

Murray – Early Greece

3. End of the Dark Age – Aristocracy

Homer mainly reflects a later Dark Age culture, with lots of earlier stuff mixed in. Homer describes an aristocratic society, Hesiod a lower class society. The basileus in Homer is a sort of hereditary nobility, and stands at the head of his household (oikos) and family (genos). Upper-class marriages were within the same social class, often for political reasons, and involved gift giving all around. Lower class marriages were more for inheritance, and rarely outside a city. Upper class women probably high status. The oikos was largely agriculture, barley the chief crop. There was probably a large shift away from animal husbandry. The basileus lived more in the countryside than in the town, as attested by the small town dwellings. It was a competitive, time, based society. Lots of gift exchange for acquiring honor. The relationships between the basilees would develop into the hetairoi. Fighting was probably between champions, since only the rich could afford armor. Epic poetry glorified this, and the aristocratic nobility survived throughout Greek history.

4. End of the Dark Age – Community

Main social division is between aristocracy and demos (the free peasantry). The craftsman (demiourgos) was somewhat outside of this – valued for skills, but not an aristocrat. Basic political forms – boule of aristocrats – came into being early. Things were discussed in council and presented to the people, who listened and ratified. The people's opinion was important. The legal system was one of arbitration, but it was moving fast towards law and dike. Hesiod was a big pusher of justice. From all of this comes the polis. Urbanisation takes place, the oikos declines, population grows, and the citizen army comes into being. The demos's power grew and the aristocracy's declined.

5. Euboean Society and Trade

Short-distance trading was scorned, but long-distance grew in importance as the need for metals and luxury goods increased among the aristocracy. This brought the Greeks into competition with the Phoenicians, from whom they learned much. Trading posts were established, both in the east and west. In the west, the Greeks heavily influenced the Etruscans. The Euboeans seem to have been heavily involved in this, and Euboea saw a population explosion in the 8th century. There was a large war fought over the Lelantine plain, that seems to have divided much of Greece in the late 8th/early 7th centuries.

6. The Orientalizing Period

Lots of eastern influence – the chicken came from Persia, lots of words from Phoenicia. In art, the evidence is confined mainly to pottery. Geometric pottery was fused in Corinth with orientalized pottery around 725, and a

little later in Athens. Lots of eastern motifs. The Adonis myth is eastern in origin. Hesiod's Theogony was influenced heavily by Babylonian creation myths. Hesiod was probably the inventor of theogonic poetry in Greece. The alphabet came from Phoenicia, although the date is not clear. Between 850 and 700. Spread quickly along trade routes.

7. Colonization

The clearest sign of the polis is its ability to start a new polis through colonisation. Euboea and Corinth began colonising Sicily along the trade route. Syracuse 733. Other cities jumped into the action in Sicily and south Italy. Colonizing stopped around 580. Colonies wanted a good defensible spot with a harbor – Syracuse the ideal. Colonists were trained fighters, capable of dealing with natives. While trade and a need for raw materials played an important part, the need for land to deal with a growing population was most important. Most mother cities were short of land. The original group of colonists would be supplemented by later newcomers, and often formed a new aristocracy in the city.

8. Warfare and the new morality

Hoplite phalanx developed around 700-675. Specialized hoplite helmet and shield developed around that time. Homer may have been aware of the early phases as he mentions stabbing spears. Lyric poets such as Tytaeus reflect hoplites more clearly.

9. Tyranny

From 650-550, tyranny was the standard form of government in much of Greece. Earliest tyrants were aristocrats who ruled outside the normal government with popular support. As the people and aristocracy moved together again, the tyranny, often in the second generation, was kicked out. Might have something to do with increasing wealth, but more likely because of the growth of the hoplites. Earliest tyranny seems to have been Corinth, which became extremely important as trade and colonies grew and was a center of orientalizing. Cypselos, an outsider seized power from the aristocracy and passed it on to his son Periander. Trade flourished and the Doric temple was developed. Other tyrants also seem to have been acting against the aristocracy and for the demos, and were often quite popular and effective.

10. Sparta and the Hoplite State

Sparta was the ideal hoplite state. Her constitution, unwritten, is difficult to unravel given that the evidence is always designed to serve some theoretical end. Started out typical Dorian tribe, except for dual kingship. More a hereditary generalship with lots of perks. Sparta first expanded beyond its villages into the neighboring Dorian groups, calling themselves Lacedaimonians to be inclusive. The Messenian Wars (730-710) were colonial

movements without needing to go overseas. The Messenians became helots, tied to the land. Hoplites were probably introduced after a defeat by Argos in 669. The constitution of Lycurgus is probably around the same time. Not clear when the Ephors, elected officials, were introduced. However, Sparta still had a strong aristocracy and there is evidence for eastern imports and pottery, and other signs of culture, which gradually declines in the 6th century as the military ethos takes over. The citizen served the state. Boys were raised by the state in organized groups from age 6. It was very paramilitary. Having a large population of serfs demanded this strict discipline. All very archaic, but really pseudo-archaic.

11. Athens and Social Justice

Literacy enabled laws to be written down. First Athenian law giver was Dracon, perhaps a reactionary aristocrat. But Solon (early 6th century) was the true founder of the Athenian state. He used poetry to communicate his laws, but also displayed them. Athens was continually occupied through the Dark Ages and flourished, but it declined and the countryside grew in the 8th century. Aristocracy had large country estates and lots of power – met on the Areopagus. Lower classes grew oppressed and Solon stood up for them, abolishing debts, and probably initiating some form of land reform. Solon created four classes – the 500-bushel men, the Hippeis, the zeugetai and the thetes. He left government positions in the hands of the rich, but there was still an assembly. Best of all, he instituted a thorough law code, directing Athens towards social justice, even if many of his political reforms didn't work out.

12. Life Styles: The Aristocracy

After Dark Ages comes Geometric, then orientaling, and finally Archaic! 600-460 or so. Political leadership was still in the hands of the aristocracy, despite the coming of the hoplites. The Olympic (776), Isthmian (581), Nemean (573), and Pythian (582) games, and competition in general became much more important. These festivals, unconnected with major cities, gained a pan-hellenic importance as opposed to local festivals. Winning in a competition gave great prestige back home. Greatest of lyric poets, Pindar, Bacchylides, Simonides, celebrated the winners, although Xenophanes disapproved. Another important aspect of aristocratic social life was the Symposium. Much of Greek pottery from this time is concerned with the Symposium, and decorated as such. This is also the great period of erotic vase painting. Among the aristocracy, marriage was primarily a way of creating ties between families. There was no deep love of women, and those praised in poetry are slaves or flute girls. Romantic love was homosexual, especially between older man and younger. Harmodius and Aristogeiton, and the honors paid them, are a good sign of this. By the end of the archaic age however, the aristocracy was being envied.

13. Life Styles: The Economy

New sources of wealth produced upwards mobility. Many distinguish between wealth based on land and on other stuff. The agrarian economy was very diverse, with the usual cereals, but also olive and grapes on terraced hillside, and the use of mountainous areas for herding, often outside the direct control of a polis. Plus fishing, stone-cutting, forestry. The division of Attica by Cleisthenes reflects this. Craftsmanship grew in importance – lots of vase painters signed their works. Trade, both short and long haul, was important. Aegina became exceedingly wealthy from it. Athens built her fleet ostensibly to counter Aegina. A sophisticated professional class of traders grew up. There was a Greek town in Egypt, Naucratis, basically a trading post. Egypt and other Eastern kingdoms employed Greek soldiers. The Greeks were fascinated by Egypt, but there was little actual influence. Coinage, usually silver, was invented, and replaced earlier (although sophisticated) forms of barter. The Greeks borrowed it from the Lydians, who invented it around 600. By the mid 6th century there was a complex market economy throughout the Mediterranean. Slavery for agriculture also burgeoned. The huge temples and other works of the 6th century are a sign of the prosperity. Tyrants loved that sort of thing.

14. The Coming of the Persians

Ionia was the backwater of Greece, but there was plenty of profit from the Black Sea trade and the first philosophers came from Miletus. Thales postulated water as being the source of everything, Anaximenes thought air, and others sought a rational system for explaining nature. But in 559 Media fell to Cyrus, and in 547/6 Croesus followed. Then Babylon. Cambyses conquered Egypt in 525. The Persians were a primitive people and they adopted other more sophisticated cultures as they came across them. They were monotheists, worshipping Ahuramazda, lacking temples or rituals, and emphasizing the struggle of good and evil. But they were very tolerant of other religions, like Judaism. Darius succeeded Cambyses, and in 499 the Ionians revolted. They were successful at first and had Athenian help, but soon the Persians crushed them. Afterwards, many Ionian thinkers went west. And soon the Persians invaded Greece.

15. The Leadership of Greece