

Chapter 3

I. THE AEGEAN IN THE BRONZE AGE: LABYRINTHS AND CYCLOPEAN WALLS

Settlements on Crete, in Greece, and in Turkey conserved a deep belief in the spiritual power of natural phenomena. Sacred hilltops, miracle-working trees, and mysterious grottoes served as the focus of their religious narratives and provided points of orientation for their architecture.

A. Minoan Crete: The Sacred Realm of the Labyrinth

1. One of the most extraordinary cultural awakenings of the Bronze Age occurred on Crete, a long, narrow island on the southern rim of the Aegean Sea.
2. Unlike most ancient peoples, the Minoans built their cities without defensive walls, indicating an absence of internal conflicts.
3. The small town of Gournia, on the bay of Mirabello in the northeast, offers the best-preserved example of Minoan urban layouts.
 - a. Its urban form, which included a temple and a shaped public space, appeared more complex than a farming village.
 - b. The houses at Gournia were small and densely packed.
 - c. They showed remarkable equality in economic status.
 - d. While modest in size, they boasted the luxury of indoor plumbing.
 - e. A series of ceramic tiles discovered at Knossos depicted the top stories of the houses with windows.
4. The largest settlement was Knossos. The grand structure of the major religious complex at Knossos, later known as the Labyrinth, rose on the upper edge of the city.
 - a. Knossos was the center of the federation and had been settled since the sixth millennium BCE.
 - b. The economy of Knossos depended heavily on overseas exchange for metalwork and textiles.
 - c. During the mid-second millennium BCE, trade with cities on the Ionian coast of Turkey and the Greek islands and mainland fostered the growth of a series of colonial depots in towns including Miletus, Akrotiri, and possibly Mycenae.
5. The first Labyrinth of Knossos, the city's great temple complex, was constructed around 1900 BCE; the final version (built around 1450 BCE) probably reproduced the design of the earlier temple.
 - a. Urban and Topographical Orientation
 - a. The structure rose in isolation several kilometers inland from the port on a slope and was shielded from the sight of the sea by an intervening hill.
 - b. The western and northern elevations of the Labyrinth facing the city appear to have been fortified.
 - c. A carefully paved road with a central rut for drainage extended in straight sections from the temple to the harbor city.
 - d. The Minoans' attention to nature led them to build nonaxial arrangements of space that adjusted to the topographic qualities of the land.
 - b. Layout of the Labyrinth
 - a. The Labyrinth of Knossos rose four stories high, with over 1,000 rooms.
 - b. The stairs and projecting balconies on the elevations facing the court purposely avoided symmetry.
 - c. Another inherently defensive aspect of the Knossos temple was the disorientation caused by its maze-like circulation—the winding paths of the lower levels inspired legends.
 - c. Function and ritual of the Labyrinth

- a. The bull imagery throughout the temple refers to the local prototype for the later Greek god Poseidon.
 - b. The Bull Court occupied the center of the Labyrinth, a near perfect rectangle.
 - c. The similarity in size and proportions of the courts in the four other major Minoan temples of the time indicate a clear ritual standard.
- B. Mycenae: Cyclopean Walls and Megaron Palaces
1. Around 1450 BCE Minoan culture gave way to Mycenaean conquerors.
 2. During the expansion of Mycenaean power, the Minoan artistic influence rang clear. But in architecture, there could be no more different approach.
 - a. Mycenaean designers created predominantly lithic, solid, and hierarchical structures based on military necessity.
 - b. The royal privilege of warrior kings is seen in the megaron palaces and beehive tombs, which differed immensely from the nonhierarchical Minoan society.
 - c. Their artistic intentions gravitated more toward dread than pleasure.
 3. The great citadels of Mycenaean lords date from around 1400–1250 BCE.
 - a. Cities were positioned strategically on defensible eminences with a good supply of water.
 - b. The summit of Mycenae clung to a bold outcrop of hard limestone that they made impregnable by the addition of cyclopean walls.
 - c. Mycenae also controlled the coastal fortress of Tiryns, which only allowed access to its citadel through a thick corbelled arch.
 - d. Both had bastions that allowed occupants to fire down on invaders.
 4. The Mycenaeans' heavily fortified hilltop towns resulted from local infighting among feudal lords.
 - a. Each lord built a great hall, or megaron, that dominated the townscape.
 - b. The megaron of Pylos offers the best-documented example of the type.
 5. Mycenaean funerary architecture was more smooth and precise than their other structures.
 - a. Most of the grave sites of Mycenae lay along the first stretch of the road leading away from the citadel and ranged from simple shaft tombs and a stone circle for collective graves to the monumental *tholos*, or beehive, type.
 - b. During the final century of Mycenaean power, the kings and queens commissioned mounded conical structures, the *tholoi* tombs.
 6. When all of the Mycenaean cities and the settlements in the Aegean were destroyed during the late 13th century, it was probably due to a combination of internal uprisings, as well as invasions.
- C. Hattusha: The New Landscape of Militarism
1. The peoples of the Aegean during the Bronze Age could trace some of their culture to the earlier cultures of Southwest Asia.
 2. The Mycenaeans maintained strong connections to the more powerful Hittite Empire in Turkey.
 3. The site of Troy was excavated at Hisarlick during the 19th century on the Ionian coast overlooking the southern tip of the Dardanelles.
 4. Strong influences came from the Hittite Empire to the east, which at an earlier stage counted Troy, known also as "Iliam," among its colonial possessions.
 5. The great capital city of Hattusha, located in a hilly forest next to the modern town of Boğazkale (Turkey), grew to about 50,000 inhabitants.
 - a. Hattusha's walled citadel clung to the north slope overlooking the valley.

- b. The Hittites used corbel techniques that most likely influenced the masonry of the Mycenaeans.
- 6. The martial image of Hattusha mattered as much as the effectiveness of its defensive structures.
- 7. The residential arrangements in Hattusha conformed to the traditions of Southwest Asia: contiguous houses with five or six rooms gathered around small courts.
- 8. To the west of the citadel, Hattusha's principal urban temple became the focus of the "lower city."
- 9. Despite their military prowess and the seemingly impenetrable fortifications of Hattusha, much like Mycenae and Knossos, their culture collapsed around 1200 BCE. The same factors of internal dissension, famine, environmental crises, and the arrival of the invaders undermined the survival of these three civilizations, all of whom left precious lessons of how architecture can integrate with the landscape.

II. NEW KINGDOM EGYPT

AXIAL TEMPLES AND COLOSSAL STATUES

During the period of New Kingdom Egypt, roughly 1560 to 1070 BCE, the southern capital of Thebes came to prominence, and the great temples of Karnak and Luxor exhibited a new spatial awareness.

- A. Thebes: The Great Temples of the New Kingdom
 - 1. The continuous rule of Egyptian dynasties underwent a second crisis with the intrusion of the Hyksos people: These "shepherd kings," tribal mercenaries from the Palestinian region, conquered Egypt and assimilated the trappings of pharaonic rule between the 18th and 16th centuries BCE.
 - 2. During the late 16th century BCE, Thutmose I ousted the foreign rulers and Egyptian dynasties resumed power as the New Kingdom. Using Thebes as their capital, the new regime extended Egypt's dominion as far north as the Euphrates and as far south as Nubia.
 - 3. The temples of Thebes grew into ever grander complexes structured on emphatic column-lined axes—the temple complexes sheltered a large priesthood, commanded thousands of workers, and owned hundreds of thousands of cattle, orchards, boats, and workshops.
 - 4. The bulk of the residential area of Thebes remained on the west bank.
 - a. Row houses lined the modest residential streets.
 - b. Each had a small court and a shaded portico on the south side.
 - c. The living room rose higher than the side rooms, allowing for clerestory lighting.
 - d. Unlike the involuted and street-shy houses of Mesopotamian cities, Thebes enjoyed an extroverted street architecture.
 - 5. While the houses and palaces of Thebes were built of mud and expendable materials, the temples used solid limestone and have endured as splendid ruins.
 - 6. The Temple to Amon-Ra at Karnak occupies a site as large as a city.
 - a. The monumental pylons at Karnak imitated those at the Old Kingdom temples in Memphis and Heliopolis.
 - b. Like most Egyptian temples, Karnak presented a sequence of a central axis through a colonnaded entry court to a more secluded hypostyle hall and then a restricted inner sanctum.
 - c. The east-west extension of the Temple of Amon-Ra represented a cosmic timepiece.
 - d. Karnak came to embody the nation's theological universe.

- B. King/Queen Hatshepsut: The Political Use of Patronage: Hatshepsut, the first historically documented woman to rule with the complete authority of a man, ruled Egypt approximately 1479–1458 BCE.
- a. The architectural style of the New Kingdom derived from her motivated patronage: She used architecture to bolster her rule.
 - b. Aside from her funerary complex and the works at Karnak, she built five major temples.
 - c. Inscriptions claiming Hatshepsut's divine origins covered her monuments and became the basis of her political power.
 - d. Senenmut was her closest advisor and chief architect; their relationship seems to have been more than professional.
 - e. Her greatest architectural scheme was the Temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahri—it was used less for burial rituals than for the annual Feast of the Valley.
 - f. Her stepson, Thutmose III, systematically destroyed her monuments after she died.
- C. Luxor and Amarna: Architecture after Hatshepsut
1. Thutmose III's successors, in particular Amenhotep III during the 14th century BCE, continued to build; this is best seen in the additions to the Temple of Luxor. The temple at Karnak, for example, unfolded axially in three parts: an outer forecourt, a hypostyle hall, and an inner sanctuary for the cult statue.
 2. Amenhotep III became the first pharaoh to assume god-like status during his own life; the walls of the ambitious additions to Karnak and Luxor were covered with narratives of his divine birth.
 3. His successor, Amenhotep IV (r. 1352–1336) changed his name to Akhenaten and turned to monotheism. Akhenaten's new monotheistic religion inspired a completely different mode of representation.
 - a. Artists portrayed the pharaoh and his wife, Nefertiti, naturalistically rather than as stiff, hieratic figures.
 - b. They look distinctly human and not god-like.
 4. After Akhenaten's demise, around 1333 BCE, his successor, Tutankhamen, moved back to Thebes and restored the religious orthodoxy of the cult of Amon-Ra at Karnak.
 5. A generation later, Ramesses II (r. 1279–1213) prevailed as the greatest contributor to Luxor and Karnak.
 - a. During his nearly seventy-year reign, Ramesses II left behind more colossal portraits of himself than any ruler in history.
 - b. Despite such ponderous expressions of power, the Egypt of Ramesses entered a phase of steady decline.

III. BIBLICAL JERUSALEM: ARCHITECTURE AND MEMORY

Jerusalem plays a special role in world history, since cosmological meanings have been attached to it by Jews, Christians, and Muslims.

- A. The City of the Jews and Many Others
1. David, the warrior-hero, chose Jerusalem as the national capital, around the year 1000 BCE, and the city became the focus of Jewish culture.
 2. The city clung to the top of a walled, oval-shaped hill, with steep fortifications.

3. Being a seminomadic people, the Jews lacked traditions of masonry architecture, city building, and city administration.
4. Under King David, the status of the Jews changed from inconsequential outsiders to a dominant power, influencing a region that stretched from the Red Sea to the Euphrates River.
5. David and Solomon realized that to maintain political control they needed a palace to represent the validity of their dynasty and a temple as the home for the deity that protected their rule.

B. Against Architecture: The Rise and Fall of the Temple

1. For the Jewish tribes, saturated with nomadic habits, the creation of a temple next to a royal palace represented suspicious acts that might inspire divine retribution.
2. To consolidate his authority, David interrupted the custom of passing the Ark of the Covenant between the tribes and placed it in a permanent sanctuary.
3. David's son Solomon fulfilled the mission to build the temple (the First Temple) shortly after his assumption of power in 961 BCE.
4. It included an immense palace complex on the slope beneath the temple mount.
 - a. Like the ruler's core at Akhetaten, Jerusalem acquired a religious-political nucleus with grand hypostyle halls, residential courts, and a separate harem quarter.
 - b. Unlike all other temples of the time, the First Temple did not house a statue of the deity but only the effects of the divinity, the Ark of the Covenant. Still, it was believed that God dwelled within the holy of holies.
5. In 586 BCE Jerusalem fell to the Neo-Babylonians. Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the First Temple completely.
6. The Second Temple was hastily built around 535 BCE after the Persians permitted the Jews to return to Jerusalem; during the late 1st century BCE, King Herod I completely rebuilt the Second Temple in grand style.
7. The site draws Jews lamenting the loss of not only the First Temple but also the Second Temple, which was destroyed a few generations after its completion during the Roman siege of Emperor Titus in 70 CE.