The Rise of Greek Civilization

The island of Crete provided the bridge linking the old civilizations of the east with the development of civilization in the Aegean and the Greek mainland

The Minoans (2900-1150 BCE)

The first civilization to appear in the Aegean is associated with the Minoans on the island of Crete

 Their name derives from Minos, a legendary king of the island

 Their origins and ethnicity is unknown and it is thought that their civilization

emerged among Neolithic peoples living on the island as they adopted various influences of civilization from Mesopotamia and Egypt

The Minoans are especially known for their palace sites

 An exceptional example is found a Knossus

A labyrinth of rooms organized around courtyards up to four stories containing living quarters, workshops, and storage facilities for oil and grain

The palace sites may have served religious and economic purposes, but nobody knows the exact purposes

There are no unambiguously known monarchs and it is not known if the various Minoan sites were unified or independent

 Interestingly these sites lacked defensive walls

 Presumably the isolation of Crete was sufficient protection

They practiced agriculture growing wheat, barley, olives, grapes, figs, poppies, and raising cattle, sheep, pigs, and goats

 Eastern influences are found in their mural artwork, and their writing

 Minoans wrote on clay tablets like Mesopotamians

 They employed three different types of writing

A hieroglyphic form of writing (influenced from Egypt and Mesopotamia?)

Undeciphered

 Two different linear scripts

 Linear A and Linear B

 Linear A

Written using a stylus to cut lines in the clay

Opposed to cuneiform that used a stylus to press wedges into the clay

Remains undeciphered

 Linear B

Is different from Linear A and is an early form of Greek

Linear B documents are bureaucratic inventories characteristic of early monarchies of Mesopotamia

Minoans, however, were not Greeks, so why were records being written in Greek?

 Another mystery

The Mycenaeans (1600-1150 BCE)

 Non-Indo-Europeans occupied Greece in the Helladic or (Pre-Greek) period

 The Indo-European Greeks arrived on the mainland around 1900 BCE

 Their civilization is called Mycenaean for the city of Mycenae

The Mycenaeans were warlike and established powerful independent and well-organized kingdoms

 Conquered Crete between 1400-1200 BCE

 Their settlements were located on defensible sites

Some say that the need for protection is what promoted the development of strong centralized monarchies

I think ancestral traditions contributed to the strong social organization and authority of the monarchs which contributed to their strong defense

 The Mycenaeans constructed great domed monumental tombs for their kings

The height of their power occurred from 1400-1200 BCE

They ventured by sea to Asia Minor, Syria, Crete, Egypt, Italy and Sicily and probably were heavily involved in raiding

Hittite and Egyptian documents mention them

They apparently sacked the city of Troy about 1250 BCE

By 1200 BCE they were in decline and were being harassed by outsiders

By 1100 BCE Mycenaean civilization had collapsed

Ancestral memory of the Mycenaeans survived in the form of Homer’s epics and Greek literature in the form of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*

 Ilium was a Greek term for the city of Troy

 Odyssey may possibly come from the ancient Greek word for hate

 Odysseus was hated by men and gods and hence his hardships

The outsiders who harassed the Mycenaeans were known as Dorians

 Apparently, the Dorians were a less civilized Greek peoples from the north

According to Greek legends the Dorians attacked the Peloponnese in southern Greece

Nevertheless, the collapse of the Myceneans introduced a long period of decline of civilization in the Aegean

The Middle or Dark Ages (1150-750 BCE)

 Depopulation, impoverishment, and decline characterized the Dark Ages

 Palaces, tombs, and other structures were destroyed

 Villages and settlements were abandoned and never resettled

The collapse of Mycenaean civilization caused many Greeks, including Dorians, to emigrate to the islands of the Aegean and to the coast of Asia Minor

 Seeking refuge among regions more associated with civilization

 Each community developed independently

Little is known about this period or development since writing disappeared with the collapse of the Mycenaeans

Architecture, painting, and sculpture also disappeared and wasn’t revived until after 750 BCE

 Society in the Dark Ages

 What is known about the era is based on Homer’s epics

 (Homer: hostage, blind, going with a companion)

The society was organized by kinship led by kings in consultation with their nobles

Nobles, close kinsmen, vigorously debated and sometimes opposed the king’s wishes

Commoners, more distant co-descendants, expressed their intensions and wishes by acclamation (expression of approval)

 This seems to be an early form of limited popular government

 Homeric society was divided into classes (castes?)

 The ancestral aristocracy

 The thetes

Inheritors of family agricultural estates which were passed down from generation to generation

 Agricultural laborers unattached to ancestral lands

 Slaves (relatively few)

 Men served as shepherds and menial laborers

 Women served as maids and concubines

 Homeric Values

 The epic poems associated with this era influenced later Greeks

 The values promoted by Homer’s works were

Physical prowess (strength), courage, fierce protection of family, friends, and property, and the defense of honor

All of these are associated with social behavior and sacrifice

The highest value was the courage and excellence that enabled a man to acquire and defend honor

Men have to create their social value, and women have to defend theirs

Women encourage men to sacrifice to defend their social value

 Helen of Troy and the Trojan War?

The individual (man) was to vie for individual supremacy in *arete* (virtue) in order to enhance the family’s ancestral honor

To honor the ancestors

Women were encouraged to express great honor through sacrifice as well

Odysseus’ wife Penelope remained faithful for twenty years while Odysseus was away

Clytemnestra, Agamemnon’s wife takes on lovers while her husband is away

Agamemnon dishonors his fellow Greek Achilles by taking his female prize of war and thus creates disunity among his kinsmen

Agamemnon’s dishonor is punished when he is killed by Clytemnestra’s lovers

 The Polis (poleis pl.)

Polis originally referred to a defensible high ground or citadel (an acropolis) where farmers retreated to when attacked

These may have appeared in the 8th century BCE and spread through the region

These eventually became associated with communities of extended kinsmen and their villages

They were descended from a common ancestor and inherited specific familiar religious ritual

Monarchy faded away and a republic dominated by an aristocratic caste developed

Political participation expanded over time leading in the direction of greater popular participation in decision making

One way this was expressed was in the development of a method of writing that was easy for common persons to learn

The Greeks learned and copied Phoenician script and added vowels creating an alphabet

Another way this was expressed was in the Greek way of fighting based on the hoplite phalanx

 Previously aristocrats engaged in battle

In the era of the polis strength depended on common farmers joining with aristocrats in order to defend their communities

The infantry soldier, or hoplite, equipped with a spear and a shield (hoplon), formed a tight formation called a phalanx (eight ranks deep)

A disciplined phalanx could fight off a cavalry charge and rout large armies of undisciplined men

 Discipline, courage, and sacrifice was key

Shared military duties led to demands for shared political participation

 From about the middle of the 8th century BCE, a colonization movement began

 Poleis spread from the Black Sea to Spain, Italy, and Africa

They expanded into areas where civilization and local defenses were weak

 Overpopulation is the common explanation for this development

The colonies reflected the traditions of the poleis from where the colonists originated

 But the colonies were independent of their homelands

Over 1,000 poleis were established

One effect of this development was the reduction of competition and violence on the Greek mainland

 People reproduce and land doesn’t

The colonial development was important for economic and sociopolitical development

Greek mainland farmers began to focus less on local crops for consumption and focused on producing olives and wine for export

Food for consumption was raised in the colonies and imported to the mainland

Expanding opportunities and population growth enlarged the caste of commoners and expanded their prosperity

 This also contributed to the demands for shared political participation

 Tyrants

The political disruption created by the conditions of expanded political participation led to the development of tyrannical power

A tyrant was an aristocrat who exercised power by appealing to the interests of the common population

With this leverage he could expel aristocratic opponents and reward his supporters by distributing land and other economic favors

Tyrants courted public support by public works projects, festivals, and support for the arts

Tyrannies helped contribute to the growth and development of popular government by undermining the aristocratic claim to political influence

The major poleis that we know about

 Many poleis developed in the ancient Greek world

 Unfortunately, we don’t have much knowledge of the vast majority of them

 We mostly only know detailed information of two major city-states, Sparta and Athens

Sparta

 Sparta became the most respected military power in Greece

Around 735 BCE Sparta began a war with neighboring Messenia in order to acquire more land to support a growing population

The outcome of the war was the conquest of the region and the enslavement of the Messenian people who they called Helots, meaning slaves

 The Helots outnumbered the Spartans ten to one

Around 650 BCE a major slave revolt almost destroyed Sparta

The Spartans then concluded that in order for their society to survive they had to live in a continuous state of military mobilization

Strict discipline and the threat of physical force was needed at all times in order to maintain this type of rigid hierarchical society where the minority ruled over a large majority

Spartan traditions were aimed at achieving a high level of discipline that subordinated one’s devotion to self and family to the needs of extended co-descendant kinsmen recognized via the polis or state

Individuals were beholden to the authority of the state from the time they were born

Only infants that were judged to be fit were raised

At the age of 7, boy left their families and were raised and educated in military camps

They learned to fight, to endure privation and physical pain, and to live off the land

At 20 they joined the army in the field and lived in barracks until 30

Only after the age of 30 did a Spartan man receive full rights of citizenship and could maintain a home

Even then the men ate at a public mess with members of their military unit

The Spartan diet was sparse and consisted of very limited amounts of meat and wine

Spartans also rejected all other luxuries

Because the boys and men were constantly in the barracks or in the field, Spartan females had much more responsibilities and freedoms that Greek women in other poleis

A Spartan family’s livelihood was supported by a grant of land from the state which was worked by the Helots

 Spartan government

Spartan government was a mix of monarchy, oligarchy (power of a few), and democracy

The Spartans recognized two royal families

 Two ancestral lineages

 The kings functioned as religious and military leaders

An oligarchic council made up of the kings and 28 men aged 60 and over set policy and acted as a court (protected and enforced tradition)

All Spartan males over 30 could participate in the democratic assembly that had final authority over proposals referred to it by the council

It mainly ratified decisions already taken by the council or decided between alternative proposals handed down by the council

 The Peloponnesian League

Because the Spartan’s had to expend a large amount of energy maintaining command over the Helots, they generally did not engage in activities of conquest and assimilating conquered subjects into their society

Instead they pressed their neighbors into alliances that made them subservient to Sparta’s will with regards to foreign relations and policy

Almost all southern Greek states were part of the Peloponnesian League and Sparta became the largest and most powerful polis on the Greek mainland before the rise of Athens

Athens

 Athens developed more slowly than Sparta

The geographical space of Attica allowed for the absorption of a larger growing population

Its economic development was hampered by the fact that it wasn’t located along major trade routes in the 7th and 8th centuries BCE

In the 7th century BCE, aristocratic families (representing the original ancestors) dominated the region around Athens

Their hierarchical position allowed for their influence over the tribes, clans, and military fraternities that were the foundation of Athenian society

Government

Athenian government was headed by the Council of Areopagus (Hill of Ares, god of war and brother of Athena)

 A group of nobles

 They chose Athens’ 9 archons, magistrates who administered the polis

 Archon means “to be first,” “to rule”

There were no formal laws other than customs and traditions which guided the decisions of the archons

 An agrarian crisis in the 7th century BCE contributed to Athens political evolution

 Most Athenians grew and depended on farms that grew wheat

As lands became less and less fertile farmers became indebted to wealthier citizens and many were eventually reduced to debt slavery

Some debt slaves were even sold outside of Attica in order to recoup the debt

I’m sure this was a serious crisis in that treating fellow Athenians in this way probably violated traditions that encouraged Athenians to favor one another

Many Athenians resented this and began to call for the abolition of the debts and for the redistribution of land

A nobleman names Cylon tried to take advantage of this situation to establish his power as a tyrant

The aristocracy became alarmed and they commissioned a man named Draco (“sharp-sighted”) to codify and publish Athenian law (621 BCE)

Draconian law decreed extremely harsh punishments for crimes in the hope of deterring blood (family) feuds aimed at retribution and restitution

The standardization of law was to dissuade people from taking matters into their own hands

 Tribalism and personal rivalries threaten civilization

In 549 BCE more radical reform was instituted by an archon named Solon

 He was authorized to reorganize the polis as he saw fit

Solon cancelled debts and forbid loans

He emancipated those who were in debt slavery

He brought home many of those who had been sold abroad

Instead of redistributing land, he sought to create more economic opportunities for people

 He forbit the export of wheat, but not olive oil

 Olive oil was a valuable export

He standardized weights and measures to conform to other commercial centers in Greece

He gave citizenship incentives to foreign skilled artisans in order to diversify the economy by encouraging industry

 He also reformed the political institutions

Athens citizens were divided into 4 divisions (said to be based on wealth, but I suspect it was based on descent)

The top two divisions or castes contributed to the archonships in the Council of Areopagus

The third caste could serve as hoplites and be elected to a council of 400

 This was to be a check on the Areopagus

And it had the power to decide what would be considered by the popular assembly

The last caste, the thetes, voted in the popular assembly, participated in the election of archons, and sat on a popular court that hear appeals from other jurisdictions

 Tyrannies

 Of course, these reforms caused resentment and tensions

 Sometimes archons could not be elected

In 560 and 556 BCE a military hero named Pisistratus attempted to establish a tyranny and failed

 He succeeded in 546 BCE and remained in power until his death

His son Hippias inherited the tyranny until he was driven from Athens in 510 BCE

Pisistratus and Hippias consolidated their power by courting the general public and popular sentiment

 They sponsored public works programs

 Urban development

 Civic festivals

 Employed artists and poets

And they made the claim that their authority was rooted in Solon’s constitution

Hippias broke from his father’s style after assassins murdered his brother

He then feared for the preservation of his power and safety

In 510 BCE the Alcmaeonids, a noble family exiled from Athens persuaded the Spartans to help them overthrow Hippias

Hippias fled, and the Spartans installed Isagoras in order to return the aristocrats to power

This development caused a popular uprising and the Alcmaeonid leader Clistenes took advantage of the situation and drove out Isagoras

Clistenes and democracy

 Destroyed the power of the aristocracy

 In 508 BCE he divided Attica into small political unites called demes

Members of the demes were then grouped together to create new tribes that made up the army and elected the government

Care was taken to make sure that each tribe was made up of demes of different parts of Attica

This suggests that Clistenes is breaking the traditional social organization based on kinship

He effectively reorganizes society by artificially redefining familial obligation in the new tribes thereby stitching all of Attica together in a metaphorical closer kinship association

Strangers found themselves having to cooperate with those of whom they had no previous obligations

The council of 400 was increased to 500 and its main duty was to prepare legislative proposals for discussion by the popular assembly

All adult males were members of the popular assembly and they could propose and debate legislation

Persian Empire and the Invasion of Greece

The Greek colonies on the Ionian coast of the Aegean came under the control of the Lydian King Croesus around 560-550 BCE

In 546 the Lydians and their dependents were defeated and incorporated by the Persians

The Persian Empire was created by the Achaemenid dynasty under the leadership of Cyrus the Great beginning in 559 BCE

Cyrus initially ruled a small kingdom, but he expanded his domain in all directions and ultimately brought the area of Asia Minor under his control

The Ionian Greeks initially resisted the Persians but were defeated by 540 BCE

 The Ionian Rebellion of 499 BCE

The Persians appointed Greek tyrants as their satraps or governors to govern over the Greek cities

Thanks to Greek local leadership and reasonable tribute imposed by the Persians, the Ionians became reconciled to life under Persian authority

The Ionians submitted to the successors of Cyrus after his death in 530 BCE

In 499 BCE, during the time of the Great King Darius, the tyrant of Miletus, Aristagoras, incited other Ionian cities to join in a rebellion against the Persians

Aristagoras was due to be punished for dragging the Persians into a failed campaign against the Aegean island of Naxos

He wanted to avoid this punishment

 Aristagoras also sought help from the mainland Greek states

 The Spartans declined

The Athenians were more sympathetic because they were related to the Ionians

The Athenians were also suspicious of the designs of the deposed Hippias who was a guest of Darius’ court and supported Hippias’ plan to restore his tyranny in Athens

Also, the Persians controlled the Hellespont which threatened Athens’ access to the grain producing Greek colonies surrounding the Black Sea

 In 498 BCE Athenian and Ionian armies sacked Sardis, the capital of Lydia

 They encouraged other Greeks to join their rebellion but without success

After the Athenians withdrew, the Persians recovered their losses and defeated the Ionian fleet and leveled Miletus

In 490 the Persians attempted to punish Athens for its support of Aristagoras and sought to restore Hippias to power thereby gaining control of the Aegean Sea

The Athenians refused to submit to the Persians, and they chose Miltiades to lead them against the Persians

 Miltiades was chosen for his personal grudge against the Persians

The Persian fleet landed at Marathon and the Athenians met them there and defeated them

The victory of the Athenians enhanced their pride and their confidence in the system of democracy they had developed to govern their polis

Ten years later in 481 BCE, Darius’ successor Xerxes focused on the Greeks in order to take revenge for Marathon

He assembled a large army of 150,000 men and 600 ships to assert dominance in the Aegean

Themistocles, the political leader in Athens had turned the polis into a naval power

 By 480 BCE Athens had over 200 ships

Only 31 of hundreds of Greek city states committed to contributing to the defense of Greece

 (Sparta, Athens, Corinth, and Aegina led the Greek League)

 Themistocles argued for a naval engagement

The Spartans, under Leonidas, were chosen to lead the Greek League and they chose to make a stand at Thermopylae

Storms had destroyed some of Xerxes’ ships before the battle

The Greeks at Thermopylae stood their ground for two days and slaughtered many Persians

On the third day a Greek traitor show the Persians a trail around the mountains

Realizing the situation was hopeless, Leonidas discharged the Greeks to defend themselves

 300 Spartans chose to remain behind and die fighting

 The route to Athens was now open to the Persians

Themistocles had prepared Athens for evacuation while the fighting was going on at Thermopylae

The Athenians retreated across Salamis bay and lured the Persians into a sea battle

 The Persians lost more than half their ships

Xerxes returned to Persia, but he left a large portion of his army under Mardonius behind

 Mardonius established camp in central Greece

In the summer of 479 BCE, the Spartan leader Pausanias assembled the largest Greek army ever fielded and defeated the Persians at Platea in Boeotia

At the same time the Ionians encouraged the Spartan commander of the Greek fleet, Leotychidas, to attack the Persian naval base at Mycale in Asia Minor

The Persian fleet was defeated and the Persians retreated from the Aegean and Ionia

The Athenian Empire

 The Delian League

Even though the Spartans led the Greeks to victory over the Persians, they were not willing to assume responsibility for defending the Aegean and the Greek mainland

Since Athens was a naval power and had close (kinship) ties to the polis around the Aegean, they joined other Greek on the island of Delos in 478-477 BCE to swear a mutual oath of defense and war against Persia

The purpose of the League was to free Greeks under Persian rule, defend against the return of Persia, and to obtain compensation form Persia by conducting raids against their lands

 The league was successful in ridding the Aegean of pirates and driving back the Persians

 Won a victory over the Persians at the Eurymedon River in Asia Minor in 467 BCE

After this victory some members felt that the League had served its purpose and tried to withdraw from the association

However, Athens force those poleis to continuing making contributions to the League

This became the basis of the Athenian Empire

A free association of states had become an empire dominated by Athens and Athenian power

Leadership in Athens had shifted away from Themistocles to Cimon, the son of Miltiades (of Marathon fame)

Cimon defended Clisthenes’ constitution, waged war against Persia, and maintained friendly relations with Sparta

 The First Peloponnesian War

 In 465 the island of Thasos rebelled against the Delian League

 Cimon was away during the two years it took to put down the rebellion

When he returned, he was attacked politically accused of taking bribes, and for his pro-Spartan and pro-aristocratic policies

Ephialtes and his protégé Pericles led the attack

 Thasos asked Sparta to attack Athens

 However, an earthquake struck Sparta and sparked a Helot revolt

 The revolt kept the Spartan army at home

 In an effort to deal with the slave revolt Sparta asked Athens for help

 Cimon talked the Athenians into sending an Army to Sparta

The Spartans reconsidered letting an Athenian army onto their lands, and they ordered the Athenians to retreat

This humiliated the Athenians and they blamed Cimon for the shame brought to Athens

 Cimon was exiled from Athens in 461 BCE

 And in turn, Athens allied with Argos, an enemy of Sparta

 A radical political faction under Pericles emerged in command of Athens

Since Sparta had been willing to support Thasos in their attempt to break away from the Delian League, the Athenians backed the polis of Megara when it withdrew from the Peloponnesian League

Sparta’s objection led to war with Athens

Athens had the upper hand until they lost a fleet they had sent to Egypt to attack the Persians there

Dissatisfied poleis associated with the Delian League sensed the weakness of Athens and rebelled against Athenian authority

As a result, Athens was forced to disentangle itself from the conflict with Sparta in order to protect its interest in the Delian League

A truce between Sparta and Athens was arranged in 449 BCE and Athens also made peace with Persia

In 446 BCE, hostilities again broke out between Athens and Sparta, but Pericles negotiated a 30-year truce where Sparta recognized the Athenian Empire, and the Athenians agreed to end its drive to gain more control over the Greek mainland

 This truce divided Greece into two blocs

 Sea vs land power

 Athenian Empire and Democracy

The rebellion of the client states of the Delian League gave the Athenians an excuse to tighten their control over the League

 They kept more of the annual revenues for themselves

Even though the Persian threat had faded, the Athenians profited from the League too much to let it dissolve

Although Athenian dominance had fallen out of favor with many League members, there were democratic political factions in the various poleis that supported Athens

Athenians sensed no inconsistencies in demanding more democracy at home while asserting greater imperial dominance abroad

 Pericles reforms

Democracy was expanded as the property qualification for holding office was abolished

Citizenship was returned to those whose both parents descended from citizen families

This limited the number of voters and increased the value of each vote

 Classical Athenian democracy gave citizens extensive powers

 Every decision of the state had to be approved by the popular assembly

Every judicial decision was subject to an appeal to a court consisting of anywhere between 51 to 1,501 citizens

Most officials were chosen at random by casting lots

Candidates for chief offices were usually aristocrats, but the voters could choose anyone

Officials could be removed from office

 Pericles was an effective, persuasive, and popular leader

He was elected to the generalship thirty times overall and during that time had a stint where he was elected 15 years in a row

After the defeat of the Athenian fleet in Egypt Pericles backed off his strong expansionist imperialist stand and advocated more conservative policies aimed at preserving the empire that Athens controlled and maintaining peace with Sparts

 The Great Peloponnesian War 431-404 BCE

 The immediate cause of the war was a conflict between Corinth and Corcyra

The Athenians intervened because if Corinth captured the Corcyran fleet then they could challenge Athenian sea power

However, Corinth was a member of the Peloponnesian League

Corinth appealed to Sparta for help and they persuaded the Peloponnesian League to declare war against Athens

In Spring of 431 the Spartan army marched into Attica

The Spartan strategy was to invade, destroy crops, and force a hoplite battle on the Athenians

The Athenian strategy was to retreat behind the wall of Athens and rely on the strength of the navy and the resources of the empire to last out the siege

Pericles thought this would demonstrate to the Spartans the futility of their strategy and they would sue for peace

 The plan require self-control while Sparta destroyed Attica

Pericles’ leadership encouraged this self-control, but a plague swept Athens in 429 and Pericles perished

His successors were unable to maintain the discipline or stick to a plan of action

 Two opposing factions appeared in Athens

One led by Nicias who wanted to continue Pericles’ defensive strategy

The other headed by Cleon who favored launching an offensive

In 425 BCE Athens captured 400 Spartans and Sparta offered peace in exchange for the prisoners

 The Athenians refused and continued the war

The following two years brought Athenian defeats

 Particularly at Amphipolis in 422 BCE

 Cleon and the Spartan leader Brasidas were killed

The deaths of the leaders brought about a truce called the Peace of Nicias

 Was supposed to guarantee 50-year peace

In 415 BCE, an young ambitious Athenian political leader Alcibiades persuaded Athens to intervene in the affairs of Greek colonies in Sicily

Two years later the entire Athenian expedition was destroyed in this fighting

The destruction of the expedition sparked a rebellion among the cities of the Delian League

Persia then offered aid to Sparta

With help from the Persians the Spartans were able to defeat the Athenian fleet at Aegospotami

And the Spartan leader Lysander cut Athens off of its food supply and starved the city into submission

Athens was stripped of its fleet and empire

Sparta tried to take Athens’ place as leader of the Greek world but failed to do so thanks to its concerns at home with the Helots and their indebtedness to Persia

Sparta ceded the Ionian poleis to Persia, thereby alienating the Greeks of Ionia

Lysander installed oligarchies that were loyal to Sparta and installed Spartan garrisons across Greece

 This proved to be unpopular

 Especially in Athens to the point of rebellion

The Spartan King Pausanias had to remove Lysander and reestablish democracy in Athens to keep the peace

In 396 BCE Sparta sent an army to Asia Minor to protect Greek interests there

The Persians offered aid to any Greek city that resisted Sparta

Thebes took up the offer in 395 BCE and created an alliance with Corinth, Athens, and Argos

The Corinthian War (395-387) led to the destruction of the Spartan fleet

In 371 BCE the Theban general Epaminondas defeated the Spartans at Leuctra and freed the Helots from Spartan control thereby destroying Spartan power forever

The dominance of Thebes was short lived as the Athenians rebelled against them in 362 BCE and defeated and killed Epaminondas at the battle of Mantinea

The Athenians attempted to reclaim an empire in 378 BCE by establishing the Second Athenian Confederation

The collapse of Sparta and Thebes, and the lack of Persian aggression convinced Confederation members that the organization was unnecessary

 In 335 BCE members rebelled and Athens declined even further

 Classical Greece was a period filled with tension, warfare, and the onset of decline

Private ambitions of individuals undermined the religious and civic traditions aimed at encouraging self-restraint

The weakness of Greek civilization in the 4th century BCE set up the conditions for the Macedonian invasion of Greece and the onset of the transitional and meteoric Hellenistic world