THE ERECHTHEUM OF THE ATHENIAN ACROPOLIS

A SACRED SPACE

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by
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION AND THESIS

Ancient Greeks and their ancestors, like most cultures of prehistory, sought to make sacred their surroundings in an effort to control their existence via the creation of a site and a vehicle of return, spiritually and physically, to a time of communion and interaction between the gods | creators and man. The physical results of these spiritual desires were evident in the choices of sites for sacred and domestic structures, their orientation, and even the composition of the buildings and altars. Few places on this earth embodied this saturation of spirit into a site, structure and sculpture more than the ancient remains of the Greek Athenian Acropolis and, more specifically, the Erechtheum. Widely accepted bodies of research have concluded that the Peloponnesian peninsula, and the Athenian Acropolis, have been inhabited by Greek speaking tribes who migrated southward from Anatolia around 6000 B.C.E. However, most researchers admit that no exact date or period can be pinpointed as to when the transformation from profane space to sacred space took place or when the shift from the matriarchal to patriarchal deities occurred. Many researchers and scholars do agree that while the earliest structures were habitats and fortifications, they were also sacred sites of ritual and worship, and the deities were distinctly female.

The Acropolis, as a peak sanctuary and later home of some of the most sacred structures of our time, presented a unique collection of challenges when attempting to prove an exact

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moment of transition from profane to sacred and from female to male. Widely accepted research established that the Athenian Acropolis of the Mycenaean period was a fortification and a place of residence in the form of a modest palace located east of the north porch of the Classical Erechtheum, not a sacred site. However, Bogdan Rutkowski defined a cult place or sanctuary through the identification of three things: places, ritual, and belief. If the case can be made that even the Mycenaean residence met this criteria then the conclusion can be reached that the Acropolis was and is a continual sacred space.²

Archaeological evidence confirmed that the Athenian Acropolis has been occupied since Neolithic and Mycenaean times. That same evidence also confirmed that the Erectheum was the specific site of this continuous presence and the complexes of structures, even the Mycenaean palace, have been sacred in nature. This research will discuss and confirm that the structure of the Erechtheum was the physical connection between the Athenians, their heritage, and their connection to the gods via their claim as descendents of Erechtheus and Athena. While the Erectheum was shrouded in mystery, it was quite clear that the mythology of the Hellenes dictated the site, orientation, floor plan, architectural detail, and sculpture. This was a distinctly feminine building dedicated to both King Erechtheus and Athena and illustrated the transition from ancient matriarchal power to the patriarchal spiritual and political rule of fifth century B.C.E. Athens.

CHAPTER 2
THE ATHENIAN BASIN AND ACROPOLIS AS SACRED GEOGRAPHY

The Athenian Acropolis was arguably the most consistently inhabited and successfully maintained peak of the Attic plain but it certainly did not gain that distinction via geographical statistics. Many peaks of the Athenian Basin were higher and possessed more impressive and severe edifices as well as topography more conducive to architecture. Modern priorities are not the same as ancient priorities and the Athenian Acropolis must be analyzed with an ancient eye for function and spirituality as well as the relationship of the peak to the landscape of Attica.

The Athenian Basin as Sacred Form

The architectural historian, Vincent Scully, vehemently believed that it was the relationship of the Acropolis to the surrounding Athenian landscape and the ancient Greek's ability to recognize the sacred landscape that rendered the structures on the rock sacred before the first altar was erected or the first foundation was laid. Again, the Erechtheum and its predecessors, the Mycenaean Megaron and the palace of Erechtheus, serve as examples of structures which left the topography of the crest unaltered primarily to preserve the sacred tokens of the trident mark, the spring and the olive tree. Truly, Scully said it best.

"...the historic Greeks partly inherited and partly developed an eye for certain surprisingly specific combinations of landscape features as expressive of particular holiness. This came about because of a religious tradition in which the land was not a picture but a true force which physically embodied the powers that ruled the world, and although it may be objected that some of the landscape forms I shall define as holy are

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3 Mt. Lykabettos, located approximately 2 kilometers northeast of the Acropolis, is 277 meters (909 feet) above sea level. This was almost twice as high as the Athenian Acropolis. Jeffrey M. Hurwit, *The Athenian Acropolis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) 4.
common in Greece, still temples are many also, and their consistent appearance in relation to sacred forms in question is never coincidental.⁴

The terrain of the Greek peninsula boasts many famous landscape districts, i.e., Attica, Eleusis, Boeotia, Corinth, and Arcadia, all of which were nestled in a bowl or basin and were surrounded by mountains of moderate size or a sea full of islands. The seasons also affected the color and atmospheric perspective of the landscape at any given time. The human was never intimidated nor left forlorn in a Greek landscape.⁵ Likewise, Greek architecture never intimidated but related to its human participants both in proportion, iconography and attitude. Pythagoreans, a fifth century Greek philosopher, codified the Greek attitude toward the union of landscape and architecture with his statement, “Man is the measure of all things.”

The Greek landscape of these basins allowed its inhabitants to approach its forms from a human point of view, through rolling picturesque valleys and peaks. These rolling peaks and valleys created a natural labyrinth leading to the sanctuary. Often when viewing Greek places of worship, the choice of orientation and site was not logical by modern standards. From approximately 2000 B.C.E. onwards, a clear formula for choosing a site emerged, and it was Mycenaean in origin.⁶ First, an enclosed valley was the choice for the palace or temple, Scully

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⁶ It was during the beginning of the sixteenth century B.C.E. that the Minoan culture of Crete made its first appearance on the Greek mainland. Conflict on the Greek mainland was most likely the reason for their emergence at the time. They were not a warring people but were wonderful sailors and they would have carried the Mycenaean warriors on their ships from Egypt
refers to this landform as the "Natural Megaron" and Greece had a plethora of these valleys.

Second, the structure should be oriented along a north-south axis in relationship to a gentle mound or conical shape visible in the distant landscape. Finally, just past the mound and still on the north-south axis, a double-peaked or cleft mountain should be viewable from the structure. While there were often variations of the surrounding clefts and mounds, it was the double peaks that were essential. These peaks created the conical horns that appeared as raised arms or wings with the female cleft, or breasts. The viewer should be able to perceive a reclining woman, Mother Earth or Mons Verneris, formed by the Grecian landscape (Figures 1 & 2). The focal point becomes the female cleft, our point of origin, and the horns/cones a symbol of active power.⁸


⁷ Scully noted that the Cretan palaces of the Stone and Bronze ages set a precedent for this type of palace orientation along a north or south axis to the landscape forms. The iconic symbols of the earth goddess, and the labyrinth and the horns, were duly documented in the art and religion of the Near East and Crete. Both concepts were fully defended in the work of; G. R. Levy, *The Gate of Horn, a study of the religious conceptions of the stone age, and their influence upon European thought* (London: 1948)⁸

⁸ Scully, 11.
Attica, specifically the Athenian Basin, claimed all of the sacred female forms in the mountain ranges surrounding the basin. Mount Hymettos was the primary sacred form that dominated this region and it peaked into a sharp and widespread pair of horns. As one ascended the Athenian Acropolis and approached the ruins of the Temple of Athena Polias, the temple was aligned between the two horns. Beneath the horns were the rolling conical foothills of Hymettos that created the reclining woman easily visible from the temple of Athena. Assuming that the foundations of the Palace of Erechtheus were the same as the temple of Athena Polias, and the two bases now on the site were the stone bases for Mycenaean wooden columns of the Greek chieftain’s megaron, the view from the Acropolis toward Mt. Hymettos cradled the Acropolis in the bosom of the great Earth Goddess\(^9\) (*Figure 3*).


The phallic symbols of the landscape were also quite evident and more noteworthy to later architects and philosophers. Lycabettos, located southeast of the Acropolis and east of Hymettos, was intimately connected and often disturbing to the Athenians. In fact, they invented the myth that Athena dropped the jagged peak in its current locale accidentally when she heard

of the defiance of the Cecropidae. Later, in the fifth century, the placement of the Erechtheum balanced the complex atop the Acropolis and completed the picturesque view between the sacred female forms and the phallic Lycabettos. Ironically, it was the placement and orientation of the Erechtheum that also drew attention to the naked and imposing peak of Lycabettos and accentuated the tension between the earth and sky deities. \(^{10}\)

**The Rock of the Acropolis**

The triangular Athenian basin consisted of a soft schist, sandstone and marl, from which the fractured bluish gray limestone of the Athenian Acropolis jutted upward to a height of 156.63 meters (514 feet). Over the centuries, the surface was highly polished by human feet to the point in which it almost appeared as a crystalline marble with deep blood-red streaks of marl and calcite. This appearance was deceiving since the upper most surface was indeed limestone and not marble. The Athenian Acropolis did not boast the grey and white marble of Mount Hymettos or the pristine white marble of Mount Petelikon.\(^{11}\) However, by the end of the fifth Century tons of the white and grey stone found its way to the peak of the Acropolis in the form of architectural stone monuments and stairways.

Limestone, while hard, was also porous and water soluble, but the schist and sandstone combination just beneath the limestone was not. Consequently, water flowed through the limestone via its porous texture and deep fissures and was collected between the two layers. Centuries of water erosion created a series of caves and rock outcroppings, most of which

\(^{10}\) Scully, 92 & 182.

\(^{11}\) The same tectonic forces that produced the mountain peaks of Attica created the Alpine system that stretches from Gibraltar to the Middle East. Essentially Greece and its surrounding Islands were a series of mountaintops peaking above the Aegean Sea, which have remained seismically active in modern times. Hurwitt, 4-5.
-contained fresh water springs. These springs provided the much needed water source for the early inhabitants of the Acropolis as well as legendary sacred spaces of Pan, Zeus & Apollo.  

(Figure 4)

Figure 4. “Northwest slope of Athenian Acropolis. The caves marking the slope were sacred to Apollo Pythios? Hypoalgorithm (Under the Long Rocks) Zeus Olympios, and Pan.” Illustrated in Jeffrey M. Hurwit, the Athenian Acropolis. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 10.

The battle between Athena and Poseidon for patronage of Athens was and is legendary and the topography of the Acropolis provided tangible visual evidence of the friction between the female and male deities of the earliest Greeks and the Mycenaean’s. Euripides explained that in a moment of rage Poseidon rode in on a storm surge and struck the Acropolis with his trident, leaving his mark for all eternity in the stone. In Euripides’s version, this violent act caused a large chasm in which the rock split and broke off an enormous boulder that subsided into a tilted position.  

Ironically the “salt sea” well attributed to Poseidon’s temper in most classic Greek mythology was originally Aphrodite’s iconography and was referred to as a “salt pool.”  

The female version of the origins of the well were more characteristic of a Neolithic period of

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12 Hurwit, 6-7.
13 Jeppesen, Kristian, *The Theory of the Alternative Erechtheion* (Denmark: Aarhus University Press, 198) 13. More prevalent versions of this myth ends with a creation of a salt water well which is not favored by the Athenians and costs Poseidon to lose his battle for patronage of Athens to Athena in favor of her gift, the olive tree. 13-17.
14 Scully, 183.
farming in which the cults of Mother Earth and fertility were closely associated with the discovery of agriculture."^{15}

The position of the rock created a fissure that conveniently provided the Mycenaean’s with a much needed water source during times of siege. These ancient Greeks constructed an intricate system of stairways composed of natural rock formations and timber that allowed them to retrieve water from the well beneath the Cyclopean wall completely protected by the natural fissure. Archaeological evidence existed in the form of pottery sherds found at the bottom of the well that dated the structure to approximately 1200 B.C.E."^{16}

The geological explanation for the existence of the Athenian Acropolis as the limestone result of colliding tectonic plates subject to continual seismic and erosive activity over thousands of years does not begin to explain the spiritual significance of this outcropping. It represents the very origins of human kind and the quest for order out of chaos. According to Greek legend the grottos, caves, and springs were the source of human origin and the source of creation."^{17} Mircea Eliade explained this relationship of water, trees, mountain, and grotto as an entire complex that embodied the “perfect place,” a source of bliss and immortality."^{18} These original creation myths were distinctly female and connected to Mother Earth, the Earth Goddess, also known as Terra Mater. As the ancient Greeks journeyed up the steep slopes of the Acropolis the struggle for control between the Earth Mother and the Sky Father began. The Erechtheum, built on ancient foundations, physically housed the emblems of the struggle between the female Athena and male Poseidon; the trident and the olive tree.

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^{16} Marintos, 86.
^{17} Rutkowski, 1.
^{18} Eliade, 153.
Orientation of Structures

The Athenian Acropolis, like many other mainland Greek sites, does not adhere to the strict north-south orientation of Minoan temples and palaces in relationship to the landscape and the sacred forms. The Temple of Athena Polias, the Parthenon, the Temple of Athena Nike, the Propylea, and even the fifth century Erechtheum were all oriented toward the east. This east – west orientation illustrated the increasing importance of the sky deities to the Athenians during the fifth century and the friction between the celestial and earth gods. Festivals were a vital aspect of the sacred Acropolis and it was critical for the temples to orient to the rising and setting sun. The mainland Greeks appear to have been more flexible with the north – south orientation than the Minoans. For example, in the case of the Athenian Acropolis, the topography of the peak was more conducive to the east – west orientation so the sacred form of Mt. Hymettos could still be seen from the eastern porticos.\(^{19}\) However, let it be noted that the most feminine façade of the Acropolis, The Porch of the Maidens of the classical Erechtheum, defiantly looks to the southern landscape, illustrating the connection this structure had to the ancient female in defiance of the increasingly dominant male gods.

Open altar placement on the Acropolis also followed certain orientation rules in relationship to the sunrise and the sacred landscape forms. The altars were placed in a position to view the landscape in relationship to the ritual and the sky. Many peak sanctuaries, Athens included, placed the altar between the temple and the landscape, which positioned the worshiper between the two. The east – west orientation of the temples also created a continuous line of sight from the worshiper and traveled past the temple and on toward the sacred landscape.

\(^{19}\) Scully, 43-45.
forms.\textsuperscript{20} Again, it was the Erechtheum, via its unique and seemingly illogical floor plan, that appeased the struggle between the male and female, the celestial and the earthly.

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 43-45
CHAPTER 3
THE PALACE OF ERECHTHEUS AND THE MYCENAEAN MEGARON –
SACRED SPACES

It was the Mycenaean Megaron, the elusive predecessor of the Erechtheum, that offered
the greatest challenge to the assertion that the Athenian Acropolis, this site specifically, was
always a sacred citadel. The argument has been made that the choice of the Athenian Acropolis
over more auspicious locations for habitation, fortification, and worship was due to the sacred
forms of the landscape surrounding the rock and the connection to the female earth goddesses.
The Earth, the Rock and the Sky created the sacred complex or peak sanctuary. These efforts of
persuasion have been made in vain if we cannot define the activities of the megaron as ritualistic,
even religious in nature.

Bogdan Rutowski’s classification of the ‘cult place’ made an impressive argument for the
identification of the megaron as a sacred space. Rutowski contends that the various types of cult
spaces can be divided into two groups. The first category consists of those spaces outside the
built-up areas, those are; caves, peak sanctuaries, sacred enclosures, and spring sanctuaries. The
second category included those inside of settlements; those were, temples, domestic and palace
sanctuaries, altars, lustral basins, spring sanctuaries and tremenae in town squares, and
courtyards. Rutkowski further explained that the ‘cult space’ involved three aspects: places,
rituals and belief. The megaron, or palace of the first king of Athens, Erechtheus, can be
classified as both category one; a peak sanctuary, and category two; a domestic and palace
sanctuary.


21 Rutkowski, xix.
The Archaeological Evidence – The Megaron

The most daunting obstacle to the study and research of the megaron of the Athenian Acropolis was the lack of substantial archaeological evidence that it ever existed. The findings were scant, but just revealing enough to suggest a thriving Mycenaean community similar to Mycenae and Tiryns. 22 The Athenian artifacts consisted of: a massive cyclopean wall fortification located near the Propylea, the underground Mycenaean spring with its innovative stairway access, the possible remains of a palace (Palace of Erechtheus), scattered house walls along the south side of the Acropolis, and remains of a domestic structure from the north slope of the Acropolis just outside the fortification wall 23 (figure 5). Hurwit observed that the success of the Athenian Acropolis in many ways was a curse for historians. Thousands of years of demolition, clearing, and rebuilding of the rock yielded scant artifacts and obscured the ancient story of the Acropolis. 24

22 Dr. Heinrich Schliemann, in collaboration with Wilhelm Dorpfeld, is responsible for the two greatest and lucrative discoveries of ancient Aegean civilizations; Troy, and Mycenae. Schliemann’s dogged pursuit of the Homeric legend of Troy in the face of learned skepticism that it existed outside of the stories of the Iliad and Odyssey, rewrote ancient Aegean history and opened the flood gates for further exploration of sites mentioned in Homer’s epochs. The discoveries of Minoan Crete by Sir Arthur Evans and more recent excavations of the Cycladic culture Thera would not have been possible without the Schliemann’s enlightenment of the “truths” of Homer’s writings. Most of the references to Schliemann’s discoveries referenced in this research originally appeared in his own work, Schliemann’s Excavations: An Archaeological and Historical Study in 1891.


24 Hurwit, 68.
The most significant remains relevant to the discussion of the Athenian Megaron were the stone bases, which were presumably the bases for the wooden columns of the ancient Acropolis Megaron belonging to the early Greek chieftain.\textsuperscript{25} A large column base made of local blue acropolis stone found east of the later Erechtheum further proved the assumed purpose of the stone foundations.\textsuperscript{26} Aside from the previously mentioned cyclopean wall and Mycenaean spring, Mycenaean chamber tombs have been located in the area of the later Athenian Agora that reveal a possible belief system and, at the very least, ritual behavior. The existence of these artifacts and sites imply a thriving community that existed during a tumultuous time in Greek history in which walled fortification was necessary, as well as a protected water source that was accessible from the Acropolis.\textsuperscript{27} A small fertility figure found in the sanctuary of Demeter and Kore in 1938 revealed ritual behavior and the continued influence of the female earth deities.\textsuperscript{28}

\textit{(figure 6)} Most archaeologists intimately involved with the Acropolis and its history accepted the

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{25} Scully, 28.
  \item \textsuperscript{26} Shear, 429.
  \item \textsuperscript{27} Ibid., 348.
  \item \textsuperscript{28} Hurwit, 68.
\end{itemize}
theory that a megaron existed on the Athenian rock. We can also extrapolate from Homer’s writing that indeed the megaron was the palace of the heroic first king of Athens, Erechtheus.

“At this the grey-eyed goddess Athena left him
And left that comely land, going over sea
To Marathon, to the wide roadway of Athens
And her retreat in the stronghold of Erechtheus”29

Even Herodotus referred to, “the megaron, which faces west.” It was an acceptable “given” that none of the temples of the Acropolis faced west. The Mycenaean structure was roughly located on or near the site of the Temple of Athena Polias and the classical Erechtheum30 (figure 7). Herodotus’s description such a structure seemed to support the existence of the ancient megaron.

Figure 6. Neolithic figurine from area of Eleusinion, 6,000-5,000 B.C.E, Agora Museum S 1097. Illustrated in Jeffrey M. Hurwit, The Athenian Acropolis, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999) 68.

Figure 7. Plan of the Late Bronze Age (Mycenaean) Acropolis. By I. Gelbrich. Illustrated in Jeffrey M. Hurwit, the Athenian Acropolis, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 69.

30 Jeppesen, 38.
Sacred or Profane

Places

The placement of the Mycenaean Megaron on the Acropolis, a peak sanctuary, by its designer consecrated it as sacred. However, it can be argued that due to the defendable nature of the Acropolis and the availability of a fresh water source, this site choice was simply logical and economical; not the least bit spiritual. Remember, Herodotus noted that the megaron of the Acropolis faced west, an orientation not considered acceptable by Minoan standards and more male than female with respect to the deities due to the celestial orientation skyward. However, the sacred landscape forms of the Athenian Acropolis were oriented east to west with the cones of Hymettos to the east of the rock. It was quite probable that this was a conscious choice made to create a sacred complex uniting earth, sky, and even the underworld.

Mircea Eliade, author of The Sacred and the Profane, distinguished the structure as sacred, an imago mundi, by its simple creation around a central point or altar/hearth by a religious human. The hearth rimmed by columns became the center of the structure, or axis mundi, that connected sky, earth, and underworld, and the rest was built from this symbolic center of the world. From Eliade’s point of view, the location of the structure on the Acropolis and its east – west orientation was inconsequential. He contended that the creation of space was the same as the consecration of space and the structure or habitation became the imago mundi, or the representation of the cosmos on the ground, of order. Humans always strive toward order (sacred) and away from chaos (profane); in fact, human beings cannot live in chaos.\(^1\) Eliade stated that,

\(^{31}\) Eliade, 32.
“...cosmic symbolism is found in the very structure of the habitation. The house is an imago mundi. The sky is conceived as a vast tent supported by a central pillar; the tent pole or the central post of the house is assimilated to the Pillars of the World...”

The construction of the dwelling was an act of cosmicization of an unknown territory of space. The cosmicization was and is always a consecration. Eliade summarized this argument in his statement that, “...to organize a space is to repeat the paradigmatic work of the gods.” Quite simply, the place, or space, was sacred.

The courtyards of Myenaean palaces were traditionally used for rituals and festivals; this complex would have been no different. There was strong literary evidence that the legendary cult statue of Athena Polias emerged at this time. It may have been a simple olive woodcarving of Athena that was brought out on feast days, dressed and displayed. The origins of the icon were unknown, but historians have established that the cult statue of Athena existed and it continuously inhabited several temples on the north side of the Acropolis, including the Temple of Athena Polias and the Erectheum. Legend credited King Erechtheus or Cecrops with the carving of the piece. Any temple, which housed the statue, was referred to as “The temple on the Acropolis in which the ancient image is.”

Beliefs – Rituals and Altars

Evidence of beliefs or a belief system during the Mycenaeans, or Neolithic period, on the Greek Acropolis was much easier to produce than for “places” or “rituals.” The early Athenians worshiped and believed in the great female earth deities and placed their structures, specifically

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32 Ibid., 53.
33 Ibid., 32.
34 Hurwit, 74
masculine than in previous eras. It was only fitting that it was on this site, the site of Erechtheus's conception, that the Classical Erectheum temple would become the visual representation of this epic tug of war between the earth mother and sky father.

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39 The myth of the conception and birth of Erechtheus was so creative that Athena became a mother; yet, remained a virgin. As the legend goes, Athena commissioned armor from Hephaestus who tried to rape her when she entered his smithy Athena successfully warded off Hephaestus's advances but in the struggle he ejaculated on her thigh. Athena quickly wiped her leg with a piece of wool, which she threw to the ground near Athens. Hephaestus's seed fertilized Mother Earth, Gaia, who refused to raise the child, a boy. Athena took the child, Erechtheus, and gave him to his half sister, Aglauros; the eldest daughter of the Athenian King Cecrops and Mother Earth. Later, after Aglauros's self sacrificing death, Athena raised Erechtheus lovingly as her son. Robert Graves, The Greek Myths (Mt. Kisco, New York: Moyer Bell Ltd., 1988), 96-98.
CHAPTER 4
THE TEMPLE OF ATHENA POLIAS

"THE TEMPLE ON THE ACROPOLIS IN WHICH THE ANCIENT IMAGE IS"

The temple of Athena Polias was and is an enigma. More archaeological evidence exists from this Acropolis structure than any that precedes it; yet, the debate has continued as to the exact number of temples, their placements, and the circumstances of its demise.\(^{40}\) Archaeologists have agreed that this temenos was built to house "the cult image" of Athena.\(^{41}\) However, it was unclear when this image moved permanently to the Classical Erechtheum, which was dedicated to a triad of deities: Poseidon, Athena, and Erechtheus. Historians have also agreed that an open-air altar, where the "cult image" was brought out on festival and feast days, preceded the Temple of Athena Polias and perhaps remained after the temple was built.

The fall of the Mycenaean palatial kingdoms was not instantaneous; rather, it was a gradual decline beginning with the invasions of the Dorian tribes from the north around 1065 B.C.E. and continuing into the seventh century.\(^{42}\) Undoubtedly, the structures on the Acropolis suffered during this dark time but historians continue to agree that this site remained a sacred

\(^{40}\) The excavation of the temple of Athena Polias was begun in 1834 by Rossand and completed by Kavvadias in 1886. In 1885 Wilhelm Dorpfeld recognized the foundations of the structure as the Doric temple, of Athena Polias. (This temple is also known as the \textit{arkhaios naos}) These foundations in contemporary records are now identified as the Dorpfeld temple. Gloria Ferrari, "The Ancient Temple on the Acropolis at Athens," \textit{American Journal of Archaeology} 106, 1(2002) 11.

\(^{41}\) The origin of the olivewood cult image of Athena is unknown. One theory is that it mysteriously fell from the heavens. Another theory is that Kekrops, the first king of Athens, and Erechtheus, foster son of Athena and king of Athens, made the image. Regardless of its origins, it is most certainly the oldest documented cult image of Greece dating to the Mycenaean or Bronze age of Athens. Hurwit, 20.

\(^{42}\) These invasions mark the end of the Bronze Age for the Greeks and the beginning of the Iron Age, or Dark Ages that lasts until around 600 B.C.E. Hurwit, 85-86.
peak sanctuary. L. B. Holland states in his study of the remains of this specific portion of the Acropolis that the collective opinion of the Greek historians is that even from pre-historic times through the age of turmoil following the invasions, the Acropolis was a continuous sacred space.43

Open-Air Altar – Relationship to the Palace and the Temple

An altar did exist at the same time as the temple of Athena Polias. In order to understand the relationship of the altar to the temple, the Acropolis must be considered in its entirety. Vitruvius points out a critical perspective that affects the placement of architecture on the Acropolis that was specifically Greek in nature. He observed that the Athenians differed from their Mycenaean and Minoan influences based on the different perspectives of “man-centered” design versus “god-centered” design. The north to south axis of the Minoan and Mycenaean temples and structures in relationship to the landscape were placed from the deity’s point of view or, “god centered.” The Greek Acropolis was an east to west orientation because of the relationship to the horns of Mount Hymettos. The placement of the altar just east of the temple of Athena Polias and in line with the horns of Mount Hymettos carried the human eye from the Propylea past the temple and on to the sacred landscape. Consequently, the altar, and the rituals performed in front of it, balanced the human between the temple and the landforms; this was

43 Holland’s exact quote is, “...that from prehistoric times the site was marked with sacred areas; that these persisted with little change down to the time of the Persian conflagration; that they were then rebuilt with practically the same locations and sizes as before...; and that the last rebuilding, in the second half of the fifth century, still paid scrupulous respect to the ancient areas.” L. B. Holland, “Erechtheum Papers III. The Post-Persian Revision,” American Journal of Archaeology 28, 3 (1924) 426.
distinctly "man centered" design. 44 Certainly, concerning the landforms in the case of the Athenian Acropolis, the earth and celestial orientations work together.

Once the existence and placement of the Altar of Athena Polias was established, there was virtually no defense necessary for the argument that open-air altars are considered sacred spaces. However, Mircea Eliade's description of the spiritual significance of the altar explained mankind's impulse to construct these structures in a very deliberate fashion to create order from chaos. Considering the turmoil that followed the invasions of Indo-European cultures from the north, the literal attempt to bring order was understandable.

"For, in fact, the erection of an altar...is nothing but the reproduction – on the microcosmic scale – of the Creation. The water in which the clay is mixed is assimilated to the primordial water; the clay that forms the base of the altar symbolizes the earth; the lateral walls represent the atmosphere and so on."45

Rutkowski noted that all peak sanctuaries included an altar; furthermore, an open-air altar was very probable on the Acropolis at this time since the palace megaron that precedes the temple had a courtyard and vestibule where festivals were held during the Mycenaean period.46 We also know from Homer's Odyssey, 7.79-81 that the cult statue existed during the Mycenaean period and it "resided" in the palace of the King. An altar would provide a vehicle for the continuation of the festivals and rituals of the Acropolis. Pottery sherds depicting Skira, or festivals performed by women, excavated on the Acropolis supported the theory that Proto-Panathenaic festivals were common in the open courtyard of the palace that celebrated Athens

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44 Vitruvius, Ten Books on Architecture, Ingrid D. Rowland and Thomas Noble Howe, trans. Ingrid D Rowland (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) IV.5.1, 59. Scully also notes that the procession of worshipers would enter the Acropolis from the Propylaea to the west of the altar leading the sacrificial beasts. Their horns echo the landscape and the horns of Hymettos. Scully, 181.

45 Eliade, 30-31.

46 Rutkowski,11,16.
and Athena, the patron goddess. Inscriptions from the Acropolis stele of 409 B.C.E. placed the “Great Altar of Athena” northeast of the temple of Athena Polias. The fifth century stele of Athenian Inscriptions does not describe the appearance of the altar but it appeared it was a Mycenaean, or more accurately a Minoan, influenced structure.

Elsewhere on the rock, the erection of the Sanctuary of Zeus on the highest location on the Athenian Acropolis was the first to be dedicated to a male deity and was the site of the festival of Zeus, the Dipolieia, which included the ox-slaying, or bouphonia. This sanctuary

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47 Hurwit, 74. 90. The Skira fiestival, also know as the Thesmophoria, was performed on the ancient Athenian Acropolis and was connected to the mythological rape of Kore (a.k.a. Perspophine) by Plouton (a.k.a. Hades). A swineherd named Eubouleaus had his entire herd swallowed in the chasm created when Plouton drug Kore into the underworld. The Skira festival entailed sacrifices of pigs on the altar and three days of fasting and celebrating by women only. Another focus of the rituals was the withholding of sex from the men in an effort to avenge the rape of Kore and exercise control over men. At the end of the three days some of the rotting flesh of the pigs was placed on the fields to ensure fertility of the harvest. This act was also believed to improve the fertility of the women once they returned to the men of Athens. Jane Harrison, trans. Margaret De G. Verral Mythology and Monument of Ancient Athens, Being a Translation of a Portion of the ‘Attica’ of Pausanias (New York and London: MacMillan and Co. 1890), 103-107.

48 In the 409 B.C.E. a commission was assigned to take charge of the Erechtheum project. The commission submitted a complete report that included the current progress of the temple and an inventory of all materials associated with the new structure. A great deal of the information was preserved on a granite stele. Two inscriptions refer to the altar of Athena Polias and its placement northeast of the Temple of Athena Polias. This placement was much further east than the courtyard or vestibule of the megaron palace that faced west based on excavations of support columns. The Gorham Phillip Stevens et al., ed. James Morton Paton, The Erechtheum (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1927), 343, 346.

49 Hurwit, 12-13. It was assumed that many of the rituals performed at the “Great Altar of Athena” were dedicated to the female goddess Athena and, by the Bronze Age, included the Temple of Athena Polias and the cult image of Athena. Furthermore, these rituals could be festivals or sacrificial in nature and performed by women. However, Athena appeared originally, not on the Athenian Acropolis but on the Acropolis of Mycenae at the time of the late Bronze Age. While she was not the focus of the gold ring, she was already recognized as a warrior goddess complete with her figure eight shield and spear in hand. The ring also included the symbol of ritual, the double-sided axe. Athena was indeed originally Greek, chthonic, earthly and female, not Indo-European and celestial.

50 The Festival of Zeus and the ox-slaying ritual have evidence dating back to the Mycenaean period. Hurwit, 40.
exhibited the beginnings of the paradigm shift toward space dedicated to the sky gods and was a result of the influences of the sky gods of the Indo-Europeans beginning in the first millennium B.C.E.\(^{51}\) This sanctuary lay to the east of the Great Altar of Athena and drew the view of the worshiper toward the landform of the phallic male symbol of Mount Lybettos.\(^{52}\)

The Temple of Athena Polias and its Relationship to the Erechtheum

The dilemma of the Temple of Athena Polias, also known as the Achaios Neos, or the Old Temple of Athena Polias, was not whether or not it existed but how many temples existed on the site of the foundations south of the fifth century Erechtheum\(^{53}\) (Figure 8). These foundations were so notorious that they were simply known as the Dorpfeld foundations after the late nineteenth-century discovery by Wilhem Dorpfeld. Historians agreed that these foundations represented a sixth century temple, which housed the ancient wooden cult image of Athena. The question was whether this was the third or fourth temple to stand on these foundations and how those foundations related to the Erechtheum.\(^{54}\) This dilemma was relevant to this research since the transfer of “the cult image” of Athena was known to go from the Temple of Athena Polias, or

\(^{51}\) The Dorian invasion can be placed at precisely 1104 B.C.E. This date is supported by the historian R. Drews in his various proposals of infantry theory. Hurwit, 81.

\(^{52}\) Scully, 181.

\(^{53}\) The Blue Beard Temple is a possible temple to rest on the Dorpfeld foundations. This temple dates to 560 B.C.E. and could have been the third temple to utilize these foundations. Historians know of the Blue Beard Temple via pediment sculpture found on the Acropolis. Following this theory would establish the Archaicos Neos as the fourth and final temple to occupy this place on the Acropolis. The first theory would also elevate the importance of pediment sculpture attributed to the Blue Beard Temple as significant to the battle of the sexes represented in the iconography of the predecessor of the Erechtheum. The second theory identifies the Blue Beard Temple and the Hekatompedon as the same temple, preceding the Parthenon and would reduce the number of temples to rest on the Dorpfeld foundations to three. The final temple would still be the Archaicos Neos, the temple burned by the Persian in 480 B.C.E. There was also a significant amount of “floating” stone sculpture and architectural stone and terracotta that date from the sixth-century but were not attributed to any specific structure. Hurwit, 105-114

\(^{54}\) Hurwit, 109-112.
the Archaios Neos, to her own sacred space in the Erechtheum. In fact, we know from the inscriptions translated by G.P. Stevens that the primary purpose of the east cella of the Erectheum was to house the “cult image” of Athena Polias. The Archaios Neos was the final temple represented by the Dorpfeld foundations which housed “the cult statue” of Athena and remained standing until it was burned by the Persians in 480 B.C.E.

If we assumed that the Blue Beard Temple was one of the temples that utilized the Dorpfeld foundations, the pediment sculptures of that temple were significant and supported this paper’s thesis that the Erechtheum and its predecessors represented a continuous sacred space on the Athenian Acropolis and codify the visual friction and transition of the female to male deities of the Ancient Greeks. The meanings and arrangements of these east and west pediment sculptures were open for speculation, but they do represent the Greek need to visually explain the impetus of its temples. Indeed, Greek Temples boasted a unique relationship with their creators and worshipers as very “man-centered” versus “god-centered.” Eliade explained that,

55 Stevens, 298.
56 Hurwit, 136.
“...the temple continually re-sanctifies the world, because it at once represents and contains it. In the last analysis, it is by virtue of the temple that the world is resanctified in every part.\textsuperscript{57}

Due to the violent nature of the lions of the east pediment, it was apparent that the sculpture was probably protective and designed to ward off evil. The apotropaic nature of the sculptures aside, the obvious gender battle between the lioness and its victim, the bull, was too obvious not to mention. While the image of “blue beard” himself was most likely a male “body politic” or personification of the unity of Attica, no longer a female earth mother image. He spored a snaky-torso and legs associated with the earth-born kings, sons of Gaia, Kecrops and Erechtheus. The “Introduction Pediment” mostly likely depicted the introduction of Hercules, an Indo-European god, to Zeus by Athena, original Greeks gods.\textsuperscript{58} This was an interesting visual “changing of the guard” from the new to the old, the earth deities to the sky deities.

Two fires consume the Temple of Athena Polias. The first fire occurred at the hands of the Persians in 480 B.C.E. in which “the cult image” was rescued from the temple and taken from Athens; the second fire occurred in 406 B.C.E. and was very controversial regarding intent and amount of destruction as well the use of the surviving portion of the old temple structure prior to the second burning with the rules of the Oath of Plataea. The question of where the wooden “cult image” of Athena was stored after the Persian blaze was also a point of continued debate.\textsuperscript{59}

\textsuperscript{57} Eliade, 59.
\textsuperscript{58} Hurwit, 112-113.
\textsuperscript{59} All of the controversy related to the destruction of the old temple of Athena is in reference to a portion of the inscriptions from the Acropolis Commission of 409 B.C.E., \textit{IG} 1\textsuperscript{3} 474. It is the theory of Gloria Ferrari, in support of Wilhem Dorpfeld’s original hypothesis, that the temple of Athen Polias was not completely destroyed by the Persians but a portion was left standing. Ferrari provides evidence that the opisthodomos, or rear chamber, of the temple was in tact and housed the treasuries of the Athena until the Erechtheum was complete. The “cult image” of Athena was housed in a temporary shrine on the site of the Erechtheum. The Oath of Plataea taken just before the battle of Plataea, pledges that the ruins on the Athenian Acropolis
we do know was that the Erechtheum was in some stage of construction or repair during the
second fire in 406 B.C.E. and showed signs of scorching on the stones.\textsuperscript{60}

The Temple Athena Polias, The Old Temple of Athena, or the Archais Neos, all refered
to the temple which housed the ancient cult image of Athena until that image was transferred to
the Erechtheum. Historians agreed, that regardless of the number of temples that existed, the
Dorpfeld foundation was the site of their placement on the Acropolis. This temple was also the
successor to the Erechtheum as "the temple on the Acropolis in which the ancient image is."\textsuperscript{61}
The temple was undeniably sacred and it most certainly housed sculpture representing, what
historian Focillon referred to as, "...the psychological landscape of Greece."\textsuperscript{62} If the Blue Beard
pediment sculpture was from this temple, we certainly see the transfer of the genders as Athena
introduced the Indo-European demi-god Hercules to her father Zeus. In contrast, the lioness
devoured the bull. The amalgam of Attica was a serpent-tailed man representing the unification
of Attica.

\textsuperscript{60} Stevens argues that the scorched stones are proof the fire of 406 B.C.E. was either a
mistake or a planned razing that got out of hand. Stevens, \textit{The Erechtheum}, 406-461
\textsuperscript{61} Hurwit, 20.
CHAPTER 5
THE ERECHTHEUM; THE STRONG HOUSE OF ERECHTHEUS

Frank Lloyd Wright described organic architecture as a design theory by which all architecture should emerge from the landscape, in harmony with the landforms, materials and the elements. "Form and function are one." The Erechtheum was certainly a success by Frank Lloyd Wright's standards in its marriage to the land, in this case the rock, and its unique floor plan in response to its purpose. There were two ancient descriptions of this temple; the first were the inscriptions referred to at length via Steven's work and through the writing of Pausanias. Pausanias, a second century C.E. Historian, geographer and traveler, was quite awestruck by the temple of Minerva, also known as the Erechtheum, He described the Erechtheum as double, or diplous. Careful examination of this structure will apply this description of the dual temple to both form and function.

The Creation Myths & the Physical Symbols
Athena and Poseidon

Athena's epic battle with Poseidon appeared to be a fifth-century manifestation that strategically pits the genders and their skills against one another. As the legend unfolds,

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63 Frank Lloyd Wright Interview, 1 August 1957.
64 Henry William Inwood, The Erechtheion at Athens, Fragments of Athenian Architecture and a Few Remains in Attica Megara and Epirus (London: Gregg International Publishers Limited, 1972), 97. Also keep in mind that the Erechtheum was built for the primary purpose of housing the "cult image" of Athena Polias. Stevens, 98.
65 The battle in the waters of Salamis in which the Greek fleet out maneuvered the Persians is largely credited to Poseidon. The rebuilding of the Athenian Acropolis was made possible via that decisive battle. The inclusion of Poseidon's tokens as well as an altar in the
Poseidon decided to take Athens by thrusting his trident into the Acropolis. A saltwater spring emerged in its place and the sea could be heard when the south wind blew. To counter this "gift" from Poseidon, Athena planted an olive tree for the Athenian people. Both Poseidon and Athena agreed to arbitration to settle this dispute and the Athenians saw Athena’s gift as more desirable. Athena won the arbitration but conceded Poseidon his place on the Athenian Acropolis.  

The tokens of this confrontation were: the trident marks and the brackish spring, attributed to Poseidon; and the olive tree attributed to Athena.

Erechtheus, Athena and Poseidon

The origins of the first king of Athens, Kecrops, and the legendary fourth king of Athens Erechtheion, had very similar earthly bound connections; they were both conceived by mother earth, Gaia. The Athenians claimed to be descendents of Erechtheion and Erechtheus, who were both conceived by the attempted rape of Athena by Hephaistos. When Athena wiped the sperm from her leg and threw it on the ground she fertilized mother earth. Giai did not want to raise Erechtheion/Erechtheus so Athena raised him as her own. Often these two kings are viewed as one and the same via the same creation myth.

These earthly beginnings of Kecrops and Erechtheion/Erechtheus were “autochthonous,” or of the earth, and resonated with the people of Athens who believed themselves to be the

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Erechtheum is seen as recognition of Poseidon’s power. This is a distinct shift from the matriarchal control of the Acropolis to the Patriarchal. Hurwit, 32.

66 Ibid., 60.
67 Ibid., 8, 32.
68 Graves, 97. The first ancient Greek appearance of a warrior goddess that vaguely resembled Athena was during the Mycenaean period and did not occur on the Athenian Acropolis but in Mycenae in the thirteenth-century. She was mentioned by name five hundred years later on the Athenian Acropolis in which her creation myth originated. The tokens from Athena’s birth were the owl, the double axe, the aegis with the head of Medusa the Gorgon, her spear, and snakes, Graves, 46.
original Greeks and descendents of Erechtheus. Erechtheus met his demise defending Athens when he killed Poseidon’s son Eumolpus, as he claimed the throne of Attica in the name of his father. Poseidon struck Erechtheus with his trident and created a large chasm in the acropolis; thus, creating permanent marks of the strike in stone in the area of the Erechtheum to avenge his son’s death. The sacred tokens associated with Erechtheus were: the snake, the lightening bolt, and the cleft in the rock. The snake and lightening bolt were unarguably symbolically male.

These myths clearly exhibited an upward thrust away from the autochthonous earth bound deities and toward the celestial sky deities of the fifth century. The shift from the matriarchal to patriarchal was driven by the politics of Athens of the fifth century and mirrored in the imagery of the gods. The rise of the polis of the fifth century depended on the absolute rule of the King and the lineage was patriarchal. While originally a King conceived by the earth goddess ruled Athens, the lineage, or right to rule, was strictly patriarchal. In response to the

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69 Erechtheus’s daughter, Otionia, is chosen as a sacrifice to Athena to ensure victory. Otionia’s older sisters, Protagonia and Pandora also sacrifice themselves as part of a pact that if one should die they all should die. Graves, 169.

70 By genealogical standards Erechtheus, the sixth king of Athens, is the grandson of Erechtheion, the fourth king of Athens. However, both were conceived from a rape of Athena by Hephaistos and raised by Athena on the north side of the acropolis. In infancy Erechtheion/Erechtheus is given to Kecrops’s daughters in a basket they are not to open. When they disobey Athena they were frightened by a snake coiled around the baby and throw themselves off the Acropolis. Hurwit, 33. One small anomaly of the story is the existence of Erechtheus’s twin brother, Butes, the beekeeper. Butes’s father is rarely mentioned and only in a unrelated story in which both Erechtheus and Butes are fathered by King Pandion. An alternative story in the death of Erechtheus is that Poseidon asks that Zeus strike him down with a thunderbolt. Graves, 168-170.


72 In the myth of Poseidon and Athena’s battle for Athens the arbitration left women with few rights. To appease Poseidon the women of Athens give up their vote and the claim to their mothers’ name after marriage. Graves, 60.

73 Perry, 46-47.
shift, Athena of the Parthenon was the masculine warrior goddess fully armored and ready to
defend Athens, and her virginity if needed.

The Structure of the Erechtheum

The Erechtheum was the last of three structures of the Periclean building program rebuilt
after the Persian sack of the Athenian Acropolis and the dissolution of the Oath of Plataia.74 The
building of these structures, by Eliade's analysis, was the physical reenactment of the formation
of cosmos (order) from chaos.75 The site and orientation of the temple, as well as the unique
floor plan and architectural detail, revealed a structure of reconciliation between the ancient
female and the fifth century male on a continually sacred site.76 The Erechtheum captured this
moment in time when sky met earth and female met male. First and foremost the function of the
Erechtheum was the keeper of the ancient chthonic cult image of Athena Polias; as well as, altars
to Poseidon, Erechtheus, Hephaistos, and Butes. The Erechtheum was also the precinct for the
sacred tokens of the trident marks, the olive tree, and the salt spring. The altar of Zeus was also
included in the general complex of this temple but its exact location was under debate.77 As
Frank Lloyd Wright professed, "Form and Function are one." This was truly the case in the
design of the Erechtheum.

74 Gerdin, 389. The Oath of Plataia stated that none of the Acropolis structures would be
rebuilt following the burning of the Acropolis structures in 479 B.C.E. Instead, they would stand
in ruin as a tribute to the fallen heroes and a reminder of the brutality of the Persians. Many
Athenians, and later, modern historians question the origin of the Oath but all agree that the
dissolution of the Oath later in the fifth century was the catalyst for the ambitious building plans
75 Eliade, 32.
76 The designation of the site of the Classical Erectheion on the north slope of the
Acropolis as sacred is well documented in previous chapters of this research. This is the site of:
the olive tree, the trident marks, and the cleft of the earth for the sacred snake, and the
mythological burial place of King Kecrops.
77 Jeppesen, 8-9.
The Site and Orientation

The temple of Erechtheus was located on the north central side of the Acropolis and was oriented east to west just like the Temple of Athena Polias (Figure 9). This orientation directed the eastern façade toward the horns of Hymettos. However, the north to south orientation, which was distinctly Minoan female, directed the legendary caryatid Porch of the Maidens toward the Parthenon, dedicated to the masculine she-warrior Athena of the fifth century. If Gerding is correct in his assumption that the foundation of the Old temple of Athena Polias served as an open area for the celebration of the Panathenaic Procession, the caryatids silently witnessed the Athenians recreate the ancient chthonic festivals celebrating the birth of Athena and fertility.

Figure 9. Plan of the Acropolis by I. Gelbrich (after Travlos 971, fig. 91 and Korres 994b, 43) Illustrated in: Hurwit, 7.

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78 Stevens, 15.
79 Hurwit, 6.
80 Ibid., 44. Gerding, 389-390.
In order to fully appreciate the relationship of the Erechtheum and its position on the Acropolis, the observer must see the fifth century peak sanctuary as a great room defined by buildings and landforms. The east to west approach from the Propylaea, directed the viewer’s focus between the Erechtheum and Parthenon, over the altar of Athena Polias toward the Horn of Hymettos. The asymmetry of the Erechtheum’s elevation echoed the mountains of Pentilikon and Parnes in the distance and ironically emphasized the male phallic symbol of Lycabettos. The secondary north to south axis directed the viewer from the North Porch of Poseidon of the Erechtheum and the ancient earth gods in the distinctly female ionic temple of the Erechtheum toward the doric masculine structure dedicated to the warrior goddess, Athena.\textsuperscript{81} Indeed, the Erechtheum must be viewed in tandem with the existing structures and the landforms to fully appreciate the balance between the old and new that was achieved in this structure and the continued connection to the sacred landforms.

The Floor Plan

The fifth-century structure had a unique floor plan, which essentially created two temples with the separate purposes of housing altars as well as a precinct for the sacred tokens of the battle for Athens.\textsuperscript{82} The iconography of the Erechtheum was ancient and yet contemporary in that it visually and physically represented the creation myths of the matriarchal earth deities of the ancient Greeks and the paradigm shift toward the patriarchal sky deities of fifth century Athens. The Persian invasion of 480 B.C.E. and the subsequent sacking and burning of the

\textsuperscript{81} Scully, 181-183. The viewer is subjected to the contrast of the Parthenon and its obvious alterations of the topography of the Acropolis and the Erechtheum’s varied elevations in relationship to the mountain forms in the distance. Also noted earlier in this paper, east to west orientation is sky oriented and male; the north to south orientation is Minoan and female.

\textsuperscript{82} Ibid., 97.
Acropolis structures predated the Classical Erechtheum by over seventy years. We know from the inscriptions of the Acropolis commission of 409 that the classical Erechtheum was not completed until 407 B.C.E.\(^3\) It was possible that the “cult image” of Athena Polias was housed in the restored opisthodomos until the new Erechtheum was complete. This is a theory many historians support.\(^4\) An open air Pandroseion, located just west of the classical building, continued to enclose the olive tree gift of Athena, the crevice of the snake of Erechtheus, and the Kekropeion. This complex existed prior to the Persian invasion because, as legend tells, the olive tree was burned by the Persians but still sprouted a new limb just after the attack.\(^5\) Herodotos referred to a “‘neo of Erechtheus, called the Earthborn…” when he visited the Acropolis in 440 B.C.E. that was distinctly different from the ruins of the Old Temple of Athena or the Parthenon. Inscriptions dating to 460 and 450 B.C.E. also referred to the pre-Erechtheum and the rituals concerning the “cult image.”\(^6\)

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\(^3\) Botsford, 348. We also know from the inscriptions that it was necessary to repair the Erechtheum after the fire of the remaining structure of the temple of Athena Polias in 406. Stevens, 46. Those repairs were completed in 405 B.C.E. Gerding, 389.

\(^4\) Hurwit, 145. Dorpfeld, Ferrari, Jeppesen, to name just a few, agree that the opisthodomos remained standing until the fire of 406 B.C.E. Ferrari argues that it remained standing well into the Roman period. The Erechtheum inscriptions indicate that the “cult image” of Athena Polias was to reside in the newly constructed temple completed at the end of the fifth century. Gerding refers to the inscription \(\text{IG}1^3\) 474 which Stevens analyzes as part of the Chandler inscriptions. Gerding, 389.

\(^5\) Ibid., 145. There was evidence of other small structures and shrines that all may have been referred to collectively as the Erechtheum and dated to the time of the recognition of the tokens of Athena and Poseidon; perhaps, as early as the Archaic period. The cleft of the snake, at least its myth, dated to the Mycenaean period. These buildings were located on the site of the current Erechtheum and, thus, designated this site as continuously sacred by virtue of the tomb of Kekrops and the tokens.

\(^6\) Hurwit, 144-145. Kristian Jeppesen argues the theory of an “alternative Erechtheum” located at the Mycenaean well and the cleft in the rock. This is the location of the tokens most sacred to Erechtheus, as well as, the altars of Poseidon, Erechtheus, Butes, and Hephaiastos. The temple we recognize as the Classical Erechtheum today is, in fact, the Tempe of the Polieas and housed the “cult image” of Athena. Gerding, 389.
A continuous foundation, which predates the Classic Erectheum, supported the contemporary structure on the north, east, and south walls. At least a portion of the foundation is prehistoric and dates to the Mycenaean stones of the cistern. The Porch of the Maidens of the Classical Erectheum rested on the Dorpfeld foundations of the Old Temple of Athena Polias. The classical temple of Erechtheus bridges the mythology of the past and future both spiritually and physically by reconciling the matriarchal of the old and patriarchal of the new into one structure, the Classical Erectheum. Henrik Gerding, more specifically, saw the Porch of the Maidens as the undeniable female link between the Parthenon of the new masculine Athena, the festivals, and the people of Athens.

Gorham Stevens took a brief reprieve from his clinical analysis of the Classical Erectheum to put in perspective the importance of this structure by stating that, “…the Erectheum is commonly held to be the most perfect example of the Ionic, and its forms have been imitated again and again by modern architects.” As important as this structure was to later architecture, and even the formation of Western Thought, it was even more representative of the people of Athens and their perseverance in the face of a formidable foe, the Persians. Eliade described the Persian invasion as a reenactment of the epic battle of cosmos over chaos.

“Any destruction of a city is equivalent to a retrogression to chaos. Any victory over the attackers reiterates the paradigmatic victory of the gods over the dragon (that is, over chaos).”

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87 Stevens, 12-15. The crowding of the Porch of the Maidens by any existing portion of the Temple Athena Polias supports Gerding’s theory that upon completion of the Erectheum, the remaining Old Temple was razed, perhaps by fire.

88 Following the desolation of the Oath of Plataea, The Temple of Athena Polias was the only structure that was not reconstructed on the same site. Instead, the heir apparent of the cult image became the Erectheum, constructed to the north of the Old Temple. After the fire of 406 Gerding’s theory is that the site between the Parthenon and the Erectheum was left open to allow room for the Panathenaic procession. Gerding, 389.

89 Stevens, vii.

90 Eliade, 48.
Foundation Creation Myth Symbols and the Bedrock

The respect for the existing terrain and the sacred tokens of Erechtheus, Poseidon and Athena is reflected in the treatment of the ground or rock of the foundations of this structure. The bedrock of the Erechtheum foundation is dressed, but not significantly altered; for example, the elevation of the floor is 3.24 meters higher on the north and east porticoes and the ceiling heights are adjusted accordingly for flow (Figure 10). An ancient foundation reveals that the topography of this space has always been left in its most natural state. The most logical reason for the exposed original bedrock is the existence of the sacred tokens of the gods and goddesses.

Figure 10. The western facade of the Erechtheum. The Pandrosian houses the Olive tree and the tomb of the serpent man Cecrops. Note the height of the north portico in comparison to the Porch of the Maidens. Illustrated in: Pinsent, *Greek Mythology*, 64.

The western precinct, of the temple, also named the Pandroseion, is known to house the Olive tree gift from Athena, and possibly: the cleft of the serpent of Erechtheus, and the saltwater spring of Poseidon. The trident mark resides just inside the western wall of the temple. The architectural element that most affects the treatment of the original terrain of this area is the possible tomb of Cecrops, the first king of Athens. A large block of marble rests on the same

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91 Stevens, 4-9.
foundations as the west wall and the Porch of the Maidens. Yet, the area under the block is vacant. It appears that the marble stone placement is to protect something of great importance from the building above. The inscription of the commission of 409 further supports this theory by identifying the Porch of the Maidens as the portico in front of the Cecropium. If this area is also the site of the Mycenaean palace, Cecrops's tomb, the sacred tokens and their mythology could date to the Mycenaean period and further reinforce the theory of this research that this site has been perpetually sacred.

The elevations of the Erechtheum certainly reveal empathy to the earth that the Parthenon does not possess. These two structures stand in stark contrast to one another of the old ways of the Earth Mother and the new ways of the Sky Father. The organic nature of the multi-leveled Erechtheum echoes the sacred landscape as well as preserves the tokens of the chthonic gods and goddesses of the earth. The Parthenon, which is distinctly Doric male, rises forcefully from the arched stylobate that was constructed on a significantly altered landscape.

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93 Ibid., 414. The Pandroseiom is named for Erechtheus's youngest daughter who stoically sacrifices herself for the Athenian cause. Her two sisters also sacrificed themselves in fulfillment of a pact made by all three to die together. Graves,168.
The floor plan for this structure is literally oriented to all four of the cardinal points and
the two major axes with a façade or courtyard that faces north, south, east, and west. The east
façade, and primary entrance to the temple, is oriented in the same direction as its predecessor,
the temple of Athena Polias. This male or celestial orientation works for the temples on the
Acropolis since the sacred landscape forms are to the east rather than the female north or south,
the Minoan female orientation. The eastern most cella most likely houses the “cult image” as
well as the treasures of the Old Temple salvaged before the invasion. This chamber is on the
upper of the two levels of the temple elevation but is on the same level as the ground in front of
the east façade. This chamber does not have access to any other portion of the temple.

The chambers to the west of the cella are not accessible from the east façade; instead, one
must enter from Poseidon’s porch to the north or the Caryatid porch to the south. These

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94 Stevens, 15.
95 Hurwit, 203-204.
chambers most likely house altars to Hesphantos, Butes, and the sacred tokens of Poseidon: the salt sea, and the trident marks. A cleft in the rock could also be for the serpent of Erechtheus.96 The north porch also protects the "final word" of Zeus in the dispute between Athena and Poseidon. The floor of the portico is partially removed to expose the fissures on the bedrock inflicted by Zeus's lightening bolts. The architects apparently felt that the sibling rivalry was not resolved since a corresponding skylight exists over the fissures; Zeus might need to put his foot down again.97 (Figure 12 and 13) The fifth century designers were highly sensitive to the earthly and ancient tokens of the gods embedded in the terrain and yet, they are fully aware that the final word of fifth-century Athens is from the sky father, Zeus.

Figure 12. North Portico: opening in the pavement (1922) From northwest. This opening exposes the fissures on the bedrock below. Illustrated in Stevens, 108

Figure 13. North Portico: East Portion of ceiling, from below. (March 26, 1909). The photo shows the corresponding ceiling skylight over the opening in the floor. Illustrated in: Stevens, 90.

96 Ibid., 204.
97 Stevens, 104.
The Caryatids of the Porch of the Maidens distinguishes this building as truly the most feminine and anthropomorphic of all the Acropolis structures; furthermore, the porch itself spiritually and physically connects the Erechtheum to the Temple of Athena Polias. The south wall of the porch utilizes the foundations of the stereobate and peristyle of old temple, a.k.a. the Dorpfeld temple. Spiritually, they are reminders of the sacrifices of King Erechtheus’s daughters for the preservation of Athens. While the eastern and northern porticos were entrances, it appears that this entrance was never intended for public access to the interior.\textsuperscript{98}

\textbf{The Architectural Elements and Detail}

Ernest Arthur Gardner described the Erechtheum as follows:

“If the Parthenon shows us the perfection of Doric architecture, no less does the Erechtheum offer the most beautiful example of the Ionic order, and of the Ionic order in its Attic form, with an added grace and delicacy.”\textsuperscript{99}

The mythology associated with the development of the Ionic order relates to the grandson of King Erechtheus, Ion, by his daughter Creusa and Xuthus, son of Hellen. Ion and his people occupied areas in Asia and built shrines to the Greek Gods and Goddesses. Their order, the Ionic, was based on the proportions of a woman’s footprint to her slenderness. Thus, the Ionic has a ratio of 8:1 which is much more slender than the masculine Doric order. The Ionic order incorporates the volute, which represents women’s hair and the fluting of the columns is to replicate draped clothing.\textsuperscript{100}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{98} Stevens, 15.  \\
\textsuperscript{99} Gardner, 354.  \\
\textsuperscript{100} Vitruvius, 54-55
\end{flushright}
The Ionic Column & Porch of the Maidens

Twelve Ionic columns and four Ionic pilasters adorn the north, east and west facades of the Erechtheum’s exterior; each is carved with very little variance based on geometry and proportions. These columns, along with the Caryatids of the South Portico, lend a definite female anthropomorphic quality to this temple. Inscriptions also record the implementation of optical refinements and the application of gilding for the “eye” or center of the volute further humanizing this architectural element. The egg and dart moldings adorn the abacus of each of the capitals, which echoes alternating rhythm of the genders in the male and female symbols. Gardner’s states that, “The Erechtheum, as has already been said, may be taken as a representative of the most refined form of Ionic architecture.”


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101 Stevens, 18-23. Optical refinements were generally not applied to Ionic structures. In the case of the Erechtheum the corner columns of the east façade incline toward the center to appear less intimidating to the worshiper.

102 Gardner continued his critique of the Ionic columns of the Erechtheum by comparing them to the pure Ionic form of Asia Minor, the later more conventional Ionic, and the simpler form of Ionic seen at the Propylaea and Temple of Athena Nike. These comparisons established the uniqueness of the Ionic order of the Erechtheum. 367.
The Caryatids of the Porch of the Maidens connected the earthly chthonic past to the fifth century present and skyward to the patriarchal gods. Each maiden stood in a controppasto stance that was apparent through the draping of her tunic; they were crowned with the egg and dart echinus and basket capitals over flowing hair.\textsuperscript{103} (figure 14) Yet, each was clearly unique within the unified group, demonstrating the Greek understanding of the human perception of visual harmony through variety and unity. These maidens stand in an eternal position of repose atop the ruins of the Dorpfeld temple which served as an architectural bridge between the two distinctly different monuments dedicated to Athena.\textsuperscript{104}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item\textsuperscript{103} Stevens, 232-238.
\item\textsuperscript{104} Stevens, 110-112.
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CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The Acropolis no longer housed ancient Kings or powerful gods and goddesses yet it continued to influence Western Civilization well into the 21st century. Somehow the typographical data falls short of explaining the phenomenal success of the Athenian Acropolis; surely there is another theory. Perhaps this location was destined, through its relationship to the ancient Mother Goddess or Mother Earth, to continue to inspire us with architecture fit for the gods and high ideals of humanism, all the while nestled securely and harmoniously in Mother Earth’s bosom. Vincent Scully in, The Earth the Temple and the Gods and Mircea Eliade’s, The Sacred and the Profane, adroitly make the assertion that there is a higher level of reasoning at play and the choice of the Athenian Acropolis over its more impressive neighbors is the result an ancient bond between primordial man and the Mother Goddess.

Jeffry Hurwitt and Vincent Scully also both observed that the Greeks intimately placed their sacred structures in the clefts and mounds of the Greek landscapes oriented toward distinctly female north to south directions. This connection to the Earth Mother or, Terra Mater, as Eliade prefers to refer to her, manifested itself in the power and myth of the ancient goddess Athena and her triumph over Hephaistos for her virginity and Poseidon for Athens. As the structures of the Mycenaean citadel rose to the top of the acropolis and begin to make connections with the male sky deities, it was the sacred megaron and the early altars that continued to be dedicated to Athena.

The Erechtheum housed all of the symbols of Athena’s victories in the trident mark, the olive tree, and the brackish spring and even owes its unique topography to its marriage to the rock. This was the original temple on the Acropolis in which the ancient image was. In fact this
cult image seemed to be more dedicated the site rather than a particularly dedicated structure erected in her honor. The primary axis of the Erechtheum was east to west but a secondary and perhaps more natural orientation existed north the south. The north porch viewed the distinctly male peak of Mt. Lycabettos while the porch of the maidens stood in quiet repose over the more masculine dedication to Athena as Parthenos. ascension of Athena over Parthenos.\textsuperscript{105}

The 20\textsuperscript{th} Century architect Frank Lloyd Wright reemphasized the lessons learned from the ancient architects through their sensitivity to the environment in which their sanctuaries ultimately rest. Wright believed that he could design for any religious faith because of the basic philosophy that gave birth to his prolific examples of organic architecture. Wright is quoted in a 1957 interview in which Wright ascertains that,

\begin{quote}
"God is the great mysterious motivator of what we call nature, and it has been said, often by philosophers, that nature is the will of God. And, I prefer to say that nature is the only body of God that we shall ever see. If we wish to know the truth concerning anything, we’ll find it in the nature of that thing." Wright goes on to say, “I believe in God, only I spell it Nature.”\textsuperscript{106}
\end{quote}

Archaeological evidence confirms that the Athenian Acropolis has been occupied since Neolithic and Mycenaean times. That same evidence also confirmed that the Erechtheum was the specific site of this continuous presence and the series of structures, even the Mycenaean palace, have been sacred in nature. The structure of the Erechtheum was the physical connection between the Athenians, their heritage, and their connection to the gods via their claim as descendants of Erechtheus and Athena. While the Erechtheum is shrouded in mystery, it is quite clear that the mythology of the Hellenes dictated the site, orientation, floor plan, architectural detail, art, and sculpture. This is a distinctly feminine building dedicated to both King Erechtheus

\textsuperscript{105} Scully, 94-95.

\textsuperscript{106} Frank Lloyd Wright, \textit{The Mike Wallace Interviews with Frank Lloyd Wright}, Interview by Mike Wallace, New York, New York, 1 August 1957 and 28 August 1957.
and Athena and illustrates the transition from ancient matriarchal power to the patriarchal spiritual and political rule of fifth century B.C.E. Athens.

"As for this place, it is clearly a holy one" Sophocles\textsuperscript{107}

\textsuperscript{107} Sophocles, \textit{Oedipus at Colonus}, Trans. Robert Fitzgerald (Harcourt Brace, 1941), 16.
EPILOGUE

RESTORATION & INTERVENTIONS

Pre-World War II Interventions

The cycle of construction, destruction, reconstruction and preservation that began over 8,000 years ago continues to this day on the Athenian Acropolis. Conquering cultures from the pagan Romans through the Christians and Frankish Muslims reshaped the sacred monuments to physically represent their respective religions. Modern restorative efforts have sought to remove these additions as well as repair the scars of numerous battles and return the Acropolis to its fifth century grandeur. Ironically, Mother Nature has also been a "fair weather friend" to this region and the elements have aged these ageless monuments in spite of Herculean efforts of preservation. Earthquakes, lightening strikes windstorms, erosion and acid rain have taken their toll on this ancient rock and her structures. While the preservationists that were not opportunists had the best of intentions, many of the interventions did not stand the test of time and the very improvements and reconstructions that were meant to improve or preserve the structures, served to be more visually and physically destructive than the original damage.

The Roman conquerors of the second century A.D. were great admirers of the Greek legacy of monument construction. Consequently, their contributions to the rock tended toward preservation rather than reconstruction. The most prolific of the Roman Emperors, Claudius, Augustus and Hadrian accepted the Athenian Acropolis as a pure example of classical architecture and sculpture and rarely attempted to improve upon the ideal. By the first century A.D. the Erechtheum had laid in ruins for decades following a fire that resulted from a lightening strike. For reasons that are not clearly documented, this structure became the exception to the
Roman practice of preservation. It is not apparent which of the emperors financed the rebuilding of the Erechtheum; however, it was reconstructed using Imperial Roman techniques and rededicated to the Roman god Apollo who was associated the Augustus.  

Athens and the Acropolis continued to experience change but did not experience removal and restorative efforts again until 1855, when the last of a contingent of Bavarian soldiers evacuated the citadel following the Turkish invasions at the beginning of the 19th century. Athens had just been named the capital of the new Kingdom of Greece and the King Otto declared the rock an official archaeological site worthy of preservation. These efforts were two fold. First, they focused on the removal of all evidence of the Franks, Florentines, and Turks and their religious structures. Second, preservationist attempted to restore the site to its fifth century B.C.E grandeur. In reality only the former was successful and any restoration and construction was haphazard and poorly documented at best. It was during this time that the Erechtheum was excavated down to its bedrock and experienced restoration via the reconstruction of the north and south walls as well as replacement of the caryatid removed in 1805 by Lord Elgin.

The first half of the 1800’s were chaotic and relatively undocumented but most historians agree that any misconceived renovations were reversible and nondestructive. Unfortunately the same cannot be said about the excavations and interventions that took place under the watchful eye of Nikolaos Balanos. Balano’s perpetrated the most notorious of the Acropolis intervention methods on the monuments from 1898 to 1943. Engineers utilized iron rods and pins to

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108 Hurwit, 266, 279
109 Ibid, 296-299. From 1801 to 1805 removal of artifacts from the Athenian Acropolis occurred at the hands of the British Ambassador to Constantinople, Thomas Bruce, AKA Lord Elgin. Bruce’s original mission was to measure and make plaster casts of the ancient sculptures for study. In order to expedite this process Elgin’s team removed the sculptures to Britain, never to return to their home, the Athenian Acropolis. Elgin removed the remaining Parthenon pediment sculptures, south metopes and frieze, pieces of the Propylaia and a Caryatid from the Erechtheum’s Porch of the Maidens.
reinforce the architecture and architectural detail; unfortunately, the rods corroded and consequently cracked and degraded the very marble they were intended to preserve.\textsuperscript{110} These exposed iron rods used to support the caryatid Porch of the Maidens also corroded and later shattered the many of the stone members, which comprised the ceiling of the south caryatid porch.\textsuperscript{111} Consequently, the restoration to end all restorations would only stand for blink of an eye when compared to the life span of the structures of the sacred rock.

\textbf{Committee for the Conservation of the Acropolis Monuments}

\textbf{CCAM}

The establishment of the CCAM in 1975 and the urgency to reverse the Balano innovations in time to save the four primary sacred monuments marks the modern restorations of those Acropolis structures: the Parthenon, Propolyaia, Nike Temple, and the Erechtheum. The CCAM was also established in response to the UNESCO 1971 expose on the affects of acid rain and pollution on the monuments\textsuperscript{112} The Erechtheum had suffered serious and excellerated degradation in the seventy years since the Balano interventions. Consequently, this structure was the first to be undertaken and completed between the years of 1979-1987. The CCAM is no stranger to controversy and often the type, extent, and time period target date of historic preservation are up for debate regarding the appropriate method in which to proceed.


\textsuperscript{111} Ibid, 137

\textsuperscript{112} Hurwitt, 300. The Committee for the Conservation of the Acropolis Monuments, CCMA, is comprised of experts in the fields of: engineering, architecture, archaeology, chemical engineers and conservators. The Acropolis Restoration Service, YSMA, is responsible for the day to day excavations, documentation and education regarding the site and is also consists of architects, civil engineers, Archaeologists, chemist, draftsmen and also a highly trained staff. For example marble workers. "Restoration of the Athenian Acropolis, Lecture delivered January 18, 2006. Dr. Fani Mallouchou-Tufano."
As the Balano's interventions have been replaced, the mission on the Acropolis has turned from rescue to restoration and reintegration utilizing reversible practices. In the case of the Erechtheum, the iron rods and pins have been replaced and efforts were made to reconstruct the portions that were incorrectly restored. Twenty-three block of the north wall of the interior cella of the Erechtheum were incorrectly used to construct the south wall. This error was corrected when those blocks were properly placed in the south wall as a result of an innovative procedure in which each fragment from the surface of the rock was scanned and cataloged into a digital database that provided ready access for the preservationists to search for those missing pieces of each structure. During this same 1979-1987 renovation the remaining caryatids of the Porch of the Maidens were moved to the Acropolis museum in order to protect them from the elements of pollution and aced rain. New materials such as titanium for the joinery, new marble and a composite with the same composition as marble, are used to structurally reinforce the structure as well as provide visitors with an accurate representation of the fifth century Erechtheum. Certainly the goal of the YSMA is to replace the filler components with the original piece; consequently it is necessary for any reconstruction to be completely reversible in order bring each piece home to its rightful position in each structure.\textsuperscript{113}

The Athenian Acropolis and the Erechtheum have always been the site of convergence of the sacred ground and structure with spiritual presence of the goddess and gods; or, as Eliade states, the \textit{axis mundi} that connected sky, earth, and underworld. Restoration and research of the Erechtheum continues today and the friction between male and female continues to be revealed as archaeologists use new laser technology and VII photographic method to reveal color in the ceiling coffers of the Porch of the Maidens. Traces of Egyptian Blue highlight the bead and reed

\textsuperscript{113} Mallouchou-Tufano, 1-11.
moldings as well as the male vs. female egg and dart motif of the Ionic order. The juxtaposition of male vs. female continues to render the Erechtheum, that place where the statue of Athena resides, and the origins of the first King Erechtheus of Athens, the physical sacred connection between earth mother and sky father.

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