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Pericles

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Every past event shaped the world today. This is the reason why everyone needs to know how things happened. Everything must have a starting point. There are many interesting and significant historical studies in every part of the world; one of the famous is ancient Greek history. In ancient Greek history, there were variously important and powerful people. One of them was Pericles who was born in rich and honorable family in Athens. He was the great Greek general who was expert in many fields, such as politics, military, literary, and philosophy.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, he was also the orator, and statesman of Greek.<sup>2</sup> Although he is not as well known as others in the same period of time, his works have brought huge changes to humanity. The most obvious lifework is his political work. Pericles laid the truly democratic policy to Athens which has been the valuable foundation of modern democracy.

Pericles extremely encouraged democratic policy in Athens during his time.<sup>3</sup> He wanted his citizens to have rights in their hands. In addition, he saw that everyone deserved equality in order to suggest their recommendations about governing the state.

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<sup>1</sup> Wikipedia Contributors. "Pericles". *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. 6 Sep. 2012. <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pericles>>

<sup>2</sup> Joshua J. Mark. "Pericles". *Ancient Encyclopedia history*. 6 Sep. 2012. <<http://www.ancient.eu.com/pericles>>

<sup>3</sup> Wikipedia Contributors. "Pericles". *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. 6 Sep. 2012. <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pericles>>

They also had freedom in many parts, such as freedom to vote, and freedom of speech. On the other hand, there was no democracy in other states, especially Sparta, the enemy of Athens. Sparta ruled by autocracy which absolutely opposites to democracy in many sections.<sup>4</sup> In autocracy, citizens do not have rights to vote at all. They are ruled by leaders that do not come from majority. Those leaders can force their people to do everything they want so that they can use their authority to control a state easily. This kind of political policy tends to increase conflict in the country because a huge decision that affects every citizen in a state should come from overall majority so that it can be appropriate to make decision for the state. However, democracy in Athens was not completely perfect. Even though Pericles gave his citizens rights to vote and rule their state, there was a few amount of population who had ability to take part in this method. He offered only Athenian men who were born by both Athenian parents and older than eighteen years old to participate in governing the state. There was no authority for women, foreigners, and slaves at all.<sup>5</sup> Females were regarded as citizens but had no rights to vote. One of his policy to strengthen democracy and help poor people was citizens had to pay money to officials so that those poor people could participate in public affairs.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, he believed that his citizens should realize that they were not only ruled by the leaders but they were also rulers of Athens. Athenians followed their laws because they wanted to do, whereas other cities had to do. This concept made them aware how

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<sup>4</sup> Joe Emory. "Growing Up Spartan". *Historian on the warpath*. 7 Sep. 2012. <<http://www.scottmanning.com/content/growing-up-spartan> >

<sup>5</sup> Takis Fotopoulos. "Direct and Economic Democracy in Ancient Athens and its Significance Today". *democracy nature*. 9 Sep. 2012. <[http://www.democracynature.org/vol1/fotopoulos\\_athens.htm](http://www.democracynature.org/vol1/fotopoulos_athens.htm)>

<sup>6</sup> Wikipedia Contributors. "Athenian Democracy". *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. 9 Sep. 2012. <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Athenian\\_democracy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Athenian_democracy)>

worth they were. Pericles brought Athens to the top of democratic state they had ever had.

Pericles was also good at giving speeches. Although he never wrote his words or his awesome speeches down and distributed them, those words were very powerful to encourage his citizens, especially during wars. Many people admired and praised him for his capability in persuasion; the most obvious man was Thucydides, Greek author and historian. Thucydides really esteemed the way Pericles thought and managed Athenian society in a variety of situations. As a result of great devotion of Pericles to his state, he was called by Thucydides as the first citizen of Athens.<sup>7</sup>

Aside from those marvelous achievements, Pericles also focused on artistic matters which made Athens more civilized than others. As a matter of fact, arts and literature are important and powerful in every society. They considerably influence human behavior and development of a society. Without arts, this world will not be pleasant to live because arts bring peace and happiness to humanity. They also enhance cultural of the state. In addition, arts of each state express their pasts and their own different unique characteristics. During the time Pericles ruled Athens, civilization raised to the peak. He established many remarkable structures which still remain today. The Parthenon, Greek temple, is one of the most famous architecture that was built during his time. It did not only beautify the city but also gave works to Athenians.<sup>8</sup> Thus, they could have allocation of works in the city. Moreover, it was used for some political reasons.

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<sup>7</sup> Wikipedia Contributors. "Pericles". *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. 11 Sep. 2012. <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pericles>>

<sup>8</sup> Plutarch. "Pericles". *History of Greece*. 11 Sep. 2012. <<http://www.ahistoryofgreece.com/biography/pericles.htm>>

Other well-known structures are statue of Athena, Acropolis, and Propylaea. He used all building projects to serve the full employment policy to his citizens.<sup>9</sup> Everyone who was able to work could earn money and also dignity from people in the state. Unlike Athens, Sparta quite concentrated on wars and colonized other cities which brought calamity and disaster toward themselves. They almost ignored all arts. These were reasons why Spartan society had less prosperous civilization than Athenians society at that time. During the time when Pericles was the governor of Athens, Athenian society flourished. There was duration of progressive economy, successful politics, valuable architecture, and cultural advancement. Accordingly, this period was known as the age of Pericles or golden age of Athens.<sup>10</sup>

According to the previous articles, Pericles' lifeworks helped the world enormously. He truly dedicated himself to his state. His legacy brings many benefits and usefulness to modern world, especially democratic policy. Many countries in the world are governed by democracy; however, some parts of them have changed over time. Each country has its own concept of democracy but the main pattern or standard form from the past still remains. The apparent change is women have rights to participate in political activities almost equal or as equal as men depending on each country. Although it has been long time since he lived and many things have changed, his ideas still fulfill human needs properly. Many present architectures are results from those buildings that were established during his time. No matter how long the time passes, his great orations have

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<sup>9</sup> A.R.Burn. "Pericles and Athens". *Questia*. 11 Sep. 2012. <<http://www.questia.com/read/3834275/pericles-and-athens>>

<sup>10</sup> Michael S. Russo. "The Fabulous Fifth Century: Athens During the Age of Pericles". *Martinfrost*.. 14 Sep. 2012. <[http://www.martinfrost.ws/htmlfiles/fab\\_five.html](http://www.martinfrost.ws/htmlfiles/fab_five.html)>

inspired a lot of people to develop themselves and change their ways of thinking. Because of these reasons, Pericles is considered as miraculous man of ancient Greek history.