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Great Palaces of the Ancient World

Course Guidebook

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Miami University

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An esteemed teacher, Professor Tuck received the 2013 E. Phillips Knox Teaching Award, Miami University's highest honor for innovative and effective undergraduate teaching. In addition, the Greater Cincinnati Consortium of Colleges and Universities gave him its Excellence in Teaching Award in 2013. Nationally, the Archaeological Institute of America, North America's oldest and largest organization devoted to archaeology, presented him with its Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching Award in 2014. He also has been named an Outstanding Professor, a Distinguished Scholar, and an Altman Faculty Scholar at Miami University.

Professor Tuck has conducted archaeological fieldwork and research in Italy, Greece, England, and Egypt. He has directed more than 15 study tours in England, Greece, and Italy, the latter tours concentrated on the city of Rome and the area around the Bay of Naples, including Pompeii, Herculaneum, and the Island of Capri. He has given more than 60 public lectures, including as a national lecturer for the Archaeological Institute of America. Professor Tuck served as president of the Vergilian Society, an international academic organization dedicated to studying and promoting the works of the Roman poet Vergil. He consults on ancient sculpture and gallery design at the Ancient Sculpture Museum at Pyramid Hill in Hamilton, Ohio.

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Professor Tuck has taught four other Great Courses: *Experiencing Rome: A Visual Exploration of Antiquity's Greatest Empire*; *Pompeii*: *Daily Life in an Ancient Roman City*; *Cities of the Ancient World*; and *The Mysterious Etruscans*. ■

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COURSE SCOPE

Palaces are more than just the homes of rulers. Their design and decoration, of course, reflect the public images and political needs of their occupants. But more than that, palaces are the centers where rulers impressed the ruled and intimidated visitors and from where they controlled their kingdoms; in these building complexes—each built to reflect and reinforce the power of the ruler—rulers collected, stored, and redistributed the wealth of their kingdoms. This course is an exploration of some of the most extraordinary palaces in world history. Each lecture links one or more palaces to the rulers who created them and to the cultures in which they were built.

The course begins with an overview of this vast topic, illustrated with examples from the palaces of Saddam Hussein. Like many of the oldest-known palaces, Saddam's almost 100 palaces reflected their Mesopotamian cultural heritage. They also exemplify key components of ancient palaces, with their lavish use of water and gardens, banquet halls, throne rooms, and decorative programs that aggrandize the ruler who commissioned them.

Lectures 2 and 3 introduce the best-preserved palaces from ancient Egypt, both from the New Kingdom. In lecture 2, you will discover the Egyptian palace of Amenhotep III at Malkata, with its wall paintings of nature, artificial landscape, and design and organization to reflect the international marriages of the pharaoh that were the basis for his foreign treaties. In lecture 3, the palaces of his son Akhenaten demonstrate the revolution that Akhenaten undertook to reorder Egyptian society and religion with himself as the sole intermediary between Egyptians and the sun disk, the Aten. Both palaces reflect the very different personal and political needs of these father-and-son monarchs.

Lectures 4 and 5 introduce two other Bronze Age palaces: one from the non-Greek Minoan culture on the island of Crete and the other the Bronze Age Greek palace at Pylos. Their radically different approaches to palace design and organization tell us about the roles of rulers in these regions and their varying religious identities.

Many of the palaces in the course are from the area commonly known as the Middle East, although they are the products of some very widely differing cultures. The majority of these are the palaces found in areas that today are Iraq and Iran. These include the Assyrian palaces of Nimrud and Nineveh, explored in lectures 6 and 7, as well as the Persian palace and ceremonial capital at Persepolis, the subject of lecture 8. All three of these share a decorative scheme of large stone sculptural relief panels that lined walls and doorways to depict the real and symbolic accomplishments of their rulers to visitors—both subjects and diplomats.

Lectures 9 through 13 illustrate the transfer of palace complexes from the East to the Western world of Greece and Rome. But more than cultural transference, the palaces explored in these lectures demonstrate cultural blending, as demonstrated first in the palaces of Greek rulers in the area of the former Persian Empire in lectures 9 and 10. Their palace complexes speak to Greek, Persian, and local populations with differing designs, decors, and spaces for ruler interactions. Lecture 11 charts the earliest examples of Greek palace design adopted into Roman culture, which would have a profound effect, particularly under the later Roman emperors. In lectures 12 and 13, the palaces of Herod the Great, king of Judea, illustrate the blending of East and West—the creation of palace forms that serve political purposes and reflect personal identity in a kingdom between Roman and Eastern cultures.

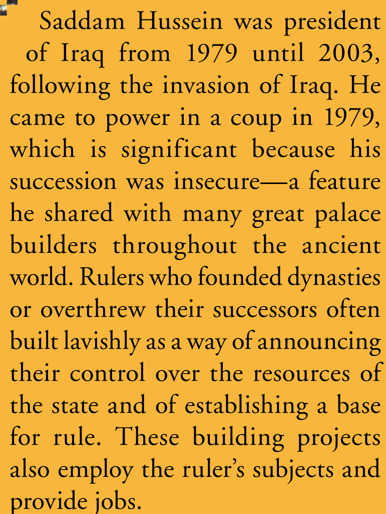
Lectures 14 through 20 examine the palaces of the Roman emperors, including the floating palaces of Caligula, the grand palaces of Nero and Domitian, and those of later emperors—up to the palace founded by Constantine in his new capital of Constantinople, the foundation of the Byzantine Empire. Lectures 21 and 22 branch out to explore China's Weiyang Palace (the Endless Palace), the largest palace ever built, as well as the palace of the Aztec king Montezuma at Tenochtitlán. Both reveal their rulers' understanding of their physical and spiritual worlds.

Finally, lectures 23 and 24 bring us to the modern world. Lecture 23 demonstrates the classical revival of the Renaissance palaces while the final lecture of the course examines a range of modern palaces. These include both actual residences of rulers as well as the buildings that have been created to substitute for palaces in societies without kings. They demonstrate that the palace form is still a vibrant expression of cultural values and personal identity into the 21st century. ■

PALACES PAST AND PRESENT

LECTURE 1

More than *Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous*, the topic of great palaces of the ancient world is really about exploring some of the largest building complexes created by a number of ancient societies and investigating what they reveal about those societies. The palaces in this course are mirrors of the societies that created them and therefore reflect much more than just the needs or wishes of the individual rulers that first occupied them—although many of those rulers are important as well. This lecture will explore some of the major themes and subjects of ancient palaces by illustrating them with examples from the palaces of a modern ruler: Saddam Hussein.



Saddam Hussein was president of Iraq from 1979 until 2003, following the invasion of Iraq. He came to power in a coup in 1979, which is significant because his succession was insecure—a feature he shared with many great palace builders throughout the ancient world. Rulers who founded dynasties or overthrew their successors often built lavishly as a way of announcing their control over the resources of the state and of establishing a base for rule. These building projects also employ the ruler's subjects and provide jobs.

This construction is part of the classic cult of personality, which includes images of the ruler spread throughout the country. Only the media change. For Saddam, it was colossal sculptures, large portrait photos, his image on the currency—combined with control of television—and lots of palaces.

Most simply, palaces are the residences for rulers, generally heads of state or heads of government. Palaces, however, are more than just the homes of rulers. Their design and decoration reflect the public images and political needs of their occupants while also revealing much about their cultures at large.

Palaces demonstrate how rulers impressed the ruled and intimidated visitors, how they controlled their kingdoms, and how they collected, stored, and redistributed the wealth of their kingdoms or empires in these building complexes, each built to reflect and reinforce their power—sometimes in ways that continue to astound us today.

Saddam Hussein's Many Palaces

Saddam built somewhere between 80 and 100 palaces during his 24 years as president of Iraq. While these palaces were residences, they weren't just residences. They were statements of power. Saddam built palaces in every major city—and many minor ones—in Iraq as a means of marking his territory and establishing a visible presence everywhere. From Mosul in the far north to Basra in the extreme south, no one should get any ideas of revolt if the ruler is everywhere at once.

In addition to the number of palaces, there's sheer size to overwhelm people. The eight main palace complexes contained more than 1,000 buildings and covered, according to UN estimates, 12 square miles. In comparison, the average Iraqi residence was 1,550 square feet (144 square meters) and contained eight people.

The palaces were built using a staggering range of luxury materials. Most residential structures in Iraq were traditionally built of sun-dried mud brick. But Saddam's palaces were built of stone, and the major reception rooms were invariably lined with marble. All of them feature marble floors cut into patterns, marble wall facings, and lots of marble columns—many of which contained elements of Egyptian, Greek, and Roman architectural design.

Saddam's palaces used gold lavishly for certain so-called fittings: faucets, soap dishes, sinks, wastebaskets, bidets, and even toilets in the palace bathrooms. It's a deliberate statement of ostentation to fashion what might be considered the most utilitarian objects in the palace out of the most precious material in their construction. Gold is also the major color scheme in other areas, including the reception spaces of Saddam's palaces used for dining.

Rather than large, heavy panels of plain marble, the ceilings in Saddam's palaces were decorated with elaborate cut marble work, referred to in the ancient world as opus sectile. In many of the palaces, these ceiling designs use traditional Muslim nonfigural design, while others hint at the floral patterns of ancient Egypt, with lotus and papyrus designs used to create massive medallions with crystal chandeliers suspended from their centers.

The effect is disorienting and overwhelming, likely to make the first-time visitor slightly uncomfortable while the occupant—that is, the ruler—is at ease in a familiar setting.

Ancient Signs of Authority

Another recurring feature of ancient palaces is the appropriation of past cultures to lend authority to an insecure ruler. In Saddam's case, you might think that these were the result of decisions by his modern architects or interior designers, except that they are sometimes fairly explicit references to ancient design choices by much earlier rulers. Saddam's great palace at Babylon, 50 miles south of Baghdad, is a superb example of modern incorporation of ancient signs of authority.

The ancient city of Babylon was famous as the capital of Babylonia, site of the great hanging gardens—one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World—and the location of a tremendous palace for the rulers of Babylonia. This was a 600-room palace complex largely built by King Nebuchadnezzar II, who had ruled Babylon for more than 40 years.

Shortly after he came to power in 1979, Saddam proclaimed his desire to rebuild the ancient city of Babylon. What he did, instead, was replace it. Starting in 1982, he had about two-thirds of the ancient city leveled to create a foundation for his own palace on the site.

The decorative scheme of the palace was designed to create comparisons between Saddam and the kings of Babylonia. For example, a relief with a profile portrait of Saddam is flanked by male and female figures, and beneath him is a hawk with its wings spread, apparently protecting the image of the president. The inspiration is probably the stone reliefs of the Assyrian palaces of northern Iraq, with their images of rulers flanked by protective deities and spirits or personified figures. They serve to remind the viewer of the ruler's power and the spiritual basis for it.

It was typical for ancient rulers who came to power through coups or usurping power to make references back over the most immediate predecessors—who, after all, they probably had killed—to those who came before them to create a sort of dynasty of association. In Saddam's case, he occupied and updated the Republican Palace in Baghdad that had been built by King Faisal II in the 1950s. Saddam made the palace more closely reflect his own public image and decorative patterns. The interior was lined with marble, and colossal bronze sculptures of Saddam on the front roofline of the palace were visible to everyone who approached.

Palace Structure and Social Structure

> For all of the palaces in this course, including recent ones, there are limits to what we can know or reconstruct. In some cases, photos and plans just don't exist with the level of detail that we'd like; in other cases, the damage to the palaces has been extensive. But we know from a lot from primary sources that describe palaces and events within them, comparanda from parallel sites, and archaeology—all of which help to fill in the picture.

It's typical in ancient palaces to see that the social structure of the society or of the court of a particular ruler is reflected in the layout, organization, and assigning of space within a palace.

One example of a palace with a structure that reflects social structure is the Believer's Palace, another property in Baghdad. Built in the 1980s out of reinforced concrete, it looks like a typical Saddam palace from the outside. It was roofed with three large domes, the largest and central of which caps a dining room punctuated with marble columns and arcaded colonnades. It was decorated with friezes that combined a monogram of Saddam's initials with passages from the Koran.

But the entire facility was actually more of an elaborate façade designed to conceal the extensive three-story bunkers beneath, created to protect Saddam and his chosen companions from conventional bombs and gas and chemical attacks. With elaborate airlocks, decontamination rooms, and rows of enormous air filters, it was the bunkers, not the relatively flimsy palace above, that were the real focus of the 60-million-dollar construction project.

Ancient palaces have their own secluded getaways and extensive underground passages as well, so the concept is not unique to the Believer's Palace.

Created Location

In addition to the found or natural location of a ruler's real estate, another type of location that's significant is the created location: the alteration of the natural landscape to create an artificial one. This is a powerful tendency found in palaces across the ancient world as rulers sought to demonstrate control over nature in a variety of ways.

One was through palace gardens, where artificial terraces were built to reshape the landscape to create a topography of vast open areas associated with power.

Another was through the selection of plants and animals for these gardens. Often plants and animals were used as surrogates standing in for conquered people or territories. They symbolized the conquests. Animals could be tame, such as the peacocks found in palace gardens, or wild beasts placed in walled gardens, which created hunting opportunities for rulers to demonstrate their manhood.

During the coalition occupation of the palaces in Baghdad, three lions were discovered on the grounds of one palace. Saddam's son Uday had apparently kept them in a walled garden, imitating the practice of Assyrian monarchs at their palaces in what is now northern Iraq.

These elements are all found at various palaces of Saddam Hussein. For example, the al-Sujud Palace in Baghdad was built within extensive gardens, including a formal garden adjacent to the palace itself that was arranged like a fan or a peacock's tail in an immense semicircle, creating the structural basis for the terraced gardens that radiate from it.

The Use and Control of Water

In a country like modern Iraq, which is dominated by vast deserts, the use and control of water creates a statement of control of nature and of the resources necessary to dominate the natural world, as well as one's enemies. A number of Saddam's palaces were built on the shores of artificial lakes, including the Victory over America Palace.

The al-Faw Palace, also known as the Water Palace, was built on the outskirts of Baghdad. The decision to place this palace on an artificial lake may be a visual reference to the landscape of the al-Faw peninsula, a low, marshy area of southern Iraq. It has date palm orchards across the peninsula, and date palm trees were planted around the palace as well. That notion of symbolically significant artificial landscape is found earlier in the pleasure gardens of Montezuma.

The relatively compact 62-room al-Faw Palace was constructed in the 1990s and named to commemorate the Iraqi victory over Iran in the al-Faw peninsula during the Iran-Iraq War.

The Perfume Palace was located on an artificial lake on the edge of Baghdad.

Palms need a lot of water, so planting a grove of palm trees in Baghdad is really a statement of commitment to the water needs of the grove, which requires an artificial source of consistent water. It's a statement of control of the natural resources of the region. We see the same pattern in the artificial lakes of pharaonic palaces of ancient Egypt and the villa palace of the Roman emperor Hadrian, also designed to evoke a particular geographical area.

While swimming pools specifically aren't found in ancient palaces, artificial pools and lakes were, and they conveyed the same themes of luxury and control as did Saddam's swimming pools. Fountains and other decorative water systems transmitted much the same themes of luxury and control over scarce resources.

In the garden of the Victory over America Palace, a pair of fountains flank a life-size tile mural portrait of Saddam Hussein in full military dress.

SUGGESTED READING

Owen, "Architecture after Excess."

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1 How do the palaces of Saddam Hussein illustrate the creation of gardens and water features as symbols of conquest and control?

2 In what ways do the interior décor and furnishings of Saddam's palaces reflect his needs to assert control and establish Iraqi unity and victory?

MALKATA PALACE: PHARAOH, FOREIGNERS, AND GODS

LECTURE 2

The palace of the Egyptian pharaoh Amenhotep III—known by its modern name, Malkata—one of the oldest surviving palaces in the world, preserves an architectural complex that reflects the social structure of the Egyptian court, with its rich complexity and distant, inaccessible ruler. Its decoration displays the earliest examples of what will be major decorative themes in later palaces: nature as a metaphor for the power of the ruler, the conquest of foreign enemies, and the ruler's religious authority and connections. For Egyptians, the peaceful abundance of nature came about because of the pharaoh's power in creating *ma'at*, balance and order. This palace is designed and decorated to reflect that critical concept.

Egyptian palaces are rare survivals. We only have 17 royal palace sites from the 3,000 years of pharaonic rule, and Malkata is by all accounts one of the two most significant.

Location and Layout of the Palace

Malkata was Amenhotep III's principal residence. He constructed it in Upper Egypt at Thebes on the west bank of the Nile. It stood across from the Temple of Luxor, part of the religious complex that included the great Temple of Amun Ra at Karnak, the largest temple complex ever built in human history.

The palace complex itself was also enormous. It measured almost 7½ acres. In contrast, each ordinary house at the well-preserved ancient village of Deir el-Medina nearby measured 750 square feet.

Amenhotep III was pharaoh in the 14th century BC. According to most chronologies, he ruled from 1386 to 1349 BC during the 18th dynasty of the New Kingdom, Egypt's golden age. In fact, his reign is considered by many scholars to have been a—if not *the*—highpoint of Egyptian culture. It marked an extraordinary period of peace, prosperity, and construction. More than 200 of his portraits and many of his buildings survive.

The palace combined residential, administrative, and religious functions and spaces. As the home of the pharaoh, it was the central administrative structure in the state and marked the relocation of Egypt's capital from Memphis in the north to Thebes in the south. In addition to the official spaces, vast service areas are found throughout the palace.

The palace structures are built not directly along the Nile; instead, they line the shores of a massive artificial lake, now known as Birket Habu. The lake was connected to the Nile by a long canal and was connected to the rest of Egypt as well. The lake allowed for building materials and other bulk commodities to be brought to the palace by water—a much more efficient transport system than land. It also allowed the royal barque to bring Amenhotep, his wife Tiye, and their family to the palace directly.

In addition to the main block of palace buildings, the palace complex is connected by causeways—paved processional roads—to other buildings on the west bank, including the village of Deir el-Medina to the north. To the south, another causeway runs first by the scattered administrative buildings called the West Villas and then the royal workshops attached to the palace, past another village to the south. Then, about a mile away are two religious monuments: a platform for the Sed Festival and a royal rest house and associated buildings.

Since the Malkata Palace was first excavated in the 1880s, archaeologists have concluded that the palace served as the base for Amenhotep's Heb-Sed, or Sed Festival. This was a festival of renewal undertaken by a pharaoh when he reached his 30th year of rule and then periodically after that. It was a very old festival that had been held since the Old Kingdom, 1,800 years earlier than the reign of Amenhotep III.

The buildings to the south of the main palace of Malkata—the platform and the royal rest house—were there as components of the festival and the movement of the pharaoh through this space. Malkata is one of only three known locations for Sed Festivals, critical for the pharaoh's proclamation of right to continued rule.

The causeway finally connects the palace to Amenhotep III's burial site. This included a grand mortuary temple and the Colossi of Memnon, the 60-foot-tall seated statues of Amenhotep that still stand, marking the entrance to the temple.

The palace itself is organized in a series of large rectangular buildings that open off of even larger courtyards around which they are arranged. The loose organization and orientation of the buildings is probably a product of the 20-plus years it was under construction.

The cartouche of Amenhotep III's name is combined with the sun disk of Ra and the double ostrich feathered headdress of Amun.

The main block of the palace building contained the royal quarters. The pharaoh's residence is found in the southeast quarter of the structure and includes his private suites of rooms as well as more public areas, including audience and festival halls, extensive gardens, administrative offices, a library, kitchens, and numerous storerooms.

Amenhotep had many wives and children, including six foreign princesses. The palace also incorporated extensive quarters for all of them, their children, and their own households. The numbers living in the various quarters in the palace must have been in the thousands. Quarters were also provided in the palace for powerful high-ranking officials who helped run the Egyptian government (and all of their respective servants).

The suites and halls associated with Amenhotep III were the core of the palace and were the most significant in terms of governing. In addition to the royal residence, the palace was an administrative center and ceremonial stage for ritual appearances by the pharaoh. Amenhotep held formal audiences there, received foreign delegations, and made royal pronouncements from the palace.

The Main Throne Room

The Malkata Palace was designed with a range of audience rooms of a number of different sizes, from vast to intimate. Each of these rectangular rooms was provided with a dais, or throne platform, that rested in the center of one of the short sides of the room.

The architectural structure of the main throne room suite at Malkata reveals much about Egyptian pharaonic ideology. All visitors who attended an audience or royal appearance first passed through a columned hall that then led into the throne room. At the far end of the throne room was a raised dais that held the throne itself.

The architecture was deliberately designed to reflect that of temples, especially the Temple of Amun Ra across the river. The columned hall, throne room, and dais were equivalent to the hypostyle hall (the column-supported antechamber in the temple), sanctuary, and inner shrine for the cult statue of Amun in the temple.

Like the temple, the palace also operates as a microcosm of Egypt. The hall with columns shaped like marsh plants represents the primeval swamp, out of which the dais rises—exactly as the primordial mound did in Egyptian mythology on which the creator god, Atum, appeared.

Preserving *ma'at*—meaning everything in the natural world working as it should, in balance or harmony—was crucial to preserving a pharaoh's rule, and possibly his life. There's evidence that when things went sideways—for example, the Nile didn't flood as expected—a pharaoh might be killed. This concept is reflected in the decoration of the throne room.

Although not much of the Temple of Amun Ra survives today, we do have some tiles of geometric faience and gold decoration, similar to that found in the palace itself, notably in the robing room of the pharaoh.

Unlike temples in Assyrian palaces, which featured reliefs and wall paintings related to the deities and their divine status, the throne room at Malkata reinforces the authority of the pharaoh and the result of his rule, which ideally led to the preservation of *ma'at*.

The Malkata Palace reveals the ancient notion that there is no separation between the ruler and the man who held the position. The pharaoh had no personal life or separate identity from his office. He was pharaoh all the time.

For example, the plastered floors were painted with images of pools full of lotuses, fish, and ducks, around which a variety of plants grow. Animals are seen among the plants, and birds fly through the air. The entire composition shows ordered nature under the power of the pharaoh, who appears on his throne like the sun, Amun Ra, in the heavens—the creator and sustainer of life.

The layout of these scenes suggests that they are images of controlled nature, of the type found in the walled gardens of the palace with artificial ponds, precisely planted beds, and captured animals. They show the pharaoh's control over nature. Elements of the same motif are found throughout the palace.

Scenes showing the pharaoh triumphant over foreigners were carved on stone columns and door jambs and were probably originally painted on the exterior walls of the palace on the main entrance from the lake. Figures of bound foreign captives decorated the floor and the throne dais so that the king regularly walked over them and sat above them, establishing the appropriate relationship with them (from an Egyptian perspective).

A painting from the tomb of a priest of Amun shows Amenhotep and Tiye enthroned, seated on a dais in the palace. A frieze runs along the bottom of the painting of foreigners with their arms bound behind them. The foreigners are the generic types of kneeling alternating Nubians, Libyans, and Asiatics.

Banquet Rooms

In addition to receiving subjects and foreign dignitaries in the throne room, Amenhotep also hosted banquets in the palace. These royal banquets took place in a variety of dining spaces, in groups from the intimate to the very large.

Dining with the pharaoh carried with it some significant messages. It created a shared experience between the pharaoh and his guests that established a bond between them. However, although there was a bond, it wasn't a bond between equals. The pharaoh, as host, was always the superior individual in the relationship, even when the guests were foreign dignitaries.

The extent and grandeur of dining at Malkata is conveyed, at least indirectly, by the size of the food storerooms and kitchens found at the site, as well as by the very large number of blue-painted pottery pieces excavated there. These were the top of the line in serving ware in the 18th dynasty and are generally found at other sites only in small fragments. At Malkata, entire serving vessels are found, lavishly decorated and largely intact, indicating banquet facilities that could host dozens if not hundreds of people.

SUGGESTED READING

Fletcher, *Chronicle of a Pharaoh*.

Kozloff, *Amenhotep III*.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1 Reflecting on the parallels in layout and organization between the palace at Malkata and the Temple of Amun Ra across the Nile, do you see the palace as competing with the worship of Amun Ra or creating a connection between the pharaoh and god?

2 What complementary and/or contrasting relationships between Amenhotep III and foreigners do you see in the organization, layout, and decoration of the palace?

AMARNA: PALACE OF THE FIRST SUN KING

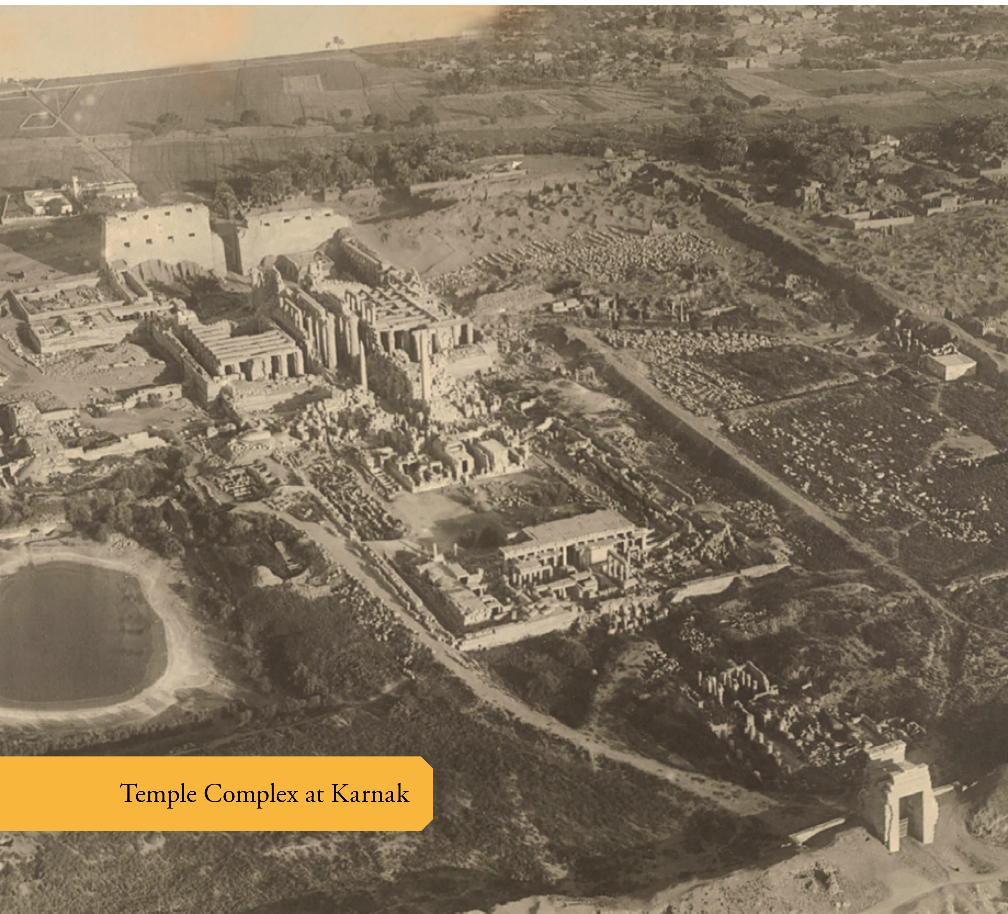
LECTURE 3

The revolutionary new capital city and palace of Amenhotep IV reflects his dramatic alterations in Egyptian religion and society. Renaming himself Akhenaten and dedicating himself to the worship of the sun disk—the Aten—he reevaluated what was needed in a palace and created spaces that flattened out the social pyramid of ancient Egypt. He did this by presenting the pharaoh himself as the only intercessor between humans and the great god Aten. Wide open spaces that allowed the pharaoh contact with his subjects in the beneficent rays of the sun define the architecture. Idealized images of these royal audiences decorated the walls of the palace, reinforcing their significance.

From Amenhotep to Akhenaten

When Amenhotep III passed away in about 1349 BC, he had ruled as pharaoh for almost 39 years. But he had shared the control of Egypt during that time with the extensive and powerful priesthood of Amun Ra.

Centered at the temple complex at Karnak, the largest temple ever built in human history, the Amun Ra priesthood controlled more than just the spiritual lives of Egyptians as intermediaries between mortals and the chief god of the Egyptian pantheon. They also controlled the Egyptians' lives. For example, the temples became centers for the collection, storage, and distribution of food. And as the temples acquired more land, slaves, and resources, their power grew.



Temple Complex at Karnak

Amenhotep III's son, Amenhotep IV, had a bold plan to change this forever. First, he declared himself Akhenaten. He abandoned the name and worship of Amun and dedicated himself to the worship of the sun disk, the Aten, instead of the 75 names and identities of Amun.

Second, he closed all of the temples of Amun Ra, abandoned his father's palace across the Nile from the Temple of Amun Ra at Karnak, and moved the capital of Egypt to a new location almost exactly halfway between the old capital Memphis in the north and Karnak in the south, where he created a capital city from scratch. That location is known by its modern name: Amarna.

The city of Amarna was laid out along the banks of the Nile with an area of 8 by 10 miles defined at the boundaries by limestone stele (standing slabs), each of which carried a relief image of the royal family worshipping the Aten. They literally defined the new capital. In fact, the city of Amarna was designed around the person and movements of the pharaoh and his family.

The city was laid out along a main road that runs like a spine through the entire city, paralleling the Nile to the west. The buildings in the city are laid out on either side of this so-called Royal Road. The name is modern, but it points out the structure of the city in a pattern designed to emphasize its use as a setting for royal procession.

The city was designed around the needs of the pharaoh and his family to be seen as the only necessary vessels of political and religious authority in the state. The city is a stage for the public performance of their roles.

The North Palace

The North Palace was deliberately located just a few kilometers away from palaces in the main city to the south in an attempt to redirect people's focus from the temples of Amun Ra to the pharaoh. Rather than going to a local Temple of Amun Ra for food distribution as they had in the past, at Amarna they turned to the temples of Aten or directly to the palaces of the pharaoh.

Also, this palace would be the first official residence encountered by anyone approaching the city from the north. It's probably intended as a liminal monument, marking the border and reestablishing one's relationship with the ruler as one entered.

The North Palace contained a series of open courts of various sizes, one of which was an altar court. Because the Aten was the sun disk, he was worshipped in the open and offerings were left for him where his rays could touch them. There was also a series of quarters for cattle. The cattle were for sacrifices to the Aten, after which most of the meat would be distributed to those in attendance.

Visitors entering the palace found themselves in a massive courtyard. Beyond that is a garden court, which is dominated by a large pool of water surrounded by a line of trees. This central court is an elaborate garden of the type known from earlier temples and palaces, and it must have closely resembled the surviving wall paintings that show these palace gardens.

As a carefully cultivated garden, it provided green space in the palace and also conveyed the grandeur of the pharaoh, whose space one entered through the artificial landscaping. The wall paintings in this central zone reinforced the theme of nature, with imagery of typically Egyptian plants and animals in a structured garden setting.

Then there were the royal suite of apartments and reception and throne room—the core of which is a square-columned hall leading to a transverse hypostyle, or narrow columned hall, that opens onto a very small throne room with a raised dais on the back wall. The structure of this suite of three rooms echoes that of the throne room in Malkata, the palace of Akhenaten's father. But it also closely resembles the core of the Temple of Amun Ra at Karnak.

The Great Palace and the Great Temple of the Aten

The main official palace was in the central part of the city lying along the river on the west side. The core of the city included the Great Palace and the Great Temple of the Aten, the largest complex in the city. This core of the city was a stage for the pharaoh's power and for rituals that reinforced his connection to the Aten and the benefits that flowed through him to the people of Egypt.

> The North Palace was a microcosm of the main city to the south.

The temples of the Aten were designed superficially like the great temples of Amun Ra. They were organized with processional routes and increasingly restricted spaces as one moved through the temple. These provided personal contact with the god to only the most elite members of the community.

Here, however, as befitting the temple of the sun disk, the entire complex was unroofed. All the worship occurred in the open, and the sacrifices and offering tables were laid out in massive courtyards.

The Temple of the Aten supplied rations to the inhabitants of the central part of the city. The pharaoh has taken a page from the playbook of the priest of Amun Ra, only now the food for the inhabitants of Amarna comes from the Temple of the Aten and the benefits of this flow through the pharaoh personally.

Rather than requiring the intercession of hundreds of priests, the sun disk's blessings flowed to the royal family, and from them to their subjects across the kingdom. This made Akhenaten and his family the only intermediaries needed for the entire kingdom and its citizens to thrive.

We have a good idea of the structure of the Great Temple from excavation and from images of Akhenaten sacrificing in the sanctuary with the temple architecture around him. He's always the largest figure in a scene, often surrounded by smaller figures that make up the components of Egyptian society, including soldiers, priests, and officials.

In addition to celebrating the Aten, the city was designed as a stage for pharaonic display, as seen in the city layout, palace architecture, and art found across the capital, from royal spaces to private tombs.

Much larger than any private dwelling, the Great Palace demonstrates the vast distance between the pharaoh and the rest of society. Its plan consisted of a succession of flat-roofed buildings, courts, and gardens as well as larger pillared reception halls, some decorated with colossal statues of Akhenaten.

The King's House was, like the North Palace, a rectangular walled enclosure comprised of open courts and rooms. But this was not a private space in any way. The pharaoh was a public official all the time. He did not have a private persona and therefore did not have truly private space.

The King's House is connected to the Great Palace across the Royal Road by a bridge whose use seems to have been restricted to the royal family and close retainers. In the center of the bridge is the Window of Appearances, a palace balcony where the pharaoh makes regular appearances alone or with his family to reinforce their connection to him—and to his children's possible eventual succession.

The open-air review of troops and representatives of empire also took place here, to reinforce the connection between the pharaoh and these critical components of society.

The so-called Coronation Hall on the far south edge of the palace complex was a later addition to the palace by Akhenaten. It has a relatively square plan featuring an enormous number of piers covering the whole interior, an arrangement that is strikingly similar to that of the later Persian apadana, a great columned hall, at the Persian palace at Persepolis.

Akhenaten's revolution collapsed at his death and his visionary new capital of Egypt was abandoned, leaving it to be rediscovered without overbuilding centuries later. It reveals for us a moment in Egypt and the power of architecture and art in a revolutionary plan to redesign the entire Egyptian state. The palaces of Akhenaten—stages for the display of the pharaoh—were critical components of that plan and show just how palaces reflect the needs and values of their designers and occupants.

SUGGESTED READING

Kemp, *The City of Akhenaten and Nefertiti*.

Spence, "Court and Palace in Ancient Egypt."

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1 How do the palaces and neighboring temples at Amarna exemplify the revolutionary social structure that Akhenaten imposed on the kingdom of Egypt?

2 How were the palaces organized to present the pharaoh as the sole transmitter of the benefits of the Aten, the sun disk, to those in his kingdom?

PHAISTOS: PALACES BETWEEN ASIA AND EUROPE

LECTURE 4

The Bronze Age (ca. 2000–1200 BC) palaces on Crete belonged to a civilization that is still tremendously mysterious to us: the Minoan civilization. This civilization developed on the island of Crete in the Bronze Age from about 2600 BC until about 1400 BC, when they were conquered by the Mycenaeans, Bronze Age Greeks from the mainland. The Minoans were not Greek, but were a civilization that developed independently on Crete beginning in the Neolithic. They have a unique form of architecture, palace structure, language and writing system, and religion. Nevertheless, they represent a key intermediary between Egypt and the Near East and Greece.

Four Great Minoan Palaces

Phaistos, on the south coast of Crete, is one of the four great palace sites on the island, along with Knossos and Malia to the north and Zakros on the east coast. These four represent a development toward centralizing habitation and authority in Crete beginning ca. 2000 BC, when populations on Crete were expanding.

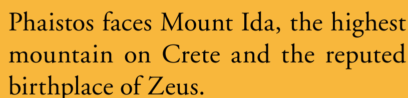
Communities were established under the control of a powerful local family, and their palaces served as residences and administrative centers. But they also served as complexes for the collection, storage, and redistribution of commodities, such as grain, olive oil, and wine. These reinforced the power and position of the ruling families, as they shared them with subordinates as well as with neighboring rulers.

The palaces generally resemble Near Eastern and Egyptian examples, but their unique form probably originally derived from the needs of the palatial economic system. This system includes the unique Minoan agricultural production and storage facilities. It also includes the specific sorts of craft products created in these complexes, the most important of which included pottery, carved wood and ivory, and textile manufacture.

The development of skilled craftspeople at these palace sites probably reflected the needs of these local rulers to have and give and exchange high-status materials, such as fine pottery, worked gold, and fine woven textiles.

Writing developed on Crete in ca. 1700 BC to facilitate the administration of these palace complexes, as had happened earlier in the Mesopotamian palaces.

The four great Minoan palaces differ in a number of ways, but all share certain features. Each was constructed on a hilltop in a multistory complex that consisted of a large, rectangular, central courtyard oriented toward a nearby mountain peak. The courtyard was a multifunctional space and served as a stage for ritual performances, political or military assemblies, and economic activities, such as textile weaving.



Phaistos faces Mount Ida, the highest mountain on Crete and the reputed birthplace of Zeus.

The palace façade facing the courtyard was designed to be impressive. It rose two or more stories high and was built from carefully cut blocks of stone. The façade featured entryways, projecting porches, and large open windows. It was clearly not designed for defense.

That central court was surrounded by a cell-like structure of groups of rooms, corridors, and storerooms on several floors. The entire palace complex was divided into well-defined, functional areas for religion, storage, reception, domestic life, and craft production.

Three of the four Minoan palaces—Phaistos, Knossos, and Malia—also feature a western court, which was the outer face of the palace, its presentation to the surrounding community and to visitors. It, too, had a cut-stone façade, although with fewer windows, probably as a security feature.

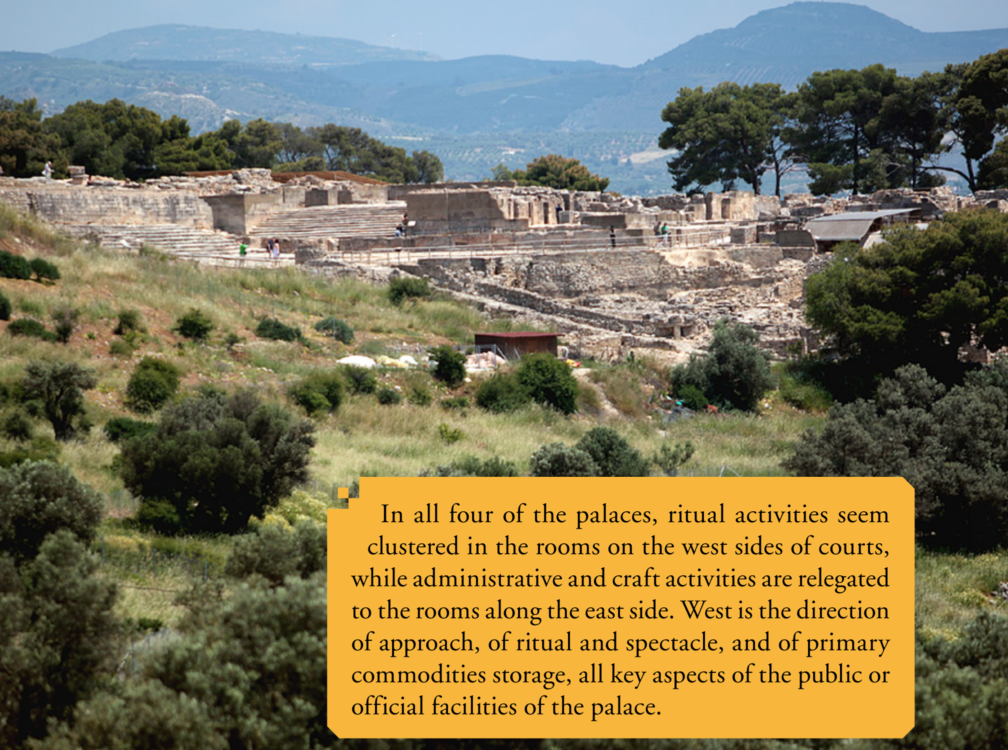
Phaistos, unlike the other palaces, was a single construction from the start, not a later accumulation of rooms and spaces into a whole.

Although to most eyes Minoan palaces look like a jumble of rooms and spaces probably created over time and lacking any overall organization, they were in fact planned and executed to fulfill that overall plan. The rooms, however, were organized into small suites, or clusters of rooms, that fulfilled particular functions.

The Central Courtyard at Phaistos

The central courtyard at Phaistos is the largest space in the palace. It serves the purpose of a light well, allowing air and light to pass into the rooms on all three stories that surround it, but a smaller open space would accomplish the same thing.

The court for large assemblies of people is as large as the one at Knossos and the other palaces. These people may have come together for religious rituals (either to participate or to spectate) as well as for other purposes, such as dancing and Minoan bull leaping.



In all four of the palaces, ritual activities seem clustered in the rooms on the west sides of courts, while administrative and craft activities are relegated to the rooms along the east side. West is the direction of approach, of ritual and spectacle, and of primary commodities storage, all key aspects of the public or official facilities of the palace.

A suite of three rooms lines the west side of the courtyard, occupying the southern half of the west side. The excavators and subsequent archaeologists conclude that they are ritual spaces.

This suite includes two rooms opening directly onto the courtyard, with gypsum benches lining their north and west walls. One room had a central pillar, a symbol found in Minoan religious spaces, while the other held a low table in the center of the room, clearly an offering table. Similar rooms are found at other sites, and archaeologists refer to them as bench sanctuaries after the major feature they have in common.

It is concluded that these rooms were used by a body of priests or priestesses to view events taking place in the central courtyard. The offering table was probably not used by the priests and priestesses, but by lower-status participants to leave offerings witnessed by the priests. The offerings, found at a number of Minoan shrines, include statuettes and cups that held libations of wine.

The Minoans worshiped trees and pillars. Images of columns or pillars are present in much of their religious art, and goddesses are often shown adjacent to trees in religious imagery. Some have questioned whether the Minoans actually worshipped pillars—it does seem odd. But the historic period Greeks erected columns in their sanctuaries and suspended various offerings on them, either tied or nailed, so it's not too improbable.

The pillar crypt room contained two lustral basins, which resemble small-scale indoor swimming pools set into the floor and entered by a short stairway. The original excavators of Phaistos imagined some sort of ceremonial bath taking place in them, but it's also possible that they are sunken chambers like those in the palace of the Egyptian pharaoh Akhenaten at Amarna.

The Western Court

Like the central court, the western court at Phaistos was a space for ritual and theatrical entertainments or spectacles. The rituals that took place in the western court, as well as in the central court and associated rooms, were probably intended to reinforce the spiritual authority of the ruler of the palace as well as his political authority.

It's generally concluded that these rituals were centralized expressions of previously rural activities, and they reinforced the authority of the king over the wide landscape he claimed in southern Crete.

Another component of the ruler's reinforced authority is economic. On the west side of the palace were the storerooms. The enormous food storage areas provide conclusive evidence that the complex controlled food production, storage, and distribution for the region.

In Egypt, this was generally the responsibility of temple complexes across the country and reinforced their power over the populace. In Crete, it served to stabilize the control and authority of the king, whose power combined religious and civil components.

Estimates place the urban population in the palace at Phaistos and surrounding city at 40,000. This means that the palace anchored the second largest urban population center in Bronze Age Crete after Knossos.

The Royal Apartments

At Phaistos—unlike the other palaces, where the royal domestic quarters were on the east side of the central court—the so-called Royal Apartments are in the north part of the palace.

Much of the Royal Apartment complex was created using what architectural historians call the pier-door-pier system. This consists of a unit of double doors flanked by two square piers. The doors folded back to allow a large opening between rooms.

The system was replicated in a line of such units, and this allowed for the maximum amount of light to pass into rooms on the ground floor of this enormous multistory complex. Adjustments of temperature and access into spaces were controlled by pier-door-pier systems by closing various doors to restrict movement, as well as light and air. This allowed complex seasonal and functional alterations of interior space.

This construction was extraordinary for its time, and it allowed the royal reception spaces to be modular. They could be opened or closed to create larger or smaller spaces, depending on the needs of the moment. This means that the royal suite was more than a residential space for the rulers at Phaistos; it was also where they received visitors as individuals or in small groups.

Craft Areas

Craft areas—located in the northeast section of the palace—were designed to create objects that would enhance the ruler's status and his or her connections to other palaces and states. Minoan wheel-thrown fine pottery is found far from home, including in Egypt, as is its jewelry and wall paintings, which were probably created by Minoan painters who were sent to work there.

Unlike the numerous frescoes found at Knossos, there is a lack of wall paintings at Phaistos, which used so much more stone for walls that the incidence of plastered rubble is much lower. Therefore, the more luxurious building materials led to a less decorated space. Luxury goods were used to create or reinforce social, economic, and political relations across the eastern Mediterranean.

The Minoan palaces—in fact, the entire civilization—fell under the control of the Bronze Age culture from the Greek mainland: the Mycenaeans. This conquest occurred beginning in ca. 1450 BC. Most of the Minoan centers still functioned, but under the occupation of Greeks.

SUGGESTED READING

Preziosi and Hitchcock, *Aegean Art and Architecture*.

Shaw, *Elite Minoan Architecture*.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1 The lack of a large throne room is a debated feature of Minoan palaces. Does this represent a different notion of kingship or the primacy of a religious over civic identity for the ruler?

2 Should we consider the lack of symmetry and axiality as reflections of the Minoan social structure or merely of its architectural traditions? What arguments and evidence support your conclusion?

PALACE OF NESTOR AT PYLOS AND BRONZE AGE GREECE

LECTURE 5

The palace at Pylos in southwestern Greece—a building complex of more than 100 rooms—is one of the oldest and largest Bronze Age palaces in continental Europe. The Greek kings who ruled here lived in a vast administrative center organized around a three-room complex called a megaron, the focus of which was a throne room. Much of the complex is decorated in imagery of war and hunting, showing the cultural practices these kings relied on for their authority. The finds from the palace show that commodities were stored and produced here, including large numbers of textiles, while some of the larger spaces were used for massive banquets that allowed the king to display his wealth and generosity and to bind him to the ruled and to his peer monarchs.

Archaeologists discovered a shaft grave—a high-status Bronze Age burial—of a man from about 1450 BC in a field adjacent to the palace at Pylos. The man in the grave was buried with about 1500 expensive luxury grave goods, either imported from or based on objects from Crete. This finding illustrates a few major points:

- Minoan Crete, the non-Greek culture on that island, was more advanced than the Greek culture on mainland Greece at that time. As a result, elite Greeks imported luxury goods from Crete and adopted them into their culture as a means of demonstrating elite status.

- The Mycenaeans, unlike the Minoans, were a society ruled by and organized under a warrior system, perhaps even a caste. Elite warriors—both local rulers (kings) and their military—identified themselves first and foremost as warriors. This is seen in their art and in their grave goods, and it informs our understanding of their palace structure.

Mycenaean versus Minoan Palaces

Mycenaean palaces superficially resemble Minoan palaces. The building materials and architecture are very similar, suggesting copying Minoan predecessors. The exterior walls are squared blocks of limestone secured with clamps. Like the Minoan ones before them, these blocks were cut in a V shape for better fit.

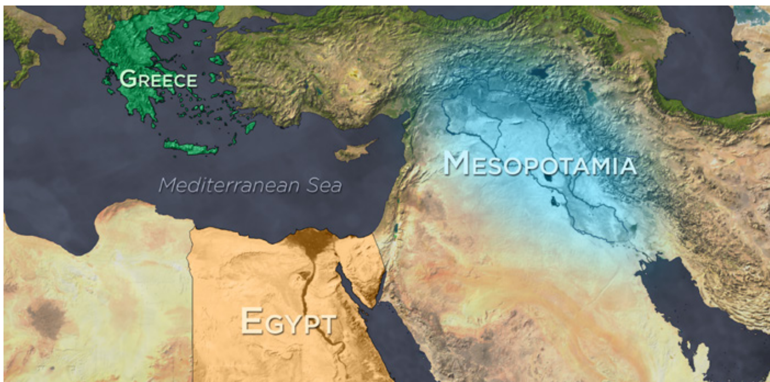
One block at Pylos had a double axe carved on it, a possible sign of a Minoan mason at work there. A horn of consecration, the Minoan religious symbol, was also found built into a wall, demonstrating strong Minoan influence, at least in the construction phases of the palace. The lower-story interior walls are largely constructed of timber and rubble core with plaster over it, while the upper floors are made of mud brick, again echoing Minoan practice.

Mycenaean palaces also superficially follow the layout of Minoan palaces. Specifically, they are organically arranged with suites of rooms around a large, rectangular courtyard. To the west of the palace is a second courtyard.

Looking closer, however, it becomes clear that while the Mycenaean Greeks were probably inspired by the Minoans, their palace architecture varied in significant ways—and that those ways reflect the cultural priorities, political systems, and social structure of these people.

The palaces are much more compact than Minoan palaces or the Egyptian or Near Eastern examples to which they are often compared. In fact, the main building in the four-building palace complex of Pylos would fit in the large courtyard of the largest Minoan palace at Knossos.

That size is a significant indicator of social structure. A topographical map of the eastern Mediterranean shows that the largest palaces, found in Egypt and Mesopotamia, have the widest-open areas and the biggest empires. In contrast, Greece is more rugged, so lots of smaller communities dominated by local palaces and kings sprang up in mainland Greece in the smaller valleys between the mountain ranges. Greece had smaller palaces because it controlled smaller populations and had less territory due to the topography of the region.

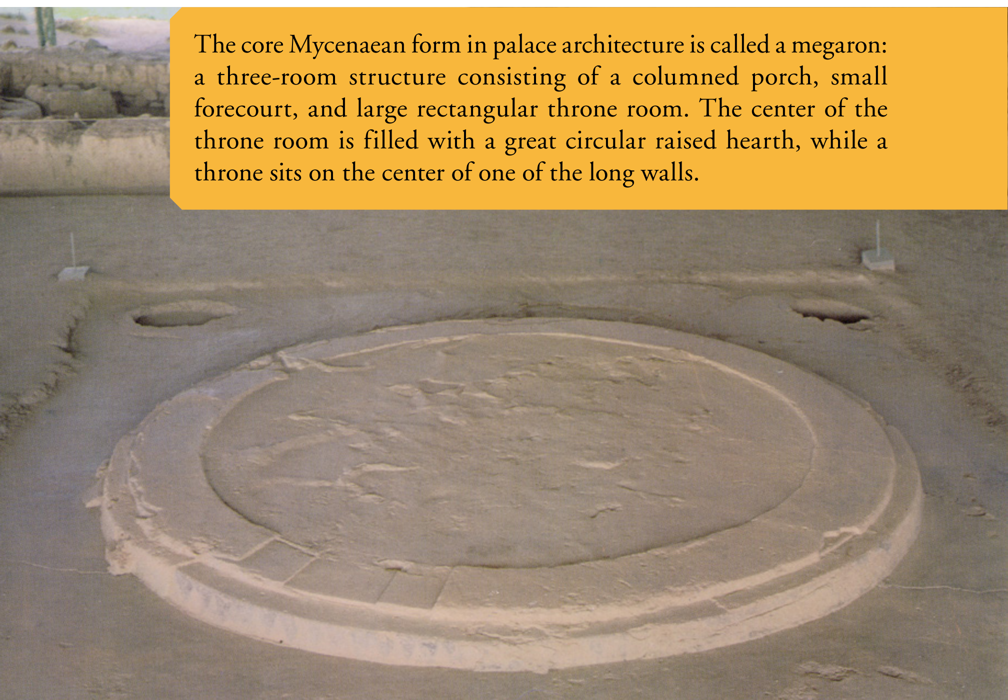


The Palace at Pylos

Perhaps the best-preserved Greek Bronze Age palace is the one at Pylos in southwestern Greece. It is one of the oldest and largest Bronze Age palaces in all of continental Europe. The so-called Palace of Nestor—named by the excavators after Nestor, the mythical wise old king of Pylos in Homer's epic poems—is a palace complex of more than 100 rooms and was built in about 1300 BC.

The main building is an irregular rectangle with the main entrance on the south side. To the west of the main courtyard in the palace is a line of rooms. The first two were the records rooms of the palace, where more than 1,000 clay tablets were found. The next two were storerooms for banqueting supplies.

To the north of the courtyard is the most important suite of rooms in the palace: the megaron. The center of the throne room in the megaron is filled with a great circular raised hearth, and a throne sits on the center of one of the long walls, to the right of the door. The large stuccoed hearth dominates the center of the throne room.



The core Mycenaean form in palace architecture is called a megaron: a three-room structure consisting of a columned porch, small forecourt, and large rectangular throne room. The center of the throne room is filled with a great circular raised hearth, while a throne sits on the center of one of the long walls.

The plastered floor of the hearth was subdivided into more than 100 small squares, each painted with a nonfigural pattern, perhaps intended to imitate the slabs of stone found in Minoan palaces. The only square with a figure in it contains an octopus, a common design in Minoan art—common, too, in the painted pottery found at Pylos.

One wall of the throne room is covered by a procession fresco, which was typical of palaces and displays of royal power. It consists of lines of figures bringing gifts or offerings to the king, who isn't shown. Such frescoes survive from Egyptian and Minoan tombs and palaces, and stone reliefs of offering bearers are found in later palaces, such as the Persian palace at Persepolis.

These figures are the surrogates of the visitors, reminding them of the power of the king and of the power differential between him and those who visit this space, bringing him gifts that acknowledge his power.

Another element of the throne room wall painting is more specifically Minoan: the inclusion of two large bulls. One is very much alive, apparently walking in front of or as part of the gift-bearer procession. The other image—which may be the same bull slightly later in its soon-to-be short life—is a trussed-up bull on an offering table or altar, prepared for sacrifice. Bulls are a common motif in Minoan art, and in particular, a similar bull trussed for sacrifice is illustrated on a sarcophagus from Hagia Triadha in southern Crete.

The east wall of the throne room, the one with the throne in its center, was painted with one or two pairs of lions and griffins flanking the throne. It is remarkably similar to the contemporary throne room at Knossos, where the throne was flanked by painted griffins in the wall painting on either side of the gypsum throne.

There was a long tradition in the eastern Mediterranean of pairs of animals flanking seated rulers or deities. They may indicate protection or the power of the ruler over these beasts. Griffins seem a particular symbol of Mycenaean rulers, and they are found flanking symbols of Bronze Age Greek royal power in a range of artistic media.

The megaron suite combines aspects more familiar to us from a throne room or audience chamber, as in the Egyptian palaces of Amenhotep III or IV. The king would entertain here as well as perform more formal functions of office, and by accepting his hospitality or honors, his subordinates, peers, or heralds would accept his authority. Nothing like this is found in Minoan palaces.

Because the basic layout of the palace reflects that of Minoan palaces, the western courtyard and rooms around it might have a religious use, as they did in Minoan palaces. It's possible that the king appeared here as a priest, supervising or performing religious rituals.

There's evidence that the western court and the rooms around it were used for ritual and/or social banqueting. Two of the small rooms that lay between the main and western court contained stacks of kylikes, the stemmed drinking cups used for drinking wine in Greek banquets. The fragmentary frescoes from these rooms seemed also to illustrate ritual banqueting.

These 600 cups for drinking wine were stored near where they were used—close to the western court—and the number of them indicates the size of the ritual or social banqueting that took place.

Another indicator of the size of the population of the palace and its surrounding land is the size of the storage rooms. The main palace building is surrounded with large storage rooms that contained vast quantities of agricultural commodities, especially stockpiles of olive oil and wine.

The storage rooms support the idea that the palace was an economic as well as a political and religious center. Commodities from the lands under the control of the king of Pylos were gathered and stored, ready for redistribution—either in banquets hosted by the king or decanted into smaller jars and sent out in trade or as rations to smaller communities.

Clay Tablets

In 1939, Carl Blegen from the University of Cincinnati began excavating the site of Pylos and immediately hit the palace. In fact, on the first day of excavation, he discovered the most important find of the entire dig: clay tablets. These were the first of eventually more than 1,000 tablets covered with lines of Bronze Age writing found at Pylos.

Unlike Phaistos or any other Minoan palaces on Crete, Pylos was founded and occupied by Greek speakers. This was only proven conclusively with the translation of these tablets, and their writing system was referred to as Linear B.

Michael Ventris and John Chadwick, who accomplished their translation in the early 1950s, proved that—rather than a variation of Minoan writing, referred to as Linear A—Linear B was a Mycenaean form of written Greek. The Mycenaean Greeks adopted the writing system of Minoan Crete with some changes to accommodate their different language, so writing is an inheritance from the Minoans. Linear B disappeared with the destruction of the palaces in ca. 1200 BC. The discovery that Linear B was Greek pushed the date of written Greek back about 600 years.

The palace at Pylos reopened to the public in 2016 with a new roof to preserve the site and new walkways throughout to allow visits without damaging it. There's also a small museum nearby with some material from the palace.

Some of the most important finds, including some Linear B tablets, are on display on the main floor of the National Archaeological Museum of Athens.

The contents of the tablets reveal many details about palace administration, the impetus for the adoption of writing. Eventually, scholars realized that the Pylos tablets were written by professional scribes, and almost all of their texts focused on palace administration. These included lists of goods, statements of delivery, and records of commercial transactions that tell us about trade, agriculture, population, and wealth.

The palace at Pylos didn't last. None of the Mycenaean palaces did. Massive fires destroyed all of them in about 1200 BC. The fires also ironically preserved some evidence for us.

The clay Linear B tablets, which weren't supposed to be permanent records but temporary accounts, were fired into terra-cotta, preserving them for discovery by the excavators 3,000 years later.

If you want to know more about this catastrophic destruction, you can read the whole depressing story in *1177 B.C.: The Year Civilization Collapsed*, a superb book by Great Courses professor Eric Cline.

SUGGESTED READING

Davis and Bennet, eds., *Sandy Pylos*.

Preziosi and Hitchcock, *Aegean Art and Architecture*.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. In what ways do the layout and organization of the palace reinforce the notions of a strong kingship? Are these reinforced by the banqueting evidence from Pylos?
2. How do the storage areas for bulk commodities serve to define the regional power of the Mycenaean kings?

THE ASSYRIAN PALACE AT NIMRUD: EMPIRE IN STONE

LECTURE 6

The Assyrian palaces are found in northern Mesopotamia, on the banks of the Tigris River, close to the modern city of Mosul. The palace of Ashurnasirpal II at Nimrud gives us the first chance since the end of the Bronze Age to see the personality and public identity of a ruler reflected in his palace architecture and decoration. Ashurnasirpal II was an unapologetic imperialist, and virtually everything—from the ivory furniture and royal jewelry to the decorative reliefs on the walls—was designed to reinforce his imperial pretensions.

Unfortunately, much of the Assyrian palace at Nimrud, along with the site itself, fell under the control of ISIS in northern Iraq, and the local museum and remaining material left in situ were demolished by ISIS. The palace itself was the site of multiple barrel bomb explosions.

Fortunately, much of the palace was excavated in the 19th century by an Englishman named Austen Henry Layard, who shipped tons of material to the British Museum in London, where much of it is on permanent display.

The excavation didn't rise to modern professional standards. Because the goal was treasure, not knowledge, Layard and his team didn't dig stratigraphically, by layer—nor did they clear room by room, as the excavators of Pompeii did. Instead, they cleared much of the site of Nimrud through a few miles of tunnels in the mound, removing more than 600 wall facing slabs carved with scenes in relief, major pieces of architectural sculpture, and countless smaller objects.

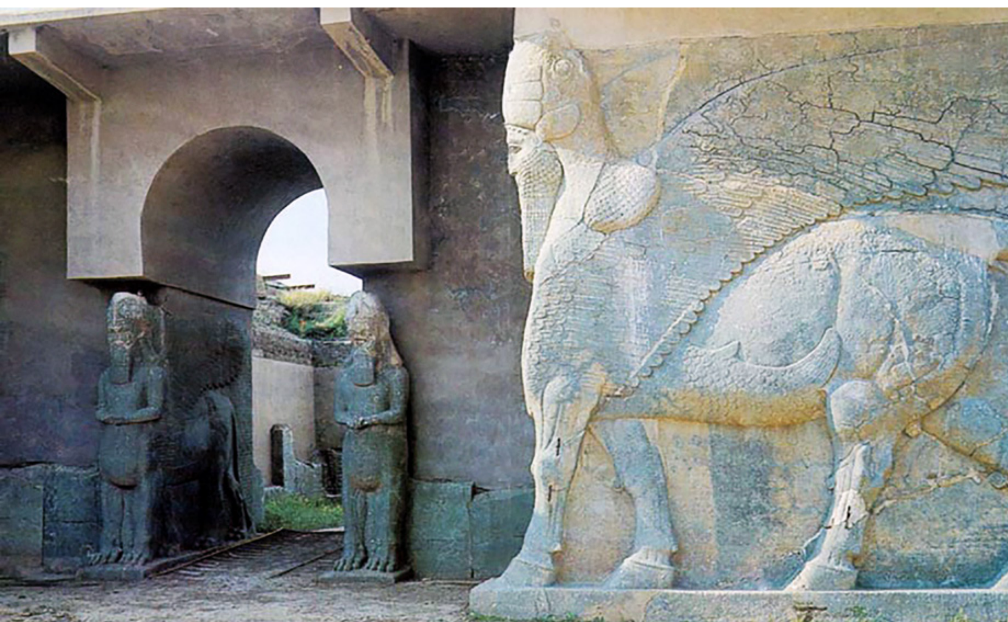
The Northwest Palace

The father-and-son kings of Assyria, Ashurnasirpal II (r. 883–859 BC) and Shalmaneser III (r. 858–824 BC), built their capital and palace at Nimrud on the east bank of the Tigris River, creating a new urban center and a stage on which the king could perform acts that reinforced his power.

Its major residence, the Northwest Palace, would remain an Assyrian royal residence for nearly 200 years. This sprawling palace contained a massive throne room, receiving rooms, a central court, and the king's apartments, with many of the rooms lined with large stone facing panels carved with scenes that reinforced the kings' roles as ruler, hunter, warrior, and priest.

The new capital city, called Kalhu by the Assyrians, was laid out in a rough rectangle defined by a massive mud-brick fortification wall. Within that city was a smaller walled citadel that was built on a higher mound in the southwest corner of the city. It contained the royal palaces and major temples, although the palaces dwarfed the temples in size and grandeur.

Notably, the military identity of the Assyrian kings is separately proclaimed by a second citadel in the southeast corner of the city—with a fortress, arsenal, store rooms, smaller palace, and a parade ground with a raised dais for the king's throne.



The Northwest Palace of Ashurnasirpal II, in the northwest part of the southwest citadel, was built on a platform of 120 courses of mud brick that elevated it about 50 feet (15 meters) above the surrounding city, making it the highest structure in the city and an object of spectacle itself.

An extraordinary inscription found on the walls of the palace describes its construction in the words of Ashurnasirpal II:

> I built thereon [a palace with] halls of cedar, cypress, juniper, boxwood, teak, terebinth, and tamarisk as my royal dwelling and for the enduring leisure life of my lordship. Beasts of the mountains and the seas, which I had fashioned out of white limestone and alabaster, I had set up in its gates. I made it [the palace] fittingly imposing. I bordered them all around with bronze studs. I mounted doors of cedar, cypress, juniper, and terebinth in its gates. Silver, gold, tin, bronze, iron, my own spoils from the lands over which I ruled, as much as possible, I brought and placed it all therein.

Although the structure was largely made of mud brick, the inscription celebrated the wood used, not the wall materials. The wood made up the doors, gates, window frames, roof beams, and so on. But it was also imported. It represents the king as ruler of an empire, a vast area from which he draws all the natural resources at his command to build this grand palace.

The gates were designed to be imposing, rising as much as 20 feet high, made from imported cedar. The gates were also covered with bronze bands, hammered into relief friezes that were nailed to the doors. Although the scenes on many of the surviving bands are military, the episodes illustrated seem to be actual historical events, not the generalized scenes of mayhem often found on Egyptian reliefs. Assyrians passing through the gates would be reassured at the power of their king, while foreigners would be threatened.

One of the most notable and consistent elements of Assyrian palaces were the walled gardens, built on the banks of major rivers so that palace builders could create canals and elaborate irrigation systems to water the gardens. The antecedent to this might have been the gardens attached to the great temples and palaces of the Egyptian pharaohs, watered by canals fed from the Nile. Later, the tradition continues with the Persian and then Greek rulers of this area.

The major gates and palace entrances are protected by apotropaic figures (that is, figures designed to avert evil from a place) called a *lamassu*—a protective deity with a human head, the body of a lion or bull, and the wings of an eagle. These towering figures were as much as 20 feet (6 meters) high and were intended to project an imposing image at the entrance to the palace and to key public areas on the way to the throne and receiving rooms.

The Northwest Palace is organized into sets of rooms around open courtyards that were designed to allow large numbers of people to gather as well as to let light and air into the surrounding rooms. Given the palace's mud-brick construction, the walls are thick and windows nonexistent. The palace is roughly divided into two zones: The northern section contains the public rooms and spaces, and the southern section contains the private ones.

The rooms throughout were built in a range of squares and rectangles of differing sizes, with no symmetry or axiality—nor do Assyrian palaces parallel the layout seen in the Egyptian palaces with the *adyton*, the small, enclosed, exclusive room inspired by Egyptian temple architecture.

In Egyptian palaces such as that of Amenhotep III, visitors had to pass through a series of hallways, courtyards, and great columned halls before finally reaching the throne room as a destination deep in the palace. There is even a smaller version of that in the Mycenaean palace at Pylos. At Nimrud, it's quite the opposite.

Beginning with Austen Henry Layard and continuing with subsequent excavators and investigators through to the late 20th century, more than 20,000 ivories and pieces of ivories have been recovered from the palace of Nimrud.

While many of the ivories have Assyrian artistic motifs, most aren't purely Assyrian and have Egyptian and Phoenician features. It seems that they were made for the Assyrians by foreign craftsmen who created works that melded the artistic styles and subjects of the Near East.

The northernmost element of the palace that survives is the Outer Court, a large rectangular courtyard that marked the north edge of the public spaces in the palace. Its specific use, besides generalized gatherings, is suggested by the banquet inscription, found carved on one of the gypsum wall slabs in a niche off of the courtyard. The 154-line cuneiform inscription gives an account of the dedicatory celebrations once the palace was completed:

> He prepared a banquet of 1,000 fattened head of cattle, 1,000 calves, 10,000 stable sheep, 15,000 lambs – for my lady Ishtar alone 200 head of cattle and 1,000 sihhu-sheep …

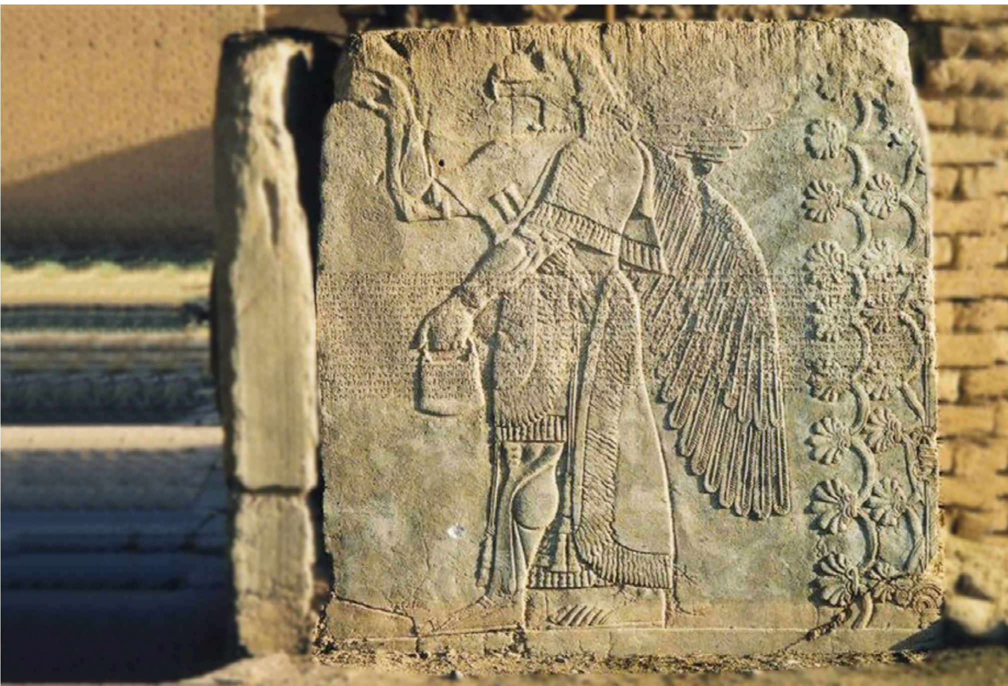
The quote continues, listing pretty much every farm or wild animal from the Middle East, along with loaves of bread, jars of beer, eggs, etc. The list of vegetables, spices, and condiments is where the imperialism is clearest in the foodstuffs. These items are explicitly imported from areas that Ashurnasirpal himself conquered—or claimed to have conquered—that stretched from the coast of the Mediterranean in the west to Iran in the east.

The banquet inscription, which demonstrates the king's generosity and reach, notes that he invited guests from his realm as well as surrounding areas, both official delegates and (allegedly) ordinary people. Acting as host shows his beneficence as well as his wealth and control.

In 1989, Iraqi archaeologist Muzahim Mahmoud Hussein announced a discovery at the Northwest Palace of three burial vaults of Assyrian queens. These are the first intact Assyrian royal tombs ever found.

The Throne Room

The throne room—which runs east to west, with the throne set on a raised dais in the center of the short east wall—is lined with slabs of gypsum that were set in place along the lower parts of the walls and then carved. In each of the corners is a relief of the Assyrian Tree of Life. These are flanked by winged divine spirit figures, often called genies. Some of these figures were otherwise human; others had bird heads. These figures held a bucket and pine cone, which were tools for either fertilizing the tree or for sprinkling the king with their magical protection.



The long north and south walls are lined with slabs with two registers of reliefs showing the king triumphant in battle and in big-game hunting. Inscriptions divide the wall panels into long, horizontal registers—actually, an inscription, repeated across the panels. This is the so-called standard inscription, found in at least 400 copies carved across the gypsum slabs on the palace walls. It includes statements of the king and his greatness as a warrior:

> Ashurnasirpal, … great king, strong king, king of the universe, king of Assyria; … marvelous shepherd, fearless in battle, unopposable mighty floodtide, king who subdues those insubordinate to him, he who rules all peoples, strong male who treads upon the necks of his foes, trampler of all enemies, he who smashes the forces of the rebellious, … and has conquered all lands, gained dominion over all the highlands and received their tribute, capturer of hostages, he who is victorious over all countries ...

The concept of the king as victor over all people is reinforced by the details of the battle scenes—details that visitors in the throne room would most likely pick up on, and understand the implicit threats therein. The reliefs and inscriptions should not be considered accurate documents; they are propaganda.

SUGGESTED READING

Larsen, *The Conquest of Assyria*.

Oates and Oates, *Nimrud*.

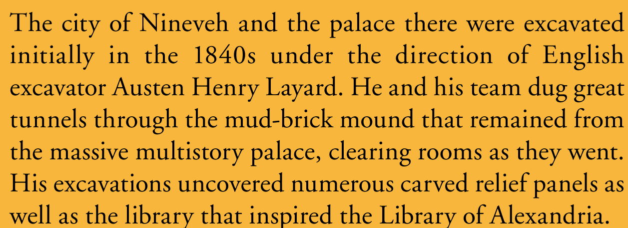
QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. How did the selection of plants and animals for the walled garden serve to reinforce the proclamations of imperial power of Ashurnasirpal?
2. The presentation of the Assyrian king and queen were critical to support their rule. In what way did the decoration of the palace, jewelry, and personal possessions of the queens proclaim their status as monarchs and their worthiness to rule?

NINEVEH: THE ARCHITECTURE OF ASSYRIAN POWER

LECTURE 7

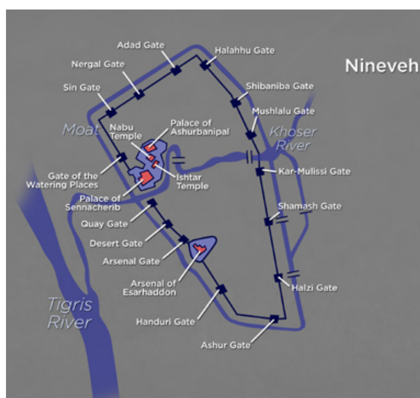
The king Sennacherib built the final Assyrian royal palace and its surrounding gardens at Nineveh. The palace dominated a city of more than 100,000 people—the largest in the world at that time—and its design, decoration, and amenities were created to evoke a sense of wonder from visitors. The palace was largely constructed of mud brick, but its walls were lined with colossal carved-stone relief panels that featured by-then traditional images of war and big-game hunting.



The city of Nineveh and the palace there were excavated initially in the 1840s under the direction of English excavator Austen Henry Layard. He and his team dug great tunnels through the mud-brick mound that remained from the massive multistory palace, clearing rooms as they went. His excavations uncovered numerous carved relief panels as well as the library that inspired the Library of Alexandria.

The City of Nineveh

Nineveh was founded on the east bank of the Tigris River by the Assyrian king Sennacherib. It's now on the outskirts of Mosul, the largest city in northern Iraq. In the mid-7th century BC, at its height, it was the largest city in the world—in fact, the largest city the world had ever seen. The area of the city was about 1,850 acres (about 750 hectares).



Most impressively in terms of civil engineering, the Khosr River passed through the city and was diverted into more than 50 miles (80 kilometers) of moats and canals that protected the city outside its mud-brick walls and provided transportation and water throughout the city. This water system was on a grander scale than anything seen before.

Along the west edge of the city, inside the wall, was the high point on two artificial mounds, one on each bank of the Khosr River. To the south was the armory or arsenal of the Assyrian kings, and to the north was the mound that supported their palace—the same arrangement as found at Nimrud, the earlier capital.

Unlike other palaces, such as Pylos in Greece, in the Assyrian Empire the size and complexity of the empire led to a diversification of administration and royal identities, and the economic and military aspects of the kingdom were separated into this other complex.

The northern mound was an artificial terrace for the buildings constructed on it. The mound contained a number of temples to the major gods of the Assyrian pantheon and two 7th-century BC palaces: the original palace of Sennacherib and the expansion by his grandson Ashurbanipal.

The Palace at Nineveh

The palace of Sennacherib, called by Layard the Southwest Palace, was a large block building of more than 80 rooms. It consisted of a vast block of rooms for receiving, dining, meetings, and administration as well as residential areas. All of this was surrounded by a *paradeisos*, a walled park, that was full of many species of fruit and flowering trees, birds and wild animals, and water canals for irrigation and for pleasure.

The huge royal palace towering above the city on its high platform proclaims the distant and supreme position of the king in the imperial hierarchy. The palace is laid out with a series of very long, narrow rooms that surround open courtyards.

The design is necessitated by the use of mud brick as the major building material. Mud brick requires very thick walls with no windows, or it has a tendency to collapse under its own weight. The courtyards were necessary to allow light and air into the rooms, which were laid out parallel to the edges of the courtyards on all sides.

As in earlier Assyrian palaces, the major doorways into the public areas were flanked by *lamassu* figures, each of which was carved in very high relief from a single block of alabaster that weighed upward of 30 tons. They were almost invariably found in pairs, facing outward and flanking the most important entrances to the palace.

The throne room is like that at the earlier Assyrian palace of Nimrud. It opens via three large doorways (a very grand central one flanked by two smaller doorways) from a great courtyard on the south side. The doors are flanked by *lamassu* figures.

The placement of the throne room as the first room in the palace's administrative block demonstrates the great differences in kingship between the Assyrians and other ancient people, such as the Egyptians. For the Egyptian palaces, the throne room is a destination room that must be entered through a series of alternating open and closed spaces, gradually smaller and smaller in size until the final room is a small chamber. Such an *adyton*, as it's referred to, allows one to come face to face with the pharaoh as one would a god.

The Assyrian kings seem not to have created such pretensions—or, perhaps, associations. The Assyrian king is decidedly mortal, although he is often seen worshiping the great god Assur. It's possible that the throne room should be considered only as a large audience hall.

Lamassu figures, which combined the body of a lion or bull with an eagle's wings and a human head, were spiritually protective figures that were meant to be intimidating. The various powerful characteristics of the animals were believed to transfer to the human—in this case, the intelligence of a human and the strength of a lion or bull. The eagle wings are a visual symbol of divinity and spiritual nature.

Reliefs of Royal Imagery

The Assyrian palaces were constructed of mud-brick walls, but the lower sections were faced with large slabs of alabaster that were set in place and then carved with relief scenes, primarily images of hunting and battle interspersed with religious scenes, especially where the king would personally appear.

The most spectacular of these are the large battle narratives. These reliefs often show multiple scenes in a military campaign with all the major components of that campaign illustrated in a sort of comic book storytelling form. The fullest portrayal of this type in the palace at Nineveh is the Lachish relief cycle.

The Lachish battle room is arguably the most restricted, exclusive, high-status space in the administrative wing of the palace at Nineveh. The room is lined with wall reliefs devoted entirely to depicting the Assyrian advance on and destruction of Lachish—after Jerusalem, the second most important city in the ancient Levant at the time—as well as the aftermath of the battle, which took place in 701 BC.

The entire room of reliefs is on display in the British Museum in London.

The battle reliefs that covered the walls of Nineveh are detailed, circumstantial, and documentary. They show specific campaigns, with the topography, architecture, dress, and armor of those being attacked recorded in minute detail.

The detailed illustrations of conquest, very carefully depicting people and ethnic groups from around the entire empire, is a cautionary tale for anyone who views these scenes—and even more so for those who came as emissaries from those areas.

Yet the emphasis on the surrenders and movements of survivors away from their cities carries another message—one of empire, not just imperialism. In a world made up of Persians and Elamites; Aramaeans and Hittites; Phoenicians and Israelites; and Babylonians, Medes, and Chaldeans, we see a world defined by different cultural, political, social, and economic habits. In the end, however, it becomes a world made up of Assyrian subjects.

A number of the reliefs are unique images and suggest historical events and the desire to document them in an ideologically appropriate way that flattered the king. For example, a series of reliefs illustrates Ashurbanipal's campaign against the Elamites, including his victory over them.

In addition to the battle scenes that Ashurbanipal—king of Assyria from 668 to 627 BC—used to demonstrate his achievements, he continued the long Assyrian tradition of lion hunt reliefs illustrating the personal qualities of the king. Specifically, these lion hunt scenes showed Ashurbanipal's bravery and prowess with sword, spear, and bow. Lions were apparently collected from across the Assyrian Empire and brought in cages to the *paradeisos*, where the cages were opened and a hunt was staged.

In these scenes, we see the king facing the real chance of death as he slays a number of male and female lions. We don't know if this sort of hunt actually took place under Ashurbanipal, but the detail of the reliefs is intended to make it look as though it did. The minute depictions of dress, jewelry, weaponry, and anatomy make it clear that the artists inspected these aspects personally.

The reliefs from Nineveh that show Ashurbanipal hunting lions are considered by many art historians to be the high point of Assyrian sculpture. They are magnificent, and all are on display in the British Museum.

The Most Significant Find

In the 1850s, Layard and his chief assistant, Hormuzd Rassam, discovered the library of King Ashurbanipal, the oldest royal library ever discovered. They found more than 22,000 clay tablets, most of which were cracked, broken, and burned and laid shattered and scattered across the floors of the rooms that originally held them.

In the 1860s, an engraver named George Smith made a number of critical discoveries about the tablets, changing our understanding of Near Eastern history and chronology. Alongside historical inscriptions, letters, administrative, and legal texts, he found thousands of divinatory, magical, medical, literary, and lexical texts.

But Smith's greatest discovery was revealed in 1872, when he published his translation of an account of the flood that predated the Bible account. He eventually pieced together tablets to restore the great *Epic of Gilgamesh*, the oldest surviving written epic in the history of the world.

After the death of Ashurbanipal in 627 BC, things went downhill pretty quickly for the Assyrian Empire and for Nineveh. In 612 BC, a coalition of Assyrian enemies besieged the city. They diverted the river so that it washed away sections of the city walls and entered, sacked, and burned it.

As with other such sites of massive destruction in the ancient world, the destruction of the palace at Nineveh ironically served to preserve much of it for us today. Without overbuilding, the site was abandoned, the clay tablets were fired into terra-cotta (which preserved them), and the entire site lay for centuries under the weight of the mud brick that had made up its walls—until it was finally excavated, beginning in the 19th century.

SUGGESTED READING

Larsen, *The Conquest of Assyria*.

Layard, *Nineveh and Its Remains*.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1 What would the effect of viewing the Lachish battle room be for Assyrians? For visiting foreigners from the lands depicted? For those negotiating with the Assyrian king from elsewhere?

2 What do the extensive lion hunt reliefs reveal about the public identity and personal qualities of Ashurbanipal?

PERSEPOLIS: PALACE OF THE PERSIANS

LECTURE 8

Cyrus the Great conquered Babylon in 539 BC, founding the Persian Empire. He defeated Astyages, the king of the Medes, to found a dynasty that ushered in joint Persian-Median rule. This dynasty, the Achaemenid, came to rule the Near East from the Aegean Sea to Central Asia and from Egypt to the Indus River. Like the Assyrian kings who ruled Mesopotamia before them, each Persian king founded his own palace and capital. Darius I chose Susa, an old Elamite city in southern Mesopotamia, as his administrative center. He also founded a palace complex in about 515 BC at Persepolis in Fars, in modern-day Iran. This complex became the symbolic and ceremonial center of the Persian Empire. It was deliberately designed as the first great showcase of the Persian people—to intimidate their enemies and inspire the Persian people in their heartland.

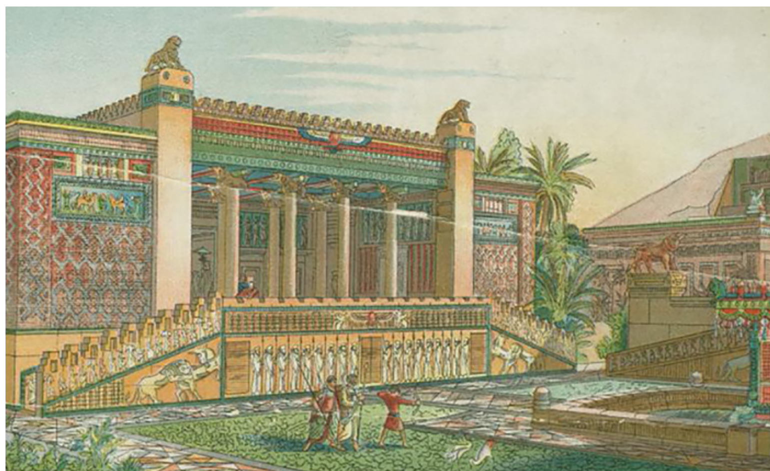
Persepolis is now a UNESCO World Heritage site and a popular tourist destination in Iran.

The Palace at Persepolis

The great citadel at Persepolis was designed as a governmental and ceremonial capital for the Persian Empire. The palace complex sits on a tremendously large artificial terrace that was cut into the base of a mountain, the Mount of Mercy, and the resulting irregular rocky surface was leveled. A mud-brick wall reinforced with towers was built to fortify the complex.

An impressive flight of stairs of 111 steps allowed access to the terrace. At the top of the stairs was a gatehouse built by the Persian king Xerxes. This so-called Gate of All Nations was guarded by two giant stone bulls on the western side and two massive *lamassu*—human-headed bulls with eagle wings—on the east. It contained great bronze doors that gave access to the apadana courtyard.

The use of bronze for the doors was unprecedented at the time. Typically, doors were made of wooden planks that were covered with sheets of bronze or even gold. Fully bronze doors were a technical marvel.



The grand staircase is lined with reliefs of the Persian New Year festival. It depicts the 23 subject nations of the empire processing past in their native dress. Each delegation is individualized, wearing their ethnic or regional dress, headgear, and hair and beard styles. Some are more strongly Persian than others, indicating their location near the core of the empire.

The members of the national delegations bear gifts as tribute for the Persian king of kings. As with their specific dress, the gifts vary by region, with variations in fabrics, vases, weapons, jewelry, and animals. In addition to the delegations, members of the court are also depicted. Persians and Medes attended by soldiers and guards, horses, and chariots are all recognizable. Stylized trees are used to separate various groups or activities.

The relief also has an internal rhythm, with repeating figures and groups. It is arranged so that the figures are walking up the stairs next to anyone who is also walking the staircase. It puts visitors in their place by putting them exactly on the same level as those subordinate figures. They are walking along with the subject people. In that way, the processional relief is activated every time someone walks up the stairs adjacent to the reliefs on that wall.

Gate of All Nations

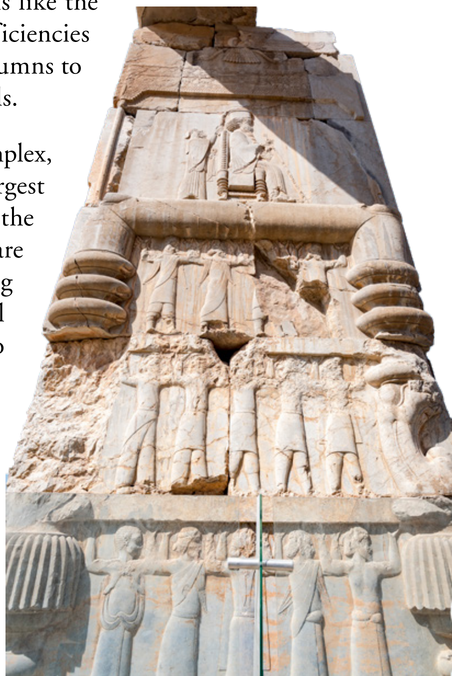
The Architecture of the Palace

The architecture of the palace follows very different traditions from the earlier Assyrian palaces of Nimrud and Nineveh. Most notably, the layout differs dramatically. The palace is not composed of a large building block. Instead, the palace complex is made up of clusters of separate, largely square buildings, each on its own individual platform. The use of building stone instead of mud brick and numerous columns throughout further distinguishes the architecture from its Assyrian predecessors.

The scale here was made possible because—again in contrast to the Assyrians 100 years before them—the major buildings are not constructed from mud brick, but from the local gray stone, highly polished to shine like marble. Instead of using mud-brick buildings requiring thick walls without windows and narrow rooms like the Assyrians, the Persians solved these deficiencies with stone construction and forests of columns to support the roofs of their great square halls.

In the northwest corner of the palace complex, nearest to the grand staircase, was the largest and most impressive of the structures in the palace complex: the apadana, the great square audience hall. It was begun under King Darius I and was the great reception hall of the Persian kings, so it was intended to be accessible to all.

Adjacent to the apadana on the east side of the terrace is the throne room and audience hall, also called the Hall of the Hundred Columns—the second largest hall at Persepolis after the apadana. It was started under King Xerxes and completed at the end of the 5th century BC by his son Artaxerxes I. It was clearly designed to accommodate large crowds.



Hall of the Hundred Columns

Its eight stone doorways are decorated on the south and north with two major subjects. One depicts scenes of the enthroned king, distinguished by being the highest and largest figure, by being seated while everyone else on the relief is standing, and by being bowed to by the figure in front of him. The other major subject is reminiscent of Assyrian reliefs from the palace of Nineveh 200 years earlier: A hero or king stabs a monster that has a lion's body and an eagle's wings.

The imagery of bulls is a tradition adopted from Assyrian art.

These two paired audience hall/throne rooms don't conform to our preconceived notions of throne rooms. Perhaps instead they are waiting rooms—holding cells, essentially. This is where the crowds waited, under the massive watchful eyes of the reliefs that project Persian royal power, until they were summoned into the smaller chambers beyond.

These are still impressive because they replace the open courtyards found in earlier (and later) palaces used for crowds awaiting audience. The creation of indoor spaces of this scale is an innovation of Persian architecture.

The portion of the palace called the harem was actually the entire royal residence at Persepolis. It consisted of a main wing and a west wing that ran along the back edge of the terrace, arguably the most inaccessible part of the entire Persepolis complex.

A large, centrally placed, columned audience hall made up the core of the palace. It featured a columned front porch facing north, opening onto a large courtyard. The four doorjambs leading into the hall were carved with reliefs of images that reinforced royal power and authority. This grander central unit of the palace contained the royal apartments as well as residential space for their attendants and courtiers.

In the far southeast corner of the terrace, Darius also started to build a great treasury, the building designed to hold the spoils from Persia's wars of conquest, tributes from subject nations, and gifts from neighboring monarchs.

Like the other discrete parts of the palace complex, the treasury consisted of a large rectangular building filled with square and rectangular rooms, the largest of which are filled with forests of columns designed to support the timber roofs. These are comparable to the much earlier hypostyle halls of the Egyptian pharaohs but are much more numerous in the palace and not all associated with throne or reception rooms.

The Fortification Tablets

Persepolis enjoyed the reputation as the wealthiest palace in the world in the 5th and 4th centuries BC—according to some authors, the wealthiest ever. The gold and silver of Persepolis is long gone, but that's not to say that treasure wasn't discovered when the site was excavated in the 1930s and 1940s. That treasure was clay, and it came in the form of the Fortification tablets.

In 1930, archaeologists from the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago excavated 30,000 clay tablets with cuneiform writing, referred to as the Fortification tablets for their findspot in the foundation of the palace. These represent a fraction of the estimated 100,000 to 200,000 tablets in the original archive.

> The degree of wealth of the palace at Persepolis is reinforced by the Greek historians who wrote about Alexander the Great's conquest of Persepolis in 330 BC. When he emptied the treasury, it contained the modern equivalent of about 40 billion dollars.

The tablets have been a treasure trove of information about the administration of the Persian Empire as a whole, and Persepolis in particular, as well as the social structure of ancient Persia. They document that the palace at Persepolis was an administrative and economic center as well as a royal residence.

The tablets record the collection, storage, and distribution of grains, livestock, oil, beer, wine, and other agricultural commodities and by-products at the palace—and to whom they were distributed, including the gods, priests, royal officials, members of the royal family, members of the court, artisans, and those traveling on official business to and from Persepolis.

The tablets provide a perspective on the ancient world that was missing before: the voices of those inside the Persian Empire, instead of later Greek and Arabic sources and the Aramaic and Hebrew versions of the Old Testament. Now scholars can read the Persian accounts and descriptions of their world.

The palace was destroyed by Alexander the Great in 330 BC, an event famous in the ancient world and described by more than one author. The burning of the palace was instigated in revenge for the Persian sack and burning of Athens in 480 BC.

As with the Assyrian palaces burned in 612 BC by their conquerors, the destruction of Persepolis ironically led to the preservation of much of its layout, decoration, and archive. The clay tablets, intended to be temporary records, were fired into terra-cotta, ensuring their survival well beyond their anticipated life. And the site today continues to be excavated and studied as the most spectacular palace and ceremonial center from the Persian Empire.

SUGGESTED READING

Curtis and Tallis, eds., *Forgotten Empire*.

Wilbur, *Persepolis*.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1 How do the Gate of All Nations and the grand staircase establish the ancient visitors' relationship with the Persian king before they even entered the palace?

2 Compare and contrast the vast columned hall of Persepolis with the small audience chambers of Egyptian or Minoan palaces. How do they reveal a different idea of accessibility to the king?

GREEK PALACES IN CONQUERED LANDS I

LECTURE 9

As the Greeks under and after Alexander the Great spread their culture into new lands, they built palaces that combined Greek and foreign influences. The palaces at Ai Khanoum (c. 280 BC) in modern Afghanistan and Nippur (c. 250 BC) in modern Iraq demonstrate the adaptation of Greek forms to new regions and the inclusion of local traditions of elite architecture into these hybrid palaces, with Greek decorative features and elements of Persian, Babylonian, and local architectural traditions to reflect the new blended cultures of this period.

Beginning in 334 BC, Alexander the Great's mission was to revenge the Greek people for their occupation in the Persian War by invading and conquering the Persian Empire. The successful invasion and conquest of the empire led to a diffusion of Greek colonies and occupation that stretched from the Mediterranean Sea to India—and led to the decision to rule that new empire by founding Greek communities and creating a joint Greek-native culture.

When Alexander died in 323 BC, he left behind a world we refer to as Hellenistic—a new, expanded Greek culture ruled by his personal companions who took the roles of kings as they divided his empire into smaller units. These Hellenistic kingdoms controlled Greece and the former Persian Empire until the last of them fell to Rome in 30 BC. Among these kingdoms were the regional powers that created the two palaces that will be examined in this lecture: the palaces at Ai Khanoum in modern Afghanistan and Nippur in modern Iraq.

You can learn more about Alexander the Great in Kenneth Harl's Great Course *Alexander the Great and the Macedonian Empire* and Jeremy McInerney's Great Course *Alexander the Great and the Hellenistic Age*.

The Palace at Ai Khanoum

Ai Khanoum, originally named Alexandria Oxiana—one of the many cities named for Alexander the Great in his new empire—is not the best known of the ancient palaces and, being in Afghanistan on its border with Tajikistan, isn't the most accessible, either. That's unfortunate because it's one of the best preserved of the Hellenistic palaces with some fascinating material discovered from it—material that may now be lost to the world because of the wars in Afghanistan beginning in the 1990s.

The palace and the city in which it was built were established on the banks of the Oxus River in extreme northern Afghanistan, in the area called Bactria in Alexander's time. The palace and city founded here were markers of its significance and the plans for the city as an administrative center.

Unlike many earlier palaces, the one at Ai Khanoum was built into the regional capital city rather than isolated from it by distance or by topography. In that way, it reflected the layout of Assyrian palaces, the predecessors of the Persians in ruling Mesopotamia.

The palace, like the Assyrian palace of Nineveh before it, was built in the western section of the city along the banks of the river. The division of the city into upper and lower zones superficially compares to Greek cities, but the palace and other public buildings are not in the upper city—the acropolis—but the lower city, the floodplain of the river.

The palace is architecturally impressive and deliberately reflects the mix of cultures in the city. It is located in the city's center, near the temples of deities that also show a combined Greek and Eastern identity.

Its orientation differs from the Hippodamian—or rectangular grid—plan of the city around it. This shows that it was not fully integrated into the city but conceived of as a separate complex. The palace was a huge complex; not only did the king and his family live there, but it was also where the administrative offices of both the kingdom and the city were housed.

The particularly Eastern features of the palace include the clustering of rooms with differing functions into a single building suite. Long corridors were used for interlinking the architectural units and integrating the whole layout. The palace was accessed through a vast courtyard.

The palace and grounds covered 21.6 acres—more than twice as large as the palace of the Roman emperor Domitian, which became the official palace of the emperors in Rome from the 1st to the 4th centuries.

The palace was built in a grand architectural scale typical of Assyrian and Persian palaces, with spacious entrance courtyards and rooms supported by forests of columns. Among the buildings in the palace complex was a sizeable hypostyle hall—a hall with the roof supported by rows of columns—and a treasury similar to that found at Persepolis. This treasury did not contain tablets of cuneiform but held many ostraca, broken pieces of pottery with Greek inscriptions painted on them, used to record transactions in a typically Greek fashion.

Surrounding the palace was a garden of the *paradeisos* type, showing Persian (and ultimately Assyrian) influence in the palace form. Ai Khanoum's garden was west of the main palace and limited by the banks of the river Oxus. Its walled garden contained a huge swimming pool and a gymnasium—characteristically Greek architectural components. Despite these features, the building material was local mud brick, the columns were unfluted, and the general plan was non-Greek in arrangement.

The combined Greco-Persian gymnasium in distant Bactria is a great example of how Greek cultural activities, and the spaces for their practice, were adopted in an area very far away from the Aegean Hellenistic civilization.

A mausoleum was found in Ai Khanoum that may have been the tomb of Kineas, described as the founder of the Greek settlement.

In addition to the very Greek architectural sculptures and decorative features that managed to convey a general impression of Greek identity and values, the palace also contained features that represented the political world in which it was built. Among the floor mosaics were several that were created with a carpet pattern or a floor of squares and rectangles all arranged around a central feature. This is a common design, but in this case, the central panel contained the Macedonian sunburst pattern, associated with the royal house of Alexander the Great.

The Palace at Nippur

The palace at Ai Khanoum makes a dramatic contrast to another Hellenistic palace found at Nippur in the heart of Mesopotamia along what was once the course of the Euphrates River, south of modern Baghdad, Iraq.

The palace at Nippur is near the center of the Seleucid Empire, founded by a Macedonian general who succeeded Alexander and controlled the bulk of his empire across the Near East, from Turkey in the west to Afghanistan in the east.

Although it is much farther west and closer to Greek territory, the palace at Nippur actually has fewer Greek features, suggesting that the primary audience for which it was constructed was more likely local populations of non-Greeks in Mesopotamia than a mixed community of Greeks and non-Greeks.

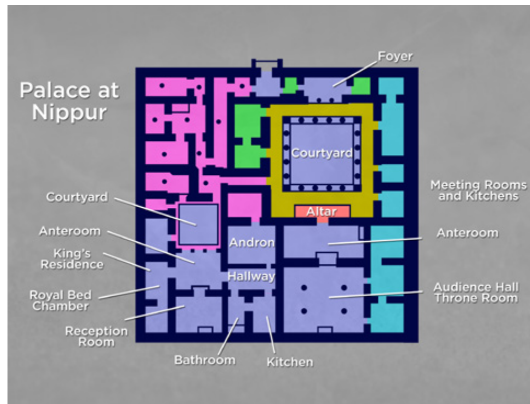
The palace at Nippur is a compact, square block constructed of mud brick, all features that conform to Near Eastern traditions in palace construction.

The palace is situated inside the city rather than standing within its own grounds or fortifications. This is typical of many Mesopotamian palaces, such as the Assyrian palace at Nineveh.

The palace doesn't have the extensive grounds that traditionally surrounded Egyptian, Assyrian, and Persian palaces. Those grounds allowed rulers with imperial aspirations to make symbolic statements of control either by importing foreign plants into the garden or foreign animals, which they would kill in public hunts.

Nippur has neither fortifications nor extensive grounds, suggesting that its design was for a regional palace without the—arguably pretentious—statements of empire found at other palaces.

It seems that as a regional palace, Nippur was designed for the Hellenistic kings of this region of Alexander's empire to make periodic visits, hold public functions, stay, and then move on. That makes sense when we consider that other types of rooms and spaces that are normally part of a palace are not found here. For example, there's no treasury for storing valuables, nor a library or archive room for royal documents.



The square block of palace has one entrance, and it is surprisingly unadorned, being a simple doorway at the top of a short flight of stairs, only elaborated by a porch supported by a pair of columns. Inside the door is a small antechamber with doorways to the left and right. The right door leads to the residential suites, and the left door leads to the public area.

This arrangement is significant because having the private, residential space to the right upon entering the palace is the same as the slightly earlier palace at Ai Khanoum. In addition, the same division of public and private is seen in the elite residences of Roman Italy from the late 2nd and early 1st centuries BC.

One of the unusual architectural features at Nippur is the use of single and double half columns on piers. These are a further decorative elaboration of the basic columns but are used only at the entrances of rooms that are the first in a suite.

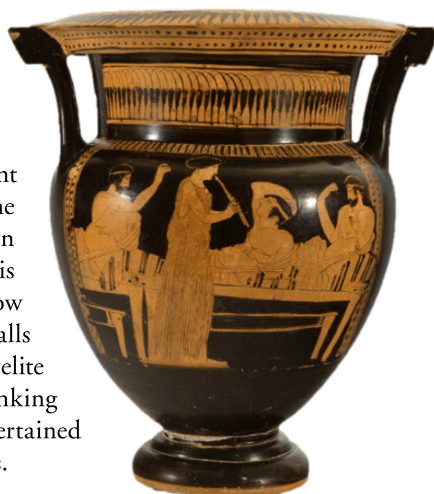
The style derives from the Hellenistic palace of the kings of Macedon at Vergina and is found exclusively in Hellenistic palaces, so it constitutes a particular palatial style of architecture across the Hellenistic world.

The public suites of rooms on the left are arranged axially in a four-room sequence. Superficially, this public suite resembles the megaron complex of Greek Bronze Age palaces, although more simplified. The majority of rooms in this public section are arranged around a large open courtyard, which is surrounded by a portico of Greek Doric–style columns.

As is usual in this sort of palace, the courtyard was probably used as a place for people to gather prior to audiences. The courtyard and the east side of the four-room suite were flanked by a series of smaller chambers that included small meeting rooms and kitchens to support any public banqueting that probably took place in the audience hall and courtyard, as at Assyrian palaces.

The mixing of Greek and non-Greek—as seen in the Near Eastern layout and building materials, coupled with Greek columns and architectural features—is also mirrored in the small finds excavated at the palace. For example, a Mesopotamian portrait head resembling the generic figures in Persian art was found in the palace, along with a number of Greek terracotta statuettes.

The right half of the palace block was given over to the residential rooms of the king. As at Ai Khanoum, long corridors connect suites of rooms arranged nonsymmetrically through the space of this half of the palace. In the rear quarter was the actual residence of the king. This suite of rooms opened off of a small courtyard without porticoes, so without the elaborate architecture of Hellenistic rule.



The *andron*, or men's room, is a prominent feature of Greek houses. It is found on the ground floor, almost always accessible down a short hallway off of a courtyard, as at this palace. It was of a size and shape to allow dining couches to be placed along the walls for men to dine and drink in the Greek elite custom of the symposium—a Greek drinking party at which men were sometimes entertained by flute players or highly educated escorts.

Both of these Hellenistic palaces represent the new political system under which they were constructed—the kingdoms of Greek and non-Greek peoples combined—and were ruled by the successors of Alexander the Great. These palaces reflect new forms of architecture that were designed for these new kingdoms.

In many ways, the most Greek of these palaces was the one at Ai Khanoum, the farthest from Greek territory. Its design seems a self-conscious attempt to project a Greek identity in this most distant territory of the Greek kingdoms.

In contrast, the palace at Nippur utilizes architectural features only found in other Hellenistic palaces, but these are applied to a building that owes much of its form to Near Eastern palace architecture rather than Greek.

SUGGESTED READING

Bernard, "An Ancient Greek City in Central Asia."

Cohen, *The Hellenistic Settlements in the East from Armenia and Mesopotamia to Bactria and India*.

Nielsen, *Hellenistic Palaces*.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Why do you think that the most purely Greek of all the Hellenistic palaces was the one farthest from the Greek heartland? What lesson should be drawn from this?
2. In the palace at Nippur, the most characteristically Greek room, the *andron*, is one of the least accessible. What can we conclude about the audience for the public rooms in the palaces as opposed to those for the more exclusive rooms? Was the palace built for two separate populations?

GREEK PALACES IN CONQUERED LANDS II

LECTURE 10

After the death of Alexander the Great in 323 BC, his Greco-Persian Empire was divided among his successors into smaller kingdoms. This period, referred to as the Hellenistic Age, dates from 323 to 30 BC, when the last of the kingdoms fell to the Romans. Alexander's trusted general Ptolemy seized Egypt for his kingdom while another general, Seleucus, occupied the center of the empire in Mesopotamia, establishing a kingdom that stretched from Turkey in the west to Afghanistan in the east. The palace at Iraq al-Amir in Jordan was built under one of the Seleucid monarchs, while the Palazzo delle Colonne in Libya was built in the city of Ptolemais, named for Ptolemy III, who founded it.

While both palaces are products of military expansion and occupation, the areas in which they were built differed. The area of Jordan was part of the Persian Empire before Alexander conquered it and therefore was populated with Persian subjects. The city of Iraq al-Amir was actually created with people forcibly relocated from Tyre on the Mediterranean coast and was called Tyros. The palace, therefore, needed to project a royal identity and control what would be understood by people used to Persian rule.

Ptolemais, on the other hand, was from the start a Greek community without the need to project power over a population that might, understandably, be harboring some resentment about their forced relocation. These different needs led to very different forms.

One of the reasons we study the smaller, regional palaces of the Hellenistic kings is that the larger, main palaces no longer exist. Thanks to Alexander the Great's keen sense of real estate, the cities that he founded or selected for capitals across his empire are almost all still occupied—and many have been continuously occupied since antiquity. Denied a firsthand look at the main palaces of Alexander and his successor kings, we look instead at those in their regional capitals that were probably built in imitation of the larger palaces in the main capitals.

The Palace at Iraq al-Amir

The palace at Iraq al-Amir was inspired by fortified residences in the Near East and was placed on a large artificial terrace surrounded by an artificial lake or moat. The integration of artificial bodies of water is found in palaces going back to the Bronze Age and reflected both the desire to ensure a steady water supply as well as a statement of control over the landscape.

Reinforcing the point of conquest of nature was the creation of a large park around the palace in the tradition of the Assyrian and Persian *paradeisos*, or walled park. The entrance to the park—and, therefore, the palace grounds—was a monumental gateway, a propylon in Greek architectural design, which was likely deliberately created to establish the Greek identity of the Seleucid rulers to any who entered the palace.

The main palace building was constructed out of large blocks of local stone, very different than the mud-brick construction found throughout the Persian Empire, with the rare exception of major and significant buildings such as this.

The palace is essentially a large rectangular building with very few ground-floor windows and no interior courtyards. The second story has loggias of columns with Corinthian capitals and large windows. The style of palace is referred to as a tetrapyrgion, a rectangular fortified palatial complex with four towers in the corners. It's seemingly designed to intimidate the local population or to protect the ruler inside.

The entrance is marked with a monumental doorway with a small vestibule. The door has two Corinthian columns flanking it, and the corners of the vestibule have matching Corinthian pilasters, creating a formal entrance. The source of this style was probably not the Assyrian or Persian monarchs, but the Greek Hellenistic kings.

Between the first and second stories was a frieze with pairs of standing lions above the cornice that topped the columns and pilasters that supported and decorated the first floor. There is also some evidence that a frieze of lions was carved on the building at the ground-floor level, but these are not well-preserved.

Lions are a traditional subject in Near Eastern art, but they are also associated with royalty. The Assyrian palaces were frequently decorated with reliefs of the kings hunting and killing lions to demonstrate their virility and, by extension, right to rule. These are different in that they seem to be apotropaic, designed to keep away evil. Apotropaic imagery of fierce animals is often used on buildings, especially near doorways or—as here—under the towers, suggesting a protective function.

The interior of the palace is less well understood than its façade, a common problem with two-story (or more) buildings that collapse, leaving rubble to be sorted out.

> Friezes of lions demonstrate the intersections between palace and temple decoration in the ancient world—perhaps an attempt to evoke the same emotional or unconscious reaction from viewers at a palace as they would have at a temple.

The palace at Tyros bears a remarkable resemblance to the 7th-century BC temple at Prinias in Crete with its stone architecture, fortified appearance, central door marked by columns, and exterior relief frieze of lions above the main entrance.

The ground floor of the palace is subdivided into a series of square and rectangular rooms joined by corridors. Unlike earlier Near Eastern palaces, it's not a labyrinth of separate suites of rooms of widely varying sizes. Instead, it is bilaterally symmetrical—very much a Greek layout rather than a Near Eastern one.

The audience hall of the palace is surprisingly located on the second floor. It was a large room decorated with Corinthian three-quarter columns, so it matched the decorative program of the entrance, creating a visual link between the two so that visitors would see that audience hall as a terminal space connected back to the main entrance. This hall probably served as both banquet and audience hall, again a pattern commonly found in palaces throughout the Near East.

This fortified palace style with the second-story loggia is interesting in its own right, but it's also notable because the style passes directly into Roman practice, as seen in mosaics from Roman Africa that show such houses in the 4th century AD, more than 500 years later.

The Palace at Ptolemais

That transmission of Eastern practice moving west to the Romans is also an element of the 1st-century BC regional palace at Ptolemais in Cyrenaica, modern Libya, arguably the best-preserved surviving Hellenistic palace. Scholars typically refer to this as a governor's palace, but the palace was built in imitation of the great Hellenistic palaces in Macedonia and Alexandria, so it might more usefully be considered a regional palace. Its design and decoration are created to evoke the power and rule of the kings, not of a governor alone.

The Palazzo delle Colonne utilizes Greek peristyle architecture of open courtyards with water features surrounded by colonnades, an architectural pattern copied from Ptolemaic reception spaces in Alexandria and later replicated in Roman private and imperial palaces. It was built into the Hippodamian grid plan of the city by the Greek city designers.

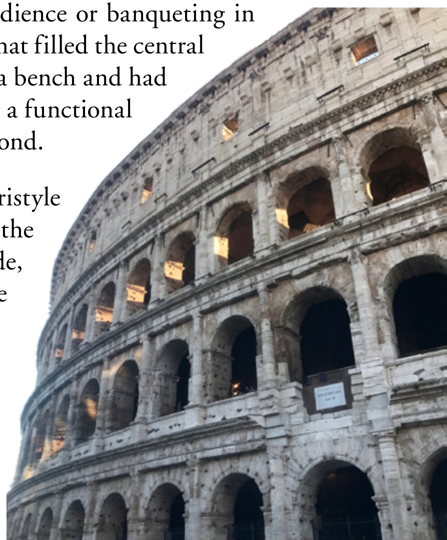
Palace at Ptolemais

The core of the public area of the palace is the large peristyle courtyard. Its colonnade surrounds a garden with a central water feature. The palace is not furnished with the usual surrounding gardens or walled park as previously found in Hellenistic and earlier Persian and Assyrian palaces. Here, the garden is reduced to one within the peristyle courtyard. This may be the earliest example of what becomes the standard garden throughout Roman palace forms from the 1st century BC to the 4th century AD. All the water features and formal bedded gardens are internal—or at least within peristyle spaces—rather than external.

To the south of the courtyard is a large reception room, probably a banquet hall, with suites of rooms to the east and west of it: to the west a domestic suite and to the east another dining suite. To the north of the courtyard is the formal reception room, what we can refer to as the audience hall of the palace. The extensive use of mosaic floors throughout this section of the palace reinforces the conclusion drawn from the architecture that it was elite public space.

The main courtyard served practical functions for the palace. It allowed light to enter into the largely windowless rooms that surrounded it and served as a gathering place for those awaiting audience or banqueting in the adjacent rooms. In addition, the pool that filled the central third of the courtyard was surrounded by a bench and had steps leading into it, suggesting that it was a functional swimming pool, not merely a decorative pond.

It also had a decorative function. The peristyle was two stories in height. It was Ionic on the ground floor, except for along the north side, where it makes up the front of the audience hall; here, to distinguish it from the surrounding spaces, Corinthian columns were used. The peristyle also had Corinthian columns on the second floor. This is a standard pattern as seen, for example, on the façade of the Colosseum, where more elaborate columns are used for upper stories.



The façade of the Colosseum

Basilica at Pompeii

Another decorative feature of the courtyard peristyle is that it conforms to a type referred to as Rhodian, which means that in the center third above the doorway into the banqueting hall, the two-story colonnade is broken. Instead, there is a taller, single-story colonnade with an upper window and pediment above it—a feature seen also above the tribunal in the basilica at Pompeii. Although referred to as Rhodian, suggesting an origin on the island of Rhodes, the style has been traced to Alexandria and the palace of the Ptolemaic kings.

Not only was the façade of the audience hall distinguished by Corinthian columns, but so was its interior, adding prestige to the ruler through this architectural frame. The audience hall was large, but not large enough to need columns in the center of the room to support the roof. Instead, a two-story line of Corinthian columns ran around the room, creating a more elaborate formal space. This sort of hall was called an Egyptian oecus, a form likely developed in Alexandria.

The palace had at least two designated banqueting halls, excluding the audience hall. The first is a large formal one opposite the audience hall, and it opened directly onto the courtyard—an arrangement also found in the palace of the Roman emperor Domitian in Rome, which was probably inspired by the Hellenistic predecessors.

In addition to that grand hall, there was another dining room, almost as large, that seems to have been an *andron*, an exclusively male space for drinking, conversation, and entertainment. A kitchen was found close to the *andron*, in the corner of the courtyard, an arrangement also found in earlier Greek houses.

Unfortunately, after the Romans seized Cyrenaica in 96 BC, they occupied the palace and eventually turned it over for their own governor in the 3rd century AD. That long-term occupation and the massive destructive events of the late antique world (earthquakes and invasions) have pretty much wiped out any Ptolemaic decoration.

SUGGESTED READING

Cohen, *The Hellenistic Settlements in Syria, the Red Sea Basin, and North Africa*.

Nielsen, *Hellenistic Palaces*.

Winter, *Studies in Hellenistic Architecture*.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. In what ways does the palace at Iraq al-Amir/Tyros continue the palace building traditions of the Assyrians and Persians? Do the lions derive from that tradition or from another, more Greek region?
2. What elements of the Hellenistic palace at Ptolemais are found in contemporary or shortly later Roman palaces and public buildings?

GREEK PALACES COME TO ROMAN ITALY

LECTURE II

The gardens of Lucullus and Sallust, the Villa of the Papyri, and the House of the Faun show the rapid adoption of Greek and Persian palace traditions into Roman residential design. Roman houses not only increase in size, but become multistory complexes, often built on vast artificial terraces and surrounded by formal gardens filled with captured or copied Greek art. Some of the suites of rooms continue the Roman traditions of the republican period; others are more self-consciously Greek. The resulting building complex is a model that becomes the standard for palaces throughout the ancient world beginning in the 1st century BC and is again adopted in the Renaissance with the rediscovery of these Roman palaces in the 15th century.

In 212 BC, Marcus Claudius Marcellus, a very successful Roman soldier, commander, and military innovator, finally captured the Greek city of Syracuse—one of the largest and richest Greek cities at the time—after a siege. He then did something no Roman general had ever done before: He had Greek buildings in Syracuse disassembled, shipped to Rome, and reassembled.

According to ancient authors, that was the beginning of Roman obsession with Greek art and architecture. From that point on, elite Romans began to acquire Greek works of art and build their own Greek-style buildings throughout the city. Marcellus set the stage for Greek art and architecture to become Roman art and architecture.

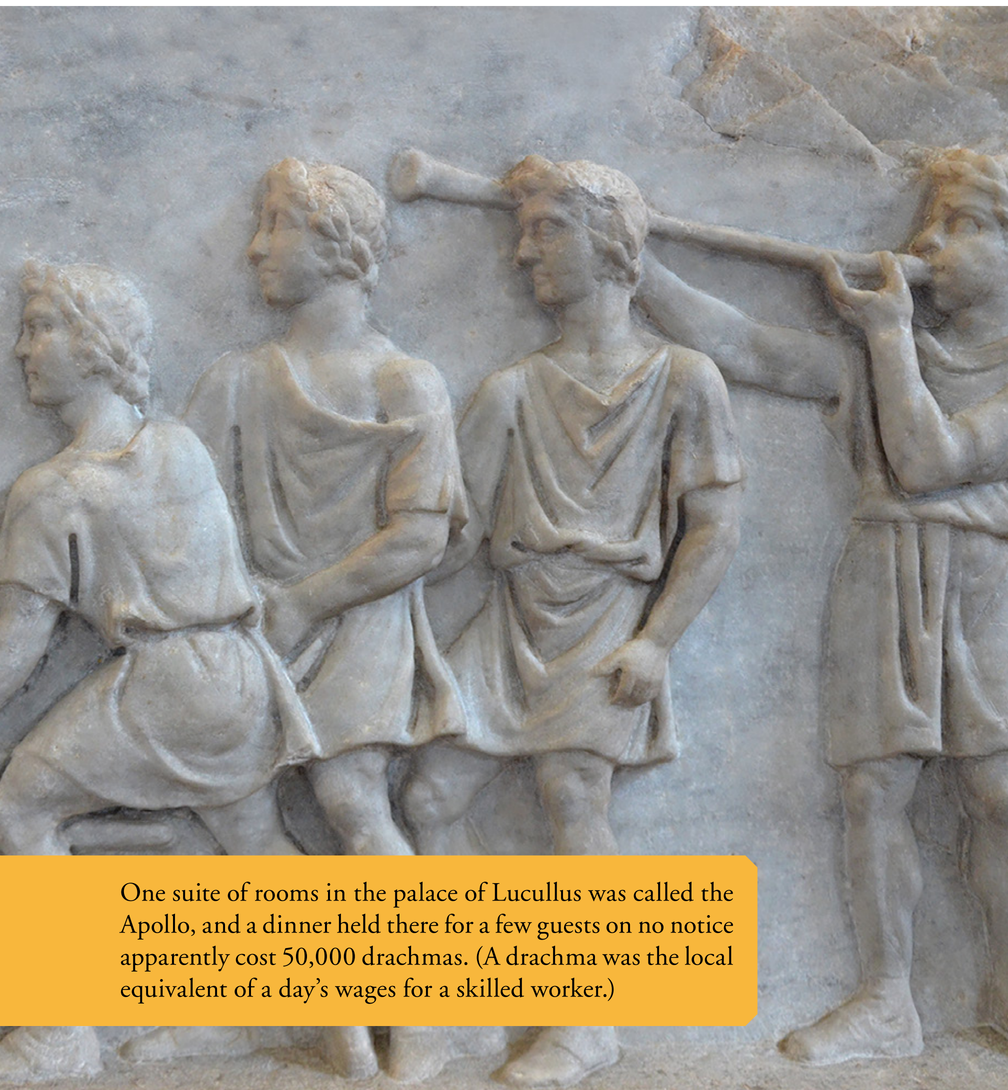
The Gardens of Lucullus and Sallust

Lucius Licinius Lucullus is probably the most important figure in the adoption of palaces as well as a successful Roman general. In the 70s and 60s BC, over a course of a 25-year period of war against the Greek king Mithradates of Pontus, Lucullus won a great many battles and returned home the wealthiest man in Rome at the time.

Lucullus purchased a huge chunk of land in the hills to the north of the city of Rome and constructed a massive palace, perhaps the first building by a Roman that could be called a palace. This was a grand structure—more of a building complex—that sprawled over a series of immense terraces overlooking the city.

The palace had some Persian influence. One of the largest Persian influences is the use of enormous terracing to create the flat land necessary for the various wings of the palace and gardens. This is a Persian architectural feature seen most famously at their palace and ceremonial capital at Persepolis, adopted by the Greeks and then by the Romans. The palace of Lucullus represents the first known use of this technique in Roman residential architecture.

The palace included all of the dining rooms, reception rooms, etc., to be expected in a palace of any nationality. Other rooms and spaces were particularly deliberately Greek, emulating the palaces of the Hellenistic kings who followed Alexander the Great. Lucullus also created a library of Greek literature, along with associated study rooms that he opened to the public.



One suite of rooms in the palace of Lucullus was called the Apollo, and a dinner held there for a few guests on no notice apparently cost 50,000 drachmas. (A drachma was the local equivalent of a day's wages for a skilled worker.)

Much of the palace was built out of marble, including what the Romans called Lucullan marble, a type of multicolored marble imported at great expense from Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey) into Rome for the first time by Lucullus.

The palace also made use of Greek-style porticos, arranged in the usual Greek fashion in large squares or rectangles to define and frame vast gardens, many of which were structured around decorative ponds for breeding fish and eels. These gardens were decorated with dozens of sculptures that were part of his plunder from the war against King Mithradates.

Lucullus wasn't just claiming his cultural connection to the Greek world by emulating their palaces; he was proclaiming his personal superiority by taking their building forms, building stone, and marble sculptural groups for his own personal use.

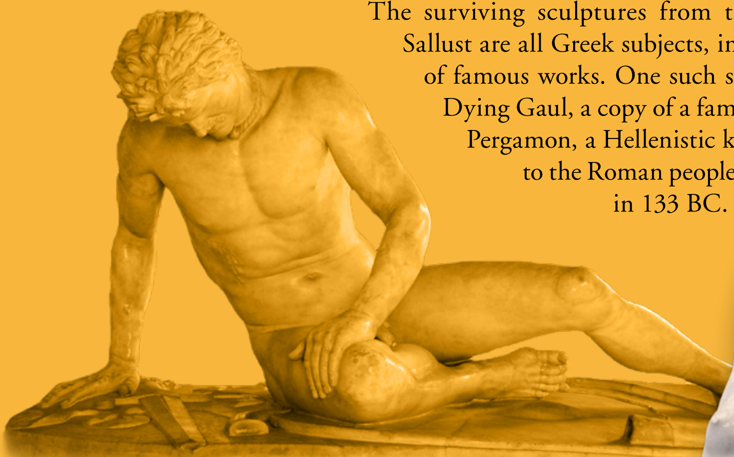
The concept is much the same as seen in the palace gardens of the Egyptian pharaohs, who cultivated plants from conquered territories. But here there's no denigration of the foreign. You don't find images of captive Greeks and such; the Romans valued Greek culture in a way that other imperial rulers did not celebrate conquered cultures.

The palace also notably contained specifically Roman features, such as private baths and ambulatories—long, covered walkways that led from a house to a distant point, a Roman invention designed to allow them to walk back and forth in the shade of a covered walkway.

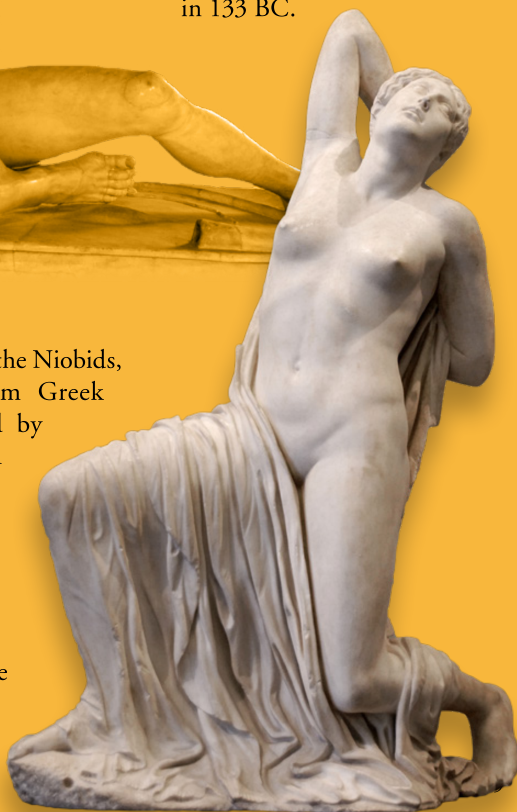
You can't visit Lucullus's palace today, as what's left of it is buried under parts of 19th-century Rome. But you can see the sculptures and some of the other decorative elements in museums around Rome.

Lucullus's palace and gardens were exceptional, but not unique. Quickly following his example was the Roman official Sallust, who built his own palace and gardens outside of Rome.

The palace and gardens of Sallust, paid for from his conquest and occupation of Numidia in North Africa, included a palace, a nymphaeum complex—that is, a building that incorporated sculpture groups, fountains, and often room for dining, sometimes in an artificial grotto—baths, terraced gardens, a temple of Venus, a hippodrome for horse racing, and the pyramid of Sallust (suggesting features inspired by Egypt as well as Greek and Persian models).



The surviving sculptures from the gardens of Sallust are all Greek subjects, including copies of famous works. One such sculpture is the Dying Gaul, a copy of a famous work from Pergamon, a Hellenistic kingdom willed to the Roman people by its last king in 133 BC.



One set of sculptures showed the Niobids, the children of Niobe from Greek mythology who were killed by Apollo and Artemis to punish their mother for her hubris.

It's likely that these sculptures were selected to illustrate the Roman notion of punishment of those who threaten the authority of the state or the gods.

The Villa of the Papyri

While we don't have access to Lucullus's palace outside Rome or even much of Sallust's, we have a closely contemporary house, probably inspired by the model of Lucullus, that gives us a sense of the grandeur of Roman palace design and emulation of Greek forms. That house is the Villa of the Papyri outside Herculaneum, probably built by Julius Caesar's father-in-law, Lucius Calpurnius Piso.

The villa (which is a rural or suburban house) was covered in the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in AD 79. It was rediscovered and excavated in the 18th century by tunnels cut through the solid rock of the eruption material, which covered the villa to a depth of about 70 feet.

The excavators, led by the Swiss mining engineer Karl Weber, made a plan of the villa and brought up some of the 1,800 carbonized papyrus scrolls that represent the only surviving library from antiquity. Most have not yet been read, as they are too fragile to unroll.

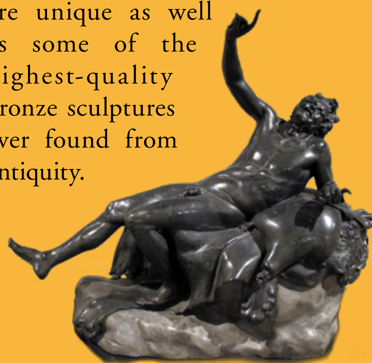
The villa was built, like the palace of Lucullus, on a series of terraces. It consisted of four major levels, but overlooked the sea below rather than the city of Rome as Lucullus's had. The villa had a private library, many reception and dining spaces, a huge portico surrounding a garden with a large swimming pool in the center, and a long ambulatory that led to a small gazebo along the shore looking over the sea.

As with the palace of Lucullus, there are Persian, Greek, and Roman architectural features in the villa. The terraces and gardens are a Persian inspiration; the closed porticos that surround the gardens come directly from Greek usage. The ambulatory and the atrium and the rooms around it are Roman forms.

The papyrus scrolls that give the villa its name contain many of the writings of the philosopher Philodemus of Gadara and his Epicurean teachings on a wide variety of subjects.

Along with the scrolls, the most important find from the villa was the more than 100 pieces of marble and bronze sculptures recovered from its house and gardens, which reveal the character of the rooms and spaces they decorated. The sculptures from the villa are the largest sculptural assemblage from any single structure ever found in the entire ancient Mediterranean world: Egypt, Near East, Greece, or Rome.

Bronze sculptures are rare survivors from antiquity because those that were found before the modern era were invariably melted down to allow the reuse of the valuable bronze. The villa yielded about 85 bronze sculptures that are unique as well as some of the highest-quality bronze sculptures ever found from antiquity.



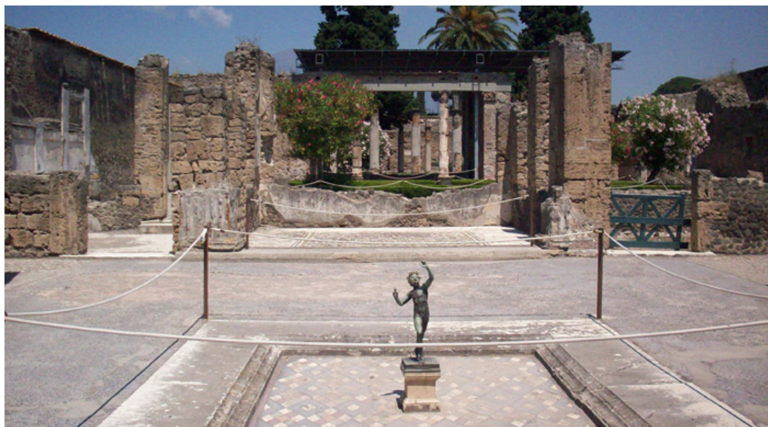
The condition of the walls and floors in the villa make identification of the decorative program of the wall paintings and some mosaic floors very difficult. But some are revealed, particularly the floors, which feature a great amount of opus sectile, cut marble work that was a more expensive alternative to mosaic floors.

Visiting the Villa of the Papyri is sometimes possible outside of Herculaneum, but it is always disappointing. Very little of the villa is exposed and visible. Because the villa was excavated by tunneling under the modern city, the vast majority of it is still buried. But all of the sculptures and some of the scrolls are on display in a series of galleries in the National Archaeological Museum of Naples, where they can be viewed along with plans of the building.

The Getty Villa in Malibu, California, which houses a museum of ancient art, is a copy of the Villa of the Papyri, and copies of the sculptures from the Villa of the Papyri have been reproduced and placed in the gardens.

The House of the Faun

One of the best preserved domus—urban residences of an elite Roman—is the House of the Faun at Pompeii, which is also from the late republican period. It takes up an entire city block in Pompeii and was at least two stories tall (Mount Vesuvius wiped out any evidence of more stories); included two peristyles—large gardens surrounded by porticoes—shops integrated into the house, private baths, kitchens, and a small stage for performances; and comprised more than an acre.



The House of the Faun was originally two houses that were then combined. The larger left house was used as public space in the combined house while the smaller right house was retained as private space—or, more accurately, service space, as it contained the kitchens, baths, a smaller atrium, and staircases to the second floor, which was not accessible to those visiting the public areas of the house.

Unfortunately, because the house was excavated in the 1830s, fairly early in the history of excavations at Pompeii, good records of the decoration in the private areas were not kept. But the larger left half of the house was better preserved and understood. It was constructed with walls built from rubble and other fairly prosaic local building materials. But over all of that was a thick layer of lavish decoration designed to make the house look like the palace of a Greek king.

The doorways in the public, left space were framed with cut-stone piers with elaborate carved-stone Corinthian capitals. The rubble walls were heavily plastered, and that plaster was carved to imitate large blocks of cut building stone. Then, the blocks were painted to look like imported marbles and exotic materials. All of this imitated the palaces of the Greek kings of the Hellenistic period.

The floors were finished in a variety of Greek decorative schemes. Some of the most important public areas were done in opus sectile.

The mosaics in the House of the Faun are all variations on standard Greek designs: still lifes of birds, images of Dionysiac figures, and similar subjects—that is, all but one. That one exception was the mosaic floor in the reception room off the first large peristyle. It is clearly designed as the terminus of a route from the front door to this reception room. It is believed that this is where the owner of the house would stand and greet those who came to the formal Roman greeting ceremony called the *salutation*.

A stunning mosaic in the House of the Faun illustrates the moment at the Battle of Issus when Alexander the Great chased the Persian king Darius off the battlefield.

About a third of the area within the walls of the house was taken up by the two great peristyle gardens. These were Greek in design, from the rectangular porticoes to the architectural orders that made up the colonnades. But they relied on the Persian walled-garden concept, which was ultimately adopted from the Assyrian royal practice of the walled garden, the *paradeisos*.

SUGGESTED READING

McKay, *Houses, Villas and Palaces in the Roman World*.

Nielsen, *Hellenistic Palaces*.

Winter, *Studies in Hellenistic Architecture*.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1 In what ways do the forms and decorations of Roman palaces reflect Rome's complex relationship with Greek models? Are Greek rulers and buildings to be celebrated or celebrated only in conquest?

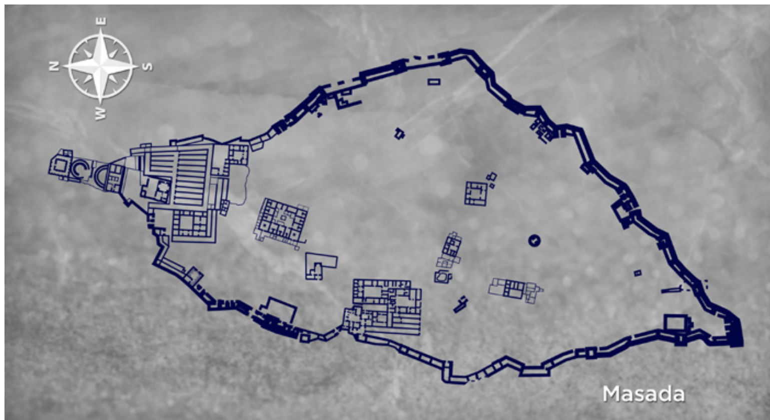
2 How does the expansion of gardens, libraries, terraces, and porticoes reflect the role of *otium*, or leisure, in the lives of elite Romans of the late republic (1st century BC)?

MASADA: HEROD THE GREAT BETWEEN EAST AND WEST

LECTURE 12

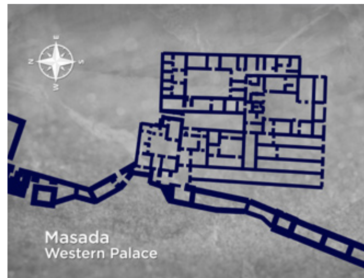
The Western and Northern palaces on Masada were built under Herod the Great, king of Judea for 37 years, beginning in 37 BC. Herod instigated one of the greatest building programs of any ancient monarch. His palaces are the most transparent buildings in the ancient world for revealing the history and context of the ruler, and even his personal tastes. Herod's palaces clearly show his desire to create a dynasty to rule the people of Judea while evoking both the traditions of the Near East as well as the building forms and amenities of the Romans. He was, after all, named king of Judea by the Roman Senate, and his determination to maintain his rule required that he bridge eastern and western traditions.

The hill of Masada is one of the great natural fortresses of the Near East. On the edge of the Judean Desert, this sheer outcropping of rock rises 1,300 feet above the surrounding desert floor, culminating in a relatively flat plateau about 17 acres in area. It’s like the mesas of the American Southwest.



The Western Palace

The Western Palace, named because it was built along the center of the west edge of the plateau, was a compact complex surrounded by at least three other smaller royal residences, creating a royal compound that was actually constructed in nine building programs, mostly from 37 to 30 BC. When the palace was complete, it measured almost an acre in area.



The early phases of the Western Palace have no Roman features—and, in fact, the building materials and techniques are indistinguishable from those of Herod's immediate predecessors. Archaeologists conclude that he employed local construction teams who had worked for the previous rulers.

Throughout the nine phases of construction, the Western Palace maintained features based on Near Eastern traditions. It was organized with suites of rooms in a variety of square and rectangular shapes, all arranged around courtyards in a manner similar from earlier Persian and Hellenistic palaces.

None of the courtyards were ever given Greek peristyle colonnades, meaning that in form they would have appeared very traditional, perhaps even old-fashioned, although Greek bathing rooms were part of the palace.

The Core Palace, the highest-status suite of rooms around a large courtyard, had a simple entrance without any sort of grand façade. The most important rooms in the Core Palace were along the southern side of the courtyard and consisted of a pair of rooms for audiences and banqueting. Some scholars refer to this as an *andron* complex, using the terminology for an elite Greek room for exclusively male dining and drinking, but it might have been an audience hall.

In the eastern part of the palace was a room scholars refer to as the mosaic room because of its elaborate colored mosaic floor with geometric and floral patterns. The lack of figural decoration in the mosaic is consistent with much Near Eastern work from this period. Most scholars agree that the mosaic room was Herod's throne room in this palace. The rooms along the northern side of the courtyard consisted of bathing rooms of Greek and Jewish style and stairs leading to the residences on the second floor above.

The mosaic room

The Near Eastern features include the lack of an elaborate formal entrance, the uncolumned courtyard, and the shape and decoration of the audience or reception rooms, while Greek features are seen in the *andron* and the bathing suites. This combination of Near Eastern and Greek elements is comparable to the Hellenistic period palaces in the Near East, Egypt, and North Africa.

The three small residences unattached to the palace have the same plan as the Core Palace, with a series of square and rectangular rooms surrounding a central, offset courtyard. They were built at the same time as the Western Palace, as separate residences for members of Herod's family, court, or honored guests. Also from this period was a large swimming pool at the southern end of the plateau.

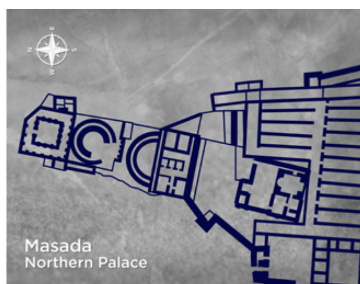
The profligate use, as well as display, of water was a display of power. It demonstrated that Herod controlled the resources of the kingdom that would allow such an impractical project in this inhospitable territory. That pool was originally placed as an element in a series of gardens, an extraordinary achievement of logistics and royal will in this climate.

A similar layout of gardens and an open pool is found in Mesopotamian palaces dating back hundreds of years. Unlike Masada, those had ready access to water from the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers that they were built adjacent to. This layout leads us to conclude that the entire top of the plateau was viewed as the royal palace and its grounds.

The Northern Palace

As luxurious and technically challenging as the Western Palace was, it was nothing compared to the later Northern Palace, built on the northern edge of the plateau, between 30 and 20 BC. A radically new architectural concept is evident here: The marvelous setting on three natural terraces down the steep northern slope of the hill, connected by a staircase cut into the rock, created enormous challenges for the architect and builders.

This three-tiered palace organization was deliberately designed to evoke a sense of wonder from viewers, a factor in many Hellenistic building projects. The same concept of terraced building is found in many Roman palaces of the 1st century BC, including Lucius Licinius Lucullus's palace outside Rome. Taken together, the rooms and open spaces of the three create a palace comparable in size to Hellenistic royal palaces but more wonderful than any other contemporary palaces.



The lower terrace of the Northern Palace was occupied by a square hypostyle hall, a traditional form of columned hall, with columns set on plinths, a feature previously found exclusively in Greek Hellenistic palace architecture. The columns and walls were painted in frescoes, imitating marble. This faux painting is not a sign of cheap imitation; it was found in the largest and most exclusive of houses, including other palaces.

This hypostyle reception room was surrounded by covered porticoes, partly open to the north to exploit the spectacular view to the north, east, and west. This sort of structure is found at a few other earlier Hellenistic palaces, so copying it here might have been a deliberate attempt to proclaim this as a palace.

The rooms on the lower terrace demonstrate three different cultural traditions in this one section of the palace: the Roman bathing tradition and technology for heated rooms, the Jewish ceremonial bath for ritual

cleansing, and the hall based on Hellenistic palace reception rooms. This is a unique combination of cultures and spaces in a late Hellenistic palace, and it represents Herod's desire to reference all of his cultural connections.

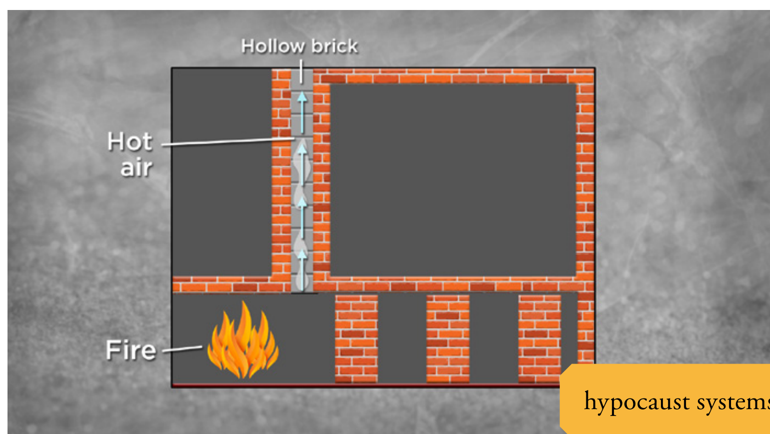
The middle terrace was dominated by a tholos, a round building defined by a circular wall enclosing a single room and surrounded by a circular colonnade that supported the roof around the building. The type is found in Greek sanctuaries and palaces, although also found in later Herodian construction. Prior to its use in the Northern Palace on Masada, the tholos was only found in religious contexts.

One of the later examples of a tholos, and one that is most similar to the tholos in the Northern Palace, was the Temple of Hercules Victor in Rome, dated to ca. 150 BC.

Attached to the tholos was a series of rooms, the largest of which contained an exedra, a semicircular recess, with a series of alcoves in the wall, which led the excavators to conclude that it was probably a library with inset shelving. The location and size suggest that the library was only for Herod and the other residents of the palace—not for the wider public, as at the Hellenistic complexes at Alexandria or Pergamon, which inspired it.

In addition to those features of the palace, parts of it were decorated with Roman-style wall painting of the category called second style, referring to Pompeian wall painting. This was the highest-quality, most expensive style of Roman wall painting. It was found in only the most elite residences and was the height of interior décor at the time of the construction of the palace. Painters were probably brought to Masada from Rome to execute this commission.

Other Roman features were incorporated into the Northern Palace, such as the large baths. These, like the smaller bath complex on the lower terrace, were Roman in design and construction and used the latest in Roman heating technology—hypocaust systems—to supply radiant heat through the floors and the inset baths in the floors of heated rooms. This is the earliest complete Roman bath complex that preserves a full suite of Roman bathing and exercise rooms and spaces. The baths were lavishly decorated with mosaic floors and frescoed walls in the Roman style, which reinforced their thoroughly Roman design and engineering.



hypocaust systems

Roman bath complex

While Herod created a royal identity with his palace—combining Hellenistic Greek and Roman features that associated him with the two major political authorities of his world—he was also careful to represent the Jewish component of his identity, particularly where his subjects could witness it.

As an element of this, a synagogue was part of the palace complex, located between the main blocks of the Northern and Western Palaces and accessible from both. The synagogue, oriented toward Jerusalem, is notable as the best surviving example of early synagogues, from the period before the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in 70 AD.

It is difficult to imagine a garden on the barren, rocky landscape today, but all evidence suggests that the garden room of the North Palace offered a reflection of the original, completely artificial Herodian landscape within the fortress. That fertility reinforced Herod's invincibility in this desert landscape.

The grandiose and monumental architectural projects of Herod, including that of the Northern Palace at Masada, also increased the political power and propaganda value of the ruler, contributing to immortalizing his greatness for future generations. From such projects, it is apparent that court-sponsored architecture, representing personal interests, is to a great extent likely to distort history in its determination to achieve a particular goal.

SUGGESTED READING

Fittschen and Foerster, *Judaea and the Greco-Roman World in the Time of Herod in the Light of Archaeological Evidence*.

Netzer, *The Palaces of the Hasmoneans and Herod the Great*.

Roller, *The Building Program of Herod the Great*.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1 What does unpacking the Persian and Greek elements of the Western Palace at Masada reveal about Herod's royal identity in the earliest years of his kingship?

2 What do the more overtly Roman components of the later Northern Palace tell us about Herod's ties to the wider Mediterranean and relationship with the Roman Empire?

HEROD THE GREAT'S SUMMER AND WINTER PALACES

LECTURE 13

This lecture will focus on two palace complexes: the Winter Palaces at Jericho and the Summer Palace at Herodium. These series of palaces were built as residences and administrative centers from which Herod could rule for long periods and, at Herodium, establish a shrine and tomb. All of the palaces were laid out within large parks with multiple swimming pools, gardens, and Roman-style bathing and dining facilities.

Herod's identity as a king stems in part from his insecure accession of power, which can be seen in his continual fortification of his palaces, inconsistent with earlier Near Eastern practice.

What can also be seen is his need to project a personal Jewish identity to his subjects, something that was called into question during his rule.

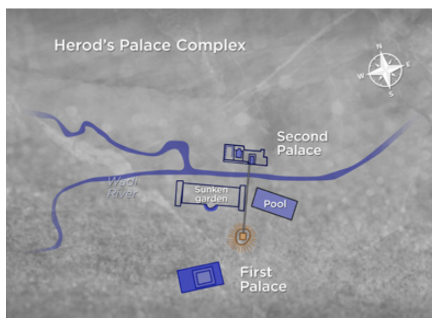
Furthermore, he needed to present himself as a king in ways that his subjects would recognize. This meant that his palaces needed to evoke the architecture of his predecessors and the rulers before him.

In addition, he needed or wanted to infuse his palaces with a variety of Roman components, perhaps in keeping with his debt to the Roman Senate for his rule or to declare his forward thinking, as the Roman elements represented the latest technological advances and decorative features.

Finally, Herod was concerned with his own succession and creating a dynasty, so his palaces include buildings that reflect that desire for dynasty, such as the tomb at Herodium.

The Winter Palaces at Jericho

The Winter Palaces at Jericho are the three phases of a palace complex built by Herod at Jericho. Archaeologists date the construction of these to 35, 25, and 15 BC. The palaces incorporated spaces and buildings for athletics as well as equestrian and theatrical performances in the Greek and Roman style.



The First Winter Palace was built shortly after Herod's accession in 37 BC and was probably used mainly as a recreational residence for Herod and his family and resembles at first sight a large Hellenistic palatial house. In area, it measured about an acre. It is inwardly oriented, with a large peristyle court with rooms on three sides, including a room identified as an Egyptian oecus, or formal reception room.

In layout and design, the palace follows Near Eastern practice, carried from the Persians to the Greek Hellenistic kings of the 3rd and 2nd centuries BC. That includes the organization of the palace as a large rectangular building subdivided into a variety of square and rectangular rooms without any strong axes or symmetry.

The main entrance is not formalized with a Greek propylon or any sort of grand architectural entryway, as regularly seen in later Roman palaces, but is a simple doorway leading directly into the peristyle.

The Egyptian oecus was on the west side of the courtyard, with a large doorway open to the peristyle court. Almost directly across from it on the east side, although not on the same axis, was a large T-shaped room flanked by suites of smaller rooms that opened off of it. This was the banquet hall, placing the two more significant public reception spaces off the main court and in view of each other.

It's likely that both were used for audiences as well as banquets and other formal public events, during which Herod appeared to his subjects, diplomats, and foreign visitors. Notably, his public appearances were in an architectural setting that was inspired by the pattern of Hellenistic Greek palaces; in 35 BC, it was a traditional form of architectural stage for this new king.

The rooms along the northern side of the peristyle court made up the residential wing of the palace. They contained a Jewish mikvah as well as a Roman bath with a hypocaust heating system, cutting-edge Roman

bathing technology, in the private space of the palace. It would only be in later phases of this, and the palaces at Masada, where the Roman features would make their way to the public areas.

The Second Winter Palace was built in 25 BC, after an earthquake in 31 BC had damaged the previous palace. It bears some resemblance to the First Winter Palace, which was repaired and continued to be occupied for residential space, but this Second Winter Palace has more in common with Greek and Roman palaces.

At this point in his reign, Herod is enjoying the current luxuries of the entire Mediterranean world while making sure to present himself as a traditional Jewish ruler.

This palace is larger than the First Winter Palace. The main block measured about half an acre while the full grounds encompassed about an acre. It is more open to the outside than the earlier palace, perhaps demonstrating the increased security of Herod's position. It is laid out on two levels, based on the Hellenistic pattern of large artificial terraces used to create vast palace platforms and elevate buildings. This was done to invoke a feeling of wonder, both from those who viewed these structures from afar and from those who approached them.

The upper palace consisted of a large colonnaded courtyard surrounded by rooms on three sides. The two main rooms on the north and south of the courtyard face each other, as in the First Winter Palace, but here the arrangement has more symmetry. The south room also has a doorway that opens onto a columned porch very like a Greek stoa, giving views across the property and to the lower palace.

The First Winter Palace was probably built by local architects from Judea while the Second was probably designed and built by Greek architects or local ones trained in the Greek system.

The lower wing of the palace included a large swimming pool within a garden and surrounded by a peristyle. To the west, and connected with this complex, was an enclosed garden with a Roman bathing complex with a mikvah, or Jewish ritual bath, in place of the usual cold-water bath.

Roman features dominate the Third Winter Palace, built by Herod in 15 BC. It was the largest of the three palaces, at just under an acre in size for the building alone and about seven and a half acres for the palace and grounds.

It was also the most architecturally innovative of the palaces at Jericho. Its radical—in fact, unprecedented—form is comparable to the Northern Palace at Masada, finished around 20 BC, but is even more Roman.

The First and Second Winter Palaces were still in use, so the Third Palace is designed to augment, not replace, them. It was laid out in a very regular rectilinear plan on both sides of a local wadi, a dry wash that contains water only during the rainy season.

The northern palace wing features an audience and banqueting hall; a garden peristyle; a lavishly decorated smaller audience hall; another peristyle courtyard with a large T-shaped banqueting room opening onto it, very similar to that in the First Winter Palace; and a large Roman bathing complex that was constructed using Roman building techniques and included a laconicum, which is a hot, dry room, like a dry sauna.

On the south side of the wadi, reached by a bridge, were the other components of the Third Winter Palace, including a large formal sunken garden, a very large swimming pool, a a hippodrome (a stadium track for chariot racing), a theater with a peristyle court behind it, and a squared rotunda that seems to have been based on contemporaneous rotundas in Italy.

In contrast to the earlier palaces and palace phases constructed by Herod, which were dominated by linear architecture, the Summer Palace at Herodium and the Third Winter Palace at Jericho utilize many more rounded forms, such as rotundas. These forms have more in common with instances found in 1st-century BC Roman Italy than those found in the Near East.

These later palaces of Herod's show the intersections between east and west in palace design and architecture that served as the incubator for virtually all later palace design in the ancient world—and for palace design based on the ancient world, as seen in Renaissance and later palaces.

Temple of Mercury on the Bay of Naples

The Summer Palace at Herodium

The Summer Palace of Herod at Herodium is a complex located south of Jerusalem. It was begun in 23 to 20 BC, so shortly before the Third Winter Palace at Jericho and contemporary with the Northern Palace on Masada. It was at least partially finished by 15 BC.

Herodium was a very complex palace, with a range of buildings and spaces that were designed to project a startling range of messages about Herod, his rule, and his dynasty. It included a summer palace, a fortress, an administrative center, pleasure gardens and athletic areas, a triumphal monument celebrating his victory over the Parthians (who backed Herod's rival for power), and Herod's tomb (which has not been located).

The artificial hill of the upper palace rises about 330 feet (100 meters) above the surrounding palace buildings and gardens, visually dominating them. From the outside, it looks like a traditional fortress, such as those built at Jerusalem or Jericho by earlier Jewish rulers. Inside, however, it was something completely different: a complete, compact palace.

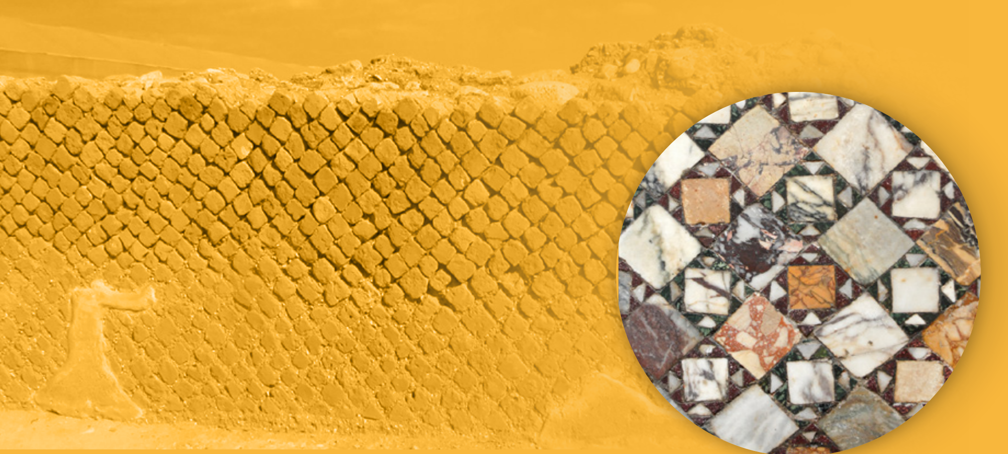
Herodium was named after Herod himself, in good Greek practice. This same Greek practice gave us more than 20 different cities, including Alexandria after Alexander the Great across the ancient Near East, Antioch after Antiochus, and Ptolemais after Ptolemy.

The key features show similarities to those found at the Winter Palaces at Jericho, such as a peristyle courtyard garden, a large cruciform banqueting hall opened off the courtyard, an audience hall, and a Roman-style bath complex.

The buildings below the upper palace were laid out orthogonally on the northern slope of the hill. Uppermost is a large palace building on an artificial terrace. Directly below that was a unique building that consisted of a long, narrow terrace running east to west across the flank of the hill, leading to and terminating in a large hall with niches along the interior walls. The narrow terrace created a formal, processional entrance to the hall, which has been interpreted as a throne room or banqueting hall.

The niches were probably filled with statues of Herod's family members. This is the concept found in the tholos of the Northern Palace at Masada, but here in a larger, more public space. The hall—its decoration and use—would therefore be part of Herod's plan to create a dynasty supported by a decorative program that celebrated it.

At the base of the hill was a more recreational space. The great garden of the palace grounds consisted of a pool and was surrounded by porticoes. Some scholars conclude that this imitates a Greek gymnasium, meaning that one purpose of this was to demonstrate an affinity with elite male Greek athletic culture. That would be consistent with the hippodrome at Jericho and the practical use of the pools for swimming. This garden space also included an outdoor dining pavilion and a large Roman bath complex.



Roman influence is seen in the wall paintings and opus sectile floors as well as in the building techniques of *opus reticulatum* and *opus mixtum*, masonry techniques contemporary to these palaces but found at Rome and in the communities along the Bay of Naples. This is such a specific system of building that scholars have concluded that their use here indicates the importation of Italic craftsmen and building materials.

SUGGESTED READING

Fittschen and Foerster, *Judaea and the Greco-Roman World in the Time of Herod in the Light of Archaeological Evidence*.

Netzer, *The Palaces of the Hasmoneans and Herod the Great*.

Roller, *The Building Program of Herod the Great*.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Comparing the palace at Herodium to the earlier Northern Palace at Masada, how has Herod's interest in dynasty come to occupy a more public role in the palace?
2. What do the Roman elements of the palaces at Jericho and Herodium demonstrate about Herod? His political connections? His place in an interconnected Mediterranean world? The role of Roman design at the forefront of luxury and the architecture of ease?

CALIGULA'S FLOATING PALACES

LECTURE 14

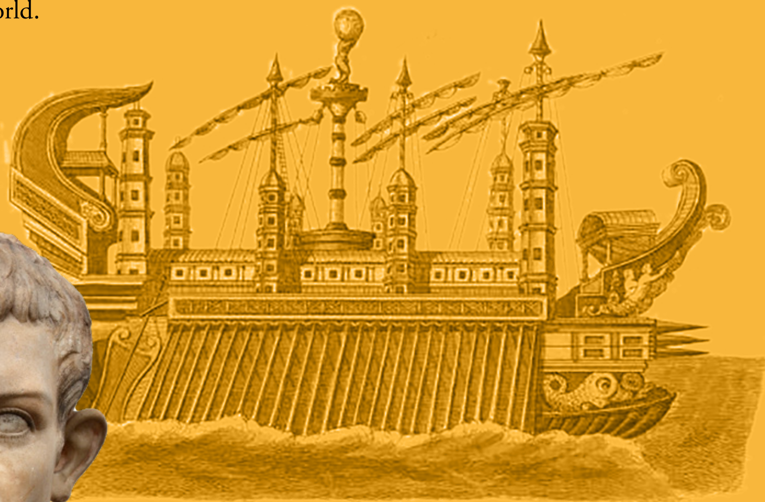
The Roman emperor Caligula modeled many of his acts somewhat on those of Alexander the Great and more directly on those of the Ptolemies, Alexander's successors who successfully ruled Egypt for 300 years, from the late 4th century BC to the late 1st century BC. One of Caligula's most direct imitations of the Hellenistic Greek kings was the creation of a pair of floating palaces—one of the most remarkable forms of palace in the ancient world. Kings and emperors had long owned unique transport vessels that were designed to convey the ruler in state, but Caligula's floating ships were true palaces with the luxurious appointments and special rooms found in regular land-based palaces.

The inspiration for Caligula's floating ships probably derives from the *Syracusia* of Hieron II, the first of such great vessels—and thought to be the largest ship ever made in antiquity. Hieron II was ruler of the city of Syracuse in Sicily from 270 to 215 BC. After the ship was completed, Hieron sent it as a gift to King Ptolemy III in Alexandria, where it was renamed *Alexandris*.

Ptolemy III's successor, King Ptolemy IV (r. 221–204 BC), had his own floating palace called the *Thalamegos*, which included multiple decks connected by a winding staircase and rooms similar in size and type to those found in Hellenistic palaces.

This Ptolemaic tradition of luxury vessels carried on for more than 200 years. It saw its end at the same time as the end of the independent kingdom of Egypt with Cleopatra's famous pleasure ship, which was covered with precious materials.

Cleopatra's, Ptolemy IV's, and Heiron II's ships were clearly models for Caligula's own ships. Unfortunately, none of these Greek ships survived antiquity. All are lost. Fortunately, Caligula's two ships did survive to the modern world.



Caligula reveled in spectacle, unfortunately often focusing his resources on lavish spectacular display that provided no tangible benefits to his people.

The Rediscovery and Excavation of Caligula's Ships

Caligula's two ships were found where they settled along the bottom in Lake Nemi, a volcanic crater lake in the Alban Hills, south of Rome. In antiquity, the lake was sacred to the goddess Diana. Adjacent to the lake was a grove also sacred to Diana. Caligula had a villa on the shores of the lake, and these ships were essentially a moving extension of his property.

The Nemi ships have always been known, at least to locals. By the time of the first concerted effort to raise them, local fishermen had been using hooks and lines to snag and draw up materials from them to sell.

In 1928, the Italian government signed an agreement with a group of industrialists to finance the recovery efforts with technical assistance from the navy, who planned to drain the lake and excavate the ships after they were revealed in the mud of the lake bottom.

By 1929, enormous pumps and piping systems were in place, and draining the lake began. The two ships came to light in late 1929 and early 1930, and excavations continued intermittently until 1932, when the ships and associated material were raised and placed in a new museum built on the shores of Lake Nemi in 1936.

In a few years, World War II came to Italy, and during an Allied attack and German retreat in 1944, the ships were burned in the museum. A number of artifacts and some timbers remain, however, along with photos, detailed plans, technical drawings, and excavation reports.

The Design and Decoration of the Ships

The Nemi ships were both very large, if not quite as big as their Hellenistic models. One, referred to as Ship A, measured 233 feet by 66 feet; the other, referred to as Ship B, measured 240 feet by 79 feet.

According to Roman historian Suetonius, Caligula's galleys had 10 banks of oars, which would have required 600 rowers, not counting other necessary crew. Ship A was designed for sails as well as oars, while Ship B was powered exclusively by oars.

The hulls of the ships were excavated almost intact. Fewer of the perishable wooden superstructures were recovered, although enough to reconstruct much of them. Analysis of the wood from the ships shows that they were built from a combination of fir, spruce, pine, elm, and oak, with different woods being used for different purposes.

Of the wood of the ships' hulls, only three pieces—now in the collections of the American Academy in Rome—survive.

Thanks to the literary descriptions and the nonperishable materials in terra-cotta, metal, and stone that have been recovered, we have a good sense of the range of rooms as well as the décor of the ships. Both ships had multiple decks with structures on them that reflected contemporary Roman civic architecture.

The excavators concluded that the ships were constructed by shipbuilders up to the deck level and then other nonnaval architects created the buildings on the decks, which included bathing suites, bedrooms, and dining facilities.

What we have of Ship A shows sections of floor and wall mosaics as well as floor panels in what was then the very expensive opus sectile technique of marble inlay cut into elaborate patterns. These inlaid floors included some of the costliest marbles in the Roman world, including porphyry from Egypt and Spartan stone from southern Greece.

The buildings were roofed with gilded copper roof tiles rather than the typical terra-cotta tiles. In addition to the lead water pipes that identified the ships as belonging to Caligula, hundreds of terra-cotta pipes and tiles and bronze faucets were also recovered from Ship A. These allow us to conclude that in addition to baths (tubs of water for bathing), Ship A had hot and cold running water—the first vessel in history known to have this luxury. This means, too, that somewhere in the ship was a furnace to heat the water for the baths, another first.

There are too many pipes for just the baths, however, meaning that the ship probably also featured fountains on it, another unprecedented luxury.

It's also possible that the pipes were not all for water. Other 1st-century emperors had fountains in their residences that flowed with wine; Nero had pipes in the ceiling of one of his palace dining rooms that carried perfume to be misted over dining guests. Perfume misting is a tempting reconstruction theory for the Nemi ships, because it copies the clouds of perfume that followed Cleopatra's luxury ship.

Both of the ships had bronze fittings of stunningly high quality, unlike anything else surviving from the ancient world. From Ship A, a group of animal heads were recovered, a common ornamental motif in ancient art. This also matches the alleged decoration of figures of animals on Ptolemy IV's floating palace.

From Ship B come large cast-bronze open hands adorning the beams next to the four rudders. These may have been apotropaic—that is, intended to protect the ship from harm.

Ship B also had gilded copper roof tiles as well as terra-cotta roof ornaments and materials similar to Ship A. The terra-cotta roof ornaments were molded with relief designs of female worshippers, perhaps worshipping the goddess Isis, adorning a candelabra with garlands. This was a scene found in sanctuaries across the Roman world and reinforces the religious character of Ship B.

Three lions and a panther adorned the ends of the beams running across Ship A. Four wolves decorated the ends of lengthwise beams, while two lion heads on cylindrical caps crowned the long shafts of the side rudders. All were cast as fierce animals, seeming to be snarling with large solid-bronze rings in their mouths.

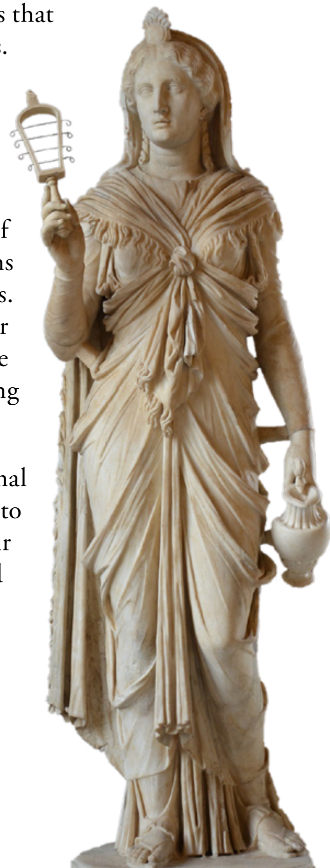
Ship B is a unique find because many pieces of marble and ivory were preserved—notably, materials mentioned as part of the construction of the Hellenistic ships. Fluted columns carved of marble imported from the eastern Mediterranean were also found on Ship B, along with a building thought to be a temple, perhaps reminiscent of the chapels in the Ptolemaic floating palaces.

As luxury pleasure vessels, the Nemi ships were laid out for *otium*, or leisure, above all. The inclusion of plants, vines, and trellises in Caligula's ships is likely meant to evoke the gardens that were such a critical component of terrestrial palaces. They allowed for space for strolling beneath trellises supported by colonnades as well as space for hospitality—that is, the open use of gardens by guests, which was expected by elite Romans.

The need for space for guests dominated the design of the Nemi ships. That explains the emphasis in terms of onboard space on bathing and dining facilities. According to Suetonius, banqueting was a regular activity on the ships and could fill hours of the day—a statement supported by finds of drinking vessels and wine amphora on the ships.

Hosting large-scale banquets was not just a personal indulgence; it was an obligation of elite Romans to host both peers and subordinates, according to their means. Such hospitality was politically useful and served to cement political connections and personal relationships. As the emperor, Caligula would be expected to host such dinner parties frequently.

The ships were also generously supplied with artificial light, which was rare in the Roman world. As the historian Cassius Dio tells us, Caligula's wish was to "make the night day as he had made the sea land," referring to his pontoon bridge. The lavish use of light was another homage to Cleopatra and the amenities of her pleasure ship.



The goddess Isis

We refer to the Nemi ships as belonging to Caligula, but in fact they were imperial property and their use transcended his lifetime. Analysis of the mosaics and some of the coin finds from the ships has led archaeologists to conclude that the ships were both redecorated under Nero, who came to power 14 years after the death of Caligula.

Nero was, like Caligula, known to host nighttime maritime banquets, which were famous for their luxury, debauchery, and light. It is likely that Nero was copying the model of Caligula rather than Caligula's model of the Ptolemies in such behavior.

Another element based on the ships of the Ptolemies was the religious aspect of Ship B. In addition to the remains of what is thought to be a chapel or temple, recovered from the ship were a number of cult objects connected to the Egyptian goddess Isis, assimilated to the Roman goddess Diana in the nearby sanctuary on the shores of Lake Nemi.

Caligula was not only a worshipper; he was also a strong proponent of the worship of Isis. He ordered the rebuilding of her temple in Rome and included religious festivals honoring Isis in public worship. This may have been another facet of his emulation of Ptolemaic monarchs.

It's possible that Caligula's villa, the sanctuary of Diana, and the ships at Nemi formed part of a specific political, religious, and architectural program devised by the emperor, who intended to create a complex space that would serve his plan to revitalize a cultural model passed down to him from the Hellenistic monarchs of Egypt.

An intriguing suggestion is that this complex space might have included Caligula's planned tomb. In 2011, the Italian treasury police recovered parts of an eight-foot-tall statue of Caligula seated on a throne wearing the robes of a god. The men caught smuggling it out of Italy led the police to the spot along the shores of Lake Nemi where they found it, a spot that preliminary investigations identified as a tomb. Carved out of high-quality imported Greek marble, the image shows Caligula as he wished to appear in his lifetime: as a Greek god.

SUGGESTED READING

Casson, *Ships and Seamanship in the Ancient World*.

McManamon, *Caligula's Barges and the Renaissance Origins of Nautical Archaeology under Water*.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1 How do the Greek elements of the floating palaces support the idea that Caligula was modeling his rule on the Hellenistic kings, particularly those of Egypt?

2 In what ways can the floating palaces—their exotic materials, size, scale, and building sets—provide evidence that Caligula was focused on spectacle and the wondrous in his art and architecture?

NERO'S DOMUS TRANSITORIA AT ROME

LECTURE 15

Nero's rule had many elements in common with Caligula, and they also shared a key characteristic: a love of spectacle. Both adored entertainment, such as chariot racing, and created their own spectacular events, such as banquets. This love of spectacle seems to have inspired many of Nero's life decisions, including his decision to create new palaces.

Nero came to power as emperor at the age of 16 in 54 AD, following the death of his adoptive father, Claudius, who already had grand residences, both in and outside the city of Rome. Nero inherited all of the imperial properties, including a large palace on the Palatine Hill in Rome—the source for our word "palace"—begun by the emperor Tiberius and expanded by his successor, Caligula. That palace is now almost completely covered by later overbuilding on the hill, but excavations suggest that it probably measured about 215,000 square feet.

That doesn't include the vast imperial gardens that created a greenbelt around much of Rome, largely across the Esquiline Hill north of and outside the ancient walls of Rome. These gardens gradually came to be imperially owned from the time of Julius Caesar to that of Nero's immediate predecessor, Claudius.

The locations of many of these imperial gardens are still green spaces in Rome today and are open to the public, including the Piazza Vittorio Emanuele II and the Parco del Colle Oppio.

Nero's Design-Focused Palace

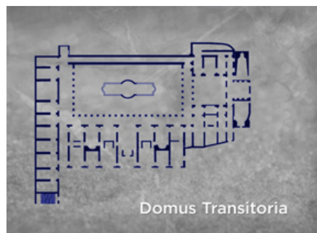
In 62 AD, Nero began a new palace called the Domus Transitoria, or Passageway House—a cutting-edge architectural complex that would connect all of the imperial properties inside and outside the city into one large compound. Nero seems to have been taken with what is now called the Roman architectural revolution, a revolution that he may well have been responsible for through this commission.

Roman buildings up to the time of, and under, Claudius—Nero's predecessor—were largely made from natural materials, such as wood or stone, and were rectangular or square. There were very few windows, so the interiors were generally dark. For public buildings, the decoration was all on the exterior, where you'd find columns, carved or painted reliefs, elaborate architectural statuary, and fountains.

With Nero, all that changed. Buildings constructed under the architectural revolution were created using Roman concrete, a fluid material that could be formed into virtually any shape desired. And these vaults and domes had great windows that let light pour in these rooms with their curved walls—or, even more radically, no walls, with the roofing systems supported by columns or concrete piers, which created the Roman version of open-plan buildings.

With that new emphasis on light came a new emphasis on interior décor to reinforce the light and space now available. Marble panels lined walls, and wall paintings shifted dramatically from designs based on big blocks of red, black, or yellow to white paintings that reflected the new, increased light.

Other decorative features shifted to the interior as well. Sculptures filled these rooms, and running water in canals, pools, and even waterfalls flowed through these new spaces. A plan of the largest surviving section of the Domus Transitoria reveals the comparative lack of walls and the open plan of the palace. This relatively small wing of the palace—compared with the overall plan—contained more than 45 rooms. It still measured a few acres.



The palace was built on a massive artificial terrace. It was at least two stories in height and opened on the south side onto a large xystus, a form of a Greek gymnasium that was a stadium 600 Greek feet (or about 577 feet) in length. The incorporation of a Greek architectural element in Greek dimensions indicates one of the important inspirations for the design of the palace.

All of the rooms in this surviving wing of the palace open off of a large colonnaded courtyard with a fountain and pool of water in the center or face the southern exposure. That courtyard acts as a light well, allowing raking light to enter all the rooms that surround it. That works because none of the rooms have solid walls on all sides. Each one has at least one open side, and where there are walls, they are only partial. None run unbroken from corner to corner.

Also, the rooms are in pairs that are patterned so that a long room on the north is paired with a short one on the south, and in the next unit those are reversed. There's a rhythm that encouraged movement through the complex—and also added light and airflow. And no room is ever far from the open courtyard and its fountain; the sound of trickling water must have filled the entire suite of rooms.

We don't know the uses for all of these 45 rooms. The majority that run along the south side between the southern exposure and the courtyard to the north are thought to have been Nero's private suite of apartments.

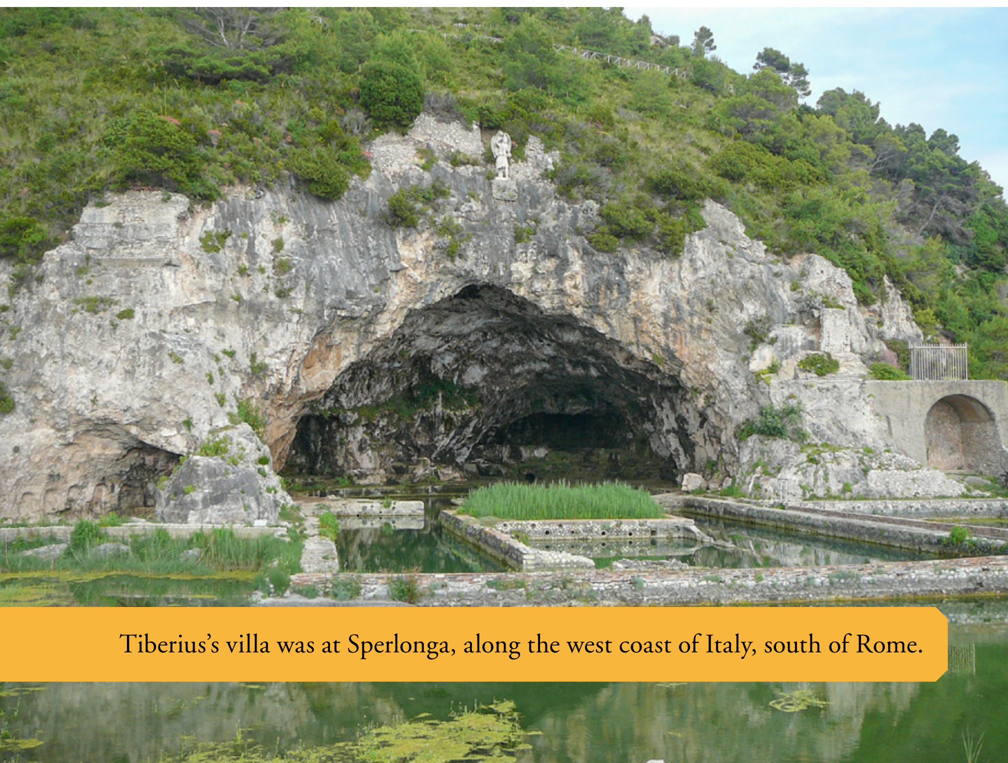
Centered on the east side of the courtyard is the largest room in this part of the palace and is almost certainly a dining room. It is a concrete vaulted room that has a line of columns rather than a wall screening it from the courtyard and creating a formal display, which was a pattern found in earlier Roman palaces, such as the House of the Faun at Pompeii.

The room is referred to as a dining room, but it's really part of a small suite with a smaller barrel-vaulted room opening off of it on the east side. Not much of the decoration in this suite survives, but the vaulted dining room and the smaller attached vaulted room survive intact enough for us to understand their decoration.

Covering the upper parts of the walls and extending to the springing of the vault is a mosaic frieze that is more than seven feet tall. The frieze runs unbroken around the walls of both the larger (dining) and smaller barrel-vaulted rooms.

The vault of the smaller barrel-vaulted room is covered in brown pumice to give the appearance of a cave, and in the center of the vaulted ceiling is an octagonal panel filled with a mosaic of polychrome glass tesserae depicting a scene of Odysseus offering wine to the Cyclops Polyphemus.

That Nero wanted his dining room decorated with an episode from Greek myth wouldn't be particularly surprising. Roman houses were filled with scenes from Greek myth. In fact, Greek myth was the primary subject of Roman residential decoration. That he selected this *specific* myth—and that it was presented in a context that made the dining room look like a cave—is significant because it's an homage to two earlier imperial palace dining rooms: a villa on the Bay of Naples that was decorated under Claudius and the villa of Tiberius at Sperlonga.



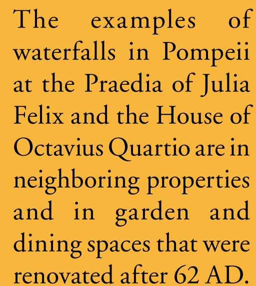
Tiberius's villa was at Sperlonga, along the west coast of Italy, south of Rome.

Surviving Suites

Two other suites of rooms survive from the Domus Transitoria as well. The first is generally referred to as a nymphaeum, defined loosely as a building or room with water features and statuary. These were often outdoor rooms, but in the case of Nero's palace, someone created an interior space with all of the elements of the typical outdoor display of water and sculptures.

The statues in early examples of nymphaea were of the nymphs—hence the name of the space.

It consists of a central courtyard with a surrounding colonnade and a fountain and pool in the center. It also consists of a waterfall—an innovation found in the Domus Transitoria for the first time but very shortly found later in houses at Pompeii.



The examples of waterfalls in Pompeii at the Praedia of Julia Felix and the House of Octavius Quartio are in neighboring properties and in garden and dining spaces that were renovated after 62 AD.

Nero was famous for loving the theater and for his musical performances of singing and playing the lyre held in Rome, Naples, and Greece.

Between the waterfall and statue display and the courtyard was another revolutionary feature, a small-scale copy of a *scaenae frons*, the typical Roman stage building. This is the earliest example of this design incorporated into a Roman residential building. The *scaenae frons* later became popular in fountains and nymphaea, but the fashion owes its start to Nero.

The courtyard was flanked by two pairs of facing rooms on the east and west. Each of the rooms was roofed separately with a concrete barrel vault. This structure, essentially an arch extended into a third dimension the length of the room, was a standard feature of Roman concrete construction. Altogether, this small five-room suite contained a number of revolutionary features in terms of its design and appointments.

In terms of decoration, the rooms in this suite were extraordinary from floor to ceiling. The floors are in fragmentary condition, but what is preserved is the highest-quality opus sectile, or cut-marble inlay, found from anywhere in the ancient world. Each room in the suite had a complicated, unique floor design made up from geometric patterns.

The wall panels are as high in quality as the floor designs, if not more so. It's typical in many palaces to panel the bottom four feet or so of the wall with solid panels of marble, but in Nero's Domus Transitoria, those marble panels are replaced with friezes of opus sectile figures cut out of light marble mounted on slabs of dark marble or slate, each panel about two feet (60 centimeters) high. The authors Suetonius and Tacitus both commented on the extraordinary amount of gold that covered the walls of the palace.

Two sections of this flooring, along with the wall and ceiling decorations, are on display in the Palatine Museum on the Palatine Hill in Rome.

The wall and ceiling paintings in the nymphaeum suite are also innovative and designed to reinforce the revolutionary architecture of the palace. The upper walls and vaults in the rooms flanking the courtyard are plastered and painted with white backgrounds subdivided into small sections with red bands—a dramatic contrast to the contemporary trend of blocks of red, yellow, and black.

Many of the sections of white background are filled with lines of thin filigree, candelabra, and vines with flowers. The centers of the flowers are semiprecious gems and blue glass cabochons, polished half circles unfaceted and set in the wall to catch the light.

Another suite of rooms in the Domus Transitoria foreshadowed some of the most stunning buildings of the architectural revolution. This third suite consists of a cross-shaped space, with the arms of the cross made of rooms roofed with barrel vaults while the center of the crossing itself has a large dome covering it, all created using concrete.

The dome was carried on four massive piers, not walls, and had an oculus in the center to allow light into the suite of rooms. The entire unit has light and air and a height that foreshadows the Pantheon of Hadrian, with its grand dome. Only a small portion of the vault decoration survived to the modern period. As with the nymphaeum suite, the wall surface was divided into small panels with delicate paintings on the plaster.

In AD 64, much of the Domus Transitoria was destroyed in the Great Fire of Rome, after which Nero instituted Rome's first building codes, requiring fireproof building materials and firefighting equipment, widening streets, and banning common walls that allowed fires to move through whole blocks.

SUGGESTED READING

Ball, *The Domus Aurea and the Roman Architectural Revolution*.

Boethius, *The Golden House of Nero*.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. How do the architecture and decoration of the Domus Transitoria work together to advance the new vision of the Roman architectural revolution?
2. How does the lack of public spaces, such as audience halls and atria, in the Domus Transitoria alter our perception of the building and of Nero? Is there an implicit violation of the role of the emperor as public figure in this?

NERO'S GOLDEN HOUSE: A ROMAN PALACE THEATER

LECTURE 16

The Domus Aurea, the Golden House of the Roman emperor Nero, might win the award for the most notorious of ancient palaces. Nero began the construction after the Great Fire of Rome in AD 64, and the palace complex eventually took over four of the 14 districts of the ancient city. The Golden House stands in an interesting period in Roman history, and the surviving wings reveal some remarkable constructions in the Roman architectural revolution. This revolution shifted architecture to concrete construction, featuring curved walls, vaults and domes for roofing, and increased interior light and space.

It was rumored, and widely believed, that Nero had started the Great Fire of Rome to clear the land to build the vast estate of the Domus Aurea.

Original Palace, Rediscovery, and Current State

The palace and grounds of the Domus Aurea covered about 124 acres of what had originally been densely occupied city lands running from the Palatine Hill in the south to the Esquiline Hill in the northern part of the city. In comparison, New York City's Central Park is 843 acres. The vestibule alone covered an area of more than four acres.

But remember that this isn't just Nero's space. What he created here was the descendent of the palace gardens of previous rulers, from the Persian kings to the Greek Hellenistic kings who followed Alexander the Great and Romans such as Lucius Licinius Lucullus, who introduced the Roman model for this sort of palace complex in a landscape.

The wide range of landscape types in the grounds of the Golden House were probably intended to convey Nero's control over such a variety of cultivated and wild lands, possibly based on the *paradeisos* model of the Persians, with an implicit statement of omnipotence.

Lucullus and Nero both opened these spaces to the public, so the Golden House actually created the equivalent of a park in the center of a city that had no green space in it. The higher status a Roman was, the more he was obliged to provide amenities as a patron, and the emperor was the highest patron of all, so we would expect these spaces to be teeming with Romans taking advantage of them.

Despite Nero's opening of his land to the public, upon his death in AD 68 the palace was too tainted by association and was abandoned by his successors, the Flavian emperors, who ruled from AD 69 to 96. Under the Flavians, it was filled with rocks and soil and used as the foundation for Flavian public buildings, including a new forum, an enormous public bath complex, and the Colosseum—the largest Roman amphitheater ever constructed.

If you get a chance to visit Rome, make a reservation ahead of time to see the Golden House, which is about a 15-minute walk from the Colosseum.

The good news is that the palace wasn't destroyed. It was rediscovered in the 15th century by men digging a well who struck the roof of one of the rooms. Eventually, they dug into many of the rooms and led torchlight tours. The soil and rock had settled, leaving enough room for visitors to walk on the fill, up close to the painted ceilings. The wall and ceiling paintings that they saw inspired the Renaissance wall paintings of the 15th and 16th centuries as seen in the Villa Giulia in Rome and the Villa d'Este in Tivoli.

> Artists from Italy and as far away as Germany and the Netherlands came to study and copy the art from Nero's palace.

Eventually, much of the fill was removed, and restorations of the surviving wings of the palace have been undertaken. They are still underground, so moisture is a constant problem, but they can be visited today.

Surviving Spaces

From Suetonius, Nero's biographer, we learn why it was called the Domus Aurea, or the Golden House: All of the surfaces, he alleges, were covered with gold. This is a statement repeated by the historian Tacitus.

We think that the best-preserved wing of the palace exemplifies the revolutionary design and construction of Nero's builders, Severus and Celer, and the work of his painter, Famulus. Unfortunately, the sculptures of his personal sculptor, Zenodorus, do not survive; their bronze was melted down long ago.

You can still visit the largest surviving wing of the palace, which is on an enormous artificial terrace, like the Domus Transitoria, facing due south. Assumedly, this is to catch the sunlight that was so essential for lighting the vast interiors.

This wing is approximately 850 feet wide. The design can be subdivided into suites of rooms around open spaces or large rooms with windows so that light pours in directly or obliquely into every room. This also means that the rooms are not all oriented in the same direction but instead around their suites of courtyards, light wells, and domes.

Domus Aurea

One of the largest of these organizing spaces is an exedra that is 164 feet wide and faces due south in the shape of half an octagon. It is lined with a series of rooms that all open onto the octagonal courtyard with a range of barrel vaults roofing each one separately. The rooms are not all the same size, but on each side of the exedra they are arranged with the largest room on each side in the center, flanked by two or more smaller rooms to the left and right.

The largest room in the suite is on the north side in the center facing due south. The effect of this design is to create a pattern that is not static. As one passed through the rooms—and they are all interconnected by doorways—the varying sizes, shapes, and orientations of the rooms would be evident.

To the east of the large exedra is another suite that radiates from a fully octagonal room. One of the architectural masterpieces of the Roman architectural revolution, it was a step toward the ultimate achievement of the revolution: Hadrian's Pantheon, with its immense concrete dome.

Two specific elements are profoundly influential for the concrete buildings to come in the next 60 years. First, this octagonal salon, thought to be a dining room, has no walls—only eight piers. All of the considerable weight of the concrete roofing system is supported by these eight regular piers, which support a large concrete dome 46 feet in diameter.

More precisely—and the second innovative element—is that they support a roofing system that starts as an eight-sided domical vault. This roof is a segmented dome like an umbrella that transitions into a true dome at the very top. At the center of the dome is an open oculus that allowed sunlight to pour into the octagonal room as well as the rooms that opened off of it.

The piers operate as doorposts for the large, open doorways that led to rooms that open directly off of the octagonal space, radiating out from each side of the octagon. These rooms alternate in shape and roofing system, creating a rhythm in design. One, on the north side, was a large barrel-vaulted nymphaeum with a staircase waterfall, an innovation in interior design developed in Nero's earlier Domus Transitoria.

Completely missing from the rooms of the palace today are the Greek sculptures that we know decorated the spaces under Nero. These sculptures included some of the greatest works of Greek art, including works by the Greek classical sculptor Praxiteles, who sculpted in the 4th century BC. His works were sought after and copied by Romans for centuries.

The majority of sculptures fall into the art historical category of Hellenistic baroque, meaning that they were done in a dramatic, emotional style, which probably appealed to Nero. One of these baroque sculptures is the famous Laocoön, transferred to the Golden House from a palace of Nero's predecessor, the emperor Tiberius, under whom it was sculpted by three Greek sculptors.

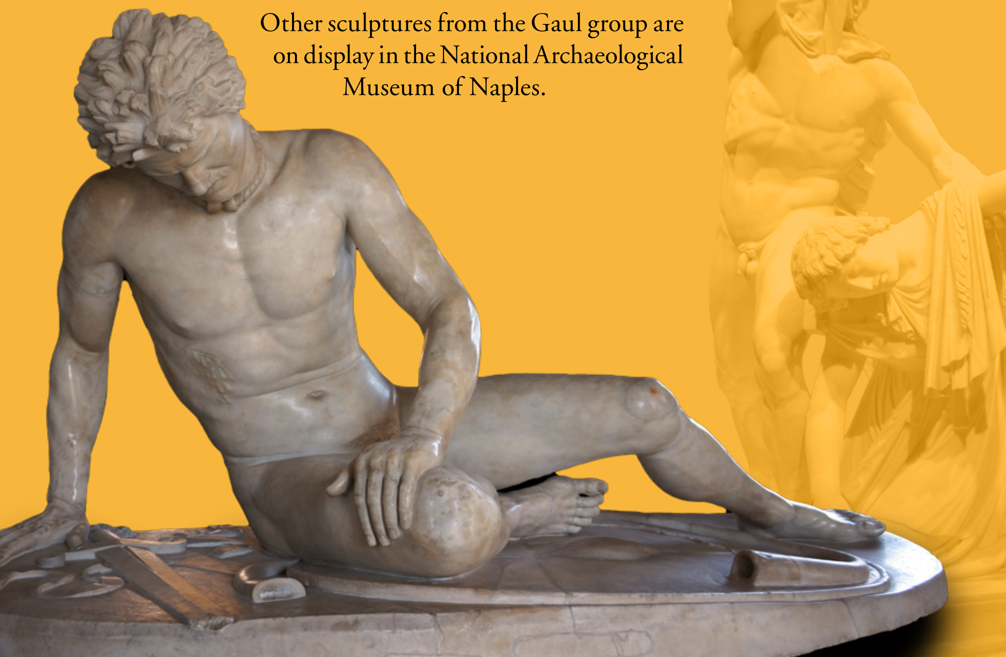
The Laocoön is on view in the Vatican Museum.

Nero also collected the famous Gaul sculptures that made up part of the victory monuments of the Hellenistic Greek kings of Pergamon, Eumenes, and Attalus. Pliny the Elder tells us that these were transferred to Rome by Nero by force and exhibited in the halls of the Golden House.

The scale of the frescoes in the Golden House is staggering. Just counting the ones that still cover the walls, they total more than 300,000 square feet—the area of 30 Sistine Chapels. And it took Michelangelo four years just to paint that ceiling. All of this was done in four years and all under the supervision, and sometimes the brush, of a master painter, Famulus.

The wall and ceiling decoration was an integral part of the palace design. Deliberate effects of lighting—which diffused from windows, light wells, and courtyards—further increased the grandeur of the entire complex, architecturally organized into airy spaces with wide views. This accentuated the luminous quality of the wall and ceiling surfaces, with their unprecedented use of white-ground paintings and gold ornament.

The famous Dying Gaul is in the Capitoline Museum in Rome and the Suicidal Gaul is in the Palazzo Altemps Museum, also in Rome.



Other sculptures from the Gaul group are on display in the National Archaeological Museum of Naples.

These were all the more impressive considering that the contemporary fashion was for wall decoration to be dominated by large blocks of red, black, and yellow—both much darker and less organic than what survives from the Golden House, which is among the most innovative and original of Roman painting.

They are innovative and original, but that doesn't mean that they appeared out of thin air. In fact, the designs that cover vast wall surfaces in Nero's palace have their origin in the subsidiary designs of the previous style, where they were merely secondary features.

In terms of composition, the wall and ceiling paintings in the Golden House are largely painted on white backgrounds. Some of the best-preserved paintings show a white-ground composition divided into concentric rectangular zones, often further defined by raised stucco work, with a central rectangular field for a figural painting. Many of the subsidiary figures and animals and a few of the figural paintings have Dionysic themes.

Nero is famous for his love of the stage, and some of the wall paintings in the largest rooms and corridors in the Golden House create architectural frames that are immediately or distantly related to the *scaenae frons*—the multistory decorated backdrop of the Roman theater stage.

SUGGESTED READING

Ball, *The Domus Aurea and the Roman Architectural Revolution*.

Boethius, *The Golden House of Nero*.

MacDonald, *The Architecture of the Roman Empire*.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. How do the architecture and decoration of the Domus Aurea work together to shape the Roman architectural revolution?
2. Does the decorative program of the Domus Aurea reinforce or challenge our perceived notion of Nero? Why or why not?

ROME'S GREAT IMPERIAL PALACE OF DOMITIAN

LECTURE 17

The palace built by Domitian is the last great imperial palace built in ancient Rome. It was so well located, designed, and constructed that it was used by emperors for more than 200 years as the primary official residence of the emperor in Rome. It also gave us our word "palace," which comes from the building's location on the Palatine Hill in Rome. All of that despite the fact that the man who commissioned it, Domitian, was considered by many to have been a despot, and his reign ended in assassination in the palace itself.

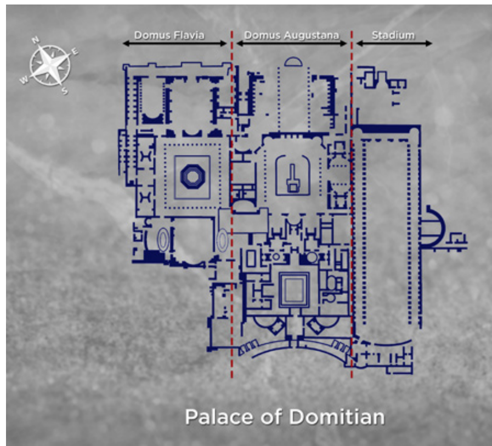
Domitian (Titus Flavius Domitianus) was the third Roman emperor of the Flavian dynasty. He became princeps in AD 81 upon the premature death by a fever of his brother Titus, a death he was later suspected of hastening.

Despite his skills as a successful general and competent administrator, Domitian suffered from a poor reputation during his lifetime that only worsened after his death in AD 96.

In his 15 years of rule, however, Domitian left a number of influential works of art, architecture, and infrastructure. The greatest of these is his palace, which developed the concepts of the Roman architectural revolution with its soaring rooms and wide-open spaces made possible by the use of brick-faced concrete.

Palace on the Palatine Hill

Domitian's most influential architectural complex was his palace on the Palatine Hill in Rome. While not the first palace built on the Palatine by an emperor, it was the largest and remains the best preserved. The palace—including its gardens, fountains, and porticoes—covered 10 acres, contrasting in size with the mid-1st-century BC Villa of the Papyri at about three and a half acres.



Later overbuilding, including wings of this palace, covers all the palaces of earlier 1st-century AD emperors—Tiberius, Caligula, and Nero. The architect Rabirius was responsible for this massive complex, the building of which presented many challenges, including an irregular site and preexisting buildings.

Rabirius chose to create a large complex, which in places rises more than six stories in height. Despite the lack of reliable artificial light in the ancient world, the rooms were not caverns. This was all possible owing to the use of brick-faced concrete as the primary building material.

> Overall, the complex is boldly experimental and successful. It builds on the work of Severus and Celer in the Domus Aurea of Nero and creates new interior spaces that inspired the work of Apollodorus of Damascus and other 2nd-century architects.

In addition to adding light, the use of concrete changed the form of the rooms. Rabirius experimented primarily with curves, creating multiple spaces that were circular, semicircular, or apsed. These often alternate with rectangular rooms, foreshadowing the alternating circular and square forms of 2nd-century Roman architecture.

These revolutionary room shapes required complex roofing solutions for which traditional gabled roofs were not designed. Rabirius relied again on concrete, with the result that the circular and semicircular rooms are roofed with a variety of domes, segmented domes, and half domes, while concrete barrel vaults and cross vaults cover some of the rectangular rooms as well.

Some of the suites are composed of sets of rooms directly connected with no hallways in between them, a very difficult problem for roofing, but one solved again by the use of concrete.

Concrete construction solved the problem of how to light the rooms at a time when no reliable source of artificial light existed. By using concrete to build great freestanding piers instead of solid walls for structural support, Rabirius created large openings of windows and light wells in the walls so that light poured into all of the rooms of the various suites in the palace. Open garden spaces and light wells alternate with suites of closed rooms so that both light and air move through the palace.

The higher-status rooms are on the top floors and around the exterior, where they receive the best light and air. Lower-status spaces, such as service corridors, are below and in the interior; they are darker, smaller, and less desirable.

Spaces and Suites in Detail

The main façade of the palace faced north across the Palatine Hill toward the Forum Romanum below. This was the direction most visitors would probably have used to approach the palace. A portico extends across the façade of the palace, screening a three-room suite that runs here, the doors all facing north.

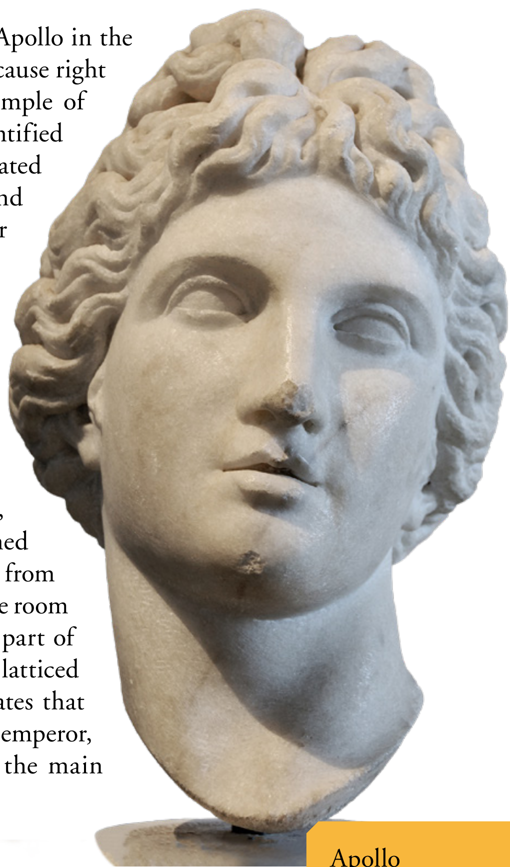
The first hall on the east, smaller than the others, has been called the Lararium—a shrine to the Lares, Roman gods of the household. In the center was the largest of the three rooms, called by the excavators the Aula Regia, or Royal Hall. Based on its size and lavish decoration, it is clearly the main audience chamber or throne room of the palace.

This is the only surviving space in Rome where we know for certain that emperors sat in state and greeted their subjects. The walls and floor were veneered with imported marbles, and the sidewalls were lined with statue niches. The south end, opposite the door, was apsed, and it was here that the emperor would sit enthroned and receive audiences.

Part of the decoration was a colossal statue in basalt of a powerfully built Hercules. Domitian repeatedly conflated his identity with that of Hercules in his public art program. Like Hercules, he was the son of the god (Domitian's father was deified by the Senate on his death) and he used his power to benefit mortals.

There was also a colossal statue of Apollo in the throne room. This is interesting because right next door to the palace is the Temple of Apollo, built by Augustus, who identified with Apollo. That temple is decorated with reliefs that show Apollo and Hercules struggling for control over the sacred object that symbolized Apollo's sanctuary at Delphi. Here, placing these gods together with Hercules, as the alter ego of the emperor Domitian, suggests a reversal of Augustus's imagery next door.

The third room is called the basilica, because it is a rectangular columned hall. The columns are yellow marble from North Africa. At the south rear of the room is an apse screened from the main part of the room by a marble transenna, a latticed marble balustrade. The apse indicates that this was also reception space for the emperor, probably for smaller groups than the main audience hall.



Apollo

Behind these three rooms to the south is a massive porticoed garden with a central octagonal fountain, a shape that was found throughout Nero's Domus Aurea. This peristyle garden served as a staging area for the crowds waiting to attend the imperial audience. It also allowed light and air to pour into the suites of rooms that surrounded the peristyle on the east, west, and south. This alternation of open and closed spaces is what enabled this multistory complex to operate as a palace.

The room in the center of the south side of the peristyle, directly opposite the audience hall on the north, was Domitian's grand dining room. It was a large square room, almost as large as the audience hall, with an apse at the rear. The rear section of the room with the apse is a step higher than the main floor of the room. This is the famous dining room of Jupiter where the Roman poet Statius dined.

The dining room was paved with large blocks of imported colored marble in an alternating pattern of circles and squares that becomes standard in concrete buildings of the 2nd century AD.

Sadly, much of the decoration of the palace is lost, some because of later looting, but also because later emperors, avoiding the pattern of Domitian—and hopefully his fate—dedicated many of the finest and most expensive items to the Temple of Jupiter on the Capitoline Hill. Jupiter was the god that the Roman poets Martial and Statius were consistent in comparing Domitian to.

> The Roman poet Martial reveals the contemporary imperial ideology of the emperor Domitian as the new Jupiter on earth who surpasses the traditional Olympian gods, a notion that develops throughout the 2nd century. Martial's slightly younger contemporary, Statius, also explicitly compares Domitian and Jupiter.

Statius mentions citrus wood tables with ivory legs, and Martial refers to emeralds set in gold, imperial magnificence, and luxurious drinking cups. Those later emperors were redirecting religious attention from the emperor back to Jupiter. That is the extent of our knowledge of the furnishings, other than that we know it had many.

Interior climate control in the ancient world was limited. It mainly relied on architecture and setting to keep rooms comfortable in all seasons.

Domitian's dining room, in the southwest corner of the palace complex, could have been unbearable in the heat of a Roman summer. Rabirius, however, included large windows on the east and west and, just outside of each, an open-air nymphaeum. Fountains shot water up into the air in front of the windows of the dining room, and the prevailing winds, largely from the west, blew across the fountain and into the dining room, acting as a nontechnological form of air conditioning.

The floor of the dining room used a hypocaust heating system: Beneath the dining room were service corridors, including a furnace room. That furnace was lit in cold weather, and the smoke and heat from it rose into the area under the floor for a form of radiant heat.

The dining room could simultaneously seat dozens, perhaps scores, of guests, all of whom would have reclined on dining couches with tables, a proliferation of furniture not seen in other Roman houses.

We have more evidence of the architectural decoration. Architecture under Domitian reveals two major trends—increasingly elaborate classical decoration and revolutionary concrete construction—both of which began under Nero and continue under the later emperors of the 2nd century.

> Because Domitian enjoyed watching sporting events but didn't always want to leave his house to attend, he had the first skybox in history created in the palace so that he could look down into the valley of the Circus Maximus, which ran along the south edge of the Palatine Hill, just below the top floor of the palace.

The first trend is an expanded use of architectural decoration found on traditional building forms. This seems to be the design style chosen by Domitian or his architects for traditional building types, such as temples. The style consists of friezes of traditional Greek classical type, but now cut and drilled more deeply than ever before and often combined with multiple friezes, where in the past one would have served.

This style of architectural sculpture was used to decorate a number of Domitian's building projects, and it leads to a profusion of decoration, which is richly detailed and more volumetric than in the past.

Both architectural and decorative elements recede and project more than previously seen. Interior walls in the throne room, for example, are lined with deep niches separated by frames that project out into the room.

In his writing, Statius describes the catalog of imported marbles that decorated the palace, drawn from across the entire Roman world. Cataloging them indicates that Domitian's selection of decorative stone was intended to reflect Roman control over the edges of imperial territory as well as control over the resources necessary to bring these materials to Rome, a power that rested in the hands of the emperor. It also metaphorically reflects the superiority of the Roman system over foreign powers and cultures.

Domitian inaugurated a stadium in Rome for Greek sports and athletic contests. The Stadium of Domitian is now buried, but its size and form are preserved in the Piazza Navona that lies just above it, one of Rome's most wonderful public spaces.

The east edge of Domitian's palace is framed by a sunken garden shaped like a stadium, possibly based on the Stadium of Domitian itself.

Other than the luxuriousness, there's little in the palace of Domitian that speaks to us directly about Domitian besides the Hercules colossal statue and the stadium garden. Instead, the palace speaks to us about the Roman notions of the architectural revolution and palatial space.

SUGGESTED READING

MacDonald, *The Architecture of the Roman Empire*.

Meade, *Seat of the World*.

Stierlin, *The Roman Empire*.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1 Domitian's palace became the primary residence of emperors for 200 years. Can you see a correspondence between that longevity and the ceremonial core of the palace in the throne room, central courtyard, and dining room?

2 In what ways did the palace of Domitian reflect his personal tastes and projected identity, either in decoration or room design?

HADRIAN'S VILLA, TIVOLI

LECTURE 18

The palace complex of the Roman emperor Hadrian at Tivoli provides perhaps the best example of a palace from the ancient world that reflects the personality of the ruler who made it. As far as we can tell, Hadrian selected the land, personally designed many (if not most) of the buildings and rooms, named them, lived in them, and deliberately created architectural spaces that served as mementos of his personal experiences. Instead of surveying the entertainment suites, bath complexes, guest quarters, libraries, theaters, temples, dining rooms, and gardens, this lecture will concentrate on the most extraordinary spaces in terms of architecture and imperial taste.

The palace complex of the Roman emperor Hadrian at Tivoli is about 20 miles (30 kilometers) from Rome. Tivoli is located up in the hills, but Hadrian's Villa is on a large open plain.

Archaeologists still haven't found the edges of the complex, but it's usually described as covering about 300 acres and comprising about 40 buildings. The site as we have it is twice as big as the city of Pompeii and was the largest Roman palace ever built.

Teatro Marittimo

One of the most architecturally sophisticated of the suites is the Teatro Marittimo, or Circular Island Suite. While not a theater, its actual use is still debated. Its placement between what's called the Hall of the Philosophers and the Greek and Latin libraries has led some scholars to consider it Hadrian's or his wife Sabina's private apartment suite. Others think it operated as an astronomical observatory.

The suite is an exercise in the architecture of undulating curves and the creation of enclosed space with a minimum of supporting walls. It consists of a circular enclosure wall that is 144 feet (44 meters) in diameter—almost exactly the diameter of the Pantheon in Rome, Hadrian's greatest architectural achievement. It has a surrounding ambulatory with a portico of 40 marble Ionic columns, a moat, and a circular island filled with a series of undulating convex and concave rooms around a central courtyard with a fountain.

Maritime theatre Villa Adriana

The suite consists of spaces laid out with a compass, emphasizing four segments of a circle as a design feature. There is none of the traditional reliance on axiality and symmetry. As with other works of the architectural revolution, the goal here is the creation of spaces with a maximum of light; a centrally oriented, curvilinear design; and freedom from heavy supporting walls.

Experiments in roofing systems were also a major component of the island complex, with barrel and cross vaults used to roof irregular spaces.

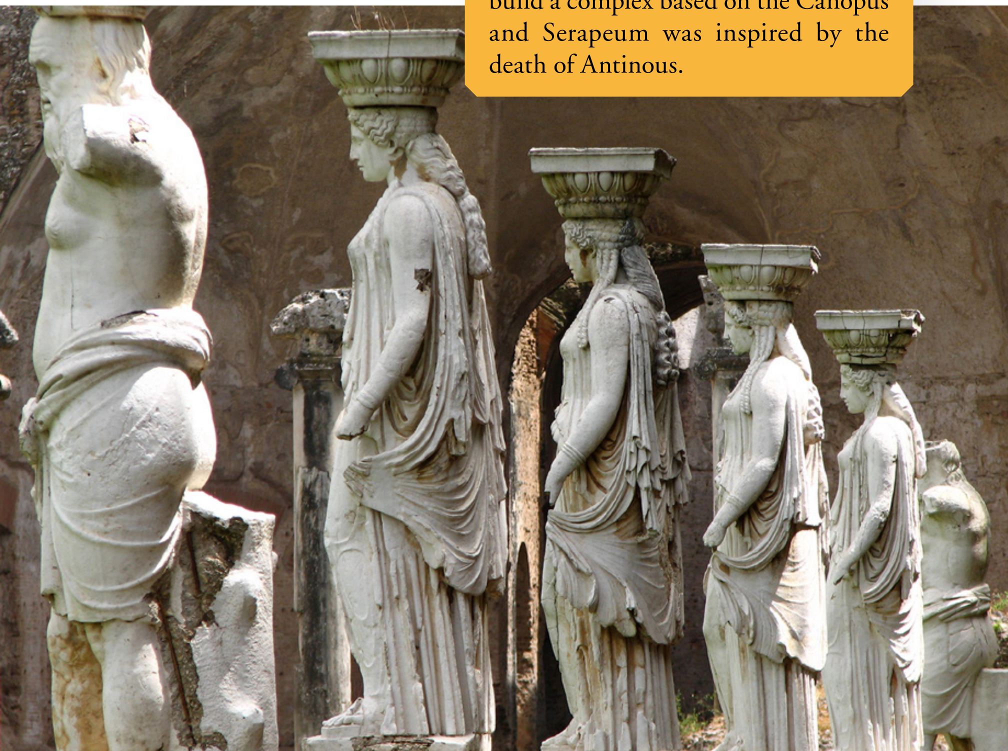
The Serapeum/Canopus Complex

Hadrian's Serapeum—a dining complex with decoration inspired by the sanctuary of the Greco-Egyptian god Serapis in Alexandria, Egypt—is located on almost the opposite edge of the villa complex from the theater and exemplifies an exploration of memory, history, and architectural innovation.

The building faces a large artificial pool, called the Canopus, named after the canal at Alexandria in Egypt running between the Nile and the sanctuary of Serapis, which Hadrian visited on one of his travels.

A very personal memory that influenced Hadrian's art and architecture was his mourning for Antinous, a young man from Bithynia who was Hadrian's favorite companion and traveling partner. Antinous drowned in the Nile in AD 130, and in reaction to his loss, Hadrian deified Antinous—an unprecedented step for someone not a member of the emperor's family.

It seems very likely that the decision to build a complex based on the Canopus and Serapeum was inspired by the death of Antinous.



At the southern end of the canal is a small square reflecting pool, and just beyond that, the complex of the Serapeum was built into the hillside. The emperor and his guests were the primary audience for this display. They reclined on a large semicircular dining couch facing the Canopus and the sculptural display in and around it.

Behind the couch is an artificial grotto that perhaps evoked the dining context at Sperlonga or Nero's Domus Transitoria in Rome. Here, the artificial grotto is created with a great concrete half dome that is 72 feet (22 meters) in diameter—exactly half that of the Pantheon. It's not a true dome, but a "pumpkin" vault, of which the nine radiating segments alternate in convex-curve or flat sections.

The Canopus canal, dining platform grotto, and subterranean complex beyond are all connected by a complicated series of water features. The entire layout is reminiscent of earlier Roman palaces, although structurally far more sophisticated and with layers of meaning and memory never found before.

The pattern of the rhythmic flat and curved pumpkin half dome above the dining couch continues along the curving back wall of the dining space with eight statue niches that have alternating semicircular or square tops.

A deep barrel-vaulted chamber recedes into the hillside behind the dining couch. Its sidewalls have eight more alternating statue niches, also repeating the square-and-circular rhythm of the statue niches in the dining platform grotto. Those eight statue niches held black basalt statues in Egyptian style. The barrel-vaulted chamber terminates in a large statue niche for a colossal white marble bust of the god Serapis with the facial features of Antinous.

The black and white statuary from the Serapeum is in the Vatican Museum, in a room built to reflect the original setting.

The design of the Serapeum/Canopus complex evokes the sanctuary of Serapis that Hadrian rebuilt at Alexandria and whose worship Hadrian brought to Rome. It also commemorates Antinous, who becomes the new deity worshipped here.

The subterranean chamber might be based on the underground chambers used to initiate people into the worship of Serapis in Egypt. All of this is created using the materials and building vocabulary of the architectural revolution.

The Antinoeion

One of the last sections of the villa to be built under Hadrian (in AD 134) and one of the most recent to be excavated (in the 21st century) is the Antinoeion, a temple complex dedicated to the deified Antinous.

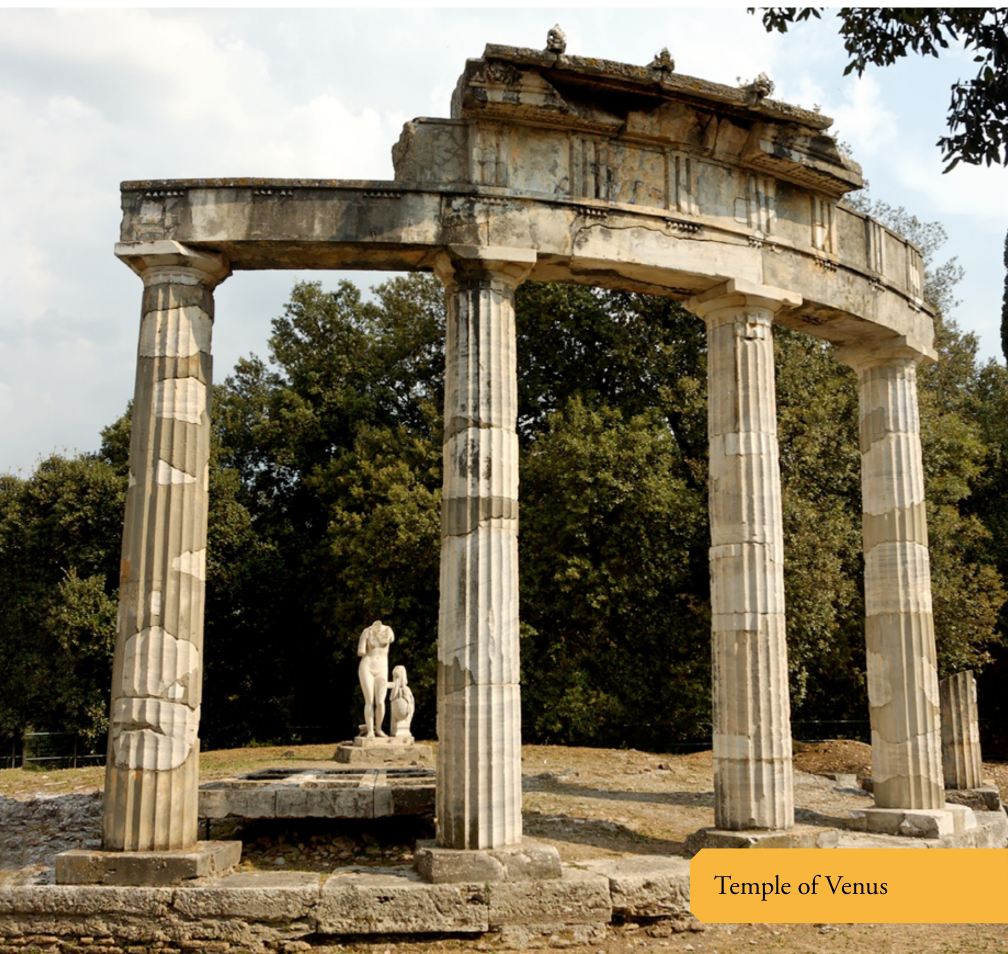
The sacred precinct consists of a surrounding wall and rectangular courtyard, in which two small Roman-style temples were built that faced each other across the open plaza. One of the long walls of the precinct flares out in a colonnaded hemicycle with a room at the center of it, opposite the main entrance into the sanctuary. This creates a cross axis in the precinct and adds a curved feature, which seems to have been a requirement of Hadrianic design.

Much of the decorative sculptures from the Antinoeion is in Rome, including the Antinous-Osiris, which is in the Vatican Museum. Two Egyptian-style telamones (human-shaped brackets or supports) found nearby are also in the Vatican Museum.

The Temple of Venus

The Temple of Venus is a copy of the Temple of Aphrodite of Knidos—one of the most notorious sanctuaries in the Greek world—which includes a copy of the cult statue of Aphrodite created by the sculptor Praxiteles of Athens in the 4th century BC.

After purchasing the statue—referred to by scholars as a Venus Pudica ("modest Venus")—from Praxiteles, the Knidians constructed a round temple for it in which it could be admired from all sides. It was a sensation.



Temple of Venus

People traveled from across the Greek world to view what's thought to be the first nude cult statue of Aphrodite, and copies of it are found across the ancient world, produced for the next 700 years.

Hadrian replicated the round Doric-style Greek temple and the cult statue, which presumably he had visited in his travels, but added his own design to the sanctuary. The temple stands in a large semicircular courtyard rather than a more traditional Greek rectangular one.

The Piazza d'Oro

One of the most architecturally innovative parts of the palace—and thus one of the most radically designed buildings in the Roman world—is what today is known as the Piazza d'Oro, or the Golden Piazza, so called because of its lavish use of opus sectile and carved marble relief friezes.

The complex consists of three major components: an entrance foyer, a courtyard with a surrounding portico (the largest space in the complex), and a nymphaeum complex opposite the entrance.

The entrance foyer stands in the center on one of the short sides of the courtyard, acting as an intermediate space between the courtyard and the room it's connected from. It is a unique room that is shaped similar to a pumpkin. It consists in plan of a space with eight sides; four curved walls alternate with four straight walls. The roofing is lobed with ribs separating flat and rounded dome elements that reflect the room spaces below them: flat roofing over the straight walled sections and curved vaulting over the rounded sections, all poured in a single concrete roof. It's very intricate and technically challenging.

opus sectile

Unfortunately, Hadrian's Villa has been quarried for its precious marbles—both building stones and decorative features—for hundreds of years. This has led to the scattering of the sculptures, stuccos, mosaics, opus sectile floors, wall decorations, and furnishings and to the current situation where we can identify many of these elements from the palace but stripped of their original context.

Examples include a red marble statue of a satyr called the Fauno Rosso (Red Faun) and a mosaic of doves on the rim of a drinking cup by Sosus of Pergamon, the most esteemed Greek mosaic artist of antiquity. Both are on display in the Capitoline Museum in Rome.

The main feature of the Piazza d'Oro is the suite of rooms opposite the entryway and taking up the rear of the courtyard. It's one of the most sophisticated forms of the architectural revolution, using the flexible material of concrete to create a space that allows air, light, and integrated water features into an interior suite of rooms.

The centerpiece is an open court shaped like a quatrefoil, although with a completely sinuous or undulating plan so that the four lobes of the cross shape flow into each other. Eight piers support the architrave above, each separated by a pair of marble columns. So, 16 columns and eight small piers take the place of walls, allowing light from this court to pour into the rooms all around.

On the main axis opposite the entry is the terminal feature of the entire complex: a curved back wall with a nymphaeum comprised of statue niches, slender columns, and a water feature.

Stretches of marble relief from the Piazza d'Oro show scenes of hunting and Cupids. These are comparable to Hadrian's hunting tondi, the round reliefs in Rome that show Hadrian and members of his court hunting bears, wild boars, and other big game.

SUGGESTED READING

MacDonald and Pinto, *Hadrian's Villa and Its Legacy*.

Stierlin, *The Roman Empire*.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. "Go play with your pumpkins," the architect Apollodorus of Damascus taunted Hadrian. In what ways does his villa serve as an architectural studio for pumpkin domes?
2. How do the buildings, rooms, and décor of the villa reflect the personal experiences of the emperor?

DIOCLETIAN'S RETIREMENT PALACE, SPLIT

LECTURE 19

The palace of the Roman emperor Diocletian, who ruled from AD 284 to 305, rejects the model sprawling villa and palace forms of previous emperors in favor of a design aesthetic that has more in common with Roman republican colonies and army bases than with grand palaces. In terms of architectural design, Diocletian's palace served as a bridge between the Roman republic/early empire and the later medieval world.

The 3rd century AD was a period of turmoil for the Roman Empire. Only the first emperor of the century died peacefully in his bed. Everyone who followed him was assassinated or committed suicide before he could be assassinated. And by AD 284, when Diocletian came to power, the empire had seen 25 emperors in 50 years, as armies made and overthrew emperors based on self-interest or hoped-for victory in battle.

Diocletian came to power with a vision and motivation to solve Rome's systemic problems. His greatest achievement was the creation of the tetrarchy, the rule by four men. In 285, Diocletian raised another army officer, Maximian, to the rank of junior emperor, or Caesar. In 286, Maximian was raised to coemperor, or Augustus. He and Diocletian then each selected a Caesar, Maximian adopting Constantius and Diocletian adopting Galerius.

On May 1, AD 305, after 20 years of rule, Diocletian and Maximian abdicated power simultaneously, becoming the first Roman emperors to retire to private life. This led to the promotion of their Caesars, who each selected a new Caesar as an associate emperor.

Maximian's retirement villa at Piazza Armerina—a UNESCO World Heritage site—demonstrates that in some instances the Romans still desired the same type of palaces as seen in earlier periods and were still technically able to create palace structures similar to those of the 1st and 2nd centuries. Therefore, Diocletian's radically different palace is the result of an act of will and taste, not the inability to create what earlier Roman emperors had achieved.

The palace of Diocletian

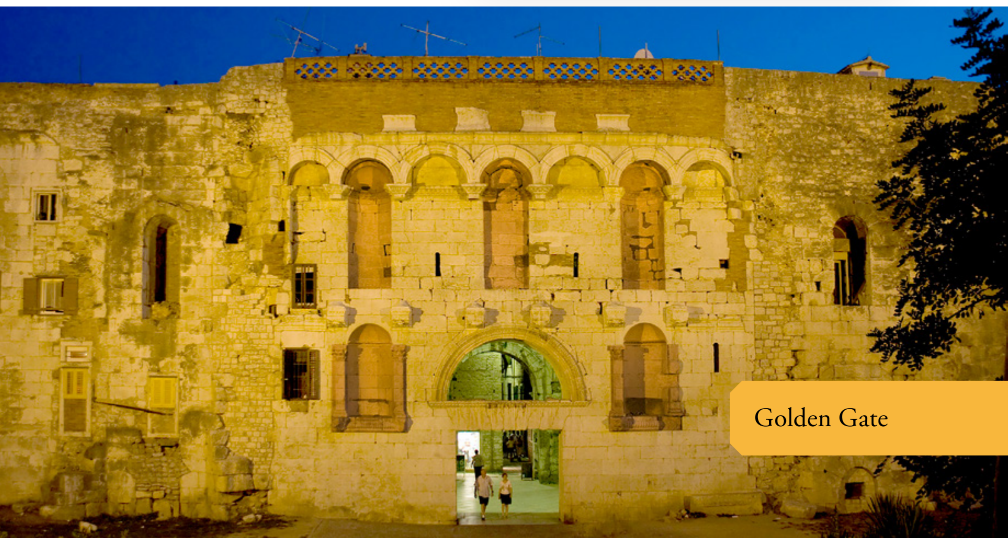
The Palace of Diocletian

The palace of Diocletian at Split, Croatia, sits on the Adriatic coast in a relatively compact fortified rectangle that covered an area of almost 10 acres, which is somewhat smaller in comparison to other palaces in this course—specifically the rural ones.

The entire palace is surrounded by a high fortification wall punctuated by towers. This is the same pattern as the Aurelian walls that were built surrounding Rome in the AD 270s. The palace walls had square towers on each corner, octagonal towers flanking the entrances in the centers of three of the sides, and more square towers halfway between those entrances and the corners. The fourth side faced the sea and was unbroken by entrances or towers, making a formidable façade to those who approached from that direction—who were, possibly, the majority of visitors.

The entrances in the centers of the north, east, and west walls are today referred to by names given to them in the 16th century when Split was under Venetian influence: The north gate is called the Golden Gate, the east is the Silver Gate, and the west is the Iron Gate.

Some commentators have pointed out the projection of power that this fortified residence radiates. But if the emperor has to fortify his palace, it's actually a rather dramatic statement of insecurity. Diocletian lived in uncertain times, and that is reflected in the design of his palace.


Golden Gate

The entrances to the palace are in the center of the outside walls, which means that the colonnaded roads within it cross at the center, creating a design that is essentially four quarters separated by these roads. This is a throwback to the layout of Rome's first colony at Ostia. It seems that Diocletian's architects relied on a plan that was 600 years old and appropriate to a military colony laid out in enemy territory.

Judging by the interior arrangements and facilities of the palace, it occupies something of a transitional place between the palaces of the previous emperors and the later Byzantine forms.

One arm of the crossed colonnaded streets terminates not in a gate to the exterior (because it faces the sea), but in an elaborate and grand peristyle court. At the rear is a platform raised about five feet up a flight of eight steps. The stairs are split and fill the two outer thirds of the platform. The center third of the platform has a railing, or balustrade, around it. This was the stage for imperial audiences.

elaborate and grand peristyle court

A Greek-type pediment combined with a Roman arch, which was a favorite design of late Roman architecture, further formalizes the raised position of the emperor. Four large monolithic red granite columns with Corinthian capitals support the pediment. The granite was shipped from Egypt and would have been costly and recognized as such by those in audience.

This sort of formal audience architecture develops in the 3rd and 4th centuries from the earlier tribunal, on which a Roman judge would sit and preside over court. It's the antithesis of the models of emperors like Nero and Caligula, who mingled with their subjects in informal reception spaces.

Diocletian deliberately distanced himself from other, even elite, Romans as a means of self-protection against assassination. He had to be seen and be accessible—but not too accessible—so he appeared above them, wearing a crown, framed by architecture to set him apart from even the members of his court. His imagery and staging became the model for medieval kingship.

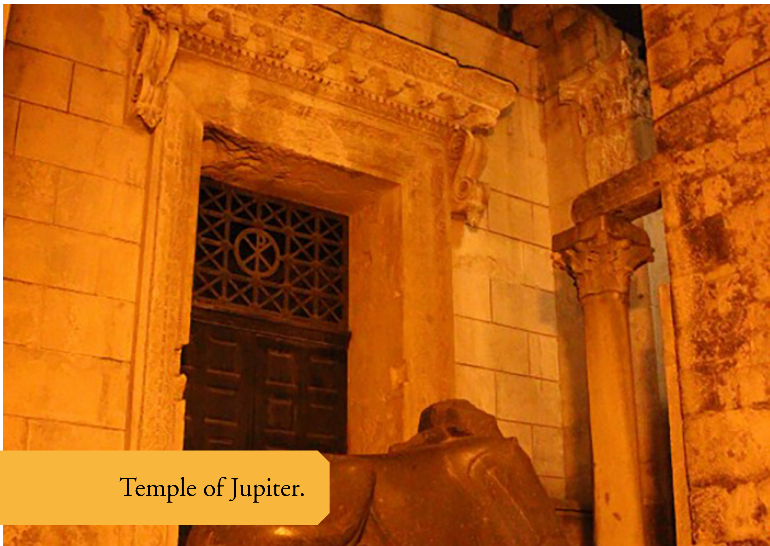
On the Arch of Galerius at Thessaloniki in Greece (AD 303), the four Tetrarchs appear on one relief performing a sacrifice with the senior Tetrarchs, Diocletian and Maximian, in the center, all four in front of a backdrop of an arcaded colonnade very similar to the elaborate and grand peristyle court in Diocletian's palace.

Temple and Tomb

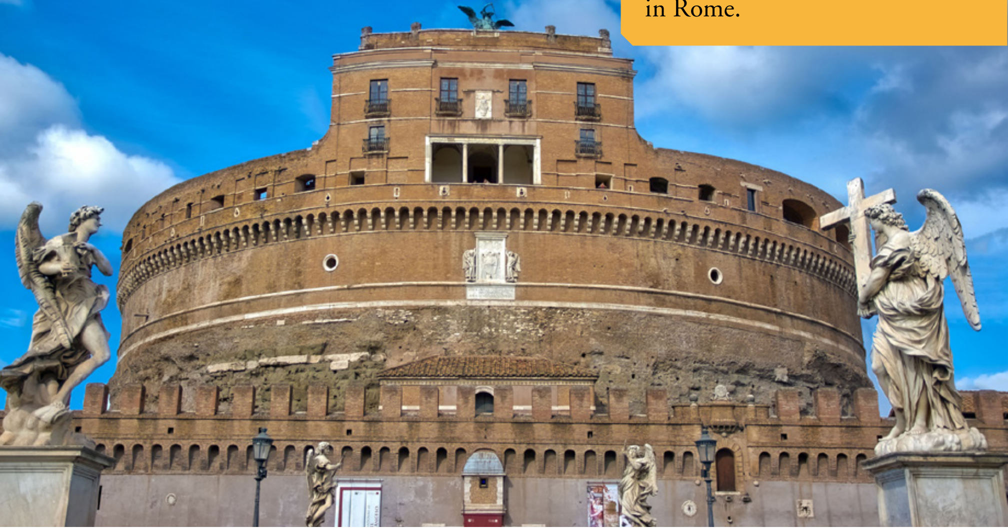
On either side of the peristyle court, two buildings faced each other from their own courtyards in the two quarters of this half of the palace. To the west is a temple facing a mausoleum to the east. The temple is a very traditional Roman Italic design. In some ways, it's a throwback to Roman republican temple design, such as the Temple of Portunus in Rome.

The temple is reminiscent of the Temple of Minerva found in the palace of Domitian on the Palatine Hill in Rome and also similar to the two small temples in the Antinoeion sanctuary in Hadrian's Villa at Tivoli. Unlike Hadrian's temples, which were constructed of concrete, Diocletian's was built of cut stone that was pieced into an elaborately coffered, barrel-vaulted ceiling. This temple provides another example of the reliance on traditional architectural forms and processes rather than the concrete-based work of the architectural revolution.

Diocletian's mausoleum is in the southeast quarter of the palace, facing the Temple of Jupiter. It is the first Roman imperial tomb housed in a palace. Prior to this, emperors were generally buried in large public tombs on the outskirts of Rome.



Temple of Jupiter.



To this day, you can still see the Mausoleum of Augustus and the Mausoleum of Hadrian, the Castel Sant'Angelo, in Rome.

By placing his tomb within his palace, Diocletian seems to be following an older practice. Starting perhaps as early as the 5th century BC, wealthy Romans who owned houses outside the city of Rome buried family members on their properties. Certainly by the 2nd century BC, monumental tombs erected on villa sites had become a familiar feature of the suburban landscape. Elite Roman residences developed with a culture of personal commemoration that Diocletian seems to be referring back to.

The arrangement of the temple and tomb in Diocletian's palace is startlingly similar to the core of Augustus's building program on the Campus Martius outside of Rome. The Mausoleum of Augustus was built on the north edge of the Campus Martius with a doorway facing south. Due south of it was the Pantheon of Agrippa, with its door facing north. Both were round buildings whose doors faced each other—one a temple to the traditional gods and the other a monument to the new gods.

In the palace of Diocletian, the same sort of arrangement—creating an axis between the Temple of Jupiter and the mausoleum of Jupiter's son Diocletian—seems deliberate. Some details of his tomb reinforce that idea as well.

The shape of Diocletian's mausoleum is not traditional, although it has some interesting contemporary parallels. It is an octagonal, central-planned building, which distantly references the Pantheon of Hadrian. It's domed and has seven niches along the interior wall that alternate semicircular and square, a familiar pattern from the Pantheon. Also like the Pantheon, it has a projecting front porch, much like a more traditional Roman temple.

Diocletian's palace is a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Small round or octagonal buildings, like Diocletian's mausoleum, were used as tombs of elite individuals rather than elite families throughout the 3rd and 4th centuries. In these centuries, tombs like that of Diocletian become the building type known as a martyrium, a freestanding round or octagonal building that would become the standard form for marking the burial of an important or saintly person and then later for marking sites that were more generally sacred to Christianity.

Rooms and Halls

The section of the palace that faced the sea equals about a quarter of its overall area, essentially everything to the south of the peristyle court, Temple of Jupiter, and Diocletian's mausoleum. This area has frequently been discussed as private apartments or living quarters, but it seems instead to be closer to the suite of three major reception rooms found along the north edge of the palace of Domitian on the Palatine Hill in Rome.

Those rooms were built adjacent to each other and connected along their north fronts by a long portico. Looking from the south edge of the palace, you see a long hallway that runs the length of the palace from east to west. Such a transverse hall is found in front of the audience hall of Maximian in his villa at Piazza Armerina.

> Like the palaces of Domitian and Hadrian, there are extensive substructures at Split. They were probably used for storage and staff areas, and they are similar to the lower levels found on the Palatine Hill in Rome under the imperial palaces.

This hallway opens onto a number of rooms of varying sizes and configurations, three of which are of particular interest. In the center of the south side of the palace behind the peristyle court is a large rectangular audience hall. Because it isn't constructed of concrete like Domitian's, it needs the eight large piers that break up the open area of the floor to support its roofing system.

Architecturally, it's a hypostyle hall, a roof supported by columns. In terms of design, it is very similar in proportions and size to the cut-stone entrance hall at the step pyramid complex of Zoser in Saqqara, Egypt.

Diocletian's hypostyle hall was not connected directly to the peristyle court, but a domed room was built between the two. This domed room has cross-shaped hallways in it that lead to the raised audience platform on the north and to the hypostyle hall to the south, so it links the two major spaces on the central axis of the palace. It may have been a dining room, or it might have been a more exclusive reception space for smaller groups that the emperor needed to meet with.

To the west of the large hypostyle hall on the south edge of the palace are two additional halls of differing sizes. One is small enough for a freestanding roof, but the other has six columns that support the roof and create a basilica plan, very similar to the basilica room adjacent to the major audience hall in Domitian's palace in Rome.

To the east are two more suites of rooms that are built into the rigid rectangular plan of the palace. In the far southeast corner is a multiroom bath suite, which served the needs of guests as well as residents in the rooms in this wing of the palace—a common feature in Roman elite dwellings.

SUGGESTED READING

Adam, *Ruins of the palace of the Emperor Diocletian at Spalatro in Dalmatia*.

Wilkes, *Diocletian's Palace*.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1 Diocletian's palace is something of a throwback. In what ways does it incorporate elements of Roman republican design and forms? In what ways Augustan?

2 What components of Diocletian's palace demonstrate his relationship to other Romans and his rule of the eastern half of the empire?

CONSTANTINE'S PALACE, CONSTANTINOPLE

LECTURE 20

Constantinople represents something extraordinary in world history: the creation of a new capital for an empire that was already more than 600 years old. It was more than a new capital for the Roman Empire and the first newly designed Christian city; it grew into the greatest European city of the Middle Ages and a model for all other European cities, as well as a bulwark against the spread of Islam, until its eventual fall in AD 1453.

By the 4th century AD, it was clear that Rome was not conveniently located as an imperial capital. Too far from the sea, from the major population and economic centers of the empire, and from the frontiers, Rome had largely become a symbolic capital rather than a center of government by the time Constantine came to power in AD 306.

His predecessors, the Tetrarchs, shared power in groups of four and had divided the empire into spheres of influence, in which they founded regional capitals closer to the frontiers and population centers to protect and govern the empire.

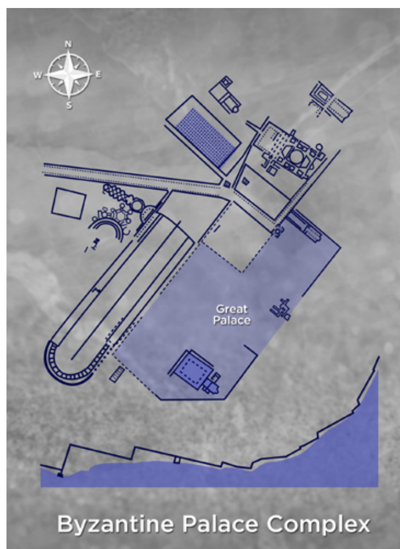
Constantine, however, fought a series of civil wars that left him the sole ruler of the Roman world. And he, too, founded a new capital, selecting a spot already occupied by the small Greek town of Byzantium.

Constantine was responsible for the initial placement and layout of the city and its monuments. Like Rome before it, this new capital was founded on a site with seven hills, which shows the importance of symbolic continuity for the imperial capital.

Although he was initially involved in the city's design, Constantine died in AD 337 before it could be completed.

A New Capital

The site of Constantinople was selected based on a number of advantages. It was close enough to directly supervise the rich eastern provinces—to intervene against invasions from across the Danube or through Asia—and it guarded the vital trade route that connected the Mediterranean and Black Seas.



The Bosphorus, the narrow strait at this point, also made a natural east-west conduit so that, like Rome in Italy, Constantinople spanned the major regional crossroads. It was also easily defensible, unlike many of the other major cities of the empire. Built on a triangular peninsula with very poor access from the sea, an impressive set of walls was erected that surrounded the entire city—one of Constantine's first acts.

As a new foundation in a new capital, the palace was designed to make a statement of empire that was appropriate to the administrative and ceremonial center of the Roman world. This statement started with the size of the palace—at more than 200,000 square feet, built on six massive terraces, rising up more than 100 feet above the coast. In design, it was reminiscent of earlier Roman palaces.

The tradition of building temples or other religious buildings adjacent to palaces is one of long standing in the ancient world, going back as far as the Egyptian palaces of the New Kingdom with their temples to Amun Ra, the principal god of the Egyptian dynasty.

The palace was built on its terraces in the southeastern quadrant of the city. One of a number of imperial residences, it was known from early on as the Great Palace to distinguish it from the lesser residences around the city. The palace block included expected spaces, such as residential suites, barracks for imperial guards, reception rooms, and a throne room.

To the north and south of the palace complex were Christian churches. These seem to have replaced the typical temples of Jupiter or other pagan patron deities that were found in earlier Roman palaces.

At Constantinople, the churches to the north were the most important, placed as they were at a major intersection in the city, essentially at the entrance to the palace. These churches acted as anticipatory monuments that established the religious identity of the palace occupants for visitors before they entered the palace.

This design reflects, and is perhaps directly based on, the Golden House of Nero in Rome, where a great artificial terrace platform held the Temple of the Deified Claudius, Nero's adoptive father. This temple faced the main road leading to the residential block of the palace, announcing Nero's piety toward his father.

The Augustaion, the large courtyard between Hagia Sophia—the cathedral of Constantinople—and the palace to the south, was designed to reference the Forum Romanum in Rome, but to act as a forecourt for the palace and a stage for a sculpture group of the Constantinian dynasty.

The name of the space, the Augustaion, is derived from the title of Constantine's mother, Augusta Helena. Her statue, surmounting a column, was placed in the courtyard, along with companion statues on columns of Constantine and his three sons. This form of imperial commemoration was based directly on a group in the Forum Romanum of five columns topped with statues of Jupiter and the Tetrarchs, Constantine's predecessor emperors. That group from Rome is prominently featured on a relief from Constantine's triumphal arch in Rome.

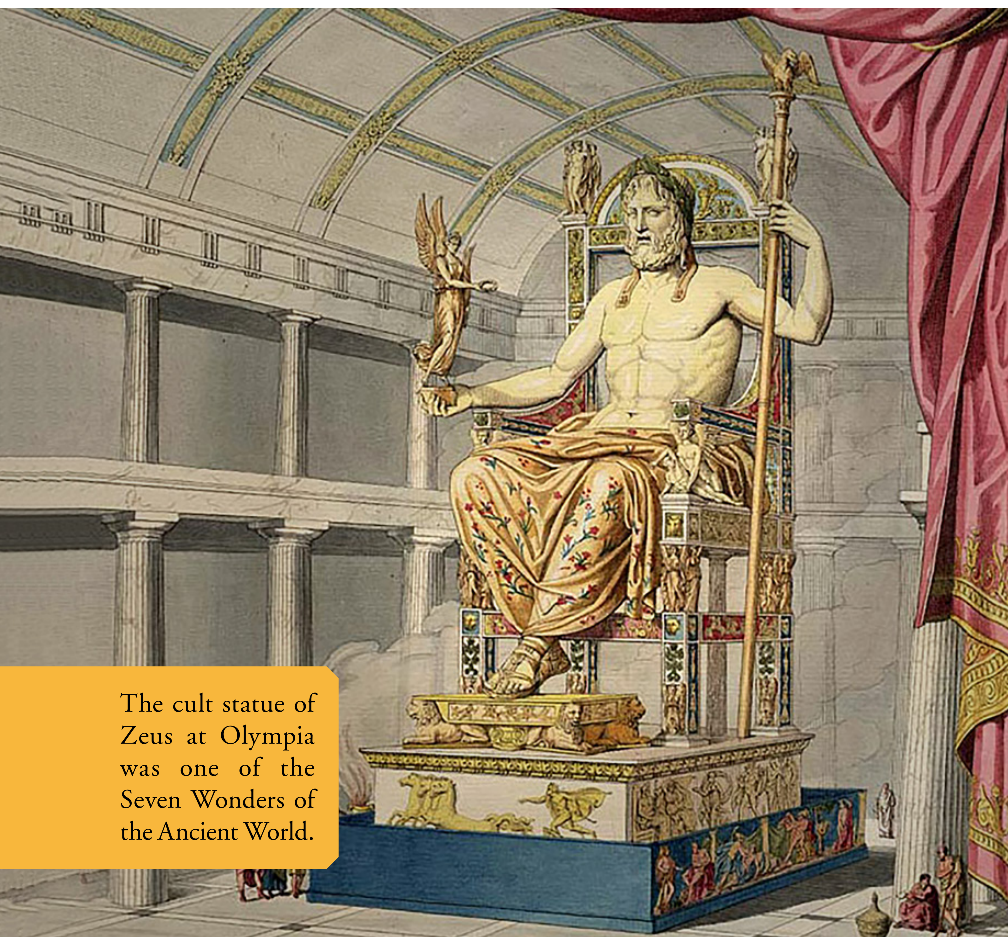
Jupiter is conspicuously absent in Constantinople in favor of Constantine's mother, the very Christian, and recently deceased, Helena. This statue group is also reflected in the Eagle Cameo, an ancient cameo presentation gem now set in the cover of the Ada Gospel. It shows Helena, Constantine, and his three sons with two Roman eagles.

The redirection of divine attention from pagan to Christian is demonstrated by the Baths of Zeuxippos, immediately south of the two churches and within the block of the palace. The baths were built over a temple of Zeus, which may be the source for their name. These were public baths, but were connected to the palace itself, and were designed and decorated as an integral element in the palace. Emperors were not only expected to build bath complexes, but they were also expected to frequent them, along with their subjects.

Sculptures from around the Empire

Constantine sent agents throughout the empire to collect art for the palace complex. Much of this art was bronze sculptures, one of the most technically difficult, expensive, high-status artistic media in the ancient world. He apparently had dozens of sculptures collected from around the empire and brought to decorate the palace.

These sculptures included some of the most famous works of ancient art, such as the cult statue of Aphrodite from Knidos, a work by the Greek master sculptor Praxiteles. Even more famous was the cult statue of Zeus at Olympia, a chryselephantine (gold and ivory) colossal statue.



The cult statue of Zeus at Olympia was one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World.

Almost none of these sculptures collected from across the empire survive. Ironically, the few that do only survived because they were looted from Constantinople when the Great Palace was sacked by the Venetians in AD 1204. They took some works back to Venice, where they are still on display today. These included porphyry statues of Constantine's immediate predecessors, the Tetrarchs.

Statue of the Tetrarchs

The appropriation of victory monuments from his predecessors was part of Constantine's public art program, best seen on his triumphal arch in Rome. On the arch, a large amount of the sculptural relief decoration is reused material, referred to as *spolia*. This material includes relief panels and standing figures from public monuments of only three emperors: Trajan, Hadrian, and Marcus Aurelius. This seems a deliberate attempt to extend the meritocracy of the Five Good Emperors to include Constantine by creating an extended dynastic display.

All of these images show this exclusive group of emperors—many with their facial features recut to those of Constantine—performing public, official, and praiseworthy acts, such as warfare, hunting, sacrifice, arrival and departure ceremonies, and addressing crowds of civilians and the army.

It seems certain that Constantine was taking great pagan works from around the empire and moving them to decorate the palace in a way that demonstrated its status as the new center of the empire and its acceptance of the cultural legacy of pagan antiquity. Yes, he took material from temples, but its placement seems not to have been a degradation, but only a relocation of the imagery. Taking the sculptures and placing them in the palace shows that he—or the prospective audience—was expected to value them.

The Hippodrome

To the west of the main palace block was the hippodrome of Constantinople, the largest and most important venue for spectacle entertainment in the city. As a hippodrome, it was primarily designed for chariot racing, but absent an amphitheater or other such venue, it was also the space that housed the other major spectacles of animal hunts and other animal performances, prisoner executions, and triumphal processions.

The hippodrome at Constantinople was laid out in a position almost identical to the Circus Maximus in Rome, immediately to the west of the main palace. In Rome, the palace was not directly connected to the Circus Maximus, instead hosting a skybox from which the emperor could view the chariot races. But the hippodrome featured a passage that allowed the emperor and his family to move under cover between the palace and the imperial box at the hippodrome.

> The hippodrome seated about 100,000 spectators. By comparison, the Circus Maximus in Rome could accommodate about 150,000 spectators.

Hippodrome of Constantinople

That imperial box was placed in the center of the long, eastern side of the seating area and was one of only two exclusive seating areas. Its placement in the center of the stands at the finish line meant that the emperor was an integral part of the spectacle taking place in the hippodrome—which operated as a stage for him to display his family, beneficence, and generosity as a patron of the entertainments taking place.

The hippodrome, like other areas of the palace, was richly decorated to emphasize the imperial beneficence as well as the continuity of classical culture. This meant that some of the decoration relied on *spolia*, as seen elsewhere in the palace.

We know that the hippodrome featured obelisks brought from Egypt, along with sculptures of the pagan gods, heroes, and previous Roman emperors. Specific works known from here included the very famous Serpent Column, brought to the hippodrome from the sanctuary of Apollo at Delphi.

The Serpent Column was dedicated at Delphi in 478 BC to commemorate the success of the Greeks against the invading Persians at the Battle of Plataea. Constantine removed the column from Delphi and had it placed in the hippodrome.

Lost Elements

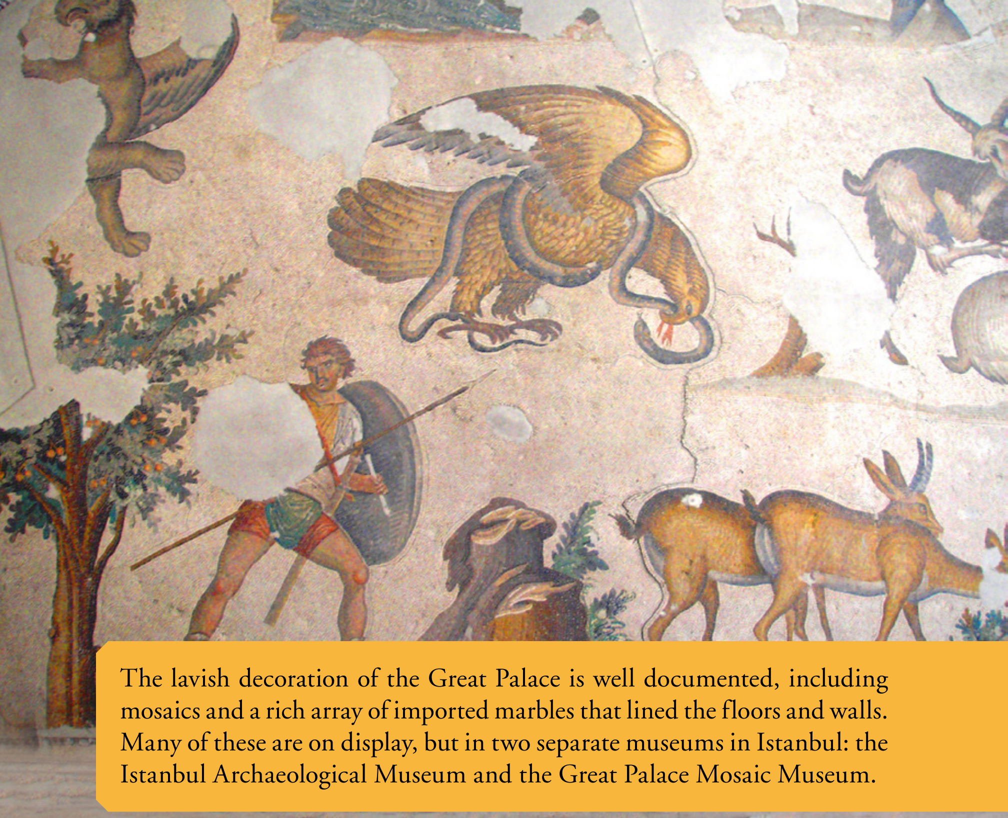
Much of the palace has been lost over the centuries to destruction, overbuilding, and neglect. Still, many elements are understood and provide some insight into the designs and priorities of Constantine.

The Great Palace at Constantinople had a series royal reception rooms, one of which is called the *triconchos*, referring to its shape with three semicircular apses. An almost identical reception room from a generation earlier in the villa of Maximian at Piazza Armerina in Sicily seems to have been an important model for Constantine's palace.

Constantine's personal bed chamber and throne room were identical in design—both octagonal rooms. This visual linkage marked both spaces as belonging to the emperor personally.

The throne room became a model for other throne rooms throughout the empire. The best-preserved example is Charlemagne's Palatine Chapel, which was based on copies of the Great Palace's throne room from the 6th century found in the Byzantine architecture of Ravenna in northern Italy. But its ultimate model was in Constantinople. The decorative features include lavish use of marble wall facings and mosaics. This use of marble was something that it had in common with the Great Palace, even if it did not derive directly from it.

Charlemagne's Palatine Chapel



The lavish decoration of the Great Palace is well documented, including mosaics and a rich array of imported marbles that lined the floors and walls. Many of these are on display, but in two separate museums in Istanbul: the Istanbul Archaeological Museum and the Great Palace Mosaic Museum.

SUGGESTED READING

Bardill, "The Great Palace of the Byzantine Emperors and the Walker Trust Excavations."

Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1 What does the collection of statuary for the palace reveal about imperial cultural identity or a proclamation of control over the empire under Constantine?

2 With which buildings or spaces can you trace the tension between Christian and pagan in the new capital and palace of Constantine?

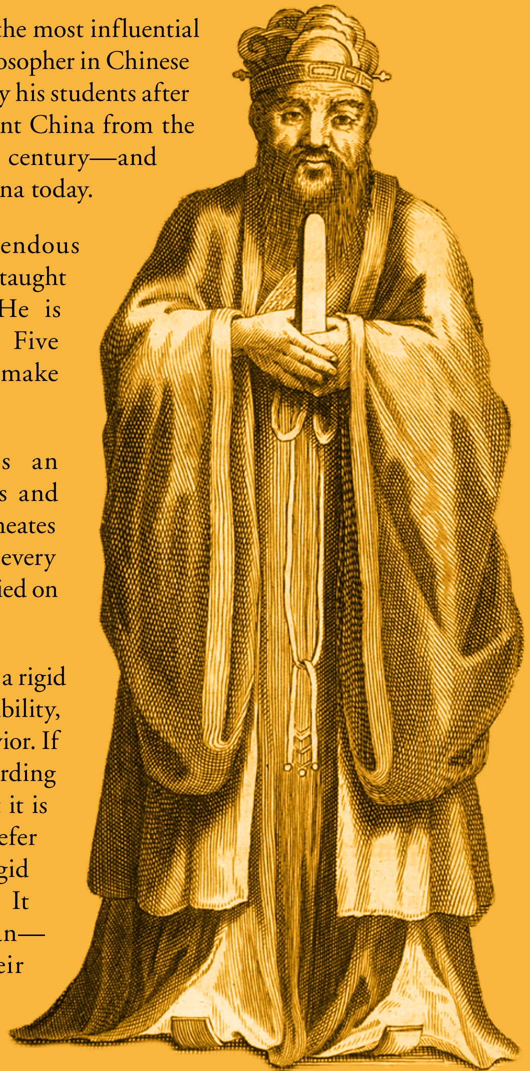
CHINA'S ENDLESS PALACE: WEIYANG PALACE

LECTURE 21

The Endless Palace, Weiyang, was organized to reflect Chinese society under the influence of Confucianism; it was rigidly formal and spaces were hierarchically arranged. The palace is a microcosm of the political world it served as the capital of and the primary residence and administrative center of the emperors of the entire Han dynasty, considered to be the golden age of Chinese history. It served this role from its construction in 200 BC for more than 425 years until the new rulers in the subsequent dynasty, the Jin, destroyed it.

CONFUCIANISM

Confucius (551–479 BC) was the most influential and important teacher and philosopher in Chinese history. His teachings, spread by his students after his death, largely shaped ancient China from the 5th century BC until the 20th century—and they are still significant in China today.



Confucius wrote a tremendous amount over his long life and taught throughout his adult life. He is credited with creating the Five Classics, the five books that make up the core of Confucianism.

An appeal to authority is an important idea for Confucius and his followers. The notion permeates his work and inspired virtually every facet of Chinese culture that relied on Confucius and his works.

The basis of his philosophy was a rigid insistence on personal responsibility, proper action, and ethical behavior. If everyone acts properly and according to their abilities, it means that it is only right and proper to defer to those above one in the rigid hierarchy of Chinese society. It also means that everyone can—in fact, should—seek their appropriate level in society.

The Han Dynasty

The founder of the Han dynasty, Han Gaozu, was born Liu Bang to a peasant family and was disinterested in study or hard work. Instead, he seems to have engineered his advancements through a combination of charm, ambition, and careful selection of the winning side in various military conflicts.

Gaozu led an uprising against the Qin dynasty that began in ca. 210 BC. Once Han conquered the Qin and the other pretenders to the throne, he began to rule unified China in 202 BC. Although not initially an adherent of Confucianism, he came to embrace the philosophy. Its emphasis on meritocracy and social mobility, combined with the appeal to authority embedded in its workings, must have appealed to an emperor who rose from the peasant class, took power after a civil war, and needed to secure his dynasty. That philosophical foundation informed the design and use of his palace.

Under the influence of Confucius, the emperors of the Han dynasty strengthened the civil service examination system at every level of government. This system developed over the centuries into a rigid means of supplying government workers at all levels of Chinese government, but its form was based on the Han dynasty's reaction against the methods of rule of their predecessors, the Qin dynasty.

For more information on these topics, check out these Great Courses: *Understanding Imperial China: Dynasties, Life, and Culture* (which has lectures on the terra-cotta warriors and on Han dynasty China) and *From Yao to Mao: 5000 Years of Chinese History* (which has two lectures on the Han dynasty and one that provides a survey of Confucianism).

It also relied on an extensive system of education. Boys were sent to schools across China that provided a fairly uniform education based on the teachings of Confucius. This meant that perhaps 40 percent of Chinese men under the Han dynasty were literate—in contrast to the perhaps 10 percent of contemporary Roman men who were literate. These literate men took exams at the local, regional, and eventually imperial level.

Chinese government, therefore, was a meritocracy that broke the power of aristocrats and ensured social mobility. The idea of meritocracy and social mobility were innovations that began with the Han dynasty, but they relied on the strict acceptance of hierarchy that actually preexisted.

An Intellectual Model for the Endless Palace

The tomb of the first emperor of the Qin dynasty is in many ways the intellectual model for the Endless Palace.

The Qin dynasty was the first dynasty that created the unified imperial China and established the foundations of the system that ruled China from ca. 221 BC until 1911. The first emperor, Qin Shi Huang, commissioned a massive tomb that was complete at the time of his death in 210 BC. It was designed as a copy of the imperial capital within a miniature landscape of China, with the major rivers replicated with rivers of mercury.

The tomb itself was placed within a copy of the palace within the capital city under a mound 250 feet high with a circumference of four miles. The city included residences for 100 officials, reinforcing the emperor's power with the number and high status of these supporting figures.

The famous army of terra-cotta warriors was designed to guard the tomb. When excavated, they were found still standing in ranks as soldiers should. Although they were terra-cotta, fired and painted clay, they were armed with real iron and bronze weapons. Composed of all of the units found in the Chinese army, the terra-cotta army included at least 8,000 life-sized terra-cotta soldiers.

Although every publication describes the soldiers as life-sized, that's not strictly true. The higher-ranking figures are taller, a convention of art referred to as hierarchy of scale. This tells us that as much as they give the illusion of reality, they are governed by the needs of the Chinese emperor to illustrate the rigid hierarchy of the state.

The Endless Palace

Han Gaozu had burned the Qin palace that was begun in 212 BC and therefore needed a new palace, which he began in 200 BC—Weiyang, the Endless Palace, the largest imperial palace ever built, covering an area of 1,200 acres, about 11 times the size of Vatican City.

The Endless Palace received its name because it grew continually throughout its use, being added to more or less continually during the Han dynasty.

The Endless Palace is a tremendous walled compound rectangular in shape and aligned to the cardinal directions. This alignment is an essential element in Chinese architecture, dating back to the Zhou dynasty (1046–256 BC). There was an inseparable relationship between buildings and the landscape in ancient China. The arrangement of buildings took on a cosmic significance.

In China, palaces are not only laid out in relation to the celestial, but also the terrestrial. They are integrated into the landscape, with which they are intended to join in a harmonious relationship. This is probably familiar to most people in the West through the concept of feng shui, which governed much of the arrangement of buildings as well as their interior furnishings.

The Endless Palace had its own walls, each with one major gate in the center of each of the cardinally oriented sides. The buildings inside were axially and symmetrically laid out. Neither of these design features is inevitable or a default for palaces. But such layout was vital to ensure that the palace operated in harmony with the landscape. This meant that the ruler was also in harmony with the landscape and, by extension, with his empire.

Bilateral symmetry means that a building is the same on both sides of the center line. Axiality means that the most important rooms and spaces in a building or complex fall along the center line—as opposed to being scattered throughout the complex or aligned to the outside walls.

Spatial Organization as a Reflection of Society

The palace as a whole is subdivided into a series of walled courtyards that open onto each other through a series of axially arranged gates. Within each of these courtyards is a series of buildings, conventionally translated as "halls," some of which have their own smaller walled enclosures.

The spatial organization of the palace is a reflection of Chinese society in its imposition of hierarchical structure. The walled courtyards that made up the interior organization served to restrict access into the palace. Based on one's status in society, access to the inner reaches of the palaces would be restricted, with those of higher status gaining more and more access, until they were able to enter the personal presence of the emperor himself in the inner chambers in the private hall on the north side of the palace.

The emperor would, on specific occasions, appear in the outer courtyards, but more often in the inner private palace spaces. Being in the personal presence of the emperor was a form of cultural currency, and the Endless Palace was designed with that in mind.

The Endless Palace covered almost two square miles—or about 288 times as large as the Qin dynasty palace, the Epang Palace, that Han Gaozu destroyed at the start of his reign.

For example, the emperor had the option of entering and exiting the palace through a private, covered, elevated passageway that entered the palace through a tower in the north wall that guarded a staircase that led down into the palace grounds.

It was remarkably similar to the better-preserved and better-known Passetto di Borgo, the 13th-century elevated passage that links Vatican City to the fortress of Castel Sant'Angelo, which served as a refuge for popes in times of danger. However, for the Endless Palace, the passage seems less for safety than for privacy.

The Endless Palace compares in its spatial organization to earlier palaces in its conception of hierarchies of joined courtyard spaces leading to restrictive audience chambers or throne rooms, allowing little personal contact with the emperor. Excellent parallels include the Assyrian palaces at Nimrud and Nineveh, with their multiple courtyards and increasingly restrictive spaces for audiences.

These contrast to slightly later Roman palaces with more open spaces and access, designed to connect the Roman emperor with his "peers" among the senators and, in larger groups, with Roman citizens at large, with whom he strove to create shared experiences. The Han dynasty emperors seem less concerned with shared experiences than with reinforcing position through hierarchies of space.

This is not to say that there weren't shared experiences with the Chinese emperor. No emperor can survive long without demonstrating the tangible benefits of his rule to the ruled. A key means of doing so was through banqueting, a rather direct method of sharing time as well as the assets of the empire with a select group of ruled subjects.

One notable aspect of the imperial banquets at the palace was the desire to create a shared experience, but not an identical one. In Han dynasty banquets, feng shui was applied to the seating arrangement, which conveyed status, or lack of it. The emperor would place guests in particular seating areas to either elevate or demean them, depending on his needs at the time.

Banquets were occasions for drinking wine and dining on unusual dishes. In addition, entertainers—including wrestlers, dancers, musicians, and acrobats—performed throughout the banquet.

The Chinese imperial court was composed of a huge bureaucracy, each component of which needed its own spaces within the palace complex. The entertainers were members of the court, not hired in for the occasion of a banquet.

The emperor Gaozu set the pattern for the entire Han dynasty with his regard for poetry, even composing some famous verses himself. This emphasis shaped the court, as the palace provided space for musicians, scribes, performance spaces, musical archives, and areas for training all of these individuals. The emphasis on literacy and learning is unique among the ancient palaces.

SUGGESTED READING

Sun, *Age of Empires*.

Tseng, *Picturing Heaven in Early China*.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1 How do the layout and organization of the palace spaces exemplify the philosophy of Confucianism that inspired them?

2 Can you articulate ways that it is possible to make the case that the Endless Palace both reflects the court, which it housed, as well as the larger world of China and the cosmos?

THE PALACE OF MONTEZUMA II AT TENOCHTITLÁN

LECTURE 22

Tenochtitlán is the Aztec capital, founded in 1325 AD by the Aztecs on a swampy island in Lake Texcoco. They developed the capital over about a 200-year period into the largest city in the pre-Columbian Americas. As they expanded their city, they expanded their great empire, which was centered in Mexico. Their empire relied on a mix of political and military achievements, but it really rested on the astute organization of agricultural production and trade. Given the location of the capital in a swamp, water control systems were critical to their ability to grow food—along with the capital.

The Aztec capital of Tenochtitlán was destroyed during the Spanish conquest, but it never truly disappeared. The location was too strategically important, so the Spanish founded a new city directly on the Aztec ruins: Mexico City.

Excavations in recent decades have revealed that the destruction was not as thorough as had been believed, so much of the ceremonial center of the Aztec city has been excavated and studied, some left exposed, and many of the most important finds placed in local museums. This material is now a major tourist attraction in Mexico.

Montezuma and Cortés

Montezuma II, as he's commonly known in the English-speaking world, was a noble from the local bloodline of the Mexica people. Born in 1466 AD, Montezuma was 36 years old when he came to power as the ninth emperor of the Aztec Empire—which he ruled from 1502 to 1520 AD and expanded to its largest size, until the Spanish conquest.

Montezuma is portrayed in some accounts as being obsessed with omens, and his superstitious and fatalistic nature doomed the Aztecs once the Spanish appeared. It's debated how much Montezuma's personal beliefs affected his reaction to the Spanish, and Cortés in particular.

It is generally agreed, however, that he did instruct his military to keep a close watch out for foreigners and that many omens and portents were reported to him prior to the actual appearance of the Spanish. And these might have mentally prepared him to anticipate the Spanish arrival.

Montezuma ruled a great empire—larger than any of the Spanish kingdoms at the time—which had a complex class system and controlled tribute that flowed into the capital from the captive territories in Mesoamerica.

Into this empire in 1519 came Hernán Cortés, leading an expedition of hundreds of men, horses, and dogs, all presenting a unique image to the Aztecs, many of whom initially viewed them as gods or as sent by the Aztec gods.

These few hundred men conquered an empire of millions by using their weapons (and diseases), by exploiting internal conflicts within the Aztec Empire, and by manipulating the belief that they were godlike beings, thus giving them access to the capital and its emperor, Montezuma.

As an empire, Aztec rule relied on the dominance and exploitation of a large number of subject people. Cortés made alliances with those subjects, and they provided the manpower for his conquest.

In November of 1519, Cortés, along with his soldiers, entered Tenochtitlán. They were greeted warmly by Montezuma, who housed them in a royal palace as honored guests. This relationship would not last, as they subverted Montezuma's rule, either hoping to rule through him as a puppet or to overthrow him.

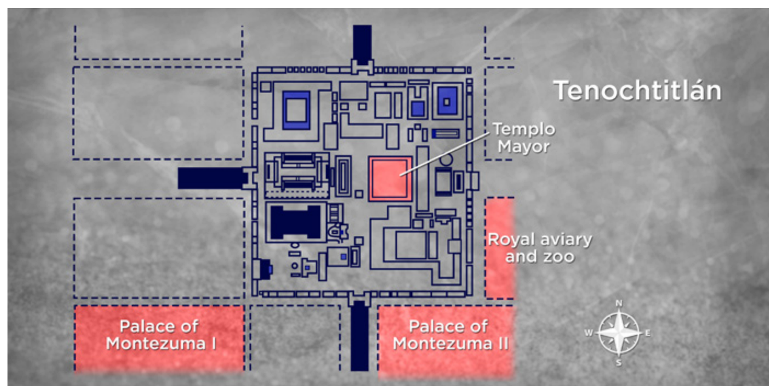
Montezuma was killed during a confused attack or uprising against the Spanish in late June 1520. The populace was decimated by a smallpox epidemic that spread later that year. It was finally wiped out by the middle of 1521 by a siege of the Spanish and their allies on Tenochtitlán that ended with the city emptied and destroyed.

The City and Its Center

Tenochtitlán probably covered about five or six square miles and had a population estimated at as many as 125,000 inhabitants—twice as many as any Spanish city at the time—not to mention a more sophisticated infrastructure, especially its water systems. The city was arranged with long, wide streets and canals that crossed at right angles, creating a series of blocks of differing sizes.

The city center was defined by a set of more than 70 structures arranged around and throughout a large square oriented to the cardinal points. The buildings around it were the grandest in Tenochtitlán.

The precinct was dominated by the Templo Mayor (Great Temple) complex and its huge pyramids, mainly arranged on the east side of the large main plaza. Montezuma's palace filled an entire block on the south side of the plaza, while the palace of his great-grandfather, Montezuma I, covered a block to the west of the temple complex. This older palace was where Cortés and his men were quartered when they arrived in the city.



Here, Montezuma had his palace among the civic and religious structures that made up the monumental heart that defined the center of the empire. Unlike other palace complexes that included temples or sanctuaries, the placement of Montezuma's palace adjacent to the major temples of the imperial capital meant that the palace did not have an explicitly religious component to proclaim the ruler's association with the Aztec gods. That was taken care of through the nearby temples.

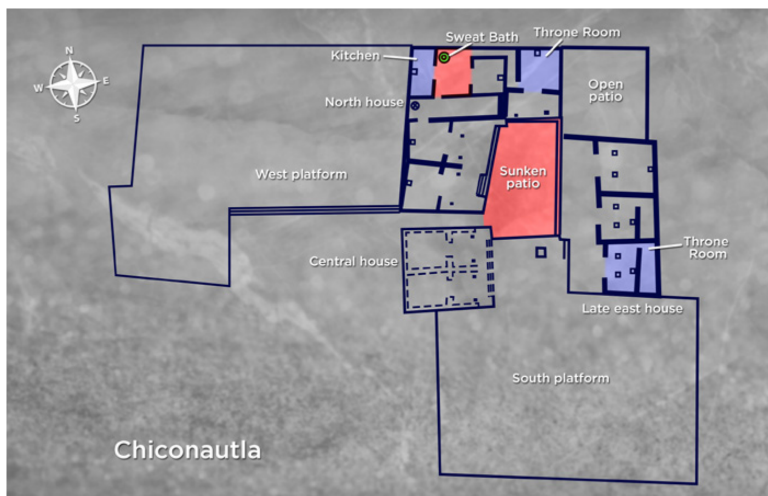
It also did not have huge courtyards, as seen in Egyptian or Assyrian palaces, for example. The vast public plaza in the center of Tenochtitlán operated as the exterior center of activity for the palace as well. For example, large spectacles and public feasts would take place there, and only more exclusive events took place in the smaller courtyard and throne room. The courtyard in the palace would be filled during daylight hours with nobles in attendance on the king, awaiting his command to perform duties.

Similarly, in other palaces, such as Versailles, the nobles were housed within the palace as a statement of the power of the ruler, particularly an imperial ruler. In Tenochtitlán, 200 nobles were selected for Montezuma's personal bodyguard and housed in the palace adjacent to his private quarters. Others, however, built houses in the city in close proximity to the palace. These satellite houses demonstrated the power of the Aztec king, as the tributary states used them to maintain a presence near the king.

These noble palaces, or *tecpans*, were smaller-scale replicas of the palaces of the kings. Architecturally, they needed to fulfill many of the same functions, such as providing space for audiences to gather to attend on the noble or ruler, either in the open courtyard or throne room.

Although they were organized hierarchically, with public areas accessible from the main entrance and more private spaces further back, none of the *tecpans* display any axial arrangement or symmetry. There is no doubt that their construction was planned, but their layout appears agglutinative, as though they were added to over the years.

Montezuma II's palace, known in Aztec as *tecpan-calli*, meaning "lord place-house," along with the palace of Montezuma I, is recorded in many sources. The Spanish accounts of this and other *tecpans* emphasize their size and luxury.



Montezuma II's Newer Palace

The newer palace of Montezuma II was even larger than that of his great-grandfather, where he housed the Spanish. From the written, visual, and documentary sources, we know that it contained residential and administrative areas: vast personal quarters for the king and his many wives and concubines, reception and banquet rooms, bathing rooms, wardrobes, a throne room, storerooms, and treasuries. Also on the grounds were a series of menageries—one for birds of prey, one for other animals, and two aquatic ones.

According to a widely told folktale, Tenochtitlán was founded in fulfillment of an omen that told the Aztecs to build their city where they saw an eagle perched on a cactus with a snake in its mouth—still the image in the center of modern Mexico's national flag.

These latter facilities of storerooms, treasuries, and menageries have something in common: The display of treasure or imported exotic animals served to reinforce the status of the king because they were out of reach of those of lesser status.

In addition to being an administrative center, Montezuma's palace was also an economic center. It held vast food stores, which accumulated from tribute brought from around the empire. His palace was also the site for production of economically significant materials. Nobles were trained to produce precious objects, such as painted books, featherwork, and fine metalwork and stonework.

Polygyny also served to bolster the economic power of the palace. Wives and concubines could bring income from land holdings and tributes, as well as personal property, into the household. Furthermore, the women of the household produced assets, most notably textiles, an important form of wealth in the Aztec Empire and a recognized medium of exchange.

Along with the personal quarters for Montezuma, the palace contained spaces for his personal religious observances. These were different than the official rituals conducted at the major temples. They were undertaken on behalf of the entire community. Within the palace were rooms filled with idols, probably including statuettes of the primary Aztec deities, whose images were vehicles for sacred power.

In addition to being a bathing facility, the sweat bath, or *temazcal*, was also a personal religious experience. Although primarily therapeutic, the *temazcal* also invoked the worship of the mother of the gods, a symbolic rebirth. In this private function, the *temazcal* differs from the bathing facilities found in other palaces, such as those in Rome, where baths were amenities offered to guests or visitors to allow a shared experience with the ruler and court.

Being in a city with ample water, the palace and elite residences of the nobles in the vicinity of the Templo Mayor had lavish gardens. The canals throughout the city created greenbelts, and gardening was encouraged as an appropriate elite activity.

When cultivated around palaces of emperors, gardens can be used to create a symbolic representation of the empire by importing plants and animals from the full extent or boundary areas of the empire. The Aztec rulers followed this pattern, creating an artificial landscape that reflected their territorial claims.

The largest gardens of Montezuma did not immediately surround the palace but were created some distance away, outside the capital. These comprised a pleasure park of the type found in, for example, the Assyrian *paradeisos*, a walled garden or park.

In 2008, the remains of part of Montezuma II's palace were excavated under the modern city center. Among the discoveries was the "black house," a dark, windowless room—the floor of which was paved with black basalt—that was set aside for Montezuma to meditate or reflect on religious omens and visions, often ones relayed to him by professional seers and sorcerers. He was closely attentive to these omens.

After Montezuma's death in 1520, the palaces and most of the structures in Tenochtitlán were pulled down by the Spanish so that they could found their own capital, Mexico City. The Spanish deliberately redirected worship and political authority of the public spaces. This policy led to them founding a cathedral built over the remains of the Great Temple, creating the largest plaza in Latin America over the Great Plaza, and building the current National Palace with stones from the palace of Montezuma.

This area is now a UNESCO World Heritage site. Under excavation since 1978, remains from the ceremonial center of Tenochtitlán can be viewed, some in situ and others in museums.

SUGGESTED READING

Mundy, *The Death of Aztec Tenochtitlan*.

Restall, *When Montezuma Met Cortes*.

Rojas, *Tenochtitlan*.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1 How are the religious spaces in the palace surprisingly personal when compared to other palace religious facilities? Can you account for this with the proximity to the Great Plaza?

2 What similarities do you see between the pleasure gardens of Montezuma and those of the Assyrian, Persian, and Egyptian rulers? How do you account for those?

RENAISSANCE PALACES AND THE CLASSICAL REVIVAL

LECTURE 23

Many palaces, mansions, and gardens in the Renaissance were built or reconstructed following classical forms, and these palaces represent the acceptance and reinterpretation of classical antiquity in both form and ideology. This lecture will explore this type of reception by concentrating on three of the best examples: Kensington Palace (ca. 1690), the Tuileries Palace (1564), and the Palace of Versailles (1678).

Kensington Palace

Originally built in 1605 as a suburban residence, Kensington Palace was called Nottingham House until it was purchased from the Earl of Nottingham by English rulers King William and Queen Mary, who upgraded and modernized it to transform it into their country residence. It hasn't moved, but it's now in pretty much the center of London on the edge of Hyde Park.

The upgrades and extensions were undertaken by Sir Christopher Wren, the King's surveyor of works. Wren's works throughout the 1670s and 1680s were heavily inspired by classical designs. In Kensington Palace, the King's and Queen's Galleries survive the many later renovations of the palace as original works by Wren.

Although Kensington Palace is still a royal residence, much of it is open for tourists, and the King's State Apartments are well worth a visit.

Sir Christopher Wren is most famous as the architect of St. Paul's Cathedral, but his work included more than 50 churches as well as other secular commissions that kept him occupied after the Great Fire of London in 1666.

The King's Gallery was the largest and longest of the state apartments Wren designed for Kensington Palace. Unlike the Gothic and Tudor styles that preceded it, the gallery had no elaborate surface design. The emphasis was on the proportions and scale of the long, single-story gallery, which was intended to be pleasing in and of itself.

Along one side was a set of long windows, and on the other were the doors leading into the other rooms and suites of the palace, with a focus on the fireplace, the only decorative feature in the room.

The fireplace was constructed of white marble with gold trim. The marble was cut into a series of classical friezes. The overmantel was dominated by a curious and unique map of Great Britain and France that shows the two countries as the same size despite France's actual much larger size.

The Queen's Gallery was similarly designed. As the longest and largest of the rooms in the apartments of Queen Mary, it was also very classical in design, with a series of east-facing windows along one long wall and the other wall punctuated by doorways with marble frames. The only decorative feature was a fireplace in the center of the wall. The ceiling here was a gentle barrel vault, another feature of classical architecture that Wren utilized. Again, the scale and proportions of the room were its features, not any elaborate decorative finishes.

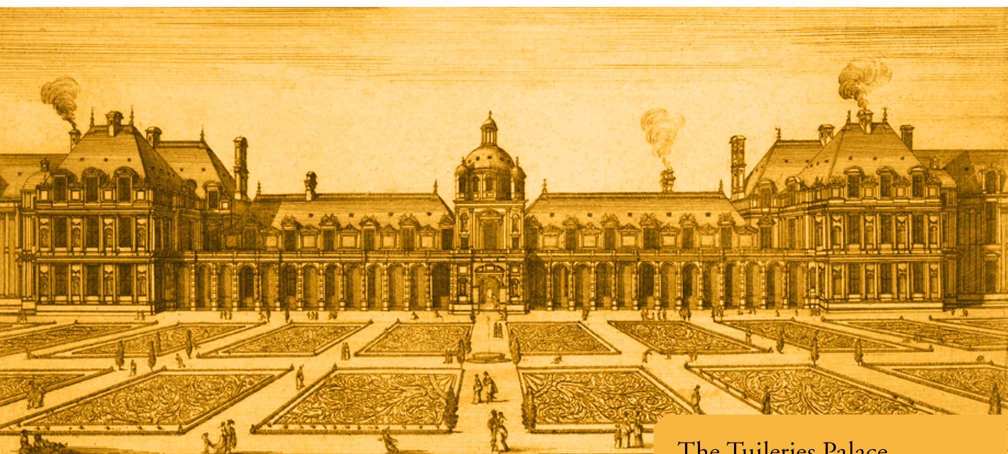
The original furnishings of William and Mary have been long dispersed, but two contemporary inventories survive from their time in the palace. One mentions a white set of furniture and the furnishings in the King's Bedchamber that were "guilt with gold," indicating that the classical influence of the architecture extended to the furnishings.

The subjects of the many paintings that hung in the King's and Queen's Galleries are not recorded in the inventories except for some drawings by Raphael and the nine paintings of Andrea Mantegna's *The Triumphs of Caesar*—his masterpiece and largest work. In subject, they are classical and in style belong to the Renaissance.

The Tuileries Palace

The Tuileries Palace was built under the patronage of Catherine de' Medici after the death of her husband, Henry II, in a jousting tournament. She wanted a new residence that was close to but distinct from the Louvre, the main residence of the French kings on the right bank of the Seine in Paris. The name "Tuileries" comes from the tile works that had previously filled the site.

The architect, Philibert de L'Orme, had spent three years in Rome, where he studied ancient Roman architecture, so it's not surprising that he created something that is very formal and classical. The palace was organized as a series of long, narrow buildings that created one major and two minor courtyards.



The Tuileries Palace

The façade of the palace shows its classical form. The main block of the building is rigidly bilaterally symmetrical as well as axial, with the visual emphasis on a central suite with a domed roof and three-story blocks that define the ends of the palace.

The ground floor of the façade has a long, arcuated colonnade with engaged (attached to the wall or surface behind them), rusticated columns with Ionic capitals. In other words, the columns are roughly cut with the individual drums, or round stones, that make up the columns left unfinished.

This is a form of deliberately old-fashioned finish popular with the Roman emperor Claudius. The resulting heaviness emphasized the mass and solidity of the construction while implying age. For the Romans of the empire, this was an allusion to republican architecture. Here, it gives the new construction a sense of tradition.

The second floor was pierced by a series of large windows that had alternating triangular and semicircular frames, a design feature found in buildings of the Roman architectural revolution, primarily in 2nd-century AD Roman architecture.

The central feature of the palace seems to have been based on Hadrian's Pantheon, built in the 120s AD. The Pantheon is the greatest work of the Roman architectural revolution and a structure the architect likely studied when in Rome. The Pantheon's main feature is a great dome, which covered this section of the palace. On the ground floor, the Pantheon had a large central doorway flanked by two niches for colossal sculptures.

The Tuileries has the same sort of entrance with flanking statue niches. In this central element, the façade is extended upward to three stories rather than the two that make up the rest of the long façade.

The engaged Ionic columns on the ground floor of the rest of the façade are found in this central unit, as well as Corinthian columns on the exterior of the second floor and engaged Corinthian pilasters on the third floor.

This design created rooms full of light, unusual for the time, and a long façade perpendicular to the river Seine. This long façade made up one edge of what would become the Tuileries gardens, with their formal, classical structure. The palace was burned in 1871, but the gardens remain.

The Palace of Versailles

The classical design of the palace continued to inspire, as can be seen in the Palace of Versailles, which was constructed under Louis XIV, the grandson of Catherine de' Medici. Louis XIV had lived in the Tuileries Palace until 1671, when he left it—and Paris—for the hunting lodge that he decided to adopt as his main residence until his death in 1715. That hunting lodge would become the Palace of Versailles.

The Palace of Versailles

The façade at Versailles runs about a third longer than the Tuileries. The area of the palace was about 16.5 acres—about twice as large as the palace of the Roman emperor Domitian that served as the primary palace in Rome from the late 1st century AD to the 4th century.

The façade of Versailles resembles the Tuileries in a number of ways. It's also rigidly axial and bilaterally symmetrical, with two long wings projecting from a central unit. The ground floor consists of an arcaded, rusticated façade. The second floor has Corinthian columns in the central unit and engaged Corinthian pilasters on the wings.

The third floor has shorter engaged Corinthian pilasters across the entire façade and periodically is punctuated along its length, notably at the center and the ends, with standing sculptures of Roman emperors. This design arrangement is based on Roman models, notably the Theatre of Marcellus (built under the first Roman emperor, Augustus) and the Colosseum. In addition, the roofline has groups of sculptures that copy the Roman military trophy displays that Michelangelo placed along the balustrade on the edge of the Capitoline Hill in Rome.

Hall of Mirrors

Louis XIV created Versailles as a royal palace with the expectation that the nobles in the court as well as those who wanted his favor, attention, and promotion would all take apartments in the massive palace. As a result, much of the palace is filled with apartments that were taken by some of the highest-ranking nobles and royals in France, both because it was expected of them and because it benefitted them. The public areas, including the state apartments and gardens, were designed and decorated with this captive but high-ranking audience in mind.

The messages that the rooms and spaces convey about Louis XIV were deliberate and bold. But they also assumed an audience educated in the classics who were trained to read art allegorically. This sort of sophisticated presentation was like speaking in code, but it was a code that was well understood by the prospective audience.

At Versailles, much of the interior was conceived of as an opportunity to display the fine and decorative arts of France. The centerpiece of the palace is universally acclaimed as the Hall of Mirrors, which occupies the central unit on the main floor of the palace. This is very similar in design and proportions to the Queen's Gallery in Kensington Palace. It consists of a long hall with windows along one flank and a barrel-vaulted ceiling.

It differs, however, in some key ways. First, it's larger. Second, rather than being a display space for the painting collection, it was designed instead for mirrors. A mirror industry developed to supply these, as the king had commanded that Versailles be decorated and furnished only with French products.

Unlike the Queen's Gallery, the barrel-vaulted ceiling was frescoed with large paintings. They portray actual events in the life of Louis XIV, but depicted heroically in classical landscapes.

Associations between Louis XIV and Roman deities abound in the state apartments, which include the Apollo Room, the Mercury Room, the Mars Room, the Diana Room, the Venus Room, and the Hercules Room.

The state apartments, which run along the main floor of the palace, are similar in decoration to the Hall of Mirrors, with the same marble-clad walls, classical architectural features, and painted ceilings.

These apartments were not the king's living quarters, but stages for official acts, receptions, gatherings with courtiers, and so forth. They were in regular use under Louis XIV and therefore part of the stage of power.

Versailles is an impressive building, but it is overwhelmed by the size and impressiveness of the gardens. Like many other palace gardens, they were designed to fill a number of needs.

Of the 386 works of art created for Versailles, 221 were in the gardens.

The Mars Room

The fountains and garden sculptures of Versailles rely on the Italian model, specifically inspired by the Renaissance residence of a Catholic cardinal, the Villa d'Este in Tivoli, Italy, of 100 years earlier.

Like Versailles, the Villa d'Este is a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Neptune Fountain in Villa d'Este:

Dragon Fountain in Versailles

First, they celebrated the conquest and control of nature in the rigid formality of the plantings and the exuberant use of water. Second, like the decoration and furnishings of the palace interior, the gardens celebrate France by being planted with trees and shrubs brought from across France. Third, the gardens echoed the decoration of the palace, with political statements in the sculptural program and classically themed fountains that conflated the king's identity with various Greek and Roman gods.

> The architectural and decorative vocabulary of the Renaissance palaces was derived from that of the Roman palaces of antiquity. Proclaiming themselves as a second Rome was a means of distinguishing themselves from rival courts and of attesting to the control of the resources of the world that had been fragmented since the fall of Rome in the West. The grandeur of the Renaissance courts relied on the ancient models to define their accomplishments and aspirations.

SUGGESTED READING

Issa, *Kensington Palace*.

Picon and Hammond, *Versailles*.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Although Renaissance palaces were directly copying Roman models, how did they indirectly preserve the Greek, Persian, and Assyrian examples that inspired the Romans?
2. Can you analyze the Palace of Versailles as an extension of the Roman idea of palaces? What are the specific Roman models that it evokes?

PALACES IN A WORLD OF DEMOCRACIES

LECTURE 24

This lecture applies the lessons of the ancient world to the palaces of today in three categories: to the actual residences of rulers, to the palaces of government, and to the palaces of commerce. As you will discover, the themes and lessons of antiquity are still with us, shaping our world and allowing us to understand and analyze it.

The White House

One of the most recognizable residences of modern rulers is the White House. Like many of the 18th- and 19th-century government buildings in Washington DC, it was designed in the neoclassical style. The decision to employ this style was ideological and informed by the deliberate emulation of Roman government forms in the new United States. The building design conveyed the values of the government whose executive branch would be housed here.

The design is based on the writings of the Roman architect Vitruvius and the Renaissance neoclassical architect Andrea Palladio. The two-story colonnades of Roman-styled Ionic columns on both the north and south façades, as well as the alternating triangular and semicircular pediments above the windows on both façades, are based on models found on buildings from ancient Rome as well as in the writings of Vitruvius.

The interior is also completed in a neoclassical style, with, for example, fasces used as the patterns for the doorframes. This symbol, representing the supreme power in the state resting with the people, was also used in the House of Representatives and the Lincoln Memorial to convey the same ideal of democratic power.

Even the permanent decorative program in the White House responds to political demands. An example is the Roosevelt Room, which was named in honor of two presidents: Theodore Roosevelt, who was a Republican, and Franklin Roosevelt, who was a Democrat. Both were responsible for renovations in the White House, especially in this space, and portrait paintings of each of them make up the major decoration in the room.

Traditionally, under Democratic presidents, the portrait of FDR is placed in the more prominent position over the fireplace and that of Theodore occupies the south wall. Under Republicans, their position is switched. The change, as relatively minor as it seems, demonstrates clearly that this décor matters. It matters to the extent that even within a room, the imagery reflects political agendas.

Presidents have enormous leeway in the decoration of the White House. They can request works from the Smithsonian American Art Museum, the National Gallery of Art, and the Hirshhorn Museum. And they do so knowing that what works of art they display will be noticed, commented on, and recognized for conveying the values and political identity of the administration.

The Palace of Justice in Rome

The term "palace of justice" is more than a vestigial use of an old-fashioned term for something modern. It's a deliberate and ideologically significant statement of societal values. Those countries that have palaces of justice are making a statement of the role of justice in their states. And that statement is this: Justice is sovereign.

Naming a court of law or ministry of justice a palace isn't an isolated phenomenon. There are at least 22 palaces of justice on four continents, so they are also well distributed. They convey the supremacy of law through design and decoration.

The Palace of Justice in Rome was first planned shortly after Rome was selected as the capital of the unified kingdom of Italy in 1870. Its construction began in 1888. The building is a huge block on the banks of the Tiber in Rome in a very prominent location north of the Vatican facing the old city across the river.

The building façade is based on the models of Renaissance palaces. It's axially arranged and bilaterally symmetrical, with a two-story elevation throughout but a three-story central unit with visual associations to a Roman triumphal arch.

The façade contains all the greatest hits of Renaissance architecture, such as freestanding and engaged columns with rusticated elements; that is, the joined edges of blocks are smoothed but the sides are roughly chiseled and project outward. The resulting heaviness emphasizes the mass and solidity of the construction while implying age. In imperial Rome, rustication was used to imply republican connections. Here, it gives a new building a sense of age—as if it's always been there.

The façade also blends the ancient architectural orders. On the first and second floors, Tuscan columns are topped by Doric friezes, while the Ionic columns on the third floor are unfluted and bereft of any Ionic frieze at all.

The façade is also heavily festooned with garlands and projecting decorative elements. Surprisingly, many of these are military in origin.

In a great arched opening visually reminiscent of an arched pediment above the front door of the palace is a large-scale figure group that consists of three colossal human figures, along with their attributes. Seated in the center on a throne is the personification of Justice herself.

The façade of the palace is faced with travertine, which is the local sort of protomarble. It has weathered to a warm beige color, which gives it a contrast to the 18 white marble statues of historically important Roman and Italian jurists that are placed outside the building on tall rusticated bases attached to the ground floor of the façade. The most famous of these jurists, Cicero, stands next to the main entrance to the building.

We can apply the analytical tools developed for considering ancient royal residences to other forms of structures in the modern world and therefore reflect on what sorts of buildings and activities we consider as repositories of our values in today's world.

Ancient palaces shared a number of characteristics that we could use as criteria for modern explorations.

- They were almost invariably surrounded by parks or gardens that were in general ostentatiously artificial in terms of their landscape and plantings. The selection of plants was often an allegory for territorial expansion or aspirations to it.

- Architecturally, they were designed to create visual associations in the minds of the viewers. Some were radical and innovative while others were archaistic and deliberately traditional. The exterior decoration was intended to convey the values of the ruler or his regime, often through imagery of conquest or imperial power or associations with deities or powerful animals.

- The organization of space throughout the palace buildings was specifically designed to privilege the presence of the ruler, either by making it difficult to achieve or exclusive. Intermediate spaces leading to those audience or throne rooms were generally open-air spaces or broad halls for large numbers of undifferentiated attendees. Spaces and rooms were created to allow for shared—though never identical—experiences with the ruler that generally allowed him to demonstrate generosity or beneficence, often through group banqueting.

The Spheres of Amazon

Although Amazon has only partially adopted the forms and conventions of the traditional palace—which makes sense given the dramatic cultural changes that have occurred—it can be considered representative of the modern palace.

Amazon was founded by Jeff Bezos, who has periodically been reported as the richest man in the world or possibly the richest man in the history of the world.

As of 2018, Amazon has about 500,000 employees, which includes about 50,000 in Seattle, where it occupies or owns about 3 million square feet of office space. Its headquarters in the South Lake Union and Denny Triangle neighborhoods is the result of purchasing several blocks of real estate.

Amazon's fifth tower building in the neighborhood, on what was known as block 18, is a 17-story building of 388,000 square feet with an urban treehouse design. The central focus is a staircase that goes up the middle of the building planned to evoke the ladder of a treehouse.

Amazon certainly checks the boxes of innovative architecture designed for large numbers of people. The urban treehouse design also has facilities for gathering and collaborative work, two separate categories in the plans.

Much of the Seattle campus's design is created to be spectacular but also to appeal to and benefit the public, not just the Amazon employees. The campus features public space, inside and out, including unique retail spaces on the ground floors of the towers as well as nearby public spaces, such as an outdoor dog park, playing fields, and a dedicated two-way cycle track to separate bikes from traffic.

The public street has been converted into a shared-use street that's designed for the needs of pedestrians as well as cars and an Amazon-funded street car, along with art installations, covered public walkways, and other features.

There are features of the ancient palaces and their components that were designed to impress the visitor or viewer of the power, wealth, and care of the rulers and to give a sense of the benefits of rule to the ruled. The Amazon campus in Seattle is certainly impressive, and the benefits of Amazon as an urban neighbor—if not ruler—are pretty apparent.

Most commonly for ancient rulers, extravagant statements of power or control of resources were made in their gardens, which enabled rulers to demonstrate their control over nature through the creation of artificial landscapes. They also selected plants and animals to project certain identities.

For Amazon, statement of power, control, and conquest of nature are manifested in The Spheres, a set of three unique, geodesic, steel-framed glass domes in Seattle. The largest sphere is 90 feet tall and 130 feet wide and is connected to the two flanking smaller domes. The three are climate controlled, but not identical, providing microclimates throughout. Altogether, they hold more than 40,000 plants collected from 30 different countries across the world.

Amazon has not made any explicit statements of imperial intent for the botanical collections in The Spheres. Nevertheless, it is very difficult not to think of the royal antecedents in terms of the range of species or the decision to bring in mature species rather than to grow plants internally.

More than 25,000 of the plants were woven by horticulturalists into a 4,000-square-foot mesh living-wall system that is four stories tall. While this doesn't really fulfill any structural purpose, it is reminiscent of the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World.

Created in the city of Babylon by King Nebuchadnezzar II (605–562 BC), the Hanging Gardens were also designed to evoke a distant landscape and climate. These famous gardens were only one in a line of famous Assyrian gardens by monarchs such as Sennacherib and Ashurnasirpal II, who had previously created vast palace gardens, including the antecedents for such hanging gardens.

All of these Assyrian kings—like Amazon—used cutting-edge technology to create starkly artificial gardens for plants that had no business growing in the deserts of Mesopotamia (modern Iraq)—or the desert of urban Seattle.

SUGGESTED READING

Amazon, The Spheres, https://www.seattlespheres.com.

Monkman, *The White House*.

Whitaker, *Department Store*.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What are some examples of how the White House continues the tradition of décor to reflect personal beliefs and political positions in palaces?
2. What types of contemporary buildings would you compare to the ancient palaces in terms of their role in projecting cultural values and personal identity?

QUIZ

1 Which of the following is an aspect of a ruler's position that palaces do NOT reflect?

a Military might
b Modesty
c Insecurity
d Religious authority

2 Amenhotep III's palace Malkata was intended chiefly to represent what aspect of his reign?

a The peace and prosperity of his kingdom
b His military victories
c His love for his wife
d His respect for time-honored tradition

3 Why was the throne room of Amenhotep IV's palace so small?

a So it would be easier to protect in an uprising
b To show his deep humility towards his people and his god
c So he could have a private place when he wanted to be alone
d To show that it was a privileged space to which only the elite had access

4 What is the writing on the famous Phaistos disk from the Minoan palace on Crete?

a A prayer
b A record of military triumphs
c An omelette recipe
d We have no idea

5 What is a megaron?

a A great circular raised hearth
b A three-room structure containing a columned porch, a forecourt, and a throne room
c A kind of statuary favored by the Mycenaeans
d A military leader

6 What was the lamassu in the Assyrian palace at Nimrud?

a An apotropaic figure
b A huge statue with a human head, a lion's body, and an eagle's wings
c A protective deity
d All of the above

7 What was the paradeisos in the Assyrian palace at Nimrud?

a A protective deity
b A private room set aside for the king and his immediate family
c A walled garden with flowers and fruit trees
d A gigantic fountain

8 What was the most notable aspect of the grand staircase at Persepolis?

a The height of each individual stair
b The relief sculptures of subject nations bearing gifts
c The fact that each stair was made of a different kind of marble
d All of the above

9 What typically Greek feature graced the palace of Ai Khanoum in modern Afghanistan?

a A huge swimming pool
b The mud-brick building material
c The way the palace rooms were organized
d The fluted columns

10 What is a peristyle?

a An arched gateway into a palace
b A kind of throne room
c A columned porch
d A banqueting hall

Answers on page 242

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Amazon. The Spheres. https://www.seattlespheres.com. This is the official website for the Seattle Spheres of Amazon, with its 40,000 plants and a variety of working spaces. It outlines the structure, from its origins to design and use, and uses text, still image, and video to give a variety of perspectives on this modern hanging garden. [Lecture 24]

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McKay, Alexander G. *Houses, Villas and Palaces in the Roman World.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998. This survey of housing in the Roman world relies on both ancient literary descriptions and archaeological results to explore its topic. In addition to exploring architecture, McKay covers patterns in interior furnishing and decoration. A very useful survey volume, especially for placing palaces in the context of other housing at their time. [Lecture 11]

McManamon, John M. *Caligula's Barges and the Renaissance Origins of Nautical Archaeology under Water.* College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2016. Although the major focus of this work is the rediscovery of Caligula's floating palaces and their connection with Renaissance notions of science, it also includes a summary of the history of their construction and rediscovery from the Renaissance to the 20th century. [Lecture 14]

Meade, C. Wade. *Seat of the World: The Palatine of Ancient Rome.* Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 2013. The result of 30 years of excavation and exploration on the Palatine, this book is divided into two parts: The first surveys the excavation efforts on the Palatine and the second surveys the remains of the buildings from the earliest period to the late Roman world, including the series of palaces of the ancient Roman emperors. [Lecture 17]

Monkman, Betty C. *The White House: Its Historic Furnishings and First Families.* Washington, DC: Abbeville Press, 2014. This updated book provides a historical survey of the décor and interiors of the White House. With emphasis on the public offices, reception rooms, and dining spaces, the author connects the decorative decisions to the politics and personalities who made them across the administrations. [Lecture 24]

Mundy, Barbara E. *The Death of Aztec Tenochtitlan, the Life of Mexico City.* Austin: University of Texas Press, 2018. Mundy has written an award-winning book on the Aztec capital. She relies on contemporary texts, maps, and works of art to explore and explain the Aztec city and its life, with special attention on the waterworks that made the city possible. [Lecture 22]

Netzer, Ehud. *Greater Herodium.* Jerusalem: Institute of Archaeology, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1981. This book, written by the director of the excavations, explores the wide range of buildings at the site of one of Herod's great palaces. [Lecture 13]

———. *The Palaces of the Hasmoneans and Herod the Great.* Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 2001. This work synthesizes much of the excavation career of Netzer at the greatest palaces of Herod the Great. It includes chapters on Jericho, Masada, and Herodium, all of which were excavated by Netzer. [Lecture 12, Lecture 13]

Nielsen, Inge. *Hellenistic Palaces: Tradition and Renewal.* Aarhus, Denmark: Aarhus University Press, 1999. The most important book written on the subject, this is the initial stop for anyone reading about palaces built between Alexander the Great and the Roman emperor Domitian throughout the lands of the Persian, Greek, or Roman empires. It is especially useful for those sites published in obscure journals and for English readers. [Lecture 9, Lecture 10, Lecture 11]

Oates, Joan, and David Oates. *Nimrud: An Assyrian Imperial City Revealed.* Baghdad: British School of Archaeology in Iraq, 2019. Written by two former excavators of the palace at Nimrud, this accessibly written account of the site explores both the history of archaeology at Nimrud as well as the extraordinary finds. It covers not just the grand excavations of the 19th century, but the Iraqi excavations of the 1980s and 1990s as well. [Lecture 6]

Owen, Vince. "Architecture after Excess: The Palaces of Saddam's Baghdad." *Failed Architecture* (blog). September 4, 2016. https://failedarchitecture.com/architecture-after-excess-the-palaces-of-saddams-baghdad/. In this article, Owen presents an overview of Saddam's palaces and addresses the topic of what to do with them in current times, noting their fate as state-owned estates and considering the option of a return to private ownership. [Lecture 1]

Paspates, A. G. *The Great Palace of Constantinople.* London: Alexander Gardner, 1893. https://books.google.com/books?id=Zx-CkfBpjwAC&pg=PA11&source=gbs_toc_r&cad=3#v=onepage&q&f=false. Paspates, a 19th-century antiquarian and resident of Istanbul, made it his life's work to explore and document what could be found then of the Great Palace of the Byzantine emperors. His book combines his explorations and identifications with literary descriptions of the various parts of the palace. Challenging to read in some areas, but an invaluable source on the remains of the palace (many now lost to overbuilding). [Lecture 20]

Picon, Guillaume, and Francis Hammond. *Versailles: A Private Invitation.* London: Flammarion, 2018. There are about a million images and descriptions of Versailles available in a variety of media. This book, however, combines the classic views of the palace with select scenes of private spaces and objects not accessible on tours. [Lecture 23]

Preziosi, Donald, and Louise A. Hitchcock. *Aegean Art and Architecture.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. The authors created a handbook that offers a superb survey of the art and architecture of both Crete and the Greek mainland, including much material on the palaces in both Minoan and Mycenaean culture. [Lecture 4, Lecture 5]

Restall, Matthew. *When Montezuma Met Cortes: The True Story of the Meeting That Changed History.* Using the meeting between these two men as a jumping-off point, Restall explores their characters and how this event shaped the history of the world to follow. Basing his work on primary sources, he comes to a startlingly different conclusion about these figures than traditional accounts. [Lecture 22]

Rojas, Jose Luis de. *Tenochtitlan: Capital of the Aztec Empire.* Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2012. More than just a history or urban survey of the Aztec capital, this work provides insights in the Aztec world. It covers the construction of the city and palace, but also politics, economic activity, religion, and culture in the capital. [Lecture 22]

Roller, Duane W. *The Building Program of Herod the Great.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998. This book not only collects the evidence for Herod's enormous building program, but also contextualizes it with Herod's internal and external political situation and in the greater cultural world of the eastern Mediterranean. It provides an excellent overview of Herod's architecture and its meaning. [Lecture 12, Lecture 13]

Shaw, Joseph W. *Elite Minoan Architecture: Its Development at Knossos, Phaistos, and Malia*. Philadelphia: INSTAP Academic Press, 2015. Written by a scholar with more than 40 years of experience conducting fieldwork on Minoan sites, this book takes a developmental approach in explaining the forms of Minoan palace architecture. [Lecture 4]

Spawforth, A. J. S., ed. *The Court and Court Society in Ancient Monarchies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007. This is a collection of seven chapters by leading scholars exploring aspects of the courts of ancient Persia, Alexander the Great, the Roman Empire, the Byzantine Empire, Han China, and ancient Egypt. Almost every chapter covers court culture in one of the main palaces in this course.

Spence, Kate. "Court and Palace in Ancient Egypt: The Amarna Period and Later Eighteenth Dynasty." In *The Court and Court Society in Ancient Monarchies*, edited by A. J. S. Spawforth, 267–328. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007. Spence has written dozens of articles and book chapters on Egyptian palaces and court culture, especially focused on

Amarna. This is her most extensive work on the palace and court that it housed. She successfully moves beyond studies of architecture to how the spaces were used. [Lecture 3]

Stierlin, Henri. *The Roman Empire, Volume 1: From the Etruscans to the Decline of the Roman Empire.* Köln, Germany: Taschen, 1996. This lavishly illustrated survey of Roman architecture is supplied with high-quality reconstructions of many of the key buildings and includes some lengthy sections on the palaces of Nero, Domitian, Hadrian, and Maximian. [Lecture 17, Lecture 18]

Sun, Zhixin Jason. *Age of Empires: Art of the Qin and Han Dynasties.* New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2017. Not only an exhibition catalogue, this work contains seven excellent essays on Qin and Han art and culture. It contains a full catalogue of the exhibition as well as extensive notes and bibliography, with the numerous Chinese titles translated into English. [Lecture 21]

Tseng, Lillian Lan-ying. *Picturing Heaven in Early China.* Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2011. Tseng has created a very important book on early China. With her focus on the concept of heaven, she is really exploring the Chinese creation and visualization of their world and therefore illuminates art, culture, and science, including the ideology behind the construction of the Endless Palace. [Lecture 21]

Whitaker, Jan. *Department Store: History, Design, Display.* London: Thames & Hudson, 2011. The grandiose design, tremendous scale, lavish decoration, and role in conveying community values are all features that palaces and department stores shared. This book explains the place of the grand department stores of the 19th and early 20th centuries in countries with representative governments where they fill many of the roles of palaces. [Lecture 24]

Wilbur, Donald N. *Persepolis: The Archaeology of Parsa, Seat of the Persian Kings.* New York: Darwin Press, 1989. This is a lavishly illustrated book that creates an engaging narrative out of decades of excavation reports and technical studies of the palace site at Persepolis. [Lecture 8]

Wilkes, J. J. *Diocletian's Palace, Split: Residence of a Retired Roman Emperor*. Sheffield, England: University of Sheffield, 1986. In an expanded version of a public lecture, Wilkes offers a detailed account of the remains of the palace and its modern exploration. His book also covers the ongoing debate on the architectural origins of the building and its imported building materials. He also notes the role of the building in the European classical revival of the 18th century. [Lecture 19]

Winter, Frederick E. *Studies in Hellenistic Architecture*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006. This magisterial work includes a very important chapter on residential architecture, which explores Hellenistic palaces. It also covers notions of Hellenistic design, such as the use of terracing and the role of setting and vista. Additionally, it surveys the transmission of Hellenistic style and form into Italy and the Roman republican palaces in another chapter. [Lecture 10, Lecture 11]

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Quiz Answers:

1-b, 2-a, 3-d, 4-d, 5-b, 6-d, 7-c, 8-b, 9-a, 10-c