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Introduction

Athens rose to cultural flourishing during the classical era, which led to an economic, and generally multifaceted, growth. The city was virtually the economic centre of East Mediterranean, and could therefore exercise great political influence.

The economic vigor

The economic vigor appeared, above all, through the public assistance the city could offer, via the development of social protection institutions, like the *theorika*. That way, even indigent citizens could take relish of art, as the society covered the ticket expense for the entrance to the theatre. The economic wealth is also visible in the substantial public works which improved the face of the town but also created many job positions.

The direct taxation

The achievement of these measures was directly linked to the existence of a continuous financial support which could offer large amounts of money, in the form of direct taxation. The main source of income was the bright and original tax system (*leitourgia*) which required funds deposit from the economically powerful people. At first, this was a voluntary function, but, eventually, it grew into an official institution through which the wealthy would show their

generosity and prove that the private wealth was in the service of the community. The taxpayers accepted this system because they aided the state and fulfilled their personal ambitions, as their reputation was guaranteed through commemorative monuments in case of a victory of the team they supported financially in sports or drama competitions. The functions were categorized according to the usage of the expended amounts. Therefore, the operation for which the amounts were used for ship maintenance was called trierarchy, the ones for theatrical competitions were named choregia, the ones for the training and diet of the athletes were known as gymnasiarchia, while the estiasi included an amount for a public luncheon in periods of sports competitions or celebrations.

The indirect taxation

Apart from each leitourgia, which constituted forms of direct taxation, there was also indirect taxation, including judicial revenue and leases of publicly owned lands. The most lucrative lease came from the Laurium mines. When their operation was ceased, in combination to the cutback of trade resources, the state suffered a drastic revenue reduction which led to a strong expression of the rich and poor social inequality. The state apparatus support was supplemented by trading taxation, like pentikosti, levied on imported and exported goods, and eponion, associated with the value of merchandising. Moreover, resident aliens had to pay a metic toll tax, the metoikon, while foreigners who took up short-term residence in Athens were liable to pay the xenikon. Athens held a friendly policy towards them, luring them in the city in order to bear a large percentage of the tax burden. It is noteworthy that direct taxation was not applicable to the free citizens of Athens, who considered it highly offensive for them.

The taxes collection

Regarding the taxes collection, in cases of small amounts the state arranged the revenue, while the rights to collect larger taxes were often transferred to publicans, the telônai. This facilitated the state function as larger amounts were required to be prepaid. Then, the telônai were granted the right to act in any way considered right to collect the debt attributable to each

citizen.

The foreign residents and slaves' role to the economic system

However, it is important to also examine closely what was the source of the funds each taxpayer was asked to pay. Foreign residents were mainly involved with trade and labor, and were also put in as secretaries and guards. Generally, foreign traders and metics were playing a meaningful part to the city's economy, as commerce flourished at these times, especially cereal trade, which was of the most importance. Trading was mainly a lucrative business, but those who couldn't afford the goods transportation or the money for the license to practice, could borrow from the wealthy and pay a fee to boatswains. Slaves undertook the more hazardous tasks, such as mining, but the ones working in the farms were luckier. The landlords collected some income from their fields, but, in order to enhance agriculture produce, slaves and owners occasionally worked together. Single-hearted slaves could even undertake roles of butler or caretaker, while some of them specialized to work as artisans in workshops and small industries next to metics. Sometimes, they were called upon to pay the landlord a fee for operation and could profit from the remainder income.

Conclusion

The economic structure of Athens at the age of Pericles, around Myrtis' times, is a timeless model of wise management and costs and resources allocation, and also a perfect example of how cultural flourishing can lead to a balanced economic, social and political development.

Essential Bibliography

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*The Lysikrates Monument in Plaka, Athens. A choragic commemorative monument.
Metics from ancient Greece*