

Purpose of Reading: *To become familiar with the differences between Athens and Sparta in the area of economy*

27.4 Athenian Economy

An important part of life in any community is its economy. An *economy* is the way a community or region organizes the manufacture and exchange of money, food, products, and services.

The Athenian economy was based on trade. The land around Athens did not provide enough food for all the city's people. But Athens was near the sea, and it had a good harbor. So Athenians traded with other city-states and some foreign lands to get the goods and natural resources they needed. They acquired wood from Italy and grain from Egypt. In exchange, Athenians traded honey, olive oil, silver, and beautifully painted pottery.

Athenians bought and sold goods at a huge marketplace called the **agora**. There, merchants sold their goods from small stands. People bought lettuce, onions, olive oil, wine, and other foods. They could also buy household items like pottery, furniture, and clay oil lamps. Most Athenians made their clothes at home, but leather sandals and jewelry were popular items at the market. In addition, Athenians bought and sold slaves at the agora.

Like most city-states, Athens developed its own coins to make trade easier. Coins were made of such metals as gold, silver, and bronze. Athenians decorated the flat sides of their coins. One of their coins had an image of the goddess Athena on one side. The other side pictured Athena's favorite bird, the owl.

Key Question: How did Athenians get the goods they needed for everyday life?

Main Idea:

Important Details:

Key Words:

Questions I Still Have

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27.8 Spartan Economy

While the Athenian economy depended on trade, Sparta's economy relied on farming and on conquering other people. Sparta didn't have enough land to feed all its people, so Spartans took the land they needed from their neighbors. Because Spartan men spent their lives as warriors, Sparta used slaves and non-citizens to produce needed goods.

The Spartans turned the neighbors they conquered into slaves, called *helots*. The helots continued to live in their own villages, but they had to give much of the food they grew to the Spartan citizens.

The Spartans also made use of noncitizens, called *perioikoi*. Perioikoi were free men, not slaves. They might serve in the army when needed, but they could not take part in Sparta's government. The perioikoi made such necessary items as shoes, red cloaks for soldiers, iron tools like knives and spears, and pottery. They also conducted some trade with other city-states for goods that Sparta could not provide for itself.

In general, through, Sparta discouraged trade. The Spartans feared that contact with other city-states would lead to new ideas and weaken their government. Trading with Sparta was also difficult because of its system of money. Sparta didn't have coins. Instead, it used heavy iron bars as money. Legend says that an ancient Spartan leader decided to use iron as money to make it hard to steal. A thief would need a wagon to carry enough iron bars to be valuable. As you can imagine, other city-states were not anxious to receive iron as payment for goods.

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