

The Business Life of Ancient Athens is an informative book about different aspects of Ancient businesses and Ancient ways of dealing with money. This book first starts out by explaining the agricultural aspects of Ancient Athens. Agriculture was not well for Athens, so they had to trade a lot. It is recorded as early as the 6th century BC that grain was a very big part of an average Athenian's diet. Therefore; much grain trade was necessary because Greece land was very bad for agricultural purposes. Athens had grown industrially and commercially within time, and this was also a problem: overpopulation. Also, many Spartan tribes over and over attacked Greece and destroyed any crops that might grow in the soil. Peasants were also sent to work at farms but they lost care in their farms and found it better to live in the city, living off small amounts of money that came from doing state services. During this time, many people learned ways of math because they needed to know how much grain is needed per person. Although these calculations are not totally accurate, they are a start in banking and maybe even other ways of mathematics. The Peloponnesian War also occurred- leaving Greece(Attica) with nothing. Attica was forced by famine to go under Peloponnesian rule. By now, trade had come in an uproar. Many people had found it easy to trade by sea. So many merchants with not enough money would borrow money from rich people and then buy cargo space on a ship. In most cases the merchant went on the ship to get the goods to sell. Then on returning, the merchant would sell the goods, and then pay off the lender, with a 22.5 percent interest rate. In many cases, problems occurred, sometimes a merchant returned late, could not pay all of the money back, or something or other. Therefore the idea of a collateral was invented. Also, courts were established to rule these sorts of fights amongst the people. These courts weren't used in the winter because of stormy weather and so not to interrupt commercial business. Courts were required to solve a case within 30 days, this procedure only applies to cases where and actual legal documented agreement was made between the lender and the merchant. Many merchants did not return, therefore the collateral was the lender's to keep. But often the merchant didn't have anything good to start with so many lenders lost money.

Next, the book talked about Banking and Bankers. Early banking dates back all the way to Sumer and Akkad where many specialized in weighing things and telling of precious metals. Banking was first found where coinage started, in the middle of Asia Minor, around the 7th century BC. Coinage was also thought to have started with Minoans, but they are not sure. It is thought that the idea of banking may have started with the priests of Sumer and Akkad, priests were always the "bankers" of temples and organizer of the money. The Greeks took the information from these past priests and formed a banking system that consisted monetary transactions. And they concentrated in dealing with strictly money and giving out money. The Romans took this idea further and made what is similar to modern 1980's bank situations(banking has progressed in the last decade). With banking, the Greeks learned frugal manner and ways of living with money, and not bartering.

Lastly, this book speaks about Mining in Ancient Athens. Around 500 BC. Mining was introduced in Athens. If the ways of the mining business had not come, Athens would have probably lost an oncoming war with the Persians, but because of the mining, many new people joined Athens and Persia decided not to invade. They feared it because it had become much greater in strength. If mining had not come, there would have been no Athenian Empire, or an Age of Pericles. So, in the scabrous hills of Laurium, silver struck. Everyone was fascinated with this new idea. In present day Laurium, you can still see the remains of the mining and see everything. Many things were not found out about the mining, because not too many records were kept. But many modern engineers and archaeologists have looked into the land of Laurium and have found remains of apparatus, and from analyzation of cinder collections. However, it is not known how silver was extracted from the stones, how they were crushed and how they eventually made silver objects from the mined silver. The history of this can not be reconstructed.

The way this author approaches this topic is in a supportive way. He is very Greek favoring and states many comments about how many people do NOT give the early Greek people the credit they deserve. For instance on page 82 the author states....."many students of economic history have not yet given Greek banking the attention it deserves [in banking]. " and the author proceeds in telling of all the wonderful things the Greeks have done about banking and how the Romans merely just watched the early Greeks. The author also thinks of the mining industry as wonderful. He explained it in such an exciting manner .

As a result of reading this book, I have formed many new opinions. For example, I never knew that business started as early as it did[in the manner of banking]. I figured that banking probably didn't come until at least a couple of centuries after Christ. Also, I learned about mining and all the things that were involved with it. Here again I was surprised that it had started so early. My outlook on the business field has changed. I thought that all these business people were so great to come up with all these ideas, but they are truly just taking the basics of early history in business and applying it to modern ways.

I think the author's purpose of writing this book was to make me confused! No, I really think that the purpose of writing this book was to inform people of the ways of early business life, and the way our ancestors were dealing with the business industry back then. Also, it was a way to carry on history even further, to state the facts for people even farther down the road of the world. The author did not try to persuade the reader in any way, although he did favor the Greeks a lot. He[the author] did, however, compare and contrast almost all of the situations with the modern world.

I think that the author succeeded in his purpose in that he wanted to get the Greek side of the story out, and also tell a lot of facts too. He kept on, over and over, telling what the Greeks did that others took the credit for. For example, when talking about coinage, he said that the Lydians were the founder of coins. But he left a trace saying that the Greeks too, had knowledge of coins, but the Lydians developed it faster than them. The author repeatedly stated facts about the Ancient Businesses, telling of how courts developed, how they ran, how they were maintained, how they were functioning. And he did this similarly to almost all the subjects he touched upon like Mining, Banking, Agriculture, Trade, the course of economic evolution.

All in all my opinion of this book is good. I wished at most times that it wasn't so factual and the author also used a number of hard to comprehend ways of saying things. The part of the book that I found the most interesting is the part about the Grain Trade. The Early Athenians had such a need for grains and they could not get it so they eventually had to surrender to the Peloponnesians, which they DID fight and went through months of famine. And I also enjoyed the part of the book that talked about early banking. I was very surprised that banking started so early. I think that by reading this book, I learned many things, and it helped me better my knowledge of history.

