

The Revised Temple Typology:

By James L. Carroll, 2005

This temple typology is based upon the Far Eastern and Near Eastern temple typologies of Dr. John M. Lundquist, however the order has been rearranged to create three main divisions, space, rites, and role in society.

The Temple Space:

1. **Sacred or Set Apart Space:**
The temple is built on separate, set-apart, sacral, or guarded space.
2. **Revealed Plan:**
The plan and measurements of the temple are revealed by God to the king, and the plan must be carefully carried out.
3. **Sacred Center:**
The temple is seen as the sacred center, the point of origin, and the goal toward which mankind strives. Further, the temple often embodies various difficulties inherent in the approach to the sacred center such as the “labyrinth.”
4. **House of the Deity:**
The Temple is considered the home or house of the deity, and the worshipers are considered the house “servants” of the deity, caring for the deity’s temporal needs.
5. **Mountain:**
The temple is the architectural embodiment of the cosmic mountain.
6. **Successive Ascension:**
Temples, and the temple mountain, express the idea of a successive ascension toward heaven.
7. **Creation:**
The cosmic mountain represents the primordial hillock, the place that first emerged from the waters covering the earth during the creative process.
8. **The Underworld:**
The temple is associated with the underworld, the realm of the dead, the afterlife, the grave, or a cave which often accompanies the sacred mountain.
9. **Waters of Life:**
The temple is often associated with the waters of life that flow forth from a spring within the building itself—or rather the temple is viewed as incorporating within itself or as having been built upon such a spring.
10. **Tree of Life:**
The temple is associated with gardens and the tree of life.
11. **Cosmic Orientation:**
The temple is oriented toward the four world regions or cardinal directions, and to various celestial bodies such as the polar star.
12. **Cosmogram:**
The temple is seen as a cosmogram (“mandala” in Sanskrit), or scale model of the universe, often focusing on the welding of heaven and earth.

The Temple Rites:

13. **Sacrifice:**
The temple is a place of sacrifice.

14. **Votive Offerings:**
Votive offerings, or “gifts to the gods” are offered at the temple to secure the favor of the deity.
15. **Yearly Festivals:**
Yearly rites are carried out at the temple, and thus the temple plays a role in the liturgical calendar. During the New Year rites, texts are read and dramatically portrayed that recite a pre-earthly war, the victory in the war by the forces of good, lead by a chief deity, the creation and establishment of the cosmos, cities, temples, and social order. The sacred marriage is often carried out at this time.
16. **Pilgrimage:**
In conjunction with the sacred center, successive ascent, and yearly festivals, the temple is a destination for pilgrimage.
17. **Communal Meals:**
Sacral, communal meals are carried out in connection with temple ritual, often at the conclusion of or during a covenant ceremony.
18. **Sacred Marriage and Fertility:**
The Temple is often seen as a place of marriage, either between the people and God, or between the Gods themselves. These marriages and unions were often acted out. These rites were seen as providing fertility and prosperity to the society.
19. **Revelation:**
God’s word is revealed in the temple, usually in the holy of holies, to priests or prophets attached to the temple or to the religious system that it represents.
20. **Divination:**
As part of the revelatory process, the tablets of destiny (“tablets of the decrees”), or other divinatory oracles, are consulted both in the cosmic sense by the gods, and by man in a special chamber of the temple, often in association with special yearly festivals. By these means the will of the deity was communicated to the people through the king or the prophet for a given year.
21. **Initiation:**
Inside the temple, and in temple workshops, images of deities as well as living kings, temple priests, and worshipers are washed, anointed, clothed, fed, enthroned, and symbolically initiated into the presence of deity, and thus into eternal life.
22. **Secrecy:**
The temple and its ritual are enshrouded in secrecy.

The Temple and Community:

23. **Economic Center:**
The temple and its cult are central to the economic structure of ancient Near Eastern society.
24. **Source of Prosperity:**
The temple is associated with abundance and prosperity, indeed is perceived as the giver of these. Conversely, the destruction or loss of the temple is seen as calamitous and fatal to the prosperity of the community in which the temple stood.
25. **Place of Law:**
There is a close interrelationship between the temple and law in the ancient Near East.
26. **Legitimizes the State:**
The temple plays a legitimizing political role in the ancient Near East, and, the ideology of king-ship in the archaic state is indelibly and incontrovertibly connected with temple building and with temple ideology.
27. **Unifying Institution:**
The temple is the central, organizing, unifying institution in ancient Near Eastern society.