



T 16: The Hellenistic World

Hellenistic meaning

- Literally means “**Greek-like**”
- Evolved as a consequence of the conquests by **Alexander the Great**
- **Syncretism** (blending) of Hellenic (Greek) culture with cultures from Asia and Africa – predominance of Greek language and culture

Background

- Death of **Alexander** in 323 BCE – split of his conquered territories among his generals: **Seleucus** (**Seleucid Empire** from Syria to Afghanistan), **Ptolemy** (**Ptolemaic Empire** –Egypt), **Antigonos** (Macedonia) and others
- Formation of large kingdoms under the Greeks – spread of **Greek culture** in Afro-Asia – **Hellenization** – predominance of Greek culture

Alexander the Great



The Hellenistic World

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Main features

- Uniform **cosmopolitan** culture
- *High Culture* – development of philosophy, political ideas history, art and sciences.
- A simplified and standardized Greek language acting as the vehicle for spreading **Hellenism** (Hellenistic culture & civilization)
- Economic development through trade and commerce

Cosmopolitanism

- Broadening of world view - Individuals became **‘citizens of the world’** instead of individual states
- Integration of Greek culture with local cultures – influenced each other – fusion of **occidental** (Western) and **oriental** cultures
- Hellenistic Cosmopolitan way of life attracted the elites as well as business people – common people remained less affected

Hellenistic Economy

- A new era in world trade and commerce opened by Alexander's conquests
- Unprecedented economic development due to stability and security, standardized currency and common language
- Use of gold and silver bullions seized from Persia for financing public works – boosted trade and commerce

Legacy

- Preserved Hellenic traditions and spread them to the East
- Introduced relatively ‘modern’ ideas in the oriental regions
- New cities – new cultural and trade centers (**Alexandria** to Kandahar) - development of science, medicine and mathematics (Euclid, Archimedes)
- Facilitated spread of Christianity later on
- Hellenistic influence mostly limited to the cities

Lighthouse of Alexandria



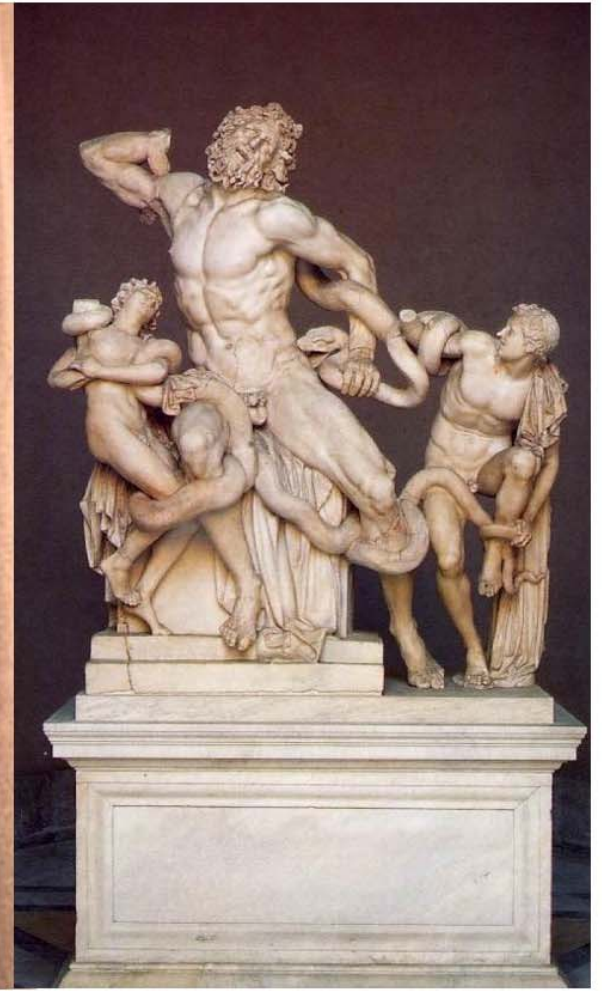
Differences?



Archaic



Hellenic



Hellenistic

Study Questions

- What does *Hellenistic* mean?
- How did Hellenism evolve?
- Examine the main features of Hellenistic civilization.
- Do you think that Hellenistic civilization evolved through *Hellenization* of oriental culture?
- How do you perceive cosmopolitanism?
- What impact did Hellenism had on trade and commerce?
- Narrate the legacy of Hellenistic civilization.

Thank You