



AND HIS VISION OF A GREAT NAVAL DEFENSE.

So, to find Piraeus as the "Commercial Heart of the Hellenes", when Thukydides describe it saying "from all the lands, everything enters", we have to wait to the most important figure for Piraeus, Themistokles, who was the first who had the revelation of the future importance of this peninsula, with great natural harbours, to the history of Athens. Finally, Cimon and Pericles completed this idea. After their projects Piraeus appeared as one of the four known as the "Four lands of Heracleion".

The old main port of Athens it had been the Gulf of Faliro until the 5th century BC but it was quite mediocre for Themistokles' idea of a great Naval Army. So, Themistokles, Archon at Athens, started in this Peninsula the construction of a fortified port from 493 to 479 BC. With its natural harbour he could manage to create a naval empire. Using the money from the silver mines of Laurion improved the three ports: Kantharos, a commercial port (Athens depended on the importation of cereals, minerals and wood), and two war ones, Zea and Mikrolimano, where the 200 warships (triremes) were kept. These were the same that were used in the battle of Salamis (479 BC) against the Persian king Xerxes.

Later Pericles completed the fortification by building the Makra Teiche (the Long Walls) during the 460's and 450's, which protected both sides of the road all the way from Piraeus to Athens. With them it was tried to avoid an attack by land that could cut off the communications between Athens and Piraeus.

Finally, the last big intervention was the redesign of this city by the famous architect Hippodamos of Miletus. Around 450 BC his new plan was traced based upon the rectangle. It was Hippodamos who laid out the boundaries and set in place the boundary markers of public, privated and sacred spaces.

A whole city was created with its public buildings and prosperous economic life mainly due to the commerce.