

# 19

## The Caribbean

Dan Hicks and Jago Cooper

### 19.1 Introduction

The Pitt Rivers Museum (PRM) holds *c.* 706 objects from the island Caribbean, of which *c.* 577 are defined as ‘archaeological’. This chapter discusses the Caribbean archaeological collections from the PRM’s founding collection (19.2), before considering the development of the collections after 1884 (19.3), and drawing brief conclusions (19.4).

### 19.2 The Founding Collection

There are *c.* 20 ‘archaeological’ objects from the PRM founding collection that are recorded as being from the Caribbean. The objects comprise stone axes and adzes, shell adzes, and a single stone spindle whorl. There are 3 objects from Barbados – a shell adze from the Codrington Estate (1884.126.174), a stone axe (1884.126.196) and the stone spindle whorl mentioned above (1884.104.97). There are also 2 stone axes from St Lucia (1884.126.142, 1884.126.213), a stone axe from St Vincent (1884.126.208), a stone axe with a carved decoration of a human face and arms from the Dominican Republic, purchased from Bryce McMurdo Wright probably before 1874 (1884.126.173), and a stone axe from Trinidad, collected by ‘W. Hackett’ in 1863 (1884.126.214). There are also 6 shell adzes (1884.126.237–239, 1884.126.244–246) and 6 stone axes and adzes (1884.126.140–141, 1884.126.175, 1884.126.210–212) that are simply recorded as from the West Indies. These include 2 from the collection of William Greenwell (1884.126.237–238). One of the objects recorded as stone axes may be one of the objects – described as ‘two stone mullers, one from Tahiti, the other from the West Indies, together with a drawing of a similar muller from New York’ – exhibited by Pitt-Rivers at a meeting of the Ethnological Society on 25 January 1870 (Anon 1870).

As well as the ‘archaeological’ material, the PRM founding collection includes a number of ‘ethnographic’ objects from the Caribbean. These comprise a cockroach trap made of grass stalks from Jamaica,<sup>1</sup> acquired by Pitt-Rivers from John George Wood in 1878 (1884.117.104), a decorated gourd vessel from Barbados, collected by 1879 (1884.63.52), 2 seeds of *Mucuna urens* (1884.140.118), and 11 soap-berries (1884.70.8). Not from the PRM founding collection, but purchased by the PRM in 1992, are 4 wooden locks or models of locks (1992.5.3, 1992.5.11, 1992.5.13, 1992.5.16), which are recorded as from St Vincent, Jamaica and Dominica. Pitt-Rivers’ interest in West Indian wooden locks was explored in his 1883 publication ‘On the development and distribution of primitive locks and keys’, where he discussed the ‘various kinds of primitive locks in use in different countries’:

<sup>1</sup> Some of the documentation indicates that this is possibly from Japan, not from Jamaica.

It will, I think, have been made evident that some of them most certainly have been derived from a common centre. The wooden key-drawn pin-locks have spread over the region extending from Egypt to Yarkand. The Scandinavian wooden locks of the same kind, though differing in the details of their construction, we have seen are common to Norway and Scotland, and by some means have been carried to the West Indies and British Guiana, whilst the tubular spring padlock of the Roman age in Europe is the same that is found throughout the whole region extending from Italy to China and Japan on the east, northward into England and Scandinavia, southward into Abyssinia, and westward into West Africa and Algeria, Spain, and on as far as the West Indies' (Pitt-Rivers 1883: 16).

The wooden locks were purchased by the PRM from 'C.M. Gill' in 1992, having been previously bought at Battle, Sussex in 1991: they appear to be annotated in Pitt-Rivers' own hand, and to be from his second collection, which he displayed at Farnham, Dorset (see Chapter 1).

### 19.3 The Development of the Collections after 1884

#### 19.3.1 Introduction

This section outlines the *c.* 285 objects from St Kitts and Nevis (19.3.2), the *c.* 51 objects from Barbados (19.3.3), the *c.* 32 objects from St Lucia (19.3.4), the *c.* 31 objects from St Vincent and the Grenadines (19.3.5), the *c.* 30 objects from Jamaica (19.3.6), the *c.* 11 objects from Trinidad and Tobago (19.3.7), the *c.* 10 objects from the Virgin Islands (19.3.8), the 9 objects from Antigua and Barbuda (19.3.9), and the 6 objects from Puerto Rico (19.3.10).

As well as this material, there are 3 stone axes from Grenada (1921.67.80 1957.1.19–20); 2 stone axes from Guadeloupe (1921.67.78–79); and a stone axe from Dominica (1936.84.19). The single 'archaeological' object recorded as from Bermuda in the PRM collections is also a stone axe (1921.67.75). There is just one object from the Netherlands Antilles: a silver dollar, cut into a quarter, from Curaçao (1912.86.6). There are also just 2 objects from the Dominican Republic: a stone axe with a carved decoration of a human face and arms, from the PRM founding collection (1884.126.173), and a cast of a stone axe with a carved decoration of a human face (1906.57.4). There is also a single stone axe from Haiti (1921.67.74).

There are also *c.* 93 'archaeological' objects that are simply recorded as from the West Indies, with no country of origin listed. These include 2 casts of human skulls that were held in the collection of Christ Church, Oxford between 1860 and 1866, and were transferred to the PRM through the OUMNH in 1887 (1887.33.17). There are also *c.* 19 stone and shell implements collected by Thomas Graham Briggs, and purchased by the PRM from C. Kenrick Gibbons in 1890 (1890.36.1–19), and a further 17 stone axes collected by Briggs that were donated by Henry Balfour in 1915 (1915.37.310–326). Balfour also donated a stone axe that is not recorded as collected by Briggs (1915.37.309). There is also a fragment of a stone axe transferred from the OUMNH in 1902 (1902.89.2); a stone axe from the collection of Stephen William Silver (which he displayed at Letcombe Manor, Oxfordshire) (1906.20.109); *c.* 33 stone axes and hammerstones donated by Arthur Roberston Brailey in 1920 (1920.80.2–34); 2 stone axes purchased from S.G. Fenton & Company between 1912 and 1916 by Lucas White King, and then purchased from the sale of King's collection at Sotheby's on 9 November 1921 by Louis Colville Gray Clarke who donated them to the PRM (1921.67.72–73); a stone axe acquired by Harry Beasley for the Cranmore Museum on 20 October 1926, and donated the PRM in 1954 (1954.8.160); a stone axe purchased by the OUMNH from Edwin Alfred Walford in 1922, and transferred

to the PRM in 1959 (1959.10.1); and a stone axe donated to the Ashmolean Museum from the estate of Harold Arthur Lee-Dillon in 1933, and transferred to the PRM in 1969 (1969.34.523). Finally, there are 12 pencil drawings of some of the objects collected by Herbert Boon from St Kitts and St Lucia, probably drawn by Boon himself (1966.29.213).

### 19.3.2 *St Kitts and Nevis*

There are *c.* 285 'archaeological' objects from St Kitts and Nevis, none of which are from the PRM founding collection. These come from just 2 donors, both of whom also donated material from St Lucia (see 19.3.4 below).

There is a collection of 15 stone mullers or pounders and 2 stone axes that were purchased from 'L. Archer Shepherd' (possibly Rev. Laurence Archer-Shepherd) in 1938, and are simply recorded as from St Kitts (1938.84.20–36); these include four oversized large flat head axes with flanges.

The remaining *c.* 268 objects from St Kitts and Nevis were collected by Herbert Boon (1892–1981) between 1908 and 1930, and purchased by the PRM in 1966. The Boon collection comprises 162 shell objects, 89 stone objects, *c.* 15 ceramic objects, and 2 coral objects. The majority of this material comprises an assemblage of *c.* 213 shell, stone and ceramic objects from a site recorded as to the north of the factory at Ponds Estate (1966.29.21–168, 1966.29.209). There are 14 stone and ceramic objects from Stone Fort Estate (1966.29.169–180, 1966.29.210–211), 6 stone axes and a stone muller from Wingfield Estate (1966.29.182–188), and a stone adze from Sandy Point (1966.29.181). There are also 12 stone objects simply recorded as from Nevis (1966.29.189–200), *c.* 20 stone and coral objects simply recorded as from St Kitts (1966.29.1–20), and a stone muller recovered from the ballast of a boat 'plying between the capitals of St Kitts and Nevis' (1966.29.212). The Boon collections appear to comprise both prehistoric and historical materials, and include some notable examples of perforated stone beads, carved shell objects, and ground stone artefacts. There are shell adzes and scrapers, predominantly made from *Strombus gigas*, and a number of shell pendants made from *Oliva reticularis*, together with a number of different shell pendants and beads made of perforated shell disks with a variety of sizes from 1–3 cm. There is also a number of intricately carved shell ornaments and fragments, including one *guayaza*, one body stamp and a number of shell inlays for wooden figurines. Some of the stone 'mullers' and coral objects might be interpreted as 'three-pointer' or *veini* artefacts: the distribution of which beyond Puerto Rico and Saba is a question of some debate (Hoogland and Hofman 1999). There is potential for the shell objects to be studied as part of broader research into shell carving technology and more general pre-Columbian artistic representations in the Caribbean (e.g. Jardines Macías and Calvera Rosés 1997), and for the stone beads and bead blanks to be studied in the context of research into the archaeology of bead manufacture in the region (e.g. de Mille *et al.* 2008). The ceramics are varied, but include a number of late period Suazey sherds (1966.29.158–168, 1966.29.177–180).

### 19.3.3 *Barbados*

There are *c.* 51 'archaeological' objects from Barbados, 3 of which are from the PRM founding collection and are discussed in section 19.2 above. Some 25 of the remaining *c.* 48 objects were transferred to the PRM from the Ashmolean Museum, in 1886 and 1969. These comprise *c.* 23 shell axes and adzes from the Codrington Estate, St Johns, and sites at St Luke's, St George's, Conset Bay and Conset Point, collected by Rev. Greville John Chester and donated to the Ashmolean Museum in 1869 (1886.1.1037, 1969.34.1–8). Some or all of these objects appear to have been

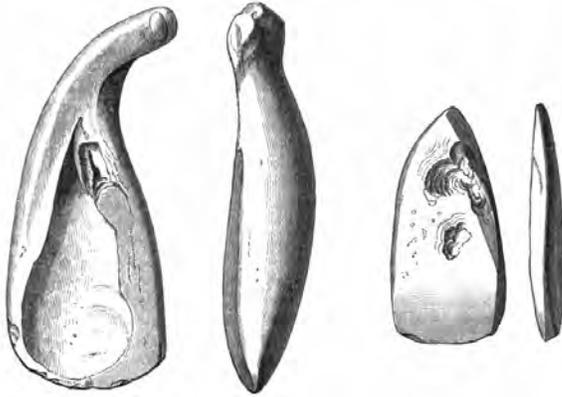


Figure 19.1 'Carib implements of shell and stone found in Barbados' (from Chester 1868:169). The shell adze illustrated here is possibly one of the collection of 23 shell axes and adzes made by Rev. Greville J. Chester, exhibited by him at a meeting of the Royal Archaeological Institute on March 6 1868, donated to the Ashmolean Museum in 1869, and transferred to the PRM in 1886 and 1969 (1886.1.1037, 1969.34.1-8).

among the 'collection of Carib implements and tools from the West Indies' that were exhibited by Chester at a meeting of the Royal Archaeological Institute on Friday March 6 1868 (Figure 19.1), which were described as follows:

'They are formed of the great conch shell, and were the implements used by the early inhabitants of the islands, who have now entirely disappeared. The implements had been buried, and were found in gullies or on the coast after heavy rains. The natural curve of the shell had been skilfully turned to account so as to fit the hand. It appears, by Schomberg's History of Barbadoes, that few of the aborigines existed when the island was occupied by English settlers in 1625; they were either enslaved or exterminated. The island must at one time have been thickly populated by Indian or Carib tribes, as shown by the quantity of pottery, with implements of stone and shell (*Strombus gigas*) which have been found. The latter are of three kinds: those with central grooves, or cavities, and handles; those without any groove or handle; and hones for rubbing down the shells in forming the implements. He had seen only fragments of very rude pottery, closely resembling some of the Celtic wares of the British islands. Two objects with bluntly rounded ends, somewhat dilated, may have been portions of pestles for preparing food, such as the dried root of the manioc or capava. These were found at Conset Point, Barbadoes. The implements occur in the surface soil, and especially in caves or under rocks, and in caves that seem to have been the favourite habitations of the Caribs. Schomberg states that figures of pottery, one of them possibly an idol, 6 ft in height, have been found in the parish of St Lucy; also part of a disk, of close-grained clay, found with the shell implements, near Conset Point. Humboldt states that South American tribes keep such cakes of clay in their huts to stay the cravings of hunger by distending the stomach. Mr Chester imagines that the disc in question may have served a like purpose' (Chester 1868: 169-70).

The Chester collection also includes 2 ceramic sherds, one of which may be a fragment of a Troumassoid three-legged cooking pot (1886.1.1040).

There are also 3 shell adzes that were donated to the OUMNH from the collection of William Acland, probably all in 1876, before being transferred to the PRM in 1886 and 1937 (1886.2.131-132, 1937.56.62). Later accessions include 5 shell axes donated by R. Radclyffe Hall in 1905: 2 found by him at Hastings, Barbados (1905.14.1-2), and 3 from the collection of Sir Thomas Graham Briggs of Farley Hill, which may or may not be from Barbados (1905.14.3-5). There are 7 shell axes recorded as from the west

coast of Barbados, donated by Henry Balfour in 1915 (1915.37.302–308); a shell axe donated by Henry Boyd (Principal of Hertford College, Oxford) in 1916 (1916.3.1); a shell axe donated from the estate of Edward Burnett Tylor (1917.53.95); another shell axe donated by Arthur Robertson Brailey in 1920 (1920.80.1); 2 stone adzes purchased from the sale of Lucas White King's collection at Sotheby's on 9 November 1921 by Louis Colville Gray Clarke who donated them to the PRM (1921.67.67–68); a shell adze purchased from the collection of Arthur Young by Edward Bagnall Poulton, and purchased by the PRM from Poulton in 1927 (1927.86.36); a shell adze donated to the Newbury Museum by Lord Carnarvon<sup>2</sup> and donated to the PRM per Herbert Henery Coghlan in 1957 (1957.1.21); and a shell adze which formed part of the material purchased from Ipswich Museum in 1966 (1966.1.392).

#### 19.3.4 *St Lucia*

There are *c.* 32 'archaeological' artefacts from St Lucia, 2 of which are from the PRM founding collection and are discussed in section 19.2 above. The remaining *c.* 30 objects were purchased from the same collectors as the archaeological material from St Kitts and Nevis (19.3.2 above). A collection of *c.* 22 stone artefacts – axes, grinding stones and a polished chisel – is simply recorded as from 'St Lucia', and was purchased from 'L. Archer Shepherd' (possibly Rev. Laurence Archer-Shepherd) between 1936 and 1939 (1936.84.1–18, 1937.51.5, 1939.5.6B–8B). There is also a collection of 8 stone and shell axes purchased by Herbert Boon 'in a curiosity ship in Castries', St Lucia, which Boon 'was satisfied...came from this island' (1966.29.201–208).

#### 19.3.5 *St Vincent and the Grenadines*

There are *c.* 31 'archaeological' artefacts from St Vincent and the Grenadines, one of which is from the PRM founding collection and is discussed in section 19.2 above. Some 28 of the remaining *c.* 30 objects are stone axes that are simply recorded as from 'St Vincent'. There are eight sources for these axes: 2 were purchased from the sale of Lucas White King's collection at Sotheby's on 9 November 1921 by Louis Colville Gray Clarke who donated them to the PRM (1921.67.76–77); 4 were collected by 'C. Stevens' in 1894 and 1905, and were purchased by the PRM from James Hooper in 1926 (1926.90.1–4); 3 were purchased by the PRM from Stevens Auction Rooms (1927.72.5–7); 2 were donated from the estate of John Evans (1928.68.50–51); 11 were purchased in Wallingford, Oxfordshire from the collection of 'Prof. Fox, Reading' by Francis Gerald William Knowles and Francis Howe Seymour Knowles (1936.57.1–2, 1936.83.1–9); 4 were donated by 'L. Archer Shepherd' (possibly Rev. Laurence Archer-Shepherd) in 1937 (1937.51.1–4); and 2 were collected in 1896, acquired by Harry Beasley for the Cranmore Museum, and donated the PRM in 1954 (1954.8.156–157). Also from the Fox/Knowles material is a fragment of a stone palette (1936.83.10). The remaining object is a carved jet figure of a parrot and a monkey, recorded as found 'in a cane piece in Charlotte Parish', and given by 'Archdeacon Frederick' (then the Rector of Charlotte Parish) to Bishop John Mitchinson around 1870, who donated it to the PRM in 1900 (1900.44.1).

#### 19.3.6 *Jamaica*

There are *c.* 30 'archaeological' artefacts from Jamaica, none of which are from the PRM founding collection, and all of which are stone axes. Most of these comprise

<sup>2</sup> George Edward Stanhope Molyneux Herbert, who was most famous for his financial backing of the Howard Carter excavations in the Valley of the Kings.

a collection of c. 23 polished stone axes from 'Potters Hill' and the Reading Pen Estate donated in 1936 and 1942 by 'Mrs Derwent Simmonds', who is recorded as the estate owner (1936.13.1-2, 1936.41.1-12, 1942.1.374). Other Jamaican objects include a stone grinder from Parnassus Estate, Clarendon Parish, donated by William Gregory Dawkins (recorded as the estate owner) in April 1893 (1893.29.1); a ground stone axe collected by Henry Nottidge Moseley during the voyage of HMS *Challenger* in the 1870s, and donated from his estate in 1915 (1915.25.100); a stone axe donated by Beatrice Braithwaite Batty in 1917 (1917.14.1); and 2 stone axes purchased from the Smithsonian Institution National Museum of Natural History in 1916 by Lucas White King, and then purchased from the sale of King's collection at Sotheby's on 9 November 1921 by Louis Colville Gray Clarke who donated them to the PRM (1921.67.68-69). There is also a stone axe from the collection of Harry Beasley (the Cranmore Museum), donated to the PRM in 1954 (1954.8.159). Finally, a stone axe found by 'H.G. Francis' 'to the south of cliffs, Herston', near Swanage in Dorset, was donated to the PRM by William G. Wallace in 1946, and is recorded (on the interpretation of Sir Hercules Reed in 1917) as possibly Jamaican in origin (1946.5.70). As well as these c. 30 objects, 5 half-plate photographs of 'deformed skulls excavated on [Jamaica]' were donated by W.F. Harper in 1950 (1950.7.43-47).

### 19.3.7 *Trinidad and Tobago*

There are c. 11 'archaeological' artefacts from Trinidad, one of which is from the PRM founding collection and is discussed in section 19.2 above. The remaining 10 objects include 8 large stone axes with decorative flanges, collected by Rev. Philip le Maistre between 1847 and 1882, and donated to the PRM by 'F. le Maistre' in 1925 (1925.6.1-8). There are also 2 ceramic sherds collected from a shell mound at Cabo-Pablo by William Coleman Piercy, and donated to the PRM from his estate in 1935 (1939.3.215-216). One of the sherds is the handle of a vessel, while the other is a fragment in the form of a human or animal head, broken from a larger vessel. There are no artefacts recorded as from Tobago.

### 19.3.8 *Virgin Isles*

There are c. 10 'archaeological' artefacts from the British Virgin Islands, none of which are from the PRM founding collection. There are two fragments of silver dollars from Tortola – one cut in half, one cut into a quarter, to form 'pieces of eight' – that were purchased by the PRM from A.H. Baldwin and Sons, London (1912.86.5). The remaining 8 objects are all stone axes: 7 collected from an unnamed settlement on the island of Anegada, and donated to the PRM by Jack Carrick Trevor in 1937 (1937.23.1-7); and one acquired by Harry Beasley for the Cranmore Museum, and donated the PRM in 1954 (1954.8.158). There are no 'archaeological' objects from the United States Virgin Islands.

### 19.3.9 *Antigua and Barbuda*

There are c. 9 'archaeological' artefacts from Antigua, none of which are from the PRM founding collection. These comprise a glass bottle, from the base of which flakes have been struck, and 8 of these flakes, which are recorded as used as razors (*Figure 19.2*; 1908.2.1-2). These objects were collected by James Arthur Harley from Antigua, and were donated to the PRM in 1908.

### 19.3.10 *Puerto Rico*

There are 6 'archaeological' artefacts from Puerto Rico, none of which are from the PRM founding collection. There are 2 stone pounders, carved in the form of

*Figure 19.2 Glass bottle, from the base of which flakes have been struck, with 6 of these glass flakes. The flakes are recorded as having been used as razors (PRM Accession Numbers 1908.2.1–2). These objects were collected by James Arthur Harley from Antigua, and were donated to the PRM in 1908.*



human figures, donated from the estate of Edward Burnett Tylor, which are recorded as probably from Puerto Rico (1917.53.287–288). It is possible that Tylor collected these stone figures while in Cuba during his travels in 1855–1856 (Tylor 1861: 1). One of the figures (1917.53.288) is identified in the documentation as possibly representing ‘Atabeyra, the Arawak fertility goddess, connected with waters’. There are 2 stone axes purchased from the Smithsonian Institution National Museum of Natural History in 1916 by Lucas White King, and then purchased from the sale of King’s collection at Sotheby’s on 9 November 1921 by Louis Colville Gray Clarke who donated them to the PRM (1921.67.70–71). There are also 2 artefacts, recorded as ‘dug up on Porto Rico’, donated by Sydney Haldane Olivier in 1932: a carved stone ‘Zemi’ head (1932.4.1), and a fragment of a stone axe (1932.4.2).

#### 19.4 Conclusions

The small Caribbean ‘archaeological’ collections of the Pitt Rivers Museum are focused mainly on stone and shell axes and adzes, collected for comparative purposes during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. There is little from the western Caribbean and virtually no portable art or ceramics in the collections.

The geographical provenance of the artefacts is almost exclusively from islands that were subject to British colonial rule. The relationship between collecting and colonialism in this region is even more visible in the ethnographic collections: it is hard to consider the 3 Gorgonia stem ‘horse-whips’ collected by Henry Nottidge Moseley while serving on HMS *Challenger* in 1872–1876 (1887.1.660–662), and 2 wooden figures, linked by an iron chain, collected in 1914 by Robert Straker Turton, and recorded as used in the practice of *obeah* in Jamaica (1985.49.108), without remembering the legacies of West Indian slavery.

There is potential to study the provenance of the stone tools through lithic analysis (Crock and Petersen 2004; Knippenberg and Zijlstra 2008; Rodríguez Ramos 2002). More promising, perhaps, is the potential for studying the large early 20th-century collections from St Kitts, especially from the sites at Ponds Estate, Stone Fort Estate, and Wingfield Estate (on which see Hicks 2007). While this material is undated, and may relate to the historical period, one potential theme here might be to consider the potential for some of the ‘three-pointer’ stones to relate to past belief systems (Oliver 2009). In the 19th century, and perhaps earlier, the relationship between collecting at the Codrington Estate in Barbados and the history of Oxford museums warrants exploration, especially given Christopher Codrington’s late 17th-

century connections with Christ Church, which was the site of one of Oxford's first collections. Overall, the Caribbean archaeological collections hold the potential to be understood as part of the broader intertwined histories of the temporal depth of the archaeological imagination and the geographical scope of the British colonial world, in which Pitt-Rivers himself played one small part.

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