

2022-02-04 - Lecture 08

3.1 Aegean in the Bronze Age; Labyrinths and Cyclopean Architecture

4.2 Greek City-States; Classical Architecture in the Agora

1) Minoan Crete — c. 1900 - 1600 BCE

- Built with the unworked **cyclopean** stone masonry. Built on naturally defensible positions but did not add fortifications
- Minoans had a strong connection with nature, to wit: processions to sacred natural sites, sacred caves, sacred trees, sacred mountaintops
- Meandering pathways of caves, and irregular, meandering, indirect pathways caused by topography might have led to the concept of the **labyrinth** (*adjectival form: labyrinthian*)
- **Labyrinth**, in any case, was an effective defense, as intruders would not have straight-line access to any part of the palace

- **Labyrinth of Knossos** — great temple complex at Knossos c **1900 BCE**

Bull imagery throughout - maybe a reference to prototype god of Greek Poseidon
Meandering circulation - no axial arrangements - adjusted to landscape

Theater-like entry court

Maze-like circulation

The myth of Theseus and the Minotaur

The counterintuitive columns that are thinner at the bottom instead of thicker (as we might intuit based on forces and structure)

The **taurokatharsia** - the Bull Dance with acrobats performed in the giant central **Bull Court**
(pronunciation: torow-ka-THARP-sia - "tauro", of course, meaning "bull" as in the zodiac)

The Horns of Consecration - upper level sacred alignment with the distant mountain Juktas Throne Sanctuary at Knossos. This is an example of a **visual axis** between a framing device within the palace (the bulls horns) and a distant sacred landscape feature. Of course, there is no direct way to get there topographically, but this is a visual connection.

2) Classical Greece — c 500 - 400 BCE

- **demo** is the Greek root-word for people / **kratos** is root-word for rule
demo+kratos = democracy — ruling by and for the people
- Reaching its peak in 5th century BCE, Greece's cities developed in **democratic cities**, unlike the cities of southwestern Asia that were focused on tombs, temples, and the megalomaniacal wishes of the tyrants and warlords
- The democratic cities were marked by **classical architecture**, which, from here forward will be a strong influence on most of architectural history
- **Classicism** — A system of architecture that is a logical, tectonic, and symbolic representation of the craft of architecture and its construction method.

The goal of classical architecture is to achieve physical, geometric, and optical perfection through the arrangement of this system and its parts. The classical system of parts may be thought of as a language and its geometrical arrangement its syntax.

- The **polis** is the city. (Such as Indianapolis, Metropolis, Acropolis, Demopolis and many other examples. **Polis** means the body of politics that underlie a city; it is the **political constitution of the city**. Regarding 5th century BCE Greece, the polis was based on what Aristotle referred to as the "*living together*." Therefore, several villages would agree to live together as a confederation, or city-state, and become a polis, which was essentially **democratic**.

The polis influences the physical manifestation of the city

The polis will continue to influence the physical manifestation of cities throughout history

- **The physical constitution of the city**. Does the concept of "democracy" derive from the landscape itself? The landscape of Greece is rough, rocky, jagged coastline, hundreds of

islands, and hilly terrain. Ancient Greece also was guided by a very strong literary tradition, *Homer's Odyssey*, which was the story (legend) of Greece's "origin myth."

The decentralized topography and the unified literary tradition made the Greeks connected enough to develop the concept of self-governance (**democracy**) in an effort to stay together.

Some of the Greek City-States were not democratic, however.

- Important aspects of Athenian democracy and citizenship were:

- (1) **Private property rights**
- (2) **Individual freedom**
- (3) **Women and slaves were not part of the democracy**

3) Four important components of the Greek City

- **agora** :: The Greek **agora** was the gathering place of the polis, or the city... It's where people could gather to discuss openly ideas about politics and culture, share information, and have open debate.

The **agora** accommodated a broad range of activities, including: markets, athletic events, and theatrical performances

The Athenian **agora** was crossed by an important road, the **Panathenian Way**

- **stoa** :: The **stoa** (plural stoas) was an architectural feature of the **agora**. It was a colonnaded area that was still part of the **public realm** that could provide protection for the public, such as protection from the blazing hot sun. The back of the stoa may have included chambers or offices that were **semi-public**

The **porch** is an *additive* colonnaded piece to a building or house that is **semi-public** (*bumps out*)

The **loggia** is a *subtractive* colonnaded piece to a building or house that is **semi-public** (*bumps in*)

- **theater** :: The **theater** is an important **building type** in use today. Diagrammed as a semi-circle, a *Greek theater* is a semi-circular array of seats called a theatron carved into a hillside, often with a distant landscape as the backdrop. A stage for drama, oration, and poetry was in front of the viewers, and it was composed of a **skene** and a **proskenion** (a "scene" and a "proscenium")

Two theaters pushed together end-to-end would make an **amphitheater** the prefix *amphi* meaning "both." The amphitheater is really the genesis of the full-round place for viewing, as we'll see at the great amphitheater of Rome called the colosseum.

- **tholos** :: The **tholos** is a round architecture that, obviously places the occupant *on-center* in a profoundly important way. The **tholos** at ancient Athens was not a religious building and it was fairly crude, but the **tholos quickly became a very religious building type - perhaps the most sacred** - because its *centrality* was a direct connection to the vertical axis (earth and heaven)