THE TREASURES OF ANCIENT GREECE
Professor Paul Cartledge

MAP OF SITES

THE SITES OF ANCIENT GREECE

ILLUSTRATED TIMELINE

GLOSSARY
This aerial overview of Greece, as seen ‘through the eyes of the gods’, was produced between 1996 and 2006 from more than 100 photo flights, involving a total of 248 flying hours, over mainland Greece and the Greek islands. These photo expeditions were carried out in Cessna 172s or 182s, small, single-engine aircraft. Flying out over the open sea in such a tiny airplane can be a little disconcerting, to say the least, even if one has every confidence in the reliability of the plane and its pilot. There is always a risk of sudden gusts or air turbulence even on the most glorious of days. There is also one particular island in the Aegean archipelago which can easily produce a feeling of apprehension – its very name, Icaria, is a reminder of the world’s earliest known flying disaster, when Icarus fell to his death in the seas off this island after the sun had melted the wax of his wings.

The thousand-year-old myth of Icarus’ escape from Crete and the Labyrinth of the Minotaur with the aid of a pair of wings, fashioned from wax and feathers by his father Daedalus, a talented craftsman (who also took care to warn his son not to fly too close to the sun), mirrors man’s age-old dream of being able to fly. The Greek philosopher Plato (c.428-c.348 BC) likewise dreamed of flying and once confessed to harbouring an ‘overwhelming desire for wings’, although in his case the desire stemmed from more than a simple yearning to fly. Flying held the promise of the acquisition of knowledge. One cannot fly over modern-day Attica without recalling the passage from Plato’s work Critias (ll.11a-d) lamenting the deforestation and erosion of the Athenian landscape. This remarkably topical ecological review contained in one of his late dialogues suggests a survey and analysis somehow conducted from the air. To Plato’s mind, a bird’s eye view was a positive virtue: his concept of zoology was based on a hierarchical system which incorporated an increasing level of intelligence, whereby land animals followed sea creatures and winged creatures followed land animals. Although Socrates realized that the ‘true Earth’ would only be revealed to one who could fly like a bird, he nevertheless describes it from the perspective of an astronaut, so to speak: ‘This earth, seen from on high, would resemble one of those balls made from twelve pieces of leather in a variety of separate, bright colours…’ (Phaedo 110b).

The term ‘overview effect’ has been coined by present-day astronauts describing the euphoric experience of viewing the earth from such an all-embracing perspective. At school, I was one of the ‘Greeks’: that is to say, Ancient Greek was one of my main subjects. This may partly explain why these flights over Greece’s cultural heritage sites and
The city of Athens, Attica
The city of Athens, Attica

The monuments of Athens’ heritage are like jewels that stud the fabric of the modern metropolis, which has more than four million inhabitants. The Acropolis stands out as the city’s crowning glory, with the Odeum of Herod Atticus and the Theatre of Dionysos on its slopes, the sites of festivals to which the famous Attic writers contributed their plays. Visible behind the Acropolis in this photograph are the Agora, the meeting place of ancient Athens and a cradle of democracy, and the Kerameikos cemetery. In the lower right stand the surviving columns of the Olympieion, a colossal temple dedicated to Zeus Olympios that was finally completed in the second century AD by the Roman Emperor Hadrian, more than 600 years after construction started.

The new town of Olynthos, Macedonia

Olynthos, the regional capital of the Chalcidice Peninsula, was forced to expand in the second half of the fifth century BC due to an influx of people. The new residential areas were laid out in a grid pattern not unlike a modern subdivision, with a clear hierarchy of streets from boulevards to alleys. Olynthos was destroyed in the year 348 BC and never rebuilt, rewarding today’s archaeologists with a unique window on ancient town planning.

The Temple of Apollo in ancient Corinth, Corinthia

The ruins of ancient Corinth echo the ups and downs of a long history. Built in the sixth century BC, the central sanctuary of Apollo dates back to Corinth’s first heyday, when it established colonies in Sicily and Corfu. With captivating views of the Gulf of Corinth, the Apollo sanctuary occupies the highest point of the ancient city’s terrain. Made of tufa, a type of limestone, the columns were originally covered with white stucco to make them look like marble. Under the Romans, who sacked and then rebuilt the city, Corinth later reached a second peak, but an earthquake in 521 AD toppled it for good.
The theatre of Argos, Argolis

The ruins of Philippi, Macedonia
The temple of Poseidon on Cape Sounion, Attica
The temple of Poseidon on Cape Sounion, Attica

Perhaps the most emblematic sight of Greece is that of the temple of Poseidon, the god of the sea, on Cape Sounion. Attica’s southernmost headland plunges precipitously into the Aegean, and the turbulent waters off the cape provided good reason to placate Poseidon with offerings. Pericles (c.495–429 BC), general of Athens during the city’s golden age, ordered the temple to be built around 440 BC, at the same time as the Parthenon. Today, the gleaming white marble of the sanctuary is a comforting landmark for approaching sailors. In antiquity, however, the temple’s value as a signal may have been reduced by its gaudy colouring.

The theatre of Argos, Argolis

The city of Argos, sustained by the fecund Argive Plain, takes pride in being the oldest continuously inhabited Greek town, going back no less than 6000 years. Ancient Argos was legendary for breeding horses, for its heroes and military prowess. Its enormous theatre, built in the fourth century BC and refurbished in Roman times, seated 10,000 spectators. The 81 middle rows have survived because they were cut into the cliff face. In the Greek war of independence from Ottoman rule, the theatre also served as the meeting place for the National Assembly twice, in 1821 and 1829.

The ruins of Philippi, Macedonia

From the theatre to the forum and the basilica across the road, the ruins of Philippi, named after a Macedonian king, point to the town’s Roman and early Christian heyday rather than its Macedonian past. A battle like no other in antiquity, marking 41 Roman legions, raged at Philippi in the winter of 42 BC, seeking to avenge Julius Caesar’s death. Octavian and Marc Antony defeated his assassins, Brutus and Cassius, who had fled Rome for the eastern provinces. In AD 49, Saint Paul preached in Philippi, sowing the seeds for the first Christian community on European soil. Saint in c. AD 62 from Rome, his epistle to the Philippians irrevocably put the town on the Christian map.

The Meteora monastery of Varlaam, Thessaly

The Greek word metéora means ‘suspended in the air’, and monasteries precariously perched on pinnacles have become emblematic of Greece. Hermits first searched out these sandstone pillars in Thessaly in pursuit of solitude in the ninth century AD. Two dozen monasteries sprang up here in the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries, Varlaam among them. In turbulent times, the monks banked on security by inaccessibility: people could only enter via retractable ladders or in nets hoisted by windlasses. Nowadays steps hewn into the rock and an asphalt road have eased access to the monasteries, of which only five are still inhabited. Besieged by tourists, solitude and security long gone, some monks choose to desert Meteora for Mount Athos. Varlaam is a UNESCO World Heritage site.
### Historical events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>550 BC</td>
<td>Peisistratos tyrant of Athens; tyrannies elsewhere in Greece</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>525 BC</td>
<td>Peisistratos tyrant of Athens; tyrannies elsewhere in Greece</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500 BC</td>
<td>Introduction of democracy at Athens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>490 BC</td>
<td>Propylaea is finished from the orders of the Spartans and the Alcmaeonidae, a powerful and noble family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>480 BC</td>
<td>Xerxes, son of Darius, marches on Greece; Battle of Thermopylae</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>470 BC</td>
<td>Persians burn down the Acropolis; Athens and allies overcome Persian fleet at naval battle of Salamis; Battle of Plataea; Greeks defeat Persian army</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>460 BC</td>
<td>Temple of Poseidon, Cape Sounion, Attica</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Archaeological events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>550 BC</td>
<td>Temple to Hera on the island of Samos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500 BC</td>
<td>The city of Thebes, Boeotia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500 BC</td>
<td>The plain of Marathon, Attica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>490 BC</td>
<td>Pnyx, next to the Acropolis, Attica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>450 BC</td>
<td>Temple of Poseidon, Cape Sounion, Attica</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Art and Cultural events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>500 BC</td>
<td>Limestone pediments on Akropolis; Ionic order established, e.g. temple of Artemis at Ephesus; Amasis Painter; Caeretan hydriai, vases decorated with mythological scenes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>525 BC</td>
<td>Temple to Hera on the island of Samos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500 BC</td>
<td>The city of Thebes, Boeotia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>490 BC</td>
<td>Discobolos, Myron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>480 BC</td>
<td>Wounded Warrior</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Timeline

- **550 BC**
  - Limestone pediments on Akropolis; Ionic order established, e.g. temple of Artemis at Ephesus; Amasis Painter; Caeretan hydriai, vases decorated with mythological scenes.

- **500 BC**
  - The plain of Marathon, Attica
  - The city of Thebes, Boeotia
  - Temple to Hera on the island of Samos
  - The city of Thebes, Boeotia
  - Temple of Poseidon, Cape Sounion, Attica

- **490 BC**
  - Discobolos, Myron
  - Wounded Warrior

- **480 BC**
  - The Oresteia, a trilogy of tragedies by Aeschylus; Aeschylus – Agamemnon, Choephoroi (The Libation Bearers), The Eumenides – is first performed in Athens
GLOSSARY

Symposium (pl. symposia)
Drinking party, with music, poetry and formalized rules. All-male, save for presence of courtesans

Telessterion
Hall of ceremonies, generally for initiation into Mysteries

Temenos
Sacred precinct

Thoros
Round-shaped building or tomb

T h e r o n
A treasure house in a sacred precinct for housing valuables

Triglyph
Panel with three vertical grooves or bars, alternating in Doric order with metopes

Tumulus (pl. tumuli)
Burial mound, usually with raised earth

Tympanon
The triangular wall at the back of the pediment

Engaged column
Semi-detached (from wall or pilaster) and about semi-circular in plan

Entablature
Includes all parts of an architectural order above the columns, consisting of architrave, frieze and cornice

Entasis
Convex tapering of a column

G

Geometric
The period c.900 to 750 BC

Gymnasium
Literally, place where one goes naked. As today, a place set aside for physical exercise and training

H

Helladic
Used of the Bronze Age period as it occurs on the Greek mainland

Hellenistic
Using Greek modes of style, expression or language; in art-historical chronology, conventionally covers the period of 323 BC to 31 BC

Heraion
Temple of Hera

Herm
Pillar, usually square, surmounted by a head

Heroon
Shrine for worship of a hero

K

Kerameikos
Potters’ quarter

Kore (pl. Korai)
‘Young girl’; used specifically for the standing marble statues dedicated in the Archaic period, especially on the Athenian Akropolis

Kouros (pl. Kourai)
Statue of a young man, used only for the Archaic period to designate statues of youths in frontal attitude, bilaterally symmetrical, generally with the left foot advanced

Krepidoma
The stepped platform of a Greek temple

M

Maenad
Female follower of Dionysos; sometimes also known as a Bacchant

Magna Graecia
‘Great Greece’: the area of southern Italy colonized by the Greeks, often understood to include Sicily too

Megaron
The principal hall in a Mycenaean house

Metope
Rectangular panel inserted between triglyphs of Doric order

Minoan
Crete-based ‘palatial’ civilization named after legendary King Minos, c.1900–1500 BC

Mycenaen
Civilization overlapping with, then overtaking, Minoan, c.1600–1200 BC. Name taken from city of Mycenae in the Peloponnese

Mutule
Projecting slab on the soffit of a Doric cornice

N

Naos
Understood in Greek to mean simply ‘temple’, but now used to mean inner sanctum of a temple, thus overlapping with cella

Nike (pl. nikai)
Winged victory personification, invariably female

Odeion
Roofed building used mostly for musical performances

Opisthodomos
Porch at the rear of a temple

X

Xoanon (pl. xoana)
Old-fashioned wooden statue, usually a cult statue. Examples survived in Greek sanctuaries up to at least the second or third centuries AD, but not beyond

Echinus
The convex moulding beneath the abacus of a capital