The question of how the classical orders achieved their canonical form was first explored by Vitruvius in his Ten Books on Architecture, written at the end of the first century BC.1 In modern times, architects and architectural historians have closely examined extant structures, archaeological evidence, and ancient art in order to identify the sources of inspiration and understand the meanings of classical forms. Among these, Barbara A. Barletta has provided a thorough consideration of the literary and archaeological evidence regarding the Greek architectural orders, and J. J. Coulton has offered a thoughtful investigation of the nature of structure and design.2 In his most recent book, Mark Wilson Jones, an architect and architectural historian, approaches the subject with a sensitivity to design processes and material culture and a thorough grounding in theoretical and philosophical frameworks. The book’s subtitle, Temples, Orders, and Gifts to the Gods in Ancient Greece, indicates a primary thesis that the temple must be understood within the context of the sanctuary, and the connection between temples and gifts to the gods is explicit. The temple is an expression of piety, civic pride, and competition, and its mature structure and decorative forms are the result of cross-fertilization between architecture and a wide range of votive objects that inhabit the same sacred space.

In chapters 1 and 2 of Origins of Classical Architecture, Wilson Jones examines the nature and origins of the Greek temple and observes that the temple was not, in fact, essential to religious practice. The ritual acts of sacrifice at an altar, dedication of votive objects, and prayer did not require the existence of a temple. The temple served as the house of the god, protecting venerable cult images and functioning as a repository for valuable offerings. Since congregational worship was not central to Greek religion, the development of a monumental building may be an indication of its role as a “vector for collective identity and cohesion” (21) and an expression of “political and dedicatory competition” (24). Much of this information will already be familiar to scholars of the ancient Greek world, but it will be less so to others. This overview serves to emphasize the importance of cultural context and the dedicatory quality of temples as important lines of inquiry into the development of architectural morphology (30). While Vitruvius offered a tectonic and humanistic rationalization for the Doric and Ionic orders, some archaeologists and architectural historians have also looked for sources of inspiration in the Late Bronze Age Minoan and Mycenaean cultures and Early Iron Age Greece. Wilson Jones dismisses the theory that the temple plan was derived from the Mycenaean megaron because the latter was an integral part of a palatial building complex, whereas temples are freestanding structures in a sanctuary. While he admits that a break of many centuries between the Mycenaean palaces and the first Greek temple also argues against a conscious imitation, he nevertheless maintains that “some habits will have persisted in some form” (36). This statement should alert the reader to Wilson Jones’s sympathy for the view that ideas and influences may persist over long periods despite the absence of archaeological evidence. Following an examination of the extant buildings from the eleventh through the seventh centuries, Wilson Jones notes the lack of any architectural “style” but points out significant technological advances, such as the invention of the double-pitch roof with terra cotta tiles and the periplat. The emergence of early Doric architecture in the late seventh century, without any known predecessors, argues against a theory of evolutionary development and raises the question of where and why Doric forms emerged at all.

In each of chapters 3 through 6, Wilson Jones juxtaposes two themes: a broadly framed question (of construction, of influence, of appearance, of meaning) followed by a specific architectural subject (Doric genus, Aeolic capital, Ionic genus, Corinthian capital). This organization allows him to follow a line of inquiry, such as construction and form, across Doric and Ionic architecture as well as the history of scholarship, but it also makes the chapter headings inadequate. Wilson Jones begins with Vitruvius’s theories on the origins of Doric form in wood (4.2.2–5) and an overview of scholarly responses from the eighteenth century to the present. He explores the concept of “constructional mimesis” (66) in vernacular architecture from China, India, Egypt, and Asia Minor that clearly translated wooden elements into non-perishable materials (stone, brick, terra cotta). This evidence is thought provoking, but its direct relevance to ancient Greece is not clear, since all but the Egyptian examples postdate the development of classical architecture, and the correspondence of Greek Doric forms to wooden prototypes

Mark Wilson Jones
Origins of Classical Architecture: Temples, Orders, and Gifts to the Gods in Ancient Greece
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Notes:
has not been proved. In summarizing the challenges to understanding Doric forms as direct translations, Wilson Jones specifically notes that this theory does not adequately account for the form of the echinus capital or the triglyph frieze. It should also be noted that his acceptance of the mutular geison as a petrified form can be challenged as well, since the earliest geisa do not have mutules, the canonical form does not appear before the sixth century, and mutules do not correspond to rafter placement. In the end, Wilson Jones concludes that the Doric elevation does not imitate wooden structure but has a decorative nature that was ‘tectonified’ after the formal vocabulary had already existed” (81). Instead, he sees inspiration coming from several different forms of material culture over a wide geographic and chronological range. He assembles a staggering number of examples in a variety of media, from the prehistoric Aegean (92–93), Egypt, and the Near East (94–99), as models for monumental building, colonnades, and decorative motifs. Wilson Jones’s investigation of the Aeolic capital, with its rising volutes, serves to emphasize the extraordinary variety of foliate capitals and crowns in architecture (figs. 4.37, 4.28) and the minor arts (107–10). He sees the relationship between Aeolic and Ionic capitals as a part of this process, where the design potential of the rising volute was explored in the Cyclades and Ionia before reaching the familiar mature form in the late sixth century (125–32). His conclusion that these forms were ubiquitous and bound to stimulate experimentation is plausible, but he avoids looking too closely at the visibility, survival, or mechanics of transmission across time and cultures.

A discussion of the manner in which architecture carries meaning with it serves as a springboard for understanding the symbolism of the column (chapter 6). Familiar concepts include the equation of the column with a sacred tree (also known in Egypt and Mesopotamia) and with the human body (Vitruvius 3.1.1, 4.1.3–8). Wilson Jones also notes recent assertions that columns represent warriors or even banks of rowers, but, interestingly, he draws the line at George Hersey’s suggestions that the volutes of Ionic capitals resemble horns and that the vertical elements of the triglyph represent the thighbones of sacrificial animals (since the Greeks called this element meros, which also means femur; 146). A close reading of Vitruvius’s account of the invention of the Corinthian capital by Kallimachos (Callimachus) allows the author to demonstrate his approach to meaning and form. A key element of the narrative is Kallimachos’s viewing of a kalathos placed atop an acanthus plant growing in a cemetery in Corinth. Wilson Jones adds to this Kallimachos’s reputation as a sculptor of technical distinction, foliate imagery from funerary stelai, Corinthian bronze work, and the appearance of kalathoi in vase painting scenes of grave visits to propose a slow development that drew together strands from funerary sculpture, metalwork, and foliate crowns to produce a capital with a kalathos core, lyre-shaped volutes, and acanthus leaf decoration. The combined meaning of these elements is triumph over death (150–55).

In chapter 7, Wilson Jones returns to the context of the Greek sanctuary and its role as a repository of offerings. The accumulation of prestige dedications from Greeks and foreigners made sanctuaries and temples into de facto museums that were sources of inspiration for Greek artists (162–63), and it is clear that the Panhellenic sanctuaries played a particularly important role as showcases of design and innovation in the ancient Greek world. Wilson Jones is careful not to assert a direct causal relationship; rather, he uses biological metaphors such as “viral contagion propelling design creativity” (167) to describe the artistic atmosphere. The most significant example of this process is in chapter 8, where he goes to great lengths to establish the sacred, visual, and functional qualities of the tripod as well as its linguistic, proportional, and spatial relationship with the triglyph, a topic he has explored in an earlier article. While there is a scholarly consensus regarding the status of the tripod and its symbolic potential, arguments concerning the processes of the tripod’s abstraction and transfer to monumental architecture remain speculative and, ultimately, unconvincing. The transposition of tripods from three-dimensional objects to two-dimensional representations requires a degree of abstraction and omission of details (182). Numerous examples in painting from the Bronze Age through the sixth centuries demonstrate the variation in tripod silhouette, but they are all clearly recognizable as such. Wilson Jones argues that the abstracted tripod is reflected in the form of the triglyph: the upper taenia represents the cauldron, while the arches below echo the curved attachment of the legs when seen in profile. But, as he admits, the triglyph is not “an architectural representation or equivalent of the tripod” (188), so the leap from even the abstract, two-dimensional form to the Doric triglyph is clearly one of faith.

In chapter 9, Wilson Jones attempts to define the creative atmosphere that led to the appearance of the orders. He introduces the concept of “formal convergence,” using the metaphor of an arborist grafting a new tree cutting onto older rootstock as a means of illustrating how two independent traditions combine to create a new form. An example is how the echinus of an Ionic capital evolved into an ovolo profile decorated in a manner resembling a phiale (193). Wilson Jones suggests that such processes are proof that architectural forms develop in stages, and no single theory can account for the appearance of all elements. Acknowledging that some ideas might be dismissed as implausible, he references the ancient Greek use of ambiguity and multiple levels of understanding as justification for “creative speculation.” He uses his final chapter (10) to draw conclusions and to articulate remaining questions.

This book offers a thoroughly researched and provocative inquiry into the nature of classical architecture and invites a wide readership (architects, architectural historians, archaeologists, and artists) to explore the relationships among art, architecture, and culture in the ancient world. As an archaeologist and architectural historian, I would have appreciated a stronger emphasis on the dating of objects (many captions are lacking dates) and on the means for communicating forms and ideas across time and culture. From our perspective in the twenty-first century, material evidence from a broad geographic and chronological range is accessible and visible thanks to archaeological excavation and dissemination of information across a variety of media. In the course of inquiry into ancient precedent and sources of inspiration, however, it is important to ask
Zeynep Yürekli

Architecture and Hagiography in the Ottoman Empire: The Politics of Bektashi Shrines in the Classical Age


By examining the patronage and remodeling of two Anatolian shrine complexes, Zeynep Yürekli addresses the historical, religious, and ideological complexities that shaped the political and spiritual geography of the Ottoman Empire during the sixteenth century. A specific form of architectural patronage at the shrines, which were built to venerate medieval religious figure Haci Bektash Veli and eighteenth-century warrior saint Seyyid Battal Gazi, shaped the architecture at the important Anatolian centers that housed the saints’ tombs and attendant communities of dervishes. These places were of pilgrimage visitation, known in Turkish as ziyaretler. The sites sat on the borders of regional principalities, or beylikler, that were formed following the Mongol conquest of Anatolia in 1243 and were eventually brought into the Ottoman Empire. Yürekli posits that the shrines subsequently became key sites in a “Bektashi network” that grew between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries to include more than 150 such sites, all under the centralized governance of the leaders of the Haci Bektas Veli shrine in central Anatolia.

Such shrines, dedicated to saints venerated by Anatolian Muslims, dotted the Ottoman landscape. In many cases, the tombs of these exemplary figures became parts of large complexes that included facilities for dervishes in Sufi orders; kitchens and bakeries for supplying food to initiates, pilgrims, festival attendees, travelers, and the poor; systems of running water piped to pools and fountains as well as to residential and educational buildings; and ceremonial spaces. The architecture of the Turco-Mongol tradition of saint veneration was multifunctional and often cumulative, as structures were added, remodeled, and reoriented over time, sometimes over several centuries. This multifunctional character, and the fact that the meaning and importance of these shrine complexes derive from visual impact as well as from praxis, myth, and association, has made the complexes challenging to classify by architectural typology and to analyze by dates, patrons, and even traditions of use prior to accounts of recent memory. The architecture of these two shrines is monumental in the perception of pilgrims, but it is a regional style, an effective counterpoint to the court-sponsored structures of the increasingly centralized Ottoman state. Ultimately, in the Ottoman realm of the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, clerics began to react negatively toward antimomian dervish practices that had once been accepted under the warrior ethic of the earlier Ottomans. This created a situation in which the Bektashi sites were attended by “warriors, villagers, nomads and dervishes with a shared identity,” and where these marginalized groups were encouraged “to visit the shrines and contribute to them as pilgrims, donors and architectural patrons” (159).

The first half of Architecture and Hagiography in the Ottoman Empire presents a historical and documentary overview that establishes the political setting and role of hagiography in eliciting patronage at the shrines. The second half provides an analysis of the shrines’ architecture, developed and remodeled as a direct result of the transmission of the hagiographic record. In the introduction, Yürekli discusses aspects of Sufi architecture in Ottoman society and the place of imperial and Sufi-generated texts. This speaks to the impetus for the book, namely, the interrelated nature of hagiography, shrine architecture, and the cultural milieu of both Ottoman architectural patronage and the Ottoman “imperial apparatus.” Yürekli opens the study by noting the role of such sites for the Alevi community in the present day, broaching a subject that is relevant to the history of the Bektashi network but that remains undefined in her subsequent discussion.

Chapter 1, “The Bektashis, Their Shrines and the Ottomans,” defines the historical setting in which marginalized groups of Shiite villagers, Turcoman tribes, potentially rebellious Janissary troops, and antimomian dervishes found common cause as the Ottomans increasingly restricted religious, political, and military behaviors in the empire. This repression was heightened during the wars with the Shiite Safavid Empire to the east, which renewed frontier warriors’ involvement with the Ottoman leaders on campaign but stifled practices and affiliations outside mainstream Sunnism within the empire. In this chapter, Yürekli provides a masterful synopsis of imperial dynamics, suggesting that the shrines were subjected to centralized Ottoman control as an element of the power struggle between the Ottoman leadership and internal, anti-Ottoman, marginal groups. Chapter 2, “The Hagiographic Framework,” engages with the hagiographic material essential to Yürekli’s architectural discussion of the shrines.