

GREEK CITY-STATES

By the Archaic Period, mainland Greece was made up of a cluster of small city-states, politically independent from each other. The word the Greeks used for a city-state was *polis* - which is the origin of our word 'politics'. Although these states were often rivals, and sometimes fought wars against each other, they shared the same Greek identity - a common language, culture and religion - which created strong links between them.



This map shows the city-states in around 500BC. The most powerful cities were Athens, Corinth and Sparta.

This image from a Greek vase shows an Athenian slave and his owner.

WHAT WAS THE CITY-STATE LIKE?

The Greeks liked to keep their political units fairly small - even the largest city-state, Athens, had no more than a few thousand citizens (see opposite page). Each *polis* consisted of a single city, enclosed by walls, and its surrounding countryside. Inside the walls was an area of high ground, called an *acropolis*, and an open area, called an *agora*, which was used for markets and meetings.

FREE MEN AND SLAVES

Greek society was made up of two main groups: free men (and their wives and families) and slaves. Slaves were workers who were owned by free men and had no legal rights. Many lived closely with their owners, like members of the family, but were very rarely granted their freedom.

