

Pericles funeral oration (after 490 bce) from thucydides, the peloponnesian war

[History](#)



13 June Veritas in Athenis “ Mankind is tolerant of the praises of others so long as each hearer thinks that he can do as well or nearly as well himself.”, as Pericles said (Brians par. 3).

In ancient Greece, it has been a compelling tradition to conduct a funeral oration in occurrence of death just like the practice that transpired throughout the world until the contemporary era to commemorate the dead and their deeds when they were still living. At around 430 B. C., Athens chose their general Pericles to deliver this eulogy for their departed Athenian soldiers who sacrificed themselves at an opening battle of the Peloponnesian War (Brians par. 1). His speech reflected dispute on the tradition of praising the dead so instead he praised their deeds of heroism along with appraisal of the entire Athens and its people (Brians par. 3).

Historians and scholarly readers may find this oration packed with clues and information on the culture, government and economy of Athens in Pericles' era yet its validity raises speculations among others. The eloquence of Pericles' testimonies, as recorded by the Greek historian Thucydides, could indeed make a reader believe his description of Athens as the real Athens. Pericles described Athenians as people with a sense of pride and a hint of arrogance as he restated their glories through every battle and the gratifying courage and character of each Athenian. He praised their ability to live their life as they wanted both in time of peace and war, and noted that they can still have pleasure and relaxations even in the time of difficulty. Athenians, as he described, acquired homes satiated with beauty and goods from their lands and from other country (Brians par. 6). He further boosted the morale of the soldiers and their families as he sang in praises that “ Our enemies

have never yet felt our united strength" (Brians, par. 7) claiming their military force to be as invincible once fought in union. This strength stems from education and training instituted from the early ages of the Athenians therefore making them audacious and confident at every peril they may come across. Power, versatility and grace are the forces that embrace each Athenian's personality making them a country envied by their neighbors. He further described their government as democratic " for the administration is in the hands of the many and not of the few" - a picture of a perfect nation in the hands of the people (Brians par. 7).

It can be noticed that only a few words were dedicated to confer the flaws of Athens such as presence of poverty in their economy and unequal treatment for the women (Brians par. 12). Instead it was soaked in positivity and praise. This speech can be a basis for describing the Athens in Pericles' time, yet it must be taken into account that this was delivered in time of nation's grief. Pericles aimed to uplift the morale of the Athenian soldiers and the families of the dead as a way to justify their loss as a sacrifice to an honorable greatness of their nation. His descriptions of their way of life can be viewed as embellished for he was a leader overwhelmed with power. Driven with desire for victory against another nation, he engineered this concept of a remarkable and great country to win the hearts of the Athenians to build courage and patriotism amongst his soldiers and gain support from the rest of the nation. A wise strategy formulized and a chariot that brought them numerous victories.

Work Cited

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