

FOREWORD

On the eve of its centenary it is perhaps time to assess the state of the Museum. From its humble origins as the private collection of General A.H.L.F. Pitt Rivers the Museum has grown, through several incarnations, to become one of the paramount ethnographic collections in the world. This growth is reflected in the Museum's outgrowing of its original site in the University Museum Annexe to its current distribution among four separate sites in Oxford. Nevertheless, despite its growth the Museum's unique character - immediately felt by anyone who enters its precincts - has been retained and reflects the continuing adherence to the General's instructions for its organization and display.

The second century will see several bold new experiments. In order to foster closer ties with the public, movement is now underway to establish a new organization, the Friends of the Pitt Rivers. The initial response has been gratifying and there is every reason to expect that with its inauguration new dimensions of museum services can be achieved. In 1984, to mark our centenary, we will see the opening of a new exhibition concerned with the General and his achievements, the growth of the collection over the last century, some of the more notable additions, present collecting policy, and aspects of the Museum's work. In the following year, 1985, the Museum's new building in Banbury Road should be opened with exhibitions illustrating the hunter-gatherer way of life and - a particularly ambitious enterprise - a display of the Museum's superb musical instrument collection which will include not only static displays but will also draw the public into participation.

The authors of the papers contained in this volume were invited for their diversity. The introductory paper, by B.A.L. Cranstone, sets the stage by describing the Museum and its activities on the eve of its centenary. This is followed by W.R. Chapman's detailed discussion of the origins of the Museum and how it found a home in Oxford. The papers by Elizabeth Edwards, H el ene La Rue and Deborah Waite illustrate diverse facets of the Museum by highlighting three different kinds of collections found within it. Edwards outlines the extensive photographic archives housed within the Museum, a

resource the major importance of which has only recently been realized. Taking one particular kind of artefact, musical instruments, La Rue describes the evolution and organisation of this important Museum collection. Using a geographical perspective, Waite examines the range of artefacts available for a single geographic region - the Solomon Islands. In the final two articles the relationship between anthropology and material culture is explored. Providing examples from his own fieldwork experiences in Indonesia, Michael Hitchcock describes the pragmatic considerations and requirements of collecting artefacts in the contemporary environment. On a theoretical level, Barrie Reynolds concludes this volume with a discussion of the relevance of the study of material culture to anthropology.

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