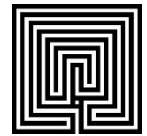


# A Labyrinth at Side

Sarah Coles



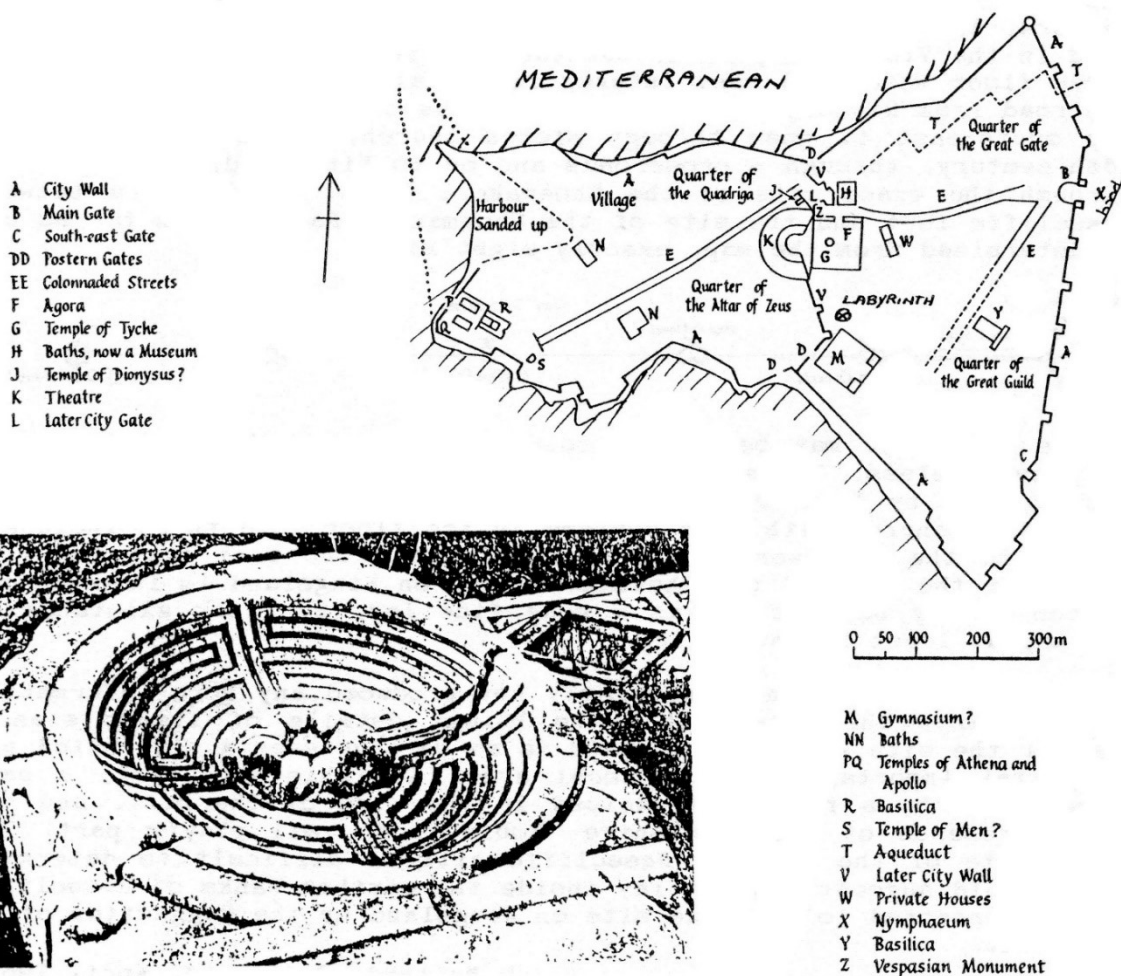
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Side today is a little Turkish village, about fifty miles (80 km) east of Antalya, situated beside the Mediterranean among the ruins of a city which flourished under the Roman Empire. Side was then a Greek colony, with a harbour, temples, baths and a splendid theatre which survives practically intact. It was a centre of science and culture, and in the 5<sup>th</sup> century CE became an archbishopric; from the 7<sup>th</sup> century it was attacked by Arabs and later became derelict.

Among the ruins littering the sandy grass is an unusual circular labyrinth, which is coved, and has fruit at its centre. It is carved on a block of stone about three feet wide. George Bean in *Turkey's Southern Shore* says it might have been a ceiling block from the gymnasium, although other guides identify the nearby building as the library. The name Side means 'pomegranate' a familiar symbol of fertility; this fruit is shown on the city's coins and appears to be the fruit at the centre of the labyrinth. So, the labyrinth may be performing one of its oldest functions, protecting the city.

Sarah Coles, Alresford, England; May 1987

*Plan of the ruins of the ancient city of Side, Turkey; below, the labyrinth carved stone.*



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