

Gottfried Gruben, **Klassische Bauforschung**. Edited by Wolf Koenigs and Irene Ring. Publisher Hirmer, Munich 2007. 304 pages, 212 illustrations.

All the time since the nineteenth century, German research on ancient architecture has held a unique standard and set a model of excellence for contributions in this field from other nations. As an important branch of field research in classical archaeology this activity has always been intimately linked with the large excavation projects undertaken by the German Archaeological Institute in Italy, Greece and elsewhere in the Mediterranean, at sites where architectural remains are discovered; at such places as Olympia or Pergamon this connection is evident. But German scholars have made splendid contributions also on buildings not directly touched by German excavation activity; Greek temples at Paestum, Metaponto and Segesta have seen such undertakings in recent years, in a country where the German experts Robert Koldewey and Otto Puchstein more than one hundred years ago collected the material for their monumental publication of Greek temples in Southern Italy and Sicily. To this day, for several of those temples no better publication than theirs from 1899 has appeared, and such recent monographs by German scholars as those on the temples of Aphaia on Aigina and on the buildings on Samos stand a similar good chance of remaining unsurpassed for generations to come. In addition to the concrete task of studying and publishing specific buildings or remains of such, German scholars have also been leading

in the theoretical studies of ancient architecture. From the pre-war studies by Hans Riemann and Armin von Gerkan to the recent bulky article (in the *Jahrb. DAI* 120, 2005) on the corner contraction in Doric buildings by Ernst-Wilhelm Osthues, their studies on proportions, metrology or architectural planning procedures have always been in the forefront of international research on these issues; no one can do serious work in these fields without knowing them.

One of the reasons why this particular branch of German archaeological research has been so successful, is probably that as a general rule it has been in the hands of trained architects rather than archaeologists. This background in professional craftsmanship contributes to explain the precision in their publications, their excellent, professional and highly informative drawings, and the painstaking documentation of every single piece of building material which may in some way or other be considered informative. But this also explains what may be seen as a weakness in some of these publications: they may not always in a meaningful way succeed in connecting the buildings with their historical and cultural background, with the people who wanted them, paid for them and had them built. Archaeologists and art historians, the sort of scholars who deal with ancient architecture elsewhere, probably have an easier approach to this kind of problems. But the German environment includes scholars with a full and masterly command also of these aspects of ancient architecture, in addition to their command of the architect's trade, and the best ones have also occasionally demonstrated an admirable level of conscious reflection on why they do what they are doing, and why they do it the way they do.

One such person, outstanding also within his own environment, was Gottfried Gruben, who for many years held a chair of history of architecture at the technical university of Munich. His students were to become practising architects and he had himself graduated as one, thus standing safely in the mainstream of the German tradition, but he had also behind him university studies in classical archaeology and other humanistic disciplines. One book from his hand, »Die Tempel der Griechen«, has since it first appeared in 1966 been reissued in no less than five editions, the last one (of 2001) heavily updated with the title »Griechische Tempel und Heiligtümer«, and it has become something of a bible both to archaeologists and to students of architectural history in Germany, thanks to its profile which clearly reflects both his background and competence. It is not, as most general treatises of Greek architectural history, a chronological survey of developments and trends exemplified by the various buildings; originally intended for tourists and travellers, it is arranged with topographically organized presentations in individual sections discussing the important temples and temple sites in Greece, Italy and Asia Minor not only as architecture, but including their topographical, cultural and historical contexts. The book is deeply rooted in German mentality and traditions (and has perhaps for that reason never been translated into

other languages), but is probably the best introduction to Greek temple architecture to be found in any language; it is written by a man with a full understanding not only of the buildings he describes and analyses, but also of their deeper cultural background and the reasons why the people who built them wanted them to look as they did – once he has explained how they did look, from the often meagre remains available to us today.

Apart from this book, most of Gruben's scholarly production was expressed in short and long articles, the long ones published in the renowned and well distributed *Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts* and other series from the same institution, the rest often in minor, marginal periodicals with limited circulation. In 2007, a few years after his death, a selection of his articles was edited and published by one of his pupils and collaborators, Wolf Koenigs, under the title »Klassische Bauforschung«. The title sets a very wide frame, and the editor has taken pains to include a wide spectrum of Gruben's writings. It could not be avoided, however, that the selection concentrates on early Ionic architecture, with five of the eleven articles; four of them concern early temples in the Cyclades, which Gruben discovered as a fairly virginal topic when he took it up in the late nineteen sixties, and where he concentrated his field research afterwards. But the book includes also six articles with wider scopes: a general survey of the individual architect and his role in society through the millennia, another one on the early beginnings of Greek temple architecture, then studies of irregular column shapes and of technical aspects of marble architecture, and of methodical and ethical problems involved in the way we study and treat ancient architecture. The width of Gruben's commitment to the study of the Greek and other early architecture, including its practical as well as theoretical aspects, is well expressed by this selection.

With Gruben's work on the Cyclades, particularly Naxos, looming so heavily in the book, one may perhaps feel a certain regret that his excellent work on early Ionic architecture at other sites, such as Samos and Didyma, is so little represented. The long article on the archaic Didymaion, in the *Jahrbuch* of 1963, is in the opinion of this reviewer perhaps Gruben's very best work, but it was certainly not suitable for inclusion in this anthology of fairly short texts. The brief resume of his doctoral dissertation on the capitals from the Polycratean temple of Hera on Samos is eminently useful and would have been a valuable addition to the book, also because it is otherwise difficult to obtain, but it will obviously be superseded by his volume on this temple which is now in press in the Samos publication series. In this book, the early phase of Gruben's work is represented by his article in the *Athenische Mitteilungen* of 1965 on the votive column from Aigina, and it is a good example of two basic aspects in all Gruben's work: his meticulous precision in the description of preserved material making full and strictly logical use of all information thus obtained for the study and ideal reconstruction of the monument,

together with full attention to its topographical context and general significance. At Aigina, his concern in this direction ends up in nothing less than a full analysis of the development of the sanctuary through its archaic building phases. This part of the article is now outdated, after Ernst-Ludwig Schwandner's work on the early archaic temple, so that today the repetition of figure 80 with a peripteral reconstruction of that temple can be felt as slightly problematical. There is no fault with Gruben's reasoning, based on the information available to him at the time, but the results from the full documentation and study of the preserved material done later demonstrate once more how indispensable such work is for the correct understanding of an ancient building, preserved only in fragments.

In 1972 Gruben wrote and published a general article on early Cycladic architecture, for the *Münchener Jahrbuch der bildenden Kunst*. He had then quite recently embarked on his own discoveries on Naxos, and the article provides an excellent and thoughtful survey of what was then known about this architecture, to a large extent based on the marble treasuries at Delphi which he convincingly links up with Paros. Palm-leaves capitals, volutes, caryatides, frieze instead of dentils above the architrave and monumental porches, all executed in marble, are essential elements in his definition of this branch of early Ionic architecture, distinguishing it from the Eastern Aegean variant as documented on Samos and on the coast of Asia Minor. It is worth noticing, however, that in this early survey of the field the early Naxian buildings on Delos have not yet been included; the importance of the »Naxian oikos« for the creation of the frieze evidently was one of his later discoveries. This lacuna was abundantly filled by his monumental article, in the *Jahrbuch* of 1997, devoted to those buildings on Delos. With more than one hundred and fifty pages this text was definitely too heavy for a book of this character, but the buildings in Delos are considered in a short article on roof constructions of marble, included here, where the preserved examples from the archaic and classical periods are discussed from a technical point of view. Here, the importance of an architectural training for scholars studying ancient buildings is well demonstrated: the calculations of the carrying capacity of marble beams of different dimensions and material require such competence, and the article also demonstrates how necessary such calculations and such knowledge are for the full understanding of the buildings. The article appeared in a little known and purely architectural publication, not readily accessible to archaeologists, and it is an intelligent move by the editor to make it available to them in this book.

Full publications of Gruben's important fieldwork at the Naxian sites of Yria and Sangri will obviously have to be taken care of by his collaborators, but numerous preliminary notices and reports have already made these sites well known to anybody interested in early Greek temple architecture. Two such studies are included in the book. The article from 1993 entitled »Die inselionische

Ordnung« does not really cover all that field, it is a short, readable and precise account of the two building sites on Naxos, but some important observations on the Naxian oikos on Delos are included, and some general considerations on the later development of the same traditions in Attica and on the Peloponnese are added at the end. It can be understood as a supplement and update to the general survey from 1972. The article from 1991 on the beginning of monumental architecture on Naxos focuses on technical observations on the marble temple (the fourth building on the site) at Yria, until the final paragraph. That is short, but demonstrates how Gruben was able to switch his attention from very material observations into deeply penetrating reflections on the dynamic forces behind the development of Greek monumental architecture.

His capacities as a field investigator of high quality are demonstrated by the article from 1999 on wandering columns on Naxos, where he managed with a masterpiece of intelligent deduction to bring together widely dispersed material from one single classical building and indicate its probable origin in a sanctuary for Hestia on Paros, adding at the end some interesting reflections about its position in the general landscape of fourth century architecture, from Asia Minor to the Peloponnese. The reconstruction of the sanctuary is completely convincing, although not one stone from it does exist in situ; the attempt to locate it in our general, not very clear picture of architectural developments in the fourth century invites discussion, and is valuable for that reason.

For an ambitious Italian book project in several heavy volumes intended to cover as widely as possible the various aspects of ancient Greek culture, Gruben wrote a text on the origins and early development of the Greek temple, developing a subject which also filled an introductory chapter in his general book on Greek temples mentioned above. For this commission his German text was translated into Italian, not without errors, and it has until now only been accessible in that form; it is now for the first time available in its original language. Research and discoveries in this field have been lively in recent years, and having them summed up by a scholar of Gruben's standing is obviously useful for everybody needing a short and updated survey. A lot of information had to be crammed into a limited number of pages, leaving space also for a necessary (and highly competent) selection of illustrations; not everybody would agree to all his occasionally rather perfunctory statements, but this was not a place for lengthy discussions of particular problems. For such texts (others have appeared recently) there is a general tendency to emphasize the early development of the Doric order at the expense of the Ionic. For perfectly understandable reasons Gruben chose the opposite pattern, and by pulling in his own discoveries at Yria and Sangri he also managed to create a contribution of greater originality than his precise, but traditional account of early Doric architecture. As far as possible, future references to this text should be made to the original German version, as

it has now been made accessible in this book, rather than to the Italian translation.

Another study of a more limited, but less clearly defined material carries the rather subtle title of »Griechische Un-Ordnungen«, and is intended to demonstrate irregularities and weaknesses in the Vitruvian concept of architectural orders, with concrete examples. Use of pillars instead of columns in early architecture, strange mixtures of stone and wood, technical innovations in early Ionic temple buildings, and wide variations in the relations between lower column diameter and column height (which clearly were more important to Vitruvius than to the Greek architects) are among the oddities that Gruben attempts to approach here. Once again, the main attention rests on the early Ionic architecture, but the funny, semi-Doric architecture in the spring-cistern at Megara is a lovely gem pulled to our attention from a murky Greek publication.

There are much wider scopes behind the first two articles in the book. The first one is an ambitious attempt to sketch (in no more than twenty pages!) the social status and function of the architect from the Neolithic settlement at Çatal Hüyük through Egypt, Greece, Rome, the Middle Ages and the Renaissance almost down to our time. This could be nothing more than a sketch, but it is a highly intelligent one: the severe choice of factual information is paired with precise comments relating the position of the architect to the cultural profile of each period. Such a short and easily readable text on such an enormous subject – which has to my knowledge rarely, if ever, been treated in this way before – could only be written by a scholar with an exceptional knowledge of the entire range of architectural history, not only in the particular period where he was a specialist. It is another merit of the editors to have pulled it forth from an absolutely marginal publication where it otherwise would have been forgotten.

The second article does not run that risk, and one might really wish for it to be translated into other languages for the benefit of other than German students: the text with the title »Klassische Bauforschung«, which appeared in 2000 as part of a general introductory volume to classical archaeology, intended for students taking up this subject. Such general introductions, also good ones, do exist in other languages, but Gruben's on building archaeology is one of the very few in any language to present a general introduction to this particular discipline. For that reason one might have wished for it to be more extensive, and to have expanded a bit more on the first part of the methodical principles of the discipline, even at the expense of the useful and interesting survey of its history, development and current status in the various nations and environments where it is practised. The emphasis on German research is understandable, given the audience for which the text was intended, but the German achievements in this field would make it valuable in any language, if only in order to make students elsewhere understand how essential it is to anybody who wants to do serious work on ancient

architecture to obtain a sufficient command of German and get acquainted with the works by the scholars listed and mentioned on these pages.

Another gem appears on the last pages of the book, cleverly pulled forth from another very obscure context where otherwise it would not have been much noticed: Gruben's brief and very personal reflections on anastylosis projects in Greece, from the birth of the concept in the early nineteenth century until today. This text from 2002, evidently one of his last, is written by a person who is acutely aware of the responsibilities to past, present and future generations inherent in his – and our – treatment of ancient monuments; it calls for caution, moderation and concern for long-time preservation rather than spectacular and impressive reconstructions, and the author feels free to express his misgivings about concrete projects in brief, but often scathing remarks. No one can misunderstand his opinion on such projects as the ongoing restorations at Epidauros and Bassae from the lines devoted to them, and the last few sentences, with a severe warning to his architect colleagues, concentrate in a few words his feelings about the way they are now treating ancient buildings.

The final list of Gruben's publications does not impress by their quantity: it covers almost fifty years with only a few more items. Some are heavyweights: the articles on the Didymaion, on the column at Aegina and several voluminous works on Cycladic architecture (including the blockbuster from 1997), the temple book in its several more or less thoroughly updated editions, and the posthumous volume on the Polykratean temple for the Samos series. A large article on the doors of the Pantheon looms also because it is his only work with a distinct focus on a Roman monument, and Gruben until his last months worked on another large article for the *Römische Mitteilungen*, never finished, intended to answer the most irritating architectural questions concerning this temple. But surprisingly many of these titles are short, often only a few pages, and tucked away in marginal publications. Many are from *Festschriften* or conference reports, and confirm the impression of a man who published when he was asked or invited, used such opportunities when they came his way, but probably did not actively look for them. In some ways this is to be regretted: the torrent of original and valuable information and analyses which emerges from the temple book shows that this man could have written impressive, scholarly studies on every single one of the temples he discusses there. It may be a piece of luck – our luck – that this book came so early in his career, because also from the list of publications it is evident how deep his commitment to the early architecture of the Cyclades became after the early nineteen seventies, leaving little space for other work. It is for this reason completely justified that this field is so strongly represented in this collection. But the editor and the publisher should be warmly thanked for bringing to light with this book also other aspects of the knowledge and capacities of this remarkable man, who deserves to be remembered by future generations

as one of the finest students of ancient Greek culture in the twentieth century.

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