

# Cultural development in the Mediterranean basin as perceived by the shaping of built form



*Aris Sapounakis,*

*Professor of Architecture & Urban Design,*

*University of Thessaly, Volos, Greece*

[sapounakis@gmail.com](mailto:sapounakis@gmail.com)

# *Cultural development in the Mediterranean basin as perceived by the Shaping of Built Form*

*Aris Sapounakis, University of Thessaly, Greece*



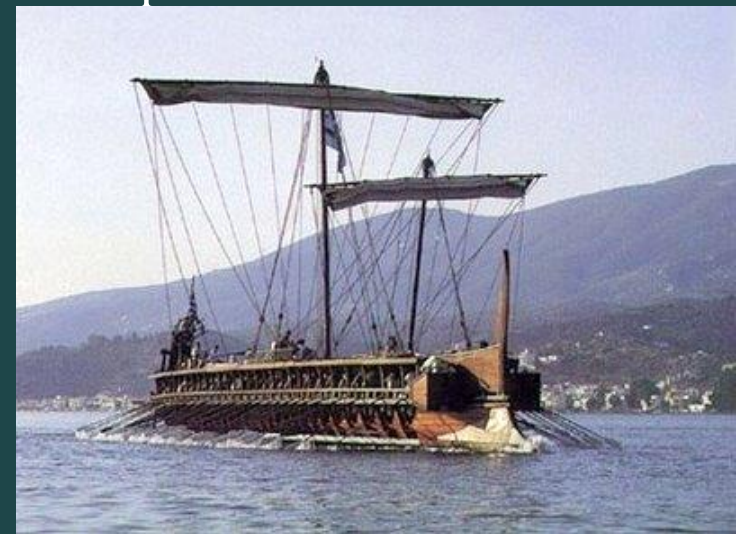
**The sea!** Land's end! Is it really an end?

In the history of mankind, it has often been the **beginning**..

In the Mediterranean, places were,  
and sometimes still are better accessible by boat

**In ancient times:** it would have been a trade ship or a warship

*A **trireme** (from Latin *triremis*, literally "three-oarer") was a type of **galley**, a Hellenistic-era warship that was used by the ancient maritime civilizations of the Mediterranean, especially the Phoenicians, ancient Greeks and Romans. The trireme derives its name from its three rows of oars on each side, manned with one man per oar (wikipedia)*



# Cultural development in the Mediterranean basin as perceived by the Shaping of Built Form

Aris Sapounakis, University of Thessaly, Greece

## 12th century BC (mythological):

Ancient Greek myths, such as

**Odyssey** and **Jason and the Golden Fleece**,

are characteristically based on navigation through a network of very different places

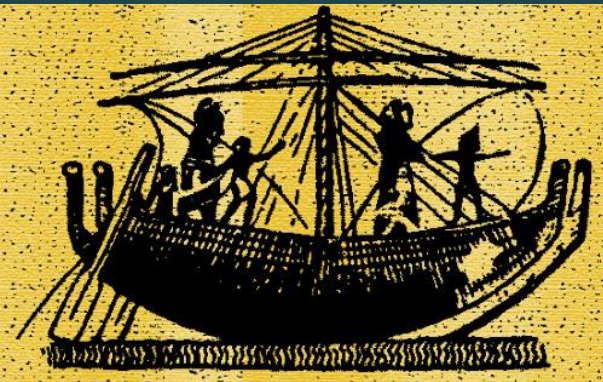


# Cultural development in the Mediterranean basin as perceived by the Shaping of Built Form

Aris Sapounakis, University of Thessaly, Greece

by 12th century BC:

Phoenician and Greek trade routes cover the entire Mediterranean



# *Cultural development in the Mediterranean basin as perceived by the Shaping of Built Form*

*Aris Sapounakis, University of Thessaly, Greece*

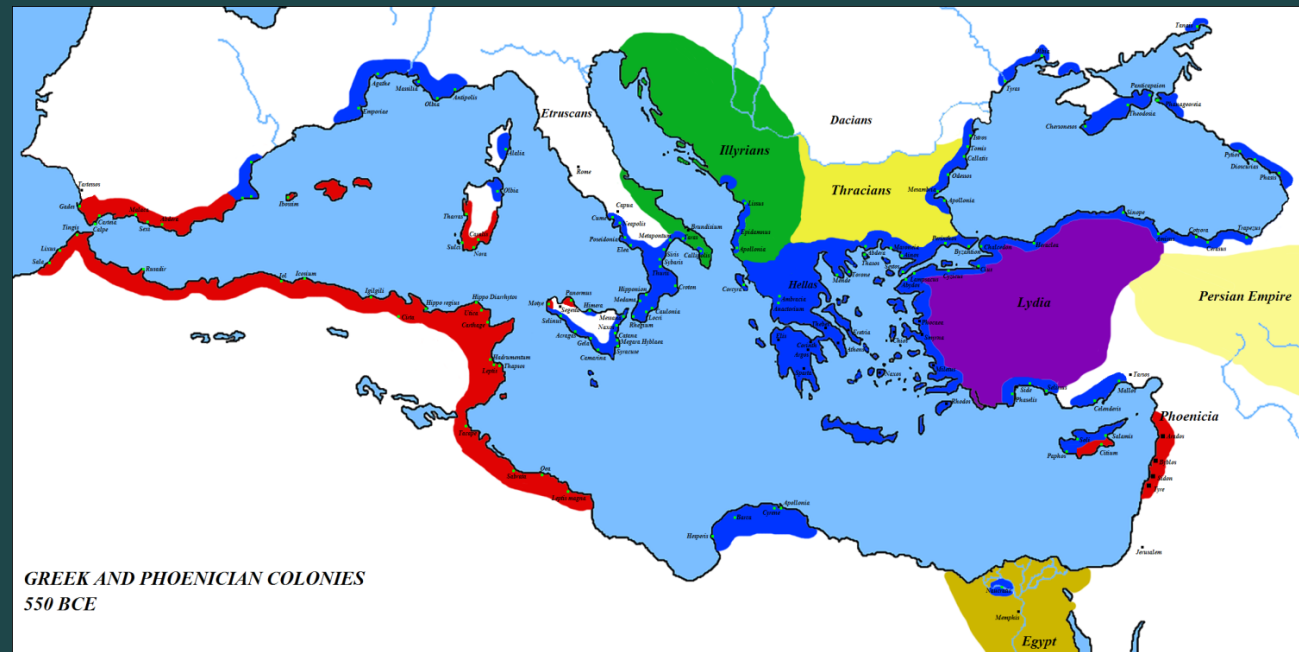
**by 800 BC:** a network of primarily Greek colonies has developed either peacefully or by force, as f.i. in the case of Troy

**Phoenicians:** mostly interested in trade

Carthage, their main colony, had in turn colonized SW Mediterranean basin

**Greek city-states**  
had their own colonies  
and never had an empire

This is reflected  
on the type and form  
of archaeological remnants



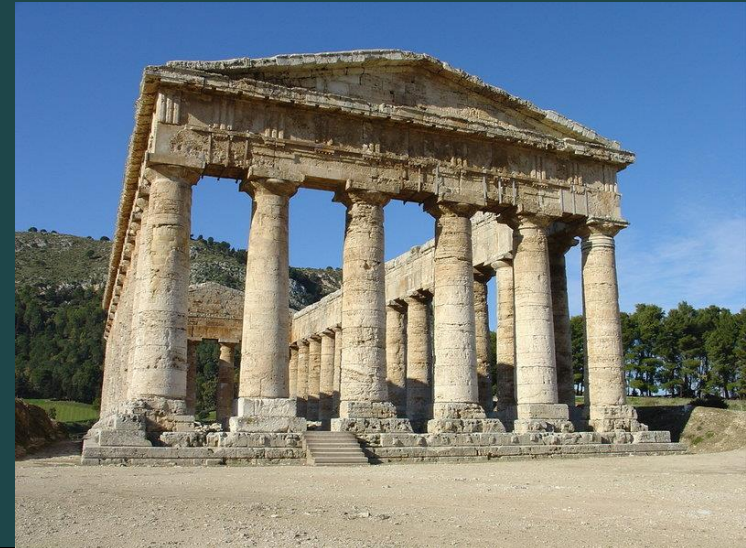
# *Cultural development in the Mediterranean basin as perceived by the Shaping of Built Form*

*Aris Sapounakis, University of Thessaly, Greece*

Colonization, trade and influence in general, allow formal-informal networks to develop

Mother city civilization is reflected in artifacts, buildings and culture, as in the case of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC Athenian amphora found in a roman villa in **Silves, southern Portugal**, or the Doric temple in **Segesta**, a non Greek speaking Elimian city in Sicily, built in Greek style (never completed)

In Greek colonies, networking remained a dynamic situation, as cities were either cooperating or in war, as f.i. Athens attacking and being defeated by Syracuse, 414 BC



# *Cultural development in the Mediterranean basin as perceived by the Shaping of Built Form*

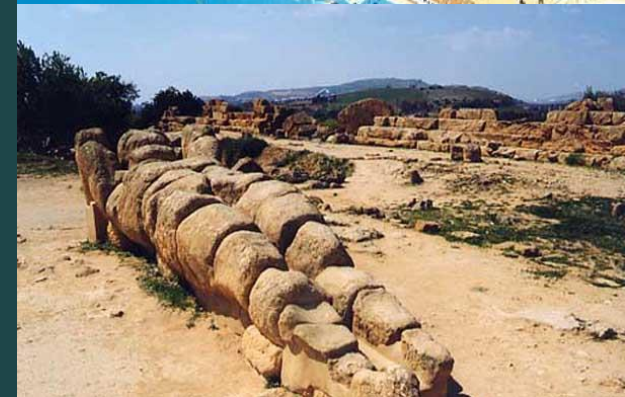
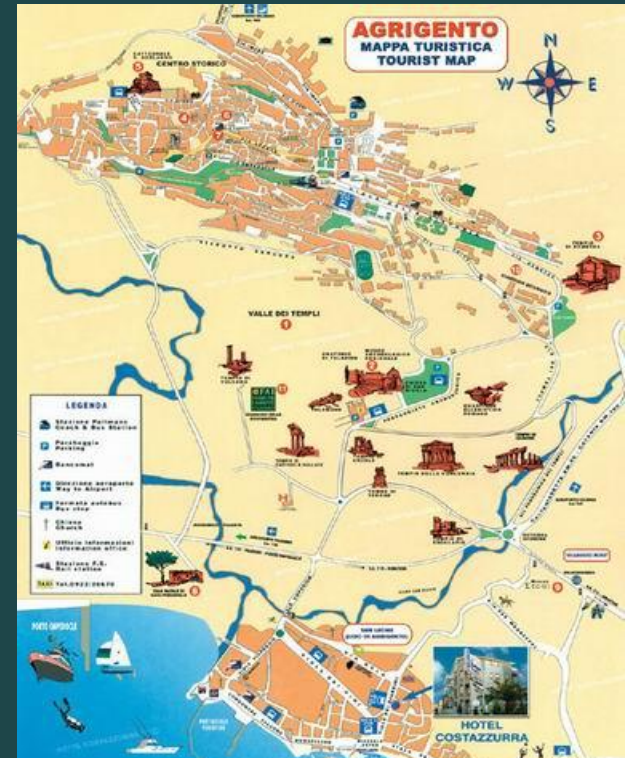
*Aris Sapounakis, University of Thessaly, Greece*

Architecture in **Akragas**,  
once the most prosperous Greek colony in Sicily,  
has been noted for its extravagance

Valle dei templi: a valley (in fact, a ridge) of 7 monumental  
5<sup>th</sup> century BC Doric temples that dominate the scenery



The poor quality of the  
local stone could not  
support the tremendous  
height of most temples  
which now lay in ruins ,  
manifesting the city's  
intention to compete  
with its motherland

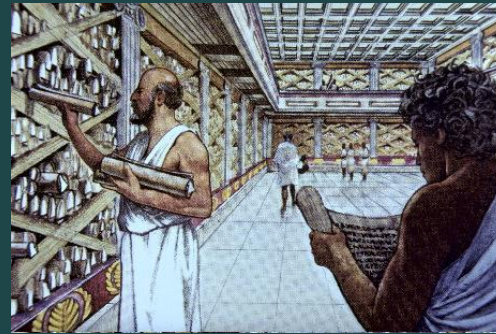


# *Cultural development in the Mediterranean basin as perceived by the Shaping of Built Form*

*Aris Sapounakis, University of Thessaly, Greece*

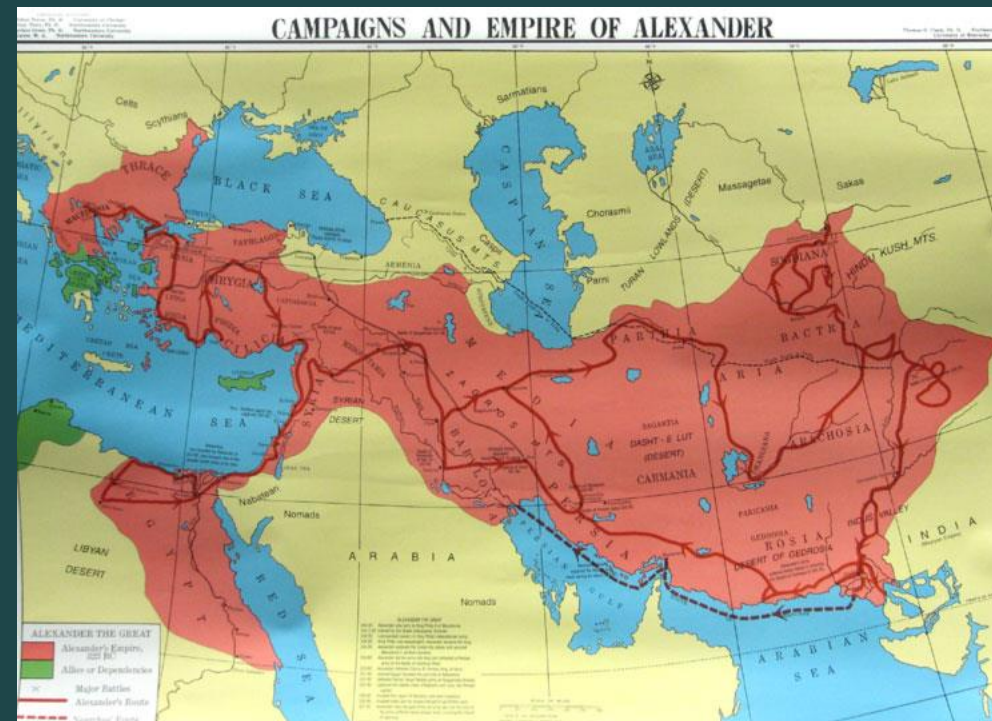
**320 BC:**

Alexander of Macedonia conquers the Eastern part of the basin and the entire Persia



New networks are established as for example in Egypt where the heirs of the Pharaohs were replaced by that of Ptolemy, Alexander's general, great grandfather of Cleopatra

The famous Library of Alexandria is established during Ptolemy's reign





# *Cultural development in the Mediterranean basin as perceived by the Shaping of Built Form*

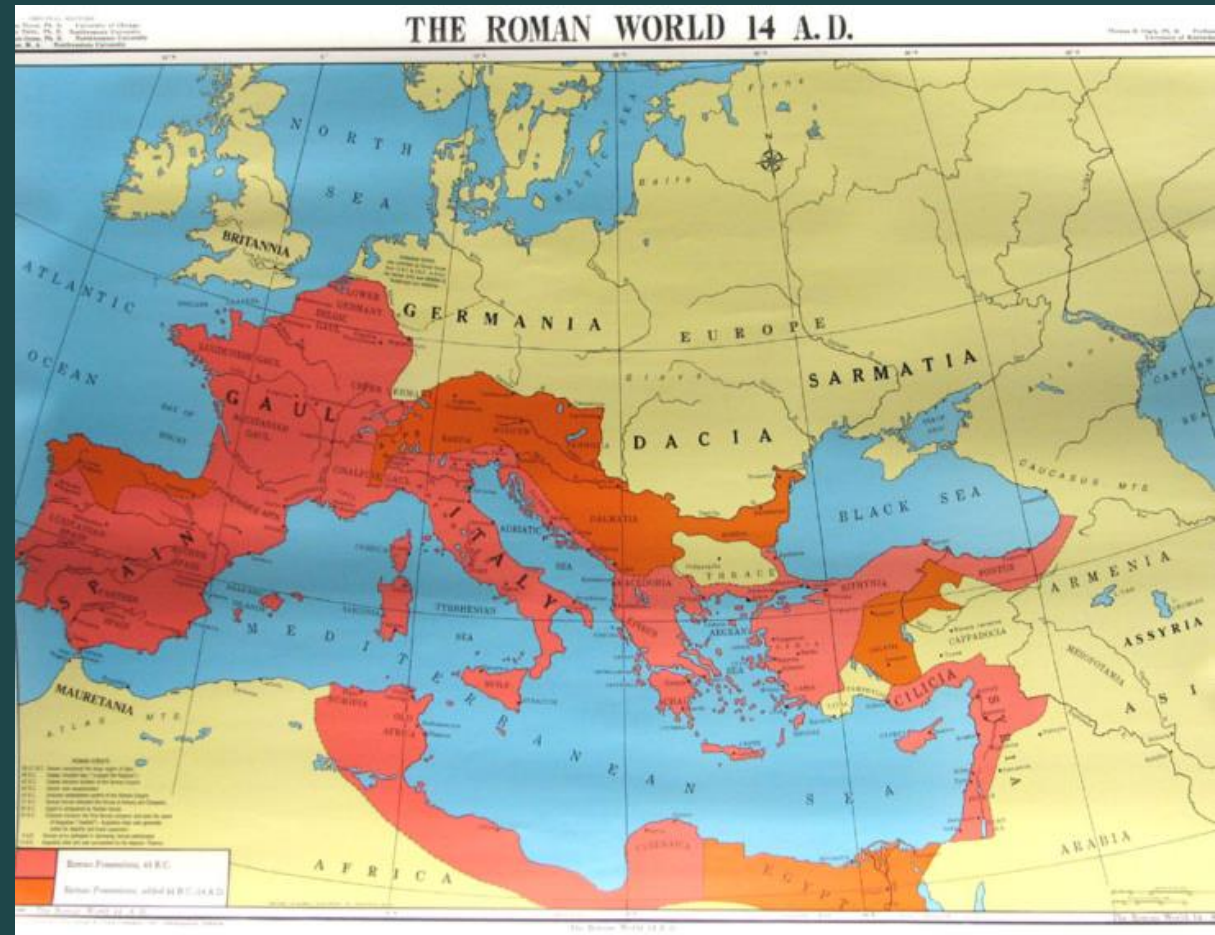
*Aris Sapounakis, University of Thessaly, Greece*

**by 100 BC:** the Roman empire extends to cover the entire Mediterranean basin

it is enforced  
on a variety of civilizations  
imposing conditions of peace,  
**Pax Romana**



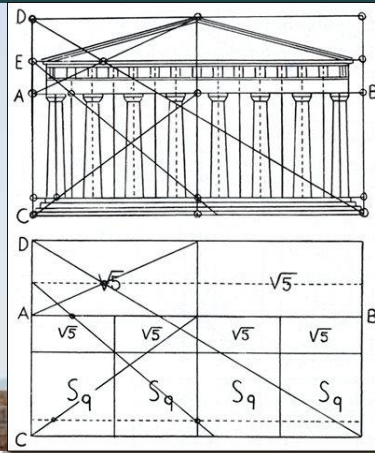
Temple of Vaal, Palmyra,  
32 AD



# *Cultural development in the Mediterranean basin as perceived by the Shaping of Built Form*

*Aris Sapounakis, University of Thessaly, Greece*

## Notable differences between Greek and Roman architecture (Parthenon vs. Pantheon)



The articulate classic forms of Greek monuments, that related only to the local city-state community, were succeeded by pompous declamatory symbols typically aiming to impress and be decoded by the much wider populace of the Roman empire

# *Cultural development in the Mediterranean basin as perceived by the Shaping of Built Form*

*Aris Sapounakis, University of Thessaly, Greece*

Ancient Greek theaters,  
like the ones in Epidavros, Ephesos and Syracuse,  
blend well with their environment taking advantage of  
the hillsides and the evening coastal breeze



Roman theaters,  
like the theater of Marcellus in Rome,  
are constructed as buildings, in contrast to their context



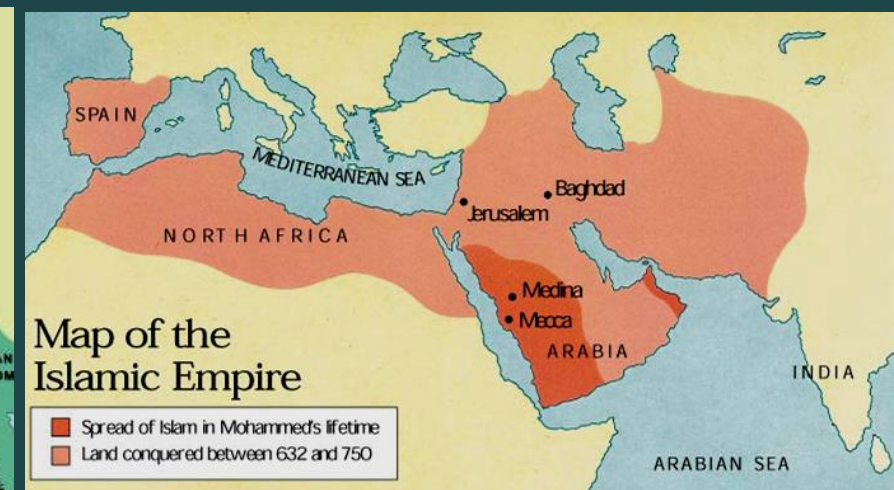
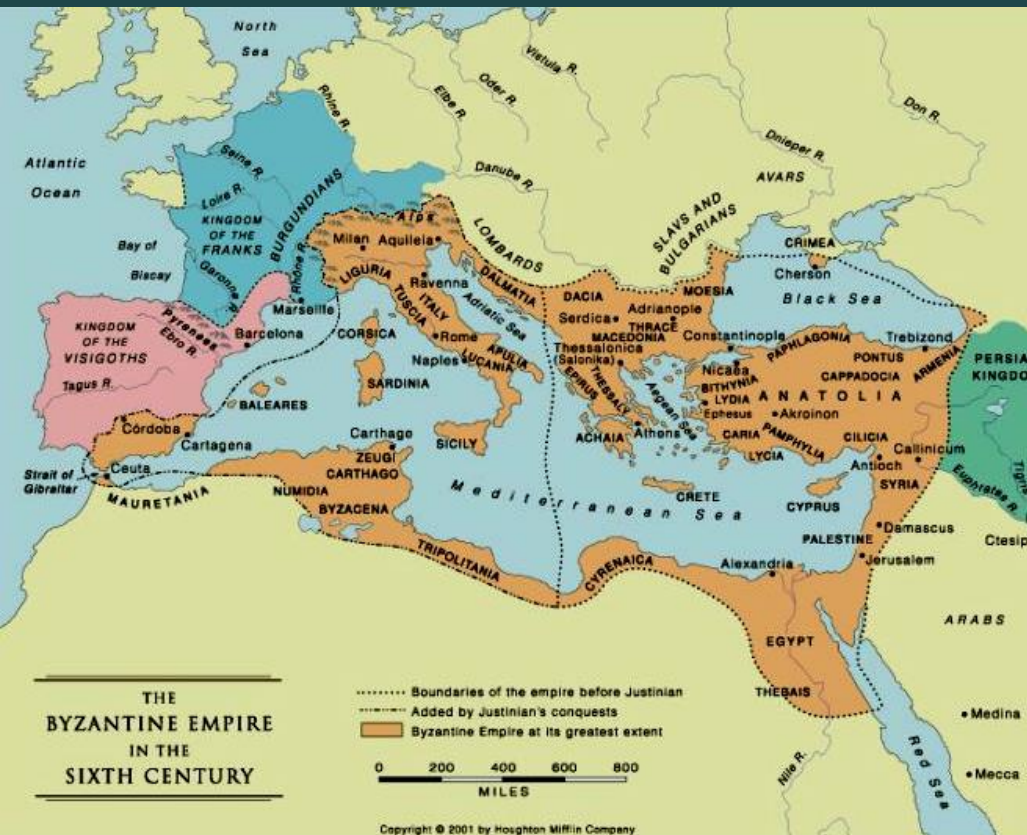
# Cultural development in the Mediterranean basin as perceived by the Shaping of Built Form

Aris Sapounakis, University of Thessaly, Greece

## 1<sup>st</sup> millennium AD:

The East Roman empire, **Byzantium**,

influences the Mediterranean basin for more than 1000 years (330 – 1453 AD)

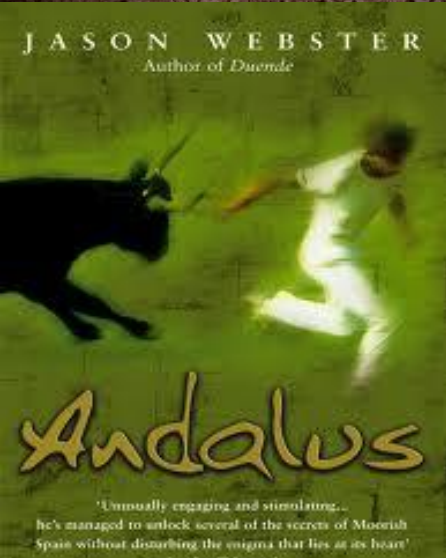


## 7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> century:

The Arab world expands to cover the southern part of the basin

# Cultural development in the Mediterranean basin as perceived by the Shaping of Built Form

Aris Sapounakis, University of Thessaly, Greece



The Arabian influence and the crusades

the name of Zitouni, now Lamia, in central Greece, and 'aceituna'

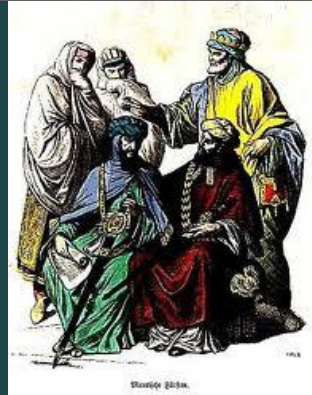
# Cultural development in the Mediterranean basin as perceived by the Shaping of Built Form

Aris Sapounakis, University of Thessaly, Greece

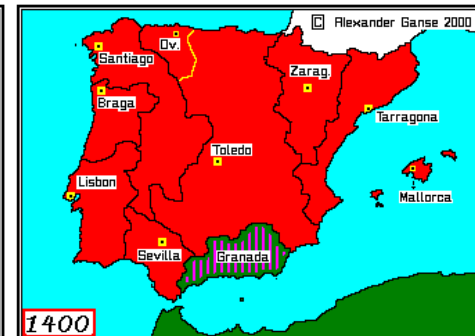
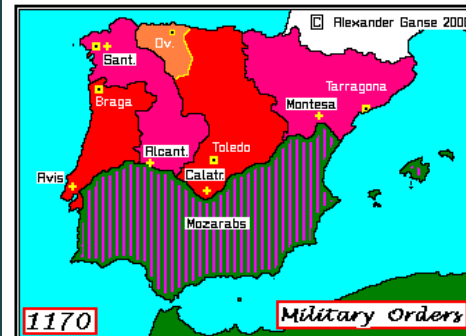
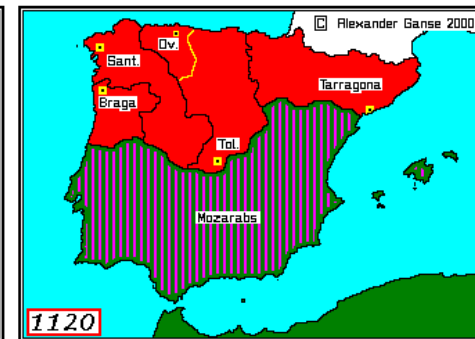
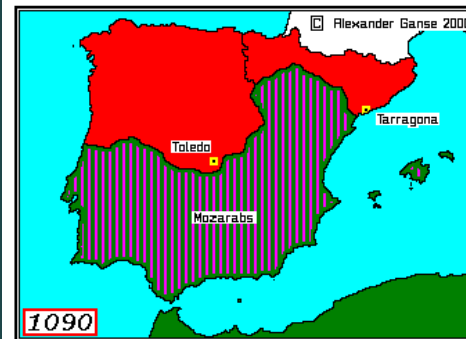
## Middle Ages: Spain reconquista



Ferdinand and Isabella



Church Organisation of the Iberian Peninsula



# Cultural development in the Mediterranean basin as perceived by the Shaping of Built Form

Aris Sapounakis, University of Thessaly, Greece

1492AD:

The Jewish community of Spain is expelled  
Sefardite Jews spread across the Mediterranean



# Cultural development in the Mediterranean basin as perceived by the Shaping of Built Form

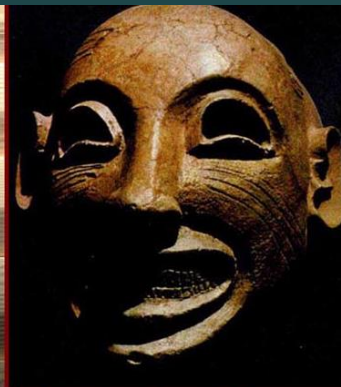
Aris Sapounakis, University of Thessaly, Greece

## Late Middle Ages:

The commercial dispute between Venice and Genoa



Venetian carnival masks elucidate the close relation to Carthage (first two masks left)



Carnival in  
**VENICE**  
GERALD HOOPER 1958



# Cultural development in the Mediterranean basin as perceived by the Shaping of Built Form

Aris Sapounakis, University of Thessaly, Greece

## The Ottoman empire in command of the Eastern part of the basin

### A new perspective for Mediterranean Islam



# *Cultural development in the Mediterranean basin as perceived by the Shaping of Built Form*

*Aris Sapounakis, University of Thessaly, Greece*

Small scale **networks** that are apparent in **heritage**

Balkan architecture:

Albanian builders have built Gjirokaster and have influenced the imagery of many villages in mainland Greece, like Makrinita in Mount Pelion lower right, following the principles of Balkan architecture evident even in the old Greek house in Safranbolu, Turkey, below



# Cultural development in the Mediterranean basin as perceived by the Shaping of Built Form

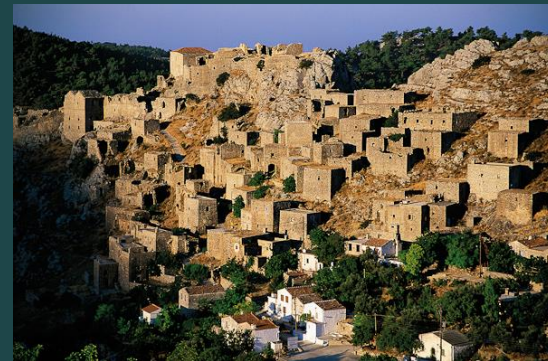
Aris Sapounakis, University of Thessaly, Greece

## 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century:

### Pirates in the Mediterranean



Photo # NH44647-KN "Decatur Boarding the Tripolitan Gunboat". Painting by Dennis Malone Carter



Anavatos, Hios island, not seen from the sea

# *Cultural development in the Mediterranean basin as perceived by the Shaping of Built Form*

*Aris Sapounakis, University of Thessaly, Greece*

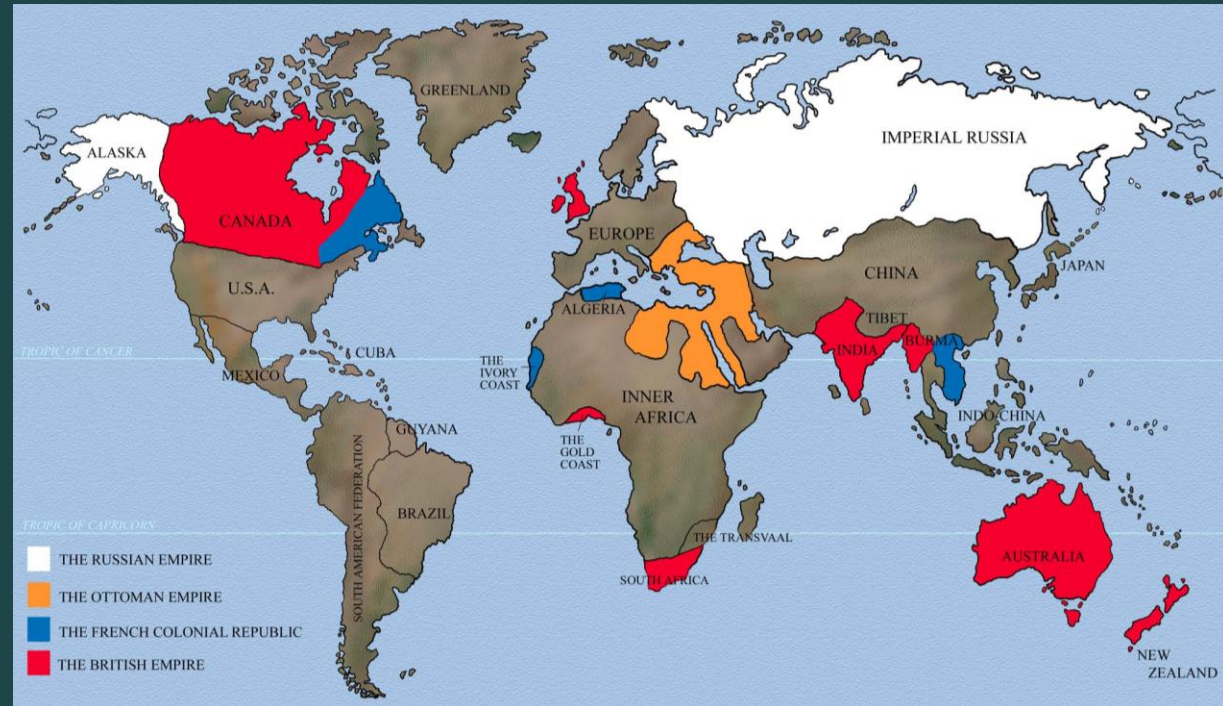
Mediterranean networks during the **19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries**: domination of the British  
*'the sun never sets in the British empire'*



an image of contemporary Malta



bridge in Kythira, Greece,  
built during the British  
occupation of the island, 1826



19<sup>th</sup> century empires worldwide (English version)

# *Cultural development in the Mediterranean basin as perceived by the Shaping of Built Form*

*Aris Sapounakis, University of Thessaly, Greece*

## **the Mediterranean today:**

This paper has not been concerned with the situation in contemporary Mediterranean

Already established networks are threatened by political turmoil in areas like the Middle East, earlier in Cyprus and Serbia and more recently in Libya, Egypt and Syria.

With migration at its peak, it is expected that the Mediterranean basin is not unlikely to experience dramatic changes in the manner in which its people view and shape their immediate milieu



## **Conclusions:**

(a) The movement of people and goods & the exchange of knowledge and attitudes sustain the development of formal and informal networks that tend to be reflected and become concretized in built form.

These forms embody the potential to operate as **strong heritage signifiers** and mediate the ideology behind them

(b) The shaping of built form is not only a matter of one specific actor but also involves a much wider signification of past and present layers of meaning that are seldom overtly expressed and decoded.

It is important for designers and researchers to attain a better understanding of the broader social environment as well as what is finally invested in built form