

HIST2220: Final Assignment

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HIST2220: The Mediterranean World

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In the early period of the Mediterranean, there were many different influences on the development of their culture. The Mediterranean was influenced a lot by different religions such as: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam and these religions were influenced by the Mediterranean as well. All three of these religions influenced the writings, lifestyle and the culture that was practiced in the early period in the Mediterranean.

In the beginning, the Mediterranean was mainly ruled by Judaism. During the time when the Babylonian exile happened, the Jewish communities began to settle throughout the eastern Mediterranean. This began the spread of the culture of Judaism into the Mediterranean cities. The first influence that Judaism had on the Mediterranean and the Mediterranean had on the Jewish population is through their literature. The cultures become so blended that the writings would be in each other's languages. Robin Winks explains in the textbook "the city of Alexandria in Egypt had an especially large Jewish population and it was here that the Hebrew Bible was translated into Greek" (Winks, 2004, 109). This shows how the Mediterranean culture was affected by Judaism because their writings were translated into Greek, proving that many of their citizens were Jewish. Another influence that came from Judaism in the Mediterranean is through Greek literature with their myths and stories. Many of these stories were written in both Hebrew and Greek so that all cultures could understand. This shows just how they were so intermixed within the culture. Winks also points out in the textbook "while the mythology of the bible remained the basic subject matter for most Jewish literature, the stories were interpreted and embellished in a wide variety of ways; Babylonian and Greek influences often mingled with Jewish traditions" (Winks, 2004, 109). This shows how the cultures became one with each other and people would follow both because of how Judaism was incorporated into Greek life.

Another religion that also had a big influence on the early Mediterranean is Christianity. The first way that Christianity influenced the Mediterranean is with the amount of people **who** converted to it and the laws that were put into place **because of them**. In the beginning, people were mainly pagans, which meant that they believed in multiple gods. Once Christianity was introduced, it became **the** more popular belief in the Mediterranean. According to the textbook, **Winks explains that** “by the end of the fourth century most pagan practices, including animal sacrifice, were illegal” (Winks, 2004, 198). This shows that the start of Christianity in the Mediterranean influenced and affected the everyday lives of the citizens. Another way that Christianity influenced the Mediterranean is through the changes that it influenced **for the** architecture of Rome. **For example**, when Christianity became more popular, it was shown in their buildings. In the textbook Winks writes: “in some cities, monumental public buildings, streets and squares were allowed to decay... it is possible that Christianity caused some of these changes” (Winks, 2004, 202). Christianity also caused **some** physical **changes** in Rome as some of the buildings were turned into churches for Christians to pray in, **and** others were abandoned because they were used to follow paganism. A final influence that Christianity had on the Mediterranean is through **its influence on** how people helped each other. In the textbook it explains, “the Christian virtue of charity meant almsgiving- gifts for distribution to the poorest and neediest Christians” (Winks, 2004, 204). Before the Christian influence, the main value was placed on status. This changed as that is not what Christianity values, **which was a major shift in the Mediterranean culture**.

The final religion that had a big influence on the early Mediterranean is Islam. The first influence that Islam had on the Mediterranean **is the split it caused** between that East and the West. By the middle of the **Seventh** century, there had been a split between that East and the

West and Islam had conquered the East. According to the textbook, when Islam came into the Roman empire, it did not **erase** the current culture and practices, but it did influence them a lot. Winks points out, “none of them erased the cultures they conquered, but all influenced the peoples subject to them and were influenced by them” (Winks, 2004, 216). The main influences that were brought into the Mediterranean by Islam were in the laws, the language and the literature. Another was that Islam influenced the **Mediterranean in** the values that it brought into how people were supposed to live their lives. With the Islamic influence, they tried to incorporate people valuing “warrior-like” behavior and to be brave and ruthless. According to the textbook, they were very heavily influenced by Bedouin society and they brought these values when they conquered the Mediterranean.

All in all, the Mediterranean had many influences that affected **the** citizens and culture. Depending on who was in power, or moving to different parts, the different religions had more of an effect. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam all had an influence on the Mediterranean **and what the culture evolved into.**

Work Cited:

Winks, R. W., & Mattern, S. P. (2004). *The ancient Mediterranean World: From the stone age to A.D. 600*. Oxford University Press.