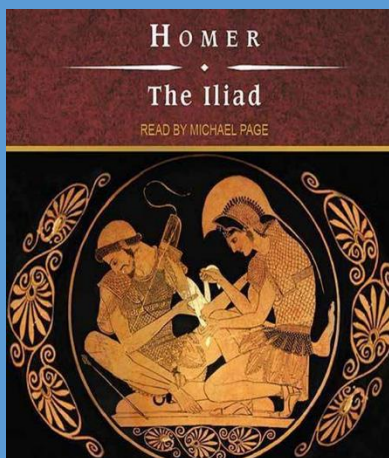


THE GREEKS

Greeks assume that everyone has heard at least something about Greek history.

It's as old as Helen of Troy, Achilles and Hector! So, let's begin the Herculean feat of presenting the "milestones of Greek history".

Milestone number 1



The first time the Greeks face a “different” culture (at least that’s what Homer says) was at Troy.

We learn about heroes, war, battles but still Homer paints a flattering picture of the Trojans. Hector is brave and just, a loving husband and brother, fighting for the freedom of his city, and Priam is a wise king. The trojans are presented as heroic as the Greeks and even more sympathetic and likeable than Agamemnon or Menelaus.



All of Achilles fighting skills couldn’t bring Troy to its knees (oh! but that stupid heel of his!!) and then Ulysses and his Trojan Horse happened.

Did Homer want to suggest that Greeks aren’t superior in battle but win their battles with their wit?

The Greeks continued to travel all over the

Mediterranean Sea, the same way Odysseus did,

meeting new people and facing all sorts of challenges,

managing to build 15000 new Greek cities all over the place.



Milestone number 2

The great Persian empire is expanding and it meets the Greeks.



Conflict and war begin at Marathon were the Athenians beat the Persian army and a few years later the two famous battles at Thermopylae and Salamis.

The unexpected had happened!

Classical Greece with democracy, the Parthenon and the Olympic games was born.



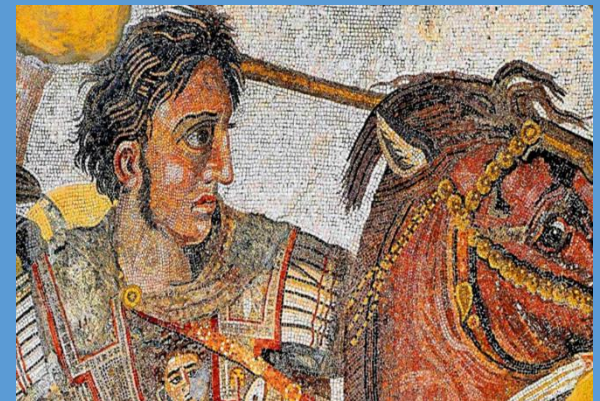
Milestone number 3

The Greeks united under the leadership of the Greek Macedonian kingdom and take the fight on Persian land.

Alexander the great defeats King Darius and his empire and creates probably the first melting pot in history.

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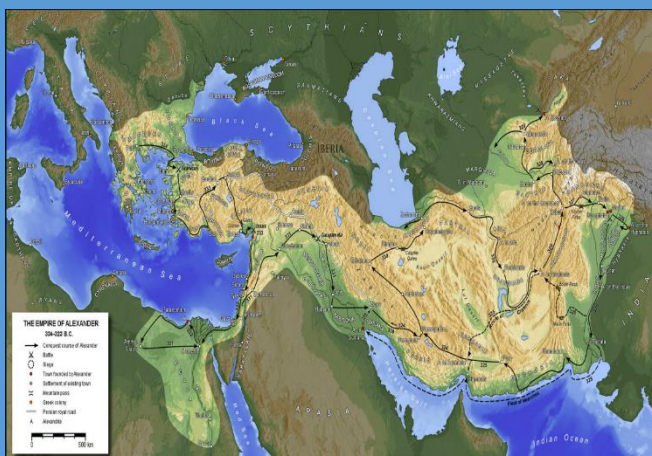
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Alexander the great defeats King Darius and his empire and creates probably the first melting pot in history.

A new world. The Hellenistic world. A Greek civilization with Persian administration.



He encourages his soldiers to marry Persian women, educates Persian lads and is willing to use Persian administrators who adopt the Greek language and way of living. He sets an example himself by dressing half Greek, half Persian allowing the Persian people to follow their customs. He built 10 Alexandria's with Theatres, agoras, stadiums, gymnasiums.

Speaking Greek, dressing like the Greek, building like the Greeks became popular.

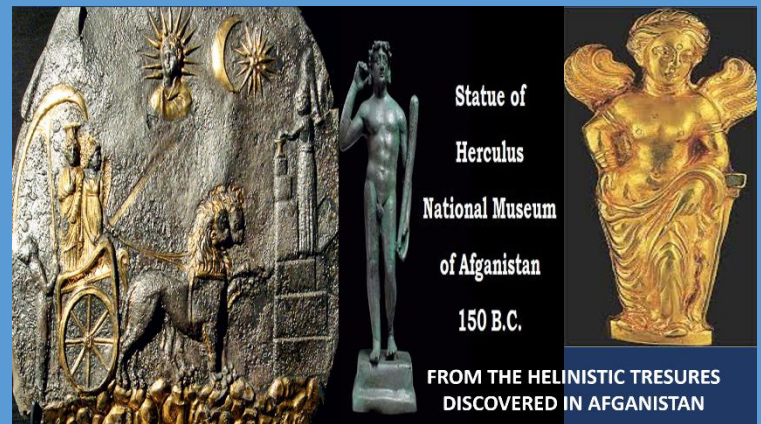
Hellenistic Culture

"Hellenistic" culture is the Greek culture that existed during and after the time of Alexander the Great. It was classical Greek culture blended with Egyptian, Persian and Indian influences.



The idea went so well that we even have new Egyptian-Greek gods and temples for the worship of Egyptian gods built in Greece. (Serapis, Temple of Isis) a pyramid in Greece

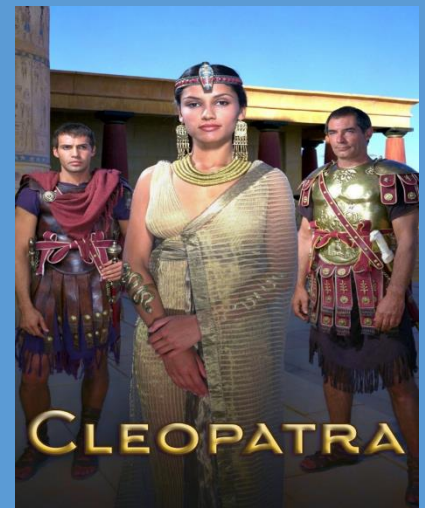
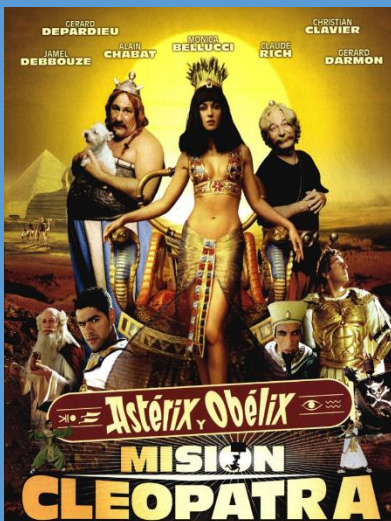
The Greek style of architecture spread from India and Afghanistan, to Egypt and the Middle East.



Milestone number 4

The Romans. They conquered Greece and they conquered the last Hellenistic kingdom, Egypt and its last Greek Queen Cleopatra. (Asterix and Cleopatra, Antonio and Cleopatra) What a tragic story. So tragic that Shakespeare wrote a play about it: "Antony and Cleopatra."

A new melting pot happened. The Greeks have a saying: "Rome conquered Greece, and Greece conquered Rome with its civilization".



The truth is that, in time a new, Greco-Roman civilization was born.



As the centuries went by, and the Roman empire changed from pagan to Christian, by the time of Constantine the Great, all people under the rule of Rome started to feel Roman citizens.

The Roman empire was a multicultural empire.

Greeks and Italians, Syrian, Egyptians, Armenians, British, Gauls and Iberians felt they were Roman citizens.

Interesting fact! Greeks use two names to identify themselves in their language.

Έλληνες from the ancient word σέλλας which in our language means “light” (and which is also our ancient name)

and the word Ρωμαίοι which comes from the word Ρωμαίοι which means **Romans**.

Hellas
Ελλάς
Σέλλας = light
Ελληνες = children of Έλληνας

Romans
Ρωμαίοι
Ρωμιοί



Gradually the roman empire fell into decline. The west was overrun by new peoples and went into a new phase.

The eastern Roman empire managed to survive and came to be known as the

“Byzantine empire” one of the longest lasting empires in the world. (It lasted for 1100 years!!!)

Milestone number 5



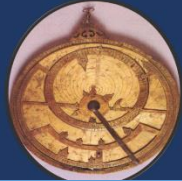
The byzantine empire was under attack by various peoples during its long-lasting history. It fought many battles. It won and lost. But the way the Byzantines preferred to solve their problems was through diplomacy. This meant giving valuable gifts to these newcomers, inviting them to their dazzling capital “new Rome” or as it most widely known “Constantinople”.



One of the people they came in contact was the Arabs. After the fights of the first years, cultural exchange started to take place. The caliph alMa'mûn send a letter to the byzantine emperor Theophilus (829-842), requesting for manuscripts so he could translate them in Arabic.



Leo the Mathematician who developed machines like the "optical telegraph" and a solar "watch".



He also invited Leo the Mathematician to teach in Bagdad. Leo was a great mathematician, astrologer and philosopher. He is considered to have conceived the machinery that used lights in order to warn Constantinople of Arabic raids from Tarsus of Cilicia, to have created the automata Leo also invented several automata, such as trees with moving birds, roaring lions, and a levitating imperial throne.

35^η έως 37^η: We can see this coexistence and influence between cultures without much difficulty.

(Mosaics from Ravenna, Saint Mark in Venice, Constantinople, Thebes, Thessaloniki, and the Grand Mosque in Damascus. A byzantine church and a mosque.)

Milestone number 6



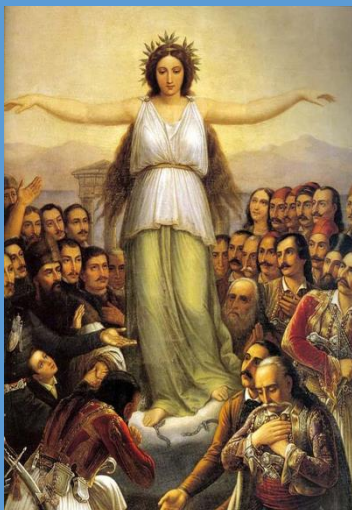
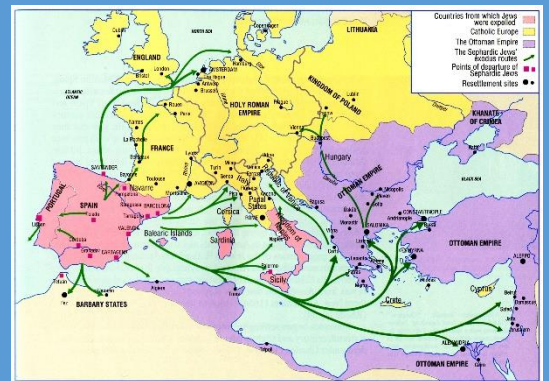
May 1453 Occupation by the Ottoman Empire

The true "dark ages" of Greek history. During this period the first Sephardim came in 1492 from Majorca.

1493, Jews from Castile and Sicily joined them. In subsequent years, other Jews came from those

lands and also from Aragon, Naples, Venice and Provence. Later, in 1540 and 1560,

Jews from Portugal sought refuge in Salonika. They were sometimes forcibly relocated under the Ottoman policy following the conquest of land by Suleiman the Magnificent beginning in 1526.



The Jewish population of the city was 20,000 in 1553. Immigration was great enough that by 1519, the Jews represented 56% of the population of Thessaloniki and by 1613, 68%

In 1821, the Greeks, who had been fighting to become free for 400 years, succeeded to liberate themselves and have a state of their own for the very first time.

Milestone number 7

World War II

On 28 October 1940, Greece following the refusal of the Greek dictator [Iohannis Metaxas](#) to accept the ultimatum given by Benito Mussolini, entered the II World War. All the Greeks joined the fight. Among them, many of Thessaloniki's Jews who by then identified themselves as Greek-Jewish.

12,898 men enlisted in the Greek army. The 50th Brigade of Macedonia was nicknamed "Cohen Battalion", reflecting the strong presence of Jews in its composition. When the frontier collapsed, after eight months of fighting the intensions of the Nazi occupants towards the Jews and the Roma community would soon become apparent.

The rest of the Greeks tried to hide and save their fellow Greek- Jews.

A shining example of this effort was Archbishop Damaskenos.



«all the children of mother Greece form one inseparable unity and are equal members of society independent to which religion they follow» and «with their common fate in both times of glory and sadness they have forged unbreakable bonds, with no exceptions and regardless of their race»

When he realized the intensions of the Nazi occupants towards the Jews, he fervently preached about one ‘national conscience’ with the following words: *«all the children of mother Greece form one inseparable unity and are equal members of society independent to which religion they follow» and «with their common fate in both times of glory and sadness they have forged unbreakable bonds, with no exceptions and regardless of their race».* His attitude enraged the Germans, who threatened to execute him -only to receive his famous answer that *«according to the traditions of the*

Greek orthodox church, its leaders are hanged, not shot to death». For his actions and for saving the lives of hundreds of Greek – Jews he was awarded the title of “the Just of the nations” by the [Yi ad Vashem foundation](#).

Milestone 8

Salonika's 54,000 Jews were shipped to the Nazi extermination camps. More than 90% of the total Jewish population of the city were murdered during the war. Only the Polish Jews experienced a greater level of destruction

At [Birkenau](#), about 37,000 Salonicans were gassed immediately, especially women, children and the elderly.^[31] Nearly a quarter of all 400 experiments performed on the Jews, were on Greek Jews, especially those from Salonika. These experiments included emasculation and implantation of cervical cancer in women. Most of the twins died following atrocious crimes.

Others from the community worked in the camps. In the years 1943–1944, they accounted for a significant proportion of the workforce of Birkenau, making up to 11,000 of the labourers.





Because of their unfamiliarity with Yiddish, Jews from Greece were sent to clean up the rubble of the Warsaw Ghetto in August 1943 in order to build a Warsaw concentration camp. Among the 1,000 Salonican Jews employed on the task,

a group of twenty managed to escape from the ghetto and join the Polish resistance, the Armia Krajowa, which organized the Warsaw Uprising.

Many Jews from Salonika were also integrated into the Sonderkommandos.

On 7 October 1944, they attacked German forces with other Greek Jews, in an uprising planned in advance, storming the crematoria and killing about twenty guards. A bomb was thrown into the furnace of crematorium III, destroying the building. Before being massacred by the Germans, insurgents sang a song of the Greek partisan movement and the Greek National Anthem.



In his book *If this is a man*, one of the most famous works of literature of the Holocaust, Primo Levi describes the group this way: "those Greeks, motionless and silent as the Sphinx, crouched on the ground behind their thick pot of soup". Those members of the community still alive during 1944 made a strong impression on the author. He noted: "Despite their low numbers, their contribution to the overall appearance of the camp is of prime importance". He described a strong patriotic sense among them, writing that their ability to survive in the camps was partly explained by the fact that "they are among the most cohesive of the national groups, and from this point of view the most advanced".

PHOTO OF THE WATERBOTTLE IN WHICH THE MANUSCRIPT DESCRIBING THE LIFE OF GREEK JEWS IN AUSWITZ WAS FOUND, WRITTEN BY MARCEL NATJARY

