

**The East Asian Objects of a Nineteenth-Century Collector (General Pitt-
Rivers)**

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Abbreviations

Chapman	W.R. Chapman, <i>Ethnology in the Museum: A.H.L.F. Pitt Rivers (1827–1900) and the Institutional Foundations of British Anthropology</i> (University of Oxford, D.Phil. thesis, 1981)
CUL	Cambridge University Library
<i>Franks</i>	M. Caygill and J. Cherry (eds.), <i>A.W. Franks: Nineteenth Century Collecting and the British Museum</i> (London, 1997)
<i>OV</i>	N. Levell, <i>Oriental Visions: Exhibitions, Travel and Collecting in the Victorian Age</i> (London, 2000)
Pitt-Rivers	Lieutenant General Augustus Henry Lane Fox Pitt-Rivers (1827-1904). Before 1880 his surname was simply Lane Fox, however Pitt-Rivers will be used throughout this thesis for the sake of continuity. Pitt-Rivers spelled his name both with and without a hyphen. I have opted to use the hyphenated version unless a quotation or name of an institution (i.e. the Pitt Rivers Museum) does otherwise.
PRM	Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford

I. Introduction: Orientalism

My involvement in the ongoing 'Rethinking Pitt-Rivers' research project at the Pitt Rivers Museum has made evident to me the necessity in 'rethinking' established ideas about Pitt-Rivers and his collections. In examining how Pitt-Rivers' collecting habits developed over his lifetime it becomes clear that his motivations and activities were less obvious than the prevalent association between the name Pitt-Rivers and the disciplines of archaeology and anthropology suggests. In reading around these topics, I have become sceptical about the pervasive postulation of nineteenth-century collecting as an aspect of European colonialism. Edward Saïd elaborated how the concept of a monolithic 'Orient' fostered Western 'dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient'.¹ He referred to the Middle East, although his ideas have been applied to the rest of Asia also; Louise Tythacott, for example, in her recent 'biography' of five Chinese bronzes seized in the First Opium War and now in Liverpool Museum, quotes Saïd.² But the picture that emerges from such literature is a rather simplistic one; Tythacott's examples of how the treatment of these objects demonstrated European notions of cultural superiority and political ascendancy over the Orient sometimes seem forced. The hierarchical view of material culture held by Pitt-Rivers, along with the racist views common in anthropology at the time, link in an apparently obvious way to the cultural and political hegemony that was European colonialism. There is a close relationship between these phenomena, particularly since during the second

¹ E. Saïd, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (London, 1978), p. 3

² L. Tythacott, *The Lives of Chinese Objects: Buddhism, Imperialism and Display* (New York, 2011), p. 165

half of the nineteenth-century, when these ideas were becoming prevalent, the British Empire was reaching its height. However, such links can obfuscate the true views and motives of the people involved. Many of those who concerned themselves with the Far East doubtlessly had a genuine interest in its cultures and people, and the fact that they may have held imperial and racist prejudices that were common at the time does not preclude this. John MacKenzie makes this argument in his 1995 critique of Said, *Orientalism: History, Theory and the Arts*.³ Using the significant number of Asian art objects collected by Pitt-Rivers, it is possible both to reinterpret Pitt-Rivers' identity as a collector, and to reveal how European views of the Orient were not monolithic, but in fact subject to variation. I will suggest that there were significant differences in the way that the Far East was perceived compared to India, and other parts of Asia.

European visitors compared contemporaneous China and Japan to the European Middle Ages; Rutherford Alcock, consul in Shanghai and Britain's first minister in Japan remarked that, 'with the Japanese we take a step backward some ten centuries to live again the feudal days'.⁴ This image of the country was central in its appeal. Groups such as Young England, the Tractarians, the Pre-Raphaelites and, later in the century, the Aesthetic and Arts and Crafts movements pined with nostalgia for an imagined pre-industrial golden age; both John Ruskin and William Morris suggested that the Middle Ages represented the apogee of European craftsmanship. Such ideas fostered

³ M. Put, *Plunder and Pleasure: Japanese Art in the West 1860-1930* (Leiden, 2000), p. 15

⁴ 'The Victorian vision of China and Japan' [<http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/t/the-victorian-vision-of-china-and-japan>] 19 Feb 2012

an admiration for the crafts of China and Japan, such as porcelain and lacquer, while disparaging their social and intellectual progress. This can be seen as an attempt to fit them neatly into the universal progression of human society, as was the obsession of nineteenth-century anthropologists and collectors such as Pitt-Rivers. China and Japan were some way behind the West but a long way in front of the 'primitive' societies that could be found in Oceania, Africa, or the Americas. Nevertheless, their position in this hierarchy was always awkward, and they were also likened to the Classical age; Pitt-Rivers himself compared Japanese art to the works of European antiquity.⁵ China and Japan were often categorised together, and aspects of their cultures were much confused; in Whistler's painting *Purple and Rose: The Lange Leizen of the Six Marks*, for example, the woman wears a Japanese *kimono* under her Chinese robe.⁶ Similarly a cartoon in *Punch* of the wife of the first Chinese ambassador showed a woman in a Japanese *kimono*, accompanied by a verse mocking her bound feet.⁷ Nevertheless there were differences in the way the two countries were perceived; Japan was an idyllic feudal society that represented the best aspects of the Middle Ages, while China was full of brutal barbarians who had allowed their once great culture to rot through their laziness and self-indulgence. This attitude is made evident by the comment of a journalist in Hong Kong in the 1880s, who found that the British displayed 'a distinct abhorrence for the

⁵ Pitt-Rivers, 'address at annual meeting of the Dorchester School of Art', Feb 1884, [<http://web.prm.ox.ac.uk/rpr/index.php/article-index/12-articles/216-pitt-rivers-on-art>] 08 Feb 2012

⁶ J.M. MacKenzie (ed.), *The Victorian Vision: Inventing New Britain* (London, 2001) p. 308

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 306

Chinese. They speak of them as if they were beasts'.⁸ Europeans had a particular fascination with Chinese methods of punishment such as execution by 'slow-slicing' and the cangue. When John Henry Gray's Chinese collection was displayed at the Royal Pavilion, Brighton in 1877 'engines of torture' was one of the three categories of objects, along with 'religious artefacts' and 'everyday life',⁹ somewhat ironic as Gray himself was sympathetic towards the Chinese. Such perceptions may have something to do with China's continuing hostility towards the West, concessions only being granted grudgingly as a result of military defeat. Japan, on the other hand, welcomed foreigners and new technologies from the 1850s.

European interest in the Orient is most evident in design. For individuals such as Ruskin and Morris, reform of design was not a frivolous matter, but had deep moral implications. These were fostered by a belief that mechanisation had stripped the contemporary craftsman of any pride and fulfilment in his work, as well as by the aesthetic inferiority of contemporary design. The greater range and higher quality of goods that became available from East Asia in the course of the nineteenth-century encouraged new interest in the material culture of these countries, fitting conveniently into contemporary anxieties about the social and economic changes brought about by industrialisation. A letter from the Japanese art dealer John Sparks to Pitt-Rivers about an unsatisfactory purchase expresses these anxieties: 'I can only

⁸ *OV*, p. 200

⁹ J. Green, 'Curiosity', 'Art' and 'Ethnography' in the Chinese collections of John Henry Gray', A. Shelton (ed.), *Collectors: Individuals and Institutions* (London, 2001), p. 115

surmise that the maker of the vase had been the victim of the modern evil of cheapening everything and had some of the wretched cheap glue or cement that is now being imported in immense quantities to Japan from Europe.¹⁰ Arthur Liberty's embracing of Eastern art objects and design styles at his Regent Street store and the relationships he built with many of the leading designers of the age epitomised the high regard for the aesthetics of the Far East, and especially Japan. This could be related to the high esteem in which Japan was held compared to China, or might simply be a matter of fashion; *Chinoiserie* had been extremely popular in the eighteenth-century and would have seemed outmoded in the nineteenth.¹¹ Nevertheless, it would be untrue to claim that only strictly Japanese styles were popular. 'Hawthorn jars', a common Chinese export design, were highly prized in aesthetic circles, with one achieving the astronomical price of £5,900 in 1905.¹² Another example is 'Long Elizas', an English corruption of the Dutch phrase *lange lijzen*, used to describe the figures commonly found on porcelain from the Kangxi reign (1662-1722).¹³ Clearly, then, despite a more professed admiration for Japan, East Asia in general exerted a key influence on the aesthetics of the period.

¹⁰ SSWM, B426, 14 June 1895

¹¹ Green, 'John Henry Gray', p. 114

¹² A. Anderson "Chinamania': collecting Old Blue for the House Beautiful', J. Potvin and A. Myzelev (eds.), *Material Cultures, 1740-1920: The Meanings and Pleasures of Collecting* (Burlington, 2009), p. 117

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 121-2

II. General Pitt-Rivers, a Nineteenth-Century Collector

Archaeology and Anthropology

Augustus Henry Lane Fox Pitt-Rivers was one of the most prolific collectors of his day. Beginning as a young soldier with an interest in the history of military technology, by his death in 1900 his collections ranged from weapons to fine arts to everyday objects from all corners of the globe, extending to a menagerie on his estate at Cranborne Chase on the borders of Dorset and Wiltshire. He was responsible for the establishment of two museums, one at Oxford, and a smaller one at the village of Farnham on his estate, which remained open until the 1960s.¹ He belonged to a great many learned societies, both nationally and locally, regularly giving papers and showing artefacts at meetings. Some of his more prominent positions included Vice-President of the Anthropology Section of the meetings of the British Association for the Advancement of Science in 1872, 1874 and 1875 and President of the Anthropological Institute from 1881 to 1882. In 1876 he was elected a fellow of the Royal Society, sponsored by no less a figure than Charles Darwin.² On a more local level he was Vice-President of the Blandford Cycling Club and his correspondence³ confirms that he was involved in regional archaeology and antiquities clubs.⁴ Pitt-Rivers included

¹ H. Waterfield and J. C. H. King, *Provenance: Twelve Collectors of Ethnographic Art in England 1760-1990* (Geneva, 2006), p. 50

² M. Bowden, *General Pitt Rivers, The Father of Scientific Archaeology* (Salisbury, 1984), p. 2

³ SSWM

⁴ 'Pitt-Rivers' involvement in clubs and societies,'
[<http://web.prm.ox.ac.uk/rpr/index.php/pitt-rivers-life/123-clubs-a-societies>]
31 Jan 2012

himself in all the key intellectual debates of the day and aspired to make an imprint upon the fields that interested him. He began collecting around 1851, the year of the Great Exhibition, and his activities were contemporaneous with the development of the national museums, including the British Museum and the Victoria and Albert Museum, into the institutions we recognise today, as well as the various local museums that sprang up following the 1845 Museums Act. His extensive collections, therefore, give us a clear window into the ways in which material remains were put at the centre of reconstructing the human past and celebrating the human present.

To Pitt-Rivers, anthropology was the study of man's development 'from the simple to the complex'; it took two forms, physical anthropology concerned with racial development, and cultural and social anthropology.⁵ Darwin furnished him with the language and ideas to conceptualise human development; Pitt-Rivers referred to 'the evolution of culture' and natural selection in relation to 'the various products of human industry'.⁶ His ideas correlated with those of contemporary anthropologists, many of whom he corresponded with. Pitt-Rivers' view that some 'existing races... may be taken as the bona fide representatives of the races of antiquity'⁷ was compatible with

⁵ Pitt-Rivers, *Catalogue of the Anthropological Collection lent by Colonel Lane Fox for exhibition in the Bethnal Green branch of the South Kensington Museum June 1874, Parts I and II*. (London, 1874), pp. xi-xii

⁶ G. Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology* (London, 1987), p. 180

⁷ Pitt-Rivers, 'Primitive Warfare I', [http://web.prm.ox.ac.uk/rpr/index.php/primary-documents-index/15-founding-collection-1850-1900/702-primitive-warfare-i-1867#ixzz1mf4DekPm] 23 Feb 2012

E.B. Tylor's theory of 'survivals'.⁸ Numerous articles on evolution in Pitt-Rivers' press cuttings reveal a fascination with this topic.⁹ There are extracts about the work of Max Müller on the philology of the Indo-European languages, for example, illustrating the way in which Darwinian ideas were applied to everything from physiology to art to languages. The ideas of Tylor and Pitt-Rivers on the evolution of culture confirm that there was thought to be a scientific basis for comparisons of the Far East with medieval or classical Europe.

Existing studies of Pitt-Rivers' motivations for collecting have focused on his archaeological work,¹⁰ or on how his collections illustrated his ideas about the evolution of material culture.¹¹ The Pitt Rivers Museum continues to care for 'the University of Oxford's collection of anthropology and world archaeology'.¹² A glance around the museum today, however, can tell us only a limited amount about the interests and collections of the General himself; while his founding gift to the university in 1884 contained some 20,000 objects, the collections of the museum now exceed 300,000 objects. One of the conditions attached to Pitt-Rivers' donation was 'that any change in details [of the method of arrangement] to be made subsequently shall be only as necessitated by the advance of knowledge, as do not affect the general principle originated by the

⁸ E.B. Tylor, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/36602>] 01 March 2012

⁹ SSWM, P series

¹⁰ M. Bowden, *Pitt Rivers: the Life and Archaeological Work of Lieutenant Augustus Henry Lane Fox Pitt Rivers, DCL, FRS, FSA* (Cambridge, 1991)

¹¹ Chapman

¹² Pitt Rivers Museum welcome message [<http://www.prm.ox.ac.uk>] 20 Feb 2012

donor'.¹³ In spite of this, with a huge number of objects accessioned since the founding donation and with subsequent developments in anthropological and archaeological thought, the arrangement of the museum has been unavoidably distorted from Pitt-Rivers' original scheme, with curators such as Henry Balfour and Beatrice Blackwood leaving their mark on the collections. Furthermore, Pitt-Rivers continued to collect for the remaining sixteen years of his life following the donation. It is therefore necessary to look elsewhere to establish a clear picture of his motivations and interests.

The Two Pitt-Rivers Collections

One major source on Pitt-Rivers' collections has only been publicly available since 1999, meaning that it has not been used for most existing studies. A re-examination of Pitt-Rivers' activities as a collector is therefore necessary. The new source, specifically, consists of nine large volumes, currently held in Cambridge University Library, forming a catalogue of objects purchased by Pitt-Rivers after about 1880, and a tenth volume which is a catalogue of the library at Rushmore, Pitt-Rivers' home from 1880. Although the entries are variable, throughout the volumes the date of purchase, a description, the price, source and the destination of the objects are generally recorded. For objects that went to Farnham Museum, the room and case number is usually given, and for those in Rushmore, a specific room is often recorded. Frequently, especially in the later volumes, detailed colour illustrations of the objects are provided.

¹³ 'Report to the Hebdomadal Council of the Committee of Members of Convocation appointed to consider the offer by Major-General Pitt-Rivers...', cited in Chapman, p. 478

Thus these volumes potentially enable a reconstruction of how Pitt-Rivers' collections developed over the last twenty years of his life. In particular, they reveal a side to Pitt-Rivers that has not been examined thus far; the collection he accumulated after 1880 contained a large number of art objects that are almost non-existent in the earlier collection, while at the same time he continued to collect ethnographic material from all over the world. The objects recorded in these volumes can be thought of as Pitt-Rivers' 'second' collection, while the 'first' collection refers to the objects he gifted to Oxford in 1884, and which had been displayed at the South Kensington Museum and its Bethnal Green branch since 1874. It is unlikely that Pitt-Rivers donated everything he collected before 1880 to Oxford, and some of the items he owned before this date are included in the manuscript catalogues; indeed the earliest date of acquisition recorded is that of an earring found by Pitt-Rivers in a field in Brittany in 1878.¹⁴ Furthermore it is evident that not all of the objects Pitt-Rivers owned or purchased after 1880 are catalogued. It seems likely that the contents of these volumes were objects purchased specifically for the museum at Farnham, since although a great many objects are recorded as being retained in Rushmore, and a few at Pitt-Rivers' London address, a codicil to Pitt-Rivers' will refers to 'the objects of curiosity in my house at Rushmore which are intended to be placed in the said [Farnham] Museum'.¹⁵ Despite these overlaps and uncertainties, the catalogues allow us to observe changes in Pitt-Rivers' collecting habits before and after 1880.

¹⁴ CUL, Add.9455vol3_p765/3

¹⁵ 'Codicil to Pitt-Rivers' will', 20 November 1899, [<http://web.prm.ox.ac.uk/rpr/index.php/article-index/12-articles/317-pitt-rivers-will>] 20 Feb 2012

A general comparison, using the categories by which the Pitt Rivers Museum classifies its objects, reveals distinct differences in the characters of the two collections. Some of these differences are clearly related to Pitt-Rivers' aims for his museums; however they also reflect changes in personal taste and financial means. In the 'agriculture' category, the first collection has fifty-five objects, in contrast to 141 in the second collection;¹⁶ this change is explained by the Farnham Museum, commonly referred to as the 'Peasant Museum' by Pitt-Rivers, which catered principally to an audience of local farm workers and villagers. Pitt-Rivers desired to display objects that would be relevant to the experiences of the visitors, and room eight of the museum was dedicated to agricultural implements, while rooms one and two displayed peasant costumes of different nations and peasant carvings from Brittany.¹⁷ The second collection contains considerably more objects in the categories of 'boxes', 'carvings', 'currency', 'death-related', 'dwelling-related including furniture', 'figures', 'food-related', 'lighting', 'locks', 'narcotics-related', 'ornaments and beads', 'pictures', and 'vessels'. Categories such as 'boxes', 'carvings', 'ornaments and beads', 'pictures' and 'vessels' suggest an increased focus on fine art and decorative objects; most oriental porcelain, for example, falls into the 'vessel' class. The increase in the 'food-related' category might also reflect this, including items such as a pair of Manchurian wine cups,¹⁸ or *lekythoi* from the Mediterranean.¹⁹

¹⁶ 'Classes in both collections' [<http://web.prm.ox.ac.uk/rpr/index.php/article-index/13-statistics/157-classes-in-both-collections>] 20 Feb 2012

¹⁷ 'Guide to Farnham Museum', undated [<http://web.prm.ox.ac.uk/rpr/index.php/article-index/12-articles/336-farnham-museum-guide>] 16 Feb 2012

¹⁸ CUL, Add.9455vol7_p2168/6

This category also consists of items such as a grindstone for corn from Norway²⁰ for the 'Peasant Museum'. Many of the objects in 'narcotics' category are intricately made and decorated, and thus could be categorised as art objects. One example is a Burmese bronze box thought to be for holding opium. The box has five compartments and is decorated with birds, the top being in the form of a peacock which unscrewed to open all the compartments.²¹ It seems clear that, while his other interests did not diminish, art and design were far more important to Pitt-Rivers after 1880 than before.

Pitt-Rivers the Art Collector?

The year 1880 was a momentous one for Pitt-Rivers. He unexpectedly inherited the estate of his cousin Horace, the sixth Lord Rivers. This secured him Rushmore house, a 30,000 acre estate on Cranborne Chase, a house at the fashionable London address of 4 Grosvenor Gardens, and a dramatically increased yearly income of around £20,000. This would have allowed Pitt-Rivers more ambitious intentions for his collections, enabling the changes evident from the manuscript catalogues. Indeed, only a few weeks after learning of his inheritance he told Richard Thompson at the South Kensington Museum that he would 'extend much more rapidly than hitherto the Ethnographical collection now exhibited at South Kensington... I shall want nearly double the space at once, and if my intentions are fulfilled, more room

¹⁹ CUL, Add.9455vol9_p2299/1-3

²⁰ CUL, Add.9455vol1_p11/2

²¹ CUL, Add.9455vol2_p368/1

will be required immediately'.²² There have already been some glimpses of the artistic side of Pitt-Rivers, for example, it has long been known that he used King John's House on his estate as an art gallery, and in 1895 an art exhibition took place at the Larmer Grounds, the pleasure gardens he constructed.²³ Nevertheless, the evidence of the catalogues reveals a man with interests much broader than is often assumed, and contradicts some assumptions that have been made about him.

Chapman claims that Pitt-Rivers avoided professional dealers, preferring to purchase individual pieces rather than sections of pre-existing collections.²⁴ This may have been the case early in his career as a collector, but the catalogues suggest the opposite; auction houses such as Sotheby's, and professional dealers such as John Sparks of the Japanese Fine Art Depot feature heavily as suppliers. He also bought up large sections of complete collections, purchasing a number of Chinese art objects from the collection of Charles Octavius Swinnerton Morgan in December 1891. Lady Charlotte Schreiber, Lord Londesborough and Rutherford Alcock are other well-known collectors whose names appear. Chapman acknowledges that from around 1880 there is increasing evidence of an interest in art objects and ornamental design, in the form of a great many letters from dealers such as Sparks.²⁵ Chapman suggests that Pitt-Rivers and his wife set about redecorating their homes 'in a

²² SSWM, P136 cited in Chapman, p. 432

²³ *Catalogue of Pictures and Objects of Art, exhibited at the Larmer Grounds in 1895* [<http://web.prm.ox.ac.uk/rpr/index.php/article-index/12-articles/333-1895-exhibition-catalogue>] 20 Feb 2012

²⁴ Chapman, p. 41

²⁵ SSWM, B402-60, Chapman, p. 502

combination of the latest in ‘artistic’ fashions and the more traditional ‘Italianate’.²⁶ The opportunity to renovate two new properties no doubt had an influence, letters from organisations such as the Indian Art Gallery, Alfred Inman’s Oriental Depot, and the Japanese Fine Art Depot contain receipts for furniture, an antique chandelier,²⁷ and an order confirmation for some tiles.²⁸ Without the evidence of the manuscript catalogues, however, Chapman was unable to appreciate the extent of Pitt-Rivers’ interest in such objects; it now seems clear that many of the purchases which Chapman assumed were for a home decorated in a fashionable Aesthetic style in fact formed part of Pitt-Rivers’ collection. An example is a Japanese painting of heaven and hell, the subject of a letter from Sparks to Pitt-Rivers on 22 October 1888.²⁹ It is possible that the letter refers to one of a group of Japanese *kakemono* purchased in 1888 from the dealer Dowdeswell in New Bond Street, four of which represented heaven and hell.³⁰ Sparks uses paper headed with Dowdeswell’s name and address so it appears that he worked with this dealer for a time. Decorative items that Pitt-Rivers purchased from individuals like Sparks were entered into the manuscript catalogues, demonstrating that he conceptualised them as part of his collection. Furthermore, the *art nouveau* designs of the title pages of the volumes (fig. 1) are testament to the more artistic character of this collection.

²⁶ Chapman, p. 430

²⁷ SSWM, B402

²⁸ SSWM, B416

²⁹ SSWM, L557a

³⁰ Add.9455vol2_p425/3, Add.9455vol2_p451-2

Pitt-Rivers' first collection had been displayed at the Bethnal Green branch of the South Kensington Museum from 1874 and at the main museum site from 1878, and therefore clearly represents Pitt-Rivers' views of the appropriate content for an educational museum. In the second collection the boundary between his 'collection' and his family's personal objects is much more blurred. Several objects are recorded as being located 'in Mrs Pitt Rivers's boudoir', and other personal rooms. Similarly some Greek pendants are recorded as having been 'given to Mrs Rivers by Genl. Rivers'³¹ and an amber necklace from Sri Lanka is 'in Mrs Pitt-Rivers [sic] care'.³² It is unclear whether Pitt-Rivers considered an item to have exited his collection once given to his wife; would he have happily claimed the necklaces back again if he wanted to display them in his museum? The manuscript catalogues reveal that, whether or not they were purchased with the museum in mind, a great many of the recorded objects were kept permanently at Rushmore or, less frequently, at Grosvenor Gardens. Others were kept in one of the houses for a few months or even several years before being finally transferred to the museum. It does not seem unreasonable to assume that Pitt-Rivers did not just have an educational series in mind when collecting; the audience for his second collection was not limited to local peasantry or the working class of London's East End, but his family, guests and indeed himself also. Aesthetic considerations would have therefore been more important.

³¹ CUL, Add.9455vol1_p143/4

³² CUL, Add.9455vol2_p346/6

Pitt-Rivers' evident interest in art has been rarely acknowledged. His remark that 'the value of relics viewed as evidence, may be said to be in an inverse ratio to their intrinsic value'³³ seems to suggest that he had little interest in valuable art objects. This remark, however, was specifically related to archaeology, coming from his accounts of his excavations in Cranborne Chase. Certainly, in archaeology Pitt-Rivers was a pioneer in collecting articles like fragments of animal bones which were generally ignored by his contemporaries, yet can be extremely valuable in adding to knowledge about a site. To extend the import of this remark beyond its archaeological context, however, does not necessarily make sense. It is certainly true that Pitt-Rivers believed that apparently worthless objects could be immensely valuable for his purposes, but it does not follow that he considered highly priced items to be inherently less valuable. Pitt-Rivers wanted to showcase the whole range of human artistic achievement, from the most primitive to the most refined. Nevertheless, the fact that he viewed certain types of art as more refined than others and imposed upon design a clear hierarchy of development, does confirm that he would have viewed the fine arts as indicative of a higher level of mental ability and technical skill in their producers. It is clear that for Pitt-Rivers it was a case of hierarchy; he believed that the particular historical conditions of Europe had facilitated the development of a more sophisticated artistic culture than elsewhere, citing the influence of Christianity combined

³³ Pitt-Rivers, *Excavations in Cranborne Chase*, vol. III, p. ix, cited in Bowden, *General Pitt Rivers, The Father of Scientific Archaeology*, p. 5

‘with the sense of duty to the commonwealth which we learnt from the Romans’.³⁴

As an archaeologist and antiquarian, art may have been a concern of Pitt-Rivers from fairly early on, as many contemporary collections and exhibitions had an artistic focus. He was a member of the National Association for the Advancement of Art and likely a member of the Burlington Fine Arts Club,³⁵ he was also considered enough of an authority to be invited to address the annual meeting of the Dorchester School of Art in 1884. Indeed, John Maler Collier, in his 1883 *Primer on Art*, comments that ‘The ethnographical collection of General Pitt-Rivers... gives many interesting examples of the development of ornament.’³⁶ Furthermore, Henry Balfour wrote of the first collection in 1893, ‘the illustration of the gradual growth of Decorative Art from simple beginnings was a part of [Pitt-Rivers’] scheme for establishing series of objects with a view to tracing the stages of the evolution of all the material arts of mankind.’³⁷ Pitt-Rivers’ famous series of paddles from Papua New Guinea, which he used to chart the degeneration of the human form in design, clearly shows that he was interested in art well before 1880; he first talked about the paddles in 1872 at a meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science. It is also noteworthy that Pitt-Rivers’ collection was displayed at the South Kensington

³⁴ Pitt-Rivers, ‘address at annual meeting of the Dorchester School of Art’

³⁵ ‘Pitt-Rivers, taste and the Aesthetic Movement’

[<http://web.prm.ox.ac.uk/rpr/index.php/article-index/12-articles/329-pitt-rivers-and-the-aesthetic-movement>] 20 Feb 2012

³⁶ ‘Influences upon Pitt-Rivers artistic interests’

[<http://web.prm.ox.ac.uk/rpr/index.php/article-index/12-articles/259-pitt-rivers-influences-1>] 20 Feb 2012

³⁷ H. Balfour, *Evolution of Decorative Art*, (London, 1893), p. vii-viii

Museum from 1878 to 1885. Although the museum did refuse to permanently house the collection due, in part, to its ethnographical character, Pitt-Rivers' long involvement with an institution that promoted Aestheticism may well have influenced his collecting tastes. His increasing interest in art and design fits into the mood of the second half of the nineteenth-century, coinciding with the height of the Aesthetic movement in the 1870s and 80s. It is difficult to see Pitt-Rivers mingling with the likes of Wilde and Whistler, however, that does not mean he would have been uninfluenced by contemporary fashions.

III. Arranging the Orient: A History of Oriental collections in Europe

Opening up the Orient

Goods such as tea and silk, as well as porcelain produced for export, had long been available in the West. In the nineteenth-century however, specific events made East Asia more open to foreign involvement. The first Opium War ended in 1842 with the opening of four treaty ports and the ceding of Hong Kong to Britain. Similarly the second Opium War culminated in the opening of ten new ports and the officially sanctioned looting of the Beijing Summer Palace in 1860, Britain was also involved in quelling the Taiping Rebellion from 1850 to 1864. These events sent high quality Chinese objects flowing into Europe.¹ The porcelain looted from the imperial palace was of radically higher quality than the previously familiar export wares. This porcelain, valuable religious artefacts and other objects that would not previously have been available to foreigners increasingly began to appear in European salerooms, and collectors who actually travelled in China, such as Frederick Horniman and John Henry Gray, were able to obtain such items themselves. In the case of Gray's collection, there are many items that were probably taken from temples and monasteries.² Japan followed a much less conflicted route, gradually becoming more open throughout the 1850s. Following the 1868 Meiji Restoration the new government embraced new technologies such as railways, which they constructed with aid from British advisors. Japanese objects became

¹ J. Harrison-Hall, 'Oriental Pottery and Porcelain', *Franks*, p. 222

² Green, 'John Henry Gray', p. 125

increasingly available, including high-quality imperial ceramics and other prestigious items.

Oriental Exhibitions

The intensity of public curiosity about these unfamiliar lands is demonstrated by the popularity of the exhibition of Nathan Dunn's Chinese collection, which opened in London in 1842. This exhibition was the most comprehensive collection of Chinese material to have been displayed in Britain thus far, and represented the Orient as both exotic and as a subject worthy of academic study.³ The academic visitor could find satisfaction in the wide range of objects and detailed catalogue descriptions, although as time went on the focus of the exhibition became increasingly sensationalist, by 1851, advertisements were drawing attention to a Chinese woman on display with feet 'only Two Inches and a Half in Length!!'⁴ In the following decades, several exhibitions catered to the public curiosity about the Far East. The mysterious appearance of a Chinese gentleman at the opening of the Great Exhibition in 1851 aroused significant interest, although he turned out to be the captain of a junk moored in the Thames trying to attract people to tour his boat for a shilling.⁵ The Arts Treasures Exhibition in Manchester in 1857, for example, included an Oriental section and the London International Exhibition of 1862 was the first time

³ C. Pagini, 'Chinese material culture and British perceptions of China in the mid-nineteenth century', T. Barringer and T. Flynn (eds.) *Colonialism and the Object: Empire, Material Culture and the Museum* (London, 1998), p. 35

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 38

⁵ J. Auerbach, *The Great Exhibition of 1851: a nation on display* (New Haven, London, 1999), p. 178

Japanese objects were seen in any great quantity, the displays attracting great admiration.⁶ This contrasts with reviews of Chinese exhibitions, which often compared Chinese stagnation to the progress of the West, and focused on negatives such as torture and opium consumption. Five years later, in 1867, a considerable number of Oriental objects were displayed at the *Exposition Universelle* in Paris, including a model Japanese farm staffed by young Japanese women. Permanent displays at the British and South Kensington Museums also included Oriental objects. Augustus Wollaston Franks of the British Museum lent his own collection of Oriental porcelain for display at Bethnal Green in 1876, while Pitt-Rivers' collection was there,⁷ and in 1878 the Burlington Fine Arts Club held an exhibition of 'Japanese and Chinese works of art'. Clearly anyone with an interest in exhibitions and collecting would have been unable to avoid exposure to the newly available Oriental wares flooding into Europe.

Franks, a friend of Pitt-Rivers, was influential in the study and collection of Oriental arts. He authored several publications on the subject, such as his *Catalogue of Oriental Porcelain and Pottery* issued in 1876 as a record of the Bethnal Green exhibition. Franks was fascinated with prehistoric, Anglo-Saxon and medieval antiquities; objects that had been ignored by an older, classically focused generation.⁸ This interest in the exotic and unknown drew him to the study of Oriental material, though there was an opportunistic element to his collecting, and if the material had not been so readily available on the market it seems unlikely he would have sought it out. Franks read neither Chinese nor

⁶ 'The Victorian Vision of China and Japan'

⁷ Chapman, p. 417

⁸ M.D. Willis, 'Sculpture from India', *Franks*, p. 251

Japanese and never travelled to the countries, despite being considered an authority on their decorative arts. (In this respect he is similar to Pitt-Rivers, who only made two trips out of Europe, a military excursion to Canada in 1861 and a Cook's tour to Egypt in 1882.) Franks acknowledged these limitations, lamenting the lack of access to native knowledge about the arts of the Far East.⁹ His catalogue is organised by types and materials rather than chronologically due to limited knowledge about Chinese history and the dating of ceramics. Through his influence, however, Oriental ceramics were being portrayed as a legitimate subject for 'academic study and didactic display',¹⁰ the fact that he did not restrict himself to the types of objects that were popularly admired or most readily available, unusually managing to acquire some examples of pre-Ming ceramics, for example, is testament to his genuine curiosity for the subject. Franks' catalogue was acknowledged by later writers to have been 'one of the first attempts to classify Oriental works on some intelligible system'.¹¹

The way that Oriental objects were classified in museums suggests much about how they were perceived. In the British Museum during the period of Franks' curatorship, all Chinese and Japanese objects, excepting paintings, were categorised as 'ethnography'.¹² This mode of organisation evinces the attitude that all cultures must be placed in relation to 'advanced' Western and other

⁹ A.W. Franks, *Catalogue of a Collection of Oriental Porcelain and Pottery Lent for Exhibition by A.W. Franks, Esq., F.R.S., F.S.A.* (London, 1876), p. viii

¹⁰ Harrison-Hall, 'Oriental Pottery and Porcelain', p. 220

¹¹ R.L. Hobson, *Chinese Pottery and Porcelain: an Account of the Potters Art in China from Primitive Times to the Present Day*, vol. I (London, New York, Toronto, Melbourne, 1915), p. xviii

¹² C. Clunas, 'China in Britain: The imperial collections', Barringer and Flynn, *Colonialism and the Object*, p. 45

more 'primitive' cultures. Pitt-Rivers viewed 'ethnographic' pieces as 'missing links in the chain of progress';¹³ objects that were not interesting in their own right, but in how they related to the process of development that found its zenith in contemporary Western European civilisation. A clear example of how museums were used to illustrate this view is Liverpool Museum, the displays of which were reorganised in the 1890s into three racial groupings, 'Melanian', 'Mongolian' and 'Caucasian'. The 'Caucasian' collections were to be found on the ground floor of the museum, emphasising their primacy, while 'Melanian' material was relegated to the basement galleries and 'Mongolian' was on the first floor, showing its superiority over the 'Melanian' but its inferiority to the centrally important 'Caucasian'.¹⁴

A second collector notable for his Oriental collections is Frederick John Horniman. As the founder of an anthropological museum, his collections are more closely comparable than Franks' with those of Pitt-Rivers. He shared with Pitt-Rivers the same paternalistic desire to educate the masses, and his commissioning of a set of small vases from Japan to show the stages of the process of cloisonné enamelling¹⁵ was a similar endeavour to Pitt-Rivers' series at Farnham showing the histories of glass-making and enamelling. Unlike Pitt-Rivers, Horniman was widely travelled. Coming from a family of tea merchants, his interest in Asia is unsurprising, and forty-two per cent of the collections of the Horniman Museum were Asian, the four most represented countries being

¹³ Cited in Chapman, p. 102

¹⁴ L. Tythacott, 'Race on display: the 'Melanian', 'Mongolian' and 'Caucasia' galleries at Liverpool Museum (1896-1929)', *Journal of Early Popular Visual Culture*, 9:2 (2011), pp. 131-146

¹⁵ *OV*, p. 194

India, China, Japan and Burma.¹⁶ Horniman made two major trips abroad, to India and Sri Lanka from 1894 to 1895 and a round-the-world trip from 1895 to 1896, visiting Japan, China and India. It is notable that a great proportion of Horniman's collections came from countries, such as China and Japan, that were not subject to British colonial rule, raising questions about the traditional narrative that sees nineteenth-century collecting and museums as a key element in the ideology of imperialism.¹⁷ Horniman's observations about Japan and China on his 1895 to 1896 tour exemplify European perceptions. In Japan he was 'greatly impressed with the cleverness and great skill of this very clever nation'¹⁸ and found their manufacturing processes intriguing 'both from their primitiveness and their artistic point of view'.¹⁹ The contrasting of the 'cleverness' and artistic skill of the Japanese with their 'primitiveness' highlights the awkwardness in European attempts to conceptualise Japanese civilisation and history. Of Canton he remarked that 'all streets are filled with people morning to night, and although they are very noisy, they are very orderly.'²⁰ In commenting on the noise and masses of people and emphasising that the streets are orderly nonetheless, Horniman betrays an expectation of disorder, perhaps encouraged by the prevalent negative stereotypes of China, and its turbulent political history during the nineteenth-century.

¹⁶ K. Teague 'In the Shadow of the Palace: Frederick J. Horniman and His Collections', A. Shelton (ed.), *Collectors: Expressions of Self and Others* (London, 2001), p. 122

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 123

¹⁸ *OV*, p. 193

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 193-4

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 206

Some collectors took an ethnographic approach to the collecting of Oriental objects. John Henry Gray was interested in all aspects of Chinese life, expressed through both his collections and his 1878 book *China: A history of the laws, manners and customs of its people*, a copy of which was in Pitt-Rivers' library.²¹ The collection of Robert and Mary Davidson, Quaker missionaries who lived for a period in Sichuan, focused upon everyday objects, including a scale model of the house they occupied.²² In contrast, other collectors, such as Franks, focused upon decorative art. Sir Merton Russell-Cotes' Japanese collection in Bournemouth consisted principally of 'costly relics'²³ selected to show off the collector's refined taste. Such collections can be compared to those which were acquired for purely aesthetic purposes, such as those of James McNeil Whistler or Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Pitt-Rivers clearly fell somewhere in between these camps. His collecting interests were certainly not limited to decorative art, but this was a huge category in his second collection. Just as the British Museum categorised Oriental ceramics as ethnography, Pitt-Rivers did not make a theoretical distinction between fine art and everyday objects, to him they were all equal examples of human industry that could be used to chart the development of civilisation. That is not to say, however, that he did not value objects for their aesthetic properties also, the number of objects from his second collection that decorated Rushmore being evidence of this.

²¹ CUL, Add.9544_vol10, unpaginated

²² N. Levell, 'The Translation of Objects: R. and M. Davidson and the Friends' Foreign Mission Association, China, 1890-1894', Shelton, *Collectors: Individuals and Institutions*, pp. 129-162

²³ S. Garner 'Sir Merton Russell-Cotes and His Japanese Collection: The Importance and Impact of an Unplanned Trip to Japan in 1885', Shelton, *Collectors: Individuals and Institutions*, p. 174

India, Part of the Orient?

In discussing the Orient I have referred mainly to collections from China and Japan. The term can, however, potentially apply to anywhere east of the Mediterranean and it can be difficult to tell exactly to which countries it refers. This is part of the convenience of the word; it can be used in order to avoid making distinctions and precise categorisations. However, their use of this term does not necessarily suggest that nineteenth-century collectors made no distinctions between the countries that it covered, nor is it necessarily representative of a wilful desire to obfuscate the differences between these countries as a method of oppression. The power of the word 'Oriental' can easily be overemphasised. It was a convenient term to describe Asian cultures, many of which, although different, were interrelated by common religious, linguistic and philosophical traditions; using it in this sense is little different to using the word 'European' to describe a geographical region with a range of different, but related, languages, religious traditions and cultural practices within it. Alternatively, the word 'Oriental' reveals the genuine difficulty Europeans had in adequately describing the cultures of Asia; they recognised them to be as complex and ancient as those of Europe and were aware of their lack of knowledge and understanding. It may be significant, then, that there were some Oriental cultures that were better understood than others. India for example, had long been more accessible than either China or Japan. By the late nineteenth-century, British rule in India had been consolidated and many British people lived in, or had visited the country, some travelling extensively and even acquiring the native languages. This can be perceived in the

arrangement of collections, where Oriental seems to refer more frequently to China and Japan than to India or the Middle East. Edward Hawkins, keeper of the British Museum Department of Antiquities from 1826 to 1860 remarked that 'it is something of a disgrace to have so few memorials of our Indian empire',²⁴ hinting at how India was held in special regard due to its colonial status. Franks' catalogue of 'Oriental' ceramics contained wares only from East Asia. Similarly, the guide to the Burlington Fine Arts Club exhibition in 1878 states that China and Japan 'will always be ranked together when a comparison is instituted between the productions of East and West.'²⁵ The arrangement of the Manchester Arts Treasures Exhibition points to these differences in perception as early as 1857. The Oriental court of the exhibition was superintended by the botanist John Forbes Royle, who had headed the Indian section of the Great Exhibition and who considered India and East Asia to be two 'different...very distinct types of the civilisation of the East'.²⁶ India and China were separated on different sides of the court, with India dominating. Similarly, in the Horniman Museum the Entrance Hall was furnished with Chinese and Japanese artefacts, as was the Reception Room that adjoined it. The Porcelain and Glass Room also contained many East Asian wares. Three Indian Rooms contained the Indian collections, and the countries were only mixed in the Oriental Armoury.²⁷ For Royle and Horniman, China and Japan formed a category of their own. Arguably, this sense of difference increased throughout the second half the nineteenth-century, as British political power in

²⁴ Willis, 'Sculpture from India', *Franks*, p. 251

²⁵ *Exhibition of Japanese and Chinese Works of Art*, printed for Burlington Fine Arts Club, (London, 1878) p. 5

²⁶ Cited in Tythacott, *The Lives of Chinese Objects*, p. 114

²⁷ *OV*, pp. 229-312

India was consolidated following the quashing of the mutiny in 1857 and the dissolution of the East India Company.

IV. The Oriental Collections of General Pitt-Rivers

Assembling

It is clear that Pitt-Rivers did not have a particular interest in any one country; his interests were not in what distinguished one geographical area but in what unified human material culture, and what parallels might be found between different societies in their various stages of development. However, the presence of large numbers of objects from certain areas raises questions about what external factors helped shape Pitt-Rivers' collections. Approximately fifteen per cent of the objects in Pitt-Rivers' first collection were of Asian origin, rising to just over sixteen per cent of the second collection. This amounts to more than 5,000 objects, considerably more than he collected from any other continent except Europe. Of course Asia includes many more countries than China and Japan, and Indian objects feature heavily in both collections. Overall however, Japan is one of the top ten countries collected from, and certainly the most prominent Asian country other than India. 733 objects in the first collection come from either China or Japan, second only to the United Kingdom (including Ireland), France and the USA. Similarly, in the second collection China and Japan combined contribute 1,007 objects, superseded only by the United Kingdom, Egypt and Cyprus.¹ A considerable number of the objects owned by Pitt-Rivers, then, were of East Asian origin, and there must be some link between his acquisition of these and the immense popularity of East Asian

¹ 'Statistics' [<http://web.prm.ox.ac.uk/rpr/index.php/statistics>] 20 Feb 2012

art objects and design styles in Europe in the second half of the nineteenth-century.

Pitt-Rivers almost certainly visited most of the major exhibitions of the period. While the Great Exhibition was open in 1851, he was stationed with his battalion at Windsor Castle and then at the Tower of London. Being in such close proximity, it seems unlikely he would have missed the exhibition, especially with his nascent interest in collecting. A catalogue from the 1857 Arts Treasures Exhibition, owned and annotated by Pitt-Rivers' sister-in-law Maude Stanley, records that he visited this exhibition on at least five occasions.² He probably attended the 1862 International Exhibition, as in his essay *Evolution of Culture* he refers to some armour on display there.³ He visited the second *Exposition Universelle* in 1878 with one of his daughters,⁴ purchasing some Chinese coins,⁵ and he acquired Japanese trumpet⁶ from the 1867 *Exposition*, so it seems that he visited this too. A pair of rosewood clappers⁷ and two small cymbals⁸ from China bought from a Paris dealer named Eugene Boban were probably also procured on the 1878 trip. Pitt-

² C. Flood "And Wot does the Catalog tell me?": Some social meanings of nineteenth-century catalogues and gallery guides' *Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 5 (2007) [www.19.bbk.ac.uk] 17 Feb 2012, see fig. 8

³ Pitt-Rivers, *Evolution of Culture and Other Essays*, (Oxford, 1906) p. 66 [http://web.prm.ox.ac.uk/rpr/index.php/pitt-rivers-life/26-a-year-in-the-life-1862] 25 Feb 2012

⁴ Undated and unnumbered letter from Pitt-Rivers to George Rolleston, Rolleston Papers (Ashmolean Museum) [http://web.prm.ox.ac.uk/rpr/index.php/article-index/12-articles/734-rolleston-papers-at-ashmolean-museum] 03 Feb 2012

⁵ PRM, 1884.99.46-47

⁶ PRM, 1884.112.19

⁷ PRM, 1884.110.33

⁸ PRM, 1884.110.35.1-2

Rivers' involvement with the South Kensington Museum means that he would have been familiar with the collections there and most likely visited Franks' 1876 exhibition at Bethnal Green. He corresponded extensively with the Burlington Fine Arts Club and in 1888 asked to be 'furnished with the Catalogues of past exhibitions of the Club',⁹ so he would have been aware of their 1878 exhibition. He purchased over 300 objects from the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition, mostly from India and Sri Lanka but including a few from China and Hong Kong. Aside from acquiring objects from exhibitions, Pitt-Rivers frequented the main London dealers and auction houses of the period including Christie's, Sotheby's, Foster's, Webster, Lawrence, Inman and Fenton, most of whom were also used by Horniman¹⁰ and Franks. Unlike travelled collectors such as Gray and Horniman, Pitt-Rivers was confined to making selections from what was currently available on the European market. It seems highly probable, therefore, that the greater number of Oriental objects to be found in the second collection, and the more artistic character of these, was due to the greater availability of such objects from around the 1860s onwards, and their increasing popularity with European collectors. Pitt-Rivers' collecting of these objects, like that of Franks, was to a large degree opportunistic.

The types of objects that Pitt-Rivers was acquiring reflect the general themes of the two collections. In keeping with this, approximately 123 individual Chinese or Japanese objects from the first collection can be classified as weapons or armour. Very few, if any, of the objects could be categorised as decorative art,

⁹ SSWM, L587 [<http://web.prm.ox.ac.uk/rpr/index.php/pitt-rivers-life/123-clubs-a-societies>] 22 Feb 2012

¹⁰ Teague, 'Horniman', p. 118

although a Japanese lacquered chest of drawers and a few bronze and pottery vessels might be put into this category. There are many human and animal figures, both religious and of unidentified function, and also paintings, which may be categorised as art objects. Chinese and Japanese painting, however, was not well understood or particularly desirable in Europe at this time and the fact that most of the paintings were of people, as opposed to the landscapes and non-figural genres that were more valued in China and Japan, suggests that Pitt-Rivers' interest was in collecting examples of the physical appearance and costumes of native Chinese and Japanese, as well as how human and animal figures were represented in art. Other projects he carried out, such as recording physical features of inhabitants of Flamborough in Yorkshire while excavating there in 1879,¹¹ attest to his interest in physiology. His collection of several models, particularly of ships, and a large number of personal items such as clothing and toiletries, similarly demonstrate an interest in examining physical appearance. Chinese shoes for bound feet, Japanese *netsuke*, hats, combs, beads, fans and a Chinese 'ear scoop', are all items that fall into this personal category and are typical of the content of the first collection.

The second collection is considerably different in character. Judging from the numbers, Pitt-Rivers' interest in weapons had not necessarily diminished, 109 objects fall into this category, although this number includes of a large group of Japanese *tsuba*, while from China there are only eight weapons. The catalogue of the Burlington exhibition states of its large collection of *tsuba* that, 'these sword-guards as well as the small knives and ornaments attached to the sword,

¹¹ Bowden, *Pitt Rivers: the Life and Archaeological Work*, p. 50

illustrate the use made by the Japanese of alloys of various colours',¹² revealing that they were valued primarily for their decorative qualities rather than as examples of weaponry. They were an extremely common collectors' item, and Franks also owned many. The same can be said of *netsuke*,¹³ and Pitt-Rivers owned at least eleven of these. Ceramic, metal and enamel vessels are prominent in the second collection, including vases, plates, dishes and incense burners. There are various objects that were highly regarded collectors' items in the 1880s including seven 'hawthorn jars', and many examples of the famous 'blue and white' china. The objects are similar to those displayed in the Burlington exhibition, which included ceramics, lacquer, metalwork, enamel and carvings in jade, ivory and agate, as well as examples of armour and swords and knives. Pitt-Rivers' collection includes some pieces of imperial ware; two bowls of the imperial colour, yellow, are apparently from the reign of the Yongzheng emperor (1722-1735).¹⁴ There is also an 'imperial yellow basin' from the Kangxi reign (1654-1722) purchased in May 1892,¹⁵ as well as a blue and white bowl from the same era.¹⁶ These are typical of the nineteenth-century fashion for early-to-mid Qing wares. A pair of Ming white porcelain incense holders in the form of *qilin*¹⁷ and a 'libation cup'¹⁸, dated to the Yongle reign (1402-1424), appear to have come from Franks' collection. Not all of Pitt-Rivers' porcelain is of such high quality; there are some descriptions of plain porcelain produced in China and painted in Chelsea, probably examples of the

¹² *Exhibition of Japanese and Chinese Works of Art*, p. 32

¹³ L. Smith 'The Art and Antiquities of Japan', *Franks*, p. 268

¹⁴ CUL, Add.9455vol3_p765/8

¹⁵ CUL, Add.9455vol3_p821/3

¹⁶ CUL, Add.9455vol3_p765/10

¹⁷ CUL, Add.9455vol3_p766/1

¹⁸ CUL, Add.9455vol3_p766/4

sort of wares that were manufactured specifically for export. However, the presence of some prestigious items, which are totally lacking from the first collection, demonstrates the distinctly different character of the post-1880 collection. It also reveals the extent to which the presence of Oriental objects was governed by availability; Pitt-Rivers owned exactly the kinds of objects popular at the time, revealed by the similarities between his and other prominent collections.

Arranging

Aside from the manuscript catalogues that tell us the destinations of objects in the second collection, a guide to Farnham Museum compiled by Pitt-Rivers himself¹⁹ can inform us about how this collection was arranged. Two editions of this guide were published, one at an unknown point between 1880 and 1900 and one shortly after Pitt-Rivers' death. It is unknown for certain which copy is which, however since one guide does not include room nine of the museum, and the catalogues show that objects were being put into this room during Pitt-Rivers' lifetime, it seems likely that this is the earlier guide, while the one describing room nine is later. Secondly, a handbook to Farnham museum from 1929 summarises the layout room-by-room.²⁰ It is unknown how much the museum changed during the time between Pitt-Rivers' death in 1900 and this

¹⁹ 'Guide to Farnham Museum',
[<http://web.prm.ox.ac.uk/rpr/index.php/article-index/12-articles/336-farnham-museum-guide>], 16 Feb 2012
see also [<http://web.prm.ox.ac.uk/rpr/index.php/primary-documents-index/16-second-collection-1880-1900/337-larmer-guide-2>] 16 Feb 2012

²⁰ L.H. Dudley Buxton (ed.), *The Pitt-Rivers Museum Farnham, General Handbook*, (Farnham, 1929), pp. 27-29

handbook being published; a comparison between it and the earlier guide suggests that the general scheme of organisation remained much the same, though it is impossible to say whether individual objects were moved. Most Chinese and Japanese material was to be found in rooms six and seven of the museum. Room six contained a 'series of ancient and medieval pottery of all nations' that began in room four;²¹ Oriental ceramics and vessels of various sorts were kept in here, mostly in cases forty-nine and fifty. Room seven, according to Pitt-Rivers' guide, contained series illustrating glass making, enamelling and carving in different countries. The 1929 guide states that this room contained 'crafts of the civilised races of Asia', suggesting that a large proportion of the examples were made up of Asian objects. This room is certainly where a large part of the Chinese and Japanese material is to be found, principally carvings of figures, *netsuke*, and cloisonné and enamel work. Room eight was dedicated to agriculture, and contained some implements from East Asia. Room nine is not mentioned in Pitt-Rivers' first guide but is described in the 1929 guide as containing 'specimens of ceremonial objects, weapons &c., of modern savage tribes'. The later Pitt-Rivers guide describes this room as containing the glass-making series previously in room seven and it does seem from the catalogues that some items were transferred here from room seven in the 1890s. Pitt-Rivers says nothing about the ceremonial objects, though the content of the room does suggest that this was a theme; perhaps the guide was written before the arrangement of this room was completed. An

²¹ 'Guide to Farnham Museum'

account of the museum from 1894²² does not mention room nine, so presumably it was a very late addition, perhaps only being completed around the time of Pitt-Rivers' death. The catalogues record that the room contained two ceremonial Chinese staffs, a Chinese helmet and flag and some Japanese weapons and armour. It is interesting how objects from these countries are apparently transformed into examples of 'modern savage tribes', having been from the 'civilised races of Asia' in room seven. Although the language in this later guide does not directly reflect the views of Pitt-Rivers himself, it indicates continued confusion over how Oriental objects should be categorised in exhibitions.

Many Oriental objects from the collections remained in Rushmore, some for a few months or years before being transferred to the museum and some indefinitely. It has been suggested that the manuscript catalogues record objects that were ultimately intended for the Farnham museum. Certainly no real differences can be perceived between the types of objects that were in the museum and those in Rushmore; there is no indication that Pitt-Rivers opted to keep more decorative or more expensive objects in the house. Nevertheless since so many objects did remain there for so long, surely Pitt-Rivers would have exploited their aesthetic properties in order to decorate his home,

²² Roach le Schonix, 'Notes on Archaeology in Provincial Museums: The Museums at Farnham, Dorset, and at King John's House, Tollard Royal', *The Antiquary* 30 (1894) pp. 166-171
[<http://web.prm.ox.ac.uk/rpr/index.php/article-index/12-articles/196-farnham-museum-in-1894>] 16 Feb 2012

especially given the fashions of the period. Photographs of Rushmore²³ reveal that every wall and surface inside the house was covered with objects from the collections; corridors and halls were lined with cases full of china, glass and metal wares and walls were hung with paintings and displays of weapons and armour. The catalogues list the various rooms in Rushmore that objects were kept in, they vary from more public areas such as halls and the drawing room, to more private places such as bedrooms, Pitt-Rivers' study and the bathroom, where there was a single Japanese statue.²⁴ The Japanese and Chinese material does not seem to have been concentrated in any particular area, but the majority of it was on display in public places such as the halls, staircase, corridors and gallery. From a comparison of the entries in the catalogues with the few photographs of the interior of Rushmore, it has been possible to indentify a white *qilin*, one of a pair bought from a Thomas Bell in Newcastle in October 1889,²⁵ with one displayed on the mantelpiece of the outer hall (fig. 5).²⁶ Similarly a large bronze vessel displayed at the top of the staircase leading to the gallery seems to be the one listed on page 120 of volume one (fig. 6). The prominent display of these objects in public areas of the house suggests that they were valued as ornamental objects. A Japanese suit of armour purchased in 1895 was displayed in the art gallery at King John's House (figs. 3 and 4).²⁷ The catalogue description of the armour as 'gilt and embroidered' emphasises

²³ *Photographs of Rushmore and its environs showing the improvements made by General Pitt Rivers during the ten years from 1880 to 1890*, 3 vols. (private collection)

²⁴ CUL, Add.9455vol2_p238/4

²⁵ CUL, Add.9455vol2_p614

²⁶ *Photographs of Rushmore*, vol. I

²⁷ CUL, Add.9455vol3_p1184

its decorative nature, and it seems, therefore, that the Oriental objects of the second collection were perceived primarily as decorative art.

Conceptualising

Pitt-Rivers' perception of the Orient does not seem to have differed greatly from the general views current at the time, with East Asian civilisation falling somewhere in between Europe and 'primitive' peoples. In his second paper on 'Primitive Warfare' in June 1868 Pitt-Rivers used a series of Japanese weapons that had originally formed part of a native Japanese collection as an example 'that this remote country not only passed through the same stone period as ourselves, but that, as their culture improved and expanded they, like ourselves, have at last begun to make collections of objects to illustrate the arts of remote antiquity.'²⁸ This suggests an admiration for their advancement. Particularly impressive is that fact that they have a sense of their own antiquity, although the words 'at last' suggest that he feels the Japanese might have reached this stage sooner, attributing to them a slower and inferior progression to that of European culture. In his first lecture on 'Primitive Warfare' in 1867²⁹ he referred to the 'semi-civilised Chinese and Hindoos' and classified them with 'ancient Assyria, Egypt, and other nations immediately prior to the first dawn of history'. He also referred to 'the conservatism which has caused them to remain for ages in nearly the same condition'. These comments are all fairly typical; however, by the end of his life Pitt-Rivers was

²⁸ Cited in Chapman, p. 290

²⁹ Pitt-Rivers, 'Primitive Warfare I'

using the artefacts of these 'semi-civilised' nations to decorate his home alongside contemporary European wares, and positioned a suit of Japanese armour alongside European paintings in King John's House. His views on the subject were not static.

Letters to Pitt-Rivers from John Sparks³⁰ suggest that by the 1890s he had become less of an opportunistic buyer and was interested in seeking out specific objects; in one letter Sparks mentions that he is forwarding a request from Pitt-Rivers to his agent in Japan.³¹ Although a number of speculative letters from Sparks, informing Pitt-Rivers about certain objects that have just come into his hands, indicate that he thought it likely that Pitt-Rivers would purchase items other than those he specifically requested. Pitt-Rivers was seeking out objects with particular patterns and motifs.³² He also requested translations of inscriptions on objects in his possession³³ and appears to have ordered translations of Chinese and Japanese texts.³⁴ In 1884 Pitt-Rivers still compared Japanese, and Oriental art generally, unfavourably with contemporary European art in its ability to depict 'the higher emotions',³⁵ and likened it in this respect to the works of antiquity.³⁶ The contrast between his stated views the way he actually arranged his collections, and his continuing curiosity evident from the Sparks letters suggests a difficulty in reconciling his appreciation of the craftsmanship and the aesthetic value of Oriental objects

³⁰ SSWM, B426

³¹ SSWM, B426, 06 Sept 1892

³² SSWM, B426, 21 Sept 1889; B426, 01 Dec 1896

³³ SSWM, B426, 09 Dec 1890

³⁴ SSWM, B426, 21 Sept 1889

³⁵ Pitt-Rivers, 'address at annual meeting of the Dorchester School of Art'

³⁶ *Ibid.*

with his desire to position them in a strict hierarchy of civilisation. This is reflective of the tension between the private, subjective meanings that collections can have for their owners, compared with the objective meanings they are supposed to take on when given a defined position in the narrative of a public display. A similar tension has been pointed out in activities of many collectors, Ken Teague describes Horniman as 'Janus-like'; on the one hand a passionate collector with a love of authentic craftsmanship and aesthetic beauty, and on the other a philanthropist whose aim was to use his collections to increase educational opportunities for the public.³⁷ Comparably, there is a tension within John Henry Gray's collection as one of 'curiosities', and a systematic mode of collecting.³⁸ The motivations of nineteenth-century collectors were not fixed or straightforward, making it problematic to view their activities in relation to specific ideologies, such as colonialism.

A consideration of how the word 'Oriental' was used by Pitt-Rivers to describe his own collections facilitates a clearer understanding of how his views developed during his career as a collector. Descriptions in the 'delivery catalogues' that were compiled when the first collection was transferred from South Kensington to Oxford in 1884 place items in categories such as 'cross-bows European, African and Oriental'.³⁹ The typological method of organising the collection meant that the place from which something originated was of secondary importance, and the term 'Oriental' is clearly used here to mean

³⁷ Teague 'Horniman', p. 130

³⁸ Green, 'John Henry Gray', p. 111

³⁹ All source information taken from the PRM digital catalogue entries for objects in the first collection

anywhere that is not Europe or Africa (the status of the Americas is not clear). The countries that come under this bracket include India, China, Vietnam, Malaysia, Afghanistan, Myanmar, Japan, Turkey, Egypt, Iran, Indonesia and Yemen. A photogravure of a Mexican calendar stone⁴⁰ is also described as 'Oriental' in the 'green book' that was compiled by staff at Bethnal Green and South Kensington as the objects were received there from Pitt-Rivers. This may simply be a case of mistaken identification by the staff, since the delivery catalogue describes the calendar as Mexican, as does the Pitt Rivers Museum accession book that was compiled in the 1920s. Most of the objects described as Oriental are from India, followed by China, with relatively few from Japan. The range of objects described in the manuscript catalogues of the second collection as Oriental is far more limited, being mostly ceramics. The countries included under the Oriental label are mainly Japan and China, with eleven objects from Iran and one each from Syria and Iraq. A number of European ceramics are described as having Oriental designs, and there are several pieces that appear to have been produced in either China or Japan and painted in Chelsea, London.⁴¹ It seems then, that while Oriental was used as a fairly broad term in labelling the first collection, in the second it had come to be more closely defined as the Far East. No Indian objects are described as Oriental in the second collection. It is possible that with British rule well established in India by this time, Victoria being named Empress in 1876, the country was considered as separate and more familiar than the rest of the Orient. This is reflected in the arrangement of the Arts Treasures Exhibition and the

⁴⁰ PRM, 1884.97.7

⁴¹ CUL, Add.9455vol2_p74, p61, p72

Horniman Museum, where India, while sometimes being categorised as Oriental, was considered separately from East Asia, while differentiation was rarely made between China and Japan.

In analysing the differences in terminology between the first and second collections, the very different ways in which the two collections were recorded must be acknowledged. The second collection is recorded in the manuscript catalogues, which were compiled by Pitt-Rivers himself and assistants in his employment. Several of the entries are signed by Pitt-Rivers as having been 'seen & approved', all dating from February 1900, just three months before his death. It seems, therefore, that he took an active role in compiling the volumes until he was too ill to do so, after which he simply inspected the entries completed by his assistants. It is likely that volume nine was continued for a short time after the General's death, in order to complete the cataloguing project. The brief entries without illustration that are characteristic of this volume suggest that it was compiled hastily.⁴² Allowing for changes that are to be expected with a project completed over a number of years, the information we have on the second collection is consistent, and likely to have been compiled by a small group of people. Primary descriptive material of the first collection, on the other hand, is gleaned from a variety of sources. The delivery catalogue, green book and accession book have already been mentioned, in addition to these there are the black, blue and red books which were written at Bethnal Green and South Kensington and reflect either the thinking of the

⁴² M. Thompson and C. Renfrew, *The catalogues of the Pitt-Rivers Museum, Farnham, Dorset*, *Antiquity* vol. 73, no. 280 (1999), p. 385

museum staff or Pitt-Rivers himself. In the case of this collection, the available information is far less consistent and it is likely that a far larger number of people were involved in compiling it, including Pitt-Rivers himself, unknown staff at the South Kensington Museum and Oxford University and Ernest Seymour Thomas, Assistant Curator at the Pitt Rivers Museum in the early 1920s. The voice of Pitt-Rivers himself can be certainly detected in the catalogue he produced in 1874 to guide visitors around his collection at Bethnal Green. The term Oriental is rarely used in this, items usually being given a more specific provenance. The catalogue does, however, refer to some objects as part of groups of Oriental weapons that have been arranged to show how their forms have developed. Most of the objects referred to as being in these groups appear to be Indian, so clearly India was included in the Oriental category in 1874, but seems not to have been after 1880. This change in perception is further evinced by the fact that during the 1890s the Oriental Room (1895) (fig. 7), the India Room (1899) and the Upper India House (1898) were installed at Larmer Gardens. It appears from names of these rooms that India was considered to be separate from the Orient, although pictures of the rooms⁴³ do not suggest any radical differences in their design. The Oriental room in fact had a fireplace with a Persian inscription, which could be Mughal Indian (fig. 8). It seems significant that the Indian rooms were both added shortly after Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897, underlining the British sense of ownership of India that may well have been what led to India being categorised separately from the rest of the Orient. Similarly, objects from the Middle East, as relics of the classical civilisations that were seen as the

⁴³ *Photographs of Rushmore*, vols. II and III (private collection)

beginning of European history, seem to have been categorised differently from East Asia, rarely being referred to as Oriental by Pitt-Rivers.

V. Conclusion

An examination of the collections of Pitt-Rivers and his contemporaries has emphasised the miscellaneous status that China and Japan held in nineteenth-century thought and collections. Frequently categorised together and confused as Oriental nations, yet each perceived differently. Attempts to place their cultures, which had an ancient literary history and had developed independently of Europe, within a trajectory of development that followed the course taken by European civilisation were inevitably awkward and inadequate, as some of those who became familiar with the countries, such as John Henry Gray, recognised. The frequent comparison of the countries with the Middle Ages, contrasted with Pitt-Rivers' likening of them to both classical Mediterranean cultures and ancient Egypt and Assyria, reveals the confusion there was in trying to define their stage of development, coupled with the recognition that the languages, histories and cultures of the countries were inadequately understood. Ideas about them were in a state of continuing flux.

Pitt-Rivers' Oriental collections thus fall into a somewhat miscellaneous group, particularly after 1880 when they became more numerous and more artistic in focus. The apparent removal of India from the category of Oriental is symptomatic of its different status as a British territory, no longer in the realm of the 'other'. Pitt-Rivers was acquiring Oriental material not because he had a vision for it within his series but because the market was flooded with it in the late nineteenth-century. Franks' interest followed a similarly opportunistic path. The categorisation of Oriental material as 'ethnography' in the British

Museum was an attempt to fit in into a narrative of human development; Franks' interest in Oriental ceramics as a category in their own right can be seen as a result of the illogicalities of this scheme of organisation, and was stimulated by the increasing availability of relevant material. A similar case can be made for the Cypriot material collected by Pitt-Rivers, which included hundreds of items excavated by Luigi and Alessandro Palma di Cesnola at Pathos. In the early arrangement of the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford, a large case at the front of the display contained the Cypriot collection; it was not integrated into the series of the museum. Like the Oriental collections Pitt-Rivers probably acquired it because of the huge excavations going on at the time, not because it fitted neatly into his scheme of organisation. The same again might be said of the Benin bronzes acquired following the sack of Benin City in 1897. These ended up in room nine of the Farnham museum,¹ not integrated with the other collections and probably placed there because, as the most recent room to be opened, it had the available space. Tensions in the placement and conceptualisation of Chinese and Japanese material can be observed in many nineteenth-century collections. Certainly in Pitt-Rivers' case, the Oriental category is one that is produced by the state of the contemporary art and antiquities market, not one that stemmed from Pitt-Rivers' views on the evolution of culture, or anything else.

A detailed examination of Pitt-Rivers' Indian collections, revealing what types of objects he was collecting, from where he obtained them, how they are categorised and how they compare to contemporary collections would be the

¹ Buxton, *The Pitt-Rivers Museum Farnham*, p. 29

next step in the development of a more nuanced understanding of perceptions of the Orient. In my research I have noted that Pitt-Rivers tended to acquire Indian material from different sources to those for his East Asian objects, and looking at who his sources were might prove informative. Another fruitful approach would be to analyse the prices Pitt-Rivers paid for different types of objects and what this might indicate about his priorities. Finally, the role of Pitt-Rivers' collection within his home intrigues me. Shaun Garner emphasises the significant role that Annie Russell-Cotes played what was nominally her husband's collection² and Nicky Levell³ makes a similar point about Robert and Mary Davidson. There is no evidence that Alice Pitt-Rivers had any influence over the collections but with the objects displayed in her home, and some recorded as being in her personal care, it is tempting to think that she might have been involved in some purchases. A closer examination of sources relating to the home life of the family, such as the diary of Pitt-Rivers' daughter Agnes,⁴ might provide some answers to these questions.

² Garner, 'Sir Merton Russell-Cotes', p. 185

³ Levell, 'R. and M. Davidson', p. 134

⁴ D. Hawkins, *Concerning Agnes: Thomas Hardy's "Good little pupil"* (Gloucester, 1982)

Figures

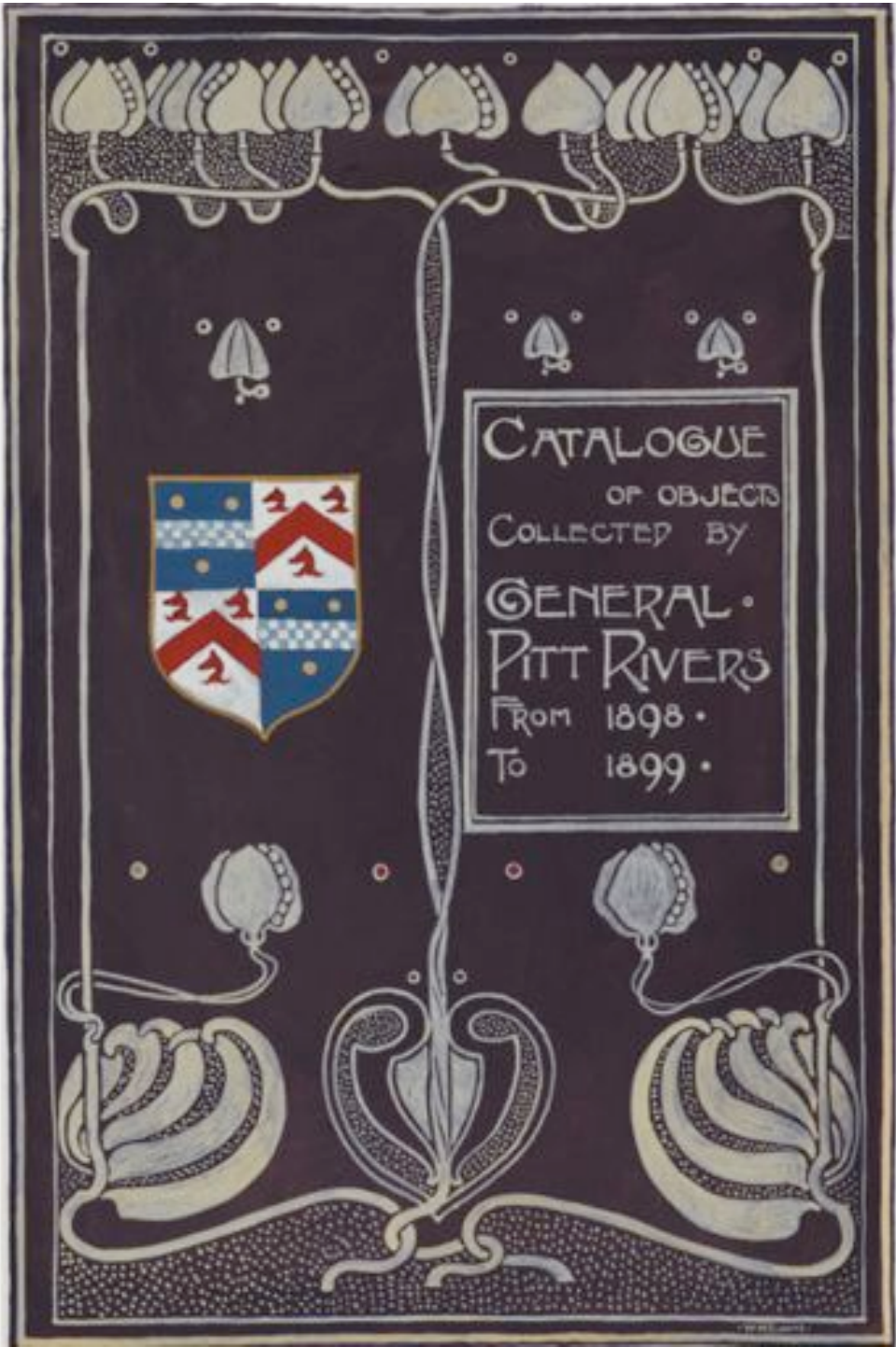


Figure 1, title page of CUL, Add.9455vol6.

1007				
DATE	DESCRIPTION OF OBJECT.	PRICE	DEPOSITED AT	REMOVED TO
1894	Bought of Sparks. (contd.)			
June 1 25	A pair of blossom Vases. Japanst. Modern.  Height 16 1/2 ins.	£7 Five pence	Inner Hall Rushmore <i>Ground floor In Room 5-10 1900</i>	
June 13.	Bought of John Sparks, 15 Duke Street, London.  Carved pierced Silver perfume Vase, Japanst; enamelled in various co- lours on a carved, ivory stand, made by Kido Katen, especially for the Chicago Exhibition.	£45	Inner Hall Rushmore.	

Figure 2, Japanese objects bought from Sparks for the second collection, CUL, Add.9455vol3_p1007

1184.

DATE	DESCRIPTION OF OBJECT.	PRICE	DEPOSITED AT.	REMOVED TO
1895.	<p>Bought of <u>J. Willson</u>, 7 King Street, St. James's, London.</p> <p>Gilt and embroidered Armour of Japanese Daimio, consisting of 14 pieces in Lacquer Case.</p>			
25		£24	King John's House. Feb. 97.	King John's House - June
	<p>This suit of Armour was purchased on May 23rd 1892. See page 835 of this Catalogue, where parts of this armour are drawn on a larger scale.</p>			

Figure 3, catalogue entry for Japanese armour on display at King John's House, CUL, Add.9455vol3_p1184



Figure 4, Japanese armour at King John's House, *Photographs of Rushmore and its environs showing the improvements made by General Pitt Rivers during the ten years from 1880 to 1890, (private collection), vol. II*



Figure 5, the outer hall, Rushmore, with Chinese *qilin* on right side of mantelpiece, *Photographs of Rushmore and its environs showing the improvements made by General Pitt Rivers during the ten years from 1880 to 1890*, (private collection), vol. I



Figure 6, the gallery at Rushmore with bronze Chinese vase in the centre foreground (I have been unable to identify the two vases either side of it) *Photographs of Rushmore and its environs showing the improvements made by General Pitt Rivers during the ten years from 1880 to 1890*, (private collection), vol. I



Figure 7, the Oriental Room, Larmer Grounds, *Photographs of Rushmore and its environs showing the improvements made by General Pitt Rivers during the ten years from 1880 to 1890*, (private collection), vol. II



Figure 8, fireplace with Persian inscription in the Oriental Room, Larmer Grounds, *Photographs of Rushmore and its environs showing the improvements made by General Pitt Rivers during the ten years from 1880 to 1890, (private collection), vol. II*

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