

An Extract from  
**“Labyrinths and their secrets”**  
by Patrick Adrian

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# Labyrinths

*In my End is my Beginning.*

T.S. Eliot

Labyrinths are patterns of power. Still, they are a mystery.

In this chapter, the reader will familiarise him or herself with the basic notion of the labyrinth, its history and modern application. It is not my intention to enter the symbolism of a labyrinth as it is known nowadays (or better say unknown), nor it is my intention to explain different theories concerning the matter. Readers who are interested can use the Internet, while to the ones who desire more complete and more in-depth information, I recommend two books: *Through the Labyrinth*, by Hermann Kern, Prestel, Munich-London-New York, 2000, and *The Genesis and Geometry of the Labyrinth*, by Patrick Conty, Inner Traditions, Rochester, Vermont, 2002.

Regardless of all interpretations about the nature and purpose of labyrinths, I will present my complete and thorough knowledge about the nine basic labyrinths in the second part of the book. As the reader will see, this knowledge is unique and special. It does not rely on existing interpretations that, despite the number of books written, concur only in the claim that the origin, function and purpose of labyrinths is unknown or unclear, to say the least.

Let us start by explaining the very notion of the word labyrinth.

## **“Labyrinth” as a word and a notion**

By all indications, the word “labyrinth” originates from pre-Greek languages, especially the forgotten and lost language of the people of Crete. The Greeks heard and accepted the term “*labris*” that referred to a „double axe“, a common Cretan symbol. However, there are different indications (Gimbutas) that point to

the fact that the double axe symbol actually represents butterfly wings indicating an evolutionary transformation, which is in fact in concordance with the labyrinth symbolism.

*Labris* is therefore a symbol, while the Greek ending *inthos* refers to its location. When saying *labirint(os)*, the ancient Greeks were probably referring to the palace in Knossos, marking it as the location of the “butterfly wings symbol”.

Nevertheless, no matter the complexity of Knossos, no traces have ever been found of a structure that would resemble a labyrinth, that is, the one that made famous the “labyrinth of Crete” – the drawing on Cretan coins. The myth of Minotaur, a half-person, half-bull who lived in the centre of the labyrinth, where virgins were sacrificed, also encouraged the imagination of explorers who were convinced that labyrinths as structures did, in fact, exist. Some claim it disappeared in one of numerous earthquakes, while the mythical story about a terrifying monster in the very centre of the complex structure exists even nowadays strongly linking it to the notion of the labyrinth. Consequently, an average person has a negative attitude towards the term labyrinth, associating it the most as being a “dark, hidden place; a place where one can easily get lost and hurt”.

In fact, the primary culprit for the collective impression about a labyrinth could be the Greek philosopher Plato. He was the first one to use this term conveying one of Socrates’ dialogues (Euthydemus). Following logical arguments, the philosophers thought they had solved the problem and had come to a closure, when suddenly “as if they had fallen into a labyrinth” they found themselves at the beginning of the discussion!

Therefore, a labyrinth is something confusing, but it does not end in a monster’s insides. It ends at the beginning, the place you started from.

The term labyrinth was, in a way, used as an analogy for something confusing, something unclear and unknown, as well as something that brought us back to the beginning instead of leading us to a different place.

Nonetheless, the most common mistake that we need to rectify is the attitude that a labyrinth is a place with many options, with a path that suddenly ends in dead-end alleys or that it is a structure where it is difficult to find your way out.

The above definition can be applied to a maze, not to a labyrinth!

To make this difference clear, let us try and determine what exactly a labyrinth is.

## Definition of a labyrinth

To make a labyrinth what it is, we have to fulfil the following elements:

- one entrance
- winding path or path with several turns
- no crossroads
- no dead end streets
- one centre
- the same path leads to the exit
- the exit is actually the entrance

If you think about these elements, you will quickly notice the fact that it is impossible to get lost in a labyrinth!

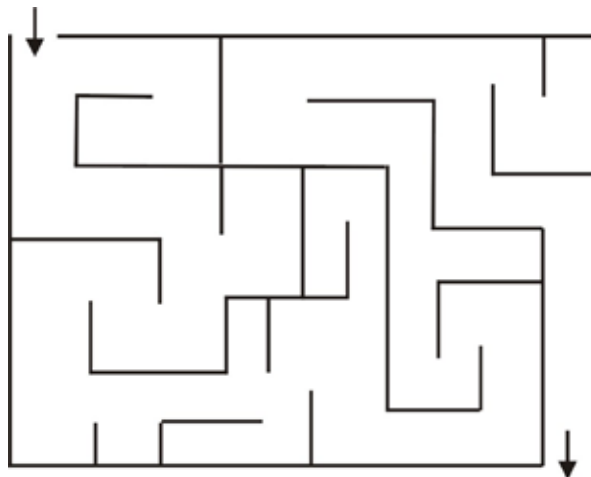
The only thing that a person walking through a labyrinth has to do is just that – walk!

Unless you turn around and head back, you will reach the centre. This is where you turn around and go back the same way that you came from.

A labyrinth is indeed a complex and confusing structure, but it is not a maze!

Unfortunately, few people know about this difference, so therefore, the Platonic function of a labyrinth as a synonym for confusion and disorientation remains in the general use.

Look at the image of a simple maze.

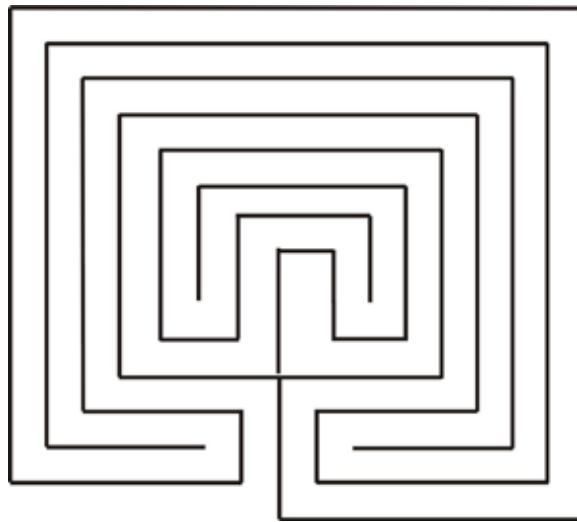


As you can see, it has an entrance and an exit on two opposite sides. As soon as you enter, you face a dilemma: head on straight or turn left. If you turn left

you will find yourself in a dead end street and you will have to go back. In some places there are crossroads where you can choose whether to go one way or the other. This maze has only one correct path that leads to the exit. However, it is possible to construct a maze with connecting paths, which means it has alternative paths that lead to the exit. If this maze was more complex, one could spend hours in it before finding a way out.

The popular term ‘labyrinth’ is often wrongly used to describe these kinds of structures (in parks and similar). As I have pointed out, a maze significantly differs from the definition of a real labyrinth.

This is how a labyrinth looks like.



It is also a complex and a confusing structure, at least when you first look at it. Still, if you examine it more closely you will discover it only has one entrance (which is also the exit), so there are no crossroads or dead end paths. This means that after you reach the centre you go back the same way to reach the exit. As much fun and likable mazes can be, they are not labyrinths. While mazes symbolize the process of deciding and making decisions, as well as stimulate the mind to get its bearings (the body also, if they are the right size), labyrinths are true patterns of power that act on a much deeper level than pure logic and getting your bearings.

## Ancient mystery

Let us go back for a moment to the ancient Greeks and their perception of a labyrinth. The myth about Minotaur in the centre of a structure called labyrinth, the legend about Ariadne, who gave Theseus a ball of wool when he entered a labyrinth (so that he would safely return), and eventually the fact that the constructor of the labyrinth, the wise Daedal and his son Icarus were trapped inside of it, paints a completely different picture in our minds compared to the one the labyrinths most likely have in their original meaning.



Still, the Greeks were confused by the labyrinth which, most likely, made them identify it with many things they did not know or accept within the much older and different culture of Crete. In this regard, there are contradictory reports about the origin of the labyrinth. In his Iliad, Homer described Achilles' shield with a labyrinth drawn onto it. Yet, he claims that this was the pattern of a dance floor made for Ariadne. There are other indications that a labyrinth was never a structure, especially not a dark and dangerous one, but that it was a dance pattern. It was so complex that Cretans would sometimes draw it onto the ground to make it easier on the dancers.

However, no such dance podium has been found in Knossos, making the coin with labyrinths drawn onto its both sides the only connection between Crete and the labyrinth, aside from the very word that became universal. This kind of a labyrinth form is called classical or Cretan labyrinth, and it is one of the most famous labyrinths to have ever appeared in human history.

Before we make a short overview on how labyrinths appeared in all parts of the world, it would be a good thing to say that one of the Cretan scripts, the so called Linear B, has been partially deciphered. One of the charts mentions the Labyrinth's Mistress or the Labyrinth's Lover, who receives "as much honey as all the gods receive together". This short remark points to the fact that, for the

old Cretans, the labyrinth had a spiritual or even religious meaning. It is obvious that, even though it was a dance pattern, it still possessed a deeper, nearly sacred meaning.

Although some claim that the idea and the notion of a labyrinth are “only” four to five thousand years old, it is more likely that it has been following humankind much longer than that. However, as things usually happen, the further we go into the past, the evidence is more unclear, and interpretations can take on different forms. For instance, the Neolithic origin of labyrinths is not questionable. Namely, the Neolithic was a time full of secrets. It was a time when astronomy and astrology developed, together with the measurement of time and cosmic rhythms. Furthermore, many things originated in Neolithic - understanding of life and death, ideas on reincarnation, as well as other spiritual and even technical knowledge (megaliths, building astronomical observatories and similar. It is questionable whether the labyrinth as a structure existed even earlier, in the Palaeolithic, more than twelve thousand years ago. For some, the answer is negative (because, as they say, such regular structures were not interesting to the mostly nomadic population of that time), while for others the answer is positive. Namely, although there is no material evidence, labyrinths were never only structures (or some other material object like megaliths, stone blocks or sculptures). We are talking about an abstract idea, a pattern that exists in the consciousness and expresses itself through movement and dance. It is not necessary for it to find a way to concrete existence in the material world. Finally, in spite of all the myths and legends, the famous labyrinth of Knossos has never been found, although, as an idea, it spread across the world and sustained the blows of long millenniums! Therefore, it is logical to assume that even pre-Neolithic people knew the general cosmic laws, at least in their rudimentary form.

Forms similar to labyrinths have been found in most of the old cultures on all continents: Celtic, Mayan, Greek, Cretan, American-Indian, Indian... Of course, the interpretation as to the universality of the appearance of labyrinths is different. While some claim that the original labyrinth is the Cretan one, and has found different ways to spread across the world, others claim that this is actually a universal pattern that was created in different cultures of the world that were mutually independent. If it was indeed created in a single place, its most probable point of birth is the Mediterranean circle and the culture of Old Europe. However, if this is true and that is the place from which the labyrinth spread across the world, it does not mean that the idea could not have existed, in this or some other form, in other Neolithic cultures of that era.

Regardless of the use of the word labyrinth, similar structures are mentioned in the oldest oral and written traditions. Thus, Mahabharata, the oldest Indian

epic, mentions a deadly military formation much like a labyrinth, which was used on the battlefield of Kurukshetra. In Ramayana, the second most famous Indian epic poem, the labyrinth is the unconquerable fort of the demon Ravana who had kidnapped Sita, Rama's wife. Tantric art knows yantras and mandalas that are much like labyrinths. There is a labyrinth in Egypt, next to Lake Moeris, for which they claim is some kind of a matrix that reflects the structure of the universe. There is a labyrinth in Korea called the seal of the ocean. A text inscribed into it, according to the legend, explains everything that exists in this world. Tihuanaco calendar talks about a time structure that resembles a labyrinth.

If we start from the Cretan towards our own time, we will find labyrinths in Celtic and Scandinavian motifs. Also, the ancient Hopi tribe from Northern America knew the labyrinth as the "house of the Sun", and the Pima tribe as the house of Siuhii, a mythical hero whose tracks were so confusing that no one could ever find him. In India, in the Halebid temple in Mysore, there is a painting of a structure that resembles a labyrinth. It represents the cit or consciousness which is the source of images we use to "create" our world. It actually illustrates a deadly formation that the sage Drona had described in Mahabharata much earlier.

In the west, the labyrinth is preserved in Roman mosaics, while it was later integrated into medieval architecture. Strangely enough, Christianity accepted it tacitly, so it became a type of substitute for pilgrimages. When they were not able to go to a holy place (Jerusalem), pilgrims walked through a labyrinth. In this way, without them even realising, they preserved the ritual function of the labyrinth as the arrival to a place of "sacredness" – the inner centre of consciousness. The oldest existing Christian labyrinth is the one in the basilica Reparatus in the town of Algora in Spain, dating from the 4th century A.D.

One of the extenuating circumstances in accepting the Cretan labyrinth type was probably the fact that it had a cross in its centre, which means that its seed pattern can be presented in form of a cross. Later, labyrinths blossomed across European churches, especially in France. The most famous Christian labyrinth is most definitely the one in the cathedral of Chartres whose circular design became very popular as a symbol of Christian labyrinths. Aside from Chartres, there are also churches in Sens, Poitiers, Bayeaux, Amiens and Rheims, as well as cathedrals in Rome.

Nowadays, labyrinths are not only present in churches and sacred places, but also in parks, public areas and private yards. They have been accepted as ornaments and works of art, so no one is concerned by the fact that we know so little about this structure.

Most likely, the secret of a labyrinth will not be solved any time soon. Despite



its universality and acceptance in all cultures, there is not much we know about it. It has remained faithful to its symbolism – and to this day confuses us with its forms, curves, paths, centre... And then again, it looks like it has been present more than ever! Thousands and thousands of people have heard about a labyrinth, they walk through it and even though they know nothing about it, they enjoy the delicate presentiment of power and unclear feeling of mysteriousness brought by its presence.

## **Labyrinths around us**

Labyrinths are all around us! They are present in all cultures and religions, as symbols that remind us of ancient times or even as works of art. Recently, there have been more and more people who feel the attractiveness of a labyrinth as a symbol, but also feel its effects on the consciousness of those who frequently walk through it. What is more, the presence of a labyrinth, as stated by many, has a very positive effect on the entire environment and creates balance in the body of planet Earth itself.

Many spiritually oriented people use the labyrinth as one of the ways of going back to themselves, or as means for exploring their place under the Sun, their humanity.<sup>1</sup>

This book is written as a manual and a source of information about the construction of labyrinths. One of the objectives that I had in mind is to encourage as many people as possible, according to their possibilities, to build or to participate in the building, and, later on, to use these significant patterns of power.

After the publication of this book (originally in Croatian language) there were literally hundreds of new labyrinths built on the soil of Old Europe, some in archaeological areas, other on private or public land.

I personally participated in building several “Cities of labyrinths” (places where nine labyrinths are built together). The first one is on the property of The Art of Giving, a Croatian NGO. Eventually, this place became an attraction to many visitors; a magical place to experience the power of labyrinths.

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<sup>1</sup> A convenient means to find a labyrinth is the „Labyrinth locator“ on the Internet, as part of the pages of „Labyrinth Society“: <http://wwll.veriditas.labyrinthsociety.org/locate-a-labyrinth>

# Appendix A

## **Labyrinths - balance and healing points**

Throughout the book I have pointed out the influence of the labyrinths on the space where they are located as well as on the plants, animals and people living in their proximity. I mentioned that in some way they can act as catalysers of progress, or as a factor of balance. Of course, such statement requires evidence, which we do not possess in this moment. In other words, there are only subjective experiences and testimonies of people who constructed the labyrinth or simply noticed that after it everything around them has assumed a different – better – quality.

Are those people subjective or liable to suggestion? Or, do they unconsciously see what they would like to see and not the real state of things? I do not believe it to be so, but we will most likely be waiting for a scientific proof for quite some time. The labyrinths are not only at the edge, but over the edge reachable by science today.

Their Neolithic origin in connects them with the megalithic structures – big stone blocks that Neolithic people, in a mysterious and unexplained way, put up in specific places. If nothing else, they were probably present at the same time. While the megaliths clearly point to a kind of geomantic abilities, that is to say, “readings” of the energetic lines of force of the landscape, would it be possible to say such a thing about the labyrinths, as well?

We do not know. The megaliths have survived, at least partially, because they are enormous. They remained among us as a forgotten giant reminder of their unknown past. On the other hand, the labyrinths survived in the collective consciousness of humankind with much less material evidence. Nevertheless, it is not hard to imagine that the labyrinths were also placed in special places, which, personally, I like to call “places of power”.

Geomancy is the “reading” of good and bad places, definition of energetic lines of force and knots, positive and negative influences from the same planet or

the space around us. I am not an expert in this field, but I am able to recognise the “place of power”. I noticed that my “places of power” do not necessarily correspond to the “places of power” of another person.

Maybe the point at issue is that certain people “vibrate” with certain places, while other people feel the same elsewhere. Reality is multidimensional, as the physics tells us, so we have to be cautious in the evaluation of the subjective and the objective.

Modern geomancers try to discover the patterns that were obviously known by Neolithic people. Why did they choose certain places for their interventions in stone and others not? Energy is the key, some say. They talk of generation and preservation of energy, and, according to this opinion, the entire megalithic culture, including structures such as labyrinths, were a sort of generator or accumulator for the creation of energy which was used for purposes beyond our understanding.

Perhaps they wanted to heal the planet, some say, so that they drove, as acupuncture needles, stone pillars into the ground. Nowadays, this is done today by peculiar people (like Slovenian Marko Pogačnik with his litopuncture). Still, is the “healing of the planet” an idea that could have been developed in the Neolithic? Was the question of the “healing of the planet” actual in times when people were happier than today, probably more developed socially, and perhaps even scientifically (considering the technology that they disposed of in the manipulation of the immense stone structures), in times that we could almost call the golden era of humanity? Possibly, it was due to other reasons (natural catastrophes, climatic changes), but it seems to me that “healing” is a modern necessity, much more than ancient.

Nowadays, to talk about healing of what humankind has done to the planet, without stopping and annulling those effects, is equal to the idea that some medication will solve the consequences of a wrong way of life. You can heal a polluted and an overpopulated city only by separating it into components and depopulating it, or spreading it over a much larger area, and then by a clever populating politics maintain the natural balance between people and their surroundings. Of course, under the condition that prior to all of this you have increased the awareness of people at a certain level of understanding and readiness to save what can be saved with their actions.

In fact, now we arrive to the crucial difference between labyrinths and other mysterious “technologies” of the Neolithic time. Perhaps the megaliths were really generators of energy; maybe they had healing properties for the people and the planet; and maybe it was both.

The labyrinths possess some of these characteristics, but above all they impact

the consciousness of people. Labyrinths are patterns of power, and not external factors that belong to a greater structure.

This is why it is not so important whether they are located in a place of power, a point of energy or a meridian. Answering the question whether they will have a stronger influence if they are located in such places, I have to say that the probability for such an influence is high. However, this is not crucial.

Labyrinths are not here to follow the already existing power of the planet – they are here as independent patterns generating power by themselves. Every labyrinth is the centre of the universe and wherever located, it will work in the same way. It means that you do not have to look for an energetically special place to construct a labyrinth – construct it and you will create an energetically special place! When you construct a labyrinth, you create an additional source of power that the entire environment absorbs from. In a way, you have empowered and healed the space where you constructed it. Depending on the features of this labyrinth, the area around it will be enriched with these same natural laws.

If you are engaged in healing, you could make a mistake – give a wrong medicine or drive a needle into the wrong place. However, when you simply water the roots of life, regardless of the imbalance present, it will be spontaneously cured. This is exactly what the labyrinths do: they feed and empower the basic natural laws. Revived and full of energy, intelligence and power, they become benevolent and generous toward the entire life around them.

Do not forget that they act together with human consciousness. If their mere presence in a particular place has favourable effects, this is only a pale shadow of the effects they generate when people walk them. Each passing through a labyrinth makes it stronger and more powerful. All people who pass through it next, not only add their own part in this wave of power but also enjoy its benefits more than their predecessors. Thus, we can say that the power of a labyrinth is proportional to the number of people who have walked through it.

Here is a short table reminding you about the effects of particular labyrinths on the space around them.

LABYRINTH OF POWER	increases people's general health, their social status, fosters management and political life
LABYRINTH OF FEELINGS	reinforces the quality of compassion in people, makes them good and cordial hosts, and gives a tender attractiveness to the entire area (it is particularly good in areas that need healing – war areas or areas with deeply rooted conflicts between people)
LABYRINTH OF ENERGY	activates people, the entire area exudes work, diligence, decisiveness and realisation; calms conflicts, gives strength and energy for the defence of justice and eliminates negativities
LABYRINTH OF CONNECTION	improves closeness and understanding between people and reduces unnecessary conflicts and arguments; creates optimistic atmosphere, and people start to look with hope to the future; increases the wish for learning and gaining new knowledge
LABYRINTH OF WISDOM	stimulates innate human curiosity and redirects people's thoughts and deeds to the execution of tasks that belong to the entire humankind; increases the level of wisdom, erudition and tolerance; reduces prejudices, stimulates learning and the relation with the divine
LABYRINTH OF LOVE AND CREATION	increases the level of love and creativity in people; increases honesty and eliminates negative feelings; incites the increase of innovativeness, abundance and wealth of the entire area

LABYRINTH OF LIFE AND DEATH	fosters agriculture, harmonises natural rhythms, climate and seasons; reduces the quantity of sorrow (especially after natural disasters); increases spiritual aspects, peace and silence
LABYRINTH OF TRANSFORMATION	preserves the diversity of nature; improves the life of animals; makes people of that area more kind toward strangers; encourages experiences of higher states of consciousness and the perception of delicate levels of reality
LABYRINTH OF FREEDOM	stimulates openness to deep inner insights, whereas people become wiser; decreases violence and accidents; this labyrinth protects animals and makes the communication with them easier; energetically “cleans” the space from tensions and aggression, especially from people toward other living species