Greek Civilization

Lesson 3 Alexander’s Empire

Understanding Location: Greek Migration

Migration, or the movement from one place to another, was always an important part of Greek history. Natural resources, such as farmland and minerals, were scarce and often of poor quality on the mainland of Greece. Greece’s location on the Aegean, Ionian, and Mediterranean Seas made travel for conquest an efficient way to acquire more land and resources. By the time Philip II of Macedonia conquered Greece, numerous Greek settlements had been established in the Aegean Sea basin and all around the shores of the Mediterranean Sea. After Philip died, his son Alexander the Great conquered the Persian Empire. He established Greek settlements throughout Southwest Asia, Egypt, and as far east as India.

After Alexander died, his empire did not hold together. Without his strong leadership, his generals fought among themselves for control of the empire. This power struggle lasted for twenty years. It finally resulted in the formation of three kingdoms: the Seleucid Kingdom, the Egyptian Kingdom, and the Macedonian Kingdom. About 50 years later, a fourth kingdom, the Pergamum Kingdom, emerged as a new power. During the entire Hellenistic Age, these rulers repeatedly acquired new lands and grew stronger.

Despite the constant struggle for power, the new lands Alexander had brought into his empire opened up new possibilities for trade and commerce. Most of the kingdoms adopted the same system for using gold and silver. Having everyone use the same kind of money made trade much easier. Trade and commerce extended beyond the Mediterranean region into Africa, Arabia, India, and China.

Alexander’s conquests also opened up the lands of southwest Asia to Greek migration. The Greek settlers brought with them their preference for life in cities with Greek-style homes, temples, civic buildings, and statues. The Hellenistic rulers and wealthy citizens were willing and able to spend lots of money to build new cities modeled on Greek cultural centers like Athens.
The Hellenistic kings created garrisons, or forts, to guard their conquests. Many of these settlements were colonies of Greek and Macedonian veterans from Alexander’s armies. Some of them had stayed in the conquered lands, and others migrated from Greece to work in the garrisons. These settlements often grew and became Greek-style cities, with temples, gymnasiums, and theaters. It was through this kind of migration and settlement that Greek culture spread throughout the Hellenistic kingdoms. Likewise, the new kingdoms provided work for Greek artists, sculptors, and architects to help construct their new cities. These new cities attracted painters, playwrights, poets, writers, historians, and philosophers.

Greek language, culture, and ideas spread throughout the Hellenistic world.

Directions: Answer the following questions.

Understanding the Concept

1. Locating On which seas is Greece located?
2. **Identifying** Whose conquests opened up Southwest Asia to Greek migration?

Applying the Concept

3. **Determining Cause and Effect** What were two causes for Greek-style cities developing throughout the Mediterranean world?

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4. **Drawing Conclusions** How did having a uniform system for using gold and silver make trade easier?

5. **Making Connections** What is the relationship between Greece’s location and the spread of Greek culture to other parts of the world?