

# Iron Age and Roman Italy

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## 16.1 Introduction

The Pitt Rivers Museum (PRM) holds *c.* 346 artefacts from Italy that are recorded as Iron Age or Roman in date. A further *c.* 302 artefacts are listed as 'Roman', but with no country of provenance. This chapter therefore presents a characterization of *c.* 648 artefacts, complementing the discussions of Iron Age and Roman material in the chapters on Egypt (Chapter 7), Europe (Chapter 11), the Aegean and Cyprus (Chapter 15), the Levant (Chapter 22) and South-West Asia (Chapter 23).

After setting this collection in its geographic and temporal context (16.2), this chapter presents an overview of the collectors represented by the Iron Age and Roman Italian collections (16.3), with reference to the PRM founding collection (16.3.1), and the material collected by John Wickham Flower (16.3.2), Henry Balfour (16.3.3), Robert William Theodore Gunther (16.3.4), Anthony John Arkell (16.3.5), Walter Leo Hildburgh (16.3.6), and other collectors (16.3.7). The collections from Iron Age Italy are considered in section 16.4 by Lucy Shipley, Yannis Galanakis and Stella Skaltsa, with reference to the Etruscan collections (16.4.1) and the other Iron Age material from Italy (16.4.2). Collections from Roman Italy and unprovenanced Roman objects are considered by Zena Kamash in section 16.5, and brief conclusions are drawn in section 16.6.

## 16.2 Temporal and Geographic Context

'The Latini at the outset were few in number and most of them would pay no attention to the Romans; but later on, struck with amazement at the prowess both of Romulus and of the kings who came after him, they all became subjects. And after the overthrow of the Aequi, the Volsci, the Hernici...the Rutuli, the aborigines... the Rhaeci, the Argyrusci and the Preferni, the whole country was called Latium' (Strabo *Geography* 5.3.4).

At the beginning of the early Iron Age (*c.* 900 BCE), 'Italy' as we understand it today did not exist. As the quote from Strabo demonstrates the peninsula was highly cosmopolitan and occupied by numerous peoples, all speaking different languages and dialects. Politically many of these peoples were fiercely inclined towards independence. At the same time, however, the diffusion of Hellenistic ideas, fashions and styles created a range of 'hybrid' cultures that were only unified by Rome. The main areas of relevance to this chapter are those under Greek and Etruscan influence.

Greek cities had established colonies in parts of southern Italy and Sicily since the early 8th century BCE. As a consequence of these colonies the region became known

as Magna Graecia (Greater Greece). Taranto, the source of the majority of the Iron Age Italian objects in the PRM collection, was one such colony. It was a coastal city in Apulia that was founded, according to the ancient tradition, around 700 BCE by settlers from Sparta. The city flourished and became one of the most important commercial and artistic centres of southern Italy. Essentially, these colonies were a series of small city-states who were independent of each other and of their mother cities. The foundation of these Greek colonies brought about major changes in Iron Age Italy. As Greek traders came northwards in search of metals, Greek objects, especially pottery vessels, began to appear as grave goods in Latium and southern Etruria. The effects of this 'Orientalizing Period' spread all along the coastal strip of western-central Italy.

There were also major developments to the north of Rome, where as far as Florence and the River Arno, a large part of the population would have called themselves Etruscans. Cities such as Veii and Tarquinia were conspicuous for their size and the strength of their natural defences. These cities seem to have developed from small dispersed settlements akin to villages that nucleated into a single centre. It is under the Etruscans, for example, that between 616–509 BCE the series of hilltop villages on the Palatine, Esquiline and Quirinal coalesced into the single centre that we know as Rome. At the same time as the appearance of urban characteristics, chamber tombs begin to appear in cemeteries, which were furnished with rich grave goods.

After the expulsion of the Etruscan kings in 509 BCE Rome remained politically independent and its population basically Latin, though its material culture indicates close contacts with other Etruscan cities. Throughout the 4th and 3rd centuries BCE, Rome's influence began to spread across the peninsula. This was partly a consequence of the colonies of its citizens that Rome established in some of the major cities of Latium. Rome, however, also engaged in a series of wars, particularly against the Samnites who controlled large parts of Campania and Lucania. After the Samnite Wars, Rome turned its attention towards the Greek cities of southern Italy. By 272 BCE wars against the colonies of Magna Graecia brought the whole Italian peninsula under Roman control, heralding Rome's overseas expansion into the Mediterranean and beyond. It is from this point onwards that we can begin to talk about 'Roman Italy'.

### 16.3 Collectors

#### 16.3.1 *The Founding Collection*

The PRM founding collection includes *c.* 233 artefacts listed as being, or possibly being, Iron Age and/or Roman. More than half of these, some *c.* 187 items, are identified as 'Roman', yet only 18 are identified as definitively deriving from Italy (1884.41.38, 1884.42.1–2, 1884.42.10, 1884.67.40, 1884.67.76, 1884.68.108, 1884.79.90, 1884.79.112, 184.79.116–119, 1884.79.124–125, 1884.79.128). A further 25 objects are currently described as Etruscan (or possibly Etruscan) (1884.32.15, 1884.37.83 .1, 1884.41.19, 1884.64.4, 1884.67.17, 1884.67.38–39, 1884.67.53, 1884.67.55, 1884.70.11, 1884.79.110–111, 1884.80.42–43, 1884.99.8, 1884.119.447–448, 1884.119.629 .1), 5 appear to be Classical Greek in date (1884.79.81, 1884.79.94–96, 1884.79.122) and the remainder are currently listed simply as 'Iron Age' (1884.24.129, 1884.24.130, 1884.67.21, 1884.67.35–37, 1884.68.103, 1884.79.80, 1884.79.93, 1884.79.99–101, 1884.79.113–114, 1884.79.120–121, 1884.79.126–127, 1884.79.129–132).

As with much of the General's collection, there is little indication as to the provenance of most of these artefacts or who may have acquired them originally. With regard to the latter, one notable exception is an Etruscan vessel (1884.38.27), which

formed part of the Cesnola assemblage (see Chapter 15). The only other item with an indication of its 19th-century acquisition is the Etruscan bronze handle (1884.67.17), noted to have been purchased at Rollin and Feuardent's auction house sometime prior to its display with the rest of Pitt-Rivers' collection in Bethnal Green in 1874.

### 16.3.2 John Wickham Flower

Some 33 Iron Age and 4 Roman Italian objects now in the PRM were formerly part of the collection of John Wickham Flower, whose collection was donated to the Oxford University Museum in 1873 by his widow and then transferred to the PRM in 1892. Although his collection reflected his main research interests in English prehistory, little is known about the provenance of the 29 Etruscan artefacts that it also encompassed (1892.67.15, 1892.67.47, 1892.67.61, 1892.67.933–942). The majority of these are ceramics, of which many are simply collections of sherds or fragments, with the exception of a complete blackware *oinochos* jug (1892.67.61), which is discussed below (16.3.1), and a terracotta votive offering of a uterus (1892.67.47) found in Cyprus, but more recently identified by Karageorghis as being Etruscan and consequently was not included in his catalogue of *Cypriote Art in the Pitt Rivers Museum* (Karageorghis 2009). The remaining objects of Iron Age date amidst the Flower material include 3 Hellenistic figures (1892.67.18–20), a 5th-century BCE *pelike* pottery vessel from Capua (1892.67.57) and a single pottery head (1892.67.17) described as being from *Magna Graecia*, presumably one of the ancient Greek cities along the coast of southern Italy. Three Roman objects from the Flower collection were recently found as unaccessioned objects, including 2 pottery vessels (2004.148.6 and 2004.148.10) and a ceramic disc (2004.148.11), all said to derive from Rome itself. There are a further 21 objects listed as being Roman, but without any provenance whatsoever, including 4 mirrors (1892.67.9–11, 1892.67.140), 11 ceramic vessels (1892.67.66, 1892.67.947, 2004.148.1–2, 2004.148.4–5, 2004.148.7–9, 2004.148.21), 3 bronze vases (1892.67.947, 1892.67.951–952), a bronze lamp (2000.66.1), a pottery sherd (1892.67.2) and a hollow pottery head of a monkey (2008.29.1).

### 16.3.3 Henry Balfour

The Museum's first curator, Henry Balfour, personally donated about 114 objects, including roughly 70 Roman artefacts, 32 Greek objects and 3 Etruscan (the remainder currently only identified as 'Iron Age'). Some 44 objects of the total number of objects are recorded as coming from the city of Taranto. A good portion of Balfour's material is from Taranto, according to the PRM register details, and originates from an 1895 excavation at the old city walls. The material is almost all noted to be Greek (see 16.3.2) and includes: 21 loom-weights (1884.29.3–23) that were originally believed to be fishing net weights; 2 lamps (1932.88.340 and 1932.88.342) that formed part of Balfour's series on lighting; 5 ancient Greek astragals (knuckle bones) (1895.9.15–19); 2 jointed pottery dolls (1895.9.21–22); a square bronze mirror (1919.8.7); and a strigil (1917.28.17). A bird-shaped bronze fibula (2000.56.13) is the only object from Taranto currently noted to be 'Roman', although a pair of arms of a statuette of a boxer showing a cestus on both hands (1895.9.20) is possibly to be considered Roman, while an indistinct spindle whorl (1896.29.24) can only be said to be generally Iron Age. There are also 6 further lamps from Taranto, again without more specific cultural attribution (1932.88.341, 1932.88.343, 1932.88.436, 1932.88.486, 1932.88.500, 1932.88.504).

The Roman material that Balfour donated includes 11 *styli* of bone and ivory (1894.4.1–11), 3 bone bodkins (1894.4.12–14), 21 pieces of coloured chalk said to be from Pompeii (1916.2.25), 2 leaden slingstones (*glandes*) both with raised inscriptions

(1900.3.6–7), 5 pottery lamps (1932.88.431–434, 1932.88.526) and a bronze astragalus from Sicily (1900.3.11). A further 27 objects are unprovenanced Roman objects and include 3 bone pins (1894.15–17), 3 pottery lamps (1932.55.544, 1932.88.526, 1932.88.548), 9 coins (1912.45.38–46), and 12 coins that may be either Greek or Roman according to current documentation (1933.51.33–44). The Etruscan material includes a pair of ivory dagger pommels (1898.20.62–63, see 16.3.1).

One final item associated with the name Balfour is an Etruscan *Bucchero* cup with loop handles (1933.42.1), excavated at Orieveto by Odoardo Giglioli. The donor appears not to be Henry Balfour, however, but rather a Miss K. Balfour whose relation or not to the PRM's curator is unknown.

#### 16.3.4 Robert William Theodore Gunther

Robert William Theodore Gunther (1869–1940) collected one of the most substantial parts of the Roman Italian collection: 27 anatomical terracotta votives (1896.15.4–30, see 16.4 below), from Veii, Italy. R.W.T. Gunther studied zoology at Oxford University and was a Tutor in Natural Science at Magdalen College. A large part of his scientific fieldwork was carried out in Italy, which probably accounts for his collection. He also published on an imperial villa near Naples, confirming his side-interest in the archaeology of the Classical world (Gunther 1913).

#### 16.3.5 Anthony John Arkell

Amongst the unprovenanced Roman objects are 62 coins from the collection of Anthony Arkell (1971.15.1497–1510, 1971.15.1522–1531, 1971.15.1534, 1971.15.1536–1540, 1971.15.1542–1545, 1971.15.1547–1550, 1971.15.1558–1559, 1971.15.1628, 1971.15.1661–1681). There is additionally a Greek coin provenance to Apulia in his collection (1971.15.1541). Arkell was an archaeologist and former colonial administrator in Sudan and Egypt best known for his work at Khartoum, Meroe and on trade beads found in Africa (see Chapter 8).

#### 16.3.6 Walter Leo Hildburgh

The c. 59 Iron Age/Roman objects collected by Walter Leo Hildburgh (1876–1955) were transferred to the Museum by the Wellcome Institute in 1985, thirty years after Hildburgh's death. This loan represents the largest single change to the Italian Iron Age and Roman material of the Museum in the 20th century. His collection includes 34 Etruscan small bronze figurines, known as *bronzetti schematici* (1985.50.466–495, 1985.50.497, 1985.50.502, 1985.50.511, 1985.50.86), and 27 Roman bronze amulets (1985.50.51, 1985.50.59–65, 1985.50.216, 1985.50.221, 1985.50.255–256, 1985.50.325, 1985.50.409, 1985.50.414–415, 1985.50.452, 1985.50.457, 1985.50.461, 1985.50.498–500, 1985.50.502, 1985.50.504, 1985.50.511, 1985.50.540, 1985.50.907).

Few of these objects have information as to whom Hildburgh collected these from, with the exception of two phallic amulets (1985.50.457, 1985.50.461), noted to have been acquired from Giuseppe Bellucci, a significant figure who was Chair of Organic Chemistry at Perugia University from 1874 and was subsequently rector of the University (see 14.3.2). Another is the intriguing figure of Miss E.C. Vansittart, a female collector about whom relatively little is known. According to the issues of Folklore Society's journal and *Archaeological Review* from 1913–15, it appears that she was living in Rome, from where she probably collected the Etruscan clapper bell (1985.50.86) that is now part of the PRM collection. Vansittart appears as early as 1901 in *The Gentleman's Magazine* as an expert on Italian cradle songs and again in 1903 in *The Catholic World* magazine where she provides a discussion of the German city of Rothenburg. Despite appearing to be a pioneering female traveller, collector,

folklorist and archaeologist, and although contemporary with Gertrude Bell and publishing quite widely, Vansittart is not a well-known person from the period.

While Hildburgh himself is best known for his work on English medieval alabasters and Spanish goldwork, he travelled widely across Europe acquiring antiquities from a number of regions and periods. Perhaps the artefacts were collected in the process of acquiring Italian silverwork, although his obituary in *The Times* (28 November 1955) stated that 'he could never resist... an Italian bronze at a reasonable price,' suggesting a higher degree of interest in both ancient and modern Italian bronze-working. This specific interest in earlier archaeological material is supported by his work on amulets, in particular an article published in 1942 which discusses specifically his collection of Etruscan examples. The amulets for protection against evil or sickness and the votive offerings to prevent suffering or to invoke the forces of the gods for healing or protection purposes fall neatly into a history of medical endeavour and hence its significance relative to the Wellcome Collection. Indeed, based on his masterly review of Bonner's discussion of amulets (Hildburgh 1952), it can safely be assumed that this aspect of the collection could also have been of particular interest to Hildburgh's wide-ranging studies, although one which has not gathered as much fame as other aspects of his work.

### 16.3.7 Other Collectors

The rest of the objects that can be attributed to the Iron Age or Roman periods from Italy found their way to the PRM through a series of one-off donations from several individuals. For completeness, these are listed here. Included in their number are omnivorous collectors whose vast, often global, collections also contained material from Iron Age/Roman Italy: George Fabian Lawrence donated 23 bronze objects, including belt hooks (1896.69.18–22), Etruscan belts (1897.61.1–2, 1897.72.1), Etruscan mirrors (1897.61.3–4, 1897.72.2), lead slingstones (1898.55.13–15), a Roman key ring (1898.66.12), and a Roman bolt (1905.69.3); Edward Tylor's personal collection received by the Museum upon his death included 2 Iron Age ceramic vessels (1917.53.562–563), discussed below (16.3.1) and a *bulla*, or charm case, that he acquired from Greville John Chester (1917.53.598); 2 gaming counters from Pompeii were purchased from S.G. Hewlett (1934.72.13–14); 3 bronze mirrors (1907.72.32–33, 1907.72.35) and 2 strigils (1907.72.38–39) came from Cecil Vincent Goddard; a single 5th- or 4th-century BCE pottery sherd (1924.29.6) from the wide-ranging collection of G.R. Carline; and from Brenda and Charles Seligman's eclectic assemblage is a single glass, globular eye-bead (see Seligman 1940–41; Seligman and Beck 1938) (1946.8.108), said to be Roman.

David Randall MacIver, whose connection to Edward Tylor and the PRM is discussed in chapter 5 in relation to his work on Egypt, went on later in life to become a notable Etruscan scholar (e.g. Randall MacIver 1927). An early interest in this material while he was still associated with Oxford is perhaps indicated by an Etruscan decorated bronze handle of a vessel that he presented to the Museum at the end of the 19th century (1899.43.14). Two other notable archaeologists who contributed to the collection include William Hunt and Bradford, whose work is discussed in more depth in Chapter 14. While most of their collection is Neolithic or Bronze Age, 3 objects can be attributed to the later Iron Age, namely the 3 pottery sherds that were found at San Severo (1946.2.18).

Other individuals associated with this part of the collection include: William Downing Webster, who donated 2 Iron Age/Roman sling shots from northern Italy (1902.68.16–17); Denis Alfred Jex Buxton who had acquired a broken, black glazed pottery vessel of the 5th–4th century BCE (1966.32.23); Albert Henry Baldwin from

whom a Roman *aes rude* irregular bronze or copper lump found near Naples was purchased (1912.86.4); Clement Fortay who presented 2 Roman coins (1991.38.50, 1991.58.53); Richard Carnac Temple who donated a Roman pottery vessel (1913.46.5); and Charles Smith who gave a 4th-century BCE Greek pottery vessel (1923.87.356). Balfour's interest in lamps ensured that several Roman pottery lamps were acquired by the Museum including: 2 from Francis Fox Tuckett (1897.21.1–2); 5 from Frederick William (1966.3.99, 1966.3.101, 1966.3.106, 1966.3.109, 1966.3.115) who was recorded in the annual reports of the PRM as an avid cataloguer of lamps of all times and periods (Robins 1939);<sup>1</sup> one from Josaphine Phelps (1941.11.9); one from Estella Canziani (1941.8.027); 2 from Beatrice Barry (1918.25.101–102); one from Samuel Margerison (1910.73.3); and 2 that were bought at Stevens Auction Rooms (1911.59.8, 1933.90.23).

A handful of items were originally part of other institutional collections, such as the Somerset Archaeological Society. Amongst the material transferred to the Pitt Rivers from this society were an Etruscan horse-shaped amulet collected by a Miss Allen (1968.13.450) and 2 beads collected by Frederick Thomas Elworthy (1968.13.246–247), a Somerset antiquary. Although his research interests lay in English and West Country folklore, Elworthy also travelled extensively in Spain and Italy, and was intensely interested in folk magic. This interest in magic might explain his purchase of these Etruscan beads, as both have a pattern of 'eyes' perhaps reminiscent of evil eye amulets still used around the Mediterranean region, and as such would have appealed to Elworthy's interests. A single Etruscan example of *Bucchero* pottery (1994.4.17) was originally part of Hampshire Museums Service (which in turn had been previously part of the British Museum's holdings).

Finally, there is a single object where the collector is unknown: a black miniature vase (*oinochoe*) with a globular body (2004.172.1), the only documentation for which is a small label adhering to the base that simply states 'Herculaneum'.

## 16.4 Iron Age Italy

### 16.4.1 Etruscan Iron Age

The Etruscan Iron Age material – dating from *c.* 800 BCE to the colonization of Etruria by the Romans in the 3rd century BCE – comprises *c.* 118 artefacts, which can be divided, by and large, into two main groups based on their material components: bronzes (69 examples) and ceramics (43 examples). The bronze artefacts may be further divided between a variety of artefact types, including figurines, 'bow pullers,' fibulae, mirrors, handles and helmets, while the ceramic material includes a variety of vessel forms, tiles and a small pottery lamp. Outside these two overbearing groups, which will be discussed in more detail below, there are only 6 examples of other materials, all of smaller artefacts: 2 faience beads (1968.13.246 and 1968.13.247), a shark's tooth pendant (1985.50.310), a coral pendant (1985.50.316) and a pair of ivory dagger pommels (1898.20.62 and 1898.20.63). Of these 118 objects, 4 have been fully published in recent years, with a further artefact published in the early years of the Museum's establishment.

The earliest publication based on the collection concerns an amphora fragment from the J.W. Flower collection (1892.67.15), decorated exquisitely with a guilloche pattern in red and orange overlaying two horizontal swathes of cream. A second fragment with the same pattern (1892.67.942) is also to be found in the collection, although variations in the design make it relatively unlikely to be from the same original

<sup>1</sup> See also <http://england.prm.ox.ac.uk/englishness-Robins-and-Lamps.html>.

vessel. The small fragment (1892.67.15) was discussed by Balfour (1901) in relation to its guilloche pattern: he suggests that it forms an origin point for this design, albeit one among many. He describes the intricacies of the overlapping fish-scale effect and a large photograph is also included, emphasizing the visual nature of his discussion. The other single publication is of a pair of decorated bronze handles (1884.67.1.17 .1 and 1884.67.1.17 .2), which were included in a review of bronze material from Vulci (Riis 1998) and form good examples of the craftsmanship typical of the city and its environs. Another bronze handle in the collection (1899.43.14) was not included in this analysis, but displays a floral decoration incorporating lotus motifs.

The two other recent publications are of two mirrors in the *Corpus Speculorum Etruscorum*, which were discussed and described by de Grummond and Rasmussen (2007) and which were drawn for this publication. The first (no. 26 in their catalogue, 1897.61.4) shows as its main scene a representation of the Dioskouroi, and is quite severely damaged, broken off just above the extension and suffering from patination. An intricate description of the poses and clothing of both figures on the mirror is provided and the mirror is suggested to date from the 3rd–4th centuries BCE. The second mirror (no. 27, 1897.61.3) is in much better condition, and is complete. It shows a largely naked female figure to the left, a second female figure in the centre turning towards the first, carrying a spear and clad in a sleeveless *peplos*, and two further women seated on the right of the mirror, both wearing jewellery and *peploi*. De Grummond suggests (2007: 39) that this scene represents the judgement of Paris, although he is absent from this image: only Turan (the naked figure on the left) and Menrva (the central figure with the spear) are identifiable from the attributes represented on the mirror. De Grummond supports this conclusion by comparing the Pitt Rivers mirror to an example from Malacena near Volterra, which shows a similar scene of four goddesses and has the same laurel wreath decoration around the scene edge. She suggests that the two may originate from the same workshop, and possibly the same craftsman, based on the striking similarities in their manufacture. De Grummond dates this mirror to the 2nd century BCE. Perhaps the dismissal of Paris from this scene may be explained by the position of the mirror as an artefact associated with and often used by women (Izzet 1998): in this interpretation the scene on the Pitt Rivers example celebrates the beauty of the goddesses, rather than the snake in Eden of masculine judgement. However one chooses to interpret this scene, it demands further discussion and consideration.

In addition to the few artefacts in the collection that have been presented for wider publication, there are others that have been considered as part of student dissertations, but remain unpublished at this time. These consist of a group of votive bronzes examined as part of a study of Roman bronzes in the Museum, undertaken by Tamasin Graham in 2003 as an MA thesis. She describes and provides comparanda for 5 figurines that form part of the Wellcome votive bronzes collection (1884.67.36, 1884.67.39, 1884.67.49, 1884.67.53 and 1884.67.55). Graham considered these 5 bronzes due to their presence in the displays and because of the level of detail that they convey, as opposed to the more ambiguous nature of the majority of the Wellcome figurines. In particular, the figurine of a woman holding a libation bowl (1884.67.55) is notable for the detail in which her *himation* garment is rendered, and the youth standing upon a slope (1884.67.39) is also noteworthy for his structured pose. The figure 1884.67.53 is far more representative of the remainder of the votive collection, being worn and focused upon an anthropomorphic outline, rather than a detailed, portrait-like figure.

The sheer size of the Iron Age Etruscan votive bronze collection certainly deserves further attention: this is a body of material, conveniently situated within a single collection, which is large enough to test research questions on the popularity of images within votive offerings, and to re-examine traditional interpretations of

votive offerings through the lens of recent archaeological theory and wider research into imagery and representation. A case in point is the group of 34 Etruscan small bronze figurines (1985.50.466–495, 1985.50.497, 1985.50.502, 1985.50.511, 1985.50.86), known as *bronzetti schematici*, most of which are labelled as originating from Perugia. It appears that the group were bought as a single acquisition and probably originated from the same archaeological context. Simon Stoddart (pers. comm.) has suggested, therefore, that the figurines may have been excavated from the site of Monte Tezio, from which a number of similar figurines (now in the archaeological museum in Florence) are known to have come, and which were excavated at the appropriate moment in the early 20th century as to have formed part of Hildburgh's collection. These could therefore be analysed in a comparative fashion with other known votive bronzes from the site, examining types of representation, the frequency of different motifs and figures, and their possible meanings. Comparison of these results with material from other sanctuaries could lead to discussion of regional similarities and traditions of deposition, contrasting beliefs and their expression across different areas of Etruria. At present, however, these Wellcome bronzes remain virtually unstudied. The bronzes are a mixture of pure figurines and supposed 'amulets,' dating from the 6th–5th centuries BCE. In the course of their object biographies, a number of the figures have been adapted to form charms or amulets, for example 1985.50.496. This appears to have been done in order to meet the demand for 'magic' objects and to force the original votive bronzes to conform to the mental images of such materials possessed by early collectors. As observed by Stoddart, the PRM material includes examples of forms of male and female Esquiline (Colonna 1970: 103–5), Mars Nocera Umbra (Colonna 1970: 100) and female Vocklabruck (Colonna 1970: 88–9) types. Finds similar to the *bronzetti schematici* 'amulets' collected by Hildburgh have also been found in the Gubbio valley (Malone and Stoddart 1994).

Aside from the votive figurines, other bronze artefacts in the collection include 5 'bow pullers', which have also suffered from the curse of amulet fetishism in the early 20th century. McDaniel (1918) suggested that rather than performing a practical function as their name suggests, these small objects, consisting of two holes with a small plate between them from which protrudes three spikes, varying in length and sharpness, were used as charms to protect the wearer and more particularly their horses. In the Museum collection, 3 artefacts (1884.119.447, 1884.119.448 and 1927.24.37) all display animal faces: respectively an anthropomorphic goat-like figure, a dog and a lion, with a further pair of feline heads upon either side of the central etching. These enigmatic objects are discussed further below (section 16.4). Further bronze material includes 2 drags or grapples (1884.119.609 and 1884.119.610) and a distinctively Etruscan oval helmet. (1884.32.15)

The real highlight of the bronze-work from the Museum's collection, however, are the 4 Etruscan belts (1897.72.1, 1884.119.629.1, 1897.61.1, and 1897.6.2), which, if genuine, are of considerable interest (*Figure 16.1*). All 4 belts are beautifully crafted examples and survive in a relatively good condition, covered in dark green patina, with markedly similar decorative schemes of punched holes along their upper and lower borders. Decorated belt hooks survive for 3 of these (1897.72.1, 1884.119.629 .1, 1897.61.1), showing floral decoration and incised lines for the former pair, and etched horses heads for the latter. These fastenings are of interest as the horses display their teeth menacingly, in a striking contrast to the other belts in the collection, which are otherwise markedly similar in decorative scheme and suggest relative contemporaneity in date around 650–600 BCE.

There is potential for an intriguing research project surrounding these 4 Etruscan belts (1897.72.1, 1884.119.629.1, 1897.61.1 and 1897.6.2), particularly



*Figure 16.1 Etruscan bronze belt lined with a rare example of Etruscan textile inside (PRM Accession Number 1897.72.1)*



*Figure 16.2 Etruscan caryatid chalice with frieze showing human images (PRM Accession Number 1884.37.83), from the Pitt Rivers Museum founding collection.*



*Figure 16.3 Etruscan caryatid supports for bowl (PRM Accession Number 1884.37.83)*

due to their different provenances: 2 from southern Italy, one from Lazio and one from an unknown origin but probably from the Etruscan heartland. The presence of these belts in southern Italy supports the far-reaching trade networks suggested by Bonfante (1981) and the trade in metallic luxury objects as evidenced by these objects demonstrates their value both inside and outside Etruria. An additional aspect for study of the bronze belts would be a more theoretically influenced discussion of their owners and their usage, perhaps within a consideration of the other elite clothing and accessories to be found in the Museum collection: for example, the helmet (1884.32.15), the ivory dagger pommels said to be from an Etruscan tomb northern Italy (1898.20.62 and 1898.20.63) and the 2 bronze fibulae (1884.79.110 and 1884.79.111). Together with other examples, these objects could easily inform an investigation of the use of elite accessories and high quality weaponry in the creation of identity in the Etruscan period. The slender circumference of the belts, against their robust size and the work of Bonfante (2003) on other examples, forms a point of interest regarding their wearers, and could be a starting point for a study of Etruscan elite display objects from the Pitt Rivers Museum collection. This would be a valuable addition to the growing number of studies in Etruscan social archaeology, as would a similarly informed discussion of the largest aspect in the Museum's collection: the votive bronzes.

Aside from the bronzes, the other key component of the Museum collection are the ceramic vessels, few of which have been published. In total there are 15 vessels, of which 6 are complete or nearly so, and the remaining 9 are fragmentary. Of these, several are identifiable as belonging to vessel forms: namely 7 fragments of a *Bucchero kantharos* (1892.67.937 .1–7), with an encircling decoration of 3 horizontal lines, almost half of a *Bucchero kantharos* (1892.67.934), which is very similar to the aforementioned fragmentary *kantharos* (1892.67.937 .1–7) in decorative style and form. In addition there are the coarse-ware amphorae fragments published by Balfour (1892.67.942, 1892.67.15) with the guilloche pattern and 3 fragments from a *Bucchero* bowl (1892.67.938) with incised geometric decoration of upward pointing triangles leading to horizontal and vertical line patterning, echoing the shape of the original vessel. Of the 4 remaining fragmentary vessels, 2 are represented by a single sherd: one of *impasto fineware* (1892.67.941) and one of *Bucchero*, (1892.67.936), which is possibly a *kylix* fragment due to the horizontal handle that survives on the remaining piece. A further *Bucchero* open vessel of unclear type is represented by nine fragments (1892.67.939). Of these vessels, all 8 are labelled as originating from an 'Etruscan tomb near Rome' and could conceivably come from the same site or excavation. 'Near Rome' suggests that the ceramics came from Cerveteri, Veii or Tarquinia, with the former two being more likely due to their closer proximity. The major excavations at both sites, described by Dennis (1848) in his seminal volume, opened Etruria to the interest of Victorian collectors and were completed long before the donation of the ceramics. However, Flower, their original collector, could have purchased them nearer to the time of these excavations in the 1840s: a little archival investigation could yield more information.

The largest fragmentary vessel (1884.37.83) deserves a little more discussion (*Figures 16.2 and 16.3*). It is a composite vessel made up from the foot of a caryatid chalice of Rasmussen's Type 1b (Rasmussen 2006: 95) and the bowl of a cylinder impressed chalice of Rasmussen's Type 2c (Rasmussen 2006: 190). Although the vessel is broken into three parts, roughly along the lines of its re-composition, it is clear that the two vessels were brought together as one at some point in the vessel's history. The upper half of the chalice displays a cylinder decoration which supports its recorded find spot of Chiusi (Scalia 1968), displaying seated figures, their attendants and a winged accompanying figure, probably divine. Beneath the seats

of the individuals are birds, and their accompanying attendants carry spears, while several of the seated figures carry a *lituus* or curved staff. There are several similarities to other friezes, both on ceramics, such as an example from the British Museum (Vase H198, Etruscan Bucchero No.70) and in larger relief, such as the architectural terracottas from Poggio Civitate-Murlo (Gantz 1971). The lower vessel carries clear echoes of the cylinder frieze, perhaps explaining the union of the two objects at the hands of a collector or dealer after their discovery. This vessel seems likely to also have originated in Chiusi, a centre for the production of this type of ceramic. The caryatid figures repeat the motif from this decoration of seated individuals, but it is evident from their dress, hairstyles, jewellery and apparent breasts that these are women, rather than the ambiguous images from the cylinder frieze. They sit on backed chairs, facing sideways rather than the more familiar standing caryatid figures, and as in the cylindrical decoration are accompanied by birds. On the base of the chalice, between where the supports were attached (as evidenced by visible breakage), are what appear to be moulded impressions of a trio of male, bearded faces, creating a group of six couples represented on the vessel supports and foot. As the two halves could be separated by around 50 years, with the lower chalice dating to around between 620–580 BCE and the upper to around 600–550 BCE, they probably came from different tombs, and were only united in the workshop of the collector who sold them on. The composite nature of this object emphasises the role of 19th-century collectors in the creation of new objects, while the maintenance of motifs over the time separating the two vessels is a testament to the concern invested in images of divinities and the representation of power. There exists, therefore, considerable research potential for incorporating an analysis of the figures from the cylinder-made frieze, as has been done for some of its comparanda. The presence of winged figures within the frieze and the birds beneath the chairs of the seated individuals, suggest some divine connections. Moreover, the similarities with, and differences from, other friezes of the period – whether on other chalices or in larger architectural form like those from Poggio Civitate – provide further avenues for discussion in such a study. Comparison with other Chiusine Bucchero wares and regional variations of cylinder decoration styles could be another area of research surrounding this intriguing vessel.

Of the whole vessels, 2 are Etruscan red and black figure vessels, one is impasto ware and 3 are of Bucchero. The impasto vessel (1884.38.27), from the Cesnola collection, is an *askos*-type drinking vessel, decorated with painted red and black stripes, which form a key pattern around the vessel, with sun disc style decorations at intervals above the encircling key pattern. The red and black figure vessel (1917.53.562), which appears to be of Italian manufacture, shows a painted image of a winged goddess, probably Turan or possibly Uni, but without accoutrements (and wearing far too many clothes to be a Vanth type figure), standing between two women, who are swathed in *himation*-like garments. The goddess faces one of the women, with her back to the other, perhaps her attendants or devotees, or possibly Helen and an attendant, with Turan facing Helen while the attendant looks on in horror. The other red and black figure vessel (1884.64.4; *Figure 16.4*) is a very low, flat bowl, with squared handles, which shows a painted pattern of lotus flowers and leaves, with a stamped palmate decoration in its centre. The Museum's accession book suggests that it is of Greek origin, but the floral decoration, particularly the lotus flowers, is more suggestive of Italian red and black ware.

The Bucchero vessels consist of an *oinochoe*, a *kantharos* and a *kyathos*. The *kyathos* (1994.4.17) is Rasmussen's type 1e, (Rasmussen 2006: 196 no.189) a small drinking cup with a high handle and small boss on the dorsal face of the handle. It is decorated with three horizontal parallel lines, which echo the curve of the vessel as it draws towards the foot and base. The *kantharos* (1884.41.19) is Rasmussen's type 3e, with



Figure 16.4 Southern Italian kylix (cup) of the 4th century BCE from the Pitt Rivers Museum founding collection (PRM Accession Number 1884.64.4).

large handles topped on one side with a cuboid nub. This *kantharos* is completely plain and undecorated, allowing the high shine of the burnished fabric to speak for itself. The *oinochoe* (1892.67.61), of Rasmussen's type 6a (Rasmussen 2006: 176 pls. 54 and 55), is a large and impressive piece of *Bucchero pesante*, originally from Chiusi. The other two *Bucchero* pieces are of unknown provenance, but probably derive from tomb contexts.

The final aspect of the Etruscan material at the Pitt Rivers Museum is the aerial photographs of Etruria included in the Bradford collection. Taken in the 1950s, the images from Etruria form a key part of Bradford's work, and are often coupled with photographs of archaeological material, ground shots and annotated plans and notes. A more detailed examination of this valuable archive could result in a clarification of the images themselves, and add to an understanding of the history of Etruscology as a discipline. Further investigation of the Bradford collection images, a number of more specific explorations of Etruscan studies could also be made into this collection, both alone and in comparison with other collections in England, Italy and worldwide.

#### 16.4.2 Other Iron Age Italy

The Greek style collection from Italy includes about 36 objects, the majority of which (32 objects) come from Taranto via Henry Balfour (see 16.4.3) and as noted above include 21 loom-weights (1884.29.3–23), 2 lamps (1932.88.340 and 1932.88.342), 5 ancient Greek astragals (1895.9.15–19), 2 jointed pottery dolls (1895.9.21–22), a square bronze mirror (1919.8.7) and a strigil (1917.28.17). In the 19th century Taranto attracted considerable attention from scholars and collectors. Arthur Evans, Keeper of the Ashmolean Museum, observed in an article in 1886 that 'there are few sites in the Hellenic World that in recent years have been so prolific of discoveries as that of Tarentum' (Evans 1886: 1). Collections of important Tarentine material now exist in various museums across the world, including the British Museum and the Ny Carlsberg Museum in Copenhagen (both of which bought objects from the well-known German classical archaeologist, art-dealer and collector, Wolfgang Helbig [1839–1915]).

Various excavations as part of the city's development, most of them in the heart of the commercial quarter of ancient Taras, have yielded an important amount of material culture. Evans noted that the importance of these discoveries was 'to induce the Italian Government to place them under the inspection of a competent antiquary... Signor Luigi Viola' (Evans 1886: 2). Evans's own discoveries related to

the town proper brought to light 'the public and private cult, the arts and every-day life of the ancient Tarentines' (Evans 1886: 7). As the result of repeated visits to Taranto in the 1880s, Evans, in collaboration with Viola, was able to collect a large number of terracottas of various kinds selected from many thousands of others, the whole of which, according to his statement, he presented to the Ashmolean Museum. These terracottas were divided by Evans into the following groups:

1. Those having relation to local sanctuaries, including reliefs, figurines, and masks.
2. Those from the tombs, including figurines and other objects found in the sepulchral cists and chambers, and portions of sepulchral slabs, friezes and antefixes which adorned the outside of the monuments.
3. Objects of miscellaneous use including tesserae, impressions of gems and signets, the so-called weights, or perforated disks, and moulds including some apparently intended to stamp holy cakes (Evans 1886: 8).

In 1886 the Ashmolean Museum received a total of about 150 clay objects, representing a selection of all three categories mentioned above. Given Evans's close acquaintance with Balfour, it seems reasonable to suggest that the latter may have acquired the pieces from Taranto now in the Pitt Rivers Museum inspired by the former's trips there in the 1880s. Balfour's material, according to the Museum's accession register, originates from the 1895 excavation at the old city walls (for an almost contemporary mention regarding excavations in search of tombs in the area of the ancient city walls see *The American Journal of Archaeology and of the History of the Fine Arts* 1896: 292).

The 21 ceramic loom weights from Taranto, Italy (e.g. *Figure 16.5*) date from the 4th century BCE (1886.29.3–23). These loom-weights, unlike their more common and plainer conical and pyramidal counterparts, fall into two categories: discoid and horse-shaped, all mould-made or stamped with relief decoration. Their rich iconographic representations include Leda/Aphrodite with the swan, dolphins, owls, female heads, chariots pulled by birds, and other, rather, playful scenes. Primarily utilitarian objects, loom-weights are also known to have been used as votive offerings in Greek sanctuaries (Foxhall 2008: 47). This collection of loom-weights at the Museum is the largest in Oxford. It can be compared to that at the Ashmolean (19 examples) and the one in the British Museum, where about 50 similar loom-weights are kept – also originating from Taranto and purchased from Greville John Chester of Oxford in 1884 (who in turn may have inspired Evans's travels to the site).<sup>2</sup>

The 2 Taranto lamps date to the 4th–2nd century BCE and are of great interest, as both of are inscribed with personal names. The first (1932.88.342) bears the name ΛΑΩΣ (Laōs); if not a forgery, it should perhaps stand for ΛΑΟΣ (Laos), a rare name, encountered in certain regions, e.g. Macedonia, central Greece, Bithynia, Apulia. The second lamp (1932.88.340; *Figure 16.6*) bears the name ΛΑΟΚΑΝΔΙΟΣ (Laokandios); again if not a forgery, the name is unattested so far in this compound form. The personal name ΚΑΝΔΙΟΣ (Kandios), though rare, is attested in Hellenistic and Roman Asia Minor.

One highlight of the remaining Iron Age collection is a *hydria* (1884.37.48), or water-jar, dating to around 525–500 BCE, which has a globular body, flat rim and handle, with two side lug-handles and which is decorated with black figure painting, depicting birds, animals and a swastika. It was first published by H.R.W. Smith (1932: 144) after Beazley drew his attention to it as an example of a work of the master Phineus.

A south Italian *kylix* (1884.64.4, *Figure 16.4*) also revealed a nice surprise. In close examination, especially on attempting to photograph the inside of the cup, it was

<sup>2</sup> Five more examples of the same type exist in the Fitzwilliam Museum, University of Cambridge (GR.15j-m.1891). They were given to the museum by Chester in 1891.

Figure 16.5 (Left)  
Ancient Greek discoid  
clay loom-weight with  
relief decoration of a  
butterfly (PRM Accession  
Number 1896.29.20).



Figure 16.6 (Right)  
Ceramic black-glazed  
lamp with projecting  
nozzle and ring handle,  
donated to the PRM by  
Henry Balfour in 1932.  
An inscription reads  
ΛΑΟΚΑΝΔΙΟΣ (c.  
400-200 BCE) (PRM  
Accession Number  
1932.88.340).



observed that in the tondo the potter had originally painted a helmeted head in profile. Today only a very faint trace of this head appears since the potter later changed his mind: he decided to decorate the tondo with impressed palmettes, a much-loved theme of the 4th century BCE. Other 5th–4th century BCE objects include a pottery fragment (1924.29.6) donated by G.R. Carline said to be ‘from a dump heap in recent diggings at Paestum, S Italy, Sept. 1924’, a 5th-century BCE *pelike* pot found in Capua in 1868 which found its way into the J.W. Flower collection (1892.67.57), and a 4th-century BCE (325–300 BCE) Southern Italian *epichysis*, painted in the Gnathia style and donated by Henry Balfour (1938.35.1553).

### 16.5 Roman Italy and Unprovenanced Roman objects

There are c. 147 Roman objects that are provenanced to Italy. The Museum’s collection also holds a further 302 or so Roman objects for which no country is recorded. Together, these objects seem to span the whole of the Roman period, including some from the earliest periods of Roman influence in Italy. The date of almost a third of the objects is queried in the PRM database, although many of these probably are Roman. Almost 75% of the figurines, for example, most of which are on display, have not been given a firm date, yet it seems likely that the majority of these are indeed Roman. In contrast, many of the torques and bracelets from the PRM founding collection that lack provenance are almost certainly not Roman in date, as originally catalogued. It is more likely that these objects come from La Tène France (Duncan Garrow and Jody Joy pers. comm.) and as such, the database records have been amended accordingly. Some of the objects appear very similar to examples in the Morel Collection of Iron Age material from Champagne in the British Museum (Stead and Rigby 1999). For instance, the bracelet with spaced rings (1884.82.113; compare Stead and Rigby 1999: figure 114, numbers 1707 and 1965), the torque with animal heads (1884.78.38 – compare Stead and Rigby 1999: figure 93, no. 1708) and the spiral armlets (1884.82.114–115 and 1884.82.120; compare Stead and Rigby 1999: figure 101, nos 1559, 2080 and 2062). An Iron Age date may also be more appropriate for some of the brooches and fibulae. This question deserves further attention.

As might be expected from an assemblage of Roman objects the majority of the collection comprises ceramics (including 25 lamps), coins and brooches, as well as bronze figurines and *styli* (writing instruments) from Italy. There are also several individual unprovenanced objects of note, for example a ceramic water pipe (1884.35.64), a bronze helmet (1884.32.14; Figure 16.7) and an oboe (1884.111.37 –



*Figure 16.7 Roman period bronze helmet with hinged ear-guards and lion-head badge, from the Pitt Rivers Museum founding collection (PRM Accession Number 1884.32.14). This object was purchased by General Pitt-Rivers from dealers Claude Camille Rollin and Felix Feuarden before 1879.*



*Figure 16.8 Four Roman terracotta votive offerings: (a–b) hands (PRM Accession Numbers 1896.15.5 and 1896.15.28), and (c–d) bearts (PRM Accession Numbers 1896.15.22 and 1886.15.27). Such terracottas are thought to be offerings of thanks or requests for divine attention towards a specific body part.*

discussed below). Other noteworthy groups of items include the votive offerings, the bow-pullers and the mirrors, which are discussed in more detail below.

The assemblage of 27 terracotta votive offerings from Veii, collected by Robert William Theodore Gunther in the late 19th century, are of particular interest (1896.15.4-30). The majority of these (25) are human anatomical terracottas (*Figure 16.8*), but the collection also includes 2 terracotta cattle votives (1896.15.9, 1896.15.13). Most of the terracottas display traces of their original paint, mostly red, with black used on the hair of the heads. In general, the pieces are finely modelled showing clear and identifiable anatomical details, with the heads and hands showing the most variation. One left hand (1896.15.20) narrows considerably at the wrist into a stick-like protrusion, which might suggest that it was to be placed in the top of something (a narrow-necked vessel, for instance) or pushed into the ground to stand upright.

Almost half of this material is on display in the PRM in case 32 on the ground floor as part of the 'Votive Offerings' section. The choice of what went on display shows some interesting biases. While all the heads and faces and both cattle have been chosen for display, significantly fewer of the more intimate body parts have been chosen; for example only one of the male genitalia and one of the uterus/bladder models, and none of the viscera and breasts. Whatever the motivation behind this choice may be it seems somewhat to misrepresent not only the collection, but also the practice of making votive offerings of body parts at these ritual sites in Italy.

There is a large literature about terracotta anatomical *ex votos* from healing sanctuaries in Italy, some of which, but not all, may have been associated with Aesculapius, the god of healing. The phenomenon is predominantly associated with Etruria, northern Campania and Latium, particularly in the final four centuries of the 1st millennium BCE. The terracottas are generally taken to be 'thank offerings' or requests for divine attention towards a specific body part, a type of cult that is not mentioned in any surviving ancient account (Beard *et al.* 1998: 13). The material from Veii held in the PRM compares well with that found elsewhere in form, decoration, technique and types of body parts represented (see, for example; Fregellae: Coarelli 1986; Falerii: Comella 1986; Tevere: Pensabene *et al.* 1980). While these terracottas are generally specific, and obvious, body parts, the assemblages from Tevere, Fregellae, Falerii and Veii all contain a rather curious terracotta votive that is not easily identifiable. In the PRM collection these have been described as possible 'hearts' (1896.15.22 and 27; figure 22.4c-d). These objects are globular or ovoid in shape with a set of petal-like features circling the base. Although it is unlikely that they are 'hearts' as originally suggested by the PRM database, they have, in general, defied any better categorization by most of the specialists cataloguing these *ex votos*. Mostly they are called either *cipetti* or aniconic votives.

The site of Veii, modern Isola Farnese, c. 16 km north of Rome, whence this collection derives, was the most southerly of the Etruscan cities and had a long rivalry with Rome, particularly between 405 and 396 BCE, when the town was sacked. As well as excavations of its cemeteries, the Campetti sanctuary at Veii was also excavated in 1937-1938 (Vagnetti 1971), 1947 and 1969 (Comella and Stefani 1990). The sanctuary at Campetti seems to begin in the late 6th century, possibly dedicated to chthonic deities and then, after the town became Roman in 296 BCE, may have been associated with cult of Ceres. Apollo is also thought to have had an association with the sanctuary. Oddly, his curative role is said not to have been important here because there are very few anatomic *ex votos*. The archaeological record is poor, however, and some of the excavated material was stolen, so it is possible that the publications of the Campetti material may not be wholly representative (see Blagg 1993). This would seem to fit better with the collection in the PRM, whose composition is similar to that of other 'healing sanctuaries' in Italy, but quite different to the assemblages published

by Vagnetti and Comella/Stefani. While all three collections contain heads, faces, hands, feet, breasts, *cipetti*/'hearts' and cattle, there are some significant variations. The Vagnetti and Comella/Stefani collections contain a preponderance of figurines that are not part of the PRM collection. Furthermore, the PRM collection includes votives of male genitalia, uterus/bladder, viscera and spleen that do not seem to feature in the other two collections. Another explanation might be that the PRM material came from a different part of the site where there was a stronger focus on a healing cult. There is clearly more work to be done on this corpus of terracotta votives, both to explore its association with the other assemblages from Veii, and to place it in the wider context of anatomical *ex votos* from Italian sanctuaries.

Also from Roman Italy are nine 'bow-pullers' that vary in length from 43 mm–78 mm, in width from 18 mm–27 mm and in depth from 10 mm–45 mm (1884.119.447–455). All of the examples have two 'finger holes' and a set of protruding spikes (except 1884.119.450 that has no spikes). They seem to belong to two broad groups. Group 1 (1884.119.454 and 1884.119.455) have a convex base and four small spikes (*c.* 5 mm high) arranged in a square between the finger holes; both examples also have crosses incised into the space between the finger holes. Group 2 (1884.119.451, 452 and 453) have a concave base and three large central spikes (*c.* 20–30 mm high) arranged in a triangle. One example (1884.119.449) is a slight variation on the group 2 type as it has an additional spike on the base and its upper spikes curve in towards each other. The additional spike on the base makes it difficult to envisage this object being held in someone's hand. All the examples appear complete, except 1884.119.452 that is missing part of one of its finger holes, which is a common feature of this type of object (Stevenson 1912: 55; McDaniel 1918: 27). These Roman examples are plain and undecorated, but the PRM does hold more ornate examples, apparently of Etruscan date (1884.119.447, 1884.119.448 and 1927.24.37; see section 16.4.1 above) that are comparable with other examples from the University Museum, Philadelphia (McDaniel 1918: figure 4) and the Free Museum of Science and Art, University of Pennsylvania (Stevenson 1912: 57). These objects are often found in graves of Greek, Etruscan and Roman date. They excited a lot of interest in the late 19th and early 20th centuries from scholars who struggled to identify their purpose (see Brinton 1897; Charvet 1889; Morse 1894; Stevenson 1912; McDaniel 1918), to the extent that McDaniel (1918: 42) even refers to them as 'diabolical puzzles'. Given their date of acquisition it is conceivable that the 6 objects came into the PRM collection because of the on-going, transatlantic debate about these curious objects. In general, the protagonists of this debate agree on two points: 1) that while these objects do have differences, as is demonstrated nicely by those in the PRM collection, they appear to form a coherent group and 2) that they were not bow-pullers; beyond these points, there has been little agreement. A multitude of suggestions have been made about their purpose, including screw drivers, wick-holders, spear-throwers, caltrops, horse bits (or some other object involved with horse control), a vicious part of a boxer's hand covering (*caestus*), known as the *myrmex* or amulets where the spikes are the equivalents of animal horns and harness the power of the number three. None of these suggestions is quite satisfactory for all the objects and so, with Morse (1894: 142) before us, it seems we must still, 100 years on, 'reluctantly yield the solving of the enigma to others'.

Notable amongst the collection are 2 unprovenanced Roman bronze mirrors (1884.70.10, 1884.70.12). The former of these still has its handle (not silvered) attached and as well as having concentric rings, also has circular perforations around its edge. Bored circular holes are also known on some mirrors in the Rijksmuseum collection (Lloyd Morgan 1981: 43, figures 8a and b and 55; figures 11a and b). Rather than being hand-held as the other mirror appears to have been, 1884.70.12 is attached to a stand

Figure 16.9 Roman oboe from the Pitt Rivers Museum founding collection (PRM Accession Number 1884.11.37).



with a circular foot, which has concentric grooves. This stand seems to be a rather unusual feature and is not found, for instance, in the Rijksmuseum collection. While Roman mirrors are not rare, for instance there are several fragmentary examples in the Portable Antiquities Scheme database, such complete examples as these are notable. There is a large body of work on the analysis of metals used for mirrors, so it may be worthwhile analysing the 2 examples here that do not seem to have been tampered with.

One of the more unusual items in the collection is a Roman 'oboe' (1884.111.37; Figure 16.9), which is made of six segments of bone, *c.* 0.25 m long in total and *c.* 40 mm in diameter. The upper segment has a single hole at the top that is bored all the way through the pipe. The other segments have a single whole in the narrowest part of each segment. The bottom segment is flared. The oboe, known as *aulos* or *tibia* in antiquity, was the most common type of wind instrument. The usual form of this instrument in the Greco-Roman world was a double-pipe, but single pipes were also known (Comotti 1989: 71–2). Single pipes are, however, rare in Greco-Roman art (Howard 1893: 13) and it is possible that the PRM example is half of a double pipe; further research could ascertain this. The *aulos* was purported to be used for funerals because of its mournful sound and power to induce grief in the listeners (Plutarch *Quaestiones conviviales* 3.8 (657a)). *Auloi* were used in the theatre, for example there are stage directions in the comedies of Plautus and Terence that demonstrate that instrumental pieces were inserted between acts (e.g. Plautus *Pseudolus* line 573a). Such an instrument could be potentially either Greek or Roman in date; a clearer date for the PRM instrument could be gained by AMS dating.

Surviving examples of this instrument are rare, but similar pipes with flaring ends are also known from Pompeii and the British Museum: the following descriptions follow Howard (1893: 47–60, plates I and II). The four pipes from Pompeii (Naples Museum: catalogue nos. 76891–76894) were found in 1867 and are straight tubes of ivory, which are longer (*c.* 0.49–0.53 m long) and have more finger holes than the PRM example. The British Museum also has 4 examples. Two were acquired from the Castellani collection and comprise an inner tube of wood encased in bronze in similar bands to the Pompeii and PRM examples (British Museum catalogue nos. 84, 4–9, 5 and 6). These 2 pipes are of similar lengths to the one in the PRM (*c.* 0.27 m–0.29 m long respectively), but appear to be broken. The other 2 instruments were found in a tomb near Athens and were brought to London as part of the Elgin collection (1816.610.502). These pipes are tubes of wood with six finger holes and are slightly longer than the other British Museum and PRM examples (*c.* 0.31 m–0.35 m long). This variation in lengths and numbers of holes would affect the range of music that could be played on these pipes and, indeed, reflects the number of different versions of these instruments that are known from contemporary literature (see Comotti 1989: 50–1, 67–74; Howard 1893).

As well as these examples, the Ure Museum, Reading also holds a bronze and silver *aulos* (accession number 67.7.3), as does the Herakleion Museum, Crete.

## 16.6 Conclusions

While the PRM collection of Iron Age and Roman objects from Italy can be in no way considered large in comparison with some other museum collections, it does, however, contain some very interesting elements. The Etruscan material, albeit small, could usefully be published alongside the Ashmolean Museum's collection, to create a catalogue similar to that produced by Perkins (2007) for the British Museum, but expanded beyond the Bucchero ceramics that form his key focus. Such a volume could easily incorporate research on the origins of objects from both collections, and explore the connections between Etruria and Oxford, dating back beyond the 19th century to the Grand Tour, and the enduring fascination of British scholars with Italy, expressed physically in the objects they collected. Indeed, the impressive collections of the British Museum itself could also be incorporated to create a corpus of the three major collections of Etruscan archaeological material in the UK. Similarly, comparative work should be undertaken on the anatomical terracotta votives from Veii, which is one of the most interesting assemblages, and one which definitely deserves further research.

The collection as a whole adds further nuances to the history of collecting at the PRM and seems to be a reflection of the rather specific interests of those who were engaged in collecting antiquities in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Interestingly, some of the objects, such as the 'bow pullers', seem to situate the PRM within broader discussions and questions amongst contemporary, transatlantic collectors and curators. There is also potential to examine the perceptions and prejudices of collectors towards antiquities by looking at the kinds of restoration undertaken on certain objects.

Some of the objects, such as the bracelets, torques and brooches from the PRM founding collection, to which a Roman date has been attributed, need to be reviewed as it is likely that these form a separate assemblage of Celtic art, which has its own sets of interests and research directions. Using scientific methods, such as AMS dating, might also establish a firmer date for one of the rarest objects in this collection: the 'oboe'. Other scientific analyses may also throw further light on, for instance, the production techniques of the mirrors in the collection.

The provenance of many of these objects is currently hazy at best, but there is potential for narrowing down certain groups, for example the ceramics donated by John Wickham Flower, which may have originated from the same tomb, and certainly appear to have come from the same wider site or city as discussed above. Uncovering the object biographies of these and the votive bronzes would lead to a far clearer picture of their origins, and provide a fuller understanding of the objects in context.

Finally, this collection provides an excellent opportunity to break down period boundaries and specialisms in order to explore the material culture of Italy over a long time period from its cosmopolitan beginnings as a peninsula peopled by numerous linked, but idiosyncratic cities and regions to its unification under Roman rule. Such a diachronic analysis could, for example, be achieved by looking at the 'bow-pullers' as a complete group or by focusing on particular themes in the collection, such as the use and deposition of votives. Such a thematic and diachronic approach would, of course, be very much in the spirit of the overall original design of the Museum's collection.

Overall, the Italian archaeological material in the PRM presents a small, but interesting collection of objects. In spite of the clear biases in the kinds of objects collected, there is certainly scope for numerous valuable research projects that would throw further light on the archaeology and material culture of Italy. Furthermore,

an analysis of the Italian material in combination with that from other parts of the Greek and Roman worlds has the potential to add much to our understandings of cultural interactions in the Mediterranean and northern Europe.

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