

## FAMOUS INSIDE FRAMES: THE MILITARY LABYRINTH

The defensive fortresses made in the Iron Age displayed all of the properties of the “inside frame” which, as a partial object, metonymized space and time at a simultaneously cosmic and local level.

**Circumnavigation.** Any attempt to walk around the fortress led to being inadvertently incorporated into it, *via* the first, outer fold. Made of trenched earth whose banks could be navigated from the top by a secondary circulation system, the system of a single meandering path maximized the distance between exterior to interior, giving sufficient opportunity for the prospective entrants to be observed, interrogated, tested, etc. Enfiladed entry through a narrow path assured that the entrants could not group to effect a greater than 1:1 advantage over their higher-place adversary.

Customs of interrogation involved passwords, riddles, and actual debriefings which, if unsatisfactory, could trigger the capture of or attack on the visitors. The elevation of the banks gave the residents clear military advantage. Once in the defile, the prospective entrants, though armed, were effectively neutralized. The labyrinth alternated short turns with long ones in a sequence that created doubt about whether the entry was actually an entry and not a dead end. This increased the stress of the entrants and allowed the residents to “stress test” them. As with any interrogation involving stress, the standard of performance is raised to improve the quality of the intelligence.

The forced ritualized movement had the effect of imposing a charm on the entrants — a kind of detoxification to counter the magic of their uniforms, standards, and weapons, presumed to be protected by customary blessings, rubbings, materials, etc. With the neutralization of these charms, their weapons — or, rather, the confidence of the entrants in their weapons — would be ineffective. By extending the simple entry through a gate into a long path by means of (usually) seven concentric circles and their interconnections, any blessing would be countered by a counter-spell that combined the shape of poetry with the shape of the entry.

Not only were defensive labyrinths militarily effective, they were “lessons in miniature” about how the cosmos and landscape worked in general, where poetry and earth were coordinated to create their own totalizing *mons delectus*, or mountain of choice. In this sense, the ancient defensive labyrinths of the iron age did not fade away with improved military technology but were preserved as an idea in the *sacri monte* set up for would-be pilgrims to Jerusalem. Unable to make the actual pilgrimage to Palestine, travelers could visit a closer site set up with *tempietti*, pathways, and plazas to tell the stories of the Old and New Testaments. The winding paths suggested the intricate narrative connections between the story components; points of critical interest were intensified around exhibits where *tableaux* portrayed key events of the Bible.

The relation of an enfiladed space to the transfer of a charm or counter-charm is the idea of the partial object, the inside frame, where simple circumnavigation is rendered impossible and exchanged for a composite circuit where the “impossible-Real” quality of the space (-x) is combined with a component of conditional entry (1/x). The *mons delectus* of the *sacri monti* duplicated the military logic of the defensive iron age labyrinth, and was also the program of the so-called “Table of Cebes,” where a *mons delectus* was purported to be a Rosetta Stone linking human cultural development with cosmic symmetries.