Name: _____ Date: _____

Study Guide #12 **The City-States of Greece**

The Rise of the Polis. Starting in the 700s B.C., the main political and social unit for the Greeks was the **polis**, or city-state. The concept of the polis included geography, community, and political and economic independence. Each polis included a city surrounded by farmland. In each city stood an **acropolis**, or walled fortification.

Most poleis (plural of polis) were small, with around 1,000 adult male citizens. Athens was the largest Greek polis, with 40,000 citizens and about 200,000 inhabitants in 431 B.C. Each inhabitant was expected to show absolute loyalty to the polis.

Life in the Polis. The **agora**, or marketplace, was the center of life in the polis. All trading took place there. Society was composed of three groups: free adult males, who were citizens with political rights; women, children, and resident foreigners, free but without rights; and slaves. Men dominated society, and female infants were frequently left outside to die because they were more expensive than valuable. Slaves were prisoners of war or indebted Greeks.

Colonization. Many Greek cities attempted to solve overpopulation and the need for more food by establishing colonies in Spain, Italy, France, and around the Black Sea. Trade and commerce grew, benefiting both the colonies and the Greek mainland. Greek culture spread across the Mediterranean.

Decline of the Aristocratic Order. By the 700s B.C., aristocrats, wealthy landowners, controlled most aspects of society. However, in the 600s B.C., colonization reduced their power, as commoners acquired wealth and bought land, which they worked with tools made of the new iron. The introduction of iron weapons also changed military formations. Infantrymen, or **hoplites**, began to use the **phalanx** formation, a closely packed group of men using long spears. Because this arrangement required more soldiers, commoners became crucial to the defense of the polis and they could demand a greater voice in the government. To ensure their rights, in the late 600s B.C. the commoners forced the aristocrats to write down the laws.

Lyric poetry was literature that focused on feelings and emotions that all people, not just the aristocrats, experienced. Sappho was one of the greatest of the lyric poets.

Athenian Political Development. To reduce tensions between aristocrats and commoners, in 594 B.C., the Athenian aristocrats chose a man named Solon to lead Athens. He first forgave all debts, then established a society where citizenship came from wealth, not birth. He expanded trade and manufacturing, reducing the Athenian dependence on agriculture.

After Solon, an aristocrat named Peisistratus ruled as a **tyrant**, chosen by the people but holding all political power. He brought Athens peace and commercial stability. As social rivalries died down, the need for tyrants diminished. In 510 B.C. an uprising ended their rule.

Cleisthenes ruled from 508 B.C. He divided the population into ten tribes, mixing people from different regions to destroy regional power. He also created a

Council of Five Hundred, drawn from a different tribe every month. It presented matters to a popular assembly made up of all voting citizens, which maintained all legislative and electoral power. This system is called a **direct democracy**.

Sparta. Sparta developed very differently from Athens. One of Greece's largest poleis, Sparta was made up of three social groups: citizens, half-citizens, and helots. Half-citizens were traders, while the helots farmed for the citizens, so they could concentrate on military training. There were many more helots than citizens. Education focused on physical fitness and military training, and weak babies were left outside to die. Spartan boys trained until they were twenty, and then became soldiers. Women stayed home and bore children, but were known for their wealth and independence. The Spartans had very little interest in the arts, philosophy, and other cultural pursuits, but they excelled in sports.

Answer the questions below **in your own words** and in complete sentence. Highlight your evidence.

1. What did the concept of the Greek polis include?

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2. What group had the rights of citizenship in the Greek polis?

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3. What pressures led to colonization?

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4. How did the introduction of iron help break down the power of the aristocrats?

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5. How did Solon reform the Athenian political and social system?

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6. How did the Spartans focus their energies?

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