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Egypt and Sudan: Mesolithic to Early Dynastic Period

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5.1 Introduction

W.M. Flinders Petrie, the pioneering archaeologist, was suspicious of museums. He suggested that they were ‘dangerous places’: ‘ghastly charnel-houses of murdered evidence’ (Petrie 1904a: 48). Reflecting upon these concerns a century later, however, we might have a more positive outlook. In large measure this is due to the opportunities afforded by some of the earliest fieldwork documentation practices instituted by Petrie and his colleagues, which sought to ensure that ‘a fit curator may succeed in reuniting the long-severed information’ (ibid.: 49). Many Egyptian archaeological collections today thus have significant research potential, including those at the Pitt Rivers Museum (PRM).

Today, the PRM holds *c.* 15,639 archaeological artefacts from Egypt and Sudan (excluding Palaeolithic material – see Chapter 4 above). Ancient Egypt often has a prominent position in western museum displays. Even in the PRM, where objects from different times and places jostle for visibility, Egyptian artefacts have their own dedicated space in Case 7A of the Court. Within this cabinet are presented some examples of the most iconic of Egyptian objects – mummified remains and coffins (e.g. 1887.1.481, 1945.6.1). And elsewhere in the PRM, ancient Egyptian material culture is also well represented relative to other areas and periods of archaeology. There are some 280 further Egyptian archaeological artefacts interspersed throughout the thematic cases of the galleries, many of which are as equally recognizable as the coffins and mummies, such as those objects that have hieroglyphs or hieratic inscribed upon them. They include the Oxford Bowl (1887.27.1, *Figure 5.1*), upon which is written one of only about twenty known ‘Letters to the Dead’ (Gardiner and Seth 1928; see 6.4.1 below). Other types of items on display in the PRM, and commonly found in other museums, are Predynastic black-topped and painted vessels, and bronze statuettes of deities and priests made in the first millennium BCE, such as the bronze figure of a cat representing the goddess Bast, from the PRM founding collection (1884.58.79; *Figure 5.2*).

A focus on such eye-catching or famous objects, however, would misrepresent the full character of the PRM collection. For example, despite the prominence of the Oxford Bowl in Egyptological literature (e.g. Bommas 1999: 56–7; Gardiner and Seth 1928: 27, plate IX; Willems 2001: 347), there are actually very few written documents in the PRM collection. Meanwhile, while Predynastic vessels are common on the art

Figure 5.1 The Oxford Bowl: an Egyptian 'letter to the dead' (PRM Accession Number 1887.27.1). This small ceramic bowl is one of about twenty known Egyptian 'letters to the dead'. It has three lines of hieratic inscription painted around the exterior dating to the Late Middle Kingdom/Second Intermediate Period. The text addresses a deceased family member.



Figure 5.2 Egyptian bronze figure of a seated cat with inlaid collar and pendant, representing the goddess Bast, dating from the first millennium BCE. From the Pitt Rivers Museum founding collection (PRM Accession Number 1884.58.79).



market, and are therefore often of unknown origin, the vast majority of the PRM's Predynastic pottery actually derives from known excavations: something which is not true for four of the ten Predynastic vessels currently on display in the PRM.

The majority of the Egyptian archaeological material within the PRM founding collection was made up of bronze figurines, which were never Pitt-Rivers' primary interest. He only visited Egypt once in 1881 (Bowden 1991: 90–3; Stevenson 2011) and his own publications concerning the archaeology of Egypt are limited; his papers on Stone Age tools from the Nile Valley (Pitt-Rivers 1882) and on the Egyptian boomerang (1883) are more in keeping with his primary scholarly interests, rather than the more conventional Egyptological endeavours that the visibility of the archaeology of Egypt in today's displays in the PRM might suggest. While not all the objects associated with Pitt-Rivers' publications are part of the PRM's collection, in their entirety the PRM's Egyptian accessions are closer to the character of the General's work overall, and his interest in the development of types and technologies. Similarly, PRM Curator Henry Balfour's interest in the archaeology of Egypt lay in the technological aspects of material culture, such as bows and arrows (1896.2.1.1–17; Balfour 1897), and this is reflected in his additions to the PRM Egyptian collection, which include pottery moulds, pottery lamps for the lighting series, coins for the currency series and stone tools.

A correlate of the fascination with Egypt has, however, been that the archaeology of its southern neighbour, Sudan, was eclipsed in the early development of the discipline in North Africa. As O.G.S. Crawford noted in 1948 in an article entitled 'People without a History', when Egyptologists looked southwards their focus remained upon the Egyptian temples and scripts, rather than on the wider archaeology of Sudanese communities (cf. Chapter 8). This tendency is reflected in many western museum collections, which whilst abundant in Egyptian material culture largely lack non-Egyptian artefacts from sites in Sudan. At the PRM this gap stands rather starkly in contrast with the wealth of ethnographic material from Southern Sudan (Edwards 2007: 213), which has been the subject of significant research activity.¹ It is only recently that more concentrated research efforts to begin to elucidate cultural sequences in Sudan have been undertaken (Edwards 2004), by which time the PRM had ceased to acquire archaeological material in the manner in which it had in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Today, the PRM holds around 11,500 archaeological artefacts from ancient Egypt and Sudan (excluding Palaeolithic material and post-Roman material: see Chapters 4 and 8), the vast majority of which is not on display. This represents one of the largest collections of its kind in the UK: of the 195 museums in the UK that hold ancient Egyptian archaeological collections, only 18 hold more than 2500 objects (Serpico 2006: 7). Yet the Egyptian collection is not as visible or as well known as its fellow University of Oxford collection in the Ashmolean Museum, and thus has received far less attention from archaeologists working with Egyptian or Sudanese material.

Given the popular appeal of ancient Egypt relative to other archaeological regions, museums have often acquired artefacts via private collectors and the art market. Some 62 % of the PRM ancient Egyptian collection, however, derives from published excavations (*Tables 5.1 and 5.2*; see also *Figures 5.3 and 5.4*). Thus, the collection represents a valuable resource for the study of the history of archaeological fieldwork in Egypt and for modern reanalysis of excavated assemblages. For this reason, this chapter begins with a brief discussion of the issues involved in studying excavated material from Egypt in museums (5.2), as a necessary precursor to the discussion of chronological eras of the archaeology of Egypt and Sudan. The rest

¹ <http://southernsudan.prm.ox.ac.uk/>

World Archaeology at the Pitt Rivers Museum: A Characterization
 edited by Dan Hicks and Alice Stevenson, Archaeopress 2013, pages 60-89

Site	Year	Organization	Publication	Number of objects	Donor(s)
Abydos	1907–08	None	Garstang 1909	13	Francis Legge
Abydos: Cemetery D	1900–01	EEF	MacIver and Mace 1902	11	EEF
Abydos: Cemetery G	1901–02	EEF	Petrie 1902, 34–5	2	EEF
Abydos: Cemetery X	1899–1900	EEF	MacIver & Mace 1902, 53–5	1	EEF
Abydos: Osiris Temenos	1901–02	EEF	Petrie <i>et al.</i> 1902	24	EEF
Abydos: Osiris Temple, 'Chamber M64'	1902–03	EEF	Petrie 1903	12	EEF
Abydos: Enclosures (Tombs of the Courtiers)	1921–22	BSAE	Petrie 1925	8	Transferred from OUMNH 1946
Abydos: Umm el-Qa'ab	1900–01	EEF	Petrie 1901a	315	EEF
Alawiyeh	1900–01	ERA	Garstang 1903	1	ERA
Antinoe	1913–14	EEF	Johnson 1914	41	EEF
Badari	1923–24	BSAE	Brunton 1928	1	BSAE
Behnasa (Oxyrhynchus)	1902–04	EEF	Grenfell and Hunt	52	EEF
Bet Khallaf	1900–01	ERA	Garstang 1903	46	ERA
Thebes: Deir el Bahri	1903–04	EEF	Naville 1907	117	EEF
Denderch	1897	EEF	Petrie 1898a	10	EEF
Deshashch	1897	EEF	Petrie 1898b	11	Petrie
Diospolis Parva (Abadiya and Hu)	1898–99	EEF	Petrie 1901b	18	EEF
Ehnasya	1903–04	EEF	Petrie 1904; 1905	37	EEF
el Amrah	1900–01	EEF	MacIver and Mace 1901	449	Randall MacIver
el Mahasna	1900–01	ERA	Garstang, 1903	c.1623	ERA
Fayum	1927–28	RAI	Caton-Thompson and Gardner 1934	73	Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain
Gerzeh	1910–11	BSAE	Wainwright 1912	11	BSAE
Hawara	1888	None	Petrie 1889	10	Petrie
	1910–11	BSAE		2	
Hierakonpolis	1897–98	ERA	Quibell and Green 1902	1	EEF
Koptos	1894	EEF	Petrie 1896	2	EEF
Lahun and Gurob	1889, 1890	Independent	Petrie 1890, 1891	285	Flinders Petrie & Kennard
Meydum	1890–91	Independent	Petrie 1892	20	Flinders Petrie & Haworth
Qau	1922–23	BSAE	Brunton 1928 Brunton 1930	75	BSAE
Sinai	1904–05	EEF	Petrie 1906	48	EEF
Tarkhan	1911–12	BSAE	Petrie <i>et al.</i> 1913	10	BSAE
Tell el Amarna	1921–22	EEF	Peet and Woolley 1923	5	EES Committee
Thebes: Ramesseum	1896	ERA	Quibell 1898	5	ERA & Flinders Petrie
Umm es Sawan (Fayum)	1927–28	RAI	Caton-Thompson and Gardner 1934	42	RAI

Table 5.1 Principal excavated assemblages from Egypt in the Pitt Rivers Museum.

[Key: BSAE= British School of Archaeology in Egypt; EEF= Egypt Exploration Fund; EES= Egypt Exploration Society; ERA= Egypt Research Account; OUMNH= Oxford University Museum of Natural History; RAI= Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain]

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Site	Year Excavated	Organization	Publication reference	Approx. no. of Objects ¹	Donor
Kawa	Before 1932	University of Oxford	Macadam 1955	98	Griffith
Sanam	1913	University of Oxford	Griffith 1923; Griffith Archive Oxford	1082	Griffith
Dongola: unspecified sites ²	1912–13	University of Oxford	Unknown	3544	Griffith
Faras: Hathor Temple	1911–12	University of Oxford	Griffith 1921b, 84–9	c.1731	Griffith
Faras: Meroitic Cemetery	1911–12	University of Oxford	Griffith 1924; 1925; 1926 Griffith Archive Oxford	772	Griffith
Faras: Protodynastic Cemetery	1911–12	University of Oxford	Griffith 1921a	10	Griffith (1 via Ashmolean)
Jebel Moya	1910–14	Wellcome Excavations	Addison 1949	295	Wellcome Trustees
Khartoum	1944–45	Sudan Government Antiquities Service	Arkel 1949	102	Shinnie
Khor Bahan	1907–08	University of Oxford	Reisner 1910	1	Thomas
Faragab	9–11 Feb. 1912	Independent	Seligman 1914–16	180	Seligman
Wadi Howar	1935	Independent	Shaw <i>et al.</i> 1936	166	Kennedy Shaw

Table 5.2 Principal excavated assemblages from Sudan in the collections of the Pitt Rivers Museum.

¹ The high number of objects for Sudan is a correlate of the manner in which they have been documented in the Museum catalogue, which includes estimates for large numbers of single beads, which in other cases are often counted simply as one set.

² Much of the material from this site was not accessioned until recently and the precise locales seem to have been lost, but the associated numbers on objects may permit the re-establishment of contexts in the future.

of the chapter examines the Mesolithic to Early Dynastic Period (c.7000 to 2637 BCE, 5.3–5.8), before the later periods are considered in Chapters 6 (Old Kingdom to Late Period, 2637 to 332 BCE), and 7 (Greco-Roman Period, 332 BCE to c. 640 CE). The Sudanese material discussed in this chapter primarily includes Khartoum Mesolithic material and Terminal Nubian A-Group artefacts (5.5.6). Chapter 6 includes Sudanese (Kushite) material from sites that cover the Old Kingdom to Late Period. Sudanese Meroitic Period material (300 BCE–400 CE) is mentioned in both chapters 6 and 7, as the database does not currently distinguish between earlier and later Sudanese material and several of the earlier Kushite sites included were re-used in the Meroitic period.

5.2 Excavations and Museum Collections

The vast majority of excavated Egyptian material the PRM (*Table 5.1*), and in British museums more generally, comes from the enterprises of three organisations founded in the late 19th and early 20th centuries: the Egypt Exploration Fund (EEF),² the Egyptian Research Account (ERA) and the British School of Archaeology in Egypt (BSAE). Sponsors of these groups included museums and following each season finds would be divided between Egyptian and foreign institutions. As a consequence a single site's artefacts would be fragmented and dispersed across the globe.

Supporters of these organizations would also receive annual memoirs summarizing the work undertaken in Egypt. Although Petrie extolled the virtues of complete recording of sites (Petrie 1904a), the publications that he and his students produced

² Now known as the Egypt Exploration Society. See www.ees.ac.uk.

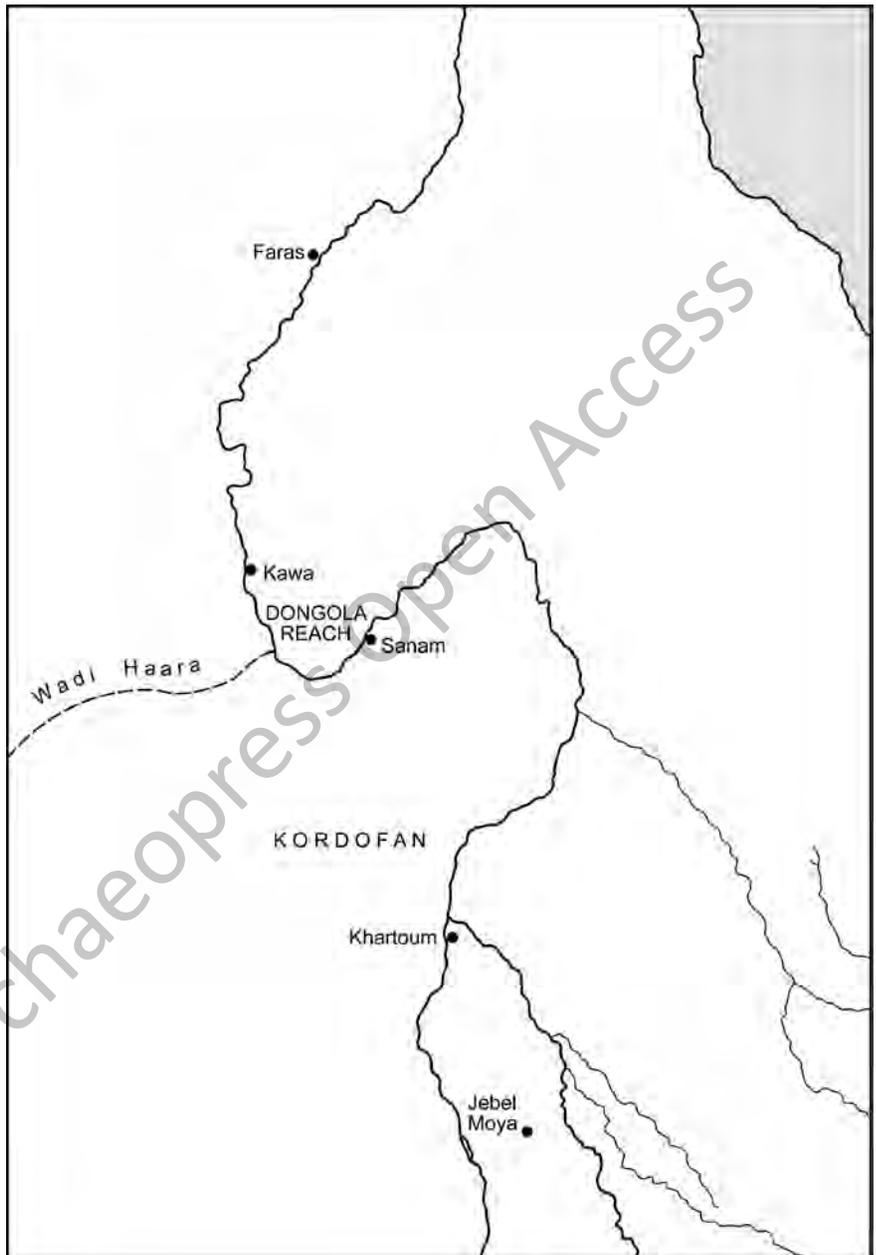


Figure 5.3 Map of Sudan showing the main archaeological sites discussed in Chapters 5, 6 and 7.

were often very brief. The PRM objects that are associated with these excavations thus provide opportunities for re-examination of sites that were explored more than a century ago, especially given that many objects retain excavator's marks upon them allowing linkages to be made to their original findspots and associated assemblages. The limitations of the excavation reports can also be countered to some extent by the archives held in the Egypt Exploration Society (EEF/EES excavations), the Petrie Museum, UCL (EEF/EES, BSAE and ERA excavations), and the Griffith Institute,



Figure 5.4 Map of Egypt showing Predynastic and Early Dynastic archaeological sites referred to in Chapter 5.

University of Oxford (Oxford Expedition to Nubia; Henry Wellcome's campaigns). The problem of the division of material across several institutions can also be mitigated, to a degree, by the presence of unpublished distribution lists held by these institutes for most of these sites and thus it is possible to track down related objects. This has proved a useful tool for this project as it has permitted us to establish the uniqueness of the PRM's collections relative to other institutions. Nevertheless, there are caveats associated with such archives, such as the recognition that not everything listed on the distribution lists was necessarily sent or received by institutions, and also the fact that there are instances where extra objects were sent that were not noted down. It is also possible that private individuals subsequently made donations of material that they had received through sponsorship of, or purchase from, the EEF, ERA or BSAE, including the excavators and their colleagues. One letter³ from Petrie to Tylor in the PRM dated 2 June 1898 highlights another aspect of post-excavation

³ PRM Tylor Papers/Box 13/P9

biographies of artefacts: ‘...we gave away many broken and damaged examples and someone has got hold of them that I did not intend’.

Whilst the work of the EEF, ERA and BSAE was extensive prior to the Second World War, subsequent to it and the Egyptian Revolution of 1952 the role of the UK in Egyptian excavations was more difficult, and the BSAE/ERA ceased to exist after 1954. In the interim the focus shifted to the Sudan where the British had been involved in rescue operations associated with the construction of the Aswan High Dam in the early 20th century. The PRM has objects from both periods of UK involvement in the Sudan, but more strongly the earlier work, in large measure due to the central involvement of the University of Oxford, beginning with Francis Llewellyn Griffith, but later in the forties and fifties through Peter Shinnie and Anthony Arkell who also had strong Oxford connections through their education here.

The opportunities for museum acquisition of excavated material have been increasingly curtailed throughout the 20th century, following the discovery of Tutankhamun’s tomb in the 1920s. In 1983 Egypt enacted Law 117, which, among other provisions, vested ownership of all antiquities discovered after that date in the Egyptian nation. This formalized the constriction of the amount of material from foreign excavations that could be exported from Egypt that had been increasingly been applied throughout the 1970s after Egypt had signed the UNESCO convention. As a result, excavated material is no longer permitted to leave Egypt. Consequently, if scholars are interested in analyzing material outside Egypt they are reliant upon the material collected by previous generations of archaeologists, thus increasing the importance of well-documented Egyptian collection in museums such as the PRM.

Whilst the periods in the Egyptian past discussed in this and subsequent chapters are often associated with diagnostic artefacts, there are several classes of material that are not so easily assigned to a specific time period without detailed knowledge of their original context. Consequently, there are several items within the PRM’s collection where it is unclear whether they should be considered in the earlier or the later Egyptian study area for this project.

The site of the Early Dynastic royal burials at Abydos, in the area known as in the Umm el-Qa’ab, is particularly problematic as it has a complex life-history. As with the majority of royal Egyptian tombs these were plundered probably not long after the funeral and set alight destroying much of the central burial chambers. Yet, because of the identification in the Middle Kingdom of one of these tombs – that of King Djer’s – as the mortuary complex of the god Osiris, the tombs were renovated and became the focus of cult activity until Roman times. Indeed the site in Abydos, the Umm el-Qa’ab – which means ‘mother of pots’ in Arabic – is so called because of the prolific scatters of pottery sherds that are testament to centuries of activity in the area. Furthermore, these tombs have been opened and sifted through by several generations of excavators and of those endeavours that were reported in print, the details were often limited and it is difficult to establish whether an object is original to the ruler’s burial chambers, the surrounding retainer burials or relates to later activity. Deir el-Bahri also has significant temporal depth, and thus aspects of its material is also discussed in the chapters on the North African Palaeolithic and historical periods (Chapters 4 and 8).

5.3 Overview of the Mesolithic, Neolithic, Predynastic and Early Dynastic Egyptian and Sudanese Collections

When the PRM was founded the prehistory of Egypt was but a vague concept that had not yet been defined temporally or materially. The first edition of Flinders Petrie’s *History of Egypt, From the Earliest Times to the XVth Dynasty* (Petrie 1894) thus contained

only a very short chapter entitled 'Prehistoric Egypt' with tentative observations of racial types and geological formations, but descriptions of artefacts were notably lacking. Similarly, the Early Dynastic Period was 'a blank' (Petrie 1894: 16). Yet, in the ensuing six years Petrie's work at Naqada and Abydos began to populate the idea of prehistoric Egypt with material culture situated within an innovative relative chronological framework (Petrie 1899). Thus in 1901 Petrie was able to report with confidence that

'The monumental history has been carried back to the very beginning of the written record, which has been entirely confirmed; and beyond all that, the whole course of the prehistoric civilisation has been mapped out for perhaps two thousand years, more completely than has been done for such ages in any other land.' (Petrie 1901: cited in Drower 1985: 263).

It was also in 1901 that the PRM received its largest donation of early Egyptian artefacts from the committees of EEF and ERA from the three archaeological sites that form the core of the collection: the Predynastic cemetery of el-Amrah, the Predynastic settlement of el-Mahasna, and the royal tombs of the First and Second Dynasties at Abydos (*Figure 5.4*). Together these acquisitions account for 76.5% of the archaeological objects from these periods from Egypt and Sudan (*c.* 2,592 objects). The early Egyptian archaeological collections considered in this chapter are thus dominated by material from Upper Egypt: Predynastic Delta sites, for example, are not well represented. Lower Egyptian sites are present in the form of Neolithic assemblages from Gertrude Caton-Thompson's work in the Fayum, and her surface collecting activities in Helwan (5.5.4 below). Early Sudan is not as well represented, and only 121 objects are definitely attributable to this region, primarily to Mesolithic Khartoum: but this is a notable collection nonetheless.

While in many museums newly-discovered prehistoric artefacts were used in the early 20th century to extend existing displays so that they encompassed the newly identified early periods of the Egyptian past, at the PRM these accessions reflected the general concern with early technologies. This is seen in the high number of stone tools and organic specimens as opposed to type-series of objects. There are roughly 2,800 chipped stone tools – a field relatively little studied by Egyptologists – whilst pottery is relatively under-represented in the PRM: forming only 5.6% (198 objects) of the Egyptian and Sudanese archaeological collections, in comparison to roughly 300 objects that are described in the PRM database as a 'specimen', which include pigments and resins, as well as samples of hair, basketry, leather and textiles.

This chapter considers material from Egypt and Sudan which dates from after the Palaeolithic, and before the Old Kingdom Dynastic Period: this sequence runs from *c.* 7000 to *c.* 2600 BCE, and comprises the Mesolithic (*c.* 7000–5500 BCE), Neolithic (*c.* 5500–4000 BCE), Predynastic (*c.* 4000–3100 BCE) and Early Dynastic (*c.* 3100–2575 BCE, formerly referred to by some as the 'Archaic Period') Periods (*Table 5.3*).⁴ For

⁴ In comparison with the Predynastic, the Neolithic of Egypt is very poorly documented and is better known in the southern part of the Nile Valley: Sudan and the Western Deserts. In Egypt itself it was first defined, and is still best known, by Caton-Thompson's (1934) work in the Fayum. Arkell's (1949) work in the Sudan found much earlier evidence at Khartoum for pottery making communities. Despite the presence of pottery, however, the groups at Early Khartoum showed no evidence for domestication and as such are referred to in the literature as being part of the Khartoum Mesolithic. Radiocarbon dates provided by Hassan suggest that the Khartoum Mesolithic dates from roughly 7500 BCE to 6500 BCE (Hassan 1986: 88), although it has been suggested that it was particularly long-lived tradition that persisted until the fifth millennium BCE (Fuller and Smith 2004: 268–269). The Neolithic in Egypt is generally viewed to date to the fifth millennium BCE, the oldest sites dating to about 5230 ± 50 cal BCE, and the youngest *c.* 4000 cal BCE (Hassan 1985: 106), although see Kobusiewicz *et al.* (2004).

Table 5.3 Archaeological periods for Predynastic and Early Dynastic Egypt, with calibrated dates BCE (adapted from Hendrickx 2006: 92, table II.1.7).

Phase	Description	cal. BCE
Naqada IIIC1	Early Dynastic Period (Dynasties 1–3)	c.3100–2575
Naqada IIIA1–IIIB	Late Predynastic (Protodynastic/ Dynasty '0')	c.3350–3100
Naqada IIC–IID2	Middle Predynastic (Gerzean)	c.3600–3350
Naqada IA–IIB	Early Predynastic (Amratian)	c.4000/3900–3600
Badarian	Badarian	c.4500–4000

the purposes of this study, the Early Dynastic Period is defined as ending with the beginning of the Fourth Dynasty, when the Old Kingdom Period commences (see Chapter 6).⁵

5.4 History and Background to the Mesolithic, Neolithic, Predynastic and Early Dynastic Collections

The PRM founding collection contains only a single object that can be attributed to early Egypt or Sudan – an Early Dynastic Egyptian flint knife, which was described and illustrated by Pitt-Rivers in his 1882 paper on Palaeolithic artefacts from the Nile Valley (1884.140.82) (Pitt-Rivers 1882: 386–7, Fig. 14). A second item from the PRM founding collection – an undated flint bracelet (1884.140.83) – was also published in that paper. However, in 1892 a set of seven Neolithic stone tools (1892.27.1–7) was donated by the prolific antiquary, collector and dealer George Fabian Lawrence (1861–1939). At the time of donation, however, the age of such Neolithic material was unknown, and up until 1899 most of the items dateable to early Egypt were stone tools dated to the Predynastic period.⁶

The fact that stone tools were the only kind of artefact from the Mesolithic, Neolithic, Predynastic or Early Dynastic periods up to 1899 can in part be attributed to the interests of the Curator of the PRM, Henry Balfour, who was an enthusiastic collector of stone tools (Gosden and Larson 2007: 96), and also to the development under the Keepership of Arthur Evans, from 1884 to 1908, of the Ashmolean Museum's archaeological and numismatic collections from Egypt (Whitehouse 2008: xiv). Notably, this included Flinders Petrie's donation of large stone anthropomorphic statues known as the Koptos Colossi in 1894 (after their rejection by the British Museum) and a type-series of objects from the cemetery of Naqada. This was the basis on which the Ashmolean Museum, in Petrie's opinion, 'will be, for the future, the essential place for the study of this period' (Petrie and Quibell 1896: x).⁷ The PRM, on the other hand, rarely received any donations directly from Petrie himself and the objects that were received from his excavations (e.g. Abydos) were through the EEF or BSAE Committees.

⁵ Many authors (e.g. Shaw 2000) would include the Third Dynasty in the Old Kingdom (often referred to as the 'Pyramid Age') as it was during this Dynasty that the first pyramids were constructed, but others (e.g. Wilkinson 1999) situate it within the Early Dynastic period as it shares many features with its antecedents. For the current study, the Early Dynastic period is considered to encompass the first three dynasties. This is as much for practical convenience as scholarly abstraction as the Third-Dynasty material in the PRM derives from John Garstang's season at Bet Khallaf, where a series of *mustabas* of Second and Third Dynasty date were located. This was the same season from which the largest part of the Predynastic collection comes and is thus included in the discussion related to that.

⁶ Including a fish-tailed knife from the ERA work at Hierakonpolis (1898.37.6) and 16 stone implements from his (Petrie 1901b) EEF sponsored work at Diospolis Parva (1899.33.1–16). A ground stone bracelet also from this season of work was accessioned the following year (1900.42.14).

⁷ Petrie was referring to the 'New Race' period, which he originally identified as occurring at the end of the Old Kingdom. It was only later that he accepted such material as 'Predynastic' (Petrie 1901b).

The expansion of the early Egyptian archaeological collections at the PRM from 1899–1900 derived from the activities of David Randall-MacIver, who was at that time the Laycott student of Egyptology at Worcester College, Oxford and who had been particularly inspired by E.B. Tylor's anthropology whilst an undergraduate at The Queen's College (Ridgeway 1983: 360). As he recounted in an autobiographical note, it

‘was a fortunate moment at which I entered this particular period of Egyptian archaeology. The time dating and character of the pred-dyn and pro-dyn had just been brilliantly diagnosed by De Morgan... The subject was now foremost in the mind of every student of Egypt and the Near East.’⁸

Randall-MacIver's first visit to Egypt was in 1898 to work with Petrie at Denderah, where he bought 2 Predynastic flint saws (1899.43.2–3) and 6 flint blades said to be from Naqada (1899.43.25–30), all of which he presented to the PRM. The following year he donated 20 Neolithic hollow-based arrow-heads and 6 flint flakes from the Fayum (1900.15.1–26), 7 Predynastic White Cross-lined (C-Ware) pottery vessels (1900.38.102–109) and 3 stone maceheads (1900.38.110–112), all of which were again purchased from dealers.

Randall-MacIver's largest single donation, however, was the material from his excavations at el-Amrah on behalf of the EEF in 1901 (5.5.1 below). This was also the year that the PRM acquired two other key collections: material from the royal tombs at Abydos (5.5.2 below) and a Predynastic settlement at el-Mahasna (5.5.3 below). Notably, Balfour was the stone tool expert consulted for all three of the excavation reports associated with these accessions, and this probably accounts for the considerable amount of Predynastic and Early Dynastic material donated in this year. Moreover the field directors at el-Amrah and Mahasna had both studied at Oxford and were thus predisposed to donating material to an institution they were most likely very familiar with.

After 1901, Randall-MacIver maintained his relationship with the PRM, and he sent ethnographic material purchased in local markets in Aswan in 1902 and Zanzibar in 1905. He had a particular interest in pottery production in Egypt and Sudan (Randall-MacIver 1905). Whilst working on the Nubian rescue campaigns in Sudan, he returned to thinking about the Predynastic period, particularly with regard to the striking black-topped pottery which continued to be manufactured in Nubia beyond the Early Dynastic Period in Egypt. These interests may explain his donation of 9 black-topped pottery vessels to the PRM in 1907 (1907.48.1–9), which are noted in the accession book to have been ‘made in imitation of Predynastic Egyptian pots, to discover methods of manufacture. Made by H.C. Mercer of Doylestown, Pennsylvania, 1907.’⁹ This accession is of interest in the history of archaeology since the earliest study of black-topped pottery manufacture has often been considered (e.g. Baba and Saito 2004: 576) to be by A. Lucas (1929; 1932), but Randall-MacIver's investigations were actually published earlier (Randall-MacIver and Woolley 1909: 17–18). It is notable that Randall-MacIver also had four of the white cross-lined pottery bowls that he purchased and presented to the PRM in 1900 examined for their pigment composition. Later in life he advocated the importance of archaeologists obtaining practical experience of craftwork (Randall-MacIver 1932: 464) and this interest in technology probably owes much to his interactions with the PRM.

⁸ Unpublished autobiographical note written by Randall-MacIver in 1942, Queen's College Library, Oxford/MS 541.

⁹ H.C. Mercer was a friend of Randall-MacIver's who he met when at the University of Pennsylvania Museum. Mercer later went on to found a pottery workshop in Philadelphia (Reed 1987).

Other than Randall-MacIver's donation, the material received by the PRM from excavations up until the Second World War was largely through the BSAE rather than the EEF, principally because Henry Balfour was a member of the BSAE Committee. Thus the BSAE excavations at Gerzeh (Wainwright 1911), Tarkhan (Petrie *et al.* 1912; 1913), Badari¹⁰ and Qau (Brunton and Caton-Thompson 1928), and the First-Dynasty 'tombs of the courtiers' at Abydos (Petrie 1925)¹¹ are represented in the PRM's collection, but not to the extent as the aforementioned sites of el-Amrah, Umm el-Qa'ab at Abydos or Mahasna. No one artefact stands out in these assemblages as unique in comparison to other museum assemblages.

There were also sporadic donations from private collectors during this time whose assemblages typify popular tastes in the acquisition of 'Predynastic art', and as 'choice' artefacts these tend to be those chosen for display in the PRM's galleries. This includes 3 black-topped pottery vessels donated in 1928,¹² a double ceramic vessel decorated with spirals, typical of Naqada IIC–D, presented in 1925,¹³ and a fish-shaped palette donated in 1929.¹⁴

More significant, from the point of view of the history of Egyptian archaeology, are the donations of material from two areas that were the basis for recognising the earlier Neolithic and Mesolithic in the Nile Valley; Gertrude Caton-Thompson's work in the Fayum (Caton-Thompson and Gardner 1934) and Arkell's (1949) excavations in Khartoum respectively. Gertrude Caton-Thompson had been involved with the 1920s BSAE excavations in the Badari region, which had extended Petrie's Predynastic sequence further back to the Badarian, but it was her own work in the Fayum that established the presence of an even earlier Neolithic in Egypt for the first time. This work is represented in the PRM by around 63 objects (5.5.4 below), together with material acquired from the same season from her excavations in the Early Dynastic quarries of Umm es-Sawan (Caton-Thompson and Gardner 1934) (5.5.5 below). The work of Anthony Arkell was just as significant as Caton-Thompson's in identifying prehistoric sites; principally sites from the Mesolithic and Neolithic periods of the Sudanese Nile Valley. At the Khartoum Hospital site in 1944, which was the first excavation of the Sudan Antiquities Service, Arkell (1949) identified a hunting and fishing society that produced microlithic tools and distinctive wavy-line pottery. On the basis of the latter Arkell coined the term 'Wavy Lined Culture', now generally referred to as the Khartoum Mesolithic or Early Khartoum. The PRM received just over 100 objects from Arkell's work at the Khartoum Hospital site (5.5.6 below).

5.5 Significant Collections (Mesolithic–Early Dynastic Periods)

5.5.1 *The Predynastic Cemetery of el-Amrah*

The Predynastic Period in Egypt is most visible archaeologically through its cemetery remains, and an estimated 15,000 graves have been excavated across Egypt (Hendrickx and van den Brink 2002) (*Figure 5.5*). Thus most assemblages of Predynastic material, where the provenance is known, are from such prehistoric necropolises. A list of all

¹⁰ Including 1924.35.1, a Second-Dynasty copper 'flaying knife'. Examined and photographed in Coghlan (1951: 144, plate X).

¹¹ These 8 vessels were transferred from the University of Oxford Department of Human Anatomy in 1946 (1946.5.5–12). They are all First-Dynasty pottery vessels from the tombs that surround the First-Dynasty royal enclosures at Abydos and the tomb numbers are written on the objects (tombs 272, 328, 403, 433, 501 and 539).

¹² 1928.40.1–3 bought at the Stevens Auction Rooms lot 560 on 12 December 1928 by Alfred Walter Francis Fuller.

¹³ 1925.16.16 donated by Miss G. Verney.

¹⁴ 1929.91.1 donated by James Thomas Hooper.



Figure 5.5 Drawing of a Predynastic burial from el-Amrah, Upper Egypt (Randall-MacIver and Mace 1901: pl. V). The clay model cattle are now in the British Museum (MacGregor 2010: 43–8), but the C-ware bowl is in the Pitt Rivers Museum (PRM Accession Number 1901.29.78).

known cemeteries excavated for this period is provided in Hendrickx and van den Brink (2002) and of these the PRM has only a handful of artefacts from a few of the sites:¹⁵ 1 fish-tailed knife from a cemetery at Hierakonpolis (1898.37.6);¹⁶ 16 stone tools from Diospolis Parva (1899.33.1–1899.33.16); 3 flints from Abydos cemeteries G (1900.42.1–2; Petrie 1902: 34–5) and X (1900.42.7; Randall-MacIver and Mace 1902: 53–55); 9 flints from Gerzeh (1911.33.1; Wainwright 1911; Stevenson 2009); 1 flint knife and 1 flint armet from Tarkhan (1912.32.1–2; Petrie *et al.* 1912); and 27 flints (1923.32.1–20, 1923.32.23, 1923.32.29), 1 macehead (1923.42.31), 1 palette plus rubbing stone (1923.43.36–37), 3 copper needles/pins (1923.43.55–57), 1 ripple-decorated Badarian pottery sherd (1923.43.55) and 3 ornaments from Qau (1923.43.39–40, 1923.43.59; Brunton and Caton-Thompson 1928).

In comparison, only the Predynastic cemetery of el-Amrah is well represented in the PRM collections, with 403 objects.¹⁷ The el-Amrah assemblage (all prefixed with the accession number 1901.29) is the most diverse of all the early Egypt collections in the PRM, including pottery, mudstone (greywacke) palettes, basketry, minerals, fragments of matting and leather, stone tools, beads, copper implements, ivory ornaments and animal mud figures. The only class of relatively common grave good that is absent are vessels made of stone.

¹⁵ Although there are 8 objects listed as being from Naqada, none are securely provenanced: samples of hair said to be from Naqada were found in the PRM collection in 1945 (1945.10.126), 6 were bought by David Randall-MacIver in Coptos, although said to be from Naqada (1899.43.25–30) and 1 perforated piece of stone donated by Francis Fox Tuckett is only 'said to be from Nagada', according to the accession records (1898.27.1).

¹⁶ A tubular spiral faience bead was donated by Brenda Seligman in 1946 (1946.8.106) possibly from the Main Deposit at Hierakonpolis.

¹⁷ A total that far exceeds that sent to the Asmolean Museum, which only received 48 objects (Payne 1993).

David Randall-MacIver and Anthony Wilkin excavated the site of el-Amrah between December 1900 and February 1901 on behalf of the EEF (MacIver and Mace 1902). The site had been targeted prior to this by the Frenchmen Jacques de Morgan and Émile Amelineau, but they 'had been more attracted by the numerous graves of the XIIth and XVIIIth Dynasties than by those of the pre-dynastic and proto-dynastic period' (Randall-MacIver and Mace 1902: 2), which Randall-MacIver and Wilkin chose to concentrate on. They divided the site into cemeteries a and b, but in reality both were part of one large Predynastic necropolis into which Eighteenth-Dynasty burials had intruded thus splitting the earlier contexts into two areas separated by only 250 yards.¹⁸

Only 156 of an estimated 800 graves from el-Amrah were published, because the 'quantity of small material is so great that the cost of figuring it would be excessive, while the repetition of identical illustrations in several memoirs would in any case be irksome, if not misleading' (Randall-MacIver and Mace 1902: 6). Reference was therefore made to Petrie's *Naqada and Ballas* volume (Petrie and Quibell 1896), in which 'were figured all the characteristic products of the period' (Randall-MacIver and Mace 1902: 6). Whilst the definition of cultural types in this manner was a preoccupation of the early 20th century, one hundred years later it is the nature of regional identities and local variations that has become of particular interest to Egyptologists (e.g. Baines 1996; Seidlmayer 1990). Consequently, detailed examination of all objects from a site can provide evidence of idiosyncrasies and patterns related to community and regional identities overlooked previously. The distribution of material, according to the EES distribution list, was extensive with at least twenty museums receiving artefacts from the season's work and it is clear from the objects in the PRM that most were labelled with the number of the tomb from which they came. This wide museum distribution of provenanced material means that there exists the opportunity to reunite objects and document through museum research unpublished tomb contents as a basis for the reinterpretation of the site with reference to more current debates.

From the tomb numbers noted on the objects it is also evident that tomb assemblages were rarely kept together. For instance, there are nine graves in the PRM collection that are also represented by objects in the Ashmolean Museum (Payne 1993).¹⁹ Some groups of objects in the PRM, however, were retained as coherent assemblages, such as 'the remarkable outfit of small objects of personal use' (Randall-MacIver and Mace 1902: 26; cf. *ibid.*: 16, plate vii, 2) found in grave a88 (1901.29.25–38).

There are a total 56 complete pottery vessels and 5 pottery sherds in the PRM from Amrah, which seems to be the largest set in the division of pottery from the site according to the unpublished distribution list currently held in the EES office in London. This assemblage includes most of the key types of pottery from this period as classified by Petrie (1896, 1901, 1921).²⁰ Such objects can be diagnostic for constructing relative chronologies (Hendrickx 2006), whilst the D-ware (*Figure 5.6*) and C-ware (*Figure 5.7*) are popular research subjects frequently requested to be viewed by researchers. The C-ware from el-Amrah is of particular interest as such objects have been considered to be iconographically unique (Finkenstaedt 1980).

There are also significant amounts of organic materials, and crucially a large number have tomb numbers associated with them. This includes the remains of 3

¹⁸ The site was later used as the type-site for Petrie's 'Amratian' culture, a term that is no longer used as a group identification, but remains in the literature as a chronological reference to the earlier part of the Predynastic, equivalent to the period between Naqada I and early Naqada II.

¹⁹ Graves a41, 156, 174, a90, a96, a131, b62, b102B, and b136.

²⁰ 13 black-topped (B-ware), 9 polished (P-ware), 6 rough (R-ware), 3 wavy-handled (W-ware), 8 decorated (D-Ware), 5 cross-lined (C-ware) and 4 late (L-ware) ceramic vessels.

baskets (1901.29.138–9), fragments of cord (1901.29.127), reed mat work samples (1901.29.140–141), 8 specimens of leather and skins (1901.29.138), more than 7 pieces of wood showing carved lines (1901.29.128–129), 3 pear-shaped clay objects embedded with plant fragments (1901.29.97–99) and 16 ivory ornaments.²¹ These – particularly the short-lived plant materials – are valuable resources for modern radiocarbon dating techniques (Dee *et al.* 2008; Rowland 2008).²² There are additionally several accessions of mineral samples, including what has been identified as bitumen (1901.29.135, 2005.60.1), as well as red pigment (1901.29.136) that may be valuable as reference samples for residue analysis. The resins in particular may be of interest since these are likely to be imported goods, although their origins and uses in Predynastic Egypt are unclear and require further study (Serpico 2000: 430).

Despite this diversity, the collection from el-Amrah is still dominated by stone tools. Often museum collections of Predynastic stone tools are based on objects that were popular with collectors, such as ripple-flaked knives. For instance, of all 11 ripple-flaked knives held in the PRM collection, 7 were purchased from dealers or collectors.²³ What makes the el-Amrah material more significant is that it encompasses not just the usual museum accessions ‘because ulterior questions of great interest are involved in the dating of the roughly-worked implements’ (Randall-MacIver and Mace 1901: 44). Consequently, Henry Balfour ‘examined the entire series’ (*ibid.*) and there are around 150 implements from the graves and fillings, many of which have yet to be individually numbered and documented.²⁴ A further 62 flints collected from the surface of the site have been identified as Palaeolithic (Milliken 2003: 183–91). The ‘rough’ nature of many of these pieces suggests certain biases in other early collections from excavations that the material in the PRM has the potential to counterbalance.

5.5.2 *First-Dynasty Royal Tombs at Abydos*

Randall-MacIver was also a member of Petrie’s team that worked in the area of Abydos known as the Umm el-Qa’ab, the site of the royal burials of the First and latter part of the Second Dynasty. It was possibly through his personal recommendation that the PRM received a substantial quantity of material from Petrie’s (1902) second season at the site.

All eight rulers of the First Dynasty and the last two kings of the Second Dynasty were interred at Abydos (see *Table 5.3*). Petrie’s work at the site between 1899 and 1903 followed on from the heavily-criticized digging of the area by Amelineau who allegedly ‘reduced to smithereens’ (Petrie 1901a: 2) all he did not take. Petrie’s more thorough working of the site, however, recovered such fragments and crucially the *serekhs* inscribed upon them (e.g. *Figure 5.8*) within which early ruler’s names were written. These allowed Petrie to date each of the royal burials relative to each other and build up the complete sequence of the First Dynasty from archaeological evidence for the first time.

The quantity of material from this site in the PRM, some 500 Early Dynastic Period items, is still relatively modest in comparison to the collection at the Ashmolean

²¹ Combs 1901.29.1 and 1901.29.107; tags 1901.29.2, 1901.29.29–38; bracelet 1901.29.106.

²² *A New Chronology for the Formation of the Egyptian State*, funded by the Leverhulme Trust (2010–2013), <http://c14.arch.ox.ac.uk/embed.php?file=egypt2.html>.

²³ e.g. 1900.42.2 bought and donated by Randall-MacIver; 1934.57.41 bought and donated by Edward Evans-Prichard; 1924.69.26 purchased from Sotheby’s (formerly Knowles collection); 1925.56.1 purchased from S.G. Fenton and company; 1926.73.2 collected by R.G. Gayer-Anderson; 1926.79.2 collected by Mohareb Todrous (a dealer in Luxor); 1925.75.1 collected by E.C. Mills.

²⁴ Including the assemblage photographed in the excavation report (Randall-MacIver and Mace 1902: plate VII, numbers 4 and 6).

World Archaeology at the Pitt Rivers Museum: A Characterization
 edited by Dan Hicks and Alice Stevenson, Archaeopress 2013, pages 60-89

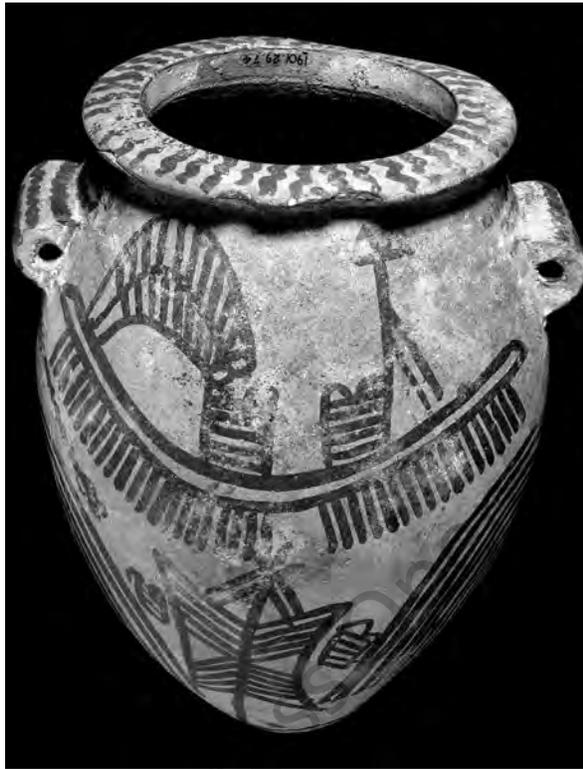


Figure 5.6 Painted
 Predynastic pottery vessel
 (D-ware) used to furnish
 el-Amrah grave B 37,
 Egypt (PRM Accession
 Number 1901.29.74).

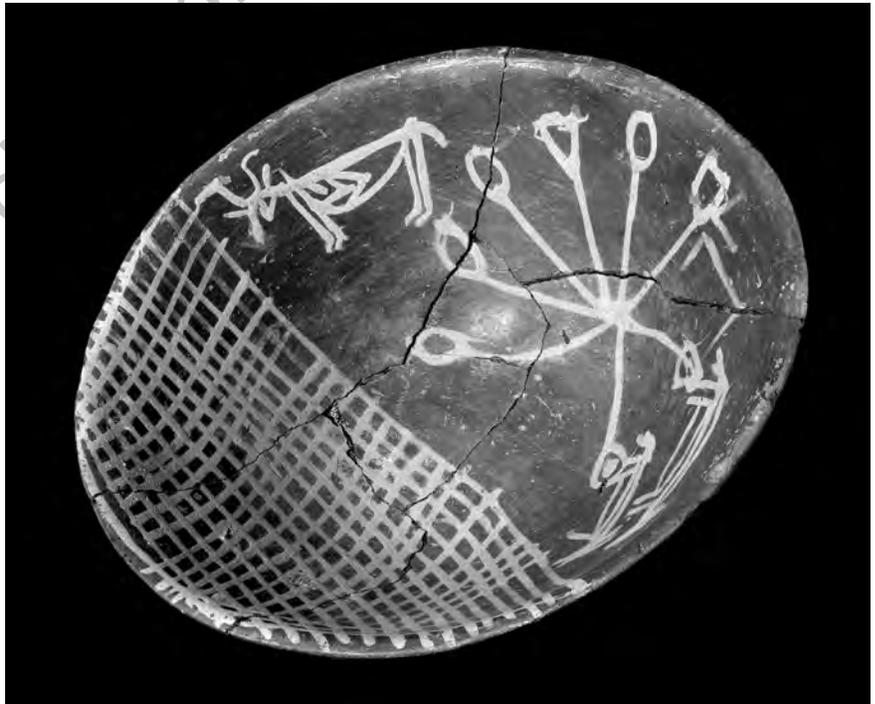


Figure 5.7 Painted
 Predynastic pottery bowl
 (C-ware) used to furnish
 el-Amrah grave B 161,
 Egypt (PRM Accession
 Number 1901.29.94)
 showing a net pattern and
 three representations of
 cattle on the interior.

Museum, which also includes a far broader range of material. The PRM items are largely implements of flint, ivory, bone or wood, and there are only 8 fragments (1901.40.34–38, 1925.32.8–10)²⁵ of the thousands of stone vessels found at the site that are otherwise frequently encountered in museum collections (Hendrickx *et al.* 2001). Of the other materials the only unique item in the collection, according to the EES distribution lists, is the sample of leather (1901.40.60 .2), although there is no firm basis on which to assert that this is Early Dynastic in date. The PRM does have a large number of organic specimens from the site relative to other museums, such as resin (1901.40.61 .1–28), ivory and worked wood²⁶ including 55 wood, bone and ivory arrow-heads and their associated reed shafts, which on typological grounds are of First-Dynasty date. Thus, like the material from el-Amrah, the collection is suited to absolute dating techniques and other organic chemistry investigations. Indeed samples from the reed shafts have recently been taken as part of the *New Chronology for the Formation of the Egyptian State* project,²⁷ which is at the time of writing still ongoing.

A secure chronological context cannot be claimed for all the material because of the complex nature of the site's life-history. A case in point is the large quantity of hair in the PRM collection (1901.40.78 .1–2, 1901.40.52 .1–5, 1901.40.53–55), which is not mentioned in the excavation report or in the distribution lists. Such quantities of hair, some of which was elaborately curled and possibly formed part of wigs, were noted by Amelineau in his work at the site prior to Petrie's (Amelineau 1904: 78, 455, 477). Museum documentation is limited, but at some point in the PRM's history they were attributed to the Early Dynastic period, although others have preferred to regard them as later votive deposits (Fletcher 2003: 100–101). Recent re-excavation of the site, however, by the German Archaeological Institute in Cairo (DAI) has recovered similar hair deposits from the First-Dynasty retainer burials (G. Dreyer pers. comm.) and this provides collaborative evidence for the early dating of the PRM examples, also known in the collections in Brussels and Berlin. Recent radiocarbon dating of these samples confirms an Early Dynastic dating (Mike Dee pers. comm.). The amount of hair from the site in the PRM is considerable and they thus provide a good resource for other forms of scientific sampling. In particular it could be valuable for isotopic analysis with a view to investigations of diet and seasonality (Peter Ditchfield, pers. comm.), as it has been suggested on the basis of the skeletal remains that there were health differences between those buried around the royal burials and those buried around the associated First-Dynasty enclosures also at Abydos (Keita and Boyce 2006), a theory which might be explored further with reference to dietary differences.

Less easy to ascertain a date for are the specimens of resin and pigments, which whilst all categorized as Early Dynastic in the database may be later as their context within the royal complex is unknown. There are samples of textiles (e.g. 1901.40.64), for instance, that are stated to be Early Dynastic, but this seems unlikely.

The strength of the PRM collection from the area of the Umm el-Qa'ab at Abydos lies in the large sample of material from the tomb of Djer. Unfortunately, Petrie's brief report of the site did not distinguish in a clear manner those objects

²⁵ These later objects are noted in the accession book to be 'from Royal tombs of I and II dynasties, Abydos' and these were donated in 1925 by Balfour's Assistant Curator Ernest Seymour Thomas.

²⁶ 1901.40.57.1–3, 'ten pieces of carved wood-work burnt, some have signs of carving', 1901.40.58 'pieces of wood-work'. Several items are listed in Killen (1994); 1901.40.74 wood with square groove, 1901.40.57 'furniture fragments partly calcined, wood and ivory', 1901.40.93 'fragment of carved bull's leg with scroll ornament', 1901.40.46 'oblong piece of ivory (part of box?)', 1901.40.136 'carved furniture fragments ivory', 1901.40.58 'furniture fragment shaped and bored, ivory'.

²⁷ <http://c14.arch.ox.ac.uk/embed.php?file=egypt2.html> Accessed 14 February 2012.

Figure 5.8 Model ivory flake from the tomb of the First Dynasty Egyptian king Aba at Abydos, Egypt with the name of the king inscribed at the tip in a serekh (PRM Accession Number 1901.40.5 .2).



Figure 5.9 Fragments of a horn bow from the tomb of the First Dynasty Egyptian king Djer (PRM Accession Numbers 1901.40.43.1–5).

from the burial chamber and those that were found in the subsidiary burials. Djer's tomb was surrounded by the largest number of retainers – 318 in total – and this may, in part, explain the higher number of artefacts associated with this tomb in the PRM. It is also the case that the unusual nature of the stone implements and the PRM's speciality in this area may have led to a specific concession of chipped-stone tools. The diversity of materials used stone implements in the tomb is striking in comparison to the other royal complexes and the current excavators of the site have also noted this (Vera Müller, pers. comm.). Petrie's volumes were all in black and white

providing no indication of the range of the assemblage, but it is clear from the PRM sample that there was a deliberate eclecticism and aesthetic choice in the stone selected for these assemblages. Whilst some of the unusual colourings are a product of the fire that destroyed the burial chamber in antiquity, not all are so explained. Collections such as this thus provide the opportunity to document the diversity of resources exploited in early Egypt and raise questions about material provenance for such flints, which is an area that has not been systematically investigated as yet for Egypt. In this respect the very large number of flint tools in the early Egypt collection, generally, may form an excellent reference collection for any future provenance studies of flint. It also highlights the value of old excavated collections for providing a material basis on which issues such as the archaeology of aesthetics may be addressed.

The collection also includes ivory and wooden arrow-heads together with their reed shafts,²⁸ which were prevalent at the site, some with the tips stained with red iron oxide.²⁹ The PRM selection probably includes bone and ebony, as well as ivory of various descriptions. Again a proper examination to determine the precise materials would be a useful exercise not just from a documentation point of view, but also as a way to qualify the nature of elite appropriation and exploitation of a range of resources as part of their political, ideological and political strategy during the consolidation of the early Egyptian state. For example, analysis of one of the First-Dynasty wooden arrows in the Ashmolean Museum revealed it to be a species of pine not native to Egypt (Western and McLeod 1995: 93): an observation that has yet to be qualified by a wider ranging account of the scope of materials recovered from the early royal tombs. The Royal Museums of Art and History (RMAH) in Brussels have begun a project to catalogue their large collection of material from the site, which may expand to include other collections (Bielen 2004: 634). The site is also being re-excavated currently by the German Archaeological Institute. The PRM's collections can thus contribute to these international efforts to understand the site.

Finally, special mention should also be made here of the oryx horn and wooden bow fragments from the tombs of Djfer (1901.40.43 .1–5; Petrie 1901a, pl:VII; *Figure 5.9*) and Den (1901.40.80–83) as despite the relative frequency of their depiction in Late Predynastic art, there are very few examples of such bows known in early Egyptian contexts (Gilbert 2004: 45). One of the few other ones known is a fragment from Tarkhan tomb 22 dated to the First Dynasty (Keimer 1936; Petrie *et al.* 1913: VII, 1). J.G.D Clarke *et al.* (1974: 342) singled out the PRM bow fragments from Abydos in his analysis of Egyptian bows and arrows as the subject of a separate study, although it appears that none was ever published. The whereabouts of the Tarkhan fragment are unknown, but another bow from the Abydos royal tombs is accessioned into the Berlin Museum (Accession Number 18041; Gilbert 2004: 189) although it seemingly lacks the contextual association with a specific tomb. A more complete example is in Cairo Museum (Accession Number JE 34981) (Petrie 1901a: plate XXVI, A).

5.5.3 *The Settlement Site of el-Mahasna*

The site of Mahasna, discovered by John Garstang at the beginning of the 20th century, was one of the first Predynastic settlements in Egypt to be excavated and reported (Garstang 1903). Garstang had been a Mathematics student at Jesus College, Oxford, from 1895 to 1899. His account of the work at the Mahasna settlement was brief, taking

²⁸ 1901.40.22, 1901.40.42 (29 examples), 1901.40.49 .1–13, 1901.40.67–69, 1901.40.84–88, 1901.40.94–97, 1901.40.42 .30–36.

²⁹ Petrie speculated that this might be poison or a form of sympathetic magic (Petrie 1901a: 34–35; see also Clarke *et al.* 1974; Teeter 2011, 240).

up only three pages of the Egyptian Research Account's memoir, and the site has been largely overlooked in accounts of Predynastic Egypt. This might not just be due to the limited nature of the official report and the lack of archives associated with this excavation, but also because its surviving collections are not very visible in museums. Indeed, until this project the size of the Mahasna material was underestimated as indicated in a letter, dated 12 July 1963, from the Assistant Secretary of PRM, A.Q. Butler, to the Head of the Liverpool School of Archaeology and Oriental Studies, now in the archives of the School of Classics, Archaeology and Egyptology, University of Liverpool (Patricia Winker, pers. comm.):

Mr Penniman has asked me to write and thank you for your enquiry of 13 June 1963. They have a lot of Egyptian material but only a few from Garstang 1901–2 season.⁷

The only manuscript associated with the site is an unpublished distribution list in the Petrie Museum,³⁰ which in addition to the PRM, lists twenty other destinations for the objects retrieved during that season (which also included work at Abydos and Bet Khallaf). Having consulted the catalogues, online databases and the curators of institutions associated with the cities mentioned on the distribution list, it is clear that the Predynastic settlement of Mahasna is represented in only a few museum collections, with the PRM possessing the largest amount of material by far with over 1,600 artefacts (primarily flint tools).³¹

Mahasna is located approximately 10.5 km north of Abydos and has been more recently re-excavated as part of the University of Pennsylvania-Yale University and the Institute of Fine Arts, New York Expedition to Abydos (Anderson 2006). The latter's work has re-located Garstang's concession and dated the ancient activity at the site between Naqada I and III. In his report Garstang identified two separate settlement areas, S1 and S2, based on the concentration of worked flints and pottery in these areas. They were separated by zones of much lower surface densities of Predynastic artefacts, together with lighter coloured silts and sands, but were probably part of one site. Area S2 revealed structural remains of possible wattle-and-daub constructions, whilst the excavation of area S1 uncovered less definite remains.

The large number of chipped-stone tools from Mahasna in the PRM was unexpected, as the initial overview of the collection based upon the database and accession records suggested that there were only several dozen flint tools. Yet in the PRM Stone Tool store an estimated 1,500 flint implements, all un-numbered, from both areas S1 and S2 were discovered. Therefore, the PRM's assemblage may represent one of the largest collections of stone tools in a museum from any Predynastic Egyptian site known and may be the subject of renewed international interest given the site's current re-excavation.

Very few studies of lithics from settlement contexts have been conducted, and the work of Diane Holmes (1989) on the Predynastic settlement flints from Badari, Hierakonpolis and Naqada is one of the most important studies thus far published. It demonstrated that the range of stone tools was far wider than what had been selected to be placed in Predynastic burials and was far more eclectic than early excavators allusions to 'flake scatters' in settlement areas indicated. Yet the number of objects available to Holmes in the Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology was small; around 334 lithics from Hemamieh and about 45 from Badari. She noted on

³⁰ PMA/WFP1 115/10/1(9)

³¹ The Asmolean Museum has 11 objects (Payne 1993), the Manchester Museum has 27, the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology has 131 pieces and the Oriental Institute in Chicago has 63 items (David Anderson, pers. comm.), although the latter are largely surface collections made by Seton-Karr who may have visited the site during its excavation.

the basis of these collections that the early selection of lithic tools for museums was problematic, with diagnostic pieces being the favoured museum requisition. Thus whilst Petrie brought home most of the material from cemeteries, Holmes' research demonstrated was not the case for the settlements (Holmes 1989). In comparison it is clear that the PRM has a huge variety of tools and it is likely to be a fairly representative sample. For instance, Holmes (1989: 36–37) notes that it was usual for collectors to retrieve more 'attractive' specimens, but they almost never collected retouched flakes, notches, denticulates, cores, circular scrapers or end-scrapers. An initial overview of the PRM's material reveals that all these types of implements are present, with retouched flint flakes being very common, and several denticulates, circular scrapers and end-scrapers were observed. The collection has yet to be individually catalogued and clearly there is scope for a detailed investigation of the nature of the assemblage. It is possible that this is one of the few representative samples of Predynastic settlement lithic technology outside Egypt (cf. Holmes 1989) and thus it has significant potential not only as a teaching and reference collection, but also for new research on the nature and role of lithic technology in daily life of Predynastic Egyptians.

In addition to the stone tools, other material from the site includes 13 pottery and stone spindle whorls (1901.42.145–157), 4 pottery sherds (1901.42.162–165), a 'stingray' spine (1901.42.159), an ivory comb (1901.42.135), 7 small pottery urns (1901.42.138–144), 3 fragments of palettes,³² and a large (62 cm) intact storage jar with the image of a giraffe incised upon it (1901.42.166; Garstang 1903: plate IV). Notable are the unusual pebbles and flints from two distinct deposits, most of which were not mentioned in the excavation report, but which form striking assemblages (1901.42.1–30). The accumulation of such unusually-shaped, coloured and textured stones is also known to be an aspect of Early Dynastic temple deposits such as at Tell Ibrahim Awad (van Haarlem 1995; 1996) and Elephantine (Dreyer 1986: 96–97, 153, Tafel 57), but these rarely receive detailed attention because they are associated with other carved votive objects.

In the same season Garstang also excavated six Third-Dynasty mud-brick *mastabas* (tombs) at Bet Khallaf, the largest of which was K1, dating to the reign of King Netjerikhet (Djoser). The PRM possesses a number of flint tools from a surface collection around K1, mostly Palaeolithic (Milliken 2003: 179), but there are also 10 crescent-shaped flint tools collected from the vicinity of K1 (1901.42.56–65; Garstang 1903: plate XV), as well as 18 Third-Dynasty copper tools (1901.42.115 (8 objects), 1901.42.116, 1901.42.118–123, 1901.42.168–169) from the K1 *mastaba* itself. Similar copper implements are on display in the Ashmolean Museum as well as several other museums, including the British Museum, the University of Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, and the Manchester Museum.

5.5.4 Neolithic Egypt

The PRM had received stone tools that are most likely to be Neolithic in date prior to Caton-Thompson's pioneering work in the Fayum, but they were not recognized as such and very few are provenanced precisely. For example, there is a poorly understood stone tool assemblage from the Eastern Desert and the Fayum donated by Seton-Kerr³³ and a collection of stone implements from the Libyan Desert accumulated

³² 1901.43.124, 125 and 131. In the accession book there are two separate notes both listing '10 fragments of palettes, s.1' although only 10 have been found in the PRM and it is possible that the set was mistakenly counted twice and there are only 10. Of these 10 only 5 are of mudstone (greywacke) material so distinctively used for these artefacts and only 3 flat enough to be palettes. The rest are simply rough stones and cannot be considered palettes.

³³ A total of 469 stone tools from Egypt said to have been collected by Captain Seton-Kerr (1859–1938)

and donated by Charles Trick Currely in 1924 (1924.40.42, 1924.40.46–64), both of which require definition by a stone tool expert, but Sarah Milliken commented in her analysis of the Egyptian stone tools that these were possibly Neolithic.

The PRM holds 63 stone tools that derive from Caton-Thompson's 1927–1928 season in the Fayum (1928.42.47–113), which were considered 'more noteworthy accessions to the Museum collections' in the PRM 1928 annual report. Her excavations recovered a series of small camps along the ancient lakeshore and which were the basis for her Fayum A culture. To date the area still represents the best record of the Neolithic in Egypt, with the earliest known evidence for agriculture, and has been re-investigated several times (Ginter and Kozłowski 1983; Holdaway *et al.* 2010; Wendorf and Schild 1976; Wendrich and Cappers 2005). Thirty-one museums received material from Caton-Thompson's excavation (Caton-Thompson and Gardner 1934: xiv) and whilst some of these institutions received coherent assemblages, the material in the PRM, from the associated numbers on some of the artefacts, appears to derive from several different areas of the season's work, including site L KOM, Camp ii, X, X-L, Zi and Qasr Sagha. None of these sites are the focus of current research, and the most important areas of Caton-Thompson's work are considered to be the largest mounds, Kom's K and W where direct evidence for agriculture was first located.

There are some documents in the PRM manuscript collection associated with this collection, including photographs and notes on the surrounding geology of the sites made by Caton-Thompson's colleague, Elinor Gardner.³⁴ Caton-Thompson's own archaeological notes are in the Institute of Archaeology, London.³⁵ Overall, the research potential of this collection would be realized through a programme of research that ranged across several museum collections, which may be productive given the object contexts noted on the objects, as well as the associated excavation records.

Caton-Thompson also personally donated 145 flint implements (1924.47.1.1–145) acquired from the surface around Helwan (Caton-Thompson n.d.:13–19). The site was a popular collecting spot since Reil drew attention to the thousands of microlithic and blade tools strewn across the landscape in the 19th century (Browne 1878) and as a result the area today is much denuded (Andie Byrnes pers. comm.). Many of these collectors passed on their finds to the PRM, and there are an additional 101 implements in the collection from Helwan, comprising 80 collected by F.L. Griffith (32 via Seligman), 19 bought at an auction of S.G. Hewlett's collection, and 2 from John Evans' personal collection. The industry at Helwan is currently undated, although it has been suggested, on the basis of the appearance of the distinctive Helwan points at Negav, that they reached there from the Middle Euphrates around 7600 BCE (Gopher 1994). Currently, however, no Helwan points are known from Sinai and a direct connection has not been established. One problem in establishing whether the industry, or which parts of it, are Epipalaeolithic or Neolithic is because it has not been fully published (Midant-Reynes

are in the collection, although many of these found their way into the PRM via other collectors such as John Evans, Charles Seligman, Henry Forbes and the Ipswich Museum. Seton-Karr presented material to over 200 museums and institutions worldwide, but much of this material lacks specific provenance, limiting its utility. The examples in the PRM have not been examined in detail and most lack good descriptions and chronological attributions, although several are certainly Neolithic and at least 2 are Palaeolithic (Milliken 2003: 172). From current documentation it can be established that at least 285 objects came via the Ipswich Museum in 1966, but the provenance of all of these is uncertain and the associated records only state 'Eastern Desert'. A further 57 were collected from the Fayum, 49 of which were received directly from Seton-Karr in 1904 (1904.24.1–49), including Neolithic hollow-based arrow-heads. Some 65 pieces derive from the flint mines at Wadi el-Sheikh (1900.45.1–13) discovered by Seton-Karr in 1896 (Seton-Karr 1898), see below. The collection also includes a series of 8 specimens illustrating the earlier stages in the manufacture of flint bracelets from discoidal pieces of flint (1900.22.1–8), and 3 pieces of coarse pottery (1900.22.9–11).

³⁴ PRM Manuscripts Collection/Gardner Papers.

³⁵ UCLA/IA/A/4.

2000: 89). Since the PRM possesses a sizeable number it would provide a one possible starting point for an attempt to define this industry.

Further Neolithic stone tools came to the PRM in the 1930s and 1940s, but in these cases the assemblages were made through surface collection over fairly broad regions. This includes 20 arrow-heads (1940.12.811 .1–11, 1940.12.812 .1–7, 1940.12.835 .1–2) from the large collection of over 3,500 artefacts from around the world donated to the PRM by Charles and Brenda Seligman, many from Egypt, but mostly all Palaeolithic (Milliken 2003).

5.5.5 Early Quarries

The collection includes archaeological material from a number of flint quarry sites. Among these is material from Caton-Thompson's investigation of the Early Dynastic (Third Dynasty) and Old Kingdom gypsum quarry of Umm es-Sawan (Caton-Thompson and Gardner 1934). Forty objects (1928.42.1–39, 1928.42.80) from this fieldwork are held by the PRM, including gypsum vessels, crescent-shaped flint tools, vessel blanks and rough-outs with flint tools still embedded in the surface. The site has seen ongoing field investigation, and recent surveys have found similar objects *in situ* (Bloxam and Haldal 2007; Haldal *et al.* 2009). These surveys, however, did not recover any of the 'crescent-shaped' chert drills used for boring out the centres of the vessel, which are in the PRM's collection (Elizabeth Bloxam pers. comm.).

Also in the collection are about 542 stone implements from the Wadi es Sheikh in the Eastern Desert, a well-known flint quarry first discovered by Seton-Karr in 1896 (Seton-Karr 1898). The collection donated by Charles G. Seligman (1940.12.788–796, 1940.12.800) and Seton-Karr are difficult to date, and indeed are probably variable in terms of period represented: the former is largely made up of fine regular bladelets and the latter includes some bifacial pieces that appear to be Predynastic in date. A recent survey of the site (Negro and Cammelli 2010) noted that the majority of the blades from the area were Twelfth Dynasty (Middle Kingdom) in date, although the site was undoubtedly intensively exploited for its extensive high quality flint from the Predynastic period.

5.5.6 Mesolithic and Neolithic Sudan

The PRM possesses 102 items from the excavation at the Khartoum Hospital site, donated as a type-series including 47 pottery sherds with the diagnostic impressed decoration and 55 stone tools: 29 microliths (1950.10.62 1–16), 8 scrapers on flakes (1950.10.66. 1–10), 4 sandstone grinders (1950.10.55–58), 4 ochre grinders (1950.10.46, 47, 53, 54), 4 borers (1950.10.64 .1–4), 3 small hammerstones (1950.10.48–50), 2 stone rings (1950.10.51, 52) and a net sinker (1950.10.61). Almost all of the artefacts are numbered with the square of the excavation, which can be correlated with the tables published by Arkell (1949: 96, 105). There are a limited number of museums with Khartoum material in the UK; there are 121 artefacts in the Ashmolean Museum (of a similar profile to the PRM's), 53 items in the British Museum and 110 in the Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology. Together then with the Ashmolean Museum collection, the PRM collection is undoubtedly valuable as a reference and teaching resource in Oxford.

Another significant collection, in terms of the history of archaeology, is made up of 180 objects (1940.12.846) from Charles Seligman's excavation of three mounds at Faragab in Sudan, which he believed were prehistoric. His publication of the work (Seligman 1916) represents the first interest in prehistoric archaeology in Sudan away from the sphere of Egyptian influences (Edwards 2004: 5). This material was never dated, but the fine decoration on the pottery sherds together with their high firing

and the presence of several decorated handles suggests a much later, possibly even post-Roman, date (cf. Chapter 8). The PRM also houses a large collection from Jebel Moya in Sudan, donated by Henry Wellcome who sponsored excavations at the site over four seasons from 1910 – not so much for the archaeology, but as a way of providing life-improving employment for the local population (Larson 2009: 58). The earlier periods at the site are poorly recorded and understood, but re-examination of sherds held by the British Museum demonstrated that there is evidence of Neolithic occupation in the form of wavy-lined and dotted and wavy-line pottery (Caneva 1991). Of the 388 objects from the site in the PRM (1949.12.1–137), some 194 might be prehistoric and as the example of the British Museum investigation shows (Caneva 1991) there is considerable scope for museum collections such as this to contribute to a better identification and understanding of Neolithic Sudan (see also Brass 2009).

Of more certain early date are 18 objects were obtained from the Protodynastic (A-Group) cemetery of Faras excavated by F.L. Griffith in 1911–12 (Griffith 1921a)³⁶ and 4 artefacts³⁷ that were donated by Balfour's assistant curator Ernest Seymour Thomas in 1925. The Griffith Institute (University of Oxford) houses the complete and mostly unpublished field record of these excavations (Malek 1988) and thus these objects could potentially be more fully contextualized as part of a wider re-assessment of this only partially published site (Griffith 1921). Finally, there is a single small pottery bowl with herringbone band fast below rim and incised lines (1946.8.78) donated by Brenda Seligman in 1946 and which is said to be from Kordofan Baraais. Material collected by W.B.K. Shaw in 1935 from the Wadi Howar (1936.62.1–2) close to the Libyan-Sudanese border, which includes some Neolithic dotted wavy lined pottery, is discussed by Paul Lane in Chapter 8 as most of the material is seemingly later in date.

5.7 The Early Egyptian Collections after 1951

With the cessation of the BSAE and the limitations placed on UK work in Egypt in the 1950s, fewer museum accessions of Egyptian objects were made after the end of the British occupation of Egypt in 1952. In fact only two further groups of donations have been made to the PRM since, neither of which derived from excavations. The first of these donations was made in 1957 by a Mr H.E. Merry and consisted of 87 stone tools³⁸ that he had collected in Siwa Gara (Libyan Desert) whilst serving in the First World War. These items have yet to be described and identified. The other donation derived from the larger corpus of material transferred from Ipswich Museum in 1966. The Seton-Karr collection that was part of this has already be mentioned, but this was also accompanied by 8 Predynastic pottery vessels from the Estate of Denis Alfred Jex Buxton (1895–1964), an RAF officer who had been educated at Balliol College, Oxford, and was later a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries.³⁹ At least one of these vessels⁴⁰ – 1966.32.51 – has an old square labels

³⁶ Some of these, such as the A-group pottery vessel (1951.4.04) were loaned to the Pitt Rivers by the Ashmolean Museum in 1951. The others (1912.89.31–39), were received directly from Francis Lewellyn Griffith in 1912. These include 3 quartz palettes, 5 polishing stones and 2 copper awls.

³⁷ 1925.32.12 black-topped pottery jar from Khor Bahan (University of Oxford excavations 1907–1908), 1925.32.6 large ground stone axe from Dabod, 1925.32.11 rhomboid-shaped palette, and 1925.32.13 small red pottery jar painted in reticulate designs from Dakka. These were probably collected during his time in Cairo where he prepared a catalogue of the ethnographic collections of the Royal Geographical Society of Egypt

³⁸ 1957.9.1 B–81B. There is also a map drawn by the donor associated with this accession and showing the sites of 'Jarabub', 'Elfara' and 'Siwa' in relation to Cairo and the Mediterranean Sea.

³⁹ One polished (P-Ware) vessel (1966.32.55), 3 black-topped (B-Ware) pottery vessels (1966.32.50, 1966.32.53–54), 2 decorated (D-Ware) vessels (1966.32.26) and (1966.32.24), a late wavy-handled (W-Ware) vessel (1966.32.51) and a brown burnished Badarian bowl (1966.32.19).

⁴⁰ Possibly two: see 1966.32.24.

referencing the site of Gebelein and the accession register suggests that they may have originally derived from the largely unpublished work of Gaston Maspero at Gebelein. Predynastic vessels such as this are popular with collectors and frequently appear in auctions, but without provenance they are of limited utility to current research given the large number of well-documented pieces.

5.8 Summary: Potential and Future Research

The early Egyptian collections of the Ashmolean Museum, are better known, better studied, and more extensive than those of the PRM.⁴¹ Yet the PRM early Egypt collection is distinctive, and holds significant research potential. The preponderance of stone tools and organic specimens relative to other museum collections are an untapped resource, most notably for the sites of el-Amrah, the settlement of el-Mahasna, and the royal tombs of the First and Second Dynasty. There is significant scope for programmes of radiocarbon dating and chemical investigative techniques on the very numerous organic materials. At least two collections of stone tools – the one from Mahasna and the one from Helwan – offer the opportunity to define stone tool industries that are otherwise under-represented in museums, and little known in the literature to date. In particular, the Mahasna material is striking as if any trend can be seen in this review of the collecting practices associated with early Egypt (as for many areas) it is the tendency to select singular artefacts or sets of artefacts primarily for illustrative purposes, yet the Mahasna accession is more characteristic of a whole assemblage. Other collections will require more preliminary description and identification, such as those from the Sudan, but which represent less intensively studied areas that are certainly deserving of the effort.

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⁴¹ For example, see Payne's (1993) catalogue of the Asmolean Museum's Predynastic collection, which lists over 2000 Predynastic Egyptian objects.

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