

ARCHAIC AGE OF GREECE

(800-500 BC)



Greek civilization emerged in the Archaic Age centered on the *polis* (city-state). Each Greek polis was (theoretically) independent and sovereign, and had an assembly of citizen heads of household. These are described in action as early as Homer's *Iliad*. While Greeks all recognized their common ancestry as *Hellenes*, their identity as members of a particular polis (as Athenians, Spartans, or Corinthians) often led Greeks to war with each other.

- Homer composed the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, the first European literature. Far more than a good war story (which it was, to be sure), the *Iliad* illustrated how the individual needs to subordinate their own desires for the good of the community.
- Presocratic philosophers (*phusikoi*)
 - Rejected earlier myths of Homer and Hesiod about gods
 - Insisted upon physical explanations for the creation of the universe, and people
 - Insisted upon using logic, rejected the argument from authority
 - Zeno (c. 495-430 BC) used some interesting paradoxes to prove that nothing ever really changed, and that you couldn't trust even your senses, but had to use reason
 - Democritus (c. 460-370) taught the atomic theory
- Adoption and transformation of Phoenician script into an alphabet, and widespread writing
- Increase in trade, and the use of gold and silver as money (instead of barter, and pricing items in terms of oxen)
- Use of the hoplite phalanx formation
- Evolution from monarchy (see *Iliad*) to aristocracy and democracy
- *Stasis* (civil discord) between rich and poor
 - Gave the Greeks motivation for colonization
 - Gives rise to tyrannies in many Greek cities
 - Reforms of Solon and Cleisthenes in Athens
 - Spartan solution