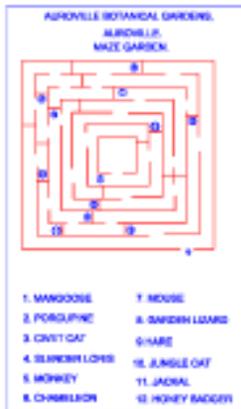
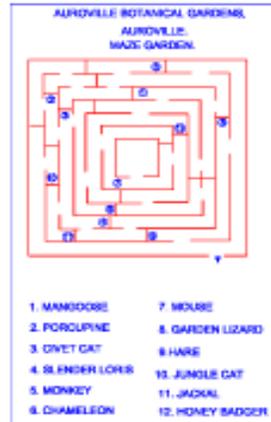
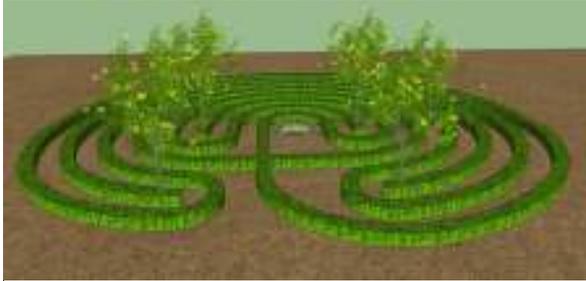


Auroville - Labyrinths and Mazes



- 1. M
- 2. P
- 3. C
- 4. B
- 5. M
- 6. C





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Generally, a **labyrinth** is commonly used for walking meditations – walking slowly into its center and back out again - to clear one’s mind or resolve a problem - a spiritual, reflective activity.

A **maze** is designed to confuse and challenge one to find a way into the center and then back out again.

It is designed to test problem-solving skills, memory, and tolerance for frustration! Meant to aMaze.

A **labyrinth** is unicursal, that is designed with a single path in to the center and out again, so there can be no confusion as to where to go. It is a confined, guided walk with many turns, to let one walk in a compact area while letting one’s mind relax and meditate.

A **maze** is multicursal, multi-course, which requires a person to make choices about which path they will take.

Two Basic Approaches to Walking the Labyrinth:

1) Walking the Labyrinth is a right-brain meditation activity. There are as many ways to walk it as there are walkers. Prior to walking, sit on a bench and journal your thoughts and objectives, or share what you

are looking for with a friend; they might help you to form an unspoken question in a more conscious way. Pause at the entrance, take a moment to become fully conscious of stepping into the labyrinth. Allow a space of time to elapse between you and any person in front of you.

First, give fully your attention: quiet your mind, let go of doing and be, allow thoughts to go away, be still in mind, and embrace a soulful quest. During the walk look at your question or goal from all aspects; walking can allow your own consciousness to open so deeper aspects of yourself can speak. Use a silent mantra if you like, or a centering prayer of aspiration or phrase of affirmation. Reflect on a passage from Sri Aurobindo or the Mother's writings that seems important now, or other inspiring works: meditate or offer as you walk. Use accessories if you like: wear a coloured scarf as symbolic of something for you; carry an object of significance to you (votive candle, flower, stone, etc.) Whatever you carry in should be carried out as well.

The great gift of the labyrinth is that you don't have to do anything in a particular way. It is the walking through the pathways that will help you in prayer and meditation and play.

PATH: There is a single pathway in to the centre and the same path brings you back out. When you have reached the centre you are halfway along the path. Take some time in the centre. It is okay for several people to be seated in the centre at one time. When you are ready, begin the walk back to the beginning. If a number of people are walking the labyrinth, then you will pass people on the way in and on the way out.

PACE: Allow your body to find its own pace. If you need to walk more quickly than the person in front of you, then it is okay to walk around them. The turns are a good place to move ahead of someone. And if you are moving slowly and are being distracted by worries about people behind you, then step aside and let them walk past. (Adapted from the Labyrinth Society of Edmonton, Canada)

2) The labyrinth has only one path so there are no tricks to it and no dead ends. The path winds throughout and becomes a mirror for where we are in our lives. It touches our sorrows and releases our joys. Walk it with an open mind and an open heart. There are three stages of the walk:

Purgation (Releasing) - A releasing, a letting go of the details of your life. This is the act of shedding thoughts and distractions. A time to open the heart and quiet the mind.

Illumination (Receiving) - When you reach the center, stay there as long as you like. It is a place of meditation and prayer. Receive what is there for you to receive.

Union (Returning) - As you leave, following the same path out of the center as you came in, you enter the third stage, which is joining the Divine, your Higher Power, or the healing forces at work in the world. You become more empowered to find and do the work you feel your soul reaching for.

We're really in a cosmic dance, we're all on this planet together; we're all walking the path together, whether we know it or not.

(Adapted from the Reverend Lauren Artress, of the Grace Episcopal Church in San Francisco, USA)

A PREHISTORIC 'MINOAN' MYTH FUELED THE GREEK IMAGINATION

The earliest civilization on the island of Crete is largely unknown except for later Greek sources and modern archeology. As a Bronze Age society, it flourished from the 27th century to the 15th century BCE, and was the pre-eminent civilization and empire in the area of the Aegean Sea, until volcanic eruptions or earthquakes led to its demise. British archaeologist Arthur Evans uncovered many palaces and archives and learned that the king was called Minos, so he termed the culture "Minoan." Even though Minos simply means "king," it was believed that the first king was named Minos, and he became fully mythological for the later Greeks.

As the first advanced European civilization, 'Minoan' culture was based upon authoritarian rule, a low level of militarism with defenseless towns and internal peace, unusual freedoms for women, and relative social harmony, according to the historians. We know close to nothing about their spoken language; their form of writing was at first hieroglyphic and later alphabetical in a very archaic version of Greek, which finally died out. The only records found relate to commerce and their matriarchal religion based on goddess worship. They wrote nothing, as far as we know, about any King Minos, a monumental palace at Knossos or a labyrinth. Wall murals found reveal a strong fascination with bulls.

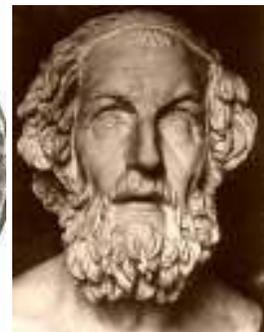
As Cretan power declined, the palace of Knossos was occupied by the Mycenaean Greeks by around 1420 BCE, and they apparently adapted, rather than destroy, 'Minoan' culture, religion, art – and the very oral tradition of the Minotaur and the labyrinth. They continued to operate the economic system and bureaucracy of the 'Minoans' as well. This is the period of the earliest Greek literature and myth, including the epics of Homer – the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* – in which Minos is mentioned as king of Knossos, long before the Trojan War. He was said to be the most ancient man known to build a navy, and the honorable author of the Cretan constitution. It was especially the Greeks of Athens who evolved a mythic view of the Cretans, since they had centuries earlier lived in the shadow of the powerful 'Minoans', and perhaps even had to pay them tribute. Greeks who settled in Crete learned about the Minotaur myth and developed it to suit themselves.



Painting at Palace of Knossos



coin of a King Minos?



Homer

escape, for many a winding turn shut off the secret outward way. It was an elaborate, high-walled maze at Knossos, created by “the first inventor of images, who hardly could himself make his way out, so puzzling was the maze,” it was said. To the Greek mind, with its emphasis on reason in society and order in its classical architecture, the many-roomed, confusing palace of Knossos too, may have functioned in the myth as a symbol of unreason, an appropriate place for the Minotaur.

Minos’ navy was formidable, supposedly, and it terrorized the Greeks and they feared Minos’ power. It attacked the small Athens and defeated it; Minos demanded then an appalling tribute in the form of seven youths and seven maidens, who every year must be sent to Crete for the Minotaur to eat alive. He craved the flesh of young Athenians, and had to be fed on a regular basis.

GREEK HEROES DEFEAT EVIL ‘MINOAN’ BEAST – MYTHIC TRIUMPH OF CIVILIZATION



Thesues



Poseidon

Brave Theseus was a Greek demi-god, born of two fathers – the king of Athens and the god of the sea, Poseidon. As he had proved himself capable of superlative feats of battle to protect civilization, he was challenged to kill the cannibalistic Minotaur. So he went to Crete as one of the seven youths of tribute to the Minotaur. But he had to get into the labyrinth, kill the beast and find his way back out again. Upon arrival in Crete, Ariadne, the daughter of Minos, fell in love with him and agreed to give him a clue to help him get in and out, if he would take her back to Athens as his wife. So following the clever advice of the designer Daedalos, she gave Theseus a ball of thread or twine as the clue, which he attached to the entry door and unraveled as he worked his way in to the center.



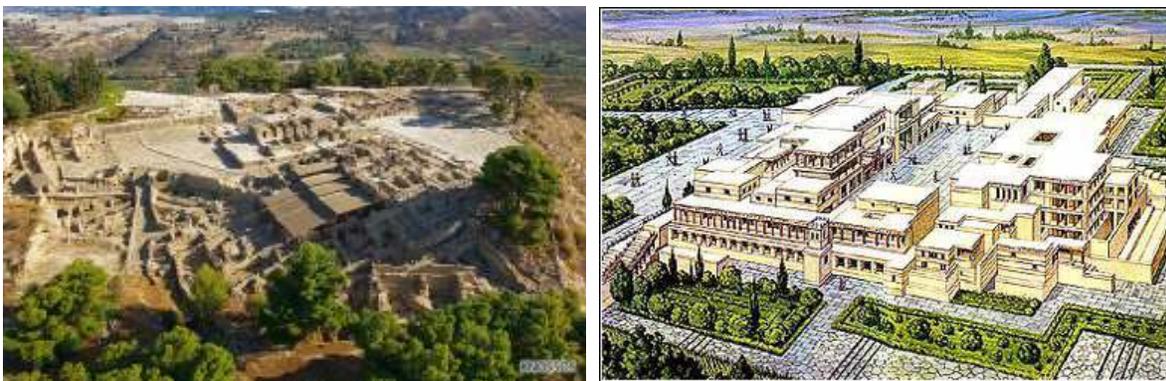


Many Greek images in various media show him killing the Minotaur. There are, however, no such 'Minoan' images: they are Greek creations.

And with Ariadne's clue, he could find his way back out of the maze. So Daedalos stood up to the will of the tyrant Minos, affirming the Greek power of the mind - in his ingenious solution to the problem of escaping the labyrinth - against the chaos of 'Minoan' rule with its confusing maze and bestiality.

And Theseus returned to Athens, became king, and founded Athens' constitution and many of its traditions, according to some accounts. However Athens did not really rise to power for about a thousand years after the 'Minoan' era. The palace of Knossos is a fact in Crete, while King Minos and the labyrinth likely fantasies of the Greeks. As 'Minos' is Cretan for 'king', many scholars consider it a royal or dynastic title for all the priestly rulers of Bronze Age Knossos, and may not refer to a specific king. The Athenians prided themselves on valuing reason over savagery, order over chaos, civilization over barbarism, and envisioned Cretans as brutal and tyrannical.

So as the heroic Theseus - intelligent, brave, and civilized - confronted the vile creature, his victory may represent our victory over the animal or savage aspect in ourselves. The physical lair of the Minotaur may have been symbolically a spiritual one — a dark and confusing place of the mind. And the complicated palace of Knossos may have functioned in the myth as a symbol of bewildering unreason, an appropriate companion to the Minotaur.



Ariel view of the ruins and artist restructuring of the Palace of Knossos

This myth may be a symbol of the eventual shift of power from 'Minoan' Crete to Athenian Greece. It may also represent the overthrow of an archaic religious order with a new Hellenistic one. Theseus would then symbolize not just an individual so much as an entire episode of history.

Labyrinth – the Greek Word

Two possibilities:

1) The impression made on the Mycenaean (eventually Athenian) Greeks who visited Crete may have been the intricate jumble of architecture in Knossos. The palace had been planned and constructed with great care. Excavations have shown that its 1300 rooms were connected by passages of varying sizes and with many interconnecting rooms, so it could have seemed (for all the exuberance of its form and decoration) like an intimidating maze to visitors.

2) And the decorations everywhere were of a two-headed axe, for which the term in ancient Greek was *labrys*. In other words, the Labyrinth was "The House of the Two-Headed Axe". The confusion probably comes from the first 'labyrinth' being a maze in reality and myth, but the idea of a labyrinth being a maze has persisted.

Labyrinthus in Latin was derived from Greek *labyrinthos*, meaning "maze, large building with intricate passages," especially the structure built to hold the Minotaur, from a pre-Greek language." So possibly "labyrinth" was originally the multi-roomed, royal 'Minoan' palace of Knossos itself, also meaning "palace of the double-axe."



A golden 'Minoan' *labrys*, symbol of royal power

Labyrinth – the confusion still today

In colloquial English, labyrinth is still generally synonymous with maze, but contemporary scholars observe a clear distinction between the two. Through the centuries various forms of both have been represented both symbolically and physically, as seen in paintings, as designs in pottery, baskets and coins, as body art, etched on walls of caves, but especially on the floor and ground.

Sri Aurobindo – 'labyrinth'

The seeker must learn to distinguish, as an impartial and discerning witness of all that proceeds within this kingdom of his nature, the separate and the combined action of

these qualities; he must pursue the workings of the cosmic forces in him through all the labyrinth of their subtle unseen processes and disguises and know every intricacy of the maze.... As he proceeds in this knowledge, he will...no longer remain an ignorant tool of Nature. (The Synthesis of Yoga, pg.230)

Only another labyrinthine house
Of creatures and their doings and events
A city of the traffic of bound souls
A market of creation and her wares,
Was offered to the labouring mind and heart. (Savitri)

The golden issue of mind's labyrinth plots,
The riches unfound or still uncaught by our lives,
Unsullied by the attainment of mortal thought
Abide in that pellucid atmosphere. (Savitri)

In the labyrinth pattern of her thoughts and hopes
And the byways of her intimate desires,
In the complex corners crowded with her dreams
And rounds crossed by an intrigue of irrelevant rounds,
A wanderer straying amid fugitive scenes,
He lost its signs and chased each failing guess. (Savitri)

Sri Aurobindo wrote of "mind's labyrinth plots,"
and of the "labyrinth pattern of (our) thoughts and hopes...." Can't find

Concluding remarks about the myth, by Eugene Hirschfeld

The myth of Theseus and the Minotaur has been taken up by subsequent artists and reshaped for their own purposes. The Minotaur appears briefly in Dante's *Inferno*, both Blake and Picasso made drawings of him, and the surrealist movement named a journal after him — to name just a handful of examples.



Minos by Gustave Doré for Dante Alighieri's *Inferno*



Minos by William Blake



Picasso's Minotauromachy 1935 Etching



Picasso's The Blind Minotaur 1934

This is perhaps because the myth works on many levels. Most immediately it is a stirring tale. It also explores some profound psychological questions, and embodies such oppositions as reason and unreason, civilisation and barbarism, which fascinated the Greeks. It is also a political story, a form of propaganda that presents the Greeks as heroic, and the decaying Cretan power as deserving overthrow. As such, it tells us more about the Greeks than about the Minoans.

The myth of the Minotaur is not a simplistic account of a muscular hero defeating an evil monster, but part of a narrative continuum. Theseus and the Minotaur are partly both products of deeds that predate them and over which they have no control. It is how Theseus responds to the situation he finds himself in which determines his heroism. The characters are complex and sometimes contradictory. Daedalus devises the clever ruse of the thread, but he also built the labyrinth in the first place; Minos does not follow acceptable Greek practice by killing his cursed son by exposure, but still keeping him in degraded conditions.

Being a myth, the story is of course elusive. There is no 'correct answer' to what it is all about, and there are other possible readings. This is the ambiguity of symbolic representations, which are not necessarily directed rooted in any concrete thing.

There are limits to the archaeological evidence available; consider the timespans involved: arising in an oral tradition, the story was already centuries old when writers like Apollodorus or Plutarch recorded it. Even if there really was a King Minos, who lived at the peak of Minoan civilisation — say around 1600 BCE — he would have been dead roughly 800 years before even Homer's work was first written down. The existence of different versions of the myth emphasises the elusive nature of imaginative narratives whose contact with archaeological fact is confusing and partial at best.

Two Aegean specialists put it: "The old legends, in short, may not have been nostalgic fantasies of a lost golden age spun out of whole cloth, but rather seemed to be dim memories of a very real, rich and vibrant civilisation..."

The story of Theseus and the Minotaur illustrates how mythology, for all its psychology and fancy, does not spring mysteriously from the imagination, but is a product of particular social and material

conditions, even if the connection has become very obscure. And it shows that even a fairy tale has an ideological spin.

[Eugene Hirschfeld](#)

<http://marxist-theory-of-art.blogspot.com/2010/12/myth-of-theseus-and-minotaur.html>

Some basic questions arise:

How did the 7-circuit design evolve to a floor labyrinth for walking meditations?

How did it evolve from 7-circuits to 11-circuits in many countries?

Seven-circuit labyrinth designs did not appear on Cretan coins at Knossos until the time from 430 to 70 BCE, issued by the Hellenic trading colony founded on the site. This was long after 'Minoan' culture had faded away and Greek power and culture dominated the area of the Aegean Sea. They include coins with both square and circular versions of this Cretan labyrinth. From well before this era, the unicursal design was widely used to represent the Labyrinth – even though both logic and literary descriptions make it clear that the mythic Minotaur was trapped in a complex branching maze.



Clay tables from ancient Greece, too, show similar designs. Then the Romans painted it on pots and ceramics, and spread the labyrinth widely through the Roman Empire, being taken by travelers in copy books, usually of parchment or on papyrus rolls. The Romans were the first to use it in mosaic floors through the Mediterranean area - over 60 of them dating from c.165 BCE to c.400 CE, from Italy to Egypt, Syria, and up to England. Most of these labyrinths were too small to have been walked, typically being found on floors near entrances to houses and villas; they may have served a protective function, perhaps to have warded off evil influences or intruders—a common function of various labyrinths in many other cultures as well. Even as the designs became more elaborate, often appearing quite different from the earlier ones, they represent the first significant changes to the original labyrinth symbol - itself already some 2000 years old in Roman times. Nonetheless, depictions of them from then until the European Renaissance are mostly 7-circuit and unicursal, leading to the center. And the round version is now generally seen as the standard Cretan labyrinth, based on the 'seed pattern' and is called the Classical Labyrinth.



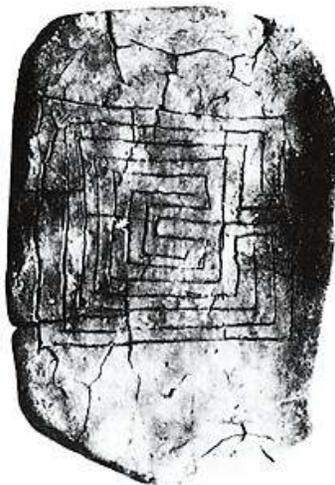
The seed pattern is seen as the cross, four angles and dots, and is drawn first in designing new labyrinths. All grows out from the 'seed'.
troop



The Chakra-vyuha labyrinth is found primarily in India, and is based on a three-fold seed pattern and so is drawn with a spiral at the center. It is a name derived from a magical

It is referred to in Indian tradition as "Chakra-vyuha," formation employed by the magician Drona at the battle of Kurukshetra, as recounted in the Mahabharata epic. The stone labyrinth at Baire Gauni, Tamil Nadu, India, is laid out in the Chakra-vyuha style commonly encountered throughout India.

Three Pointed Seed Patterns There are two subtypes: 1. The Chakra-Vyuha Labyrinth 2. The Baltic Labyrinth



pottery fragment from
Tell Rifa'at, Syria, 1300 BCE

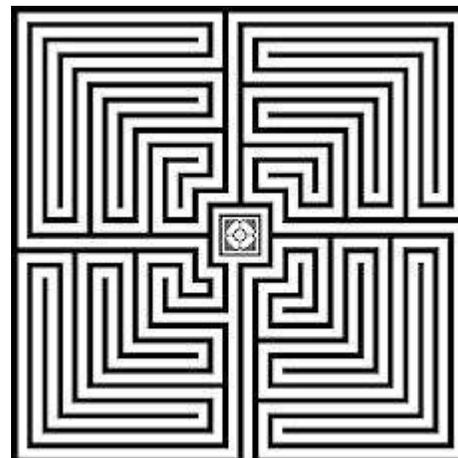
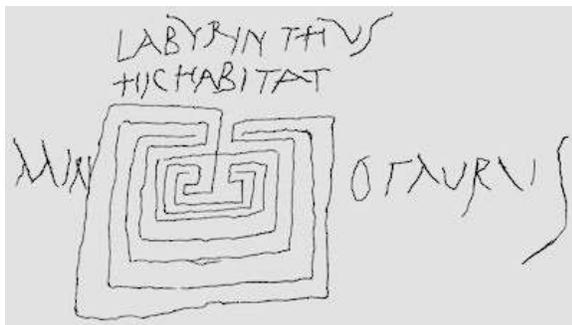
clay tablet: Mycenaean palace
at Pylos, Greece, c. 1200 BCE

engraved labyrinth as rock art,
at Taouz, Morocco, c.500 BCE



Etruscan wine jar from Tragliatella, Italy, late 7th century BCE, with armed soldiers on horseback running near a labyrinth with the word TRVIA (Troy) inscribed in the outermost circuit. The Roman writer Pliny records that the labyrinth pattern was used, marked out on the ground, and known as the *Lusus Trojae* – “Game of Troy” by competing riders on horseback as a test of skill.

Roman mosaic in Cyprus, 1st C, with simplified 4-circuit labyrinth



Scratched on a pillar of a house at Pompeii, Italy, the town destroyed by an eruption of Vesuvius in 79 CE, is a graffiti with an inscription reading

Roman labyrinths of this generic type were first developed in the 2nd century BCE, and are found

LABYRINTHUS HIC HABITAT MINOTAURUS
(the labyrinth, here lives the Minotaur)

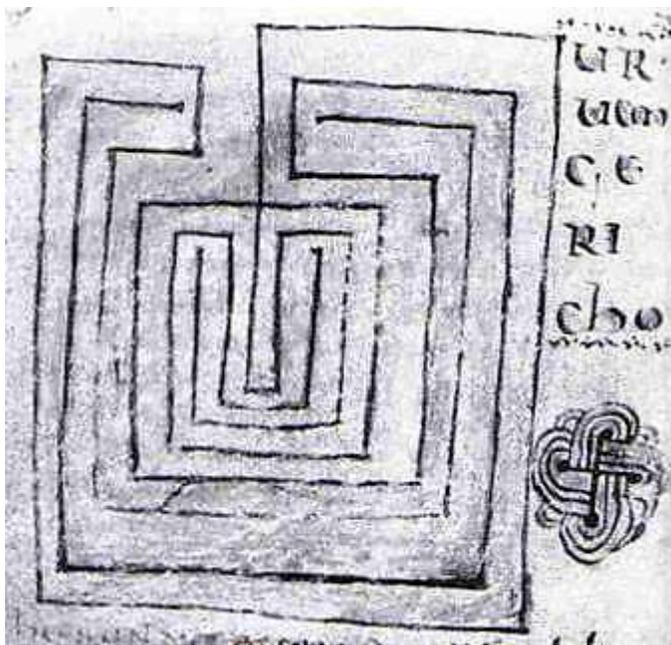
throughout Europe and North Africa
wherever the Romans settled.

This popular connection between the labyrinth and the defenses of Troy (and indeed other fabled and destroyed cities) has continued throughout the history of the labyrinth.

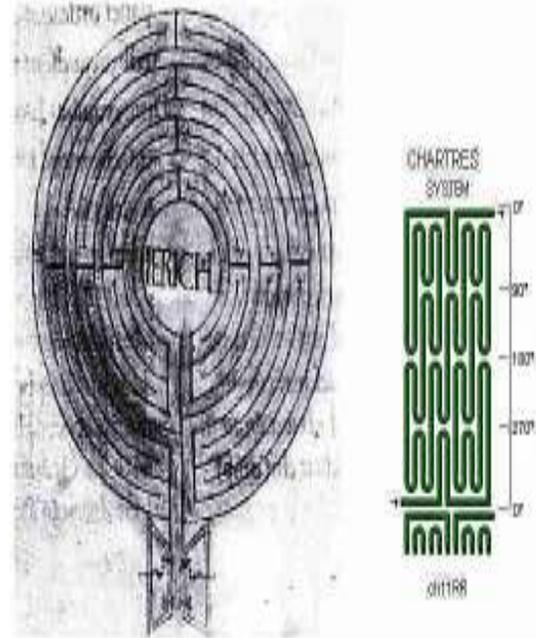
It seems likely that the preserved written works of Roman and, earlier, Greek authors, Pliny, Homer and others, which mentioned the legends of the labyrinth, were responsible for the later development of the labyrinth symbol in Europe. Once Christianity was spread throughout the Roman territories, the labyrinth symbol was absorbed into later Christian symbolism, philosophy and architecture.

Old Testament labyrinths

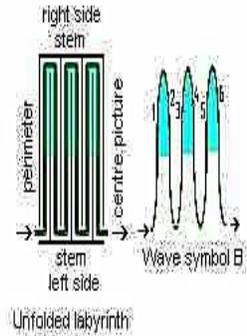
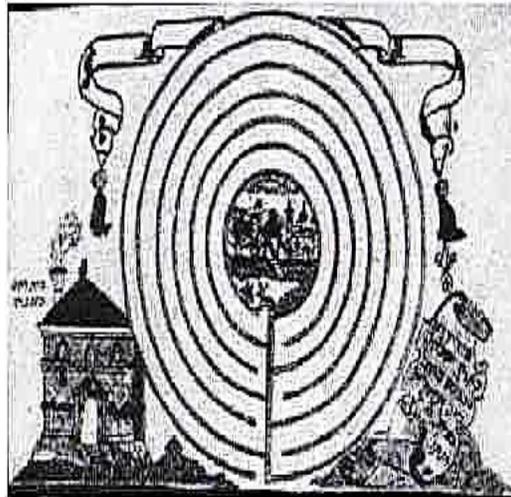
Medieval Jews who looked at the Jericho story imagined that Jericho was not just a walled city, but a 7-circuit labyrinth: that God had in fact asked the Israelites to walk the labyrinth to penetrate into the city and into the good land beyond it. Another legend tells that Jericho was besieged by the Israelites and conquered only after the army had marched 7 times around its walls. Thus was born the 'Jericho Labyrinth,' a decorative motif found in medieval manuscripts of a seven-looped labyrinth, usually illustrated as a walled city, always labeled 'Jericho.' But some were 11-circuit.



"Jericho" Labyrinth, Abruzzi Monastery, 822
the oldest extant manuscript labyrinth



"Jericho" Labyrinth, Chartres Style, from
Corbie Abbey near Amiens, France, ca. 1150

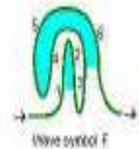


Jericho, Lune; moon-shaped Jericho Labyrinth, in manuscript from Regensburg, Germany, ca. 1175. In Hebrew, the word Jericho and the moon have similarities, so Jericho can mean the moon city.

Hebrew manuscript of Israel's holy sites, including the seven walls of Jericho; ca. 1270, copied in 1598 in Italy



Jericho 7-circuit Labyrinth representing Jericho having seven walls, with Joshua slaying his enemies; ancient manuscript in a Hebrew Bible, Beirut Library, Lebanon



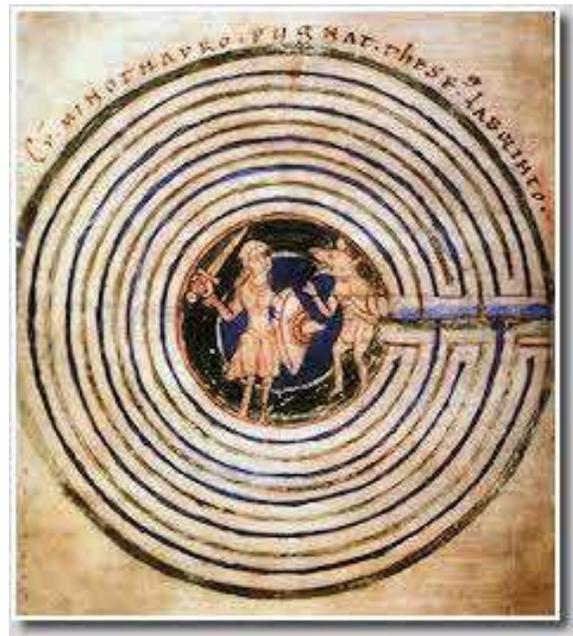
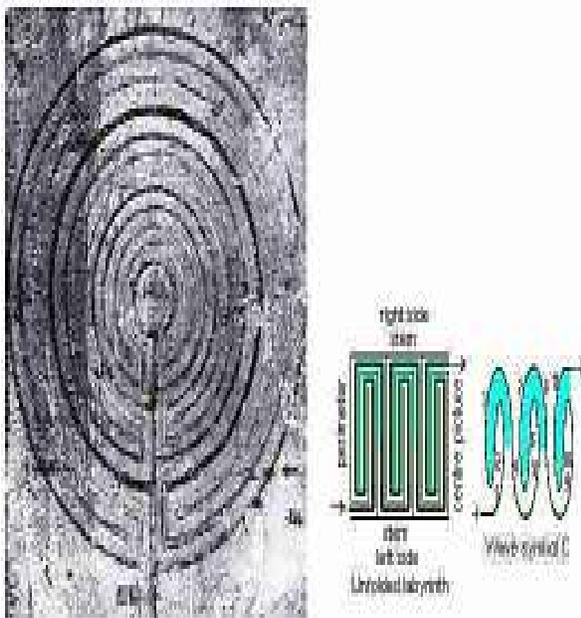
Jericho Labyrinth, in Farhi family Hebrew Bible, from Provence in France and Spain, 1382. Jericho is in the centre with 7 walls around the city, formed as a labyrinth. One legend tells that 7 kings built Jericho, each of them building a wall around it.

Christian numerology

In the medieval period 11 was special, 11 = number of evil. 11 falls 1 short of 12, a holy number (12 apostles), and 11 exceeds 10 with 1 (10 commandments). 11 lanes as prison for the minotauros. But when the 11 circuit labyrinth in a couple of centuries changed completely as in Chartres to be holy and used for pilgrimage walking on knees to the centre, it can be considered that the centre goal is the 12' circuit step and thereby specially holy.

11-Circuit 'Chartres-Style', Christian Labyrinth Design

Eleven-circuit labyrinths evolved in the middle ages, first in manuscripts carried from city to city, and later in Christian cathedrals and churches – called Chartres-style labyrinths. First carved in a stone porch in Italy and soon after in the Cathedral at Chartres, France.



Otfrid's Labyrinth, manuscript in Evangelienbuch by Otfrid of Weissenburg, Alsace, France, 871; it likely provided the impetus for the development of the much more influential Chartres design with 11 circuits.

Another Otfrid-type of labyrinth is based on the classical seed pattern, but is drawn concentrically with an additional set of turns added to create an 11-circuit labyrinth. Here is the scene for battle between Theseus and the Minotaur; late 12th C. manuscript from Regensburg, Germany



First carved Christian Labyrinth – 11-circuit pattern

This ‘finger’ maze at the cathedral of San Martino at Lucca, Tuscany, Italy, (built beginning in 1060) is carved into the right pier of its porch (built beginning in 1204). It likely pre-dates the famous Chartres maze. The rustic incised Latin inscription refers to the Cretan/Greek mythology: ‘This is the labyrinth built by Dedalus of Crete; all who entered therein were lost, save Theseus, thanks to Ariadne’s thread.’”

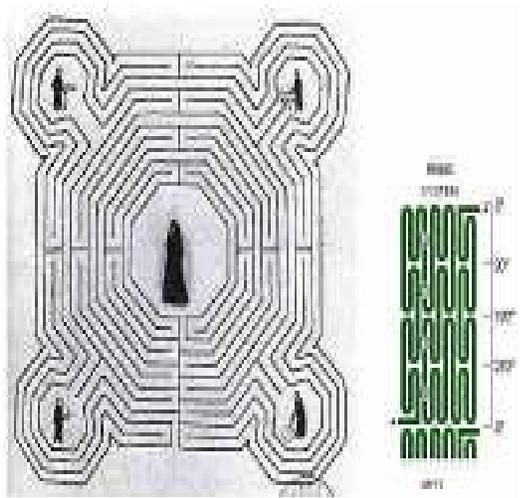


Chartres was built beginning in 1194 and finishing in 1221. Between 1215 and 1221, the church's large floor labyrinth was made with paving stones in the very central nave.

Because of the cathedral's impressive size, the labyrinth itself was equally grand, attaining a diameter of 12.85 meters, making it not only the first, but also the largest church floor labyrinth ever constructed during the middle ages. While perhaps not the most embellished or ornate of labyrinths, the one found in Chartres is arguably one of the most famous in the world. With its rounded sides and eleven concentric circles, any labyrinth using this model has come to be known as a Chartres-type labyrinth. The large 6-petaled central area came to represent the Divine Mother, the Catholic Virgin Mary. This new kind of labyrinth design spread throughout Europe in medieval times, in many forms of art, becoming a spiritual form for spiritual reflection and meditation.



10-circuit labyrinth in Chapter House of Bayeux Cathedral, France, ca. 1250.



Floor Labyrinth design in Reims Cathedral, France, c.1270. It was destroyed in 1779.



Floor Labyrinth in Cathedral of Amiens, France, 1288, as a Chartres-style labyrinth in an 8-sided polygon.

Italian architects had been sketching conceptual garden labyrinths as early as 1460, and hundreds of mazes were constructed in Europe between the mid-16th and 18th centuries.

Knot Gardens and Hedge Mazes

Branching maze designs became popular during the European Renaissance as gardens. Called hedge mazes, and now well known around the world, they originally evolved from the Knot Gardens first established in England during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I (1533-1603). Most Renaissance knot gardens were composed of square compartments. A small garden typically consisted of one compartment, while large gardens would contain six or eight parts. As gardens of very formal design in a square frame, they held a variety of evergreen aromatic plants and culinary herbs including germander, marjoram, thyme, southernwood, lemon balm, hyssop, costmary, acanthus, mallow, chamomile, rosemary, calendulas, violas and santolina. Most later knot gardens now have hedges made from dwarf box (*Buxus sempervirens*), slow growing, robust and shade tolerant, and whose leaves have a sweet smell when bruised. The paths in between are usually laid with fine gravel.



**Modern Knot Garden at St Fagans'
museum of country life, south Wales**



**Modern Knot Garden at the
Red Lodge Museum, Bristol**



The labyrinth had thirty-nine groups of hydraulic statuary representing the fables of Aesop. At the entrance to the labyrinth were placed symbolical statues of Aesop and Cupid, the latter holding in one hand a ball of thread. Each of the speaking characters represented in the fable groups emitted a jet of water, representing speech, and each group was accompanied by an engraved plate displaying verses by the poet de Benserade.



'Puzzle design' maze, Versailles, France, 1677
with sculpted characters from Aesop's fables

Hampton Court Palace Maze, c. 1690s
This is the oldest surviving puzzle hedge maze.



Wandiligong Hedge Maze near Bright in Victoria, Australia, end of 1900s

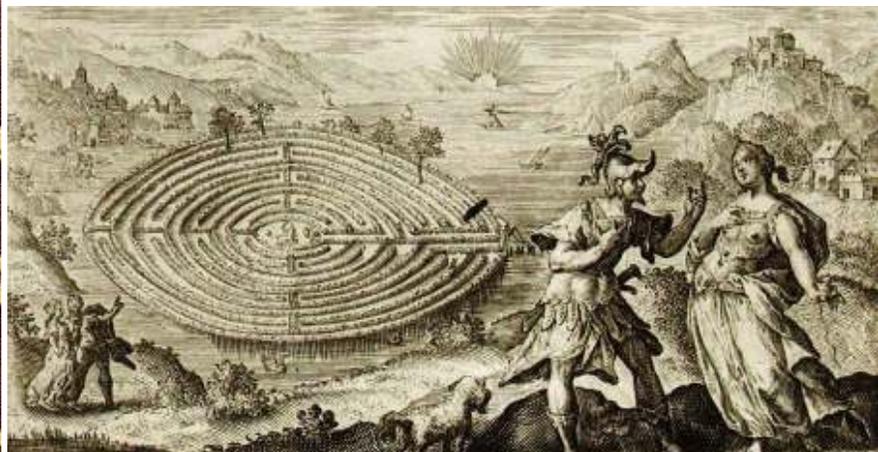


Seasonal American corn mazes abound throughout the United States – latest craze

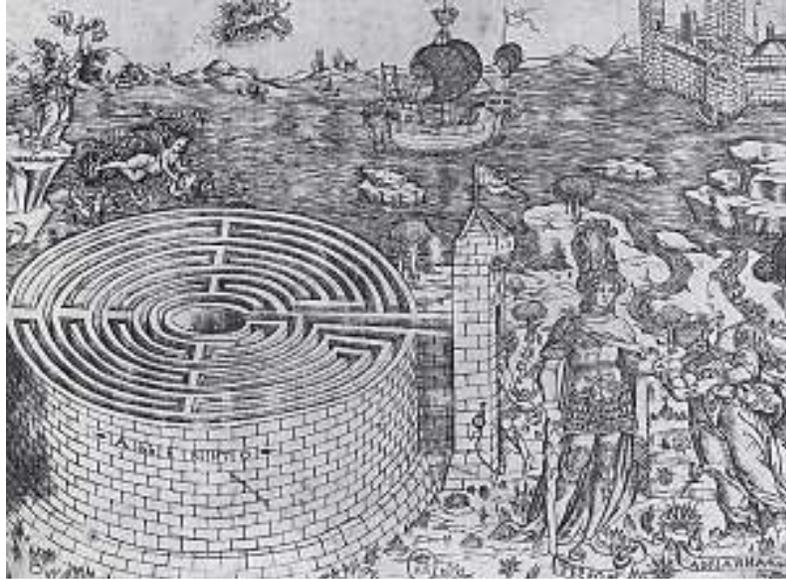
The labyrinth design and Cretan/Greek mythology continued in other art forms.



Map of the world (*Mappa Mundi*) manuscript, c. 1300
Hereford Cathedral, U.K.



Theseus fights the Minotaur in the Labyrinth
by Dutch artist Crispin de Passe I (1565-1637)



<http://www.labyrinthos.net/firstlabs.html>

http://www.lavigne.dk/labyrinth/e5a_miex.htm#Figm6JerLune