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Miletus

Coordinates: 37°31′49″N 27°16′42″E

Miletus (/ˈmaɪˈliːtəs/; Greek: Μίλητος, romanized: *Mī́lētos*; Hittite transcription *Millawanda* or *Milawata* (exonyms); Latin: *Milētus*; Turkish: *Milet*) was an ancient Greek city on the western coast of Anatolia, near the mouth of the Maeander River in ancient Ionia.^{[3][4][5]} Its ruins are located near the modern village of Balat in Aydın Province, Turkey. Before the Persian rule that started in the 6th century BC, Miletus was considered among the greatest and wealthiest of Greek cities.^{[6][7]}

Evidence of first settlement at the site has been made inaccessible by the rise of sea level and deposition of sediments from the Maeander. The first available evidence is of the Neolithic. In the early and middle Bronze Age the settlement came under Minoan influence. Recorded history at Miletus begins with the records of the Hittite Empire, and the Mycenaean records of Pylos and Knossos, in the Late Bronze Age. Miletus was a Mycenaean stronghold on the coast of Asia Minor from c. 1450 to 1100 BC.

The 13th century BC saw the arrival of Luwian language speakers from south central Anatolia calling themselves the Carians. Later in that century other Greeks arrived. The city at that time rebelled against the Hittite Empire. After the fall of that empire the city was destroyed in the 12th century BC and starting about 1000 BC was resettled extensively by the Ionian Greeks. Legend offers an Ionian foundation event sponsored by a founder named Neleus from the Peloponnesus.

The Greek Dark Ages were a time of Ionian settlement and consolidation in an alliance called the Ionian League. The Archaic Period of Greece began with a sudden and brilliant flash of art and philosophy on the coast of Anatolia. In the 6th century BC, Miletus was the site of origin of the Greek philosophical (and scientific) tradition, when Thales, followed by Anaximander and Anaximenes (known collectively, to modern scholars, as the Milesian school), began to speculate about the material constitution of the

Miletus

Μίλητος
Milet



Shown within Turkey

Location	Balat, Didim , Aydın Province , Turkey
Region	Aegean Region
Coordinates	37°31′49″N 27°16′42″E
Type	Settlement
Area	90 ha (220 acres)
History	
Builder	Minoans (later Mycenaean s) and then Ionians (the later on a former Anatolian site) ^{[1][2][3]}
Site notes	
Public access	Yes
Website	Miletus Archaeological Site (https://muze.gov.tr/muze-d)

world, and to propose speculative naturalistic (as opposed to traditional, supernatural) explanations for various natural phenomena.

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History

Neolithic

The earliest available archaeological evidence indicates that the islands on which Miletus was originally placed were inhabited by a Neolithic population in 3500–3000 BC.^[8] Pollen in core samples from Lake Bafa in the Latmus region inland of Miletus suggests that a lightly grazed climax forest prevailed in the Maeander valley, otherwise untenanted. Sparse Neolithic settlements were made at springs, numerous and sometimes geothermal in this karst, rift valley topography. The islands offshore were settled perhaps for their strategic significance at the mouth of the Maeander, a route inland protected by escarpments. The graziers in the valley may have belonged to them, but the location looked to the sea.



Map of Miletus and other cities within the Lydian Empire

Middle Bronze Age

The prehistoric archaeology of the Early and Middle Bronze Age portrays a city heavily influenced by society and events elsewhere in the Aegean, rather than inland.

Minoan period

The earliest Minoan settlement of Miletus dates to 2000 BC.^[9] Beginning at about 1900 BC artifacts of the Minoan civilization acquired by trade arrived at the site.^[8] For some centuries the location received a strong impulse from that civilization, an archaeological fact that tends to support but not necessarily confirm the founding legend—that is, a population influx from Crete. According to Strabo:^[10]

Ephorus says: Miletus was first founded and fortified above the sea by Cretans, where the Miletus of olden times is now situated, being settled by Sarpedon, who brought colonists from the Cretan Miletus and named the city after that Miletus, the place formerly being in possession of the Leleges.

The legends recounted as history by the ancient historians and geographers are perhaps the strongest; the late mythographers have nothing historically significant to relate.^[11]



A panoramic view of The Theatre of Miletus, Didim.

Late Bronze Age

Recorded history at Miletus begins with the records of the Hittite Empire and the Mycenaean records of Pylos and Knossos, in the Late Bronze Age.

Mycenaean period

Miletus was a Mycenaean stronghold on the coast of Asia Minor from c. 1450 to 1100 BC.^[12] In c. 1320 BC, the city supported an anti-Hittite rebellion of Uhha-Ziti of nearby Arzawa. Muršili ordered his generals Mala-Ziti and Gulla to raid Millawanda, and they proceeded to burn parts of it; damage from LHIIIA found on-site has been associated with this raid.^[13] In addition the town was fortified according to a Hittite plan.^[14]

Miletus is then mentioned in the "Tawagalawa letter", part of a series including the Manapa-Tarhunta letter and the Milawata letter, all of which are less securely dated. The Tawagalawa letter notes that Milawata had a governor, Atpa, who was under the jurisdiction of Ahhiyawa (a growing state probably in LHIIIB Mycenaean Greece); and that the town of Atriya was under Milesian jurisdiction. The Manapa-Tarhunta letter also mentions Atpa. Together the two letters tell that the adventurer Piyama-Radu had humiliated Manapa-Tarhunta before Atpa (in addition to other misadventures); a Hittite king then chased Piyama-Radu into Millawanda and, in the Tawagalawa letter, requested Piyama-Radu's extradition to Hatti.

The Milawata letter mentions a joint expedition by the Hittite king and a Luwian vassal (probably Kupanta-Kurunta of Mira) against Miletus, and notes that the city (together with Atriya) was now under Hittite control.

Homer mentions that during the time of the Trojan War, Miletus was an ally of Troy and was city of the Carians, under Nestor and Amphimachus.^[15]

In the last stage of LHIIIB, the citadel of Bronze Age Pylos counted among its female slaves a *mi-ra-ti-ja*, Mycenaean Greek for "women from Miletus", written in Linear B syllabic script.^[16]

Fall of Miletus

During the collapse of Bronze Age civilization, Miletus was burnt again, presumably by the Sea Peoples.

Dark Age

Mythographers told that Neleus, a son of Codrus the last King of Athens, had come to Miletus after the "Return of the Heraclids" (so, during the Greek Dark Ages). The Ionians killed the men of Miletus and married their widows. This is the mythical commencement of the enduring alliance between Athens and Miletus, which played an important role in the subsequent Persian Wars.

Archaic period



The Ionic Stoa on the Sacred Way in Miletus

The city of Miletus became one of the twelve Ionian city-states of Asia Minor to form the Ionian League.

Miletus was one of the cities involved in the Lelantine War of the 8th century BC.

Ties with Megara

Miletus is known to have early ties with Megara in Greece. According to some scholars, these two cities had built up a "colonisation alliance". In the 7th/6th century BC they acted in accordance with each other.^[17]

Both cities acted under the leadership and sanction of an Apollo oracle. Megara cooperated with that of Delphi. Miletus had her own oracle of Apollo *Didymeus Milesios* in Didyma. Also, there are many parallels in the political organisation of both cities.^[17]

According to Pausanias, the Megarians said that their town owed its origin to Car, the son of Phoroneus, who built the city citadel called 'Caria'.^[18] This 'Car of Megara' may or may not be one and the same as the 'Car of the Carians', also known as Car (King of Caria).

In the late 7th century BC, the tyrant Thrasybulus preserved the independence of Miletus during a 12-year war fought against the Lydian Empire.^[19] Thrasybulus was an ally of the famous Corinthian tyrant Periander.



Apollo statue found in Miletus.
Currently in Istanbul Archeology
Museum



Temple of Apollo in Didyma

Miletus was an important center of philosophy and science, producing such men as Thales, Anaximander and Anaximenes. Referring to this period, religious studies professor F. E. Peters described pan-deism as "the legacy of the Milesians".^[20]

By the 6th century BC, Miletus had earned a maritime empire with many colonies, but brushed up against powerful Lydia at home, and the tyrant Polycrates of its neighbor to the west, Samos.

First Achaemenid period



Coinage of Miletus at the time of Aristagoras. Late 6th-early 5th century BC.

When Cyrus of Persia defeated Croesus of Lydia in the middle of the 6th century BC, Miletus fell under Persian rule. In 499 BC, Miletus's tyrant Aristagoras became the leader of the Ionian Revolt against the Persians, who, under Darius the Great, quashed this rebellion and punished Miletus by selling all of the women and children into slavery, killing the men, and expelling all of the young men as eunuchs, thereby assuring that no Miletus citizen would ever be born again. A year afterward, Phrynicus produced the tragedy *The Capture of Miletus* in Athens. The Athenians fined him for reminding them of their loss.^[21]

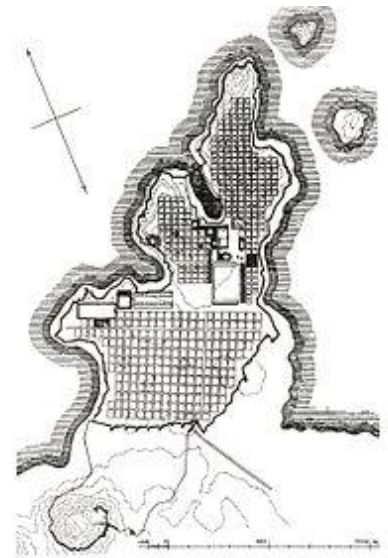


Electrum coinage of Miletus, circa 600-550 BC.

Classical Greek period

In 479 BC, the Greeks decisively defeated the Persians on the Greek mainland at the Battle of Plataea, and Miletus was freed from Persian rule. During this time several other cities were formed by Milesian settlers,

spanning across what is now Turkey and even as far as Crimea. The city's gridlike layout became famous, serving as the basic layout for Roman cities.



The plan of Milet in the Classical period

Second Achaemenid period

In 387 BC, the Peace of Antalcidas gave the Persian Achaemenid Empire under king Artaxerxes II control of the Greek city-states of Ionia, including Miletus.

In 358 BC, Artaxerxes II died and was succeeded by his son Artaxerxes III, who, in 355 BC, forced Athens to conclude a peace, which required its forces to leave Asia Minor (Anatolia) and acknowledge the independence of its rebellious allies.

Macedonian period

In 334 BC, the Siege of Miletus by the forces of Alexander the Great of Macedonia conquered the city. The conquest of most of the rest of Asia Minor soon followed. In this period, the city reached its greatest extent, occupying within its walls an area of approximately 90 hectares (220 acres).^[22]

When Alexander died in 323 BC, Miletus came under the control of Ptolemy, governor of Caria, and his satrap of Lydia, Asander, who had become autonomous.^[23] In 312 BC, Macedonian general Antigonus I Monophthalmus sent Docimus and Medeios to free the city and grant autonomy, restoring the democratic patrimonial regime. In 301 BC, after Antigonus I was killed in the Battle of Ipsus by the coalition of Lysimachus, Cassander, and Seleucus I Nicator, founder of the Seleucid Empire, Miletus maintained good relations with all the successors after Seleucus I Nicator made substantial donations to the sanctuary of Didyma and returned the statue of Apollo that had been stolen by the Persians in 494 BC.

In 295 BC, Antigonus I's son Demetrius Poliorcetes was the eponymous archon (stephanephorus) in the city, which allied with Ptolemy I Soter of Egypt, while Lysimachus assumed power in the region, enforcing a strict policy towards the Greek cities by imposing high taxes, forcing Miletus to resort to lending.

Seleucid period

Around 287/286 BC Demetrius Poliorcetes returned, but failed to maintain his possessions and was imprisoned in Syria. Nicocles of Sidon, the commander of Demetrius' fleet surrendered the city. Lysimachus dominated until 281 BC, when he was defeated by the Seleucids at the Battle of Corupedium. In 280/279 BC the Milesians adopted a new chronological system based on the Seleucids.

Egyptian period

In 279 BC, the city was taken from Seleucid king Antiochus II by Egyptian king Ptolemy II Philadelphus, who donated a large area of land to cement their friendship, and it remained under Egyptian sway until the end of the century.^[24]

Aristides of Miletus, founder of the bawdy Miletian school of literature, flourished in the 2nd century BC.

Roman period

After an alliance with Rome, in 133 BC the city became part of the province of Asia.

Miletus benefited from Roman rule and most of the present monuments date to this period.

The New Testament mentions Miletus as the site where the Apostle Paul in 57 AD met the elders of the church of Ephesus near the close of his Third Missionary Journey, as recorded in Acts of the Apostles (Acts 20:15–38). It is believed that Paul stopped by the Great Harbour Monument and sat on its steps. He might have met the Ephesian elders there and then bade them farewell on the nearby beach. Miletus is also the city where Paul left Trophimus, one of his travelling companions, to recover from an illness (2 Timothy 4:20). Because this cannot be the same visit as Acts 20 (in which Trophimus accompanied Paul all the way to Jerusalem, according to Acts 21:29), Paul must have made at least one additional visit to Miletus, perhaps as late as 65 or 66 AD. Paul's previous successful three-year



Egyptian artefact found in Miletus

ministry in nearby Ephesus resulted in the evangelization of the entire province of Asia (see Acts 19:10, 20; 1 Corinthians 16:9). It is safe to assume that at least by the time of the apostle's second visit to Miletus, a fledgling Christian community was established in Miletus.

In 262 new city walls were built.

However the harbour was silting up and the economy was in decline. In 538 emperor Justinian rebuilt the walls but it had become a small town.

Byzantine period

During the Byzantine age the see of Miletus was raised to an archbishopric and later a metropolitan bishopric. The small Byzantine castle called Palation located on the hill beside the city, was built at this time. Miletus was headed by a curator.^{[25][26]}



Byzantine Palation Castle

Turkish rule



An Ottoman mosque from the Turkish period in Miletus site

Seljuk Turks conquered the city in the 14th century and used Miletus as a port to trade with Venice.

In the 15th century the Ottomans utilized the city as a harbour during their rule in Anatolia. As the harbour became silted up, the city was abandoned. Due to ancient and subsequent deforestation, overgrazing (mostly by goat herds), erosion and soil degradation, the ruins of the city lie some 10 km (6.2 mi) from the sea with sediments filling the plain and bare hill ridges without soils and trees, a maquis shrubland remaining.

The Ilyas Bey Complex from 1403 with its mosque is a Europa Nostra awarded cultural heritage site in Miletus.

Archaeological excavations

The first excavations in Miletus were conducted by the French archaeologist Olivier Rayet in 1873, followed by the German archaeologists Julius Hülsen and Theodor Wiegand^{[27][28][29]} between 1899 and 1931. Excavations, however, were interrupted several times by wars and various other events. Carl Weickart excavated for a short season in 1938 and again between 1955 and 1957.^{[30][31][32]} He was followed by Gerhard Kleiner and then by Wolfgang Muller-Wiener. Today, excavations are organized by the Ruhr University of Bochum, Germany.



The Market Gate of Miletus at the Pergamon Museum in Berlin

One remarkable artifact recovered from the city during the first excavations of the 19th century, the Market Gate of Miletus, was transported piece by piece to Germany and reassembled. It is currently exhibited at the Pergamon Museum in Berlin. The main collection of

artifacts resides in the *Miletus Museum* in Didim, Aydın, serving since 1973.

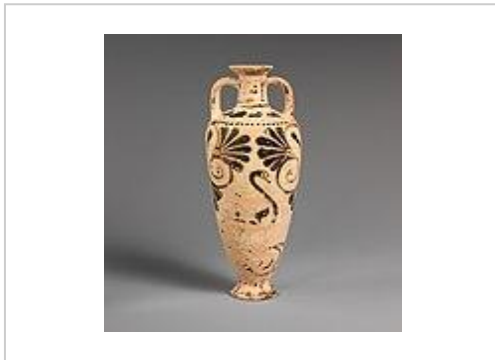
Archaeologists discovered a cave under the city's theatre and believe that it is a "sacred" cave which belonged to the cult of Asklepius.^{[33][34]}

Examples of the Milesian Vase

Artifacts



The name Fikellura derives from a site on the island of Rhodes to which this fabric has been attributed. It is now established that the center of production was Miletus.



Milesian Vase



Milesian Vase



Milesian Vase



Milesian Vase

Geography

The ruins appear on satellite maps at $37^{\circ}31.8'N$ $27^{\circ}16.7'E$, about 3 km north of Balat and 3 km east of Batiköy in Aydın Province, Turkey.

In antiquity the city possessed a harbor at the southern entry of a large bay, on which two more of the traditional twelve Ionian cities stood: Priene and Myus. The harbor of Miletus was additionally protected by the nearby small island of Lade. Over the centuries the gulf silted up with alluvium carried by the Meander River. Priene and Myus had lost their harbors by the Roman era, and Miletus itself became an inland town in the early Christian era; all three were abandoned to ruin as their economies were strangled by the lack of access to the sea. There is a Great Harbor Monument where, according to the New Testament account, the apostle Paul stopped on his way back to Jerusalem by boat. He met the Ephesian Elders and then headed out to the beach to bid them farewell, recorded in the book of Acts 20:17-38.



Location of Miletus at the Maeander River's mouth

Geology

During the Pleistocene epoch the Miletus region was submerged in the Aegean Sea. It subsequently emerged slowly, the sea reaching a low level of about 130 meters (430 ft) below present level at about 18,000 BP. The site of Miletus was part of the mainland.

A gradual rise brought a level of about 1.75 meters (5 ft 9 in) below present at about 5500 BP, creating several karst block islands of limestone, the location of the first settlements at Miletus. At about 1500 BC the karst shifted due to small crustal movements and the islands consolidated into a peninsula.

Since then the sea has risen 1.75 m but the peninsula has been surrounded by sediment from the Maeander river and is now land-locked. Sedimentation of the harbor began at about 1000 BC, and by 300 AD Lake Bafa had been created.^[35]

Gallery



Sculpture from Baths of Faustina



Faustina Baths in Miletus



The Sacred Way from Miletus with the remains of the stoa



The Ionic Stoa on the Sacred Way



Remains of the stoa connecting the main Bath of Faustina to the Palaestra



Illustration of Miletus



Right entrance of the Ancient Greek theatre
ancient Greek theatre

Colonies

Miletus became known for the great number of colonies it founded. It was considered the greatest Greek metropolis and founded more colonies than any other Greek city.^[36] Pliny the Elder (*Natural History*, 5.112) says that Miletus founded over 90 colonies. Among them are:^[37]

▪ Abydos

▪ Amisos

- Apollonia Pontica
- Borysthenites (Berezan)
- Cardia
- Cius
- Colonae
- Cotyora
- Cyzicus
- Dioscurias
- Hermonassa
- Histria
- Kepoi
- Kerasous
- Lampsacus
- Leros
- Limnae
- Miletopolis
- Myrmekion (?)
- Nymphaion
- Odessos
- Olbia
- Paesus
- Panticapaeum
- Parium
- Patraeus
- Phanagoria
- Phasis
- Pityus
- Priapus
- Proconnesus
- Prusias (?)
- Sinope
- Scepsis
- Tanais
- Theodosia
- Tieion
- Tomis
- Tyras
- Tyritake
- Trapezunt

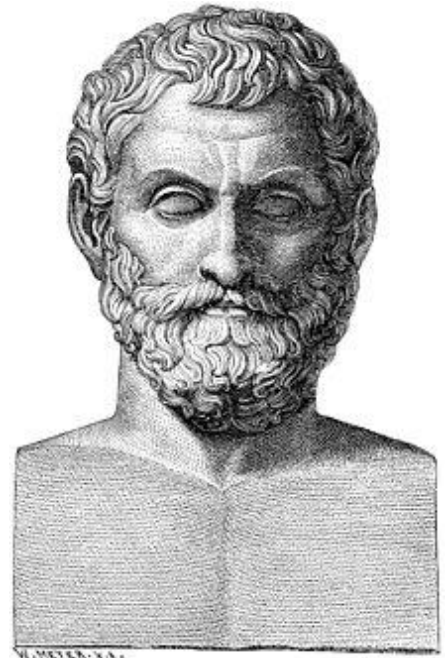


Map of the Black Sea, featuring the chronological phasing of major Milesian colonial foundations.

Notable people

- Arctinus of Miletus (775 BC – 741 BC), epic poet
- Thales (c. 624 BC – c. 546 BC), Pre-Socratic philosopher
- Anaximander (c. 610 BC – c. 546 BC), Pre-Socratic philosopher and geographer

- Cadmus (fl. c. 550 BC), writer
- Anaximenes (c. 585 BC – c. 525 BC), Pre-Socratic philosopher
- Aristagoras (fl. 6th-5th century BC), Tyrant of Miletus
- Phocylides (born c. 560 BC), Greek gnomic poet
- Hecataeus (c. 550 BC – c. 476 BC), Greek historian
- Histiaeus (died 493 BC), ruler of Miletus
- Leucippus (fl. first half of 5th century BC), philosopher and originator of Atomism (his association with Miletus is traditional, but disputed)
- Hippodamus (c. 498 – 408 BC), urban planner
- Aspasia (c. 470 – 400 BC) courtesan, and mistress of Pericles, was born in Miletus
- Aristides (fl. 2nd century BC), writer
- Monime (died 72/71 BC), a Greek noblewoman and one of the wives of Mithridates VI Eupator
- Alexander Polyhistor (fl. 1st century AD), Greek scholar, born in Miletus before being taken as a slave to Rome
- Aeschines of Miletus (fl. 1st century AD), a distinguished orator in the Asiatic style
- Isidore (fl. 6th century AD), Greek architect
- Hesychius (fl. 6th century AD), Greek chronicler and biographer
- Timagenes or Timogenes, historian and rhetor^[38]
- Philiscus of Miletus, rhetor. Teacher of Neanthes of Cyzicus^[39]
- Hellanicus, historian^[40]
- Dionysicles (Ancient Greek: Διονυσικλῆς) of Miletus, sculptor. One of his famous works was a statue, at Leonidaion, of Democrates of Tenedos who was an ancient Olympic winner at wrestling^[41]
- Baccheius or Bacchius of Miletus (Βακχεῖος), a writer. He wrote a work on agriculture.^[42]



Thales of Miletus was a Greek mathematician, astronomer and pre-Socratic philosopher from the city. He is otherwise historically recognized as the first individual known to have entertained and engaged in scientific philosophy

See also

- Cities of the ancient Near East

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35. Crouch (2004) page 180.
36. Colony and Mother City in Ancient Greece By A. J. Graham page 98 "Judged by the number of its colonies Miletus was the most prolific of the Greek mother cities. For though some of the more extravagance claims made in antiquity have not been substantiated by modern investigations, her colonies were by far more numerous than those of any other Greek cities."
37. Tsetskhladze, Gocha R. (2006). *Greek Colonisation. An account of Greek Colonies and Other Settlements Overseas. Vol. 1*. Leiden, Boston: Brill. pp. lxxvii - lxxiii (Table 6). ISBN 978-90-04-12204-8.
38. Suda, tau, 590 (<https://topostext.org/work/240#tau.590>)
39. Suda, nu, 114 (<https://www.cs.uky.edu/~raphael/sol/sol-entries/nu/114>)
40. Suda, epsilon, 738 (<http://www.stoa.org/sol-entries/epsilon/738>)
41. Pausanias, Description of Greece, 6.17.1 (<https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=urn:cts:greekLit:tlg0525.tlg001.perseus-grc1:6.17.1>)
42. A Dictionary of Greek and Roman biography and mythology, Baccheius (<https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.04.0104%3Aalphabetic+letter%3DB%3Aentry+group%3D1%3Aentry%3Dbaccheius-bio-1>)

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Further reading

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- Gorman, Vanessa B. (2001). *Miletos, the Ornament of Ionia: A History of the City to 400 B.C.E.* Ann Arbor, MI: Michigan University Press. ISBN 9780472111992.

External links

- Official website (<https://web.archive.org/web/20131020162924/http://www.muze.gov.tr/miletus-en>)
- Ausgrabungen in Milet (<http://www.ruhr-uni-bochum.de/milet/>) official site of the excavations in Miletus by Ruhr-Universität Bochum (in German)
- Ancient Coins of Miletus (<http://rjohara.net/coins/>)
- Livius picture archive: Miletus (<https://www.livius.org/articles/place/miletus/>)
- Some 250 pictures of site and museum (<https://pbase.com/dosseman/miletus>)
- Greek Inscriptions of Miletus (<http://www.attalus.org/docs/search.html#Miletos>) in English translation
- The Theatre at Miletus, The Ancient Theatre Archive, Theatre specifications and virtual reality tour of theatre (<http://www.whitman.edu/theatre/theatretour/miletus/miletus.htm>)
- Herbermann, Charles, ed. (1913). "Miletus" (https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Catholic_Encyclopedia_(1913)/Miletus). *Catholic Encyclopedia*. New York: Robert Appleton Company.
- Details about most of the monuments (<http://www.fhw.gr/choros/miletus/en/index.php>)
- Walking the sacred pagan path from Ancient Miletus to Didim (<http://turkishtravelblog.com/sacred-path-miletus-turkey-ancient/>)

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