

# Notes on Quiz #2: Archaic Greece

1. **What is a polis? How does the polis come about, and what kinds of changes were involved? Be specific. What role would you say was played by the aristoi ("best men") in the polis?**

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 hoplites? How did they change Greek warfare? What effect did they have on the polis?**

A hoplite is a heavily armed footsoldier, named for his large round shield (hoplon). They fight in a large, tightly packed formation called a phalanx. The effectiveness of the hoplite army made other forms of warfare obsolete.

Within the hoplite army, made up of all citizens who could afford the equipment, all distinctions of status and birth vanish. As a result, the claim of the aristoi that only they were fit to wield power in the state was weakened.

**EC1. A kouros is which of the following?**

- (a) A large open space at the heart of a city
- (b) A place set aside for men to exercise
- ✓ (c) A statue of a young man, often used as grave monuments or offerings
- (d) A drinking party at which aristocratic men heard poetry recited

**EC2. Compare lyric poetry to epic poetry. How is lyric poetry representative of the social changes of the Archaic age?**

Epic poetry involves lengthy, narrative heroic sagas telling of legendary figures that, in a sense, belong to everyone. Lyric poetry tends to concern private life; its subjects are more personal and subjective. Where epic poetry often celebrates the elite (kings and princes of the Homeric era), lyric poetry can also reflect the point of view of the middle strata and the tension between the classes.