

WORLD  
ARCHAEOLOGY AT  
THE PITT RIVERS  
MUSEUM:

A CHARACTERIZATION

Edited by

Dan Hicks and Alice Stevenson

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Dedicated to the memory of Andrew Sherratt (1946-2006),  
who knew that worlds are never global (DH)

Dedicated to the staff of the Pitt Rivers Museum  
(past and present)  
who have cared for, and understood the call of, things (AS)



# Table of Contents

<i>List of Contributors</i>	ii
<i>List of Figures</i>	iv
<i>List of Tables</i>	viii
<i>Preface</i>	xi

1 Characterizing the World Archaeology Collections of the Pitt Rivers Museum. Dan Hicks	1
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## I AFRICA

2 Stone Age Sub-Saharan Africa. Peter Mitchell	16
3 Kenyan Stone Age: the Louis Leakey Collection. Ceri Shipton	35
4 Stone Age North Africa. Nick Barton	52
5 Egypt and Sudan: Mesolithic to Early Dynastic Period. Alice Stevenson	60
6 Egypt and Sudan: Old Kingdom to Late Period. Elizabeth Frood	90
7 Greco-Roman Egypt. Christina Riggs	115
8 Later Holocene Africa. Paul Lane	122

## II EUROPE

9 Palaeolithic Britain. Alison Roberts	169
10 Palaeolithic Continental Europe. Alison Roberts	216
11 Later Prehistoric and Roman Europe. Joshua Pollard and Dan Hicks	240
12 Post-Roman Europe. Eleanor Standley, Dan Hicks and Alice Forward	262
13 Oxfordshire. Matthew Nicholas and Dan Hicks	279
14 Neolithic and Bronze Age Malta and Italy. Simon Stoddart	302
15 The Aegean and Cyprus. Yannis Galanakis and Dan Hicks	312
16 Iron Age and Roman Italy. Zena Kamash, Lucy Shipley, Yannis Galanakis and Stella Skaltsa	336

## III THE AMERICAS

17 South America. Bill Sillar and Dan Hicks	358
18 Central America. Elizabeth Graham, Dan Hicks and Alice Stevenson	383
19 The Caribbean. Dan Hicks and Jago Cooper	401
20 North America. Dan Hicks and Michael Petraglia	409

## IV ASIA

21 Asia and the Middle East. Dan Hicks	455
22 The Levant: Palestine, Israel and Jordan. Bill Finlayson	471
23 India and Sri Lanka. Dan Hicks, Michael Petraglia and Nicole Boivin	482
24 Japan. Alice Stevenson, Fumiko Ohinta and Simon Kaner	504
25 China. Lukas Nickel	511
26 Myanmar and Malaysia. Huw Barton	517

## V OCEANIA

27 Australia and Oceania. Dan Hicks	525
28 New Zealand. Yvonne Marshall	554
29 Easter Island and Pitcairn Island. Dan Hicks, Sue Hamilton, Mike Seager Thomas and Ruth Whitehouse	564

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# List of Figures

Cover	Front and back of carved stone human figure known as 'Titahanga-o-te-Henua, or 'the Boundary of the Land', recovered from the islet of Motu Nui, Easter Island (PRM Accession Number 1916.36.319).
Figure 2.1	Map showing the relative sizes of the sub-Saharan African archaeological collection by country.
Figure 2.2	Copy on paper of a Khoisan rock painting in Ncibidwane, South Africa.
Figure 2.3	Stone implements from KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.
Figure 2.4	Ground stone axe from Bamenda, Cameroon.
Figure 3.1	Map of Kenya showing the main Stone Age archaeological sites referred to in Chapter 3.
Figure 3.2	Location of sites found by the East African Archaeological Expedition.
Figure 3.3	Obsidian blade from Gamble's Cave, Kenya.
Figure 3.4	Seven backed obsidian artefacts from Gamble's Cave, Kenya.
Figure 3.5	Photograph of Gamble's Cave II, Kenya taken by Henry Balfour in 1928.
Figure 3.6	Drawing of a fine Lupemban lanceolate stone implement from Yala Alego, Kenya.
Figure 4.1	Map of North Africa, showing the main Stone Age sites referred to Chapter 4.
Figure 4.2	Photograph of Christopher Musgrave in the Western Desert, 1942.
Figure 4.1	The Oxford Bowl: an Egyptian 'letter to the dead'.
Figure 5.2	Ancient Egyptian bronze figure of a seated cat, representing the goddess Bast.
Figure 5.3	Map of Sudan showing the main archaeological sites discussed in Chapters 5, 6 and 7.
Figure 5.4	Map of Egypt showing Predynastic and Early Dynastic archaeological sites referred to in Chapter 5.
Figure 5.5	Drawing of a Predynastic burial from el-Amrah, Upper Egypt.
Figure 5.6	Painted Predynastic Egyptian pottery vessel.
Figure 5.7	Painted Predynastic pottery bowl.
Figure 5.8	Model ivory flake from the tomb of the First Dynasty Egyptian king Aha at Abydos.
Figure 5.9	Fragments of a horn bow from the tomb of the First Dynasty Egyptian king Djer.
Figure 6.1	Map of Egypt showing the main archaeological sites referred to in Chapters 6 and 7.
Figure 6.2	Ancient Egyptian shabti from the Pitt Rivers Museum founding collection.
Figure 6.3	Mummified cat from the Pitt Rivers Museum founding collection.
Figure 6.4	Late New Kingdom round-topped limestone stela.
Figure 6.5	Late New Kingdom round-topped limestone stela.
Figure 6.6	Middle Kingdom boat model from the Pitt Rivers Museum founding collection.
Figure 6.7	Detail from the lid of an ancient Egyptian coffin.
Figure 6.8	Leather pilgrim flask found during Petrie and Quibell's excavations at the Ramesseum, Luxor, Egypt.
Figure 6.9	New Kingdom Egyptian necklace.
Figure 6.10	Sketch of a large bag tunic excavated during W. M. Flinders Petrie's 1889-1890 season at Lahun, Egypt.
Figure 7.1	Wooden mummy label from Akhmim, Egypt.
Figure 8.1	Map of Africa showing the proportion of later archaeological material in the Pitt Rivers Museum.
Figure 8.2	Photographic portrait of Robert Powley Wild.
Figure 8.3	Photograph of pottery fragments from Monkey Hill, Ghana.
Figure 8.4	Photograph of pottery fragments from Monkey Hill, Ghana.
Figure 8.5	Photograph of ceramic vessel from Abomposu, Ghana.
Figure 8.6	Photograph of stone beads from Akwatia, Ghana.
Figure 8.7	Photograph of a midden site on the island of São Vicente (Saint Vincent), Cape Verde Islands taken by O.G.S. Crawford 1913.



- Figure 8.8 Photograph of a midden with exposed sherds on the island of São Vicente (Saint Vincent), Cape Verde Islands taken by O.G.S. Crawford 1913.
- Figure 8.9 A soapstone *nomoli* from Sierra Leone.
- Figure 8.10 View of the Khami ruins, Zimbabwe in August 1929.
- Figure 8.11 Soapstone carving of a crocodile found at the Khami ruins, Zimbabwe by Henry Balfour in 1905.
- Figure 8.12 Drawings of ceramics from the Webster Ruins, Zimbabwe.
- Figure 8.13 Coptic double clarinet, dating from around the 8th century CE, excavated in Egypt by W. Flinders Petrie.
- Figure 8.14 Photograph of ostrich eggshell beads at the Wadi Howar, Sudan.
- Figure 9.1 Photograph of an excavated section at Wolvercote Brick Pit, Oxfordshire.
- Figure 9.2 Photographic portrait of Francis H.S. Knowles, taken in 1915.
- Figure 9.3 Photograph of sifting for archaeological finds at Biddenham gravel quarry, Bedfordshire.
- Figure 9.4 Photographic portrait of Worthington G. Smith.
- Figure 9.5 Photograph of Robert Ranulph Marett at La Cotte de St Brelade, Jersey.
- Figure 10.1 Map of the main sites in France from which the PRM holds Palaeolithic material.
- Figure 10.2 Lower Palaeolithic hand-axe, collected from St Acheul, France by John Evans in 1862.
- Figure 10.3 Magdalenian-Period whistle made from reindeer phalanx bone, found at Laugerie Basse, Dordogne, France.
- Figure 11.1 Fragment of a Late Bronze Age bronze end-blast trumpet, from the Pitt Rivers Museum founding collection.
- Figure 11.2 Late Bronze Age leaf-shaped socketed bronze spearhead with gold inlay on the socket, from the Pitt Rivers Museum founding collection.
- Figure 11.3 Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age carved stone ball from Kemnay, Aberdeenshire, Scotland.
- Figure 11.4 Early Neolithic jadeite axe found at Aberdeenshire, Scotland.
- Figure 11.5 Bronze Age gold funicular torque from the Pitt Rivers Museum founding collection, from a hoard discovered in 1857 on Law Farm in Moray, Scotland.
- Figure 11.6 Ceramic vessel excavated by James Medhurst at the Romano-British temple site at Lancing Down, West Sussex.
- Figure 11.7 Late Iron Age bead-rimmed ceramic jar excavated by James Medhurst at Lancing Down, West Sussex.
- Figure 11.8 Neolithic stone axe from St Martin's, Jersey, collected in June 1870, from the Pitt Rivers Museum founding collection.
- Figure 11.9 Photograph of excavations at the Stone Circle at Avebury, Wiltshire conducted by Harold St George Gray, April 1922.
- Figure 11.10 Photograph of prehistoric lake dwellings at Lake Biel Lattrigen, 1874, from the Pitt Rivers Museum founding collection.
- Figure 11.11 Chape-shaped decorated stone object from Onnens, Lake Neuchâtel, Switzerland.
- Figure 11.12 Unused example of General Pitt-Rivers' 'medalets'.
- Figure 11.13 Scale model of the Neolithic chambered tomb at Wayland's Smithy, Oxfordshire, made by Alfred Lionel Lewis in the late 1860s; from the Pitt Rivers Museum founding collection.
- Figure 12.1 Medieval ceramic vessel from General Pitt-Rivers' 1878 excavations at Castle Hill (Caesar's Camp), Kent; from the Pitt Rivers Museum founding collection.
- Figure 12.2 Medieval ceramic vessel from General Pitt-Rivers' 1878 excavations at Castle Hill (Caesar's Camp), Kent; from the Pitt Rivers Museum founding collection.
- Figure 12.3 A Viking Age sword, known as 'The Battersea Sword' from the Pitt Rivers Museum founding collection.
- Figure 12.4 Early medieval tanged iron knife recovered during General Pitt-Rivers' excavations at Merrow Down, Surrey in May 1877; from the Pitt Rivers Museum founding collection.
- Figure 12.5 Forged Ogham stone from Aghabulloge, County Cork, Ireland; from the Pitt Rivers Museum founding collection.

- Figure 12.6 Stone with inscribed medieval ogham script from Aghabulloge, County Cork, Ireland; from the Pitt Rivers Museum founding collection.
- Figure 12.7 Undated fragment of painted wall plaster from Farnese Palace, Rome; from the Pitt Rivers Museum founding collection.
- Figure 12.8 Post-medieval glass bottle from late 19th-century excavations at 5–6 Threadbare Street, London.
- Figure 12.9 Medieval bird bone flute from Pitt-Rivers' 1878 excavations at Castle Hill (Caesar's Camp), Kent; from the Pitt Rivers Museum founding collection.
- Figure 12.10 Two post-medieval bone apple-corers, excavated at Fenchurch Street, London.
- Figure 13.1 Map of the main archaeological sites in Oxfordshire referred to in Chapter 13.
- Figure 13.2 Illustration of flints found in Oxfordshire by General Pitt-Rivers.
- Figure 13.3 Map and section plans for Dorchester Dykes and Sinodun Camp.
- Figure 13.4 Photograph of Alexander Montgomerie Bell.
- Figure 14.1 Map of Maltese sites mentioned in Chapter 14.
- Figure 14.2 Examples of pottery sherds from Maltese temple sites in the Pitt Rivers Museum.
- Figure 15.1 Map of Greece, Cyprus and Western Turkey showing the main sites referred to in Chapter 15.
- Figure 15.2 An interior view of the Court of the Pitt Rivers Museum, taken between 1887 and 1895.
- Figure 15.3 Detail of photograph reproduced as Figure 15.2, showing Cypriote pottery.
- Figure 15.4 Cypro-Archaic ceramic jug with painted decoration showing a human figure seizing a bull by its horns; from the Pitt Rivers Museum founding collection.
- Figure 15.5 (a and b) Bronze mirror disc, dating from the 4th century BCE, probably excavated from a tomb at Vari, Attica in 1866.
- Figure 15.6 Rare, intact Bronze Age jug, possibly from Melos.
- Figure 15.7 Mycenaean stirrup jar (a), with detail of the base (b), obtained by George Rolleston from A.S. Rhousopoulos.
- Figure 15.8 Small ceramic bowl of Middle Cypriot I date.
- Figure 15.9 Late Bronze Age bull-shaped *rhyton*
- Figure 15.10 Late Bronze Age handmade female figurine from Cyprus.
- Figure 15.11 Late Bronze Age handmade female figurine from Cyprus.
- Figure 15.12 Late Bronze Age handmade female figurine from Cyprus.
- Figure 15.13 Cypro-Archaic I ceramic jug (750–600 BCE).
- Figure 16.1 Etruscan bronze belt.
- Figure 16.2 Etruscan caryatid chalice with frieze showing human images, from the Pitt Rivers Museum founding collection.
- Figure 16.3 Etruscan caryatid supports for bowl.
- Figure 16.4 Southern Italian *kylix* (cup) of the 4th century BCE from the Pitt Rivers Museum founding collection.
- Figure 16.5 Ancient Greek clay loom-weight.
- Figure 16.6 Iron Age (Classical Greek) ceramic black-glazed lamp.
- Figure 16.7 Roman period bronze helmet from the Pitt Rivers Museum founding collection.
- Figure 16.8 Four Roman terracotta votive offerings.
- Figure 16.9 Roman oboe from the Pitt Rivers Museum founding collection.
- Figure 17.1 Inca work-basket from Arica, Chile.
- Figure 17.2 Possible forgery of a Peruvian Chimú-style pottery vessel from the Pitt Rivers Museum founding collection
- Figure 17.3 Forgery of a Peruvian Chimú-style pottery vessel from the Pitt Rivers Museum founding collection.
- Figure 17.4 Illustration published by General Pitt-Rivers in 1875, comparing arrow-heads from USA and Patagonia.
- Figure 17.5 Unfinished Inca-style cap from Arica, Chile.
- Figure 17.6 Ancient Peruvian work-basket, from the Wellcome collection.
- Figure 17.7 Peruvian Chimú-Inca pottery vessel.
- Figure 17.8 Peruvian Chimú-Inca vessel from the Pitt Rivers Museum founding collection.
- Figure 17.9 Ceramic 12-tube pan-pipe from Nazca, Peru.
- Figure 18.1 View of a carved stone stela at the Maya site of Quiriguá, taken by Alfred

- Percival Maudslay in 1883.
- Figure 18.2 Ten examples of Teotihuacan figures, donated to the Pitt Rivers Museum in 1943.
- Figure 18.3 Fragment of a carved stone female figurine collected from eastern coast of Mexico before 1825.
- Figure 18.4 Figurine from Cholula, Mexico.
- Figure 18.5 Olmecoid-style jade pendant from the Wellcome collection.
- Figure 18.6 Fifteen Postclassic stone and ceramic spindle whorls and beads.
- Figure 18.7 Figurine head with elaborate tasseled headdress and ear ornaments.
- Figure 18.8 Cache vessel from Belize dating from the 16th century CE.
- Figure 18.9 'Eccentric' flints from Barton Raimie Estate, Belize.
- Figure 19.1 Illustration of 'Carib implements of shell and stone found in Barbados', published in 1868.
- Figure 19.2 Glass bottle, from the base of which flakes have been struck (a), and six of these glass flakes (b) from Antigua.
- Figure 20.1 Undated fragment of rush matting from Bee Cave, Texas.
- Figure 20.2 Photograph taken in 1879 at San Felipe Pueblo, New Mexico, showing James Stevenson.
- Figure 20.3 Carved ivory figure of a pregnant woman, collected from a grave on Southampton Island, Hudson Bay, Canada.
- Figure 21.1 Neo-Babylonian ceramic cuneiform tablet from Iraq, from the Pitt Rivers Museum founding collection.
- Figure 21.2 Cuneiform school exercise or model account dating from the Ur III period (c.2100–2000 BCE), probably from the site of Telloh, Iraq.
- Figure 21.3 Photograph of excavations at Hursag-Kalama taken by T.K. Penniman during his involvement in the excavations at Kish, Iraq 1928–1929.
- Figure 21.4 Hand-drawn card from T.K. Penniman's notes on his involvement in the 1928–1929 season of excavations at the site of Kish, Iraq.
- Figure 22.1 Map of Israel, Palestine and Jordan showing sites referred to in Chapter 22.
- Figure 22.2 Photograph of the 'Wady Mughara Group' that oversaw excavations at Mount Carmel, Israel in 1931: Theodore McCown, Dorothy Garrod and Francis Turville-Petre.
- Figure 22.3 Photograph of stratigraphy at Dorothy Garrod's excavations at et-Tabun, modern day Israel, taken in 1930.
- Figure 22.4 Photograph of excavations at Et-Tabun, Israel taken in 1934.
- Figure 23.1 Map of India showing sites referred to in Chapter 23.
- Figure 23.2 Photograph by Frederick R. Richards of a mound at Peacock Hill, Bellary, India.
- Figure 23.3 Photograph by Frederick R. Richards of rock art at Peacock Hill, Bellary, India.
- Figure 23.4 Photograph by Frederick R. Richards of a group of 'placed' rocks at Bellary, India.
- Figure 24.1 Map of Japanese Islands.
- Figure 25.1 Examples of Chinese money from the PRM collections.
- Figure 26.1 Illustrations of examples of axes/adzes from Perak, Malaysia.
- Figure 27.1 Map of the countries referred to in Chapter 27.
- Figure 27.2 Stone figure, named Arununa, from the ceremonial enclosure (*marae*) in the Mateaina district of Raivavae Island.
- Figure 27.3 Photograph of a beach 'composed almost entirely of flakes' at Suloga Village, Papua New Guinea.
- Figure 28.1 Eight stone adzes said to have been 'dug up on D. MacFarlane's sheep-run near Hamilton, Waikato District, New Zealand'.
- Figure 28.2 Slate *mata* from Chatham Island, New Zealand.
- Figure 28.3 Six nephrite *tikis* from New Zealand.
- Figure 29.1 Carved wooden figure, possibly of Captain Cook, from Easter Island.
- Figure 29.2 Stone *moai* (figurine) from Easter Island.
- Figure 29.3 Carved stone human figure, known as Titahanga-o-te-Henua, from Easter Island.
- Figure 29.4 Stone *toki* (implement) from Easter Island.

# List of Tables

Table 1.1	Number of ‘archaeological’ objects held in the Pitt Rivers Museum, by continent.
Table 1.2	Number of ‘archaeological’ objects from the Pitt Rivers Museum, by country.
Table 1.3	Number of ‘archaeological’ objects from Africa, by country.
Table 1.4	Number of ‘archaeological’ objects from Europe, by country.
Table 1.5	Number of ‘archaeological’ objects from the Americas, by country.
Table 1.6	Number of ‘archaeological’ objects from Asia, by country.
Table 1.7	Number of ‘archaeological’ objects from Australia and Oceania, by country.
Table 1.8	Number of ‘archaeological’ objects associated with the main 25 archaeological collectors, donors, previous owners and dealers represented in the collections of the Pitt Rivers Museum.
Table 2.1	Number of Stone Age artefacts from sub-Saharan Africa in the archaeological collections of the Pitt Rivers Museum, by country (excluding casts).
Table 2.2	Chronological framework of cultural-historical terms used in Chapter 2.
Table 3.1	Kenyan sites from which stone artefact assemblages are held in the archaeological collections of the Pitt Rivers Museum, showing number of artefacts.
Table 3.2	Chronology of the Kenyan Stone Age, showing dates and key features.
Table 4.1	Number of Palaeolithic artefacts from North Africa in the Pitt Rivers Museum, by country.
Table 5.1	Principal excavated assemblages from Egypt in the Pitt Rivers Museum.
Table 5.2	Principal excavated assemblages from Sudan in the collections of the Pitt Rivers Museum.
Table 5.3	Archaeological periods for Predynastic and Early Dynastic Egypt, with calibrated dates BCE.
Table 6.1	Chronology of Dynastic Egypt.
Table 8.1	Estimated numbers of post-Stone Age/late Holocene ‘archaeological’ objects from Africa in the collections of the Pitt Rivers Museum, by country.
Table 8.2	Number of later archaeological objects from Africa in the collections of the Pitt Rivers Museum, by region.
Table 8.3	Principal collectors, sites and objects from the Later Holocene archaeological collections from Zimbabwe in the Pitt Rivers Museum.
Table 9.1	List of Palaeolithic artefacts from Biddenham Gravel Pit, Bedfordshire held in the archaeological collections of the Pitt Rivers Museum.
Table 9.2	Groups of naturally perforated Porosphaera fossils from Britain in the archaeological collections of the Pitt Rivers Museum, listed in order of date of donation.
Table 11.1	List of scale models of archaeological sites and monuments in the UK, Ireland and Norway from the Pitt Rivers Museum Founding Collection.
Table 14.1	Chronological representation of the Maltese archaeological collections of the Pitt Rivers Museum.
Table 14.2.	Principal Maltese archaeological sites represented in the collections of the Pitt Rivers Museum.
Table 17.1	Chronological overview of South American archaeological cultures and periods
Table 18.1	Chronological overview of Mesoamerican archaeological periods.
Table 20.1	Number of ‘archaeological’ objects from the USA in the Pitt Rivers Museum, by State.
Table 20.2	Number of archaeological objects from Canada by Province or Territory.
Table 20.3	Glass beads from Pennsylvania, New York and California donated to the Pitt Rivers Museum in 1955 by John G. Witthoft.
Table 24.1	Number of prehistoric Japanese objects in the PRM by chronological phase (excluding objects from Hokkaido).
Table 26.1	Main stone artefact types in the ‘archaeological’ collections from Malaysia and Myanmar in the Pitt Rivers Museum.

# Abbreviations Used

BCE	Before Common Era
BP	Before Present
CE	Common Era
EEF	Egypt Exploration Fund
EES	Egypt Exploration Society
ERA	Egypt Research Account
ESA	Earlier Stone Age
LSA	Later Stone Age
MSA	Middle Stone Age
OUMNH	Oxford University Museum of Natural History (originally known simply as the Oxford University Museum).
PRM	Pitt Rivers Museum
RAI	Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain
RDF	Related Documents Files, Pitt Rivers Museum (organized by Accession Number).



# Preface

In the pages that follow, we present a ‘characterization’ of the archaeological collections of the Pitt Rivers Museum. This is an unusual form of curatorial endeavour, grounded not in the regional or period-based specialization of lone scholarship, but in a collaborative exploration of history, geography and materiality that is perhaps akin to the process of archaeological excavation. Through a series of descriptive overviews and quantifications, developed from the museum’s database through partnerships with a series of specialist researchers and museum staff, the book presents new accounts of the collections, organized by region and period. These accounts are not definitive or final: they are provisional. This is not a catalogue. Rather, the volume seeks to encourage new research through a description of what we might call the ‘character’ of the collection. Many of the objects described have not been studied for a century or more. Part of our invitation to the reader must therefore be to help us to see the objects described here in new ways: to correct inaccuracies or errors, and to develop alternative interpretations and comparative accounts of the materials described. I have called this kind of collaborative writing a ‘characterization’: the book sets out where we stand today in our knowledge of the histories, shape and character of the collections. By publishing the book online in open access form, as well as in a hard copy, we hope to maximize our future potential readerships and exchanges. So, the book is offered as an invitation to researchers to help the Museum to develop new knowledge of the collections. More than anything, the volume is assembled in the belief that curatorial practice proceeds best through collaborative endeavour, rather than lone scholarship. And that it operates better when informed by provisional description, rather than by anecdote.

The Pitt Rivers Museum’s database can be accessed through the museum’s website at <http://www.prm.ox.ac.uk>. Accession numbers are provided throughout the text below, to assist with the reader’s use of this book in combination with the database. Research enquiries about the collections, including requests for access, should be addressed in the first instance to the Head of Collections, Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford, South Parks Road, Oxford OX1 3PP, UK. Email: [objects.colls@prm.ox.ac.uk](mailto:objects.colls@prm.ox.ac.uk).

This volume is the product of a collaborative undertaking – a form of indoors archaeological fieldwork – that has depended upon the professionalism, commitment and expertise of a large number of people. Principal among these is Jeremy Coote (Joint Collections Manager and Curator), without whose longstanding commitment to enhancing the documentation of the museum, and promoting collections-based research, this volume would have been impossible. We are indebted to Jeremy not just for this, but for his active support and guidance as our study of the archaeological collections developed. Within the Pitt Rivers Museum we would like to thank Julia Nicholson, Marina de Alarcón, Elin Bornemann, Madeleine Ding, Kate Greenaway, Faye Belsey, Siân Mundell and Zena McGreevy for helping access, manage, and sometimes rearrange the stored museum collections. We are indebted to Chris Morton and Philip Grover for their thoughtful assistance with numerous enquiries relating to the manuscript and photographic collections, and for providing high-quality copies of photographs for publication. Mark Dickerson at the Balfour Library has been especially patient with the project team’s need to explore the library’s status as a historical collection, the formation of which is bound up with the artefact collections.

Conservators Heather Richardson, Jeremy Uden and Kate Jackson provided help and advice on many occasions, Malcolm Osman took many of the photographs of objects for the volume, and Alison Wilkins drew the maps for some of the chapters. Cathy Wright and Antigone Thompson assisted with the administration of the project; Haas Ezzet provided IT support; and the Director of the Museum, Mike O'Hanlon, provided support at all of the crucial moments during the project's life.

We are grateful to the John Fell OUP Research Fund, which funded the project *Characterizing the World Archaeology Collections of the Pitt Rivers Museum* between 2009 and 2011, of which this book is the product. The project team comprised Dan Hicks, Alice Stevenson, Matt Nicholas and Alison Petch. Jeremy Coote and Mark Pollard contributed greatly through their membership of the project's Steering Committee. The project also benefitted from the work of four student interns and volunteers: Caroline Butler, Cassia Pennington, Sophie Graham and Loretta Kilroe. We are grateful to the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) for supporting Matt Nicholas in a workplace learning bursary, and to the Boise Fund for supporting Ceri Shipton's research into the Kenyan collections. As well as working on the project for some time, Alison Petch provided invaluable guidance on the history of the Museum and its documentation throughout the project.

Above all, this volume would not have been possible without the specialists who are the authors and co-authors of the chapters. We are indebted to them all for their generous contributions of time, energy and expertise, and for helping us to take stock of the character and potential of the archaeological collections of one of the world's great archaeological museums.

Dan Hicks, Pitt Rivers Museum, 6 February 2013



# Characterizing the World Archaeology Collections of the Pitt Rivers Museum

Dan Hicks

## 1.1 Introduction

The Pitt Rivers Museum (PRM) is the University of Oxford's museum of Anthropology and World Archaeology. It was founded in 1884 with a donation of a collection of *c.* 22,092 archaeological and ethnological objects, which had been assembled between *c.* 1851 and the early 1880s by General Augustus Henry Lane Fox Pitt-Rivers (1827-1900) – who was known until 1880 simply as Augustus Henry Lane Fox (Chapman 1981: 34–5; cf. Bowden 1991; Chapman 1984, 1985, 1989; Lane Fox 1877; Thompson 1977). The PRM founding collection was donated to the University four years after Pitt-Rivers had inherited a large estate (and his new surname): an event that transformed his life.<sup>1</sup> After 1884, and especially through the activities of Henry Balfour, who was Curator of the Museum between 1891 and 1939, the PRM collections rapidly grew in size (cf. Balfour 1893, 1906). Today, the Museum is a very different collection from that donated by the General: it holds *c.* 312,686 artefacts, as well as more than 174,000 photographs<sup>2</sup> and extensive manuscript collections. The 'typological' arrangement of archaeological and anthropological material in the Museum (Lane Fox 1884; Pitt-Rivers 1891) was reimagined and reordered under the curatorships of Balfour, Tom Penniman (Curator 1939-1963), Bernard Fagg (Curator 1964-1975), Brian Cranstone (Curator 1976-1985), and most recently the directorships of Schuyler Jones (Director 1985-1998) and Michael O'Hanlon (Director 1998-present).

This volume presents an overview of the archaeological collections of the Museum. It is the product of a research programme that ran between 2009 and 2011, titled *Characterizing the World Archaeology Collections of the Pitt Rivers Museum*:

<sup>1</sup> In the final two decades of his life, Pitt-Rivers developed a second collection, similar in composition and size to his first, much of which he displayed at his private museum at Farnham, Dorset, close to his country estate. The second collection was sold off and dispersed during the 1960s and 1970s, although much of the British archaeological collections are today held by Salisbury and South Wiltshire Museum.

<sup>2</sup> Chris Morton, PRM Curator of Photograph and Manuscript Collections, estimates the total number of photographs held by the PRM to be around 200,000. There are *c.* 174,000 photographic objects currently recorded on the PRM database (Chris Morton pers. comm. November 2012; cf. Edwards 1984).

*defining research priorities*, and supported by the University of Oxford's John Fell OUP Research Fund. This introductory chapter outlines the approach adopted by the project, which we have termed 'characterization' (1.2), and considers the definition of 'archaeological' collections (1.3), before introducing the rest of the volume (1.4), and drawing brief conclusions (1.5).

## 1.2 Characterization

The chapters of this book were written by specialists in the various periods and regions of archaeology represented in the collections, in collaboration with a project research team based at the Museum. The project team (Dan Hicks, Alice Stevenson, Matt Nicholas and Alison Petch) undertook primary research to enhance the documentation of the archaeological collections: retrieving objects, updating and correcting database records, researching the locations of archaeological sites, identifying where objects had been published, etc. In collaboration with the external specialists, the team developed the new descriptive overviews of collections. These 'characterizations' sought, through a process of documentation and description, to suggest what might represent the main strengths of the archaeological collections, and to indicate priorities for collections-based research for the next ten or fifteen years.

In practice, the research process bore some similarity to the process of 'post-excavation assessment' undertaken after developer-funded excavations (English Heritage 1991). Rather than assessing a single body of material from one programme of excavation, it treated the whole collection – derived from many different field interventions, and many different parts of the world – as a single assemblage. Indeed, by developing descriptive accounts of the collections, the research process sometimes came close to older museum practices of creating catalogues or 'hand-lists'. But generally such catalogues are focused on more closely-defined bodies of material (e.g. Hook and MacGregor 1997; MacGregor 1993, 1997), rather than the full range of archaeological materials explored here. So, perhaps the exercise undertaken here stands as much in a tradition in the study of the collections of the University of Oxford that begins with the 1836 *Catalogue of the Ashmolean Museum: descriptive of the zoological specimens, antiquities, coins and miscellaneous curiosities* (Ashmolean Museum 1836) as it does in that of more fine-grained interpretive scholarship.

In developing the idea of characterization, we took as a principal challenge Hedley Swain's idea, set out in his *Introduction to Museum Archaeology*, that 'conceptually every item in a collection [might be] given equal value' (Swain 2007: 297; cf. Thomas 1991: 3). Existing models of museum curatorship are dominated by art historical and anthropological approaches, but we wanted to find more adequately *archaeological* ways of undertaking research in a museum environment: bringing archaeological approaches and sensibilities indoors. In other words, we sought to understand the Pitt Rivers Museum as a kind of archaeological site.

Imagining PRM as an archaeological site, we envisaged the research process as akin to undertaking a programme of evaluative fieldwork. Our hope was to lay the foundations for future more detailed 'excavations' of particular bodies of archaeological material in PRM, as well as perhaps to develop a methodology that it might be possible adopt in other museums. Our sense from the outset was that by seeking to present a descriptive overview of the whole 'archaeological' collection, we would not simply rediscover significant artefacts and collections, but would find new assemblages and juxtapositions that have been formed through the 130-year history of PRM. We would, we imagined, transform the archaeological collections by documenting them: in a similar manner to the transformations undertaken in

archaeological fieldwork. Archaeologists document in order to understand, and in doing so they transform, and thus re-create, their objects of enquiry. This is most clear in the interventionism of excavation – which is often defined as destructive of the archaeological record – but can, perhaps, be equally true of doing archaeology in museums.

We sought to develop written overviews of the collections that are not closed descriptions: since our main aim is to present material so that it can be added to, and corrected, by future research. But we also did not want simply to present interpretations, but to take longer over describing, sometimes with inevitable repetition, the material, rather than hurrying to humanistic perspectives. Our use of the term ‘characterization’ will, we hope, capture the method that we have sought to develop and experimented with here: creating interested overviews of each tranche of the collections, highlighting unexplored strengths and pointing to areas for future work. As I shall argue below, what we have learnt was that this process has also served to transform the collections themselves, in a manner akin to the interventionism of archaeological excavation: since documentation is an integral element of the archaeological record (Lucas 2012).

### 1.3 What Counts as ‘Archaeological’

A note on the definition of ‘archaeological’ collections is necessary. One might suggest that any distinction between anthropology and archaeology is simply inappropriate for the PRM. Pitt-Rivers’ own interests made little distinction between archaeology and anthropology, and in its early history the PRM was generally defined as concerned with ‘ethnology’: a term that encompasses both archaeological and archaeological concerns, sometimes with a particular focus on technology. Only in 1958, during the curatorship of Tom Penniman, was the Museum re-defined as the ‘University Department of Ethnology and Prehistory’ – a terminology that was retained until the current terminology – ‘Oxford University’s Museum of Anthropology and World Archaeology’ – was adopted in the 1980s.

However, these earlier permeabilities between disciplines were hardly straightforward. As Arthur Evans’ reflection on the transfers of material from the Ashmolean Museum to the newly-opened PRM made clear, a distinction between Classical and non-Classical archaeology was enacted (A. Evans 1884; cf. Chester 1881). Although Evans saw it as ‘impossible to lay down any hard and fast lines of distinction between objects of Archaeological and Anthropological interest’, he saw the kind of archaeology represented by the Ashmolean Museum as being concerned with ‘objects illustrative of the arts and history of Great Britain, of the European peoples, and of those parts of Asia and the Mediterranean world with which they are historically and, in some cases, ethnographically bound’ – ‘the early ages of our own quarter of the globe’ – while the Pitt Rivers Museum took precedence as to material from ‘the more remote parts of the world’ (A. Evans 1884: 4-5; compare White 1994; Impey 1995; Larson 1998).

The result has been that the PRM archaeological collections have developed as particularly strong in Stone Age/Palaeolithic material from around the world (including very considerable European collections), and in later archaeological material that derives from outside Europe and the Near East. That said, there are also many significant bodies of material that fall outside of this rubric, especially in the PRM founding collection. For example, there are considerable amounts of Romano-British and medieval material excavated by the General himself (Chapters 11 and 12), or later prehistoric Cypriot ceramics that were, unusually for the time, not exhibited in the context of Greek and Roman material (Chapter 15). Beyond Europe,

it is clearer still that purely chronological distinctions between ‘archaeological’ and ‘anthropological’ material are difficult to define in an *a priori* manner. In southern Africa, the continuity of stone tool use and rock art production until very recent times means that the distinction between the ‘Stone Age’ rock art and San (Bushman) ethnographic holdings of the PRM is at best an artificial one (Chapter 2).

Drawing classificatory lines between archaeology and anthropology can also be politically complex. On one hand, in Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego (Chapter 17) or Tasmania (Chapter 27) the definition of ethnographic material as ‘archaeological’ problematically recalls 19th-century ideas of contemporary peoples as ‘survivals’ – through the anthropological trick of collapsing geographical distance into temporal distance (Fabian 1983). On the other hand, whether in Africa or even in North America, definitions of material as ‘ethnographic’ has excluded some regions from being recognised as significant in archaeological accounts of the past.

In Britain, the historical distinctions between ‘archaeological’, folkloric and ‘ethnographic’ objects relate mainly to conceptions of the limits of archaeology – as prehistoric, or as perhaps including the Romano-British or medieval periods. A central issue here is the *historical* nature of both anthropological and archaeological collections. As archaeology has, over the past half-century, increasingly been understood as a discipline that can be applied to 19th- and 20th-century material just as much as it can to the more distant past, and as parallel debates over the historical nature of apparently atemporal accounts of ethnographic situations have developed, distinctions between ‘archaeological’ and ‘ethnographic’ material today perhaps lie not so much in the period of time in which an object was made, but the disciplinary thinking that went into its collection and subsequent curation.

In other words, the ‘archaeological’ nature of collections derives to a large extent from the archaeological methods and practices through which objects have been assembled, rather than simply from the contexts in which objects were made or used. In the PRM, the history of these methods and practices includes a very wide range of collecting strategies. The history of collecting is, in this case, best understood as a history of enacting objects through different disciplinary methods and practices, rather than simply as the gathering of assemblages. Perhaps this is most clear in the ‘archaeological’ objects in the PRM that are artefacts made from stone or glass by Museum curators for the purposes of comparative technology. But in all cases, any account of the archaeological collections must highlight the role of curators who defined themselves – to a greater or lesser extent, or not at all – as archaeologists.<sup>3</sup> The regional traditions in which these individuals were trained and practiced – Africanist, Americanist, European prehistorian, etc. – shaped the agendas and definitions for archaeology in the Museum over time.

Large programmes of excavation are relatively rarely represented in the collections: indeed, a major part of the challenge in studying the collections is that a clear archaeological provenance is currently not recorded for many objects, especially those acquired through dealers, auction houses, and from other collections. As the results of this volume show, sustained documentary and collections-based research can often provide clearer contexts for particular assemblages and objects, and many of the future challenges for research into the archaeological collections lie in unpicking the processes through which they were formed, to resolve basic questions of provenance and history – most starkly, perhaps, with the entangled histories of

<sup>3</sup> from Tom Penniman and Beatrice Blackwood to Bernard Fagg, Peter Gathercole, Donald F.W. Baden-Powell, Audrey Butt, K.O.L. Burridge, B.A.L. Cranstone, Schuyler Jones, Dennis Britton, J.B. Campbell, Ray Inskip, Howard Morphy, Elizabeth Edwards, Donald Tayler, Hélène La Rue, Peter Mitchell and Chris Gosden, as well as current PRM staff.

material recorded as from Arica (Chile) and Ancón (Peru) (Chapter 17). Here, the processes of research and documentation must be understood as commensurable with the processes of fieldwork itself – shaping and re-shaping the geographical and temporal distribution of the collections.

In practice, for the present volume the definition of ‘archaeological’ collections has followed (and, where appropriate, has updated) the distinctions made on the PRM database. Any object defined as ‘Archaeology’ or ‘Archaeology/Ethnography’ (but not ‘Ethnography’) in the database field ‘Archaeology/Ethnography’ has been included in the material described here. Clarification of the numbers of objects represented by single records, the incorporation of previously unaccessioned material, and the correction of mistaken attributions of clearly archaeological material (whether Palaeolithic hand-axes or excavated clay pipe stems) to the ‘Ethnographic’ category, meant that over the course of the project, the number of archaeological objects listed on the database increased from 127,684 in November 2009 to 136,025 in November 2012. To give one small illustrative example, the project team’s collections work has shown that the PRM’s material from Cornish’s Pit in Iffley, Oxford consists of *c.* 185 objects rather than the 28 reported by Wymer (1968), and that it was associated with faunal remains, and the location of the site has been identified (Chapter 12). This kind of documentation work is often tedious, and always labour-intensive, but as with the processes of excavation the cumulative effect is to allow new understanding of the material to emerge. Such work is not just valuable, but crucial, if we understand our objects of enquiry to be the effects of our practice as researchers, rather than readymades just waiting to be studied (Hicks and Beaudry 2010: 21).

Where objects have been excavated, definitions are perhaps most clear. In other cases, unhafted stone tools may be listed as ‘archaeological’ while hafted stone tools from the same collection are listed as ‘ethnographic’: a distinction that is clearly unhelpful, since any stone tool could be re-hafted at any point. Countless other examples of the permeabilities between ‘archaeological’ and ‘ethnographic’ objects could be pointed to. There are examples in the PRM collections of ethnographic objects collected for comparative archaeological purposes, modern objects recovered through archaeological techniques, and even archaeological objects excavated by indigenous people. But having noted these difficulties, we must underline that in this volume ‘archaeological’ is a contingent and provisional definition that must rely on an understanding of the historical – and ongoing – formation of the PRM collections in the context of overlapping disciplinary histories and agendas.

Today, around 44% of the artefact collections – *c.* 136,025 objects – is defined as ‘archaeological’. This contrasts with the *c.* 13,687 ‘archaeological’ objects in the PRM founding collection – i.e. around 62% of the collection in 1884. Until the present volume, the most sustained ‘archaeological’ research activity conducted in the Museum related to the scientific study of technology, and particularly to the production of stone tools and metallurgy. This focus is most visible in the PRM’s own publications (but see also Penniman and Allen 1960). The Pitt Rivers Museum Occasional Papers on Technology series ran from 1944 to 1970, and included Francis Knowles’ studies of *The Manufacture of a Flint Arrow-Head by Quartzite Hammer-Stone* (Knowles 1944) and *The Stone-Worker’s Progress: a study of stone implements in the Pitt Rivers Museum* (Knowles 1953); Henry Coghlan’s metallurgical studies of European prehistoric copper and bronze (Coghlan 1951) and iron (Coghlan 1956); and Allen’s *Metallurgical Reports on British and Irish Bronze Age Implements and Weapons in the Pitt Rivers Museum* (Allen 1970). Beatrice Blackwood’s contributions to the same series – *The Technology of a Modern Stone Age People in New Guinea* (Blackwood 1950) and *The Classification of Artefacts in the Pitt Rivers Museum Oxford* (Blackwood 1970) – related less directly to archaeology, although a part of the context for the first of these

volumes was Blackwood’s pioneering interests in ethnoarchaeology. In contrast, not one of the eight volumes in the *Pitt Rivers Museum Monograph Series*, published between 1977 and 1998, was on an archaeological theme (Bockstoce 1977; Blackwood 1978; Bowden 1983; Morphy and Edwards 1988; Mowat *et al.* 1992; Tayler 1996, 1997, 1998). As with the editorial direction of the monograph series, so in the active research culture of the PRM since it was discontinued in the 1990s, ethnographic themes and approaches have continued to dominate the research undertaken in the museum. However, significant advances in the development of an electronic database for the PRM collections, and of the documentation of the PRM founding collection, have been made during this period – without which the present volume would have been impossible (Coote *et al.* 1999; Petch 1998a, 1998b, 2002, 2006).

Thus, our definition of archaeology is a contingent one – based on the history of the PRM. In some cases it is arbitrary, while in others it is clear-cut. In all cases, it is provisional. As with all the information put forward in this volume, it is there to be questioned, corrected, expanded upon, or re-oriented. There has been a handful of accounts of particular elements of the archaeological collections (e.g. Milliken 2003, Karageorghis 2009), the body of scientific studies of prehistoric technologies mentioned above, the work of Derek Roe and his students on the Palaeolithic collections (Milliken and Cook 2001), especially through the PRM’s association with the Donald Baden-Powell Quaternary Research Centre between 1975 and 2003, and the displays of archaeological material made and used by Ray Inskeep between 1984 and 2000 at the Museum’s former annexe 60 Banbury Road (now dismantled). But with these exceptions, the PRM’s archaeological collections – including those made by General Pitt-Rivers himself – have remained unstudied since 1884.

1.4 The Rest of the Volume

As set out above, the present volume aims to begin a process of studying the collections by documenting and describing them – a process that we have called ‘characterization’. A starting point was to identify a country of origin for each object – something that has been possible for the majority of artefacts (*Tables 1.1 and 1.2*), and to divide these collections by continent (*Tables 1.3-1.7*). The documentation of geographical provenance was enhanced wherever possible with regions or archaeological sites, using contemporary (21st-century) territorial boundaries. The resulting chapters are divided not only across geographical but also, where appropriate, chronological divisions. We paid no attention to equalizing the relative numbers of objects discussed in each chapter, since all the chapters are documents that aim to begin, rather than to conclude, research. Thus, the largest section in terms of numbers of objects – the 47,469 ‘archaeological’ objects from the continent of Africa (Section I) – includes a chapter on Stone Age Sub-Saharan Africa that discusses *c.* 17,611 objects (Chapter

Continent	Number of objects	Percentage
Africa (see breakdown in <i>Table 1.3</i> )	47,469	35%
Europe (see breakdown in <i>Table 1.4</i> )	40,254	30%
Americas (see breakdown in <i>Table 1.5</i> )	14,250	10%
Asia (see breakdown in <i>Table 1.6</i> )	14,624	11%
Oceania and Australia (see breakdown in <i>Table 1.7</i> )	19,015	14%
Unknown Continent	413	>0.01%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>136,025</b>	

*Table 1.1 Number of ‘archaeological’ objects held in the Pitt Rivers Museum, by continent*



UK	29,848	Tunisia	327	Poland	35	Guinea	2
Australia	16,022	Iraq	323	Independent State of Samoa	33	Kiribati	2
Egypt	10,604	Cyprus	295	St Lucia	32	Lesotho	2
South Africa	7,660	Belgium	288	St Vincent & the Grenadines	31	Nepal	2
Kenya	6,757	St Kitts and Nevis	285	Vanuatu	31	Palau, Republic of	2
Sudan	6,275	China	253	Cook Islands	30	Slovenia	2
India	5,449	Myanmar (Burma)	252	Honduras	30	South Sudan	2
Zimbabwe	4,763	Pakistan	235	Jamaica	30	Tuamotu Archipelago	2
France	4,364	Saudi Arabia	227	Tubuai Islands	29	Bermuda	1
Peru	3,817	Belize	214	Bosnia Herzegovina	26	Cambodia	1
USA (see Table 20.f)	3,627	Libya	202	Mali	21	Dominica	1
Israel	3,524	Germany	164	Botswana	20	Dominican Republic	1
Algeria	2,208	Somalia	142	Democratic Republic of Congo	20	Finland	1
Mauritania	1,748	Solomon Islands	133	Iran	19	Haiti	1
Zambia	1,585	Syria	132	El Salvador	16	Macedonia	1
Sri Lanka	1,580	Greenland	125	Norway	15	Malawi	1
Mexico	1,577	Panama	109	Brazil	13	Netherlands Antilles	1
Nigeria	1,319	Federated States of Micronesia	105	Marshall Islands	13	Niger	1
Chile	1,297	French Polynesia	102	Niue	12	Society Islands	1
Jordan	1,099	New Caledonia	99	Trinidad & Tobago	12	Togo	1
Italy	1,066	Bolivia	93	Indonesia	10	Uruguay	1
Ghana	889	Pitcairn Islands	93	Sierra Leone	10	Venezuela	1
Papua New Guinea	841	Lebanon	92	Tonga	10	Unknown country (Africa)	78
Uganda	840	Senegal	85	Virgin Islands	10	Unknown country (Asia)	24
Cameroon	820	Hungary	84	Antigua and Barbuda	9	Unknown country (Caribbean)	106
Denmark	818	Turkey	81	Nicaragua	7	Unknown country (Europe)	513
Ecuador	739	Thailand	80	Swaziland	7	Unknown Country (Mesoamerica)	42
Canada (see Table 20.2)	720	Guatemala	73	Albania	6	Unknown country (North America)	435
Tanzania	702	Sweden	73	Puerto Rico	6	Unknown country (Oceania)	24
Switzerland	697	Fiji	71	Romania	5	Unknown country (South America)	15
Ireland	683	Cape Verde	67	Vietnam	5	Unknown Continent	413
New Zealand	683	Guyana	51	Yemen	5	<b>Total</b>	<b>136,025</b>
Easter Island (Rapa Nui)	622	North and South Korea	51	Iceland	4		
Argentina	573	Barbados	50	Paraguay	4		
Japan	510	Croatia	48	Portugal	4		
Greece	443	Costa Rica	47	Grenada	3		
Spain (including Canary Islands)	438	Austria	46	West Papua	3		
Malta	426	Morocco	45	Afghanistan	2		
Occupied Palestinian Territories	362	Colombia	43	Chad	2		
Malaysia	355	Hawaiian Islands	42	Czech Republic	2		
		Russia	42	Guadeloupe	2		
		Ukraine	42				

Table 1.2 Number of 'archaeological' objects from the Pitt Rivers Museum, by country.\*

\* There are no 'archaeological' objects recorded from the countries of Andorra, Angola, Anguilla, Armenia, Aruba, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Benin Republic, Bhutan, Brunei, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cayman Islands, Central African Republic, Chechnya, Comoros Islands, Republic of Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Djibouti, East Timor, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Falkland Islands, The Gambia, French Guiana, Gabon, Gaum, Georgia, Gibraltar, Guinea-Bissau, Heard & McDonald Islands, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Latvia, Liberia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Maldives, Martinique, Mauritius, Mayotte, Melilla, Moldova, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Montserrat, Mozambique, Namibia, Nauru, Netherlands, Northern Mariana Islands, Oman, Philippines, Qatar, Réunion, Ross Dependency, American Samoa, San Marino, São Tomé & Príncipe, Serbia, Seychelles, Singapore, Slovakia, South Georgia, South Sandwich Islands, St Helena, Ascension & Tristan da Cunha, Surinam, Taiwan, Tajikistan, Tibet, Tokelau Islands, Turkmenistan, Turks & Caicos Islands, Tuvalu, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, Vatican City, Wallis & Futuna Islands, Western Sahara, and Wrangel Island (Vrangelya Ostrov).

Algeria	2,208	Gabon	0	St Helena, Ascension & Tristan da Cunha	0
Angola	0	The Gambia	0	Senegal	85
Benin Republic	0	Ghana	889	Seychelles	0
Botswana	20	Guinea	2	Sierra Leone	10
Burkina Faso	0	Guinea-Bissau	0	Somalia	142
Burundi	0	Kenya	6,757	South Africa	7,660
Cameroon	820	Lesotho	2	Spain (Canary Islands)	264
Cape Verde	67	Liberia	0	Sudan	6,275
Central African Republic	0	Libya	202	South Sudan	2
Chad	2	Madagascar	0	Swaziland	7
Comoros Islands	0	Malawi	1	Tanzania	702
Congo, Democratic Republic	20	Mali	21	Togo	1
Congo, Republic	0	Mauritania	1,748	Tunisia	327
Côte d'Ivoire	0	Mauritius	0	Uganda	840
Djibouti	0	Mayotte	0	Western Sahara	0
Egypt	10,604	Morocco	45	Zambia	1,585
Equatorial Guinea	0	Mozambique	0	Zimbabwe	4,763
Eritrea	0	Namibia	0	Unknown country	78
Ethiopia	0	Niger	1	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>47,469</b>
		Nigeria	1,319		
		Reunion	0		
		São Tomé & Príncipe	0		

*Table 1.3 Number of 'archaeological' objects from Africa, by country*

Albania	6	Greece	443	Portugal	4
Andorra	0	Hungary	84	Romania	5
Austria	46	Iceland	4	San Marino	0
Belarus	0	Ireland	683	Serbia	0
Belgium	288	Italy	1,066	Slovakia	0
Bosnia Herzegovina	26	Latvia	0	Slovenia	2
Bulgaria	0	Liechtenstein	0	Spain (excluding Canary Islands)	174
Chechnya	0	Lithuania	0	Sweden	73
Croatia	48	Luxembourg	0	Switzerland	697
Cyprus	295	Macedonia	1	Turkey	81
Czech Republic	2	Malta	426	UK	29,848
Denmark	818	Melilla	0	Ukraine	42
Estonia	0	Moldova	0	Vatican City	0
Finland	1	Monaco	0	Unknown country	513
France	4,364	Montenegro	0	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>40,254</b>
Germany	164	Netherlands	0		
Gibraltar	0	Norway	15		
		Poland	35		

*Table 1.4 Number of 'archaeological' objects from Europe, by country*



*Table 1.5 Number of 'archaeological' objects from the Americas, by country*

Anguilla	0	French Guiana	0	St Kitts and Nevis	285
Antigua and Barbuda	9	Greenland	125	St Lucia	32
Argentina	573	Grenada	3	St Vincent & the Grenadines	31
Aruba	0	Guadeloupe	2	Surinam	0
Barbados	50	Guatemala	73	Trinidad & Tobago	12
Bahamas	0	Guyana	51	Turks & Caicos Islands	0
Belize	214	Haiti	1	Uruguay	1
Bermuda	1	Honduras	30	USA (see Table 20.1)	3,627
Bolivia	93	Jamaica	30	Venezuela	1
Brazil	13	Martinique	0	Virgin Islands	10
Canada (see Table 20.2)	720	Mexico	1,577	Unknown country (North America)	435
Cayman Islands	0	Montserrat	0	Unknown country (South America)	15
Chile	1,297	Netherlands Antilles	1	Unknown country (Caribbean)	106
Colombia	43	Nicaragua	7	Unknown Country (Mesoamerica)	42
Costa Rica	47	Panama	109	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>14,250</b>
Cuba	0	Paraguay	4		
Dominica	1	Peru	3,817		
Dominican Republic	1	Puerto Rico	6		
Ecuador	739	South Georgia	0		
El Salvador	16	South Sandwich Islands	0		
Falkland Islands	0				

*Table 1.6 Number of 'archaeological' objects from Asia, by country*

Afghanistan	2	Korea (N and S)	51	Singapore	0
Armenia	0	Kuwait	0	Sri Lanka	1,580
Azerbaijan	0	Kyrgyzstan	0	Syria	132
Bahrain	0	Laos	0	Taiwan	0
Bangladesh	0	Lebanon	92	Tajikistan	0
Bhutan	0	Malaysia	355	Thailand	80
Brunei	0	Maldives	0	Tibet	0
Cambodia	1	Mongolia	0	Turkmenistan	0
China	253	Myanmar (Burma)	252	United Arab Emirates	0
East Timor	0	Nepal	2	Uzbekistan	0
Georgia	0	Oman	0	Vietnam	5
India	5,449	Pakistan	235	Wrangel Island (Vrangelya Ostrov)	0
Iran	19	Occupied Palestinian Territories	362	Yemen	5
Iraq	323	Philippines	0	Unknown country	24
Israel	3,524	Qatar	0	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>14,624</b>
Japan	510	Russia	42		
Jordan	1,099	Saudi Arabia	227		
Kazakhstan	0				

Australia	16,022	Palau, Republic of	2
Cook Islands	30	Papua New Guinea	841
Easter Island (Rapa Nui)	622	Pitcairn Islands	93
Fiji	71	Ross Dependency	0
French Polynesia (Gambier Islands, Austral Islands and Society Islands)	102	Samoa, Independent State of	33
Gaum	0	Samoa, American	0
Hawaiian Islands	42	Society Islands	1
Heard & McDonald Islands	0	Solomon Islands	133
Indonesia	10	Tokelau Islands	0
Kiribati	2	Tonga	10
Marshall Islands	13	Tuamotu Archipelago	2
Micronesia, Federated States of	105	Tubuai Islands	29
Naru	0	Tuvalu	0
New Caledonia	99	Vanuatu	31
New Zealand	683	Wallis & Futuna Islands	0
Niue	12	West Papua	3
Northern Mariana Islands	0	Unknown country	24
		<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>19,015</b>

Table 1.7 Number of 'archaeological' objects from Australia and Oceania, by country

Name	Estimated number of objects
Augustus Henry Lane Fox Pitt-Rivers	13,678
Ernest Westlake	12,525
Henry Balfour	6,678
Louis Leakey	6,481
Charles and Brenda Seligman	4,364
Alexander James Montgomerie Bell	4,091
Anthony John Arkell	3,959
Dorothy Garrod	3,367
Francis Knowles	3,028
James Swan	2,716
K.R.U. Todd	2,657
Louis Colville Gray Clarke	2,500
Edward Burnett Tylor	2,344
Mervyn David Waldegrave Jeffreys	1,796
Robert Soper	1,727
John Wickham Flower	1,418
John Evans	1,348
Penelope Ward	1,260
Edward John Dunn	1,161
Stevens Auction Rooms	1,148
Alison Betts	1,064
Beatrice Blackwood	1,023
Alfred Schwartz Barnes	979
George Fabian Lawrence	926
Henry Nottidge Moseley	845

Table 1.8 Estimated numbers of 'archaeological' objects associated with the main 25 archaeological collectors, donors, previous owners and dealers represented in the collections of the Pitt Rivers Museum. Note that a small number of objects will appear in more than one list, where objects moved from one collector or dealer to another. In total the list includes c. 80,000 objects. Note also that the full extent of some of these collections will include 'ethnographic' as well as 'archaeological' material, and so will be larger than the numbers given here.

2), while the chapter on Greco-Roman Egypt (Chapter 7) examines just 252 objects. Similarly, in Europe (Section II) our account of later prehistoric and Roman Europe (Chapter 11) considers c. 24,150 objects, which contrasts with 648 objects from Iron Age and Roman Italy considered in Chapter 16.

The ‘world archaeology’ collections of the PRM derive from 145 of the 196 countries of the world. By far the largest element of the ‘archaeological’ collections (c. 29,848 objects, or around 22%) derives from the UK, but there are also collections of more than 1,000 ‘archaeological’ objects from 20 other countries, comprising (in order of size) Australia, Egypt, South Africa, Kenya, Sudan, India, Zimbabwe, France, Peru, USA, Israel, Algeria, Mauritania, Zambia, Sri Lanka, Mexico, Nigeria, Chile, Jordan and Italy (*Table 1.2*). One principal factor in the formation of these collections is that artefacts from the former territories of the British Empire dominate. Another factor is that the vast majority of the ‘archaeological’ objects were collected before World War II, after which time radical changes in the international movement of antiquities took place. For the PRM, the year 1939 also, of course, marked the end of the longstanding curatorship of Henry Balfour (Curator 1891-1939), who shaped the formation of the archaeological collections so much. Another major factor in the formation of the collection was the numerous transfers from other museums: from the Oxford University Museum of Natural History and the Ashmolean Museum (E. Evans 1884) within the University, from large collections such as those of Edward Burnett Tylor and John Evans, and from beyond Oxford – for example in the 1966 purchase of large archaeological collections from Ipswich Museum. Indeed much more than half of the ‘archaeological’ collections of the PRM was acquired from just 25 principal sources: ranging from the PRM founding collection (which included c. 13,678 ‘archaeological’ objects), through Ernest Westlake’s collection of 12,525 Tasmanian stone tools, to smaller collections made by Beatrice Blackwood, George Fabian Lawrence and Henry Nottidge Moseley (*Table 1.8*).

Each chapter presents an overview of a defined tranche of the collection, exploring the history of its formation and its scope, especially in relation to the PRM founding collection and subsequent accessions. The chapters run from Africa and Europe to the Americas (Section III), Asia (Section IV), and Australia and Oceania (Section V). The accounts conclude with reflections on particular strengths and future research priorities for the material discussed. Taken together, the chapters present a ‘characterization’ of the archaeological collections of the PRM.

## 1.5 Conclusions

Over the course of the 20th century, the popular understanding of the status, set out by Arthur Evans in 1884, of the PRM as the University of Oxford’s repository for non-classical archaeology, rather than purely ethnographic collections, was gradually lost. To give just one example, an account of the transfer of the British archaeological element of Pitt-Rivers’ second collection to Salisbury Museum referred to ‘the mainly ethnographic collection which is to be found in the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford’ (Bentham 1984: 5). In broader perspective, this is unsurprising: the majority of ‘ethnographic’ museums in Europe similarly hold many non-western archaeological collections. These problems of definition and terminology are, perhaps, a major factor in the limited development of world archaeology undertaken from western museum collections. This is certainly the case in Oxford.

The descriptive approach adopted in this volume, and the focus on enhancing documentation, is unfashionable. Museum research has, in recent years, been dominated by various forms of socio-cultural studies. Humanistic approaches to museums developed from socio-cultural anthropology have explored museums’

roles as ‘contact zones’ (Clifford 1997), and their historical emergence as ‘relational’ entities (Gosden and Larsen 2007) or within ‘social networks’ (Larson *et al.* 2007). The direction of this volume is in precisely the opposite direction: to explore how, despite human intentionality, the archaeological collections of the PRM have become an archaeological site. While anthropologists have shown that museums can be sites for ethnographic fieldwork, the challenge for archaeologists is to begin to see the museum as a place for new kinds of excavation: new forms of historical archaeology, from which histories of archaeological practices and materials can complement conventional histories of archaeological thought, and where the contemporary value and significance of archaeological collections can be characterized. There remain some uncatalogued and un-numbered collections, to which this volume points, which will add to the material described here. But equally, all further archaeological attention to these collections will re-shape them, just as excavation constantly re-shapes the archaeological record.

Today, just *c.* 3,034 (10%) of the *c.* 27,800 objects on permanent display in the PRM are identified on the Museum database as ‘archaeological’. There are challenges for the display of archaeological materials, but the challenge of understanding the objects in the storerooms must take priority. In developing these understandings, perhaps the major revelation from archaeology is that – as an archaeological object in its own right – the formation of any museum collection is always ongoing, rather than fixed. This volume, by characterizing the material and suggesting directions for future work, adds another layer to the collections. In doing so, it aims to make a clear contribution to the pressing question that has been asked of university museums over the past twenty years (Merriman and Swain 1999, Swain 2007): how can we reimagine museums as places for archaeological research? We hope that the approach outlined here, which we have termed characterization, makes a useful contribution to continued efforts to answer that question.

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