



HANDBOOK to LIFE in

# ANCIENT GREECE

LESLEY ADKINS & ROY A. ADKINS

UPDATED EDITION



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# HANDBOOK TO LIFE IN ANCIENT GREECE

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*Updated Edition*

LESLEY ADKINS AND ROY A. ADKINS

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*This book is dedicated to Ralph Jackson.*

**Handbook to Life in Ancient Greece, Updated Edition**

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“The isles of Greece, the isles of Greece!  
Where burning Sappho loved and sung,  
Where grew the arts of war and peace,  
Where Delos rose, and Phoebus sprung!  
Eternal summer gilds them yet,  
But all, except their sun, is set.”  
—Byron, *Don Juan*

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# INTRODUCTION

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The Greek period lasted for three millennia, from the beginning of the Minoan civilization in Bronze Age Greece (around 3000 BC) until the Romans took control of the last of the Greek territories (around 30 BC). During this time the cultures of the Minoans and the Mycenaeans developed and disappeared, and Greece passed through an anarchic Dark Age to emerge as a collection of city-states and colonies that were fleetingly merged into the Empire of Alexander the Great. The breakup of his Empire into smaller Hellenistic states achieved a kind of equilibrium that, in some areas, continued well into the Roman period.

The Roman conquest stripped Greece of its heritage. Works of art were removed, and skilled artisans and trained professionals served the Roman Empire, leaving Greece a backwater for the next 2,000 years. Paradoxically, this dispersion of culture undoubtedly led to the high achievements in Greek art, architecture and philosophical thought having an enormous and lasting influence on the development of Western culture.

The aim of this book is to present information relating to Greek history from the Minoan period to the Roman conquest. The chapters are organized thematically rather than chronologically, in order to give readers easier access to particular topics. By consulting the extensive index, the book can also be used as a dictionary. All too often, archaeological and historical evidence are used in isolation from each other.

We have therefore tried to select the most important aspects of both disciplines. No attempt has been made to separate historical from archaeological elements in the text, and so there are no specific chapters devoted solely to archaeological evidence or artifacts.

Often a particular topic can be viewed in more than one way, so it may be covered in more than one section. For example, pottery can be considered as a container, as part of a manufacturing process, or as a work of art. Where this occurs, repetition of information has been kept to a minimum. The reader should make full use of the index to find all references to a particular subject and also the meanings of particular words. Inevitably, there is room to do no more than summarize the various topics, but we have tried to provide further references for readers wishing to know more about any subject. In addition to technical, historical and archaeological terms, we have also tried to give the meaning of those Greek words and phrases more commonly encountered in other works on the subject.

Place-names are usually in English, except where convention prefers the Greek (transliterated) or where no English equivalent exists. Where the names of modern countries are used, only the names of properly defined territories at the time of writing have been used. Standard U.S. measurements are given, with metric equivalents in parentheses. Precise dates are given wherever possible, but at times only approximate dates are known. A date written as

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c. 360 BC means approximately (circa) 360 BC. One written as c. 360–c. 250 BC means approximately 360 BC to approximately 250 BC. Written as c. 360–250 BC, it means approximately 360 BC to precisely 250 BC; and 360–250 BC means precisely 360 BC to precisely 250 BC. A date such as 120/118 BC means either 120 BC or 118 BC.

Many people nowadays prefer BCE (Before Common Era) to BC, but the traditional term BC is used here, with no religious significance whatsoever.

## Transliteration of Names and Words

The transliteration of Greek names and words from the Greek alphabet is a problematic area, because people invariably have preferences. Many words are more familiar today in a Latinized or Anglicized form, while others are more familiar in their original Greek form. Furthermore, there were differences in names even amongst the Greeks. The least familiar method of presenting names and words is direct transliteration, such as Aiskhylos, Kleon, Lysandros, Perikles, Epeiros, Mykenai. The Romans transliterated words by using *c* for kappa, *ch* for chi, *ae* for alpha iota, *oe* for omicron iota, *u* for omicron upsilon, *y* for upsilon, *-us* for an *-os* ending, and *-der* for a *-dros* ending.

Generally, the Roman spelling is followed in this book. Consequently, Aiskhylos becomes Aeschylus, Kleon becomes Cleon, Lysandros becomes Lysander,

Perikles becomes Pericles, Epeiros becomes Epirus and Mykenai becomes Mycenae. The Greek transliterated version is given in italics, usually with *kh* rather than *ch* and *k* not *c*. So for archon, the ancient Greek version will be presented as *arkhon*. The Greek upsilon can be transliterated as *y* or *u*.

No attempt is made in this book to differentiate between the long and short vowels *e* and *o* (eta and epsilon, and omega and omicron). In some cases the modern Greek words or the Anglicized forms are used, such as “Athens,” “Lesbos” and “Cos.” What has been chosen in this book is the term that is likely to be most familiar to the reader. There is no agreement between scholars on how Greek terms should be presented to a modern audience.

## Updated Edition

At the invitation of Facts On File, the opportunity has been taken to revise and expand this Greek handbook. We have concentrated by and large on the literature published since we first wrote the book, as we believe that directing the reader—especially students—to far more detailed sources is of particular value. Our purpose has always been to provide accessible information, simply stating the known facts and giving the terminology and dates, while leaving interpretation for others to expand. We have concentrated especially on areas such as social life, like the role of women, health and medicine, and homosexuality, as these are areas that have received most attention from recent scholars.

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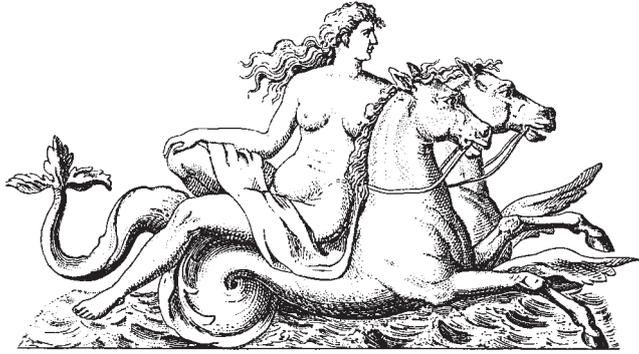
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1



CIVILIZATIONS,  
CITY-STATES  
AND EMPIRES

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## BRIEF HISTORY

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Greece was never a single nation but was a series of independent states, often in conflict. The Greek world existed until 30 BC, when Ptolemaic Egypt (the last major Hellenistic kingdom) came under Roman rule. Early Greek history (particularly 8th century BC and earlier), before the advent of alphabetic writing, is dependent solely on archaeological evidence, with limited credence given to mythological accounts. Later Greek history, based increasingly on written accounts, is more certain. Most dates before 600 BC are approximate, while dates after this period can still be subject to problems and dispute. Further details on historical events are given in chapter 2 (biographies of prominent people) and in chapter 4 (on geography).

### Minoan and Mycenaean Civilizations

This period is the Bronze Age, 3300–1050 BC.

### DATING METHODS

Earliest farming settlements in mainland Greece and Crete date from the 7th to 4th millennium BC (the Neolithic Period and Copper Age, fig. 1.1). The Bronze Age began around 3300 BC, characterized by the use of copper alloy or bronze for tools and weapons. Since the early 20th century, the Aegean Bronze Age has tended to be divided into three chronological periods, a tripartite system that was originally intended to mirror the Old, Middle and New Kingdoms of Egypt. The Aegean also tends to be divided into three geographical regions for this period: mainland, Cyclades and Crete. The dating continuously undergoes revision, and the phases (often referred to in abbreviated form) are no longer distinct. Relative chronology is based mainly on pottery styles, and it is not often possible to use absolute dates, even with the availability of some radiocarbon dates.

### CRETE

In Crete the Bronze Age begins with the Minoan culture, named after the legendary king Minos. The earliest phase is the Prepalatial Period, to about 2200



*1.1 Early settlement of the late Neolithic period and Early Bronze Age at Khirokitia in Cyprus*

or 2000 BC. It is divided into Early Minoan I (EMI), Early Minoan II (EMII) and Early Minoan III (EMIII); the latter is a transitional phase overlapping with Middle Minoan IA (MMIA).

The next period (c. 2200 or 2000–c. 1700 or 1600 BC) is the First Palace Period (or Old Palace Period), equating approximately to Middle Minoan IB (MMIB), Middle Minoan IIA (MMIIA), Middle Minoan IIB (MMIIB) and Middle Minoan IIIA (MMIIIA). Vast palaces were built across Crete during the First Palace Period. The end of the first palaces c. 1700 BC may have been due to a severe earthquake (or series of earthquakes) or to warfare and conquest, with Knossos emerging as the leading center.

The next phase (c. 1700 or 1600–c. 1500 BC) is the Second Palace Period, equating approximately to Middle Minoan IIIB (MMIIIB), Late Minoan IA (LMIA) and Late Minoan IB (LMIB). During the Second Palace Period the palaces were promptly rebuilt, including at Knossos, Mallia, Phaistos and Zakros. A system of writing known as Linear A was also developed (fig. 7.1). In this period Minoan influence (though probably not settlement) is apparent elsewhere in the Aegean, including the mainland. The enormous eruption of the Thera (Santorini) volcano (which brought about the legend of the lost city of Atlantis) was once thought to have marked the end of the Second Palace Period, causing the destruction of the palaces on Crete c. 1500 BC. This date is no longer accepted, and the eruption is generally believed to have occurred before the end of Late Minoan IA and Late Helladic I (around 1630/20 BC) (fig. 1.2). Indeed, the eruption may not have had such devastating consequences as was once thought. Instead, the palaces and other settlements on Crete could have continued for over 100 years, only then being destroyed by devastating fires or severe decline and prolonged abandonment. Internal conflict is the most likely explanation; an invasion by mainland Mycenaeans is no longer an accepted view, even though they apparently invaded Crete shortly after this period of decline.

The Third Palace Period (c. 1500–c. 1200 BC) equates approximately to Late Minoan II (LMII) and part of Late Minoan III (LMIIIA1, LMIIIA2, LMIIB). In the Third (and last) Palace Period on Crete, Knossos was powerful, exerting influence over a wide area of the Aegean. It is debatable whether the Mycenaeans ever controlled Crete. Linear B (fig.



1.2 *The eruption of the volcano at Thera took place around 1630/1620 BC, destroying the settlement of Akrotiri.*

7.1) was adopted, and the last palace at Knossos was destroyed by fire, preserving the Linear B archives (written on clay tablets). This may have occurred c. 1400 BC along with the destruction of other Cretan palaces, or it may have been at the end of LMIIIA2 (late 14th century BC) or even as late as 1200 BC.

The Postpalatial Period, from c. 1200 to c. 1050 BC, is approximately equivalent to Late Minoan IIIC (LMIIIC). Previously occupied sites did continue in use, but they were fewer in number, with apparent depopulation.

## CYCLADES

In the Cyclades Islands there are various dating schemes, the simplest termed “Cycladic”: Early Cycladic I (ECI), Early Cycladic II (ECII) and Early Cycladic III (ECIII) are all equivalent to the Prepalatial Period. The Middle Cycladic (MC) is partly equivalent to the First Palace Period, with the later part equivalent to the Second Palace Period. Late

Cycladic I (LCI) and Late Cycladic II (LCII) are also equivalent to the Second Palace Period. Late Cycladic III (LCIII) is equivalent to the Third Palace and Postpalatial Periods.

#### MAINLAND

On the mainland various dating schemes exist for the Bronze Age, the most common being termed “Helladic” and usually divided into three: c. 3000–c. 2100 BC is Early Helladic, c. 2100/2000–c. 1550 BC is Middle Helladic and c. 1580–c. 1100/1050 BC is the Late Helladic or Mycenaean period. The Prepalatial Period comprises Early Helladic I (EHI), Early Helladic II (EHII) and Early Helladic III (EHIII). The First Palace Period comprises the early part of Middle Helladic (MH). The Second Palace Period comprises the later part of Middle Helladic, as well as

Late Helladic I (LHI) and Late Helladic IIA (LHIIA). Possibly because of Minoan influence and trade, a ruling class became established at Mycenae and elsewhere on the mainland, represented by much wealth and rich burials, and probably by the first palaces on the mainland.

On the mainland the Third Palace Period comprises the Late Helladic IIB (LHIIIB) and Late Helladic III (LHIIIA1, LHIIIA2, LHIIIB1 and LHIIIB2), while the Postpalatial Period is Late Helladic IIIC (LHIIIC). The Third Palace Period was the main Mycenaean period, with the mainland becoming more important than Crete. Several palaces (such as Tiryns, Mycenae, Pylos and Thebes) and many new settlements were established (fig. 1.3). The 14th and 13th centuries BC especially were the Heroic Age of the poets, when legends and oral traditions were mixed with some element of truth. Dur-



1.3 *The Late Bronze Age site at Mycenae, Greece, situated on the nearer hill*



1.4 Cyclopean masonry outside the Lion Gate at Mycenae, dating to the late 13th century BC. These fortification walls were about 20 ft (6.09 m) thick.

ing this time many of the palaces were protected by massive fortifications (fig. 1.4), probably in preparation for sieges. The threat may have been from afar or from neighboring states.

From about 1250 BC a breakdown of settled conditions began in the eastern Mediterranean, Egypt and Asia Minor, and c. 1220 BC level VIIa of Troy was destroyed (fig. 1.5). This was a time of great insecurity, and in c. 1200 BC there was widespread destruction and/or abandonment of many major Mycenaean sites and palaces. Like Crete, some sites did continue to be inhabited for several decades, but they were far fewer in number. Following the final collapse of Mycenaean culture, it used to be believed that the Dorians (Indo-Europeans from the Danube area) invaded much of mainland Greece from approximately 1200 to 1000 BC. It is no longer accepted that the invasion caused the major dramatic collapse of Mycenaean civilization, and such an invasion is not supported by the archaeological evidence.

Climate-shift may have been responsible, leading to crop failure, famine and social collapse.

## Dark Age to Geometric

The Dark Age, a period about which little is known except from the archaeological record, is equivalent to the end of the Bronze Age and the Iron Age (c. 1110–900 BC). There was a greatly diminished population, poor material culture and buildings that left few surviving remains, and no written records, as it was a nonliterate society. From 1050 to 950 BC the Ionian Greeks and other Greeks migrated from the mainland to the Aegean Islands and Asia Minor's west coast. Most inhabitants of mainland Greece (except Arcadia) in the Classical Age called themselves Dorian Greeks. The terminology used by scholars for this period is imprecise, with much disagreement. Despite the term "Dark Age," some such

settlements were evidently quite prosperous at this time. There also seems to have been a division into separate political organizations, which become clearer in the ensuing Archaic Age. The term “Geometric” is usually applied to the period 900–700 BC when describing pottery, and at this time the population appears to have increased.

## Archaic Age

This period is c. 750–479 BC, when the Persian invasions ended, although the dates of this period are disputed, and some prefer 780–480 BC. The cities of Chalcis and Eretria in Euboea emerged as the leading settlements in Greece. From 800 BC the Greeks began to travel far afield and colonized many parts of Europe and Asia Minor, mostly by sea, because of

the increasing population and consequent land shortage. Chalcis and Eretria were responsible for the earliest colonies, and in 733 BC Corinth followed with colonies at Corcyra and Syracuse. The Lelantine War between Chalcis and Eretria for the fertile Lelantine Plain broke out around 730 BC and developed into a conflict involving many Greek states, leading to the disintegration of Euboea’s power.

From about 730 BC Corinth emerged as the most advanced city in Greece. Other important cities included Corinth’s neighbors Sicyon and Megara, as well as Aegina, Samos, Miletus, Athens and Sparta. From the mid-7th century BC there were revolts to overthrow some aristocratic city governments. In Corinth around 657 BC, Cypselus became the first tyrant to overthrow an aristocratic government. Similar revolts followed in Megara and Sicyon, and an attempted revolt by Cylon in Athens failed in 632 BC.



*1.5 Troy in western Asia Minor was destroyed c. 1220 BC. This view is of the earlier Troy VI East Gate of c. 1500 BC and the sloping city walls.*

Although tyrannies seem to have been widespread in the 7th and 6th centuries BC, Sparta's hereditary kingship and unique system of rule endured. Thought to have been established by Lycurgus in the early 7th century BC, Sparta's system resembled one in Crete and had probably developed from earliest times.

In the years following 625 BC Sparta and then Athens dominated mainland Greece. Many tyrannies were overthrown (such as at Corinth) and were replaced by oligarchic governments or democracies. Economic problems in Athens were addressed by Solon, the archon in 594/593 BC, who refused the role of tyrant. Nevertheless, Peisistratus became tyrant of Athens from c. 560 BC, succeeded by his sons Hipparchus and Hippias, the former subsequently assassinated and the latter forced into exile. Cleisthenes then undertook reform at Athens, and by the end of the 6th century BC Athens became very powerful and came into conflict with Sparta. By now Sparta was head of an alliance (the Peloponnesian League, but known then as "the Lacedaemonians and their allies"), which included all states of the Peloponnese except Argos.

By the 6th century BC Greek settlements existed in Asia Minor, northern Africa, Egypt and the Mediterranean basin. Some colonies were established for political purposes and for trade. Many were agricultural settlements, owing to overpopulation and a shortage of suitable fertile land on mainland Greece. Athens did not participate in colonization, as it had sufficient agricultural land, and Sparta had only one colony (Taras), until Heraclea Trachinia in the mid-5th century BC.

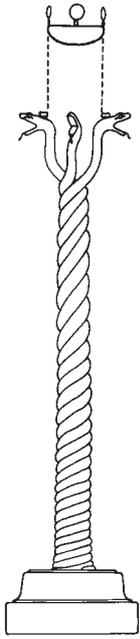
In 546 BC the Persians under Cyrus the Great conquered Lydia and came into contact with the Ionian Greek cities of Asia Minor. Conflict with Persia dominated the late Archaic Age (until 479 BC). In 513 BC Darius the Great invaded Thrace and Scythia. Persia came to control Thrace as far as Macedonia, as well as Asia Minor, the Middle East, Egypt, and northern Africa as far as Cyrene (beyond which was the Phoenician colony of Carthage, a threat to Greek Sicily and southern Italy). In 499 BC the Ionian Greeks revolted against Persian control. Sparta refused to help, but Athens and Eretria sent assistance. The Persians crushed the revolt and destroyed Miletus (494 BC). In 492 BC the Persians under Mar-



1.6 Silver tetradrachm of Athens c. 450 BC, obverse side with Athena wearing a helmet. The palmette with olive leaves on her helmet and the waning moon on the coin reverse (fig. 5.7) may commemorate the battle of Salamis and the defeat of the Persians in 480 BC. These motifs were added as signs of victory from about 479 BC. (Courtesy of Somerset County Museums Service)

donius took Thasos and campaigned in Thrace. In 490 BC Darius again attempted to invade Greece, probably to punish Athens and Eretria, but was defeated by Athens at the battle of Marathon (fig. 2.5) with the loss of 6,400 Persian troops but only 192 Athenian Greeks.

The Persians did not invade again for another 10 years, this time under Xerxes. In Athens, Themistocles became an influential leader and prepared for another Persian invasion by building new trireme warships and fortifying Piraeus (Map 6). Thirty-one Greek states attended a conference at Sparta in 481 BC and one at the Isthmus of Corinth in spring 480 BC, forming an alliance that is today known as the Hellenic League, because the Greeks used the word Hellenes to describe themselves, and led by Sparta to combat the Persians. Also in 480 BC the Persians invaded Greece for a second time and defeated the Greeks at Thermopylae (fig. 2.6) and Artemisium



1.7 After the Persians were defeated at the battle of Plataea (479 BC), a bronze serpent column made from booty was set up at Delphi, comprising a stone pedestal, three intertwined snakes and a gold tripod on top.

(Euboea). They moved through central Greece, and were supported by Thebes. Athens was next taken by the Persians, but the Persians were finally defeated at the naval battle of Salamis in the channel between the island of Salamis and the Greek mainland (fig. 1.6). Possibly on the same day in 480 BC, Sicilian forces under Theron and Gelon at the battle of Himera (north coast of Sicily) defeated the Carthaginians under Hamilcar.

Xerxes sailed to Asia Minor to prevent a revolt there, and his general, Mardonius, moved north to Thessaly for the winter. In 479 BC a combined Greek force defeated the Persians under Mardonius at the battle of Plataea (figs. 1.7 and 1.8) and then moved to Thebes, where the town was besieged and its leaders executed for supporting the Persians. In Ionia the Greeks revolted against the Persians. The Hellenic League now incorporated island states such as Chios, Lesbos and Samos. The Greeks sailed to Asia Minor and defeated the Persians at Mycale (near Samos). Sestus (base of the Persians) was then attacked and destroyed by Xanthippus (479/478 BC).



1.8 The pedestal of the serpent column

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## Classical Age

### DELIAN LEAGUE

The 5th and 4th centuries BC are regarded as the Classical Age of Greece, from the end of the Persian invasions to the accession of Alexander the Great (479–336 BC). In 478 BC Pausanias was sent with an allied fleet to recapture Byzantium from the Persians, but was recalled by Sparta. From 478 BC Athens rose to power, particularly under Pericles, and replaced Sparta as leader of the Greeks. Sparta's displeasure when Athens began to rebuild its walls lessened after Themistocles was ostracized (c. 471 BC) and Cimon became powerful. Athens became leader of a group of allies called the Delian League, set up to fight against the Persians. The Delian League, also known today as the "Confederacy of Delos," (because it was based on the island of Delos) was known in the 5th century BC as "The Athenians and their allies." Developed from the Hellenic League, its treasury and meeting place were at Delos. Some states contributed money and others contributed ships, and its money was administered by Athenian officials known as *hellenotamiai* (treasurers of the Greeks). Until 461 BC the Delian League forces were led by Cimon who was pro-Spartan. The Delian League undertook various activities against Persia and also for and against its own members, including besieging and capturing Eion (476 BC), clearing Scyrus of pirates (475–473 BC) and subjugating a revolt at Naxos (469 BC).

Although the battle of the Eurymedon (in southern Asia Minor) in c. 467 BC removed the Persian threat, Athens continued the Delian League. Revolts by member states were suppressed, including one by Thasos in 465 BC. Sparta offered to help Thasos, but was prevented by a devastating earthquake and a revolt by the helots of Messenia. Cimon, whose offer to send Sparta assistance from Athens was rejected, was ostracized in 461 BC (fig. 1.12). From that date the Delian League was gradually converted into an Athenian Empire. Athens adopted a greater imperialist strategy, using the Delian League to pursue its own interests, which attracted opposition from Sparta and Corinth. From c. 460 to 446 BC the First Peloponnesian War was fought between Athens and the Peloponnesian League (involving mainly Corinth). The Delian League treasury was moved to Athens in 454

BC. With the influence of Cimon, a five year truce was signed between Athens and Sparta c. 451 BC.

Cimon renewed attacks on Persian-held territory, and the Persians were finally defeated at the battle of Salamis off Cyprus in 449 BC. A peace treaty (called the Peace of Callias) between Athens and Persia was negotiated in 449/448 BC. In the treaty, Athens agreed not to attack Persian territory, and the Greeks of Asia Minor were to be autonomous. From 450 to 446 BC Athens undertook colonization in the form of cleruchies, including Thurii in southern Italy and Amphipolis in the northern Aegean. In 446 BC Sparta invaded Attica but then withdrew. The First Peloponnesian War was settled the same year, and peace between Athens and Sparta lasted 15 years.

At this point there was little justification for the prolonged existence of the Delian League, but Athens forced the allies to continue paying tribute. From 445 BC Athens and Sparta drifted toward war. In 435 BC Corinth and Corcyra fought over Epidamnus. Athens intervened, but the 30-year peace treaty between Athens and Sparta held. In 432 BC, Potidaea (a colony of Corinth) revolted from the Delian League. The Peloponnesians and Athenians sent forces; the Athenians were victorious and then besieged Potidaea. Sparta subsequently declared war in 431 BC.

### SECOND (OR GREAT) PELOPONNESIAN WAR

The first part of the war (431–421 BC) was the Archidamian War (after Archidamus II). Attica was invaded annually by the Peloponnesians, but its population was concentrated at Athens and Piraeus within the defensive walls. When plague broke out in Athens, leading to the death of Pericles, Cleon became the dominant leader. After Brasidas and Cleon were killed in 422 BC, Athens and Sparta wanted peace, and a 50-year truce (Peace of Nicias) was signed in 421 BC.

When Sparta's allies refused to ratify the treaty, Athens, Argos, Mantinea and Elis formed an alliance. Corinth and Megara formed a new alliance with Sparta. The Spartan alliance was victorious at the battle of Mantinea (418 BC). Sparta and Argos then agreed on an alliance, and then Alcibiades played an important part during the Peloponnesian War (until the battle of Notium in 406 BC). In 416 BC Athens conquered the independent island of Melos, and in 415 BC sent a huge expedition to Sicily to help

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