

THE ACROPOLIS

J. M. HURWIT: *The Athenian Acropolis: History, Mythology and Archaeology from the Neolithic Era to the Present*. Pp. xv + 384, 242 figs, 10 pls. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999. Cased, £45. ISBN: 0-521-41786-4.

This is a monumental undertaking, and the resulting book is a very wide-ranging and detailed survey of the most famous site in the Greek world. H. starts with a three-chapter Prologue on 'The Rock', 'The Goddess', and 'The Acropolis in Athenian Life and Literature'. There follow ten chapters surveying the history of the site from the Neolithic and Bronze Ages to the late fifth century A.D., two of which are, as it were, appendices to the longest chapter, 'A Guide to the High Classical Acropolis, 450–400'. The final chapter, termed an Epilogue, briefly carries the story down to the present day, and is followed by four appendices proper, containing Pausanias' description of the akropolis, the section of Plutarch's *Life of Perikles* on the Perikleian building programme, a catalogue of the major akropolis buildings, and a chronological table.

If there is one aspect which is not fully dealt with, it is the more strictly architectural side. While the refinements of the Parthenon are discussed on pp. 166–8, little is said about Mnesikles' skill in fitting the Perikleian propylaia to its steeply sloping site, and in the discussion of the Nike temple nothing is said of its strange plan, nor of the Ilissos temple and its probable relation to the earliest Perikleian ideas for the sanctuary. It is a pity, too, that the epilogue is not longer. Jacques Carrey and the Earl of Elgin are included (and it is not hard to guess where H. stands in the marbles debate), but where are Wheler and Spon, or Stuart and Revett? The latter pair are represented by a figure taken from *Antiquities of Athens* II, but they do not feature in the text.

The large number of figures (both photographs and line-drawings, many of the former H.'s own) are well chosen, though one or two (notably Fig. 240 on p. 298) are a bit dark, and several are referred to so frequently throughout that a lot of page-turning is necessary. The ten colour plates at the front, taken by H., are superb, and it almost seems churlish to point out that Pl. V is neither numbered nor captioned—though anyone who needs to be told what the Parthenon looks like would probably not be reading the book anyway.

Throughout the book there is a very laudable lack of the dogmatic, an unwillingness to go beyond what the evidence allows, even though, on occasion, this leads to a string of statements such as 'No proof . . . no reason why not . . . a very good bet' (all on p. 16). In a similar vein, the great points of dispute are openly admitted and often left undecided; good examples are the vexed problem of the *opisthodomos*, and the location of the so-called 'Bluebeard temple'—on the site of the Dorpfeld foundations, or further south, where the Parthenon later stood—where the two views are clearly stated and their merits discussed (pp. 111–12). Sometimes H. states his preference, but occasionally he does not give his reasons: why, for example, does he prefer the second or third of his reasons listed on pp. 89–90 to explain the presence of large amounts of Late Geometric funerary pottery?

There is a certain inconsistency in the amount of background information supplied along the way—almost as if H. is not sure whether he should be aiming his book at the general reader as well as the classical specialist. Thus he feels it necessary to explain (Chapter II) the origins of the deities of the Greek pantheon and (Chapter III) the general principles of Greek religious observance, to state why (p. 68) potsherds are

essential to the archaeological record and to tell us (p. 139) what ostracism is; but more technical architectural terms, such as 'anta', 'in antis', and 'metope', are nowhere commented upon (though 'prostyle' is explained on p. 202), and a fairly detailed knowledge of the Doric and Ionic orders is assumed throughout. A similar pattern is found in the notes: the great majority of the time, ancient sources mentioned in the text are meticulously referenced in the notes, but there are, for example, no references for the mentions of Vitruvius on pp. 169, 203, and 216, nor for the 'line in Aristophanes' on p. 217.

There is, perhaps inevitably, quite a bit of repetition or recapitulation; even the discussion of whether the Parthenon can actually be termed a temple in the strict sense of the word (pp. 161–5) is anticipated on p. 27. Once or twice H. slips up, as when Octavian is called Caesar's stepson on p. 263; and one or two of his opinions are at least questionable, as when he categorically states that the inner colonnades of the Parthenon were not load-bearing (p. 169—Coulton certainly does not say this). In some respects the book does not make easy reading: the Americanisms will occasionally grate upon the British reader, the frequent use of sometimes lengthy brackets can prove distracting, and some of the lists of offerings are extremely long. The spelling of Greek words (mostly strict transliterations, but e.g. 'acropolis' and 'Attica' throughout) is defended in an *apologia* in the Introduction; but that does not explain 'Panathenaia' four times and 'Panathenaea' twice on p. 116.

The book, then, can be criticized, and very occasionally faulted, on points of detail both of style and content. But this should not obscure the extent of H.'s achievement. We have here about as much detail on almost all aspects of the acropolis as we can reasonably expect to find within a single volume.

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MIDEA

G. WALBERG (ed.): *Excavations on the Acropolis of Midea. Results of the Greek–Swedish Excavations. Vols 1:1 Text, 1:2: The Excavations on the Lower Terraces 1985–1991*. (Skrifter Utgivna av Svenska Institutet i Athen 40, XLIX:I:1, 2.) Pp. 364, 152 pls. Stockholm: Swedish Institute in Athens, 1998. Cased. ISBN: 91-7916-039-5.

The first volume of the recent excavations in the citadel of Midea presents the finds from the 1985–91 excavations on the Lower Terraces, which were supervised by G. Walberg (University of Cincinnati). This was part of a wider project of investigations in the citadel of Midea, undertaken by a Greek–Swedish team. The area around the West Gate of the citadel was dug by K. Demakopoulou and N. Divari-Valakou (Greek Archaeological Service), while the East Gate area was dug by P. Åström (University of Göteborg). This first volume will be followed by accounts of the excavations in these other parts of the citadel.

The volume opens with some basic information on the site. This is followed by a large chapter on the stratigraphy of the Lower Terraces, which are located on the more gentle northern slope and had deeper accumulations than the rest of the largely eroded citadel area. This chapter provides detailed documentation for each stratum in each trench. The assemblage from each stratum is described briefly, percentages of pottery from the main phases are given, and the catalogued objects are listed; at the end the