

## History of Greece

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*This article covers the Greek civilization. For the Greek language as a whole, see [Greek language](#). For the Classical Greek language, see [Ancient Greek](#).*

The **History of Greece** traditionally encompasses the study of the [Greek people](#), the areas they ruled historically, and the territory now composing the modern state of [Greece](#).

The scope of Greek habitation and rule has varied significantly through the ages, and as a consequence the history of Greece is similarly elastic in what it includes. Each era has its own related sphere of interest.

The first Greeks arrived in [Europe](#) some time before [1500 BC](#), and at its peak, Greek civilization spread from Greece to [Egypt](#) and to the [Hindu Kush](#) mountains. Since then Greek minorities have remained in former Greek territories (e.g., [Turkey](#), [Italy](#), and [Libya](#), [Levant](#), etc.), and Greek [emigrants](#) have assimilated into differing societies across the globe (e.g. [North America](#), [Australia](#), [Northern Europe](#), [South Africa](#) etc.). However, today most Greeks live in the modern states of Greece (independent since [1821](#)) and [Cyprus](#) (independent since [1960](#)).

### ***Aegean civilization: prehistoric Greece***

*Main article: [Aegean civilization](#)*

The earliest civilization to appear around Greece was the [Minoan civilization](#) in [Crete](#), which lasted approximately from 2700 ([Early Minoan](#)) BC to 1450 BC, and on the [Early Helladic](#) period on the Greek mainland from ca. 2800 BC to 2100 BC.

Little specific information is known about the Minoans (even the name is a modern appellation, from [Minos](#), the legendary king of [Crete](#)). They have been characterized as a [pre-Indo-European](#) people, apparently the linguistic ancestors of the [Eteo-Cretan](#) speakers of Classical Antiquity, their language being encoded in the undeciphered [Linear A](#) script. They were primarily a mercantile people engaged in overseas trade, taking advantage of the land's rich natural resources. [Timber](#) at that time was an abundant natural resource that was commercially exploited and exported to nearby lands such as [Cyprus](#), [Egypt](#) and the [Aegean Islands](#).

Although the causes of their demise are uncertain, they were eventually invaded by the [Mycenaeans](#) from mainland Greece. Their invasion took place around 1400 BCE, and in conjunction with the [Thera eruption](#), they present a likely scenario for the final end of the Minoan civilization. According to this theory, the Minoan fleet and ports were irrevocably destroyed by the colossal Mediterranean waves. Possible climatic changes affected crops for many years, which in turn could have led to famine and social breakdown. The Mycenaean invaders wrote the final chapter to a civilization that flourished for some 1600 years.

### **[\[edit\]](#) Mycenaean Greece (Bronze Age)**

*Main article:* [Mycenaean Greece](#)

Mycenaean Greece, also known as Bronze Age Greece, is the [Late Helladic Bronze Age](#) civilization of [Ancient Greece](#). It lasted from the arrival of the Greeks in the [Aegean](#) around [1600 BC](#) to the collapse of their Bronze Age civilization around [1100 BC](#). It is the historical setting of the [epics](#) of [Homer](#) and much other [Greek mythology](#). The Mycenaean period takes its name from the archaeological site [Mycenae](#) in the northeastern [Argolid](#), in the [Peloponnesos](#) of southern Greece. [Athens](#), [Pylos](#), [Thebes](#), and [Tiryns](#) are also important Mycenaean sites.

Mycenaean civilization was dominated by a warrior [aristocracy](#). Around [1400 BC](#) the [Mycenaeans](#) extended their control to [Crete](#), center of the [Minoan civilization](#), and adopted a form of the Minoan script called [Linear A](#) to write their early form of [Greek](#). The Mycenaean era script is called [Linear B](#).

The Mycenaean nobles were buried in [beehive tombs](#) (*tholoi*), large circular burial chambers with a high vaulted roof and straight entry passage lined with stone. They often buried daggers or some other form of military equipment with the deceased. The nobility were frequently buried with gold masks, tiaras, armour, and jeweled weapons. Mycenaean nobles were buried in a sitting position, and some of the nobility underwent [mummification](#).

Around [1100 BC](#) the Mycenaean civilization collapsed. Numerous cities were sacked and the region entered what historians see as a [dark age](#). During this period Greece experienced a decline in [population](#) and [literacy](#). The Greeks themselves have traditionally blamed this decline on an [invasion](#) by another wave of Greek people, the [Dorians](#), although there is scant archaeological evidence for this view.

## **[edit]** Greek Dark Ages

*Main article:* [Greek Dark Ages](#)

The *Greek Dark Ages* (ca. [1200 BC](#)–[800 BC](#)) refers to the period of Greek history from the presumed [Dorian invasion](#) and end of the [Mycenaean civilization](#) in the [11th century BC](#) to the rise of the first [Greek city-states](#) in the [9th century BC](#) and the epics of [Homer](#) and earliest writings in [alphabetic Greek](#) in the [8th century BC](#).

The collapse of the Mycenaean coincided with the fall of several other large empires in the near east, most notably the [Hittite](#) and the [Egyptian](#). The cause may be attributed to an invasion of the [sea people](#) wielding iron weapons. When the Dorians came down into Greece they also were equipped with superior iron weapons, easily dispersing the already weakened Mycenaeans. The period that follows these events is collectively known as the Greek Dark Ages.

[Archaeology](#) shows a collapse of civilization in the Greek world in this period. The great palaces and cities of the Mycenaeans were destroyed or abandoned. The [Greek language](#) ceased to be written. Greek dark age pottery has simple geometric designs and lacks the figurative decoration of Mycenaean ware. The Greeks of the dark age lived in fewer and smaller settlements, suggesting famine and depopulation, and foreign goods have not been found at archaeological sites, suggesting minimum international trade. Contact was also lost between foreign powers during this period, yielding little cultural progress or growth of any sort.

Kings ruled throughout this period until eventually they were replaced with an aristocracy, then still later, in some areas, an aristocracy within an aristocracy—an elite of the elite. Warfare shifted from a focus on cavalry to a great emphasis on infantry. Due to its cheapness of production and local availability, iron replaced bronze as the metal of choice in the manufacturing of tools and weapons. Slowly equality grew among the different sects of people, leading to the dethronement of the various Kings and the rise of the family.

Families began to reconstruct their past in attempts to link their bloodlines with heroes from the [Trojan War](#), more specifically [Heracles](#). While most of this was legend, some were sorted by poets of the school of [Hesiod](#). Most of these poems are lost, though, but some famous "storywriters", as they were called, were [Hecataeus](#) of [Miletus](#) and [Acusilaus](#) of [Argos](#).

It is thought that the epics by [Homer](#) contain a certain amount of tradition preserved orally during the Dark Ages period. The historical validity of

Homer's writings is vigorously disputed; see the article on [Troy](#) for a discussion.

At the end of this period of stagnation, the Greek civilization was engulfed in a renaissance that spread the Greek world as far as the [Black Sea](#) and [Spain](#). Writing was relearned from the [Phoenicians](#), eventually spreading north into [Italy](#) and the [Gauls](#).

## **[[edit](#)]** [Ancient Greece](#)

*Main article:* [Ancient Greece](#)



[Cape Sounion](#) in Attica, looking out to the Aegean islands.

There are no fixed or universally agreed dates for the beginning or the end of the Ancient Greek period. In common usage it refers to all Greek history before the [Roman Empire](#), but historians use the term more precisely. Some writers include the periods of the [Minoan](#) and [Mycenaean](#) civilizations, while others argue that these civilizations were so different from later Greek cultures that they should be classed separately. Traditionally, the Ancient Greek period was taken to begin with the date of the first [Olympic Games](#) in [776 BC](#), but most historians now extend the term back to about [1000 BC](#). The traditional date for the end of the Ancient Greek period is the death of [Alexander the Great](#) in [323 BC](#). The following period is classed as [Hellenistic](#). Not everyone treats the Ancient and Hellenic periods as distinct, however, and some writers treat the Ancient Greek civilization as a continuum running until the advent of [Christianity](#) in the [third century AD](#).

Ancient Greece is considered by most historians to be the foundational culture of [Western Civilization](#). Greek culture was a powerful influence in the [Roman Empire](#), which carried a version of it to many parts of [Europe](#). Ancient Greek civilization has been immensely influential on the language, politics, educational systems, philosophy, art and architecture of the modern world, particularly during the [Renaissance](#) in Western Europe and again during various [neo-Classical](#) revivals in [18th](#) and [19th century](#) Europe and [The Americas](#).

The basic unit of politics in Ancient Greece was the [polis](#), sometimes translated as [city-state](#). "Politics" literally means "the things of the polis." Each city was independent, at least in theory. Some cities might be subordinate to others (a colony traditionally deferred to its mother city), some might have had governments wholly dependent upon others (the [Thirty Tyrants](#) in [Athens](#) was imposed by [Sparta](#) following the [Peloponnesian War](#)), but the titularly supreme power in each city was located within that city. This meant that when Greece went to war (e.g., against the [Persian Empire](#)), it took the form of an alliance going to war. It also gave ample opportunity for wars within Greece between different cities.

Most of the Greek names known to modern readers flourished in this age. Among the poets, [Homer](#), [Hesiod](#), [Pindar](#), [Aeschylus](#), [Sophocles](#), [Euripides](#), [Aristophanes](#), and [Sappho](#) were active. Famous politicians include [Themistocles](#), [Pericles](#), [Lysander](#), [Epaminondas](#), [Alcibiades](#), [Philip II of Macedon](#), and his son [Alexander the Great](#). [Plato](#) wrote, as did [Aristotle](#), [Heraclitus of Ephesus](#), [Parmenides](#), [Democritus](#), [Herodotus](#), [Thucydides](#) and [Xenophon](#). Almost all of the mathematical knowledge formalized in [Euclid's \*Elements\*](#) at the beginning of the Hellenistic period was developed in this era.

Two major wars shaped the Ancient Greek world. The [Persian Wars](#) (500–448 BC) are recounted in [Herodotus's \*Histories\*](#). [Ionian](#) Greek cities [revolted](#) from the [Persian Empire](#) and were supported by some of the mainland cities, eventually led by [Athens](#). (The notable battles of this war include [Marathon](#), [Thermopylae](#), [Salamis](#), and [Plataea](#).)

In order to prosecute the war, and subsequently to defend Greece from further Persian attack, Athens founded the [Delian League](#) in [477 BC](#). Initially, each city in the League would contribute ships and soldiers to a common army, but in time Athens allowed (and then compelled) the smaller cities to contribute funds so that it could supply their quota of ships. Revolution from the League could be punished. Following military reversals against the Persians, the treasury was moved from [Delos](#) to Athens, further strengthening the latter's control over the League. The Delian League was eventually referred to pejoratively as the Athenian Empire.

In 458 BC, while the Persian Wars were still ongoing, war broke out between the Delian League and the [Peloponnesian League](#), comprising [Sparta](#) and its allies. After some inconclusive fighting, the two sides signed a peace in [447 BC](#).

That peace, it was stipulated, was to last thirty years: instead it held only until [431 BC](#), with the onset of the [Peloponnesian War](#). Our main sources concerning this war are [Thucydides's \*History of the Peloponnesian War\*](#) and [Xenophon's \*Hellenica\*](#).

The war began over a dispute between [Corcyra](#) and [Epidamnus](#); the latter was a minor enough city that Thucydides has to tell his reader where it is. [Corinth](#) intervened on the Epidamnian side. Fearful lest Corinth capture the Corcyran navy (second only to the Athenian in size), Athens intervened. It prevented Corinth from landing on Corcyra at the [Battle of Sybota](#), laid siege to [Potidaea](#), and forbade all commerce with Corinth's closely situated ally, [Megara](#) (the [Megarian decree](#)).

There was disagreement among the Greeks as to which party violated the treaty between the Delian and Peloponnesian Leagues, as Athens was technically defending a new ally. The Corinthians begged Sparta for aid. Fearing the growing might of Athens, and witnessing Athens' willingness to use it against the Megarians (the embargo would have ruined them), Sparta declared the treaty to have been violated and the Peloponnesian War began in earnest.

The first stage of the war (known as the Archidamian War for the Spartan king, [Archidamus II](#)) lasted until [421 BC](#) with the signing of the [Peace of Nicias](#). The Athenian general [Pericles](#) recommended that his city fight a defensive war, avoiding battle against the superior land forces led by Sparta, and importing everything needful by maintaining its powerful navy: Athens would simply outlast Sparta, whose citizens feared to be out of their city for long lest the [helots](#) revolt. This strategy required that Athens endure regular [sieges](#), and in [430 BC](#) it was visited with an awful [plague](#) which killed approximately a quarter of its people, including Pericles. With Pericles gone, less conservative elements gained power in the city and Athens went on the offensive. It captured 300–400 Spartan [hoplites](#) at the [Battle of Pylos](#). This represented a significant fraction of the Spartan fighting force which the latter decided it could not afford to lose. Meanwhile, Athens had suffered humiliating defeats at [Delium](#) and [Amphipolis](#). The Peace of Nicias concluded with Sparta recovering its hostages and Athens recovering the city of [Amphipolis](#).

Those who signed the Peace of Nicias in 421 BC swore to uphold it for fifty years. The second stage of the Peloponnesian War began in [415 BC](#) when Athens embarked on the [Sicilian Expedition](#) to support an ally ([Segesta](#)) attacked by [Syracuse](#) and to conquer [Sicily](#). Initially, Sparta was not going to aid its ally, but [Alcibiades](#), the Athenian general who had argued for the Sicilian Expedition, defected to the Spartan cause upon

being accused of grossly impious acts and convinced them that they could not allow Athens to subjugate Syracuse. The campaign ended in disaster for the Athenians.

Athens' Ionian possessions rebelled with the support of Sparta, as advised by Alcibiades. In [411 BC](#), an oligarchical revolt in Athens held out the chance for peace, but the Athenian navy, which remained committed to the democracy, refused to accept the change and continued fighting in Athens' name. The navy recalled Alcibiades (who had been forced to abandon the Spartan cause after reputedly seducing the wife of [Agis II](#), a Spartan king) and made him its head. The oligarchy in Athens collapsed and Alcibiades proceeded to reconquer what had been lost.

In [407 BC](#), Alcibiades was replaced following a minor naval defeat at the [Battle of Notium](#). The Spartan general [Lysander](#), having fortified his city's naval power, won victory after victory. Following the [Battle of Arginusae](#), which Athens won but was prevented by bad weather from rescuing some of its sailors, Athens executed or exiled eight of its top naval commanders. Lysander followed with a crushing blow at the [Battle of Aegospotami](#) in [405 BC](#) which virtually destroyed the Athenian fleet. Athens surrendered one year later, ending the Peloponnesian War.

The war had left devastation in its wake. Discontent with the Spartan hegemony that followed (including the fact that it ceded [Ionia](#) and [Cyprus](#) to the [Persian Empire](#) at the conclusion of the [Corinthian War](#) (395–387 BC); see [Treaty of Antalcidas](#)) induced the [Thebans](#) to attack. Their general, [Epaminondas](#), crushed Sparta at the [Battle of Leuctra](#) in [371 BC](#), inaugurating a period of Theban dominance in Greece. In [346 BC](#), unable to prevail in its ten year war with [Phocis](#), Thebes called upon [Philip II of Macedon](#) for aid. [Macedon](#) quickly conquered the exhausted cities of Greece. The basic unit of politics from that point was the [empire](#), and the Hellenistic Age had begun.

## **[\[edit\]](#) Hellenistic Greece**

*Main article: [Hellenistic Greece](#)*



 Philip V of Macedon, "the darling of Hellas", wearing the [royal diadem](#).

The Hellenistic period of Greek history begins with the death of [Alexander the Great](#) in [323 BC](#) and ends with the [annexation](#) of the Greek peninsula and islands by [Rome](#) in [146 BC](#). Although the establishment of Roman rule did not break the continuity of Hellenistic society and culture, which remained essentially unchanged until the advent of [Christianity](#), it did mark the end of Greek political independence. During the Hellenistic period the importance of "Greece proper" (that is, the territory of modern Greece) within the Greek-speaking world declined sharply. The great centres of Hellenistic culture were [Alexandria](#) and [Antioch](#), capitals of [Ptolemaic Egypt](#) and [Seleucid Syria](#) respectively. (See [Hellenistic civilization](#) for the history of Greek culture outside of Greece in this period.)



 The restored [Stoa of Attalus](#), [Athens](#).

Athens and her allies revolted against [Macedon](#) upon hearing that Alexander had died, but was defeated within a year in the [Lamian War](#). Meanwhile, a struggle for power broke out among Alexander's generals, which resulted in the break-up of his empire and the establishment of a number of new kingdoms (see the [Wars of the Diadochi](#)). [Ptolemy](#) was left with [Egypt](#), [Seleucus](#) with the [Levant](#), [Mesopotamia](#), and points east.

Control of Greece, [Thrace](#), and [Anatolia](#) was contested, but by [298 BC](#) the [Antigonid dynasty](#) had supplanted the [Antipatrid](#).

Macedonian control of the Greek city-states was intermittent, with a number of revolts. [Athens](#), [Rhodes](#), [Pergamum](#) and other Greek states retained substantial independence, and joined the [Aetolian League](#) as a means of defending it. The [Achaean League](#), while nominally subject to the [Ptolemies](#) was in effect independent, and controlled most of southern Greece. [Sparta](#) also remained independent, but generally refused to join any league.

In [267 BC](#) [Ptolemy II](#) persuaded the Greek cities to revolt against Macedon, in what became the [Chremonidean War](#), after the Athenian leader [Chremonides](#). The cities were defeated and Athens lost her independence and her democratic institutions. This marked the end of Athens as a political actor, although it remained the largest, wealthiest and most cultivated city in Greece. In [225](#) Macedon defeated the Egyptian fleet at [Cos](#) and brought the [Aegean](#) islands, except Rhodes, under its rule as well.

[Sparta](#) remained hostile to the Achaeans, and in [227 BC](#) invaded [Achaea](#) and seized control of the League. The remaining Achaeans preferred distant Macedon to nearby Sparta, and allied with the former. In [222 BC](#) the Macedonian army defeated the Spartans and annexed their city—the first time Sparta had ever been occupied by a foreign power.

[Philip V of Macedon](#) was the last Greek ruler with both the talent and the opportunity to unite Greece and preserve its independence against the ever-increasing power of [Rome](#). Under his auspices the [Peace of Naupactus](#) ([217 BC](#)) brought conflict between Macedon and the Greek leagues to an end, and at this time he controlled all of Greece except Athens, Rhodes and Pergamum.

In [215 BC](#), however, Philip formed an alliance with Rome's enemy [Carthage](#). Rome promptly lured the Achaean cities away from their nominal loyalty to Philip, and formed alliances with Rhodes and Pergamum, now the strongest power in [Asia Minor](#). The [First Macedonian War](#) broke out in [212](#), and ended inconclusively in [205](#), but Macedon was now marked as an enemy of Rome.

In [202 BC](#) Rome defeated Carthage, and was free to turn her attention eastwards. In [198](#) the [Second Macedonian War](#) broke out for obscure reasons, but basically because Rome saw Macedon as a potential ally of the [Seleucids](#), the greatest power in the east. Philip's allies in Greece deserted

him and in [197](#) he was decisively defeated at the [Battle of Cynoscephalae](#) by the Roman proconsul [Titus Quinctius Flaminius](#).

Luckily for the Greeks, Flaminius was a moderate man and an admirer of Greek culture. Philip had to surrender his fleet and become a Roman ally, but was otherwise spared. At the [Isthmian Games](#) in [196](#), Flaminius declared all the Greek cities free, although Roman garrisons were placed at Corinth and [Chalcis](#). But the freedom promised by Rome was an illusion. All the cities except Rhodes were enrolled in a new League which Rome ultimately controlled, and aristocratic constitutions were favoured and actively promoted.

### **[\[edit\]](#) Roman Period**

*Main article:* [Roman Greece](#)

Militarily Greece itself declined to the point that the [Romans](#) conquered the land ([187 BC](#) onwards), though Greek culture would in turn conquer Roman life. Although the period of Roman rule in Greece is conventionally dated as starting from the sacking of [Corinth](#) by the Roman [Lucius Mummius](#) in 123 BC, Macedonia had already come under Roman control with the defeat of its king, [Perseus](#), by the Roman [Aemilius Paullus](#) at [Pydna](#) in 168 BC. The Romans divided the region into four smaller republics, and in 146 BC Macedonia officially became a Roman province, with its capital at [Thessalonica](#). The rest of the Greek [city-states](#) gradually and eventually paid homage to Rome ending their *de jure* autonomy as well. The Romans left local administration to the [Greeks](#) without making any attempt to abolish traditional political patterns. The [agora](#) in [Athens](#) continued to be the centre of civic and political life.

Caracalla's decree in 212 AD, the [Constitutio Antoniniana](#), extended citizenship outside of [Italy](#) to all free adult males in the entire [Roman Empire](#), effectively raising provincial populations to equal status with the city of [Rome](#) itself. The importance of this decree is historical rather than political. It set the basis for integration where the economic and judicial mechanisms of the state could be applied throughout the entire Mediterranean as was once done from Latium into all of Italy. In practice of course, integration did not take place uniformly. Societies already integrated with Rome, such as Greece, were favored by this decree, in comparison with those far away, too poor or just too alien such as Britain, Palestine or Egypt.

Caracalla's decree did not set in motion the processes that lead to the transfer of power from Italy and the West to Greece and the East, but rather

accelerated them, setting the foundations for the rise of Greece as a major power in [Europe](#) and the [Mediterranean](#) in the [Middle Ages](#).

## **[edit]** *Byzantine Empire*

*Main articles:* [Byzantine Empire](#) and [Roman and Byzantine Greece](#)

The history of the Byzantine Empire is described by scholar August Heisenberg as the history "of the Roman state of the Greek nation, that turned Christian". The division of the empire into East and West and the subsequent collapse of the [Western Roman Empire](#) were developments that constantly accentuated the position of the Greeks in the empire and eventually allowed them to become identified with it altogether. The leading role of [Constantinople](#) began when [Constantine the Great](#) turned [Byzantium](#) into the new capital of the Roman Empire, henceforth to be known as [Constantinople](#), placing the city at the centre of Hellenism a beacon for the [Greeks](#) that lasted to the modern era.



[Empress Theodora](#) and her retinue (fresco from Basilica of [San Vitale](#), 6th century).

The figures of [Constantine the Great](#) and [Justinian](#) dominated during 324–610. Assimilating the Roman tradition, the emperors sought to provide the basis for subsequent developments and for the formation of the Byzantine Empire. Efforts to secure the borders of the Empire and to restore the Roman territories marked the early centuries. At the same time, the definitive formation and establishment of the [Orthodox](#) doctrine, but also a series of conflicts resulting from heresies that developed within the boundaries of the empire marked the early period of Byzantine history.

In the first period of the middle Byzantine era (610–867) the empire was attacked both by old enemies ([Persians](#), [Langobards](#), [Avars](#) and [Slavs](#)) as well as by new ones, appearing for the first time in history ([Arabs](#), [Bulgarians](#)). The main characteristic of this period was that the enemy

attacks were not localized to the border areas of the state but they were extended deep beyond, even threatening the capital itself. At the same time, these attacks lost their periodical and temporary character and became permanent settlements that transformed into new states, hostile to Byzantium. Those states were referred by the Byzantines as *Sclavinias*. Changes were also observed in the internal structure of the empire which was dictated by both external and internal conditions. The predominance of the small free farmers, the expansion of the military estates and the development of the system of [themes](#), brought to completion developments that had started in the previous period. Changes were noted also in the sector of administration: the administration and society had become immiscibly [Greek](#), while the restoration of [Orthodoxy](#) after the [iconoclast](#) movement, allowed the successful resumption of missionary action among neighbouring peoples and their placement within the sphere of Byzantine cultural influence. During this period the state was geographically reduced and economically damaged, since it lost wealth-producing regions; however, it obtained greater lingual, dogmatic and cultural homogeneity.

From the late 8th century, the Empire began to recover from the devastating impact of successive invasions, and the reconquest of Greece began. Greeks from [Sicily](#) and [Asia Minor](#) were brought in as settlers. The [Slavs](#) were either driven out or assimilated and the Sclavinias were eliminated. By the middle of the 9th century, Greece was Greek again, and the cities began to recover due to improved security and the restoration of effective central control.

### **[edit] Economic prosperity**

When the Byzantine Empire was rescued from a period of crisis by the resolute leadership of the three [Komnenoi](#) emperors [Alexios](#), [John](#) and [Manuel](#) in the twelfth century, Greece prospered. Recent research has revealed that this period was a time of significant growth in the rural economy, with rising population levels and extensive tracts of new agricultural land being brought into production. The widespread construction of new rural churches is a strong indication that prosperity was being generated even in remote areas. A steady increase in population led to a higher population density, and there is good evidence that the demographic increase was accompanied by the revival of towns. According to Alan Harvey in his book ‘Economic expansion in the Byzantine Empire 900-1200’, towns expanded significantly in the twelfth century. Archaeological evidence shows an increase in the size of urban settlements, together with a ‘notable upsurge’ in new towns. Archaeological evidence tells us that many of the medieval towns, including [Athens](#), [Thessaloniki](#),

[Thebes](#) and [Corinth](#), experienced a period of rapid and sustained growth, starting in the eleventh century and continuing until the end of the twelfth century. The growth of the towns attracted the [Venetians](#), and this interest in trade appears to have further increased economic prosperity in Greece. Certainly, the Venetians and others were active traders in the ports of the [Holy Land](#), and they made a living out of shipping goods between the [Crusader](#) Kingdoms of [Outremer](#) and the West while also trading extensively with Byzantium and [Egypt](#).

### [\[edit\]](#) Artistic revival

The 11th and 12th centuries are said to be the Golden Age of [Byzantine art](#) in Greece. Many of the most important Byzantine churches in around Athens, for example, were built during these two centuries, and this reflects the growth of urbanisation in Greece during this period. There was also a revival in the mosaic art with artists showing great interest in depicting natural landscapes with wild animals and scenes from the hunt. Mosaics became more realistic and vivid, with an increased emphasis on depicting three-dimensional forms. With its love of luxury and passion for colour, the art of this age delighted in the production of masterpieces that spread the fame of Byzantium throughout the whole of the Christian world.



Byzantine Church in the Agora, Athens

Beautiful silks from the work-shops of Constantinople also portrayed in dazzling colour animals -lions, elephants, eagles, and griffins- confronting each other, or representing Emperors gorgeously arrayed on horseback or

engaged in the chase. In the provinces, regional schools of Architecture began producing many distinctive styles that drew on a range of cultural influences. All this suggests that there was an increased demand for art, with more people having access to the necessary wealth to commission and pay for such work.

Yet the marvellous expansion of Byzantine art during this period, one of the most remarkable facts in the history of the empire, did not stop there. From the tenth to the twelfth century Byzantium was the main source of inspiration for the West. By their style, arrangement, and iconography the mosaics of St. Mark's at Venice and of the cathedral at Torcello clearly reveal their Byzantine origin. Similarly those of the Palatine Chapel, the Martorana at Palermo, and the cathedral of Cefalu, together with the vast decoration of the cathedral at Monreale, demonstrate the influence of Byzantium on the Norman Court of Sicily in the twelfth century. Hispano-Moorish art was unquestionably derived from the Byzantine. Romanesque art owes much to the East, from which it borrowed not only its decorative forms but the plan of some of its buildings, as is proved, for instance, by the domed churches of south-western France. Princes of Kiev, Venetian doges, abbots of Monte Cassino, merchants of Amalfi, and the Norman kings of Sicily all looked to Byzantium for artists or works of art. Such was the influence of Byzantine art in the twelfth century, that Russia, Venice, southern Italy and Sicily all virtually became provincial centres dedicated to its production.

### [\[edit\]](#) **The Fourth Crusade**

The year 1204 marks the beginning of the late Byzantine period, when probably the most important event for the Empire occurred. [Constantinople](#) was lost for the Greek people for the first time, and the empire was conquered by [Latin](#) crusaders and would be replaced by a new Latin one, for 57 years. In addition, the period of Latin occupation decisively influenced the empire's internal development, as elements of feudality entered aspects of Byzantine life. In 1261 the Greek empire was divided between the former Greek Byzantine Comnenos dynasty members (Epirus) and Palaiologos dynasty (the last dynasty until the fall of Constantinople). After the gradual weakening of the structures of the Greek Byzantine state and the reduction of its land from [Turkish](#) invasions, came the fall of the Greek Byzantine Empire, at the hands of the [Ottomans](#), in 1453, when the Byzantine period is considered to have ended.

It must be pointed out that the term "Byzantine" is a contemporary one established by historians. People used to call the Empire from the 10th century on as the Greek Empire as well as Romeo-Greek before that time;

that's why Greeks call themselves sometimes as Romioi in a colloquial form. The Romeo term was used sometimes because of the legal tradition left in many aspects of the political administration of the Empire. It must also be added that many empires all around Europe had been using this term, in addition to the Greek Byzantines, like the Carolingians, or the Heiliges Römisches Reich (Latin Sacrum Romanum Imperium) of the Germans looking themselves as the legitimate heirs of the Roman Empire.

### **[edit] Ottoman Rule and the Rise of Modern Greece**

*Main articles: [Ottoman Greece](#) and [History of Modern Greece](#)*



The [Battle of Navarino](#), in October 1827, marked the effective end of Ottoman Rule in Greece.


When the [Ottomans](#) arrived, two Greek migrations occurred. The first migration entailed the Greek [intelligentsia](#) migrating to Western Europe and influencing the advent of the Renaissance. The second migration entailed Greeks leaving the plains of the Greek peninsula and resettling in the mountains. Greece being mostly mountainous, the Ottomans could not conquer the entire Greek peninsula since they created neither a military nor an administrative presence in the mountains. There existed many Greek mountain clans all across the peninsula and islands. The [Sfakiots](#) of Crete, the [Souliots](#) of [Epirus](#), and the [Maniots](#) of the [Peloponnese](#) were the most resilient mountain clans throughout the Ottoman Empire. By the end of the [16th century](#) up until the 17th century, many Greeks began to migrate from the mountains to the plains. The [millet system](#) contributed to the ethnic cohesion of Orthodox Greeks by segregating the various peoples within the Ottoman Empire based on religion. The Greek Orthodox Church, an ethno-religious institution, helped the Greeks from all geographical areas of the peninsula (i.e., mountains, plains, and islands) to preserve their ethnic, cultural, and linguistic heritage during the years of Ottoman rule. The Greeks living in the plains during Ottoman occupation were either Christians who dealt with the burdens of foreign rule or Crypto-Christians (Greek Muslims who were secret practitioners of the Greek Orthodox faith). Many Greeks became [Crypto-Christians](#) in order to avoid heavy taxes and at the same time express their identity by maintaining their secret

ties to the Greek Orthodox Church. However, Greeks who converted to [Islam](#) and were not Crypto-Christians were deemed Turks in the eyes of Orthodox Greeks, even if they didn't adopt Turkish language. On the other hand, this population has played an immense role for the creation of modern Greek culture, as Turkish traditions and customs were learned during the entire occupation period. The most obvious traces of Ottoman influence on Greek culture today are reflected in Greek music and in the Greek kitchen.

### **[[edit](#)] The modern Greek state**

Main article: [History of Modern Greece](#)



 The expansion of Greece from 1832 to 1947, showing territories awarded to Greece by the Treaty of Sèvres but lost in 1923 under the Treaty of Lausanne (click to enlarge)

The Ottomans ruled Greece until the early [19th century](#). On March 25, [1821](#) (also the same day as the Greek Orthodox day of the [Annunciation of the Theotokos](#)), the Greeks [rebelled and declared their independence](#), but did not achieve it until [1829](#). The big European powers saw the war of Greek independence, with its accounts of Turkish [atrocities](#), in a romantic light (see, for example, the [1824](#) painting *Massacre of Chios* by [Eugène Delacroix](#)). Scores of non-Greeks volunteered to fight for the cause, including [Lord Byron](#). At times the Ottomans seemed on the point of suppressing the Greek revolution but for the threatened direct military intervention of [France](#), [England](#) or [Russia](#). The Russian minister for foreign affairs, [Ioannis Kapodistrias](#), himself a Greek, returned home as President of the new Republic following Greek independence. That republic

disappeared when the European powers helped turn Greece into a monarchy; the first king, [Otto](#) came from [Bavaria](#) and the second, [George I](#) from [Denmark](#).

During the 19th and early [20th](#) centuries, in a series of wars with the Ottomans, Greece sought to enlarge its boundaries to include the ethnic Greek population of the Ottoman Empire. (The [Ionian Islands](#) were returned by England upon the arrival of the new king from Denmark in 1863, and [Thessaly](#) was ceded by the Ottomans without a fight). As a result of the [Balkan Wars](#) of 1912-13 [Epirus](#), southern [Macedonia](#), [Crete](#) and the [Aegean Islands](#) were annexed into Greece. Greece reached its present configuration in [1947](#).