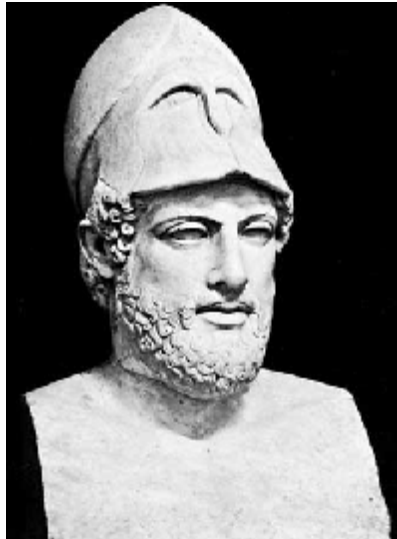


Phenomenons of the Ancient world

3. Ancient democracy



Bust of Pericles – athenian leader (ca. 495 – 429 BC)

Athens in the Classical period

After Persian wars (499 – 449 BC) Athens were in ruins, but the victory over Persians made athenians self-confident and **powerful**, so their will to **rebuild** Athens was very strong. This happened under the rule of Pericles, he became **strategos** of Athens 14 years in a row. Once he said to the Athenians:

„What I desire the most is that you should fix your eyes every day on the greatness of Athens as she really is, and that you should fall in love with her.“

Q: What is this quotation saying about Pericles? How would you characterize his speech?

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And we must say Pericles was successful. Athens became not only a beautiful city but even a strong **power** among other greek *poleis*, controlling them with its strong **fleet**. Their only rival remained *Sparta* and its **allies**.

Thucydides (460 - 404 BC) – a historian, eyewitness of the *Peloponnesian war* – quoted about Pericles:

„In short, what was nominally a democracy became in his hands government by the first citizen.“

Q: What does Thucydides say about Pericles’s government? Is he in favor of Pericles?.....

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Another author says: „he kept himself untainted by corruption, although he was not altogether indifferent to money-making.“

On the other hand, in one of his dialogues, **Plato** (428 – 347 BC) a philosopher, rejects the glorification of Pericles and quote as saying: "as I know, Pericles made the Athenians *slothful, garrulous and avaricious*, by starting the system of public fees". **Plutarch** mentions other criticism of Pericles' leadership: "many others say that the people were first led on by him into allotments of public lands, festival-grants, and distributions of fees for public services, thereby falling into bad habits, and becoming luxurious and wanton under the influence of his public measures, instead of frugal and self-sufficing".

Q: Are there any public fee given to Slovak people, similar to those of Pericles?.....
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Q: How could you explain these critics by your own words?
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It is obvious that he was a very good **speaker** – well skilled in **rhethorics** – the art of speaking.
But the most problematic part of the athenian democracy was **Ostracon** – **ostracism**. It meant the exclusion of an accused person by the majority of people. The name of such person must be written on an ostracon (clay sliver). If the majority of citizens writes down the same name.... During the **Peloponnesian war** (war between Athens and Sparta) it was abused against a leader and general **Alcibiades** (450 – 404 BC), his opponnets accused him of **treason**. At the time he was fighting for Athens in Sicily. Then he had no choice and switched the side and helped Sparta to win the war.
Finally Athens felt the failure and democracy was removed from Athens by force.

Task: Imagine you are an athenian citizen, another citizen is accused of treason. What argument would you accept in order to write his name on ostracon. How to verify such accusation?
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