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Stone Age Sub-Saharan Africa

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2.1 Introduction

With over 17,611 artefacts, the Pitt Rivers Museum (PRM) has, after the British Museum, one of the United Kingdom's largest and most diverse collections of 'Stone Age' archaeological finds from sub-Saharan Africa. These artefacts – almost all of them stone tools – come from a wide variety of countries and span virtually all periods of the African past, from the early hominins who made Oldowan choppers to the last few centuries of hunter-gatherer presence in South Africa (cf. Chapter 8). These collections and their accompanying documentation provide insights not only into the history of the PRM, but also into the broader history of collecting Africa's past, its recognition by European science as a worthwhile subject of study, and the formative stages of African archaeology as a recognizable academic discipline.

This chapter first illustrates this by surveying the geographical and chronological range of the collections, and considering how far they derive from particular countries, areas or periods (2.2 and 2.3). The PRM's southern African rock art collections are introduced (2.4), since they are the product of people closely related to those responsible for some of the PRM's stone artefacts from the same region. The chapter then identifies those individuals and institutions of greatest importance as contributors to the collections and discusses how their activities relate to the broader development of African prehistory as a whole (2.5). In conclusion (2.6), the chapter outlines the relevance of the collections as a whole to contemporary archaeological debates and their potential for future study and research. Earlier detailed study of the southern African Stone Age collections of the British Museum (Mitchell 1998a; 2002a), which included check lists of all other African Stone Age holdings in that institution, as well as of all other southern African Stone Age holdings in other United Kingdom museums, provides some basis for inter-institutional comparison (Mitchell 2002b).

Before beginning, however, a word of warning is in order. Few of the collections or their related documentation have been examined in detail by Africanist archaeologists. Indeed, thus far detailed object-by-object study and assessment of related archival material has only been completed for those collections that originate from south of the Zambezi River, and even then those collected by James Swan and Edward J. Dunn from South Africa remain to be studied (Mitchell in prep.). More limited work has been undertaken on Early Stone Age (ESA) and Middle Stone Age (MSA) artefacts from Uganda (Cormack 1993) and on the material collected by Robert P. Wild from Ghana and Mervyn D.W. Jeffreys from Nigeria (Wharton 2005). Only such detailed

study can resolve outstanding questions of provenance or chronology, and until this is done quantitative assessments of the numbers or kinds of artefacts from particular parts of Africa or particular periods of its past are at best provisional estimates. The emphasis in the following account on stone artefacts also requires a cautionary note: while reflecting the typological basis of the PRM's foundation and its subsequent display history, it nevertheless artificially segregates objects of stone from those made in other materials (pottery, bone, ostrich eggshell etc.), often found at the same site and donated by the same collector, and certainly the product of the same indigenous or prehistoric groups. Particular note is made of this point here in relation to the PRM's South African holdings.

2.2 Geographical Overview

The PRM holds material from 17 of the 42 countries on the mainland of sub-Saharan Africa (*Table 2.1; Figure 2.1*). The island nations of Cape Verde, São Tomé and Príncipe, Mauritius and Seychelles fall outside the scope of this chapter, as all were first settled in the historical period (see Chapter 8), while the Comores were first occupied by iron-using populations around 1200 years ago (Mitchell 2004). Madagascar was probably also settled at this time, again by iron-using populations, although speculation continues about the possibility of a pre-Austronesian settlement by hunter-gatherers from the African mainland (e.g. Blench 2007). However, no

Country	Estimated number of Stone Age artefacts
Botswana	19
Cameroon	820
Chad	2
Congo-Kinshasa	14
Ghana	657
Kenya	6,886
Lesotho	1
Mauritania	202
Nigeria	586
Senegal	62
Somalia	142
South Africa	5,010
Sudan	72
Tanzania	533
Uganda	840
Zambia**	30
Zimbabwe	1,735
TOTAL	17,611

Table 2.1 Number of Stone Age artefacts from sub-Saharan Africa in the archaeological collections of the Pitt Rivers Museum by country (excluding casts).

* A single artefact (1911.41.5) provenanced in the Museum database to Tumba 'French Congo' must, instead, come from the former Belgian Congo, i.e. modern Congo-Kinshasa, as this is where Tumba lies.

** This is a minimal estimate of the Museum's Zambian Stone Age holdings. Some of the material grouped classified for the moment under Zimbabwe may, in fact, come from the Zambian side of the Victoria Falls. In the case of those objects collected and donated by Henry Balfour detailed comparison with relevant documents in the PRM's Balfour manuscript collection may help establish this with greater certainty. A further ten objects collected by E.J. Wayland but included in the Museum's database under Zambia are misplaced and derive from Kagera, Uganda, where they are counted in this table.



archaeological confirmation of this currently exists and Madagascar is, in any case, unrepresented in the PRM's collections.

Collections recognisable as 'Stone Age' definitely come from Mauritania, Ghana, Nigeria, Cameroon, Senegal and Chad in West Africa; from Congo-Kinshasa in Central Africa; from Somalia, Kenya, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda in East Africa; and from Botswana, Lesotho, South Africa and Zimbabwe in southern Africa.¹ Zambia is also represented, but with the bulk of the material derived from just one locality: the terraces associated with Victoria Falls on the country's southern border with Zimbabwe.

Figure 2.1 Map showing the relative sizes of the sub-Saharan African archaeological collection by country.

¹ The likelihood of any of the finds in the Lamplugh collection with a possible attribution to 'Songwe' coming from the river of this name in Malawi and Tanzania is extremely slight, as this is also the name of a locality on the Zambian side of the Victoria Falls, where Lamplugh was certainly active as a collector in 1905 (Cohen 2002: 215). Material provenanced to 'Togoland' comes from the former League of Nations Mandated Territory/United Nations Trusteeship Territory of that name, which was incorporated into modern Ghana in 1960. The artefacts from the former state of Somalia are all provenanced to locations within modern Somaliland, i.e. the former British colony of that name.

What kind of geographical patterning is evident in the sub-Saharan ‘Stone Age’ collections held by the PRM? Examination of *Table 2.1* and *Figure 2.1* demonstrates that almost all (99%) come from former territories of the British Empire: only those from Chad, Congo-Kinshasa, Senegal and Mauritania fall outside its boundaries. This is not, of course, particularly surprising, and it is mirrored almost exactly in the African Stone Age collections of the British Museum (Perkins 2002). However, not all parts of Britain’s former African colonies are equally represented. The smaller territories of Gambia and Sierra Leone are, for example, completely absent, while two countries – Kenya and South Africa – between them account more than two thirds (67.55%) of the sub-Saharan Stone Age collections. Zimbabwe makes up a further 9.85%, with Uganda, Cameroon, Ghana, Nigeria and Tanzania representing most of the remainder.

Three principal factors can be suggested as having shaped this geographical patterning. First is the early development of antiquarian and archaeological research in South Africa. Second are the activities of particular collectors: notably Mervyn Jeffreys, who worked in Nigeria and Cameroon,² and Louis S.B. Leakey. Leakey alone was personally responsible for an astonishing *c.* 97.9% of the PRM’s Kenyan Stone Age collections, which represents *c.* 38.3% (*c.* 6,747 objects) of the sub-Saharan Stone Age stone artefact collections (see Chapter 3). Third are the activities of Henry Balfour (Curator of the PRM 1891–1939), who played an important part in collecting African stone artefacts himself as well as in securing collections from others, not least through his own many visits to Africa and his attendance at the meetings in South Africa of the British Association for the Advancement of Science in 1905 and 1929 – meetings directly linked to visits to (and collections from) many key archaeological sites (Gosden and Larson 2007: 67–73; Mitchell 2002a: 11).

2.3 Chronological Overview

Without detailed assessment of individual collections and artefacts it is not possible to offer precise information about the periods of African prehistory represented in the PRM collections (*Table 2.2*), but it is clear that they span all major phases of stone tool use. They include, for example, numerous examples of Acheulean handaxes (~1.8–0.3 mya), with notable collections being those donated by J.G. van Alphen from sites in South Africa’s Northern Cape Province, by Lewis Leakey from Kariandusi, Kenya, and by E.J. Wayland from several localities in Uganda, including Nsongezi. The latter also include many implements best classified as Sangoan, an industry characterized by heavy-duty picks, core-axes and small flake tools, but few, if any, handaxes or cleavers that are found widely across Central Africa and its border regions from perhaps 300–170 kya (Barham and Mitchell 2008: 234–7).

MSA artefacts (~300–25 kya) are also well represented, particularly from South African localities, including the material collected on the Cape Flats near Cape Town in the mid-19th century by individuals such as Langham Dale and Captain Henry Thurburn, as well as at a variety of sites in KwaZulu-Natal by John Sanderson (1878). As with Acheulean handaxes, their greater size and visibility undoubtedly attracted the attention of some amateur collectors, but we must also recall the early interest in these two periods on the part of pioneering generations of archaeological researchers, an interest sparked by their evident antiquity, their similarity to the Lower and Middle Palaeolithic stone artefacts of Europe and the potential that the geological contexts (river terraces) in which some of them were found held – or were thought to hold – for dating by reference to past episodes of climatic or geomorphological change. The

² Cf. PRM Manuscript Collections, Jeffreys Papers (correspondence and papers, 1945–1949).

Acheulean (Early Stone Age)	c. 1.8–0.3 million years ago.
Middle Stone Age	c. 300,000–25,000 years ago.
Sangoan	A transitional Early/Middle Stone Age industry in Central Africa from roughly 300,000–170,000 years ago.
Later Stone Age	From about 40,000 years ago in some areas (e.g. East Africa), but only from about 25,000 years ago in others (e.g. southern Africa).
Eburran	A specific Later Stone Age industry known from Kenya, roughly 2,000–10,500 years ago.

Table 2.2 Chronological framework of cultural-historical terms used in Chapter 2.

importance of the Victoria Falls in this regard was, for example, not lost on Balfour, who collected extensively there in the early 20th century (cf. Clark 1952).

More recent hunter-gatherer groups are again best represented from South Africa, most obviously in the extensive collection of backed microliths, scrapers and other Later Stone Age (LSA) microlithic artefacts donated by James Swan, who was active in the Northern Cape Province for many years in the mid-20th century, and developed ties with the PRM through his friendship with Henry Balfour (Stevenson 2012). From broadly the same region there is also the extensive body of MSA and LSA material donated – again as a result of extensive cultivation by Balfour – by Edward Dunn, who collected there in the late 19th century (Ellerby 2003). Finally, we should note the presence of other LSA (<25 kya) collections from the coastal fringes of the Western and Eastern Cape Provinces, some of it from sites sampled by Ray Inskeep (Curator of African Archaeology at the PRM between 1972 and 1994). This material, principally from Inskeep's own fieldwork at Nelson Bay Cave and Guanogat, both on the Robberg Peninsula near Plettenberg Bay (Inskeep 1987), also includes non-lithic items of material culture (pottery, ostrich eggshell beads and worked bone tools), just like that collected by Dunn, Swan and some earlier South African or South African-based donors.

The use of stone as the principal non-organic material for making tools continued in Africa well after the emergence of food-production. Artefacts and collections associated with African farming and pastoralist communities are thus also present in the Museum's holdings. The best example is provided by the many ground stone objects, generally termed 'celts' or 'axes' in the archaeological literature, represented here in collections from Ghana, Nigeria and Cameroon, many of them acquired and donated by Robert Wild and Mervyn Jeffreys (Wharton 2005). Interestingly, the PRM's records make explicit mention that some of these West African artefacts were believed locally to be thunderbolts (e.g. some of those donated by Robert S. Rattray from Ashanti, Ghana (1912.33.1–94), along with another collected by Balfour himself from the Katsina area of northern Nigeria in 1930 (1930.43.38)). This provides a direct parallel with pre-scientific understandings of stone artefacts in Europe (Daniel 1975: 25–6) and is reinforced by the continued use of these objects in shrines in parts of West Africa (Connah 1964) where they are still readily bought and sold as fetish items in local markets.

2.4 Southern African Rock Art

Southern African hunter-gatherers began making rock art at least 27,000 years ago, and continued to do so in some areas until little more than a century ago. Attempts at recording the paintings and engravings that they produced began in the 1860s, although an ethnographically-informed understanding of the art is little more than thirty years

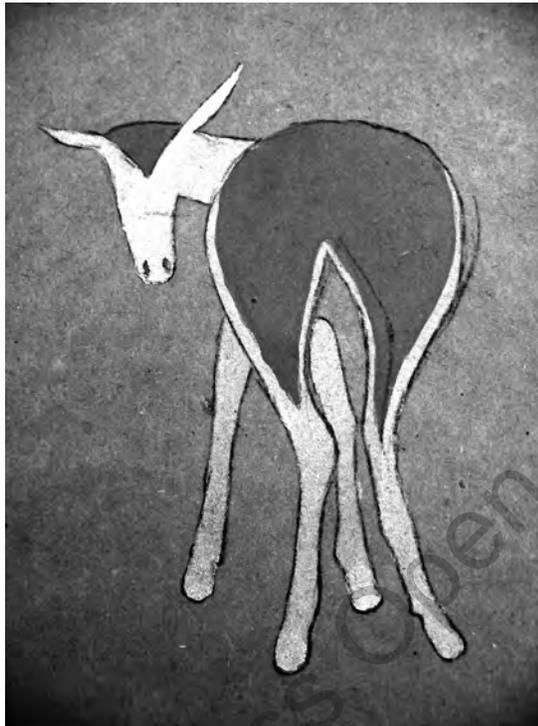


Figure 2.2 Copy on paper of a San rock painting in Ncibidwane, Province of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, made by Louis Tylor in 1893 (PRM Accession Number 1894.15.8 .1).

old (Lewis-Williams and Pearce 2004). Given the continuity of stone tool use and rock art production in southern Africa until very recent times, the distinction between the 'Stone Age' rock art and San (Bushman) ethnographic holdings of the PRM (Hobart and Mitchell 2004) is at best an artificial one. It is therefore appropriate to note here the significance of the Museum's rock art collections from southern Africa and to provide brief comments on the research that has been undertaken on them.

The PRM holds two important collections of San rock art from South Africa, both removed from their *in situ* locations

in the late 19th century. The larger group comprises 6 panel fragments (1894.15.1–6) extracted from rockshelters in the Giant's Castle area of the uKhahlamba-Drakensberg Mountains of KwaZulu-Natal by Louis Tylor in 1893, along with 97 copies made by Tylor of other paintings from the same locality (e.g. Figure 2.2). The copies, some of the earliest made in southern Africa, have been important in subsequent research attempting to evaluate the rate at which surviving *in situ* paintings are deteriorating (Ward 1997). The 6 painted fragments were described and published, along with an extensive biography of their collector (Hobart *et al.* 2002). They were subsequently traced by Dr David Pearce (Rock Art Research Institute, University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa) during a research visit to the PRM in 2006 supported by the Oppenheimer Fund.

The second set of San paintings in the PRM was removed by Edward Dunn from rockshelters in the Stormberg Mountains of South Africa's Eastern Cape Province in 1877. They form part of the extensive archaeological and ethnographic collections that Dunn donated to the PRM in 1936, following a long correspondence with Henry Balfour (Ellerby 2003). The 5 paintings (1938.37.326–330), exhibited at the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition in London, were traced by Dr David Pearce in 2006, but remain unpublished, except for Dunn's own account of his fieldwork in late 19th-century South Africa (Dunn 1931: plates XXVI–XXVIII).

The remaining southern African rock art holdings comprise slides and amateur rubbings of rock engravings from a number of sites in the South African interior, but are of little, if any, scientific interest. The one exception is the small body of material published by Hobart *et al.* (2000), which comprises some of the earliest, and earliest surviving (pre-1916), photographic records of Bushman rock art at a number of sites in Lesotho, South Africa and Zimbabwe.

2.5 Major Collections and their Collectors

Reviewing the PRM's African Stone Age collections in more detail, it is convenient to consider them country-by-country, highlighting those holdings that are of particular interest by reason of their size, provenance or history. As it is the southern African collections that have received most detailed study to date, I begin there and work my way north through the continent.

2.5.1 *South Africa*

The PRM's South African Stone Age collections are significant for several reasons. First, they include, as already mentioned, almost 2,000 artefacts from the extensive collections made by James A. Swan, whose bequest to the Museum initiated the James Swan Fund, an important source of support for southern African archaeology and African hunter-gatherer research. All of the Swan material comes from the Northern Cape Province of South Africa, much of it close to Kimberley, where Swan was a long-term employee of De Beers, the diamond-mining company. Earlier in date of collection, but also from the Northern Cape, is the Dunn collection of over 1,100 artefacts, which is significant as it parallels Dunn's ethnographic collection from the same region acquired in the 1870s from /Xam San individuals. This is precisely the same Bushman group that provided Wilhelm Bleek and Lucy Lloyd with an ethnohistoric archive which is now invaluable to understandings of Bushman rock art and social relations (Skotnes 2007). Dunn's archaeological finds remained almost wholly unpublished for half a century (Dunn 1880, 1931), despite his personal familiarity with many of the leading figures in the early development of archaeology in South Africa, as well as key intellectuals in Britain, including John Evans, Thomas Huxley and Charles Lyell (Ellerby 2003). The reason for this lies in Dunn's return to Australia in 1886, which removed him from the South African scientific scene, and later encouraged the systematic disparagement of his collecting efforts once Jack Goodwin and Peter van Riet Lowe (1929) formulated the still dominant system of Earlier, Middle and Later Stone Age subdivisions in the late 1920s (Goodwin 1935: 333; Goodwin and van Riet Lowe 1929: 109). Ellerby (2003) assesses Dunn's significance in the early development of Stone Age research in southern Africa in more detail, along with the process by which his collections came to the PRM.

A second, but much smaller, set of collections are of interest because they relate to the very beginnings of South African archaeology in the mid-19th century. The earliest of these is the bored stone digging stick weight collected by William Burchell (1953[1822–1824]), during his natural history-cum-anthropology expedition through the Northern Cape in 1822–1824. Donated to the Ashmolean Museum by his daughter in 1865, and transferred to the PRM in 1969, this object (1969.34.452) now forms part of the much larger Burchell collection that includes some of the oldest surviving African ethnographic artefacts anywhere in the world. Also of interest is material transferred to the PRM from the Oxford University Museum of Natural History (OUMNH) in 1886 (Gosden and Larson 2007: 159–62), which was originally collected from sites on the Cape Flats and elsewhere near Cape Town by Langham Dale (1826–1898), an educationist who was one of the first people to recognise and describe in print the presence of prehistoric stone artefacts in southern Africa (Dale 1870a, 1870b, 1871). Although it includes several grindstones, the vast majority of the seventy-odd artefacts are clearly of MSA affiliation (Mitchell in prep.). Much more recent in date because of their LSA origin are two more bored stones. One (1887.1.67) from the Cape Flats was collected by Charles Bell (Surveyor-General of the Cape Colony, 1848–1872) and later also transferred from OUMNH in 1886 (Bell



Figure 2.3 Stone implements from KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, collected by Colonel James Henry Bowker in 1880 (PRM Accession Numbers 1928.68.279–81, 1928.68.285–286 and 1928.68.381–383).

1875). The second (1891.61.7, provenanced to ‘Cape of Good Hope’) was donated by the early ethnographer Anne Walbank Buckland to the OUMNH in 1877, and probably formed part of the original PRM founding collection.

Related to the Dale collection in content and provenance is a small group of MSA artefacts (1928.68.329–334) collected in 1866 by William Whitaker, who, like Dale, was a contributor to the southern African collections of the British Museum (Cohen 2002). Additional MSA artefacts collected on the Cape Flats in the early 1870s (1928.68.298–302 and 1928.68.416–419) were acquired from Captain Henry Thurburn in 1872, along with a few MSA and LSA artefacts (1928.68.423 and 1928.68.430–434) from Port Beaufort on the Cape’s southern coast; other material collected by him at both localities is present in the British Museum (Mitchell 2002a). Other pioneers of South African archaeology are represented by artefacts collected or acquired by Colonel James Henry Bowker from unspecified sites in Zululand in 1880, i.e. immediately following the Anglo-Zulu War (Mitchell 1998b; 1928.68.279–281, 1928.68.285–286 and 1928.68.381–383, *Figure 2.3*), as well as by those collected by A.G. Bain in the Grahamstown area of the Eastern Cape Province in 1865 and subsequently passed on to Charles Lyell (1928.68.275 and 1928.68.335–338). Note, however, that the 9 MSA artefacts listed in the PRM’s object database as being collected by Lyell near Grahamstown in 1866 (1928.68.384–392) must also have been acquired by an intermediary since Lyell never visited South Africa. Bain is one possibility, but so too are J.H. Bowker and his brother, the aforementioned T.H. Bowker, both of whom sent stone artefacts to Britain, including some directly to Lyell, around 1866 (Bowker 1884; Cohen 1999; Mitchell 2002a: 24). All the objects

mentioned here passed into the possession of John Evans and were donated to the PRM with other elements of his collection by his son Arthur Evans in 1928.

Another early collection comprises the 40 stone artefacts (and 2 potsherds) collected or acquired by John Sanderson (principally in KwaZulu-Natal), exhibited by him to the Royal Anthropological Institute in 1878 (Sanderson 1878) and donated by it in 1900 (1900.56.1–53). This is, in fact, the only 19th-century southern African Stone Age collection in the PRM that appears to have been exhibited to a British learned society, creating a sharp contrast with the origin of much of the British Museum's material of the same kind, much of which was acquired after first being displayed and discussed at meetings of the Royal Anthropological Institute or the Society of Antiquaries (Mitchell 2002a).

A little later in date than the objects discussed thus far, but worth noting because they derive from some of the earliest explorations of the very rich archaeological record of the southern Cape coast, are the 85 objects acquired from Henry D.R. Kingston (1900.77.1–83; from sites near Knysna), about 200 artefacts from Frederick Williams Fitzsimons (1910.34.1–33; from sites near Port Elizabeth), and – via the Evans route already mentioned – 150 objects from J.C. Rickard (accessioned within 1928.68.1–544; again from sites in the Port Elizabeth area; see Rickard 1881a, 1881b). None of these collections is unique in the wider British context (Mitchell 2002a; Roberts 2002), with the Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, for example, holding an extensive collection from Rickard's work near Port Elizabeth and East London. However, finds by Dale, Whitaker, Bain and Bowker can only be paralleled in the British Museum, while those made by Sanderson are unique to the PRM (Mitchell 2002a).

As already noted, over 500 artefacts of the South African – and, indeed, southern African – collections derive, either directly or indirectly, from the activities of its first Curator, Henry Balfour, who maintained an active interest in the region's prehistory (e.g. Balfour 1910). Apart from the Swan and Dunn collections discussed earlier, examples include his own donations of objects from localities as far afield as East London (Eastern Cape Province), Alexandersfontein (Northern Cape Province) and Stellenbosch and Villiersdorp (Western Cape Province), as well as the collections acquired from professional and amateur colleagues encountered on his visits to South Africa. These include 220 objects from sites in the Northern Cape donated by J.G. van Alphen (1929.61.1–200, 1931.54.1) and Maria Wilman (1929.66.1–3, 1930.31.15), and those from sites in the Western Cape donated by W.E. Hardy (1929.44.1–140) and Petronella van Heerden (1929.49.1–8). Analysis of comparable collections in the British Museum underlines the importance of such visits and ties in the building up of southern African material in United Kingdom institutions during the early decades of the 20th century (Mitchell 1998a, 2002a).

2.5.2 *Zimbabwe*

In Zimbabwe, once again Balfour emerges as an important collector, principally from the Victoria Falls (1906.39.41–155), for which extensive notes surviving in the Balfour manuscript collection of the PRM³ complement preliminary accounts presented to the Royal Anthropological Institute (Balfour 1906) and the Society of Antiquaries (Balfour 1918). Balfour also collected almost 50 Stone Age artefacts from key sites in Zimbabwe visited during his 1929 trip to southern Africa in connection with the meeting there of

³ Cf. PRM Manuscript Collections, Balfour Papers, Box 1 (Diaries 1888–1927), item 4: 'Results of and observations made during three visits to Victoria Falls in the years 1905 (6 days), 1907 (3 weeks) and 1910 (11 days)' (20 pp.).

the British Association for the Advancement of Science, including stone tools from Hope Fountain near Bulawayo, once an important type site for the Zimbabwean ESA (Jones 1929, 1949; 1929.41.53–100). Of other collectors and collections, Franklin White (1909), who donated 10 implements to the PRM (1910.27.6), is of interest as the first person to conduct archaeological excavations at a Stone Age site in Zimbabwe; Father Thomas Gardner (1928) for his excavations at Gokemere Cave, an important LSA site near Masvingo from which the PRM has a tiny collection of 18 quartz artefacts and ochre fragments (1946.10.54); and Frederic Mennell (1904) again for conducting some of the very first Stone Age excavations in the country, represented here by 37 artefacts from one or more sites in the Matopo Hills (1905.38.4–10, 1906.60.1–13).

2.5.3 *Zambia*

As explained above, at least some of the artefacts collected by Henry Balfour at Victoria Falls are likely to come from the Zambian side of the Zambezi River. This is even more probable for the much smaller quantity of 37 artefacts donated by George William Lamplugh, who investigated the area's geology during a visit arranged while attending the 1905 meeting in South Africa of the British Association for the Advancement of Science (Lamplugh 1905a, 1905b). With the exception of artefacts collected at the same time by Feilden (Feilden 1905), those donated to Norwich Museum and now held by Liverpool Museum (Roberts 2002: 206), and others collected by Lamplugh himself, now in the British Museum (Perkins 2002), the PRM's collections from Victoria Falls are almost certainly the earliest such collections in the United Kingdom. Given the uncertainties prevailing over the exact provenance of the Balfour and Lamplugh material from Victoria Falls, the only certainly Zambian collections are: 20 quartz and quartzite flakes and fragments of animal bones and teeth from Kabwe (Broken Hill) collected by Franklin White (1910.27.1.1–27); a ground stone axe to its northeast (1923.81.1); and 4 MSA artefacts found at Victoria Falls by M.D.W. Jeffreys (1954.7.9 .1–4).

2.5.4 *Tanzania*

The vast majority of the 507 archaeological objects recorded from Tanzania were donated by anthropologist Ralph Tanner, who conducted fieldwork in the Sukuma area of northern Tanzania over many years, beginning as a district officer and government anthropologist from 1948 to 1959 (Tanner 1967; 1958.1.1–68, 1958.11.38). Most are from the Ngorongoro Conservation Area, provenanced either to sites near the Larei Forest or to Olduvai Gorge itself. Raw materials are predominantly obsidian and chalcedony with some vein quartz. The artefacts are microlithic and clearly attributable to one or more LSA industries. They include a few sherds of grooved, but otherwise plain, pottery suggesting the presence of a Pastoral Neolithic component. A smaller quantity of material, only five objects, is provenanced to a locality on the main road between Arusha and Dodoma in north-central Tanzania and is of MSA character, mostly in chert. Neither this material, nor the much smaller quantity of 25 mostly white chert/chalcedony (i.e. not quartzite) débitage from Olduvai Gorge collected by Quaternary geologist W.W. Bishop and donated, along with other of his collections, by Queen Mary College, London, in 1988, has been published.

2.5.5 *Kenya*

Kenya has the largest number (*c.* 6,886) of stone artefacts of any sub-Saharan country represented in the PRM collections. These are discussed in more depth in Chapter 3. A small fraction of these, about 119 artefacts, were donated by individuals

other than Louis Leakey, the founding father of East African palaeoanthropology. This minority includes Henry Balfour, who collected 22 LSA artefacts from several sites in the Central Rift Valley during a visit to Kenya in 1928. Some, provenanced to 'Gamble's Farm' (1928.21.1–6), come from close to an important rockshelter excavated by Leakey himself (see below), others (1929.41.47–48) from the Gilgil River, from which Leakey also donated additional material, and from other localities near Naivasha (1929.41.49–52). Much older in their manufacture are the Acheulean handaxes and cleavers that form part of the rather larger collection (1936.59.1–36) donated by Rev. Walter Owen from the Kavirondo area of western Kenya, where he served as archdeacon of the Anglican Church from 1918 until 1945.

Of Louis Leakey's contribution to African archaeology and studies of human evolution there can be no doubt (Cole 1975; Gowlett 1990). The PRM's Leakey collections, donated over almost two decades between 1929 and 1947, come from several distinct localities in Kenya. They also span many different aspects of East African prehistory. Over 200 Acheulean handaxes and other artefacts, for example, come from Kariandusi (Leakey 1931), an important site more recently investigated by Gowlett (1980). A single handaxe from Ologesailie, a much better preserved Middle Pleistocene locality now under renewed investigation (summarised in Barham and Mitchell 2008: 180–4), is of interest as it was collected there by Mary Leakey at, or soon after, the site's original discovery; the object concerned (1978.1.1) was eventually donated to the PRM by Kenneth P. Oakley, formerly of the British Museum.

More recent in date are the mostly obsidian artefacts from Njoro described as 'Stillbay' and thus belonging to the East African MSA, plus a smaller number of surface finds from Nanyuki possibly transitional between Mode 2 and Mode 3 (i.e. ESA and MSA) technologies (Leakey 1931) and most likely of late Middle Pleistocene age. However, the vast majority of the various Leakey donations represent the more recent phases of stone tool use in Kenya. Largely made in obsidian, most are again surface finds, but they include a small number of artefacts, including long obsidian blades, from unspecified rockshelters near Naivasha (1947.2.449.1–12). Over 2,000 further artefacts, most of them débitage and including a small, non-obsidian component, come from the Little Gilgil River also near Naivasha, while several hundred more come from close to Lake Elmenteita, a little to the north. Sixteen of these artefacts (1929.45.6–21), consisting of obsidian flakes and backed microliths, are provenanced to 'the lower levels' of Gamble's Cave and thus likely belong to what Leakey (1931) initially termed the 'Kenya Aurignacian' and later 'Kenya Capsian'. Now dated to ~12,000–10,500 radiocarbon years ago, this industry, which makes almost exclusive use of obsidian and a Mode 4 (blade-based) technology, is today referred to as the Eburran (Ambrose *et al.* 1980).

None of the PRM's Kenyan Stone Age material had been described or studied in detail until Shipton's assessment (Chapter 3) and, except for allusions in Leakey's (1931) own work and a recent publication of material from Kariandusi (Shipton 2011), little of it has been published yet.

2.5.6 Uganda

The situation is rather different for Uganda, as Julie Cormack undertook substantial research on the 470 stone artefacts collected there by Edward James Wayland (1920.82.1–93, 1938.17.1–102, 1966.2.105–117) and the 117 collected by Terence Patrick O'Brien in the early 20th century (1940.7.306–323, 1966.2.110–111, 1966.2.118–119). Her unpublished study (Cormack 1993) includes detailed matching of artefacts, labels and associated documentation. Some of these artefacts were illustrated and discussed by O'Brien in his synthesis of his research in Uganda

Figure 2.4 Ground stone axe from Bamenda, Cameroon, collected by M.D.W. Jeffreys (PRM Accession Number 1942.13.2424): one of over 800 presented to the PRM in 1942 from the Wellcome Historical Medical Museum.



(O'Brien 1939). Historically important among the localities represented in the Wayland collection is Nsongezi, where artefacts in river terraces formed an important mid-20th-century reference point for reconstructing East African prehistory (cf. Cole 1963, 1967; van Riet Lowe 1952). They include material described as Acheulean and Sangoan, but neither Nsongezi nor the other sites represented in the PRM's holdings feature any longer in regional overviews (e.g. Barham and Mitchell 2008), neglected in favour of sites still in primary or near primary context to which absolute dating techniques can be applied. The principal exception to what is otherwise an exclusive emphasis in the PRM's Ugandan collections on ESA and MSA artefacts is a small collection (1917.19.21–89) of obsidian scrapers and débitage recovered by Charles Hartley from an unknown location in Bunyoro in 1917.

2.5.7 Cameroon

All 830 artefacts from Cameroon were donated by Mervyn Jeffreys via the Wellcome Museum in 1942 (1942.13.2004–2831). They come from the Bamenda area of the former British Cameroons, now in the western part of the modern state, and were collected, along with much ethnographic material, by Jeffreys during his time as Chief Commissioner there between 1915 and 1945. The Cameroonian stone artefacts that he donated to the PRM remain unstudied and undescribed, but include many ground stone axes/adzes of mid-late Holocene age (e.g. Figure 2.4). Intriguingly, Jeffreys' interest in archaeology was sparked by Thomas Gardner, one of his schoolteachers, and Frederic Mennell, both contributors to the PRM's Zimbabwean collections (see above; Jeffreys 1951a). The role played by the Jesuit order, to which Gardner belonged, and its links in the formation of British archaeological collections from Africa, merit further investigation (Mitchell 2002a: 25).

2.5.8 Nigeria

Jeffreys (1951b, 1951c, 1955) also made an important contribution to the PRM's Nigerian archaeological collections, with additional stone tools from the Itu area of Nigeria now forming part of the West African holdings of the British Museum (Perkins 2002). Undiagnostic quartz and (?)basalt débitage and a much larger number

of ground and polished stone axes and adzes comprise the over 300 artefacts now in the PRM (Wharton 2005). The same broad description holds true of the PRM's other Nigerian collections, some of them coming, like the Jeffreys material, from southern and southeastern Nigeria: for example, the 34 artefacts donated from the Cross River area by Gwilym I. Jones, a former student of Balfour's (1930.33.1–2, 1931.18.125–160; Gosden and Larson 2007: 134, 136). The rest comes from central or northern parts of the country, and includes a polished stone axe (1930.43.38) collected by Balfour from near Katsina during his visit to Nigeria in 1930. Except for Wharton's (2005) brief description of the Jeffreys collection, all the material from Nigeria remains undescribed and unstudied.

2.5.9 Ghana

Ghana, the third formerly British West African territory discussed here, shares with Cameroon and Nigeria an emphasis on ground stone axes and quartz débitage. Most prolific among the collectors represented is Robert Wild, who was Inspector of Mines in the then Gold Coast from 1920 until 1937. An important figure in the collection of ethnographic material culture, principally from Ashanti, and in the development of Ghanaian scientific publications (Wharton 2005), Wild also played a key role in pioneering archaeology in Ghana, as recognised by the first professional archaeologist to hold a position there, Thurstan Shaw (Shaw 1990; Wild 1927, 1929, 1934). The *c.* 268 Stone Age artefacts that Wild donated to the PRM through the 1920s and 1930s come from numerous localities across southern and western Ghana, but emphasize ground stone axes in particular. Exactly the same is true of the collection of 97 stone artefacts donated in 1912 by Robert Rattray (1923), a political officer and pioneering anthropologist in Ashanti (Machin 1998), and of the various smaller collections donated by others.

Once again, little of this material has been studied in detail or published, apart from Wharton's (2005) work on the Wild collection. The small collection of quartz artefacts and ground stone axes donated by Charles S. Seligman and his widow Brenda Z. Seligman (1940.12.689.1–90 and 1940.12.692.1–10) were possibly briefly described by Cardinall and Seligman (1921), but this is uncertain as the provenance of the objects is given in the PRM's records no more precisely than 'a site in Nigeria or Ashanti'. More certainly, some of Cardinall's own collections from northern Ghana, including those provenanced to Navrongo (1921.66.1–9 and 12, 1921.45.1–4, 1927.12.1, 1927.64.1, 1931.11.1–12), are reported in the same paper, while ground stone axes collected and donated by Balfour (1988.29.1–6) receive mention in one of his own publications (Balfour 1912).

Of greater historical interest are the 6 artefacts (1928.68.449–454) collected by William W. Reade at Aquapim (now Akwapim) near Accra in southern Ghana. Acquired by John Evans and subsequently donated in 1928 by Arthur Evans, they are undoubtedly among those mentioned by John Lubbock (1870) in an important paper that helped establish the universality of the Stone Age as an ordering concept in prehistory. Comparable artefacts in the PRM founding collection provenanced to 'Aquapan' (1884.126.96–99) may have the same origin, as they are known to have been collected in Ghana before 1874 and could readily have passed to Pitt-Rivers from Lubbock.

2.5.10 Chad

Chad represents one of the very few non-British Empire territories represented in the PRM's sub-Saharan Stone Age collections. The 2 ground stone axes of relevance (1929.11.1–2) were collected in the Wadi Howar area of what is now southeastern

Chad during exploration of sites in various parts of the central Sahara by W.B.K. Shaw and D. Newbold (1928: 275; cf. Chapter 8).

2.5.11 *Remaining Countries*

The countries of Botswana, Congo, Lesotho, Mauritania, Senegal, Somalia and Sudan are represented in the collections of the PRM, but only by a small number of objects (see *Table 2.1*) and they have limited research potential. The Botswanan material (Levellois' cores and flakes (1935.14.1–19)) is noted to have come from the Tate River Basin and was donated by the British Museum in 1935. Unfortunately, there is no associated information as to who collected these implements or when they found their way into the British Museum. Enquiries at the British Museum may rectify this, however. A handful of other artefacts from this region are also noted on the database, but these have yet to be investigated and their character is uncertain (e.g. 1928.68.446–448).

The single object from Lesotho is a small scraper (1900.56.25) donated via the Archaeological Institute in 1900, and originally collected by John Sanderson.

A larger assemblage of flint artefacts originates from Mauritania. Of these, 63 arrow-heads, 104 flakes, 20 pointed stone implements and 5 scrapers (1913.64.149–341) were purchased by the PRM from L'Abbé H. Breuil, who had in turn acquired the material from L. Dion. The remainder of the collection from Mauritania are part of the large donation made by Robert Soper in 1983. This collection (1983.26) has yet to receive detailed collections management attention and thus its character is uncertain (cf. Chapter 4). Robert Soper is also responsible for amassing the entire collection of material from Senegal. H. Seton-Karr is the collector largely accountable for the stone tools from Somalia (1895.48.1–11, 1897.79.1 .1–15, 1921.91.84–87, 1931.71.1–4) although some objects were also acquired via H.A. Byatt in 1904 (1906.41.1–8). Finally, the Sudanese Stone Age was brought into the PRM via Charles and Brenda Seligman, who were responsible for the even larger collection of Palaeolithic implements from Egypt (Milliken 2003; see also Chapter 4). The entire assemblage was procured from the area of Jebel Guli.

2.6 **Summary: Research Potential**

This quick survey of the PRM's sub-Saharan Stone Age archaeological collections does not do them full justice. It can, however, help identify their potential for future research. Regrettably, the acute lack of precision as to the original geographical provenance of many of the individual objects and collections severely reduces that potential. Even more of an impediment is the fact that virtually all the artefacts considered come from surface sites, rather than carefully excavated contexts, and are, furthermore, very likely to have been selected on grounds of aesthetics, size or presumed typological or cultural importance. In no sense can they be thought of as an unbiased sample. Such considerations are by no means unique to the PRM and certainly afflict the better-studied southern African Stone Age collections of the British Museum (Mitchell 2002a). As with the latter, however, all is not completely lost. Individual artefacts can clearly play an important educational role when displayed to the public or used in teaching. Moreover, exploration of the British Museum's collections indicates that surprises can be found; witness the unexpected discovery of a couple of hundred artefacts from the otherwise totally lost collection made by William Bazley (1905) from his excavations of an astonishingly deep – and once no doubt highly informative – site in the former Alfred County, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa (Mitchell 1998c).

Nevertheless, in the case of the PRM's sub-Saharan Stone Age holdings, just as in that of the British Museum, their real intellectual value resides in their role as tangible documents of past histories of collection and, in particular, of the pioneering decades – often by amateurs – of African archaeology. Considered in this light, they can reveal much about the interests of their collectors, the ways in which collection was affected by wider political or economic processes and the importance of different professional backgrounds, including participation in colonial military, administrative and commercial structures, in conditioning what was acquired, retained and donated and from where and when. Most important of all, perhaps, they also inform us on the networks, often surprisingly long, complex and intertwined, that joined collectors to each other and brought their collections to Oxford. It is that historical dimension that should be foremost in considering their contemporary significance and that most clearly justifies their continued study.

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