

Background Information on Neutral City-States

Thebes (pronounced THEEBZ)

The city-state of Thebes was located on the eastern plain of Boeotia (pronounced bee-OH-sheh) in central Greece. Thebes was situated on wide farmlands, and it controlled northern and southern trade routes, so the city was able to maintain a strong farming economy. An oligarchy governed Thebes' large population. The Thebans possessed a strong army that often enabled them to dominate the surrounding city-states in their region.

Argos (pronounced AR-goes)

The city-state of Argos was located three miles inland, on the rim of a plain on the northeastern portion of the Peloponnesus (pronounced peh-loh-puh-NEE-suss) landmass. Using its large areas of farmland and its proximity to the sea, Argos engaged in a combination of farming and trade to support its medium-size population. Until the fifth century B.C.E., an oligarchy ruled Argos. However, around 480 B.C.E., the people overthrew the oligarchy and installed a democratic government. Despite the change to democracy, Argos continued to look for ways to make its government more stable and powerful.

Delos (pronounced DEE-lows)

The city-state of Delos was located on an island in the Aegean (pronounced ih-JEE-yun) Sea, among a small group of islands situated east of the Peloponnesus landmass. Although the island was only two square miles, Delos was a thriving port. Its strong trade economy allowed it to easily support its small population. The ancient Greeks believed that Delos was the birthplace of the God Apollo, and the island was considered a sacred site. Various tyrants ruled Delos until the mid 400s B.C.E., when a democracy became its form of government.

Mantineia (pronounced man-tin-AY-ah)

The city-state of Mantineia was located on the central plain of Arcadia (pronounced ar-KAY-dee-ah), a mountainous region on the Peloponnesus landmass. Around the sixth century B.C.E., Mantineia emerged as a city out of a group of villages populated by various tribes. The city supported its small and rather poor population with a very modest farming economy. Mantineia's first real form of government, formed in around 470 B.C.E., was a democracy.

Syracuse (pronounced SEER-ah-kewz)

The Greek colony of Syracuse was located on the east coast of Sicily, an island about 400 miles west of Greece. This city-state was founded by Corinth (pronounced KOR-inth), another Greek city-state, which hoped to use Syracuse as a source of food. With its fertile coastal farmland and excellent harbor, Syracuse developed a diverse economy from which large numbers of colonists prospered. Despite its prosperity, Syracuse was a violent city where aristocrats and tyrants often battled for political power. In 465 B.C.E., the people overthrew their last tyrant and established a democracy.