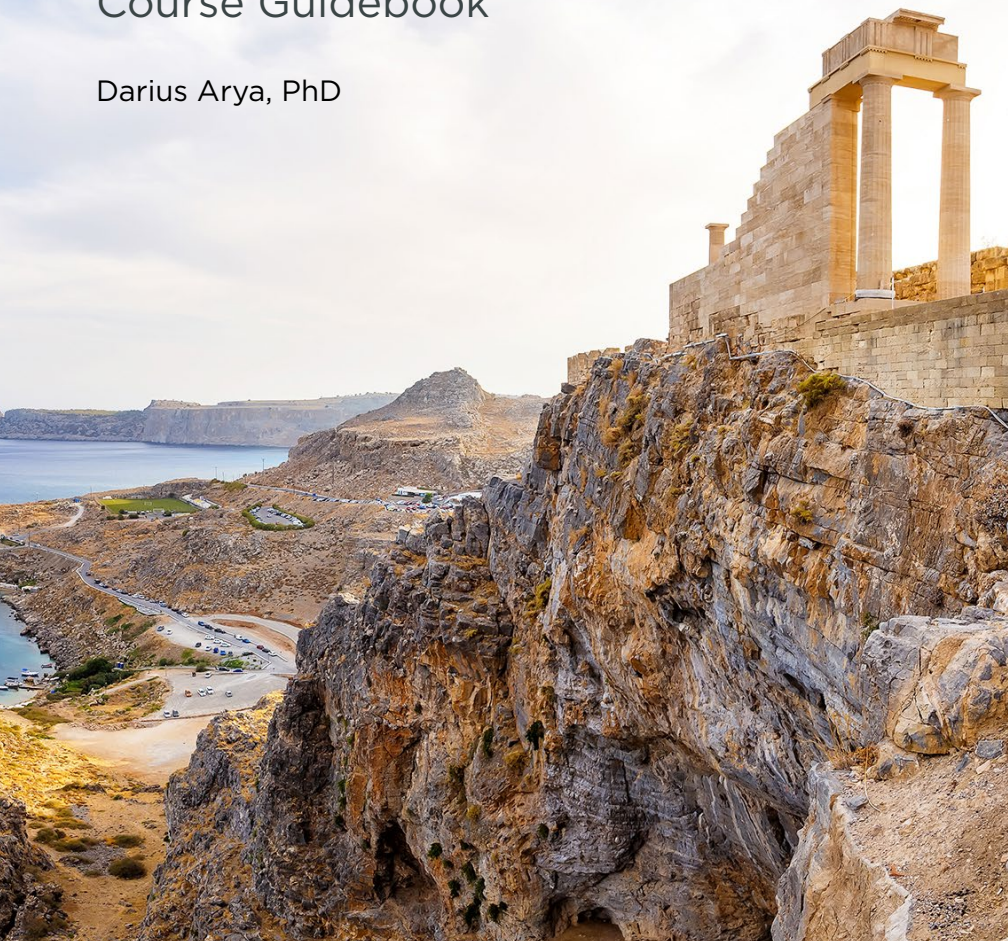
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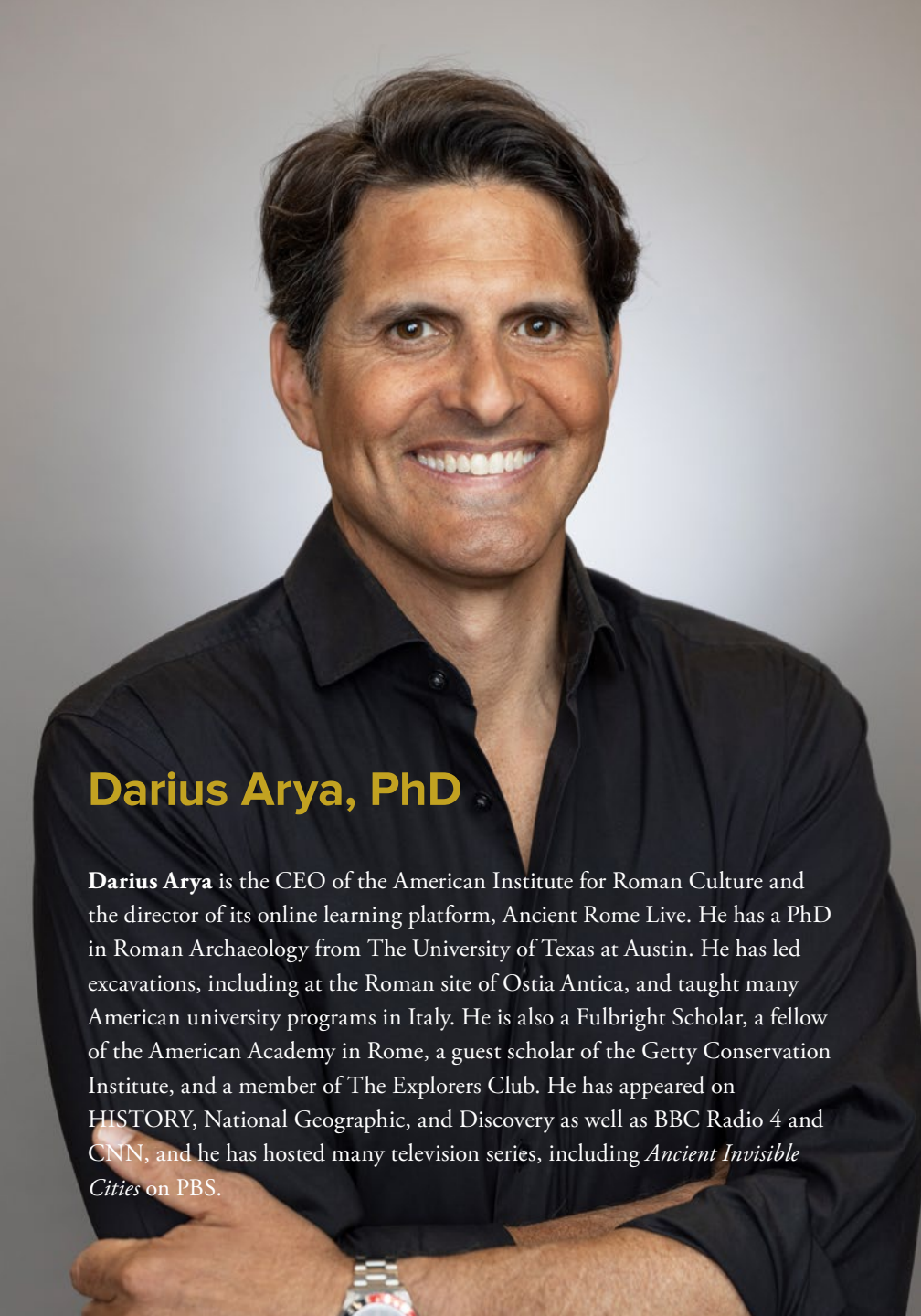
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1

THE PHOENICIANS: BYBLOS, SIDON, AND TYRE

The Mediterranean, one of the great cradles of civilization, has been home to some of the most incredible cities in history. The evolution of these urban centers was inherently tied to their relationship with the Mediterranean Sea, which covers some 970,000 square miles and has carried people, goods, ideas, and ambitions since the dawn of civilization. This lecture series will take you on a tour of some of the greatest cities of the ancient Mediterranean, tracing the development of several of the most interesting urban centers. From the harbors of Spain to the shores of Turkey and from the Greek islands to the North African hinterlands, you will explore thousands of years of history—from the earliest trading settlements of the Stone Age to the emerging centers of Christianity in late antiquity. In this first lecture, you will explore the three greatest cities of the Phoenicians.

The City of Byblos

The Phoenicians were legendary seafarers, and they built one of the first maritime empires. Phoenician city-states emerged around 2500 BC and dominated a strip of coast along the eastern Mediterranean known as the Levant—today the coastline of Israel, Lebanon, and Syria. The Phoenicians traded solid timber, a valuable commodity in the ancient Mediterranean. Quality timber was scarce in arid Egypt and Mesopotamia but plentiful around Byblos, Tyre, and Sidon, just a few miles from the Lebanon Mountains. The *Cedrus libani*, or Lebanese cedar, was perfect for construction and shipbuilding.



Residential district in Byblos from mid Bronze Age

The Phoenicians grew much of their food in the fertile Beqaa Valley and used the rivers in the valleys to transport timber to the coast. Where one of those rivers meets the Mediterranean, the city of Byblos has been in existence for 8,000 years. Its location facilitated the collection, transportation,

and selling of timber from the hinterlands, and the city was one of Egypt's greatest trading partners in the Old and Middle Kingdoms. The Egyptians used cedar to build ships, temples, tombs, and furniture.

According to legend, the Greek titan Kronos—associated with the Phoenician god Baal—founded Byblos as the first city of humanity. Like many ancient cities, Byblos syncretized gods and beliefs from different pantheons into its own; thus, its temples were dedicated to different deities.

A crusader castle and several other structures still loom over the ancient city. The site includes temples and a Middle Bronze Age residential district that consists of around 100 homes of a few rooms, arranged in four small blocks. On the hillside above the site is the king's well, about 60 feet deep and accessible by a spiral staircase. The site suggests that Byblos was a large city. In a sizable area dedicated to royal tombs—dating to around 1900 BC—illustrations on the Ahiram sarcophagus show a mix of Aegean, Cypriot, Assyrian, and Egyptian artistic styles, indicative of the places that interacted with the Phoenician city-states.

Traders, Inventors, and Strategists

The Ahiram sarcophagus also contains one of the oldest examples of the Phoenician alphabet. After centuries of working with Egyptian hieroglyphic and Mesopotamian cuneiform symbols, the Phoenicians of Byblos created a faster and simpler writing system for recordkeeping. In this new system, each character represented just a single sound rather than an idea or a word. The new alphabet was soon recognized as superior. It influenced the Greek, Arabic, Hebrew, and Latin alphabets—the latter being used by most European languages today.

The Phoenicians were known for their technological advances in shipbuilding. They developed new woodworking techniques, allowing their fleets to expand and travel further. Two common types of ships were built. The *gauloi*—or round ship—had rounded hulls, a big square sail at the center, and a blade at the rear for steering. There was room for cargo and the crew under the decks. These basic, small trading ships could cross the whole of the Mediterranean. The warships were galleys—boats powered by banks of

rowers. The classic design was the bireme, a galley with two rows of oars. This design was later perfected by the Greeks, and additional oar banks were added over time. The galley was used for naval battles in the Mediterranean until the medieval period.

The Phoenicians learned to navigate by the stars, which made it possible to undertake long, bold voyages across the Mediterranean. They gathered knowledge of routes and anchorages and established emporia—or trading posts—for the exchange of valuable goods. They also started to produce more sophisticated products, including glass, textiles, metalwork, and papyrus.

Before Phoenicia's peak period, the city of Ugarit flourished by trading with Cyprus, Syria, and inland Hittites. Based on its extensive ruins and various other archeological finds, Ugarit was a prosperous city in the Bronze Age. The settlement of Arwād, located just south of Ugarit on an island 2 miles off the Syrian coast, was first occupied in the 3rd millennium BC. Its location was easy to defend, and there were two natural harbors. The city grew into a large urban center with multistory houses. A port city on the mainland controlled land to provide Arwād with food, raw materials, and various public areas.

The City of Sidon

Sidon is located on a rocky peninsula, stretching over 145 acres and containing two natural harbors. Its history can be traced to the Neolithic period, circa 4000 BC. In the Bronze Age, Sidon emerged as a regional trading hub and was famous for glass and dyes. Glassware was a valuable luxury item. Beads with faces made of glass, featuring brilliant yellows and blues, are an iconic Phoenician and later Carthaginian design. Such beads have been discovered all over the Mediterranean, showing how far Punic traders traveled.

Dyes were even more valuable, and the Phoenicians were best known for producing rich blue and purple dyes from murex sea snails. Dye makers would extract the hypobranchial gland from one of two murex sea snail species that produced the mucus used as the base of the dyes. The glands were crushed and boiled with brine for up to 10 days in tin vats. Due to the stench,



Illustration of the city of Sidon

production was relegated to outside the city walls, and just south of Sidon's acropolis is a 130-foot-high dump of murex shells near what was a huge production center.

Sidon was also a center for science and navigation, sharing its knowledge of astronomy and arithmetic with Greece. Some of the ruins of the city's Temple of Eshmun, dated to the 6th century BC, remain visible. It comprises an example of a winged throne. It is thought that statutes of Astarte, the Phoenician goddess of love and war, were placed in such thrones. The unearthed votive offerings include a finely carved statuette of a child that the Phoenician inscription identifies as a royal offering.

The City of Tyre

The Phoenician city-states were not united under a single ruler or polity. They were often rivals, and their establishment of colonies across the Mediterranean was likely motivated by competition for access to the best products and routes.

Tyre, a colony of Sidon, was built on a small reef about half a mile from the coast. The buildings on the island had multiple stories, the construction of which required sophisticated masonry, carpentry, and metalworking skills.

The Tyrians became so famous for dye production that the distinctive shade of purple that murex sea snails create is known as Tyrian purple. An area of rocky shore opposite Tyre was known across the Mediterranean for its supply of murex sea snails and fine sand.



Illustration of the city of Tyre

By the 10th century BC, King Hiram I expanded Tyre's control over the Phoenician world by forging alliances. The city established a trade link with Arabia and imported riches such as ivory and silver from as far away as Ethiopia. It founded new colonies in Iberia, Sicily, Corsica, and even Gades.

The Phoenicians had access to supplies of iron, tin, and copper—metals found in the colonies and increasingly used to build stronger, hardier ships—giving them a technological advantage. Their control was solidified by

a vast network of emporia and colonies, including locations in Cyprus, Crete, Thrace, North Africa, Sicily, Italy, Sardinia, Spain, and Malta. They were even trading with Britain by 600 BC.

The Decline of Phoenicia

The Phoenicians, prosperous but decentralized and with only a small army, became a prime target of adjacent empires. In 858 BC, the Assyrian Empire invaded, and most of Phoenicia came under Assyrian control. Tyre, Byblos, and Sidon attempted but failed to regain their independence at various points over the next centuries. Sidon was razed in an Assyrian retaliation against rebellion in the 7th century BC.

Most Phoenician city-states managed to maintain their civic identity to a degree—especially under the Achaemenid Persians, who preferred semi-independent satrapies in their conquered territories, tied to requirements of annual tribute. The wealthy Phoenician cities paid to retain a level of autonomy and maintained a strong position in international trade. However, when forced involvement in the decades-long Greco-Persian war triggered a mass exodus from the city-states of the Levant, Carthage and other colonies in the west became the centers of Phoenician influence.

In the 330s BC, Alexander the Great dealt Phoenicia the final blow. After his victory over the Persians at Issus, Alexander went to secure the coastline of the Levant. Arwād, Byblos, and Sidon readily submitted, but Tyre refused. Determined, Alexander ordered his army to build a causeway to bridge the strait. When the Tyrian navy burned the roadway and siege equipment, Alexander marshaled the navies from the other Phoenician city-states and Cyprus and trapped the Tyrian navies within the two harbors. After the causeway was completed, 160-foot-high siege towers were rolled to Tyre's walls for the final assault. Over the next several centuries, Phoenicia was caught in the crossfire of civil wars and clashing empires and was eventually conquered by Rome. The Phoenician identity disappeared completely in the 7th century AD.



Alexander the Great at the Battle of Issus

Phoenicia has long been relegated to the role of an almost silent protagonist, a catalyst for spreading ideas and cultural norms throughout the Mediterranean. However, the Romans and Greeks were aware of its pivotal role in the region's civilization. Herodotus described the Phoenicians as secretive and untrustworthy merchants but acknowledged their enormous impact on Greek culture. Thucydides, despite not appreciating the Phoenicians as allies of Persia, saw them as a model for an Athenian empire. Phoenicia was a remarkable civilization that set the tone for centuries of exchange and diffusion of cultures, products, and ideas across the Mediterranean.

2

CRETE, KNOSSOS, AND THE MINOANS

Few places in the Mediterranean are as steeped in legend as Crete. This largest of the Greek islands was home to the fascinating Minoan civilization. Findings of bull-jumping performers and snake-wielding goddesses have perpetuated the sense of wonder and mystery surrounding this island, whose people were once masters of the Aegean. The complex urban settlements of the Minoans flourished from 2000 BC to 1500 BC. Blessed with natural harbors, local resources, and a central position in the eastern Mediterranean, the Minoans set out to explore and trade, creating the first large sea empire that had extensive ties with Egypt and the Near East. The thriving community left a lasting impression on the Greeks, Phoenicians, Egyptians, and even Romans. In this lecture, you'll explore the myths, art, commerce, and beliefs of ancient Crete.

The Land of Mythology

Crete is the fifth-largest island in the Mediterranean. It lies about 100 miles south of Greece and 60 miles west of Anatolia. Most of the island is mountainous, with a central chain that runs east to west. The highest peak, Mount Ida, is the most prominent in Greece. The fertile valleys between the mountain ranges support a variety of agricultural produce, while the surrounding slopes are covered with abundant forests. Recent surveys suggest human activity on the island as early as the Paleolithic period, around 130,000 years ago.



Illustration of Crete

In Greek mythology, Zeus was born and raised on Crete. He was hidden from his titan father, Kronos, who devoured his sons to avoid being overthrown by them. Zeus returned to the island several times, most famously after transforming into a bull and seducing Europa, daughter of a king of Tyre. Europa gave birth to three sons: Minos, Rhadamanthys, and Sarpedon.

Minos became a celebrated figure in Greek mythology and literature, revered as an effective but ruthless ruler. Homer and Thucydides both wrote about Crete under Minos as being the foremost naval power in the Aegean. That power had been promised by the god Poseidon, who produced a white bull from the sea that Minos was supposed to sacrifice. Minos tried to trick Poseidon by sacrificing an ordinary bull, and as punishment, Poseidon made Minos's wife have a relationship with the white bull.

The offspring of that relationship was the Minotaur, a monstrous creature with the head and tail of a bull and the body of a man. The inventor Daedalus constructed a large, intricate labyrinth, hoping the Minotaur would never escape this maze. The Athenian prince Theseus ended up killing the beast and escaped the labyrinth with the assistance of Daedalus and Minos's daughter. Furious, Minos imprisoned Daedalus and his son Icarus in the Labyrinth. Daedalus fashioned wax-covered wings so that they might fly away—but Icarus flew too close to the sun, and the wax melted, causing him to fall to his death.

Discoveries at Knossos

In the 1870s, Heinrich Schliemann set out to discover the lost city of Troy—the setting of Homer's *Iliad*. He found the location, but while trying to remove layers of ground to find the Troy of legend, he destroyed the layer that is believed to have been the Troy of Homer's time.

Around the same time, Greek amateur archeologist Minos Kalokairinos discovered Knossos—the Minoan capital—but a proper excavation of the site wasn't authorized until British archaeologist Arthur Evans arrived in 1900. Evans would write four volumes on the excavations there, which he called the Palace of Minos. He found distinct architecture, colorful frescoes, and unique artifacts and named this newly discovered culture the Minoans. In fact, Evans's work would shape the modern understanding of the Minoans and their art and architecture.

The layout of the palace complex—with many bends and turns, dead-end hallways, and small rooms with no clear purpose—convinced Evans that the palace was the labyrinth of the legends. The vast complex had a large central

court, just like the ancient mosaics of the labyrinth suggested. One of Evans's finds was the *Bull-Leaping Fresco*, which dates to about 1450 BC. Painted on stucco, the scene depicts three figures: one grasping the bull by its horns, one leaping upside down on its back, and one gesturing toward it at the rear. The same activity is depicted in a nearly intact bronze sculpture Evans discovered.

Additional finds seemed to reinforce Evans's case, but no mention of the Minotaur or records of the rulers of Knossos were ever found. Nonetheless, Evans had discovered a unique civilization. Continuous excavations have revealed that Knossos is a truly ancient site, continuously occupied since 7000 BC. Its rise to prominence began in the Bronze Age, and it became an important political, cultural, and religious site in the Aegean.

The Knossos Complex

The most impressive Minoan architecture and engineering developments took place in the Protopalatial period, between 2000 BC and 1750 BC. At Knossos, the entire hilltop was leveled to create the first palatial structures, large foundations, and underground storage areas. Over the next few centuries, the palace complex spread over the entire hillside, with residences and commercial districts sprawling around it. Similar palaces simultaneously appeared in other locations on Crete, but Knossos was likely the most important center. Its expansive complex underscores the builders' skill and indicates the city's importance.

During the restoration of the complex, Evans rebuilt what was at risk of rapid deterioration and reconstructed some of the frescoes. The northern gate has a repainted colonnade and a large panel depicting a bull charging at an olive tree. A gatehouse on the west side contains a series of restorations that show how the interior spaces might have looked. Several reconstructed murals depict men carrying jars and urns.

The main complex has a large staircase leading to the western wing. The superstructures are mostly gone, but the layout and the features of the site are still discernable. A hall with colonnades—reconstructed by Evans—



Illustration of Knossos Complex

provides a view into the atrium where the *Bull-Leaping Fresco* was found. Nearby warehouses contained Pithoi—jars that were used in the ancient Mediterranean to store and transport wine, olive oil, and other goods.

Across the central piazza is the entrance to the most elaborately restored area. Evans called it a throne room, believing the single alabaster seat here to be the throne of King Minos. To one side of the room is a small colonnaded staircase that leads to a sunken area, called a lustral basin. On the other side of the staircase is the area of the Tripartite Shrine, where two snake-wielding figurines made of faience, as well as a series of mini frescoes, were found.

In the eastern portion of the complex, the reconstructed staircase leads down to two subfloor royal apartments that are decorated with restored frescoes. The queen's apartment features a scene of dolphins swimming above the doorways, which themselves are surrounded by delicate rosette patterns on the lintels. Nearly every square inch of the royal apartments would have been painted with ornate patterns in rich hues of red, blue, and yellow. Red was the dominant color at Knossos, derived from the hematite-rich clays of Crete.

The Minoan Civilization

Like the Phoenicians, the Minoans were traders. They produced maritime-themed luxury items of bronze and other precious metals, and their metalwork and pottery have been found in Syria, Sicily, and Egypt. Minoan influence and control appear to have spread throughout the eastern Mediterranean. Homer recorded that the Minoans had up to 90 cities under their control, which likely means that those places were culturally and economically—and perhaps politically—dominated by Knossos.

On the island of Thera—today known as Santoríni—the settlement of Akrotíri was along the route to Cyprus, which provided the Minoans with copper. At the archeological site, up to three stories of some buildings are well preserved. The artwork represents a wide diversity of subjects. It includes depictions of ordinary scenes, such as a couple of young women picking saffron flowers. Saffron was highly desirable, not only for cooking but also for



Ruins of Akrotiri

medicinal use and the production of yellow dye. Evidence suggests that it was among the most valuable of all the Minoan trade goods and that Akrotíri was an important saffron-growing outpost.

Little is known about the size of the Minoan trade network or Knossos's political role, and no record exists of a king or dynasty. Like the Phoenicians, the Minoan civilization may have been a series of autonomous city-states linked by a common religious and artistic culture. For instance, marine-style pottery from many Minoan sites around Crete and abroad exhibits similar characteristics.

The Minoan golden age came to an end around 1470 BC, likely due to a series of natural or man-made destructions. The Mycenaeans from mainland Greece were the next to arrive on Crete and dominate Knossos. In contrast to the Minoans, the Mycenaeans had a martial culture, and the art and defensive features built on Crete at this time seem to reflect their conquest of the island. However, the Minoans influenced the Myceneans, and the resulting hybrid culture eventually formed the foundation of the first Greek civilization.

Knossos started to decline around 1370 BC. For centuries, the island was often controlled by foreigners—including the Macedonians, the Romans, the Byzantines, the Venetians, and finally the Ottomans—until it became part of modern Greece in 1908.

3

ATHENS, PIRAEUS, AND THE RISE OF GREECE

When it comes to naval power in the Mediterranean, no single city left a larger cultural legacy than Athens. The city's meteoric rise to dominance in the Mediterranean beat incredible odds and fearsome enemies. Its urban, architectural, and artistic productivity transcended its military success to create a legacy of wonder. Unmatched monuments and temples lined the Acropolis, forming a cultural center for the rest of the Mediterranean. Many of the ruins reflect the city's golden age in the 5th century BC when it was the master of the Aegean and one of the most powerful naval and mercantile powers in the Mediterranean. This lecture focuses on the emergence and rise of Athens and its port city of Piraeus, touring these cities at the height of their power.

The City of Athens

Athens was always torn between the land and the sea. The west pediment of the Parthenon depicts the contest between Athena and Poseidon over who would become the patron god of the city. As the legend goes, Poseidon offered a spring and the bounty of the sea as a sign of his protection. Athena offered an olive tree, which became a symbol of Mediterranean culture.

The city of Athens was created through a nationwide amalgamation and urbanization process. In the Archaic period—from around 800 BC to 480 BC—many small villages formed unified political entities. The process—likely initiated for economic, political, and defensive reasons—led to the emergence of the first great city-states of Greece, such as Sparta, Thebes, Corinth, and Athens. Like most of the new city-states, Athens was initially ruled by an oligarchy of the city's most powerful families and aristocrats. This urban nobility traditionally met on the Areopagus, a large rocky area in the city that remains to this day.



Temple of Poseidon on Cape Sounion

In 594 BC, the aristocrat Solon took office and replaced the monopoly of the eupatridae with a government made up of wealthy citizens. While Solon's reforms still favored the elite, the shift in governance put Athens on the path to becoming an influential democracy.

The core of the Athenian democracy was the *ekklēsia*, or assembly. This body comprised all Athenian citizens who elected city officials and voted on important matters. The *ekklēsia* met on the Pnyx—an area carved into a hillside—and regularly involved 6,000 to 13,000 people. Only male citizens could vote. Immigrants and slaves—who worked in the mines and the galleys and may have constituted 30% or more of the overall population—were not allowed to vote.

Athens's Rise to Power

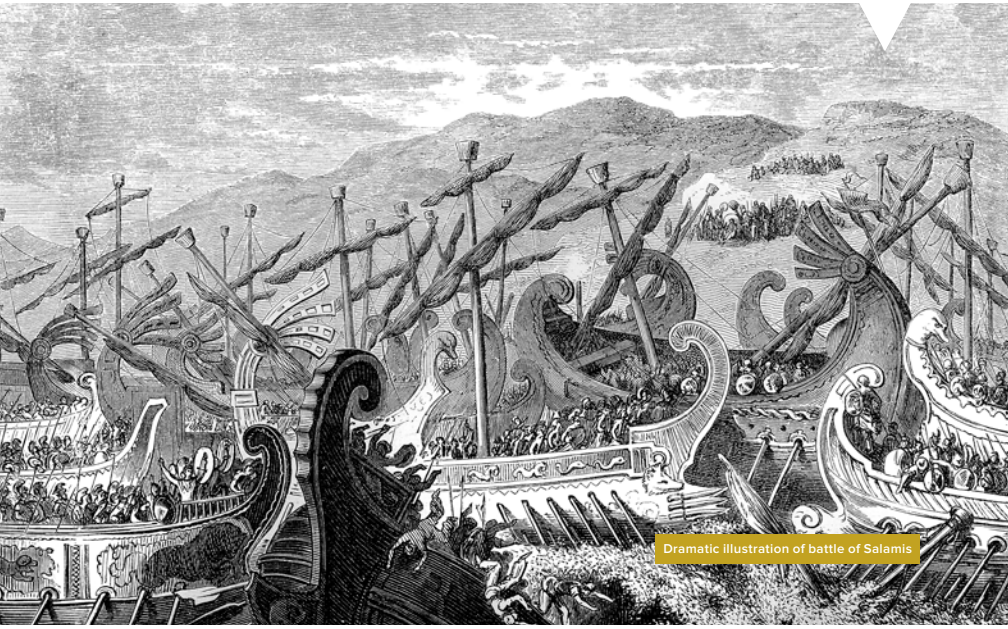
In the early Archaic period, Athens was just one of many Greek city-states competing for influence. Around 561 BC, a politician named Peisistratus seized power by mobilizing the city's poor. Peisistratus was deposed and returned to power several times over the following decades, but the programs he initiated began Athens's great rise. He recognized that Athens needed to develop its industry and trade. Olive groves were expanded and became the city's main cash crop. Olive oil was an ideal trade good because it handled long voyages well and was relatively easy to transport and sell in any quantity. Peisistratus also grew the black-figure pottery trade. Fragments of Athenian black-figure pottery found as far away as Spain and Syria date to the time of his reign.

A critical investment in the mining operations of Mount Pangaeos in northern Greece allowed the opening of the Laurion mines. These cramped mines were worked by up to 20,000 slaves, including many children. The mining efforts paid off—the silver coins minted by Athens became known for the purity of their silver content, and the drachma became one of the few currencies accepted by merchants almost everywhere in the Mediterranean. As a result, Athenian merchants had significant prestige and trading power. Economic

colonization efforts went further afield, and the Athenians established colonies and outposts in Thrace to secure precious metals and timber as well as trade routes for grain.

Peisistratus and his successor Hippias brought new levels of prosperity to Athens, but their brand of tyranny was overthrown for the final time in 510 BC. Athens entered a more democratic period, with the assembly becoming more powerful to prevent tyranny from reestablishing itself. This new era marked the start of the region's consolidation under Athenian authority and its rise in power on the seas, aided by its relationship with its neighbors and the sea.

The polis of Athens included the surrounding districts, which had representation in the government. The flourishing democracy soon controlled most of the harbors and bays around the peninsula. A prominent example is the island of Salamis in the Saronic Gulf. As a sign of its growing power and maritime ambitions, Athens seized the island from Megara, and it became a key naval base.



Dramatic illustration of battle of Salamis

Naval Victories

By the end of the 5th century BC, the Greek city-states were under threat from the Persian Empire to the east. King Darius I launched an invasion in 490 BC, but Athens won an upset victory at the Battle of Marathon to the north of the city. As another Persian attack was inevitable, Athens's leaders debated how the city should respond. Many elites of the city believed that Athens was primarily a land power and should concentrate on its army. Themistocles—one of the generals who had been a hero of Marathon—had an alternative vision.

Despite limited support from the aristocracy, Themistocles became one of the most influential politicians in the assembly and dramatically reshaped Athenian policy for decades. Convinced that the real threat to Athens—and the key to its future power—was the sea, he moved the main port of Athens to Piraeus, where three natural harbors could support many trade and military ships. Themistocles also ordered the expansion and improvement of Athens's walls, which became known as the Themistoclean Walls.



Themistoclean walls running through Kerameikos

In 483 BC, Themistocles persuaded the Athenian assembly to invest in building more than 100 triremes—powerful galley warships with three tiers of oars. Themistocles's strategy and Athens's ability to reinvent itself as a naval power was put to the test in 480 BC, when a massive Persian army and fleet mounted the expected second invasion. Attempts to stop the invasion at Artemisium failed, and the Persians smashed through the holdouts at Thermopylae.

Themistocles convinced his allies to go along with his plan to use their fleets to defeat the enemy. With his forces concentrated in one place, he lured the Persians into the straits off Salamis. Taking advantage of the Persian fleets' limited mobility in the narrow and unfamiliar waters, Themistocles won a stunning naval victory that proved to be a turning point in the war. With a subsequent win at Mycale and Spartan victories on land, the second invasion was repelled. In the aftermath, the Athenians advocated for the formation of the Delian League—a naval alliance of several Greek city-states. Each city offered an annual tribute for the maintenance of this Panhellenic navy.

From Golden Age to Demise

Athens prospered, and it invested heavily in the city's art, architecture, and culture. Some of the most famous ruins of Athens date to this period. Pericles, the principal architect of the Athenian golden age, became the most influential politician in the city after Themistocles was sent into exile. Pericles ordered the restructuring of the Acropolis, which comprised many sacred buildings from different eras.

The aesthetic program of the restructuring was overseen by the sculptor Phidias, who personally sculpted the two largest statues that were erected on the Acropolis. The Athena Parthenos stood inside the main sanctuary of the Parthenon. The statue was nearly 40 feet tall and was made of gold and ivory plates mounted to a wooden frame. Phidias's second statue of Athena—the Athena Promachos—was cast from bronze and stood between the Parthenon and the entryway to the Acropolis.

The port city of Piraeus was expanded to facilitate the commercial potential of the agora and to cement control over the seas. The core of the city was redeveloped in a grid pattern, still discernible today. The plan was developed by Hippodamus of Miletus—one of the first recorded urban planners. Extensive ship sheds were built along the three natural harbors. Known as *neosoikoi* to the Greeks, these long colonnaded sheds had pitched roofs and sloping slipways. To preserve the triremes, the ships were hauled up onto the slipways when not in use.

Another upgrade involved the Long Walls—4 miles of masonry walls that extended from Athens to the old port at Phaleron and the main port at Piraeus. The Long Walls were built to prevent Athens from being cut off from its navy and the sea in times of war. Around 440 BC, a third wall was constructed parallel to and about 600 feet from the earlier wall to Piraeus, creating a fortified corridor. With Piraeus and Phaleron now effectively within its walls, Athens became the largest Greek city in the Mediterranean. However, its reign was short-lived.

From the start, Athens's rise sparked resentment and jealousy among the other Greek city-states—particularly Sparta and Corinth, who formed their own alliance to counter the growing power of the Delian League. Rivalries and skirmishes led to two wars. The second war—from 431 BC to 404 BC—devastated Athens and caused its demise as a major independent power. However, Athens remained an influential center of Greek culture, commerce, and learning. Its reputation underscores that it was and still is one of the great cities of the Mediterranean.

4

MAGNA GRAECIA: TARAS, POSEIDONIA, AND SYRACUSE

Starting in the 8th and 7th centuries BC, the city-states of Greece sent out expeditions to establish outposts across the seas. Over the next several centuries, the Greeks spread their influence across the Mediterranean, with colonies as far away as Emporion in modern Spain and Trapezus on the northern coast of Turkey. They even got to the mouth of the Don River—today in Russia—with their colony of Tanais. Many colonial expeditions concentrated in southern Italy. Waves of settlers followed, attracted by the commercial and social opportunities. In this lecture, you'll explore the area in southern Italy that became known as Magna Graecia and tour three of its greatest cities: Taras, Poseidonia, and Syracuse.

The City of Taras

This city in southern Italy, which the Greeks called Taras, had a massive outer harbor and secondary inner lagoon. In the late 8th century BC, Greek settlers took root along the coastline and established the colony of Taras. When the colonists tried to move onto the fertile plains beyond the coast, they clashed with the local tribes. Eventually, Taras developed as a coastal community and became an important trade hub. Fish production flourished, and the deep inner harbor attracted much commercial traffic.

The colonists established the city's acropolis on the tip of the isthmus. They built a temple—dedicated to Poseidon—whose few remaining Doric columns are the oldest remains of a Greek temple in Magna Graecia. Radiating outward, Taras became a sprawling city of nearly 200 acres. Its remains are covered by the modern city of Taranto, but the Greek geographer Strabo described its splendor in late antiquity as follows:

> It has a very beautiful gymnasium, and also a spacious marketplace, in which is situated the bronze colossus of Zeus, the largest in the world except the one that belongs to the Rhodians. Between the marketplace and the mouth of the harbor is the acropolis, which has but few remnants of the dedicated objects that in early times adorned it, for most of them were either destroyed by the Carthaginians when they took the city or carried off as booty by the Romans when they took the place by storm.

Artifacts unearthed at Taras confirm the city's wealth and sophistication. Taras was a center of goldsmithing in the ancient Mediterranean. Its goldsmiths were known for their skill in filigree, in which thin threads of gold are combined to create very fine textures and patterns. The most spectacular example is a diadem found in a tomb. Decorated with extremely fine leaves and flowers and interspersed with small red garnets and carnelians, it is unique and would have been difficult to engineer with the tools available at the time.

The city became an important cultural center. Pythagoras, who is well known as a mathematician but was also an influential philosopher, spent his later years in Magna Graecia. He and his disciples established a quasi-religion, which spread rapidly through the region. The Pythagoreans believed the goal of life was to purify the soul so that it could escape the cycle of reincarnation. They lived an austere existence and studied music and mathematics.

The height of Taras's power came under Archytas, who lived from around 435 BC to 360 BC. He was a Pythagorean and the leading politician in the city for decades. Archytas was a friend of Plato, and some scholars have made the case that he was the model for a philosopher king, which Plato argued in the *Republic* to be the ideal form of human government.

Poseidonia

The Greek colony of Poseidonia was one of several colonies that were established by other colonies. Poseidonia was likely founded by Sybaris around 600 BC. Its remains are well preserved; clear outlines of its layout and remains of many structures exist—including city walls, an agora, and a stoa. Three ancient temples stand among the remaining edifices. The first temple was built around 540 BC and features 50 Doric columns around the perimeter. The second temple, dating to approximately 460 BC, is considered one of the best-preserved Greek temples in the world. On the other end of the site, the third temple has a similar design style. The striking appearance of these temples is due to their sandstone construction, as Poseidonia was far from any good sources of marble.

Poseidonia was ruled in keeping with the Athenian tradition, and there is an open-air assembly area where the citizens of the colony discussed and voted on the affairs of the day. A rare find at this site is a partially underground *heroön*—a shrine used to cult worship a hero, possibly the founder of the colony. Bronze vessels recovered from this shrine contained concentrations of cannabis pollen and hemp oil.

The Tomb of the Diver was found at a nearby necropolis, in which four frescoed walls show scenes of what was known as a symposium—a banquet that took place after a meal. There would be drinking, dancing, music,


Poseidonia

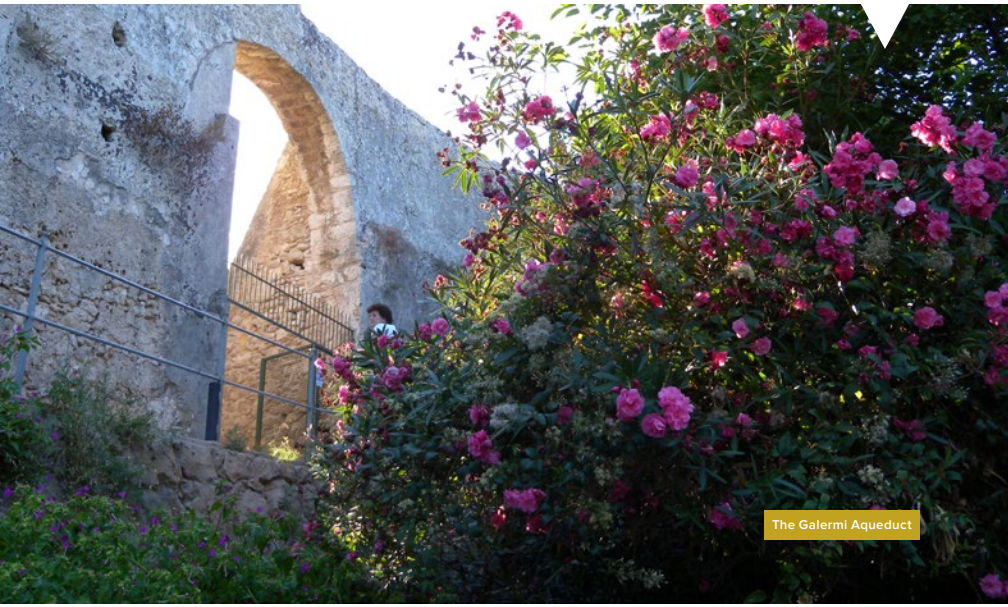
recitals, and lively conversation. The walls show a scene of an all-male party engaged in pederasty—the Greek social practice of romantic relationships between older and younger men. Frescos depicting such activities are incredibly rare. The titular diver scene on the ceiling may be a reference to death—the deceased diving into the unknown—or it could be part of the symposium scene. When the panels are lined up as they were in the tomb, the trajectory of the diver is straight into a raised cup in the scene below.

According to Strabo, Poseidonia was conquered by the neighboring Italic Lucanian tribe around the end of the 5th century BC. The cultures fused, and the Greeks and Lucanians lived side by side. Frescos painted in the Greek style and depicting the favorite Lucanian pastime of horse riding were placed in tombs—an Etruscan practice—showing that Magna Graecia blended many different cultural traditions.

The Great Colony of Syracuse

The Greeks established many colonies on Sicily, particularly along the island's eastern and southern coast. One of these colonies was Syracuse, and it was destined to become master of Sicily. It was located on one of the most important waterways in the Mediterranean and had plentiful spring water. Greeks from Corinth founded Syracuse in the 730s BC. The colonists first settled on the small island that divided the bay into two natural harbors and called it Ortygia.

The first recorded great ruler of Syracuse was Gelon, who invaded the city in 485 BC. He brought the city to new heights and added two suburbs: Tyche and Neapolis. Syracuse expanded so much that the spring could no longer meet the needs of the urban population, and Gelon built the Galermi Aqueduct to channel water from the mountains to the city. One of the terminal points for the aqueduct is the Grotta del Ninfeo, which was used as a place for spiritual contemplation. Below it stands an enormous theater. The original structure dates to Gelon's reign, but it was enlarged and renovated in



The Galermi Aqueduct

the 3rd century BC. With 67 rows of seating, it is one of the largest theaters of the ancient Greek world. Gelon and other city leaders encouraged Syracuse's development as a major center for Greek culture.

The construction of the new structures required lots of stone, which was quarried in Syracuse from what the Greeks called *latomiai*—quarries that doubled as prisons where slaves, prisoners of war, and criminals could be put to work cutting stone. By the end of Gelon's reign, Syracuse was encircled by new walls enclosing 300 acres. The colony's area of control extended far beyond the walls, as it now had colonies of its own around the southeast corner of Sicily. At its height, Syracuse established new colonies along the Adriatic coast, thereby expanding its influence.

The Decline of Magna Graecia

In the 3rd century BC, Magna Graecia faced severe challenges. Carthage was expanding, and Rome had consolidated its hold over most of the southern Italic peoples. Recognizing the growing threat, Syracuse signed alliances with former Greek rivals. Taras, facing Roman invasion, called upon Epirus's King Pyrrhus to help defend the Greek peoples of Italy. In 280 BC, Pyrrhus arrived with a substantial fighting force and won a string of battles.

In 278 BC, Pyrrhus received a request for help from Syracuse, which faced invasion by the Carthaginians. He successfully lifted the Carthaginian siege of the city and was proclaimed king of Sicily. Many cities on the island defected to his side, but when his siege of Lilybaeum—one of the last Carthaginian strongholds—stalled, he pressed the Greeks into service with such zeal that they revolted. By 276 BC, he was forced to abandon the increasingly hostile island and return to Italy. By then, the Romans had captured much of Magna Graecia. Pyrrhus attempted to join the Greeks one more time, but his forces were defeated at Beneventum in 275 BC. Three years later, Taras was conquered by Rome and became Tarentum, and much of its gold and art was taken to Rome. Poseidonia was also captured and became Paestum.

Syracuse's new tyrant, Hiero II, chose to publicly ally with the rising power of Rome during the First Punic War between Rome and Carthage. This alliance allowed Syracuse to survive as an independent kingdom, and a new era of stability and prosperity began. Hiero enlarged the city's theater and built a massive public altar, the remains of which are still visible today. He hired the famous inventor Archimedes to improve the city's defense system. The allegedly largest ship of antiquity—capable of holding 1,600 tons—was built during his reign and gifted to Ptolemy II of Egypt.



Syracuse's theather and massive public altar which are still visible today

In 215 BC, Hiero was succeeded by Hieronymous, whose rule proved disastrous for the city. The Carthaginian general Hannibal had won the Battle of Cannae the previous year, and Hieronymous chose to switch sides when Hannibal promised the whole of Sicily to Syracuse in the event of victory over Rome. The Romans responded in force, and Syracuse fell in 212 BC.

The event marked the end of Magna Graecia, but the Greek culture endured across the region and greatly influenced Roman culture. The region remained one of the great areas of cultural fusion in Europe. Only echoes of the great Greek colonies can be seen today, but their impact on the region was profound and enduring.

5

REPUBLICAN ROME: RISE OF A NAVAL POWER

In 259 BC, crowds packed the Forum Holitorium in Rome to witness the first-ever naval triumph awarded to the city's great admiral Gaius Duilius. A victory column was erected and decorated with the prows of Carthaginian ships that had been defeated at the Battle of Mylae the previous year. The column was a tangible monument to Rome's newfound naval power. As a reward for his victory, Duilius was allowed to build a temple in the Forum Holitorium—the Temple of Janus. The next two lectures will explore how landlocked Rome linked itself with the Mediterranean and ultimately came to dominate it.

The City of Rome

The location of Rome had all the characteristics necessary for a bright future. The terrain was rich in natural springs, and the hills—the result of volcanic eruptions half a million years ago—secured the city's control over Tiber Island, which was used for docking by traveling ships and for crossing the river via ferry. It was Rome's oldest emporium and its first river port. Nearby, the city built its main river harbor and its first bridge, the Pons Sublicius.

The waterfront housed much of the city's infrastructure. Next to the river port and the bridge were several major markets—including the Forum Boarium, the cattle and meat market for the city. Here stood a temple dedicated to Portunus, who was the god of keys, doors, livestock, and ports. The temple's late Republican version still stands there today. Next to it is the sacred area of Sant'Omobono—the sanctuary of Mater Matuta and Fortuna—dating to the 7th century BC. Material remains of Greek and Etruscan dedications show that this part of the city was frequented by many peoples from well beyond its borders. The Vicus Iugarius connected the port area to the Forum Romanum,



Temple dedicated to Portunus

the political heart of the city. Another thoroughfare, the Cloaca Maxima, was the city's main storm drain and sewer. The naval shipyard was located along the banks of the river and consisted of many ship sheds.

To become a major Mediterranean player, Rome needed to find a better link than the Tiber to connect to the sea. According to tradition, Ancus Marcius—Roman king from around 640 BC to 616 BC—conquered the coastline closest to the city and founded a port town known as Ostia Antica, about 15 miles from Rome. As Ostia's earliest ruins only date to the 4th century BC, this claim of pre-Republican origin cannot be verified. If it had existed in this earlier period, the town's initial utility would have been salt panning rather than naval activities because salt was one of the most important early commodities for Rome, essential for the preservation of food.

During the Roman monarchy, Rome's physical form reflected its mindset as a land-based power. Servius Tullius, who reigned from 578 BC to 535 BC, is believed to have constructed the Servian Wall—although archaeological evidence suggests it was built later, in the Republican era. The wall blocked almost all access to the Tiber River. Far fewer gates faced the river or headed toward the sea than faced routes to the north and west, possibly indicating where Rome's attention was focused. Even after the expulsion of the Etruscan kings—traditionally dated to 509 BC—and the proclamation of a Roman Republic, the Etruscans still dominated much of Italy and the seas around it.

The Etruscans

Like the Phoenicians, the Etruscans were not a cohesive, centralized civilization but a collection of city-states that shared a linguistic and cultural heritage. Their city-states formed various leagues and alliances to promote Etruscan power and interests. The Etruscans had access to valuable minerals, which made them desirable trading partners. By the 6th century BC, they were exporting large quantities of grain, pine nuts, olive oil, and wine. Their craftsmen were particularly known for their ironwork, bronze craftwork, and distinctive black bucchero pottery—examples of which have been unearthed as far away as Delphi, Carthage, and Cyprus.

There are few above-ground remains of the Etruscan city-states, but some unearthed artifacts speak to the sophistication and prosperity of the Etruscans. Some examples of Etruscan civilization have been found at the site of the main necropolis for Cisra, including the famous Sarcophagus of the Spouses. Fired in terracotta, the tomb showcases not just the artistry of its creator but also presumably accurate renderings of Etruscan hairstyles and fashions. At the same site, the Tomb of the Reliefs contains many stucco reliefs of various objects from everyday Etruscan life. A nearby tomb was found full of grave goods and jewelry made of gold, silver, bronze, and copper.



Tomb of the Reliefs

Several motifs on the metalwork and pottery found at Cisra reveal artistic influences from the eastern Mediterranean. That connection was verified by the discovery of the Pyrgi Tablets, which bear the same inscription—a dedication to the Phoenician god Astarte—in both Phoenician and Etruscan script. The tablets date to around 500 BC, the period in which Rome successfully deposed its Etruscan rulers. Some scholars believe that the tablets are evidence that the Etruscans were military allies of Carthage. While no documentary proof exists, such an alliance may have been in place

because, around the time of Rome's rebellion, the Etruscans were also facing stiff competition from the Greeks—particularly the Greek colonies of Magna Graecia, which had become a major naval and trading power.

The Etruscans compensated for their declining success at sea with trade routes on land into western and central Europe but faced a major setback in a naval battle against Syracuse at Cumae. Their defeat was the beginning of the end of their hegemony along the coast. Rome took advantage of the Etruscan decline to expand its influence beyond the city. By the end of the 4th century BC, Rome was the rising power.

Rome's Naval Power

Rome took its initial steps into the Mediterranean with its first naval battle against several neighboring Italic peoples in 338 BC. However, its focus was on the peninsula, which involved the army rather than the navy. The Roman navy is thought to have been established in 311 BC, mainly for the purpose of combatting pirates. After the Samnite Wars and Pyrrhic Wars—during which Rome captured major coastal cities—the emerging empire had a chain of connected harbors that could serve for both war and commerce, and Rome began to take the concept of a navy seriously.

The turning point in Rome's history as a naval power came in the First Punic War, which began in 264 BC and was almost entirely fought at sea. Despite their lack of experience in naval warfare, the Romans were victorious at Mylae in 260 BC. Four years later, they reinforced their dominance at the Battle of Cape Ecnomus, the largest recorded naval battle of antiquity. The Romans sunk or captured three times as many ships as Carthage did, and the Carthaginians withdrew, confirming that Rome was now a naval power to be reckoned with.

In 241 BC, the First Punic War concluded with a sea battle at the Aegates Islands off the coast of Drepana. Carthage lost many of its most lucrative areas to Rome, including Sicily. In the Second and Third Punic Wars, Rome annexed large swaths of Iberia, North Africa, Corsica, and Sardinia.

Each conquest brought access to more taxes, slaves, spoils of war, and commercial enterprises. A massive wave of treasures, goods, and people flooded into Rome, and this was soon reflected in the city's architecture.

New Structures

Rome's infrastructure was enhanced with additional aqueducts, an expanded emporium, and paved roads in the city. Structures reflecting the city's increased connection to the waterways and seas appeared. The construction of the Pons Aemilius—the first stone bridge across the Tiber, connecting the Forum Boarium to the western bank of the river—began in 179 BC. Near it, the Porticus of Metellus appeared a few decades later, creating colonnaded walks around several of the temples of the area and the Circus Flaminius—one of the earlier racetracks built in the city. The colonnaded area was home to the first temple constructed with imported marble—the Temple of Jupiter Stator. Built by the middle of the 2nd century BC, it showcased not just Greek marble but also the Greek artisans who had come to Rome.



Illustration of Forum Boarium

Further down the river, the Porticus Aemilia—dating to 174 BC—was another reflection of Rome's growing interaction with the water. This portico covered around 270,000 square feet and was one of the largest commercial structures of the Republican era. It functioned not only as a gateway to the Tiber River but also as a major storehouse and distribution center for all the goods coming in and out of the city, especially grain.

The marketplace received several new structures, most notably the Basilica Fulvia and the Basilica Sempronia. Older temples and spaces in the forum were renovated—including the Temple of Castor and Pollux, where the official weights and measures used by the city's markets were regulated. New specialized markets for certain products developed, including the Forum Piscarium—the city's main fish market.

Surprisingly, Republican Rome's major harbor was not in Ostia but in Puteoli, a town 150 miles away on the north side of the Bay of Naples. All the grain imports—essential to feeding the Roman population—were brought there from Sardinia, Sicily, and eventually Alexandria. By 125 BC, Puteoli was the most important city in the Mediterranean. Despite its unsuitable location, the town became wealthy, serving as the middleman between Rome and its colonies.

6

IMPERIAL ROME AND OSTIA ANTICA

By the dawn of the Imperial era, Rome was dependent on its connection with the Mediterranean for its very subsistence. It drew in food and products from around the mare nostrum through a sprawling network of roads and harbors. However, the final stretch to Rome was hampered by the crowded ports, roads, and rivers around the city. This second lecture on Rome examines the city's transformation during the Imperial era and the logistical challenge of feeding the growing city. You'll see some of the grand projects the early emperors embarked on to strengthen Rome's connection to and domination of the sea, in addition to touring the Imperial-era port of Ostia Antica.

Rome Rules the Mediterranean

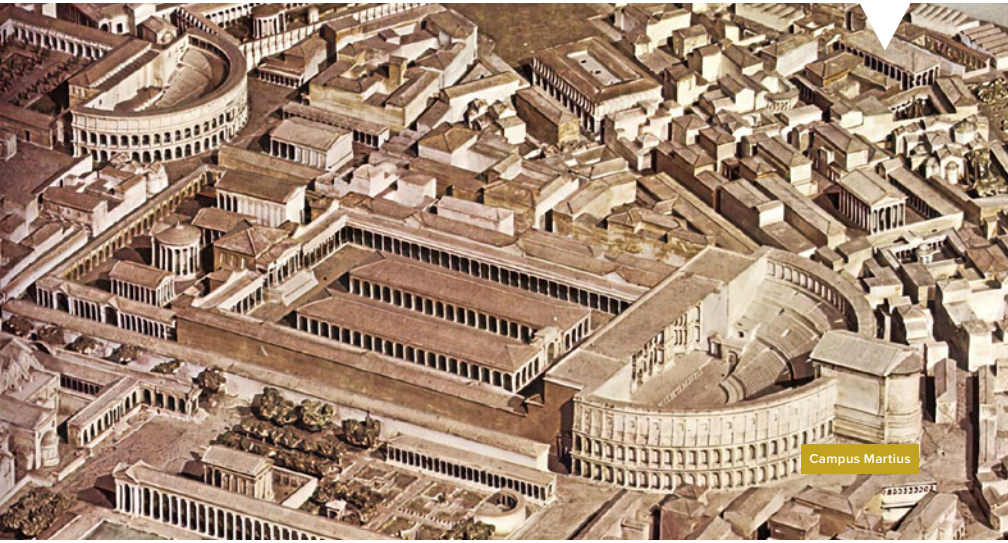
Octavian, Rome's first emperor, built the Temple of Actian Apollo to celebrate having won the power struggle that took place after Caesar's death. The temple was surrounded by grand porticoes, a Greek and Latin library, and a hall for the Senate. It was a symbol of Rome's better nature—a place of culture, learning, and peace.

The war had brought into focus just how dependent Rome had become on its maritime connections. During the succession struggle, Sextus Pompey—son of Pompey the Great—had used his navy to block Rome's ports, threatening the food supply to the capital and the stability of Italia. The Roman population was utterly reliant on grain imports from around the Mediterranean, particularly Egypt and North Africa. The seriousness of the situation inspired a daring engineering project—the Portus Iulius.

Not far from Puteoli, a narrow entrance led to a brackish lake called Lacus Lucrinus. Next to it was the isolated Lake Avernus. Agrippa—Octavian's right-hand man—created the Portus Iulius by joining the two lakes with a new canal, creating a double harbor. To allow the navy to train in isolation and to protect the harbor against potential enemy attacks, he built a tunnel from the lake to the city of Cumae for troop movement. The port was sheltered by a long sea wall on the sandy edge of Lake Lucrinus. A channel in the wall allowed ships to enter the basin, while road traffic could enter via a wooden bridge.

The construction and training of the new fleet at Portus Iulius remained concealed from Sextus's navy. When it was fully outfitted, Agrippa's fleet left its secret base and defeated Sextus at the Battle of Naulochus off the north coast of Sicily. The defeat of Antony and Cleopatra at the Battle of Actium gave the Romans the opportunity to take control of Egypt—particularly the vital grain port of Alexandria—thereby securing Rome's food supply. Octavian, soon to be Augustus, was now the undisputed master of the Mediterranean and rebuilt the capital to reflect it.

The Mediterranean empire brought significant wealth, which was used to transform Rome. One of the centers of this transformation was the Campus Martius, which had lost its relevance when military operations were moved



away from the city. Around 500 acres in size, this "Field of Mars" lay between the Tiber River and the city of Rome. In 55 BC, the Theatre of Pompey was erected on the grounds. Augustus renovated the theater and had Agrippa drain the swampy land and create a landscape of new parklands, pools, and public amenities. A massive bathing complex called the Baths of Agrippa was the first of its kind in the city. Augustus also completed the grand theater of Marcellus, for which land had been cleared and construction had been planned by Julius Caesar. Agrippa transformed the Campus Martius with the construction of the Pantheon. Beyond the Campus Martius, Augustus completed the restructuring of the Forum Romanum and—adjacent to the forum—Caesar's secondary annex, the Forum Julium, and added the Forum Augustum.

Rome's Food Poverty Problem

Rome became a consumer city, with up to 1 million people living within its boundaries. Massive amounts of food had to be available for the masses. Food was not just for sustenance; it also played a major role in many religious

and cultural practices, and feasting was a prominent part of many annual celebrations. Saturnalia, one of the biggest festivals of the year, involved huge public banquets known as *convivium publicum*. Many public offices in Rome were charged with procuring and distributing food to Rome's citizens, but even with significant government attention to the problem, many food shortages occurred.

The food supply to the capital became so fraught that the Roman government began to distribute grain directly to the city's poorer classes. Initially intended as emergency measures during times of shortage, the grain assistance program eventually became permanent during the Imperial period. The purpose of the government-run grain distribution program was to provide the urban poor with not only food but also opportunity in the urban environment. The urbanization of Rome had made maintaining family land difficult. Many subsistence farming families became indebted and were forced to sell their lands. Large landholders bought up these small farms and converted their production to more profitable trade goods, such as wine, which resulted in less food being grown and a growing class of landless urban poor in the city. Despite several reforms, the poor remained vulnerable, and Roman politicians began to fear widespread unrest.

The Gracchi brothers, prominent politicians in the late Republic, attempted to address this possible threat by subsidizing the price of grain for male citizens who were considered under the Roman equivalent of the poverty line. Initially, about 40,000 men over the age of 14 were eligible to buy around 33 pounds of grain at below-market prices. Later, the grain allotment was free to eligible citizens. The office of the *praefectus annonae* was established to ensure an adequate supply of grain to sustain the policy, and officials were responsible for overseeing the efforts to distribute all this grain.

A New Harbor

During the annual sailing season, between 2,000 and 3,000 shipments traveled up the Tiber River toward Rome. At the harbor, each grain sack and amphora had to be off-loaded individually. The entire process of getting supplies to the city was highly inefficient. Augustus attempted to improve the

situation by dredging and widening the Tiber. He enhanced the city's emporia and the river docks, adding more wharves and warehouses to speed up the loading and unloading of goods. However, as there was no natural harbor system downriver from Rome, the process of getting the goods to the city remained slow and expensive. Large ships were unable to dock at Ostia—the main port town where the Tiber meets the sea—and had to be off-loaded into smaller ships to come to shore.

Julius Caesar was credited with planning a new, artificial harbor off the coast by Ostia. Finally, Claudius I decided to act, creating one of the largest engineering projects of the Roman Empire. The new artificial harbor was called Portus. It was formed by building two massive breakwaters to create a sheltered harbor three-quarters of a mile in diameter—big enough to berth the massive fleet of grain ships servicing Rome. The southern mole sheltered the mouth of the Tiber River from strong winds and dangerous tidal forces and mitigated the risk of flooding.

To the immediate south of Portus, a new canal connecting the sea to the Tiber, bypassing the town of Ostia. Complementing the new harbor was a new road to Rome. The entire project took many years to build, and it was only under Nero that the first incarnation was completed. Under Trajan, a secondary inner harbor was created. Vast warehouses, marketplaces, and dockyards surrounded the new harbor, as well as temples and other amenities. This harbor still exists today.

Ostia Antica

While Ostia could now be bypassed, the town continued to thrive in the early Imperial era. The ruins show that it was a bustling port town in the time of the early emperors. Twenty-six separate bath complexes have been found. The Baths of Neptune span more than an acre and date to the reign of Hadrian. They take their name from the massive mosaic that shows Neptune, god of the sea, riding a chariot drawn by hippocampi and surrounded by various sea creatures. Many bath complexes are surrounded by the remains of what appear to be social places, such as bars, shops, restaurants, and a theater complex.



The Baths of Neptune

The marketplaces and other public areas had many shops and bars. One extremely well-preserved and restored example is a wine bar. This ruin—known as the House of the Wine Bar—dates to late in the empire and shows various counters, areas for food preparation and storage, and even a fresco of food that might have been served. There is a large open area where people could eat, drink, and socialize. The main counter faces a broad archway to the street and may have served as a takeout counter.

The commercial heart of Ostia, known as the Forum of Corporations, was an important mercantile hub. Merchants gathered in this open-air market to sell anything from grain and shipping services to elephants and giraffes. Rebuilt in the 2nd century AD, the Forum of Corporations was representative of the many diverse cultures that made up the Roman world. Companies from

around the empire could conduct business in the 60 rooms that surrounded the open-air plaza. The temple in the middle of the forum was dedicated to Annona Augusta, the god of imperial supplies.

The floor of the Forum of Corporations contains mosaics that represent the places and products that were being sold. This feature indicates that Ostia—and, by extension, Rome—was at the heart of a large Mediterranean empire. One of the mosaics contains the words *codicari de suo*—a derivation from a Latin term meaning "made of tree trunks." The term was used for the Tiber boats that were responsible for ferrying the goods from Ostia or Portus to Rome, 19 miles upriver. Boats of various sizes were either rowed or hauled upriver by slaves and oxen along the riverbanks.

Rome overcame many obstacles to become the center of the Mediterranean world. Its efforts and engineering feats made it possible to stay connected to the sea. For centuries, Imperial Rome was the undisputed greatest city of the Mediterranean world.

7

SACRED CITIES: DELPHI, DELOS, AND OLYMPIA

The Greek city-states expanded their wealth and influence through trade and colonization, spreading Greek culture to almost every corner of the Mediterranean. In many areas, Greek culture and language shaped—and in some cases supplanted—their local equivalents. This Hellenization took place over centuries and reached its greatest extent after the conquests of Alexander the Great. Koine Greek became the standard language of trade and scholarship; Greek philosophy, music, architecture, and art dominated the Mediterranean; Greek gods were adopted into the pantheons of many cultures and fused with local practices as far away as India and Afghanistan; and Greek temples and sanctuaries became holy sites of international significance, drawing in pilgrims and donations from far and wide. This lecture will explore three such sites: Delphi, Delos, and Olympia.

Delphi's Oracle

According to ancient legends, Zeus released two eagles—one to the east and one to the west—in hopes of finding the home of his grandmother, the earth goddess Gaia. Zeus marked the spot where the eagles crossed paths in the sky above Delphi with a stone, the Omphalos. Delphi lies at the foot of Mount Parnassus, one of the most sacred mountains in Greece. Archeological finds at the site show an increase in valuable artifacts dating to the 8th century BC, suggesting that pilgrims were bringing offerings to the sanctuaries there.



Illustration of Delphi

The core of Delphi was the sacred precinct, whose ruins date to around the 6th century BC. The main temple was built of limestone and marble, and the walls were covered in reliefs depicting the heroic deeds of Apollo. The temple entrance was guarded by the Sphinx of Naxos—a marble statue with the head of a woman, the wings of an eagle, and the body of a lion. The temple's interior had limestone floors and intricate sculptures depicting Dionysus, Nike, and other mythical figures.

The Temple of Apollo contained a large inner sanctum where the priests and priestesses of Apollo lived. The most famous resident was the Pythian—the oracle of Apollo—who dwelt in a special restricted chamber known as the adyton. According to tradition, the oracle was a woman from Delphi who had lived a blameless life and had consecrated herself to Apollo. People from across the Greek world—from kings to commoners—traveled to Delphi to seek the oracle's wisdom. Those who were granted access would find the oracle in the inner chamber, seated on a special stool above a crack in the floor from which a gas—pneuma, or sacred breath—steadily rose. When asked a question, the oracle would go into a trance and give an answer, usually nonsensical gibberish that the priests translated into advice.

Many people seem to have found truth and clarity in the oracle. Grateful cities built treasuries along the Sacred Way leading up to the temple, where the remnants of several such repositories remain to this day. One of the largest is the Athenian Treasury, dating to around 490 BC. Tradition says the treasury was created to house the spoils of the Athenian victory over the Persians at the Battle of Marathon.

Delphi was one of more than a dozen sanctuary complexes that by the 4th century BC were competing for a share of the great revenues to be made from pilgrims and offerings. Some were specialized to serve specific niches of the pilgrimage market. Sanctuaries to Artemis and Hera were frequented by women seeking to get pregnant, while sanctuaries to Asclepius were for the sick. It appears that some oracles specialized in certain fields, such as agriculture or communication with the deceased. Still, the major sanctuaries to Zeus and Apollo were the most visited.

The Panhellenic Games

Sport and religion were intertwined elements of Greek culture. Every year, one of the four Panhellenic games—the Olympic, Nemean, Isthmian, and Pythian Games—drew together athletes from across the Greek world to compete in honor of the gods. Thus, every year, there was a major competition for athletes to compete in.

The Pythian Games took place in the stadium at Delphi, located at the top of the hill overlooking the town. Measuring almost 600 feet long, the stadium could hold about 6,500 spectators. It was used mainly for running and jumping events, as evidenced by the starting marks and the stones on which the runners could put their feet as they readied for a match. Based on the width of the field, it is estimated that up to 20 runners could compete at a time.

The most popular events of the Pythian Games were the chariot races, held at the hippodrome. Although the original building no longer exists, a bronze statue called the Charioteer of Delphi is well preserved. It was once part of a larger piece that included a chariot, four horses, and two attendants. The statue was likely built in Athens and brought to Delphi as a votive offering to Apollo. Over time, nonsporting contests were added to the Pythian Games—including painting, singing, and tragic acting.

The Sanctuary of Delos

Delos is a small island in the center of the Cyclades, a group of islands in the Aegean. According to legend, it is where Leto gave birth to Apollo and Artemis. The island is dry and rocky, and nearly all the supplies needed to build and live on the island have to be imported.



Aerial shot of Delos showing Sacred Harbor

Delos reached the height of its religious significance with the construction of the Delian Temple of Apollo, completed around 314 BC. The complex comprised multiple temples dedicated to the Olympic pantheon and several wide-open areas for people to gather. From the Sacred Harbor, pilgrims would make their way to the complex via the Sacred Way, ornamented with long colonnades and sculptures. The Sacred Way led to the Terrace of the Lions, where five partially intact lions still stand. The lions were likely carved around 600 BC by the people of nearby Naxos, who worshiped frequently on the island.

Around the perimeter of the complex stood various halls for use by religious orders. In front of one such hall stood the Colossus of the Naxians, dating to the 7th century BC. Three of the temples in the complex were built in honor of Apollo. The largest is known as the Temple of Delians, whose sanctuary comprised the Sacred Lake, home to the sacred swans of Apollo.

The temple complex was primarily a site for worship but also served a political purpose. The Temple of Apollo played host to several meetings of the Delian League, the alliance of Greek city-states. As Delos did not have an army, it was a neutral location. With dignitaries coming from all over the empire for political meetings and pilgrims flocking to the religious sites, the island prospered.

Signs of Wealth

Several houses on Delos attest to the wealth that was accumulating by the 2nd century BC. They feature some of the best-preserved Hellenistic mosaics in the Mediterranean. Many of the mosaics bear simple geometric patterns, but some have more elaborate scenes with religious or cultural themes. The House of Dionysus contains a large floor mosaic that depicts Dionysus—the god of wine and fertility—riding a tiger.

In the House of the Dolphins, the mosaic mixes colors, shapes, and symbols to create a stunning floor piece. The home likely belonged to a rich Carthaginian merchant on the island because the mosaic includes a symbol of Tanis, identified with Carthage.

The Romans arrived on Delos in 166 BC. Seeking to displace the island of Rhodes as the dominant trade port of the Aegean, the Romans proclaimed that Delos was exempted from taxes or duties on incoming vessels. This duty-free status led Delos to become a massive port for those trying to import goods into the Roman Republic. Romans also used it as the hub of their massive slave trade, with indentured peoples from all over the frontiers of the empire, often thousands a day, flowing through the city.

With its newfound wealth and lack of defense, the city became a target for Rome's enemies. It was plundered by Mithridates of Pontus in 88 BC and by a pirate fleet in 69 BC. The second event seems to have triggered a mass exodus of traders to other ports and pilgrims to other sanctuaries.

Olympia

The earliest settlements at Olympia appeared around 1500 BC. The oldest temple on the site was dedicated to Hera, and to this day, the Olympic torch is lit in this temple before traveling around the world to the site of the Olympic Games. The Temple of Hera is in the sacred precinct. At the center of the district stood the Temple of Zeus, which was constructed in the 5th century BC and was one of the largest Doric temples in the Mediterranean. It was built of porous limestone and covered in white stucco to resemble marble. The roof was covered with more than 1,000 tiles of translucent marble, allowing sunlight to illuminate the temple.

The most famous sculptural group that remains depicts a mythical battle between humans and centaurs. At the center of the arrangement stands the young Apollo, his arm outstretched toward the human side of the battle, indicating the direction of his favor. Inside the temple stood the Statue of Zeus, which no longer exists but is depicted on ancient coins from the area. The statue was created by the sculptor Phidias in 430 BC. Archeologists have found Phidias's workshop, where the remains of sculpting materials and molds for the statue confirm the ancient accounts.

Olympia was famous for its association with the Olympic Games. A large outdoor stadium on the outskirts of the Altis hosted the running and athletics events. The stadium measured about 700 feet long and was able



Illustration of Olympia Altis

to hold almost 40,000 spectators. The track was made of hardened clay, and white blocks were used to align the runners. The palaestra was host to wrestling, boxing, and freestyle fighting competitions. The building had a sand-filled courtyard in the middle, surrounded by rooms and porticoes where the wrestlers were housed and cared for. The palaestra was part of a *gymnasion*—a training facility where athletes could practice, socialize, and prepare for their events. Athletes and important visitors stayed in the neighboring Leonidaion—equivalent to the modern Olympic village—built around 330 BC.

Olympia became the religious and entertainment capital of the Hellenic world. At its height, the city was a unifying force for much of the Mediterranean. The last recorded games were not until 393 AD, at which point the Roman Empire's official conversion to Christianity put an end to pagan celebrations. However, the Olympic Games were reinaugurated in AD 1896—a reminder of the enduring legacy of these sacred cities of the ancient world in modern times.

8

ASIA MINOR: MILETUS AND PERGAMON

Long before the Turks, Byzantines, Romans, Persians, and even the Greeks came to dominate the region known as Turkey, Anatolia was home to a diverse group of Indo-European peoples that thrived for millennia. The last Anatolian dialect—a linguistic family that once included dozens of languages—became extinct around 1,500 years ago. The Greco-Anatolians laid the foundations for some of the most cultured cities of the ancient Mediterranean and prospered as traders and seafarers in the Aegean. By the 4th century BC, Asia Minor was an integral part of the Greek world and would remain so for more than a millennium until the fall of the Byzantine Empire. The next two lectures will explore the Greco-Anatolian cities of western Asia Minor. In this lecture, you will discover how the region's cultural synthesis arose and tour some of its cities and kingdoms.

Ancient Asia Minor

Anatolia has a long history of human occupation and settlement. The oldest temple structure ever found—dating to around 9000 BC—was unearthed at Göbekli Tepe in southeastern Anatolia. The Hittites conquered and dominated most of Anatolia from the 2nd millennium BC. Hittite art and ruins suggest trade connections and cultural interchange with ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, the Minoans, and the Phoenicians.



Oldest temple at Gobekli Tepe

Hittite is one of the few Anatolian languages that can be understood because it was recorded on clay tablets in a cuneiform script. Fragments of royal correspondence have allowed decipherment, providing one of the earliest windows into the rise of Greek culture in Anatolia. In a letter dating to the

mid-13th century BC, the Hittite ruler specifically mentions Ahhiyawā and states that several coastal settlements on the west coast—including Miletus and Troy—are within their realm. Scholars are not certain who Ahhiyawā refers to, but the prevailing consensus is they are the Mycenean Greeks—indicating that Greek culture and influence was spreading across the Aegean long before the Greek city-states emerged.

While Minoan traders from Crete came to the region as early as 1900 BC, Anatolian people made up at least part of the population and were known as the Carians. Few inscriptions in the Carian language remain, but none from after the 3rd century BC, suggesting the language went extinct around then. However, there was no mass slaughter or migration of the Carians; rather, the Carians intermarried extensively with Ionian Greeks, who came to the region in the 10th century BC and quickly assimilated into mainstream Greek culture.

Miletus

Some of the best evidence of this assimilation is found at religious sites. At Miletus, a large religious processional route—the Sacred Way—connected the city to a sacred temple district the Carian-Greeks built at Didyma, where the Temple to Apollo dates to the 6th century BC. The temple's two remaining full columns have Ionic capitals, a design known to have been used first in this region. Another design motif at the site is called the meander or Greek key pattern, although it is likely Carian-Greek in origin. It may have been inspired by the Meander River or by the Minoan labyrinth motif, as Miletus had extensive interactions with the Minoans in its early history.

Probably the most famous person to come from Miletus is the philosopher known as Thales. Born around 625 BC, Thales used science, math, and reasoning rather than mythology to explain the world. Ancient sources cite him as the first to try and use observations of nature to predict the weather and to use math and geometry to calculate the height and distance of objects far away. Plato later identified Thales as the first of the seven sages who



Sacred Way

established the foundations of Greek civilization and knowledge. Thales profoundly influenced Greek thought, and his many students went on to promote his ideas.

Miletus sat on a peninsula, its large harbor forming an inlet that supported much commercial traffic and provided a springboard for the city into the Aegean and beyond. As early as the 8th century BC, Carian-Greek colonies were being established as far away as the Black Sea. Miletus was famous for its furniture, which was exported all over the Greek world and was likely used to furnish the Parthenon. Other major industries were wine, olive oil, religious tourism, and education.

By the 6th century BC, there were many influential Greek cities in Asia Minor, including Ephesus, Smyrna, and Cnidus. These coastal cities were the result of generations of Greek settlers intermarrying with the local Anatolian peoples. Their location made them vulnerable to invasion, and they formed various defensive leagues to avoid foreign domination.

The Mausoleum

The inland empire of Lydia had a complex relationship with the coastal cities, alternately attempting to conquer them and striking trade deals and alliances with them. The Lydian monarchs are significant in Mediterranean history for being the first to introduce coinage in the 7th century BC. King Croesus of Lydia introduced the first true gold coins with standardized purity in the 6th century BC. Stamped with the royal sign, these coins became the gold standard. Traders all over the Mediterranean and Near East accepted these coins as a trustworthy currency with an intrinsic metal value.

Soon after the introduction of these coins, the Achaemenid Persians conquered Lydia, Miletus, and the Greek cities of Asia Minor. The cities staged several revolts against Persian rule, and the region endured conflict for several centuries. One of the most famous Carian-Greek monuments dates to this period: the mausoleum at Halicarnassus. It was built for Mausolus, a Carian who served as the region's governor. He came from a family of local Carian rulers who had chosen not to revolt against the Persians and had been rewarded with a fair degree of autonomy to rule over ancient Caria.

Mausolus moved his capital to Halicarnassus, a moderately sized port town with a mixed population of Carians and Greeks. His workmen deepened the city's harbor and used the dragged sand to make breakwaters in front of the channel. On land, they paved streets and squares and built houses for ordinary citizens. On one side of the harbor, they built a fortified palace positioned to have a clear view of the sea. Some elements from that period—including the grand theater with waterfront views—indicate that despite being indigenously Carian and still speaking the Carian language, Greek and Carian culture had fused by this point.

The mausoleum was erected on a hill overlooking the city. The structure sat in an enclosed courtyard, with the tomb placed on a stone platform in the center. A stairway flanked by stone lions led to the top of the platform, which bore along its outer walls many statues of gods and goddesses. At each corner, stone warriors mounted on horseback guarded the tomb. There were many sculpted panels and friezes—including a large section showing the mythical battle between the Greeks and the Amazons, sections of which were excavated from the site. On top of the structure stood a quadriga—four horses

pulling a royal chariot—and the riders were Mausolus and Artemisia. The mausoleum was eventually destroyed by a series of earthquakes, but it lasted until well into the Middle Ages.

The Ancient City of Pergamon

The coming of Alexander the Great and the fall of the Persians not long after Mausolus's death led to significant repositioning in Greek Asia Minor, particularly in the power vacuum that opened after Alexander's death. In this period, the city of Pergamon rose to glory. The city's location on a massif on the Caicus plain allowed for its protection and defense, and the surrounding river valleys provided farmland and natural resources. Pergamon was an inland city connected to the sea by its satellite port town Elaea.



Illustration of Pergamon

Lysimachus took control of the region in 301 BC. His successor—Philetaerus—founded the Attalid dynasty, which ruled the kingdom of Pergamon until 133 BC. The kingdom flourished; its loyalty to Rome was rewarded with swaths of land in western Anatolia. Pergamon's economy thrived with these added sources of agricultural products and silver mines. The Pergamenes produced textiles and excelled in manufacturing parchment, dominating the parchment trade. Over the next several centuries, parchment slowly replaced papyrus, particularly for books or important records that needed to be preserved.

With its growing prosperity, the Attalid kings sought to turn Pergamon into a center of Greek culture and sponsored many works of art and architecture in the city. They established the Library of Pergamon in the 2nd century BC. The building was part of a large temple complex dedicated to Athena. A sizeable and mostly intact statue of Athena was recovered from the site, described by ancient sources as the decorative centerpiece against the highest wall of the library's reading room. The ruins of the main gateway to the Temple of Athena were also recovered and reconstructed in the Pergamon



Illustration of Pergamon Library

Museum in Berlin. Along the front of the balcony is a frieze that depicts weapons and armor from armies defeated by Pergamon and has an inscription giving thanks to Athena.

At the height of the Attalid dynasty, Pergamon's acropolis was covered with various temples and public buildings. The focal point of the acropolis was a monumental altar dedicated to Zeus and Athena. The foundations of the altar are still visible and intact, and the remains of the altar itself are in the Pergamon Museum. The frieze that was wrapped around the base of the altar has been reconstructed and exemplifies the pinnacle of Hellenistic art.

Pergamon and its kingdom flourished for several centuries and is thought to have reached a population of 200,000 at its height. Part of its success is attributed to the Attalid dynasty, which seems to have gone without a single civil war or dispute over succession. The end of the kingdom came when the last king, Attalus III, willed the entire realm to Rome.

For centuries, Miletus and Pergamon—two cities of non-Greek origin in Asia Minor—were leading centers of Greek learning, art, and culture. They exemplified Greek culture's success in accommodating and assimilating foreign peoples throughout the Mediterranean. Neither city stayed influential; a combination of natural disasters, warfare, geographical changes, economic downturns, and shifting trade routes caused both cities to go into slow but steady decline from the 3rd century AD. However, their memory lived on in the Greek world—as did their intellectual and artistic legacy.

9

EPHESUS AND THE HELLENIC GOLDEN AGE

One of the greatest eastern Mediterranean sites is Ephesus in Turkey. A city of learning and the arts, it was one of the cultural centers of the ancient Greek world. Under Rome, its prominence was enhanced when it became a provincial capital, gathering the riches of the East and serving as a central hub for trade and commerce. Today, Ephesus's harbor is entirely silted over. In this lecture, you'll examine the ancient responses to centuries of silting that narrowed and eventually blocked access to the sea and the impact this had on the city. In so doing, you'll discover how one of the great Mediterranean cities ultimately ended up being neither a city nor on the Mediterranean.

The City on the Kaystros River

The history of Ephesus is long and complicated—with the site's occupation going back to the Neolithic era. According to one legend, it was founded by Amazons who worshipped Artemis and built a sacred temple to her on the sea. Another legend tells the story of the Greek prince Androklos, who created the town on the spot where he caught a boar. Both tales center around the same location—Ayasuluk Hill—where people have been living since at least the Early Bronze Age. The hill overlooked the Kaystros River, which fed into the sea. The river deposited sediment at the mount, silting the harbors and shifting the city slowly forward onto the expanding coastline—away from what would later become the magnificent city of Ephesus.

The sacred precinct of Ephesus was on the water's edge, where the Kaystros River flowed into the sea. Flooding was a constant issue. Excavations have found that the temple platform had to be raised over time to keep it above the marsh. Pliny the Elder explained some of the ancient techniques for doing this:

> [So] that the foundations of so vast a pile might not have to rest upon a loose and shifting bed, layers of trodden charcoal were placed beneath, with fleeces covered with wool upon the top of them.

At some of the earliest layers, archaeologists discovered a rich deposit containing early electrum coins—a mix of silver and gold—dating to the 7th century BC. Many coins depict a stag—the symbol of the goddess Artemis, who was goddess of the hunt, animals, and the wild.

The Cult of Artemis

After the Lydian Empire took over Ephesus, King Croesus rebuilt the earlier shrine as a massive temple to Artemis on a newly raised platform. This first large-scale solid marble temple was constructed by an army of artisans from all over the western coast of Anatolia. Its columns had Ionic capitals and were

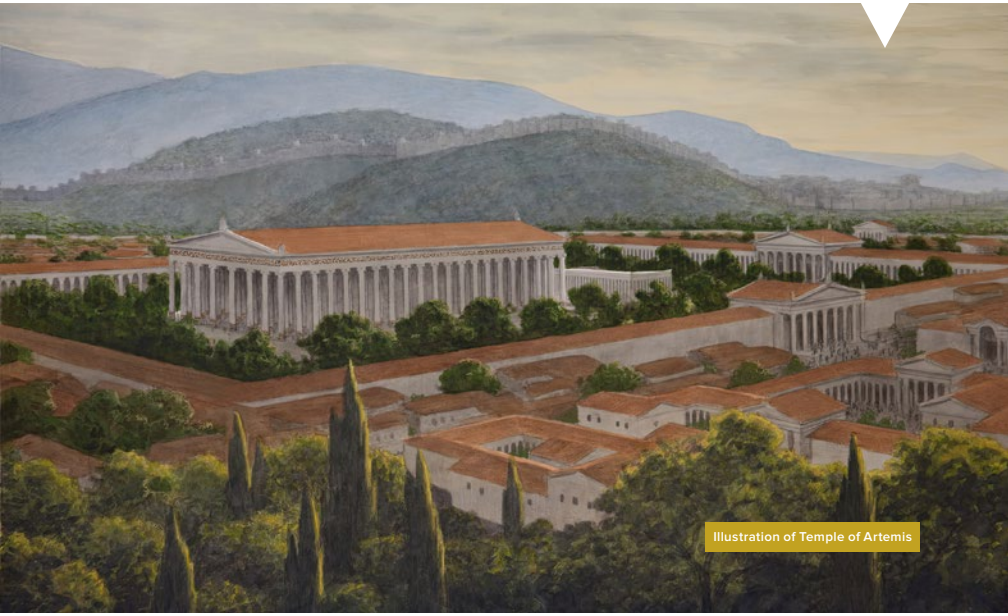


Illustration of Temple of Artemis

arranged around the perimeter in what would become the Greek peristyle. This version of the temple was burned down by a fanatic named Herostratus, who wanted to be immortalized by setting the roof beams on fire.

Ephesus raised the funds to rebuild its great temple. Pliny the Elder recorded that this third incarnation took 120 years to complete. The temple no longer exists, but ancient sources describe it as follows:

> The entire length of the temple is four hundred and twenty-five feet, and the breadth two hundred and twenty-five. The columns are one hundred and twenty-seven in number, and sixty feet in height, each of them presented by a different king. Thirty-six of these columns are carved.

More is known about the cult statue representing Artemis, the city's protectress. Since at least the Hellenistic period, the goddess has been consistently depicted with Greek and Anatolian elements, including the symbolism of Cybele, the Anatolian mother goddess whom Greek colonists

in Asia Minor adopted as one of their own gods. Pausanias—who traveled the Greek world in the 2nd century AD and recorded the artwork in sanctuaries—noted the popularity of the Ephesian Artemis. He attributed this popularity to the sanctuary's antiquity, the temple's massive scale, the goddess's fame, and Ephesus's prestige. Copies of the statue of Ephesian Artemis have been found at religious sites all over the ancient world.

The cult of Artemis became wealthy, receiving many donations and offerings. It became a large property owner and Ephesus's financial center. As the sanctuary's fame grew internationally, it competed with older Greek cultural centers such as Delphi and Olympia, and it operated as a regional bank of sorts. With the sanctuary drawing fame and fortune, Ephesus's fortune grew.

A City on the Move

The earlier city seems to have shifted west of the sanctuary toward the eastern side of Mt. Pion. Under the rule of Lysimachus, the city was moved another mile west—to the mouth of the Kaystros River, where the harbor was deeper. Parts of his city are still visible. Lysimachus surrounded it with a massive wall; thus, the city could not be moved again. The destructive shifting and sedimentation of the Kaystros River continued throughout antiquity, and the Ephesians continually dredged the harbor and maintained the city's connection to the Mediterranean. Ephesus was one of the great ports of the Aegean, thanks to its strategic location on the crossroads of major transportation routes.

Ephesus became one of the main gateways to Persia and Asia. The Eastern trade dealt in expensive luxuries such as spices, exotic timbers, perfumes, carpets, and furs. A great deal of wealth flowed through the city, and the merchants and middlemen captured a share of it. An inscription attests to the existence of 50 oil lamps that were lit at night along the main thoroughfares. Street lighting was an expensive public service few cities could afford.

The Hellenic-era city also established itself as a preeminent center of learning in the Greek world, particularly after the brutal sacking of Miletus by the Persians in the 490s BC. There is evidence that women now had more

rights and freedoms in the city, possibly due to education and prosperity or the influence of the female priesthood attached to the worship of the Ephesian Artemis.

In the 2nd century BC, Ephesus came under the domination of the region's new kingdom. Pergamon was landlocked, but it connected itself to the Mediterranean through a series of seaports, Ephesus among them. Pergamon took care of the city's infrastructure to address the harbor's silting that was already occurring, and it rebuilt the city's two marketplaces. When King Attalus III bequeathed his entire kingdom to Rome in 133 BC, Ephesus was also handed over.

Rome now had a strong foothold in the Greek east, and they named their first eastern province Asia. Augustus made Ephesus the capital of Asia in 22 BC, and the city prospered as trade grew. Merchants from across the empire and from the east came to the city's commercial agora, where the nearby Temple of Serapis was built for the benefit of Egyptian merchants. Augustus and other Roman leaders sponsored many new construction projects in the city. Most of the remaining ruins date to the first 2 centuries of Roman rule, when much of the city was built on a grand scale.

The End of Ephesus

As the Roman Empire began to wane, so did the fortunes of Ephesus. Although edicts were passed that forbade citizens from dumping waste materials from construction and various industries into the harbor, the silting got worse and became harder to reverse. In addition, the construction projects and the population's increased use of wood for fuel led to widespread deforestation and caused the hills around Ephesus to erode, and overgrazing by goats removed ground vegetation and broke up the soil. Growing amounts of sediment from different sources flowed down into the river catchment and were deposited at the mouth of the harbor at a rate that eventually overwhelmed the ability of the city's leaders to reverse it. The harbor got smaller and shallower, and traders began to move to better ports.



Ephesus today

The city rebounded for a time under the Byzantines in the 4th century, in part due to the prominence of the Church of Mary that was constructed by the harbor. Ephesus was an important early Christian center. From AD 52 to 54, the apostle Paul lived in the city and used it as a base to spread Christianity into Anatolia. The apostle John also lived in Ephesus, and Mary—the mother of Jesus—may have also lived in the city. Two major church councils convened in Ephesus in the 400s, underscoring its important early role and its historical association with scholarship and debate.

However, by the 600s, Ephesus was in terminal decline. Archeological evidence indicates that the Byzantine War with the Sassanian Persians devastated large parts of the city, as did another large earthquake. Around this time, the port became unusable, and most of the commercial activity left the city. By the late 7th century, the remaining residents were using stone from the old temples as building material for new homes, and marble sculptures were being ground down to make lime for plaster. Ephesus, once one of the greatest of all Mediterranean cities, became a landlocked ruin.

10

THE RISE AND FALL OF CARTHAGE

The sprawling seaside city of Carthage was once one of the greatest cities of the ancient world. Its harbor was filled with ships from all over the Mediterranean, many laden with the wealth of Carthage's colonies in Sicily, Sardinia, Corsica, and Iberia. The city's skyline was dominated by the citadel of Byrsa, which overlooked the iconic double harbor. For many centuries, the two great powers of the western Mediterranean were Carthage and Rome. Unlike Rome, Carthage was on the coast and boasted a great maritime legacy. The Carthaginians dominated the trade routes of the western Mediterranean and built a network of colonies, client states, and allies across much of North Africa. Rome eventually destroyed Carthage, but it quickly rose again and was an important city until the Middle Ages. This lecture will help you explore ancient Carthage—from its foundation to its fall.

The New City

Carthage was founded by Phoenician colonists from the city of Tyre. Based on archaeological evidence, the city may have been settled as early as the 12th century BC. The Tyrians called their North African colony Qart Hadasht, which means "new city." Ancient sources tell the story of the princess Elissa—later known as Dido—who fled Tyre with a group of followers after her evil brother Pygmalion took the throne and had her husband murdered. They first landed on Cyprus but eventually ended up on the northern coast of Africa. She met with the chief of a local Numidian tribe, who agreed to provide refuge but allowed the group only as much land as could be covered by an ox hide. As the legend goes, Dido cut the hide into very thin strips, enough to cover a nearby hill. This hill became Byrsa, which in Greek means "ox hide." The Carthaginians agreed to pay a yearly tribute for permission to live there.

The story has some kernels of truth. The earliest settlement at Carthage was on Byrsa Hill. The acropolis was built around an ancient temple dedicated to Eshmun, the Punic god of healing. Furthermore, until the 5th century, the



Illustration of Byrsa Hill harbor

Tyrian settlers did make annual payments to the Numidian tribes. The new colony had a population of competent merchants and sailors, and there was a mixture of natural resources to draw on. The area around Carthage and the nearby Cape Bon Peninsula had fertile soil and good rainfall. To the north of the city was the Medjerda River, which originates in the Atlas Mountains and flows across northern Algeria and Tunisia. This river is still the most important in Tunisia, supplying water and irrigation to cities and farms.

While few remains from the Punic era exist, there is evidence that a large population survived and thrived in the area. Punic coins found in the city often depict horses. This region became famous for the Barb horse, which is well known for its hardiness and stamina. The Barb is the ancestor of many breeds of racehorses today, and the region's Numidian tribes produced some of the best light cavalry in the ancient world. The tribes were recruited by Punic mercenary armies and struck terror into the hearts of Roman legionnaires for generations.

Carthage's immediate neighbors included the Punic colonies of Hippou Acra, Hadrumetum, and Thapsus. Surrounding them were various local North African peoples—including Berbers, Numidians, and Mauri. Over time, the Punic colonies intermingled and intermarried with the local peoples. The Carthaginians successfully integrated the many peoples of their empire. Roman and Greek authors noted that the Carthaginian armies were diverse, not just the soldiers but also the officers. During the Second Punic War, Hannibal showcased the successful intercultural fusion of Carthage when his armies—made up of Punic, Libyphoenician, Numidian, Greek, Iberian, Celtic, and other soldiers—bested the relatively homogenous Roman legions for a time.

Establishing Trade

At the time it was established, Carthage merely had a promising foothold in Africa. The Punic settlements around the city provided a support network, but the Carthaginians still had to strive to succeed in a hostile world to raise at least enough money to pay the tributes demanded by the surrounding local

tribes and the mother city of Tyre. The Carthaginians used their sailing and trade skills and the local resources, tapping into established Phoenician trade routes and knowledge of important products.

Byrsa Hill overlooked a shallow double lagoon. Carthage developed and expanded the lagoon, constructing a protected inner harbor that was connected to the sea through a broad channel that could double as the outer harbor. The inner harbor was for military and official use, while the outer harbor was for merchant traffic. From this harbor, the city established a thalassocracy that ruled over vast areas of the Mediterranean. Initially, the expansion of the realm was slow and careful. The Phoenician traders sought out routes and raw materials in areas that had not already been exploited by the Greeks to avoid conflict over territory. They went to Tunisia, Morocco, Spain, Sardinia, and Corsica, and they established colonies in western Sicily that became valuable and prosperous.

While the Carthaginians were finding new trade opportunities, Tyre was in decline. The Neo-Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar II laid siege to the city for more than a decade from 586 BC. The prolonged blockade of its ports caused a collapse in trade from which Tyre never recovered. Carthage became the leading city for the Phoenician colonies in the west, although Punic cities maintained a high degree of autonomy from—and even rivalry with—Carthage.

Agriculture and Industry

Carthage created a wide network of alliances, colonies, subjects, and client states and established many new farming settlements. The Carthaginians were not only merchants but also leaders in agriculture. One of the most important agricultural texts of the ancient world was written by the Carthaginian author Mago. After the Romans conquered Carthage in the Third Punic War, the Roman Senate specifically ordered Mago's work to be translated into Latin, and the text became a key source for later important writers on the subject.

Megara—the rural district around Carthage—was a green belt, with irrigated gardens and large agricultural estates. Depictions of grand plantations on the outskirts of Carthage show the agricultural landscape in ancient times.

The ruins of Kerkouane indicate the presence of a sizable, prosperous regional city with a grid-like street plan and orderly arrangement of houses around squares and open spaces. The many murex shells in the ruins are a sign that the town was involved in the dye trade, and there is evidence of salt production and commercial fishing. Foundations of several pottery kilns have also been found, and artifacts and settlement patterns suggest that Kerkouane was the market and service town for a wider network of farms and agricultural industries. Within the city, many fine goods were produced for export—including embroidered textiles, furniture, and everyday metal objects. One of the few preserved districts from the Punic era is on Byrsa Hill, where excavations have revealed a series of smiths and metal workshops.



Ruins of Kerkouane

By the 3rd century BC, Carthage's diverse affiliations included most of what is now Tunisia, long stretches of the coastline to Morocco and as far as Cyrenaica, western Sicily, Corsica, Sardinia, and holdings on the Balearic Islands and southern Spanish coast. At its peak, the empire reached an

estimated 3 to 4 million people. The Carthaginian trade fleet was one of the largest in the Mediterranean and controlled much of the transportation of goods.

The Fall of Punic Carthage

As the empire reached its height of prosperity, conflict between Carthage and its rivals became inevitable. Toward the end of the 3rd century BC, both the Greeks and the Romans challenged Carthage's position of power in Sicily. Rome's rise as a Mediterranean power was forged in the First Punic War for control of the island, which Carthage ultimately lost.

Carthage revived after the war—in part due to the efforts of Hamilcar and Hannibal Barca, who expanded Punic holdings in Iberia and founded new colonies there, including New Carthage. For a time, Carthage even seemed poised to seize Rome itself. Mercenary troops from across Iberia, North



First Punic War

Africa, Gaul, and Magna Graecia were marshaled into a disciplined army that was united behind Hannibal for more than a decade of fighting on the Italian peninsula—proof of Hannibal's military prowess and the Carthaginian Empire's multiculturalism.

However, in 204 BC, a Roman invasion led by Scipio Africanus landed in North Africa and defeated Hannibal. The subsequent peace treaty stripped Carthage of many of its overseas territories and placed severe limitations on its military abilities. It still took Rome several years to breach the city walls during the Third Punic War. Carthage had a 20-mile circuit to protect its population of several hundred thousand, and its skilled sailors—experts at outrunning the Roman naval blockade—kept the city supplied with food.

Eventually, the city was invaded, pillaged, and burned. Fifty thousand inhabitants were sold as slaves. Nearby Utica was selected as the new provincial capital, and it quickly filled up with Roman merchants and new constructions to reflect its status. However, as alluvial deposits continuously silted up Utica's harbor, Carthage—with its double harbor—was resurrected. By the middle of the Imperial period, Carthage was a prominent city of the Roman Empire.

In the 19th and 20th centuries, Punic Carthage was found under layers of Roman, Byzantine, Arab, and Ottoman history. While much of the ancient city remains to be discovered, its legacy as the maritime and mercantile power that once dominated much of the Mediterranean is assured.

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IBERIA: GADIR, CARTHAGO NOVA, AND TARRACO

In antiquity, Spain's wealth came from agricultural and metal products that were exported through a network of river systems and towns. The Phoenicians expanded the local exploitation of Iberia's wealth by its indigenous peoples. Under the Carthaginians, Iberia became a major economic colony; under Rome, it reached new heights and had a vast infrastructure system of roads, bridges, aqueducts, and cities. The Iberian Peninsula became a trading post at the edge of the Mediterranean.
This lecture will take you beyond the Strait of Gibraltar to the Atlantic coast for a wider view of the Iberian Peninsula and the ramifications of its ties to the rest of the Mediterranean. It will also look at the protagonists who impacted the coastline, from the Punic Barcids to the Vandals.

The Outpost of Gadir

The Bronze Age laid the foundations for many of the great cities and civilizations of the Mediterranean. When bronze began to appear in Europe around 3300 BC, it was harder and more durable than any metal that had been known before. Civilizations that could produce bronze tools, weapons, and armor had a big advantage over those that could not make such implements. The standard way to make bronze involves two ingredients: copper and tin. In antiquity, major copper deposits were mined in Egypt, the Levant, Cyprus, Greece, Sardinia, and Anatolia. The largest tin deposits—much rarer than copper—were in Iberia, as were large deposits of gold, silver, and copper.

The first coastal kingdom of Iberia—known as Tartessos—lay along the Gulf of Cadiz, into which flowed several rivers that could carry large volumes of agricultural goods and metals from the interior to the sea. Tartessos became well known to the rest of the Mediterranean for its wealth. Phoenician and Greek traders sailed to the far reaches of the Mediterranean in search of raw materials, particularly tin and silver. The city-state of Tyre first tapped into the trade of Tartessos by creating a fortified outpost called Gadir on two islands in the Gulf of Cadiz.

Gadir was established as early as the 7th century BC and became a mecca for not only trade but also pilgrims, particularly for its Temple of Melqart. The city became synonymous with the boundaries of the known world. Gadir lies just beyond the mouth of the Mediterranean, today the Strait of Gibraltar. Flanking the strait are two large rocky promontories known as the Pillars of Hercules. The mythic origin story is that Hercules—instead of climbing a great mountain that once stood here—smashed his way through, splitting the mountain in two and thus connecting the Mediterranean to the Atlantic. As the rough oceans of the Atlantic were too dangerous for most ancient sailors, the pillars and Gades became the edge of the Mediterranean world.

Gadir's success was the result of its connections to the Phoenician trading network and the settlers' mentality of working and integrating with the locals. This mixing of the Phoenicians with the Tartessos can be seen in Gadir's later material culture and in artifacts that show both the bronzeworking mastery of Tartessos and the stylistic influences of the Phoenicians. Gadir's importance

fell away when Tyre yielded to the Neo-Babylonians. After the First Punic War, the city rose again when Hamilcar Barca—Hannibal's father—sailed to Iberia to establish new colonies and reinvigorate his empire. Gadir was the initial base of operations. After falling to the Romans in the Second Punic War, Gadir became Gades. Its citizens were successful merchants and local patricians, and they received Roman citizenship under Julius Caesar.



Hamilcar Barca sailing

Carthago Novo

One of the great port cities of modern Spain is Cartagena, which lies at the end of a large natural harbor on the other side of the Pillars of Hercules. The city's roots run deep; it is located on top of the city the Phoenicians called Qart Hadasht and the Romans called Carthago Novo. The city's natural harbor and ideal maritime location allowed it to thrive under Roman rule. Carthago Nova ultimately became the capital of its own Roman province, Hispania Carthaginensis.

The city's silver mines were highly profitable, yielding up to 25,000 drachmae a day. Esparto grass and *garum* also contributed to the city's wealth. The indigenous esparto grass grows in thin, fibrous blades up to 3 feet long. This hardy material was used in antiquity to weave and wind into rope and other items. Examples of baskets, rugs, and footwear made from esparto have been found, dating to the Neolithic period.

Garum was a Greek invention derived from *garos*, fish guts fermented in salt. The resulting putrefied liquid was a delicacy that the Romans drizzled on various foods. It was known to cancel out poor-quality food and even mask the taste of food that had gone bad. *Garum* from Carthago Nova was made of mackerel, and it was one of the costliest liquids around.

The Romans in Hispania

After Hannibal's defeat in the Second Punic War in 201 BC, Rome dominated Iberia until the empire collapsed. The metal wealth of Iberia drew great Roman interest, and the Romans began to organize their newly won land and establish settlements. A common strategy was to establish veteran colonies in Hispania to reward the soldiers who served in the endless foreign and civil wars of Rome.

Under Julius Caesar and Augustus, 21 colonies were founded in Iberia. Mines of gold, silver, lead, tin, and copper were in great demand to supply the ever-growing needs of the Roman Empire. Roman mining techniques used huge quantities of water diverted by aqueducts to eat into the mountains and reveal the deposits. Iberia's rivers were also used to bring agricultural products such as olive oil, wine, vegetables, cattle, and horses from inland valleys for trade throughout the empire, making many communities wealthy in the process.

The Via Augusta connected many of these wealthy settlements and colonies. The road followed along an older path that Hercules had carved out on his travels across Europe. The Via Augusta was paved, and new bridges were constructed. The Arch of Bera, built on the Via Augusta during Augustus's reign, still stands on a traffic island in the middle of what is today a modern highway.

The cities along the ancient road were guaranteed merchant traffic and revenue. Tracing the Baetis River, the road went past Hispalis and Corduba. It turned east to Carthago Nova, then north past Valencia and Saguntum, connected to Tarraco, and ended at Narbo Martius in what is now southern France.

Tarraco

Located near the Sulcis river, Tarraco was an important trade hub. The Romans developed it into a leading city because of its strategic location between the Pyrenees and the Ebro River and its position along the Via Augusta. Like Gadir and Carthago Novo, Tarraco had a long history before the Romans. It had been an Iberian town before it was settled as a Phoenician trading post. The Phoenicians called it Tarchon, and it featured a citadel perched on a high cleft overlooking the sea. This high point later became



Tarraco/Tarchon citadel on high cleft overlooking sea

the Roman city's citadel, overlooking the city that developed at the mouth of the river alongside the sea. Unlike Gadir and Carthago Nova, Tarraco did not have a proper port. Despite this disadvantage, Tarraco quickly outshone Roman port cities in the region.

Today, the city's many intact Roman-era ruins are protected as a UNESCO World Heritage site. Like any ancient stronghold, Tarraco had an extensive circuit of walls, sections of which can still be seen today. Some of those sections show the layers of history, with different courses of stone added over centuries as the walls were rebuilt and repaired.

The city had two forum spaces. The original municipal forum was near the waterfront and is partially excavated. There are remains of shops, cisterns, a basilica, and a curia—all substantially remodeled during the reign of Augustus. This was also the location of The Temple of Divine Augustus. The remains of the theater and the Altar of the Victory of Augustus stand near the area.

Other remains date to the Flavian period, when three new structures were created on three distinct terraces above the city. On the lowest terrace are the remains of the circus. On the next terrace was an open space for the city's provincial forum, of which just small fragments are preserved. Behind and above the forum stood a massive temple, dedicated to the imperial cult. Over time, this three-tiered complex was converted into a Visigothic church, then a Moorish Mosque, and finally, the city cathedral.

The End of an Era

Late antiquity and the collapse of Rome devasted much of the Mediterranean world, in particular Iberia. In the 5th century AD, migrant confederations of Alans, Suevi, Vandals, and Visigoths arrived and ravaged the peninsula. The Visigoths emerged as the most powerful confederation, establishing a kingdom that ruled over Iberia until the 700s.

Many of the cities of Iberia show signs of Visigoth occupation, including the transformation of spaces into churches and contraction in the urban centers. The Visigoth kingdom was predominantly an inland empire, and the

trade connections with Rome and Constantinople disappeared. Gades and Tarraco show little growth or new ruins from late antiquity, and according to accounts, Carthago Nova was little more than a fishing village by the end of the Visigoth era.


Cadiz

When Iberia began to look to the seas again in the Middle Ages, it was in a different direction. Under the Umayyad caliphate and its successors, the cities of Iberia became vital connections to North Africa and termini for the trans-Saharan gold trade. After the Christian reconquest, Spain and Portugal became famous for conquering much larger regions than the Mediterranean.

Under the Spanish, Gades became Cádiz—the city from where Christopher Columbus departed on his second and fourth voyages to the Americas. During the following centuries, Cádiz developed into the home port of the Spanish treasure fleet that brought the riches from Spain's colonies to Europe. Once an emporium at the end of the known world, Gadir became the starting point for the new world.

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ALEXANDRIA AND PTOLEMAIC EGYPT

Alexandria is considered one of the greatest and most iconic ancient capital cities of the Mediterranean. It served as the capital of the Ptolemaic pharaohs and became the greatest cultural center of the Mediterranean—an international community of Egyptians, Greeks, and Jews that attracted scholars and merchants from around the world. Alexandria's scale, opulence, and influence rivaled Constantinople and even Rome. This lecture will travel through Alexandria's history and attempt to recreate its lost urban plan, including its dedicated centers for entertainment and leisure, centers of learning, places of worship, the tomb of Alexander the Great, and the residences of the ruling class. It will explore what life would have been like under Ptolemaic and Roman rule and the empire's final demise.

Alexander the Great

Egypt has a unique connection with the Mediterranean. Just beyond modern-day Cairo, the Nile fans out into an enormous delta, spanning more than 150 miles by the time it reaches the coast. For millennia, the Old and Middle Kingdom pharaohs had their capitals far south of the delta in Upper Egypt, principally Memphis and then Thebes. However, by the end of the Middle Kingdom—around 1700 BC—things began to change. The seat of power in Egypt moved to Avaris in the Nile Delta—possibly in response to the threat posed by the neighboring Hyksos, who ultimately invaded and captured Avaris and set it up as their own capital of conquered Lower Egypt. The Egyptian pharaohs of the New Kingdom preferred capitals in the Nile Delta, but they moved frequently, possibly due to changing geography.

Alexander the Great conquered Egypt in 332 BC and decided to place his capital on the Mediterranean coast. He chose a narrow strip of land between the Mediterranean and a lagoon, where an Egyptian fishing town known as Rhakotis was already established. The site had a protected harbor and a tributary of the Nile. Egypt was the breadbasket of the ancient world, but it had never owned an adequate center that could facilitate trade and the shipping of goods. Alexander's new capital was built for the purpose of dialoguing with and dominating the Mediterranean. A massive causeway was constructed to create two harbors. Hundreds of barges brought grain to the harbor, where the crop was stored in huge granaries before being loaded onto ocean-going ships and sold to the world. The city prospered from this grain trade.

Alexander continued his campaigns to the east and left his close confidant Cleomenes in charge of Egypt. One of Cleomenes's first decisions was to forcibly transfer the population of Canopus—the main port of Egypt at the time—to Alexandria. Soon, much of trade between Europe and the Middle East shifted to Alexandria, and many Greek immigrants from diverse backgrounds and merchants and artisans from all over the Mediterranean settled in the city.

Alexander died in Babylon in 323 BC. A conference was held in the city to determine the fate of his massive empire, and it was decided that the empire would be divided into various governates and ruled by his generals.



Illustration of Alexander's tomb

Alexander's half-brother Arrhidaeus was to succeed as king until Alexander's newborn son, also named Alexander, was old enough to do so. However, because Arrhidaeus suffered from various learning and mental disabilities, a regent—Perdiccas—was appointed to rule in his stead.

Under Ptolemaic Rule

Ptolemy I Soter—one of Alexander's generals—who had been appointed as governor of Egypt immediately sought to undermine Perdiccas. By Macedonian custom, kings asserted their right to the throne by burying their predecessors; thus, Ptolemy hijacked Alexander's funeral procession and had it diverted to Memphis in Egypt. He ultimately constructed a tomb for Alexander's remains in Alexandria. That tomb was known as the Soma—meaning "body"—and it was part of the palatial complex. Ptolemy

made Egypt an independent kingdom and had himself proclaimed pharaoh in 305 BC. Over the next 3 centuries, Ptolemy's successors had themselves buried next to Alexander's tomb, symbolically reaffirming their connection with the city's great founder.

Alexandria flourished under Ptolemaic rule, and its leaders sought to make it a capital of learning and scholarship. Alexander had been tutored by Aristotle and had an interest in questioning and documenting the unknown. Ptolemy I Soter invited scholars and artists to his capital—including Euclid, the Greek mathematician who wrote *Elements*. To help support the cultural and academic life of the city, Ptolemy dedicated a portion of Alexandria to the Muses—the goddesses of literature, science, and the arts—and called it the Mouseion.

It is assumed that the Library of Alexandria stood among the structures of the Mouseion. Established by Ptolemy, it grew into the largest library of the ancient world, housing an estimated 400,000 works. First head librarian Zeodotus of Ephesus organized the books in alphabetical order using the first letter of every author's name—the first recorded example of using the alphabet to organize information.

The early Ptolemies also built a lighthouse called the Pharos. Constructed between the reigns of Ptolemy I and Ptolemy II, the structure was at least 330 feet high and topped by a burning flame, which was enhanced by a bronze mirror. The lighthouse stood for more than a millennium but was eventually destroyed by earthquakes.

The City of Alexandria

Alexandria was a thriving city. Along the waterfront were an emporium, warehouses, the Temple of Poseidon, and a theater. Docks stretched across to the causeway. Two parallel streets—each 100 feet wide—ran through the city. The center of the city included courts, landscaped groves, and the Paneium—an artificially raised mound in the shape of a fir cone. A spiral path up the hill led to a summit that provided a view of the entire city.



Illustration of the city of Alexandria

The city's largest temple—the Serapeum—was dedicated to the god Serapis, the protector of the city. The temple complex was near the Museion and likely housed at least part of the Library of Alexandria. Serapis represents the fusion of cultures that was cultivated by the Ptolemies. As Greeks now ruled over a largely Egyptian population, they sought ways to legitimize their rule by fusing their own cultural traditions with local ones. Serapis was a combination of Osiris—the Egyptian god of the afterlife—and Apis, a sacred bull figure whose worship had become very popular in Egypt's Late Period.

Ptolemy I Soter's version of Serapis aimed to promote religious harmony between the Egyptian public and the Greek elite. The god was made to look like a Greek god but with Egyptian elements, such as a cylindrical headdress. His Egyptian roots were kept, but he was given powers by Greek gods. The cult of Serapis proved popular, and it spread around the Greek world.

Although the Ptolemies sought harmony between the different cultures of their diverse empire, the different communities each had their own neighborhoods. The Egyptians were mostly in Rhacotis, the original city. The Jews were on the eastern side of the city and made up the largest Jewish population outside of Judaea. They were immersed in the Greek reality of the city and produced the Septuagint, the first translation of the Torah. Smaller neighborhoods of foreign sailors and merchants were located near the ports. Egyptians were encouraged to adopt the Hellenic language and customs, but for average peasant farmers—most of the population—life and culture remained largely unchanged.

The End of the Ptolemaic Dynasty

The local Egyptians did not accept Greek rule unquestioningly. As time wore on, local rebellions increasingly sapped the strength of the Ptolemies. One rebellion even took control of half the country for several years from 205 BC and nearly overthrew the dynasty—an event referenced on the Rosetta Stone. Thereafter, feuds and civil wars were common.

Alexandria was the principal grain supplier to Rome and its growing legions, and the Romans began to interfere in Egyptian affairs to maintain the stability of the supply. When Macedon and Greece fell in the 2nd century BC, the Ptolemaic kingdom had to accept an alliance and become a Roman client state. Alexandria's institutions fell into decline.

This situation lasted for around 150 years until the ascent of Cleopatra marked the beginning of a period of civil wars. Cleopatra and Mark Antony attempted but failed to consolidate control over the Eastern Roman Empire. They were defeated by Augustus at the Battle of Actium, ending the Ptolemaic dynasty. Alexandria became the capital of the new Roman province of Egypt and was kept as a personal possession of the emperors because it was the major grain producer of the empire.

One of the few intact archaeological remains in Alexandria is found in the district of Kom el-Dikka, which encompasses an excavated Roman-era neighborhood. Houses from the 1st through 3rd centuries AD remain—including the famous Villa of the Birds, named for the floor mosaics that

remain in good condition. Nearby are bathhouses and a small theater dating back to the 4th to 7th centuries. An academic complex with at least 20 auditoria likely served as part of an ancient university, underlining that Alexandria remained an important place of intellectual pursuits and learning.

Over time, much of Alexandria's grandeur was destroyed due to natural disasters, conflict, and neglect. When the empire converted to Christianity in the late 4th century, many of the pagan temples in the city were demolished or converted to churches. The city became a focal point in the wars between Islam and Christianity. It was captured several times by the Persians, the Byzantines, and the Arabs and was at one point sacked by a Crusader army. Under the Arabs, grain was no longer shipped to feed Rome and the West; instead, it was sent east to the Islamic world. The Arab rulers of Egypt relocated to Cairo. By the time archeology and historic preservation came into vogue, there was virtually nothing left to save.

Despite its physical destruction, ancient Alexandria has powerfully endured in the world's memory. In modern Egypt, the city has even undergone a renaissance; it is home to many higher education institutions and is the second-busiest port in the country. In 2002, the Egyptian government opened a large new library—the Bibliotheca Alexandrina—which seeks to draw new generations of scholars and learners to the city.

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CYRENE, LEPTIS MAGNA, AND ANCIENT LIBYA

During the Neolithic period, Libya was a fertile region of lakes, rivers, forests, and wildlife. Evidence suggests the environment could support a sizable population through hunting, foraging, and food processing. In the 4th millennium BC, climate change led to the desertification of North Africa. The rivers and lakes dried up, and the Sahara overtook all but the coastal plains. On the coast of northern Libya are some of the most intact cities of the ancient Mediterranean. These cities overcame significant infrastructure challenges, and the quality of the craftsmanship reflects the height of Roman North Africa in the 2nd and 3rd centuries. This lecture will tour the remains and explore the story of two once-great cities of the Libyan coast: Cyrene and Leptis Magna.

The Founding of Cyrene

One of the earliest peoples described in ancient sources from this region are the Garamantes, who were a tribe of the Berbers—a cultural and linguistic group that spanned across North Africa—and one of several Berber groups that settled the coastal regions. The Berbers lived in a vast desert area known as Fezzan.

The Garamantes were pastoralists who lived in a series of small settlements across the Sahara. They created a sophisticated system of underground water channels that allowed them to tap into ancient aquifers. This system produced enough water to irrigate crops and supply towns. In the 5th century BC, Herodotus noted that the Garamantes herded cattle, grew dates, and sustained a good quality of life despite the harsh environment. Archaeologists have found evidence of a sophisticated ancient civilization—including markets, public squares, ritual burial grounds, and defensive structures.



Cyrene

Phoenician traders formed relations with Berber tribes and settled in Libya as early as the 7th century BC. The Phoenicians developed some of these settlements into colonies and cities. Later, the Greeks arrived and began settling colonies of their own. The first and most important Greek colony was Cyrene, likely founded by Battus in 631 BC. Battus was the first king of Cyrene, and his descendants ruled for 2 centuries.

Cyrene lies near the Jebel Akhdar, a stretch of land in northeastern Libya. The area is a mass of nearly 3,000-foot-high limestone that slopes toward the sea, and it receives enough rainfall to sustain lush plains and forests. Greek explorers founded more cities—including Cyrene's harbor city Apollonia, Barea, Hespera, and Teuchira. Collectively, these Greek cities became known as the Pentapolis—or five cities—and the broader region became known as Cyrenaica, encompassing roughly the eastern half of modern Libya.

The Silphium Trade

For the Greek settlers, Cyrene offered an abundance of agricultural products that were grown on a lush plateau that could support three harvests a year. The settlers produced wheat, barley, figs, apples, wine, and olive oil and pastured sheep, cattle, and goats.

However, their greatest wealth came from exporting silphium, a tall plant with leaves like celery and small flowers that grew in bunches from the end of the stems. The most valuable part was the plant's resin, which was extracted from the roots and stalk. This resin was a medicinal cure-all, an aphrodisiac, and a contraceptive. It was also a culinary delicacy, capable of producing a range of flavors. Silphium could be fed to cattle to give a better flavor to the beef, and its flowers could be made into perfume.

Silphium could not be cultivated; it only grew in the wild and only in a small region of Cyrenaica. Cyrene made a fortune harvesting and exporting this exclusive supply of silphium. A famous vase painting—which dates to about 560 BC—recovered from the city depicts the plant being bundled, carried, and weighed for trade. The plant became extinct around the 1st century AD, either from overharvesting or desertification. It was the first species extinction

in recorded history. Since then, *Ferula drudeana*—a plant found in a few places in Turkey—has been identified as similar to the ancient descriptions, offering many culinary and medicinal properties.

Wealth and Decline

Cyrene thrived on the silphium trade for centuries. Within a century of settlement, Cyrene boasted a massive Temple of Zeus, whose estimated dimensions put it on par with the Parthenon in Athens. On the other side of the colony—near the acropolis—a large Temple of Apollo was built, likely also serving as the city's treasury.

When Cyrene rebelled against its monarchical rulers in the 320s BC, the deposed aristocrats received help from Ptolemy I, a former general of Alexander and the de facto ruler of Egypt. Ptolemy's troops never left, and



Temple of Zeus

Cyrenaica effectively became a client state of Ptolemaic Egypt. The Ptolemies continued to develop Cyrene. One of their contributions was the gymnasium, built by Ptolemy VIII. By this time, the agora had been expanded as traders and merchants traveled great distances to take part in the lucrative silphium trade. The gymnasium and the agora were connected by a long, porticoed stoa for additional business and public space. The stoa had statues on every column, showing the city's prosperity to its visitors.

The Ptolemies built several new settlements in the region. Ptolemais—on the coast near today's Benghazi—was originally a small port village for the Greek colony of Barca, but the Ptolemies transformed it into a large town and the seat of the local governor. A large palace of columns dates from this period but was later expanded and modified by the Romans and other occupants. A network of vaulted cisterns was built to collect and store fresh water. It is estimated that the cisterns could hold nearly 2 million gallons of water, enough to support a sizeable population.

In 96 BC, Ptolemy Apion died, leaving his realm to the Romans. In Cyrene, the empire's rule was periodically challenged. Many people perished, and Rome had to send new settlers to maintain the province's viability. Cyrene recovered for a time, but several major earthquakes and increasingly powerful raids by tribes from the surrounding deserts led to its end. A Roman historian in the 4th century AD called Cyrene "an ancient but deserted city." In the 7th century, it was completely abandoned.

Leptis Magna

In the area known as Tripolitania, the main cities were Leptis Magna, Oea, and Sabratha. The region was dominated first by Carthage and then Rome. Oea lies beneath the modern capital of Tripoli. Only the Antonine marble arch that was built in the later Roman era remains. Sabratha is better preserved, but not much of the Punic era still exists. The earliest cities here were built from mudbrick, which wears away over time. However, some stone monuments from the Punic period remain. The mausoleum of Bes exhibits

Punic, Greek, Near Eastern, and Egyptian design influences. It is thought to represent Sabratha's diverse population; the city had a well-established trade link to the interior and thrived because of it.



Leptis Magna theater by the sea

Leptis Magna was established in the second half of the 7th century BC. After Carthage fell in the Punic Wars, Leptis Magna came under Roman rule but was allowed to remain largely independent. In the Roman era, the city's wealth increased as a result of inland trade. Roman merchants established lucrative trans-Saharan routes. Augustus launched several campaigns against the Berber tribes, who had long raided and threatened North Africa. He made traveling through the region safer by establishing roads, forts, and military outposts. As a result, the Romans established control over the formerly Punic routes into the African interior. The most important and easiest route led almost due south from Leptis Magna to Lake Chad, taking advantage of several mountain passes and oases on the way. West Africa was a source

of gold, ivory, spices, and exotic timber; Lake Chad provided a supply of natron—a type of soda ash that was widely used in the ancient world to make soap, toothpaste, antiseptics, insecticide, bleach, and preservatives.

The market at Leptis Magna was built on top of the remains of the Punic cemetery and was enlarged several times as the trans-Saharan trade expanded and the empire's demand for African products increased. The most intact ruins are of the food market, where distinctive circular kiosks were lined with large counters. A tablet found in the marketplace bears a visual system for converting between various units of measurement. The city also operated a large slave market and was involved in the exotic animal trade. The empire loved public spectacles, and wild animals could draw huge crowds. Hunts were particularly popular, pitting gladiators against ferocious animals in the ring.

Under the Severan clan—a local family that rose to prominence in Rome—Leptis had a period of great prosperity. In AD 197, Emperor Septimus Severus defeated the Parthians and captured their capital. The enormous and largely intact Arch of Septimus Severus in Rome commemorates this victory. Severus never forgot his African origins, and he poured money into Leptis Magna. He increased the size of the harbor, added an outer harbor, and lined the quays with warehouses and a temple. The theater was expanded and improved, and a new forum was added. The piazza was paved with Proconnesian marble and lined with shops, ending at a sprawling staircase that led up to the Temple of Bacchus and Hercules—the city divinities. The Severan Basilica was lined with Aswan granite columns and green Euboean marble mixed with white marble detailing—all of which had to be imported.

Not long after Severus died, the situation in North Africa rapidly deteriorated. Berber tribes regrouped and raided settlements, and the trade routes across the Sahara became increasingly perilous. Meanwhile, demand for expensive luxuries from Africa diminished as Rome's economy faltered. The newly completed harbor was barely used; it had already been silted up by the end of the 4th century AD. By the 600s, the once great ports of Tripolitania were abandoned.

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EPIRUS AND THE GATEWAYS TO GREECE

In the ancient world, the area along the lower Adriatic and Ionian seas comprised the lands of Epirus and southern Illyria. These rugged and mountainous regions were inhabited by several Greek tribes—including the Chaonians, Thesprotians, Molossians, and dozens of Illyrian tribes. They established several important coastal cities, which became political battlegrounds in the late Roman Republic. Historical figures such as Pyrrhus, Pompey, Caesar, Mark Antony, and Augustus all moved through the region. Epirus became western Europe's gateway to the Greek world, eventually connecting Rome to Byzantium. Among the region's great ancient cities are Dyrrachium, Apollonia, Nicopolis, and Butrint. This lecture introduces some lesser-known cities along the lower Adriatic and Ionian seas—ancient Epirus and Illyria—and explores their role in the geopolitics of the Greeks and Romans.

Epirus

The ancient region of Epirus extended from the Ambracian Gulf north to what is the Cape of Gjuhëz in modern Albania. The area was home to more than a dozen Greek tribes—main among them the Chaonians in the north, the Molossians in the center, and the Thesprotians in the south. The tribes of Epirus stayed nomadic for a long time, and their villages didn't become urban areas until the 6th century BC. One of the obstacles was the massive Pindus Mountains that cut through most of the region and extend into southern Illyria, which was settled by tribes like the Taulantii and Albanoi. Borders were fluid in the ancient world, and many Illyrian settlements in the borderlands had strong Hellenistic ties.

The remains of Amantia show clear signs of Hellenization. This strategically positioned town overlooking the Vjosa River valley had a temple of Aphrodite and a Christian basilica. The remains of walls and gates date to around 450 BC and show that the town was fortified. The stadium—close to the old town center and designed to accommodate about 4,000 people—hosted athletic contests like javelin and discus throwing. One of Epirus's focal points of Hellenistic cultural influence was the sanctuary of Zeus in Dodona, where the priestesses of Dodona received divine revelations by interpreting the rustling of oak trees, which still grow on the site today. The size and prosperity of the city can be estimated by the remains of the large theater, which overlooks the Pindus Mountains. Nearby are the ruins of a bouleuterion—a meeting place for making political decisions in the town, suggesting that the city had a democratic form of Greek-style self-government.

The Molossians—the Greek tribe in the middle of Epirus—began expanding their territory at the expense of the others in the 6th century BC, establishing the kingdom of Epirus in the 4th century BC. This emerging kingdom struck a political alliance with the neighboring Macedonians, allowing them to subjugate the other tribes and push further into Illyria. After years of fighting in the area, Pyrrhus returned to Epirus at the head of an army supplied by Ptolemy to claim the throne. One of Pyrrhus's first decisions was to move his capital to Ambracia—today the city of Arta. He also built Antigonea, which became the main inland city in the region. The city's center, domestic neighborhood, and commercial centers for artisanal production are still discernable.


Antigonea

Wins and Losses

Pyrrhus expanded Epirus's borders to incorporate much of Macedon and Thessaly. As he was the most prominent Greek ruler of his day, Tarentum—one of the great cities of Magna Graecia in Italy—requested his help to protect Greek interests against rapidly expanding Roman power. Pyrrhus landed in Italy in 280 BC and won a string of victories against the Romans. However, there were so many casualties that after winning the Battle of Asculum, he famously commented, "If we are victorious in one more battle with the Romans, we shall be utterly ruined."

Pyrrhus switched his focus to resource-rich Sicily, where he landed in 278 BC and successfully lifted the Carthaginian siege of Siracusa. He was proclaimed king of Sicily, but his need for soldiers led to mass conscription of the islanders and their resources to continue the fight, which caused him to lose the support of the locals. By 276 BC, Pyrrhus was forced to abandon

the increasingly hostile island, and he returned to Epirus the following year. He seized power in Macedon in 274 BC but was killed in a battle with Sparta in 272 BC.

The ruling families formed a new republic—the Epirote League. The capital was moved to Phoenice, in Chaonian territory. By the 220s BC, wars broke out across the Mediterranean and Asia Minor. The three major tribes of Epirus were divided: the Chaonians and Thesprotians sided with Rome, but the Molossians fought with the Greeks. Epirus was defeated in 168 BC and became part of the new Roman province of Macedonia.

Rome added a series of new constructions. The most transformative structure was the Via Egnatia, a road that extended from the port city of Dyrrachium to Macedon and the principal city of Thessalonica. The Romans eventually extended the road to Byzantium. The Via Egnatia was a tangible demonstration of Rome's conquest—facilitating trade, diplomacy, and military control.

Dyrrachium

The Roman city of Dyrrachium was founded by the Greeks in 627 BC. Originally, this site was well into Illyria, but it was incorporated into the Epirote kingdom under Pyrrhus. By 229 BC, the Romans controlled the area. Its natural harbor made it an ideal place to build up and accommodate the traffic from Brundisium. Now known as Durrës, the city still contains remains of the old Roman town of Dyrrachium. Most of the city walls were built during the Byzantine era, but they are based on Roman foundations, and some sections of the Roman walls still exist. The city had an amphitheater—the largest Roman amphitheater built in the Balkans, with an estimated capacity of more than 20,000 people.

Dyrrachium found itself at the center of several battles that led to the end of the Roman Republic. Julius Caesar needed a big port like Dyrrachium to supply his troops in Greece, and he faced off against Roman army commander Pompey in a complex siege. Caesar used his army to encircle Pompey's camp outside the city, hoping to cut off the camp's water and food supplies. Caesar's lines ran 13 miles, but they were soon opposed by Pompey's

own defensive lines that blocked Caesar's access to the harbor, forcing him to rely on foraging to feed his men. By the summer of 48 BC, Pompey's army was growing larger with fresh recruits while Caesar's defenses were stretched thin. Pompey found a weak point in the line and broke through, but he did not fully commit his forces, which gave Caesar a chance to retreat and regroup. Further east along the Via Egnatia, he fought Pompey again at the Battle of Pharsalus, and Pompey's troops were defeated. Pompey fled to Pelusium to rebuild his army but was assassinated upon arriving, signaling the end of the Roman Republic.



Durres today

Apollonia

The city of Apollonia is located about 30 miles from Dyrrachium and connects to the Adriatic via the Vjosa River. It served as an embarkation point for the Via Egnatia. According to Strabo, the original Hellenistic city controlled the rich agricultural region, a successful slave trade, and the commoditization of local asphalt for ship caulking.

Among the ruins of Apollonia, the arcade that covered shops and offices is still recognizable. Nearby are the remains of the Monument of Agonothetes, which has been identified as the historical council chamber. The city's wealth can be gleaned from the well-preserved nymphaeum—a shrine dedicated to nymphs, or minor natural spirit gods. Nymphs came in many forms in Greek mythology, and there are hundreds of named nymphs in ancient texts. The Naiads—nymphs that oversaw bodies of fresh water like wells, springs, and streams—were the most popular. A nymphaeum could be built on top of an underground spring, feeding sacred waters into the shrine to be used in various ceremonies.

Apollonia was also a place of culture and learning; the remains of a library and related buildings have been identified on the site. Among the city's famous pupils were Octavian and Agrippa, who were studying in Apollonia when Caesar was assassinated in 44 BC. Caesar's main assassins—Brutus and Cassius—fled east along the Via Egnatia to build a power base in Greece and the Levant. Octavian, Lepidus, and Mark Antony pursued and eventually defeated them at the Battle of Philippi. Later, Octavian defeated his former ally Mark Antony and became emperor Augustus. At the site of Apollonia, a small shrine was dedicated to the imperial cult Octavian established during his reign.



Ancient Roman library of Apollonia

The site of Octavian's camp on the peninsula opposite Actium was sponsored as a new city—Nicopolis, which means "city of victory." It became an important religious and commercial center, lined with monuments celebrating the Battle of Actium. Grand public infrastructure—such as an aqueduct and a large theater complex—was constructed. The combination of subsidies and Nicopolis's natural harbors led to commercial success, and the remains of some large mansions—like the Villa of Manius Antonius, complete with intact mosaics—give a sense of how the nouveau riche lived in this new outpost of Rome. Every 4 years, Nicopolis hosted the Actian Games—with wrestling, horse racing, musical contests, and even mock sea battles.

Buthrotum

Augustus rewarded the heroes of the Battle of Actium by sponsoring a veteran's colony at the nearby settlement of Buthrotum. The Greek Chaonians had founded this city on a prominent hill on a promontory along the Vivari Channel, which directly fed into the Mediterranean. The city had a sanctuary to Asclepius and an acropolis, and the entire settlement was surrounded by walls. Wide ruins of agoras and stoas hint at commercial activity, and later domination by nearby Korkyra led to economic growth from the 4th century BC. A well-preserved Greek theater remains, and many of the structure's stone blocks have long inscriptions carved into them. Some of the inscriptions provide details of the city's history, but the majority are declarations of manumission—the freeing of slaves.

Buthrotum expanded rapidly with new Roman settlers, and many new structures appeared. An aqueduct, a forum, a public nymphaeum, and a thermal bath complex were built. The remains of the latter are a well-preserved example of an underfloor heating infrastructure, which warmed the waters and rooms above.

In recognition of the region's culture, many of the Greek-era buildings were kept and even expanded or restored by Rome, which has helped the ruins survive at what is now the Butrint World Heritage site in Albania.

15

EARLIEST TRADE: SARDINIA, CORSICA, AND MALTA

There are more than 10,000 islands in the Mediterranean Sea. The largest—Sicily—is nearly 10,000 square miles and is home to more than 5 million people. The smallest inhabited island is Tabarca, where just 68 people reside on 100 acres. Two large and two small islands had a big impact on the ancient Mediterranean: Sardinia, Corsica, Malta, and Pantelleria. These islands share a complex and tumultuous history as trading centers and fortified outposts in the central Mediterranean. Evidence of some of the most ancient Mediterranean peoples can be found here, and sites from the Neolithic and early Bronze periods provide a unique window into the earliest cities. This lecture will explore the four islands to discover what the Mediterranean world looked like before the arrival of the Phoenicians, Greeks, and Romans.

Sardinia

The island of Sardinia—the second-largest island in the Mediterranean—is located to the west of Italy and north of Tunisia. Sardinia's varied landscape—green hills, sandy beaches, dense forests, rocky outcrops, and stretches of uninhabited plains—essentially makes it a microcontinent. Its location between Europe and the African continent makes it a natural meeting point of culture, language, and trade. It was conquered and reconquered by multiple empires—from the Phoenicians to the Greeks and then the Romans—who used Sardinia as a strategic gateway for commerce, trade, and influence.


Sardinia

However, Sardinia boasts many settlements that belong to far older civilizations. Some of those settlements are the work of the Nuragic peoples, who came to the island around 1800 BC. The Nuragic civilization gets its name from distinctive stone towers called nuraghes. More than 7,000 of these stone structures litter the island. Su Nuraxi once had several towers and curtain walls that were built of large basalt blocks, all organized around

a large inner courtyard. Around this courtyard was a larger village, the stone foundations of which can still be seen today. This site has become important for understanding early Nuragic culture and was declared a UNESCO Heritage site in 1996.

The traditional interpretation of nuraghes is that they were used as defensive strongholds, but scholars have also proposed religious, political, and residential functions. Some nuraghes are simple, single towers that stand alone in the landscape; others are part of more elaborate, castle-like complexes with additional walls and towers and are located near villages. Nuraghes are unique to Sardinia and provide a glimpse into what ancient communities looked like as they transitioned from the Stone Age to the Bronze Age.

Early Maritime Seafarers

The Nuragic peoples were seafarers, and their settlements were connected to the Mediterranean. Along with fishing, Nuragic Sardinians raised cattle and sheep on the island, and wagon roads dating to the 14th century BC suggest that basic infrastructure was developed to transport goods from inland to the coast.

Along the coast, ancient anchors weighing 200 pounds have been found, suggesting that the Nuragic peoples built sizeable ships that were capable of oceangoing travel. Among hundreds of bronze figurines that have been discovered on the island is a bronze Nuragic model of a ship. As no tin deposits exist on Sardinia, the Nuragic peoples must have established oceanic trade routes to get it.

Evidence of maritime trade even before the Bronze Age can be found at the site of Monte Acri, one of the most important deposits of obsidian in the ancient Mediterranean. Obsidian is a type of volcanic glass that is hard and brittle. When it fractures, it produces a sharp edge—suitable for making cutting tools and hunting weapons before metals such as bronze and iron could be worked. Obsidian from this deposit has been found in archaeological sites around the western Mediterranean, indicating that Sardinia was a center for Neolithic trade.

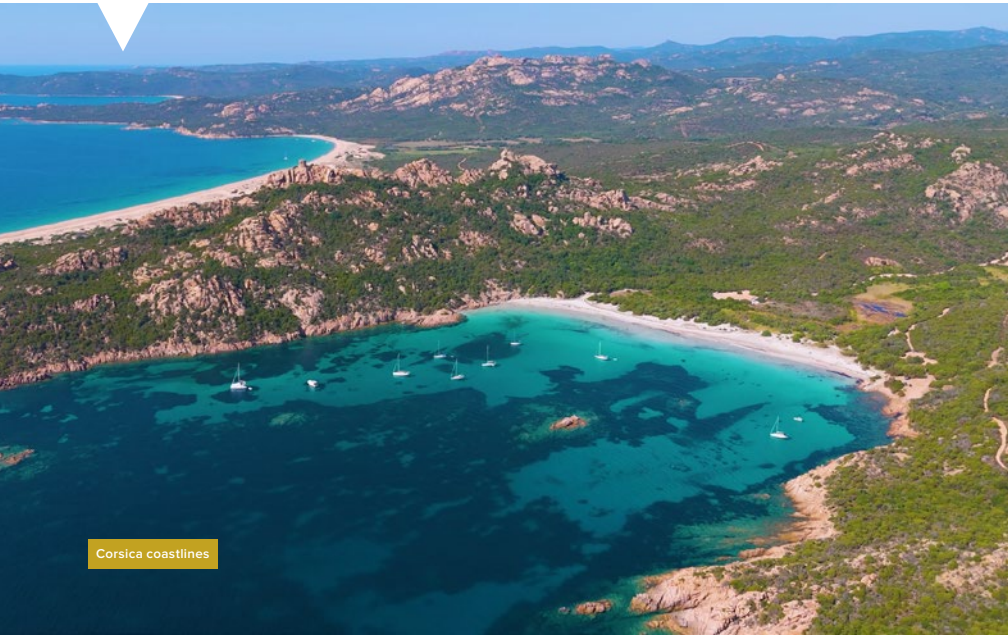
This means that prior to the Nuragi, several Neolithic cultures prospered on Sardinia. The Ozieri thrived between 3200 and 2800 BC. Large Stone Age complexes of Ozieri origin still exist—including the stone platform at Monte d'Accoddi, believed to be one of the oldest sites of animal sacrifice in western Europe. Many Ozieri tombs and necropolises have also been discovered, some containing goods from around the Mediterranean. In the largest necropolis at Anghelu Ruju, an axe from Britain was discovered. This find suggests that Sardinia was well connected to the long-range trading routes of the Stone Age.

The Nuragic peoples dominated Sardinia for more than 2,000 years, but by the 8th century BC, the Phoenicians were establishing colonies on the island as they expanded their trade routes through the Mediterranean. Due to its strategic location, the island changed hands many times, each change adding to the layers of cultural history.

Corsica

The island of Corsica shares a great deal of history with Sardinia. However, Corsica has a relatively uniform landscape, with a single chain of mountains making up two-thirds of the island's geography. The rest of the island consists of forest and flat coastline, including more than 200 beaches. Like Sardinia, Corsica was first inhabited by Neolithic peoples, with the earliest settlements dating to around 6000 BC. It is clear these tribes had advanced artistic abilities and strong social organizations.

Some of the most significant prehistoric monuments in the Mediterranean can be found in Filitosa. The site includes dolmens fashioned from three or more stones that are believed to have been used for healing and ritual practice. In addition, large upright stones—known as menhirs or standing stones—are arranged in specific groups and patterns. These stones are believed to have been used for astronomical observation or as part of an early calendar system. Although menhirs can be found elsewhere in mainland Europe, the ones at Corsica are unique for their distinct carvings that depict human anatomical features and even swords and daggers. These dolmens and menhirs reflect the early inhabitants' sophisticated social and religious practices and their deep-rooted sense of cultural identity.



Corsica coastlines

Archeologists have found little evidence of a strong maritime culture on the island during this early period. However, the discovery on Corsica of an Oxhide ingot—a heavy block of copper thought to have been a means of transporting copper or possibly a form of currency—indicates at least some trade connections with the wider world.

The Islands of Malta

Malta is an archipelago of seven islands with white-sand beaches, turquoise water, and a culture of hospitality and leisure. As a stop on the way between eastern and western Europe, Malta was a strategic location for Mediterranean traders and navies. It boasts a rich history that spans from the Neolithic era to the Byzantine period, emphasizing Malta's pivotal role as a Mediterranean crossroads for strategic navigation. This collection of islands is home to some of the oldest free-standing structures in the world, remnants of the

early Neolithic civilizations that inhabited Malta between 3600 and 2500 BC. However, there is evidence of human activity on the island as early as 5000 BC.

One of the oldest and grandest megalithic temple structures in the world is on the island of Gozo. The Ġgantija Temple complex is believed to have been used for fertility rituals, as many of the artifacts found depict pregnant women. The temples are built in the shape of a cloverleaf and face southeast in line with the sun's path during the equinox. Libation holes in the floor of the inner temple were used for pouring liquid offerings into the ground. In front of the complex, a large forecourt from the same period suggests that people assembled outside the monument during ceremonial activities.

Other large Neolithic sites on mainland Malta are notable for their sophisticated astronomical alignments. At the temple of Mnajdra, the doorways are aligned so that sunlight passes through them on the vernal and autumnal equinoxes. On the solstices, the megaliths on the left and right of the doorways are illuminated. Rows of holes in certain stones denote the timing of lunar phases and events. Many Neolithic temple complexes were built across the islands over thousands of years, the last ones at the end of the Neolithic period and in the early Bronze Age.

Malta, like Sardinia and Corsica, shows signs of not only cultural and artistic influences from other cultures but also likely trade connections across the Mediterranean. For instance, pottery fragments of Mycenaean origin were recovered in an ancient coastal village in the temple at Borg in-Nadur, which dates to around 2500 BC.

Pantelleria

At just 9 miles long and home to around 7,000 people, the island of Pantelleria—known in ancient times as Cossura—is the smallest of the four islands. Located in the Strait of Sicily, Pantelleria is unique among the Mediterranean islands for being a volcanic island formed from many layers of volcanic stone—a source of natural obsidian deposits for the early Neolithic peoples who settled on Pantelleria and an important early trade good.



Pantelleria garden

The oldest known villages on the island date to the 11th to 15th centuries BC. The most characteristic structures left behind by these early peoples are the *sesi*—conical structures built from volcanic rock with many entrances and chambers. The largest of these is the Sese Grande. The ancient people who built these structures—the Sesioti—may have been somewhat seasonal, with people moving on and off the island depending on the economic opportunities. Even though settled cultures were becoming the norm across the Mediterranean during the Neolithic period, sudden changes in local conditions could still prompt the abandonment of settlements or mass migrations.

There are no rivers on Pantelleria. There is also no groundwater, and rainfall is unpredictable at best. Even so, adaptations to this dry environment exist. A common sight on the island is the so-called Pantelleria garden, which consists of circular walls of lava stone piled up around various crops and

trees. These walls protect against the wind and evaporation, and they are sloped inwards so that dew and condensation drip from the walls onto the soil around the plants. It is not clear when these gardens were established.

Sardinia, Corsica, Malta, and Pantelleria all serve as monuments to the most ancient past—and were home to the first great settlements—of the central Mediterranean. Their Neolithic and Early Bronze remains provide a window into an interconnected Mediterranean world before the Phoenicians and Greeks.

16

MASSALIA, NARBO, AND SOUTHERN GAUL

The coastline of France is rich with ancient history. The Greeks established a foothold in southern France—particularly at Massalia, whose natural harbor flourished for centuries and was envied by the Carthaginians. Rome gained traction in the region at the port city of Narbo Martius. The Romans progressively conquered and assimilated the surrounding areas, joining together their previously established land routes in Hispania and Italia through southern Gaul. In the process, they initiated an impressive wave of urbanization that had a lasting effect on the entire coastline and produced one of the most Romanized areas of the empire. In addition to the port cities of Massalia and Narbo, this lecture will explore several Roman urban centers of southern France: Nemausus, Arelate, and Arausio. Together, these settlements provide a vivid snapshot of Roman cultural and urban assimilation.

Massalia

Greek colonists from the ancient city of Phocaea in Anatolia founded Massalia around 600 BC. According to Herodotus, the Phocaeans were the first Greeks to make long sea voyages and were credited with having discovered the Adriatic and Iberian coasts. According to legend, the colony was established by way of intermarriage and peaceful settlement rather than violent colonization.

Massalia flourished as a connection point between two major trade regions: vast reaches of Celtic Gaul—which wanted Roman products and wine—and Rome, which sought access to raw materials, food, and slaves. Massalia was a walled city with an expansive port and temples to Apollo and Artemis on the hill above the city. The Jardin des Vestiges contains the excavated remains of some of the Hellenic port and fortifications, whose materials and expanse attest to the city's size. At its height in the 3rd and 2nd centuries BC, Massalia was a highly influential city-state with economic and political ties to Rome.



Illustration of Massalia

Once the Romans had conquered Carthaginian Iberia in the Second Punic War, their attention turned to the southern coast of Gaul—a logical extension of their new Iberian holdings. The opportunity for the Romans to establish themselves in the region arose when Massalia asked Rome for help in the war against various indigenous Gallic tribes on its borders, in particular the Allobroges and Averni. In 122 BC, the Romans defeated the Salluvi—a hostile Gallic tribe just north of Massalia—and captured their main settlement.

Instead of the Massalians, the Romans assumed control over the conquered center. They then abandoned the settlement and built a new fortified castrum—Aquae Sextius, strategically located to control the routes east of Massalia and the routes to the Durance and Rhône Rivers. The location served as a launching point for more military campaigns in the region. Subsequent Roman victories over the neighboring Allobroges added a tract of new Roman territory along the coast.

Narbo Martius

In 118 BC, the Romans established Narbo Martius on top of an indigenous emporium that was already flourishing with trade in tin from Britain. Narbo was situated on a sprawling lagoon that provided several harbor areas connected to the sea by a narrow strait. By this point, most of the Gallic tribes of the area had been defeated, and Rome proclaimed a new province under its protection: Transalpine Gaul. It was the first Roman province beyond the Alps, and Narbo became its capital. Like many Roman provinces, Transalpine Gaul included various non-Roman polities, which were allies or client states of Rome but maintained local autonomy. Massalia assumed this status within Transalpine Gaul, but its autonomy and status diminished over time as cultural and political Romanization took place. Narbo eventually came to rival and overtake Massalia, and the province was renamed Gallia Narbonensis.

Although Narbo was intensively developed as a port city, it was also the first important node on a new overland route that linked Hispania to Italia: the Via Domitia. The paved Roman road facilitated trade, troop movement,

and urbanization. In the process, many settlements became Romanized. The transformation can be seen at sites such as Ambrussum. The Via Domitia went through the town, and improvements were made to support travel through the area. Over time, Ambrussum became a popular staging post with hotels and taverns. Documents indicate that during the Imperial era, the town was an important way station for the Roman mail service and provided services such as cart repair and horse replacement.


Ambrossum

As Romanization proceeded, Narbo flourished as the regional hub. Its growth intensified with Julius Caesar's conquest of Gaul, when Narbo became a way station for the armies and supplies that were sent north. Massalia lost much of its influence; it sided with Pompey and the enemies of Caesar and was defeated by Caesar's allies in 49 BC. By contrast, Narbo thrived after the war, with many veterans of the Gallic Wars settling in the city. The Romans improved the navigability of the waterway to Narbo by constructing a dam

and creating a new canal that led to the sea. A 3rd-century AD mosaic from the Piazza of the Corporations in Ostia Antica indicates that Narbo was a primary port of Gaul.

At its height, Narbo may have had more than 50,000 inhabitants and was the main point of exchange between the Mediterranean and the conquered realms of Gaul. The city's focal point was a massive temple dedicated to three gods—Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva—which towered over the forum and the rest of the city. Narbo became famous for its own trade goods and exports, particularly a type of rosemary honey that was very popular among the elites in Rome. Several reliefs attest to the commercial life of the city.

Nemausus

Continued Roman conquest and expansion created a network of colonies and cities throughout the region, reinforcing the link between Gaul and the Mediterranean world. Coastal towns, inland towns, and tributaries flowing into major rivers with a high level of navigability allowed for unique connectivity. The Romans undertook heavily urbanized construction projects, building massive entertainment centers whose impact is still visible in some of the preserved smaller cities in the region.

Under Augustus, Nemausus—modern Nimes—was one such urban center that thrived as a waypoint on the growing Via Domitia. Augustus gave land to legionaries as a reward for defeating Antony and Cleopatra in 31 BC. This history is reflected in the town's ancient coins, which depict a chained crocodile that represents the taming of Egypt—a symbol that is still seen on the city's coat of arms.

Nemausus was augmented by an aqueduct and a water tank, both of which remain. For the Augustan temple, the details were copied directly from contemporary works in the capital city. The restored inscription on the temple reads that it was dedicated to Augustus's grandsons and his adopted sons, Gaius and Lucius. A massive limestone building known as the Temple of Diana may have been a meeting hall or library dating to the Hadrianic era.

The well-preserved arena of Nemausus comprises two stories of local stone and was used as late as the 19th century when it was a popular venue for local bullfighting.

Arelate and Arausio

Prior to the arrival of the Romans, many of the region's major cities were founded along the confluence of tributaries into the Rhône. The Rhône River begins in the Swiss Alps, then flows into Lake Geneva and on to France and the Mediterranean. At Arelate, the Rhône splits into its two main branches to the sea.



With the gradual Romanization of northern Gaul, economic productivity exploded between the end of the 1st century BC and the 2nd century AD. The various local populations flocked to the new urban centers, which became major economic hubs. Many products were brought to the Mediterranean market along a series of navigable rivers, and the Rhône was the main artery. The production of meat, olives, fruit, and horses was highly profitable. The demand for cheese, wine, pottery, glass, metalwork, and textiles grew for both local consumption and export. Materials such as wood and metals were in high demand in Rome.

In the Imperial age, Arelate replaced Massalia as the principal hub between the rivers and the sea. Roman Arelate spanned nearly 100 acres and was surrounded by a massive wall circuit. The inner city was dominated by a large theatre and arena. The main road led to the forum and temple complex, which formed the administrative and mercantile heart of the city. On the city's outskirts stood a circus for equestrian events, indicating the city was a center of Roman culture and sophistication. The intact amphitheater is



Ampitheater

an example of Roman architecture in the region—the structure features 120 arches and a complex system of arcades, terraces, and galleries to allow quick entry and exit for its massive crowds.

Rather than a stone bridge across the wide Rhône River, Arelate had a novel pontoon boat bridge. Anchored between two masonry piers, this wooden bridge on boats had the advantage of being able to rise and fall with the changing water levels and could adapt to the unpredictable flows of the river. A few miles away, Roman engineers created a channel from the aqueduct to draw water over the edge of the cliffside. That water powered a series of 16 water wheels that were used to grind grain.

In the nearby city of Arausio, two important monuments remain. The first is a triple arch Tiberius constructed in AD 27 to celebrate Germanicus's victory over the German tribes along the Rhine. The arch was later incorporated into the medieval city walls. The second monument is the well-preserved theater of Arausio. The entire *scaenae frons* building remains and, with today's modern seating, holds almost 8,000 people.

Southern Gaul became assimilated to such a degree that its cities were essentially extensions of Rome, with similar cultural amenities and architectural landscapes. The region was part of the evolving story of Roman citizenship.

17

INNOVATIVE ISLANDS: RHODES, SAMOS, AND KOS

Three islands in the Eastern Aegean were renowned centers of learning and innovation in the Mediterranean: Rhodes was a Mediterranean trade capital that accomplished incredible feats of ancient architecture and art; Kos's sanctuary of Asclepius drew the sick in search of cures; and Samos was a small but mighty island that produced many innovative mathematicians and engineers—not least Pythagoras. This lecture will take you on a tour of these three islands, whose different stories of how they rose to prominence highlight the diversity of ways that cities could become great in the ancient Mediterranean.

The Island of Rhodes

Rhodes's history was shaped by trade, commerce, religion, and architecture from different periods. The Dorian Greeks who came to settle on the island named the main cities after the sons of Helios and Rhodos: Lindus, Ialysus, and Camirus. According to tradition, Lindus was established around 1000 BC. Its acropolis atop a rocky outcrop overlooked the town and harbor below—a practical and defensible location that would have attracted the first colonies.

The Temple of Athena Lindia stood in the acropolis complex and was an important and prominent feature on the island. Built in the 6th century, the temple was dedicated to Athena and was almost 22 feet high and 70 feet long.



Rhodes

Several votive offerings fashioned in styles and with materials not native to Rhodes have been found around the temple, suggesting that pilgrims came from afar to offer sacrifices at the temple.

Lindus was an important stopping point for Phoenician merchants, who also began to establish colonies on the island. Glass artifacts found in the Rhodian city of Ialysus are proof of Phoenician influence. The Phoenicians were expert glassmakers, and the lens-shaped artifacts were likely used as magnifying glasses by artisans.

Kamiros is another of the older settlements, and it is an important archaeological site. The city's remains span three levels of terraces on the hillside. To provide Kamiros with drinkable water, the city builders constructed reservoirs on the uppermost level, large enough to hold almost 160,000 gallons of water that gravity could feed down to the town and structures below. The middle terrace was the main residential level; it features a collection of houses and an urban layout that is intact due to the stone foundations.

The City of Rhodes

The main settlement on the island of Rhodes was the city of Rhodes, established in 408 BC by the other cities on the island. The city of Rhodes had three harbors to welcome ships and travelers. The grid concept was used to develop neat city blocks that were connected by broad streets and a well-organized water supply and sewerage network. The only remnants of the settlement are several columns of the Temple of Apollo and the partially restored stadium where Rhodes held the Haleion Games in honor of its patron god Helios.

The Ptolemies of Alexandria brought an Egyptian influence onto the island. The city of Rhodes became a critical port in one of the most extensive trade networks in the Mediterranean and a powerhouse of commerce. Greco-Egyptian influence was particularly strong during this time; evidence of an artistic link between the nations exists, especially in literature. Poet and scholar Apollonius of Rhodes was one of the most prominent figures of Hellenistic Rhodes. His most influential work, *Argonautica*, is the only epic

from the Hellenistic period to have survived in its entirety and has given scholars and historians key insights into the literary themes and styles of the era.

The Rhodians often repelled attacks by neighboring nations that sought control of their trade empire. A sculpted relief at Lindus captures the design of a Rhodian warship of antiquity called a *trihemiolia*, known to be one of the fastest and most maneuverable designs of the era. In 305 BC, Demetrius Poliorcetes of Macedonia laid siege to the city, but he gave up after Rhodes had withstood the siege for more than a year. To celebrate their victory, the Rhodians created the Colossus of Rhodes—a depiction of their patron god, Helios—which stood in the harbor of the city of Rhodes. In 226 BC, the large bronze statue collapsed during an earthquake and was not rebuilt.

The Island of Kos

Just west of Rhodes lies the island of Kos, also called the island of healing. It was recognized as a center of learning and culture in the ancient world. The island's first settlers were Doric Greeks from Epidaurus who were part of a cult that worshiped Asclepius—the god of healing and medicine. The sanctuary at Epidaurus was a popular pilgrimage site from the 5th century BC onward. People came to the sanctuary to be cured of their ills and purified by the sanctuary priests. The settlers established specialized places to care for the sick, beginning the island's reputation as a place for healing.

The Asclepieion—the main healing complex—dominated the hillside that looked out over the town and the sea. The complex stood on a series of terraces that were built into the side of the hill and featured different areas for bathing, resting, eating, and praying. Its layout included therapeutic halls, temples, and a sacred grove that provided a serene environment for healing. The ruins of the Asclepieion of Kos showcase a blend of Greek and Roman architectural elements, attesting to its continued use in the Roman period.

While much of what went on at the Asclepieion was equivalent to faith healing, the Asclepieion of Kos also engaged in more sophisticated medicine. Hippocrates—considered the father of medicine—was born on Kos in 460 BC and was one of the first to theorize that diseases were not punishment



Illustration of Kos

from the gods but the result of biological and anatomical problems. He created a rigorous method for recording and tracking a patient's symptoms and attempted to systematize the study of medical conditions. Concepts such as acute, chronic, relapse, and exacerbate all entered the medical lexicon because of Hippocrates.

The ancient Koans discovered the secret to creating silk-like fabrics from the threads produced by the *Pachypasa otus* moth found on the island. Garments known as *coa vestis* were made exclusively in Kos and were considered highly valuable. As the material degrades quickly, no samples of it exist, but the legacy of the silk and the island's prestige lives on in the historical records of Aristotle and Pliny the Elder.

The famed *coa vestis* were exported via Cos—the harbor of the capital city, established in 366 BC. Archaeologists have discovered the remains of a town and ancient agora on the hillside overlooking the natural harbor. The Greek-style agora is laid out in a grid pattern and is one of the largest

agoras discovered in the Mediterranean to date. The agora complex includes ruins of a temple to the god-hero Hercules. The stoa was built with Doric-style pillars and is thought to be one of the oldest sections, which was expanded during the Hellenistic and Roman eras.

During the Hellenistic era, the island reached its peak of importance in the region. This is evident in the remains of an ancient gymnasium found near the agora. The ruins indicate that the gymnasium was an expansive complex—complete with a swimming pool, a road for foot races, and a portico under which athletes could rest in the shade between competitions. Several Hellenistic-style floor mosaics suggest that the gymnasium was also a place where young men gathered for intellectual discussions.

The Island of Samos

Samos is situated directly off the coast of Turkey in the Aegean Sea. The island's proximity to the coast of Asia Minor allowed it to benefit from nearby trade routes to Athens, Crete, and Italy. The Ionian Greeks created the settlement in the 10th century BC, and the temples on the island suggest these first inhabitants were worshippers of Hera.

The center of worship was the Heraion. In the 8th century BC, the *Hecatompedon*—a 110-foot-long central temple structure—was constructed. The temple complex continued to expand over the next few centuries. A double row of columns across the front was added in the 7th century BC, and a brand-new temple was built in the 6th century BC. The Heraion likely dominated ancient Samos.

Samos became famous for maritime engineering during the Lelantine War. Starting in the 6th century BC, Samos was in competition with the mainland city of Miletus, just a few miles opposite the island on the mainland of Anatolia. Accounts describe Samos as fighting with a new kind of warship called a trireme, which had three rows of oars as opposed to the two rows used by the biremes of the day. The ships were fast and imposing and became synonymous with Samos as their maritime power grew.



Illustration of Samos

The tyrant Polycrates played an important role in Samos's history. After taking power in 535 BC, Polycrates brought the island to its greatest heights. He aided innovation as he sought to fortify the capital city against his many enemies. During his reign, Polycrates ordered a new aqueduct to be constructed. Rather than building an overground aqueduct as was typical of the ancient world, Polycrates insisted that it was built underground to protect the water supply from being cut off by enemy forces. According to Herodotus, Polycrates commissioned engineer Eupalinus of Megara to build the aqueduct—a project that became known as the Eupalinus Aqueduct. The construction crews started digging from opposite sides of the mountain, meeting in the middle at a spot that Eupalinus had calculated with Euclidean geometry. The notches and shifts in the tunnel show where course corrections had to be made. The aqueduct was used for more than 1,000 years before it became clogged, but it remains to this day.

Samos is the birthplace of several influential individuals. Both the mathematician and philosopher Pythagoras and the prominent philosopher Epicurus were born on the island. The latter was the founder of Epicureanism—a way of thinking that became highly popular in the Greco-

Roman world—and an advocate of the idea that all physical matter is made up of small invisible particles called atoms—the basis of the modern atomic theory. Aristarchus of Samos, born on the island around 310 BC, was the first recorded astronomer to propose that the earth revolves around the sun rather than the other way around. He was one of the greatest astronomers of antiquity, and it would take many centuries for some of his ideas to be proven right.

Rhodes, Samos, and Kos were flourishing centers of innovation and thought during antiquity, impacting everything from medicine to architectural styles across the empire. They prove that even small cities could become some of the most influential cities of the ancient Mediterranean.

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JERUSALEM, PETRA, AND THE DESERT TRADE

Jerusalem played a significant role in the trade networks of the ancient Mediterranean. Despite its inland location, the city's strategic position and political importance connected it to coastal ports and thus facilitated a vibrant exchange of goods, cultures, and ideas. From early Canaanite settlement to a Roman-dominated city, Jerusalem had ties to the coast that made it a crucible of religions and cultures. Furthermore, the southern Levant—a region known in antiquity by names such as Canaan, Judaea, and Palaestina—produced several seafaring cultures whose cities were also bustling centers of trade and commerce. This lecture will explore ancient Jerusalem and the ports and people that connected the city to the sea. It will also look at several cultures in southern Levant, particularly the Nabateans, whose capital Petra became a crossroads between the Mediterranean and Arabia.

Trade Connections

Jerusalem is located on the spur of a plateau in the Judaean mountains. The city's oldest signs of fortification and urbanization date back to the Middle Bronze Age. Canaan—the ancient term for the city's surrounding region of the southern Levant—stretched from the Dead Sea in the southeast corner to the Sea of Galilee in the northeast. Furthermore, the Mesopotamian civilizations of the Fertile Crescent were to the east, and the Egyptian kingdoms were to the southwest; thus, Canaan was a major point of exchange between the Mediterranean and the Near East. Archaeological evidence from the Bronze Age suggests that Canaan was part of a major trade highway connecting the Mediterranean Sea to India and South Asia.



Illustration of Jerusalem

Tel Megiddo—today not far from Haifa in Israel—was a large and powerful city in Bronze Age Canaan. Today, the site has 20 archaeological layers, which were created as new generations built and rebuilt atop the previous city. The ancient city had a palace at the center and strong perimeter walls around it. The largest complex within the ancient city seems to have been the stables. Horses were a valuable commodity in the ancient world, particularly for the empires of the Near East, who used them extensively in warfare and chariot racing. Megiddo likely served as a training ground and trading post for horses to the Assyrians. However, its trade connections went far beyond Assyria. Dental analysis of Bronze Age remains in Megiddo has revealed traces of soybeans, sesame, and turmeric—products only available from South Asia during this period. Other uncovered items indicate trade with Egypt. At another Bronze Age settlement on the coast—Tel Kabri—a Minoan-style fresco was found, revealing that ancient Canaan was also connected to the early Greek world.

During the Iron Age, the Israelites formed the Kingdoms of Judah and Israel in central Canaan. When King David established his capital at Jerusalem, he sought to control the vast surrounding territory and build more connections to the sea. In this period, Phoenician maritime expertise influenced Jerusalem's trade and helped connect it to the Mediterranean. The city of Tyre is mentioned several dozen times in the Bible, nearly always in the context of trade or craftsmanship, particularly as a source of timber and metals used in the construction of Jerusalem. Tyrian craftsmen are also credited for helping build the palace of King David.

The Philistines, another group from Canaan, established several major port cities during the Iron Age. Philistine port cities such as Ashkelon were likely important transshipment points between the caravans of the Near East and the ships of the Mediterranean. The Philistines are often described as crude and uncultured pagans, but archaeological discoveries indicate they operated a sophisticated olive oil factory at Ekron. It is estimated that during the Philistine period, Ekron produced at least 500 tons of oil annually—the largest oil production center uncovered so far in the ancient world—which must have been for export.

The Jewish Diaspora

Canaan's strategic location made the Philistines and the Israelites a target. In the 600s BC, the Neo-Babylonian Empire conquered the Philistine city-states, sacked Jerusalem, and destroyed the first Temple of Solomon. The subsequent deportation of much of the population was the first of many exoduses. It spawned a diaspora that gave the Jewish community deep roots throughout the Mediterranean and made Jerusalem one of the most widely connected cities in the ancient world.

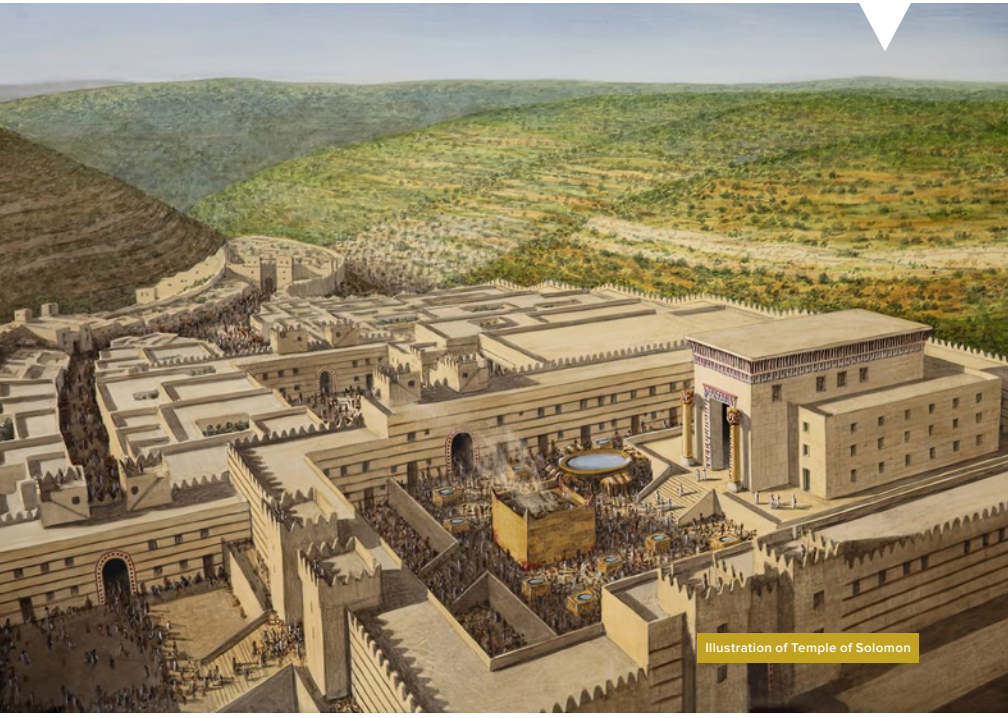


Illustration of Temple of Solomon

The Jewish diaspora was notable for maintaining its identity and connection with the homeland. Part of that ongoing connection was the temple tax—every adult male Jew paid an annual half-shekel in tax to the temple in Jerusalem, regardless of where he was in the Mediterranean. Foreign Jewish

communities also made voluntary contributions. As the Jewish diaspora grew and thrived, the stream of funds sent to Jerusalem increased—the largest sums coming from the wealthy Jewish communities in Asia Minor and Egypt.

The contributions helped the city recover from the destruction. Over the following centuries, the Persians, Macedonians, and Seleucids ruled over Canaan and Jerusalem, but the city was given a large degree of autonomy and managed its own affairs. The region produced wheat, barley, olives, figs, dates, grapes, and wine. The city's location ensured that trade contributed significantly to its prosperity. The Jewish diaspora formed a network of trading communities around the Mediterranean, allowing Jews to engage in long-distance trade through trusted contacts and middlemen along the route. The resulting economic base was regularly mobilized to sustain prolonged and large-scale revolts against any infringements on its autonomy—such as the Maccabean revolt, which ultimately led to a semi-independent Jewish kingdom being revived in 140 BC.

Jerusalem

Herod the Great was installed as king of the Jews in 37 BC at the behest of the Romans, who were then the dominant force in the Levant. With the support of Rome, Herod became a prolific builder. The masterpiece of his reign was the remodeling and expansion of the Second Temple, the chief place of worship of the ancient Jewish faith.

Herod built a plaza around the temple to expand the available land at the peak of the mountain. The plaza was surrounded by porticoes that provided sheltered places for money changers and merchants to conduct business, making this area the commercial heart of the city. At the center of the plaza, the sanctuary building comprised the Holy of Holies—the most sacred place of Judaism, accessed only by the high priest once a year. It contained the Ark of the Covenant and was where God would appear on the Day of Atonement. Tens of thousands of Jewish pilgrims from the many Jewish communities of the diaspora visit the city annually, particularly for the festivals of Passover, Shavuot, and Sukkot.

A few decades after Herod's death, Judaea reverted to a Roman province with a governor. In AD 66, the first of a series of Jewish rebellions broke out, triggered by the oppressive rule of the new Roman governors, taxation, and religious tensions. A Roman blockade of Jewish ports choked off essential supplies to the capital, ultimately leading to the city's fall in AD 70. Jerusalem was pillaged in the aftermath, and large parts of the city were set ablaze. The Second Temple was destroyed—a turning point in history that dramatically reshaped the Jewish community. Subsequent rebellions and Roman reprisals devastated and depopulated the wider region of Judaea, and Jerusalem's ties to the Mediterranean would remain broken until the Byzantine era.

The Nabataeans

Another ancient people who crossed this land and connected the Mediterranean to the Near East were the Nabataeans. The Nabataean kingdom was an ancient Arab state located in modern-day Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and parts of Syria and Israel. It flourished from around the 4th century BC until its annexation by the Roman Empire in AD 106. The Nabataeans were renowned for their mastery of trade, advanced water management systems, and architectural achievements.

The Nabataean kingdom was a crucial link in the ancient trade network known as the incense route, which connected the Levant through Arabia to India. It was the channel for some of the most sought-after luxuries of the ancient Mediterranean—including incense, spices, gemstones, silk, animal hides, pearls, and feathers. Many ancient religions used incense in their rituals. Incense typically consisted of resins such as frankincense and myrrh, which were found in the southern Arabian Peninsula. The Nabataeans were the masters of shipping incense from the peninsula to the rest of the Mediterranean.

Gaza, a Nabataean port city on the coast, served as the principal trade outlet to the Mediterranean world. The Nabataeans also maintained important ports on the Red Sea—including at Aila, on the mouth of the Gulf of Aqaba. Aila was particularly crucial, as it allowed the Nabataeans to sail around

Arabia and East Africa and over to India. Land routes from Aila led to Gaza and to the Mediterranean. Islands such as Cyprus and Rhodes served as important maritime stops and depots for Nabataean traders. Evidence of a strong Nabataean presence has been found as far away as Misenum, near the Bay of Naples.

The kingdom's southern capital and the launching point for caravans and trade routes to the east was Hegra. The city is famous for its rock-cut, sandstone tombs—some bearing inscriptions with information about the grave owners and the masons who carved them. In addition, more than 130 wells have been discovered at Hegra, as well as remains of a substantial residential district. The Nabataeans were masters of finding and preserving water. They located oases, dug wells, and created cisterns and water tanks in the rocks. Their water infrastructure was hidden to prevent non-Nabataeans or invaders from making use of it.

The most famous of the Nabataean sites is the main capital, Petra. It is enclosed by a valley of towering rockfaces through which the main commercial routes needed to pass from the coast and north to reach their trade roads. This gave the Nabataeans control of the routes. At Petra, both Al-Khazneh and Ed-Deir—elaborate and ornate rock-cut edifices—show a blending of Hellenistic and Mesopotamian culture, demonstrating that Petra was inextricably linked with the Mediterranean world. The city's religion and art similarly mix Mediterranean and Near Eastern ideas and gods.

The Nabataean kingdom was annexed by Rome under Trajan in AD 106, integrating Nabataean trade routes and cities into the Roman economy. Despite initial prosperity under Roman rule, the importance of Nabataean cities declined in the 3rd century AD due to changing trade routes. However, the cultural and architectural legacy of the Nabataeans continued to influence the region.

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ANTIOCH AND THE JOURNEYS OF PAUL

Acts of the Apostles, the fifth book of the New Testament, is the account of the founding of the Christian Church and its early spread in the Roman Empire. More than half of the book's verses are devoted to describing the life and travels of Saint Paul, whose missionary journeys crisscrossed the eastern Mediterranean before his arrest and his death around AD 65. Paul's influence on the evolution of Christianity was profound, and his missions were instrumental in the early spread of the faith that completely transformed the Mediterranean world. This lecture retraces some of Paul's life in the 1st century AD. The journey will take you to some of the great cities of this period—starting and ending with Antioch, which emerged as the most important city of early Christianity after Jerusalem.

Paul's Early Years

Paul was born Saul in Tarsus around AD 5. Tarsus was an important port city just south of the Cilician Gates—a pass through the Taurus Mountains that was critical for those crossing southern Anatolia. Saul came from a devout Jewish family, and he was sent to Jerusalem to study. He became part of the traditionalist faction of the Second Temple, which was trying to suppress the radical new ideas being spread by the followers of a recently executed man called Jesus. While Saul was traveling to Damascus to arrest those suspected of being part of the new movement, Jesus appeared to him. According to Acts 9:3, Saul fell to the ground after a blinding light appeared, and he heard a great voice say, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? ... I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting."

Saul was blinded and was told to go to Damascus, where his sight was restored by one of the followers he had been sent to persecute. Thereafter, Saul became Paul, and he devoted the rest of his life to spreading the word of Jesus. Paul now faced persecution by the authorities himself and relocated to Antioch, where he launched his mission of conversion.

The City of Antioch

Antioch was founded by Seleucus I Nicator—one of Alexander's generals and successors—in 300 BC. The Seleucid empire was the largest of the successor states, stretching from the Turkish coast to Afghanistan and Pakistan. It had two capitals: Antioch in the west and Seleucia in the east. Antioch had a strategic location—guarding the Belen Pass, which controlled access between Syria and southern Anatolia. The city's connection to the sea was via the Orontes River, but a satellite port city on the coast was also established.

Over time, the city was built across four interconnected quarters that were surrounded by their own walls. To encourage residents to move in, Seleucus ensured that Antioch's construction was well funded and included many amenities. He also offered significant benefits, and Antioch grew quickly. Trading opportunities existed—on the fertile surrounding lands, cotton, grain, grapes, and other foodstuffs were grown for export. The city also



Illustration of Antioch

had many workshops that specialized in metalworking. The city was likely involved in the arms trade, fashioning weaponry and armor for warring armies in the Near East.

After the collapse of the Seleucid Empire, Antioch passed into Roman hands and continued to flourish. By the time Paul arrived, the city was one of the largest in the Mediterranean. Archaeological evidence shows that residential districts had started to expand beyond the four walled quarters. Antioch was diverse, and it was known for its permissive attitude. Ancient visitor accounts

suggest the city was a place of sin and temptation. Some of its wealth may have come from tourism, with traders and naval vessels adding Antioch to their routes for the rest and recreation of their sailors.

The Free City

To encourage growth and appease the diverse population, Seleucus had given Antioch free-city status. Free cities enjoyed local autonomy and were allowed to be governed by their own local laws and leaders. When the Romans took over Antioch, they honored the existing arrangement, thus allowing the locals to elect their own magistrates and live by their own laws. That autonomy extended to the Jews of the city, who since the time of Seleucus had been allowed freedom of worship and other privileges—all inscribed on bronze tablets hung in the main public square.

The wealthy and heavily Hellenized Jewish community of Antioch was most receptive to the idea that Jesus was their messiah. This positive stance and the city's reputation for religious and social tolerance meant that many in the Jesus movement fled to Antioch after the beginning of the persecutions in Jerusalem, and many more followed after the destruction of the Second Temple. The Jewish community's integration into the general population also meant that Gentiles—or non-Jews—learned about and joined the Jesus movement. This completely changed the nature of the movement, turning it from a schism within the Jewish faith to an entirely new faith. Paul was an enthusiastic advocate of this process, believing Jesus to be a universal savior rather than the savior of only Jews. To that end, he advocated moderation of Jewish laws to ease the entry of Gentiles into the new church. In Antioch, the Jesus movement became a new faith.

One of the oldest Christian churches in the world is near Antakya, the modern Turkish city built on ancient Antioch. It is called the Church of Saint Peter. According to tradition, it stands where the first believers of the city met and worshipped in a cave and where Paul was baptized after his conversion. A façade was later built over the opening to the cave—rebuilt into its current form by the crusaders in the 11th century and restored to its current state in the 19th century.

Paul's Missions

After Paul established this first Christian church in Antioch, he embarked on three missionary journeys to spread the new faith and establish other churches. Accompanied by Barnabas, Paul visited the island of Cyprus, where he went to Salamis and Paphos. Local histories of Paphos state that Paul was caught preaching by the local authorities and lashed as punishment. A pillar in Paphos is by tradition the one Paul was tied to while he was lashed, but the account in Acts doesn't mention this.



Pillar in Paphos

From Cyprus, Paul and Barnabas landed in Anatolia at the port city of Perga. The general outline of the city at its height is still intact, and Paul may have walked on the long colonnaded street that led up to the center of the city. The street was adorned by many columns, and down its center ran a long

cascading fountain that flowed from the acropolis down to a nymphaeum at the bottom. The main marketplace and baths were located at the lower end of the street. The Bible notes that Paul preached in Perga, and as he sought to reach a wider audience on his mission, he may have preached in the markets of the cities he visited. Perga had several large public spaces; the Romans built both a grand theatre and a large stadium, both of which are well preserved. However, there is no evidence that Paul preached in great spaces like these; rather, his most successful missionary work seems to have come from more intimate meetings with the established Hellenized Jewish communities in local synagogues and private homes.

In the next town, many outsiders came to listen to Paul's sermon. Angered by their presence, the Jewish community turned on Paul and claimed that his sermon was blasphemous. Paul famously responded that the Jews—having heard God's word and rejected it—had proved themselves unworthy of salvation, unlike the Gentiles. Infuriated, the Jewish community pressured the city authorities to have Paul and Barnabas thrown out of town. After being chased out of several cities, Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch. Paul embarked on two more missionary journeys, visiting cities such as Kos, Delphi, Miletus, and Pergamon. He spent 3 years in Ephesus, which became an important early center of Christianity. His journeys lay the foundations for the spread of Christianity across the Greek-speaking world.

Paul's Final Journey

Paul maintained ongoing communication with the churches he established, writing letters to counsel them on issues of theology and administration. Much of his correspondence was to the church he established in the city of Corinth, where he resided for 18 months. Paul was not well received by the Jewish elders and did not preach in the synagogue. Instead, his church met in the home of a Gentile supporter.

After his final stay in Corinth, Paul arrived in Jerusalem in AD 57. When some Jews visiting the city from Asia Minor accused Paul of defiling synagogues by bringing Gentiles into them, he was seized by an angry mob. The Roman authorities arrested Paul and took him to the Antonia Fortress,

which then stood at the corner of the temple mount. The local tribune held a meeting between Paul and the Jewish leaders to get to the bottom of the dispute, but disagreement among the Jewish leaders resulted in Paul being transferred to Caesarea Maritima so that the governor could decide the best course of action. When Paul was told there would be another trial in Jerusalem, he asserted his right to be tried in Rome instead—marking the beginning of his final journey.

Paul spent the next 2 years under house arrest in Rome but continued to preach and assist with the growth of the early church that Peter had established. His trial coincided with the first wide-scale crackdown on Christians in the empire—initiated by Nero in the aftermath of the Great Fire of Rome, which he blamed on the Christians. Paul was sentenced to death. He was buried beyond the walls of Rome, and a basilica dedicated to him was constructed on the site in the 4th century.

The church Paul helped to establish transformed the Mediterranean world. After the destruction of Jerusalem, Paul's church in Antioch was the principal center of early Christianity for several centuries. Antioch's prestige as one of the birthplaces of Christianity meant it was lavished with patronage by the later Christian emperors—including Constantine, who commissioned an enormous cathedral in the city.

Antioch was devastated by several earthquakes. Eventually, it was abandoned during the wars between the Christian and the Arab world. By the 1400s, Antioch's population was just 300 people.

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DESERT CITIES OF NUMIDIA AND MAURETANIA

More than 1,000 miles of coastline stretches from the southern Pillar of Hercules to the northernmost tip of Africa at Cape Angela. Today, this coastline runs across the top of modern Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia. The area was once known as the regions of Numidia and Mauretania and was home to prosperous Berber kingdoms before becoming Roman provinces. The ancient landscapes shed light on the unique culture and peoples of North Africa. This lecture will tour some of the varied terrains and lost cities of this region. It will explore the Berber tribes that once dominated the area, right up to Rome's scheme to dot the region with military towns and veterans' colonies.

The Berbers

In ancient times, the Mediterranean coast of today's Morocco and Algeria were part of the homelands of the Berbers—a diverse group of tribes, each with its own language. For thousands of years, the Berber tribes were seminomadic, and not much is known about their culture or history.

According to historical records, the Phoenicians were the first to establish settlements along the North African coast. The leading cities were Carthage and the three ports of Tripolitania, but the Phoenicians also settled further west, even beyond the mouth of the Mediterranean. The ancient people grouped the Berbers of this western region into two groups—the Numidians, who lived west of Carthage across modern Algeria; and the Mauri, who occupied modern Morocco. Significant Berber populations toward the coast had permanent settlements and were engaged in farming.

Further south, the tribes were nomadic, maintaining large herds and trade caravans across the arid regions. Certain tribes occupied complexes of caves, which they used as housing and storage areas for the winter months. Thousands of prehistoric engravings found in the Sahara Desert show that the Berber peoples adapted to and survived in the harsh environment for tens of thousands of years. The arrival of the Phoenicians triggered a period of significant change for the Berbers, who gradually formed more urbanized societies and adopted many aspects of Punic culture.

They developed their alphabet, the first inscriptions of which appeared around the same time the Phoenicians began to interact with the Berbers. It is possible that the Berber alphabet was inspired by the Phoenician alphabet. The process was likely accelerated by trade interactions and the many Numidian horsemen who served in the Punic mercenary armies, usually for years at a time before returning home.



Berber alphabet

Numidia

Berber cities started to appear in historical records—particularly in eastern Numidia, where extensive interaction with Carthage led to increased centralization. In the ancient city of Dougga, stone tombs indicate that settlement predated the Phoenicians, but a city seems to have been established by the Berbers in the 6th century BC. Among the few remaining examples of Berber architecture is a mausoleum, dating to around the 3rd century BC. It has a unique blend of Punic, Egyptian, and Greek artistic influences but bears a Numidian inscription.

In many ancient cities of the region, the Berber layer of history is hard to find. Structures were either built from impermanent materials or covered over by later settlements. The Numidian city of Dougga was built over by a Roman town, which is well preserved. The site includes a theater and the capitol, which has a temple dedicated to Jupiter, Juno, Minerva, and some of the imperial divinities.

Around the 4th century BC, the Numidians and Mauri began to form centralized kingdoms. As a result, some monumental architecture appeared. Herodotus recorded that the Numidians adopted many of the Punic gods but also had a significant cult around the dead. They worshipped their deceased rulers, as evidenced by the enormous tomb of a Numidian king found at Madghacen, dating to around the mid-3rd century BC. Its design is distinctly Berber, but the monument contains classical Mediterranean elements, such as columns of the Doric order.

The Numidian kingdoms were powerful, and the Carthaginians increasingly relied on them as trading partners and military allies. The Numidian and Carthaginian elite frequently intermarried for political and economic reasons.

Numidia Defeated and Restored

After the Second Punic War, Masinissa—the leader of one of the largest federations of Berber tribes in the region—switched sides to the Romans as the tide was turning against Carthage. After a joint Numidian–Roman

triumph at the Battle of Zama in 202 BC, Masinissa was rewarded with sovereignty over nearly all of Carthaginian North Africa, save for the Roman province formed around Carthage itself.



The new Numidian kingdom became famous in the Roman world for its agriculture. It produced high-quality wheat and barley, similar to the wheat farmed along the banks of the Nile in Egypt. Major trade networks and new urban areas started to form across Numidia to facilitate trade with Rome, the Greeks, and the Egyptians. Numidia's importance to the Roman supply chain meant that any disruption to the stability of the region would provoke a dramatic reaction. In 118 BC, the anti-Roman Jugurtha rose to power in Numidia. The Romans gained the allegiance of Bocchus—Jugurtha's father-in-law and king of the vast lands of the Mauri to the west of Numidia.

The subsequent defeat of Jugurtha led to some of Numidia being annexed to Mauretania. Numidia disappeared altogether not long after, when its last kings backed Pompey over Caesar in the civil war for the Republic.

Caesar took Juba—infant son of the last Numidian king—back to Rome to be raised in his household. Juba's loyalty to the Roman Empire was rewarded by the restoration of the kingdom of Numidia, and Juba became king of Numidia and Mauretania. He was given Cleopatra Selene II—the daughter of the now deceased Mark Antony and Cleopatra—as his wife. Juba and Cleopatra Selene developed a sophisticated cultural fusion in the cities of North Africa, particularly in the capital. Juba's additions to Caesarea Mauretaniae included cultural enhancements such as a theater, circus, amphitheater, basilica, pharos, amphitheater, library, and collection of art. New infrastructure projects used Roman engineering to support a growing population in these arid areas. These improvements were possible due to the kingdom's production of agricultural produce and Tyrian purple dye.

Legio III Augusta

King Ptolemy—Juba's son and successor—was murdered by the emperor Caligula in AD 40, and all of North Africa was annexed by the Roman Empire. Revolts by traditional Berber tribes increased, and the instability necessitated a growing Roman military presence in the region.

A legion was permanently stationed in North Africa: Legio III Augusta. Augustus had first based 5,000 soldiers and twice the number of auxiliary troops in Ammaedara in Tunisia. From this inland post, the legions began to construct infrastructure such as walls, roads, aqueducts, and bridges to allow the army to move swiftly against the raids of the Berber tribes. The army also stood as a buffer between the developed coastline and the inland tribes that continued to harass the urban centers. There was no wall circuit but rather a *limes*—a border that was permeable but controlled with trenches, watchtowers, and a series of fortifications.

During the reign of Vespasian, the Legio III was moved to Theveste—today's Tébessa, Algeria—located next to the Aurès Mountains. The outpost was expanded, and one of the added structures was a basilica that later became a Christian worship facility. Before the rise of Islam, North Africa had many important early Christian centers.



Today's Thebessa, Algeria ruins

Under the emperor Titus, the legion moved to Lambaesis. This city controlled a strategic pass to the Aurès Mountains, protecting Numidia from the Gaetuli tribes in the Sahara. A triumphal arch honoring the emperor Commodus still stands tall at one of the entryways to the camp site. At the center of the military quarter remains a large building with its walls intact, likely the administrative headquarters. Nearby are the ruins of an arsenal, where

thousands of projectiles were excavated. In addition, baths, a temple, soldier accommodations, and a cemetery have been identified. The legion maintained its vigil against the Berber tribes until order collapsed completely in AD 392.

The Fall of Numidia and Mauretania

The Vandals were a Romanized Germanic people who originated from what is today southern Poland. They began migrating in the 4th century AD when raids by the Huns forced many Germanic peoples to escape into the safety of the Roman Empire. As many as 100,000 Vandals were on the move around the Empire around AD 430, at which point they made their way to North Africa from Iberia. The Romans gave them permission to settle there, and the Vandals soon set about establishing their own kingdom in the ruins of the Roman administration of North Africa.

The Vandals moved their base to Carthage, from where they sailed on to sack Rome in AD 455. The Byzantines eventually ejected the Vandals from North Africa and recovered the lost Roman provinces, but the situation remained unstable. The Berber tribes pushed north, and most of Mauretania was lost by AD 600. Arab invasions began soon afterward, and the Umayyad caliphate took over Numidia and Mauretania near the end of the 7th century. Its once grand ancient cities were abandoned or completely built over by the conquerors.

Western Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco have rich and interesting histories. Numidia and Mauretania became integral regions of the Roman Empire and contained many ancient cities, and evidence of their cosmopolitan and sophisticated urban cultures still exists among the hills and sands of North Africa.

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AQUILEIA AND THE DALMATIAN COAST

The city of Aquileia was one of the largest and wealthiest cities of the late Roman Empire. It occupied a commanding position at the head of the Adriatic Sea, which was an increasingly important area of the Mediterranean during late antiquity and into the Middle Ages. The Adriatic was becoming a busy highway between the new centers of the Eastern and Western Roman Empires, as well as a conduit to central Europe. The eastern coast of the Adriatic—today dominated by Croatia—was also home to a string of prosperous cities and trading ports, and many saw their fortunes rise in late antiquity. This lecture will take you on a tour of some of the great cities that dotted the Dalmatian Coast and northern Adriatic to explore why this region expanded while others were in decline in late antiquity.

Early Greek Colonies

The Adriatic Sea is the region of the Mediterranean that is enclosed by Italy on one side and the Balkans on the other. Its connection to the rest of the Mediterranean is quite narrow, just 45 miles across at the narrowest point of the Strait of Otranto. Many parts of the Adriatic Sea are shallow; thus, the waters of the Adriatic tend to be calmer and warmer than the Mediterranean Sea. Croatia's coastline—historically known as Dalmatia—is the most indented in the whole of the Mediterranean, with countless coves and inlets and more than 1,000 islands off the shore. These properties drew some of the first Greek colonists to Dalmatia in the 4th century BC. The first urban areas were founded on some of the small islands, which were ideal locations for trading posts and were relatively invulnerable to the large Illyrian tribes that dominated the mainland.



Adriatic coast

One of the first Greek colonies in this area was established on the island of Hvar at the southern end of the Dalmatian coast in 384 BC. Known as Stari Grad, it is a World Heritage site because of its well-preserved agricultural landscape. The Greeks divided the land among the colonist families and built dry stone walls on the borders between the plots. The walls not only kept animals contained but also allowed the farmers to walk along the walls to cross fields and minimized land disputes. Subsequent generations have maintained the original walls, and Stari Grad is still partitioned as at the time of the Greek colonists.

The nearby island of Issa—today known as Vis—was colonized as part of a bold plan by Dionysius the Elder to take control of the emerging Adriatic trade routes. At the time, the Etruscans still dominated the northeast Italian peninsula, and the Illyrians were beginning to form centralized communities in the Balkans. Issa received sufficient funding to develop as a significant trading post and military base and founded several satellite colonies in Dalmatia.

The upper Adriatic had significant trade potential. The Po River cuts across northern Italy and drains into the Adriatic Sea, as do several other rivers connecting to the Danube's massive watershed. The Etruscans had developed valuable metal trading networks from northern Italy into what is now Switzerland, Austria, Czechia, and southern Germany—regions that were rich in iron, gold, copper, and lead. The tribes to the north traded in cattle, hides, timber, and slaves. Dionysus's plan was to wrest the trade from the Etruscans and Illyrians. In response, the Illyrians formed new kingdoms and established port cities and fleets of their own. In the mid-3rd century BC, King Agron and Queen Teuta of Ardiaei began a campaign of expansion that saw most of the colonies of the eastern Adriatic fall under Illyrian control.

Issa was one of the last holdouts and appealed to the Roman Republic for help. The Romans controlled most of Italy's eastern coast and were interested in expanding into the Adriatic region. The subsequent Illyrian Wars saw Rome seize control over most of Dalmatia. The Greek colonies it "liberated" became Roman protectorates. The Romans also colonized Gaul in northern Italy; thus, Rome was in control of all the major ports around the upper Adriatic by 200 BC.

The City of Aquileia

The Romans recognized the commercial potential of the Adriatic and invested heavily in developing their newly conquered region. In 181 BC, they founded Aquileia along the Natissa River. Aquileia was established as a military outpost and, for centuries, served as a bulwark against the invasions that came from the north over the Julian Alps. The city also served as a staging area for campaigns to the north and east against the Illyrians.

By 89 BC, the local inhabitants of the coastal regions of Cisalpine Gaul and Illyria had accepted the Roman rules, laws, and language. Aquileia expanded rapidly, aided by a new road network that connected the city to the newly conquered areas. Aquileia sat at the end of the trade route that went through central Europe to the Baltic coast, where amber washed up on the beaches. Amber—the fossilized resin of trees—presented yet another trade opportunity, as it was used throughout the ancient world for jewelry


Aquileia

and decorative objects. In many areas of the Mediterranean, amber was also considered to have mystical powers, capable of protecting wearers from evil or curing maladies.

Aquileia became famous for its amber workshops. Many examples of amber objects that originated in the city still exist, including bracelets, amulets, and rings. The Amber Road brought down other products as well—such as furs, hides, wax, and honey. Rome developed a series of fortifications to protect the slow, steady traffic of goods headed from the interior down to the river port of Aquileia and onward to the rest of the Roman world.

The city's proximity to the Illyrians and northern barbarians meant it continued to receive military attention. Julius Caesar spent time strengthening the border forts and towns in the region, including Aquileia. Octavian was often based in the city while he fought in Illyria. By the start of the Imperial era, Aquileia was well known to the emperor and a requisite stopping point on the route to Istria and Pannonia.

The remains of the river port along the eastern side of the city are well preserved. A unique feature is the two distinct levels in the port's design, which allowed the offloading of goods during both high and low tide. The remains of the theater, baths, amphitheater, and residences are located further into the city. The museum in the city is home to many artifacts that were found at the site, including mosaics and glass items.

The Region Under Roman Rule

The local inhabitants were expected to assimilate into the Roman culture, language, and style over time. The people living in these regions of the upper Adriatic were the Veneti, who consisted of many small tribes and subgroups. Evidence suggests that the Veneti were active traders and had begun to form urban centers when the Romans arrived. Many of these centers were reorganized as Roman settlements. The Histri were forced to adopt the Roman way of life, including the laws and the language. The Roman assimilation process was highly effective; within a generation, the Venetic language completely disappeared from the archaeological record.

Roman colonization of this region was not confined to the main urban centers. The cities were the political and economic centers, but the hand of Rome extended deep into the hinterlands. On Brijuni—off the coast of Pula—the fertile lands and local villages were reorganized into large manorial estates known as latifundia. The footprint of the expansive central villa at the heart of the estate remains visible. The latifundia managed the farming of vast tracts of land and accompanying mills, workshops, and presses to process crops into products for local consumption and export. The local Histri worked the fields in serfdom-like arrangements that became the norm of the Middle Ages, with peasant labor tied to the estates they lived on.

At its height, Aquileia was one of the largest cities in the empire, with as many as 100,000 residents. The town's evolution appeared to be an integration success story. However, near the beginning of the 2nd century AD, the fortunes of the city and the wider region started to change. The threat to Italy's northern border posed by the restless Germanic and Gothic tribes became a constant problem. The Marcomannic Wars for control of the Danube—fought from AD 166 to 180—saw the emperors base their military operations in the city, and Aquileia was besieged. For the next century, wars on the Danuban frontier were nearly constant.

The End of Aquileia

Under the emperor Diocletian, a measure of stability temporarily returned. Diocletian was born in Salona, the provincial capital of Dalmatia. He lavished attention on his hometown, which had not only grown as an administrative and military capital but also as a prosperous trade port on the Adriatic. Its increase in wealth was in part due to its mint and its connection to the silver mines of the Dinaric Alps.

The area's prestige was enhanced when Diocletian chose to build a massive retirement palace just south of the city, which now lies in the center of the modern city of Split in Croatia. The preserved complex is a World Heritage site. Its massive size was in part due to the attached military compound, a reflection of the ongoing security issues on the Danuban frontiers.



Aquileia ruins

Diocletian voluntarily abdicated and retired to his palace in AD 305, where he spent his last years tending the gardens. Soon after, the tetrarchy collapsed due to a bitter civil war.

When the war was over, Constantine the Great assumed power. Christianity became legal and even state-sponsored across the empire. Almost immediately, places of Christian worship and teaching were constructed on a large scale. One example of great change from this time is the richly decorated basilica complex of Aquileia, whose construction began as soon as Christianity was legalized in AD 313. The preserved original mosaics are some of the oldest Christian examples found and have earned the basilica World Heritage status.

Alaric the Goth—who plundered Rome in AD 410—besieged Aquileia in 401 and 408. In 452, Attila the Hun sacked the city. Aquileia never recovered, and most of the commercial activity in the Adriatic moved to safer cities such as Salona and Ravenna. Aquileia went from rags to riches to rags in just a few centuries, but its story is an important chapter in the ancient Mediterranean.

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CONSTANTINOPLE: STRADDLING EUROPE AND ASIA

Constantinople has been known by many names during its rich history. When it was founded by Greek settlers, it was Byzantium. Under the Romans, it was known as Augusta Antonia and New Rome before becoming Constantinople. Next, the city was known by its Arabic name, Kostantiniyye, until it became Istanbul. For many centuries, Constantinople was one of the most important cities of the Mediterranean. Its position on the gateway between Europe and Asia and between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean placed the city at a global crossroads of trade. Under the patronage of the Eastern Roman emperors, Constantinople became an early Christian center and continued the Roman legacy after the fall of the Western Empire. This lecture will tour Constantinople in its earliest centuries, exploring its rise from a small Greek colony to the Rome of the East.

Ancient Byzantium

Constantinople straddles the Bosphorus Strait, just 2.5 miles across at its widest and less than 3,000 feet at its narrowest point. The waterway widens out into the Sea of Marmara to the southwest before narrowing again into the Dardanelles Strait—known as the Hellespont in antiquity—leading into the Aegean. In ancient times, these small bodies of water that connect two seas and separate two continents were ocean highways.

Ancient Byzantium is thought to have been founded in 660 BC by colonists from the Greek city of Megara under the leadership of Byzas. Little is known about the first 600 years of the city's history, but the design and infrastructure of the cityscape show remnants of Greek influence. On the hillside known as Seraglio Point stands Topkapi Palace—built during the rule of the Ottoman Empire—where the ancient acropolis was once the focal point of the city. In a park near the palace stands a monument called the Column of the Goths, perhaps the only remaining structure from the city's pre-Constantinople period.


Topkapi Palace

Several Greek colonies had been established prior to Byzantium. There were colonies right around the Black Sea, including Panticapeum and Chersonesos. These colonies found fertile markets among the local Scythians and steppe peoples, who were eager to trade Greek products for furs, wax, cured meat, leather, honey, and slaves. Another important Black Sea colony was Phasis, located in what is now Georgia. Phasis was a critical connection to the trade with India and the Far East. Over time, these colonies developed a distinctive language and culture known as Pontic Greek.

Byzantium became the warehouse of the Greek world, where traders from both sides could store goods and arrange them for transshipment. By the 4th century BC, Byzantium had become even more important because it was the crucial waypoint for the Black Sea grain trade. For the Greeks, grain became the most important good imported into the Mediterranean. Athens and the other large city-states relied on grain imports to feed their large urban populations. The narrowness of the Bosphorus allowed Byzantium to insert itself as the obligatory middleman between Black Sea and Mediterranean traders, with merchants and shippers buying and selling in their markets and warehouses.

Regional Conflict

Byzantium and other settlements on the Sea of Marmara became of high strategic importance. The region was drawn into the Greco-Persian Wars, with the cities of Hellespont taking part in the initial revolt against Persian hegemony and two Persian expeditions into Greece crossing the area. The eventual victory over Persia is immortalized by the Serpentine Column at the Hippodrome of Constantinople.

Byzantium and its neighboring cities were also involved in the Peloponnesian War between Athens and Sparta. To cut Athens off from its food supply, Sparta launched several invasions in the region. Byzantium was captured in 411 BC and retaken by Athens a few years later. The definitive battle of the war—the Battle of Aegospotami in 405 BC—was fought in the Hellespont, with Spartan commander Lysander convinced that a crushing naval victory to close the strait to Athens would force the city to surrender. Indeed, after

being defeated, Athens faced total starvation and surrendered the following year. For several centuries, Byzantium remained the major gateway to the Mediterranean world from the Black Sea. However, after the Roman conquest of Greece, Byzantium's fortunes declined as the economic activity of the Aegean decreased and the center of the Mediterranean grain trade moved to Egypt and North Africa.

In AD 293, Diocletian divided the territory to stabilize the empire. Each half of the realm was to be ruled by a senior emperor and a junior colleague, who was the designated heir. Four new capital cities from which these emperors would rule were selected. Rather than Byzantium, nearby Nicomedia was chosen as the capital of the Asia Minor region. However, the new arrangement did not last long. In AD 306, Constantine I was proclaimed by his troops to have succeeded his father as senior emperor in the west despite not being the designated heir. A compromise was negotiated, but the situation soon sparked a long and bitter civil war between the tetrarchs. Constantine emerged as the victor in AD 324, defeating his last rival at two definitive battles in the Hellespont and at Chalcedon.

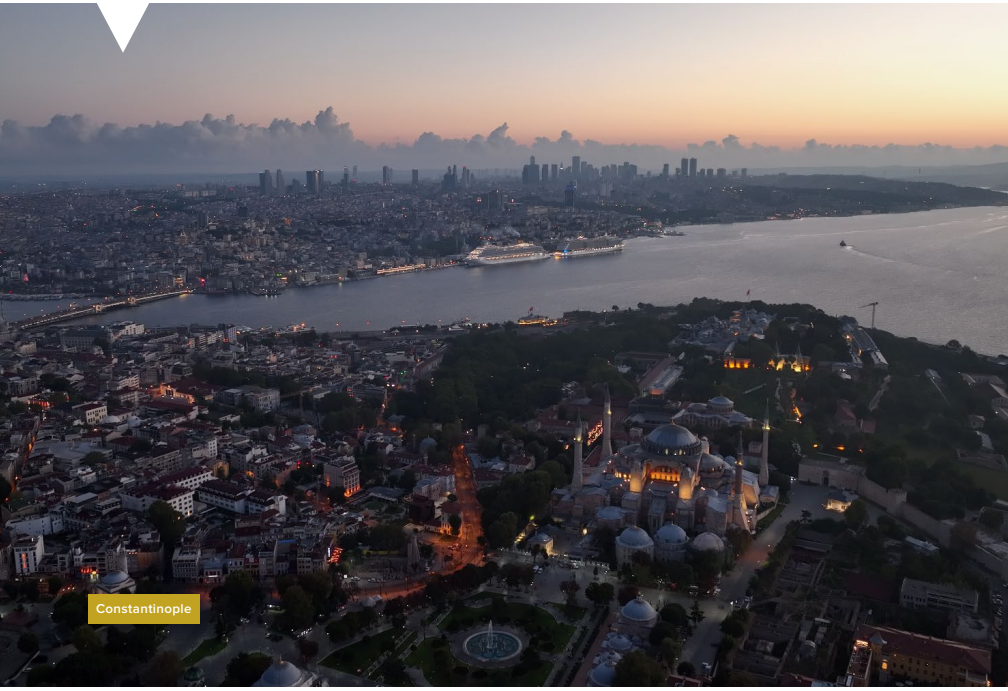
A City Reborn

Constantine was a reformer. He made sweeping changes to the government, the military, and the law. After winning the civil war, he began to move the imperial administration to Byzantium. The richest regions of the empire—Egypt, Syria, Greece, and Eastern Anatolia—were much closer to Byzantium than to Rome; thus, a capital in the east could better support—and tax—this wealthy region to shore up the diminished imperial treasury.

Constantine set about reconstructing Byzantium into a new capital. The city was called New Rome, although it was later renamed to Constantinople. The restructuring marked a turning point in the city's history. Constantinople became the center of political, economic, and cultural life in the Eastern Mediterranean. The city was expanded and reconstructed. Constantine's palace and tiered gardens dominated the hill that overlooked the forum, and the nearby Hippodrome of Constantine became the center of Byzantine civic life and entertainment.

To encourage the city's growth, Constantine instituted the old Roman grain assistance program, distributing tens of thousands of rations of free bread from hundreds of points around the city every day. Those who chose to move and set up their homes and businesses in the city received land grants and gifts. To bring economic stability, Constantine reformed the Roman coinage. He reintroduced the solidus—a highly pure gold coin to replace the denarius, whose value had collapsed due to constant debasement and excessive minting by cash-strapped emperors. The solidus was the standard currency of trade in the Eastern Mediterranean for nearly 500 years.

Beyond its economic and political power, Constantinople had significant religious influence during Constantine's reign. After signing the Edict of Milan in AD 313, Constantine officially decriminalized Christianity and allowed it to take root as the unofficial religion of the empire. He commissioned the building of several Christian churches in the new capital. In AD 325, Constantine called the first ecumenical council of Christian



Constantinople

church leaders in the nearby city of Nicaea, the first of many that would settle contentious theological and doctrinal issues. One of its promulgations was the Nicene Creed, the central statement of the Christian faith still accepted by nearly all mainstream denominations today.

Constantine's successors often campaigned against various threats to the empire. Constantinople faced numerous threats from barbarian tribes, but the city had several natural advantages for its defense. It was surrounded by water on three sides—the Sea of Marmara to the south and east and the Golden Horn to the north. Like Rome, the city sat on seven hills, giving the defenders a natural height advantage. The only real option for attackers was to cross the land to the west. To eliminate this vulnerability, several emperors built walls on this side, but it was Emperor Theodosius II who extended the perimeter and constructed one of the most advanced wall systems in the ancient world. The Theodosian Walls proved nearly impregnable for more than 1,000 years.

Constantinople

The capital began to flourish. The population exploded, reaching half a million by the middle of the 6th century. Justinian I became emperor in AD 527 and initiated another period of construction and reform in the city to deal with administrative challenges. One such challenge concerned the city's food supply. While Byzantium had been the granary of the Eastern Mediterranean, the city now relied on massive grain imports to feed its population. Justinian built a network of granaries and sent large convoys to Alexandria to solve the issue and provide a stable supply. He established new trade relations with faraway kingdoms, connecting Constantinople to distant regions such as Abyssinia and Cornwall.

Justinian also fostered new high-value trade goods for the city to reduce the reliance on lower-value agricultural exports. He sponsored an expedition by two monks to China, who managed to smuggle silkworm eggs back to Constantinople. Justinian immediately sponsored several silk factories, and the city became the first to produce silk in Europe. Byzantine silk was controlled by an imperial monopoly, ensuring the massive profits from this

high-value luxury benefitted the imperial treasury and helped fund the capital's food and infrastructure needs, including the expansion of the water supply system.

The energetic reforms and building programs came at a high cost, and Justinian faced unrest as citizens rebelled against his high taxation rates. A major uprising broke out in AD 532, leaving tens of thousands of people dead and much of the city destroyed. Justinian took the opportunity to rebuild and rejuvenate Constantinople's infrastructure. He pulled resources from all over the empire to reconstruct the Hagia Sophia, a church originally built by Constantine I, with the very best building materials money could buy—including green and white marble from Greece, porphyry from Egypt, and alabaster from the Middle East. The exterior and interior structures of the Hagia Sophia are still much like they were when Justinian rebuilt the church in the 6th century.

Constantinople played a central role in many of the important events of the Middle Ages, from the Crusades and the Great Schism to the rise of the Ottoman Empire. The city was central to much of the ancient world—a powerhouse of economic, social, and cultural influence that would continue to impact the Mediterranean region for centuries to come.

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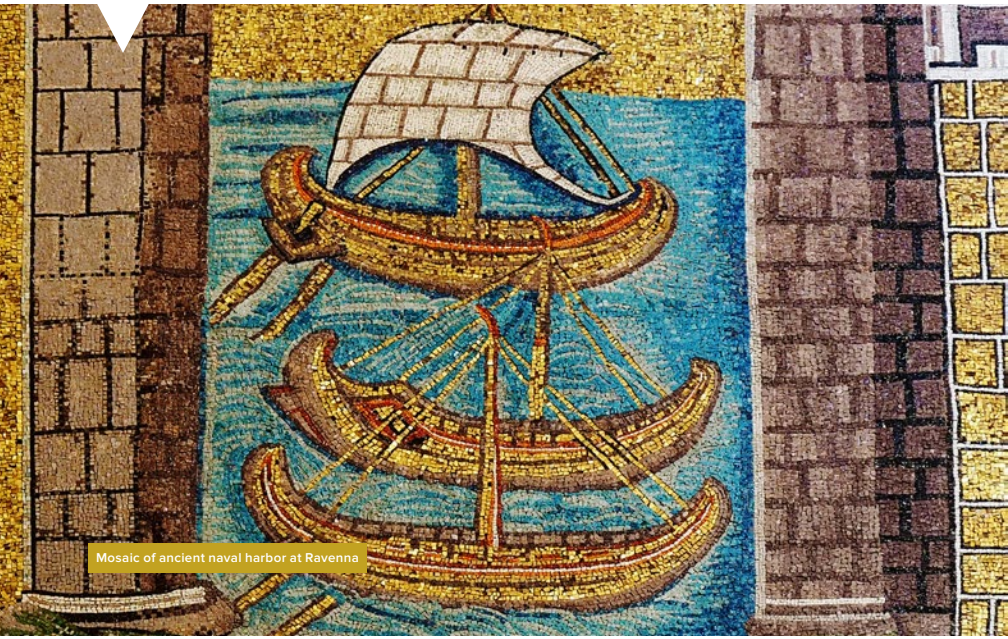
RAVENNA AND THE RISE OF CHRISTIANITY

Ravenna was an outsized protagonist at the end of the Roman Empire and Byzantium's lifeline amid the disasters of late antiquity. This fringe port city became the capital of the Western Roman Empire. Ravenna's story narrates the demise and resilience of the empire in the 5th and 6th centuries and the rise of Christianity and the Gothic kingdoms of late antiquity. The city bears the marks of many heroes, from Germanic "barbarian" rulers to the Greek Byzantine emperors. Each leader created their own vision of ancient Rome in Ravenna, a city that continually evolved and eventually emerged as an epicenter of western Christianity. In this lecture, you will explore the UNESCO World Heritage site of Ravenna.

A New Harbor City

Fifteen hundred years ago, Ravenna was an island at the center of a coastal lagoon that was fed by the Padenna and the Lamone rivers. When the Romans conquered northern Italy, they initially ignored Ravenna because of its remote setting. This situation changed in 49 BC when Caesar mustered his legions in Ravenna before crossing the Rubicon River to declare war on the Roman Senate.

After Caesar's death, Agrippa not only created the sheltered harbor complex near Puteoli but also ordered a parallel naval harbor on the Adriatic coast at Ravenna. An existing harbor at the entrance of a lagoon near Ravenna was artificially extended and built up so that it could accommodate as many as 250 ships. This military harbor made Ravenna one of the major cities of the Adriatic. The area of the expanded harbor was known as Classis. Today, the entire area is landlocked, and the actual basin has not been identified. However, the foundations of various harbor buildings have been found.



Mosaic of ancient naval harbor at Ravenna

The entire town was built on piles pushed into the muck of the lagoon, and the city was traversed by canals and bridges. In Classis, Augustus's engineers pushed large oak piles into the mud of the lagoon to extend the shore and build the ship sheds and warehouses for the marines. Eventually, the first constructions were replaced with stone and brick. To resolve local water supply issues, the emperor Trajan provided Classis with an impressive aqueduct that also fed into Ravenna. The harbor and the fleet boosted the local economy. Timber flowed down from the Po River valley for shipbuilding and repairs, while workshops and farms flourished to accommodate sailors and merchants. The harbor doubled as a hub of trade and commerce on the Adriatic.

In the 3rd century AD, Ravenna and its port went into decline as the empire's political situation became less stable. The fleet based in Classis became smaller as the bulk of the ships relocated to Byzantium in the 320s. The harbors of Classis were no longer maintained and began to silt up, and the shipping lane—the Fossa Augusta—became unnavigable. Ravenna was periodically threatened by barbarian invasion, but the swampy conditions and narrow land passages to the city helped protect it. Even as its naval facilities were falling apart, Ravenna was important as a strategic outpost to defend the north.

When the Roman Empire was formally divided, Honorius—the first Western Roman emperor—based himself in Mediolanum. However, he moved his capital to Ravenna due to constant threats from his former ally, Alaric the Goth. Ravenna was protected by its marshlands and lagoons, and it had decent seaborne connections to the east. Honorius improved the city by expanding the walls to defend the new capital. However, Honorius's younger sister Galla Placidia and her son—later the emperor Valentinian III—were particularly instrumental in breathing new life into Ravenna.

Signs of Christianity

Galla Placidia adorned the city with churches and other Christian monuments. On a dangerous sea voyage from Constantinople to Ravenna, she vowed to construct a church to Saint John the Evangelist if he would save

her from the storms. She survived the voyage and built the church, which was decorated with early 5th-century Christian art. The church was heavily bombed in World War II, but its decoration was recorded. In the apse, Christ was depicted above a series of Roman emperors from the royal house of Theodosius, and another scene showed Galla making her vow to John as he saves her from a shipwreck.

An intact example of her work is the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia, which dates to AD 425—the year Valentinian, then 6 years old, became emperor. Galla Placidia became a powerful figure in Ravenna. Despite its name, the mausoleum is not Galla Placidia's tomb—she was buried in Rome 25 years later. It is not known whose tomb it is, but the structure's artwork references the gospels and depicts biblical scenes.



Mausoleum of Galla Placidia

The Baptistery of Neon was originally part of a large Christian basilica that predated the capital's move. It was decorated later by Neon, who was Bishop of Ravenna under Valentinian III. The ceiling features a series of mosaics.

At its center is John the Baptist baptizing Jesus, who stands in the Jordan river, personified by a diminutive figure. The central panel is surrounded by an outer row of the apostles holding jeweled crowns, alluding to the regal status of Jesus. The next outer ring depicts an altar and a throne, joined by a series of faux architectural settings with background gardens lined with empty chairs and individual Bible verses that are legible on open books set on tables.

After Valentinian III was assassinated in AD 455, Ravenna saw a series of emperors as the Western empire unraveled. In 476, a mercenary chief named Odoacer staged a revolt of Germanic soldiers fighting for Rome and deposed the last emperor, Romulus Augustus. Odoacer was initially backed by the Eastern Roman emperor Zeno. When Odoacer and Zeno turned on each other, another Zeno-backed officer—Theoderic—invaded and took power in Ravenna in 493. Theoderic was of the Ostrogoths—a Germanic people from central Europe and the Balkans—and the Ostrogothic Kingdom was proclaimed over the Italian peninsula.

The Ostrogoth Kingdom

Theoderic the Great was one of the last great rulers of Italy in antiquity. Despite his non-Roman origins, Theoderic revived the glory of the Western Roman Empire. He introduced a new code of laws and reestablished order in many areas. He restored old buildings in Rome—including the Colosseum and the Theatre of Pompey—and he expanded his rule over the Balkans and Visigoth Spain. He also made extensive repairs and improvements in Classis, where part of the harbor had completely dried up. Classis was never a major naval base again, but it became a major commercial port for northern Italy and a vital trade and communications link to the east during the Ostrogoth period.

Theoderic and the Ostrogoths were followers of Arianism, a doctrine of Christianity that believes that Jesus is not coeternal with God but instead was created by Him and is therefore distinct and subordinate to Him. This position is considered heretical by the Catholic Church, but Theoderic

did not seek to force Arianism on the Catholic population. Instead, he attempted to maintain religious harmony by commissioning separate places of worship for Arianism.

Theoderic built the Basilica di Sant'Apollinare Nuovo, first completed in AD 505. This basilica was renovated and modified several times over subsequent centuries, but inside are still more than a dozen mosaics that date to the Ostrogoth period. Along the nave are a series of mosaics above the windows that depict the life and miracles of a beardless Jesus, balanced on the other wall with a series depicting the passion and resurrection of a bearded Jesus. Between each of the scenes is a pair of doves resting on a shell-like niche that creates a canopy effect over a series of saints and martyrs holding various scrolls, books, and other objects. The walls' lower portions show a parade of female martyrs departing from the harbor and a procession of men emanating from what was likely Theoderic's palace. Any hint of Arianism was purged from the cathedral after the building came into Catholic hands.



Basilica di Sant'Apollinare Nuovo

Theoderic's successful reign spanned 30 years. He died in 526, and his remains were interred in a massive structure known as the Mausoleum of Theoderic. The Istrian stone structure is a blend of Roman, Byzantine, and Gothic influences. The tomb remains, but Theoderic's body was removed when the structure was converted into a Christian chapel during the Byzantine period. However, Theoderic's legacy remains strong in Ravenna, highlighted by the uniquely Gothic construction of his mausoleum.

The End of Ravenna

The heretical Ostrogoth Kingdom survived mainly due to Theoderic, whose military skill was such that the Byzantine emperors feared going to war with him. The situation changed when Justinian I became the Eastern Roman emperor the year after Theoderic's death. Theoderic's daughter Amalasuintha had taken over as regent for her 10-year-old son, but her gender and Roman cultural sensibilities made her unpopular with the Gothic nobles, who plotted to depose her.

Fearing for her life, Amalasuintha asked Justinian for protection, but she was deposed and then executed in 535—an event Justinian used as a pretext for war. Justinian wanted to reunify the Roman Empire under a single emperor in Constantinople and eradicate the Arian heresy that had taken root in the West. In 540, Justinian's general Belisarius captured Ravenna and established more than 2 centuries of Byzantine rule. The city became the capital of the Exarchate of Ravenna, one of the empire's administrative regions.

Under the Byzantines, the city's revival continued. Ravenna was a cosmopolitan place of not only Romans and Greeks but also a remnant population of Goths and other Germanic groups. Classis continued to grow as the major Adriatic port, with merchants docking from across the Byzantine world and beyond. Warehouses, inns, and other port facilities dominated the shores of the harbor, as Ravenna was a major stop for long-distance traders. Under the direction of the city's bishop—Maximian—a third surge of construction took place in Ravenna, completing its complement of late antiquity structures. Examples from this period include the Basilica of San Vitale in Ravenna and the Basilica of Sant'Apollinare in Classis.



Ravenna today

The end of antiquity in the 7th century AD marked the end of Ravenna's prosperity. Archaeological evidence indicates that long-distance trading and port activity sharply decreased, and the city's population began to shrink. Byzantine control crumbled under pressure from a new Germanic people—the Lombards—and the city changed hands several times. The harbors silted up for good, and Ravenna eventually became landlocked. Still, its history provides insight into the changes that occurred as the Mediterranean transitioned to the Middle Ages.

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THESSALONÍKI AND THE END OF ANTIQUITY

The collapse of the Western Roman Empire and the rise of warring successor kingdoms and barbarian migrations brought the relatively stable situation in the Mediterranean to a close. Furthermore, the rise of the Arabic caliphates split the region into rival Christian and Islamic spheres. Even in the Byzantine Empire, warfare and instability were often the norm. Piracy dramatically increased, and the Vikings also began raiding the Mediterranean. This lecture will explore one ancient city that not only survived but prospered through the transition to the Middle Ages: Thessaloníki. The city's urban center exemplifies the rich political, religious, and cultural evolution of late antiquity—from being a Hellenistic center to becoming a Roman port, a late Empire capital, and a Byzantine metropolis. The events that took place in the city and the surrounding region characterized the end of antiquity and the start of the Middle Ages.

The End of Antiquity

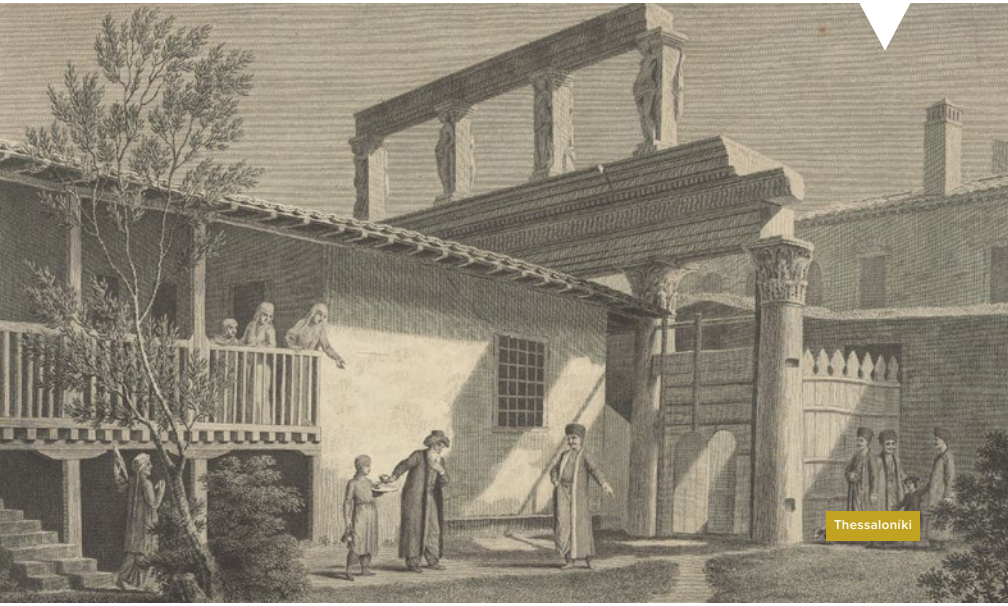
Antiquity turned into the Middle Ages around the 6th and 7th centuries. It was a period of much change in the Mediterranean. For centuries, relative peace and prosperity had been guaranteed by the Pax Romana. Infrastructure such as ports and highways allowed people to travel across Europe and the Near East. There were networks of magistrates and officials who handled disputes, maintained order, and enforced contracts. Roman fleets and legions combated piracy and brigands, and its mints produced a stable currency. The Mediterranean was prosperous and interconnected, and trade and travel thrived.

As the Western Roman Empire collapsed, the networks of trade and cultural exchange were dramatically altered or even severed. Oceanic trade disappeared almost completely in some places. The grain routes from Egypt to Rome and Athens were rerouted to the Middle East. The river of exotic goods from the Orient that had made the cities of Asia Minor and the Levant wealthy had dried up. Complex supply chains were cut as manufacturers became unavailable or their quality sharply declined.

Large cities reliant on trade and manufacturing struggled to survive this transition, and some were abandoned altogether. Eventually, new networks of trade and cultural exchange were established along new routes. Places such as Venice, Genoa, Dubrovnik, Cairo, Seville, Palermo, and Naples came to dominate the Mediterranean world in the Middle Ages.

The Founding of Thessaloníki

Situated in northern Greece on the Thermaic Gulf, Thessaloníki is Greece's second-largest city. The stretch of coastline between the Thermaic Gulf and the Sea of Marmara is shared between the regions of Macedonia and Thrace, which historically straddled the edge of the Mediterranean Greek world and the non-Greek peoples of the Balkans. The area was home to many important ancient Mediterranean cities. Perhaps the first to rise to global prominence



was Pella, the capital of ancient Macedon. From this city, Philip II and his son Alexander transformed Macedonia into one of the greatest empires of antiquity.

Pella was considered lacking in culture—a city of warriors rather than traders or thinkers, particularly as both Philip II and Alexander spent most of their reigns on campaigns rather than sponsoring the development of the city. In the wake of Alexander's death, Cassander ruthlessly fought his way to power in Macedon—first as regent for Alexander's young son, then as king after murdering the boy in 305 BC. To reinforce his legitimacy, he married Alexander's half-sister, Thessaloníki.

Under Cassander's rule, Pella became an increasingly wealthy and sophisticated city. The agora was expanded to facilitate more trade and industry in the city. The remains of several villas from this period indicate growing wealth in the region. Several homes have intact mosaics of a unique style—made from pebbles and rounded stones, often with a striking black background. One of the most famous is the Stag Hunt mosaic.

Seeking a more reliable connection to the sea, Cassander founded a new port city 25 miles to the east—Thessaloníki, named after his wife. Strategically located at the end of the Thermaic Gulf, it was ideal for trade and military movements and offered a safe land route between the surrounding river valleys. The new city was built on top of a cluster of settlements called Therma. While not much of this earliest layer of Thessaloníki remains, it is known that it was a Hellenistic capital city.

In many ways, the Punic Wars and Macedonian Wars marked the final showdown with Rome for ultimate domination of the Mediterranean world. Rome's defeat of Carthage in 201 BC effectively ended the Punic chapter of Mediterranean history. Four years later, Philip V of Macedon—once an ally of Hannibal—was defeated by the Roman consul Flaminius on the plains of Thessaly. Thirty years later, Macedonia was conquered outright by Rome. The final battle at Pydna, just south of Thessaloníki, signaled that Greece had been neutralized as an independent power in the Mediterranean. Macedonia was converted into a Roman province in 146 BC, with Thessaloníki serving as the new provincial capital.

A Place in History

Rome created a new highway to connect its conquests. From the port city of Dyrrachium, the Via Egnatia went inland across the Balkan Mountains. When it descended on the other side, it connected Pella, Thessaloníki, and the Thracian coast to Philippi, Perinthus, and Byzantium. The new road allowed Thessaloníki to become an even more important hub for trade, military movements, and cultural exchange.

The region was the setting for two more momentous confrontations in Roman history. In the contest for the fate of the Roman Republic fought between Julius Caesar and Pompey the Great, Caesar's march on Rome caught Pompey and the Senate off guard. He headed east to regroup—hoping to raise a massive army from the eastern provinces—and used Thessaloníki as a base. In 48 BC, Caesar crossed the Adriatic with his troops and started

down the Via Egnatia toward Pompey. After some maneuvering, the two sides finally met at Pharsalus, 120 miles south of Thessaloníki. Caesar won the ensuing battle, leading to the end of the Republic.

Thessaloníki was a protagonist in Rome's next civil war too. Caesar's killers took refuge in the city, and the so-called liberator faction attempted to raise an army to retake Rome from the east. The final confrontation, led by Cassius and Brutus against Octavian and Mark Antony, took place in 42 BC in Philippi—a city 100 miles east of Thessaloníki on the Via Egnatia.

In the centuries that followed, Thessaloníki thrived as an important provincial capital. The Via Egnatia was a busy highway, with Roman legions crossing between Italy and the eastern frontiers. The Romans preferred to move the legions across land on well-managed roads lined with way stations that could supply them rather than risk losing an entire army at sea. Thessaloníki's increasingly prominent position is evident in some of the city's ruins.

For centuries, Thessaloníki was not only a political and commercial center but also an early hub for the development of Christianity. Paul traveled to Thessaloníki in the late 40s AD, starting the early Christian communities in this region. His first letters are an important resource and record of the early Christian community that was formed in Thessaloníki under Paul's direction.

Galerius

Thessaloníki gained even greater prominence in the Late Roman Empire. During the tetrarchy, Galerius—one of the four co-emperors—selected Thessaloníki as the new capital. He constructed a magnificent framework for the city, which is still partially visible.

Galerius was born in what is today Bulgaria and was of Thracian ancestry. He had served as an ordinary soldier but rose through the ranks as a great commander and gained the attention of Rome. Galerius married Emperor Diocletian's daughter and was appointed as one of the two junior co-emperors under the new tetrarchy arrangement. In this role, he commanded a major campaign against the Sassanid Persian Empire in the east.

Despite early setbacks, he ultimately destroyed the Persian army at the Battle of Satala in AD 298 and captured their capital at Ctesiphon. The Arch of Galerius in Thessaloníki was built to celebrate this victory. It originally spanned the Via Egnatia, so all travelers would pass under it. Thessaloníki was Galerius' primary power base, and he resided there from 299 to 303 and from 308 to 311.



Arch of Galerius

When Galerius succeeded Diocletian as senior emperor in AD 305, Thessaloníki effectively became a de facto capital of the empire, one of many during the tetrarchy. The palace complex Galerius built in Thessaloníki sprawled across some 37 acres. It was located on the eastern side of the city—abutting the city's eastern wall circuit—and it was bisected by the Via Egnatia. In Rome, the emperor's residence had been on Palatine Hill, overlooking the Circus Maximus—and the later capitals attempted to emulate this setting. Trier, Sirmium, Mediolanum, Constantinople, and Thessaloníki all built their palaces on a hill near the hippodrome.

Soon after Galerius's accession, another civil war broke out in the tetrarchy. The Via Egnatia became the epicenter of the east versus west confrontation. Galerius died before the conflicts were settled, and Constantine defeated the final co-emperor at the Battles of Adrianople and Byzantium in 324. In Constantine's newly formed Eastern Roman or Byzantine Empire, Thessaloníki was considered the second city of the realm. The smaller and then less developed city of Byzantium was chosen as the new capital.

A New Mediterranean

Thessaloníki continued to grow during the Byzantine era and was a major center of trade. The Via Egnatia remained the key highway to the west, and the city was well connected to the Balkan possessions of the empire as well as the rest of Greece by land and by sea. At the end of late antiquity, Thessaloníki was reinvented once more as the city of Byzantine Christianity. Many of the UNESCO-listed properties of the city are churches that were built throughout more than 1,000 years of Byzantine patronage, and many of their architectural details remain.

The chaotic transition to the Middle Ages uprooted families, communities, and sometimes entire cultures. Cities that had prospered for thousands of years were abandoned within a generation, and much of the technology and knowledge with which they were built would be lost until the Renaissance. Even Thessaloníki—located in the part of the Roman Empire that endured as the Byzantine Empire—faced great uncertainty. There were constant raids by barbarians from the north and long periods of religious and civil conflict as the Eastern emperors secured their legitimacy and managed new threats. However, over the centuries, a new Mediterranean world emerged—with new cities and new civilizations—and it continues to thrive to this day.

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