

ANTHROPOLOGY IN THE MUSEUM

Introduction

Three years ago the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford celebrated its hundredth anniversary, an occasion marked by *JASO* with a Special Issue (Volume XIV, no. 2) and the publication of *The General's Gift: A Celebration of the Pitt Rivers Museum Centenary 1884-1984* [*JASO* Occasional Papers no. 4]. Last year saw the opening of the Balfour Building, the first stage of the new Pitt Rivers Museum, named after its benefactor, the son of the Museum's first curator. The Balfour Building has provided limited but much-needed additional space for the display of the Pitt Rivers collections. The new space is given over to two exhibitions, one devoted to musical instruments and the other to hunter-gatherer material. To mark this important development in Oxford anthropology these exhibitions are reviewed here (see below pp. 64-7 and 67-9) by Margaret Birley and P.L. Carter, specialist museum curatorial staff with first-hand experience of organising such displays.

Exhibitions of ethnographic material, such as those reviewed below, have many possible purposes, publics to reach, and demands to fulfil, as well as presenting rather different problems to their organisers from those faced by anthropologists when writing academic articles and books. An exhibition such as *Making Light Work* at the Pitt Rivers Museum develops an aspect of the Museum's permanent collection and the use made of it by a contemporary artist. The account of the exhibition given here (pp. 60-3) by the exhibition's organiser, Linda Cheetham, throws light on the way in which such a display comes about, as a concept and in practice, and on the way in which ideas are reflected in and thrown up by it. The same might be said of *Lost Magic Kingdoms and Six*

Paper Moons from Nahuatl, at the Museum of Mankind, and of Linda Cheetham's review of it here (pp. 75-6). *Lost Magic Kingdoms* is far from being a conventional ethnographic exhibition. Indeed it has been criticised elsewhere for not being sufficiently informative about 'other cultures'. It may be that a greater degree of sophistication concerning the treatment of the material products of 'other cultures' is required for an appreciation of the approach of Paolozzi, and the Museum of Mankind, than one can expect from the lay public who are now used to 'ethnographic' exhibitions.

In his account of *Between Ghandara and the Silk Roads: Rock-carvings along the Karakorum Highway* (pp. 69-73) one of the exhibition's organisers, Peter Parkes, discusses some of the problems involved in presenting not only 5,000 years of artistic expression from this area of Central Asia, but also the history of its exploration and discovery. He stresses the importance for anthropologists working in this area of appreciating the long term continuities in cultural traditions which the exhibition makes clear. It may well be that such cultural continuities can be more readily realised when presented in a visual display than in purely literary narrative form.

Madagascar: Island of the Ancestors, however, might be regarded as an example of the museum equivalent of the ethnographic monograph. It is in response to such exhibitions, perhaps, that the non-museum anthropologist has most to offer, acting as critic with regard to accuracy of fact and validity of interpretation in his or her area of expertise. Karen Middleton's review here (pp. 73-4) is of this type. Such exhibitions have to appeal to a wide range of publics and are subject to rather different constraints than those on the writer of a monograph. It is clear that there are a variety of criteria by which they can be judged. But as important features of the public face of anthropology all exhibitions of ethnographic material should be of concern to the anthropological community as a whole, and *JASO* will continue to take note of this important part of the anthropological enterprise from time to time.

The hundredth anniversary of the Pitt Rivers Museum and the opening of the new building are timely reminders of the historically variable importance within anthropology of museums and the study of material culture. The third volume of the *History of Anthropology* reviewed here (pp. 77-9) traces some of that history, including the role of Pitt Rivers and his Museum, and also points to what some authorities see as a coming, if not already arrived, renaissance in the importance of museums and the study of material culture in British and American anthropology generally. Such a renaissance is seen as the result of a number of factors including the suitability of material culture for analysis using structuralist methods, the difficulties of arranging overseas fieldwork and the consequent search for materials on which to work closer to hand, as well as the growing realisation on the part of trained or training - but unemployed - anthropologists of the possibilities for employment in museums. The

publication last year of an interim report of a survey of ethnographic collections in the British Isles, with tabulated information and comments on ethnographic holdings in hundreds of museums and other institutions, has drawn attention to the vast wealth of mostly unresearched material only waiting for anthropologists to go and study it.¹

In a recent interview, Malcolm McLeod, speaking from inside the museum world as Keeper of Ethnography at the British Museum (Museum of Mankind), has stated that, at least as far as the Museum of Mankind itself is concerned, 'No longer can one separate museum work and anthropology, the two are closely interconnected'.² Whatever may be the case with the Museum of Mankind in particular, in general museums and the study of material culture, in spite of the predicted renaissance, are far from being reintegrated with the rest of anthropology. But as anthropology, wherever it is practised, becomes more and more subject to financial constraints, it is more important than ever for all institutions concerned with the subject to encourage the crossing of such boundaries as still exist to create a stronger base for the continued survival and growth of the study and presentation of other cultures.

JEREMY COOTE

1

MAKING LIGHT WORK:
AN EXHIBITION OF LAMPS AND LIGHTING
AT THE PITT RIVERS MUSEUM, OXFORD

Artificial light is taken so much for granted in our society that it is rarely written, or even thought, about. The length of our days no longer depends on the rising and setting of the sun. But through anthropology and archaeology we have all been in touch with people whose days are, or were, so governed; and it was only a few generations ago that the inventions of gas and electric lighting brought dramatic changes to our own lifestyle.

The Pitt Rivers Museum has a huge lighting collection,

¹ Yvonne Schumann (ed.), *Museum Ethnographers' Group Survey of Ethnographic Collections in the United Kingdom, Eire and the Channel Islands: Interim Report* [MEG Occasional Paper no. 2], Hull: MEG (Centre for South East Asian Studies), 1986; two vols.

² Gustaaf Houtman, 'Interview with Malcolm McLeod', *Anthropology Today*, Vol. 3, no. 3 (June 1987), pp. 4-8.

particularly enriched by Henry Balfour's 1939 bequest, and a further bequest by F.W. Robins, author of *The History of the Lamp* (1939). Few items from the collection had ever been on display, but an excuse to bring them out of storage was provided in 1986 by the appearance of Margaret O'Rorke, an Oxford potter. Margaret had long been fascinated by the treasures of the Pitt Rivers Museum, and her speciality is translucent porcelain lamps. It soon became apparent that an unusual exhibition could be produced by juxtaposing her pieces with museum specimens.

The result was *Making Light Work* a global exhibition of lamps and lighting taken mainly from the Pitt Rivers collections, but incorporating Margaret O'Rorke's latest work. The influence of one culture on another can be seen in O'Rorke's stoneware oil lamps, which are thrown, but directly derived from ancient Roman moulded specimens. A warm atmosphere is created by the soft muted light of her porcelain lamps, compensating for the regrettable fact that the museum specimens cannot, of course, be lit.

The exhibition is divided into a general section on the development of lighting (oil lamps, candles, tinder boxes, matches) followed by cases on 'Light for the Home', 'Light for Work', 'Travelling Light' and 'Light for Worship'. A section entitled 'Making Light' leads into Margaret O'Rorke's part of the exhibition.

The Pitt Rivers Museum was intended by its founder to illustrate the evolution of forms. Thus the General would have placed the stone lamp and the shell lamp at the beginning of his sequence, and proceeded to the pottery saucer lamp, the two-tier cruise, the closed-in classical lamp, the Arab spout lamp, and so on. Today the fascination of the collection lies in the fact that while all these forms can be seen in the exhibition, they turn evolution on its head. Thus a lamp made from a hollow lump of unworked flint filled with animal fat was used, not by Palaeolithic Man, but by an Oxfordshire baker in the 1890s. The shell lamp, known from Ancient Mesopotamia, was used quite recently by the Ainu people of Japan. Anything that will hold fat or oil and a wick can effectively become a lamp.

'Light for the Home' includes an ancient Inuit lamp from the Thule Culture (Fig. 1). The stone lamp was the focal point of the Inuit household, used not only for lighting but for heating, cooking, crafts and drying clothes. It was the property and responsibility of the woman, and would eventually be buried with her. Alongside this piece are a 'buckie' whelk-shell lamp from Orkney, a rushlight clip from Sussex and a South African lamp improvised from an old Brasso tin (Fig. 2).

Domestic lighting with oil lamps, candles or rushlights could be a messy and smelly business. Oil and grease would drip on the floor, particularly from rushlights which left a trail of greasy droplets as they burned. Lamps and candles tended to smoke unless they were regularly trimmed. In wealthier homes lighting was left to the servants, who lit the lamps, trimmed the wicks and cleaned up the mess. In ancient Rome slaves were expected to wash the lamp black off the statues after banquets.

Another problem was the fire hazard of lighting based on

naked flames, and the expense of fuel was also a consideration. It is interesting to contemplate that most of the oils and fats used as lighting fuels are also edible. The choice between internal and external fat consumption must often have been dictated by economic circumstances.

'Light for Work' features devices used by those whose occupation demanded that they work indoors or in dark places. Various miner's lamps are shown, including a 'steel mill' used in eighteenth-century European coal mines. This, worked all day by an unfortunate boy, created a shower of sparks which was (wrongly) assumed to be safer than a naked flame in the presence of inflammable gases. A highlight of this case is a pair of gun-flint knapper's candles from the Brandon flint mines in Suffolk (Fig. 3). The candles are marked with flint chips which fell out every hour as the wick burned down, and were used to measure the three hours' work after each day's tea-break.

'Travelling Light' shows a variety of European lanterns and travelling candlesticks from the nineteenth century. One of the latter (Fig. 4) has pins for fastening to the lapel or the seat of a railway carriage, thus enabling the passenger to read. One wonders how often a traveller dozed off over his evening paper and woke to find himself and the carriage ablaze.

Light as a divine gift and symbol of life itself, has always been significant in religion. 'Light for Worship' features lamps, candles and tapers from churches, temples, mosques, synagogues and shrines. An Ashanti pottery lamp (Fig. 5) takes the form of a fertility figurine. A 'lotus' lamp from India is particularly striking: the brass and copper petals of the lotus bud unscrew to reveal the lamp within.

'Making Light' concentrates on the diversity of materials used for illumination. Some of the more unusual are the stormy petrel with a wick down its throat, burned as a candle in the Shetland Islands, and the candlefish treated in a similar way on the north-west coast of America. There are Italian lamps made from snail shells, a Chinese lantern made from an inflated fish-skin (Fig. 6), and a string of waxy candle-nuts from Bali. Brazilian and Mexican Indians are said to have tied fireflies to their hands and feet on night excursions.

Copies of paintings and prints have been used as illustrative material. The work of Georges de la Tour is particularly evocative and includes perfect representations of tallow candles and a float-wick lamp. Also included are modern Japanese prints of street and temple lighting by Yoshida, Kasamatsu and Ito, as well as two interior scenes by Van Gogh. A series of recent photographs shows Margaret O'Rorke at work in her studio.

This exhibition breaks new ground for the Pitt Rivers by bringing the work of a present-day craftswoman into the Museum. This has helped to heighten the sense of contrast so often felt by visitors: of the old with the new, the past with the present, the familiar with the exotic; and, of course, in this instance, of light with darkness.

LINDA CHEETHAM
(Illustrations by KOZO HIDA)

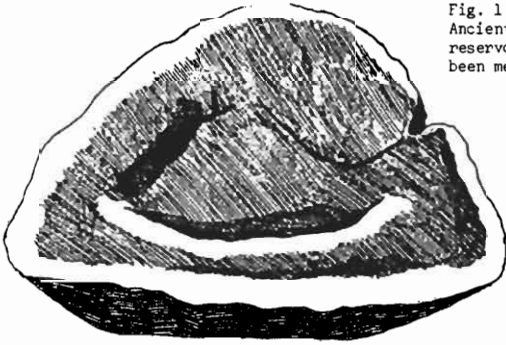


Fig. 1 CANADA - BAFFIN LAND - INUIT - THULE CULTURE
Ancient stone lamp with a ridge dividing the fuel
reservoir from the wick channel. The fuel would have
been melted seal or whale blubber, the wick dried moss

Fig. 3 ENGLAND - SUFFOLK - BRANDON
Time candles used by gun-flint knappers.
It is claimed that the flint knappers
did not wear watches for fear of damage
by flying flint chips

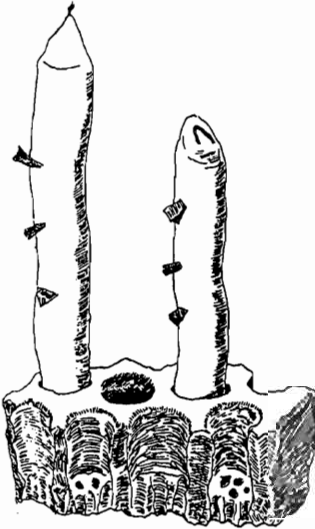


Fig. 2 SOUTH AFRICA
- BACKVELD
Oil lamp improvised
from a Brasso
container



Fig. 4 ENGLAND
Patent nickel candle-holder with
hinged lid/reflector and pins for
hooking into the lapel or the
cushions of a railway carriage



Fig. 5 GHANA - ASHANTI
Pottery lamp in the form
of a female figurine

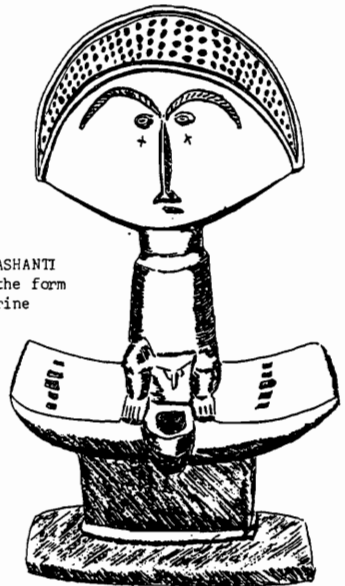


Fig. 6 CHINA
Lantern made from an
inflated fish skin

MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS:
 AN EXHIBITION AT THE BALFOUR BUILDING,
 PITT RIVERS MUSEUM, OXFORD

'What I want is the money for building an annexe to the museum so that I may have a whole room for music.'¹ It was in 1907 that Henry Balfour, curator of the Pitt Rivers Museum from 1891 until 1939, expressed this wish for the future. A substantial legacy was left to the Museum by his son, Lewis Balfour, in 1974, making it possible for an extension to the Museum, the Balfour Building, to be constructed in the Banbury Road. This bequest also provided for a new exhibition of the musical instrument collection, but all the running costs of a gallery and the purchase of a complete sound system had to be financed before such an enterprise could be viable. In today's unpredictable financial climate, which even professional organisers of charitable appeals find inclement, the achievement of raising the necessary capital and thereby post-humously fulfilling Balfour's wish is a credit to everyone involved in the project. The highly successful display in the new music gallery was opened in June 1986 in the Balfour Building.

The founder of the Museum, General Lane Fox Pitt Rivers, who presented his collection to the University of Oxford in 1884, stipulated that it must be displayed by type of object rather than by geographical region. Henry Balfour, under whose curatorship the Museum's musical instrument collection expanded from 300 to over 4,000 specimens, used the system devised by Victor Charles Mahillon, curator of the Museum of the Brussels Conservatoire, for the classification of this section of the collection. In Mahillon's system any musical instrument belongs to one of four groups, depending on the nature of its vibrating body, which may consist of the sonorous material from which it is made, a stretched membrane, a stretched string, or a vibrating column of air. In 1914 Erich M. von Hornbostel and Curt Sachs published the *Systematik der Musikinstrumente* which, while utilising Mahillon's principle of classification and four categories of musical instruments - idiophones (autophones in Mahillon's terminology),

¹ Henry Balfour, unpublished letter to Mrs Crosby-Brown, April 1907. I am grateful to Dr H el ene La Rue for providing this quotation. For more information on the Pitt Rivers Museum's musical collections see H el ene La Rue, 'The "Natural History" of a Musical Instrument Collection' in B.A.L. Cranstone and Steven Seidenberg (eds.), *The General's Gift: A Celebration of the Centenary of the Pitt Rivers Museum, 1884-1984* [JASO Occasional Papers No. 4], Oxford: JASO 1984, pp. 36-40.

membranophones, chordophones and aerophones - is in other respects a revision and development of his work, resulting in the comprehensive system which is widely used today. These authorities also incorporated the Dewey decimal system into their scheme.

In the new music gallery, sound-producing instruments dating from the Upper Paleolithic to the present day are arranged in accordance with the divisions of the Hornbostel and Sachs system, which generates a display that is truly cross-cultural, in the tradition established by the Museum's founder. A Hungarian *citera* plucked with goose-quills, and seventeenth-century Italian virginals, which once belonged to Canon Galpin, are found in the fretted box-zithers section. Among the specimens representing lip-activated wind instruments (the Hornbostel and Sachs nomenclature is 'trumpets') are an early nineteenth-century English serpent, a Swedish shepherdess's cow-horn, and an example from Guyana made of a jaguar's skull.

The sound-generating components of aerophone reeds are examined in display panels showing single, double and free reeds. Presumably for the sake of consistency with the Hornbostel and Sachs system, the 'plucked drums' from India, which are 'special kinds of monochord harps', are associated with the membranophones section, while the text describing this category of instrument states that 'as the string is the part plucked by the player and therefore it is its vibrations which are the most crucial, it can be placed in the chordophone group'.²

While the gallery was being planned, a survey of over three hundred of the Museum's visitors was carried out to ascertain the colours that might be associated with the sounds of the four different groups of instruments. The majority of the participants in this experiment visualised the sound of membranophones as red, idiophones as yellow, chordophones as green, and aerophones as blue. These four colours have been used to dramatic effect as lively backgrounds to the cases. Dark and light brown occur throughout the cases and these colours have also been used on display panels which, like the wooden dowelling supporting the exhibits, are among the features that are both decorative and functional in this attractive design by John Todd. A vivid contrast of colours is also frequently provided by the instruments themselves; the gaudiness of the blue feathers attached to the top of a mouth organ from Assam is enhanced by their close proximity to the red dome of an English whistling kettle - another free-reed instrument.

The lighting is maintained at the optimum level for conservation purposes but is bright enough to reveal the intricacies of the instruments' designs; here, the quality of the carving in one of the rarities of the collection, an Austral Islands drum of a type that was obsolescent by the 1820s, can clearly be seen. Natural daylight illuminates the display through skylights; its fluctuations are monitored by a computer that operates shutters

² See: L.E.R. Picken, 'The "plucked" drums: *gopi yantra* and *ananda lahari*', *Music Asiatica* 3 (1981), pp. 29-33.

which can be opened or closed over the windows to maintain a constant lux level inside the gallery. The temperature and humidity levels inside the cases are also recorded on a computer. The system of environmental control was devised by Gary Thompson.

The historical importance of the displays in the Pitt Rivers Museum has long been recognised; for the visitor, however, the fascination of seeing such a quantity of items in each showcase is mitigated by the frustration of being unable to view each object clearly, as a result of the proximity of so many of its neighbours. In the new gallery the wealth and diversity of the collections is represented by over a thousand instruments in a display which allows for maximum visibility but is also economical of space.

Most of the Museum's specimens were collected during the course of fieldwork undertaken by anthropologists, who have provided the extensive details found in the display texts, describing the location and date of the instruments' acquisition, and their manufacture and playing technique. The texts in the new gallery, like those in its parent Museum, are informative and full of scholarly gems:

Ariston Organette. This instrument was introduced in 1876 by Paul Elmlion of Leipzig, Germany. In 1895 this was billed in America as 'the latest musical wonder', with the proud boast that it contained 'twenty-four full-sized organ reeds'.

As well as the texts, photographs from the Pitt Rivers archive also enhance the displays in the new gallery. Many of them were taken in the field by anthropologists who collected musical instruments for the Museum, and they show them being played in their cultural context. Besides devising the arrangement and textual interpretation of the display, the Assistant Curator, Dr Hélène La Rue, who has worked with the collections for more than ten years, has contributed to the success of many other aspects of the exhibition.

There are four polygonal bays which break up the rectangular lines of the showcase modules spanning the length of the room; these are to be used for temporary exhibitions of objects from the collections. At the time of writing these bays house displays on the theme 'Music Fit for the Gods'. Material accumulated by four anthropologists working in four different cultures is used to demonstrate the association of music and religion in Nyoro ritual, *Wayang Siam* puppet theatre, Japanese pilgrimage, and Tibetan temple drama.

There is provision for temporary exhibitions of audio-visual material in the form of a booth which incorporates several sets of headphones and two screens on which images of slides are projected. Up till the time of writing there have been four slide-tape programmes of life and music in the Gambia, the Balkans, Japan and China. The world of sound may also be explored in the main body of the gallery. By means of a short-wave radio system it is possible for the visitor to hear, through cordless headphones, appealing examples of the music relevant to the

instruments in the cases. A number of the extracts complement the collections by demonstrating the sound of instruments outside the scope of the exhibition.

In the music gallery the heritage of the didactic displays of the Pitt Rivers Museum is enhanced by the new dimensions provided by the technological resources, design and conservation expertise of the 1980s. Two hours give scarcely enough time for the casual visitor to view the exhibition in this gallery alone without taking into account the display of material in the rest of the Balfour Building. May we hope that the Museum's opening hours will be extended in the future?

MARGARET BIRLEY

3

HUNTER GATHERERS: PAST AND PRESENT
AN EXHIBITION AT THE BALFOUR BUILDING,
PITT RIVERS MUSEUM, OXFORD

Historically a distinction has been drawn between university, national and provincial museums, this distinction being based on differing function as much as upon different methods of funding. In the past this has resulted in the application of different criteria for critical comment when dealing with differing types of museum. In this egalitarian age should we continue to apply differing standards or should the same criteria of criticism apply to the British Museum, the Pitt Rivers Museum and the Oxford County Museum? Is the history of the development plans for the Pitt Rivers Museum relevant to a review of the new galleries in the Balfour Building in Banbury Road? Why, indeed, are the new displays in Banbury Road and not in the original buildings in Parks Road?

The two new galleries are part of the first phase of a new Pitt Rivers Museum projected for the Banbury Road site. The display *Hunter Gatherer Cultures, from the Earliest Archaeological Evidence to the Present Day* now occupies the first gallery of the new buildings and covers some 140 square metres of floor space. The proposed new building when completed is expected to contain about 7,500 square metres of floor area.

The hunter-gatherer gallery contains thirteen cases, of which five deal with prehistoric groups, five with modern groups and two with topics common to both the living and the dead. An introductory case is headed 'When did it all happen?'

The biggest problem this reviewer had was to find the connecting link between the thirteen cases, elegant as they are on first impression. A gallery plan and more prominent case-headings would

be helpful. The first case is particularly congested. The juxtaposition of outline drawings of artefacts, pictures of the machinery of radio carbon dating, photographs of pollen grains and a generalised diagram of the divisions of Plio Pleistocene time based on the oxygen isotope curves will be a shade indigestible for the Oxford public, even if comprehensible to university students.

The relevance of the opening paragraph should now be apparent. Is this exhibition primarily aimed at the public or the student population of Oxford? By the standards used in 1987 to assess displays aimed at the public it would be easy to criticise it on a number of counts. As a teaching display for students it is useful and the overall presentation is both elegant and refreshingly gimmick-free. The five cases dealing with prehistoric hunter-gatherers that follow the introductory case do form an informative and coherent group. The large number of stone artefacts contained in them are perhaps inevitable in a teaching museum that has from its foundation emphasised the place of artefactual typology!

The value of the prehistoric cases rests on the world perspective presented in five adjacent units, each dealing with a discrete parcel of prehistoric time - 3.5 to 1.4 million years, 1.4 to 0.5 million years, 0.5 million to 140 thousand years, 140 to 40 thousand years and 40 to 10 thousand years. Each unit contains a map showing the extent of the inhabited world, a selection of the appropriate stone tools and, where the evidence is available, casts of the associated skeletal remains. The choice of material clearly demonstrates the richness of the Pitt Rivers collections and the ingenuity of the curatorial staff in obtaining casts of material to fill in the inevitable gaps. Not all casts on display are clearly marked and descriptive text is somewhat sparse, but the forthcoming guide will be a welcome source of additional information for the serious visitor.

Following the prehistoric hunter-gatherer display are five cases showing modern non-agricultural groups from the Arctic and Africa. The difference in presentation and content between the living and the dead is very marked - not only does artefact density per case drop dramatically but the style of presentation is more akin to a public than a university museum. The supporting photographic material is both relevant and technically excellent. Each case forms a complete 'story' and together they complement each other. The groups represented are the San of the Kalahari, the Mbuti of the Western Congo rain forest, the Hadza of Tanzania, the Wandorobo of Kenya, and the Inuit of Greenland.

The final case in the exhibition, entitled 'The Search for Animal Protein', is most successful in effectively bringing together the two apparently disparate halves of the gallery. The choice of photographs is particularly good and the attention drawn to procurement methods other than hunting graphically illustrates the food quest of the hunter-gatherer. The photograph of mired hippopotami in a dry water hole brings home very forcibly the large amounts of animal protein that were not infrequently available.

To display the entire spectrum of hunter-gatherer activities

in the compass of thirteen cases in one small gallery is a virtually impossible task. The Pitt Rivers is to be congratulated on the successful solution of a problem made the more difficult by the limited budget that was available. For some of us there are perhaps too many stone artefacts in the prehistory cases and not enough emphasis on prehistoric art, both rupestral and mobiliary, but this view should not be allowed to distract from a generally successful first gallery in the new building.

P.L. CARTER

4

BETWEEN GANDHARA AND THE SILK ROADS:
AN EXHIBITION AT THE PITT RIVERS MUSEUM, OXFORD

Between Gandhara and the Silk Roads: Prehistoric and Buddhist Rockcarvings along the Karakorum Highway is the full title of an exhibition to be held at the Pitt Rivers Museum during this Summer (1987). The exhibition marks a quite novel departure for the Pitt Rivers, being the first display of material entirely from outside its own collections. It documents one of the most important recent discoveries in Central Asian prehistory: some 3,000 inscriptions in Sanskrit and many other ancient languages, and over 20,000 figurative engravings, many of which are of outstanding artistic significance, spanning a period of more than five millenia.

Although accompanied by a display of Gandharan Buddhist sculptures, on loan from the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, the essentially photographic nature of this exhibition of rock-carvings poses problems of dramatic presentation within a museum environment. These we have tried to overcome by specifically exploiting its two-dimensional pictorial display to present a coherent narrative tapestry of regional archaeology in the Karakorum. But an initial necessity was simply to present the topography and exploration history of a little-known part of the world.

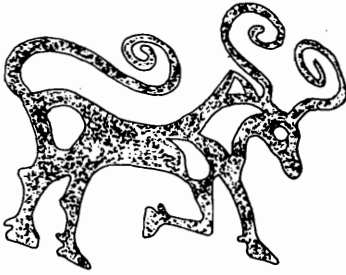
The Karakorum region of northern Pakistan comprises a large mountain tract on the western extremity of the Himalayas, much of which only became accessible to exploration in the late 1970s. The completion of the Karakorum Highway, linking the subcontinent with southwest China, opened up the entire length of Indus Kohistan, previously marked on the maps as 'unexplored tribal territory' and known to surrounding Pukhtuns simply as *Yaghestan*, the 'Land of Anarchy'. The ethnography of Indus Kohistan is still mainly restricted to a short report by Fredrik Barth, based

upon a pioneering three-week expedition there during his main fieldwork in Swat in the summer of 1954. However, important archaeological remains were already anticipated in reports of early Buddhist rockcarvings discovered by the great Central Asian explorer, Sir Aurel Stein, shortly before his death in the 1940s. Aurel Stein was, indeed, the first outsider to penetrate this inhospitable territory in modern times in the course of a brief survey of the upper Indus in 1942, and his posthumously published account of its rockcarvings clearly foreshadows the remarkable discoveries that were to be made by Karl Jettmar's German-Pakistani team some thirty years later. An introductory section of the exhibition outlines the background of Aurel Stein's archaeological work in the Karakorum, illustrated with diaries, photographs and personal papers relating to the rockcarvings (obtained on loan from the Stein Collection held in the Bodleian Library, Oxford); and this is matched by a concluding section that documents the contemporary research work of Professor Jettmar's interdisciplinary team at Heidelberg.

The main exhibits consist of sixty large colour photographs of the most visually striking rockcarvings, arranged in broadly chronological order from the third millennium B.C. to the twelfth century A.D. As the title of the exhibition indicates, its main focus is on the significance of the Karakorum in the early history and transmission of Central Asian Buddhism, and also upon its crucial geographical position as a major trading post on the ancient 'Silk Roads' linking China and South Asia with the Mediterranean (between the first and eighth centuries A.D.).

Evidence of wide-ranging trading connections can be clearly demonstrated by juxtaposing the iconography of the rockcarvings with figures characteristic of early Achaemenid, Sogdian and Gandharan art. But the interpretation of such historical connections, particularly where attested in inscriptions (in Middle Persian, Parthian, Sogdian, Chinese, even Hebrew; and with Sanskrit inscriptions in Kharoshthi, Brahmi and proto-Sharada scripts) does require the use of quite detailed explanatory captions. The main problem here was to find a balance between a predominantly visual display - of material that without sufficient explanation might be too easily dismissed as obscure 'graffiti' - and detailed historical analysis, whose proper textual treatment necessarily falls outside the scope of an exhibition designed for ambulant viewers. We hope to have coped with this problem by providing a number of specialized and self-sufficient 'sub-displays' of thematic interpretations (on Indian epigraphy, Sogdian trade in Central Asia, Gandharan Buddhist art) which may be viewed more or less independently of the main narrative theme of the rockcarvings themselves.

This narrative scheme concentrates on the repeated historical role of the Karakorum as a critical 'reservoir region' in the cultural transmission of major civilizations in northern India and Central Asia. The prehistoric animal art of Achaemenid Iran and of the Scythians, for example, has a remarkable continuity in these rockcarvings, extending to a period many centuries later than attested elsewhere; and this cultural archaism may account



a) Kneeling animal



b) Warrior in West Iranian dress sacrificing a goat (6th century B.C.).

Fig. 1 Achaemenid Art in the Karakorum

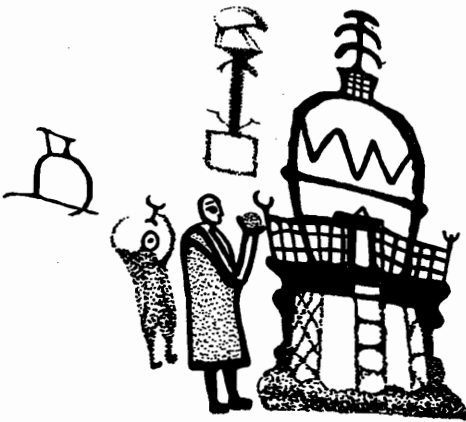


Fig. 2 Buddhist Rockcarvings

a) A rare representation of early Buddhist worship before a domed stupa and cult pillar (1st century A.D.);

b) Narrative picture of the 'body offering' of the Bodhisatva Shibi, related in Jataka legends to have offered his own flesh (shown weighed in scales) to save the life of a dove (held in his lap).



for otherwise enigmatic echoes of early Iranian art in the nearby Gandharan civilization of the first to fifth centuries A.D. The Karakorum again appears to have played a significant role in the transmission of Indian art and civilization between the fifth and eighth centuries: when the old cultural centres of Gandhara (in Swat and the Kabul basin) were overthrown by tribal 'Hephthalite' hordes, resulting in a retreat of religious and artistic schools to remoter mountain areas, as witnessed in many fine late Gandharan Buddhist engravings. The broad aesthetic narrative of cultural influences depicted in these rockcarvings therefore challenges many conventional notions of 'centre' and 'periphery' in our understanding of the complex historical interaction of Central Asian civilizations.

Apart from unfolding an unprecedented 'Visitor's Book' of foreign trade, pilgrimage and colonization dating from prehistoric times, the exhibition also tries to interpret the indigenous society and beliefs of the local population of the Karakorum (so far as these may be reasonably reconstructed from mainly iconic evidence). Here, despite the presence of many foreign religions, one finds evidence of a distinctive 'local cult' associated with mountain spirits and the veneration of wild animals of the mountains, which may be traced from as early as the Bronze Age to historical times, even now persisting in folk traditions underlying Islam in this region. For ethnographers of the pre-Islamic cultures of the Hindu Kush and Karakorum, this material offers invaluable evidence of long-term continuities in cultural traditions about whose history we were hitherto ignorant: particularly for the understanding of the religious symbolism of the Kafir and Dardic speakers of this region, here linking up with Jettmar's massive comparative survey of Hindu Kush religions, as well as the work of social anthropologists such as Schuyler Jones and the present author. Particularly instructive for archaeologists and anthropologists concerned with religious symbolism and its indigenous exegesis is the manner in which this 'local cult' clearly interacted with foreign religious traditions: where such Buddhist symbols as the stupa and wheel of doctrine for example, become successively re interpreted and deformed as 'mountain icons' or as demonic 'giants', even now recurring in the religious iconography of the Kalasha Kafirs of Chitral.

In assembling this multi-faceted exhibition, we have therefore tried to combine a broadly narrative exposition (of successive Central Asian civilizations and artistic influences) with a more specific and localized historical-ethnographic interpretation of the region. Archaeological evidence is of course notoriously prone to reckless over-interpretation, particularly in terms of those 'grand historical narratives' deplored by Jean-François Lyotard: the 'rise and fall' of great civilizations, or indeed stirring stories of European exploration in such remote regions. While necessarily relying upon such narrative devices, this exhibition equally addresses more complex issues that should be pertinent to social anthropologists. These concern continuities and transformations within a localized mountain community,

from the privileged perspective of some five thousand years of its continuous artistic expression.

PETER PARKES

Between Gandhara and the Silk Roads can be seen at the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford until 26th September 1987.

5

MADAGASCAR: ISLAND OF THE ANCESTORS
AN EXHIBITION AT THE MUSEUM OF MANKIND, LONDON

How could one *not* welcome the opening of a major exhibition on Madagascar? Madagascar is so little known and, save for one occasion in Neuchâtel (Switzerland) in 1973, has not before been the subject of an exhibition in Europe. There are many interesting objects collected together here and certain sections are highly atmospheric. The diorama of an east coast forest village, sand strewn with wooden toys, is particularly popular with old Malagasy hands; and the reconstructed Zafimaniry house, with its carved wood-panels and its ordered interior, is also pleasing. One notes, indeed, that another reviewer has been so moved as to write that 'Madagascar blooms in Burlington House like an orchid in Harrods'.

According to its organisers, the exhibition has two themes: the diverse ancestry of the Malagasy and the concern of all Malagasy with the ancestors. I am not sure that the two belong together, but, in any case, this exhibition includes almost everything else besides: from natural history, divination and basketry, to musical instruments, the contribution of missionaries, and the development of kingdoms. Finding that Madagascar is so little known, the organisers seem to have been unable to resist the temptation to try to introduce all.

My own feeling is that this is an extraordinarily broad canvas to try to paint for any society and all the more so for an island as vast and diverse as *le petit continent*. It is no wonder, then, that important cultural variation is sometimes overlooked and that themes are not always fully developed. One regrets, for example, that the principle of spatial orientation is not developed for any other context than the 'typical Malagasy house' (falsely so, as it happens, for the far south). One also wonders how much the visitor will learn of the Merina kingdom, one of the most fascinating in sub-Saharan Africa.

The obligation to place material artefacts in their cultural

context must also on occasion inevitably break down through the sheer extent of the undertaking. Thus, a fine display of funerary cloth would seem to require rather more exegesis than four snapshots of the *famadihana* (the rewrapping of corpses) if it is not to fall prey to window-shoppers.

I must also point out that the object masquerading as a 'Mahafale tomb' is not a 'faithful reconstruction'. The construction and decoration of tombs in the south is always subject to a principle of proportion: a tomb worthy of funerary sculpture (*aloalo*) would be between thirty and fifty metres square; the child's tomb displayed here normally would not belong in the cemetery proper. Regrettably there is nothing to indicate that liberties have been taken.

Above all it is the attempt to construct a Malagasy composite by juxtaposing elements taken from the divers ethnic groups that is so fascinating. A boat from the Vezo, a house from the Zafimaniry, a village from the Betsimisaraka and a tomb from the Mahafale: it reminds one of nothing so much as the game of 'Animal Consequences'. The resemblance and diversity that one finds in Madagascar is most certainly a problem but I am not convinced that this is the way to tackle it.

Overall one suspects that this exhibition is not intended to be taken entirely seriously. The ante-room is given over to the display of posters and brochures promoting tourism on behalf of Air Madagascar, one of its sponsors (which is in itself a disturbing sign of contemporary pressures upon British museums), and perhaps it is as tourists that we are supposed to view it. Certainly the two 'emblematic' Travellers' Palms, that incongruously flank the 'Mahafale tomb', might well have escaped from a fun park, and the emphasis elsewhere is definitely upon the primitive and the paradisaical. Several notices are careful to say that everything has been collected in the last decade but museums may be as guilty as anthropologists of the sin of omission. I am sure that Air Madagascar will see a return upon its investment and one hopes that a few visitors will be persuaded to look a little deeper.

The accompanying book, which is not an exhibition catalogue but more in the way of a general introduction to Malagasy history and culture, is actually rather better at dealing with such diversity of theme.* Written at short notice under somewhat trying circumstances, its author must be congratulated upon his competent and even-handed synthesis. Careful to avoid both the grosser generalisations and the conjecture that have ensnared so many others, Dr Mack still manages to have some useful things to say. No comparable work in the English language exists and I am happy to recommend it to the non-specialist reader. A nice selection of illustrations accompanies the text.

KAREN MIDDLETON

* JOHN MACK, *Madagascar: Island of the Ancestors*, London: British Museum Publications for the Trustees of the British Museum 1986. 93pp., Bibliography, Index, Maps, Figures, Plates. £6.50.

LOST MAGIC KINGDOMS
AND SIX PAPER MOONS FROM NAHUATL:
AN EXHIBITION AT THE MUSEUM OF MANKIND, LONDON

The artist Eduardo Paolozzi has, perhaps in harmony with the aims of the symposium 'Making Exhibitions of Ourselves : Limits of Objectivity in the Representation of Other Cultures' (held at the British Museum early last year), willingly and truthfully made an exhibition of himself in *Lost Magic Kingdoms*. The result is a highly personal statement, which is the visitor is free to interpret in an equally personal way. What follows is one visitor's reaction to this statement.

Paolozzi has chosen to exhibit, from the Museum of Mankind's collections, specimens which have fascinated and influenced him over the years. Juxtaposed with these items are examples of Paolozzi's own sculpture and a number of other objects which it would be difficult to classify either as ethnographic specimens or as art.

For the visitor interested in the ethnographic specimens (or for that matter, the Paolozzi sculptures) with regard to their age, provenance, purpose or cultural significance, this is not a satisfactory exhibition. Descriptions of the specimens are restricted to half a dozen words at most, and the sculptures are entirely unlabelled. For those in doubt as to which are which, the Museum's specimens are numbered, though the visitor seeking a key to these numbers may on occasion search in vain. This is primarily an art exhibition, and must be viewed as such.

The impact of materials is immediately apparent. Nothing in the exhibition is touchable, but the range of textures brings an itch to the fingertips. Without it being specifically stated, one becomes aware of the origin, use and reuse of different substances. Paolozzi's particular theme is the recycling of waste for creative purposes. He admires the African who makes a toy aeroplane out of old tin cans, and the Mexican who recycles paper to produce papier-mâché figures for the Day of the Dead. A fine example of the principle is an old light bulb restyled as an oil-lamp from Kumase, Ghana. Many of Paolozzi's own sculptures are conglomerations of scrap paper, wood, cloth and metal.

The idea of the creation of art pervades the exhibition. Sometimes, as in a display of woodworking tools and related carvings, Paolozzi emphasises the act of craftsmanship. Tools are displayed with model hands: the plaster mannequin variety as well as a carved example from Easter Island. Not only the carvings but also the tools were hand-made, and an adze from the North

West Coast of America is in its own way as beautiful as a finished sculpture. Another display examines the versatility of clay, the material of death's heads from modern Mexico and musical instruments from ancient Peru.

Music is a recurrent theme, with a splendid Sudanese lyre forming a centrepiece of the exhibition. This specimen, adorned with coins, beads, bells, cloth and cowrie shells, also demonstrates the versatility of materials. Juxtaposed with it is a Paolozzi creation: a stringless wooden guitar/cassette-player with Coca-Cola can trim. In a neighbouring case is a wooden radio from Cameroon. An exhibition appealing so directly to the senses might have benefited from the use of musical effects as an extra dimension.

The significance of the title of the exhibition becomes apparent gradually, though the six paper moons (Paolozzi papier-mâché sculptures of the Aztec goddess Coyolxauhqui) had been reduced to two by the time of writing. The loss of the 'Magic Kingdoms' of Africa, Polynesia and America, now radically altered by contact with the 'civilizing' influence of Europeans (represented by the old school tie, smashed wing mirrors and bits of radio and camera) is emphasised by an all-pervasive preoccupation with death. Mexican Day of the Dead figures abound throughout the exhibition; Solomon Islands and Tiv skulls are also on display, as well as a New Ireland *malanggan* with its funerary connotations. Many of Paolozzi's sculptures are based on skulls and skeletons, and a liberal sprinkling of plastic flies lends a general atmosphere of decay.

Nevertheless the theme of renaissance is juxtaposed with that of death, and two additions to the exhibition are Paolozzi sculptures of women giving birth. A corpse laid out in evening dress wears a grinning comic mask: two plastic crickets copulate nearby while a rainbow-striped umbrella gives a sign of promise. The recycled detritus of one culture becomes the art of another, and the exhibition itself is dynamic as pieces are added and subtracted over time. The Day of the Dead is an occasion of celebration: all is not lost.

LINDA CHEETHAM

Both *Lost Magic Kingdoms* and *Madagascar: Island of the Ancestors* can be seen at the Museum of Mankind throughout 1987.

THE MUSEUM IN THE HISTORY OF ANTHROPOLOGY

The ten essays in this third volume of the *History of Anthropology* are more disparate in focus and content than its title might suggest.* Five are concerned with the 'Museum Era', four of these being about museums, but of the other five, two are general (an introductory essay and an afterword), one deals with trends in the history of archaeology, another with the ethnic art market in the Southwestern United States and another with the preservation of Quebec's cultural heritage. In the introductory essay the anonymous author, presumably George Stocking, the volume's editor, discusses the two 'enterprises' of the book. The first and most obvious of these is, as is implied in the second half of its title, the history of anthropological museums and of museums in anthropology. The second, as is implied in the first half of the title, is 'a more generalized, metahistorical, philosophical, or theoretical consideration of the two defining categories (or category relationships) of human existence' (p. 3), that is, objects and others. This latter enterprise is only clearly evident in James Clifford's afterword, though it could be argued that all the other essays and indeed all anthropological essays ever written are concerned with such a general enterprise. To try too hard to see these essays as forming a whole would lead to ignoring the value of each individual essay.

The first five essays are concerned with the 'Museum Era' in anthropology. The 1840s to 1890 had previously been proposed as the museum era in anthropology, but as the anonymous author of the introductory essay argues, the period from 1866 (the date of the founding of the Peabody Museum) to the 1920s is more obviously a museum era. Museum anthropology developed in the late nineteenth century and was 'stranded in an institutional, methodological, and theoretical backwater' (p. 8) by the rise of fieldwork and functionalism (the subjects of the two previous volumes in this series). William Chapman presents material concerning Pitt Rivers and the Oxford museum of the same name ('Arranging Ethnology: A.H. L.F. Pitt Rivers and the Typological Tradition'), material already familiar to readers of *JASO* (see Vol. XIV, no. 2, pp. 181-202). Curtis Hinsley presents similar material concerning the Peabody Museum ('From Shell-Heaps to Stelae: Early Anthropology at the Peabody Museum'). Both these papers focus on the individuals involved, especially Pitt Rivers and Frederick Putnam, but also

* GEORGE STOCKING (ed.), *Objects and Others: Essays on Museums and Material Culture* [History of Anthropology 3], Madison and London: The University of Wisconsin Press 1985. viii, 248pp., Index, Plates. No price given.

consider matters such as class (for example the Boston 'Brahmins'), finance, institutional and personal negotiations, as well as ideas and ideologies, and their effect on the establishment and development, or otherwise, of anthropological museums. Ira Jacknis's essay ('Franz Boas and Exhibits: On the Limitations of the Museum Method in Anthropology') also focuses on one individual, but one more central to the history of social and cultural anthropology and one eventually critical of the 'museum method'.

On a different tack Stocking ('Philanthropoids and Vanishing Cultures: Rockefeller Funding and the End of the Museum Era in Anglo-American Anthropology') discusses the funding of anthropology in the inter-war years and argues that by flowing with the intellectual tide, away from traditional historical and museum-based concerns towards fieldwork and functionalism, such funding swelled the tide, so helping to bring an end to the museum era. The tide may well have been overwhelming anyway - it is difficult to imagine the RAI maintaining its dominant status in the face of the rise of the LSE - but the Rockefeller funding clearly had a reinforcing effect.

Elizabeth Williams' paper ('Art and Artifact at the Trocadéro: *Ars Americana* and the Primitivist Revolution') can be seen as a counterpoint to the artist-centred studies of recent years concerning the 'discovery' of non-Western art in early twentieth-century Paris. Her account discusses the other side of the 'beauty/instruction' conflict and the part played by museum curators, such as Hamy and Verneau, in the establishment institutions. Though they were presumably no more unimaginative than their American and British counterparts, having lost the argument over pre-Columbian art to Van Gogh and Gauguin, and the more general argument over non-Western art to Matisse, Picasso *et al*, they do now appear most unenlightened figures.

All five essays make use of documentary and archival materials. They all discuss the role of individuals involved in the development and stagnation of anthropological museums, giving some consideration to matters of class, academic and institutional politics and money. Only Jacknis, however, indicates something of what a sociology or anthropology of the museum might be, arguing that 'a museum display is the product of collaborative labour performed within a particular social system' made up of various social roles - patron, trustee, curator, visitor etc. - and that Boas's tasks as curator 'were largely defined by the expectations others had of his role and he of theirs' (p. 83). While there is nothing particularly profound here it represents one of the few attempts in these essays to say anything sociological. More of such an approach would be welcome, for the history of anthropology should surely not merely concentrate on individuals and ideas but be a truly anthropological and sociological history.

Of the other five papers Bruce Trigger's ('Writing the History of Archaeology: A survey of Trends') is presumably one of the 'miscellaneous studies' which the *History of Anthropology* includes in each volume, studies relevant to the history of anthropology but not to the subject of any particular volume.

Edwin Wade's paper ('The Ethnic Art Market in the American South-West, 1880-1980') is an admirable contribution to the growing literature on 'tourist' art, giving an account of the different interests and attitudes of the various groups - Indians, traders, philanthropists, railway companies - involved in the production and promotion of Indian arts and the way in which the 'authenticity' of such arts is negotiated.

The most unusual and interesting contribution to the volume is by Richard Handler ('On Having a Culture: Nationalism and the Preservation of Québec's *Patrimoine*'). Handler considers the notion of cultural property and in particular sixty years of legislation regarding the preservation of heritage in the Canadian province of Quebec. The categorisation of what is to be regarded as 'cultural property' is revealed as contentious though there seems to be some general unconscious agreement that it is objects which best symbolize culture. Handler's account is admirably anthropological and though his discussion concerns a specific time and place it is so close to home that it can be seen as a radical debunking of much Western thinking about objects and culture.

The collection is topped and tailed by two reflective essays: an introduction and James Clifford's afterword ('Objects and Selves'). In the introduction a rather confusing definitional excursus (discussing seven 'dimensions' of objects in museums) is followed by a general discussion of the museum era and some suggestions as to why material studies might return to a more central position in anthropology.

Clifford's afterword is more radical in tone. Taking James Fenton's poem *The Pitt-Rivers Museum, Oxford* - the hyphen is Fenton's - as a thread with which to find his way out of the museum method maze, Clifford explores our Western notions concerning other peoples' objects. He complains about our possessiveness, our passion for classification, and the way in which we use other peoples' objects, as well as our own, to define ourselves. Non-Western objects, he argues:

'belong' nowhere having been torn from their social contexts of production and reception, given value in systems of meaning whose primary function is to confirm the knowledge and taste of a possessive Western subjectivity. (p. 244)

Clifford's solution is to refetishise these objects, allowing them again to disconcert our classifications and us. (It is difficult to see who would be able to achieve this, apart from the most reflexive of us; Clifford presumably, and perhaps Eduardo Paolozzi, whose current exhibition, *Lost Magic Kingdoms*, can be seen in this light [see above pp. 75-6]). Through museum display and the involvement of the 'owners', that is, the descendants of their producers, of objects in their exhibition, we should also try to maintain our awareness of the power relations which objects may come to represent. And we should also not forget the history of collection and recontextualization: we should not redisplay the Pitt Rivers collections along more 'modern' lines but maintain its

evolutionistic arrangement so as to remind us of our former classifications and of the fact that our present classifications are probably just as arbitrary and ignorant.

The third volume of the *History of Anthropology* will probably be referred to as, and remembered as, the one on museums. It is, however, the more radical papers by Handler and Clifford, with their critique of modern Western categories, which should have more lasting effect. If nothing else they reflect a new trend in thinking about what we can and should do with objects, a thinking which would have cultural products extend us rather than reassure us. The dustjacket (and p. 82) of *Objects and Others* features a photograph of a life-group exhibit of Kwakiutl: life-like, other, ethnic and dead; on page 99 is featured a photograph of Boas looking rather mad, arms outstretched, squatting in a hunched-up position, demonstrating for his model-makers the pose of the *hamatsa* initiate in the Kwakiutl life-group. Both images are powerful illustrations of what museums can do to and for people. The history of the museum in anthropology has still to be written.

JEREMY COOTE