

# Notes on Quiz #4

*Civilizations of the Ancient World • Spring 2023*

## 1. What is a polis? How did they come about?

The polis was a form of city-state—a city and its adjoining territory forming a single political (and economic) unit. So the emergence of the polis involves formal political unification of an urban market center with its surrounding farmland territory, and centralization of government. Unification involves synoecism, whereby every village, town, and hamlet merge their political (and other) identities into a single unit. Also, rule by basileus (chieftain), characteristic of the dark age, gives way to collective leadership by a small group of magistrates (oligarchy) and an assembly made up of the citizens.

The aristoi—the wealthy, large-estate-holding, educated families—dominate the oligarchies and see it as their right and responsibility to govern. This creates tension with the common people (demos), who increasingly gain various levels of decision-making power.

## 2. Who were the Dorians? What effect did they have on Greece?

The Dorians were a second wave of Greek-speaking Indo-Europeans. The first were the Mycenaean Greeks, who arrived sometime before 2000 BCE; the Dorians arrived a thousand years later, around 1100-1000 BCE.

The arrival of a huge nation of newcomers into the Aegean world was hugely disruptive, helping to bring down the already unbalanced Mycenaean economy. Those factors, combined with natural disasters happening at the same time, caused the Bronze Age Greek civilization to collapse, forcing the abandonment of the cities, emigration of refugees, and a reversion to a basic agrarian economy in the countryside.

The Dorians settled to the west of the Greek world (sometimes called the West Greeks), while the existing Greeks were pushed east (East Greeks or Ionians). One of the most prominent Dorian groups was the Spartans, who conquered the inhabitants of the southern Peloponnese peninsula, forcing them to become serfs who farmed on their behalf so that the Spartans could focus on the art of war.

## 3. In what ways did the "competitive spirit" affect the way Greeks thought about themselves and others?

Men were judged on bravery and honor (timē), and were expected to strive to surpass (aretē) in competition with their peers (agon).

### EC1. From a Greek point of view, all of the following were barbarians EXCEPT: (1 point)

(d) Hellenes [the Hellenes are the Greeks themselves]

### EC2. What's the significance of Delphi? (3 points)

Delphi was thought to be the navel of the earth, and so functions as a common cultural focus for the disunited Greeks. It was the site of the oracle to Apollo, an important religious center. The oracle was shared by the Greeks and was held in common esteem by them, with leads from all over Hellas (and beyond) journeying to Delphi to consult the oracle.

Delphi was also important because it was a center of great wealth amassed through contributions to the temple, most of which was in the form of small objects fashioned from gold and dedicated to Apollo.

The Pythian Games were held at Delphi every four years. Like the temple and oracle, these helped solidify a sense of shared culture amongst the otherwise disconnected Greeks.