

The rise of Athens

Silver



The Athenians had rich silver mines in their territory. They used the silver to make coins like this one. The coins were used all over the Mediterranean region because people knew they could rely on the quality of Athenian silver.

The coin shows an owl, Athena's bird, and the first three letters of the Greek name for Athens. Above the owl are some olives.

Digital image courtesy of the Getty's Open Content Program

Olive oil and pottery

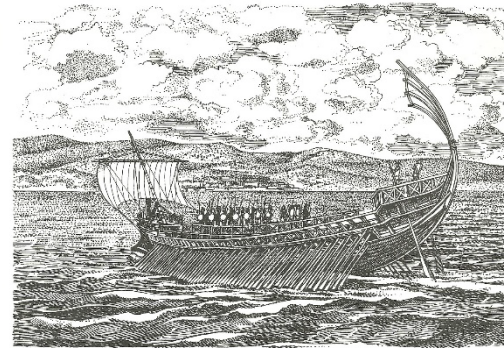


Athens was famous for its olive oil and exported it in large quantities. The prizes at athletics competitions in Athens were pots like this, filled with the finest olive oil. The pots showed the goddess Athena.

Athenian pottery was also of very high quality and very popular. Athenian ships carried thousands of pots to many other parts of the Greek world, especially to Italy.

photo Metropolitan Museum via Creative Commons

The Athenian empire



Athens used its wealth to create the most powerful navy in the Greek world. The ordinary people of Athens were able to help their city by serving as rowers.

In the 470s BC, Athens and a group of Greek cities and islands joined together in an alliance to protect themselves from their enemies. The Athenians turned the alliance into an empire and used their navy to control the others.

A politician's view

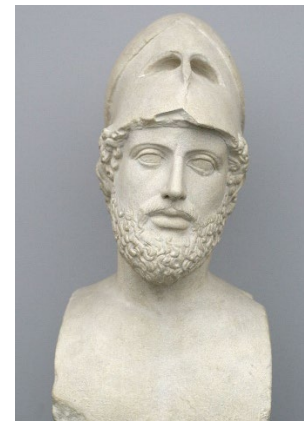


photo via Creative Commons

Perikles was an important politician who had a lot of influence over the people of Athens. In one of his speeches he said this about the city:

‘Contests and festivals throughout the year provide us with relaxation from work, and we have pleasant private homes to enjoy.’

‘Because of the size of our city, products from all over the world come into Athens. To us, it is as normal to enjoy foreign goods as it is to enjoy home-grown.’