discrete objects—which, he implies, compromises the overall “integrity of a tomb”—we should treat the tomb space, artifacts, and images as part of an interrelated whole. More importantly, because tombs make up a unique category of art specifically designed for the dead, not the living, the scholar must reconsider the utility of employing our traditional art-historical methodologies in analyzing tombs (12–13).

Wu argues that a “fundamental logic” underlies the structure of burials (219), and that only by uncovering this logic can we truly understand Chinese tombs. This thesis is reflected in Wu’s decision to arrange the book thematically into chapters that represent what he considers the “three most essential aspects of any manufactured work”: spatiality, materiality, and temporality (14). Because he is not bound by the same constraints that accompany the more traditional chronological and individual approaches to studying tombs, Wu is able to draw freely from a large, albeit fragmented, body of material and textual evidence to support his points. A major strength of this book may also be perceived as a weakness: Wu seems to be able to offer explanations for practically all the visual phenomena in tombs. One may question the reliability of such a comprehensive explanation for such an enormous amount of information.

The first chapter, “Spatiality,” addresses an age-old problem in the study of Chinese tombs. What factors caused the shift from the pre-Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE) practice of burying the dead in wooden caskets set within deep vertical pits to the Han and post-Han preference for constructing chambered tombs positioned along a horizontal axis? Because in casket tombs the objects, not the architectonic space, give the tomb meaning, Wu conceptualizes this transition as moving from an “object-oriented” to a “space-oriented” design, during which time tombs underwent a process of “architecturalization” (32). He attributes the shift to major changes in ancestral worship, conceptions of the soul and the afterlife, and the establishment of an underworld bureaucracy that occurred in or just before the Han. To this point, Wu informs us that whereas in pre-Han times immortality was equated with deathlessness, in the Han period immortality after death was believed possible. As a consequence, tombs were decorated with images of the home, the heavens, and the world of the immortals, thereby embodying “polycentric” spaces that offered the dead a rich variety of realms to inhabit (221).

The second chapter, “Materiality,” is predicated on the idea that because tomb artifacts were specifically designed for the dead, they possess specific visual properties—with respect to their material, size, and decoration—directly related to their symbolic functions. Wu observes, for example, that lacquerwares from the Eastern Zhou (770–221 BCE) and Han periods were painted red and black, the colors of coffins; that vessels buried with the dead were often deliberately rendered unusable in some way; and that sculptural figurines were frequently miniaturized. This chapter also includes an important discussion of the many ways that contemporaries tried to “transform” their corporeal bodies in order to escape death.

In chapter three, “Temporality,” Wu deploys Paul Ricoeur’s concepts of time as an analytical tool to great advantage.1 Wu writes that images within the tomb such as star maps and animals associated with the cardinal directions align the deceased with the underlying structure of the cosmos in what Ricoeur would call “cosmic time.” In contrast, personal objects buried with the dead represent a “lived time.” These embody two different forms of time: at the funeral they evoke the past life of the deceased, but once buried in a tomb they cater to the needs of the soul in the present and future. A third kind of time, “historical time,” represented by textual and pictorial biographies of the deceased and narratives of important historical figures, reconstructs his or her public persona. And finally, the frequent depiction of chariots on tomb walls represents a journey that enables the deceased to move through time within the tomb.

The Art of the Yellow Springs concludes with a short coda that presents “portraits” of three of China’s best-known tombs: Mawangdui Tomb 1 (ca. 168 BCE) in Changsha, Hunan province; Mancang Tomb 1 (ca. 113 BCE) in Baoding, Hebei province; and the tomb of Zhang Wenzao in Xuanhua, Hebei province (1093). Wu presents these at the end in order to demonstrate the potential advantages of applying the theories outlined in the previous chapters to specific tombs.

Although the clarity with which Wu writes makes this book accessible to non-specialists, he evidently assumes the reader is familiar with China and the subject of tombs. For example, no maps are included, despite frequent mentions made of specific provinces and cities. Additionally, no matter how obscure or technical the terms, he provides Chinese characters in only one instance (128). The reliance on pinyin romanization may make it somewhat frustrating for specialists encountering these terms for the first time to understand them or even to look them up in a dictionary. Oddly, several line drawings and diagrams only employ Chinese characters; it would have been helpful for Wu to translate these. However, these minor shortcomings do not overshadow the overall importance of this book. On account of its remarkably original theoretical approach, The Art of the Yellow Springs is essential reading material for anyone interested in a new interpretation of Chinese tombs.

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Note

Konrad Ottenheym, Krista De Jonge, and Monique Chatenet, editors
Public Buildings in Early Modern Europe

Most buildings in this book will be unfamiliar even to scholars of early modern architecture: these public buildings, such as city halls or market arcades, often count among the happy discoveries of sightseeing in European cities after visiting
better-known churches and palaces. A good guidebook might give the names of the architects and dates of the construction campaigns, but if curious to learn more, information about such buildings is often found only in national or regional inventories of historic monuments based on painstaking research by local scholars. Public Buildings in Early Modern Europe furnishes a broad international panorama of such noteworthy early modern urban structures, presenting thirty essays uniting otherwise scattered material on these hard-working building types of late preindustrial society.

The Architectura Moderna series, initiated in 2002, aims to explore architectural exchanges and influences within northern and central Europe during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The essays collected in the series’ ninth volume were originally presented at two related conferences held in Utrecht in 2006 and 2008 under the general title “Public Buildings in Early Modern Europe.” Their chronology spans 1400 to 1800, with the major geographical emphasis on the Low Countries, France, and the German lands; Italy, England, Scotland, Denmark, Poland, Dalmatia, Spain, Portugal, and Dutch overseas colonies are also represented. Most articles are in English, but eight are in French, and one each in German and Spanish.

The term public buildings is problematic, as book and series coeditor Krista De Jonge admits in her foreword (vii). While many buildings treated here are public in the sense that they were commissioned by and for various civic or governmental bodies, others were commissioned by private or institutional patrons, served a limited group of users, or had restricted access, and thus were arguably private.

Coeditor Konrad Ottenheym’s introduction opens with utopian plans for the unexecuted Swiss merchant city of Henripolis (1625–26), a microcosm of building types deemed necessary for early modern society and thus a convenient overview of the collection’s topics. He situates the volume within the scholarship on building types—based on function rather than style—and identifies one of the volume’s main themes as the shift in models for many of these types from monastic ensembles early in the period to palace architecture later on (xiv). Ottenheym’s six pages are the reader’s only synthetic guide to the loosely connected case studies that follow. These are organized in five sections, the first dedicated to theories of public building while the remaining four treat specific building types for government and justice, trade, education, and hospitals.

The first part, “Public Buildings: Texts and Theories,” consists of only two essays and situates public building types within a theoretical framework. Hermann Hipp analyzes the idea of public building primarily in early modern German political theory, but also in the early seventeenth-century encyclopedic writings of Johann Heinrich Alsted and the architectural treatise on Gewerb-Stattegebäw of Joseph Furtenbach the younger (1650). In such texts, the functions of individual buildings work together to create the fabric of the city and mirror society and its governance. Jeroen Goudeau’s essay, on Nicolaus Goldmann’s mid-seventeenth-century Vollständige Anweisungen zu der Civil-Bau-Kunst (posthumously published in 1696), demonstrates how the Leiden-based mathematician presented a uniquely comprehensive theory of public building type in his treatise, including building practice, architectural theory, and social philosophy, while incorporating both the models of antiquity and contemporary developments.

The second part, “Government and Justice,” is the richest of the entire volume, with eleven essays on city halls, prisons, courthouses, and related buildings attaining a critical mass missing from the other sections. Hubertus Günther opens the section, examining Italian Renaissance notions of the ancient Roman Capitol and curiae as treated by writers from Flavio Biondo to Daniele Barbaro and cartographers such as Etienne Dupérac in the face of new archaeological evidence. The remaining essays describe regional or national variations on buildings for government or justice, fluid typologies during the period with their functions often mixed in single buildings, sometimes even including spaces for trade. Often castles or palaces inspired the buildings (as Charles McKean on Scottish “tolbooth” town halls), and recurring features across Europe included loggias, grand exterior stairways, clock towers, and ceremonial balconies. Some essays here reveal how outdoor or ephemeral activities or rituals related to governance and justice took on permanent architectural form as the early modern period progressed (Nada Grujić on Dalmatian communal loggias and Pieter Vlaardingerbroek on Dutch Vierschaar courts). Barbara Arciszewska’s article on Polish town halls demonstrates how the architectural variety of these buildings depended on the town’s status as a free, Crown, or private city. Stephan Albrecht, discussing the seventeenth-century town halls of Augsburg, Nuremberg, and Regensburg, challenges the notion of building type applied to the early modern era in view of the aristocratic demeanor adopted in the architecture and decoration of these civic buildings, which also served as assembly halls for the Reichstag. Sometimes government administration was combined with a residence for high officials (Lex Bosman on Dutch colonial governor’s mansions and Stéphanie Dargaud on the new eighteenth-century building type of the French hôtel de l’Intendance). Two essays on institutions for confinement conclude the section. First, Lanfranco Longobardi offers a detailed functional analysis of the prisons installed in the pre-existing structures of Castel Capuano, Naples, and the Doge’s Palace in Venice; then Freek Schmidt surveys the civic reforming impulses in Amsterdam houses of correction, whose architectural settings shifted from abandoned monastic complexes in the sixteenth century to the grand and progressive purpose-built workhouse of the late eighteenth century.

The book’s third part, “Economy,” comprises seven essays on structures for trade: stock exchanges, market halls, slaughterhouses, weigh houses, and bridges with shops. Here, trade fuels local prosperity, but also the international exchange that spreads architectural ideas. De Jonge studies national merchant houses and the bourse in Antwerp, which inspired the exchanges of Lille, London, and Amsterdam, while Juliette Roding examines the Copenhagen exchange with its
dragon spire, the result of a royal rather than civic commission as part of Christian IV’s new urban expansions for his capital. Joaquin Bérchez and Fernando Marias offer a rich study of Spanish lonjas (exchanges) concentrating on the three-aisled late Gothic structures that recall hall churches and refer to biblical notions of traders in the temple of Jerusalem, culminating in the splendid example at Valencia. They close with Seville’s late sixteenth-century lonja, which breaks with the earlier tradition and houses new functions administering overseas trading, adopting a palace-like model tied to royal buildings in Madrid. Deborah Howard’s stimulating essay treats the Rialto Bridge not as a building type, but rather explores the process of its design, commission, and construction as a case study of the Venetian civic building authorities at work. Ottenheym demonstrates how Dutch meat and fish market halls reflected both practical necessities for cool storage or avoiding odors, as well as the wares’ evolving socioeconomic position. Karl Kiem emphasizes the unique status of Dutch meat houses with their movable weighing beams as the only monofunctional weigh houses in early modern Europe.

Part four, “Education,” covers school, college, and university buildings, but also astronomical observatories. Many of these eight essays highlight issues of tradition versus innovation in architectural design for institutions desiring reference to a venerable past while adjusting to post-Reformation circumstances, responding to new advances in learning, or attempting to appeal to students from elite social classes. Aurélie Perraut considers early modern remodelings of medieval Parisian colleges responding to growing enrollment and new teaching methods. Rui Lobo and De Jonge analyze Jesuit schools in Portugal and the southern Low Countries, respectively, showing how these adopted architectural elements from secular colleges and patronic residences to serve the functional requirements of their curricula. Laurent Lecomte discusses the girls’ pensionats operated by the French female religious order of the Visititation Sainte-Marie, boarding schools that combined features of both public and convent architecture. Barbara Uppenkamp reviews new sixteenth-century German university foundations, focusing on the Academia Julia in Helmstedt as an erudite rhetorical construction equivalent to a public oration. With similar eloquence, Alistair Fair characterizes the new architectural spirit that overtook Oxford and Cambridge colleges after the Restoration, promoted by architects like Wren and Hawksmoor.

Two essays on innovative hospitals comprise the final section. Günther, examining Italian quattrocento hospitals, argues that Brunelleschi’s Ospedale degli Innocenti, Florence, along with Filarate’s Ospedale Maggiore, Milan, and Sixtus IV’s Ospedale di Santo Spirito, Rome, marked the beginning of new eras in their respective cities, serving public welfare with a progressive, humanitarian spirit. Joelle Barreau, on the Hôtel Royal des Invalides, Paris, highlights the superior quality of accommodation provided there, since only a suitably magnificent institution would adequately demonstrate the king’s gratitude and generosity toward his former officers and soldiers.

Nikolaus Pevsner’s A History of Building Types furnishes a recurring point of reference for the editors (vii, x–xi) and many contributors, in spite of Pevsner’s emphasis on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In fact, only a background like Pevsner’s—broad-ranging and multinational, yet also familiar with the minutiae of regional historic monument surveys from his Buildings of England series—allows such comprehensive, comparative typological studies to be undertaken. These qualities are rare in an individual scholar, so the editors’ vision in coordinating this collective international effort marks a significant achievement, pooling the talents and regional expertise of numerous specialists. Not surprisingly, all the contributors are European, since the majority treat structures from their native countries, buildings they have come to know and appreciate over many years despite their absence from mainstream historiography.

Considering the high quality of most contributions, greater care should have been taken in the production of the volume. The photo caption information varies widely among authors, from full identification and source citation to little of either (334). Photo quality also ranges from excellent to poor (288, 374). Numerous typographical errors litter the pages, with the name of one contributor (Bérchez) spelled three ways in different locations: table of contents, running heads, and (correctly) in the article byline. Even the order of the editors’ names differs from cover to title page. The volume ends abruptly after the final essay, with no afterword, general bibliography (some essays list frequently cited works), or even an index. This last would have been a welcome addition, enabling a rudimentary overview of the collection’s disparate material.

Ultimately, the book’s essays are more juxtaposed than interwoven; nonetheless they give a good introduction to the basic themes of secular, nonresidential building across four centuries and much of a continent. Public Buildings in Early Modern Europe blazes the trail for further studies in which city halls, exchanges, colleges, and hospitals can emerge from historic monument inventories to join churches and palaces in standard surveys of early modern architecture.

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Notes