

the compelling story that Campbell tells, however. Indeed, one of her book's greatest strengths lies in the clarity of both the argument and the handsomely reproduced illustrations presented in its pages. I will enjoy rereading these chapters with my students—the story of magnificent buildings and the millions involved in their construction is sure to inspire lively discussions about the profound impact of Yongle's architectural vision on global architectural history and global history as a whole.

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## Notes

1. Craig Clunas, *Superfluous Things: Material Culture and Social Status in Early Modern China* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991); Jonathan Hay, *Sensuous Surfaces: The Decorative Object in Early Modern China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2010).
2. James T. C. Liu, *China Turning Inward: Intellectual-Political Changes in the Early Twelfth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1988).
3. Lothar Ledderose, *Ten Thousand Things: Module and Mass Production in Chinese Art* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000).
4. Fu Xinian et al., eds., *Zhongguo gudai jianzhushi, di er juan: San Guo, Liang Jin, Nan-Bei chao, Sui-Tang, Wu Dai jianzhu*, 2nd ed. (Beijing: Zhongguo Jianzhu Gongye Chubanshe, 2009), 602; William H. Cooldrake, *Architecture and Authority in Japan* (London: Routledge, 1996), 64–66.
5. Jiren Feng, *Chinese Architecture and Metaphor: Song Culture in the Yingzao Fashi Building Manual* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2012), 98–99.
6. Nancy Steinhardt, "Why Were Chang'an and Beijing So Different?," *JSAH* 45, no. 4 (Dec. 1986), 339–57.

Vaughan Hart

### Christopher Wren: In Search of Eastern Antiquity

New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2020, 209 pp., 180 illus. \$60 (cloth), ISBN 9781913107079

Christopher Wren was a reluctant traveler. In 1661 he declined the offer of a position in Tangier to fortify the British garrison there, and his only well-documented journey outside Britain was his visit to Paris in 1665–66, when he famously met Gian Lorenzo Bernini.<sup>1</sup> Nonetheless, his buildings are replete with French and Italian references, which have been carefully identified in

classic monographs such as those by John Summerson, Kerry Downes, and Margaret Whinney.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, in Restoration London, French influence permeated all aspects of cultural life, and Rome provided the touchstone for a new identity for the Anglican Church as a rival to Catholicism. Yet cultural horizons extended beyond Europe. During the same period, Londoners were gathering in Ottoman-inspired coffee bars to exchange news and ideas, and in 1679 the first Turkish bathhouse, known as the Royal Bagnio, opened in Newgate Street. London was a melting pot of new scientific advances and intellectual research, and as a founding member of the Royal Society, Wren was in the thick of it.

Vaughan Hart audaciously titles the preface of his new book on Wren "Towards a New History of Architecture." Although he is alluding to Wren's curiosity about the origins of built forms, Hart also hints at his own claim that the book offers a new strategy for analyzing Wren's sources and prototypes. His method springs not primarily from visual analysis of the buildings but from a close study of Wren's reading and his day-to-day encounters with his close friends, notably Robert Hooke and John Evelyn. Wren's own writings—especially the "Tracts," begun in the 1670s and finished in 1719, though not published until 1750—form the starting point. The library catalogues of Wren and Hooke (both published in 1972) and the diaries of Hooke and Evelyn help to confirm the enthusiasms and curiosity of these restless minds.

In the late seventeenth century, Ottoman civilization engendered both fear and admiration in Europe. On one hand there was deep-rooted suspicion of the Muslim faith, but on the other there was respect for one of the world's most powerful empires, which controlled vast areas of the Eastern Mediterranean, eastern Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa. At this time, the Ottoman Empire's territory included all the biblical sites as well as the lands of the ancient Greek philosophers. The publication of numerous travel narratives—some with engraved illustrations—opened up these distant lands to the imagination. Such books, written by pilgrims, explorers, and merchants, provided geographical templates in which readers could root the great civilizations known from ancient texts, including those of the Phoenicians,

Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, and Egyptians, not to mention the "wonders" of the ancient world.

Wren's curiosity about the origins of architecture blossomed within the intellectual circles of the Royal Society. Hart documents the architect's voyage of discovery, expanding on Lydia Soo's assertion of Wren's interest in Eastern cultures.<sup>3</sup> In his introduction, Hart explores the intellectual climate in which Wren, Hooke, and Evelyn, all of them founding members of the Royal Society, conversed and exchanged ideas. Sources that intrigued them included illustrated travel writings such as those of Jean Chardin (1686) as well as anti-Ottoman propaganda. It was not the experience of Ottoman life itself that aroused Wren's curiosity, however; rather, he was interested in the information he could gather on the beginnings of civilization—in his armchair travel, he journeyed through time as well as space.

In a series of essays, Hart examines the possible Eastern influence on particular architectural themes and forms in Wren's work. In the first chapter, "Classical Orders and Lanterns," he investigates Wren's theory of the "Tyrian order" as an alternative to the Vitruvian narrative of the primitive hut. Perhaps inspired by notions of visits to ancient Britain by the Phoenicians, Wren sought the origin of the Doric order in Tyre. He even suggested that the biblical Temple of Solomon had been built in the Tyrian style, criticizing Juan Bautista Villalpando's reconstruction using Corinthian capitals. Wren identified other ancient buildings as Tyrian, including the Mausoleum at Halicarnassus and the Tomb of Absalom in Jerusalem. With Hooke he discussed the likely form of the tomb of the Etruscan king Lars Porsena at Clusium, also described by Pliny, which Wren pronounced "a stupendous fabric, of Tyrian architecture" (32). Although Wren's 4-foot-long drawing has not survived, a sketch by John Aubrey records Hooke's reconstruction of Porsena's tomb, and Hart suggests that the open structure with superimposed obelisks was "in Wren's mind" when he designed the Gothic open spire of St. Dunstan-in-the-East (42). Although one could argue that the fifteenth-century crown spire of St. Mary's Newcastle is more similar, Hart hypothesizes that Wren took inspiration from such remote

models. He proposes that other Eastern sources, such as the Temple of Venus at Baalbek, informed the open lanterns and steeples in Wren's work (although, of course, similar open forms were to be found in baroque Rome).

In the second chapter, "Gothic Arches and Towers," Hart advances the theory that Wren's willingness to design in the anachronistic Gothic style did not simply represent an exercise in appropriateness or contextualization but also reflected his interest in the "Saracenic" origins of the pointed arch. Hart quotes Wren's 1713 report on Westminster Abbey, in which he argued that the "Gothick Manner of Architecture . . . should with more Reason be called the *Saracen* Style; for those People wanted neither Arts nor Learning; and after we in the West had lost both, we borrowed again from them, out of their *Arabick* Books, what they, with great Diligence had translated from the *Greeks*" (55). Wren associated the arrival of the Gothic in Europe with the Crusades; as Peter Draper has shown, citing the same passage, the pointed arch was certainly developed in the Islamic world long before it reached the West, although the means of transmission is still a matter of debate.<sup>4</sup> The presence of Islamic buildings in the Holy Land imbued the appropriated and Christianized "Saracenic" pointed arch with biblical associations.

As a national landmark, the dome of St. Paul's Cathedral is perhaps the boldest symbol of Wren's contribution to English architecture. Hart's third chapter, "Greek Crosses and Domes," explores Wren's fascination with early Christian and Byzantine domes in the Eastern Mediterranean, especially those of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem and Hagia Sophia in Constantinople. Many scholars have noted the impact of Parisian domes on the design of St. Paul's, as well as the influence of the woodcuts of St. Peter's and Donato Bramante's Tempietto in Rome by Sebastiano Serlio and Andrea Palladio; Dutch precedents for some of Wren's city churches have also been identified. Hart is not denying these sources so much as expanding Wren's frame of reference. The Eastern Church not only seemed to represent the birth of Christianity but was also untainted by Catholicism. Drawings of Hagia Sophia in Wren's hand (or possibly

Nicholas Hawksmoor's) in a book from St. Paul's Cathedral testify to his careful study of that church. As domes were still little used in British architecture, Wren took particular interest in the geometry of the pendentive dome. Sir George Wheler, one of the most prominent travelers to Constantinople and another fellow of the Royal Society, having read the accounts of Hagia Sophia by both Eusebius and Procopius, proposed the combination of Greek cross and dome as the ideal form for Christian worship. Hart's detailed exploration of the knowledge of Eastern domes among the members of Wren's circle allows him to see the reflections of such domes in several of Wren's city churches as well as St. Paul's. He concludes this chapter with the bold assertion that Stuart London, with its skyline of domes and spires, adopted the identity of a "new Constantinople," a comparison backed up by a profusion of seventeenth-century references.

Wren's grand colonnades with straight entablatures—including those at Greenwich Hospital and Trinity College Library—constitute one of his most individual contributions to British architecture, and they are the subject of Hart's final chapter, "Monumental Columns and Colonnades." While Wren's liking for paired columns can be traced to Paris, Hart argues that his use of extended colonnaded walkways is related to his preoccupation with the planning of ancient Near Eastern cities such as Babylon, Athens, Palmyra, and Persepolis. Archaeological discussions at the Royal Society as well as travelers' reports fueled this enthusiasm. Wren's plan for London included an ambitious monumental colonnade along the banks of the Thames, and Hart argues that this detail, like Wren's built colonnades, signals his interest in contemporary discussions about ancient cities at the Royal Society. Similarly, Wren's Monument to the Great Fire of London seems deliberately intended to evoke the colossal single columns of antiquity, especially those of Constantinople.

A city may adopt or claim multiple identities—as a new Jerusalem, a new Constantinople, a new Athens—though these can be recognized only one at a time. Hart's stimulating book confers multiple layers on Restoration London to create a mirage of shifting associations. In his conclusion, he adds the identity of a new Troy

to the mix in relation to the postfire city. Hart is less concerned with analyzing Wren's own buildings than with adding another dimension to our understanding of the architect's mind-set. As a distinguished scientist in his own right, Wren rarely depended on purely architectural considerations, and his absorption with Eastern antiquity was just one element in a complex design agenda. Hart's lucidly structured book opens up this new area of research by providing a formidable array of evidence from Wren's circle of friends and acquaintances and asserting that the studies of this group laid the foundation stone of the architect's thinking: "Wren's growing awareness of these surviving and destroyed buildings can now be seen to have informed not only some of his designs but also, more fundamentally, his understanding of the origins and purpose of architecture itself" (148).

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## Notes

1. Lisa Jardine claims that Wren was to be found among the entourage of the exiled Elector Palatine in the Low Countries during the English Civil War. See Lisa Jardine, *On a Grand Scale: The Outstanding Career of Sir Christopher Wren* (London: HarperCollins, 2002), 72–87.
2. John Summerson, *Sir Christopher Wren* (London: Collins, 1953); Kerry Downes, *Christopher Wren* (London: Allen Lane, 1971); Kerry Downes, *The Architecture of Wren* (London: Granada, 1982); Margaret Whinney, *Wren* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1971).
3. Lydia M. Soo, *Wren's "Tracts" on Architecture and Other Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 37, 124, 128–30, 132.
4. Peter Draper, "Islam and the West: The Early Use of the Pointed Arch Revisited," *Architectural History* 48 (2005), 3.

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### **Building America: The Life of Benjamin Henry Latrobe**

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020, 304 pp., 34 b/w illus. \$34.95 (cloth), ISBN 9780190696450

Robert Russell

### **William Strickland and the Creation of an American Architecture**

Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2017, 344 pp., 108 b/w illus. \$60.00 (cloth), ISBN 9781621903468