1976

Review of *Arts of the Ancient Greeks*, by Richard Brilliant

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but it has no inkling that there is a forest, or—we suspect—even that one might exist.

Meade apparently uses no sources not available to him in English, and, as a result, he ignores not only the distinctly international flavor of Assyriology, including American Assyriology, but also some of the contributions of Americans. He is, thus, to be expected to ignore the French contribution of Stephen Langdon (mentioned as “of Oxford University,” Langdon was an American, even though Meade seems not to know it) or the important multi-volume book of Morris Jastrow on Mesopotamian religion which found its more extensive exposition in German. Sadly, Meade gives us the nearly sterile official account of E. J. Banks’ connection with the excavation at Adab, but fails to let us know that Banks retired to Florida and sold his tablets by mail-order all through the country.

Omissions aside, the sloppiness of the volume even extends to repeatedly referring to Edward Chiera as “Edwin Chiera” (he gets it right the first couple of times, though), and the language is sometimes completely inadequate, e.g., “the vocabularies . . . have grown very extant.”

The volume closes with a bibliography divided into American literature to 1940 (the time when Meade’s account ends) and other works he has consulted (unfortunately, occasionally works which belong in the first category appear in the second). Although most of the “other works consulted” should have been omitted since they are not relevant to the volume, they are all numbered and reach a grand total of 846. In the book, Meade refers to the number of works issued during a particular period of American Assyriological activity, but this writer would not want to call him a “cliometrician.” Far from trying to ascertain the vital statistics of the muse (Clio) at whose shrine historians worship—measurements which they exact so that they may more properly appreciate her sumptuous curves—Meade has merely fitted her for a corset.

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Arts of The Ancient Greeks
by RICHARD BRILLIANT. xxiii, 406 pages, 105 color photographs, 320 black and white photographs, 60 plans, 1 map, 50 drawings. McGRAW-HILL, New York 1973 $16.95

The value of any book should be determined on the basis of two factors: the purpose for which it was written and the extent to which such purpose has been achieved. Under the first heading the author tells us that he has written a general book for the student and the amateur of Greek art, hoping to stimulate deeper interest and further research. Is there need for such a work? Brilliant obviously thinks so, and I would tend to agree; he points out that other general books currently in use, being written by non-Americans, “often presume a frame of reference which does not exist” (page xi). He therefore tries to supply abundant excerpts from the ancient sources in order to create a unified picture of the Greek world in all its manifestations, and presumably taking no previous knowledge for granted. He touches upon most major monuments and discusses sanctuaries and sites as well as individual buildings. At first glance, therefore, this lavishly illustrated book would seem ideal for an introductory course on Greek art or classical civilization.

On closer inspection, however, such an impression suffers a serious setback. Given the general nature of the book, one cannot expect from the author original contributions or discussion of controversial issues; one can expect, however, accurate statements and updated information. Regrettably, this is not the case; too many comments are ambiguous, others are questionable and some are simply wrong (e.g., page 158, the Hephaisteion in Athens is described as “lacking columns in the cella”; page 64, the return of Hephaistos, tricked by Dionysos, occurs in order “to let loose his wife, Aphrodite, caught in adultery with Ares”; page 250, the stag-hunt mosaic signed by Gnosis is not “from the Macedonian palace at Pella” but from a private house, etc.). Contradictions occur from chapter to chapter, especially in dates; they obviously reflect the writer’s awareness of scholarly disagreement on chronological points but are bound to be confusing for the unaware student.

Despite all attempts, some knowledge is taken for granted, and some technical terminology is used either proleptically or entirely without further explanation, nor is a glossary given with the text. Finally there is little system in the discussion, and works chronologically later are mentioned before, or together with, earlier ones, following trends of thought which could be legitimately pursued at an advanced level but which will surely leave the freshmen stranded.

All in all, however, the text is interesting, stimulating and well written. My real quarrel is with the publishers! What makes the book practically unsafe in an introductory course is the enormous amount of mistakes, both typographical and of content, which have been introduced in the text and especially, with literally few exceptions, in the captions to the illustrations. It is obvious even to the casual reader that Brilliant could not have been show dressproof of his book. Personages are wrongly identified (e.g., page 214, figure 6.60, for “Athena” read “Nike”; page 208, figure 6.51a, for “Dionysos and Nike” read “infant Dionysos and Hermes”; and so forth); when several monuments appear in the same page, often their captions are scrambled (e.g., the Amazons on page 176, figure 6.8-6.10; Artemis and Athena, page 389, figure 9.54, and so on) and on page 98 the text speaks of the Nike akroterion for the Alkmaeonid temple at Delphi, but figure 4.13, though similarly labelled, gives instead the Nike from Delos in Athens.

In the field of architecture, the diagrams for the orders (figures 4.2, 4.3 and 4.7) are peculiar and difficult to read; some plans are entirely outdated by more recent excavations (e.g.,
Mycenae, page 10, figure 1.20; Aegina, page 156, figure 5.42a; general plans at times do not coincide with detail-plans or models (e.g., figures 8.25 and 8.26; and so forth) and the Olympia model (page 152, figure 5.36) has been printed reversed.

Some illustrations are splendid, but some are either poor or have been badly reproduced; some views are uselessly repetitive in a book where reducing costs might have mattered; one wonders whether the author was even consulted for the selection as well for the captions. The publisher must also be held responsible for less important but equally disturbing typographical details: the numbering of the figures, for instance, is not always in sequence (cf., e.g., pages 258-260), and page numbers are difficult to find and variously placed, if given at all.

One regrets that such an expensive and potentially valuable book, by a scholar of great repute, could not be assigned a better editor, designer and proofreader. I have an extensively marked review copy and several pages of notes; I shall be glad to put both at the publisher's disposal, should they decide in favor of a second, much revised, edition.

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The Hellenistic Kingdoms:
Portrait Coins and History
by NORMAN DAVIS and COLIN M. KRAAY.
296 pages, 212 photographs, 3 maps, glossary, bibliography. THAMES AND HUDSON, London 1973 38.50

This attractive book is a welcome addition to the growing number of surveys of Greek coins which have appeared in recent years. Confronted by six centuries of coinage, involving the output of well over a thousand mints, the writer who covers the entire field must be selective in the extreme, and usually it is the numismatic works of art of the Archaic and Classical periods that receive the greatest attention. By limiting themselves to the Hellenistic age and to portrait coins, the authors of the present volume have been able to concentrate on a relatively restricted body of material and to explore it more fully.

The text, which is largely the work of Norman Davis, presents the history of the times as it was shaped by the men and women who ruled the Hellenistic world from Macedonia to India. If one must agree that "only a handful of them can be described in complimentary terms," the authors nevertheless have described them skillfully. They emerge, in action and anecdote, as individuals—sometimes admirable, more often despicable, but rarely colorless. The accounts of the Ptolemies, the Seleucids and the Bactrian rulers are especially interesting, and the clarity of the exposition is no mean achievement in view of the complexity of the dynastic struggles and the incompleteness of the historical sources. Maps and genealogical tables are helpful supplements to the narrative.

Seventy-two coins, nearly half of them from the Davis Collection, provide a truly impressive gallery of portraits. Almost all the Seleucid kings through Antiochus VIII are represented, and the Bactrian section is comparably strong. Many of the rulers portrayed are famous historical figures. We know a great deal about them from historical sources. Maps and genealogical tables are helpful supplements to the narrative. Seventy-two coins, nearly half of them from the Davis Collection, provide a truly impressive gallery of portraits. Almost all the Seleucid kings through Antiochus VIII are represented, and the Bactrian section is comparably strong. Many of the rulers portrayed are famous historical figures. We know a great deal about them from historical sources. Maps and genealogical tables are helpful supplements to the narrative.

A few errors have escaped the proofreader: no. 21 is a silver (not gold) decadrachm of Arsinoe; no. 25 is a silver pentadrachm (not decadrachm) of Berenice; the description of no. 108 misspells the Greek word for goddess, as the coin attests. To this reviewer the scale of the enlargements is at times distressing. Occasionally the extreme magnification is very effective, as in the case of Ptolemy IV, Eucratides and Amyntas; more often the exaggeration of surface flaws on the coin detracts from the impact of the portrait. When enlargement in lesser degree is used, for Ptolemy I and a few other rulers, the results are better.

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The Art of the Migration Period
by GYULA LÁSZLÓ. 158 pages, 16 color plates, 193 black and white photographs, 79 text figures, 3 maps, bibliography. UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI PRESS, Coral Gables, Florida 1974 $20.00

The Carpathian Basin has for several thousand years been an important point of