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Review of "'Pictures of Record' Archaeological Slide Sets: Mesoamerican Survey I and Mexican Series (The Olmecs, El Tajin, The Aztecs, Teotihuacan, Monte Alban, Xochicalco, Tula)"

Diane Z. Chase
University of Nevada, Las Vegas, diane.chase@unlv.edu

Arlen F. Chase
University of Nevada, Las Vegas, arlen.chase@unlv.edu

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Review
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clearly missing. Although the series focuses on the Classical Age, the viewer never senses what the classical achievement was, nor is there any discussion about what is meant by the term classical. Thus, although one thoroughly enjoys the pictorial feast ingested while watching these films, the lack of content leaves the belly feeling hollow.

John Oakley, Department of Classical Studies, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, VA

Archaeological Slide Sets:

Mesoamerican Survey I.
100 slides, $140

Mexican Series:
- The Olmecs. 75 slides, $105
- El Tajin. 76 slides, $106
- The Aztecs. 68 slides, $97
- Teotihuacan. 96 slides, $139
- Monte Alban. 79 slides, $109
- Xochicalco. 50 slides, $77
- Tula. 60 slides, $88

Produced by Pictures of Record, Inc., 119 Kettle Creek Road, Weston, CT 06883 (203) 227-3387

The Mexican series of slides available from Pictures of Record can be of use to both the archaeologist and the art historian. The primary market for these slides, however, is likely to consist of non-Mesoamericanists, especially those who are either interested in the subject matter or need illustrative material for teaching.

All of the sets contain written material describing the site or sites as well as descriptions of each of the numbered slides and a short bibliography for further reference. Most of the slide sets follow a set format. First, an overall map of Mesoamerica locating the appropriate site(s) and then a partial site map for the specific site focused on are presented. Next come the architectural high points of the site(s), followed by details of murals or sculpture. Finally, a sampling of the more distinctive artifacts from the particular site(s) is shown.

The sets are of varying quality in terms of coverage and text. The slides comprising Mesoamerican Survey I are well presented and a generally useful set for introductory courses in either Mesoamerica, the New World, or General Archaeology. Many of the sets, however—and in particular the Aztec set—need updating in light of new finds or revised interpretations. In addition, all of the sets could use up-dated references in the written text, although it must be noted that the pictures themselves will never go out of date. Most of the slides in the various sets are good-quality pictures, but occasionally a few are not in focus, particularly several of the Monte Alban artifacts and some of the murals from Teotihuacan.

The Tula set has generally good slides, but suffers from a very simplistic dis-
of direct Mycenaean influence north of the Alps.

Certainly amber deriving from the Baltic Sea was reaching Mycenaean and other Greek sites by the sixteenth century B.C., so this was a time of long-distance trading contacts. But piece by piece, every item of evidence and generation of prehistorians had put forward to document the Mycenaean presence in north and central Europe is rejected. Of course the book is very much more positive than this. Harding discusses the nature of trade at the time, and establishes a clear picture of the nature of Mediterranean and European contacts. The outstanding feature of this book is its thoroughness; where many of the supposed links had previously been called into doubt, Harding by a careful scrutiny of the complete range of evidence is able to validate those doubts and to pronounce with authority.

This is an important book for European prehistory. It settles quite definitely (using the evidence at present available) what has been one of the most lively controversies in European prehistory. It leaves the way open for more interesting explanations of what happened in Europe in terms of processes which were locally at work, and indeed takes some steps in that direction itself. With its clear presentation of the evidence and its good illustrations it should appeal to a far wider readership than the specialists who will first and most eagerly pounce upon it.

Colin Renfrew, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, UK

In the World of Sumer: An Autobiography, by Samuel Noah Kramer. 255 pages, frontispiece, 29 black-and-white photographs, 1 text figure, 1 map. Wayne State University Press, Detroit, MI 1986 $37.50

Samuel Noah Kramer’s name will be well known to many readers of this magazine as the man who brought the Sumerians and their literature into the realm of general knowledge. That the Sumerians are now part of the standard fifth-grade curriculum in this country, whereas a generation ago they were known mostly to cuneiformists, is in large measure owed to his unrelenting...