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SmartHistory of Art II: Ancient Mediterranean

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Licensing

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

1: Nabataean

Petra was the greatest city of the Nabataeans, a people who occupied the area from Sinai to northern Arabia.

c. 400 B.C.E. - 106 C.E.

1.1: Petra- The rose red city of the Nabataeans

1.2: Petra- urban metropolis

1.3: Petra- rock-cut façades

1.4: Petra- UNESCO Siq Project

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1.1: Petra- The rose red city of the Nabataeans

by DR. ELIZABETH MACAULAY-LEWIS

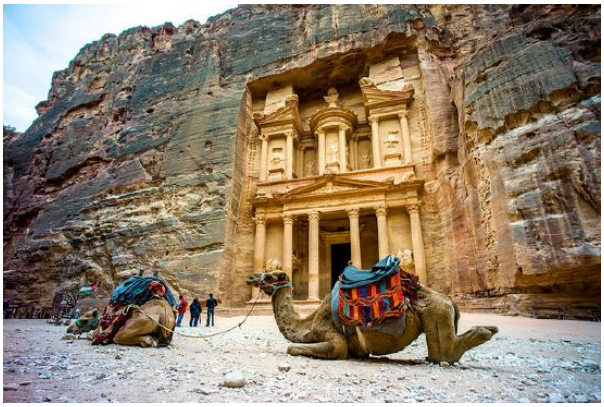


Figure **1.1.1**: So-called Treasury (Khazneh), Petra (Jordan), 2nd century C.E. (photo: **Colin Tsoi**, CC BY-ND 2.0)

There is only one true way to experience Petra—the greatest city of the Nabataeans, a people who occupied the area from Sinai and Negev to northern Arabia in the west and as far north as southern Syria. On foot or mounted on a camel, one should leave the modern village of Wadi Musa in modern-day Jordan and enter the Siq, a narrow, curving canyon, that traders, explorers and travelers have been walking down since time immemorial (**here's a short video** of the approach).



Figure **1.1.2**: So-called Treasury (Khazneh), through the Siq, Petra (photo: **Colin Tsoi**, CC BY-ND 2.0)

Stone carvings, camel caravans and betyls (the famous god blocks) set in niches, appear. But these elaborate carvings are merely a prelude to one's arrival into the heart of Petra, where the Treasury, or Khazneh, a monumental tomb, awaits to impress even the most jaded visitors. The natural, rich hues of Arabian light hit the remarkable façade, giving the Treasury its famed rose-red color.

Petra, the capital of the Nabataean Kingdom

Petra was the capital of the Nabataean Kingdom for most of its history until the Roman Emperor Trajan created the province of Arabia in 106 C.E., annexed the Nabataean kingdom, and moved the capital of this new province to Bosra (also spelt Bostra) in what is today modern southern Syria.

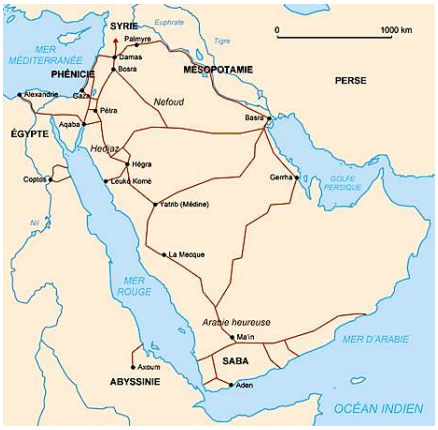


Figure **1.1.3**: Nabataean trade routes (CC BY-SA 3.0)

The Hellenistic period

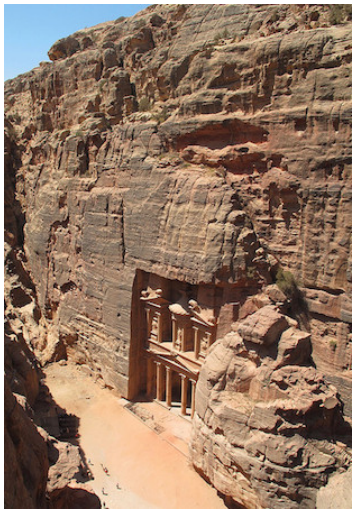
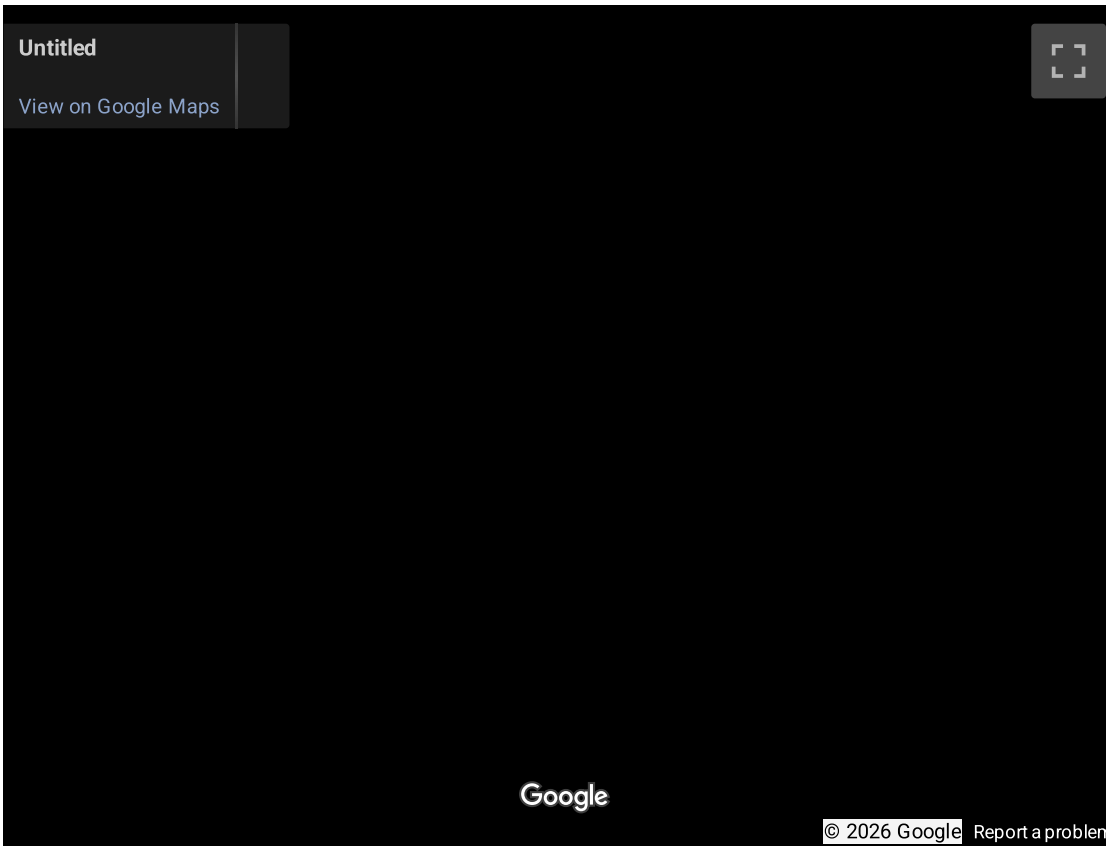


Figure **1.1.3**: So-called Treasury (Khazneh), Petra (Jordan), 2nd century C.E. (photo: Kyle Simourd, CC BY 2.0)

The ancient sources inform us that the Nabataeans were great traders, who controlled the luxury trade in incense during the late Hellenistic and early Roman periods. The Hellenistic period stretches from the death of Alexander the Great in 323 B.C.E. to 31 B.C.E. when the Roman Empire emerged. It can also refer to artistic and cultural similarities in the eastern part of the Mediterranean, Egypt and the Middle East in this era. Petra, the rock-cut city of the Nabataeans, lay at the intersection of these rich trade routes. The great wealth that the Nabataeans amassed allowed them to create the spectacular architecture that so many admire in Petra today.



Additional resources:

Virtual tour of Petra from Google

Petra at the American Museum of Natural History

Resources for educators from the American Museum of Natural History on Petra

Brown University Petra Archaeological project

Petra: The Great Temple Excavation (Brown University)

The Pool-Complex at Petra, University of Pennsylvania

New Pieces of Mada'in Salih's Puzzle

Susan B. Downey, "Museum Review: Petra Rediscovered: An Exhibition on Petra and Nabataean Sanctuaries in Jordan"

The Nabataean Kingdom and Petra on The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

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1.2: Petra- urban metropolis

by DR. ELIZABETH MACAULAY-LEWIS

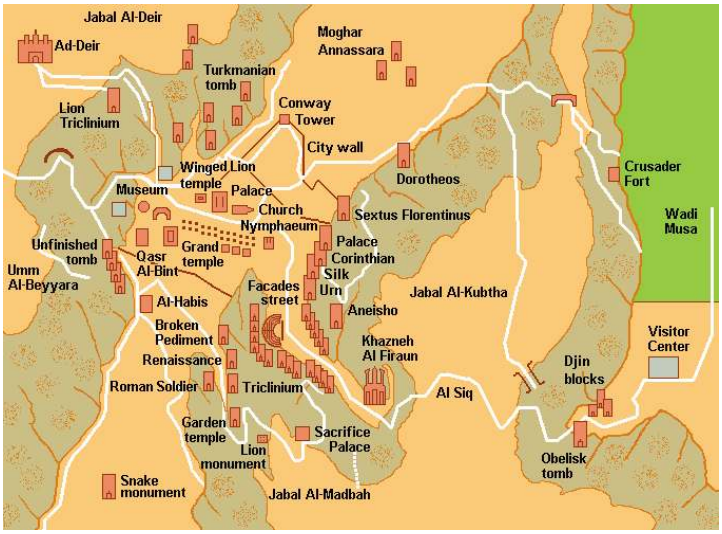


Figure **1.2.1**: Map of Petra (**public domain**)

The great tombs and buildings of Petra

Petra was a well-developed city and contained many of the buildings and urban infrastructure that one would expect of a Hellenistic city. Recent archaeological work has radically reshaped our understanding of downtown Petra. Most of Petra's great tombs and buildings were built before the Roman Empire annexed it in 106 C.E.



Figure **1.2.2**: Theater, Petra (Jordan) (photo: **Chris Armstrong**, CC BY-ND 2.0)

Petra had a large theater, which was probably built during the reign of Aretas IV (9 B.C.E. – 40 C.E.), as well as a monumental colonnaded street. Important buildings graced both sides of the Wadi. On the south side of the street was a nymphaeum (a shrine consecrated to water nymphs, often with a fountain) and a series of monumental spaces, which were once identified as markets. The so-called Lower Market has recently been excavated and shown to be a garden-pool complex. This stood adjacent to so-called Great Temple of Petra. Within the cella, or inner sanctuary room, of the Great Temple, a series of stone seats were discovered; this may suggest that the structure was not a temple, but an audience hall at least for part of its history.

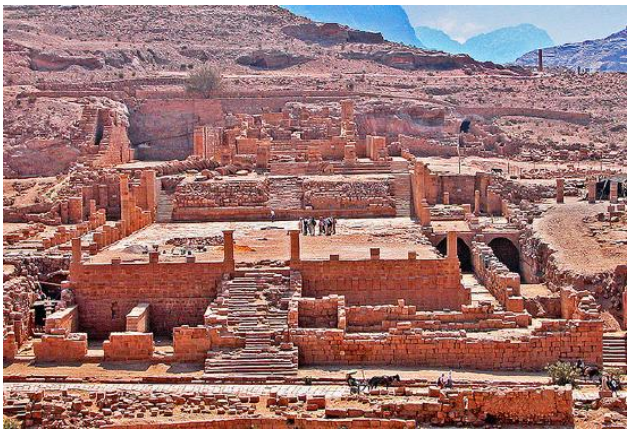


Figure **1.2.3**: So-called Great Temple, Petra (Jordan) (photo: **Dennis Jarvis**, CC BY-SA 2.0)

Baths were also located in its vicinity. Opposite the so-called Great Temple is the Temple of the Winged Lions, from which a unique god block of a female goddess, was recovered. Column capitals at Petra are truly unique in part for their carvings of winged lions and elephants.



Figure **1.2.4**: Elephant-headed capital, limestone, Petra. Found in the triple colonnades of the Lower Tenemos (sacred district). The decoration from top to bottom consists of a plain band, egg and dart motif, and the cornice with a plain band with tripartite molding in a double wave. The corner decoration is an elephant head with fan-shaped ears.… Beneath the heads is an acanthus leaf extending downwards…. On the sides and resting on the elephant's forehead is an incurving scroll with floral motifs (from the label "Elephant-headed Capitals" in the Archaeological Museum, Petra) (photo: **Guillaume Baviere**, CC BY 2.0)

Just to the west, past a gate in a *temenos,* or sacred precinct, was the Qasr el-Bint, the most important temple in the city. It was also probably built under Aretas the IV, but we do not know to which gods the Qasr el-Bint was dedicated. Petra is also filled with more mundane architecture, including domestic residences, as well as the all-important water-catchment and storage systems that allowed life and agriculture to flourish here.



Figure 1.2.5: Qasr el-Bint, Petra (Jordan), c. 9 B.C.E. – 40 C.E. (photo: Dennis Jarvis, CC BY-SA 2.0)

One of many Nabataean sites

Petra is often seen in isolation; in fact, it was one of many Nabataean sites; the Nabataean lands stretched from the Sinai and Negev in the west, as far north as Damascus at one point, and as far south as Egra, modern-day Madain Saleh, in Northern Saudi Arabia, which also had numerous rock-cut tombs, amongst others. At Egra an inscription attests to the presence of a Roman Legion at the site, marking the city as the southern most boundary of the Roman Empire in the Antonine Era. Khirbet et-Tannur was a major sanctuary in central Jordan; many of its reliefs are in the Cincinnati Museum of Art today.

The Nabataeans took an active role in their architectural and artistic creations, drawing upon the artistic vocabulary of the Hellenistic world and the ancient Near East. Rather than slavishly copying either one of these traditions, the Nabataeans actively selected and adopted certain elements for their tombs, dining pavilions, and temples to suit their needs and purposes, on both the group and individual level. Indeed, the Treasury and the Monastery could only have been conceived of and executed in Petra.

Additional resources:

Philip C. Hammond, “The Capitals from ‘The Temple of the Winged Lions,’ Petra,” Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research (1977)

Richard B. Freeman, “Nabataean Sculpture in the Cincinnati Art Museum,” American Journal of Archaeology (1941)

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1.3: Petra- rock-cut façades

by DR. ELIZABETH MACAULAY-LEWIS

The rock-cut façades are the iconic monuments of Petra. Of these, the most famous is the so-called Treasury (or Khazneh), which appeared in the film *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*, as the final resting place of the Holy Grail.



Figure **1.3.1**: The so-called Treasury (Khazneh), of Petra (Jordan), 2nd century C.E. (photo: **Richard White**, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

The prominence of the tombs in the landscape led many early explorers and scholars to see Petra as a large necropolis (cemetery); however, archaeology has shown that Petra was a well-developed metropolis with all of the trappings of a Hellenistic city.



Figure **1.3.2**: Tombs at Petra (Jordan) (photo: **Dennis Jarvis**, CC BY-SA 2.0)

Tombs

The tomb facades draw upon a rich array of Hellenistic and Near Eastern architecture and, in this sense, their architecture reflects the diverse and different cultures with which the Nabataeans traded, interacted, and even intermarried (King Aretas IV's daughter was married to Herod Antipas, the son of Herod the Great, whose mother was also Nabataean). Many of the tombs contain niches or small chambers for burials, cut into the stone walls. No human remains have ever been found in any of the tombs, and the exact funerary practices of the Nabataeans remain unknown.

The dating of the tombs has proved difficult as there are almost no finds, such as coins and pottery, that enable archaeologists to date these tombs; a few inscriptions allow us to date some of the tombs at Petra, although at Egra, another Nabataean site (in modern Saudi Arabia), there are thirty-one dated tombs. Today scholars believe that the tombs were probably constructed when the Nabataeans were wealthiest between the second century B.C.E. and the early second century C.E. Archaeologists and art historians

have identified a number styles for the tomb facades, but they all co-existed and cannot be used date the tombs. The few surviving inscriptions in Nabataean, Greek, and Latin tell us about the people who were buried in the tombs.

Hellenistic in style

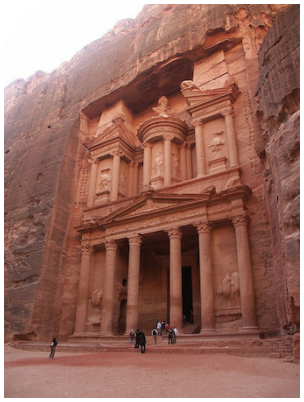


Figure \(\PageIndex{3}\): The Treasury (Khazneh), Petra (Jordan), 2nd century C.E. (photo: **Packwood / Shand**, CC BY 2.0)

The Treasury's façade (24.9 meters wide x 38.77 meters high) most clearly embodies the Hellenistic style and reflects the influence of Alexandria, the greatest city in the Eastern Mediterranean at this time. Its architecture features a broken pediment and central tholos (a circular building) on the upper level; this architectural composition originated in Alexandria. Ornate Corinthian columns are used throughout. Above the broken pediments, the bases of two obelisks appear and stretch upwards into the rock.

The sculptural decoration also underscores a connection to the Hellenistic world. On the upper level, Amazons (bare-breasted) and Victories stand, flanking a central female figure (on the tholos), who is probably Isis-Tyche, a combination of the Egyptian Goddess, Isis, and Tyche, the Greek Goddess of good fortune. The lower level features the Greek twin gods, Castor and Pollux, the Dioscuri, who protected travelers and the dead on their journeys. There are other details from the artistic traditions of the Hellenistic world, including eagles, the symbols of royal Ptolemies, vines, vegetation, kantharoi (vase with large handles), and acroteria (architectural ornaments on a pediment). However, the tomb also features rosettes, a design originally associated with the ancient Near East.



Figure **1.3.4**: Relief sculpture and acroteria (detail), The Treasury (Khazneh), Petra (present-day Jordan), 2nd century C.E. (photo: **Richard White**, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

There are no inscriptions or ceramic evidence associated with the tomb that allows us to date it. Considering that it was located at the most important entrance to Petra through the Siq, it was probably a tomb for one of the Nabataean Kings. Aretas IV (reigned, 9 B.C.E. – 40 C.E.) is the most likely candidate, because he was the Nabataeans' most successful ruler, and many buildings were erected in Petra during his reign.

The treasury was exceptional for its figurative detail and ornate Hellenistic architectural orders; most tombs did not have figurative sculpture—a legacy of the Nabataean artistic tradition that was largely aniconic, or non-figurative. Many of the smaller tombs were less complex and also drew far less upon the artistic conventions of the Hellenistic world, suggesting that the Nabataeans combined the artistic traditions of the East and West in many different and unique ways.

It is a popular misconception that all of the rock-cut monuments, which number over 3,000, were all tombs. In fact, many of the other rock-cut monuments were living quarters or monumental dining rooms with interior benches. Of these, the Monastery (also known as ed-Deir) is most the famous. Even the large theater, constructed in the first century B.C.E., was cut into the rock of Petra.



Figure **1.3.5**: So-called Monastery, or ed-Deir, Petra (Jordan) (photo: **April Rinne**, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Much like the Treasury (discussed above), ed-Deir was not a monastery, but rather behind its façade was a monumental cella (the inner chamber of a temple) with a large area for dining with a cultic podium at the back. While no traces of decoration remain today, the room would have been plastered and painted. The façade again features a broken pediment around a central tholos, but its decoration is more abstract and less figurative than that of the Treasury. The column capitals are typically Nabataean, modeled on the Corinthian order, but abstracted. The façade features a Doric entablature, but rather than having figures in the metopes, roundels with no decoration appear. Thus, while the Monastery deploys many elements of Classical architecture, it does so in a unique way.

Additional resources:

Virtual tour of Petra from Google

The Nabataean Kingdom and Petra

Unesco: Petra

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- **2.6: Nabataean** by Smarthistory is licensed CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.

1.4: Petra- UNESCO Siq Project

by UNESCO

The Siq, Petra's canyon entrance, is cracking. The cliffs threaten to fall, and scientists race to find a solution.



Video **1.4.1**: Video from UNESCO Amman

The Siq is one of Petra's most endangered areas, in which natural environmental risks pose a major threat to the cultural heritage and the visitors. Thus, systematic identification and monitoring of its potentially unstable areas is needed. The Jordanian government made a request in 2011 for assistance in this regard, and subsequently a rapid assessment of the Siq was carried out by UNESCO to identify the unstable blocks and map risk zones in the Siq. **Read more here**.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

2: Etruscan

A brilliant culture once controlled almost the entire peninsula we now call Italy. This was the Etruscan civilization.

c. 800 - 500 B.C.E.

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2.1: The Etruscans, an introduction

by DR. LAUREL TAYLOR



Figure **2.1.1**: Etruscan civilization, 750-500 B.C.E., **NormanEinstein** – based on a map from *The National Geographic Magazine*, vol.173 No.6 (June 1988) (CC BY-SA 3.0)

Before the small village of Rome became "Rome" with a capital R (to paraphrase D.H. Lawrence), a brilliant civilization once controlled almost the entire peninsula we now call Italy. This was the Etruscan civilization, a vanished culture whose achievements set the stage not only for the development of ancient Roman art and culture but for the Italian Renaissance as well.

Though you may not have heard of them, the Etruscans were the first "superpower" of the Western Mediterranean who, alongside the Greeks, developed the earliest true cities in Europe. They were so successful, in fact, that the most important cities in modern Tuscany (Florence, Pisa, and Siena, to name a few) were first established by the Etruscans and have been continuously inhabited since then.

Yet the labels "mysterious" or "enigmatic" are often attached to the Etruscans since none of their own histories or literature survives. This is particularly ironic as it was the Etruscans who were responsible for teaching the Romans the alphabet and for spreading literacy throughout the Italian peninsula.

The influence on ancient Rome

Etruscan influence on ancient Roman culture was profound. It was from the Etruscans that the Romans inherited many of their own cultural and artistic traditions, from the spectacle of gladiatorial combat, to hydraulic engineering, temple design, and religious ritual, among many other things. In fact, hundreds of years after the Etruscans had been conquered by the Romans and absorbed into their empire, the Romans still maintained an Etruscan priesthood in Rome (which they thought necessary to consult when under attack from invading "barbarians").

We even derive our very common word "person'" from the Etruscan mythological figure Phersu — the frightful, masked figure you see in this Early Etruscan tomb painting who would engage his victims in a dreadful "game" of blood letting in order to appease the soul of the deceased (the original gladiatorial games, according to the Romans!).



Figure 2.1.2: Phersu and his victim, Tomb of the Augurs, late 6th century B.C.E., Tarquinia

Etruscan art and the afterlife

Early on the Etruscans developed a vibrant artistic and architectural culture, one that was often in dialogue with other Mediterranean civilizations. Trading of the many natural mineral resources found in Tuscany, the center of ancient Etruria, caused them to bump up against Greeks, Phoenicians and Egyptians in the Mediterranean. With these other Mediterranean cultures, they exchanged goods, ideas and, often, a shared artistic vocabulary.



Figure 2.1.3: Etruscan hut urn (c. 800 B.C.E.), impasto (Vatican Museums)

Unlike with the Greeks, however, the majority of our knowledge about Etruscan art comes largely from their burials. (Since most Etruscan cities are still inhabited, they hide their Etruscan art and architecture under Roman, Medieval and Renaissance layers). Fortunately, though, the Etruscans cared very much about equipping their dead with everything necessary for the afterlife—from lively tomb paintings to sculpture to pottery that they could use in the next world.

From their extensive cemeteries, we can look at the “world of the dead” and begin to understand some about the “world of the living.” During the early phases of Etruscan civilization, they conceived of the afterlife in terms of life as they knew it. When someone died, he or she would be cremated and provided with another ‘home’ for the afterlife.

This type of hut urn (above left), made of an unrefined clay known as impasto, would be used to house the cremated remains of the deceased. Not coincidentally, it shows us in miniature form what a typical Etruscan house would have looked like in Iron Age Etruria (900-750 B.C.E.)—oval with a timber roof and a smoke hole for an internal hearth.

More opulent tombs

Later on, houses for the dead became much more elaborate. During the Orientalizing period (750-575 B.C.E.), when the Etruscans began to trade their natural resources with other Mediterranean cultures and became staggeringly wealthy as a result, their tombs became more and more opulent.

The well-known Regolini-Galassi tomb from the city of Cerveteri shows how this new wealth transformed the modest hut to an extravagant house for the dead. Built for a woman clearly of high rank, the massive stone tomb contains a long corridor with lateral, oval rooms leading to a main chamber.



Figure **2.1.4**: Fibula from Regolini Galassi tomb in Cerveteri, gold, mid-seventh century B.C.E. (Vatican Museums)

A stroll through the Etruscan rooms in the Vatican museum where the tomb artifacts are now housed presents a mind-boggling view of the enormous wealth of the period. Found near the woman were objects of various precious materials intended for personal adornment in the afterlife—a gold pectoral, gold bracelets, a gold brooch (or fibula) of outsized proportions, among other objects—as well as silver and bronze vessels and numerous other grave goods and furniture.

A bronze bed

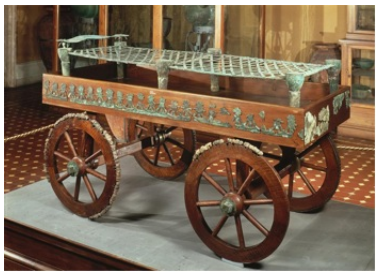


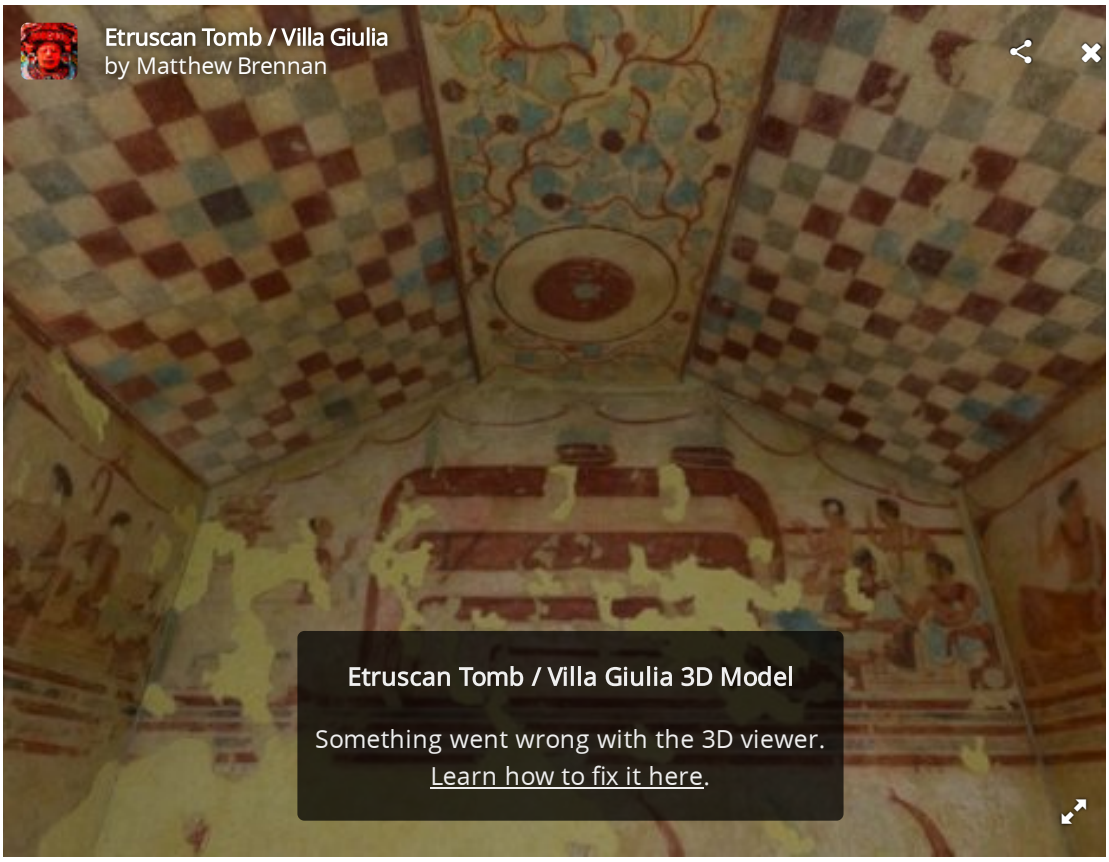
Figure **2.1.5**: Bronze bed and carriage, Regolini-Galassi Tomb, (c. 650 B.C.E.), Cerveteri (Vatican Museums)

Of course, this important woman might also need her four-wheeled bronze-sheathed carriage in the afterlife as well as an incense burner, jewelry of amber and ivory, and, touchingly, her bronze bed around which thirty-three figurines, all in various gestures of mourning, were arranged.

Though later periods in Etruscan history are not characterized by such wealth, the Etruscans were, nevertheless, extremely powerful and influential and left a lasting imprint on the city of Rome and other parts of Italy.



Video **2.1.1**: Bettini Tomb in Tarquinia and virtual restoration of its frescoes using archive material



Etruscan Tomb / Villa Giulia by **Matthew Brennan** on **Sketchfab**

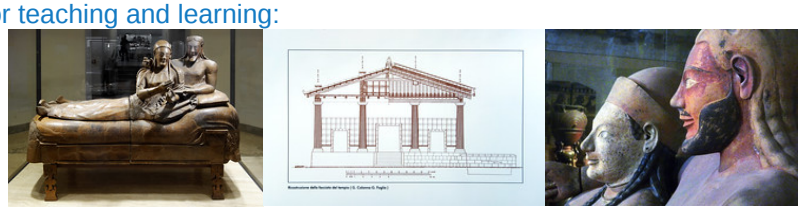
Additional resources:

Video: Etruscan Necropolises of Cerveteri and Tarquinia (from UNESCO/NHK)

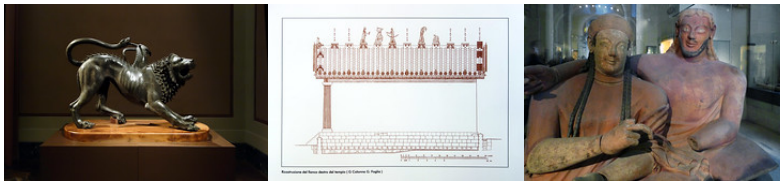
"Etruscan art" on The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

"In Our Time" podcast on Etruscan Civilization

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2.2: Bucchero

by DR. JEFFREY A. BECKER



Figure **2.2.1**: Terracotta kantharos (vase), 7th century B.C.E., Etruscan, terracotta, 18.39 cm high (**The Metropolitan Museum of Art**)

Bucchero, a distinctly black, burnished ceramic ware, is often considered the signature ceramic fabric of the Etruscans, an indigenous, pre-Roman people of the Italian peninsula. The term bucchero derives from the Spanish term *búcaro* (Portuguese: *pucaro*), meaning either a ceramic jar or a type of aromatic clay. The main period of bucchero production and use stretches from the seventh to the fifth centuries B.C.E. A tableware made mostly for elite consumption, bucchero pottery occupies a key position in our understanding of Etruscan material culture.

Manufacture

Bucchero's distinctive black color results from its manufacturing process. The pottery is fired in a reducing atmosphere, meaning the amount of oxygen in the kiln's firing chamber is restricted, resulting in the dark color. The oxygen-starved atmosphere of the kiln causes the iron oxide in the clay to give up its oxygen molecules, making the pottery darken in color. The fact that pottery was burnished (polished by rubbing) before firing creates the high, almost metallic, sheen. This lustrous, black finish is a hallmark of bucchero pottery. Another hallmark is the fine surface of the pottery, which results from the finely levigated (ground) clay used to make bucchero.



Figure **2.2.2**: Terracotta column-krater (bowl for mixing wine and water), c. 560-500 B.C.E., Etruscan, terracotta, bucchero pesante, 16 1/8 in high, 13 9/16 in diameter (**The Metropolitan Museum of Art**)

Bucchero wares may draw their inspiration from metalware vessels, particularly those crafted of silver, that would have been used as elite tablewares. The design of early bucchero ware seems to evoke the lines and crispness of metallic vessels; additionally early decorative patterns that rely on incision and rouletting (roller-stamping) also evoke metalliform design tendencies.

Forerunners of Etruscan bucchero



Figure **2.2.3**: Terracotta kyathos (single-handled cup), 7th century B.C.E., Late Villanova, terracotta, buccheroid impasto, 4 9/16 in high without handle, 8 11/16 in with handle, 11 in diameter of mouth **(The Metropolitan Museum of Art)**

Impasto (a rough unrefined clay) ceramics produced by the Villanovan culture (the earliest Iron Age culture of central and northern Italy) were forerunners of Etruscan bucchero forms. Also called buccheroid impasto, they were the product of a kiln environment that allows for a preliminary phase of oxidation but then only a partial reduction, yielding a surface finish that ranges from dark brown to black, but with a section that remains fairly light in color. The kyathos in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (above) provides a good example; the quality of potting is high overall. This impasto ware was thrown on the wheel, has a highly burnished surface, but has a less refined fabric (material) than later examples of true bucchero.

Bucchero types

Archaeologists have discovered bucchero in Etruria and Latium (modern Tuscany and northern Lazio) in central Italy; it is often frequently found in funereal contexts. Bucchero was also exported, in some cases, as examples have been found in southern France, the Aegean, North Africa, and Egypt.



Figure **2.2.4**: Terracotta trefoil oinochoe (jug), c. 625-600 B.C.E., Etruscan, terracotta, bucchero sottile, 11 3/16 in high (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

The production of bucchero is typically divided into three artistic phases. These are distinguishable on the basis of the quality and thickness of the fabric. The phases are: “thin-walled bucchero” (*bucchero sottile*), produced c. 675 to 626 B.C.E., “transitional,” produced c. 625 to 575 B.C.E., and “heavy bucchero” (*bucchero pesante*), produced from c. 575 to the beginning of the fifth century B.C.E.



Figure **2.2.5**: Terracotta kantharos (drinking cup), c. 650-600 B.C.E., Etruscan, terracotta, bucchero sottile, 12 in high without handles, 10 1/4 in diameter (**The Metropolitan Museum of Art**)

The earliest bucchero has been discovered in tombs at Caere (just northwest of Rome). Its extremely thin-walled construction and sharp features echo metallic prototypes. Decoration on the earliest examples is usually in the form of geometric incision, including chevrons and other linear motifs (above). Roller stamp methods would later replace the incision.



Figure **2.2.6**: Bucchero hydria (water ware jug), c. 550-500 B.C.E., Etruscan, terracotta, 60.5 cm high © The Trustees of the British Museum

By the sixth century B.C.E., a “heavy” type of the ceramic had replaced the thin-walled bucchero. A hydria (vessel used to carry water) in the British Museum (above) is another example of the “heavy” bucchero of the sixth century B.C.E. This vessel has a series of female appliqué heads as well as other ornamentation. A tendency of the “heavy” type also included the use of mold-made techniques to create relief decoration.



Figure **2.2.7**: Terracotta vase in the shape of a cockerel, c. 650-600 B.C.E., Etruscan, terracotta, bucchero, 4 1/16 in high (**The Metropolitan Museum of Art**)

A number of surviving bucchero examples carry incised inscriptions. A bucchero vessel currently in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art (above) provides an example of an abecedarium (the letters of the alphabet) inscribed on a ceramic vessel. This vase, in the form of a cockerel, dates to the second half of the seventh century B.C.E. has the 26 letters of the Etruscan alphabet inscribed around its belly (below)—the vase combines practicality (it may have been used as an inkwell) with a touch of whimsy. It demonstrates the penchant of Etruscan potters for incision and the plastic modeling of ceramic forms.



Figure **2.2.8**: Alphabet (detail), Terracotta vase in the shape of a cockerel, c. 650-600 B.C.E., Etruscan, terracotta, bucchero, 4 1/16 in high (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

Interpretation

Bucchero pottery represents a key source of information about the Etruscan civilization. Used by elites at banquets, bucchero demonstrates the tendencies of elite consumption among the Etruscans. The elite display at the banqueting table helped to reinforce social rank and to allow elites to advertise the achievements and status of themselves and their families.

Additional Resources:

Bucchero at the British Museum

Jon M. Berkin, *The Orientalizing Bucchero from the Lower Building at Poggio Civitate (Murlo)* (Boston: Published for the Archaeological Institute of America by the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, 2003).

Mauro Cristofani, *Le tombe da Monte Michele nel Museo archeologico di Firenze* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1969).

Richard DePuma, *Corpus vasorum antiquorum. [United States of America]. The J. Paul Getty Museum, Malibu: Etruscan Impasto and Bucchero* (Corpus vasorum antiquorum., United States of America, fasc. 31: fascim. 6.) (Malibu: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 1996).

Richard DePuma, *Etruscan Art in the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2013).

Nancy Hirschland-Ramage, "Studies in Early Etruscan Bucchero," *Papers of the British School at Rome* 38 (1970), pp. 1–61.

Philip Perkins, *Etruscan Bucchero in the British Museum* (London: The British Museum, 2007).

Tom Rasmussen, *Bucchero Pottery from Southern Etruria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

Wim Regter, *Imitation and Creation: Development of Early Bucchero Design at Cerveteri in the Seventh Century B.C.* (Amsterdam: Allard Pierson Museum, 2003).

Margaret Wadsworth, "A Potter's Experience with the Method of Firing Bucchero," *Opuscula Romana* 14 (1983), pp. 65-68.

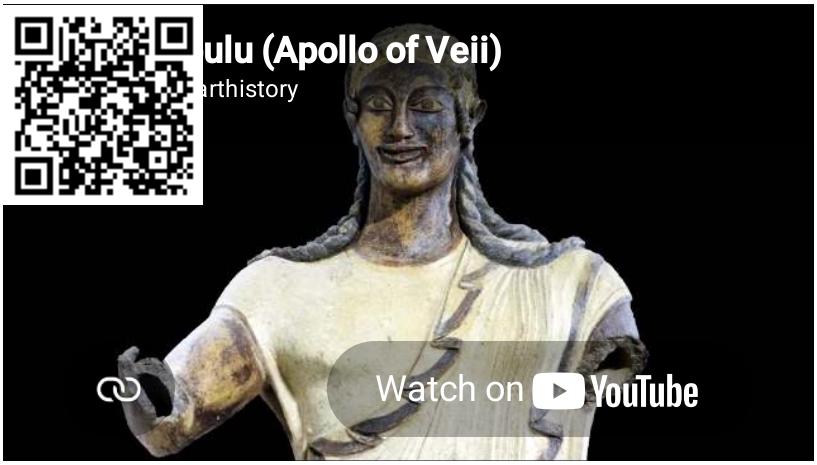
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2.3: Temple of Minerva and the sculpture of Apollo (Veii)

by DR. LAUREL TAYLOR

Forget what you know about Greek and Roman architectural orders—Etruscans had their own unique style.



Etruscan temples have largely vanished

Among the early Etruscans, the worship of the Gods and Goddesses did not take place in or around monumental temples as it did in early Greece or in the Ancient Near East, but rather, in nature. Early Etruscans created ritual spaces in groves and enclosures open to the sky with sacred boundaries carefully marked through ritual ceremony.



Figure **2.3.1**: Reconstruction of an Etruscan Temple of the 6th century according to Vitruvius

Around 600 B.C.E., however, the desire to create monumental structures for the gods spread throughout Etruria, most likely as a result of Greek influence. While the desire to create temples for the gods may have been inspired by contact with Greek culture, Etruscan religious architecture was markedly different in material and design. These colorful and ornate structures typically had stone foundations but their wood, mud-brick and terracotta superstructures suffered far more from exposure to the elements. Greek temples still survive today in parts of Greece and southern Italy since they were constructed of stone and marble but Etruscan temples were built with mostly ephemeral materials and have largely vanished.

How do we know what they looked like?

Despite the comparatively short-lived nature of Etruscan religious structures, Etruscan temple design had a huge impact on Renaissance architecture and one can see echoes of Etruscan, or 'Tuscan,' columns (doric columns with bases) in many buildings of the Renaissance and later in Italy. But if the temples weren't around during the 15th and 16th centuries, how did Renaissance builders know what they looked like and, for that matter, how do we know what they looked like?

Fortunately, an ancient Roman architect by the name of Vitruvius wrote about Etruscan temples in his book *De architectura* in the late first century B.C.E. In his treatise on ancient architecture, Vitruvius described the key elements of Etruscan temples and it was his description that inspired Renaissance architects to return to the roots of Tuscan design and allows archaeologists and art historians today to recreate the appearance of these buildings.

Archaeological evidence for the Temple of Minerva

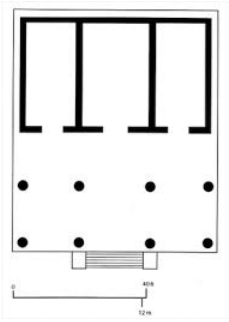


Figure **2.3.2**: Typical Etruscan temple plan

The archaeological evidence that does remain from many Etruscan temples largely confirms Vitruvius's description. One of the best explored and known of these is the Portonaccio Temple dedicated to the goddess Minerva (Roman=Minerva/Greek=Athena) at the city of Veii about 18 km north of Rome. The tufa-block foundations of the Portonaccio temple still remain and their nearly square footprint reflects Vitruvius's description of a floor plan with proportions that are 5:6, just a bit deeper than wide.

The temple is also roughly divided into two parts—a deep front porch with widely-spaced Tuscan columns and a back portion divided into three separate rooms. Known as a triple cella, this three room configuration seems to reflect a divine triad associated with the temple, perhaps Menrva as well as Tinia (Jupiter/Zeus) and Uni (Juno/Hera).

In addition to their internal organization and materials, what also made Etruscan temples noticeably distinct from Greek ones was a high podium and frontal entrance. Approaching the Parthenon with its low rising stepped entrance and encircling forest of columns would have been a very different experience from approaching an Etruscan temple high off the ground with a single, defined entrance.

Sculpture

Perhaps most interesting about the Portonaccio temple is the abundant terracotta sculpture that still remains, the volume and quality of which is without parallel in Etruria. In addition to many terracotta architectural elements (masks, antefixes, decorative details), a series of over life-size terracotta sculptures have also been discovered in association with the temple. Originally placed on the ridge of temple roof, these figures seem to be Etruscan assimilations of Greek gods, set up as a tableau to enact some mythic event.

Apollo of Veii



Figure **2.3.3**: Aplu (Apollo of Veii), from the roof of the Portonaccio Temple, Veii, Italy, c. 510-500 B.C.E., painted terra-cotta, 5 feet 11inches high (Museo Nazionale Etrusco di Villa Giulia, Rome)

The most famous and well-preserved of these is the *Aplu (Apollo of Veii)*, a dynamic, striding masterpiece of large scale terracotta sculpture and likely a central figure in the rooftop narrative. His counterpart may have been the less well-preserved figure of Hercle (Hercules) with whom he struggled in an epic contest over the Golden Hind, an enormous deer sacred to Apollo's twin sister Artemis. Other figures discovered with these suggest an audience watching the action. Whatever the myth may have been, it was a

completely Etruscan innovation to use sculpture in this way, placed at the peak of the temple roof—creating what must have been an impressive tableau against the backdrop of the sky.



Figure **2.3.4**: Detail, Aplu *(Apollo of Veii)*, from the roof of the Portonaccio Temple, Veii, Italy, c. 510-500 B.C.E., painted terra-cotta, 5 feet 11inches high (Museo Nazionale Etrusco di Villa Giulia, Rome)

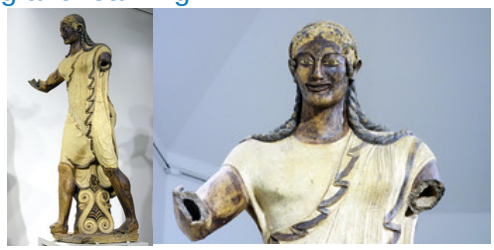
An artist by the name of Vulca?

Since Etruscan art is almost entirely anonymous it is impossible to know who may have contributed to such innovative display strategies. We may, however, know the name of the artist associated with the workshop that produced the terracotta sculpture. Centuries after these pieces were created, the Roman writer Pliny recorded that in the late 6th century B.C.E., an Etruscan artist by the name of Vulca was summoned from Veii to Rome to decorate the most important temple there, the temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus. The technical knowledge required to produce terracotta sculpture at such a large scale was considerable and it may just have been the master sculptor Vulca whose skill at the Portonaccio temple earned him not only a prestigious commission in Rome but a place in the history books as well.

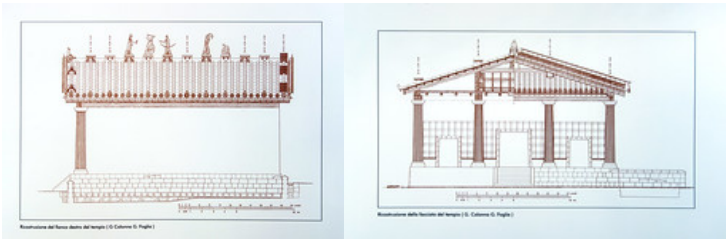
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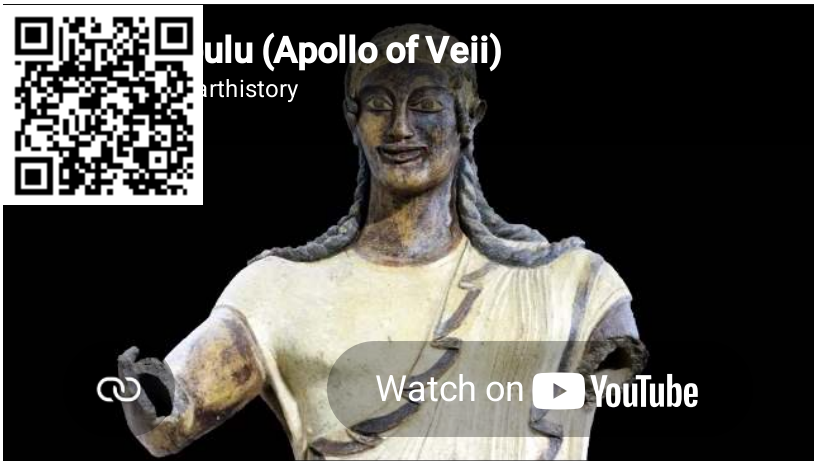
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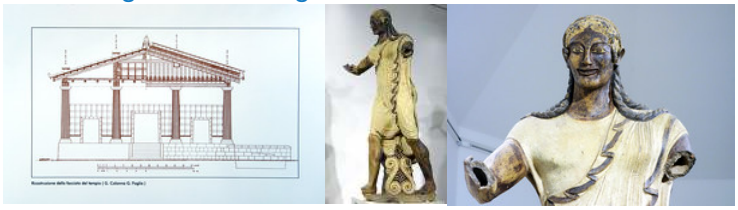
2.4: Apulu (Apollo of Veii)

by DR. STEVEN ZUCKER and DR. BETH HARRIS

Confronting Hercules in the middle of his labors, this clay statue of Apollo strides forward.



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2.5: Sarcophagus of the Spouses (Louvre)

by DR. LAUREL TAYLOR



Figure **2.5.1**: Sarcophagus of the Spouses, Etruscan, c. 520-510 B.C.E., painted terracotta (**Musée du Louvre**), photo: © Louvre, dist. RMN/Philoppe Fuzeau

The freedom enjoyed by Etruscan women

One of the distinguishing features of Etruscan society, and one that caused much shock and horror to their Greek neighbors, was the relative freedom enjoyed by Etruscan women. Unlike women in ancient Greece or Rome, upper class Etruscan women actively participated in public life—attending banquets, riding in carriages and being spectators at (and participants in) public events. Reflections of such freedoms are found throughout Etruscan art; images of women engaged in these activities appear frequently in painting and in sculpture.

The *Sarcophagus of the Spouses* was found in Cerverteri, a town in Italy north of Rome, which is the site of a large Etruscan necropolis (or cemetery), with hundreds of tombs. The sarcophagus vividly evokes both the social visibility of Etruscan women and a type of marital intimacy rarely seen in Greek art from this period.



Figure **2.5.2**: Sarcophagus of the Spouses, Etruscan, c. 520-510 B.C.E., painted terracotta (Musée du Louvre)

A funerary banquet?

In the sarcophagus (and another largely identical example at the Villa Giulia in Rome), the two figures recline as equals as they participate in a banquet, possibly a funerary banquet for the dead. In contemporary Greece, the only women attending public banquets, or symposia, were courtesans, not wives! The affectionate gestures and tenderness between the Etruscan man and woman convey a strikingly different attitude about the status of women and their relative equality with their husbands.

Terracotta

Aside from its subject matter, the sarcophagus is also a remarkable example of Etruscan large-scale terracotta sculpture (terracotta is a type of ceramic also called earthenware). At nearly two meters long, the object demonstrates the rather accomplished feat of modeling clay figures at nearly life-size. Artists in the Etruscan cities of Cerveteri and Veii in particular preferred working with highly refined clay for large-scale sculpture as it provided a smooth surface for the application of paint and the inclusion of fine detail.

Handling such large forms, however, was not without complications; evidence of this can be seen in the cut that bisects the sarcophagus. Splitting the piece in two parts would have allowed the artist to more easily manipulate the pieces before and after firing. If you look closely, you can also see a distinct line separating the figures and the lid of the sarcophagus; this was another trick for creating these monumental pieces—modeling the figures separately and then placing them on top of their bed.

Color

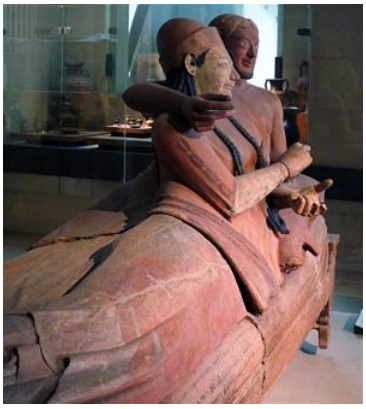


Figure **2.5.3**: Detail, Sarcophagus of the Spouses, Etruscan, c. 520-510 B.C.E., painted terracotta (Musée du Louvre)

A really lovely characteristic of this sculpture is the preservation of so much color. In addition to colored garments and pillows, red laced boots, her black tresses and his blond ones, one can easily discern the gender specific skin tones so typical in Etruscan art. The man's ochre flesh signifies his participation in a sun-drenched, external world, while the woman's pale cream skin points to a more interior, domestic one. Gendered color conventions were not exclusive to the Etruscans but have a long pedigree in ancient art. Though their skin and hair color may be different, both figures share similar facial features—archaic smiles (like the ones we see in ancient Greek archaic sculptures), almond shaped eyes, and highly arched eyebrows—all typical of Etruscan art.

What were they holding?

One of the great puzzles of the sarcophagus centers on what the figures were holding. Etruscan art often featured outsized, expressive hands with suggestively curled fingers. Here the arm positions of both figures hint that each must have held small objects, but what? Since the figures are reclining on a banqueting couch, the objects could have been vessels associated with drinking, perhaps wine cups, or representations of food. Another possibility is that they may have held alabastra, small vessels containing oil used for anointing the dead. Or, perhaps, they held all of the above—food, drink and oil, each a necessity for making the journey from this life to the next.

Whatever missing elements, the conviviality of the moment and intimacy of the figures capture the life-affirming quality often seen in Etruscan art of this period, even in the face of death.

Additional resources:

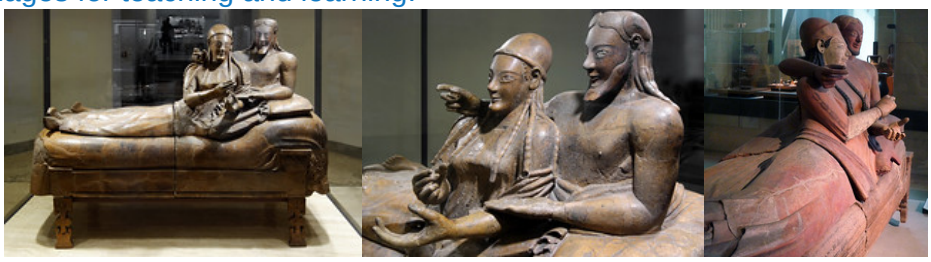
The Sarcophagus in the Louvre

Etruscan Necropolises of Cerveteri and Tarquinia (UNESCO)

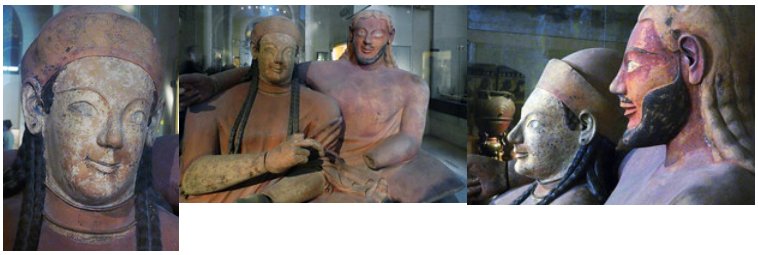
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2.6: Sarcophagus of the Spouses (Rome)

by DR. JEFFREY A. BECKER

The intimacy of this clay sculpture is unprecedented in the ancient world. What can it tell us about Etruscan culture?



Video **2.6.1**: Sarcophagus of the Spouses (or Sarcophagus with Reclining Couple), from the Banditaccia necropolis, Cerveteri, Italy, c. 520 B.C.E., painted terracotta, 3′ 9 1/2″ x 6′ 7″ (Museo Nazionale Etrusco di Villa Giulia, Rome)



Figure **2.6.2**: Sarcophagus of the Spouses, c. 520 B.C.E., Etruscan, painted terracotta, 3 feet 9-1/2 inches x 6 feet 7 inches, found in the Banditaccia necropolis, Cerveteri (Museo Nazionale Etrusco di Villa Giulia in Rome)

The *Sarcophagus of the Spouses* is an anthropoid (human-shaped), painted terracotta sarcophagus found in the ancient Etruscan city of Caere (now Cerveteri, Italy). The sarcophagus, which would have originally contained cremated human remains, was discovered during the course of archaeological excavations in the Banditaccia necropolis of ancient Caere during the nineteenth century and is now in Rome. The sarcophagus is quite similar to another terracotta sarcophagus from Caere depicting a man and woman that is presently housed in the Louvre Museum in Paris; these two sarcophagi are contemporary to one another and are perhaps the products of the same artistic workshop.



Figure **2.6.3**: Upper bodies (detail), *Sarcophagus of the Spouses*, c. 520 B.C.E., Etruscan, painted terracotta, 3 feet 9-1/2 inches x 6 feet 7 inches, found in the Banditaccia necropolis, Cerveteri (Museo Nazionale Etrusco di Villa Giulia in Rome)

An archaic couple

The sarcophagus depicts a reclining man and woman on its lid. The pair rests on highly stylized cushions, just as they would have done at an actual banquet. The body of the sarcophagus is styled so as to resemble a kline (dining couch). Both figures have highly stylized hair, in each case plaited with the stylized braids hanging rather stiffly at the sides of the neck. In the female's case the plaits are arranged so as to hang down in front of each shoulder. The female wears a soft cap atop her head; she also wears shoes with pointed toes that are characteristically Etruscan. The male's braids hang neatly at the back, splayed across the upper back and shoulders. The male's beard and the hair atop his head is quite abstracted without any interior detail. Both figures have elongated proportions that are at home in the archaic period in the Mediterranean.



Figure **2.6.4**: Feet and shoes (detail), *Sarcophagus of the Spouses*, c. 520 B.C.E., Etruscan, painted terracotta, 3 feet 9-1/2 inches x 6 feet 7 inches, found in the Banditaccia necropolis, Cerveteri (Museo Nazionale Etrusco di Villa Giulia in Rome)

A banquet

The S*arcophagus of the Spouses* has been interpreted as belonging to a banqueting scene, with the couple reclining together on a single dining couch while eating and drinking. This situates the inspiration for the sarcophagus squarely in the convivial (social) sphere and, as we are often reminded, conviviality was central to Etruscan mortuary rituals. Etruscan funerary art—including painted tombs—often depicts scenes of revelry, perhaps as a reminder of the funeral banquet that would send the deceased off to the afterlife or perhaps to reflect the notion of perpetual conviviality in said afterlife. Whatever the case, banquets provide a great deal of iconographic fodder for Etruscan artists.

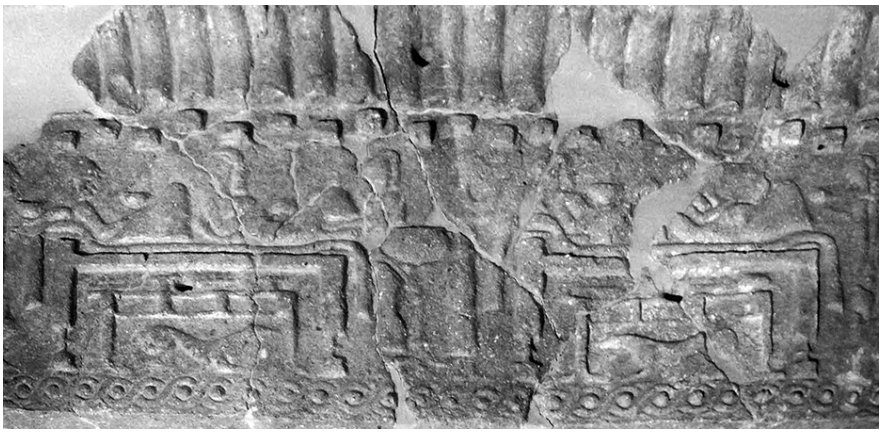


Figure **2.6.5**: Banquet Plaque (detail) from Poggio Civitate, early 6th century B.C.E., Etruscan, terracotta (Antiquarium di Poggio Civitate Museo Archeologico, Murlo, Italy) (photo: **sailko**, CC BY-SA 3.0)

In the case of the sarcophagus it is also important to note that at Etruscan banquets, men and women reclined and ate together, a circumstance that was quite different from other Mediterranean cultures, especially the Greeks. We see multiple instances of mixed gender banquets across a wide chronological range, leading us to conclude that this was common practice in Etruria. The terracotta plaque from Poggio Civitate, Murlo (above), for instance, that is roughly contemporary to the sarcophagus of the spouses shows a close iconographic parallel for this custom. This cultural custom generated some resentment—even animus—on the part of Greek and Latin authors in antiquity who saw this Etruscan practice not just as different, but took it as offensive behavior. Women enjoyed a different and more privileged status in Etruscan society than did their Greek and Roman counterparts.

Technical achievement

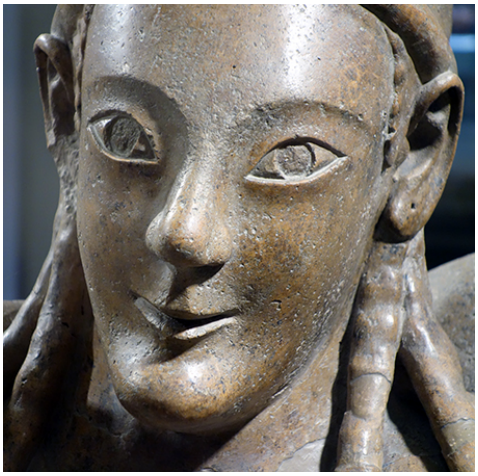


Figure **2.6.6**: Female's face (detail), *Sarcophagus of the Spouses*, c. 520 B.C.E., Etruscan, painted terracotta, 3 feet 9-1/2 inches x 6 feet 7 inches, found in the Banditaccia necropolis, Cerveteri (Museo Nazionale Etrusco di Villa Giulia in Rome)

The *Sarcophagus of the Spouses* is a masterwork of terracotta sculpture. Painted terracotta sculpture played a key role in the visual culture of archaic Etruria. Terracotta artwork was the standard for decorating the superstructure of Etruscan temples and the coroplastic (terracotta) workshops producing these sculptures often displayed a high level of technical achievement. This is due, in part, to the fact that ready sources of marble were unknown in archaic Italy. Even though contemporary Greeks produced masterworks in marble during the sixth century B.C.E., terracotta statuary such as this sarcophagus itself counts as a masterwork and would have been an elite commission. Contemporary Greek colonists in Italy also produced high level terracotta statuary, as exemplified by the seated statue of Zeus from Poseidonia (later renamed Paestum) that dates c. 530 B.C.E.

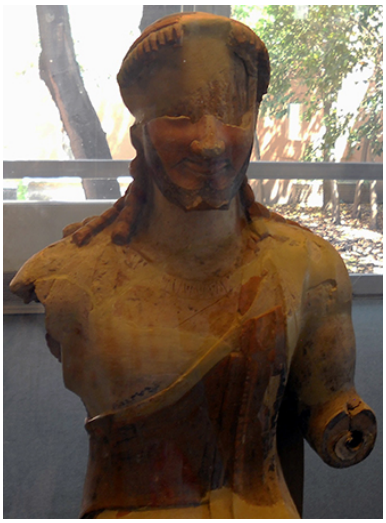


Figure
PageIndex7: Seated statue of Zeus from Poseidonia (Paestum) c. 530 B.C.E., terracotta (photo: **Dave & Margie Hill**, CC BY-SA 2.0) (Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Paestum)

In the case of the Caeretan sarcophagus, it is an especially challenging commission. Given its size, it would have been fired in multiple pieces. The composition of the reclining figures shows awareness of Mediterranean stylistic norms in that their physiognomy reflects an Ionian influence (Ionia was a region in present-day Turkey, that was a Greek colony)—the rounded, serene faces and the treatment of hairstyles would have fit in with contemporary Greek styles. However, the posing of the figures, the angular joints of the limbs, and their extended fingers and toes reflect local practice in Etruria. In short, the artist and his workshop are aware of global trends while also catering to a local audience. While we cannot identify the original owner of the sarcophagus, it is clear that the person(s) commissioning it would have been a member of the Caeretan elite.



Figure **2.6.8**: Male's face (detail), *Sarcophagus of the Spouses*, c. 520 B.C.E., Etruscan, painted terracotta, 3 feet 9-1/2 inches x 6 feet 7 inches, found in the Banditaccia necropolis, Cerveteri (Museo Nazionale Etrusco di Villa Giulia in Rome)

The *Sarcophagus of the Spouses* as an object conveys a great deal of information about Etruscan culture and its customs. The convivial theme of the sarcophagus reflects the funeral customs of Etruscan society and the elite nature of the object itself provides important information about the ways in which funerary custom could reinforce the identity and standing of aristocrats among the community of the living.

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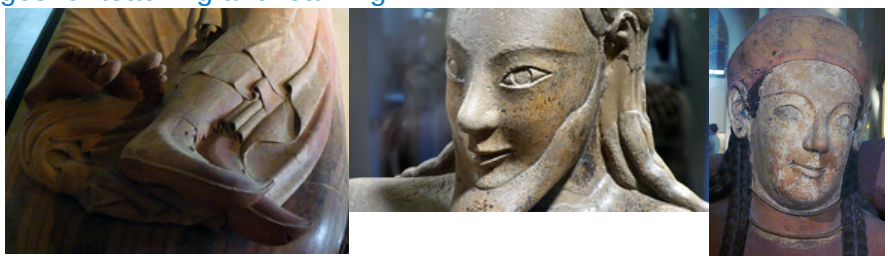
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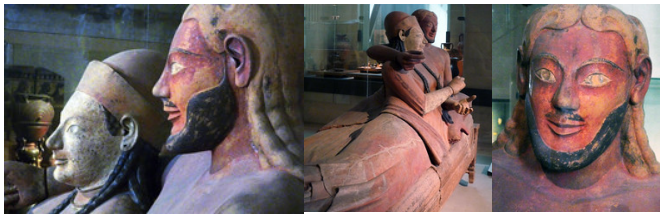
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2.7: Tomb of the Triclinium

by DR. JEFFREY A. BECKER



Figure **2.7.1**: Etruscan civilization, 750-500 B.C.E. (image: NormanEinstein, CC BY-SA 3.0) Based on a map from *The National Geographic Magazine* Vol.173 No.6 (June 1988).

Elaborate funerary rituals

Funerary contexts constitute the most abundant archaeological evidence for the Etruscan civilization. The elite members of Etruscan society participated in elaborate funerary rituals that varied and changed according to both geography and time.

The city of Tarquinia (known in antiquity as *Tarquinii* or *Tarch(u)na*), one of the most powerful and prominent Etruscan centers, is known for its painted chamber tombs. The Tomb of the Triclinium belongs to this group and its wall paintings reveal important information about not only Etruscan funeral culture but also about the society of the living.

An advanced Iron Age culture, the Etruscans amassed wealth based on Italy's natural resources (particularly metal and mineral ores) that they exchanged through medium- and long-range trade networks.

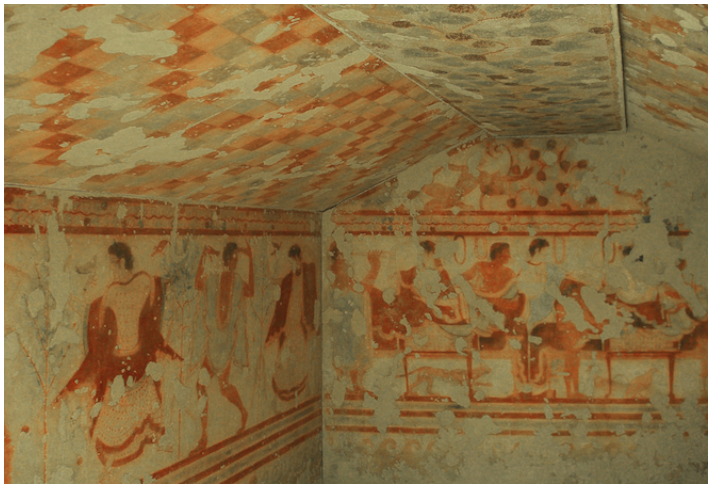


Figure **2.7.2**: Tomb of the Triclinium, c. 470 B.C.E. (Etruscan chamber tomb, Tarquinia, Italy)

Tomb of the Triclinium

The *Tomb of the Triclinium* (Italian: *Tomba del Triclinio*) is the name given to an Etruscan chamber tomb dating c. 470 B.C.E. and located in the Monterozzi necropolis of Tarquinia, Italy. Chamber tombs are subterranean rock-cut chambers accessed by an approach way (dromos) in many cases. The tombs are intended to contain not only the remains of the deceased but also various grave goods or offerings deposited along with the deceased. The *Tomb of the Triclinium* is composed of a single chamber with wall

decorations painted in fresco. Discovered in 1830, the tomb takes its name from the three-couch dining room of the ancient Greco-Roman Mediterranean, known as the triclinium.

A banquet

The rear wall of the tomb carries the main scene, one of banqueters enjoying a dinner party (above). It is possible to draw stylistic comparisons between this painted scene that includes figures reclining on dining couches (*klinai*) and the contemporary fifth century B.C.E. Attic pottery that the Etruscans imported from Greece. The original fresco is only partially preserved; although it is likely that there were originally three couches, each hosting a pair of reclining diners, one male and one female. Two attendants—one male, one female—attend to the needs of the diners. The diners are dressed in bright and sumptuous robes, befitting their presumed elite status. Beneath the couches we can observe a large cat, as well as a large rooster and another bird.

Music and dancing

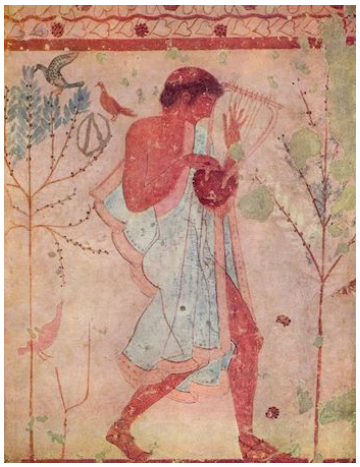


Figure **2.7.3**: Barbiton player on the left wall (detail), *Tomb of the Triclinium*, c. 470 B.C.E., Etruscan chamber tomb, Tarquinia, Italy

Scenes of dancers occupy the flanking left and right walls. The left wall scene contains four dancers—three female and one male—and a male musician playing the barbiton, an ancient stringed instrument similar to the lyre (left).

Common painterly conventions of gender typing are employed—the skin of females is light in color while male skin is tinted a darker tone of orange-brown. The dancers and musicians, together with the feasting, suggest the overall convivial tone of the Etruscan funeral. In keeping with ancient Mediterranean customs, funerals were often accompanied by games, as famously represented by the funeral games of the Trojan Anchises as described in book 5 of Vergil's epic poem, the *Aeneid*. In the *Tomb of the Triclinium* we may have an allusion to games as the walls flanking the tomb's entrance bear scenes of youths dismounting horses, variously described as being either apobates (participants in an equestrian combat sport) or the Dioscuri (mythological twins).



Figure **2.7.4**: Two dancers on the right wall (detail), *Tomb of the Triclinium*, c. 470 B.C.E., Etruscan chamber tomb, Tarquinia, Italy

The tomb's ceiling is painted in a checkered scheme of alternating colors, perhaps meant to evoke the temporary fabric tents that were erected near the tomb for the actual celebration of the funeral banquet.

The actual paintings were removed from the tomb in 1949 and are conserved in the Museo Nazionale in Tarquinia. As their state of preservation has deteriorated, watercolors made at the time of discovery have proven very important for the study of the tomb.

Interpretation

The convivial theme of the *Tomb of the Triclinium* might seem surprising in a funereal context, but it is important to note that the Etruscan funeral rites were not somber but festive, with the aim of sharing a final meal with the deceased as the latter transitioned to the afterlife. This ritual feasting served several purposes in social terms. At its most basic level the funeral banquet marked the transition of the deceased from the world of the living to that of the dead; the banquet that accompanied the burial marked this transition and ritually included the spirit of the deceased, as a portion of the meal, along with the appropriate dishes and utensils for eating and drinking, would then be deposited in the tomb. Another purpose of the funeral meal, games, and other activities was to reinforce the socio-economic position of the deceased person and his/her family: a way to remind the community of the living of the importance and standing of these people and thus tangibly reinforce their position in contemporary society. This would include, where appropriate, visual reminders of socio-political status, including indications of wealth and civic achievements, notably public offices held by the deceased.

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2.8: The François Tomb

by DR. JACLYN NEEL

The François Tomb is chock-full of elaborate frescoes with complicated messages we may never fully understand.



Figure **2.8.1**: The archeological site of the ancient Etruscan city of Vulci, Italy (photo: **Robin Iversen Rönnlund**, CC BY-SA 3.0)

When Alessandro François and Adolphe Noël des Vergers entered the so-called François Tomb (named for its discoverer) in 1857, they described a magnificent treasure trove in which ancient Etruscan warriors were sleeping on their funeral couches, surrounded by grave goods, armaments, and brilliant tableaux on painted walls. This exceptional tomb from the Ponte Rotto necropolis in Vulci served as a familial burial monument and was used for several centuries in the Hellenistic period.

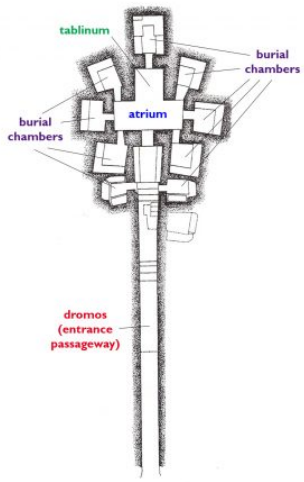


Figure **2.8.2**: Plan of the François Tomb, Vulci

The Etruscans believed that the afterlife mirrored their own world, so they provided elaborate “homes” for their dead. The ground plan of the François Tomb is essentially a T shape, with two main chambers (called the *atrium* and *tablinum* after the rooms of typical **Italo-Roman houses**). The main chambers are arranged perpendicularly, with small burial chambers branching out from all sides.

The François Tomb is famous largely because of the frescoes of its main chamber, which can be dated to the fourth century B.C.E. Unlike most Etruscan tomb paintings, the François tomb frescoes seem to include battle scenes — making it a rare, early example of ancient history painting.

Though scholars still have many questions surrounding the exact meanings of these paintings, they reflect important Etruscan ideas about history, and they would have helped reinforce shared narratives about ancestry and the past as family members continually

visited the tomb to inter the newly deceased.

Dazzling frescoes

Frescoes fill the walls and ceiling of the tomb. (The original frescoes were removed by a collector in the 19th century, and replaced in the tomb itself by reproductions.) The ceiling is designed to look like the interior of a building with a timber-framed roof structure, while the walls include various figural representations and geometric designs.



Figure **2.8.3**: Frieze with Greek key pattern and hunting scene, *atrium* of the François Tomb, Vulci (Villa Albani, Rome)

The *atrium*, which was the first room a visitor would enter, has the most elaborate frescoes. At the upper margin of the wall, there is a small running frieze in two registers: a Greek key pattern on top, with a hunting scene below. Under the hunting scene are larger scenes featuring human figures depicted at nearly life size.



Figure **2.8.4**: Portrait of Vel Saties, *atrium* of the François Tomb, Vulci (Villa Albani, Rome)

Although one wall was badly damaged, most of the figures are well-preserved and labeled with text. From this text we know that these figures include a mix of mythological characters (including Sisyphus, Eteocles and Polynices killing each other, and Ajax raping Cassandra) and historical figures, including the founder of the tomb, an Etruscan aristocrat named Vel Saties. This full-length portrait of Vel Saties wearing a *toga picta* has garnered acclaim as the first such portrait in western art.[1] It is likely that the lowest quarter of the wall was obscured by stone benches, although not all of these benches have been preserved.

Scenes from mythology and history

The *tablinum*, or rear room of the tomb, also has benches at the bottom, a fresco representing a running meander at the top, and a scene featuring human figures in between. There are a few differences in the iconography that clearly separate the *atrium* and *tablinum*. First, the *tablinum* does not have a hunting scene below the meander; second, the ceiling patterns are different; and finally, the figural fresco is made up of two narrative scenes, each with labeled characters.



Figure 2.8.5: Achilles sacrificing Trojan prisoners to the shade of Patroclus, *tablinum* of the François Tomb, Vulci (Villa Albani, Rome)

On the left-hand side of the tomb, there is a scene of Achilles sacrificing Trojan prisoners to the shade of Patroclus.

The right-hand side of the tomb shows a battle between two groups of Etruscans. It is this battle scene that has drawn the majority of historical attention. The figures are arranged into a series of dueling pairs on the long wall. Inscriptions identify the men on both sides as Etruscan, but only the figures who appear to be losing are identified with a specific city. This discrepancy has led scholars to believe that the winners are from Vulci. Because many of the dying men are only partially clothed, this scene has been interpreted as a nocturnal ambush: surprised in their sleep, the defeated figures were apparently not able to fully dress before the fighting started.



Figure 2.8.6: Battle scene, *tablinum* of the François Tomb, Vulci (Villa Albani, Rome)

A link between text and image

Rounding the corner of the fresco is a scene derived from Rome's legendary history. Mastarna (perhaps an alternate name for Servius Tullius, the legendary sixth king of Rome) frees Caelius Vibenna, an Etruscan aristocrat who aided Rome's founder Romulus in his wars against Titus Tatius. Although these two men are portrayed nude (in the manner of mythological figures) there is some evidence that both were considered historical figures.

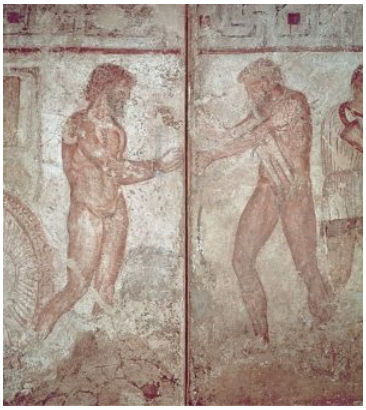


Figure 2.8.6: Mastarna freeing Caelius Vibenna, *tablinum* of the François Tomb, Vulci (Villa Albani, Rome)

These paintings represent an important potential link between ancient visual and textual sources. The Roman emperor Claudius claimed in a speech that Mastarna was the Etruscan name of Rome's sixth king, Servius Tullius, who was a friend of Caelius Vibenna (*ILS* 212). This is very similar to what is portrayed in the frescoes in the François tomb, and so the tomb's iconography seems to provide independent confirmation of Claudius' account.

Many scholars interpret the tomb's iconography as being pro-Etruscan and anti-Roman. Since the Roman state made substantial territorial conquests in Etruria during the fourth century B.C.E., when the tomb was founded, the deployment of the iconography of Caelius Vibenna and Mastarna could have been a symbol of cultural pride among the Etruscans.

Unanswered questions

Despite widespread agreement about the fresco of Mastarna and Caelius Vibenna, questions remain about the meaning of many of the other frescoes in the François tomb.

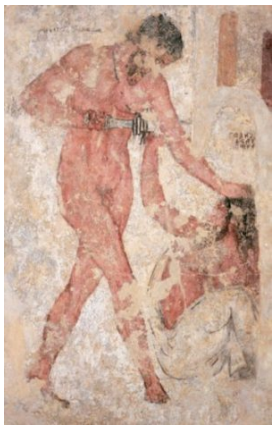


Figure **2.8.7**: Camillus slaying Gaius Tarquinius, *atrium* of the Francois Tomb, Vulci (Villa Albani, Rome)

The *atrium* fresco depicts Camillus killing a figure identified as "Gaius Tarquinius of Rome."

While both Camillus and Tarquinius are figures from early Roman history, their presence in the painting is not clearly understood. The name Tarquinius may refer to either of two male Tarquin rulers (or Tarquinii) from early Roman history; however, their first names were not Gaius, but Lucius, and neither of these men was killed by Camillus. Both Tarquinii lived around the time of Mastarna in the 6th century B.C.E., whereas Roman authors believed that Camillus lived about a century later, closer in time to the date of the tomb's construction. To further complicate things, according to Roman tradition, Camillus was famous for defeating Etruscans. His presence in the tomb and his killing of Tarquinius are thus both mysterious.

Scholarly opinion is also divided on the relationship between the Camillus/Tarquinius fresco and the other historical fresco. Many scholars see them as part of the same narrative; others, however, argue that the two must be kept separate. This debate is unlikely to be resolved unless new evidence is discovered.

Mysteries remain

The François Tomb is rightly celebrated for its elaborate decor. Although we cannot fully understand the choices made by the tomb's patron, it seems likely that the frescoes were created to deliver a specific message. This message may have been political (pro-Etruscan/anti-Roman), religious (since most scenes focus on bloodshed), familial (portraying the family history of the owners), or ethical (illustrating moral qualities that were important to the owners). All of these interpretations have been suggested, and it is possible that all of them are correct—that is, that the owner of the tomb had all of these aspects in mind when choosing the iconography. It is the historical fresco, however, that has captured the most interest, as it seems to preserve rare information about Etruscan historical thought.

We may never know the answers to many of these questions, but the François Tomb remains a shining example of Etruscan fresco painting that offers us a glimpse into the tumultuous history of the ancient Mediterranean world.

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Additional resources:

The François Tomb at the Southern Etrurian Archaeological Heritage website (in Italian)

Image gallery of the frescoes

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2.9: Tomb of the Reliefs

by DR. JEFFREY A. BECKER

All signs point to a party: cushions, drinking equipment, and armor hung on the wall … but a party in a tomb?



Figure **2.9.1**: Tomb of the Reliefs, late 4th or early 3rd century B.C.E., Necropolis of Banditaccia (Cerveteri), Italy (**photo**, CC BY-SA 2.0)

The banquet is over, the dining equipment is stowed, and the warriors sleep on in this Etruscan dining room, yet the evocative signs of a lively scene draw the viewer into the ancient world. These evocations of an Etruscan banquet—from the cushions to the drinking equipment to the armor hung on pegs on the walls—are situated firmly in the funereal sphere, one that is replete with reminders not only of life but also of death. In tomb interiors we find some of our most important and compelling evidence for an understanding of the first millennium B.C.E. world of the Etruscans.



Figure **2.9.2**: Entrance (dromos), *Tomb of the Reliefs*, late 4th-early 3rd century B.C.E., Necropolis of Banditaccia (Cerveteri), Italy (**photo**, CC BY-SA 3.0)

The *Tomb of the Reliefs* (Italian: *Tomba dei Rilievi*) is a late fourth or early third century B.C.E. rock-cut tomb (*hypogeum*) located in the Banditaccia necropolis of the ancient Etruscan city-state of Caere (now Cerveteri) in Italy (a necropolis is a large, ancient cemetery). The tomb takes its name from a series of painted stucco reliefs that cover the walls and piers of the tomb chamber itself. Unlike some of its neighbors that are covered mounds of earth (tumulus-type tombs), the *Tomb of the Reliefs* is of the rock-cut type and was excavated at a considerable depth in the bedrock, approached by a steep dromos (entranceway). This elite tomb once accommodated several dozen burials and is located, likely not by accident, close to an important tumulus-type tomb from the earlier Orientalizing period.

Inside the tomb

The plan of the tomb is roughly quadrangular. The entire tomb and all of its features have been carved from the bedrock (a type of volcanic mudstone known as tufa). The central block of the room, supported by two piers, is flanked by a series of niches for burials that have been styled to resemble the dining couches (*klinai*) of the ancient world. Decorative pilasters with volute (scroll-shaped) capitals separate the niches one from the other (see image below).

The tomb's bas relief (low relief) decoration consists of carved bedrock features that have been stuccoed and painted. The decorative schema evokes the interior of an aristocratic house that is prepared to host a banquet or drinking party. The provisions for banqueters include cups and strainers hanging from pegs. The soldiers' armor—shields, helmets, greaves (protective armor for the lower leg)—has been stowed by hanging it from pegs. The pilasters are also decorated, with the items depicted including a range of tools and implements as well as the depiction of a small carnivore, perhaps a weasel.



Figure **2.9.3**: Detail of central niche on rear wall, *Tomb of the Reliefs*, late 4th or early 3rd century B.C.E., Necropolis of Banditaccia (Cerveteri), Italy (**photo**, CC BY-SA 2.0)

Beneath the central niche of the rear wall we find an allusion to the afterlife. There, under the side table we find, in relief, the hellhound Cerberus and an anguiped (serpents for legs) demon—perhaps the Etruscan god Charun who conducted the souls of the departed to the afterlife? This central niche, equipped with footstool, may have been intended for the male and female heads of the family.

The Matunas family is identified as the owner by way of an inscribed cippus (a small pillar). The inscription reads "Vel Metunas, (son) of Laris, who this tomb built." A locked strongbox included in the relief may be meant to represent the container for storing the records of the family's deeds (*res gestae*).

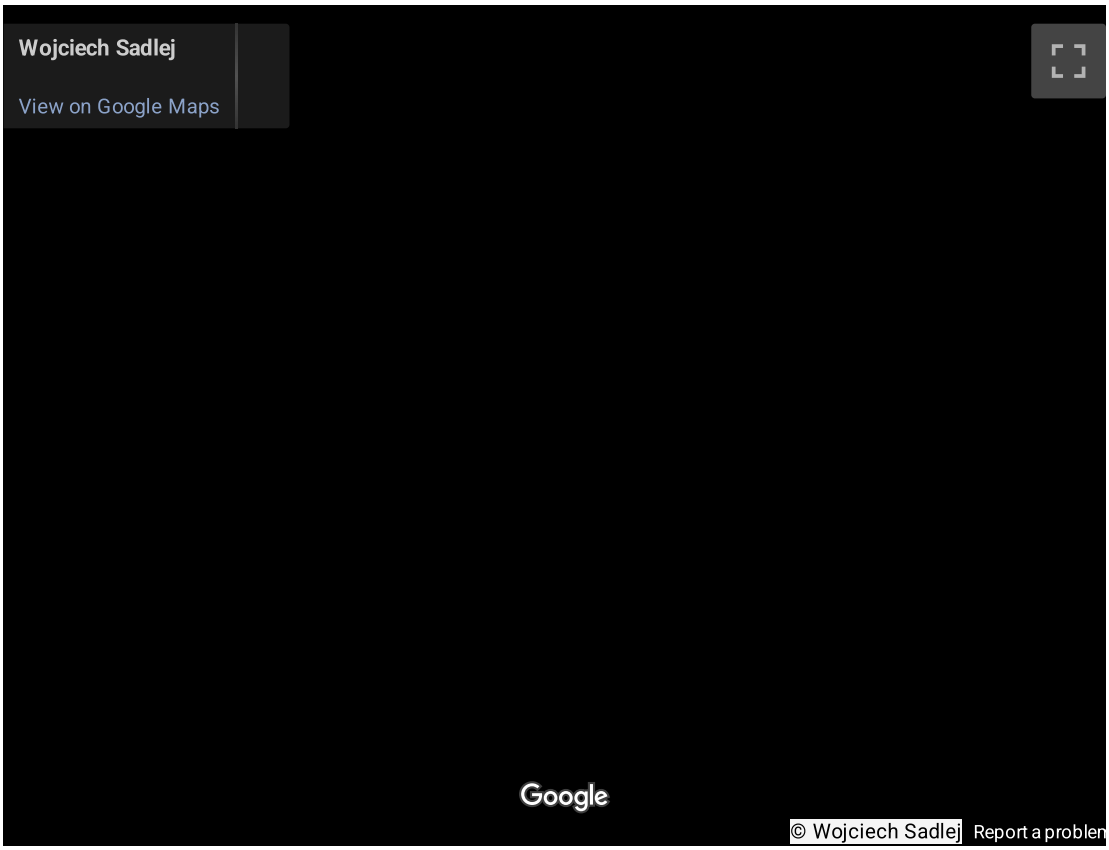


Video **2.9.1**: More information about this video and a related panoramic tour **can be found here**.

Interpretation

The *Tomb of the Reliefs* is unusual in the corpus of Etruscan tombs, both for its richness and for its decorative scheme. The Matunas family, among the elite of Caere, make a fairly strong statement, by means of funerary display, about their familial status and accomplishments, even at a time when the cultural autonomy of the Etruscans—and of Caere itself—had already begun to wane. The funeral banquet remains an important and vibrant theme for Etruscan funerary art throughout the course of the Etruscan civilization. This convivial and festive rendering demonstrates to us that the funeral banquet not only sent the deceased off to the afterlife but also reinforced ties and status reminders among the community of the living.

Etruscan tombs at Cerveteri:



Additional resources:

Tomb of the Reliefs (from Archaeological Heritage in Southern Etruria)

Etruscan Tombs from the Toledo Museum of Art

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2.10: Chimera of Arezzo

by DR. JEFFREY A. BECKER

A vicious mythic beast, the Chimera is a terrifying mix of animals—that even attacks itself.



Figure **2.10.1**: Chimera from Arezzo, c. 400 B.C.E., bronze, 129 cm in length, (Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Florence)

The *Chimera of Arezzo* is one of the best known pieces of Etruscan sculpture to survive from antiquity. Discovered near the Porta San Lorentino of Arezzo, Italy (ancient Arretium) in 1553, the statue was added to the collection of Cosimo I de' Medici, Grand Duke of Tuscany in the sixteenth century and is currently housed in the Museo Archeologico Nazionale in Florence.



Figure **2.10.2**: Chimera from Arezzo, c. 400 B.C.E., bronze, 129 cm in length, (Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Florence)

When the statue was discovered along with a collection of small bronzes, it was cleaned by Cosimo I and the artist Benvenuto Cellini; it was then displayed as part of the duke's collection in the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence. Giorgio Vasari (16th century artist, writer, and historian), studied the statue and declared it a bona fide antiquity.

What is a chimera?

The Chimera was a legendary, fire-breathing monster of Greek myth that hailed from Lycia (southwestern Asia Minor). The offspring of Typhon and Echidna, the Chimera ravaged the lands of Lycia until Bellerophon, a hero from Corinth, mounted on the winged horse Pegasus was able to slay it (Hesiod *Theogony* 319-25). Typically the Chimera is a hybrid—often shown with elements from more than one animal incorporated into the whole; most often these include a lion's head, with a goat rising from its back, and a snaky tail.



Figure 2.10.3: Chimera from Arezzo, c. 400 B.C.E., bronze, 129 cm in length, (photo: E.M. Rosenbery; © Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici della Toscana-Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Firenze)

The *Chimera of Arezzo* presents a complex composition that seems conceived for viewing in the round. The contortions of the fire-breathing beast, obviously wounded in combat, evoke emotion and interest from the viewer. Its writhing body parts invite contemplation of the movement, pose, and musculature of the figure. While the tail was restored post-discovery, enough of the original composition confirms this dynamism. The lean body also emphasizes the tension in the arched back, the extended claws, and the roaring mouth set amidst the bristling mane.



Figure 2.10.4: Detail of back, *Chimera from Arezzo*, c. 400 B.C.E., bronze, 129 cm in length, (Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Florence)

The right foreleg (below) bears a dedicatory inscription in the Etruscan language. The inscription reads, “tinścvil” meaning “Offering belonging to Tinia” (*TLE* 663; Bonfante and Bonfante 2002, no. 26 p. 147). This indicates that the statue was a votive object, offered as a gift to the sky god Tinia.



Figure 2.10.5: Detail with inscription “tinścvil”, *Chimera from Arezzo*, c. 400 B.C.E., bronze, 129 cm in length, (Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Florence)

Interpretation

The *Chimera of Arezzo* is a masterwork of Etruscan bronze working, demonstrating not only a high level of technical proficiency on the part of the artist (or workshop) that produced it but also clearly showing a fine-tuned awareness of the themes of Greek mythology that circulated around the Mediterranean. A. Maggiani discusses the wider Italiote context in which the statue was likely produced—pointing out iconographic comparisons from sites in Magna Graecia such as Metaponto and Kaulonia (Italiote refers to pre-Roman Greek speaking peoples of southern Italy, while Magna Graecia refer to the Greek colonies established in Southern Italy from the 8th century B.C.E. onward).



Figure **2.10.6**: Detail with lion's head, *Chimera from Arezzo*, c. 400 B.C.E., bronze, 129 cm in length, (Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Florence)

These iconographic trends, indicative of increasing Attic (derived from the area around Athens, Greece) influence, suggests that the *Chimera of Arrezo* was produced by Italiote craftsmen who were influenced by the spread of Attic trends in art in the last years of the fifth century continuing through to the early fourth century B.C.E. The dedication of the statue as a votive offering to Tinia further reminds us of the wealth and sophistication of Etruscan elites who, in this case, could not only afford to commission the statue but could also afford to part with it in what may have been an ostentatious fashion.



The Chimera of Arezzo by **Matthew Brennan** on **Sketchfab**

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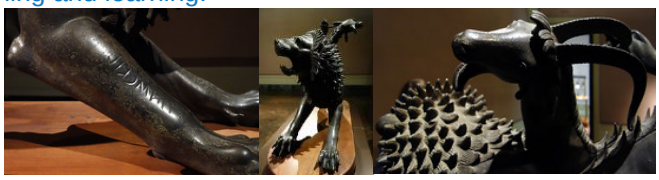
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2.11: Mars of Todi

by DR. JEFFREY A. BECKER

Lightning struck this statue dedicated to the Etruscan god of war, marking it as a particularly sacred object.



Figure **2.11.1**: Mars of Todi, late 5th or early 4th century B.C.E., hollow-cast bronze, 141 cm high (Gregorian Etruscan Museum, Vatican Museums)

The religious sanctuaries of ancient Italy were busy and multi-faceted places, playing roles not only in religion and ritual, but also in commerce and connectivity. People visited sanctuaries to participate in ritual, connect with their community, and to commune with the gods. The religions of ancient Italy relied heavily on votive practices—that is the giving of gifts or offerings to the divinities that helped to affirm a pact or agreement between the worshipper and a god or goddess. Votives could be humble objects from everyday life, or they could be purpose-made prestige objects. In all cases, votives are particularly instructive in informing us about ritual practice in the ancient world.

The statue

The so-called *Mars of Todi* is an inscribed Etruscan bronze statue dating to the late fifth or early fourth century B.C.E. It was discovered in 1835 on the slopes of Mount Santo near Todi, Italy (ancient *Tuder*). The hollow-cast bronze statue is the product of an Etruscan workshop but was likely produced for the market in Umbria (a region in central Italy).

The statue measures 141 cm in height, making it nearly life-sized. The Etruscans were adept metalworkers and Orvieto (Etruscan *Velzna*, Roman *Volsinii*) was particularly known for the production of bronze statues. The Romans reportedly removed 2,000 bronzes from Volsinii when they captured it in 265 B.C.E. (Pliny, *Natural History* 34.33). It is possible that the *Mars of Todi* was originally produced there.



Figure **2.11.2**: Head (detail), *Mars of Todi*, end of the 5th century B.C.E., hollow-cast bronze, 141 cm high (Gregorian Etruscan Museum, Vatican Museums), photo: **Nick Thompson** (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

The warrior is clearly a prestige object, a worthy votive dedication. It is likely that the object was dedicated to Laran, the Etruscan god of war. Dressed in intricately worked plate armor, the figure takes a contrapposto stance and indicates that the Etruscan artist was aware of the formal elements of the Classical style of sculpture. These classicizing elements indicates that the artists of Etruria are not only aware of Mediterranean stylistic conventions but also that they are comfortable enough with these stylistic trends that they can in turn adapt and apply them to local tastes and demand. Likely attached elements—including a patera (a libation bowl) held in the right hand and a spear in the left—have not survived, nor has the helmet that he wore atop his head.

The inscription



Figure **2.11.3**: Caption (detail), *Mars of Todi*, end of the 5th century B.C.E., hollow-cast bronze, 141 cm high (Gregorian Etruscan Museum, Vatican Museums)

The bronze statue bears an inscription in the Umbrian language that has been written using Etruscan characters. This dedication is inscribed on the skirt that is attached to the breastplate and reads "*Ahal Trutitis dunum dede*" ("Ahal Trutitis gave [this as a] gift"). The dedicant—Ahal Trutitis—has a name that is Celtic in origin, which lends this dedication of an Etruscan object in an Umbrian sanctuary a particularly cosmopolitan element.

Interpretation

The Mars of Todi is a rare object in that many prestige votives of its stature have not survived from antiquity. The careful burial of this object—perhaps after it had been struck by lightning*—accounts for its survival. The composition represents the tradition of

libations made by soldiers prior to battle, an opportunity for beseeching the gods for support and success in battle. The dedication of this object is also indicative of the dynamic human landscape of ancient Italy—within that human landscape sanctuaries often served as nodal points where diverse cultures came into contact with one another. This votive statue, then, tells us a great deal not only about ritual practice and iconography, but also about those who frequented sanctuaries in ancient Italy.

*Note on lightning as sacred

In ancient Italic religion lightning was sacred, as it was connected to the chief sky god, called Iuppiter (Jupiter) by the Romans and Tinia by the Etruscans. Thus on occasions when lightning struck the Earth, the spot which—or the object which—the lightning "selected" (*fulgur conditum*) would become even more sacred. Roman ritual doctrine considered these consecrated spots special and thus they were often marked in some way. The Puteal Libonis (also known as Puteal Scribonianum) in the Comitium of the Forum Romanum provides such an example; after a spot in the Comitium had been struck by lightning, it was marked with a puteal (a marble wellhead) (Festus 333). The Romans considered these special shrines, which often had a circular templum (a sacred, inaugurated precinct), as bidentalia (from the Latin noun *bidental*, *bidentalis* "a place struck by lightning") and it was forbidden to tread on them. In the case of the Mars of Todi, the statue was found carefully buried in a stone-lined cist, leading to the conclusion that the statue had been struck by lightning, which caused it to fall from its podium and that it was subsequently ritually buried. The ritual burial of votive objects is a common practice in ancient Mediterranean religions, but the treatment of these bidentalia was special in its own right.

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2.12: Aule Metele (Arringatore)

by DR. JEFFREY A. BECKER

An Etruscan in Roman clothing, this figure is a masterwork—made as Etruscan culture was slipping away.



Figure **2.12.1**: Aule Metele (Arringatore), from Cortona, Italy, early 1st century B.C.E., bronze, 67 inches high (Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Florence), (image: **corneliagraco**, CC BY 2.0)

The image, status, and stature of the magistrate in the course of performing the duties of his office commands respect—and no pose is more riveting than that of the orator.

L'Arringatore ("The Orator") is a hollow-cast bronze statue that was recovered from Lake Trasimeno in 1566. The statue is an important example of bronze sculpture in later first millennium B.C.E. Italy and indicates the gradual Romanization of Etruscan art.

The statue

The life-size statue depicts a draped adult male, standing with his right arm outstretched. The figure adopts a frontal pose with a slight contrapposto stance (contrapposto refers to the figure shifting his weight onto his right leg). Based on the inscription on the statue, the figure is identified as Aulus Metellus (or Aule Metele in Etruscan). He is clearly a magistrate and his posture seems to be that of the orator who is in the process of addressing the crowd. He wears a tunic over which is draped a toga—the formal attire of the magistrate. The toga is wrapped around the body, leaving the right arm free. On his feet are the high boots that were commonly worn by Roman senators. His expression and slightly opened mouth make him a compelling figure. The statue was originally erected by the community in honor of Aulus Metellus.

The inscription



Figure **2.12.2**: Inscription (detail), *Aule Metele (Arringatore)*, from Cortona, Italy, early 1st century B.C.E., bronze, 67 inches high (Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Florence) (image: **corneliagraco**, CC BY 2.0)

The lower hem of the short toga carries an Etruscan inscription: "*auleśi meteliś ve[luś] vesial clenśi / cen flereś tece sanśl tenine / tu θineś χisvlicś*" which can be interpreted as reading, "To (or from) Auli Meteli, the son of Vel and Vesi, Tenine (?) set up this statue as a votive offering to Sans, by deliberation of the people" (*TLE* 651; *CIE* 4196).

Interpretation

The statue of Aulus Metellus offers us a glimpse of the changing socio-political landscape of the Italian peninsula during the latter first millennium B.C.E.—a period in which sweeping change brought on by the hegemonic fortunes of Rome and its booming population, signalled profound and lasting change for other Italic peoples, including the Etruscans. As Rome's territory expanded during the fifth through first centuries B.C.E., her neighbors were gradually absorbed into the sphere of Roman cultural, economic, and political influence. Some groups, of course, resisted in one way or another, while others gladly "joined up" through political and military treaties and through adopting a Roman lifestyle. This process of acculturation–or Romanization, to use a term that is considered outmoded by some scholars—means that cultural heterogeneity becomes less visible in the archaeological record, replaced instead by a more homogeneous cultural model. These were the fortunes of the Etruscans—as the autonomy of the various Etruscan states eroded, the Etruscans themselves elected to adopt the trappings of a Roman culture that was, in turn, indicative of wider, pan-Mediterranean dynamics. Etruscan art, politics, and even language gradually slipped away.

Thus *L'Arringatore* is one of our latest surviving examples of a sculptural masterwork that still demonstrates the traits of an Etruscan workshop, all the while packaged for an increasingly Roman world. The statue clearly wears the short *toga exigua* (a kind of narrow toga) and senatorial boots that come from the Roman sphere. He is posed as an orator—highlighting his political career as both Etruscan and Roman aristocrats did. His haircut is in keeping with those of Roman aristocrats and his face may betray some evidence of the verism (truthfulness) popular among Roman elites of the late Republic. The statue still carries an inscription in Etruscan, though, and the working of the bronze is in keeping with the tendencies of Etruscan craftsmanship. Surely the historical Aulus Metellus witnessed a world that was changing rapidly and this statue that carries his inscribed name still bears silent witness to the patterns and dynamics of socio-cultural change in the Roman Mediterranean.

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Museo Archeologico Nazionale in Florence

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2.13: Etruscan Necropolises of Cerveteri and Tarquinia (from UNESCO/NHK)

by UNESCO and NIPPON HOSO KYOKAI

Doors to the afterlife, Etruscan tombs were happily decorated. But as war increased, that began to change.



Video **2.13.6**: Video from UNESCO / Nippon Hoso Kyokai

These two large Etruscan cemeteries reflect different types of burial practices from the 9th to the 1st century BC, and bear witness to the achievements of Etruscan culture. Which over nine centuries developed the earliest urban civilization in the northern Mediterranean. Some of the tombs are monumental, cut in rock and topped by impressive tumuli (burial mounds). Many feature carvings on their walls, others have wall paintings of outstanding quality. The necropolis near Cerveteri, known as Banditaccia, contains thousands of tombs organized in a city-like plan, with streets, small squares and neighbourhoods. The site contains very different types of tombs: trenches cut in rock; tumuli; and some, also carved in rock, in the shape of huts or houses with a wealth of structural details. These provide the only surviving evidence of Etruscan residential architecture. The necropolis of Tarquinia, also known as Monterozzi, contains 6,000 graves cut in the rock. It is famous for its 200 painted tombs, the earliest of which date from the 7th century BC.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

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Julius Caesar, the Colosseum, and the birth of Christianity—all roads lead to Rome.**753 B.C.E. - 410 C.E.**

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SECTION OVERVIEW

3.1: Beginner’s guide- Ancient Rome

Roman art spans almost 1,000 years and three continents from Europe into Africa and Asia.

753 B.C.E. - 410 C.E.

The mythic founding of the Roman Republic is supposed to have happened in 509 B.C.E. when the last Etruscan king was overthrown. Augustus’s rise to power in 27 B.C.E. signaled the end of the Roman Republic and the formation of the Empire. Gods and religions from other parts of the empire made their way to Rome’s capital including the Egyptian goddess Isis, the Persian god Mithras, and ultimately—Christianity.

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3.1.1: Introduction to ancient Rome

THE BRITISH MUSEUM



Figure 3.1.1.1: Cameo with double portrait of the emperor Trajan and his wife Plotina, c. 105-115 C.E., sardonyx, 5 x 4.3 cm, © Trustees of the British Museum

From a republic to an empire

Legend has it that Rome was founded in 753 B.C.E. by Romulus, its first king. In 509 B.C.E. Rome became a republic ruled by the Senate (wealthy landowners and elders) and the Roman people. During the 450 years of the republic Rome conquered the rest of Italy and then expanded into France, Spain, Turkey, North Africa and Greece.

Rome became very Greek influenced or “Hellenized,” and the city was filled with Greek architecture, literature, statues, wall-paintings, mosaics, pottery and glass. But with Greek culture came Greek gold, and generals and senators fought over this new wealth. The Republic collapsed in civil war and the Roman empire began.

In 31 B.C.E. Octavian, the adopted son of Julius Caesar, defeated Cleopatra and Mark Antony at Actium. This brought the last civil war of the republic to an end. Although it was hoped by many that the republic could be restored, it soon became clear that a new political system was forming: the emperor became the focus of the empire and its people. Although, in theory, Augustus (as Octavian became known) was only the first citizen and ruled by consent of the Senate, he was in fact the empire’s supreme authority. As emperor he could pass his powers to the heir he decreed and was a king in all but name.

The empire, as it could now be called, enjoyed unparalleled prosperity as the network of cities boomed, and goods, people and ideas moved freely by land and sea. Many of the masterpieces associated with Roman art, such as the mosaics and wall paintings of Pompeii, gold and silver tableware, and glass, including the Portland Vase, were created in this period. The empire ushered in an economic and social revolution that changed the face of the Roman world: service to the empire and the emperor, not just birth and social status, became the key to advancement.

Successive emperors, such as Tiberius and Claudius, expanded Rome’s territory. By the time of the emperor Trajan, in the late first century C.E., the Roman empire, with about fifty million inhabitants, encompassed the whole of the Mediterranean, Britain, much of northern and central Europe and the Near East.



Figure **3.1.1.2**: Map of the Roman empire during the reign of the Emperor Trajan

A vast empire

Starting with Augustus in 27 B.C.E., the emperors ruled for five hundred years. They expanded Rome's territory and by about 200 C.E., their vast empire stretched from Syria to Spain and from Britain to Egypt. Networks of roads connected rich and vibrant cities, filled with beautiful public buildings. A shared Greco-Roman culture linked people, goods and ideas.

The imperial system of the Roman Empire depended heavily on the personality and standing of the emperor himself. The reigns of weak or unpopular emperors often ended in bloodshed at Rome and chaos throughout the empire as a whole. In the third century C.E. the very existence of the empire was threatened by a combination of economic crisis, weak and short-lived emperors and usurpers (and the violent civil wars between their rival supporting armies), and massive barbarian penetration into Roman territory.

Relative stability was re-established in the fourth century C.E., through the emperor Diocletian's division of the empire. The empire was divided into eastern and western halves and then into more easily administered units. Although some later emperors such as Constantine ruled the whole empire, the division between east and west became more marked as time passed. Financial pressures, urban decline, underpaid troops and consequently overstretched frontiers – all of these finally caused the collapse of the western empire under waves of barbarian incursions in the early fifth century C.E. The last western emperor, Romulus Augustus, was deposed in 476 C.E., though the empire in the east, centered on Byzantium (Constantinople), continued until the fifteenth century.

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3.1.2: Introduction to ancient Roman art

by DR. JESSICA LEAY AMBLER

With the lands of Greece, Egypt, and beyond, Ancient Rome was a melting pot of cultures.



Figure **3.1.2.1**: View of the Roman forum, looking toward the Colosseum (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Roman art: when and where

Roman art is a very broad topic, spanning almost 1,000 years and three continents, from Europe into Africa and Asia. The first Roman art can be dated back to 509 B.C.E., with the legendary founding of the Roman Republic, and lasted until 330 C.E. (or much longer, if you include Byzantine art). Roman art also encompasses a broad spectrum of media including marble, painting, mosaic, gems, silver and bronze work, and terracottas, just to name a few. The city of Rome was a melting pot, and the Romans had no qualms about adapting artistic influences from the other Mediterranean cultures that surrounded and preceded them. For this reason it is common to see Greek, Etruscan and Egyptian influences throughout Roman art. This is not to say that all of Roman art is derivative, though, and one of the challenges for specialists is to define what is "Roman" about Roman art.



Figure **3.1.2.2**: Doryphoros (Spear Bearer), Roman copy after an original by the Greek sculptor Polykleitos from c. 450-440 B.C.E., marble, 6'6″ (Archaeological Museum, Naples) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Greek art certainly had a powerful influence on Roman practice; the Roman poet Horace famously said that "Greece, the captive, took her savage victor captive," meaning that Rome (though it conquered Greece) adapted much of Greece's cultural and artistic heritage (as well as importing many of its most famous works). It is also true that many Romans commissioned versions of famous Greek works from earlier centuries; this is why we often have marble versions of lost Greek bronzes such as the *Doryphoros* by Polykleitos.

The Romans did not believe, as we do today, that to have a copy of an artwork was of any less value that to have the original. The copies, however, were more often variations rather than direct copies, and they had small changes made to them. The variations could be made with humor, taking the serious and somber element of Greek art and turning it on its head. So, for example, a famously gruesome Hellenistic sculpture of the satyr Marsyas being flayed was converted in a Roman dining room to a knife handle (currently in the National Archaeological Museum in Perugia). A knife was the very element that would have been used to flay the poor satyr, demonstrating not only the owner's knowledge of Greek mythology and important statuary, but also a dark

sense of humor. From the direct reporting of the Greeks to the utilitarian and humorous luxury item of a Roman enthusiast, Marsyas made quite the journey. But the Roman artist was not simply copying. He was also adapting in a conscious and brilliant way. It is precisely this ability to adapt, convert, combine elements and add a touch of humor that makes Roman art Roman.

Republican Rome

The mythic founding of the Roman Republic is supposed to have happened in 509 B.C.E., when the last Etruscan king, Tarquinius Superbus, was overthrown. During the Republican period, the Romans were governed by annually elected magistrates, the two consuls being the most important among them, and the Senate, which was the ruling body of the state. Eventually the system broke down and civil wars ensued between 100 and 42 B.C.E. The wars were finally brought to an end when Octavian (later called Augustus) defeated Mark Antony in the Battle of Actium in 31 B.C.E.

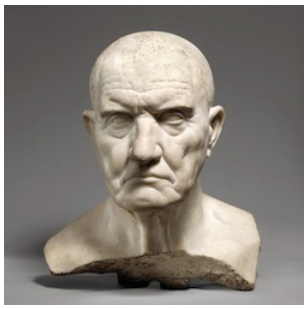


Figure **3.1.2.3**: Marble bust of a man, mid 1st century, marble, 14 3/8 inches (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

In the Republican period, art was produced in the service of the state, depicting public sacrifices or celebrating victorious military campaigns (like the Monument of Aemilius Paullus at Delphi). Portraiture extolled the communal goals of the Republic; hard work, age, wisdom, being a community leader and soldier. Patrons chose to have themselves represented with balding heads, large noses, and extra wrinkles, demonstrating that they had spent their lives working for the Republic as model citizens, flaunting their acquired wisdom with each furrow of the brow. We now call this portrait style veristic, referring to the hyper-naturalistic features that emphasize every flaw, creating portraits of individuals with personality and essence.

Imperial Rome

Augustus's rise to power in Rome signaled the end of the Roman Republic and the formation of Imperial rule. Roman art was now put to the service of aggrandizing the ruler and his family. It was also meant to indicate shifts in leadership. The major periods in Imperial Roman art are named after individual rulers or major dynasties, they are:

Julio-Claudian (14-68 C.E.)
Flavian (69-98 C.E.)
Trajanic (98-117 C.E.)
Hadrianic (117-138 C.E.)
Antonine (138-193 C.E.)
Severan (193-235 C.E.)
Soldier Emperor (235-284 C.E.)
Tetrarchic (284-312 C.E.)
Constantinian (307-337 C.E.)

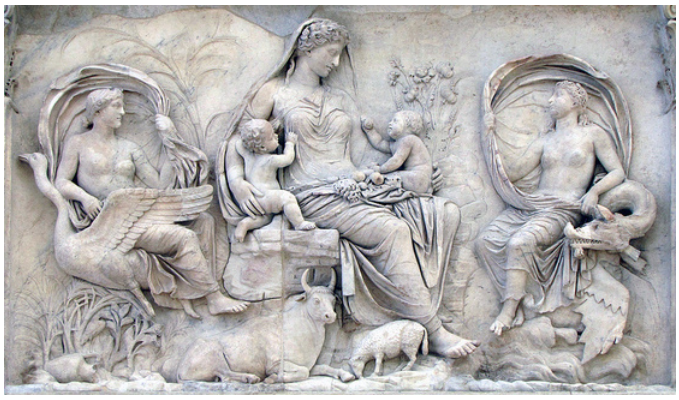


Figure **3.1.2.4**: Relief from the *Ara Pacis Augustae (Altar of Augustan Peace)*, 9 B.C.E. monument is dedicated, marble (Museo dell'Ara Pacis, Rome) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Imperial art often hearkened back to the Classical art of the past. "Classical", or "Classicizing," when used in reference to Roman art refers broadly to the influences of Greek art from the Classical and Hellenistic periods (480-31 B.C.E.). Classicizing elements include the smooth lines, elegant drapery, idealized nude bodies, highly naturalistic forms and balanced proportions that the Greeks had perfected over centuries of practice.

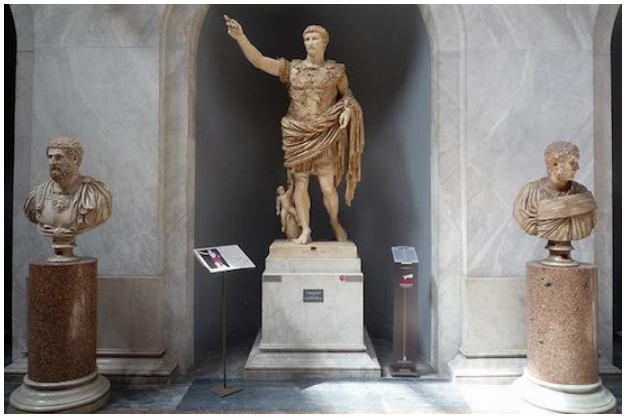


Figure **3.1.2.5**: Augustus of Primaporta, 1st century C.E. (Vatican Museums) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Augustus and the Julio-Claudian dynasty were particularly fond of adapting Classical elements into their art. The *Augustus of Primaporta* was made at the end of Augustus's life, yet he is represented as youthful, idealized and strikingly handsome like a young athlete; all hallmarks of Classical art. The emperor Hadrian was known as a philhellene, or lover of all things Greek. The emperor himself began sporting a Greek "philosopher's beard" in his official portraiture, unheard of before this time. Décor at his rambling Villa at Tivoli included mosaic copies of famous Greek paintings, such as *Battle of the Centaurs and Wild Beasts* by the legendary ancient Greek painter Zeuxis.



Figure **3.1.2.6**: Pair of Centaurs Fighting Cats of Prey from Hadrian's Villa, mosaic, c. 130 C.E. (Altes Museum, Berlin)

Later Imperial art moved away from earlier Classical influences, and Severan art signals the shift to art of Late Antiquity. The characteristics of Late Antique art include frontality, stiffness of pose and drapery, deeply drilled lines, less naturalism, squat proportions and lack of individualism. Important figures are often slightly larger or are placed above the rest of the crowd to denote importance.



Figure **3.1.2.7**: Chariot procession of Septimus Severus, relief from the attach of the Arch of Septimus Severus, Leptis Magna, Libya, 203 C.E., marble, 5; 6" high (Castle Museum, Tripoli)

In relief panels from the *Arch of Septimius Severu*s from Lepcis Magna, Septimius Severus and his sons, Caracalla and Geta ride in a chariot, marking them out from an otherwise uniform sea of repeating figures, all wearing the same stylized and flat drapery. There is little variation or individualism in the figures and they are all stiff and carved with deep, full lines. There is an ease to reading the work; Septimius is centrally located, between his sons and slightly taller; all the other figures direct the viewer's eyes to him.



Figure **3.1.2.8**: Relief from the Arch of Constantine, 315 C.E., Rome (photo: F. Tronchin, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

Constantinian art continued to integrate the elements of Late Antiquity that had been introduced in the Severan period, but they are now developed even further. For example, on the oratio relief panel on the Arch of Constantine, the figures are even more squat, frontally oriented, similar to one another, and there is a clear lack of naturalism. Again, the message is meant to be understood without hesitation: Constantine is in power.

Who made Roman art?

We don't know much about who made Roman art. Artists certainly existed in antiquity but we know very little about them, especially during the Roman period, because of a lack of documentary evidence such as contracts or letters. What evidence we do have, such as Pliny the Elder's *Natural History*, pays little attention to contemporary artists and often focuses more on the Greek artists of the past. As a result, scholars do not refer to specific artists but consider them generally, as a largely anonymous group.



Figure **3.1.2.9**: Painted Garden, removed from the triclinium (dining room) in the Villa of Livia Drusilla, Prima Porta, fresco, 30-20 B.C.E. (Museo Nazionale Romano, Palazzo Massimo, Rome)

What did they make?

Roman art encompasses private art made for Roman homes as well as art in the public sphere. The elite Roman home provided an opportunity for the owner to display his wealth, taste and education to his visitors, dependents, and clients. Since Roman homes were regularly visited and were meant to be viewed, their decoration was of the utmost importance. Wall paintings, mosaics, and sculptural displays were all incorporated seamlessly with small luxury items such as bronze figurines and silver bowls. The subject matter ranged from busts of important ancestors to mythological and historical scenes, still lifes, and landscapes—all to create the idea of an erudite patron steeped in culture.



Figure **3.1.2.10**: Ludovisi Battle Sarcophagus: Battle of Romans and Barbarians, c. 250-260 C.E., preconneus marble, 150 cm high (Palazzo Altemps: Museo Nazionale Romano, Rome).

When Romans died, they left behind imagery that identified them as individuals. Funerary imagery often emphasized unique physical traits or trade, partners or favored deities. Roman funerary art spans several media and all periods and regions. It included portrait busts, wall reliefs set into working-class group tombs (like those at Ostia), and elite decorated tombs (like the Via delle Tombe at Pompeii). In addition, there were painted Faiyum portraits placed on mummies and sarcophagi. Because death touched all levels of society—men and women, emperors, elites, and freedmen—funerary art recorded the diverse experiences of the various peoples who lived in the Roman empire



Figure **3.1.2.11**: Column of Trajan, Carrera marble, completed 113 C.E., Rome, dedicated to Emperor Trajan in honor of his victory over Dacia (now Romania) 101-02 and 105-06 C.E. (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

The public sphere is filled with works commissioned by the emperors such as portraits of the imperial family or bath houses decorated with copies of important Classical statues. There are also commemorative works like the triumphal arches and columns that served a didactic as well as a celebratory function. The arches and columns (like the Arch of Titus or the Column of Trajan), marked victories, depicted war, and described military life. They also revealed foreign lands and enemies of the state. They could also depict an emperor's successes in domestic and foreign policy rather than in war, such as Trajan's Arch in Benevento. Religious art is also included in this category, such as the cult statues placed in Roman temples that stood in for the deities they represented, like Venus or Jupiter. Gods and religions from other parts of the empire also made their way to Rome's capital including the Egyptian goddess Isis, the Persian god Mithras and ultimately Christianity. Each of these religions brought its own unique sets of imagery to inform proper worship and instruct their sect's followers.

It can be difficult to pinpoint just what is Roman about Roman art, but it is the ability to adapt, to take in and to uniquely combine influences over centuries of practice that made Roman art distinct.

Additional resources:

Clarke, John R. *Art in the Lives of Ordinary Romans: Visual Representation and Non-Elite Viewers in Italy, 100 B.C-A.D. 315*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003.

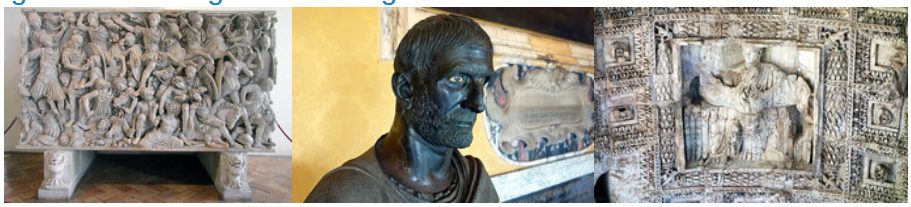
Kleiner, Fred S. *A History of Roman Art*. Belmont: Thomson Wadsworth, 2007.

Ramage, Nancy H., and Andrew Ramage. *Roman Art: Romulus to Constantine*. Fifth Edition. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc., 2008.

Stewart, Peter. *The Social History of Roman Art*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

Zanker, Paul. *Roman Art*. Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2010.

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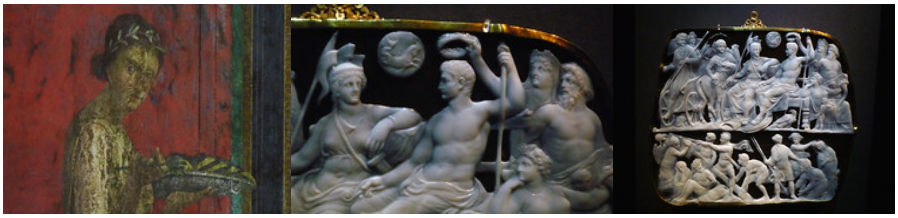
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3.1.3: Ancient Rome

by DR. BERNARD FRISCHER and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER

Fly over a reconstruction of one of history's greatest cities to experience Rome as the Romans knew it. This reconstruction is based on two decades of research and the input of dozens of specialists.



Video **3.1.3.1**:

To learn more about the architecture seen in this video go to:

Arch of Constantine:

> *Arch of Constantine, Rome*

Arch of Titus

The Arch of Titus

Basilica of Maxentius and Constantine

Basilica of Maxentius and Constantine

Roman Forum

Forum Romanum (The Roman Forum)

Imperial Fora

Imperial fora

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Forum and column of Trajan

The Forum and Markets of Trajan

Pantheon

The Pantheon (Rome)

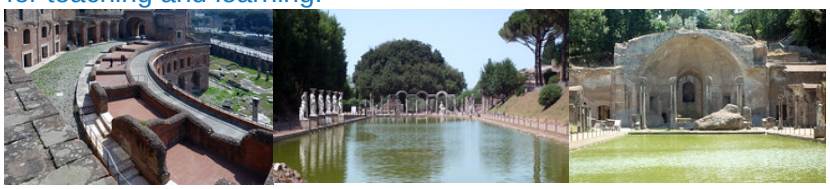
https://human.libretexts.org/@go/page/163473

The Colosseum

To learn more about Rome Reborn, visit
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Speakers: Dr. Bernie Frischer and Dr. Steven Zucker
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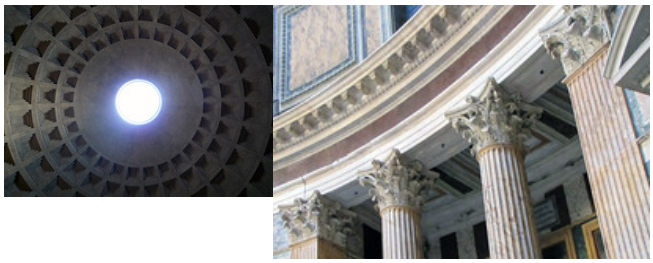
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3.1.4: Rome’s history in four faces at The Met

by DR. JEFFREY A. BECKER and DR. BETH HARRIS

Realism, ideal beauty, and military might—explore the evolution of Roman portraits and political imagery.



Additional resources:

Marble portrait of the emperor Caracalla at The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Marble portrait bust of the emperor Gaius, known as Caligula at The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Roman Portrait Sculpture: The Stylistic Cycle on The Metropolitan Museum of Art’s Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

Roman Portrait Sculpture: Republican through Constantinian on The Metropolitan Museum of Art’s Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

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3.1.5: Damnatio memoriae—Roman sanctions against memory

by DR. FRANCESCA TRONCHIN

If the Roman government condemned a ruler, his portraits often died with him.



Figure **3.1.5.1**: Detail of Geta (face removed) and Caracalla from the Severan Tondo, c. 200 C.E., tempera on wood, 30.5 cm diameter (Altes Museum, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, photo: **Carole Raddato**, CC BY-SA 2.0)

We know that Roman emperors were often **raised to the status of gods** after their deaths. However, just as many were given the opposite treatment—officially erased from memory.

Condemning memory

Damnatio memoriae is a term we use to describe a Roman phenomenon in which the government condemned the memory of a person who was seen as a tyrant, traitor, or other sort of enemy to the state. The images of such condemned figures would be destroyed, their names erased from inscriptions, and if the doomed person were an emperor or other government official, even his laws could be rescinded. Coins bearing the image of an emperor who had his memory damned would be recalled or cancelled. In some cases, the residence of the condemned could be razed or otherwise destroyed.[1]

This was more than a form of casual, politically-motivated vandalism, carried out by disgruntled individuals, since the condemnation required approval of the Senate and the effects of the official denunciation could be seen far from Rome. There are many examples of *damnatio memoriae* throughout the history of the Roman Republic and Empire. As many as 26 emperors through the reign of **Constantine** had their memories condemned; conversely, about 25 emperors were deified after their deaths. The damning of memory phenomenon, however, is not unique to the Roman world. Egyptian pharaohs **Hatshepsut** and **Akhenaten** likewise had many of their their images, monuments, and inscriptions destroyed by political opponents or religious purists.[2]

Did it work?



Figure **3.1.5.2**: Portrait of Emperor Caligula, 37-41 C.E., marble, 28 cm high (Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen, photo: **Dr. Francesca Tronchin**, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

Instances of *damnatio memoriae* were not always completely successful in wiping out the memory of an individual. Among the emperors who suffered *damnatio memoriae* are some of the best-known figures from Roman history, including **Gaius** (a.k.a.

Caligula) and Nero. The notoriety of these men comes to us not only from texts written during their lifetimes and later, but also from images which survived the immediate violence of the *damnatio memoriae* and then centuries of neglect.

For instance, one marble portrait preserves not only the image of Caligula, but also traces of paint, informing us of the existence of this condemned emperor as well as the polychromy of ancient sculpture. In antiquity, these types of images were considered very powerful and closely linked with the identity of the person they represented.



Figure **3.1.5.3**: Two portrait heads of Emperor Caligula, created 37-41 C.E., marble, both detached from the sculpted bodies after his death. Left: 43 x 21.5 x 25 cm (**The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles**); right: 33 x 21 x 23.5 cm (**Yale University Art Gallery**)

Small heads, big reputations

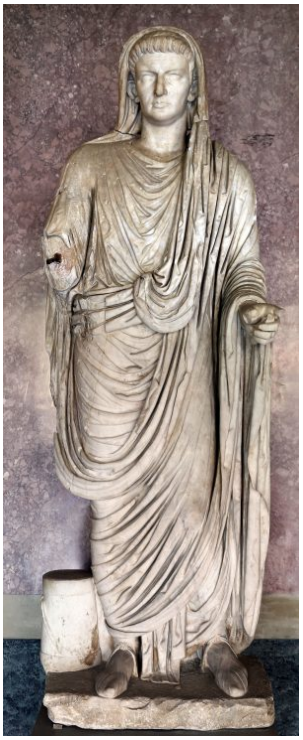


Figure **3.1.5.4**: Portrait statue of Caligula, recarved as Claudius, from the Basilica at Velleia, first half of the 1st century C.E., marble, 221 cm high (Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Parma, photo: **Sailko**, CC BY-SA 4.0)

Caligula was the first emperor to have his images purposefully destroyed after his death. It is impossible to know how many portraits in bronze or other precious metals were melted down, but a number of marble portraits show traces of being re-cut or simply dismantled and disposed of. Workshop procedures for official imperial portraits dictated that many full-length statues in stone were to be created in two pieces. So heads of Caligula, like those now in the Getty Villa and the Yale University Art Gallery

(above), could be fairly easily detached from the bodies and tossed aside and a portrait head of the new emperor would swiftly replace the offending one.

A full-length, one-piece statue of a *pontifex maximus* (chief state priest, a title held by the emperor) from Velleia, however, apparently underwent a kind of sculptural recycling. The face of Caligula's successor Claudius appears rather small in comparison to the head and the rest of the body—suggesting to some scholars that it was cut down from a portrait of Caligula.

Cancelleria Reliefs: Nerva replaces Domitian



Figure **3.1.5.5**: Domitian recut into Nerva, detail of a felief from the Palazzo della Cancelleria, 81-96 C.E., marble (Museo Gregoriano Profano, Vatican Museums, photo: **Erin Taylor**, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

A similar re-cutting is evident on a set of reliefs found in Rome and now housed in the Vatican Museums (below). The so-called Cancelleria Reliefs show mythological and allegorical figures celebrating members of the Flavian dynasty for their military successes.

In one, Domitian departs from Rome on a military campaign, ushered out of the city by Victoria, Mars, and Minerva, as well as personifications of the Senate and the Roman people. Yet the head atop the stately tunic-clad body of the emperor is not that of Domitian. Instead it is Nerva, who succeeded Domitian after his assassination and subsequent *damnatio memoriae*. As in the Claudius *pontifex maximus* statue from Velleia, Nerva's face is far too small for the relief and even appears comical when compared to the divinities surrounding him.[3] Apparently the sculpture was recarved.



Figure **3.1.5.6**: Relief from the Palazzo della Cancelleria, 81-96 C.E., marble (Museo Gregoriano Profano, Vatican Museums, photo: **Egisto Sani**, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0). Domitian/Nerva can be seen fourth from the left.

Slightly more elegant solutions for *damnatio memoriae* could be executed in metal statuary. The face of a bronze equestrian portrait of Domitian (below) was sawed off and replaced with that of his successor, Nerva. The result is much less jarring than on the Cancelleria relief, as the bronze "mask" was made to the same scale as the rest of the statue and the join is mostly unnoticeable.



Figure **3.1.5.7**: Equestrian statue of Nerva (formerly Domitian), from the Sanctuary of Augustales, Miseno, bronze (Museo Arceologico dei Campi Flegrei, Bacoli, photo: **Erin Taylor**, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

Caracalla removes the image of Geta



Figure **3.1.5.8**: Relief showing Septimius Severus and Julia Domna with a caduceus, Arch of the Argentarii, Rome, completed 204 C.E. (photo: Panairjdde, CC BY-SA 2.0)

Perhaps the most striking and widespread examples of *damnatio memoriae* come from the reign of **Caracalla**, a member of the Severan Dynasty who ruled from 211-217 C.E. He was initially co-emperor with his younger brother Geta, but after months of squabbling between the sibling rulers, Caracalla had Geta assassinated. This death was quickly followed by a *damnatio memoriae*, one in which it became a capital offense to even speak the name of the younger co-emperor.

In Rome, Geta's image was eliminated from reliefs on the Arch of the Argentarii. No attempt at an elegant recarving was made as in the Cancelleria Reliefs; in a panel showing Septimius Severus and Julia Domna (the parents of Caracalla and Geta) sacrificing at an altar, a caduceus floats over an empty space where Geta must have stood.[4] Even images of Geta's wife and father-in-law were carved out of the Arch of the Argentarii panels, as they too had suffered a *damnatio memoriae*. The names of all the condemned individuals were erased from the arch and replaced with new inscriptions honoring Caracalla.



Figure **3.1.5.9**: Severan Tondo, c. 200 C.E., tempera on wood, 30.5 cm diameter (Altes Museum, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, photo: **Carole Raddato**, CC BY-SA 2.0). This circular painting is exceptional for its materials, state of preservation, and insight into Roman painting beyond frescoes and other murals.

Erasing memory across time and space

A painted panel found in Egypt demonstrates the very long reach of Roman vengeance when enacting a *damnatio memoriae*. The panel shows the Severan family: Julia Domna wears heavy pearl earrings and necklaces; Septimius's hair and beard are tinged with gray; and highlights in the eyes of all the figures add a lifelike quality. Caracalla's boyish face—painted when he was merely heir to the throne—peers out to the viewer's left. Next to him is a circular erasure in the paint where Geta once appeared. This deletion is dramatic when considering the procedures of *damnatio memoriae.* Someone in the province of Egypt, far from the center of the Empire, was charged with erasing the image of a child—a child who grew up to be co-emperor, only to be killed by his own brother. The tyranny of Caracalla and the thoroughness of *damnatio memoriae* meant that practically no image of the emperor's enemies, no matter how small or out-of-date, would escape destruction.

Damnatio memoriae continued in the Roman world through the fourth century C.E., as seen in disfigured portraits of Constantine's rival Maxentius. With Christianity made official in the Roman world, vandalism of imperial portraits continued, but with more of a religious bent than a political one. The fact that Roman portraits were removed, damaged, or destroyed because of dramatic changes in the subjects' reputations is unmistakable evidence that such images are more than just "pictures." A portrait can carry meaning over decades and centuries—whether it is of a Roman emperor, a Communist leader like Joseph Stalin, a dictator like Saddam Hussein, or Confederate generals in the United States.

Notes:

1. Nero's *Domus Aurea* (Golden House) in downtown Rome was eventually filled in and built over by his successors in the Flavian Dynasty, but it was not a systematic destruction. In fact, there is evidence Vespasian lived in the controversial villa before he and his sons turned the land from Nero's private estate back over to the public.
2. Hatshepsut's successor, Thutmose III, ordered her images, cartouches, and monuments destroyed as she was seen as a usurper to his throne. Akhenaten, who brought monotheism briefly to Egypt, suffered a sort of *damnatio memoriae* by those who enthusiastically returned to polytheism after his death.
3. In a *coup de grâce* for the Cancelleria Reliefs, they seem to have never been displayed, instead discarded in a Republican-period cemetery after Nerva died just fifteen months into his reign. The Flavian Dynasty was over and it would have been too challenging to re-recarve the portrait of Nerva into Trajan.
4. It appears that Julia Domna's left arm was carved in the space where Geta's body once was; in the original format, she was probably holding the caduceus.

Additional Resources:

Essay on Roman portrait sculpture from the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

Sarah Bond, "Erasing the Face of History," *The New York Times*, May 14, 2011

S. Bundrick and E. Varner, *From Caligula to Constantine: Tyranny & Transformation in Roman Portraiture* (Michael C. Carlos Museum, 2001).

Harriet I. Flower, *The Art of Forgetting: Disgrace & Oblivion in Roman Political Culture* (University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

Eric Varner, *Mutilation and Transformation: Damnatio Memoriae and Roman Imperial Portraiture* (E.J. Brill, 2004).

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3.1.6: Roman funeral rituals and social status- The Amiternum tomb and the tomb of the Haterii

by DR. LAUREL TAYLOR

Death, memory, and funerary rituals—monumental tombs lined the streets leading into ancient Roman cities.



Figure **3.1.6.1**: Tombs along the Via Appia, Rome

To say that the ancient Romans thought a lot about funerary ritual and post-mortem commemoration is an understatement. Abundant textual evidence records complex, performative rituals surrounding death and burial in ancient Rome while significant expenditures on visual commemoration—elaborate tombs, funerary portraits—defined Roman mortuary culture.

Cemeteries and tombs lined extra-urban roads throughout the Roman world so that the mere act of exiting or entering a city brought one into immediate and direct contact with the world of the dead. In fact, Roman funerary art was not marginalized within Roman visual culture but was an integral part of it and constitutes one of the largest surviving bodies of evidence of Roman art.

Many conspicuous funerary monuments remain that commemorate the lives of elite Romans but members of other social strata also made sure to leave a lasting legacy and, indeed, funerary art is the only category of art that documents the lives of those outside of the elite. In ancient Rome, great opportunities for economic mobility existed and when people of the lower classes—former slaves (*liberti*) or members of a servile family—made money, they often wanted to commemorate their success by commissioning a tomb or grave marker that documented their rise to wealth. Two examples of surviving funerary monuments illustrate some of the these tendencies while providing a window into Roman funerary culture and art associated with freedmen and women, that is, people who were former slaves.

The Amiternum Tomb



Figure **3.1.6.2**: Funerary procession, Amiternum, c. 50-1 B.C.E. (Museum, Aquila) (photo: **Erin Taylor**, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

The first example is a late first century B.C.E. funerary relief from Amiternum (above), located in what is now the Abruzzo region of Italy. One relief depicts a person of some consequence and shows the only existing scene in Roman art of the *pompa* or funerary procession that was famously described by the historian Polybius (*History* 6.53-4). Roman funerals were often elaborate affairs that began in the house and culminated tombside. Upon death, dramatic displays of mourning were performed by household members of the deceased's family. Such mourning rituals included wailing, chest-beating, and sometimes self-mutilation —pulling of the

hair and laceration of the cheeks. The deceased's corpse was then washed, anointed, and displayed on a funeral bed in the house before ultimately being transported to the tomb or site of cremation on an elaborate bier in a procession known as the *pompa*.

For elite Romans, the *pompa* was a dynamic performance defined less by solemnity and more by a multi-dimensional performance designed to reflect and reinforce political and social status. These spectacles featured not only the nuclear and extended biological family but also clients, current slaves, former slaves, hired mourners paid to wail and sing dirges, and musicians playing horns, flutes, and trumpets. For elite Roman men specifically, the procession culminated in the Forum with a public eulogy attended by male family members who would wear the ancestor masks depicting deceased male relatives.



Figure **3.1.6.3**: Male figure on funerary couch surrounded by funeral cortège (detial), Funerary procession, Amiternum, c. 50-1 B.C.E. (Museum, Aquila) (photo: **Erin Taylor**, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

In the relief from Amiternum, the *pompa* scene shows a male figure, resting on an elaborate funerary couch and transported by eight pallbearers (above). Though dead, the figure appears still very much alive—tilted up on his left side and resting his head on his left hand. On either side of the central scene are all the elements of a funeral cortège. On the right pipe players, with hornblowers and a trumpeter on a floating ground line above. To the immediate right of the deceased are two women, perhaps hired mourners, one grabbing her hair and the other with her hands upraised. Most likely it is the chief mourners—the widow and children—who follow behind, to the left of the deceased.

A partial inscription found near the relief suggests that the tomb was commissioned by a person whose family was formerly of servile origins. Stylistically, the relief exhibits many of the formal characteristics typical of 'freedmen' art, a category of art commissioned by former slaves (or descendants of slaves) and one which largely rejected the Classicizing trappings of elite roman art. Art commissioned by freedmen and women typically exhibits disproportion, hierarchies of scale, collapsing of space or ambiguous spatial relationships, and a gestural use of line. In subject matter, freedmen art is characterized by an acute focus on self-presentation, specifically expressions of social mobility.



Figure **3.1.6.4**: Gladatorial Combat, Amiternum, c. 50-1 B.C.E. (Museum, Aquila) (photo: **Erin Taylor**, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

The *pompa* relief was part of an ensemble of reliefs—of which two remain—most likely inset into the fabric of a larger tomb complex that no longer survives. The other relief (above) depicts a scene of gladiatorial combat, an image type occasionally found on funerary monuments and usually understood as a reference to the public munificence of the deceased. Providing games or

spectacles to the public was expected of magistrates and civil servants and such acts would be worthy of biographical commemoration. Though of servile families, freeborn men could and did rise to such offices. Considered together the two reliefs are mutually informing—displaying on the one hand, a spectacle for the public and, on the other, the spectacle of his death. As many ancient authors attest, the number of figures in a funeral procession directly correlated with the perceived importance of the deceased. While the patron of the Amiternum monument was not a member of the elite, patrician class, he certainly wanted to convey his importance by selecting two poignant images to document his biographical legacy—in recording public munificence during life and in expressing status in death.

The Tomb of the Haterii

Another tomb featuring a recognizable funerary ritual is that of the Haterii, built around 100 C.E. Discovered piecemeal in Rome since the late 1800s, the original form and layout of the tomb is unknown but the ambition of its decoration and narrative scope is obvious from the series of reliefs and portrait busts that do remain.



Figure **3.1.6.5**: Mausoleum of the Haterii, c. 100 C.E. (Vatican Museums) (photo: **Erin Taylor**, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

Constructed by a family of builders, the tomb simultaneously documents the death of the family matriarch and celebrates the family's source of wealth. Though two busts remain of a male and female, it is the woman who appears multiple times in the visual program of the tomb's reliefs. In the death scene, she appears on a funerary bed in the atrium of the house (above), surrounded by lit torches, a flute player at her feet, and her children beating their chests in mourning. Below the bed are three figures who wear the pileus, a cap of freedom worn by newly liberated slaves. This reference to the matron's liberality and humanity is echoed both here with the figure reading her last will and testament beside her, as well as in another inset in which the deceased is shown making her will.



Figure **3.1.6.6**: Mausoleum of the Haterii, c. 100 C.E. (Vatican Museums) (photo: **Erin Taylor**, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

The viewer sees a conflation of time, viewing the deceased both alive and dead. In the relief above, she is shown in a retrospective portrait lounging on a couch with her children playing below. Under this vignette (below), is a grandiose temple-tomb with a

portrait of deceased in the pediment and portraits of her children along the sides. In front of the tomb is a treadwheel crane which most scholars think is a reference to the family's construction business.



Figure **3.1.6.7**: Mausoleum of the Haterii, c. 100 C.E. (Vatican Museums) (photo: **Erin Taylor**, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

The Haterii were likely involved in important building projects during the reign of the Flavian emperors (69-96 C.E.), and another relief from the tomb probably documents some of their major projects in Rome including the Flavian Amphitheater (later known as the Colosseum) and the Arch of Titus.

Whether all of the reliefs originally constituted a narrative sequence or not is debatable but what does get communicated is the considerable expenditure on this tomb and the biographical means by which it was created. Though amassing considerable wealth, the Haterii family was, nonetheless, of servile origin.

Interpretation

Both the Amiternum relief and the Haterii tomb were commissioned by patrons outside of Roman elite society, a factor that had a huge impact on the style and narrative content of the monuments. Funerary art commissioned by the Roman elite almost never referenced commerce or sources of wealth though this was a driving goal for funerary art of the freedmen. Similarly, elite monuments do not document death rituals, though elites certainly observed them. The Amiternum relief and the Haterii tomb, however, rely on a narrative interplay between death ritual and biography. For these patrons, as for many freedmen and women, their final resting places provided an ideal opportunity for documenting ritual observance and, more importantly, for documenting their success in life and commerce.

Additional Resources:

John Bodel, "Death on Display: Looking at Roman Funerals," in *The Art of Ancient Spectacle*, edited by Bettina Bergmann and Christine Kondoleon, pp. 259-281 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).

Diane Favro and Christopher Johanson, "Death in Motion: Funeral Processions in the Roman Forum," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 69.1, 2010, pp. 12-37.

Harriet I. Flower, *Ancestor Masks and Aristocratic Power in Roman Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

Valerie M. Hope, *Death in Ancient Rome: A Source Book* (London: Routledge, 2007).

Eleanor W. Leach, "Freedmen and Immortality in the Tomb of the Haterii," in *The Art of Citizens, Soldiers and Freedmen in the Roman World*, edited by E. D'Ambra and G. Metraux, 1-18. (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2006).

J. M. C. Toynbee, *Death and Burial in the Roman World* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971).

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3.2.1: An introduction to ancient Roman architecture

by DR. JESSICA LEAY AMBLER

Roman architecture was unlike anything that had come before. The Persians, Egyptians, Greeks and Etruscans all had monumental architecture. The grandeur of their buildings, though, was largely external. Buildings were designed to be impressive when viewed from outside because their architects all had to rely on building in a post-and-lintel system, which means that they used two upright posts, like columns, with a horizontal block, known as a lintel, laid flat across the top. A good example is this ancient Greek Temple in Paestum, Italy.



Figure **3.2.1.1**: An example of post and lintel architecture: Hera II, Paestum, c. 460 B.C.E. (Classical period), tufa, 24.26 x 59.98 m

Since lintels are heavy, the interior spaces of buildings could only be limited in size. Much of the interior space had to be devoted to supporting heavy loads.



Figure **3.2.1.2**: Giovanni Paolo Panini, *Interior of the Pantheon*, c. 1734, oil on canvas, 128 x 99 cm (National Gallery of Art)

Roman architecture differed fundamentally from this tradition because of the discovery, experimentation and exploitation of concrete, arches and vaulting (a good example of this is the Pantheon, c. 125 C.E.). Thanks to these innovations, from the first century C.E. Romans were able to create interior spaces that had previously been unheard of. Romans became increasingly concerned with shaping interior space rather than filling it with structural supports. As a result, the inside of Roman buildings were as impressive as their exteriors.

Materials, methods and innovations

Long before concrete made its appearance on the building scene in Rome, the Romans utilized a volcanic stone native to Italy called tufa to construct their buildings. Although tufa never went out of use, travertine began to be utilized in the late 2nd century B.C.E. because it was more durable. Also, its off-white color made it an acceptable substitute for marble.



Figure **3.2.1.3**: Temple of Portunus (formerly known as, Fortuna Virilis), c. 120-80 B.C.E., structure is travertine and tufa, stuccoed to look like Greek marble, Rome

Marble was slow to catch on in Rome during the Republican period since it was seen as an extravagance, but after the reign of Augustus (31 B.C.E. – 14 C.E.), marble became quite fashionable. Augustus had famously claimed in his funerary inscription, known as the *Res Gestae*, that he "found Rome a city of brick and left it a city of marble" referring to his ambitious building campaigns.

Roman concrete (*opus caementicium*), was developed early in the 2nd c. BCE. The use of mortar as a bonding agent in ashlar masonry wasn't new in the ancient world; mortar was a combination of sand, lime and water in proper proportions. The major contribution the Romans made to the mortar recipe was the introduction of volcanic Italian sand (also known as "pozzolana"). The Roman builders who used pozzolana rather than ordinary sand noticed that their mortar was incredibly strong and durable. It also had the ability to set underwater. Brick and tile were commonly plastered over the concrete since it was not considered very pretty on its own, but concrete's structural possibilities were far more important. The invention of *opus caementicium* initiated the Roman architectural revolution, allowing for builders to be much more creative with their designs. Since concrete takes the shape of the mold or frame it is poured into, buildings began to take on ever more fluid and creative shapes.

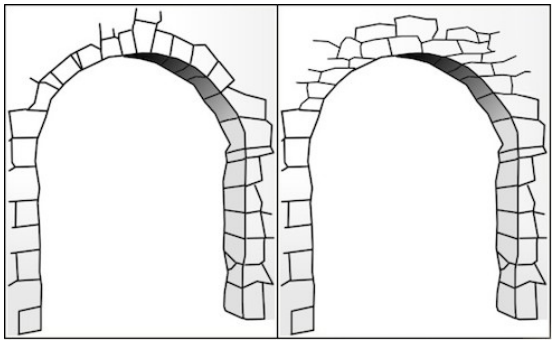


Figure **3.2.1.4**: True arch (left) and corbeled arch (right) (**image**, CC BY-SA 2.5)

The Romans also exploited the opportunities afforded to architects by the innovation of the true arch (as opposed to a corbeled arch where stones are laid so that they move slightly in toward the center as they move higher). A true arch is composed of wedge-shaped blocks (typically of a durable stone), called voussoirs, with a key stone in the center holding them into place. In a true arch, weight is transferred from one voussoir down to the next, from the top of the arch to ground level, creating a sturdy building tool. True arches can span greater distances than a simple post-and-lintel. The use of concrete, combined with the employment of true arches allowed for vaults and domes to be built, creating expansive and breathtaking interior spaces.

Roman architects

We don't know much about Roman architects. Few individual architects are known to us because the dedicatory inscriptions, which appear on finished buildings, usually commemorated the person who commissioned and paid for the structure. We do know that architects came from all walks of life, from freedmen all the way up to the Emperor Hadrian, and they were responsible for all

aspects of building on a project. The architect would design the building and act as engineer; he would serve as contractor and supervisor and would attempt to keep the project within budget.

Building types



Figure **3.2.1.5**: Forum, Pompeii, looking toward Mt. Vesuvius (photo: **Steven Zucker**, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Roman cities were typically focused on the forum (a large open plaza, surrounded by important buildings), which was the civic, religious and economic heart of the city. It was in the city's forum that major temples (such as a Capitoline temple, dedicated to Jupiter, Juno and Minerva) were located, as well as other important shrines. Also useful in the forum plan were the basilica (a law court), and other official meeting places for the town council, such as a curia building. Quite often the city's meat, fish and vegetable markets sprang up around the bustling forum. Surrounding the forum, lining the city's streets, framing gateways, and marking crossings stood the connective architecture of the city: the porticoes, colonnades, arches and fountains that beautified a Roman city and welcomed weary travelers to town. Pompeii, Italy is an excellent example of a city with a well preserved forum.



Figure **3.2.1.6**: House of Diana, Ostia, late 2nd century C.E. (photo: **Sebastià Giralt**, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Romans had a wide range of housing. The wealthy could own a house (*domus*) in the city as well as a country farmhouse (*villa*), while the less fortunate lived in multi-story apartment buildings called *insulae*. The House of Diana in Ostia, Rome's port city, from the late 2nd c. C.E. is a great example of an insula. Even in death, the Romans found the need to construct grand buildings to commemorate and house their remains, like Eurysaces the Baker, whose elaborate tomb still stands near the Porta Maggiore in Rome.



Figure 3.2.1.7: The tomb of Eurysaces the baker, Rome, c. 50-20 B.C.E. (photo: Jeremy Cherfas, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

The Romans built aqueducts throughout their domain and introduced water into the cities they built and occupied, increasing sanitary conditions. A ready supply of water also allowed bath houses to become standard features of Roman cities, from Timgad, Algeria to Bath, England. A healthy Roman lifestyle also included trips to the gymnasium. Quite often, in the Imperial period, grand gymnasium-bath complexes were built and funded by the state, such as the Baths of Caracalla which included running tracks, gardens and libraries.



Figure 3.2.1.8: Aqueduct (reconstruction). Aqueducts supplied Rome with clean water brought from sources far from the city. In this view, we see an aqueduct carried on piers passing through a built-up neighborhood. Elements of the model © 2008 The Regents of the University of California, © 2011 Université de Caen Basse-Normandie, © 2012 Frischer Consulting. All rights reserved. Image © 2012 Bernard Frischer

Entertainment varied greatly to suit all tastes in Rome, necessitating the erection of many types of structures. There were Greek style theaters for plays as well as smaller, more intimate odeon buildings, like the one in Pompeii, which were specifically designed for musical performances. The Romans also built amphitheaters—elliptical, enclosed spaces such as the Colloseum—which were used for gladiatorial combats or battles between men and animals. The Romans also built a circus in many of their cities. The circuses, such as the one in Lepcis Magna, Libya, were venues for residents to watch chariot racing.



Figure **3.2.1.9**: Arch of Titus (foreground) with the Colloseum in the background (photo: **Steven Zucker**, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

The Romans continued to perfect their bridge building and road laying skills as well, allowing them to cross rivers and gullies and traverse great distances in order to expand their empire and better supervise it. From the bridge in Alcántara, Spain to the paved roads in Petra, Jordan, the Romans moved messages, money and troops efficiently.

Republican period



Figure **3.2.1.10**: Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus, Capitoline Hill, Rome (reconstruction courtesy **Dr. Bernard Frischer**)

Republican Roman architecture was influenced by the Etruscans who were the early kings of Rome; the Etruscans were in turn influenced by Greek architecture. The Temple of Jupiter on the Capitoline Hill in Rome, begun in the late 6th century B.C.E., bears all the hallmarks of Etruscan architecture. The temple was erected from local tufa on a high podium and what is most characteristic is its frontality. The porch is very deep and the visitor is meant to approach from only one access point, rather than walk all the way around, as was common in Greek temples. Also, the presence of three cellas, or cult rooms, was also unique. The Temple of Jupiter would remain influential in temple design for much of the Republican period.

Drawing on such deep and rich traditions didn't mean that Roman architects were unwilling to try new things. In the late Republican period, architects began to experiment with concrete, testing its capability to see how the material might allow them to build on a grand scale.



Figure **3.2.1.11**: Model of the Sanctuary of Fortuna Primigenia, from the archeological museum, Palestrina (**image**, CC BY-SA 3.0)

The Sanctuary of Fortuna Primigenia in modern day Palestrina is comprised of two complexes, an upper and a lower one. The upper complex is built into a hillside and terraced, much like a Hellenistic sanctuary, with ramps and stairs leading from the terraces to the small theater and tholos temple at the pinnacle. The entire compound is intricately woven together to manipulate the

visitor's experience of sight, daylight and the approach to the sanctuary itself. No longer dependent on post-and-lintel architecture, the builders utilized concrete to make a vast system of covered ramps, large terraces, shops and barrel vaults.

Imperial period



Figure **3.2.1.12**: Severus and Celer, octagon room, Domus Aurea, Rome, c. 64-68 C.E. (**photo source**)

The Emperor Nero began building his infamous Domus Aurea, or Golden House, after a great fire swept through Rome in 64 C.E. and destroyed much of the downtown area. The destruction allowed Nero to take over valuable real estate for his own building project; a vast new villa. Although the choice was not in the public interest, Nero's desire to live in grand fashion did spur on the architectural revolution in Rome. The architects, Severus and Celer, are known (thanks to the Roman historian Tacitus), and they built a grand palace, complete with courtyards, dining rooms, colonnades and fountains. They also used concrete extensively, including barrel vaults and domes throughout the complex. What makes the Golden House unique in Roman architecture is that Severus and Celer were using concrete in new and exciting ways; rather than utilizing the material for just its structural purposes, the architects began to experiment with concrete in aesthetic modes, for instance, to make expansive domed spaces.



Figure **3.2.1.13**: Apollodorus of Damascus, Markets of Trajan, Rome, c. 106-12 C.E. (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Nero may have started a new trend for bigger and better concrete architecture, but Roman architects, and the emperors who supported them, took that trend and pushed it to its greatest potential. Vespasian's Colosseum, the Markets of Trajan, the Baths of Caracalla and the Basilica of Maxentius are just a few of the most impressive structures to come out of the architectural revolution in Rome. Roman architecture was not entirely comprised of concrete, however. Some buildings, which were made from marble, hearkened back to the sober, Classical beauty of Greek architecture, like the Forum of Trajan. Concrete structures and marble buildings stood side by side in Rome, demonstrating that the Romans appreciated the architectural history of the Mediterranean just as much as they did their own innovation. Ultimately, Roman architecture is overwhelmingly a success story of experimentation and the desire to achieve something new.

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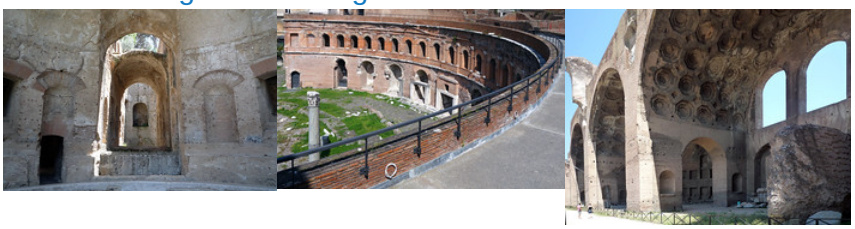
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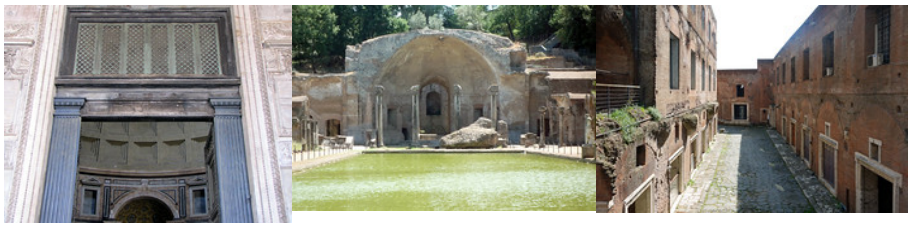
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3.2.2: Italo-Roman building techniques

by DR. JEFFREY A. BECKER



Figure **3.2.2.1**: Isili, Sardinia: exterior of Nuraghe Is Paras, fifteenth century B.C.E., (photo: **Cristiano Cani**, CC BY-SA 3.0)

Building techniques represent an important means through which to study and understand ancient structures. The building technique chosen for a given project can indirectly provide a good deal of information about the building itself, in terms of helping archaeologists and art historians to understand scale, scope, expense, and technique, alongside other, more aesthetic considerations. The building technique can also inform the chronology of the structure and can indicate, in some cases, other economic factors based on the building materials employed. The masonry techniques discussed here cover a broad chronological range from the second millennium B.C.E. to Late Antiquity.

Megalithic techniques

From the second millennium B.C.E. onwards techniques of megalithic architecture were used in Italy and on the island of Sardinia. As the name suggests, such techniques involved the use of large unworked (or roughly worked) stones to create walls and structures. Such walls tend to be built in a dry stone technique, meaning that no bonding agents are used to join stones, rather the tight fit and gravity itself are relied upon to hold the stones in place. Such techniques are frequently referred to under the general heading of “Cyclopean masonry”, indicative of the great bulk of the stones used.



Figure **3.2.2.2**: Isili, Sardinia: Interior of Nuraghe Is Paras, fifteenth century B.C.E., (photo: **Cristiano Cani**, CC BY-SA 3.0)

On Sardinia, distinctive tower structures known as *nuraghe* built during the second and first millennia B.C.E. utilized megalithic techniques, including the construction of corbel vaults. In peninsular Italy, the distinctive style of polygonal masonry emerged by the second half of the first millennium B.C.E. Often used to construct defensive walls, retaining walls, and terraces, this type of megalithic architecture assumed a distinctive polygonal pattern.



Figure **3.2.2.3**: Amelia, Italy: detail of polygonal masonry wall of the ancient city of Ameria (photo: **Ameroe**, CC BY-SA 3.0)

Ashlar masonry (*opus quadratum*)

Ashlar or cuboidal masonry (cut, squared stones), referred to as *opus quadratum* by the Romans, represents an important advance in building technology. In Italy, the widespread use of **ashlar masonry** occurs from the sixth century B.C.E. onward. At Rome, this adoption corresponded to a marked increase in monumental construction projects during the late archaic period. Initially, Romans made use of a locally available tufo type known as *cappellaccio*. While a prestige material, its overall low quality led to the Romans being eager for other sources of superior tufo — a new source of tufo became available once Rome sacked the Etruscan city of Veii in 396 B.C.E.

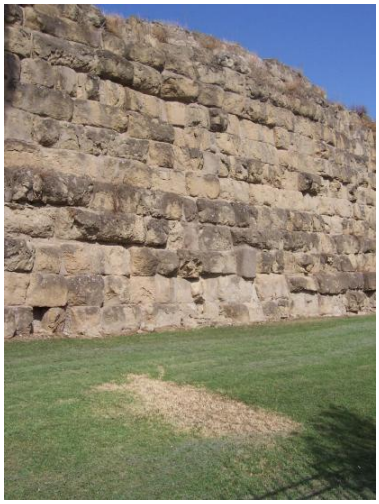


Figure **3.2.2.4**: Rome, Italy: Segment of the so-called “Servian walls” in Piazza dei Cinquecento, fourth century B.C.E. (photo: **Salvatore Falco**, CC SA 1.0)

Ashlar masonry, in general, is used primarily where underlying bedrock is softer and more easily shaped, such as the tufo plateaus on which the city of Rome and many of her Etruscan neighbors sit. Ashlar masonry is phased in for use in monumental construction projects. Notable examples in the city of Rome include the so-called “Servian walls” surrounding the city of Rome and the late sixth century B.C.E. podium of the Temple of Iuppiter Optimus Maximus. Although ashlar techniques would never completely disappear, the emergence of Roman concrete (*opus caementicium*) during the second century B.C.E. came to offer greater flexibility and strength than ashlar masonry could.



Figure 3.2.2.5: Rome, Italy: podium of the Temple of Iuppiter Optimus Maximus, late sixth century B.C.E. (photo: **Torquatus**, CC BY-SA 4.0)

Opus caementicium (“cement work”)

“Roman concrete” describes a category of building technology that involves the use of concrete. Concrete is defined as a heavy, durable building material made from a mixture of sand, lime, water, and inclusions (*caementa*) such as stone, gravel or terracotta. It can either be spread or poured into molds or frames; it forms a stone-like mass upon hardening. In chronological terms, the ancient Roman usage of concrete stretches from sometime in the second century B.C.E. to Late Antiquity (and beyond). Within that chronological span, the technology of concrete changed and developed over time so that we may observe differences that relate to both function and aesthetics.

The basic concept of Roman concrete walling is to create a concrete core that is then faced with stone or brick and perhaps faced even further with stucco, paint, or polished stone veneers. Roman concrete is strong, practical, and functional — it is, on its own, rarely deemed aesthetically beautiful but its versatility and load-bearing potential facilitated the construction of many of the most famous buildings of Roman antiquity. The trio of the Domus Aurea of Nero, the **Flavian Amphitheater**, and the **Pantheon** could never have been realized without the innovative use of concrete building technology.



Figure 3.2.2.6: Italy, Rome, Via Appia Antica, tomb. The remains show the internal core of the building, made in Roman concrete (*opus caementicium*). Photo: **MM**, CC0

Roman concrete is famously strong and durable — even in archaeological contexts concrete is remarkable for its longevity. While the Romans did not invent concrete per se, they improved their own version of concrete by means of additions to its formula. Volcanic sand known as *pozzolana* (or “pit sand”) was favored by Roman builders for mixing concrete. When *pozzolana*, which contains high quantities of both aluminum oxide (sometimes called alumina) and silica, was added to mortar, the water-resistant properties of the mortar increased. This hydraulic concrete was then ideal for use in building piers, breakwaters, and bridge pylons, among other structures.

Typology

The Roman architectural writer Vitruvius (first century B.C.E.) provides a thorough summary of building techniques in his 10-book treatise *De architectura* ("On architecture"). In most cases, modern scholars continue to employ the Latin terminology used by Vitruvius. In these typological categories, the Latin term *opus* means "work or technique".



Figure **3.2.2.7**: Terracina, Italy: *Opus incertum* used in the podium of the temple of Iuppiter Anxur (photo: **Xavier121**, CC BY-SA 3.0)

Opus incertum ("irregular work") is an early concrete technique that emerged during the earlier second century B.C.E. and continued in use until the middle of the first century B.C.E., gradually abandoned in favor of *opus reticulatum*. *Opus incertum* may be identified on the basis of its use of randomly placed, fist-sized chunks of tufo or stone that are placed into a core of *opus caementicium*.



Figure **3.2.2.8**: An example of *opus reticulatum* (photo: **Pouwerkerk**, CC BY-SA 3.0)

Opus reticulatum ("reticulate work") is a technique that employs diamond-shaped pieces of tufo known as *cubilia* that are placed within a core of concrete. The resulting pattern of the flat ends of these blocks form the net-shaped pattern that lends its name to the technique. *Opus reticulatum* became popular during the early first century B.C.E. It would eventually be superseded by *opus latericium*.



Figure **3.2.2.9**: Ostia Antica: example of *opus latericium* (photo: **Camelia.boban**, CC BY-SA 3.0)

Opus latericium ("brickwork") describes a masonry technique that employs courses of laid bricks that are used to face a wall core of *opus caementicium*. This is a predominant technique during the Roman Imperial period. The bricks, in turn, would often be coated with stucco or another form of wall revetment.



Figure **3.2.2.10**: Ostia Antica: example of *opus mixtum* (photo: **Camelia.boban**, CC BY-SA 3.0)

Opus mixtum ("mixed work") is a technique that combines *opus reticulatum* with *opus latericium*. The latter is usually found at the margins of the wall. It is a technique most common during the Hadrianic period in the mid-second century C.E.



Figure **3.2.2.11**: Ostia Antica: example of *opus vittatum* (photo: **Camelia.boban**, CC BY-SA 3.0)

Opus vittatum or *opus listatum* is a later Roman concrete technique that is adopted in the early fourth century C.E. This technique alternated horizontal courses of tufo with alternating courses of bricks. This technique is particularly evident in building projects of Constantine I.

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3.2.3: Roman Domestic architecture- the Domus

by DR. JEFFREY A. BECKER

The domus was more than a residence, it was also a statement of social and political power.



Figure **3.2.3.1**: Peristyle, Casa della Venere in Conchiglia, Pompeii (Photo: **F. Tronchin/Warren**, BY-NC-ND 2.0)

Introduction

Understanding the architecture of the Roman house requires more than simply appreciating the names of the various parts of the structure, as the house itself was an important part of the dynamics of daily life and the socio-economy of the Roman world. The house type referred to as the *domus* (Latin for "house") is taken to mean a structure designed for either a nuclear or extended family and located in a city or town. The *domus* as a general architectural type is long-lived in the Roman world, although some development of the architectural form does occur. While the sites of Pompeii and Herculaneum provide the best surviving evidence for *domus* architecture, this typology was widespread in the Roman world.

Layout

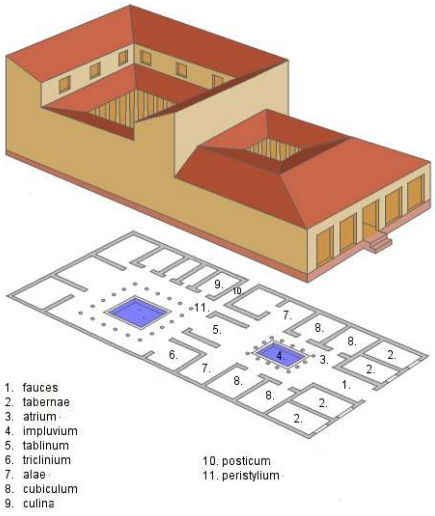


Figure **3.2.3.2**: Plan of a typical Roman domus (house) (**source**)

While there is not a "standard" domus, it is possible to discuss the primary features of a generic example, keeping in mind that variation is present in every manifest example of this type of building. The ancient architectural writer Vitruvius provides a wealth of information on the potential configurations of *domus* architecture, in particular the main room of the *domus* that was known as the atrium (no. 3 in the diagram above).

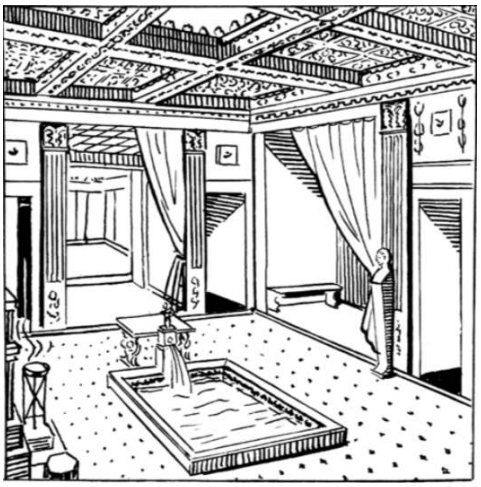


Figure **3.2.3.3**: Illustration of an atrium

In the classic layout of the Roman *domus*, the atrium served as the focus of the entire house plan. As the main room in the public part of the house (*pars urbana*), the atrium was the center of the house's social and political life. The male head-of-household (*paterfamilias*) would receive his clients on business days in the atrium, in which case it functioned as a sort of waiting room for business appointments. Those clients would enter the atrium from the *fauces* (no. 1 in the diagram above), a narrow entry passageway that communicated with the street. That doorway would be watched, in wealthier houses, by a doorman (*ianitor*). Given that the atrium was a room where invited guests and clients would wait and spend time, it was also the room on which the house owner would lavish attention and funds in order to make sure the room was well appointed with decorations. The corner of the room might sport the household shrine (*lararium*) and the funeral masks of the family's dead ancestors might be kept in small cabinets in the atrium. Communicating with the atrium might be bed chambers (*cubicula*—no. 8 in the diagram above), side rooms or wings (*alae*—no. 7 in the diagram above), and the office of the *paterfamilias*, known as the *tablinum* (no. 5 in the diagram above). The *tablinum*, often at the rear of the atrium, is usually a square chamber that would have been furnished with the paraphernalia of the *paterfamilias* and his business interests. This could include a writing table as well as examples of strong boxes as are evident in some contexts in Pompeii.

Types of atria

The arrangement of the atrium could take a number of possible configurations, as detailed by Vitruvius (*De architectura* 6.3). Among these typologies were the Tuscan atrium (*atrium Tuscanicum*), the tetrastyle atrium (*atrium tetrastylum*), and the Corinthian atrium (*atrium Corinthium*). The Tuscan form had no columns, which required that rafters carry the weight of the ceiling. Both the Tetrastyle and the Corinthian types had columns at the center; Corinthian atria generally had more columns that were also taller.

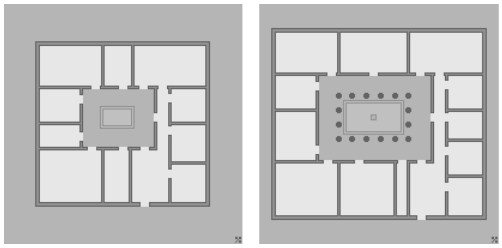


Figure **3.2.3.4**: Plans, **Tuscan atrium, left** (both CC BY-SA 3.0) and **Corinthian atrium, right**

All three of these typologies sported a central aperture in the roof (*compluvium*) and a corresponding pool (*impluvium*—no. 4 in the diagram above) set in the floor. The *compluvium* allowed light, fresh air, and rain to enter the atrium; the *impluvium* was necessary to capture any rainwater and channel it to an underground cistern. The water could then be used for household purposes.



Figure **3.2.3.5**: Impluvium in atrium, looking through the tablinum toward the peristyle, House of Menander, Pompeii before 79 C.E. (photo: **Carole Raddato**, CC BY-SA 2.0)

Beyond the *atrium* and *tablinum* lay the more private part (*pars rustica*) of the house that was often centered around an open-air courtyard known as the peristyle (no. 11 in the diagram above). The *pars rustica* would generally be off limits to business clients and served as the focus of the family life of the house. The central portion of the peristyle would be open to the sky and could be the site of a decorative garden, fountains, artwork, or a functional kitchen garden (or a combination of these elements). The size and arrangement of the peristyle varies quite a bit depending on the size of the house itself.

Communicating with the peristyle would be functional rooms like the kitchen (*culina*—no. 9 in the diagram above), bedrooms (*cubicula*—no. 8 in the diagram above), slave quarters, latrines and baths in some cases, and the all important dining room (*triclinium*—no. 6 in the diagram above). The triclinium would be the room used for elaborate dinner parties to which guests would be invited. The dinner party involved much more than drinking and eating, however, as entertainment, discussion, and philosophical dialogues were frequently on the menu for the evening. Those invited to the dinner party would be the close friends, family, and associates of the *paterfamilias*. The *triclinium* would often be elaborately decorated with wall paintings and portable artworks. The guests at the dinner party were arranged according to a specific formula that gave privileged places to those of higher rank.

Chronology and development

No architectural form is ever static, and the *domus* is no exception to this rule. Architectural forms develop and change over time, adapting and reacting to changing needs, customs, and functions. The chronology of *domus* architecture is contentious, especially the discussion about the origins and early influences of the form.



Figure **3.2.3.6**: The outer Peristyle Garden of the Getty Villa Roman gardens (photo: **Dave & Margie Hill / Kleerup**, CC BY-SA 2.0)

Many ancient Mediterranean houses show the same propensity as the Roman atrium house—a penchant for a plan that focuses on a central courtyard. The Romans may have drawn architectural inspiration from the Etruscans, as well as from the Greeks. In truth it is unlikely that there was a single stream of influence, rather Roman architecture responds to streams of influence that pervade the Mediterranean.

By the second and first centuries B.C.E., the domus had become fairly well established and it is to this period that most of the houses known from Pompeii and Herculaneum date. During the Republic the social networking system that we refer to as the "patron-client relationship" was not only active, but essential to Roman politics and business. This organizational scheme changed as Rome's political system developed.

With the advent of imperial rule by the late first century B.C.E., the emperor became the universal patron, and clientage of the Republican variety relied less heavily on its old traditions. House plans may have changed in response to these social changes. One clear element is a de-emphasis of the atrium as the key room of the house. Examples such as the multi-phase House of Cupid and Psyche at Ostia (2nd-4th centuries C.E.) demonstrate that the atrium eventually gives way to larger and more prominent dining rooms and to courtyards equipped with elaborate fountains.

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3.2.4: Roman domestic architecture- the villa

by DR. JEFFREY A. BECKER

To escape the heat and pressures of the city, the wealthiest Roman families retreated to their country homes.



Figure **3.2.4.1**: Giovanni Riveruzzi, *View of the Casino and the park of Villa Paolina from the side of Porta Pia*, 1828, watercolor on paper (Museo Napoleonico). This villa belonged to Paolina Bonaparte, sister of Napoleon, though it dates back to the 17th century.

Familiar but enigmatic

The villa, on its face, seems to be the simplest of Roman domestic buildings to understand—after all, we continue to use the Latin term “villa” to conjure up a luxurious retreat in the country or at the seashore.

We find evidence of the ancient Roman villa in both archaeological remains and in ancient texts. Taken together this would seem to suggest a fairly uniform and monolithic body of architecture, while the reality is, in fact, something quite different. In some ways the Roman villa is a conundrum. This is especially true in the earlier phases of the type’s development, where questions of origins and influence remain hotly debated. As a building type, the villa manages to simultaneously seem instantly understandable and completely enigmatic.

History

The earliest examples of buildings grouped into this category, sometimes referred to by the term *villa rustica* (country villa), are mostly humble farmhouses in Italy. These rural structures tend to be associated with agriculture or viticulture (grapes) on a small scale. The villa form—and the term itself—then comes to be appropriated and applied to a whole range of structures that persist across both the Republican and Imperial periods, continuing into Late Antiquity. One thing that all villas tend to have in common is their extra-urban setting—the villa is not an urban structure, but rather a rural one. Thus we most often find them in rural, suburban or coastal settings most often. In ideological terms, the country (*rus*) provided relief from the hectic pressures of the city (*urbs*), and thus the villa became associated (and remains associated) with rural getaways.

According to Pliny the Elder, the *villa urbana* was located within easy distance of the city, while the *villa rustica* was a permanent country estate staffed with slaves and a supervisor (*vilicus*). The *villa rustica* is connected with agricultural production and the villa complex can contain facilities and equipment for processing agricultural produce, notably processing grapes to make wine and processing olives to produce olive oil. Even opulent villas often had a *pars rustica*, the working or productive part of the building. Latin authors like Cato the Elder and Varro even made and observed strict recommendations, based in agrarian ideology, as to how these rustic villas should be built, appointed, and managed.

Building typology

It is difficult to identify a single, uniform typology for Roman villas, just as it is difficult to do so for the Roman house (*domus*). In general terms the ideal villa is internally divided into two zones: the urbane zone for enjoying life (*pars urbana*) and the productive area (*pars rustica*). As with *domus* architecture, villas often focus internally around courtyards and atrium spaces. Elite villas tend to be sprawling affairs, with many rooms for entertainment and dining, in addition to specialized facilities including heated baths (*balnea*).

Republican villas

Villas built in Italy during the period stretching from the fifth to the second centuries B.C.E. can be divided into several groupings, based on their building typology. One typology with the smallest number of known examples is an opulent villa that draws its influence from the tradition of palatial aristocratic compounds of the Archaic period in central Italy, such as the complex at Poggio Civitate (Murlo) and the "palace" at Acquarossa (near Viterbo). These aristocratic compounds might have inspired Roman Republican aristocrats to build similar aristocratic mansions for their extended families as a demonstration of their social and economic clout. Other Republican period "villas" tend to be small and connected with agricultural production on a small scale. Traditionally they are associated with an open-air, yet enclosed, courtyard that serves as a focal point.

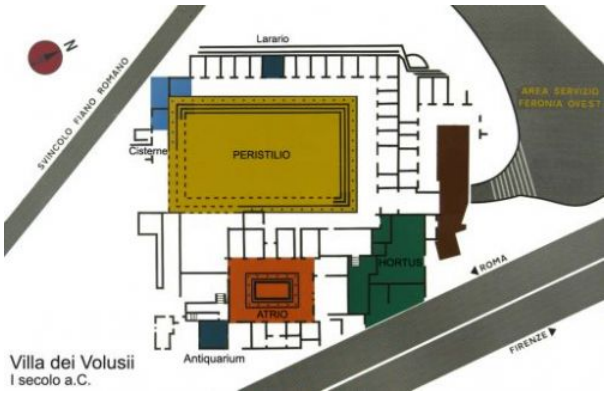


Figure **3.2.4.2**: Plan of the Villa of the Volusii Saturnini, middle of the first century (**source**)

The mid-first century B.C.E. villa of the Volusii Saturnini at Lucus Feroniae (left) provides a good example of an opulent villa built by Late Republican new money. It also demonstrates the pattern that many elite villas would follow during the Imperial period in becoming ever more opulent. In the plan, we see a large peristyle (a garden surrounded by columns) and smaller atrium (an open courtyard) and dozens of rooms off each.

Ancient writers the likes of Cato the Elder (a Roman senator who was born in the late 3rd century B.C.E.), Varro (a scholar and writer from the first century C.E.), and Columella (who wrote about agriculture in the first century C.E.) theorized that villa architecture evolved over time, with the so-called "Columellan" villa being the most elaborate and sophisticated. While scholars do not accept this evolutionary schema any longer, it is interesting that these ancient authors were focused on villas and their culture and that they appreciated change over time. While the archaeological remains do not bear out or prove this theory of architectural development, the awareness of the villa and its role in Roman ideology is an important concept on its own.

Imperial villas

From the Imperial period, we are fortunate to have evidence for a wide range of villa architecture distributed across the Roman empire. In the provinces of the Roman Empire, the adoption of classic villa architecture seems to serve as a mark of adopting a Roman lifestyle—with elites keen to demonstrate their urbanity by living in villas. An example of such an adoption is the so-called Fishbourne Roman palace at Chichester in the south of England which was likely the seat of the Roman client-king Cogidubnus.



Figure **3.2.4.3**: Model of the Palace, Fishbourne Roman Palace Museum

A number of villas destroyed by the 79 C.E. eruption of Mount Vesuvius demonstrate key features of the opulent villa. At Boscoreale the Late Republican villa of Publius Fannius Synistor (c. 50-40 B.C.E.) is well known for its elaborate **Second Style** wall paintings (below).



Figure **3.2.4.4**: Frescos in the Cubiculum (bedroom) from the Villa of P. Fannius Synistor at Boscoreale, c. 50-40 B.C.E. (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

At Oplontis (modern Torre Annunziata, Italy), the so-called Villa A (sometimes referred to as Villa Poppaea) demonstrates the seaside villa (*villa maritima*). This is a grand pleasure villa, with many well-appointed rooms for leisure and reception.



Figure **3.2.4.5**: Villa Oplantis, first century C.E. with later remodeling (**source**, CC BY-SA 2.0)

In the periphery of Rome itself we find a number of villas connected with the Imperial house. These are mostly villas of the *villa urbana* category—including examples such as the Villa of Livia at Prima Porta that belonged to Livia, the wife of the emperor Augustus. The Prima Porta villa—a private Imperial retreat—is famous for its garden-themed dining room and the portrait statue of **Augustus of Prima Porta**.



Figure **3.2.4.6**: Painted Garden, Villa of Livia, detail with oak in center, Prima Porta, fresco, 30-20 B.C.E. (Museo Nazionale Romano, Palazzo Massimo, Rome)

Other emperors would build their own suburban villas as well. Worthy of note in this category is the **Villa of Hadrian** at Tivoli located to the east of Rome. A series of later elite villas (mostly south of Rome) such as the Villa of Maxentius on the Via Appia and the Villa of the Quintilii show us that the villa continued to be not only a statement of status into the later Roman period, but also maintained its role as a retreat from the crowded confusion of the city.



Figure **3.2.4.7**: Reconstruction, Maritime Theater, Hadrian's Villa, Tivoli, 2nd century C.E., photo: **The Digital Hadrian's Villa Project, Institute for Digital Intermedia Arts**, Ball State University, Dr. Bernard Frischer and John Fillwalk

Late Roman

In Late Antiquity the Roman villa continued to develop. The so-called Villa Romana del Casale just outside of Piazza Armerina, Sicily, was built in the early fourth century C.E. and boasts one of the most complex programs of Roman mosaics preserved from the ancient world.

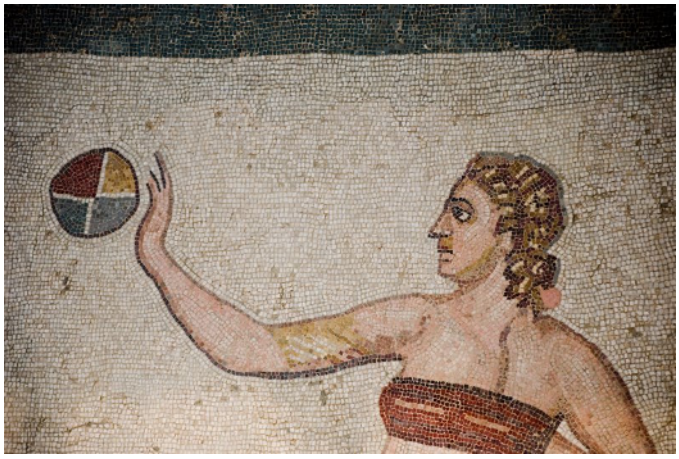


Figure 3.2.4.8: Mosaic from the "Chamber of the Ten Maidens," Villa Romana del Casale, Sicily, 3rd-4th century C.E.

The Villa Casale was likely the center of a large agricultural estate (*latifundium*) and its opulent decorations strongly suggest the elite status of its owners. The villa has three sectors that focus on a central peristyle. It seems that the complex was built as a simultaneous project. Its mosaic decorations are rich and complex, with themes that range from natural and geometric scenes, to genre scenes, to hunting scenes, as well as scenes extracted from Graeco-Roman mythology. Villas like the Villa Casale dominated the rural landscape and its economy, engaging in various productive activities from farming to mining.

Roman rural villas remained prominent features in post-Roman landscapes, in some cases becoming centers of monastic life and in others becoming the centers of emergent villages during the Medieval period.

Additional resources:

The Oplontis Project

Digital Hadrian's Villa

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3.2.5: Roman domestic architecture- the insula

by DR. JEFFREY A. BECKER

The Romans are famous for soaring monuments, but perhaps they should be better known for their high-rise apartments.



Figure **3.2.5.1**: Ostia Antica, regione I, via dei Balconi (public domain)

In the Latin language, *insula* (plural *insulae*) means “island” and the term has been connected to the high-rise apartment dwellings of the Roman world, presumably since they rose like islands from the built landscape of the city. The insulae of ancient Roman cities provided housing for the bulk of the urban populace. The plebs—defined as ordinary people of lower- or middle-class status—tended to inhabit *insulae*. During the heyday of the mercantile city of Ostia at the mouth of the Tiber river (less than 20 miles from Rome), a building boom produced many such insulae, making Ostia a city of high-rise apartments, a phenomenon of urban building that would not manifest itself again until the Industrial Revolution.



Figure **3.2.5.2**: Reconstruction, Insula of Diane (CC BY-SA 3.0) (**source**)

History

In relating the history of the year 191 B.C.E., the historian Livy remarks that two tame oxen had climbed the stairs of a multi-story building, ending up on the tiled roof (Livy 36.37). While this may seem a passing comment, it reminds us that even in the second century B.C.E Rome was a vertical city in the sense that buildings with multiple levels were already being built. Strabo (5.3.7), commenting on Rome in the time of Augustus, mentions the building boom there and the need to regulate construction, including the height of buildings. The architectural writer Vitruvius (*De architectura* 2.8.17) expresses a fairly optimistic view of the *insulae*,

observing that advances in construction technology that facilitated the construction of these outstanding dwellings. Other ancient authors, including Seneca and Diodorus, were less positive about *insulae*, seeing them as noisy and squalid.

There is some debate among scholars about how, precisely, we should understand and define the term *insula*. A fourth century C.E. source, known as the *Regionary Catalog*, states that in the city of Rome there were 44,850 *insulae* and 1781 *domus* in 315 C.E. Glenn Storey observes that if these figures represent individual buildings, fourth century C.E. Rome had over 45,000 independent structures. Understanding the meaning of the term *insula*, then, has obvious implications for understanding the population and organization of the ancient city of Rome. Scholars have debated how we should interpret the term. James Packer posits that *insula* connotes a high-rise building that could occupy an entire block or be a portion of a larger structure.

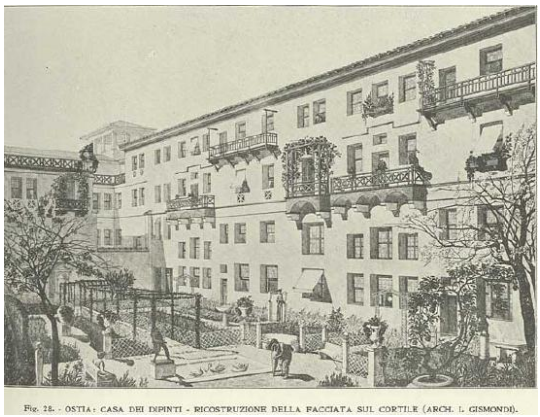


Figure **3.2.5.3**: Insula dei Dipinti (Ostia) reconstruction (I. Gismondi)

In this reconstruction, the larger building must have been subdivided into smaller units. These are the *medianum* and *cenaculum*, terms for subdivisions of the apartment building. Their specific meaning remains somewhat troublesome, but surviving records do indicate that apartment buildings were subdivided for legal reasons, as well as for assessing rent. James Packer estimates the median area of a Roman apartment at 239 square meters.

Typology

The apartment block differs significantly from the townhouse (*domus*). The *domus* is essentially a dwelling for a single, extended family unit, while the apartment block contains multiple units. The top-to-bottom arrangement of the Roman apartment block was the inverse of what is true in the twenty-first century: in the Roman world the best apartments were located at ground level, while the lower quality (and more squalid) units were to be found on the upper floors of the structure. There is a good deal of variation in terms of the organization of the structures themselves. Frequently the entire structure centers on an open courtyard which also serves as a light well for the lower floors. The spaces fronting on the street itself were often used for mercantile functions.

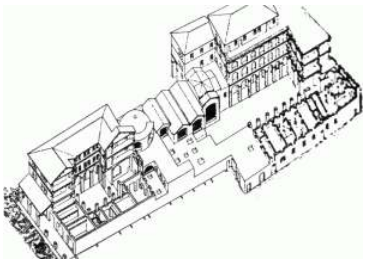


Figure **3.2.5.4**: Reconstruction drawing by Italo Gismondi. From left to right: *Caseggiato del Serapide* (House of Serapides), *Terme dei Sette Sapienti* (Baths of the Seven Sages), Cas. degli Aurighi (House of the Charioteers) (**source**)

The port city of Ostia provides the best evidence for the Roman apartment block. Ostia had been founded as a Roman colony during the third century B.C.E. Its location at the mouth of the Tiber river was important for both mercantile and strategic reasons. During the second century C.E. its economy and population was booming, as was the population of the city of Rome. As a result the city witnesses an intense spate of building activity, including the construction of numerous *insulae*.

The Caseggiato del Serapide shows an example of a block with shops at the ground level, while staircases lead to apartments on upper floors. The courtyard contained a cult room with a stuccoed relief of the god Serapis.

The so-called Garden Houses (*Case a Giardino*) provide an example of second and third century C.E. luxury apartments that were later converted to commercial use. This structure originally stood to four floors (height of c. 17.70 metres or 60 Roman feet according to Stevens) and had 16 units on the ground floor. The central architectural feature is the garden courtyard at the center of the structure to which the apartments communicated.

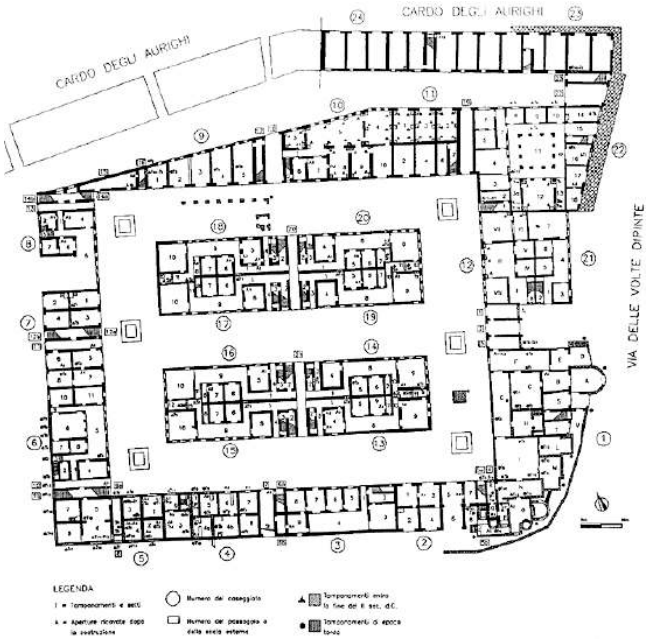


Figure **3.2.5.5**: Ostia: Plan of Regio III – Insula IX – Case a Giardino (Garden Houses) (**source**)

The original walk-ups

The apartment block demonstrates the pragmatism and innovation of Roman architects who capitalized on their technical proficiency with concrete (*opus caementicium*). Cities like Rome and Ostia are unusual in the ancient world—their large and concentrated populations required solutions like the apartment block. These structures, despite Vitruvian enthusiasm, were not without their dangers and drawbacks. Since fire was a frequent danger in the ancient city, the high-rise apartment was particularly risky—especially for those dwelling on upper floors. The living conditions in some cases may have been less than ideal as well. The *insula* as an architectural type demonstrates the variety of Roman architecture and provides another set of important data about Roman domestic building.

Additional resources:

Ostia: Harbour City of Ancient Rome

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3.2.6: Forum Romanum (The Roman Forum)

by DR. JEFFREY A. BECKER



Video **3.2.6.1**

The heart of ancient Rome, the Forum Romanum was the monumental center of religious, political, and social life.



Figure **3.2.6.78**: View of the Forum from the slope of the Capitoline to the Palatine Hill (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

In his play *Curculio*, the Latin playwright Plautus offers perhaps one of the most comprehensive and insightful descriptions of the Forum Romanum ever written (ll. 466-482). In his summary, Plautus gives the reader the sense that one could find just about every sort of person in the forum—from criminals and hustlers to politicians and prostitutes. His summary reminds us that in the city of Rome the Forum Romanum was the key political, ritual, and civic center. Located in a valley separating the Capitoline and Palatine Hills, the Forum developed from the earliest times and remained in use after the city's eventual decline; during that span of time the forum witnessed the growth and eventual contraction of the city and her empire. The archaeological remains of the Forum Romanum itself continue to provide important insights into the phases and processes associated with urbanism and monumentality in ancient Rome.

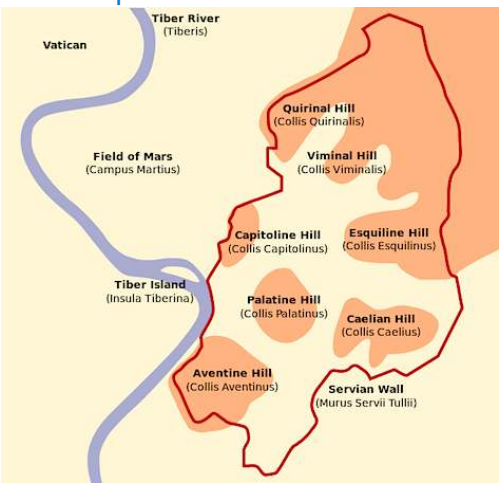


Figure **3.2.6.2**: Seven Hills of Rome (**image**, CC BY-SA 3.0)

Situated astride the Tiber river, the site of Rome is noted for its low hills that are separated by deeply cut valleys. The hilltops became the focus of settlement beginning in the Early Iron Age; the development of the settlement continued during the first millennium B.C.E., with the traditional Roman account holding that the city herself was founded in 753 B.C.E. (Livy 1.6)

The traditional foundation narrative holds that one of the first acts of Romulus, the city's eponymous founder, was to establish a fortification wall around the Palatine Hill, the site of his new settlement. The Capitoline Hill, opposite the Palatine, emerged as the city's citadel (*arx*) and site of the poliadic cult of Jupiter Optimus Maximus, among others (poliadic: the chief civic cult of an ancient city, derived from the Greek word "polis").

Iron Age populations had used the marshy valley separating the Palatine and Capitoline hills as a necropolis (a large ancient cemetery), but the burgeoning settlement of archaic Rome had need of communal space and the valley was repurposed from a necropolis to a usable space. This required several transformations, both of human activity and the natural environment. Burial activity had to be transferred elsewhere; for this reason the main necropolis site shifted to the far side of the Esquiline Hill.



Figure **3.2.6.3**: View of the Forum Romanum toward the Palatine Hill (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Addressing the problems of seasonal rains and flooding proved more challenging—the valley required a landfill project as well as the construction of a drainage canal to manage standing water. Since the Tiber river tended to leave its banks regularly, the valley was prone to significant flooding, as a low saddle of land known as the Velabrum connects the forum valley to the riverine zone. As coring studies conducted by Albert J. Ammerman have shown, a deliberate landfill project deposited fill in the forum valley in order to create usable, dry levels during the sixth century B.C.E. Twentieth century excavators, including Giacomo Boni and Einar Gjerstad, revealed important remains of Iron Age burials that pre-dated the establishment of the forum valley as a civic space; in particular the necropolis in the area known as the *Sepulcretum* along the Sacra Via ("Sacred Way," the main sacred processional road of the city) has been extensively studied and published. The investigations of the burials themselves, and the patterns they

followed, have allowed archaeologists to understand not only funeral customs but also social dynamics during Rome's proto-urban phases.



Figure **3.2.6.4**: A view of the Via Sacra, with the Artium Vestae in the foreground

This major investment in the creation of civic space and the organization of labor also provides important information about the socio-economic structure of early Rome (Livy 1.59.9). The drainage canal eventually came to have a vaulted covering and was known as the *Cloaca Maxima* or "Great Drain." One of the clear outcomes of these civic investments was the creation of a usable space that came to be a civic focus for activities in many spheres, especially political and sacred functions.

Temples and sacred buildings

From the Early Republican period the forum space saw the construction of key temples. One of the most prominent early temples is the Temple of Saturn (often considered the earliest of the temples in the Forum Romanum), the first iteration of which dates c. 498 B.C.E. The temple was dedicated to Saturn, the god of agriculture, and housed the state treasury. The temple was rebuilt in 42 B.C.E. and again after 283 C.E. Another early Republican temple is the Temple of the Castors (a.k.a. Temple of Castor and Pollux) that was completed in 484 B.C.E. and was dedicated to the Gemini who had aided the Romans at the Battle of Lake Regillus in 496 B.C.E. The temple had several construction phases. The Sacra Via passed along the forum square en route to the Capitoline Hill and the temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus. This sacred route was used for certain state-level ceremonies, especially the celebration of the victory ritual known as the Roman triumph.

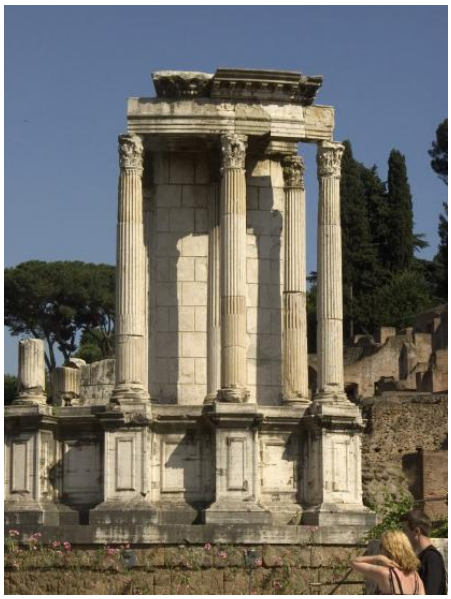


Figure **3.2.6.5**: Temple of Vesta, rebuilt many times, most recently in the 1930s (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Two other early, sacred buildings are important to note. These are the Regia or "king's house" and the Temple of Vesta, both located on the downward slope of the Palatine Hill near the point where it reaches the edge of the Forum Romanum proper. Both of

these sacred buildings are quite ancient and had many building phases, making it difficult to refine the chronology of the earliest phases. The Regia served as a ceremonial home for the king—later passing into the ownership of the pontifex maximus (principal state-level priesthood) once the kings had been expelled—and consisted of an irregularly planned suite of rooms surrounding a courtyard. The sixth century B.C.E. phase was decorated with painted plaques of architectural terracotta, clearly indicating both elite function and investment. Across the way was the Temple of Vesta, focused on the maternal elements of the archaic state as well as safeguarding the cult of Vesta and the sacred, eternal hearth flame of the Roman people. Both the Regia and the Temple of Vesta developed from crude structures in earlier phases to stone-built architecture in later phases. The Severan family carried out the final significant restoration of the Temple of Vesta in 191 C.E.

Meeting spaces

Important meeting spaces for political bodies emerged at the northwest side of the forum, namely a pair of complexes known as the Curia and Comitium. The Curia served as the council house for the Roman Senate, although the Senate could convene in any inaugurated space (i.e. a space ritually demarcated by Roman priests). The Curia emerged perhaps in the seventh century B.C.E., although little is known about its earliest phases. The surviving Curia is an imperial rebuilding of the Late Republican phase known as the Curia Julia, since Julius Caesar was its architectural patron. The Comitium was a tiered space that lay in front of the Curia that served as an open-air meeting space for public assemblies. Little of the Comitium remains today but it was a key architectural complex for political and sacred events during the time of the Roman Republic.



Figure 3.2.6.6: Curia Julia (Senate House)

From Republic to Empire

During the fourth and third centuries B.C.E. the Forum Romanum certainly continued to develop, but material remains of large-scale architecture have proven elusive and thus our understanding of the space during those centuries is less clear than in other periods. One middle Republican development is the continued elaboration of the Rostra, the platform from which orators would speak to those assembled in the forum square. This monument would continue to develop over time and took its name from the prows (*rostra*) of defeated enemy warships that were mounted on its façade.

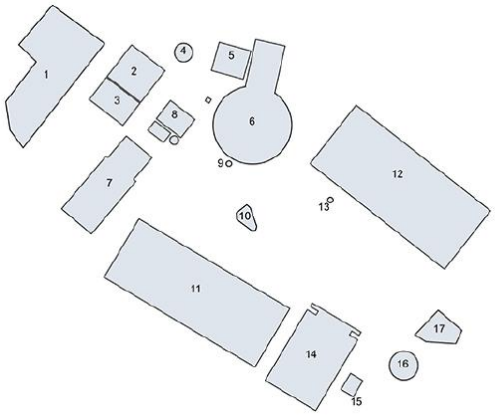


Figure **3.2.6.7**: The Forum Romanum in the Late Republican period: 1) Tabularium; 2)Temple of Concord; 3) Basilica Opimia; 4)Tullianum; 5) Basilica Porcia; 6) Curia and Comitium; 7) Temple of Saturn; 8) Senaculum; 9) Volcanal; 10) Lacus Curtius; 11) Basilica Sempronia; 12) Basilica Fulvia; 13) Shrine of Venus Cloacina; 14) Temple of the Castors; 15)Fountain of Juturna; 16) Temple of Vesta; 17) Regia (**Source image**, CC BY-SA 3.0)

The later second and first centuries B.C.E., the Late Republican period, witnessed many changes in the city and in the Forum Romanum. The successes of Rome and her growing empire during the second and first centuries B.C.E. led to a great deal of monumental construction in the city, including in the Forum Romanum itself. It was during this Late Republican phase that Rome became a metropolitan center, equipped with the monumental architecture that could compete with—if not eclipse—that of the foreign powers Rome had tamed during the Punic Wars and those against the Hellenistic kingdoms of the eastern Mediterranean. In particular the Romans established a tradition of constructing monuments commemorating famous men who had achieved great success in military and public careers. The first of these was the *Columna Rostrata* that marked the naval victory of Caius Duilius at the naval battle of Mylae in 260 B.C.E. The Roman interest in monumental, commemorative monuments, now referred to as triumphal arches, would soon follow. The first of these, the Fabian arch (*fornix Fabianus*), was dedicated on the Sacra Via toward the eastern end of the Forum Romanum in 121 B.C.E., commemorating the military victories (and family) of Quintus Fabius Allobrogicus (Cicero **pro Planc. 17**). While the Fabian monument is no longer extant, its construction established a tradition (and a traditional form) for official commemorative and honorific monuments in the context of Roman public art.

The Basilica

The second century B.C.E. saw the creation and introduction of a unique Roman building type, the basilica. The basilica was a columnar hall that often had a multi-purpose use—from law courts to commerce to entertainments. Roman planners came to prefer them for lining the long sides of open squares, in a way not dissimilar from the Greek stoa. The sources claim that the Basilica Porcia (c. 184 B.C.E.) was the first basilica built at Rome, although no trace of it remains. The Basilica Porcia served as an office for the tribunes of the plebs. Other, more elaborate basilicae were soon to be built, including the famous Basilica Aemilia, first built in 179 B.C.E., and remodeled from c. 55 to 34 B.C.E. as the Basilica Paulli. Restored again after a fire in 14 B.C.E., the famous basilica was deemed by Pliny the Elder to be one of the three most beautiful monuments in Rome (Plin. *HN* **36.102.5**)



Figure **3.2.6.8**: Western end of the Roman Forum, c. 300 C.E. In the foreground is the Rostra Augusti. In the background are (left to right) the Temple of Saturn, the Temple of Vespasian, and the Temple of Concordia. Elements of the model © 2008 The Regents of the University of California, © 2011 Université de Caen Basse-Normandie, © 2012 Frischer Consulting. All rights reserved. Image © 2012 Bernard Frischer

Imperial period

The advent of the principate of Augustus (27 B.C.E. – 14 C.E.) brought about additions and renovations to the Forum Romanum. With the deification of Julius Caesar, Augustus' adoptive father, a temple dedicated to Caesar's cult (*templum divi Iulii*) was constructed on the edge of the forum square (15 in the diagram below).

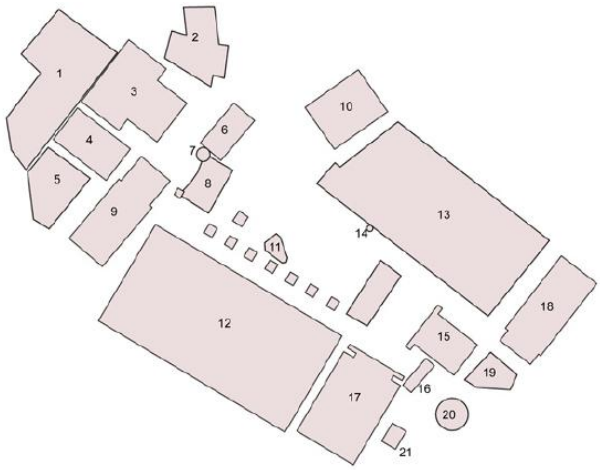


Figure **3.2.6.9**: The Forum Romanum in the Imperial period: 1)Tabularium; 2) Tullianum; 3) Temple of Concord; 4) Temple of Vespasian; 5) Portico Dii Consentes; 6) Arch of Septimius Severus; 7) Umbilicus Urbis; 8) Rostra; 9) Temple of Saturn; 10) Curia Julia; 11) Lacus Curtius; 12) Basilica Julia; 13) Basilica Aemilia; 14) Shrine of Venus Cloacina; 15) Temple of Divus Julius; 16) Arch of Augustus; 17) Temple of the Castors; 18) Temple of Ant0ninus and Faustina; 19) Regia; 20) Temple of Vesta; 21) Fountain of Juturna (**source image**, CC BY-SA 3.0)

Augustus restored existing buildings, completed incomplete projects, and added commemorative projects to celebrate his own accomplishments and those of his family members. In this latter group, the Arch of Augustus (#16 above) and the Porticus of Caius and Lucius are notable. The former was a triumphal arch celebrating significant military and diplomatic accomplishments of the emperor, while the latter honored the emperor's grandsons.

Augustus also followed Julius Caesar in creating yet another new forum space beyond the Forum Romanum that was named the Forum of Augustus. (dedicated in 2 B.C.E.). These new Imperial Fora in some cases provided additional space and, in turn, shifted attention away from the Forum Romanum.

During the Imperial period the Forum Romanum itself saw only sporadic new construction, although the maintenance of the existing structures would have provided a pressing and ongoing obligation. Just beyond the limit of the forum proper the second century C.E. temple of Antoninus Pius and his wife Faustina was constructed in 141 C.E. (and then modified in 161 C.E. following the emperor's death).



Figure **3.2.6.10**: Arch of Septimius Severus, 203 C.E. (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Coming to power at the end of the second century C.E., the Severan family erected a triple-bay triumphal arch commemorating the victories of emperor Septimius Severus (reigned 193-211 C.E.) at the northwestern corner of the forum square. The third century C.E. saw rebuilding of structures and monuments that had been damaged by fire, including the rebuilding of the Curia Julia by the emperor Diocletian in the late third century C.E. following a fire in 283 C.E.

Decline



Figure **3.2.6.11**: View of the Roman Forum (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Declining imperial fortunes led inevitably to urban decay at Rome. After the Severan and Tetrarchic building programs of the third century C.E. and Constantinian investment in the early fourth century C.E., the forum and its environs began to decline and decay. Constantine I officially relocated the administrative center of the Roman world to Constantinople in 330 C.E. and Theodosius I suppressed all “pagan” religions and ordered temples shut permanently in 394 C.E. These changes, coupled with population decline, spelled the gradual demise of spaces like the Forum Romanum. Roman monuments were cannibalized for building materials and open, unused spaces were re-purposed—sometimes as ad hoc dwellings and other times for the deposition of rubbish and fill. Thus the forum slowly yielded its sacro-civic functions to more mundane concerns like pasturage—in fact it eventually came to be known as the “Campo Vaccino” (cow field).

The beauty of the ruins

The monument that is considered to be the final ancient structure erected in the Forum Romanum is a re-purposed monumental column set in place by the emperor Phocas in August of 608 C.E. The anonymous Einsiedeln itinerary, written in the eighth century C.E., mentions a general state of decay in the forum. A major earthquake in 847 C.E. wreaked considerable damage on remaining Roman monuments in the forum and in its environs. During the Middle Ages ancient structures provided reusable buildings materials, as well as reusable foundations, for Medieval structures.

The ruins themselves provided endless inspiration for artists, including painters the likes of Canaletto who became interested in the romanticism of the ruins of the ancient city as well as for cartographers and engravers the likes of G. B. Piranesi and G. Vasi, among others, who created views of the ruins themselves and restored plans of the ancient city.



Figure **3.2.6.12**: Giovanni Battista Piranesi, "Veduta di Campo Vaccino," *Views of Rome*, plate 82, 18 x 27.75 inches, etching, 1772

Interpretation

The Forum Romanum, despite being a relatively small space, was central to the function and identity of the city of Rome (and the wider Roman empire). The Forum Romanum played a key role in creating a communal focal point, one toward which various members of a diverse socio-economic community could gravitate. In that centralized space community rituals that served a larger purpose of group unity could be performed and observed and elites could reinforce social hierarchy through the display of monumental art and architecture. These devices that could create and continually reinforce not only a sense of community belonging but also the existing social hierarchy were of vital importance in archaic states. Even as the Forum Romanum changed over time, it remained an important space. After a series of emperors chose to build new forum complexes (the Imperial Fora) adjacent to the Forum Romanum, it retained its symbolic importance, especially considering that, as a people, ancient Romans were incredibly loyal to ancestral practices and traditions.



Figure **3.2.6.13**: Recent excavation at the northeast corner of the Palatine Hill (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Rediscovery and excavation

Many of the monuments of the Forum Romanum, along with ancient occupation levels, gradually disappeared from view. Systematic exploration and study began under archaeologist Carlo Fea who started to clear the area near the Arch of Septimius Severus in 1803. Study continued during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, with prominent scholars including Rodolfo Lanciani, Giacomo Boni, Einar Gjerstad, and Andrea Carandini, among others, leading major campaigns. Study and excavation—as well as the hugely important obligation of preservation—continue in the Forum Romanum today. The bulk of the forum is accessible to visitors who have the opportunity to experience one of the great documents of urban archaeology.

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Digital Roman Forum (UCLA)

Digital Augustan Rome

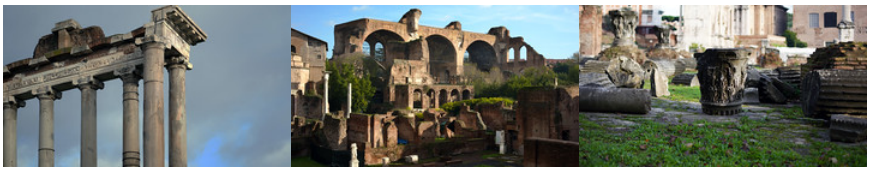
Rome Reborn

Roman Forum and Palatine Hill

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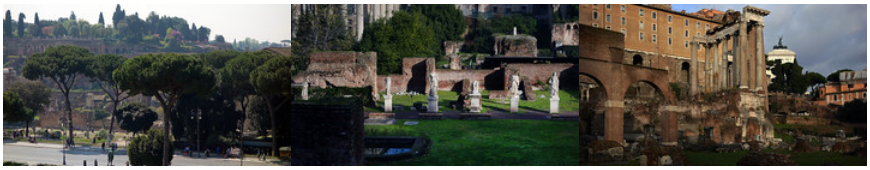
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3.2.7: Imperial fora

by DR. JEFFREY A. BECKER

These awe-inspiring public complexes were built to reinforce the imperial family's political message.



Figure **3.2.7.1**: View of the Forum of Trajan, c. 112 C.E.. Later medieval walls can be seen amidst the grass on the left; the upright columns of the Basilica Ulpia can be seen on the right in front of the larger Column of Trajan (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

For centuries, the Roman Forum (*Forum Romanum*) was the civic, juridical, and social heart of the ancient city of Rome, a place where civic buildings, sacred buildings, and monuments were to be both found and admired. Beginning in the first century B.C.E., a new series of public spaces, also dubbed as *fora* (*fora* being the plural form of the Latin noun *forum*) began to be created. These *fora* (called Imperial *fora* since they were built by Roman emperors during the Roman imperial period) would eventually number five in all and were important public spaces that relied upon the visual potential of monumental art and architecture to reinforce ideological messages.

Topography and chronology



Figure **3.2.7.2**

The Imperial *fora* are located in an area bounded on the southwest by the Capitoline Hill, on the northeast by the Quirinal Hill, and extending toward the Esquiline Hill to the east. The *fora* were initially built between c. 54 B.C.E. and 113 C.E., with continuing additions, restorations, and modifications through late antiquity. In the middle ages the *fora* were spaces re-used for building materials, housing, industry, and burials. Gradually these spaces faded from view, buried beneath the medieval and modern city of Rome. A massive campaign of excavation in the twentieth century on the orders of the Fascist dictator Benito Mussolini returned large areas of the *fora* to view. Ongoing archaeological investigation continues to reveal additional elements of the *fora* and to provide additional data that allow for their contextualization.

Forum of Julius Caesar

The Forum of Julius Caesar (also known as the *Forum Iulium* or *Forum Caesaris*) was the first of the imperial *fora* complexes to be built. Pompey the Great, a political rival of Caesar, had dedicated a monumental theater and portico complex in the Campus Martius in 55 B.C.E. and this perhaps spurred Caesar's ambition to construct a new forum complex.

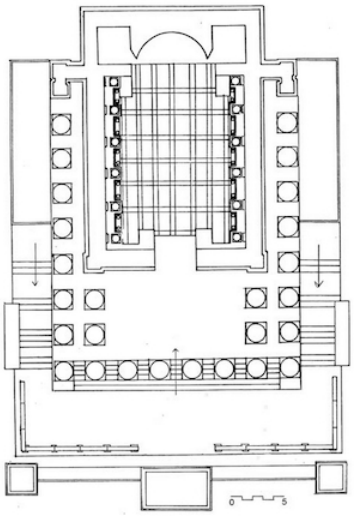


Figure **3.2.7.3**: Temple of Venus Genetrix (plan), Forum of Caesar

Caesar's project required the acquisition of land at the flank of the Capitoline Hill and he was aided in this early on by political allies, including Cicero, with the initial land purchased at a cost of sixty million sesterces (Cic. *ad Att*. 4.16.9). Additional landacquisition may have ballooned the total cost to one hundred million sesterces (Suetonius *Divus Iulius* 26; Pliny the Elder *Natural History* 36.103). The construction of Caesar's forum resulted in significant reorganization of the northwest corner of the Forum Romanum.



Figure **3.2.7.4**: Cupids, frieze-architrave, Temple of Venus Genetrix, Forum of Julius Caesar, 113 C.E., marble (Mercati di Traiano Museo dei Fori Imperiali)

The Forum of Caesar takes the form of a rectangle measuring 160 by 75 m. The centerpiece of the complex was the Temple of Venus Genetrix, dedicated to the goddess that Caesar celebrated as his distant ancestor. The octastyle (eight columns across the façade) temple was made of solid marble and sat atop a high podium. The long sides of the forum square, flanking the temple, housed two storeys of rooms that may have served political and/or mercantile functions. The complex was dedicated during the festivities surrounding Caesar's triumph in September of 46 B.C.E.

Forum of Augustus

The Forum of Augustus (known as the *Forum Augustum* or *Forum Augusti*) followed the Forum of Caesar as the second of the imperial *fora*. At the Battle of Philippi in 42 B.C.E., Augustus vowed a temple to Mars in exchange for help in avenging the slain Caesar (Suet. *Aug*. 29.2), but the temple and forum complex would not be dedicated until 2 B.C.E. (*Res Gestae* 21). The Forum of Augustus provided additional room for the meeting of law courts and was built on land acquired by Augustus.



Figure 3.2.7.5: Model of the Temple of Mars Ultor between twin porticoes, Forum Augusti (Mercati di Traiano Museo dei Fori Imperiali, Rome)The temple at the center of the Forum Augusti was sacred to Mars Ultor ("Mars the Avenger"), and was surrounded by a portico that defined the forum space and played a key role in the visual narrative of the public art program installed in the forum. As Augustus had emerged as the sole leader of the Roman state, it was important for him to create and display messages of continuity and stability.



Figure 3.2.7.6: View of the ruins of the Temple of Mars Ultor in the Forum Augusti, c. 2 B.C.E.; the stairs to the temple platform are visible (left) and the paving stones of one portico can be seen at the lower right (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

The visual program in the Forum of Augustus is complex. The architectural sculpture adorning the Temple of Mars Ultor inserts Augustus into the Julian family (*gens Iulia*) by portraying Augustus in the context of divinities (Mars, Venus, and Cupid) and the deified mortal—Julius Caesar (*divus Iulius*). Flanking the temple in the exedrae (the semicircular, recessed areas behind the colonnades to the left and right of the temple) of the porticoes were sculptural groups depicting both Romulus and Aeneas, thus connecting Augustus to Rome's two legendary founders (Ovid *Fasti* 5.549-570).

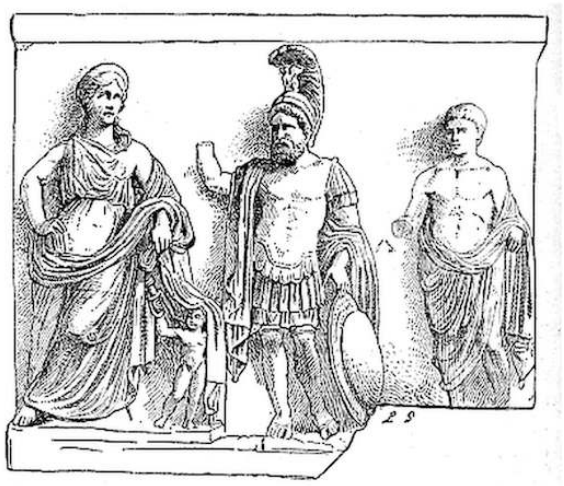


Figure 3.2.7.7: This drawing shows an ancient sculpture now in Tunis that may be a depiction of the actual pedimental group from Mars Ultor (possible identifications left to right: Venus, Cupid, Mars, and Divus Iulius)

To complete the narrative cycle, statues of famous Romans of the Republican period adorned the attic of the porticoes. These famous men (*summi viri*) were portrayed alongside small, inscribed plaques (*tituli*) bearing their political and military accomplishments. In this way, Augustus portrayed himself as the ideal man to lead the Roman state; he was connected to Rome's divine origins and he represented continuity with its republican tradition. This powerful visual narrative represents an important early use of public art to transmit ideological messages in the western world.



Figure 3.2.7.8: View of the capitals of the Temple of Mars Ultor, Forum Augusti, c. 2 B.C.E.

Subsequent emperors continued to elaborate upon the Forum of Augustus. The emperor Tiberius added two arches in 19 C.E. meant to honor the German victories of Drusus and Germanicus (Tacitus *Annales* 2.64; *CIL* 6.911) and the emperor Hadrian restored the forum complex in the second century. Pliny the Elder deemed the Forum of Augustus one of three most beautiful monuments in the city of Rome (Pliny the Elder *Natural History* 36.102.5).

Templum Pacis / Forum of Vespasian

The next imperial forum to be built was commissioned by the emperor Vespasian following the suppression of the Great Jewish Revolt that lasted from 66 to 73 C.E. Vespasian came to power following civil chaos in 69 C.E. and, together with his eldest son, Titus, suppressed the revolt and sacked the city of Jerusalem. During the summer of 71 C.E. Vespasian and Titus jointly celebrated a lavish triumph at Rome—an ancient ritual celebrating significant military victories. One of the key tenets of Vespasian's new administration was the restoration of the city, including the construction of new buildings and monuments. He dedicated a forum complex that housed a temple dedicated to Peace (*Pax*) in 71 C.E., completing it by 75 C.E. (Flavius Josephus *Jewish War* 7.5.7). This innovative complex was deemed one of Rome's most beautiful monuments by Pliny the Elder and housed not only significant spoils from Jerusalem but also masterworks of Greek art that had previously been hoarded by the emperor Nero.

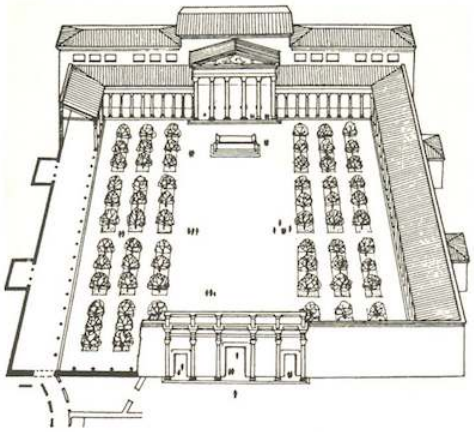


Figure 3.2.7.9: Restored plan, Temple of Peace

The Temple of Peace (*Templum Pacis*) stands out among the imperial *fora* for its innovative architectural design. Rather than featuring a central temple seated atop a prominent podium, the Templum Pacis complex consists of a square portico (dimensions 110 x 135 m) with the temple itself set within the eastern side of the portico, flanked by ancillary rooms. This left the square itself open for the installation of decorative water features and plantings which are seen both archaeologically and on fragments of the Severan marble plan of the city of Rome (*forma urbis Romae*) that was mounted in the forum complex in the third century C.E. The fragments of the Severan plan provide valuable information about the design of this architectural complex and has led scholars to speculate that the inspiration for its design may have been the great market (*macellum magnum*) of the city that had likely been destroyed in the Great Fire of Rome in 64 C.E. It is especially significant to note that this is a public space and that Vespasian's generosity granted the populace of Rome access not only to a beautiful, monumental square, but also to art and the spoils of military victory (including spoils from the Temple in Jerusalem).

Forum Transitorium



Figure 3.2.7.10: Columns and relief sculpture, Forum Transitorium (Forum of Nerva), c. 97 C.E.

The Forum Transitorium, also referred to as the Forum of Nerva, was begun by Domitian, the younger son of Vespasian. Incomplete at the time of Domitian's assassination in 96 C.E., the complex was completed by Nerva in 97 C.E. This is a narrow forum complex that abuts both the Forum of Augustus and the Templum Pacis and is constrained by these pre-existing structures (dimensions: 131 x 45 meters); as well as the Argiletum, a street that ran the length of the forum. The Forum Transitorium's temple was sacred to Minerva, who had been a patron divinity of Domitian, and the architectural sculpture that decorated the porticoes featured imagery connected to Minerva and scenes from the private lives of women.

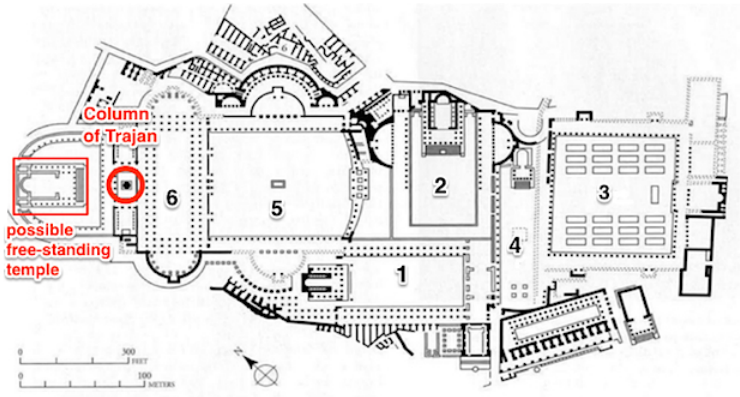


Figure 3.2.7.11: Plan of the Imperial fora showing a freestanding Temple of the Deified Trajan at the western end of the Forum of Trajan. 1) Forum of Caesar; 2) Forum of Augustus; 3) Templum Pacis; 4) Forum Transitorium; 5) Forum of Trajan; 6) Basilica Ulpia (part of Trajan's Forum)

The Forum of Trajan (*Forum Traiani*), the final imperial forum, was both the largest and the most lavish. Inaugurated in 112 C.E., the architectural complex relied upon imposing architectural and sculptural features to glorify the accomplishments and principate of the emperor Trajan. The elaborate forum complex has a vast footprint, measuring 200 x 120 meters. The open square of the forum is flanked by porticoes that contain exedrae and point viewer attention toward the main structure, the massive Basilica Ulpia. The architect Apollodorus of Damascus was responsible for the innovative design. On the western side of the basilica was another courtyard, flanked by two libraries (one Greek and one Latin), that contained a monumental honorific column, known today as the Column of Trajan.



Figure 3.2.7.12: View of the Forum of Trajan, c. 112 C.E., the Column of Trajan can be seen behind the columns of the Basilica Ulpia (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

The Column of Trajan, inaugurated in 113 C.E., is a main feature of the Forum of Trajan and is, in its own right, a masterwork of Roman art. The column carries an helical frieze of historical relief that provides a pictorial narrative of the events of Trajan's wars in Dacia (101–102 and 105–106 C.E.), culminating with the death of the enemy commander, Decebalus. The column stands 38 meters tall and its frieze wraps around the column shaft 23 times, with a total length of roughly 190 meters. Carved in bas relief, the exquisite frieze carefully narrates Trajan's campaigns and its level of detail is simply astounding.



Figure 3.2.7.13: Column of Trajan, Carrara marble, completed 113 C.E., Rome; dedicated to Emperor Trajan (Marcus Ulpius Nerva Traianus in honor of his victories over Dacia (now Romania) 101-02 and 105-06 C.E.

The column's frieze may draw inspiration from earlier Roman triumphal art, the tradition of which was inclined to depict scenes from the foreign campaigns and, in so doing, glorify the accomplishments of the commander and his soldiers. Throughout the Forum of Trajan the theme of military victory, and its celebration, permeate the monumental decorative programs.



Figure 3.2.7.14: Pontoon bridge with Roman soldiers (detail), Column of Trajan, Carrara marble, completed 113 C.E., Rome (photo: **ElissaSCA** © All rights reserved, by permission)

When Trajan died in 117 C.E., sources tell us that the Roman Senate allowed a special dispensation whereby Trajan's cremated remains could be deposited in the base of the column and that a temple to his cult (*Templum Divi Traiani et Plotinae*) was added to the forum complex between 125 and 138 C.E. (*Historia Augusta – Hadrian* 19.9). An ongoing point of scholarly contention is the position and appearance of this plan. Traditional reconstructions favor a free-standing temple at the western end of the forum, while more recent reconstructions instead favor a shrine positioned against the western exedra of the Forum of Augustus. Ongoing archaeological fieldwork may yet shed light on this contentious topographical debate.

Interpretation

The Imperial *fora* represent important architectural landscapes in the city of Rome. They demonstrate the efficacy of public art and architecture with respect to creating collective identity and communicating clear messages that both disseminate and reinforce ideology. The strength and accomplishments of the Roman state, not to mention its stability, are key themes in any such program of message making. We should also not underestimate the psychological effect of these grandiose, soaring, bedecked complexes, based around massive open plazas, on the minds and experiences of city dwellers (many of whom lived in crowded squalor). The Imperial *fora* demonstrate that within the mechanisms of Roman urbanism, civic architecture occupies a crucial role. We are reminded of this efficacy by an ancient example that is perhaps no different from the reaction of a modern visitor to the city of Rome. The emperor Constantius II, visiting Rome in the mid-fourth century C.E., was amazed by the Forum of Trajan, something he considered "a construction unique under the heavens" (Ammianus Marcellinus 16.10.15).

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L. Richardson, Jr., *A New Topographical Dictionary of Ancient Rome* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992).

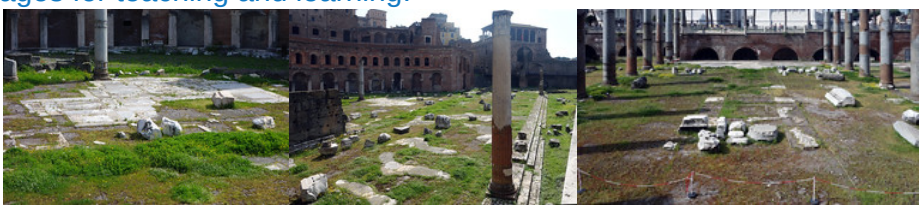
R. Ulrich, "Julius Caesar and the Creation of the Forum Iulium," *American Journal of Archaeology* 97.1:49-80.

L. Ungaro, *Il Museo dei Fori Imperiali nei mercati di Traiano* (Milan: Electa, 2007).

Mercati di Traiano Museo dei Fori Imperiali (Markets of Trajan and the Imperial Fora Museum)

Fori Imperiali (Sovrintendenza Capitolina)

SmartHistory images for teaching and learning:



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SECTION OVERVIEW

3.3: Roman art, archaeology and museums

3.3.1: Digging through time

3.3.2: Seizure of Looted Antiquities Illuminates What Museums Want Hidden

3.3.3: Looting, collecting, and exhibiting- the Bubon bronzes

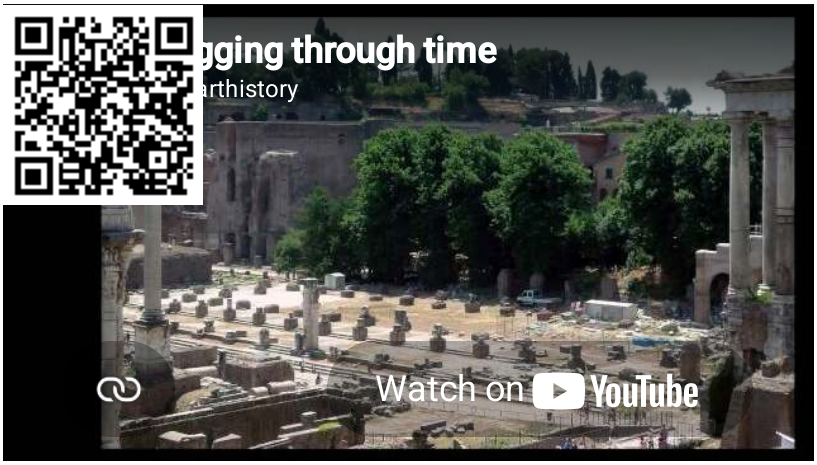
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3.3.1: Digging through time

by DR. DARIUS ARYA and DR. BETH HARRIS

Dirt and detritus have built up in Rome over the centuries—the city now sits well above ancient street level.



Video **3.3.1.1**

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3.3.2: Seizure of Looted Antiquities Illuminates What Museums Want Hidden

by DR. ELIZABETH MARLOWE

Over 20,000 precious art objects were seized in a raid at dawn — what can this tell us about beauty, theft, and the museum?

On July 4, 2018, Europol and the Italian Carabinieri's Division for the Protection of Cultural Heritage announced the culmination of "Operation Demetra." This criminal investigation, tracking a network of Sicilian archaeological looters and international traffickers, resulted in dawn raids on 40 houses in 4 countries and the arrest or detention of 23 people, and the seizure of some 20,000 plundered objects worth an estimated €40 million (approximately $46.6 million).

Art, photography, and unspoken messages



Figure 3.3.2.1: One of the looted works seized in Operation Demetra, probably a 1st century CE portrait of a member of the Roman imperial family, the Julio-Claudians (photo: **Europol**)

The Europol press release was accompanied by an uncaptioned photograph of a beautiful, naturalistic marble portrait head, presumably one of the works seized in the raids. The portrait depicts a young, beardless man wearing a veil over the back of his head. The figure has a protruding, dimpled chin, and very small ears, but there are few signs of individualization here.

On the basis of its similarity to other works, the portrait can be plausibly identified as a young man of the Roman imperial family from the early 1st century C.E. The sculptor was skilful at capturing in stone the appearance of soft, youthful skin as it stretches over cheekbones and puckers out at the corner of the mouth The nose and left cheek are damaged, but otherwise, the piece seems to be in extraordinarily fine condition. It would be a centerpiece in the ancient gallery of any museum in the world today.

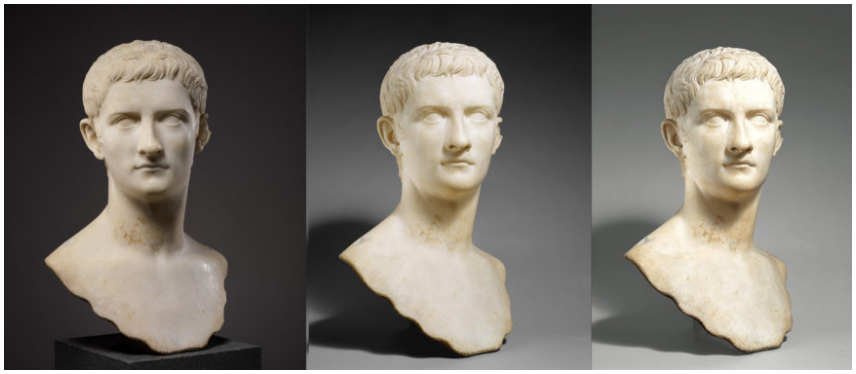


Figure 3.3.2.2: Three museum photographs of a portrait of Caligula, said to have been found near Marino, Lago Albano. Purchased by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1914 from Alfredo Barsanti, Rome (**The Metropolitan Museum of Art**)

The head has much in common with other Roman imperial portraits, but the Europol photograph is unique. The depiction is not at all how we've become accustomed to seeing ancient sculpture presented. Museum and art market photography usually features pieces like this against a seamless muslin backdrop. The backdrop can be black or gray or, for a little spice, it can fade from black

to gray or from dark gray to light. The neutral color, the absence of a horizon line and of any representational detail other than the single object itself, work together to situate the piece in an other-worldly realm, one far removed from any actual specific, physical location. The non-space of these official photographs complements the museum rhetoric of universality. This rhetoric is grounded in a philosophy of art that goes back to Immanuel Kant.

Museums and contexts



Figure **3.3.2.3**: Bronze statue identified as Marcus Aurelius, likely one of a large number of bronzes that were looted from an archaeological site in southern Turkey called Bubon in the 1960s and sold to American collectors and museums in subsequent decades (**Cleveland Museum of Art**)

Implicitly in their architecture and explicitly in their labels, art museums frame their holdings as manifestations of creativity, genius, truth, and beauty — ostensibly universal and timeless human values. This makes the objects' installation in a museum, often far removed from the particular culture and setting for which they were created and where they may still hold very different meanings, seem unproblematic and even natural.

Sometimes the rhetoric of universality takes on a more literal and pragmatic meaning, as when self-proclaimed "universal museums" claim the right to own — and retain — objects from every corner of the globe, regardless of the dubious circumstances by which they may have acquired them. The two concepts of universality are, of course, mutually reinforcing; and the gray vacuum photographs of record are part and parcel of this ideological apparatus.



Figure **3.3.2.4**: Portrait of Drusus purchased by the Cleveland Museum of Art in 2012. It was sold with provenance documents indicating an ownership history going back to the 19th century. These documents turned out to be false; the piece had in fact been stolen from a small museum near Naples in 1944. It was returned to Italy in 2017 (photo: **Daderot**, CC0)

The Europol press release photo is the antithesis of the gray vacuum images. It is teeming with details that anchor the ancient portrait in a very particular and very mundane realm. The most startling of these details are the two slippers partially visible along

the lower edge on either side of the head. These must be the slippered feet of the photographer himself, as he stood over the marble head and aimed his camera at the floor.

The head is lying on what looks like a nice Persian carpet, but our photographer was apparently untroubled by the disarray surrounding it: a pen, whose metal clip catches the light in the image's upper left corner; two pieces of battered wooden furniture; what appears to be an ornate but broken gilded plaster picture frame; and a blue crocheted blanket. It would not have taken much to push all this detritus out of the frame of the photograph, but our cameraman did not bother. He also apparently couldn't be bothered, before snapping the picture, to turn off his TV, the blue glow of which illuminates the portrait's proper right side.

These details not only root the image in a specific earthly setting; they also introduce a concept art world insiders usually take pains to hide from the general public: the inevitably messy *human agency* behind the removal and relocation of artworks or cultural objects from their original context to their end destination in a gallery display. Europol didn't release any information about the photograph itself, and it is possible that it was taken by one of the investigators. The slippered feet, however, suggest a different actor, someone in possession of the looted head in his own home.

Erasing stories, erasing the past

We know from other cases of looted antiquities that middlemen often photographed their wares after receiving them from the *tombaroli* (grave-robbers) who dug them out of the ground. The photographs were used to shop the pieces around to potential buyers. Perhaps this photograph was meant to serve as the basis for negotiations over price between the middleman and the dealer whose role in this network was to smuggle the pieces out of Italy to Munich, where, the investigators claim, they were supplied with false provenance papers and sold at auction. No doubt this laundering entailed new photography as well.



Figure **3.3.2.5**: Members of the Benin Punitive Expedition of 1897, with some of their loot (British Museum)

The Europol photograph is a stark reminder that many of those polished marble masterpieces on their spotlit museum pedestals were once merely raw goods on the floor of a crook's cluttered living room. The alchemy is usually carefully hidden from view; museums do everything they can to keep our attention away from the men behind the curtain.

In its power to reveal more profound truths about museum objects, the Europol photograph recalls the famous image of those manspreading colonialists, the members of the British Punitive Expedition, seated atop their loot at Benin in 1897. That is the "before" image to be paired with the loot's "after" images, both in photographs of record and in the beautiful modernist grid in the new Sainsbury African Galleries of the British Museum.

The fact that these "before" photographs still have the power to shock years, and even decades, after debates about "decolonizing the museum" have become widespread, and the looting of antiquities is widely recognized as a scourge, reveals how thoroughly we've been conditioned by museum rhetoric of beauty and universality. The truth is that the route to the gallery is often ugly, built on crime, brute force, and lies. When we catch a glimpse of that reality, we must not look away.



Figure **3.3.2.6**: Gallery devoted to the material from Benin, in the Sainsbury wing of the British Museum (photo: **Shadowgate**, CC BY 2.0)

This essay first appeared in **Hyperallergic** (used by permission).

Additional resources:

Peter Watson and Cecilia Todeschini. *The Medici Conspiracy: The Illicit Journey of Looted Antiquities – from Italy's Tomb Raiders to the World's Greatest Museums* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2007).

Europol's post about Operation Demetra

Read more about Operation Demetra at Artnet

More information about Operation Demetra from ARCA

Read about a campaign to return looted Benin bronzes to Nigeria at Artnet

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3.3.3: Looting, collecting, and exhibiting- the Bubon bronzes

by DR. ELIZABETH MARLOWE and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER

Where do the objects in museums come from? Explore the tension between collectors and the preservation of knowledge.



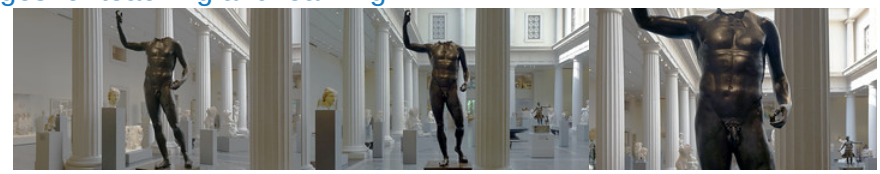
Video **3.3.3.1**: Bronze statue of a nude male figure, Greek or Roman, Hellenistic or Imperial, c. 200 B.C.E. – c. 200 C.E. (The Metropolitan Museum of Art). Speakers: Dr. Elizabeth Marlowe and Dr. Steven Zucker ARCHES: At Risk Cultural Heritage Education Series

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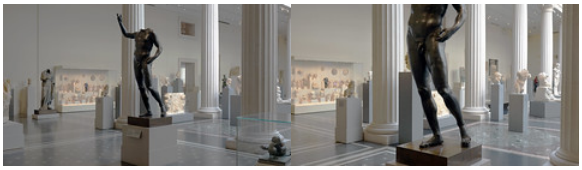
Bubon on Chasing Aphrodite

Bubon on Looting Matters

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SECTION OVERVIEW

3.4: Pompeii

3.4.1: Pompeii, an introduction

3.4.2: The rediscovery of Pompeii and the other cities of Vesuvius

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3.4.1: Pompeii, an introduction

by DR. FRANCESCA TRONCHIN

Pompeii, once called the “City of the Dead,” gives a marvelous sense of day-to-day Roman life.



Figure **3.4.1.1**: Forum, looking toward Mount Vesuvius, Pompeii

Preserved under volcanic ash



Figure **3.4.1.2**

Pompeii may be famous today, with millions of tourists visiting each year, but in the ancient world It was simply a market and trading town specializing in a fish-based condiment (called *garum*); other sites on the Bay of Naples were far better known as sumptuous vacation spots.

Pompeii was destroyed by the eruption of Mount Vesuvius (a volcano near the Bay of Naples) in 79 C.E. making the town one of the best-preserved examples of a Roman city, and tourists today marvel at the sensation of walking through a real ancient city.

While the volcano took thousands of lives and made the region uninhabitable for centuries, the layers of volcanic ash preserved Pompeii in a manner unparalleled at other ancient Roman sites. Not only have the magnificent temples and villas of the town been preserved, but also one-room workshops, graves of lower-class citizens, and modest take-out restaurants frequented by the hoi polloi. Organic materials like food, clothing, and wood are more often preserved in nearby Herculaneum, because of the differences in volcanic materials covering the two towns. And so, Pompeii, this “city of death” in fact tells us more about daily life in first-century Italy than even the city of Rome itself.



Figure **3.4.1.3**: Storefront oven and pots, Pompeii, before 79 C.E.

Not always Roman

Pompeii, however, was not always a Roman town. By the mid-sixth century B.C.E. both Etruscans and Greeks had settled in this area, yet their specific contributions to the founding of Pompeii as a city are currently poorly understood since archaeological exploration of the earliest phases of the town have been scarce. The **Doric** Temple in Pompeii's Triangular **Forum**, nevertheless, suggests a stronger Greek than Etruscan presence.



Figure **3.4.1.4**: Remains of the Doric temple in the Triangular Forum, Pompeii (photo: **Dave & Margie Hill / Kleerup**, CC BY-SA 2.0)

The 5th and 4th centuries B.C.E. at Pompeii were a time of dominance by the Samnites—an indigenous people of south-central Italy who spoke the Oscan language. Their settlement occupied what is now the south-west corner of Pompeii, a site strategically placed at the mouth of the Sarno River near the Bay of Naples. By the middle of the 4th century, the melting-pot of cultures in this region had reached a boiling point, with Greek, Samnite, and Roman residents coming into conflict.

Over the course of the 3rd century B.C.E., Pompeii was one of many Italian towns that came to be dominated by the Romans. This power shift put Pompeii on a path to prosperity and many large, new, public buildings were constructed in the late 3rd century and into the 2nd. This was the time at which the Forum acquired its general footprint and large high-status houses replaced simpler ones.



Figure 3.4.1.5: View of atrium (with a marble-lined *impluvium or* recessed basin to catch rainwater) opens to a large peristyle beyond in the ornate House of Menander, Pompeii, before 79 C.E.

Pompeii becomes Roman

The years 91-88 B.C.E. were dramatic ones for Pompeii, as it took part in a rebellion against Rome (the Social Wars). Having lost this battle of allied cities against the capital, the Roman general Sulla re-founded the city as a proper Roman colony and settled his army veterans in Pompeii. The existing inhabitants of Pompeii must have resented this move, but when new public buildings, including the Amphitheater, were constructed to meet the needs and desires of the new residents, this resentment may have eased. Later, the period of the early Roman Empire (c. 27 B.C.E.-69 C.E.) was a prosperous one for Pompeii; large, luxurious homes as well as imported goods from around the Mediterranean show up at this time.



Figure 3.4.1.6: Amphitheater, Pompeii with a view at upper left to the modern city, and upper right to the ancient city.

The City Plan and its Major Features

The vast majority of the buildings visible at Pompeii today are from the Roman period, but some earlier features remain. The nucleus of the city in the 6th century B.C.E. was situated on a plateau overlooking the Sarno River at the southwest corner of what became the final “version” of Pompeii, and was organized around sanctuaries dedicated to Apollo and Minerva (or possibly Hercules). This early city had walls and a roughly grid-shaped street plan.

As Pompeii grew in size and population, the city walls were expanded, with gates at the ends of major roads. Slowly, the largely agricultural land inside the walls was built over with homes, places of production, markets, and other urban amenities. The east-

west streets (known today by their modern names via della Fortuna, via di Nola, via dell'Abbondanza) and north-south ones (via Stabiana, via di Mercurio) formed the basis for the creation of *insulae* (city blocks), most of which are generally rectangular and contained a mix of domestic, commercial, and industrial buildings.

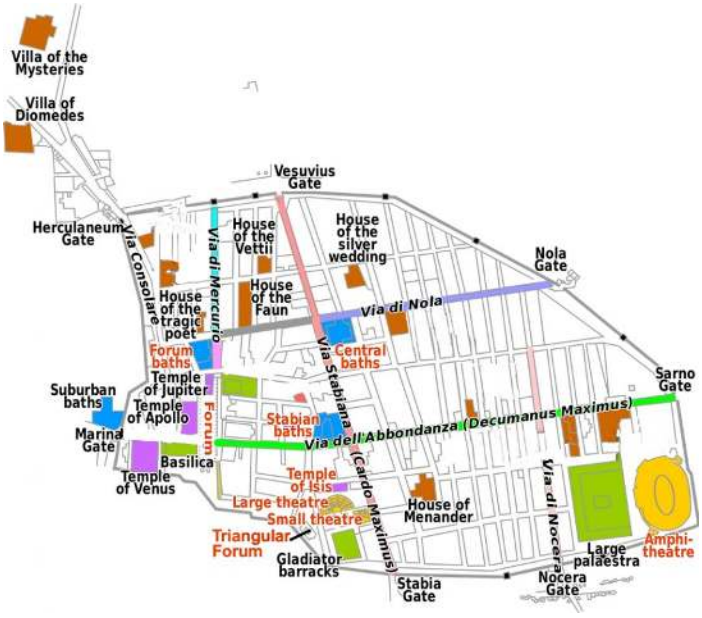


Figure **3.4.1.7**

The Forum, "theater district," amphitheater, and baths

Ancient Roman cities were almost never zoned or planned for specific activities. There are two main areas of Pompeii, however, that were loosely organized around a general function. The Forum, at the southwest corner of the city, was the site of various services and structures, and could be considered a sort of "downtown" for Pompeii.

Additionally, a kind of "entertainment district" in the south-central section of Pompeii included two theaters—one open-air, the other smaller and roofed. In these theaters, one could see plays, hear musical performances, and perhaps hold civic or social gatherings. These entertainments differ drastically from those enjoyed in the amphitheater at Pompeii.



Figure **3.4.1.8**: Pompeii Amphitheater with a Brawl between Pompeians and Nucerini, fresco in the IV Pompeian style (59-79 C.E.), was discovered in the peristilium (colonnade with garden) of the House of Actius Anicetus in 1869.

Built more than 150 years before the Colosseum in Rome, Pompeii's facility is the first known Roman amphitheater, where gladiators fought one another or hunted wild animals as a spectacle. It is estimated that between 10,000-15,000 people could be

accommodated in Pompeii's amphitheater. A fresco from a house at Pompeii illustrates in a shorthand way the *spectacula* (seating area) and *arena* (playing surface) as well as the *velarium* (sun shade) of the amphitheater.

As in Rome, Pompeii also had public establishments for bathing. At least five public baths (and scores of private ones within homes) provided not simply a place to get clean, but also opportunities for social interaction and exercise. Communal bathing was a custom for middle- and upper-class Romans; men especially would spend their afternoons in the baths, enjoying heated pools, steam rooms, cold plunge tubs, massages, ball games, and so forth, in the company of their peers and surrounded by beautiful decoration in mosaic, stucco, and sculpture.



Figure **3.4.1.9**: Painted stucco decoration, Stabian Baths, Pompeii (photo: **Matt Brisher**, CC BY 2.0)

Both the Stabian and the Forum Baths were initially constructed with public funds, indicating the extent to which such establishments were considered essential for Pompeii's residents. Surviving inscriptions, however, indicate that a wealthy citizen could contribute financing for an addition to (or renovation of) the baths, as in the case of a large marble fountain in the *caldarium* (hot-water room) of the Forum Baths.

An aqueduct fed both private and public baths, although many residents of Pompeii relied on rainwater or abundant wells in the city to supply their water. The high state of preservation at Pompeii provides a view of the city's water supply, from the aqueduct, through a distribution center at the high northern part of the town, through water towers and public fountains, and into private homes by way of terracotta and lead pipes. The most luxurious homes in Pompeii had fountains decorated with mosaics, sea shells, sculpture, and even frescoes.

The Forum

The religious, political, and commercial center of any Roman city was its forum. A kind of town center existed in the earliest phases of Pompeii at its southwest corner, but the forum only received monumental form and decoration in the 2nd century B.C.E. At that time, the Temple of Jupiter (eventually the Capitolium), Macellum (market), and Basilica (law court) were constructed and the open piazza of the forum was paved with stone. Statues of illustrious Pompeians, civic benefactors, and the imperial family stood under the forum colonnades and in the open areas of the piazza as well as in two buildings dedicated to the worship of divinized emperors—the Imperial Cult Building and the Sanctuary of Augustus (these statues are now entirely lost, save for their bases).



Figure **3.4.1.10**: Aerial view of the Forum, Pompeii (photo: **ElfQrin**, CC BY-SA 4.0)

Religious Life at Pompeii

The forum provided ample opportunity for the citizens of Pompeii to worship their various gods as well as divinized members of the imperial family. Temples to Apollo and Venus stood just outside the forum proper and represent both early (6th century B.C.E.) and later (post-80 B.C.E.) historical building periods, respectively. Smaller temples throughout Pompeii honored Jupiter, Asclepius, and Minerva (in the Greek temple in the Triangular Forum). Even more modest shrines stood at important crossroads and inside the atria of private homes. These *lararia*, dedicated to somewhat mysterious guardian deities called Lares, were decorated with paintings and received small votive offerings.



Figure **3.4.1.11**: Temple of Isis, 2nd century B.C.E., Pompeii (photo: **Carole Raddato**, CC BY-SA 2.0)

A small, yet impressive temple to the Egyptian goddess Isis stands just to the north of the Large Theater. The cult of Isis had been introduced to Italy as early as the 2nd century B.C.E. and was apparently very popular at Pompeii, as indicated by the sumptuous painted stucco decoration of the precinct walls, Fourth Style wall paintings, a marble statue of Isis herself (now in the Naples Archaeological Museum), and abundant finds of votive offerings, some of which were imported from Egypt.

Death and Burial

Because of the circumstances of its destruction, Pompeii often encourages macabre interest in those who perished in the city during the 79 C.E. eruption of Vesuvius. Yet for centuries, citizens of Pompeii had been solemnly commemorating their dead with sometimes elaborate tombs and costly grave goods. Longstanding traditions among ancient Mediterranean cultures generally prohibited burials within a city's walls and Pompeii followed that tradition. The roads leading from the various city gates are lined on both sides with tombs—some were for individual burials while others were designed for multiple occupancy (usually of the

lower classes or freed slaves). The most prestigious burials can be recognized both by their forms and by their location just outside a city gate, where they could be seen by as many passers-by as possible.



Figure **3.4.1.12**: Tomb of the Flavii, Pompeii (photo: **Gary Willis**, CC BY-SA 2.0). The tomb resembled an apartment house and had 14 identical niches, only 9 were used at the time of the eruption of Vesuvius.

There was no standard shape for Roman tombs and Pompeiian funerary monuments could be decorated with statues of the deceased, pseudo-autobiographical relief sculpture, wall paintings, and even functional features like benches. Multiple-occupancy "house tombs," popular in the last century of Pompeii's existence, contained the cremated remains of various members of a single family or social group. These lower-cost tombs had brief inscriptions about the deceased persons and small niches held the stone, ceramic, or glass ash urns.

An open-air museum

At the time of the destruction of the city, an estimated 15,000 people lived in Pompeii. As many as 2,000 died in the ash and toxic gases of Vesuvius' eruption in 79 C.E. The city today is an open-air museum dedicated to the experience of walking through an ancient Roman town. And while the houses and wall paintings from the last phase of Pompeii are what attracts the most visitors, the city's complex social and building history, as well as the urban infrastructure, are worth noting as well.



Video **3.4.1.1**: Reconstruction of the house of Caecilius Iucundus from Lund University

Additional Resources:

Ancient Graffiti Project

Pompeii Bibliography and Mapping Project

Pompeii in Pictures

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3.4.2: The rediscovery of Pompeii and the other cities of Vesuvius

by DR. FRANCESCA TRONCHIN



Figure **3.4.2.1**: Forum of Pompeii, looking toward Mount Vesuvius (photo: **Steven Zucker**, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

The eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 C.E. destroyed and largely buried the cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum and other sites in southern Italy under ash and rock. The rediscovery of these sites in the modern era is as fascinating as the cities themselves and provides a window onto the history of both art history and archaeology.



Figure **3.4.2.2**

The eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 C.E. destroyed and largely buried the cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum and other sites in southern Italy under ash and rock. The rediscovery of these sites in the modern era is as fascinating as the cities themselves and provides a window onto the history of both art history and archaeology.

Pompeii today

Today the site of Pompeii is open to tourists from all over the world. Major projects in survey, excavation, and preservation are supervised by Italian and American universities as well as ones from Britain, Sweden, and Japan. Currently, the major concern at Pompeii is conservation—officials must deal with the intersection of increased tourism, the deterioration of buildings to a sometimes dangerous state, and shrinking funding for archaeological and art historical monuments. The 250-year-long story of the unearthing of Pompeii, Herculaneum, and the other sites destroyed by Vesuvius in 79 C.E. has always been one of shifting priorities and methodologies, yet always in recognition of the special status of this archaeological zone.

Hidden for centuries?

The popular understanding of the immediate aftermath of the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius is that Pompeii, Herculaneum, and sites like Oplontis and Stabiae, lay buried under ash and volcanic material—completely sealed off from human intervention, undisturbed and hidden for centuries. Archaeological and geological evidence, however, indicates that there were rescue operations soon after the eruption (see, for example, the tunnels dug through the House of the Menander) and that some parts of these cities remained visible for some time (the forum

colonnade at Pompeii was not completely covered). Throughout the Middle Ages, Pompeii was entirely deserted, yet locals referred to the area as *La Cività* ("the settlement"), perhaps informed by folk memory of the city's existence.



Figure **3.4.2.3**: Sebastian Pether, *The Eruption of Vesuvius*, 1825, oil on wood panel (The Nelson Atkins Museum of Art). Vesuvius erupted again in the late 1700s and early 1800s. Though Pether travelled to Italy to paint the volcano, here he depicted the one eyewitness account of the eruption in 79 C.E. by Pliny the Younger.

Excavations begin

While Renaissance scholars must have been aware of Pompeii and its destruction through various ancient written sources, the first "archaeologist" in the area was apparently unimpressed with his discoveries. From 1594-1600, the architect Domenico Fontana worked on new constructions in the area and accidentally excavated a number of wall paintings, inscriptions, and architectural blocks while digging a canal. No one undertook follow-up explorations for nearly a century and a half, despite the general interest in antiquity and rudimentary archaeology at the time.



Figure **3.4.2.4**: This bronze was probably the most celebrated sculpture discovered at Herculaneum and Pompeii in the eighteenth century. It was excavated in 1759 at the Villa of the Papyri in Herculaneum and kept in the royal palace at Portici. *Seated Mercury* (also known as *Hermes at Rest*), Roman copy of an ancient Greek bronze, 105 cm (Museo Nazionale, Naples, photo: **Marie-Lan Nguyen**, CC BY 2.5)

The eighteenth century saw the first large-scale excavations in this region, motivated by the desire to collect works of ancient art as much as by a scientific curiosity about the past. Further incidental discoveries in the early decades of the 1700s prompted Charles VII, King of Spain, Naples, and Sicily, to commission a survey of the area of Herculaneum.

Official excavation began in October 1738, under the supervision of Rocque Joaquin de Alcubierre, a military engineer who tunneled through the practically petrified volcanic material with dynamite to find remains of Herculaneum more than 20 meters under the surface. This dangerous work (tunnel collapse and toxic gases were a constant threat), yielded wall paintings, life-size sculpture in both bronze and marble, and papyrus scrolls from the Villa of the Papyri. Many of these recovered works went to decorate the palace of the king. Archaeology was still in its infancy as a practical field of study at this time, and was often more about "treasure-hunting" than careful research or documentation.

A Swiss engineer, Karl Jakob Weber, took over the excavation of Herculaneum from de Alcubierre in 1750 and brought more cautious methods to the site. Weber's practices of recording the findspots of important objects in three dimensions and making detailed plans of architectural remains laid the foundations for the indispensable procedures of modern archaeology. De Alcubierre shifted his focus to

Pompeii, which had just been (re)discovered in 1748. Among the early excavations there were the amphitheater and an inscription confirming the town's name: REI PUBLICAE POMPEIANORUM. With finds from Herculaneum and Pompeii increasing exponentially, King Charles inaugurated a Royal Academy in Naples in 1755, dedicated to mapping the sites and publishing significant discoveries.

The new fields of archaeology and art history and the building of a royal collection



Figure **3.4.2.5**: Anton Raphael Mengs, *Johann Joachim Winckelmann*, c. 1777, oil on canvas, 63.5 x 49.2 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

The field of art history was emerging concurrently with these early excavations and naturally sites like Pompeii and Herculaneum were of great interest to the man who coined the term "history of art"—the German scholar Johann Joachim Winckelmann. His reports on the finds from this area fanned the flames of European fervor for classical antiquity (ancient Greece and Rome), and Grand Tour travelers from Britain and elsewhere beat a path to Pompeii and Herculaneum in the late 18th century.

Although Winckelmann was most concerned with categorizing Greek and Roman sculpture, he was also keenly interested in the new field of archaeology: he knew enough of this science to criticize the secrecy and aggressive methods of de Alcubierre, an action that got Winckelmann effectively banned from Pompeii.

It was actually King Charles's desire (and that of his successor Ferdinand) for beautiful artifacts that closed much of the excavations off to outside scholars, with most of the important finds going directly into the private royal collection. The king also enacted laws forbidding the export of antiquities from the Kingdom of Naples. Even the publication of the monumental *Le antichità di Ercolano esposte (The antiquities of Herculaneum displayed*, 1757-92*)* was tightly controlled and the illustrated volumes were only selectively presented to other European monarchs by the king himself.

Preservation and access

With the arrival of Francesco la Vega as director of excavations in Pompeii in 1780, the conservation of buildings and artifacts became a priority. Francesco, and his brother Pietro after him, removed valuable artifacts to the new Naples Museum, where they joined other pieces from the royal collection. Francesco la Vega also embraced Weber's concerns for recording three-dimensional contexts, and it was under his leadership that the Triangular Forum, the Temple of Isis, and the theater district were uncovered. However, like many archaeologists at Pompeii, la Vega struggled with a significant conflict: a desire to preserve the rare ancient wall paintings in situ while maintaining the site as a singular opportunity for visiting an ancient Roman city whose walls and roofs still stood. Paintings and buildings were left open to both treasure-hungry visitors and the elements, resulting in both natural and man-made deterioration at Pompeii.



Figure **3.4.2.6**: Temple of Isis, Pompeii (photo: **Amphipolis**, CC BY-SA 2.0)

Perhaps no archaeologist had such a significant influence on the exploration of Pompeii as Giuseppe Fiorelli. He was superintendent of Pompeii for twelve years (1863-1875) during a supremely patriotic moment after the unification of Italy in 1860 when the country's archaeological heritage was a tremendous source of pride. Fiorelli did not meet his goal of uncovering the entire city—only about one third of the Pompeii was excavated—but he accomplished other important tasks and brought new techniques to the site.

Opening the site to visitors and the first entrance fee

Fiorelli systematically organized the site by dividing it into nine regions and providing a system of "addresses" for insulae (city blocks) and doorways. In a dramatic shift from the restrictive 18th-century approach to tourism in Pompeii, Fiorelli opened the site up to visitors from all over the world—and he also introduced the first entrance fee. His exhaustive reports on the excavations kept scholars apprised of developments on the site.

Fiorelli is best known for his use of plaster casting techniques which permitted a kind of preservation of otherwise ephemeral archaeological finds like wood and human remains. By pouring plaster into voids in the ash left by decomposed organic material, Fiorelli's casts gave form to things like wooden doors, window frames, furniture, and of course the victims of the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius. The casts of human remains—including adults and children, not to mention a pet dog—remind visitors to this day that the great gift of Pompeii's archaeology came at tremendous cost (as many as 2,000 people lost their lives).



Figure **3.4.2.7**: Plaster cast of a body, Forum storage, Pompeii (photo: **Steven Zucker**, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Archaeological investigation continues—as an international project

In the late 19th century, exploration of Pompeii and Herculaneum became a more international project. The British diplomat Sir William Hamilton had already published studies of volcanic activity and painted pottery from the region in the late 18th century. German scholars of the 1800s studied inscriptions (Theodor Mommsen), outlined the city plan (Heinrich Nissen), and created typologies of wall painting (Wolfgang Helbig). August Mau's thorough categorization of the Four Styles of Pompeian frescoes, published in 1882, remains the basis for

wall painting studies today. The late 19th century also saw the excavation and restoration of two of Pompeii's most spectacular houses—the House of the Vettii and the House of the Silver Wedding.



Figure 3.4.2.8: House of the Vettii, Pompeii, Italy, Imperial Roman, c. second century B.C.E., rebuilt 62-79 C.E., cut stone and fresco (photo: Peter Stewart, CC BY-NC 2.0)

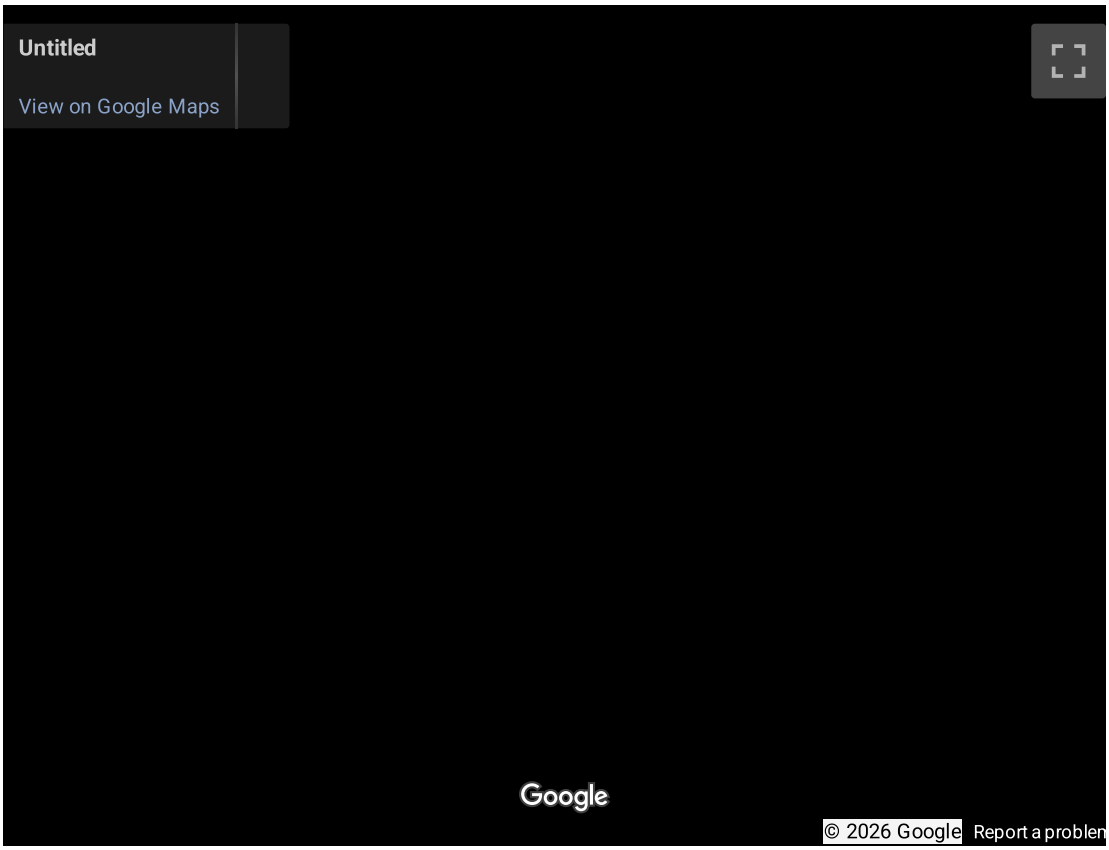
Pompeii in the 20th century: interruptions to archaeological work and bombing

The 20th century continued to be a very productive time at Pompeii for Italian archaeologists, even though work was interrupted by world events. Vittorio Spinazzola (director, 1911-1923) opened a massive excavation campaign along the Via dell'Abbondanza. His work not only uncovered important residences like the House of Octavius Quartio, but also contributed to our understanding of upper floors of Pompeian buildings. Spinazzola's work was interrupted by the outbreak of World War I and he was forced to step down from his position by Italy's Fascist government. Amedeo Maiuri was the director of excavations from 1923-1962 and oversaw the discovery of the Villa of Mysteries and the House of the Menander.

Although work was stopped again at Pompeii during the Second World War, Maiuri succeeded in broadening the excavations to the extent seen today: about two-thirds to three-quarters of the city's final phase has been uncovered. Maiuri was also concerned with pre-Roman Pompeii, opening excavations below the most recent layer; he also undertook extensive restoration and conservation work.

A terrible moment for Pompeii occurred in 1943 when the Allies dropped more than 150 bombs on the site, believing Germans were hiding soldiers and munitions among the ruins. At least one bomb fell on the on-site museum, destroying some of the more interesting artifacts discovered by that time.

Nevertheless, thanks to the efforts of the many archaeologists and researchers who have worked to uncover the remains of Pompeii and Herculaneum over the last three centuries, today we can again walk the streets of these fascinating ancient Roman towns.



Additional resources:

The eruption story from The British Museum

Dr. Damian Robinson, “The Elite House and Commercial Life along the Via dell’Abbondanza”

Dr. John J. Dobbins, “Public Space and via dell’Abbondanza”

Archaeological Areas of Pompei, Herculaneum and Torre Annunziata (UNESCO)

Roman domestic architecture – the insula

Roman wall painting styles

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SECTION OVERVIEW

3.5: Wall Painting

Paintings from antiquity rarely survive, but thanks to the eruption of Mount Vesuvius and the preservation of Pompeii and Herculaneum, we can see what the Romans saw.

c. 200 B.C.E. - 79 C.E.

3.5.1: Roman wall painting styles

3.5.2: Painted Garden, Villa of Livia

3.5.3: Still Life with Peaches

3.5.4: Pompeii- House of the Vettii

3.5.5: Dionysiac frieze, Villa of Mysteries, Pompeii

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3.5.1: Roman wall painting styles

by DR. JESSICA LEAY AMBLER

Mount Vesuvius buried Pompeii two millennia ago—creating a time capsule of the evolution of Roman painting.



Figure **3.5.1.1**: Example of a Fourth Style painting, before 79 C.E., fresco, Pompeii

Why Pompeii?

Paintings from antiquity rarely survive—paint, after all, is a much less durable medium than stone or bronze sculpture. But it is thanks to the ancient Roman city of Pompeii that we can trace the history of Roman wall painting. The entire city was buried in volcanic ash in 79 C.E. when the volcano at Mount Vesuvius erupted, thus preserving the rich colors in the paintings in the houses and monuments there for thousands of years until their rediscovery. These paintings represent an uninterrupted sequence of two centuries of evidence. And it is thanks to August Mau, a nineteenth-century German scholar, that we have a classification of four styles of Pompeian wall painting.



Figure **3.5.1.2**: View of Mount Vesuvius from Pompeii

The four styles that Mau observed in Pompeii were not unique to the city and can be observed elsewhere, like Rome and even in the provinces, but Pompeii and the surrounding cities buried by Vesuvius contain the largest continuous source of evidence for the period. The Roman wall paintings in Pompeii that Mau categorized were true frescoes (or buon fresco), meaning that pigment was applied to wet plaster, fixing the pigment to the wall. Despite this durable technique, painting is still a fragile medium and, once exposed to light and air, can fade significantly, so the paintings discovered in Pompeii were a rare find indeed.



Figure 3.5.1.3: Example of First Style painting, House of Sallust, Pompeii, built 2nd century, B.C.E.

In the paintings that survived in Pompeii, Mau saw four distinct styles. The first two were popular in the Republican period (which ended in 27 B.C.E.) and grew out of Greek artistic trends (Rome had recently conquered Greece). The second two styles became fashionable in the Imperial period. His chronological description of stylistic progression has since been challenged by scholars, but they generally confirm the logic of Mau's approach, with some refinements and theoretical additions. Beyond tracking how the styles evolved out of one another, Mau's categorizations focused on how the artist divided up the wall and used paint, color, image and form—either to embrace or counteract—the flat surface of the wall.



Figure 3.5.1.4: Example of First Style painting, House of the Faun, Pompeii, built 2nd century, B.C.E. (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

First Pompeian Style

Mau called the First Style the "Incrustation Style" and believed that its origins lay in the Hellenistic period—in the 3rd century B.C.E. in Alexandria. The First Style is characterized by colorful, patchwork walls of brightly painted faux-marble. Each rectangle of painted "marble" was connected by stucco moldings that added a three-dimensional effect. In temples and other official buildings, the Romans used costly imported marbles in a variety of colors to decorate the walls.



Figure **3.5.1.5**: Detail of faux marble, Villa of the Mysteries, before 79 C.E., fresco, just outside the walls of Pompeii on the Road to Herculaneum (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Ordinary Romans could not afford such expense, so they decorated their homes with painted imitations of the luxurious yellow, purple and pink marbles. Painters became so skilled at imitating certain marbles that the large, rectangular slabs were rendered on the wall marbled and veined, just like real pieces of stone. Great examples of the First Pompeian Style can be found in the House of the Faun and the House of Sallust, both of which can still be visited in Pompeii.

Second Pompeian style

The Second style, which Mau called the "Architectural Style," was first seen in Pompeii around 80 B.C.E. (although it developed earlier in Rome) and was in vogue until the end of the first century B.C.E. The Second Pompeian Style developed out of the First Style and incorporated elements of the First, such as faux marble blocks along the base of walls.



Figure **3.5.1.6**: Example of Second Style painting, cubiculum (bedroom), Villa of P. Fannius Synistor at Boscoreale, 50–40 B.C.E., fresco 265.4 x 334 x 583.9 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

While the First Style embraced the flatness of the wall, the Second Style attempted to trick the viewer into believing that they were looking through a window by painting illusionistic images. As Mau's name for the Second Style implies, architectural elements drive the paintings, creating fantastic images filled with columns, buildings and stoas.



Figure **3.5.1.7**: Example of Second Style painting, cubiculum (bedroom), Villa of P. Fannius Synistor at Boscoreale, 50–40 B.C.E., fresco (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

In one of the most famous examples of the Second Style, P. Fannius Synistor's bedroom (now reconstructed in the Metropolitan Museum of Art), the artist utilizes multiple vanishing points. This technique shifts the perspective throughout the room, from balconies to fountains and along colonnades into the far distance, but the visitor's eye moves continuously throughout the room, barely able to register that he or she has remained contained within a small room.



Figure **3.5.1.8**: Example of Second Style painting, view of the Dionysiac frieze, Villa of the Mysteries, before 79 C.E., fresco, 15 x 22 feet, just outside the walls of Pompeii on the Road to Herculaneum (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

The Dionysian paintings from Pompeii's Villa of the Mysteries are also included in the Second Style because of their illusionistic aspects. The figures are examples of megalographia, a Greek term referring to life-size paintings. The fact that the figures are the same size as viewers entering the room, as well as the way the painted figures sit in front of the columns dividing the space, are meant to suggest that the action taking place is surrounding the viewer.

Third Pompeian Style

The Third Style, or Mau's "Ornate Style," came about in the early 1st century C.E. and was popular until about 50 C.E. The Third Style embraced the flat surface of the wall through the use of broad, monochromatic planes of color, such as black or dark red, punctuated by minute, intricate details.

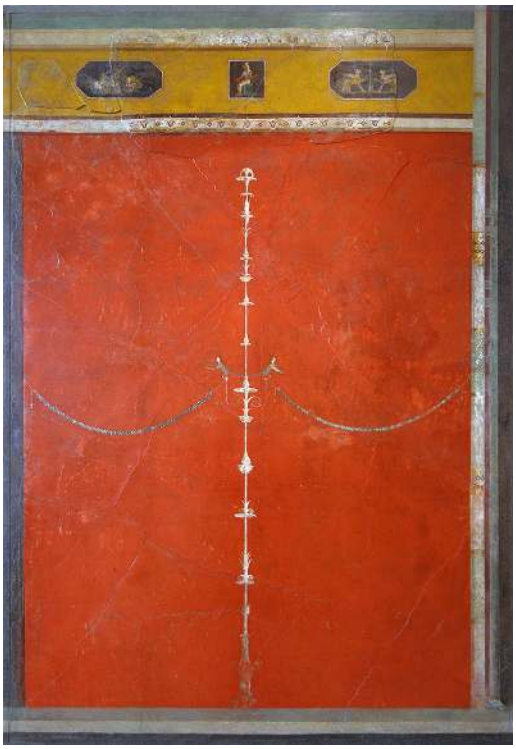


Figure **3.5.1.9**: Example of Third Style painting, panel with candelabrum, Villa Agrippa Postumus, Boscotrecase, last decade of the 1st century B.C.E. (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

The Third Style was still architectural but rather than implementing plausible architectural elements that viewers would see in their everyday world (and that would function in an engineering sense), the Third Style incorporated fantastic and stylized columns and pediments that could only exist in the imagined space of a painted wall. The Roman architect Vitruvius was certainly not a fan of Third Style painting, and he criticized the paintings for representing monstrosities rather than real things, "for instance, reeds are put in the place of columns, fluted appendages with curly leaves and volutes, instead of pediments, candelabra supporting representations of shrines, and on top of their pediments numerous tender stalks and volutes growing up from the roots and having human figures senselessly seated upon them…" (Vitr.De arch.VII.5.3) The center of walls often feature very small vignettes, such as sacro-idyllic landscapes, which are bucolic scenes of the countryside featuring livestock, shepherds, temples, shrines and rolling hills.



Figure **3.5.1.10**: Example of Third Style painting, panel with candelabrum (detail with Egyptian motif), Villa Agrippa Postumus, Boscotrecase, last decade of the 1st century B.C.E. (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

The Third Style also saw the introduction of Egyptian themes and imagery, including scenes of the Nile as well as Egyptian deities and motifs.

Fourth Pompeian Style

The Fourth Style, what Mau calls the "Intricate Style," became popular in the mid-first century C.E. and is seen in Pompeii until the city's destruction in 79 C.E. It can be best described as a combination of the three styles that came before. Faux marble blocks along the base of the walls, as in the First Style, frame the naturalistic architectural scenes from the Second Style, which in turn

combine with the large flat planes of color and slender architectural details from the Third Style. The Fourth Style also incorporates central panel pictures, although on a much larger scale than in the third style and with a much wider range of themes, incorporating mythological, genre, landscape and still life images. In describing what we now call the Fourth Style, Pliny the Elder said that it was developed by a rather eccentric, albeit talented, painter named Famulus who decorated Nero's famous Golden Palace. (Pl.NH XXXV.120) Some of the best examples of Fourth Style painting come from the House of the Vettii which can also be visited in Pompeii today.



Figure 3.5.1.11: Example of Fourth Style painting, Ixion Room, House of the Vetii, Pompeii, 1st century C.E.

Post-Pompeian painting: What happens next?

August Mau takes us as far as Pompeii and the paintings found there, but what about Roman painting after 79 C.E.? The Romans did continue to paint their homes and monumental architecture, but there isn't a Fifth or Sixth Style, and later Roman painting has been called a pastiche of what came before, simply combining elements of earlier styles. The Christian catacombs provide an excellent record of painting in Late Antiquity, combining Roman techniques and Christian subject matter in unique ways.

Additional Resources:

Roman Painting on the Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

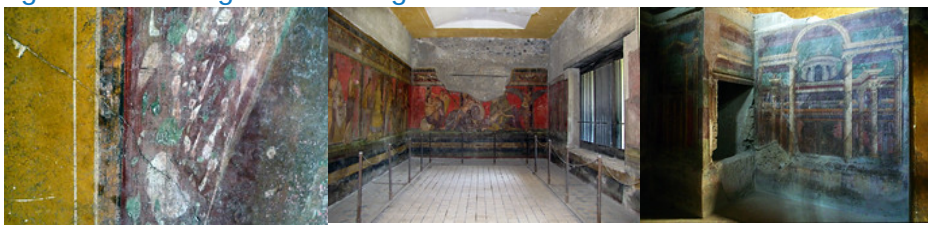
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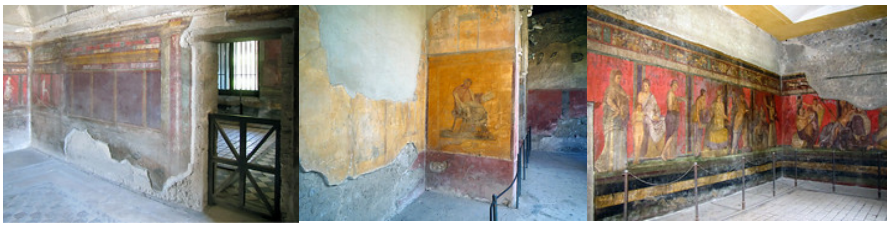
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3.5.2: Painted Garden, Villa of Livia

by DR. STEVEN ZUCKER and DR. BETH HARRIS

Step into a stunning painted garden that gives insight into the flora and fauna of ancient Rome.



The plant species depicted include: umbrella pine, oak, red fir, quince, pomegranate, myrtle, oleander, date palm, strawberry, laurel, viburnum, holm oak, boxwood, cypress, ivy, acanthus, rose, poppy, chrysanthemum, chamomile, fern, violet, and iris.

Additional resources:

Roman Painting on the Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

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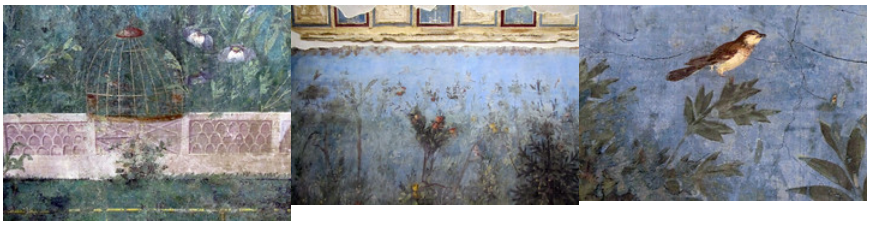
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3.5.3: Still Life with Peaches

by DR. LEA CLINE

Hospitality was key in ancient Rome, and this wall painting shows the gifts that guests may have received.



Figure **3.5.3.1**: Still Life with Peaches *and Water Jar* (left), *Still Life with a Silver Tray with Prunes, Dried figs, Dates and Glass of Wine* (center), and *Still Life with Branch of Peaches*, Fourth Style wall painting from Herculaneum, Italy, c. 62-69 C.E., fresco, 14 x 13 1/2 inches (**Archaeological Museum, Naples**)

Hostess gifts

When I was growing up, my (proper, Southern) mother always insisted that I bring a hostess gift to my friend's parents when I spent the night at their house. A typical teenager, I thought she was annoyingly old fashioned. This painting, *Still Life with Peaches and Water Jar*, proves that she was old fashioned…really old fashioned. It turns out that the practice of presenting hostess gifts dates back to the ancient Greeks; in antiquity, though, it was the host—not the guest—who presented the gifts. This small fresco is an example of how the Romans played the hostess game and how this generosity was captured by ancient Roman artists.

House of the Stags, Herculaneum

Archaeologists discovered *Still Life with Peaches and Water Jar* in the House of the Stags in Herculaneum, once a wealthy, seaside town on the Bay of Naples just a few miles north of Pompeii. Like Pompeii, Herculaneum was destroyed by the eruption of nearby Mt. Vesuvius on August 24, 79 C.E. The House of the Stags, named after two sculptures of stags (or male deer) found in its peristyle garden, was among the fanciest houses in town, oriented to take full advantage of Herculaneum's panoramic sea view. Archaeologists believe that the house was owned by the wealthy merchant Q. Granius Verus since his stamp was discovered on a loaf of bread, amazingly preserved by the volcanic ash, unearthed in the house. (Stamping bread was a common practice because Roman houses, unlike most modern houses, did not have private ovens. Ovens were dangerous and hot so most Romans took their bread out for baking after preparing the dough at home. You stamped your loaf so it would not get mixed up in the ovens or claimed by someone else.)



Figure **3.5.3.2**: House of the Stags, Herculanum (photo: **Cornell University**)

We cannot be sure whether the family of the Granii were the original builders of the house (likely during the reign of the emperor Claudius, from 41-54 C.E.) but they seem likely to have undertaken a major renovation not long before Mt. Vesuvius erupted. In the years immediately preceding the destruction of Herculaneum, all 25 rooms in the House of the Stags were repaired and redecorated in the newest style of painting—the Fourth Style; only the old atrium, with its historic frescoes, remained untouched as

a sign of the house's historic importance. So, although the house survives today only as a ruin, when the Granii family woke up on that fateful morning in 79 C.E., they would have experienced a home resplendent with freshly painted walls and colorful mosaic floors, terrace fountains filling the spaces with the sound of trickling water, and gardens filling the house with wafts of sweet fragrance carried in by the sea air. It is too bad the day did not end as nicely.

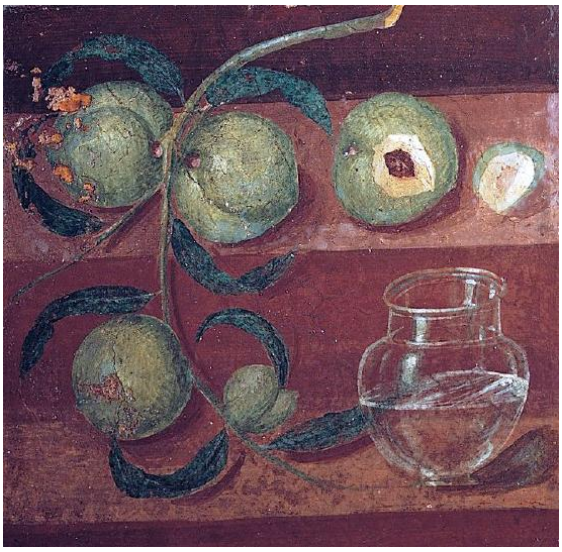


Figure **3.5.3.3**: Still Life with Peaches and Water Jar, detail of a Fourth Style wall painting from Herculaneum, Italy, c. 62-69 C.E., fresco, 14 x 13 1/2 inches (**Archaeological Museum, Naples**)

Still Life with Peaches and Water Jar was one small part of this house's decorative scheme, not meant to be seen in isolation. It was part of a series of at least ten roughly-square still-life compositions, painted together in a row, sharing decorative borders. This series of paintings presents a variety of fruits, crustaceans, fish, fowl, meats, vegetables, and drinking vessels set against a neutral brown background, sometimes with a step, shelf or wall niche on which the artist arranged the display.

Still Life with Peaches and Water Jar features five unripe peaches (one only barely formed), their branch cascading off a shelf, and a glass jar of water in the foreground. One of the peaches has been pulled from the branch and bitten open, revealing a reddish pit and white flesh that contrast sharply against its yellow-green skin. The glass jar shows the artist's ability to register two types of transparency at once: the clear glass vessel and the clear liquid that it contains. While the patron may have wanted the glass, among the most expensive luxuries in Roman Italy, included as a display of their wealth, the artist turned it into an opportunity to demonstrate his skill at depicting these visually complex attributes in perspective.

Xenia (hospitality)

Still Life with Peaches and Water Jar, like the small scenes that accompanied it, belongs to a category of still life paintings known as *xenia*, drawing on the Greek word for "guest-friendship" or hospitality. *Xenia* (hospitality) was shown to guests who were far from home by accommodating them and by presenting them with the means to be comfortable (a bed, food, a bath, etc.). This was not just a matter of being polite, but was considered a religious obligation for the Greeks—an idea preserved in both Homeric epic and mythology. The Greeks believed that Zeus Xenios, Zeus's role as protector of guests, wandered in disguise with travelers, testing the capacity of hosts to be generous and tolerant. Although the devotion with which the Greeks pursued the quality of *xenia* was not matched by the Romans, the Romans nevertheless took pride in their ability to provide hospitality to guests, especially those whose social favor they wanted to earn (those who were more wealthy and socially important). *Xenia*, for the Romans, was more about the display of hospitality for appearance's sake than it was a religious devotion.



Figure **3.5.3.4**: Still Life with Hen (left), *Still Life with Two Cuttlefish, a Silver Jug, Bird, Shells, Snails and Lobster* (center), and *Still-life with a Hare and Grapes* (right), Fourth Style wall painting from Herculaneum, Italy, c. 62-69 C.E., fresco, 14 x 13 1/2 inches (**Archaeological Museum, Naples**)

The small *xenia* paintings at the House of the Stags are not unusual; many rich houses, especially houses and villas located along the coast where visitors from Rome might want to travel to escape the summer heat (or political turmoil), were outfitted with special guest quarters. *Xenia* paintings are frequently found in these rooms, announcing to these guests that they would be lavished with the finest foods and service wear while in the house. The ancient Roman architect Vitruvius suggested that the *xenia* include, in particular, "poultry, eggs, vegetables, and other country produce" as a way to highlight the experience of getting out of the city and into the countryside (*de Architectura* VI.7.4). The *xenia* at the House of the Stags, as Vitruvius might have liked, present fruits and fish (known as area specialties) along with the standard fare.



Figure **3.5.3.5**: Still-Life with Chicken and Hare (left), *Still Life with Partridge, Pomegranate and Apple* (second from let), *Still Life with Thrushes and Mushrooms* (third from left), *Still-Life with Partridges and Eels* (far right), Fourth Style wall painting from Herculaneum, Italy, c. 62-69 C.E., fresco, 14 x 13 1/2 inches (**Archaeological Museum, Naples**)

Xenia paintings or mosaics also appear in more public areas of houses where clients (people who depend on the homeowner's business) and less-wealthy visitors might see them. In these cases, the *xenia* spoke to the wealth of the family, and the level of generosity that they could afford to show to those lucky enough to be invited (even if the viewers did not belong to that chosen group). I suspect that my mother had a different idea when sending me with hostess gifts: more an apology for whatever trouble I might get in than a display of wealth and social importance. Still, her insistence that I present myself with hostess gift in hand demonstrates that showing our best and accommodating guests with grace has never gone out of style.

Additional resources:

Roman Painting on the Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

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3.5.4: Pompeii- House of the Vettii

by DR. JEFFREY A. BECKER

Buried by a volcanic eruption two thousand years ago, this Roman house was the epitome of wealth and style.



Figure **3.5.4.1**: View of the Forum with Mount Vesuvius in the distance, Pompeii (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

The ancient city may be quiet now, its life ended by a fantastic cataclysm nearly two thousand years ago, but the remains of houses, decorations, and the objects of daily life whisper to us about the lives of the ancient people who inhabited Pompeii before the eruption of Mount Vesuvius. Domestic spaces, in particular, offer a rich resource for examining ancient lives that, in some cases, ended abruptly. Pompeii was thriving up until the moment of its destruction and in studying its life interrupted, we arrive at important insights about what it was like to live in the Roman Mediterranean.



Figure **3.5.4.2**: Fourth style wall paintings (from a room off the peristyle), House of the Vettii, Pompeii (photo: **Lady Erin**, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

Overview

The House of the Vettii or Casa dei Vettii (VI xv,1) is a Roman townhouse (*domus*) located within the ruined ancient city of Pompeii, Italy. A volcanic eruption destroyed Pompeii in the year 79 C.E., thus preserving extraordinary archaeological remains of the Roman town as it was at the time of its cataclysmic destruction. Those remains constitute a nearly unparalleled resource for the study of the Roman world.

Domus architecture

Beginning with the Renaissance interest in all things classical, architectural historians and archaeologists have been debating the form and function of ancient Roman houses for several hundred years. The interest in the domestic architectural form was fueled further by the re-discovery, in the middle of the eighteenth century, of Pompeii, Herculaneum, and other sites destroyed by Vesuvius.



Figure 3.5.4.3: Street view, House of the Vettii, Pompeii (photo: Mark L. Brack, 1995, posted by Penn State University, CC BY-NC 2.0)

A house is, of course, a dwelling—but it is also a stage on which the rituals of daily life and social hierarchy would be performed. During the time of the Roman republic (fifth through first centuries B.C.E.), ranking aristocratic families (patricians) used domestic display as a way to reinforce social position and as a way to advance their own fortunes, as well as those of their dependents and clients (*clientes*), within the community. Since Republican society operated on the basis of this patron-client relationship, the *domus* played a key part in the reinforcement of social hierarchy as the patron (*patronus*) would receive his clients (*clientes*) in the atrium of his *domus* each business day. While visiting with the patron, each client would get an eyeful of the patron's household wealth, thus applying implicit pressure on the patron to ensure that his house was tasteful and fashionable.

The patron-client system revolved around asymmetrical social relationships whereby lower ranking clients were bound to their patrons by the qualities of trust (*fides*) and dutifulness (*pietas*). Governed by ancestral custom (*mos maiorum*), clients would seek support and favors from the patron; in turn the patron provided protection, support, and benefaction, collectively known as *patrocinium*. This system had changed somewhat by the time of the brothers Vettii and it is unclear to what extent the patron-client system factored in their lives or in their own domestic sphere.

In his treatise on Roman architecture, the first century B.C.E. author Vitruvius outlines the key elements, proportions, and aesthetics of the Roman house, creating what has been treated as a canonical recommendation for domestic architecture of the period. The Vitruvian canon (or standard) proposes a range of plans, suggesting strongly that the organization of interior space was important in Roman architectural theory (***De Architectura* 6.3.3-6**). Although the plan of the Roman *domus* does reflect the canonical aspects described by Vitruvius, we also see enormous variation with modifications and remodeling undertaken over time.

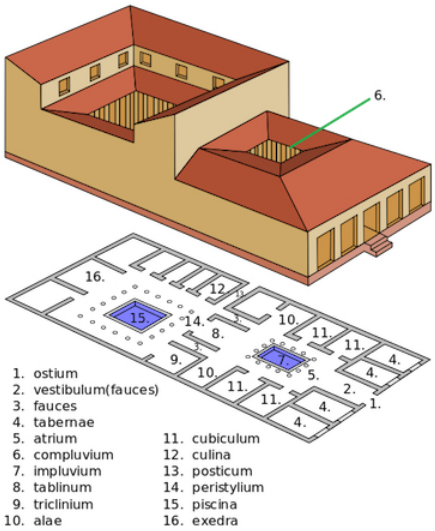


Figure 3.5.4.4: Standard plan of an ancient Roman Domus

The standard house (*domus*) plan has several key architectural elements. Generally entered from the street via a narrow doorway (*fauces*), the large centralized reception hall (*atrium*) is flanked by wings (*alae*) and often bounded by bedrooms (*cubicula*). The office of the head of household (*paterfamilias*), known as the tablinum, links the public part of the house (*pars urbana*) to the private part of the house (*pars rustica*). This latter area often focuses on an open, colonnaded courtyard (peristylium) and serves as the center of family life, with the kitchen (*culina*), dining room(s) (*triclinium* or *oecus*), and often a small garden (*hortus*). Many houses also had a second level that may have contained additional sleeping spaces and perhaps storage.

Excavation and identification

The House of the Vettii was excavated between late 1894 and early 1896. The artifacts that were recovered allowed for the identification of the house's putative owners, Aulus Vettius Conviva and his brother, Aulus Vettius Restitutus. Both men have been identified as former slaves or freedmen (liberti). The Vettii had risen to some prominence; Conviva was an augustalis—the top civic office for which a freedman would be eligible. In the construction and decoration of their house the brothers display a mind-set not uncommon among the newly-rich. Two strongboxes (arca – essentially lockable boxes for storing valuables)—concrete signs of wealth—were placed prominently in the large atrium so that visitors would be sure to notice them.



Figure 3.5.4.5: Plan of Pompeii, with location of the House of the Vettii

The strongboxes, paired with a painting of the god Priapus in the vestibule, serve to underscore the wealth of the brothers Vettii. This painting, which shows Priapus weighing his own phallus against a bag of money, may represent the socio-economic ambitions

of the Vettii and perhaps indicates that those ambitions were different from those of high-ranking citizen families. This is interesting when we consider that achieving the status of *augustalis* likely indicates that Conviva made a large donation to a public works project in Pompeii.

The plan of the house

The House of the Vettii covers an area of approximately 1,100 square meters. The construction of the house and its decorations belong to the final period of Pompeii's occupation and therefore provides important evidence of the aesthetics of the city on the eve of its destruction.



Figure **3.5.4.6**: View through atrium to the peristyle (photo: **Peter Stewart**, CC BY-NC 2.0)

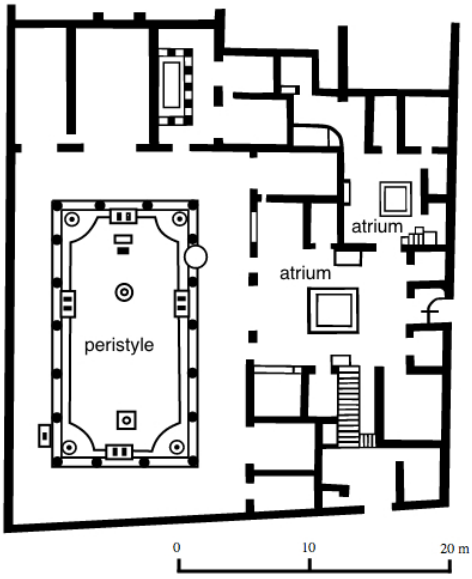


Figure **3.5.4.7**: Plan, House of the Vettii, Late Republican-Early Imperial domus, destroyed 79 C.E.

The house was built atop the remains of an earlier house that survives, in part, in the form of the wings (*alae*) and a doorway. The plan of the House of the Vettii has two large central halls (*atria*) and, significantly, lacks an office space (*tablinum*). Entry to the house was gained from the east by way of a vestibule that granted admission to the larger atrium. The stone-lined basin for collecting rainwater (*impluvium*) lies at the center of the atrium. This larger atrium communicates directly with the peristyle (an open courtyard surrounded by fluted Doric columns) by means of a set of folding doors. The smaller atrium was the focus of the service portion of the house, while the peristyle and its well-appointed rooms was meant for entertainment and dining.



Figure **3.5.4.8**: Frescoes in the atrium, House of the Vettii, Pompeii (photo: **Irene Norman**, CC BY-NC 2.0)

The decorative schema of the House of the Vettii provides important evidence for trends in domestic decoration in the final years of Pompeii's occupation. Since Pompeii suffered a major earthquake in 62 C.E. that caused significant destruction, the chronology of the wall paintings and other decorations in the House of the Vettii has been a topic of debate since the house's discovery.

Most art historians point to the house's decorative schema as being representative of a key transitional phase, between the Third and Fourth styles of Pompeian wall painting. Some scholars consider it among the finest examples of the Fourth Style at Pompeii. Paul Zanker sees the Fourth Style wall paintings as being imitations of higher art forms, reckoning that the chosen pictures aim to turn the rooms into picture galleries (*pinacothecae*).

The atrium is richly decorated, as are the rooms opening onto the peristyle. Two of these were in the course of being painted at the time of destruction, while the other three are richly appointed with Fourth Style wall painting. The largest of these, a dining room, is decorated in panels of red and black with an exceptionally fine motif of erotes or putti (mythological winged gods associated with love) engaged in various occupations (image below). The central panel pictures that were likely set into the walls do not survive. Overall the scheme of wall painting in the house of the Vettii suggests an attempt at forward-looking interior decoration on the part of the owners.



Figure **3.5.4.9**: detail of Fourth Style wall painting in the Triclinium, House of the Vettii, Pompeii (photo: **Lady Erin**, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

Overall the evidence furnished by the House of the Vettii offers key insights into domestic architecture and interior decoration in the last days of the city of Pompeii. The house itself is architecturally significant not only because of its size but also because of the indications it gives of important changes that were underway in the design of Roman houses during the third quarter of the first century C.E.

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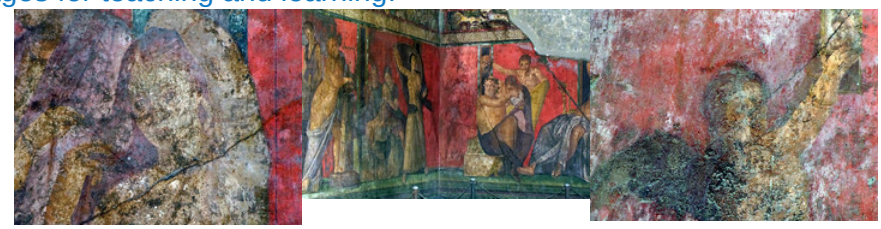
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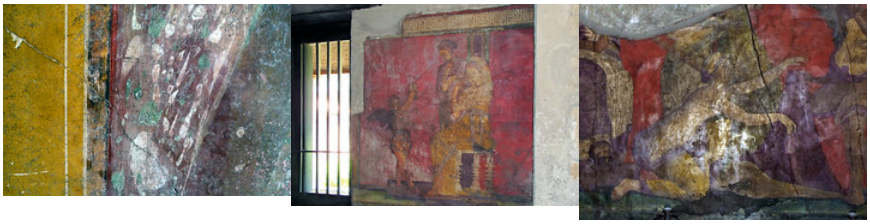
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3.5.5: Dionysiac frieze, Villa of Mysteries, Pompeii

by DR. BETH HARRIS and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER

Standing outside of the state religion, mystery cults are an intriguing puzzle. Does art hold the answer?



Video **3.5.5.1**: Dionysian Cult Cycle (?), Villa of Mysteries, before 79 C.E., fresco, Pompeii

Additional resources:

Roman Painting on the Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

Mary Beard, John North, and Simon Price, *Religions of Rome*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998)

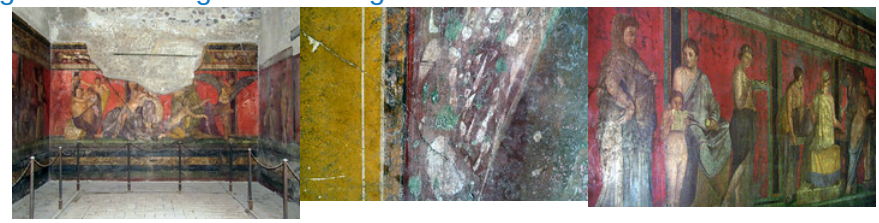
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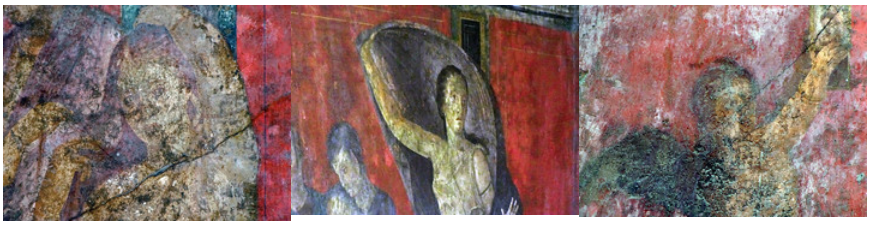
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SECTION OVERVIEW

4.1: Roman Republic

Between the period of Kings and Emperors, there was the Roman Republic, whose most important political institution was the Senate.

4.1.1: Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus, Rome

4.1.2: Temple of Portunus, Rome

4.1.3: Maison Carrée

4.1.4: Capitoline She-wolf

4.1.5: Capitoline Brutus

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4.1.7: Veristic male portrait

4.1.8: Head of a Roman Patrician

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4.1.1: Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus, Rome

by DR. ANDREW FINDLEY

This three-in-one temple to “Jupiter Best and Greatest,” Juno, and Minerva was central in ancient Roman religion.



Figure **4.1.1.1**: Reconstruction (courtesy Dr. Bernard Frischer, Rome Reborn), Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus (Temple of Jupiter Capitolinus) Rome, Italy, sixth century B.C.E. through fifth century C.E.

A temple on a hill

Like the Etruscans and Greeks before them, the Romans are known for having constructed monumental temples in highly visible locations. Situated atop the Capitoline Hill in the heart of the ancient city of Rome, the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus represented this tradition well (today the site is occupied by a **piazza designed by the Renaissance artist Michelangelo**, see photo below). Unfortunately, neglect, spoliation, and eventual site adaptation means that very little of the Temple of Jupiter remains for us to study. Despite its absence, however, the lasting impact of the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus can be observed in the many Roman temples that emulated it, making it perhaps the most important of all Roman temples in terms of its cultural influence and design. (**Watch this video** to see where the Temple stood in the ancient city.)



Figure **4.1.1.2**: Looking up to the Capitoline Hill from the street below (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Current State and Original Appearance(s)

Remains of the temple include portions of the tuff foundation and podium (see photo below), as well as some marble and terracotta architectural elements. Most of the structural remains can be viewed *in situ* (in their original setting) on the grounds of the Palazzo

Caffarelli (today part of the Capitoline Museums), and surviving fragments are located within the Capitoline Museums.



Figure **4.1.1.3**: Podium remnant from the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus, Capitoline Museums, Rome, begun 6th century B.C.E. (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Based on the surviving portions of the archaic foundation, the podium for the temple likely measured approximately 50m x 60m. Those dimensions are somewhat speculative, however, as there is no scholarly consensus on the precise measurements. The current best guess is that the temple was quite similar in plan to that of late-archaic Etruscan temples like the **Temple of Minerva at Veii** (also called the Portonaccio temple)—a high podium (platform) with a single frontal staircase leading to a three-column deep *pronaos* (porch) fronted by a hexastyle (six columns across) arrangement of columns. One of the defining features of the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus was its three-part (tripartite) interior with three adjacent *cellae* (rooms) for the three major deities honored within (Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva).

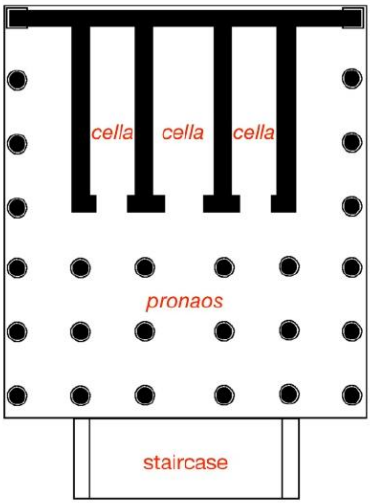


Figure **4.1.1.4**: Plan of the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus (Temple of Jupiter Capitolinus) Rome, Italy; sixth century B.C.E. through fifth century C.E.

The earliest phase of the temple featured terracotta elements, including *acroteria* (sculptures on the roofline) and a large terracotta statue of Jupiter driving a *quadriga* (four-horse chariot). Inside the temple was another image of Jupiter—the cult statue reportedly sculpted by the famed archaic sculptor Vulca of Veii. This statue was painted red and served as the basis for the tradition of painting the faces of Roman generals during officially sanctioned triumphs.

In contrast with the modest terracotta (baked clay) that was used to adorn the earliest versions of the temple, several Roman sources note that the later reconstructions made during the period of the Roman empire featured much more extravagant materials. Ancient

authors, including Plutarch, Cassius Dio, Suetonius, and Ammianus described the temple as outstanding in its quality and appearance, with a superstructure of Pentelic marble, gilded roof tiles, gold-plated doors, and elaborate pedimental relief sculpture.

History and Dedication

Although primarily dedicated to Jupiter Optimus Maximus, the temple also included spaces for the worship of Juno and Minerva. Together, the three deities comprised what is known as the Capitoline Triad—a divine group significant to the Roman state religion. Jupiter, the Roman equivalent of Zeus, was the most significant of these deities. This is supported by the specific aspect of his worship noted in the full title of the cult—Iuppiter Optimus Maximus, Latin for "Jupiter, Best and Greatest."

An important date for Rome

The temple was reportedly completed around 509 B.C.E.—the date itself is significant as it marks the purported year during which the Romans overthrew the monarchy (which was **Etruscan**, not Roman) and established a republican system of government. Thus, not only was the temple located in a prominent geographical location, it was also a lasting reminder of the moment when the Romans asserted their independence. This historical proximity of the founding of the Republic with the construction of the Temple of Jupiter may have also helped to lend support to its central role in Roman religion and to architectural design practice.



Figure **4.1.1.5**: Italo Gismondi, scale model showing the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus on the Capitoline Hill in Rome during the time of Constantine (early 4th century), abutting the Roman Forum (below, right) and Imperial Fora (to the right) (Plastico di Roma Imperiale. Particolare con il Campidoglio e l'Arce sormontata dal Tempio di Giunone Moneta), 1933-1955, gesso (Capitoline Museums, Rome)

Destroyed and rebuilt

The building itself was destroyed and rebuilt several times in the Republican and Imperial periods, and benefitted from several restorations along the way. First destroyed in 83 B.C.E. during the civil wars of Sulla, the temple was rededicated and rebuilt during the 60s B.C.E. Augustus claimed to have restored the temple, most likely as part of his enormous building program that began during his rise to power in the first century B.C.E. The temple was again destroyed in 69 C.E., during the tumultuous "year of the four emperors." Although rebuilt by the emperor Vespasian in the 70s C.E., the temple once more burned during a fire in 80 C.E. The emperor Domitian enacted the final major reconstruction of the temple during his reign, between 81 and 96 C.E.. The fact the temple was never neglected for very long is a testament to its perceived importance.

After the first century C.E., the temple seems to have retained its structural integrity until the emperor Theodosius eliminated public funds for the upkeep of pagan temples in 392 C.E. (Christianity had become the official state religion of the Roman Empire). Following this, the temple was spoliated several times in the Late Antique and Medieval eras. Eventually a grand residence, the Palazzo Caffarelli, was built on the site in the sixteenth century C.E.



Figure **4.1.1.6**: Relief with Marco Aurelius sacrificing to Jupiter (Pietas Augusti), from the decoration of a triumphal arch, 177-180 C.E. (Capitoline Museums, Rome) (photo: **Carole Raddato**, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Public Function

The Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus was more than simply a standard religious building. From its earliest phases, the temple also seems to have been a repository for objects of ritual, cultural, and political significance. For example, the Sibylline Oracles (books containing the prophecy of the Sibyls) were kept at the site, as were some spoils of war, like the Carthaginian general Hasdrubal's shield. In addition, the temple served as the end point for triumphs, a meeting place for the senate, a location for combined religious and political pageantry, an archive for public records, and a physical symbol of Rome's supremacy and divine agency.

Sacrifice Panel of the Lost Arch of Marcus Aurelius



Figure **4.1.1.7**: Temple of Jupiter (detail), Relief with Marco Aurelius sacrificing to Jupiter (Pietas Augusti), from the decoration of a triumphal arch, 177-180 C.E. (Capitoline Museums, Rome) (Capitoline Museums, Rome) (photo: **Carole Raddato**, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Perhaps the best depiction of the Temple of Jupiter Capitolinus can be seen on the *Sacrifice Panel* from a now lost arch of the emperor Marcus Aurelius (above and detail, left). In this relief, Marcus Aurelius is shown in his role as Pontifex Maximus (chief priest) offering a sacrifice to Jupiter amidst a crowd of attendants. A temple with three doors, presumably the Temple of Jupiter Capitolinus, is portrayed in the background.

In this rendering, the temple is tetrastyle (four columns across the front—likely a truncated artistic representation due to the size of the panel) and of the **Corinthian order**. The pediment features Jupiter enthroned in the center while flanked by other deities; an intricately sculpted raking (sloping) cornice, surmounted at the apex by a *quadriga* (four-horse chariot), frames the scene.

Lasting Influence

Although the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus was built in an Etruscan style and involved Etruscan craftsmen, it nevertheless serves as the origin point for the development of Roman temple-building tradition, which often incorporated local elements into a more broadly Roman template.



Figure **4.1.1.8**: Temple of Portunus (formerly known as Fortuna Virilis), c. 120-80 B.C.E., travertine, tufa, and stucco, Rome (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

In terms of architectural history, the lasting significance of the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus can be best recognized by its influence on Roman temple building from the last two centuries B.C.E up until the third century C.E. Imperial temples across the empire—including the **Temple of Portunus** at Rome (see photo above)—the **Maison Carrée** in France, and the many *Capitolia* (Temples dedicated to Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva) of Roman colonies established in north Africa demonstrate an obvious visual connection to the Capitoline temple with a shared frontality, deep front porch, and rich sculptural adornment (some characteristics of which are shared by the **Temple of Baalshamin** at Palmyra). Yet, the influence of the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus can also be seen in the overall Roman approach to designing architecture—monumental scale, urban setting, lavish decoration, and imposing elevation. Together, these elements are hallmarks of Roman temples and suggest that the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus was an origin point for what would become a commonly understood architectural mark of Roman sovereignty over the Mediterranean world.

Additional resources:

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4.1.2: Temple of Portunus, Rome

by DR. JEFFREY A. BECKER

Page ID 163500

This small temple is a rare surviving example from the Roman Republic. It is both innovative and traditional.



Temple of Portunus (or Fortuna Virilis), c. 75 B.C.E. (Roman Republic), tufa, travertine, concrete (Forum Boarium, Rome)

The Temple of Portunus is a well preserved late second or early first century B.C.E. rectangular temple in Rome, Italy. Its dedication to the God Portunus—a divinity associated with livestock, keys, and harbors—is fitting given the building's topographical position near the ancient river harbor of the city of Rome.



Figure **4.1.2.1**: Temple of Portunus (formerly known as Fortuna Virilis), travertine, tufa, and stucco, c. 120-80 B.C.E., Rome

The city of Rome during its Republican phase was characterized, in part, by monumental architectural dedications made by leading, elite citizens, often in connection with key political or military accomplishments. Temples were a particularly popular choice in this category given their visibility and their utility for public events both sacred and secular.



Figure 4.1.2.2: Temple of Portunus (formerly known as Fortuna Virilis), travertine, tufa, and stucco, c. 120-80 B.C.E., Rome

The Temple of Portunus is located adjacent to a circular temple of the Corinthian order, now attributed to Herakles Victor. The assignation of the Temple of Portunus has been debated by scholars, with some referring to the temple as belonging to Fortuna Virilis (an aspect of the God Fortuna). This is now a minority view. The festival in honor of Portunus (the Portunalia) was celebrated on 17 August.



Figure 4.1.2.3: Temple attributed to Herakles Victor, Forum Boarium, Rome, late 2nd century B.C.E.

The Temple's plan and construction

The temple has a rectangular footprint, measuring roughly 10.5 x 19 meters (36 x 62 Roman feet). Its plan may be referred to as pseudoperipteral, instead of a having a free-standing colonnade, or row of columns, on all four sides, the temple instead only has free-standing columns on its facade with engaged columns on its flanks and rear.

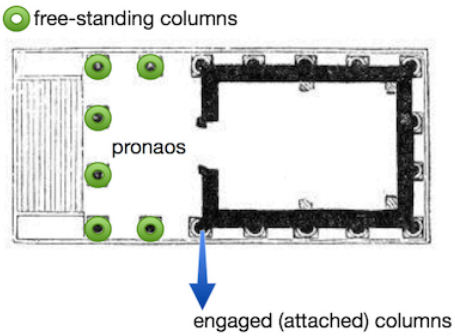


Figure 4.1.2.4: Plan, Temple of Portunus (Rome, c. 120-80 B.C.E.)

The pronoas (porch) of the temple supports an Ionic colonnade measuring four columns across by two columns deep, with the columns carved from travertine. The Ionic order can be most easily seen in the scroll-shaped capitals.There are five engaged

columns on each side, and four across the back.

Overall the building has a composite structure, with both travertine and tufa being used for the superstructure (tufa is a type of stone consisting of consolidated volcanic ash, and travertine is a form of limestone). A stucco coating would have been applied to the tufa, giving it an appearance closer to that of the travertine.



Figure **4.1.2.5**: Engaged columns, Temple of Portunus (formerly known as Fortuna Virilis), travertine, tufa, and stucco, c. 120-80 B.C.E., Rome

The temple's design incorporates elements from several architectural traditions. From the Italic tradition it takes its high podium (one ascends stairs to enter the pronaos), and strong frontality. From Hellenistic architecture comes the Ionic order columns, the engaged pilasters and columns. The use of permanent building materials, stone (as opposed to the Italic custom of superstructures in wood, terracotta, and mudbrick), also reflects changing practices. The temple itself represents the changing realities and shifting cultural landscape of the Mediterranean world at the close of the first millennium B.C.E.

The temple of Portunus resides on the Forum Boarium, a public space that was the site of the primary harbor of Rome. While the temple of Portunus is a bit smaller than other temples in the Forum Boarium and the adjacent Forum Holitorium, it fits into a general typology of Late Republican temple building.



Figure **4.1.2.6**: Temple of the Sibyl, Tivoli, c. 150-125 B.C.E. (photo: **LPLT**)

The temple of Portunus finds perhaps its closest contemporary parallel in the Temple of the Sibyl at Tibur (modern Tivoli) which dates c. 150-125 B.C.E. The temple type embodied by the Temple of Portunus may also be found in Iulio-Claudian temple buildings such as the Maison Carrée at Nîmes in southern France.

Preservation and current state

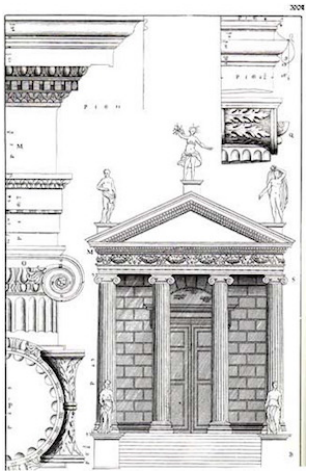


Figure **4.1.2.15**: Andrea Palladio, Temple of Fortuna Virilis, engraving from *The Four Books of Architecture*, London, Isaac Ware, 1738

The Temple of Portunus is obviously in an excellent state of preservation. In 872 C.E. the ancient temple was re-dedicated as a Christian shrine sacred to Santa Maria Egyziaca (Saint Mary of Egypt), leading to the preservation of the structure. The architecture has inspired many artists and architects over the centuries, including Andrea Palladio who studied the structure in the sixteenth century.

Neo-Classical architects were inspired by the form of the Temple of Portunus and it led to the construction of the Temple of Harmony, a folly in Somerset, England, dating to 1767 (below).

The Temple of Portunus is important not only for its well preserved architecture and the inspiration that architecture has fostered, but also as a reminder of what the built landscape of Rome was once like – dotted with temples large and small that became foci of a great deal of activity in the life of the city. Those temples that survive are reminders of that vibrancy as well as of the architectural traditions of the Romans themselves.



Figure **4.1.2.7**: The Temple of Harmony, 1767, Halswell House, Somerset, England

Backstory

The Temple of Portunus was put on the **World Monuments Watch list** in 2006. Overseen by the World Monuments Fund, this list highlights “cultural heritage sites around the world that are at risk from the forces of nature or the impact of social, political, and economic change,” providing them with “an opportunity to attract visibility, raise public awareness, foster local engagement in their protection, leverage new resources for conservation, advance innovation, and demonstrate effective solutions.”

Together with the Soprintendenza Archeologica di Roma and grants from private funders, the World Monuments Fund sponsored a restoration of the Temple of Portunus beginning in 2000. The temple had been partially restored and conservation measures put in place in the 1920s, but the activities undertaken in the last two decades utilized the latest technologies to complete a full restoration

of the interior and exterior of the building. This included the cleaning and conservation of the frescoes, replacement of the roof (incorporating ancient roof tiles), anti-seismic measures, and the cleaning and restoration of the pediment, columns, and exterior walls. The newly-restored temple opened to the public in 2014.

The Temple of Portunus is one of the best-preserved examples of Roman Republican architecture, and efforts like those of the World Monuments Fund are ensuring that it continues to survive intact.

Backstory by Dr. Naraelle Hohensee

Additional resources:

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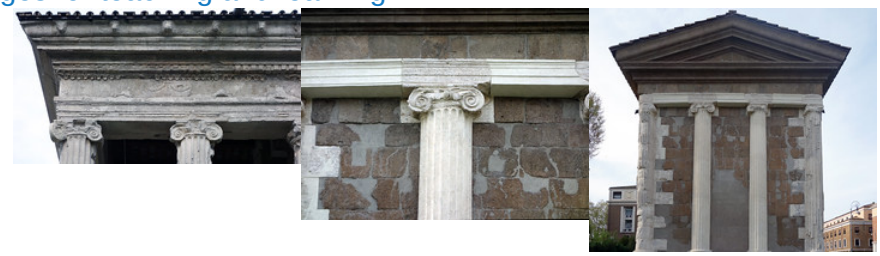
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Video with photos of the restoration from the World Monuments Fund

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4.1.3: Maison Carrée

This well-preserved building in modern-day France is a textbook example of a Vitruvian temple.



Figure **4.1.3.1**: Maison Carrée, c. 4-7 C.E., *Colonia Nemausus* (modern Nîmes, France)

The so-called Maison Carrée or "square house" is an ancient Roman temple located in Nîmes in southern France. Nîmes was founded as a Roman colony (*Colonia Nemausus*) during the first century B.C.E. The Maison Carrée is an extremely well preserved ancient Roman building and represents a nearly textbook example of a Roman temple as described by the architectural writer Vitruvius.

Design and Plan

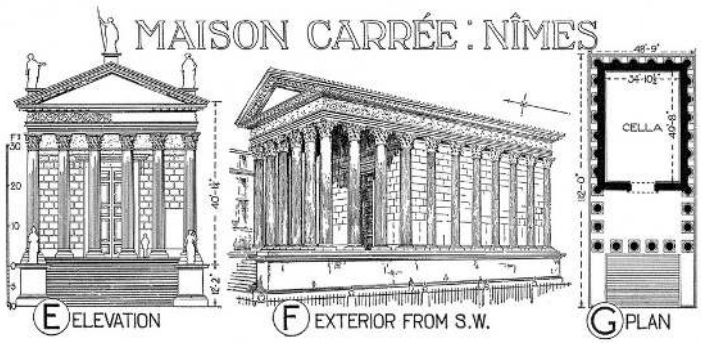


Figure **4.1.3.2**: Plan and elevation of the Maison Carrée, c. 4-7 C.E. (photo: **Penn State University Library**, CC BY-NC 2.0)

The frontal temple is a classic example of the Tuscan style temple as described by Vitruvius (who wrote *On Architecture* in the first century B.C.E.). This means that the building has a single cella (cult room), a deep porch, a frontal, axial orientation, and sits atop a high podium. The podium of the Maison Carrée rises to a height of 2.85 meters; the footprint of the temple measures 26.42 by 13.54 meters at the base.

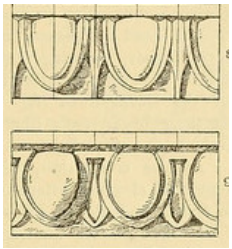


Figure **4.1.3.3**: Example egg-and-dart motif (**source**)

The building is executed in the **Corinthian order** (easily identified by the acanthus leaf motifs on the capital) and is hexastyle in its plan (meaning it has six columns across the façade); twenty engaged columns line the flanks, yielding a pseudoperipteral arrangement (the front columns are free-standing but the columns on the sides and back are engaged, that is, attached to the wall).

The temple has a very deep *pronaos* (porch). The superstructure is decorated with egg-and-dart motifs, with the architrave divided into three zones. The deep porch which puts an emphasis on the temple front and the pseudoperipteral arrangement clearly differentiate this from an ancient Greek temple.



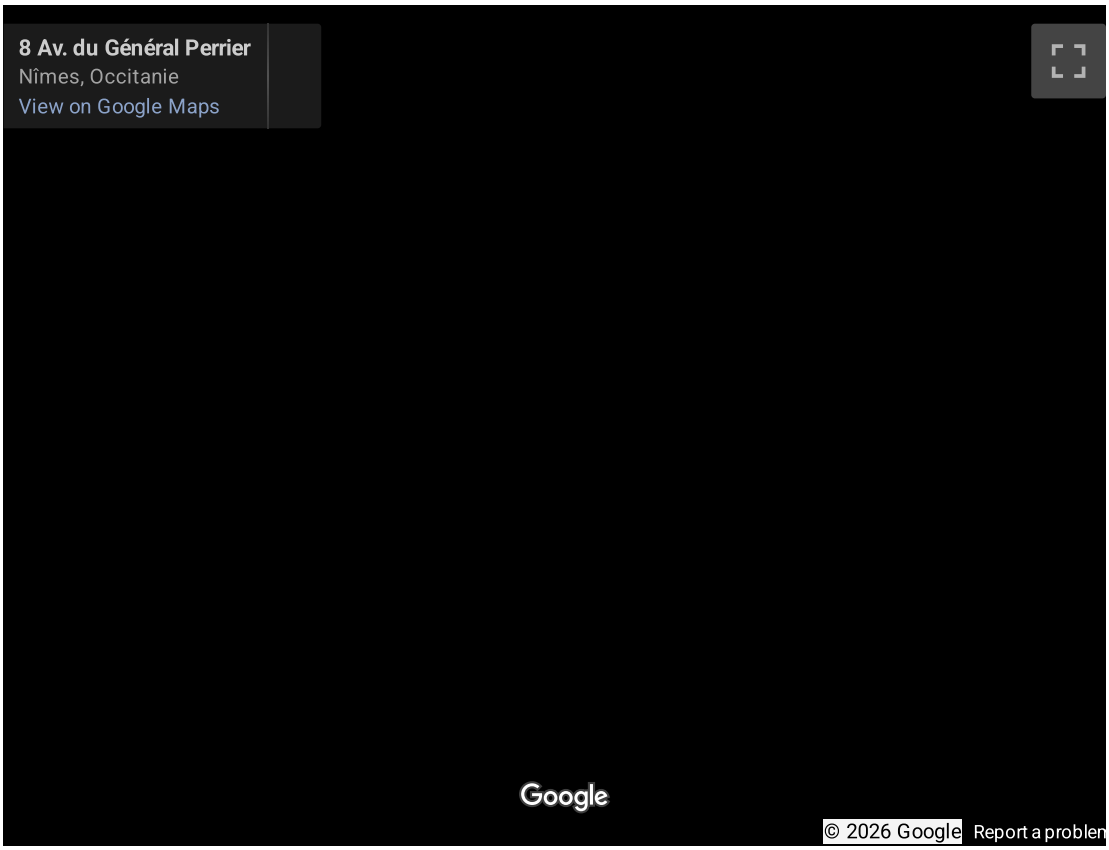
Figure **4.1.3.4**

The temple once carried a dedicatory inscription that was removed in the Middle Ages. Following the reconstruction of the inscription in 1758, scholars believe that the dedication of the building honored Augustus' grandsons and intended heirs, Caius and Lucius Caesar. The dedicatory inscription read, in translation, "To Gaius Caesar, son of Augustus, Consul; to Lucius Caesar, son of Augustus, Consul designate; to the princes of youth" (*CIL* XII, 3156). While not especially common within Italy during the time of the Iulio-Claudians, the worship of the emperor and the imperial family was more commonplace in the provinces of the Roman empire.

The late first century B.C.E. Temple of Augustus and Livia in located in Vienne, France (an ancient settlement of the Allobroges that received a Roman colony) is very similar in plan to the Maison Carrée. This temple was originally dedicated to Augustus alone, but in 41 C.E. the emperor Claudius re-dedicated the building to include Livia, his grandmother (and the wife of Augustus). Taken together these temples show us not only well preserved examples of early Imperial architecture but they also show the degree to which local elites would invest in monumental construction in order to celebrate the emperor and his family members. Just as honorific temples at Rome were sponsored by elites, construction in the provinces also often relied on elite members of the community to fill the role of artistic patron.



Figure **4.1.3.5**: Temple of Augustus and Livia, Vienne, France, late first century B.C.E. (photo: **Carole Raddato**, CC BY-SA 2.0)



Additional resources:

La Maison Carrée

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4.1.4: Capitoline She-wolf

by DR. JACLYN NEEL

Rome's eternal symbol?

If one could choose any animal to become one's mother, how many people would choose a wolf? Wolves are not known to be the gentlest of animals, and in the ancient world, when many people made their living as shepherds, wolves could pose a significant threat. But for reasons we do not understand, the Romans chose a wolf as their symbol. According to Roman mythology, the city's twin founders Romulus and Remus were abandoned on the banks of the Tiber River when they were infants. A she-wolf saved their lives by letting them suckle. The image of this miracle quickly became a symbol of the city of Rome, appearing on coinage in the third century B.C.E. and continuing to appear on public monuments from trash-cans to lampposts in the city even to this day. But the most famous image of the she-wolf and twins may not be ancient at all—at least not entirely.



Figure **4.1.4.1**: Coin (didramma) from the "Romano-campana" series, Herakles and the wolf suckling the twins, 265 B.C.E., silver coin (Capitoline Museum, Rome)

Description

The *Capitoline She-wolf* (Italian: *Lupa capitolina*) takes its name from its location—the statue is housed in the Capitoline Museums in Rome. The She-wolf statue is a fully worked bronze composition that is intended for 360 degree viewing. In other words the viewer can get an equally good view from all directions: there is no "correct" point of view. The She-wolf is depicted standing in a stationary pose. The body is out of proportion, because its neck is much too long for its face and flanks. The incised details of the neck show thick, s-curled fur which ends with unnatural beads around the face and behind the forelegs. The wolf's body is leaner in front than in the rear: its ribs are visible, as are the muscles of its forelegs, while in the back the musculature is less detailed, suggesting less tone. Its head curves in towards its tail; the ears curve back. The children themselves have a more dynamic posture: one sits with his feet splaying to either side, while the other kneels beside him. Both face upwards. They, too, are lean, with no trace of baby fat.



Figure **4.1.4.2**: *Capitoline Wolf*, 5th century B.C.E. or medieval, bronze, 75 cm (Capitoline Museums, Rome)

Hollow-cast bronze: How was it made?

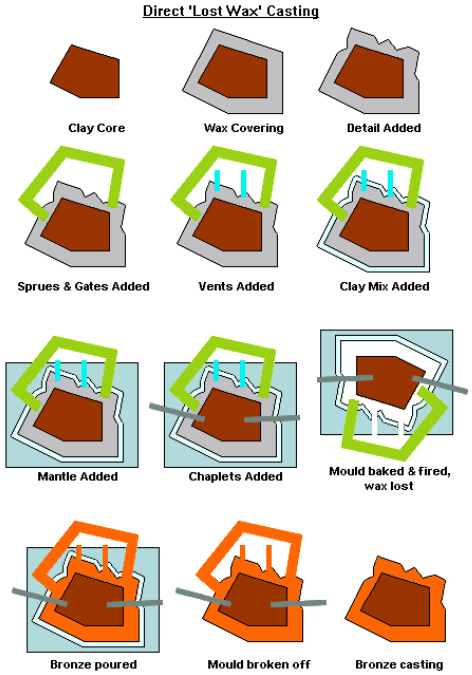


Figure 4.1.4.3: Diagram of direct lost-wax casting

The *She-wolf* is a hollow-cast bronze statue that is just under life-sized. Hollow casting is one of the many ways that metal sculptures were made in the ancient world. It was the typical method for large-scale bronze statues.

In antiquity, hollow casting (also known as "lost-wax casting") could be a lengthy procedure. A large sculpture was made in many smaller pieces, and these were joined as the last step of the process. A sculptor first made a model of the statue in a less-valuable medium, such as clay. He then coated the model with a second model, which was made in multiple pieces so it could be removed. Once removed, the second model was coated in wax and another layer of clay. The second and third models were then attached to each other and fired, leaving a hollow space as the wax melted. Molten metal was poured in to replace the wax, and the molds were (at last) removed only when the metal had cooled and set. In the case of large statues, the pieces were soldered together and polished as a final step.

But although the *She-wolf* is hollow-cast, it is not made of multiple pieces. This has raised significant questions about whether the wolf is ancient at all.

Questions of chronology

While it was known for some time that the twins are Renaissance additions to the sculpture, it was not until 2006 that the chronology of the *She-wolf* itself was challenged. Long believed to date to fifth century B.C.E. Etruria (Etruscan culture), the *She-wolf*'s date is now debated. If ancient, the original sculpture probably would not have depicted Rome's she-wolf. We do know that Romans engaged in regional trade that led them to acquire art objects from surrounding areas, including Etruria (Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* 35.45).



Figure **4.1.4.4**: Capitoline Wolf, 5th century B.C.E. or medival, bronze, 75 cm, (Capitoline Museum, Rome)

But new laboratory analysis suggests that the *She-wolf*is not ancient and was made in the Middle Ages, specifically the twelfth century C.E. Questions about the authenticity of the *She-wolf* were first raised when the statue was restored in the late 1990s. At that time, conservators realized that the casting technique used to make it is not the same as the hollow casting technique used on other large-scale bronze sculptures. Instead of using multiple molds, as described above, the *She-wolf* is made as a single piece. Proponents of this view argue that the wolf is more similar stylistically to medieval bronzes. Proponents of the Etruscan date claim that the few surviving Etruscan large-scale bronze statues are stylistically similar to the *She-wolf*.

The claim that the *She-wolf* is medieval has generated a lot of controversy in Italy and among scholars of ancient Rome. Several respected researchers have publicly disputed the new findings and maintain the *She-wolf*'s Etruscan provenance. Physical and chemical testing on the bronze has been inconclusive about the date. The Capitoline Museums admit both possibilities in the object's description.



Figure **4.1.4.5**: *Lupa of Fiesole*, 4th-2nd centuries B.C.E., bronze sculpture (Museo Civico, Fiesole) (photo: **Sailko**)

Conclusion

Although the debate continues with regard to the date of the *Capitoline She-wolf*, either interpretation offers interesting points for analysis. The only definitive testimony suggests that materials used in casting the wolf came from both Sardinia and Rome. If the work is from the fifth century B.C.E., we can use that evidence to analyze trade patterns in Italy. Remembering that the wolf was originally cast without the twins—no matter what date we assign to the wolf sculpture—we can try to imagine the original significance of the statue.

On the other hand, if the wolf is medieval, what was its original function? We should not think that a medieval wolf is any less valuable just because it is more recent in its date of manufacture. In fact, a pastiche *Capitoline She-wolf* might be an even better

symbol of Rome: a Renaissance addition to a medieval statue that recreates the ancient symbol of the eternal city.

Additional resources:

This work at the Capitoline Museums

View this work in the Capitoline Museum gallery

Etruscan bronzes on the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

Greek and Roman bronze-casting technique on the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

Medieval casting technique, including a video, from the Victoria and Albert Museum

M. R. Alföldi, E. Formigli, and J. Fried, *Die römische Wölfin: ein antikes Monument stürzt von seinem Sockel = The Lupa Romana: an antique monument falls from her pedestal* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2011).

G. Bartoloni and A. M. Carruba, *La lupa capitolina: nuove prospettive di studio : incontro-dibattito in occasione della pubblicazione del volume di Anna Maria Carruba, La lupa capitolina: un bronzo medievale* Sapienza, Università di Roma, Roma 28 febbraio 2008 (Rome: "L'Erma" di Bretschneider, 2008).

Andrea Carandini and R. Cappelli, *Roma: Romolo, Remo e la fondazione della città* (Milan: Electa, 2000).

A. M. Carruba and L. De Masi, *La Lupa capitolina: un bronzo medievale* (Rome: De Luca, 2006).

C. Dulière, *Lupa romana: Recherches d'Iconographie et Essai d'Interprétation* (Rome: Institut historique belge de Rome, 1979).

A. W. J. Holleman, "The Ogulnii Monument at Rome," *Mnemosyne* 40.3/4 (1987), pp. 427-429.

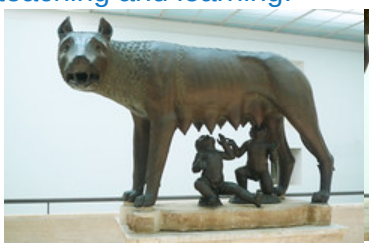
Dale Kinney, "Book Review: The Lupa Romana: An Antique Monument Falls from Her Pedestal," *Speculum* 88.4 (2013), pp. 1063-65

A. La Regina, "La lupa del Campidoglio è medieval: la prova è nel test al carbonio," *La Repubblica* July 9, 2008

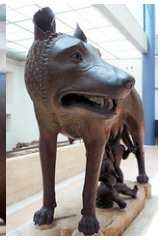
Françoise-Hélène Massa-Pairault, "Romulus et Remus: réexamen du miroir de l'Antiquarium Communal = Romulus and Remus: a re-examination of the mirror from the Antiquarium Communale," *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome – Antiquité*, 123.2 (2011) pp. 505-525

C. Mazzoni, *She-Wolf: The Story of a Roman Icon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

SmartHistory images for teaching and learning:




Click on image for larger picture (External link to flickr)

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Figure **4.1.4.28**: More SmartHistory images…

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4.1.5: Capitoline Brutus

by DR. STEVEN ZUCKER and DR. BETH HARRIS

Once identified as the founder of the Roman Republic, debate over this figure's true identity rages on.



Video **4.1.5.1**: *Capitoline Brutus*, 4th-3rd century B.C.E. bronze, 69 cm (Capitoline Museums, Rome)

Backstory

We know that the Capitoline Brutus was found somewhere in Rome during the sixteenth century, but there is no recorded findspot for this sculpture. In 1564 it was officially bequeathed to the city of Rome by Cardinal Rodolfo Pio da Carpi, an Italian scholar and collector who owned a large trove of ancient artifacts, but there is no known evidence of its original provenance.

In the sixteenth century, at the time of Pio da Carpi's bequest, this sculpture was already known among antiquarians as Lucius Junius Brutus (who founded the Roman Republic in the 6th century B.C.E.), and this belief continued through the centuries. The bust eventually became a touchstone of revolutionary sentiment: after Napoleon's invasion of northern Italy in the late 1790s, he staged a triumphal procession across Paris that conspicuously displayed his "art loot" from the campaign. "Rome is no more in Rome. It is now in Paris," was the chorus of a song that accompanied the march. For Napoleon, the cultural and political meanings associated with ancient Roman art—and particularly the Capitoline Brutus—were key to shoring up his image as the leader of the new capital of Europe. According to art historian Patricia Mainardi, the Brutus was "carried at the end of the march and ceremonially placed on a pedestal before the Altar of the Fatherland," with a plaque stating "Rome was first governed by kings: / Junius Brutus gave it liberty and the Republic."

The sculpture was returned to Rome in 1814-15, after Napoleon's defeat, but its interpretation as the portrait of Brutus lived on. As they did with the **Portrait Bust of a Flavian Woman**, art historians throughout the nineteenth century debated the identity of the sitter based on its resemblance to other portraits, such as those found on coins. (These objects selected for comparison are called "comparanda.") However, without a sure archeological findspot, we have no way of knowing who this sculpture actually represents. The mystery of the Capitoline Brutus demonstrates how myths about particular objects can grow into stories that become larger than the objects themselves—but these stories are not necessarily grounded in archeological facts.

There is still a need not only a need for proper archeological excavation and documentation of ancient objects, but also for properly-documented objects to be prioritized within the canon of the history of visual culture. Though the Capitoline Brutus is aesthetically pleasing and in good condition, the most we can do is guess about its original history. Other objects—**ones with recorded findspots**—can help us learn much more about the cultures and artists that produced them, even if they may be less overtly enticing to the eyes.

Backstory by Dr. Naraelle Hohensee

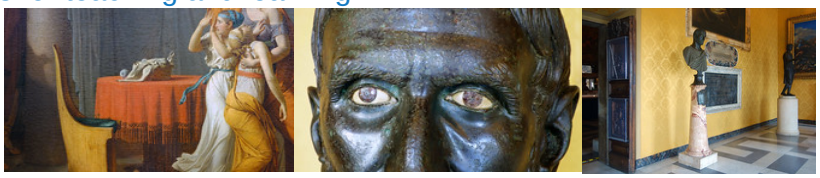
Additional resources:

This work at the Capitoline Museums

Peter Holliday, “Capitoline Brutus,” in *An Encyclopedia of the History of Classical Archaeology*, ed. Nancy Thomson de Grummond (New York: Routledge, 1997), n.p.

Patricia Mainardi, “Assuring the Empire of the Future: The 1798 Fête de la Liberté,” *Art Journal* vol. 48, no. 2 (Summer 1989), pages 155-163.

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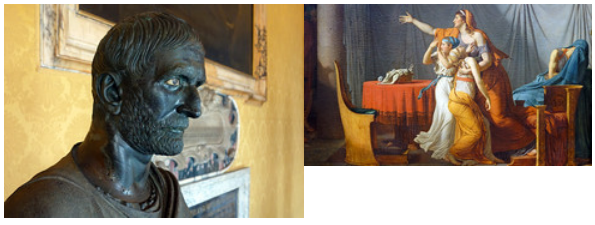
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4.1.6: Tomb of the Scipios and the sarcophagus of Scipio Barbatus

by DR. JEFFREY A. BECKER

Even in death, great Roman families were concerned with reinforcing and projecting their status.



Figure 4.1.6.1: Plaster cast of the Tomb of Scipio Barbata in-situ, early 3rd century B.C.E. (original, Vatican Museums) (photo: Caterina A., by permission)

Image and status

The latter days of the Roman Republican period witnessed socio-economic upheaval, and a long-established social order found itself threatened by newcomers who were wealthy but lacking in illustrious social pedigrees. Roman aristocrats in the patrician class (those threatened by this socio-economic upheaval) linked their ancestors to the founders of the Roman state, and projected an image of themselves as aged and wise as a measure of their experience and acumen (see **Head of a Roman Patrician**).

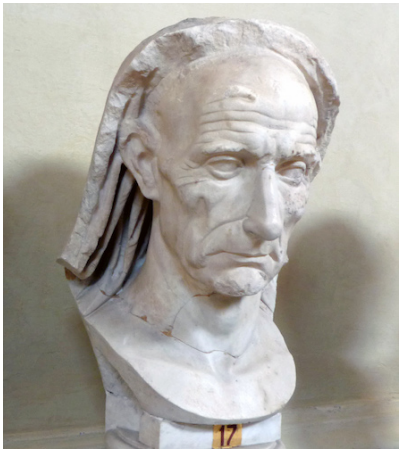


Figure 4.1.6.2: Veristic male portrait (similar to Head of a Roman Patrician), early 1st Century B.C.E., marble, life size (Vatican Museums, Rome) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Since image and status are frequently linked, these aristocrats had long relied on display as part of cultivating their status. Whether this was the display of the images of illustrious family members in the atrium of their houses (so-called *imagines*), or the constructions of tombs or other patronage projects, material culture mattered in maintaining status. The Late Republican period (the late 2nd and 1st centuries B.C.E.) witnessed several significant examples of this attempt to maintain status in a changing world.

The family of the Cornelii Scipiones

The Cornelii Scipiones were among the most famous Romans of all. Their ancestors had won many victories—including those of Lucius Cornelius Scipio Barbatus (who died c. 280 B.C.E.) and Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus (who died c. 183 B.C.E.), the victor in the Second Punic War. The family tomb of the Cornelii Scipiones, located along the Via Appia leading south from the city of Rome, was first rediscovered in 1614. Its remains constitute one of the most important examples of Late Republican funerary culture at Rome and demonstrate how an illustrious family worked to maintain its image in a changing world.

The Tomb

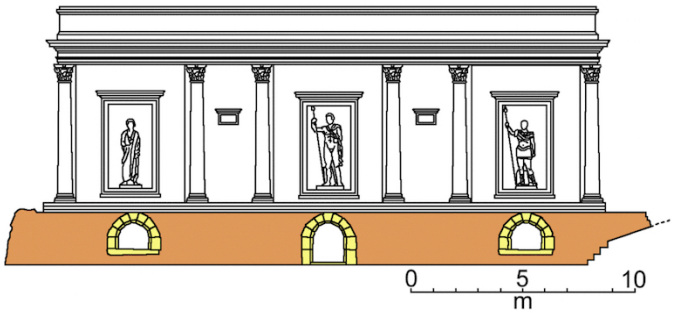


Figure **4.1.6.3**: Possible reconstruction of the Scipio's tomb on the via Appia, Rome, third century B.C.E. – first century C.E.

The Tomb of the Scipios is a subterranean, rock-cut tomb (*hypogeum*) composed of irregular chambers and connecting corridors that provide niches for burials (see plan and interior view below).



Figure **4.1.6.4**: Plan of the Tomb of the Scipios in Rome. 1) the old entrance; 2) a "calcinara," mediaeval lime kiln; 3) the main entrance; 4) entrance to the new room. The letters from A to I are the sarcophagi or loculi with inscriptions. The tomb is now empty except for facsimiles; the remains were discarded or reinterred, while the sarcophagi fragments ultimately went to the Vatican (based on a plan by Filippo Coarelli, Coarelli, *Il Sepolcro degli Scipioni a Roma. Itinerari d'arte e di cultura* (Rome: Fratelli Palombi, 1988).

The tomb was begun in the early years of the third century B.C.E. and continued in use until the first century C.E. The family's patriarch, Lucius Cornelius Scipio Barbatus, who served as consul in 298 B.C.E. is the most prominent occupant of the tomb. Barbatus was buried in a monumental stone sarcophagus with a Latin inscription (see below). Other family members occupy other parts of the tomb, in many cases with inscriptions identifying the individuals and charting their public careers.

As the tomb faced an important roadway, it came to have an elaborate façade in its later phases. This façade likely dates to c. 150 B.C.E. or later when the family renovated and expanded the tomb. In addition to the architectural elements of the façade, **a fresco depicting a processional scene**—perhaps of famous members of the Cornelii Scipiones—adorned the tomb.

The Sarcophagus of Barbatus

Scipio Barbatus was deposited in an elaborately carved sarcophagus (today the original is in the Vatican Museums—image below, and a plaster cast is in situ—**image here**). The façade of the sarcophagus is decorated with a Doric frieze and volute scrolls adorn the lid (**watch a video about the classical orders**). It included an elaborate Latin epitaph that was modified in antiquity, with some earlier text being erased. The Scipios were always keen to maintain family ties and support their ancestry at any cost. The extant text of the Barbatus epitaph records civic career achievements (Barbatus served as consul, censor, and aedile) and military achievements. In the latter category Barbatus was famous in Rome's third century B.C.E. wars with the Samnites; the epitaph tells the reader that he captured Taurasia and Cisauna in Samnium, in addition to subduing the region of Lucania (*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* VI, 1285).



Figure **4.1.6.5**: Sarcophagus of Scipio Barbatus, early 3rd century B.C.E. (Vatican Museums) (photo: Sailko, CC BY 3.0)

Conclusion

The Tomb of the Scipios is an important monument that demonstrates Roman methods of using images to reinforce and project status. The competition to maintain social rank and position was fierce, and latter day members of the Cornelian family (*gens Cornelia*) were indeed trading on the names and reputations of their more famous ancestors as they themselves struggled for traction in the tumultuous period at the end of the Roman Republic.

Below is a Google photosphere, showing a Late Republican *columbarium* (for storage of funerary urns), adjacent to the Tomb of the Scipios that was used for cremation burials and, together with the elite Tomb of the Scipios, was located within a large necropolis located along the Via Appia exiting the city of Rome from the south:



Additional resources:

Roman Funerary Rituals (SmartHistory essay)

Filippo Coarelli, *Il sepolcro degli Scipioni a Roma* (Rome: Fratelli Palombi, 1988).

Filippo Coarelli, *Rome and environs: an archaeological guide*, trans. J. J. Clauss and D. Harmon (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

Janos Fedak, *Monumental tombs of the Hellenistic age: a study of selected tombs from the pre-classical to the early imperial era* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990).

Harriet Flower, *Ancestor Masks and Aristocratic Power in Roman Culture* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).

Peter J. Holliday, *The origins of Roman historical commemoration in the visual arts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, "Housing the Dead: the tomb as house in Roman Italy", in L. Brink and D. A. Green (eds.) *Commemorating the Dead. Texts and Artifacts in Context* (Berlin, New York: de Gruyter) 39-77.

Platner and Ashby (1929) SEP. SCIPIONUM

Sepolcro degli Scipioni (Italian)

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4.1.7: Veristic male portrait

by DR. BETH HARRIS and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER

With age comes experience, and sculptors in the Roman Republic highlighted seniority—warts and all.



Video **4.1.7.1**: Veristic male portrait (similar to *Head of a Roman Patrician*), early 1st Century B.C.E., marble, life size (Vatican Museums, Rome)

Additional resources:

Roman Portrait Sculpture: The Stylistic Cycle on the Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

D. Jackson, "Verism and the Ancestral Portrait," *Greece & Rome* 34.1 (1987):32-47.

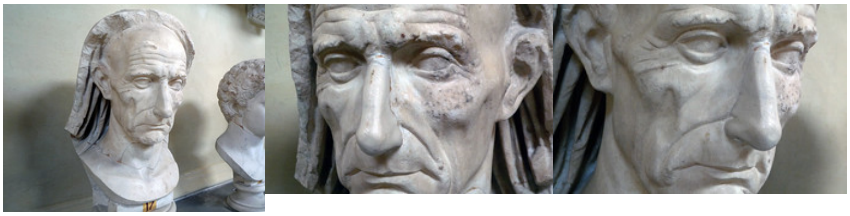
D. E. E. Kleiner, *Roman Sculpture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994).

G. M. A. Richter, "The Origin of Verism in Roman Portraits," *Journal of Roman Studies* 45.1-2 (1955):39-46.

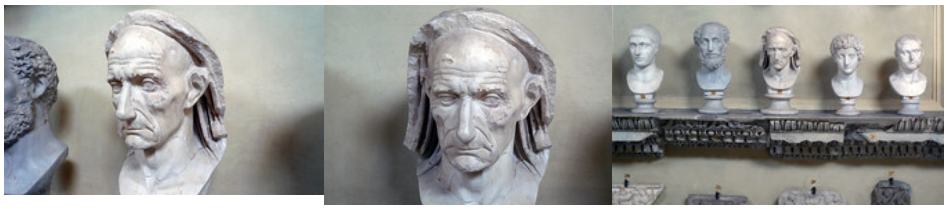
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4.1.8: Head of a Roman Patrician

by DR. JEFFREY A. BECKER

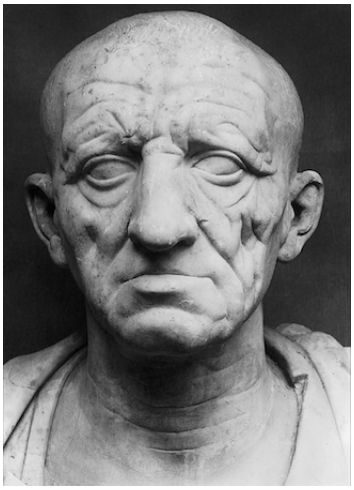


Figure **4.1.8.1**: *Head of a Roman Patrician from Otricoli*, c. 75-50 BCE, marble (Palazzo Torlonia, Rome)

Seemingly wrinkled and toothless, with sagging jowls, the face of a Roman aristocrat stares at us across the ages. In the aesthetic parlance of the Late Roman Republic, the physical traits of this portrait image are meant to convey seriousness of mind (*gravitas*) and the virtue (*virtus*) of a public career by demonstrating the way in which the subject literally wears the marks of his endeavors. While this representational strategy might seem unusual in the post-modern world, in the waning days of the Roman Republic it was an effective means of competing in an ever more complex socio-political arena.

The portrait

This portrait head, now housed in the Palazzo Torlonia in Rome, Italy, comes from Otricoli (ancient Ocriculum) and dates to the middle of the first century B.C.E. The name of the individual depicted is now unknown, but the portrait is a powerful representation of a male aristocrat with a hooked nose and strong cheekbones. The figure is frontal without any hint of dynamism or emotion—this sets the portrait apart from some of its near contemporaries. The portrait head is characterized by deep wrinkles, a furrowed brow, and generally an appearance of sagging, sunken skin—all indicative of the veristic style of Roman portraiture.

Verism

Verism can be defined as a sort of hyperrealism in sculpture where the naturally occurring features of the subject are exaggerated, often to the point of absurdity. In the case of Roman Republican portraiture, middle age males adopt veristic tendencies in their portraiture to such an extent that they appear to be extremely aged and care worn. This stylistic tendency is influenced both by the tradition of ancestral *imagines* as well as a deep-seated respect for family, tradition, and ancestry. The *imagines* were essentially death masks of notable ancestors that were kept and displayed by the family. In the case of aristocratic families these wax masks were used at subsequent funerals so that an actor might portray the deceased ancestors in a sort of familial parade (Polybius *History* 6.53.54). The ancestor cult, in turn, influenced a deep connection to family. For Late Republican politicians without any famous ancestors (a group famously known as ‘new men’ or ‘homines novi’) the need was even more acute—and verism rode to the rescue. The adoption of such an austere and wizened visage was a tactic to lend familial gravitas to families who had none—and thus (hopefully) increase the chances of the aristocrat’s success in both politics and business. This jockeying for position very much characterized the scene at Rome in the waning days of the Roman Republic and the Otricoli head is a reminder that one’s public image played a major role in what was a turbulent time in Roman history.

Additional Resources:

Roman Portrait Sculpture: The Stylistic Cycle on the Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

K. Cokayne, *Experiencing Old Age in Ancient Rome* (London: Routledge, 2003).

H. I. Flower, *Ancestor Masks and Aristocratic Power in the Roman Republic* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).

E. Gruen, *Culture and National Identity in Republican Rome* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992).

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D. E. E. Kleiner, *Roman Sculpture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994).

M. Papini, *Antichi volti della Repubblica: la ritrattistica in Italia centrale tra IV e II secolo a.C.* 2 v. (Rome: “L’Erma” di Bretschneider, 2004).

G. M. A. Richter, “The Origin of Verism in Roman Portraits,” *Journal of Roman Studies* 45.1-2 (1955):39-46.

J. Tanner, “Portraits, Power, and Patronage in the Late Roman Republic,” *Journal of Roman Studies* 90 (2000), pp. 18-50.

“Portrait bust of a man [Roman]” in The Metropolitan Museum of Art’s Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

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SECTION OVERVIEW

4.2: Early Empire

With Augustus, the Roman Empire begins, and so does a 200-year period of peace and stability known as the Pax Romana.

4.2.1: Augustus of Primaporta

4.2.2: Ara Pacis

4.2.3: Gemma Augustea

4.2.4: The art of gem carving

4.2.5: Preparations for a Sacrifice

4.2.6: Portrait of Vespasian

4.2.7: The Colosseum

4.2.8: The Arch of Titus

4.2.9: The Spoils of Jerusalem, Arch of Titus

4.2.10: Silver shekel of the Second Jewish Revolt

4.2.11: Portrait Bust of a Flavian Woman (Fonseca Bust)

4.2.12: The Forum and Markets of Trajan

4.2.13: Column of Trajan

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4.2.1: Augustus of Primaporta

by JULIA FISCHER

Nothing was more important to a Roman emperor than his image.



Video **4.2.1.1**: *Augustus of Primaporta*, 1st century C.E. (Vatican Museums)

Augustus and the power of images

Today, politicians think very carefully about how they will be photographed. Think about all the campaign commercials and print ads we are bombarded with every election season. These images tell us a lot about the candidate, including what they stand for and what agendas they are promoting. Similarly, Roman art was closely intertwined with politics and propaganda. This is especially true with portraits of Augustus, the first emperor of the Roman Empire; Augustus invoked the power of imagery to communicate his ideology.



Figure **4.2.1.2**: *Augustus of Primaporta*, 1st century C.E., marble, 2.03 meters high (Vatican Museums)

Augustus of Primaporta

One of Augustus' most famous portraits is the so-called *Augustus of Primaporta* of 20 B.C.E. (the sculpture gets its name from the town in Italy where it was found in 1863). At first glance this statue might appear to simply resemble a portrait of Augustus as an orator and general, but this sculpture also communicates a good deal about the emperor's power and ideology. In fact, in this portrait Augustus shows himself as a great military victor and a staunch supporter of Roman religion. The statue also foretells the 200 year period of peace that Augustus initiated, called the Pax Romana.



Figure **4.2.1.3**: Detail, *Augustus of Primaporta*, 1st century C.E., marble, 2.03 meters high (Vatican Museums)

Recalling the Golden Age of ancient Greece

In this marble freestanding sculpture, Augustus stands in a contrapposto pose (a relaxed pose where one leg bears weight). The emperor wears military regalia and his right arm is outstretched, demonstrating that the emperor is addressing his troops. We immediately sense the emperor's power as the leader of the army and a military conqueror.



Figure **4.2.1.4**: *Doryphoros (Spear Bearer)*, Roman copy after an original by the Greek sculptor Polykleitos from c. 450-440 B.C.E., marble, 6'6″ (Archaeological Museum, Naples)

Delving further into the composition of the Primaporta statue, a distinct resemblance to Polykleitos' *Doryphoros*, a Classical Greek sculpture of the fifth century B.C.E., is apparent. Both have a similar contrapposto stance and both are idealized. That is to say that both Augustus and the Spear-Bearer are portrayed as youthful and flawless individuals: they are perfect. The Romans often modeled their art on Greek predecessors. This is significant because Augustus is essentially depicting himself with the perfect body of a Greek athlete: he is youthful and virile, despite the fact that he was middle-aged at the time of the sculpture's commissioning. Furthermore, by modeling the *Primaporta* statue on such an iconic Greek sculpture created during the height of Athens' influence and power, Augustus connects himself to the Golden Age of that previous civilization.

The cupid and dolphin

So far the message of the *Augustus of Primaporta* is clear: he is an excellent orator and military victor with the youthful and perfect body of a Greek athlete. Is that all there is to this sculpture? Definitely not! The sculpture contains even more symbolism. First, at Augustus' right leg is cupid figure riding a dolphin.



Figure 4.2.1.5: Detail, *Augustus of Primaporta*, 1st century C.E., marble, 2.03 meters high (Vatican Museums)

The dolphin became a symbol of Augustus' great naval victory over Mark Antony and Cleopatra at the Battle of Actium in 31 BCE, a conquest that made Augustus the sole ruler of the Empire. The cupid astride the dolphin sends another message too: that Augustus is descended from the gods. Cupid is the son of Venus, the Roman goddess of love. Julius Caesar, the adoptive father of Augustus, claimed to be descended from Venus and therefore Augustus also shared this connection to the gods.



Figure \Pagendex6: Detail of breastplate, *Augustus of Primaporta*, 1st century C.E., marble, 2.03 meters high (Vatican Museums)

The breastplate

Finally, Augustus is wearing a cuirass, or breastplate, that is covered with figures that communicate additional propagandistic messages. Scholars debate over the identification over each of these figures, but the basic meaning is clear: Augustus has the gods on his side, he is an international military victor, and he is the bringer of the Pax Romana, a peace that encompasses all the lands of the Roman Empire.

In the central zone of the cuirass are two figures, a Roman and a Parthian. On the right, the enemy Parthian returns military standards. This is a direct reference to an international diplomatic victory of Augustus in 20 B.C.E., when these standards were finally returned to Rome after a previous battle.



Figure **4.2.1.7**: Detail of figures on breastplate, *Augustus of Primaporta*, 1st century C.E., marble, 2.03 meters high (Vatican Museums)

Surrounding this central zone are gods and personifications. At the top are Sol and Caelus, the sun and sky gods respectively. On the sides of the breastplate are female personifications of countries conquered by Augustus. These gods and personifications refer to the Pax Romana. The message is that the sun is going to shine on all regions of the Roman Empire, bringing peace and prosperity to all citizens. And of course, Augustus is the one who is responsible for this abundance throughout the Empire.

Beneath the female personifications are Apollo and Diana, two major deities in the Roman pantheon; clearly Augustus is favored by these important deities and their appearance here demonstrates that the emperor supports traditional Roman religion. At the very bottom of the cuirass is Tellus, the earth goddess, who cradles two babies and holds a cornucopia. Tellus is an additional allusion to the Pax Romana as she is a symbol of fertility with her healthy babies and overflowing horn of plenty.

Not simply a portrait

The Augustus of Primaporta is one of the ways that the ancients used art for propagandistic purposes. Overall, this statue is not simply a portrait of the emperor, it expresses Augustus' connection to the past, his role as a military victor, his connection to the gods, and his role as the bringer of the Roman Peace.

Additional resources:

View this work at the Vatican Museums

D. E. E. Kleiner, *Roman Sculpture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994).

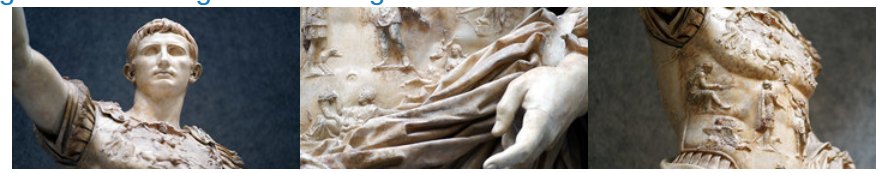
Paolo Liverani, *The Augustus of Prima Porta: Report on the Polychromy* (2011) on The Digital Sculpture Project

John Pollini, *From Republic to Empire: Rhetoric, Religion, and Power in the Visual Culture of Ancient Rome* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012).

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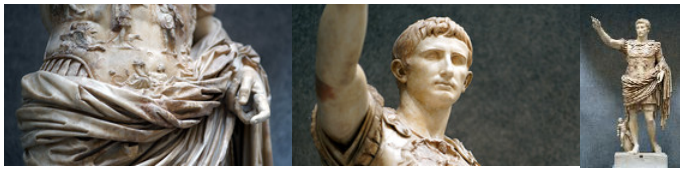
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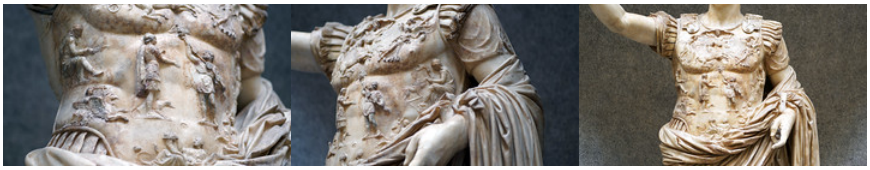
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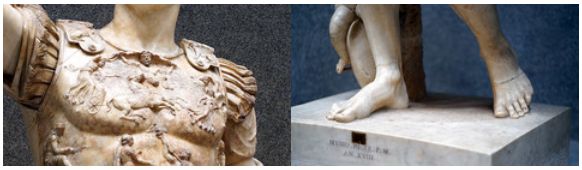
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4.2.2: Ara Pacis

by DR. JEFFREY A. BECKER

Augustus is said to have found Rome a city of brick and left it a city of marble—this altar symbolizes his golden age.



Video 4.2.2.1: Ara Pacis Augustae (Altar of Augustan Peace), 9 B.C.E. (Ara Pacis Museum, Rome, Italy)



Figure 4.2.2.1: Ara Pacis Augustae (Altar of Augustan Peace), 9 B.C.E. (Ara Pacis Museum, Rome, Italy) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

The Roman state religion in microcosm

The festivities of the Roman state religion were steeped in tradition and ritual symbolism. Sacred offerings to the gods, consultations with priests and diviners, ritual formulae, communal feasting—were all practices aimed at fostering and maintaining social cohesion and communicating authority. It could perhaps be argued that the Ara Pacis Augustae—the Altar of Augustan Peace—represents in luxurious, stately microcosm the practices of the Roman state religion in a way that is simultaneously elegant and pragmatic.



Figure **4.2.2.2**: Portrait of Augustus as Pontifex Maximus from the Via Labicana, after 12 B.C.E. (Palazzo Massimo alle Terme, Rome)

Vowed on July 4, 13 B.C.E., and dedicated on January 30, 9 B.C.E., the monument stood proudly in the Campus Martius in Rome (a level area between several of Rome's hills and the Tiber River). It was adjacent to architectural complexes that cultivated and proudly displayed messages about the power, legitimacy, and suitability of their patron—the emperor Augustus. Now excavated, restored, and reassembled in a sleek modern pavilion designed by architect Richard Meier (2006), the Ara Pacis continues to inspire and challenge us as we think about ancient Rome.

Augustus himself discusses the Ara Pacis in his epigraphical memoir, *Res Gestae Divi Augusti* ("Deeds of the Divine Augustus") that was promulgated upon his death in 14 C.E. Augustus states "When I returned to Rome from Spain and Gaul, having successfully accomplished deeds in those provinces … the senate voted to consecrate the altar of August Peace in the Campus Martius … on which it ordered the magistrates and priests and Vestal virgins to offer annual sacrifices" (Aug. *RG* 12).

An open-air altar for sacrifice

The Ara Pacis is, at its simplest, an open-air altar for blood sacrifice associated with the Roman state religion. The ritual slaughtering and offering of animals in Roman religion was routine, and such rites usually took place outdoors. The placement of the Ara Pacis in the Campus Martius (Field of Mars) along the Via Lata (now the Via del Corso) situated it close to other key Augustan monuments, notably the Horologium Augusti (a giant sundial) and the Mausoleum of Augustus.

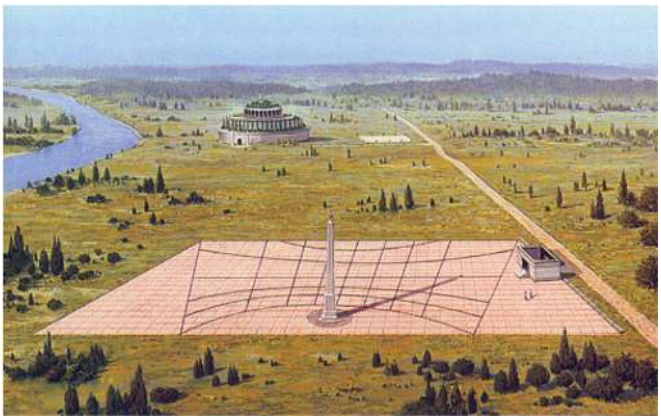


Figure **4.2.2.3**: Illustration showing the likely original placement of the Ara Pacis Augustae (far right) in proximity to the Horologium Augusti (sundial) and the Mausoleum of Augustus in the background. (**source**)

The significance of the topographical placement would have been quite evident to ancient Romans. This complex of Augustan monuments made a clear statement about Augustus' physical transformation of Rome's urban landscape. The dedication to a rather abstract notion of peace (*pax*) is significant in that Augustus advertises the fact that he has restored peace to the Roman state after a long period of internal and external turmoil.

The altar (*ara*) itself sits within a monumental stone screen that has been elaborated with bas relief (low relief) sculpture, with the panels combining to form a programmatic mytho-historical narrative about Augustus and his administration, as well as about Rome's deep roots. The altar enclosure is roughly square while the altar itself sits atop a raised podium that is accessible via a narrow stairway.



Figure 4.2.2.4: Processional scene (south side), Ara Pacis Augustae (Altar of Augustan Peace) 9 B.C.E. (Ara Pacis Museum, Rome) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Processional scenes occupy the north and south flanks of the altar screen. The solemn figures, all properly clad for a rite of the state religion, proceed in the direction of the altar itself, ready to participate in the ritual. The figures all advance toward the west. The occasion depicted would seem to be a celebration of the peace (*Pax*) that Augustus had restored to the Roman empire. In addition four main groups of people are evident in the processions: (1) the lictors (the official bodyguards of magistrates), (2) priests from the major *collegia* of Rome, (3) members of the Imperial household, including women and children, and (4) attendants. There has been a good deal of scholarly discussion focused on two of three non-Roman children who are depicted.



Figure 4.2.2.5: A member of the Priestly college (association) of Septemviri epulones, carries an incense box, processional scene (north side), Ara Pacis Augustae (Altar of Augustan Peace) 9 B.C.E. (Ara Pacis Museum, Rome) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

The north processional frieze, made up of priests and members of the Imperial household, is comprised of 46 figures. The priestly colleges (religious associations) represented include the *Septemviri epulones* (“seven men for sacrificial banquets”—they arranged public feasts connected to sacred holidays), whose members here carry an incense box (image above), and the *quindecimviri sacris faciundis* (“fifteen men to perform sacred actions”— their main duty was to guard and consult the Sibylline books (oracular texts) at the request of the Senate). Members of the imperial family, including Octavia Minor, follow behind.



Figure 4.2.2.6: Augustus (far left) and members of the imperial household, Ara Pacis Augustae (Altar of Augustan Peace) 9 B.C.E. (Ara Pacis Museum, Rome) (source)

A good deal of modern restoration has been undertaken on the north wall, with many heads heavily restored or replaced. The south wall of the exterior screen depicts Augustus and his immediate family. The identification of the individual figures has been the source of a great deal of scholarly debate. Depicted here are Augustus (damaged, he appears at the far left in the image above) and Marcus Agrippa (friend, son-in-law, and lieutenant to Augustus, he appears, hooded, image below), along with other members of the imperial house. All of those present are dressed in ceremonial garb appropriate for the state sacrifice. The presence of state priests known as flamens (*flamines*) further indicate the solemnity of the occasion.



Figure 4.2.2.7: Processional scene (south side) with Agrippa (hooded), Ara Pacis Augustae (Altar of Augustan Peace) 9 B.C.E. (Ara Pacis Museum, Rome) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

A running, vegetal frieze runs parallel to the processional friezes on the lower register. This vegetal frieze emphasizes the fertility and abundance of the lands, a clear benefit of living in a time of peace.

Mythological panels

Accompanying the processional friezes are four mythological panels that adorn the altar screen on its shorter sides. Each of these panels depicts a distinct scene:

- a scene of a bearded male making sacrifice (below)
- a scene of seated female goddess amid the fertility of Italy (also below)
- a fragmentary scene with **Romulus and Remus in the Lupercal grotto** (where these two mythic founders of Rome were suckled by a she-wolf)
- and a fragmentary panel showing **Roma** (the personification of Rome) as a seated goddess.



Figure 4.2.2.8: Sacrifice Panel, Ara Pacis Augustae (Altar of Augustan Peace) 9 B.C.E. (Ara Pacis Museum, Rome) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Since the early twentieth century, the mainstream interpretation of the sacrifice panel (above) has been that the scene depicts the Trojan hero Aeneas arriving in Italy and making a sacrifice to Juno. A recent re-interpretation offered by Paul Rehak argues instead that the bearded man is not Aeneas, but Numa Pompilius, Rome's second king. In Rehak's theory, Numa, renowned as a peaceful ruler and the founder of Roman religion, provides a counterbalance to the warlike Romulus on the opposite panel.



Figure 4.2.2.9: Tellus (or Pax) Panel, Ara Pacis Augustae (Altar of Augustan Peace) 9 B.C.E. (Ara Pacis Museum, Rome) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

The better preserved panel of the east wall depicts a seated female figure (above) who has been variously interpreted as Tellus (the Earth), Italia (Italy), Pax (Peace), as well as Venus. The panel depicts a scene of human fertility and natural abundance. Two babies sit on the lap of the seated female, tugging at her drapery. Surrounding the central female is the natural abundance of the lands and flanking her are the personifications of the land and sea breezes. In all, whether the goddess is taken as Tellus or Pax, the theme stressed is the harmony and abundance of Italy, a theme central to Augustus' message of a restored peaceful state for the Roman people—the Pax Romana.

The Altar

The altar itself (below) sits within the sculpted precinct wall. It is framed by sculpted architectural mouldings with crouching gryphons surmounted by volutes flanking the altar. The altar was the functional portion of the monument, the place where blood sacrifice and/or burnt offerings would be presented to the gods.



Figure 4.2.2.10: View to the altar, Ara Pacis Augustae (Altar of Augustan Peace) 9 B.C.E. (Ara Pacis Museum, Rome) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Implications and interpretation

The implications of the Ara Pacis are far reaching. Originally located along the Via Lata (now Rome's Via del Corso), the altar is part of a monumental architectural makeover of Rome's Campus Martius carried out by Augustus and his family. Initially the makeover had a dynastic tone, with the Mausoleum of Augustus near the river. The dedication of the Horologium (sundial) of Augustus and the Ara Pacis, the Augustan makeover served as a potent, visual reminder of Augustus' success to the people of Rome. The choice to celebrate peace and the attendant prosperity in some ways breaks with the tradition of explicitly triumphal monuments that advertise success in war and victories won on the battlefield. By championing peace—at least in the guise of public monuments—Augustus promoted a powerful and effective campaign of political message making.

Rediscovery

The first fragments of the Ara Pacis emerged in 1568 beneath Rome's Palazzo Chigi near the basilica of San Lorenzo in Lucina. These initial fragments came to be dispersed among various museums, including the Villa Medici, the Vatican Museums, the Louvre, and the Uffizi. It was not until 1859 that further fragments of the Ara Pacis emerged. The German art historian Friedrich von Duhn of the University of Heidelberg is credited with the discovery that the fragments corresponded to the altar mentioned in Augustus' *Res Gestae*. Although von Duhn reached this conclusion by 1881, excavations were not resumed until 1903, at which time the total number of recovered fragments reached 53, after which the excavation was again halted due to difficult conditions. Work at the site began again in February 1937 when advanced technology was used to freeze approximately 70 cubic meters of soil to allow for the extraction of the remaining fragments. This excavation was mandated by the order of the Italian government of Benito Mussolini and his planned jubilee in 1938 that was designed to commemorate the 2,000th anniversary of Augustus' birth.

Mussolini and Augustus



Figure 4.2.2.11: Vittorio Ballio Morpurgo, Ara Pacis Pavillion, 1938 (photo: **Indeciso42** CC BY-SA 4.0)

The revival of the glory of ancient Rome was central to the propaganda of the Fascist regime in Italy during the 1930s. Benito Mussolini himself cultivated a connection with the personage of Augustus and claimed his actions were aimed at furthering the continuity of the Roman Empire. Art, architecture, and iconography played a key role in this propagandistic "revival". Following the 1937 retrieval of additional fragments of the altar, Mussolini directed architect Vittorio Ballio Morpurgo to construct an enclosure for the restored altar adjacent to the ruins of the Mausoleum of Augustus near the Tiber river, creating a key complex for Fascist propaganda. Newly built Fascist palaces, bearing Fascist propaganda, flank the space dubbed "Piazza Augusto Imperatore" ("Plaza of the emperor Augustus"). The famous *Res Gestae Divi Augusti* ("Deeds of the Divine Augustus") was re-created on the wall of the altar's pavilion. The concomitant effect was meant to lead the viewer to associate Mussolini's accomplishments with those of Augustus himself.

The Ara Pacis and Richard Meier



Figure **4.2.2.12**: Richard Meier and Partners, Ara Pacis Museum, Rome, 2006

The firm of architect Richard Meier was engaged to design and execute a new and improved pavilion to house the Ara Pacis and to integrate the altar with a planned pedestrian area surrounding the adjacent Mausoleum of Augustus.

Between 1995 and the dedication of te new pavilion in 2006 Meier crafted the modernist pavilion that capitalizes on glass curtain walls granting visitors views of the Tiber river and the mausoleum while they perambulate in the museum space focused on the altar itself. The Meier pavilion has not been well-received, with some critics immediately panning it and some Italian politicians declaring that it should be dismantled. The museum has also been the victim of targeted vandalism.

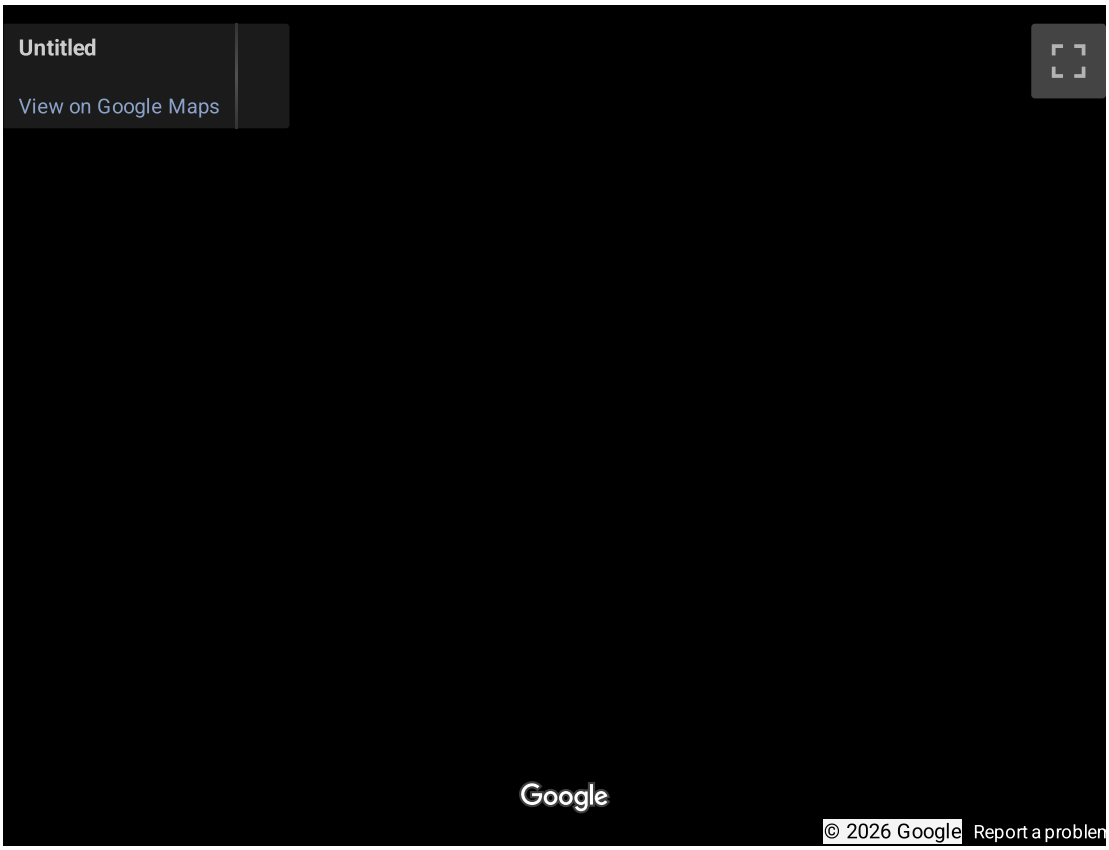
Enduring monumentality

The Ara Pacis Augustae continues to engage us and to incite controversy. As a monument that is the product of a carefully constructed ideological program, it is highly charged with socio-cultural energy that speaks to us about the ordering of the Roman world and its society —the very Roman universe.

Augustus had a strong interest in reshaping the Roman world (with him as the sole leader), but had to be cautious about how radical those changes seemed to the Roman populace. While he defeated enemies, both foreign and domestic, he was concerned about being perceived as too authoritarian–he did not wish to labeled as a king (*rex*) for fear that this would be too much for the Roman people to accept. So the Augustan scheme involved a declaration that Rome's republican government had been "restored" by Augustus and he styled himself as the leading citizen of the republic (*princeps*). These political and ideological motives then influence and guide the creation of his program of monumental art and architecture. These monumental forms, of which the Ara Pacis is a prime example, served to both create and reinforce these Augustan messages.

The story of the Ara Pacis become even more complicated since it is an artifact that then was placed in the service of ideas in the modern age. This results in its identity being impossibly, a mixture of Classicism and Fascism and modernism—all difficult to interpret in a postmodern reality. It is important t

o remember that the sculptural reliefs were created in the first place to be easily readable, so that the viewer could understand the messages of Augustus and his circle without the need to read elaborate texts. Augustus pioneered the use of such ideological messages that relied on clear iconography to get their message across. A great deal was at stake for Augustus and it seems, by virtue of history, that the political choices he made proved prudent. The messages of the Pax Romana, of a restored state, and of Augustus as a leading republican citizen, are all part of an effective and carefully constructed veneer. What was the Pax Romana?



Additional resources:

Ara Pacis Museum

Ara Pacis Augustae (Reed College)

Roma Sparita Photo Archive (Italian)

Ara Pacis Museum / Richard Meier & Partners Architects

David Castriota, *The Ara Pacis Augustae and the Imagery of Abundance in Later Greek and Early Roman Imperial Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

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Paul Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*, trans. D. Schneider (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1987).

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4.2.3: Gemma Augustea

by JULIA FISCHER

Upper register, Dioskourides, *Gemma Augustea*, 9 – 12 C.E., 19 x 23 cm, double-layered sardonyx with gold, gold-plated silver (Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna)



Figure **4.2.3.1**: Dioskourides, *Gemma Augustea*, 9 – 12 C.E., 19 x 23 cm, double-layered sardonyx with gold, gold-plated silver (Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna)

When you think of Roman art, the Colosseum and the ruins of the Roman Forum immediately spring to mind. You may also think of all the public sculpture that decorated ancient Rome, such as the portrait of *Augustus from Primaporta* (left) or the Ara Pacis Augustae. These public works of art functioned as political propaganda and advertised to all Romans the accomplishments of the emperor. In public art Augustus wanted to promote that he was a military victor, that he brought peace to the Roman Empire, and that he was connected to the gods.



Figure **4.2.3.2**: Head (detail), *Augustus of Primaporta*, 1st century C.E. (Vatican Museums) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Private art

But the emperor also commissioned small private works of art such as gems, and cameos. Unlike art in the public sphere, private art would not have been seen by a large audience. Instead, only a select few would have been granted access. If you were lucky enough to be invited to a dinner party at the emperor's palace, he might display his gem collection or show off his large imperial cameos. However, despite the fact that private art would not have been seen by the majority of Roman citizens, the messages contained within these works would have functioned in much the same way as their public counterparts. So if you were at that dinner party with Augustus and he showed you a large cameo, that cameo would have advertised the emperor's military victories, his role as the bringer of peace, and his connection to the gods.



Figure **4.2.3.3**: *Gemma Claudia*, 49 C.E., 120 x 152 cm without setting, five-layered onyx and 18th century gold band (Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna); Emperor Claudius (left), his fourth wife, Agrippina the Younger behind him, her parents are opposite, Germanicus, brother of the emperor, and behind him his wife, Agrippina the Elder

Cameos were a popular medium in the private art of the Roman Empire. While cameos first appeared in the Hellenistic period, they became most fashionable under the Romans. Typically cameos were made of a brown stone that had bands or layers of white throughout, such as sardonyx. This layered stone was then carved in such a way that the figures stood out in white relief while the background remained the dark part of the stone. Most cameos were small and functioned as pendants or rings. But there are a few examples of much larger cameos that were specifically commissioned by the emperor and members of his imperial circle, the most famous example is the *Gemma Augustea*.

Gemma Augustea

The *Gemma Augustea* is divided into two registers that are crammed with figures and iconography. The upper register contains three historical figures and a host of deities and personifications. Our eyes immediately gravitate towards the center of the upper register and the two large enthroned figures, Roma (the personification of the city of Rome) and the emperor Augustus.

Roma is surrounded by military paraphernalia while Augustus holds a scepter, a symbol of his right to rule and his role as the leader of the Roman Empire. At his feet is an eagle, a symbol of the god Jupiter and so we quickly realize that Augustus has close ties to the gods. Augustus is depicted as a heroic semi-nude, a convention usually reserved for deities. Augustus is not only stating that he has connections to gods, he is stating that he is also god-like.



Figure **4.2.3.4**: Roma and Augustus (detail), Dioskourides, *Gemma Augustea*, 9 – 12 C.E., 19 x 23 cm, double-layered sardonyx with gold, gold-plated silver (Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna)

Two other historical figures accompany Augustus in the upper register. At the far left is Tiberius, who will eventually succeed Augustus on the throne. To the right of Tiberius, standing in front of a chariot, is the young Germanicus, another member of Augustus' family and a potential heir to the throne. Clearly the *Gemma Augustea* is making Augustus' dynastic message clear: he hopes that Tiberius or Germanicus will succeed him after he dies.



Figure **4.2.3.5**: Tiberius and Germanicus (detail), Dioskourides, *Gemma Augustea*, 9 – 12 C.E., 19 x 23 cm, double-layered sardonyx with gold, gold-plated silver (Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna)

Interspersed amongst the three historical figures of the upper register are deities and personifications. Directly behind Tiberius is winged Victory. Behind Augustus is Oikoumene, the personification of the civilized world, who places a corona civica (civic crown) on the emperor's head. In the Roman Empire, it was a great honor to be awarded the civic crown as it was only given to someone who had saved Roman citizens from an enemy (and Augustus had certainly done just that by rescuing Romans from civil war). Oceanus, the personification of the oceans, sits on the far right. Finally, Tellus Italiae, the mother earth goddess and personification of Italy, sits with her two chubby children and holds a cornucopia.

Pax Romana

What does the top register mean, with its grouping of mortals, deities, and personifications? In short, everything praises Augustus. The emperor expresses his domination throughout the Roman Empire and his greatest accomplishment, the pacification of the Roman world, which resulted in fertility and prosperity. Augustus' peace and dominion will spread not only throughout the city of Rome (represented by the goddess Roma), but also to all of Italy (represented by Tellus Italiae) and throughout the entire civilized world (symbolized by Oikoumene). And as to Tiberius and Germanicus, Augustus' potential heirs, either will continue the peace and prosperity established by Augustus.



Figure **4.2.3.6**: Lower register (detail), Dioskourides, *Gemma Augustea*, 9 – 12 C.E., 19 x 23 cm, double-layered sardonyx with gold, gold-plated silver (Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna)

The lower register is significantly smaller than the upper, but it nevertheless has plenty of figures in its two scenes, both of which show captive barbarians and victorious Romans. At the left, Roman soldiers raise a trophy while degraded and humiliated barbarians sit at their feet. At the right is a similar scene, with barbarians being brought into submission by Roman soldiers. While the upper register focuses on peace, the lower register represents the wars that established and maintained peace throughout the Roman Empire.



Figure **4.2.3.7**: Roman soldiers and barbarians detail), Dioskourides, *Gemma Augustea*, 9 – 12 C.E., 19 x 23 cm, double-layered sardonyx with gold, gold-plated silver (Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna)

So even though the *Gemma Augustea* is a work of private art, the cameo nevertheless offers a political message and thus serves a purpose similar to public art. The *Gemma* proclaimed Augustus's greatest accomplishment, the Pax Romana, his military victories, his connections to the gods and his god-like status, and his hopes for dynastic succession.

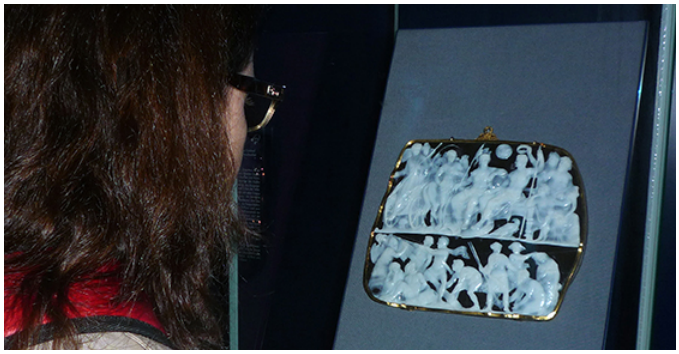
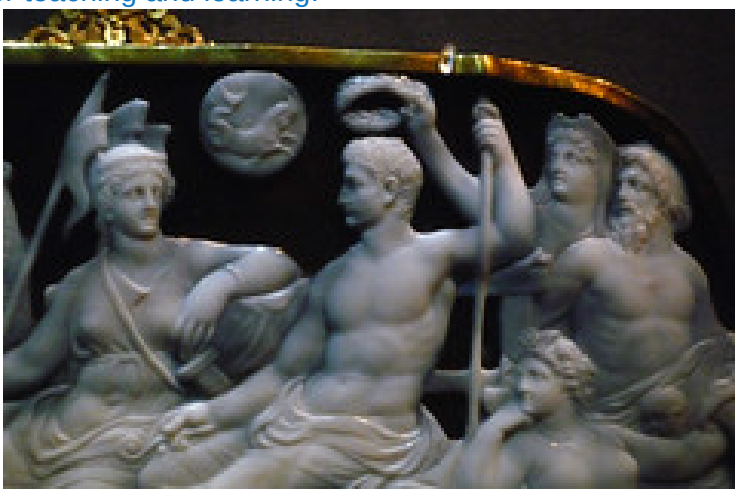


Figure **4.2.3.8**: Dr. Beth Harris viewing the *Gemma Augustea* (for scale)

Additional resources:

Gemma Augustea in the Google Cultural Institute

SmartHistory images for teaching and learning:



Click on image for larger picture (External link to flickr)

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4.2.4: The art of gem carving

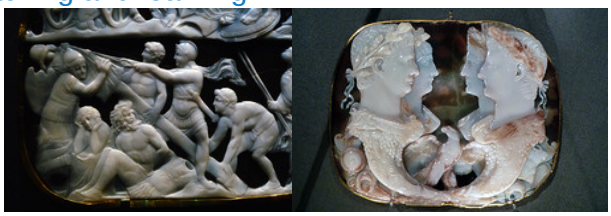
by THE J. PAUL GETTY MUSEUM

Watch a modern artist engrave a precious gemstone using the techniques of the ancients.



Video **4.2.4.6**: Video from the J. Paul Getty Museum

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4.2.5: Preparations for a Sacrifice

by DR. JEFFREY A. BECKER

Animal sacrifice played an important role in ancient Roman religion, but what was involved in the preparation?

An animal sacrifice

The scene depicts a group of four males and a bull preparing for a sacrifice. The bull, bedecked in finery—including its pelta-shaped frontalia—is the intended victim. One attendant (a *tibicen*) provides music by playing the flute (*tibia*), two others hold the bull, and the fourth is perhaps the officiant who will conduct the ceremony. The latter figure, wearing a toga, stands at the viewer's far left, looking toward the sacrificing priests.



Figure **4.2.5.1**: *Preparations for a Sacrifice*, fragment from an architectural relief, c. mid-first century C.E., marble, 172 x 211 cm / 67¾ x 83⅛ inches (Musée du Louvre, Paris) [note: the date for this relief from the Louvre's website—beginning of the second century C.E.—is at odds with the Louvre's publication of its catalog, *Roman Art from the Louvre* (2009) and given the arguments of Koeppel and Torelli, the assignment of a date in the second or third quarter of the first century C.E. is more likely]

Public sacrifices such as the one depicted in this relief played a major role in the Roman state religion. The animal sacrifice itself served multiple functions, chief among them honoring the divinity in question, but also providing a context within which ritual communal feasting could take place after the event. These communal feasts provided valuable nutrition to city dwellers and served to reinforce community ties within the locus of the sanctuary.



Figure 4.2.5.2: Ox (detail), Preparations for a Sacrifice, fragment from an architectural relief, c. mid-first century C.E., marble, 172 x 211 cm / 67¾ x 83⅛ inches (Musée du Louvre, Paris)

The scene is set against a sculpted background that depicts a **Corinthian temple** (to the left) and a distyle building (to the right) that has two Aeolian capitals flanking a double door; this latter façade is decorated with a laurel garland.

The temple's pediment (see image below) includes depictions of various Roman ritual equipment including the *aspergillum* (for sprinkling sacred water), *simpulum* (a ritual ladle for libations), *lituus* (the curved wand of a religious official known as an augur), and an *apex* (a flamen's hat). Such a background serves not only to situate the main scene but also to add realism and contextualization to these activities as they took place within the city of Rome.

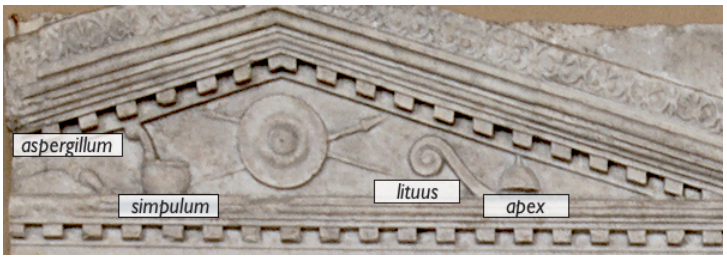


Figure 4.2.5.3: Pediment (detail), *Preparations for a Sacrifice*, fragment from an architectural relief, c. mid-first century C.E., marble, 172 x 211 cm / 67¾ x 83⅛ inches (Musée du Louvre, Paris)

As we look closely, it's important to keep in mind that the relief has been heavily restored—with art restorers adding elements to replace those that had been lost. Archival records suggest that the restorations were carried out by the sculptor Egidio Moretti in 1635, when the relief was a part of the collection of Asdrubale Mattei. The main restored elements are the heads of the two sacrificial priests, as well as the beard of the togate man. Also restored are the hands and the flute of the musician, the right portion of the bull's frontalia, the bull's muzzle, and the raised arm of the priest nearest to the bull. These restorations must all be considered to be conjectural.

Chronology

This fragmentary historical relief comes from Rome but unfortunately lacks a secure findspot (the relief was in the possession of the Mattei family when it was purchased by the Louvre in 1884). Objects such as this one—which was long ago removed from its archaeological context—are incredibly difficult to date.

Based on comparative stylistic analysis, the relief has been dated by some scholars to the beginning of Hadrian's reign (117-138 C.E.), based upon its supposed similarity to the so-called **adventus relief** of Hadrian (now in the Capitoline Museums). If this reading is correct, the setting for the relief is the forecourt of the Temple of Concord (a temple in the Roman Forum), although this assignment is based on an undocumented impression that the relief's findspot was in or near the Forum of Trajan. This is an important reminder that stylistic dating is subjective and often inaccurate.



Figure 4.2.5.4: *Ara Pietatis*, cast of the Della Valle-Medici slab, detail with scene of sacrifice before the temple of Mars Ultor, 43 C.E., marble, 3 feet, 9 inches high (original in the Villa Medici, Rome)

An alternative and more compelling argument promoted by G. Koeppel called for an earlier dating of the relief. Koeppel argued that the most apt stylistic comparison is a fragment of a relief from the *Ara Pietatis Augustae* (the *Altar of Augustuan Piety*, a Julio-Claudian monument from Rome's Campus Martius, image above), which would place the date of the Louvre relief either at the close of Claudius' reign (41-54 C.E.) or at the beginning of Nero's reign (54-68 C.E.). Koeppel based his argument on a comparison of the architectural background visible in both reliefs, as well as on the stylization of the bull's head in both reliefs.



Figure 4.2.5.5: Architecture (detail), *Preparations for a Sacrifice*, fragment from an architectural relief, c. mid-first century C.E., marble, 172 x 211 cm / 67¾ x 83⅛ inches (Musée du Louvre, Paris)

Mario Torelli posits that the buildings in the background of the Louvre relief should be identified as the house of Gnaeus Domitius Ahenobarbus (the father of the emperor Nero), at right, and, at left, Aedes Penatium, a temple once located on the Velia in Rome.

Context: historical art

It is clear that the creation of historical art forms—meaning those that aim to encapsulate and document actual events in a permanent medium—stands out as a key achievement within the vast corpus of Roman art. As a medium, historical relief sculpture defines public art of the Roman imperial period. These reliefs, most often carefully composed and well executed, capture the Roman interest in detailed depictions of actual events that had transpired. One clear outcome of creating such a corpus of sculpture is the creation (and reinforcement) of communal memories that served not only to remind the human participants and witnesses of things that they had seen but also to serve as a cohesive agent, binding together the constituent members to the body of the community.

The celebratory element of reliefs of this type remind viewers of communal rituals (in which some of them may well have participated) that occurred in the city of Rome on a regular basis, manifesting an interchange between state ritual and the urban populace. These reliefs also serve a didactic function, capturing snapshots, of a sort, to reflect the traditions, customs, and iconography of the Roman culture. In their hyper-detailed nature they are not only beautiful artifacts to behold today, but they also encode important documentary evidence that aids in our understanding of details large and small related to the Roman civilization.

Additional resources:

This work at the Louvre

Greek, Etruscan and Roman antiquities at the Louvre

D. E. E. Kleiner, *Roman Sculpture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994).

G. M. Koeppel, "The Grand Pictorial Tradition of Roman Historical Representation during the Early Empire," *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* II.12.1 (1982), pp. 507-535.

G. M. Koeppel, "Official State Reliefs of the City of Rome in the Imperial Age: a Bibliography," *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* II.12.1 (1982), pp. 477-506.

G. M. Koeppel, "Die historichen Reliefs der römischen Kaiserzeit I: Stadtrömische Denkmäler unbekannter Bauzugehörigkeit aus augusteischer und julisch-claudischer Zeit," *Bonner Jahrbücher* 183 (1983), pp. 61-144.

G. M. Koeppel, "The Role of Pictorial Models in the Creation of the Historical Relief during the Age of Augustus," in *The Age of Augustus*, edited by R. Winkes (Providence RI: Center for Old World Archaeology and Art, Brown University, 1985), pp. 89-106.

D. Roger and C. Giroire, *Roman Art from the Louvre* (Hudson Hills Press, 2009).

I. S. Ryberg, *Rites of the State Religion in Roman Art* (Rome: American Academy in Rome, 1955).

M. Torelli, *Typology and Structure of Roman Historical Reliefs* (Thomas Spencer Jerome Lectures) (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1982).

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4.2.6: Portrait of Vespasian

by THE BRITISH MUSEUM



Figure 4.2.6.1: *Head from a marble statue of Vespasian*, 70-80 C.E., marble, 45 cm high, from Carthage, northern Africa © Trustees of the British Museum

In ancient Rome, official portraits were an extremely important way for emperors to reach out to their subjects, and their public image was defined by them. As hundreds of surviving imperial statues show, there were only three ways in which the emperor could officially be represented: in the battle dress of a general; in a toga, the Roman state civilian costume; or nude, likened to a god. These styles powerfully and effectively evoked the emperor's role as commander-in-chief, magistrate or priest, and finally as the ultimate embodiment of divine providence.

Portrait of the emperor: A soldier and a wit

This naturalistic portrait of the emperor Vespasian (reigned 69-79 C.E.) clearly shows the lined complexion of this battle-hardened emperor, and also the curious 'strained expression' which the Roman writer Suetonius said he had at all times. The loss of the nose is characteristic of the damage often suffered by ancient statues, either through deliberate mutilation or through falling or being toppled from their base.



Figure 4.2.6.2: *Relief depicting a triumphal procession into Rome with loot from the temple in Jerusalem*, c. 81 C.E., panel in the passageway, Arch of Titus, marble, 6'-7" high, Via Sacra, Rome

Vespasian was born in the Roman town of Reate (Rieti), about forty miles (sixty-five kilometers) north-west of Rome in the Sabine Hills. Vespasian distinguished himself in military campaigns in Britain and later became a trusted aide of the emperor Nero. Together with one of his sons, Titus, Vespasian conquered Judaea in 75 C.E. and celebrated with a magnificent triumphal procession through Rome. Part of the event, in particular the displaying of the seven-branched candlestick or "Menorah" from the Temple at Jerusalem, is shown on the Arch of Titus, in Rome (above). The proceeds from the conquest of Judaea provided funds for the building of the Colosseum and other famous buildings in Rome.

Vespasian was known for his wit as well as his military skills. When, during one of his attempts to boost the treasury, Vespasian raised a tax on public urinals. Titus complained that this was below imperial dignity. Vespasian is said to have held out a handful of coins from the new tax and said “Now, do these smell any different?” Even on his death bed Vespasian’s wit did not desert him. He was perhaps parodying the idea of the deification of emperors, when he said “Oh dear, I think I’m becoming a god.”

Roman portrait sculptures

Portrait sculptures are one of the great legacies of Roman art. Busts and statues portraying men, women and children from most ranks of society were set up in houses, tombs and public buildings throughout the Roman Empire. Sculptures of emperors and magistrates were often thought to embody personal authority, whereas many of the portraits representing private citizens were intended as memorials to the dead.

Suggested readings:

S. Walker, *Greek and Roman portraits* (London, The British Museum Press, 1995).

S. Walker, *Roman art* (London, 1991).

B. Levick, *Vespasian* (Routledge, 1999).

This work at The British Museum

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4.2.7: The Colosseum

by DR. BERNARD FRISCHER and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER

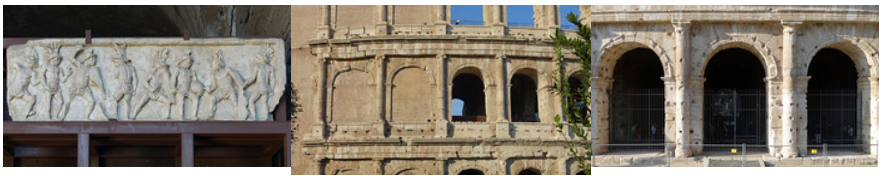


Video **4.2.7.1**: Colosseum (Flavian Amphitheater, or Amphitheatrum Flavium), c. 70-80 C.E., Rome, an ARCHES video

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4.2.8: The Arch of Titus

by DR. JEFFREY A. BECKER

At the end of a Roman triumph, the defeated general was murdered. The victim was marched under this triumphal arch.



Video **4.2.8.1**: Relief panel with *The Spoils of Jerusalem Being Brought into Rome*, Arch of Titus, Rome, after 81 C.E., marble, 7’10” high

The Roman triumph

The Roman triumph was an ancient martial tradition—a parade so riotous that its symbolic culmination involved catapulting the victorious general (*triumphator*) to quasi-divine status for a single, heady day. The Romans marked his status by staining his face red using the mineral pigment cinnabar (Jupiter’s countenance was said to have the same ruddy hue).

The Romans traced the traditions of the triumph back to their own beginnings. Rome’s legendary founder, Romulus, was the first to celebrate the rite when he defeated and killed Acron, the king of Caenina.

Victory in Judea



Figure **4.2.8.1**: Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema, *The Triumph of Titus: AD 71*, *The Flavians*, 1835 oil on panel, 44.3 x 29 cm (The Walters Art Museum); “The artist shows Titus returning to Rome in triumph following his capture of Jerusalem….His father, Emperor Vespasian…leads the procession. Titus comes next, holding the hand of his daughter, Julia, who turns to address her father’s younger brother and successor, Domitian…Alma-Tadema depicted these events by drawing on classical sources…and on the latest 19th-century scholarship regarding everyday life in Rome.” (**source**)

In the summer of 71 C.E. the Roman emperor Vespasian and Titus, his eldest son, had quelled a dangerous revolt in the Roman province of Judea and returned to Rome to celebrate this major accomplishment. Not only that, but the Flavian dynasty (Vespasian

and his two sons Titus and Domitian) had succeeded in winning the throne during the year 69 C.E.—a time of bloody civil turmoil known as the “Year of the Four Emperors.”



Figure **4.2.8.2**: Judaea Capta Sesterti (Roman coin) with portrait of Titus (left) and a personification of Judea, captured (right) (photo: copyright © David Hendin, used by permission)

A great deal was at stake for Vespasian and Titus, both relative political newcomers from a family line (Flavius) that was not particularly illustrious. The honor of the triumph was accorded to them jointly, and the spectacle (as described by Flavius Josephus in his text known as *The Jewish War*) rivaled anything that Rome had ever seen before: spoils, prisoners, pictorial narratives in abundance. All this was meant to awe the spectators and to transport the viewers to the battlefields of the war in the east. But the ritual of the triumph, its parade—even the semi-divine status accorded the *triumphator*—was ephemeral. For this reason, the later construction of permanent monuments (like the Arch of Titus) served to make an impact on the urban landscape (and the collective memory of city dwellers) that lasted far longer than the events of the day itself.



Figure **4.2.8.3**: Arch of Titus and the Colosseum, Rome (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

The tradition of triumphal monuments connects the Flavians to the traditions of the Roman Republic. Early monuments included columns—for instance the rostrate column (*columna rostrata)* of Caius Duilius (c. 260 B.C.E.)—and the early triumphal arch prototype known as the fornix Fabianus erected in the Forum Romanum by Q. Fabius Allobrogicus in 121 B.C.E. The emperor Augustus continued the use of the triumphal arch, even though he restructured the institution of the triumph itself. Since the Flavians were relative newcomers to the Roman power structure, they needed as much legitimization as they could find, and thus participating in the time-honored traditions of the triumph and its stock monuments made a good deal of sense.

Topography and the triumph



Figure 4.2.8.4: View across the Roman Forum (Forum Romanum) to the Arch of Titus (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

The Arch of Titus is located in Summa Sacra Via, the highest point of the Sacra Via, Rome's "Sacred Way" that served as its main processional street. Furthemore, the Arch of Titus commands a key point along the triumphal route (*via Triumphalis*)—one that visually links the valley of the Flavian amphitheater (known to us as the **Colosseum**) to the valley of the **Forum Romanum** and the Capitoline Hill beyond. Many triumphal parades had passed along this route for many centuries, thus the choice to place a permanent triumphal monument astride the route was not accidental but, rather, deliberately evocative of the fact that the triumph as a ritual both created and reinforced collective memory for Romans. This arch, built as an honorific monument, honored Titus posthumously and was a project executed by his younger brother and imperial successor, Domitian (emperor, 81-96 C.E.). Another arch dedicated to Titus, triumphal in its nature, was located in the valley of the Circus Maximus—but this arch only survives in the form of scattered sculptural fragments and a Medieval transcription of its dedicatory inscription. Recent archaeological excavations (2015) in the Circus Maximus have revealed previously unknown remains of this "lost" arch, including elements of its foundations.

The attic inscription

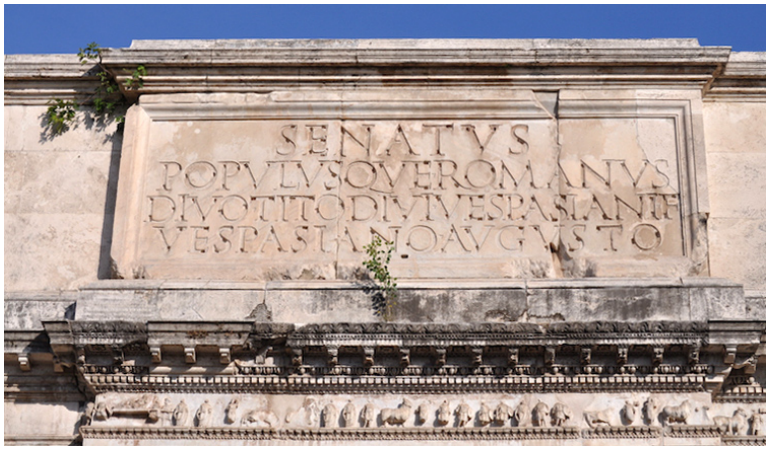


Figure 4.2.8.5: Attic inscription, Arch of Titus, after 81 C.E., Rome (photo: Dr. Steven Fine, used by permission)

The surviving ancient attic inscription (above) records the dedication of the monument to Titus. Given that Titus is identified as having been deified (*divus*), we learn that the monument's completion can only have occurred after Titus' death in September of 81 C.E.

The text of the attic inscription reads:

> ***SENATVS***
> ***POPVLVSQVE·ROMANVS***
> ***DIVO·TITO·DIVI·VESPASIANI·F(ILIO)***
> ***VESPASIANO·AVGVSTO (CIL 6.945)***

> ***The Senate and the Roman people (dedicate this) to the deified Titus Vespasian Augustus, son of the deified Vespasian***

The inscription makes the dedication a public one—undertaken on the part of the Senate and the Roman People (*Senatus Populusque Romanus*), and reminds viewers of Titus' link to his likewise deified father, Vespasian, who had died in 79 C.E. This dedication is an example of shrewd power politics on the part of the Emperor Domitian—he had been too young to take part in the military glory enjoyed by his father and brother. Perhaps he sought to bask in the generally favorable public opinion they enjoyed as he himself made the transition to power.

Relief sculpture



Figure 4.2.8.6: View of the vault of the arch's passageway, with a relief of the apotheosis of Titus (photo: Dr. Steven Fine, used by permission)

Two panel reliefs flank the single passageway of the arch, and a third adorns the vault (the vault relief is above). The subject matter of the flanking reliefs draws upon the 71 C.E. triumph of Vespasian and Titus, depicting key triumphal episodes following the fall of Jerusalem. In one scene (below) Romans carry spoils from the Temple in Jerusalem, including a Menorah, sacred trumpets and the showbread table. Recent studies have shown these items were painted with yellow ochre.



Figure 4.2.8.7: Relief panel showing The Spoils of Jerusalem being brought into Rome, Arch of Titus, Rome, after 81 C.E., marble, 7 feet,10 inches high (photo: **Steven Zucker**, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

The triumph panel opposite depicts Titus in a triumphal four-horse chariot (*quadriga*) followed closely by the goddess of Victory (*Victoria*), preceded by official attendants known as lictors, and accompanied by symbolic representations (*genii*) of the Senate, the Roman people, and Virtus (manly virtue) (below).



Figure 4.2.8.8: Relief panel showing Titus in a triumphal four-horse chariot, Arch of Titus, Rome, after 81 C.E., marble, 7 feet,10 inches high (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Since the triumphal parade would have passed through the very spot on which the arch was constructed, these images serve as powerful evocations of collective memories shared and held by the Roman people. The depiction in the reliefs echoes the riotous parade described by Flavius Josephus. The program of Flavian architecture largely transformed the physical landscape of Rome; this program was replete with visual cues and reminders of Flavian success, all of which stemmed from and centered around the great triumph at the culmination of the Jewish War.

Restoration and current state



Figure 4.2.8.9: Canaletto, *The Arch of Titus in Rome*, 1742-44, oil on canvas, 38 x 28 cm (Galleria dell'Accademia Carrara, Bergamo)

During the eleventh century the arch was incorporated into a fortress built by the Frangipani family in Rome, resulting in damage to the panel reliefs that is still visible today. In 1821, during the pontificate of Pope Pius VII, Giuseppe Valadier undertook a major restoration of the surviving structure. In order to identify those portions that had been restored, Valadier employed travertine as opposed to the original marble. The western side of the attic received a new inscription at the time of this restoration. Canaletto's famous painting of the arch grants a view of the monument's condition prior to Valadier's restoration.

Influence

The Arch of Titus has long provided a source of artistic inspiration. Leon Battista Alberti was inspired by its form as he designed the facade of the basilica of Sant'Andrea in Mantua, Italy, after 1472. The Arch of Titus has inspired many modern commemorative arches, notably the Arc de Triomphe in Paris (1806), Stanford White's Arch in Washington Square Park in New York City (1892),

the United States National Memorial Arch in Valley Forge National Historical Park designed by Paul Philippe Cret (1917), and Edward Lutyens' India Gate in New Delhi (1921).



Figure **4.2.8.10**: Paul Philippe Cret, The National Memorial Arch In Valley Forge Park in Pennsylvania, erected 1917

Additional resources:

The Arch of Titus Digital Restoration Project

Rome Reborn: Arch of Titus

The Flavian Dynasty (69–96) on The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History)

Coloring in the the troubled history of a renowned Roman arch

Mary Beard, *The Roman Triumph* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap, 2009).

A. J. Boyle and W. J. Dominik, *Flavian Rome: culture, image, text* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2003).

F. Coarelli, *Divus Vespasianus. Il Bimillenario dei Flavi* (Milan: Electa, 2009)

R. H. Darwall-Smith, *Emperors and Architecture: a Study of Flavian Rome* (Latomus, 1996).

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R. Ross Holloway, "Some Remarks on the Arch of Titus," *L'antiquité classique* 56 (1987) pp. 183-191.

M. Pfanner, *Der Titusbogen* (Mainz: P. von Zabern, 1983).

L. Roman, "Martial and the City of Rome." *The Journal of Roman Studies* 100 (2010) pp. 1-30.

H. S. Versnel, *Triumphus: an inquiry into the origin, development and meaning of the Roman triumph* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1970).

L. Yarden, *The spoils of Jerusalem on the Arch of Titus: a re-investigation* (Stockholm : Svenska Institutet i Rom; Göteborg : Distributor, P. Åströms, 1991).

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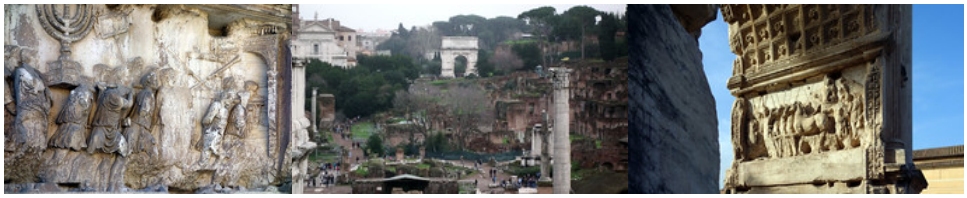
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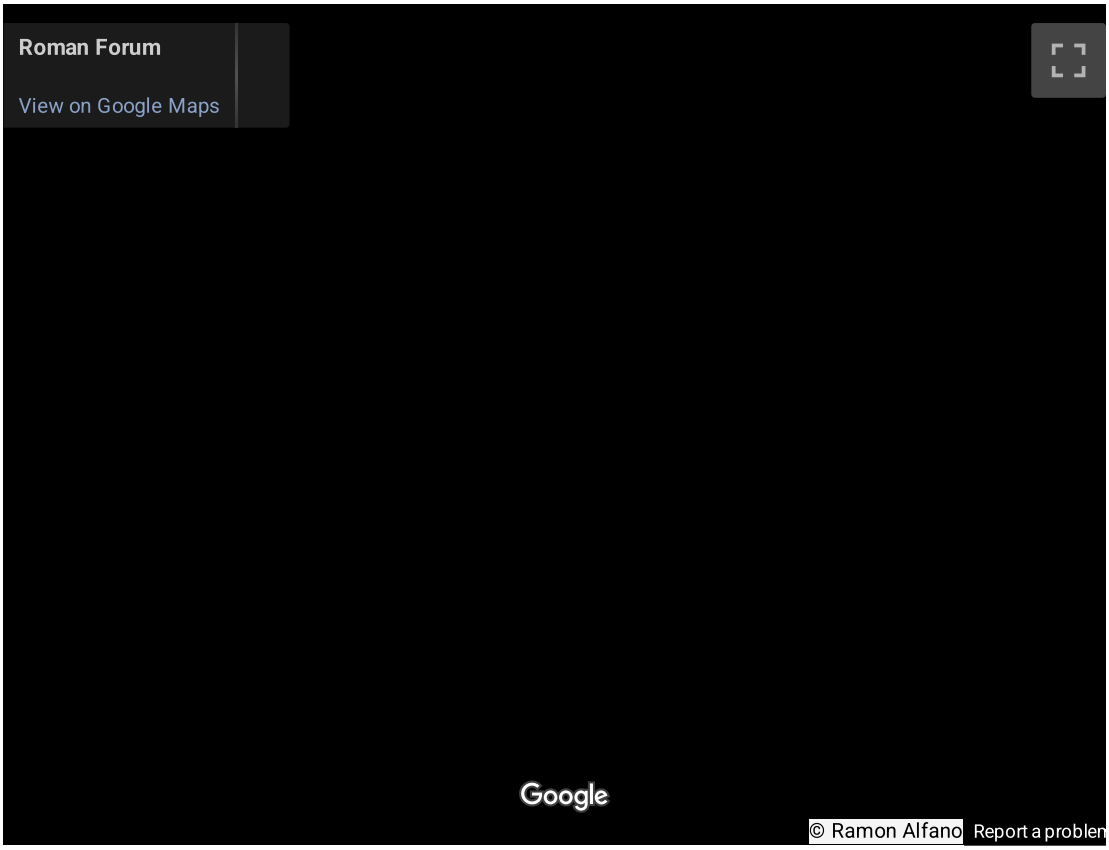
4.2.9: The Spoils of Jerusalem, Arch of Titus

by DR. STEVEN FINE and DR. BETH HARRIS

The emperor Titus sacked the temple in Jerusalem and looted its most holy treasures.



Video 4.2.9.1: Relief panel with *The Spoils of Jerusalem Being Brought into Rome*, Arch of Titus, Rome, after 81 C.E., marble, 7’10” high



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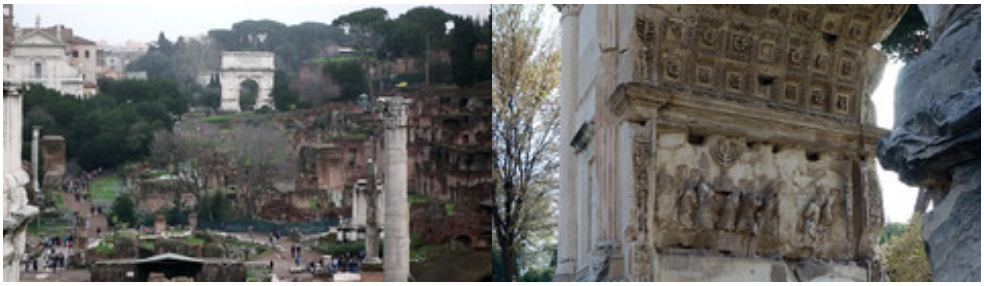
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4.2.10: Silver shekel of the Second Jewish Revolt

by THE BRITISH MUSEUM

This silver coin shows how, in an act of defiance against Roman rule, the Jewish population in the province of Judaea over-struck portraits of the Emperor Hadrian with their own symbols.



Figure **4.2.10.12**: *Silver shekel of the Second Jewish Revolt*, struck over a denarius of the Emperor Hadrian, c. 133-135 C.E., from Judaea, Palestine © Trustees of the British Museum

Rebellion against Rome

Jerusalem had been destroyed by Roman forces in 70 C.E. and the Roman authorities prevented the Jews from rebuilding their temple, which was the focal point of their religious and cultural identity. Moreover, Hadrian decided to re-found Jerusalem as a Roman colony named Aelia Capitolina

This and other measures, such as banning circumcision, prompted the Jews to rise against Rome under their charismatic leader Simon Bar Kokhba, an assumed name, meaning “Son of the Star” (a reference to his divine claim to leadership). The Roman forces were taken by surprise and suffered heavy casualties.

The rebels established their own rule in the territory they held and Bar Kokhba took the title “Prince of Israel” (nsy’ Ysr’l). As well as over-striking Roman coins like this one, they minted their own with highly symbolic and deeply emotive motifs referring to the destroyed Temple of Jerusalem and the rituals associated with it. A new era of “Redemption” or “Freedom of Israel” was declared. Documents dated “Years One to Four” survive and cover the period from March/April 132 C.E. to the time when the Romans re-established control in the autumn of 135 C.E.

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4.2.11: Portrait Bust of a Flavian Woman (Fonseca Bust)

by DR. ELIZABETH MARLOWE, DR. STEVEN ZUCKER and DR. BETH HARRIS

Is this delicate female portrait what we think? Take part in a discussion of a masterpiece we know little about.

Part 1:



Video **4.2.11.1**: *Portrait Bust of a Flavian Woman (Fonseca Bust)*, from Rome, early 2nd century C.E., marble, 63 cm (Capitoline Museums), Part 1 of 2Speakers: Dr. Steven Zucker and Dr. Beth Harris

Part 2:

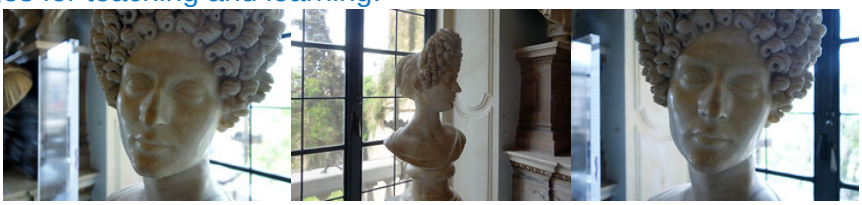


Video **4.2.11.2**: *Portrait Bust of a Flavian Woman (Fonseca bust)*, early 2nd century C.E., marble, 63 inches high (Capitoline Museum, Rome), part 2 of 2
Speakers: Dr. Elizabeth Marlowe and Dr. Beth Harris

Additional resources:

Elizabeth Marlowe, *Shaky Ground: Context, Connoisseurship and the History of Roman Art* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2013)

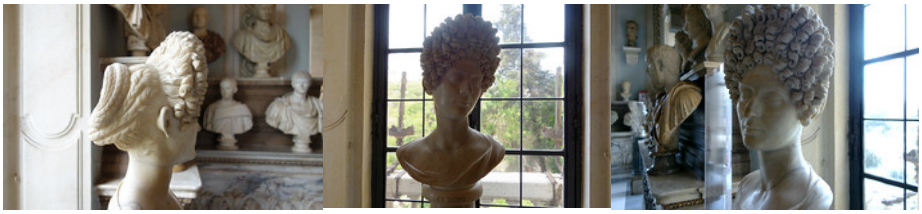
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4.2.12: The Forum and Markets of Trajan

by DR. JEFFREY A. BECKER

Trajan tasked his architect with moving an entire hill to make room for this extravagant public space.



Video 4.2.12.1: Apollodorus of Damascus, The Forum of Trajan, dedicated 112 C.E., Rome



Video 4.2.12.2: Apollodorus of Damascus, The Markets of Trajan, 112 C.E., Rome

An emperor worth celebrating

Marcus Ulpius Traianus, now commonly referred to as Trajan, reigned as Rome's emperor from 98 until 117 C.E. A military man, Trajan was born of mixed stock—part Italic, part Hispanic—into the *gens Ulpia* (the Ulpian family) in the Roman province of Hispania Baetica (modern Spain) and enjoyed a career that catapulted him to the heights of popularity, earning him an enduring reputation as a "good emperor."



Figrue 4.2.12.1: Marble bust of Trajan, c. 108-117 C.E., 68.5 cm high (The British Museum) (photo: Chris Stroup, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

Trajan was the first in a line of adoptive emperors that concluded with Marcus Aurelius. These emperors were chosen for the "job" based not on bloodlines, but on their suitability for rule; most of them were raised with this role in mind from their youth. This period is often regarded as the height of the Roman empire's prosperity and stability. The ancient Romans were so fond of Trajan that they officially bestowed upon him the epithetical title *optimus princeps* or "the best first-citizen." It is safe to say that the Romans felt Trajan was well worth celebrating—and celebrate him they did. A massive architectural complex—referred to as the Forum of Trajan (Latin: *Forum Traiani* or, less commonly, *Forum Ulpium*) was devoted to Trajan's career and, in particular, his great military successes in his wars against Dacia (now Romania).

Unique under the heavens

The Forum of Trajan was the final, and largest, of Rome's complex of so-called "Imperial fora"—dubbed by at least one ancient writer as "a construction unique under the heavens" (Amm. Marc. 16.10.15). *Fora* is the Latin plural of *forum*—meaning a public, urban square for civic and ritual business. A series of **Imperial fora**, beginning with Iulius Caesar, had been built adjacent to the earlier **Roman Forum** by a series of emperors. The Forum of Trajan was inaugurated in 112 C.E., although construction may not have been complete, and was designed by the famed architect Apollodorus of Damascus.



Figrue 4.2.12.2: View from the Markets of Trajan of the remains of the eastern exedra and the eastern portico of the main square of the Forum of Trajan, looking toward the Basilica Ulpia (in the upper left) (**photo**, CC BY-SA 3.0)

The Forum of Trajan is elegant—it is rife with signs of top-level architecture and decoration. All of the structures, save the two libraries (which were built of brick), were built of stone. There is a great deal of exotic, imported marble and many statues, including gilded examples. The forum was composed of a main square (measuring c. 200 x 120 meters) that was flanked by porticoes (an extended, roofed colonnade), as well as by exedrae (semicircular, recessed spaces) on the eastern (above) and western sides.

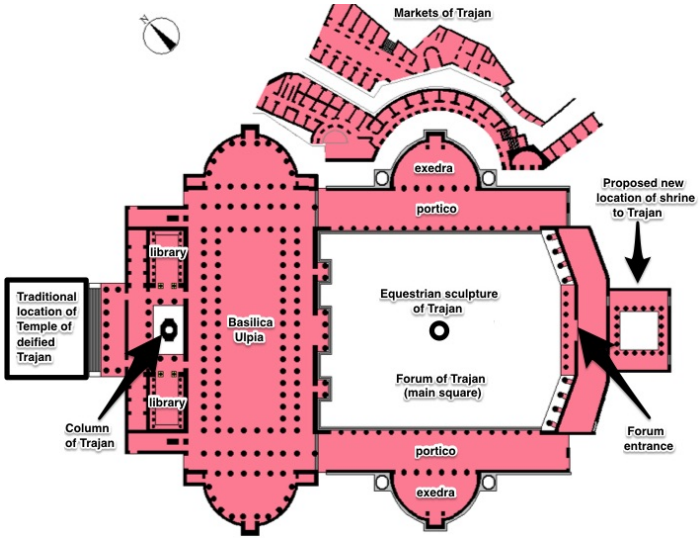


Figure 4.2.12.3: Plan of the Forum of Trajan. Note that the traditional site of the temple of the deified Trajan is shown, but is replaced by a shrine located at the southern side of the forum's main square (following R. Meneghini) (**image**: CC BY-SA 3.0, annotated by SmartHistory)

A contested element of the reconstruction of the forum complex is a temple dedicated to the deified Trajan (the deceased emperor had been declared a god). Traditional reconstructions place this temple behind the column, although a recent reconstruction favored by Dr. Roberto Meneghini does not agree with this conjecture, instead preferring to place a shrine to the deified Trajan at the southern end of the forum abutting the retaining wall of the neighboring Forum of Augustus. Scholars continue to debate the nature and position of this temple.

The main structure at the center of the forum complex is the massive Basilica Ulpia, and beside that stood two libraries that flanked the Column of Trajan, an honorific monument bearing an elaborate program of sculpted relief.



Figure 4.2.12.4: Remains of the Basilica Ulpia (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Paved in white marble: The forum square (*Area Fori*)

The main square of the forum was once a vast space, screened by architecture on all sides and paved in white marble. Several rows of trees, and perhaps rows of statues, ran parallel to the porticoes. Entry to the forum square was from the south, by way of a triumphal arch surmounted by a statue of Trajan riding in a triumphal chariot. Although the arch itself is no longer extant, it is depicted on a coin issued c. 112-115 C.E. (below).



Figure **4.2.12.5**: Gold coin (aureus) struck at Rome c. 112-115 C.E. (19 mm, 7.13 g, 7h). The legend reads "IMP TRAIANO AVG GER DAC P M TR P COS VI P P ("To the emperor Trajan Augustus Germanicus Dacicus, Pontifex Maximus, [holder of] tribunician power, in his sixth consulship, father of his country." The coins depicts a laureate Trajan (draped, and cuirassed bust right) seen from behind on the observe side. On the reverse the Arcus Traiani of the Forum of Trajan is seen. This is presented as a hexastyle building facade, crowned by a frontal chariot drawn by six horses. Three figures stand to the left and right, while four statues occupy niches in the arches below. The reverse legend reads "FORVM TRAIAN[A]" (**image**)

The forum square (116 x 95 meters) has an overriding martial theme, reminding viewers and visitors that the forum was constructed from the proceeds (*manubiae*) of Trajan's successful military campaigns against the Dacians (101–102, 105–106 C.E.). The porticoes were decorated with statuary and military standards (official emblems of the legions), as described by the ancient author Aulus Gellius: "All along the roof of the colonnades of the forum of Trajan gilded statues of horses and representations of military standards are placed, and underneath is written *Ex manubiis* [from the spoils of war] …" (*Attic Nights* 13.25.1).

The decorative program also included statues of captured Dacian prisoners (left) and, it seems, statues of notable Roman statesmen and generals that were set in the intercolumnar spaces of the porticoes.



Figure **4.2.12.6**: Captured Dacian, 106-112 (Vatican Museum) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

At the center of the Forum square stood a bronze equestrian statue of Trajan, the *Equus Traiani*. While the statue itself does not survive, the occasion of a visit to Rome by Constantius II (in 357 C.E.) preserves a mention of the famous equestrian: "So he [Constantius II] abandoned all hope of attempting anything like it, and declared that he would and could imitate simply Trajan's horse, which stands in the middle of the court with the emperor on its back." (Ammianus Marcellinus 16.10.15) We also see the equestrian statue depicted on a silver denarius struck at Rome c. 112-114/5 C.E. (below).



Figure 4.2.12.7: Silver coin, Denarius (19mm, 3.35 g, 7h), struck 112-114/115 C.E IMP TRAIANO AVG GER DAC P M TR P COS VI P P, laureate bust right, drapery on far shoulder S P Q R OPTIMO PRINCIPI, equestrian statue of Trajan facing left, holding spear and sword (or small Victory) (**image**)

The massive Basilica Ulpia

As an architectural type, the basilica is uniquely Roman and served various civic and juridical purposes. The habit of planners from the first century B.C.E. onwards had been to prefer to use the basilica as a framing device, so as to have it communicate with the flanks of a forum square. We see this in many cases, although with some variation. In the case of the Forum of Trajan the massive and monumental Basilica Ulpia is constructed at the northern edge of the open courtyard. It thus serves to bisect the complex, with the portico-lined courtyard lying to its east and the libraries and the Column of Trajan to its west.



Figure 4.2.12.8: Remains of the Basilica Ulpia in the foreground, and the Column of Trajan in the middle ground (photo: **Steven Zucker,** CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

The basilica is massive—its overall length is some 169 meters and the interior nave is 25 meters wide. It is apsidal at both ends, with a raised central floor, and the main hall has a double surround of columns (96 in total) that were probably of white or yellow marble, in the Corinthian order. The basilica was also famous in antiquity for its gilded bronze roof tiles, as commented on by Pausanias, who remarked that the building was “worth seeing not only for its general beauty but especially for its roof made of bronze” (*Description of Greece* 5.12.6).



Figure 4.2.12.9: Artist's view of exterior elevation (J. Gaudet, 1867)

The Markets of Trajan (dedicated c. 110 C.E.)



Figure 4.2.12.10: Apollodorus of Damascus, The Markets of Trajan, 112 C.E. the Militia Tower is visible in the center, rising above the markets (photo: Vašek Vinklát, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Adjacent to the Forum of Trajan is a separate architectural complex attributed to Trajan that is commonly referred to as the Markets of Trajan. This multi-level commercial complex was built against the flank of the Quirinal Hill which had to be excavated for the purpose. The complex of the markets takes its planning cue from the eastern hemicycle of the Forum of Trajan. The ruins of the markets today preserve 170 rooms and the complex covers a space of approximately 110 by 150 meters; its walls stood to 35 meters above the level of the pavement of the Forum of Trajan. The original extension is hard to ascertain, based in part upon subsequent re-use and construction in the Medieval period (and later). The archaeologist Corrado Ricci (1858-1934) cleared the ruins in the twentieth century, but the markets themselves have received comparatively less attention than the adjacent forum.



Figure 4.2.12.11: Apollodorus of Damascus, The Markets of Trajan, 112 C.E. (photo: Steven Zucker CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)The function of the markets was mercantile—indeed the markets may have been designed to relocate shops (*tabernae*) and offices that were displaced by the Trajanic building project. The ground floor offices (at the forum level) were likely occupied by cashiers of the imperial treasury (*arcarii caesariani*), while upper level rooms may been leased out or used by imperial officials associated with the grain dole (*annona*).



Figure 4.2.12.12: Apollodorus of Damascus, The Markets of Trajan (Market Hall), 112 C.E. (photo: Steven Zucker CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

The great, vaulted market hall (above) is an ambitious and brilliant design—just as with the rest of the complex, reflecting the skills of the designer / architect who executed the project. The medieval Militia Tower (*Torre delle Milizie*) (12th century) and the now-demolished convent of Santa Caterina a Magnanapoli utilized portions of the structure of the market's buildings.

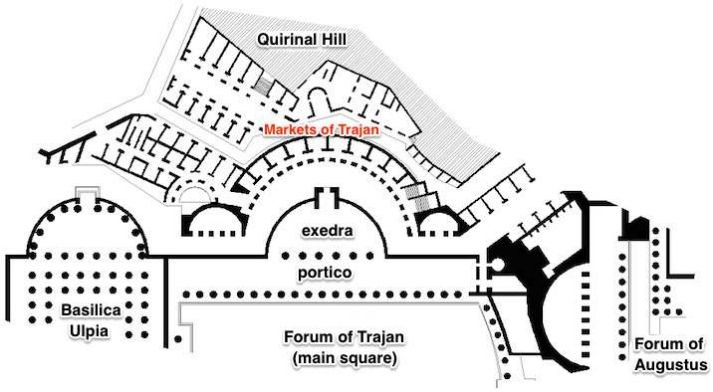


Figure 4.2.12.13: Plan of the Markets of Trajan (in relation to the Forum of Trajan)

The architect – Apollodorus of Damascus

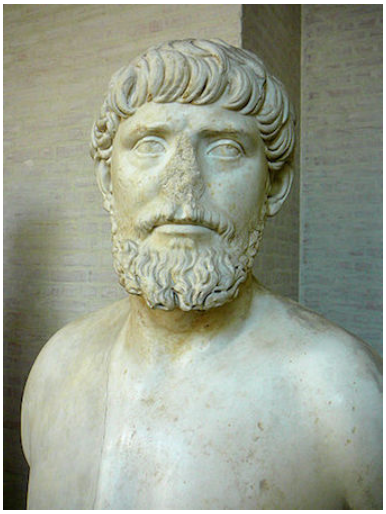


Figure **4.2.12.14**: Portrait considered to be that of Apollodorus of Damascus (Munich Glyptothek) (photo: **Gun Powder Ma**, CC BY-SA 3.0)

Apollodorus of Damascus was a military engineer and architect who was active during the first quarter of the second century C.E. He accompanied the emperor Trajan on his campaigns in Dacia and is famous for building a bridge across the Danube river that was both described by ancient authors and depicted in art. The relief from the Column of Trajan depicts the bridge in the background (see below). Built c. 105 C.E., the segmental arch bridge was the first across the lower Danube and allowed Roman soldiers to cross the river easily. Apollodorus, who is described as "the master-builder of the whole work" is credited with the project (Procopius, *Buildings*, 4.6.11-14; tr. H.B. Dewing). Upon return from the Dacian Wars, Apollodorus is thought to have been the architect behind the project that produced the Forum and Column of Trajan, as well as the adjacent markets. A textual tradition is preserved by Cassius Dio that has Apollodorus running afoul of (and being executed by) Hadrian, Trajan's successor, although it is unclear whether credence should be given to this story (Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, 69.4; tr. Cary).



Figure **4.2.12.15**: Relief from the Column of Trajan, Carrara marble, completed 113 C.E., showing the bridge in the background and in the foreground Trajan is shown sacrificing by the Danube river

Significance of the "construction unique under the heavens"

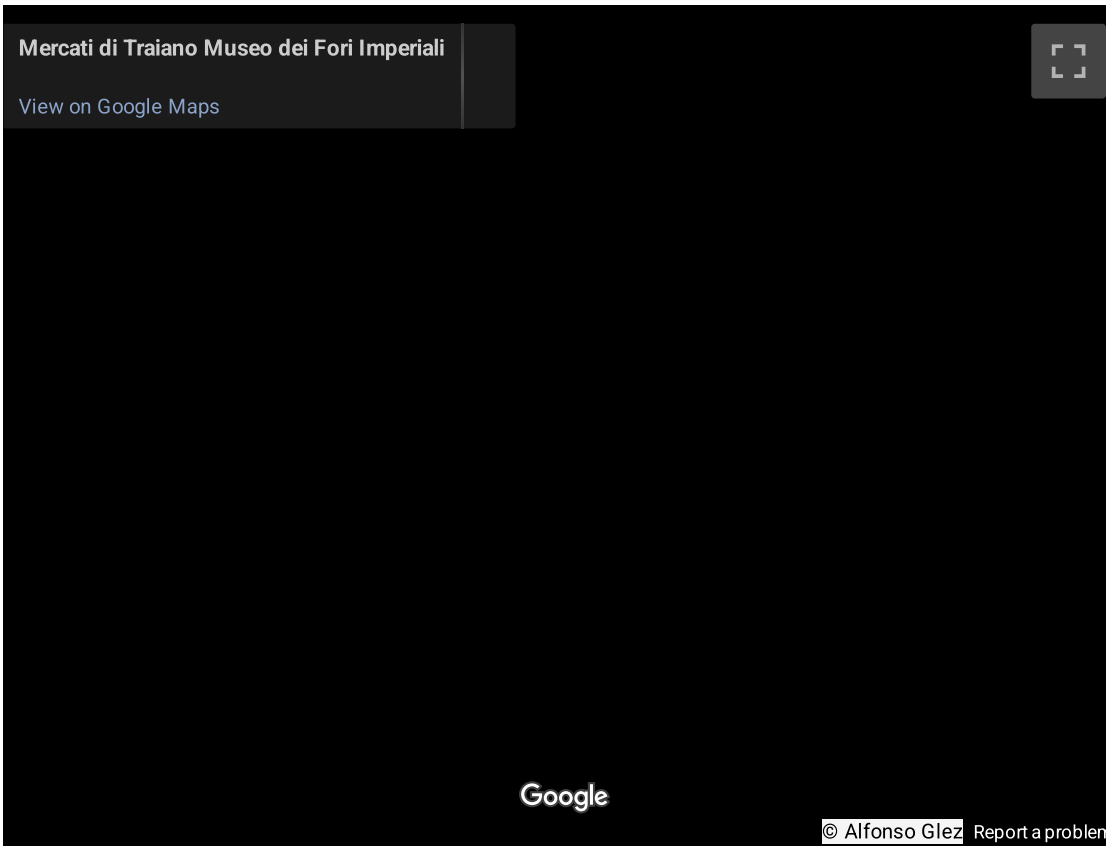
The Forum of Trajan earned a great deal of praise in antiquity—and it has been the focus of scholarly study perhaps since 1536 when Pope Paul III ordered the first clearing of the area around the base of the Column of Trajan. Paul III would then protect the column itself in 1546 by appointing a caretaker to look after it. The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries saw various artists and architects produce renderings and plans of the forum and its monuments. Among the most famous of these are those of Dosio (c. 1569) and Etiénne Du Pérac (1575). In terms of public architecture in Imperial Rome, the Forum of Trajan complex is a crowning achievement in its vast monumentality. The execution of its sophisticated and elegant design surpassed all of its predecessors in the complex of forum spaces in the city. The value of vast public spaces in the city of Rome cannot be underestimated. For the average city dwellers accustomed to narrow, dim, crowded streets the soaring, the gleaming open space of the forum, bounded by elaborate architecture and sculpture, would have had a powerful psychological effect. The fact that the monuments glorified a revered leader also served to create and reinforce important ideological messages among the Romans.

Overall the role of public architecture in the Roman city, and the Roman consciousness, is an important reminder of the ways in which Romans used built space to establish and perpetuate messages about identity and ideology.



Figure **4.2.12.16**: *Vestigi delle antichita di Roma, Tiuoli, Pozzuolo et altri luochi*, 1606 (Ægidio Sadeler engravings of reduced copies of Du Pérac's *Vestigi dell'antichità di Roma*) (Getty Research Institute)

The enduring ruins, in this case cleared initially by the excavations sponsored by the Fascist regime of Benito Mussolini, stand as strong, and stark, reminders of these Roman realities. Modern viewers still extract and reinforce ideas about identity based on looking at and visiting the ruins. Even with these ruins we still come away with an idea about Trajan's greatness and his martial accomplishments. We might, then, judge the architectural program to be a great success—so successful that a great many of our own public monuments still operate on the basis of conventions established in antiquity.



Additional resources:

Forum of Trajan, Rome Reborn (Dr. Bernard Frischer)

Il Museo dei Fori Imperiali

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Platner, S. B. and T. Ashby. 1929. "Forum Traiani." In A Topographical Dictionary of Ancient Rome (Oxford: Clarendon Press) (**Perseus Project**)

L. Ungaro et al. *The Museum of the Imperial Forums in Trajan's market* (Milan: Electa, 2007).

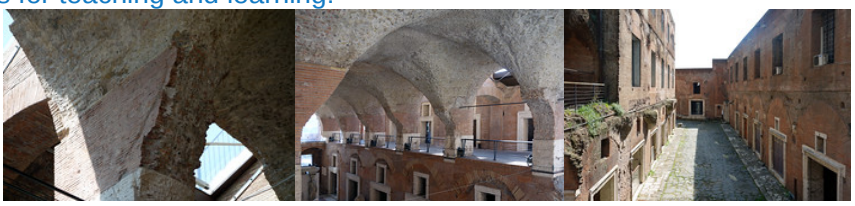
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4.2.13: Column of Trajan

by DR. JEFFREY A. BECKER

Trajan expanded the Roman Empire to its greatest extent, celebrating his victories with this monumental column.



Video **4.2.13.1**: Column of Trajan, Carrara marble, completed 113 C.E., Rome. Dedicated to Emperor Trajan (Marcus Ulpius Nerva Traianus b. 53 , d. 117 C.E.) in honor of his victory over Dacia (now Romania) 101-02 and 105-06 C.E.



Figure **4.2.13.1**: Column of Trajan (as seen through the ruins of the Basilica Ulpia in the Forum of Trajan), Carrara marble, completed 113 C.E., Rome, dedicated to Emperor Trajan (Marcus Ulpius Nerva Traianus b. 53 , d. 117 C.E.) in honor of his victory over Dacia (now Romania) 101-02 and 105-06 C.E. (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

The Triumph

The Triumph was a riotous military ritual celebrated by the Romans over the course of centuries—whenever their commander had won a spectacular victory. On the appointed day (or days) the city would be overflowing with crowds, pageantry, spoils, prisoners, depictions and souvenirs of foreign lands—but then, just as quickly as it began, the glorious tumult was over. The spectacles and the echoes of glory entrusted to the memory of those who had witnessed the event. Was the parade and its giant city-wide party enough to commemorate the glorious deeds of Rome's armies? Or should a more permanent form of commemoration be adopted? Being pragmatists, the Romans enlisted both means of commemoration—the ephemeral and the permanent. The Column of Trajan

(dedicated in May of 113 C.E.) might be the crowning example of the inborn need to commemorate—in more permanent form—historical deeds that dominates the psyche of Roman art and artists.

Returning from Dacia triumphant—100 days of celebrations

The emperor Trajan, who reigned from 98 – 117 C.E., fought a series of campaigns known as the Dacian Wars. Dacia (modern Romania), was seen as a troublesome neighbor by the Romans and the Dacians were seen to pose a threat to the province of Moesia, along the Danube frontier. In addition Dacia was rich in natural resources (including gold), that were attractive to the Romans. The first campaign saw Trajan defeat the Dacian leader Decebalus in 101 C.E., after which the Dacians sought terms from the Romans. Renewed Dacian hostilities brought about the second Dacian War that concluded in 106 C.E. Trajan's victory was a substantial one—he declared over 100 days of official celebrations and the Romans exploited Dacia's natural wealth, while incorporating Dacia as an imperial province.



Figure **4.2.13.2**: Denarius (Roman coin), obverse: Trajan in profile; reverse: Dacian seated right on pile of arms, his hands bound behind him, silver, c. 103-11 (Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, **CM.BU.240-R**)

After the first Dacian war Trajan earned the honorary epithet "Dacicus Maximus" (greatest Dacian) and a victory monument known as the *Tropaeum Traiani* (Trophy of Trajan) was built at *Civitas Tropaensium* (modern Adamclisi, Romania). Coins issued during Trajan's reign (as in the image above) depicted the defeated Dacia.

Iconography and themes

The iconographic scheme of the column illustrates Trajan's wars in Dacia. The lower half of the column corresponds to the first Dacian War (c. 101-102 C.E.), while the top half depicts the second Dacian War (c. 105-106 C.E.). The first narrative event shows Roman soldiers marching off to Dacia, while the final sequence of events portrays the suicide of the enemy leader, Decebalus, and the mopping up of Dacian prisoners by the Romans.



Figure **4.2.13.3**: The crossing of the Roman Army over the Danube River in the first Dacian War (the large figure is a personification of the Danube) (detail), Column of Trajan, dedicated 113 C.E., Rome (photo: **Steven Zucker**, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

The execution of the frieze is meticulous and the level of detail achieved is astonishing. While the column does not carry applied paint now, many scholars believe the frieze was initially painted. The sculptors took great care to provide settings for the scenes, including natural backgrounds, and mixed perspectival views to offer the maximum level of detail. Sometimes multiple perspectives are evident within a single scene. The overall, unifying theme is that of the Roman military campaigns in Dacia, but the details reveal additional, more subtle narrative threads.

One of the clear themes is the triumph of civilization (represented by the Romans) over its antithesis, the barbarian state (represented here by the Dacians). The Romans are orderly and uniform, the Dacians less so. The Romans are clean shaven, the Dacians are shaggy. The Romans avoid leggings, the Dacians wear leggings (like all good barbarians did—at least those depicted by the Romans).



Figure **4.2.13.4**: "Scene from the second Dacian War, the Dacians plan a new offensive and attack a Roman Fort and engage with Roman troops. Many Dacians, however, fall in the wake of a strong Roman counteroffensive," (detail), Column of Trajan, dedicated 113 C.E., Rome (source for image and caption: **Trajan's Column Website**, Professor Roger B. Ulrich, Dartmouth College)

Combat scenes are frequent in the frieze. The detailed rendering provides a nearly unparalleled visual resource for studying the iconography of the Roman military, as well as for studying the actual equipment, weapons, and tactics. There is clear ethnic typing as well, as the Roman soldiers cannot be confused for Dacian soldiers, and vice versa.



Figure **4.2.13.5**: The Emperor (fourth from the lower right) oversees construction (detail), Column of Trajan, dedicated 113 C.E., (photo: **Steven Zucker**, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

The viewer also sees the Roman army doing other chores while not fighting. One notable activity is building. In numerous scenes the soldiers may be seen building and fortifying camps. All of the Roman edifices depicted are solid, regular, and well designed—in stark contrast to the humble buildings of the Dacian world. Roman propaganda at work.



Figure **4.2.13.6**: Trajan and his fleet depart for Second Dacian War—Trajan can be seen at the far left (detail), Column of Trajan, dedicated 113 C.E., detail, Column of Trajan, dedicated 113 C.E. (photo: **Peter Reed**, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

The emperor Trajan figures prominently in the frieze. Each time he appears, his position is commanding and the iconographic focus on his person is made clear. We see Trajan in various scenarios, including addressing his troops (*ad locutio*) and performing sacrifices. The fact that the figures in the scenes are focused on the figure of the emperor helps to draw the viewer's attention to him.

The base of the column eventually served as a tomb for Trajan's ashes. He died while returning from foreign campaigns in 117 C.E. and was granted this unusual honor, in keeping with the estimation of the Roman people who deemed him *optimus princeps* or "the best first citizen".

Specifications of the Column and construction

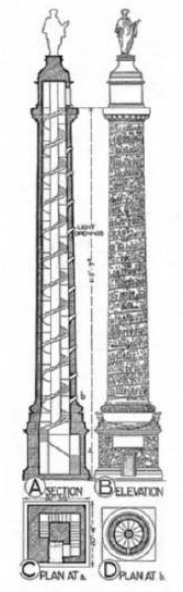


Figure **4.2.13.7**: Column at Trajan, dedicated 113 C.E., plan, elevation, and section

The column itself is made from fine-grained Luna marble and stands to a height of 38.4 meters (c. 98 feet) atop a tall pedestal. The shaft of the column is composed of 19 drums of marble measuring c. 3.7 meters (11 feet) in diameter, weighing a total of c. 1,110

tons. The topmost drum weighs some 53 tons. A spiral staircase of 185 steps leads to the viewing platform atop the column. The helical sculptural frieze measures 190 meters in length (c. 625 feet) and wraps around the column 23 times. A total of 2,662 figures appear in the 155 scenes of the frieze, with Trajan himself featured in 58 scenes.

The construction of the Column of Trajan was a complex exercise of architectural design and engineering. As reconstructed by Lynne Lancaster, the execution of the column itself was an immense engineering challenge that required complex lifting devices and, no doubt, careful planning to execute successfully. Materials had to be acquired and transported to Rome, some across long distances. With the appropriate technology in place, the adept Roman architects could carry out the project. The successful completion of the column demonstrates the complex tasks that Roman architects could successfully complete.

Significance and influence

The Column of Trajan may be contextualized in a long line of Roman victory monuments, some of which honored specific military victories and thus may be termed “triumphal monuments” and others that generally honor a public career and are thus “honorific monuments”. Among the earliest examples of such permanent monuments at Rome is the rostrate column (*column rostrata*) that was erected in honor of a naval victory celebrated by Caius Duilius after the battle of Mylae in 260 B.C.E. (this column does not survive). During the Republican period, a rich tradition of celebratory monuments developed, best known through the *fornices* (honorific arches) and triumphal arches. This tradition was continued in the imperial period, with both triumphal and honorific arches being erected at Rome and in the the provinces.



Figure **4.2.13.8**: Gold aureus showing Trajan’s Column, Roman, early 2nd century C.E. (The British Museum)

The idea of the honorific column was carried forward by other victorious leaders—both in the ancient and modern eras. In the Roman world immediate, derivative monuments that draw inspiration from the Column of Trajan include the Column of Marcus Aurelius (c. 193 C.E.) in Rome’s Piazza Colonna, as well as monuments like the now-lost Column of Arcadius (c. 401 C.E.) and the Column of Justinian at Constantinople (c. 543 C.E.). The idea of the narrative frieze applied to the Column of Trajan proved influential in these other instances.



Figure **4.2.13.9**: Aegidius Sadeler, view of the column of Trajan, shown with its pedestal dug out from the earth, surrounded by buildings at the base of the Quirinal Hill, Rome, from the series "Ruins of the antiquity of Rome, Tivoli, Pozzuoli, and other places," 1606, etching and engraving, plate 31 (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

Honorific or triumphal columns inspired by that of Trajan were also created in honor of more recent victories. The column honoring Admiral Horatio Nelson in London's Trafalgar Square (c. 1843) draws on the Roman tradition that included the Column of Trajan along with earlier, Republican monuments like the columna rostrata of Caius Duilius. The column dedicated to Napoleon I erected in the Place Vendôme in Paris (c. 1810) and the Washington Monument of Baltimore, Maryland (1829) both were directly inspired by the Column of Trajan.

Additional Resources:

Trajan's Column in Rome, from Prof. R. Ulrich, Dartmouth College

Stoa.org – Column of Trajan

National Geographic Society – Column of Trajan

Wikimedia Commons – Cichorius Plates

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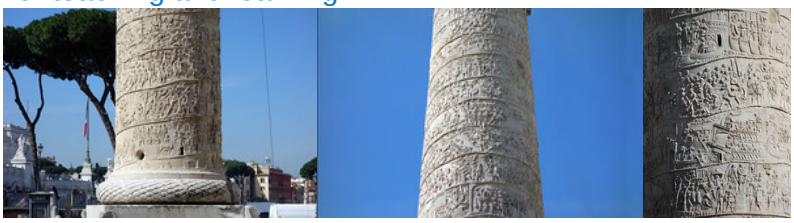
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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

5: Ancient Rome III

By the time of the emperor Trajan, the Roman empire encompassed the whole of the Mediterranean, Britain, much of northern and central Europe and the Near East.

117 - 235 C.E.

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5.1.1: The Pantheon (Rome)

by DR. PAUL A. RANOGAJEC

The Pantheon has one of the most perfect interior spaces ever constructed—and it's been copied ever since.



Video **5.1.1.1**: The Pantheon, Rome, c. 125

The eighth wonder of the ancient world

The Pantheon in Rome is a true architectural wonder. Described as the "sphinx of the Campus Martius"—referring to enigmas presented by its appearance and history, and to the location in Rome where it was built—to visit it today is to be almost transported back to the Roman Empire itself. The Roman Pantheon probably doesn't make popular shortlists of the world's architectural icons, but it should: it is one of the most imitated buildings in history. For a good example, look at **the library Thomas Jefferson designed** for the University of Virginia.



Figure **5.1.1.1**: The Pantheon, Rome, c. 125

While the Pantheon's importance is undeniable, there is a lot that is unknown. With new evidence and fresh interpretations coming to light in recent years, questions once thought settled have been reopened. Most textbooks and websites confidently date the building to the Emperor Hadrian's reign and describe its purpose as a temple to all the gods (from the Greek, pan = all, theos = gods), but some scholars now argue that these details are wrong and that our knowledge of other aspects of the building's origin, construction, and meaning is less certain than we had thought.

Whose Pantheon?—the problem of the inscription

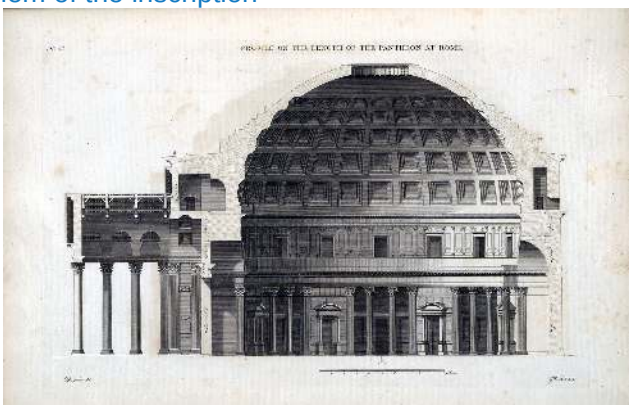


Figure 5.1.1.2: Pantheon Elevation

Archaeologists and art historians value inscriptions on ancient monuments because these can provide information about patronage, dating, and purpose that is otherwise difficult to come by. In the case of the Pantheon, however, the inscription on the frieze—in raised bronze letters (modern replacements)—easily deceives, as it did for many centuries. It identifies, in abbreviated Latin, the Roman general and consul (the highest elected official of the Roman Republic) Marcus Agrippa (who lived in the first century B.C.E.) as the patron: "M[arcus] Agrippa L[ucii] F[ilius] Co[n]s[ul] Tertium Fecit" ("Marcus Agrippa, son of Lucius, thrice Consul, built this"). The inscription was taken at face value until 1892, when a well-documented interpretation of stamped bricks found in and around the building showed that the Pantheon standing today was a rebuilding of an earlier structure, and that it was a product of Emperor Hadrian's (who ruled from 117-138 C.E.) patronage, built between about 118 and 128. Thus, Agrippa could not have been the patron of the present building. Why, then, is his name so prominent?

The conventional understanding of the Pantheon

A traditional rectangular temple, first built by Agrippa

The conventional understanding of the Pantheon's genesis, which held from 1892 until very recently, goes something like this. Agrippa built the original Pantheon in honor of his and Augustus' military victory at the Battle of Actium in 31 B.C.E.—one of the defining moments in the establishment of the Roman Empire (Augustus would go on to become the first Emperor of Rome). It was thought that Agrippa's Pantheon had been small and conventional: a Greek-style temple, rectangular in plan. Written sources suggest the building was damaged by fire around 80 C.E. and restored to some unknown extent under the orders of Emperor Domitian (who ruled 81-96 C.E.).



Figure 5.1.1.3: The Pantheon, Rome, c. 125 (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

When the building was more substantially damaged by fire again in 110 C.E., the Emperor Trajan decided to rebuild it, but only partial groundwork was carried out before his death. Trajan's successor, Hadrian—a great patron of architecture and revered as one of the most effective Roman emperors—conceived and possibly even designed the new building with the help of dedicated architects. It was to be a triumphant display of his will and beneficence. He was thought to have abandoned the idea of simply reconstructing Agrippa's temple, deciding instead to create a much larger and more impressive structure. And, in an act of pious humility meant to put him in the favor of the gods and to honor his illustrious predecessors, Hadrian installed the false inscription attributing the new building to the long-dead Agrippa.

New evidence—Agrippa's temple was not rectangular at all

Today, we know that many parts of this story are either unlikely or demonstrably false. It is now clear from archaeological studies that Agrippa's original building was not a small rectangular temple, but contained the distinctive hallmarks of the current building: a portico with tall columns and pediment and a rotunda (circular hall) behind it, in similar dimensions to the current building.

And the temple may be Trajan's (not Hadrian's)

More startling, a reconsideration of the evidence of the bricks used in the building's construction—some of which were stamped with identifying marks that can be used to establish the date of manufacture—shows that almost all of them date from the 110s, during the time of Trajan. Instead of the great triumph of Hadrianic design, the Pantheon should more rightly be seen as the final architectural glory of the Emperor Trajan's reign: substantially designed and rebuilt beginning around 114, with some preparatory work on the building site perhaps starting right after the fire of 110, and finished under Hadrian sometime between 125 and 128.



Figure **5.1.1.4**: Giovanni Paolo Panini, Interior of the Pantheon, Rome. c. 1734, oil on canvas, 128 x 99 cm (National Gallery of Art)

Lise Hetland, the archaeologist who first made this argument in 2007 (building on an earlier attribution to Trajan by Wolf-Dieter Heilmeyer), writes that the long-standing effort to make the physical evidence fit a dating entirely within Hadrian's time shows "the illogicality of the sometimes almost surgically clear-cut presentation of Roman buildings according to the sequence of emperors." The case of the Pantheon confirms a general art-historical lesson: style categories and historical periodizations (in other words, our understanding of the style of architecture during a particular emperor's reign) should be seen as conveniences—subordinate to the priority of evidence.

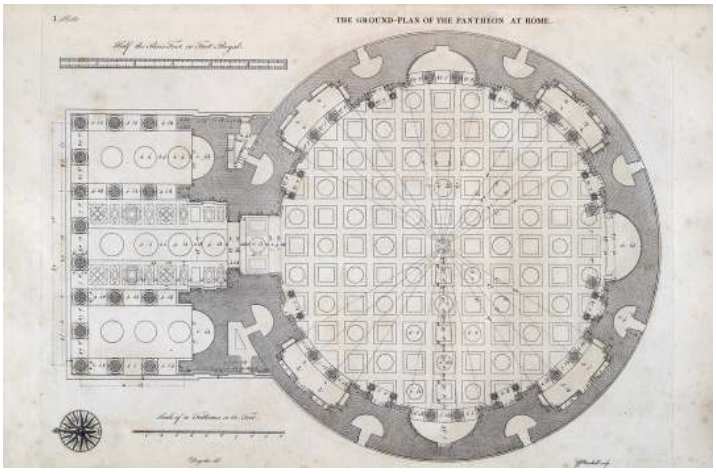


Figure **5.1.1.5**: Pantheon Plan

What was it—a temple? A dynastic sanctuary?

It is now an open question whether the building was ever a temple to all the gods, as its traditional name has long suggested to interpreters. Pantheon, or *Pantheum* in Latin, was more of a nickname than a formal title. One of the major written sources about the building's origin is the *Roman History* by Cassius Dio, a late second- to early third-century historian who was twice Roman consul. His account, written a century after the Pantheon was completed, must be taken skeptically. However, he provides important evidence about the building's purpose. He wrote,

> ***He [Agrippa] completed the building called the Pantheon. It has this name, perhaps because it received among the images which decorated it the statues of many gods, including Mars and Venus; but my own opinion of the name is that, because of its vaulted roof, it resembles the heavens. Agrippa, for his part, wished to place a statue of Augustus there also and to bestow upon him the honor of having the structure named after him; but when Augustus wouldn't accept either honor, he [Agrippa] placed in the temple itself a statue of the former [Julius] Caesar and in the ante-room statues of Augustus and himself. This was done not out of any rivalry or ambition on Agrippa's part to make himself equal to Augustus, but from his hearty loyalty to him and his constant zeal for the public good.***

A number of scholars have now suggested that the original Pantheon was not a temple in the usual sense of a god's dwelling place. Instead, it may have been intended as a dynastic sanctuary, part of a ruler cult emerging around Augustus, with the original dedication being to Julius Caesar, the progenitor of the family line of Augustus and Agrippa and a revered ancestor who had been the first Roman deified by the Senate. Adding to the plausibility of this view is the fact that the site had sacred associations—tradition stating that it was the location of the apotheosis, or raising up to the heavens, of Romulus, Rome's mythic founder. Even more, the Pantheon was also aligned on axis, across a long stretch of open fields called the Campus Martius, with Augustus' mausoleum, completed just a few years before the Pantheon. Agrippa's building, then, was redolent with suggestions of the alliance of the gods and the rulers of Rome during a time when new religious ideas about ruler cults were taking shape.



Figure 5.1.1.6: Reconstruction by the **Institute for Digital Media Arts Lab at Ball State University**, interior of the Pantheon, Rome, c. 125 C.E. (Project Director: John Filwalk, Project Advisors: Dr. Robert Hannah and Dr. Bernard Frischer)

The dome and the divine authority of the emperors

By the fourth century C.E., when the historian Ammianus Marcellinus mentioned the Pantheon in his history of imperial Rome, statues of the Roman emperors occupied the rotunda's niches. In Agrippa's Pantheon these spaces had been filled by statues of the gods. We also know that Hadrian held court in the Pantheon. Whatever its original purposes, the Pantheon by the time of Trajan and Hadrian was primarily associated with the power of the emperors and their divine authority.



Figure 5.1.1.7: Pantheon dome (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

The symbolism of the great dome adds weight to this interpretation. The dome's coffers (inset panels) are divided into 28 sections, equaling the number of large columns below. 28 is a "perfect number," a whole number whose summed factors equal it (thus, 1 + 2 + 4 + 7 + 14 = 28). Only four perfect numbers were known in antiquity (6, 28, 496, and 8128) and they were sometimes held—for instance, by Pythagoras and his followers—to have mystical, religious meaning in connection with the cosmos. Additionally, the oculus (open window) at the top of the dome was the interior's only source of direct light. The sunbeam streaming through the oculus traced an ever-changing daily path across the wall and floor of the rotunda. Perhaps, then, the sunbeam marked solar and lunar events, or simply time. The idea fits nicely with Dio's understanding of the dome as the canopy of the heavens and, by extension, of the rotunda itself as a microcosm of the Roman world beneath the starry heavens, with the emperor presiding over it all, ensuring the right order of the world.

How was it designed and built?



Figure 5.1.1.8: The Pantheon, Rome, c. 125 (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

The Pantheon's basic design is simple and powerful. A portico with free-standing columns is attached to a domed rotunda. In between, to help transition between the rectilinear portico and the round rotunda is an element generally described in English as the intermediate block. This piece is itself interesting for the fact that visible on its face above the portico's pediment is another shallow pediment. This may be evidence that the portico was intended to be taller than it is (50 Roman feet instead of the actual 40 feet). Perhaps the taller columns, presumably ordered from a quarry in Egypt, never made it to the building site (for reasons unknown), necessitating the substitution of smaller columns, thus reducing the height of the portico.



Figure 5.1.1.8: Pantheon, Rome, c. 125 C.E. (photo: Darren Puttock, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

The Pantheon's great interior spectacle—its enormous scale, the geometric clarity of the circle-in-square pavement pattern and the dome's half-sphere, and the moving disc of light—is all the more breathtaking for the way one moves from the bustling square (piazza, in Italian) outside into the grandeur inside.

One approaches the Pantheon through the portico with its tall, monolithic Corinthian columns of Egyptian granite. Originally, the approach would have been framed and directed by the long walls of a courtyard or forecourt in front of the building, and a set of stairs, now submerged under the piazza, leading up to the portico. Walking beneath the giant columns, the outside light starts to dim. As you pass through the enormous portal with its bronze doors, you enter the rotunda, where your eyes are swept up toward the oculus.



Figure 5.1.1.9: Reconstruction by the Institute for Digital Media Arts Lab at Ball State University, exterior of the Pantheon, Rome, c. 125 C.E. (Project Director: John Filwalk, Project Advisors: Dr. Robert Hannah and Dr. Bernard Frischer)

The structure itself is an important example of advanced Roman engineering. Its walls are made from brick-faced concrete—an innovation widely used in Rome's major buildings and infrastructure, such as aqueducts—and are lightened with relieving arches and vaults built into the wall mass. The concrete easily allowed for spaces to be carved out of the wall's thickness—for instance, the alcoves around the rotunda's perimeter and the large apse directly across from the entrance (where Hadrian would have sat to hold court). Further, the concrete of the dome is graded into six layers with a mixture of scoria, a low-density, lightweight volcanic rock, at the top. From top to bottom, the structure of the Pantheon was fine-tuned to be structurally efficient and to allow flexibility of design.

Who designed the Pantheon?



Figure 5.1.1.10: Pantheon, Rome, c. 125 C.E. (photo: Peter, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

We do not know who designed the Pantheon, but Apollodorus of Damascus, Trajan's favorite builder, is a likely candidate—or, perhaps, someone closely associated with Apollodorus. He had designed Trajan's Forum and at least two other major projects in Rome, probably making him the person in the capital city with the deepest knowledge about complex architecture and engineering in the 110s. On that basis, and with some stylistic and design similarities between the Pantheon and his known projects, Apollodorus' authorship of the building is a significant possibility.

When it was believed that Hadrian had fully overseen the Pantheon's design, doubt was cast on the possibility of Apollodorus' role because, according to Dio, Hadrian had banished and then executed the architect for having spoken ill of the emperor's talents. Many historians now doubt Dio's account. Although the evidence is circumstantial, a number of obstacles to Apollodorus' authorship have been removed by the recent developments in our understanding of the Pantheon's genesis. In the end, however, we cannot say for certain who designed the Pantheon.

Why Has It Survived?

We know very little about what happened to the Pantheon between the time of Emperor Constantine in the early fourth century and the early seventh century—a period when the city of Rome's importance faded and the Roman Empire disintegrated. This was presumably the time when much of the Pantheon's surroundings—the forecourt and all adjacent buildings—fell into serious disrepair and were demolished and replaced. How and why the Pantheon emerged from those difficult centuries is hard to say. The *Liber Pontificalis*—a medieval manuscript containing not-always-reliable biographies of the popes—tells us that in the 7th century Pope Boniface IV "asked the [Byzantine] emperor Phocas for the temple called the Pantheon, and in it he made the church of the ever-virgin Holy Mary and all the martyrs." There is continuing debate about when the Christian consecration of the Pantheon happened; today, the balance of evidence points to May 13, 613. In later centuries, the building was known as Sanctae Mariae Rotundae (Saint Mary of the Rotunda). Whatever the precise date of its consecration, the fact that the Pantheon became a church—specifically, a station church, where the pope would hold special masses during Lent, the period leading up to Easter—meant that it was in continuous use, ensuring its survival.



Figure **5.1.1.11**: Sanctae Mariae Rotundae (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Yet, like other ancient remains in Rome, the Pantheon was for centuries a source of materials for new buildings and other purposes—including the making of cannons and weapons. In addition to the loss of original finishings, sculpture, and all of its bronze elements, many other changes were made to the building from the fourth century to today. Among the most important: the three easternmost columns of the portico were replaced in the seventeenth century after having been damaged and braced by a brick wall centuries earlier; doors and steps leading down into the portico were erected after the grade of the surrounding piazza had risen over time; inside the rotunda, columns made from imperial red porphyry—a rare, expensive stone from Egypt—were replaced with granite versions; and roof tiles and other elements were periodically removed or replaced. Despite all the losses and alterations, and all the unanswered and difficult questions, the Pantheon is an unrivalled artifact of Roman antiquity.

Additional Resources:

Mary T. Boatwright, "Hadrian and the Agrippa Inscription of the Pantheon," in *Hadrian: Art, Politics and Economy*, edited by Thorsten Opper (London: British Museum, 2013), pp. 19-30.

Paul Godfrey and David Hemsoll. "The Pantheon: Temple or Rotunda?" in *Pagan Gods and Shrines of the Roman Empire*, edited by Martin Henig and Anthony King (Oxford: Oxford University Committee for Archaeology, 1986), pp. 195-209.

Gerd Graßhoff, Michael Heinzelmann, and Markus Wäfler, editors, T*he Pantheon in Rome: Contributions* (Bern: Bern Studies in the History and Philosophy of Science, 2009)

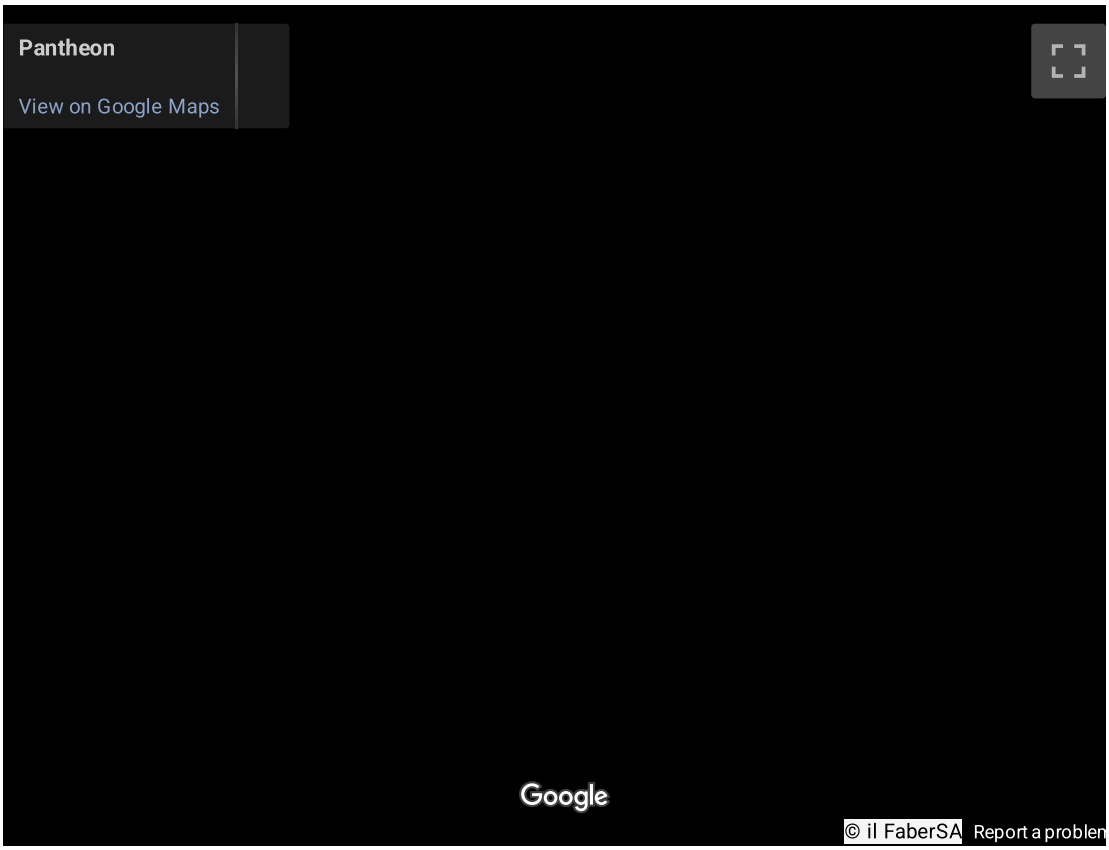
Robert Hannah and Giulio Magli. "The Role of the Sun in the Pantheon's Design and Meaning," *Numen* 58 (2011), pp. 486-513.

Lise M. Hetland, "Dating the Pantheon," *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 20 (2007), pp. 95-112.

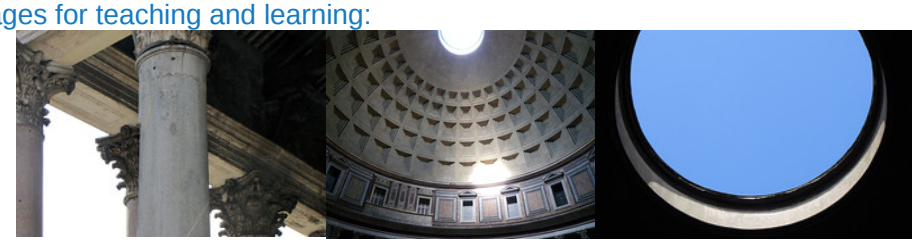
Mark Wilson Jones, *Principles of Roman Architecture* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000)

Tod A Marder and Mark Wilson Jones, editors, *The Pantheon from Antiquity to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

Gene Waddell, Creating the Pantheon: Design, Materials, and Construction (Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 2008)



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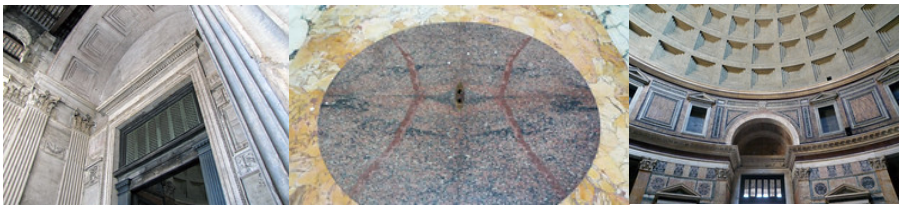
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5.1.2: Bronze head from a statue of the Emperor Hadrian

by THE BRITISH MUSEUM



Figure **5.1.2.1**: Bronze head from a statue of the Emperor Hadrian, 2nd century C.E., bronze, 43 cm high, Roman Britain © Trustees of the British Museum

Hadrian (reigned 117-138 C.E.), once a tribune (staff officer) in three different legions of the Roman army and commander of a legion in one of Trajan's wars, was often shown in military uniform. He was clearly keen to project the image of an ever-ready soldier, but other conclusions have been drawn from his surviving statues.

Fixing the Empire's borders

When Hadrian inherited the Roman Empire, his predecessor, Trajan's military campaigns had over-stretched it. Rebellions against Roman rule raged in several provinces and the empire was in serious danger. He ruthlessly put down rebellions and strengthened his borders. He built defensive barriers in Germany and Northern Africa.

Rome's first emperor, Augustus (reigned 27 B.C.E.– 14 C.E.), had also suffered severe military setbacks, and took the decision to stop expanding the empire. In Hadrian's early reign Augustus was an important role model. He had a portrait of him on his signet ring and kept a small bronze bust of him among the images of the household gods in his bedroom.

Like Augustus before him, Hadrian began to fix the limits of the territory that Rome could control. He withdrew his army from Mesopotamia, modern-day Iraq, where a serious insurgency had broken out, and abandoned the newly conquered provinces of Armenia and Assyria, as well as other parts of the empire.

Hadrian's travels

Hadrian is also famous as the emperor who built the eighty-mile-long wall across Britain, from the Solway Firth to the River Tyne at Wallsend: "to separate the barbarians from the Romans" in the words of his biographer. This head comes from a statue of Hadrian that probably stood in Roman London in a public space such as a forum. It would have been one and a quarter times life-size.

This statue may have been put up to commemorate Hadrian's visit to Britain in 122 C.E.; Hadrian travelled very extensively throughout the Empire, and imperial visits generally gave rise to program of rebuilding and beautification of cities. There are many known marble statues of him, but this example made in bronze is a rare survival.

Born in Rome but of Spanish descent, Hadrian was adopted by the emperor Trajan as his successor. Having served with distinction on the Danube and as governor of Syria, Hadrian never lost his fascination with the empire and its frontiers.

At Tivoli, to the east of Rome, he built an enormous palace, a microcosm of all the different places he had visited. He was an enthusiastic public builder, and perhaps his most celebrated building is the Pantheon, the best preserved Roman building in the world. Hadrian's Wall is a good example of his devotion to Rome's frontiers and the boundaries he established were retained for nearly three hundred years.

A lover of culture

Hadrian was the first Roman emperor to wear a full beard. This has usually been seen as a mark of his devotion to Greece and Greek culture.

Hadrian openly displayed his love of Greek culture. Some of the senate scornfully referred to him as Graeculus ("the Greekling"). Beards had been a marker of Greek identity since classical times, whereas a clean-shaven look was considered more Roman. However, in the decades before Hadrian became emperor, beards had come to be worn by wealthy young Romans and seem to have been particularly prevalent in the military. Furthermore, one literary source, the Historia Augusta, claims that Hadrian wore a beard to hide blemishes on his face.

Hadrian fell seriously ill, perhaps with a form of dropsy (swelling caused by excess fluid), and retired to the seaside resort of Baiae on the bay of Naples, where he died in 138 C.E.

The image of the Roman Emperor



Figure **5.1.2.2**: Torso of a statue of the emperor Hadrian wearing a cuirass, c. 130-141 C.E., 137 cm high, from Cyrene, northern Africa © Trustees of the British Museum. In this statue we see Hadrian presented as the commander-in-chief. We know from ancient literary sources that Hadrian was particularly keen to project a strong military image.

The cult of the Emperor combined religious and political elements and was a vital factor in Roman military and civil administration. Deceased rulers were often deified, and though the living Emperor, who was the state's chief priest, was not himself worshipped as a god, his "numen," the spirit of his power and authority, was.

The image of the ruler and information about his achievements was spread primarily through coinage. In addition, statues and busts, in stone and bronze and occasionally even precious metal, were placed in a variety of official and public settings. They varied in size: colossal, life-size and smaller. Such images symbolized the power of the state and the essential unity of the Empire.

As well as the political importance of representations of the Emperor, his physical appearance and that of his consort and family were familiar to people throughout the Empire. This influenced fashion and such representations can assist the modern archaeologist and art-historian. For example, beards became fashionable after the accession of Hadrian, and the hairstyles of Empresses and other Imperial women may be seen in private portraiture and decorative art, even in remote provinces such as Britain.

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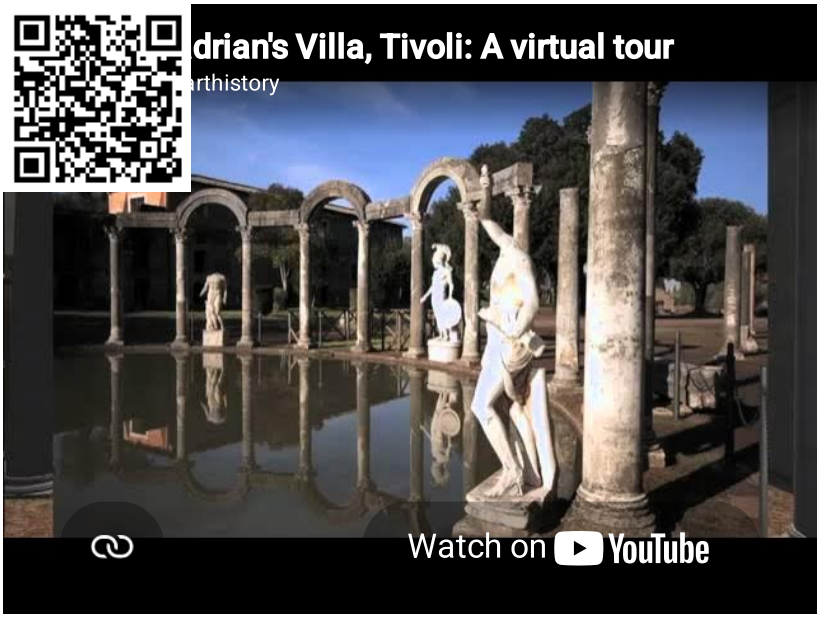
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5.1.3: A virtual tour of Hadrian's Villa

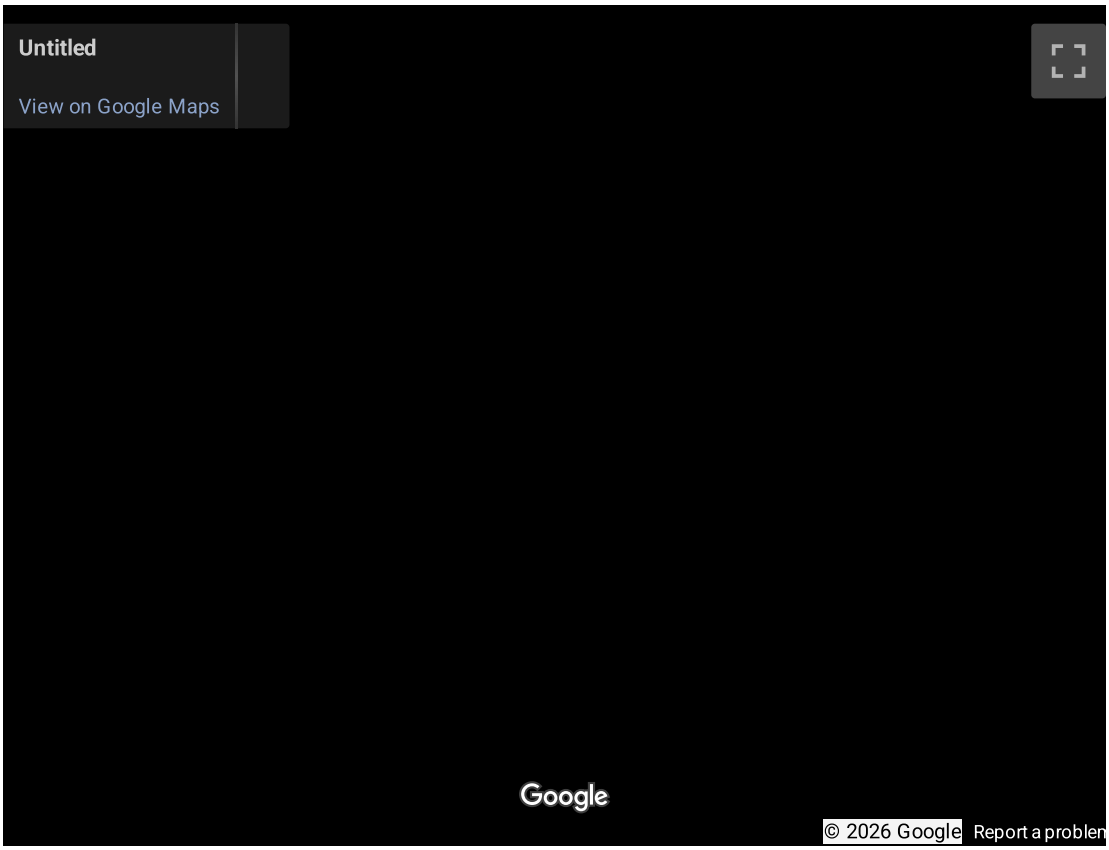
by DR. BERNARD FRISCHER and DR. BETH HARRIS

Explore Hadrian's Villa in 3D and learn about Hadrian from the emperor himself.



Video **5.1.3.1**: A virtual tour of Hadrian's Villa using a 3D digital model of the villa created under the direction of Dr. Bernard Frischer.

The ruins of Hadrian's Villa, in the town of Tivoli, near Rome, is spread over an area of approximately 250 acres. Many of the structures were designed by the Emperor Hadrian, who ruled from 117 until his death in 138 C.E. This virtual rendering is based on current archeological research and has been created in consultation with art historians, archaeologists, and museum curators with expertise in this area. Please note that a few features are necessarily assumptions based on the best available evidence.



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5.1.4: Hadrian- The imperial palace, Tivoli

by THE BRITISH MUSEUM

The Empire in miniature, see how Hadrian's Villa served as a space for both business and pleasure.



Video **5.1.4.1**: Video from The British Museum.

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5.1.5: Maritime Theatre at Hadrian's Villa

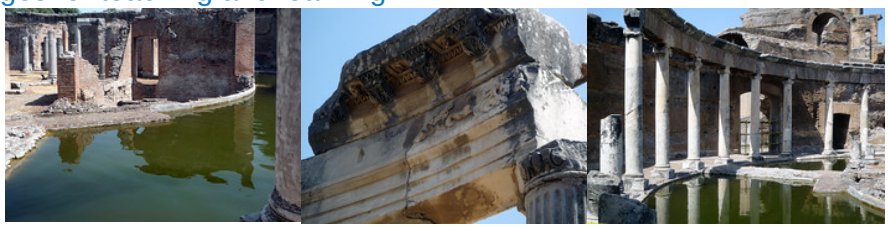
by DR. BERNARD FRISCHER and DR. BETH HARRIS

A lavish Roman house in miniature, explore the innermost sanctum of the emperor Hadrian's villa.



Video **5.1.5.1**: Maritime Theatre at Hadrian's Villa, Tivoli, Villa begun in 117 C.E

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5.1.6: Rome’s layered history — the Castel Sant’Angelo

by DR. STEVEN ZUCKER and DR. BETH HARRIS



Video 5.1.6.1: A conversation with Dr. Steven Zucker and Dr. Beth Harris at the Castel Sant’Angelo (Mausoleum of Hadrian), 139 C.E., Rome

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5.1.7: Pair of Centaurs Fighting Cats of Prey from Hadrian's Villa

by DR. BETH HARRIS and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER

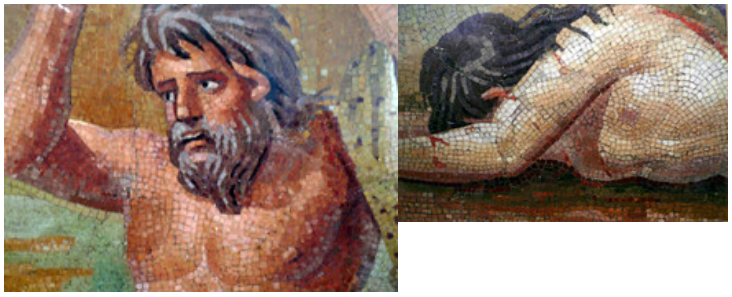
Discover the drama of this split second in time, as a centaur flights big cats for his life.

Video **5.1.7.1**: Pair of Centaurs Fighting Cats of Prey from Hadrian's Villa, mosaic, c. 130 C.E. (Altes Museum, Berlin)

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5.1.8: Hadrian- Building the wall

by THE BRITISH MUSEUM

At the remotest point of the Roman Empire, Hadrian erected this fortification—a symbol of control and dominance.



Video 5.1.8.1: Video from The British Museum.

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5.1.9: Medea Sarcophagus

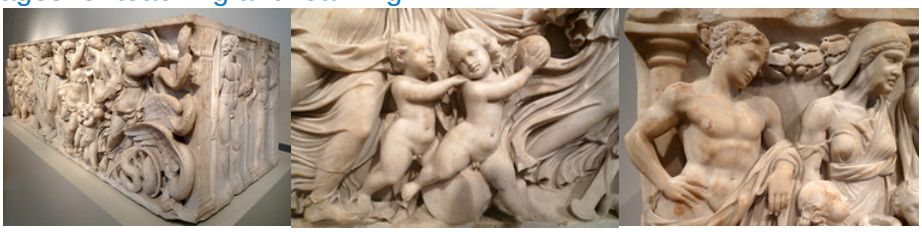
by DR. STEVEN ZUCKER and DR. BETH HARRIS

One of the great myths of jealousy and revenge is carved into this sarcophagus. But why put this story on a coffin?

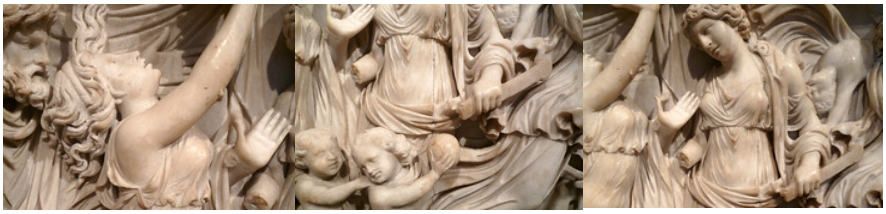


Video **5.1.9.1**: Medea Sarcophagus, 140 – 150 C.E., marble, 65 x 227 cm (Altes Museum, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin)

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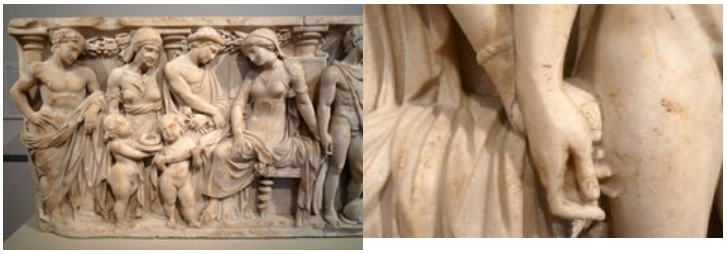
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Figure 5.1.9.18: More SmartHistory images…

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5.1.10: Equestrian Sculpture of Marcus Aurelius

by DR. JEFFREY A. BECKER

Due to a fortunate case of mistaken identity, this commanding statue was saved from destruction.



The original location of the sculpture is unknown, though it had been housed in the Lateran Palace since the 8th century until it was placed in the center of the Piazza del Campidoglio by Michelangelo in 1538. The original is now indoors for purposes of conservation. Marcus Aurelius ruled 161-180 C.E.

In ancient Rome equestrian statues of emperors would not have been uncommon sights in the city—late antique sources suggest that at least 22 of these “great horses” (*equi magni*) were to be seen—as they were official devices for honoring the emperor for singular military and civic achievements. The statues themselves were, in turn, copied in other media, including coins, for even wider distribution.



Figure **5.1.10.1**: Equestrian Statue of Marcus Aurelius, c. 173-76 C.E. gilded bronze (Capitoline Museums, Rome). The original location of the sculpture is unknown. Beginning in the 8th century, it was located near the Lateran Palace, until it was placed in the center of the Piazza del Campidoglio in 1538 by Michelangelo. The original statue is now indoors for purposes of conservation (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Few examples of these equestrian statues survive from antiquity, however, making the *Equestrian Statue of Marcus Aurelius* a singular artifact of Roman antiquity, one that has borne quiet witness to the ebb and flow of the city of Rome for nearly 1,900 years. A gilded bronze

monument of the 170s C.E. that was originally dedicated to the emperor Marcus Aurelius Antoninus Augustus, referred to commonly as Marcus Aurelius (reigned 161-180 C.E.), the statue is an important object not only for the study of official Roman portraiture, but also for the consideration of monumental dedications. Further, the use of the statue in the Medieval, Renaissance, modern, and post-modern city of Rome has important implications for the connectivity that exists between the past and the present.



Figure **5.1.10.2**: Equestrian Sculpture of Marcus Aurelius, c. 173-76 C.E., bronze (Capitoline Museums, Rome) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Description

The statue is an over life-size depiction of the emperor elegantly mounted atop his horse while participating in a public ritual or ceremony; the statue stands approximately 4.24 meters tall. A gilded bronze statue, the piece was originally cast using the lost-wax technique, with horse and rider cast in multiple pieces and then soldered together after casting.

The horse

The emperor's horse is a magnificent example of dynamism captured in the sculptural medium. The horse, caught in motion, raises its right foreleg at the knee while planting its left foreleg on the ground, its motion checked by the application of reins, which the emperor originally held in his left hand. The horse's body—in particular its musculature—has been modeled very carefully by the artist, resulting in a powerful rendering. In keeping with the motion of the horse's body, its head turns to its right, with its mouth opened slightly. The horse wears a harness, some elements of which have not survived. The horse is saddled with a Persian-style saddlecloth of several layers, as opposed to a rigid saddle. It should be noted that the horse is an important and expressive element of the overall composition.



Figure 5.1.10.3: Horse and rider (detail), Equestrian Sculpture of Marcus Aurelius, c. 173-76 C.E., bronze (Capitoline Museums, Rome) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

The horseman sits astride the steed, with his left hand guiding the reins and his right arm raised to shoulder level, the hand outstretched.

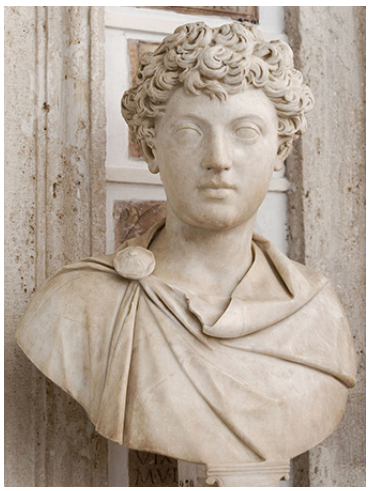


Figure 5.1.10.4: Marcus Aurelius, type I portrait, ca. 140 C.E. (Capitoline Museums, Rome)

There are approximately 110 known portraits of Marcus Aurelius and these have been grouped into four typological groupings. The first two types belong to the emperor's youth, before he assumed the duties of the principate.

In the Roman world it was standard practice to create official portrait types of high-ranking officials, such as emperors that would then circulate in various media, notably sculpture in the round and coin portraits. These portrait types are vital in several respects, especially for determining the chronology of monuments and coins, since the portrait types can usually be placed in a fairly accurate and legible chronological order.

The interpretation of these portraits relies on various key elements, especially the reading of hairstyle and the examination of facial physiognomy. In the case of the equestrian statue, the portrait typology offers the best means of assigning an approximate date to the object since it does not otherwise offer another means of dating. The earliest portrait of Marcus Aurelius dates to c. 140 C.E. and is best represented by the Capitoline Galleria 28 type, where the youth wears a cloak fastened at the shoulder (*paludamentum*); this portrait was widely circulated, with approximately 25 known copies (above).

The second portrait type was made when Marcus was in his late 20s, c. 147 C.E. and shows a still youthful type, although Marcus now has light facial hair (below).



Figure **5.1.10.5**: Marcus Aurelius, type II portrait, c. 147 C.E. (Antiquarium of the Palatine)

Marcus Aurelius became emperor in 161 C.E., when he was forty years of age; this was the occasion for the creation of his third and most important portrait type. This mature type shows the emperor fully bearded with a full head of tightly curled, voluminous hair; he retains the characteristic oval-shaped face and heavy eyelids from his earlier portraits. His coiffure forms a distinctive arc over his forehead. This third type is known from approximately 50 copies.



Figure **5.1.10.6**: Marcus Aurelius, type IV, 170-180 C.E. (Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna)

The emperor's fourth portrait type (above), created between 170 and 180 C.E., retains most of the features of the third type, but shows the emperor slightly more advanced in age with a very full beard that is divided in the center at the chin, showing parallel locks of hair.

The statue of the horseman is carefully composed by the artist and depicts a figure that is simultaneously dynamic and a bit passive and removed, by virtue of his facial expression (see image below). The locks of hair are curly and compact and distributed evenly; the beard is also curly, covering the cheeks and upper lip, and is worn longer at the chin. The pose of the body shows the rider's head turned slightly to his right, in the direction of his outstretched right arm. The left hand originally held the reins (no longer preserved) between the index and middle fingers, with the palm facing upwards. Scholars continue to debate whether he originally held some attached figure or object in the palm of the left hand; possible suggestions have included a scepter, a globe, a statue of victory – but there is no clear indication of any attachment point for such an object. On the left hand the rider does wear the senatorial ring.

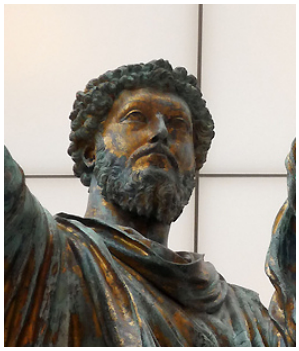


Figure **5.1.10.7**: Portrait head (detail), Equestrian Sculpture of Marcus Aurelius, c. 173-76 C.E., bronze (Capitoline Museums, Rome)

The rider is clad in civic garb, including a short-sleeved tunic that is gathered at the waist by a knotted belt (*cingulum*). Over the tunic the rider wears a cloak (*paludamentum*) that is clasped at the right shoulder. On his feet Marcus Aurelius wears the senatorial boots of the patrician class, known as *calcei patricii*.

Interpretation and chronology

The interpretation and chronology of the equestrian statue must rely on the statue itself, as no ancient literary testimony or other evidence survives to aid in the interpretation. It is obvious that the statue is part of an elaborate public monument, no doubt commissioned to mark an important occasion in the emperor's reign. With that said, however, it must also be noted that scholars continue to debate its precise dating, the occasion for its creation, and its likely original location in the city of Rome.

Starting with the portrait typology it is possible to determine a range of likely dates for the statue's creation. The portrait is clearly an adult type of the emperor, meaning the statue must have been created after 161 C.E., the year of Marcus Aurelius' accession and the creation of his third portrait type. This provides a *terminus post quem* (the limit after which) for the equestrian statue. Art historians have debated whether the portrait head most resembles the Type III or the Type IV portrait. Recent scholarly thinking, based on the work of Klaus Fittschen, holds that the equestrian portrait represents a unique variant of the standard Type III portrait, created as an improvisation by the artist who was commissioned to create the equestrian statue. In the end the precise chronology of the portrait head—and indeed the typology—remains a matter of scholarly debate.



Figure **5.1.10.8**: Relief from honorary monument to Marcus Aurelius, 176-180 C.E., marble 350 cm (Capitoline Museums, Rome)

The pose of the horseman is also helpful. The emperor stretches his right hand outward, the palm facing toward the ground; a pose that could be interpreted as the posture of *adlocutio*, indicating that the emperor is about to speak. However, more likely in this case we may read it as the gesture of clemency (*clementia*), offered to a vanquished enemy, or of *restitutio pacis*, the "restoration of peace." Richard Brilliant has noted that since the emperor appears in civic garb as opposed to the general's armor, the overall impression of the statue is one of peace rather than of the immediate post-war celebration of military victory. Some art historians reconstruct a now-missing barbarian on the right side of the horse, as seen in a surviving panel relief sculpture that originally belonged to a now-lost triumphal arch dedicated to Marcus Aurelius (left). We know that Marcus Aurelius celebrated a triumph in 176 C.E. for his victories over German and Sarmatian tribes, leading some to suggest that year as the occasion for the creation of the equestrian monument.

History

The original location of the equestrian monument also remains debated, with some supporting a location on the Caelian Hill near the barracks of the imperial cavalry (equites singulares), while others favor the Campus Martius (a low-lying alluvial plain of the Tiber River) as a possible location. A text known as the *Liber Pontificalis* that dates to the middle of the tenth century C.E. mentions the equestrian monument, referring to it as "*caballus Constantini*" or the "horse of Constantine." According to the text, the urban prefect of Rome was condemned following an uprising against Pope John XII and, as punishment, was hung by the hair from the equestrian monument. At this time the equestrian statue was located in the Lateran quarter of the city of Rome near the Lateran Palace, where it may have been since at least the eighth century C.E. Popular theories at the time held that the bearded emperor was in fact Constantine I, thus sparing the statue from being melted down.

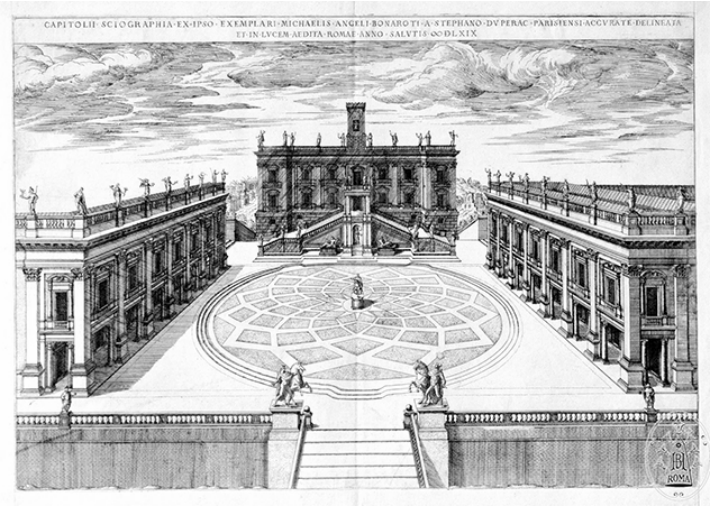


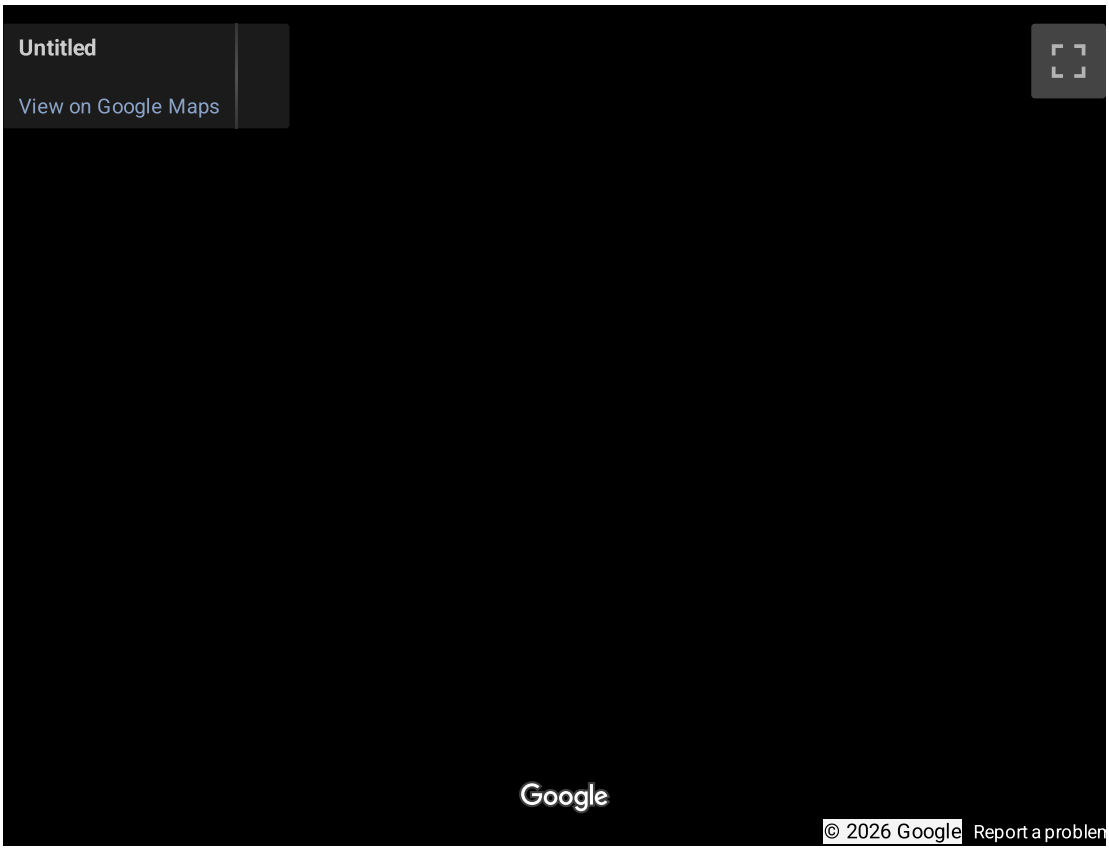
Figure **5.1.10.9**: Étienne Dupérac, Michelangelo`s Design for the Campidoglio, 1569, engraving



Figure **5.1.10.10**: Reverse of Italian € 0.50 coin

In 1538 the statue was relocated from the Lateran quarter to the Capitoline Hill to become the centerpiece for Michelangelo's new design for the Campidoglio (a piazza, or public square, at the top of the Capitoline hill). The statue was set atop a pedestal at the center of an intricately designed piazza flanked by three palazzi (image above). It became the centerpiece of the main piazza of secular Rome and, as such, an icon of the city, a role that its still retains. The equestrian statue still plays a role as an official symbol of the city of Rome, even being incorporated into the reverse image of the Italian version of the € 0.50 coin (image above). The statue itself remained where Michelangelo positioned it until it was moved indoors in 1981 for conservation reasons; a high-tech copy of the original was placed on the pedestal. The ancient statue is now housed within the Musei Capitolini where it can be visited and viewed today.

The equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius is an enduring monument, one that links the city's many phases, ancient and modern. It has borne witness to the city's imperial glory, post-imperial decline, its Renaissance resurgence, and even its quotidian experience in the twenty-first century. In so doing it reminds us about the role of public art in creating and reinforcing cultural identity as it relates to specific events and locations. In the ancient world the equestrian statue would have evoked powerful memories from the viewer, not only reinforcing the identity and appearance of the emperor but also calling to mind the key events, achievements, and celebrations of his administration. The statue is, like the city, eternal, as reflected by the Romanesco poet Giuseppe Belli who reflects in his sonnet *Campidojjo* (1830) that the gilded statue is directly linked to the long sweep of Rome's history.



Additional resources:

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K. Stemmer, ed. Kaiser, *Marc Aurel und Seine Zeit: Das Römische Reich im* Umbruch (Berlin: Abguss-Sammlung Antiker Plastik, 1988).

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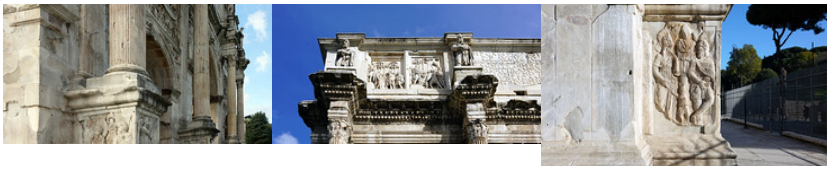
A. M. Vaccaro, et al., *Marco Aurelio: storia di un monumento e del suo restauro* (Milan: Silvana, 1989).

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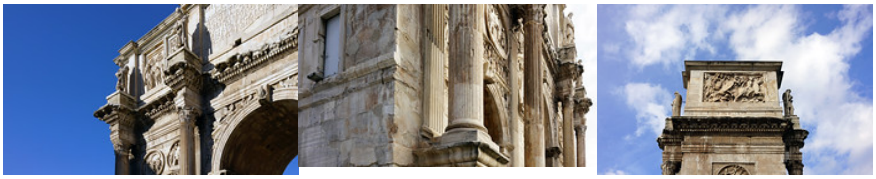
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5.1.11: The importance of the archaeological findspot- The Lullingstone Busts

by DR. ELIZABETH MARLOWE and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER

What do we gain when works come from a well-documented excavation?



Video **5.1.11.1**: Lullingstone Busts, 2nd century C.E. Speakers: Dr. Elizabeth Marlowe and Dr. Steven Zucker

Additional resources:

Lullingstone Roman Villa (from English Heritage)

G. W. Meates, The Lullingstone Roman Villa, *Archaeologia Cantiana*, vol. 63 (1950), pp. 1-49.

K. S. Painter, The Lullingstone Wall-Plaster: An Aspect of Christianity in Roman Britain, *The British Museum Quarterly*, vol. 33, no. 3/4 (Spring, 1969), pp. 131-150.

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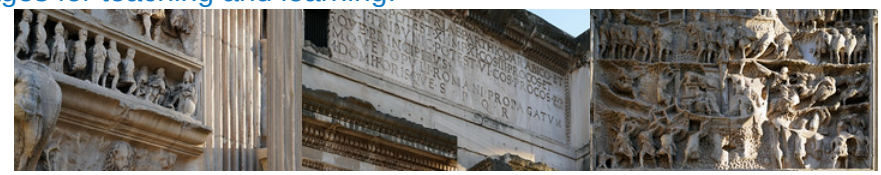
5.1.12: The Arch of Septimius Severus, portal to ancient Rome

by DR. DARIUS ARYA and DR. BETH HARRIS



Video **5.1.12.1**: Triumphal Arch of Septimius Severus, 203 C.E., marble above a travertine base, roughly 23 x 25 m, Roman Forum, speakers: Dr. Darius Arya, executive director of the **American Institute for Roman Culture** and Dr. Beth Harris

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Figure 5.1.12.31: More SmartHistory images…

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5.1.13: The Severan Tondo- damnatio memoriae in ancient Rome

by DR. STEVEN ZUCKER and DR. BETH HARRIS



Video **5.1.13.1**: A conversation with Dr. Steven Zucker and Dr. Beth Harris in front of *The Severan Tondo*, c. 200 C.E., 30.5 cm, tempera on wood (Altes Museum, Staatliche Museen, Berlin)

Additional resources:

More on Damnatio Memoriae

Klaus Forschen, The portraits of Roman emperors and their families," in *The Emperor and Rome: Space, Representation, and Ritual*, edited by Björn C. Ewald and Carlos F. Noreña (Cambridge University Press, 2010)

Eric R. Varner, *Mutilation and Transformation : Damnatio Memoriae and Roman Imperial Portraiture* (Brill 2004)

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5.1.14: Severan marble plan (Forma Urbis Romae)

by DR. JEFFREY A. BECKER

This ancient map served as an administrative tool for one of the largest empires in history.

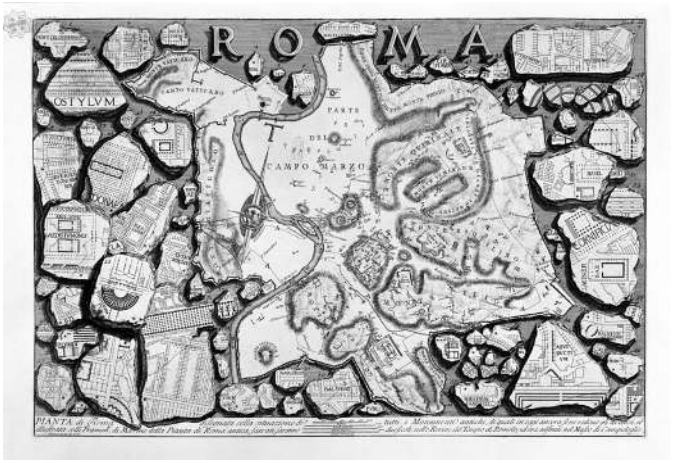


Figure **5.1.14.1**: Giovanni Battista Piranesi, Map of ancient Rome and Forma Urbis, from *Le antichità Romane*, 1835-1839.

Imagining ancient Rome

What did the ancient city of Rome look like? What was it like to walk through Rome's streets? Did the ancient city resemble the Rome that we know today? For centuries, this set of questions occupied the attention of artists and scholars, ranging from engravers like Giovanni Battista Piranesi who produced "views" and a map of the ruined state of ancient Rome (above), to mapmakers like **Giambattista Nolli** whose famous map of the city was produced in the time of Pope Benedict XIV (1748), to archaeological plans like the ***Forma Urbis Romae*** produced by Rodolfo Lanciani at the end of the nineteenth century. One thing that Piranesi, Nolli, and Lanciani had in common was an awareness of the fragmentary remains of a much older depiction of the city's layout, the so-called "Severan marble plan" that dates to the third century C.E.



Figure **5.1.14.2**: A fragment of the Severan marble plan showing the Porticus of Octavia (Capitoline Museums) (photo: **Sailko**, CC-BY SA 3.0)

The Severan marble plan of Rome (also known as the *Forma Urbis Romae)* was a carved plan of the city of Rome produced during the first decade of the third century C.E. and mounted on a wall of the Temple of Peace in Rome. Rendered at a scale of approximately 1 to 240, the Severan marble plan was engraved on 150 marble slabs and originally measured approximately 60 by

43 feet (18.1 by 13 meters). The orientation of the map itself would seem at odds with our twenty-first century north-oriented outlook—the Severan marble plan was oriented with south at the top. The plan is a detailed and intricate undertaking, with building layouts shown for the city of Rome—including temples, public buildings, public baths, houses, and the housing blocks (*insulae*) of the city. Interior details such as columns and staircases are also indicated, and some complexes—particularly notable public ones—are labeled.

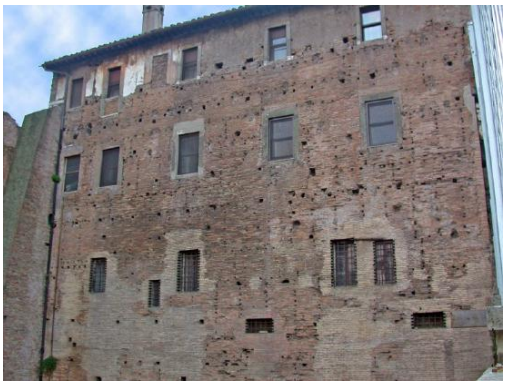


Figure **5.1.14.3**: The wall of the Temple of Peace where the Severan marble plan once hung (photo: **Wikimedia Commons**)

Only fragments remain

After antiquity, the marble plan disappeared—the metal clamps that affixed it to the wall were likely robbed and the slabs simply collapsed to the ground. The first recorded rediscovery of the Severan marble plan was in 1562 when Giovanni Antonio Dosio excavated fragments near the sixth-century basilica church of Santi Cosma e Damiano. The basilica incorporates former architectural elements of the ancient Temple of Peace that had originally been built by the emperor Vespasian in the 70s C.E. The fragments were passed between multiple sixteenth-century collectors, but there was little interest in examining them closely at that time. But in 1741, the fragments became property of the city of Rome and were subsequently studied and drawn by scholars and artists, including Piranesi, and research continued throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Additional fragments were discovered in 1999 and others have appeared sporadically since then. In all only approximately 1,186 fragments of the original plan (only about 10-15%) are known to survive.



Figure **5.1.14.4**: **Conjectural reconstruction of the *Forma Urbis Romae***

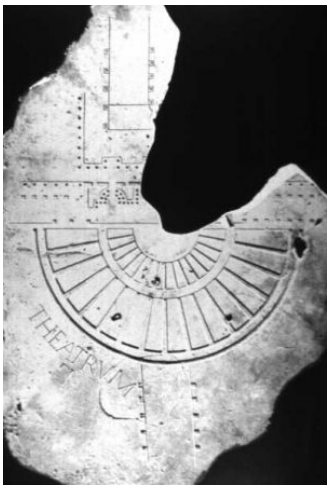


Figure 5.1.14.5: Reconstruction of a part of the *Forma Urbis Romae* showing the theater of Pompey (photo: **Ulysses K. Vestal**, public domain)

The conjectural restoration of the fragments (above) suggests that the viewer would have been presented with an urban panorama in plan view, complete with miniscule details. What purpose the plan served, however, remains an open question for scholars. It is likely that the official offices for the government of the city of Rome during the imperial period occupied rooms next to the wall where the marble plan was hung, suggesting that it may have had an official, administrative function. Its scale and location, however, call it into question as a practical, useful object. The marble plan may have served a more representative function, placing it in line with painted and carved landscape views—both fantastical and realistic—known from other examples of Roman art.

Whatever its original use, the marble plan provokes and stimulates the imagination of the viewer: those who have studied the fragments have drawn enormous inspiration from this view of the city. The fragments influenced Lanciani's creation of his own archaeological map of Rome (***Forma Urbis Romae,*** 1893-1901), which in turn strongly influenced Italo Gismondi and his team as they designed and built the famous model of Rome (Plastico di Roma antica) first exhibited at Rome in 1937 (now in the **Museo della Civiltà Romana**, Rome). Gismondi's model still strongly influences views of what ancient Rome looked like, revealing a continued interest in the question of how one might imagine the ancient city.

Additional resources:

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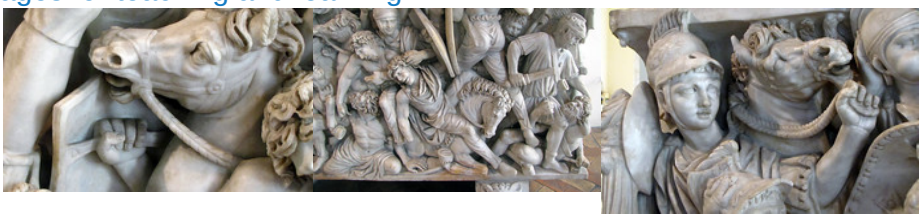
5.1.15: Battle of the Romans and Barbarians (Ludovisi Battle Sarcophagus)

by DR. STEVEN ZUCKER and DR. BETH HARRIS

Romans fight barbarians on this chaotic coffin, which shows signs of a turn in artistic trends.



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SECTION OVERVIEW

5.2: Late Empire

In the third century C.E. the Ancient Roman Empire was threatened by economic crisis, weak and short-lived emperors and usurpers, and the loss of territory to barbarian invasions.

235 - 410 C.E.

5.2.1: Trebonianus Gallus — emperor or athlete? Rethinking a modern attribution

5.2.2: Portraits of the Four Tetrarchs

5.2.3: Basilica of Maxentius and Constantine

5.2.4: The Colossus of Constantine

5.2.5: Arch of Constantine, Rome

5.2.6: The Symmachi Panel

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5.2.1: Trebonianus Gallus — emperor or athlete? Rethinking a modern attribution

by DR. ELIZABETH MARLOWE and DR. BETH HARRIS

In the chaos of the 3rd century, can we be sure about the identification of this statue?



Additional resources:

This work at The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Dr. Elizabeth Marlowe, "Said to be or not said to be: the findspot of the so-called Trebonianus Gallus statue at the Metropolitan Museum in New York," *Journal of the History of Collections*, vol. 27, issue 2 (July 2015)

Roman Portrait Sculpture: The Stylistic Cycle on The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

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5.2.2: Portraits of the Four Tetrarchs

by DR. STEVEN ZUCKER and DR. BETH HARRIS

Learn how the solid, abstracted forms of these co-emperors reject earlier understanding of the human body.



Video **5.2.2.1**: Portraits of the Four Tetrarchs, from Constantinople, c. 305, porphyry, 4′ 3″ high (St. Marks, Venice)

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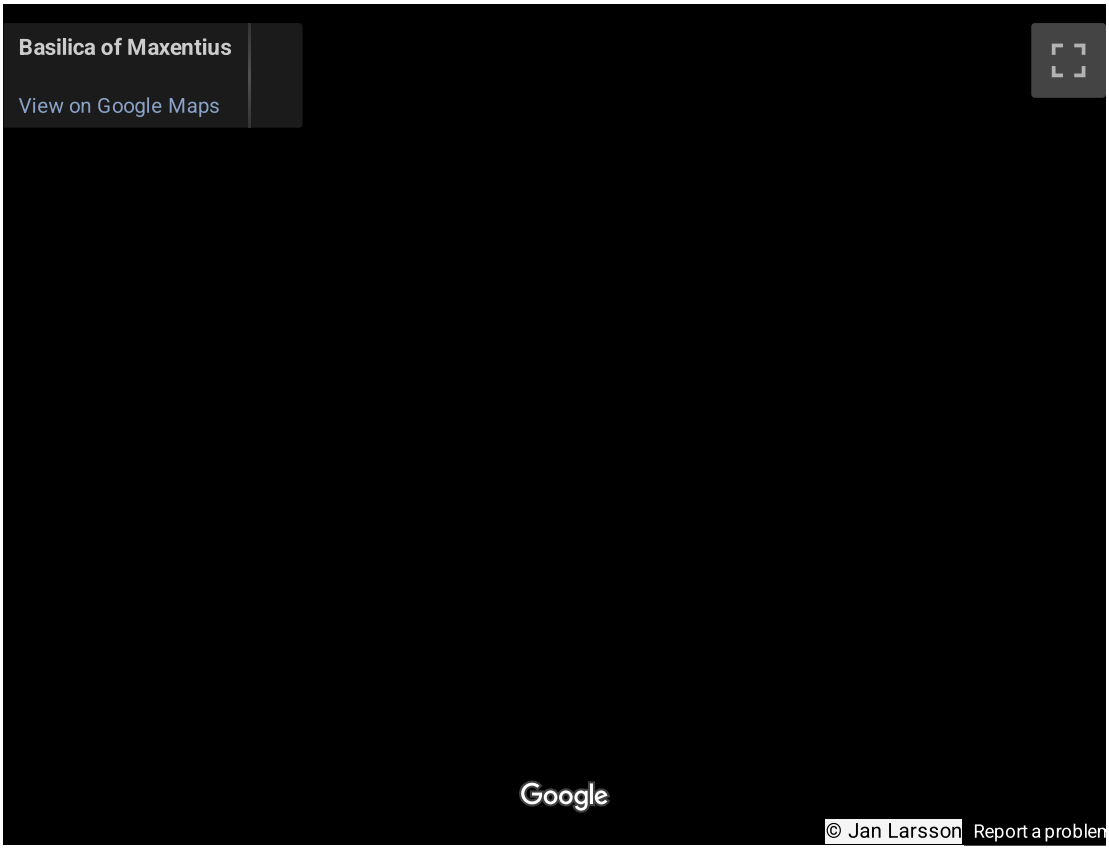
5.2.3: Basilica of Maxentius and Constantine

by DR. DARIUS ARYA and DR. BETH HARRIS

Built using new technologies, this building is overwhelming and unprecedented—displaying Roman imperial power.



Video **5.2.3.1**: Basilica of Maxentius and Constantine (Basilica Nova), Roman Forum, c. 306-312



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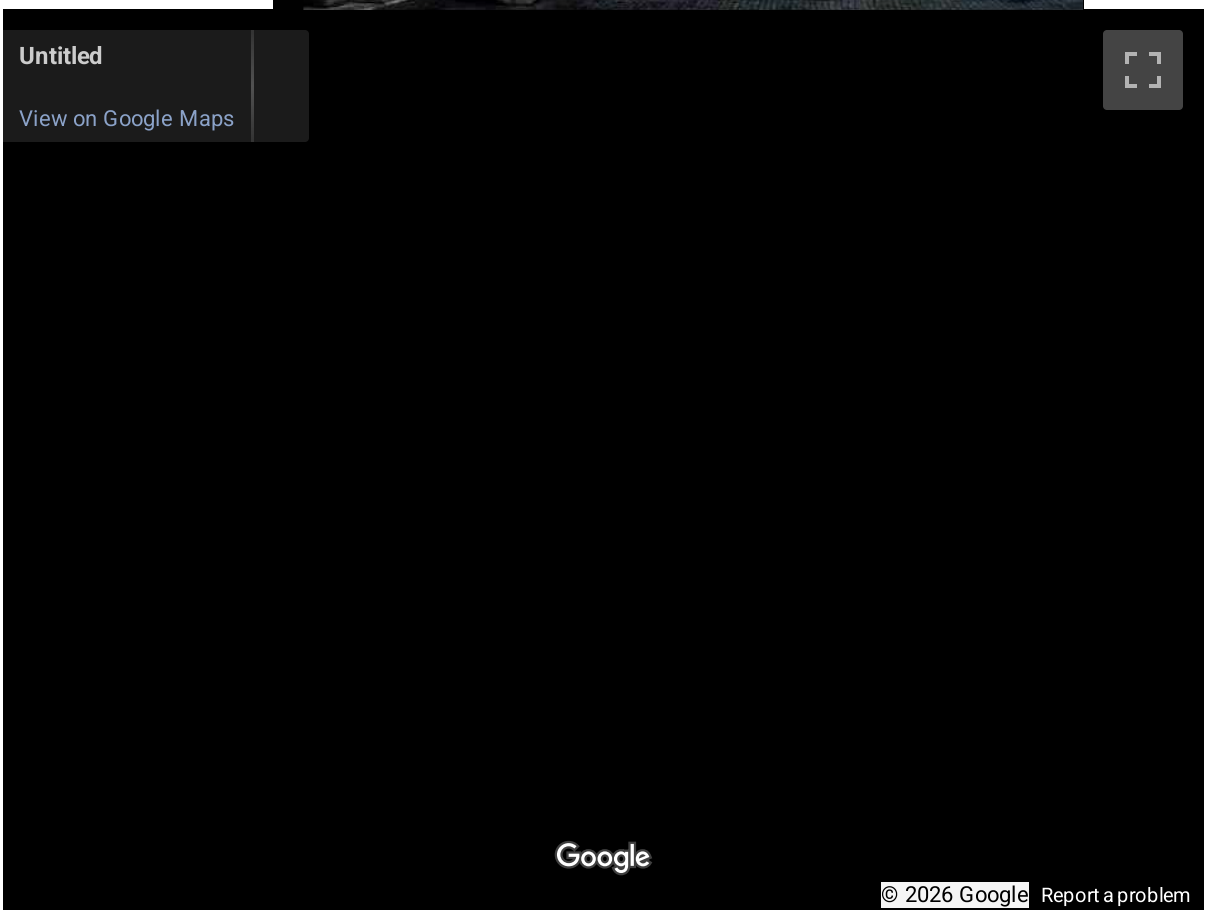
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5.2.4: The Colossus of Constantine

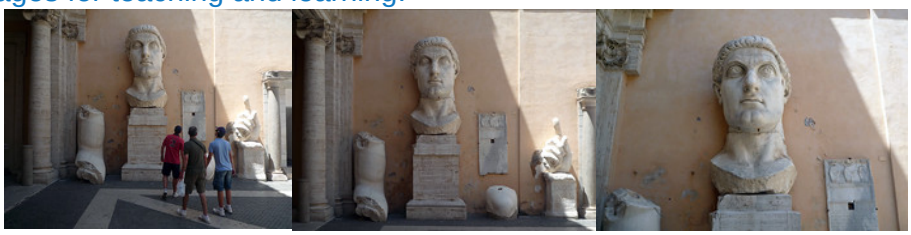
by DR. BETH HARRIS and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER

Does the abstraction of form and faraway look in this colossal portrait hint at the growth of Christianity in Rome?





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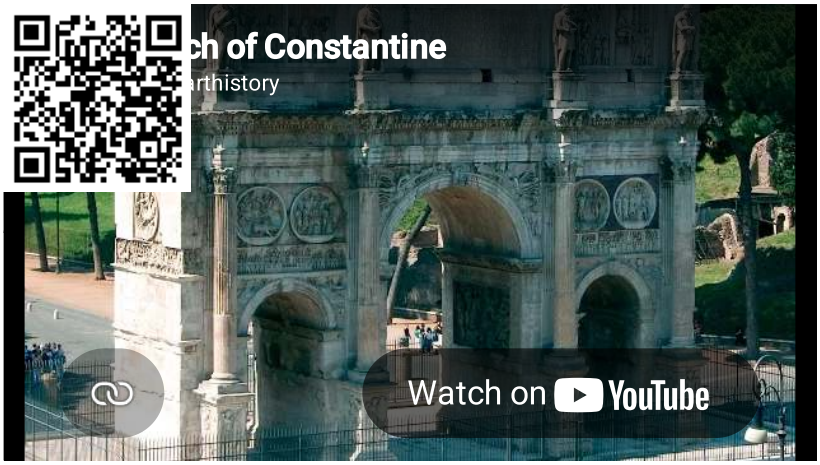
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5.2.5: Arch of Constantine, Rome

by DR. ANDREW FINDLEY

For the first time, a Roman emperor celebrated victory over fellow Romans, and appropriated the art of earlier rulers.



Video 5.2.5.1: Speakers: Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker. Video produced by Dr. Naraelle Hohensee, Dr. Steven Zucker and Dr. Beth Harris

The Emperor Constantine, called Constantine the Great, was significant for several reasons. These include his political transformation of the Roman Empire, his support for Christianity, and his founding of Constantinople (modern day Istanbul). Constantine's status as an agent of change also extended into the realms of art and architecture. The Triumphal Arch of Constantine in Rome is not only a superb example of the ideological and stylistic changes Constantine's reign brought to art, but also demonstrates the emperor's careful adherence to traditional forms of Roman Imperial art and architecture.

Location and Appearance



Figure 5.2.5.2: Reconstruction of the location of the Arch of Constantine (lower left) and the sculpture of the Colossus of the Sun (center)—both situated between the Temple of Venus and Roma (far left) and the Flavian Amphitheater (Colosseum—right), model © 2008 The Regents of the University of California; image © 2008 The Board of Visitors of the University of Virginia. Courtesy Dr. Bernard Frischer (Rome Reborn 2.0)

The Arch of Constantine is located along the Via Triumphalis in Rome, and it is situated between the Flavian Amphitheater (better known as the Colosseum) and the Temple of Venus and Roma. This location was significant, as the arch was a highly visible example of connective architecture that linked the area of the **Forum Romanum** (Roman Forum) to the major entertainment and public bathing complexes of central Rome.



Figure 5.2.5.3: Arch of Constantine, 312-315 C.E., and older spolia, marble and porphyry, Rome

The monumental arch stands approximately 20 meters high, 25 meters wide, and 7 meters deep. Three portals punctuate the exceptional width of the arch, each flanked by partially engaged Corinthian columns. The central opening is approximately 12 meters high, above which are identical inscribed marble panels, one on each side, that read:

> ***To the Emperor Caesar Flavius Constantinus, the Greatest,***
> ***pious, fortunate, the Senate and people of Rome,***
> ***by inspiration of divinity and his own great mind***
> ***with his righteous arms***
> ***on both the tyrant and his faction***
> ***in one instant in rightful***
> ***battle he avenged the republic,***
> ***dedicated this arch as a memorial to his military victory***

The end of the Tetrarchy

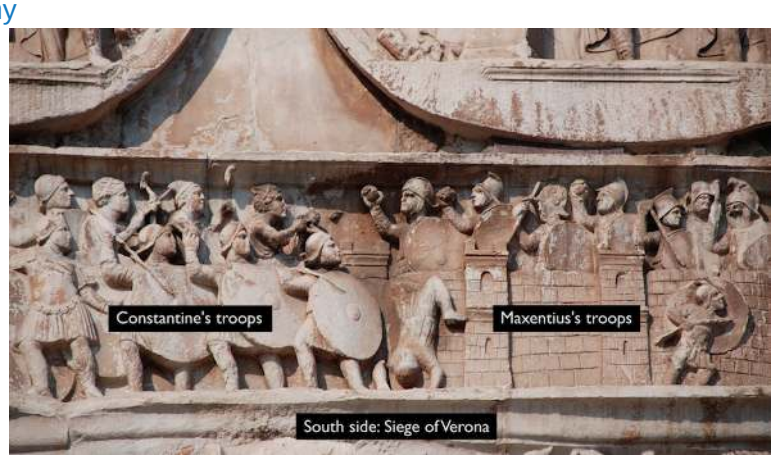


Figure 5.2.5.4: Frieze with Constantine's siege of Maxentius's troops at Verona (before the Battle of the Milvian Bridge), Arch of Constantine (south side) , 312-315 C.E. and older spolia, marble and porphyry, Rome

Beginning in the late 3rd century, the Roman Empire was ruled by four co-emperors (two senior emperors and two junior emperors), in an effort to bring political stability after the turbulent 3rd century. But in 312 C.E., Constantine took control over the Western Roman Empire by defeating his co-emperor Maxentius at the Battle of the Milvian Bridge (and soon after became the sole ruler of the empire). The inscription on the arch refers to Maxentius as the tyrant and portrays Constantine as the rightful ruler of the Western Empire. Curiously, the inscription also attributes the victory to Constantine's "great mind" and the inspiration of a singular divinity. The mention of divine inspiration has been interpreted by some scholars as a coded reference to Constantine's developing interest in Christian monotheism.

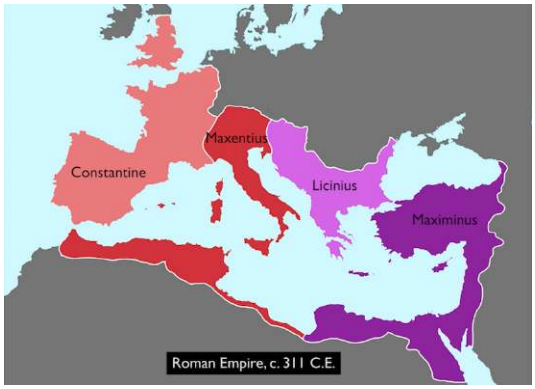


Figure **5.2.5.5**

Sculpture from different eras

Perhaps the most striking feature of the Arch is its eclectic and stylistically varied relief sculptures. Some aspects of the sculpture are quite standard, like the Victoria (or Nike) figures that occupy the spandrels above the central archway or the typical architectural moldings found in most imperial Roman public and religious architecture (below).



Figure **5.2.5.6**: Victoria (Nike) figures (personifications of victory, spandrels, Arch of Constantine (north side), 312-315 C.E. and older spolia, marble and porphyry, Rome

Other sculpted elements, however, show a multiplicity of styles. In fact, most scholars accept that many of the sculptures of the arch were spolia taken from older monuments dating to the 2nd century C.E. Although there is some scholarly disagreement on the origins of the sculptures, their imperial style corresponds to those of the reigns of Trajan (ruled 98-117 C.E.—the figures surmounting the decorative columns), Hadrian (ruled 117-138 C.E.—the middle register roundels), and Marcus Aurelius (ruled 161-180 C.E.—the large panel reliefs on the top registers). Most of the reliefs feature the emperors participating in codified activities that demonstrate the ruler's authority and piety by addressing troops, defeating enemies, distributing largesse, and offering sacrifices.



Figure **5.2.5.7**: Diagram of the Arch of Constantine showing architectural features and spolia, 312-315 C.E., Rome (**link to large image**)

Some sculptural elements of the structure also date to Constantine's reign, most notably the frieze which is located immediately above the portals. These relief sculptures are of a drastically different style and narrative content when compared with the spoliated (older, borrowed)

sections (below, left); Constantine's relief sculptures (below, right) feature squat and blocky figures that are more abstract than they are naturalistic.



Figure 5.2.5.8: Two reliefs from the Arch of Constantine: left: roundel showing Sacrifice to Apollo, era of Hadrian, c. 117-138 C.E.; right: detail, Distribution of Largesse, era of Constantine, 312-315

The Constantinian reliefs also depict historical, rather than general events related to Constantine, including his rise to power and **victory over Maxentius at the Milvian Bridge**. There is also a scene of **Constantine distributing largesse (funds) to the public**—recalling the scenes of emperors from the earlier sculptures.

Clarity of form

Regarding style, the relief figures from Constantine's age still seem like outliers. Yet in comparison to the idealized naturalism of the earlier sculptural elements (for example, in the roundels in the image below), the thick, bold outlines of the Constantinian figures render them remarkably legible to passersby. While the Constantinian figures lack natural aesthetics, their clarity of form ensured that they were informative and communicated Constantine's official (and celebrated) history to viewers of his own time.



Figure 5.2.5.9: Reliefs from the south side of the Arch of Constantine. Roundels, Aftermath of a lion hunt (left) and Sacrifice to Hercules (right), era of Hadrian, c. 117-138 C.E. and the frieze below, showing the *Distribution of Largesse*, era of Constantine, 312-315 C.E.

Analysis and Meaning

Until relatively recently, art historians viewed the blocky sculptures and use of spolia in the arch as signs of poor craftsmanship, deficient artistry, and economic decline in the late Roman Empire (this reading is now almost wholly rejected by art historians). Even one of the most prolific and influential art historians of the modern age, Bernard Berenson, titled his short book on the arch, *The Arch of Constantine: The Decline of Form*. More recently, however, analysis of the arch has focused on the political and ideological goals of Constantine and the objectives of the artists, which has highlighted new possibilities for the interpretation of the arch.

If, indeed, the spoliated (older) material from the arch can be traced to the reigns of Trajan, Hadrian, and Marcus Aurelius, then it situates Constantine as one worthy of the same level of reverence as those emperors—all of whom earned deserved levels of acclaim. This was vitally important to Constantine, who had himself essentially bypassed lawful succession and usurped power from others. Moreover, Constantine encouraged major social changes in Rome, such as decriminalizing Christianity. Any religious change was a threat to the ruling and political classes of Rome. By aligning himself with well-regarded emperors of Rome's 2nd-century C.E. golden age, Constantine was signaling that he intended to model his rule after earlier, successful leaders.

Additional resources:

List of rulers of the Roman Empire on the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

The Roman Empire on The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

Byzantium (ca. 330–1453) on The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

Mary Beard, *The Roman Triumph* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap, 2009).

Bernard Berenson, *The Arch of Constantine: The Decline of Form* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1954).

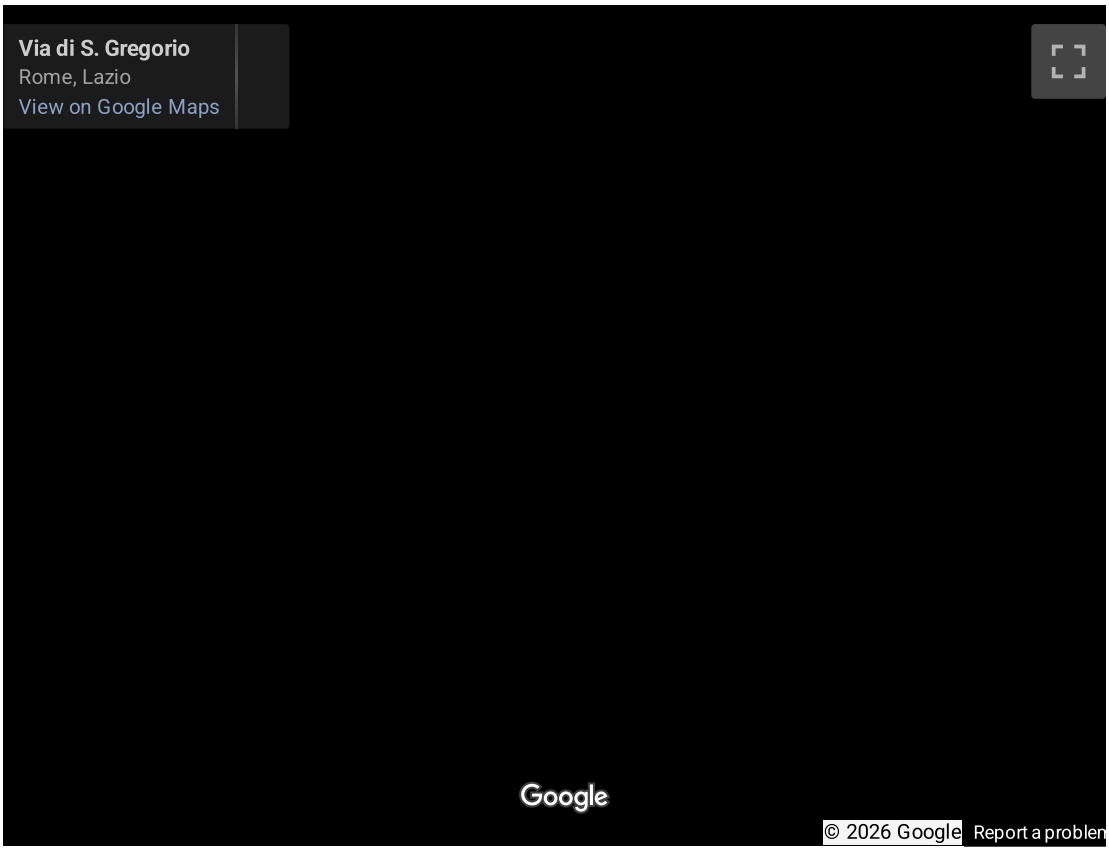
R. Ross Holloway "The Spolia on the Arch of Constantine" *Quaderni Ticinesi Numismatica e Antichità Classiche* 14 (1985), pp. 261-273.

Ernst Kitzinger, *Byzantine Art in the Making: Main Lines of Stylistic Development in Mediterranean Art*, 3rd-7th Century (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1977).

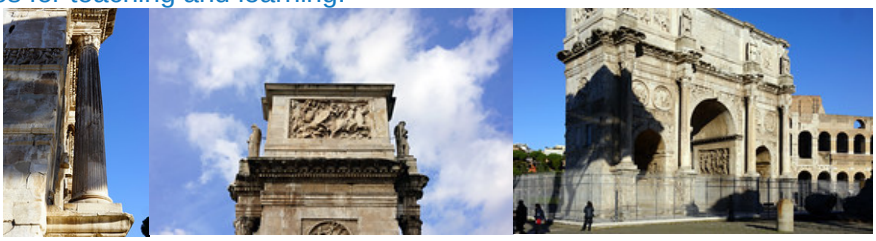
Jaś Elsner, "From the Culture of Spolia to the Cult of Relics: The Arch of Constantine and the Genesis of Late Antique Forms," *Papers of the British School at Rome* 68 (2000), pp.149–184.

Elizabeth Marlowe, "Framing the Sun: The Arch of Constantine and the Roman Cityscape," *The Art Bulletin* vol. 88 no. 2 (June 2006), pp. 223-242.

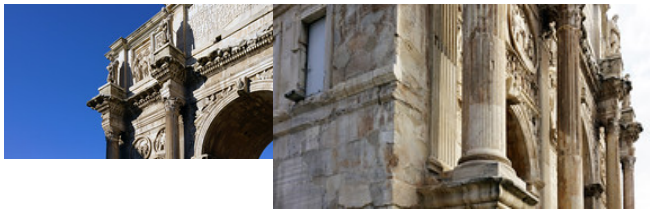
Mark Wilson Jones, "Genesis and Mimesis: The Design of the Arch of Constantine in Rome," *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 59 (March 2000), pp. 50–77.



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5.2.6: The Symmachi Panel

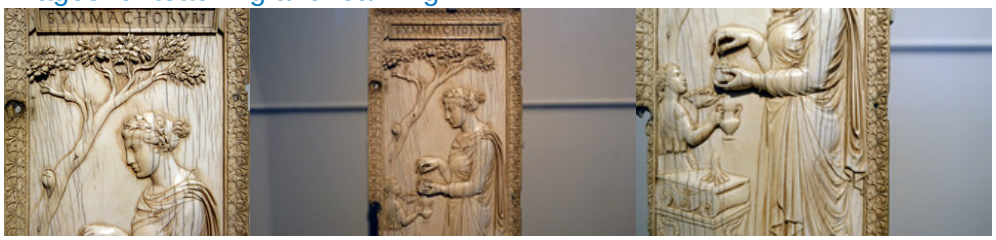
by DR. BETH HARRIS and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER

Holding on to pagan traditions in the early Christian era.



Video **5.2.6.1**: The Symmachi Panel, c. 400 C.E., ivory, 32 x 13 cm (Victoria and Albert Museum, London)

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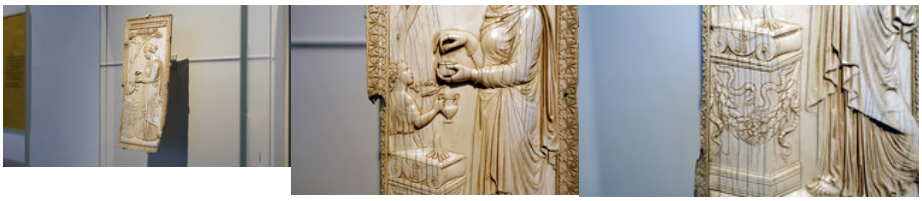
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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

6: Palmyra

Described as a noble city, this oasis was renowned for its rich soil and pleasant streams. Ancient Palmyra was an important stop for caravans traversing the Syrian Desert.

c. 1800 B.C.E. - 272 C.E.

6.1: Palmyra- the modern destruction of an ancient city

6.2: Temple of Bel, Palmyra

6.3: Palmyrene Funerary Portraiture

6.4: Temple of Baalshamin, Palmyra

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6.1: Palmyra- the modern destruction of an ancient city

by DR. SALAM AL KUNTAR and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER

Terrorists overran Palmyra twice despite international cries for protection, sowing irreversible destruction.



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6.2: Temple of Bel, Palmyra

by DR. JEFFREY A. BECKER

Drawing from Greco-Roman and Eastern architecture, this temple was one of history's great architectural achievements.



Figure **6.2.1**: Temple of Bel in 2005 – Palmyra, first and second centuries C.E. (photo: **ian.plumb**, CC BY 2.0)



Figure **6.2.2**: Location of Palmyra within Syria

A noble city

Described as a noble city situated in a vast expanse of sand and renowned for its rich soil and pleasant streams, the ancient city of Palmyra was a stopping point for caravans traversing the Syrian Desert (Pliny the Elder *Natural History* 5.88.1). There is evidence that the site has been settled by people since the early second millennium B.C.E.

Known from ancient literary records—including Assyrian texts and the Hebrew Bible—Palmyra today is known as a unique and resplendent ruined city that preserves remarkable examples of monumental, hybrid architecture that blends the canon of Graeco-Roman architecture with Near Eastern elements.

Brief history

Palmyra, originally known as Tadmor, became a prosperous city under the Seleucid kings and was eventually annexed to the Roman empire after 64 B.C.E. Under Tiberius (emperor from 14-37 C.E.) the city was incorporated into the Roman province of Syria and assumed the name Palmyra. The city received the patronage of several Roman emperors and experienced great prosperity. The city suffered under the rise of the Sassanid dynasty of Persia. After the brief, revolutionary rise of queen Zenobia, the city was sacked by the Roman emperor Aurelian in 272 C.E.

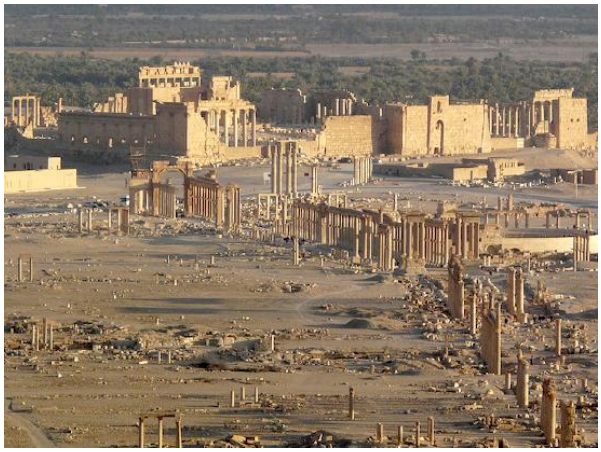


Figure 6.2.3: View of Palmyra ruins from the Qala'at Shirukh hill in 2010 (photo: Varun Shiv Kapur, CC BY 2.0)

A hybrid architecture

The monumental architectural remains of the city attest to its great prosperity during its heyday. Among the many surviving monuments of Palmyra is the remarkable temple of the Semitic god Bel or Baal (top of page). A discussion of its architectural features demonstrates both the plurality of artistic and architectural styles in the ancient Mediterranean, and the numerous cultures that frequently overlapped and inter-mixed there. Although an inscription attests to the temple's dedication in 32 C.E., its completion was gradual with major architectural elements added over the course of the first and second centuries.

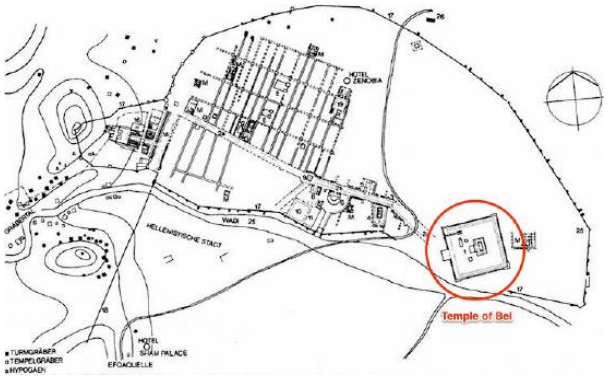


Figure 6.2.4: Plan of the site of Palmyra



Figure 6.2.5: Columns in the inner court of the temple of Bel in 2005 (photo: ian.plumb, CC BY 2.0)

The organization of the temple's ground plan derive from the traditions of eastern ritual architecture, including independent shrines for distinct divinities and, notably, the bent-axis approach to the cult (i.e. the architecture requires the celebrant to enter the temple and turn 90 degrees in order to view the offering table and cult area). The architectural elements employed in the temple's elevation however, derive from the Graeco-Roman canon, including the use of the Corinthian order as well as various architectural elements of that adorn the frieze course and roofline. In its outward appearance, the temple seems to derive from the canon of Hellenistic Greek architecture.

The temple itself sits within a bounded, architectural precinct measuring approximately 205 meters per side. This precinct, surrounded by a portico (a colonnaded entryway), encloses the temple of Bel as well as other cult buildings. The temple itself has a very deep foundation that supports a stepped platform. At the level of the stylobate (the platform atop the steps) the area measures 55 x 30 meters and the cella (the inner chamber of the temple that held the cult statue), stands over 14 meters in height and measures 39.45 x 13.86 meters.

The cella is designed according to the Near Eastern tradition of the bent-axis approach and incorporates two separate shrines (*thalamoi*). A ramp and central stair, with an off-center doorway, grants access to the cella. The columnar arrangement is pseduoperipteral (free-standing columns at the porch with engaged columns on the sides and back) and includes an arrangement of 8 x 15 (height = 15.81 meters) fluted, Corinthian columns. The cella also has exterior Ionic half-columns at each of its ends. Merlons (crenellations) crowded the roof and the ceilings were coffered. From masons' marks and graffiti found on the site, it seems that there were craftspeople of various background, including Greeks and Romans alongside the Palmyrenes.



Figure **6.2.6**: Palmyra's divine triad: Baalshamin, with the Moon god Aglibol on his right and the Sun-god Yarhibol at left, discovered at Bir Wereb, near Palmyra, 60 cm high (Louvre, Paris) (photo: **Emmanuel PIERRE**, CC BY-SA 3.0)

The temple is dedicated to a divine triad, Bel along with the moon god Aglibol and the sun god Yarhibol. This divine triad is innovative, with the secondary gods playing the role of Bel's attendants.



Figure **6.2.7**: Carved stone ceiling, cella, Sanctuary of Bel, Palmyra, Syria (photo: **John Winder**, CC BY-NC 2.0)

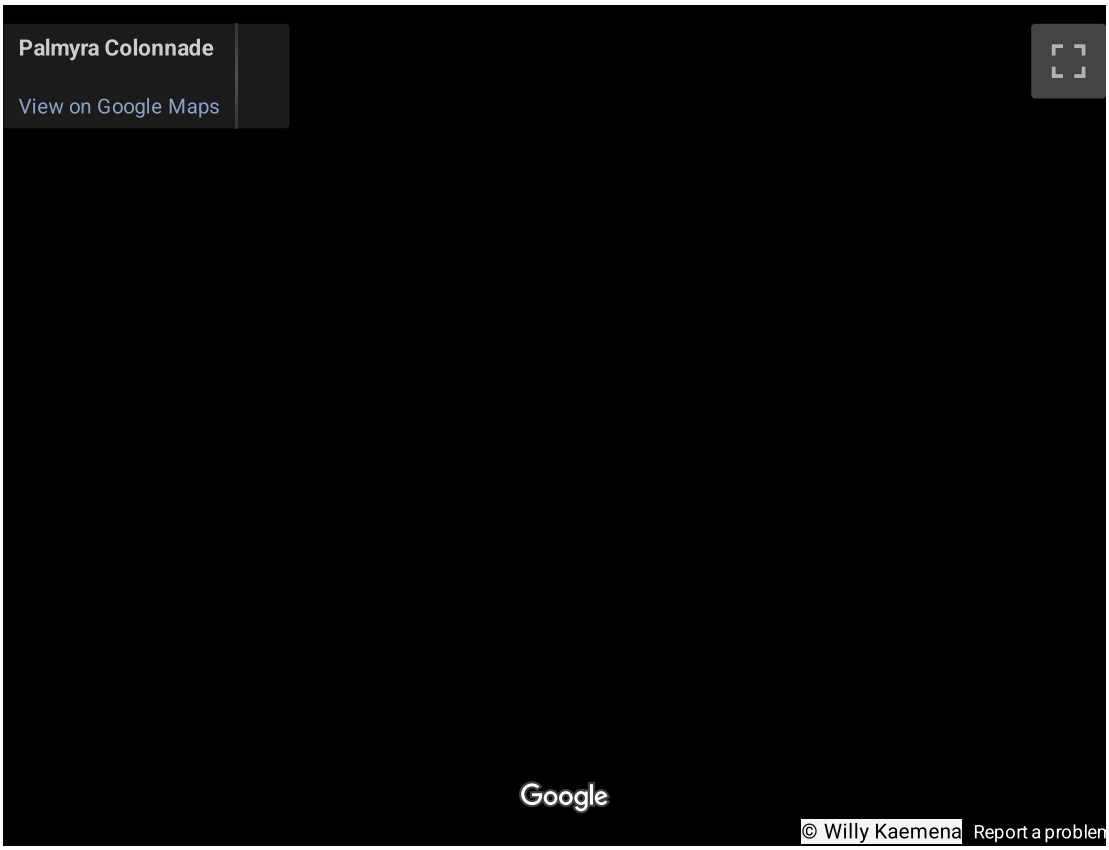


Figure **6.2.8**: Front view of triumphal (or monumental) arch at Palmyra, Syria (photo: **Erik Hermans**, CC BY 2.0)

The Temple of Bel is one of the great architectural achievements of the Mediterranean world during the early first millennium. As an architectural product it draws on rich, canonical forms derived from both the Graeco-Roman and Near Eastern spheres and its technical aesthetics are of the first order. Along with temples such as that of Heliopolitan Zeus at Baalbek, the Palmyrene temple demonstrates the massive civic investment in monumental architecture.

Clearly Palmyra was prosperous, allowing its elites to invest heavily in elaborate architecture—all the same this civic investment was also central to the Mediterranean concept of urbanism where presentation architecture helped to define and advance the status of the city itself. The hybridity of the Temple of Bel further demonstrates that ancient Palmyra was a multi-cultural community and that while the cult and its function adhered to Semitic practice, the execution of the temple in the Graeco-Roman style spoke the architectural lingua franca of the expansive Roman empire.

***Note:** The current political situation in Syria has resulted in the destruction numerous archaeological sites at Palmyra including the Temple of Bel.



Additional resources:

Palmyra, UNESCO video

Palmyra on the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

Trade Routes between Europe and Asia during Antiquity on the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

Trade and Commercial Activity in the Byzantine and Early Islamic Middle East on the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

Palmyra photo album on Flickr from the Institute for the Study of the Ancient World

The Divine Triad at the Louvre

Palmyra, UNESCO World Heritage Site

Pleiades Project: Palmyra, Tadmora or Hadrianopolis (Palmyra)

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J. B. Ward-Perkins, *Roman Imperial Architecture* (Yale: Yale University Press, 1981).

T. Wiegand et al., *Palmyra: Ergebnisse der Expeditionen von 1902 und 1917* (Berlin: H. Keller, 1932).

E. Will, *Les Palmyréniens: la Venise des sables: Ier siècle avant-IIIème siècle après J.-C.* (Paris: A. Colin, 1992).

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6.3: Palmyrene Funerary Portraiture

by STEVEN ZUCKER and DR. JEFFREY A. BECKER

At the crossroads of East and West, the caravan city of Palmyra was a melting pot of culture.



Figure **6.3.1**: Tower tombs, Palmyra, Syria (photo: **Bernard Gagnon**, CC BY-SA 3.0)

The search for identity is an unending one. As we peer across big lenses of time, such as those that separate us from the ancient Mediterranean world, one of the questions that occurs again and again is “who were these people?” In the case of Palmyra, a prosperous caravan city located in the Syrian Desert, a remarkable assemblage of funerary portraiture grants us a glimpse at the self-styled identity of a number of the city’s former occupants.



Figure **6.3.2**: Tower tombs, Palmyra, Syria (photo: **James Gordon**, CC BY 2.0)

Among the tomb types from Roman Syria are the curious “tower tombs” of Palmyra, which find no comparison in Roman architecture from the western empire (above and left). They were the main tomb typology from the final quarter of the first century until the middle of the second century C.E., at which point the underground hypogeum became the preferred tomb type. A hypogeum is a subterranean tomb, most often excavated directly from the bedrock, thus creating an underground chamber or chambers for burials.



Figure **6.3.3**: Elahbel Tower Tomb, Palmyra, Syria (photo: **isawnyu,** CC BY 2.0

The tower tombs tend to occupy high ground and were likely built for kinship groupings. These tall, slender structures enclose tiers of niches or loculi in which human remains would be deposited. Each loculus would then be sealed with a stone slab, often carved with a relief portrait of the descendent. An exceptionally fine (and early) example is the Tower Tomb of Iamblichus (dated to 83 C.E. on the basis of epigraphic evidence—evidence from inscriptions). Another is the well preserved Tomb of Elahbel (above) with its elaborately coffered ceilings (below).



Figure **6.3.4**: Coffered ceiling, Elahbel Tower Tomb, Palmyra, Syria (photo: **Bernard Gagnon**, CC BY-SA 3.0)

The tomb also includes a small balcony (below).



Figure **6.3.5**: Balcony, Elahbel Tower Tomb, Palmyra, Syria (photo: Bernard Gagnon, CC BY-SA 3.0)



Figure **6.3.6**: Interior of a tower tomb, Palmyra, Syria (photo: **Odilia**, CC: BY-SA 3.0)

Individual portraiture

The individual loculus relief sculptures present a rich range of iconographic information about the people of Palmyra. These individualized reliefs are formatted as portrait reliefs and depict their subjects intimately, often with symbols of their status and social position.



Figure **6.3.7**: Left: Palmyrene Funerary Relief Bust of a Priest, c. 50-150 C.E., limestone, 63 x 52.5 cm / Right: Palmyrene Funerary Bust of Tamma, c. 50-150 C.E., limestone, 50 cm high © Trustees of the British Museum

The portrait of a priest dating c. 50-150 C.E. (above left) provides a good example of this practice. The priest holds ritual vessels (a bowl and a jug) and wears the traditional polos hat—a high, cylindrical hat worn by both men and women and derived from the divine crowns of the goddesses of the ancient Near East and Anatolia. A fragmentary female figure stands behind the priest's right shoulder. The funerary bust of Tamma, c. 50-150 C.E. (above right) demonstrates similar traits. Tamma is richly dressed, perhaps indicating worldly wealth, and holds a spindle and distaff, perhaps indicating that she produced fabric in her household. The inscription identifies her as "Tamma, daughter of Shamshi geram, son of Malku, son of Nashum."



Figure **6.3.8**: Palmyrene funerary relief of Viria Phoebe and Gaius Vurus, c. 50-150 C.E., limestone, 47.5 x 52 x 25 cm © Trustees of the British Museum

The bust portrait of a couple (above) shows a pair of decedents. This portrait carries a Greek inscription, which differs from the typical Aramaic inscriptions. The text identifies the two individuals as Viria Phoebe and Gaius Virius Alcimus. This pair have the same clan name, a possible indication they are the former slaves of a brother and sister. Alcimus holds a book-roll, while the woman holds the spindle and distaff (both implements associated with cloth production). These objects may be meant to evoke their respective roles.

Group reliefs

A third century C.E. funerary relief from Palmyra now in the British Museum (below) depicts a funeral banquet. Elite tombs of this period demonstrate a mixture of Roman and Near Eastern motifs. In this particular relief that depicts a funeral banquet, the reclining male is attended by a seated female; perhaps the pair are meant to be husband and wife. The idea of the funeral banquet is a Roman motif adopted by local craftsmen. The male—presumably the deceased—reclines on a couch while holding an open vessel. He is depicted at a slightly larger scale than the attendant female. His costume is of Parthian origin, a sort of pant-suit. The Parthian empire, c. 247 B.C.E.-224 C.E. was a major political power of ancient Iran located on the eastern margin of the Roman empire. Reliefs such as this one would be arranged in groups of three in communal tombs, thereby giving the tomb chamber the resemblance of a Roman-style dining room (triclinium) in which a real banquet would have taken place.



Figure **6.3.17**: Limestone relief showing a funerary banquet, Palmyra, Syria, c. 200-273 C.E., 40.6 x 43.1 x 19 cm © Trustees of the British Museum

The funerary reliefs from Palmyra form a profoundly evocative body of evidence. The individualized treatment of the sculptures themselves still serves to convey important elements about the identities of these individuals. We can glean information about wealth, social status, role in the community, familial relationships—all of which help to enrich our reconstruction of ancient Palmyrene society. The reliefs also demonstrate the degree to which Palmyra existed in a multicultural and multilingual landscape, one in which the traits, trends, styles, and languages of the Graeco-Roman world and the Near Eastern world not only overlapped but intertwined, producing new, unique cultural objects. This is an important realization, one that helps remind us of the degree to which the ancient world was diverse and varied and that a great deal of the material culture of the ancient world resulted from shared cultural influence and hybridization. The tombs of Palmyra embody and evoke this climate of cultural diversity as they still stand as monuments to Palmyrene identity.

Additional resources

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Michael Danti, “Palmyrene Funerary Sculptures at Penn,” *Expedition* 43.3 (November 2001).

Palmyrene Funerary Sculptures at Penn

M. K. Heyn, “Gesture and Identity in the Funerary Art of Palmyra” *American Journal of Archaeology* 114.4 (October 2010) pp. 631-61. DOI: 10.3764/aja.114.4.631

Andreas J. Kropp, *Images and Monuments of Near Eastern Dynasts, 100 BC – AD 100* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History, The Metropolitan Museum of Art

The Lady Marti, Funerary Portrait of a Woman, Palmyra, c. AD 170-190, Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen

Funerary Portrait of a Priest from Palmyra, Walters Art Museum

The Wisconsin Palmyrene Aramaic Inscription Project

Palmyra Portrait Project, AARHUS University

Portrait bust, Penn Museum

Portrait of a deceased woman, Liebieghaus, Frankfurt

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6.4: Temple of Baalshamin, Palmyra

by DR. JEFFREY A. BECKER

A hybrid of eastern and western design, this temple showcased the cultural diversity and great wealth of Palmyra.



Figure **6.4.1**: Temple of Baalshamin, 1st century C.E. (Palmyra—in modern Syria) (photo: **Verity Cridland**, CC BY 2.0)

Hybrid in design

The Temple of Baalshamin in Palmyra was a first century C.E. sanctuary dedicated to one of the key gods of the city.* As with other Palmyrene architecture, the sanctuary of Baalshamin demonstrated hybridity of design—incorporating both Near Eastern and Graeco-Roman elements.

The cult

The temple's cult is dedicated to Baalshamin or Ba'al Šamem, a northwest Semitic divinity. The name Baalshamin is applied to various divinities at different periods in time, but most often to Hadad, also known simply as Ba'al. Along with Bel, Baalshamin was one of the two main divinities of pre-Islamic Palmyra in Syria and was a sky god. The relief plaque below depicts a votive dedication by a worshipper—Baalshamin and Bel along with Yarhibol (the lord of spring with a solar nimbus) and Aglibol (a lunar divinity).



Figure **6.4.2**: Limestone bas-relief dedicated by Ba'alay to Bel, Baalshamin, Yarhibol, and Aglibol. Limestone, dated January 121 CE., from Palmyra (Museum of Fine Arts, Lyon) (photo: **Owen Cook**, CC BY-SA 3.0)

The architecture

The temple of Baalshamin was a prostyle (having free standing columns on the façade only), tetrastyle (four columns across the façade) temple of the Corinthian order with a deep porch (visible in the photo below). What is the Corinthian Order?

The temple was set within a colonnaded precinct (a colonnade is a row of columns). The temple building dated to c. 130 C.E. and represents an addition to a sanctuary that already existed by 17 C.E.



Figure **6.4.3**: View of the porch with free-standing columns, and a pilaster visible on the flank, Temple of Baalshamin, 1st century C.E. (Palmyra—in modern Syria) (photo: **Juan Llanos**, CC BY-ND 2.0), CC BY 2.0)

The temple itself is conventional in its external design, meaning it conforms to what one would expect from a Classical Graeco-Roman structure. The four freestanding columns across the façade are complemented by engaged pilasters at the sides and back. What is a pilaster?



Figure **6.4.4**: Temple of Baalshamin, 1st century C.E. (Palmyra—in modern Syria) (photo: **Paul Kidd**, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0), CC BY 2.0)

The colonnaded precinct experienced several phases of development during the first century C.E. (prior to the addition of the current temple). By the time of the temple's construction, the colonnade had become a so-called Rhodian peristyle—meaning one flank was taller than the other three. The complex continued to develop across the course of the second century.

The temple itself adopts a Near Eastern motif of including a window in each of the cella's flanks, a trait that is not Graeco-Roman but that finds comparison in contemporary temples in Lebanon. These windows reflect the belief that the divinity dwelled in the temple.

Context

The Temple of Baalshamin in Palmyra is a rough contemporary of the Temple of Bacchus in Baalbek **(now in Lebanon)**. Although dissimilar in scale (the Temple of Bacchus is a monumental building), both show the contemporary propensity in Roman provincial architecture of using forecourts to frame sanctuaries, as well as showing the widespread use of the Corinthian order. This is one of a number of sanctuaries in the city that demonstrates the great wealth of the Palmyrenes. Palmyra and much of the Roman Near East was rich in cultural diversity, a diversity expressed in many ways, including by means of art and architecture.

***Note:** The Temple of Baalshamin was destroyed in 2015.

Additional resources:

Palmyra Temple Was Destroyed by ISIS, U.N. Confirms—*New York Times*
Palmyra's Baalshamin temple 'blown up by IS'—BBC News

Images taken from Robert Wood's *The Ruins of Palmyra, London, 1753

Plan of the site

UNESCO World Heritage List: Site of Palmyra

Palmyra, UNESCO (video)

Palmyra on The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

Trade Routes between Europe and Asia during Antiquity on The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

Palmyra photo album on Flickr from the Institute for the Study of the Ancient World

Paul Collart, "Reconstruction Du Thalamos Du Temple De Baalshamîn a Palmyre," *Revue Archéologique, Nouvelle Série*, Fasc. 2 (1970), pp. 323-327.

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A. M. Smith, II, *Roman Palmyra: Identity, Community, and State Formation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

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J. B. Ward-Perkins, *Roman Imperial Architecture* (Yale: Yale University Press, 1981).

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

7: Ancient Near East

Mesopotamia, the area between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers (in modern day Iraq), is often referred to as the Cradle of Civilization because it is one of the first places where complex urban centers grew.

c. 3500 - 400 B.C.E.

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7.6.4: Persepolis- The Audience Hall of Darius and Xerxes

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SECTION OVERVIEW

7.1: Sumerian

The region of southern Mesopotamia is known as Sumer, and it is in Sumer that we find some of the oldest known cities, including Ur and Uruk.

c. 4000 - 2339 B.C.E.

7.1.1: Sumer, an introduction

7.1.2: White Temple and ziggurat, Uruk

7.1.3: Archaeological reconstructions

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7.1.1: Sumer, an introduction

by DR. SENTA GERMAN

Sumer was home to some of the oldest known cities, supported by a focus on agriculture.

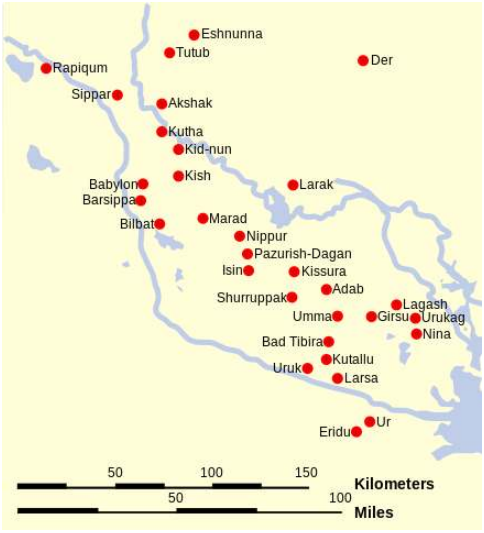


Figure 7.1.1.1: Cities of ancient Sumer, photo (CC BY 3.0)

The region of southern Mesopotamia is known as Sumer, and it is in Sumer that we find some of the oldest known cities, including Ur and Uruk.

Uruk

Prehistory ends with Uruk, where we find some of the earliest written records. This large city-state (and it environs) was largely dedicated to agriculture and eventually dominated southern Mesopotamia. Uruk perfected Mesopotamian irrigation and administration systems.

An agricultural theocracy

Within the city of Uruk, there was a large temple complex dedicated to Innana, the patron goddess of the city. The City-State's agricultural production would be "given" to her and stored at her temple. Harvested crops would then be processed (grain ground into flour, barley fermented into beer) and given back to the citizens of Uruk in equal share at regular intervals.

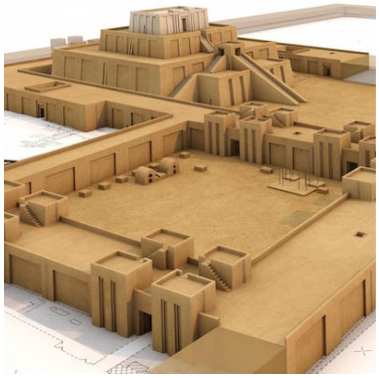


Figure 7.1.1.2: Reconstruction of the ziggurat at Uruk dedicated to the goddess Inanna (created by Artefacts/DAI, copyright DAI, CC-BY-NC-ND)

The head of the temple administration, the chief priest of Innana, also served as political leader, making Uruk the first known theocracy. We know many details about this theocratic administration because the Sumerians left numerous documents in the form of tablets written in cuneiform script.

It is almost impossible to imagine a time before writing. However, you might be disappointed to learn that writing was not invented to record stories, poetry, or prayers to a god. The first fully developed written script, cuneiform, was invented to account for something unglamorous, but very important—surplus commodities: bushels of barley, head of cattle, and jars of oil!

The origin of written language (c. 3200 B.C.E.) was born out of economic necessity and was a tool of the theocratic (priestly) ruling elite who needed to keep track of the agricultural wealth of the city-states. The last known document written in the cuneiform script dates to the first century C.E. Only the hieroglyphic script of the Ancient Egyptians lasted longer.



Figure **7.1.1.3**: Cuneiform tablet still in its clay case: legal case from Niqmepuh, King of Iamhad (Aleppo), 1720 B.C.E., 3.94 x 2″ (British Museum)

A reed and clay tablet

A single reed, cleanly cut from the banks of the Euphrates or Tigris river, when pressed cut-edge down into a soft clay tablet, will make a wedge shape. The arrangement of multiple wedge shapes (as few as two and as many as ten) created cuneiform characters. Characters could be written either horizontally or vertically, although a horizontal arrangement was more widely used.

Very few cuneiform signs have only one meaning; most have as many as four. Cuneiform signs could represent a whole word or an idea or a number. Most frequently though, they represented a syllable. A cuneiform syllable could be a vowel alone, a consonant plus a vowel, a vowel plus a consonant and even a consonant plus a vowel plus a consonant. There isn't a sound that a human mouth can make that this script can't record.

Probably because of this extraordinary flexibility, the range of languages that were written with cuneiform across history of the Ancient Near East is vast and includes Sumerian, Akkadian, Amorite, Hurrian, Urartian, Hittite, Luwian, Palaic, Hatian and Elamite.

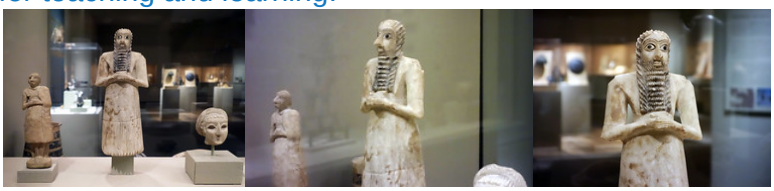
Additional resources

Short video from Artefacts about the reconstruction of the Ziggurat

Cylinder seals on The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

The Origins of Writing on The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

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7.1.2: White Temple and ziggurat, Uruk

by DR. SENTA GERMAN

A gleaming temple built atop a mud-brick platform, it towered above the flat plain of Uruk.



Figure **7.1.2.1**: Archaeological site at Uruk (modern Warka) in Iraq (photo: SAC Andy Holmes (RAF)/MOD, Open Government Licence v1.0)

Visible from a great distance

Uruk (modern Warka in Iraq)—where city life began more than five thousand years ago and where the first writing emerged—was clearly one of the most important places in southern Mesopotamia. Within Uruk, the greatest monument was the Anu Ziggurat on which the White Temple was built. Dating to the late 4th millennium B.C.E. (the Late Uruk Period, or Uruk III) and dedicated to the sky god Anu, this temple would have towered well above (approximately 40 feet) the flat plain of Uruk, and been visible from a great distance—even over the defensive walls of the city.

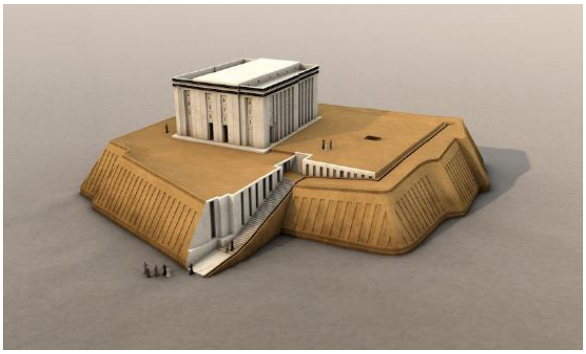


Figure **7.1.2.2**: Digital reconstruction of the White Temple and ziggurat, Uruk (modern Warka), c. 3517-3358 B.C.E. © **artefacts-berlin.de**; scientific material: German Archaeological Institute

Ziggurats

A ziggurat is a built raised platform with four sloping sides—like a chopped-off pyramid. Ziggurats are made of mud-bricks—the building material of choice in the Near East, as stone is rare. Ziggurats were not only a visual focal point of the city, they were a symbolic one, as well—they were at the heart of the theocratic political system (a theocracy is a type of government where a god is recognized as the ruler, and the state officials operate on the god's behalf). So, seeing the ziggurat towering above the city, one made a visual connection to the god or goddess honored there, but also recognized that deity's political authority.



Figure **7.1.2.3**: Remains of the Anu Ziggurat, Uruk (modern Warka), c. 3517-3358 B.C.E. (photo: **Geoff Emberling**, by permission)

Excavators of the White Temple estimate that it would have taken 1500 laborers working on average ten hours per day for about five years to build the last major revetment (stone facing) of its massive underlying terrace (the open areas surrounding the White Temple at the top of the ziggurat). Although religious belief may have inspired participation in such a project, no doubt some sort of force (*corvée* labor—unpaid labor coerced by the state/slavery) was involved as well.

The sides of the ziggurat were very broad and sloping but broken up by recessed stripes or bands from top to bottom (see digital reconstruction, above), which would have made a stunning pattern in morning or afternoon sunlight. The only way up to the top of the ziggurat was via a steep stairway that led to a ramp that wrapped around the north end of the Ziggurat and brought one to the temple entrance. The flat top of the ziggurat was coated with bitumen (asphalt—a tar or pitch-like material similar to what is used for road paving) and overlaid with brick, for a firm and waterproof foundation for the White temple. The temple gets its name for the fact that it was entirely white washed inside and out, which would have given it a dazzling brightness in strong sunlight.



Figure \(\PageIndex{4\): Digital reconstruction of the two-story version of the White Temple, Uruk (modern Warka), c, 3517-3358 B.C.E. © **artefacts-berlin.de**; scientific material: German Archaeological Institute

The White Temple

The White temple was rectangular, measuring 17.5 x 22.3 meters and, at its corners, oriented to the cardinal points. It is a typical Uruk “high temple (*Hochtempel*)” type with a tri-partite plan: a long rectangular central hall with rooms on either side (plan). The White Temple had three entrances, none of which faced the ziggurat ramp directly. Visitors would have needed to walk around the temple, appreciating its bright façade and the powerful view, and likely gained access to the interior in a “bent axis” approach (where one would have to turn 90 degrees to face the altar), a typical arrangement for Ancient Near Eastern temples.

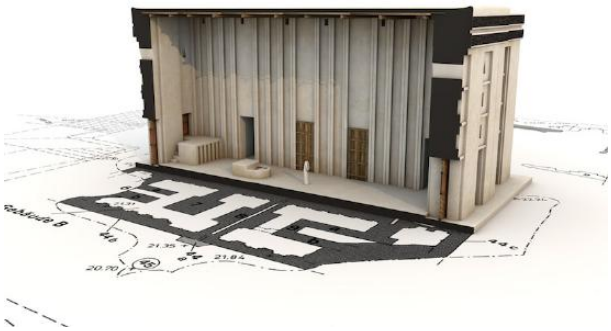


Figure 7.1.2.5: Section through the central hall of the "White Temple," digital reconstruction of the interior of the two-story version White Temple, Uruk (modern Warka), c, 3517-3358 B.C.E. © artefacts-berlin.de; scientific material: German Archaeological Institute

The north west and east corner chambers of the building contained staircases (unfinished in the case of the one at the north end). Chambers in the middle of the northeast room suite appear to have been equipped with wooden shelves in the walls and displayed cavities for setting in pivot stones which might imply a solid door was fitted in these spaces. The north end of the central hall had a podium accessible by means of a small staircase and an altar with a fire-stained surface. Very few objects were found inside the White Temple, although what has been found is very interesting. Archaeologists uncovered some 19 tablets of gypsum on the floor of the temple—all of which had cylinder seal impressions and reflected temple accounting. Also, archaeologists uncovered a foundation deposit of the bones of a leopard and a lion in the eastern corner of the Temple (foundation deposits, ritually buried objects and bones, are not uncommon in ancient architecture).



Figure 7.1.2.6: Interior view of the two-story version of the "White Temple," Digital reconstruction of the White Temple, Uruk (modern Warka), c, 3517-3358 B.C.E. © artefacts-berlin.de; scientific material: German Archaeological Institute

To the north of the White Temple there was a broad flat terrace, at the center of which archaeologists found a huge pit with traces of fire (2.2 x 2.7m) and a loop cut from a massive boulder. Most interestingly, a system of shallow bitumen-coated conduits were discovered. These ran from the southeast and southwest of the terrace edges and entered the temple through the southeast and southwest doors. Archaeologists conjecture that liquids would have flowed from the terrace to collect in a pit in the center hall of the temple.

Additional resources:

Uruk: 5000 year old mega-city (exhibition at the Pergamon Museum, Berlin)

The White Temple and Ziggurat on Art through Time

The White Temple from Artefacts, Berlin

U.S. Department of Defense, Cultural Property Training Resource on Uruk (Modern Warka)

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7.1.3: Archaeological reconstructions

by SEBASTIAN HAGENEUER

Reconstructions of ancient sites or finds can help us to understand the distant past. For non-academics, reconstructions offer a glimpse into that past, a kind of visual accumulation of scientific research communicated by means of images, models or even virtual reality. We see reconstructions in films, museums and magazines to illustrate the stories behind the historical or archaeological facts. For archaeologists like me however, reconstructions are also an important tool to answer unsolved questions and even raise new ones. One field where this is particularly true is the reconstruction of ancient architecture.

Early reconstructions

Since at least medieval times, artists created visual reconstructions drawn from the accounts of travelers or the Bible. Examples of this include the site of Stonehenge or the Tower of Babylon. Since the beginning of archaeology as a science in the mid-19th century, scientific reconstructions based on actual data were made. Of course, the earlier visualizations were more conjectural than later ones, due to the lack of comparable data at that time (for example, the image below).



Figure **7.1.3.1**: Reconstruction drawing of Nimrud, the site of an ancient Assyrian palace, by James Fergusson for Sir Henry Layard, published in 1853. The columns depicted here were never found. The reconstruction is clearly influenced by what was known at that time of Greco-Roman architecture and by John Martin's Fall of Nineveh (1829)

The three building blocks of reconstructions

Since the end of the 19th century, reconstruction drawings evolved to be less conjectural and increasingly based on actual archaeological data as these became available due to increased excavations. Today we can not only look at reconstructions, we can experience them—whether as life-sized physical models or as immersive virtual simulations. But how do we create them? What are they made of? Every reconstruction is basically composed of three building blocks: Primary Sources, Secondary Sources, and Guesswork.

The first step toward a good visualization is to become aware of the archaeological data, the excavated remains—simply everything that has survived. This data is referred to as the Primary Sources—this is the part of the reconstruction we are most certain about. Sometimes we have a lot that survives and sometimes we only have the basic layout of a ground plan (below).



Figure **7.1.3.2**: Remains of Building C in Uruk. Only a couple of mud-brick rows have survived to offer a basic ground plan. The building dates into the 4th millennium B.C.E. © German Archaeological Institute, Oriental Institute, W 10767, all rights reserved.

Even when the Primary Sources are utilized, we often have to fill the gaps with Secondary Sources. These sources are composed of architectural parallels, ancient depictions and descriptions, or ethno-archaeological data. So, for example in the case of the Building C in Uruk (above), we know through Primary Sources, that this building was made of mud-bricks (at least the first two rows). We then have to look at other buildings of that time to find out how they were built. In the example above, the layout of the ground-plan shows us that this building was tripartite—a layout well known from this and other sites. We also look at contemporary architecture to understand how mud-brick architecture functions and to find out what certain architectural details might mean. Unfortunately, we don't have any depictions or textual evidence that can help us with this example. Parallels from later times however show us that the unusual niches in the rooms suggest an important function.

After utilising all the primary and secondary sources, we still need to fill in the gaps. The third part of every reconstruction is simple Guesswork. We obviously need to limit that part as much as we can, but there is always some guesswork involved—no matter how much we research our building. For example, it is rather difficult to decide how high Building C was over 5000 years ago. We therefore have to make an educated guess based, for example, on the estimated length and inclination of staircases within the building. If we are lucky, we can use some primary or secondary sources for that too, but even then, in the end we need to make a subjective decision.

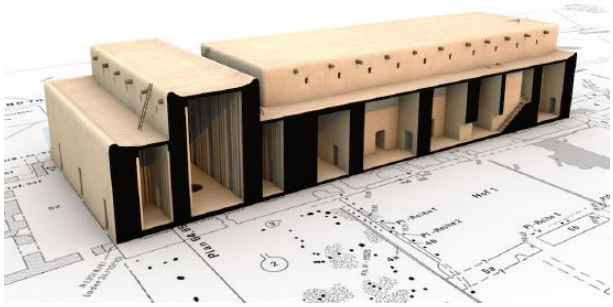


Figure **7.1.3.3**: Technical reconstruction of Building C in Uruk. The southwestern part of the building is artificially cut open so we can see the inside (for example, the staircase). © artefacts-berlin.de; Material: German Archaeological Institute

Reconstructions as a scholarly tool

Besides creating these reconstructions to display them in exhibitions, architectural models can also aid archaeological investigations. If we construct ancient architecture using the computer, we not only need to decide every aspect of that particular building, but also the relation to adjoining architecture. Sometimes, the process of reconstructing several buildings and thinking about their interdependence can reveal interesting connections, for example the complicated matter of water disposal off a roof.

These are only random examples, but clearly, the process of architectural reconstruction is a complex one. We, as the creators, need to make sure that the observer understands the problems and uncertainties of a particular reconstruction. It is essential that the viewer understands that these images are not 100% factual. As the archaeologist Simon James has put it: "Every reconstruction is wrong. The only real question is, how wrong is it?"

Additional resources:

ARTEFACTS: Scientific & Archaeological Reconstruction

Nicholas Stanley-Price, The Reconstruction of Ruins: Principles and Practice (2009)

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7.1.4: Warka Vase

by DR. SENTA GERMAN

One of the most precious artifacts from Sumer, the Warka Vase was looted and almost lost forever.



Figure **7.1.4.1**: Warka (Uruk) Vase, Uruk, Late Uruk period, c. 3500-3000 B.C.E., 105 cm high (National Museum of Iraq)

Picturing the ruler

So many important innovations and inventions emerged in the Ancient Near East during the Uruk period (c. 4000 to 3000 B.C.E. and named after the Sumerian city of Uruk). One of these was the use of art to illustrate the role of the ruler and his place in society. The *Warka Vase*, c. 3000 B.C.E., was discovered at Uruk (Warka is the modern name, Uruk the ancient name), and is probably the most famous example of this innovation. In its decoration we find an example of the cosmology of ancient Mesopotamia.



Figure **7.1.4.2**: Ancient Near Eastern sites (with the borders of modern countries and modern capitals)

The vase, made of alabaster and standing over three feet high (just about a meter) and weighing some 600 pounds (about 270 kg), was discovered in 1934 by German excavators working at Uruk in a ritual deposit (a burial undertaken as part of a ritual) in the temple of Inanna, the goddess of love, fertility, and war and the main patron of the city of Uruk. It was one of a pair of vases found in the Inanna temple complex (but the only one on which the image was still legible) together with other valuable objects.

Given the significant size of the Warka Vase, where it was found, the precious material from which it is carved and the complexity of its relief decoration, it was clearly of monumental importance, something to be admired and valued. Though known since its excavation as the Warka “Vase,” that term does little to express the sacredness of this object for the people who lived in Uruk five thousand years ago.



Figure **7.1.4.3**: Bottom bands (detail), *Warka (Uruk) Vase*, Uruk, Late Uruk period, c. 3500-3000 B.C.E. (National Museum of Iraq), photo: **Hirmer Verlag**

The relief carvings on the exterior of the vase run around its circumference in four parallel bands (or registers, as art historians like to call them) and develop in complexity from the bottom to the top.

Beginning at the bottom, we see a pair of wavy lines from which grow neatly alternating plants that appear to be grain (probably barley) and reeds, the two most important agricultural harvests of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in southern Mesopotamia. There is a satisfying rhythm to this alternation, and one that is echoed in the rhythm of the rams and ewes (male and female sheep) that alternate in the band above this. The sheep march to the right in tight formation, as if being herded—the method of tending this important livestock in the agrarian economy of the Uruk period.

The band above the sheep is a blank and might have featured painted decoration that has since faded away. Above this blank band, a group of nine identical men march to the left. Each holds a vessel in front of his face, and which appear to contain the products of the Mesopotamian agricultural system: fruits, grains, wine, and mead. The men are all naked and muscular and, like the sheep beneath them, are closely and evenly grouped, creating a sense of rhythmic activity. Nude figures in Ancient Near Eastern art are meant to be understood as humble and low status, so we can assume that these men are servants or slaves (the band above, displays the slave owners).



Figure **7.1.4.4**: Drawing, top register, *Warka (Uruk) Vase* (reconstructing some missing areas), by Jo Wood, after M. Roaf, from *Leaving No Stones Unturned: Essays on the Ancient Near East and Egypt in Honor of Donald P. Hansen* (Eisenbrauns, 2001), p. 17.

The top band of the vase is the largest, most complex, and least straightforward. It has suffered some damage but enough remains that the scene can be read. The center of the scene appears to depict a man and a woman who face each other. A smaller naked male stands between them holding a container of what looks like agricultural produce which he offers to the woman. The woman, identified as such by her robe and long hair, at one point had an elaborate crown on her head (this piece was broken off and repaired in antiquity).

Behind her are two reed bundles, symbols of the goddess Inanna, whom, it is assumed, the woman represents. The man she faces is nearly entirely broken off, and we are left with only the bottom of his long garment. However, men with similar robes are often found in contemporary seal stone engraving and based upon these, we can reconstruct him as a king with a long skirt, a beard and a

head band. The tassels of his skirt are held by another smaller scaled man behind him, a steward or attendant to the king, who wears a short skirt.



Figure **7.1.4.5**: Top band (detail), *Warka (Uruk) Vase*, Uruk, Late Uruk period, c. 3500-3000 B.C.E. (National Museum of Iraq), photo: **Hirmer Verlag**

The rest of the scene is found behind the reed bundles at the back of Inanna. There we find two horned and bearded rams (one directly behind the other, so the fact that there are two can only be seen by looking at the hooves) carrying platforms on their backs on which statues stand. The statue on the left carries the cuneiform sign for EN, the Sumerian word for chief priest. The statue on the right stands before yet another Inanna reed bundle. Behind the rams is an array of tribute gifts including two large vases which look quite a lot like the *Warka Vase* itself.



Figure **7.1.4.6**: Top band (detail), Relief-carved alabaster vessel called the Uruk Vase, Uruk, Late Uruk period, c. 3500-3000 B.C.E. (National Museum of Iraq), photo: **Hirmer Verlag**

What could this busy scene mean? The simplest way to interpret it is that a king (presumably of Uruk) is celebrating Inanna, the city's most important divine patron. A more detailed reading of the scene suggests a sacred marriage between the king, acting as the chief priest of the temple, and the goddess—each represented in person as well as in statues. Their union would guarantee for Uruk the agricultural abundance we see depicted behind the rams. The worship of Inanna by the king of Uruk dominates the decoration of the vase. The top illustrates how the cultic duties of the Mesopotamian king as chief priest of the goddess, put him in a position to be responsible for and proprietor of, the agricultural wealth of the city state.

Backstory

The *Warka Vase*, one of the most important objects in the Iraq National Museum in Baghdad, was stolen in April 2003 with thousands of other priceless ancient artifacts when the museum was looted in the immediate aftermath of the American invasion of Iraq in 2003. The *Warka Vase* was returned in June of that same year after an amnesty program was created to encourage the return of looted items. *The Guardian* reported that "The United States army ignored warnings from its own civilian advisers that could have stopped the looting of priceless artifacts in Baghdad…."



Figure 7.1.4.7: Broken-off foot of vase, tossed over, National Museum of Iraq, May 2003, photo: **Joanne Farchakh**

Even before the invasion, looting was a growing problem, due to economic uncertainty and widespread unemployment in the aftermath of the 1991 Gulf War. According to Dr. Neil Brodie, Senior Research Fellow on the Endangered Archaeology of the Middle East and North Africa project at the University of Oxford, "In the aftermath of that war…as the country descended into chaos, between 1991 and 1994 eleven regional museums were broken into and approximately 3,000 artifacts and 484 manuscripts were stolen…." The vast majority of these have not been returned. And, as Dr. Brodie notes, the most important question may be why no concerted international action was taken to block the sale of objects looted from archaeological sites and cultural institutions during wartime.

Read more about endangered cultural heritage in the Near East in Smarthistory's ARCHES (At Risk Cultural Heritage Education Series) section.

Additional resources:

Neil Brodie, "The market background to the April 2003 plunder of the Iraq National Museum," in P. Stone and J. Farchakh Bajjaly (eds), *The Destruction of Cultural Heritage in Iraq* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2008), pp. 41-54 (available online here).

Neil Brodie, "Iraq 1990–2004 and the London antiquities market," in N. Brodie, M. Kersel, C. Luke and K.W. Tubb (eds), *Archaeology, Cultural Heritage, and the Antiquities Trade* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2006), pp. 206–26 (available online here).

Neil Brodie, "Focus on Iraq: Spoils of War," *Archaeology* (from the Archaeological Institute of America), vol. 56, no. 4 (July/August 2003) (available online here).

On looting in Iraq from SAFE (Saving Antiquities for Everyone)

Documentation on this object in "Lost Treasures from Iraq" from the Oriental Institute in Chicago

Lauren Sandler, "The Thieves of Baghdad," *The Atlantic*, November 2004

On looting in Iraq from The Antiquities Coalition

Uruk: The First City on the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

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7.1.5: Standing Male Worshipper (Tell Asmar)

by DR. STEVEN ZUCKER *and* DR. BETH HARRIS

One of a group buried in a temple almost 5,000 years ago, this statue's job was to worship Abu—forever.



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7.1.6: Perforated Relief of Ur-Nanshe

by DR. SENTA GERMAN

More than 4,000 years ago, Ur-Nanshe, the chief priest and king, displayed his piety and power by building a temple.



Figure **7.1.6.1**: Perforated relief of Ur-Nanshe, king of Lagash, limestone, Early Third Dynasty (2550–2500 B.C.E.), found in Telloh or Tello (ancient city of Girsu). 15-¼ x 18-¼ inches / 39 x 46.5 cm (Musée du Louvre) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Archaeologists believe that the years 2800-2350 B.C.E. in Mesopotamia saw both increased population and a drier climate. This would have increased competition between city-states which would have vied for arable land.

As conflicts increased, the military leadership of temple administrators became more important. Art of this period emphasizes a new combination of piety and raw power in the representation of its leaders. In fact, the representation of human figures becomes more common and more detailed in this era.

This votive plaque, which would have been hung on the wall of a shrine through its central hole, illustrates the chief priest and king of Lagash, Ur-Nanshe, helping to build and then commemorate the opening of a temple of Ningirsu, the patron god of his city. The plaque was excavated at the Girsu. There is some evidence that Girsu was then the capital of the city-state of Lagash.



Figure **7.1.6.2**: Detail, *Perforated relief of Ur-Nanshe*, king of Lagash, limestone, Early Third Dynasty (2550–2500 B.C.E.), found in Telloh or Tello (ancient city of Girsu). 15-¼ x 18-¼ inches / 39 x 46.5 cm (Musée du Louvre) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

The top portion of the plaque depicts Ur-Nanshe helping to bring mud bricks to the building site accompanied by his wife and sons. The bottom shows Ur-Nanshe seated at a banquet, enjoying a drink, again accompanied by his sons. In both, he wears the traditional tufted woolen skirt called the kaunakes and shows off his broad muscular chest and arms.

Additional resources

This sculpture at the Louvre

Early Dynastic Sculpture 2900-1350 B.C.E. at The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

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7.1.7: Cylinder seals

by DR. SENTA GERMAN

Signed with a cylinder seal

Cuneiform was used for official accounting, governmental and theological pronouncements and a wide range of correspondence. Nearly all of these documents required a formal “signature,” the impression of a cylinder seal.

A cylinder seal is a small pierced object, like a long round bead, carved in reverse (intaglio) and hung on strings of fiber or leather. These often beautiful objects were ubiquitous in the Ancient Near East and remain a unique record of individuals from this era. Each seal was owned by one person and was used and held by them in particularly intimate ways, such as strung on a necklace or bracelet.

When a signature was required, the seal was taken out and rolled on the pliable clay document, leaving behind the positive impression of the reverse images carved into it. However, some seals were valued not for the impression they made, but instead, for the magic they were thought to possess or for their beauty.



Figure **7.1.7.1**: Cylinder Seal (with modern impression), royal worshipper before a god on a throne with bull’s legs; human-headed bulls below, c. 1820-1730 B.C.E. (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

The first use of cylinder seals in the Ancient Near East dates to earlier than the invention of cuneiform, to the Late Neolithic period (7600–6000 B.C.E.) in Syria. However, what is most remarkable about cylinder seals is their scale and the beauty of the semi-precious stones from which they were carved. The images and inscriptions on these stones can be measured in millimeters and feature incredible detail.

The stones from which the cylinder seals were carved include agate, chalcedony, lapis lazuli, steatite, limestone, marble, quartz, serpentine, hematite and jasper; for the most distinguished there were seals of gold and silver. To study Ancient Near Eastern cylinder seals is to enter a uniquely beautiful, personal and detailed miniature universe of the remote past, but one which was directly connected to a vast array of individual actions, both mundane and momentous.



Figure **7.1.7.2**: Cylinder Seal with Kneeling Nude Heroes, c. 2220-2159 B.C.E., Akkadian (Metropolitan Museum of Art) Cylinder Seal (with modern impression), showing Kneeling Nude Heroes, c. 2220-2159 B.C.E., Akkadian (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

Why cylinder seals are interesting

Art historians are particularly interested in cylinder seals for at least two reasons. First, it is believed that the images carved on seals accurately reflect the pervading artistic styles of the day and the particular region of their use. In other words, each seal is a small

time capsule of what sorts of motifs and styles were popular during the lifetime of the owner. These seals, which survive in great numbers, offer important information to understand the developing artistic styles of the Ancient Near East.

The second reason why art historians are interested in cylinder seals is because of the iconography (the study of the content of a work of art). Each character, gesture and decorative element can be “read” and reflected back on the owner of the seal, revealing his or her social rank and even sometimes the name of the owner. Although the same iconography found on seals can be found on carved stelae, terra cotta plaques, wall reliefs and paintings, its most complete compendium exists on the thousands of seals which have survived from antiquity.

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7.1.8: Standard of Ur

by THE BRITISH MUSEUM

Intentionally buried as part of an elaborate ritual, this ornate object tells us so much, but also too little.



The city of Ur

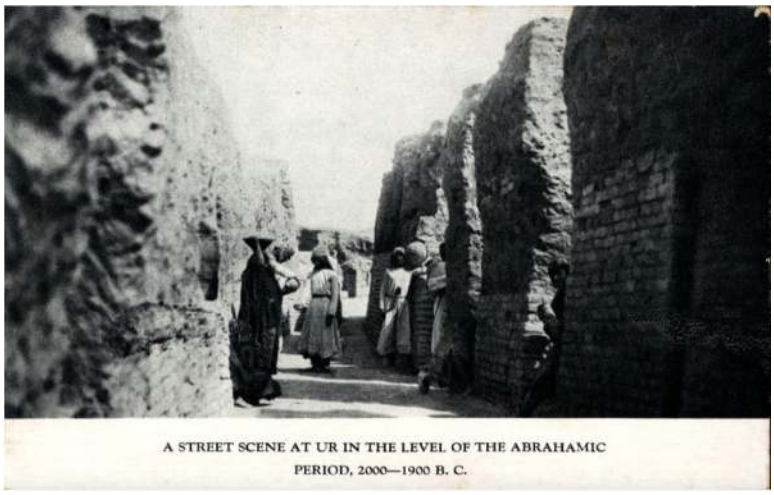


Figure \(\PageIndex{1}\): Postcard; printed; photograph showing archaeological excavations at Ur, with Arab workmen standing for scale in the excavated street of an early second millennium B.C.E. residential quarter © Trustees of the British Museum

Known today as Tell el-Muqayyar, the “Mound of Pitch,” the site was occupied from around 5000 B.C.E. to 300 B.C.E. Although Ur is famous as the home of the Old Testament patriarch Abraham (Genesis 11:29-32), there is no actual proof that Tell el-Muqayyar was identical with “Ur of the Chaldees.” In antiquity the city was known as Urim.

The main excavations at Ur were undertaken from 1922-34 by a joint expedition of The British Museum and the University Museum, Pennsylvania, led by Leonard Woolley. At the center of the settlement were mud brick temples dating back to the fourth millennium B.C.E. At the edge of the sacred area a cemetery grew up which included burials known today as the Royal Graves. An area of ordinary people’s houses was excavated in which a number of street corners have small shrines. But the largest surviving religious buildings, dedicated to the moon god Nanna, also include one of the best preserved ziggurats, and were founded in the period 2100-1800 B.C.E. For some of this time Ur was the capital of an empire stretching across southern Mesopotamia. Rulers of the later Kassite and Neo-Babylonian empires continued to build and rebuild at Ur. Changes in both the flow of the River Euphrates (now some ten miles to the east) and trade routes led to the eventual abandonment of the site.

The royal graves of Ur

Close to temple buildings at the center of the city of Ur, sat a rubbish dump built up over centuries. Unable to use the area for building, the people of Ur started to bury their dead there. The cemetery was used between about 2600-2000 B.C.E. and hundreds

of burials were made in pits. Many of these contained very rich materials.



Figure 7.1.8.2: Cylinder seal of Pu-abi, c. 2600 B.C.E., lapis lazuli, 4.9 x 2.6 cm, from Ur © Trustees of the British Museum

In one area of the cemetery a group of sixteen graves was dated to the mid-third millennium. These large, shaft graves were distinct from the surrounding burials and consisted of a tomb, made of stone, rubble and bricks, built at the bottom of a pit. The layout of the tombs varied, some occupied the entire floor of the pit and had multiple chambers. The most complete tomb discovered belonged to a lady identified as Pu-abi from the name carved on a cylinder seal found with the burial.

The majority of graves had been robbed in antiquity but where evidence survived the main burial was surrounded by many human bodies. One grave had up to seventy-four such sacrificial victims. It is evident that elaborate ceremonies took place as the pits were filled in that included more human burials and offerings of food and objects. The excavator, Leonard Woolley thought the graves belonged to kings and queens. Another suggestion is that they belonged to the high priestesses of Ur.

The *Standard of Ur*



Figure 7.1.8.3: Peace (detail), *The Standard of Ur*, 2600-2400 B.C.E., shell, red limestone, lapis lazuli, and bitumen (original wood no longer exists), 21.59 x 49.53 x 12 cm, Ur © Trustees of the British Museum

This object was found in one of the largest graves in the Royal Cemetery at Ur, lying in the corner of a chamber above the right shoulder of a man. Its original function is not yet understood.

Leonard Woolley, the excavator at Ur, imagined that it was carried on a pole as a standard, hence its common name. Another theory suggests that it formed the soundbox of a musical instrument.

When found, the original wooden frame for the mosaic of shell, red limestone and lapis lazuli had decayed, and the two main panels had been crushed together by the weight of the soil. The bitumen acting as glue had disintegrated and the end panels were broken. As a result, the present restoration is only a best guess as to how it originally appeared.



Figure 7.1.8.4: War (detail), *The Standard of Ur*, 2600-2400 B.C.E., shell, red limestone, lapis lazuli, and bitumen (original wood no longer exists), 21.59 x 49.53 x 12 cm, Ur © Trustees of the British Museum

The main panels are known as “War” and “Peace.” “War” shows one of the earliest representations of a Sumerian army. Chariots, each pulled by four donkeys, trample enemies; infantry with cloaks carry spears; enemy soldiers are killed with axes, others are paraded naked and presented to the king who holds a spear.

The “Peace” panel depicts animals, fish and other goods brought in procession to a banquet. Seated figures, wearing woolen fleeces or fringed skirts, drink to the accompaniment of a musician playing a lyre. Banquet scenes such as this are common on cylinder seals of the period, such as on the seal of the “Queen” Pu-abi, also in the British Museum (see image above).

Queen’s Lyre

Leonard Woolley discovered several lyres in the graves in the Royal Cemetery at Ur. This was one of two that he found in the grave of “Queen” Pu-abi. Along with the lyre, which stood against the pit wall, were the bodies of ten women with fine jewelry, presumed to be sacrificial victims, and numerous stone and metal vessels. One woman lay right against the lyre and, according to Woolley, the bones of her hands were placed where the strings would have been.



Figure 7.1.8.5: Queen’s Lyre (reconstruction), 2600 B.C.E., wooden parts, pegs and string are modern; lapis lazuli, shell and red limestone mosaic decoration, set in bitumen and the head (but not the horns) of the bull are ancient; the bull’s head in front of the sound box is covered with gold; the eyes are lapis lazuli and shell and the hair and beard are lapis lazuli; panel on front depicts lion-headed eagle between gazelles, bulls with plants on hills, a bull-man between leopards and a lion attacking a bull; edges of the sound-box are decorated with inlay bands; eleven gold-headed pegs for the strings, 112.5 x 73 x 7 cm (body), Ur © Trustees of the British Museum

The wooden parts of the lyre had decayed in the soil, but Woolley poured plaster of Paris into the depression left by the vanished wood and so preserved the decoration in place. The front panels are made of lapis lazuli, shell and red limestone originally set in bitumen. The gold mask of the bull decorating the front of the sounding box had been crushed and had to be restored. While the horns are modern, the beard, hair and eyes are original and made of lapis lazuli.

This musical instrument was originally reconstructed as part of a unique “harp-lyre,” together with a harp from the burial, now also in The British Museum. Later research showed that this was a mistake. A new reconstruction, based on excavation photographs, was made in 1971-72.

Suggested readings:

J. Aruz, *Art of the First Cities: The Third Millennium B.C. from the Mediterranean to the Indus* (New York, 2003).

D. Collon, *Ancient Near Eastern Art* (London, 1995).

H. Crawford, *Sumer and Sumerians* (Cambridge, 2004).

N. Postgate, *Early Mesopotamia: Society and Economy at the Dawn of History* (London, 1994).

M. Roaf, *Cultural atlas of Mesopotamia* (New York, 1990).

C.L. Woolley and P.R.S. Moorey, *Ur of the Chaldees, revised edition* (Ithaca, New York, Cornell University Press, 1982).

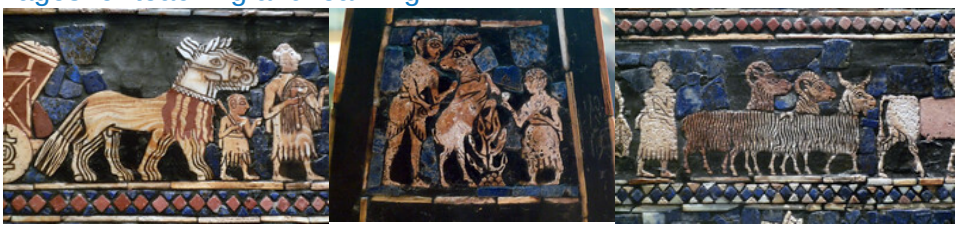
N. Yoffee, *Myths of the Archaic State: Evolution of the Earliest Cities, States, and Civilization* (Cambridge, 2005).

R. Zettler, and L. Horne, (eds.) *Treasures from the Royal Tomb at Ur* (Philadelphia, 1998).

Related objects in the collection of the British Museum

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7.1.9: New Page

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SECTION OVERVIEW

7.2: Akkadian

The Akkadian Empire was begun by Sargon, a man from a lowly family who rose to power and founded the royal city of Akkad (Akkad has not yet been located, though one theory puts it under modern Baghdad).

c. 2334 - 2193 B.C.E.

7.2.1: Akkad, an introduction

7.2.2: Victory Stele of Naram-Sin

7.2.3: Cylinder seal with a modern impression

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7.2.1: Akkad, an introduction

by DR. SENTA GERMAN

Founded by the famed Sargon the Great, Akkad was a powerful military empire.

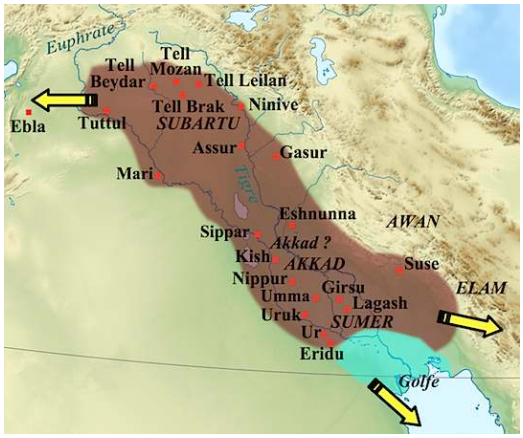


Figure **7.2.1.38**: Map showing the approximate extension of the Akkad empire during the reign of Narâm-Sîn, yellow arrows indicate the directions in which military campaigns were conducted, photo (CC BY-SA 3.0)

Akkad

Competition between Akkad in the north and Ur in the south created two centralized regional powers at the end of the third millennium (c. 2334–2193 B.C.E.).

This centralization was military in nature and the art of this period generally became more martial. The Akkadian Empire was begun by Sargon, a man from a lowly family who rose to power and founded the royal city of Akkad (Akkad has not yet been located, though one theory puts it under modern Baghdad).

Head of an Akkadian Ruler



Figure **7.2.1.39**: Head of Akkadian Ruler, 2250-2200 B.C.E. (Iraqi Museum, Baghdad – looted?)

This image of an unidentified Akkadian ruler (some say it is Sargon, but no one knows) is one of the most beautiful and terrifying images in all of Ancient Near Eastern art. The life-sized bronze head shows in sharp geometric clarity, locks of hair, curled lips and a wrinkled brow. Perhaps more awesome than the powerful and somber face of this ruler is the violent attack that mutilated it in antiquity.

Ur

The kingdom of Akkad ends with internal strife and invasion by the Gutians from the Zagros mountains to the northeast. The Gutians were ousted in turn and the city of Ur, south of Uruk, became dominant. King Ur-Nammu established the third dynasty of

Ur, also referred to as the Ur III period.

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7.2.2: Victory Stele of Naram-Sin

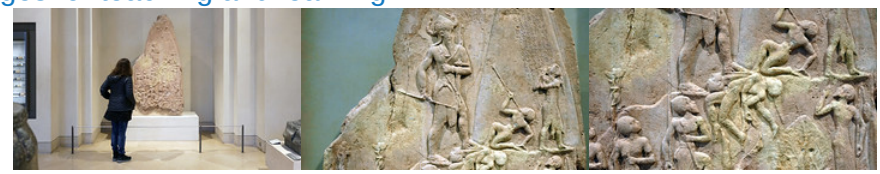
by DR. STEVEN ZUCKER *and* DR. BETH HARRIS

Naram-Sin leads his victorious army up a mountain, as vanquished Lullubi people fall before him.



This monument depicts the Akkadian victory over the Lullubi Mountain people. In the 12th century B.C.E., a thousand years after it was originally made, the Elamite king, Shutruk-Nahhunte, attacked Babylon and, according to his later inscription, the stele was taken to Susa in what is now Iran. A stele is a vertical stone monument or marker often inscribed with text or relief carving.

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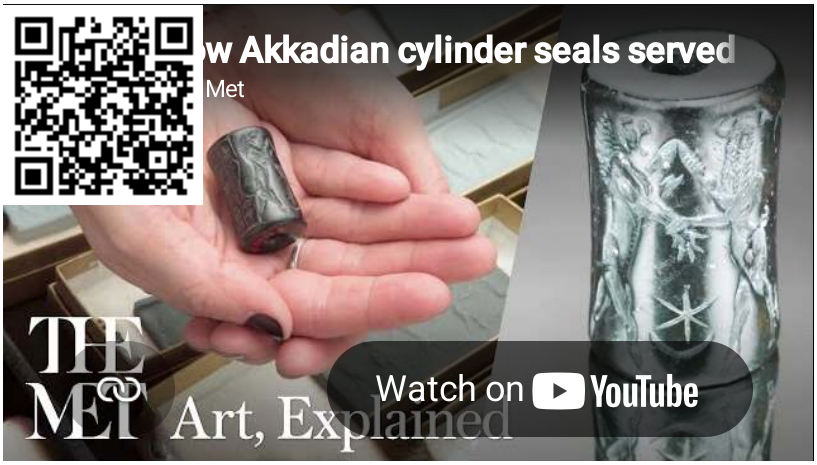
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7.2.3: Cylinder seal with a modern impression

by The Metropolitan Museum of Art

See an ancient cylinder seal used 4000 years after it was made, and learn about its dynastic symbolism.



Video **7.2.3.1**: Cylinder seal and modern impression: nude bearded hero wrestling with a water buffalo; bull-man wrestling with lion, c. 2250–2150 B.C.E., Akkadian, Serpentine, 1.42″ / 3.61 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art). Video from The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

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SECTION OVERVIEW

7.3: Neo-Sumerian/Ur III

7.3.1: Seated Gudea holding temple plan

7.3.2: Ziggurat of Ur

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7.3.1: Seated Gudea holding temple plan

by DR. STEVEN ZUCKER *and* DR. BETH HARRIS



Video **7.3.1.1**: Seated Gudea holding Temple Plan, known as “Architect with Plan,” c. 2100 B.C.E. (Neo-Sumerian/Ur III period), from Girsu (modern Telloh, Iraq), diorite, 93 x 41 x 61 cm (Musée du Louvre, Paris)

Additional resources

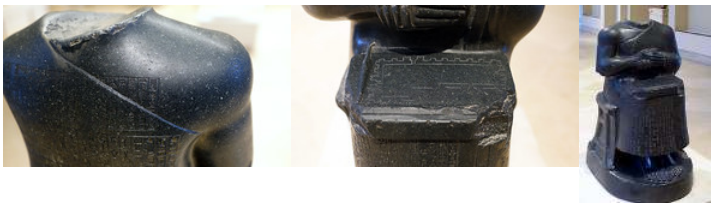
This sculpture at the Louvre

Translations of Gudea cylinders A and B

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7.3.2: Ziggurat of Ur

by DR. SENTA GERMAN

The great Ziggurat of Ur has been reconstructed twice, in antiquity and in the 1980s—what's left of the original?



Figure \(\PageIndex{1}\): Ziggurat of Ur, c. 2100 B.C.E. mud brick and baked brick, Tell el-Mukayyar, Iraq (largely reconstructed)

The Great Ziggurat

The ziggurat is the most distinctive architectural invention of the Ancient Near East. Like an ancient Egyptian pyramid, an ancient Near Eastern ziggurat has four sides and rises up to the realm of the gods. However, unlike Egyptian pyramids, the exterior of Ziggurats were not smooth but tiered to accommodate the work which took place at the structure as well as the administrative oversight and religious rituals essential to Ancient Near Eastern cities. Ziggurats are found scattered around what is today Iraq and Iran, and stand as an imposing testament to the power and skill of the ancient culture that produced them.

One of the largest and best-preserved ziggurats of Mesopotamia is the great Ziggurat at Ur. Small excavations occurred at the site around the turn of the twentieth century, and in the 1920s Sir Leonard Woolley, in a joint project with the University of Pennsylvania Museum in Philadelphia and the British Museum in London, revealed the monument in its entirety.



Figure **7.3.2.2**: Woolley photo of the Ziggurat of Ur with workers, Ziggurat of Ur, c. 2100 B.C.E., Woolley excavation workers (Tell el-Mukayyar, Iraq)

What Woolley found was a massive rectangular pyramidal structure, oriented to true North, 210 by 150 feet, constructed with three levels of terraces, standing originally between 70 and 100 feet high. Three monumental staircases led up to a gate at the first terrace level. Next, a single staircase rose to a second terrace which supported a platform on which a temple and the final and highest terrace stood. The core of the ziggurat is made of mud brick covered with baked bricks laid with bitumen, a naturally occurring tar. Each of the baked bricks measured about 11.5 x 11.5 x 2.75 inches and weighed as much as 33 pounds. The lower portion of the ziggurat, which supported the first terrace, would have used some 720,000 baked bricks. The resources needed to build the Ziggurat at Ur are staggering.

Moon goddess Nanna

The Ziggurat at Ur and the temple on its top were built around 2100 B.C.E. by the king Ur-Nammu of the Third Dynasty of Ur for the moon goddess Nanna, the divine patron of the city state. The structure would have been the highest point in the city by far and, like the spire of a medieval cathedral, would have been visible for miles around, a focal point for travelers and the pious alike. As the Ziggurat supported the temple of the patron god of the city of Ur, it is likely that it was the place where the citizens of Ur would bring agricultural surplus and where they would go to receive their regular food allotments. In antiquity, to visit the ziggurat at Ur was to seek both spiritual and physical nourishment.



Figure **7.3.2.3**: Ziggurat at Ali Air Base Iraq, 2005 Ziggurat of Ur, partly restored, c. 2100 B.C.E. mudbrick and baked brick Tell el-Mukayyar, Iraq

Clearly the most important part of the ziggurat at Ur was the Nanna temple at its top, but this, unfortunately, has not survived. Some blue glazed bricks have been found which archaeologists suspect might have been part of the temple decoration. The lower parts of the ziggurat, which do survive, include amazing details of engineering and design. For instance, because the unbaked mud brick core of the temple would, according to the season, be alternatively more or less damp, the architects included holes through the baked exterior layer of the temple allowing water to evaporate from its core. Additionally, drains were built into the ziggurat's terraces to carry away the winter rains.

Hussein's assumption



Figure **7.3.2.4**: US soldiers decend the Ziggurat of Ur, Tell el-Mukayyar, Iraq (public domain)

The Ziggurat at Ur has been restored twice. The first restoration was in antiquity. The last Neo-Babylonian king, Nabodinus, apparently replaced the two upper terraces of the structure in the 6th century B.C.E. Some 2400 years later in the 1980s, Saddam Hussein restored the façade of the massive lower foundation of the ziggurat, including the three monumental staircases leading up to the gate at the first terrace. Since this most recent restoration, however, the Ziggurat at Ur has experienced some damage. During the recent war led by American and coalition forces, Saddam Hussein parked his MiG fighter jets next to the Ziggurat, believing

that the bombers would spare them for fear of destroying the ancient site. Hussein's assumptions proved only partially true as the ziggurat sustained some damage from American and coalition bombardment.

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SECTION OVERVIEW

7.4: Babylonian

The city of Babylon on the River Euphrates in southern Iraq first came to prominence as the royal city of King Hammurabi, and then again during the Neo-Babylonian Empire.

c. 1850 B.C.E. - 539 B.C.E.

7.4.1: Babylonia, an introduction

7.4.2: Visiting Babylon

7.4.3: The Babylonian mind

7.4.4: Law Code Stele of King Hammurabi

7.4.5: The Ishtar Gate and Neo-Babylonian art and architecture

7.4.6: Towers of Babel

7.4.7: Kassite art- Unfinished Kudurru

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7.4.1: Babylonia, an introduction

by THE BRITISH MUSEUM

On the River Euphrates

The city of Babylon on the River Euphrates in southern Iraq is mentioned in documents of the late third millennium B.C.E. and first came to prominence as the royal city of King Hammurabi (about 1790-1750 B.C.E.). He established control over many other kingdoms stretching from the Persian Gulf to Syria. The British Museum holds one of the iconic artworks of this period, the so-called “Queen of the Night.”

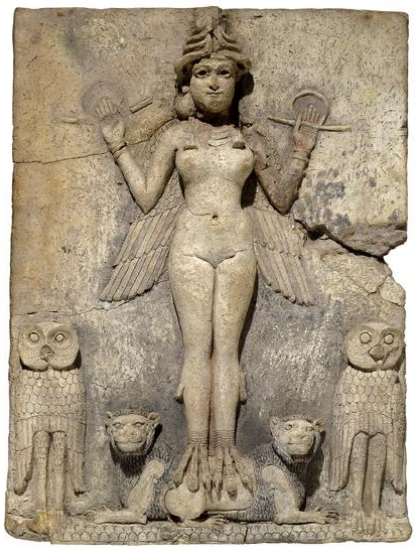


Figure **7.4.1.1**: The “Queen of the Night” Relief, 1800-1750 B.C.E., Old Babylonian, baked straw-tempered clay, 49 x 37 x 4.8 cm
© Trustees of the British Museum

From around 1500 B.C.E. a dynasty of Kassite kings took control in Babylon and unified southern Iraq into the kingdom of Babylonia. The Babylonian cities were the centers of great scribal learning and produced writings on divination, astrology, medicine and mathematics. The Kassite kings corresponded with the Egyptian Pharaohs as revealed by cuneiform letters found at Amarna in Egypt, now in the British Museum.

Babylonia had an uneasy relationship with its northern neighbor Assyria and opposed its military expansion. In 689 B.C.E. Babylon was sacked by the Assyrians but as the city was highly regarded it was restored to its former status soon after. Other Babylonian cities also flourished; scribes in the city of Sippar probably produced the famous “Map of the World” (see image below).

Babylonian kings

After 612 B.C.E. the Babylonian kings Nabopolassar and Nebuchadnezzar II were able to claim much of the Assyrian empire and rebuilt Babylon on a grand scale. Nebuchadnezzar II rebuilt Babylon in the sixth century B.C.E. and it became the largest ancient settlement in Mesopotamia. There were two sets of fortified walls and massive palaces and religious buildings, including the central ziggurat tower. Nebuchadnezzar is also credited with the construction of the famous “Hanging Gardens.” However, the last Babylonian king Nabonidus (555-539 B.C.E.) was defeated by Cyrus II of Persia and the country was incorporated into the vast Achaemenid Persian Empire.



Figure **7.4.1.2**: Map of the World, Babylonian, c. 700-500 B.C.E., clay, 12.2 x 8.2 cm, probably from Sippar, southern Iraq © Trustees of the British Museum

Babylon remained an important center until the third century B.C.E., when Seleucia-on-the-Tigris was founded about ninety kilometers to the north-east. Under Antiochus I (281-261 B.C.E.) the new settlement became the official Royal City and the civilian population was ordered to move there. Nonetheless a village existed on the old city site until the eleventh century AD. Babylon was excavated by Robert Koldewey between 1899 and 1917 on behalf of the Deutsche Orient-Gesellschaft. Since 1958 the Iraq Directorate-General of Antiquities has carried out further investigations. Unfortunately, the earlier levels are inaccessible beneath the high water table. Since 2003, our attention has been drawn to new threats to the archaeology of Mesopotamia, modern day Iraq.

For two thousand years the myth of Babylon has haunted the European imagination. The Tower of Babel and the Hanging Gardens, Belshazzar's Feast and the Fall of Babylon have inspired artists, writers, poets, philosophers and film makers.

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7.4.2: Visiting Babylon

by Dr. Beth Harris, Lisa Ackerman and World Monuments Fund

Even today with international tourism waning in the face of military threats, Iraqis regularly visit this famous site.



Video **7.4.2.1**: This video was produced in cooperation with the World Monuments Fund.

Additional resources:

New York Times article on how the World Monuments Fund and CyArk are using laser technology to digitally preserve monuments in the Near East (December 29, 2015)

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7.4.3: The Babylonian mind

by THE BRITISH MUSEUM

What do the 60-minute clock and the zodiac have in common? The answer lies in ancient Babylon.



Video **7.4.3.1**: Video from The British Museum.

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7.4.4: Law Code Stele of King Hammurabi

by DR. SENTA GERMAN

Law is at the heart of modern civilization, and is often based on principles listed here nearly 4,000 years ago.



A stele is a vertical stone monument or marker often inscribed with text or with relief carving.



Figure **7.4.4.1**: *Law Code Stele of King Hammurabi*, basalt, Babylonian, 1792–50 B.C.E. (Musée du Louvre, Paris)

Hammurabi of the city state of Babylon conquered much of northern and western Mesopotamia and by 1776 B.C.E., he is the most far-reaching leader of Mesopotamian history, describing himself as “the king who made the four quarters of the earth obedient.” Documents show Hammurabi was a classic micro-manager, concerned with all aspects of his rule, and this is seen in his famous legal code, which survives in partial copies on this stele in the Louvre and on clay tablets (a stele is a vertical stone monument or marker often inscribed with text or with relief carving). We can also view this as a monument presenting Hammurabi as an exemplary king of justice.

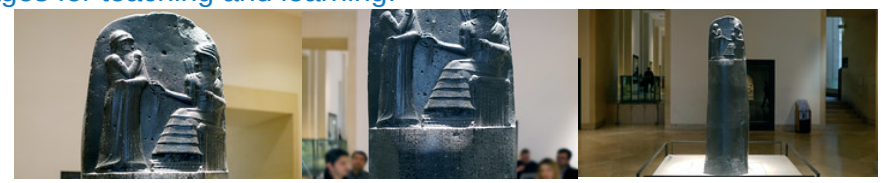
What is interesting about the representation of Hammurabi on the legal code stele is that he is seen as receiving the laws from the god Shamash, who is seated, complete with thunderbolts coming from his shoulders. The emphasis here is Hammurabi’s role as pious theocrat, and that the laws themselves come from the god.

Additional resources:

Feature from the Louvre on the Stele

This work at the Louvre

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Figure **7.4.4.49**: More Smarthistory images…

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7.4.5: The Ishtar Gate and Neo-Babylonian art and architecture

DR. SENTA GERMAN

“I, Nebuchadnezzar … magnificently adorned them with luxurious splendor for all mankind to behold in awe.”



Video **7.4.5.1**: Reconstruction of the Ishtar Gate and Processional Way, Babylon, c. 575 B.C.E., glazed mud brick (Pergamon Museum, Berlin)

The chronology of Mesopotamia is complicated. Scholars refer to places (Sumer, for example) and peoples (the Babylonians), but also empires (Babylonia) and unfortunately for students of the Ancient Near East these organizing principles do not always agree. The result is that we might, for example, speak of the very ancient Babylonians starting in the 1800s B.C.E. and then also the Neo-Babylonians more than a thousand years later. What came in between you ask? Well, quite a lot, but mostly the Kassites and the Assyrians.

The Assyrian Empire which had dominated the Near East came to an end at around 600 B.C.E. due to a number of factors including military pressure by the Medes (a pastoral mountain people, again from the Zagros mountain range), the Babylonians, and possibly also civil war.

A Neo-Babylonian dynasty

The Babylonians rose to power in the late 7th century and were heirs to the urban traditions which had long existed in southern Mesopotamia. They eventually ruled an empire as dominant in the Near East as that held by the Assyrians before them.

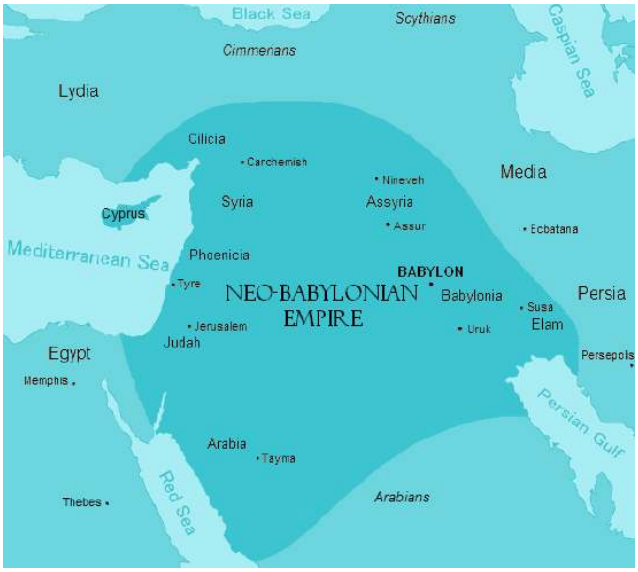


Figure **7.4.5.2**: Map of the Neo-Babylonian Empire

This period is called Neo-Babylonian (or new Babylonia) because Babylon had also risen to power earlier and became an independent city-state, most famously during the reign of King Hammurabi (1792-1750 B.C.E.).

In the art of the Neo-Babylonian Empire we see an effort to invoke the styles and iconography of the 3rd millennium rulers of Babylonia. In fact, one Neo-Babylonian king, Nabonidus, found a statue of Sargon of Akkad, set it in a temple and provided it with regular offerings.

Architecture

The Neo-Babylonians are most famous for their architecture, notably at their capital city, Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar (604-561 B.C.E.) largely rebuilt this ancient city including its walls and seven gates. It is also during this era that Nebuchadnezzar purportedly built the “Hanging Gardens of Babylon” for his wife because she missed the gardens of her homeland in Media (modern day Iran). Though mentioned by ancient Greek and Roman writers, the “Hanging Gardens” may, in fact, be legendary.

The Ishtar Gate (today in the Pergamon Museum in Berlin) was the most elaborate of the inner city gates constructed in Babylon in antiquity. The whole gate was covered in lapis lazuli glazed bricks which would have rendered the façade with a jewel-like shine. Alternating rows of lion and cattle march in a relief procession across the gleaming blue surface of the gate.

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7.4.6: Towers of Babel

by THE BRITISH MUSEUM

Artists have depicted the Tower of Babel throughout the ages, a symbol of the extraordinary—but it did exist.



Video **7.4.6.1**: Video from The British Museum.

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7.4.7: Kassite art- Unfinished Kudurru

by DR. SENTA GERMAN

The Kassites controlled Babylonia for 400 years—now all that remains are these carved boundary stones.



Figure **7.4.7.1**: Top level: Mesopotamian Gods in symbolic form, second level: animals and deities playing musical instruments (detail), "Unfinished" Kudurru, Kassite period, attributed to the reign of Melishipak, 1186–1172 B.C.E., found in Susa, where it had been taken as war booty in the 12th c. B.C.E. (Louvre) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Artistic exchange

During the 2nd millennium, the region of Mesopotamia, with Assyria in the north and Babylonia in the south, together with Egypt and the Hittite lands in what is now modern Turkey, grew strong and exercised surprisingly harmonious political relations.



Figure **7.4.7.2**: Map of Kassite Babylonia (photo: **MapMaster**, CC: BY-SA 3.0)

For art, this meant an easy exchange of ideas and techniques, and surviving texts reflect the development of "guilds" of craftsmen, such as jewelers, scribes and architects.

Babylonia at this time was held by the Kassites, originally from the Zagros mountains to the north, who sought to imitate Mesopotamian styles of art. Kudurru (boundary markers) are the only significant remains of the Kassites, many of which show Kassite gods and activities translated into the visual style of Mesopotamia.

Combining cultures

This Kudurru, considered unfinished because it lacks an inscription, would have marked the boundary of a plot of land, and probably would have listed the owner and even the person to whom the land was leased.



Figure 7.4.7.3: “Unfinished” Kudurru, Kassite period, attributed to the reign of Melishipak, 1186–1172 B.C.E., found in Susa, where it had been taken as war booty in the 12th century B.C.E. (Louvre) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Although an object made and intended for Kassite use, it bears Babylonian style and imagery, especially the multiple strips or registers of characters and the stately procession of gods and lions.



Figure 7.4.7.4: Animals and deities playing musical instruments (detail), “Unfinished” Kudurru, Kassite period, attributed to the reign of Melishipak, 1186–1172 B.C.E., found in Susa, where it had been taken as war booty in the 12th century B.C.E. (Louvre) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

The Kassites eventually succumbed to the general collapse of Mesopotamia around 1200 B.C.E. This regional collapse affected states as far away as mainland Greece, and as great as Egypt. This is a period characterized by famine, widespread political instability, roving mercenaries and, most likely, plague. It is often referred to as the first Dark Ages.

Additional resources:

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SECTION OVERVIEW

7.5: Assyrian

The Assyrian empire dominated Mesopotamia and all of the Near East for the first half of the first millennium.

1365 - 609 B.C.E.

7.5.1: Assyria, an introduction

7.5.2: Assyrian Sculpture

7.5.3: Lamassu from the citadel of Sargon II

7.5.4: Ashurbanipal Hunting Lions

7.5.5: The palace decoration of Ashurbanipal

7.5.6: Assyria vs Elam- The battle of Til Tuba

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7.5.1: Assyria, an introduction

by DR. SENTA GERMAN

Led by aggressive warrior kings, Assyria dominated the fertile crescent for half a millennia, amassing vast wealth.



Figure **7.5.1.1**: Map of the Neo-Assyrian Empire and its expansions.

A military culture

The Assyrian empire dominated Mesopotamia and all of the Near East for the first half of the first millennium B.C.E., led by a series of highly ambitious and aggressive warrior kings. Assyrian society was entirely military, with men obliged to fight in the army at any time. State offices were also under the purview of the military.



Figure **7.5.1.2**: Ashurbanipal slitting the throat of a lion from his chariot (detail), Ashurbanipal Hunting Lions, gypsum hall relief from the North Palace, Ninevah, c. 645-635 B.C.E., excavated by H. Rassam beginning in 1853 (British Museum) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Indeed, the culture of the Assyrians was brutal, the army seldom marching on the battlefield but rather terrorizing opponents into submission who, once conquered, were tortured, raped, beheaded, and flayed with their corpses publicly displayed. The Assyrians torched enemies' houses, salted their fields, and cut down their orchards.

Luxurious palaces

As a result of these fierce and successful military campaigns, the Assyrians acquired massive resources from all over the Near East which made the Assyrian kings very rich. The palaces were on an entirely new scale of size and glamour; one contemporary text

describes the inauguration of the palace of Kalhu, built by Assurnasirpal II (who reigned in the early 9th century), to which almost 70,000 people were invited to banquet.



Figure **7.5.1.3**: Lion pierced with arrows (detail), Lion Hunts of Ashurbanipal (ruled 669-630 B.C.E.), c. 645 B.C.E., gypsum,Neo-Assyrian, hall reliefs from Palace at Ninevah across the Tigris from present day Mosul, Iraq (British Museum) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Some of this wealth was spent on the construction of several gigantic and luxurious palaces spread throughout the region. The interior public reception rooms of Assyrian palaces were lined with large scale carved limestone reliefs which offer beautiful and terrifying images of the power and wealth of the Assyrian kings and some of the most beautiful and captivating images in all of ancient Near Eastern art.



Video **7.5.1.1**: This silent video reconstructs the Northwest Palace of Ashurnasirpal II at Nimrud (near modern Mosul in northern Iraq) as it would have appeared during his reign in the ninth century B.C.E. The video moves from the outer courtyards of the palace into the throne room and beyond into more private spaces, perhaps used for rituals.(Video from **The Metropolitan Museum of Art**). **According to news sources, this important archaeological site was destroyed with bulldozers in March 2015 by the militants who occupy large portions of Syria and Iraq.**

Feats of bravery



Figure 7.5.1.4: Ashurbanipal taking aim at a lion (detail), Lion Hunts of Ashurbanipal (ruled 669-630 B.C.E.), c. 645 B.C.E., gypsum,Neo-Assyrian, hall reliefs from Palace at Ninevah across the Tigris from present day Mosul, Iraq (British Museum)

Like all Assyrian kings, Ashurbanipal decorated the public walls of his palace with images of himself performing great feats of bravery, strength and skill. Among these he included a lion hunt in which we see him coolly taking aim at a lion in front of his charging chariot, while his assistants fend off another lion attacking at the rear.

The destruction of Susa

One of the accomplishments Ashurbanipal was most proud of was the total destruction of the city of Susa.



Figure 7.5.1.5: Sacking of Susa by Ashurbanipal, North Palace, Nineveh, 647 B.C.E.

In this relief, we see Ashurbanipal's troops destroying the walls of Susa with picks and hammers while fire rages within the walls of the city.



Figure 7.5.1.6: Wall relief from Nimrud, the sieging of a city, likely in Mesopotamia, c. 728 B.C.E. (British Museum)

In the Central Palace at Nimrud, the Neo-Assyrian king Tiglath-pileser III illustrates his military victories and exploits, including the siege of a city in great detail.

In this scene we see one soldier holding a large screen to protect two archers who are taking aim. The topography includes three different trees and a roaring river, most likely setting the scene in and around the Tigris or Euphrates rivers.

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7.5.2: Assyrian Sculpture

Assyrian Sculpture

by The British Museum and Arathi.Menon

Leveraging their enormous wealth, the Assyrians built great temples and palaces full of art, all paid for by conquest.



Figure 7.5.2.7: Protective Spirit Relief from the North-West Palace of Ashurnasirpal II, 883-859 B.C.E., Neo-Assyrian, alabaster, 224 x 127 x 12 cm (extant), Nimrud (ancient Kalhu), northern Iraq © Trustees of the British Museum. One of a pair which guarded an entrance into the private apartments of Ashurnasirpal II. The figure of a man with wings may be the supernatural creature called an apkallu in cuneiform texts. He wears a tasselled kilt and a fringed and embroidered robe. His curled moustache, long hair and beard are typical of figures of this date. Across the body runs Ashurnasirpal's "Standard Inscription," which records some of the king's titles.

Although Assyrian civilization, centred in the fertile Tigris valley of northern Iraq, can be traced back to at least the third millennium B.C.E., some of its most spectacular remains date to the first millennium B.C.E. when Assyria dominated the Middle East.

Ashurnasirpal II

The Assyrian king Ashurnasirpal II (883-859 B.C.E.) established Nimrud as his capital. Many of the principal rooms and courtyards of his palace were decorated with gypsum slabs carved in relief with images of the king as high priest and as victorious hunter and warrior. Many of these are displayed in the British Museum.



Figure **7.5.2.8**: Statue of Ashurnasirpal II, Neo-Assyrian, 883-859 B.C.E., from Nimrud (ancient Kalhu), northern Iraq, magnesite, 113 x 32 x 15 cm (The British Museum) This rare example of an Assyrian statue in the round was placed in the Temple of Ishtar Sharrat-niphi to remind the goddess Ishtar of the king's piety. Ashurnasirpal holds a sickle in his right hand, of a kind which gods are sometimes depicted using to fight monsters. The mace in his left hand shows his authority as vice-regent of the supreme god Ashur. The carved cuneiform inscription across his chest proclaims the king's titles and genealogy, and mentions his expedition westward to the Mediterranean Sea.

Ashurnasirpal II, whose name (Ashur-nasir-apli) means, "the god Ashur is the protector of the heir," came to the Assyrian throne in 883 B.C.E. He was one of a line of energetic kings whose campaigns brought Assyria great wealth and established it as one of the Near East's major powers.

Ashurnasirpal mounted at least fourteen military campaigns, many of which were to the north and east of Assyria. Local rulers sent the king rich presents and resources flowed into the country. This wealth was use to undertake impressive building campaigns in a new capital city created at Kalhu (modern Nimrud). Here, a citadel mound was constructed and crowned with temples and the so-called North-West Palace. Military successes led to further campaigns, this time to the west, and close links were established with states in the northern Levant. Fortresses were established on the rivers Tigris and Euphrates and staffed with garrisons.

By the time Ashurnasirpal died in 859 B.C.E., Assyria had recovered much of the territory that it had lost around 1100 B.C.E. as a result of the economic and political problems at the end of the Middle Assyrian period.



Figure 7.5.2.9: The Siege and Capture of the City of Lachish in 701 B.C.E., panel 8-9, South-West Palace of Sennacherib, Nineveh, northern Iraq, Neo-Assyrian, c. 700-681 B.C.E., alabaster, 182.880 x 193.040 cm (The British Museum) Part of a series which decorated the walls of a room in the palace of King Sennacherib (reigned 704-681 B.C.E.). The Assyrian soldiers continue the attack on Lachish. They carry away a throne, a chariot and other goods from the palace of the governor of the city. In front and below them some of the people of Lachish, carrying what goods they can salvage, move through a rocky landscape studded with vines, fig and perhaps olive trees. Sennacherib records that as a result of the whole campaign he deported 200,150 people. This was standard Assyrian policy, and was adopted by the Babylonians, the next ruling empire.

Later kings continued to embellish Nimrud, including Ashurnasirpal II's son, Shalmaneser III who erected the Black Obelisk depicting the presentation of tribute from Israel.



Figure 7.5.2.10: The Dying Lion, panel from the North Palace of Ashurbanipal, c. 645 B.C.E., Neo-Assyrian, alabaster, 16.5 x 30 cm, Nineveh, northern Iraq © Trustees of the British Museum. Part of a series of wall panels that showed a royal hunt. Struck by one of the king's arrows, blood gushes from the lion's mouth. There was a very long tradition of royal lion hunts in Mesopotamia, with similar scenes known from the late fourth millennium B.C.E.

During the eighth and seventh centuries B.C.E. Assyrian kings conquered the region from the Persian Gulf to the borders of Egypt. The most ambitious building of this period was the palace of king Sennacherib (704-681 B.C.E.) at Nineveh. The reliefs from Nineveh in the British Museum include a depiction of the siege and capture of Lachish in Judah.

The finest carvings, however, are the famous lion hunt reliefs from the North Palace at Nineveh belonging to Ashurbanipal (668-631 B.C.E.). The scenes were originally picked out with paint, which occasionally survives, and work like modern comic books, starting the story at one end and following it along the walls to the conclusion.

The Assyrians used a form of gypsum for the reliefs and carved it using iron and copper tools. The stone is easily eroded when exposed to wind and rain and when it was used outside, the reliefs are presumed to have been protected by varnish or paint. It is possible that this form of decoration was adopted by Assyrian kings following their campaigns to the west, where stone reliefs were used in Neo-Hittite cities like Carchemish. The Assyrian reliefs were part of a wider decorative scheme which also included wall paintings and glazed bricks.

The reliefs were first used extensively by king Ashurnasirpal II (about 883-859 B.CE..) at Kalhu (Nimrud). This tradition was maintained in the royal buildings in the later capital cities of Khorsabad and Nineveh.

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7.5.3: Lamassu from the citadel of Sargon II

by DR. STEVEN ZUCKER *and* DR. BETH HARRIS

Winged, human-headed bulls served as guardians of the city and its palace—walking by, they almost seem to move.



These sculptures were excavated by P.-E. Botta in 1843-44.

Backstory

The lamassu in museums today (including the Louvre, shown in our video, as well the British Museum, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, and National Museum of Iraq in Baghdad, and others) came from various ancient Assyrian sites located in modern-day Iraq. They were moved to their current institutional homes by archaeologists who excavated these sites in the mid-19th century. However, many ancient Assyrian cities and palaces—and their gates, with intact lamassu figures and other sculptures—remain as important archaeological sites in their original locations in Iraq.

In 2015, a chilling video circulated online, showed people associated with ISIS destroying ancient artifacts in both the museum in Mosul, Iraq and at the nearby ancient archaeological site of ancient Nineveh. Their targets included the lamassu figures that stood at one of the many ceremonial gates to this important ancient Assyrian city. Scholars believe that this particular gate, which dates to the reign of Sennacherib around 700 B.C.E., was built to honor the god Nergal, an Assyrian god of war and plague who ruled over the underworld. Islamic State representatives claimed that these statues were "idols" that needed to be destroyed. The video features footage of men using jackhammers, drills, and sledgehammers to demolish the lamassu.

The Nergal gate is only one of many artifacts and sites that have been demolished or destroyed by ISIS over the past decade. Despite the existence of other examples in museums around the world, the permanent loss of these objects is a permanent loss to global cultural heritage and to the study of ancient Assyrian art and architecture.

Backstory by Dr. Naraelle Hohensee

Additional resources:

"Historians Pore Over ISIS Video of Smashed Statues for Clues to What's Been Lost," *The New York Times*, February 26, 2015.

"ISIS Destroys Mosul Museum Collection and Ancient Assyrian Statues," *Hyperallergic*, February 26, 2015.

"Isis fighters destroy ancient artefacts at Mosul museum," *The Guardian*, February 26, 2015.

"ISIS has turned the destruction of ancient artifacts into entertainment," *Los Angeles Times*, February 27, 2015.

P. G. Finch, "The Winged Bulls at the Nergal Gate of Nineveh," *Iraq*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (Spring, 1948), pp. 9-18 (read for free online via JSTOR)

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Figure **7.5.3.67**: More Smarthistory images…

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7.5.4: Ashurbanipal Hunting Lions

by DR. STEVEN ZUCKER *and* DR. BETH HARRIS

Only the king was permitted to kill lions—and doing so signified his power and ability to keep nature at bay.



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Figure 7.5.4.68: More Smarthistory images…

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7.5.5: The palace decoration of Ashurbanipal

by THE BRITISH MUSEUM



Video **7.5.5.1**

Ashurbanipal wasn't just an Assyrian king, he was a propaganda king. The layout, decorations and even the landscaping of his palaces were all made to point to one major fact – he was more powerful than you.

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7.5.6: Assyria vs Elam- The battle of Til Tuba

by THE BRITISH MUSEUM

Reading Assyrian art isn't easy — but it's always worth it.



Video **7.5.6.1**

The battle of Til Tuba reliefs are among some of the great masterpieces of ancient Assyrian art. The movement and details are truly stunning. That said, the scenes actually being depicted are anything but easy on the eye.

Join curator Gareth Brereton as he walks you through the reliefs that once decorated the last great king of Assyria's royal palace.

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SECTION OVERVIEW

7.6: Persian

Famous for their monumental architecture, Persian kings established numerous centers in their vast empire such as Susa and Persepolis (today, in Iran).

6th century B.C.E.

7.6.1: Ancient Persia, an introduction

7.6.2: The Cyrus Cylinder and Ancient Persia

7.6.3: Capital of a column from the audience hall of the palace of Darius I, Susa

7.6.4: Persepolis- The Audience Hall of Darius and Xerxes

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7.6.1: Ancient Persia, an introduction

by DR. SENTA GERMAN

The heart of ancient Persia is in what is now southwest Iran, in the region called the Fars. In the second half of the 6th century B.C.E., the Persians (also called the Achaemenids) created an enormous empire reaching from the Indus Valley to Northern Greece and from Central Asia to Egypt.

A tolerant empire

Although the surviving literary sources on the Persian empire were written by ancient Greeks who were the sworn enemies of the Persians and highly contemptuous of them, the Persians were in fact quite tolerant and ruled a multi-ethnic empire. Persia was the first empire known to have acknowledged the different faiths, languages and political organizations of its subjects.

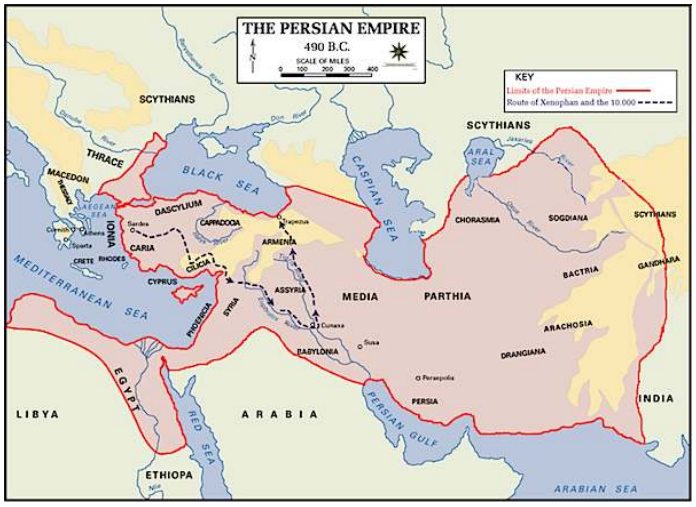


Figure **7.6.1.69**: The Persian Empire, 490 B.C.E.

This tolerance for the cultures under Persian control carried over into administration. In the lands which they conquered, the Persians continued to use indigenous languages and administrative structures. For example, the Persians accepted hieroglyphic script written on papyrus in Egypt and traditional Babylonian record keeping in cuneiform in Mesopotamia. The Persians must have been very proud of this new approach to empire as can be seen in the representation of the many different peoples in the reliefs from Persepolis, a city founded by Darius the Great in the 6th century B.C.E.



Figure **7.6.1.70**: Gate of all Nations, Persepolis (photo: **youngrobv**, CC BY-NC 2.0)

The Apadana

Persepolis included a massive columned hall used for receptions by the Kings, called the Apadana. This hall contained 72 columns and two monumental stairways.



Figure **7.6.1.71**: Assyrians with Rams, Apadana, Persepolis (**photo**: CC BY-SA 3.0)

The walls of the spaces and stairs leading up to the reception hall were carved with hundreds of figures, several of which illustrated subject peoples of various ethnicities, bringing tribute to the Persian king.



Figure **7.6.1.72**: View of the eastern stairway and columns of the Apadana (Audience Hall) at Persepolis, Iran, 5th century B.C.E. (The Oriental Institute, University of Chicago)

Conquered by Alexander the Great

The Persian Empire was, famously, conquered by Alexander the Great. Alexander no doubt was impressed by the Persian system of absorbing and retaining local language and traditions as he imitated this system himself in the vast lands he won in battle. Indeed, Alexander made a point of burying the last Persian emperor, Darius III, in a lavish and respectful way in the royal tombs near

Persepolis. This enabled Alexander to claim title to the Persian throne and legitimize his control over the greatest empire of the Ancient Near East.

Additional resources:

Persepolis from the air (video from The Oriental Institute, University of Chicago)

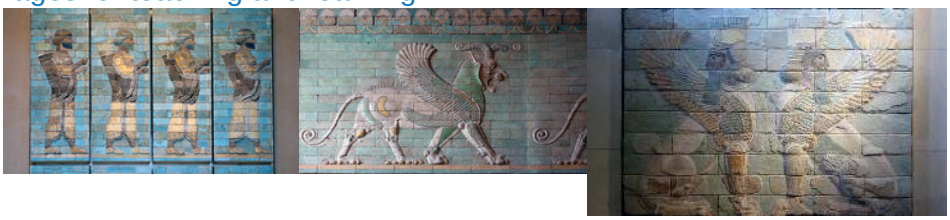
The Apadana from the University of Chicago

Persepolis from the University of Chicago

The Achaemenid Persian Empire on The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Timeline of Art Museum

Persepolis (video from Unesco)

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7.6.2: The Cyrus Cylinder and Ancient Persia

by THE BRITISH MUSEUM



Video **7.6.2.1**: The Cyrus Cylinder, after 539 B.C.E., fired clay, 21.9 cm long (video from the British Museum)

The Cyrus Cylinder is one of the most famous objects to have survived from the ancient world. It was inscribed in Babylonian cuneiform on the orders of Persian King Cyrus the Great (559-530 B.C.E.) after he captured Babylon in 539 B.C.E. It was found in Babylon in modern Iraq in 1879 during a British Museum excavation.

Cyrus claims to have achieved this with the aid of Marduk, the god of Babylon. He then describes measures of relief he brought to the inhabitants of the city, and tells how he returned a number of images of gods, which Nabonidus had collected in Babylon, to their proper temples throughout Mesopotamia and western Iran. At the same time he arranged for the restoration of these temples, and organized the return to their homelands of a number of people who had been held in Babylonia by the Babylonian kings. Although the Jews are not mentioned in this document, their return to Palestine following their deportation by Nebuchadnezzar II, was part of this policy.

The cylinder is often referred to as the first bill of human rights as it appears to encourage freedom of worship throughout the Persian Empire and to allow deported people to return to their homelands, but it in fact reflects a long tradition in Mesopotamia where, from as early as the third millennium B.C.E., kings began their reigns with declarations of reforms.

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7.6.3: Capital of a column from the audience hall of the palace of Darius I, Susa

by DR. STEVEN ZUCKER *and* DR. BETH HARRIS

This massive capital is very different from those of Greece, and suggests the frightening power of the Persian Empire.



Video **7.6.3.1**: Capital of a column from the audience hall of the palace of Darius I, Susa, c. 510 B.C.E., Achaemenid, Tell of the Apadana, Susa, Iran (Musée du Louvre, Paris)

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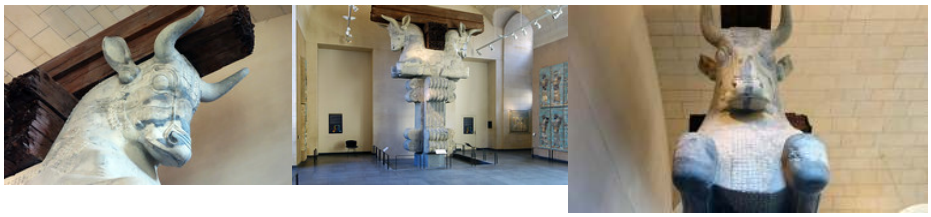
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7.6.4: Persepolis- The Audience Hall of Darius and Xerxes

by Dr. Jeffery A. Becker

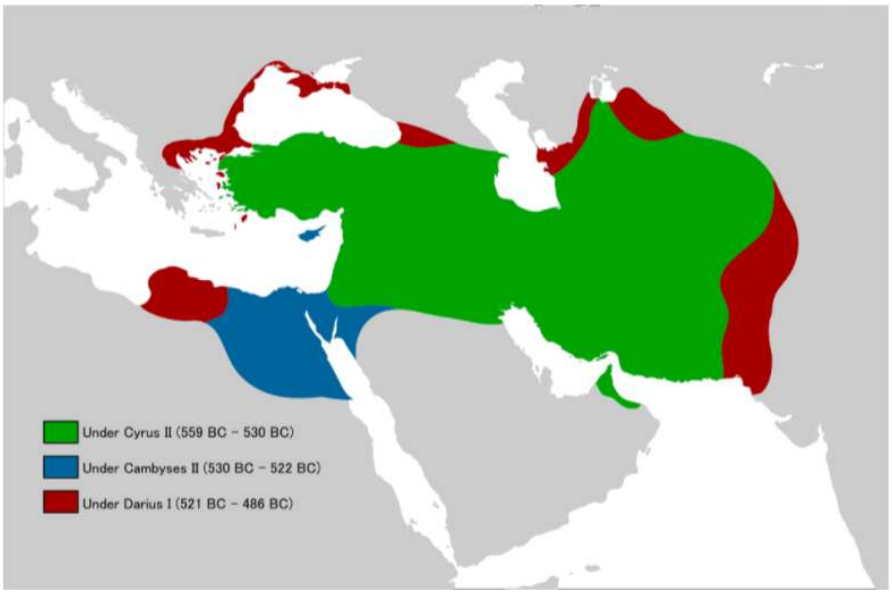


Figure **7.6.4.1**: Growth of the Achaemenid Empire under different kings (**source**)

By the early fifth century B.C.E. the Achaemenid (Persian) Empire ruled an estimated 44% of the human population of planet Earth. Through regional administrators the Persian kings controlled a vast territory which they constantly sought to expand. Famous for monumental architecture, Persian kings established numerous monumental centers, among those is Persepolis (today, in Iran). The great audience hall of the Persian kings Darius and Xerxes presents a visual microcosm of the Achaemenid empire—making clear, through sculptural decoration, that the Persian king ruled over all of the subjugated ambassadors and vassals (who are shown bringing tribute in an endless eternal procession).



Figure **7.6.4.2**: Kylix depicting a Greek hoplite slaying a Persian inside, by the Triptolemos painter, 5th century B.C.E. (National Museums of Scotland)

Overview of the Achaemenid Empire

The Achaemenid Empire (First Persian Empire) was an imperial state of Western Asia founded by Cyrus the Great and flourishing from c. 550-330 B.C.E. The empire's territory was vast, stretching from the Balkan peninsula in the west to the Indus River valley in the east. The Achaemenid Empire is notable for its strong, centralized bureaucracy that had, at its head, a king and relied upon regional satraps (regional governors).

A number of formerly independent states were made subject to the Persian Empire. These states covered a vast territory from central Asia and Afghanistan in the east to Asia Minor, Egypt, Libya, and Macedonia in the west. The Persians famously attempted to expand their empire further to include mainland Greece but they were ultimately defeated in this attempt. The Persian kings are noted for their penchant for monumental art and architecture. In creating monumental centers, including Persepolis, the Persian kings employed art and architecture to craft messages that helped to reinforce their claims to power and depict, iconographically, Persian rule.

Overview of Persepolis

Persepolis, the ceremonial capital of the Achaemenid Persian empire (c. 550-330 B.C.E.), lies some 60 km northeast of Shiraz, Iran. The earliest archaeological remains of the city date to c. 515 B.C.E. Persepolis, a Greek toponym meaning “city of the Persians”, was known to the Persians as Pārsa and was an important city of the ancient world, renowned for its monumental art and architecture. The site was excavated by German archaeologists Ernst Herzfeld, Friedrich Krefter, and Erich Schmidt between 1931 and 1939. Its remains are striking even today, leading UNESCO to register the site as a World Heritage Site in 1979.

Persepolis was intentionally founded in the Marvdašt Plain during the later part of the sixth century B.C.E. It was marked as a special site by Darius the Great (reigned 522-486 B.C.E.) in 518 B.C.E. when he indicated the location of a “Royal Hill” that would serve as a ceremonial center and citadel for the city. This was an action on Darius’ part that was similar to the earlier king Cyrus the Great who had founded the city of Pasargadae. Darius the Great directed a massive building program at Persepolis that would continue under his successors Xerxes (r. 486-466 B.C.E.) and Artaxerxes I (r. 466-424 B.C.E.). Persepolis would remain an important site until it was sacked, looted, and burned under Alexander the Great of Macedon in 330 B.C.E.

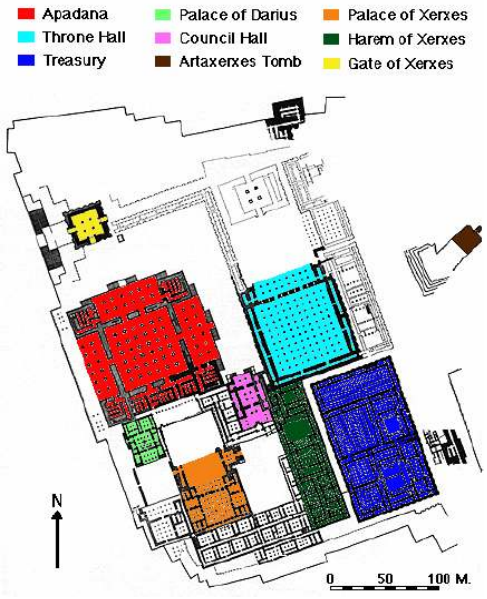


Figure **7.6.4.3**: Plan of Persepolis (**source**)

Darius’ program at Persepolis including the building of a massive terraced platform covering 125,000 square meters of the promontory. This platform supported four groups of structures: residential quarters, a treasury, ceremonial palaces, and fortifications. Scholars continue to debate the purpose and nature of the site. Primary sources indicate that Darius saw himself building an important stronghold. Some scholars suggest that the site has a sacred connection to the god Mithra (Mehr), as well as links to the Nowruz, the Persian New Year’s festival. More general readings see Persepolis as an important administrative and economic center of the Persian empire.



Figure 7.6.4.4: Bull Capital from Persepolis, Apādana, Persepolis (Fars, Iran), c. 520-465 B.C.E. (National Museum of Iran) (photo: s1ingshot)

The Apādana palace is a large ceremonial building, likely an audience hall with an associated portico. The audience hall itself is hypostyle in its plan, meaning that the roof of the structure is supported by columns. Apādana is the Persian term equivalent to the Greek hypostyle (Ancient Greek: ὑπόστυλος hypóstȳlos). The footprint of the Apādana is c. 1,000 square meters; originally 72 columns, each standing to a height of 24 meters, supported the roof (only 14 columns remain standing today). The column capitals assumed the form of either twin-headed bulls (above), eagles or lions, all animals represented royal authority and kingship.



Figure 7.6.4.5: Apādana, Persepolis (Fars, Iran), c. 520-465 B.C.E. (photo: Alan Cordova, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

The king of the Achaemenid Persian empire is presumed to have received guests and tribute in this soaring, imposing space. To that end a sculptural program decorates monumental stairways on the north and east. The theme of that program is one that pays tribute to the Persian king himself as it depicts representatives of 23 subject nations bearing gifts to the king.

The Apādana stairs and sculptural program

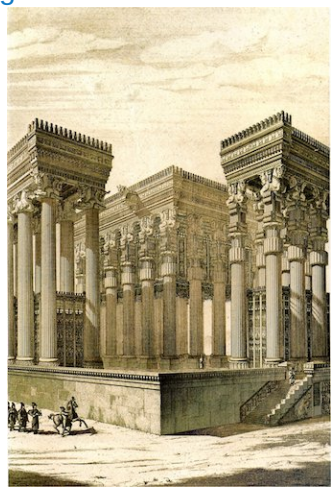


Figure 7.6.4.6: 19th century reconstruction of the Apādana, Persepolis (Fars, Iran) by Charles Chipiez

The monumental stairways that approach the Apādana from the north and the east were adorned with registers of relief sculpture that depicted representatives of the twenty-three subject nations of the Persian empire bringing valuable gifts as tribute to the king. The sculptures form a processional scene, leading some scholars to conclude that the reliefs capture the scene of actual, annual tribute processions—perhaps on the occasion of the Persian New Year–that took place at Persepolis. The relief program of the northern stairway was perhaps completed c. 500-490 B.C.E. The two sets of stairway reliefs mirror and complement each other. Each program has a central scene of the enthroned king flanked by his attendants and guards.



Figure 7.6.4.7: East stairway, Apādana, Persepolis (Fars, Iran), c. 520-465 B.C.E.

Noblemen wearing elite outfits and military apparel are also present. The representatives of the twenty-three nations, each led by an attendant, bring tribute while dressed in costumes suggestive of their land of origin. Margaret Root interprets the central scenes of the enthroned king as the focal point of the overall composition, perhaps even reflecting events that took place within the Apādana itself.



Figure **7.6.4.8**: An Armenian tribute bearer carrying a metal vessel with Homa (griffin) handles, relief from the eastern stairs of the Apādana in Persepolis (Fars, Iran), c. 520-465 B.C.E. (photo: **Aryamahasattva**, CC BY-SA 3.0)

The relief program of the Apādana serves to reinforce and underscore the power of the Persian king and the breadth of his dominion. The motif of subjugated peoples contributing their wealth to the empire's central authority serves to visually cement this political dominance. These processional scenes may have exerted influence beyond the Persian sphere, as some scholars have discussed the possibility that Persian relief sculpture from Persepolis may have influenced Athenian sculptors of the fifth century B.C.E. who were tasked with creating the Ionic frieze of the **Parthenon** in Athens. In any case, the Apādana, both as a building and as an ideological tableau, make clear and strong statements about the authority of the Persian king and present a visually unified idea of the immense Achaemenid empire.

Additional resources:

UNESCO video on Persepolis

Persepolis on Livius.org

Persepolis relief in the British Museum

Persepolis from the Oriental Institute, University of Chicago

John Boardman, *Persia and the West: an archaeological investigation of the genesis of Achaemenid art* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2000).

John Curtis, Nigel Tallis, and Béatrice André-Salvini, *Forgotten Empire: The World of Ancient Persia* (Berkeley : University of California Press, 2005).

John Curtis, *The world of Achaemenid Persia: history, art and society in Iran and the ancient Near East: proceedings of a conference at the British Museum*, 29th September-1st October 2005 (London: I. B. Tauris, 2010).

R. Schmitt and D. Stronach, "Apadana," *Encyclopædia Iranica*, II/2, pp. 145-48

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Wolfram Kleiss, "Zur Entwicklung der achaemenidischen Palastarchitektur," *AMI* 14 (1981) pp. 199-211.

Margaret Cool Root, "The king and kingship in Achaemenid art: essays on the creation of an iconography of empire" (*Acta Iranica*; 19) (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1979).

Margaret Cool Root, "The Parthenon Frieze and the Apadana Reliefs at Persepolis: Reassessing a Programmatic Relationship," *American Journal of Archaeology* 89.1 (1985) pp. 103–122.

Erich Friedrich Schmidt, *Persepolis* 3 v. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953-1970).

R. Schmitt, "Achaemenid Dynasty," *Encyclopædia Iranica*, I/4, pp. 414-426

A. S. Shahbazi, "The Persepolis "Treasury Reliefs' Once More," *AMI* 9 (1976) pp. 151-56.

Robert E. Mortimer Wheeler, *Flames over Persepolis: Turning Point in History* (London, 1968).

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Ancient Egyptian civilization lasted more than 3000 years, showing an incredible continuity.

c. 5000 - 30 B.C.E.

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SECTION OVERVIEW

8.1: Beginner’s guide- Ancient Egypt

Egypt’s impact on later cultures was immense.

c. 5000 - 30 B.C.E.

While today we marvel at the glittering treasures from the tomb of Tutankhamun, the sublime reliefs in New Kingdom tombs, and the serene beauty of Old Kingdom statuary, it is important to remember that the majority of these works were never intended to be seen.

8.1.1: Ancient Egypt, an introduction

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8.1.1: Ancient Egypt, an introduction

by DR. AMY CALVERT



Figure **8.1.1.1**: Step Pyramid of Djoser at Saqqara, Old Kingdom, c. 2675-2625 B.C.E. Photo: Dr. Amy Calvert

Egypt's impact on later cultures was immense. You could say that Egypt provided the building blocks for Greek and Roman culture, and, through them, influenced all of the Western tradition. Today, Egyptian imagery, concepts, and perspectives are found everywhere; you will find them in architectural forms, on money, and in our day to day lives. Many cosmetic surgeons, for example, use the silhouette of Queen Nefertiti (whose name means "the beautiful one has come") in their advertisements.

Longevity

Ancient Egyptian civilization lasted for more than 3000 years and showed an incredible amount of continuity. That is more than 15 times the age of the United States, and consider how often our culture shifts; less than 10 years ago, there was no Facebook, Twitter, or Youtube.

While today we consider the Greco-Roman period to be in the distant past, it should be noted that Cleopatra VII's reign (which ended in 30 B.C.E.) is closer to our own time than it was to that of the construction of the pyramids of Giza. It took humans nearly 4000 years to build something–anything–taller than the Great Pyramids. Contrast that span to the modern era; we get excited when a record lasts longer than a decade.

Consistency and stability

Egypt's stability is in stark contrast to the Ancient Near East of the same period, which endured an overlapping series of cultures and upheavals with amazing regularity. The earliest royal monuments, such as the Narmer Palette carved around 3100 B.C.E., display identical royal costumes and poses as those seen on later rulers, even Ptolemaic kings on their temples 3000 years later.



Figure **8.1.1.2**: Palette of Narmer, c. 3000-2920 B.C.E. (left) and Ramses III smiting at Medinet Habu (1160 B.C.E.) (right)

A vast amount of Egyptian imagery, especially royal imagery that was governed by decorum (a sense of what was 'appropriate'), remained stupefyingly consistent throughout its history. This is why, especially to the untrained eye, their art appears extremely

static—and in terms of symbols, gestures, and the way the body is rendered, it was. It was intentional. The Egyptians were aware of their consistency, which they viewed as stability, divine balance, and clear evidence of the correctness of their culture.

This consistency was closely related to a fundamental belief that depictions had an impact beyond the image itself—tomb scenes of the deceased receiving food, or temple scenes of the king performing perfect rituals for the gods—were functionally causing those things to occur in the divine realm. If the image of the bread loaf was omitted from the deceased's table, they had no bread in the Afterlife; if the king was depicted with the incorrect ritual implement, the ritual was incorrect and this could have dire consequences. This belief led to an active resistance to change in codified depictions.

The earliest recorded tourist graffiti on the planet came from a visitor from the time of Ramses II who left their appreciative mark at the already 1300-year-old site of the Step Pyramid at Saqqara, the earliest of the massive royal stone monuments. They were understandably impressed by the works of their ancestors and endeavored to continue that ancient legacy.

Geography

Egypt is a land of duality and cycles, both in topography and culture. The geography is almost entirely rugged, barren desert, except for an explosion of green that straddles either side of the Nile as it flows the length of the country. The river emerges from far to the south, deep in Africa, and empties into the Mediterranean sea in the north after spreading from a single channel into a fan-shaped system, known as a delta, at its northernmost section.

The influence of this river on Egyptian culture and development cannot be overstated—without its presence, the civilization would have been entirely different. The Nile provided not only a constant source of life-giving water, but created the fertile lands that fed the growth of this unique (and uniquely resilient) culture.



Figure **8.1.1.3**: View from the high peak of the Theban hills showing the sharp delineation between the lush Valley and the barren desert. Photo: Dr. Amy Calvert

Each year, fed by melting snows in the far-off headlands, the river overflowed its banks in an annual flood that covered the ground with a rich, black silt and produced incredibly fertile fields. The Egyptians referred to this as Kemet, the "black lands," and contrasted this dense, dark soil against the Deshret, the "red lands" of the sterile desert; the line between these zones was (and in most cases still is) a literal line. The visual effect is stark, appearing almost artificial in its precision.

Time – cyclical and linear

The annual inundation of the Nile was also a reliable, and measurable, cycle that helped form their concept of the passage of time. In fact, the calendar we use today is derived from one developed by the ancient Egyptians. They divided the year into 3 seasons: akhet "inundation," peret "growing/emergence." and shemw "harvest." Each season was, in turn, divided into four 30-day months. Although this annual cycle, paired with the daily solar cycle that is so evident in the desert, led to a powerful drive to see the universe in cyclical time, this idea existed simultaneously with the reality of linear time.

These two concepts—the cyclical and the linear—came to be associated with two of their primary deities: Osiris, the eternal lord of the dead, and Re, the sun god who was reborn with each dawn.

Early development: The Predynastic period

The civilization of Egypt obviously did not spring fully formed from the Nile mud; although the massive pyramids at Giza may appear to the uninitiated to have appeared out of nowhere, they were founded on thousands of years of cultural and technological development and experimentation. “Dynastic” Egypt—sometimes referred to as “Pharaonic” (after “pharaoh,” the Greek title of the Egyptian kings derived from the Egyptian title *per aA*, “Great House”) which was the time when the country was largely unified under a single ruler, begins around 3100 B.C.E.

The period before this, lasting from about 5000 B.C.E. until unification, is referred to as Predynastic by modern scholars. Prior to this were thriving Paleolithic and Neolithic groups, stretching back hundreds of thousands of years, descended from northward migrating *homo erectus* who settled along the Nile Valley. During the Predynastic period, ceramics, figurines, mace heads, and other artifacts such as slate palettes used for grinding pigments, begin to appear, as does imagery that will become iconic during the Pharaonic era—we can see the first hints of what is to come.

Dynasties

It is important to recognize that the dynastic divisions modern scholars use were not used by the ancients themselves. These divisions were created in the first Western-style history of Egypt, written by an Egyptian priest named Manetho in the 3rd century B.C.E. Each of the 33 dynasties included a series of rulers usually related by kinship or the location of their seat of power. Egyptian history is also divided into larger chunks, known as “kingdoms” and “periods,” to distinguish times of strength and unity from those of change, foreign rule, or disunity.

Period	Dates
Old Kingdom (the ‘pyramid age’)	c. 2649 – 2150 B.C.E.
First Intermediate Period	c. 2150 – 2030 B.C.E.
Middle Kingdom	c. 2030 – 1640 B.C.E.
Second Intermediate Period (Northern Delta region ruled by Asiatics)	c. 1640 – 1540 B.C.E.
New Kingdom	c. 1550 – 1070 B.C.E.
Third Intermediate Period	c. 1070 – 713 B.C.E.
Late Period (a series from foreign dynasties, including Nubian, Libyan and Persian rulers)	c. 712 – 332 B.C.E.
Ptolemaic Period (ruled by Greco-Romans)	c. 332-30 B.C.E.

Figure **8.1.1.4**

The Egyptians themselves referred to their history in relation to the ruler of the time. Years were generally recorded as the regnal dates (from the Latin regnum, meaning kingdom or rule) of the ruling king, so that with each new reign, the numbers began anew. Later kings recorded the names of their predecessors in vast “king-lists” on the walls of their temples and depicted themselves offering to the rulers who came before them—one of the best known examples is in the temple of Seti I at Abydos.

These lists were often condensed, with some rulers (such as the contentious and disruptive Akhenaten) and even entire dynasties omitted from the record; they are not truly history, rather they are a form of ancestor worship, a celebration of the consistency of kingship of which the current ruler was a part.

The pharaoh—not just a king

Kings in Egypt were complex intermediaries that straddled the terrestrial and divine realms. They were, obviously, living humans, but upon accession to the throne, they also embodied the eternal office of kingship itself. The ka, or spirit, of kingship was often depicted as a separate entity standing behind the human ruler. This divine aspect of the office of kingship was what gave authority to the human ruler. The living king was associated with the god Horus, the powerful, virile falcon-headed god who was believed to bestow the throne to the first human king.

Horus’s immensely important father, Osiris, was the lord of the underworld. One of the original divine rulers of Egypt, this deity embodied the promise of regeneration. Cruelly murdered by his brother Seth, the god of the chaotic desert, Osiris was revived through the potent magic of his wife Isis. Through her knowledge and skill, Osiris was able to sire the miraculous Horus, who avenged his father and threw his criminal uncle off the throne to take his rightful place.

Osiris became ruler of the realm of the dead, the eternal source of regeneration in the Afterlife. Deceased kings were identified with this god, creating a cycle where the dead king fused with the divine king of the dead and his successor “defeated” death to take his place on the throne as Horus.

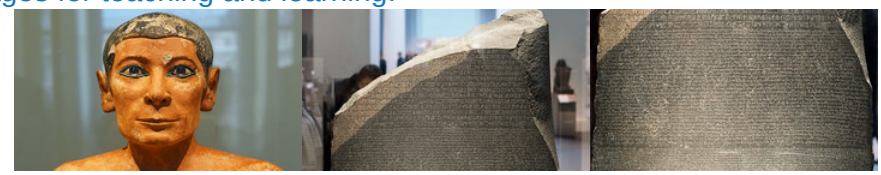
Additional resources:

For instructors: related lesson plan on Art History Teaching Resources

An introduction to ancient Egypt from the British Museum

Egyptian art on the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

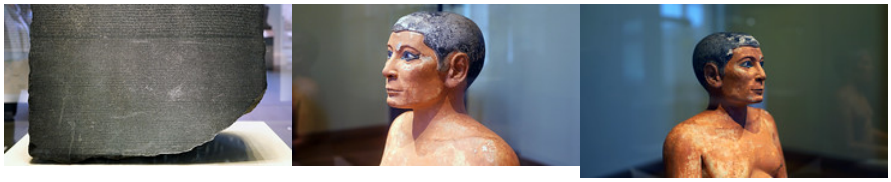
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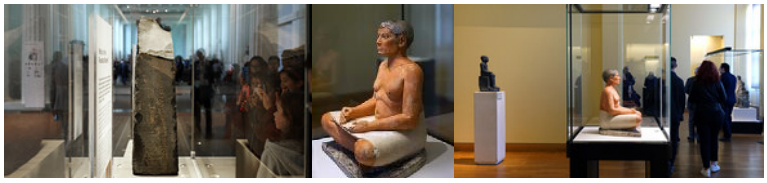
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8.1.2: Ancient Egyptian art

by DR. AMY CALVERT



Figure 8.1.2.1: Beautifully preserved life-size painted limestone funerary sculptures of Prince Rahotep and his wife Nofret. Note the lifelike eyes of inlaid rock crystal (Old Kingdom). Photo: Dr. Amy Calvert

Appreciating and understanding ancient Egyptian art

Ancient Egyptian art must be viewed from the standpoint of the ancient Egyptians to understand it. The somewhat static, usually formal, strangely abstract, and often blocky nature of much Egyptian imagery has, at times, led to unfavorable comparisons with later, and much more 'naturalistic,' Greek or Renaissance art. However, the art of the Egyptians served a vastly different purpose than that of these later cultures.

Art not meant to be seen

While today we marvel at the glittering treasures from the tomb of Tutankhamun, the sublime reliefs in New Kingdom tombs, and the serene beauty of Old Kingdom statuary, it is imperative to remember that the majority of these works were never intended to be seen—that was simply not their purpose.



Figure 8.1.2.2: Painted sunk relief of the king being embraced by a goddess. Tomb of Amenherkhepshef (QV 55) (New Kingdom) Photo: Dr. Amy Calvert

The function of Egyptian art

These images, whether statues or relief, were designed to benefit a divine or deceased recipient. Statuary provided a place for the recipient to manifest and receive the benefit of ritual action. Most statues show a formal frontality, meaning they are arranged straight ahead, because they were designed to face the ritual being performed before them. Many statues were also originally placed in recessed niches or other architectural settings—contexts that would make frontality their expected and natural mode.

Statuary, whether divine, royal, or elite, provided a kind of conduit for the spirit (or ka) of that being to interact with the terrestrial realm. Divine cult statues (few of which survive) were the subject of daily rituals of clothing, anointing, and perfuming with incense and were carried in processions for special festivals so that the people could "see" them (they were almost all entirely shrouded from view, but their 'presence' was felt).

Royal and elite statuary served as intermediaries between the people and the gods. Family chapels with the statuary of a deceased forefather could serve as a sort of 'family temple.' There were festivals in honor of the dead, where the family would come and eat in the chapel, offering food for the Afterlife, flowers (symbols of rebirth), and incense (the scent of which was considered divine). Preserved letters let us know that the deceased was actively petitioned for their assistance, both in this world and the next.

What we see in museums

Generally, the works we see on display in museums were products of royal or elite workshops; these pieces fit best with our modern aesthetic and ideas of beauty. Most museum basements, however, are packed with hundreds (even thousands!) of other objects made for people of lower status—small statuary, amulets, coffins, and stelae (similar to modern tombstones) that are completely recognizable, but rarely displayed. These pieces generally show less quality in the workmanship; being oddly proportioned or poorly executed; they are less often considered 'art' in the modern sense. However, these objects served the exact same function of providing benefit to their owners (and to the same degree of effectiveness), as those made for the elite.



Figure \(\PageIndex{3}\): Hard stone group statue of Ramses II with Osiris, Isis, and Horus in the Egyptian Museum, Cairo (New Kingdom). Photo: Dr. Amy Calvert

Modes of representation for three-dimensional art

Three-dimensional representations, while being quite formal, also aimed to reproduce the real-world—statuary of gods, royalty, and the elite was designed to convey an idealized version of that individual. Some aspects of 'naturalism' were dictated by the material. Stone statuary, for example, was quite closed—with arms held close to the sides, limited positions, a strong back pillar that provided support, and with the fill spaces left between limbs.



Figure 8.1.2.4: Painted wooden model of the deceased overseeing the counting of cattle in the Egyptian Museum, Cairo (Middle Kingdom). Photo: Dr. Amy Calvert

Wood and metal statuary, in contrast, was more expressive—arms could be extended and hold separate objects, spaces between the limbs were opened to create a more realistic appearance, and more positions were possible. Stone, wood, and metal statuary of elite figures, however, all served the same functions and retained the same type of formalization and frontality. Only statuettes of lower status people displayed a wide range of possible actions, and these pieces were focused on the actions, which benefited the elite owner, not the people involved.

Modes of representation for two-dimensional art

Two-dimensional art represented the world quite differently. Egyptian artists embraced the two-dimensional surface and attempted to provide the most representative aspects of each element in the scenes rather than attempting to create vistas that replicated the real world.

Each object or element in a scene was rendered from its most recognizable angle and these were then grouped together to create the whole. This is why images of people show their face, waist, and limbs in profile, but eye and shoulders frontally. These scenes are complex composite images that provide complete information about the various elements, rather than ones designed from a single viewpoint, which would not be as comprehensive in the data they conveyed.

Registers



Figure 8.1.2.5: Chaotic fighting scene on a painted box from the tomb of Tutankhamen in the Egyptian Museum, Cairo (New Kingdom). Photo: Dr. Amy Calvert

Scenes were ordered in parallel lines, known as registers. These registers separate the scene as well as provide ground lines for the figures. Scenes without registers are unusual and were generally only used to specifically evoke chaos; battle and hunting scenes will often show the prey or foreign armies without groundlines. Registers were also used to convey information about the scenes—

the higher up in the scene, the higher the status; overlapping figures imply that the ones underneath are further away, as are those elements that are higher within the register.

Hierarchy of scale

Difference in scale was the most commonly used method for conveying hierarchy—the larger the scale of the figures, the more important they were. Kings were often shown at the same scale as deities, but both are shown larger than the elite and far larger than the average Egyptian.

Text and image

Text accompanied almost all images. In statuary, identifying text will appear on the back pillar or base, and relief usually has captions or longer texts that complete and elaborate on the scenes. Hieroglyphs were often rendered as tiny works of art in themselves, even though these small pictures do not always stand for what they depict; many are instead phonetic sounds. Some, however, are logographic, meaning they stand for an object or concept.



Figure 8.1.2.6: Highly detailed raised relief hieroglyphs on the White Chapel of Senusret I at Karnak (Middle Kingdom). Photo: Dr. Amy Calvert

The lines blur between text and image in many cases. For instance, the name of a figure in the text on a statue will regularly omit the determinative (an unspoken sign at the end of a word that aids identification–for example, verbs of motion are followed by a pair of walking legs, names of men end with the image of a man, names of gods with the image of a seated god, etc.) at the end of the name. In these instances, the representation itself serves this function.

Additional resources:

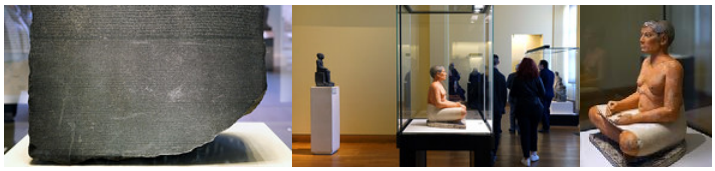
Collection Tour of Egyptian Art: Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

The Giza Archives

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8.1.3: Materials and techniques in ancient Egyptian art

by DR. AMY CALVERT

A wide variety

Egyptian artists used a wide array of materials, both local and imported, from very early in their history. For instance, already in the Predynastic period we find figurines carved from lapis lazuli—a lustrous blue stone that originates in what is now Afghanistan and indicates the early presence of robust trade routes.



Figure **8.1.3.1**: Group of stones collected in Egypt showing the range of colors and textures available to the ancient artists.

Stone

There were numerous native stones used for statuary, including the ubiquitous soft limestone of the desert cliffs that line most of the Nile valley, as well as sandstone, calcite, and schist.

Harder stones include quartzite, diorite, granite, and basalt. Carving on softer stones was done using copper chisels and stone tools; hard stone required tools of yet harder stone, copper alloys, and the use of abrasive sand to shape them. Polishing was achieved with a smooth rubbing stone and abrasive sands with a fine grit.



Figure **8.1.3.2**: Menkaure (Mycerinus) and Khamerernebty(?), graywacke, c. 2490-2472 B.C.E. (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston)

Painted statuary

Most statuary was painted; even stones selected for the symbolism of their color were often painted. For instance, the exemplary statues of Menkaure (left), builder of the smallest of the three major pyramids at Giza, were executed in dark schist (also called

graywacke). This smooth black stone is connected with Osiris, resurrected god of the dead who was often shown with black or green skin referring to the fertile silt and lush vegetation of the Nile valley.

These images preserve traces of red paint on the king's skin indicating that, when completed and placed in his memorial temple near his pyramid, they would have appeared lifelike in coloration. With time, the paint would have flaked away, revealing the black stone underneath and explicitly linking the deceased king with the Lord of the Underworld.

Wood



Figure **8.1.3.3**: Ceremonial gilded wooden shield from the tomb of Tutakhamun. Egyptian Museum, Cairo (New Kingdom) (photo: Dr. Amy Calvert)

Egyptian artists also used a variety of woods in their work, including the native acacia, tamarisk, and sycamore fig as well as fir, cedar, and other conifers imported from Syria. Artisans excelled at puzzling together small, irregular pieces of wood and pegged them into place to create statuary, coffins, boxes, and furniture.

Metals

They also executed pieces in various metals, including copper, copper alloys (such as bronze), gold, and silver. Cult statues of gods were made in gold and silver—materials identified by myth as their skin and bones—and were often quite small. Very few metal statues survive because they were often melted down and the material reused, although preserved examples from the Old and Middle Kingdoms demonstrate that they were skilled not only in sheet metal forming, but also practiced complex casting.

Jewelry work was quite sophisticated even in the Old Kingdom, as demonstrated by some highly creative pieces depicted in tomb scenes. A cache of royal jewelry from the tombs of Middle Kingdom princesses displays extremely high levels of skill in terms of design as well as precisely cut stone inlays, repoussé, and cloisonné.

Many objects, especially small amulets and inlays, were made from a manufactured material known as Egyptian faience. This quartz-based medium could be easily shaped, molded, and mass produced. The glaze coating could be almost any color, depending on the minerals used in the composition, although turquoise blue is the most common.



Figure 8.1.3.4: Tutankhamun's lunar pectoral in the Egyptian Museum, Cairo (New Kingdom) (photo: Dr. Amy Calvert)

Relief sculpture

Relief was usually carved before being painted. The two primary classes of relief are raised relief (where the figures stand up out from the surface) and sunk relief (where the figures are cut into and below the surface). The surface would be smoothed with a layer of plaster and then painted. If the surface was not carved before painting, several layers of mud plaster would be applied to create a flat plane.



Figure 8.1.3.5: Painted raised relief in the Temple of Seti I at Abydos (New Kingdom)

The drawing surface would be delineated using gridded guidelines, snapped onto the wall using string coated in red pigment dust (very much like chalk lines used by modern carpenters). This grid helped the artists properly proportion the figures and lay out the scenes. Scene elements were drafted out using red paint, corrections noted in black paint, and then the painting was executed one color at a time. Even on carved relief, many elements in a scene would be executed only in paint and not cut into the surface.



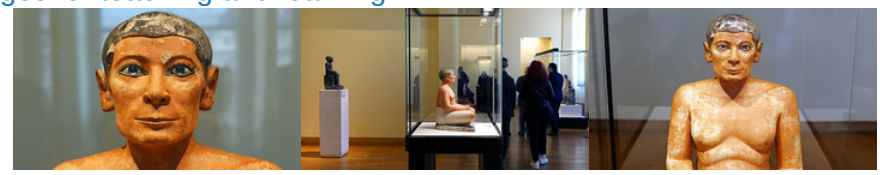
Figure 8.1.3.6: Iron oxide nodules, source of a range of red pigments, Thebes

Pigments

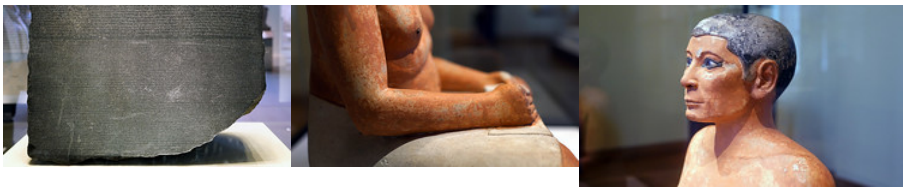
Most pigments in Egypt were derived from local minerals. White was often made from gypsum, black from carbon, reds and yellows from iron oxides, blue and green from azurite and malachite, and bright yellow (representing gold) from orpiment. These

minerals were ground and then mixed with a plant or animal based glue to make a medium able to attach to the walls. They could be applied as a single plane, but were also layered to create subtle effects and additional colors, such as pink or gray. More information on the materials used to make pigments, as well as a discussion of the symbolism of various colors may be found in the article “Aspects of Color in Ancient Egypt” at Egyptological.

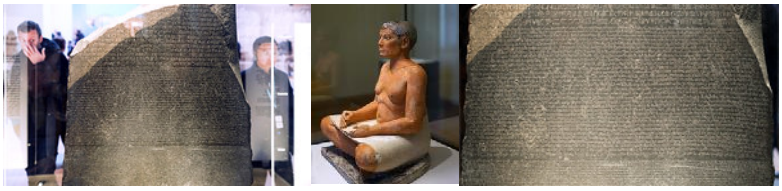
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8.1.4: The mummification process

by THE J. PAUL GETTY MUSEUM

To prepare a body for the afterlife, ancient Egyptians removed organs, dried the body, wrapped it, and more.



Video 8.1.4.1: Video from the J. Paul Getty Museum

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SECTION OVERVIEW

8.2: Predynastic and Old Kingdom

“Dynastic” Egypt—sometimes referred to as “Pharaonic”—was the time when the country was largely unified under a single ruler, starting around 3100 B.C.E. The period before this, lasting from about 5000 B.C.E. until unification, is referred to as Predynastic by modern scholars.

c. 5000 - 2150 B.C.E.

8.2.1: Palette of King Narmer

8.2.2: The Great Pyramids of Giza

8.2.3: Pyramid of Khufu

8.2.4: Pyramid of Khafre and the Great Sphinx

8.2.5: Pyramid of Menkaure

8.2.6: King Menkaure (Mycerinus) and queen

8.2.7: The Seated Scribe

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8.2.1: Palette of King Narmer

by DR. AMY CALVERT



Figure 8.2.1.1: Palette of King Narmer, from Hierakonpolis, Egypt, Predynastic, c. 3000-2920 B.C.E., slate, 2′ 1″ high (Egyptian Museum, Cairo)

Vitally important, but difficult to interpret

Some artifacts are of such vital importance to our understanding of ancient cultures that they are truly unique and utterly irreplaceable. The gold mask of Tutankhamun was allowed to leave Egypt for display overseas; the *Narmer Palette*, on the other hand, is so valuable that it has never been permitted to leave the country.

Discovered among a group of sacred implements ritually buried in a deposit within an early temple of the falcon god Horus at the site of Hierakonpolis (the capital of Egypt during the pre-dynastic period), this large ceremonial object is one of the most important artifacts from the dawn of Egyptian civilization. The beautifully carved palette, 63.5 cm (more than 2 feet) in height and made of smooth grayish-green siltstone, is decorated on both faces with detailed low relief. These scenes show a king, identified by name as Narmer, and a series of ambiguous scenes that have been difficult to interpret and have resulted in a number of theories regarding their meaning.

The high quality of the workmanship, its original function as a ritual object dedicated to a god, and the complexity of the imagery clearly indicate that this was a significant object, but a satisfactory interpretation of the scenes has been elusive.

What was the palette used for?

The object itself is a monumental version of a type of daily use item commonly found in the Predynastic period—palettes were generally flat, minimally decorated stone objects used for grinding and mixing minerals for cosmetics. Dark eyeliner was an essential aspect of life in the sun-drenched region; like the dark streaks placed under the eyes of modern athletes, black cosmetic around the eyes served to reduce glare. Basic cosmetic palettes were among the typical grave goods found during this early era.

In addition to these simple, purely functional, palettes however, there were also a number of larger, far more elaborate palettes created in this period. These objects still served the function of being a ground for grinding and mixing cosmetics, but they were also carefully carved with relief sculpture. Many of the earlier palettes display animals —some real, some fantastic—while later examples, like the Narmer palette, focus on human actions. Research suggests that these decorated palettes were used in temple ceremonies, perhaps to grind or mix makeup to be ritually applied to the image of the god. Later temple ritual included elaborate daily ceremonies involving the anointing and dressing of divine images; these palettes likely indicate an early incarnation of this process.

A ceremonial object, ritually buried

The *Palette of Narmer* was discovered in 1898 by James Quibell and Frederick Green. It was found with a collection of other objects that had been used for ceremonial purposes and then ritually buried within the temple at Hierakonpolis.

Temple caches of this type are not uncommon. There was a great deal of focus on ritual and votive objects (offerings to the God) in temples. Every ruler, elite individual, and anyone else who could afford it, donated items to the temple to show their piety and increase their connection to the deity. After a period of time, the temple would be full of these objects and space would need to be cleared for new votive donations. However, since they had been dedicated to a temple and sanctified, the old items that needed to be cleared out could not simply be thrown away or sold. Instead, the general practice was to bury them in a pit under the temple floor. Often, these caches include objects from a range of dates and a mix of types, from royal statuary to furniture.

The “Main Deposit” at Hierakonpolis, where the Narmer Palette was discovered, contained many hundreds of objects, including a number of large relief-covered ceremonial mace-heads, ivory statuettes, carved knife handles, figurines of scorpions and other animals, stone vessels, and a second elaborately decorated palette (now in the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford) known as the *Two Dogs Palette*.



Figure 8.2.1.2: Two Dogs Palette, Hierakonpolis, Egypt c.3100 B.C.E. (Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford)

Conventions that remain the same for thousands of years

There are several reasons the *Narmer Palette* is considered to be of such importance. First, it is one of very few such palettes discovered in a controlled excavation. Second, there are a number of formal and iconographic characteristics appearing on the Narmer palette that remain conventional in Egyptian two-dimensional art for the following three millennia. These include the way the figures are represented, the scenes being organized in regular horizontal zones known as registers, and the use of hierarchical scale to indicate relative importance of the individuals. In addition, much of the regalia worn by the king, such as the crowns, kilts, royal beard, and bull tail, as well as other visual elements, such as the pose Narmer takes on one of the faces where he grasps an enemy by the hair and prepares to smash his skull with a mace, continue to be utilized from this time all the way through the Roman era.

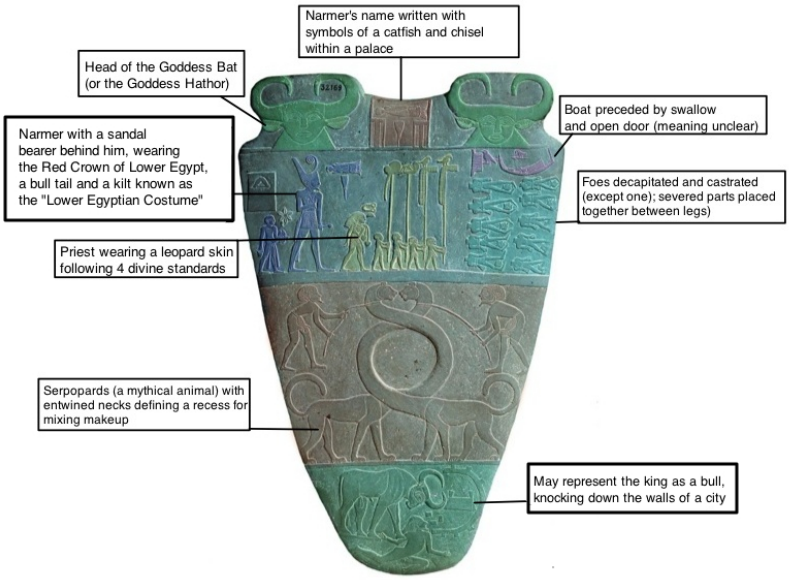


Figure **8.2.1.3**

What we see on the palette

The king is represented twice in human form, once on each face, followed by his sandal-bearer. He may also be represented as a powerful bull, destroying a walled city with his massive horns, in a mode that again becomes conventional—pharaoh is regularly referred to as “Strong Bull.”

In addition to the primary scenes, the palette includes a pair of fantastic creatures, known as serpopards—leopards with long, snaky necks—who are collared and controlled by a pair of attendants. Their necks entwine and define the recess where the makeup preparation took place. The lowest register on both sides include images of dead foes, while both uppermost registers display hybrid human-bull heads and the name of the king. The frontal bull heads are likely connected to a sky goddess known as Bat and are related to heaven and the horizon. The name of the king, written hieroglyphically as a catfish and a chisel, is contained within a squared element that represents a palace facade.

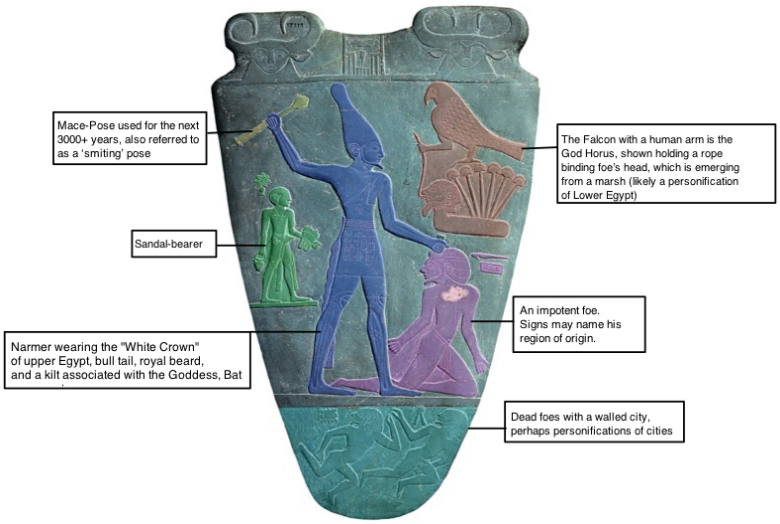


Figure **8.2.1.4**

Possible interpretation: unification of Upper and Lower Egypt

As mentioned above, there have been a number of theories related to the scenes carved on this palette. Some have interpreted the battle scenes as a historical narrative record of the initial unification of Egypt under one ruler, supported by the general timing (as

this is the period of the unification) and the fact that Narmer sports the crown connected to Upper Egypt on one face of the palette and the crown of Lower Egypt on the other—this is the first preserved example where both crowns are used by the same ruler. Other theories suggest that, rather than an actual historical representation, these scenes were purely ceremonial and related to the concept of unification in general.



Figure **8.2.1.5**: Detail, Palette of King Narmer, from Hierakonpolis, Egypt, Predynastic, c. 3000-2920 B.C.E., slate, 2′ 1″ high (Egyptian Museum, Cairo)

Another interpretation: the sun and the king

More recent research on the decorative program has connected the imagery to the careful balance of order and chaos (known as ma'at and isfet) that was a fundamental element of the Egyptian idea of the cosmos. It may also be related to the daily journey of the sun god that becomes a central aspect in the Egyptian religion in the subsequent centuries.



Figure **8.2.1.6**: Detail, Palette of King Narmer, from Hierakonpolis, Egypt, Predynastic, c. 3000-2920 B.C.E., slate, 2′ 1″ high (Egyptian Museum, Cairo)

The scene, showing Narmer wearing the Lower Egyptian Red Crown* (with its distinctive curl), depicts him processing towards the decapitated bodies of his foes. The two rows of prone bodies are placed below an image of a high-prowed boat preparing to pass through an open gate. This may be an early reference to the journey of the sun god in his boat. In later texts, the Red Crown is connected with bloody battles fought by the sun god just before the rosy-fingered dawn on his daily journey and this scene may well be related to this. It is interesting to note that the foes are shown as not only executed, but rendered completely impotent—their castrated penises have been placed atop their severed heads.

On the other face, Narmer wears the Upper Egyptian White Crown* (which looks rather like a bowling pin) as he grasps an inert foe by the hair and prepares to crush his skull. The White Crown is related to the dazzling brilliance of the full midday sun at its zenith as well as the luminous nocturnal light of the stars and moon. By wearing both crowns, Narmer may not only be ceremonially expressing his dominance over the unified Egypt, but also the early importance of the solar cycle and the king's role in this daily process.

This fascinating object is an incredible example of early Egyptian art. The imagery preserved on this palette provides a peek ahead to the richness of both the visual aspects and religious concepts that develop in the ensuing periods. It is a vitally important artifact of extreme significance for our understanding of the development of Egyptian culture on multiple levels.

*The Red Crown of Lower Egypt and the White Crown of Upper Egypt were the earliest crowns worn by the king and are closely connected with the unification of the country that sparks full-blown Egyptian civilization. The earliest representation of them worn by the same ruler is on the *Narmer Palette*, signifying that the king was ruling over both areas of the country. Soon after the unification, the fifth ruler of the First Dynasty is shown wearing the two crowns simultaneously, combined into one. This crown, often referred to as the Double Crown, remains a primary crown worn by pharaoh throughout Egyptian history. The separate Red and White crowns, however, continue to be worn as well and retain their geographic connections. There are a number of Egyptian words used for these crowns (nine for the White and 11 for the Red), but the most common—deshret and hedjet—refer to the colors red and white, respectively. It is from these identifying terms that we take their modern name. Early texts make it clear that these crowns were believed to be imbued with divine power and were personified as goddesses.

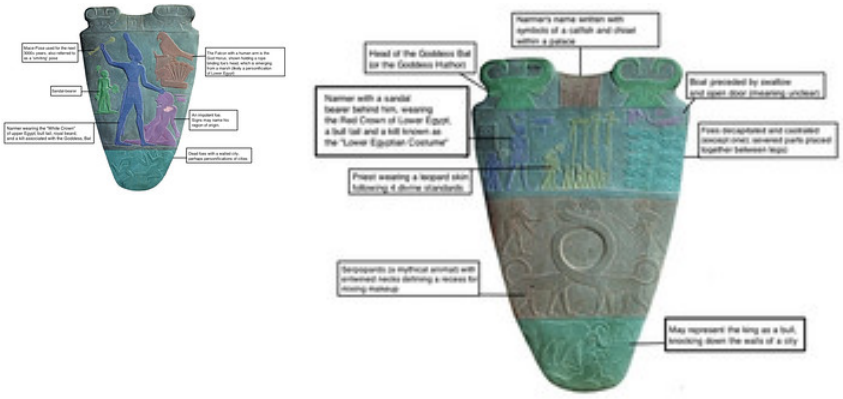
Additional resources:

Decorative Palettes of the 4th millenium

Hierakonpolis website

Publication on the excavation

SmartHistory images for teaching and learning:



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8.2.2: The Great Pyramids of Giza

by DR. AMY CALVERT



Figure **8.2.2.1**: Pyramid of Khafre (Photo: Dr. Amy Calvert)

One of the Seven Wonders of the ancient world

The last remaining of the Seven Wonders of the ancient world, the great pyramids of Giza are perhaps the most famous and discussed structures in history. These massive monuments were unsurpassed in height for thousands of years after their construction and continue to amaze and enthrall us with their overwhelming mass and seemingly impossible perfection. Their exacting orientation and mind-boggling construction has elicited many theories about their origins, including unsupported suggestions that they had extra-terrestrial impetus. However, by examining the several hundred years prior to their emergence on the Giza plateau, it becomes clear that these incredible structures were the result of many experiments, some more successful than others, and represent an apogee in the development of the royal mortuary complex.

Three pyramids, three rulers

The three primary pyramids on the Giza plateau were built over the span of three generations by the rulers Khufu, Khafre, and Menkaure. Each pyramid was part of a royal mortuary complex that also included a temple at its base and a long stone causeway (some nearly 1 kilometer in length) leading east from the plateau to a valley temple on the edge of the floodplain.

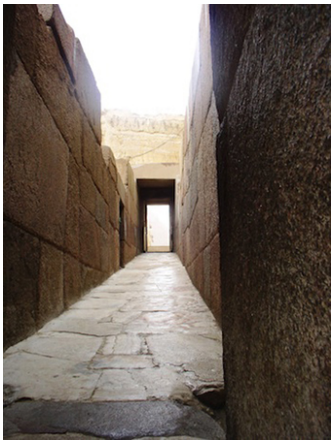


Figure **8.2.2.2**: View up the causeway from Khafre's valley temple towards his pyramid (Photo: Dr. Amy Calvert)

Other (smaller) pyramids, and small tombs

In addition to these major structures, several smaller pyramids belonging to queens are arranged as satellites. A major cemetery of smaller tombs, known as mastabas (Arabic for 'bench' in reference to their shape—flat-roofed, rectangular, with sloping sides), fills the area to the east and west of the pyramid of Khufu and were constructed in a grid-like pattern for prominent members of the court. Being buried near the pharaoh was a great honor and helped ensure a prized place in the afterlife.

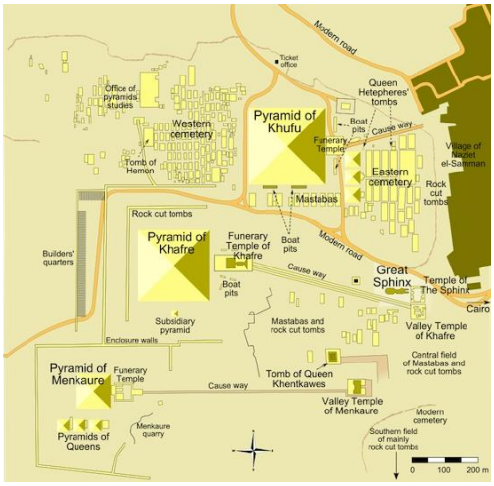


Figure **8.2.2.3**: Giza Pyramid Complex

A reference to the sun

The shape of the pyramid was a solar reference, perhaps intended as a solidified version of the rays of the sun. Texts talk about the sun's rays as a ramp the pharaoh mounts to climb to the sky—the earliest pyramids, such as the Step Pyramid of Djoser at Saqqara—were actually designed as a staircase. The pyramid was also clearly connected to the sacred ben-ben stone, an icon of the primeval mound that was considered the place of initial creation. The pyramid was considered a place of regeneration for the deceased ruler.

Construction

Many questions remain about the construction of these massive monuments, and theories abound as to the actual methods used. The workforce needed to build these structures is also still much discussed. Discovery of a town for workers to the south of the plateau has offered some answers. It is likely that there was a permanent group of skilled craftsmen and builders who were supplemented by seasonal crews of approximately 2,000 conscripted peasants. These crews were divided into gangs of 200 men, with each group further divided into teams of 20. Experiments indicate that these groups of 20 men could haul the 2.5 ton blocks from quarry to pyramid in about 20 minutes, their path eased by a lubricated surface of wet silt. An estimated 340 stones could be moved daily from quarry to construction site, particularly when one considers that many of the blocks (such as those in the upper courses) were considerably smaller.



Figure **8.2.2.4**: View up the side of Khufu's pyramid showing scale of the core blocks (Photo: Dr. Amy Calvert)

Backstory

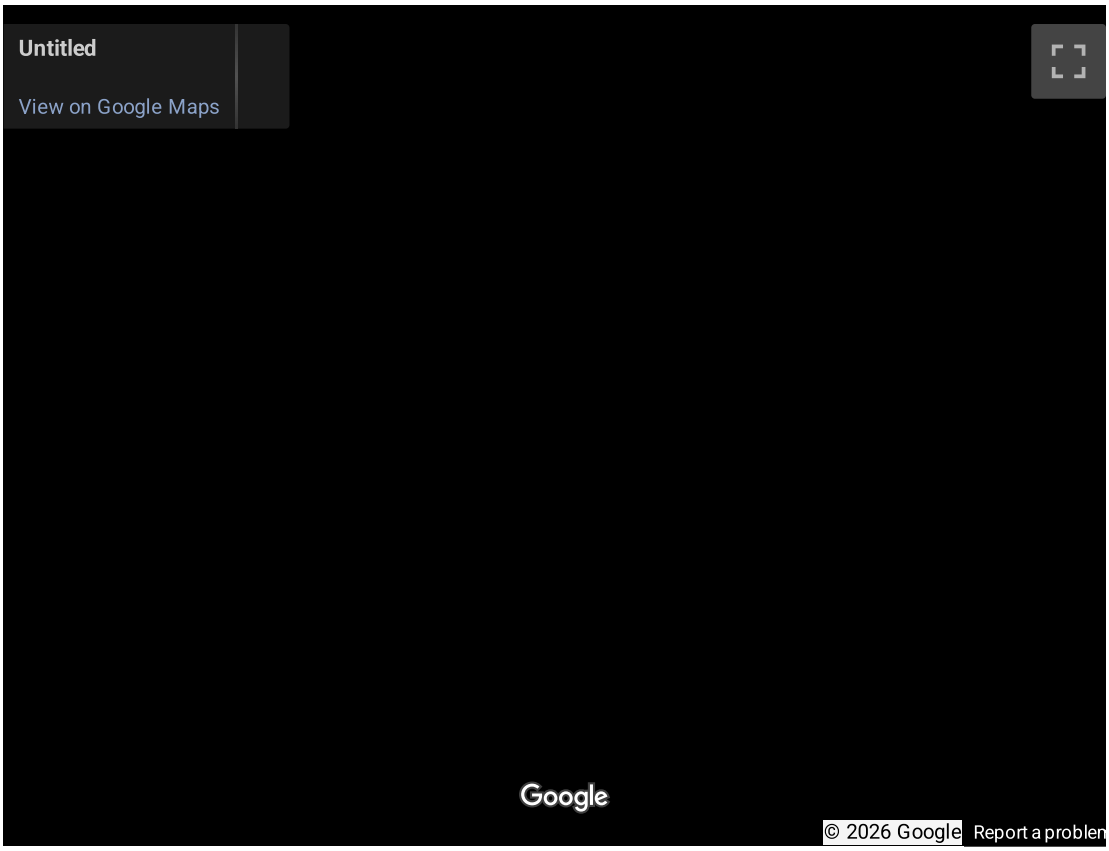
We are used to seeing the pyramids at Giza in alluring photographs, where they appear as massive and remote monuments rising up from an open, barren desert. Visitors might be surprised to find, then, that there is a golf course and resort only a few hundred feet from the Great Pyramid, and that the burgeoning suburbs of Giza (part of the greater metropolitan area of Cairo) have expanded right up to the foot of the Sphinx. This urban encroachment and the problems that come with it—such as pollution, waste, illegal activities, and auto traffic—are now the biggest threats to these invaluable examples of global cultural heritage.

The pyramids were inscribed into the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1979, and since 1990, the organization has sponsored over a dozen missions to evaluate their status. It has supported the restoration of the Sphinx, as well as measures to curb the impact of tourism and manage the growth of the neighboring village. Still, threats to the site continue: air pollution from waste incineration **contributes to the degradation of the stones**, and the massive illegal quarrying of sand on the neighboring plateau has created holes large enough to be seen on Google Earth. Egypt's 2011 uprisings and their chaotic political and economic aftermath also negatively impacted tourism, one of the country's most important industries, and the number of visitors is only now **beginning to rise once more**.

UNESCO has continually monitored these issues, but its biggest task with regard to Giza has been to advocate for the **rerouting of a highway** that was originally slated to cut through the desert between the pyramids and the necropolis of Saqqara to the south. The government eventually agreed to build the highway north of the pyramids. However, as the Cairo metropolitan area (the largest in Africa, with a population of over 20 million) continues to expand, planners are now proposing a multilane tunnel to be constructed underneath the Giza Plateau. UNESCO and ICOMOS **are calling** for in-depth studies of the project's potential impact, as well as an overall site management plan for the Giza pyramids that would include ways to halt the continued impact of illegal dumping and quarrying.

As massive as they are, the pyramids at Giza are not immutable. With the rapid growth of Cairo, they will need sufficient attention and protection if they are to remain intact as key touchstones of ancient history.

Backstory by Dr. Naraelle Hohensee



Additional resources

Egyptian Art in the Age of the Pyramids, The Metropolitan Museum of Art

UNESCO webpage for Memphis and its Necropolis – the Pyramid Fields from Giza to Dahshur

Giza 3D

Giza archives, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

Building the Great Pyramid, BBC

Mark Lehner, *The Complete Pyramids*, Thames and Hudson, 2008.

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8.2.3: Pyramid of Khufu

by DR. AMY CALVERT



Figure **8.2.3.1**: Pyramid of Khufu, c. 2551-2528 B.C.E. (photo: Dr. Amy Calvert)

Size

The Great Pyramid, the largest of the three, was built by the pharaoh Khufu and rises to a height of 146 meters (481 feet) with a base length of more than 230 meters (750 feet) per side. The greatest difference in length among the four sides is a mere 4.4 cm (1 ¾ inches) and the base is level within 2.1 cm (less than an inch), an astonishing engineering accomplishment.

Construction: inner core stones, and outer casing stones

The pyramid contains an estimated 2,300,000 blocks, some of which are upwards of 50 tons. Like the pyramids built by his predecessor Snefru and those that followed on the Giza plateau, Khufu's pyramid is constructed of inner, roughly hewn, locally quarried core stones, which is all we see today, and angled, outer casing blocks laid in even horizontal courses with spaces filled with gypsum plaster.

The fine outer casing stones, which have long since been removed, were laid with great precision. These blocks of white Tura limestone would have given the pyramid a smooth surface and been quite bright and reflective. At the very top of the pyramid would have sat a capstone, known as a pyramidion, that may have been gilt. This dazzling point, shining in the intense sunlight, would have been visible for a great distance.



Figure **8.2.3.2**: Detail of core blocks of Khufu's pyramid, c. 2551-2528 B.C.E. (photo: Dr. Amy Calvert)

Interior

The interior chambers and passageways of Khufu's pyramid are unique and include a number of enigmatic features. There is an unfinished subterranean chamber whose function is mysterious as well as a number of so-called 'air shafts' that radiate out from the upper chambers.

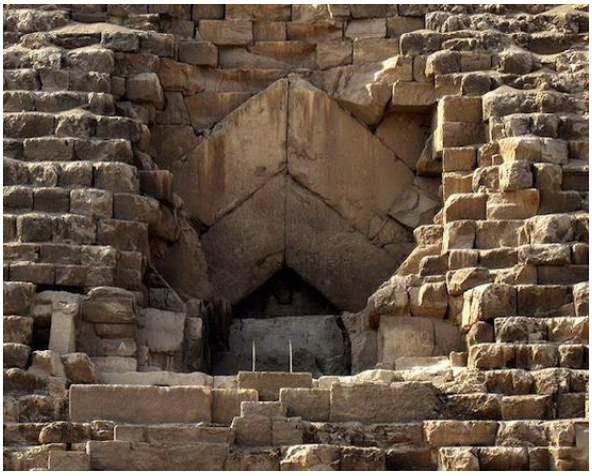


Figure **8.2.3.3**: Entrance, Pyramid of Khufu, c. 2551-2528 B.C.E. (photo: **Olaf Tausch**, CC BY 3.0)

These have recently been explored using small robots, but a series of blocking stones have obscured the passages. When entering the pyramid, one has to crawl up a cramped ascending chamber that opens suddenly into a stunning Grand Gallery. This corbelled passage soars to a height of 8.74 m (26 feet) and leads up to the King's Chamber, which is constructed entirely from red granite brought from the southern quarries at Aswan.

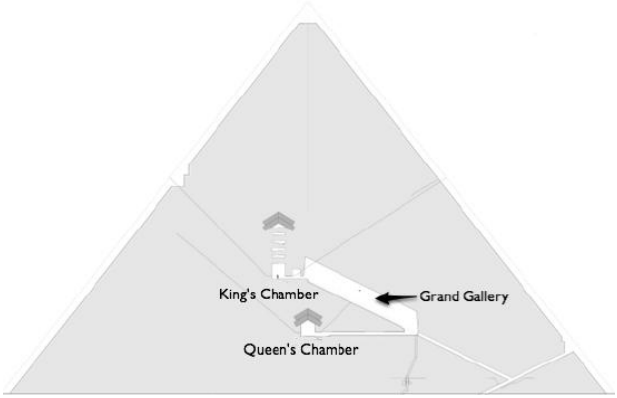


Figure **8.2.3.4**: Diagram of the interior of the Pyramid of Khufu

Above the King's Chamber are five stress-relieving chambers of massive granite blocks topped with immense cantilevered blocks forming a pent roof to distribute the weight of the mountain of masonry above it. The king's sarcophagus, also carved from red granite, sits empty at the exact central axis of the pyramid. This burial chamber was sealed with a series of massive granite blocks and the entrance to the shaft filled with limestone in an effort to obscure the opening.

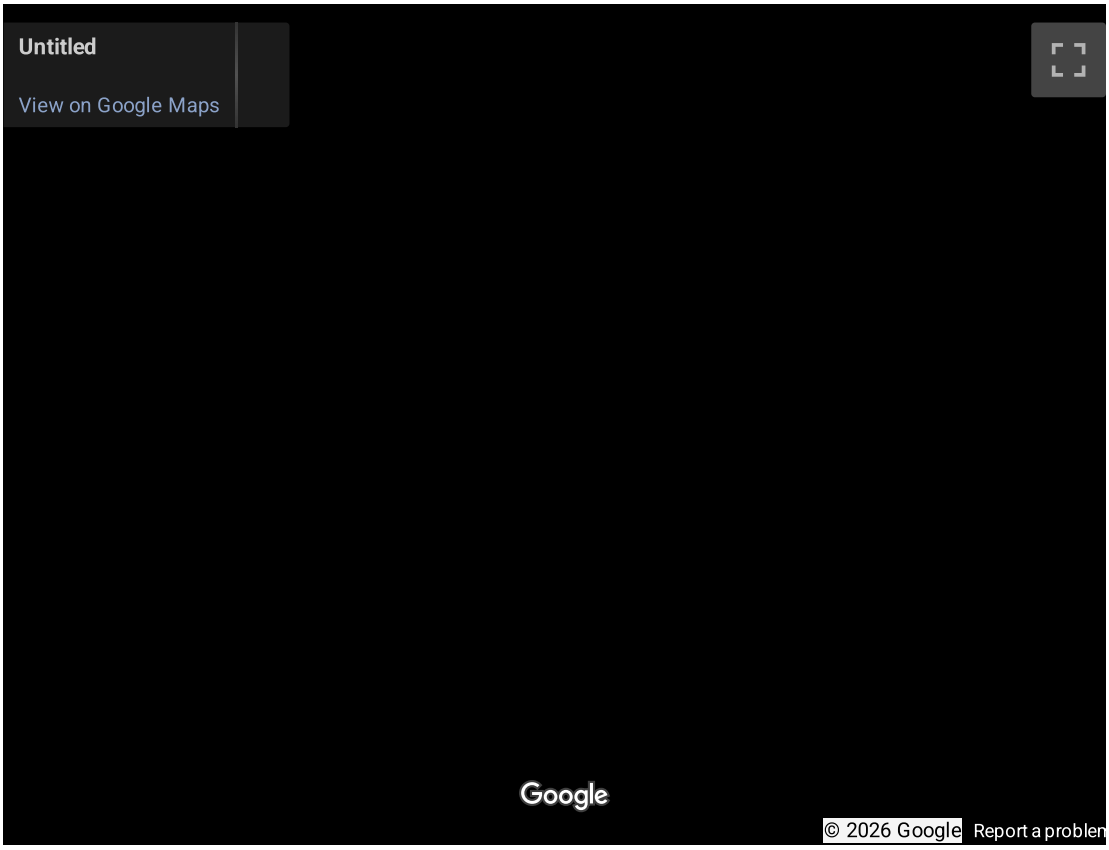
Boats for the afterlife

Khufu's mortuary complex also included seven large boat pits. Five of these are located to the east of the pyramid and were a sort of model; these brick-lined boat shaped elements were probably intended for use in the afterlife to transport the king to stellar destinations. Boat burials and models of this type had a long history in royal mortuary contexts—a fleet of 14 such pits, containing actual boats averaging 18-19 meters (60 feet) in length encased inside, were discovered at a Dynasty 1 mortuary enclosure in Abydos, the cemetery of Egypt's earliest kings. Often, however, as with Khufu, the pits were simply boat shaped models rather than containing actual boats.



Figure **8.2.3.5**: Reconstructed funerary boat of Khufu (Photo: Dr. Amy Calvert)

In addition to these model boat pits, however, on the south side of the pyramid Khufu had two massive, rectangular stone lined pits that contained completely disassembled boats. One of these has been removed and reconstructed in a special museum on the south side of the pyramid. This cedar boat measures 43.3 meters (142 feet) in length and was constructed of 1,224 separate pieces stitched together with ropes. These boats appear to have been used for the funerary procession and as ritual objects connected to the last earthly voyage of the king, and were then dismantled and interred.



Additional resources:

Mark Lehner, *The Complete Pyramids (*Thames and Hudson, 2008).

David O'Connor, Abydos: *Egypt's First Pharaohs and the Cult of Osiris* (Thames and Hudson, 2011).

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8.2.4: Pyramid of Khafre and the Great Sphinx

by DR. AMY CALVERT



Figure **8.2.4.1**: Pyramid of Khafre, c. 2520-2494 (photo: Dr. Amy Calvert)

Size and appearance

The second great pyramid of Giza, that was built by Khufu's second son Khafre, has a section of outer casing that still survives at the very top (and which would have entirely covered all three of the great pyramids at Giza). Although this monument appears larger than that of his father, it is actually slightly smaller but was constructed 10 m (33 feet) higher on the plateau.

Interior

The interior is much simpler than that of Khufu's pyramid, with a single burial chamber, one small subsidiary chamber, and two passageways. The mortuary temple at the pyramid base was more complex than that of Khufu and was filled with statuary of the king–over 52 life-size or larger images originally filled the structure.

Valley temple

Khafre's valley temple, located at the east end of the causeway leading from the pyramid base, is beautifully preserved. It was constructed of megalithic blocks sheathed with granite and floors of polished white calcite. Statue bases indicate that an additional 24 images of the pharaoh were originally located in this temple.



Figure **8.2.4.2**: Pillars in Valley Temple of Khafre (photo: Dr. Amy Calvert)

The Great Sphinx

Right next to the causeway leading from Khafre's valley temple to the mortuary temple sits the first truly colossal sculpture in Egyptian history: the Great Sphinx. This close association indicates that this massive depiction of a recumbent lion with the head of a king was carved for Khafre.



Figure **8.2.4.3**: The Great Sphinx (photo: Dr. Amy Calvert)

The Sphinx is carved from the bedrock of the Giza plateau, and it appears that the core blocks used to construct the king's valley temple were quarried from the layers of stone that run along the upper sides of this massive image.

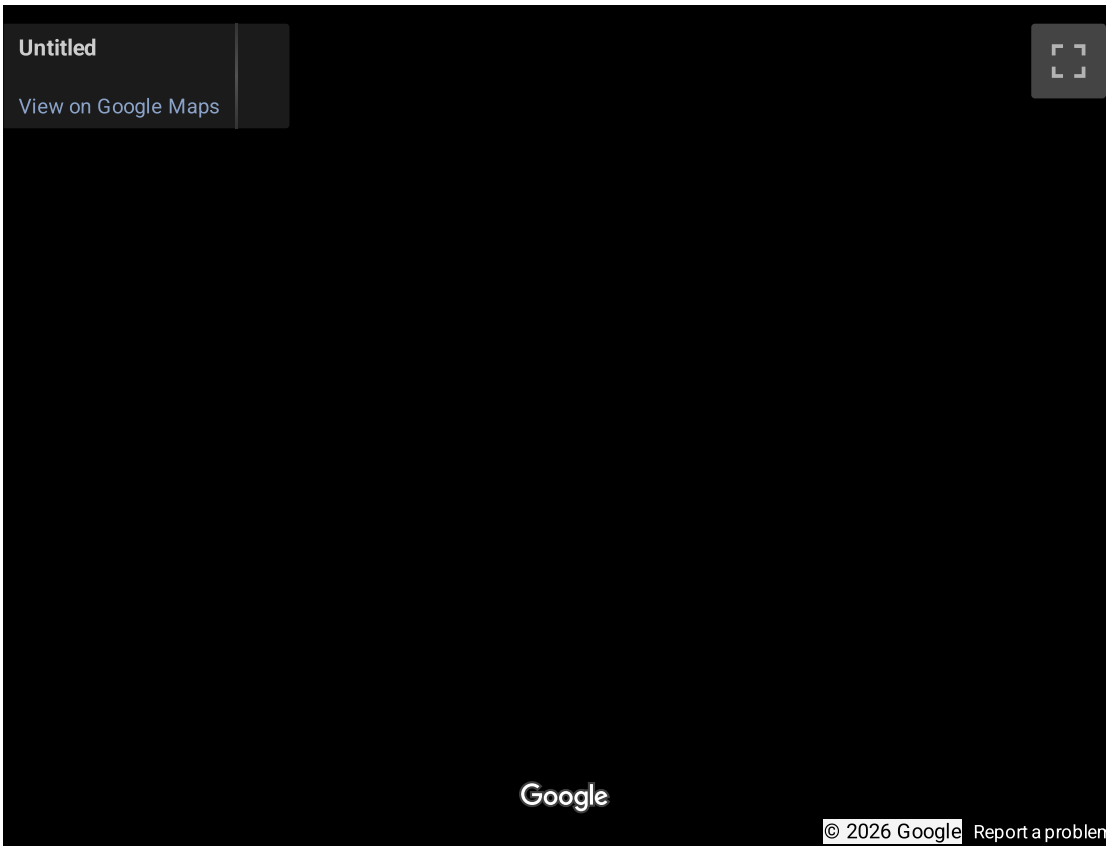


Figure **8.2.4.4**: Khafre, Egyptian Museum, Cairo

Khafre

The lion was a royal symbol as well as being connected with the sun as a symbol of the horizon; the fusion of this powerful animal with the head of the pharaoh was an icon that survived and was often used throughout Egyptian history. The king's head is on a smaller scale than the body. This appears to have been due to a defect in the stone; a weakness recognized by the sculptors who compensated by elongating the body.

Directly in front of the Sphinx is a separate temple dedicated to the worship of its cult, but very little is known about it since there are no Old Kingdom texts that refer to the Sphinx or its temple. The temple is similar to Khafre's mortuary temple and has granite pillars forming a colonnade around a central courtyard. However, it is unique in that it has two sanctuaries—one on the east and one on the west—likely connected to the rising and setting sun.



Additional resources:

The Giza Plateau Mapping Project (GPMP)

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8.2.5: Pyramid of Menkaure

by DR. AMY CALVERT



Figure \(\PageIndex{1\): Pyramid of Menkaure (Photo: Dr. Amy Calvert)

The third of the major pyramids at Giza belongs to Mekaure. This is the smallest of the three, rising to a height of 65 meters (213 feet), but the complex preserved some of the most stunning examples of sculpture to survive from all of Egyptian history.

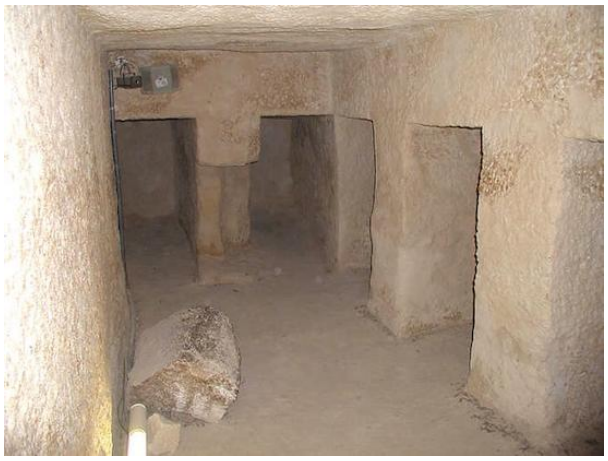


Figure **8.2.5.2**: Pyramid of Menkaure, chamber with niches

Mekaure's pyramid chambers are more complex than those of Khafre and include a chamber carved with decorative panels and another chamber with six large niches. The burial chamber is lined with massive granite blocks.

His black stone sarcophagus, also carved with niched panels, was discovered inside, but was lost at sea as it was being transported to England.

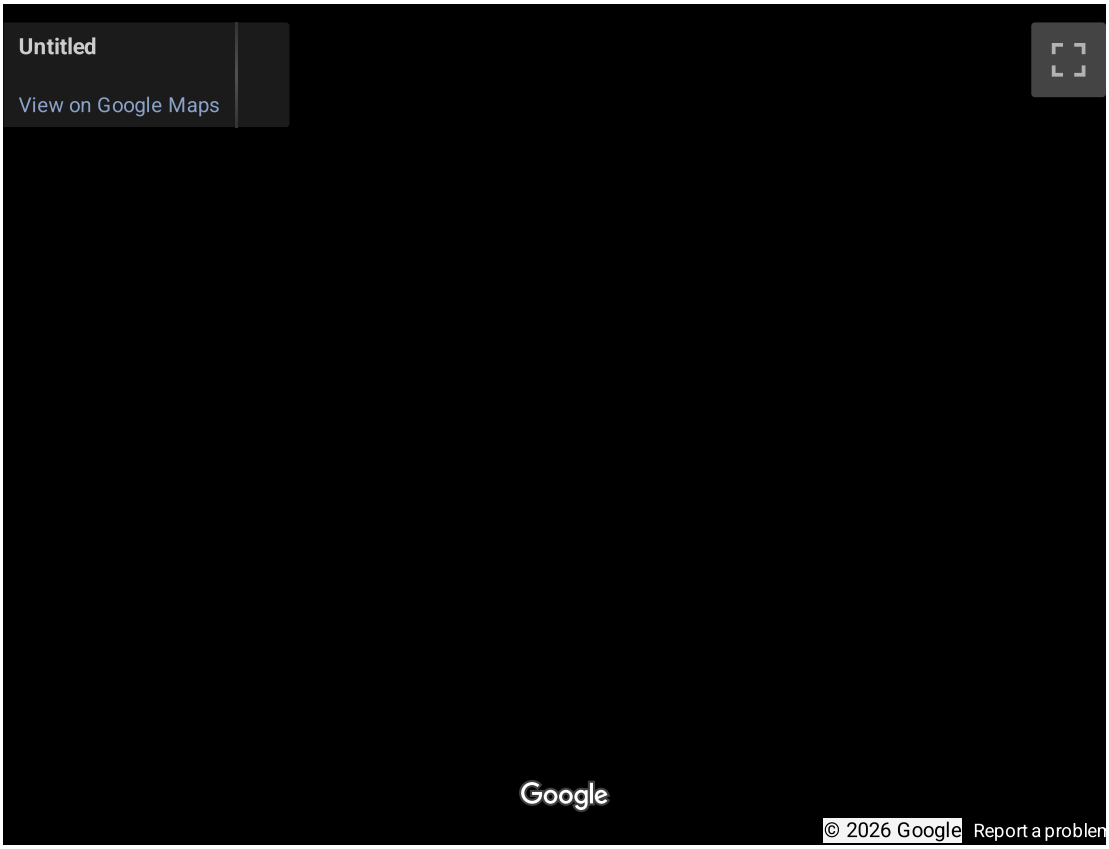


Figure **8.2.5.3**: King Menkaure (Mycerinus) and queen, 2490-2472 B.C.E., Greywacke, overall: 142.2 x 57.1 x 55.2 cm, 676.8 kg / 56 x 22 1/2 x 21 3/4 inches, 1492.1 pounds (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston)

Within Menkaure's mortuary and valley temples, neither of which were completed before his death, excavation revealed a series of statues of the king.

The stunning diad of the king with his primary queen, Khamerernebty II (now in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston), as well as a number of triads showing the king being embraced by various deities, were discovered in the valley temple and were originally set up surrounding the open court.

This temple was still an active place of cult late in the Old Kingdom and was almost entirely rebuilt at the end of the 6th dynasty after it was heavily damaged by a flood.



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8.2.6: King Menkaure (Mycerinus) and queen

by DR. AMY CALVERT

Serene ethereal beauty, raw royal power, and evidence of artistic virtuosity have rarely been simultaneously captured as well as in this breathtaking, nearly life-size statue of the pharaoh Menkaure and a queen. Smooth as silk, the meticulously finished surface of the dark stone captures the physical ideals of the time and creates a sense of eternity and immortality even today.

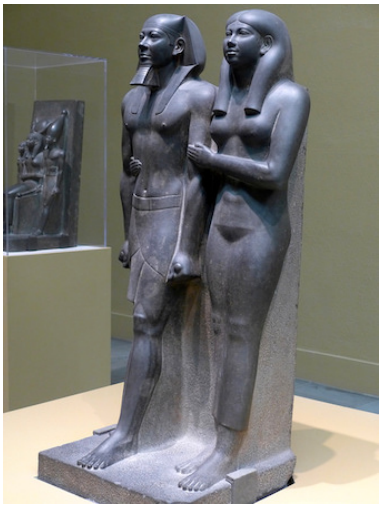


Figure **8.2.6.1**: King Menkaure (Mycerinus) and queen, 2490–2472 B.C.E., greywacke, 142.2 x 57.1 x 55.2 cm (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston), photo: **tutincommon** (CC BY-NC 2.0)

Undoubtedly, the most iconic structures from Ancient Egypt are the massive and enigmatic Great Pyramids that stand on a natural stone shelf, now known as the Giza plateau, on the south-western edge of modern Cairo. The three primary pyramids at Giza were constructed during the height of a period known as the Old Kingdom and served as burial places, memorials, and places of worship for a series of deceased rulers–the largest belonging to King Khufu, the middle to his son Khafre, and the smallest of the three to his son Menkaure.



Figure **8.2.6.2**: Giza plateau, photo: **kairoinfo4u** (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Pyramids are not stand-alone structures. Those at Giza formed only a part of a much larger complex that included a temple at the base of the pyramid itself, long causeways and corridors, small subsidiary pyramids, and a second temple (known as a valley temple) some distance from the pyramid. These Valley Temples were used to perpetuate the cult of the deceased king and were active places of worship for hundreds of years (sometimes much longer) after the king's death. Images of the king were placed in these temples to serve as a focus for worship—several such images have been found in these contexts, including the magnificent seated statue of Khafre, now in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo.



Figure 8.2.6.3: Head and torso (detail), Khafre enthroned, from Giza, Egypt, c. 2520-2494 B.C.E., diorite. 5’ 6 inches high (Egyptian Museum, Cairo)

On January 10, 1910, excavators under the direction of George Reisner, head of the joint Harvard University-Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Expedition to Egypt, uncovered an astonishing collection of statuary in the Valley Temple connected to the Pyramid of Menkaure. Menkaure’s pyramid had been explored in the 1830s (using dynamite, no less). His carved granite sarcophagus was removed (and subsequently lost at sea), and while the Pyramid Temple at the base was in only mediocre condition; the Valley Temple, was—happily—basically ignored.



Figure 8.2.6.4: George Reisner and Georg Steindorff at Harvard Camp, looking east toward Khufu and Khafre pyramids, 1935, photo by Albert Morton Lythgoe (**Giza archives**)

Reisner had been excavating on the Giza plateau for several years at this point; his team had already explored the elite cemetery to the west of the Great Pyramid of Khufu before turning their attention to the Menkaure complex, most particularly the barely-touched Valley Temple.



Figure **8.2.6.5**: Four greywacke triads, Menkaure valley temple, S magazines, corridor III 4, photo: 1908 (The Giza Archives). **View** one of the triads in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

In the southwest corner of the structure, the team discovered a magnificent cache of statuary carved in a smooth-grained dark stone called greywacke or schist. There were a number of triad statues—each showing 3 figures—the king, the fundamentally important goddess Hathor, and the personification of a nome (a geographic designation, similar to the modern idea of a region, district, or county). Hathor was worshiped in the pyramid temple complexes along with the supreme sun god Re and the god Horus, who was represented by the living king. The goddess's name is actually 'Hwt-hor', which means "The House of Horus," and she was connected to the wife of the living king and the mother of the future king. Hathor was also a fierce protector who guarded her father Re; as an "Eye of Re" (the title assigned to a group of dangerous goddesses), she could embody the intense heat of the sun and use that blazing fire to destroy his enemies.



Figure **8.2.6.6**: Menkaure flanked by Hathor (left) and nome goddess (Egyptian Museum, Cairo)

There were 4 complete triads, one incomplete, and at least one other in a fragmentary condition. The precise meaning of these triads is uncertain. Reisner believed that there was one for each ancient Egyptian nome, meaning there would have originally been more than thirty of them. More recent scholarship, however, suggests that there were originally 8 triads, each connected with a major site associated with the cult of Hathor. Hathor's prominence in the triads (she actually takes the central position in one of the sculptures) and her singular importance to kingship lends weight to this theory.

In addition to the triads, Reisner's team also revealed the extraordinary dyad statue of Menkaure and a queen that is breathtakingly singular.



Figure **8.2.6.7**: Heads and torsos (detail), King Menkaure (Mycerinus) and queen, 2490–2472 B.C.E., greywacke, 142.2 x 57.1 x 55.2 cm (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston), photo: 1910 (The Giza Archives)

The two figures stand side-by-side on a simple, squared base and are supported by a shared back pillar. They both face to the front, although Menkaure's head is noticeably turned to his right—this image was likely originally positioned within an architectural niche, making it appear as though they were emerging from the structure. The broad-shouldered, youthful body of the king is covered only with a traditional short pleated kilt, known as a shendjet, and his head sports the primary pharaonic insignia of the iconic striped nemes headdress (so well known from the mask of Tutankhamun) and an artificial royal beard. In his clenched fists, held straight down at his sides, Menkaure grasps ritual cloth rolls. His body is straight, strong, and eternally youthful with no signs of age. His facial features are remarkably individualized with prominent eyes, a fleshy nose, rounded cheeks, and full mouth with protruding lower lip.



Figure **8.2.6.8**: Heads (detail), King Menkaure (Mycerinus) and queen, 2490–2472 B.C.E., greywacke, 142.2 x 57.1 x 55.2 cm (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston), photo: 1910 (The Giza Archives)

Menkaure's queen provides the perfect female counterpart to his youthful masculine virility. Sensuously modeled with a beautifully proportioned body emphasized by a clinging garment, she articulates ideal mature feminine beauty. There is a sense of the individual in both faces. Neither Menkaure nor his queen are depicted in the purely idealized manner that was the norm for royal images. Instead, through the overlay of royal formality we see the depiction of a living person filling the role of pharaoh and the personal features of a particular individual in the representation of his queen.

Menkaure and his queen stride forward with their left feet—this is entirely expected for the king, as males in Egyptian sculpture almost always do so, but it is unusual for the female since they are generally depicted with feet together. They both look beyond the present and into timeless eternity, their otherworldly visage displaying no human emotion whatsoever.

The dyad was never finished—the area around the lower legs has not received a final polish, and there is no inscription. However, despite this incomplete state, the image was erected in the temple and was brightly painted—there are traces of red around the king's ears and mouth and yellow on the queen's face. The presence of paint atop the smooth, dark greywacke on a statue of the

deceased king that was originally erected in his memorial temple courtyard brings an interesting suggestion—that the paint may have been intended to wear away through exposure and, over time, reveal the immortal, black-fleshed
"Osiris" Menkaure (for more information on the symbolic associations of Egyptian materials, see **Introduction to Egyptian Art—Materials**).

Unusual for a pharaoh's image, the king has no protective cobra (known as a *uraeus*) perched on his brow. This notable absence has led to the suggestion that both the king's nemes and the queen's wig were originally covered in precious metal and that the cobra would have been part of that addition.

Based on comparison with other images, there is no doubt that this sculpture shows Menkaure, but the identity of the queen is a different matter. She is clearly a royal female. She stands at nearly equal height with the king and, of the two of them, she is the one who is entirely frontal. In fact, it may be that this dyad is focused on the queen as its central figure rather than Menkaure. The prominence of the royal female—at equal height and frontal—in addition to the protective gesture she extends has suggested that, rather than one of Mekaure's wives, this is actually his queen-mother. The function of the sculpture in any case was to ensure rebirth for the king in the Afterlife.

Additional resources:

This sculpture at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

Educator resource from the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

Menkaure Pyramid Complex from the Giza Archives

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8.2.7: The Seated Scribe

by DR. BETH HARRIS *and* DR. STEVEN ZUCKER

Seated cross-legged, with rolls of belly fat, this painted statue differs from the ideal statues of pharaohs.



Video **8.2.7.1**: Seated Scribe, c. 2500 B.C.E., c. 4th Dynasty, Old Kingdom, painted limestone with rock crystal, magnesite, and copper/arsenic inlay for the eyes and wood for the nipples, found in Saqqara

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Figure **8.2.7.48**: More Smarthistory images…

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SECTION OVERVIEW

8.3: Middle and New Kingdom

New Kingdom pharaohs controlled vast wealth. Thebes was the religious center of the period, and Pharaohs built mortuary temples here and were buried in huge rock-cut tombs.

c. 2030 - 1070 B.C.E.

8.3.1: Temple of Amun-Re and the Hypostyle Hall, Karnak

8.3.2: Ancient Thebes with its Necropolis

8.3.3: Standing Hippopotamus

8.3.4: Mortuary Temple and Large Kneeling Statue of Hatshepsut

8.3.5: The tomb-chapel of Nebamun

8.3.6: Paintings from the Tomb-chapel of Nebamun

8.3.7: A bottle and a toy- Objects from daily life

8.3.8: House Altar depicting Akhenaten, Nefertiti and Three of their Daughters

8.3.9: Portrait Head of Queen Tiye

8.3.10: Thutmose, Model Bust of Queen Nefertiti

8.3.11: Tutankhamun's tomb (innermost coffin and death mask)

8.3.12: Head of Tutankhamun

8.3.13: Hunefer's Judgement in the presence of Osiris

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8.3.1: Temple of Amun-Re and the Hypostyle Hall, Karnak

by DR. ELIZABETH CUMMINS



Figure **8.3.1.1**: View of sphinxes, the first pylon, and the central east-west aisle of Temple of Amon-Re, Karnak in Luxor, Egypt (photo: **Mark Fox**, CC: BY-NC 2.0)

The massive temple complex of Karnak was the principal religious center of the god Amun-Re in Thebes during the New Kingdom (which lasted from 1550 until 1070 B.C.E.). The complex remains one of the largest religious complexes in the world. However, Karnak was not just one temple dedicated to one god—it held not only the main precinct to the god Amun-Re—but also the precincts of the gods Mut and Montu. Compared to other temple compounds that survive from ancient Egypt, Karnak is in a poor state of preservation but it still gives scholars a wealth of information about Egyptian religion and art. About the New Kingdom, Amun-Re, Mut, and Montu



Figure **8.3.1.2**: Google Earth view of Karnak

"The Most Select of Places"

The site was first developed during the Middle Kingdom (2055-1650 B.C.E.) and was initially modest in scale but as new importance was placed on the city of Thebes, subsequent pharaohs began to place their own mark on Karnak. The main precinct alone would eventually have as many as twenty temples and chapels.[1] Karnak was known in ancient times as "The Most Select of Places" (*Ipet-isut*) and was not only the location of the cult image of Amun and a place for the god to dwell on earth but also a working estate for the priestly community who lived on site. Additional buildings included a sacred lake, kitchens, and workshops for the production of religious accoutrements.

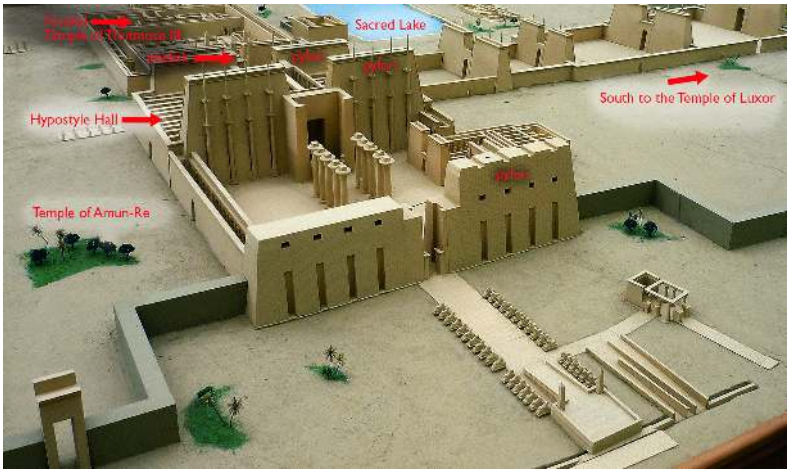


Figure **8.3.1.3**: Model of the Precinct of Amon-Re, Karnak (photo: **Rémih**, CC: BY-SA 3.0)

The main temple of Amun-Re had two axes—one that went north/south and the other that extended east/west. The southern axis continued towards the temple of Luxor and was connected by an avenue of ram-headed sphinxes.

While the sanctuary was plundered for stone in ancient times, there are still a number of unique architectural features within this vast complex. For example, the tallest obelisk in Egypt stood at Karnak and was dedicated by the female pharaoh Hatshepsut who ruled Egypt during the New Kingdom. Made of one piece of red granite, it originally had a matching obelisk that was removed by the Roman emperor Constantine and re-erected in Rome. Another unusual feature was the Festival Temple of Thutmose III, which had columns that represented tent poles, a feature this pharaoh was no doubt familiar with from his many war campaigns. What is an obelisk?

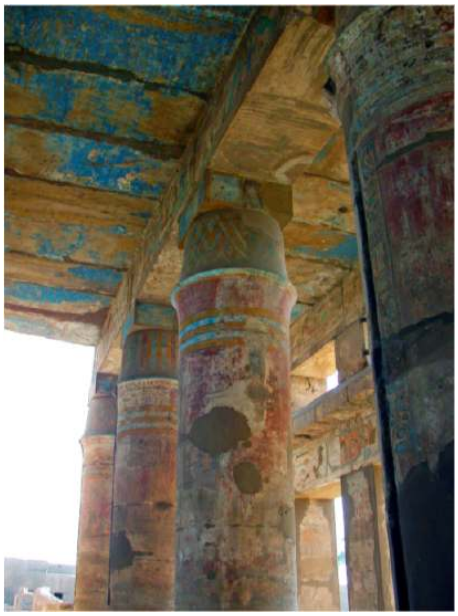


Figure **8.3.1.4**: "Tent pole" columns, Festival Temple of Thutmose III, c. 1470-25 B.C.E., sandstone, mud brick, paint, Karnak, at Luxor, Egypt (photo: Dennis Jarvis, CC: BY-SA 2.0)

Hypostyle hall

One of the greatest architectural marvels of Karnak is the hypostyle hall built during the Ramesside period (a hypostyle hall is a space with a roof supported by columns). The hall has 134 massive sandstone columns with the center twelve columns standing at 69 feet. Like most of the temple decoration, the hall would have been brightly painted and some of this paint still exists on the upper portions of the columns and ceiling today. With the center of the hall taller than the spaces on either side, the Egyptians allowed for clerestory lighting (a section of wall that allowed light and air into the otherwise dark space below). In fact, the earliest evidence for clerestory lighting comes from Egypt. Not many ancient Egyptians would have had access to this hall, since the further one went into the temple, the more restricted access became. Explain Rameesside and Clerestory



Figure **8.3.1.5**: Hypostyle Hall, c. 1250 B.C.E. (hall), 18th and 19th Dynasties, New Kingdom, sandstone and mud brick, Karnak, at Luxor, Egypt (photo: **Blalonde**, public domain)

Temple as cosmos

Conceptually, temples in Egypt were connected to the idea of *zep tepi*, or "the first time," the beginnings of the creation of the world. The temple was a reflection of this time, when the mound of creation emerged from the primeval waters. The pylons, or gateways in the temple represent the horizon, and as one moves further into the temple, the floor rises until it reaches the sanctuary of the god, giving the impression of a rising mound, like that during creation. The temple roof represented the sky and was often decorated with stars and birds. The columns were designed with lotus, papyrus, and palm plants in order to reflect the marsh-like environment of creation. The outer areas of Karnak, which was located near the Nile River, would flood during the annual inundation—an intentional effect by the ancient designers no doubt, in order to enhance the temple's symbolism.[2]

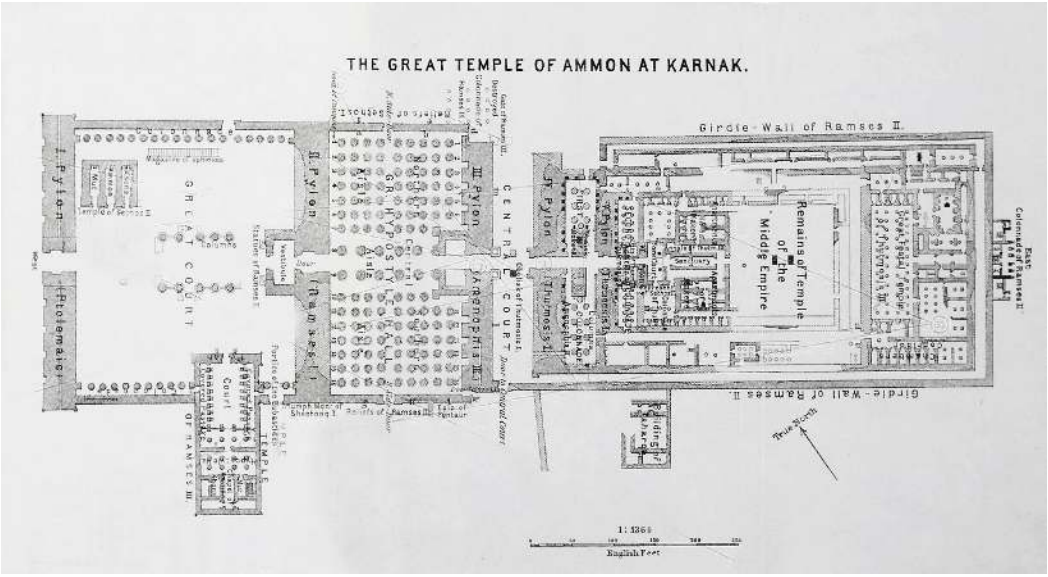


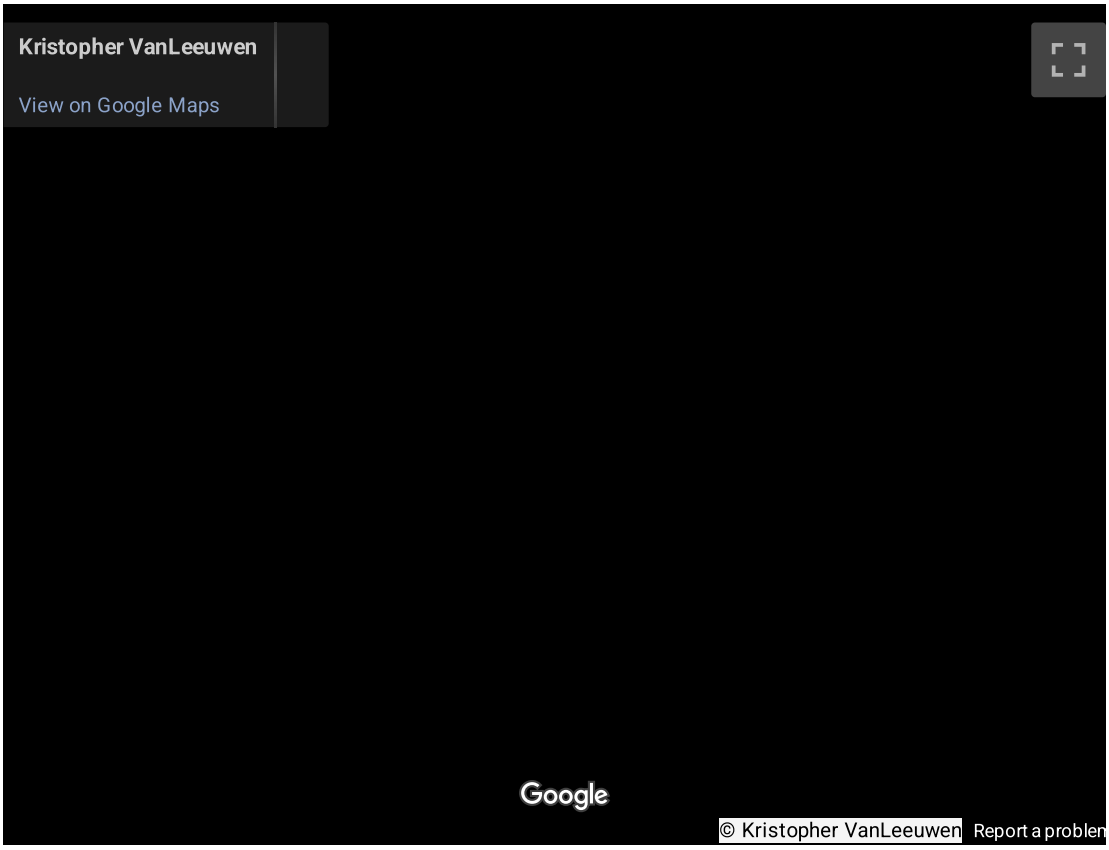
Figure **8.3.1.6**: Plan of the Temple of Amon-Re, Karnak

[1]R. Wilkinson, *The Complete Temples of Ancient Egypt* (New York, Thames & Hudson, 2000), p. 154.

[2]R. Wilkinson, *The Complete Temples of Ancient Egypt* (New York, Thames & Hudson, 2000), p. 77.



Video **8.3.1.1**: Video from UNESCO/TBS



Additional resources:

A digital resource from UCLA that provides an overview of the types of buildings and building phases of Karnak

The Karnak Great Hypostyle Project

Slide show detailing the excavation of the Mut Precinct at Karnak

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8.3.2: Ancient Thebes with its Necropolis

by UNESCO *and* TBS

From temples on the east bank of the Nile to the Valley of the Kings, Thebes was a wonder of Egyptian Civilization.



Video **8.3.2.4**: Video from UNESCO/TBS

Thebes, the city of the god Amon, was the capital of Egypt during the period of the Middle and New Kingdoms. With the temples and palaces at Karnak and Luxor, and the necropolises of the Valley of the Kings and the Valley of the Queens, Thebes is a striking testimony to Egyptian civilization at its height.

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8.3.3: Standing Hippopotamus

by THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART



Video **8.3.3.5**: Standing Hippopotamus, ca. 1961–1878 B.C.E., Egypt, Middle Kingdom, faience, 7 7/8″ x 2 15/16″ x 4 7/16″ / 20 cm x 7.5 cm x 11.2 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art). Video from **The Metropolitan Museum of Art**.

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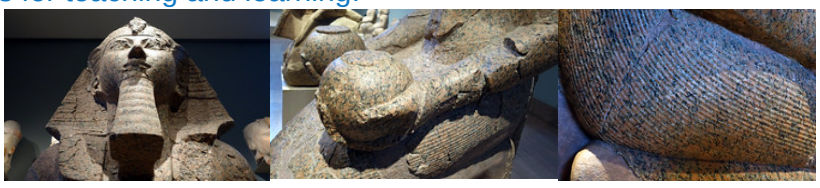
8.3.4: Mortuary Temple and Large Kneeling Statue of Hatshepsut

by DR. BETH HARRIS *and* DR. STEVEN ZUCKER





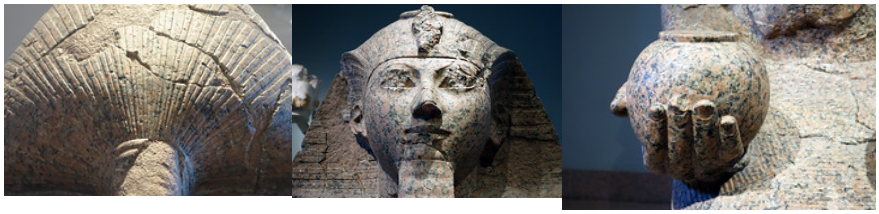
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8.3.5: The tomb-chapel of Nebamun

by THE BRITISH MUSEUM

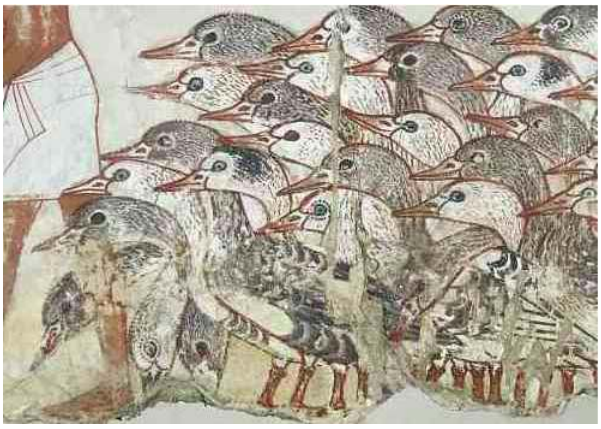


Figure 8.3.5.1: Geese (detail), from the *Presentation of the Geese*, Tomb chapel of Nebamun, c. 1350 B.C.E., paint on plaster, whole fragment: 71 x 115.5 cm, Thebes © Trustees of the British Museum

The British Museum contains 11 fragments of wall painting, which are some of the most famous images of Egyptian art. The fragments come from the now lost tomb-chapel of Nebamun, an ancient Egyptian scribe or the "scribe and grain accountant in the granary of divine offerings," in the Temple of Amun at Karnak. Nebamun died c. 1350 B.C.E., a generation or so before Tutankhamun. His name is damaged but he was almost certainly called Nebamun.

"Antiquity's equivalent to Michelangelo"

The tomb-paintings were discovered by the local agent Henry Salt in Thebes and acquired by the Museum in the 1820s. The location of the tomb from which they came is still not known with any certainty, but it is thought to be in the northern part of the necropolis in the area known as Dra Abu el-Naga. Stylistically, the magnificent wall paintings can be dated to either the final years of the reign of Amenhotep III (1390-1352 B.C.E.) or the early years of his successor. The fragments were constantly on display until the late 1990s. Since then, the fragile wall-paintings have been meticulously conserved, securing their condition for at least the next fifty years.

The project has provided numerous new insights into the superb technique of the painters. Their exuberant compositions, astonishing depictions of animal life and unparalleled handling of textures have caused one art historian to call them "antiquity's equivalent to Michelangelo." New research and scholarship have enabled new connections to be made between the fragments, allowing scholars to gain a better understanding of their original locations in the tomb. They will now be re-displayed together for the first time in a setting designed to recreate their original aesthetic impact and to evoke their original position in a small intimate chapel.



Figure 8.3.5.2: The four musicians and singers with their song written above them (detail), *Banquet Scene*, Tomb Chapel of Nebanum, c. 1350 B.C.E., 18th Dynasty, paint on plaster, whole fragment: 88 x 119 x 22 cm, Thebes © Trustees of the British Museum

The paintings show scenes of daily life and include images of banquets, agriculture, animal husbandry, hunting and scenes of offerings. The quality of the drawing and composition is outstanding, and the superbly detailed treatment of the animals makes these some of the finest paintings to survive from ancient Egypt.

A place of commemoration

Nebamun's tomb-chapel was a place for people to come and commemorate Nebamun and his wife after his death with prayers and offerings. Nebamun himself was buried somewhere beneath the floor of the innermost room of the tomb-chapel in a hidden burial chamber.The beautiful paintings, which decorated the wall, not only showed how Nebamun wanted his life to be remembered but what he wanted in his life after death.

Building a tomb-chapel was expensive and would have only been done by the wealthy. The majority of ancient Egyptians would have been buried in cemeteries.

How the tomb-chapel was built and used

Nebamun's tomb-chapel was cut into the desert hills opposite the city of Thebes (modern Luxor and Karnak). Workmen would have cut the tomb out of the rock using flint tools and copper-alloy chisels. The walls and ceilings of the tomb were then covered in a layer of mud plaster, followed by a layer of white plaster. This provided a smooth surface for painting.

The tomb-chapel was painted by a team of artists. They first sketched out the designs and figures before painting the final pattern. Sometimes the sketches can still be seen, showing how the artists changed their minds. The artists used black, white, red, yellow, blue and green paints.

The tomb-chapel probably contained three sections: an outer chamber, an inner chamber and an underground burial chamber, which was sealed once Nebamun and his wife had been buried. Outside the tomb-chapel a courtyard was cut into the hillside. The walls of the chapel facade were decorated with rows of pottery cones stamped with the names and titles of the owner.

Suggested readings:

M. Hooper, *The Tomb of Nebamun* (London, British Museum Press, 2007).

R. Parkinson, *The painted Tomb-chapel of Nebamun* (London, British Museum Press, 2008).

A. Middleton and K. Uprichard, (eds.), *The Nebamun Wall Paintings: Conservation, Scientific Analysis and Display at the British Museum* (London, Archetype, 2008).

Explore the tomb-chapel of Nebamun in a 3D interactive animation at The British Museum

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8.3.6: Paintings from the Tomb-chapel of Nebamun

by THE BRITISH MUSEUM

The fragments from the wall painting in the tomb-chapel of Nebamun are keenly observed vignettes of Nebamun and his family enjoying both work and play. Some concern the provision of the funerary cult that was celebrated in the tomb-chapel, some show scenes of Nebamun's life as an elite official, and others show him and his family enjoying life for all eternity, as in the famous scene of the family hunting in the marshes. Together they decorated the small tomb-chapel with vibrant and engaging images of an elite lifestyle that Nebamun hoped would continue in the afterlife.

Hunting in the marshes



Figure **8.3.6.1**: Nebamun fowling in the marshes, Tomb-chapel of Nebamun, c. 1350 B.C.E., 18th Dynasty, paint on plaster, 83 x 98 cm, Thebes © Trustees of the British Museum

Nebamun is shown hunting birds from a small boat in the marshes of the Nile with his wife Hatshepsut and their young daughter. Such scenes had already been traditional parts of tomb-chapel decoration for hundreds of years and show the dead tomb-owner "enjoying himself and seeing beauty," as the hieroglyphic caption here says.

This is more than a simple image of recreation. Fertile marshes were seen as a place of rebirth and eroticism. Hunting animals could represent Nebamun's triumph over the forces of nature as he was reborn. The huge striding figure of Nebamun dominates the scene, forever happy and forever young, surrounded by the rich and varied life of the marsh.

There was originally another half of the scene which showed Nebamun spearing fish. This half of the wall is lost, apart from two old photographs of small fragments of Nebamun and his young son. The painters have captured the scaly and shiny quality of the fish.

A tawny cat catches birds among the papyrus stems. Cats were family pets, but in artistic depictions like this they could also represent the Sun-god hunting the enemies of light and order. His unusual gilded eye hints at the religious meanings of this scene.



Figure **8.3.6.2**: Cat catching birds in the papyrus clump (detail), from the *Fowling in the Marshes*, 18th Dynasty, Tomb of Nebamun, from the tomb of Nebanum, c. 1350 B.C.E., 18th Dynasty, paint on plaster, Thebes © The Trustees of the British Museum

The artists have filled every space with lively details. The marsh is full of lotus flowers and Plain Tiger butterflies. They are freely and delicately painted, suggesting the pattern and texture of their wings.

Nebamun's Garden



Figure **8.3.6.3**: Nebamun's garden, Tomb-chapel of Nebamun, c.1350 B.C.E., 18th Dynasty, paint on plaster, 64 cm high, Thebes, Egypt © Trustees of the British Museum

Nebamun's garden in the afterlife is not unlike the earthly gardens of wealthy Egyptians. The pool is full of birds and fish, and surrounded by borders of flowers and shady rows of trees. The fruit trees include sycamore-figs, date-palms and dom-palms—the dates are shown with different degrees of ripeness.

On the right side of the pool a goddess leans out of a tree and offers fruit and drinks to Nebamun (now lost). The artists accidentally painted her skin red at first but then repainted it yellow, the correct color for a goddess' skin. On the left, a sycamore-fig tree speaks and greets Nebamun as the owner of the garden; its words are recorded in the hieroglyphs.



Figure **8.3.6.4**: Pool (detail) Nebamun's garden, Tomb-chapel of Nebamun, c.1350 B.C.E., 18th Dynasty, paint on plaster, 64 cm high, Thebes, Egypt© Trustees of the British Museum

Here the pool is shown from above, with three rows of trees arranged around its edges. The waves of the pool were painted with a darker blue pigment; much of this has been lost, like the green on the trees and bushes.

Surveying the fields



Figure **8.3.6.5**: Surveying the fields for Nebamun, Tomb-chapel of Nebamun, c. 1350 B.C.E., 18th Dynasty, paint on plaster, 106.7 x 45.8 cm, Thebes, Egypt © Trustees of the British Museum

Nebamun was the accountant in charge of grain at the great Temple of Amun at Karnak. This scene from his tomb-chapel shows officials inspecting fields. A farmer checks the boundary marker of the field.

Nearby, two chariots for the party of officials wait under the shade of a sycamore-fig tree. Other smaller fragments from this wall are now in the Egyptian Museum in Berlin, Germany and show the grain being harvested and processed.

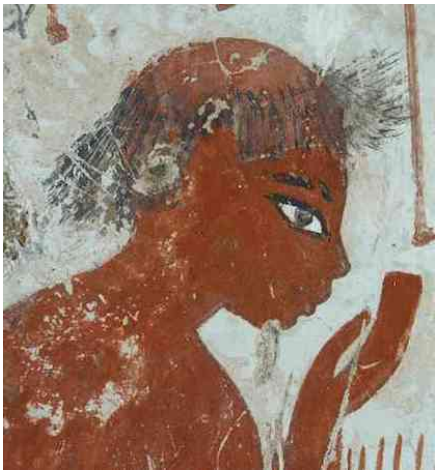


Figure **8.3.6.6**: Old man assessing crops (detail), *Surveying the fields for Nebamun*, Tomb-chapel of Nebanum, c. 1350 B.C.E., 18th Dynasty, paint on plaster, whole fragment: 106.7 x 45.8 cm, Thebes © Trustees of the British Museum

The old farmer is shown balding, badly shaven, poorly dressed, and with a protruding navel. He is taking an oath saying: “As the Great God who is in the sky endures, the boundary-stone is exact!”

“The Chief of the Measurers of the Granary,” (mostly lost) holds a rope decorated with the head of Amun’s sacred ram for measuring the god’s fields. After Nebamun died, the rope’s head was hacked out, but later, perhaps in Tutankhamun’s reign, someone clumsily restored it with mud-plaster and redrew it.

Nebamun’s cattle



Figure **8.3.6.7**: Nebamun’s cattle, Tomb-chapel of Nebamun, c. 1350 B.C.E., 18th Dynasty, paint on plaster, 58.5 x 10.5 cm, Thebes, Egypt © Trustees of the British Museum

This fragment is part of a wall showing Nebamun inspecting flocks of geese and herds of cattle. Hieroglyphs describe the scene and record what the farmers say as they squabble in the queue. The alternating colors and patterns of cattle create a superb sense of animal movement.



Figure **8.3.6.8**: Cattle (detail), *Nebamun’s cattle*, Tomb-chapel of Nebamun, c. 1350 B.C.E., 18th Dynasty, paint on plaster, whole fragment: 58.5 x 10.5 cm, Thebes, Egypt © Trustees of the British Museum

The herdsman is telling the farmer in front of him in the queue:

Come on! Get away!
Don’t speak in the presence of the praised one!
He detests people talking ….
Pass on in quiet and in order …
He knows all affairs, does the scribe and counter of grain of [Amun], Neb[amun].

The name of the god Amun has been hacked out in this caption where it appears in Nebamun’s name and title. Shortly after Nebamun died, King Akhenaten (1352–1336 B.C.E.) had Amun’s name erased from monuments as part of his religious reforms.



Figure **8.3.6.9**: Nebamun’s geese, Tomb-chapel of Nebamun, c. 1350 B.C.E., 18th Dynasty, paint on plaster, 71 x 115.5 cm, Thebes © Trustees of the British Museum

This scene is part of a wall showing Nebamun inspecting flocks of geese and herds of cattle. He watches as farmers drive the animals towards him; his scribes (secretaries) write down the number of animals for his records. Hieroglyphs describe the scene and record what the farmers say as they squabble in the queue.



Figure **8.3.6.10**: Geese (detail), *Nebamun’s Geese*, Tomb-chapel of Nebamun, c. 1350 B.C.E., 18th Dynasty, paint on plaster, whole fragment: 71 x 115.5 cm, Thebes © Trustees of the British Museum



Figure **8.3.6.11**: Scribe (detail), *Nebamun’s geese*, Tomb-chapel of Nebamun, c. 1350 B.C.E., 18th Dynasty, paint on plaster, whole fragment: 71 x 115.5 cm, Thebes © Trustees of the British Museum

This scribe holds a palette (pen-box) under his arm and presents a roll of papyrus to Nebamun. He is well dressed and has small rolls of fat on his stomach, indicating his superior position in life. Beside him are chests for his records and a bag containing his writing equipment.

Farmers bow down and make gestures of respect towards Nebamun. The man behind them holds a stick and tells them: “Sit down and don’t speak!” The farmers’ geese are painted as a huge and lively gaggle, some pecking the ground and some flapping their wings.

A feast for Nebamun (top half)



Figure **8.3.6.12**: A feast for Nebamun, the top half of a scene from the Tomb-chapel of Nebamun, c. 1350 B.C.E., 18th Dynasty, paint on plaster, 88 x 119 cm, Thebes © Trustees of the British Museum

An entire wall of the tomb-chapel showed a feast in honor of Nebamun. Naked serving-girls and servants wait on his friends and relatives. Married guests sit in pairs on fine chairs, while the young women turn and talk to each other. This erotic scene of relaxation and wealth is something for Nebamun to enjoy for all eternity. The richly-dressed guests are entertained by dancers and musicians, who sit on the ground playing and clapping. The words of their song in honor of Nebamun are written above them:

The earth-god has caused
his beauty to grow in every body…
the channels are filled with water anew,
and the land is flooded with love of him.

Some of the musicians look out of the paintings, showing their faces frontally. This is very unusual in Egyptian art, and gives a sense of liveliness to these lower-class women, who are less formally drawn than the wealthy guests. The young dancers are sinuously drawn and are naked apart from their jewelry.



Figure **8.3.6.13**: Musicians and dancers (detail), *A feast for Nebamun*, Tomb-chapel of Nebamun, c. 1350 B.C.E., 18th Dynasty, paint on plaster, whole fragment: 88 x 119 cm, Thebes © Trustees of the British Museum

A rack of large wine jars is decorated with grapes, vines and garlands of flowers. Many of the guests also wear garlands and smell lotus flowers. All the guests wear elaborate linen clothes. The artists have painted the cloth as if it were transparent, to show that it is very fine. These elegant sensual dresses fall in loose folds around the guests' bodies.

Men and women's skins are painted in different colors: the men are tanned and the women are paler. In one place the artists altered the drawing of these wooden stools and corrected their first sketch with white paint.

Servant's bringing offerings



Figure 8.3.6.14: Servants bringing offerings, Tomb-chapel of Nebamun, c. 1350 B.C.E., 18th Dynasty, paint on plaster, Thebes, Egypt © Trustees of the British Museum

A procession of simply-dressed servants bring offerings of food to Nebamun, including sheaves of grain and animals from the desert. Tomb-chapels were built so that people could come and make offerings in memory of the dead, and this a common scene on their walls. The border at the bottom shows that this scene was the lowest one on this wall.

One servant holds two desert hares by their ears. The animals have wonderfully textured fur and long whiskers. The superb draughtsmanship and composition make this standard scene very fresh and lively.



Figure 8.3.6.15: Estate worker bringing a hare from the fields (detail),*Servants bringing offerings*, Tomb-chapel of Nebamun, c. 1350 B.C.E., 18th Dynasty, paint on plaster, whole fragment: 41 cm, Thebes, Egypt © Trustees of the British Museum

The artists have even varied the servants' simple clothes. The folds of each kilt are different. With one of these kilts, the artist changed his mind and painted a different set of folds over his first version, which is visible through the white paint.

Suggested readings:

M. Hooper, *The Tomb of Nebamun* (London, British Museum Press, 2007).

R. Parkinson, *The painted Tomb-chapel of Nebamun* (London, British Museum Press, 2008).

A. Middleton and K. Uprichard, (eds.), *The Nebamun Wall Paintings: Conservation, Scientific Analysis and Display at the British Museum* (London, Archetype, 2008).

Explore the tomb-chapel of Nebamun in a 3D interactive animation at The British Museum

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8.3.7: A bottle and a toy- Objects from daily life

by THE BRITISH MUSEUM

The wall paintings from Nebamun's tomb-chapel depict an idealized vision of daily ancient Egyptian life. Much less is known about the lives of the majority of society. The study of human remains in poor cemeteries is often the only way to learn about the short lives of most ancient Egyptians. Many of the objects that remain belonged to the wealthy and survived only because they were buried in tombs. They provide a glimpse of these elite people's lavish lifestyles.

Glass bottle in the form of a fish



Figure **8.3.7.1**: Glass bottle in the form of a fish, c. 1390-1336 B.C.E., 18th Dynasty, glass, 14.5 cm, el-Amarna, Egypt © Trustees of the British Museum

Glass vessels seem to have been primarily functional rather than ritual objects; their main use was as containers for cosmetics or precious oils. However, in this case the fish design might hint at some further meaning, complementing its beauty as an elite personal item.

The fish represented is a Nile tilapia fish, which hatches and shelters her young in her mouth. The emergence of live offspring from the tilapia's mouth caused it to be used as a symbol of rebirth and regeneration; it was frequently worn as an amulet.

This is the most complete and spectacular example of several surviving fish-shaped glass vessels made around this period. It was found under the floor in a house at Tell el-Amarna, where it may have been buried by its owner.

Glass vessels from the New Kingdom (1550-1070 B.C.E.) are highly colorful objects, and glass was often used as a more versatile and less expensive substitute for semiprecious stones. This fish was made by trailing molten glass over a core made of a clay mixture. Next, colored rods of glass were wrapped around the body and dragged with a tool to create a fish-scale pattern. The body was then smoothed, the eyes and fins added and the core scraped out.

Wooden toy cat



Figure **8.3.7.2**: Wooden toy cat, c. 1550-1070 B.C.E., 5.3 x 11.7 x 3 cm, Thebes, © Trustees of the British Museum. Rock crystal inlays are used for the eyes, and the teeth are of bronze. The lower jaw can be moved, using a string (modern) which runs through a hole which runs through from the top of the head.

Cats may have been kept as pets as early as the fourth millennium B.C.E. Two wild species of cat lived in Egypt: the jungle cat and the African wild cat. By the late first millennium B.C.E. cats were bred on an industrial scale for use in the cult of the cat goddess Bastet.

From the Twelfth Dynasty, cats are shown in tomb decoration, seated beneath the chair of the deceased, or accompanying him on a hunt in the marshes. There is a fine example of the latter type of scene in the tomb of Nebamun, showing a ginger cat catching birds in its mouth and with all four paws at the same time. Such hunting scenes may also represent the struggle between civilized humans and the forces of chaos, shown as wild fowl.

The cat had a similar role on the divine plane. In the funerary text called the Litany of Re, the sun god appears as a cat and battles the snake Apep. This serpent, a manifestation of the forces of chaos, attacked the solar boat as it passed through the night sky. The god overcame Apep by cutting him in two with a knife, allowing the sun to continue its journey to be reborn at dawn.

Additional resources:

R.M. and J.J. Janssen, *Growing up in Ancient Egypt* (London, The Rubicon Press, 1990).

M. Stead, *Egyptian life* (London, The British Museum Press, 1986).

I. Shaw and P. Nicholson (eds.), *British Museum dictionary of Ancient Egypt* (London, The British Museum Press, 1995).

A.P. Kozloff and B.M. Bryan, *Egypts dazzling sun: Amenhotep III and History World* (Cleveland Museum of Art, 1992)

E.R. Russmann, *Eternal Egypt: masterworks of Ancient Art from the British Museum* (University of California Press, 2001).

J.D. Cooney, *Catalogue of Egyptian antiqu-3* (London, The British Museum Press, 1976).

S. Quirke and A.J. Spencer, *The British Museum Book of Ancient Egypt* (London, The British Museum Press, 1992).

Learn more about Egyptian objects on the British Museum website

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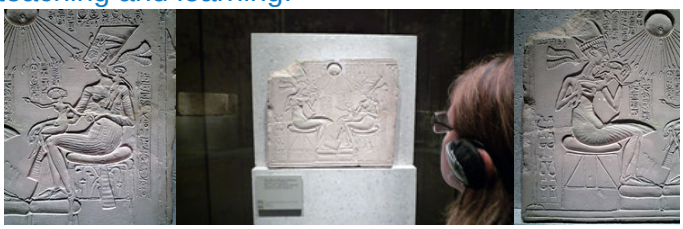
8.3.8: House Altar depicting Akhenaten, Nefertiti and Three of their Daughters

by DR. STEVEN ZUCKER *and* DR. BETH HARRIS

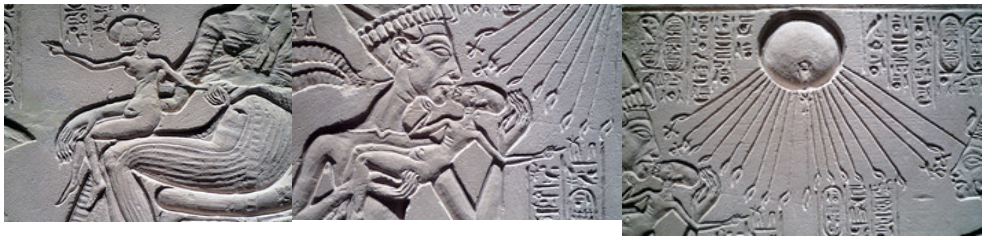


Video **8.3.8.1**: House Altar depicting Akhenaten, Nefertiti and Three of their Daughters, limestone, New Kingdom, Amarna period, 18th dynasty, c.1350 BCE (Ägyptisches Museum/Neues Museum, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin)

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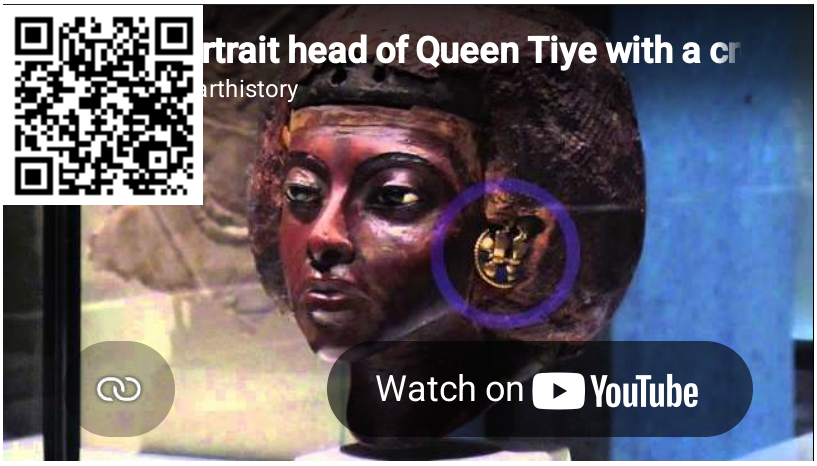
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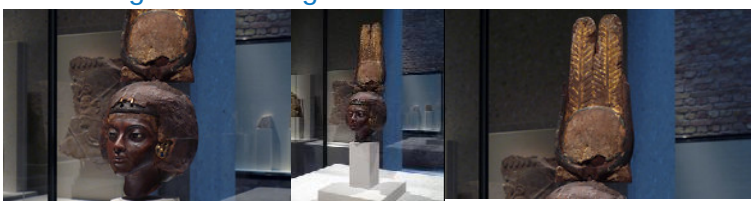
8.3.9: Portrait Head of Queen Tiye

by DR. BETH HARRIS *and* DR. STEVEN ZUCKER

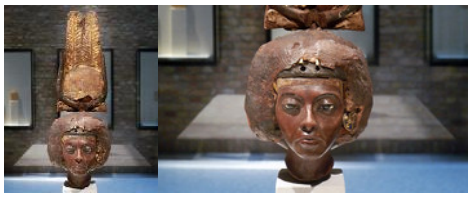


Video **8.3.9.1**: Portrait Head of Queen Tiye with a Crown of Two Feathers, c. 1355 B.C.E., Amarna Period, Dynasty 18, New Kingdom, Egypt, yew wood, lapis lazuli, silver, gold, faience, 22.5 cm high (Egyptian Museum and Papyrus Collection at the Neues Museum, Berlin)

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8.3.10: Thutmose, Model Bust of Queen Nefertiti

by DR. STEVEN ZUCKER *and* DR. BETH HARRIS

Found in an artist's studio, this stunning bust exemplifies a change in style, and may have been an early prototype.



Video **8.3.10.1**: Thutmose, Model Bust of Queen Nefertiti, c. 1340 BCE, limestone and plaster, New Kingdom, 18th dynasty, Amarna Period (Egyptian Museum and Papyrus Collection/Neues Museum, Berlin)

Backstory

In 2009, the refurbished Neues Museum in Berlin celebrated its reopening, with the bust of Nefertiti prominently displayed as one of its main attractions. The celebration coincided with one of the Egyptian government's repeated pleas for the official return of the bust to Egypt. The museum has staunchly refused to give up the sculpture, asserting that the bust was acquired legally by the German archaeologist Ludwig Borchardt in 1912. Borchardt had excavated it along with several other objects from the studio of the ancient Egyptian sculptor Thutmose, and had brought his finds to Germany as part of an agreement with the Egyptian Antiquities Service. While there is no proof that Borchardt's dealings were explicitly illegal, as early as 1925, the Egyptian government began to take issue with Germany's possession of valuable antiquities. They began imposing sanctions, and the bust has been the source of tension between the two nations ever since.

This controversy relates to a general growing public awareness about the provenance—and politics—of antiquities held in European and American museums. In 2016, Nora al-Badri and Jan Nikolai Nelles, two artists from Germany, made a bold statement about these issues by staging an event they called "NefertitiHack." They secretly mapped the sculpture using a consumer-grade 3-D scanning device, and then released the data openly under a Creative Commons license. The artists' intention was "to inspire a critical reassessment of today's conditions and to overcome the colonial notion of possession in Germany," according to their website.

Many groups have advocated for using digitally-produced replicas either as stand-ins for objects that are returned to their places of origin, or vice versa—as ways of offering highly accurate replicas in place of the originals. The sharing of data between institutions and groups who lay claim to objects has also been suggested as a way to ease tensions over restitution. Nelles and al-Badri's project is a critical statement about the growing questions around repatriation and public access to objects via 3-D models and other data, as the Neues Museum does not allow photography or publicly share its own 3-D model of the bust.

Nora al-Badri, one of the artists behind NefertitiHack, stated:

"The head of Nefertiti represents all the other millions of stolen and looted artifacts all over the world currently happening, for example, in Syria, Iraq, and in Egypt…Archaeological artifacts as a cultural memory originate for the most part from the Global South; however, a vast number of important objects can be found in Western museums and private collections. We should face the fact that the colonial structures continue to exist today and still produce their inherent symbolic struggles."

Over a century after it was excavated, the bust of Nefertiti remains a flashpoint for institutions and the public, driving us to consider the ways in which objects and their data are acquired, displayed, and shared.

Backstory by Dr. Naraelle Hohensee

Additional resources:

Image of Nefertiti, photo: Philip Pikart (CC BY-SA 3.0)

NefertitiHack website

Artists' video of the scanning process in the Neues Museum

"Swiping a Priceless Antiquity … With a Scanner and a 3-D Printer," *The New York Times*, March 1, 2016

"Artists Covertly Scan Bust of Nefertiti and Release the Data for Free Online," *Hyperallergic*, February 19, 2016

"Re-Examining Nefertiti's Likeness and Life," *ABC News*, December 8, 2012

"German foundation refuses to return Nefertiti bust," *Reuters*, January 24, 2011

"A 3,500-Year-Old Queen Causes a Rift Between Germany and Egypt," *The New York Times*, October 18, 2009

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8.3.11: Tutankhamun's tomb (innermost coffin and death mask)

by DR. ELIZABETH CUMMINS



Figure **8.3.11.1**: Harry Burton, Howard Carter with Innermost Coffin of Tutankhamun, 1922 (Tutankhamun Archive, Griffith Institute, University of Oxford)

Nearly lost to history

Tutankhamun was only the age of nine when he became king of Egypt during the 18th dynasty of the New Kingdom (c. 1332–1323 B.C.E.). His story would have been lost to history if it were not for the discovery of his tomb in 1922 by the archaeologist Howard Carter in the Valley of the Kings. His nearly intact tomb held a wealth of objects that give us unique insights into this period of ancient Egyptian history.

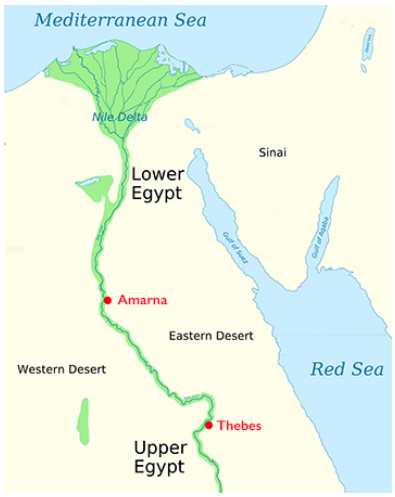


Figure **8.3.11.2**: Map of Ancient Egypt (modified) (original image: **Jeff Dahl**)

Tutankhamun ruled after the Amarna age, when the pharaoh Akhenaten, Tutankhamun's probable father, turned the religious attention of the kingdom to the worship of the god Aten, the sun disc. Akhenaten moved his capital city to the site of Akhetaten (also known as Amarna), in Middle Egypt—far from the previous pharaoh's capital. After Akhenaton's death and the rule of a short-lived pharaoh, Smenkhkare, Tutankhamen shifted the focus of the country's worship back to the god Amun and returned the religious center back to Thebes.

Tutankhamun married his half-sister, Ankhesenamun, but they did not produce an heir. This left the line of succession unclear. Tutankhamun died at the young age of eighteen, leading many scholars to speculate on the manner of his death—chariot accident, murder by blow to the head, and even a hippopotamus attack! The answer is still unclear. Tutankhamun's much-older advisor (and possible step-grandfather), Ay, married the widowed Ankhesenamun and became pharaoh.



Figure **8.3.11.3**: Valley of the Kings, Egypt (photo: **Troels Myrup**, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

During the early twentieth century, Howard Carter, a British Egyptologist, excavated for many years in the Valley of the Kings—a royal burial ground located on the west bank of the ancient city of Thebes. He was running out of money to support his archaeological digs when he asked for funding for one more season from his financial backer, the fifth Earl of Carnarvon. Lord Carnarvon granted him one more year—and what a year it was!



Figure **8.3.11.4**: Lord Carnarvon with Carter during his initial visit to the tomb, 1922 (photo: Keystone Press Agency Ltd., 1922)

At the beginning of November 1922, Carter came upon the first of twelve steps of the entrance that led to the tomb of Tutankhamun. He quickly recovered the steps and sent a telegram to Carnarvon in England so they could open the tomb together. Carnarvon departed for Egypt immediately and on November 26, 1922, they made a hole in the entrance of the antechamber in order to look in. Carter states:

At first I could see nothing, the hot air escaping from the chamber causing the candle flame to flicker, but presently, as my eyes grew accustomed to the lights, details of the room within emerged slowly from the mist, strange animals, statues, and gold –everywhere the glint of gold.[1]



Figure **8.3.11.5**: Harry Burton, View of tomb interior, 1922 (Tutankhamun Archive, Griffith Institute, University of Oxford)

The task of cataloging the finds was an immense undertaking for the team. Carter spent a decade systematically recording the finds and having them photographed.

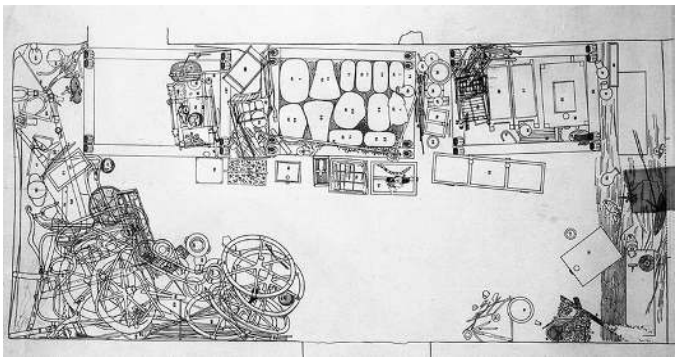


Figure **8.3.11.6**: Howard Carter, Drawing of Tutankhamun's tomb (Tutankhamun Archive, Griffith Institute, University of Oxford)

The innermost coffin

Tutankhamun's sarcophagus (a box-like stone container) held not one but three coffins in which to hold the body of the king. The outer two coffins were crafted in wood and covered in gold along with many semiprecious stones, such as lapis lazuli and turquoise. The inner coffin, however, was made of solid gold. When Howard Carter first came upon this coffin, it was not the shiny golden image we see in the Egyptian museum today (below). In his excavation notes, Carter states, it was "covered with a thick black pitch-like layer which extended from the hands down to the ankles (top image). This was obviously an anointing liquid which had been poured over the coffin during the burial ceremony and in great quantity (some two buckets full)."[2]

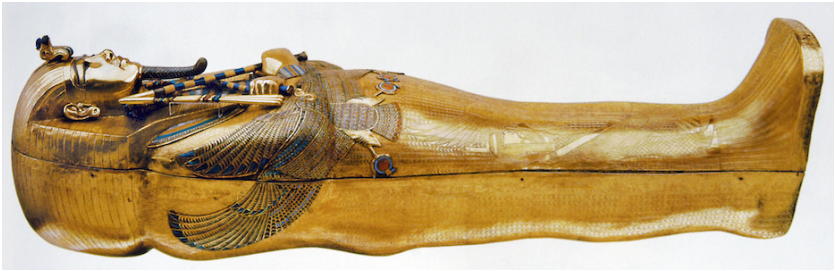


Figure **8.3.11.7**: Tutankhamun's tomb, innermost coffin, New Kingdom, 18th Dynasty, c. 1323 B.C.E., gold with inlay of enamel and semiprecious stones (Egyptian Museum, Cairo)

The image of the pharaoh is that of a god. The gods were thought to have skin of gold, bones of silver, and hair of lapis lazuli—so the king is shown here in his divine form in the afterlife. He holds the crook and flail, symbols of the king's right to rule. The goddesses Nekhbet (vulture) and Wadjet (cobra), inlaid with semiprecious stones, stretch their wings across his torso. Beneath these goddesses are two more—Isis and Nephthys—etched into the gold lid.

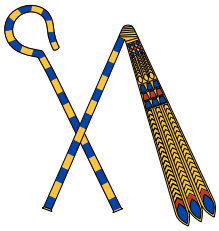


Figure 8.3.11.8: Egyptian crook and flail (image: Jeff Dahl)

The death mask of Tutankhamun



Figure 8.3.11.9: Death Mask from innermost coffin, Tutankhamun's tomb, New Kingdom, 18th Dynasty, c. 1323 B.C.E., gold with inlay of enamel and semiprecious stones (Egyptian Museum, Cairo) (photo: Bjørn Christian Tørrissen, CC BY-SA 3.0)

The death mask (above) is considered one of the masterpieces of Egyptian art. It originally rested directly on the shoulders of the mummy inside the innermost gold coffin. It is constructed of two sheets of gold that were hammered together and weighs 22.5 pounds (10.23 kg). Tutankhamen is depicted wearing the striped nemes headdress (the striped head-cloth typically worn by pharaohs in ancient Egypt) with the goddesses Nekhbet and Wadjet depicted again protecting his brow. He also wears a false beard that further connects him to the image of a god as with the inner coffin. He wears a broad collar, which ends in terminals shaped as falcon heads. The back of the mask is covered with Spell 151b from the Book of the Dead, which the Egyptians used as a road map for the afterlife. This particular spell protects the various limbs of Tutankhamun as he moves into the underworld.

[1]Howard Carter and A. C. Mace, *The Tomb of Tut-ankh-amen* (New York City: Cooper Square Publishers. 1933), (vol. 1) pp.95-96.

[2]N. Reeves, *The Complete Tutankhamun* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1990), pp. 108-109.

Additional resources:

The Griffin Institute's digital archive of the excavation of Tutankhamun's tomb—includes all of Carter's handwritten notes, plans, and photographs

Theban Mapping Project

Tutankhamun's Funeral on The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

Howard Carter and Arthur C. Mace, *The Tomb of Tut.ankh.Amen, I-III* (London: Cassell and Company) 1923-1933.

Carl Nicholas Reeves, *The Complete Tutankhamun: The King, The Tomb, The Royal Treasure* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1990).

This page titled 8.3.11: Tutankhamun's tomb (innermost coffin and death mask) is shared under a CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Smarthistory.

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8.3.12: Head of Tutankhamun

At only 6 years old, Tutankhamun is crowned pharaoh by the god Amun-Ra.



Video **8.3.12.1**: Head of Tutankhamun, c. 1336–1327 B.C.E., New Kingdom, Amarna Period, indurated limestone, 6 3/4″ x 6 5/16″ x 9 5/16″ / 17.2 cm x 16 cm x 23.6 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art). **Video from The Metropolitan Museum of Art.**

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8.3.13: Hunefer’s Judgement in the presence of Osiris

by THE BRITISH MUSEUM



Video 8.3.13.1: Hunefer’s Judgement in the presence of Osiris, Book of the Dead of Hunefer, 19th Dynasty, New Kingdom, c. 1275 B.C.E., papyrus, Thebes, Egypt (British Museum). Speakers: Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker

Erratum: near the end of the video we say that Nephthys and Anubis are siblings; this is not correct.

Hunefer: An ancient Egyptian official

Hunefer and his wife Nasha lived during the Nineteenth Dynasty, in around 1310 B.C.E.. He was a “Royal Scribe” and “Scribe of Divine Offerings.” He was also “Overseer of Royal Cattle,” and the steward of King Sety I. These titles indicate that he held prominent administrative offices and would have been close to the king. The location of his tomb is not known, but he may have been buried at Memphis.

Hunefer’s high status is reflected in the fine quality of his Book of the Dead, which was specially produced for him. This, and a Ptah-Sokar-Osiris figure, inside which the papyrus was found, are the only objects which can be ascribed to Hunefer. The papyrus of Hunefer is characterized by its good state of preservation and the large, and clear vignettes (illustrations) are beautifully drawn and painted. The vignette illustrating the “Opening of the Mouth” ritual is one of the most famous pieces of papyrus in The British Museum collection, and gives a great deal of information about this part of the funeral.

Page from the *Book of the Dead* of Hunefer

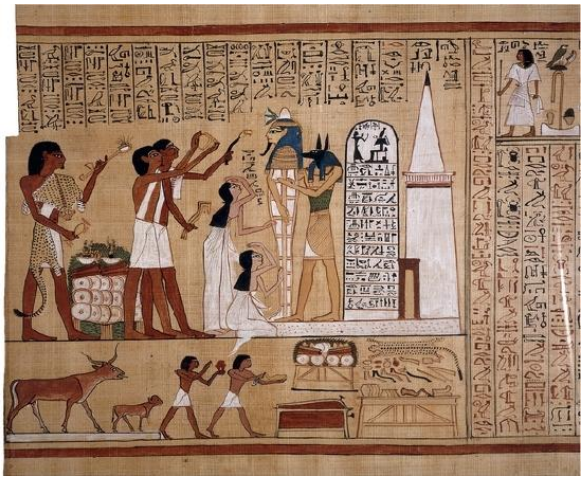


Figure 8.3.13.2: Page from the Book of the Dead of Hunefer, c. 1275 B.C.E., 45.7 x 83.4 cm (frame), Thebes, Egypt © Trustees of the British Museum

The centerpiece of the upper scene is the mummy of Hunefer, shown supported by the god Anubis (or a priest wearing a jackal mask). Hunefer's wife and daughter mourn, and three priests perform rituals. The two priests with white sashes are carrying out the Opening of the Mouth ritual. The white building at the right is a representation of the tomb, complete with portal doorway and small pyramid. Both these features can be seen in real tombs of this date from Thebes. To the left of the tomb is a picture of the stela which would have stood to one side of the tomb entrance. Following the normal conventions of Egyptian art, it is shown much larger than normal size, in order that its content (the deceased worshipping Osiris, together with a standard offering formula) is absolutely legible.

At the right of the lower scene is a table bearing the various implements needed for the Opening of the Mouth ritual. At the left is shown a ritual, where the foreleg of a calf, cut off while the animal is alive, is offered. The animal was then sacrificed. The calf is shown together with its mother, who might be interpreted as showing signs of distress.

Page from the *Book of the Dead* of Ani



Figure **8.3.13.3**: Page from the Book of the Dead of Ani, c. 1275 B.C.E., 19th Dynasty, 44.5 x 30.7 cm, Thebes, Egypt © Trustees of the British Museum

The scene reads from left to right. To the left, Anubis brings Hunefer into the judgement area. Anubis is also shown supervizing the judgement scales. Hunefer's heart, represented as a pot, is being weighed against a feather, the symbol of Maat, the established order of things, in this context meaning 'what is right'. The ancient Egyptians believed that the heart was the seat of the emotions, the intellect and the character, and thus represented the good or bad aspects of a person's life. If the heart did not balance with the feather, then the dead person was condemned to non-existence, and consumption by the ferocious "devourer," the strange beast shown here which is part-crocodile, part-lion, and part-hippopotamus.

However, as a papyrus devoted to ensuring Hunefer's continued existence in the Afterlife is not likely to depict this outcome, he is shown to the right, brought into the presence of Osiris by his son Horus, having become "true of voice" or "justified." This was a standard epithet applied to dead individuals in their texts. Osiris is shown seated under a canopy, with his sisters Isis and Nephthys. At the top, Hunefer is shown adoring a row of deities who supervise the judgement.

Suggested readings:

R.O. Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead* (revised ed. C. A. R. Andrews) (London, The British Museum Press, 1985).

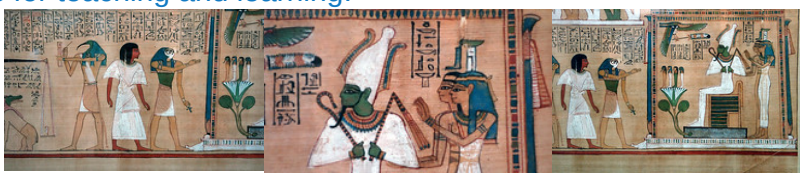
R.B. Parkinson and S. Quirke, *Papyrus* (Egyptian Bookshelf) (London, The British Museum Press, 1995).

S. Quirke and A.J. Spencer, *The British Museum book of ancient Egypt* (London, The British Museum Press, 1992).

This work at The British Museum

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SECTION OVERVIEW

8.4: Ptolemaic

After the death of Alexander the Great's heirs, his conquests were divided among his generals. The Ptolemaic dynasty begins in 305 B.C.E., when one of Alexander's generals became Ptolemy I of Egypt.

332 - 30 B.C.E.

8.4.1: Egyptian mummy portraits

8.4.2: Faiyum mummy portraits

8.4.3: Decoding the Rosetta Stone

8.4.4: Multilingualism along the Nile

8.4.5: The Rosetta Stone

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8.4.1: Egyptian mummy portraits

by THE BRITISH MUSEUM

A portrait shows what an individual would have looked like. Ancient Egyptians did not make much use of portraits; inscriptions containing the name and titles of an individual were used for identification purposes instead. Portraits were, however, important in Roman art. They were placed in tombs as a memorial of family members.

This type of portrait appeared in Egypt in the first century C.E., and remained popular for around 200 years. Egyptian mummy portraits were placed on the outside of the cartonnage coffin over the head of the individual or were carefully wrapped into the mummy bandages. They were painted on a wooden board at a roughly lifelike scale. It is possible to date some mummies on the basis of the hairstyles, jewelry and clothes worn in the portrait, and to identify members of a family by their physical similarities.

Mummy portrait of a man

Most mummy portraits that have survived have unfortunately become separated from the mummies to which they were attached. Because of this we rarely know the identities of the subjects.



Figure **8.4.1.1**: Mummy portrait of a man, c. 100-120 C.E., 40.1 x 21.5 cm, Hawara, Egypt © Trustees of the British Museum

The subject of this portrait, painted in encaustic on limewood, appears to be a man in his fifties or sixties of strikingly Roman appearance. He is dressed in a tunic with a violet stripe, or clavus, and a thick folded mantle. The hair is brushed forward and cropped in the style of court portraits of the Trajanic period (98-117 C.E.). Pink has been used to highlight his nose and lips, and dark brown to indicate shading and the contours of the face. The portrait gives the impression of age, authority and austerity. These characteristics were very important in Rome, and are here represented in a very Roman manner.

The accuracy of these portraits has often been questioned. Techniques employed by doctors to plan delicate facial surgery have been used to compare the actual appearance of several mummies with their portraits. These techniques have helped prove that the portrait did indeed show the person as they appeared during life. Of course, there was still some element of artistic license; for example, the mummy of Artimedorus appeared to be much more heavily built than he seemed in his portrait.

Mummy portrait of a woman



Figure **8.4.1.2**: Mummy portrait of a woman, c. 55-70 C.E., 41.6 x 21.5 cm, Hawara, Egypt, © Trustees of the British Museum

Additional resources:

S. Walker and M. Bierbrier, *Ancient faces: Mummy portrait of a man* (London, The British Museum Press, 1997).

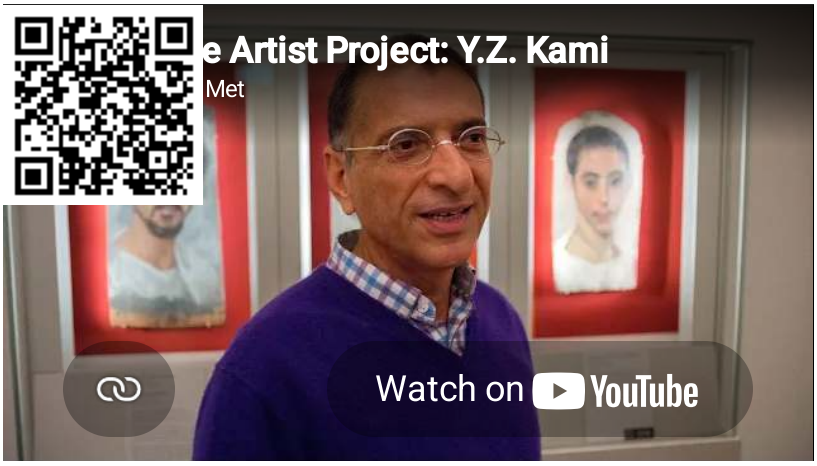
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8.4.2: Faiyum mummy portraits

by THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART



Video 8.4.2.1: Y.Z. Kami on Egyptian Mummy Portraits, “Always in front of a human face you have an emotional reaction. Video from **The Metropolitan Museum of Art**.

Additional resources:

Portrait of the Boy Eutyches at The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Roman Egypt on The Metropolitan Museum of Art’s Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

Art of the Roman Provinces, 1–500 A.D. on The Metropolitan Museum of Art’s Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

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8.4.3: Decoding the Rosetta Stone

by DR. STEVEN ZUCKER and DR. BETH HARRIS



Video **8.4.3.13**: A conversation with Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker in front of the Rosetta Stone, Egypt, Ptolemaic Period, 196 B.C.E., granodiorite, 112.3 x 28.4 x 75.7 cm (The British Museum)

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8.4.4: Multilingualism along the Nile

by LUIGI PRADA



Figure **8.4.4.1**: This bilingual papyrus containing magical spells and recipes dates from the early third century A.D. and is written in both Greek and Demotic. In some passages, the Greek text is also transliterated into Demotic, and vice versa. **London Magical Papyrus**, A.D. 200–225, Romano-Egyptian. Papyrus and ink, 9 7/16 × 33 5/8 in. The British Museum, EA10070,2. On loan from the Trustees of the British Museum. © The Trustees of the British Museum. Featured in the exhibition *Beyond the Nile: Egypt and the Classical World*

When we think of the language of ancient Egypt, the first thing that springs to mind is hieroglyphs carved on temple and tomb walls, the expression of a monolithic and unchangeable culture. Yet this could not be further from the truth. The civilization of ancient Egypt was much more dynamic and open to innovation than we normally give it credit for, and so was its linguistic complexity. Ancient Egyptian has one of the longest histories of written attestation of all world languages. First recorded around 3200 B.C., it gradually disappeared in the Middle Ages under the pressure of Arabic—a language that is not linguistically related to ancient Egyptian and is today Egypt's national language.

When we think of the changes that occurred in the English language between the time of Shakespeare and today, over a period of just four centuries, it is easy to imagine what dramatic transformations ancient Egyptian underwent over its own history, spanning four millennia.

About the Ancient Egyptian language

Scholars divide the ancient Egyptian language into five historical phases:

- **Old Egyptian**—attested in the third millennium B.C.
- **Middle Egyptian**—originating in the first half of the second millennium B.C., it later remained in use as the classical phase of the Egyptian language for most official, ritual, and literary texts
- **Late Egyptian**—in use in the second half of the second millennium and the first half of the first millennium B.C.
- **Demotic**—attested from the seventh century B.C. to fifth century A.D.
- **Coptic**—documented from approximately the second century A.D. to the tenth century A.D., though it still remains in use as the liturgical language of the Egyptian Coptic Church

Ancient Egyptian could also be written in a variety of different scripts, which include:

- **Hieroglyphs**—mostly used to write Old and Middle Egyptian texts



Figure 8.4.4.2: Hieroglyphs. Detail from the Temple of Seti I, Abydos, Egypt. Photo courtesy of and © Luigi Prada

- **Hieratic**—a cursive script typically written on portable media such as papyrus and used for Old, Middle, and Late Egyptian alike



Figure 8.4.4.3: Hieratic. London Medical Papyrus (detail), about 1300 B.C., Egyptian. Papyrus and ink, 7 7/8 × 45 1/2 in. The British Museum, EA10059,1. On loan from the Trustees of the British Museum. © The Trustees of the British Museum. Featured in the exhibition *Beyond the Nile: Egypt and the Classical World*

- **Demotic**—an even more cursive script used for writing Demotic (the same term being used for both the language phase and the script)

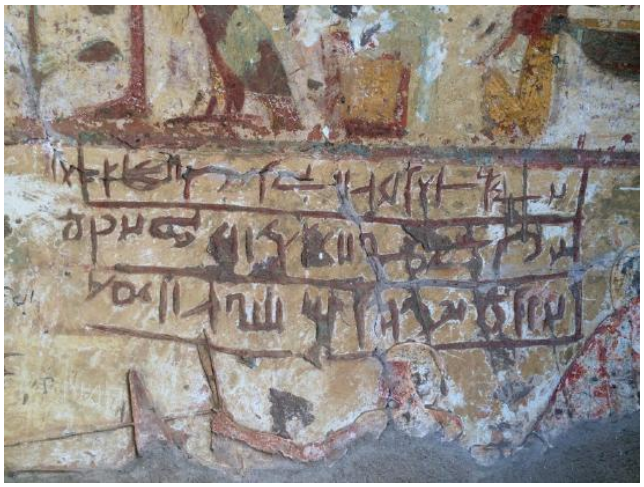


Figure 8.4.4.4: Demotic. Detail of script in the Tomb of Reneny in Elkab, Egypt. Photo courtesy of and © Luigi Prada

- **Coptic**—the Greek alphabet with the addition of a few letters for noting sounds that are specific to Egyptian (employed for Coptic—again, using the same word for both the language and the writing)

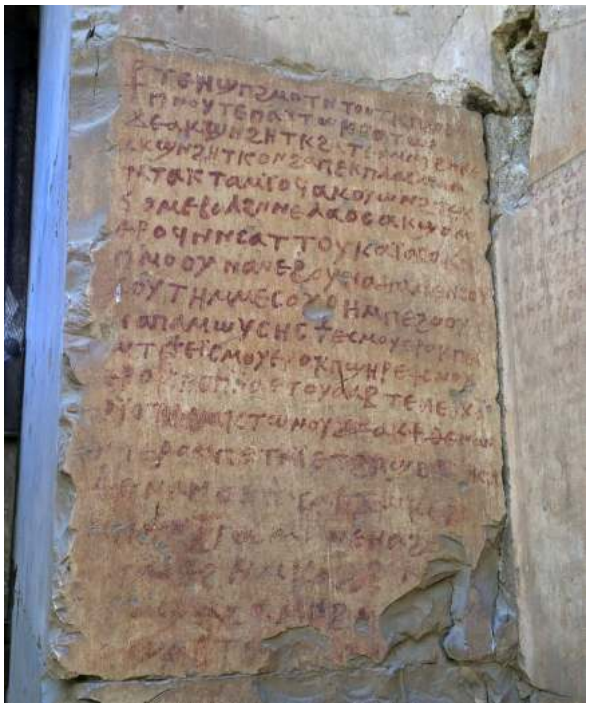


Figure 8.4.4.5: Coptic. Graffito in the Temple of Sethi I in Abydos, Egypt. Photo courtesy of and © Luigi Prada

This all makes for a rather complex linguistic landscape, especially when we consider that, in the latter phases of ancient Egyptian history, several of the aforementioned language phases and scripts were in use at the same time. Nor was Egypt unaccustomed to foreign languages. In the exhibition **Beyond the Nile: Egypt and the Classical World**, the visitor had the opportunity to observe a number of written artifacts illustrating the outcome of language contact between Egypt and peoples from the Aegean and Roman world.

Intellectual and linguistic exchange

The so-called **London Medical Papyrus** is a manuscript dating from Egypt's Eighteenth Dynasty, about 1400 to 1300 B.C. It contains a collection of remedies—consisting of both medical recipes and magical spells—for the treatment of various conditions, including swelling, skin diseases, eye ailments, bleeding, and burns. The text is written in hieratic (script) and composed in Middle Egyptian (language) but, remarkably, a number of healing spells in the section concerned with dermatology are not in Egyptian. As the papyrus itself points out, they are in fact in *djed en khastyw*, that is, "foreign language," here transliterated in hieratic. One of the foreign languages used in this section of the text is that of *Keftw*, the ancient Egyptian name for the island of Crete.



Figure 8.4.4.6: **London Medical Papyrus**, about 1300 B.C., Egyptian. Papyrus and ink, 7 7/8 × 45 1/2 in. The British Museum, EA10059,1. On loan from the Trustees of the British Museum. © The Trustees of the British Museum. Featured in the exhibition Beyond the Nile: Egypt and the Classical World

Throughout human history, societies ancient and modern have been fascinated with the culture of faraway lands—often perceived as a "secret knowledge." The ancient Egyptians were no exception, and it is thus not surprising that they should have chosen a foreign language as a special linguistic vehicle for magical incantations. The presence of Cretan, the language of the Minoan civilization, in this papyrus shows that the links between pharaonic Egypt and the Aegean area in pre-Hellenic times went much

further than trade or the visual arts would suggest (as witnessed in the Minoan-style frescoes of Avaris, in the Egyptian Delta), and that they also included intellectual and linguistic exchanges.

Moving eight centuries forward, to Egypt's Late Period and its Twenty-sixth Dynasty (664–525 B.C.), the presence of an increasing number of people from the Aegean world in Egypt, and especially in its Delta and in the area of the ancient capital of Memphis, was then a fait accompli. Arriving mainly for commercial and military reasons (many served as mercenaries in the Egyptian army), these communities included both Greek and non-Hellenic peoples, such as the Carians, from southwest modern-day Turkey.

The funerary stela here pictured records the burial of a Carian woman named Píabrm, pictured in the bottom register, lying on a funerary bed. Yet the making of her stela, and especially the reliefs in the other registers, reveals how these Carian immigrants adapted themselves to the customs and beliefs of their new country while also retaining their own traditions and language.



Figure 8.4.4.7: Funerary Stela with a Carian Inscription, 500s B.C., Egyptian. Limestone, 24 3/4 × 12 1/4 × 4 in. On loan from the Trustees of the British Museum, donated by Egypt Exploration Society, 1971. © The Trustees of the British Museum. Featured in the exhibition Beyond the Nile: Egypt and the Classical World

The top and middle registers sport deities from the Egyptian pantheon such as Osiris, Thoth, and the Apis Bull (a sacred bull worshipped in Saqqara, the same site where this stela was unearthed), while the scene at the bottom is remarkably un-Egyptian, showing the deceased Píabrm on a Grecian-style bier and the people around her performing Carian ceremonies. Note the second mourner from the left, who is lifting a knife to her forehead—a Carian mourning ritual of self-harm attested also in other sources.

When it comes to language, the stela is wholly Carian: the text carved on it, recording the name and other information about the deceased, is not written in Egyptian hieroglyphs—as one would perhaps expect on a funerary stela from Egypt showing Egyptian deities—but in the deceased's original language and writing, the Carian alphabet.

A multicultural Egypt

It was finally with the conquest of the country by Alexander the Great in the year 332 B.C. and with the subsequent Ptolemaic Period (ending with the Roman conquest in 30 B.C.) that Egypt became a proper multicultural and multilingual country at all levels of society and in virtually all corners of the country. A new line of rulers took over the throne of Egypt—the Ptolemies—and, as these rulers originated from Greece, Greek became one of Egypt's official languages, alongside Egypt's old indigenous languages and scripts.

No better artefact on display in the exhibition at the Getty could exemplify this than the **stela of Kallimachos**. This granite stela was originally set up in the temple of Amun at Karnak in the year 39 B.C. during the reign of the last Ptolemaic ruler, queen Cleopatra VII. It contains a decree issued by the local priests to honor a general named Kallimachos, who is praised in the text as a powerful local benefactor.



Figure 8.4.4.8: Decree in Honor of Kallimachos, 332–30 B.C., Ptolemaic. Granite, 44 7/8 × 25 11/16 × 11 13/16 in. Torino, Museo Egizio. © Museo Egizio. Featured in the exhibition *Beyond the Nile: Egypt and the Classical World*

Already at first sight, one notices some irregularities in this stela: this is due to the fact that the priests of Karnak were clearly working on a budget and had to reuse an earlier monument from the Pharaonic Period. Most of its original hieroglyphic text and scene were erased. Only the images of the winged sun-disc and of the two gods (Amun-Re and Montu) with related hieroglyphic captions were preserved in the center. The Ptolemaic sculptors then added two new images to the sides, those of the ruler Cleopatra and of her heir Caesarion (her son by Julius Caesar), along with the hieroglyphic captions identifying them.

The lower two thirds of the stela were covered with the decree itself written in "both Greek and native letters," as the stela itself proclaims—that is, presented bilingually, in both Demotic and Greek, so as to cater to both possible audiences. Hieroglyphs (to write Middle Egyptian), Demotic, and Greek are all present side-by-side on this one monument, reflecting on stone the composite identity and the cultural traditions of Hellenistic Egypt.

Hieroglyphs exported to Rome

Egypt was not the only laboratory for such interactions and experimentations in the multilingual world of the Hellenistic and Roman Mediterranean. Artifacts inscribed in Egyptian also made their way to the four corners of the Roman Empire, and none are more remarkable than Egyptian obelisks. The obelisk of Benevento is paradigmatic in this respect. It was erected in the year 88 or 89 A.D. in the southern Italian city of Benevento to celebrate the Emperor Domitian and the Egyptian goddess Isis, whose local temple it decorated, along with a twin obelisk. Even more remarkable than the obelisk *per se* are the inscriptions on its four sides, which must have been commissioned to a member of the Egyptian priesthood well-versed in the ancient language (Middle Egyptian) and script (hieroglyphs) of his native culture.



Figure 8.4.4.9: Detail of the Benevento obelisk showing the text "Isis the great, lady of Benevento" inscribed in Egyptian hieroglyphs. Obelisk (detail, pre-conservation view), A.D. 88/89, Roman. Granite, 351.5 cm high. Collection: Benevento, Museo del Sannio, inv. 1916. Featured in the exhibition *Beyond the Nile: Egypt and the Classical World*

Despite its traditional and archaic form and language, the obelisk is still fully relevant to the place and time in which it was erected. The royal cartouches, which traditionally surround the pharaoh's name, bear the name of Domitian transliterated into hieroglyphs.

And even the ancient Egyptian goddess Isis is connected with the Italian city where the obelisk stood, as she is celebrated in the hieroglyphic text as “Isis the great, lady of Benevento.”

A city of which the ancient Egyptians would never have heard thus received a rendering of its name in the most sacred and ancient language and script of ancient Egypt. This would have probably bemused the Latin-speaking inhabitants of Benevento themselves, had they been able to read the inscription—perhaps not much unlike the experience of modern residents of New York, when they see the name of their city rendered into Latin, in scholarly publications or Roman Catholic Church texts, as *Novum Eboracum*.

This essay first appeared in the **Getty Iris**.

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8.4.5: The Rosetta Stone

by THE BRITISH MUSEUM



Figure 8.4.5.1: The Rosetta Stone, 196 B.C.E., Ptolemaic Period, 112.3 x 75.7 x 28.4 cm, Egypt © Trustees of the British Museum. The Rosetta Stone was discovered in Egypt, at Fort St Julien in el-Rashid, known as Rosetta.

The key to translating hieroglyphics

The Rosetta Stone is one of the most important objects in the British Museum as it holds the key to understanding Egyptian hieroglyphs—a script made up of small pictures that was used originally in ancient Egypt for religious texts. Hieroglyphic writing died out in Egypt in the fourth century C.E.. Over time the knowledge of how to read hieroglyphs was lost, until the discovery of the Rosetta Stone in 1799 and its subsequent decipherment.

The Stone is a tablet of black rock called granodiorite. It is part of a larger inscribed stone that would have stood some 2 meters high. The top part of the stone has broken off at an angle—in line with a band of pink granite whose crystalline structure glints a little in the light. The back of the Rosetta stone is rough, where it has been hewn into shape, but the front face is smooth and crammed with text, inscribed in three different scripts. These form three distinct bands of writing.

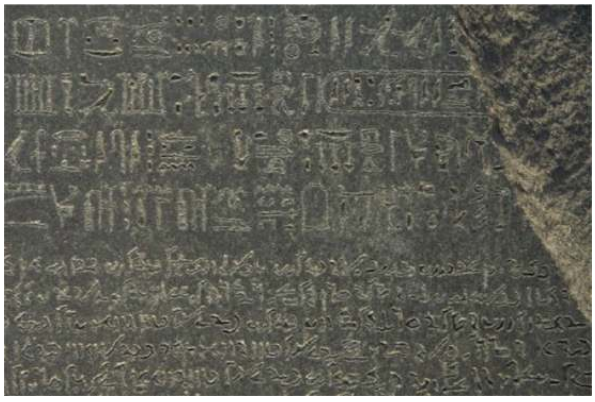


Figure 8.4.5.2: The Rosetta Stone, 196 B.C.E., Ptolemaic Period, 112.3 x 75.7 x 28.4 cm, Egypt © Trustees of the British Museum. Part of grey and pink granodiorite stela bearing priestly decree concerning Ptolemy V in three blocks of text: Hieroglyphic (14 lines), Demotic (32 lines) and Greek (53 lines).

Three translations of the same decree

The inscriptions are three translations of the same decree, passed by a council of priests, that affirms the royal cult of the thirteen-year-old Ptolemy V on the first anniversary of his coronation. The decree is inscribed on the stone three times, in hieroglyphic (suitable for a priestly decree), demotic (the native script used for daily purposes), and Greek (the language of the administration).

The importance of this to Egyptology is immense. In the early years of the nineteenth century, scholars were able to use the Greek inscription on this stone as the key to deciphering the others.

Opposition to the Ptolemies

In previous years the family of the Ptolemies had lost control of certain parts of the country. It had taken their armies some time to put down opposition in the Delta, and parts of southern Upper Egypt, particularly Thebes, were not yet back under the government's control.

Before the Ptolemaic era (that is before about 332 B.C.E.), decrees in hieroglyphs such as this were usually set up by the king. It shows how much things had changed from Pharaonic times that the priests, the only people who had kept the knowledge of writing hieroglyphs, were now issuing such decrees. The list of good deeds done by the king for the temples hints at the way in which the support of the priests was ensured.

The end of hieroglyphics

Soon after the end of the fourth century C.E., when hieroglyphs had gone out of use, the knowledge of how to read and write them disappeared. In the early years of the nineteenth century, some 1400 years later, scholars were able to use the Greek inscription on this stone as the key to decipher them.

The discovery

Thomas Young, an English physicist, was the first to show that some of the hieroglyphs on the Rosetta Stone wrote the sounds of a royal name, that of Ptolemy. The French scholar Jean-François Champollion then realized that hieroglyphs recorded the sound of the Egyptian language and laid the foundations of our knowledge of ancient Egyptian language and culture.

Soldiers in Napoleon's army discovered the Rosetta Stone in 1799 while digging the foundations of an addition to a fort near the town of el-Rashid (Rosetta). On Napoleon's defeat, the stone became the property of the British under the terms of the Treaty of Alexandria (1801) along with other antiquities that the French had found.

The Rosetta Stone has been exhibited in the British Museum since 1802, with only one break. Towards the end of the First World War, in 1917, when the Museum was concerned about heavy bombing in London, they moved it to safety along with other, portable, 'important' objects. The Rosetta Stone spent the next two years in a station on the Postal Tube Railway 50 feet below the ground at Holborn.

Analyzing the Rosetta Stone

When the Rosetta Stone was discovered in 1799, the carved characters that covered its surface were quickly copied. Printer's ink was applied to the Stone and white paper was laid over it. When the paper was removed, it revealed an exact copy of the text—but in reverse. Since then, many copies or "facsimiles" have been made using a variety of materials. Inevitably, the surface of the Stone accumulated many layers of material left over from these activities, despite attempts to remove any residue. Once on display, the grease from many thousands of human hands eager to touch the Stone added to the problem.

An opportunity for investigation and cleaning the Rosetta Stone arose when this famous object was made the centerpiece of the *Cracking Codes* exhibition at The British Museum in 1999. When work commenced to remove all but the original, ancient material, the stone was black with white lettering. As treatment progressed, the different substances uncovered were analyzed. Grease from human handling, a coating of carnauba wax from the early 1800s and printer's ink from 1799 were cleaned away using cotton wool swabs and liniment of soap, white spirit, acetone and purified water. Finally, white paint in the text, applied in 1981, which had been left in place until now as a protective coating, was removed with cotton swabs and purified water. A small square at the bottom left corner of the face of the Stone was left untouched to show the darkened wax and the white infill.

The Stone has a dark grey-pinkish tone with a pink streak running through it. Today you can see traces of a reddish brown in the text. This material was analyzed and found to be a clear mineral known as hydroxyapatite; the color may be due to iron traces. The mineral may have been applied deliberately, but there is no proof of this. This substance is not known by experts to have been used as a pigment, nor to have been used as a base for painting (a ground) in ancient Egypt.

Translation of the demotic text

[Year 9, Xandikos day 4], which is equivalent to the Egyptian month, second month of Peret, day 18, of the King “The Youth who has appeared as King in the place of his Father,” the Lord of the Uraei “Whose might is great, who has established Egypt, causing it to prosper, whose heart is beneficial before the gods…”

Read the rest of the Rosetta Stone translation here

Additional resources:

The Rosetta Stone from the BBC’s History of the World

Everything you ever wanted to Know about the Rosetta Stone (The British Museum)

A.K. Bowman, *Egypt after the Pharaohs: 332 BC–AD 642; From Alexander to the Arab Conquest* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1996).

C.A.R. Andrews, *The Rosetta Stone* (London, The British Museum Press, 1982).

C.A.R. Andrews and S. Quirke, *The Rosetta Stone: facsimile drawing* (London, The British Museum Press, 1988).

D.J. Thompson, “Literacy and Power in Ptolemaic Egypt,” *Literacy and Power in the Ancient World* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 67–83.

D.J. Thompson, The Ptolemies and Egypt in Andrew Erkine (ed.), *A Companion to the Hellenistic World* (Oxford, Wiley-Blackwell, 2003), pp. 105–20.

G.A. Hölbl, *History of the Ptolemaic Empire* (London, Routledge, 2000).

R. Parkinson, *The Rosetta Stone* (London, British Museum Press, 2005).

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R.S. Simpson, *Demotic grammar in the Ptolemaic Sacerdotal Decrees* (Oxford, Griffith Institute, Ashmolean Museum, 1996).

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SECTION OVERVIEW

9.1: Cycladic

The art of the Cycladic islands, the Minoans (on Crete), and the Mycenaeans (on the Greek mainland). The Cyclades is a group of about thirty small islands in the Aegean Sea.

3200 - 1050 B.C.E.

9.1.1: Male Harp Player from Keros

9.1.2: Akrotiri, Thera

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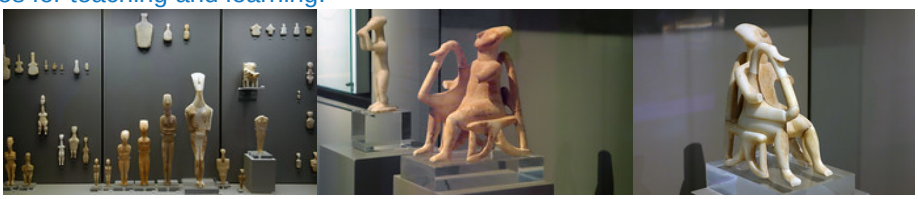
9.1.1: Male Harp Player from Keros

by DR. BETH HARRIS and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER

Modern artists fell in the love with these abstract 5000 year old sculptures—but what was their real meaning?



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9.1.2: Akrotiri, Thera

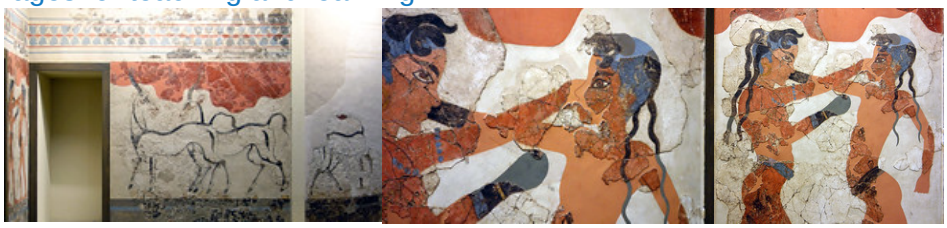
by STEVEN ZUCKER and BETH HARRIS

Hidden under volcanic ash for millennia, the beautiful frescoes in the houses of Akrotiri were recently unearthed.



Video **9.1.2.1**: Frescoes from Akrotiri, on the Cycladic island Thera (Santorini), Greece, 16th century B.C.E., Aegean Bronze Age (National Archaeological Museum, Athens)

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SECTION OVERVIEW

9.2: Minoan

Minoan culture is characterized by the building of remarkable palaces (really administrative centers) decorated with colorful frescoes. The remarkable and influential bronze-age culture on the island of Crete is called "Minoan" after the mythic King Minos.

c. 3000 – c. 1100 B.C.E.

9.2.1: The Palace at Knossos (Crete)

9.2.2: Kamares Ware Jug

9.2.3: Snake Goddess

9.2.4: Bull's Head Rhyton

9.2.5: Harvester Vase

9.2.6: Octopus vase

9.2.7: Statuette of a Male Figure (The Palaikastro Kouros)

9.2.8: Hagia Triada sarcophagus

9.2.9: Bull-leaping fresco from the palace of Knossos

9.2.10: Minoan woman or goddess from the palace of Knossos ("La Parisienne")

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9.2.1: The Palace at Knossos (Crete)

by DR. SENTA GERMAN



Figure 9.2.1.1: The archaeological site at Knossos, with restored rooms in the background, Crete (photo: Jebulon, public domain)

Restoration versus conservation

What happens to an archaeological site after the archaeologist's work is completed? Should the site (or parts of it) be restored to what we believe (based on evidence) it once looked like? Or should the site be protected through conservation and left as is? A visit to an unrestored archaeological site can be uninspiring—even the most lavish ancient sites can appear to be piles of unorganized stones framed by broken columns and other fragments. And while modern conservation principles insist on the reversibility of any treatment (in case better treatments are discovered in the future), in the past, conservators didn't have the resources or science that is available today.

Knossos

The archaeological site of Knossos (on the island of Crete) —traditionally called a palace—is the second most popular tourist attraction in all of Greece (after the Acropolis in Athens), hosting hundreds of thousands of tourists a year. But its primary attraction is not so much the authentic Bronze Age remains (which are more than three thousand years old) but rather the extensive early 20th century restorations installed by the site's excavator, Sir Arthur Evans, in the early twentieth century.



Figure 9.2.1.2: Sir Arthur Evans, 1911

Archaeological restorations offer important information about the history of a site and Knossos doesn't disappoint—one can see the earliest throne room in Europe, walk through the monumental Northern entrance to the palace, marvel at colorful wall paintings and enjoy the elegance of a queen's apartments. All these spaces, however, are the result of extensive, contentious and, in some cases, damaging restoration. Knossos asks us to consider how we can preserve an archaeological site, while at the same time providing a valuable, educational experience for visitors that nonetheless remains true to the remains.

Considering Evans' reconstructions

The Evans restoration at Knossos are important for several reasons:

1. If Evans hadn't worked to preserve and restore so much of Knossos beginning in 1901, it would have undoubtedly been largely lost.
2. The restoration of the site undertaken by Evans, with its elegantly painted Throne Room (below) makes very real our historical understanding, originally revealed by Homer, of the power and prestige of the kings of Crete.
3. The beautiful, although sometimes inaccurate, restorations of architecture and wall paintings by Evans evoke the elegance and skill of Minoan architects and painters.

These are the undeniable benefits of Evans's restorations and among the aspects of a visit to Knossos that everyone values. It is the smooth corniced walls, bright paintings, and whole passages stepped with balustrades at Knossos that the post cards, camera snaps, and human memory preserve, and that has translated into important support for the site—intellectually, politically, and financially.



Figure **9.2.1.3**: Throne Room, Knossos (photo: **Olaf Bausch**, CC BY 3.0)

At the same time, the Evans restorations are problematic. In some cases, what is restored does not accurately reflect what was found. Instead, a grander, and more complete, experience is presented. For example, when you visit Knossos, because of the way it is reconstructed, it is very easy to believe that all that was ever found there was a Late Bronze Age palace.



Figure **9.2.1.4**: Throne Room excavations at Knossos, from the title page of a brochure appealing for support issued by the Cretan Exploration Fund (1900)

Evans's restoration of the Throne Room (and much else at the site) privileges the Late Bronze Age period of its history. The typical visitor likely won't grasp that the Throne Room dates to the *latest* phase of Knossos—the end of the 2nd millennium B.C.E., though the site was occupied nearly continuously from the Neolithic to the Roman era (from the 8th millennium B.C.E. to at least the 5th century C.E.).

The power of Evans's interpretation and reconstruction of the site as purely Minoan—the product of the indigenous culture of that island—is very much still with us despite the fact that much has changed about how art historians and archaeologists understand the different periods of construction at Knossos. Today, much of its final plan and form, which Evans reconstructed (including the

Throne Room and most of the frescos), are understood as being of Mycenaean construction (not Minoan). Although this information is noted in texts mounted at the site, it is too often overlooked by visitors.



Figure 9.2.1.5: Contemporary view of Knossos looking southwest from the Monumental North Entrance (photo: **Theofanis Ampatzidis**, CC BY-SA 4.0)

What is archaeological restoration?

When archaeological remains are revealed through excavation, they are often delicate and cannot survive long unprotected. Some archaeologists backfill their trenches (refill the excavated holes with the material that was removed) to help preserve remains. In other instances, architecture, graves, or the impressions left from ephemeral building materials (such as wood) are sometimes left exposed, and when this happens some sort of conservation should occur. By definition, any sort of conservation is restoration when the modern materials are layered on the ancient and made to look harmonious in form, color and/or texture. As a result, restorations are sometimes nearly indistinguishable from authentic materials, and this is where things get tricky—such as the situation at Knossos.

Before making an archaeological restoration, three essential issues must be examined:

1. **What specific point in a site or monument's history will be the subject of the restoration?** Many (most!) archaeological sites reflect a long occupation or use, and within that timeframe things change, are repaired, or rebuilt. What era of the site will be privileged by the restoration—and in turn, which eras of the site's history will become harder to see and understand?
2. **How will future changes in the interpretation and knowledge about a site or monument be accommodated by restorations?** Archaeological interpretations of sites evolve all the time, often through new discoveries elsewhere. Restorations, in order to remain accurate, need to take into account potential new scholarship that can change the history or meaning of a site or monument.
3. **Lastly and most importantly, restorations must be non-destructive and reversible**. The first role of restoration is conservation. Therefore, the original remains must be entirely safe and not harmed in any way by restoration methods and materials. The reversibility of restorations not only has to do with the accommodation of changes in interpretation made above, but also with the need to leave the way open for less invasive, more gentle restoration methods in the future.

Restoration at Knossos

Aside from some gaps (for instance, during the First World War) Evans excavated at the site of Knossos each year from 1900 to 1930. Restoration of the architectural finds began almost immediately and can be divided into three phases, each characterized by the architect Evans hired to do the work. These three men, Theodore Fyfe, Christian Doll, and Piet De Jong, each had very different restoration philosophies.

Phase 1: Theodore Fyfe

From 1901 to 1904, a young architect by the name of Theodore Fyfe was charged with the restorations at Knossos. It is likely that Evans hired him because the winter of 1900/01 had damaged the newly exposed Throne Room—the most important space excavated during that first season at the site.

Fyfe's work at Knossos can be characterized by two things. First of all, he was devoted to the concept of minimal intervention. Second, when intervention was necessary, he made great efforts to use materials authentic to the Bronze Age structure (wood, limestone, rubble masonry) and even to use Bronze Age construction techniques, which he was able to glean from his onsite work. Clearly Fyfe was highly concerned about the truthfulness of his interventions and reconstructions; the only exception to this was his construction of modern-style pitched roofs to protect the Throne Room and the Shrine of the Double Axes.

Phase 2: Christian Doll

The second phase of restoration work at Knossos dates from 1905 to 1910, and was directed by Christian Doll. The first conservation work to which Doll had to attend to in 1905 was that of Fyfe's. Essentially, Fyfe's zeal to use authentic materials resulted in failure: he neglected in many cases to treat timbers before their use and he tended to use softwoods rather than hardwoods (all of which lead to rot). Also, rain was a destructive force in the winters, especially when it ran through newly exposed parts of the site. Doll's first and most important project was to stabilize and reconstruct the Grand Staircase to its original four story height. This was an extremely difficult job as the exact nature of the ancient design eluded both him and Fyfe, so a certain amount of improvisation was needed. And, because the weight of the structure was so great, Doll used iron girders (imported from England at great expense) covered in cement to make them look like ancient wooden beams.

Doll's approach to conservation was still anchored in preserving the excavated remains. However, Doll was no fan of the authentic materials used by Fyfe, as he saw how they had failed to preserve the many areas where they had been employed. Instead, Doll constructed structural systems based on techniques used in London at the time. Moreover, he employed contemporary architectural materials, such as the iron girders mentioned above, as well as concrete (the first use of this material at Knossos).

Phase 3: Piet De Jong



Figure **9.2.1.6**: Piet de Jong, reconstruction of the "Dolphin Fresco," Queen's Megaron, Knossos (public domain)

The third phase of conservation work was executed over a longer period of time, from 1922 to 1952, by Piet De Jong. The vast majority of what Knossos looks like today, with large passages of reconstructed walls and rooms, is his work.

Three main elements characterize De Jong's work at Knossos. The most prominent was his use of iron reinforced concrete. In the twelve years between Doll's and De Jong's work, the use of reinforced concrete had grown in popularity because of its speedy construction, its relative cheapness, and its ability to be molded into nearly any shape. It was also thought to be nearly indestructible.

Another essential characteristic of De Jong's work at Knossos was his use of reinforced concrete to construct parts of the palace beyond what had been found—some passages were based on archaeological evidence, some were not (the bases of these reconstructions came from Evans himself).

De Jong often did not merely end walls at the height of their discovery but would either finish them off with a flat roof and cornice, often decorated with double white horns (what some contemporary wall paintings of Bronze Age houses looked like), or would leave the top edge of walls with irregular stones, evoking a picturesque, antique view. When a complete vision of ancient Knossos could not be reconstituted, a romantic one was built instead.



Figure **9.2.1.7**: South Propylaeum, Knossos (photo: **Stegop**, CC BY-SA 4.0)

The reconstruction of the interior decoration of the throne room was executed during this period and similarly exhibits a combination of the truthful reflection of archaeological remains and Evans's creativity.

Lastly, an important characteristic of De Jong's restorations was the placement of reproductions of wall paintings around his newly built spaces. Some paintings were placed very close to their findspots and therefore aimed at a more authentic reconstruction, while other paintings were reconstructed at some distance from where they had been discovered.

The question remains: why did Evans encourage De Jong's radical approach to conservation, especially after two more conservative predecessors? Several reasons are at play, no doubt. The first, and possibly the most important, is the condition of Knossos after almost eight years of abandonment during the First World War. Aside from the wild overgrowth of weeds, there was much weather-related and other damage. However, the parts of the site that had been roofed (such as the Throne Room and the Shrine of the Double Axes) and sections that were more intact (such as the Grand Staircase), were in excellent shape and this no doubt convinced Evans of the importance of aggressive conservation work. Second, the iron-reinforced concrete which De Jong proposed to use was inexpensive and could be employed quickly. Third, Evans, in a masterful anticipation of the desires of future tourism, aimed to make a site that would vividly conjure the culture he had discovered, as much evocative and picturesque as historically accurate.

Conservation at Knossos after Evans

It is only fair to reflect upon the restorations of Knossos within their historical framework. The aims, methods, and materials used in restoration at the site over a period of some sixty years changed, reflecting a long list of crises, constraints, theories, and desires. Perhaps most significant, however, was Evans's overriding conviction that the conservation of Knossos was an obligation born out of its great antiquity and unique importance. He knew this from his own Edwardian education, British colonial outlook, and his twenty-four year directorship of the Ashmolean Museum at the University of Oxford. Evans was keenly aware of how intimately connected the teaching of Knossos's history was with how it was presented on site. He made Knossos into a museum and a showcase for the newly discovered Aegean Bronze Age chapter of ancient history and the earliest example of cultural tourism, today a mainstay of public historical education—not to mention local economies. Evans did it first at Knossos.

Conservation at Knossos has continued since De Jong's work, although with new challenges. The most recent conservation work on the site has been focused largely on repairing Evans's reconstructions. Despite a belief that reinforced concrete would last indefinitely, it has proven to be susceptible to the wet Cretan winters, crumbling and allowing for rust on the interior ironwork. In other areas the reinforced concrete proved to be structurally unsound.



Figure 9.2.1.8: Visitors to Knossos, 2016, photo: Neil Howard, CC BY-NC 2.0

In addition, the steady increase of tourist traffic since the 1950s has meant growing stress on both the original architecture of Knossos as well as its reconstructions. Sustained foot fall, increasing weight load as well as touching and sitting, is increasingly destructive. To combat this, the Greek Archaeological Service, under the Greek Ministry of Culture and Sports, has closed off large sections of Knossos and generally restricted circulation on the site. In the 1990s it conducted extensive conservation of both ancient and modern structures as well as building new corrugated plastic roofing. At present the Service is working on a visitor management plan for the site and the Greek government has applied to UNESCO for World Heritage Status for Knossos as well as four other Minoan palatial sites which would afford much needed support for ongoing conservation efforts.

In addition, the steady increase of tourist traffic since the 1950s has meant growing stress on both the original architecture of Knossos as well as its reconstructions. Sustained foot fall, increasing weight load as well as touching and sitting, is increasingly destructive. To combat this, the Greek Archaeological Service, under the Greek Ministry of Culture and Sports, has closed off large sections of Knossos and generally restricted circulation on the site. In the 1990s it conducted extensive conservation of both ancient and modern structures as well as building new corrugated plastic roofing. At present the Service is working on a visitor management plan for the site and the Greek government has applied to UNESCO for World Heritage Status for Knossos as well as four other Minoan palatial sites which would afford much needed support for ongoing conservation efforts.

Additional resources:

Knossos at UNESCO

Minoan Crete from The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Helbrunn Timeline of Art History

Arthur Evans archive (Oxford University)

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9.2.2: Kamares Ware Jug

by DR. SENTA GERMAN



Figure 9.2.2.1: Kamares wares in the Archaeological Museum of Heraklion (photo: **Bernard Gagnon**, CC BY-SA 3.0)

Look closely at the jug on the top shelf at the far left in the photograph above. Can you almost see a bird looking up to the sky?

The pottery we see in this photograph is called Kamares Ware, and it was the first fine, mass-produced and widely-traded pottery produced on Minoan Crete, dating to the Middle Minoan era (1900-1700 B.C.E.). It was Sir Arthur Evans, the archaeologist who first uncovered the Minoan palace at Knossos, who divided Minoan chronology into different periods and it was Evans who was also responsible for using the name “Minoan” to refer to the Bronze Age culture of Crete (after the legendary King Minos). Minoan culture flourished between c. 2600 and c. 1600 B.C.E. The Kamares cave, discovered in 1864, is the location of a Minoan archaeological site on Crete, and some of the best examples of Middle Minoan pottery have been found there—hence the name Kamares ware.



Figure 9.2.2.2: Sir Arthur Evans

Kamares ware is characterized by light-on-dark abstract and floral patterns and elegant shapes. The crafting of these shapes was executed on a fast-spinning potter’s wheel, a new invention during the Middle Minoan era, and its painted decoration is particularly labor intensive, requiring a dark background color, usually black, on which white and sometimes red and orange colors were added. This was a departure from earlier Early Minoan pottery which merely added dark abstract designs to the buff background color of the clay. Perhaps the most remarkable type of Kamares ware is referred to as eggshell ware, named for the extreme thinness of the vessel walls. The overall effect of Kamares ware is not just a pretty pot but an object which is a wonder to behold—at once inventive, delicate, and full of movement and charm.



Figure **9.2.2.3**: Map of Crete showing the location of Phaistos



Figure **9.2.2.4**: Kamares ware jug from Phaistos, c. 2000-1900 B.C.E., 27 cm (Archaeological Museum of Heraklion, photo: **Wolfgang Sauber**, CC BY-SA 3.0)

This Kamares ware jug is a classic example of the type. It was found at the Minoan palace of Phaistos, which is in south central Crete. Phaistos and its sister palace Knossos to the north were the two main manufacturing centers for Kamares-ware pottery in the middle Bronze Age.

The vessel is painted with a black background and most of the abstract decoration is painted in either white or red. The belly of the jug, its broadest circumference, is where the main action of the design takes place: two abstract shapes, an “S” shaped double spiral and a striped oval shape alternate like beads on a string. Each is connected to the other by a white line which seems to expand and contract with the pull of the double spiral. The oval shapes are grounded in the composition with white triangles, under which is a succession of smaller triangles angled to the left. A red stripe separates the neck of the jug from its body and the spout and handle are striped.

At first glance, the shape of the jug is simple but when you begin to understand the painting, you realize that it is a zoomorphic shape, meant to imitate an animal, in this case, a bird with its beak in the air and a striped plume emerging from the top of its head (the handle). With this, the jug has a dual reading: it can be seen as a bulbous sphere with alternating swirling spheres, or a proud bird, looking up to the sky and contemplating flight.

Probably the most important thing about Kamares ware is how it helps us map the trading relationships of the Minoans with the Mediterranean at large. Kamares ware pottery has been found in Egypt, the Levant, the Cycladic islands, mainland Greece, and southern Italy. In this, it is the first true marker of Bronze Age Crete’s economic reach.

Additional resources:

Minoan Crete on The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

Gisela Walberg, "The Role and Individuality of Kamares Ware" in *Aegean Archaeology*, vol. 5 (2001), pp. 9-18.

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9.2.3: Snake Goddess

by DR. SENTA GERMAN



Figure **9.2.3.1**: Snake Goddess from the palace at Knossos, c. 1600 B.C.E., faience, 29.5 cm high (**Archaeological Museum of Heraklion**, photo: **Zde**, CC BY-SA 4.0)

An enticing mystery

It has been said that the image of the Snake Goddess, discovered by Sir Arthur Evans at **Knossos** on Crete, is one of the most frequently reproduced sculptures from antiquity. Whether or not this is true, it is certainly the case that she is a powerful and evocative image. What she meant to the Minoans who made her, however, is not very well understood.

The “Temple Repositories”

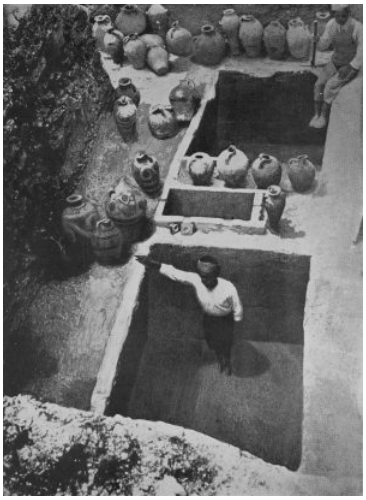


Figure **9.2.3.2**: Excavation of the temple repositories, from Sir Arthur Evans, *The Neolithic and Early and Middle Minoan Ages* (London: Macmillan, 1921), p. 465 (**Universitäts-Bibliothek Heidelberg**)

Evans found the sculpture of the Snake Goddess in a secondary exploration of the complex he called a “palace” at Knossos. After digging out the entire western wing, he decided to check under the paving stones. Most covered nothing but earth, but just south of the Throne Room, he discovered two stone-lined pits containing a wide variety of precious things, mostly broken: scraps of gold, ivory, faience (the largest deposit of faience on Crete), stone inlay, unworked horn, ceramic vessels, seal stones, sealings, shells, the vertebrae of large fish, and the broken pieces of at least three figurines, of which the Snake Goddess was one.



Figure **9.2.3.3**: The Snake Goddess prior to restoration by Evans, from Angelo Mosso, The Palaces of Crete and Their Builders (London: Unwin, 1907), p. 137 (**University of Toronto Libraries**)

Because of the fragmentary nature of these valuable objects, Evans assumed what he had found were damaged pieces that had been cleaned out from a temple. He named the pits the “Temple Repositories” and immediately set upon the reconstruction of as much as he could, with special interest in the figurines, which he assumed were of goddesses.

The hat and the cat

The Snake Goddess, as originally excavated, lacked a head and half of her left arm. The complete right arm held a short wavy striped stick, which Evans interpreted as a snake. This was, in some measure, to match the other nearly complete figurine found in the Temple Repositories, which clearly had snakes slithering up both of her arms. The restoration of the Snake Goddess was done by the Danish artist Halvor Bagge together with Evans. Their contribution to the figurine was the creation of a matching arm and stripy snake, the head of the goddess, and the placement of the hat and cat (separate faience pieces found in the Temple Repositories) on her head.



Figure **9.2.3.4**: Two Snake Goddesses from the palace of Knossos, c. 1600 B.C.E., faience, 34.2 cm and 29.5 cm high (Archaeological Museum of Heraklion, photo: **Jill_Ion**, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

In her restored state, the Snake Goddess is 29.5 cm (about 11.5 inches) high, a youthful woman wearing a full skirt made of seven flounced layers of multicolored cloth. This is likely not a representation of striped cloth, but rather flounces made from multiple colorful bands of cloth, the weaving of which was a Minoan specialty. Over the skirt she wears a front and back apron decorated with a geometric diamond design. The top of the skirt and apron has a wide, vertically-striped band that wraps tightly around the figure’s waist. On top, she wears a short-sleeved, striped shirt tied with an elaborate knot at the waist, with a low-cut front that exposes her large, bare breasts. The Snake Goddess’s head, restored by Bagge and Evans, stares straight forward, topped by the spherical object that Bagge and Evans believed would make a good crown, and, finally, a small sitting cat. Her long black hair hangs down her back and curls down around her breasts.



Figure **9.2.3.5**: Snake Goddess from the palace at Knossos, c. 1600 B.C.E., majolica, 29.5 cm high **(Archaeological Museum of Heraklion**, photo: **Zde**, CC BY-SA 4.0)

Really a goddess?

The Snake Goddess is a provocative image, but its restoration and interpretation are problematic. The crown and cat have no parallel in any image of a Bronze Age woman, so these should be discounted. The interpretation of this figure as a goddess is also difficult, since there is no evidence of what a Minoan goddess might have looked like. Many images of elite Minoan women, perhaps priestesses, look very much like this figurine. If it is the action of snake-wrangling that makes her a goddess, this is also a problem. The image of a woman taming one or more snakes is entirely unique to the Temple Repositories. Therefore, If she is a snake goddess, she is not a particularly popular one.

Certainly, Evans was interested in finding a goddess at Knossos. Even before he excavated at the site, he had argued that there was a great mother goddess who was worshiped in the pre-Classical Greek world. With the Snake Goddess, Evans found—or fashioned—what he had anticipated. Its authenticity and meaning, however, leave many questions today.

Additional resources:

This work at the Archaeological Museum of Heraklion

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9.2.4: Bull's Head Rhyton

by DR. SENTA GERMAN



Figure **9.2.4.1**: Bull's head rhyton from the palace at Knossos, c. 1550-1500 B.C.E., black steatite, jasper, and mother-of-pearl, 26 cm high (**Archaeological Museum of Heraklion**, photo: **Zde**, CC BY-SA 4.0)

Ritual vessels

Images of bulls are among the most important in Minoan art and as many as eleven bull's head rhyta come from the site of Knossos.

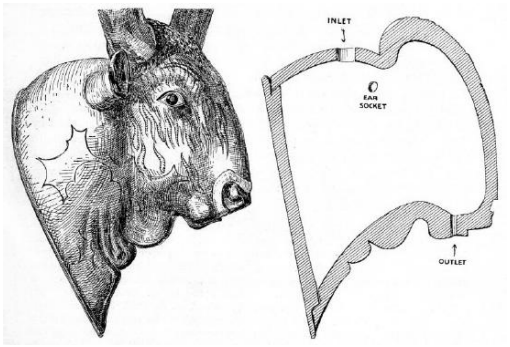


Figure **9.2.4.2**: Profile and section of the bull's head rhyton from the palace at Knossos, from Sir Arthur Evans, *Town-Houses in Knossos of the New Era and Restored West Palace Section, with Its State Approach* (London: Macmillan, 1928), p. 529 (**Universitäts-Bibliothek Heidelberg**)

A rhyton is a ritual vessel used for pouring liquids, with a hole at the top and the bottom. This rhyton was found in a structure called the Little Palace (it is called a "palace" because of its size and elite architectural elements, not because there was a throne in it), about 200 meters northwest of the palace at Knossos. The rhyton dates to the original Neopalatial period (1600-1450 B.C.E.), when the building was constructed, and was likely purposefully broken before it was discarded. It is heavily damaged—the left side of the bull's head and left ear, as well as its golden horns, were restored by Sir Arthur Evans.

This bull's head rhyton was carved from a single block of black steatite and is 26 cm (about 10 inches) in height, as restored. It is hollow, as a rhyton must be, with the hole at the top behind the bull's horns and the hole at the bottom at its muzzle. The back of the rhyton is flat so that it could be laid down on a surface.



Figure 9.2.4.3: Bull's head rhyton from the palace at Knossos, c. 1550-1500 B.C.E., black steatite, jasper, and mother-of-pearl, 26 cm high (Archaeological Museum of Heraklion, photo: Carole Raddato, CC BY-SA 4.0)

Both realistic and stylized

The carving of the bull's head is remarkable for its combination of vivid realism and stylization. For instance, the eyes of the bull were made of inlaid rock crystal lenses, painted on their flat back with a black iris and red pupil, surrounded in white. The rim of the eye was inlaid with red jasper, giving the bull a wild, frightening, bloodshot look.

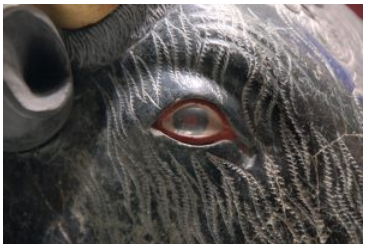


Figure 9.2.4.4: Bull's head rhyton from the palace at Knossos (detail), c. 1550-1500 B.C.E., black steatite, jasper, and mother-of-pearl, 26 cm high (Archaeological Museum of Heraklion, photo: **Camille Gévaudan**, CC BY-SA 4.0)

The bull is shaggy, with naturalistic locks hanging down its face, carved with very shallow incisions in the soft stone and filled with ground white stone (perhaps gypsum) for contrast against the black steatite. Also very realistically carved are the rolls of skin at the neck of the bull. However, other parts of the representation of the bull are rather stylized. For instance, the hair whorl at the center of the bull's forehead looks more like a spiral than a swirled tuft of hair, and this is topped by a patch of stylized fur with curls arranged in rows. Lastly, the patch of white hair around the snout of the bull, rendered with shell inlay, looks graphic in its straight borders.



Figure 9.2.4.5: Bull's head rhyton from the palace at Knossos, c. 1550-1500 B.C.E., black steatite, jasper, and mother-of-pearl, 26 cm high (Archaeological Museum of Heraklion, photo: Zde, CC BY-SA 4.0)

Treasured gifts

Bull's head rhyta such as this one were some of the most valued treasures of Minoan Crete. Images of them appear in 18th dynasty Egyptian wall paintings, where they are shown as pharaonic gifts from visiting Cretans. Many examples of rhyta have been archaeologically recovered; some twenty-three of them have been found at archaeological sites on Crete and the Greek mainland. What is remarkable is that all have been found purposefully destroyed. This has led archaeologists to believe that after the utility of a bull's head rhyton had expired, it was ritually destroyed.



Figure **9.2.4.6**: Example of a bull's head rhyton in Egyptian wall painting (visible lower center). "Gifts from the Keftiu (Minoans)," from the Tomb of Rekhmire, Thebes, 18th dynasty, c. 1479–1425 B.C.E., drawing by Nina de Garis Davies, tempera on paper, 45 x 65 cm (**The Metropolitan Museum of Art**)

Additional resources:

This work at the Archaeological Museum of Heraklion

Beth Ann Judas, "Keftiu and Griffins: An Exploration of the Liminal in the Egyptian Worldview," in *Current Research in Egyptology 2014* (Oxbow, 2015)

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9.2.5: Harvester Vase

by DR. SENTA GERMAN



Figure **9.2.5.1**: Harvester Vase from Hagia Triada, c. 1550-1500 B.C.E., black steatite, diameter 4.5 inches (**Archaeological Museum of Heraklion**)

Small but powerful

Found at Hagia Triada, an elite site associated with Minoan palaces and dating to the Neopalatial period, (1600-1450 B.C.E.) the Harvester Vase displays a detailed and fascinating scene of men marching and singing in what appears to be a harvest celebration. Although it is not a grand artistic monument, this small vessel (about 4.5 inches in diameter), communicates a grace and vitality typical of Aegean Bronze Age art.

Imitating an eggshell



Figure **9.2.5.2**: Ostrich egg rhyton from the tholos tomb at Dendra, Greece, Mycenaean, 15th-14th c. B.C.E., ostrich egg, silver, gold, and copper (National Archaeological Museum, Athens, photo: **Schuppi**, CC BY-SA 3.0)

The Harvester Vase is actually not a vase but rather a rhyton, a ritual vessel use for pouring liquids. It has a hole at the top and would have had a hole at the bottom before it was damaged. It is made of black steatite and is shaped to look like a similar vessel made of an even more valuable material: an ostrich egg shell. Ostrich egg rhyta were some of the most luxurious and exotic ritual goods in the Aegean Bronze Age. This type of object was made by drilling holes at either end of an ostrich egg (imported from Egypt), drawing out the contents, and affixing a decorative rim on the top and at the bottom. However, what the Harvester Vase lacks in imported luxury, it makes up for in sheer sculptural power.



Figure 9.2.5.3: Harvester Vase from Hagia Triada (detail), c. 1550-1500 B.C.E., black steatite, diameter 4.5 inches (Archaeological Museum of Heraklion, photo: **Zde**, CC BY-SA 4.0)

A rhythmic procession



Figure 9.2.5.4: Harvester Vase from Hagia Triada (detail), c. 1550-1500 B.C.E., black steatite, diameter 4.5 inches (Archaeological Museum of Heraklion, photo: **Zde**, CC BY-SA 4.0)

The miniature scene, carved in relief, illustrates some twenty-seven men in a procession. Most of these men are depicted in pairs, legs stepping high and right arms bent at the elbow, hands held close to the chest, and wearing identical costumes: loincloths, flat caps, carrying bags or pads on the left thigh, and on the left shoulder, a pole with a short curved blade and a three pronged fork. These men are all young, slim, and muscular, with angular faces turned up to the sky. Their paired, lock-step procession evokes marching or rhythmic movement. There is one exception to this rhythm: near the back of the group, one man turns to look behind him, perhaps because, it would appear, another has fallen just at his back.



Figure 9.2.5.5: Harvester Vase from Hagia Triada (detail), c. 1550-1500 B.C.E., black steatite, diameter 4.5 inches (Archaeological Museum of Heraklion, photo: **Zde**, CC BY-SA 4.0)

This marching group is led by an apparently older man, wearing long shaggy hair and a fringed robe with a scallop pattern (above). He carries a long staff, crooked at the bottom and tapering at the top. In the middle of the group of men behind him is another single figure, a man who looks perhaps not as young and lean as those in the group, who is shaking a sistrum (a musical instrument used in religious rituals). These were common in ancient Egypt as well as in ancient Greece and Rome; examples have been found on Bronze Age Crete as well. This man appears to be shouting or singing with his mouth wide open and he is followed close behind by a rank of four men who also have wide open mouths and wear cloaks around their shoulders.



Figure **9.2.5.6**: Harvester Vase from Hagia Triada (detail), c. 1550-1500 B.C.E., black steatite, diameter 4.5 inches (**Archaeological Museum of Heraklion**, photo: **Olaf Tausch**, CC BY-SA 4.0)

Reaping or sowing?

As the name of this vessel indicates, it is generally thought that its decoration refers to harvesting, the key evidence being the long implement each of the younger men is carrying over his shoulder. What is not clear is exactly what the implement is. If it is a winnowing fork, these men are harvesting, collecting mature cereal crops; they will use the fork to separate the grain from its husk. If the implement is a hoe, festooned with branches, then the men are off to plant seeds—perhaps to be found in each of the men's bags. Which it is—harvesting or planting—we may never know, but what is clear is the masculine, communal, and celebratory nature of the activity depicted on this beautiful vessel.

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9.2.6: Octopus vase

by DR. SENTA GERMAN



Figure **9.2.6.1**: Octopus vase from Palaikastro, c. 1500 B.C.E., 27 cm high (Archaeological Museum of Heraklion, photo: **Wolfgang Sauber**, CC BY-SA 3.0)

Ceramics for the wealthy

One of the most important aspects of Minoan culture was its ceramics. Pottery today may not seem particularly interesting or important, but in the second millennium B.C.E., it was a high art form and its manufacture was often closely associated with centers of power. Much like the production of porcelain for European royal houses in the 18th century, the production of pottery on Crete tells us about elite tastes, how the powerful met and shared meals, and with whom they traded.



Figure **9.2.6.2**: The ruins at Palaikastro (photo: **Panegyrics of Granovetter**, CC BY-SA 2.0)

This vase, found at Palaikastro, a wealthy site on the far eastern coast of Crete, is the perfect example of elite Minoan ceramic manufacture. It is 27 cm (about 10.5 inches) high, wheel-made, hand-painted, and meant to hold a valuable liquid—perhaps oil of some kind. Its shape is somewhat unusual, constructed by slipping together, while still leather hard (clay that is not quite dry), two shallow plates which had been made on a fast spinning potter's wheel and with highly refined clay. The circular bases of these shallow plates are still visible in the center of both sides of the flask. A spout and stirrup-style handles (which would allow the user to carefully control the flow of the liquid out of the container) were added by hand, as well as a base, to facilitate the standing upright of the vessel.

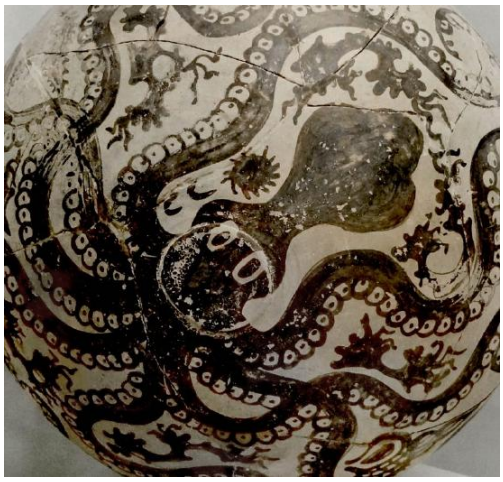


Figure **9.2.6.3**: Octopus vase from Palaikastro (detail), c. 1500 B.C.E., 27 cm high (Archaeological Museum of Heraklion, photo: **Olaf Tausch**, CC BY 3.0)

Lastly, the Marine Style decoration would have been added. Using dark slip on the surface of the clay, the Minoan painter of this vessel filled the center with a charming octopus, swimming diagonally, with tentacles extended out to the full perimeter of the flask and wide eyes that stare out at the viewer with an almost cartoon-like friendliness. Around this creature's limbs we find sea urchins, coral, and triton shells; no empty space is left unfilled, lending a sense of writhing energy to the overall composition.



Figure **9.2.6.4**: Mycenaean imitation of Minoan Marine ware, 15th century B.C.E. Tomb 2, Argive Prosymna

Marine-Style pottery, of which this vessel is a prime example, is regarded as the pinnacle of Minoan palatial pottery production, specifically of the LM I period (around 1400 B.C.E.). Those who believe "hands" (that is, specific artists) can be identified in the painting of Bronze Age pottery have identified this vessel as the work of the Marine Style Master, who worked at the site of Palaikastro. The era of Marine Style pottery coincided with a period during which the Minoans' trade networks spanned widely across the Mediterranean, from Crete to Cyprus, the Levant, mainland Greece, and Egypt. Some have connected this seafaring skill to the popularity of Marine Style pottery. The style was imitated by potters on the Greek mainland as well as the islands of Melos, and Aegina, but none could match the charm and grace of the Minoan inventors of the style.



Figure **9.2.6.5**

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9.2.7: Statuette of a Male Figure (The Palaikastro Kouros)

by DR. SENTA GERMAN

One of the most spectacular recent finds from Crete is this statuette of a youthful male figure made of gold, ivory, serpentine, and rock crystal. It is one of only a small handful of Minoan sculptures in the round, and the largest ever found. Although it is not complete, much of it is in excellent shape and its naturalistic style is striking. It is often called the Palaikastro Kouros, as it is similar to the later **Archaic Greek statues** of idealized youthful elite males.



Figure **9.2.7.1**: (The Palaikastro Kouros), 1480 – 1425 B.C.E., serpentine, hippopotamus ivory, and gold, 54 x 18.5 cm (**Archaeological Museum of Sitia**, photo: **Olaf Tausch**, CC BY 3.0)

The figure was found in the excavations at the town of Palaikastro, a large archaeological site on the East coast of Crete known for, among other things, the creation of especially fine **Marine Style** pottery which was traded all over the island as well as throughout the Mediterranean. The statue was discovered smashed into hundreds of pieces, spread over two areas 10 meters apart, the result of the looting and burning during the town's destruction at the end of the LM Ib period (1450 B.C.E.).

After painstaking efforts, the figurine was reconstructed to show an athletic young man standing with one foot slightly before the other, knees locked, both arms bent, hands in fists held up to the chest. The figure's head is turned very slightly to the left, with hair cropped short except for one lock running down the middle of the scalp from front to back.



Figure **9.2.7.2**: (The Palaikastro Kouros) (detail), 1480 – 1425 B.C.E., serpentine, hippopotamus ivory, and gold, 54 x 18.5 cm (**Archaeological Museum of Sitia**, photo: **Olaf Tausch**, CC BY 3.0)

The figurine was constructed of eight separate pieces of hippopotamus ivory and was fitted together using wooden dowels. The hair was carved from a piece of serpentine stone and the eyes were inlaid with rock crystal. Sadly, the face of the figure as well as his middle section is lost; much of the surviving ivory was burned black, although still in remarkably good condition. There is evidence that the figurine was partially covered in hammered gold: specifically, the feet and part of the lower leg, the lower arms (possibly in the form of bracelets), as well as the lost middle section, likely to look like a loincloth.

Although it is hard to guess where this piece would have originally been viewed, it is clear that it was inserted into a base, which would have allowed it to stand up straight. Careful analysis has shown that the base itself was as opulent as the figurine, made from a combination of Egyptian blue and gold.



Figure **9.2.7.3**: (The Palaikastro Kouros), 1480 – 1425 B.C.E., serpentine, hippopotamus ivory, and gold, 54 x 18.5 cm (**Archaeological Museum of Sitia**, photo: **Olaf Tausch**, CC BY 3.0)

The attention to naturalistic human anatomy in the statue is extraordinary. The smooth shape and musculature of the chest, legs, and arms is highly accurate. In the feet and hands, the details of veining and even the cuticles of the fingers and toes are breathtaking to behold. However, this singular anatomical detail is not, in fact, accurate. For instance, the veins on the foot do not reflect real human vascular systems. Similarly, the thumbs of each hand are rendered too long, and curl over the knuckles of the remaining fingers too far. This uneven realism is actually a hallmark of Minoan art.

Whom does this statue represent? There is no way to know exactly. Surely it was an important figure, given the precious materials and refined skill used to create it. The archaeologists who excavated the statue at Palaikastro believe that it represents the Bronze Age forerunner of the later Classical youthful male god of the underworld, come to herald the beginning of the harvest in the fall: Diktaian Zeus.

What does this extraordinary statue tell us about the Minoans? At least two things. First of all, it tells us about a special relationship with Egypt. The two most valuable materials that make up the statue are hippopotamus ivory and gold, and both of these materials came from Egypt. Moreover, the stance of the figure (one foot in front of the other with locked knees) imitates the classic stance of **Egyptian statuary**. Lastly, art historians believe that the figurine employs a variant of an early Egyptian proportional canon. Therefore, much of how this figurine was conceived and produced is owed to Egypt. We might view this as evidence of a close trading relationship and likely some sort of cultural affinity as well.

The second thing the Palaikastro Kouros can tell us about the Minoans is that they were the first to create chryselephantine statuary. Chryselephantine statuary is best known from the Classical Greek era, the most famous examples being the statues of Athena and Zeus at Athens and Olympia, respectively, both created by **Phidias** in the 5th century B.C.E. Early examples on a much smaller scale have been found at Delphi, but this figurine from Palaikastro is the earliest known example of this important sculptural type.

Additional resources:

This work at the Archaeological Museum of Sitia

Mark Moak, “The Palaikastro Kouros,” in *British School at Athens Studies*, vol. 6 (2000), pp. 65-83.

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9.2.8: Hagia Triada sarcophagus

by DR. SENTA GERMAN



Figure **9.2.8.1**: The Hagia Triada sarcophagus at the Archaeological Museum of Heraklion (photo: **C messier**, CC BY-SA 3.0)

A coffin for royalty?

Many images of Minoan rituals are fragmentary and therefore difficult to interpret. There are very few complete, narrative-style representations of religious topics, and the Hagia Triada (also sometimes spelled “Agia Triada”) is the best among them. This sarcophagus was found in 1903 by the Italian archaeologist Roberto Paribeni in Tomb 4 of the hilltop cemetery north of the site of Hagia Triada, a large and wealthy ancient Minoan settlement in south central Crete. Tomb 4 was a family tomb containing the sarcophagus, constructed of limestone, and another large ceramic coffin. The tomb was disturbed in antiquity, but some small burial goods were left behind by the looters: a carved stone bowl, a triton shell, and a fragment of a female terracotta figurine. These remaining grave goods and the elaborate nature of the Hagia Triada sarcophagus has led to the identification of Tomb 4 as that of royalty.



Figure **9.2.8.2**: Hagia Triada sarcophagus, c. 1400 B.C.E., limestone and fresco, 1.375 x .45 x .985 m (**Archaeological Museum of Heraklion**, photo: **Carole Raddato**, CC BY-SA 2.0)

A story in fresco

The Hagia Triada sarcophagus is the only Minoan sarcophagus known to be entirely painted. It was created using fresco, like contemporaneous wall painting, and illustrates a complex narrative scene, apparently of burial and sacrifice. The object itself is substantial, measuring 1.375 meters (about 4.5 feet) long, .45 meters (about 1.5 feet) wide and .985 meters (about 3 feet) high.



Figure **9.2.8.3**: Hagia Triada sarcophagus (detail), c. 1400 B.C.E., limestone and fresco (**Archaeological Museum of Heraklion**, photo: **Zde**, CC BY-SA 2.0)

One of the long sides is the most complete and shows a funeral procession of offering bearers and a libation ceremony that features seven figures—two women and five men. From the far left, we see a female in profile facing left, dressed in an elaborate hide skirt and open short-sleeved shirt, holding a vessel in both hands while pouring the contents into a larger vessel which is resting on a stone platform between two poles. The poles are set on richly-veined stone bases and are topped with double axes surmounted by birds. Behind the woman pouring is another woman, and behind her, a man. The second woman, who is elaborately robed and wears a crown of lilies, carries on her shoulders a pole that supports two vessels identical to the one being used for pouring by the first female. The man behind her plays a lyre and is also elaborately robed.



Figure **9.2.8.4**: Hagia Triada sarcophagus (detail), c. 1400 B.C.E., limestone and fresco (**Archaeological Museum of Heraklion**, photo: **Olaf Tausch**, CC BY 3.0)

The next three people from the left are young men, each bare-chested and wearing a hide skirt. The first two hold bovine statues, one spotted brown, one black; the third man holds a model of a boat. These three men are in composite profile, with shoulders frontal but legs and head in profile, a common Egyptian painting convention. They are also set against a blue background, which is different from the rest of the scene on this side of the sarcophagus. Another man faces these three. He has no feet and looks posed like a sculpture, and it is thought this represents the deceased person. He wears a long hide robe with gold trim.

Between the three men and the deceased is a set of three steps, perhaps an altar, which has some damage at the top. There is a tree above the altar, and it is possible (based on other images of similar altars) that it is supposed to be growing out from the altar itself. Behind the deceased is another structure, elaborately painted with running spirals and inlaid with veined stone. This is thought to be the tomb of the deceased.



Figure 9.2.8.5: Hagia Triada sarcophagus, c. 1400 B.C.E., limestone and fresco, 1.375 x .45 x .985 m (Archaeological Museum of Heraklion, photo: Carole Raddato, CC BY-SA 2.0)

Offerings and altars

On the opposite side of the sarcophagus, there are another seven figures—six female and one male. Beginning again from the left, we are met with a large patch of damage which only leaves the legs and feet of two pairs of women, all with elaborate long robes, moving to the right.



Figure 9.2.8.6: Hagia Triada sarcophagus (detail), c. 1400 B.C.E., limestone and fresco (Archaeological Museum of Heraklion, photo: Olaf Tausch, CC BY 3.0)

A fifth female figure, fully visible, leads them, also well-dressed and wearing a lily crown. She is in full profile, with yellow hair, her arms stretched down towards to the ground. She and the four women behind her are all set in a bright yellow background. Moving to the left, the background color changes to white and against this is a male double-flute player wearing a short blue robe and long curls. He stands behind an offering table on which lies a trussed bull on its side, facing the viewer. Red streaks of blood can be seen coming from the bull's neck and pouring into a vessel that sits at the foot of the table. Beneath the table are two small goats, possibly awaiting a similar fate.

To the right of this large altar the background color changes to blue; a woman stands before another low altar wearing a hide skirt. This altar is decorated with a red and white running spiral design and on top sits a shallow grey bowl, possibly silver, above which floats in the field a painted beaked pitcher and a two-handled bowl with what appears to be round fruit—possibly all offerings. To the right of this altar is another pole, this one set in a red and white checked base, with a double axe and bird at the top. Lastly, in the field is an architectural structure, also with red and white running spirals and four pairs of horns on top and from which grows a great green tree.

No surface left undecorated



Figure **9.2.8.7**: Hagia Triada sarcophagus, c. 1400 B.C.E., limestone and fresco (**Archaeological Museum of Heraklion**)

One of the short sides of the Hagia Triada sarcophagus has two scenes situated one on top of the other, while the opposite short side has only one scene. On the side with two scenes, the top one is almost entirely lost from damage but enough remains to indicate a procession of men in short pointed kilts of richly woven textiles. Beneath this scene is a horse-drawn chariot with an ox-hide carriage in which two women ride, both dressed in elaborate robes and one holding a whip.



Figure **9.2.8.8**: Hagia Triada sarcophagus (detail), c. 1400 B.C.E., limestone and fresco (**Archaeological Museum of Heraklion**, photo: **Wolfgang Sauber**, CC BY-SA 3.0)

On the other short side there is a griffin–drawn chariot with another pair of women riding in an ox-hide carriage also richly dressed and wearing pointed hats. The griffins are multicolored and spread their wings, as if in flight; above them flies a bird in profile, moving in the opposite direction.

Surrounding all five of these scenes on the Hagia Triada sarcophagus are framing elements: rows of rosettes, bands of colors to imitate richly veined stone, running spirals with central rosettes, and colorful striped bands. It is colorfully painted from top to bottom.

Simple story, complex questions

In some ways what we see on the Hagia Triada sarcophagus is simple to understand: women and men in elite dress are busy making sacrifices and preparing the deceased for burial before his tomb. However, looking more deeply, many questions remain. How is it to be read? Is there a prescribed order to the images? What does the change in background color mean? Who exactly are these people—are they all priestesses and priests? Are they mythological characters? Who was the deceased? Was this a special sort of burial, or did everybody get this treatment? These are questions that have yet to be answered with confidence.

Additional resources:

This work at the Archaeological Museum of Heraklion

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9.2.9: Bull-leaping fresco from the palace of Knossos

by DR. SENTA GERMAN



Figure **9.2.9.1**: Bull-leaping fresco from the east wing of the palace of Knossos (reconstructed), c. 1400 B.C.E., fresco, 78 cm high (**Archaeological Museum of Heraklion**, photo: **Jebulon**, CC0)

Taking the bull by the horns

Bull sports—including leaping over them, fighting them, running from them, or riding them—have been practiced all around the globe for millennia. Perhaps the best-loved ancient illustration of this, called the bull-leaping or Toreador fresco, comes from the site of **Knossos** on the island of Crete. The wall painting, as it is now **reconstructed**, shows three people leaping over a bull: one person at its front, another over its back, and a third at its rear.

The image is a composite of at least seven panels, each .78 meters (about 2.5 feet) high. Fragments of this extensive wall painting were found very badly damaged in the fill above the walls in the Court of the Stone Spout, on the east side of the Central Court at Knossos. The fact that the paintings were found in fill indicates that this wall painting was destroyed as part of a renovation. The pottery which was found together with the fragments gives us its date, likely LM II (around 1400 B.C.E.).

Reconstructed but still incomplete

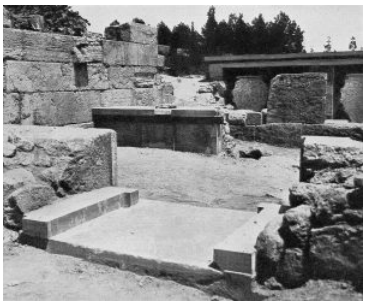


Figure **9.2.9.2**: The Court of the Stone Spout, where the pieces of the fresco were found, from Sir Arthur Evans, *The Palace of Minos* (London, 1930), p. 270 (**Universitäts-Bibliothek Heidelberg**)

When Sir Arthur Evans, the first archaeologist to work at Knossos, found the fragments, he recognized them as illustrating an early example of bull sports, and he was eager to create a complete image that he could share with the world. He hired a well-known archaeological restorer, Émile Gilliéron, to create the image we know today from the largest bits of the seven panels. Unfortunately, it is impossible to reconstruct all of the original panels and to get a sense of the painting at all, we are left with Gilliéron's reconstruction.



Figure **9.2.9.3**: Bull-leaping fresco from the east wing of the palace of Knossos (reconstructed), c. 1400 B.C.E., fresco, 78 cm high (**Archaeological Museum of Heraklion**, photo: **Andy Montgomery**, CC BY-SA 2.0)

Visual gymnastics

What we see is a freeze-frame of a very fast moving scene. The central image of the fresco as reconstructed is a bull charging with such force that its front and back legs are in midair. In front of the bull is a person grasping its horns, seemingly about to vault over it. The next person is in mid-vault, upside down, over the back of the bull, and the final person is facing the rear of the animal, arms out, apparently just having dismounted—"sticking the landing," as they say in gymnastics.



Figure **9.2.9.4**: Bull-leaping fresco (detail) from the east wing of the palace of Knossos (reconstructed), c. 1400 B.C.E., fresco, 78 cm high (Archaeological Museum of Heraklion, photo: **Carole Raddato**, CC BY-SA 2.0)

The people on either side of the bull, as reconstructed, bear markers of both male and female gender: they are painted white, which indicates a female figure according to ancient Egyptian gender-color conventions, which we know the Minoans also used. But both characters wear merely a loincloth, which is male dress. The hairstyle (curls at the top with locks falling down the back) is not uncommon in representations of both youthful males and females. Many interpretations of this gender crossing are possible, but there is little evidence to support one over another, unfortunately. At the very least, we can say that the representation of gender in the Late Aegean Bronze Age was fluid.



Figure 9.2.9.5: Bull-leaping fresco (detail) from the east wing of the palace of Knossos (reconstructed), c. 1400 B.C.E., fresco, 78 cm high (Archaeological Museum of Heraklion, photo: Carole Raddato, CC BY-SA 2.0)

The person at the center of the action, vaulting over the bull's back, is painted brown, which indicates male gender according to ancient Egyptian gender-color conventions, and this makes sense considering his loincloth. It is interesting to note that the muscles of all three of the bull leapers, at their thighs and chests, have been very delicately articulated, accentuating their athletic build.



Figure 9.2.9.6: Bull-leaping fresco (detail) from the east wing of the palace of Knossos (reconstructed), c. 1400 B.C.E., fresco, 78 cm high (Archaeological Museum of Heraklion, photo: Carole Raddato, CC BY-SA 2.0)

The background of the scene is blue, white, or yellow monochrome, and indicate no architectural context for the activity. Moreover, the seven panels and Gilliéron's composite reconstruction all show a border of painted richly variegated stones overlapping in patches. So, it seems we are meant to see these scenes as abstracted action within frames, not part of a wider visual field or narrative.

A rite of passage?

The most interesting question about the bull leaping paintings from Knossos is what they might mean. We cannot understand the whole bull-leaping cycle in detail as it is so fragmentary, but we know that it covered a lot of wall space and a considerable amount of resources must have been expended to create it.



Figure **9.2.9.7**: Bull-leaping fresco (detail) from the east wing of the palace of Knossos (reconstructed), c. 1400 B.C.E., fresco, 78 cm high (Archaeological Museum of Heraklion, photo: **Jebulon**, CC0)

As mentioned above, many cultures across space and time have engaged in bull sports, and they all have a few things in common. First, these sports are life-threatening. To race, dance with, leap over, or kill a bull might very well get you killed. Second, these activities are usually performed before a crowd: they are a civic event, publicly presented and recorded in memory. Third, those who participate in these bull activities are often youths at an age when they are passing from childhood into adulthood and the achievement of the bull sport contributes to that passage. Anthropologists refer this sort of activity as a "rite of passage," which, when witnessed by one's community, establishes the participant as an adult.

Therefore, we might surmise that the bull leaping scenes from Knossos refer to such a rite of passage ceremony. Many have identified the Central Court (Theatral area) just beyond the west façade of the palace at Knossos as locations where bull-leaping ceremonies might have taken place. We may never know the exact meaning of these paintings, but they continue to resonate with us today—not only because of their beauty and dynamism, but because they represent an activity that is still an important part of many cultures around the world.

Additional resources:

This work at the Archaeological Museum of Heraklion

Bulls and Bull-leaping in the Minoan World

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9.2.10: Minoan woman or goddess from the palace of Knossos (“La Parisienne”)

by DR. SENTA GERMAN



Figure 9.2.10.1: Woman or goddess (“La Parisienne”) from the Camp-Stool fresco, c.1350 B.C.E., western wing of the palace at Knossos, buon fresco, 20 cm high (Archaeological Museum of Heraklion)

“Parisian” from ancient Crete

This image of a young woman with a bright dress and curly hair is among the best known images in Minoan art. It is also one of the few representations of Minoan people rendered in color and detail, and it is a beautiful example of Minoan wall painting. Shortly after it was first discovered by Sir Arthur Evans at **Knossos**, it was seen by Edmond Pottier, a famous art historian of Greek pottery, who likened her charming look to the contemporary women of Paris. She has been known as “La Parisienne” ever since.

The sacred knot



Figure 9.2.10.2: Woman or goddess (“La Parisienne”) from the Camp-Stool fresco, c.1350 B.C.E., western wing of the palace at Knossos, buon fresco, 20 cm high (**Archaeological Museum of Heraklion**)

Only La Parisienne’s head and upper body are preserved. Her hair is black and curly, with one curl springing down onto her forehead and others cascading down her neck and upper back. Her skin is white, which is in imitation of the ancient Egyptian color convention (women painted white, men brown), and her large, darkly outlined eye also reminds us of Egyptian style, but her bright red lips are unique. She wears an elaborately woven blue and red striped dress, with a blue banded edge attached with red flecked loops. Tied to the back of the dress is a “sacred knot,” as Evans first called it. This is a loop of long cloth tied with another loop at the nape of the neck, leaving a length of the cloth trailing down the back.

This is one of only two representations of a woman actually wearing a sacred knot, although the knots themselves are found on seals, painted on pottery, in other frescos, and rendered in ivory or faience. This knot is thought to designate the wearer as a holy person, so this Minoan woman may be a priestess.



Figure 9.2.10.3: The western wing of the palace at Knossos (photo: tedbassman, CC BY 2.0)

Found in fragments

The wall painting of which La Parisienne is a part was discovered heavily damaged and fallen from an upper story in the western wing of Knossos. It was painted in buon fresco (on wet plaster) as most Minoan wall paintings were, and given its archaeological context is likely one of the last painted works of the palace, dating to LM III (around 1350 B.C.E.). Specifically, this fragment was part of a two tiered scene that is about a half-meter (about 1.5 feet) wide, called the Camp Stool fresco (shown below as a reconstruction). Featured on both the top and bottom panels are pairs of men and women in profile sitting and standing and holding up elegant vessels. La Parisienne comes from one of the female pairs.

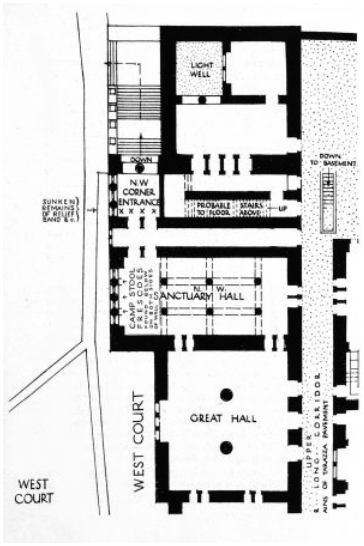


Figure 9.2.10.4: Sir Arthur J. Evans. Upper plan, northwest palace area, Knossos, from *The Palace of Minos* (London, 1935), p. 380 (Universitäts-Bibliothek Heidelberg)

It has been suggested that the part of the palace of Knossos from which this painted scene fell was used for ceremonies and feasting; if this is true, subject matter depicting toasts being made would fit in nicely. Whatever her original meaning, La Parisienne is an enduring testament to the skill of Minoan fresco painters.



Figure **9.2.10.5**: The Camp Stool fresco (reconstruction), c. 1350 B.C.E., from west wing of the palace of Knossos (Archaeological Museum of Heraklion, Crete)

Additional resources:

This object at the Archaeological Museum of Heraklion

Sir Arthur Evans, *The Palace of Minos* (London, 1935)

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SECTION OVERVIEW

9.3: Mycenaean art

Mycenaean culture flourished on the Greek mainland in the Late Bronze Age. The name comes from the site of Mycenae, where the culture was first recognized after the 1876 excavations by Heinrich Schliemann.

c. 1600 - 1100 B.C.E.

9.3.1: The “Palace” and Grave Circle A

9.3.2: Mask of Agamemnon

9.3.3: The Treasury of Atreus

9.3.4: Lion Gate

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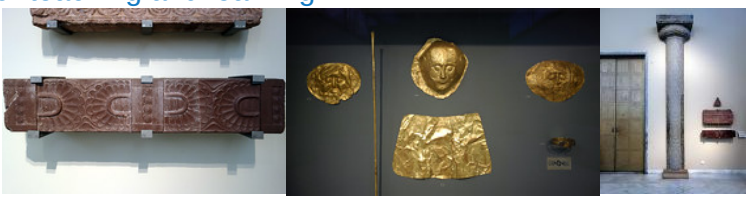
9.3.1: The “Palace” and Grave Circle A

by DR. STEVEN ZUCKER and DR. BETH HARRIS

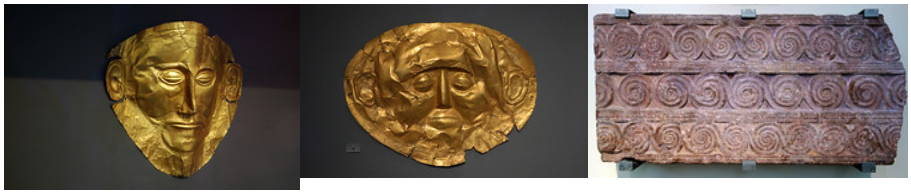


Seeking the mythic cities of Homer, Heinrich Schliemann identified Mycenae in the 19th century.

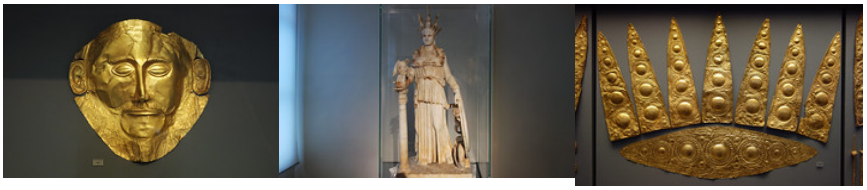
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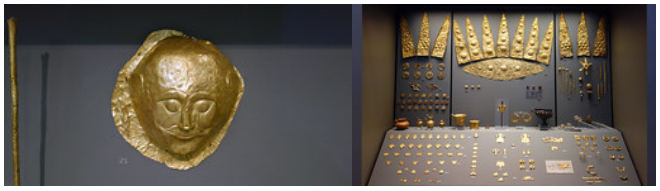
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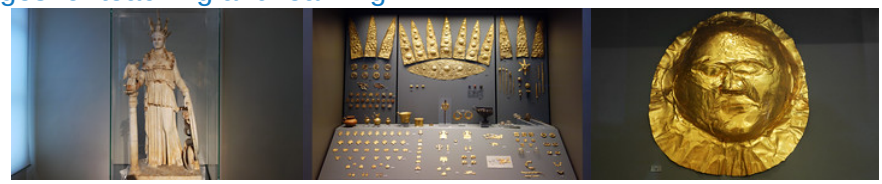
9.3.2: Mask of Agamemnon

by DR. STEVEN ZUCKER and DR. BETH HARRIS



“I have gazed into the face of Agamemnon,” boasted the man who discovered it—but is it really the Homeric hero?

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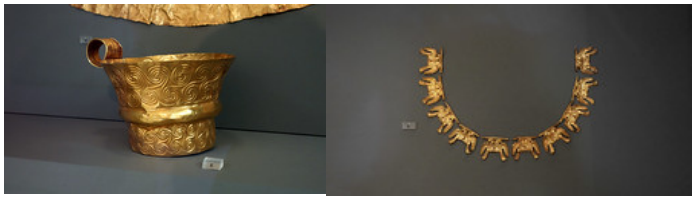
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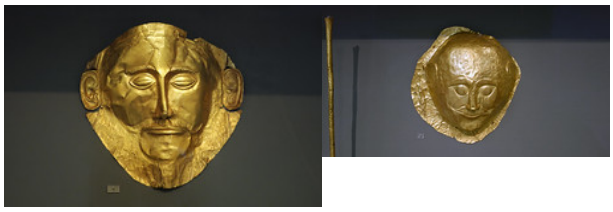
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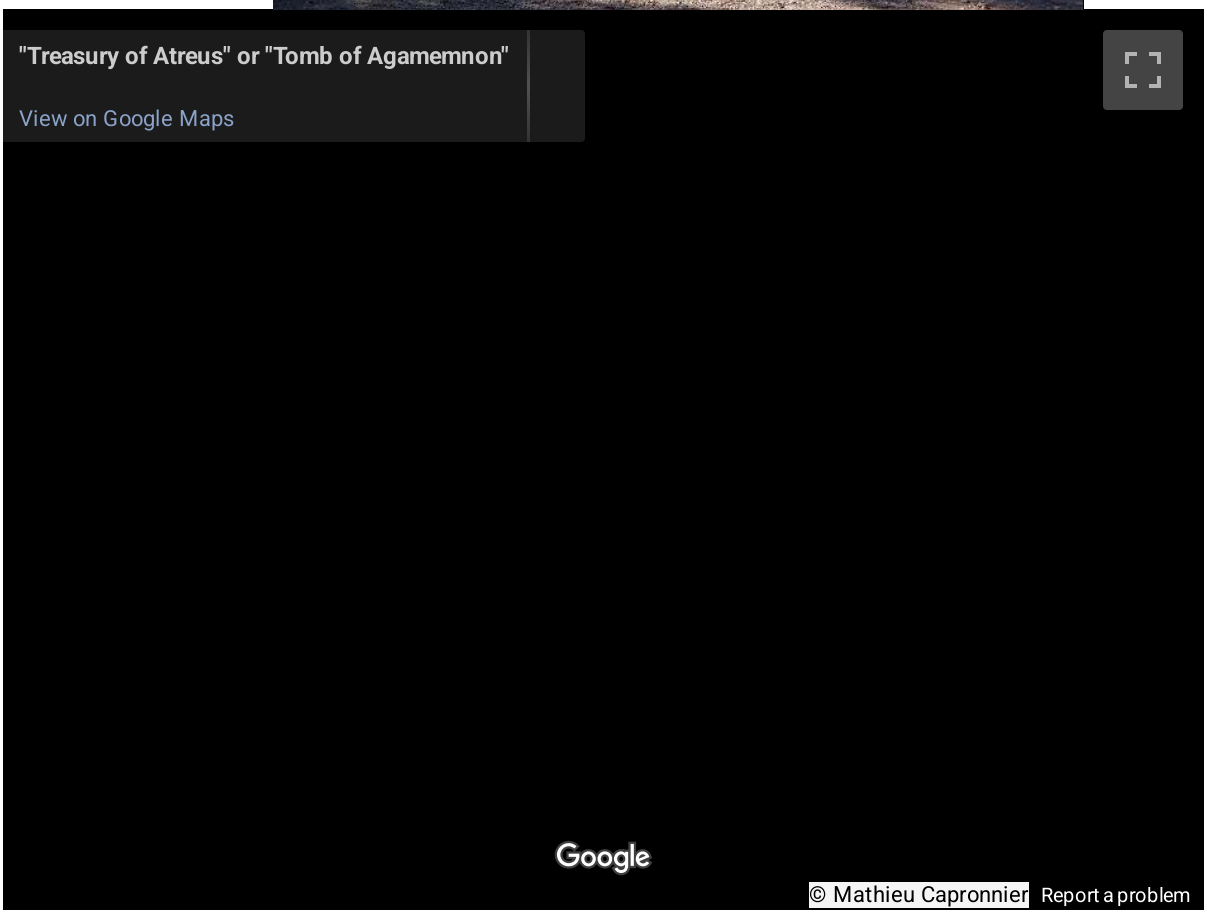
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9.3.3: The Treasury of Atreus

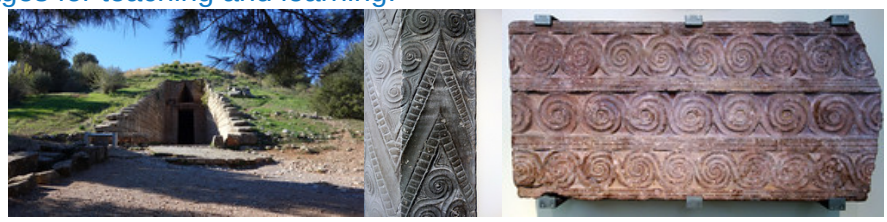
by DR. STEVEN ZUCKER and DR. BETH HARRIS

Below the great citadel of Mycenae, a passage into a hillside leads to a massive beehive-shaped tomb.





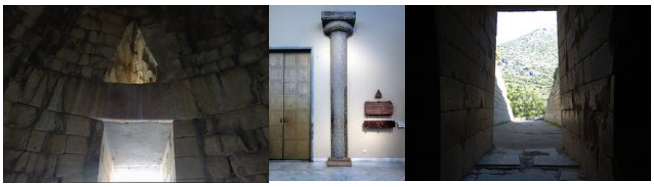
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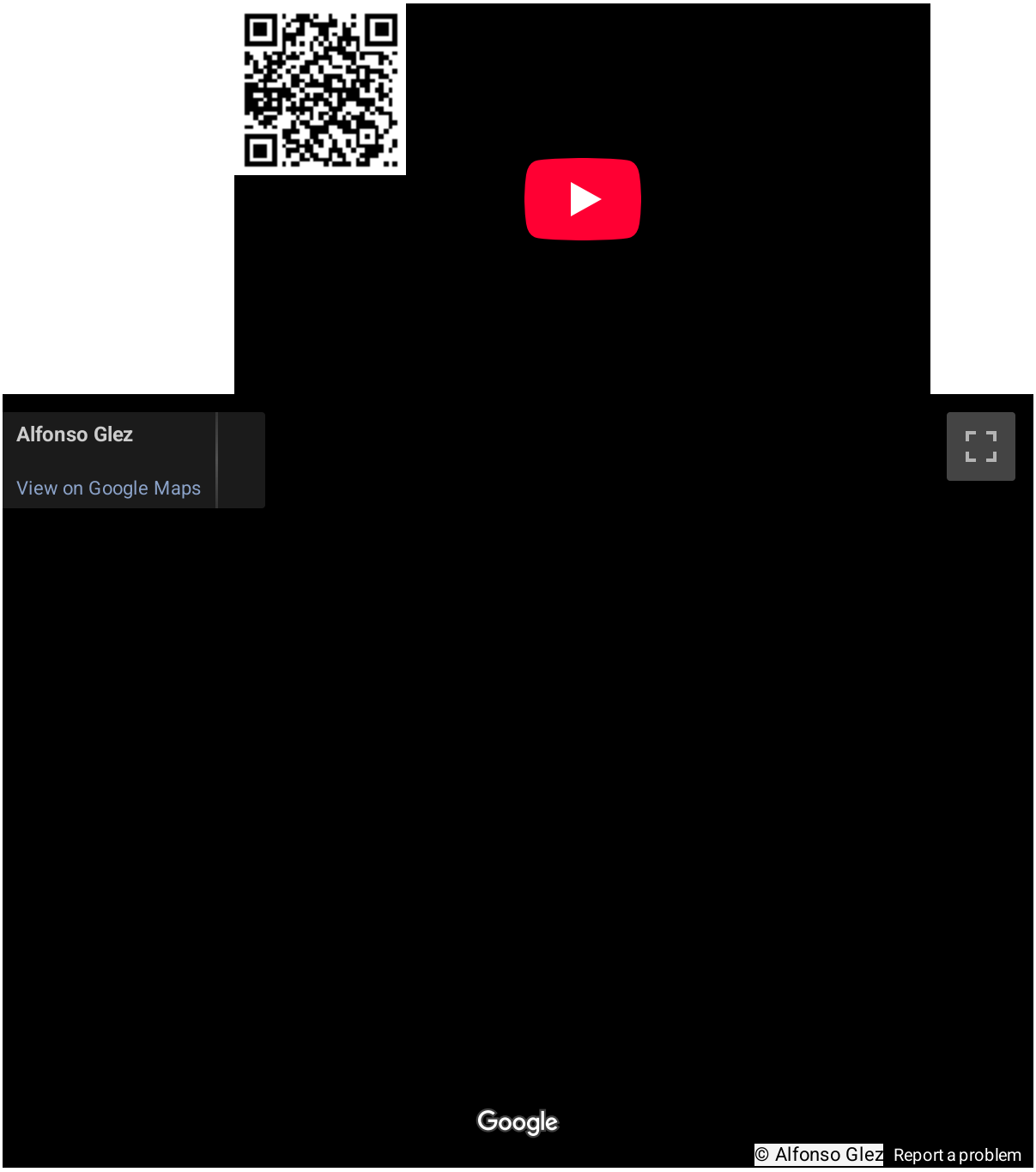
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9.3.4: Lion Gate

by DR. STEVEN ZUCKER and DR. BETH HARRIS

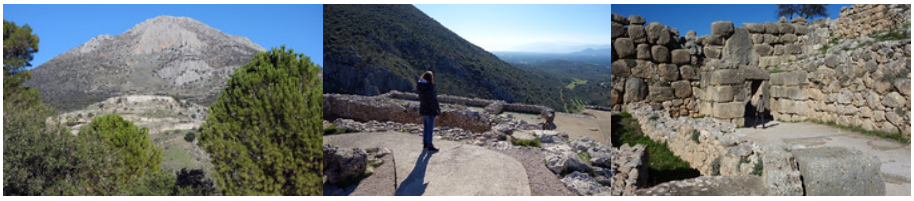
Approaching Mycenae was awe inspiring: a massive hill, walls of enormous stones, and the fearsome Lion Gate.



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Figure **9.3.4.64**: More Smarthistory images…

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

10: Ancient Greece

Ancient Greek art, with its love of the human body, is perhaps the most influential art ever made.

c. 900 - 146 B.C.E.

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SECTION OVERVIEW

10.1: A beginner’s guide- Ancient Greece

The Greeks were united by a shared language, religion, and culture.

c. 700 - 146 B.C.E.

By around 500 B.C.E. “rule by the people,” or democracy, emerged in the city of Athens. Following the defeat of the Persian Empire, Greece (and Athens in particular) entered a golden age of art, literature, and philosophy.

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10.1.1: Ancient Greece, an introduction

by THE BRITISH MUSEUM



Figure **10.1.1.1**: Achilles killing the Amazon Queen Penthesilea, 540-530 B.C.E., black-figured amphora (wine-jar), signed by Exekias as potter and attributed to him as painter, 46 cm tall, Athens, Greece © Trustees of the British Museum. Penthesilea brought her Amazon warriors to help the Trojans defend their city, but was killed in combat with Achilles, the greatest of the Greek warriors.

The ancient Greeks lived in many lands around the Mediterranean Sea, from Turkey to the south of France. They had close contacts with other peoples such as the Egyptians, Syrians and Persians.The Greeks lived in separate city-states, but shared the same language and religious beliefs.

Bronze Age Greece



Figure **10.1.1.2**

During the Bronze Age (around 3200 – 1100 B.C.E.), a number of cultures flourished on the islands of the Cyclades, in Crete and on the Greek mainland. They were mainly farmers, but trade across the sea, particularly in raw materials such as obsidian (volcanic glass) and metals, was growing.

Mycenaean culture flourished on the Greek mainland in the Late Bronze Age, from about 1600 to 1100 B.C.E. The name comes from the site of Mycenae, where the culture was first recognized after the excavations in 1876 of Heinrich Schliemann.



Figure **10.1.1.3**: Pottery stemmed bowl decorated with a procession of riders in chariots, Mycenaean, about 1400-1300 B.C.E., 42 cm high, Cyprus, Greece © Trustees of the British Museum. The upper zone of the vase is painted with a frieze of chariots, pulled by elongated horses, in which ride a charioteer and a passenger. Such chariot processions on vases may well have been inspired by contemporary fresco-paintings which decorated the walls of Mycenaean palaces.

The Mycenaean period of the later Greek Bronze Age was viewed by the Greeks as the "age of heroes" and perhaps provides the historical background to many of the stories told in later Greek mythology, including Homer's epics. Objects and artworks from this time are found throughout mainland Greece and the Greek islands. Distinctive Mycenaean pottery was distributed widely across the eastern Mediterranean. These show the beginnings of Greek mythology being used to decorate works of art. They come from about the same time that the epics of Homer were reaching the form in which we inherit them, as the earliest Greek literature.

The collapse of Mycenaean civilization around 1100 B.C.E. brought about a period of isolation known as the Dark Age. But by around 800 B.C.E. the revival had begun as trade with the wider world increased, arts, crafts and writing re-emerged and city-states (*poleis*) developed.

Archaic period

Two of the most distinctive forms of free-standing sculpture to emerge during the Archaic period of Greek art (about 600-480 B.C.E.) were statues of youths (*kouroi*) and maidens (*korai*).



Figure **10.1.1.4**: The Strangford Apollo, c. 500-490 B.C.E., 101 cm high, perhaps from Cyclades, Aegean Sea © Trustees of the British Museum

Kouros (the singular form) is a term used to describe a type of statue of a male figure produced in marble during the Archaic period of Greek art. Such statues can be colossal (that is larger than life) or less than life size. They all have a conventional pose, where the head and body can be divided equally by a central line, and the legs are parted with the weight placed equally front and back.

The male figures, usually in the form of naked young men, acted both as grave markers and as votive offerings, the latter perhaps intended to be representations of the dedicator. The female figures served similar functions, but differed from their male counterparts in that they were elaborately draped.

The mouth is invariably fixed in a smile, which is probably a symbolic expression of the *arete* ("excellence") of the person represented. It used to be thought that all kouroi were representations of the god Apollo. However, although some may be representations of gods or heroes, many were simply grave markers. The *kouros* was not intended as a realistic portrait of the deceased, but an idealized representation of values and virtues to which the dead laid claim: youthful beauty, athleticism, and aristocratic bearing, among others.

Classical period

By around 500 B.C.E. "rule by the people," or democracy, had emerged in the city of Athens. Following the defeat of a Persian invasion in 480-479 B.C.E., mainland Greece and Athens in particular entered into a golden age. In drama and philosophy, literature, art and architecture, Athens was second to none. The city's empire stretched from the western Mediterranean to the Black Sea, creating enormous wealth. This paid for one of the biggest public building projects ever seen in Greece, which included the Parthenon.

Ancient Greece also played a vital role in the early history of coinage. As well as making some of the world's earliest coins, the ancient Greeks were the first to use them extensively in trade.

Hellenistic period



Figure **10.1.1.5**: Marble portrait of Alexander the Great, Hellenistic Greek, 2nd-1st century B.C.E.,37cm high, Alexandria, Egypt © Trustees of the British Museum

Following the death of Alexander and the division of his empire, the Hellenistic period (323-31 B.C.E.) saw Greek power and culture extended across the Middle East and as far as the Indus Valley. When Rome absorbed the Greek world into its vast empire, Greek ideas, art and culture greatly influenced the Romans.

Alexander was always shown clean-shaven, which was an innovation: all previous portraits of Greek statesmen or rulers had beards. This royal fashion lasted for almost five hundred years and almost all of the Hellenistic kings and Roman emperors until Hadrian were portrayed beardless.

The British Museum collection includes objects from across the entire Greek world, ranging in date from the beginning of pre-history to early Christianity in the Byzantine era.

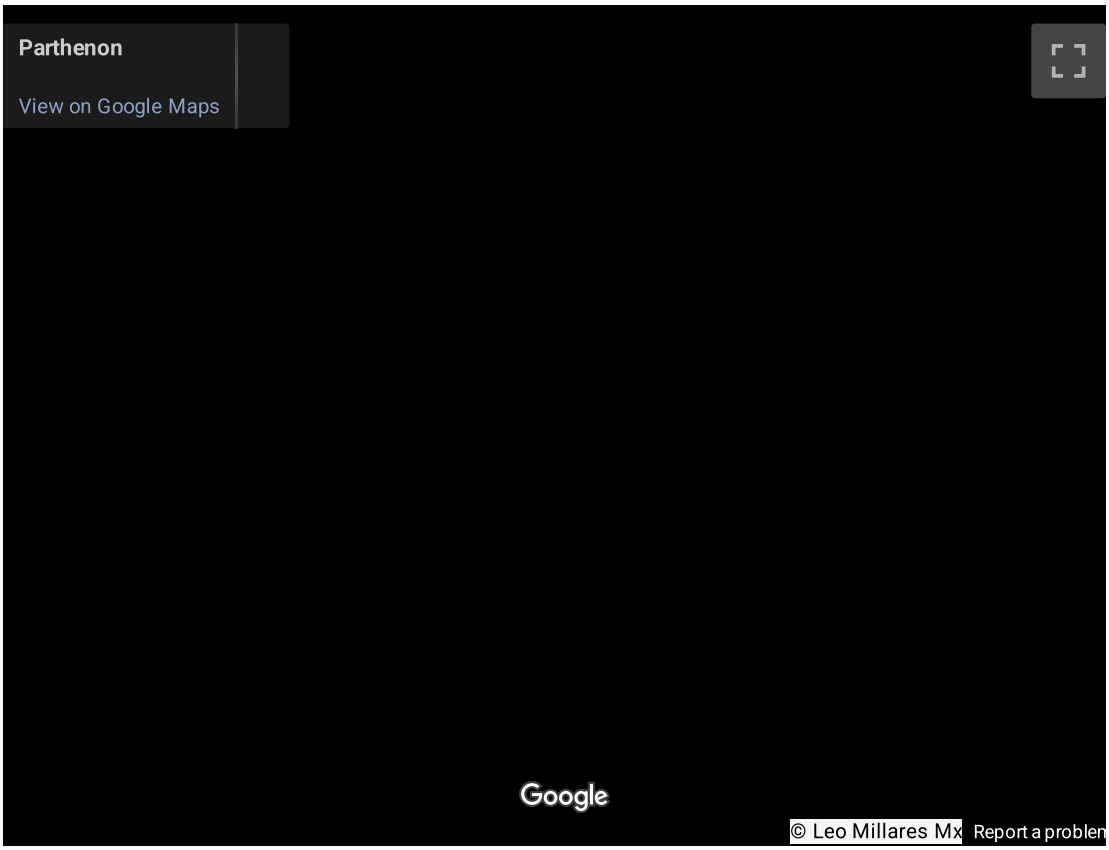
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10.1.2: Introduction to ancient Greek art

by DR. RENEE M. GONDEK



A shared language, religion, and culture

Ancient Greece can feel strangely familiar. From the exploits of Achilles and Odysseus, to the treatises of Aristotle, from the exacting measurements of the **Parthenon** (image above) to the rhythmic chaos of the ***Laocoön*** (image below), ancient Greek culture has shaped our world. Thanks largely to notable archaeological sites, well-known literary sources, and the impact of Hollywood (*Clash of the Titans*, for example), this civilization is embedded in our collective consciousness—prompting visions of epic battles, erudite philosophers, gleaming white temples, and limbless nudes (we now know the sculptures—even the ones that decorated temples like the Parthenon—were brightly painted, and, of course, the fact that the figures are often missing limbs is the result of the ravages of time).



Figure **10.1.2.1**: Athanadoros, Hagesandros, and Polydoros of Rhodes, *Laocoön and his Sons*, early first century C.E., marble, 7'10-1/2" high (Vatican Museums)

Dispersed around the Mediterranean and divided into self-governing units called *poleis* or city-states, the ancient Greeks were united by a shared language, religion, and culture. Strengthening these bonds further were the so-called **"Panhellenic" sanctuaries** and festivals that

embraced “all Greeks” and encouraged interaction, competition, and exchange (for example the Olympics, which were held at the Panhellenic sanctuary at Olympia). Although popular modern understanding of the ancient Greek world is based on the classical art of fifth century B.C.E. Athens, it is important to recognize that Greek civilization was vast and did not develop overnight.



Figure **10.1.2.2**

The Dark Ages (c. 1100 – c. 800 B.C.E.) to the Orientalizing Period (c. 700 – 600 B.C.E.)

Following the collapse of the **Mycenaean citadels** of the late Bronze Age, the Greek mainland was traditionally thought to enter a “Dark Age” that lasted from c. 1100 until c. 800 B.C.E. Not only did the complex socio-cultural system of the Mycenaeans disappear, but also its numerous achievements (i.e., metalworking, large-scale construction, writing). The discovery and continuous excavation of a site known as **Lefkandi**, however, drastically alters this impression. Located just north of Athens, Lefkandi has yielded an immense apsidal structure (almost fifty meters long), a massive network of graves, and two heroic burials replete with gold objects and valuable horse sacrifices. One of the most interesting artifacts, ritually buried in two separate graves, is a centaur figurine (see photos below). At fourteen inches high, the terracotta creature is composed of a equine (horse) torso made on a potter’s wheel and hand-formed human limbs and features. Alluding to mythology and perhaps a particular story, this centaur embodies the cultural richness of this period.



Figure **10.1.2.3**: Centaur, c. 900 B.C.E. (Proto-Geometric period), terracotta, 14 inches high, the head was found in tomb 1 and the body was found in tomb 3 in the cemetery of Toumba, Lefkandi, Greece (detail of head photo: **Dan Diffendale** CC BY-NC-SA 2)

Similar in its adoption of narrative elements is a vase-painting likely from Thebes dating to c. 730 B.C.E. (see image below). Fully ensconced in the Geometric Period (c. 800-700 B.C.E.), the imagery on the vase reflects other eighth-century artifacts, such as the ***Dipylon Amphora***, with its geometric patterning and silhouetted human forms. Though simplistic, the overall scene on this vase seems to record a story. A man and woman stand beside a ship outfitted with tiers of rowers. Grasping at the stern and lifting one leg into the hull, the man turns back towards the female and takes her by the wrist. Is the couple Theseus and Ariadne? Is this an abduction? Perhaps Paris and Helen? Or, is the man bidding farewell to the woman and embarking on a journey as had Odysseus and Penelope? The answer is unattainable.



Figure 10.1.2.4: Late Geometric Attic spouted krater (vessel for mixing water and wine), possibly from Thebes, c. 730 B.C.E., 30.5 cm high (The British Museum, London), photo: Egisto Sani CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

In the Orientalizing Period (700-600 B.C.E.), alongside **Near Eastern motifs and animal processions**, craftsmen produced more nuanced figural forms and intelligible illustrations. For example, terracotta painted plaques from the Temple of Apollo at Thermon (c. 625 B.C.E.) are some of the earliest evidence for architectural decoration in Iron Age Greece. Once ornamenting the surface of this Doric temple (most likely as metopes), the extant panels have preserved various imagery (watch **this video** to learn about the Doric order). On one plaque (see image below), a male youth strides towards the right and carries a significant attribute under his right arm—the severed head of the Gorgon Medusa (her face is visible between the right hand and right hip of the striding figure). Not only is the painter successful here in relaying a particular story, but also the figure of Perseus shows great advancement from the previous century. The limbs are fleshy, the facial features are recognizable, and the hat and winged boots appropriately equip the hero for fast travel.



Figure 10.1.2.5: Fragment showing Perseus with the head of Medusa likely from a metope from the Temple of Apollo at Thermon, c. 630 B.C.E., painted terracotta, 87.8 cm high (National Archaeological Museum, Athens)

The Archaic Period (c. 600-480/479 B.C.E.)

While Greek artisans continued to develop their individual crafts, storytelling ability, and more realistic portrayals of human figures throughout the Archaic Period, the city of Athens witnessed the rise and fall of tyrants and the introduction of democracy by the statesman Kleisthenes in the years 508 and 507 B.C.E.

Visually, the period is known for large-scale marble kouros (male youth) and kore (female youth) sculptures (see below). Showing the influence of ancient Egyptian sculpture (like **this example** of the Pharaoh Menkaure and his wife in the MFA, Boston), the kouros stands rigidly with both arms extended at the side and one leg advanced. Frequently employed as grave markers, these sculptural types displayed unabashed nudity, highlighting their complicated hairstyles and abstracted musculature (below left). The kore, on the other hand, was never nude. Not only was her form draped in layers of fabric, but she was also ornamented with jewelry and adorned with a crown. Though some have been discovered in funerary contexts, like *Phrasiklea* (below right), a vast majority were found on the Acropolis in Athens (for the Acropolis korai, click **here**). Ritualistically buried following desecration of this sanctuary by the Persians in 480 and 479 B.C.E., dozens of korai were unearthed alongside other dedicatory artifacts. While the identities of these figures have been hotly debated in recent times, most agree that they were originally intended as votive offerings to the goddess Athena.



Figure **10.1.2.6**: Left: *Anavysos (Kroisos) Kouros*, c. 530 B.C.E., marble, 6′ 4″ (National Archaeological Museum, Athens), photo: Steven Zucker Right: Aristion of Paros, *Phrasikleia Kore*, c. 550 – 540 B.C.E. Parian marble with traces of pigment, 211 cm high (National Archaeological Museum, Athens), photo: **Asaf Braverman** CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

The Classical Period (480/479-323 B.C.E.)

Though experimentation in realistic movement began before the end of the Archaic Period, it was not until the Classical Period that two- and three-dimensional forms achieved proportions and postures that were naturalistic. The "Early Classical Period" (480/479 – 450 B.C.E., also known as the "Severe Style") was a period of transition when some sculptural work displayed archaizing holdovers. As can be seen in the ***Kritios Boy***, c. 480 B.C.E., the "Severe Style" features realistic anatomy, serious expressions, pouty lips, and thick eyelids. For painters, the development of perspective and multiple ground lines enriched compositions, as can be seen on the **Niobid Painter's vase** in the Louvre (image below).



Figure **10.1.2.7**: Niobid Painter, Niobid Krater, Attic red-figure calyx-krater, c. 460-50 B.C.E., 54 x 56 cm (Musée du Louvre, Paris)

During the "High Classical Period" (450-400 B.C.E.), there was great artistic success: from the innovative structures on the **Acropolis** to Polykleitos' visual and cerebral manifestation of idealization in his sculpture of a young man holding a spear, the ***Doryphoros* or "Canon"** (image below). Concurrently, however, Athens, Sparta, and their mutual allies were embroiled in the Peloponnesian War, a bitter conflict that lasted for several decades and ended in 404 B.C.E. Despite continued military activity throughout the "Late Classical Period" (400-323 B.C.E.), artistic production and development continued apace. In addition to a new figural aesthetic in the fourth century known for its longer torsos and limbs, and smaller heads (for example, the ***Apoxyomenos***), the first female nude was produced. Known as the *Aphrodite of Knidos*, c. 350 B.C.E., the sculpture pivots at the shoulders and hips into an S-Curve and stands with her right hand over her genitals in a *pudica* (or modest Venus) pose (see a Roman copy in the Capitoline Museum in Rome **here**). Exhibited in a circular temple and visible from all sides, the ***Aphrodite of Knidos*** became one of the most celebrated sculptures in all of antiquity.



Figure **10.1.2.8**: Polykleitos, *Doryphoros (Spear-Bearer)* or The Canon, c. 450-40 B.C.E., ancient Roman marble copy found in Pompeii of the lost bronze original, 211 cm (Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli)

The Hellenistic Period and Beyond (323 B.C.E. – 31 B.C.E.)

Following the death of Alexander the Great in 323 B.C.E., the Greeks and their influence stretched as far east as modern India. While some pieces intentionally mimicked the Classical style of the previous period such as Eutychides' ***Tyche of Antioche*** (Louvre), other artists were more interested in capturing motion and emotion. For example, on the **Great Altar of Zeus from Pergamon** (below) expressions of agony and a confused mass of limbs convey a newfound interest in drama.



Figure **10.1.2.14**: Athena defeats Alkyoneus (detail), The Pergamon Altar, c. 200-150 B.C.E. (Hellenistic Period), 35.64 x 33.4 meters, marble (Pergamon Museum, Berlin)

Architecturally, the scale of structures vastly increased, as can be seen with the **Temple of Apollo at Didyma**, and some complexes even terraced their surrounding landscape in order to create spectacular vistas as can be seem at the **Sanctuary of Asklepios on Kos**. Upon the defeat of Cleopatra at the Battle of Actium in 31 B.C.E., the Ptolemaic dynasty that ruled Egypt and, simultaneously, the Hellenistic Period came to a close. With the Roman admiration of and predilection for Greek art and culture, however, Classical aesthetics and teachings continued to endure from antiquity to the modern era.

Additional resources:

The Art of classical Greece from the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

Greek Art in the Archaic Period on the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

Art of the Hellenistic Age and the Hellenistic Tradition on the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

Richard T. Neer, *Greek Art and Archaeology: A New History, c. 2500-c. 150 B.C.E.* (Thames and Hudson, 2011)

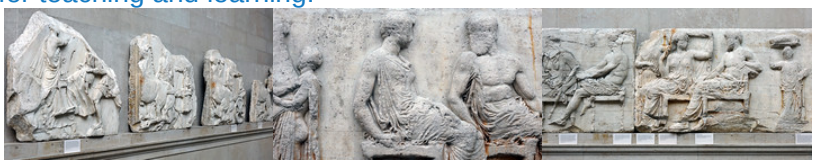
Robin Osborne, *Archaic and Classical Greek Art* (Oxford University Press, 1988)

John G. Pedley, *Greek Art and Archaeology* (Pearson, 2011)

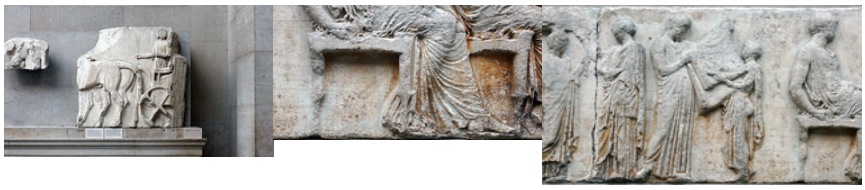
J.J. Pollitt, *Art and Experience in Classical Greece* (Cambridge University Press, 1972)

Nigel Jonathan Spivey, *Greek Art* (Phaeton Press, 1997)

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10.1.3: Contrapposto explained

by DR. STEVEN ZUCKER and DR. BETH HARRIS

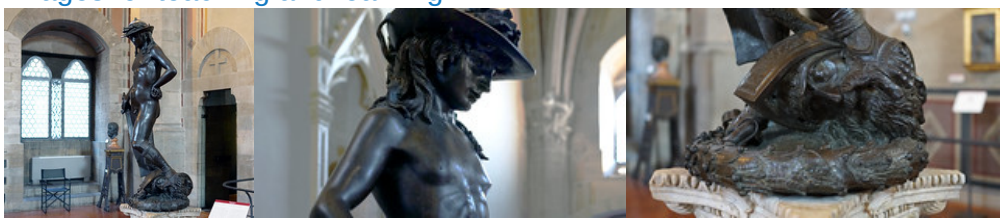
The ancient Greeks mastered the naturalistic representation of the human body, and the Renaissance revived it.



Video **10.1.3.1**: A discussion about contrapposto while looking at “Idolino” from Pesaro, (Roman), c. 30 B.C.E., bronze, 158 cm (Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Firenze), speakers: Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker

Although these particular objects may not have been known in the Renaissance, the ideas and form of contrapposto were revived in the Italian Renaissance.

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10.1.4: Introduction to ancient Greek architecture

by DR. JEFFREY A. BECKER

For most of us, architecture is easy to take for granted. It's everywhere in our daily lives—sometimes elegant, other times shabby, but generally ubiquitous. How often do we stop to examine and contemplate its form and style? Stopping for that contemplation offers not only the opportunity to understand one's daily surroundings, but also to appreciate the connection that exists between architectural forms in our own time and those from the past. Architectural tradition and design has the ability to link disparate cultures together over time and space—and this is certainly true of the legacy of architectural forms created by the ancient Greeks.



Figure **10.1.4.1**: The Erechtheion, 421-405 B.C.E. (Classical Greek), Acropolis, Athens (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Where and when

Greek architecture refers to the architecture of the Greek-speaking peoples who inhabited the Greek mainland and the Peloponnese, the islands of the Aegean Sea, the Greek colonies in Ionia (coastal Asia Minor), and Magna Graecia (Greek colonies in Italy and Sicily).

Greek architecture stretches from c. 900 B.C.E. to the first century C.E. (with the earliest extant stone architecture dating to the seventh century B.C.E.).

Greek architecture influenced Roman architecture and architects in profound ways, such that Roman Imperial architecture adopts and incorporates many Greek elements into its own practice.

An overview of basic building typologies demonstrates the range and diversity of Greek architecture.



Figure **10.1.4.2**: "Hera II," c. 460 B.C.E., 24.26 x 59.98 m, Greek, Doric temple from the classical period likely dedicated to Hera, Paestum (Latin) previously Poseidonia (photo: **Steven Zucker**, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Temple

The most recognizably “Greek” structure is the temple (even though the architecture of Greek temples is actually quite diverse). The Greeks referred to temples with the term ὁ ναός (*ho naós*) meaning “dwelling,” temple derives from the Latin term, *templum*. The earliest shrines were built to honor divinities and were made from materials such as a wood and mud brick—materials that typically don’t survive very long. The basic form of the *naos* (the interior room that held the cult statue of the God or Gods) emerges as early as the tenth century B.C.E. as a simple, rectangular room with projecting walls (*antae*) that created a shallow porch. This basic form remained unchanged in its concept for centuries. In the eighth century B.C.E. Greek architecture begins to make the move from ephemeral materials (wood, mud brick, thatch) to permanent materials (namely, stone).

During the Archaic period the tenets of the Doric order of architecture in the Greek mainland became firmly established, leading to a wave of monumental temple building during the sixth and fifth centuries B.C.E. Greek city-states invested substantial resources in temple building—as they competed with each other not just in strategic and economic terms, but also in their architecture. For example, Athens devoted enormous resources to the construction of the acropolis in the 5th century B.C.E.—in part so that Athenians could be confident that the temples built to honor their gods surpassed anything that their rival states could offer.

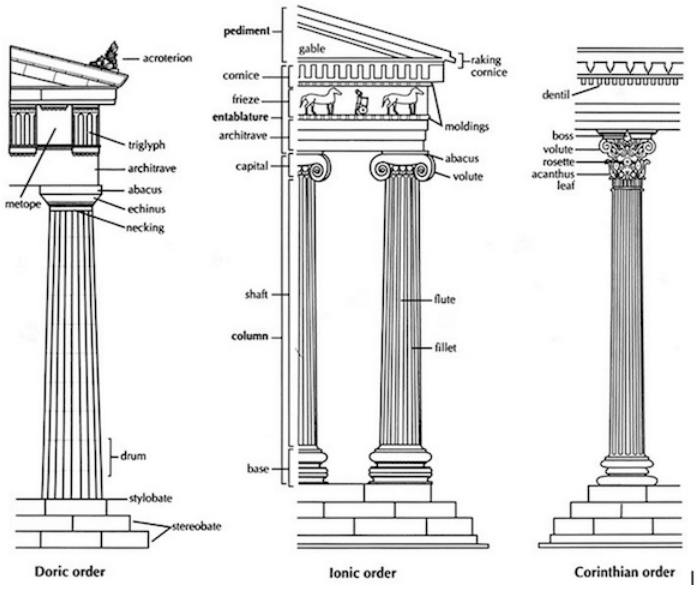


Figure **10.1.4.3**: Greek architectural orders

The multi-phase architectural development of sanctuaries such as that of Hera on the island of Samos demonstrate not only the change that occurred in construction techniques over time but also how the Greeks re-used sacred spaces—with the later phases built directly atop the preceding ones. Perhaps the fullest, and most famous, expression of Classical Greek temple architecture is the Periclean Parthenon of Athens—a Doric order structure, the Parthenon represents the maturity of the Greek classical form.



Figure 10.1.4.4: Iktinos and Kallikrates, The Parthenon, Athens, 447 – 432 B.C.E. (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Greek temples are often categorized in terms of their ground plan and the way in which the columns are arranged. A prostyle temple is a temple that has columns only at the front, while an amphiprostyle temple has columns at the front and the rear. Temples with a peripteral arrangement (from the Greek πτερον (*pteron*) meaning "wing) have a single line of columns arranged all around the exterior of the temple building. Dipteral temples simply have a double row of columns surrounding the building. One of the more unusual plans is the tholos, a temple with a circular ground plan; famous examples are attested at the sanctuary of Apollo in Delphi and the sanctuary of Asclepius at Epidauros.



Figure 10.1.4.5: Tholos temple, sanctuary of Athena Pronaia, 4th century B.C.E., Delphi (Greece) Greece (photo: kufoleto, CC BY 3.0)

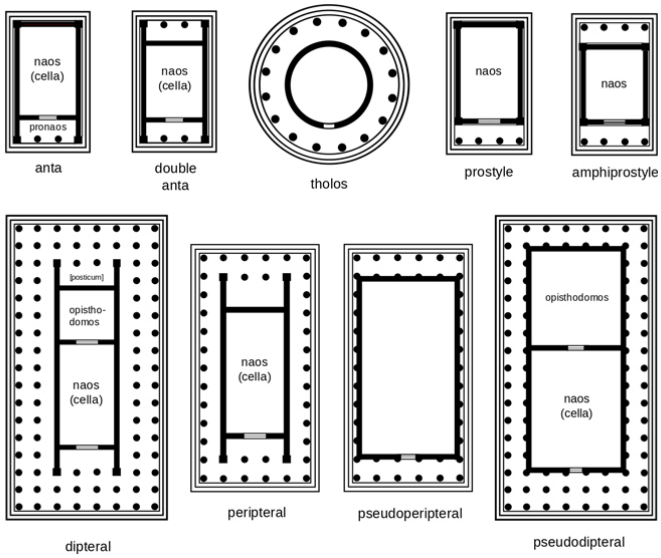


Figure **10.1.4.6**: Greek temple plans (**source**)

Stoa

Stoa (στοά) is a Greek architectural term that describes a covered walkway or colonnade that was usually designed for public use. Early examples, often employing the Doric order, were usually composed of a single level, although later examples (Hellenistic and Roman) came to be two-story freestanding structures. These later examples allowed interior space for shops or other rooms and often incorporated the Ionic order for interior colonnades.

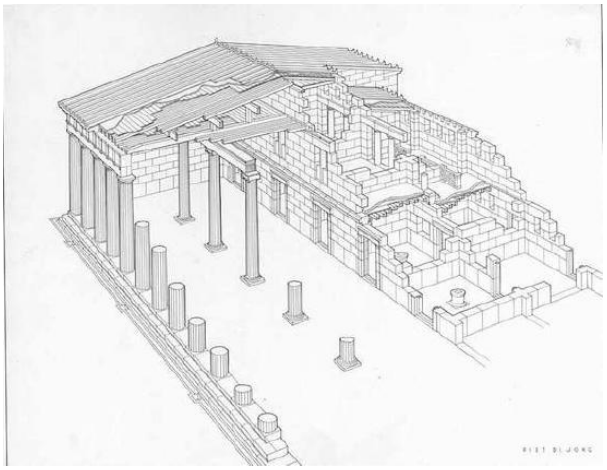


Figure **10.1.4.7**: P. De Jong, Restored Perspective of the South Stoa, Corinth (photo: **American School of Classical Studies, Digital Collections**)

Greek city planners came to prefer the stoa as a device for framing the agora (public market place) of a city or town. The South Stoa constructed as part of the sanctuary of Hera on the island of Samos (c. 700-550 B.C.E.) numbers among the earliest examples of the stoa in Greek architecture. Many cities, particularly Athens and Corinth, came to have elaborate and famous stoas. In Athens the famous Stoa Poikile (“Painted Stoa”), c. fifth century B.C.E., housed paintings of famous Greek military exploits including the battle of Marathon, while the Stoa Basileios (“Royal Stoa”), c. fifth century B.C.E., was the seat of a chief civic official (*archon basileios*).



Figure 10.1.4.8: 20th century reconstruction of the Stoa of Attalos in the Athenian Agora (original c. 159-138 B.C.E.) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Later, through the patronage of the kings of Pergamon, the Athenian agora was augmented by the famed Stoa of Attalos (c. 159-138 B.C.E.) which was recently rebuilt according to the ancient specifications and now houses the archaeological museum for the Athenian Agora itself (see image above). At Corinth the stoa persisted as an architectural type well into the Roman period; the South Stoa there (above), c. 150 C.E., shows the continued utility of this building design for framing civic space. From the Hellenistic period onwards the stoa also lent its name to a philosophical school, as Zeno of Citium (c. 334-262 B.C.E.) originally taught his Stoic philosophy in the Stoa Poikile of Athens.

Theater



Figure 10.1.4.9: Theater at the Sanctuary of Asclepius at Epidaurus, c. 350 – 300 B.C.E. (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

The Greek theater was a large, open-air structure used for dramatic performance. Theaters often took advantage of hillsides and naturally sloping terrain and, in general, utilized the panoramic landscape as the backdrop to the stage itself. The Greek theater is composed of the seating area (theatron), a circular space for the chorus to perform (orchestra), and the stage (*skene*). Tiered seats in the theatron provided space for spectators. Two side aisles (*parados*, pl. *paradoi*) provided access to the orchestra. The Greek theater inspired the Roman version of the theater directly, although the Romans introduced some modifications to the concept of theater architecture. In many cases the Romans converted pre-existing Greek theaters to conform to their own architectural ideals, as is evident in the Theater of Dionysos on the slopes of the Athenian Acropolis. Since theatrical performances were often linked to sacred festivals, it is not uncommon to find theaters associated directly with sanctuaries.

Bouleuterion



Figure 10.1.4.10: Bouleuterion, Priène (Turkey), c. 200 B.C.E. (photo: Jacqueline Poggi, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

The Bouleuterion (βουλευτήριον) was an important civic building in a Greek city, as it was the meeting place of the boule (citizen council) of the city. These select representatives assembled to handle public affairs and represent the citizenry of the polis (in ancient Athens the boule was comprised of 500 members). The bouleuterion generally was a covered, rectilinear building with stepped seating surrounding a central speaker's well in which an altar was placed. The city of Priène has a particularly well-preserved example of this civic structure as does the city of Miletus.

House

Greek houses of the Archaic and Classical periods were relatively simple in design. Houses usually were centered on a courtyard that would have been the scene for various ritual activities; the courtyard also provided natural light for the often small houses. The ground floor rooms would have included kitchen and storage rooms, perhaps an animal pen and a latrine; the chief room was the *andron*—site of the male-dominated drinking party (*symposion*). The quarters for women and children (*gynaikeion*) could be located on the second level (if present) and were, in any case, segregated from the mens' area. It was not uncommon for houses to be attached to workshops or shops. The houses excavated in the southwest part of the Athenian Agora had walls of mud brick that rested on stone socles and tiled roofs, with floors of beaten clay.

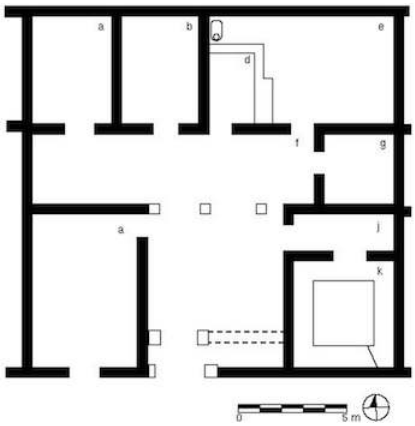


Figure 10.1.4.11: Plan, Olynthus (Greece), House A vii 4, built after 432, before 348 B.C.E., from Olynthus, vol. 8 pl. 99, 100 and fig. 5, kitchen complex c, d, and e; andron (k) (photo: Perseus Digital Library)

The city of Olynthus in Chalcidice, Greece, destroyed by military action in 348 B.C.E., preserves many well-appointed courtyard houses arranged within the Hippodamian grid-plan of the city. House A vii 4 had a large cobbled courtyard that was used for domestic industry. While some rooms were fairly plain, with earthen floors, the *andron* was the most well-appointed room of the house.

Fortifications



Figure **10.1.4.12**: Fortifications and gate, Palairos (Greece)

The Mycenaean fortifications of Bronze Age Greece (c. 1300 B.C.E.) are particularly well known—the megalithic architecture (also referred to as Cyclopean because of the use of enormous stones) represents a trend in Bronze Age architecture. While these massive Bronze Age walls are difficult to best, first millennium B.C.E. Greece also shows evidence for stone built fortification walls. In Attika (the territory of Athens), a series of Classical and Hellenistic walls built in ashlar masonry (squared masonry blocks) have been studied as a potential system of border defenses. At Palairos in Epirus (Greece) the massive fortifications enclose a high citadel that occupies imposing terrain.

Stadium, gymnasium, and palaestra

The Greek stadium (derived from *stadion*, a Greek measurement equivalent to c. 578 feet or 176 meters) was the location of foot races held as part of sacred games; these structures are often found in the context of sanctuaries, as in the case of the Panhellenic sanctuaries at Olympia and Epidauros. Long and narrow, with a horseshoe shape, the stadium occupied reasonably flat terrain.

The gymnasium (from the Greek term *gymnós* meaning “naked”) was a training center for athletes who participated in public games. This facility tended to include areas for both training and storage. The palaestra (παλαίστρα) was an exercise facility originally connected with the training of wrestlers. These complexes were generally rectilinear in plan, with a colonnade framing a central, open space.

Altar



Figure **10.1.4.13**: Altar of Hieron II, 3rd century B.C.E. (Syracuse, Sicily, Italy)

Since blood sacrifice was a key component of Greek ritual practice, an altar was essential for these purposes. While altars did not necessarily need to be architecturalized, they could be and, in some cases, they assumed a monumental scale. The third century B.C.E. Altar of Hieron II at Syracuse, Sicily, provides one such example. At c. 196 meters in length and c. 11 m in height the massive altar was reported to be capable of hosting the simultaneous sacrifice of 450 bulls (Diodorus Siculus *History* 11.72.2).



Figure **10.1.4.14**: Model of the Pergamon Altar (Altar of Zeus), c. 200-150 B.C.E. (Pergamon Museum, Berlin) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Another spectacular altar is the Altar of Zeus from Pergamon, built during the first half of the second century B.C.E. The altar itself is screened by a monumental enclosure decorated with sculpture; the monument measures c. 35.64 by 33.4 meters. The altar is best known for its program of relief sculpture that depict a gigantomachy (battle between the Olympian gods and the giants) that is presented as an allegory for the military conquests of the kings of Pergamon. Despite its monumental scale and lavish decoration, the Pergamon altar preserves the basic and necessary features of the Greek altar: it is frontal and approached by stairs and is open to the air—to allow not only for the blood sacrifice itself but also for the burning of the thigh bones and fat as an offering to the gods.

Fountain house

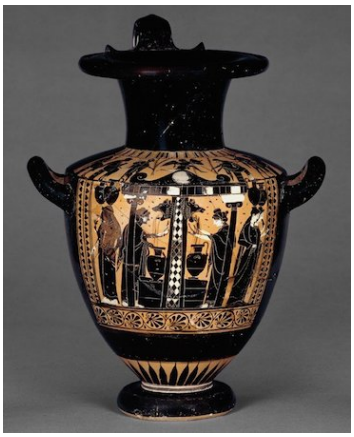


Figure **10.1.4.15**: Black-figured water-jar (hydria) with a scene at a fountain-house, Greek, about 520-500 B.C.E., 50.8 cm high, © The Trustees of the British Museum

The fountain house is a public building that provides access to clean drinking water and at which water jars and containers could be filled. The Southeast Fountain house in the Athenian Agora (c. 530 B.C.E.) provides an example of this tendency to position fountain houses and their dependable supply of clean drinking water close to civic spaces like the agora. Gathering water was seen as a woman's task and, as such, it offered the often isolated women a chance to socialize with others while collecting water. Fountain house scenes are common on ceramic water jars (*hydriai*), as is the case for a Black-figured hydria (c. 525-500 B.C.E.) found in an Etruscan tomb in Vulci that is now in the British Museum

Legacy

The architecture of ancient Greece influenced ancient Roman architecture, and became the architectural vernacular employed in the expansive Hellenistic world created in the wake of the conquests of Alexander the Great. Greek architectural forms became implanted so deeply in the Roman architectural mindset that they endured throughout antiquity, only to then be re-discovered in the Renaissance and especially from the mid-eighteenth century onwards as a feature of the Neo-Classical movement. This durable legacy helps to explain why the ancient Greek architectural orders and the tenets of Greek design are still so prevalent—and visible—in our post-modern world.

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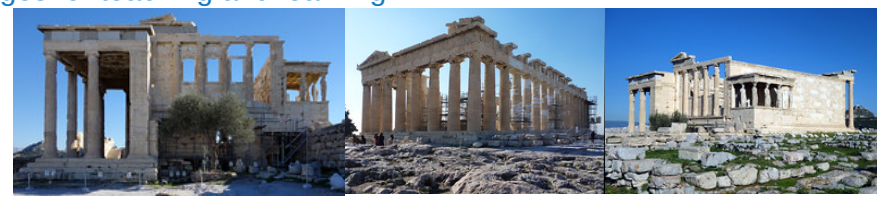
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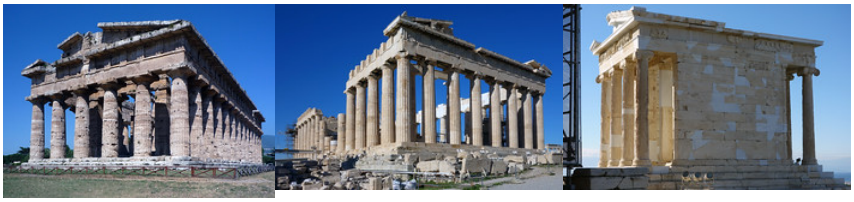
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10.1.5: Greek architectural orders

by DR. JEFFREY A. BECKER

Identify the classical orders—the architectural styles developed by the Greeks and Romans used to this day.



Video **10.1.5.1**

An architectural order describes a style of building. In classical architecture each order is readily identifiable by means of its proportions and profiles, as well as by various aesthetic details. The style of column employed serves as a useful index of the style itself, so identifying the order of the column will then, in turn, situate the order employed in the structure as a whole. The classical orders—described by the labels Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian—do not merely serve as descriptors for the remains of ancient buildings, but as an index to the architectural and aesthetic development of Greek architecture itself.

The Doric order

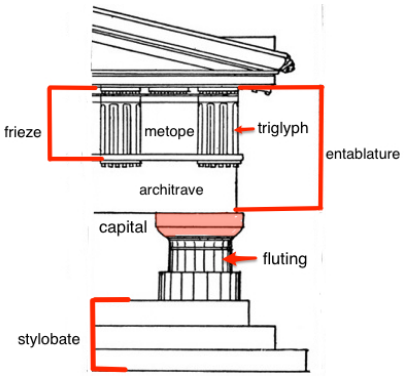


Figure **10.1.5.1**: Doric order

The Doric order is the earliest of the three Classical orders of architecture and represents an important moment in Mediterranean architecture when monumental construction made the transition from impermanent materials (i.e. wood) to permanent materials, namely stone. The Doric order is characterized by a plain, unadorned column capital and a column that rests directly on the stylobate of the temple without a base. The Doric entablature includes a frieze composed of trigylphs (vertical plaques with three divisions) and metopes (square spaces for either painted or sculpted decoration). The columns are fluted and are of sturdy, if not stocky, proportions.



Figure **10.1.5.2**: Iktinos and Kallikrates, The Parthenon, 447 – 432 B.C.E., Athens

The Doric order emerged on the Greek mainland during the course of the late seventh century B.C.E. and remained the predominant order for Greek temple construction through the early fifth century B.C.E., although notable buildings of the Classical period—especially the canonical Parthenon in Athens—still employ it. By 575 B.C.E the order may be properly identified, with some of the earliest surviving elements being the metope plaques from the Temple of Apollo at Thermon. Other early, but fragmentary, examples include the sanctuary of Hera at Argos, votive capitals from the island of Aegina, as well as early Doric capitals that were a part of the Temple of Athena Pronaia at Delphi in central Greece. The Doric order finds perhaps its fullest expression in the Parthenon (c. 447-432 B.C.E.) at Athens designed by Iktinos and Kallikrates.

The Ionic order



Figure **10.1.5.3**: Ionic capital, north porch of the Erechtheion, 421-407 B.C.E., marble, Acropolis, Athens

As its names suggests, the Ionic Order originated in Ionia, a coastal region of central Anatolia (today Turkey) where a number of ancient Greek settlements were located. Volutes (scroll-like ornaments) characterize the Ionic capital and a base supports the column, unlike the Doric order. The Ionic order developed in Ionia during the mid-sixth century B.C.E. and had been transmitted to mainland Greece by the fifth century B.C.E. Among the earliest examples of the Ionic capital is the inscribed votive column from Naxos, dating to the end of the seventh century B.C.E.

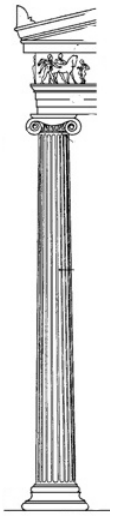


Figure 10.1.5.4: Ionic order

The monumental temple dedicated to Hera on the island of Samos, built by the architect Rhoikos
c. 570-560 B.C.E., was the first of the great Ionic buildings, although it was destroyed by earthquake in short order. The sixth century B.C.E. Temple of Artemis at Ephesus, a wonder of the ancient world, was also an Ionic design. In Athens the Ionic order influences some elements of the Parthenon (447-432 B.C.E.), notably the Ionic frieze that encircles the cella of the temple. Ionic columns are also employed in the interior of the monumental gateway to the Acropolis known as the Propylaia (c. 437-432 B.C.E.). The Ionic was promoted to an exterior order in the construction of the Erechtheion (c. 421-405 B.C.E.) on the Athenian Acropolis (image below).



Figure 10.1.5.5: North porch of the Erechtheion, 421-407 B.C.E., marble, Acropolis, Athens

The Ionic order is notable for its graceful proportions, giving a more slender and elegant profile than the Doric order. The ancient Roman architect Vitruvius compared the Doric module to a sturdy, male body, while the Ionic was possessed of more graceful, feminine proportions. The Ionic order incorporates a running frieze of continuous sculptural relief, as opposed to the Doric frieze composed of triglyphs and metopes.

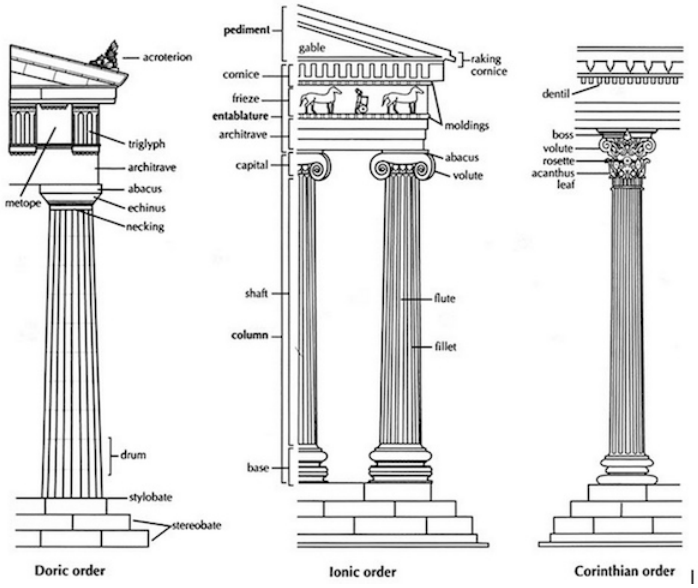


Figure **10.1.5.6**: The Greek orders

The Corinthian order



Figure **10.1.5.7**: Corinthian capital

The Corinthian order is both the latest and the most elaborate of the Classical orders of architecture. The order was employed in both Greek and Roman architecture, with minor variations, and gave rise, in turn, to the Composite order. As the name suggests, the origins of the order were connected in antiquity with the Greek city-state of Corinth where, according to the architectural writer Vitruvius, the sculptor Callimachus drew a set of acanthus leaves surrounding a votive basket (Vitr. 4.1.9-10). In archaeological terms the earliest known Corinthian capital comes from the Temple of Apollo Epicurius at Bassae and dates to c. 427 B.C.E.



Figure 10.1.5.8: Acanthus leaf

The defining element of the Corinthian order is its elaborate, carved capital, which incorporates even more vegetal elements than the Ionic order does. The stylized, carved leaves of an acanthus plant grow around the capital, generally terminating just below the abacus. The Romans favored the Corinthian order, perhaps due to its slender properties. The order is employed in numerous notable Roman architectural monuments, including the Temple of Mars Ultor and the Pantheon in Rome, and the Maison Carrée in Nîmes.

Legacy of the Greek architectural canon

The canonical Greek architectural orders have exerted influence on architects and their imaginations for thousands of years. While Greek architecture played a key role in inspiring the Romans, its legacy also stretches far beyond antiquity. When James "Athenian" Stuart and Nicholas Revett visited Greece during the period from 1748 to 1755 and subsequently published *The Antiquities of Athens and Other Monuments of Greece* (1762) in London, the Neoclassical revolution was underway. Captivated by Stuart and Revett's measured drawings and engravings, Europe suddenly demanded Greek forms. Architects the likes of Robert Adam drove the Neoclassical movement, creating buildings like Kedleston Hall, an English country house in Kedleston, Derbyshire. Neoclassicism even jumped the Atlantic Ocean to North America, spreading the rich heritage of Classical architecture even further—and making the Greek architectural orders not only extremely influential, but eternal.

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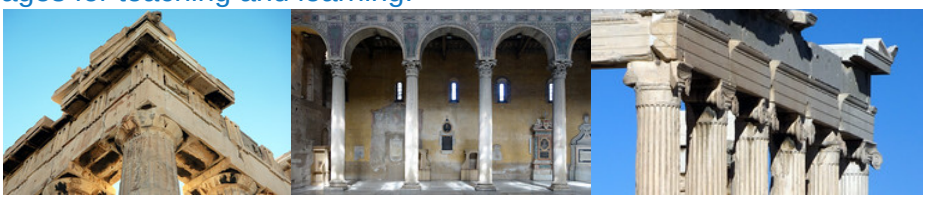
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10.1.6: Black Figures in Classical Greek Art

by DR. SARAH DERBEW



Figure **10.1.6.1**: Pitcher (*Oinochoe*) in the Form of the Head of an African, about 510 B.C.E., attributed to Class B bis: Class of Louvre H 62. Terracotta, 8 7/16 inches high (**The J. Paul Getty Museum**, 83.AE.229. Digital image courtesy of the Getty's Open Content Program)

In ancient Greece, men often escaped their daily grind to socialize at a symposium, or formalized drinking party. In the symposium, revelers indulged in numerous leisure activities centered around the consumption of wine. Among the variety of ceramic vessels that were used, pitchers of many shapes and sizes enabled wine pourers to fill the drinkers' cups. [1]One example is this oinochoe (a type of wine jug) now on display in the new Athenian vases gallery at the Getty Villa.



Figure **10.1.6.2**: Pitcher (*Oinochoe*) in the Form of the Head of an African, with the label that accompanies it in Athenian Vases (Gallery 103) at the **Getty Villa**

This head-shaped wine pitcher invites numerous questions. The first is, quite simply, how to describe it. How can curators responsibly and comprehensively create a label for this pitcher? Is this face best characterized as "black," "African," or "black-glazed"?

The term "black" is unsuitable, because it transports our modern color politics into antiquity; the Trans-Atlantic slave trade has permanently mangled any attempt to use this color objectively.

The geographical marker "African" initially seems like a sound alternative. Unlike the historical weight of "black," using the name of a continent seems to sidestep the retrojection of slavery's violent history. It also presents a utopian description that unites fifty-

four countries and millions of people into a collective entity. To use the word “African” for this pitcher, however, is to irresponsibly project contemporary concerns onto the past. The notion of “Africa” was vague at the time of production of this vessel, around 500 B.C.E.; the Greek term for the region, “Libya,” referred generally to the northern and northeast regions of the continent. “Aithiopian” was another popular term used to describe people with black skin; the etymology of Aithiopia highlights this relationship: *aithō* (I blaze) + *ops* (face).

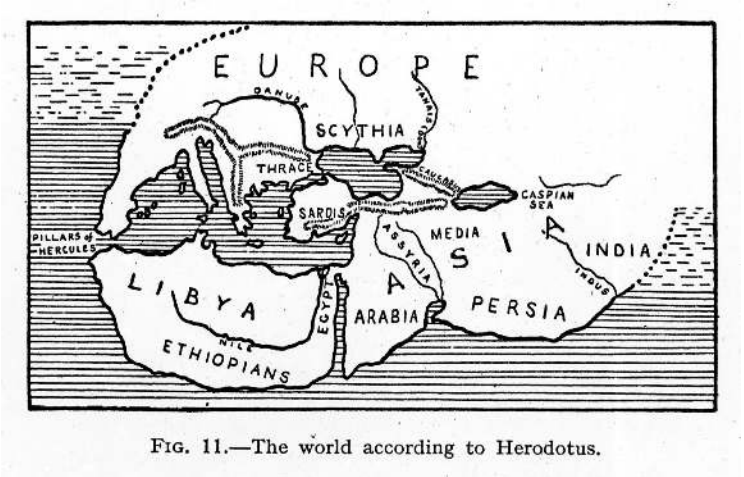


Fig. 11.—The world according to Herodotus.

Figure **10.1.6.3**: Map of the World According to Herodotus, Wellcome Collection (CC BY 4.0)

What about our third option to describe this vessel, “black-glazed”? This term softens modern racial thinking by enabling a focus on material composition; the description recognizes color but does not subscribe to any color-based hierarchy. Although it is naïve to imagine that the black-glazed face, paired with full lips and a broad nose, does not evoke comparison with real people, I would argue that “black-glazed” is preferable because it extends beyond its modern politicized counterpart, “Black.”[2] The hyphen emphasizes its artificial status; the label reflects artistic license rather than historical prejudices.

Now let us contextualize the description of this pitcher. The Getty Villa’s label tells us that “occasional scenes on Athenian vases show Africans as slaves, and this stereotyped representation combines servant and serving vessel.” Art historian François Lissarrague also interprets the black-glazed faces on other drinking cups and pitchers as servants in the symposium. [3]



Figure **10.1.6.4**: High-Handled Drinking Cup (*Kantharos*) in the Form of Two Heads, about 510–480 B.C.E., the London Class. Terracotta, 7 9/16 inches high (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Henry Lillie Pierce Fund)

Some literary evidence supports this claim; one of the character sketches in the late fourth century B.C.E. Theophrastus’ *Characters* describes a black person as an exotic servant for a petty man.\^{[4]}\) But other ancient Greek texts contradict this characterization; Homeric epics describe black people as semi-divine creatures whose country was a relaxing oasis for the gods.[5] Furthermore, visual references on ancient Greek vases depict black people in numerous roles: political allies, musicians, religious worshippers, soldiers, and servants. [6]



Figure 10.1.6.5: Attic White-ground *Alabastron*; Unknown; Athens, Greece; about 480 B.C.; terracotta; 14.5 cm (J. Paul Getty Museum)

It is dangerous to fold selective history into the discussion without any reflective comments about the speculative work at play here. Although it is plausible that *some* black people were slaves in the fifth century B.C.E., there is no sure sign that this was the case in all situations.

The need for careful treatment of black people in ancient Greek art extends beyond this pitcher. On the cover of Roman historian Benjamin Isaac's 2004 book *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity*, a troubling scene encourages anachronistic interpretations.

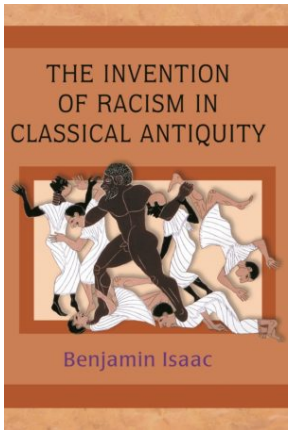


Figure 10.1.6.6: Cover of Benjamin Isaac's *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity*, Princeton University Press, 2004

Here, we are confronted with a depiction of a violent encounter between a man and six other men. The person in the middle of the scene looms large and distinct; his upright pose and stark nakedness stand in sharp contrast to the clothed people in contorted positions around him. There are other visual clues that suggest his dominance. All of the men who come into contact with him either writhe under his feet or are firmly in his grasp. They are no match for his strength; he plows through them without hesitation.

Perhaps in collaboration with Isaac, Princeton University Press (the publishers of this book) chose this image as a cover for an important contribution to the discussion of racism in antiquity. This artistic rendition is based on a modern illustration of a sixth-century B.C.E. black-figure *hydria* (water jar). [7]

This impressive vase can be seen at the Getty Center in the exhibition **Beyond the Nile: Egypt and the Classical World**. It depicts Herakles as he resists Egyptians' attempts to sacrifice him under the orders of the Egyptian king Bousiris. According to ancient Greek mythology, Bousiris received a prophecy that stipulated the sacrifice of a foreigner in order to stop a drought that was destroying his city. When Herakles entered Egypt, Bousiris tried to slaughter him, but the Greek hero fought back and eventually escaped.



Figure **10.1.6.7**: Water Jar with Herakles and Bousiris, about 510 B.C.E., Greek. Clay, 17 15/16 inches high × 15 11/16 inches diameter (Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna)

Although the visual similarities between the cover and the water vessel above are striking, the ancient image allows for a more sophisticated approach to skin color than the book cover's partial rendering of the scene. On the vase, black skin is capacious and flexible; it is not limited to those near Herakles. The crouching Egyptian priest on the left of the altar, as well as the Egyptian with raised hands to the right of the altar, have black skin. The black lines framing the scene and the black patterned designs on opposite sides of the scene also destabilize any quick interpretation of this color in antiquity. Skin color is only one element of this scene; the main theme appears to be the inverted violence that has occurred. The fear of the nine men is palpable; one has even climbed on top of the altar meant for Herakles. To add a final twist, Herakles' skin tone on this jar is dark red. [8] Herakles' blackness, as it appears today, is due to the worn state of the jar's surface.



Figure **10.1.6.8**: Water Jar with Herakles and Bousiris, detail, about 510 B.C.E., Greek. Clay, 17 15/16 inches high × 15 11/16 inches diameter (Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna, Antikensammlung. © 'KHM-Museumsverband')

There are numerous examples of this sacrificial scene on ancient Greek pottery. Another depiction portrays Herakles as a figure whose skin color does *not* differ from those around him.

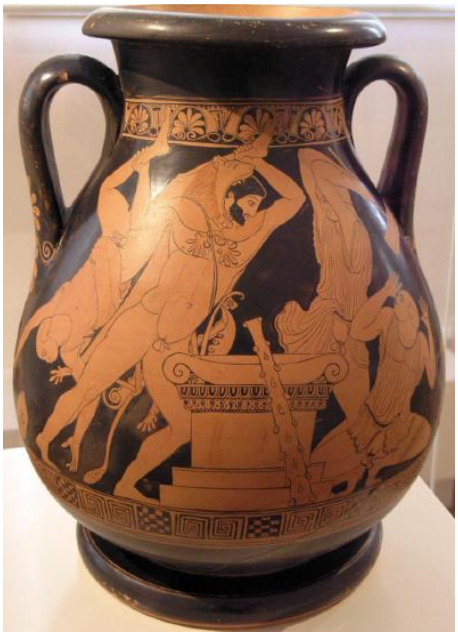


Figure **10.1.6.9**: Pan Painter, *Pelike* with Herakles and Bousiris, about 470 B.C.E., terracotta (National Archaeological Museum, Athens, photo: **Marsyas**, CC BY-SA 2.5)

On this fifth-century B.C.E.greece storage jar, Herakles (on the left of the altar) again uses his sheer strength to punish the Egyptians. But there is a different awareness of color dynamics at play on this jar. Rather than a depiction of Herakles with black skin, blackness dominates the background of this vessel. Herakles' black hair and black beard set him apart from the bald and clean-shaven Egyptians. This does not mean, however, that his chromatic appearance is particularly important in this scene. Instead, blackness literally fades into the background. It offers a visual palette for a powerful scene rather than a reflection of color-based power dynamics. Herakles' lion-skin cloak and club are more helpful indicators of his identity. [9] In addition, the physiognomy of Herakles marks him as distinct from the Egyptians; his long nose and thin lips stand in contrast to their broad noses and full lips.

Altogether, it is undeniable that the image on Isaac's cover reproduces an ancient representation of Herakles. But the cover art is also eerily reminiscent of contemporary discourse about Blackness. In particular, it suggests a dangerous connection between violence and the (modern) Black male body. This cover misleads anyone interested in ancient discussions of black skin because the contents of this book do not adequately address this topic. This omission encourages viewers and readers to assume that this image is an accurate representation of black people in Greek antiquity. Barring the caption on the back of the book, the image is presented without any context; people who judge books by their covers will jump to inaccurate conclusions. The permanently violent coding of black skin color is incorrect and irresponsible; there are no historical roots tracing this presumed innate threat.

In sum, museum and academic scholars are key players in the fight for contextualized and equitable perspectives of black people in antiquity; they curate exhibits and write books that greatly influence vast audiences. Preconceived notions of Black people are seared into our country's collective consciousness; without an overhaul of the "black=slaves in perpetuity" trope, damaging stereotypes become ossified as facts for future generations. This brief examination has revealed ancient Greek art to be an expansive landscape. Ancient Greece's visual heritage included representations of black people that nimbly provoked and cut across hierarchies. Objects like the sixth-century B.C.E. head-shaped pitcher and water jar discussed above were not part of any chromatic hierarchy because such categories had yet to be codified. Instead, they existed within their own historical and artistic context.

This essay first appeared in ***the Iris*** (CC BY 4.0)

Notes:

1. Various types of head-shaped vessels were produced around this time; see this example in the form of a woman's head in the Getty Villa collection.

2. I use “Black” to refer to the contemporary, socially constructed group of people, and “black” to designate people who are described as having black skin in ancient Greek literature and art.
3. François Lissarrague, “Athenian Image of the Foreigner,” translated by Antonia Nevill. In Thomas Harrison, ed., *Greeks and Barbarians* (Routledge Press, 2002): 108–9.
4. Theophrastus, 21.4.2.
5. *Iliad* 1.423, *Odyssey*, 1.22-23.
6. For more examples, see Frank Snowden Jr. “Aithiopes,” in *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae*, Volume I: Aara-Aphlad (Artemis Publishers, 1981): 415-18.
7. For a clearer rendition of the colors on this jar, see Perseus Digital Library.
8. Jaap M. Hemelrijk, *Caeretan Hydriae* (Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 1984): 52-54.
9. Herakles killed and skinned a lion during the first of his Twelve Labors (feats he completed to atone for his madness-induced murder of his family).

Additional resources:

The danger of importing colorblindness and the dream of “White Europe” into antiquity

Insightful blog posts about the diversity of the ancient world by Classicist Rebecca Futo Kennedy

Podcast about race and racism in the fields of Classics and Medieval Studies

Pharos’ progressive approach to Classics via the dismantling of racist manipulations of the discipline

Getty Museum’s instructional video about ancient pottery-making

David Bindman and Henry Louis Gates Jr., eds., *The Image of the Black in Western Art: From the Pharaohs to the Fall of the Roman Empire* (Volume I) (Harvard University Press, 2010).

Rebecca Futo Kennedy, C. Sydnor Roy, and Max L. Goldman, trans., *Race and Ethnicity in the Classical World: An Anthology of Primary Sources in Translation* (Hackett Publishing, 2013). Selected passages (pp. 111–202) focus on northern and eastern Africa.

Denise McCoskey, *Race: Antiquity and Its Legacy* (Oxford University Press, 2012).

James H. Dee, “Black Odysseus, White Caesar: When Did ‘White People’ Become ‘White’?,” *The Classical Journal* 99 (2, 2003/4): 157-67.

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10.1.7: Olympic games

by THE BRITISH MUSEUM

Every fourth year between 776 B.C.E. and 395 C.E., the Olympic Games, held in honor of the god Zeus, the supreme god of Greek mythology, attracted people from across Greece. Crowds watched sports such as running, discus-throwing and the long-jump.

Olympia



Figure **10.1.7.1**

The sporting events at Olympia were the oldest and most important of the four national Greek athletic festivals. The games were held on an official basis every four years from 776 B.C.E., but they probably originated much earlier. Greek myth credited the hero Herakles with devising the running races at Olympia to celebrate the completion of one of his twelve labors.

Olympia was the most important sanctuary of the god Zeus, and the Games were held in his honor. Sacrifices and gifts were offered, and athletes took oaths to obey the rules before a statue of Zeus. The games were announced by heralds traveling to all the major Greek cities around the Mediterranean, and hostilities were banned during the period around the Games to safeguard those traveling to and from Olympia.

The games at Olympia continued with minor interruptions into early Christian times and were the inspiration for the modern Olympic Games, first staged in Athens in 1896.

Equestrian Events

Chariot racing was the most popular spectator sport in ancient times. Up to 40 chariots could compete in a race and crashes were common.

In ancient Greece only the wealthy could afford to maintain a chariot and horses. Chariots had been used to carry warriors into battle, and chariot races, along with other sports events, were originally held at the funeral games of heroes, as described in Homer’s Iliad.

Wealthy citizens and Greek statesmen were anxious to win such a prestigious event. They sometimes drove their own chariot, but usually employed a charioteer. The races took place in an arena called the *hippodrome*. The most dangerous place was at the turning post, where chariot wheels could lock together and there were many crashes.



Figure 10.1.7.2: Charioteer and horses (detail), *Panathenaic amphora*, c. 410-400 B.C.E., 67.5 x 38 cm, Attica © Trustees of the British Museum. This vase belongs to a distinctive type given as a prize to the winner of the chariot race in the ancient games held at Athens during the yearly festival known as the Panathenaia that honoured Athena, the city's patron deity. The vase would have been one of 140, each containing 40 liters of olive oil, given to the winner.

The painter of this vase has been highly successful in creating the illusion of speed as the chariot careers along. A *quadriga* chariot drawn by four horses is shown, the hair and tunic of the charioteer are blown back, and the manes and tails of the horses fly in the rush of air. The chariot is coming up to a post which may represent the turn or the finish of the race. Both moments would be climaxes.

After the dangers and excitement of the chariot race came the horse- racing. This was hazardous because the track was already churned up, and the jockeys rode without stirrups or saddles, which were not yet invented. The winning horse and its owner were given an enthusiastic reception, and riderless horses that came first past the post were also honored.

Combat Sports



Figure 10.1.7.3: Panathenaic prize amphora of a chariot race, 490-80 B.C.E., red-figured cup, attributed to the Foundry Painter, Attica, Greece © Trustees of the British Museum

A big attraction at all the Greek games were the "heavy" events—wrestling, boxing, and the pankration, a type of all-in wrestling. Specialists in the sports could win large sums of money all over the Greek world, once they had proved themselves at Olympia.



Figure **10.1.7.4**: Exterior side A (detail), *Panathenaic prize amphora of a chariot race*, 490-80 B.C.E., red-figured cup, attributed to the Foundry Painter, Attica, Greece © The Trustees of the British Museum.

The *pankration* was a mixture of boxing and wrestling, where almost any tactic was permitted. Only biting and going for an opponent's eyes were illegal. On the cup above, on the left is a pair of boxers in a bout. In the center is a pair of pancratiasts down on the ground. Above them hangs a discus in a bag. In the center, one pankratiast tries to gouge his opponent's eye. A bearded trainer steps forward, his forked stick raised over his head to stop the fouls and the fight.

Boxing was considered the most violent sport. There were no separate rounds in a match and the contestants fought until one of them gave in. In ancient Greece thin strips of leather were bound around the boxers' fists to protect their hands. Boxing gloves were eventually developed, and in the Roman period they were weighted with lead or iron to inflict greater damage.



Figure **10.1.7.5**: A pair of boxers in a bout, exterior side A (detail), *Panathenaic prize amphora of a chariot race*, 490-80 B.C.E., red-figured cup, attributed to the Foundry Painter, Attica, Greece © Trustees of the British Museum.

The boxer on the left has his left arm bent up in front, his right arm back, and there is a dilute line on his cheek. His opponent, facing to the left, is seen in three-quarter back view, his left arm out in front, his right drawn back for a blow. His cheek is heavily marked with relief lines, under the eye and along the cheekbone, to denote swelling.

Wrestling was a sport of great skill which used many of the throws still seen today. It also featured as part of the pentathlon ("pente" means five in Greek while "athlos" means contest, so the ancient pentathlon included five events: discus, javelin, long jump, running and wrestling).

Running



Figure **10.1.7.6**: Fikellura style amphora with a running man, 6th century B.C.E., Greek, , made in Miletos, Asia Minor from Rhodes © Trustees of the British Museum

The most ancient and prestigious event at Olympia was the running race along the length of the stadium, a distance of 600 Olympic feet (192.28 meters). The Olympiad (the four-year period up to the next Games) was named after the winner, and dates were recorded by reference to the list of victors. Besides this equivalent of our “two-hundred meter” event, there was a race along two lengths of the track, and a long-distance race of twenty or twenty-four lengths. There was no “marathon,” this was the invention of Baron de Coubertin who revived the Olympic Games in 1896. In all these races the runners made a standing start, from a row of stone slabs set in the track that had grooves cut in them to provide a grip for the toes.

Here, a runner is painted in silhouette, with the few inner markings reserved in the natural colour of the clay. His pose, with arms and legs fully extended and chest thrust out, suggests that he is running at full speed. Most sixth-century vase painters would have surrounded this isolated figure with ornamental friezes or panels, but this artist wisely resisted the temptation.

Jumping



Figure **10.1.7.7**: Black-figured “Tyrrhenian” amphora showing athletes and a combat scene, 540 B.C.E., Greek, but made for the Etruscan market, 42.15 cm, found near Rome © Trustees of the British Museum

This vase has one of the best surviving depictions of the long-jump event at the ancient Olympic Games. There was only the long jump, not the high jump, in Greek athletics. You can see that the athlete in the picture is holding heavy lead or stone jumping weights called halteres. These were swung to increase the length of the jump. You can also see three pegs in the ground which mark the previous jumps.

The athlete is shown on the shoulder of the vase, and is captured in mid-jump, while to the right a trainer urges him on. Beneath the jumper are pegs, which may record his previous jumps or those of other athletes.

In the ancient long jump athletes carried weights that were swung forward on take-off and back just before landing. It's often said that the weights increased the length of the jump, but it is more likely that they were there for use as a deliberate handicap. Most ancient sport developed as a means of training for warfare, and this exercise would simulate a jump carrying kit. Skill in this sport would be useful for crossing a stream or ravine.



Figure **10.1.7.8**: Athlete jumping (detail), *Black-figured "Tyrrhenian" amphora showing athletes and a combat scene*, 540 B.C.E.,Greek, but made for the Etruscan market, 42.15 cm, found near Rome © Trustees of the British Museum.

The vase has other scenes related to ancient sporting events, including a discus thrower. To the jumper's left there is an athlete holding what are possibly javelins and two wrestlers are also shown.

Pentathlon

The pentathlon was made up of five events (discus, jumping, javelin, running and wrestling) which all took place in one afternoon. Running and wrestling also existed as separate events.



Figure **10.1.7.9**: Discus-thrower (The Townley Discobolus), Roman copy of a bronze original of the 5th century B.C.E., attributed to Myron, from Hadrian's Villa in Tivoli, Italy © Trustees of the British Museum

There are differences between the ancient and the modern contests. Greek discus-throwers did not spin round on the spot: they rarely managed throws of more than 30 meters, less than half the modern Olympic record.

In the ancient long-jump, contestants used jumping-weights. These where swung forward on take-off then backward just before landing, to add thrust and gain extra length. Some kind of multiple jump may have been involved.

Javelin-throwing was similar to today's event, except that a thong was attached to the javelin shaft to add spin and secure a steadier flight.

The head on this figure of a discus thrower has been wrongly restored, and should be turned to look towards the discus. The popularity of the sculpture in antiquity was no doubt due to its representation of the athletic ideal. Discus-throwing was the first

element in the pentathlon, and while pentathletes were in some ways considered inferior to those athletes who excelled at a particular sport, their physical appearance was much admired.

The Olympic victors

Valuable prizes could be won in athletic contests all over the Greek world, but victory at Olympia brought the greatest prestige. Winning contestants were allowed to put up statues of themselves inside the sanctuary of Zeus to commemorate their victory; many bases for these statues survive. Statues of athletes and statesmen were a prominent feature of Greek cities and sanctuaries. If they won three times they could set up specially commissioned portrait statues which could cost up to ten times the average yearly wage.



Figure **10.1.7.10**: Sealstone with the goddess Nike crowning an athlete, 4th century B.C.E., 2.3 x 1.6 cm, Temple of Artemis, Ephesus © Trustees of the British Museum.

Athletes tied a woolen band around their forehead, and sometimes around their arms and legs, as sign of victory. Winners at Olympia received crowns of wild olive, just as Herakles was said to have done when he had run the first races at Olympia with his brothers.

This small engraved sealstone, perhaps originally from a finger ring, shows the winged goddess Nike placing a crown of leaves on the head of a winning athlete. In Greek mythology, the goddess Nike was a messenger of the gods and, more generally, the personification of victory. She was also closely associated with Zeus, god of the Olympic Games, and is often shown in flight, bearing a wreath or a victory ribbon, to crown victorious athletes. The athlete holds a small branch, also symbolic of victory. Whether this sealstone belonged to an athlete or simply a sports enthusiast we shall probably never know.

Statues of Nike featured prominently at Olympia in connection with both sporting and military victories. The victors wreaths associated with Nike were usually made of foliage that could be dried and kept for a long time to preserve the memory of a victory. At Olympia they were made of twigs of olive, sacred to Zeus. Winning athletes were showered with flowers and leaves. This mark of celebration is called phyllobolia and is echoed today in the throwing of confetti and “ticker tape.”



Figure **10.1.7.11**: Marble figure of a victorious athlete (Daidoumenos), Roman version of a Greek bronze original, c. 440–430 B.C.E., 183 cm, found at Vaison, France © Trustees of the British Museum

Known as the *Daidoumenos* (ribbon wearer) this statue shows a triumphant athlete tying a ribbon round his head immediately after a victory. At ancient Greek sports festivals it was the custom to give ribbons to winning athletes. Later, at the awards' ceremony, the athlete received a wreath of leaves such as olive, laurel or wild celery leaves, depending on the festival. The identity of the athlete and the event he won are not known. He may represent athletic victories in general.

Victor statues were intended to immortalize successful athletes. Sculptors favored bronze for athletic statues, perhaps because it better represented tanned, oiled skin, but many were carved from marble. They were set on bases inscribed with a dedication to a god, the athlete's name, father's name, home town and contest.

Archaeology at Olympia

Over the centuries the river Alpheios, to the south of the sanctuary, folded and swept away the hippodrome, and the river Kladeios to the west destroyed part of the gymnasium. Following earthquakes and storms, a layer of silt was deposited over the entire site. Olympia lay unnoticed until modern times when an Englishman, Richard Chandler, rediscovered it in 1766.

The German government sponsored full-scale excavations from 1875. The excellent local museum displays many of the remarkable finds, and the German Archaeological Institute in liaison with the Greek Archaeological Service continues to investigate the site to the present day.

Suggested readings:

J. Boardman, *Early Greek vase painting* (London, Thames and Hudson, 1998).

J. Swaddling, *The ancient Olympic Games*, 3rd edition (London, The British Museum Press, 2004)

Richard Woff, *The Ancient Greek Olympics* (Oxford University Press, 2000).

The sealstone with the goddess Nike crowning an athlete at The British Museum

Panathenaic prize amphora of a chariot race at The British Museum

The Townley Discobolus at The British Museum

Black-figured "Tyrrhenian" amphora at The British Museum

Fikellura style amphora with a running man at The British Museum

Marble figure of a victorious athlete (Daidoumenos)

© Trustees of the British Museum

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SECTION OVERVIEW

10.2: Pottery

Ancient Greek pots represent some of the only ancient Greek painting to survive.

c. 900 - 146 B.C.E.

10.2.1: Greek Vase-Painting, an introduction

10.2.2: Ancient Greek vase production and the black-figure technique

10.2.3: Making Greek vases

10.2.4: Dipylon Amphora

10.2.5: Terracotta Krater

10.2.6: Eleusis Amphora

10.2.7: Sophilos- a new direction in Greek pottery

10.2.8: Exekias, Attic black figure amphora with Ajax and Achilles playing a game

10.2.9: Euphronios, Sarpedon Krater

10.2.10: Euthymides, Three Revelers

10.2.11: Niobid Krater

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10.2.1: Greek Vase-Painting, an introduction

by DR. RENEE M. GONDEK



Figure **10.2.1.1**: Niobid Painter, *Niobid Krater*, Attic red-figure calyx-krater, c. 460-450 B.C.E., 54 x 56 cm (Musée du Louvre)

Useful for scholars

Pottery is virtually indestructible. Though it may break into smaller pieces (called sherds), these would have to be manually ground into dust in order to be removed from the archaeological record. As such, there is an abundance of material for study, and this is exceptionally useful for modern scholars. In addition to being an excellent tool for dating, pottery enables researchers to locate ancient sites, reconstruct the nature of a site, and point to evidence of trade between groups of people. Moreover, individual pots and their painted decoration can be studied in detail to answer questions about religion, daily life, and society.

Shapes and Themes



Figure **10.2.1.2**: Diagram of Greek pot shapes (**British Museum**)

Made of terracotta (fired clay), ancient Greek pots and cups, or “vases” as they are normally called, were fashioned into a variety of shapes and sizes (see above), and very often a vessel’s form correlates with its intended function. For example, the *krater* was used to mix water and wine during a Greek *symposion* (an all-male drinking party). It allows an individual to pour liquids into its wide opening, stir the contents in its deep bowl, and easily access the mixture with a separate ladle or small jug. Or, the vase known as a *hydria* was used for collecting, carrying, and pouring water. It features a bulbous body, a pinched spout, and three handles (two at the sides for holding and one stretched along the back for tilting and pouring).

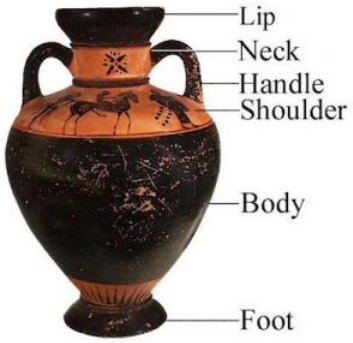


Figure **10.2.1.3**

Made of terracotta (fired clay), ancient Greek pots and cups, or "vases" as they are normally called, were fashioned into a variety of shapes and sizes (see above), and very often a vessel's form correlates with its intended function. For example, the *krater* was used to mix water and wine during a Greek *symposion* (an all-male drinking party). It allows an individual to pour liquids into its wide opening, stir the contents in its deep bowl, and easily access the mixture with a separate ladle or small jug. Or, the vase known as a *hydria* was used for collecting, carrying, and pouring water. It features a bulbous body, a pinched spout, and three handles (two at the sides for holding and one stretched along the back for tilting and pouring).

In order to discuss the different zones of vessels, specialists have adopted terms that relate to the parts of the body. The opening of the pot is called the mouth; the stem is referred to as the neck; the slope from the neck to the body is called the shoulder; and the base is known as the foot).

On the exterior, Greek vases exhibit painted compositions that often reflect the style of a certain period. For example, the vessels created during the Geometric Period (c. 900-700 B.C.E.) feature geometric patterns, as seen on the famous **Dipylon amphora** (below), while those decorated in the Orientalizing Period (c. 700-600 B.C.E.) display animal processions and Near Eastern motifs, as is visible **on this early Corinthian amphora** (The British Museum).

Later, during the Archaic and Classical Periods (c. 600-323 B.C.E.), vase-paintings primarily display human and mythological activities. These figural scenes can vary widely, from daily life events (e.g., fetching water at the fountain house) to heroic deeds and Homeric tales (e.g., Theseus and the bull, Odysseus and the Sirens), from the world of the gods (e.g., Zeus abducting Ganymede) to theatrical performances and athletic competitions (for example, the Oresteia, chariot racing). While it is important to stress that such painted scenes should not be thought of as photographs that document reality, they can still aid in reconstructing the lives and beliefs of the ancient Greeks.



Figure **10.2.1.4**: Dipylon Amphora, c. 750 B.C.E., ceramic, 160 cm (National Archaeological Museum, Athens)

Techniques, Painters and Inscriptions

To produce the characteristic red and black colors found on vases, Greek craftsmen used liquid clay as paint (termed “slip”) and perfected a complicated three-stage firing process. Not only did the pots have to be stacked in the kiln in a specific manner, but the conditions inside had to be precise. First, the temperature was stoked to about 800° centigrade and vents allowed for an oxidizing environment. At this point, the entire vase turned red in color. Next, by sealing the vents and increasing temperature to around 900-950° centigrade, everything turned black and the areas painted with the slip vitrified (transformed into a glassy substance). Finally, in the last stage, the vents were reopened and oxidizing conditions returned inside the kiln. At this point, the unpainted zones of the vessel became red again while the vitrified slip (the painted areas) retained a glossy black hue. Through the introduction and removal of oxygen in the kiln and, simultaneously, the increase and decrease in temperature, the slip transformed into a glossy black color.

Briefly, ancient Greek vases display several painting techniques, and these are often period specific. During the Geometric and Orientalizing periods (900-600 B.C.E.), painters employed compasses to trace perfect circles and used silhouette and outline methods to delineate shapes and figures (below).



Figure **10.2.1.5**: Frieze with mourning figures (detail), *Dipylon Amphora*, c. 750 B.C.E., ceramic, 160 cm (National Archaeological Museum, Athens)

Around 625-600 B.C.E., Athens adopted the black-figure technique (i.e., dark-colored figures on a light background with incised detail). Originating in Corinth almost a century earlier, black-figure uses the silhouette manner in conjunction with added color and incision. Incision involves the removal of slip with a sharp instrument, and perhaps its most masterful application can be found on an **amphora by Exekias** (below). Often described as Achilles and Ajax playing a game, the seated warriors lean towards the center of the scene and are clothed in garments that feature intricate incised patterning. In addition to displaying more realistically defined figures, black-figure painters took care to differentiate gender with color: women were painted with added white, men remained black.



Figure **10.2.1.6**: Exekias (potter and painter), Attic black-figure amphora (detail showing Ajax and Achilles playing a game), c. 540-530 B.C.E., 61.1 cm high, found Vulci (Gregorian Etruscan Museum, Vatican City)

The red-figure technique was invented in Athens around 525-520 B.C.E. and is the inverse of black-figure (below). Here light-colored figures are set against a dark background. Using added color and a brush to paint in details, red-figure painters watered down or thickened the slip in order to create different effects.

Watered down slip or “dilute glaze” has the appearance of a wash and was used for hair, fur, and anatomy, as exemplified by the sketchy coat of the hare and the youth’s musculature on the interior of this cup by Gorgos (below). When thickened, the slip was used to form so-called “relief lines” or lines raised prominently from the surface, and these were often employed to outline forms. Surprisingly similar to red-figure is the white-ground technique.



Figure **10.2.1.7**: Gorgos, Attic Red-figure Kylix (interior), c. 500 B.C.E. (Agora Museum, Athens)

Though visually quite different with its polychrome figures on a white-washed background, white-ground requires the craftsman to paint in the details of forms just like red-figure, rather than incise them (see the Kylix below).

Alongside figures and objects, one can sometimes find inscriptions. These identify mythological figures, beautiful men or women contemporaneous with the painter (“kalos” / “kale” inscriptions), and even the painter or potter himself (“egrapsen” / “epoiesen”). Inscriptions, however, are not always helpful. Mimicking the appearance of meaningful text, “nonsense inscriptions” deceive the illiterate viewer by arranging the Greek letters in an incoherent fashion.



Figure **10.2.1.8**: Attributed to the Villa Giulia Painter, Attic white ground kylix (drinking cup), c. 470 B.C.E., terra-cotta, red figure, white ground, 6.2 x 16.2 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

Vases and Reception

The overall attractive quality of Greek vases, their relatively small size, and—at one point in time—their easily obtainable nature, led them to be highly coveted collector's items during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Since the later part of the nineteenth century, however, the study of vases became a scholarly pursuit and their decoration was the obsession of connoisseurs gifted with the ability to recognize and attribute the hands of individual painters.

The most well-known vase connoisseur of the twentieth century, a researcher concerned with attribution, typology, and chronology, was Sir John Davidson Beazley. Interested in Athenian black-, red-figure, and white-ground techniques, Beazley did not favor beautifully painted specimens; he was impartial and studied pieces of varying quality with equal attention. From his tedious and exhaustive examinations, he compiled well-over 1000 painters and groups, and he attributed over 30,000 vases. Although some researchers since Beazley's death continue to attribute and examine the style of specific painters or groups, vase scholars today also question the technical production of vessels, their archaeological contexts, their local and foreign distribution, and their iconography.

Additional resources:

Beazley Archive at the University of Oxford

Athenian Vase Painting: Black- and Red-Figure Techniques on The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

Scenes of Everyday Life in Ancient Greece on the The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

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10.2.2: Ancient Greek vase production and the black-figure technique

by ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO

From heroes and gods to everyday life, ancient Greek pottery depicted a variety of subjects.



Video **10.2.2.1**: Used for the storage and shipment of grains, wine, and other goods, as well as in the all-male Greek drinking party, known as the symposium, ancient Greek vases were decorated with a variety of subjects ranging from scenes of everyday life to the tales of heroes and gods. The two most popular techniques of vase decoration were the black-figure technique, so-named because the figures were painted black, and the red-figure technique, in which the figures were left the red color of the clay. The black-figure technique developed around 700 B.C. and remained the most popular Greek pottery style until about 530 B.C., when the red-figure technique was developed, eventually surpassing it in popularity. This video illustrates the techniques used in the making and decorating of a black-figure amphora (storage jar) in the Art Institute of Chicago's collection.. Video from the **Art Institute of Chicago**

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10.2.3: Making Greek vases

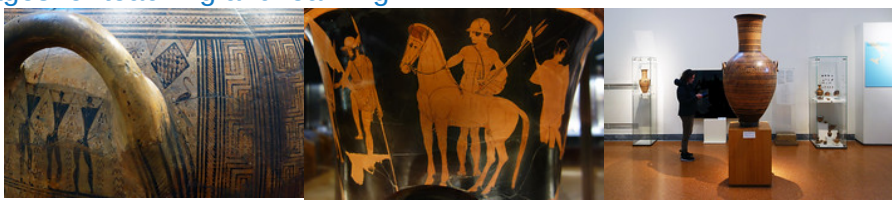
by THE J. PAUL GETTY MUSEUM

How did ancient Greek potters make and decorate their pottery?



Video 10.2.3.1: In ancient Greece, the phrase “to make pottery” meant to work hard. This video from the J. Paul Getty Museum reveals how the typical Athenian potter prepared clay, threw vases, oversaw firing, and added decoration or employed vase-painters. Video from the **J. Paul Getty Museum**.

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10.2.4: Dipylon Amphora

by DR. STEVEN ZUCKER and DR. BETH HARRIS

As tall as a person, this pot is covered with geometric patterns and early figural representations.



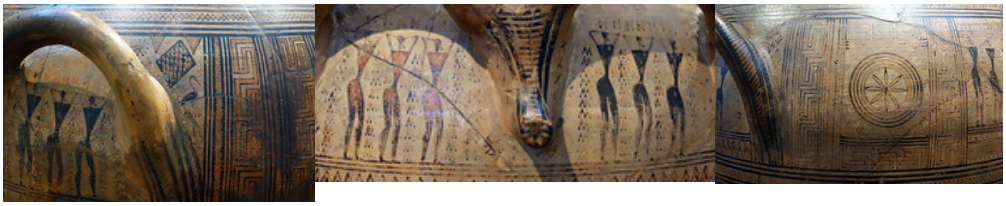
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10.2.5: Terracotta Krater

by DR. BETH HARRIS and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER

This pot stood above a grave, and the female mourners depicted on it tear out their hair in grief.



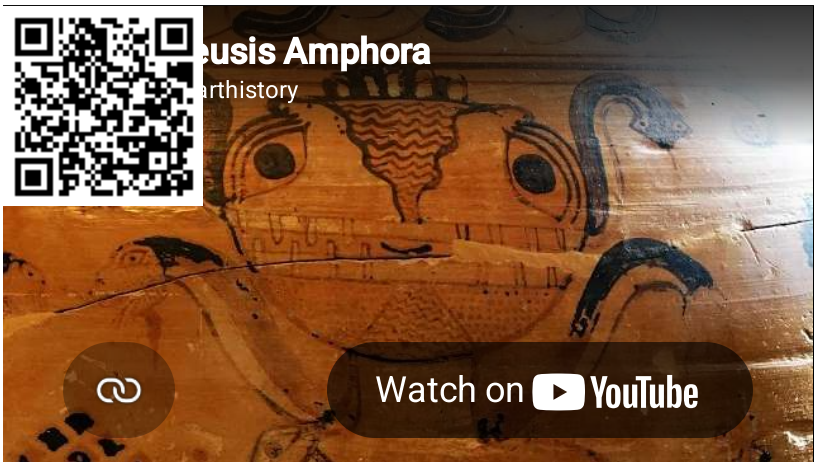
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10.2.6: Eleusis Amphora

by STEVEN ZUCKER and BETH HARRIS

This ancient pot depicts not one, but two myths: Perseus slaying Medusa and Odysseus blinding the cyclops.



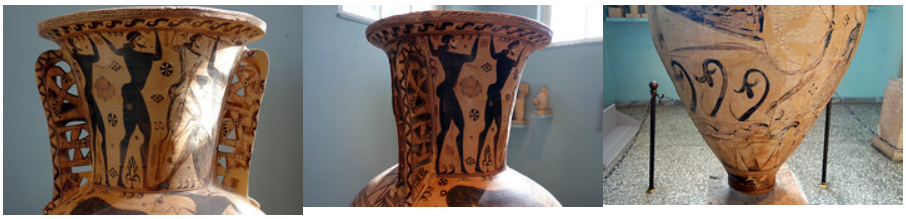
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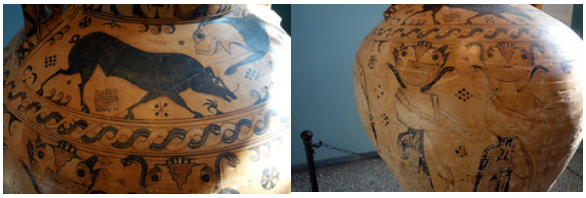
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10.2.7: Sophilos- a new direction in Greek pottery

by THE BRITISH MUSEUM



Figure **10.2.7.1**: Left: *Pedestaled krater*, c. 800-770 B.C.E., 55.5 cm high, Greek, Geometric period, Rhodes. Right: *Jug with a griffin-head spout*, c. 675-650 B.C.E., 41.5 cm, Greek, orientalizing period both: © Trustees of the British Museum

Following the collapse of Mycenaean palace society and a period of relative poverty and isolation, Greece experienced a cultural and political renaissance. From the eighth century B.C.E. onwards, renewed contact with the Near East, Anatolia, Phoenicia, Egypt, and other peoples around the Mediterranean had a profound impact on Greek culture.

The linear Geometric style of pottery (image above, left) gave way to "orientalizing" motifs, such as animals and florals (image above, right). Homer composed his epic poems and a new political unit, the city-state (polis), emerged.



Figure **10.2.7.2**: Sophilos (painter), *Black-figured bowl (dinos) and stand*, c. 580 B.C.E., 71 cm high, Athens © Trustees of the British Museum

Greek pottery: a new direction

The figure scene that occupies the highest register in the bowl above shows the new direction in which Athenian vase painting was moving. It shows gods, goddesses, nymphs and others processing to the house of the hero Peleus to celebrate his wedding to the beautiful sea-nymph Thetis.

The sea-nymph Thetis was loved by both Zeus, king of the gods, and Poseidon, god of the sea. However, their ardor was cooled when they learned that Thetis' son was destined to be greater than his father.



Figure **10.2.7.3**: Peleus greeting his guests (detail), Sophilos (painter), *Black-figured bowl (dinos) and stand*, c. 580 B.C.E., 71 cm high, Athens © Trustees of the British Museum

The gods decided that Thetis should be made to marry a mortal in order that her son, however powerful, should present no threat to the gods. They chose Peleus and to reconcile Thetis to this inferior alliance, they gave the couple a magnificent wedding, illustrated on this vase. Peleus stands to the right, before the doors of his house to greet his guests, who arrive either on foot or by chariot.



Figure **10.2.7.4**: Dionysos and others arrive at the wedding of Peleus and Thetis (detail), Sophilos (painter), *Black-figured bowl (dinos) and stand*, c. 580 B.C.E., 71 cm high, Athens © Trustees of the British Museum

Among the first is the wine god Dionysos, who carries a vine branch laden with grapes (above, third figure from the right), symbolizing the wine that will be drunk at the wedding feast, perhaps mixed in a bowl of this shape. The centaur Cheiron, part man and part horse, also appears; he later became the tutor of the son of Peleus and Thetis, the mighty Achilles. Thetis is decorously concealed within. The names of the guests are written neatly alongside.



Figure **10.2.7.5**: Thetis's grandfather, the fish-tailed sea-god Okeanos, arriving at the wedding of Peleus and Thetis (detail), Sophilos (painter), *Black-figured bowl (dinos) and stand*, c. 580 B.C.E., 71 cm high, Athens © Trustees of the British Museum

The first chariot in the procession carries Zeus and Hera, the second Poseidon and Amphitrite, the third Hermes and Apollo and the fourth Ares and Aphrodite. Between the chariots walk groups of Fates, Graces and Muses, one of whom plays the pipes. Athena and Artemis ride in the last chariot, and are followed by Thetis' grandfather, the fish-tailed sea-god Okeanos, his wife Tethys, and Eileithyia, goddess of childbirth. Hephaistos brings up the rear, seated side-saddle on a mule.

Between the columns of the house, Sophilos has signed the vase "Sophilos painted me." Sophilos is the first Greek vase painter whose name we know.

Conservation



Figure **10.2.7.6**: Sophilos (painter), *Black-figured bowl (dinos) and stand*, c. 580 B.C.E., 71 cm high, Athens © Trustees of the British Museum

When this black-figured vase was acquired by The British Museum in 1971, it was in a restored condition with only a few areas of loss. It has since come to the Museum's Conservation Department three times. On the first visit, a conservator repositioned fragments with the artist's signature, Sophilos, so that it was easier to read. A few years later the Museum acquired five fragments which had originally belonged to the vase. Conservators removed areas of gap-fill to allow these fragments to be reunited. Neither job was simple. The old restoration was hard and difficult to remove.

Conservators were able to reassess the old restoration when the vase was examined during gallery refurbishment in 1983. The old adhesive and gap-fills were identified as a polyester resin, which had hardened and become brittle; there were cracks in the stand which may have been a direct result. Today, this type of resin is not considered appropriate for use on ceramic artifacts. It was decided that the vase would benefit from dismantling and reassembly using more stable and reversible conservation materials. Taking down the old joins and fills and manually cleaning away the polyester resin from fragments was a long process. The fragments were reassembled using a reversible adhesive and areas of loss were gap-filled using plaster of Paris and painted.

Suggested readings:

L. Burn, *The British Museum book of Greek and Roman Art* (London, The British Museum Press, 1991).

D. Williams, “Sophilos in the British Museum” in Greek Vases in the J.Paul Getty Museum (Malibu, 1983).

D. Williams, *Greek vases* (London, The British Museum Press, 1999).

Additional images

Sophilos, Black-figured bowl and stand at The British Museum

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10.2.8: Exekias, Attic black figure amphora with Ajax and Achilles playing a game

by DR. BETH HARRIS and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER

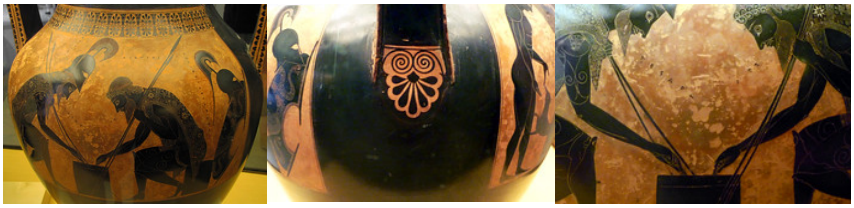
Achilles and Ajax, heroes of the Trojan War, break from battle to play a friendly game that hints at a tragic future.



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Figure **10.2.8.79**: More Smarthistory images…

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10.2.9: Euphronios, Sarpedon Krater

by DR. ERIN THOMPSON and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER

Gods carry away the dead on a pot looted from a tomb, trafficked out of Italy, bought by the Met, and finally returned.



Video **10.2.9.10**: Euphronios, Sarpedon Krater, (signed by Euxitheos as potter and Euphronios as painter), c. 515 B.C.E., red-figure terracotta, 55.1 cm diameter (National Museum Cerite, Cerveteri, Italy)

Additional resources:

The Euphronios Krater on Trafficking Culture

Black- and red-figure painting techniques on The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

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10.2.10: Euthymides, Three Revelers

by KATARZYNA MINOLLARI

Competition

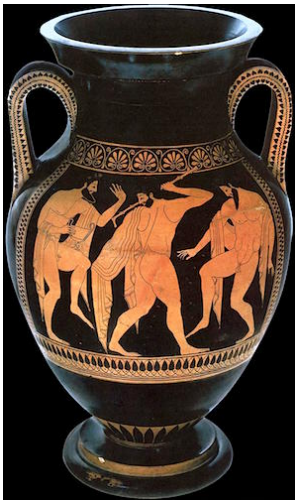


Figure **10.2.10.1**: Euthymides, *Three Revelers* (Athenian red-figure amphora), c. 510 B.C.E., 24 inches high (Staatliche Antikensammlungen, Munich)

"As never Ephronios [could do]" wrote painter Euthymides after painting his new amphora (an amphora is a type of Greek vase in this shape). Euthymides had a clear sense of achievement and was indeed proud of his work, boastfully challenging his friend and rival—Euphronios. He would see Euphronios often, as well as other painters in the Kerameikos—the potter's quarter in Athens. They would be curious to see one another's new work, sometimes with appreciation, sometimes with a bit of jealousy. In the evenings they often had a good time together at a symposium (a kind of ancient Greek male drinking party). They would drink wine mixed with water, become garrulous, loud and—if drinking went on for too long—they might even start singing and even dancing. Perhaps what is depicted on this amphora is a scene similar to those Euthymides witnessed at one of these long parties. Euphronios indeed was a master potter and painter, and Euthymides knew that and had a full appreciation for his work. He thought however, that his figures seemed much more lively, caught in a split of a moment, in a dancing movement.

The beginnings of red-figure painting

Euthymides worked mainly between 515 and 500 B.C.E., in a time when artists were exploring the possibilities of red-figure technique, invented in Athens around 530 B.C.E. Both Euthymides and Euphronios belonged to a kind of camaraderie of artists, often dubbed the "Pioneer Group" by art historians—referring to their innovative efforts in the new technique. In the red-figure technique, an artist sketches figures on the red clay of a freshly fashioned vessel, then covers all the background with a slip (a liquid clay), which turns black after final firing. Details, like elements of anatomy, folds of drapery, etc., can be freely added with a thin brush; the slip can be darker, sometimes more diluted, brownish, adding even more variety. In the black-figure technique which was used previously, an artist had to fill the figures with slip, and then incise the details with a sharp burin, which was much more difficult to handle. At the time of the "Pioneers," there is a general trend in Greek art to observe the reality and represent human body more realistically, leaving the more stiff archaic models behind.



Figure 10.2.10.2: Hector receiving the helmet from Hecube (detail), Euthymides, *Three Revelers* (Athenian red-figure amphora), c. 510 B.C.E., 24 inches high (Staatliche Antikensammlungen, Munich)

Hector departs for war

Coming back again to the "Three Revelers" vase—on one side of his amphora the artist decided to decorate with a mythological scene—a solemn moment of Hector departing for the Trojan war, receiving the helmet from his mother Hecube (above).



Figure 10.2.10.3: Drinking and dancing (detail), Euthymides, *Three Revelers* (Athenian red-figure amphora), c. 510 B.C.E., 24 inches high (Staatliche Antikensammlungen, Munich) (photo: Richard Mortel, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

On the other side of the vase, which is probably better known, the artist gave way to his keen sense of observation, giving us a glimpse into everyday life. Three rather tipsy men dance around, enjoying their moment during a long symposium. The one on the left still keeps in his hand a kantharos—a wine cup with long handles. Euthymides made an effort to show them neither completely frontally, nor completely in profile, but rather in three quarters view, using foreshortening to convey a vivid, realistic image. The poses are very diversified, the man in the center is represented in a twisted view. The artist brought his keen sense of observation to describing human anatomy and movement. Greek vase painters often give us clear insight into everyday life—allowing us to understand daily habits, details of clothing and customs. Of course, these painted vases cannot be treated as documents, since we would not expect men to be naked at a symposium. However, appreciation for the human body and nudity was a usual part of ancient Greek culture, and it provided a way for the artist to showcase his ability.



Fiugre 10.2.10.4: Euthymides, *Three Revelers* (Athenian red-figure amphora), c. 510 B.C.E., 24 inches high (Staatliche Antikensammlungen, Munich) (photo: **Richard Mortel**, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

The vase displays balance and harmony of proportions, with its elegant and graceful shape, and carefully planned pictorial decoration. The main scenes on both sides of the amphora are complemented by a delicate ornament. Despite the beauty of the vase, the potters and painters in ancient Greece did not have the status an artist has in our modern society. Their work was looked upon as a physical labor, not as an activity inspired by the muses. In fact, there was no muse of painting. The decorated vases were produced in large amounts to answer the growing demand of the markets, both in Greece, as well as abroad (especially in Etruria, and in Greek colonies). The Euthymides vase was in fact found in an Etruscan tomb at Vulci in Italy. Many Greek vases survived untouched because the Etruscans buried their deceased in large underground tombs with many everyday objects.

Most of the vases were simply everyday items, although a big, beautifully painted amphora like the one discussed here was also a luxury item, testifying to its owner's good taste and social standing. Despite their status as craftsmen, the artists around the time of Euthymides had a sense of personal value and achievement, hence the inscription "As never Euphronious [could do]". Because of the inscription "Euthymides egraphsen" ("Euthymides painted me") we are sure that he was the painter—and today we definitely think of him as an artist.

Additional resources:

Athenian Vase Painting: Black- and Red-Figure Techniques

This Amphora in the Beazley Archive

J. Boardman, *Athenian Red Figure Vases, The Archaic Period, a Handbook*, 1975.

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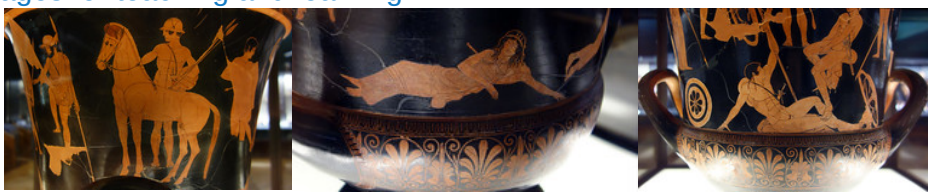
10.2.11: Niobid Krater

by DR. BETH HARRIS and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER

The gods Apollo and Artemis exact revenge for their mother, in an early attempt at showing depth in ancient Greek art.



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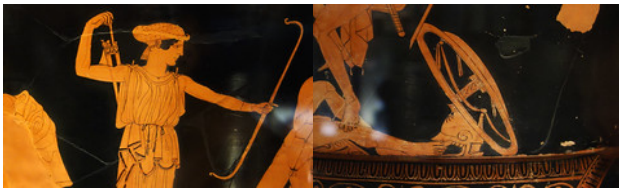
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SECTION OVERVIEW

10.3: Daedalic and Archaic

While Greek artisans continued to develop their individual crafts, storytelling ability, and more realistic portrayals of human figures throughout the Archaic Period, the city of Athens witnessed the rise and fall of tyrants and the introduction of democracy.

c. 700 - 480 B.C.E.

10.3.1: Lady of Auxerre

10.3.2: Marble statue of a kouros (New York Kouros)

10.3.3: Anavysos Kouros

10.3.4: Peplos Kore

10.3.5: Ancient Greek Temples at Paestum

10.3.6: Sanctuary of Apollo, Delphi

10.3.7: Siphnian Treasury, Delphi

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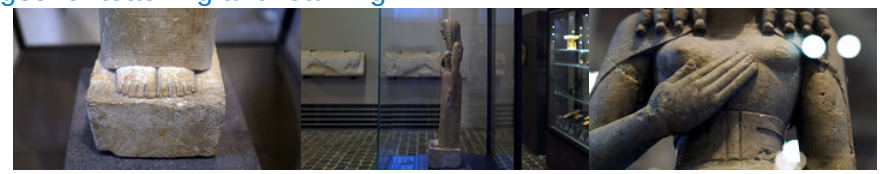
10.3.1: Lady of Auxerre

by DR. STEVEN ZUCKER and DR. BETH HARRIS

The Lady of Auxerre stands at the beginning of the history of Greek sculpture, offering a promise of what is to come.



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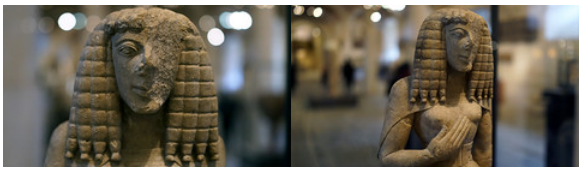
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10.3.2: Marble statue of a kouros (New York Kouros)

by DR. BETH HARRIS and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER

This early Greek depiction of the idealized male form displays power and poise in his nudity and steadfast gaze.



Video **10.3.2.1**: Marble Statue of a kouros (New York Kouros), c. 590–580 B.C.E., Attic, archaic period, Naxian marble, 194.6 x 51.6 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York). Speakers: Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker.



Video \(\PageIndex{1\): Marble Statue of a kouros (New York Kouros), c. 590–580 B.C.E., Attic, archaic period, Naxian marble, 194.6 x 51.6 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York). Video from The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

This video features Met curator Joan R. Mertens on self-reliance in *Marble statue of a kouros (youth)*. This kouros is one of the earliest marble statues of a human figure carved in Attica. The rigid stance, with the left leg forward and arms at the side, was derived from Egyptian art. The pose provided a clear, simple formula that was used by Greek sculptors throughout the sixth century B.C.E. In this early figure, geometric, almost abstract forms predominate, and anatomical details are rendered in beautiful analogous patterns. The statue marked the grave of a young Athenian aristocrat.

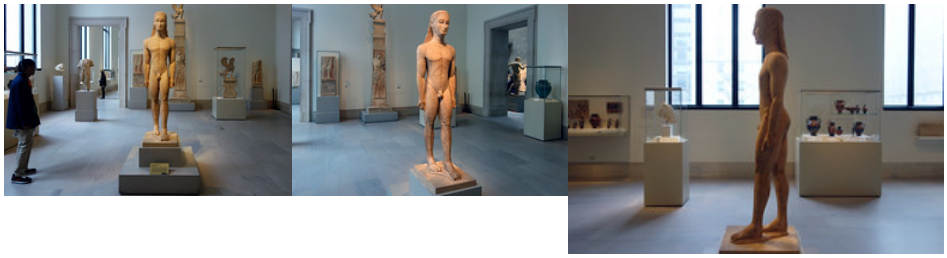
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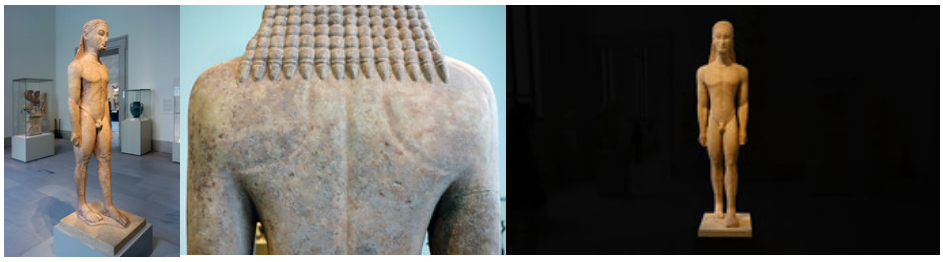
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10.3.3: Anavysos Kouros

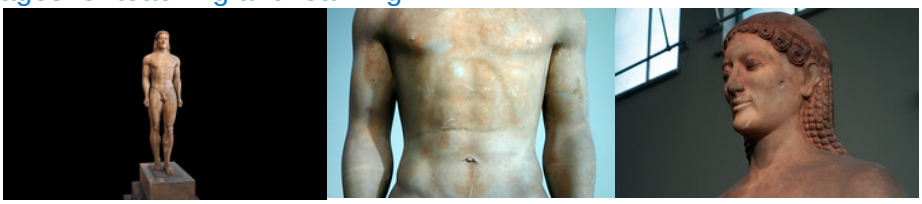
by DR. STEVEN ZUCKER and DR. BETH HARRIS

“Stay and mourn at the monument of dead Kroisos, who raging Ares slew as he fought in the front ranks.”

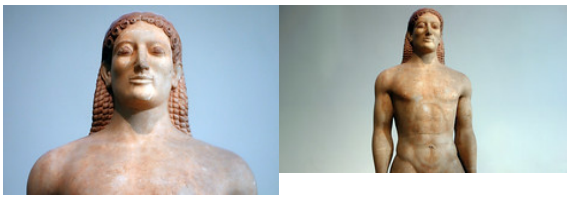


Video **10.3.3.1**: Anavysos Kouros, c. 530 B.C.E., marble, 6′ 4″ (National Archaeological Museum, Athens)

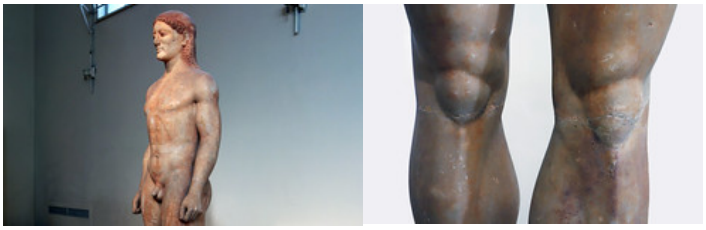
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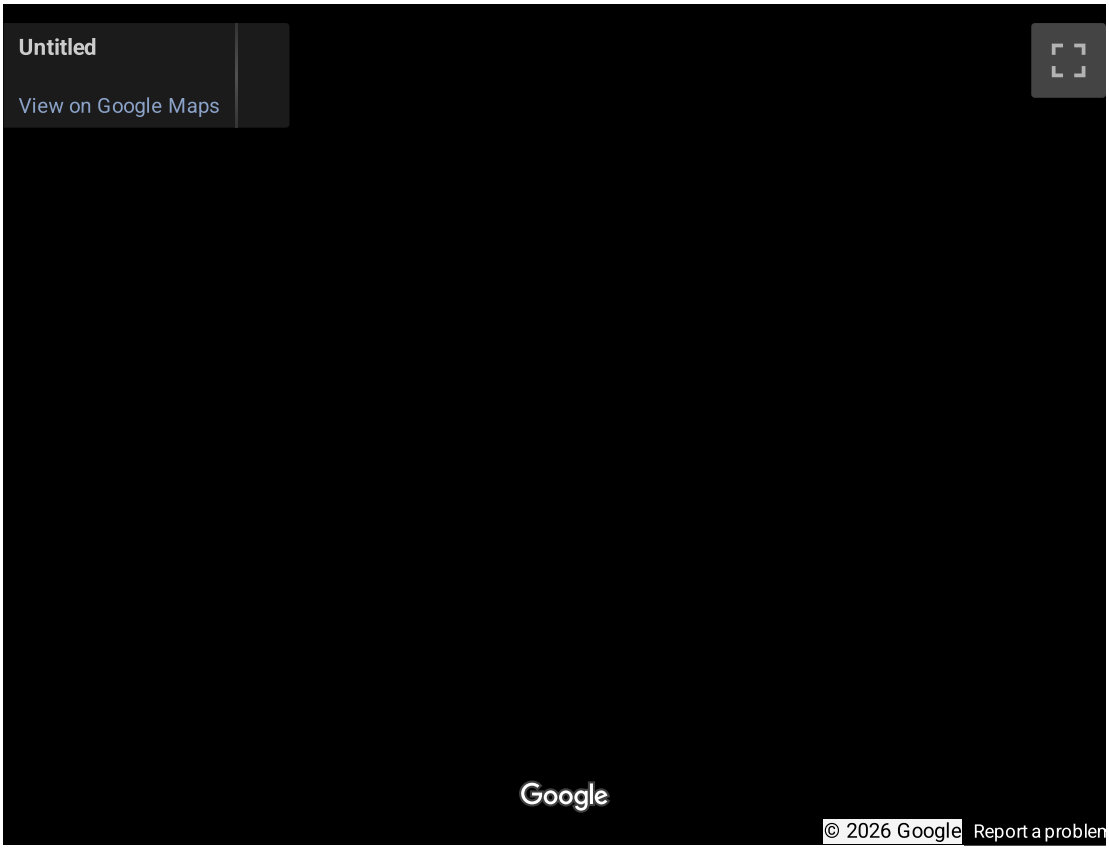
10.3.4: Peplos Kore

by DR. STEVEN ZUCKER and DR. BETH HARRIS

What's in a name? Discover whether this ancient Greek offering is an idealized young woman or a goddess.



Video **10.3.4.1**: Peplos Kore, c. 530 B.C.E., from the Acropolis, Athens, Greece (Acropolis Museum, Athens)



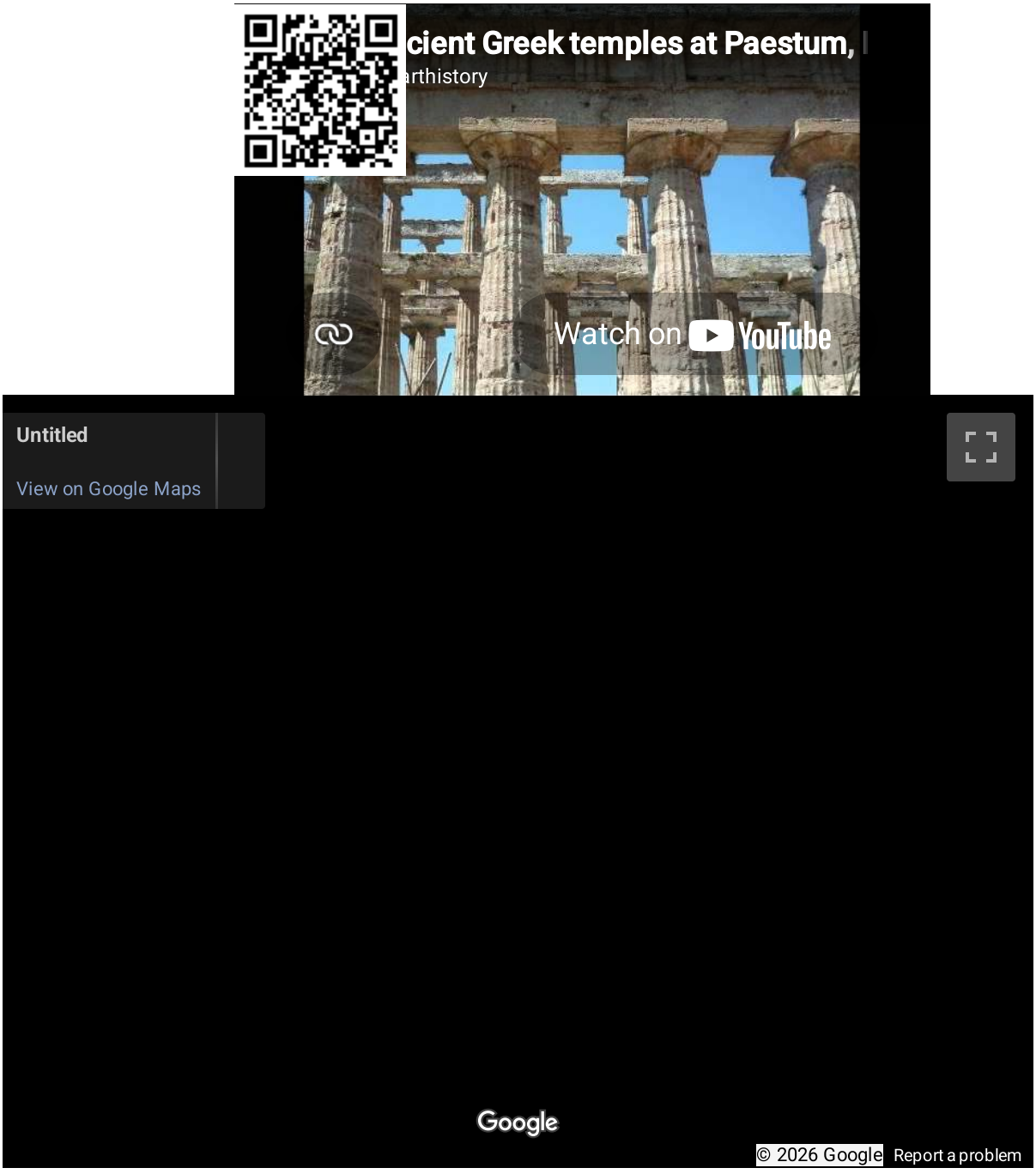
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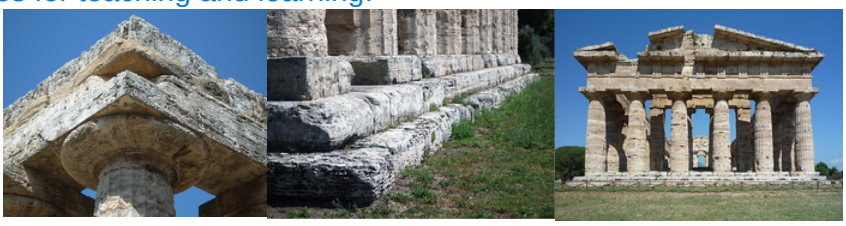
10.3.5: Ancient Greek Temples at Paestum

by DR. BETH HARRIS and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER

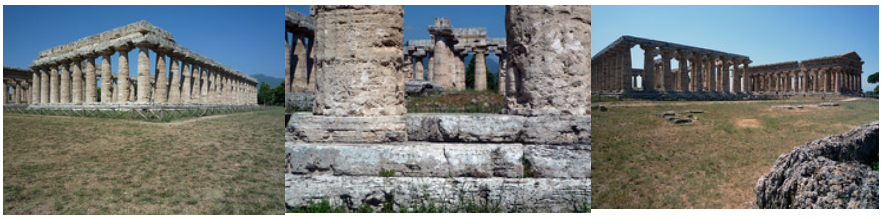
Explore the development of the Doric order in the temples of the city of Poseidon, the god of the sea.



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10.3.6: Sanctuary of Apollo, Delphi

by DR. BETH HARRIS and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER

The god Apollo spoke through his priestess at Delphi, and Greek cities competed for his favor with offerings.



Video **10.3.6.1**: Sanctuary of Apollo at Delphi, Greece

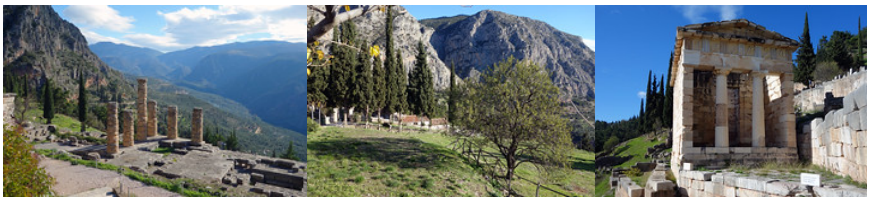
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10.3.7: Siphnian Treasury, Delphi

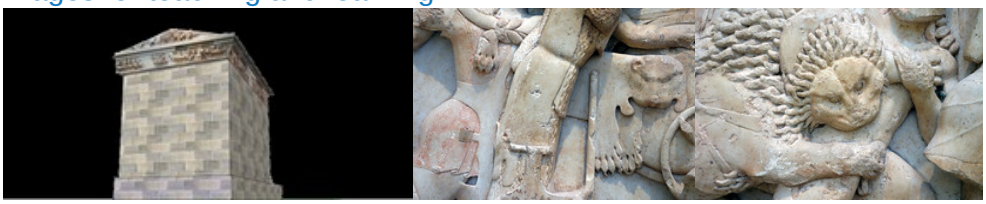
by DR. STEVEN ZUCKER and DR. BETH HARRIS

The island of Siphnos used its great wealth to earn the favor of the gods through art, architecture, and offerings.



Video **10.3.7.1**: Pediment and Frieze of the Siphnian Treasury at the Sanctuary of Apollo at Delphi, c. 530 B.C.E.
For more on pan-Hellenic sanctuaries, watch our video on the **Sanctuary of Apollo at Delphi**

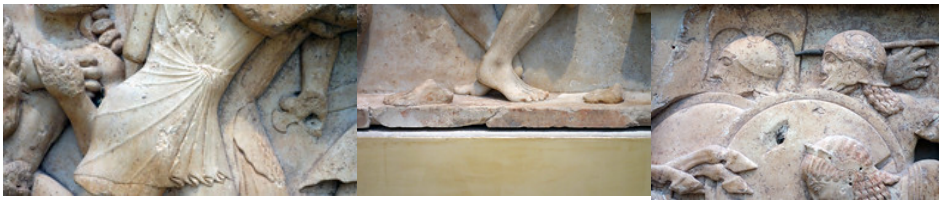
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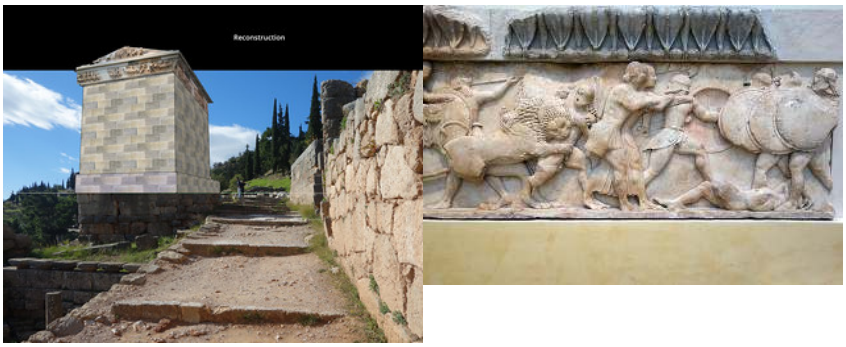
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SECTION OVERVIEW

10.4: Early Classical

The Early Classical period combines the austere nobility of the archaic style with an increasing interest in naturalistic movement—often rendered in gleaming bronze.

c. 480 - 448 B.C.E.

10.4.1: East and West Pediments from the Temple of Aphaia, Aegina

10.4.2: Kritios Boy

10.4.3: Charioteer of Delphi

10.4.4: Artemision Zeus or Poseidon

10.4.5: Riace Warriors

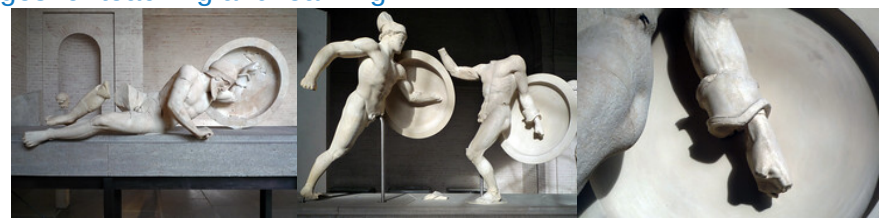
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10.4.1: East and West Pediments from the Temple of Aphaia, Aegina

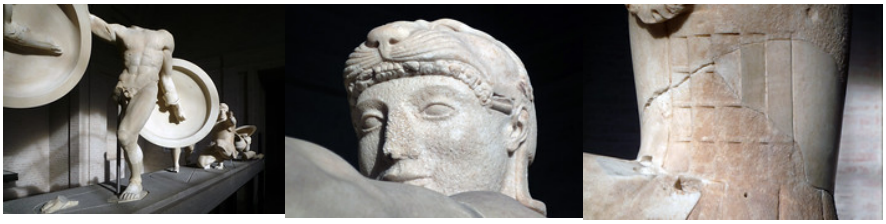
by DR. BETH HARRIS and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER

Explore the evolution of ancient Greek sculpture with two groups from the same temple, but that seem ages apart.

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10.4.2: Kritios Boy

by DR. STEVEN ZUCKER and DR. BETH HARRIS

Following war with the Persians, this highly naturalistic sculpture was buried out of respect.



Video **10.4.2.1**: Kritios Boy, from the Acropolis, Athens, c. 480 B.C.E., 3′ 10″ high (Acropolis Museum, Athens)

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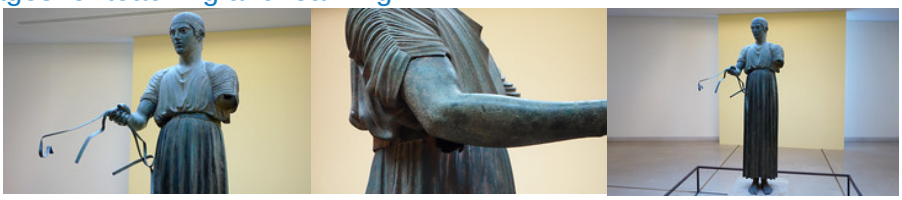
10.4.3: Charioteer of Delphi

by DR. BETH HARRIS and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER

Take part in the celebration of an athlete's victory—this life-size bronze is a hinge between the Archaic and Classical.



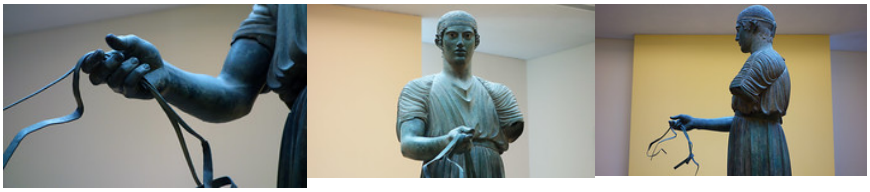
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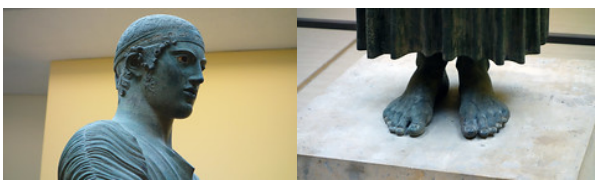
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10.4.4: Artemision Zeus or Poseidon

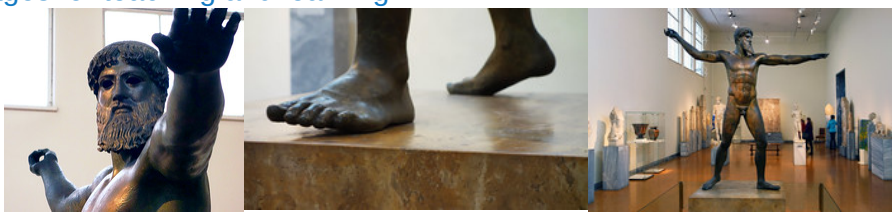
by DR. BETH HARRIS and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER

This bronze god sank to the bottom of the sea where he sat for millennia, but who is he and what can he tell us?

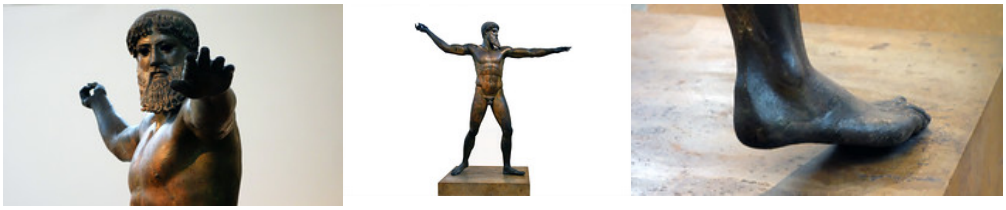


Video **10.4.4.1**: Artemision Zeus or Poseidon, c. 460 B.C.E., bronze, 2.09 m high, Early Classical (Severe Style), recovered from a shipwreck off Cape Artemision, Greece in 1928 (National Archaeological Museum, Athens)

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10.4.5: Riace Warriors

by DR. JEFFREY A. BECKER



Figure **10.4.5.1**: The *Riace Warriors* (also referred to as the *Riace bronzes* or *Bronzi di Riace*) are two life-size Greek bronze statues of naked, bearded warriors. The statues were discovered by Stefano Mariottini in the Mediterranean Sea just off the coast of Riace Marina, Italy, on August 16, 1972. The statues are currently housed in the Museo Nazionale della Magna Grecia in the Italian city of Reggio Calabria. The statues are commonly referred to as "Statue A" and "Statue B" and were originally cast using the lost-wax technique.



Figure **10.4.5.2**: The discovery of the statues in 1972

Statue A

Statue A stands 198 centimeters tall and depicts the younger of the two warriors. His body exhibits a strong contrapposto stance, with the head turned to his right. Attached elements have been lost – most likely a shield and a spear; his now-lost helmet atop his head may have been crowned by a wreath. The warrior is bearded, with applied copper detail for the lips and the nipples. Inset eyes also survive for Statue A. The hair and beard have been worked in an elaborate fashion, with exquisite curls and ringlets.



Figure \(\PageIndex{3\): Statue A (foreground) and Statue B (background), from the sea off Riace, Italy, c. 460-450 B.C.E. (?), Statue A, 198 cm high, Statue B, 197 cm high (Museo Archaeologico Nazionale Reggio Calabria) (photo: **Robert and Talbot Trudeau**, CC BY-NC 2.0)

Statue B

Statue B depicts an older warrior and stands 197 centimeters tall. A now-missing helmet likely was perched atop his head. Like Statue A, Statue B is bearded and in a contrapposto stance, although the feet of Statue B and set more closely together than those of Statue A.

Severe style

The Severe or Early Classical style describes the trends in Greek sculpture between c. 490 and 450 B.C.E. Artistically this stylistic phase represents a transition from the rather austere and static Archaic style of the sixth century B.C.E. to the more idealized Classical style. The Severe style is marked by an increased interest in the use of bronze as a medium as well as an increase in the characterization of the sculpture, among other features.

Interpretation and chronology



Figure **10.4.5.4**: Statue A, from the sea off Riace, Italy, c. 460-450 B.C.E. (?), 198 cm high (Museo Archaeologico Nazionale Reggio Calabria) (photo: **Luca Galli**, CC BY 2.0)

The chronology of the Riace warriors has been a matter of scholarly contention since their discovery. In essence there are two schools of thought—one holds that the warriors are fifth century B.C.E. originals that were created between 460 and 420 B.C.E., while another holds that the statues were produced later and consciously imitate Early Classical sculpture. Those that support the

earlier chronology argue that Statue A is the earlier of the two pieces. Those scholars also make a connection between the warriors and the workshops of famous ancient sculptors. For instance, some scholars suggest that the sculptor Myron crafted Statue A, while Alkamenes created Statue B. Additionally, those who support the earlier chronology point to the Severe Style as a clear indication of an Early Classical date for these two masterpieces.

The art historian B. S. Ridgway presents a dissenting view, contending that the statues should not be assigned to the fifth century B.C.E., arguing instead that they were most likely produced together after 100 B.C.E. Ridgway feels that the statues indicate an interest in Early Classical iconography during the Hellenistic period.

In terms of identifications, there has been speculation that the two statues represent Tydeus (Statue A) and Amphiaraus (Statue B), two warriors from Aeschylus' tragic play, *Seven Against Thebes* (about Polyneices after the fall of his father, King Oedipus), and may have been part of a monumental sculptural composition. A group from Argos described by Pausanias (the Greek traveler and writer) is often cited in connection to this conjecture: "A little farther on is a sanctuary of the Seasons. On coming back from here you see statues of Polyneices, the son of Oedipus, and of all the chieftains who with him were killed in battle at the wall of Thebes…" (Pausanias, *Description of Greece* 2.20.5).

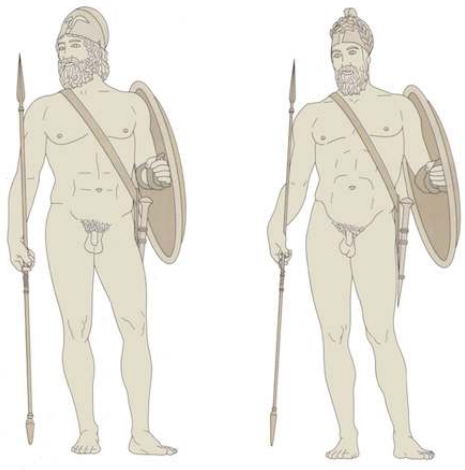


Figure **10.4.5.5**: A conjectural restored view of the two warriors (**source**)

The statues have lead dowels installed in their feet, indicating that they were originally mounted on a base and installed as part of some sculptural group or other. The art historian Carol Mattusch argues that not only were they found together, but that they were originally installed—and perhaps produced—together in antiquity.

Additional resources:

I bronzi di Riace: restauro come conoscenza (Rome: Artemide, 2003).

J. Alsop, "Glorious bronzes of ancient Greece: warriors from a watery grave" *National Geographic* 163.6 (June 1983), pp. 820-827.

A. Busignani and L. Perugi, *The Bronzes of Riace*, trans. J. R. Walker, (Florence: Sansoni, 1981).

C. H. Hallett, "Kopienkritik and the works of Polykleitos," in *Polykleitos: the Doryphoros and Tradition*, ed. by W. G. Moon, pp. 121-160 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995).

C. C. Mattusch, *Classical bronzes: the art and craft of Greek and Roman statuary* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996).

C. C. Mattusch, "In Search of the Greek Bronze Original" in *The Ancient Art of Emulation: Studies in Artistic Originality and Tradition from the Present to Classical Antiquity (Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome*, supplementary volumes, vol. 1), edited by E. K. Gazda, pp. 99-115, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002).

P. B. Pacini, "Florence, Rome and Reggio Calabria: The Riace Bronzes," *The Burlington Magazine*, volume 123, no. 943 (Oct., 1981), pp. 630-633.

B. S. Ridgway, *Fifth Century Styles in Greek Sculpture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981).

B. S. Ridgway, “The Riace Bronzes: A Minority Viewpoint,” in *Due bronzi da Riace: rinvenimento, restauro, analisi ed ipotesi di interpretazione*, vol. 1, ed. by L. V. Borelli and P. Pelagatti, pp. 313-326. (Rome: Istituto poligrafico e zecca dello stato, 1984).

B. S. Ridgway, *Hellenistic Sculpture: the Styles of ca. 100-31 B.C.* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2002).

N. J. Spivey, *Understanding Greek sculpture: ancient meanings, modern readings* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1996).

G. B. Triches, *Due bronzi da Riace: rinvenimento, restauro, analisi ed ipotesi di interpretazione* (Rome: Istituto poligrafico e zecca dello Stato, 1984).

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SECTION OVERVIEW

10.5: Classical

Even though this period is so brief, when you think of ancient Greek art, you likely think of the art produced during this period: the Parthenon, the noble caryatids on the Erechtheion, and the perfect proportions of the Doryphoros.

c. 450 - 400 B.C.E.

10.5.1: Polykleitos, Doryphoros (Spear-Bearer)

10.5.2: Myron, Discobolus (Discus Thrower)

10.5.3: The Athenian Agora and the experiment in democracy

10.5.4: The Parthenon, Athens

10.5.5: Phidias, Parthenon sculpture (pediments, metopes and frieze)

10.5.6: Who owns the Parthenon sculptures?

10.5.7: Egyptian blue on the Parthenon sculptures

10.5.8: Plaque of the Ergastines

10.5.9: The Erechtheion

10.5.10: Caryatid and Ionic Column from the Erechtheion

10.5.11: Temple of Athena Nike on the Athenian Acropolis

10.5.12: Nike Adjusting Her Sandal, Temple of Athena Nike, Acropolis, Athens

10.5.13: Grave stele of Hegeso

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10.5.1: Polykleitos, Doryphoros (Spear-Bearer)

by DR. BETH HARRIS and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER

For the ancient Greeks, the human body was perfect. Explore this example of the mathematical source of ideal beauty.



Roman copies of ancient Greek art

When we study ancient Greek art, so often we are really looking at ancient Roman art, or at least their copies of ancient Greek sculpture (or paintings and architecture for that matter).

Basically, just about every Roman wanted ancient Greek art. For the Romans, Greek culture symbolized a desirable way of life—of leisure, the arts, luxury and learning.



Figure **10.5.1.100**: Polykleitos, *Doryphoros (Spear-Bearer) or Canon*, Roman marble copy of a Greek bronze, c. 450-440 B.C.E. (Museo Archaeologico Nazionale, Naples)

The popularity of ancient Greek art for the Romans

Greek art became the rage when Roman generals began conquering Greek cities (beginning in 211 B.C.E.), and returned triumphantly to Rome not with the usual booty of gold and silver coins, but with works of art. This work so impressed the Roman elite that studios were set up to meet the growing demand for copies destined for the villas of wealthy Romans. *The Doryphoros* was one of the most sought after, and most copied, Greek sculptures.

Bronze versus marble

For the most part, the Greeks created their free-standing sculpture in bronze, but because bronze is valuable and can be melted down and reused, sculpture was often recast into weapons. This is why so few ancient Greek bronze originals survive, and why we often have to look at ancient Roman copies in marble (of varying quality) to try to understand what the Greeks achieved.

Why sculptures are often incomplete or reconstructed

To make matter worse, Roman marble sculptures were buried for centuries, and very often we recover only fragments of a sculpture that have to be reassembled. This is the reason you will often see that sculptures in museums include an arm or hand that are modern recreations, or that ancient sculptures are simply displayed incomplete.

The Doryphoros (Spear-Bearer) in the Naples museum (image above) is a Roman copy of a lost Greek original that we think was found, largely intact, in the provincial Roman city of Pompeii.*

The canon

The idea of a canon, a rule for a standard of beauty developed for artists to follow, was not new to the ancient Greeks. The ancient Egyptians also developed a canon. Centuries later, during the Renaissance, Leonardo da Vinci investigated the ideal proportions of the human body with his *Vitruvian Man*.

Polykleitos's idea of relating beauty to ratio was later summarized by Galen, writing in the second century,

> *Beauty consists in the proportions, not of the elements, but of the parts, that is to say, of finger to finger, and of all the fingers to the palm and the wrist, and of these to the forearm, and of the forearm to the upper arm, and of all the other parts to each other.*

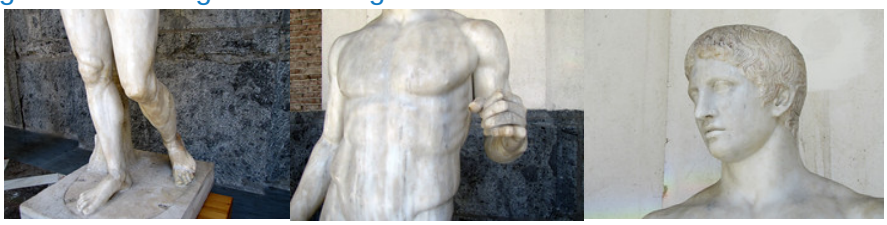
* Recent scholarship suggests that the *Doryphoros* sculpture in the Naples museum may not have been found in a Palestra at Pompeii. See Warren G. Moon, ed., *Polykleitos, The Doryphoros and Tradition*, University of Wisconsin Press, 1995.

Additional resources:

Doryphoros on Art Through Time

Doryphoros on ArtsConnectEd

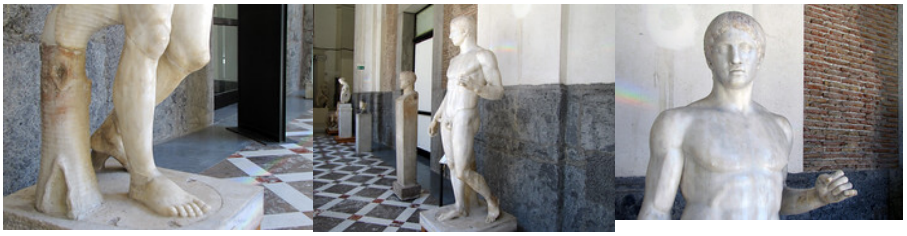
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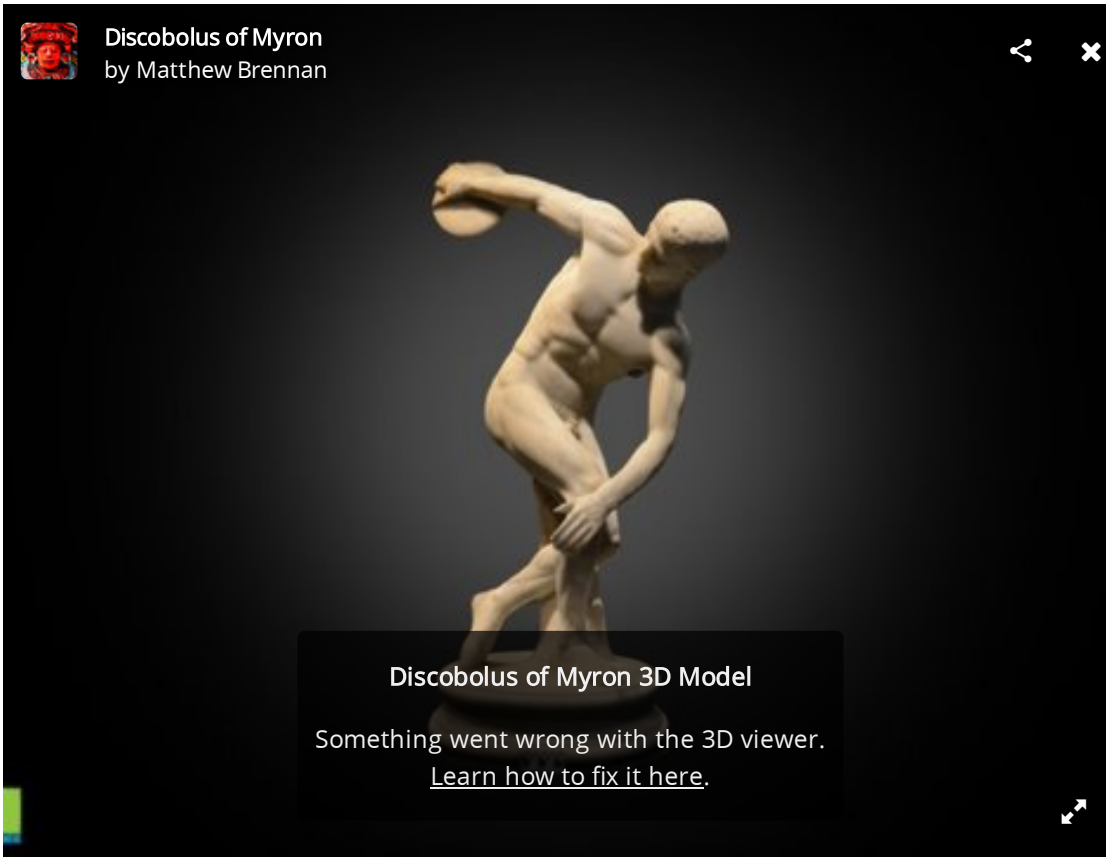
10.5.2: Myron, Discobolus (Discus Thrower)

by DR. BETH HARRIS and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER

Coiled with athletic energy, balance, and the promise of movement, see the potential of an idealized human body.



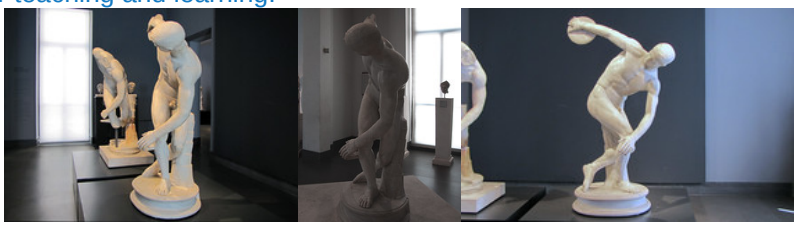
Video \(\PageIndex{1}\): Myron, *Discobolus (Discus Thrower)*, Roman copy of an ancient Greek bronze from c. 450 B.C.E., Classical Period (Palazzo Massimo alle Terme)



Discobolus of Myron by **Matthew Brennan** on **Sketchfab**

Figure **10.5.2.2**

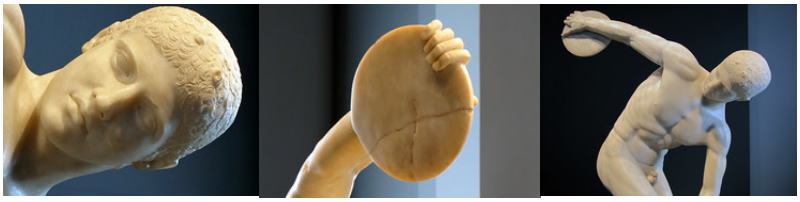
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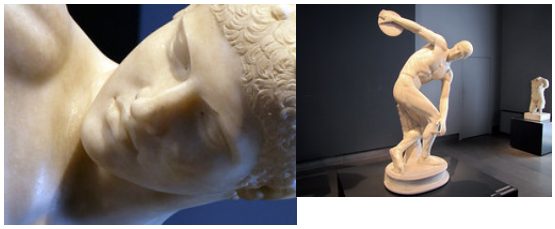
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10.5.3: The Athenian Agora and the experiment in democracy

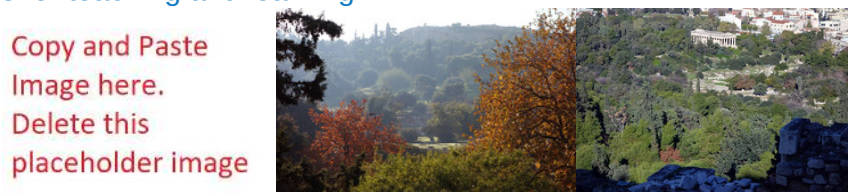
by DR. STEVEN ZUCKER and DR. BETH HARRIS

We recognize ancient Greece as the birthplace of democracy, but what did democracy really mean to the Greeks?



Video **10.5.3.1**

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10.5.4: The Parthenon, Athens

by THE BRITISH MUSEUM

Learn about the great temple of Athena, patron of Athens, and the building's troubled history.



Video **10.5.4.1**: Iktinos and Kallikrates (sculptural program directed by Phidias), Parthenon, Athens, 447 – 432 B.C.E.. Speakers: Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker.



Figure **10.5.4.2**: Iris, from the west pediment of the Parthenon, c. 438-432 B.C.E., marble, 135 cm high, Athens, Greece © Trustees of the British Museum

Athens and democracy

By around 500 B.C.E. 'rule by the people,' or democracy, had emerged in the city of Athens. Following the defeat of a Persian invasion in 480-479 B.C.E., mainland Greece and Athens in particular entered into a golden age. In drama and philosophy, literature, art and architecture Athens was second to none. The city's empire stretched from the western Mediterranean to the Black Sea, creating enormous wealth. This paid for one of the biggest public building projects ever seen in Greece, which included the Parthenon.

The temple known as the Parthenon was built on the Acropolis of Athens between 447 and 438 B.CE. It was part of a vast building program masterminded by the Athenian statesman Perikles. Inside the temple stood a colossal statue representing Athena, patron goddess of the city. The statue, which no longer exists, was made of gold and ivory and was the work of the celebrated sculptor Pheidias.

Parthenon sculptures

The building itself was decorated with marble sculptures representing scenes from Athenian cult and mythology. There are three categories of architectural sculpture. The frieze (carved in low relief) ran high up around all four sides of the building inside the colonnades. The metopes (carved in high relief) were placed at the same level as the frieze above the architrave surmounting the columns on the outside of the temple. The pediment sculptures (carved in the round) filled the triangular gables at each end.

Although the building was to undergo a number of changes, it remained largely intact until the seventeenth century. The early Christians turned the temple into a church, adding an apse at the east end. It was probably at this time that the sculptures representing the birth of Athena were removed from the centre of the east pediment and many of the metopes were defaced. The Parthenon served as a church until Athens was conquered by the Ottoman Turks in the fifteenth century, when it became a mosque. In 1687, during the Venetian siege of the Acropolis, the defending Turks were using the Parthenon as a store for gunpowder, which was ignited by the Venetian bombardment. The explosion blew out the heart of the building, destroying the roof and parts of the walls and the colonnade.

The Venetians succeeded in capturing the Acropolis, but held it for less than a year. Further damage was done in an attempt to remove sculptures from the west pediment, when the lifting tackle broke and the sculptures fell and were smashed. Many of the sculptures that were destroyed in 1687, are now known only from drawings made in 1674, by an artist probably to be identified as Jacques Carrey.

Marble metope from the Parthenon



Figure **10.5.4.3**: Marble metope from the Parthenon, c. 447-438 B.C.E., 172 cm tall, Acropolis, Athens © Trustees of the British Museum

The sculpted decoration of the Parthenon included ninety-two metopes showing scenes of mythical battle. Those on the south flank of the temple included a series featuring human Lapiths in mortal combat with Centaurs. The Centaurs were part-man and part-horse, thus having a civil and a savage side to their nature. The Lapiths, a neighboring Greek tribe, made the mistake of giving the Centaurs wine at the marriage feast of their king, Peirithoos. The Centaurs attempted to rape the women, with their leader Eurytion trying to carry off the bride. A general battle ensued, with the Lapiths finally victorious.

Here a young Lapith holds a Centaur from behind with one hand, while preparing to deliver a blow with the other. The composition is perfectly balanced, with the protagonists pulling in opposite directions, around a central space filled by the cascading folds of the Lapith's cloak.

Fragment from the frieze



Figure **10.5.4.4**: Horsemen from the west frieze of the Parthenon, c. 438-432 B.C.E., 100cm tall, Acropolis, Athens © Trustees of the British Museum

This block was placed near the corner of the west frieze of the Parthenon, where it turned onto the north. The horsemen have been moving at some speed, but are now reining back so as not to appear to ride off the edge of the frieze. The horseman in front twists around to look back at his companion, and raises a hand (now missing) to his head. This gesture, repeated elsewhere in the frieze, is perhaps a signal. Although

mounted riders can be seen here, much of the west frieze features horsemen getting ready for the cavalcade proper, shown on the long north and south sides of the temple.

Pediment sculpture



Figure 10.5.4.5: Three goddesses from the east pediment of the Parthenon, c. 438-432 B.C.E., 233 cm long, Acropolis, Athens © Trustees of the British Museum

The east pediment of the Parthenon showed the birth of goddess Athena from the head of her father Zeus. The sculptures that represented the actual scene are lost. Zeus was probably shown seated, while Athena was striding away from him fully grown and armed.

Only some of the figures ranged on either side of the lost central group survive. They include these three goddesses, who were seated to the right of centre. From left to right, their posture varies in order to accommodate the slope of the pediment that originally framed them. They are remarkable for their naturalistic rendering of anatomy blended with a harmonious representation of complex draperies.

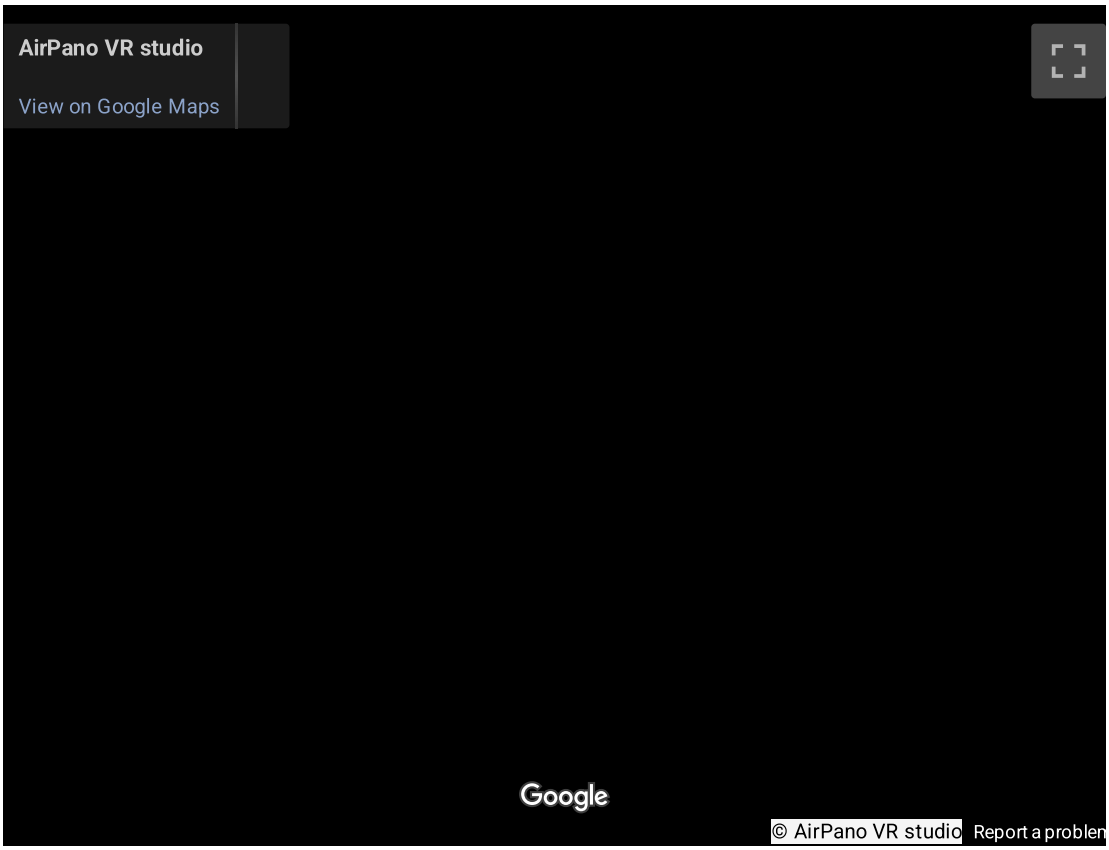
The figure on the left is on the point of rising and tucks her right foot in to lever herself up. To the right another figure cradles a companion reclining luxuriously in her lap. They are perhaps, from left to right, Hestia, goddess of the hearth and home, Dione, and her daughter Aphrodite. However, another suggestion is that the two figures on the right are the personification of the Sea (Thalassa) in the lap of the Earth (Gaia).

Suggested readings:

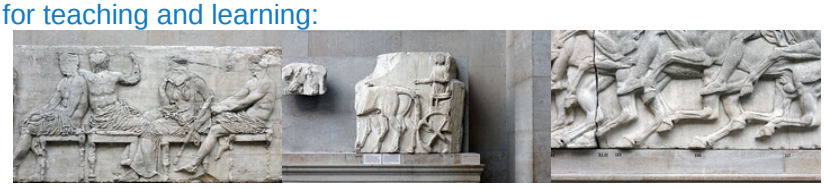
B.F. Cook, *The Elgin Marbles* (London, The British Museum Press, 1997).

The Parthenon sculptures at The British Museum

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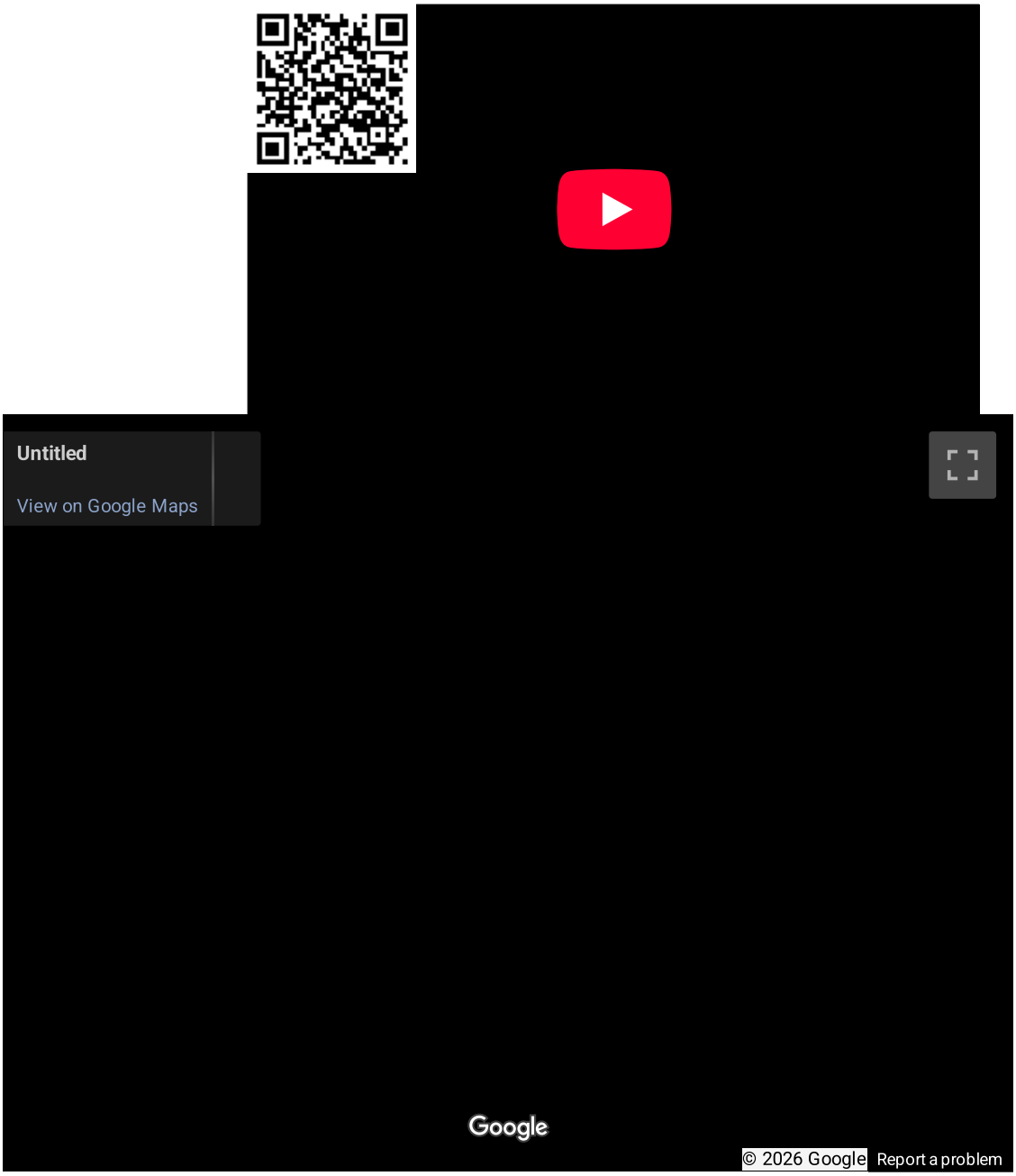
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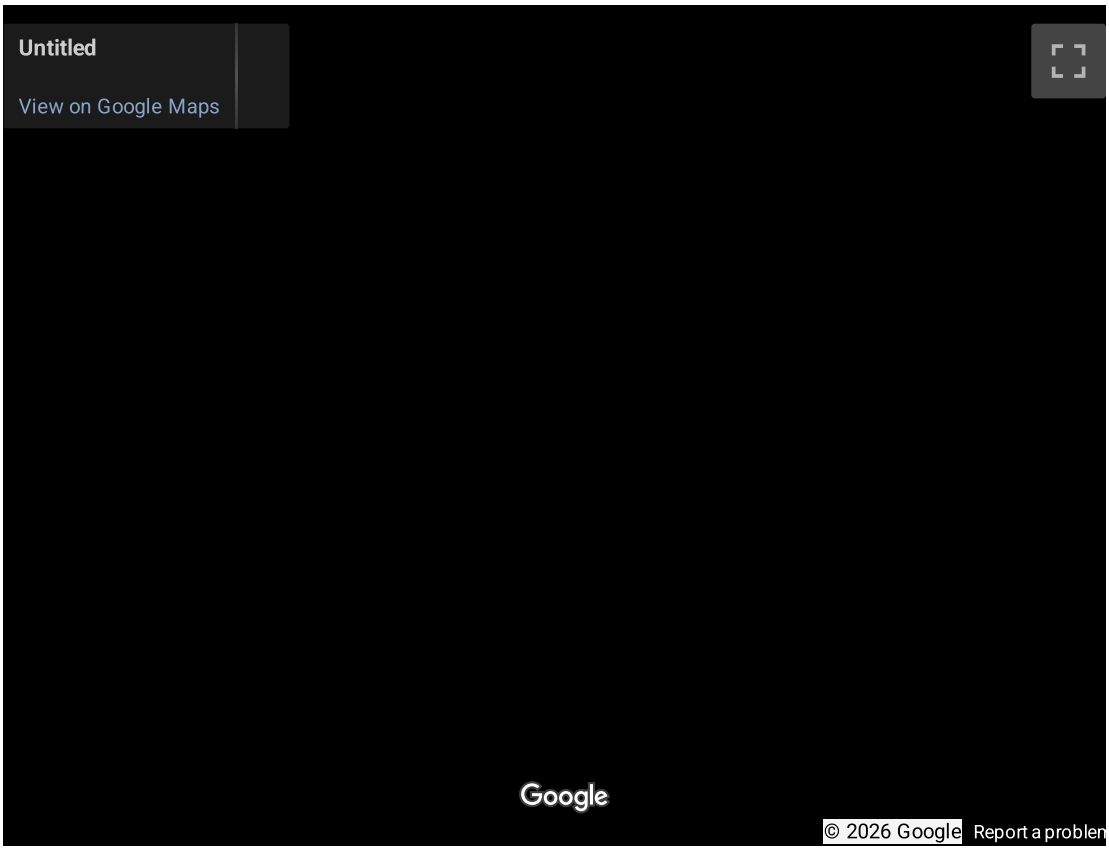
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10.5.5: Phidias, Parthenon sculpture (pediments, metopes and frieze)

by DR. BETH HARRIS and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER

Discover stunning depictions of gods, heroes, and mythical beasts in the most influential sculptures in history.





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10.5.6: Who owns the Parthenon sculptures?

by DR. STEVEN ZUCKER and DR. BETH HARRIS

Ancient Greeks made them, Ottomans captured them, Venetians blew them up, and the British took them away.



Additional resources:

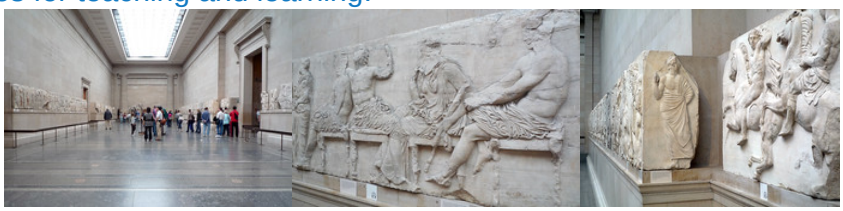
How the Parthenon lost its Marbles (National Geographic)

The British Museum on the Parthenon sculptures

The Acropolis Museum

William St Clair, Imperialism, Art & Restitution: The Parthenon and the Elgin Marbles

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10.5.7: Egyptian blue on the Parthenon sculptures

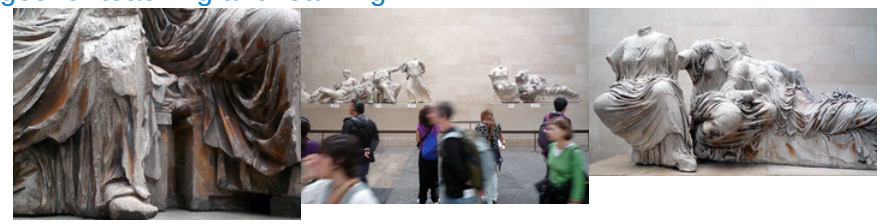
by THE BRITISH MUSEUM

Discover ancient sculptures as they were meant to be seen: in vibrant color.

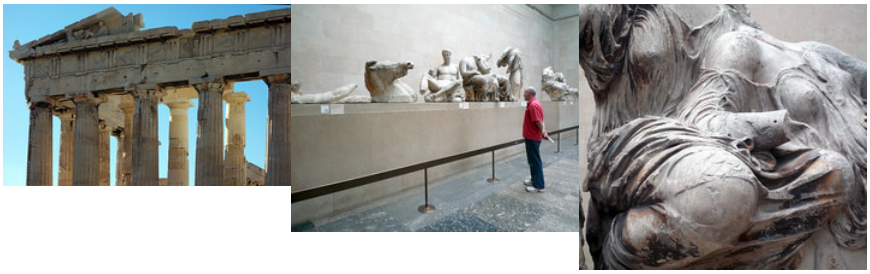


Video **10.5.7.1**: Video from The British Museum.

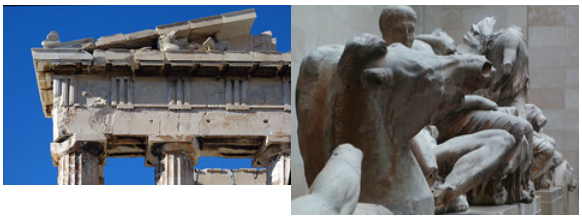
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10.5.8: Plaque of the Ergastines

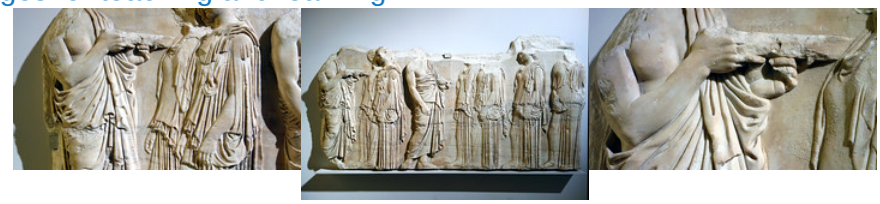
by DR. BETH HARRIS and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER

Bits of the Parthenon have been spirited all over the world—in Paris, a fragment shows religious life in Athens.



Video **10.5.8.1**: Phidias (?), *Plaque of the Ergastines*, 445 – 438 B.C.E., Pentelic marble (Attica), 0.96 x 2.07 m, fragment from the frieze on Hthe east side of the Parthenon (Musée du Louvre, Paris)

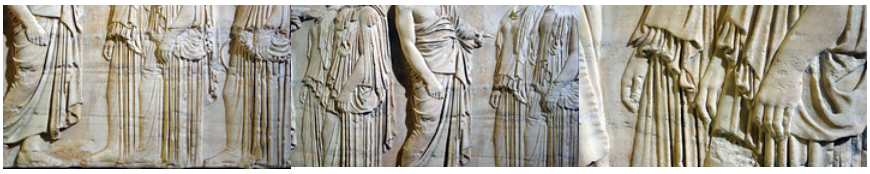
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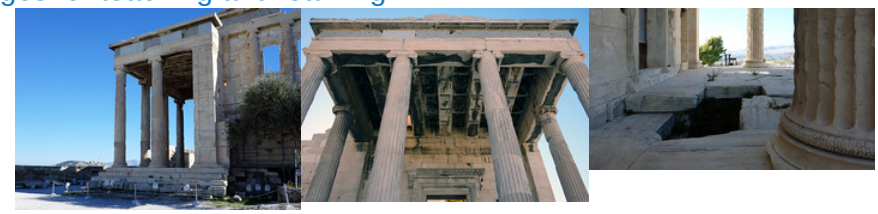
10.5.9: The Erechtheion

by DR. BETH HARRIS and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER

Perched on a cliff high above Athens, this complex temple is very different from its neighbor, the Parthenon.



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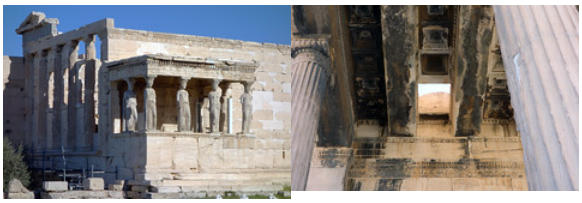
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10.5.10: Caryatid and Ionic Column from the Erechtheion

by DR. BETH HARRIS and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER

These graceful female figures replace columns—how did human form and architecture relate in ancient Greece?



The caryatid

The Erechtheion is perhaps the most complex building on the Acropolis. It houses shrines to several different deities, including Athena, Zeus and Poseidon. It is named for the mythic King Erechtheus who judged the contest between Athena and Poseidon for who would be the patron deity of Athens.

This caryatid is one of six elegant female figures who supported the roof of the south porch of the Erechtheion (figures who do the work of columns—carrying a roof—are called caryatids). The figure wears a garment pinned on the shoulders (this is a peplos—a kind of garment worn by women in ancient Greece). The drapery bunches up at the waist and pours over the belt. She stands in contrapposto with her left knee bent and pressing against the drapery The folds of drapery on other right side resemble the fluting (vertical grooves) on a column. She looks noble and calm despite the fact that she carries the weight of a roof on her head.

The column



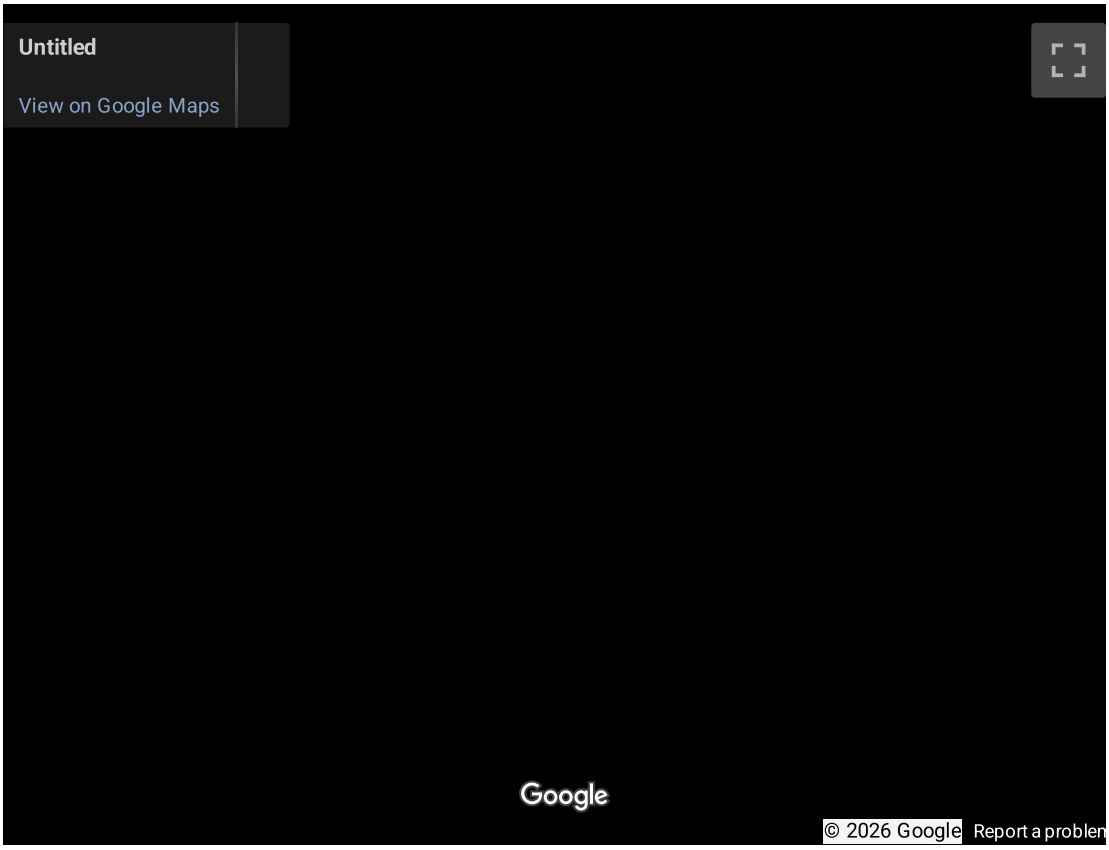
Figure 10.5.10.115: Ionic Column (North Porch), Erechtheion on the Acropolis, Athens, marble, 421-407 B.C.E., Classical Period (British Museum, London). Mnesicles may have been the architect.

The Erechtheion is a highly decorated and elegant Ionic temple. The scroll forms at the top of the column (the capital) and its tall slender profile indicate that this is the Ionic order. The column is formed of four pieces (known as “drums”) and is fluted (decorated with vertical grooves). Just below the scroll shapes (also called volutes) you see decorative moldings, including one called “egg and dart” (egg shapes alternating with V-shapes), and below that a ring of plant-like shapes—an alternating palmette and lotus pattern.

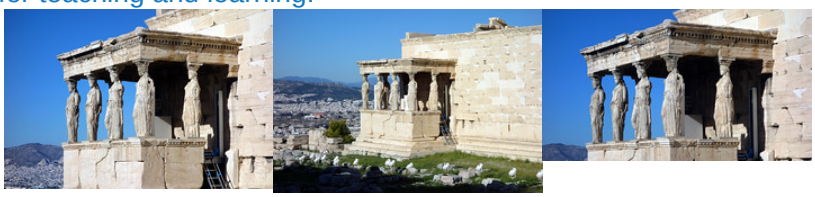
These decorative patterns also appear on the entablature of the Erechtheion (the entablature is the horizontal area carried by the columns).



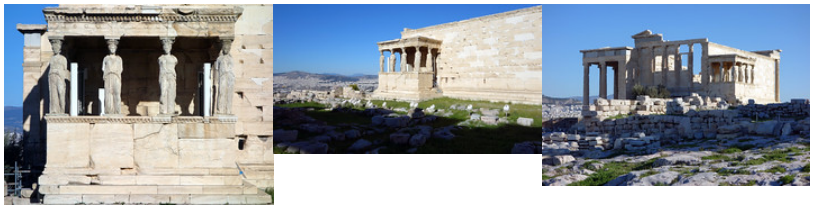
Figure 10.5.10.116: Entablature from the Erechtheion, Acropolis, Athens, marble, 421-407 B.C.E. (British Museum, London)



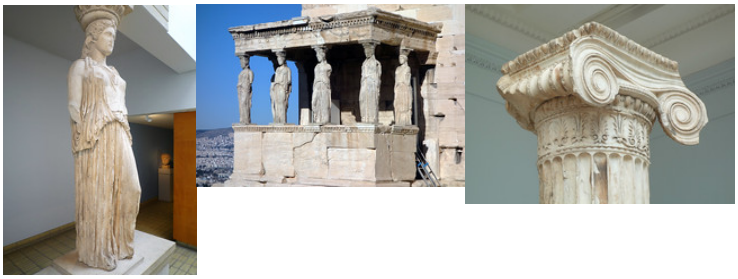
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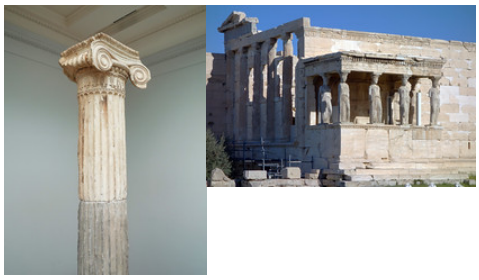
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10.5.11: Temple of Athena Nike on the Athenian Acropolis

by KATARZYNA MINOLLARI



Figure **10.5.11.1**: Temple of Athena Nike, 421-05 B.C.E., marble, Acropolis, Athens

The temple of Athena Nike (Athena as a goddess of victory) is the smallest temple at the Acropolis in Athens, placed at its southwest corner, at the edge of a high cliff (see images above). Its construction was completed in the year 420 B.C.E., during the so called High Classical Period, according to the design of Kallikrates (the same architect who was responsible for the construction of the **Parthenon**). The temple by Kallikrates replaced an earlier small temple, which got completely destroyed during the Persian wars.

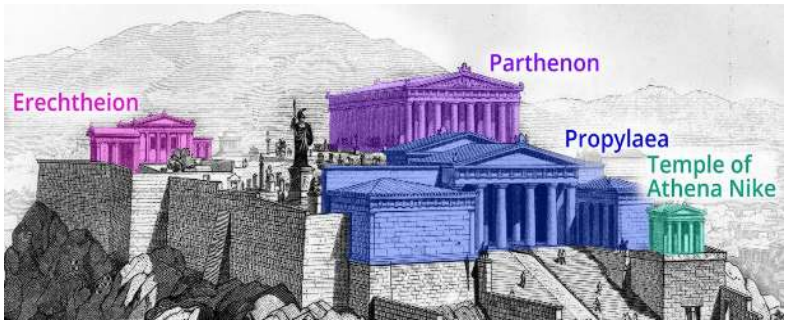


Figure **10.5.11.2**: Reconstruction diagram of the Athenian Acropolis

The spot, highly vulnerable to attack but also well placed for defense, was very appropriate for the worship of the goddess of victory. There is some archaeological evidence, that the location was used for religious rituals already in Mycenaean age (**Mycenaean** was a period of early Greek history, roughly from 1600 to 1100 B.C.E.). Mycenaeans also raised the first defensive bastion on the spot; its fragments are preserved in the temple's basement.



Figure 10.5.11.3: Temple of Athena Nike, 421-05 B.C.E., marble, Acropolis, Athens

An Ionic gem

The temple of Athena Nike, built in **Ionic order** of beautiful white Pentelic marble, has columns at the front and back but not on the sides of the cella; this kind of floor plan is called an amphiprostyle. Because of the small size of the structure, there are only four columns on each side. The columns are monolithic, which means that each one of them was made of a single block of stone (instead of horizontal drums, as it is in the case of the Parthenon).



Figure 10.5.11.4: Temple of Athena Nike, 421-05 B.C.E., marble, Acropolis, Athens

This small and elegant structure is sometimes called the pearl of the Acropolis, since it was designed and decorated with great care. For example, interestingly, its side columns have volutes both in the front and at the side, in order to create a pleasant view from any viewpoint. The Greeks considered their temples as a kind of monumental sculpture, which was supposed to be viewed from all sides and experienced in connection to its surroundings. The Romans later had a different concept—for them, the frontal view was most important (for example, the Roman **Temple of Portunus**).

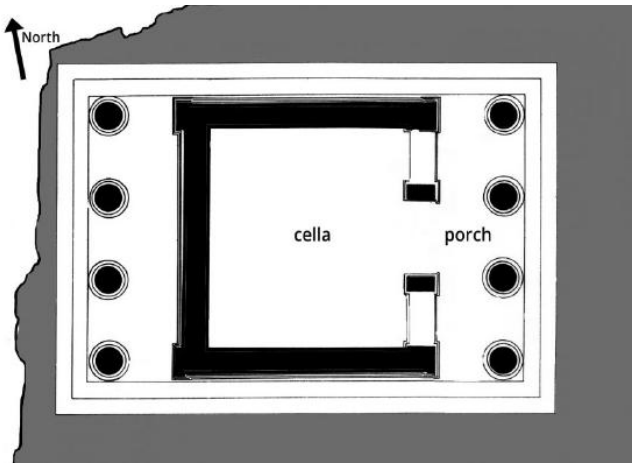


Figure 10.5.11.5: Amphiprostyle plan of the Temple of Athena Nike

Another interesting detail is that the columns of the temple of Athena Nike are not as slender as those of many other Ionic buildings. Usually the proportions between the width and the height of an Ionic column was 1:9 or even 1:11. Here the proportion is 1:7—and the reason for that choice might have been the intention to create a harmonious whole with other buildings nearby. The temple of Athena Nike stands just next to the Propylaea (below), a heavy, monumental gateway to the Acropolis, built in the Doric order. To visually counteract this massive structure, the architect may have decided to widen the columns, otherwise the building might feel out of place, and too delicate in contrast to the neighboring architectural mass of the Propylaea. We know that the ancient Greeks were very aware of mathematical ratios while constructing architecture or creating statues, feeling that the key to beauty lies in correct proportion.



Figure 10.5.11.6: Mnesikles, The Propylaea, 437-32 B.C.E., marble, Acropolis, Athens

Victory

The temple of Athena Nike, as with all Greek temples, was considered a home of the deity, represented in its statue, and was not a place where regular people would enter. The believers would simply perform rituals in front of the temple, where a small altar was placed, and could take a glimpse of the sculpted figure of the goddess through the space between the columns. The privilege of entering the temple was reserved for the priestesses, who held a respected position in Greek society. As the name suggests, the temple housed the statue of Athena Nike, a symbol of victory. It probably had a connection to the victory of the Greeks against the Persians around half a century earlier. Nike usually had wings, but in this case we know that the statue had no wings, hence it was called Athena *Apteros* (without wings). The ancient Greek writer Pausanias later explained that the statue of Athena had no wings, so that she could never leave Athens.



Figure 10.5.11.7: Temple of Athena Nike, 421-05 B.C.E., marble, Acropolis, Athens

The history of this architectural monument has been quite tumultuous. In the 5th century C.E. the temple was converted into a Christian church, then in the 17th century it was completely dismantled by the Ottoman Turks who needed its material to build fortifications. The temple was later reconstructed after Greece regained independence in 1832. In the 1930s the building was restored again. Very recently, new concerns about the structure's integrity prompted a new conservation project. First, a team of specialists completely dismantled the temple. Each of its parts was examined and mended, and eventually the entire building was reassembled using the original pieces, with some fill wherever it was needed. These additions can be easily recognized since they are of a lighter color than the original marble.



Figure 10.5.11.8: Nike Adjusting Her Sandal (detail), south side of the parapet of the Temple of Athena Nike, Acropolis, Athens, Greece, c. 410 B.C.E., marble, 3′ 6″ high (Acropolis Museum, Athens)

The temple of Athena Nike featured beautiful sculptural decoration, including a typical continuous Ionic **frieze**, which on the eastern side represented a gathering of gods. On the southern wall, the sculptor decided to show a battle between Greeks and Persians, and on the remaining sides, battles between Greeks and other warriors. Sculptures on the pediments, almost entirely lost, most probably depicted the Gigantomachy and Amazonomachy. Best known are reliefs from the outside of the stone parapet that surrounded the temple at the cliff's edge. These represented Nike in different poses and could be admired by people climbing the stairs to the Acropolis. Most famous of these is the ***Nike Adjusting Her Sandal*** (above) which presents the goddess in a simple, everyday gesture, perhaps adjusting her sandal (or maybe taking it off) as she prepares to enter the sacred precinct. Whatever she is doing, the relief is still charming in its elegance and simplicity. Both *Nike Adjusting Her Sandal* and parts of the frieze can be admired today at the Acropolis Museum.

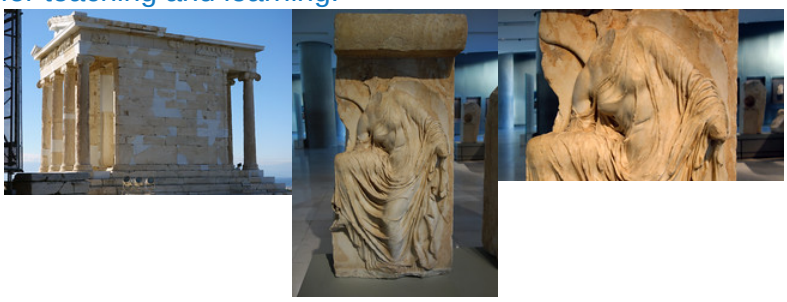
Additional resources:

Greek Gods and Religious Practices on the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

Acropolis Restoration Service website

Acropolis Museum

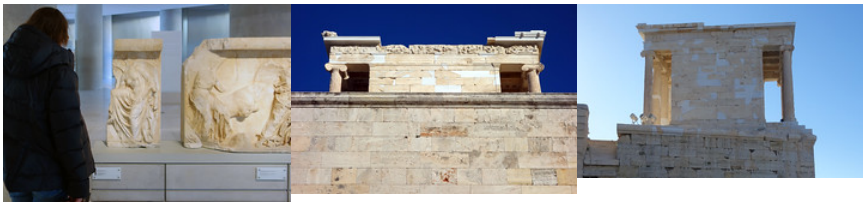
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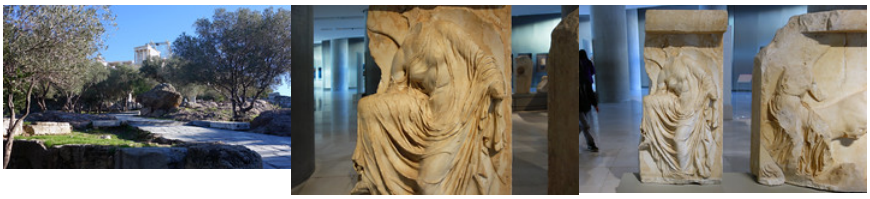
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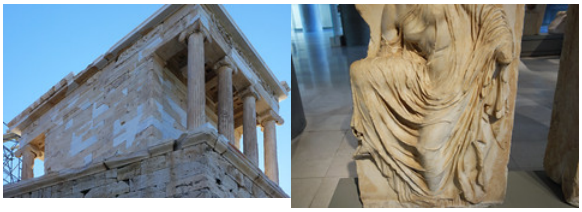
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10.5.12: Nike Adjusting Her Sandal, Temple of Athena Nike, Acropolis, Athens

by DR. STEVEN ZUCKER and DR. BETH HARRIS

Compare this off-balance image of the goddess of victory to earlier classical sculpture.



Video **10.5.12.1**: Nike Adjusting Her Sandal, from the south side of the parapet of the Temple of Athena Nike, Acropolis, Athens, Greece, c. 410 B.C.E., marble, 3′ 6″ high (Acropolis Museum, Athens)

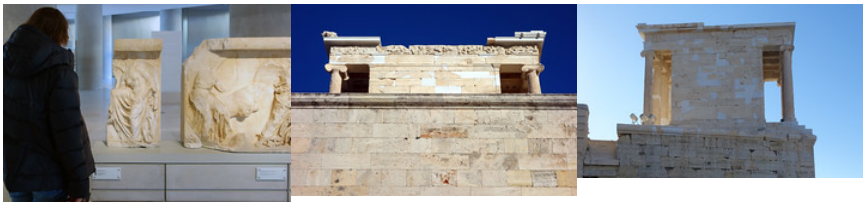
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10.5.13: Grave stele of Hegeso

by DR. STEVEN ZUCKER and DR. BETH HARRIS

See the mastery of form developed in the Classical period translated to private art on this solemn gravestone.



Video **10.5.13.1**: Grave stele of Hegeso, c. 410 B.C.E., marble and paint, from the Dipylon Cemetary, Athens, 5′ 2″ (National Archaeological Museum, Athens)

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SECTION OVERVIEW

10.6: Late Classical

Fourth-century sculpture is known for its elegant elongation of the human form, and the introduction of the female nude.

c. 400 - 323 B.C.E.

10.6.1: The Antikythera Youth

10.6.2: How an ancient Greek bronze ended up in the Vatican

10.6.3: 5.6.3 -Lysippos, Apoxyomenos (Scraper)

10.6.4: Lysippos, Apoxyomenos (Scraper)

10.6.5: Capitoline Venus (copy of the Aphrodite of Knidos)

10.6.6: The Alexander Sarcophagus

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10.6.1: The Antikythera Youth

by DR. BETH HARRIS and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER



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10.6.2: How an ancient Greek bronze ended up in the Vatican

by BETH HARRIS, DR. STEVEN ZUCKER and DR. BETH HARRIS



Video **10.6.2.1**: Lysippos, Apoxyomenos, Roman marble copy after Greek bronze original dating to c. 300 B.C.E. (Vatican Museums, Rome, Italy)

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10.6.3: 5.6.3 -Lysippos, Apoxyomenos (Scraper)

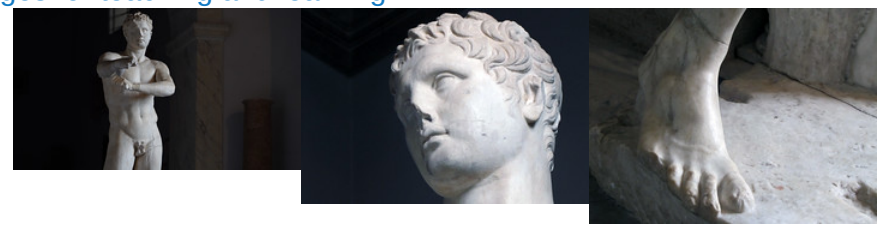
by DR. BETH HARRIS and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER

Ancient Greek athletes cleaned themselves with oil. This sculpture shows one athlete's bathing ritual.

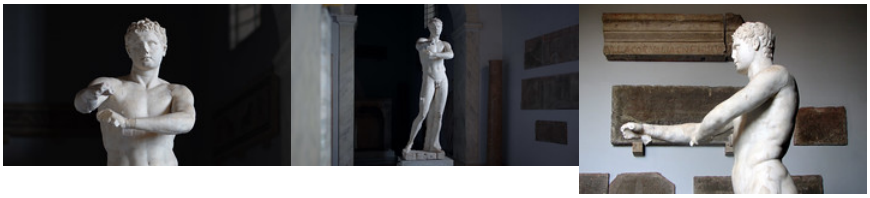


Video **10.6.3.1**: Lysippos, *Apoxyomenos (Scraper)*, Roman copy after a bronze statue from c. 330 B.C.E., 6′ 9″ high (Vatican Museums)

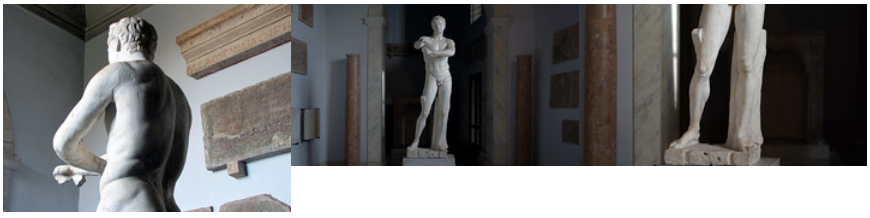
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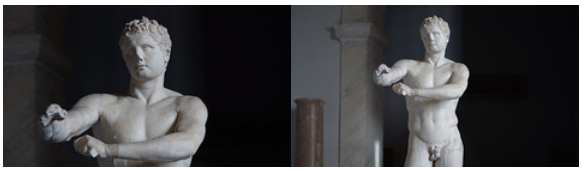
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10.6.4: Lysippos, Apoxyomenos (Scraper)

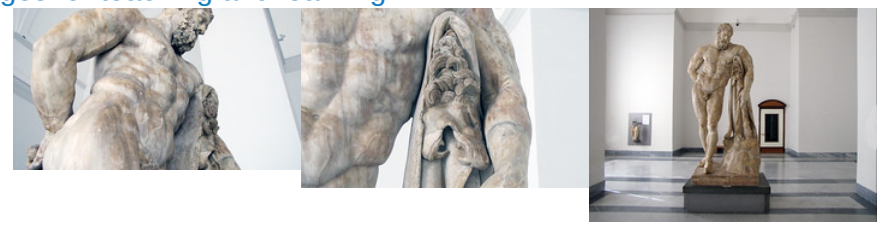
by DR. BETH HARRIS and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER

Weary from his labors, Hercules leans on his club, with hints of his heroic trials hidden in plain sight.

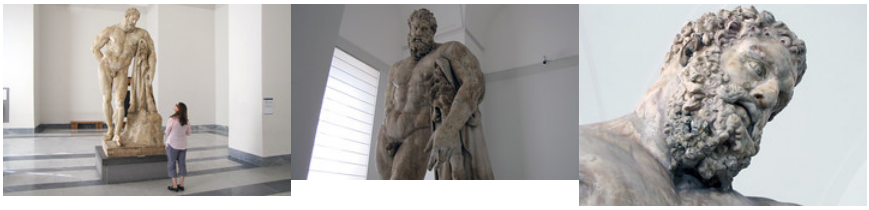


Video **10.6.4.1**: Lysippos, *Farnese Hercules*, 4th century B.C.E. (later Roman copy by Glycon) (Archaeological Museum, Naples)

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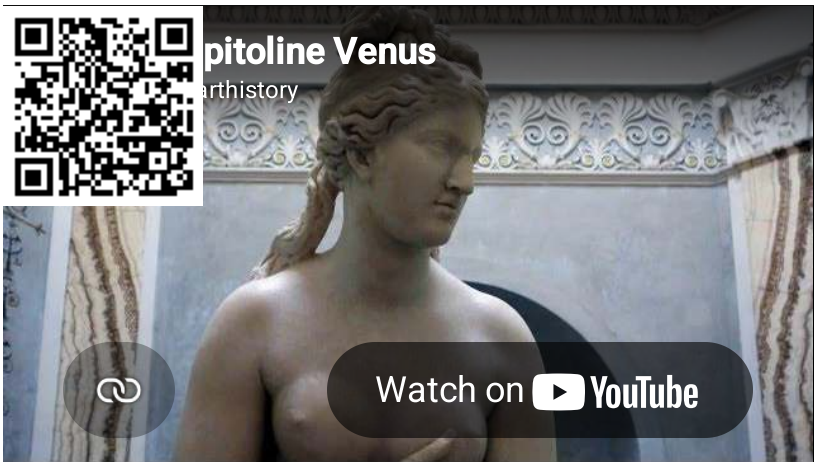
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10.6.5: Capitoline Venus (copy of the Aphrodite of Knidos)

by DR. STEVEN ZUCKER and DR. BETH HARRIS

Aphrodite, goddess of love and beauty, emerges from her bath, but what did her nudity mean to the Greeks?



Video **10.6.5.1**: Capitoline Venus, 2nd century C.E., marble, 193 cm (Capitoline Museums, Rome) (Roman copy of the Aphrodite of Knidos, a 4th century B.C.E. Greek original by Praxiteles) Speakers: Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker

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10.6.6: The Alexander Sarcophagus

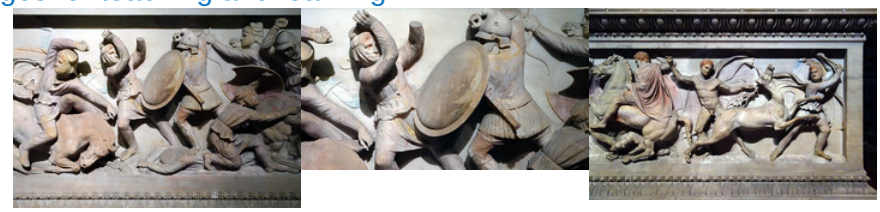
by DR. ELIZABETH MACAULAY-LEWIS and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER

Alexander the Great conquered the known world, but who was this monument for and what does it symbolize?



Video **10.6.6.1**: The Alexander Sarcophagus, c. 312 B.C.E., Pentelic marble and polychromy, found in Sidon, 195 x 318 x 167 cm (İstanbul Archaeological Museums)

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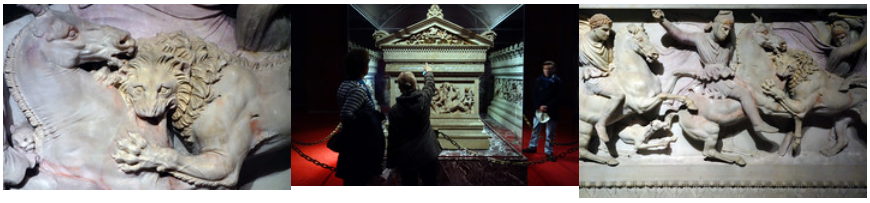
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SECTION OVERVIEW

10.7: Hellenistic

While the classical period focused on idealized figures, Hellenistic artists explored a wider range of subjects — including the wounded and defeated, and the very young and very old. A new interest in drama and engaging the viewer also characterizes this period.

323 - 146 B.C.E.

10.7.1: Barberini Faun

10.7.2: Dying Gaul and Ludovisi Gaul

10.7.3: Bronze statue of Eros sleeping

10.7.4: Nike (Winged Victory) of Samothrace

10.7.5: The Pergamon Altar

10.7.6: Apollonius, Boxer at Rest (or The Seated Boxer)

10.7.7: Alexander Mosaic from the House of the Faun, Pompeii

10.7.8: Athanadoros, Hagesandros, and Polydoros of Rhodes, Laocoön and his Sons

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10.7.1: Barberini Faun

by DR. BETH HARRIS and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER

Part man, part goat, this companion of the god of wine relaxes after a night of drinking.



Video **10.7.1.1**: Barberini Faun, c. 220 B.C.E., Hellenistic Period (Glyptothek, Munich)

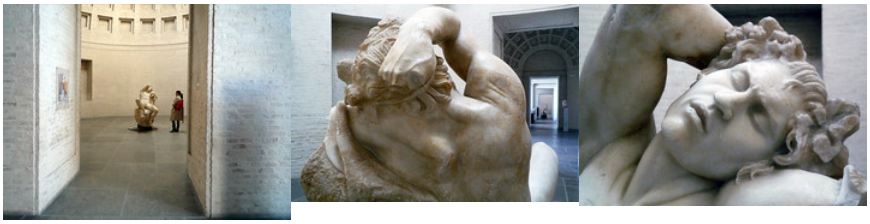
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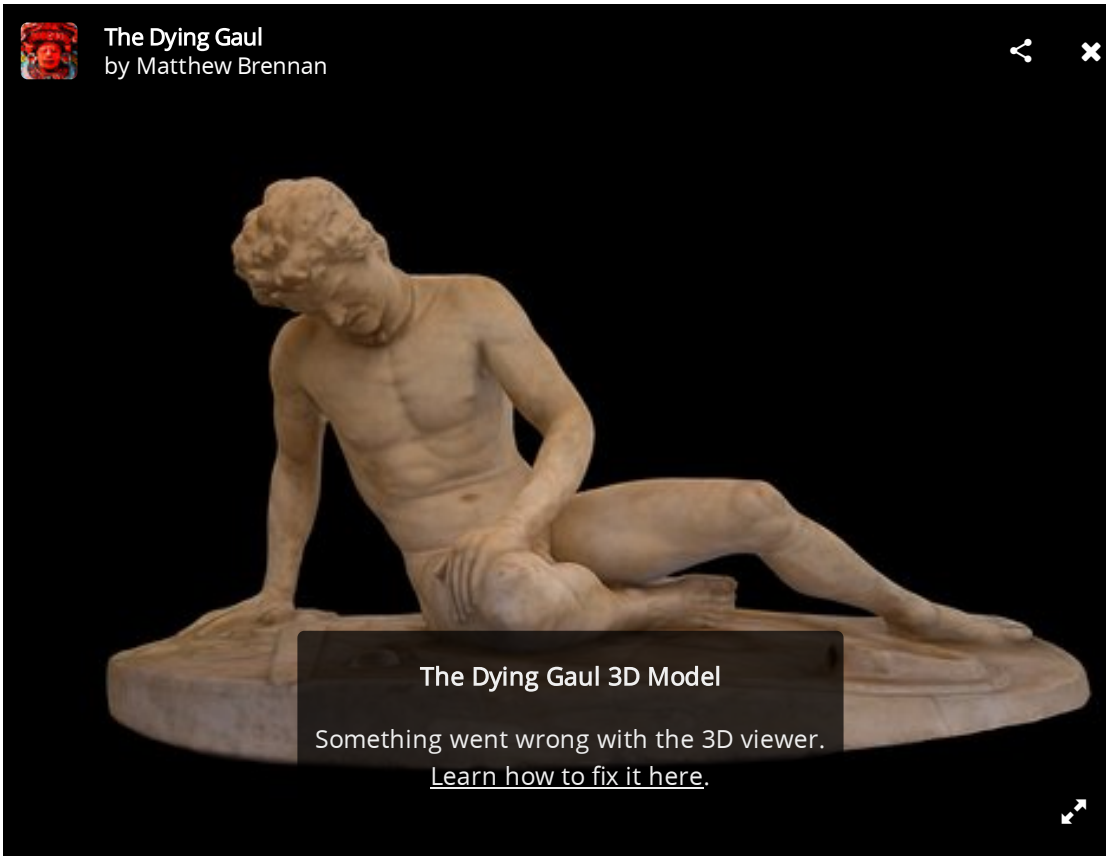
10.7.2: Dying Gaul and Ludovisi Gaul

by DR. STEVEN ZUCKER and DR. BETH HARRIS

Pain is visible on the face of this dying warrior. Did the ancient Greeks sympathize with their defeated enemies?

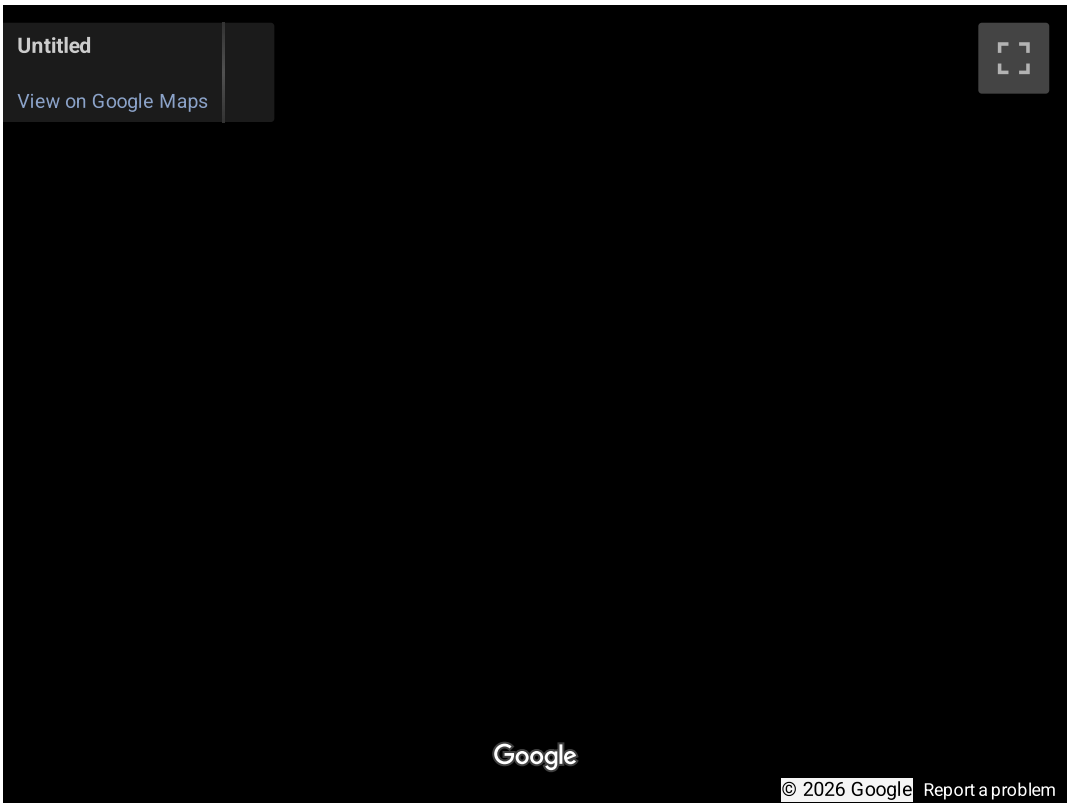


Video **10.7.2.1**: Dying Gaul and the *Gaul killing himself and his wife (The Ludovisi Gaul)*, both 1st or 2nd century C.E. (Roman copies of Third Century B.C.E. Hellenistic bronzes commemorating Pergamon's victory over the Gauls likely from the Sanctuary of Athena at Pergamon), marble, 93 and 211 cm high (Musei Capitolini and Palazzo Altemps, Museo Nazionale Romano, Rome)

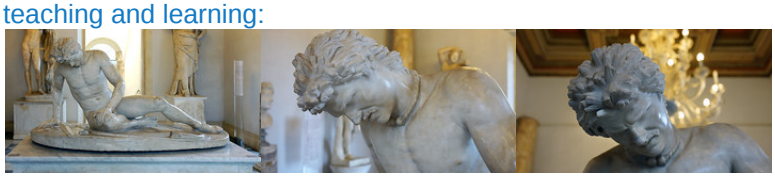


The Dying Gaul by **Matthew Brennan** on **Sketchfab**

Figure **10.7.2.134**



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10.7.3: Bronze statue of Eros sleeping

by THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

Cupid, chubby and quietly sleeping, is a common symbol today … but what did this sculpture mean to ancient Greeks?



Video **10.7.3.1**: Bronze statue of Eros sleeping, 3rd–2nd century B.C.E., bronze, 16 1/2 × 14 × 33 9/16″ / 41.9 × 35.6 × 85.2 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art). Video from **The Metropolitan Museum of Art**.

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10.7.4: Nike (Winged Victory) of Samothrace

by DR. BETH HARRIS and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER

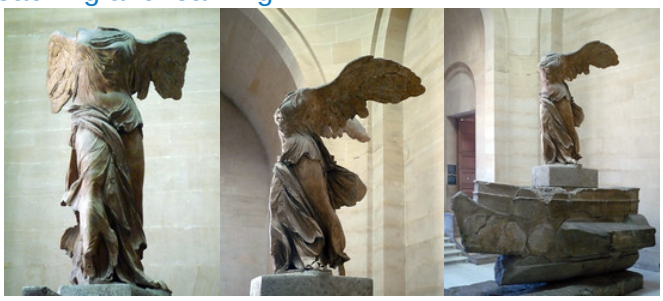
On the island of Samothrace, the wind whipped the clothing of this stone goddess of victory.



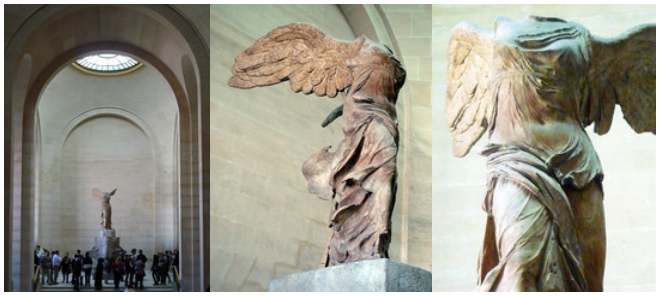
Video **10.7.4.1**: N*ike (Winged Victory) of Samothrace*, Lartos marble (ship) and Parian marble (figure), c. 190 B.C.E. 3.28 m high, Hellenistic Period (Musée du Louvre, Paris)

The sculpture was unearthed in 1863 after its discovery under the direction of Charles Champoiseau, the French Vice-Consul to Turkey. Please note that the theoretical reconstruction of the Nike as a trumpeter mentioned in the video has been largely abandoned; the monument is now thought to have been part of a fountain possibly commemorating a naval victory.

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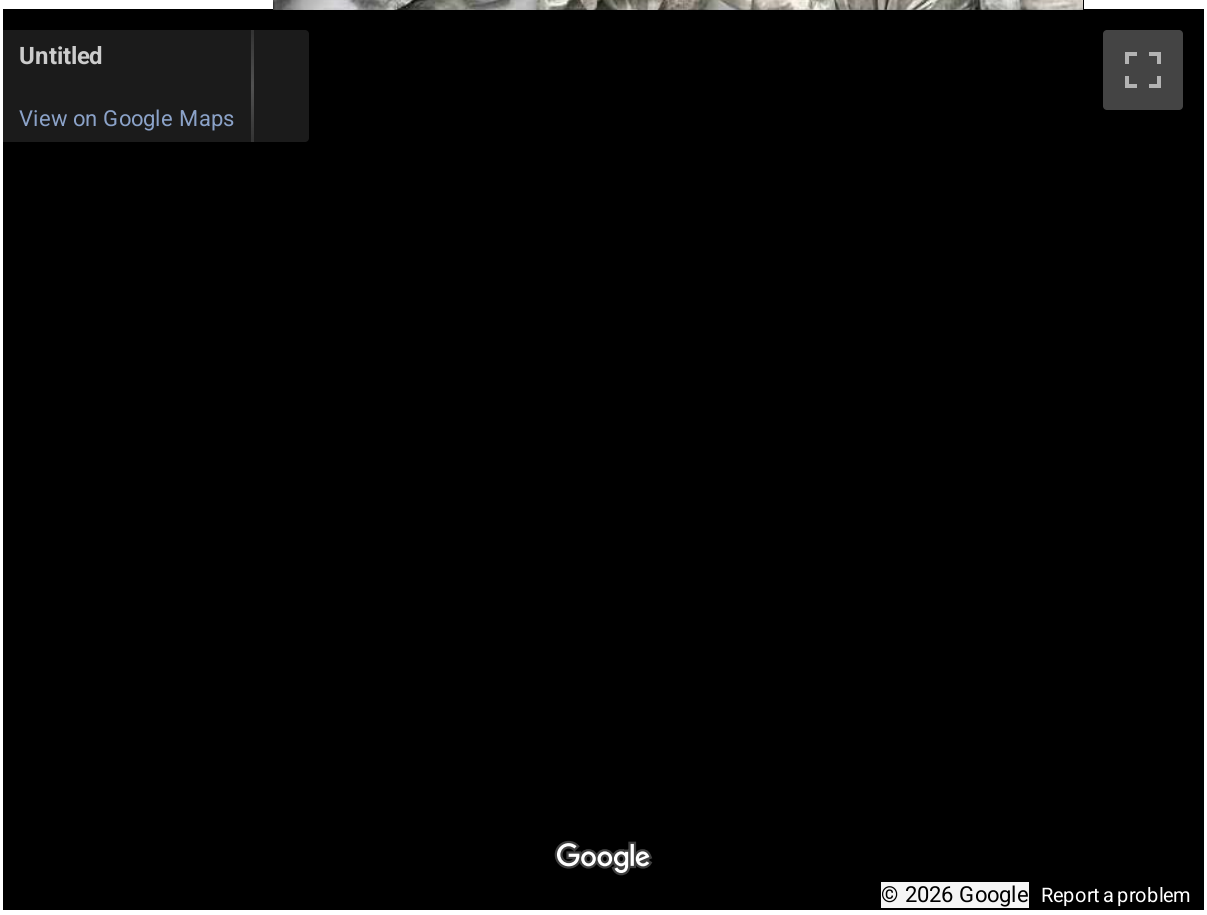
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10.7.5: The Pergamon Altar

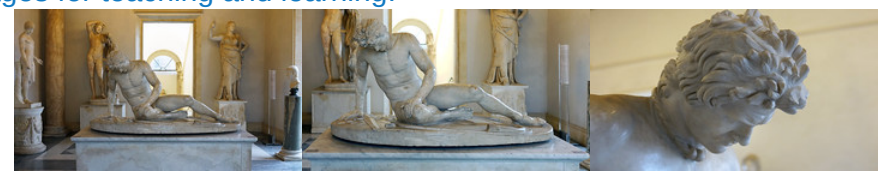
by DR. STEVEN ZUCKER and DR. BETH HARRIS

Greek gods battle Giants for supremacy of the universe, so deeply carved that they almost step out into our world.





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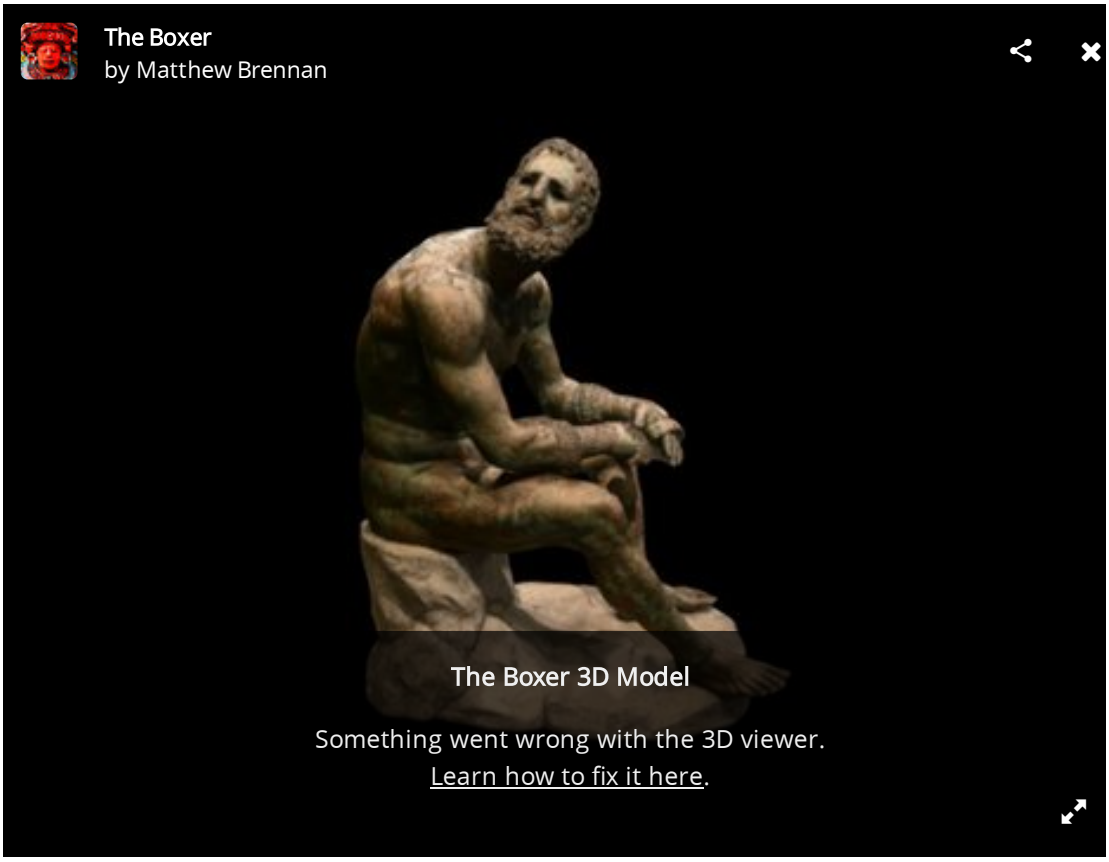
10.7.6: Apollonius, Boxer at Rest (or The Seated Boxer)

by DR. STEVEN ZUCKER and DR. BETH HARRIS

Look closely to see bloody wounds and a lifetime of scars on this defeated athlete.



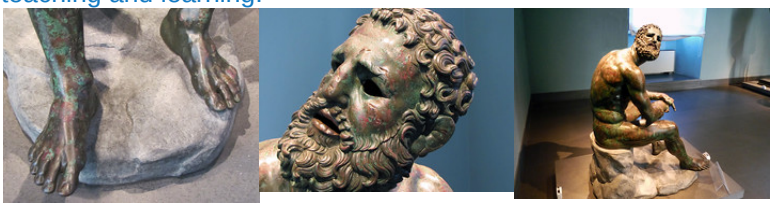
Video **10.7.6.1**: Apollonius, *Boxer at Rest*, c. 100 B.C.E., bronze, Hellenistic Period (Palazzo Massimo, Museo Nazionale Romano, Rome)



The Boxer by **Matthew Brennan** on **Sketchfab**

Figure **10.7.6.138**

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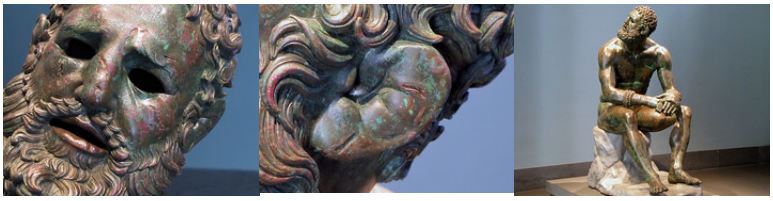
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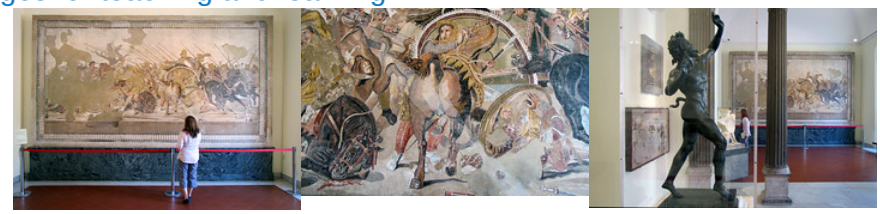
10.7.7: Alexander Mosaic from the House of the Faun, Pompeii

by DR. BETH HARRIS and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER

Sources tell us that painting was the Greek's finest art form: is this a hint at what we're missing?

Video **10.7.7.1**: Alexander Mosaic, c. 100 B.C.E., Roman copy of a lost Greek painting, House of the Faun, Pompeii, c. 315 B.C.E., Hellenistic Period (Archaeological Museum, Naples)

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10.7.8: Athanadoros, Hagesandros, and Polydoros of Rhodes, Laocoön and his Sons

by DR. STEVEN ZUCKER and DR. BETH HARRIS

The writhing agony of the Trojan Laocoon made this Hellenistic masterpiece famous throughout history.



Video **10.7.8.1**: Athanadoros, Hagesandros, and Polydoros of Rhodes, *Laocoön and his Sons*, early first century C.E., marble, 7’10 1/2″ high (Vatican Museums)

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