

HELLENISM OF ASIA MINOR AND PONTOS



A TEACHING GUIDE



THE ASIA MINOR AND PONTOS HELLENIC RESEARCH CENTER

AMPHRC

Hellenism of Asia Minor and Pontus

A Teaching Guide

*The Asia Minor and
Pontos Hellenic Research Center, Inc.*

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P.O. Box 6127
Bloomingdale, IL 60108-6127
www.hellenicresearchcenter.org
info@hellenicresearchcenter.org

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Edited by E. Dionesotes Woodlock
Cover design by Daniel Bell

*This book is dedicated
to the memory of Susan Stepan,
who gathered and drafted the initial text.*

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Preface: Note to the Elementary School Instructor

This guide is intended to provide brief background information on the Greeks of Asia Minor and Pontus (or Pontos). It covers their movement chronologically from mainland Greece to the western coast of Asia Minor and to the shores of the Black Sea some 3,000 years ago.

These Greeks colonized and built cities throughout western Asia Minor during the 9th and 8th centuries B.C. and along the Black Sea. They built settlements and cities that became the birthplace of literature, philosophy, architecture and science.

They created an empire that lasted over 1,000 years with a civilization unmatched by any of its contemporaries. What took 2.5 millennia to build, took 10 years to destroy at the beginning of the last century.

Teachers and students are encouraged to obtain more information from libraries and online sources. Be sure to refer to our Suggested Reading section listed in the Appendix.

Introduction

Greek Diaspora in the East: From Antiquity to Modern Times

Hellas is the Greek name for Greece, and Hellenes is what the people call themselves. In America, we are more familiar with the terms “Greece” and “Greek.” Hellenism is a general term that refers to the civilization, customs, and culture of the Hellenes or Greeks throughout history, including modern times.



Greek people today come from the country of Greece (left) in southeastern Europe along the shores of the Mediterranean Sea. But until the early 20th century, Greeks also lived in communities along the Black Sea coast, known as Pontus (Greek Pontos), a region of Asia Minor (also known as Anatolia). Greek colonization of these areas dates back to 1000 B.C.

Before we learn about the Hellenism of Asia Minor and Pontus, we will review some of the contributions the Greek peoples have made to our lives today.

Greece is considered the cradle of Western Civilization. Our democratic

form of government, athletic competition, and the studies of philosophy, medicine, mathematics, literature, and drama, all come from the early Greek people.

Contributions to American Culture and Language

Democracy. The term comes from δημοκρατία (*demokratia* -dē-mo-kra-te-a), power to the people. *Demos-* means “people” and *-kratos* is “power.” This political system existed in some Greek city-states, as early as the 5th and 4th centuries B.C. In modern times, democracy guarantees majority rule while ensuring that all citizens are granted rights and liberty.

The democratic form of government is only one practice we adopted from the Greeks. The word “democracy” is one of thousands of English words that originated from Greek.



Words. We use Greek words in our speech every day. Most of the school subject names are of Greek origin: mathematics, history, philosophy, geometry, music, and technology, for example. Words with Greek roots are also found in medicine and the sciences. The Greeks were the first to develop these concepts. They also developed methods of studying by observing, identifying, describing, and organizing things and events they saw every day. New words using two or more Greek roots, prefixes, and suffixes still help us identify things today.

Table 1. Medical Science

Prefixes- and -Suffixes	Definitions	Examples
An- -esthesio	without sensation	Anesthesia leaves you without sensation.
Kardi- -logos -ist	heart study of specialist	Cardiology is the study of the heart. A cardiologist is a doctor who specializes in the heart.
Derm- -log -ist	skin study of specialist	Dermatology is the study of the skin. A dermatologist is a doctor who specializes in the skin.
Ped- -iatric	child medical practice	Pediatrics is the medical specialty to treat children.
Orth- -odont -ist	straight tooth specialist	An orthodontist is the doctor who straightens the teeth.
Rhin- -itis	nose inflammation	A rhinoceros has a big nose. Rhinitis is your doctor's name for a stuffy nose.

Table 2. Other Areas



Prefixes- and -Suffixes	Definitions	Examples
Archeo- -ology -ist	ancient study of specialist	Archeology is the study of very old human cultures. An archeologist is the specialist who does the studies.
Geo- -graphy -meter	earth describe measure	Geography describes our earth's surface. Geometry is a branch of mathematics that measures angles, lines, and figures. It was invented by a Greek man named Euclid.
Hex- -gonos	six angled	A hexagon has six angled sides. It is one figure studied in geometry. 

Table 2. Other Areas (Continued)

Prefixes - and -Suffixes	Definitions	Examples
Octa- -gonos	eight angled	An octagon has eight angled sides. Stop signs are octagons. 
Hippo- -potamus	horse river	A hippopotamus is found in or near rivers, so it was called a “river horse.”
Pachy- -derm	thick skin	An elephant is a pachyderm, which has very thick skin.

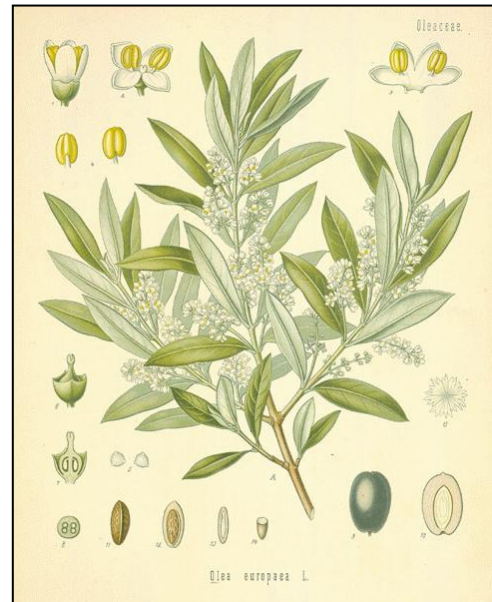
Foods. Many foods we enjoy come from 4,000 years of Greek cooking (the first cookbook was written by Mithaikos in the late 5th century B.C.). Greek cooking is a forerunner of the Western diet that came to America through Europe. Though the popular flaming cheese dish, **saganaki**, is a Greek-American invention, it is based on preparation methods the ancient Greeks used. Today, we eat many foods the ancient Greeks had in their daily diet.

Olives and **olive oil** are probably the most well-known foods associated with Greece.

Pita bread is a very old type of leavened flat bread that is served with our gyros sandwiches. Pita “pockets” are used in various dishes and stuffed sandwiches we eat today.

Gyros is a Greek word for “circle.” Think of the meat cooking on a revolving spit that is sliced for our sandwich in pita bread.

The ancient Greeks grew **wheat** and used **yeast** from wine production for leavening (causing dough to rise) to produce breads similar to what we buy today. Leavened bread was sold in Greek markets as early as the 5th century B.C.

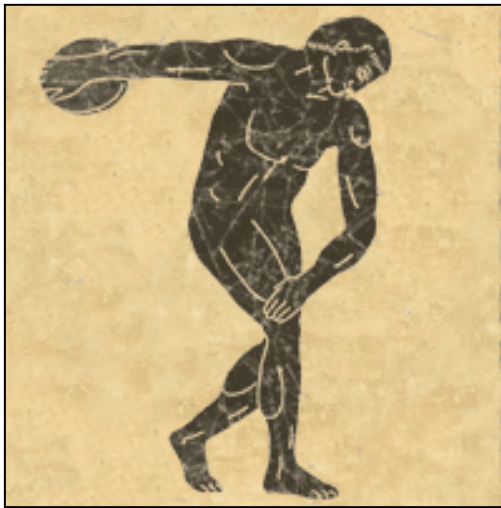


Quail and **chickens** were raised for eggs. Eggs could be cooked and eaten or used as an ingredient in other dishes, just as we do today.

Sheep and **goats** were raised for both meat and milk. Milk was used to make many varieties of cheeses.

Cheese, garlic and onions were the basic foods that soldiers carried, and formal diets for athletes always included cheeses. Early Olympic champions ate dried figs and bread with their cheese, but later, gymnastics master and trainer Pythagoras ordered his athletes to add meat to their diets. Olympic champions, then as now, lived by strict diet rules. In ancient Greece, this meant no desserts or cold drinking water and not too much wine.

Athletic Competition. The Olympic Games began around 776 B.C. and were held in Olympia, Greece, the city they were named after. Their origin is not known, but legend and myth offer several suggestions. The games may have started as a festival to Pelops, who defeated King Olympia, won the hand of his daughter, and became king himself. Another myth tells us Hercules (*Herakles* in Greek), strongman in Greek mythology, won a race in Olympia and declared the race should be held every four years (an Olympiad). In another, the father of the deities in Greek mythology, Zeus, began the festival when he defeated his predecessor, the Titan Cronus.



In mythology, the Greek gods are portrayed as being very fond of sporting events. The games honored athletic skill but also trained participants in battle skills: running, wrestling, and javelin and discus throwing.

The very first games were annual foot races of young women, competing to be priestess for the goddess Hera. The race was known as a “stadion.” It was 180 to 240 meters long, the length of the stadium. Our word stadium is derived from this race. When men joined in the competitions, the races became longer, and by the 5th and 4th centuries B.C., the games were restricted to males only.

The running races became more difficult and dangerous. Race courses became longer, similar to our marathons of today, and later racers wore 50-60 pounds of armor, carried shields, and wore helmets. Other events were added to the Olympic games, including boxing, wrestling, chariot racing, pentathlons (wrestling, running, long jump, javelin throw, and discus throw), and the pankration, a full-contact combat sport event that is similar to the mixed martial arts competitions of today.

Myths and Legends. The Greeks are well known for the hundreds of myths and legends that were passed down from generation to generation. Hundreds of immortal and mortal beings emerged from the imaginations of the ancients, and the heroes and their stories helped people understand the ups and downs of life and the rules of living in their world. Many names and events from Greek mythology have come down to us and are still in use today.

Centaurs. These half man/half horse beings could be either wild and cruel or wise and helpful. They often appear in books and movies:

Harry Potter works feature magical, intelligent creatures that live in the Forbidden Forest.

The Chronicles of Narnia novels often depict noble, brave, and loyal creatures.

Star Wars films and books feature a race of both fierce and clumsy centaurs.

Fantasia film offers friendly animated, multicolored beings in the Pastoral Symphony.



Jason. Jason searched for the Golden Fleece aboard his ship, the Argo, with his crew, the Argonauts. This story has been the subject of two films, but, stories of a long and difficult journey in search of something of great value, and winning it through bravery and cleverness is an often-used theme. The myth about Jason comes from the Greeks who lived in Asia Minor. For more on the myth of Jason and the Golden Fleece, see page 16.

Throughout this overview of Hellenism, the culture of the Greek peoples, in Asia Minor and Pontus, many terms are shown with their Greek words in parentheses.

This focus on the Greek peoples in Asia Minor takes us from their migration out of mainland Greece to the lands along the Black Sea.

Review Questions

1. In your own words, explain the meaning of democracy.

2. What two types of doctors might many children see?

3. What foods might be included in a typical Greek meal? Which of these foods have you tried?

4. Where did the Olympics get its name?

5. What purposes did the Greek myths serve? Why were they told?

6. In your opinion, what is the greatest contribution of ancient Greece to American culture and why?

Greeks and Hellenism in Asia Minor (Anatolia) and Pontus

Migration to Asia Minor and Pontus from Greece

From around 2000 until 1000 B.C., three tribes of people moved from northern Europe to the mainland of Greece. First came the Ionians, then the Achaeans, and last the Dorians.

Around 1050 B.C., when the Dorian tribes invaded mainland Greece, the Ionians who lived near the city of Attica left. They crossed the Aegean Sea and colonized the western coast of Asia Minor (Μικρά Ασία), also known as Anatolia (in English, “East”).

Coastal Asia Minor offered a mild climate with natural harbors, fertile valleys fed by two rivers, and a valuable location along traditional east-west trade routes. The settlements became history’s first city-states.



Colonization of the Black Sea.

In the 9th and 8th centuries B.C., Greeks continued to leave the mainland, and build settlements and then cities throughout western Asia Minor and along the coast of the Black Sea.

Later, in 667 B.C., Greeks from the city of Megara near Athens, with their leader, Byzas, sailed northeast across the Aegean Sea and founded the city of Byzantium, which much later would be renamed Constantinople, the capital of the Byzantine Empire.

We will learn more about both these groups of peoples, beginning with the Greeks who settled in Asia Minor along the Black Sea.

The Greek name for the Black Sea, Euxenos Pontos (Εὐξείνιος Πόντος) or simply Πόντος (Pontus), in Greek means “hospitable sea.” Before the Greeks arrived, the Black Sea was known to be inhospitable—or dangerous—because it was difficult to navigate and warrior tribes lived along its shores. The Greek colonists brought order and civilization to the area. They built trading ports in cities along the Colchis (Κολχίς) coast. Colchis today is part of the Republic of Georgia and is east of the ancient Greek city of Trebizond (Greek Trapezus or Trapezous), once the farthest east Greek trading city and now part of Turkey. The Greeks in these areas not only contributed to the wealth of Greek mythology but also were founders of many disciplines in science, mathematics, and philosophy.

Myths Associated with the Greek Presence in Asia Minor and Pontus

Jason and the Golden Fleece

The myth of Jason and the search for the Golden Fleece (Χρυσόμαλλον Δέρας) originated in Asia Minor. This myth tells us the Greeks were part of trading routes and mined gold and minerals throughout Asia Minor.

The Golden Fleece may represent the king because Jason needed to find it to return the throne to its proper ruler. It is also known that sheepskins were used to collect gold from rivers and streams. The fleeces were hung to dry and the gold flecks combed out. The early Greeks in Asia Minor were great goldsmiths. The ram itself may signify sheep farming by the people.

Legend says in the 13th century B.C., Athamas, King of Boeotia (and Jason’s uncle), tired of his first wife, Nephele, and took a second wife, Princess Ino. Ino was jealous of Nephele’s children, son Phrixos and daughter Helle, and convinced the king to kill the twins.

Before any harm came to the children, the twins were rescued by a ram with a golden fleece that was sent by their mother, Nephele. On the flight to safety, the mortal princess, Helle, unfortunately fell into the sea. It is believed she was rescued by Poseidon (Ποσειδών), God of the Sea who transformed her into a goddess. The Hellespont Sea, which bridges the Aegean and Black Seas and separates Europe from Asia, is named after her.

Son Phrixos lived and landed in Colchis. Phrixos sacrificed the ram to Zeus and gave the Golden Fleece to King Aeetes of Colchis. The king hung it on an oak tree where a sleepless dragon guarded it.

Phrixos and Helle crossing the strait separating Europe and Asia, right.

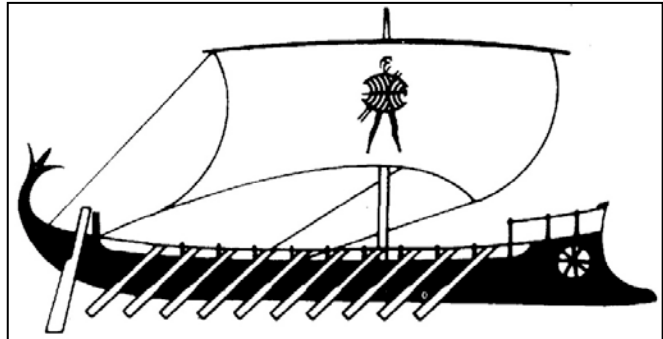


Jason's father, Aeson, was the rightful king of Thessaly, but his half-brother, Pelias, imprisoned Aeson in a power grab. Pelias feared that he would be overthrown and ordered all his half-brother's relatives to be killed. Jason was a baby at the time and was saved by some fast-thinking women and quickly left the kingdom to be raised by Chiron, a friendly centaur.

An oracle (one who predicts the future) told Pelias he should be afraid of a man with one sandal.

Many years later, as Jason was returning to the kingdom to claim the throne, he lost one sandal in the river. He was brought to the king as a man wearing only one sandal.

Afraid for his throne, Pelias told Jason he would have to find and bring back the Golden Fleece. Pelias believed Jason could not succeed in taking the Golden Fleece from the dragon and would die in the pursuit.



Jason assembled a group of about 50 sailors (the Argonauts) and a huge ship called the Argo (above and right) and sailed toward Colchis to find the Golden Fleece.

As with all quests in mythology, the journey of Jason and the Argonauts was filled with adventure. They stopped at several islands along the way, causing trouble on some and being helpful on others. On Salmydessus, for example, the king was slowly being starved to death by Harpies, creatures with the bodies of birds and heads of women.

Two Argonauts (children of the North Wind) chased the Harpies far away so they could never hurt the king again. To thank him, King Phineas told Jason how to get to the kingdom of Colchis and gave him the secret of passing through the Symplegades, two rock cliffs that clashed together and crushed any ship attempting to sail between them.



In Colchis, Jason met King Aeetes. Though Phrixos, son of King Athamas of Boeotia, was from Jason's hometown and was welcomed when he flew to Colchis on the golden ram, Aeetes did not welcome Jason. He gave Jason three very difficult tasks before Jason could get to the Golden Fleece.



The three tasks were too hard for Jason but, as often happened in Greek mythology, gods and goddesses came to help their hero. So, the goddess Hera arranged for the king's daughter, Medea (left), to help him with the tasks through her magical powers.

First, he had to yoke two fire-breathing oxen together and plow a field. Medea gave him a special salve that coated his skin and protected him from burning in the flames.

Second, he had to plant dragon's teeth in the field. The dragon's teeth grew up to be armed warriors, and Medea told him how to defeat them.

Third came the challenge of getting past the sleepless dragon that protected the fleece. At the tree where the fleece was hung, Medea put the dragon to sleep with an herbal potion. Jason grabbed the Golden Fleece, and he and Medea ran to the Argo and sailed for home.

In Greek mythology, all does not necessarily end well, even for a hero, especially if he makes a god or goddess angry. For all that Medea had done for him and the crew of the Argo, Jason decided to break his vow to marry her and became engaged to Princess Creusa instead.

Medea took out revenge on Jason by killing the princess and her father, the King. She fled to Athens. The goddess Hera did not forgive Jason and cursed him for breaking his promise. He died alone, crushed by the stern of the Argo as he slept under it.



Hera, Queen of the Gods, and Goddess of marriage, women, and birth.

Amazons



The Amazons (Ἀμαζόνες) were a race of women said to have lived in Pontos and founded many important Greek port cities, including Smyrna on the Aegean Sea, and Sinope (Σινώπη) and Trabizond on the Black Sea.

The Amazons, left, were trained in the skills of war and to fight on horseback with battle axes and bows. The Amazon myth has a basis in history. It is known, for example, that in some cultures in Asia Minor, women went to battle along with men. Amazon women were believed to be young, beautiful, and courageous.

The Amazons were part of one of the most well-known classical myths about the labors of Hercules (right, as a boy fighting a snake). He was strong and brave, and he needed to be because the goddess Hera was angry with him and was determined to destroy him.

He was living a peaceful life with his wife and three sons when Hera struck. She made him insane and forced him to kill his sons. When he came to his senses and realized what he had done, he went to the priestess at Delphi and asked what he could do to atone for this terrible crime. He was sent into the service of the King of Mycenae to perform every labor the king asked of him.



The king was afraid of Hercules and gave him a task that he thought would kill him so his throne would be safe. Hercules, however, succeeded and returned safely. Now the king had to cleverly devise one labor after another. With each one, the king hoped to hear Hercules had failed and died, and each time, he succeeded and returned.

The ninth labor brought him to the land of the Amazons. Their kingdom was ruled by Queen Hippolyta. In addition to being trained warriors, the Amazons were skilled at agriculture and hunting. They made helmets, clothing, and girdles (a belt around the waist) from animal skins.

Hippolyta's girdle was believed to be magical because it was given to her by Ares, the God of War. Hercules went to war with the Amazons to claim the girdle and bring it back for the king's daughter.

The queen liked Hercules and offered to give him her girdle, but Hera did not want a peaceful ending. She spread lies throughout the kingdom that Hercules was there to steal the queen, so the Amazons went to war with him his warriors. He captured the queen's sister and

threatened to kill her unless he and his men were free to leave with the girdle. The Amazons backed off, and the invaders sailed away.

Review Questions

1. Why was coastal Asia Minor a good place to settle?

2. What does “Pontus” mean?

3. How did Greek settlers improve the Black Sea area?

4. Do you think Jason was a hero, yes or no? Explain why.

5. How did the goddess Hera cause trouble for Jason, Hercules, and the Amazons?

Settlements in Asia Minor (9th and 8th Centuries B.C.)

First Cities in Coastal Areas

Beginning about 1000 B.C., Ionian Greek colonists founded several cities on the western coast of Asia Minor, beginning along the Mediterranean Sea and advancing along the Aegean Sea to the Black Sea. Well-known Ionian cities include Miletos, Ephesus, Phocaea, Smyrna, and Pergamum.

By the 8th century B.C., Miletos was the oldest and most powerful Greek city in Asia Minor and was a great economic and naval power. The Milesians established more colonies along the Mediterranean, and then moved north to the shores of the Euxeinus Pontus (Black Sea). They traded fish, farming products, and ores, including silver, gold, iron, and copper.



Major cities in Asia Minor.

The first wave of settlers from Miletos founded the city of Sinope (785 B.C.), which became a route for trading caravans and the easternmost port city in Pontus. The Sinopeans then founded other cities, including Amisos, Kotyora, and Trabizond (756 B.C.). Trabizond was a gateway city to the famous 7,000-mile-long Silk Road, a series of trading routes that covered Asia, Europe, and Africa, and was an early banking or money trading center.

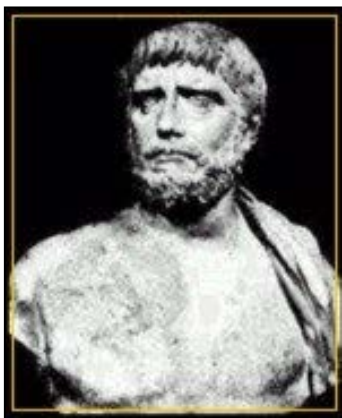


*Major cities and centers in the coastal area of the Black Sea
(from the book *The Greeks and the Black Sea* by Marianna Koromila).*

First Thinkers of Antiquity

The first great thinkers of antiquity lived in Asia Minor. They did not accept the explanations of the world around them that came from the myths and sought more sensible explanations. Western philosophy and science as we know it today emerged from these original thinkers.

Miletos (Μίλητος) has been called the birthplace of the modern world. It was home to Thales the “father of philosophy” as well as his followers Anaximander and Anaximenes. The city was the intellectual and business capital of the Greek world a century before Athens. The following information on these three thinkers gives you a brief idea of their contributions to philosophy and science.



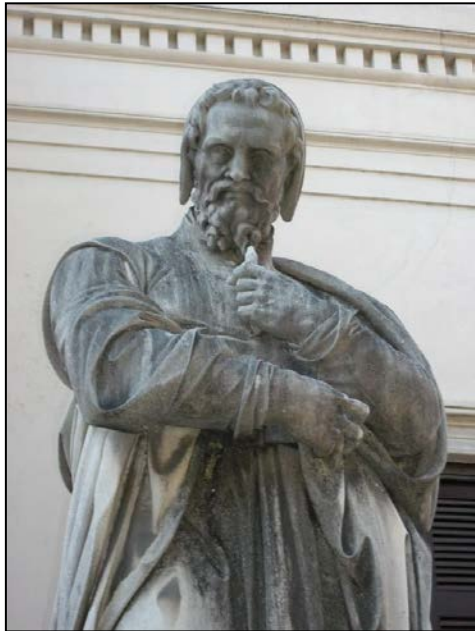
Thales (Θαλῆς), (624-546 B.C.), left, was the first known Greek philosopher. He was interested in everything around him, including science, mathematics, geography, politics, astronomy, and history. He was the first to separate the study of the sciences from philosophy and from mythology. He used reason, not myths, to explain the natural world. He began the study of Greek astronomy. His methods became the basis for the way we study science today.

The Greeks of Asia Minor traded with other Greek city-states and other countries. Many city-states became wealthy and were able to support arts, sciences, and philosophy.

Thales studied geometry in Egypt, and when he returned to Miletos, he amazed his friends with his mathematical skills. He could easily calculate how far a ship was out at sea from where he was standing on land or how high a pyramid was from the shadow it cast. Even with all his knowledge, he was poor and was laughed at by some who wondered about the usefulness of wisdom when it could not pay the rent.

One winter, he learned through his observation of the stars that the year's olive harvest would be very good, so he took what little money he had and bought olive presses at a low price. When the harvest turned out as he predicted, he was able to rent out his olive presses at a higher price and make a large profit.

He showed observation and logic can make someone rich, but he preferred to use his abilities in academic studies and not business.



Anaximander (610-546 B.C.), left, was a student of Thales and, like Thales, studied science, mathematics, and philosophy. Anaximander (Ἀναξίμανδρος) is considered to be the first scientist because he performed the earliest known scientific experiment. He was first to publish a map of the world and advanced the study of geography.

In astronomy, he was the first to identify the sun as a giant mass and realize how far away from earth it was. He was first to present an “open” system where the stars and planets were different distances from each other.

Anaximenes (585-528 B.C.), right, the third philosopher of Miletos, was a friend or student of Anaximander. He believed air was the source of all things. Anaximenes (Ἀναξίμενης) was first to propose that all matter resulted from changes to air. He offered a simple experiment that demonstrates how air can be easily modified: blow on your hand with your mouth open and the breath feels warm, then blow on your hand with your lips pursed and the breath feels cool.



Other Important Greek Thinkers from Miletos

Hecateus (550-476 B.C.) was a Greek historian who traveled through most of the known world. He wrote about his travels and described the countries and their inhabitants. He corrected and enlarged Anaximander's map of the world.

Hippodamos (Ἱππόδαμος) (498-408 B.C.) is the father of urban planning and originator of the grid system of city layouts with broad, straight streets and an open city center. He also was first to propose that people who create things useful to society should be rewarded. We do this today through patent law.

Isidoros (Ισίδωρος) was one of two Greek architects that built the Hagia Sophia (which means "Holy wisdom") church in Constantinople (today, Istanbul, Turkey). He also was a physicist and mathematician who gave us the T-square and string parabola.

A parabola (as shown in St. Louis, MO, right) is a mathematical curve. For example, a spout of water in a fountain forms a curve. A thrown baseball follows a parabolic curve in the air.



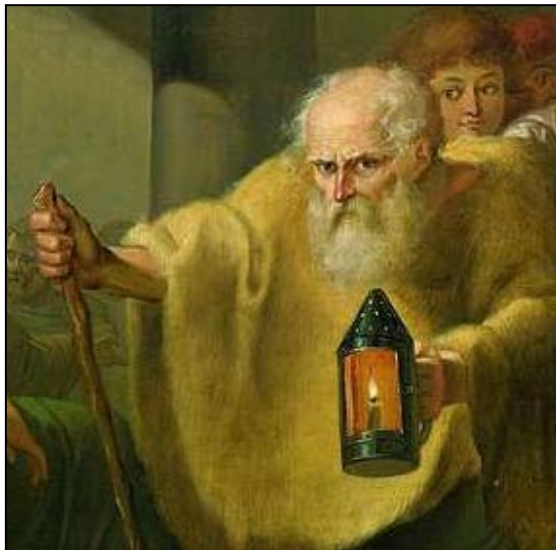
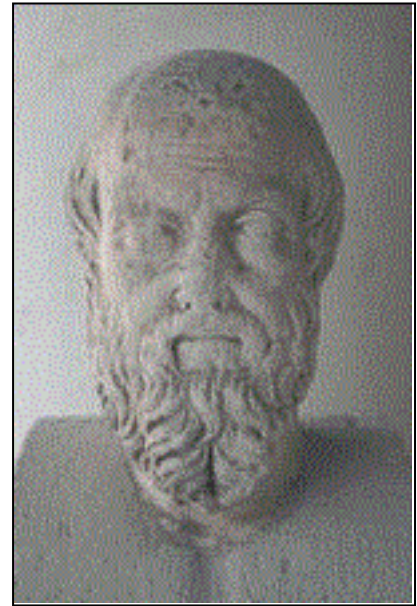
Great Greek Thinkers from Other Areas of Asia Minor



Heraclitus (Ἡράκλειτος) (535-475 B.C.), left, was the son of an aristocratic family from Ephesus (Ἐφεσος). He is best known for his doctrine that change is central to everything. For example, "You cannot step twice into the same river." He believed in the unity of opposites, stating that "the path up and down is one and the same."

Herodotus (Ἡρόδοτος) (535-475 B.C.) of Halicarnassus, right is known as the father of history. He was the first to carefully collect information, check to make sure it is correct, and organize it. His nine books, known as *The Histories*, were written as an account of the years leading up to the Greco-Persian Wars.

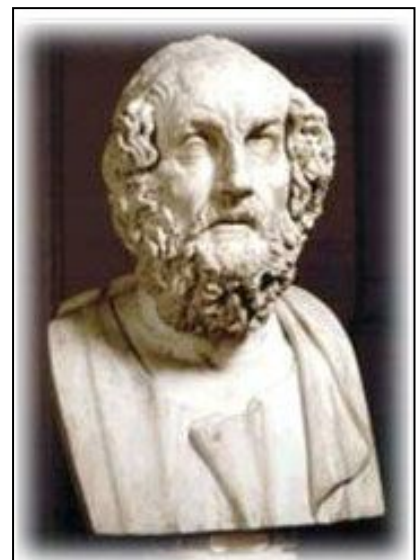
He wrote of the places and people he met while he traveled through the lands around the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. His books draw from traditional storytelling and oral histories, but also state facts of geography, anthropology (the study of humans), and history.



Diogenes (Διογένης) of Sinope (404-323 B.C.), left, was sent away from his home and went to Athens where he chose to live in extreme poverty. He was a beggar who carried a lantern through the streets as he looked “for an honest man.” He found only rascals and scoundrels.

Diogenes is one of the founders of the Cynic School of philosophy that believed in living a natural life without any of the luxuries of civilization. He believed wisdom and happiness do not depend on society’s rules or on possessions.

Strabo (Στράβων) the geographer and historian, right, (63 B.C.-24 A.D.) was born to a wealthy family in Amaseia, Pontus. Because of the peaceful times he lived in, he was able to travel throughout Asia Minor and into Africa and Europe. His most famous writings were his 17-volume *Geographica*, in which he wrote detailed descriptions of the people and places he studied in his world travels.



Review Questions

1. Why did Greeks create cities along the western coast of Asia Minor? What are the advantages of living on a coast?

2. What was one major achievement of each of these great thinkers from Miletos:

- a. Thales

- b. Anaximander

- c. Anaximenes

3. Of the other Greek thinkers mentioned in the reading,

- a. Who might have enjoyed reading this history book?

- b. Who valued honesty and wanted to live simply?

- c. Who traveled a great deal and loved geography?

The Byzantine Era (3rd to 14th Centuries A.D.)

Introduction of Christianity

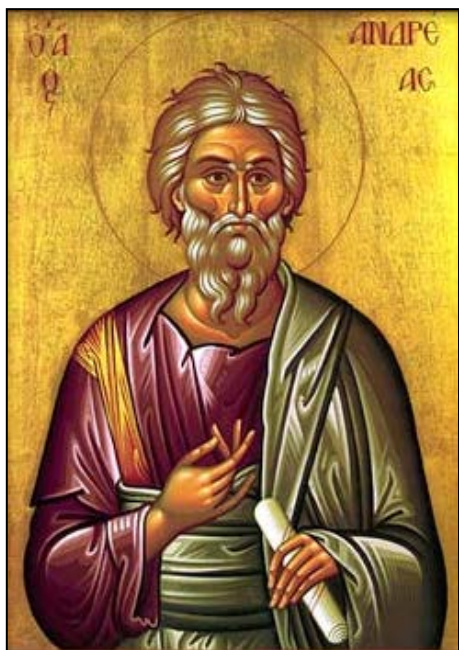
The Greek King Alexander the Great (Μέγας Ἀλέξανδρος) of Macedon is remembered for spreading Hellenism to the east after he captured Asia Minor. He brought additional Greek colonists to the area and further spread the Greek language, art, education, and government. The Greek cities of Asia Minor flourished during the Hellenistic period and Roman times (323-146 B.C.).

The Roman Emperor Constantine I captured the city of Byzantium in 324 B.C., and renamed it Constantinople. The Eastern Roman Empire and the Byzantine Empire are both names for the same area. Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire.

Monasteries, universities, and schools were built as centers of Christian and Hellenic learning. The Empire was a powerful economic, cultural, and military force until the late 10th century A.D. The Hagia Sophia Orthodox patriarchal basilica in Constantinople dedicated in 360 A.D. and built on the orders of Byzantine Emperor Justinian, was the largest cathedral in the world for almost 1,000 years (below). When Constantinople was captured by the Ottoman Turks in 1453, the conquerors converted Hagia Sophia into a mosque.



Religious Leaders, Churches, and Saints



In 35 A.D., the Apostle Saint Andrew, left, was the first preacher of Christianity in the Pontus region and by the 2nd century A.D., Christianity quickly spread to the coastal Black Sea areas and the inner region of Pontus. Many saints and fathers of the Christian Church were from Asia Minor, including St. Paul, St. Basil, St. George, and St. Nicholas.

It is in Asia Minor that Christianity grew and spread during the late Roman and early Byzantine years until Constantinople fell to the Ottoman Turks in 1453 A.D. and Trabizon fell in 1461 A.D.

The Greek communities in Anatolia during the Ottoman rule were grouped into three geographical areas: Ionia, on the western coast; Pontus, on the northeast coast; and Cappadocia, in central Asia Minor.

The Pontus region was important for trade and defense. It was part of overland trade routes, including the famous Silk Road that came through the Pontos region and continued through Asia and Africa all the way to China. Pontos was a main seaport for military defense against invading navies.

The Crusaders conquered Constantinople in 1204 and weakened the Byzantine Empire. In 1461, the Ottoman Turks conquered Trabizond, the last independent Greek state and the eastern frontier of Hellenism. Greeks would not be free again until the modern nation state of Greece was established in the 19th century. With the fall of Trabizond, massacres and deportations of the Greeks and other Christians began, and lasted until 1923.

Review Questions

1. What was a major contribution of the following individuals:

a. Alexander the Great

b. Emperor Constantine I

c. Apostle St. Paul

2. Why was Pontus such an important region?

3. What occurred in 1453 and 1461?

4. Why were these dates so important (noteworthy, significant or of great consequence) to the Greeks of Asia Minor and mainland Greece?

Ottoman Conquest (14th to 19th Centuries A.D.)

At the time of the conquest, the Pontian Greek population numbered about 700,000. Thousands of Greek churches and schools prospered. People were well educated and supported newspapers, books, and scholarship. Cultural and scientific societies thrived.

Restrictions and Hardships

Ottoman rule was always extremely harsh for the Christian minorities in the empire. They fought to keep their identities as Christians, and many kept their cultural traditions and beliefs in secret. Christians were treated as second-class citizens and were not able to move around or trade freely. Their schools and churches were destroyed, and over time people became illiterate. Special taxes were levied on the Christian peoples, their cultural writings and icons were destroyed or stolen, and their lands and businesses were often taken with no compensation.

During the 16th and 17th centuries, Greek communities in Asia Minor resisted constant pressures to convert to Islam. Most managed to preserve their religion, but some were forced to convert.

Thousands of Pontian Greeks left the coastal areas as Turkish people moved in and took over their lands. The Greeks moved inland to the monasteries and mining areas, where for awhile they became the official miners and metal workers of the Ottoman Empire.



During the 19th century, the Ottoman central government increased power over local rulers. Better security and new decrees improved the lives of both Muslims and non-Muslims. The empire entered the world economy and opened its ports to international commerce, and many Greeks migrated back to the Pontus. Prosperity for the Greek Christians did not last long. The Turks suffered losses in wars with Christian Russia from 1768 to 1868, and the Ottoman sultans channeled their anger and humiliation into making Turkey an exclusively Islamic, Turkish-speaking country.

Sumela Monastery in Trabzon built on a steep cliff in 386 A.D., left.

Forced Conversions to Islam

The Turkish persecution of Pontian Greeks and other Christian peoples began after the fall of Trabizon, starting slowly at first and gradually becoming more widespread and terrifying. Massacres and deportations became more frequent and intense. Many Christians reluctantly converted to Islam to avoid oppression and discrimination and merely to survive. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, approximately 250,000 Pontian Greeks were forced to convert to Islam and speak Turkish. Almost 250,000 migrated to areas of the Caucasus and the northern shores of the Black Sea that Russia controlled. The Russians encouraged the Pontians to emigrate and develop these newly acquired lands.

Movement for Liberation



Greek nationalists from Russia formed a secret organization called the Friendly Society (*Filiki Eteria*) in Odessa (northwest coast of the Black Sea), to free themselves from the Ottoman Empire. Alexander Ypsilantis, left, whose family escaped to Russia from the Pontus, was chosen to lead the revolt. On March 25, 1821, Greece declared a revolutionary war against Ottoman rule and by July 1832, Greece was recognized as an independent nation.

Not all Greek lands were liberated after mainland Greece won independence from the Ottoman Empire. The Greeks in Asia Minor and Pontus, who remained under Ottoman rule, paid a heavy price for the success of Greece in this war.

The last sultan of the Ottoman Empire strengthened his efforts to unite the Islamic world against the Christian West and was particularly harsh in targeting his own Christian subjects, such as the Greeks, Armenians and Assyrians. During 1895 and 1896, as many as 200,000 Christians were killed, thousands were driven out of Turkey, and thousands were forcibly converted to Islam.

Between 1914 and 1923, all Christian minorities in Asia Minor became victims of genocide.

Review Questions

1. What restrictions did the Ottoman government place on its Christian minorities?

2. Why did many Greeks convert to Islam?

3. What event occurred in 1832?

4. Did this event help/hurt the Greeks of Asia Minor and the Pontus? Explain your answer.

5. What happened in 1895-1896?

Early 20th Century (1908-1923)

Christian Communities in Asia Minor and Pontus Destroyed

When the Ottoman Empire fell in 1908, it was replaced first by a regime called Young Turks, and later by the Nationalists of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Both regimes continued the policies of expelling all Christians—Armenians, Greeks, and Assyrians—from the country. They believed massacres were necessary and justified because they were creating a new nation with a new identity. Purges became harsher and punishments more severe for being a Christian, despite the fact that Armenians and Greeks were the country's largest taxpayers, and destroying them took away much needed state revenues.

The Young Turks banned all cultural organizations of all Christians. They enforced a boycott of all products and services from Christian businesses. They took control of schools, made learning Turkish a requirement, and taxed the Christian people to fund the schools. Every community had to send their young men to military service. The Christian recruits were treated so brutally that young men fled the country to avoid the military. If they were caught, they were hanged. Because of these restrictions, the minority communities became very poor.

Gangs of Turks would break into homes at any time to rob and abuse the families on the pretense of looking for those avoiding military service. Violence against Christians was not punished. Thousands of Muslims moved into Greek villages and towns in the Pontus and other areas where the roving gangs encouraged new arrivals to hate the Christians.

The Young Turks were replaced by the Nationalists, who continued the genocide. They rounded up bankers, merchants, journalists, teachers, and clergy. They would try them in court and find them guilty on trumped-up charges of treason, and had them hanged. As a result, the Pontian community was left without leaders.

Greeks Forced from Their Ancestral Land

People were pulled out of their homes, which were looted and burned down. Women, children, and the elderly were hanged, or deported to the interior of Turkey, or taken into forced labor. People were formed into caravans and forced to march on foot. They were not allowed to bring many belongings with them. Some were marched hundreds of miles to deserts or mountains. Thousands died from exposure to severe weather and starvation. This is why they are known as death marches, as you can see below.



Expelled survivors to the interior of Asia Minor returning to the Black Sea ports before the November 30, 1922 evacuation deadline (National Geographic, November, 1925).

Women and children were also sold into slave labor and sold for as little as 80 cents each. Boys were kidnapped to work in Muslim households. Young girls often were taken for harems. Men were forced to serve in labor battalions for the Turkish Army to build roads and military fortifications—the hard labor and no food meant most men lived a short time, only two-to-three months. Survivor accounts speak of the horrors of the labor battalions. One such account is found in *Number 31328—The Book of Slavery* by Elias Venezis.

The policy of ethnic cleansing between 1914 and 1923 resulted in over 2.5 million Armenians, Assyrians and Greeks losing their lives. This was the first genocide of the 20th century.

Review Questions

1. How did the Young Turks persecute Christians?

2. How did the Nationalists continue this persecution?

3. How many Greeks were killed? How many Armenians and Assyrians?

4. Define the word “genocide.”

Forced Removal and Refugee Settlements

Deportation from Asia Minor and Pontus

During World War I and the start of the Armenian Genocide (1915-1916), Ottoman Greeks were expelled from their homes and deported to the interior with much loss of life. In May 1920, the Greek army was requested by Greece's allies to land troops in Smyrna to protect the ethnic Greeks. The war between Greek and Turkish troops continued for the next two years until the defeat of Greek troops in August 1922. The years 1922 and 1923 marked the end of Hellenism in Asia Minor and Pontus. Because so many people were lost and Hellenic presence there was ended, this is known as the Asia Minor Catastrophe (Μικρασιατική καταστροφή).

October 1922 signaled the beginning of one of the greatest refugee crises of the 20th century. Approximately 750,000 Ottoman Greeks had fled to Greece and to other countries, while an estimated half a million were still alive but in danger of being uprooted and deported to the



interior which probably meant death. The League of Nations, similar to today's United Nations, called on the Norwegian explorer and Nobel Prize winner Fridtjof Nansen to undertake the task of negotiating between the Turkish and Greek governments for an exchange of populations, thus saving the lives of hundreds of thousands of Greeks who were trying to escape from Turkey. Nansen, an International civil servant, humanitarian and fearless peacemaker, had previously negotiated exchanges of prisoners of war and civilian populations. He had already saved millions of other victims in Europe and Asia Minor from famine and diseases.

Fridtjof Nansen (October 10, 1861-May 13, 1930), left.

In May 1923, the European commission prepared the Treaty of Lausanne, which required a population exchange between Greece and Turkey. The Greek Christians who survived the purges were uprooted from the lands of their ancestors and left behind the remnants of their 3,000-year-old civilization. Approximately 1.5 million Christian Greeks were relocated and about 480,000 Muslim Turks were returned to Turkey.

Most Greeks went to Greece, but about 30,000 became refugees in Europe and the United States and 75,000 migrated to Russia, forming the "diaspora." Diaspora is a Greek word meaning dispersion—people who left their homeland and established communities in other countries.

The thousands of Greeks who converted to the Muslim religion were unable to leave Turkey and remain there today. Only a small Christian population remained in Istanbul as part of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. This small, isolated population of about 3,000 still lives under severe legal restrictions. No one is permitted to move in, and the Turkish authorities closed the seminary and all opportunities for higher education.

Survivors' Testimonies

Testimony 1

Testimony of Efthimios Couzinos in his book, *Twenty-Three Years in Asia Minor (1899-1922)*, reprinted by The Pontian Greek Society of Chicago, 2010. Below is an excerpt of the author's vivid recollection of life in Turkey before, during, and after the First World War, found on page 132:

On our way to Samsun, we observed history's greatest forced migration of people. It was the trekking of the native Greeks in Asia Minor back to where their forefathers had left about 2,500 years ago.

I was thankful that the American Near East Relief had prepared for some of us this comfortable and safe passage to the sea. In two days we would embark on American-hired vessels to proceed to safe destinations in Europe. But what we saw on this road was not only the greatest movement of refugees from one country to another, but also the most miserable and the cruelest in the history of mankind.



Efthimios Couzinos

The roads leading to Samsun and to the coast were filled with the remnants of the massacres of the previous two years. They consisted mostly of women and children and old men. As we mentioned before, the young men and able-bodied Greek men were put to death.

But why were these Greeks—loyal Turkish subjects, whose forefathers had come to Asia Minor 2,500 years ago, some with the armies of Alexander the Great—anxious to leave a country where they had taken root so many centuries ago?

The answer was written on the faces of these people, and also on the composition of each family unit. There were no families among these refugees. They were just miserable people. ...The arabas (horse or ox carriage) proceeded in the center of the road, as they had the right of way. The humble refugees win plodding alongside the arabas.

Many of these pitiful human beings had started then trek about fifteen days ago. There were others from the interior that had started from points three weeks' walking distance away.

Some family remnant units had managed to take along a donkey, loading it with a few bare necessities, such as a blanket or a worn-out coat. The cold days of the fall season were commencing, and many of the ill-clad people were shivering. Nearly all of them walked, and the majority was carrying whatever belongings they had on their backs. You could easily tell

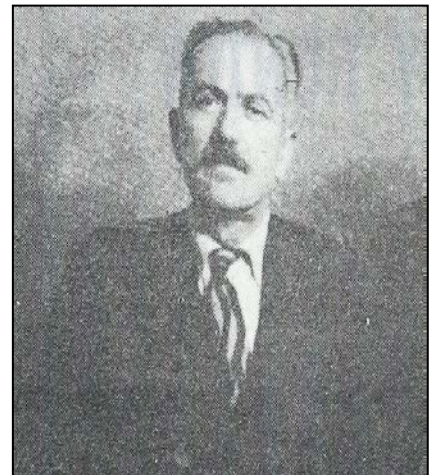
the city folk from the peasants. The physiognomy [outward appearance] of the peasants was of a tougher and rougher type, and their physical condition was more adaptable to this exposure to the elements. Here was the remnant of a family of a school teacher from Sivas. The father of the family had been killed because of his profession. The widow, with two small children, was plodding along. She was fortunate enough to have purchased 1 (one) donkey. She had covered the rickety saddle with a rug which must have been an expensive one in former fortunate days. You could tell from her few possessions that she must have belonged to a middle-class and prosperous family several years before, with a comfortable home and a teacher for the head of her family. She gave turns to her small children to ride the donkey. The poor woman had been going through this agonizing process for two weeks, and she seemed to have reached the end of her endurance. As we stopped alongside the road for watering the horses, the mother asked us how many kilometers she had to go to her destination, Samsun. We told her, approximately fifty kilometers more. That meant about five more days of walking. She hoped that for the sake of her children she might be able to make it!

Testimony 2

Testimony of Theodore Courtides from the book, *The Greek Pontians of the Black Sea*, by Constantine Hionides, Kyriakidis Brothers Publishers, 2003.

On the fourth day, we arrived in Kotyora (November, 1922) and were placed in the Greek quarters with the women and children, who had not been exiled. All the men of Kotyora had gone into exile, far away to the Carduchians mountains, to count again the stops and parasangs of Xenophon. Thousands of them died in the vast areas of the interior of Turkey.

We met here, again, the butcher of Pontos, the blood-thirsty Topal Osman. He was triumphantly returning from the massacres of Smyrna, on board the ship Ak Deniz, along with his murderous gangsters Turkish Lazoi. As we were told by his fellow passengers, Topal Osman burned a few Greeks alive in the ovens of the ship. These were prisoners from the jails of Unye and Fatsa.



Theodore Courtides

In a few days, we boarded the Spanish ship "Santa Maria." This was the first time we felt secure and encountered compassion and human interest, from the very gentle captain and crew. More refugees were boarding on five other ships. We met human skeletons, coming from the ports of Tirebolu, Kerasounta and Bulancak. They were the very few who survived the Turkish ferocity.

The women and children of Kotyora were boarding those ships coming into port, every day, and to meet their own people later on in Greece, who were then coming through Syria.

Other ships with refugees were passing by from Trapezounta, Surmena, Rize, Gumushane (Argyroupolis), Cheriana, Erzincan, and Erzurum.

All set out for mother Greece with the refugees who came from the provinces of Amisos (Samsun), Bafra, Alacam, Terma, Unye, Inebolu, Kastamonu, Sinope, Eregli, (Heraclea Pontica) and the interior areas of Erbaa, Havza, Ladik, Kiopru, Amasya, Merzifon, Sivas (Sebasteia), Tokat, Niksar, Resadiye, Koyulhisar, Nikopolis, Refahiye, and Apes.

In some provinces of Pontos, where struggles with guerrillas were strong, the destruction was greater and the victims of the seven year fights numbered many more. The last few fighters against the Turks and the natural elements were forced out of their glorious hiding places and, together with the crippled, wounded, widows and their orphans, they were added to the Pontians who were leaving Turkey.

Refugees in Greece

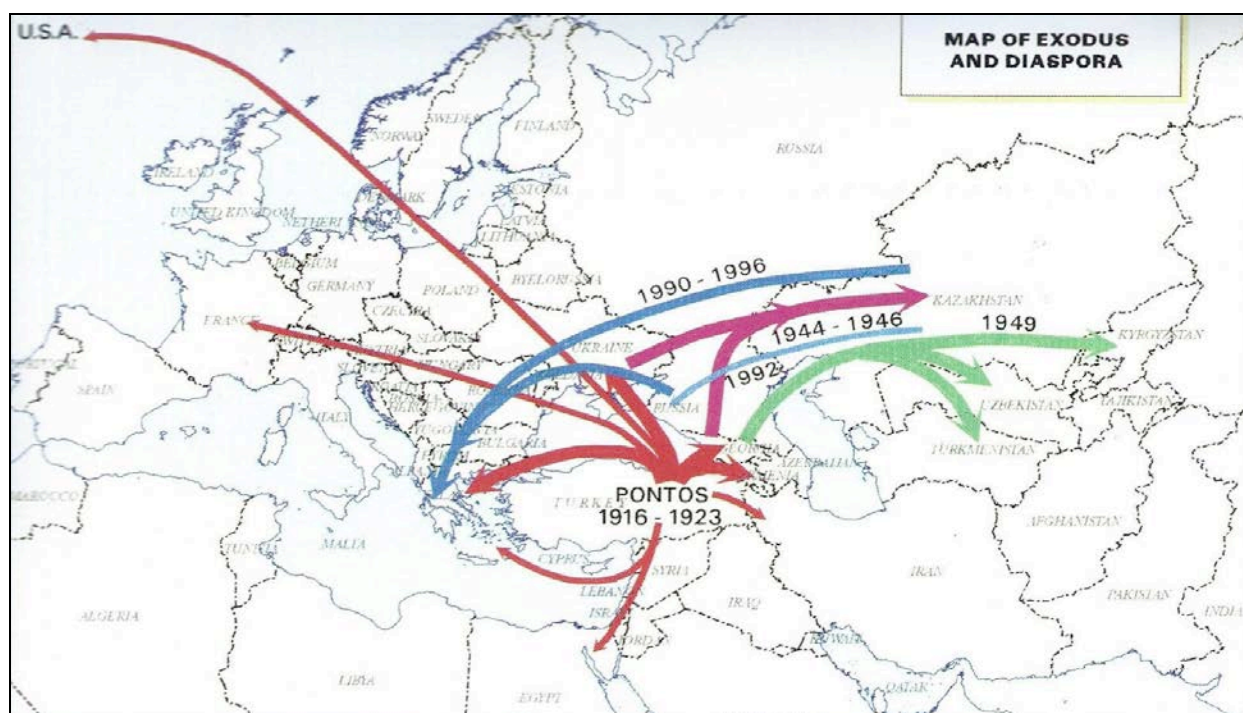
The Greek population of Asia Minor and Pontus was violently expelled or massacred especially in 1922 and 1923 before the Lausanne Treaty on July 24, 1923. Those who escaped flooded the Greek Islands and eventually were transferred to the mainland of Greece whereas others managed to reach countries in Europe, southern Russian territories and the United States of America.

Of the 1.5 million Greeks who left Asia Minor, most had followed the retreat of the Greek Army after it lost the Greco-Turkish War to Turkey; the last 150,000 left as part of the population exchange. More than one million refugees came to Greece, raising its population by about one third in just a few months. Thousands of homes were quickly built to house the new arrivals.

Once settled, the refugees helped bring prosperity to Greece—tax revenue increased by nearly 400% in just a few years. Land that could be used for agriculture increased by more than 50%. The new workers, many very skilled, were a source of lower cost labor, and Greece's economy grew from new and profitable industries built by refugees who were successful business owners in Asia Minor.

One example is the personal account of Aristotle Sokratis Onassis and his family. Onassis' father, Socrates, was a successful shipping entrepreneur in Smyrna. His family left everything behind when the Great Fire of Smyrna, started by the Turks to take the land, destroyed most of the city. The Onassis family became refugees in Greece. Aristotle Onassis built his own fleet of freighter and tanker ships. He invested in and owned many businesses, including the creation of the Greek national airline, Olympic Airways. He is most well known in the United States as the second husband of Jacqueline Kennedy.

Today, approximately 40% of Greeks are either wholly or partially descended from the refugees of Asia Minor.



Map of Pontian Greek exodus.

Despite the death and displacements of Greeks from their ancestral land of 3,000 years in Asia Minor and Pontus, today the survivors and their descendants managed to preserve their culture, tradition, and customs. Descendants of the Asia Minor and Pontus refugees keep their culture alive through hundreds of organizations worldwide. Evidence of that is seen on the Internet postings of their costumes, songs, music, dances, and historical information.

Day of Remembrance

The tragic events in 1913-1923 are historically significant for all mankind and especially for Hellenes everywhere. Two major events marked the destruction of Greeks in Asia Minor and Pontus. Years after their expulsion and uprooting from their homeland of 3,000 years, those who survived set the following commemorative days to honor the thousands of victims who lost their lives:

Worldwide, Greek communities commemorate the Pontian Greek Genocide on May 19th. On this day in 1919, while in Samsun on the Black Sea, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of modern-day Turkey, initiated the second phase of the Pontian ethnic cleansing and genocide.

Greeks also commemorate the Anatolian Greek Genocide on September 14th. On that day in 1922, the Turks set fire to the predominantly Greek city of Smyrna, destroying the Greek and Armenian quarters and killing thousands of people before survivors were evacuated several weeks later.

Review Questions

1. What is the “Asia Minor Catastrophe?”

2. Explain the great population exchange. Why was it done?

3. How did Greek refugees help the economy of Greece?

4. Define “diaspora.”

5. Besides the U.S., Greek refugees settled in what other countries?

6. Why are May 19, 1919 and September 14, 1922 such important dates?

Appendix

Chronology of Events

B.C.

3000-1450	Minoan Civilization in Crete
2000	Arrival of Greeks in Greece
1600	Mycenaean civilization
1300-1200	Myths of Amazons
1275	Myth of Jason and the Argonauts
1200	Dorians in Greece
1100	Greeks migrate to Asia Minor
785	Ionians from Miletos founded Sinope in Pontus
776	Ionians from Sinope founded Trabizond
657	Greeks from Megara founded Byzantium

A.D.

34	Saint Andreas in Pontus
50-58	Saint Paul in Asia Minor and Pontus
1100	Turkic nomads migrate from central Asia to Asia Minor
1453	The fall of Constantinople
1461	The fall of Trebizond
1913-1923	Greek Genocide (in Eastern Thrace, Pontos, and Asia Minor)
September 1922	The Great Fire of Smyrna and The Great Catastrophe
August 1923	Treaty of Lausanne and forced exchange of population; The end of Hellenism in Asia Minor and Pontus

Vocabulary

~ A ~

Antiquity: The early period; early times; ancient times; distant past

~ C ~

Civil Servant: A person in the public service whose salary is paid by the taxpayers

~ D ~

Diaspora (from the Greek word διασπορά): Scattering; displacement; dispersion

~ E ~

Ethnic: National; nations or groups of people

Ethnic Cleansing: Process or policy of eliminating unwanted ethnic or religious groups by deportation or mass murder

~ G ~

Genocide: Systematic killing or a program of action intended to destroy a whole, national or ethnic group

~ M ~

Monastery: A building or complex of buildings housing monks or nuns

~ O ~

Ottoman Empire: Referring to the Turkish Empire (1299-1918 A.D.)

~ P ~

Patriarch: The father and ruler of a family or tribe; the leader of Eastern Orthodox Christians

Patriarchate: Territory of a Patriarch

Predecessor: A person who held a position before replacement

Purge: To cleanse; to kill; to clear away or wipe out

Suggested Reading

The following books are listed for those interested in further reading on the history of Hellenism and the Pontus people.

Fridtjof Nansen and the Greek Refugee Crisis 1922-1924: A Study on the Politics of International Humanitarian Intervention and the Greek-Turkish Obligatory Population Exchange Agreement by Professor Harry J. Psomiades. An important study of the compulsory exchange and the role of Norwegian adventurer, explorer, Nobel Prize winner Fridtjof Nansen, an international humanitarian who saved thousands of the Greek refugees, as well as millions of other victims of famine or war throughout Europe. Publication of the Asia Minor and Pontos Hellenic Research Center. Printed by Athens Printing Co., NY.

Not Even My Name: A True Story. The unforgettable true story of 10-year-old Sano Halo's survival of the death march, that annihilated her family—as told to her daughter, Thea. This book is written by her daughter, Thea Halo, and published by Picador USA.

The Promised Journey: Pontus-Kefalonia, a narration of a true story by Sophia Kappatos about her father's life that began in the Region of Pontus in Asia Minor, Turkey in 1910, and ended in Kefalonia, Greece in 2000. His long journey in life, started with uprooting, exile, loss of family, American Orphanage in Athens and several other significant events before his final stop in Kefalonia. Published by the Foundation of Hellenic World.

Tamama, The Missing Girl of Pontus by George Andreadis, published by Gordios, Greece. The true story of a Pontian Greek girl's separation from her family during a death march that claimed the lives of her parents and brother, and hundreds of other members of her village. This young girl was adopted by a Turkish family who kept her identity secret for 50 years until she became very ill.

Twenty-Three Years in Asia Minor (1899-1922), a book written by Efthimios N. Couzinos, survivor of the uprooting from his homeland Pontus. Couzinos' eyewitness testimony is a valuable source of detailed information for anyone interested in the events that led to the destruction of the Greek, Armenian, and Assyrian communities in Asia Minor, (present day Turkey). Reprint of the book is sponsored by Pontian Greek Society of Chicago.

