

BOOK REVIEW

Trophies of Victory: Public Buildings in Periclean Athens. By T. LESLIE SHEAR, JR. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016. Pp. xxiii + 475. Paperback, \$65.00. ISBN 978-0-691-17057-2.

It is not often that a book appears, which could honestly be said to be the work of a life-time, a book that presents the distillation of a scholar's study of a subject over decades. Shear's *Trophies of Victory* falls into this category. Few scholars have enjoyed so long an association with the archaeology of Athens as Shear has. Whether, in the end, one agrees with all of Shear's views on the buildings covered in the book – or even with the concept (however formal or informal) of a “Periclean building plan” – the book is valuable as a comprehensive presentation of the issues and scholarship around the monuments of 5th-century Athens.

The book contains eleven chapters along with four “endnotes” (really appendices). The contents are rounded out with a very useful Epigraphical Appendix, a substantial bibliography and two indices. The first three chapters deal with the “why,” the “how” and the “by whom” of this collection of buildings. Shear begins with Plutarch, who “provides the single surviving narrative source that describes one of the most extraordinary cultural and artistic phenomena of classical Athens,” (1) and makes Pericles the “overseer” of it. This understanding of Pericles' role, which seems to go back to the 4th century, to Ephorus and Philochorus, cannot be made to agree with the surviving 5th-century evidence (especially the epigraphical evidence, fragmentary as it is), even though generations of modern scholars have debated the problem endlessly. Shear discusses a variety of issues, from Plutarch's claims, through practical problems (manpower or the lack thereof as a significant barrier for building projects), ideological concerns (how to use religion to develop an ideology of empire), to managerial and financial ones (who oversaw the projects; how were the projects funded). These questions are explored in depth, using all possible evidence, as Shear works to provide an explanation of the most basic questions of how these projects were managed. In the final analysis, according to Shear, it was the annually elected boards of overseers who brought this building program to completion; Pericles' role can never have been more than that of

providing support in the Assembly. There is no place for the hands-on role that Plutarch describes.

Chapters 4 (“The Parthenon”), 5 (“The Hephaisteion”), 6 (“The Telesterion at Eleusis”), 7 (“The Odeion”) and 9 (“The Propylaia”) deal with individual buildings. Each chapter presents what can be known (or surmised) about the architecture and decoration of each building, its role in the development of its particular architectural order, its building history, etc. Those moderately familiar with the scholarship around these buildings will recognize references to most of the debates (how many temples were there on the Acropolis; what were they called; what was represented in the sculptural programs; what has Xerxes’ tent to do with anything). Shear has high expectations for the architectural knowledge of his readers; there is no glossary of architectural terms, so readers who do not know their crepidoma from their entablature will need some help. That said, the text is a useful source of very precise information about ratios, architectural formulae and related issues, as Shear regularly drills down into the “nitty-gritty” details of these buildings.

Chapters 8 (“Temples in the Countryside”) and 10 (“Two Ionic Temples”) cover six temples around Attica. Chapter 8 looks at the Temples of Poseidon and Athena at Sounion, the Temple of Nemesis at Rhamnous and the Temple of Athena Pallenis (later the Temple of Ares). These four temples are not nearly as well served by existing publications as the city temples, and I think that this chapter will make a difference to students and instructors as it brings together the available information clearly and comprehensively. Shear also discusses the evidence for W. B. Dinsmoor’s well-known argument that a single architect designed the Hephaisteion and the temples of Poseidon at Sounion, Athena Pallenis and Nemesis. In the end, Shear both rejects Dinsmoor’s dating and agrees with M. Miles that the temples were the work of different people (see esp. 268-269 with notes for bibliography). Chapter 10 discusses the lost temple (of Artemis Agrotera?) on the Ilissos (known from the beginning of Plato’s *Phaedrus*) and the Temple of Athena Nike on the Acropolis.

Of these chapters, I found the one on the Parthenon to be the least successful, partly because the discussion of the Parthenon stretches beyond Chapter 4, beginning in Chapter 3 (“Builders of the Parthenon”) and continuing into Chapter 11 (“The Periklean Legacy,” which looks at the relationship between the Parthenon and the Erechtheion), and Endnotes 2 and 4 (“The Date of the Parthenon Podium”; “Interpretations of the Parthenon Frieze”). As a result, the discussion is fragmented. Moreover, although in other places Shear pays attention to the

various sides of the academic debate around a topic, when it comes to the Parthenon at times the discussion is simply shut down (e.g., 102: “The interior of the western chamber, properly known to the contemporary Athenian as the Parthenon, ...” does not do justice to the question of what the Parthenon and the parts of it were called in antiquity).

This book definitely merits reading and even re-reading. I have learned much from it – including things that I should have known, such as the damage done to the Parthenon in 426 by the earthquake mentioned by Thucydides (3.89; see 370-375). Shear’s depth of knowledge of Athenian archaeology and of the variety of evidence that needs to be brought together to gain any understanding of these monuments shines through the entire volume. Two aspects of the book do require some mention: the illustrations and the bibliography. The images are clear and sharp, but many have been reproduced from other publications. In some instances, especially in the case of site plans, this leads to a loss of information because the images have not come with their keys. Figure 60 (163, a plan of the sanctuary at Eleusis in the 5th century) is a good example. The labels on the plan are in German. The caption under the image explains what we are looking at, but there is no indication of whether the black used to mark the sanctuary’s wall means something different from the dark grey hatching that is used to fill in the east wall of the Telesterion or the dotted lines of its other walls. And, while the book is very well illustrated, in some places additional illustrations would have been welcome (in particular, the description of the Parthenon’s doors [64-65] and comparison of the Odeion to Persian buildings [219-223]). The bibliography is comprehensive and an excellent resource on its own for scholars and students, but, although the book was published in 2016, the most recent items are from 2010 and 2012 (one item from each year), with relatively little from 2000 onward. Obviously, the collection of sources has to end at some point, but this seems a little premature and it cannot simply be from a lack of useful publications.¹

The overall production quality of the volume is high. The copyediting is excellent (apart from a missing apostrophe on page 6 and a wrong Greek accent on page 377, I did not notice anything). The downside of the high quality of the book, particularly the paper, is that it is a heavy volume and unlikely to be one that

¹ In particular, M.M. Miles (2011), “The Lapis Primus and the Older Parthenon,” *Hesperia* 80: 657-675, and S.L. Martin-Mcauliffe and J.K. Papasopoulos (2012), “Framing Victory: Salamis, the Athenian Acropolis, and the Agora,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 71: 332-361, WOULD BOTH ADD TO THE DISCUSSION OF THESE BUILDINGS AS VICTORY MONUMENTS.

anyone will want to carry around the Greek countryside in a knapsack. It nearly cost me excess baggage fees. So, the ebook version may be the way to go.

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