Greek Civilization to 500 BCE: Minoan Crete to Classical Greece

[Name of the Writer]

[Name of the Institution]

**Introduction**

It is notable to mention that ancient civilizations were part of the history through which the basis of the modern world has formed. In western culture and identity, there is a conspicuous place for Greeks. Ancient Greek civilization was a period of artistic, scientific, political, and philosophical achievements that created an astonishing influence on western civilization. A number of cultures were flourished during the Bronze Age (3200-1100 BCE). In the Late Bronze Age (1600-1100 BCE), Mycenaean culture flourished on the mainland of Greek. It is important to mention that the Late Bronze Age was considered as ‘age of heroes” due to the stories of various heroes in Greek mythology. Greek civilization is of utmost importance as it laid the foundation of the modern world. Examining different aspects of Greek civilizations will provide a better understanding of its influence over the modern world. Here, the focus is to discuss Greek civilization to 500 BCE to determine its significance for western civilization.

**Discussion**

**Minoan Crete**

Minoan Crete civilization flourished from 3000 BCE to 1100 BCE. It was the first prominent civilization in the region of the Aegean Sea. It is notable to mention that Minoan Crete was well known for its mighty cities and palaces. The people of Minoan civilization had special skills in the use of writing. Despite its extended trade in the region of eastern Mediterranean shores (Levant), pottery, elaborate seals, and delicate, vibrant frescoes were included in its sophisticated arts. Minoan civilization had a predominantly matriarchal religion due to their display of wild goats, monkey, and bizarrely dressed goddesses on these artworks (Sansone, 2016). Minoan civilization began to expand in the neighboring islands of the Aegean region, and it finally spread to the mainland of Greece by 1580 BCE (Kitto, 2017). On the island of Crete, the Minoans built a splendid civilization based on their navy and strong trade among the Mediterranean Sea. Unique writing skills of the Minoans allowed them to establish their own language, known as “Linear A” by archeologists. Archeologists believed that the city of Knossos had a population of over ten thousand people along with a huge palace. The palace contained amazing pieces of art and pottery, which determines the superiority of Minoans Crete in the artwork (Sansone, 2016). King Minos ruled the city of Knossos as per Greek Mythology. According to Greek mythology, a monster named Minotaur was buried under the palace of King Minos.

**Mycenaean**

In the Late Bronze Age, Mycenaean culture began to flourish on the Greek mainland. It is notable to mention that Mycenaean were the first to speak the Greek language, so the majority of archeologists consider them as the first Greeks. The Mycenaean also developed trade in the region of Mediterranean, which threatened Minoans. The civilization of Minoan began to collapse due to the invasion of Mycenaean. It is important to mention that Mycenaean captured a major portion of the islands of the Minoans. These conquerors from the mainland destroyed the palace culture on Crete by the middle of the fifteenth century. The invasion of Mycenaean created a deep impact on the islands regarding mainland skills. They made Knossos and Phaistos the center of their new order on Crete to demonstrate their aesthetic achievement and economic power. The destruction of Knossos city in 1375 ended the flourishing culture of Minoan (Willetts, 2014). The power completely shifted to the dominating Mycenaean in the Aegean region. At the beginning of that time period, several heroes and gods merged as per Greek mythology. Among them, Helladic god, named Zeus was most prominent as the artwork of Mycenaean contained the shape of Zeus in pottery and other crafting objects. Unfortunately, the Mycenaean civilization in the Peloponnese was destroyed by the Dorians which entered Greece into a dark age. It is notable to mention that during the Greek Dark Age, there was a significant decrease in population throughout the region along with advancement in famine. The Greek Dark Age lasted up to 800 BCE.

**Greek Archaic Period** The Greek Archaic Period was the beginning of great ancient Greek civilization during which the early Greek culture started to take prominent shape. During this period, there was a significant increase in the development of Greek philosophy. Majority of Greek city-states began to take power during this period. Greek art became more naturalistic during this period. The rigid style of their art began to fade from their artwork, which laid the foundation of modern artwork. Characteristic "archaic smile" began to animate faces on their sculptures. It is noteworthy to mention that there was a major development in the field of architecture in the archaic period (Mark, 2019). Significance of harmonious architectural proportions is reflected from the development of Doric orders. The region of Greece along with the islands of the Aegean Seas was a landscape of mountains and seas. Ancient Greece civilization usually consisted of small cities. It is essential to mention that every territory had its cultural peculiarities, identity, and dialect. These territories were fiercely independent of one another. In the meantime, Greek began to colonize every island of the Black Sea and the Mediterranean Sea to establish a major locus for Greek colonization. The Greek were agricultural people like all other societies at that time. They were engaged in the cultivation of grains, olives, and vines in the ancient Mediterranean region (Mark, 2019). They also kept cattle, sheep, and goats in their small farms, usually of a few acres. Limited agricultural lands in Greece compelled them to engage in trade to fulfill their basic food necessitates (Pomeroy et al., 2004). The land shortage was a major concern of these people, which resulted in violent clashes among various classes. To mitigate the issue of agricultural land, Greeks traders engaged in extensive maritime trade, which proved to be effective for them. Trade of consumer goods such as cloth, wine, pottery, and metalwork was prominent at that period (Pomeroy et al., 2004). Greeks took great advantage by trading these consumer's goods which enabled them to resent the unrestrained power of the oligarchs to create new leaders. Some of these leaders turned out to be autocratic, while the majority of them were enlightened leaders, known as tyrants. The tyrants made some major decisions that changed the dynasty of their people. For instance, tyrants of Megara, named Theagenes, managed to bring running water to his city. His efforts in providing running water to his people were remarkable that made him famous among different city-states at that. The tyrant of Argos, named Pheidon, introduced the first ever orderly system of measures and weights in his city which later adopted by the Classical Greeks.

**Conclusion**

In a nutshell, ancient Greek civilization has been greatly significant in succeeding world history. The foundation of western civilization was formed by the political and philosophical concepts of ancient Greece. A significant impact of art and architecture of ancient Greek civilization has been observed in subsequent world history. Their engagement in trades and agriculture set an example for western civilization on how to effectively practice these domains to fulfill the basic necessitates.

**References**

Kitto, H. D. F. (2017). The Greeks. Routledge.

Mark, J. (2019). Ancient Greece. Ancient History Encyclopedia. Retrieved from https://www.ancient.eu/greece/

Pomeroy, S. B., Burstein, S. M., Donlan, W., Roberts, J. T., & Tandy, D. W. (2004). A brief history of ancient Greece: Politics, society, and culture. New York: Oxford University Press.

Sansone, D. (2016). Ancient Greek Civilization. John Wiley & Sons.

Willetts, R. F. (2014). Aristocratic Society in Ancient Crete (Routledge Revivals). Routledge.