



A New Insight into the Origins of the Greek Temple

Una nueva perspectiva sobre los orígenes del templo griego

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Paolo Vitti

This book presents a comprehensive exploration of the origins of sacred Greek architecture, a topic that has intrigued scholars for generations. Pierattini's discussion provides depth and fresh insights by broadening the subject to include ancient cult practices, societal dynamics, and non-architectural material culture. This approach sheds new light on the technological advances that facilitated the construction of stone temples.

Structured in three chapters, the book follows the evolution of religious, social, and architectural practice from the Late Bronze Age to the mid-seventh century BC.

The first chapter traces the continuity of temple design tradition from the Late Bronze Age to the Early Iron Age

in Greece, noting the prevalence of elongated plans in temples and other structures. Pierattini suggests that monumentalization began as early as the late eighth century BC, with Corinth and Isthmia witnessing the emergence of full ashlar walls and terracotta roofing in the seventh century BC, indicating a localized development of technical expertise from the tenth century BC.

In his second chapter, Pierattini discusses the emergence of monumental temples between the eighth and mid-seventh centuries BC, noting changes in scale and function. In the later seventh century BC, temples ceased to serve as sites for sacrifices or feasting, in keeping with a change in cult practices.

In his third chapter, Pierattini looks at the substantial aspects of monumental architecture, defining "monumental" artifacts as those that exceed practical requirements to convey a message. Key to the process is the quest for durability, evident in the shift from posts that are earthfast (i.e. without foundations) to wooden posts on stone bases. This change in construction and scale made high thatched roofs less stable, which appears to have been addressed with the introduction of roof tiles. With new building technologies, construction became more specialized, with a need for expert workmanship. And with terracotta roofs, the pitch of roofs changed, and the low-pitched tiled roof was visually less prominent than a high-pitched thatched covering. But the eaves of tiled roofs were placed much higher than those of thatched roofs. Consequently, exterior columns supporting eaves acquired new height and prominence, transforming the appearance of temples.

In short, this book elucidates the interconnectedness between architecture and non-architectural objects in shaping Greek temple design during this seminal period for architecture.

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