

Architectonics of the Sacred City -
Architecture Urbanism and Sacred Geometry
A Brief Introduction

Architecture is distinguished from building by its public aspect. It is part of a complex human community, the city, whose social structure must go beyond familial relationships. Such relationships between otherwise unrelated people are traditionally built on cosmological models with which everyone can identify. The models are expressed in terms of number and geometry. The form of the city and the design of its component structures are also governed by such models. This presentation reviews some of these models and illustrates their appearance in cities and architectural designs past and present.

The human wisdom tradition, the 'big story', may be said to answer three questions - where did we come from, where are we going, and in that context, what do we do next. In this presentation we'll look at the Pythagorean and Platonic version of this big story in the context of early human history.

During the Paleolithic era people lived in sanguinal, blood related, groups. To accept someone as fully human in a sanguinal group you must see their birth or know that you have a common ancestor. When strangers are met they must recount their lineages. If no common ancestor is found trouble may ensue including violence, ritual sacrifice, even cannibalism.

The sanguinal group makes a cyclic movement, a round, during the course of the year, following food sources. It is a way of life not completely separate from nature. This early society had no specialization. Anything that needed to be done could be done by any group member. It was led, to the extent necessary, by a charismatic leader, a big man or woman who could only exert leadership in person. People in this mode of life construct shelters and communal layouts that are round in plan.

The spiritual mode of the Paleolithic is shamanism. In this method a person enters a trance state and makes a journey of consciousness. The late paleolithic manifestation of this mode is the Afro-Eurasian cave art. A civilized version is Plato's 'Myth of Er' in the Republic. Envisioning cosmology is part of shamanic experience.

Though early people hunted, plants were their primary food sources. Over time, people begin to 'encourage' certain plants, using water distribution and breeding. The plants are not eaten at any time but only the seeds, the reproductive function, is eaten at a certain phase in the plant's lifecycle. This life cycle of the plants becomes comprehensible to people when a connection is made between above and below; using the cyclic movement of the stars and planets as a guide and analog to the plant's lifecycle.

As the encouragement continues people begin to remain at or near the site of the food source, breaking the continuity of the 'round'. At this point dwellings and layout patterns begin to rectangularize. This represents an attunement to the four-fold movement of the

sun derived from its rising and setting points during the course of the year. monumental construction begins in relation to astronomical observation; chamber and passage

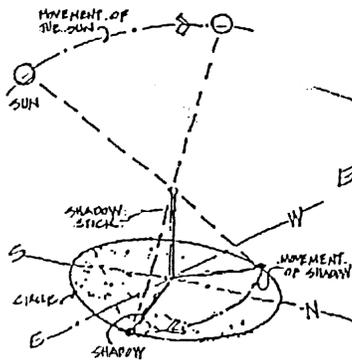


Figure 8 a
Sun and shadow
Monad becomes Dyad

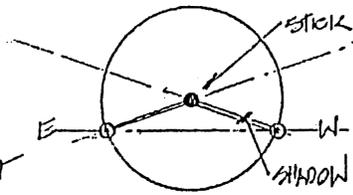


Figure 8 b
East-West axis
The Triad

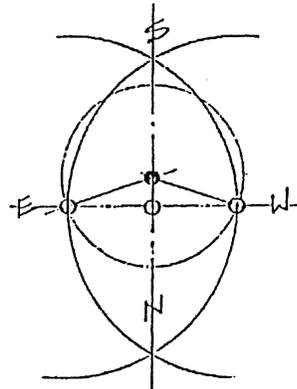


Figure 8 c
North-South axis
The Tetrad

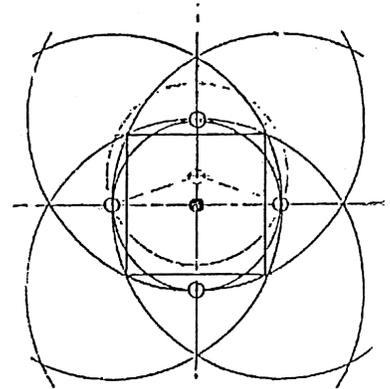


Figure 8 d
Square and Circle

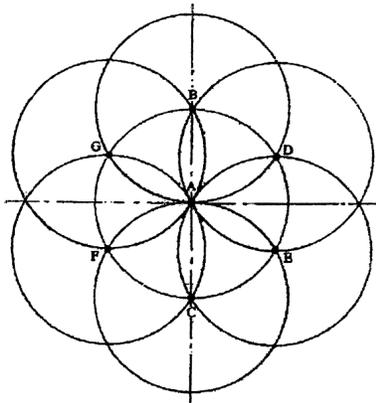
The Four-fold Power and the Movements of the Sun

monuments and stone circles begin as natural caves and horizon events.

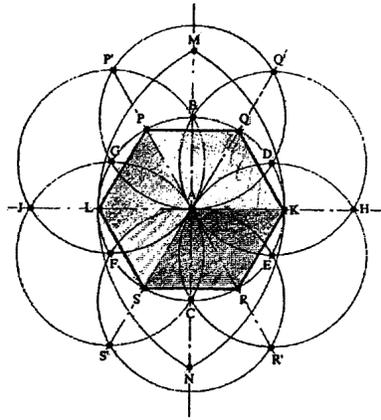
As the food surplus builds up population increases; society begins to differentiate into hierarchical levels and social institutions begin to emerge. when you have a surplus you have to store it, guard it and distribute it. The defense of the surplus generates the army. The big man becomes the king and his family aristocrats. - the shaman becomes the doctor and the priest - the shamanic experience becomes the written myth - farm and city emerge together, people no longer migrate but are fixed

Civilization means 'life in the city'. The challenge of civilization is governance of non sanguinal groups living next to each other in the city. They are united in the governing myth - the noble lie. It's the answer to the question: 'How do you get non-sanguinally related groups to work together in the limited urban environment without them killing and eating each other?' The myth that is offered is that of a common divine ancestor who is identified with the patterns of the stars and planets. The myth creates a 'sense of unity' among otherwise unrelated groups. This same theme applies to the visual arts insofar as they support civilization. The physical backdrop to support and contain the civilized project and myth of origin is art, architecture and urban design.

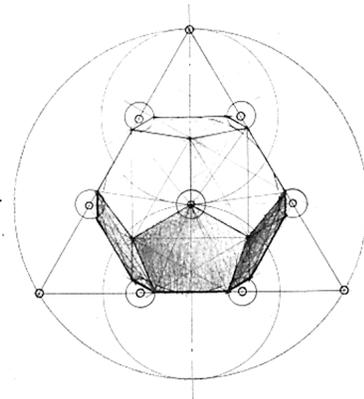
Order is brought out of the chaos of the sky by the application of geometry - especially the natural unfolding of the three-fold power into the six-fold flower from which the twelve-fold division of the sky is made. Early society is often divided into twelve tribes or clans. Various constellations are identified with divine ancestors. The planet Venus, often associated with the beautiful, describes a five-fold movement in its journey through the zodiac. Over time such geometries take on a sacred character.



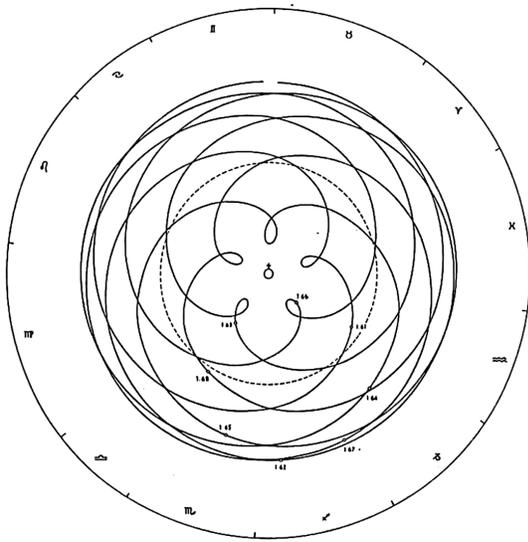
The Three and Six-Fold Powers



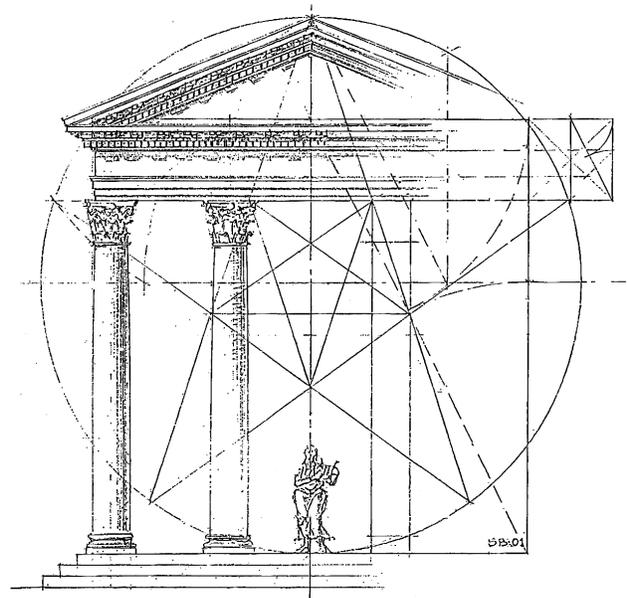
The Three-fold Power Gives Rise to the Four-fold Power



Emergence of the Five-fold Power



Geocentric Orbit of Venus



Classical Portico Based on the Five-fold Power

The presentation will look at several ideal and actual prehistoric and ancient cities; including the elements of ancient and medieval architecture. We'll see how the three, four and five-fold creative powers of sacred geometry shape the physical structure of civilization. Examples will be from Egypt, Greece, Rome, Medieval Europe and the Italian Renaissance.