Review of *The Parthenon Frieze*, by Martin Robertson and Alison Frantz

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The Parthenon Frieze
by Martin Robertson and Alison Frantz
16 pages, 48 photographs, bibliography.
Oxford University Press, New York 1975
$9.50

When Martin Robertson writes the text and Alison Frantz takes the photographs, any book is bound to be a success, but this is especially the case for The Parthenon Frieze. As the author points out, publications on the subject are usually incomplete, or, if complete, early and rare, the format large and the pictures small and unclear. Now there is a thin, manageable volume largely devoted to the illustrations, with a concise but original and lucid text. Introductory comments focus on the historical background; fifth-century Athens; the predecessors of the Parthenon; the statue of the Parthenos and its position in the building’s history after 432 B.C. Individual perceptive remarks accompany illustrations of the frieze slabs themselves, which are printed in a continuous sequence from the South to the East, North and West side. Where portions of the reliefs are lost, they are replaced by outlines largely based on Carrey’s drawings but corrected and modernized for the occasion. Fourteen stupendous details complete the photographic commentary.

Though the book will long be a pleasure to both scholars and laymen, its typographical layout deserves some criticism. One suspects that Miss Frantz’s photographs did not print as sharply as they could have and more care could have been taken in preventing the bisection of figures at the join between two pages. In addition, as traditional, each slab is identified by Roman numerals and each figure within the slab is assigned an Arabic serial number, but even spacing of such numbers has received precedence over the need for clarity, so that it is often difficult to connect identifying number and respective figure (e.g., East III, 7-8). In some cases, repetition not only of photographs but even of drawings endangers comprehension (e.g., South XXXII, given twice in consecutive pages), while in at least one instance an important outline (if not the composite cast in the Akropolis museum) has been omitted (East VI, 41, Aphrodite and Eros). One can perhaps understand that no photographs of casts were included, even if the original figures are now irreparably damaged, but some fragments actually preserved in the Acropolis Museum have been left out. To name but a few examples: South XXI, the heads of 51 and 52; North IX, the heads of 31 and 32; and, most regrettably, the beautiful head of Iris, East V, 28 are missing. The book therefore falls short of its claim that “this is the only modern monograph which gives it (i.e., the Parthenon frieze) complete” (page 3).

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Radiocarbon and Indian Archaeology
edited by D. P. Agrawal and A. Ghosh
526 pages, 27 plates, 75 text figures, 8 maps, 32 tables.
Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Bombay, India
1973 $10.00

This commemorative volume pays due homage to D. Lal who set up India’s first Radiocarbon Laboratory and to the Tata Institute and its venerable founder Homi Bhaba. Tata Institute and its Radiocarbon Laboratory have been in the vanguard of scientific archaeological research in India for the past decade, and an international symposium was convened in March, 1972 to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the laboratory’s founding. This volume contains the papers delivered at the symposium and is the single most important book to appear on the archaeology of South Asia in recent years. A few of the major papers were given by Western scholars, but the real importance of the volume is that it presents a current, comprehensive statement of what all the leading Indian archaeologists are doing and thinking. Thus the book is really a commemorative to Indian archaeologists as a whole and to their remarkable capacities for pioneering research in the face of what to Western eyes seems like insurmountable problems. The reviewer offers special appreciation to the editors of the volume, D. P. Agrawal, who, until recently, was head of Tata Institute’s excellent Radiocarbon Laboratory, and A. Ghosh, the former Director-General of the Archaeological Survey, whose own research has set the standard for so many others.

There is so much new and valuable material in this volume that a comprehensive review would be as long as...