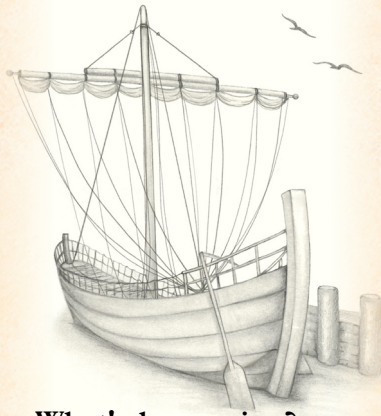




Historically Speaking

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Greek Public Buildings



What's happening?

I have found great difficulty in trying to get solid dates from the ancient Egyptian period I am using in the novel, tentatively titled, AMON. The period is during the reign of Amenhotep IV, who later changed his name to Akhenaten. That period is roughly from 1350ish and beyond. It includes what is known as the Amarna period. I was most fortunate to receive some help on the whole issue from Dr. Julia Smith, Head of the History Department at Eastern Washington University. She has agreed to go over the timeline when I get it done.

Unlike their Minoan and Mycenaean ancestors, the Ancient Greeks did not have royalty, and therefore had no need for palaces. This was why their architecture was devoted to public buildings, such as the temple, including the small circular variant (tholos); the central market place (agora), with its covered colonnade (stoa); the monumental gateway or processional entrance (propylon); the council building (bouleuterion) the open-air theatre; the gymnasium (palaestra); the hippodrome (horse racing); the stadium (athletics); and the monumental tomb (mausoleum). But of all these buildings, it is the temple that best captures the qualities of Greek design.

THE GREEK TEMPLE

Except for the circular tholos, most Greek temples were oblong, roughly twice as long as they were wide. Most were small (30–100 feet long), although a few were more than 300 feet long and 150 feet wide. (For comparison, the dimensions of the Parthenon are 235 feet in length, 109 feet in width.) The typical oblong floor plan incorporated a colonnade of columns (peristyle) on all four sides; a front porch (pronaos), a back porch (opisthodomos). The upper works of the temple usually consisted of mudbrick and wood, except for the upper facade which was usually stone, and designed according to the Order (Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian). Columns were typically carved from limestone, with upper facades usually decorated with marble.

The interior of the Greek temple typically consisted of an inner shrine (cella, or naos) which housed the cult statue, and sometimes one or two antechambers, which were used as storage places for devotees to leave their votive offerings, like money, precious objects, and weapons. 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.

Continued on page two

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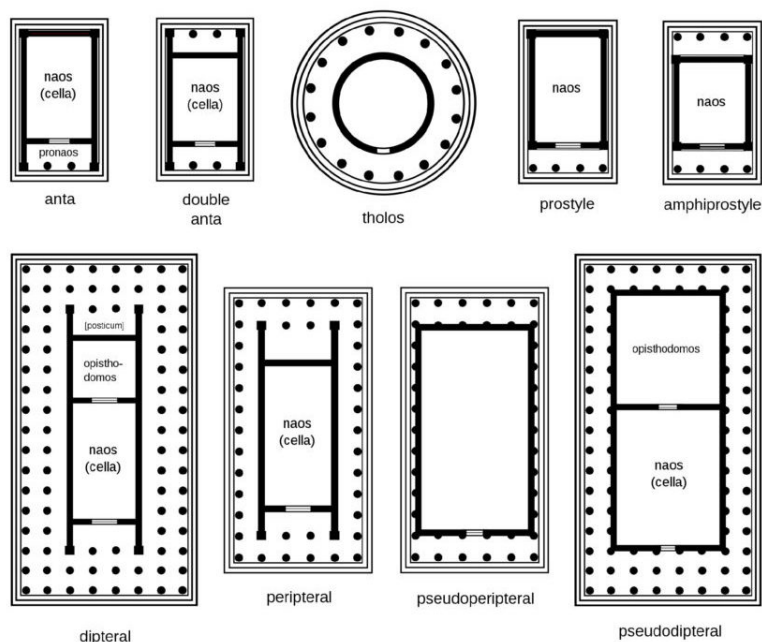
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Temples with a peripteral arrangement have a single line of columns arranged all around the exterior of the temple building. Dipteral temples simply have a double row of columns surrounding the building. One of the more unusual plans is the tholos, 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.

LAYOUT

The layout of the inner shrine, the other chambers (if any) and surrounding columns usually followed one of five basic designs, named as follows. If the entrance to the cella incorporated a pair of columns, the building was known as a “templum in antis”. If the entrance was preceded by a portico of columns across its front, the building was known as a prostyle temple. If in addition to the portico of columns at the front, there was a colonnade of columns at the rear exterior of the cella, the building was known as a amphiprostyle temple. If the colonnade surrounded the entire building, it was known as a peripteral temple. If the colonnade encircling the building comprised a double row of columns, it was known as a dipteral temple.



BASE AND WALLS

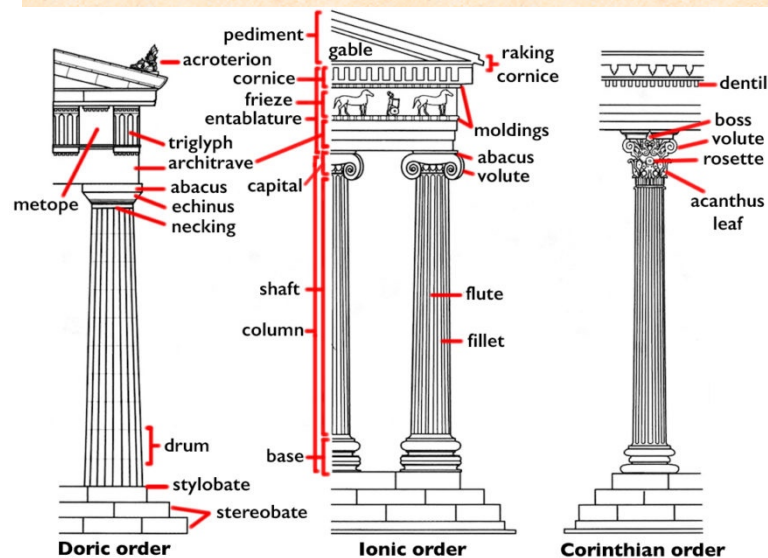
The temple was built on a masonry base (crepidoma), which elevated it above the surrounding ground. The base usually consists of three steps: the topmost step is the “stylobate”; the two lower steps are the “stereobate”. Like the Parthenon, most temples have a three-step base, although the Temple of Zeus at Olympus, has two, while the Temple of Apollo at Didyma has six. During the petrification process (650/600 BCE onwards), temples were given masonry walls, consisting mostly of local stone rubble, sometimes augmented by high quality ashlar masonry. Inside the temple, the inner sanctum (cella/naos) was made of stone, as were the antechambers, if any.

ROOF

All early temples had a flat thatched roof, supported by columns (hypostyle), but as soon as walls were made from stone and could therefore support a heavier load, temples were given a slightly sloping roof, covered with ceramic terracotta tiles. These roof tiles could be up to three-feet long and weigh as much as 80 pounds.

Adapted with some modifications from:

<https://ourhistorybox.wordpress.com/2017/03/22/public-buildings-in-greek-architecture-2/>



from an article by Dr. Jeffrey A. Becker

<https://smarthistory.org/introduction-to-greek-architecture/>