

THE ANCIENT GREEK CITY

Ancient Greek city-states were built according to human dimensions; at first they were the result of natural growth and only later they were built according to a well defined plan.

Greece is divided by mountains into small plains, and the physical boundaries of the small plains formed the boundaries of the city-state. Man could dominate in his city, he could climb up any summit, and appreciate the whole urban space.

The average population of the ancient Greek city was probably of about 20,000 inhabitants. The built-up city was very small: the average area was a square whose side was 1.3 km. As far as the shape of the Greek towns, they adapted to the landscape. The density in the city was rather uniform and it allowed one house

of 100 sq m. per family, with a corresponding garden and a sufficient area for public spaces.

The oldest cities and those of continental Greece, such as Athens, were developed around or near a hill or rock, the acropolis, where the god-protector of the town was worshipped, and which was the core¹ of the city. The ruler had his seat there, too. Later the city gradually developed in wider circles near the acropolis, thus forming a second lower core, the agora, which was the centre of political, commercial and social gatherings². Acropolis and agora there-

fore formed the double core of the ancient town, but the agora gradually became its most important element, and this was mainly due to the development of commerce and handicraft and of the new system of democracy. The original form of the agora was very simple: a flat open space with suitable drainage. It also had as much open space as was needed to make it possible for the population to gather there. Religion and worship played an important role in

the life of the citizens. In ancient Greece there was no dividing line between religious and civil architecture, because there was no distinction between these two aspects in everyday life. The religious buildings were scattered³ all over the town and the city was developed around them. The main expression of worship

was the temple.

The synthesis of public places was not determined by geometrical criteria, but only by man's own position and movements.

Special buildings such as gymnasiums, theatres and stadiums were generally located further away from the agora and the city centre. This was due to the fact that such places were used by large numbers of people on special occasions, and the movement of large crowds in the city centre would have been difficult.



GLOSSARY

- 1 nucleus, centre
- 2 meetings
- 3 spread

READING COMPREHENSION

● Answer the following questions.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ① Why could man dominate in the ancient Greek city? ② What was the average population of the ancient Greek city? ③ What was the acropolis? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ④ What was the agora? ⑤ Why was there no dividing line between religious and civil architecture? ⑥ What was the main expression of worship? |
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ACTIVITIES



MATCHING

● Match a word in the first column with one in the second column, then provide the Italian equivalents.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ① Natural ② Urban ③ Average ④ Ancient ⑤ Dividing ⑥ Civil ⑦ Large ⑧ Special | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (A) Occasions (B) Numbers (C) Town (D) Space (E) Growth (F) Line (G) Architecture (H) Population | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> |
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