The Origins of the Greek Architectural Orders

Much of our understanding of the origins and early development of the Greek architectural orders is based on the writings of ancient authors, such as Vitruvius, and those of modern interpreters. Traditionally, the archaeological evidence has been viewed secondarily and often made to fit within this literary context, despite contradictions that occur. Barletta's study examines both forms of evidence in an effort to reconcile the two sources, as well as to offer a coherent reconstruction of the origins and early development of the Greek architectural orders. Beginning with the pre-canonical material, she demonstrates that the relatively late emergence of the Doric and Ionic orders arose from contributions of separate regions of the Greek world, rather than of a single center. Barletta's reinterpretation of the evidence also assigns greater importance to the often overlooked contributions of western Greece and the Cycladic Islands.

Barbara A. Barletta is professor of art history at the University of Florida, Gainesville. A fellow of the American Academy in Rome, she is the author of *Ionic Influence in Archaic Sicily: The Monumental Art*.

The Origins of the Greek Architectural Orders

Barbara A. Barletta

University of Florida

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi

Cambridge University Press
32 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10013-2473, USA

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521124225

First published 2001
First paperback edition 2009

Printed in the United States of America

A catalog record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication data

Barletta, Barbara A.
The origins of the Greek architectural orders/Barbara A. Barletta.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 0 521 79245 2
1. Architecture – Orders. 2. Architecture, Greek. 3. Architecture – Orders – Sources. I. Title.
NA2815 B35 2001
721′.36 – dc21 00-065985

ISBN 978-0-521-79245-5 hardback
ISBN 978-0-521-12422-5 paperback

. . .since I have observed that our citizens are distracted with public affairs and private business, I have thought it best to write briefly, so that my readers, whose intervals of leisure are small, may be able to comprehend in a short time.

Vitruvius, The Ten Books on Architecture (V, praef., 3), translated by M. H. Morgan

CONTENTS

PREFACE

MODERN VIEWS OF THE architectural orders take as their basis the writings of ancient sources, especially Vitruvius. His treatise, *De Architectura,* defines the orders and explains their early emergence from wooden forms. He sets this development within a general evolution of architecture from primitive origins to perfection. Each order arises within its own geographical region and is the creation of a single ethnic group whose name it bears. Other ancient sources offer refinements of certain points, including chronological development. The arts are generally viewed as culminating in the Classical period and declining in Hellenistic times, a pattern considered especially relevant for Doric architecture. These basic ideas have been adopted and further elaborated in later times. The Renaissance contributed a more rigid definition of the orders than Vitruvius envisioned, but one that fit better with their own interests. In the eighteenth century, J. J. Winckelmann set the development of art, including architecture, within a broad historical and cultural context that appealed to the contemporary emphasis on rationalism and has persisted to the present day.

Despite criticisms of individual issues and the advent of archaeological excavation, which has considerably increased our knowledge of early Greek architecture, the essence of these initial theories remains. We still accept an evolution for the orders and often cite links with Bronze Age traditions. Although their actual appearance is placed somewhat later than Vitruvius implies, a long history in wood may bridge some of the gap. Indeed, many scholars continue to seek wooden origins. The discovery of seventh-century temples at Corinth and Isthmia has yielded fresh evidence for the "petrification" of temple architecture and raised the possibility of the emergence of the orders not in a wooden but in a stone tradition. Long-held views are, however, difficult to overcome. Although no evidence exists for the Doric order in the Isthmia temple, its excavator reconstructs it as such by assuming the existence of now-lost canonical elements in wood and other materials.

Recent investigations of other buildings from the eighth and seventh centuries offer a new perspective on the development of the temple, and help to define surrounding events and their chronology more precisely. Likewise, our knowledge of architecture in different regions of the Greek world, such as the Cycladic Islands and western Greece (southern Italy and Sicily) has been expanded through both excavation and study. Articles and books have appeared

that elucidate the development of individual building components, such as the peristyle, the Ionic capital, and the Doric geison. Yet a comprehensive examination of this material is still lacking.

My work draws on the contributions of these excavations and previous studies in an attempt to reconstruct the early history of Greek architecture and the emergence of both the Doric and Ionic orders. The third early order, Aeolic, is not discussed in any detail, since, despite its initial importance, it was never fully executed in stone and did not survive the Archaic period. It was thus unknown to later theorists and was not incorporated into their views. Because of the enormous impact of such theories, both ancient and modern, on our own understanding of the orders, the literary tradition is explored first. This is followed by the archaeological evidence, beginning with the earliest periods of Greek architecture and continuing through the appearance of the orders in stone at the end of the seventh and into the sixth century B.C.

Although this study advocates a primary role for the physical evidence, our interpretation of that material necessarily relies on theoretical principles. Buildings are generally dated according to a determined stylistic evolution, sometimes in other media (as associated pottery or architectural sculpture) but also on the basis of their own components, such as column capitals and mouldings. This study traces the development of each member of the order over time and place. Some repetition results in the case of better known or preserved structures, which are thus well represented in the discussion. Yet this approach allows consideration of poorly preserved temples. It will be seen that not all parts of a building evolved at the same pace. Likewise, different solutions may be arrived at simultaneously in separate geographical regions. An important theme of this book is thus the emergence of regional styles and their contributions to the development of the orders.

The catalyst for each order, and its precise sources, remain obscure. An attempt is nevertheless made to sort out these issues in the final chapter. My aim is to present a coherent reconstruction of the early orders in accord with the archaeological evidence and, insofar as possible, also with our literary sources. It will certainly not be the last word on this difficult subject, but, I hope, will further its discussion.

As with any project of this nature, this book owes a considerable debt to previous studies. Some of these exist in the form of unpublished dissertations, which are not widely circulated or known. Two are of particular importance because of their broad scope and, although they are cited in the endnotes, they deserve special mention here: N. L. Klein, "The Origin of the Doric Order on the Mainland of Greece: Form and Function of the Geison in the Archaic Period" (Diss. Bryn Mawr College, 1991) and T. N. Howe, "The Invention of the Doric Order" (Diss. Harvard University, 1985).

Likewise, many scholars have graciously lent me their time, materials, and/or expertise. I thank Tod Marder for having suggested the project long ago. Jeffrey

Burden and Kim Hartswick discussed various points with me and provided helpful clarification of ideas. A. A. Donohue, Mark Wilson-Jones, Thomas N. Howe, and Alex Alberro read and commented on portions of the manuscript. As always, I have benefited greatly from Brunilde S. Ridgway's thorough review of the manuscript and detailed comments. Others have assisted in various ways with the illustrations. Gottfried Gruben has been particularly generous in allowing me to reproduce numerous images. J. J. Coulton and R. W. V. Catling made available their own materials and assistance. I thank also, in alphabetical order, Anton Bammer, both Catharina Flämig and Hans R. Goette of the DAI Athens, Gerhard Joehrens of the DAI Berlin, Amalia G. Kakissis of the British School at Athens, Alexander Mazarakis Ainian, Dieter Mertens, Aenne Ohnesorg, Erik Østby, Brian Slawson, Burkhardt Wesenberg, and Penghua Zhu, as well as Kalliopi Christofi of the École Française d'Athènes, Kerri Cox of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens, and Carola Ruschinzik of Gebr. Mann Verlag, who responded to an especially large number of requests. Funding for this project was provided in part by grants from the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts and the University of Florida Scholarship Enhancement Fund. Finally, this work would not have been possible without access to excellent libraries, for which I am particularly grateful to the American Academy in Rome.