

APPENDIX B

AN EXPANDED FRAMEWORK OF RITUAL-ARCHITECTURAL PRIORITIES: ELEVEN SETS OF HEURISTIC LEADING QUESTIONS

This expanded framework of ritual-architectural priorities is based on the fundamental hermeneutical principle that scholarly interpretations, not unlike the indigenous meanings of architecture, arise in response to questions.¹ Very simply put, this dialogical proposition holds that questions not asked are seldom answered. Accordingly, if the sole queries with which an investigator approaches the architectural remains of Monte Albán are *How old is this building? Who built this structure?* or even *What symbolic meanings did the architect of this construction intend to convey?* then we can anticipate equally impoverished interpretations. Yes, questions not asked are seldom answered.

On those grounds, my discontents with extant interpretation of sacred architecture, not only in Mesoamerican but everywhere, are predicated on the observation that scholars usually operate with a quite limited array of questions about what architecture can mean and do. Consequently, as an antidote to that invariably-narrow pattern of interpretive options, I provide here a 30-page collection of leading questions that vastly widens the catalogue of possibilities. By no means anything approaching the full range of viable alternatives, years of reflecting as a comparative historian of religions on more contemporary and fully studied contexts around the globe have led me to the precocious claim that these are the most propitious lines in inquiry in making sense of broadly religious architecture. This is, then, a general mapping of possibilities—or what I term “ritual-architectural priorities”—that is not more, or less, pertinent

¹ This framework is borrowed, in slightly amended form, from Lindsay Jones, *The Hermeneutics of Sacred Architecture: Experience, Interpretation, Comparison* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), vol. II, 295-332, “Appendix: An Expanded Morphology of Ritual-Architectural Priorities.” For a much fuller discussion of the rationale and utility of this configuration of alternative, see *ibid.*, vol. II, chap. 13, “A Morphological Agendum: Organization by Ritual-Architectural Priorities.”

to pre-Columbian Mesoamerica than any other historical context.² To the contrary, this configuration of eleven main themes and copious variations on those themes is formulated on the basis of years of studying and visiting sacred architectures in many different contexts, perhaps more in Asia and Mesoamerica than anywhere else. This framework is, in other words, part of a *general* theory of sacred architecture that I am bringing to bear of the *specific* case of Monte Albán.

Again, therefore, very simply put, the agenda of *The Religion of Monte Albán* entails asking, and then working to answer, the way in which every one of the questions posed in the following catalogue of options applies to the great Zapotec capital of Oaxaca. On the one hand, this is the most pedestrian and mechanical of methods: Chapter 1 asks, and attempts to answer, how and to what extent the general themes enumerated under priority I-A, “homology,” apply to Monte Albán; chapter 2 asks, and attempts to answer, how and to what extent the general questions posed under priority I-B, “convention,” apply to Monte Albán; chapter 3 asks, and attempts to answer, how and to what extent the general questions enumerated under priority I-C, “astronomy,” apply to Monte Albán; etc. One might utilize precisely the same array of questions to interpret Teotihuacan, Chichén Itzá, Copán or, for that matter, Rome, Mecca, Kyoto or Washington, D.C. And to see the eleven sets of thematic topics as a kind of checklist is not entirely wrong.

² As I explain more fully elsewhere, I opt to call these various options “ritual-architectural priorities” primarily for two reasons: First, to signal that the most significant meanings of built forms arise in the context of ceremonial occasions or “ritual-architectural events.” On that point, see Jones, *The Hermeneutics of Sacred Architecture*, vol. I, chap. 3, “Conversation and Play: The Eventfulness of Architecture.” And, secondly, by terming these “priorities,” I endeavor to respect the way in which every ritual-architectural occasion arises from, and then perpetuates, an intensely complex play or competition—a dance, if you will—between multiple (often widely diverse) priorities, parameters, interests, interests and limitations; and thus any particular ritual-architectural event participates simultaneously in several of the framework’s morphological categories. The relevance of priority I-A, “homology,” for instance, in no ways cancels the relevance of priority II-A, “divinity,” or priority III-D, “sanctuary;” the eleven main priorities, and innumerable variations on each theme, are far more often complimentary than antagonist. On this point, see *ibid.*, vol. II, chap. 13, especially the sub-section entitled “Non-Mutually Exclusive Priorities: Competitions, Overlaps, and Interpretations.”

On the other hand, I offer constant reminders that these questions are leading, or “heuristic,” in the sense of “serving to guide, discover or reveal, but incapable of proof.”³ Heuristic questions are “tools of interpretation,” which are useful or not useful, but not right or wrong. Though none can be answered with a simple “yes” or “no,” sometimes my reply to specific queries will be that this particular ritual-architectural priority is not at all relevant to Monte Albán. In other cases, pursuing one line of inquiry will beg for additional questions and variations on the theme; while some heuristic options can be dispatched quickly, others expand in complex and unexpected ways. Symmetry and evenness of applicability are neither expectations nor goals. Alternatively, my aspiration is to open for consideration innumerable avenues of interpretation that have seldom or never been trafficked in relation to Monte Albán. Again, it is a central tenant of the dialogical, Gadamerian hermeneutical method on which I rely that questions—or heuristic possibilities—never ventured seldom get their due consideration.⁴

The three main parts of the eleven-part framework conform both to the structure of *The Religion of Monte Albán* and what I call “the mechanism of architecture.”⁵ Part I, “Orientation and Allurement: The Instigation of Ritual-Architectural Events,” addresses, to use the shorthand terms, homology (priority I-A), convention (priority I-B) and astronomy (priority I-C) as three often “modes of allurement” that frequently—for instance at Monte Albán—work of make a ritual-architectural situation compelling, legitimate and worthy of audiences’ attention.⁶ Part II, “Commemoration, Messages and Meanings: The Content of Ritual-Architectural Events,” surveys variations on the respective commemoration of divinity (priority II-A), sacred history

³ Here I appeal simply to a standard dictionary definition of “heuristic.”

⁴ Again as I note in many contexts, arguably foremost among the theoretical texts that informs this whole project is Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. W. Glen-Doepel (London: Sheed and Ward Ltd., 1975), especially pt. I, “The Question of Truth as it Emerges in the Experience of Art.”

⁵ See Jones, *The Hermeneutics of Sacred Architecture*, vol. I, chap. 4, “Order and Variation: The Twofold Pattern of Ritual-Architectural Events.”

⁶ See *The Hermeneutics of Sacred Architecture*, vol. I, chap. 5, “Allurement and Coercion: The Front Half of the Ritual-Architectural Situation.”

(priority II-B), politics (priority II-C) and the dead (priority II-D) as a means of appreciating the sorts of information and meaning that are transacted in various ceremonial occasions.⁷ And Part III, “Choreography and Ritual Context: The Presentation of Ritual-Architectural Events” inventories and contrasts the means by which particular ceremonial occasions are orchestrated and choreographed via consideration of a legion of permutations on, variously, theatrical (priority III-A), contemplative (priority III-B), propitiatory (priority III-C) and sanctuary (priority III-D) modes of presentation.

In the spirit of the sort of cross-cultural comparison that informs the composition of this framework of leading questions, and thus my interpretation of Monte Albán, many of the general alternatives enumerated here are illustrated with elliptical reference to some specific case and context. All of those cross-cultural examples are discussed more fully in *The Hermeneutics of Sacred Architecture*; but only some of those specific exemplifications are addressed in *The Religion of Monte Albán*.

PART I

ORIENTATION AND ALLUREMENT: THE INSTIGATION OF RITUAL-ARCHITECTURAL EVENTS

HOMOLOGY (priority I-A): *Sacred architecture that represents a miniaturized replica of the universe and/or conforms to a celestial archetype.*

The notion of ritual-architectural homology refers to several themes that are very prominent in the work of Mircea Eliade. This set of possibilities ought not, though, be considered as coextensive with Eliade’s work nor as a blanket endorsement of his redoubted theory of sacred space. In this context, Eliade’s formulations, with which one need not be in full agreement, are treated as heuristic and provocative rather than definitive.

Consider, for example, the non-mutually exclusive applicability of the following four variations on (or dimensions of) the homology theme:

⁷ See *The Hermeneutics of Sacred Architecture*, vol. I, chap. 6, “Transformation and Productivity: The Back Half of the Ritual-Architectural Situation.”

1. Architectural expressions of hierophany or an earthly manifestation of “the Sacred”:

This involves the acknowledgement of (apparently) intrinsically powerful places and natural features (e.g., rocks, caves, mountains, springs, or other geographical anomalies), where it is believed that a numinous or “sacred” power has made its presence felt.

Note that such sites are, from the perspective of the faithful, considered to have been designated by “sacred” or extra-natural agencies, and thus “discovered” rather than created by any sort of human activity, including ritual.

Note, moreover, that, for the sort of hermeneutical analysis advocated here, it is important for scholars to take seriously indigenous claims that “the Sacred” has manifested itself in some particular place without, however, passing judgment on the ontological viability of those indigenous claims.

2. Architectural imitations of celestial precedents or “archetypes”:

This involves constructions or construction processes conceived as earthly replications (or reiterations) of mythical, “primordial,” or heavenly buildings or building processes (e.g., the Temple of Solomon, which is described in the *Letter to the Hebrews* as “a copy and a shadow of the heavenly sanctuary”).

Note that architectural configurations that are conceived as modeled after (or reiterative of) mythical precedents are especially relevant also to the commemoration of sacred history (priority II-B), particularly the sub-category of ritual-architectural commemorations of cosmogony.

3. Architectural expressions of *imago mundi* or cosmogrammatic ordering:

This possibility, which constitutes the quintessence of the homology theme, involves constructions that are conceived as downsized replicas of the universe or “images of the world” (e.g., the house plan of the Sa’Dan Toraja of Indonesia, a domicile that is explicitly conceived and constructed as a kind reduced version of the entire Toraja cosmological system). Builders and users imagine in these cases that there is a direct parallelism between the macrocosm (i.e., the universe at large) and the architectural microcosm (i.e., the earthly built form).

Note that this version of homologized building may entail a replication of the structure of the universe at any architectural scale (e.g., at the scale of altars, rooms, buildings, cities, or whole territories, as in the case of Inca *ceque* system). Such homologizing architectural practices serve often to reflect (or effect) the unification of space, time, colors, biological species, body parts, social structure, political affiliations, etc.

4. Architectural expressions of *axis mundi* or the symbolism of the center:

This exceptionally prevalent possibility, which Eliade and others have instantiated in countless cultural contexts, involves architectural configurations that are located at, or oriented with respect to, a cosmic center or “world axis.” Orientation with respect to a cosmic center invariably entails as well a preoccupation with the cardinal directions.

Note again the possibility that a construction that is conceived as located at the “Center of the World,” thus enabling special access to other cosmic realms, finds expression at all scales (e.g., rooms, habitations, temples, villages, or, as in the case of ancient Chinese capital cities, whole empires).

- More generally with respect to the homology priority (I-A), note also that the deployment of such homologizing building practices is, in most cases, preparatory rather than summational. That is to say, homologized building is most often a means of ritual-architectural allurements, which serves to capture the interest of onlookers and to invite their participation—but almost never constitutes the total, or even primary, significance of an architectural event.
- And finally, note too that, irrespective of the Eliadean claims to universality, in the sacred architectures of numerous historical contexts (e.g., classical Greece), the infamous categories of hierophany, *imago mundi*, *axis mundi*, and symbolism of the center are largely or wholly irrelevant.

CONVENTION (priority I-B): *Sacred architecture that conforms to standardized rules and/or prestigious mythico-historic precedents.*

The so-termed convention priority refers to architectural constructions and building processes that explicitly conform to standardized (or “conventionalized”) stipulations and rules. The authority of such architectural conventions and prescriptions may, however, derive from innumerable and very different sorts of sources.

Consider, for example, the non-mutually exclusive applicability of the following three broad sets of variations on the convention theme:

1. Architectures that conform to “universalistic” principles and proportions that are (considered to have been) derived from largely empirical observations of the “natural” world.

This widespread possibility may include, for instance, the replication in architecture of abstract laws of measure and proportion (e.g., sacred ratios, magic numbers, or secret rhythms) that have been variously adduced from any—or usually all—of the following:

- a. Observations of natural phenomena (e.g., Renaissance adducements of the “first principles of Nature” from observations of plants, animals, weather, and the movements of stars and planets);
- b. Measurements of human anatomy (e.g., Alberti’s meticulous studies of bodily proportions);
- c. Analyses of sound and music (e.g., Augustine’s reliance on studies of music in the formulations of his aesthetics of number and proportion); and/or
- d. Mathematical and geometrical calculations (e.g., Chinese *feng-shui* geomantic schemes, or the rich Sufi tradition of “symbolic and qualitative mathematics”).

Note that architectural conventions of this sort may be variously recorded in building manuals (e.g., the abundance of ancient Egyptian manuals of “correct” construction and Renaissance rulebooks of architectural proportion, spacing, and style); narrative canonical codes (e.g., the vast Hindu *silpa sastra* literature); and/or schematic diagrams (e.g., Chinese “magic squares” or Hindu mandala diagrams).

Note also that, in some instances (e.g., in the Italian Renaissance context), the guiding priority for architectural design is exact (or ostensibly “objective”) conformity to universal rhythms and proportions; but in other instances (e.g., in the layout of ancient Greek city states), the first priority seems to be *the appearance of* perfect order and regularity, which may require actually compromising objective architectural proportions.

2. Architectures that conform to axiomatic stipulations that are (considered to have been) delivered by divine revelation or decree:

Architectural prescriptions that are mandated by a god may be variously recorded in personal testimony, in oral tradition, and/or in sacred scripture (e.g., Qur’anic design standards that are understood to have been decreed directly by Allah, or the divinely given design directives that appear in the Torah and Jewish halakic literature).

3. Architectures that conform to precedents that are (considered to have been) established by prestigious historical and/or mythical predecessors:

This exceptionally widespread possibility depends less on conformity to abstract cosmic principles than on the faithful imitation of revered mythico-historical precedents (e.g., “the Ancients”). Often this involves deliberate “archaisms,” that is, the copying of architectural elements (e.g., building forms and styles, iconographic and pictorial elements, or orientations and alignments) that were established in some earlier (or perhaps contemporaneous) context (e.g., the widespread Mesoamerican practice of reproducing artistic and architectural patterns believed to have been “invented” by the highly esteemed mythico-historical Toltecs).

Note that, because such deliberately archaic building practices are often in the service of establishing (an appearance of) continuity with prestigious mythico-historical forebears, these

imitative practices are often directly relevant also to the commemoration of sacred history (priority II-B) and the commemoration of politics (priority II-C).

- More generally with respect to the convention priority (I-B), note also that this alternative (unlike the homology priority, I-A) is to some considerable extent relevant to virtually all ritual-architectural circumstances. Conformity to ritual-architectural conventions is similar to homologized building, however, insofar as it serves most often as a means of establishing an aura of order and legitimacy, and thus making buildings and occasions alluring—but adherence to convention (again like homology) almost never constitutes the total, or even primary, significance of a ritual-architectural event.
- Finally, note additionally that, in many cases, deliberate deviation from well established ritual-architectural conventions is at least as provocative and powerful as faithful conformity to those conventions.

ASTRONOMY (priority I-C): *Sacred architecture that is aligned or referenced with respect to celestial bodies (e.g., the sun, moon, planets, or stars).*

The astronomy priority has an ambiguous status in this morphology insofar as orientations and referencings with respect to celestial features, frequently neglected by earlier scholars, are of central importance in a few ritual-architectural contexts, but are largely irrelevant in many, probably most, other contexts.

Note also that, despite the cross-cultural abundance of elaborate ancient monuments that were clearly designed to observe the movements of celestial bodies, very seldom (particularly in “traditional” contexts) is the significance of astronomically oriented, ostensibly religious architecture exhausted in the acquisition of “empirical data.” The incentives for ancient astronomers were, it seems, very different from those of their contemporary counterparts.

Consider, for example, how the astronomy priority may be applicable to each of the respective components of the twofold ritual-architectural situation:

1. With respect to astronomy and allurement (i.e., the “front-half” of the ritual-architectural situation):

Astro-architectural references, when coordinated with other orientational strategies, can substantially enhance the appearance of harmony and conformity to a generalized world order, and thus enhance the legitimacy—and the allure—associated with a specific ritual-architectural circumstance. Two, often complementary, possibilities deserve consideration:

- a. In conjunction with homologized orientation (priority I-A), astronomical features and alignments often serve as one more element that is integrated into some larger cosmogrammatic scheme (e.g., as in the case of the Inca *ceque* system, wherein observational sky phenomena were integrated into a complex system of homological

correlations involving not only spaces and times but also occupations, tribute responsibilities, and kinship and marriage groups); and

- b. In conjunction with conventionalized orientation (priority I-B), sometimes observable sky phenomena are integrated into the ritual-architectural context as a means of strengthening the appearance of conformity to (ostensibly) universal rhythms and principles. This may require the deliberate “distortion” (or maybe enhancement) of empirically-derived astronomical information (e.g., in the Maya’s frequent and willful manipulation of astronomical “data” in order to synchronize sky phenomena both with the conventionalized recording of past events and the scheduling of future ones).

2. Also with respect to strategies of allurement, though somewhat more aggressively and more distinctively connected to astronomy:

Ritual-architectural choreographers may, on occasion, find ways to capitalize on some predictable sky phenomenon (say, an eclipse, solar equinox, or the reappearance of Venus or a comet) as the means for strategic scheduling of a ceremony (e.g., Maya coronations or re-affirmations of kingship that were scheduled in conjunction with the arcane but regular movements of Venus and the sun).

Note that invitations of this sort, which can be both highly dramatic and often coercive, usually depend on the “ritual-architectural enhancement of nature” (e.g., in the case of the “serpent of light” phenomenon at Chichén Itzá). That is to say, the dramatically alluring astro-architectural effect is visible only as a consequence of the strategic integration of natural sky phenomena and humanly constructed elements. Without the carefully designed built forms, there is no “celestial” effect.

Note also that, because ritual-architectural events of this sort require and demonstrate special predictive knowledge, they may sometimes engender orientational sensations that are better characterized as “active control” of the future than as “passive harmony” with past (conventionalized) practices or with present (homologized) cosmic realities. That, however, is frequently very difficult to assess.

3. With respect to astronomy and the presentation of substantive meanings and messages (i.e., the “back-half” of the ritual-architectural situation):

Though the most salient uses of celestially aligned features probably come in relation to strategies of allurement, astro-architectural orientations—which work, in a sense, to incorporate sky phenomena into the ritual context—can likewise substantially enhance the presentation and apprehension of meanings that bear on each of the four commemorative priorities. Consider, for instance:

- a. Astronomical orientations in conjunction with commemorations of divinity, priority II-A (e.g., alignments that enhance the worship of celestial bodies that are variously conceived as sun, sky, and “storm gods” such as Zeus, Indra, Rudra, Baal, Jupiter, and Thor);

- b. Astronomical orientations in conjunction with commemorations of sacred history, priority II-B (e.g., enhancements of storytelling via alignments to constellations that are conceived as mythological sites or actors, as in the cases of Native Americans, Africans, Polynesians, and Australian aborigines);
- c. Astronomical orientations in conjunction with commemorations of sociopolitical concerns, priority II-C (e.g., alignments that work to enhance the astrocosmologically sanctioned authority of a ruler, say, in the frequently close associations between kingship and the sun);
- d. Astronomical orientations in conjunction with commemorations of the dead, priority II-D (e.g., alignments that enhance devotion to esteemed ancestors, as was apparently the case with numerous British megaliths, most notably, Stonehenge).

PART II

COMMEMORATION, MESSAGES AND MEANINGS: THE CONTENT OF RITUAL-ARCHITECTURAL EVENTS

DIVINITY (priority II-A): *Sacred architecture that commemorates, houses, and/or represents a deity, divine presence, or conception of ultimate reality.*

Note that especially in the case of commemorations of divinity, analyses of specific cases and cross-cultural comparison are complicated—and enlivened—by the enormous diversity of culturally-specific conceptions of deities and other supernatural entities and presences.

Nonetheless, consider, for example, the applicability of the following four sets of non-mutually exclusive variations on the divinity theme:

1. The personification or divination of natural “architectural” features of the landscape:

This possibility, which integrates naturally occurring architectonic elements into the ritual context, may entail either:

- a. Conceiving of geological or biological features, the “architecture of nature” as it were (e.g., mountains, stones, trees, lakes, etc.), as divinities, culture heroes, and/or ancestors (e.g., as among Australian aborigines); or
- b. Orienting built forms and ritual activities toward natural features that are somehow mythologized and/or divinized (e.g., as in the reciprocal relations between classical Greek temples and the landscape, wherein the experience of the buildings entails and requires also the experience of the broader natural surroundings).

2. Architecture that is conceived as the actual body of a deity:

In these cases, built forms are equated or “literally” identified with (the body of) a divinity, most prominently, a goddess of the earth (e.g., Cretan palaces, which are conceived as the body of the Minoan earth goddess, and thus as “living organisms”).

Note that often the ritualized entry into such god-like (or earth-like) architectural features is conceived as a kind of symbolic death, whereupon exit from the structure enables a cathartic sensation of rebirth (e.g., as in the supposed ritual use of Maya zoomorphic, “earth-monster” temples).

3. Architecture that is conceived an abode, residence, or house of a deity or divine presence:

Often such “deity domiciles,” which are designed with the hope of luring a divinity to take up permanent or periodic residence in that sheltering space, are conceived as earthly replicas of the god’s mythological or heavenly home (e.g., Hindu temples built as replicas of Shiva’s mythological mountain home of Kailasa).

Note also that, where deities are regarded as residing in the architectural space (either permanently or periodically), the ritualized interactions between human devotees and divinities (who may be more specifically present in anthropomorphic images, icons, or statues) can variously take the form of:

- a. Honoring, entertaining, or pampering a god (e.g., the feeding and washing of gods at many Hindu temples);
- b. Petitioning or propitiating a god (e.g., fertility rites in innumerable contexts);
- c. Consulting or soliciting advice from a god (e.g., oracle temples in ancient Greece or China); and/or
- d. Holding a god captive (e.g., Aztec cases in which the gods of conquered peoples were confined to a special temple, or those Greek cases in which deity statues were literally restrained with chains).

4. Architecture that is conceived as a built expression of the attributes of a divinity:

Built forms of this sort, which often have more the character of sculptures than shelters, express or invoke in some abstract fashion the qualities or the “notion” of a deity, a divine presence, or a conception of ultimate reality.

Though the most obvious exemplars are constructions built to “commemorate” a specific, largely anthropomorphic deity (e.g., classical Greek temples dedicated respectively to Hera, Demeter, Artemis, and Aphrodite), consider also the following, less straightforward, overlapping variations on this theme:

- a. Architectural expressions of a non-anthropomorphic conception of ultimate reality (e.g., architectural expressions of the Buddhist Dharma);
 - b. Architectural expressions of specific conceptions of existential dilemma and possible solutions (e.g., Hindu architecturalizations of the notions of karma-regulated rebirth and *moksha*, or liberation from rebirth);
 - c. Architectural expressions of subtle and specific theologies (e.g., triangular or three-tiered architectural allusions to the three elements of the Christian Trinity);
 - d. Architecture configurations designed to avoid depicting (an Abrahamic) god, yet to disclose an intuition of the nature and transcendence of god (e.g., in the evocative geometrical designs of Muslim mosques); and
 - e. Architecture that simply provides a context to meet in order to think, study, and talk about a deity that cannot be confined to any particular earthly place (e.g., those Jewish synagogues or Protestant church contexts in which the absolute transcendence of God is accentuated).
- More generally, note also the strong possibility that the commemoration of divinity (priority II-A) is most notable by its omission or highly restricted relevance. With respect, for instance, to the complex matters of idolatry, iconoclasm, and aniconism, both indigenous (especially Abrahamic) and academic claims concerning a deliberate and complete avoidance of any version of the artistic commemoration of divinity are quite common. Actual historical practice, however, nearly always belies those ostensible claims to the total evasion of any representation of God.

SACRED HISTORY (priority II-B): *Architecture that commemorates an important mythical, mythico-historical, or miraculous episode or circumstance.*

Note that “sacred history” is employed here as a broad designation that encompasses foundational and authoritative stories concerning variously mythical, miraculous, and historical circumstances, groups, and individuals. Accordingly, narratives belonging to either of the oft-contested categories of “myth” and “history” (as well as legend, fable, folktale, etc.) are directly pertinent.

Consider, for example, the applicability of the following five sets of non-mutually exclusive variations on the sacred history theme:

1. Architectural configurations that serve simply as the stage-setting or backdrop for the reenactment of notable mythic, historic, and/or miraculous episodes:

Note that such very common configurations (e.g., countless stages, amphitheaters, daises, or dance platforms) are nearly always connected to theatric modes of presentation and apprehension (priority III-A).

2. Ritual-architectural commemorations of cosmogony:

With respect to architectural embodiments of creation stories, consider, for instance:

- a. Construction (or remodeling) processes patterned after a cosmogony, which may entail either:
 - i. Building practices that are explicitly conceived by the builders as reiterative of the creation of the world (e.g., the erection of Hindu temples); and/or
 - ii. Building practices that, in the view of academic interpreters, are reiterative of a cosmogonic pattern and logic (e.g., interpretations of the sensations of renewal and exhilaration that accompany the construction of some Christian churches).

Note that instances of these sorts of ritualized, cosmogonically reiterative, building processes are directly related both to the homology priority (I-A) and to one sort of permutation of the propitiation priority (III-C).

- b. Completed architectural configurations that express, and thus facilitate reenactment of, cosmogonic themes (e.g., the moat-encircled Angkor Vat, which is a direct expression of a Southeast Asian creation story).

3. Ritual-architectural commemorations of mythico-historical episodes or occurrences:

In these cases, the episodes, or “happenings,” being commemorated may be conceived as either:

- a. Strictly “mythical” insofar as they are understood to have occurred in some primordial, timeless era or dimension (e.g., the Aztec story of the birth of war god Huitzilopochtli, which is reenacted at the Templo Mayor); or
- b. One-time “historical” episodes insofar as the events are understood to have occurred in ordinary human time, perhaps on some specifically dated occasion. In these cases, consider whether those “historical” events are conceived as either:
 - i. “Miraculous” insofar as they entail some extrahuman agency (e.g., the apparition of a god, angel, or virgin); or
 - ii. Exceptional but strictly human accomplishments (e.g., the discovery of new lands, victory in battle, or insight in law-making).

4. Ritual-architectural commemorations of mythico-historical individuals or personages:

In these cases, which often entail the consolidation of various attributes of excellence and good character (or maliciousness and bad character) in a single individual, consider, for instance, whether the figure being commemorated is conceived as:

- a. Wholly non-human, such as a mythical beast, animal, trickster, or culture hero (in which case, there is a merger with the commemoration of divinity, priority II-A);
- b. Human but in some sense divine or trans-human (e.g., Egyptian pharaohs or Jesus Christ); or
- c. Strictly human (e.g., a military leader, such as Napoleon, or a religio-political leader such as Martin Luther King, Jr.).

5. Ritual-architectural commemorations of mythical places, sites, or locations:

In these cases, in which the “power of place,” or the geography of sacred history, is apparently even more important than that of specific events or individuals, consider, for instance:

- a. Circumstances in which direct physical contact with the place is required (e.g., journeys to the pilgrimage sites of Mecca, Lourdes, or Banaras); and
 - b. Circumstances in which efforts are made to, in some sense, “transfer the sanctity” or “bring home” the place, either by carrying away amupullae, water, or dirt (e.g., in St. Helen’s transfer of dirt from Mount Calvary to Rome), or perhaps by building a replica of the place in some other location (e.g., in Friar Caimi’s replication of the Holy Land in Italy).
- More generally with respect to sacred history (priority II-B), consider also the possibilities either of relative indifference toward or ineffectiveness in the expression of narrative themes via art and architecture. In those cases, this priority could be most notable by its limited applicability (e.g., in assessments of the non-narrative quality of Olmec art as opposed to the decidedly storiological art of Izapa).
 - Additionally, note that it will be important to discern, to the extent possible, whether, in the context of the specific ritual-architectural commemorations of sacred history, human participants’ apprehensions of the respective mythico-historical episodes and individuals are conceived more as:
 - a. Pedagogical: that is, simply as occasions of intellectualized learning, remembering, or paying homage (e.g., as in most museums or celebrations of national holidays where people imagine themselves as simply “recalling” significant events and people); or
 - b. Experiential and participatory: that is, as occasions of somehow reliving or “reactualizing” those exceptional events, and perhaps even, in some sense, “becoming” those mythico-historical individuals (e.g., as in claims that participants in the Eucharist are actually made present to the Passion of Jesus).

POLITICS (priority II-C): *Sacred architecture that commemorates, legitimates, or challenges socioeconomic hierarchy and/or temporal authority.*

Note that “politics” is a shorthand designation that directs attention to the roles of architecture and ritual not only in relation to the exercise of explicitly governmental force and authority, but also in relation to the perpetuation (or subversion) of any sort of social or economic hierarchy. The sweep of relevant issues is, in other words, wide in the extreme.

Nonetheless, consider the applicability of the following three sets of non-mutually exclusive variations on the politics theme:

1. Ritual-architectural configurations that reflect and perpetuate the prevailing social hierarchy:

Such status quo-reinforcing configurations may occur at all scales—from room furnishings, to individual buildings, to village layouts, to the spatial arrangement of whole regions or empires. Moreover, architectural strategies for reinforcing socio-economic hierarchies may entail:

- a. Horizontal arrangements (e.g., in the concentric layouts of Maya villages or Chinese cities in which proximity to the town center is correlated with social status); and/or
- b. Vertical arrangements (e.g., in the relative heights of the houses of various Hindu castes or in the design of multileveled Japanese houses).

2. Ritual-architectural configurations that challenge, undermine, and (maybe) change the prevailing social hierarchy:

Consider the following variations on the theme of social critique via architecture:

- a. Configurations that (temporarily) suspend or ignore wider social differentiation (e.g., Muslim mosques, inside which the social distinctions that obtain in the outside world are erased or suspended).

Though (ostensibly) designed to criticize and challenge social conventions, note that ritual-architectural designs that enable periodic suspension or avoidance of the wider socio-economic hierarchy may actually serve in the long run to reinforce rather than undermine the status quo.

- b. Configurations that protest, subvert, and (are intended to) change the status quo (e.g., the doorways and shapes of Sikh or Baha’i temples, which are intended to express classless unity and openness to all).

These are, generally speaking, “bottom-up” configurations, as it were, insofar as they are initiated by “the disenfranchised” (e.g., revolutionaries or social critics with limited

economic and political resources who initiate “counter-designs” or “guerilla buildings”). In these cases, the long-term socioeconomic effects are often negligible.

- c. Configurations that (are intended to) override the prevailing social order and/or to authorize a transition of authority.

These are, generally speaking, “top-down” configurations insofar as they are initiated by “the enfranchised” (e.g., rulers and leaders with substantial economic and political resources). With respect to these better-financed ritual-architectural initiatives, which are more likely to succeed in effecting long-term social change, consider especially two possibilities:

- i. Ritual-architectural projects undertaken in relation to peaceful transitions of authority (e.g., coronations, ascensions, and inaugurations); and
- ii. Ritual-architectural projects undertaken in relation to forcible takeovers of authority (e.g., invasions, military victories, conquests, and colonization).

3. Ritual-architectural configurations that serve more explicitly governmental functions:

Consider, for example, the following variations of the theme of ritual-architectural strategies employed in governance and statecraft:

- a. Configurations that glorify of a particular ruler:

Such projects—which may commemorate either divine or human and either living or deceased rulers—may be initiated either by the ruler himself or herself (e.g., as in the Great Pyramid at Giza, which was built by and for the pharaoh Cheops), or by someone else (e.g., posthumous memorials like the Washington Monument, which nonetheless also serve strategic governmental functions).

- b. Configurations that facilitate day-to-day governmental operations:

This often entails the constructions of a (ritual) context for stylized debate and decision making (e.g., parliamentary chambers, congressional headquarters, or courtrooms).

- c. Configurations that provide (symbolic) expression of the strength and stability of the state and/or other religio-civic institutions:

With respect to these sorts of strategies, which are generally pursued with the greatest urgency when centralized states are expanding or imperiled, consider especially three possibilities:

i. Religio-civic integration via ritual-architectural means:

This often entails persuading reticent people in peripheral territories of their necessary respect for, and allegiance to, a hegemonic center. This may include either the replication of the architectural elements from the center in the periphery (e.g., the Quiché Maya’s construction in the outlying reaches of their empire of garrisons that were scaled-down copies of the civic buildings of their capital) or other means of standardization imposed by a centralized authority.

ii. Constructions of religio-civic identity via ritual-architectural means:

This often entails the construction and public showcasing of a distinguished pedigree (e.g., the Aztecs’ reliance on architecture and ritual in the perpetration of a legitimating but largely fictive Toltec pedigree; or the strategic imitation of Greco-Roman, European, and Egyptian architectural motifs on the Washington Mall).

iii. Blunt intimidation via ritual-architectural means:

This often entails vivid displays of past military victories (e.g., monuments in several contexts that depict conquerors standing on the necks or heads of the vanquished); or the presentation of “aggressively foreign” styles (e.g., in the colonial royal palace of the British in India, which stood in deliberately stark contrast to indigenous architectural styles).

- More generally, note also that, with respect to all of these strategic, manipulative expressions of the politics priority (II-C), it is especially important to investigate whether the ritual-architectural ploys “worked” in the sense of successfully solidifying or changing social circumstances and sentiments. That is to say, in this realm especially—where the ritual-architectural failure rate, as it were, is especially high—watch for disparities between design intentions and subsequent apprehensions.

THE DEAD (priority II-D): *Sacred architecture that commemorates revered ancestors and/or other deceased individuals or groups.*

As with the divinity priority (II-A), specific analyses and cross-cultural comparisons of the ritual-architectural commemoration of the dead (priority II-D) are especially complicated—and enlivened—by the enormous diversity of culturally-specific conceptions not only of death and the “afterlife,” but also of human bodies and lived existence.

Nonetheless, consider the applicability of the following three sets of non-mutually exclusive variations on the theme of the commemoration of the dead:

1. Architectural configurations that facilitate “bodiless memorializing”:

Two very different sorts of strategies for architecturally commemorating the dead (who are often conceived as very much “alive”) that are undertaken largely irrespective of actual bodily remains deserve special consideration:

- a. Architectural configurations that commemorate (strictly) mythical ancestors, “the dead that never lived,” so to speak, who thus have no bodily remains (e.g., Dogon houses and sanctuaries designed to honor esteemed “ancestors” who have, at no point in their existences, lived as ordinary humans); and
- b. Architectural configurations that commemorate “the fully dead,” that is, mythico-historical individuals who, after death, are not expected to exercise any direct influence on earthly affairs, and whose personhood is not directly connected to their bodily remains (e.g., modern Western, “secularized” monuments to the dead, which include no bodily remains and have a primarily pedagogical or museum-like character). Two prominent, overlapping possibilities include:
 - i. Group or collective bodiless memorials (e.g., the Holocaust Memorial Museum or the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington D.C., neither of which depends on actual bodily remains for its efficacy); and
 - ii. Individual-specific bodiless memorials: This may entail statues, monuments, or buildings that were constructed expressly to commemorate deceased individuals, but which include no bodily remains (e.g., public monuments like the Lincoln and Jefferson Memorials). Or this may entail more obviously utilitarian architectural constructions that are dedicated to, and often named after, specific deceased individuals (e.g., stadiums, hospitals, bridges, parks, streets, school or church additions, or smaller architectural elements like balconies, bells, or windows).

2. Architectural configurations that serve as the actual embodiment, reactualization, or transmutation of the dead:

This includes variations on the less obvious notion of architecture (broadly speaking) that, in some direct and important sense, *is* the dead. Though again usually undertaken largely irrespective of actual bodily remains, these artistic and architectural configurations are conceived as facilitating a kind of “conquest of death” in that they keep the deceased present and “alive.” Consider, for example, the following possibilities:

- a. Configurations in which ancestors are embodied in natural stone features or stone constructions (e.g., British megaliths or Hindu rock-cut shrines, both of which seem to rely on an equation between the timeless permanence of stone and the ongoing existence of dead ancestors); and
- b. Configurations in which ancestors are embodied in media other than stone (e.g., those practices in which famous or obscure people are “kept alive” in wood or wax carvings, paintings, photographs, or computer imaging).

3. Architectural configurations designed for the assiduous treatment and accommodation of the physical, bodily remains of the (un)dead:

This includes the more obvious possibility of actual tombs and burials of dead bodies. Consider, among prominent possibilities, the following, non-mutually exclusive variations on more explicitly mortuary architecture:

- a. Mortuary domiciles: that is, architectural configurations designed to house and pamper the (un)dead, enabling them to continue ostensibly routine domestic lives (e.g., Etruscan tombs that were conceived as “veritable underground houses”);
 - b. Mortuary refuges: that is, architectural configurations designed either as:
 - i. Permanent resting places (e.g., the cave-like burial chambers at Hagar Qim, Malta, which, like countless “tomb wombs,” provided places where the [un]dead were returned to their ostensible places of origin); or
 - ii. Temporary places of waiting: that is, tomb spaces from which the (un)dead are expected to move on to some more permanent posthumous destination (e.g., Jewish, Christian, or Muslim burials where the body “sleeps” until eventual resurrection or perhaps condemnation).
 - c. Funerary vehicles of transport (e.g., Polynesian, ancient Egyptian, or Viking tombs, which were variously designed as chariots, boats, or other conveyances that could facilitate the [un]dead’s perilous passage to some more permanent posthumous destination);
 - d. Mortuary gates, “crossing places,” or points of ontological transition: that is, *axis mundi*-like burial sites where the (un)dead—and often the living—might “cross over” into other worlds or dimensions (e.g., according to some interpretations, Egyptian graves, Buddhist stupas, or Hindu *tirthas*, which are explicitly conceived as “sacred fords”);
 - e. Mortuary prisons or places of confinement: that is, burial configurations designed to police or incarcerate the (un)dead so that they do not “come back” and cause harm (e.g., massive Haitian tombs, which block dangerous interactions between the dead and the living);
 - f. Mortuary palaces: that is, burial configurations (e.g., Egyptian pyramids and some Inca and Maya funerary monuments) that are designed so as to enable (un)dead rulers to continue, even posthumously, their exercises of authority; and
 - g. Mortuary memorials and museums: that is, burial configurations, which are associated usually with heavily rationalized conceptions of death (e.g., in the context of the French Revolution), that are designed primarily for the living either to learn about and imitate the dead, or perhaps to use and exploit the dead in their constructions of identity.
- More generally, note as well that, very often, instances of the commemoration of the dead (priority II-D) also serve as strategies of allurement, that is, in the “front-half” of the architectural situation rather than the “back-half.” Particularly notable are those very

common situations in which the presence of bodily remains provide ritual-architectural contexts with a heightened aura of auspiciousness and sanctity (e.g., as in innumerable cases of the burial of martyrs or esteemed church leaders in the floors or patios of Christian churches). The mere presence of the remains of the (un)dead, even if the deceased are never explicitly mentioned, can substantially enhance the allure of a ritual-architectural context.

PART III

CHOREOGRAPHY AND RITUAL CONTEXT: THE PRESENTATION OF RITUAL-ARCHITECTURAL EVENTS

THEATER (priority III-A): *Sacred architecture that provides a stage setting or backdrop for ritual performance.*

Note that so-termed “theatric” modes of ritual-architectural presentation and apprehension are distinguished from other modes by the following criteria:

- *Inclusive* strategies of allurement insofar as the designers’ incentive usually is to invite, cajole, or sometimes force even reticent onlookers, or “spoil sports, into involvement. (This is contrasted to sanctuary modes [priority III-D] in which the characteristic incentive is to exclude and restrict participation.)
- *Indirect* apprehensions of architecture insofar as the built forms contribute to the creation of an ambience or backdrop for ritual performance. (This is contrasted to contemplation modes [priority III-B] in which architectural elements serve as direct, purposeful objects of attention and meditation.)

Note also that theatric modes, particularly in relation to allurement, often depend heavily on “affective” appeals to emotion and stimulation of the senses. Show, spectacle, ostentation, pomp and panache, shock, seduction, and amazement—these are the watchwords of theatric presentation, priority III-A.

Consider, for example, how theatric modes of presentation and apprehension may be applicable to each of the respective components of the twofold ritual-architectural situation:

1. With respect to theatric modes of allurement (i.e., the “front-half” of the ritual-architectural situation):

Theatric allurement—which, by define, entails the aggressive solicitation of involvement—may entail the presentation of dramatic architectural spaces that seduce, affect, or amaze a solitary individual (e.g., when an individual wanders into a spectacularly elaborate Baroque cathedral at a time when no formal proceedings are underway). The more prominent instances of theatric allurement, however, involve carefully scheduled interactions between ritual performers and an audience of onlookers (who constitute ritual actors of a different sort). Characteristically theatrical choreographic arrangements include the following options:

a. Stationary stages, stationary audiences:

Ritual-architectural configurations of this familiar sort facilitate the presentation of ceremonial performances on a fixed podium or stage for a similarly stationary assembly of onlookers (e.g., the spectacular “pageant spaces” of pre-Columbian Mesoamerica as well as countless more modest church, classroom, and cinema layouts where a seated audience faces a speaker, screen, or ensemble of singers, dancers, or actors).

b. Ambulatory actors, stationary audiences:

This very common alternative entails ritual-architectural configurations that facilitate ceremonial movement along processional ways or parade routes past a largely fixed audience or reviewing stand (e.g., longitudinal Christian basilicas like that which hosted the sumptuous liturgical processions at Cluny or, more prosaically, ordinary streets that provide the context for occasional civic or religious parades).

c. Ambulatory actors, ambulatory audiences:

In these configurations, onlookers are transformed into ritual actors in the most literal sense insofar as they are compelled not simply to watch, but to join in and move in fully physical ways (e.g., by making the choreographed passage through a Minoan labyrinth, a Chinese garden, or perhaps along the route defined by the Stations of the Cross). In this particularly aggressive mode of theatric allurements, the option of passivity is largely removed (e.g., at a very large scale, the Hajj requires Muslims to undertake the actual journey to Mecca; or, at a more modest scale, many Christian liturgies require worshippers to undertake the actual journey to the altar space to receive the Host).

2. With respect to theatric presentations and apprehensions of meanings and messages (i.e., the “back-half” of the ritual-architectural situation):

As regards the substantive content of ritual-architectural events, dramatic presentational means are perhaps most important insofar as they serve to intensify the effect and/or affect—that is, to enhance the “quality of knowledge”—of the information that is presented in those contexts. Consider ways in which theatric modes may work in conjunction with each of the commemorative priorities:

a. Theatric modes in conjunction with commemorations of divinity (priority II-A):

This common combination may entail either ambulatory ritual-architectural arrangements (e.g., the very widespread practice of elaborately choreographed processions in which deity images are carried through temples or streets) or more stationary arrangements (e.g., in Greek oracle temples, Hindu temples, or Tibetan Buddhist monasteries—all of which are, though, contexts in which theatrical

elaborations are ostensibly undertaken more in the interest of attracting and impressing deities than human devotees).

b. Theatric modes in conjunction with commemorations of sacred history (priority II-B):

This is a particularly salient combination of priorities, which may range from rudimentary architectural configurations (e.g., simple crèche constructions where the birth of Jesus is reenacted for Christmas audiences) to the super-elaborate (e.g., Bernini’s creation of whole Baroque environments in which worshippers could relive the mysteries of various episodes in Catholic sacred history).

c. Theatric modes in conjunction with commemorations of socio-political concerns (priority II-C):

This is an exceedingly prevalent and, quite often, highly effective combination of priorities. The most prominent exemplars, which often have an air of intimidation and manipulation, are elaborately, dramatically staged religio-civic ceremonials (e.g., the pomp of Balinese theater states, Japanese royal funerals, or Aztec human sacrifices—all of which are designed to consolidate or redirect public opinion).

d. Theatric modes in conjunction with commemorations of the dead (priority II-D):

Among numerous permutations of this combination, the most obvious are elaborate public funerals (e.g., the Japanese royal funerals just mentioned, or the similarly dramatic west African Tamberma funeral performances, which are staged in domicile-theater structures, elaborately designed precisely to facilitate just such occasions).

- Note, more generally, that in virtually all exercises of theatric presentational modes it is important to examine not only the composition of the actors, but also the usually careful constitution and choreography of the audience. The strategic recruitment of beholders (e.g., for Aztec sacrifices or Japanese royal funerals) will determine in large part the measure of impact such occasions have.
- Note also that no other priority in the morphology draws nearly so many negative and dismissive assessments as theatric modes of presentation. The disapprobation occurs at two levels: “Indigenous” religious practitioners (e.g., Bernard of Clairvaux) very often deliberately reject the sensory stimulation of theatric modes in favor of what they regard as more suitably cerebral or exclusive alternatives (which are usually achieved via contemplative [III-B] or sanctuary [III-D] modes). Moreover, academic students of architecture and religion also very often (and not always with sufficient warrant) dismiss characteristically theatrical configurations as garishly “ritualistic,” and thus either meretricious and superficial and/or unsubtly propagandistic.

CONTEMPLATION (priority III-B): *Sacred architecture that serves as a prop or focus for meditation or devotion.*

Note that the distinguishing criterion for, what I term, “contemplation” modes of ritual-architectural presentation and apprehension is the *direct* and purposeful reliance on architectural features as foci of meditation or concentration. (This is contrasted to theatric [III-A] and sanctuary [III-D] modes in which architectural elements contribute to an ambience or backdrop for ritual performance, and thus are experienced only *indirectly*.)

By that definition, then, it is important to remember that not every occasion of meditation qualifies as an occasion of architecture-assisted contemplation per se. Many “contemplative” experiences of architecture are quiet, cerebral, elitist, and apparently “mystical;” but others are loud, unsophisticated, and more bluntly didactic than abstract.

Note also that “architectural” foci of contemplation are broadly enough conceived to include not only buildings but also doorways, ceilings, facade decorations, windows, sculpture, paintings, altar ornaments, even light—any of which may serve as an aid to spiritual exercise, education, and/or ascent.

Nonetheless, consider how contemplative modes of presentation and apprehension may be applicable to each of the respective components of the twofold ritual-architectural situation:

1. With respect to contemplative modes of allurement (i.e., the “front-half” of the ritual-architectural situation):

Ritual-architectural instigation via contemplative modes involves the presentation of architectural configurations and elements that can serve as supports, guides, or, perhaps, sense, “maps” to some sort of devotional experience. Two sorts of tensions are particularly important with respect to these modes of engendering involvement in ritual-architectural events:

- a. The motivations and incentives for participation in architecture-assisted contemplation, which tend to divide between two contrastive possibilities:
 - i. Optional and voluntary participation:

In many cases, people elect to participate in contemplative apprehensions of architecture because they perceive the occasion as an opportunity for spiritual growth (e.g., as in the case of most pilgrims’ decisions to journey to and ascend the architectonic mandala of Borobudur). Such participants thus enter the occasion with hopeful enthusiasm, often animated by individualistic and idiosyncratic motivations.

ii. Compulsory and coerced participation:

In other cases, participation in contemplative apprehensions of architectural elements is either obligatory (e.g., in the mandatory viewing of religious or political propaganda films) or at least unavoidable (e.g., in the case of inadvertent exposure to large public murals depicting historical, religious, or political themes). Participants in these cases may, then, be either indifferent or even resistant to serious consideration of the ideas that being presented.

b. The socio-religious constitution of the participants in architecture-assisted contemplation, which also tends to divide between two contrastive possibilities:

i. Exclusive and esoteric participation:

In many cases, the invitations to devotion that such contemplative occasions extend appeal only to an educated or trained elite (e.g., the spiritually expert as it were, say, monks or mystics). In these cases, contemplative modes work like sanctuary modes of allurement (III-D) to restrict access and guard the integrity of the occasion.

ii. Inclusive and popular participation:

In other cases, the foci of devotion that are presented (e.g., stained-glass windows or narrative murals) are directed especially at an unschooled or unlettered audience. In these cases, contemplative modes work more like exhortative theatric modes of allurement (III-A) to beckon and coax reticent onlookers into involvement.

2. With respect to contemplative modes for the presentation and apprehension of meanings and messages (i.e., the “back-half” of the ritual-architectural situation):

Note that in the case of each of the four commemorative priorities, the pertinent messages that are presented via contemplative modes may be either highly rarified, cerebral, and abstract (e.g., as in the metaphysical insights engendered by the upper galleries of Borobudur); or more plainly educative and even didactic (e.g., as in the storiological reliefs in the lower galleries of Borobudur, which depict the punishments and rewards consequent of improper and proper behavior).

Note also that the vehicles of presentation—that is, the “architectural” foci of worshippers’ concentration—may be variously: elaborate, complex, and abstract (e.g., the intricate floral and geometric designs that adorn Persian mosques); elaborate, complex, and explicitly representational (e.g., the veristic depiction of people and events in paintings, statuary or stained glass); very plain (e.g., the roughhewn forms in Zen rock gardens); totally natural (e.g., rocks, waterfalls, or canyons); or even inadvertent or accidental (e.g., scratches on the

floor or water stains on the walls of a church, which may also become important foci for contemplation).

Be that as it may, consider some of some of the most prominent ways in which contemplation modes may work in conjunction with each of the four commemorative priorities:

a. Contemplative modes in conjunction with commemorations of divinity (priority II-A):

This is a particularly prevalent pairing, though here again comparative matters are complicated by specific and highly diversified conceptions of divinity that range from the personalistic to the decidedly rarified. Nonetheless, consider the following particularly salient possibilities, which, in a sense, range from the literal to the abstract:

- i. Worship of, concentration on, and direct interaction with anthropomorphic idols, sculptures, or images of divinity, in which case devotees may imagine themselves as in intimate “conversation” with their gods (e.g., the washing or pampering of Hindu deity images, or the “face-to-face” consultation of anthropomorphic gods in Greek oracle temples);
- ii. Concentration or reflection on “god-like” architectural features, including whole buildings, that are conceived either as the “body” of a divinity (e.g., Maya “earth monster” temples) or an abstract representation of the attributes of a divinity (e.g., sculpture-like classic Greek temples); and
- iii. Realizations of divinity via meditation or concentration on more fully abstract, nonanthropomorphic architectural features (e.g., the Sufi reliance on abstract floral or geometrical designs as a means of ascending from the manifest to the hidden; the Gothic reliance on patterns of light and shadow as means of “anagogical illumination”; or the Buddhist practice of focused meditation on mandalas as means of “psychic integration” or “waking up”).

b. Contemplative modes in conjunction with commemorations of sacred history (priority II-B):

The esoteric meditations of spiritual experts may sometimes rely on narrative or personalistic images (e.g., pictures of esteemed founders or gurus). But even more prominent instances of this common pairing of priorities involve more popular (non-elite), educative circumstances in which lay worshippers reflect upon artistic depictions of exemplary behavior (e.g., paintings, stained-glass windows, and relief carvings that depict the life-histories of Catholic saints, the Buddha, or other mythico-historical figures).

c. Contemplative modes in conjunction with commemorations of sociopolitical concerns (priority II-C):

Though contemplative modes are perhaps most famously prominent in (ostensibly) apolitical circumstances (e.g., as means of transcending the illusions of this world), such

modes of art-assisted devotion may also be used to engender loyalty, respect, and/or fear of the state (e.g., as in Abbot Suger’s pragmatic reliance on Gothic architectural elements as a means of communicating a quite specific religio-political agenda to a largely illiterate audience).

d. Contemplative modes in connections with commemorations of the dead (priority II-D):

Another very common pairing of priorities, this may entail either personalistic reflection on some sort of funerary monument (e.g., privately contemplating a grave marker as a means of maintaining contact with a dead relative) or more collective reflections (e.g., public celebrations that focus on a crypt or other sort of architectural memorial to a revered ancestor).

- More generally with respect to the contemplation priority (III-B), note also the quite common possibility of deliberate and (ostensibly) complete rejections of any form of art-assisted devotion, in which case contemplation modes of presentation and apprehension are most notable by avoidance. Such explicit rejections of the contemplation mode, which are often more a matter of rhetoric principles than actual practice, are usually (e.g., in the Abrahamic traditions) connected to unease about idolatry or attachment to worldly things.
- Note, then, that ambivalence and condescending attitudes toward art-assisted spirituality are evident not only in the writings of many historical religious figures (e.g., Eusebius, Augustine, and Bernard of Clairvaux), but also many contemporary academics (e.g., those whose work reflects, either explicitly or inadvertently, Protestant suspicions concerning the value of art as an aid to worship).

PROPITIATION (priority III-C): *Sacred architecture and processes of construction designed to please, appease, or manipulate “the Sacred” (however variously conceived).*

Note that the so-termed propitiation priority constitutes a special case. Somewhat differently than with the other three modes of presentation and apprehension, hermeneutical inquiries in this area will require working to understand the motivations, incentives, and “logic” that animate ritual activities—particularly ritualized building activities—that are “propitiatory” in the very broadest sense.

Note also that, as in the closely related area of divinity commemoration (priority II-A), empirical analyses and cross-cultural comparisons of propitiatory practices are complicated—and enlivened—by the extreme diversity of culturally-specific conceptions of the supernatural.

Nonetheless, consider, the applicability of the following non-mutually exclusive variations on the theme of propitiation, which can be arranged in two distinct, though very broad, sets:

1. Propitiatory ritual uses of standing (already-built) architecture:

With respect to architectural arrangements that facilitate and enhance propitiatory activities, two quite different sorts of ritual logic (which presuppose two quite different sorts of cosmological orientations) are particularly prominent:

- a. Architectural configurations that facilitate ritual interactions—particularly reciprocal negotiations—with a personalized deity or other sort of supernatural being (e.g., bargaining with a god, requesting the assistance of an [un]dead ancestor, or placating a troublesome demon or ghost).

Note that such negotiative ritual logic is very widespread (e.g., especially in relation to Abrahamic conceptions of a covenant or contractual, give-and-take relationship between human communities and an anthropomorphic god). But beware also that the notions of buying, bartering, and/or begging for divine dispensation are too often invoked as the default explanation for all sorts of cross-cultural propitiatory practices (e.g., in glib explanations of the logic of sacrifice as a bartering between naïve natives and supposedly temperamental gods of rain, hunting, or war).

Note, moreover, that, while most deity-directed propitiatory practices are designed to win the favor of those transhuman entities, it is important to give serious consideration also to the viability of ritualized expressions of adoration, humility, and respect for divine beings that are undertaken irrespective of expectations of any direct recompense.

- b. Architectural configurations that facilitate broadly propitiatory activities that are *not* directed at any personalized deity or spirit (and thus do *not* really qualify as “ritual negotiations”). The logic of this quite different set of options, in which gods play little or no role (and which thus strains the label “propitiation”), has often escaped the attention of scholars. Two closely related possibilities are especially prominent:
 - i. Rituals designed to maintain and/or manipulate a cosmic equilibrium (e.g., as in Melanesian cargo cults or Kwakiutl potlatch, both of which, according to some interpretations, depend upon a logic of cosmic redistribution and exchange); and
 - ii. Rituals designed to stimulate and/or channel the flow of some sort of impersonal, fluid-like spiritual energy or force (e.g., as in those interpretations of Aztec human sacrifice that feature the cosmic circulation of *tonalli* and other vital energies).

2. Architectural construction (or destruction) processes that are themselves conceived as propitiatory ritual:

Though expediting construction processes and cutting costs may be taken-for-granted goals in most contemporary Western contexts, not infrequently building processes have been (and are) deliberately complicated, or “ritualized,” in response to incentives that are regarded as more important than efficiency and cost-effectiveness. Consider, for instance, the following

variations on the exceptionally diversified and widespread theme of building (and “un-building”) as propitiatory ritual:

a. (Re)building for periodic renewal:

Among innumerable versions of renewal, or “starting fresh,” via construction—many of which require as well preparatory ritual destructions of architecture—three possibilities are especially prominent:

- i. Constructional reiterations of cosmogony (e.g., in the building of Hindu temples, which is often explicitly conceived as the founding and building of a new world). This (and the next option) are, then, directly relevant also to versions of homologizing building (priority I-A);
- ii. (Re)building or remodeling according to a regularized schedule (e.g., in ancient Mesoamerican practices of embellishing pyramid temples at the end or beginning of various calendrical cycles). In some cases, this may actually entail perpetual, non-stop (re)building (e.g., at the Ise shrine of Japan where, in order to have a new shrine ready every twenty years, [re]construction is essentially continuous).
- iii. (Re)building according to a strategic though irregular schedule—which may entail:

- (1) (Re)building in order to formalize a transition of authority or the onset of a new political era (e.g., the relocation and construction of a new South African Tongo village each time that a headman dies and another is appointed);
- (2) (Re)building scheduled according to the availability of scarce resources (e.g., the embellishment of Indonesian Toraja origin-houses “whenever the descendants of the house feel they can afford it”);
- (3) (Re)building in relation to personal life-crises (e.g., as a means of marking one’s new status after a rite of passage or marriage; or, perhaps, as in the case of the Toraja, to reaffirm one’s cultural identity).

b. Building as a demonstration of devotion, sacrifice, or offering:

In some cases, construction (or other artistic production) is undertaken with particularly “pure” motives insofar as (ostensibly) no immediate reward is anticipated. Consider, for instance, the following heavily overlapping possibilities on the theme of “building for the Wholly Other”:

- i. Building as an expression of gratitude or thanksgiving for some good fortune (e.g., Babylonian kings’ construction of temples expressly “in recognition of the services rendered them by the divine powers”);
- ii. Building as fulfillment of a sacred vow (e.g., construction in fulfillment of a promise made to a deity or saint who helped one through a crisis); and

- iii. Building as a freely given “gift to God,” or as a display of “pure adoration,” humility, or commitment to supernatural authority (e.g., the erection of Shaker meetinghouses, which is explicitly conceived as a collective expression of devotion to God).

Note also that architectural elements and works of art that are wholly inaccessible to human view (e.g., paintings hidden away deep in caves, carvings on the downsides of sculptures, or decoration in passageways too narrow to pass) may also be conceived as “gifts to a god.”

Note, moreover, that seemingly excessively large or elaborate construction projects (e.g., lavish Gothic cathedrals, Barcelona’s phantasmagoric Sagrada Familia, or the mammoth temple of Karnak) could conceivably (and ironically) be interpreted as huge-scaled offerings, and thus expressions of a willingness to put divine interests before human ones.

c. Building as investment or petition:

Distinct from the previous set of options, this entails construction undertaken as a deliberate and self-conscious strategy for currying divine favor and/or cosmic advantage. Consider again several possibilities, which are based on distinct sorts of propitiatory logic:

- i. Building in the interest of the accumulation of (say, covenantal or karmic) merit and/or as a means of enhancing one’s prospects after death (e.g., numerous Buddhist, Jain, and especially Hindu texts explicitly describe temple construction as among the surest means of enhancing one’s rebirth status);
- ii. Building as redress for wrong doing or expiation of sin (e.g., the Jain temple of Mount Abu in western India, which was supposedly built as an act penance by a leader who had caused considerable bloodshed in pacifying a rebellion);
- iii. Building as means of ensuring one’s immortality in the sense enduring fame and, to that extent, “conquering death” (which may have been one incentive for Egyptian pharaohs’ erection of their massive pyramid tombs); and
- iv. Building in the interest of healing, which may entail either the creation of an efficacious context in which to do healing (e.g., Siberian Evenk shamans’ erection of a special cosmogrammatic tent in which to practice their curing rituals), or a more direct analogy between healing and building (e.g., like that which obtains in the “building” of a Navajo sandpainting).

d. Ritualized destruction and defacement—or the “unbuilding”—of architecture:

Several variations on the common practice of deliberate defacing and/or dismantling of art and architecture, based on several different sorts of incentives, deserve consideration:

- i. Destruction of architecture as requisite preparation for rebuilding (e.g., at the Ise shrine in Japan, where the dismantlement of structures, apparently a symbol of the impermanence of all things, proceeds with nearly the same ceremoniousness as the [re]building);
- ii. Destruction as a means of delivering one’s artistic productions to the “Wholly Other” (e.g., the very common practice in Middle and South America of ritual “killing” vessels or figurines before depositing them in offertory caches); and
- iii. Destruction of architecture as a political statement of force and/or intimidation (e.g., Spanish colonial destructions of indigenous temples and shrines, which were often replaced by Catholic churches on the same site). Such practices, though clearly expedient, nonetheless, served to announce via ritual-architectural means, the beginning of a “new era.”

SANCTUARY (priority III-D): *Sacred architecture that provides a refuge of purity, sacrality, or perfection.*

Note that so-termed sanctuary modes of ritual-architectural presentation and apprehension are distinguished from other modes by the following criteria:

- *Exclusive* strategies of allurement insofar as designers’ incentive usually is to restrict access, and thus guard the integrity of the architectural space and/or ritual proceedings. (This is contrasted to *inclusive* theatric modes [III-A] in which the characteristic incentive is to coax reticent onlookers into involvement.)
- *Indirect* apprehensions of architecture insofar as the built forms contribute to the creation of an ambience or backdrop for ritual performance. (This is similar to the *indirect* support of ritual offered by stage-setting of theatric modes [III-A], but unlike contemplation modes [III-B] in which architectural elements serve as *direct* objects of attention and meditation.)

Consider some of the countless ways in which sanctuary modes of presentation and apprehension may be applicable to each of the respective components of the twofold ritual-architectural situation:

1. With respect to sanctuary modes of allurement (i.e., the “front-half” of the ritual-architectural situation):

By far the most prominent uses of sanctuary modes of allurement and instigation involve the requisite preparation of various elements of the ritual-architectural situation. Three variations on (or dimensions of) preparatory sanctification deserve special consideration:

a. Appropriation of natural “sanctuaries,” particularly caves:

Though generally imagined as inherently sacred places (e.g., hierophanies or *axis mundis*, which already afford special access to deities and other cosmic realities), natural cave-sanctuaries (e.g., the underground passageways at Balankanche near Chichén Itzá, which hosted Maya rituals, probably for centuries) are, nonetheless, nearly always ritually embellished and enhanced (e.g., as with the famous prehistoric paintings in the caves of Lascaux, France). Hierophanies, too, require ritual sanctification.

Note also that, very often, architectural elements (e.g., niches or burial chambers) or whole buildings are designed to closely resemble caves, thus participating in the “womb-house” symbolism of caves (e.g., many Hindu and Maya temples that have unmistakably cave-like visages).

b. Preparatory sanctification of apparently ordinary places or human constructions:

This possibility, which is perhaps the most signal dimension of the sanctuary priority, involves the performance of ritual procedures whereby a previously ordinary place or building is cleansed, purified, sanctified, and thus made ready for ritual use (e.g., the cleansing and sanctification of a Japanese street prior to a *matsuri* or ritual processions, or the resanctification of an Oglala sweat lodge prior to a ceremony).

Note that such ritual procedures usually provide only situational and temporary sanctification, and thus must be repeated periodically (e.g., both Japanese streets and Oglala sweat lodges revert to prosaic status immediately following their ritual usages).

c. Preparatory sanctification of ritual actors:

Very often this will entail the construction of a building or special context to which ritual participants repair (for hours, days, or perhaps weeks) to be cleansed and purified prior to their involvement in the main ritual event (e.g., the Chinese *Tsai-kung*, or Hall of Abstinence, to which the emperor would retreat before important ceremonies, or the Japanese cave-like *muro* to which initiates retreat for fasting prior to their ceremonial passage to adulthood).

2. With respect to the presentation and apprehension of messages and meanings (i.e., the “back-half” of the ritual-architectural situation), consider ways in which sanctuary modes may work in conjunction with each of the commemorative priorities:

a. Sanctuary modes in conjunction with commemorations of divinity (priority II-A):

This is a particularly common and salient pairing of priorities. Sanctuary spaces may facilitate felicitous and productive interactions between humans and the divine (however conceived) via either of the following means:

- i. Enhancement of mental concentration (e.g., in a Cistercian or Zen monastery where all attentions are focused on meditation and prayer; or a Iranian or Chinese classical garden where all worldly distractions are removed); or
- ii. Enticement or luring of sacred entities or forces into the ritual context (e.g., Hindu temples designed to lure a specific deity to reside there, Japan *ma*-inspired architecture designed to lure *kami* energy into the ritual context, or Oglala Yuwipi rooms designed to lure spirits in the healing ceremony).

b. Sanctuary modes in conjunction with commemorations of sacred history (priority II-B):

This possibility—in which sanctuary modes work in close connection with theatric ones (III-A)—may entail the provision of an exceptional place (and time) in which to reenact, and thus re-experience, important mythical or miraculous circumstances.

c. Sanctuary modes in conjunction with commemorations of socio-political concerns (priority II-C):

This particularly salient and diversified pairing of priorities, which usually capitalizes on the symbolism attendant with privileged access to some highly restricted ritual-architectural context, may take any of the following forms:

i. Sanctuaries that effect a complete rejection of society:

This possibility, which involves retreat from society rather than attempts to change society, requires architectural configuration that facilitate long-term seclusion, isolation, and self-sufficiency (e.g., in Anabaptist or Shaker communities, or Hezychast or Cistercian monasteries—any of which may be conceived as fabricated “foretastes of heaven,” that is, refuges designed to attain a measure of perfection that cannot be realized in society at large).

ii. Sanctuaries that display an exemplary model or idealized prototype for wider society:

This possibility, which reflects greater aspirations to social change, often entails the architectural provision of both laboratory-like spaces for research and development, as it were, of religio-social alternatives (e.g., in experimental communities or long-established monastic orders), and museum-like spaces in which to showcase the viability and efficacy of those alternatives.

Note that many secluded communities (e.g., the Trappist monks at Gethesemani), which appear at first to have effected a complete rejection of society, are actually (and sometimes explicitly) providing exemplary models for society, and thus for social change. Seclusion from society ought not, then, be equated to quickly with either indifference or disdain for society.

iii. Sanctuaries that provide a mechanism for hierarchical exclusion:

This possibility, which contributes to the reinforcement rather than realignment of extant socio-economic boundaries, often involves architectural configurations that segregate “insiders” from “outsiders,” or higher social groups from lower ones (e.g., as in the Jerusalem Temple’s rigorously enforced separation of Jews from gentiles, clergy from laity, and men from women).

Particularly notable in this respect are ritual-architectural expressions (and reinforcements) of hierarchies of relative sacrality and socio-economic privilege (e.g., the complex expression of “graduated privacy” in the layout of traditional Chinese cities and homes, wherein tiered social differences translate into different levels of access to built spaces).

d. Sanctuary modes in conjunction with commemorations of the dead (priority II-D):

This may entail the provision of specially restricted spaces for, variously, the preparation of dead bodies, the posthumous placement of the dead, and the visitation of the dead (e.g., morgues, funeral homes, and cemeteries). Virtually all mortuary architectural configurations, which serve to separate the living from the dead, rely to a significant degree on sanctuary modes of presentation and apprehension.