

Foundations of World Civilization: Notes 17
The Greek Mediterranean of Thucydides and on
© Copyright Bruce Owen 2009

- Persian war (Herodotus): 500-479 BCE
- Peloponnesian war (Thucydides): 431-404 BCE
 - Athens lost to Sparta and allies
 - rivalries continued, power shifted among Sparta, Thebes, Corinth
 - leaving them decimated and unwilling to form alliances
- Thucydides
 - relationship to Herodotus
 - digs at methods
 - digs at lesser importance of earlier war
 - environmental determinism, like Diamond! (Book 1)
 - population growth led to colonization...
 - triremes
 - speeches
 - sources:
 - own observations (led troops, banished from Athens!)
 - many others
 - often disagree
 - poor memories
 - bias
 - “most severe and detailed tests possible”
 - purpose in writing
 - “if it be judged useful by those inquirers who desire an exact knowledge of the past as an aid to the understanding of the future, which in the course of human things must resemble if it does not reflect it, I shall be content.”
 - no romance, verse, etc.
 - but notes earthquakes, many eclipses, droughts, plague...
 - “immediate cause”: grounds of complaint...
 - “real cause”: “The real cause I consider to be the one which was formerly most kept out of sight. The growth of the power of Athens, and the alarm which this inspired in Sparta, made war inevitable.”
 - Epidamnus affair
 - weakened by factions and war
 - the people throw out the leaders
 - they ally with the barbarians and raid
 - send to Corcyra (colonial parent), no help
 - ask Delphic oracle if they should turn to Corinth: yes
 - Corinthians agree to help...
 - way of marking time
 - note “forty-eighth year of the priestess-ship of Chrysis at Argos...”

- Plataea affair
 - political self-interest as a cause
 - “fog of war”, then as now
 - Plataeans kill hostages, before hearing that Athens said not to
- more social causes:
 - “Zeal is always at its height at the commencement of an undertaking” (remind you of any recent history?)
 - “and on this particular occasion the Peloponnesus and Athens were both full of young men whose inexperience made them eager to take up arms”
 - “while the rest of Hellas stood straining with excitement at the conflict of its leading cities”
 - note the similar jaded view of war that Herodotus has Croesus voice: “The one to blame is the god of the Hellenes; it is he who encouraged me to go to war [yeah, and saved you from the pyre, you ingrate!]. Otherwise, no one could be so foolish as to prefer war to peace: in peace sons bury fathers; in war fathers bury sons.”
- Macedon (Macedonia)
 - north of Greece
 - 600’s BCE, trading with Greeks
 - King Philip II of Macedon: 359-336 BCE
 - conquered Greece: 350-338 BCE
 - assassinated 336 BCE
 - Alexander “the Great” of Macedon: ruled 336-323 BCE
 - ascended at age 20
 - conquered Ionia and Anatolia by 333 BCE
 - 332 BCE: takes Egypt from the crumbling Persian Achaemenid empire without resistance
 - by 331 BCE controlled Palestine and Mesopotamia
 - burned Persepolis 331 BCE
 - King of Persia 330 BCE
 - crosses Indus river 327 BCE
 - back to Susa by 324 BCE
 - died 323 BCE
 - By 275 BCE, empire divided into 3:
 - Antigonos: Greece and Macedon
 - Antigonid empire until conquered by Rome in 100s BCE
 - Ptolemy: Egypt
 - Ptolemaic rule until conquered by Rome in 31 BCE
 - Seleucus: the rest out to Bactria
 - Seleucid empire until replaced by Parthians in 100’s BCE
- Hellenistic era: Alexander and 3 successor dynasties, about 336-100’s BCE
- Cultural landmarks:
 - Phoenician alphabet adapted to Greek: 800 BCE
 - Socrates: 470-399 BCE
 - Plato: 430-347 BCE

– Aristotle: 384-322 BCE