

## Chapter 4

### I. SOUTHWEST ASIA AND ACHAEMENID PERSIA: A CYCLE OF EMPIRES

During the first millennium, improved military techniques such as the wheeled chariot helped the process of amassing ever larger political empires.

#### A. Sargon II's Dur-Sharrukin: The Roots of the Charismatic Palace

1. Neo-Assyrians amassed a huge army in northern Iraq and laid claim to the lands of the Fertile Crescent.
2. The new despot, Sargon II, consolidated his holdings by annexing the northern territories of Armenia, the southern region of Babylonia (Sumer), the majority of the eastern Mediterranean including most of ancient Israel, and even parts of Egypt.
3. He commissioned a new capital, Dur-Sharrukin, "the City of Sargon," now called Khorsabad.
4. Both the scale of his palace at Dur-Sharrukin and the inclusion of temples and a ziggurat in its precinct indicated the new, exalted nature of the ruler.
  - a. It was the first effort outside Egypt to design a city on an orthogonal plan; the scale and monumentality of Sargon's city surpassed all previous models.
  - b. The western side of Sargon's palace contained six temples and a ziggurat.
    - i. The combination of religious and secular spaces gave architectural expression to the attempt to deify the ruler.
    - ii. The ziggurat, the first constructed in the region in many centuries, presented both a revival and an improvement of the type.
5. Sargon's ambitious architectural adventure redefined the notion of the city as the stage for a god-like ruler in charge of a fierce war machine.
6. After Sargon died, his son Sennacherib immediately abandoned the city.

#### B. New Babylon: The Return to Ritual Order

1. Under Nebuchadnezzar II (r. 604–562 BCE), New Babylon became an Iron-Age "melting pot."
  - a. It boasted forty-three temples to different national deities, including one for Jews.
  - b. The rulers of New Babylon planned major projects for Babylon's renewal, including great temples and the ceremonial procession route, to enhance the city's theological role.
2. The three sets of walls, the ziggurat of Entemenanki, the Esagila Temple dedicated to the god Marduk, and the vast imperial palace with its hanging gardens had no rivals for architectural grandeur.
  - a. Entemenanki appeared to be the tallest building in the world. The Jewish interpretation of it in the Bible presented the tower as the materialization of the sin of hubris, the attempt of mortals to surpass the gods.
  - b. The Palace of Nebuchadnezzar was larger than most cities of the time.

#### C. Persepolis: A Terrace for the Unity of Nations

1. In 539 BCE, Cyrus the Great of Persia defeated the Babylonians.
  - a. Cyrus founded a new capital city at Pasargadae in southwest Iran.

- b. Pasargadae was abandoned when Darius I (r. 522–486 BCE) came to power after the seven-year reign of Cyrus's son, Cambyses II.
  - 2. Darius chose to build a second Persian capital at nearby Persepolis.
    - a. It included a grand palace complex set in the north against a backdrop of steep cliffs.
    - b. Visitors reached Persepolis across the stone highways constructed by the regime.
      - i. The link between the twenty provinces began in Sardis, Turkey, and stretched all the way to the Silk Road at Taxila, Pakistan.
      - ii. The city and palace became a repository of tribute from across the empire. The palace of Darius was built with design, labor, and materials drawn from a multiethnic pool of resources.

## II. THE GREEK CITY-STATE: CLASSICAL ARCHITECTURE AT THE ACROPOLIS AND THE AGORA

The classical style of the Greeks has been revived by a variety of cultures, obtaining nearly universal acceptance.

- A. The Greek Polis: The City of Public Space
  - 1. Instead of great palaces and tombs for tyrants and hierarchical temple compounds like those of Egypt, Assyria, and Persia, the Greeks designed open public spaces with a few colonnaded buildings for citizen meetings.
  - 2. They called the city and its outlying territory the *polis*, the root of the word "politics." Their system of living under accountable institutions of self-government eliminated the perennial power struggles of dynasties, tribes, and clans.
  - 3. The Greek mainland and surrounding islands evolved into an informal commonwealth that included about 700 city-states.
  - 4. Frequent acts of city building meant that Greek planners and political thinkers developed reproducible methods of orthogonal planning at the same time that they experimented with guaranteeing justice to a diversified class structure.
  - 5. The Agora, literally "gathering," served as the prime public space of the Greek polis; it sat as an indeterminate void in the middle of the city.
    - a. This immense park-like setting of the Athenian agora served as the city's space of information, where every male, Athenian-born property owner could express his commitment as a citizen to fight for the city's interests and debate its affairs.
    - b. The major streets of Athens crossed the Agora, which accommodated a variety of activities.
  - 6. As the complexity of Athenian government increased, each new function resulted in a particular building type:
    - a. The Prytaneion, or city hall
    - b. The Skias, a cylindrical *tholos* structure, which served as the dining hall for the senate
    - c. The Strategeion, a chamber for debating military policies
    - d. The Bouleuterion, or square-shaped senate house
  - 7. When the assembly increased to 6,000 members during the early 6th century BCE, they cleared and leveled the great terrace of the Pnyx.
- B. Greek Colonies and Orthogonal Planning

1. The Greek grid appeared in the 7th century, organized in horizontal bands as an expedient way to divide the land, shape the structure of the city, and control its future growth.
  - a. Hippodamus of Miletus (498–408 BCE) invented “the divisioning of cities,” a grid plan that also comprised a social theory of urbanism.
    - i. The rebuilding the colony of Miletus corresponds to his theories.
    - ii. Priene, another colony on the Ionian coast, was rebuilt a century later with a more tightly integrated plan.
2. The Greeks built the houses in their colonies comfortably but without distinction.
  - a. The best-documented examples appeared in Olynthus and display remarkable uniformity, suggesting a society of equals.
  - b. The house, or *oikos*, was usually one or two stories, built around a south-facing court that contained a cistern or well and an altar. The service functions of the *oikos* occupied the short sides of the court, and the living areas rose in a two-story volumn at the rear.

#### C. The Greek Temple: The Mastering of the Classical Orders

1. There are few architectural types that command such universal recognition as the Greek temple.
  - a. The unfinished temple at Segesta, Sicily, carries the imprint of the type: an oblong peripteral structure, girded on all sides by a screen of stone columns, ringed by a thick, horizontal entablature that sustains triangular pediments in the gables at each end.
2. The Greek temple differed from the religious buildings of earlier cultures in two ways: its special relation to the landscape and its dazzling colonnaded exterior.
  - a. The Greek temples served either to mark sacred natural sites or to house treasuries of sacred images and the city’s economic surplus.
  - b. The columns of Greek temples conformed to one of three styles: Doric, Ionic, or Corinthian.
3. Greek temples attained a new degree of artistic sophistication during the 5th century BCE, when architects introduced visual correctives known as “refinements.”
  - a. The refinements include the following.
    - i. Slight arcing (or bulging) of platform toward center.
    - ii. Doric columns taper toward the top and include entasis, or bulging, in the lower third of the shaft.
    - iii. The corner columns incline slightly inward toward the temple interior.
  - b. While some of the distortions can be easily detected, most of the refinements remained barely perceptible, creating the illusion of the equality of its members.

#### D. The Monuments of Democratic Athens

1. At the end of the 6th century BCE, Athens emerged as the leading city of Greece.
2. The Persians, before their final defeat, sacked Athens in 480 BCE, devastating the temples on the Acropolis.
  - a. The first reconstruction project began around 470 BCE at the Port of Piraeus.
  - b. The reconstruction of the temples included four major architectural projects:
    - i. The repositioning of the Propylaia gate

- ii. The new Ionic temple of victory, Athena Nike, directly to the south
  - iii. The rebuilding of the Parthenon to both house the colossal statue of Athena Parthenos and store the Delian treasury
  - iv. The replacement of the Doric temple to Athena Polia with the Erechtheion, a hybrid building with porches on three levels
- 3. The temples of the Acropolis served as the terminus for the yearly festival of the Panatheneia.
  - a. It was a procession: after one passed through the Propylaea, Phidias's colossal bronze statue of Athena Promachos came into view. To its right stood the Parthenon.
    - i. The Parthenon was rebuilt from 447 to 432 BCE over the ruins of a temple that had been under construction at the time of the Persian sack.
    - ii. The designers treated the Parthenon like an immense work of sculpture, laden with relief friezes and used primarily for containing a colossal statue of the goddess.

#### E. Alexander the Great: The Diffusion of Hellenism

- 1. During his fifteen-year quest to unify the world under one rule, Alexander advanced from Egypt to Babylonia to absorb the Persian Empire but fell short of conquering India. He promoted Greek culture with missionary zeal, and his name became inseparable from Hellenism, or the transmission of Greek ideas.
  - a. Greek rule no longer pertained to the Greek race alone, eradicating the age-old contrast with barbarian outsiders.
  - b. Alexander was deified even before his death.
- 2. The new political atmosphere of deified rulers and powerful client states spawned a demand for formal urban spaces.
  - a. The Mausoleum at Halicarnassus provided a prototype.
  - b. Alexander's first experience with architecture came with the completion of the Philippeion, a *tholos* temple at Olympia.
- 3. After founding the new city of Alexandria at the delta of the Nile in Egypt, the young leader established at least seventy other cities.
- 4. A theatrical and metaphoric approach came to characterize the design of Hellenistic public spaces.
  - a. The famous Colossus of Rhodes, a bronze statue of the sun god Helios, offered a spectacular entry into the port.
  - b. On the same island the Rhodians rebuilt the breathtaking sanctuary of Athena Lindia on its hilltop site, referring to the Acropolis in Athens.
  - c. The Attalid dynasty of Pergamon (which, like Rhodes, retained its autonomy) shaped the rugged mountain stronghold into a spectacular series of monumental terraces.
    - i. Like Alexander, the Attalids attempted to combine the culture of democratic Athens with the trappings of autocratic power. The upper city's terraced sequences offered grand theatrical settings well suited to a final dramatic gesture.
    - ii. The last of the Attalids bequeathed Pergamon to the Romans in 133 BCE.

### III. MAURYAN INDIA: EMBLEMS OF PEACE IN STONE

The sovereign of the Mauryan dynasty, Ashoka, consolidated a realm that included most of what is now India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. His conversion to Buddhism led him to the

exceptional contradiction of desiring to represent imperial dominion without celebrating its military basis.

A. The First Indian Empire and Religions of Antimaterialism

1. The military leaders who created the first Indian empire, inspired by the example of the Greek invaders as well as the Persians before them, united the lands east of Taxila (near modern Islamabad) under the Mauryan dynasty soon after Alexander's demise.
  - a. The new rulers, while imitating the political structure of the Persians and Greeks, did not build comparable architectural settings.
  - b. The only lasting structures came from the new religions that took root during this period, especially Buddhism, which sponsored memorial mounds and monasteries.
2. The connection between the Mauryans and the Greeks continued in diplomatic relations with the Seleucids, the largest of the Greek successor states to Alexander's empire.
3. Indian society, with perhaps as many as 50 million people at the time of the Mauryan unification, maintained rigidly structured social castes. The caste system of inherited social status began sometime after the Aryan transition in the 12th century BCE.
4. Toward the end of his reign, Chandra Gupta, the founding Mauryan emperor, abdicated his throne and converted to the Jain religion, which emphasized reincarnation while celebrating antimaterialism. Chandra Gupta was not known to have sponsored any enduring monuments to his faith.
5. During the reign of Chandra Gupta's grandson, Ashoka, beginning around 270 BCE, the Mauryan dynasty produced its major cultural contributions.
  - a. Ashoka erected monumental columns known as *stambhas*, on which he inscribed his laws in several languages.
  - b. He also sponsored thousands of Buddhist memorial mounds in the form of domical *stupas*.
  - c. Ashoka spread his architectural patronage to all parts of the Mauryan realm.
  - d. His religion, Buddhism, developed into the most significant spiritual innovation to affect the Vedic traditions in India during the ancient period.

B. Ashoka and Sanchi: Materializing the Immaterial

1. Ashoka felt that his great task as emperor was the maintenance and dissemination of Buddhist *dharma*.
  - a. He pursued this ethic restoring the roads and hostels, planting medicinal herbs, founding hospitals, and banning animal sacrifices and slaughter.
  - b. He relied on Buddhism as a strategy for social harmony.
    - i. *Stambha pillars*. Ashoka commissioned 256 *stambha* pillars to be erected in all corners of his empire, inscribing them with the benevolent message of *dharma*. The *stambhas* were monolithic, polished sandstone, slightly tapered, and sometimes over 49 ft high, approaching the scale of the obelisks of Hatshepsut.
    - ii. *Stupas*. He constructed hemispherical mounds, called *stupas* (sing. *stupa*) to commemorate holy sites, Ancient texts record that Ashoka constructed some 84,000 *stupas*.
    - iii. *Monastery precinct of Sanchi*. Ashoka constructed the special monastery precinct, containing several *stambha* pillars and *stupas*, at the geographical center of the Mauryan Empire. He planned the largest of the three major *stupas* as a reliquary for some of the ashes of the Buddha.
2. After Ashoka, the Mauryan dynasty began to lose its grip over the empire.