

Advanced Dungeons & Dragons[®]

Historical **2nd Edition** Reference

Age of Heroes

Campaign Sourcebook

Sample file





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Special thanks to Jackie Cassada for her ideas on the Olympics

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ISBN 1-56076-814-2

9408

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One of the most fascinating yet challenging jobs for any DM is to create a background and setting for a campaign. Choices must be made regarding the terrain, the economy, languages, types of clothing worn, armor and weapons available, types of monsters or NPCs that can be encountered, political maneuverings, religious beliefs, and the everyday lifestyle of most of the people to be found there. Trying to bring all these elements together into a cohesive and believable whole can be difficult, and the inadvertent use of a few anachronisms (such as the presence of plate armor in a Bronze Age culture) can lead to the collapse of the game through disbelief.

There are many advantages to recreating a historical setting such as that of ancient Greece: Most of the work mentioned above has already been done, and many people are at least marginally familiar with both the Greek culture and the mythology, from school and from movies such as *Jason and the Argonauts*. Numerous sourcebooks as well as detailed maps can be found in any public library, and campaign ideas can be generated based on either the mythology or on material from *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*.

History Versus Historical Role-playing

Much of the history of ancient Greece occurred a thousand years before there was such a thing as historical writing. What is stated as a fact is usually someone's best guess based on written fragments, archaeological finds, or accounts written decades after the events they record occurred. Nevertheless, within the bounds of what we believe is true, there is a wealth of material which can be adapted to an AD&D® campaign. This book is intended to provide source material for dynamic role-playing, not serve as a historical treatise. For this reason, many "facts" given may only apply to one area of Greece, while other details may apply only to one

time period. In general, however, it's possible, even desirable, to combine some of the information into an overall world view, which, while not wholly accurate, serves as an exciting and recognizable background for a Greek campaign. Those who wish to portray a historically accurate background will find enough detail here to start their campaigns. Either way, access to magical items and spells in this sort of campaign is strictly limited. Most people were artisans, peasants, slaves, traders, bards, politicians, or warriors, and the closest to magic they came was the limited priestly abilities of healers and oracles.

Fantasy Role-playing in a Greek Setting

While the pure historical setting offers gritty realism, there are other advantages to a fantasy campaign based in Greece. Many of the classic creatures found in the AD&D® game are taken from Greek mythology, as is the excellent portrayal of the Greek pantheon in the AD&D® 2nd Edition *Legends & Lore*.

This type of campaign allows the DM to use these fantasy elements to the fullest, while providing the players with more character choices—particularly the ones able to wield magic. Though they might not have access to all the power of classic AD&D® mages and priests, Greek spellcasters have another advantage: the rarity of any type of spellcaster and the awe in which they are held. Good role-playing which emphasizes this should make up for the lack of raw power.

Using the purely historical detail to enhance the background of a partial or full fantasy campaign is also possible. Whichever the DM chooses to do, the feeling and drama inherent in the age should be his primary concern. It is up to the DM to give the players an exciting world, full of detail, with vivid, challenging encounters, in which the characters can become the heroes about whom epics are sung!

Ancient Greece was not a unified country with a single ruler, a principal city, and a singular culture, but a collection of city-states which had their own rulers, cultural differences, laws, and alliances. The city-states battled one another as often as they fought foreign enemies. Nevertheless, Greek culture, primarily that of its greatest city, Athens, spread throughout most of the ancient world, and Greek art, drama, literature, philosophies, mathematics, medical knowledge, and theories of government formed the basis for many of the civilizations of the western world.

Timeline: 2200 B.C. to 279 B.C.

Many of the dates given below are approximate and represent the generally accepted time in which these events occurred.

2200 B.C.: Minoan civilization flourishes.

1500 B.C.: Mycenaeans become dominant.

1250 B.C.: The Trojan War is fought.

1100 B.C.: The Dorian Invasion occurs. Though barbaric in other ways, the Dorians bring iron weapons into Greece. Knowledge of writing is lost. The Greek "Dark Ages" lasts nearly 300 years.

1000 B.C.: Ionians fleeing invaders establish cities on the west coast of Asia Minor.

800 B.C.: City-states arise.

776 B.C.: First recorded Olympic Games.

750 B.C.: Greek script, based on Phoenician characters, is created. *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* are written.

730 B.C.: The First Messenian War. Sparta dominates the southwestern Peloponnese.

640 B.C.: The Second Messenian War is fought. Sparta becomes preeminent, crushing the native population.

594 B.C.: Solon reforms the laws of Athens.

560 B.C.: Peisistratus becomes the first Athenian tyrant.

532 B.C.: City Dionysia introduced in Athens, and first tragedies performed.

510 B.C.: Tyranny in Athens is overthrown.

508 B.C.: Cleisthenes introduces sweeping democratic reforms in Athens.

490 B.C.: Persian Wars begin. Persians are defeated at Marathon by Athenian hoplites.

483 B.C.: Themistocles builds the Athenian navy.

480 B.C.: Spartans defeated at Thermopylae. Persians burn Athens. Athenians destroy the Persian fleet at the Battle of Salamis.

479 B.C.: Remaining Persian troops defeated at Plataea. The Delian League forms.

477 B.C.: Athens becomes ascendant.

465 B.C.: Sparta suffers a series of disastrous earthquakes and helot uprisings.

462 B.C.: Pericles begins his rise to power in Athens. Radical democracy is introduced.

431 B.C.: Start of the Peloponnesian War

405-404 B.C.: The Athenian navy is destroyed. Athens is starved into surrender. End of the Peloponnesian War. Sparta imposes the rule of the Thirty Tyrants on Athens.

403 B.C.: The Tyrants are expelled and democracy restored in Athens.

400 B.C.: Retreat of the Ten Thousand under Xenophon. Sparta is at war with Persia.

394 B.C.: Coalition of Athens, Thebes, Corinth, and Argos defeated by Sparta at Coronea.

371 B.C.: Sparta defeated by Thebes at Battle of Leuctra. Thebes briefly rises in power.

362 B.C.: Theban general Epaminondas killed at Battle of Mantinea. Theban power crumbles.

338 B.C.: After earlier victories, Philip of Macedon defeats the Greeks at Chaeronea.

336 B.C.: Philip of Macedon is assassinated and is succeeded by his son, Alexander the Great.

335 B.C.: Alexander crushes resistance against his rule and begins campaigns against the Persian empire.

323 B.C.: Alexander the Great dies. His empire is partitioned among his generals.

279 B.C.: Gauls invade Macedon and Greece.





The Minoan Period

2200-1450 B.C.: The Minoan civilization was founded by people who emigrated from Asia Minor to the Aegean islands around 3,000 B.C. during the Neolithic era. Their culture flourished most notably on the island of Crete, where they built communities centered around huge, multi-level palaces. The palace of Minos, the king for whom the culture was named, was built at Knossos. Its labyrinthine passages, twisting corridors, and hundreds of rooms may have given rise to the legend of Theseus and the Minotaur. The tale of Theseus may have been a mythologized version of the story of Athens' emancipation from Minoan overlordship.

Good climate but limited agricultural areas led the Minoans to become great seafarers and traders (a practice which would later be successfully imitated by the Greeks). The king was a trader and administrator rather than a warlord. Accounts of imports, exports, and agricultural production were meticulously kept by his scribes, and his palace, which could house up to 80,000 people, was a center for commerce and religious rites. Food and metal were the most common imports, while wine, olive oil, pottery, gems, and knives made up the bulk of Minoan exported goods.

Aside from their accomplishments in artisanship and literacy, the Minoans excelled as artists and engineers. They took pride in using art to enhance even the humblest item and were noted for their expertise in mural paintings (frescoes), miniature sculptures, and gem carvings. They built roads which averaged 11 feet wide, and the palace at Knossos boasted both indoor running water and a light well which lit the Grand Staircase that connected the different levels. Interestingly, they felt no need to build defensive fortifications or walls around their cities.

Women were considered the equals of men (a unique notion at the time) and were allowed

to enter any profession or participate in any sport they chose—even boxing! The Minoans engaged in dancing, foot races, and boxing, and built theaters to house their musical spectacles and processions. A particular sport, known as bull leaping, in which young male and female acrobats attempted to somersault over the backs of charging bulls, may have been part of their religious observances.

Minoan religion centered around a goddess who was both good and evil. The Minoans may also have worshiped certain animals and birds (bulls, snakes, and doves) and sacred trees. Rites were held in shrines inside the palace, in the open air, and in sacred caves. Priestesses performed the sacrifices. There were no male priests.

Later Cretan myth tells that the infant Zeus was hidden from his father Cronus in a cave on Crete and was fed by the animals there. The Cretan Zeus was an agrarian deity who died and was born again annually, much like Dionysus in the later Greek pantheon. He is also associated with bulls.

Around 1450 B.C., the geologically unstable region was rocked by earthquakes and a great tsunami, which decimated the island of Thera and caused terrible destruction among the Minoan palaces. Weakened by the disaster, and without defensive structures, the Minoans were supplanted by the Mycenaeans, a more warlike mainland culture.

The Mycenaeans

1600-1100 B.C.: Around 1900 B.C., Indo-Europeans (also known as Pelasgirs), who spoke an early form of Greek, invaded the peninsula. By 1600 B.C., these people had formed communities which were influenced by the Minoans, with whom they established trade. A warlike people, the Mycenaeans became the dominant power of the region, ruling from their mainland cities of Mycenae, Tiryns, Athens, and Iolkos. Each city and its