

Japan

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24.1 Introduction

In 1883 Edward Tylor received a letter from one of the foremost British Japanologists of the 19th century, Basil Hall Chamberlain, introducing himself and ‘the interest which I [Chamberlain] feel in Japanese subjects’.¹ The timing was fortuitous. It coincided with Pitt-Rivers’ negotiations with the University of Oxford on the donation of his collection. Only 15 years previously the 250-year isolationist policies imposed by the Japanese government on the country had been lifted and western scholars, like Basil Hall Chamberlain, were for the first time welcomed by the Meiji government to introduce western science and technology. Such ‘employed foreigners’ or *oyatoi-gaikokujin* (Umesawa 1968) facilitated not only Japanese/western intellectual exchanges, but also material exchanges that benefited collections on both sides of the world, including that of the Pitt Rivers Museum (PRM). In this manner the 13 stone pieces that made up Japanese archaeological portion of the PRM founding collection expanded to c. 510 archaeological artefacts over the course of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, from a range of sites (*Figure 24.1*). A full catalogue of this unpublished archaeological collection is in preparation, and provides a detailed account of the PRM’s Japanese archaeological holdings (Ohinata *et al.* forthcoming). This chapter provides an overview of the collections.

Of the ‘three archaeologies’ of Japanese later prehistory (Mizoguchi 2006), material from the hunter-gatherer societies of the Jomon is best represented in the PRM collections, primarily in the form of stone tools, followed by pottery from the complex agrarian society of the Kofun (*Table 24.1*). Only one artefact is attributable to the Yayoi period. The Hokkaido sequence is also well represented, principally again from the long Jomon period. Five medieval artefacts represent the historical periods, although the PRM undoubtedly houses many more. Overall, whilst miscellaneous in character, with many objects of unknown provenance, the collection provides a tangible snapshot of the material available to western and Japanese scholars at the end of the 19th and early 20th centuries. As such, the collection’s primary significance lies in its historical associations, a subject that is of considerable scholarly interest today.

24.2 Chronological Overview

The prehistoric Japanese archaeological sequence is unique in comparison to the way in which Old World archaeology is usually constructed: its Palaeolithic period possess

¹ Letter to Tylor from Chamberlain, 31 March 1883, PRM Tylor Papers, Box 11, Item C1.

Figure 24.1 Map of Japanese Islands, showing Prefectures. (1) Kagoshima; (2) Miyazaki; (3) Kumamoto; (4) Ōita; (5) Fukuoka; (6) Saga; (7) Nagasaki; (8) Kochi; (9) Ehime; (10) Tokushima; (11) Kagawa; (12) Yamaguchi; (13) Hiroshima; (14) Shimane; (15) Okayama; (16) Tottori; (17) Hyogo; (18) Osaka; (19) Kyoto; (20) Shiga; (21) Mie; (22) Nara; (23) Wakayama; (24) Fukuji; (25) Gifu; (26) Aichi; (27) Shizuoka; (28) Ishikawa; (29) Toyama; (30) Nagano; (31) Yamanashi; (32) Kanagawa; (33) Niigata; (34) Gunma; (35) Saitama; (36) Tokyo; (37) Chiba; (38) Ibaraki; (39) Tochigi; (40) Fukushima; (41) Yamagata; (42) Miyagi; (43) Akita; (44) Iwate; (45) Aomori; (46) Hokkaidō.



Table 24.1 Number of prehistoric Japanese objects in the Pitt Rivers Museum by chronological phase (excluding objects from Hokkaidō).

Period	Date	Objects
Early Prehistory	Palaeolithic (Iwajuku Period)	>12, 500 BP 0
Later Prehistory	Jomon 縄文時代	12,500 BP–300 BCE 254 stone artefacts (including 123 arrow-heads) 44 pottery sherds
	Yayoi 弥生時代	300 BCE– CE 300 1 pottery vessel
Proto-historical	Kofun 古墳時代	CE 300–CE 710 19 pottery vessels (Sue-ware) 1 Magatama bead

ground stone axes (typically considered a Neolithic feature); its Neolithic pottery, the earliest in the world, belongs to a primarily sedentary hunter-gatherer-fishing society (not an agricultural one); there is no formal Bronze or Iron Age; and domesticated plants and animals were adopted fairly late. Hokkaido has a separate cultural sequence from the rest of Japan from about 300 BCE, as communities there, in contrast to the rest of the country, remained reliant upon hunting-gathering-fishing until the Satsumon period. The Ainu culture in Hokkaido as a distinct entity dates from around

the 13th century CE. At the southern end of the country, the Ryukyus group of tropical islands also has a separate chronological sequence as this area was politically independent until 1609 CE and saw the development of a distinctive culture during the 13th, 14th and 15th centuries CE (Pearson 2009). However, there is no archaeological material in the PRM from this part of the country. A number of recent western language summaries of this prehistoric sequence are available (Demoule and Soury 2008; Mizoguchi 2002; 2006; Wiczorek and Steinhaus 2004). Period and subculture specific accounts include: for the Jomon (Habu 2004; Kobayashi 2004; Kaner 2009); Yayoi and Kofun (Barnes 2007; Kidder 2007); Ainu and Hokkaido (Fitzhugh and Dubreuil 1999; Fukasawa 1998); Okinawa (Pearson 2009).

The Palaeolithic appears not to be represented in the PRM's collection, although there is an undated flint scraper (1909.41.20) that might possibly be Palaeolithic in date. The Palaeolithic was not established to exist in Japan until 1949 (Sugihara 1956). Its beginning is contested, but it ends with the introduction of pottery and thus the Japanese Palaeolithic is often considered to be simply a pre-pottery phase referred to as the 'Iwajuku' period (Imamura 1996).

The Jomon Period, one of the longest periods in world prehistory, is famous for its early pottery, first evident in the north of Honshu, and subsequently as far as southern Kyushu. It is also known for its rich material culture, although the range of material represented in the PRM collections is restricted in scope and lacks the quintessential figurines (e.g. Kaner 2009b) and ornaments. There exists a detailed pottery-based chronology for the era and the assignment of the PRM's examples to this remains to be addressed, although this is made problematic by the fragmentary nature of the pieces. In terms of stone tools, the 2 leaf-shaped spearheads in the collection (1921.82.27 and 1931.71.10) and the 49 stemmed javelin points are Early Jomon (Ohinata *et al.* forthcoming; Suzuki 1991). Arrow-heads were in use for most of the Jomon period and despite their great variability in form the 202 arrow-heads in the collection are difficult to date precisely. The 12 stone awls in the PRM are all Early Jomon examples with elongated bodies, with or without stemmed heads. The chipped-stone axes of the period are often classified as either tabular, plectrum or narrow-waisted in shape and all three of these types are represented amongst the 8 chipped-stone axes in the PRM. Of the polished stone variety a three-fold classification is also employed and again all of these are represented in the 37 examples in the PRM. No macheads are present in the collection and the only ceremonial object is a miniature polished axe of cream chert, perforated in the middle (1921.91.118). In addition to 7 retouched flakes, 2 endscrapers and 8 side-scrappers of Jomon date, there are 5 examples of stone tools that look like very small shoehorns (*berajo-sekaki*) and 55 stemmed flake tools (*ishi-saji* or stone spoons), the most typical of all the Jomon period stone tools.

The introduction of wet rice agriculture around 300 BCE signals the beginning of the Yayoi in south-western Japan, a period of increasing social complexity. As the pottery sequence at the end of the Jomon is difficult to discern from the early Yayoi, it is unclear whether some of the PRM's sherds may be from this phase, but at least one vessel is likely to date from this period (1940.12.419). Although the period also saw the introduction of both bronze and iron objects from mainland China, none are present in the PRM collections. During the subsequent Kofun period the ancient state system developed, formalizing the hierarchical social systems that had begun to appear in the Yayoi period. Studies of this period have focused on mounded tombs (*kofun*) and the elaborate burial goods contained within. The Kofun is only sparsely represented in the PRM, principally by pottery. Of these most are of Sue ware rather than the other type of pottery of the period, Haji ware.

Much of the collection derives from northern Japan, but the distinctive Hokkaido traditions of the 7th–13th centuries CE are not well represented in the PRM, with

only one possible Satsumon period pottery sherd (1892.61.3) and 3 examples of Okhotsk pottery (1892.61.15–17).

Material from the post-medieval period is also present in the collection, but has been classified in the past as ‘ethnographic’ rather than ‘archaeological’. This is understandable given that in the initial post-war decades, the span of archaeological research in Japan used to end chronologically with the early historic palace sites at Heijō (Nara, 8th century CE) and Heian (Kyoto, 9th–11th centuries CE) (Barnes and Okita 1999: 372). Medieval archaeology has, however, gathered pace in the last few decades. In the PRM there are at least 5 possible medieval pieces, all of arms and armoury, including: a short sword or dagger with plain wooden hilt, with a scabbard sleeve of copper alloy and a sheath (1925.10.1); a 16th-century tanto blade (*wakizashi*) produced in Kaga by a sword maker named Ietsugo, with a green spangled lacquered sheath (1929.17.2) and a small knife (1929.17.2–3); and a 16th-century Japanese helmet with a neck-guard (2007.31.1). Similarly, Edo material culture is gaining wider recognition from archaeologists (Barnes and Okita 1999), although given the breadth of the ethnographic collections from Japan in the PRM (numbering almost 9,000 individual pieces), this chapter does not consider the large number of Edo-period objects.

24.3 History of the Collection

The 7 arrow-heads (1884.135.169–175) and 6 stone objects (1884.140.65–70) in the PRM founding collection have no associated documentation with which to shed light on their life-histories. The acquisition of some of these may well have originally been as *kiseki* or ‘curious stones’, which included unworked unusually-shaped stones and these were cherished by antiquarians of the Edo period (Ohinata *et al.* forthcoming), later to pass through to Pitt-Rivers along with over 300 ethnographic items, when the barriers to Japan were removed in 1868.

It is the material procured by Basil Hall Chamberlain (1850–1935), however, that forms the bulk of the PRM’s collection with 291 archaeological objects purchased from him (in addition to a wider range of some 2400 ethnographic pieces also acquired). Chamberlain first travelled to eastern Asia in 1873 on a voyage that he hoped would allow him to recuperate from a nervous breakdown. The recovery Chamberlain sought was achieved in Japan where he settled and began to learn the language with great enthusiasm whilst he acted as a teacher at the naval academy (Ota 2004). Such was his aptitude for languages that within three years he was able to undertake pioneering work as a Japanologist and over the course of his life he contributed significantly to the study of Japanese language and history (e.g. Chamberlain 1887a, 1887b, 1895). His archaeological contributions to the Pitt Rivers include 24 pottery fragments from Hokkaido purchased in 1892 and 267 stone tools, most of which are unprovenanced Jomon pieces bought in 1899 when he was Professor at Imperial University in Tokyo. They include spearheads, javelin heads, arrow-heads, awls, axes, retouched flakes, scrapers, stemmed flake tools (*ishi-saji*), and spatula-shaped stone tools (*berajo-sekaki*).

Chamberlain had been in regular correspondence with Tylor since his initial letter of 1883 and through Chamberlain Tylor also secured for the PRM 16 intact, Kofun period pottery vessels (1896.9.1–11, 1896.78.1–4)² from the consul in Nagasaki, William Aston, a ‘chief authority on matters connected with early Japanese tombs and dolmens’³ and another prominent British Japanologist of the 19th century. It seems that Tylor had originally requested ancient terracotta figures, but was informed

² A further two bowls (1917.53.560 .1–2) were kept by Tylor for his private collection and only entered the PRM following his death.

³ Letter to Tylor from Chamberlain, 4 October 1883. PRM Tylor Papers, Box 11, Item C2.

by Chamberlain that they were 'so rare that there are only three or four genuine whole ones in existence above ground' and to 'procure one would therefore be almost an impossibility', thus the ceramics were offered as 'other things which he [Aston] thinks might be acceptable'.⁴ These 'other things' are all Sue-ware pieces, a specific type of unglazed, grey pottery fired at much higher temperatures (around 1100–1200°C) than other pottery of the period or preceding periods. When they were offered to Tylor, however, they were described as *giogi-yaki*, 'an ancient kind of pottery called after Giogi, the alleged inventor or introducer into Japan of the potter's wheel'.

A further 19 ceramic fragments (1892.61.2–20) were donated to the PRM in 1909 from the Anthropological Institute and most of these are of the earlier Jomon period, although two are Okhotsk in date. The Anthropological Institute had acquired the material from another significant character in the history of Japanese archaeology; William Gowland, 'the authority in the world on Japanese archaeology'⁵ and considered by many today to be the father of Japanese archaeology (Kaner 2008; Rousmaniere and Kaner 2003). His collection in the British Museum comprises one of the largest assemblages of Kofun period material outside Japan (Harris and Goto 2003). The PRM did have a more direct link with Gowland, as he donated ten tattooing needles in March 1906, but he did not donate archaeological material.

In addition to the stone tools and pottery, the Pitt Rivers collection also includes 7 glass examples of what are known as *magatama*, or comma-shaped beads, that are often found in mortuary contexts, particularly during the Kofun period. Only one example (1884.140.67) is certainly of Kofun date, whilst the others are likely to be more recent. Of these others, one (1917.53.593) is notable as being from a Japanese professor, Professor A. Konoye, sent to Tylor in 1900 after a visit to Oxford and thus it constitutes one of the few pieces not procured by westerners. Other than Konoye, only one other non-western individual is associated with donations to the collection, a 'Y. Shioda', who in 1909 presented 23 stone implements (1909.41.1–23) and one pottery sherd (1909.41.24) 'to your [Oxford] University as I did the same to other four greatest universities in Europe and America'. These were all collected by Shioda from 'mounds beside old river basins, mostly exposed in cultivated fields'.⁶

The remaining Japanese material filtered into the PRM in a piecemeal fashion as part of wider donations from prolific collectors of the late 19th and early 20th century: A J M Bell (25 Jomon arrow-heads, 1915.13.7–8, 1921.91.118–140); G.C Seligman (36 stone and ceramic pieces, 1940.12.401–429, 1940.12.858.1–11); John Evans (10 stone implements, 1931.71.10–19); Sydney Gerald Hewlett (12 stone tools, 1927.78.1–11); and (via Sotheby's) Lucas White-King (45 stone tools, 1921.82.1–45). Fifteen of the stone tools from the latter's collection are forgeries (as are many other White-King pieces purported to be from other parts of the world), whilst many of the remainder are noted to have passed through multiple hands before reaching the PRM. These may, therefore, be informative of connections between Japan and the west, as well as about the role of dealers at this time.⁷ For instance, amongst the Seligman pieces are 11 stone artefacts (1940.12.858.1–11) from a box labelled '30/7/32 Munro's flakes Japan'.⁸ This is most likely Neil Gordon Munro (1863–1942), a Scottish doctor

⁴ Letter to Tylor from Chamberlain, 4 October 1883. PRM Tylor Papers, Box 11, Item C2.

⁵ Letter to Tylor from Chamberlain, 15 November 1888. PRM Tylor papers, Box 11, Item C8.

⁶ Undated note from Y. Shioda in PRM's related documents file for 1909.41.

⁷ The accession book register for this collection notes that '21 of the small arrow heads were from the colln. of Kumegawa of Osaka & were purchd. from Yamanata & Co. London, April, 1916; 'the same applies to all the rest, all being from YAMATO PROVINCE; except small concave-based arrow-heads (Pur. from Webster, 1915) & the 'Moustier' point type & tengu-no-meshigai (Pur. from G. F. Lawrence).''

⁸ The accompanying label states 'Stones resembling palaeolithic flakes from ISHIGO in the PROVINCE OF SATSUMA, SOUTH KYUSHU, JAPAN. This is, however, a Neolithic site of prehistoric AINU. Note

who undertook fieldwork in Japan at the Mitsuzawa shell middens and many other sites before moving to Hokkaido where he wrote extensively on the Ainu. He also penned the first synthesis of Japanese archaeology in the English language (Munro 1908). The collection he amassed is now in the National Museums of Scotland (c/o Department of World Cultures) and comprises archaeological materials mainly from the Jomon and Kofun periods, together with Ainu ethnographic specimens. These materials were the subject of an extensive survey funded by the Japan Foundation in the late 1990s, results of which have yet to be made public. The PRM received 4 items directly from him (1909.15.1–4), however none relate to his archaeological work.

24.4 Summary: Potential and Future Research

The PRM collection came about as a result of donations from a series of significant figures in the fields of Japanese studies, anthropology and archaeology and thus is mainly of interest for its place in the history of relationships between British antiquarians and their Japanese suppliers (Kaner 2009b). The history of collecting and displaying Japanese antiquities is a research topic of considerable interest (Rousmaniere and Kaner 2003). Further research could, therefore, be usefully undertaken into how individual components of the collection came into the ownership of various donors and their role in early Japanese archaeology.

The further potential for publication lies in the possibility of synthesizing the PRM collections with other early collections of Japanese archaeological materials from elsewhere in the UK, including the British Museum, National Museums of Scotland (the Munro collection), the Ashmolean, the Fitzwilliam, the Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, and the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, University of East Anglia, Norwich. The PRM's collection of Japanese archaeology compares well with these other collections. Brief summaries of important Japanese art collections in the UK were published in 2004 (Irvine 2004) and these contained brief details of some archaeological holdings.

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These were probably used in excavating the burrows mentioned in the paper, and for other purposes. I found it comparatively easy to flake this material which occurs on the sea-shore 1000 ft below the site⁷.

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