

The tears of Aphrodite Euploia

At the central port of Piraeus, near the church of St.Nicholas with the majestic blue domes there is a street named Euploias. The street is named so by the glorious goddess of the sea, Aphrodite Euploia, the deity of navigation. Euploia was the patroness of seamen, ensuring a peaceful sea and safe travels. No wonder why the citizens of the ancient city had chosen to found a shrine near the harbor in order to venerate the fair goddess and ask for her divine protection.

Today at number 1 of this street lie the remains of one of the oldest state buildings of the modern city, the depots of the Custom-House. The depots were lodged in a two-stored building of the romantic neoclassical style, built circa 1850 by the architect Stamatis Kleanthis. In the 1960s, during the dictatorship, a part of the building was demolished in order to give its place to a modern block of flats. That marked the inglorious end for the depots.

Today the building is nothing but a shell, mutilated and vandalized, abandoned like a ship wreck in the dust of time. Just a few signs remind something of its past beauty and glory, like the pediment that crowns what was once the central gate. Under the pediment there is a carved epigraph with the famous saying of Hesiod “It is Idleness which Is A Disgrace”, praising this way the value of labour on which the prosperity of the city was established. The epigraph is flanked by two celebrated symbols: the caduceus, the attribute of the god of Commerce, Hermis is depicted on the left, while on the right there is a dolphin entwined around a trident, the emblem of the sea god, Poseidon. The architect foresaw to honour the ancient gods who ministered the city to flourish. But today memory has proved to be nothing but an empty word...

When it rains a small pond is formed just before the pavement, reflecting the oblivion all around: must be the tears of Aphrodite Euploia.

Euploias 1, Piraeus, Greece