

ANCIENT HISTORY: *GREECE*

Discuss the methods the Athenians used to maintain control over their allies in the period 500-440 BC

Despite originally having leadership thrust upon them, the Athenians grew accustomed to this sense of power and control and did not want to relinquish it, although by 467BC the reasons for which the Delian League was formed no longer existed. Athens disallowed abdication by allies from the league and undertook a variety of methods to consolidate and maintain control over the poleis of Ancient Greek states. Athenian methods of control such as the establishment of cleruchies, the forced adoption of Athenian currency unto their allies and control of league funds and phoros effectively maintained control over their allies and allowed the transformation of the Delian league into the Athenian empire, in which Athenian allies had become Athenian subjects.

The control of league funds was a method which was essential to the assertion of Athenian power as it provided the Athenians with complete economic control, and gave them the means to spend the league funds as they saw fit, such as towards the security of the empire, and more importantly the expansion of the empire. As a result of the economic control which they possessed, the Athenians all but abandoned panhellenism and focused on their private concerns of glorification and expansion with Goldsmith (p.149, 1830) emphasizing that the beautification of Athens was funded by Pericles misappropriation of league funds. The misuse of league funds at the hands of the Athenians highlighted the hegemonistic nature of the Athenians, as according to Finlay (p.121, 1861), Athenian methods encompassed all forms of “material exploitation that were available and possible in that society”, which thereby consolidated their dominance within the Greek polis. However whilst this was effective at consolidating control over their allies for the time being, this subjugation of member states resulted in resentment towards the Athenians and was a factor which led to subject states attempting to secede from the league. This is evidenced by the Thasian revolt of 465BC, as a result of resentment towards Athenian encroachment and control over Thasian resources. Whilst the Athenians prevailed over Samos in their attempt to secede from the league, this was significant as it marked the beginning of allied resentment towards Athenian hegemony, which would undermine Athenian methods of maintaining control in the long-term.

Additionally, the compulsory collection of phoros from Athenian allies was another economic method which successfully allowed the Athenians to further their own interests and aid their quest for glorification and dominance over the Greek poleis. It is inferred (Kallet-Marx, p.252, 1989) that phoros was used to finance the Periclean building program, which possessed no aims of panhellenism, only glory and recognition for Athens which was hoped to be achieved through the beautification of the city, with Pericles envisioning “everlasting fame” (Powell, p.248, 1987). This demonstrated Athens imperialistic nature and highlighted the fact that the Athenians were purely concerned with their private interests of advancing their resources and establishing their reputation at the expense of their allies, with Ash arguing that through doing this the Athenians abandoned any pretence of working for the good of the league. The collection of phoros was a successful method of Athenian control as it sent a clear message to the allied states that the Athenians held the hegemony, both politically and economically, and allowed for further Athenian expansion and solidification of power throughout the Greek poleis.

Simultaneously, the Athenian delegation of which specific form of phoros they would collect effectively furthered their power over their allies, with certain states being required to provide monetary funds, whilst others were expected to hand over control of their naval fleets to the Athenians. However, Athens would not only gain naval fleets through phoros, they would also ensure control of allied fleets when disciplining rebellious states, as evidenced in the punishment imposed unto Samos after their attempted revolt in 440BC. This ensured that the Athenian naval fleet would grow either way, as monetary funds collected were usually put towards furthering the Athenian navy, and the collection of neighbouring triremes to add to their own forces allowed them to establish themselves as a supreme naval power, consisting of 300 triremes, the largest naval

fleet in the Greek world. Thucydides (I.99) tells us of the importance of the supremacy of the Athenian navy fleet in maintaining control over their allies as “the Athenian fleet grew strong with the money which the allies had themselves contributed, whilst whenever they revolted they were ill-prepared and inexperienced”. This demonstrates how the enormity of Athens navy was crucial to their success in consolidating control over their allies as whomever possessed the largest naval fleet thereby had supreme control as member states without a naval fleet could not revolt against a fleet of such a grand scale. Consequently the collection of phoros was a highly effective method implemented by the Athenians to maintain control over their allies, as the combination of hegemonial authority and naval growth was crucial to the success of the Athenians.

The compulsory collection of phoros effectively provided the Athenians with economic control, however it failed in establishing social control. This method brewed resentment amongst the allies and marked the beginning of their enlightenment to Athens increasingly tyrannical and imperialistic rule, as according to Plutarch (p.49, 1683) “Greece must obviously think she is being terribly insulted and tyrannized” as “the tribute we have taken from her by force for the war” was used for purely Athenian interest in order to achieve glory and to “glid and prettify” Athens.

A further way in which the Athenians maintained control over their allies was through the imposition of Athenian currency onto their allies which gave Athens dominance over the economic life of the empire. The adoption of Athenian currency was enforced under the Coinage Decree of 450-46 BC, and resulted in the closure of local mints and forced allied states to bring their money to the Athenians to be reminted. Compliance to this method was ensured as failure to comply with the Coinage Decree would result in severe punishment as outlined under the Currency Decree, 450-46 BC. However this compliance was met with great resentment and only intensified the brewing anti-Athenian mindset that was brewing amongst subjugated states. This method of control was important as it gave the Athenians the upper hand as their establishment of a dominant currency allowed them control of economic surplus, thereby furthering their economic control so that they not only had control over allies resources, but so that they also controlled all currency throughout the Greek poleis. Through imposing this method of control onto their allies, the Athenians ensured standardisation and successfully repressed their allies independence and individuality, highlighting the growing subjugation of allied states at the hands of the Athenians.

The method which was the most crucial in solidifying Athenian control over their allies was the establishment of cleruchies, which served a double function as it was an imperialistic measure, as well as a method of maintaining control. Through establishing cleruchies, the Athenians allowed for the expansion of the Athenian empire through obtaining land and creating a network of Athenian strongholds, which benefited not only Athens as state, but also the cleruchs whom were moving up in the social class and gaining land as a result, whilst still retaining their Athenian affiliation, all of which served to maintain Athenian control and dominance over their allies and the Greek polis. This method of Athenian colonisation also served to benefit Athens and maintain Athenian control as cleruchies were a “punitive measure” (Thorley, p.46, 1996), often established to punish states whom had attempted to revolt or for whom rebellion was a concern, and thus clearly sent the message to their allies that Athens would not allow their authority to be threatened. Furthermore, the establishment of cleruchies successfully maintained Athenian control as cleruchs acted as a means of propoganda as they spread the good name of the Athens to citizens whom were colonised by the Athenians, thereby “combining the roles of guards and colonists” (French, p.141, 1964). Plutarch (Pericles XI) also tells us that cleruchs, whom by acting as military garrisons, “implanted a fear of rebellion” and were thereby an effective means of consolidating Athenian control as they helped to ensure no future revolt and further threats to Athenian hegemony. This method of colonisation was vital to the maintenance and expansion of the empire, as cleruchies were essentially an extension of Athens overseas, and thereby solidified Athens dominance throughout the empire. However, whilst the establishment of cleruchies was effective to these ends, it further demonstrated the imperialistic nature of the Athenians through the further suppression of allies autonomy, and thereby it served to intensify the already existing feelings of resentment towards Athens, with Thucydides (VIII.2) stating that “The subject states of Athens were especially eager to revolt”.

Through the implementation of these methods of maintaining control over their allies it becomes increasingly clear that the Athenians had transformed into an imperial power in which their allies had become subjects. The notions of panhellenism that the Athenians originally stood for were stripped away and due to this the Athenians made their transition from the leaders of the Delian league with their aims of panhellenism and collective benefit, to the Athenian empire, concerned primarily with their own hegemony and control over the Greek poleis. However, whilst these methods were effectively in consolidating and furthering Athenian control, through their subjugation of their allies the Athenians sowed the seeds of conflict and were not granted the support of the people, which is the key to long-term success and control.

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