

Chapter 8: The Greek Adventure Chapter Introduction  
Book Title: World Civilizations  
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## Chapter Introduction

*The function of the ruler is to use his best endeavors to make his subjects happier.*

—Socrates

### Greek Vase.

This vase shows a fight between a Greek hoplite (infantryman) and his Persian cavalry enemy. A product of the late fifth century B.C.E., the appearance of this infantry formation along with the notion of citizenship and the citizen army revolutionized warfare and community political life.



Erich Lessing / Art Resource, NY

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### Chronology

**c. 6500–4500 B.C.E.** Neolithic revolution spreads across Europe

<b>c. 2500–1500 B.C.E.</b>	European transition to Bronze Age
<b>c. 2000–1400 B.C.E.</b>	Minoan civilization on Crete
<b>c. 1600–1100 B.C.E.</b>	Mycenaean Age
<b>c. 1100–800 B.C.E.</b>	Greece's Dark Age
<b>c. 800–300 B.C.E.</b>	Hellenic civilization in Greece
<b>c. 550–330 B.C.E.</b>	Achaemenid Empire in Persia
<b>c. 500–325 B.C.E.</b>	Classical Age in Greece
<b>336–323 B.C.E.</b>	Alexander the Great's reign and campaigns
<b>c. 300–50 B.C.E.</b>	Hellenistic Age in eastern Mediterranean and Western Asia

The islands of the Aegean Sea and the small, rocky peninsula in the eastern Mediterranean Sea that is now called Greece proved to be the single most important sources of later civilization in the Western world. From these seas and this unpromising landscape emerged a vigorous, imaginative people who gave later human beings a tradition of thought and values that is still very much alive.

The history of the ancient Greeks can be divided into three epochs:

1. The *Minoan-Mycenaean Age* lasted from about 2000 B.C.E. to the conquest of the Greek peninsula by invaders in the 1100s.
2. The *Hellenic Period* extended from the time of Homer to the conquest of the Greek city-states by the Macedonians in the mid-300s. It includes the Classical Age, when Greek philosophical and artistic achievements were most impressive.
3. The *Hellenistic Age* was the final blossoming of Greek cultural innovation, lasting from about 300 B.C.E. to the first century C.E. During this age emigrant Greeks interacted politically and intellectually with other peoples to produce a hybrid culture that was extraordinarily influential on the arts and science of both Western and Asian civilizations.

We look now at the political and social aspects of the Hellenic and early Hellenistic periods; we focus on intellectual and artistic developments in [Chapter 9](#).

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