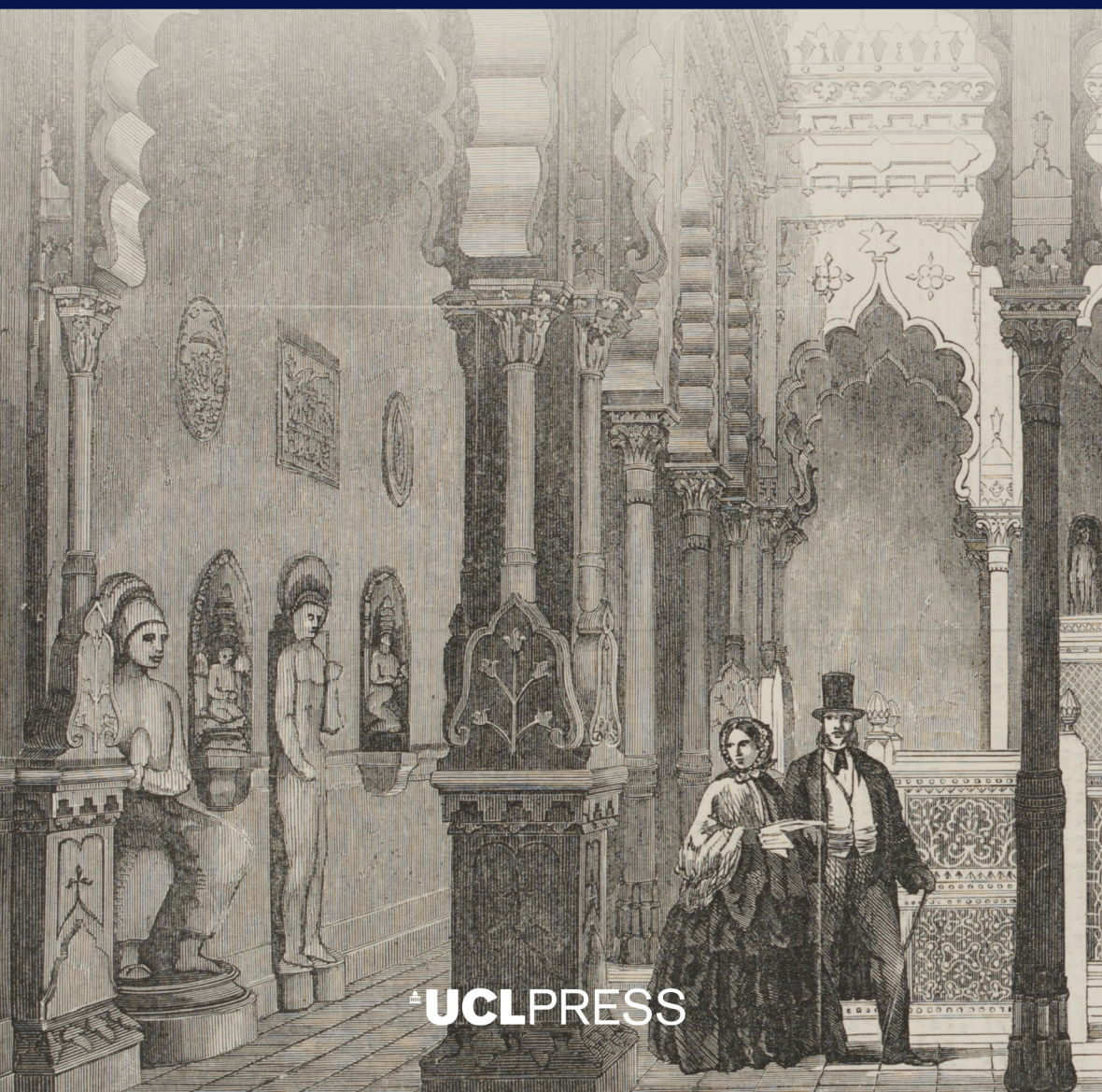


# THE INDIA MUSEUM REVISITED

ARTHUR MACGREGOR



UCLPRESS

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Arthur MacGregor

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*Dedicated to the numberless and nameless Indian makers,  
owners, worshippers and consumers of the materials that  
came to provide for a time a window on to the sub-continent  
in nineteenth-century London*



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# Foreword

No other object in the East India Company's Leadenhall Street Museum could rival 'Tippoo's Tiger'. This almost life-size semi-automaton – showing a tiger mauling a man in European clothes – was one of the Company's most popular exhibits (as it remains at the V&A today). An organ inside the tiger's flank created sounds intended as either 'the low growl of the tiger, or the half-suppressed agony of the sufferer', which echoed eerily around the galleries.

The Tiger was dispatched to the Company headquarters in 1800, after the storming of the Mysore capital, Seringapatam, and the bloody British suppression of the charismatic ruler and resistance leader, Tipu Sultan. The Tiger was seized from the palace's music room alongside Tipu's royal treasury, which was valued and divided among the victorious army.

Nowadays, the spoils from Seringapatam, and the circumstances of their seizure, can easily be located within the history of imperial loot and, inevitably, for a museum founded as a government institution during the height of the British Empire, how the South Kensington Museum was enveloped in such exercises of colonial acquisition. Given their historical prominence, it is unsurprising that objects such as these have come to frame much of the debate surrounding the India Museum. Yet, as Arthur MacGregor explains in this rich and fascinating account of the India Museum's collections – compiled from in-depth research drawing on previously unstudied resources – the story of the India Museum is more complex:

It matters whether items ultimately placed on display [at the India Museum] in London were acquired in the course of conquest, were purchased in the bazaar, produced in school classrooms,

gathered by proto-ethnographers after use or while still in use, commissioned by European officials according to more or less detailed specifications, or submitted directly or indirectly by Indian manufacturers for display at international exhibitions in the West.

Today, the public is rightly curious about how objects were acquired, who they belonged to and where they came from. If the V&A has traditionally foregrounded design history, there is now a stronger focus on histories of ownership. But it can be astonishing to realize how little museums sometimes know about the provenance of items in their collections. This is all the more surprising given how much we can learn about an object and the worlds it has inhabited over time by understanding who made it and whose hands it subsequently passed through. MacGregor's valuable sourcebook attempts 'to give a voice' to the collection as a whole – over 19,000 objects transferred from the India Museum to the South Kensington Museum in 1879 – providing the provenance detail that has, until now, been largely invisible. MacGregor is clear in his ambition of 'reuniting the exhibits with the Indian milieu', sharing object provenance that pre-dates the colonial past and revealing, where records allow, the craftspeople, production methods and societies of origin that gave rise to such an array of artefacts. He seeks to enrich these objects with the world they inhabited before they were obscured by empire.

Yet for many, the contents of the India Museum – the product of East India Company 'collecting', whether purchase, gift or loot – will be all too entwined with the history of colonial violence that subdued and seized an entire sub-continent. As MacGregor makes clear, the collection can never be considered an objective representation of Indian culture given the unequal context in which it was developed.

As a museum born of the colonial moment, some of whose collections can be traced back to the East India Company's repository, it is right that the V&A is fully engaged in this debate, with all its implications for our contemporary role as a place of welcome in the multicultural present. The V&A's collections expanded in line with the growth of the British empire, in its official and unofficial guise, across southern Asia, showcasing Indian textiles, Burmese lacquerware, Chinese porcelain and Persian carpets – as well as a remarkable range of British industrial designs and European Renaissance treasures. Beginning with the object, and involving as many voices as possible, one key role of the contemporary museum is to unleash more insight

and more context into the discussion of this complicated past and its impacts on the present. As we might expect, analysis of the India Museum collection has thus far been largely confined to its colonial history. MacGregor's detailed survey offers a new and scholarly lineage to these remarkable and beautiful objects that opens the door for future researchers to revisit the India Museum once again.

*Tristram Hunt*  
*Director, Victoria and Albert Museum*

# Preface

The museum founded around the turn of the nineteenth century at the headquarters of the East India Company (EIC) in the City of London is frequently cited as one of the major attractions of late Georgian and Victorian London, yet its contents – beyond a few iconic pieces and some intensively studied aspects, such as the textile collections – are now little known. At its dispersal in 1879, around twenty thousand objects – including many that conveyed to the visitor its specific character – were transferred to the South Kensington Museum, forerunner of today's Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A), while other material (not considered here in detail) went elsewhere according to its nature, as reviewed in [Chapter 13](#). Absorbed into the holdings of the larger institution at South Kensington (and in large part consigned to storage thereafter), the true nature and substance of the India Museum have gradually faded from general consciousness.

After a long period of relative neglect, interest in the EIC and its relations with the Indian sub-continent has revived in recent decades: the Company's museum has featured from time to time in this debate, but difficulty in accessing information on its constituent collections has frequently led to oversimplification or distortion of its character: all too often – and without reference to the actual contents or presentation of precise evidence – it is presented today as merely another tool in the EIC's colonialist enterprise. Trade and empire were, of course, indissolubly linked, and the exploitative nature of the Company is a matter of record. The thesis to be presented here, however, is that the role of the Company's museum, in both its conception and its development, was much more nuanced than is allowed for in such a one-dimensional characterization. While not seeking to deny the political context in

which it took shape – from the early years of the Company’s establishment of its grip on the sub-continent to the proclamation of Queen Victoria as Empress of India – the aim here is to restore something of the museum’s multifarious character through an assessment of the collections of material culture which it contained. In addition to developing a sense of the impact made by the museum on its nineteenth-century public in London, the text has the more far-reaching ambition of reconnecting the exhibits with the Indian milieu that gave rise to them, acknowledging and seeking to understand the craftspeople responsible for their production and the societies in which they circulated; we examine the circumstances in which the items were collected – whether by conquest or (more often) in arrangements that were to some degree collaborative – and review the narratives in which they were then deployed within the museum.

The present author’s first venture into this area came with a book entitled *Company Curiosities: Nature, culture and the East India Company, 1600–1874* (2018), in which were reviewed various collections formed in India and their reception in Britain – not least in the India Museum. The opportunity of extending that exercise with the award of an Andrew W. Mellon Visiting Professorship at the V&A Research Institute arose in 2019. Initially, it had as its primary aim the production of an interactive web presentation. Restrictions on access to the reserve collections, imposed in advance of their decanting to the planned V&A East Storehouse in the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, due to open in 2024,<sup>1</sup> placed a severe limit on firsthand contact with the objects, while the disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic (which completely closed the museum for over a year and whose ramifications continue to limit access for research), together with the loss of key staff, further inhibited implementation of the original plan. A more modest website nonetheless complements the text presented here. With the engagement of UCL Press, the present volume offers an accessible digest of the broad findings both in print and online in open access – the latter especially welcome for making the contents accessible to the widest possible international audience, for the difficulties of access experienced in London have been as nothing compared to the isolation in which the collections have been held from their original communities of producers and consumers in their homeland. The contents of the India Museum are much more than a closed historical archive to be argued over by academics, for the objects and specimens – the bulk of them products of nineteenth-century artistry and craftsmanship in traditions that continue to be practised to some degree today – will be



of relevance to all those with broad interests in the social history and applied arts of India.

The aim here is to breathe new life into an institution whose detailed contents and character have until now escaped overall analysis. Following a context-setting introduction and an assessment of the museum's broader role, the principal narrative surveys the contents category by category, in order to flesh out their character. While many of these items survive intact, others are known only from the cryptic lists compiled at the transfer of the collection to the South Kensington Museum. Here these collections are reviewed with the intention of giving them a voice – to add their material evidence to the illustration of the museum's purpose, character and changing fortunes. In pursuit of this aim, extensive reliance is placed on nineteenth-century records and contemporary commentary, couched in language that is now outmoded and often denigratory in nature; this is consciously preserved here, however, not only in the interests of historical veracity – even though it inevitably lends an imperialistic accent to the 'voice' mentioned above – but in order not to obscure the essential relationships of particular objects. For the same reason, contemporary place names as recorded in the archive are retained here. In geographical terms, attention is focused principally on material from the Indian sub-continent itself (including the Himalayan region) – that is, India as it was comprehended by its nineteenth-century British administration, before the present-day political boundaries with Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka were drawn – and with no more than sideways glances towards the other spheres of EIC influence. As a result, the Company's links with the Middle East and Southeast and East Asia – although of major political and commercial importance – are mentioned here only in passing, and are indeed registered only sporadically within the collection.

## Note

- 1 See <https://www.vam.ac.uk/info/va-east> [accessed 11.05.2023].

# Acknowledgements

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# The 'India Museum Revisited' project

The title given to the present volume is that of the project funded at the V&A's Research Institute by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. Conceived initially as a web presentation, the project aims to deliver a densely detailed account of the India Museum, backed up with original documentation and with links to large numbers of images and object records. The following pages encapsulate the essence of those findings, while more detailed elements are made available in electronic form on the project's web platform at <https://www.vam.ac.uk/research/projects/the-india-museum-revisited>. The resources provided there, which are designed to complement the present text, include:

- Access to an electronic facsimile of the 492-page catalogue of the collection from 1880
- Biographical details of contributors to the collection
- A gazetteer and map of the sites from which the objects have originated
- Transcriptions of early visitors' accounts of the museum

The materials concerned are essentially those that were transferred from the India Museum to the South Kensington Museum (later V&A) in 1879 – that is to say, the bulk of the collections other than natural history and antiquities, which went to the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew (where it formed an important founding element of the Museum of Economic Botany), and to the British Museum respectively. The process of redistribution of the collection carried on beyond that date, however,

INVENTORY OF OBJECTS TRANSFERRED  
FROM INDIA MUSEUM.

NOVEMBER, 1879.

\* \* \* The numbers on the right hand are those formerly assigned to the  
objects.

ROOM No. 10.

Case 100.

MODELS ILLUSTRATIVE OF CASTES, TRADES,  
AND CUSTOMS.

1. HUNTING CHEETAH on cart with two bullocks and driver.	
2. HUNTING CHEETAH on cart with two bullocks and driver; Deshoor.	
3. ELEPHANT with driver.	
4. ELEPHANT and driver.	90
5. ELEPHANT, driver, and howdah with two occupants.	152
6. BRAHMIN BULL.	12,276
7. MAN and two oxen ploughing; Belgaum.	12,278
8. HUNTING CHEETAH on cart with two bullocks and driver; Deshoor.	7,482
9. TIGER HUNTING PARTY; Desnoor.	6,786
10. MAN killing a tiger; Gokak.	7,071
11. PALANQUIN and bearers.	
12. BULLOCK CART; Belgaum.	6,789
13. BULLOCK with water bags and driver.	
14. WOMEN washing at a well; Belgaum.	1,185
15. FIGURE, man with drum; South Arcot.	56
16. DANCING GIRL; South Arcot.	12
17. INDIAN HERMIT; South Arcot.	1
18. FIGURE of a woman, carved and painted wood; Burmah.	
19. FIGURE of a police constable; South Arcot.	54
20. FIGURE of a woman, painted and gilt.	
21. FIGURE, duffadar or head peon.	
22. FIGURE of a man, carved and painted wood; Burmah.	
23. FIGURE of a Brahmin; South Arcot.	34
24. FIGURE of a man, painted.	1,172
25. GROUP. Churruck Pooja, a religious ceremony; Kishnaghur.	2,402

O 858. 100.—2/80.

A

Fig. 0.1. Opening page from the India Museum's *Inventory of the Collection ... transferred to the South Kensington Museum, 1879 (1880)* recording here and there – as well as brief details of the item in question – the name of the donor, provenance and (to the right) the corresponding number from the slip books. National Art Library, V&A museum no. 38041994012698. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Missing	03,865. VASE and cover. Light ware, embossed.	4,434	Written off R.P. 3/8
do.	03,866. TRAY. Light ware, embossed.	12,373	Written off R.P. 3/8
do.	03,867. BOWL and cover. Light ware, embossed.	12,373	Written off R.P. 3/8
do.	03,868. TRAY. Oval light ware.		Written off R.P. 3/8
do.	03,869. BOWL. Light ware. (15.)		Written off R.P. 3/8
	03,870. BOWL and cover. Stone.		Written off Board of Survey R.P. 5/19/33
Missing	03,871. PLATE. Light ware. (393.)		Written off R.P. 3/8
Dublin Mus	03,872. HOOKAH BASE. Light ware. (409.)		Written off R.P. 3/8
Winchester Sch	03,873. WATER BOTTLE. Light ware; Bombay. (4,058.)		Written off R.P. 3/8
Missing	03,874. BOWL. For pounding rice, light ware. (590.)		Written off R.P. 3/8
	03,875. VASE. Light ware. (440.)		
Written off R.P.	03,876. WATER VESSEL. Light ware. (480.)		
Missing	03,877. STAND. Circular, light ware; Industrial School of Arts, Madras. (387.)		Written off R.P. 3/8
	03,878. DISC. Light ware.	10,261	Written off Board of Survey R.P. 5/19/33
Missing	03,879. WATER BOTTLE. Light ware; Industrial School of Arts, Madras. (400.)		Written off R.P. 3/8
do.	03,880. VASE. Light ware.	4,434	Written off R.P. 3/8
	03,881. BOWL. Light ware. (473.)		Written off R.P. 5/17/88
Bournemouth Sch	03,882. HOOKAH BASE. Light ware. (421.)		Written off R.P. 3/8
03112 Board of Survey	03,883. HOOKAH BASE. Light ware. (400.)		
R.P. 5/19/33	03,884. HOOKAH BASE. Light ware. (399.)		Written off R.P. 3/8
Dublin Mus	03,885. HOOKAH BASE. Light ware. (441.)		Written off R.P. 3/8
Missing	03,886. HOOKAH BASE. Light ware.		Written off R.P. 3/8
Destroyed by order	03,887. HOOKAH BASE. Light ware.		Written off R.P. 3/8
Missing	03,888. TRAY. Light ware, perforated.		Written off R.P. 3/8
	03,889. BOWL. Light ware. (403.)		Written off R.P. 5/17/88
Missing	03,890. BOWL. Light ware. (419.)		Written off R.P. 3/8
	03,891. BOWL. Light ware. (41.)		
Written off R.P.	03,892. BOWL. Light ware. (473.)		Written off R.P. 3/8
Dublin Mus	03,893. BOWL. Red ware, with figures in relief. (203.)		
Written off R.P.	03,894. WATER BOTTLE and cover. Red ware, Sind. (39.)		
0.3211 Board of Survey	03,895. FRIEZE. Two portions of, terra cotta. (23.)		
R.P. 5/19/33	03,896. FRIEZE. Three portions of, terra cotta; Vel. (22.)		
	03,897. CORNICE. Two portions of, terra cotta. (22.)	4,432	
	03,898. FRIEZE. Three portions of, honeysuckle, terra cotta. (412.)		
	03,899. FRIEZE. Three portions of, honeysuckle, terra cotta; North Arcot. (41.)		
Written off R.P.	03,900. BOWL. Terra cotta.		
5/17/88	03,901. STAND. Tall, earthenware.		
Warrington Sch	03,902. Pot and cover. Red ware; Mizapur.	7,225	
03112	03,903. BASKET. Red ware.	7,225	Written off R.P. 3/8
03112	03,904. LOTAH. Red ware.	7,225	Written off R.P. 3/8
03112	03,905. Cup. Red ware.	7,226	Written off R.P. 3/8
03112	03,906. BASKET. Two, red ware.	7,225	Written off R.P. 3/8
03112	03,908. Cup. Red ware.	12,462	Written off R.P. 3/8
03112	03,909. Pot, with spout. Red ware.	7,225	Written off R.P. 3/8
Missing	03,910. BASKET. Red ware; Indore.	7,230	Written off R.P. 3/8
Written off R.P.	03,911. VASE. Bronzed ware.	4,136	

Fig. 0.2. Page from the annotated copy of the India Museum's *Inventory of the Collection ... transferred to the South Kensington Museum, 1879 (1880)*, in which items are designated as missing, written off, destroyed by order or transferred to the Dublin Museum or to schools of art in Bournemouth, Coalbrookdale, Hastings, South Shields, Warrington, Watford, Winchester and Wolverhampton. V&A Archive and Registry, inv. no. MA/94/27. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

so that some items initially assigned to South Kensington can now be identified at Kew and in the British Museum, Science Museum and National Maritime Museum in particular; a few of these items have been called upon here to help reconstitute the original benefaction. A much larger proportion of the collection was dispersed to a variety of other institutions, sold at auction or written off over the first half-century of the collection's sojourn at the V&A, as outlined further below. As a result, in the process of reconstructing the contents and character of the India Museum, considerable reliance must be placed on the earlier documentary record.

The basic text relied on for this exercise is the volume titled *India Museum. Inventory of the Collection of Examples of Indian Art and Manufacture transferred to the South Kensington Museum*, drawn up in 1879 and early 1880 and printed in that year (see [fig. 0.1](#)).<sup>1</sup> The process of compiling this inventory was undertaken by two teams of museum personnel at the South Kensington Museum, hence the numbering system applied to the objects: one group numbered from 1 to 9821 on pp. 1–190 of the inventory and one from 01 to 09245 on pp. 1a–287a. These are the numbers by which the majority of the items are still identified, now generally with the suffix IS (Indian Section); illustrated items are so identified in the present volume. The inventory was never intended for general circulation, but a small number of copies were produced to aid the processes of identification and relabelling within the museum.

In addition, one copy of this document survives in which the later – largely subtractive – history of considerable parts of the collection is recorded ([fig. 0.2](#)).<sup>2</sup> In this annotated copy are itemized many deletions from the collection ranging from the 1880s to the 1950s, as sanctioned by successive Boards of Survey.<sup>3</sup> Most numerous among these are objects that, with the passage of time, were deemed no longer appropriate to the collections: some were transferred to other institutions, notably the museums in Edinburgh and Dublin and at Bethnal Green, all controlled at the time by the Science and Art Department; the Science Museum and the Horniman Museum in London; the Indian Institute at Oxford; and various provincial museums and art schools. Other items were de-accessioned and sent to auction or were deemed too decayed or broken to merit further preservation. The official acts of withdrawal from the collection are documented in the V&A Archives, but the reasons behind the specific choices are seldom elaborated upon.

In this process of attrition, some two-thirds of the entries, and hence an equivalent number of the items to which they refer – more,



indeed, since many entries itemize several objects – have been extinguished, a situation that will explain why uncertainty hovers over the precise details of particular objects and their significance; hence the accompanying analyses of the collection presented here are at times necessarily couched in more speculative terms than would ideally have been the case. In order to recapture as much as possible of its original richness, all references to ‘the collection’ apply here to the museum as constituted in the inventory of 1880, rather than to its present-day reduced state, unless otherwise indicated.

Some entries in the 1880 catalogue include (in the right-hand margin) an additional printed number which in many (but not all) cases refers to the earlier series of ‘slip books’, which have the appearance of having formed the primary record compiled – in some part, at least – when individual objects entered the collections. These catalogues (in 54 binders, each of 250 pages) survive in the departmental records of the Asian Department:<sup>4</sup> they record each item (or group of items) by hand on a separate slip of paper, and many of them include information not recorded in the printed catalogue – for example, some record a precise year of acquisition, often coinciding with one or other of the international exhibitions, implying – or explicitly stating – that they had been acquired for (or from) particular exhibitions; a few record prices (generally in rupees) paid for particular exhibits. Reference is occasionally made here to those catalogues when they contain data not reproduced in the 1880 text.

Also included (though irregularly) in these earlier catalogues are details of provenance – where a particular item was collected (and occasionally even a particular personality with whom it was originally connected) – and of the relevant donor to the museum. With regard to place names, the nature of our sources demands that the forms used here are primarily those adopted by the early collectors and curators, however inadequately they answer the needs and expectations of a contemporary international audience. It would be impossibly cumbersome to give present-day equivalents at every mention in the text, while using current forms only would present difficulties in searching the original catalogue; modern forms are given at the first mention of each name in the text, while all the variant forms are recorded in the index and are expanded upon in the gazetteer prepared for the India Museum Revisited website. The names of personalities recorded within the museum archives are similarly gathered there in a biographical register. The website further includes contemporary descriptions and documentation of



the museum, including the full text of the only visitor's guide to the collections,<sup>5</sup> published in 1851.

In discussion of the objects themselves, use has been made here of much recent literature – including exhibition catalogues that throw valuable light on surviving items – but particular reference is also made to sources from the mid- and late nineteenth century, since these allow us on occasion to see the collection from the perspective of contemporary scholars and commentators and add their perceptions to our own in order to construct a comprehensive view of the significance of this accumulated material. Comparatively few of these sources are Indian, so inevitably they tend to favour a European perspective; many aspects remain to be enlarged upon, a process in which the input of those with firsthand knowledge of the various industries and their products would be especially valuable.

Mark Frost has written recently of the importance of physical objects and monuments in the construction of 'applied' history – that is, of history as it is constructed and consumed 'beyond academia':<sup>6</sup> this is very much the spirit in which the present exercise has been conceived, in the hope that the act of returning knowledge of these cultural objects to wide circulation – and especially in bringing them to the notice of the societies that produced them, used them and indeed were the essential sources of such information as accompanied them when they were abstracted to the museum setting<sup>7</sup> – will bring fresh significance to the India Museum collections for new generations of those to whom tangible materials, painstaking craftsmanship and physical beauty speak as directly and as eloquently as the written word. In this way, scholarly research and practical insight may be recombined in a partnership that would resonate strongly with the founding fathers of the nineteenth-century South Kensington enterprise.

## Notes

- 1 A copy can be found in the National Art Library at the V&A, under VA.1880.0011, available online at <https://archive.org/details/india-museum-inventory-of-the-collection-of-examples-of-indian-art-and-manufactu> [accessed 11.05.2023].
- 2 V&A Indian Section, unnumbered departmental catalogue.
- 3 The duties of the Boards of Survey are set out in V&A Archives, Ed84/427. Their purpose was 'to examine (a) Museum objects; and (b) Unserviceable materials and stores ... which are stated to be unfit for retention by reason of deterioration, damage, or other cause.' The Board had to 'consider and recommend whether the objects shall be: (a) Offered to an institution or Museum to be named in the recommendation; (b) Sold; (c) Returned to lender; (d) Used as material; (e) Destroyed as useless; (f) Put back for further enquiry; (g) Referred to the Director'.

- 4 Indian Section, Asian Department, unnumbered.
- 5 *The East India Museum*.
- 6 Frost, 'Handing back history'.
- 7 Vernacular terms are recorded only irregularly for the items concerned, but where they do occur – notably among the model boats, fishing gear and household utensils – their elucidation by knowledgeable local communities and the consequent improvement of the collection records is to be greatly anticipated.

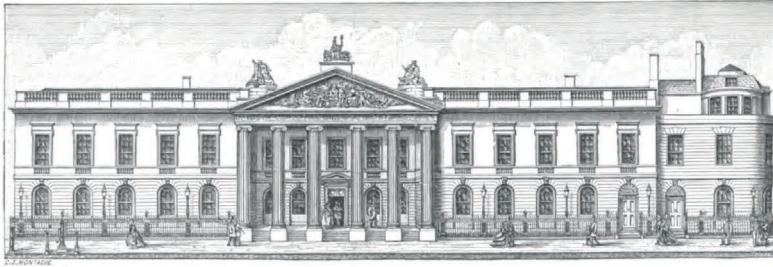


Part I

## **Historical introduction**

## An 'Oriental Museum' at the India House

In view of the high profile it would later enjoy, the genesis of the India Museum was remarkably tentative. It was perhaps inevitable that a body of traders with an impressive fleet of merchantmen sailing regularly to the East Indies (which is to say not only to India but also to the countries of Southeast Asia and China) should have accumulated randomly from time to time what were termed curiosities of art and nature. We know indeed from the account of a visitor in 1669 that in the East India Company's old headquarters in Leadenhall Street in central London there was already a sizeable cabinet of rarities, kept there 'to gratify the curiosity of the public'.<sup>1</sup> As the Company's presence in Southeast Asia was consolidated and its personnel progressed from being humble supplicants at provincial princely courts to imposing their increasingly assertive political and mercantile will over the sub-continent, the Court of Directors in London resolved in the later 1700s to employ a number of naturalists and topographical surveyors, whose task it would be to inventory and record the natural and human resources of the territories over which Company control was then being extended; they were also expected to form more purposeful collections – most notably of plant and mineral specimens – in the course of their researches. One of these, the surgeon-turned-naturalist Patrick Russell (1726–1805), mentions in a letter of 1788 to Sir Joseph Banks his intention of bringing home specimens of snakes 'for the Musæum', and the following year we find Russell declaring to Banks that 'My Snakes cut a figure in the Museum now they are arranged'. Whether the display constituted at this time largely the remnants of the seventeenth-century collection or the early glimmerings of a new and more systematic exercise remains unclear, for the collection seems to have eluded all mention in the intervening period.



**Fig. 1.1.** The rebuilt and expanded East India House, Leadenhall Street. Aquatint by Joseph C. Stadler, 1817. British Library, P1389.

## The museum established at Leadenhall Street

The former East India House had been replaced in 1729, while a major expansion and enhancement of the premises that began in 1796 may have provided the incentive – and certainly supplied the necessary space – for the establishment of a more formal museum (fig. 1.1).<sup>2</sup> In a despatch of 25 May 1798, the Court of Directors announced that it had resolved to establish ‘a Public Repository in this Country for Oriental Writings’,<sup>3</sup> and although no mention was made on that occasion of a parallel collection of artefacts and specimens, the first such acquisitions began to arrive almost immediately. On 23 October following, *The Times* reported that the Company had recently taken delivery of two chests of jewelled ornaments and Indian dresses which were ‘to be placed in the Oriental Museum preparing in the New Buildings of the India House’.

Three months later, the Court received a letter from Charles Wilkins (1749–1836, knighted 1833; see fig. 1.2a), returned to England following 16 years’ service in the Bengal Civil Service,<sup>4</sup> offering his assistance in ‘classing and arranging such books and productions of Nature and Art, as are, or may be collected, and ... to take charge of the Museum and give up my whole attention towards rendering it a Monument of the Taste, as well as of the Munificence of its Founders’.<sup>5</sup> Along with this fulsome address, an accompanying draft outline composed in more sober terms set out Wilkins’s ideas ‘of what the Museum, to be useful, as well as ornamental, should principally consist’, and it mentioned too the desirability of extending the scope of the library beyond manuscripts and printed books to include also ‘maps, charts, and views, with coins, medals, statues and inscriptions’ – a suggestion that underscores the complementary nature of the

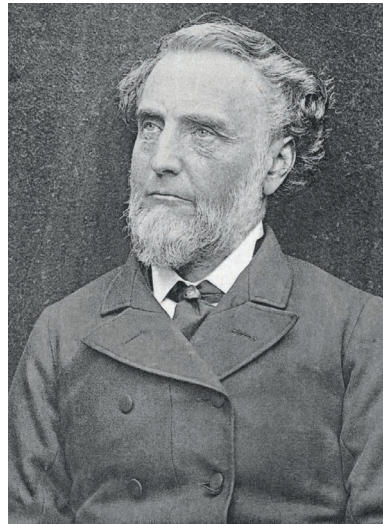
anticipated collections and the integral role played in the formation of the institution by the archives generated in the course of field surveys.<sup>6</sup> The Court invited Wilkins to submit a more detailed plan for the museum, which he had already drawn up and which, in the absence of a more official document from the directors themselves, may be regarded as a founding manifesto for the institution that eventually emerged. Wilkins envisaged three principal divisions within the collections:

A Cabinet of Natural Productions, which 'should comprehend chiefly such animals, parts of animals, or produce of animals, as are objects of commerce'; Vegetable Productions, notably 'trees and plants whose produce is an article of commerce'; and mineral productions, including such 'ores, stones, earths, and clays as might be useful in our manufactures'.

Artificial Productions, comprising 'samples of all the manufactures of Asia', including silks and cottons, models of the various machines and tools used in manufactures, implements of husbandry and 'instruments used in their sciences, mathematical, astronomical, musical, etc.'

Miscellaneous Articles, 'To consist of curiosities chiefly presents, and generally such things as cannot conveniently be classed under any of the former heads'.

Wilkins's vision for the new museum was a long way from that which had taken shape haphazardly in the seventeenth century. Although coloured by his personal experience in Calcutta (Kolkata), there was no sense in which the proposed museum would replicate any institution Wilkins had encountered there: the Asiatic Society of Bengal (in which Wilkins had played a prominent role and whose ethos is clearly reflected in his outline plan) would in time develop a collection of its own,<sup>7</sup> but the London museum preceded this by a decade. In museological terms, however, his agenda for the Company's museum seems to blend inspiration provided by the intellectually expansive milieu fostered among the British community in India under the liberal scholarly guidance of Warren Hastings and Sir William Jones with the more pragmatic precepts espoused in London by the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce.<sup>8</sup> The contents of the India Museum may be said to have spoken more obliquely to the



**Fig. 1.2** (a) Sir Charles Wilkins © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford; (b) Dr Thomas Horsfield, Wikimedia Commons; (c) Dr John Forbes Royle, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew; (d) Dr John Forbes Watson, Victoria and Albert Museum.

encyclopaedic agenda promoted by the Bengal society than the holdings of the adjacent library, where the literature and music, philosophy and art of ‘the East’ were consciously represented, but the complementary nature of the two institutions was undoubtedly an essential feature of the early decades of their existence; it would, however, become more attenuated with time.



The terms of the proposal eventually won round the Court of Directors – though not without considerable persistence on Wilkins's part and some lobbying on his behalf by his friend Warren Hastings, by then living in retirement at Daylesford (Worcestershire). It would take two years, until 18 February 1801, for Wilkins's appointment as 'Librarian to the Oriental Repository' to be confirmed by the Committee of Correspondence, at a salary of £200 per annum.<sup>9</sup>

Within a few months, the first volume had been instituted in a series (eventually running to 34 volumes) known as the Day Books – a valuable resource for the early development of the museum, details of whose acquisitions were then scattered among the more numerous entries for books, manuscripts, maps and surveys. Page 1, dated 20 November 1801, gives a flavour of what follows and of the symbiotic character of the library and museum collections:

*Daily Account of Books and Curiosities received into the Library*

Three Elephants Heads, with several detached Parts intended to illustrate the natural history of those Animals, so far as relates to their curious mode of Dentition. Presented by John Corse Scott Esq<sup>r</sup>.

Observations on the different species of Asiatic Elephants, and their Mode of Dentition, by John Corse (Scott) Esq<sup>r</sup>. From the Philosophical Transactions. 4<sup>to</sup> 1789. Presented by the Librarian. Catalogue of Sanskrita Manuscripts presented to the Royal Society by Sir William and Lady Jones. Presented by the Author. oct[avo]. London.

A Persian Manuscript traced on oil paper, English Title 'Magical History' 1 vol. 4<sup>to</sup>. Presented by John Roberts Esq<sup>r</sup>.

Six Hindu Deities in Brass representing  
Siva mounted on his Bull.

Bhawani standing upon a Lion.

Ganésa the God of Prudence and Policy, & the offspring of Siva.

Hanumán the Monkey who attended Ráma in his war against Rávana the Tyrant of Ceylon.

A female figure supposed to be the Goddess Saraswati.

Another female figure supposed to be Gangá.

Presented by John Roberts Esq<sup>r</sup>.<sup>10</sup>

Having committed itself to the establishment of the museum, the Court of Directors looked to its servants in India for display material and

sent reminders to those presidential governments that failed to display sufficient ‘zeal and alacrity’ in this respect. Then in 1808 the museum took possession of what would prove its most enduringly iconic exhibit – albeit one that would have qualified only as one of Wilkins’s ‘miscellaneous curiosities’. ‘Tippoo’s Tiger’ (see [Chapter 3](#)) had been seized from the ruler of Mysore’s palace when Seringapatam (Srirangapatna) was besieged and overrun by the Company’s army in May 1799 and was dispatched to Company headquarters in 1800, accompanied by a memorandum outlining its history.

By 1817 Wilkins could be found complaining to the Library Committee that ‘the immense crowds of persons of all classes, who ... visit the Library and Museum every day in the week except Sunday’ were making life unbearable for his staff. As a result, entry was restricted thereafter to Mondays, Thursdays and Saturdays from 10.00 a.m. to 3.00 p.m., by means of tickets issued by the librarian.<sup>11</sup>

At Wilkins’s death in office in 1836, at the age of 87, responsibilities for the growing collections were split: Horace Hayman Wilson, Professor of Sanskrit at Oxford, was placed in charge of the library, while the keepership of the museum fell to Thomas Horsfield (1773–1859; see [fig. 1.2b](#)), each with an annual salary of £500. Both Wilson and Horsfield – the latter a surgeon and naturalist who had seen service with the Dutch and British East India Companies in Java – quickly felt the need for additional accommodation for their charges and by 1839 had been rewarded with one large and three smaller rooms formerly occupied by the Company’s surveyor. Ray Desmond describes how visitors to these quarters had to negotiate a long flight of stairs and two corridors, both hung with pictures; the second corridor also housed a display of ship models and specimens of animal skins and bamboo. Of the rooms at the end, the larger one was given over entirely to natural history – stuffed mammals and birds from India, Siam (Thailand) and Java, shells and insects ‘in the corners and on shelves too high to inspect’.<sup>12</sup> Further natural history specimens rubbed shoulders in the smaller rooms with musical instruments, arms and armour, and with a number of models.

Next to the principal museum room, in the adjacent library, under a huge Chinese lantern stood an equally gigantic silver-mounted state howdah captured at the siege of Bharatpur,<sup>13</sup> as well as the golden throne of Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1780–1839), founder of the Sikh empire – a further symbol of the Company’s military and political advances in India.<sup>14</sup> There were also more pictures and sculptures from the Company’s collection, examples of calligraphy, and writing

and drawing instruments. ‘Tippoo’s Tiger’ provided the principal focus here – not only in visual terms but also by virtue of its hideous sound system being frequently stirred into baleful action by visiting members of the public.<sup>15</sup>

From 1843 a rare account survives of the experience offered by a visit to the museum – including mention of a resident guide or invigilator – which evidently proved less than satisfactory for the author:

The practice of hurrying the spectator from one thing to another as fast as the names of them can be run over, is very unpleasant, and yet it is altogether unavoidable as far as the attendant is concerned. The only comfortable way of proceeding is, to dispense with the attendance of the conductor; to wander where you like, and linger where you will: most of the curiosities here are labelled, therefore this plan is attended with little inconvenience.<sup>16</sup>

The museum gained a further gallery (formerly the pay office) in 1845 on the ground floor of India House, which came to accommodate a bulky collection of fossils from the Siwalik Hills, sculptures from the collection of Colonel Colin Mackenzie and the massive howdah of Durjan Sal that formerly had occupied so much room in the library. A large-scale model of the fortified city of Lahore, acquired during this period but whose construction and earlier collection history remains unknown, may also have found a home here.<sup>17</sup>

In 1851, the scattered documentary evidence for the museum was complemented by its first printed guide, which provides the basis for a more coherent reconstruction of the collections.<sup>18</sup> The anonymous author – clearly not a Company man himself – is appreciative and sceptical by turn, making his observations all the more valuable. Reference to them is made at intervals in the text below.

Given these inconveniences, visitor numbers of 18,623 recorded in 1850 seem quite respectable, but a year later they were to be boosted to twice as many under the beneficial influence of the Great Exhibition, when unprecedented crowds were introduced to the riches of Indian culture, manufactures and materials. By this time the museum represented a highly developed and coherent installation (fig. 1.3).

While Horsfield focused particularly on the zoological collections – publishing catalogues of the lepidoptera and mammalia in the museum – he was fortunate in having the collaboration of John Forbes Royle (1799–1858; see fig. 1.2c). A man of exceptional abilities, Royle, a former surgeon and botanist in the Indian service, was by now professor



Fig. 1.3. Interior views of the museum galleries at East India House, from *The Leisure Hour* 7 (1858). Photo: Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

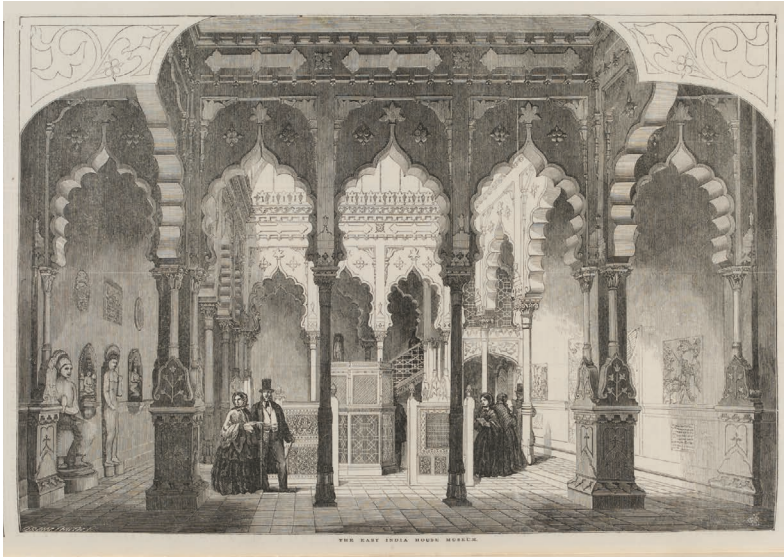
of *materia medica* at King's College; from 1839 he was also appointed 'Correspondent relating to the Vegetable Productions of India' within the museum and the following year published his 450-page *Essay on the Productive Resources of India*, a highly insightful work very much in sympathy with the agenda of the museum. Royle's contribution in positioning the institution at the forefront of the movement that would find expression in the series of international expositions that formed a major feature of the later 1800s is scarcely less important than Wilkins's founding role, for he ensured its continuing relevance in an era that might well have seen it sidelined. He further sought to promote a taste and a demand for Indian goods and also to convince the Company of the value of the museum in instructing its own staff,

by requiring those who are proceeding to India to acquaint themselves in a general way with the contents of such a Museum as it could not fail to give to them and even to those coming from India, a more general as well as a more correct idea of the country and of its inhabitants than could be obtained by those confined to one district or even to one Presidency of that wide spread Empire.<sup>19</sup>

On this occasion, the Court of Directors was again persuaded of the desirability of further expanding the accommodation and approval was given for the necessary work to be carried out at East India House. Elements of the premises occupied hitherto by the secretary and assistant secretary as well as part of the Marine Department were allocated to the new museum, but its centrepiece was to be the former tea sale room, transformed by Matthew Digby Wyatt, the Company's surveyor, into a colonnaded Mughal-style hall (fig. 1.4).<sup>20</sup> Notwithstanding the declared utilitarian aims of the new museum, when it opened in 1858 this major space was given over to the first-ever expansive display of the ancient sculptures inherited by the Company over the years, while the raw materials and manufactured goods – not to mention the many models illustrative of Indian agriculture and industry and indeed the peoples of India – were consigned to the lesser galleries.

In a sense, the expanding museum reflected the growing confidence of the Company itself. Mildred Archer and Brian Allen have each commented on the almost self-effacing image traditionally projected by the directors, 'consciously staid' and with 'little hint of a taste for ... exotica', 'as if the Directors shrank from appearing even obliquely "Chinese" or "Indian" in their way of life, and for all the Eastern





**Fig. 1.4.** The former tea sale room at East India House, transformed into a Mughal-style gallery by Matthew Digby Wyatt, 1858. Indian sculptures formed the principal exhibits within this space, which flourished for less than four years. *Illustrated London News*, 6 March 1858. Photo: Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

products incorporated in their office and its furnishings, their dealings might as well have been with North American Indians or Eskimos'.<sup>21</sup> By the mid-1800s, any such coyness had clearly been abandoned: now the museum displays proclaimed to the public at large the wealth, the authority and the dominion the Company had accumulated. By this point, Maya Jasanoff's characterization of the museum as 'a compelling advertisement for Company power' had evidently begun to assert a claim for serious consideration.<sup>22</sup> Real power was indeed beginning to slip through the Company's fingers and the more assertive tone detected here may reflect a belated recognition of the museum's potential as a platform from which the benefits accrued under its rule could be promoted to the public.

Royle died on 2 January 1858,<sup>23</sup> and Horsfield too had little opportunity to settle quietly into his newly expanded territory. The Uprising<sup>24</sup> of the previous year had brought to a head long-standing reservations concerning the Company's expanding political role in India, and with the passing of the Government of India Act of 1858 it was displaced, along with its Board of Control, by the administration

of the India Office and the Council of India. 'After a period of some anxiety on the part of the public as to the intention of the authorities with respect to the museum',<sup>25</sup> the new administrators of the library and museum moved to create a new post, that of Reporter on the Products of India, which subsumed many of the responsibilities that Royle had shouldered; Horsfield was permitted to remain in charge of the natural history collections that had been his first love, although he had to oversee the continuing dispersal of parts of the collections. On 14 July 1859, Horsfield too died at the age of 86.

Although the collections would to a large extent survive as an entity for a further two decades, in institutional terms the India Museum had reached the end of its independent existence. East India House in Leadenhall Street, now deprived of all its functions, was demolished in 1862; the Mughal-style furnishings of its most recent incarnation were sold off for a mere £79 10s.

The question might be considered of the degree to which the museum had, in fact, fulfilled the aspirations of its founders. Certainly, the commercial, industrial and economic dimensions on which Wilkins had laid stress (the 'natural and artificial productions') continued to predominate and indeed were about to be given a new lease of life, but a striking feature of the collections is the way in which the 'miscellaneous curiosities', given such a low priority in the early days, had come into much greater prominence, with sculpture in particular having been awarded the most prestigious display space. However precisely focused Wilkins's vision for the museum had been, the directors of the Company seem always to have entertained more catholic ambitions for it: an early appeal from the Library Committee, for example, solicited 'any articles of curiosity' and brought in response the snout of a swordfish that had embedded itself in the copper-bottomed hull of the East Indiaman *Farquharson*,<sup>26</sup> a number of inscribed bricks from Babylon (see [Chapter 3](#)) and 'A Piece of Sheet lead eaten through by white ants in St George's Church Madras, 1820'.<sup>27</sup>

Perhaps it was the arrival of the items associated with Tipu Sultan that had launched the museum most decisively on this broader path, and certainly they spoke more eloquently to the average visitor than many of the more esoteric displays. The importance of these historical relics was emphasized too by the preponderance of senior officers from the Company's armies in India (as well as men from its civil administration) who were among the donors of all kinds of exhibits – and evidently were acknowledged on the labels – contributing to a growing sense that the entire display was the product of

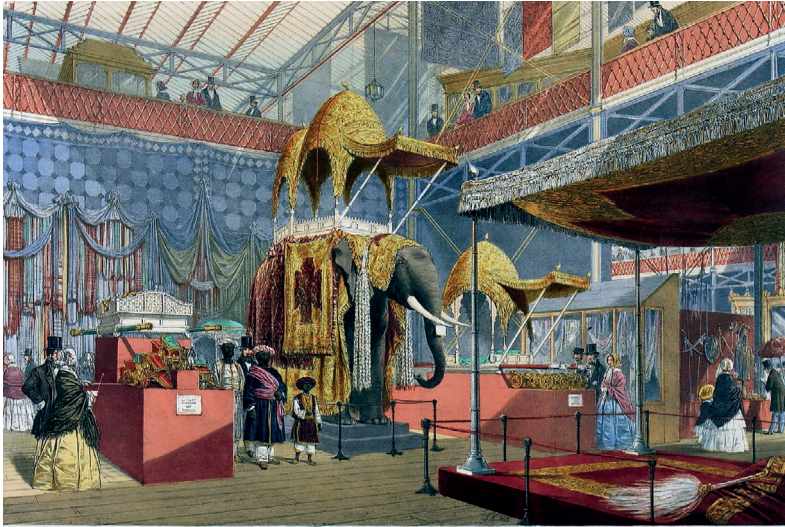


Fig. 1.5. The Indian Court at the Great Exhibition of 1851. The display formed the centrepiece of the Company's contribution, though the stuffed elephant had to be borrowed from elsewhere. Lithograph by John Nash. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

a historical process very much at the forefront of the minds of the contemporary public.

For their part, the more utilitarian dimensions of the museum as first envisaged by Wilkins also reached their apotheosis at this time, placing the collection entirely in sympathy with the movement that saw the rise of the great international exhibitions of industry and art that marked the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>28</sup> The Company had been perhaps the single biggest contributor to the Great Exhibition of 1851, with a remarkably diverse display organized by Royle (fig. 1.5). The museum also featured strongly in the subsequent international exhibitions held in London in 1862<sup>29</sup> and annually from 1872 to 1874, followed (after the collection's formal dispersal) by the Colonial and Indian Exhibition of 1886; on an international scale, the museum contributed at a major level to the *Expositions Universelles* in Paris in 1855, 1867 and 1878, and to the exhibitions held in New Zealand in 1865,<sup>30</sup> Vienna in 1873<sup>31</sup> and Philadelphia in 1876.<sup>32</sup> It also played a major role in the Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition in 1857, which adopted a rather different perspective: Elizabeth Pergam has recently analysed the presentation of the 'Oriental Court' (again organized by Royle) at Manchester, where – despite the city's strong association



with the cotton trade – the many objects lent by the India Museum were more specifically those ‘as displayed artistic skill in the art of decoration’ and might form models for contemporary designers, in line with the aesthetic rather than industrial concerns of the Exhibition.<sup>33</sup>

Not only was material sent from the museum to all of these exhibitions, but the collections benefited from new acquisitions made from among the exhibits sent directly from India for display there (often with the Company’s aid).<sup>34</sup> Desmond records that the huge influxes of material received at the closure of the 1851 and 1855 exhibitions brought about the formation of a distinct collection of natural products and manufactures under the direction of Royle<sup>35</sup> – an assemblage that would come to gain massively in importance under the administration of the India Office.

Undoubtedly, the India Museum’s continuing participation in the international exhibitions brought rewards in the form of additional exhibits, but it is not too much to claim that the museum itself, through the intervention of Royle and later under the direction of John Forbes Watson (1827–92; see [fig. 1.2d](#)), contributed in an important manner to the formulation of both the format and the range of contents observed by all these events: guided by the principles laid out half a century before the Great Exhibition by Charles Wilkins, the museum’s declared interests and its collecting policies (not to mention its permanent displays<sup>36</sup>) prefigured in many ways the routines followed throughout the later 1800s by these more transient expositions around the world.

Under the newly appointed Reporter on the Products of India, Forbes Watson, to whom the keepership was transferred in 1867, the India Museum began to follow a significantly new trajectory. It was now characterized as:

not a mere museum of curiosity, nor even primarily a museum intended for the advancement of science, but the reservoir, so to speak, that supplies power to the machinery created for the purpose of developing the resources of India, and promoting trade between the Eastern and Western empires of Her Majesty, to the great advantage of both.<sup>37</sup>

This mission took the museum a long way from its traditionally conservative – or rather preservative – function, but far from regarding this as problematic, the forging of a role in promoting direct commercial engagement was viewed by Forbes Watson as a wholly desirable development, and not one that should be limited to his own institution.

Perhaps his most ambitious exercises in public engagement were the construction and distribution of 20 sets of albums, with 18 albums in a set, each containing some 700 samples of Indian textiles that British manufacturers were encouraged to emulate (some of the samples cut from otherwise intact specimens within the museum collection);<sup>38</sup> and a number of ‘mobile museums’ – stands designed for wide circulation, each holding a number of glazed frames displaying expositions of specimens and explanatory texts on textile and other industries in India that would repay exploitation by British manufacturers.<sup>39</sup> If Forbes Watson’s practice of quarrying the collections for sample pieces to distribute to manufacturers and traders seems cavalier in conventional terms, it was wholly in line with that which had been adopted for the natural history specimens that were viewed as of practical value and as essentially replaceable, so that they could be beneficially ‘consumed’ in the course of diffusion and research. Forbes Watson’s successors were less sanguine about it. George (later Sir George) Birdwood, for example, considered that:

it is indeed unfortunate that for the purposes of this work some of the finest historical examples in the museum were destroyed. They were cut up into small fingering pieces as the manufacturers call them, shewing how many threads per square inch were in the weft and the woof of these glorious webs of sunshine and colour.<sup>40</sup>

Even under the commercial bias of the new regime, however, the India Museum continued to function both as a platform for wider interest in the representation of India and as the most important permanent site in London for the shaping of perceptions of the sub-continent. An anonymous author (seemingly Forbes Watson himself) wrote that it ‘imparts to the visitor an excellent general idea of India, affording, so to speak, an *epitome* of the country as a whole’ – its history, topography, peoples, antiquities, mineral resources and natural history.<sup>41</sup>

## Removal to Fife House, the India Office and South Kensington

With the loss of the premises at East India House, an early decision had been taken by the museum’s new masters that the combined collections should be housed in closer association with the India Office itself, but when no appropriate accommodation could be found for the

museum within the emerging department's own premises, a lease was taken initially on the mansion known as Fife House, in Whitehall.<sup>42</sup> When the bulky collections were decanted into the new accommodation, it was immediately filled to overflowing. 'The marble statues of Wellington, Clive, Hastings, Coote, Wellesley, and other military men and statesmen' stood in the entrance hall, keeping incongruous company with the Schlagintweit electrotype casts of 'the faces, feet, and hands of every tribe of Northern India, Cabul and Thibet' and 'many of those remarkable specimens of Indian sculpture which were formerly shown in the sculpture gallery of the India House';<sup>43</sup> on the staircase hung the 'valuable pictures which were formerly in the possession of the East India Company' (most or all of which had hung in apartments other than those assigned to the museum); in the library were displayed mineral products, in the dining room raw materials and manufactured goods, and in the drawing room textiles and 'the silk and jewelled dresses of the East, which present a most gorgeous appearance'; the kitchen was 'filled with antelopes, stags, leopards and other large stuffed animals'; the saloon (fig. 1.6) held craft objects in ivory and precious metals, while the bedrooms on the upper floor housed the remnants of the natural history collections, especially stuffed birds, 'arranged very ingeniously, so as to take advantage, in the best possible manner, of the unfavourable light which the small and inconvenient rooms afford'.<sup>44</sup> A poignant response to the collections in their setting at Fife House, not only huddled together but deprived of all the human and sensory associations that had formerly animated them, was recorded in 1862 by a young Indian visitor, Rakhai Das Haldar:<sup>45</sup>

It was painful to see the state chair of gold of the late Lion of the Punjab [the throne of Ranjit Singh] with a mere picture upon it; shawls without Babus; musical instruments without a Hindu player, jezails and swords without *sipahis* and *sawars*; golden ornaments without *bhobi* [women]; and above all, hookahs without the fume of fantastic shapes!

Interestingly, however, Haldar – the sole Indian visitor to the collections whose responses have been noted – records that it was his sixth or seventh visit to the museum, so that for all the pathos it evoked, it clearly touched a powerful chord within him. Haldar's deeply personal observations stand in striking contrast to those of European visitors quoted elsewhere, who might respond with more enthusiasm for the 'gorgeous appearance' or the 'ingenious arrangement' of the exhibits

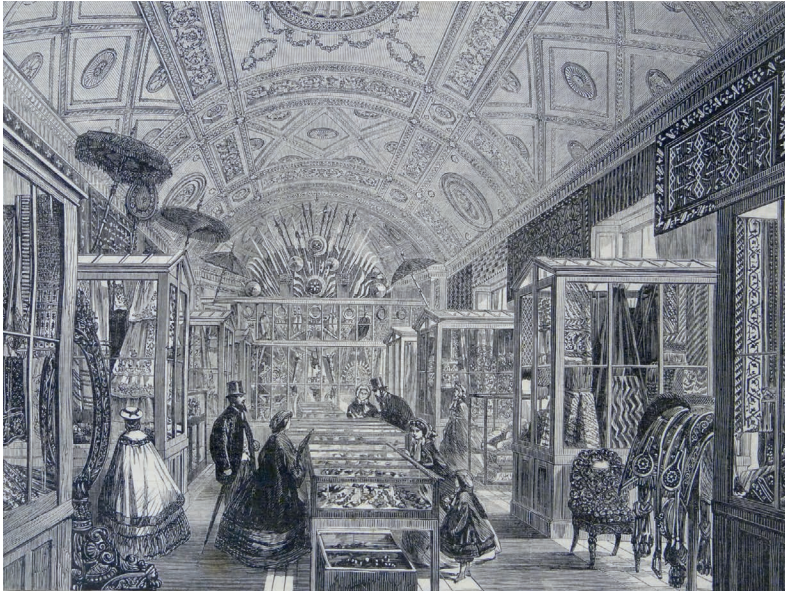


Fig. 1.6. The collection exhibited in the saloon at Fife House. *Illustrated London News*, 3 August 1861. Photo: Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

but whose comments betray a lesser degree of empathy or emotional engagement.<sup>46</sup>

A further eloquent comment was passed on the shortage of display space by the quantities of sculptured stones scattered along either side of the garden path and crammed into the coach-house – including the masterpieces salvaged from Amaravati (see [Chapter 11](#)). Nonetheless, new routines were put in place for making the collections available, and the museum began to function fairly routinely, open to the public at no charge on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, and by ticket for more privileged or more scholarly visitors on Thursdays.<sup>47</sup>

By 1869 the contents of the museum (or some part of them) were again removed, to join the library on the third floor of the newly completed India Office building in Whitehall – a measure viewed as a purely temporary arrangement. Perhaps it was just as well, for contemporary accounts make much of the 140 steps that had to be surmounted in order to penetrate the museum, housed in ‘a maze of sky-lit chambers and passages, which seem to have been originally contrived, partly for astronomical observations and partly for the growth of tropical plants’.<sup>48</sup> One visitor complained:

There is no catalogue – it would be impossible to use it if there were; – there is no intelligible arrangement, but organic and inorganic products, machinery and manufactures are mixed up in hopeless because necessary confusion ... The whole is a puzzle which only the expert can set. It is practically inaccessible, and hid away out of sight, and when you get to it you find a bonded warehouse and not a Museum in straightforward airy order.<sup>49</sup>

Inevitably, much of the India Museum's collection remained in its packing cases at this time – particularly the bulky antiquarian, natural history and geological material – much to the chagrin of those wishing to consult it.

An authoritative assessment of the collections displayed there, with notes on some of the more outstanding pieces, was included by Henry Hardy Cole<sup>50</sup> as an appendix to his *Catalogue of the Objects of Indian Art Exhibited in the South Kensington Museum* published in 1874. He considered the contents of the first importance, their treatment at the India Office as little short of scandalous, but their continuing potential as high.<sup>51</sup>

At the India Office Museum are a vast quantity of objects of Indian Art, but so closely packed that it is difficult to observe the artistic merits of the various specimens, and impossible to derive any instruction from them. Until of late years the wonderfully wrought trophies and specimens of oriental workmanship contributed through the Government or private sources have not received even the ordinary attention attaching to outlandish curiosities; but now that the objects have been approximately classified under the various heads of metal work, carving in wood, ivories, etc., a new interest is awakened which will probably have more effect than anything else in exciting the public to the wish to know more about the country ...

It is deeply to be regretted that this unexampled collection – of incalculable value – should be so inaccessible and so unworthily treated, for in truth the Indian Museum is but a Durbar store room.

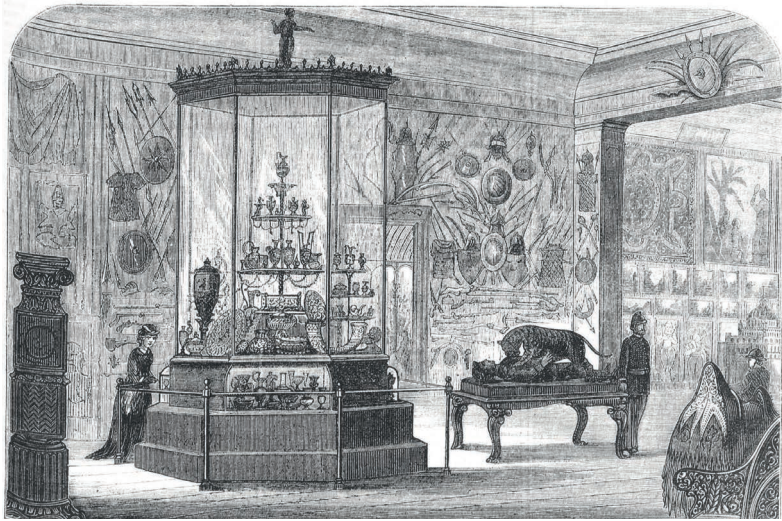
An immediate remedy to the problem of overcrowding was found in simply giving away what could not be readily housed. Raw materials deemed surplus to requirements (even including many of the samples

from the *Exposition Universelle* of 1867) were parcelled out among societies and institutions at home and abroad. In the interests of accessibility, Charles Reed, MP for Hackney, wanted the India Museum's collections moved to the Bethnal Green Museum. The rather haughty response to this latter suggestion from the Under-Secretary of State for India, M. E. Grant Duff, declared that it was not a primary function of the museum to be open to the public: it was now, rather, an essential component of the office of the Reporter on the Products of India, which used the resources offered by the collection to answer queries from manufacturers and merchants.<sup>52</sup> At the conclusion of all this debate, a decision was reached that, for the moment, the museum should remain where it was. Plans were entertained for the construction of a new purpose-built structure nearby that would house both the museum and the library, as well as some part of the collections of the Royal Asiatic Society, but they too came to nothing.<sup>53</sup>

The prospect of temporary relief, at least, came in the very year that Cole's damning assessment was published, when the Commissioners for the Exhibition of 1851, having decided to discontinue the Annual International Exhibitions held for the previous three years, offered the India Office the use of their purpose-built 'Eastern Galleries', occupying the site of the present-day Imperial College frontage on Exhibition Road, nearly opposite the South Kensington Museum.<sup>54</sup> Approval came from the Society of Arts – perhaps not surprisingly, since its own India Museum Committee, formed in April 1875 to 'draw up a memorial to the Government for assistance in establishing "a Museum fully and worthily representing the Arts, Sciences, Archaeology, Natural History and Industrial Products of India"', was chaired by Henry Cole, the moving spirit of the South Kensington Museum and the father of Henry Hardy Cole.

By June 1875, the public was able to see the collections in their new home in the Eastern Galleries, with the Amaravati sculptures now gracing the principal entrance on Exhibition Road. The ground floor housed agricultural machinery and produce, geology and transport. Elements of the combined collections of natural specimens formed by the Company's naturalists were also displayed there,<sup>55</sup> while on the upper floor were carpets (some of them loans), textiles, carvings, lacquer, gold, silver, arms, ethnography, photographs, 'Tipoo's Tiger' (fig. 1.7) and Ranjit Singh's throne. The whole collection was estimated at this time to hold 21,000 natural history specimens and 15,000 manufactured objects, in addition to coins, photographs, drawings and paintings.





**Fig. 1.7.** The India Museum at the end of its independent existence in the Eastern Galleries, before formal transfer of the collections to the South Kensington Museum. *London Journal*, 31 May 1879, 341. Photo: Author.

In a final account of the museum before the integrated collections were divided institutionally, the *London Journal* for 31 May 1879<sup>56</sup> advocated for the effectiveness of museums in ‘improving the mind and enlarging the sphere ... of imagination and knowledge’, judging that ‘for the future progress of industry ... our working classes should have the opportunity of comparing what is done in their own country with the methods of other countries’. These benefits, however, were denied to the working population by the general closure of the museums on Sundays, the author continued:

To none of the permanent museums do these remarks apply with more force than to that which is now located in the Exhibition-road, South Kensington, under the style and title of the Indian Museum. Considering the importance which statesmen of the most opposite views attach to the possession of India ... it will not be denied that it is highly desirable for all who have the power of doing so to make themselves thoroughly acquainted with its natural and industrial productions.

The opportunity of doing this is afforded by the South Kensington collection, but as the visitors are charged sixpence each for every day in the week except Mondays and Saturdays,

when the price is lowered to one penny, the public do not avail themselves of it in anything like the numbers which would visit the collection if, as it ought to be, the admission were free every day in the week and for a few hours on Sunday ... Owing, however, to what we cannot consider but the very imperfect arrangements of the authorities, it has not been visited by a large section of the public, except when the Prince of Wales's Indian collection was placed on view there.<sup>57</sup> And yet it is well worth the small trouble it entails, for the articles collected together in the ten rooms are of an exceedingly interesting and instructive character, and we venture to think that anyone who spends a few hours in the detailed examination of them will be well repaid, and will acquire a knowledge of the Indian peninsula, its people, and its products, which could scarcely be obtained even from a lengthened study of books.

The author then embarks on a guided tour – entering through a vestibule displaying the Amaravati sculptures and progressing through rooms displaying in turn specimens of Indian foods, agricultural implements and natural productions; minerals; fabrics, paintings on talc and other ‘specimens of rude art workmanship’; fishes and shells, hair, birds and animals. Mounting the stairs, he finds ‘the more elaborate and costly articles which the museum contains’, including ‘wondrous textile fabrics’; furniture; splendid gold and silver work; ethnological collections; musical instruments; weapons of war, etc. He regrets the continuing absence of a catalogue or handbook, particularly as the labelling is ‘very carelessly done’: the musical instruments, for example, have no labels at all. He concludes that visitors will find it:

a noble collection, which ought to be far better known than it is now, but they cannot help realizing the truth that, practically, every obstacle has been thrown by the authorities at headquarters [that is, the India Office] in the way of the free and uninterrupted enjoyment of its many beauties by the general public, of which its deserted rooms alone are more than sufficient evidence.

This rather poignant account of a museum neglected by its administrators and the public alike would prove an epitaph for the collections as they existed in their original encyclopaedic form, encompassing both the natural history and the material culture of India, for



they would survive in that integrated arrangement for only a few months more.

## The end of institutional identity

A new crisis erupted in 1879, when part of the accommodation occupied by the museum was abruptly scheduled for demolition. A decision was now taken that the India Museum as an independent entity should be wound up and its collections dispersed to other institutions forthwith. The move was made easier by the view widely shared in government that it had all become ‘needlessly expensive’. The author of the report that sounded its death knell, George Birdwood (1832–1917), then Scientific Assistant at the India Office, on whom the Department of Statistics relied for dispassionate analysis, foresaw that while the economic elements of the collection – that is, those that could serve for the advancement of trade – might be retained by the India Office, the remainder could easily be transferred to other institutions – zoology and ethnology to the British Museum,<sup>58</sup> economic botany to Kew, the geological specimens to the Museum of Practical Geology and the Royal School of Mines, and the remainder to the South Kensington Museum (for further mention of these elements of the collection, see [Chapter 13](#)). Birdwood’s report was accepted with alacrity by the India Office. On 1 July 1879, the Council of India resolved ‘That it is not desirable to maintain the museum in its present footing’, and that ‘notice be at once given to terminate the lease of the Galleries at South Kensington on the 25th Dec. 1879’. Despite some rearguard action from advocates for the India Museum’s independent status, and notwithstanding moves to transfer the whole of the man-made collections to the British Museum rather than the Bloomsbury institution taking (principally) the antiquities, the Department of Science and Art (on the part of the South Kensington Museum) presented the case for the ‘applied arts objects’ to join that museum’s existing Indian collections. By this means, it was claimed:

Thus there would be formed one collection of the Manufactures and Art Industries of India, which would go far to establish such a beneficial interest ... and the anomalous position of two Indian collections being formed within a few yards of each other under the management of two separate Government Institutions would be prevented.

Such an arrangement was eventually ratified on 11 November<sup>59</sup> and was welcomed with enthusiasm by the South Kensington authorities: Henry Cole, always an advocate for the educational role of his institution – and in his day the museum complex at South Kensington was vastly more multi-disciplinary and more directly involved in practical education than is generally recognized today – proclaimed that with the combining of the two collections ‘There is no university in the world where one can learn so much about India.’<sup>60</sup>

The move also set in motion a mammoth cataloguing exercise as the curators sought to document the material now transferred to their care – some of which had remained in packing cases for decades. By February 1880, the process of drawing up the inventory – some 20,000 entries – had been completed in remarkably quick time, a task achieved by two teams working in parallel. The lists were printed for internal use only, as an *Inventory of the Collection of Examples of Indian Art and Manufactures Transferred to the South Kensington Museum* (1880): as well as constituting the catalogue of the collection, the text was intended to serve in the anticipated re-labelling exercise (see [figs 0.1](#) and [0.2](#)).

It is this *Inventory* that has formed the basis for the present attempt to put some flesh on the bones of the India Museum, whose institutional history has hitherto been reconstructed primarily in archival form. It will be appreciated that the 1880 lists present only a final snapshot of part of the museum’s contents: although they deal only with the material transferred to the South Kensington Museum, and the objects are described only in the most summary form, the 1880 lists nonetheless represent by far the most comprehensive record of the collections that survive. They have the additional advantage of recording acquisitions made up to the very moment of the institution’s final demise as an independent entity;<sup>61</sup> while much historical interest attaches to the earlier years of the collection, it will be seen that the museum continued to function in new and dynamic ways up to the end.

Under their new proprietor, the India Museum collections continued to maintain a physical distance from the other elements of the South Kensington Museum – even from much of the Indian material that had arrived there independently of other sources – for they remained in place in the surviving halls of the Eastern Galleries. At the end of 1879, Caspar Purdon Clarke (1846–1911), who had been responsible the previous year for ‘the most splendid display ever made by India in an International Exhibition’ at the *Exposition Universelle* in Paris, was appointed ‘to superintend arrangement of

the Indian Collection'. Again his efforts brought approbation, this time from *The Academy*:<sup>62</sup>

Well arranged and well lighted, what is now the Indian section of the South Kensington Museum might serve as a model even to the Museum itself ... The arms are hung very artistically, and, with some ivory palanquins and other articles lent by the Queen, occupy the principal room ... In the next room is arranged the very beautiful and valuable collection of jewellery, ranging from rude archaic goldwork to the exquisite specimens of jade inlaid with gold and precious stones ... Farther on are the pottery, metalwork, textiles, &c., &c. In the rooms below is a miscellaneous collection ... including a very beautiful assemblage of carpets, ancient and modern ... There is little fault to be found with these beautifully stored rooms.

The turnaround from the neglected institution of only 12 months earlier to the appealing displays described in this account seems remarkable. Allowing, perhaps, for opposing allegiances between the two authors, it may have been that Purdon Clarke had managed to turn the loss of some sectors of the collection to his advantage by redisplaying the remainder to greater effect.

Deprived of institutional independence, the physical outlines of the reconstituted India Museum collections remained visible in abbreviated form up to the middle of the twentieth century, though now absorbed within the administrative structure of the South Kensington Museum (known as the V&A after 1899). Lobbying by rearguard advocates for the creation of an independent museum for India and the colonial empire failed to dislodge the collections, but, quite suddenly, in 1955 a planned expansion of the adjacent Imperial College brought about the demolition of the remaining Eastern Galleries and removal of the collections. Some of the principal exhibits were merged with those already in the V&A's Indian Galleries, but for the majority of those that had survived periodic bouts of 'rationalization' in the meantime, the future awaiting them lay out of the public eye in the comparative anonymity of the museum's reserve collections, with only a few being brought to light from time to time in thematic exhibitions within the museum and elsewhere.<sup>63</sup>

In recent decades, the V&A has made strides in developing its internal Collections Management System, so that electronic records now exist for every item in the reserve collections (in varying degrees

of detail); these now appear also on the 'Explore the Collections' facility on the museum's website.<sup>64</sup> Currently, the objects in the reserve collection are being prepared for transfer to the museum's projected V&A East Storehouse, due to open in 2024: at that time, the collections themselves will become physically more accessible and enhanced information relating to all of them will have become publicly available. The account offered here will complement the redeployment of the India Museum's collections, reconstituted in a more comprehensive form than they have enjoyed within living memory.

## Notes

- 1 Account compiled by Lorenzo Magalotti, Secretary to Cosimo III de' Medici, reproduced with discussion in MacGregor, *Company Curiosities* (p. 12), in which volume the outlines of the present chapter were earlier explored.
- 2 To date, the most comprehensive account of the museum is that published in Desmond, *India Museum*, a volume compiled, essentially, from documentary sources. As an institutional history it will probably never be bettered, but it scarcely concerns itself with the collections that form our essential interest here.
- 3 See Datta, 'India Office Library', 101 n. 5, with further references.
- 4 For Wilkins and for others mentioned below, see 'Contributors to the India Museum, together with personalities and institutions associated with items in the collection', at <https://www.vam.ac.uk/research/projects/the-india-museum-revisited>.
- 5 Charles Wilkins to the Court of Directors, 2 January 1799; British Library, India Office Records (hereafter IOR) E/1/100/2. While in India, Wilkins had built up a formidable reputation as a scholar of Sanskrit, 'up to that time, not merely unknown but supposed to be unattainable by Europeans'; his ground-breaking translation of the Bhagavat-Geeta was published at the Company's expense in 1785, and his *Sanskrita Grammar* appeared in 1808.
- 6 The complementary roles of the library and the museum – too often overlooked – would have been rendered all the more obvious to contemporaries by the example of the British Museum, founded half a century earlier, in which the library was at the time the dominant partner in a similar relationship.
- 7 The Society's museum was founded in 1814 at the instigation of Nathaniel Wallich. It survived as an independent institution until 1878, when the majority of its collections were transferred to Calcutta's newly rebuilt Indian Museum.
- 8 Established in 1754 with a declared mission to 'embolden enterprise, enlarge science, refine art, improve our manufacturers and extend our commerce', the declared ambitions of the latter society would have resonated strongly at East India House. In promoting them, the Society of Arts had instituted annual exhibitions in the mid-century and by the 1780s had a permanent museum of models and materials of industry and commerce.
- 9 Wilkins's wide ambitions for the proposed institution are underscored by his suggestion that the Court of Directors might also promote the foundation in London a society similar to that 'now flourishing in Calcutta', which could hold its meetings within the library for the benefit of all 'lovers and promoters of Eastern learning'. While the directors demurred, Wilkins's vision would eventually find expression in the [Royal] Asiatic Society, founded in London in 1823. See Codrington, 'Birdwood and the study of the arts of India', 141.
- 10 Day Books, 20 November 1801. Unfortunately, museum acquisitions virtually disappear from the Day Books in later years, presumably reflecting the separation of responsibility for its curation from that of the library in 1836. By the momentous year of the 1857 Uprising, the only entry for museum objects, 'A collection of Models of Fruits and Vegetables of India

- numbering [ ] pieces' is annotated 'Transferred to New Museum' (Day Books, 25 November 1857).
- 11 Access to the early British Museum was likewise regulated by the issue of tickets, though the practice had been abandoned in 1805. 'People of all classes' were similarly drawn there in the new public enthusiasm for museum-going and were widely commented upon, but descriptions of visitors to the India Museum are lacking.
  - 12 Desmond, *India Museum*, 36. An entry in the Day Books (26 November 1813) records the dispatch of 110 birds, 16 quadrupeds and 246 insects collected in the field by Horsfield, 'Sent to Mr Bullock to be Stuffed & arranged'. In addition to his taxidermy business, William Bullock was proprietor of the museum at Egyptian House in Piccadilly.
  - 13 The Day Books (19 August 1828) record its arrival: '2 Cases containing The Howdah of State of the late Usurper of Bhurtpore. Presented by Lord Amherst – being too ponderous to be brought up the stairs with safety the cases were opened below under the inspection of Mr Cogden & the articles delivered in Library were – The body of the Howdah with three cushions & Humah or Eagle as a canopy with stem of iron & silver to support – A large scarlet cloth with embroidered edgings as caparison for the elephant – two embroidered or gold wrought cloths – a roll of gold fringe & one of silver muslin.'
  - 14 See further Chapter 3.
  - 15 See MacGregor, *Company Curiosities*, fig. 106.
  - 16 *Old Humphrey's Walks*, 147–8.
  - 17 An oblique view of the model appears in a photograph of 1890, showing the entrance to the Indian Section at the South Kensington Museum, reproduced in Bryant, 'India in South Kensington', fig. 1.41.
  - 18 *East India Museum* (1851). The India Museum Revisited website reproduces this text at length, with hyperlinks to images of each of the objects mentioned.
  - 19 Desmond, *India Museum*, 80.
  - 20 Jennifer Howes (personal communication, 13.06.2022) has aptly observed that availability of the new accommodation was brought about by the loss of the Company's trading monopoly and commercial functions through the terms of the Government of India Act (1833); this meant that tea auctions and many other activities no longer took place at East India House – moves that clearly had major implications for the expansion of the museum. The style chosen for the decorations may be seen in light of the near-contemporary Oriental Court established at the South Kensington Museum, which served, in the words of Tim Barringer ('The South Kensington Museum', 15), 'to enhance the "otherness" of the objects by creating an "oriental" ambience'.
  - 21 Archer, 'The East India Company and British art', 401; Allen, 'The East India Company's settlement pictures', 2. East India House itself was by no means free from carefully embedded references to the Company's dominion, from the heavy symbolism of the pediment over the entrance to the ceiling painting mounted in the Revenue Committee Room (see MacGregor, *Company Curiosities*, 168–71); the painting, *The East Offering Her Riches to Britannia*, by Spiridione Roma, is now held in the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. I am grateful to Dr Richard Smith for sight of the original painting.
  - 22 Jasanoff, 'Collectors of empire', 122–3, 128.
  - 23 To commemorate Royle's 'eminent talents and vast acquirements', the Court of Directors commissioned a bust which thereafter occupied 'a prominent place in the museum' – 'an appropriate and enduring mark of the high sense which the Court entertained of the value of Dr Royle's services to India and the country' (*India Museum and the Department of the Reporter on the Products of India*, 6). The bust, executed by J. G. Lough, survives at Kew: see Desmond, *India Museum*, pl. 18.
  - 24 The terms 'Indian Mutiny' and 'Sepoy Mutiny', formerly applied to the military-led revolt of 1857, have rightly fallen from use. Alternatives favoured by some include the 'First War of Independence', but this seems not to represent accurately the nature of the conflict. Here the more neutral 'Uprising of 1857' is used throughout the text.
  - 25 *India Museum and the Department of the Reporter on the Products of India*, 6.
  - 26 The horn had not come far on this occasion, for it is recorded soon after the museum's opening as having been 'Received from the Treasurer, in whose office it had been for a great number of years' (Day Books, 20 December 1801). For some reason, the same specimen was received again from the Secretary 30 years later, when the species was confirmed as *Xiphias gladius* (Day Books, 17 November 1832).

- 27 Day Books, 24 September 1823.
- 28 The literature on these is huge: see, for example, Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas*; Luckhurst, *The Story of Exhibitions*; Rydell, *World's Fairs*.
- 29 Forbes Watson, *International Exhibition of 1862*.
- 30 Forbes Watson, *New Zealand Exhibition*.
- 31 Forbes Watson, *Vienna Universal Exhibition*.
- 32 Forbes Watson, *Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition*. Exhibitions of a similar character began to be held in India, notably in Madras, Calcutta and Lahore. The organizing committee of the Calcutta International Exhibition of 1883–4 explained the principles behind it in a 'vernacular notice' circulated by local committees (*Calcutta International Exhibition*, vol. I, 486); although the India Museum did not benefit directly from these, there is ample evidence of a shared ethos. 'People from all countries will then come to Calcutta to see the things shown in that exhibition. Other and far distant countries will show all the things they possess of the richest and best; and all men will compare things sent from one country with those sent from others. Natives of India, for love of their country, and for its greater power and glory, will, with all their power, show and recommend to other nations those things for which the East is famous. In this way workmen and artisans will see the skilfulness and treasures of different nations ... Good to India will accrue not only in this way, but when foreign nations see the skill and cleverness of Eastern nations, they will be desirous of obtaining the manufactures of India and the East, and thus great commerce and welfare may be brought to the Indian people at large.'
- 33 Pergam, 'An ephemeral display', *passim*.
- 34 After appropriate choices had been made at the end of the particular exhibition, surplus material was generally sent to auction: see, for example, Hoggart, Norton & Trist, *A Catalogue of the Highly Important and by far the Greater Proportion of the Valuable and Interesting Collection as Exhibited by the Honourable East-India Company at the Great Exhibition in 1851 ...* London, 7 June 1852 and four following days, and 28 June 1852 and five following days; Christie & Manson, *Catalogue of the Celebrated Collection of the Works of Art and Manufacture of British India, Exhibited by the East India Company at the Exposition Universelle at Paris in 1855*, London, 9 March 1857 and 12 following days.
- 35 Desmond, *India Museum*, 42.
- 36 Breckenridge ('Aesthetics and politics of colonial collecting', 203), for example, places the (much admired) display of carpets at the 1851 Exhibition 'at the forefront of modern display techniques': hanging them on the walls was 'an innovation in carpet use made popular by the Crystal Palace, although it had been used earlier in the East India Company's Oriental repository'.
- 37 IOR: L/SUR/6/3 Memorandum to the Duke of Argyll, 13 February 1869.
- 38 Forbes Watson, *Textile Manufactures and Costumes*. See also below, fig. 6.8.
- 39 See Driver and Ashmore, 'Mobile museum'. One 'Rotating stand with twelve double frames containing ninety-six illustrations of textile fabrics of India' came to the South Kensington Museum in 1879 but was later written off.
- 40 Quoted in Driver and Ashmore, 'Mobile museum', 372.
- 41 *The India Museum and the Department of the Reporter on the Products of India*, 7.
- 42 Built originally as a residence for the politician Edward Dunch, Fife House gained its title following its purchase in the 1760s by the Earl of Fife; later it was owned by Lord Liverpool, and it had served most recently as an auction room for the tea trade. The house was demolished in 1869.
- 43 This incongruity was manifested at multiple levels, the idealized marble memorials of European officers contrasting with the anthropological casts that aimed at unadorned verisimilitude in the service of anthropological 'science' and the hewn stone representations of the Hindu pantheon that continued to bemuse the average metropolitan visitor.
- 44 *Illustrated London News*, 3 August 1861, 125–6.
- 45 Haldar, *The English Diary*, 57. Rakhai Das Haldar (1832–87) studied at University College London during the years 1861–2. The son of an Company employee, he too returned to a career with the Bengal Civil Service. At his death, he was manager of the Chota Nagpore estate.
- 46 A few were even disparaging, like C. G. Carus who, in 1844, had found at East India House that 'the rooms containing the collection are low, and the objects of curiosity are only seen under dusty glass cases; in fact the house does not at all look as if it were the centre from

- which 170,000,000 of human beings are governed!’ (Carus, *The King of Saxony’s Journey*, 132–3).
- 47 Although no formal barriers were put in the way of any sector of the public, they were to a degree self-selecting on account of the opening hours. See the discussion of the collection as installed at South Kensington, below.
  - 48 *The Times*, 5 May 1874.
  - 49 *The Oriental* 1 (1873), 320; quoted in Desmond, *India Museum*, 129.
  - 50 The son of Sir Henry Cole, Henry Hardy had served in the Royal Engineers before becoming Superintendent of the Northwest Provinces for the Archaeological Survey of India.
  - 51 Cole, *Catalogue of the Objects of Indian Art*, 320–4. Published only a year after the previous account of the collections, Cole’s mention that they were now ‘approximately classified under various heads’ suggests that some progress had been made in reordering them in the meantime. His enthusiasm for the ‘wonderfully wrought trophies and specimens of oriental workmanship’ is reflective of the growing appreciation for Indian design in the later 1800s, as discussed further in Chapter 13.
  - 52 A more pragmatic note had been struck by Henry Cole, who encouraged loans from the reserve collections to the periodic exhibitions mounted by the Commissioners of the 1851 Exhibition; his suggestion was approved on the grounds that it would ‘remove the very great scandal of nothing being done to let the collection be seen’ (Codrington, ‘Birdwood and the study of the arts of India’, 144).
  - 53 For details of these complex but ultimately fruitless negotiations, see Desmond, *India Museum*, 133–40.
  - 54 Robert Skelton, who summarizes the history of collections at this time (‘The Indian collections’, 301–2), characterizes the Eastern Galleries as comprising 36,000 square feet on two floors. He also includes a view from 1936 (fig. 55) of the recently rearranged Mughal Gallery on the first floor.
  - 55 By no means all of the material in these collections was now made accessible. Cocker and Inskipp (*A Himalayan Ornithologist*, 31) record that when the Russian naturalist and traveller Aleksei Pavlovitch Fedchenko asked in 1874 to see the zoological material collected in the Himalayas by Brian Houghton Hodgson and presented by him to the Company’s museum 20 years earlier, he was rebuffed on the grounds that it had not yet been unpacked.
  - 56 Reproduced at length at <https://www.vam.ac.uk/research/projects/the-india-museum-revisited>.
  - 57 For Prince Albert Edward’s tour of India in 1875–6 and the many presents with which he returned, see <https://www.rct.uk/collection/themes/trails/the-prince-of-wales-tour-of-india-in-1875-6> [accessed 16.03.2023].
  - 58 Desmond (*India Museum*, 179) mentions that some part of the natural history collections in particular was offered to the Indian Museum in Calcutta at this time – one of the few occasions when the normal direction of flow was reversed. After their transfer to Kew, part of the collection of timber specimens was also said to have been transferred to the Forest Research Institute at Dehradun.
  - 59 The botanical collections had been accepted in October by Kew and on 17 November the zoological collections were transferred to the natural history department of the British Museum (Natural History) – the present-day Natural History Museum. Many of the drawings, maps and survey documents remained in the possession of the India Office Library; ultimately, they would make their way to the present-day British Library as a distinct collection.
  - 60 Quoted by Robertson, ‘South Kensington Museum in context’, 5. Robertson’s overview of the educational role of the whole South Kensington complex provides an excellent background for the milieu into which the collection now entered.
  - 61 This is true for all aspects of the collection. With respect to the natural specimens, for example, Desmond (*India Museum*, 151) comments: ‘1875 was a fairly good year for natural history acquisitions: Francis Day presented fishes from Cochin (Kochi), W. Sealy Lepidoptera from the Malabar coast, Surgeon Jayakar fishes from Muscat and H. W. Bellew bird skins from Kashgar and Kashmir; 1876 showed no diminution, with birds from W. E. Brooks, fossil shells from Sind from Mr Grassby and wild silkworm cocoons from H. Marsh.’ These natural collections obviously represent the elephant in the room as far as

the present summary is concerned, but we continue to live with the arbitrary disciplinary divisions imposed on the collections in 1879: they undoubtedly deserve more comprehensive treatment as a whole.

- 62 *The Academy*, 22 May 1880, 393. There were some, however, who warned that this 80-year accumulation should be interpreted with caution: John Lockwood Kipling (quoted in Bryant, *John Lockwood Kipling*, 12) observed that ‘The heaped up splendours of the India museum, the spoil of many periods, have given an exaggerated idea of the artistic wealth of the land, and some writers have formed an ideal picture of a halcyon time when the hid treasures of princes’ palaces were commonly in every bazaar.’
- 63 Rosemary Crill (personal communication, 2022) estimates that for many years after the 1955 closure, only about 1 per cent of the Indian collections were on view at any time, rising to some 2 or 3 per cent with the opening of the Ceramics Galleries, which included a large number of Indian ceramics.
- 64 <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/search/> [accessed 16.03.2023].



## 2

# The objects themselves: restoring an identity to the collections

The historical account of the museum presented so far will serve to locate the unfolding evolution of the collection as touched upon periodically in the following chapters, in which the primary narrative is shaped essentially around the objects in the collection and what they reveal collectively about the nature and purpose of the India Museum. The account given here attempts to give a voice to the objects so that they may begin to make their own contribution to the debates that have proliferated in recent years concerning colonialism and museum culture, from which – despite forming a major point of contention – all detail relating to the actual content of the collections, beyond a handful of high-profile objects, has generally been omitted.

For an understanding of the London institution, India must inevitably form a starting point, as the source of not only the materials concerned but also the entangled mechanisms by which they came to be assembled. In this context, it should be acknowledged at the outset that the East India Company was the absolute archetype of a colonial institution, with its origins in the hands of hard-headed merchant adventurers who made fortunes from the monopoly they secured (and thereafter vigorously defended) on trade with the sub-continent. The growing success and political influence of the Company was achieved through alliances negotiated with or imposed on princely states, backed by an administrative body of notoriously inflexible character and a military force whose rapaciousness became a byword, among both populations who had never known anything but foreign domination and those whose proud history of independence it brought to an abrupt end. The Company was inescapably a product of its age and of the society within which it operated: both corporately and individually,

its personnel committed appalling acts – and accomplished some admirable successes – aspects of which are reflected here. In examining the collections, every attempt will be made to adopt as objective a stance as possible, while recognizing the practical difficulties of attaining complete objectivity. Any inadvertent failures to match these ambitions must remain the author's responsibility.

The nature of the records (as well as the society and the bureaucracy that produced them) is such that we are better provided with information on donors and collectors than on the commissioners, manufacturers and former users of exhibits. Despite the limited opportunities offered, acknowledgement is made here wherever possible to the societies that gave rise to the objects in question, the craftsmen who produced them and even, on the rare occasions when this is known, the individuals for whom they were created. Although the minimal amount of associated documentation places a limit on our ability to carry these processes very far, every opportunity is taken here to establish those relationships, with a particular aim of rendering the collection accessible and relevant to the widest possible readership. Such provenance information as survives is also recorded, as are the (phonetically transliterated) indigenous terms as recorded by certain of the collectors, with a view to enabling communities to reconnect with items that were carried from them at various times up to two and a half centuries ago.

## Origins: collecting in India

The present author has attempted elsewhere to provide an outline survey of the practices of collecting that took place under the umbrella of the Company's presence in India.<sup>1</sup> From as early as the latter part of the seventeenth century, evidence emerges of both individual enterprise and corporate collaboration (particularly with the Royal Society) in attempts to gather physical evidence that might shed light on the expanding territories and populations with which Company personnel engaged. Men who had gone to India to perform other functions – notably as surgeons, but also as administrators or soldiers – found themselves swept into secondary roles as naturalists, hydrographers, meteorologists, geologists and surveyors involved in mapping – in both the literary and figurative sense – the territories that would ultimately be consolidated to form what the British would later call the Indian empire.<sup>2</sup> A great deal of the Enlightenment spirit of inquiry that permeated European research of the period was transmitted to

India, where it was absorbed by the more scholarly echelons of European society, reaching its most developed manifestation with the formation in 1784 of the Asiatic Society of Bengal. Dedicated to the study of ‘Man and Nature; whatever is performed by the one, or produced by the other’,<sup>3</sup> the society, whose membership embraced members of the judiciary and the civil and military administrations, promoted interest in the human and natural history, the languages, music, religions and every other aspect of the sub-continent. All of its members were, from the outset, committed natural philosophers. They provided crucial support to the Company’s naturalists – botanists in particular – when these began to be formally appointed from the 1770s; their herbarium specimens and drawings accumulated initially in the botanical gardens established first under the presidencies based in Madras (Chennai) and Calcutta, which became important centres of natural science. In time, the Company required that some parts of those collections were forwarded to London, although until the opening of the museum there (and even beyond that date) no appropriate repository for them existed.

Although these biological specimens formed no part of the collection that was transferred to the South Kensington Museum in 1879, their treatment might be expected to have established protocols that would in time be applied to the man-made specimens, but in the early years, at least, acquisition of the latter seems to have been entirely random in nature. As early as 1798 – that is, three years before Wilkins’s formal appointment as curator – the two chests of jewelled ornaments and Indian dresses mentioned above had been sent (unsolicited) from India for inclusion in the proposed museum. Henceforth, some new exhibits arrived directly from overseas or from Company servants recently returned, while others no doubt were rehoused in the museum in a process of continuing rationalization, either from other apartments in East India House or from the Company’s extensive London warehouses.<sup>4</sup>

As discussed elsewhere (see [Chapter 3](#)), considerable quantities of material were seized in 1799 at Seringapatam – an encounter that may have done much to kickstart the Company’s collecting of cultural property. Army regulations at this time included strictures for the formal division of spoils in order to produce prize money, which would then be allocated to the victors according to rank. Random pillaging was outlawed (though never totally eradicated) by the Mutiny Act of 1754, a prohibition enforced under later generations by the authority of the army’s prize committees. At Seringapatam, Colonel Arthur Wellesley (later 1st Duke of Wellington) had ‘by the greatest exertion,

by hanging, flogging, etc.’ famously suppressed the initial free-for-all indulged in by the troops in order that the spoils could be divided among the victorious combatants in the customary graduated manner.<sup>5</sup> These procedures were certainly implemented elsewhere and continued after the opening of the Company’s museum, but while some exceptional pieces were commonly reserved for presentation to the monarch, no formal mechanisms have yet been found by which material acquired in this manner was routinely assigned to the museum<sup>6</sup> and the means by which individual items from theatres of conflict found their way there remain, for the most part, unestablished.

Until the mid-century, the same remains true for the bulk of the domestic, personal and industrial material that entered the collections. Almost nothing is known of the circumstances of its collection, and the absence of official records suggests that much was dependent on the initiative of individual officers. Two outstanding examples – the sculpture collections formed respectively by Colonel Colin Mackenzie and Colonel (later Major-General) Charles Stuart, for whom see [Chapter 9](#) – serve to illustrate how individual collectors could shape much of the way the British public came to confront Indian art, even if Stuart’s collection was acquired for the British Museum and the mass of Mackenzie’s architectural material ended up in the same institution, having defied the abilities of the India Museum to accommodate it in an adequate fashion.

Among the more mundane materials, occasional evidence can be found for systematic gathering – for example among the model boats and fishing nets discussed in [Chapters 4](#) and [6](#) respectively. Some of the former, at least, may belong to the era of the international exhibitions and of the India Office regime (see below), and in the absence of firm dating evidence for many of them it remains impossible to establish regular acquisition initiatives during the period of the Company’s rule.

In the representation of the Indian terrain to the metropolitan public, paintings, prints and drawings provided potentially a more accessible medium, but while the measured plans and drawings of the surveyors were regularly archived, the Company proved doggedly resistant to committing funding for recording landscape and topographical views. Hence, although Francis Swain Ward compiled an extensive series of very competent architectural studies in oils during his service with the Madras Infantry, when he offered to ship his canvases to East India House so that they might be engraved at the Company’s expense, his offer was declined. William Hodges, who had already made his name as official artist on Captain Cook’s second

voyage to the South Seas, spent three years (1780–3) recording Indian monuments and landscapes, but when he returned to England, his work was so poorly received (coloured to some degree by his former association with Warren Hastings, then undergoing impeachment) that eventually he abandoned his profession altogether. Thomas and William Daniell, greatly influenced by Hodges' work, spent a decade in India from 1784 before returning home with a portfolio of some 1,400 drawings, which they etched in aquatint over the following 20 years for publication in several well-received works. Their initiative – the most successful of the era – was again of a private nature, however: their published works were bought by the Company, but they received no more direct support. Thomas Hickey had gone so far as to propose his own formal employment as 'Historical and Portrait Painter to the Company', setting out an ambitious programme for recording the countryside, its monuments, the peoples, their dress and their religions; again the Company demurred, responding that such an enterprise 'must be left to the exertions of voluntary enterprise and the encouragement of private patronage'.<sup>7</sup>

But if the mechanisms by which exhibits were gathered for the museum during its early decades remain mostly obscure, they changed dramatically from the mid-century onwards, first under John Forbes Royle and later with the appointment of John Forbes Watson under the administration of the India Office. Royle was given responsibility for assembling and organizing the Company's exhibits at the Great Exhibition (he was himself a member of the organizing commission). Declaring itself 'at all times desirous' of encouraging the development of the resources of the empire and the promotion of trade (both import and export), the Company drew up extensive lists of raw products and manufactured items which were published in the respective gazettes of the presidencies and in several indigenous languages, so that 'an opportunity [would] be afforded for the latent resources of the least-known artist, to compete with the produce of the most favoured regions'. Committees were formed in India, charged with drawing up lists of the material desired from each region and, where necessary, commissioning the manufacture of new specimens. Alongside Indian manufactures, the regional governments proved eager to send models of the civic improvements they had instituted – perhaps especially in the field of irrigation, as mentioned in [Chapter 4](#). When presented at the Crystal Palace, this harvest won both admiration from the public and awards from the organizing committee; in the aftermath, a flood of material entered the museum under Royle's initiative, launching a

new phase in its development. Forbes Watson would continue to engage enthusiastically with these opportunities in terms of the continuing promotional exercise that had been initiated by the Great Exhibition, as well as the opportunities for expanding the collections offered by the new regime of the India Office and the later international exhibitions (none of which, however, benefited from organized collecting exercises on quite the scale of that undertaken for 1851).

This is not to say that the later 1800s saw the collecting process conducted in a new spirit of universal enlightenment. The hardening of colonialist attitudes towards India that characterized the era is already evident in the official record of the Great Exhibition itself:

Why this people have made so little progress, why the great bulk of them are in the same condition, moral, social, and intellectual, that they were in 300 years ago, is a question too large to be discussed here; but we may venture to point out certain obvious reasons. The first is to be found in the narrowness of their wants. Look at the army of little figures, modelled from life, representing various trades and callings ... which were exhibited in the north bay of the Indian collection, and observe how little these people need, how few are their incentives to exertion ... [I]t will be seen that the native rural population need scarcely any clothes ... What would the Great Exhibition have been, in the two great displays of machinery and textile manufactures, if we dressed like the Indian population?

No indication can be found that the India Museum had fostered such a supercilious attitude in the past or adopted it during its final decades. Although the curators were inescapably men of their age, all of them – up to and including Forbes Watson – are to be identified among the more progressive thinkers of their day, who sought to understand the human and natural resources of India and to present them in such a way as to be accessible to a broad audience, while also engaging to an increasing degree the commercial instincts of their masters.

## Museological matters

The India Museum has frequently been cited in theoretical discourse as a cypher for British influence in – and extension of control over – the sub-continent. A number of examples are given below. Rather than

seeking to extend that debate, however, the goal specifically chosen here is to open up for attention the diversity of material evidence represented by the collections themselves, which bring into play many more dimensions than are commonly acknowledged in the theoretical literature, in which there has hitherto been a tendency to interpret the museum as a single uniform organism. The labelling of any museum – but perhaps this one in particular – as a colonialist construct and a tool of imperialist policy may be no more than a statement of the obvious, but it carries with it the danger of stifling the application of any further analysis as to its actual mission or its contents. In the case of the India Museum, more detailed study will undoubtedly continue to shed light on the implications of its evolving mission during a period encompassing major political upheaval, the varying degrees to which those ambitions were achieved under successive curatorial regimes and the changing ways in which the collections were conceived and perceived during the eight decades of the museum's existence. The objects and their related archives will surely form one of the most fruitful resources in promoting those aims.

All too often, even the inanimate objects entering museum collections find themselves implicated and embroiled in the opprobrium cast over the entire colonialist exercise of survey and data collection – denied independent significance under the weight of the burden they are condemned to shoulder. In the emerging phases of this school of thought, Edward Said characterized institutions such as the India Museum as being comprehensively and inexorably trapped in the imperialist milieu in which they were formed, maintaining that:<sup>8</sup>

the power ... to represent what is beyond metropolitan borders derives from the power of an imperial society, and that power takes the discursive form of a reshaping of 'raw' or primitive data into the local conventions of European narrative and formal utterance, or ... the systematics of disciplinary order.

Such institutions, he continues, became 'vested with an authority to organize, speak about and speak *for* colonized territories and cultures'. The working principles of this 'power-knowledge' trope have been succinctly presented elsewhere:<sup>9</sup>

For individual colonial officials, the act of collecting and the building of a collection created an illusion of cognitive control over their experience in India ... Since many officials collected,

it can be argued that collections promoted a sense of moral and material control over the Indian environment. At the same time, collected objects could be fed into the two growing institutions of the second half of the nineteenth century, the exhibition and the museum, thus allowing this sense of knowledge and control to be repatriated to the metropolis.

The degree to which these views have become prevalent among historians of a theoretical turn of mind is exemplified at the head of an extremely useful article on museums in colonial India, published by Kavita Singh:<sup>10</sup>

It is generally assumed that the great knowledge-producing project of the British empire was primarily one of control. We understand that by surveying and mapping lands, by conducting censuses, and by collecting and classifying specimens, the colonial power was able to take hold of its possession with a more than military might.

The intention here is not to set up an opposition between these overarching comments – the macro view of the collecting process and the micro level of the objects actually collected, be they spectacular or prosaic. While the grand sweep of historical discourse has come in recent decades to embrace the more granular contributions of the genre of microhistory, there remains undoubtedly some way to go before the role that material evidence can play is fully acknowledged and brought into play.

Recent years have seen some welcome advances in the analysis and presentation of colonial history, but the tendency for attention to be focused exclusively on the imperialist milieu in which such collections were formed has meant that the materials in question have been allowed to play only a minor role: the abstracting of collections to the museum is universally decried, but their continuing capacity to contribute to the debate is generally ignored. Recourse to the very ‘systematics of disciplinary order’ espoused by Said, and by which museum practice is universally governed, surely opens up a rich field for the recovery of further knowledge by allowing the objects to speak for themselves, even while acknowledging the constraints and influences under which they were collected. The following account attempts to add some substance to that aspect of the debate and to contribute to redressing the imbalance that hitherto has seen the specific collections



sidelined in almost all discussion of the very institution that brought them together.

Recognition of the full significance of the India Museum has been further limited for those encountering it through this theoretical school of writing due to its characterization by some influential commentators as little more than a latter-day cabinet of curiosities – bereft even of the philosophical frameworks that had marked its sixteenth- and seventeenth-century forerunners.<sup>11</sup> No support for that view will be found here, and the picture to be presented is more nuanced in tone, conjuring up an institution responding to a purposeful and preordained (though gradually evolving) programme – one that may be said to have had its roots in the frontier territory of the Company rather than in London.

### Strategies of collecting and display

The ambitions of the Company's civil personnel on the ground in India – as indeed with its military commanders, sometimes over-eager to force the pace of political expansion without the sanction of Company headquarters – were liable to run ahead of the self-interest of the proprietors in London; a great deal of early scholarship and fieldwork, including the formation of collections, was carried out at the personal initiative (and occasionally at the private expense) of those concerned. In the field of material culture, the examples of (Sir) Walter Elliot, Colonel Charles Seton Guthrie and Colonel Colin Mackenzie stand out; among the naturalists, Marquess Wellesley's ambitious Natural History Project, unauthorized by London, proved so costly as to contribute to his early recall.<sup>12</sup> Wilkins's founding manifesto for the India Museum was certainly couched in terms designed to appeal to the directors of the Company, but they reflected a great deal of the ethos in which much enlightened research was already taking place in Calcutta. For the members of the Asiatic Society there, scholarship and commercial potential had proved amenable bedfellows; the pragmatism of their approach can be said to have been repatriated along with Wilkins, to form a defining influence on the new museum – one that would last at least until the mid-nineteenth century, when new imperatives were added to its existing programme with the transfer of the collections to the India Office.

This preoccupation with the documentation and exploitation of the natural resources of India, together with the development of its economic potential for British importers and exporters, has been shown

to have fed directly into the format adopted with singular success at the 1851 Great Exhibition – not least through the primary involvement of the museum’s close associate, John Forbes Royle, in commissioning and installing a large part of the Indian display at the Crystal Palace. Whatever one thinks of the ethics of the exploitative relationship with the sub-continent developed by the Company from the mid-eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century – and there can be few who would claim it was in the least way benign – it must surely be mistaken to imagine that the hard-headed Court of Directors would devote growing amounts of money and accommodation to anything so frivolously unproductive as a mere rarity show. The collection of artefacts reviewed here certainly indicates otherwise, while the material assembled systematically by the Company’s naturalists (excluded by its nature from the present survey, but see [Chapter 13](#)) is even more emphatic in identifying the museum as a site of economic and scientific endeavour, in which public entertainment was the least of its priorities. Up to this point, the curators appear to have been content to ‘display’ the sub-continent within the museum while pursuing their own research principally through the natural resources and products of India, but so far as one can tell without casting it in an overtly political mould – though housed at the heart of the most colonialist institution the world has ever seen. Even in the wake of its successes at the exhibitions of 1851 in London and 1855 in Paris,<sup>13</sup> and a matter of weeks before the Company’s ultimate suppression, the mission of the museum continued to be characterized in *The Times* as ‘to illustrate the productive resources of India, and to give information about the life and manners, the arts and industry of its inhabitants’.<sup>14</sup> In this context, and notwithstanding the background of British dominion in which they had been assembled, the care taken to preserve the indigenous nomenclature associated with the exhibits – sometimes, indeed, to the exclusion of English terminology altogether (see Appendix) – suggests that the simplistic character which some have sought to attribute to the museum is surely misplaced.

Under Forbes Watson (and under the administration of the India Office), significant steps were taken to strengthen the role of the museum in promoting ‘the products of India’, supplying, in his words, ‘power to the machinery created for the purpose of developing the resources of India, and promoting trade between the Eastern and Western empires of Her Majesty’. Now, as an agency of the administration of India with an enhanced mission to promote delivery of British manufactures to the sub-continent which outweighed its role in representing India to the British, the museum surely did enter a

phase of being a more consciously directed instrument of Empire. Forbes Watson could scarcely have done more to promote this role within his institution, but he failed to attract lasting commitment from his political masters: when it was closed down in 1879, his ambitions were still set on the creation of an 'Imperial Museum for India and the Colonies', but if no such institution was forthcoming, he had gone a long way towards establishing a viable prototype. Even within this seemingly unsympathetic environment, however, evidence is found below for the nurturing of some early steps in the exploration of ethnological method,<sup>15</sup> in which – from a European perspective – the least productive societies (with minimal scope for commercial exploitation) were introduced to general notice for the first time.

Given its lengthy period of gestation and the several curatorial regimes under which the museum took shape, it will be clear that the collections cannot be read as the product of a single unified initiative. The snapshot provided by the catalogue of 1880 can tell us little of the installation as it had emerged in embryo form at East India House, or as it was reconstituted successively at Fife House and the India Office: while some features or particular groupings of exhibits may have survived all these upheavals, others will have been reordered several times – just as they have been here for the purposes of this presentation.

The models and machines, musical and scientific instruments, textile samples and so on that were identified by Wilkins as of interest to the museum ultimately did flow in, as evidenced by contemporary descriptions of the collections, but details of how they got there have, for the most part, remained obscure. Among the arms and armour, the spoils from Seringapatam stand out, not only, in this context, celebrating the famous victory for the Company and its allies but ensuring the withdrawal from circulation and removal to London of potential relics around which continuing resistance to British influence in Mysore might crystallize. Despite the tactical impulse at work here, the bulk of the weapons seem not to have been exhibited in the early museum as trophies, or even to have been associated with particular conflicts; contemporary commentators remark solely on their workmanship and their decoration, and the display seems to have lacked the memorializing character of other collections of militaria – perhaps particularly in (later) regimental museums. The engagements at Plassey and Buxar were already historical events by the time the museum was formed, but Assaye (1803), for example, goes equally unremarked. The names of these engagements may have found themselves emblazoned on the battle honours of British regiments and engraved in the hearts of the

public at large, but they were scarcely acknowledged in the museum's collections of arms and armour. A telling contrast may be drawn with the form of display – literally as trophies of arms – revealed on the eve of the collection's dispersal (see [fig. 1.7](#)), seemingly heralding the introduction of a more authoritarian regime under the imperial administration.<sup>16</sup>

The very different – or certainly more structured – pattern of collecting instituted by Royle for the Company's contribution to the Great Exhibition, with lists of desiderata being formally circulated to each of the presidencies and in turn cascaded down through the administrative hierarchies, ushered in a more structured era within the museum displays – the collections purposefully assembled and the individual items typically accompanied by more reliable provenance and other contextual information. To some degree, the same is true of material received from every one of the succeeding international exhibitions under Forbes Watson, and even individual private donors to the museum seem eventually to have absorbed the importance of the documentary record to provide a context for their gifts.

## The ethnographic turn

As an integral part of the annual exhibitions held at South Kensington in the 1870s, the Commissioners for the Exhibition of 1851 (who continued to play a central role in these later displays) had intended to feature 'a collection of objects illustrative of the ethnology and geography of the various parts and races of the British empire, especially the races of India', in the hope of forming ultimately a comprehensive 'Museum of Mankind'. It was foreseen that the India Museum would lend for these purposes the Schlagintweit casts of Indian faces, photographs of Indian ethnic groups (see [Chapter 11](#)), artefacts of indigenous Indian tribes and selected traditional costumes. Flagging public attendance ultimately led to the abandonment of this exhibition series and also killed off plans for a separate ethnological and geographical museum.

Despite its utilitarian complexion under Forbes Watson's regime, however, the India Museum had seen the emergence of a significant new engagement with the ethnographic representation of the sub-continent. Although this preoccupation remained linked in some senses to the museum's mercantile roots,<sup>17</sup> it also promoted an illustrative role that was partly dependent on the exploratory missions mounted at intervals by the colonial administration. This was especially

true of those penetrating beyond the northern frontiers, where intelligence on the terrains and populations through which any threat from Russian expansionism was likely to be carried would have been particularly valued. Several of these missions are discussed in relation to their respective leaders in [Chapter 12](#): in each case, their comparatively narrowly specified terms of reference resulted in collections that exemplified to some extent the societies occupying those territories in a manner that distinguished them from the generality of the India Museum collection. The pioneering work of the Schlagintweit brothers (again mentioned in [Chapter 12](#)) in the closing years of Company rule placed India at the centre of this emerging field, while Forbes Watson's photographic surveys of populations and costumes represent attempts to systematize the characterization of India's diverse ethnic groupings. In this way the museum came to form a significant platform for the exploration and development of an emerging disciplinary field that found its full expression in the late 1800s.<sup>18</sup>

There were by now a number of institutions in London which could have contributed to the emergence of these interests. The galvanizing effect of James Cook's successive voyages to the South Seas is well recognized for its importance to the West in promoting a surge of interest in collecting 'artificial curiosities', in registering their origins in some detail and in interrogating them for the cultural data they might embody – even if it would take until the latter years of the nineteenth century for ethnography to emerge as an independent, structured discipline. In the decade before the India Museum was established, the British Museum had opened its 'Otaheite and South Seas Rooms', dedicated to the display of material that had already become widely known through a burgeoning illustrated travel literature.<sup>19</sup> Following its opening in 1775, Sir Ashton Lever's 'Holophusicon' in Leicester Fields presented a more widely drawn (if sometimes less closely documented) collection of artificial rarities and natural specimens to a more catholic audience than that which penetrated the British Museum.<sup>20</sup> The early 1800s saw the addition of William Bullock's exhibitions of a proto-ethnographic character at the Egyptian House in Piccadilly, joined from 1815 by the museum of the London Missionary Society, offering a mixture of zoological specimens and 'idols ... given up by their former worshippers, from a full conviction of the folly and sin of idolatry' – an eloquent commentary on the uncompromising zeal with which the Church carried its message abroad.<sup>21</sup> The India Museum therefore took its place within a range of institutions in which contemporary (if remote) human society – rather than antiquity – had become a

legitimate field for representation. Increasing numbers of Company servants returning to Britain at this time brought with them private collections which further ensured the diffusion of this taste throughout much of polite society.<sup>22</sup>

## The South Kensington milieu

By the time of its dissolution (and the loss of its mercantile imperative), the residual significance of the collection formed under the Company had become questionable. The cream of the antiquarian collection, the natural specimens and the important (if now less than pristine) botanical material were annexed by the British Museum and Kew respectively, leaving the bulk of the ‘applied art’ collections to South Kensington. British eyes had indeed been opened in the preceding decades to the aesthetic and cultural lessons that India had to offer in this area, but these had not always been well learned: the value of presenting Indian materials and designs to the British public – as indeed contemporary attempts to disseminate European aesthetic sensibilities through the government schools of art that had appeared in India from the 1850s onwards – had begun to raise powerful questions among the arbiters of nineteenth-century taste. A commentary on the unhappy effects that sometimes occurred when the two value systems clashed indiscriminately – in this instance in ceramic products – led George Birdwood to observe as follows in 1880:<sup>23</sup>

if it is an unpardonable error to darken by the force and teaching of English schools of art ... and other state institutions and departments in India the light and tradition by which the native artists in gold and silver, brass and copper, and jewelry, and in textiles and pottery work, it is an equal abuse of the lessons to be taught by such an exhibition of the master handicrafts of India as the India Museum presents for the manufacturers of Birmingham, and Manchester, and Staffordshire, to set to work to copy or imitate them. Of late years the shop windows of Regent Street and Oxford Street have been filled with electrotype reproductions of ... silver and gold work, along with Manchester, Coventry, and Paisley imitations of Indian chintzes, *kincobs*, and shawls. Porcelain vases and tea services may be seen covered all over with Cashmere cone pattern copied literally in the gaudiest colors from some cashmere shawl. This is simply to deprave and debase

English manufactures and English taste ... English manufacturers should visit the India Museum, not to slavishly plagiarise, but to receive into their breasts a stimulating and elevating influence from the light and life of a traditional skill, still fresh and pure, as at its first dawning two or three thousand years ago.

Birdwood's sentiment, however paternalistic, would have resonated strongly with those who saw the integrity of traditional European craftsmanship as under threat from the 'dead hand' of industrialized production. His strictures also show how the collections were perceived as continuing to perform a dynamic function to the very end of their independent existence, for by the time his tract was published, the museum no longer existed as an administrative entity.

From this point onwards, management of the messages communicated by the collections devolved to the curators of the South Kensington Museum (later the V&A), an institution which already had half a century's experience of mediating to the public the merits and demerits of one or other aspect of industrial design.<sup>24</sup> In this new institutional context the contents of the India Museum were initially preserved together, although swaths of seemingly more mundane objects failed to answer the aesthetic and technological preoccupations of curators in the earlier twentieth century and were ruthlessly culled. Today, the surviving elements of the collection are prized more comprehensively, forming an important nucleus of the South Asian collections and continuing to play an important – even expanding – role in the life of the museum.

## **The objects themselves: restoring individual integrity**

Having registered regret at the way in which the contents of the India Museum have too often been reduced to cypher status, it would be unfortunate if the present exercise did no more than present an alternative – but still essentially a Western and academic – view of the collections. Ultimately, objects can communicate most effectively only by being handled, minutely examined, analysed and – most importantly – having their individual identity restored by reference to the context (or many contexts) in which they were produced, traded, used and eventually collected. They will, furthermore, speak most eloquently to those who understand the intricacies of their production, the potential and the limitations of the materials from which they have

been constructed, what they reveal of the skills of their particular producer and the effectiveness with which they fulfilled their function.

Sir Edward Buck warned of the fact that ‘in India the Art manufactures of any one place are, as a rule, so different in character from those of any other place that they ought not to be confounded by being brought under the same group’.<sup>25</sup> That process of agglomeration had already taken place to a degree when these items entered the India Museum, and despite the best efforts of researchers since that time, the situation has to some extent been perpetuated to the present day. By expanding the amount of information made readily accessible to those with the most detailed first-hand knowledge of localized production, it may be hoped that possibilities will be opened up for an increasingly informed and more granular interpretation of the collection.

One problem with these ambitions is the fact that, as mentioned elsewhere, some two-thirds of the original collection has been written off over the years – decayed, broken beyond repair or simply (in less enlightened times) deemed to be of no further interest. Inherent fragility in the face of repeated decanting of the collection, combined with the unstoppable march of decay among biodegradable materials at a time when museum conservation remained in its infancy – not to mention more than one fire in the storerooms and displays – accounted for many of these losses; no one thought to record why the remainder were thought to have lost all relevance. There is, of course, scarcely an object in the entire collection that would not have repaid further inspection today, but even for those now lost, there are potentially rewarding areas of study. For example, the indigenous names applied to everyday items such as cooking vessels or agricultural implements were assiduously recorded for many items in the inventory printed in 1880: these are entirely opaque to the present author (who has no training in linguistic matters) but must surely present a rewarding field of study for those better equipped to interpret them (and to untangle the intricacies of their [mis-]transcription). The provenance (more or less detailed) recorded for many items allows for regional assessments of the collection to be carried out as contributions to studies in other disciplinary areas. Only a handful of producers are recorded by name, but ethnic origins are recorded for several items, providing potential for a further degree of re-identification with particular communities or (occasionally) religions.

Even the processes of collecting are of relevance to the source communities of such objects. It matters whether items ultimately placed on display in London were acquired in the course of conquest,



purchased in the bazaar, produced in school classrooms, gathered by proto-ethnographers after use or while still in use, commissioned by European officials according to more or less detailed specifications or submitted directly or indirectly by Indian manufacturers for display at international exhibitions in the West. The conditioning influences of each of these trajectories remain to be widely examined, and it may be hoped that those to whom these influences will be most apparent – the communities who made and used the objects in question – will find the enhanced access offered by the India Museum Revisited project useful and will build on it with their own knowledge.

Some disciplines – notably anthropology and ethno-botany – have made strides in recent years in reconnecting collections with their geographical, cultural and ecological origins, opening up vastly rewarding perspectives that had lain dormant during decades or centuries of mute storage, out of sight and out of mind.<sup>26</sup> While a number of the star pieces from the India Museum collections have always been on public display and while some categories of material – notably textiles, high-quality metalwork, sculptures and gemstones – have been the subject of admirable research, publication and exhibition by scholarly curators, as an entity the collection has remained all but invisible, so it is scarcely a matter for wonder that memory of it has in the meantime become blurred or distorted.

## The museum as context

Needless to say, the collections considered here can never be presented as a wholly objective representation of Indian nature and culture: necessarily, they embodied British preoccupations and British perceptions of what was significant and what merited particular attention, both in the field and in the museum. To the many layers of cultural bias imposed by their collectors must be added not only the multiple interpretations that have been formulated in the museum age but also the perspectives that can only be contributed by the society (or many societies) that produced them: many of those with valuable specialist knowledge may have been unaware until now of the cultural riches contained in the collection, and it is to be hoped that the sharing of this information will promote a dialogue that further enhances the collection by attracting their unique perspectives to the continuing study of the material. Such a process will undoubtedly result in the capacity of the collection to contribute meaningfully to contemporary discussion being greatly enhanced.

It is widely accepted today that seizure of what were considered in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as valid spoils of war – a concept formally enshrined, as we have seen in contemporary military practice – can no longer be considered legal, ethical or defensible. The implications for material seized under these circumstances two or three centuries ago are themselves subject to continuing debate but lie beyond the scope of this volume. What can be said, however, is that only a handful of the items considered below fall into such a category; although individually important, a large part of their residual importance in this context lies in their ability to anchor the collection in its historical context and to articulate the significance of the bulk of the collection. For much of the material surviving from the India Museum, there is little that can claim to be of individual cultural significance, and much of it could even now be replicated many times over on the sub-continent. The significance claimed for it here arises principally from the context it has gained within the museum setting: a great deal of its value is invested in its collective identity rather than its individual components. It has been persuasively suggested elsewhere that ‘cultural objects develop a value for the nations or museums that hold them, that their retention best serves scholarship’:<sup>27</sup> this is not at all the view adopted here, but it is suggested that the value of the whole collection – by whatever means its individual components came together – is made immeasurably greater by acknowledging every aspect of its accumulation – a process of inescapable importance to all those who seek to interpret it. As a body of material withdrawn from contemporary circulation and preserved for posterity in the museum context, the collection continues to hold significant value for all students of Indian material culture and economic history.

Criticism has been levelled in the past at museums which hold collections – in this case the V&A itself – for their failure to ‘relinquish the “right to narrate” and transfer authorial control’ to others claiming ownership of nomenclature and narrative (not to mention the objects themselves):<sup>28</sup> while acknowledging the impossibility of relaying any information without imposing upon it some sort of narrative, there could be no more gratifying response to the present text than its being taken up and rewritten or expanded upon by those from whom the objects originated.

Alexander Herman has written of ‘the indelible link between a cultural object and its point of origin (country, community, family or individual)’, and of ‘the moral compulsion on the part of museums to engage directly with those from whose communities these items

had been taken'.<sup>29</sup> Both of those observations accord with the spirit in which the present volume has been compiled. To quote Edward Said once more:<sup>30</sup>

One of imperialism's achievements was to bring the world closer together and, although in the process the separation between Europeans and natives was an insidious and fundamentally unjust one, most of us should now regard the historical experience of empire as a common one. The task is then to describe it as pertaining to Indians *and* Britishers ... despite the horrors, the bloodshed, and the vengeful bitterness.

The narrative presented here may contribute to a more inclusive debate that will undoubtedly be enriched by the perspectives (and, undoubtedly, correctives) contributed by those for whom these remain not primarily museum exhibits but fragments of the fabric of everyday life, endowed with qualities of humanity that sometimes struggle today – as they did for Rakhil Das Haldar in 1862 – to assert themselves in the museum environment.

## Notes

- 1 'The Company collects', in MacGregor, *Company Curiosities*, 39–166.
- 2 See, for example, MacGregor, 'European Enlightenment in India'.
- 3 The society's ambitious manifesto was published in its journal, *Asiatick Researches* 1 (1788).
- 4 For the centralization at this time of 'all the books scattered throughout the different departments of the India House and the warehouses together with any articles of curiosity to be found there', see Datta, 'India Office Library', 101.
- 5 For the operation of the prize system, see Davis, 'Three styles in looting India'; Spiers, 'Spoils of war: Custom and practice'; Shaffer, *Grafted Arts*, 143–9. Today, looting is prohibited by international law and is classed as a war crime, but the retention of captured arms and military equipment by the victor is considered valid.
- 6 Since prize funds available for distribution would have been reduced in this way, the military would certainly have been opposed to such an arrangement.
- 7 Quoted in Archer and Lightbown, *India Observed*, 13.
- 8 Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 119. Elsewhere, the same author defines his concept of Orientalism as 'a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient' (Said, *Orientalism*, 3–4).
- 9 Breckenridge, 'Aesthetics of colonial collecting', 211. For the imperial archive as fantasy, see Richards, *Imperial Archive*.
- 10 Singh, 'Material fantasy', 40.
- 11 See the comments on Carol Breckenridge's 'Aesthetics of colonial collecting' and James H. Bunn's 'Aesthetics of British mercantilism' in MacGregor, 'Cabinets of curiosities', 13.
- 12 For more on these, see MacGregor, *Company Curiosities*, passim; and 'Contributors to the India Museum' at <https://www.vam.ac.uk/research/projects/the-india-museum-revisited>.
- 13 A report on *The India Museum and Department of the Reporter on the Products of India* (1864) records (p. 6) that the cost of mounting the Indian Department of the 1855 Exhibition

- 'reached upwards of 60,000l.' and that of the materials involved, 'the greater proportion became the property of the museum' – a significant boost to the collections on the eve of their transfer to the India Office and their new director, Forbes Watson.
- 14 *The Times*, 7 April 1858; Bryant, 'India in South Kensington', 15.
  - 15 As well as the acquisition and display of objects of material culture, sometimes – as shown repeatedly below – collected in an evidently rational manner, one might mention the Company's engagement with the Schlagintweit brothers' mensuration project and Forbes Watson's attempt at a photographic survey of *The People of India* (1868–72), both discussed in Chapter 13.
  - 16 While at Fife House, for example, the arrangement (such as we can see it, in fig. 1.6) seems to have been primarily decorative, but the evidence is suggestive rather than conclusive.
  - 17 Interesting implications are raised by what Abigail McGowan (*Crafting the Nation*, 69) has called the 'ethnographicization' of artisan-craftsmen, particularly in the degree to which perceptions of their work may have changed subtly as it came to be regarded as the product of an independent historical process rather than merely as representative of contemporary production.
  - 18 In another context, Paul Basu ('N. W. Thomas and colonial anthropology') has drawn attention to the special advantages that political officers experienced in colonial administrations were perceived by some to have enjoyed over the emergent body of academic anthropologists; the ethnographical collections in the India Museum collection surely entitle it to take its place among the sites of 'extra academic' endeavour that have hitherto been denied their due acknowledgement in charting the emergence of the new discipline.
  - 19 See King, *Artificial Curiosities*, appendices 1–4.
  - 20 See Kaeppler, *Holophusicon*.
  - 21 The reference here is to the South Pacific, but it could have been applied to any non-Christian society. See Wingfield, 'Scarcely more than a Christian trophy case'; MacGregor, *Curiosity and Enlightenment*.
  - 22 Finn and Smith, *East India Company at Home*.
  - 23 Birdwood, *Industrial Arts*, 323–4. An insert facing the title page of this volume acknowledges that 'The important collection of examples comprised in the Museum formed by the East India Company has lately been transferred from the India Office to the charge of the Lords of the Committee of Council on Education, and henceforth will form a section of the South Kensington Museum.'
  - 24 The combined benefits of the museum and the government school of art and design in the South Kensington complex provided a model and a template for several of the similar institutions established in India from the mid-century, notably at Bombay, Calcutta, Madras and Lahore.
  - 25 Sir Edward Buck, in *Colonial and Indian Exhibition*, 1.
  - 26 The theme has been explored most recently in the essays included in Driver, Nesbitt and Cornish, *Mobile Museums*.
  - 27 Herman, *Restitution*, 12.
  - 28 Adams, 'The V&A: Empire to multiculturalism?' 75.
  - 29 Adams, 'The V&A: Empire to multiculturalism?' 12, 50.
  - 30 Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, xxiv, as noted by Adams, 'The V&A: Empire to multiculturalism', 75–6.

Part II

## **The collections of the India Museum**

### 3

## Historical relics: their role in the collection

In common with every other category into which the contents of the India Museum are divided here – purely in the interests of accessibility – the items to be considered for their personal or historical relations never collectively formed a distinct element of the displays while the museum survived as an independent entity. Such a concept would indeed have been at odds with the ethos under which it operated from its inception until its dissolution: as stressed elsewhere in this volume, it was primarily a mercantile imperative that drove the museum's collecting policy – first under the Company and later under the control of the India Office. That having been said, there was a growing acknowledgement that representation of the sub-continent itself and its diverse populations formed an effective complement for consideration – both as a source of raw materials and manufactured goods for importation and as an export market of almost limitless potential.

Nonetheless, it is in our collective nature to respond more readily to individual personalities, named locations and significant events than to faceless populations, uncharted territories and unwitnessed histories. The impetus to memorialize by gathering objects as tokens of peoples, places and historical events is an irresistible one, and the impulse to assemble them into formal groups – to form collections – is almost universally manifested.

It was, then, perhaps inevitable – whatever the objective policies of the corporate body – that individual donors to the collection would be motivated by a variety of more personal responses. While they experienced India from many different perspectives, a considerable number of donors were themselves Company men – together with occasional female family members and independent travellers; the

reputations of some of the former were widely known in England through reports of their military or diplomatic exploits, a factor that at that time added to the appeal of their respective donations. So strongly had this trend taken hold by the mid-century that one observer was moved to claim that the India Museum had in fact become a very *British* museum, possessing:

a peculiar claim upon the best regards of British visitors; one, too, which is more truly National than from its having been founded by Britons, and stored by their exertions; or from the amount and variety of the treasures it contains – much more truly national than if it contained none but specimens of British art, British minerals or animals, or any thing that derived its chief value from its antiquity, its curiosity, or its relation to science. We here speak of a repository which is National, inasmuch as it owes its origin to national character, national employment, and national prosperity; and in which every article, whatever may be its intrinsic value in itself, stands in relation to a series of incidents that successively disclosed the national character – and gave to the valour and sagacity of a company of British traders, the subjugation of extensive kingdoms, and the consolidation of a mighty empire.<sup>1</sup>

While this is not at all the spirit in which the India Museum was conceived or is reconstructed here, it seems appropriate enough to open this survey with a review of some of the exhibits that impressed themselves in this way on the everyday visitor, before turning to the mass of important but largely generic displays that filled the majority of the galleries. These same items are also those that lend themselves most overtly to the characterization of the museum as a colonialist construct, but although the milieu in which it developed must render such a characterization implicit – and no doubt this dimension became more marked as first the Company and later the India Office tightened their exploitative grip on the sub-continent – a repeated refrain in the present text will maintain that those responsible for the museum displayed no interest in projecting the kind of triumphalist sentiment brought by some contemporary observers and mistakenly attributed to the India Museum by some commentators to this day. Without wishing to project too much twenty-first-century scientific detachment onto these early curatorial figures, who, like their present-day successors, no doubt struggled continuously to reconcile the conflicting expectations

from their paymasters and their public, the attachment of each of them to the fundamental programme of the museum is remarkable.

A few of the most resonant exhibits are singled out for discussion below, but something of the same memorializing spirit manifested itself more widely – if at a secondary level – throughout the collections. The more modest exhibits included, for example, some that attracted particular interest due to the identity of their donors or former owners. Small-scale items in this category included gifts (mostly arms and armour) from a number of rulers whose names, at least, were fast becoming familiar to a British audience from newspaper reports on the forging of new alliances or political settlements. Swords were given by the rajas of Indore and Travancore and by Sher Ali, Amir of Kabul, or were formerly owned by Ahmed Shah Abdali and Shah Shuja, kings of Afghanistan (the latter given a display case to themselves); a sword-stick came from Kazi Shahabudin, formerly a minister to the Rao of Kutch. Daggers were presented by Maharaja Gulab Singh, the Nawab of Bahawalpur and Sir Jung Bahadur. Matchlocks originated with the rajas of Coorg, Jodhpur and Jaipur; musketoons and a mountain gun came from Gulab Singh, and a rifle from the Nawab of Bahawalpur. Various pieces of defensive armour were given by the rajas of Jodhpur and Kerauli, and shields by Maharajas Suchet Singh and Gulab Singh and the Raja of Haraoti. The Raja of Nabha was exceptional in offering toys, puzzles and pieces of lace rather than weapons. The appeal generated by these associations was entirely dependent on the donors in question being specifically identified in the displays, so the exhibits could never have been the ‘minimally labelled’ jumble envisaged by some commentators.<sup>2</sup>

By the same token, some items recorded historic – though peaceful – encounters: a magnificent sword ‘presented to the Governor-General of India by the Maharajah Nownchall Sing [*sic*] in Durbar’; a jacket, coat of mail and set of arm guards ‘presented by Lord Frederick Fitzclarence, to whom [they] were presented by H.H. the Maharajah Holkar’ at Gwalior (see [fig. 7.5b](#));<sup>3</sup> and a jewel-encrusted sword ‘presented to Lord Dalhousie by the King of Ava’. Items referencing the military and political conquest in India by the Company included the state howdah of Durjan Sal seized by Lord Combermere after the siege of Bhurtpore and several sets of colours recorded in the Day Books:<sup>4</sup>

Three Colours taken at Burtpore (from Durjan Sal the usurper),  
Presented by Lord Combermere.



Mahratta Colours: taken from the Mahratta Corps in the Campaign of 1803: Twenty-three in number.

Numbers of weapons are also identified as having been ‘taken at Lucknow’, perhaps in the aftermath of the Uprising of 1857, and two table-tops, one in black marble and one in white, both with inlaid ornament, had been ‘taken from the Hall of Audience in the Palace of Delhi, after its capture on the 20th September 1857, by troops under the command of Col. Sir John Jones’.<sup>5</sup> As a category, however, trophies of war were not prominent among the exhibits.

Equally striking is the paucity of material associated with the vast armies maintained by each of the Company’s own presidencies: a dozen badges and insignia, all acquired in 1855 from remote Kathmandu and with all the appearance of originally having formed an anonymous private collection,<sup>6</sup> and the regimental ‘Union Jack of the East India Company’s Volunteers’ – raised in London, not in India – are all that can be found in the catalogue,<sup>7</sup> apart from a few items of horse gear identified in [Chapter 8](#) as of military origin. Notwithstanding the military might of the Company’s armies, the whole ethos of the India Museum is a long way from that permeating typical regimental museums, or indeed the contemporary displays at the Tower Armouries or the United Services Institute.<sup>8</sup> If this seeming reluctance to glorify the military prowess of the Company’s own armies can be maintained, it may represent a further facet of the curiously self-effacing ethos mentioned in [Chapter 1](#) as having permeated East India House.

There were, indeed, a number of medals on display, but (apart from ‘A Gold Medal struck by order of the Company on the Capture of Srirangapatnam’<sup>9</sup>) most of those we know of were of the most pacific character: they commemorated agricultural shows in the 1860s in Calcutta, Agra, Oudh (Awadh), Roorkee and Burma (Myanmar); manufacturing and craft exhibitions in Jubbulpore, Nagpore, the Punjab and the North-West Provinces; and awards from the colleges of Fort William and Benares (Varanasi). These present interesting (but scarcely surprising) reflections of the way that European institutional modes penetrated a certain level of Indian society under the early Raj. Other medals marked the coronation of Queen Victoria and the opening of the East Indian Railway in 1860; their random nature is underlined by the inclusion also of seven bronze medals commemorating US presidents.<sup>10</sup> There was also a gold medal from the Paris *Exposition Universelle* of 1855 and bronze medals from the Statistical Society of France and the University of Christiania. A ‘Silver medal

with blue ribbon' was 'Presented to the India Museum by His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, 20th March 1877'. One historical piece is represented by 'The Die from which was struck a Medal presented by the E. I. Company to Capt. N. Wilson, Commander of the Shipp Pitt commemorative of his Services in having made his Passage to & from China by an unusual course (date 1760)' – just the sort of reward one might have expected to encounter here more frequently.<sup>11</sup> A further medal of a memorializing character marks 'the loss of the Kent East Indiaman by fire, and the deliverance of 547 persons from a dreadful death, by the praiseworthy conduct of Captain Cook, of the brig Cumbria'.<sup>12</sup>

A reference does occur to an – evidently recently mounted – display of five military medals in an account of the museum dating from 1842;<sup>13</sup> these would appear to have been exemplars of the decorations of the Order of India, instituted by the Company in 1837 and incorporated into the conventional honours system following the transfer to the India Office of political power in the British-administered territories in 1858.

Exhibits relating to two personalities in particular may in some sense have formed exceptions to these generalizations concerning the display of British imperial might. Tipu Sultan (d. 1799), ruler of Mysore, had – like his father Haider Ali before him – long been a thorn in the British side in southern India, while Maharaja Ranjit Singh (d. 1839) led the Sikh peoples of the Punjab to form a formidable empire in the north-west with which, after Ranjit Singh's death, the British would twice be drawn into conflict. Relics relating to them may introduce some further pieces highlighted for their historical and personal relationships.

## 'Tippoo's Tiger'

No other exhibit in the museum came close to 'Tippoo's Tiger' (figs 3.1a and b) for the impact it made on the visitor, with its almost-life-sized tableau of a ferocious Indian tiger at the throat of a prostrate European animated by the awful roars of one and the agonized shrieks of the other that were made to echo round the galleries on a regular basis. These growls and moans, according to one habitué of the Company headquarters, 'were the constant plague of the student, busy at work in the library of the old India House, when the Leadenhall Street public, unremittingly, it appears, were bent on keeping up the performance



**Fig. 3.1a and b.** 'Tippoo's Tiger', 1799. Catalogued as 'Emblematic organ, representing an European officer groaning under the claws of a tiger. Contrived for the amusement of Tippoo Sultan.' (a) External appearance; (b) with the internal organ mechanism and keyboard uncovered. L 178 cm. Seringapatam. 2545(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

of this barbarous machine'.<sup>14</sup> The noises that rent the air on a regular basis in East India House were generated by cranking a handle let into the tiger's side, which acted on bellows and organ pipes set up within the body; a keyboard, concealed behind a flap, provided the means for more ambitious (and melodic) entertainment.<sup>15</sup>

The figures are carved from wood, the tiger with a hinged lid giving access to the organ in a cavity within. Its stripes are painted in sinuous black leaf-shaped elements (some enclosing openings allowing the sound to project), following a convention widely observed at Tipu's court, where even his elite soldiers' uniforms were similarly striped.<sup>16</sup> The musical mechanism is considered to be French in inspiration, if not in origin; it shows evidence of having been heavily restored in the nineteenth century. The European figure is dressed in a red coat, a white shirt and stockings, black knee-breeches and a hat. His left forearm is the only part that now moves, rising and falling in futile fashion with the turning of the handle, to cover and uncover his mouth, from which his groans are made to issue by way of an organ pipe.<sup>17</sup> His costume is not that of an army officer – his coat is decorated with sprigs of roses – but is thought perhaps to be an amalgam of civil and military dress: a lack of specificity would not in the least have obscured his identity as a personification of the hated East India Company.<sup>18</sup>

The piece has a firmly established provenance, having been taken from the palace of Tipu Sultan at Seringapatam when it was stormed on 4 May 1799 by the combined armies of the Crown, the Company and the Nizam of Hyderabad, all under the command of Major-General David Baird and reinforced in the latter stages by the effective presence of Colonel Arthur Wellesley. Its purely timber construction may have saved it from the attentions of the looters who effectively demolished Tipu's throne in their hunger for precious materials. The production history of the piece is unknown, but the town of Channapatna in the kingdom of Mysore – a noted centre for the production of realistically carved and painted wooden models on a smaller scale – has been suggested as a likely source.<sup>19</sup>

Reports of the day vied to pour scorn on the character of Tipu – in reality a reforming administrator and a gifted military commander, though a harsh ruler. A memorandum to the directors of the Company, which accompanied the tiger on its journey from India, recorded that Tipu 'frequently amused himself with a sight of this emblematical triumph of his [dominions] over the English'. Lord Mornington, Governor-General of Bengal, suggested that the piece should be sent to the Tower of London rather than the India Museum – surely an

expression of the contempt with which he regarded Tipu rather than a mark of approbation.

The emotional responses engendered by this piece may be seen as one aspect of a wider expression of hitherto unprecedented public interest in and engagement with the events that culminated at Seringapatam in 1799. Elsewhere in London, Robert Ker Porter's 200-foot-long panorama of *The Taking of Seringapatam*, exhibited at Somerset House, dramatized the action and placed the viewer literally at the centre of events. Together with avidly read newspaper reports and publications, these material witnesses to events in a setting that up to that point would have been considered so remote as to make little impact on the London public, may be said to have brought about the first inklings of a sense of common identity – the beginnings of a popular conception of empire that would increasingly take hold in the following decades. 'Tippoo's Tiger' was not to be counted with the vaguely sourced 'oriental curiosities' that had reached British cabinets of curiosities over the previous two centuries: more than any other physical specimen, it marked a turning point in the way the British saw their position in the wider world: notwithstanding its anomalous position within the India Museum's collecting policy, it set a marker for the museum's future development as a nexus for British and Indian interests, interlinked to a degree never before experienced.

The pristine external appearance of the piece today belies the fact that it was shattered into several hundred pieces when a bomb fell on the V&A during World War II. The story of its restoration is given by Arthur Ord-Hume, who notes that the internal workings of the organ had already been so extensively restored in the past (that is, in the nineteenth century) that their original details have been all but lost.<sup>20</sup>

### Other relics of Tipu Sultan

Tipu was by far the most densely represented personality in the museum, reflecting both his notoriety among the British and the extraordinary amount of spoliation that went on in the aftermath of the siege. Among the most striking exhibits were several pieces of armour, all 'taken at the siege of Seringapatam': an imposing steel helmet damascened with gold is topped with a quadrangular gilt spike, has a sliding nose guard flanked by sockets for plumes and incorporates a coif of mail 'falling in points to the shoulders' (see [fig. 8.15](#)); a coat of mail is composed of steel and brass links arranged in a lozenge pattern; a pair of ribbed steel arm guards 'ornamented with delicate gold damascening' is accompanied



**Fig. 3.2.** Tiger's head moulded in sheet gold over wooden core, with fangs of rock crystal; from the throne of Tipu Sultan. Formerly displayed in the museum, it was presented to King William IV by the Company in 1831. 57 × 48 cm. Seringapatam. Now Royal Collection Trust, RCIN 67212. © His Majesty King Charles III 2023.

by gauntlets of velvet, studded with gilt-headed nails; a cuirass (*peti*) of quilted cotton covered with green velvet is accompanied by a matching helmet, embroidered internally with an inscription in Persian to the effect that it has been 'dipped in the holy well of Zamzam at Mecca', rendering it impenetrable.<sup>21</sup>

Other relics from Seringapatam to be seen in the museum at this time included (in addition to the colours seized at the storming of the palace) 'the head of a tiger, the natural size, in massive gold' (fig. 3.2) and much material from Tipu's personal wardrobe, purchased for the Company at the liquidation of the palace's contents to provide for the victorious army's prize money:

It consisted of eighty-four turbans, of different sorts and colours. Among them were two curious worked pink turbans, with inscriptions at the ends from the Koran ... Fifty pocket-handkerchiefs. Fifty-seven jamahs, or gowns, of different kinds. Fourteen



angurkas, or plain jackets. Twenty-six kulahs, or caps. Two pairs of busaks, or leather boots. Fifty-four asteems, or jackets of various kinds. Thirty-six pai jamahs, or drawers. Forty duputtahs, or clothes for undress. Twenty kummerbunds, or sashes. Ten rumals, or rich handkerchiefs, to be suspended from the khurjee or dagger, worn in full dress by way of ornament ... They are tuburrucks, or holy gifts from Mecca. One rezai, or shawl quilt. Besides these, there were several jackets, turbans and handkerchiefs marked with the bubberee, or tiger stripe. This was the royal mark, peculiar to Tippoo and his family: no other person dared to use it on any occasion.

This property was purchased on account of the Company, and sent to England, in consequence of intelligence communicated to the Duke of Wellington, then Colonel Wellesley, that the Mahomedans in Mysore intended to purchase it, for the purpose of distributing the several articles worn by Tippoo as sacred relics of his prophetic and holy character.<sup>22</sup>

The capacity of these to act as potential rallying points for rebellion was mentioned earlier, but the mechanisms and motives involved in their acquisition distinguish them in an interesting manner from the trophies (*spolia opima*), which were more often acquired in conflict, as recently reviewed by Nicole Hartwell.<sup>23</sup>

More unexpected among the 'souvenirs' acquired at Serinapatam is an English pocket watch that claims to have been the property of Tipu himself (though how he came by it is unrecorded). The gold case is signed 'Ellicott London'; it is hallmarked for 1768–9 and bears the maker's mark 'TL' with star above, for Thomas Layton. The engraved initials 'JD' within a chased wreath seem to be contemporary with the date of manufacture, and are presumably those of the original owner. Its association with Tipu is asserted by an engraved inscription on the back:

This watch was found on the person of Tippoo, Sultan of Mysore on his death and was presented to the Indian Museum by Colonel Edmund Frederick Waterman (Madras Staff Corps) specially to carry out the wishes of his late dear wife, a daughter of Brigadier Robert McDowell into whose hands as Lieut. R. McDowell the watch came on the 4th May 1799.<sup>24</sup>

Colonel Waterman evidently fulfilled his wife's wishes by presenting the watch on 12 March 1877. Less securely provenanced is a gold-topped malacca cane, said to have also been taken at Seringapatam.

## Maharaja Ranjit Singh's throne

Itself constructed in the form of a lotus flower, the wooden throne of Ranjit Singh (fig. 3.3) is covered with sheet gold embossed all over with motifs of lotus flowers and leaves and with chased and engraved details, so that it glows with opulence. The cusped base, with two tiers of leaves, reproduces the form encountered in so many representations of Hindu deities, reinforcing the allusory solemnity conjured up by this icon of Sikh power. It is one of the few items in the collection with which the name of a craftsman can be associated – in this case the



**Fig. 3.3.** The throne of Ranjit Singh, of embossed sheet gold over a wooden structure, ornamented with repeated motifs of the leaves and flowers of the lotus. Sheathed in gold by Hafez Muhammad Multani, 1820–30. Acquired for the India Museum from Lahore in 1853. H 93 cm. 2518(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



goldsmith Hafez Muhammed Multani, who ornamented the throne in Lahore around 1820–30.

The throne was seized by the British in their annexation of the Punjab on 2 April 1849, at the conclusion of the Second Anglo-Sikh War. Its subsequent display at the Great Exhibition in 1851 can scarcely have avoided a huge element of triumphalism, before it settled down to a more prosaic life in the India Museum as the ‘Golden Chair of State ... with three red and yellow velvet cushions, formerly used by H. M. the Maharajah Runjeet Singh’.

Following the death of Ranjit Singh in 1839, the Sikh empire entered a period of instability and came under pressure from the expansionist ambitions of the British. Two Anglo-Sikh wars eventually resulted in the north-westerly limits of British India being established as far west as the frontier with Afghanistan. The Sikh capital city of Lahore became a British administrative centre, and Ranjit Singh’s palace lost its status as the centre of regional power. The removal of his golden throne must have symbolized the end of an era, as surely as did the absorption of the gems from his collection to Queen Victoria’s crown jewels and the removal of Ranjit’s youngest son, Duleep Singh, at the age of only five, to an upbringing under a wholly alien environment presided over by state-sponsored British guardians.

The throne retains all the splendour of its goldwork as well as its cushions of red and yellow velvet. Missing today are the golden globes formerly supported on brackets that project to either side from the arms, currently draped with red cords and golden tassels.

## Model of Ranjit Singh’s mausoleum

Acknowledging the memory of Ranjit Singh in a different mode is a spectacular large-scale model in timber and ivory of his mausoleum (*samadh*), the original of which stands in Lahore. Construction of the original edifice was begun under Ranjit’s eldest son and heir as maharaja, Kharak Singh; it was completed in 1848, nine years after Ranjit’s death, during the reign of his youngest son, Duleep Singh. The monument stands on the site where Ranjit was cremated (along with his four wives and seven enslaved girls from his household); his ashes are contained in an urn within. The model once dominated the left-hand side of one of the galleries at East India House (see [fig. 1.3](#), bottom), where it attracted the particular attention of a contemporary commentator, for whom:

the most notable model is perhaps that of the tomb of Runjeet Singh, at Lahore. This is elaborately carved in a species of dark wood, and represents a magnificent temple, having four façades, each apparently the counterpart of the others, and a grand dome rising in the centre, the dome being crowned by a lofty spire. The design is grand and imposing, but to the eye of an European it has nothing sepulchral about it, and would suggest rather the idea of life, with splendour and luxury within its walls, than of silence, solitude, and death.<sup>25</sup>

This splendid example of cabinet-maker's skill survived the transfer of the collection to South Kensington, only to be extensively damaged by fire there six years later, in 1885. In preparation for the V&A exhibition *The Arts of the Sikh Kingdoms* (1999), a restoration programme succeeded in reconstructing three of the façades, including two plaster panels with polychrome figures flanking the entrance (fig. 3.4); the fourth side was too fragmentary to be incorporated.<sup>26</sup>



**Fig. 3.4.** Restored fragments from the model of the mausoleum of Ranjit Singh, in carved wood with ivory inlay and painted decoration in watercolour. H c. 42 cm. Lahore or Amritsar. 944(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

## General Lake's standard

One item specifically associated with the campaigns of the Company's armies may be mentioned here,<sup>27</sup> although, as ostensibly a gift from the Mughal Emperor for services in ridding his capital of the French, its significance might be said to belong as much in a diplomatic as in a military milieu. The object in question (fig. 3.5) is a gilt brass standard, leaf-shaped with a serrated outline, welded to a socket with simple mouldings and mounted on a long shaft. A central circular void has been cut away to leave an inscription in Arabic in reserve: *Nasr min Allah wa fath qarib* ('Help is with God, and victory is nigh'). Particular interest attaches to a series of inscribed legends in English, which testify to the standard's significance:

This trophy was presented to General Lake on the 14th day of September 1803, by the Hands of His Majesty, Shah Aulum, Emperor of Agra and Delhi, with the titles of Prince of Delhi, in Consideration of the Gallant Victory obtained over the French and Native Troops under the command of Doulat Rao Sindia ... Sumsam a Dawla – The Sword of the State ... Khan Dawran Khan, The Lord of the Land ... Asghar ul Mulk, the Hero of the Land ... General Lake Bahadur Futteh Jung. The Lord of the Age and the Victorious in War.

Ali Gohar (d. 1806), known as Shah Alam II, presided over an empire so reduced in extent and weakened in its influence that it scarcely continued to merit the name; his own accession had been facilitated by intervention from the Marathas, whose star was very much in the ascendant and to whom he remained indebted. Earlier in his reign, Shah Alam had been no friend to the British; he had been instrumental in initiating the Bengal Wars and had fought on the losing side at the Battle of Buxar. An accommodation had long since been reached, and British intervention at Delhi was now prompted by fears that 200 French mercenaries employed in Shah Alam's armies were on the verge of staging a takeover. At a time when the Napoleonic Wars gripped much of Europe, no further incentive was needed, and in 1803 Lake's forces seized control of the city, displacing both the French under General Perron and the long-standing Maratha garrison that ostensibly had provided Shah Alam's security. By now old, blind and with little option, the emperor acquiesced.



**Fig. 3.5.** Standard (*alam*) presented to General Gerard Lake by Emperor Shah Alam II on 14 September 1803. [head] H 47 cm. Delhi. 2538(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

General Gerard Lake was a veteran of the Revolutionary War in America, Flanders and the Irish Rebellion of 1798, where he acquired a reputation for particular ruthlessness. He was regarded as a highly effective commander-in-chief of the army in India: his success at Delhi against the Marathas of Daulat Rao Sindhia followed on from his storming of the fort at Aligarh and preceded other successes at Agra and Laswary – all within the space of a few weeks. In recognition of his service, he was rewarded at his retirement – in an act of appropriation wholly in accordance with the custom of the day – with the title Viscount Lake of Delhi and Laswary.



Fig. 3.6. Photograph (albumen print) of the Cawnpore Memorial by Francis Frith, 1850s–70s. E.208:915-1994. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

## Model of the Cawnpore Memorial

Quite a different response would have been evoked by a further exhibit, which represented a sombre and distinctly British addition to the Indian landscape. The model of the ‘Cawnpore Memorial’ was executed in Agra soapstone and displayed in its own glazed case. The poignant original monument at Cawnpore (Kanpur) (fig. 3.6) stood on the site of a well shaft into which, following a protracted siege in the course of the Uprising of 1857, the bodies of almost 200 captive British women and children are said to have been thrown – some already dead and some yet living. The site is reputed to have drawn to it in former times more European visitors than the Taj Mahal: certainly, its significance would have been well known to the London public.

A number of individuals had a hand in the design of the monument: Lady Canning, wife of the governor-general (later viceroy) and her sister – a respected artist at home in England – the Marchioness of Waterford were instrumental in forwarding the idea; the gothic screen that enclosed the site was designed by Colonel Sir Henry Yule and C. B. Thornhill, commissioner in Allahabad; and the standing figure of

an Angel of the Resurrection at the heart of the memorial was carved by Baron Carlo Marochetti.<sup>28</sup>

The monument was an early casualty of Indian independence (though the angel survives in the nearby All Souls Memorial Church in Cawnpore).<sup>29</sup> By that time, the model too had already been destroyed, written off by the V&A authorities in 1939 – despite its having been no more than a loan to the museum from ‘Lord Henry de Burgh Canning’. No one of that name has been traced, but the catalogue entry seems likely to be an error for Hubert de Burgh-Canning, 2nd Marquess of Clanricarde (1832–1916), son of Ulick de Burgh, 1st Marquess, and his wife Harriet, daughter of British prime minister George Canning and sister-in-law to Lady Canning, wife of the governor-general: such a relationship would make him an entirely plausible source for the model.

## The ‘Babylonian Stone’

One of the most renowned exhibits in the India Museum, curiously, came from Mesopotamia (present-day Iraq) – forwarded from there to one of the directors of the Company in London, Sir Hugh Inglis, by the Assistant Resident at Basra, Harford Jones (later Sir Harford Jones Bridges).<sup>30</sup> Jones was responding to a request from Inglis to send him ‘such memoranda on the present state of the ruins of Babylon, as would enable the court of directors to require their future Resident to collect and transmit to England specimens of the inscription-bricks, stones, &c.’ – a request he fulfilled in the most impressive manner.<sup>31</sup>

The ‘Babylonian Stone’ (fig. 3.7), as it came to be known, has been described as ‘one of the finest surviving Babylonian inscribed monuments and one of the museum’s most important acquisitions’.<sup>32</sup> Its fame quickly became widespread through its inclusion in an early attempt at analysis of cuneiform script prepared by Dr Joseph Hager, *A Dissertation on the Newly Discovered Babylonian Inscriptions* (1801), a work dedicated to the Court of Directors of the Company in recognition of their ‘wisdom, zeal, liberality, fine taste, and every other virtue’ in forwarding scientific and humanistic research. A lavish double-folio facsimile of the tablet was engraved two years later in Harford Jones’s name and published at the Company’s expense with a dedication to Inglis: intended as a presentation piece, it survives today in very few copies.<sup>33</sup>





Fig. 3.7. The 'Babylonian Stone', a tablet engraved in cuneiform script with a text alluding to the religious devotion and civic achievements of Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, 604–562 BCE. 56.5 × 50.2 cm. Babylon. British Museum, inv. no. 1938,0520.1. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

Although displayed in the first instance as a mute antiquarian curiosity – for its text remained untranslated at the time – the acquisition of the tablet may be seen as a physical complement to the important library of Asiatic texts that developed alongside the museum (in the most literal sense). It would not be until the 1840s and 1850s that progress in reading cuneiform began to be made, and it would be 1861 before the first volume of Sir Henry Rawlinson's landmark five-volume *The Cuneiform Inscriptions of Western Asia* appeared.

The arrival of the tablet in London evidently enthused Inglis, an influential supporter of the nascent museum, to such a degree that

he arranged for the following instruction to be inserted in a public despatch to the Bombay Presidency in October 1807:<sup>34</sup>

Being always desirous to lend our assistance, to those who may be employed in the Elucidation of oriental Antiquities, and having been informed that near the Town of Hillah on the River Euphrates there exist the Remains of a very large and magnificent City supposed to be Babylon, and that the Bricks of which those ruins are composed are remarkable for containing in an indented Scroll or Label apparently a Distich in Characters totally different from any now made use of the East: we direct that you give orders to our Resident at Bassorah, to procure from Hillah, ten or a Dozen of the Bricks also mentioned, and to transmit them carefully packed as early as possible to Bombay, in order that you may forward them to us on one of our Ships sailing from your Presidency for England.

Five bricks duly arrived at the museum. Desmond asserts that they were credulously labelled there as being ‘the original bricks which the Israelites were compelled to make without straw’, but without providing a source.<sup>35</sup> Two early notices of the inscription in its museum setting demonstrate the tentative state of knowledge at the time. The following comes from the *Sea-Pie* for 1842:<sup>36</sup>

Next stands in a frame, a most interesting object for antiquarian investigation. It is a slab of stone from the ruins of Babylon, bearing the most perfect inscription yet discovered in the undecyphered arrow-headed or Assyrian character. This relic of imperial Babylon was obtained in 1798 or 9, by Sir Harford Jones Brydges, from Aga Hossayn, a man of rank and large property at Hilla, on the Euphrates ... [It was] found at Nimrood, an immense pile of brick-work, generally considered as the ruins of the temple or tower of Belus, or the royal palace of ancient Babylon ... Sir Harford transmitted this valuable document to his friend Sir Hugh Inglis, when the latter immediately placed it in the Museum ... we believe no translation of it has been made of it.

Under it are placed some of the bricks from the same place (Birs Nimrood). The bitumen still adheres to the sides; and marks of reeds are visible. Each brick is impressed with a legend in the undecyphered character. These, also, were present by Sir Hugh Inglis.



This would appear to be the only record of the agency of 'Aga Hossayn' in its acquisition. A few years later, in the museum guide of 1851, the bricks and inscription together are described as 'relics well calculated to raise emotion', as representatives of the 'ruins of Babylon',<sup>37</sup>

of whose splendor and extent we may form some conception from the elaborate and gigantic character of the remains here presented; though the very site of the city has almost wholly passed away. The inscription is in a state of perfect preservation, and hopes are entertained that it may yet be deciphered; but the bricks are in a mouldering condition, and bear evidence of their extreme antiquity.

Other Babylonian antiquities eventually reaching the museum included a 'cast of a Babylonian marble weight, in tin case', and a 'Cast of a Babylonian cylinder', both contributed by the Royal Asiatic Society.<sup>38</sup>

## Roman mosaic fragment

An exhibit that attracted regular notice was a Roman mosaic – seemingly seriously out of context in the India Museum but preserved there because it had been found in Leadenhall Street, at the very threshold of East India House itself, during building work in 1803. Lying some nine and a half feet below street level, it was judged to have covered the floor of a room some 20 feet square, although part of the mosaic had already been destroyed in the cutting of a sewer trench.

Much of the central area was taken up by a roundel in which Bacchus is represented reclining on the back of a tigress, walking to the left with her head turned backwards (fig. 3.8); Bacchus wears a wreath of ivy leaves and carries a goblet and a *thyrsus* or leafy staff. Company interest may have been heightened by the representation of a tiger (rather than Bacchus' customary leopard), perhaps alluding to the tradition that the god had at one point visited India. The roundel was enclosed by three concentric borders, respectively featuring an undulating ribbon, a wave pattern and shaded radial lines; they in turn were enclosed by a square border of guilloche, two of the resulting corner quadrants enclosing canthari and two filled with tendril patterns forming pelta motifs; an outer border had outline lozenges with opposed pelta shapes with tendrils at the ends and each with an endless knot in the centre. The patterned area was set within a wide surround of plain red tesserae. The



Fig. 3.8. Central roundel from a Roman mosaic discovered in Leadenhall Street, London, 28 December 1803. Diameter 114 cm. British Museum, inv. no. OA.290. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

design of the whole original was captured in a detailed drawing by the architect and surveyor Edward Lapidge (1779–1860), from which a print was produced, with a dedication ‘To the Hon<sup>ble</sup> the Court of Directors of the East India Company’. The whole pavement, thought to date from the third century, has been characterized in the most recent scholarly survey as ‘one of the finest mosaics in Britain’.<sup>39</sup>

The *Gentleman’s Magazine* recorded in the year after its discovery that the mosaic had been ‘raised in pieces, under the direction of Mr Wilkins, Librarian to the Company and deposited, for the present, in a room adjoining the library till it can be completely arranged and put together’.<sup>40</sup> Over 30 years later, a correspondent to the same journal complained that it remained at that time ‘invisible to the naked eye’ in its inaccessible storeroom, and in 1859 Charles Roach Smith recorded

that ‘after some years it was unfortunately placed in the open air, when the action of the atmosphere loosened the tesserae’, destroying all but the central roundel which, ‘a few years since, was recovered from among the debris by Professor Wilson securely fastened upon a slab of slate and restored to the library’.<sup>41</sup>

When the India Museum collection was finally extinguished in 1879 and the collections were distributed (in this case to the British Museum), little more than the (rather poorly restored) central roundel survived.<sup>42</sup>

## Two domestic relics of the Company

A teapot and coffee pot in silver are exceptional in the collection for their early (seventeenth-century) date, their English manufacture and their status as commemorative relics of the Company itself rather than of India.

The teapot (fig. 3.9a) has a tapering cylindrical body surmounted by a conical lid, with a straight spout set at 90 degrees to the leather handle. The arms of the Berkeley family are engraved on the side, along with those of the Company and the following inscription: ‘This Siluer tea Pott was presented to ye Com[mi]ttee[e] of ye East India Cumpany by ye Right Honou[rabl]e George Lord Berkeley of Berkeley Castle A member of that Honourable & worthy Society and A True Hearty Louer of them 1670’.<sup>43</sup> Having married Elizabeth Massingberd, daughter of the treasurer of the Company, in 1646, George Berkeley (c. 1626–98) became a major investor, although he was elected a member only in 1681; in 1677, his personal estate was valued at £26,000, of which £8,000 comprised Company stock.

The coffee pot (fig. 3.9b) is closely comparable in style, except for having the spout aligned with the handle; it was likewise a gift to the Company, as recorded by a contemporary inscription: ‘The Guift of Richard Sterne E[s]q[ui]re to y<sup>e</sup> Honorable East: India: Comp<sup>a</sup>[ny]:’. Hallmarked for the year 1681–2, it is, in fact, the earliest known coffee pot made in England.

Tea and coffee both became fashionable only in the course of the mid-seventeenth century – thanks in no small part to the activities of the Company – and it took some time for a standardized suite of tableware appropriate to each of them to evolve: it has been observed that without the identifying inscription on the Berkeley teapot here, it could not have been specifically identified as such. By the eighteenth



**Fig. 3.9.** (a) Teapot, silver, with a leather-covered handle; assay marks for London 1670–1 and an unidentified goldsmith’s mark ‘TL’; engraved with the arms of Berkeley and of the Company. H 33.75 cm. M.399-1921, formerly 02641(IS); (b) Coffee pot, silver with leather-covered handle, bearing the mark of London goldsmith George Garthorne for the year 1681–2; engraved with the arms of Richard Sterne. H 25 cm. M.398-1921; formerly 02640(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

century, the convention had developed for the spouts of coffee pots (and chocolate pots of similar form, but incorporating a stirrer) to be arranged at right angles to the handle, while in teapots the spout and handle were aligned.

Although seemingly anomalous in the context of the Indian silverware discussed here, these two items were catalogued among the silver items and (at least in the museum’s final home in the Eastern Galleries at South Kensington) they were displayed together (in Case 57), so their inclusion here is entirely apposite. Earlier, they had been described in the display at East India House, where they shared a cabinet with ‘various specimens of sacrificial and domestic vessels in use among the Hindoos’, presented by the Marchioness of Hastings – further underlining the absence of special significance attached to them within the museum. In the narrowly focused terms of Charles Wilkins’s founding proposals for the development of the Company’s

collection, both items would have been consigned to the miscellaneous category, 'including presents'; it may well be that they had spent many of the intervening years since their presentation in the Company's Directors' Courtroom, for example, where they would have carried messages of venerable prestige and dependability to a rather more select public.

Many other items in the collection could have been selected for inclusion in this chapter on historical relics – the material associated with Shah Jahan considered in the main text, for example – but it would be an error to over-emphasize this dimension when the treatment accorded to these items seems to suggest that the theme remained a comparatively minor one within the displays.

## Notes

- 1 *Sea-Pie* 1 (1842), 207.
- 2 See, for example, Breckenridge, 'Aesthetics of colonial collecting', 199.
- 3 For Fitzclarence, see the online list of contributors at the India Museum Revisited web platform.
- 4 Day Books, 29 March 1836. For the particular significance of the capture of colours, see Hartwell, 'Framing colonial war loot', 9.
- 5 These are annotated in the catalogue 'Returned to Indian Government 6.11.1902'.
- 6 Two surviving badges, 0307-8(1S), both registered as 'for a Siaphee [*recte* Sipahée, a sepoy]', are ascribed respectively to the 'Dovee Dutt regiment' and the 'Surubdhooj regiment'.
- 7 The East India Company Volunteers, by contrast, were constituted of three regiments of part-time London-based militia (totalling 1,500 men), raised from among the Company's employees (mostly in Southwark and Poplar) while the country was under threat of invasion by France during the Napoleonic Wars, 'for more effectually securing the Warehouses of the Company against hazard from Insurrection or Tumults'. The Volunteers were disbanded in 1814 but reconstituted from 1820 to 1834. See Griggs, *Relics of the East India Company*, 51–4; see also <https://blogs.bl.uk/untoldlives/2019/03/colours-of-the-royal-east-india-volunteers.html> [accessed 02.05.2023].
- 8 See, for example, the range of mementos from Indian engagements that later found their way to the National Army Museum: Cohn, 'The transformation of objects', 329. See also MacGregor, *Company Curiosities*, 169–70.
- 9 Day Books, 3 February 1802. The *Description of the Museum* from 1851 mentions the presence of 'several of the Medals allotted to the officers of our native Indian regiments', but the later fate of these is unrecorded.
- 10 Dated 1801–41, the presence of these (showing Jefferson, Madison, Monroe, Adams, Jackson, Van Buren and Tyler) seems completely anomalous, although the library held numbers of volumes on the American economy and natural resources.
- 11 Day Books, 19 May 1845.
- 12 Not mentioned in the 1880 catalogue, but noticed in the *Sea-Pie* 1 (1842), 256.
- 13 *Sea-Pie* 1 (1842), 298.
- 14 *The Athenæum* 2171, 5 June 1869, 766.
- 15 On a visit to East India House in 1803, the Mameluke envoy Elfi Bey was 'entertained by a display of the musical tiger ... which performed several airs', including 'God Save the King' and 'Rule, Britannia'. For a demonstration of the keyboard in use, see: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hhIEv5Rt9g> [accessed 02.05.2023].

- 16 The tiger motif was everywhere at Seringapatam: the plinth of Tipu's throne was supported on a gilded life-size tiger; the head, with rock-crystal fangs, is now in the Royal Collection (see fig. 3.2), while subsidiary gem-studded heads are in the Clive collection at Powis Castle. Many of Tipu's mortars took the form of crouching tigers and the muzzles of cannon and small arms were often in the form of tiger heads.
- 17 The anonymous author in the *Sea-Pie* 1 (1842), 211, mentions that by means of the internal mechanism, the head of the figure was also 'convulsively thrown back, to express the agony of his helpless and deplorable situation'. Ord-Hume ('Tipu's tiger', 24) notes the wider iconographic relationship of the automaton in a series of painted figures showing tigers and elephants attacking Europeans, installed by Tipu on the façades of buildings in his capital city of Seringapatam.
- 18 Susan Stronge (*Tipu's Tigers*, 86) has laid to rest the theory that the group may have been a gleeful representation of the death of Hector Sutherland Munro, son of Sir Hector Munro, then Colonel of the 42nd Highland Regiment, fatally mauled by a tiger on Saugor [Sagar] Island in the Ganges delta in 1792.
- 19 See Qureshi, 'Tipu's tiger'.
- 20 Ord-Hume, 'Tipu's tiger', 64–75.
- 21 See Egerton, *Handbook of Indian Arms*, cat. 589; 3517(1S).
- 22 *Sea-Pie* 1 (1842), 300.
- 23 Hartwell, 'Framing colonial war loot'.
- 24 A note in the slip book records that Brigadier McDowell was killed leading his brigade into battle in the First Anglo-Burmese War, 1825–6.
- 25 'A visit to the East India Museum', *The Leisure Hour* 7 (1858), 470.
- 26 Stronge, *Arts of the Sikh Kingdoms*, cat. 151; see also Nigel Bamforth at <http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/journals/conservation-journal/issue-31/ranjit-singh-the-lion-of-the-punjab/> [accessed 02.05.2023].
- 27 There were very few others, beyond the mention of two weapons said to have been 'taken at Lucknow' – that is, presumably, during the siege of the city in 1857; both of these firearms bore the mark of the Company on the lock, together with the date 1816, so they may be said to have marked a recovery rather than a conquest.
- 28 Baron Marochetti (1805–67) had previously been responsible for the memorial erected to the British forces who fell at Scutari (the monument itself having been inaugurated by Queen Victoria during a 'peace fête' at the Crystal Palace at Sydenham, to mark the end of the Crimean War). The angel installed at Cawnpore represented a development in artistic terms of the four angels on the Scutari monument. See two useful articles by Jacqueline Banerjee at <http://www.victorianweb.org/sculpture/marochetti/29.html> and [30.html](http://www.victorianweb.org/sculpture/marochetti/30.html) [accessed 02.05.2023].
- 29 Indian attitudes to the massacre had always been less one-sided than those of the British: rumours of atrocities carried out on the civilian population by the forces advancing to relieve the siege had contributed to the murderous atmosphere at the time, while in 1947 public resentment at the continuing exclusion of Indians from the park surrounding the monument had made it – quite understandably – a prime target for retribution.
- 30 The Company's factors, consuls and Residents in the Middle East facilitated trade (via Bombay) and latterly the transmission of mail overland so as to avoid the lengthy voyage via the Cape. With the appearance of Napoleon in Egypt, they formed an important intelligence and diplomatic network under the British government's plenipotentiary in Constantinople, Lord Elgin: see MacGregor, 'Levant Company'.
- 31 The Day Books include references to the receipt of C. J. Rich's *Memoir on the Ruins of Babylon* (1815), presented by the author (27 June 1815); '267 Copies of Inscriptions on Babylonian bricks', received from the Examiners Office (25 July 1815); and 'A Babylonian brick with legend of 6 lines' from a Mr Hartley of the Bombay Marine (27 March 1820).
- 32 Desmond, *India Museum*, 15.
- 33 For example, British Library, General Reference Collection D-1753.d.3.(3.)
- 34 IOR: E/4/1012, Bombay Despatches, 18 October 1797, fols 735–7.
- 35 Desmond, *India Museum*, 1–3.
- 36 *Sea-Pie* 1 (1842), 258.
- 37 *East India Museum*, 10.

- 38 The museum guide of 1851 (*East India Museum*, 10–11) also mentions a slab from Nineveh, ‘an object seemingly of little interest, though it is distinguished for its rare antiquity’, and a number of ‘remarkable casts from the Ruins of Nineveh’.
- 39 See Neal and Cosh, *Roman Mosaics of Britain*, 422–5, where a detailed description and analysis is given.
- 40 *Gentleman’s Magazine* 1804, pt 1, 83.
- 41 *Gentleman’s Magazine* 1836, pt 1, 369–71; Roach Smith, *Illustrations of Roman London*, 57. Neal and Cosh (*Roman Mosaics of Britain*, 422) suggest that the move to an outdoor location may reflect pressure brought on the Company to make the mosaic publicly accessible, but more probably it was occasioned by the movement of the entire museum to Fife House in 1858 (see Chapter 1), when the collections overflowed into the gardens. The library in which the slate-mounted roundel was subsequently displayed would now have been that of the India Office in Whitehall.
- 42 British Museum, OA290. Hinks, *Catalogue of the ... Roman ... Mosaics*, no. 32, fig. 108.
- 43 George Berkeley was created Viscount Dursley and 1st Earl Berkeley in 1679.

## 4

# Trading with and within India: material culture of commerce and control

The mechanisms by which the East India Company carried on its commerce with India are little represented in the museum, although the accounts, journals and ships' manifests loom large in the holdings of the library which occupied the adjacent accommodation at East India House and formed a complement to the displays of objects. As one of the most highly developed bureaucracies of its age, the Company depended on the efforts of a vast army of Writers, and it is from their output – now forming the bulk of the India Office Records and Private Papers at the British Library – that a detailed understanding of the Company's commercial workings is to be gained. Nonetheless, the museum does offer a few oblique insights through the exhibits discussed here.

## Carrying the trade: ships and shipping

Without the commercial lifeblood carried by its fleet of merchant vessels – a byword for excellence in the conduct of maritime trade – the Company would have come to nothing. Every voyage undertaken to India – lasting never less than four months and commonly double that – was something of a minor triumph; the potential for losses of vessels, investments and, indeed, the lives of passengers and crew was ever present. The central role of the East Indiamen – the most famous of merchant ships – was acknowledged on the walls of the Directors' Courtroom at East India House, where a series of paintings reminded the money men of the world stage on which their transactions were carried out: views of the Company's principal ports in India, as well as its way-stations at St Helena and the Cape, were framed by



stately vessels firing salutes and receiving acknowledgement from the shore stations.<sup>1</sup>

The Company's fleet was augmented from the 1830s onwards with steam-driven vessels, which transformed journey times via the Cape (resulting also in the sidelining of St Helena as a way-station); the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 – after the Company's demise – would cut the passage to India even more dramatically. In 1842 the age of steam was marked in the museum by the acquisition of a print of 'the Honble. Comp<sup>ys</sup> Steam Frigate Memmon',<sup>2</sup> a vessel assigned to the Company's Indian naval service shortly before that time.

Otherwise, pictures and models of East Indiamen are completely lacking in the museum setting, where their absence speaks as loudly as the celebratory paintings known from other settings: it seems clear that – as with other elements of the collection – it is a fallacy to suggest that the Company conceived its museum as a means of overtly proclaiming its supremacy to the visiting public; rather, it adopted here a more subtle and low-key – almost self-effacing – business-like air, remarked upon by visitors to East India House, and pursued instead its quasi-didactic programme of presenting the public with a view of India itself. The (mostly modest) local types of boats to be found here had themselves no export potential, but merely illustrated the many types of craft encountered by Company servants going about their everyday business. Just how challenging that could be is made clear by the models of a pirate boat, a large, decked vessel (*lanum prahu*) from Mindanao in the Southern Philippines, several armed merchantmen and a number classified simply as war boats. (The East Indiamen themselves invariably carried defensive armaments against the possibility of such an encounter.)

A large proportion of the models evidently were acquired not directly from their home territory but through the medium of one or other of the international exhibitions – that is to say, in the latter decades of the museum's existence rather than in its genesis. Some are specifically recorded as having such an origin; the earliest independent mention we find of them, from 1858, already allows for that possibility for perhaps the majority:<sup>3</sup>

among the models, must not be omitted those of their sea and river-craft, whether for purposes of commerce or of pleasure, which the Indian shipwrights launch upon their waters. Some of them are exceedingly light and handsome, resembling in a degree European yachts, and carrying large, angular, lateen sails, under

which they must fly at considerable speed. Others, again, are as heavy and cumbersome as the Chinese junks; such are some of the cotton-boats; and some, as the cargo-boats, for instance, seem to be mere shapeless masses of floating lumber, compared to which the heaviest Dutch bottom would be a flying Mercury. The state-boats, adapted for regal or religious pageants, seem to vie almost with those of the Venetian doges in point of costliness and splendour.

Specifically identified in the collection as local cargo-carriers are a 'cotton boat, a sailing boat used chiefly for conveying cotton from the shore to ships, and for loading and unloading cargo'; it is provenanced to Bombay (Mumbai). Among the named varieties are an '*ulak*, a large clinker built boat for conveyance of produce, ends decked, centre generally covered by mat awnings for protection of the cargo, with mast, sail, oars, &c.', from Bhagulpore; 'a *khelan*, an open boat used for carrying produce and as a passenger boat by the lower orders, clinker built, but with the planks placed in the reverse way, *i.e.* each plank is placed inside the one immediately below it instead of outside, the planks are fastened with bamboo pegs', from Kheelna in Bengal; from Murshidabad comes a '*pulwar*, a boat for inland navigation, generally used for the transport of precious goods', with 'a lowering mast, square sail, and oars, decked with a mat cabin';<sup>4</sup> another *pulwar* from Sylhet, with a rounded covering and raised prow, is said to be 'peculiar to the eastern district'; a '*bhad* or *bhar pansi*, a large carvel built boat, used for heavy coarse cargo, covered in by a matting cabin, with mast and oars' (fig. 4.1a), comes from Calcutta; a '*maler panchi*, a large carvel-built boat with the planks fastened together with iron clamps, lowering mast and a large mat covering or house for conveying produce', from Attiah; and 'a cargo boat, *baree*, with sails, &c.', from Karachi.

Larger decked vessels include two two-masted *buglas* from Cutch, one with lateen sails; a *catiyah*, a 'partially decked trading vessel, with poop, two masts, and lateen sails', also from Cutch; a *cotia* from Karachi and a *pattamar* with two masts, lateen sails and jib from Bombay; one long *cheep* from Murshidabad is described as 'an open boat with bamboo hatches' and with an awning of embroidered velvet amidships, and another from Dacca (Dhaka), received for the London Exhibition of 1873, is described as 'decked with bamboo ... generally propelled by from 10 to 20 rowers; has mast, sail, paddles and awning'. From the Indian Archipelago comes a *prahu* 'with two tripod masts, boom lug sails, and jib', while others come from as far afield as the Persian

(a)



(b)

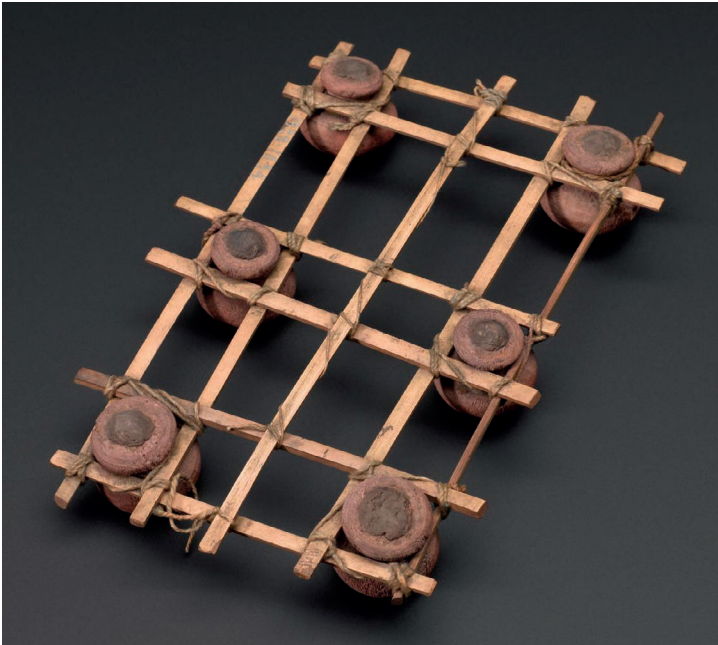


**Fig. 4.1.** Boat models. (a) *Bhad* or *bhar pansi*, 1873. L 82.5 cm. Calcutta. 3761(IS); (b) 'State boat built for the Governors of the English factory at Calcutta'. L 110 cm. 3736(IS); (c) '*Budgerow*, a decked boat with cabin and figures of rowers', 1855. L 86 cm. Murshidabad. 3681(IS); (d) '*Gharnai bhela*, a raft ... made of six earthen pots supporting a bamboo framework', 1873. L 21 cm. Gyah. 3693(IS). (Now Science Museum 1929-1088, 1086, 1087, 1094). © The Board of Trustees of the Science Museum.

(c)



(d)



Gulf and Arabia. One partly decked boat with a cabin from Bengal is described as a pinnace, but otherwise local names are preferred.<sup>5</sup>

Among those designated war boats are two of the rare survivals from this collection still within the V&A's collection, both Burmese and of gilt wood: one 'with 40 figures of rowers and seven other figures, &c.' and the other 'with 38 [amended to 28] figures of rowers and three other figures'. Another Burmese boat is described as 'a decked coasting vessel, armed with a brass pivot gun, has three masts and red Chinese lateen sails'.

Others are classified as 'state-boats' or as rather grand pleasure boats: a one-masted *jhumtee* with a lateen sail formed the state barge of the Amirs of Sind; from Lahore, a 'decked pleasure boat with a cabin glazed all round', painted and gilt, had been used by Sher Singh; a '*mohr punkee* or peacock boat' is described as 'a Hindu pleasure boat of painted ivory, open, with handsome canopy, figure head and stern, figures of rowers, &c., on wheels'.<sup>6</sup> One of two ivory models of state barges survives intact in the collection. Locally constructed to convey Company grandees in an appropriate manner was 'a state boat [evidently one of two], built for the Governors of the English factory at Calcutta', decked and provided with comfortable cabins, with carved figurehead and stern (fig. 4.1b). One craft from Singapore is designated a *punjab*, 'a Malay Rajah's barge resembling a pirate *prahu*; it is an armed decked vessel, with two masts, boom, lug sails made of strips of palm leaves, and paddles'. A more modest form of pleasure boat is represented by a *khelna*, 'a large decked and painted boat, with mat cabin, oars and steering oar', from Attiah.

Some vessels are specifically identified as river boats, such as two 'bugerows' (*budgros*), one 'with figures of rowers' from Bengal (fig. 4.1c).<sup>7</sup> The term is perhaps the one most commonly encountered in English-language sources: *Hobson-Jobson* gives *budgerow* as 'a lumbering keelless barge, formerly much used by Europeans travelling on the Gangetic rivers. Two-thirds of the length aft was occupied by cabins with Venetian windows.' Also specified are models from Murshidabad – one identified as a *parindu*, 'a decked boat with an awning of embroidered velvet amidships, propelled by oars' and the other a *purinda*, 'a long narrow open boat, with one paddle'. A '*heelung*, a merchant's boat with wickerwork awning, oars, &c.' from Assam is accompanied by a '*khal nao*, a rowing boat ... used by gentlemen' and a '*dak nao*, or mail boat', a dugout open boat, both likewise from Assam and with similar wickerwork awnings. A '*pamban manche*, or snake boat, a long open boat with a raised cabin used for passengers on the

rivers and backwaters', came from Cochin; the slip books mention that it was propelled by 20 paddles. Other types mentioned include a *bhaulea* from the Ganges; from Serampore a *dinghi*, 'a partly decked boat with awning, carvel built, the planks sewn together', described as 'the ordinary two-oared dinghy used generally in the rivers of Lower Bengal'. A '*khela dingee*, a river boat of slight construction, with lowering mast, square sail and paddles, covered in with large wickerwork house', came from Bengal. According to *Hobson-Jobson*,<sup>8</sup> the term could also be applied to a simple dugout canoe (see also below); it is also noted there that by the time that publication was being prepared (in the third quarter of the nineteenth century) the word had already 'become legitimately incorporated in the vocabulary of the British navy, as the name of the smallest ship's boat'.

Others are identified specifically as ferryboats. A '*bhed* or common ferry boat, a flat-bottomed carvel-built boat, planks connected by iron cramps' comes from Attiah in Bengal. A 'twin ferryboat' from Buncoorah consisted of 'two flat-bottomed clinker-built boats linked by a planked platform', and from the same source came another ferry termed a *donga*, carried on two dugouts. An alternative form of crossing came from Ludhiana in the Punjab, in the form of 'a bridge of boats for crossing rivers'. The extreme end of the ferryboat spectrum is represented by two models of *masoolahs*, the craft which formed the introduction to India of all those landing at Madras, where the lack of a deep-water harbour meant that passengers had the nerve-jangling experience of being rowed in through the surf: one of these is described as 'a very light clinker-built boat, with the planks sewn together', provided with 11 associated paddles. A catamaran with two figures illustrated a type from Madras 'used by the natives for conveying despatches (which are placed in their caps) to shipping off the coast', while a 'sailing canoe, with outrigger, mast and sail' comes from 'Point de Galle', Ceylon. Other small, flat-bottomed sailing boats of ubiquitous form in the East are represented by those termed *doonda*, *muchwa* and *zooruck* [*zaruka*].

A range of craft from the Malay peninsula are all identified by the term *sampan*, ranging from an open rowing boat from Johore (Johor) with six paddles to a 'fast sailing open boat used for passengers, with three masts, lateen sails, jib and paddles', from Singapore. A single *tambangan* from Surabaya, Java, is characterized as 'a passage boat, an open boat with one mast, and a peculiar triangular sail, paddles, and a light awning', and from Singapore a *kelek* is described as 'an open fishing boat for rowing and sailing'.

The most rudimentary vessels represented are dugouts from the Hooghly and from Patna on the Ganges, the latter of ebony and containing a figure of a man. Several other dugouts come from the Gangetic delta area – a '*khunda* ... used in the shallows' from Goalundo on the Padma River, while a '*dingi shorangah*, converted into a *dingi*, with an awning, oars, anchor, &c.' and a '*kheya dingi* or ferry boat, a flat-bottomed dugout open boat' were both from Chittagong (Chattogram). A *khonda* and a *sharanga*, both from Attiah, are dugouts similarly adapted for use in lagoons and shallows. Slightly more sophisticated is 'a *bojhinka*, an open boat with dugout bottom and raised sides added', from Sylhet. A single model of a punt is listed, without further detail. Among the paddles are three identified as belonging to chiefs' wives from the Baram River (Borneo).

A number of rafts feature in the catalogue: two dugouts connected by cross beams from Patna; a *langady* made from the hollowed trunks of palmyra trees lashed together with poles, from Mirzapore (Mirzapur); a *maak* of bamboo and cane from Chittagong; a *vewa* 'made of the stems of plantain trees secured by pieces of bamboo run through them crosswise', from Jessore; two *bhelas* 'made from the stems of *Æschynomene paludosa*' from Bengal and Buncoorah; a pith model of a fishing raft (*bhela*) with upturned prow from Bogra in the Southern Philippines; and, most strikingly, a *gharnai bhela* (fig. 4.1d) as used in the Gyah District, near Patna, comprising six earthenware pots supporting a bamboo framework.

Six model boats were among the items sent from the India Museum to the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition in 1876.<sup>9</sup>

The collection of ship models seems to have struggled to find an appropriate home following the dispersal of the India Museum collections. Having been transferred to the South Kensington Museum in 1879, the collection was already viewed with a degree of disappointment there: in a catalogue of that museum's (mostly European) models from a decade later, the author writes in the section on 'Indian and other Native Models of Ships, Boats, Rafts, &c.' that 'It is to be regretted that the information regarding these models ... is so meagre', although noting that 'such intelligence about them as was received at the time of their transfer to the Ship Model Collection is however noted'.<sup>10</sup> By that time, a number of items from the collection had already been moved on to the Science Collections, followed in 1929 by a wholesale transfer to the now separately constituted Science Museum; the two Burmese war boats mentioned above were subsequently returned in 1931 to the V&A – where they survive today. The



remainder suffered a continuing degree of attrition from decay, leading to their being written off by successive Boards of Survey in the V&A and in the Science Museum. A final tranche of six vessels went to the National Maritime Museum in 1958.<sup>11</sup>

## Regulating the trade: measures of weight, capacity and length

A major problem faced by the factors of the Company, tasked with buying and selling goods of all kinds, concerned the systems of measurement employed throughout their sphere of influence, which – needless to say – bore no relation to those used in England or on the European mainland. Within India itself, the multiplicity of units of measurement – varying from one region to another, between urban and rural populations and for use with one particular commodity or another – had been subject in the late sixteenth century to a reform by the Mughal emperor Akbar; however, while Akbar's system was widely imposed for the practices of administration, it seems that for everyday purposes it was simply added to those already in customary usage and did not wholly displace them. Well after the British had succeeded in imposing their political will on large tracts of the sub-continent, it was recognized that the introduction of standard weights and measures could not be achieved in so peremptory a fashion:

If ever effected, it can only be done in the gradual progress of time, by the spread of knowledge, and by the growing inter-communion of the multitudes engaged in the internal traffic of the country, who would by degrees feel the advantage of uniformity in their dealings.<sup>12</sup>

The author of the above, James Prinsep, records that:

In 1821, the Honourable Court of Directors called upon their commercial agents, collectors of customs, and other public officers of the three presidencies, to procure and forward to England accurate counterparts of the standard weights and measures in use throughout their territories in the East. The order was promptly obeyed, and the required models sent home, with certificates and explanations.<sup>13</sup>



India had no monopoly on irregularity among its measures, for the British too observed a variety of standards, each applied to particular commodities, until the introduction of the New British Imperial Measure in 1826: at that point, the Wine Gallon, Ale Gallon and Corn Gallon, for example, all disappeared in favour of the Imperial Gallon. The efforts of the Company to standardize its practices may, therefore, be seen against the wider background of metrical reform in Britain, rather than simply in terms of the imposition of another layer of European bureaucracy on a population increasingly subjected to imposed imperialist uniformity.

The 'required models' of weights and measures mentioned by Prinsep, together with the accompanying despatches, were placed in the hands of Dr Patrick Kelly, who incorporated a synthesis of his findings into his wide-ranging *Oriental Metrology* (1832).<sup>14</sup> The varieties of measures prevailing in over 130 local communities are listed there, extending beyond the sub-continent to include the entire sphere serviced by the Company. Apart from the few listed here, they include myriad alternative systems for the weighing of ghee, bell-metal, nutmeg flowers, pearls and a host of other commodities; some of these are further expressed in terms of currencies (that is, by weight of particular coins), reflecting the full complexity of India's trading history and including Portuguese, Dutch, French, Arabic and Chinese as well as Indian coinage.<sup>15</sup> Scores of conversion tables that attempted to reconcile these heterogeneous systems and denominations were published for the benefit of the European population.<sup>16</sup>

It may well be that many of the measures listed in the museum collection originated from the harmonization exercise mentioned above: a few are listed as having been received in 1821, but accession dates are lacking for the majority. Other such exercises followed, including an attempt to introduce avoirdupois, but they made little impact, and their minimal influence proved transient.

### Measures of weight and capacity

The basis of weight measurement had for centuries been provided by the barley corn, and this grain continued to exert an influence through its use as a gold measure. Capacity was also measured by weight: the volume of a particular vessel would be determined by the amount of corn it would hold, expressed in weight. The capacity of one brass measure from Madurai, for example, 'used for grain and oil', is expressed as 'contains 2 lb. 8 oz. 1 dr. of wheat'.



**Fig. 4.2.** Dry measures. (a) *Chuttack*, of bamboo. Jungypore. 4018(IS); (b) *Pucka seer*, bamboo with metal bindings. Bangalore. 3948(IS); (c) *Seer* (for rice?), of bamboo with white metal mounts. Soonamooky. 4012(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

For ordinary transactions, the *tola/seer/maund* system formed the basis of commerce, the *tola* being fixed in 1833 at 180 grains. In present-day terms, their relationships and metric equivalents may be represented as follows: 1 *tola* = 11.664 g; 1 *seer* (80 *tola*) = 0.93310 kg; 1 *maund* (40 *seer*) = 37.324 kg. A much wider range of weights and measures

is recorded in the catalogue, although the range of weights/capacities recorded is far from complete. In the following list of values recorded in the slip books and in the 1880 printed catalogue (to which notes derived from Prinsep and from Kelly have been added here), the measures given must be considered approximate, since they varied from city to city:

*adholie*. The slip books give *adholie* measures from 4 lb. 0 oz. 2 dr. to 5 lb. 1 oz. 0 dr. of wheat.

*adpowe*. Recorded by Kelly as a measure in Poona (Pune).

*arsolah*. The slip books record that 1 copper *arsolah* measure, containing 0 lb. 13 oz. 5 dr. of wheat, is the equivalent of  $\frac{1}{4}$  *seer*.

*bahadry*, 'or star pagoda'.

*bantul*, of brass.

*bongkal* (i.e. *buncal*). The slip books record one *bongkal* measure from Prince of Wales Island (Penang) as containing  $3\frac{1}{2}$  drams of wheat.

*catty ootan*. One example, of lead, from Sumatra. The *catty* was a weight commonly used in China and Japan.

*chowkee*,  $\frac{1}{4}$  *chowkee*. One *chowkee* measure, of wood, is identified as of  $7\frac{1}{4}$  lb. capacity.

*chungha*. The slip books record one bamboo *chungha* measure (for liquids) from Commercolly (Kumarkhali) as containing 1 lb. 3 oz. 14 dr. of wheat.

*chuttack*. The slip books record a 1 *chuttack* measure as containing 1 oz 2 dr., and mention that 16 *chuttacks* = 1 *sultany pucka seer* (1 lb. 14 oz. 5 dr.) of wheat. Willis reckons the '*chittack*', now obsolete, at about 5 *tola*, subdivided into smaller denominations down to  $\frac{1}{4}$  *chittack* [see fig. 4.2a].

*collogah*. The slip books record that 1 *collagah* = 16 *seer*, 20 *collagah* = 1 *candy*.

*dokra*. Kelly records the *dokra* as a measure of weight for pearls.

*kulak*, of wood. The slip books give a *kulak* measure as 7 lb. 1 oz. 9 dr. of wheat.

*kullanjees*. 'Sixty-seven and a half *kullanjees*', 'seventy-five *kullanjees*', of brass

*masa*, of brass. Kelly records the *masa* as 'a weight in Hindostan'.

*mercal*,  $\frac{1}{5}$  *mercal*. A *mercal* = 10–12 *seer*.

*moolea*. Identified as half a *ticha*.

*paily*. The slip books record that 1 *paily* measure contains 5 lb. 1 oz. 9 dr. of wheat.

*parah*. Kelly gives 'a measure in Hindostan'. The slip books record that two brass *parah* measures, for grain, each contain 2 lb. 4 oz. 1 dr. of wheat.

*patee*. A grain measure.

*pootoor*. Kelly gives 'a weight in Travancore'.

*puddy*. The slip books record that two copper *puddy* measures, for grain, each contain 2 lb. 15 oz. 5 dr. of wheat.

*punjseer*, of iron. Kelly records *punjseery* or *punjarry* as a weight used at Bombay.

*ruttee*, of brass. A pearl weight used at Bombay.

*seer*,  $\frac{1}{16}$  *seer*,  $\frac{1}{8}$  *seer*,  $\frac{1}{2}$  *seer*,  $\frac{1}{4}$  *seer*, 2 *seer*, 10 *seer*, *adseer*, *cucha seer*, *pao/powe seer*, *pucka seer*, *sultany pucka seer*. *Pao* = a quarter; a *pucka seer* is 24 *pollams*. Slip catalogue records *seer* measures from 0 lb. 11 oz. 4 dr. to 2 lb. 9 oz. 5 dr. of wheat [see [figs 4.2b and c](#)].

*tail*,  $\frac{1}{2}$  *tail*. Kelly gives *tale* (or *tahil*) as 'a weight and money in China'. That in the collection is from Sumatra.

*tank*, 15 *tank*. A weight used at Bombay.

*tigal*. Kelly gives *tical* as 'money of account at Siam &c.' One from Pegu (Bagu) in the collection.

*tola*,  $\frac{1}{2}$  *tola*, 2 *tola*, 3 *tola*, 5 *tola*, 6 *tola*, of brass.

*thoolee*. Identified as half a *tangun*.

*ticha*. Identified as half a *thoolee*.

*tippree*,  $\frac{1}{4}$  *tippree*,  $\frac{1}{2}$  *tippree*. The slip books record a  $\frac{1}{4}$  *tippree* measure as containing 8 oz. 8 dr. Kelly identifies the *tippree* as a measure used at Bombay.

*vakeah*, of lead. Kelly gives *vakeah* as 'a weight in Arabia, and Abyssinia'.

*viss*, of brass. Kelly gives 'a weight in Trichinopoly'; the example in the collection is from Pegu.

The materials of manufacture are mostly wood (including bamboo), iron, brass and copper (the latter sometimes tinned), but a set of  $\frac{1}{4}$ ,  $\frac{1}{2}$  and 1 *seer* measures from Jungypore are of wickerwork covered with leather and a *chungha* measure from Commercolly is of wickerwork only.

In addition to those specified are a large number of weights unidentified by name, a set of 16 bird-shaped weights of silver ([fig. 4.3](#)) and brass (perhaps Burmese?), steelyards from Nepal and from Prince of Wales Island, a pair of scales of painted wood and a 'Case of scales and weights. Used by Persian doctors'.



Fig. 4.3. Weight, mounted with a pair of birds moulded and chased, in silver. Unprovenanced. 02674(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

### Measures of length

A smaller number of measures of length were recorded from a group found by the cataloguers in 1879 within a cupboard. They include the following, which again do not by any means represent a comprehensive selection of the measures in contemporary use:

*burgar daut*. Slip books give 'equivalent to  $19\frac{1}{8}$  inches'.

*guz*, and *guz*, *guz shaw*, *zillah guz*

*gajum*. Slip books give 'Equivalent to  $36\frac{1}{4}$  inches. Used for measuring cloth.'

*gaut*

*gurz*. Slip books give *gurz* measures of  $25\frac{1}{4}$  inches,  $26\frac{7}{8}$  in. ('or 34 country inches') to 36 in. One is annotated 'divided transversely into three parts each of  $\frac{1}{3}$  of an inch. Used for measuring cloths, carpets, etc.' Also a *tilla gurz* measure of brass, of  $26\frac{7}{8}$  in. 'divided into 24 *tussoos*, used for measuring cloth', and two measures of *and gurz*, 'each divided into 8 *Girrah*. Used for measuring cloth. Equivalent to  $16\frac{15}{16}$  inches.'

*Hath*. The slip books mention two *hath* measures (queried), one 'equivalent to 19 inches. Divided into 6 parts, and into 32 on one

edge' and one 'equivalent to 18 inches. Divided into 18 parts, and transversely into 4, measures  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch square.'

*kole*. Slip books identify one *kole* measure as 'Divided into 24 Borrels or Malabar inches. Used for measuring timber in Travancore and Cochin.'

*moora*. Slip books give for one example 'Equivalent to  $29\frac{7}{8}$  inches. Jointed in two; divided into 24 parts. Used by stonemasons'; others are 'Equivalent to  $32\frac{5}{8}$  inches ... and divided into 24 parts; used by carpenters'; 'Equivalent to  $33\frac{1}{6}$  inches. Used by stone-cutters'; and 'Equivalent to 34 inches ... used by carpenters'.

Of these, only the *gaz* is widely recognized, although its value varies widely – from 27 inches in Bombay to 36 inches in Bengal (33–4 inches in Akbar's reform).

In addition to these items, 'a wooden measuring rod' from Yarkand is listed, though without further detail. It keeps company with two surveying chains, each 'of 50 links, each link = 1 foot' – clearly belonging to British surveyors, either civil or military.

## Feeding the populace

As its political dominion extended over the sub-continent, the Company found itself confronted with certain responsibilities for its dependent populations – responsibilities which it signally failed to honour. Two-thirds of the populace from which the Company drew its tax revenues were engaged in agriculture, an industry that found itself repeatedly devastated by periodic failures in the monsoon on which it critically depended: within Bengal, a total of 12 famines and 4 severe scarcities are noted by Vinita Damodaran during the 90 years from the advent of Company administration to the end of Company rule in 1858.<sup>17</sup> During the particularly disastrous famine of 1770, undoubtedly precipitated by climatic factors but exacerbated by the disruption wrought on traditional economies by the Company's imposition of misguided agricultural policies and inflexible tax reforms, one-third of the entire population of Bengal alone starved to death. The Company's response was to increase the scale of revenues expected from the surviving population, ill-equipped as it was to meet these demands, with the result that every aspect of society was brought further to its knees in what was surely one of the most deplorable episodes in the history of the Company. Later, concerted attempts were made to improve the

stability and the yields of rice and other staples through new irrigation schemes, while the advent of the railway system allowed for more efficient distribution of resources. These efforts were registered in the museum, mostly among the biological collections rather than the artefacts,<sup>18</sup> but in the latter too some distant echoes can be traced.

### Agriculture and husbandry

Rice, grains, cotton and sugar cane had accounted for the bulk of cultivation in India long before the arrival of the British; under their regime, cotton and sugar came to form the basis of important export trades. In representing Indian agriculture within the museum, there was inevitably an extensive reliance on models in order to convey something of the nature and character (as well as the produce) of rural life – or the many rural lives eked out among communities reliant on the different staples. Implements for tilling the soils occupy the first place, whether as collected samples or as models. Ploughs (fig. 4.4) are the most universal of these, including some from as far north as Nepal; some are identified by name – *nangur* from Khandeish (Poona), *kulpa* from Indore, *hur* from Maygaloo [?] and so on. Some are specifically identified as rice ploughs, including a *nagur* from Dharwar. Drill ploughs are separately acknowledged, including *tanra* and *pabhar*, as well as seed drilling machines, *nayee*, *goatta*, *kooregay* or *koorgee* (one from Hooblee Dharwar) and *deephun*, identified as specifically for cotton planting. A ‘Man and two oxen ploughing’ – a model from Belgaum – serves to set them in context.

Bullock hoes are numerous – two, *kooloo*, employed in rice farming and one, *koolpee*, used in cotton cultivation, all from Dharwar, as well as an unprovenanced example designated *koontee* (or occasionally *kunttee*). A bullock grubber from Mysore must have been similar, and also a ‘Model of horse grubber, *goontavay*’, from Mysore. Harrows, rakes (*halavay*, *bulsal*, *moghree*) and weeding implements (*hoot*) appear, as well as drags (*kerun*), used to even out the ground to be cultivated. While the above are all traction implements, mostly pulled by bullocks, a large variety of handheld implements are also represented, either full-sized or as models: mattocks (*chick goodlie* and *dodda goodlie*, *fowra*), spuds, spades (*koreh*), clod-breakers (including a ‘clod crusher; a large stone with wooden handle’ from the Schlagintweit collection), rakes, hoes (the latter highly differentiated, including *arain*, *gitchi*, *khodali/kodaree*, *kunti*, *mamaty*, *nana*, *rampurie*, *rumbo*, *tangna* and (from Dharwar) *huttee koorgee*). One





Fig. 4.4. Model of a wooden plough. Masulipatam. 07973(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

hoe, *momaty*, is 'from the Maharaja of Vizianagaram': why it was singled out for presentation is unclear. A 'Palm-cutter's scythe' is listed, and also sickles and reaping hooks for rice and grain (*husson*, *koodgole/coodagaloo*, *willa*, one with a serrated edge and one with a green-lacquered handle); two grass cutters are named *kurpai* and *coorfa*. A 'Model of a crushing machine for sugar cane' comes from Mysore and a sugar cane press, from Bengal; models of a variety of machines are present for cleaning, husking and pounding rice, as well as hand oil mills and cotton gins.<sup>19</sup> One 'Agricultural model (in pieces)' may imply the former existence of a more extensive tableau.

Little attention has been paid hitherto to these simple implements: a remarkably comprehensive collection was displayed at the Colonial and Indian Exhibition of 1886, accompanied by models showing their respective methods of use: under 'Agricultural Scenes', the catalogue describes detailed models of a village in northern India, Bengal cultivators' homesteads and all the processes applied to preparing the ground, harvesting and preparing the crops for their various uses, followed by a very well-informed survey of the implements in use throughout India and beyond.<sup>20</sup>

In the India Museum the rural populace is again represented by numbers of models, some of them specifically acknowledging particular



castes and communities and others illustrating universal pursuits in a more generalized way: a man sowing seed, *coombies* (hill farmers) and bullocks from Belgaum (Belgavi), various buffalo cows with their calves – one with a woman milking, one with two drivers and four bullocks ploughing and harrowing, from Belgaum – a bullock with water bags and driver, a *bheestie* (water carrier) and bullock, a man and woman driving two oxen carrying grain, from Belgaum. There is also a model of a ‘Shepherdess churning milk’, from Madras. A primitive-sounding ‘cart with two stone wheels’ is represented from Bangalore (Bengaluru), while a ‘two-wheeled cart, *punchimee*, for conveying cotton’ was a present from the Maharaja of Vizianagaram.

Additional information on some of the terms used above is presented in the catalogue of the Vienna International Exhibition of 1873,<sup>21</sup> where, under ‘Agricultural and Horticultural Machines and Implements’, a collection of models forwarded to the exhibition from C. W. Anderson of the Dharwar Collectorate are listed. Among the ploughs, for example (some requiring up to eight bullocks to draw them), are a number that appear above: the *kooloo* here is described as being adapted for two bullocks, ‘for farther breaking up the soil, and also used without previous ploughing in the years when the black cotton soil is not ploughed’. The *deephun* (here *teeephun*), or drill, is ‘used for sowing cotton, drawn by two bullocks’. The plough *nangur* is ‘used for rice cultivation, worked with two bullocks. Rice land is ploughed with this two or three times every year.’ The *koolpee* is ‘drawn by two bullocks between the rows of cotton, to eradicate weeds by this means; also the soil about the roots of the cotton plants is loosened and piled up – a rough substitute for hoeing’. The *kolpa*, again a two-ox implement, is ‘used for rooting up the weeds between the rows of grain’. The degree of overlap, and the fact that so many of those in the India Museum also came from Dharwar, might suggest that Anderson had a hand in these too, although in their case the name of the donor is unrecorded.

Irrigation and agriculture are intimately linked in India, and the Company took some pride in the measures it introduced, somewhat belatedly, to improve the effectiveness and reliability of the water systems.<sup>22</sup> The most important and successful of these projects, the building of the Ganges Canal, was placed in the hands of Captain [later Sir] Proby Cautley; no doubt the 113 woodblocks and electro-types relating to the canal and held in the museum were those used in the production of his heavily illustrated *Report of the Ganges Canal Works from Their Commencement until the Opening of the Canal in*

1854 (London, 1860). The museum also held a 'Model of apparatus for raising water. *Hurrut*', produced at the Canal Foundry, Roorkee. The Canal Workshop and Foundry was established there in 1843;<sup>23</sup> work on excavating the Upper Ganges Canal had begun in the same place the previous year. A 'Model of Webster's Water Lift', a 'Model of a new pattern lock gate for canals' and a 'Model of Colonel Dyas' grating falls for canals' are all attributed to the same source. Initiatives undertaken elsewhere are represented by a 'Model of G. H. Faulkner's patent vertical face valve, with inclined rails', which was submitted by Faulkner – of the Cuttack Workshop Division (Irrigation Branch) – to the 1862 Vienna Exhibition, as catalogued by Forbes Watson.<sup>24</sup> The collection also included models of dams at Godaveri, Kistna (Krishna), Madras and Galingulah; a sluice or 'torrent-regulating gate' from the North-West Provinces; and a model of 'Fouracre's arrangement of sluice gates' from Bengal.

Smaller-scale wells, the source of many groundwater irrigation projects, provided with water-lifting devices (*noat*), are also included in the form of models, as well as a 'Model of [a] tank on stand, with ladder'. A 'Double waterwheel' from Sind may have driven machinery of some sort. A 'Model of [a] Persian wheel, *maccin*' from Mysore certainly refers to a water-raising device rather than a power source: the vertically oriented wooden wheel, placed over a well or reservoir and turned by ox power, drives an endless chain of buckets or pots which discharge into a trough from which the water is led by distribution channels into the fields. (Another entry is for a 'bucket with cord, for a Persian wheel'.) Such devices would have been locally constructed as needed; leather was commonly used for manufacture of the buckets.

A number of bridges feature among the models, representing some of the most challenging engineering projects faced by the Company engineers. Three are suspension bridges: little is known of the first two – a 'Model of a wire suspension bridge for foot traffic over hill torrents, erected over the Ghoran River, Kandra District', and a 'Model of *dehri*. A suspension bridge; Kangra District, Punjaub' – but the third is of unusual interest. Combining modern structural theory (derived from the metal suspension bridges then proliferating in Britain) with traditional materials, it was represented by the 'Model of a Shakesperian rattan bridge; North-west Provinces'.<sup>25</sup> The brainchild of Major Colin Shakespear, postmaster-general in Calcutta, this strong but lightweight structure used only locally available organic materials – timber, coir ropes for the suspension system and split bamboo for the

roadway. The prototype for Shakespear's bridges was erected on the esplanade at Calcutta, opposite the General Post Office; it was later 'taken to pieces, and transported eighty miles on the backs of bullocks to a torrent on the road to Benares, where it was set up in twenty-four hours'. Although their value to local communities was undisputed, their strategic advantage to the British – including their capacity to carry light cannon – did not go unremarked. Cheap and serviceable Shakespearian bridges enjoyed a period of considerable success in rural India before being overtaken by other technologies.<sup>26</sup>

The railway system – one of the most loudly proclaimed assets first introduced to India under Company rule – is almost completely unacknowledged in the collection. Although important today principally for its passenger services, the system was conceived as a means of transporting freight, integrating markets and ports, and servicing industry. Its impact, for better and worse, on the population of India was enormous, but can scarcely be detected here.

A 'sectional model of a locomotive engine, wood; used in Government School, Oude' must have given a rather rudimentary introduction to its principles of design. Of more professional significance is a 'Model of a railway carriage; Perambore Works', although it serves mostly to highlight the paucity of other such material. The slip-book entry for this model provides interesting additional detail: 'Model of a 1st class double Saloon Carriage with cooking apparatus, made in the Perambore workshops'. The works at Perambur, a suburb of Madras still dominated by the railway industry, were established in 1856. They supplied the Madras and Southern Mahratta Railway Company with carriages and locomotives for many years, and they continue to fulfil the needs of the Southern Railway to this day. The full potential of the railway system – not only for passenger traffic but also for the freight services that transformed the distribution of natural and manmade materials – would be developed under the administration of the India Office rather than the Company.

### Fishing and trapping

One of the most comprehensively 'lost' elements of the collections transferred to the South Kensington Museum is that associated with fishing, amounting to 139 catalogue entries, annotated in one sweep: 'All destroyed by order, 1887 & 1909 except a couple which were missing.' Considering the care with which they had been collected and documented, the loss is unfortunate, although the advanced

state of mildewed decay into which such a mass of netting and other organic materials might have fallen in the intervening years can well be imagined.<sup>27</sup>

Some nets have no more than a single descriptor – large, small, fine – and most are described simply as fishing nets. Two are specified as casting nets – one possibly from Poona and one from Debrooghur in Upper Assam; the latter is further specified as ‘of Doom Rhea fibre’.<sup>28</sup> More impressively, no fewer than 74 nets are identified by their local names (for which see the Appendix), from localities ranging from Jacobabad in the west to Rajshaye (Rajshahi), Dacca and Chittagong in the east. A single cane landing net is recorded from Darjeeling, in the north. Together, these clearly form the product of a sustained collecting exercise across the northern sub-continent by a person with a commendable attachment to recording both the material culture and the vernacular nomenclature of fishing, whether on inland lakes and rivers or on the coast.

A few examples of fishing lines (*mohijal*) are included in this rather systematic collection; in three instances (one identified as from Singapore and one from Madras), their material is specified as tanned cotton yarn, while one from Fandpur on the borders of Nepal is accompanied by a reel. Two fishing rods and lines come from Bengal and fish spears (*juti*) from Calcutta, Rajshaye and Fandpur, the latter with a bamboo shaft.

An unprovenanced model of a fish trap of bamboo (*ghoonee jal*) accompanied a further 17 full-sized fish traps (*chanci, chipa, dalangu, dhial, doharu, jaklore, jhakai, juluki, palo, paor, pola, seera, thooshee*) from Darjeeling, Assam, Bhagulpore and Rajshaye. A model fish basket, a fish hook (*gull*) from Poona and a leaf sieve from Jacobabad complete the associated equipment.

Ten bird traps (*basirphand, betar phand, dank mira phand* and *jhanghi*) and a bird snare are listed along with the fishing gear mentioned above and appear to have been collected as part of the same exercise. A model bird trap is also listed. All come from the area around the Gangetic delta. A single porcupine trap from Darjeeling, made of cane, is further listed among the fishing equipment. All were written off after becoming mildewed.

## Notes

- 1 Allen, 'The East India Company's settlement pictures'.
- 2 Day Books, 9 May 1842. For more on the introduction of steam to the EIC's service, see Peter Mitchell's 'Under pressure: Steamships, global power and communications, and the East India Company – Part 1' at <https://blogs.sussex.ac.uk/snapshotsofempire/2016/03/07/> [accessed 03.05.2023], and for a print of 'the Honble. Compys Steam Frigate Memmon', built 1841, see Royal Museums Greenwich, PAH8898.
- 3 'A visit to the East India Museum', *The Leisure Hour* 7 (1858), 470.
- 4 For *Hobson-Jobson*, a *pulwar* is merely 'one of the native boats used on the rivers of Bengal, carrying some 12 to 15 tons'.
- 5 Pinnacle here may be a corruption of the local term *pinish*.
- 6 The Day Books (12 September 1823) record the presentation by Richard Gregory of a model of 'a Morepunkey ... made in Calcutta by order of the Donor's father Robt Gregory Esqr formerly Chairman of the Court of Directors' (Day Books, 12 September 1823).
- 7 One of them may have been the 'Model of a Bengal Budgerow' presented by Richard Gregory along with that of the *morepunkey* (see note 6). Both are recorded as having been made in Calcutta by order of the donor's father.
- 8 *Hobson-Jobson*, subtitled 'a glossary of colloquial Anglo-Indian words and phrases, and of kindred terms, etymological, historical, geographical and discursive', was one of the most widely used reference books among the British community in India – especially more recent arrivals – in navigating their way through the terms most commonly encountered on an everyday basis.
- 9 Forbes Watson, *India ... in the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition*, 24.
- 10 *Catalogue of Ship Models*, 104.
- 11 Information gratefully received from Dr Rachel Boon, Curator of Technology and Engineering, Science Museum.
- 12 Prinsep, *Useful Tables*, 75.
- 13 Prinsep, *Useful Tables*, 77–8.
- 14 The equivalent values given by Kelly in his *Oriental Metrology* are for the most part expressed in terms of troy weight. It has not been considered useful to adopt those here. A draft public despatch of 29 September 1824 mentions that 'The Specimens of Weights & Measures which were sent to this Country by our several Governments in India under our Instructions' had been 'submitted for examination & comparison' to Kelly and that the Company had 'subscribed for several Copies of [his] Work': IOR: E/4/930, 431.
- 15 Coins themselves are largely absent from the material transferred to the South Kensington Museum: most certainly went to the British Museum and, therefore, escape notice here; others evidently were regarded as the province of the library rather than the museum. On 25 November 1868 (by which time acquisitions to the museum had long since ceased to be recorded in the library's Day Books, and the process of physical separation of the two institutions was in any case virtually complete), an entry records as 'Received from Accountant General' – that is, presumably by the library rather than the museum – 'Four cabinets and a box of Coins' as well as some items in gold and silver and a model of the Nassuch [Nassak] Diamond in glass (see [https://www.wikiwand.com/en/Nassak\\_Diamond](https://www.wikiwand.com/en/Nassak_Diamond) [accessed 03.05.2023]).
- 16 Willis, 'Weights of India'.
- 17 Damodaran, 'The East India Company ... in Bengal', 80.
- 18 See the extensive collection of rice samples which accumulated in the collection, as mentioned in Chapter 13.
- 19 In 1820 the museum took delivery of 'Two Pair Millstones &ca presented to Museum by Col. Worsley – with (letter from agents) description' (Day Books, 5 July 1820).
- 20 *Empire of India*, 20–30.
- 21 Forbes Watson, *Vienna International Exhibition* (1873), vol. III, 193–4.
- 22 Not all of the Company's enterprises in this field enjoyed equal success: a misguided plan to regulate the waters of the vast Ganges delta caused untold damage to the carefully balanced economy that had evolved there and untold loss of life: see D'Souza, 'Mischievous rivers'.

- 23 The workshop formed the basis for the later establishment of an engineering college and, ultimately, the University of Roorkee.
- 24 Forbes Watson, *Vienna Universal Exhibition*, 211.
- 25 The fate of the model is unknown. The Day Books (22 July 1825) record that the museum also received a 'Description of the Shakespearian Rope Bridge (in Bengal)' and two 'lithographic sketches' of other bridges transmitted by Major Shakespear. For an illustration, see a print by James Harfield Kernot after Cornelius Varley: British Museum, 1878,0511.991.
- 26 In 1824 a further 'model of a rustic bridge of tension and suspension, for foot passengers, light cattle, carriages, &c.' had been presented at Shakespear's behest to the museum of the Society of Arts; the model was the work of the same native Indian carpenter responsible for constructing the full-scale bridges. The Society responded by awarding Shakespear its Gold Vulcan Medal for his invention. The prototype bridge shown in the illustration was erected in March 1823 opposite the General Post Office in Calcutta: a full account of the bridge is given in Biden, Shakespear and Cheek, 'Portable bridge of suspension', where Shakespear notes that 'in proof of the extreme simplicity of the mechanism, the rope work of the bridge forming the catenary arch was twice set up and taken down, both by moonlight and torch-light, in the course of a few hours'. See also *Transactions of the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce* 43 (1824), xxiv–xxv.
- 27 The British Museum retains a model net (AS 1972,Q.1527), transferred there from the India Museum in 1879. With a cane framework and an overall length of 30 cm, the conical (?landing) net presents only a rough approximation to the real thing. Seemingly from the North-West Provinces, it is described as a 'Konajal for catching fish used in Nafshaye'.
- 28 Rhea, or ramie, a member of the *Urtica* family, is native to Assam and became widely recognized as a useful source of fibre. A related form was widely grown in the USA under the name of China grass. See Carter, *Ramie (Rhea)*, 3. Forbes Watson included it among the fibres identified as potentially profitable for the British administration.

## 5

# Industry and technology: inorganic materials

Within the India Museum – and, to a much greater extent, in the series of international exhibitions that followed on from the success of the 1851 Crystal Palace Exhibition – the crafts of India were brought into relationship with those of Europe in an unprecedented way. Many of the working methods, techniques and trade practices were viewed by some contemporaries as under-developed, inviting easy comparison with the cutting-edge technology that attracted medals for progressive European manufacturers at the world fairs. The juries at the 1851 Exhibition, for example, were struck by the juxtaposition of small-scale models of Indian craftsmen with their respective hand tools and the gigantic machines performing similar tasks in England at an industrial level – Nasmyth’s steam hammer next to a Bengali blacksmith at his anvil, and a hand-cranked sugarcane crusher dwarfed by its mechanical equivalent, a massive steam-driven mill.<sup>1</sup>

To a striking degree, however, the same exhibits prompted a more thoughtful dialogue that would be sustained over the following half-century between, on the one hand, the proponents of industrialization as the key to ever-greater efficiency, prosperity and domination of world markets and, on the other hand, those of a more philosophical turn of mind, for whom the Indian products embodied the very humanity that was perceived as already being sacrificed in contemporary European society in the name of industrial progress.<sup>2</sup> Very soon, contenders for both schools of thought could be found in India itself, either arguing for the wholesale revolution of craft production in order to avoid its obliteration by a tidal wave of imports from the West, or championing the complex traditional relationships that cemented the whole fabric of Indian society.<sup>3</sup> Tirthankar Roy has surveyed the role played by



the artisans themselves (and especially by acknowledged masters) in the processes of innovation and change – and in resistance to them – particularly from the turn of the twentieth century, identifying a greater degree of active engagement than has commonly been attributed to them.<sup>4</sup>

Critical opinion in London came out heavily in favour of the innate beauty of the Indian products, perceived as the distillation of generations of hereditary artisan production – to quote George Birdwood, as ‘essentially the same as we find them in the Ramayana and Mahabharata’.<sup>5</sup> Birdwood was a firm champion of what he perceived as the industries of traditional Indian societies, marked by an individuality that stood in contrast not only to the uniformity of factory-based production but to its loss of inherent integrity of design. Although his contentions are contested today,<sup>6</sup> they resonated strongly with the mores of the Arts and Crafts Movement of the later 1800s; the influence of the Indian objects – or at least a generic Indian style – continued to permeate British tastes until the end of the century, thanks to the enthusiasm of Owen Jones, William Morris, C. R. Ashbee and others.<sup>7</sup> At the same time, it has been noted that the government schools of industrial art established in the mid-century were founded ‘with the stated aim of increasing the market for Indian handicrafts abroad by adapting to European taste household items fashioned with Indian design and craftsmanship’<sup>8</sup> – a process that could have been designed to compromise the very values that appealed so strongly to those who championed the traditional aesthetic of Indian production.

While the later displays came to reflect aspects of the competing philosophies outlined above, for the first 50 years of its existence the museum’s curators seem to have focused their attention primarily on representing technologies and crafts purely as they were encountered on the ground throughout the sub-continent. On occasion, however, they too were drawn into more direct engagement with the mercantile world, for as early as 1813 the museum received ‘sixty-one specimens of Indian sacrificial and domestic utensils “as patterns for the manufacturers”’,<sup>9</sup> an observation that extends this aspect of the museum’s role to a surprisingly early date. From the mid-century, the march of industrialization was most evident in the (comparatively few) exhibits emanating from the railway works and canal-building projects and their respective training institutions in India, but more insidious inroads can be detected, for example, in the machine-made yarns that began to infiltrate – with devastating effect on local economies – the long-established textile industries of India.

There seems much to recommend the degree to which the India Museum succeeded – albeit imperfectly – in representing so wide a spectrum of industrial arts and also, it may be said, in preserving a considerable amount of detail as to the provenance and nomenclature of individual exhibits.<sup>10</sup> Six years after the absorption of the collection into the South Kensington Museum, Sir Edward Buck commented on a decision to introduce an organizing method for this kind of material at the Colonial and India Exhibition that was primarily based on geography. His observation is worth repeating and expanding upon:

The cause of this departure from the usual system is to be found in the circumstance that in India the Art manufactures of any one place are, as a rule, so different in character from those of any other place that they ought not to be confounded by being brought under the same group. It is no exaggeration to say that a particular kind of Art Ware is often manufactured by one or two families only in a single locality.

Sir Edward also commented (somewhat paternalistically) on the endemic difficulties experienced by the officers appointed to gather material for the Exhibition – difficulties that would have been encountered both by some of those who had favoured the India Museum with gifts and, indeed, by those involved in supplying the earlier industrial exhibitions from which new exhibits evidently passed to the India Museum with increasing frequency:<sup>11</sup>

No artisans in the world are more dilatory or less anxious to advertise their wares than the artisans of India. Except in the case of a few large dealers who have acquired the habit of dealing with English firms, liberal advances and constant supervision are required for the production of almost every one of the exhibits which the Art-ware Courts contain. The advantage of advertisement being little understood, the manufacturer has no incentive to send his wares for exhibition to a foreign country of which he has but a vague idea at the best, and as it is seldom the practice for any Indian artisan to keep any stock of his wares in hand, almost every single exhibit has had to be specially ordered by a Government official.

Despite its unsympathetic tone, the passage serves as a useful reminder of the dangers of seeking too close an equivalence between

the products of societies in which production took place under very different cultural and industrial norms and those arising from a rapidly evolving mercantile landscape which, in the course of the life of the India Museum, changed beyond recognition. For the most enterprising manufacturers, markets expanded on an international scale, while the village economies in which the majority operated risked obliteration from oppressive taxation and regulation at the hands of the East India Company and later administrations.

The capacities of the museum – any museum – to represent so vast a topic as the *Industrial Arts of India*, especially when subject to the micro-regional variations commented upon by Buck, were recognized by George Birdwood in his volume of that title, compiled (or rather revised and expanded from an earlier text) with impressive speed following the transfer of the collections to the South Kensington Museum and published in 1880, in which he aimed to set out in print what could not always be achieved within the museum setting:

On examining the India Museum collections in detail, and finding how incomplete they were for a systematic representation of the manufacturing resources of India, I saw that what was most wanted was not a handbook to the contents of the Museum, but an index of its deficiencies; and I therefore resolved to virtually republish a portion of my *Handbook*,<sup>12</sup> with new information, as the second part of the present work. Although its preparation has been hurried – (the Science and Art Department received charge of the Museum only on the 1st of January last) – I hope that it is a fairly trustworthy index of every district and town in British India where manufactures of any special artistic quality are produced; and I believe it will prove of some assistance to the officials of the Science and Art Department in completing the India Museum collections, and to the general public as a guide to the places in India where they may obtain objects of genuine native art.<sup>13</sup>

Birdwood was, of course, quite right to highlight the limitations of museum collections in any attempt to represent in encyclopaedic form the totality of so many diversified industries; by his day, the government of India had indeed instituted a series of surveys that sought to document the whole of the productive economy, by registering not only the range of manufactured products but also the detailed social and economic structures within which they were produced, traded

and consumed<sup>14</sup> – an exercise whose scope far exceeded anything that could have been contemplated in the museum context. Without the objects themselves, however, these paper exercises would always lack an essential physical dimension: how well the museum succeeded – or failed, in Birdwood’s opinion – in supplying this requirement can be judged from the evidence of the collections themselves.

A striking feature of the 1880 catalogue is the way in which the compilers strove to preserve the local names for even the most commonplace objects, as recorded initially by their respective collectors or donors and later assiduously noted by India Museum curators. This attention to documentation seems further to support the contention that the whole collection had come to be pervaded by a quasi-ethnographical concern that complemented the declared – fundamentally economic and mercantile – programme of the collection. In the present-day context, when significant parts of the collection no longer survive, the documentary record continues to hold possibilities for further and more precise identification and interpretation by those with appropriate linguistic skills in the several languages involved – and with the ability to disentangle their nineteenth-century phonetic renderings.

## Resources and products

Although finished goods lay at the heart of the India Museum’s appeal and formed the principal thrust of its commercial mission, the vast primary industries of the sub-continent also played a part in the displays. Charles Wilkins had taken care to include in his specification for the museum a stipulation that ‘The Mineral Productions will, in the first place, include specimens of the ores of all the metals and semi-metals of the East, as well as of the metals themselves when found in their perfect state in the earth’, but hardly ventured into their subsequent treatment. The extraction industries presented perhaps the most challenging problems of display, to be answered mainly with samples of the raw materials and with the aid of models. Hence, models of an iron-smelting furnace and of copper-smelting and refining furnaces from Rajputana illustrated the processes involved, while the few mining implements listed included a miner’s hammer, a wedge of iron, various iron bars, a ladle and two steel punches.<sup>15</sup> A useful donation was received in 1835 from Major James Franklin of the Bengal Cavalry.<sup>16</sup>

Observations on several Iron mines in the central part of India, with an account of the Indian mode of manufacturing Iron, and plans of the machinery, implements &c. – Accompanied by  
1 Small Map  
By 2 Small Drawings of Implements  
By 1 box of Specimens of Iron Ore from the Mines of Jubulpore, Katola and Tendukaira.

## Metalworking industries

Hindu aversion to ceramic cooking pots (as mentioned further below), together with the prescribed use of metal vessels in religious observance, combined to bolster a flourishing and widely distributed industry in the production of vessels in beaten copper, brass and other copper alloys. Many of the functions performed by glass in the West were fulfilled here by copper and its alloys. Writing of the Punjab and Kashmir in particular at around the time of the dispersal of the India Museum, John Lockwood Kipling observed that pottery had also come to be eschewed in favour of metalwork in the homes of well-to-do Muslims, among whom the same predilections had begun to prevail.<sup>17</sup> He further formulated a general rule that ‘Hindus cook and eat in brazen vessels, and Mahomedans in tinned copper ware’ – a characterization he extends to the craftsmen themselves, among whom ‘the brass worker is consequently usually Hindu, and the coppersmith Mahomedan’, while conceding that ‘there are many of both races who work in both metals’. Tin workers, including those involved in tinning copper vessels, were said then to be exclusively Muslim. Today stainless steel is almost universally preferred.

In addition to the craft tools and implements listed in the catalogue, surgical instruments are well represented. A ‘Box of barber-surgeon’s instruments’ from Lahore perpetuates the earlier British concept of the non-specialized medical practitioner, at a time when in Europe most physicians had already become almost exclusively graduates; another group includes a barber’s bowl of brass, a lancet case of painted wood and a red velvet bag. A further box with eight surgical instruments is more specifically identified as for obstetric use, and an entry for ‘Two surgical instruments. Specula Saquinæ, with two small metal combs’ from Lahore may also have been for gynaecological use. Several other boxes containing between 3 and 45 surgical instruments are unspecified as to their use; one item from the Punjab is described as ‘a circular

steel plate, used in cases of paralysis'. Perhaps belonging to the field of more popular folk medicine is a 'Box containing [a] set of ear and nose boring instruments, viz., knife, tweezers, cutters, and three bundles of rings', from Lahore. One box contains 13 dentist's instruments. Astronomical instruments, appearing in smaller numbers, are further discussed below.

Little information survives concerning the donation of the more prosaic utensils reaching the museum, with the exception of one extensive gift received in 1817:<sup>18</sup>

Rec<sup>d</sup> from Countess of Hastings (per Mr Pitt) 1 case containing as below:

Pansankha (& Tarpudi) copper; Cutchin pot. A kitchen or boiling pot; A ~~patra or plate~~ Gong. brass; D<sup>o</sup> patra or salver; A bowl; Brass Hookah; A bell; Brass betle pot; Katari pot – copper; Tali or sort of Patra; An Argha of large dimensions; D<sup>o</sup> – smaller size; A Lamp. brass; A bowl (colora); A larger bowl; A Tali or patra in copper; A small bowl; A patra; A Kumbha or water pot – brass; A Kitchen or boiling pot – copper; A large salver – copper; Pik Dhammi – spitting pot. brass; A small Gurguri or hubble bubble hooka – brass; A sacrificial ladle – brass; Three vases or utensils to contain liquids, with spouts. brass; A lutra. brass; D<sup>o</sup> – chased. brass; One Vase or. brass; ~~One~~ A brass cup & cover; A lamp stand; An idol holding 5 lamps. brass; A cocoa nut – formed as the bowl of a hooka; A Wooden stand; A Hooka pot. brass; A Lutra. brass; A patra – brass; D<sup>o</sup> – copper.

While silver plate is reasonably well represented in the collection, gold vessels are few indeed.<sup>19</sup> Earlier production was doubtless centred around Delhi and the princely courts, but by the time the India Museum was dispersed, it seems that, with the exception of Cuttack and Dacca, gold and silver plate was produced only to order and not speculatively.<sup>20</sup> Cuttack in particular remained famous for its filigree work, which was so labour-intensive that much of the production cost lay in the labour rather than the material. Enamelling was among the skilled techniques widely practised, using methods developed by generations and somewhat to the astonishment of European observers.<sup>21</sup>

## Iron

Kitchen utensils are well represented in the iron collection: several items were acquired in 1873, probably from the international exhibition held in London in that year; together with an annotation in the slip books for a single scraper, they suggest that a deliberate attempt was being made 'to illustrate domestic utensils'. An iron 'oven or fireplace' from Bombay might have formed a centrepiece for such a display. A small shovel (*kaltha*) is recognized as for turning food; there are several sorts of ladles (*hata*, *jharrā*), for serving rice, for water, for frying purposes, etc.; spoons, including a *kulchee dawool* 'for stirring food, used by Hindus'; a scraper (*powdee*) for cooling *gur* (sugar cane juice); and a selection of 18 knives, cutters and scrapers, for cutting fish, etc., 'to illustrate edged tools'. There are bowls, with and without handles (*khacai*); a circular dish; two-handled cauldrons (*kahdey*, *karhae*); pans for frying and for baking – *chattoo*, *sawn*, *tawa*; sieves (*jharjee*); ladles (*pata*); strainers (*jully*); and a circular plate for making *dosas* (*thosai kut*). There are also miscellaneous items such as scissors (seven pairs, one bird-shaped), some two dozen padlocks (two cylindrical, two fish-shaped and one surmounted by animals, one named *toomkoor*) and other locks, together with keys; clasp knives; 'slicers'; stands (*choomla*) for unspecified purposes; many betel cutters, some with brass handles but all with steel blades; steels for igniting tinder (*chukmaki*); a candlestick; a prayer wheel of iron with a wooden handle; and so on. Brass openwork is combined with an iron pen case. Two rather specialized categories of equipment are represented by an 'implement for collecting lamp black, *kajabrata*', and by two *kadjul nattahts* – holders for lamp black, presumably for use by a craftsman in applying decoration or for picking out the ornament incised on ivory and other materials. One set of blacksmith's tools (five items) from Mirzapore, and models of a further 29 implements and blacksmith's tools, provide background context for the ironwork.

A small number of vessels for industrial usage are also included: an iron box for containing lime; a 'melting pot' with handle; and several cylindrical measures.

A group of particular interest is formed by more than a dozen items of steel damascened with gold (*koftgari*), all from Sialkot in the Punjab and clearly assembled to illustrate the products of that particular industry: they include a basket with a handle and wreath of gilt metal; a *tazza*; a two-handled vase and cover; two caskets and

covers; a paperweight, paper knife, inkstand and pen-rack, as well as a 'paper clip'; four brooches, a cross, bracelet and sword-handle. The only comparable item is a jewel box executed in a similar technique, but from Myhere in Bundelkhand (fig. 5.1). The *koftgari* technique, widely used in the decoration of arms and armour, was succinctly described by John Forbes Watson in his *Classified and Descriptive Catalogue* of the Indian Department of the Vienna Exhibition of 1873:

The pattern on the steel is engraved by the hand with a fine-pointed tool, called 'cherma'. The gold is beaten out into a very thin wire, which is laid into the surface so engraved. The surface is then scraped to an exact level, by an instrument called 'Tor' or 'Silat'. The article is then exposed to a moderate amount of heat, and when taken from the fire is rubbed and polished with a smooth stone called 'mohair' ... Koftgari work is produced chiefly in Goojerat and Sealkote, in the Punjab; that of the latter place being distinguished by higher finish.<sup>22</sup>

## Copper

Although there is no suggestion that the collection was displayed in such a way, an initial group of material may be recognized here in the copper kitchen equipment listed in the catalogue of 1880. This includes a two-handled cauldron, various cooking pots, pans and utensils, a number of them identified by name (*degahee*, *deich*, *durrah*, *gung*, *halwan*, *handa*, *inwaie*, *kaharahee*, *koolpee*, *tope*, *taula hari*), a milk pot with a spout and lid, two two-handled frying pans (*ee*, *kudhayee*) and one vessel from Nepal (*phoosee*) reserved specifically for boiling rice. A number of the above are identified as having handles, a refinement that Kipling attributes to European influence, Indian cooks having not hitherto felt a need for them; others are recorded as having a spout, including one from Indore labelled *ustawah* and another termed *thook-chatty*. A *katorah*, a copper basin from Indore, and a *kudhayee* from Bombay perhaps belong with the kitchen equipment, but basins with a foot (*karunda*) were more probably intended for display or for ritual, as were those with engraved decoration.<sup>23</sup> Strainers (*challum*) also belong with the kitchen equipment. This group was again comprehensively written off from the V&A's collections in the late 1930s, when many of the objects were distributed to art schools around the British Isles.

Other vessels are tinned on their interior surface (a refinement that might have to be renewed more than once in the lifetime of a





Fig. 5.1. Jewel box, iron damascened with gold and silver, with handles and lock. Myhere. 02721(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

well-used cooking pot). The majority of these come from Bombay, but there is also a group from Karachi – including cooking utensils, pans, a dish, bowl and cover, strainer and ladle – that hints interestingly at more systematic collecting.

Ladles appear with various names (*churucha*, *cufgeer*, *kusi*, *moodley*), though it seems unclear whether some of these were for domestic use or employed in ritual observance. Equally uncertain is whether some items were for preparing and cooking or for serving food – or perhaps both. There are a great many vessels and bowls (*jumeah*, *kudhayee*), some with feet and/or with a cover and set on a pedestal, engraved or with inlaid decoration, which are surely for the presentation of food, fruit or sweetmeats; there are also many plates (*khone*, *tabuka*) – including several with embossed decoration, some with tinning and one with scalloped edges, silvered and gilded – and dishes (*lungry*, *parath*). A distinctive tinned copper bowl with a conical cover, ‘engraved with figures beneath arcades and inscriptions’, was thought to have originated in Persia. The uses of other vessels – a *dolchee* ‘in four parts’, a vessel with three cells – are uncertain, as also a circular box and cover (*dubda* or *dubba*) and a box and cover ‘with loops for slinging’. Several elliptical boxes with covers come from Rangoon (Rangon), some of them inlaid with silver). Spoons include two with perforated bowls.

A coffee pot of tinned copper is accompanied by a teapot of large size, also tinned, presented by the Nawab of Tonk; a second teapot, from Darjeeling, is ornamented with plaques and bands of embossed and chased brass.<sup>24</sup> Cups (*payala*) are represented in tinned copper and in copper and brass combined; eight beakers (*punch patra* or *patree*) are accompanied by a – presumably smaller – drinking vessel designated (somewhat unsatisfactorily) as a *tazza*, from Nepal.

Water vessels (*badna*, *ghagur*, *handa*, *poaria*, *sooryee*, *tupala*) are numerous – spouted pots, long-necked goglets with engraved ornament, ewers with lids, similarly ornamented. One water vessel with a spout, from Assam, is in copper inlaid with silver; another, unprovenanced, carries engraved inscriptions. A vessel (*kosa*) from Hourah is a container for water to be used in pouring libations and for ritual bathing of the idols. A spoon (*pulee*) with a handle in the form of a cobra's head seems likely to have been used in these same ablutions; another spoon is described specifically as 'used by Brahmins', but a further example (*chummuch*) from Oude, 'used by Mahomedans', must have been put to other uses. Some 10 *lotas* – spherical-bodied vessels with a narrow mouth, occasionally (but not invariably) with a handle, spout or foot – are listed in copper, including examples engraved or tinned. Their status as domestic or ritual vessels seems fluid, and some may equally well have served household purposes.<sup>25</sup> The same is true of the trays in the collection, one of which (*tat*), from Hourah, is described as 'for bathing Hindu idols'. Water bottles similarly might cross the boundaries between domestic and ritual use, although most are certainly for carrying holy water – see, for example, one chased with representations of Vishnu's incarnation, from Madras, and one in *gunja jumna*<sup>26</sup> of copper and brass, from Ahmednuggur (Ahmednagar).<sup>27</sup> A stand in the form of a tortoise no doubt also belonged in a ritual context.<sup>28</sup> A dish (*kunda*) is identified as 'a receptacle for water offered to idols'.

Lamps and taper-stands too may have been domestic in nature, though one lamp from Benares is described as being 'used in idol worship'. Typical Indian lamps and candle-stands are tall and columnar, rather in the fashion of (but seemingly not derived from) European products and distinguished from each other only by the presence of a cup (for oil) or a socket (for a taper or candle) at the top. Pillar candle-stands in particular are columnar in form, generally with a few circumferential mouldings.<sup>29</sup>

Two items in tinned copper seem to belong in a commercial rather than a domestic context – a vessel and a boiler, 'used in distilling': both come from Furuckabad, in the North-West Provinces.

## Brass

Two model ovens (*choola*) in brass are listed. A great many 'stands' cast in brass appear, most of them without further qualification. Some, at least, are identified as fire-stands, one with a handle (*hoopdham*); another, with tongs and a shovel attached by chains, is named *chegdy*. Otherwise, we know that some had three feet (*barah*, *tironee*) and others had four, but not much more, although some have local names that doubtless hold the key to their identification (*bagote*, *neeranjune* and a tripod stand, *barah*). Other stands are certainly for ritual use and are not domestic items, including one (*buli patra*) 'for making offerings of food to idols', from Kathmandu, and one (*kumul*) 'for an idol', from Ahmednuggur.

The *batterie de cuisine* in brass follows broadly the range of types already encountered in copper, augmented by three model ovens (*choola*), which no doubt served in the displays to set the context for this material. (A model pestle and mortar probably performed a similar function.) Two charcoal burners may have been for domestic use. Three 'shovels' are most probably kitchen implements, as are a brass spoon (*pulee*) and several ladles (*hatta*, *kusi*, *moodley*, *wogeale*); a hand mill, sieves (*taulah jhanjrah*) and a strainer (*jahrah*) also belong in the kitchen context. An oil vessel (*keefdy*) from Indore and a footed oil cup, *malli*, from Nepal, are accompanied by a bottle and two oil spoons, as well as a vessel for holding ghee.

Cooking pots, probably from Sylhet, are identified by the names *bathule* and *deck*; others are named as *bahakna*, *bahakna/bahugna*, *chatu hari*, *deek*, *gung* and *taulah hari*. Deep brass pans (*rang*) come from the Garo Hills, Assam. One entry is for 'Cooking vessels, consisting of seven bowls united', of brass, tinned inside, and two others are for two-handled cooking pots (one with cover); a *pachioli chatty* from Madras is described as 'four pots with one handle'. A single vessel for boiling rice comes from Calcutta, but few others merited detailed description. Three samovars are listed, two of them given a specifically Russian origin, although it may be noted that by the later nineteenth century, at least, they were also being manufactured at Peshawar – an interesting manifestation of the encroaching Russian influence from the north that caused so much angst among the British.<sup>30</sup> A pot with a spout, *gurroah*, comes from Nepal.

Again, there are many dishes with imprecise functions – basins (*chilumchee*, *gamla*, *mechla*), bowls on feet (*phool*), dishes (*purath*), some on feet, plates circular and octagonal, salvers (*jhala*, *bogi jhala*,



Fig. 5.2. Lota of brass, with engraved ornament. Benares. 02835(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

*parat*), trays (*shalbot*) and vessels of unspecified use (*teembee*). One bowl (*jour bahler*) from Calcutta is specifically for rice.

Water vessels are as numerous in brass as in copper, some handled and others not. Several are named, including a *battora*, two designated *ghotee* or *chotee* from Hooghly, as well as *chada*, *dhothaki ghurra*, *mitah ghurra*, *iomboo*, *handa kulsee*, *kalos* and *soorhee*. A ewer with a spout is named *garn*. Some 50 *lotas* (fig. 5.2) are included, some engraved, one ribbed and one tinned, and one from Benares specified as ‘for offering water to idols’. One ribbed washing basin may be for ritual ablutions; another with a perforated cover is termed *chillumchee*. Three wine pots with spouts include two from Nepal (*untee*, *thopoocha*) and a third, unprovenanced, with a fluted body (*dhala*). Decoration on these and other ritual vessels is frequently in the form of flowers, or of images of the gods. A plate, *tubukdee*, is specifically identified as ‘for covering water vessels’. A water bottle with a screw top (*goojah*) is of brass inlaid with zinc or copper.

There are over 60 cups in the lists, a few identified by specific name (*phool*, *phoolpatra*, *wookpurnee*), one of them (*dhoupdan*)

ornamented with festoons and masks. Some cups are provided with covers (*pittullu watiacha gunj*) and a few have a foot; one is specifically 'used by Brahmins'. Beakers amount to a dozen examples, some with covers, but one (*panchpatra*) is designated 'for bathing idols', so clearly not all are exclusively for household use. A few goblets (*guttos*) occur, one 'fixed on plate'. Others named but not described include a *jambia* and a *chemboo* (*chembu*) with engraved ornament.

As mentioned, a number of vessels listed above are designated as for ritual rather than domestic use, though in a society in which shrines might be found in any household, the performance of ritual observance is not a practice to be assigned purely to a temple setting. Several bottles with stoppers, some designated as fitting with a screw (a refinement more easily produced in cast brass than in beaten copper), are certainly reserved for carrying holy water, and others probably are – specifically, in the case of one water vessel (*gunga jullee*) from Benares 'for carrying Ganges water'.<sup>31</sup> A function of some of the many vessels with spouts is given by one item (*abishakpatra*), from Benares: 'for pouring water on idols'; the same name is applied to two vessels with pointed bottoms, similarly used to trickle water through a hole in the base – perhaps a lustration vessel to be hung above a Shiva linga – and a similar function is performed by a cup (*arghija*), 'from which water is poured out as an offering to the sun'. One 'holy water holder' is designated *kosa*. Half a dozen brass spoons (*gunga jumnee pulle*) are included. A 'fountain and syringe' from Hatwa belong in a similar milieu. One spouted pot with a handle from Nepal is recorded as having been used by 'Fakeers'. Three containers (*chunouti*) are for the storage of sandalwood dust, to be used in the preparation of paste as an offering at a shrine.

A number of such shrines, three of them fragmentary, would perhaps have been for personal devotion, but the status of other items is ambivalent: they include an incense burner, globular, engraved and pierced (see the 'rolling lamp' below); a stand (*kumul*) for an idol and another stand in the form of a tortoise, 'used for keeping the god Shunkh'; a plate and a tray are 'used in idol worship'. More likely from temple contexts are a footed dish, 'used in religious ceremonies', and a vase, *buli patra*, 'for making offerings of food to idols', both from Kathmandu; an unprovenanced 'chair, small, for a god'; and three stamps, *choppas* (fig. 5.3), 'with the names of idols; used for printing', from Nuddea (Nadia). Stamps of the latter type were used by Vaishnavites to imprint their bodies with divine names or attributes, using a dilute paste of sandalwood or chalk. From Burma came two 'pestles, with heads in the form of deities'. One sceptre from Darjeeling is





**Fig. 5.3.** Stamp (*choppa*), of brass, depicting the footprints of Vishnu (*Vishnupada*) enclosing auspicious symbols. L 6.3 cm. Nuddea (Nadia). 04614(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

designated *dorjee*; another is merely described as ‘small’. Trays include two ‘in three divisions, surmounted with a cup, *cuchola*, used in idol worship’. Two stands from Ahmednuggur, one in the shape of a tortoise and the other (*sheshguldharee*) featuring a five-headed copper snake, most likely served as pedestals for household gods, while one example from Madras, square and standing on four feet, is described specifically as ‘for idols’. The stand itself commonly takes the form of a lotus flower, sometimes supported by figures of birds or, as here, animals.

Lamps and lights occupy a similarly liminal position: while some are designated as ‘used in idol worship’, when they are presented in front of the god during worship, the status of others must remain ambivalent. One is designed ‘for three wicks’, while a particularly elaborate one from Benares incorporates five cups for an equal number of wicks (fig. 5.4). Several taper-stands (*wodie bate danoo*) may well have stood before the household gods, but a pricket candlestick seems more likely to be for everyday use; three torch holders, from Indore (*masaldan*) and from Nepal (*chirog dan*), sound more appropriate to a public setting. Of the many oil lamps (*deepdan*, *halkartee*, *samaee*), some have ornamental backs, while others carry decoration, for



**Fig. 5.4.** Lamp of brass for five wicks, held by a female figure. Unprovenanced (perhaps the 'idol holding five lamps' given by the Countess of Hastings, as mentioned on p. 106). H 19 cm. 823:/(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

example in the form of a trident (a symbol of Shiva). One rolling lamp was formerly identified as an incense burner.<sup>32</sup> A number of lamps are supported on pedestals or stands, one by 'the figure of a deity', while a further pair of lamps from Madras is 'formed of female figures holding a dish'; a few are surmounted by bird figures, and some are associated with trays. Among the most elaborate are a pentagonal lamp from Madras 'consisting of saucer and stand surmounted by a peacock' and a 'standard lamp, consisting of 18 painted figures of peacocks on brackets, surmounted by a larger painted peacock'. One item is identified as a camphor lamp.

A dozen bells (one from Indore designated *ghuntah*), including several with decorative handles – surmounted by kneeling or seated deities, 'Brahmin' bulls, and other figures – marked the end of the solemn rituals. They are accompanied by various gongs and rattles. A 'basket with cover' in brass is almost certainly designed to hold flowers dedicated to a deity.

Brass boxes (*dubee*), some with covers (*panpooda*), clearly performed a range of functions – some again associated with ritual, as in holding the powdered turmeric and so on to be sprinkled over the idols, camphor to be burned before them, sugar for concluding the ceremony, but most such uses are unrecorded. One (*dubla*), octagonal in form, is identified as a snuffbox. In general, the cataloguers have concentrated on the boxes' visible characteristics – whether square, circular or octagonal, 'in form of fish with 3 feet', 'with an embossed cover', 'with a conical top' (one of the latter, *sumpoosta*, 'for a god'). Others are accorded more specific functions: spice boxes with multiple compartments, often heart-shaped in outline and five or six in number, are well represented (one designated *chowfoola*), the compartments usually surmounted by the figure of a bird (fig. 5.5), though in one case, termed *soogund patty*, with a small rosewater sprinkler in the centre. A less common type is represented by one, termed *killee*, from Ahmednuggur, 'in the form of a mango, with a screw top', perhaps for holding lime paste for making the *pan* quid. A circular box with a cover and with engraved ornament, from Coimbatore, served particularly to hold 'consecrated pebbles';<sup>33</sup> others included a tooth powder box (*cassovie*), in the form of a turtle; a pill box in four parts; two snuff boxes; a lime box and cover; and various *pan* boxes: octagonal with engraved and pierced ornament, from Benares; with a cover attached by a chain, from Assam; another more specifically from Cachar; and yet another, engraved and with a brush attached. *Huqqas* (hookahs), considered at greater length in Chapter 7, are represented by a dozen brass bases – fluted, engraved or gilt; some are described as brass plated, and one has three feet. Spittoons with embossed or incised ornament would have formed necessary adjuncts of this activity in discreet society.

Domestic appliances from about the house include two smoothing irons. Pomanders and perfume sprinklers (*golabdan*) or rosewater sprinklers (*golabpash*) are designed to bring fragrance to the household. A rather specialized device is a set of perforated rollers (*rangola*), 'used for decorating the floors of houses by means of coloured powders'.

The many plates catalogued (one named *koonichee*) include some with engraved decoration and a bowl with figures and emblems in relief; a salver (*raekabi*) is engraved with palm leaves. Some 20 bowls include a few fluted or engraved, some with feet and/or handles and two specifically for rice (*jour bahler*). One entry is for 'Cups, twenty, and one cover, *pitullu watiacha gunj*, from Ahmednuggur'. Over a dozen trays – square, triangular, octagonal, oblong, with four feet, 'pine-shaped' on casters, one with an indented edge – could belong in either context; only one is specified as 'for sweetmeats'. The same is





Fig. 5.5. Spice box of brass, five compartments with lids, surmounted by a bird. Madras. 04840:1-2(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

true of several decorative vases, one with a cover, one with four feet and one (*angdan*) described as 'two-handled, for holding fire' (fig. 5.6a); one vase 'with scalloped edges and mask ornament' was said to have been 'used by Fakeers' in Nepal, and another, from Gyah, is identified as a flower vase.

Inkstands and other writing equipment proved popular in brass as in other materials. One has an ink bottle attached by a chain, while others are accompanied by pen cases. One inkstand, from Indore, is named *kharayah*.

Items for use in personal toilet include two boxes with mirrors inside the cover; a hand mirror of polished metal in engraved brass frame; two scent boxes; one antimony holder with the top in the shape of a parrot; and another box in the form of a bird, for the same purpose.<sup>34</sup> Several brass rubbers are included, one (*unzree*) for rubbing the body while bathing, and two foot rubbers with perforated ornament, surmounted by the figure of a bird.



**Fig. 5.6.** Metal vessels. (a) Brass vase, *angdan*, two-handled, 'for holding fire'. Bombay. 04361(IS); (b) Bronze teapot or spouted ewer, with a domed hinged lid. Unprovenanced. 04288(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

## Bronze

The smaller number of items identified as of bronze (or partly of bronze) comprises mostly items from the peripheral areas of the sub-continent or beyond, reflecting the lesser importance of this material in the manufacture of vessels in India itself. These include a vase with a dragon in relief – identified as Japanese – and a tower bell, the eye of which is ornamented with dragons, perhaps also from East Asia; several items from General Goldsmid's collection, some or all from Sistan (a bowl with zig-zag and leaf ornament from Banjar and a lamp in the form of a camel; a vase-shaped lamp (*suckoonda*) from Kathmandu; a 'sacrificial vase or lamp, ancient, with representations of Vishnu Garuda, Bhavani, the snake Ananta serving as a handle' from Nepal; a 'teapot and cover, with plaques and bands of pierced brass, with silver figures and medallions and set with turquoises', from Tibet) and a further teapot (fig. 5.6b). Other items in bronze include a bell, 'for temple worship, bronze plated'; a lamp, 'supported by a figure of an elephant on stand'; two pen cases; a dozen plates, some engraved with conventionalized birds or foliage – from Madras and Dharwar (Dharwad); two spoons of copper and brass; and a few other miscellaneous items.

## Bell metal

Present-day practice tends to avoid the characterization of copper alloys as bell metal (or indeed as bronze) in the absence of detailed metallographic analysis, but a few items are so identified in the catalogue, and the high-tin alloy (usually with a ratio of about 4:1 in favour of copper) is widely recognized within India. All the entries here are for small domestic items, none of which would particularly demand production in such a metal: presumably, the surface appearance of the metal alone drove the demand for it. They include a footed dish and a 'lamp on stand and spoon with chain' from Travancore; four salvers (*jhalas*); a *lota* from Assam, bowls (*batis*) from Bengal and Coorg; a milk cup (also *bati*), from Hooghly; a Cachar tobacco box and cover and a *pan* box and cover; and a goblet on stand (*baitak*) from Hooghly – their distribution as random as their typological makeup. Mukharji characterizes these household goods as typical bell metal products, for the alloy was considered insufficiently pure for use in the manufacture of ritual vessels.<sup>35</sup>

## Tin

Tin appears in a minor way in the catalogue. Water vessels account for a significant number of the entries: four *lotas* and five drinking cups; a water bottle with stopper from Malacca and an engraved water decanter and stopper from Singapore. Also from Singapore come a cooking pot with lid and an octagonal spice box. Other items listed include a nut grater from Bombay, two vases and a *huqqa* base, the latter of engraved tin and brass, from Udaipur.

## Lead and pewter

Two bowls and 12 embossed saucers, the latter from Burma, are identified as lead, while two *lotas*, three water bottles, seven bowls (one two-handled and with feet) and two beakers (one spouted) are designated as pewter.

## Zinc

The small number of items in zinc, equally miscellaneous in character, again speak of minor usage rather than an established industry. They include a water decanter and stopper and a water vessel and cover; a spouted bowl and a spouted pot; five plates, a dish, a bowl, a cup and a fluted *huqqa* base, the latter from Nepal.

Of the products in the zinc worker's repertoire, Bidri ware (figs 5.7a and b) may be considered the most original and (at its best) virtuosic. Its distinctive appearance derives from the use of a zinc-alloy base wrought into a variety of vessels in which the surface is decorated with inlay in bright metal. Each part of the production process is in the hands of a particular specialist; once the desired form has been achieved by the craftsman in zinc, the engraver sets out his design, incised on the temporarily darkened surface; the inlayer then sets about hammering the inlay (usually silver – occasionally brass – in the form of wire or foil) into the incisions; afterwards, the zinc surface is rendered a more intense black by application of a mud paste containing sal ammoniac and other chemical agents (which have no effect on the inlay); the paste is washed off and the surface burnished and rubbed with oil, in order to further enrich the finish.

The technique is thought to have originated in the town of Bidar – from which it takes its name – in the sixteenth century, and to have reached its zenith under Mughal patronage; by the turn of the



**Fig. 5.7.** Bidri ware. (a) Hand basin and cover, *chillumchee*; a silver-inlaid inscription under the rim reads: 'From the Purnea shop of Loodoo Lall'. D 35 cm. Purnea. 02941(IS); (b) Huqqa base, the silver inlay only partly completed. H 20.6 cm. Unprovenanced. 02956(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

nineteenth century, the industry was in decline. The principal areas of production had occupied two swaths, one across central India and another in the north.<sup>36</sup>

The range of items in zinc listed in the catalogue include hand basins and ewers, one with a perforated top, designated *chillumchee*, from Purnea (fig. 5.7a); a water bottle with stopper, one from Purnea and the other from Hyderabad; a teapot, also from Hyderabad; two vases (one identified as a flower vase); a 'plate to hold areca nuts'; and an incense vessel with perforated cover. There are also seven *huqqa* bases – one, interestingly, with the ornament only partially filled in (fig. 5.7b), suggesting the specific intention of demonstrating to museum visitors the technique employed – and two spittoons.

### White metal

More cautiously identified merely as 'white metal' are a small number of miscellaneous vessels – a *lota*, bottles, vases, bowls, an engraved plate, ewers, a large teapot on an ornamental stand, cups and tankards. Other items include a three-footed tray, candlesticks, pepper boxes and salt cellars and a 'pouch for belt, circular, chased', a number of *huqqa* bases, some partially gilt or with engraved bands of brass, and a spittoon 'in two parts'.<sup>37</sup>

### Silver

Productions in silver include superior versions of vessels and dishes already encountered in base metals, as well as several decorative sculptural figures. Personal ornaments in silver are considered separately in Chapter 7.

Five bowls, one with chased decoration, accompany a small dish (*kurry tuttoo*), one plate on three feet (*velli tuttoo*) from Madras and another embossed and parcel-gilt and two more with covers. Trays include a plain octagonal betel nut tray from Madras as well as a separate *pan* box and cover with stand (fig. 5.8) and another equipped with nine oval boxes and covers for spices, in silver filigree and with gilt edges, from Hyderabad. An oval *chunam* (lime) box and cover, partly gilt, embossed and chased, comes from Burma. A jug, described as 'antique', is provenanced to Assam; a single *lota* in silver is listed. Cups include some chased and parcel-gilt, and two with green and blue enamel, one from Kangra in the Punjab. Two beakers incorporate gilt bands; one has a spout, suggesting (as above) a use in pouring libations.





**Fig. 5.8.** Spice box or *pan* box, parcel-gilt silver, composed of radially arranged heart-shaped compartments, each with a domed lid with a handle in the form of a peacock. H 10.8 cm. Malwa. 02672(1S). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

A tumbler from Madras is identified by the name *puncha pottrum*. Four bottles include three of embossed silver, presented by the Raja of Tanjore. Of two teapots, one with gilt bands is evidently from the same milieu as the material discussed here.

Two cornucopiae, 'consisting of bison's horns (pair), with embossed silver mountings and serpents, on small marble stands', from Vizagapatam (Visakhapatnam), must have formed an impressive dining table centrepiece – an embellishment much favoured to this day in European officers' messes. Other prestige tableware of Indian origin accounts for much of the remainder. There are a dozen *attardans* – perfume holders – several in the form of a fish, one with gilt head and tail, set with two rubies and a turquoise; one in filigree, 'after the pattern of the Temple of Juggernath' (fig. 5.9a); another filigree dish consisting of a 'tray and five bouquets, the centre surmounted by a peacock'; one consisting of a tray, surmounted by eleven branches and central rosette'. Five syringes are designated for use with rose water; some 15 rosewater sprinklers (*golabpash*) include one with green and blue enamel and one from





**Fig. 5.9.** (a) *Attardan* in silver filigree, in the form of the tower of the Jagannatha Temple at Puri. A plaque records the name of the producer and the place of manufacture: 'NARIAN CUTTACK'. H 28.6 cm. 02728:3/(IS); (b) Basket of silver, pierced and chased; inscribed under the handle with the maker's name and place of manufacture: 'SEEBOO SONAR CUTTACK'. 02637(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Kashmir, termed *golabdlan*. One rosewater bottle is accompanied by two scent bottles, one with a rectangular tray, engraved, perforated and parcel-gilt, from Malwa, and the other from Madras, each formed from a gourd covered with chased and perforated silver. Of four vases, only one is designated as a flower vase, though the others may have been so; one is provided with a stand. A silver basket (fig. 5.9b), perforated and chased, from Cuttack, bears the maker's name.

Many other caskets and boxes are listed – with gilt bands or parcel-gilt; on four feet; with a cover and curved front (from Burma); octagonal or heart-shaped – the latter covered with filigree ornament; and one 'surmounted by 5 bouquets' (fig. 5.10). An inkstand and pen case with embossed ornament has four chains to anchor its constituent elements. A purely domestic and decorative role may be envisaged for a series of silver figures – a horse, camel, elephant and peacock, as well as a pair of warriors, 'with sword in sheath, partially gilt'. A card tazza on an octagonal stand, from Cuttack, a card basket, 'oval with handle, silver filigree', from Cuttack, and two filigree card cases, from Dacca, complete these elegant suites of desk furniture.

Six *huqqa* bases display the range of decorative techniques that might be deployed by the silversmith: one is silver plated; one partially gilt; one has gilt bands; one parcel-gilt and chased; and two have



**Fig. 5.10.** Silver filigree casket, surmounted by five bouquets. Unprovenanced. 02731(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



**Fig. 5.11.** (a) *Huqqa* base, silver with ornament in relief. Madras. 02790(IS); (b) *Huqqa*, of silver and silver-inlaid Bidri work, the stem entwined with lotus flowers and leaves. H 85 cm. Made for the 1867 *Paris Exposition Universelle* by Hamilton & Co., Calcutta; purchased for the museum thereafter. 2510(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

enamelled ornament in relief (fig. 5.11a). The most elaborate *huqqa* (fig. 5.11b), combining Indian and High Victorian taste, was manufactured by the long-established company of Hamilton & Co. – founded in Edinburgh but operating in Calcutta – probably for the *Paris Exposition Universelle* of 1867. The company employed Indian goldsmiths, and the *huqqa* is stamped with the letter ‘P’, indicating one of them, as well as with the company’s mark. A single plain spittoon is listed among the silverware.

A small number of miscellaneous pieces account for the remainder of the silverware: a strainer, two spoons – one named *vootterany* and the other with a mythological figure on the handle – a fish fork and a perforated sugar ladle, all from Madras, may be for domestic or ritual use, while a ‘swinging incense burner [?], chased, supported by two female figures, on stand with two peacocks’ is (if accurately identified) more likely to belong in a temple context. A prayer wheel in silver is also noted, fitted with a wooden handle; it comes from the Punjab Hills.

## Gold

Although it appears as an embellishment to many types of artefact on display – from walking sticks to *huqqas* and personal ornaments – the comparatively small amount of solid goldwork on display lends support to the contention that ostentation played a comparatively minor part in the purposeful agenda of the India Museum. Apart from a writing case in gold and silver filigree, from Cuttack, and an octagonal casket and cover in gold filigree (fig. 5.12), from Vizagapatam, all the items in question are provenanced to Rangoon or more generally to Burma. The First and Second Anglo-Burmese Wars – in which the Company's Madras Army played a prominent role – and their aftermath undoubtedly provided the context for their acquisition, though by no means were they all direct spoils of war. Of three bowls, one is 'embossed with figures and animals', another is 'embossed with signs of zodiac, with a knob inside studded with stones', while the third is described as 'containing calcined bones and ashes'. A gold cup and vase are both set with rubies, while of three model pagodas (fig. 5.13) one is set with 38 rubies and an emerald. A jewelled ceremonial helmet was formerly believed on the evidence of inscriptions to have been worn by Queen Shin-saw-bu (r. 1453–60), but these are now thought to have



**Fig. 5.12.** Casket and cover, octagonal, in gold filigree. Vizagapatam. 02743(IS).  
© Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



**Fig. 5.13.** Reliquary in the form of a stupa, of gold and chased with lion, floral and foliate designs, c. 15th century. H 34.3 cm. Mon Kingdom of Pegu (Myanmar). 02755(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

been applied by King Ra-za-darit (r. 1385–1423).<sup>38</sup> It was ‘found by labourers in levelling a Buddhist temple’, to the east of the Shwe Dagon in Rangoon, on 13 April 1855. Also surviving are two gold boxes with covers, one ‘set with diamonds, emeralds and rubies, with two gold trays inside’; it is reputed to have come from the King of Burma (but perhaps via the Paris *Exposition Universelle* of 1855).

Missing from the lists is any recognizable mention of the two items considered by Birdwood to be the oldest examples of goldwork displayed in the museum – a gold casket or reliquary (fig. 5.14) and patera recovered by Charles Masson from a stupa at the ancient site of Bimaran, to the west of Jalalabad. These veritable antiquities – the casket carrying one of the earliest known representations of the Buddha in human form, in Gandharan style – were on loan to





**Fig. 5.14.** Buddhist reliquary with embossed figures in an arcade – in the centre one of the earliest representations of the Buddha – in Gandharan style; gold, set with garnets and turquoises; c. first century c.E. H 6.7 cm. Bimaran. Now British Museum, 1900,0209.1. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

the India Museum from the India Office Library; they entered the South Kensington Museum before being transferred in 1900 to the British Museum.<sup>39</sup>

An extensive set of tools used by the goldsmiths of Dacca includes hammers, anvils, file, pincers, pliers, shears, tongs, calipers, wire drawing plate, die block of buffalo horn, tracing board, clay mould, burnishers, tongs, tweezers and blowpipes. There are lesser sets of silversmith's and coppersmith's tools; individual items include engraving tools, a polishing wheel and almost 20 punches, as well as bellows. A set of tools for minting coins, including two dies, are 'facsimiles of those used by the Maharajah at Gwalior'; a further 'iron stamp used in coining' comes from Indore.<sup>40</sup>

## Stone carving: from decorative objects to architectural details

A long tradition of producing objects carved in stone existed on the sub-continent, ranging from comparatively tractable soapstone (steatite) to the most demanding hardstones such as agate, some of which represent the very pinnacle of Indian craftsmanship – particularly during the Mughal period.

The range of items encountered is very wide – not least in terms of date; as with the metalwork discussed above, however, there is no indication that chronology played any part in arrangement of the collection. In soapstone the collection includes a variety of bowls, cups (some with a foot), bottles and vases (some with stands), plates (round and hexagonal), boxes with covers, *huqqa* bases and mouthpieces, trays and inkstands. Agra is given as the source for many of these, but there are also several from Meshed (Mashhad) in Persia, including a loan collection from Dr H. W. Bellew: he must surely have been the (unrecorded) donor of the other items from the same source forming part of the permanent collection.<sup>41</sup>

White marble proved equally popular: apart from boxes with covers (fig. 5.15), trays and paperweights, there are carvings of a variety of subjects: standing, seated and recumbent figures, elephants with howdahs with or without painted figures, a boar hunt, ducks and so on. Several formed part of a collection on loan to the museum from Colonel Newdigate. Two splendid table-tops no longer in the collection must have been exceptional pieces: both are described as ‘Taken from the Hall of Audience in the Palace of Delhi, after its capture on the 20th September 1857, by the troops under the command of Col. Sir John Jones’, with the (unique) annotation ‘Returned to Indian Government, 6 November 1902’. Among the lesser items are two which are accorded their native names – a black marble jar (*rati chembu*), from Terutani in North Arcot, and a bottle (*goojo*) in variegated marble, from Trichinopoly (Tiruchirappalli).

One museum case as catalogued was clearly designed to show off the range of such materials and the variety of products produced from them. There are cups, vases and other vessels of crystal; saucers, bowls, cups, knife and dagger handles and trays of jade; a pen and inkstand, paper knives, a ruler, knife handles and a miniature table of agate, and a vase of moss agate; three cups and saucers of mocha stone; a pen and inkstand, cups, paperweight and a ruler of bloodstone. Small-scale architectural details include a fragment of a pierced screen (*jali*)





**Fig. 5.15.** Box and lid of white marble, scrolled ornament inlaid with coloured marbles; rectangular, with concave corners. Myhere. 02203(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

from the era of Shah Jahan, attributed to Delhi or Agra.<sup>42</sup> A number of ‘plaques’ may have been specimen samples included to show the characteristics of these various materials in a systematic and accessible manner for ease of comparison.

The appeal of table-top carvings manifesting aspects of the society and devotional pieces (fig. 5.16) as well as the natural history of India is easily understandable. Among the latter, elephants would have been perhaps the most emblematic, and they occur in various hardstones, notably black or white marble, with or without a howdah. A single elephant with a rider is represented in soapstone. Jodhpur appears to have been a popular centre for their production. Other animals in various coloured marbles include a camel and rider, bear, buffalo, tortoise, alligator and fish, as well as a representation of a boar hunt. Unspecified stones are used for a lion and a cow.

A noteworthy group of 28 carvings in black marble, all from Gyah (Gaya) – listed and evidently displayed together – must represent an attempt to characterize that particular industry. Gaya’s association with the Buddha has been established in more recent times, but the city also housed in the Vishnupada Temple a stone image of Vishnu’s footprint and had been a centre of Hindu pilgrimage from at least the medieval period. The carvings may represent no more than contemporary tourist souvenirs, although the fact that they all had



**Fig. 5.16.** Lakshmi with elephants (*Gajalakshmi*), in white marble; the goddess is seated under an umbrella, with attendants on either side; water pours from the trunks of the elephants. Jaipur. 889(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

animal subjects – seven elephants, four rhinoceros, eight buffalo, three camels and one each of giraffe, wolf, bear, stag and lion – must imply a degree of deliberate selection.

A second series that might be characterized as action groups from Jaipur, all executed in white marble, includes an antelope hunt, a tiger hunt, a buffalo attacked by a tiger, figures playing guitar and fiddle, a woman and child, and – most elaborate of all – a group comprising a ‘chariot drawn by two camels, and temple with two figures, white marble, painted and gilt’.

A small collection of items in jade (and one in white agate) – cups, saucers, bowls, a tray and a charm – was loaned by H. W. Bellew. Five items are provenanced to Kashgar (visited by Bellew). Two are Chinese, but could have been acquired in the same region. The collection of carved gems and hardstones formed by Colonel Charles Seton Guthrie

and placed on loan to the India Museum (treated in [Chapter 7](#)) formed the only major holding in this area.

Two virtuoso pieces of exceptional interest stand out, not only on account of their quality of production but also because of their historical associations, the first with Emperor Jahangir (r. 1605–27) – a noted aesthete and promoter of artistic endeavour – and the second with Jahangir’s highly effective fifth son, Shah Jahan (r. 1628–58), credited with leading Mughal architecture to the pinnacle of its achievement. Jahangir’s wine cup of dark green nephrite jade ([fig. 5.17](#)) is wide and shallow, with a single handle in the shape of a cockerel’s head and neck;<sup>43</sup> the rim is incised with Persian verses and a date of production corresponding to 21 February–6 August 1613, at which time the imperial court was in residence at Agra. Originally catalogued as ‘Bequeathed by N. B. Edmonstone, Esq.’, the cup had been given to the Royal Asiatic Society rather than the India Museum; it was formally acquired by the V&A in 1924. Shah Jahan’s more elaborate vessel ([fig. 5.18](#)) has been said to exemplify the brilliant eclecticism of Mughal culture: the lobed form of the cup is thought to have been derived from a gourd and to have been Chinese in inspiration; the handle is seen as more typically Indian in origin, while the pedestal base, in the form of a lotus flower enclosed by radiating acanthus leaves, forms an amalgam of Western



**Fig. 5.17.** Wine cup with handle terminating in a cockerel head, dark green nephrite jade; made in the imperial workshops of Emperor Jahangir, 1613. Persian inscription incised on the rim (and filled with white inlay at a later date), translated as ‘Through the World-Conquering Shah, the world found order/ our time became filled with light by the radiance of his justice/ From the reflection of his spinel-coloured wine may/ The jade cup be for ever like a ruby.’ D 8.8 cm. Now IM 152-1924. 01376(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



**Fig. 5.18.** Wine-cup of white nephrite jade, made for Emperor Shah Jahan (r. 1628–58); the lobed cup has a handle in the form of a ram's head and a pedestal base carved as a lotus flower with acanthus leaves. It bears a date corresponding to 1657 C.E. 18.7 × 14 cm. Formerly in the collection of Colonel Charles Seton Guthrie, now IS.12-1962. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

and oriental motifs. It is inscribed with Shah Jahan's honorary title – Second Lord of the Conjunction – alluding to his descent (and that of all the Mughal rulers) from Timur (Tamburlaine), the great Central Asian leader. This cup too may have been produced at Agra, or perhaps in the newly founded walled city of Shajahanabad (present-day Old Delhi).<sup>44</sup>

## Ceramics: potters, products and the market

It seems unlikely that many of the ceramic wares included in the India Museum were regarded as forming subjects for a potential export trade, although it may have been hoped that some of those marked as products of the government schools of art might compete on something like equal terms with their British counterparts. The whole display appears to have been constructed, rather, as another attempt by the Company to represent India in a quasi-ethnographical manner, for which it is difficult to assign any motive other than an instructive one. It might also be observed, however, that a significant proportion of the items listed in the 1880 catalogue had arrived within no more than the 30 years or so of the publication date – that is to say, during the era when the great international exhibitions began to exert an increasing attraction for colonial and other overseas governments, which were eager to lay before the European public all aspects of the material culture and the natural resources of their respective territories and to continue to enlarge their spheres of influence through commerce rather than armed confrontation. Particularly striking is the number of pieces marked in the catalogue as originating from ‘H.M.C.’: Her Majesty’s Commission for the Exhibition of 1851.<sup>45</sup> Noteworthy too is the fact that (in contrast to many of the metal vessels described above) no indigenous names are recorded for any of these items.

There would have been little enough that Indian ceramic production could have brought to the European market, which was already well served by highly industrialized manufacturers. Production in India was, by contrast, thoroughly dispersed, much of it operating at village level and with very little in the way of long-range trading – even within the sub-continent. Seasonal fairs provided the principal opportunities for potters to reach a clientele beyond their immediate community, but their range remained very limited. No fine wares in porcelain were ever produced there, while the use of coarse pottery for culinary purposes was largely disparaged by the Hindu population: no high-caste Hindu would eat food from a cooking pot ‘defiled’ by so much as a single use, while many of the smaller saucers on which accompaniments might be served were entirely ephemeral, invariably being discarded rather than washed.<sup>46</sup> (Spices or dry goods could be stored in ceramic vessels by all societies, however, and porous water vessels were widely recognized as having a beneficial cooling effect on their contents.) Such a continuing lack of prestige conspired to deny the majority of potters the patronage that might have seen the quality of their products lifted

from an everyday level, and instead consigned them to a largely utilitarian role. A few production centres in the north-west, as at Multan and Peshawar, produced more sophisticated and decorative blue-glazed pottery, reflecting the historical links of the area with Persia. Henry Hardy Cole also identified Bangalore as a source of better-quality vessels, made from fine, dense clay rich in iron and manganese.<sup>47</sup>

Most production was carried out at a rudimentary level, the potter (*kumhar*) squatting on the ground next his hand-turned wheel, or at a bench with a kick wheel.<sup>48</sup> Firing was, for the most part, similarly unsophisticated – taking place in little more than a hollow scooped from the ground surface with a fire pit and a clay wall, with the leather-hard pots stacked over the fire and covered with layers of reeds and earth.<sup>49</sup> The bulk of production was unglazed, but might have been decorated by painting with coloured slips (usually after firing) or by incising designs into the surface, sometimes filled with clay of a contrasting colour. Glazes in several colours are nonetheless mentioned in the text.

The following notes on the collection are necessarily of a generalized nature, since little detail was recorded at the time the collection passed to South Kensington and the great bulk of the collection was subsequently written off by the V&A in the decades that followed.

The largest groups are those described respectively as of black ware and red ware, a distinction introduced during firing in the kiln.<sup>50</sup> The range of vessels in black ware is particularly wide and includes the following types, several represented by multiple examples: vases (with and without covers and/or handles), jars, bottles,<sup>51</sup> ewers, jugs, *lotas* (spherical vessels for water or milk), goblets, bowls (some with feet), plates, saucers, hot-water plates, egg cups, teapots, sugar pots, trays, spice trays, lidded boxes, lamps and lampstands, candlesticks, inkstands, paperweights, *huqqas*, spittoons and a stove. Among the more unusual are four tantalus cups from Patan with covers: these incorporate a siphon which allows the cup to be filled to a certain point before the entire contents are drained through the base (and over the unwary user). A few figural pieces are also recorded, including a fish, a cock and a sphinx. Some items are described as having incised ornament; others are silvered.

A black glazed ware is also recorded, reproducing some of the above forms (fig. 5.19a). A single cup and cover with two handles is described as having silver ornament and raised figures.

Unglazed red wares again reproduce several of the same forms and additionally include bottles, water goblets (long-necked vessels in porous clay, designed to keep the contents cool by evaporation), conical





**Fig. 5.19.** Pottery bottles. (a) Black glazed ware. Unprovenanced. 01510(IS); (b) Red glazed earthenware, with a flattened, bi-convex body and a short neck; flutings radiate from a central moulded disc. H 34 cm. Unprovenanced. 01550(IS). Both deposited in the India Museum by HM Commissioners for the Exhibition of 1851. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



vases, a pickle jar, basin, pipkin, a fire pot and a seat for an infant. One bottle is embossed with the royal arms in relief (conceivably an English stoneware export or an art school product) and several jars are ornamented with black, white or coloured bands.<sup>52</sup> Other items are bronzed or silvered, such as a lamp with silvered bands. A small number of items are of 'red glazed ware', but (as with the black glazed wares mentioned above) there is no way of knowing whether it was the fabric or the glaze that was coloured. No mention is made of burnishing or polishing on any of these wares.

A handful of vessels are described as of brown ware, including a pot with ornament in relief, bottles 'sprinkled with silver'<sup>53</sup> and a flower vase and ewer, each 'with yellow ornament'. The few brown glazed wares recorded include an hourglass-shaped vessel with white ornament and a coffee pot with lid.<sup>54</sup> White wares, some with bronzed or silvered ornament, again follow the same basic repertoire, adding only two pots with covers and with perforated strainers and a set of trays.

Two bowls are described as of greenish salt-glazed ware – a technique that (if correctly identified) seems to feature nowhere else in the literature consulted: they may perhaps have been products of one or other of the government art schools. Pottery was indeed one of the areas in which the influence of these government-funded art schools (opened in Madras in 1853, Calcutta in 1854 and Bombay in 1857) is thought to have been at best equivocal and at worst downright invidious.

While the white wares mentioned above may comprise products derived from the decaying marble strata of the rural southerly regions of the sub-continent, a separate category is formed by 'light earthenware'. It includes three items produced specifically in the Industrial School of Art at Madras – two water bottles and a circular stand – as well as two water vessels with red and black decoration and a cooking pot with checked ornament.

Apart from three items of 'drab ware' and a jar of 'dark ware', a yellow earthenware plate and a stone-coloured *huqqa* bowl, the only other items described in terms of their fabric are some examples of 'thin ware', the most complex of which is a box with a cover and perforated tray, for the storage of betel nuts.<sup>55</sup> The remainder are classified by their finish rather than their material, although there may be extensive overlap with those already described.

Considerable numbers of glazed wares are mentioned (fig. 5.19b), a feature that continues to be described essentially as an urban practice in India.<sup>56</sup> Although some glazes had been in use there for the past 500 years, their distribution was limited: Chunar in Mirzapur is singled

out as one of the earliest such centres; the blue glazes of Multan are also of some antiquity, but the green glazes associated with Kashmir are thought to have been a European introduction of some 250 years ago.<sup>57</sup> Green-glazed wares (many from Sind) occur with the greatest frequency in the catalogue: the usual repertoire of forms is represented, as well as a number of additional figures – a peacock, tiger, elephant, camel, horse, dog, cat and frog. Other glazes encountered are brown, white, yellow and blue, while many vessels combine two glazes – brown and yellow, green and yellow, green and white, brown and green, and ‘mottled’. Gilt ware and silvered ware are mentioned, but bronzed ware is more commonly listed, in the usual variety of forms plus an inkstand, a *huqqa* bowl, a tray and a large water pot.

Mention of pottery produced by students of the Industrial Schools of Art in India requires some further comment. At the *Exposition Universelle* in Paris in 1878, Birdwood was appalled by the miscellaneous display of ceramics made under their influence, taken ‘neither from Eastern nor Western India, but from Chinese sugar jars, Japanese flower vases, and English jam and pickle pots’. Later, some attempt was evidently made to address the problem. At Bombay George Terry is credited with introducing some of the best potters from Sind:<sup>58</sup> their products were said to be indistinguishable from indigenous pottery except for their superior quality of finish (which Birdwood thought a fault). He mentions too that ‘examples of these varieties of the Bombay School of Art Pottery, of the imitation Sindh and the Terry ware, have been put together in a separate case in the India Museum’, but although Birdwood’s survey was published in the same year as the museum catalogue referred to here, no such grouping can be detected there. The concept nonetheless forms an interesting illustration of the museum attempting to explore an aspect of Anglo-Indian cultural interaction that gave rise to much heated debate in contemporary society.<sup>59</sup>

Anomalous within the collections are four lockable metal cases, each containing a service (up to 28 pieces) of blue or red china and accompanied by ‘tea bottles’ and other bottles of glass and a japanned tray. All are made by the Gardner company of Moscow and are recorded as the gift of ‘Shere Ali’. Sher Ali Khan (c. 1825–79) was Amir of Afghanistan from 1863 to 1866 and again from 1868 until his death in 1879. He tried to hold a difficult balance between the British and the Russians, but eventually had to concede his territory to the former during the Second Anglo-Afghan War, when he fled to Moscow. The decade before the closure of the India Museum would seem to provide the most likely period for his donation.

## Notes

- 1 *Reports of the Juries*, 649.
- 2 As early as 1852, Royle had observed that while Indian craftsmen could have benefited from a personal introduction to the Great Exhibition, ‘they might, at the same time, have observed that all innovation is not necessarily improvement, and might also have inferred, that though they had much to learn, yet that they themselves had something to teach’ (Royle, ‘Arts and manufactures of India’, 444–5).
- 3 For an account of these debates and their outcomes within Indian society, see McGowan, *Crafting the Nation*, Chapter 2.
- 4 Roy, ‘Out of tradition’.
- 5 Saloni Mathur (*India by Design*, 32) comments further on Birdwood’s conviction that Britain had a ‘great responsibility’ to preserve not only the products of those societies but also the integrity of the native societies that produced them, in order ‘to prevent the erosion of traditional forms’.
- 6 Mathur, *India by Design*, 32.
- 7 This is not to say that all such influences were beneficial, as discussed in more detail under the ceramics discussed in Chapter 5. Abigail McGowan (*Crafting the Nation*, 31) makes the interesting observation that ‘the enthusiasm critics showed for Indian color and ornament stood in striking contrast to their relative lack of interest in Indian forms’. Hence, ‘the shape of lacquered boxes or the sweeping lines of an enameled vase’ interested them much less than their surface decoration: the principal impact of Indian design was therefore manifested in two dimensions rather than three.
- 8 Tarapor, ‘John Lockwood Kipling’, 14.
- 9 Desmond, *India Museum*, 95.
- 10 The systematic procedures involved in acquiring material for the international exhibitions of the second half of the nineteenth century no doubt promoted this trend, but in earlier decades personal inclinations of the collector seem to have played a greater part.
- 11 Sir Edward Buck, in *Colonial and Indian Exhibition*, 2.
- 12 The reference here is to Birdwood’s *Handbook to the British Indian Section* of the Paris Universal Exhibition of 1878.
- 13 Birdwood, *Industrial Arts*, vi.
- 14 These surveys had the advantage, as Roy (‘Out of tradition’, 968) has observed, that (although they had their limitations) ‘government backing enabled a larger scale of the information-gathering enterprise and consequently greater informational depth than could be found in the non-official discourse on crafts at this time’.
- 15 The Day Books (6 December 1813) record the arrival of 451 bars of iron and 80 balls of steel, ‘sent in 180[ ] by Major Lawson from Madras’.
- 16 Day Books, 11 May 1835.
- 17 Kipling, ‘Brass and copper ware’, 1.
- 18 Day Books, 4 August 1817.
- 19 One of the most impressive-sounding pieces in the collection (now missing) was of Persian rather than Indian origin: ‘A beautiful Salver of fine Gold enamelled. Presented in the name of His Majesty the King of Persia to the Honble Court of Directors by his Ambassador Mirza Abul Hasan Khan’ (Day Books, 18 July 1819).
- 20 Mukharji, *Art-Manufactures*, 159.
- 21 Royle, for example, in his lecture on ‘The arts and manufactures of India’ (p. 475), tells us that enamelling was, in fact, ‘known in every part of India ... chiefly employed in ornamenting arms and jewellery, not only in gold, but also in silver’. Current opinion suggests that the technique was introduced when craftsmen from the court of the emperor Akbar (r. 1556–1605) were sent to be instructed by European practitioners in Portuguese Goa: <https://www.rct.uk/collection/themes/exhibitions/splendours-of-the-subcontinent-a-princes-tour-of-india-1875-6/the-0/enamelling> [accessed 04.05.2023].
- 22 Forbes Watson, *Catalogue of the Indian Department of the Vienna Exhibition*, 169.
- 23 Mukharji (*Art-Manufactures*, 186) observes that cooking vessels were never decorated, since they were required to be scrubbed with sand after every use. Basins and ewers were often made as matching sets; the latter are often onion-shaped, with a straight, curved

- or serpentine spout and with a handle either on top or to one side, opposite the spout (Zebrowski, *Gold, Silver & Bronze*, 153–67).
- 24 Tea naturally represented a major trading commodity for the Company. The Company's role in developing tea growing in Assam is most recently summarized in Mabberley, 'Latin name for Assam tea'. The Day Books (30 October 1834) record a donation that might have formed an associated part of the display: 'One large and one small Brick (or Tile) of the Tea used in Tartary and mentioned in Works of Travellers under the name of Brick-Tea; One round Cake of Tea and One large and four small bales of Tea.'
  - 25 In his discussion of the type, Birdwood (*Industrial Arts*, 154, pl. 12) mentions that 'The most interesting of all is in the India Museum, discovered by Major Hay in 1857, at Kunalah in Kulu, where a landslide had exposed the ancient Buddhist cell in which this lota had been lying for 1,500 years'. Identical in form to modern examples, it reproduces a panorama with the Buddha as Prince Siddhartha, before his conversion. It was assigned in 1880 to the British Museum (inv. no. 1880,22) rather than the South Kensington Museum.
  - 26 The term is applied to copper and brass applied in combination, recalling the distinct colours of the waters of the Ganges (white) and the Jumna (deep blue) where they flow together at their confluence before becoming intermixed.
  - 27 The best-known vessels in this technique are the *chambu*, made in Benares and used specifically for carrying Ganges water from the *ghats*. See Blurton, *India*, 104, fig. 4.
  - 28 Mukharji (*Art-Manufactures*, 189) mentions that a tortoise-shaped stand (*adni-shankhachi*) was required for the chank (conch) shell that was worshipped before the idols themselves were venerated.
  - 29 Zebrowski, *Gold, Silver & Bronze*, 111–19.
  - 30 Mukharji, *Art-Manufactures*, 199. See also the Gardner ware imported from Russia, mentioned below.
  - 31 The stopper in such bottles formed a representation of the Ganges itself.
  - 32 Mukharji (*Art-Manufactures*, 205) explains that a lamp of this type 'will roll on the ground without upsetting the oil-box or the light being put out ... A modified form of this lamp can probably be used with advantage on board steamers and sailing vessels.'
  - 33 Richard Blurton comments (personal communication, 14.07.2022) that these were probably for holding *salagrama* – small, usually sub-circular ammonite fossils from the Kali Gandaki river in western Nepal. These, on account of their spiral shape, are considered naturally occurring forms of the *chakra* of Vishnu and are avidly collected for use in *puja*.
  - 34 Antimony (Arabic *kohl*) was applied to the eyes as a cosmetic and also to ward off evil.
  - 35 Mukharji, *Art-Manufactures*, 206.
  - 36 Susan Stronge (in her *Bidri Ware*) gives the most comprehensive and up-to-date account of the ware, together with a catalogue of Bidri ware in the V&A's collections and a distribution map (map 1) of the production centres. Lucknow, Purnia and Murshidabad are among the other principal suppliers in the nineteenth century. See also Mittal, *Bidri Ware*.
  - 37 It was common for spittoons to be made in this form, with a lower chamber (which might echo the shape of an associated *huqqa*); in a common type, the bell-shaped base is mirrored by an inverted upper element of similar shape, while those with a spherical base have a bowl-shaped upper part. The connecting central opening is discreetly small, while the junction between the two parts is masked externally by a ring moulding.
  - 38 Lowry, *Burmese Art*, no. 28.
  - 39 British Museum, inv. no. 1900,0209.1; Birdwood, *Industrial Arts*, 144. See, most recently, Errington, *Charles Masson*.
  - 40 The prominence accorded to tools in general within the museum stands in contrast to the visitor experience at the international exhibitions, where according to McGowan (*Crafting the Nation*, 34), comparatively little notice was taken of tools as opposed to finished goods, being considered too archaic to be worthy of notice, and even Royle could profess himself sanguine at the prospect of discussing Indian productions 'disencumbered of manufacturing details'.
  - 41 In 1871 Bellew, then civil surgeon for Peshawar, accompanied a mission to Sistan (where he met up with a second mission under Frederic Goldsmid, another donor to the India Museum). Although Sistan lies some way to the south of Mashad – still a centre for soapstone carving – the mission may have provided the opportunity for acquisition of these items.
  - 42 07071(IS): Stronge, *Made for Mughal Emperors*, pl. 40.

- 43 The cup is recorded as 'Bequeathed by N. B. Edmonstone': his bequest was, in fact, to the Royal Asiatic Society, which deposited the cup on loan to the India Museum in 1869; its status as a loan evidently was overlooked at the time of the transfer to the South Kensington Museum in 1879, but the V&A purchased the cup from the Society in 1924.
- 44 Birdwood (*Industrial Arts*, 142) mentions that 'in the India Museum collection of jade there is a large engraved bowl, on which a family of lapidaries in the employ of the emperors of Delhi was engaged for three generations'. The piece survives within the collections – IS.36-1880, a lobed bowl with cover and two attached cups – but has fallen in estimation in the meantime.
- 45 Several hundred items – principally textiles – now in the V&A collections came via this route, either directly from the Commission to the South Kensington Museum or transferred from the India Museum in 1879.
- 46 John Lockwood Kipling ('Brass and copper ware', 1) observed that many abandoned village sites could be identified purely on the basis of the mounds of earthen pottery discarded in this way.
- 47 Cole, *Catalogue of the Objects of Indian Art*, 201.
- 48 Hand-built ceramics are not mentioned in the catalogue, but an entry is included for 'Mallets, two, used in making round pots'.
- 49 Saraswati (*Pottery-Making Cultures*, 10–12) adds oven firing and kiln firing (in an updraught kiln) to the 'open-firing' method described here: all were carried out in an essentially pre-industrial manner.
- 50 In European terms, black (reduced) wares are generally produced simply by excluding oxygen during the firing process, but writers on Indian pottery ascribe the effect to the introduction of smoke to the kiln during this phase.
- 51 Some of the bottles are described as perforated, recalling Birdwood's observation in 1880 that the water bottles of Madurai in particular consisted of an inner porous vessel enclosed by a perforated outer shell that allowed air to circulate within, so cooling the contents (Birdwood, *Industrial Arts*, 304).
- 52 Painted decoration is said to have been applied after firing throughout India, apart from in the North-West Provinces (Saraswati, *Pottery-Making Cultures*, 9).
- 53 Some, at least, of this so-called silvering is in fact composed of an amalgam of mercury and tin: see Mukharji, *Art-Manufactures*, 284–5.
- 54 One brown glaze mentioned in the literature is said to have been of recent introduction and to have required a further firing after its application: *Monograph on Pottery and Glass*, 17.
- 55 This ware is mentioned in disparaging terms by Mukharji (*Art-Manufactures*, 285): 'Extremely thin and light earthen vessels with silvery patterns are made at Amroha, but these are so brittle that it is with difficulty they can be safely taken to a distance. Such thin ware is known by the name of *Kagazi* or "paper-like". There are men in India to pay for such idle curiosities.' In this case the lack of survivors in the V&A may be at least partly attributable to their extreme fragility.
- 56 Mukharji (*Art-Manufactures*, 298) mentions that 'Specimens of glazed pottery were sent to the Colonial and Indian Exhibition from Indore, Madasaur, and Chatrapur. Central Indian pottery was never shewn before at any exhibition.'
- 57 Saraswati, *Pottery-Making Cultures*, 13–14. The colour blue is said here to be strongly identified with Islam and is considered inauspicious and impure by Hindus. The circulation of blue-glazed pottery would therefore have been limited for the most part to Muslim societies.
- 58 Birdwood, *Industrial Arts*, 322–3.
- 59 Writing of (commercially produced) pottery from Bombay with 'Sindhian designs on Chinese and Japanese jam and pickle pots', Birdwood (*Industrial Arts*, 323) brands them 'a violation of everything like artistic and historical consistency in art, and if they are not ignorant productions of the pupils of the School of Art they are a most cruel slander on them. It is such eccentricities as these which have led people to doubt the utility of establishing English schools of art in India.'

## 6

# Industry and technology: organic materials

Perhaps to an even greater extent than with the trades and industries discussed above, crafts relying on the more fugitive organic materials were dependent on a great many figures in unfired clay (discussed as a type in [Chapter 10](#)) for their presentation in the displays. The tradesmen represented among them include tailors, cotton cleaners and spinners, calico printers, weavers at their looms, shoemakers, carpenters, wheelwrights, confectioners, druggists, a ‘Ganjooloo or bangle seller’ and a chank-shell cutter; a collection of 32 ‘small models of tools of various kinds’ came from Bombay. More ambitious were the representations of larger-scale implements – ‘A collection of fragments of models of machinery, spinning wheels, oil presses, reflectors, &c.’ recorded in the catalogue at the museum’s dispersal indicates that these too had once played an important part in displays. Individually mentioned pieces of equipment include devices for making *huqqa* snakes and blinds, as well as rope- and cord-twisting machines. The textile trades are particularly well represented, with a ‘Dharwar saw gin’ (a cotton-cleaning device) and machines for spinning, reeling and winding yarn as well as for weaving: there are models of looms for a variety of products, from cashmere shawls to carpets. Agricultural models range from handheld implements – hoes, rakes, sickles and winnowing devices – to ploughs (including drill ploughs), harrows, sowing machines and a great many carts; some of these are designated *hackerys*, a few specifically designed for carrying cotton, stone (a model of a ‘stone-cutter’s cart, with two bullocks and driver’ in painted wood), manure etc.<sup>1</sup> Processing of various products is illustrated by, for example, ‘a group of natives pressing sugar’ from Kishnagar, spirit stills, an oil mill, pumps and rice-pounding machines.<sup>2</sup>

The rich forest resources of India – hugely important from the Company’s mercantile point of view – are barely represented among the material now in the V&A, but this is no more than the result of the division of the collection in the nineteenth century, when an enormous resource in the form of some 36 tons of timber samples was transferred to the Economic Botany Collection at Kew.<sup>3</sup> Other botanical raw materials accompanied it, and similar estrangement of the mineral and soil collections took place when those elements were passed to the British Museum (Natural History).

## Woodworking

Items in wood formed a sizeable contribution to the museum, ranging from full-scale furniture and architectural elements to small items like spoons and paper knives. While the timber involved is unspecified in many instances, sandalwood formed a popular medium for items with relief carving, with satinwood, ebony, palmwood, pearwood and bamboo also featuring; a few items are of rosewood and one of Amboyna wood.

Two entire wooden house fronts in teak from Gujarat (one from Ahmedabad) survived until the transfer of the museum to South Kensington, only to be disposed of later ‘because of their size and the restricted nature of their appeal’ – an assessment impossible to fathom today.<sup>4</sup> Commenting on their sale to ‘a provincial Indian museum’, Codrington observed that they were, in his opinion, ‘among the finest examples of a group of such objects well represented in India, and the fact that an Indian museum was willing to buy them speaks for itself’. In support of this high estimation, he quotes a popular guidebook of the day: ‘This is old India at a blow. They are wonderful; nothing else in the exhibition is so unexpected.’<sup>5</sup> Today, these extraordinary pieces survive in the Calico Museum of Textiles in Ahmedabad.

Three doors with carved and perforated decoration were displayed on the gallery walls while the museum was at South Kensington; a pair of folding doors with carved and perforated panels and ivory inlay was presented by the Raja of Kerely. One chimney-piece is noteworthy for its decoration in high-relief carving, showing figures and flowers. Two sofas and two armchairs, four chairs and two footstools were all similarly carved. The most striking survivors are a pair of ivory-mounted ebony armchairs with matching footstools (fig. 6.1) which, although exhibited in Paris in 1855, were singled





**Fig. 6.1.** One of a pair of armchairs and footstools in Rococo revival style, ebony mounted with scrolls and floral inlays in ivory; red velvet upholstery. Originally accompanied by a matching ivory chess table. H (chair) 112 cm. Berhampore. 01216-20(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

out for criticism for their exceptionally unattractive design by Alfred Maskell:<sup>6</sup>

If no attempt were purposely made to show to what depths of vulgarity and bad taste art could be made to descend, together with a waste of valuable and beautiful material, it would be difficult to succeed better than has been done with these with these astounding specimens.

There are also several lacquered and gilt chairs and at least one folding chair made of rosewood and sheathed in silver<sup>7</sup> – designed in contemporary English style, no doubt for a high-ranking official of the East India Company – as well as a surprising number of detached bedstead legs.

Among the various tables listed are two worktables and a table with perforated ends, carved with dragons and foliage, from Bombay; one surviving hexagonal worktable in sandalwood is carved with scenes from Hindu mythology, but its design derives from an English book of furniture designs, Thomas King's *The Modern Style of Cabinet Work Exemplified* (1829) – a prime example of the hybrid works that appealed widely to the European community in India and at home. It was made for the 1867 *Exposition Universelle*, where it was exhibited by Jamsetjee Herjeetbhoy, and was afterwards purchased by the India Museum.<sup>8</sup>

Smaller tables include some with octagonal tops and several with inlaid mosaic and ivory ornament. Other items of furniture with little detail attached include perforated screens, a fire screen, tripods, stands and a cradle. A desk and dressing case inlaid (like several writing desks) with mica are of the table-top variety, allowing them to be moved around the house as desired or to be taken on circuit as duty required. A number of map cases would similarly have formed part of the travelling official's accoutrements. More at home in a domestic milieu is a further map case ornamented with ivory and mosaic and accompanied by a matching stationery box, card box and card cases; the same applies to a writing desk, work basket and work box ornamented with porcupine quills mounted in frames of bone, ivory or ebony, but several others are passed over without comment. In a society obsessed with record keeping and eager to maintain correspondence with family and friends at home, other writing equipment features prominently: stationery boxes appear in ebony (fig. 6.2) and in rosewood – the latter containing a surprisingly wide range of implements including scissors, a spoon, a knife, a winder, a pick and two back scratchers, in addition to three reed pens. Ornament on these items includes panels of fluted horn, in addition to the more common ivory and mosaic inlay. Pen cases include one of cylindrical form, painted, and three of palmwood; three others of papier mâché from Kashmir are identified by the Urdu term *kalem dan*. Card cases appear with various inlays including shell, metal, tortoiseshell and ivory. Inkstands, pen racks, stationery cases, an envelope box, paperweights, paper knives and rulers are common, and blotters with covers in sandalwood with ivory and mosaic ornament



**Fig. 6.2.** Stationery box of ebony inlaid with ivory, turned and carved, with two drawers, two lift-out trays, pen rack, paper rack, blotter, secret compartment, ink- and watch-stands and screw press. 38 × 19 cm. Monghyr (Munger). 01200(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

are registered. Items in sandalwood include a cabinet; a ‘photograph book’ has in addition to ivory and mosaic inlay five miniature paintings on the cover.

Two lacquered chests on X-formed bases exemplify a type that originated as Chinese export wares made for the European market but which were taken up and produced in Rohilkand and especially at centres such as Bareilly, catering for the expatriate population in Bengal. With their black lacquer and gilt ornament featuring pagodas and domed buildings, willow trees and figures, they are easily mistaken for Chinese originals.

Boxes for a bewildering number of purposes – and many unspecified – appear in the catalogue. Workboxes include examples in ebony, satinwood, palmwood (one ‘Purchased in the market in the [Madras] Presidency’ by W. E. Underwood, Collector of Sea Customs, and exhibited at the *Exposition Universelle*, Paris, in 1855) and a dozen or more in sandalwood, many with ivory and mosaic inlay. Ten glove boxes are similarly decorated, the most elaborate with engraved ivory

mounts and with an ivory and mosaic border, from Vizagapatam. There are also jewel boxes, tobacco boxes, a cigar box in bamboo, painted and lacquered, a shawl box, spice boxes and perhaps 50 others without a specified function, some of them with internal trays. Of the lids of these boxes, some are conical and some are domed, and an unusual group is formed by a series of ball-shaped or spherical boxes, mostly from Hyderabad, some with painted or inlaid ornament; a nest of six such globular boxes and covers is recorded from Sind.

Other oddments of household goods include numbers of trays, some of them for visiting cards and one a sweetmeat tray from Siam, inlaid with pearl shell, tea caddies (one in ebony, with three boxes in satinwood), a paper rack, book stands, buckets made in polished wood, boxwood salad servers, fans and a snuff flask. Vessels in wood range from flower vases, cups and vases on stands with covers to a tazza, carved plates and saucers, and an egg cup; there are also cups and bowls in bamboo. The kitchen equipment includes a wooden bowl (*kalot*) for kneading dough, two dough mixers (*katodh*) and two 'cake kneaders' (*polpat* and *belun*).

Two examples were included of what were considered the virtuoso piece of the sandalwood carver's repertoire – a flywhisk (*chowrie*) entirely in wood. The type was described by T. N. Mukharji:<sup>9</sup>

Flappers, called *chauries*, are made of sandalwood in imitation of a yak's tail, which are used to drive away flies. A long piece of sandalwood is divided lengthwise into numerous slices, each slice is as fine as hair, and the whole resembling a *chaurie* made of yak's tail. A small part of the wood on the other end is left entire, which is carved into a handle. Such *chauries* when waved before the face or behind a man in order to drive away the flies emit the fine fragrance of sandalwood.

At the other end of the spectrum are toys and models produced universally, although raised to the level of a minor industry in centres such as Channapatna (still known as the 'town of toys': see [fig. 6.3](#)). Tipu Sultan is said to have invited skilled manufacturers from Persia to help establish the industry, which was traditionally centred on the carving of ivory wood,<sup>10</sup> dyed with vegetable dyes or finished with high-gloss lacquer; timber from this tree (now locally rare) was extensively used in carving, turnery, puzzle making and small-scale furniture production.

Among the woodworking tools one extensive group stands out – all contained in a 'Chinese cabinet': it comprises 16 planes, 15 chisels



Fig. 6.3. Toy tiger, lacquered wood. L 37 cm. Channapatna. Acquired by the India Museum in 1867, probably from the Paris *Exposition Universelle* of that year. 06236(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

and gouges, 2 drills and bow for the same, 2 saws and one example each of an axe, adze, hammer, square, rule, bevel, chalk line, mitre and pricker; all are annotated first as missing and then as written off in 1937. Another set of tools includes a lathe, adzes, hammers, saw, plane, knives, chisels, gouges, drills and bow; numerous axes and adzes appear scattered in the catalogue. Two boxes contain tools associated specifically with wood carving, one with 25 implements and the other with 63 steel tools employed particularly in sandalwood carving. A box of particular interest is cut from solid rosewood, partly veneered with ivory, within borders in ebony, ivory and *sadeli* technique; within are samples of sandalwood, ebony, ivory and wire, as well as two trays mounted respectively with raw materials and finished samples of a variety of *sadeli* inlays. Attached exhibition labels read 'CLASS./Materials & Implements used in the Manufacture / of Ivory / Inlaid / Work / 525 Bombay' and 'No. 75 / Raw Materials for / inlaid work'.<sup>11</sup>

A model – catalogued with the tools and presumably displayed together with them – shows a carpenter going about his work.

## Ivory, 'elk horn', tortoiseshell and horn

Unlike Western Europe, where medieval ivory carving was limited by the extreme scarcity of raw materials to court workshops and the more affluent monastic centres, there was a long-standing tradition of urban production across the Indian sub-continent. This popularity grew despite the disinclination of the most orthodox Hindus to handle animal-derived materials, including ivory.<sup>12</sup> In his survey of Indian industrial arts, Rustam Mehta had no difficulty in identifying over a dozen principal production sites, many of which appear to have long-established histories for their involvement in specific areas of ivory carving:<sup>13</sup>

Carved ivory fans used to be the speciality of Sylhet ... and ivory bracelets that of Jodhpur and Ratlam. Vizagapatam is famous for its veneered ivory work. Rajkot produces carved combs, the Kathiawar regions knife-handles, Baroda spoons; buttons, powder-boxes, caskets, and umbrella handles mostly come from Ahmadabad and Surat, and fine ivory bangles from Cuttack, all displaying fine finish and excellent craftsmanship.

As the most important producers today he identifies the centres of Delhi and Murshidabad in Bengal, and Mysore and Travancore in the south. The production methods and the toolkits favoured by those carvers will scarcely have changed over the centuries – saws, chisels, gouges, knives, files, punches and so on (see [fig. 6.4](#)). Ivory also continues to be stained in the traditional way – with lac for crimson, cochineal or brazilwood for scarlet, logwood for black. One entry in the catalogue for 'Materials and implements used in the manufacture of ivory and inlaid work' from Bombay is of particular interest, since it itemizes the contents of a typical workshop: it names three kinds of thin ivory strips as well as further components that remain obscure – *tundharee*, *kutkee*, *chucker*, *gool*, *toon koonia gool*, *teekee* – as well as enumerating three saws (*kurvit*), two planes (*rundha*), a square (*katkono*), hammer (*hathodee*), file (*kanus*) and chisel (*phursee*). The tools are now missing, but several samples of raw materials and partly worked decorative inlays survive.

Small-scale figure sculpture formed – at least in Western eyes – the pinnacle of the market, whether in the form of deities, human or animal subjects ([fig. 6.5](#)) or (notably) chessmen. Berhampore, whose carvers were singled out for praise by Royle, is given as the production





**Fig. 6.4.** Model representing ivory workers, with their simple tools and with works in progress. L 22 cm. Berhampore. 02481(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

centre for a large number of ivory carvings (and it remains a speciality there).<sup>14</sup> Some of these formed elaborate tableaux – ‘Model of a state procession, consisting of soldiers, horses and camels with riders, on a stand’ (acquired in 1855, probably via the *Exposition Universelle* of that year), three state barges with rowers, a palanquin with bearers and attendants or, in one instance, hunters. The largest group of animals recorded, from Jaipur, amounts to 48 pieces. There are scenes from everyday life – a nautch dance, women holding children or carrying water pots or trays, men drawing toddy from a tree, going about their ablutions and so on, as well as individual human and animal figures. Two model cannon with a gunner come from Lahore. Deities and mythological groups are well represented – four showing scenes with Durga acting out various episodes from her life, others showing Vishnu, Kali (see [fig. 9.3b](#)) and Lakshmi, and one of ‘Juggernath’s car’. While the souvenir trade (European as well as Indian) no doubt absorbed much of the nineteenth-century output, by the later 1800s some of the more elaborate pieces were being produced specifically for display at international exhibitions.





**Fig. 6.5.** Carving in ivory of an elephant with ornamental caparison and with a howdah and passengers on its back; mounted on a rectangular ivory base with four ball feet. H 21.2 cm. Berhampore. 02474(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

The vessels in ivory include perfume bottles, cups, vases and various lidded boxes – either solid or veneered, pepper boxes, dice boxes and needle cases. Some of these have relief ornament, but others are noted as being lathe-turned, adding another technique to the range of those employed by the ivory workers. One turned box and cover from Rohilkand is described as of transparent ivory: whether this implies that it was turned to very fine degree or had been treated in some way to render it more translucent is unclear. One small box and cover from Sind is stained black. Two small teapots from Lahore make a rather improbable addition to this group.

Among the small items of everyday production are many combs (fig. 6.6), from regions stretching from Nepal and Assam to Bombay. These commonly have carved and pierced ornament, and some are



Fig. 6.6. Comb, carved in ivory. H 14.1 cm. ?Bombay. 02395(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

dyed in various colours; one is ornamented with red and blue spots. Ivory was also used for items like pen holders (one carved with a representation of Krishna and a sacred cow), walking stick handles (two in the form of tiger heads), chowrie handles, back scratchers (one from Assam in the form of a hand, termed *pusht kar*), personal ornaments such as bracelets, silk winders, paper knives, humming tops, toys and rattles. Also listed are 166 letters of the Roman alphabet, coloured red, white and green.

A comprehensive set of 'materials and implements used in the manufacture of ivory and inlaid work' from Bombay contains nearly 200 strips and fragments of ivory and decorative woods, many individually identified, a parcel of green dye and a number of tools – three saws, two planes, a square, a hammer and a chisel, again individually

named. Three boxes from Madras and Berhampore contain respectively 13, 17 and 21 tools used by ivory carvers, and a set of 11 ivory turner's tools comes from Karachi.

### 'Elk horn'

The 1880 catalogue follows contemporary practice in referring to certain antler-mounted items from the Coromandel coastal area as being ornamented with 'elk horn'. Since no elk in the accepted sense exist south of Kashmir, the term requires some explanation: *Hobson-Jobson* provides the answer, commenting that elk 'is the name given by sportsmen in S. India, with singular impropriety, to the great stag *Rusa Aristotelis*, the *sambar* ... of Upper and W. India'.<sup>15</sup> Despite the impropriety, the convention continues today: an increasing taste for this material is detected during the first half of the nineteenth century.<sup>16</sup> The males of the species have antlers which regularly reach over one metre in length. Three items so mounted are identified in the catalogue – a work box,<sup>17</sup> a stationery box and a pen tray lined in ebony, all from Vizagapatam.

### Tortoiseshell

Although tortoiseshell would have been widely available in India (from turtles as well as tortoises), it too is sparsely represented in the collection: a glove box and a box and cover both come from Madras; of five combs from the same source, some have incised and pierced decoration. As a material, tortoiseshell is more usually encountered as a small-scale decorative inlay rather than being used for primary manufacturing purposes.

### Horn

Horn, by comparison, formed the basis of a sizeable industry, well supplied with raw material from the buffalo population. The cylindrical form of the wider part of the horn was amenable to being turned into natural containers of various sorts – there are two large cylindrical cups and five powder horns from Madras; two others from Malwan are described as sprinkling horns, a term explained by the entry for another from Belgaum, 'for bathing idols'. One example from Viziadroog (Gheria), on the west coast, to the south of Bombay, is described as a horn with cover; a dice-box is recorded from Berhampore and a vase

from the Punjab. Ten boxes with covers, from Madras, Malwan and Belgaum, may have utilized the very base of the horn in order to benefit from the maximum diameter.

A number of figures carved in horn will have capitalized on the solid tissue at the tip – the narrower end – of the horn (assuming the term has not been misused here to refer to antler). These include a pair of figures on stands in black and white horn from Viziadroog and a number of figures of animals – dogs, buffalo, antelope and dromedary.

Horn also has the advantage that it can be softened and flattened under heat into plates before being worked; the technique was widely used in Europe and, although not specifically recorded in India, seems likely to have been used in the production of two tazzas on stands and 14 combs, some with carved backs, and a model palanquin.

Miscellaneous small objects produced in horn include five paperknives, two shoehorns, a necklace of buffalo horn and two ‘circular stands on legs’. Two horns are described as engraved, and two as stained. A pair of cornucopiae made from bison horns and with embossed silver mountings has already been mentioned.

## Leatherworking

All the tasks associated with the processing of dead animals – from skinning and tanning hides to the production of finished goods – were in the province of some of the most marginalized Hindus, operating at the lower end of the caste system. Finished products such as shoes, sandals, belts and bags, however, remained in widespread demand. The official report on the Calcutta International Exhibition of 1883–4 makes specific mention of the conservative nature of the (largely rural) industry: although ‘met with in almost every village’, the leatherworkers ‘belong to a class of people who will not make the slightest alteration or improvement in the designs bequeathed to them by their ancestors’.<sup>18</sup> A leather dresser’s implement (*rapee*) from Poona and a set of shoemaker’s tools and lasts, together with silk sewing thread and dye (plus 10 bottles with stoppers, presumably for further dyes), are all that serve for that craft. Otherwise, it is represented by a number of surviving shoes (fig. 6.7), all of rather superior workmanship: their transmission to the India Museum via the 1855 international exhibition suggests that they were already made with an eye on the Western market. Over 60 pairs of boots, shoes and sandals were listed without further description in two boxes retrieved from the stores.



Fig. 6.7. Men's shoes (*mojari*), a pair, of silk, velvet and cotton, with glass beads and gilt silver thread. L 23 cm. Hyderabad. 0519(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

## Textiles

From an early stage in its presence on the sub-continent, the Company found that textiles held the key to even greater profitability than the spices that had originally attracted its adventurers to the East. On the other hand, Indian textiles carried eastwards on Company ships to be bartered in the markets of Southeast Asia continued to facilitate the 'country trade' in spices with those areas – that is to say, commerce centred on Indian ports rather than communicating directly with London. Perhaps no country in the world produced such a variety of materials with such an enormous export potential – a potential that the Company exploited so successfully that tariffs on imports from India were introduced in England in the later 1600s. The Calico Act of 1700 prohibited importation of silks and calicoes except such as were intended for re-export; a second Act followed in 1721, strengthening the provisions of the first.<sup>19</sup> Following the repeal of this legislation in 1774, the Company set about trying to recover its position: almost all the textiles in the India Museum were produced and collected in the course of the 1800s – not with a view to historical documentation<sup>20</sup> but in an increasingly focused attempt to boost trade in both directions. In line with the ethos later formalized by Forbes Watson, particular weight was given to fabrics that might enjoy a real mass market, rather than serving merely 'the upper ten millions of India'.<sup>21</sup>

More than any other category of material, textiles came to lie at the heart of the museum's collections – increasingly so during their afterlife under the auspices of the India Office, when Forbes Watson's role as Reporter on the Products of India placed him at the centre of a dynamic institution striving to maximize the utilitarian principles on which it had been founded. Contemporaneously with the museum's earlier evolution, British exports to India of cotton yarn and finished textiles had increased dramatically – and with the most serious implications for the indigenous industry on the sub-continent. On the other hand, the series of international expositions that marked the later 1800s, beginning with the Great Exhibition in London in 1851, provided hitherto unprecedented exposure for India's own textile products, the bold and colourful designs of which – not to mention their quality of production – made a deep impression on aesthetes, designers and consumers in Europe, creating opportunities for expansion of the Company's role as both importer and exporter. The personnel of the museum would play an important role in orchestrating the assembling of materials for display in these expositions, while the permanent collections were in turn augmented by acquisitions made at the conclusion of these temporary shows.

The key role played by Royle in the acquisition and arrangement of the 1851 exhibits has been mentioned in [Chapter 1](#); not the least remarkable aspect of his involvement is the degree to which it depended on his personal initiative and drive. Under Forbes Watson's regime, this galvanizing spirit was taken up and expanded with missionary zeal and with formal approval: from his advantageous position at the centre of power (responsibility for commerce with the sub-continent having passed in 1858 from the Company to the India Office), Forbes Watson strove to stimulate opportunities for trade by educating his countrymen in all aspects of opportunities for commerce with India. To this end, he undertook a monumental survey of the existing market, published as *The Textile Manufactures and the Costumes of the People of India* (1866). The printed text, which surveyed in detail both existing and potential markets in terms of garment types as well as appropriate fabrics, was supplemented by 20 sets of 'working samples' of actual textiles, each set comprising 18 albums of fabrics, every one of which enclosed some 700 samples ([fig. 6.8](#)).<sup>22</sup> These volumes were not offered on the open market but were dispatched to strategically important textile manufacturing centres in Britain where they could be made available for hands-on consultation by manufacturers and merchants capable of exploiting this unprecedented form of commercial intelligence; others



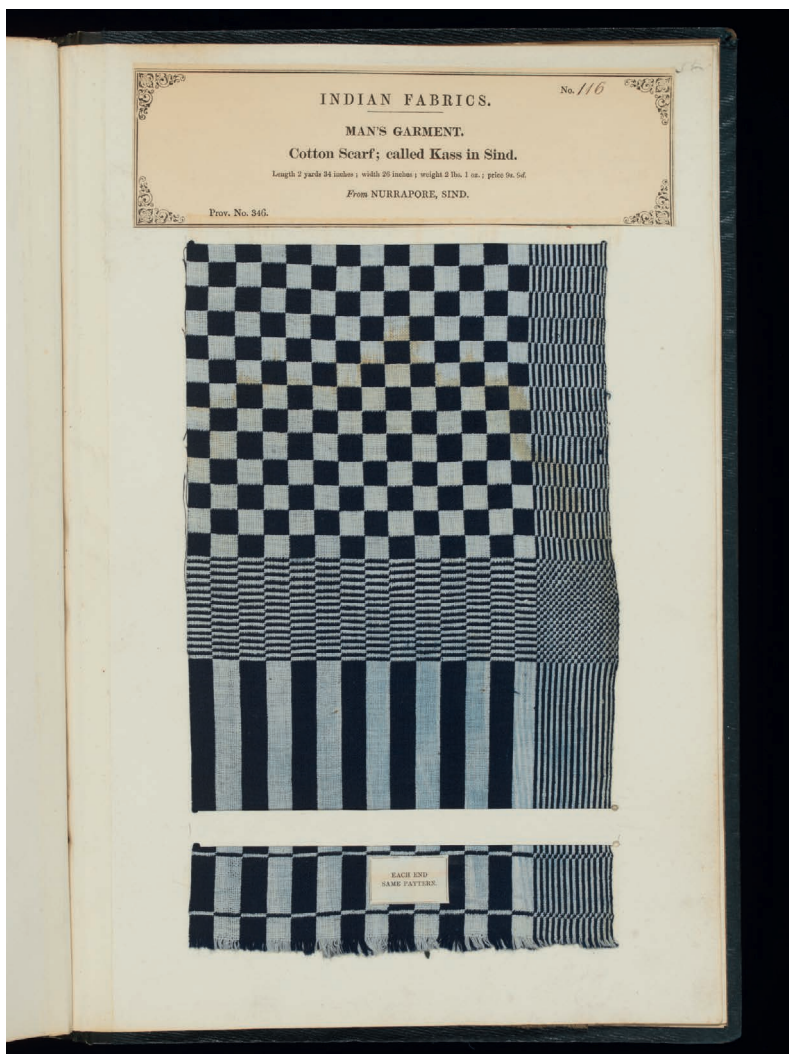


Fig. 6.8. A page from Forbes Watson's *The Textile Manufactures ... of India* (1866). As well as a sample of the material itself – a 'Cotton Scarf; called Kass in Sind' – the label gives its length, width, weight and place of origin. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

were sent to schools of design in Britain and India.<sup>23</sup> Each sample was accompanied by details of the textile's dimensions, weight, cost and place of manufacture – and with an account of how they might be worn.<sup>24</sup> The albums not only provided exemplars of the different stuffs but, by virtue of their being identical with each other, allowed



for agents in one continent to specify their interests to correspondents in another, with a high degree of exactitude. A lengthy series of entries (6877–7916) in the 1880 catalogue is headed ‘pieces of fabrics cut for the Work on Indian Textile Fabrics’.

The distribution of these immensely valuable albums was not seen as an act of alienation from the India Museum: they represented, rather, proselytizing units sent out from the mother house – they were referred to by Forbes Watson as ‘local museums’, ‘industrial museums’ or ‘trade museums’ – each intended to carry in summary form the museum’s message to a wider audience, to ‘show what the people of India affect’ and what British manufacturers had to undertake if they were to succeed in penetrating the market there.<sup>25</sup> If, having examined them, the prospective exporter ‘should still be in any perplexity’, it was suggested, ‘he can obtain information from the India Museum ... or he can examine entire pieces of clothing, which are kept there for the purpose’.<sup>26</sup> The travelling exhibits constructed under Forbes Watson’s regime, in which frames displaying themed exhibits were hung radially around a central pillar (as described in the introduction), were also well suited to textiles: one entry in the catalogue for ‘Thirteen frames, containing 121 specimens of gold and silver lace’ almost certainly refers to the remains of one of these.

Merchants who found potential in these exhibits were encouraged to visit the museum, where they would be able to handle original cloths and made-up garments. Over 100 numbered and lettered boxes and parcels of such goods, listed under ‘Articles not exhibited: in store’, would appear to be the remnants of this handling collection.

There can be no doubt of the direction in which Forbes Watson anticipated that much of the ensuing trade would flow:

About two hundred millions of souls form the population of what we commonly speak of as India; and, scant though the garments of the vast majority may be, an order to clothe them all would try the resources of the greatest manufacturing nation on earth. It is clear, therefore, that India is in a position to become a magnificent customer.<sup>27</sup>

In this quest, the manufacturer was advised not to look for his customers among ‘the upper ten millions of India’ but rather in ‘the hundreds of millions in the lower grades’, that is to say, in the general populace.

In addition to the cotton trade, opportunities continued to exist for importers of luxury textiles, particularly rich silks woven with

silver-gilt-wrapped yarns and the yellow/brown native wild silk, cashmere shawls and many other sought-after items, as well as other items made of more mundane fibres such as hemp, jute and mudar floss.<sup>28</sup> An exceptional (not to say challenging) exhibit was formed by a ‘tent, embroidered crimson Cashmere, large, with fittings, in eight cases’.

When the time came for the India Museum collections to be dispersed, over 6,000 textile samples came to the South Kensington Museum. Few of these were imbued with historical significance, for, as outlined above, the bulk of them had arrived within the previous 30 years as a result of commercially driven enterprise. Given South Kensington’s continuing engagement with matters of contemporary design, the two collections would have merged easily with each other. Forbes Watson’s own *The Textile Manufactures and the Costumes of the People of India*, based as it was on the museum collection, may therefore form our guide in the following summary.<sup>29</sup>

### Textile imports

In his tour of the textile types imported to Britain from India, Forbes Watson begins with fine muslins, before proceeding to other muslins – striped, figured, checked and printed.<sup>30</sup> Relying largely on a text by James Taylor,<sup>31</sup> he characterizes by objective means the superior qualities of Dacca muslins in particular, and he documents in extraordinary detail every aspect of their preparation, from cleaning and carding the cotton (fig. 6.9) through spinning and weaving to bleaching and dressing. Within the museum these processes (as applied to all varieties of textiles) were illustrated with great immediacy by means of models, and also by a wall display of 18 sketches by Lockwood Kipling at the Bombay School of Art, described as ‘illustrations of cotton culture’ (see fig. 11.13b).

Forbes Watson then turns his attention to calicoes before moving on to canvas – a valuable commodity much in demand for sails and tents – coloured cotton ‘trousering’ (including ‘shepherd tartans’), printed cottons used in saris and other garments and the glazed chintzes that had made such an impact on the European market.

Silks are then considered – those of India being all ‘wild’ silk, the best-known being *tussar*, the others *eri* and *moonga* (or *mooga*). The *moonga*, imported from Sylhet and Assam to be worked in Dacca, was considered the best, though comparatively little came to England.<sup>32</sup> A box of 35 garment pieces, ‘wild silks; Eria, Tussur, Moonga’, is included



Fig. 6.9. Model of a woman sitting cleaning cotton with a foot roller; painted wood. H 16.5 cm. Belgaum. 259(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

among the material from store, which may have formed part of the handling collection.

The text then considers 'loom-embroidery' (patterns worked on the loom) in gold and silver, gold and silver tissues, hand embroidery and lace, before turning to cashmere shawls and (briefly) to textiles in camel and yak hair.

Few of the textiles listed in the catalogue are described in detail, and many are bulk entries: 'cotton pieces', 'Fabrics from Darjeeling, Cachar, Assam, etc.' Identities are ventured for a few: 'cumblees' (material often used for blankets, of sheep's wool mixed with camel or horse hair), 'kincobs' (silks brocaded in silver and gold), 'mushroos' (cotton-backed satin), 'sosees' (*soosees* – plain-weave silk fabric) or – at the coarse end of the spectrum – 'gunny' from a variety of sources. Lace also makes a minor appearance, much of it evidently produced at (or under the influence of) the Mission School at Tinnevely. The volumes of samples constituting Forbes Watson's *Collections of the*

*Textile Manufactures of India* no doubt augmented the information available to the cataloguers on the existing labels and helped render their text more definitive. It should be mentioned, however, that some types of fabrics receive no mention from Forbes Watson – tie-dye and ikat, for example, as well as embroidery; presumably, these were considered unsuitable for imitation in Britain (although printed imitations of ikat and tie-dye were included).<sup>33</sup>

## Textile production

Cotton cleaning as well as spinning and weaving are well registered among the models of craftsmen engaged in their various trades, reflecting again the importance of these figures in clay and wood in rendering the unfamiliar industries comprehensible to a public that would have had little conception of them. The related equipment is also well represented in the form of models, complemented by full-size examples collected in the field. Foot rollers and bows for cleaning cotton appear in their original size, alongside a dozen model cotton gins, representing an initial stage in the mechanization of the industry. The most fully elaborated is a ‘Model of a Dharwar saw gin. Presented to Sir W. B. Seymour Fitzgerald, Governor of Bombay, AD 1872’; in the saw gin, toothed wheels like miniature circular saws with blunted teeth engage with the fibres to pull them through a narrow-spaced grid, causing the seeds to be stripped from the filaments. Over a dozen model spinning wheels are listed, with no more detail than an occasional local name (*churka*, *rahat*). The full-size spinning wheels seem to have been mostly fragmentary by the time they were noted. Winders (*katam*) and reels (as well as three reeling machines) are numerous represented for silk and cotton, those for silk in silver and ivory as well as wood. Some 10 looms include one (*mag*) also represented in model form and two designated as specifically for cotton; a further 10 models include two identified as shawl looms, one of them for cashmere. The collection also included a ‘model apparatus for making cotton fringe’.

## Notes

- 1 Carriages and other forms of conveyance are also numerous, including many palanquins – some for everyday use and others more specialized, such as a ‘Hindu marriage palanquin’ and a ‘Model of a Hindoo corpse palanquin’, the latter supplied from the Madras School of Art.

- 2 As a reminder of the Company's presence on St Helena, a model was included of the only recorded windmill on the island; it was built in 1858 – that is, some years after the island was declared a crown colony, ending Company rule (2 April 1834). See <https://sainthelenaisland.info/lostbuildings.htm?castle+entrance+mortars> [accessed 03.06.2023].
- 3 For the painful story of the fate of a large part of this collection, see MacGregor, *Company Curiosities*, 231.
- 4 These spectacular house fronts are shown in a photograph of 1936 reproduced in Dunn and Burton, 'The V&A: An illustrated chronology', fig. 37.
- 5 Codrington, 'Birdwood and the study of the arts of India', 147.
- 6 A. Maskell, quoted in Jaffer, *Furniture from British India*, 263.
- 7 2519(IS): see Jaffer, *Luxury Goods from India*, 96–7.
- 8 The table, 01215(IS), from Coomta, is a prime example of the intricate work in sandalwood carried out in that region.
- 9 Mukharji, *Art-Manufactures of India*, 242–3. One denuded example survives in the V&A's collections (01138(IS)).
- 10 *Wrightia tinctoria*, dyer's oleander. The dense white wood was described by Company naturalist William Roxburgh as coming nearer to ivory than any other timber he knew.
- 11 01997(IS); see Jaffer, *Furniture from British India*, cat. 143.
- 12 Dutt, *Ivory-Carving in Bengal*, 2.
- 13 Mehta, *Handicrafts of India*, 59–62.
- 14 Royle, 'Arts and manufactures of India', 511.
- 15 I am grateful to Dr Henry Noltie, who kindly brought this reference to my attention. Currently the population of the sambar (today *Rusa unicolor*) is so reduced and so vulnerable that the species has been placed on the IUCN Red List.
- 16 Jaffer, *Furniture from British India*, 174.
- 17 0969(IS). The box, of sandalwood with applied strips of stained 'elk horn', contains a pricker, spool case and thimble; it comes from Vizagapatam. See Jaffer, *Furniture from British India*, cat. 61.
- 18 *Official Report of the Calcutta International Exhibition*, vol. II, p. 481.
- 19 The declared aim of the 1721 Act was 'to Preserve and Encourage the Woollen and Silk Manufactures of this Kingdom, and for the more Effectual Employing of the Poor by Prohibiting the Use and Wear of all Printed, Painted, Stained or Dyed Callicoos in Apparel, Household Stuff, Furniture, or otherwise'.
- 20 Rosemary Crill (*Fabric of India*, 140) observes that early textiles survive only rarely in India and that there is little tradition there of honouring them as heirlooms.
- 21 An element missing from the collections surviving in the V&A is that supplied by the raw materials which accompanied the finished textiles: the background supplied in particular by the economic botany collections (which include a variety of cotton specimens as well as dyestuffs) was dissipated with their transfer to Kew in the later nineteenth century, although there they would figure prominently in the newly constituted Economic Botany Museum. (This museum has since been discontinued, although the constituent materials survive in the Economic Botany Collections: see Cornish, Driver and Nesbitt, 'Kew's mobile museum'). For the role of models as illustrations of the textile industry, see Chapter 6.
- 22 *The Collections of the Textile Manufactures of India* (London, 1866). A second, modified series was produced over the years 1873–8. Desmond (*India Museum*, 97) appositely speculates that the earlier *Technical Objects from India and High Asia collected by Hermann, Adolphe and Robert Schlagintweit* (c. 1857–9), whose nine volumes include samples of over 280 textiles, may have contributed to Forbes Watson's inspiration.
- 23 A list of the recipient institutions is given in an Appendix to the *Textile Manufactures* (pp. 150–1). A key analysis of the strategic aims and the outcomes of Forbes Watson's enterprise is given by Deborah Swallow in 'The India Museum and the British-Indian textile trade'. Driver and Ashmore ('The mobile museum', 371) highlight a perception among Indian nationalists that the paucity of volumes sent there was reflective of a deliberate strategy to ruin rather than encourage local initiatives.
- 24 It may be mentioned that Forbes Watson's enthusiasm for the project occasionally led him into questionable practices: some of the fabric samples he distributed, for example, had been cut from textiles and even garments in the permanent collections of the museum.
- 25 For more extensive discussion of this topic, and for the 'mobile museums' in the form of multiple glazed frames mounted radially on a central stand, designed by Forbes Watson

to circulate more complex exhibits from the museum, see Driver, 'Exhibiting South Asian textiles', and Driver and Ashmore, 'The mobile museum', where the broader impact of Indian textiles on British design, through the agency of Owen Jones and other influential figures, is also considered. Jo Norman observes (personal communication, 2022) that the circulating collections maintained by the South Kensington Museum provide an analogous means by which metropolitan museum collections were mobilized with a view to reaching provincial audiences.

- 26 Revd Meadows Taylor, review of Forbes Watson's *Textile Manufactures* in *Art Journal* 29 (1867), 82–5. Forbes Watson himself advised that if difficulties should be encountered, 'these can be got over by reference to the parent and more elaborate collection in the India Museum' (*Textile Manufactures*, 3).
- 27 Forbes Watson, *Textile Manufactures*, 2.
- 28 Crill, *Fabric of India*, 6.
- 29 A wonderfully comprehensive website detailing the entire contents of one set of all 18 volumes of *The Textile Manufactures of India* is hosted by the Harris Museum and Art Gallery, Preston, at <http://www.tmoi.org.uk> [accessed 05.05.2023]. The museum holds a complete original set originally held in Preston Town Hall; it remains in its original presentation case. The densely illustrated online presentation can be searched by volume, material, garment type, pattern, decorative technique or function.
- 30 The character and history of the muslin trade is expertly documented by Sonia Ashmore in *Muslin*. As she records (pp. 27–32), perhaps in no other area of textile production was the adverse influence of the East India Company so marked.
- 31 Taylor, *Descriptive and Historical Account*.
- 32 For a discussion of Indian wild silks, see Stephen Cohen in Crill, *Fabric of India*, 20–6.
- 33 Rosemary Crill, personal communication, 25.05.2022.

## 7

# The mirror of India: clothing, dress and ornament

There is enough here ... to teach the people of England, in a few hours, more of the inner life and social customs of the Hindoos than they are likely to get from ... any existing published works. It is sometimes a subject of complaint that the popular mind of England has never been brought into contact with the popular mind of Hindostan. The complaint is just: as a mass, we know next to nothing of the hundred millions of Hindoos who are our fellow-subjects ... Now, the East India Museum would afford a key to a good part, at least, of this mystery, and, if rightly used, would render valuable service in enlightening us with regard to a subject which is becoming day by day of more importance to Englishmen.<sup>1</sup>

With this perceptive observation – couched as it is in the language of the time – a commentator in 1858 accurately identified one of the major benefits (though incidental to its primary aim) brought by the India Museum to the metropolitan populace. While the promotion of commerce with the sub-continent undoubtedly operated as the primary driver of the collection, the East India Company and later the India Office seem to have taken a broad view of where the limits of their interests should be set. It would, indeed, have been difficult for either administration to draw precise lines separating one sphere of interest from another: for example, Forbes Watson's attempts to educate British manufacturers in the established markets for specific kinds of textiles were predicated on a commendably comprehensive study he undertook on the forms and fashions of dress adopted by different communities, religions and social strata throughout the



sub-continent, an exercise that has earned a permanent place in the ethnographical literature on India.<sup>2</sup>

The museum also adapted to and benefited from the greatly expanded range of Indian goods that found their way through the regular international trade fairs following that of 1851 in London, exposing Europeans to myriad small objects relating to life on a domestic scale rather than in the sphere of international trade – walking sticks, *huqqas*, nose ornaments, musical instruments, kitchen utensils, devotional figures. All of these helped visitors form an impression of the texture of Indian life beyond that of the commercial world.

## Clothing

Perhaps no aspect of society speaks across cultural boundaries as effectively as dress. The ability to picture other peoples in their customary dress can form a helpful first step in establishing a sympathetic understanding of otherwise unfamiliar populations. Literally hundreds of individual garments listed in the catalogue of 1879 were accessible to the visitor to the India Museum, presenting him or her with a kaleidoscope of clothing, exhibited (at least in the later decades of its existence) with a degree of contextualization. Coherence was provided by a number of entire ensembles listed (and evidently displayed) together, offering a view of how they all related to each other. The most spectacular of these was ‘the costume of the Queen of Oudh’, mentioned in more detail below, but there were others – a dress, jacket, ‘pyjamas’ and handkerchief, all in white muslin, presented by ‘the Rajah of Oodypore’ and other related groups from Lahore, Kangra and Sind. A group of 18 ‘dolls, dressed in native costumes’ would have been similarly informative in this respect, as also six glazed frames containing a total of 28 ‘coloured illustrations of costumes, &c.’, presented by P. F. Campbell-Johnston, and a further four such frames containing 17 ‘illustrations of [the] mode of wearing garments’ by John Griffiths, head of the Bombay School of Art.

On the other hand, a growing proportion of the clothing seems to have spent much of its time in storage (forming a reference collection available for consultation principally by specialist manufacturers). Among the numerous items already in boxes when they were transferred in 1879 to the South Kensington Museum, for example, were the following:

- Box No. 30. Twenty-seven men's garments, &c.  
Box No. 33. Twenty-six men's garments. Cotton.  
Box No. 34. Thirty-eight men's garments. Cotton, with gold and silk borders and ends, &c.  
Box No. 35. Twenty men's garments. Silk and cotton, &c.

Many of the garments associated with Hindu populations – *lunghis*, *dhotis* and *saris* – are characterized as leaving the loom ready for wear, without the least need for sewing. Muslim clothing, on the other hand, was characterized in contemporary sources as commonly 'made out of Piece-goods by the aid of scissors and needles': jackets, coats and trousers for men; skirts and petticoats for women. This basic distinction forms the first level of classification within Forbes Watson's *Textile Manufactures and Costumes of the People of India*. He observes, however, that these conventions were already breaking down in his day: strict Hindus, who had formerly regarded sewn garments as an abomination, were now becoming reconciled to them, whereas 'the Mahomedans of our day frequently content themselves with the simpler covering that is more peculiarly the dress of the Hindu'. Inadvertently, then, the collection captured Indian dress at a moment of transition.

Beginning with 'loom-made articles', Forbes Watson considers first male attire – turbans, 'loongees, including dhotees', and 'kummerbunds'. Each type is considered according to its constituent materials, from cotton to silk, and its various treatments – bleached or unbleached, with gold thread, dyed or printed; all are cross-referred to the samples contained in the same author's *Collections of the Textile Manufactures of India*. (Given the lack of definitive structural characteristics, it is perhaps unsurprising that the precise identities of what Forbes Watson terms the 'scarf-like garments' – turban, *lunghi*, *dhoti*, cummerbund and even *sari* – as used in the 1880 catalogue cannot be relied upon as being wholly accurate, and to some degree the wearer may indeed have decided on the final use of a particular length of textile.)

## Headgear

Since each fold of the turban envelops its predecessor, it is common for such ornament as may be applied to them to be limited to the most visible end, and occasionally to the visible edge, in the interests of economy – a principle also observed in other types of garment. Within the museum collection, surviving turbans are comparatively rare, and few of those still existing can be said to have been entirely 'loom-made'.

While regional varieties had existed for centuries – some wound close to the head and others ballooning into voluminous forms according to tribal and social conventions – those that remain in the collection are not the simple strips (some of which could reach over 30 yards long) or squares of cloth from which these were conventionally fashioned. By the mid-nineteenth century (to which period most of those in the collection belong), an evolved form of headgear had developed in which the outer appearance of the turban is recreated in permanent form by stitching a much smaller amount of textile over a papier mâché base, so that it can be fitted and removed without the need for rewinding (figs 7.1a and b). The diagonal folds or lines of embroidery that characterize these items perpetuate the overlapping pattern formed in a conventionally wound turban; regional variations in shape, including the central protrusions or crests formed in some traditional turbans, continued to be observed in these prefabricated versions, which were adopted most widely among the urban professional populations.<sup>3</sup> Originating particularly among the Marathas, this type of turban became widespread throughout India: one example here from Delhi is now characterized as ‘the most typical Indian middle-class headgear of the nineteenth century’.<sup>4</sup>

A range of undoubted caps and hats also make an appearance in the catalogue. They too varied widely across society. Perhaps the most rudimentary (though beautifully constructed) is made from a leaf of an areca palm: worn by the poorest classes in the Kanara region in the south-west, its simple elegance led it to be chosen for inclusion in an *Exposition Universelle* in Paris, from which it was acquired by the India Museum. Others are in striped cotton, coloured wool (fig. 7.1b), red muslin and unspecified materials. Embroidered caps – often elaborately decorated – were produced both to be worn independently in informal company and to be worn under a turban, the cloth of which was wound tightly around the vertical sides of the cap, whose crown was left exposed.

The more elaborate hats include one (described in the catalogue of 1880 as a turban) with a high crown of quilted satin and an embroidered cuff around the bottom (fig. 7.2a), which – despite its imposing appearance – has been identified as typical headgear of a foreign servant (especially Muslims of African extraction) in a courtly household.<sup>5</sup> Another distinctive type held in the museum in some numbers was the *serai* (or *Sindhi*) *topi*, particularly worn in nineteenth-century Sind (fig. 7.2b): it was originally associated with government officials and lawyers (a custom maintained by ‘pleaders’ in the lawcourts up



**Fig. 7.1.** (a) Turban, red cotton over a card base, as widely worn by clerical classes, teachers, etc. D 38.2 cm. Acquired in 1879 as a Brahmin's turban. Poona. 0333(IS); (b) Flat turban of red velvet, with gold brocade, sequins and a fringe of black silk at the back. D 33.8 cm. Acquired 1855. Delhi. 0331(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

to the end of the nineteenth century),<sup>6</sup> although it was adopted more widely by Muslim society as the 1800s progressed. One catalogue entry is for a box containing 36 'Caps made up. Sindee Topees', most or all of which were written off. Worn only in courtly society, notably in Delhi and Lucknow, was a hat known from its method of construction as a *chaugoshia* ('four-cornered'): elaborately ornamented as they are, these were reserved for informal wear by courtiers.



**Fig. 7.2.** (a) Hat of yellow and scarlet satin, its high crown of yellow satin stitched in parallel pockets stuffed with cotton, and with an embroidered cuff of scarlet satin around the bottom. H 21.5 cm. Acquired 1867. Bhuj. 0337(IS); (b) *Serai topi* of kinob (brocaded silk) over a cardboard base, with a characteristic panel of contrasting design; the drum is lined and wadded with cotton. D (top) 25 cm. Sind. 5742(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

## Garments

Conforming more strictly to the concept of finished production on the loom are the *lunghis* and *dhotees* considered next by Forbes Watson, the first – according to his specification – worn around the shoulders (no longer the case) and the second around the thighs (though terminology was applied differently across the regions). Although both consisted of simple lengths of cloth, Forbes Watson was at pains to point out to British manufacturers the necessity of studying and duplicating the precise lengths, widths, weights, materials, colours and decoration favoured by wearers; in the process he provides an exceptional amount of detail on a type of product (and conventions of wear) that otherwise would surely have attracted little in the way of documentation. The India Museum – and the portable albums of samples forming its local extensions, each of which included over 90 samples of textiles appropriate for this purpose – provided first-hand examples, while many details of the different styles of wearing such garments were illustrated in *The People of India* (1868–72), an attempt by Forbes Watson to document photographically ‘the races and tribes of Hindustan’.

As with turbans, it was pointed out that the method of wear determined that only the ends – often only one end – and occasionally the edges of these garments needed to be decorated. A bold stripe or two of colour was generally all that was required, although coloured silks could be woven into the borders of better-quality pieces. Gold thread might be included in the border of the *lunghi*, but would prove a discomfort in the *dhoti* and was therefore to be avoided. Dyed textiles of appropriate colours would be acceptable – deep reds were particularly favoured – but it was essential that dyes were fast, given the fact that *lunghis* and *dhotis* in particular would be subject to ‘frequent washing of a rough character’. For well-off Brahmins, silk *dhotis* were prescribed as the normal wear for dining and for ritual wear, cotton being considered impure.

The final article of male attire considered by Forbes Watson is the ‘kummerbund’ – a sash worn at the waist principally by Muslims, although richer Hindus had also adopted it for formal dress. These were generally of five or six yards in length and woven from wool, although finer muslins were also favoured.<sup>7</sup> Like the foregoing, decoration on the cummerbund was usually limited to the visible ends, where coloured or gold thread might be incorporated.

As described by Forbes Watson, the ‘saree’ – the principal woman’s garment of the sub-continent – is simply ‘a long scarf ... which envelops





**Fig. 7.3.** Sari of woven silk, showing the fully evolved pattern of a long field (*zami*) and a shorter, more decorative end piece (*anchal*), all within a border. At the centre of the *anchal* are two of the *kalka* motifs that achieved universal popularity in the form of 'paisley' pattern. 479 × 110 cm. Acquired 1855. Bahadurpur. 0786(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

the body and acts as a covering to the head'. The universal style of wearing was for one end of the sari to be passed twice round the waist and tied in a knot, the skirt so formed hanging in graceful folds to the ankle; the other end was passed across the left arm and shoulder, one edge being brought over the head, while the remainder fell behind and



over the right shoulder and arm. Cotton and silk were the standard materials, according to social standing, or combinations of the two (fig. 7.3). As with the other garments already mentioned, produced in finished form on the loom, any decoration was generally limited to the ends – more particularly the visible outer end – and perhaps the borders; coloured yarns or gold thread would be woven in as appropriate. The dimensions given for the saris in the 1879 text vary from 2½ to nearly 9½ yards in length, reflecting the range of demand, from rural women in need of a shorter, practical working dress to the middle and upper classes for whom volume, like fabric, was an index of wealth and status.

As an alternative to covering the head with the sari, a separate cotton kerchief might be worn which, when not required, was draped over the shoulders like a shawl. These were typically about one square yard; checks or tartan-like patterns were popular. All those listed by Forbes Watson are from the Madras presidency. Millions of these were traded to West Africa and thence reached the Caribbean through the slave trade, while others were exported directly to the West and as far as America, where as bandanas (derived from the Sanskrit term for tie-dyeing) they enjoyed huge popularity with the male and female populations.<sup>8</sup> In western India, where a skirt-and-blouse combination sometimes replaced the *sari*, the head and back were protected with a larger rectangular covering, the *odhni* or *orhni*.

Shawls were themselves the subject of a major export trade. Especially prized were those woven originally in Kashmir from the fine underwool – *pushum*, or *pashmina* – of the domesticated goats of the Himalayas (fig. 7.4a); Forbes Watson notes that these were now more widely woven ‘within our own territory’, quoting a report of 1862 which mentions that within the previous 30 years cashmere had become ‘by far the most important manufacture in the Punjab’, following a large-scale migration of weavers due to famine in Kashmir itself.<sup>9</sup> Worn as much by men as by women, it was acknowledged that the very best of them continued to be made in their original homeland; the industry was estimated to have given employment to 100,000 women, nine-tenths of their production being for sale rather than for domestic consumption. Commonly, they were woven as squares, but most esteemed were the *doshallas*, or long shawls; these might be dyed in up to 50 tints and were invariably sold as pairs.

Shawls composed of silk combined with gold-wrapped thread – the latter particularly associated with Benares – also found a profitable market. More exotic and sought after in the West were those incorporating



**Fig. 7.4.** Shawls. (a) Woven goat hair (*pashmina*), yellow ground with two rows of *butas* in blue on the borders. L (including fringes) 254 cm. Acquired 1855. Kashmir. 0258(IS); (b) Cotton net, embroidered in silver-wrapped thread and decorated with the iridescent wing cases of beetles (detail). L 275 cm. Unprovenanced. 6181(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

the iridescent green wing cases of beetles (fig. 7.4b): Edwina Ehrman notes a trade advertisement from 1867 announcing the arrival of a shipment of 25,000 beetle wings.<sup>10</sup> The 1880 catalogue records the latter combined with gold and silver cloth and with muslin, forming scarves, skirts, ribbons, caps and cuffs, as well as applied to baskets and bags.

From this point in Forbes Watson's discussion, attention shifts from loom-wrought garments to piece goods – that is to say, lengths of cloth that would need to be cut and tailored to make garments or furnishings. The discussion begins once again with headgear, although the caps and hats involved were thought to be too insignificant to attract the attentions of the British manufacturer. Those of the Brahmins in southern India, with two flaps over the ears, are dismissed as ugly-looking affairs, while



Fig. 7.5. (a) *Jama* of red muslin with trimmings in silver-gilt tinsel ribbon, crimped metal strips, and sequins made from wing cases of the jewel beetle; fastened on the left side with cords and with decorative ties. Acquired 1855. Bikaner. 05563(IS); (b) Jacket of red silk with decoration in gold brocade. Tailored in Indore from textile woven in Gujarat. L 78 cm. Presented to Lord Fitzclarence by H. H. Maharaja Tukoji Rao Holkar II, 25 July 1855. 05578(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

their brethren in the north-west affected a more attractive version like a smoking cap, providing fruitful employment for the local embroiderers in gold and silver wire and coloured silks. (The influence on Forbes Watson's aesthetic sensibilities of established Western fashions shows through here.) Other types are reviewed only briefly.

The long cotton coats worn by the majority of well-to-do Hindus, and the slightly roomier ones favoured by Muslims, receive passing mention. The looser, sleeved robes of the north (*choga*) are represented by a splendid example which, it has been suggested, may have come from the wardrobe of the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir, c. 1855.<sup>11</sup> One eloquent exhibit is a full-length *jama*, a garment initially favoured in Mughal courtly circles and later adopted more widely, by both men and women (with some variation): it combines a close-fitting, long-sleeved top with a full skirt, the length of which varied over time and in different regions (fig. 7.5a). Another spectacular surviving garment is a finely tailored jacket in red silk ornamented with plant motifs in gold-wrapped thread, presented by the Maharaja of Indore to Lord Fitzclarence, Commander of the Bombay Army (fig. 7.5b).

'Paejamas or trowsers' (fig. 7.6), the latter 'sometimes wide and free and sometimes tight at the leg and ankle', began to find popularity



**Fig. 7.6.** Trousers ('paejamas') of green brocaded silk with purple bands at the waist and hems, with applied silver and gold ribbon and tinsel fringes. The accession record states that they were 'worn by all the Royal Family during their youth and also by the Nobility'. L 97 cm. Acquired 1867. Bhopal. 0649(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

with Muslims of both sexes and were also increasingly adopted by younger urban Hindus.

An exceptionally ornate ensemble (fig. 7.7a) is represented by a group comprising a dress (*peshwaz*) of green silk with applied gold ribbon and pompoms, formed of a fitted bodice and a full skirt made up of 31 triangular panels; the associated maroon-coloured trousers (*paijama*) have very wide legs, each leg comprising 17 triangular panels which form a train behind; the accession record also mentions a scarf and shoes with bells attached. The entire outfit is ornamented with an overall scale pattern in crimped metal ribbon, each arc enclosing a gold rosette. It entered the museum 'as worn by the Queen of Oude',<sup>12</sup> but current opinion suggests that it may rather have been the costume of a young dancer or a noblewoman at court – possibly at Lucknow – or have been produced for a betrothal ceremony. It has also been suggested that it could have been made specifically for inclusion in one of the international exhibitions, such as that at Paris in 1855, from which the ensemble may have been acquired by the India Museum.<sup>13</sup> A second *peshwaz* in the collection (fig. 7.7b) is also associated with women's courtly dress, having been worn perhaps in the declining Mughal empire or in the Deccan.

A close-fitting jacket or bodice (*choli*) was widely favoured by both Hindu and Muslim women, distinguished by little more than the length of the sleeve and the bodice. One example in the collection reflects something of the complexities inherent in the Company's dealings in textiles: machine-woven in England from imported cotton and printed with a floral pattern in synthetic dye, the finished muslin has been exported to India and made up there with red bindings at the edges into a characteristic local garment, before being reimported for display in the 1872 London International Exhibition and ultimately being acquired for the museum collection.<sup>14</sup>

In terms of size or volume, the petticoats or skirts favoured by Muslim women were said to be 'kept within more moderate dimensions than in European countries', although there were exceptions. One example from the India Museum was more probably worn by a Hindu woman: although almost 70 m in circumference at the hem, it would have been considered unexceptional in nineteenth-century Rajasthan.





Fig. 7.7. (a) Ensemble in silk, comprising a dress (*peshwaz*) and trousers (*paijama*), associated by tradition with the Queen of Oudh. Acquired 1855. Lucknow. 0644-6(IS); (b) *Peshwaz* in delicate muslin ornamented with applied tinsel, spangles and foil. The bodice and the hem have bands of decoration around the openings, bordered by rows of blossoms in red foil and sequins. Unprovenanced. 5842(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.





## Personal ornaments

The V&A's collection of Indian jewellery and personal ornaments, largely (but not exclusively) founded on that of the India Museum, has attracted scholarly attention over the past century and more as one of the most representative gatherings of its type in Britain. Particularly useful publications on the subject range from a series of remarkably detailed and insightful articles by Colonel T. H. Hendley in the *Journal of Indian Art and Industry* from the period 1906–9 to Nick Barnard's *Indian Jewellery: The V&A Collection* of 2008, the latter presenting a succinct account of the range of material in the collection, its cultural significance and a survey of earlier bibliography.<sup>15</sup>

As mentioned in the introduction, the earliest record of a donation to the India Museum, as reported in *The Times* of 23 October 1798 – the year of the museum's foundation – comprised '2 chests of ornaments appertaining to Indian dresses and including some beautiful pearls', sent by Baji Rao II, last peshwa of the Maratha confederacy.<sup>16</sup> Half a century later, more deliberate acquisitions were being made from the great international exhibitions of the period (notably those of London in 1851 and Paris in 1855 and 1867), and what must have been an important asset from the point of view of display was acquired from the London International Exhibition of 1872 in the form of a carved wooden figure of a Hindu lady sent from Oudh (fig. 7.8): she was decked with 62 separate pieces of jewellery, giving visitors a striking illustration of the sheer density of the displays of ornament that might be encountered – in effect, the sum of the wearer's personal wealth – which otherwise would have been difficult to convey in the museum setting.

Private collectors also contributed to the displays with both gifts and loans. The most renowned of these was the collection of Colonel Charles Seton Guthrie, retired from a career with the Bengal Engineers, whose matchless collection of Mughal gems and hardstones was featured in the international exhibitions of 1862 (in London) and 1867 (in Paris). A selection of representative types was placed on loan to the museum by Guthrie; some 80 pieces were bought in 1867, and further items were presented by the collector.<sup>17</sup> An important collection, quite different in character, arrived as a loan in the museum, almost on the eve of its dispersal. Marion Rivett-Carnac, wife of a senior Bengal civil servant, had spent years amassing (in George Birdwood's words) 'an exhaustive collection of the aboriginal and peasant jewelry of India', much of it in base metal or of natural materials. Some 750 items were displayed in the international exhibition in London in



**Fig. 7.8.** 'Lay figure, with costume, consisting of red veil, green bodice, and blue silk skirt with gold embroidery, and with jewellery consisting of a head ornament, two ear ornaments, nose ornament, five necklaces, 30 armlets and bracelets, two thumb rings, seven finger rings, nine toe rings, and four anklets'. Illustration from Hendley, 'Indian jewellery', pl. 74. The figure was written off in 1950. 2512(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

1872, with further selections appearing in Vienna in 1873 and Paris in 1878, the total estimated at around 6,000 items.<sup>18</sup> In terms of demonstrating the practical usefulness of the material involved, Mrs Rivett-Carnac's collection introduced a valuable corrective element to the India Museum's displays, dominated as they were by items from more urbanized and even courtly societies.

From whichever background they came, all of these items would originally have been loaded with much more significance than is conveyed by the inadequate term 'ornament'. A great deal of store was set by them in the Indian world, where they acted as eloquent and specific signifiers of rank and marital status among all echelons of society, as well as carrying multiple messages of religious, ethnic or other cultural affinities.<sup>19</sup> To a much greater degree than in the West, gold ornaments and gems in particular were regarded as assets that would be worn with as much pomp as could be mustered but which could be liquidated in times of need, at which point they were liable to be recast into new forms. Goldsmiths (who also acted as moneylenders) occupied a central position in this mechanism; characteristically, they would not hold large reserves of gold (and were at times prohibited by law from doing so) but would depend to a large degree on this recycling process, so that a certain tension existed between the general adherence to traditional forms of ornament and the degree to which older material was liable periodically to be melted down and gems reset. This consideration would have been a contributory factor in shaping the character of the India Museum collection, in which contemporary (nineteenth-century) material greatly outweighs earlier pieces.

Ornaments of silver were more widely worn in Muslim society, but among Hindu peoples its use was confined to the less well-off elements of society. Coinage contributed quite widely to the store of raw material here, being treated largely as bullion: a few rupees might be gathered together over a period of time and melted down at an appropriate moment. Wealth stored in the form of ornaments – most of which would be worn by wives and daughters (or indeed by the husband himself) on a daily basis – was less at risk than valuables left in the family home. In this form, ornaments also acted as everyday indicators of comparative wealth, perhaps especially in the context of bridal trousseaus, which constituted a major preoccupation for every family.<sup>20</sup> The ornaments brought by the bride to her wedding remained her personal property,<sup>21</sup> to be inherited by her children; others might be provided by her husband, but on the understanding that they could be called upon in times of family need.

Gems too were viewed in a manner unlike that in the West. Size was all-important in creating an impression, while flaws in the stone were regarded as of lesser consequence. Extensive cutting and faceting was avoided in favour of retaining as much as possible of the mass of the stone, which would usually be mounted uncut. A further dimension of interest is alluded to by Hendley, who observed that the nineteenth century had seen far-reaching developments in the industry as jewellers and goldsmiths responded to changes following on from the collapse of Mughal courtly patronage which became more widely dispersed throughout the princely states of India. He also detects a growing tendency for eclecticism to displace traditional adherence to established motifs and styles; as a contributory influence in this regard, he again singles out the establishment of government-controlled art schools (established in India from the mid-1800s), promoting European aesthetics at the expense of indigenous values and resulting in a dilution and degradation of traditional practice.<sup>22</sup> The India Museum collection therefore incorporates elements of the best historical production along with examples of material produced with an eye on the international markets and exhibitions; the latter acted as conduits for new acquisitions and in turn exerted powerful influences on Indian as well as European tastes.

It would be interesting to know to what degree the museum explored these dimensions in its displays: they were touched upon in Baden Powell's influential *Hand-Book of the Manufactures and Arts of the Punjab* in 1872 and scattered references to such matters appear in the catalogue of 1880,<sup>23</sup> but otherwise these were, so far as can be discerned, questions left largely to researchers of the twentieth century and later.

### Turban ornaments

Perhaps the most prominent and prestigious piece of male jewellery,<sup>24</sup> the turban ornament (*sarpesh*), took the form of a pin worn directly above the forehead (fig. 7.9); initially associated with a plume, the turban (or *pagri*) ornament itself came to adopt the outline of a plume, its expanded head providing a field for display of the most virtuosic features of the jeweller's craft. Introduced under the Mughals, these were originally signifiers of royal rank, but with the decline of the empire in the eighteenth century their use became less exclusive and more widely disseminated among the wealthy. Nonetheless, they remained comparatively few in number in the India Museum collections, although the fact that one of the most



**Fig. 7.9.** Turban ornament of nephrite jade set with rubies, emeralds and topaz and with a pendent pearl. First half of eighteenth century, Mughal, northern India. L 19.7 cm. Presented 1868 by Colonel Charles Seton Guthrie. Unprovenanced. 02569(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

spectacular is listed in the catalogue as a head ornament (for which there are over 20 other entries) may suggest the former presence of rather more of them than we can now detect.

Other turban ornaments in the collection combine the plume-like vertical ornament with a matching horizontally aligned element, while one adopts an alternative discoid form, its convex surface enamelled with a decorative scheme featuring a central peacock flanked by other birds and set against a background of flowers and foliage.

## Head ornaments

The principal head ornaments worn by women tended to be applied directly to the forehead, supported by cords running into the hair and/or secured to the ears. The same items are variously identified as hair ornaments or even as neck ornaments: some of the uncertainty experienced by the India Museum cataloguers persists among jewellery specialists to this day.

The most elaborate are major pieces of composite jewellery: these include one example with three gold filigree elements set with gems, united by strings of pearls and sapphires and with jewel-set pendent discs supporting beads of green glass and further pearls, and another with two elements set with turquoises and rubies, linked by strings of pearls and with turquoise and pearl pendants (fig. 7.10). A number of gem-set discs in the collection are identified as coming from composite head ornaments such as these, as well as an example in silk and tinsel from Benares, deriving from a more modest ensemble.

An alternative form is represented by two silver filigree ornaments from Cuttack (the principal source for this kind of work), one with leaves and rosettes symmetrically arranged on a silver stem and the other with a series of squared rosettes mounted on a pair of chains or cords, each separated from its neighbour by a pair of beads/rosettes (fig. 7.11). Numbers of small decorations and hairpins with floreate heads, all in silver filigree, would have formed ancillaries to ornaments such as these. A simple but attractive version, set with foil-backed rock crystal imitating gems, a crescentic ornament and pendent natural pearls, is typical of those favoured in everyday Indian society. Henry Hardy Cole, who considered the India Museum's collection of jewellery as numerous but generally undistinguished, singled out the pieces of filigree from Cuttack for favourable mention: some he considered 'master-pieces of this kind of work, showing how it is possible to use it in ornaments without degeneration into frivolity'.<sup>25</sup>





Fig. 7.10. Head ornament of gem-set gold filigree, with strings of pearls and rubies and with pendent green glass beads terminating in pearl clusters. H 18 cm. Produced c. 1853 in Delhi. 03325(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 7.11. Head ornament of leaves and rosettes in silver filigree, produced in Cuttack – centre of the filigree industry. 03383(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.





**Fig. 7.12.** (a) Forehead ornament (*ticca*), crescentic gold setting with rubies, emeralds and pendent pearls. Bengal. 03195(IS); (b) *Nath*, the crescentic lower part with granular projections on either edge, from which leaf-shaped pendants in sheet gold are suspended on twisted wires threaded with seed pearls. D 7 cm. Punjab. 03130(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

A particular type of head ornament (and an essential item in a bridal outfit) is formed by the *ticca*, a pendent gem that drops from the hairline to sit on the sixth *chakra* – an auspicious spot on the forehead associated with a range of virtues and with the ‘third eye’. Commonly of gold and enamel (fig. 7.12a), several of those in the collection are crescent-shaped and set profusely with diamonds, rubies, emeralds and pearls; others are leaf-shaped and one is in the form of a fish – always a propitious sign in Hindu iconography.

Nose rings (*nath*) regularly formed further essentials of bridal costume and continued to be worn thereafter by married women; in some regions unwed girls might also wear them, often distinguished in form and detail from those of wives. The fashion was introduced to India under the Moghuls, later extending to both Hindus and Muslims. The nose ring – often of large diameter and carrying chased ornament and jewels (fig. 7.12b) – is usually worn in the left nostril (associated especially with female wellbeing); in some areas it pierces both nostrils,



**Fig. 7.13.** Ear rings. (a) Silver wire mounted with white sapphires to form two crescents and threaded with numerous seed pearls and green glass beads; below is a fish-shaped pendant. H 10 cm. Bengal. 03210-11(IS); (b) Gold; on a floriate hooked stud the petals are formed of filigree wire, ornamented with cutwork studs; on a ring below is suspended a bell-like element in the same technique, with a looped fringe. H 5 cm. Calcutta. 03179(IS); (c) Reddened gold; three spherical elements in *babul* work are connected to each other and to a suspension loop by moulded collars; the suspension loop, of wrapped wire, has floriate studs and jingling elements. H 3.8 cm. Delhi. 03330(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

(b)



(c)



in others only the medial septum, and in yet others it is threaded through the bridge of the nose. In some societies married women will never remove their nose rings, so that they perform something of the symbolic function of Western wedding rings. As might be expected, they vary widely in form (and in terminology) throughout the sub-continent, while sharing the decorative motifs that appear on other ornaments.

Earrings and ear ornaments of varying forms are among the most numerous personal ornaments in the collection, exhibiting a wide range of decoration (figs 7.13a, b and c). Hendley observed that while European

ladies 'are content with one appendage at each ear', those of Hindustan 'think it impossible to have too many'<sup>26</sup> – his humorous exaggeration conveying at least a sense of the degree of elaboration that might be encountered. A classic form comprises a wire loop that passes through the ear lobe, the lower part of which may flatten out to display engraved and moulded ornament and to act as a support for a series of pendants. In one of the most elaborate examples in the collection, multiple pearls are threaded on wires to produce a dense but light arrangement in which two crescentic elements are mounted with gemstones, the lower one supporting a gem-set pendent fish with further pendants below. The creation of this light and airy effect seems entirely at odds with the aims of some craftsmen, who embellished plain gold surfaces with multiple tiny cones or spines in so-called *babul* work, turning the hollow spheres on one pair of earrings into seemingly massive and weighty bodies (fig. 7.13c).

### Neck ornaments

Both men and women might wear neck ornaments, either necklaces – in gold or (particularly among the hill tribes) with beads or fruits – or torcs, again in a variety of materials: even British officers might find themselves presented with necklaces as distributed by rulers on state occasions, their value carefully graded according to the rank of the recipient.

Several items in the collection are identified as marriage necklaces, representative of the wealth brought to the union by the bride. One example maximizes the impact of the gold by being wrought into a succession of hollow cylinders with decorative terminals (fig. 7.14a). Metal chains also served to enhance visual impact, made either with conventional links or plaited with extraordinary virtuosity to form a substantial rope in 'trichinopoly' technique. More often, a rigid necklet would support a broad band that might be heavily inlaid with gems and support multiple jewelled pendants with terminals in the form of seed pearls (fig. 7.14b).

As well as their decorative and bullion value, some neck ornaments worn by adults or children served to support one or more amulets. Simpler types commonly take the form of closed cylinders of gold filled with appropriate apotropaic material, plaques embossed with deities or body parts of animals (notably tigers' claws). The collection includes a number of Buddhist amulets from Tibet, ornamented with coral or turquoise, as well as Muslim amulets inscribed with Koranic verses or with prayers (fig. 7.15a).



**Fig. 7.14.** Necklaces. (a) Marriage necklace of gold, comprising 21 cylindrical elements threaded on a cotton cord. Acquired 1855. [?] Bengal. 03060(IS); (b) Necklet of enamelled gold, set with diamonds and pearls, with pendent pearls and emeralds. D 18.5 cm. Bengal. 03202(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



**Fig. 7.15.** (a) Pendant of white nephrite jade set in gold and inlaid with rubies and emeralds and with an emerald pendant; the reverse is inscribed with Koranic verses; c. 1610–20. H 5.7 cm. Perhaps Agra. 02535(IS); (b) Torc, of silver, as worn by Banjara women. W 14.5 cm. Acquired 1855. Khandesh. 03471(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

At the simpler end of the spectrum are many necklaces of inexpensive beads of glass, dried fruits or seeds, or wood: the latter are represented in the collection by a multi-strand necklace of sandalwood.

A quite different form of neck ornament is represented by a series of torcs with substantial pendants (fig. 7.15b). In their sheer



bulk of metal these are unsurpassed, although they are perhaps more common in silver than in gold. They also form one of the types in which influence from Europe – where Indian originals became fashionable within a certain ‘aesthetic’ set<sup>27</sup> – was fed back to India and conditioned their formal and stylistic development in the second half of the nineteenth century, in time for these changes to be registered within the India Museum collection.

## Brooches

These played little or no part in the traditional Indian decorative repertoire, but by the middle of the nineteenth century, virtuoso examples of traditional craftsmanship can be found applied to pieces produced specifically for the European market. These included the *babul* or *kikar* work already mentioned, in which tiny thorn-like cones of gold are applied to the surface of the metal to produce an effect reminiscent



**Fig. 7.16.** Brooches. (a) Crescentic, composed of nine hollow hemispheres and four hollow tear-shaped drops in gold *babul* work, separated by engraved bands, all set within gold filigree frames embossed with hemispheres and with a pendant of three conjoined spheres. W 8.3 cm. Acquired 1855. Delhi. 03332(IS); (b) Cruciform, formed of five hollow hemispheres in *babul* work, all set within gold filigree frames embossed and with hollow tear-shaped drops to either side and below. W 7.8 cm. Acquired 1855. Delhi. 03334(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



**Fig. 7.17.** Silver filigree brooch in the form of a cutting of a rose, with seed pods, delicate openwork leaves and a butterfly resting on one of the blooms. W 10.2 cm. Acquired 1855. Travancore. 03371(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

of granulation but described more appositely by Baden Powell as ‘like a tiny hedge hog’s back’ (figs 7.16a and b).<sup>28</sup> Having been applied to wholly Indian ornaments for only a few decades, by the mid-1800s both the technique and its associated motifs came to appear on pieces aimed at a European clientele, as represented by a small group of pieces from Delhi acquired by the India Museum in 1855.<sup>29</sup> Another example of this marriage of styles is provided by a brooch of gold and enamel typical of Central Indian work, in which a traditional iconography of courtly scenes is reproduced on a brooch destined solely for a European wearer.



The two-way influences that developed between the Indian and European communities, as noted elsewhere, were perhaps nowhere more marked than in ornaments of this type, which found a ready market in Europe and which were in turn influenced by European tastes. This is particularly evident in the series of filigree brooches produced in silver (fig. 7.17) – never a material regarded particularly highly by Hindus but one which lent itself to the reproduction with great delicacy of forms from the natural world – especially flowers and insects – or those with more abstract circular or cruciform outlines. (The latter in particular seem to invoke distant allusions to the insignia of various orders of chivalry.) The city of Cuttack, formerly the capital of Orissa, developed a reputation for particularly fine work of this type.

Chased metal brooches in animal forms again speak of a primarily British audience, for they tend to be naturalistic in their representation, with little of the stylization that characterizes Indian animal ornament. An elephant brooch packs in surface texture and trappings reminiscent of Indian manuscript illumination, but a brooch in the form of a lion – rather imperial-looking except for its tiger stripes – is more Western in inspiration. Both appear to have been displayed at the 1855 Paris *Exposition Universelle*, however, so that the European audience they both address cannot be in doubt.



**Fig. 7.18.** Brooch with a scene painted on ivory within an embossed gold frame; the image shows the Taj Mahal from across the Yamuna River. W 4 cm. Madras. 08747(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Half a dozen brooches in the collection strongly recall the contemporary European fashion for pictorial cameos or micro-mosaic jewellery, except that here the iconography is executed in watercolours painted on ivory. All those in question show views of Indian monuments, represented in minute detail (fig. 7.18). It might be imagined that these would have formed ideal gifts for family and sweethearts for Europeans returning home from service on the sub-continent.

### Armlets, bracelets and bangles

The arms provided an important field for display by Indian women, multiple ornaments often being worn on the upper as well as the lower arm, to the extent that much of the surface of the skin might be covered in extreme cases. On occasion, arm and neck ornaments might be coordinated.

Within the India Museum, as elsewhere, nomenclature was inevitably a little fluid: usage has varied in the past, and indeed continues to do so. Here the term armlet is applied to an ornament for the upper arm, worn above the elbow (*bazuband*); a bangle is a solid hoop of material – metal, ivory, glass and so on – or other material fitted over the hand and worn on the wrist; and a bracelet may again be of rigid material designed to be opened (or expanded) to fit on the lower arm, or it may be tied in place. Even this rudimentary classification must inevitably be unsatisfactory, since in the absence of supporting evidence, it may be difficult or impossible to distinguish some bracelets from the upper arm ornaments mentioned above.

Armlets (fig. 7.19a) are generally characterized by having a decorative band of goldwork or textile, worn to the outside, with cords at either end which tie around the inner arm. The full range of the jeweller's craft may be applied to the decorative element, with gems and enamel combined to maximize impact. Alternatively, rather than a band of material, the decoration may take the form of a solid plaque, richly ornamented.

Bracelets are represented in the collection by a wide variety of types. Perhaps the most traditional are those with ornaments threaded on string, reminiscent of the ornaments made from dried fruits or seeds by tribal peoples. In one instance, gilt metal beads with two circumferential rows of bosses take the place of the fruits, while in another (identified specifically with Muslim wearers in the catalogue) four rows of berry-like gold beads further underline the connection. Others are wholly a goldsmith's work, with a flexible band formed by multiple



**Fig. 7.19.** (a) Armlets (pair), comprising nine enamelled plaques set with a variety of semi-precious stones, each plaque with a central cabochon and with smaller stones in the corners. L 39 cm. Acquired 1855. Possibly from Jind. 03320(IS); (b) Bracelets (pair), penannular construction, the surfaces extensively covered with twisted wires and bossed ornament, set with roughly shaped turquoises and with a coral. D 6.5 cm. Acquired 1855. Sikkim. 03468(IS); (c) Bangles (30) of ivory, coloured and gilt. D (max.) 7.4 cm. Ahmednuggur. 08303(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

hinged elements, mounted with gems and closed at the end with a loop and terminal button. Yet others gain their flexibility from being constructed with woven wires.

The more substantial bracelets (fig. 7.19b) provided maximum opportunities for the display of virtuoso craftsmanship – and personal prestige. A pair of massive silver bracelets from Sikkim, with extensively worked surfaces and settings of turquoises, well makes the point; another from Bengal is fringed with pearls. Yet other bracelets are rigid in construction but made in sections designed to be riveted onto the wrists; alternatively, a removable section fitted in place with a clasp may ease access while maintaining the small diameter sought after to accentuate the slenderness of the wearer's wrists.

Bangles provided one of the means by which a woman could keep her wealth about her in comparative safety while also making a statement about her status through their number as well as their splendour. Both for reasons of safety and to draw attention to the slenderness of her wrists, bangles were made with the smallest diameter it was possible to fit over the woman's hand – a process that might be achieved only with difficulty and was not meant to be easily reversed. While gold and silver were favoured according to the status of the wearer, ivory and shell bangles were also worn (fig. 7.19c), and for the most impecunious there were bangles in glass, numbers of which could be bought at little cost. Forest or hill tribes extended the range of materials with ornaments derived from natural sources. A chank shell in the process of being cut into bangles, once in the India Museum, is now in the collections of the British Museum. The collection also includes a number of silver filigree bracelets from Cuttack (see above), no doubt produced specifically for the Western market.

### Waist ornaments and girdles

Acting as further social or ethnic identifiers were ornaments worn at the waist by women. One example was named originally as an *aboron*, but present-day custom favours the terms *benyop* or *bayop*. The type was worn by Adi-Minyong women of present-day Arunachal Pradesh.

### Anklets

Like bangles, anklets sent visual signals of wealth and status: they could be of great weight, both collectively and individually: examples weighing 2 lb or more are not unknown. In Rajputana at least, gold

was worn below waist level only by the nobility, but the amounts involved could still be impressive: Hendley mentions that a great queen might wear several pounds of weight on her ankles, to the extent that she would have to be supported when walking. Lower down the social scale, anklets with small bells attached to them were bought by husbands for their wives, ostensibly to frighten away snakes in the dark but more significantly allowing the whereabouts of the wearer to be known to her spouse at any time.<sup>30</sup> Hollow-casting allowed for an appearance of bulk without the weight; a few anklets made in this way – mostly of brass but in some instances made of gold, reflecting the abandonment of ancient custom – enclose beads which rattle rhythmically when worn by a dancer. Several others have external pendants in various forms. The bulk of the anklets in the collection are of silver or white metal, occasionally gilded, with a range of decorative schemes corresponding with those already encountered.

### Toe rings

The toes were not neglected for ornament, although toe rings are rarely of silver or gold, bell metal or white metal being more usual both for the ring itself and for the decorative element on top of the toe.

## Personal equipment

Over 20 walking sticks are included among the material transferred to South Kensington, in a variety of materials. Examples occur in lacquer and in ivory; one of the latter is in three pieces, with a tiger-head handle, while another in four pieces has a similar handle. One is made entirely of rings of stone, with a metal top and ferrule. Especially elaborate is a 'Malacca cane, mounted with gold, chased and embossed; contains receptacle for money, watch, chamber for snuff and writing material in handle, chain and key in gold appended', from Madras. Two canes have gold handles – one 'formerly belonging to Tippoo Sahib' and the other with its stick carved, rather improbably, with a Runic calendar. Among the remainder are three from Tonk, one identified as *seesum* (sesham?) wood and two from *rous* wood.

Smoking equipment is numerously represented in the collection, reflecting a long-established custom that penetrated every level of society. Tobacco arrived more or less contemporaneously with European penetration of the sub-continent but appears to have been introduced

independently via the Middle East, perhaps particularly by those devout Muslims who made the pilgrimage to Mecca. A century after its first encounter by Europeans in the New World, tobacco first began to reach India as a novelty and by the first decade of the seventeenth century, it was grown as a cash crop; a decade later it was already being exported to the Persian Gulf and to Southeast Asia, and by 1612 the EIC employed one Robert Clarkson at its Surat factory to cure tobacco.<sup>31</sup>

Tobacco pipes appear in small numbers in the catalogue: all are now missing. Presumably most followed conventional European forms.<sup>32</sup> One example in black ware, from Vellore, certainly sounds like a local copy of a European form, whereas several gourd pipes from Yarkand represent an indigenous variety. Much more numerous are *chillums*, a term that is sometimes applied to pipes with a straight, conical body, smoked with no other refinement than perhaps a small pebble inserted in the bore as a filter, to prevent fragments of tobacco from being inhaled by the smoker. It seems doubtful that these were widely adopted by Europeans – beyond perhaps the rank and file denied the comforts of sophisticated living. The term is, however, more frequently applied to the tobacco-holder element of a *huqqa*, and it seems likely that many of those listed (mostly now missing) correspond to this type. For the most part, they are ceramic – in red, black, green, brown and yellow and blue-glazed wares (the latter provenanced to Lahore jail) – or in the case of several from Yarkand, simply ‘clay’. One has ‘silver spots’, another is ‘gilt and glazed’; one is silvered, three have ‘silver and coloured ornament’ and one is of chased gold.

Several tobacco pipe elements appear in the Leitner ethnographic collection, coming from the Himalayan area, Yarkand and the frontiers of Chinese Turkestan. They include many jade mouthpieces.

Cigar boxes and cases were no doubt manufactured purely for the local European market. Cigar cases listed in 1880 include two of leather, one in silver, chased and embossed, and one in *gurga jumna*, silver-gilt; a ‘cigar light holder’ (*fulleeta*) in enamelled silver, from Kangra, must have been a rather specialized instrument.

European society in India quickly developed a liking for the *huqqa* as a means of enjoying its tobacco, so that the range of equipment included in the museum would have been equally at home in an Indian or a European household. The principal components of the *huqqa* encountered in the catalogue are the base or bottom which holds the water; the stem – the upright element supporting the tobacco bowl (otherwise termed the *chillum* or fire cup) in which the tobacco and glowing charcoal are placed;<sup>33</sup> the tube (or *huqqa* snake) through which



**Fig. 7.20. *Huqqas*.** (a) Of earthenware: a hollow annular body is mounted on a pedestal foot; conical base with mouldings for the stem, attachment point for the waterpipe and a scrolled moulding (suspension point?) on the other shoulder. H 25.5 cm. 01578(IS); (b) Of glazed earthenware, produced in the Bombay School of Art. H 27.9 cm. 01639(IS); (c) With a globular metal body overlaid completely with greyish-green nephrite and inset with carnelians, lapis lazuli, rubies and other stones in gold setting. Purchased 1868 from the collection of Colonel Charles Seton Guthrie. Unprovenanced. 02593(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



the smoke is delivered; and the mouthpiece. *Huqqa* bottoms may be of metal – brass (sometimes plated), pewter or decorative *bidri* ware, or in chased or engraved silver (see fig. 5.11b); or they may be in pottery, as in a number of glazed and unglazed wares (figs 7.20a and b) and others described as of black ware, red ware or bronzed ware; two examples from Sind are of red ware with black ornament. The most spectacular *huqqa* bowl is an eighteenth-century Mughal piece, described in 1880 as ‘globular, jade, with rubies, emeralds, turquoises, and coloured stones set in gold’ (fig. 7.20c): the body is in fact of metal, completely overlaid with a covering of nephrite. Four examples are each made from a coconut shell – a common alternative material – mounted in silver. The earliest examples have a spherical body resembling a *lota* (from which they may have been developed), or they may be ovoid; from the 1700s, bell-shaped bottoms also appear, which have the advantage of being more stable.

Several stems are described as of silver or of cane, commonly covered with silk ornamented with gold or silver thread or wire, sometimes with additional beads or tinsel; others are simply of wood. One entry is for a *huqqa* top of silvered copper, presented by the Maharajas of Vizianagaram and Benares. The most elaborate *huqqa* top appears in the Leitner collection, ‘in silver, made in imitation of a lotus (like which it opens and shuts), little figures of birds on silver chains attached to it’; it is provenanced to Ludhiana. Some entries in the catalogue for *chillums* seem to refer to such bowls: some are described as having a cover, in one instance ‘of earthenware, with top and cover of chased and perforated silver’, and in another ‘of wood and clay, with silver top and cover’. Another *chillum* is associated with five cups, all in bronzed ware. Some examples in chased and perforated silver are each in two, three or four parts. An elaborate *huqqa* from Bhurtpore has a stem representing a flower and rests on a metal stand inlaid with silver; a rather grand example from the same source is ‘in five parts, chased silver, parcel gilt’.

Many of the *huqqa* snakes are silk-covered to match the stems, not infrequently with embroidery or lace ornament. Mouthpieces are occasionally listed along with the tube, but they also occur separately – particularly those many examples of silver or of jade or other hardstone, some of them inset with jewels. Two such mouthpieces from the Guthrie collection are of green jade with rubies set in gold.

A common adjunct of the *huqqa* is circular mat or carpet (fig. 7.21). The mats are often of velvet, and elaborately embroidered. Metal trays, with decoration to match the base, formed alternative accompaniments

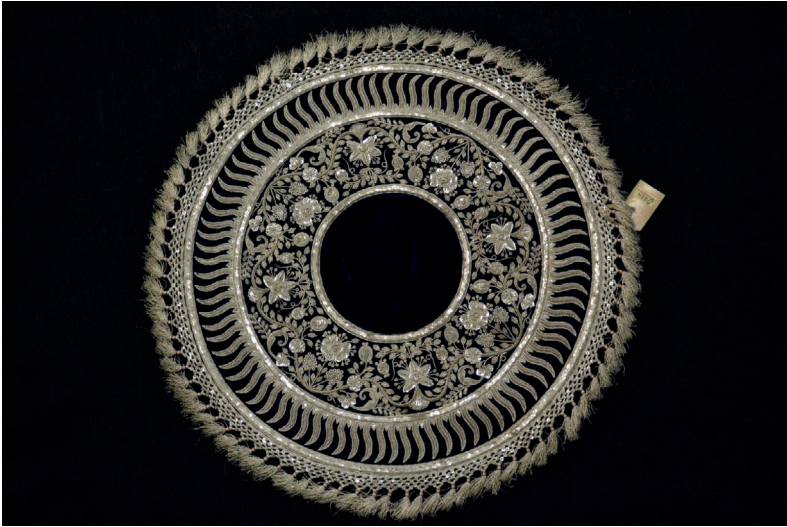


Fig. 7.21. *Huqqa* mat of velvet, silver wire and silver-wrapped thread. A black velvet centre lies within an inner circle of flowers and leaves in silver wire and silver-wrapped thread, an outer circle of radial tendrils and a fringe of silver-wrapped thread. D 41 cm. Unprovenanced. 4518(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

to *huqqas*, but any such trays appearing in the catalogue had already lost their associations. Metal rings – again with matching ornament – were also manufactured in order to stabilize those with round-bottomed bases, but none appear in the catalogue.<sup>34</sup>

There are spittoons in various materials to match the above, though it seems doubtful that they would have been regarded as personal equipment.

Three opium pipes, possibly of Chinese origin, are included among the material in the Leitner collection. Over a dozen snuff flasks or boxes appear in the lists – one in mottled lacquer with incised ornament, two in wood with painted ornament, four in horn and the remainder fashioned from gourds. More substantial – presumably a table-top piece – is a snuff horn ‘of bison’s horn, mounted with embossed and perforated silver, with silver chain attached’, from Vizagapatam, and another fashioned from an elephant’s tooth lined with tortoiseshell and mounted in white metal. These too may have been manufactured for European customers, while *pandans* – betel boxes – would have been almost exclusively for the Indian population.

*Pan*, so called in northern India at least, was prepared in the form of a roll or quid, in which a leaf of the betel vine (*Piper betel*), rolled into



**Fig. 7.22.** *Pan* box, octagonal, in off-white nephrite jade. The stepped rim has an elevated inner edge for locating and securing the low, domed cover; the sides and the cover are carved with low-relief floral ornament. Mughal, c. 1700. W 14.9 cm. Purchased in 1868 from the collection of Colonel Charles Seton Guthrie. Unprovenanced. 02589(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

a conical pouch, was filled with a lime paste (*chunam*) containing thinly chopped nuts of the areca palm, lime (often in the form of crushed shells) and a variety of spices. Specific containers (*pan* boxes) were produced in which to keep it fresh (fig. 7.22). Several betel nut cutters listed would have been used in preparing *chunam*. *Pan* was much used at every level of society – lending detachment (and the opportunity to ritually show favour) to the prince among his courtiers, or performing the role of a post-prandial *digestif* lower down the social scale.<sup>35</sup>

*Chowries* (or *chauries*) – whisks or fly-flaps – helped keep flying insects at bay by being waved around the head of either a powerful individual (for *chowries* were seen as emblematic of authority) or a statue of a deity during ritual observance. The classic form favoured by the wealthy in the north of India was fashioned from the tail of a yak – with a long bushy plume – to which a handle was fitted (fig. 7.23). Several examples in the collection have silver handles (four set with peacock quills) and others are in sandalwood, ivory or jade;<sup>36</sup> two notably rich examples formed part of the Guthrie collection, one of

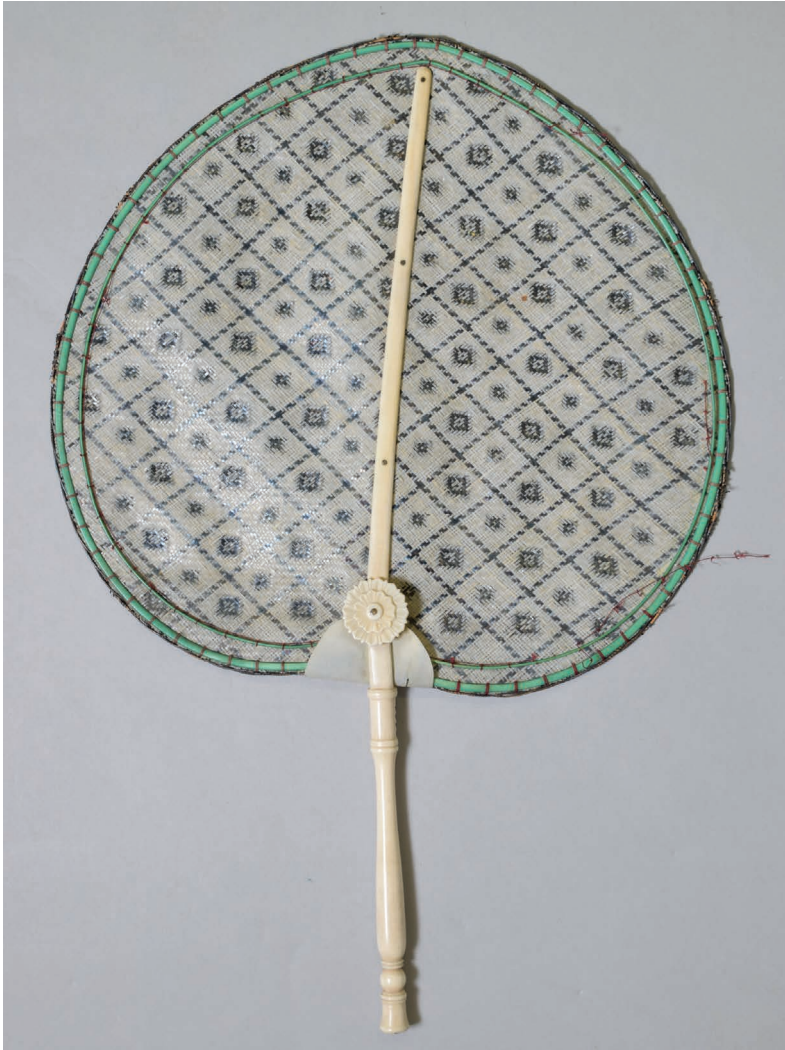


**Fig. 7.23.** *Chowrie* (or in Bengali *chamer*), formed from a yak's tail mounted in an engraved and moulded silver handle. L 108 cm. Acquired in 1855. Calcutta. 2491(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

dark green jade with diamonds set in gold and the other of white jade with bands of green jade.

Fans were equally desirable for cooling the face at all levels of society. Several have decorative ivory mounts (fig. 7.24) or are carved entirely from ivory; sandalwood formed a common alternative. One example made from peacock feathers – a symbol of royalty – would probably have been held aloft behind a ruler during an audience, symbolizing his role as protector of his people;<sup>37</sup> another example is listed from Nuddea. Three palm-leaf fans (two circular) are listed, and others are woven from bamboo or from *khus khus* (*Vetiveria zizanioides* (L.), a species of grass). Papier mâché, painted and gilt, is used in the production of some larger fans. A 'hand punkah' from Godavery is of *taur* leaf<sup>38</sup> trimmed with peacock feathers. Other punkahs mentioned without qualification in the catalogue are most likely larger in scale, designed to be suspended in an interior: they include examples in 'velvet, gold embroidered, and edged with peacock's feathers'; of 'khus khus and peacock's feathers or with textile borders'; of 'straw, covered with coloured thread'; and with 'a design in talc'.<sup>39</sup>

Combs are numerous represented in a variety of materials: some 16 examples in wood are listed without further detail and were presumably plain and for everyday use. Some of the half-dozen horn combs were elaborated to some degree – with carved backs or ends or with incised ornament. Tortoiseshell, with similar working properties



**Fig. 7.24.** Fan of interwoven strips within a leaf-shaped framework with a slender handle, of ivory. Acquired in 1855. Sylhet. 2484(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

to horn, was used for a group of 18 side-combs from Madras and four back-combs. Ivory combs tended to receive more elaborate decoration (see [fig. 6.6](#)): six from Assam were carved and perforated, the two most elaborate with ‘a top formed of dragons and elephants’ and ‘mounted with gilt metal figure and scrollwork, edged with pearls’ respectively. An exceptional piece was in white jade, with rubies and emeralds set in gold.



A leather companion set from Central Asia, probably Yarkand, loaned to the India Museum by Sir Douglas Forsyth, contained a knife, fork and spoon, a pair of chopsticks, a toothpick and a pair of tweezers.

Umbrellas are represented by several long-handled examples in green, red and gold. Many had velvet canopies, embroidered with coloured thread and with gold and silver; two large examples from Burma are described as of red cashmere with bamboo ribs (there are also two smaller examples in red and green cashmere), while others have coverings of palm leaves or of peacock feathers. Two curious examples from Gwalior incorporate pistol barrels in their shafts; one also contains two daggers, scissors and six other small implements, while the other, ornamented with silver and gold *koftgari* work, doubles as two daggers and also contains five small implements. Four sunshades in the collection include three made from palm leaves and one of light blue silk with gold embroidery. All of these proved too insubstantial to survive.

## Notes

- 1 'A visit to the East India Museum', *The Leisure Hour* 7 (1858), 469.
- 2 Forbes Watson, *Textile Manufactures and Costumes of the People of India* (1866); see also the same author's photographic survey, *The People of India* (1868–72).
- 3 For a discussion, see Crill, *Hats from India*, 7 and *passim*.
- 4 Crill, *Hats from India*, 7.
- 5 Crill, *Hats from India*, 40, no. 20.
- 6 Crill, *Hats from India*, 58, no. 40.
- 7 A surviving cummerbund or sash (*patka*), of coloured silk and metal-wrapped thread in the collection, 0684(IS), from Ahmedabad, was 'obtained through R. Phillips from General Sir John Malcolm' in 1868.
- 8 See Avalon Fotheringham in Crill, *Fabric of India*, 170.
- 9 The export of yarn from Kashmir was prohibited, but evidently the ban was circumvented on a massive scale.
- 10 Ehrman, *Fashioned from Nature*, 82.
- 11 05597(IS). See Askari and Crill, *Colours of the Indus*, 102–3, pl. 161.
- 12 Presumably the reference is to Malika Kishwar (d. 1858), mother of the last King of Oudh, who famously travelled to the court of Queen Victoria in 1856 to challenge the seizure of her son's kingdom by the British under the Doctrine of Lapse. She died on her way home, empty-handed, and is buried in the Père Lachaise cemetery in Paris.
- 13 See the discussion of these possibilities (and further illustrations) in Kumar, *Costumes and Textiles*, 249.
- 14 See Sonia Ashmore in Crill, *Fabric of India*, no. 190.
- 15 Hendley, 'Indian jewellery'; Barnard, *Indian Jewellery*. For a more general survey, see Untracht, *Traditional Jewellery*.
- 16 Susan Stronge ('Indian jewellery', 144) mentions that a gift of gems was sent by the Peshwa in the same year, through the intermediary of Sir Charles Malet, to King George III.
- 17 Stronge, 'Colonel Guthrie's collection'.
- 18 Wallis, 'The International Exhibition, 1872'.

- 19 Ganguly (*Indian Folk Jewellery*, 13) mentions that some ornaments (and ornament combinations) are strictly limited to one caste group or another, and that these boundaries are never transgressed.
- 20 In some societies no fewer than 16 bridal ornaments were prescribed as necessary for an auspicious wedding.
- 21 Ganguly (*Indian Folk Jewellery*, 12–13) mentions that in order to avoid transmission of evil influences, jewellery inherited in this way would normally be melted down and recast for the new owner.
- 22 Hendley, 'Indian jewellery', 7.
- 23 Baden Powell, *Hand-Book*, 175–84. Baden Powell was perhaps the first European to attempt to capture the complex terminology applied to these items, as well as their technological characteristics. Clearly, the curators could only work with the data at their disposal, and there was as yet little independent scholarship for them to call upon.
- 24 Barnard (*Indian Jewellery*, 21) notes their occasional use by royal women, but this was always exceptional.
- 25 Cole, *Catalogue of the Objects of Indian Art*, 323.
- 26 Hendley, 'Indian jewellery', 3.
- 27 Phillips, 'Jewellery', 209.
- 28 Baden Powell, *Hand-Book*, 186.
- 29 Barnard, *Indian Jewellery*, 73–8. For an admirable excursus on the techniques and technology of *babul* work, see Farmer, 'Work of thorns'.
- 30 Hendley, 'Indian jewellery', 20.
- 31 A useful paper by B. G. Gokhale ('Tobacco in seventeenth-century India') charts the growth of tobacco consumption and trading from these early years – long before its representation in the India Museum.
- 32 Four pipes presented by Claude Russell (two with amber mouthpieces) are identified as of Turkish origin (Day Books, 9 May 1818).
- 33 The anonymous *Monograph on the Pottery and Glass Industries*, 10, mentions that in some *huqqas*, namely those 'commonly smoked by peasant women', the tobacco bowl is attached directly to the base.
- 34 See Zebrowski, *Gold, Silver & Bronze*, 225–44.
- 35 Zebrowski, *Gold, Silver & Bronze*, 225–44.
- 36 The slip book entry for four such sandalwood chowries is annotated 'One chowrie selected for Kew Museum Oct. 24 – 79', where it would have joined the other economic botany collections transferred to Kew at this time. One example, 01138(IS), from Mysore, survives in the V&A. A gift to the museum from Claude Russell included 'One chamar or Cow-tail – flybrush silver handle' and '2 ditto of feathers of Birds of Paradise', the latter evidently from elsewhere in Southeast Asia (Day Books, 9 May 1818).
- 37 2488(IS). See Skelton et al., *Indian Heritage*, cat. 523; *Arts of Bengal*, 74 no. 223.
- 38 The broad, waxy leaves of *taur* (*Bauhinia vahlii*), a climbing plant common in the hill forests, are today commonly used in place of plates to serve food.
- 39 Referring to a mechanized (though rudimentary) method of ventilating is a 'Model of Johnson's patent self-watering Thermantidotes', a device with revolving paddles hung with wet cloths, cranked by an operator and designed to waft cool air into the interior of a room or tent. An alternative design to that of Johnson, attributed to a Dr Ranken, is described in *Asiatic Journal* 28 (1829), 323–4.



## 8

# Making war: weapons and defensive armour

Given that the home audience was fed by the newspapers with a constant diet of reports on the military exploits of British troops in India and theatres to the east, the weapons and armour of the various combatants would have been a subject of acute interest. The stranger and more unfamiliar their form, the more intriguing they would have become. Not that the displays in the India Museum featured only arms for everyday use: certainly those that caught the eye were often prestige items and seldom battlefield souvenirs. The impression conveyed by a visitor in 1858 was probably typical:<sup>1</sup>

A prominent object is a grand collection of Indian arms, inclosed in a glass-case. These are, nearly one and all, of the most magnificent and costly description, being inlaid or overlaid with ornaments of pure gold, and glittering here and there with precious gems. The kreeses, or poniards, are fitted in handles of jasper, agate, native crystal, or rare stones; the shields, helmets, gauntlets, etc., are rough with chased work in the precious metals, or sparkling with jewels, and the swords, spears, and battle-axes are no less lavishly adorned. As for the matchlocks, their long steel barrels are one mosaic of gold-work, and the stocks and fittings are equally rich and gorgeous.

The military (or quasi-military) character of a great deal of the British presence in India would have ensured a natural curiosity about the weaponry in circulation there, and there can have been few more sought-after trophies or souvenirs among soldiers of any stripe. At a diplomatic level, too, prestige arms formed a common currency in the

exchange of gifts that formed a preliminary to negotiations in almost any field: a considerable proportion of the best-quality weapons in the collection were presented to Company representatives by princely rulers in the course of exchanges of this kind.

With the Indian Arms Act of 1878 the British sought to regulate ‘the manufacture, conversion, sale, import, export, transport, bearing or possession of arms, ammunition or military stores’:<sup>2</sup> thereafter, no one (outside certain privileged groups) was allowed to carry a weapon without a licence. Although infringements must have been widespread in the more remote areas, the Act had a significant effect on the arms industry in general. Writing in 1888, T. N. Mukharji could observe that:

The manufacture of arms in India is dying out. Its days are past. Bows and arrows, swords and daggers, matchlocks and pistols are no longer of any use, with the universal peace now reigning in India. They have become antiquated and have been superseded by the latest inventions in Europe. Still their manufacture would have been continued some time longer for the purposes of hunting wild animals and for pageantry, but the Arms Act has almost destroyed the demand for them. Small quantities of arms are still made in all parts of the country, specially in the Native States,<sup>3</sup> where the Arms Act is not in force. Of these a large proportion is sold to Europeans as curiosities.<sup>4</sup>

The latest weapons reaching the India Museum just before its demise therefore represent the final flourish of an industry that – even if its extinction was not as complete as Mukharji suggests – had certainly seen its finest days.

For Londoners, the arms in the museum must surely have formed the most impressive and comprehensive display of its kind in the city. Elsewhere, comparable material could be seen forming part of the collections of the Royal Asiatic Society and the Naval and Military Museum (from 1839 renamed the United Services Institute and granted a royal charter in 1860), but neither of these would appear to have been as extensive or so readily accessible as the museum at East India House or in its later temporary homes.<sup>5</sup> From the time of the Great Exhibition, the displays in the Tower Armouries also gained significance in this respect: a number of purchases were made at the Exhibition with a view to establishing a new Asiatic Room in the White Tower, where the displays were further boosted by a gift from the East India Company in 1853 of almost 200 additional pieces – directly sourced from India

at the request of the Master-General of the Ordnance and not drawn from the Company's own collection. By 1857 a case had been installed, inscribed 'Armour, arms and equipment of the northern frontier of India presented by the Hon. East India Co., anno domini 1853'. The *Official Catalogue of the Tower Armouries* (1859) states that:

A large portion of the Indian armour and weapons was presented to the national collection by the Hon. East India Company. This princely donation was accompanied by a series of documents, compiled in the various presidencies of India, authenticating the objects contributed, and stating with minute exactness the places where they were made and the races by whom they had been used. The value of this information, relating to a country so distant, and to a class of objects so little the subject of study at home, will be readily appreciated by all who have given to such topics the smallest amount of consideration.

Surely something of the same commendable ethos concerning accurate documentation would have penetrated the displays at East India House at this time, although the more diffuse means by which the collections were accumulated undoubtedly led to the loss of many details of provenance and association. For this reason, the India Museum (even if it so wished) could not have aspired to emulate the Tower Armouries' practice of displaying arms and armour as sets, often with the name of the original owner. So far as one can tell, the curators of the early museum made no attempt to construct their displays in the form of 'trophies of arms', as became commonplace from the mid-nineteenth century onwards; the practice was certainly followed at the Great Exhibition, and an illustration of the displays from May 1879 (fig. 1.7) shows that something of this ethos had permeated the India Museum collections by the eve of their dispersal.

It is a striking fact, however, that in a recent survey of 'Collecting Oriental and Asiatic arms and armour: the activities of British and East India Company officers, c.1800–1850',<sup>6</sup> the India Museum receives no mention whatsoever. The author, Malcolm Mercer, while acknowledging that the majority of the numberless trophies acquired in service would have remained in private ownership, finds that collectors with a sense of public duty (or a wish to register themselves as intellectually engaged) were likely to favour in the first instance the museum of the Royal Asiatic Society and, increasingly, the United Services Institute.<sup>7</sup> While the 1880 catalogue does record the names of a number

of military donors of arms – namely Generals Frederic Goldsmid and Sir John Malcolm, Colonels S. W. Hamilton and Sir W. Worsley and Major Hector Edwardes – it remains true that (apart from the prestige weapons donated by various Indian princes) the majority of the acquisitions evidently arrived with a provenance but without a named donor. This might suggest that they were transmitted from India through official channels, but the mechanisms involved remain to be identified. Bringing to prominence the hundreds of arms registered in the catalogue but hitherto largely hidden from view must nonetheless change present-day perceptions of the landscape of nineteenth-century collecting of militaria in England.

One exceptional exhibit – itself on loan from the Armouries – serves to illustrate how the collection could be articulated for the benefit of the visitor: ‘Life-size figure of a Hindoo soldier. Turban with steel top, steel cap with chain mail curtain, steel plate armour for body and arms on coat of red velvet, pair of red velvet boots, sword in scabbard, with leather belt, and embroidered red sash.’ (The figure was also accompanied by a lance, ‘encased in silver’.)

As examples of private donations, a trunk received from Claude Russell in 1818 contained the following widely drawn collection:<sup>8</sup>

A Turkish scymetar; 3 Turkish daggers – elegantly ornamented with Gold & Jewelry; 1 Nepal Sword; 1 Chinese Sword; 1 Dagger or poignard or shortsword; 1 Hindu Battle ax; A Quiver & 64 arrows; A D<sup>o</sup> & 56 arrows; 2 Bows; 3 Nifadas; Cane Quiver & 27 barbed arrows; 5 Arrows; 2 – Iron Chakras.

Another gift, from Colonel Worsley on 29 August 1820, contained the following:<sup>9</sup>

A Matchlock with Match from Lahore; A pair of Gauntlets from D<sup>o</sup>; Saief [?] (Patis) made in the Dukhun; Weapon (dagger) used by the Arabs during the Pindarrie War; Peishkubz a dagger <for left hand> worn in the belt by Moguls & others in India; Kora the sword of a Gorkha Chief; Khookrie – used by the Gorkhas in the Nepaul war in close fight &c<sup>a</sup>; A saddle which belonged to the Peishwa <NB. No stirrups were received with it & the jewels ? were had been taken out for the three serpents heads in front>

A late addition to the collection, while still in its original setting in Leadenhall Street, arrived on 31 July 1855:<sup>10</sup>

Received from Political and Military Committee; The Arms and Armour of His Highness the Maharajah Holkar; 1 Coat of Chain Mail; 1 Kinkano [Kinkob?] Jacket; 1 Helmet of Chain Mail; 1 Cap to wear under Helmet; 1 Pair of Gauntlets; 1 Sword.

One crucial development that assured the status of the collection, not only for contemporary audiences but – in historical terms, at least – for all time, was the publication in 1880 by Wilbraham, Lord Egerton of Tatton, of *An Illustrated Handbook of Indian Arms, being a classified and descriptive catalogue of the arms exhibited at the India Museum*. Unfortunately, Egerton's very considerable achievement reached fulfilment just as the museum ceased to exist as a separate entity. It must have taken all his resolve to start work straight away on a new edition, which appeared in 1896 with the title *A Description of Indian and Oriental Armour: Illustrated from the collection formerly in the India Office, now exhibited at South Kensington, and the author's private collection*.<sup>11</sup> As indicated by the new title, the Company's collection had by this time completed its long migration to the South Kensington Museum, a matter of the greatest anguish to Lord Egerton: the preface to the new edition opens with the observation that as far as the original edition was concerned, the transfer had 'to a certain extent rendered [it] useless'; in order to redeem his work, Egerton augmented the original text with material from his own collection and from recent campaigns in the Sudan. Although superseded in detail, it remains a founding monument in the understanding of a subject that had until that time no formal basis whatever.

The best Indian bladed weapons are reckoned to be of good temper; they are generally comparatively rigid, however, for flexibility was never a characteristic prized there as it was in Europe. A feature mentioned in relation to the best weapons is the use of *wootz* – a commodity that was of interest to the Company; there is no suggestion, however, that any part of this particular display was assembled with a commercial imperative. *Wootz* is a high-carbon crucible steel that had been developed in southern India and Ceylon by around 500 BCE and quickly became the subject of a successful export trade to the Middle East and the Roman world. Characteristic moiré patterns formed by iron carbide particles in the metal made it especially popular with bladesmiths; these patterns could be emphasized by etching with acid and could be controlled to some degree in the forging process. In the literature, such blades are also described as of watered steel. An alternative form of patterning involved 'damascening' – strictly

achieved during forging through combining nickel with the steel to decorative effect, although some sources use the term to indicate applied metal ornament.<sup>12</sup> Many blades and hilts are further enhanced with engraved decoration, sometimes inlaid with gold in what is termed *koftgari* ornament (see p. 108).

Some Indian weapons made use of European blades, reworked into the desired form, a practice that originated at the end of the medieval period. In a few examples the original maker's mark has survived the transformation. Actual European arms are rarely featured in the India Museum: a single sabre and a few firearms are catalogued as bearing the Company arms, some of them evidently recaptured from opponents in various combats.<sup>13</sup>

Also anomalous in the collection is an Ethiopian *shotel*, its blade with perhaps the most extreme curvature encountered in any sword, being effectively sickle-shaped; in combat it had the capacity to reach behind the shield of an opponent. The context for its acquisition (along with a group of similar swords) is unrecorded: the most notorious contact between British India and Ethiopia was provided by the expedition – now acknowledged as infamous in its excesses – led by General Robert Napier in 1868 against the Emperor Tewodros II in his mountain stronghold of Maqdala, where 9,000 defending warriors were said to have been defeated at a cost of only two fatalities among the besieging forces. Tewodros himself committed suicide, and – the nominal mission of the expedition – a number of Protestant missionaries and two diplomats held hostage there were rescued. The India Museum collection also contained an 'arm guard, silver, ornamented with silver-gilt filigree and silver bosses' from Abyssinia – perhaps another trophy from Napier's expedition. The bulk of the treasure seized following the siege – including a number of pieces of key cultural and sacred significance for Ethiopia – went to the British Museum and directly to the South Kensington Museum.

Lord Egerton adopted what he termed an anthropological approach to his discussion of the arms and armour. In order to construct a comprehensible narrative of the contents of the museum, the discussion here is arranged typologically. It seems unlikely, however, that either approach had a marked controlling influence on the display itself. It may be noted that many of the weapons and defensive armour catalogued at the transfer of the collection to the South Kensington Museum in 1880 evidently received their specialized nomenclature around that time, for few of these esoteric terms were in earlier general use, nor do they make an appearance in the earlier catalogues. Birdwood indeed mentions

in that same year that the arms 'have been arranged with the most imposing effect, according to the plan adopted by ... Wilbraham ... in the *Handbook of Indian Arms* which he has prepared for the India Office, and which will be ready for sale at the India Museum when it is reopened': clearly the processes of redisplaying and applying the new nomenclature to the material as catalogued went hand in hand. Some local names were deployed in the 1880 catalogue, while others were introduced – perhaps for the first time – in Egerton's survey which, as we have seen, just failed to appear in print before the collection was absorbed into the South Kensington Museum. It seems clear, however, that his expertise informed the identities provided by the curators in their list of 1880. It may be noted that some of the items listed in that catalogue were on loan to the India Museum from the Tower Armouries and the Royal Asiatic Society; the former were returned to the Tower when ownership of the collection was transferred to the South Kensington Museum, while the latter were formally absorbed into the collection at a later date.

## Daggers and knives

With some 170 entries in the 1880 catalogue, these evidently formed a significant component of the museum display. Many of the variant types of weapon encountered by the Company's armies are well represented: several were undoubtedly of repute among European visitors to the museum, who would have been thrilled to see them in all their sinister variety.

### *Khanjar*

The most prestigious group of knives are of the type known as *khanjar*, three of which have pistol-shaped hilts of jade studded with precious stones (fig. 8.1). The form is an Islamic one, originating in the Persian Gulf area and disseminated through Mughal influence. It was customary for prestige weapons of this type to be awarded to noblemen for distinguished service, following which they would be adopted into their customary court dress. Those in the collection have lightly curved double-edged blades with reinforced tips, while others develop a more marked, J-shaped profile. The nephrite jade employed for the hilts of two examples probably originated in China. The impracticality of this material in the field confirms the status of these particular knives as prestige or display pieces, rather than functional weapons.





**Fig. 8.1.** *Khanjar*, with hilt of white nephrite jade set with rubies, emeralds and (perhaps) rock crystal, arranged in floral patterns; seventeenth or eighteenth century. Wooden scabbard covered with red woven fabric, with nephrite jade mounts at throat and chape. L 37.5 cm. Deccan. Presented by the Marquis of Hastings in 1850: this would appear to have been the Third Marquis, but the original acquisition must surely have been by the First Marquess, Governor-General of India 1812–21. 3467(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

### *Khanjarli*

It has been suggested that the historical distinction between *khanjarli* and *khanjar* is no more than a grammatical misunderstanding, the first being the plural form of the second. In conventional usage the weapons designated *khanjarli* tend to have markedly recurved blades with a rib flanked by grooves on either face and with a large lunate composite pommel, often fashioned from ivory plates. The hilt may be provided with a knuckle guard. Egerton associated them particularly with Vizianagaram.

### *Jambiya*

These are similar in appearance to the preceding; in origin they were a Yemeni form of the *khanjar*, but the distinction between them in the context of Mughal India must surely have become blurred. Much attention is paid to the hilt and the scabbard (fig. 8.2a), where the intricacies of decoration convey much nuanced information about the status of its owner. The blades tend to be marked with a medial line, delicately modelled, rather than the substantial rib displayed here.

### *Chil anum*

Only two examples are recorded in the collection. The type is characterized by an elegantly sculptured hilt with a scrolling T-shaped pommel and an integral knuckle guard. The hilt forms a single casting with the blade; similar weapons with separately made hilts are termed *khapwa*. The grip and the guard are barely distinguished from each other in size, and they too are usually forged in one piece with the blade.<sup>14</sup>

### *Jamdhar katari, jamdadu*

A degree of uncertainty surrounds the identity of some of these early weapons, and indeed their respective identities. *Hobson-Jobson* suggests that *jamdadu* and *jamdhar* are interchangeable, so the proliferation of names may not be justified. Their origins are said to lie in the area of the Hindu Kush; several of those in the collection are from Nepal (fig. 8.2b), but one is provenanced to Vizianagaram on the Bay of Bengal. The *jamdhar katari* has an in-line hilt with a T-shaped pommel and a symmetrical sinuously curved blade with a strong midrib.



**Fig. 8.2.** (a) *Jambiya* with a curved blade with central rib, the hilt of horn decorated with gold and Venetian sequins; the scabbard sheathed in chased and embossed silver. Hyderabad. 3538(IS); (b) *Jamdhar katari*, plain steel blade with a bracket-shaped guard, formerly gilt. L 34 cm. Nepal. 3048(IS); (c) *Peshkabz*, with a T-sectioned steel blade narrowing to a slender point with a concave edge; the hilt is of rock crystal. Nepal. 2558(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

## *Peshkabz*

Ultimately of Persian origin, the *peshkabz* has a single-edged blade with a thickened back, giving it a T-shaped section; in profile it is wide at the hilt before narrowing sharply and tapering to a triangular-section point, designed to penetrate armour (fig. 8.2c). The blade is generally straight, but when curved its single edge distinguishes it from the double-edged *khanjar*. The hilt plates (sometimes of walrus ivory<sup>15</sup> or other exotic or semi-precious materials) are characteristically hooked at the butt. Widely known to the British as ‘Khyber knives’, they remained popular as close-combat weapons among the Pashtun until recent years: there were over 20 examples in the collection.

## *Kard*

As a type, the *kard* is again a weapon of Persian origin, with a straight, single-edged blade, commonly said to be capable of penetrating chain armour, and with no guard. The simple form of the hilt allows its lower part to be housed within the scabbard – the conventional way of carrying this form of knife.

## *Yataghan*

From an origin in Turkey, the *yataghan* spread to the Indian sub-continent under the influence of the Mughal empire. The blade is a variant of the widespread single-edged form with a marked forward curve or slightly recurved outline. The *yataghan* is distinguished principally by its hilt: this consists of a scale tang, to either side of which are riveted hilt plates which expand and diverge to form a prominent eared pommel; the junction between the hilt plates is usually covered by a metal strip with chased decoration. There is no guard, but metal bolsters may cover the junction between the hilt and the blade. Both of those in the collection (fig. 8.3a) are from Peshawar and are now designated *salawar yataghan*; they too are alternatively labelled Khyber knives, a term applied loosely by the British military to a range of typologically distinct weapons (see also *peshkabz*).



**Fig. 8.3.** (a) *Yataghan*, damascened with gold, with a walrus ivory hilt; black leather scabbard enclosing blade and hilt. L 76 cm. Received 1855. Peshawar. 3265(IS); (b) *Zafar takieh*, with a slender blade and crutch-shaped hilt of carved jade and rock crystal. Salem. 3460(IS); (c) *Katar*, eighteenth-century; the blade is damascened with gold. Jodhpur. 3314(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

### *Zafar takieh*

These are commonly termed ‘crutch daggers’, on account of the T-shaped hilt displayed by many of them (fig. 8.3b), although others have conventional, in-line hilts. The type is said to have been favoured by rulers while holding court, as a discreet form of personal protection, and also by mystics during meditation. Usually they take the form of a sword stick, the slender blade being concealed within a decorative tapering scabbard.

### *Katar*

Widely termed ‘punch daggers’ in the West, the *katar* – originally a Hindu weapon which achieved wide popularity under the Mughals – is characterized by a comparatively short triangular blade with an H-shaped hilt whose crossbar is clenched in the fist (fig. 8.3c); the side bars are often extended to form a guard for the forearm. The blade on some is robust enough to penetrate armour with a stabbing action. Some 16 of these show a wide range of decorative embellishments, from floral patterns to a tiger hunt, the decoration inlaid with gold, silver or (in one instance) lac. They include one of a series of such weapons produced in Bundi (present-day Rajasthan) specifically for display at the 1851 Great Exhibition as exemplars of the bladesmith’s skills.<sup>16</sup> Two examples have bifurcated blades of well-known type; and two (one from Patiala and one from Bundelkhand) are fitted with spring mechanisms that release two smaller blades to either side, functioning both offensively and as a protective guard.

### *Bichwa*

Knives of this type are characterized by a looped hilt and a narrow, recurved, pointed blade. Their small size meant they were comparatively easily concealed, earning them a reputation as assassins’ weapons – an association strengthened by the fact that the hilts of some of them incorporate the claw-like projections of the *bagh nakh* (below). They are characterized as belonging to the common people, although some examples are ornamented with damascening and inlaid with gold and silver; they may also have hilt plates of walrus ivory, suggesting that not all were low-status weapons. Some examples, as here, have bifurcated blades.

## *Pichangatti*

The *pichangatti* is associated almost exclusively with the Kodava people of Coorg (Kodagu) in the kingdom of Mysore, where some were produced in lavish materials and widely worn for ceremonial purposes, while others were everyday implements rather than weapons. The blade is wide, flat and chopper-like, with a forward curve at the tip; the hilt has a bulbous, beaked terminal (often formed into a parrot head) and the junction with the blade is marked by a ferrule rather than a guard. Attached to the associated scabbard by means of a chain, there is commonly a suite of implements forming a toilet set, the whole being worn tucked into the front of a belt, while the related *ayda katti* was worn at the back.<sup>17</sup> The seven examples in the collection, with their mounts of chased silver and ebony, are comparatively modest representatives of the type.

## Moplah knives

These again form a regional type, specific to the Moplah (Mapilla) peoples – a Muslim population long settled in the Malabar coastal region. Egerton characterizes them as being ‘used as a bill for clearing jungle’, which well agrees with their broad-bladed shape; however, they also played a fearsome role in several uprisings against the British, leaving their effectiveness in no doubt. The British responded by confiscating weapons such as these by the thousand and dropping them into the sea, so that they remain comparatively rare today. The fairly light weight and the engraved decoration on some, together with the use of ivory and silver mounts, also speaks to more refined, everyday use. The wide blade is double-edged, widening in profile before it curves towards a broad tip, while the riveted hilt plates are often shaped to form a pommel in the form of a bird’s head. They were generally worn on the back, blade upwards and without a scabbard.

## *Ayda katti*

Closely related to the Moplah knife and belonging particularly to the Kodava people of Coorg, the *ayda* (or *ayudha*) *katti* (fig. 8.4a) is a short, heavy slashing knife or chopper with a crescentic blade edged on the concave face, used for clearing vegetation and general agricultural tasks in times of peace and also carried as a weapon of war for close combat. According to some authorities, the war form lacks the



egg-shaped or T-shaped pommel common on the everyday implements; its single edge distinguishes it from the Moplah knife, although like it the *ayda katti* is worn with a belt (or for the prestige version, on a chain), without a scabbard, on the back.

### *Kukri*

The 20 *kukris* in the collection would have represented a novel introduction for many visitors, the type having gained its notoriety only when British troops confronted the Nepalese during the Anglo-Gurkha War of 1814–16. The broad, forward-curving blade with recurved cutting edge (fig. 8.4b) is primarily a chopping or slashing implement that doubles as a weapon, the concave edge combining with the momentum of the heavy blade to produce a formidable cutting action. Some have a single or double fuller forged along the blade near the broad back, and most have a notch marking the end of the blade. The hilt is frequently expanded towards the butt, where the end of the tang is hammered over for rigidity; some have a scale tang with riveted hilt plates. The scabbard often has provision for a bye-knife or some other implement.

### *Kris*

The *kris*, mentioned casually by visitors to the India Museum and listed in the 1880 catalogue, are nowhere treated as more than typological or geographical variants of the dagger: no mention is made of the variety of detailed forging that goes into their construction or the rich spiritual dimensions with which each weapon is imbued; an appreciation of these features came later among Western collectors. Descriptive observations are limited to the form of the blade (straight or undulating) and the material – and occasionally the form – of the hilt; some also mention the characteristic wooden scabbard that accompanies the weapon. Although particularly associated with Indonesia, and specifically Java, the *kris* was adopted over a wide area of Southeast Asia, as hinted at by the provenances assigned to those in the collection: nearly all come from Singapore, or are designated as Malay; one is annotated as ‘used in Borneo’. This distribution is not at all representative of that of the weapon itself, and presumably reflects an anomaly introduced in the collecting process. No donor is recorded for any specimen.

Whether straight or sinuous (or ‘flamboyant’), much significance is traditionally paid to the asymmetrical blade, frequently of watered



**Fig. 8.4.** (a) *Ayda katti*, with single-edged chopping blade and an ivory hilt mounted in brass. L 43 cm. Kodagu. 2770(IS); (b) *Kukri* with bright steel blade, the hilt of ivory with incised plant scroll ornament. Embroidered black leather scabbard with accessory knives. L 48 cm. Presented by Sir Jung Bahadur. Nepal. 2561(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

(or damascened) steel, in which nickel is introduced in the forging process and, by repeated folding and hammering, the bladesmith contrives to produce a surface marked by meandering silvery patterns (*pamor*) on which much significance is placed. The hilt may be plain and straight or pistol-shaped, frequently carved in the form of a demon or an auspicious deity – over a dozen of those in the collection feature Garuda; woods (sometimes rare), hardstones or ivory may also be used. The scabbard – characteristically shaped with a widely flaring mouth

so as to leave no doubt regarding its association, even when the weapon itself has been lost – is invariably of wood, often painted and sometimes mounted with precious metal.

## Swords

No firm boundary exists between some of the (generally shorter) weapons discussed above and those with longer blades of a similar pattern. Those that follow are, however, veritable swords for purely military or ceremonial use. For a time, the India Museum collection also contained two impressive-sounding loans: ‘Sword. Plain ivory plates on hilt, puce coloured velvet scabbard, formerly belonging to Shah Shuja, King of Afghanistan’,<sup>18</sup> and the other with ‘carved ivory plates on hilt, black embossed leather scabbard with metal mounts, waist belt attached with two slides and clasps, steel inlaid with gold, formerly belonging to Ahmed Shah Abdali [Abdali], King of Afghanistan’. These were returned to the owner, E. Thomas, in 1902, and no further record of them has been found.

## *Kora*

The *kora*, aptly described as ‘the battle-sabre of the Gurkhas’, was possibly even more crucial in establishing the soldiers’ martial reputation than the better-known *kukri*. Today its principal function is in ritual sacrifice:<sup>19</sup> Egerton famously noted that ‘those who use it skilfully are enabled to cut a sheep in two at a single blow’. It is immediately recognizable by its long, curving blade, edged on the concave side (like the *kukri*), and expanding to form a wide, flat tip, decoratively contoured (fig. 8.4c). An eye (or some other religious symbol) is commonly incised on the blade. The blades on sacrificial weapons may be comparatively heavier, to aid their effectiveness in delivering a single death blow. The integral metal hilt usually has a disc above and below the grip, forming a pommel and a guard respectively. Like the *kukri*, it was first introduced to Westerners through an illustration in Colonel William Kirkpatrick’s *Account of the Kingdom of Nepaul*, published in 1811.



**Fig. 8.5.** (a) *Kora*, the back of the blade cut in alternating slots and depressions; towards the tip a lotus flower is incised, inlaid with black material. L 71 cm. Nepal. 3071A(IS); (b) Sword and scabbard once belonging to the Iranian ruler Shah Tahmasp (reigned 1524–76). The blade carries Arabic inscriptions inlaid with gold, alluding to Tahmasp’s titles and genealogy, as well as quotes from the Koran. L 107 cm. Presented by Colonel Pennington, 1855. Lahore. 3378 (IS); (c) Sacrificial axe (*ram dao*) from Bengal or Nepal; a broad band of incised linear ornament follows the line of the back of the blade, with an eye and eyebrow near the tip; shaft of ebony with brass collars. L 48 cm. Acquired for the International Exhibition of 1872, in London. Unprovenanced. 3085(IS); (d) *Sosun pattah*, willow leaf-shaped blade of crucible forged steel, slightly curved, with an ivory grip. L 84 cm. Received 1869. Deccan. 3047(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

## *Shamshir*

Although the name means no more than ‘sword’ in the original Persian, the term *shamshir* has come to be applied to a specific form of sabre-like slashing weapon, the curved blade edged on the convex side, worn horizontally in the waist belt with the hilt and tip facing upwards (fig. 8.5b). Characteristically, the hilt has a pistol-like offset pommel, a full tang with riveted hilt plates and a cross-guard with extended quillons.

## *Dao*

Like some of the knives discussed here, the *dao* can serve a dual purpose as both a weapon and an implement, the chisel-edged tip of its broad and heavy blade, which expands from the hilt towards the tip, rendering it useful for digging as well as slashing vegetation or an assailant. In India it is associated with the Naga people of Assam and Nagaland, although the provenances given for those in the collection show a distribution extending as far as Burma; here it was first adopted by the Nagas’ easterly neighbours the Kachin, before spreading further into Burma and changing its detailed form (see also *dha*). Related forms of *dao* are found throughout Southeast Asia and China. The simple hilt has no guard or pommel; often the grip is of bamboo root, although several examples in the collection are carved in ivory and in ebony. Associated scabbards are of wood and are open-faced.

Some heavier forms (*ram dao*, sometimes classified as axes – fig. 8.5c) are designated as for ritual use in sacrificing goats and buffalo, particularly in ceremonies associated with the goddesses Kali and Durga. Their use was particularly prevalent in Bengal and Nepal. The superior weight and forward-curving blades of these axes was of assistance in ensuring that the animal in question was decapitated with a single blow – considered highly auspicious in fulfilling the sacrifice.

## *Mel puttah behmoh*

The *mel puttah behmoh* is a two-handed rapier-like sword with a straight, double-edged blade. It has been characterized as having two guards, the lower round and the upper shaped like a broad figure of eight.<sup>20</sup>

## *Haladie*

The unusual form of the *haladie* combines two matched double-edged blades of sinuous outline with a rigid central grip, so that the combatant can slash with it in either direction. It was much favoured by Rajput warriors, although it also performed a ritual function and a symbolic one, signifying that its wearer had reached manhood.

## *Mandau*

The *mandau* is a short sword or knife particularly associated with the Dayak peoples of Borneo. Although popularly identified with head-hunting ceremonial, the general type is widely distributed in India and Southeast Asia, where it embraces a wide range of uses, from clearing vegetation to combat as well as ceremonial, as reflected in the degree of elaboration in the workmanship. As with other regional types seen in the collection, the single-edged blade expands from the hilt towards the tip, which may be rounded; some blades are almost straight, but most curve slightly with a concave cutting edge. The hilt generally has a lateral pommel, said to allow the *mandau* to be drawn more swiftly.

## *Sosun pattah*

A heavy, metal-hilted combat sword with a forward-curved cutting edge (fig. 8.5d). The hilt is attached to the blade by a pair of langets and usually has prominent quillons; it commonly has a knuckle guard and a discoid pommel, in some instances with a spike projecting from it.

## *Talwar*

Stone includes under this class 'all of the curved swords used in India, [though] those of a very marked curvature are frequently called by their Persian name, *shamshir*'.<sup>21</sup> The *talwar* is a version of an extensively distributed Turkic type of sword, introduced to India during the early Mughal period and widely adopted there as a standard form. It has a gently curved sabre-like blade with the cutting edge on the convex side, well suited to cavalry use although (being capable of a thrusting action) also useful on foot: commonly, the *talwar* blade widens slightly at the end, with a sharpened tip. The bulbous metal hilt usually incorporates a cross-guard with straight quillons and may have

a knuckle bow; it is generally surmounted by a saucer-shaped (later discoid) pommel cap from which extends the terminal spike of the tang (also capable of being used offensively at close quarters). A strap to secure it to the wrist may be threaded through the tang.

### *Katti talwar*

One sword so identified by Egerton has been published elsewhere as a *kirach* (fig. 8.6a). The form of the basket hilt and the curved and fullered blade are taken by Rawson to indicate a Maratha origin,<sup>22</sup> although the catalogue records its acquisition from Nepal in 1855.

### *Tegha*

The *tegha* may be thought of as a specialized development of the *talwar*, in which the blade achieves massively wide proportions and great weight while the hilt remains unaltered. They are sometimes identified as executioners' swords, a function for which they would be well suited even if not all were so used. Perhaps a Mughal introduction, the *tegha* maintained its position under the Maratha empire.

### *Khanda*

A straight-bladed double-edged sword with a long history, the *khanda* was designed primarily for slashing, the point generally being quite blunt. While the blades of later examples tend to be fairly light, they are frequently reinforced towards the hilt with fretted strips of steel applied to the back edge; the blade may widen slightly towards the tip. Commonly basket-hilted, the type often has an extended tang that could be gripped with the left hand for a more powerful blow or could be used offensively. More elaborate examples are used in religious and courtly ceremonial. The *khanda* is described as the national sword of Orissa (Odisha), although it was more widely used among the Rajputs and Marathas. An example in the collection was presented to the Company by Maharaja Holkar II of Indore.

### *Firanghi*

The term is thought to be derived from the Arabic *al-farangi*, designating the 'Franks' or people of Western Europe and alluding to the origin of the type. The blades on swords of this type are indeed commonly of





**Fig. 8.6.** (a) *Talwar* with a gold-inlaid watered steel blade closely resembling those produced in Safavid Iran, bearing the name of its manufacturer, Ali Muhammad Shirazi – also of Iranian origin. Other inscriptions on the blade indicate that it belonged to the Talpur rulers of Sind, now in Pakistan, pre-eminent between 1783 and 1843. L 94.5 cm. 3328(IS); (b) *Kastane*, with a dragon-headed pommel, the scabbard ornamented with chased and embossed gold leaf. L 89 cm. Presented to the Company by the Rajah of Travancore. 2573(IS); (c) *Dha* and scabbard, the grip encrusted with uncut rubies mounted in gold, the sheath encircled by 10 bands of uncut rubies. Presented in 1855 to Lord Dalhousie by the King of Ava. 2574(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

European origin, mainly from Solingen. They were perhaps first introduced under the Mughals, and the Portuguese were later involved in their importation; ultimately, they were adopted by the Marathas, Sikhs and others, with local copies augmenting continuing European imports. The straight blade was normally single-edged, with a pointed tip, while the hilt was generally identical to that of the *khanda*.

### *Pattisa*

The *pattisa* has a straight, double- or single-edged blade, tapering very little or even widened slightly towards a spatulate tip. Two types of hilt are associated with the *patissa*, the *khanda* and the *talwar* type, often with an extended spike at the pommel and with extended langets reinforcing the junction with the blade.

### *Kastane*

These are ceremonial or decorative swords worn by persons of rank and native to Sri Lanka, although possibly arising in the sixteenth century from a European model: a number of early blades have Dutch makers' marks. Early examples had found their way back to Europe by the 1600s: a well-known equestrian painting shows the Parliamentarian commander Colonel Alexander Popham wearing a *kastane* c. 1650.<sup>23</sup> Typically, they combine a short, single-edged blade (double-edged at the tip), straight or slightly curved, with an elaborate hilt (fig. 8.6b), frequently in a fantastical human, animal or dragonsque form proliferating over the hand- or cross-guard and with minor supporting creatures; the richest examples are encrusted with gems. Scabbards are of wood, sometimes with decorative embellishments of rhino horn; further metal figural mounts decorate the scabbard and its chape.

### 'Executioner's sword of the King of Kandy'

The sword has a straight blade, the hilt with knuckle guard of silver-gilt. The scabbard is covered with crimson velvet, ornamented with silver-gilt mounts. The original record in the slip catalogue merely identifies it as a 'Sword w<sup>th</sup> straight blade. Kandy – Ceylon'; the remaining details are first aired in the 1851 *Guide* and are reproduced in the 1880 catalogue, where the donor, the Revd B. V. Layard, is also recorded.

## *Dha*

The Burmese origin attributed to swords of the *dha* type in the collection is entirely likely, for although the type is more widely distributed in Southeast Asia, it is the national weapon of Burma. Tentative contacts with the country by the Company were followed by military campaigns of the First (1824–6) and Second (1852–3) Anglo-Burmese Wars; a third campaign (1885) took place after the dispersal of the India Museum. It is by no means certain that all of these were trophies of war, however, for the *dha* has a wide range of uses, from bush knives to temple ritual. All have in common a curving, single-edged blade, the tip of which may be pointed or blunt (fig. 8.6c); they vary in length, from knives to long swords (*dha iwe*). The circular-section grip, with or without a pommel, may be long enough to allow for two-handed use, although combat is usually single-handed. The type has no guard. Examples within the collection are now associated with the Khamti people of Burma and the Mishmi of north-eastern India respectively. Non-Burmese origins for swords of *dha* type in the collection include Bhutan, Assam and Siam; several were also from Darjeeling. Among the most splendid examples in the collection are those presented by the King of Ava to Lord Dalhousie during a diplomatic mission to the Burmese capital in 1855.

## *Pata*

In English, this type is called a gauntlet sword, the swordsman's hand being protected by an integral metal half-gauntlet, the elongated cuff of which is secured to the forearm by a metal strap or chain; the grip is transverse, at right angles to the blade (as in the *katar*), which is straight and double-edged, designed for slashing rather than thrusting and favoured by cavalry as well as infantry. The hilt is attached to the blade by a pair of projecting arms which clasp the blade on either side. Its heyday came during the period of the Maratha empire (late seventeenth to early nineteenth century). Imported European blades were commonly reworked for swords of this type: one of those in the collection is identified as of Spanish origin and one is German, with a Solingen maker's mark.

## Sword sticks

Half a dozen sword sticks (*gupti*), in which a rapier-style blade is concealed within a walking cane, may belong in the realm of personal protection rather than offensive weaponry – although their potential for clandestine use with an element of surprise is clear. Several of those listed have the stick/sheath painted with floral and other ornament, reinforcing the appearance they gave of being primarily personal items.

## Battle-axes

Well represented in the collection is the family of axes – exhibiting a variety of designs – known as *bullova*. They have in common a two-handed shaft with a socketed head, frequently crescentic in outline. Some 16 of them are provenanced to Chota Naghpur, perhaps representing a single (though unrecorded) collecting event, although the type is particularly associated with this area. Other named types include *tungi*, which had a large, irregular triangular-shaped steel blade particularly associated with the Khonds, with a step-like moulding at the head; *chatta kattar* – a pair, each with a curved blade and two transverse sockets to accommodate the shaft, and with a sheath of red leather; *venmuroo*, a crescentic-blade axe closely associated with Malabar (fig. 8.7a); *tabar/tabarzin*, a Persian term signifying a saddle axe and associated particularly with Ottoman cavalry; *buckie*, the latter represented by an axe with a metal shaft (fig. 8.7b); and *zaghna* (or *hoolurge*), signifying a form with one or two knife-like blades mounted in tandem (one of those in the collection also has a stiletto concealed within the shaft).

Two sacrificial axes (fig. 8.7c), designated *kigali* and both from Meerut, are the sole representatives of their type, and are touched on only briefly, in Egerton's survey. Their broad and massive blades again suit them to a clean dispatch of the sacrificial animal.

## *Bagh nakh*

Four sets of these weapons (fig. 8.8), commonly known as 'tiger claws', whose notoriety far exceeded the danger they posed in everyday life, were represented in the museum. They consist of a bar to which are attached four or five curving, claw-shaped spikes or blades, with a ring at either end: by passing the thumb through one ring and the little



**Fig. 8.7.** (a) Battle axe (*venmuroo*) of steel with an ebony shaft; chased bronze mounts. L 79 cm. Malabar. 2847(IS); (b) Battle axe (*buckie*), the shaft fitted with a spear point. L 63 cm. Kolhapur. 3546(IS); (c) Sacrificial axe (*kigali*) of steel with a wooden haft. L 91 cm. Meerut. 2674(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



**Fig. 8.8.** Tiger claws (*bagh nakh*) of steel, with five curved blades. Kolapore. 3196(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

finger through the other, the *bagh nakh* could be concealed in the palm of the hand until unleashed on an unsuspecting victim. Variant forms may incorporate a thrusting blade at one end or the other. Poisoned *bagh nakh* are said to have been favoured by certain Rajput clans.

Not surprisingly, these weapons developed an association with assassins' work. Perhaps the most infamous event associated with the *bagh nakh* relates to the first Maratha emperor, Shivaji. Indeed, the anonymous author of an article on the India Museum, published in the *Sea-Pie* magazine,<sup>24</sup> identifies one of those in the collection as the very weapon implicated in the killing:

not the least interesting article in the [armaments] case, is a relic of the founder of the Mahratta Empire. It is the instrument with which Sivajee murdered Abdalla Khan, the Bijapur general; and was presented by the Raja of Satara, a descendant of the murderer ... the weapon was preserved for nearly two hundred years in the family.

Curiously, the instrument associated with that event that is now in the V&A arrived from another source and not from the India Museum.<sup>25</sup> Use of these instruments was, in fact, reasonably widespread: certain Sikh tribesmen commonly concealed them in their turbans or wore them in combat on their left hand while wielding a sword in their right.

### *Chakram*

Quoits of steel or brass (*chakram*), some 12–25 cm in diameter and sharpened to a knife edge around their outer periphery (fig. 8.9a), were designed primarily as throwing weapons but could also be used in hand-to-hand combat. They became particularly associated with (but were not exclusive to) the Sikh empire, where they survived in use until the days of Ranjit Singh. Their identification with the Sikhs was reinforced by the practice of some warrior orders (*Nihangs* or *Akalis*) of prominently displaying their quoits in tiers on their tall, conical turbans (fig. 8.9b), although in combat they would normally be carried on the left forearm. Experienced practitioners (foot soldiers or cavalry) could easily hurl them 50 m, while some of those in brass constructed with an aerofoil section are said to reach twice as far. According to Egerton,<sup>26</sup> they were generally spun on the index finger prior to launching horizontally, although troops (perhaps especially in close formation) might equally use an underarm technique to throw



**Fig. 8.9.** (a) Three steel throwing quoits (*chakram*). D (max) 28 cm. Punjab. Presented 1855 by Major [later Sir] Herbert Edwards. 3261(IS); (b) Quoit turban, cotton over wickerwork frame, with embellishments of gilt steel in the form of crescents and knives. H 46 cm. Lahore. 3462(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

them either horizontally or vertically;<sup>27</sup> alternatively – especially for those of smaller diameter – they could be used as hand weapons at close quarters.

A further method of deploying these weapons was to mount the quoits in the form of a flail (*cumberjung*), each quoit having a weighted ball at its centre to provide further momentum and being attached to a common handle by a chain.

### ‘Boomerangs’

Some 15 of these weapons (*katari*) are represented in the collection, most of them of wood, one of ivory and two of steel (figs 8.10a and b). The widely adopted English term – itself an Australian Aboriginal loan word – raises the expectation that these weapons (otherwise termed throwing sticks – equally unsatisfactory in view of the range of materials encountered) would return to the thrower, but they possess no such capacity: in cross-section they are flat and they lack an aerofoil profile. They are also asymmetrical in outline, tapering in a curve





**Fig. 8.10.** 'Boomerangs' (*katari*). (a) Of wood, inscribed in ink on one face. L (max, outer curve) 91 cm. Received 1855, perhaps from the *Paris Exposition Universelle* of that year. Gujarat. 2761(IS); (b) Of steel. L (max, outer curve) 51 cm. Southern India. Presented by Claude Russell. 2830(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

towards one end, which is usually expanded to form a grip. When thrown at a target – usually small game,<sup>28</sup> although they could also be effective against human targets – the combination of weight and spinning action combine to disable if not to kill it.



**Fig. 8.11.** *Katar* of gilt steel, the side guards each extended to form a pistol barrel (which may be unscrewed), the triggers lying within the side guards; sheath of red velvet. Lahore. 3448(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

### Combination weapons

There seems to have been considerable interest in combination weapons, in which a stabbing blade was combined with a firearm – in theory providing the benefits of both, although their curiosity value probably outweighed their practicality. One of these, from Lahore, is a dagger of *katar* type (fig. 8.11), in which the side guards are extended to form the barrels of an integral pistol. Two swords are combined with pistols, the trigger in each being concealed within a basket hilt. A further two weapons combine a sword blade with a carbine, the blade inserted into the pistol-shaped butt and equalling the barrel in length; both bear the Company's mark on the lock together with the date 1816. The latter are both said to have been 'taken at Lucknow' – presumably implying that they were retaken in (or in the aftermath of) the siege of the city in 1857–8.

## Firearms

These were celebrated in India, often being as heavily ornamented as the edged weapons described above but without compromising their essential purpose. The mechanical superiority of European weapons might be generally acknowledged but, as Henry Hardy Cole observed, that was not always enough:<sup>29</sup>

The ornamental arms made in India are not merely for ornamental but for actual use. For instance, in hunting, the Amirs of Scinde use long muskets inlaid with gold and jewels, to which the locks of the guns presented by the English are fixed.

### Matchlock guns

With almost 50 representatives (including three on loan from the Tower Armouries), these were the most numerous firearms in the collection. The majority are identified as *toradars*, a type distinct to the northern and central regions of the sub-continent; it remains uncertain whether their antecedents are to be found among Portuguese weapons of the sixteenth century or whether they were introduced directly by the early Mughals, but they were certainly widely adopted in the 1600s, and their comparative simplicity of construction ensured their survival well into the second quarter of the nineteenth century. Two basic types are identified, one more lightly built with an angular-section stock and the other with a more massive barrel and a curved, diamond-section stock; both types are fired with the narrow butt held under the armpit rather than applied to the shoulder, and both regularly reach lengths approaching 2 m overall.

The barrels of two weapons are fashioned as tiger heads, recalling guns from the armoury of Tipu Sultan, but another is shaped as a rhinoceros head, suggesting that all were so formed at the whim of the gunsmith. A number of the weapons in the India Museum are provenanced to Lahore, one specifically 'taken' there, implying forcible capture rather than peaceable acquisition.

One such *toradar*, of more massive construction and almost 2 m long, is described as a 'wall piece' – that is to say, a scaled-up version of the normal infantry weapon, designed to be mounted on a rest in a defensive position and intended to break the advance of an oncoming force with its superior firepower and range.



**Fig. 8.12.** (a) Matchlock *torador* with a slender, straight stock and a rifled barrel of damascened steel with the gold *koftgari* ornament; pierced mounts and nielloed silver side plates. L 168 cm. Lahore. 2596(IS); (b) Matchlock gun with four chambers in a revolving cylinder, damascened in silver and with traces of gilding; a supply of matchcord survives wound around the butt. L 173 cm. Indore. Presented by Sir Robert Hamilton. Unprovenanced. 2619(IS); (c) Mountain gun or wall piece with a rifled barrel of damascened steel mounted on a massive wooden stock with steel rest. L 94 cm. Presented to the Company by Maharaja Gulab Singh. Lahore. 3266(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

While most matchlocks were smooth-bored, at least one example with a rifled barrel was included in the collection (fig. 8.12a) – a representative of the long period of transition when developments in firearm technology proceeded at a pace that led to some curious combinations of features from seemingly different eras.

Perhaps the most advanced development of the matchlock in the collection is a four-shot weapon that sought to increase the rate of fire by incorporating a revolving cylinder that could be charged with several rounds at a time (fig. 8.12b).

### Flintlock guns

While ease of manufacture and maintenance assured the matchlock of a lengthy popularity in India, the type was overtaken in technological terms by the flintlock. Firearms of this type are represented less frequently in the museum (only a quarter as many guns), perhaps indicating a historical bent on the part of the curators but more likely reflecting accurately the frequency with which each would have been encountered in India. Whereas most matchlocks were smoothbore weapons, flintlock ignition survived the transition to the use of (much more accurate) rifled barrels. Among the former are a musketoon bearing the Company's mark on the lock, a side-bar lock copied from an English pattern (from Gujranwala) and another made in Rajasthan.

Three flintlocks from Sind – two from Hyderabad and one from Bahawalpur – and one from Lahore all have rifled barrels of damascened steel ornamented with gold. Traditional forms of decoration continued to be applied to flintlock weapons, both on the metalwork and on the stocks, often ornamented with inlaid and other decoration. The long barrels that continued to be fitted to these weapons, when combined with the advantages of a rifled bore, gave them an enviable degree of accuracy. Again, this might be further improved by the addition of a rest to long-range defensive weapons firing from a fixed point (fig. 8.12c).

### Percussion guns

Two guns (and the pistols mentioned below) incorporating the latest form of ignition – the percussion cap – represent the ultimate development in firearms technology before the Company was extinguished in the aftermath of the Uprising of 1857. Neil Carleton has observed<sup>30</sup> that these weapons are of particular significance: although they probably

just post-date the Anglo-Sikh Wars, they show that the craftsmen of Lahore had the ability to produce weapons of this high quality at a very early date. The French General Allard, in the service of Ranjit Singh, had imported 600 pistols and two million detonating caps as early as 1836, whereas the initial introduction of the percussion cap by the British took place only three years later and more generally a decade after that. The technology gap could so easily have proved costly to the Company's armies.

## Pistols

The comparatively few pistols on display were mostly flintlocks, an obsolescent type by the time of the museum's dispersal, although they had remained in common use up to the mid-century. One pair (with scrolling ornament and Persian cartouche in gold) is of percussion type; the hollow pommels are designed to carry spare shot or percussion caps. Five (including the latter pair) are of *tamancha* (country-made) type, one after an English prototype: they were gathered (by unrecorded means) from Lahore, Agra and Mysore respectively. The pair from Agra bears the name of the gunsmith Doolee Chund. Several have chased decoration and damascened barrels (one in gold); clearly none of them were everyday weapons.

## Firearm accessories

A suite of accessories formed a normal adjunct to early muzzle-loading firearms (fig. 8.13), their precise composition evolving in line with developments in the weapons themselves. From a powder flask an appropriate charge of black powder would be measured into the muzzle, followed in turn by wadding to hold it in position, the ball or projectile (wrapped in a lubricated patch to ease its entry to the barrel) and more wadding, the whole being compacted with a ramrod (normally housed under the barrel when not in use). For matchlock guns, a separate priming horn dispensed a finer grade of powder for the ignition pan; matchcord might be carried in a purpose-made reel or simply wound around the stock. A tinderbox would be carried in order to light the match. Flintlock weapons were able to function without the need for separate priming powder. From the early nineteenth century, pre-measured charges of gunpowder might be carried in a bandolier, along with bullet pouches and patch boxes. Balls for muzzle-loaders could be produced from lead – perhaps recycled – in the field, with the



**Fig. 8.13.** Firearm accessories comprising powder flask, priming flask or measure, tinder box, two bullet pouches and patch box, decorated with gold *koftgari*. Bahawalpur. 2659(1S). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

aid of a bullet mould, usually of steel or brass, in which individual or multiple balls could be produced in a single casting, requiring no more preparation than trimming of the casting sprue.

Also to be included here is a port-fire holder in chased silver, with chain and fuse. Port-fire (a mixture of nitre and sulphur, contained in a paper case) was used in igniting primers and quick matches for ordnance pieces or on rockets. Once ignited, it burned for about 10 minutes, during which time repeated discharges could be made, the slow match being trimmed after each ignition and relit from the port-fire. The silver finish on the catalogued example may indicate a ceremonial use.

### Camel gun

An item of special historical interest is a miniature cannon, mounted on a camel saddle by means of a swivel. Guns of this type were widely used on the sub-continent, particularly in the mountainous regions of the north-west, up to the time of the Second Anglo-Sikh War of 1848–9.<sup>31</sup> Used in large numbers in place of more cumbersome conventional artillery, they were deployed (as suggested by their Persian name, *zamburak*) to harass enemy formations in preparation for the decisive cavalry charges that dominated the tactics of Central and South Asian cultures. Whereas other examples resemble large muskets,



the piece in the collection is unusual in having a bronze barrel like a small cannon: it illustrates one possible line of development from ship-mounted swivels introduced into India by the Portuguese at the end of the fifteenth century.

### Larger ordnance

Larger field guns played little or no role in the India Museum displays – or even, it seems, in the Royal Armouries at the Tower of London.<sup>32</sup> Following the conclusion of the First Anglo-Sikh War, in which the Sikh artillery had sorely tried the British forces, the *Illustrated London News* carried an illustration of vast numbers of ‘Sikh trophy guns’ drawn up in the fort at Monghyr (Munger),<sup>33</sup> but there seem to be no records of their being brought to England in any numbers. In 1849 the Master-General of the Ordnance wrote to the board of directors of the Company with a request that ‘Specimens of oriental armour, particularly Afghan and Sikh, should be forwarded from India to be deposited in the National Armoury at the Tower of London’: the subsequent shipment duly transformed the displays at the Tower, but they contained no large-calibre guns.<sup>34</sup>

Within the collections of the India Museum can be found only two small iron cannon (*phirangu*) from Vizianagaram, while model cannon appear in wood and in ivory, the latter (two examples, from Lahore) accompanied by a figure of a gunner.

## Standards

A group of six standards in the 1880 catalogue, all identified with the minimal description ‘Metal gilt; Burmah’, proves to be wrongly provenanced but of considerable interest. All are now acknowledged as being Indian of Mughal origin and of the type designated *’alam*; all date from the turn of the nineteenth century. In Mughal society they were symbols of pomp, carried on state occasions by the retinue of a ruler or bestowed by him as a mark of special favour on persons of rank.<sup>35</sup>

The simplest are fashioned from sheet brass, cut to a decorative outline, gilt, welded to a tapering socket with simple mouldings and mounted on a long shaft (fig. 8.14a). One has a frond-like outline and two have an onion-shaped profile surmounted by a simpler frond motif. More elaborate than these is a leaf-shaped standard with a serrated outline recalling a sunburst and with a central circular opening cut



**Fig. 8.14.** Brass standards. (a) With plant-like outlines, c. 1800. 2539-40(IS); (b) Ball- or spherical-headed; (c) Fish standard (*mahi*). L 66 cm. 2542(IS). All unprovenanced. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

away to leave an inscription in Arabic in reserve (see [fig. 3.5](#)). It is rendered all the more remarkable by a series of inscribed legends in English, testifying to its history, as outlined in [Chapter 3](#).<sup>36</sup>

Two further standards carry additional messages of distinction. One has a flattened spherical head ([fig. 8.14b](#)) and the other is of

the type known as a 'fish standard' (*mahi*) (fig. 8.14c). The latter was awarded only to the highest officers of state: while some are in the form of anatomically correct fish, this example is rather abstract, with a cylindrical body of brass and with a fringe of yak hair hanging from the lower jaw. When carried in procession together with ball-shaped standards, the type is known as *mahi-o-naratib* (fish and dignitaries).

## Spears

Many of the spears, with shafts of bamboo or solid wood, attract no further detail in the catalogues beyond the occasional mention of painted or applied decoration or the presence of a steel head or an iron butt. One example, most probably a hunting spear in view of the painted scenes on the shaft, may serve to exemplify the type. In two examples from Tinneveli (Tirunelveli), the spearheads are described as flamboyant (wavy, or serpentine). A group with barbed blades – as many as six barbs per head – all come from Assam.

Of the remainder, three are titled *bullum* – two with barbed heads, from Vizianagaram – and the others, with solid, angular heads from the same source, are named *sangu*, but neither term is necessarily specific in referring to a particular type. A further spear, titled *sang*, or *neza*, is said to be more typically Rajput in style, as confirmed by its origin in Jodhpur.

## Bows

Both simple and composite bows (*kaman*) are included in the range of types represented, although for those that no longer survive the limited information recorded at times precludes certain identification. The self-bows include examples in bamboo and unidentified wood – hardwood in the case of two bows from the Andaman Islands. Various of them are painted, frequently in red, and one example from Travancore is lacquered with representations of the avatars of Vishnu.

Some self-bows are described as of horn – certainly buffalo horn – rather than wood; examples from Delhi, Indore and Lahore are lacquered and gilt. There are three steel bows in the collection, one provenanced to Cambay and one 'taken at Lucknow' in 1857 – the fateful year of the Uprising.

Bow strings of bamboo, bark, leather and silk (the latter often whipped with thread to hold the multiple fibres in place) are recorded. There is one instance of a chain bow (*lyzum*) from Lahore (now written off), in which a chain replaced the string; a set of jingling discs attached to this bow indicate that it will have been intended for ritual (or in dancing, where the discs would rattle in time with the movement) rather than for use in the field.

Composite bows are acknowledged as being more effective than those of simple construction – particularly in the hot and dry conditions that characterize large parts of India; their effectiveness would have been seriously compromised during the monsoon. Here the construction of the wooden stave, with a forward curve, backed with horn and faced with sinew, allows the (comparatively short) weapon to store a great deal of energy, as it is strung by reflexing the bow against its natural curve, placing the horn splints under compression and the sinews under tension. Its compact size made it an ideal horseman's weapon. Two leather bow cases for such weapons, both from Nepal, are also included.

Single arrows are numerous in the collection, and there are a dozen quivers holding multiple arrows, some of them poisoned, in a variety of materials including wickerwork, leather and velvet.

Six pellet bows, provenanced to Nepal, Lahore and Udaipur respectively, are included in the collection. All have bamboo staves fitted with double strings (usually also of bamboo), between which is fitted a central pouch or sling, designed to hold a pellet or pebble rather than an arrow. These are for hunting small game and were not intended as weapons of war, although the velvet grip on one example and the painted ornament on two others indicates that some at least held an element of prestige.

## Defensive armour

An exceptional gift to the museum (donor unrecorded) comprised an eight-piece suit of armour from Bhuj (Kutch) which must have formed the single most striking exhibit in the arms and armour display. It consists of a short-sleeved coat or corslet of mail, formed over padded cotton and strengthened at the front by overlapping scales of brass and steel and rectangular plaques of steel with brass mountings. Trousers of riveted mail protect the legs and an accompanying pair of shoes of wadded leather is covered with scales of brass and steel over mail.

Associated with the armour is a helmet of plate and mail on a padded foundation; the crown is formed of six segments of embossed brass, tapering in outline, sewn into the crown with mail links and surmounted by a circular disc with a button finial; four rows of overlapping plates, alternately of brass and steel, extend down the back to form a neck guard, and in front is a V-shaped flap of mail with oval eye holes that falls over the nose and chin; rectangular cut-outs at the sides allow the mail covering to extend front and back to protect the throat and nape of the neck. Armguards of steel with brass mounts terminate in open mail gauntlets padded with cotton. The whole ensemble is said to be typical of the all-enclosing armour favoured in Sind.

## Helmets

A bell-shaped helmet of black hide, ornamented with gold leaf and red paint, and with a plume of hair, was associated with the Khamti peoples of Assam; its entry into the India Museum via the Military Stores might suggest that it was a trophy of war rather than being collected in the conventional sense. The helmet was recorded by Egerton before being transferred to the Horniman Museum.

Hemispherical bowl-shaped helmets (*khuds*) were widespread in distribution and in their degree of sophistication. The most impressive example in the collection, fitted with a sliding nose guard, plume holders and a ventail of steel and brass mail hanging in points, was taken in the siege of Seringapatam (fig. 8.15). More modest examples from Bhutan and Nepal are judged to be typical of the region and contrast with those that follow. These more sophisticated types include two of the rare examples in this area for which the donor is recorded: in this case, the Raja of Kerauli, in present-day Rajasthan – most probably Maharaja Sir Madan Pal (r. 1854–69).

Among the more splendid helmets in the collection are one from Gwalior identifiable as a Maratha product, of steel with engraved and gilt details and another from Gwalior retaining its nose guard and porte-aigrettes. Holes around the rim show that originally it too was fitted with a mail aventail to protect the head and neck. A 'Persian Steel Helmet with Chain Iron work' presented by Colonel Pennington in 1822, along with a 'Chain Iron Mail Shirt',<sup>37</sup> can no longer be recognized.



**Fig. 8.15.** Helmet with bowl-shaped steel cap, its surface divided into quadrants by floral ornament and with a band of gold *koftgari* ornament around the rim; two plume holders (*porte-aigrettes*) flank a sliding nose guard; a suspended ventail of steel and brass mail hangs in points to the shoulders. Seringapatam, 1799. 3491(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

## Shields

The most widespread form of shield used in India is a circular buckler (*dhal*), characteristically convex in outline to some degree (fig. 8.16), although some are flat; not infrequently, the rim of the shield is recurved. The grip comprises two loops fastened by ring bolts, with a pad between them to protect the knuckles. On the outer face, the base of each bolt is covered by a prominent metal boss; usually the bolts are four in number, but additional (and purely decorative) bosses may be applied. Some of those in the collection (distributed from Malabar to Borneo) have a prominent umbo, providing additional protection to the hand. Most commonly, these shields are made of hide, often of rhinoceros or buffalo; one example in the collection is identified as of river porpoise skin. Rhinoceros hide was particularly favoured, for having been shaped and moulded in its untanned (rawhide) form, it dried to produce a durable and exceptionally hard surface with a translucent quality. Metal (steel) shields of identical form are also known, and the same form was produced in rattan. Painted or gilded ornament was applied as a matter of course to leather shields, while those of metal might be inlaid with gold or silver and studded with gems. High-quality shields were lined in velvet. The type is represented in the collection from across the northern sub-continent, from Assam and Bhutan (and extending to the Arakan territories of Burma) to the Punjab and Lahore.

Alternative forms of leather shields are represented by the rectangular *dang*, studded with brass bosses associated with the Arakan peoples, and by a *nag-p'hani dhal* ('snake-hood shield') of black rhino hide with raised snake motifs from Nepal.

Three wooden shields from Borneo are listed: a *terebai* of the Dayaks, rectangular in outline with painted anthropomorphic ornament and tufts of hair applied; and a *kliau*, similarly with tufts of hair; and an unnamed Dayak shield, large, circular and convex with a pointed umbo of painted wood. A cane shield is similarly provenanced.

Quite different in form are several *madus* (or *marus*) from northern and central India – a form of parrying shield formed by uniting two black buck or antelope horns so that they point in opposite directions (but in-line); the junction may be enclosed in metal to form a grip, which in some instances is provided with a guard (and occasionally a spike). The tips of the horns too may be sheathed in metal – silver or steel – to enhance their effectiveness as an offensive as well as a defensive weapon. Two examples are annotated 'taken at





**Fig. 8.16.** Shield (*dhal*) of steel overlaid with gold, chiselled with low-relief tendril ornament inhabited by birds and animals pursued by hunters; central rosette motif within four hemispherical bosses set with diamonds; lined with silk brocade. D 43 cm. Presented by Raja Suchet Singh. 3440(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Lucknow, 1858', testifying to their potential for deployment in hand-to-hand combat.

Despite having its own impressive holdings of arms and armour, the India Museum curators evidently felt the need to boost its exhibits from time to time with material deposited on loan from other owners. The Tower Armouries accounted for most of these weapons, but a significant number came from J. W. Power of Kensington (returned to the owner in 1886).<sup>38</sup> Compared to the permanent collection, comparatively little information accompanies these items, provenances being limited to powder and shot pouches 'used in Bundelkund', a billhook 'used by the natives beyond Nynnee Tal', a few Nepalese knives and 'Goorkah' weapons and a 'suit of armour worn by the Peishwars'.

Power's collection can have added little to the displays of the museum's own weapons, and indeed at the time of cataloguing in 1879 they were all 'packed in [a] rough Wood Case'.

Two more prestigious weapons were lent by E. Thomas (and were returned to him in 1902): one sword with 'plain ivory plates on hilt, puce coloured velvet scabbard, formerly belonging to Shah Shuja, King of Afghanistan', and another with 'carved ivory plates on hilt, black embossed leather scabbard with metal mounts, waist belt attached with two slides and clasps, steel inlaid with gold, formerly belonging to Ahmed Shah Abdati, King of Afghanistan'.

## Horse gear and other harness

Considering the importance of cavalry units in the Company's army – not to mention the extensive reliance on horse transport by the civil administration – there is surprisingly little evidence that personnel thought it appropriate to contribute examples of Asian tack to the Company's museum. A number of complete or partial sets of harness do appear together in the catalogue and have every appearance of having been received by the museum as a single acquisition, and the same is true for several sets of harness for a single artillery team, but as yet the circumstances of their arrival in the museum have not been uncovered.

One display case containing only equestrian material is covered in the 1880 catalogue by 17 entries, relating to material from three places only. A group of material from Hutwa in Bengal evidently forms a single suite of harness of considerable opulence: a saddle of black leather embroidered with gold, pearls and stones is accompanied by stirrups, pistol holsters and saddle cloth and by a matching double bridle, snaffle and curb and martingale, embellished additionally with turquoises. The second group, from the Punjab, comprises a martingale and leading rein of green velvet embroidered in gold, a headstall embroidered green and gold, and two pairs of leather reins. The third group, from Kabul, consists of two martingales, crupper, two portions of head-dresses all of leather with gold mounts, a similar neck ornament with additional coral settings, a pair of stirrups with leathers embroidered with coloured worsted and a blue cord with gold tubular mounts. Without further documentation, it seems impossible to ascertain their precise significance.

A second cabinet contains three items from Yarkand in Central Asia – a martingale, crupper and bridle, all set with silver and turquoises;

they may have come from Sir Douglas Forsyth (see [Chapter 12](#)), but no donor is recorded. From Bombay came a saddle and stirrups, the saddle in crimson and green cloth embroidered in gold. The remaining pieces in the display are unprovenanced and may or may not be related to each other: a saddle in red and yellow cloth embroidered with silk; two embroidered headstalls, one with spangles; a girth and two saddle cloths, one embroidered with silk; a neck ornament of red cloth with silk embroidery and spangles; a crupper of red, green and yellow cloth with embroidery and spangles; and a collar in red cloth, silk embroidery and spangles.

A third case contains a green velvet saddle embroidered with gold and silver, together with stirrups and crupper, from Amritsar, and a further saddle and crupper of red velvet embroidered with floss silk. Unrelated to these (it seems) are a velvet headstall and a martingale, both with spangles; a second headstall of red cloth embroidered with floss silk and a third gold-embroidered and with two cords; a bit and leather reins embroidered with gold, a further set of reins with bit, covered with red and yellow cloth, and a third set in green velvet; and three bands of green velvet attached to rings.

Included with the personal ornaments in a further case are two rich horse head-ornaments (*toorah*) from Delhi, of identical form. Both are described as ‘in the form of a bird of an octagonal pendant, enameled on silver, with plate diamonds set in gold; attached to the bird’s mouth are seven enameled bells, from which hang numerous imitation emeralds’.

The remaining sets appear to belong with material ‘in packing cases taken from the annexe’, and hence not displayed at South Kensington; in view of the greater amount of space the collections enjoyed there, these items may never have been displayed at all. The first group comprises 13 riding saddles (some of red leather), mostly with stirrups, bridle, reins and martingale, some with headstalls and one with a head ornament; several of the saddles and other harness elements are embroidered, as are the accompanying saddle cloths and saddle pads. Several of the latter have contrasting coloured borders, perhaps indicating regimental associations – red with yellow border, red with green border, red with black, red and orange border, green with red and yellow border, white with red and yellow border. Girths and bands are similarly identified by colour. These all sound as though they were produced for affluent European customers – presumably military officers, although the presence of blue velvet on one set of headstall, martingale and reins, and spangles on another, might suggest



**Fig. 8.17.** Elephant goad (*ankusa*), gold, diamonds and enamel, made in Jaipur c. 1870. L 54.5 cm. Acquired following the Exhibition of 1871 in London. 02693(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

civilian ownership – whether European or Indian – for at least some. One further saddle, upholstered in red velvet with silver embroidery and mounts, is specifically identified as Sikh, begging the question of the origin of the others.

A complete set of gig harness is the only traction harness included, although it is closely associated in the catalogue with a ‘Model of

conveyance, painted and gilt ornament, covered with crimson and gold textile, the hood covered with the same material, two small mirrors attached, cushion scarlet striped’.

Of undoubtedly military origin are several sets of harness for a team of artillery horses. One set is identified as for a wheel horse (closest to the limber): a saddle with two holsters, a saddle pad with two holsters, two collars and two pairs of hames, two pairs of traces, two sets of breechings, one legging, two bridles with reins, two headstalls, two *numnahs* (saddle pads cut to the outline of the saddle) and one whip. The harness for the remaining horses is similar, though lacking the breeching (and the whip).

Two camel harnesses are also of embroidered red leather, and a third comprising saddle cloth, girths, stirrups and tasselled head trapping is accompanied by only a saddle frame, of ‘gilt metal with embroidered ends’. One further camel saddle is of black leather with stirrups and bit and red cord reins, while a fifth is ‘mounted with brass and white metal, the ends embroidered’.

A single elephant saddlecloth has an embroidered border. Perhaps the most impressive piece of elephant gear is a goad (*ankusa*) of gold set with diamonds in a field of blue, green and red enamel and hunting scenes in polychrome enamel painted on the grip (fig. 8.17). Probably it never so much as saw an elephant, for it was acquired for the India Museum after being shown in the 1871 Exhibition, perhaps having been made specifically for that event; traditionally it would have formed part of the traditional dress of honour given by a Maharaja to a higher noble.

## Notes

- 1 ‘A visit to the East India Museum’, *The Leisure Hour* 7 (1858), 471.
- 2 India Act XI, 1878.
- 3 The Native (or Princely) States continued to maintain a degree of internal autonomy under British rule. By the time of the Partition, most had become grouped under administrative agencies by the India Office.
- 4 Mukharji, *Art-Manufactures of India*, 218.
- 5 The RUSI museum (installed in Whitehall Yard and later in the Banqueting House), although generally accessible only at Christmas and Easter and on the anniversaries of Trafalgar and Waterloo, would have been a near neighbour of the India Museum during its sojourn at Fife House and at the India Office.
- 6 Mercer, ‘Collecting Oriental and Asiatic arms and armour’.
- 7 It may be noted that corps and regimental museums, the repositories of much related material today, had not yet emerged at this time: a recent survey published in 2016 for the Army Museums Ogilby Trust characterizes their development as ‘a century old tradition’: <https://www.armymuseums.org.uk/resources/>. Information kindly supplied by Jennifer Allison. Informal collections of trophies were no doubt accumulated earlier at regimental depots, but they had not yet been given formal shape.

- 8 Day Books, 9 May 1818.
- 9 Day Books, 29 August 1820.
- 10 Day Books, 31 July 1855.
- 11 WorldCat records that 19 editions of the *Handbook* and 13 editions of the *Description* have been published – an extraordinary testimony to Egerton's dedication to his self-imposed task. The material from 'the author's private collection' included in the 1896 publication extended to Arab, Persian and Japanese as well as Indian weapons.
- 12 Stone, *Glossary of Arms and Armor*, 202. Of interest in the India Museum catalogue is an entry for two pieces of gun barrel and a length of twisted wire, 'to illustrate the process of damascening and watering gun barrels'.
- 13 For example, a 'two-handed sword with carbine ... taken at Lucknow', a sabre blade from the Deccan and a flintlock musquetoone from Oude.
- 14 Stone, *Glossary of Arms and Armor*, 177.
- 15 Seemingly an unlikely material for India, walrus ivory was traded southwards from Scandinavia and the northern Siberian region via the Volga and thence widely distributed throughout the Ottoman and Mughal empires. It was especially favoured for sword and dagger hilts, being imbued with apotropaic qualities.
- 16 Egerton, *Indian and Oriental Armour*, cat. 629.
- 17 For the latter, see Olikara, 'Two iconic knives of the Rajahs of Coorg'.
- 18 The V&A collections include another sword associated by Lord Egerton with this ruler, who was an ally of the Company (Egerton, *Indian and Oriental Armour*, cat. 646): 'The sword of Rustum, an heir-loom of the Durrani family. Procured by the Maharaja Runjit Sing from Shah Shuja-ul-Mulk, the last of the race.'
- 19 Although in decline, the five-yearly ritual sacrifice of water buffalo in honour of the goddess Gadhimai continues to be observed in centres such as Bariyarpur: some 3,500 water buffalo are said to have been sacrificed there in 2022 – down from an estimated 200,000 animals in 2014: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-50644035> [accessed 07.05.2023].
- 20 Stone, *Glossary of Arms and Armor*, 444.
- 21 Stone, *Glossary of Arms and Armor*, 601.
- 22 Rawson, *Indian Sword*, 46–7.
- 23 Royal Armouries, Leeds, inv. no. WYL.I.315.
- 24 *Sea-Pie* 1 (1842), 253–4.
- 25 IS.33-1971. It is accompanied by a red Morocco case with the inscription 'The Wagnuck of Sivajee with which he killed the Moghul General. This Relic was given to Mr James Grant-Duff of Eden when he was Resident at Satara by the Prime Minister of the Peshwa of the Marathas.' See Jackson and Jaffer, *Maharaja*, 17, pl. 5.
- 26 Egerton, *Indian and Oriental Armour*, 128.
- 27 Stone, *Glossary of Arms and Armor*, 171.
- 28 The 1880 catalogue amplifies one entry – 2761(IS), for three boomerangs – with the information that they were 'used by the Koles of Guzerat for throwing at hares, wild boars and other animals'.
- 29 Cole, *Catalogue of Indian Art*, 122.
- 30 Neil Carleton, personal communication (2022).
- 31 These notes are taken from those contributed by Neil Carleton to the V&A's collection management system.
- 32 A single cannon – made in 1677, captured from Aurangzeb's forces at the siege of Bhurtpore (Bharatpur) and sent to London in 1828 – stood until recently outside Woolwich Barracks, before being transferred to the Royal Artillery Museum in Wiltshire.
- 33 *Illustrated London News*, 20 March 1847.
- 34 Richardson and Bennett, 'The East India Company gift to the Tower of London'.
- 35 Two standards were among a group of material presented by Captain Beaufort in 1815, but cannot today be identified (Day Books, 1 February 1815).
- 36 For more on this standard, see under Chapter 3.
- 37 Day Books, 27 February 1822.
- 38 On Power, see further under Chapter 11.

## Religious observance: introducing Indian devotional practice

Although numerously represented in the collections, the items considered here can have played little part in the original vision of the museum as articulated by Charles Wilkins: certainly there was no specific place marked out for them, even within his catch-all category of 'Miscellaneous Articles'. Following an initial period when the industrial and mercantile aspects of the East India Company's interests were, perhaps, followed with some more rigour, a broader interest in representing the peoples of the growing eastern empire began to manifest itself within the collections. By the end of its independent existence, the museum had become an important repository for material of an anthropological nature, and it may be suggested that the collection of 'idols of every description' noted in the 1851 guide to the museum<sup>1</sup> provides evidence of an already well-established interest in this field. They would also have formed a useful physical archive to complement the growing numbers of books and manuscripts on mythological and religious subjects as held in the Company's library.

Although the role played by the deities within the museum remains an elusive one, it may be seen in contrast to (for example) the unfired clay figures considered in the following chapter. While the latter were somewhat ephemeral in nature, they played a dynamic role in the didactic contributions made by the museum on a regular basis to the international exhibitions of the second half of the nineteenth century, a role that had been developed in earlier decades within the museum itself. By contrast, the religious figures and sculptures, although executed in terracotta, marble, bronze and other more 'noble' materials, seem never to have travelled beyond the doors of East India House or the museum's succeeding homes.



While early steps had been taken by a few scholarly Westerners in comprehending the range and identity of the Indian divinities, there remained as late as the mid-1850s no widespread appetite in Europe for knowledge of non-Christian beliefs, nor any developed sense of aesthetic appreciation for representations of the forms of divinity associated with them. As Bernard Cohn observed, many Europeans remained content to see Indians merely as heathens and their country a repository of satanic devil worship. In iconographic terms, its deities continued to be regarded with no more sympathy than they had received from Thomas Herbert in 1638:<sup>2</sup>

The Pagods are of sundry sorts and resemblances, in such shape as Satan visibly appears unto them: ugly faced, long black haire, gogld eyes, wide mouth, a forked beard, hornes and stradling, misshapen and horrible, after the old filthy form of Pan and Priapus.

In the very year of the museum's extinction, the influential voice of Sir George Birdwood still spoke for many when he declared that the 'monstrous shapes of the *Puranic* deities are unsuitable for the higher forms of artistic representation', suggesting that 'this is possibly why sculpture and painting are unknown, as fine arts, in India'.<sup>3</sup> It therefore remains difficult to discern what role they might have played in the museum, if not a proto-ethnographical one.

Certainly the Company had no interest in immersing itself in religious dialogue concerning India. For the whole of its existence it had resisted attempts at evangelization by missionary societies of the populace of the sub-continent over which it exercised control (being motivated by a desire to avoid the destabilization of social equilibrium rather than an aversion to the tenets of Christianity), and it continued to do so until 1813, when a clause inserted by the government into the Company's charter at its periodic renewal ended the obstructions that had hitherto been placed in the way of would-be evangelists.<sup>4</sup> Within the Company itself, army officers in particular would have been faced daily with the need to accommodate the religious beliefs and practices of their men, so that a degree of pragmatism had developed on the ground;<sup>5</sup> by the late 1700s it had become common for army units to participate in religious festivals, with formal salutes being fired by the sepoys. While there were few Europeans who embraced Indian religions quite as warmly as the remarkable Colonel Charles 'Hindoo' Stuart, whose house in Calcutta became a veritable museum

of religious artefacts (Buddhist and Jain, as well as Hindu), there was nonetheless a more widespread sympathy under the Company than would survive under the full-blown raj; indeed, the frustrated evangelicals at home complained that its pragmatism went far beyond the bounds of toleration and that the Company itself could 'scarcely be regarded as Christian'.<sup>6</sup>

Visitors to the museum in London seem to have been nonplussed by the array of deities with which, by the mid-century, they were presented – if we are to judge, at least, by the very opening of the first (and only) guidebook to the collections:<sup>7</sup>

The first object [the visitor] will meet after passing the door, is a dark rag-stone statue of THE INDIAN GOD, JINA, the great idol of the Buddhists, the most numerous order of religionists on the face of the globe ... This divinity is assuredly not particularly attractive, but this apparently is the case with almost every other object of Eastern superstition: the inhabitants being forbid by their religion to make themselves the likeness of any human image, have generally made their deities and other pictures as dissimilar as possible; and this must be taken into consideration by those who might otherwise be disposed to consider these representations as rude productions or vile caricatures.

This farrago of misinformation holds out little hope for enlightenment on the part of the visitor. According to the author, the curators had done little enough to ensure that the encounter would be an enlightening one: witness his response to:

a STATUE OF PARASWANATHA, the twenty-third Tirthakara, teacher of the Jaines, as he is ticketed; but what a Tirthakara is, or who the Jaines are, the Honourable Company has not thought proper to inform us; and it is much to be regretted that names intelligible to Europeans are not made use of in the official designation of many subjects in this interesting collection. The subjects are thus divested of half their value to the great majority of metropolitan visitors.

The tour continues in much the same vein. We encounter a:

CABINET OF CURIOSITIES, containing figures and small idols of every description; some of them exceedingly grave, others

irresistibly comic, several remarkably hideous, and not a few especially beautiful. None of them, however, can be described as of particular fidelity, in as far as natural aspect is concerned.

This is followed by a larger-scale statue:

A JAIN TIRTHA, standing in front of the great serpent Sesha, whose convolutions erect form a support to his back, while its numerous heads constitute a canopy surmounting him. The workmanship of many parts of this is remarkably good, especially that of the serpent's heads; but the effect of the whole, as in most Indian productions, is somewhat repulsive.

Clearly contemporary journalism – doubtless reflecting widely held public prejudices in the aesthetic appreciation of non-European sculpture and the religions which it served – will not form the basis for an objective assessment of the display, but other sources can come to our aid.

## A pioneering collection

In examining the India Museum's treatment of its 'idols and gods', the long experience in India of its curator Charles Wilkins is of major relevance. Not only had he been exposed for several years to the daily needs and expectations of the Indian populace at large and, specifically, the workforce under his control in the mills at Malda, but Wilkins's founder membership of the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1784 placed him at the centre of a pioneering group of Europeans with a confirmed – sometimes passionate – interest in every aspect of Indian culture.<sup>8</sup> Among his contemporaries in the Society was the tremendously important figure of Major Edward Moor (1771–1848), whose first-ever European survey of Indian religious imagery and belief was published with the title *The Hindu Pantheon* in 1810.<sup>9</sup> In the preface to his volume, Moor lamented his inability 'to read the sacred books of the Brahmans' and acknowledged his debt to others in this respect, notably Sir William Jones (the moving spirit of the Society), Henry Colebrook and Charles Wilkins. Holly Shaffer emphasizes the importance of the Society's publications in allowing Moor to relate the unfamiliar images with which he engaged to the literary sources that had begun to be explored in the *Asiatick Researches*, which in turn clothed his work in a



**Fig. 9.1.** (a) Brahma, cast in zinc at Benares for Charles Wilkins; the seated god holds a water vessel. H 22 cm. 912(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London; (b) The corresponding figure from Moor's *Hindu Pantheon*. Photo: © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

scholarly mantle that made it presentable to English society – not least the Court of Directors of the Company.<sup>10</sup> To the latter he extended thanks ‘in a more pointed manner’, acknowledging ‘the friendship of a man of such rare talents and virtues’, who had ‘been so good as to affix the names in Sanskrit, to many of the subjects of my plates’ and whose system of orthography he had followed throughout.<sup>11</sup> Wilkins did more than that: illustrated at various points within the volume are figures cast in zinc, each representing a single deity (or group of deities); these were not original Indian productions, for the captions make it clear that they were commissioned in Benares by Wilkins himself, ‘under the direction of learned Pandits’, specifically to serve as models for Moor’s plates (figs 9.1a and b).<sup>12</sup> Three of them are indeed said to have been ‘designed by Wilkins’, underscoring their role as exemplary types rather than direct reproductions of ancient artefacts.<sup>13</sup> Most or all of them were later presented by Wilkins to the India Museum. His presence there may also have been a factor in attracting further donations of similar material, such as the deities presented by John Roberts (see below).

For the introduction of such a vast and hitherto unfamiliar array of iconography, Moor wisely chose an already widely accepted form of representation, namely the spare neoclassical style of outline drawing

that had been used to good effect by Wilhelm Tischbein only a few years earlier in the *Collection of Engravings from Ancient Vases Mostly of Pure Greek Workmanship* from the 'second collection' of Sir William Hamilton.<sup>14</sup> The presentation of Moor's images (nearly all signed by Moses Haughton) in this way not only emulated a stylistic formula of proven success but implied an equivalence of value between the sculptural works introduced by Moor and the corpus of imagery from Hamilton's painted vases that in a short space of time had come to be accepted as definitively classical in origin, for all that his collection was recovered from Magna Graecia rather than mainland Greece.<sup>15</sup>

Published within a decade of the India Museum's opening, Moor's survey would have exerted a major influence on the way that the material culture of Indian religion – as represented here principally by small-scale figurines but extending also to larger-scale sculptures<sup>16</sup> and plaster casts as well as drawings – was presented there. Moor himself was only a minor contributor of specimens to the India Museum:<sup>17</sup> his own extensive collection remained largely in the care of his descendants until it was acquired by the British Museum in 1940. As regards the sculpture collection as a whole that entered the India Museum, apart from the monumental carvings excavated at Amaravati, little or no information attaches to the origins or the method of acquisition of any of them beyond the details given below.

A number of the smaller figures preserved are mounted in modest metalwork shrines, appropriate for domestic use. Many others were no doubt originally grouped in this way but have become separated from their settings over the years. Some larger-scale antiquities, including almost all the major sculptures, passed to the British Museum when the India Museum was broken up.

## Presenting the Hindu pantheon

The Hindu pantheon, which accounts for the overwhelming preponderance of representations in the collection, has long been acknowledged by scholars as being exceptionally fluid in nature. Over the space of two and a half millennia, new deities were continually absorbed within Hinduism. Some gods fell out of favour in this time, while others enjoyed a dramatic rise in fortune: Krishna, for example, has progressed from a peripheral role to being widely revered as a god in his own right. Given these fluctuations, and the complexities of the interrelationships between the various deities as elaborated over

centuries of religious practice – quite beyond the understanding of the early curators – it would have been difficult for them, as it remains for us, to alight on appropriate methods of presentation. Furthermore, the successive removals of the entire collection from East India House to Fife House, to the attics of the India Office and ultimately to South Kensington would inevitably have resulted in the obscuring of any original method of arrangement. Although we may reconstruct the groupings in which the South Kensington Museum curators found these figures when they came to pack them up in 1879, it seems unlikely that this perpetuates a great deal of Wilkins's original method. In short, it is virtually impossible to tell what sort of programme was imposed on the deities within the museum, except to say that the nature of the material is better suited to a purely iconographical survey rather than to an exposition of belief.

In the next sections, the grouping of the figures follows broadly the pragmatic scheme adopted by Richard Blurton in surveying the panorama of gods and goddesses in his invaluable volume on *Hindu Art*; additional details are supplied by other sources, as acknowledged.<sup>18</sup>

## Brahma

Standing at the head of the Hindu pantheon is the 'indefinable and unknowable Brahman', the embodiment of the elemental matter and creative spirit from which the universe was formed. Despite his seemingly fundamental importance, many of Brahma's attributes have migrated over the centuries to other gods, notably Shiva and Vishnu, and veneration of Brahma has correspondingly declined while the others have prospered. Representations of him are therefore less numerous than those of the other gods: his image still appears in temple settings, although rarely occupying a central position.<sup>19</sup> There are, nonetheless, six items in the collection identified as representations of Brahma or Brahman – three of soapstone and one of wood from Nepal and one of brass from the Deccan, as well as one in zinc (see [fig. 9.1a](#)); there is also 'a hand of Brahma' in white marble from Jaipur. In acknowledgement of his importance in the early formative period of the universe, Brahma is often represented as a venerable bearded figure; he frequently has four heads – originally he had five, but lost one in an altercation with Shiva – and four arms.

## Shiva

The representations of Shiva well display the mutable forms in which the gods might manifest themselves. The 10 straightforward catalogue entries for 'Siva' (plus a casting in zinc) represent only part of the whole. In eight cases he is accompanied by his *vahana* or mount, the bull Nandi, and in nine instances Nandi appears alone, but nonetheless as Shiva's representative. On one occasion the cataloguers have tentatively identified him as Mahadeva, the Great God.

In a further nine instances, Shiva appears as Bhairava, the headstrong, youthful manifestation of the god who had the temerity to deprive Brahma of one of his five heads, which then remained firmly fixed to Bhairava's hand while he was condemned to wander as an ascetic; eventually he reached Benares, where all sins may be washed away, and there the head detached itself. Despite his alarming and unstable character, Bhairava attracted a large following – particularly among ascetics encouraged by the promise of redemption contained in his story.

In the form of Khandoba – a manifestation particularly favoured by itinerant or pastoral communities in the northern Deccan – Shiva appears mounted on a horse, frequently accompanied by his consort Parvati and sometimes with a second consort of local origin who reinforces links with the community in question. In two of the five representations in the India Museum, he is said to have been accompanied by Durga. Khandoba is worshipped across the caste system, and his adherents include Muslims as well as Hindus.

Shiva appears once in the collection as Kirtimukha, the all-swallowing monster, in a soapstone image from Nepal. The ravaging monster had been summoned up to protect Shiva from a demon, who promptly threw himself on Shiva's mercy; in order that the monster's hunger should be satisfied, he was persuaded by the god to consume his own flesh, and starting with his extremities, Kirtimukha ate away at his entire body until only his face remained. Henceforth, the voracious facemask (or 'head of glory') became a regular image in the adornment of temples and sculptures.

One occurrence is recorded of Shiva Nataraja – Lord of the Dance – but since the image has been written off, it is impossible to know whether it showed the god in his withdrawn yogic state or in the abandoned dance form with which he marks the end of one time-cycle and the beginning of another (this being a major area of responsibility for Shiva).



In one of the five examples in the collection, reference to Shiva is made explicit by the presence of Nandi as the *linga's* supporter. Notwithstanding its phallic reference, the *linga* is to be seen as the abstract expression of creative force and not as an overtly anatomical representation.

Shiva's primary consort is Parvati, whose name appears four times in the collection in representations from Nepal to Tanjore. On occasion, the cataloguers were unsure whether the deity represented was indeed Parvati or Devi, the Great Goddess, or indeed Bhu, the earth goddess – a confusion that reflects the ambivalence encountered in many such representations in which the characters are inextricably linked.

Shiva and Parvati are considered to have had two offspring, Skanda and Ganesha, although their generation was somewhat unconventional. In the case of Skanda, the complexities of his conception led to his being born to the six Krittikas (the constellation known in the West as the Pleiades), with the result that he also inherited their name in the form Karttikeya and is often represented as six-headed in acknowledgement of his parentage. As Skanda, he appears twice in the catalogue (once acknowledged as possibly Vishnu Venkatesvara) and as Karttikeya, six times – in soapstone and wood from Nepal and in marble from Jaipur.

The benign and corpulent figure of the elephant-headed Ganesha is one of the most popular (and easily recognizable) of the Indian deities, reflected in the 22 examples in the collection. The form of his head may suggest that ultimately he is derived from an animal cult absorbed at some point into the Hindu pantheon, but legend has it that it sprang from a misunderstanding with his father which resulted in his beheading: eager to make amends, Shiva ordered a servant to bring him a replacement head from the first being he encountered – which turned out to be an elephant. One of the figures shows Ganesha with Shiva and Parvati, and one with Shiva alone; in one instance he was shown dancing. Ganesha's popularity is not unconnected with the useful ability to clear away obstacles that is credited to him (although he is also capable of erecting them); he is also traditionally a guardian of entrances at temples and elsewhere.

## Vishnu

Vishnu is perhaps the most widely honoured of Hindu gods, at times acknowledged in his primary form – usually four-armed, standing upright and wearing a crown<sup>20</sup> – but is more often represented in one

or other of the many different incarnations in which he has manifested himself on earth from time to time.<sup>21</sup> He is worshipped under other names in different regions: in the south, for example, he is known as Venkatesvara – in which form he appears three times in the collection. As the preserver of stability and harmony, Vishnu's appeal to the largely conservative Indian society is immediately understandable, while the various attributes of his alternative forms allow for a range of other interests to be catered for.

Among the incarnations (*avatars*) of Vishnu, an early position is given to three which are animal-related and concerned with creation myths. As Matsya, the fish incarnation, Vishnu intervened in the primeval flood to save mankind and the texts of the sacred *Vedas*. Four such representations, from Nepal and south India, are represented in the catalogue, together with one in zinc from the collection formed by Wilkins.

In the guise of Kurma the tortoise, Vishnu formed the pivot for the legendary churning of the primeval ocean, a story often retold in Indian painting. One south Indian representation was included in the display, along with another of Wilkins's zinc castings. Today Kurma is not widely venerated beyond a few tribal or forest groups,<sup>22</sup> but his historical importance was clearly greater. In the third of these primary *avatars*, Vishnu appears as Varaha, the boar: sometimes he has a human body, but otherwise may appear to have conventional animal anatomy. Varaha's role in the creation myth was to rescue the earth (sometimes personified as the earth goddess Bhu) from the bottom of the primeval ocean, where it had been imprisoned by a demon; later he cast up the surface of the earth to form the mountains. Two bronze figures were included in the collection: one in stone (from Jaipur) and a zinc casting given by Wilkins.

A fourth *avatara*, part animal and part human, is unconnected with creation mythology. This is the fierce Narasingha (or Narasimha), in which lion-headed form Vishnu wrought revenge on a royal follower of Shiva (or possibly a demon king) who had sought and received as a boon the gift of immortality, safe from violence from either man or animal. In the end he was destroyed by Narasimha, who fitted neither category and who contemptuously threw the devotee over his lap and eviscerated him with his claws. Probably originating in an early animal cult, Narasimha is unusual in continuing to require blood sacrifice from his followers. Six representations of 'Narasingha' appear in the catalogue, one mentioning also the presence of his victim, King Hiran-yakashipu. There is also a zinc casting, deposited by Wilkins.

In his incarnation as the dwarf Vimana, who transforms himself into a giant able to span the universe in three steps (Vishnu Trivikrama), Vishnu is represented once in the collection, quiescently carrying a water pot and an umbrella, and he also appears in the form of Parashurama ('Rama with the Axe') in a bronze figure from south India and as a zinc casting. Parashurama is the first of a series of martial heroes to appear among the deities. He is portrayed brandishing his eponymous axe (*parashu*). With this (according to one legend) he seeks to avenge the death of his Brahmin father in a dispute over a stolen wish-granting cow, which expanded into a struggle conducted through 21 battles to rid the world of all oppression; according to an alternative myth, however, the axe was a reward from Shiva for overcoming all the demons. More broadly, the symbol of the axe may evoke an era when the order of Hindu society was still in its formative state and when placement in the economic and political hierarchy was determined by force of arms rather than philosophical argument.

As the seventh avatar of Vishnu, Rama – also known as Ramachandra – is a less warlike figure, associated with filial and marital constancy. As the main protagonist of the epic *Ramayana* – the source of so much Indian iconography – Rama, having been denied his birthright and unjustly banished to the forest, is engaged for much of the narrative in recovering his beautiful wife Sita, who has been carried off by the evil king Ravana. He bears his lot uncomplainingly and resists the advances of Ravana's sister, earning himself an enviable reputation for virtue and fidelity. Through much of the action he is accompanied by one of his brothers, named Lakshmana – his other brothers being Bharata and Shatrughna – and is greatly assisted by the monkey-headed god Hanuman. Rama frequently appears carrying a bow, but the compilers of the catalogue evidently had difficulty in separating Rama and his brothers on the basis of their iconography. Three figures are identified simply as Rama/Ramachandra (with or without a query), three as Rama or Bharata, one as Rama or Bharata or Lakshmana and one as Rama or Shatrughna (fig. 9.2). Rama and Sita appear together in three instances, and once in the company of Bharata. Two figures show Lakshmana on his own and two are listed as 'Naga nymph or Shatrughna'.

Rama's stalwart companion Hanuman appears over 30 times in the 1880 catalogue (although nine entries are for items formerly in the Royal Asiatic Society's collection which had migrated to the India Museum and which later still came to be incorporated into the V&A). He is regarded as the embodiment of devoted loyalty and steadfastness.



**Fig. 9.2.** Rama (or his brother Shatrughna) in silver, his bow and arrow now lost, his quiver over his shoulder. South India, eighteenth century. H 9.7 cm. Unprovenanced. 657(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Hanuman and his monkey army are a major force for good in the tales of the *Ramayana*.

Although formally the eighth avatar of Vishnu, the popularity of Krishna has been such as to elevate him in the eyes of his followers to an exalted position among the gods. In the course of his evolution, a rich mythology has come to be attached to Krishna, and many of

the episodes with which he is associated are illustrated in figures associated with his cult. Unsurprisingly, he was one of the most frequently represented deities in the India Museum. Part of Krishna's appeal is that, appearing in conventional human form, he is represented at every stage throughout his life. In his earliest form he appears in the arms of Yashoda, his foster mother; 13 times he appears as the child god Bala Krishna, crawling on the ground, mischievously stealing the butter ball with which he is commonly associated and generally living up to his reputation as a prankster; once he is Vata-Patra-Sai, the baby asleep on a banyan leaf. As a young man he appears twice as a pastoral deity playing his magical flute in a type termed Krishna Venugopala, and five times with the milkmaids (*gopis*) with whom he dallied. Twice he appears with his long-term consort Radha, their intense love affair (even though illicit, Radha being both a mortal and already married) forming an enduring theme in epic literature.

The ninth avatar of Vishnu is the Buddha – an example of the ways in which separate creeds may become porous at the edges and absorb elements of each other's beliefs. Perhaps unsurprisingly, none of the Buddha figures present in the original collection were recognized as alluding to Vishnu, but this deficiency was supplied by a casting in zinc supplied by Wilkins.<sup>23</sup>

The tenth (but by no means final) form in which Vishnu was worshipped was as Kalki, the horse-headed god who is thought to refer back to the earliest era of Aryan infiltration into India (a migration perceived as being largely equestrian) but whose incarnation is yet to come, for Kalki heralds the end of the present world order. Five representations of Kalki in wood or in soapstone are listed in the collection as from Nepal and two in bronze from south India – though one of these is identified as Hayagriva, a less exalted horse-headed avatar.

Among the consorts of Vishnu, the most widely represented in the collection is Lakshmi, still popular as the embodiment of prosperity and abundance. She appears half a dozen times on her own, six times with Vishnu (three in the company of Garuda), twice with Vishnu as Narasimha and twice seated in the lap of the god as Narayan. In one instance she appears in the form known as Gaja Lakshmi – seated on a lotus leaf flanked by elephants which bathe her in water from their trunks.

## Devi, the Great Goddess

A variety of goddesses whose assistance is invoked locally to secure an abundance of crops are regarded as forms of the supremely powerful earth goddess known as Devi. She is also strongly associated with rivers, since they are so often the source of fertility on which agricultural communities depend. The India Museum curators were often hard-pressed to know whether it was indeed Devi rather than Durga that was represented in particular figures (both are commonly shown riding on a lion): of the seven possible representations in the collection, only one – in marble, painted and gilt, from Jaipur – is identified unequivocally (fig. 9.3a).

Just as Shiva is identified in aniconic form by the upright *linga*, Devi often takes the form of the female (though equally abstract) analogue, the *yoni*. Of three listed in the collection, two are made from rock crystal and one from smoky quartz.

The Great Goddess may also be manifested in the form of other deities, notably as Durga, credited with restoring equilibrium to the gods by destroying the demon Mahisha, who takes the form of a buffalo. Often she is represented as multi-armed, holding in each hand a weapon provided for her mission by one or other of the gods and riding on her *vahana*. Mahisha frequently appears trampled underfoot and in the process of being dispatched, either as a simple buffalo or emerging in human form from the buffalo's mouth.

Even more combative and terrifying is the manifestation of the Great Goddess in the form of Kali, represented in the India Museum by versions in wood from Nepal, in a crudely cast bronze figure attributed to central India and in ivory (fig. 9.3b) – the latter evidently produced for a Western purchaser. She is typically gaunt in appearance and carries a variety of warlike attributes, though she lacks the garland of human skulls that more often advertise Kali's ferocious character. (She does, however, have the capacity to be creative as well as destructive.) The human sacrifices which she formerly demanded would no doubt have loomed large in the European mind.

In contrast to the warlike Durga, the Great Goddess also appears as Annapurna (literally 'She who is full of food'), a personification of plenty. Commonly she is represented with her attributes of a full rice pot and milk vessel or, as in three of the four figures listed in the India Museum, with a ladle lying across her lap. Blurton characterizes these as typical of the small domestic shrines still common in present-day



**Fig. 9.3.** (a) Durga mounted on a tiger (or lion?) *vahana*; painted and gilt marble. H 22.8 cm. Jaipur. 810(IS); (b) Shrine to Kali, in ivory, within a framework in the form of a neoclassical arch incorporating a Georgian-style fanlight motif, evidently derived from a Western pattern book. H 29 cm. Berhampore. 02469(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Maharashtra, and the unsophisticated renderings of the goddesses catalogued here would be entirely at home in such a setting.

Three representations of Sarasvati are identified in the early catalogues. As the consort of Brahma, she too is a benign goddess, particularly associated with music (she is commonly represented with a *vina* over her shoulder) and with the written word. The latter recommended her particularly to the Jains, among whom the copying and commissioning of sacred texts represented a popular means of gaining merit.

## Jain deities

Less familiar to Western visitors than Hinduism or Buddhism, Jainism nonetheless was the faith of some millions of contemporary Indians: the India Museum played a role in introducing its public to the Jains, although not all visitors found enlightenment there (see above). Many deities are indeed shared between these three major religions: the Jains, originally atheistic, have come to acknowledge (among others) Ganesha, Sarasvati and Lakshmi, while the serpent king Dharana who plays a protective role in some Jain sculptures finds his analogue in Muchalinda, protector of the Buddha.<sup>24</sup> The aim of all Jains is to obtain release from the endless cycle of death and rebirth by gaining merit, rather in the way the Buddhists do but with less accent on contemplation and with greater emphasis on asceticism of a rigorous kind. Jains are notably strict in abhorring violence and following a life without meat or eggs.<sup>25</sup>

At the centre of Jain belief are not gods but the 24 *tirthankaras* (or *jinās*) – born into human bodies but raised to celestial status by lives of asceticism and virtue. The tenets of Jainism have been reiterated at intervals by the appearance of new omniscient *jinās*, of whom there have been 24 in total; the last was Mahavira, who lived in the fifth or sixth century BCE. The whole panoply is summed up in a single altarpiece from southern India (fig. 9.4) showing all 24 *tirthankaras* seated, and with one repeated in a standing position in the centre; supporting deities line the bottom of the shrine and a face mask resembling the ‘head of glory’ crowns the flame-lined apex.

The remaining Jain figures and sculptures in the India Museum collections follow the norm in representing only individual *tirthankaras*. The earliest in the sequence within the collections is a sandstone figure of Chandraprabha, seated in lotus posture (*dhyanasana*), which in Jain



**Fig. 9.4.** Jain shrine of cast bronze, showing the 24 *tirthankaras* seated in meditative posture; under a central arched setting is the standing figure of Parsvanatha, the 23rd *tirthankara*, identified by the serpent rearing up behind him. H 26 cm. From the collection of Colonel Colin Mackenzie. 448(1S). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

art indicates that he is teaching rather than (or as well as) meditating. The figure is so far unique and is certainly unusual in showing the *jina* as multi-headed. The sculpture itself is evidently of no great antiquity, however, for an inscription on the base appears to date it to 1868 (though this has been disputed).

The 16th *tirthankara* Shantinatha makes an appearance as an impressive bronze figure dated by an inscription to 1168 CE; the legend also records that it was made for a community of Jain monks (the Naila Gaccha). Although exceptional, therefore, as an antiquity, there is no indication that it was distinguished in the collection from the bulk of the near-contemporary nineteenth-century pieces. Dressed in a

loincloth, Shantinatha sits on a cushion with inlaid ornament in silver and copper, which also highlight the characteristic *shrivatsa* mark on his chest; he is identified by the presence on the throne base of a minute figure of a deer. An elaborate openwork backplate is modelled with flanking attendants holding flywhisks and (above) celestial musicians and gods riding elephants.<sup>26</sup> Four other sculptures show Parswanatha, the twenty-third (and second-last) *tirthankara*. In the first two he is again seated, the serpent Dharana rearing up behind to protect him with its seven-headed hood. The first of these pieces came to the India Museum from the collection of Colonel Colin Mackenzie, perhaps having been purchased from Mackenzie's widow in 1823; the second, smaller, more stylized and also in black stone, has no provenance information. One (and possibly both) of the other figures also came from Mackenzie: both are larger-scale carvings showing Parswanatha in the more common standing position (*kayotsarga*) adopted by Jain figures. Lengthy periods in this 'body abandonment' posture were regarded as a form of penance: the *jina*'s body is characteristically erect and column-like, his chest slightly expanded, his arms hanging loose and somewhat elongated, his hands enlarged; his nakedness in both instances suggests production by or for the more southerly Digambara sect. In both instances Dharana writhes behind and deploys his protective canopy. The latter figures are unusual in the collection as being of some antiquity, much of the remaining material being near-contemporary with the museum itself; one of them, dated to between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries, bears an inscription recording that it was produced for a shrine in Garsoppa (or Yelburga), Karnataka, by Chakravarti Paloja – a rare record of a sculptor's name.<sup>27</sup> Several other small figures represent currently unidentified *tirthankaras*.

## Buddhist sculptures

Some 40 of the India Museum's Buddha images originated in Burma (plus a number of devotional plaques and figurines of devotees customarily associated with Buddhist shrines). Other sources are comparatively few: five from Nepal (from the Royal Asiatic Society's collection), two from Java and one from Jaipur; two are now identified as Gandharan in style if not in origin, but this recognition is no doubt of recent date. The distribution fails to match even remotely the extent of the practice of Buddhism itself, while the huge over-representation of Burma (like the paucity of material from elsewhere)



Fig. 9.5. Low-relief terracotta votive plaque, gilt, moulded with a figure of the Buddha in *bhumisparsa padmasana mudra*; he wears a crown, tiered and winged. H 12.7 cm. Burma (Myanmar). 413(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

speaks of the accident of collection history rather than any deliberate attempt at comprehensiveness.

The Burmese Buddhas are in bronze, marble, stone and fired clay, all of which may be enhanced by silvering or gilding and with paint; there are also examples in rock crystal and glass. The great majority (where specified) are represented in the position termed *bhumisparsa padmasana mudra* – seated with the feet interlocking in the lap and with one hand touching the earth. This holds true both for the freestanding sculptures (some 15 examples), usually sitting on an integral lotus pedestal, and for the eight low-relief votive plaques in the collection

(fig. 9.5). The common alternative pose – *dhyana mudra*, in which both hands lie palm-upwards in the lap – appears in a single instance. More rarely, the role of the Buddha as a healer is referenced by his holding a myrobolan plant, whose fabled cure-all qualities were much valued.

In Burmese practice the Buddha is shown robed – either in monastic garments or in princely robes; in the latter case he is also crowned. (Naked Buddha figures in the collection – including one in zinc contributed by Wilkins – are likely to belong to the Jain rather than the mainstream Buddhist faith.) There are also among the Burmese figures a number identified as kneeling devotees of the Buddha, presumably having once formed part of a composite installation.

Two Buddha figures are provenanced to Java, one (in marble) to Jaipur and five (all from the collections of the Royal Asiatic Society and carved from shale) to Nepal. Of special interest are 12 casts in zinc of ‘Buddhistic prayer stones’, numbered 1 to 12 and mounted on boards, from the Schlagintweit collection.<sup>28</sup>

## Notes

- 1 *East India Museum*.
- 2 Thomas Herbert, *Some Years Travels in Africa and Asia ...* (1638), quoted in Cohn, ‘The transformation of objects’, 303.
- 3 Birdwood, *Industrial Arts of India*, 125. More sympathetic views, admittedly, were already being expressed elsewhere, although a further 30 years would elapse before the emergence of the India Society, dedicated to the appreciation of the culture of the sub-continent.
- 4 It may be noted that Partha Mitter (‘Imperial collections’, 223) is in error in applying to the India Museum the statement that Hindu sculptures were included on the grounds that they were ‘the idols given up by their former worshippers from a full conviction of the folly and sin of idolatry’: the quotation relates to the museum of the London Missionary Society (Wingfield, ‘Scarcely more than a Christian trophy case’, 113).
- 5 Failure to do so could be costly – witness the Uprising of 1857, precipitated in part by the (unfounded) rumour that the new form of cartridge being issued to sepoy was greased with pig and cow fat.
- 6 Carson, *The East India Company and Religion*, 15–16; MacGregor, *Company Curiosities*, 36, 149–52.
- 7 *East India Museum*. The guide was clearly a freelance exercise, unconnected with the Company itself.
- 8 Wilkins, notably, had published the first translation of the *Bhāgvat-Geētā*; or, *dialogues of Krēṣhṇā and Arjōṇ* (with a foreword by Warren Hastings) in 1785.
- 9 Moor, *The Hindu Pantheon* (London, 1810). The illustrations consulted here are from a later edition produced after Moor’s death from the original plates and ‘edited, with brief descriptive index’: A. P. Moor, *Plates Illustrating the Hindu Pantheon* (London, 1861).
- 10 Shaffer, *Grafted Arts*, 177.
- 11 Wilkins, who was superintendent of the Company’s factory at Malda, is reputed to have been the first Englishman to master Sanskrit: see *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, s.n. Wilkins, Charles.
- 12 Moor, *Plates Illustrating the Hindu Pantheon*, 5–17.

- 13 Some other images in the volume are captioned candidly as having been constructed 'in whimsical combinations from Pictures', so that Wilkins's intervention in the imagery is not out of line with Moor's general approach to his work.
- 14 See Tischbein, *Collection of Engravings*.
- 15 The importance of the later exponents of neoclassical style, notably Henry Fuseli and John Flaxman, is commented on by Holly Shaffer (*Grafted Arts*, 177–219): the latter's use of a neoclassical mode in lecturing on the arts of ancient Egypt, Persia and India, she observes (p. 194), 'collapsed the distance between Britain's new empire and that of Rome'.
- 16 See, most spectacularly, the extensive collection of architectural marbles excavated at Amaravati, but also such pieces as a sandstone standing Buddha of the Gupta period from Sarnath (British Museum, inv. no. 1880.6).
- 17 For example, Moor (*Hindu Pantheon*, 51) refers to a beautiful illustration of Siva, 'taken from a bronze statue, equally beautiful, deposited by me in the museum at the India house'. Later (p. 55) he mentions two statues given to him by the Hon. Jonathan Duncan, Governor of Bombay, which he had deposited in Duncan's name in the museum. Nine other references to material within the museum's collection occur. The volume, which passed through several editions, remained the most authoritative English-language account of Hinduism for the next half-century.
- 18 Blurton, *Hindu Art*. Blurton's work provides the background for a great deal of the following discussion of the objects. For more on the deities represented, see also Elgood, *Hinduism and the Religious Arts*.
- 19 Mitchell, *Hindu Gods and Goddesses*, pls 2–3.
- 20 The attributes commonly held in his hands are a club (*gada*), discus (*chakra*), conch shell (*shankha*) and lotus flower.
- 21 Blurton (*Hindu Art*, 113) observes that adherents of numerous formerly separate cults may have been absorbed into the family of Vaishnavite followers as a result of these successive incarnations.
- 22 Blurton, *Hindu Art*, 122.
- 23 Moor, *Plates Illustrating the Hindu Pantheon*, 12, pl. 71: 'being a Brahminical Buddha we here see long hair braided in a neat knot on the top of the head; and he has not the pendant ears common to the Buddhas of Ava, the Dekkan, and Ceylon'.
- 24 For much on Jainism and its iconography, see Tiwari and Sinha, *Jaina Art and Aesthetics*.
- 25 For more on Jainism, see Pal, *Peaceful Liberators*, 24–37; Dallapiccola, *Dictionary of Hindu Lore*, 99–101.
- 26 Discussed in greater detail in Barnard, 'Jain collections at the V&A'.
- 27 See further John Guy, 'Jina Parsvanatha', in Pal, *Peaceful Liberators*, 186–7.
- 28 The use of zinc here corresponds with the medium favoured by Wilkins for casting religious figures (see above); for the wider use of zinc see Chapter 5. For the Schlagintweit brothers' use of casting as a method of recording human features, see Chapter 10. The brothers' interest in the Buddhism of Tibet is witnessed in a number of painted hangings (seemingly not registered in the India Museum); H. H. Cole (*Catalogue of Indian Art*, 57), however, mentions 'praying flags of Thibet, collected by Schlagintweit from the Goupa Mangnang in Gharî Korsum, Thibet, [which] are painted with curious Chinese-looking representations of Buddha, surrounded by horses and dragons ... exhibited in the India Office Museum'.

## Culture and recreation

Items considered within this category – constructed only for the purposes of the present exercise, although individually well represented in the collection – again added a degree of humanity to the predominantly mercantile mission of the India Museum. Although disparate in nature, they combined to provide insights for the British public into the everyday lives of the Indian population.

### Musical instruments

On the eve of its displacement from East India House, musically minded visitors to the display in the basement storey of the Company's museum in Leadenhall Street would have found themselves presented with a respectable range of Indian and other instruments:<sup>1</sup>

All of them are of the portable kind, and they embrace wind-instruments, such as horns, trumpets, clarions, bamboo flutes; stringed instruments of the banjo sort, some apparently of the nature of the viol, and others which look like a hybrid between the harp and the guitar.

The observer on this occasion might have mentioned in addition the presence of a whole range of percussion instruments, while an extensive series of clay models as well as pictures, sculptures and figurines illustrated their respective modes of use. In its maturity the collection formed one expression of the museum's interest in portraying the cultural richness of Britain's dominion in India, but in the early years





**Fig. 10.1.** Nautch dancers and musicians entertaining a family, gouache on paper. 27.5 × 36 cm. Delhi. 03525(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

of Company rule such taste for musical activity as can be detected was manifested in private rather than corporate initiatives. In this sphere the wives and other female family members of the British officer corps undoubtedly played a major role, although their exclusion from the all-male Asiatic Society of Bengal and similar bodies of later date effectively denied them a formal platform for expression of their interest. As for exposure to Indian music, public celebrations were invariably accompanied by a great deal of it, albeit of a kind whose exuberance and bombast would have won few admirers among the more refined members of the European community; more promising exposure would have come in the form of the nautch (*nāch*, ‘dance’), private song and dance performances by courtesans (fig. 10.1), to which Company personnel became enthusiastically devoted in the period around the turn of the nineteenth century.

The first-ever issue of *Asiatick Researches*, in 1788, had carried a paper by Francis Fowke (Resident at Benares and himself an accomplished performer on the harpsichord), ‘On the viná or Indian lyre’, in which he sought to characterize the instrument, while Sir William Jones – the moving spirit of the society – contributed a more ambitious survey, ‘On the musical modes of the Hindus’. Jones’s text forms a

characteristic display of his breadth of scholarship, and although he continues to be acknowledged as the first European to draw attention to the profusion of Sanskrit literature on music, few of his conclusions have stood the test of time: it has indeed been said that ‘There is nothing in it [Jones’s essay] which is not either wrong or superseded’;<sup>2</sup> so that his continuing high reputation rests on work carried out in other scholarly fields.

A more comprehensive and accessible guide to the instruments themselves appeared in the *Collection of 250 Coloured Etchings Descriptive ... of the Hindoos* published by Balthazar Solvyns in Calcutta in 1799 (although even with subsequent European reissues, Solvyns’s work never reached a very wide audience). Himself something of a financial failure and not especially highly rated as an artist, Solvyns’s work, which includes 36 illustrations of musicians with their respective instruments, remains the most comprehensive European survey from the period in which the India Museum collections began to be accumulated.<sup>3</sup>

Much of the early European writing on Indian music is pervaded by a conviction that it had already fallen a long way from its imagined Golden Age, so that literary interest tended to treat it from an antiquarian point of view rather than as a living art form. The consignment of the instruments collected to a mute existence in the museum cabinet, therefore, seems curiously apposite.

### Stringed instruments

For the most part, instruments received at the museum were classified according to their nearest European equivalents – hence ‘guitars’, ‘harps’, ‘lyres’ and ‘fiddles’ according to the perceived method of playing (perceptions on the part of the curators that were at times mistaken),<sup>4</sup> although occasionally a local name would also be recorded – presumably having accompanied the instrument since the time of its collection – allowing a measure of certainty in identification even when the instrument itself has been lost.

The indifferent quality of many of the instruments falling into nineteenth-century European hands led to widespread misconceptions about their quality as a whole. While admiring the quantity of instruments in the collection, the commentator quoted above had little good to say about their quality: ‘What is remarkable about them all’, he wrote, ‘is the utter ignorance of the principles of acoustics on the part of their makers, and the lavish amount of labour bestowed on their structure

and ornamentation.’ While this dismissal might itself be dismissed as mere colonialist snobbery, it finds support in the otherwise more sympathetic pages of C. R. Day’s *Music and Musical Instruments of Southern India and the Deccan* (1891), where it is asserted that ‘many instruments are badly put together’, their construction being ‘chiefly in the hands of ordinary carpenters, most of whom are totally ignorant of the most elementary principles of music’, and among whom it was common practice that any faults in construction of their instruments should be ‘glossed over by outward ornamentation’.<sup>5</sup> Those more familiar with the intricate European traditions of the construction of violins and cellos might well have been unimpressed by the comparatively weighty Indian counterparts they encountered, often hewn from solid wood and imbued with some resonance by the addition of a goatskin membrane or gourd resonator, whose lacquered ornament could indeed hide a multiplicity of constructional imperfections. Quality certainly varied between instruments designed for a courtly setting and those that did service in village celebrations: it comes as no surprise that the few prices recorded in the slip catalogues show a considerable range – from 2 to 20 rupees. However, the dismissive assessments so prevalent among nineteenth-century writers, which would have been unfortunate if they had been formed merely on the basis of the poorest instruments, have been shown by more recent scholarship all too often to have been based on instruments made expressly for sale to Europeans – not only unplayed but even unplayable, constructed with all the shortcomings mentioned above merely in order to extract a profit from gullible customers. The instruments played by serious Indian musicians, on the other hand, were created by hereditary professional luthiers, were frequently of magnificent construction and were acutely designed to accord with the demands of the acoustic tastes of the time.<sup>6</sup>

Among the plucked instruments from the India Museum collection, those identified as ‘guitars’ form the most numerous category; the majority are from the north, stretching from Dacca to Sind, but with others collected in Bangalore (Bengaluru) and Madras (Chennai). Of five *vinas* recorded in the catalogues, only one survives.<sup>7</sup> Its origin is given as Madras, and its pear-shaped soundbox corresponds most closely with that of the present-day Saraswati *vina*, predominating in south India. In his early paper Fowke noted that in northern varieties of the instrument the sound box is carved from a gourd and not from solid wood. Both forms incorporate a second resonator fashioned from a gourd and attached to the rear of the headpiece. As here, fluted ornament and painting and gilding, together with ivory inlays, are

common. The musician – normally seated but sometimes standing – holds the instrument diagonally across their body, with the upper gourd over the left shoulder; the principal strings (usually four in number)<sup>8</sup> are plucked with a plectrum, while the drones (normally three) are strummed with the little finger. Most forms of *vina* have 24 frets on the fingerboard, applied with wax so that their position (and hence the tuning of the instrument) can be adjusted by the player.

Little can be said of the other *vinas* formerly in the collection, beyond the fact that those from Patna and Dacca would probably have been equipped with two gourds, as mentioned above. A third, unprovenanced example evidently featured a carved dragon's head – probably indicating a south Indian origin.

Three 'guitars' are described as having the form of a peacock, indicating that they belong to the family of instruments known as *taus*, a bowed stringed instrument with moveable frets; one survives in fragmentary form, with a carved bird's head terminal. Despite the degree of elaboration lavished on them – the peacock form often enhanced by the application of feathers – instruments of this kind were said by Day to be 'not much esteemed by any but Nautch musicians',<sup>9</sup> but it would be more accurate to say that their geographical distribution was limited; they were particularly favoured in the Punjab, and to this day they are still revered there. The *taus* is thought to have emerged as a type only in the middle decades of the nineteenth century.<sup>10</sup>

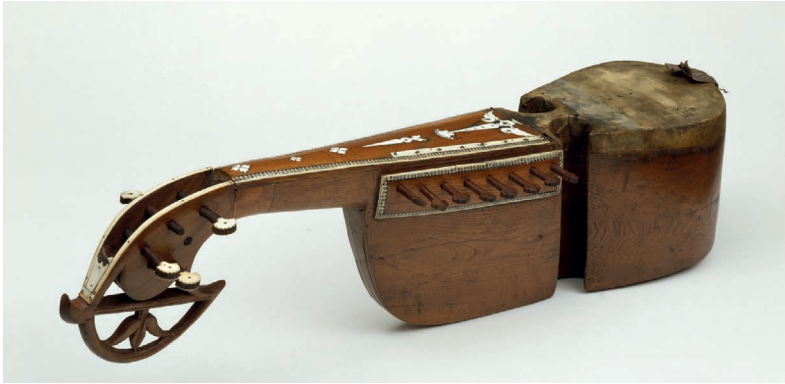
Sitars form a large and diverse family, nowadays the most popular of the plucked instruments, although their popularity seems to have fluctuated over the years. The type is represented by seven entries in the catalogues and by others whose true identity has only subsequently been recognized. Four survive (plus one bridge). One lost example is described as a *vaira sitar*.

Six instruments given the name 'fanpura' no doubt correspond to the present-day *tambura* (or *tanpura*); a single 'thamburu' may be similarly identified. The typically long-necked *tambura* is strummed to provide a continuous harmonic reference chord as an accompaniment to a singer or other instruments, but no melody is played on its strings (which are usually four in number). Solvyns characterizes the 'tumboora' as 'a magnificent instrument, covered with paintings and gilding, ornamented to an excess of luxury', but he completely misunderstands its musical role, castigating the player who 'gives himself up to the pleasing sensations which the vibrations of a single chord produce, and probably would give up even this enjoyment if it required the smallest exertion'.<sup>11</sup>

The long-lived form of the *rabab* lies behind several other instruments in this extended family. Although not recognized by name in the India Museum catalogues, one example of Afghan type has been identified from the collection in more recent research (fig. 10.2a).<sup>12</sup> The deep, vertically sided sound box is here shield-shaped, although a variety of forms exists; the hollowed-out body is closed at the top with a skin membrane (commonly goatskin). The fingerboard, wide at the bottom and tapering towards the head, has no frets; the pegs indicate that it originally had a total of six melody and drone strings, in addition to eight sympathetic strings. The head terminates in an openwork D-shaped bow and there are ivory/bone inlays on the fingerboard, including two birds at a fountain. The type was widely distributed, from Afghanistan and Kashmir to Persia.

The *rabab* originated in the medieval period but was current in India only from the eighteenth century onwards; from the early 1800s it was progressively displaced by a new instrument, the *sarod*. Their close relationship can be seen in one item in the collection, green-lacquered and ornamented with gilt plant motifs (fig. 10.2b), formerly identified as a *sarod*: coming from Benares and said to have been accompanied by a bow, it was grouped by the cataloguers with the ‘fiddles’ and identified by the indigenous name *shourd*. It lacks the metal fingerboard which forms an essential feature of the *sarod*, however, and is now grouped with the previous instrument as a *rabab*.

A further bowed instrument (or family of instruments) is represented by the *sarangi*, characterized as ‘the most important bowed chordophone in North Indian classical music’.<sup>13</sup> Eight examples (variously spelled) are identified in the early catalogues, while a further one has been so classified in more recent years. Their original random inclusion among the ‘guitars’ and the ‘fiddles’ further highlights the uncertainty experienced by the curators as to the playing method of the instruments reaching the museum: several were originally accompanied by bows – the normal method of play today – and in some instances only the bow survives. Like a number of related instruments, as mentioned above, the sound box is hollowed out from solid timber; although there are variations in shape and proportion, most are waisted in the centre and all are covered with a skin membrane forming a sound table, on which rests the bridge.<sup>14</sup> The neck has no frets, and terminates in a hollow head into which are inserted a number of pegs to adjust the tension of the melody strings, which in this instrument are stopped with the musician’s nails. The strings, commonly four in number, originate in a decorative tailpiece at the bottom, pass over



**Fig. 10.2.** Stringed instruments. (a) *Rabab*, unprovenanced. 9242(IS); (b) *Sarod*, Benares. 02020(IS); (c) *Sarangi*, Karachi. 02018(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



the bridge and enter the peg box through a large ‘mouth’, more or less decoratively shaped. A number of sympathetic strings (which today may number almost 40) lie under the playing strings and pass through the bridge at a lower level. The player holds the instrument vertically a *gamba*, and invariably makes use of a bow.<sup>15</sup>

Eleven *sarangis* are identified by name in the early catalogues, to which two have since been added (formerly identified as ‘guitars’); one example from Bengal is said to have the local name *ektara*, though today this is a single-stringed instrument; three have been reclassified as *chikaras* (below). The three *sarangis* that survive form a coherent group conforming to the above description, with the additional feature that each of them has a row of perforated inlays running diagonally across the fingerboard; one of the sympathetic strings passes through each of these string holes to engage with a corresponding tuning peg, inserted from the side of the neck. One example (fig. 10.2c) has two additional perforated mounts on the fingerboard and two more on the head. Their sources stretch from Karachi to Patna, Murshidabad and Dacca, and as far south as Bangalore.

With the rise of interest in ethnomusicology and related historical research in recent years (as manifested, for example, in the exhibition *Gloire des Princes: Louange des Dieux* at the Musée de la Musique in Paris in 2003), a greater degree of refinement has been brought to the classification of early instruments. As a result of research related to that exhibition, three former *sarangis* from the India Museum collection have been reidentified as *chikaras*. Although the term encompasses a worryingly wide range of smaller and rather primitive ‘fiddles’, the instruments here are of a different order. The most elaborate and accomplished of them<sup>16</sup> has four ivory-mounted pegs for the principal strings in the head and 10 pegs for subsidiary strings to the side; ivory fishes are inlaid on the fingerboard and the mouth is outlined with an elaborately flourished arch; the fingerboard and the head are bordered with further decorative ivory strips. The 1880 inventory identifies it as a *sarangi*, but records that its local name (in Mysore) is, or was, *jitta*. Three further entries relate to ‘fiddles and bows’, all from Patna, at least one of which is green-lacquered and painted in the manner of many of the most treasured instruments.

Also from Patna is another ‘fiddle’, identified more specifically as a *sarinda* – another close relative of the *sarangi*. This is distinguished by a short neck without frets and with a heart-shaped belly deeply waisted in the middle: the lower part, covered with a skin sound table, acts as a resonating chamber, while the wider upper chamber



is open in front and acts as a form of amplifier.<sup>17</sup> It appears in many varieties from Persia to north-eastern India; the Bengali variety, at least, is characterized as having four strings.<sup>18</sup> Day was of the opinion that neither the *sarangi* nor the *sarinda* was greatly favoured by classical musicians, both being considered lower-class instruments,<sup>19</sup> but this was not the case. According to Katherine Schofield, the *sarangi* was in fact the most important accompanying instrument for classical vocal music; it did not have a solo tradition before the twentieth century and was associated with lower-status hereditary professionals who accompanied courtesans, but nonetheless it was highly regarded in an accompanying role.<sup>20</sup>

Like the *ektara* mentioned above, the *tumbi* (*tumbou*, *tumbow*, *thumboor*) was a single-stringed instrument, represented in the catalogue by three examples; in one instance, only the bridge survives today. Three others described simply as ‘fiddles’ each have one tuning peg only and hence would appear to belong to this single-stringed category. Other local names registered include a *tharau*, evidently a small, painted instrument from Nepal, a *sarbutle* from Madras and a ‘vendy’ from Bangalore:<sup>21</sup> the identity of these remains obscure.

Also to be mentioned here are a few instruments from Burma rather than India. These include two ‘fiddles’, identified respectively by their Burmese names *nh yng* and *ta yoa*, both painted red and blue and gilt; the head of the latter is in the form of a peacock, indicating that it was used in a courtly setting (the peacock being the exclusive emblem of the Konbaung dynasty, 1752–1885). A third entry for a Burmese ‘fiddle ... in the form of an alligator’ gives its name as *mee-gyoung*, confirming that it belongs with the harps rather than the violin family.

Six further Burmese instruments appear in the catalogues, all of a type variously termed harps or zithers, three of which survive. Two of these are also in the form of a crocodile, one painted with red lacquer and gilt and the other painted black; both are correctly identified by their Burmese name (now conventionally rendered as *migyaung*), so that their identity is beyond doubt. One further item ‘in the shape of a crocodile’ doubtless belongs with them.

Three other Burmese ‘harps’ identified with the name *pa-ma* (now *saung-gauk*) had boat-shaped resonators; one survivor shows that they were differently constructed from the previous group, the upper surface having a skin covering from which 13 strings ascend obliquely to join the upswept prow, where they are anchored with red-tasselled tuning cords.<sup>22</sup>

A 'guitar' with 'ends covered with snake skin' came from the Straits Settlements and was presented to the museum by Captain Alexander Cooke; its more precise identity is difficult to establish.

The latter is the only stringed instrument accompanied by the name of a donor. Many of the others are marked in the register as 'acquired '55' or 'received 1867', almost certainly relating to the *Expositions Universelles* held in Paris in each of those years, at which the Company was a major exhibitor (and purchaser). Several of the latter are priced in rupees (from Rs 4 to 7), suggesting that the Company had bought them in India specifically for display in Paris before placing them in the museum. Both groups evidently belong to the period when the Company was seeking to expand its collections systematically and not relying on the random approaches of donors, indicating a specific commitment to the representation of the arts of India in general.

### Wind instruments

In a country so much given to musical spectacle, it is unsurprising that prominence was given by contributors to the collection to the trumpets and clarions that heralded every major event. Witnessing the progress of the 'Greate Mogoll' Shah Jahan and his court on their way to celebrate the festival of Eid al-Adha in 1632, the attention of the English traveller Peter Mundy was caught by the accompanying 'Trumpetts [*karanā*] of att least 8 foote longe and 1½ broad att the [pummel] or end, with which they make a base [bass], hoarse hollow sound, neither rising nor fallinge'.<sup>23</sup> Apart from the sheer size of some of them, there was perhaps less opportunity for the display of technical skills in these instruments, although they might still be ornamented with paint and decked with ribbons and tassels. Although none of these instruments is capable of much in the way of modulation, being used to produce impressive blasts rather than melodies, there is nonetheless a considerable hierarchy in their use, some restricted to certain privileged castes and others limited to the lower echelons of society.

There are 20 entries for trumpets in the catalogues, of which just over half can be identified today, seven of them from Madras (plus one classed as a horn) and five from Nepal – presumably reflecting the sphere of operation of particular collectors (none of whose names are recorded) rather than any more meaningful discriminating factor. That identified by the name *ekkala* survives: it is straight, with a vase-shaped bell. One is identified as a horn and given the local name *tuttari*: today the term is reserved for C-shaped trumpets, but this example is straight,



**Fig. 10.3.** Wind instruments. (a) Trumpet, L 61 cm. Nepal. 02121(IS); (b) 'Thigh bone horns'. Darjeeling. 02150(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

expanding in diameter before forming a constriction in advance of the flaring bell, so that it may be grouped more appropriately with the trumpets;<sup>24</sup> another is also straight, with a flanged, conical bell. The name *vanga* is applied to an instrument shaped like an over-sized bugle (though confusingly Bell refers to it as a *tuturi*). One is recurved in an S-shape (fig. 10.3a), poetically described by some as a ‘swan’s neck shape’,<sup>25</sup> rather than forming a continuous curve; it has a large, flaring bell. All of these are composite instruments, those with curving sections in particular being repeatedly jointed, with enlarged knobs masking the joints. None has any mechanical means of varying the note played (for example finger holes or valves), which was achieved (as in European unvalved trumpets and horns) by modulating the breath.

The *kombu* listed (now lost)<sup>26</sup> is identified as a southern term for the type of curving horn mentioned above, ‘used throughout India for signals, watch setting, processions and the like’ – at weddings, funerals and ceremonial occasions.<sup>27</sup>

The term ‘clarion’ is applied to over 20 instruments in the catalogues, of which 15 survive. The term seems to have lost all precision today: it has no entry whatsoever in the *Grove Dictionary of Music*, and general opinion takes it to apply to a high-register trumpet, whereas those listed here with any degree of detail are described as of wood (apart from one unprovenanced example of white metal) and incorporate reeds. Some have fittings of brass or bone (the flaring bell on these instruments being frequently of brass or other metal); a few have textiles attached – not functional but appropriately decorative for festive occasions. One example from Madras has the local name *nagasuram*, evidently the present-day *nadaswaram* or *nagaswaram* – a conical double-reed pipe more noted for volume than for nuance, although equipped with a full complement of finger holes.<sup>28</sup> The southern Indian *nadaswaram* (those listed in the catalogues are from Madras, Bangalore and Coimbatore) finds its equivalent in the north in the *surnai* (*shehnai*), one of which is listed from Bengal; a variant of the latter is represented by a single *surna* (*sorna*, *zurna*)<sup>29</sup> from Madras, an instrument whose orchestral lineage can be traced at least as far as the court of Akbar.<sup>30</sup> The whole family is distributed as far west as Persia and eastward to the Malay peninsula. Other local Indian names (*mukhaninai*, *papaninapam-magadi*, *sonal*) remain unidentified. Two from Burma are given the name *nai-gyee*.

While the curators seem to have been consistent in their application of the term ‘clarion’ to these double-reeded (mostly) wooden instruments, two distinct types evidently have been subsumed in this

term. In addition to those discussed above, there are references to an instrument termed locally *ottu* (with variant sub-types), of which four examples come from Patna. Although it is likewise double-reeded and generally made of wood, the *ottu* has no finger holes for melody (although it does have some smaller holes that can be selectively stopped with wax and used to modify its pitch). Its function is to provide a drone accompaniment for other players.

Over a dozen flutes are listed, mostly of bamboo but with one of turned wood and one of white metal. Although the majority probably come from the sub-continent, there is one outlier from Zanskar in the present-day Indian union territory of Ladakh. The only local name recorded in the catalogue, *banslee* (*bansli*, *bansuri*), is a general term for a flute, carrying no implications regarding form or construction. Four pipes are identified as Burmese *shanye*, a term not identified elsewhere.

The remaining wind instruments listed include ‘Pandean pipes’, bagpipes from Mysore, bamboo whistles and ‘thigh bone horns’, some from Mysore and with two examples surviving from Darjeeling (fig. 10.3b).

## Percussion instruments

Two Burmese composite instruments represent the most complex examples of this group: one model representation, comprising 17 small drums with nine conical brass cymbals attached to a frame, is dated typologically to the Konbaung dynasty (1752–1885) – and necessarily before 1879. The other (written off), with a carved, painted and gilded wooden frame, was evidently similar, having 14 brass cymbals; it no longer survives.

The designation ‘tom-tom’, applied to several drums in the catalogue, is of little help in identifying them: while the primary definition given in the *Oxford English Dictionary* is ‘A native E. Indian drum’, the entry adds that the term was ‘extended also to the drums of barbarous peoples generally’. Examples in wood and metal (fig. 10.4a) are recorded in the catalogue from Patna, Benares, Murshidabad and Madras.

Alternative names associated with some tom-toms in the collection are more specific: *pambe*, a double-headed wooden drum still in use in folk music;<sup>31</sup> and *doogdogee* (*dugdugi*), a small double-ended, cord-tensioned drum held centrally and contra-rotated swiftly so that two loose ends of the cord, knotted or weighted at the ends, strike each



**Fig. 10.4.** (a) Cylindrical brass drum with a head at each end and with cords intact; moulded figure of Nandi applied to the waist. W 36 cm. Madras. 02008(IS); (b) Drum (*bayan*), glazed ceramic body. D 21 cm. Unprovenanced. 02007(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

membrane in turn in rapid succession. Also double-sided, but shallower and more bell-shaped, is the *damaru* (*damru*).

One example is listed of a *bayan*, the *tabla* player's larger, left-hand drum (fig. 10.4b): provenanced to northern India, it has a body of

glazed pottery<sup>32</sup> – today it would normally be of metal. The *dholuk* (*dholak*) of wood from Chittagong would have been a cylindrical barrel drum. The form of the *nadek* as catalogued is unusual, and no parallel has been found for the *purzemuahs* from Bengal, evidently made of cane and covered with textile.

Two drums from Burma are again dated to the Konbaung dynasty, made c. 1862, and the type is designated *pa-ma*: it is a double-headed barrel-shaped instrument of wood and animal skin, decorated with strips of animal skin and textile. A wide-headed drum, now called *osee*, is associated with a red-lacquered wooden pedestal – evidently for storage or display, since the drum itself is of a type held under the arm and played with the hand.

## Education and schooling

After a lengthy period in which it largely avoided involvement in the education of its Indian subjects, the Company found itself compelled at the renewal of its charter in 1833 to accept its responsibilities. The charter of 1813 had earlier ended the exclusion of missionaries from British India (a policy imposed hitherto on the basis of maintaining religious neutrality); as a result, the mission schools that began to proliferate would play a large part in the spread of a specifically Western model of education, although there were many dissenters in the administration who doubted whether this was the most desirable course to follow. Proponents of the evangelical school (among whom Charles Grant was particularly prominent) believed in the desirability of imposing a regime that would pay little attention to Indian culture and would in effect substitute Western values for those of the native population: their aim was famously (or infamously) characterized as the production of a class of citizens who would be 'Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect'.<sup>33</sup> Against this view were many (comparatively speaking) more enlightened officials in India itself, dating back to the early example of Warren Hastings and later Governor-General Lord Minto, who favoured the introduction of Western schooling while maintaining Indian cultural traditions; this group was further divided between those who envisaged teaching as being carried out in the scholarly classical languages of India and those who maintained that only by adopting modern languages could any significant progress be made in reaching the huge mass of the people. (There were indeed some who



thought that rather than aiming at mass education, resources should be focused in the first instance on creating a trained cadre who would in turn disseminate the benefits of education to the wider populace). Only from the mid-century did a generally agreed programme emerge; native Indian teachers began to predominate, and a new generation of recruits conversant with European conventions began to present themselves for employment in the Company's various agencies.

The 'normal schools', which contributed several of the exhibits listed below, were effectively teacher training facilities, where promising pupils received training over a two-year period that would qualify them to teach in primary schools or, by spending an extra year, in the lower echelons of secondary schools. Some of these were administered by central government and some by regional authorities, though not all were government-run: the earliest such school was established in the Danish colony of Tranquebar in 1716, but it was only in the mid-nineteenth century that they began to become widespread. Frequently, pupils were supported by bursaries in return for a commitment to teach for a specified number of years thereafter.

Among the items listed in the 1880 catalogue, textbooks are notably absent, a result, no doubt, of the partition that had earlier taken place between the contents of the museum and those of the library. As mentioned earlier, shared responsibility for both collections had come to an end with the death of Charles Wilkins, and their fortunes had diverged further with the formal integration of the library into the India Office and the peripatetic history of the museum before it ceased to exist as a separate entity at the end of 1879. Up to that point, some shared interest had been maintained: in 1856 nearly 700 'Books, printed and manuscript' were received in London in the wake of the international exhibition in Paris, annotated as 'transferred from Dr Royle to the Library',<sup>34</sup> while Forbes Watson's *Classified and Descriptive Catalogue of the Indian Department* at the Vienna Exhibition in 1873<sup>35</sup> records a substantial contribution in terms of books and manuscripts along with the museum's exhibits. To a large extent, however, by the time of the transfer of the collections to South Kensington, most such material would have been absorbed into the India Office Library.

Within the collections, aids to teaching basic literacy predominate. Over a dozen writing tablets (several of painted wood) are listed, a number of them retaining samples of writing (some specifically 'Hindu'); one is inscribed with consonants. The type is shown in the background of [fig. 10.5](#). Names applied to them include *mistrar*



**Fig. 10.5.** *Punishments in Indian Schools*, gouache on paper; one of a series of illustrations on this theme. Apprehensive children watch one of their number about to be caned while suspended by his hands; their writing tablets are scattered on the ground. 26 × 30 cm. Unprovenanced. 08147(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

and *patti* (children with learning difficulties were said to be made to observe *patti puja*, invoking aid with their writing). In a European context such tablets would have been inlaid with wax, which could be repeatedly written on and smoothed flat; in India, however, a different medium was used. Nurullah and Naik mention a tablet which they name *hulligi*: ‘a common oblong board, about a foot in width and three feet in length; this board, when planed smooth has only to be smeared with a little rice and pulverized charcoal, and it is then fit for use.’<sup>36</sup> Another form represented is a tablet from the Central Provinces described as a sand-board – a variant form in which the student wrote in a bed of fine powdery sand that had been marked out in lines. Among the material selected by Forbes Watson for display in the Vienna Exhibition were ‘Wooden boards, plain, with glass shell for smoothing. These are the usual boards found in all schools from Ceylon to Peshawur; but in mercantile schools the boys write on brass plates with chalk.’ A further

type of board had the letters carved into its surface, which children would trace as an introduction to the alphabet. Others are pre-printed with 'Hindu inscriptions', vowels, consonants or cut-out figures: these sound more like the 'horn books' with which European children first encountered their alphabets in the early modern period.

In village schools, perhaps held in the shade of a tree, children would be introduced to their letters by writing them with their finger in the earth; a 'wooden pen for writing on the ground' may well have served the teacher in such a school. The next stage would see them graduate to a sheet of paper and a reed pen: there are listed several parcels of reed pens, 13 ink pots, some 'fragments of country ink' and a pounce box with which to dry it. The Day Books of the museum record the arrival of an interesting variety of reed pens, cut according to the requirements of particular scripts:<sup>37</sup>

Writing Reeds & Pens	
To Calcutta per Rose, uncut	1596
D° cut for Persian	250
D° for Hindovi	125
D° for Bengali	125
By Haileybury Coll: for M <sup>r</sup> Hamilton cut for Nagari 50 / for Beng: 100 / uncut 500 / for Pers: 180 / Nagari 50/	350
By Ditto for M <sup>r</sup> Stewart uncut 500 / for Pers: 100 / Nagari 50 /	650
By M <sup>r</sup> Abingdon for Croydon, uncut 500 / Pers: 100 / Nagari 25 /	625
To Calcutta Coll: per Ocean / Cut Pens 600 / Reeds	500
To Calcutta Coll: per Europe / Cut pens 1000 / reeds	4800
By M <sup>r</sup> Lewis (Dr W's nephew) reeds	6
By M <sup>r</sup> Black for sale Pens. Pens [sic]	100
By Moonshee	[?]

Two blackboards and a slate are also included. A dozen examples of writing (some in Hindi) were contributed – presumably on paper – by five successive classes or grades from a single school at Perwa in Oudh; two samples of 'ornamental writing' were also included. Class 1 from a school at Suffeepore, also in Oudh, contributed a 'grammatical tree'. Copy slips, designed to improve penmanship in southern schools, are registered in Tamil and in Telugu.<sup>38</sup>

Numbers of book rests are included among the educational equipment, seemingly used as supports for texts in the absence of desks

for pupils; two, from the Punjab and Oudh, are named *rhel*. Two carved examples (one of rosewood) speak of a more sophisticated milieu.

Non-European literary tradition survived in the use of palm leaves in lieu of paper – trimmed into standard-sized rectangles and threaded together through two or three holes to form books or volumes within protective wooden covers, opened flat in horizontal format when in use. The characters here were generally inscribed into the surface of the palm with an iron stylus, but not invariably so: an entry in the catalogue of the Calcutta International Exhibition of 1883–4 (II, 499) includes under ‘Handwriting in the various languages taught in Bengal schools’:

Writing on palm-leaves. Three sets of specimens. Writing done with ink. The bamboo pen, the palm-leaf ring in which the written leaves are kept by the scholar, the cloth with which the leaf is cleaned for fresh writing, and the grass mat or *dharpat* on which the scholar sits are also shewn. This is done in the ‘palm-leaf class’, the lowest class in a pathsala [primary school].

One entry in the 1880 catalogue offers a glimpse of the standard set of equipment for a more advanced schoolboy:

Satchel, wood, used by Hindu boys of the better class, containing:  
Case for style [i.e. stylus]  
Steel instrument for boring holes  
Knife and iron style in ivory handle  
Palm leaf manuscript, Tamil grammar  
Palm leaf manuscript, Telegu poetry

Other entries loosely grouped together in the catalogue seemingly reflect the former presence of a coherent educational display; they include half a dozen bundles of palm leaves and palmyra leaves with writing on them – perhaps exercises of some sort – as well as several books formed of the same materials, some accompanied by iron styli. One such book, presented to the museum by the Church Missionary Society, is identified as in Tamil; another contains ‘portions of scriptures’. One is a book of ‘shlokas or couplets’ and another of ‘Ganapti Stotra’ – both being mantra-like poetic forms, *shlokas* secular and *stotras* invoking divine favour (here from Ganesha). Another palm leaf contains an obituary notice.

One of the paper specimens from Perwa School (listed individually and giving the impression of having formed another coherent display)

showed arithmetical working and another a 'specimen of Euclid'. The geometry curriculum is represented too by a number of wooden bodies – semi-circles (one from the Government School, Oonae) and a cone from Benares – as well as a lacquered ruler from Sind and a pair of pen compasses.

Geography teaching can be read into the dozen terrestrial globes listed in the catalogue, some of which (for example, one from the Normal School, Meerut) certainly came from a scholarly setting, although others (for example, one 'made from a coca nut', presented by the Revd J. Lang) were perhaps included as curiosities.<sup>39</sup> A 'slate with dial and compass' belongs with this material; several maps and drawings were contributed by the Normal School, Madras, and a map of India by Sukkur Normal School. Specimens of drawings came from Lucknow School and a plan of a village from Suffeepore School. A 'Brahminical map of the world, on linen' from Bikaner is also included.

A number of instruments for astronomical observation are grouped together with the educational items and may have had a related role, perhaps concerning the teaching of Hindu astrology. Two brass sundials are listed, a celestial globe of brass and three armillary spheres, though these may be of European origin; an astrolabe inscribed with Cufic characters is described as Turkish.<sup>40</sup> Certainly of Indian manufacture are 'a brass instrument for determining the altitude of heavenly bodies';<sup>41</sup> a *dhruba yantra*;<sup>42</sup> and an unidentified 'astronomical instrument of brass, on tripod stand', from Oudh. These may seem doubtful candidates for inclusion among the educational equipment, but it may be noted that not only was exactly this kind of material included by Forbes Watson among the 'means of instruction' for national schools in the catalogue he drew up for the Vienna Exhibition, but the instruments listed there were contributed by 'Head master of the Normal School, Lucknow'.

## Board games, dice and card games

Representing the recreational dimensions of Indian life within the collection are several tables with chequerboard tops, as well as a number of folding gaming boards – both commonly with the chequers formed of inlay in coloured hardstones, ivory or woods, as appropriate – clearly designed for chess and other board games; some of the boards, for example, are laid out also for backgammon. A sandalwood board from Madras is identified as for draughts. Both tables and boards may be of marble, inlaid with hardstones in contrasting colours, or in wood –



**Fig. 10.6.** ‘Magic box for native games’ – a compendium gaming set of rosewood inlaid with ivory and with brass bindings; three tiers of boards fold out for various games; the drawer below contains a number of chess pieces and playing men for other games. 36 × 36 × 17.5 cm. Made for Maharaja Krishnaraja Wadiyar II of Mysore; exhibited at the Paris *Exposition Universelle* in 1867 and acquired thereafter for the India Museum. 06409(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

sandalwood and satinwood are both registered in the catalogue – with the chequers formed of ivory or timber inlays or outlined in paint.

A ‘Magic box for native games’ (fig. 10.6) is exceptional for several reasons. It originated at the court of the Maharaja Krishnaraja Wadiyar III (1794–1868) of Mysore, who came to the throne at the age of five and remained a skilful and inventive player of games throughout his life: he wrote extensively on the subject and developed variant forms of several games, including chess. The uppermost board here, for example, is configured for four-sided chess, but the box unfolds to provide four playing surfaces laid out for a total of 11 games, with appropriate playing pieces stored in the drawers below. The box was acquired by the museum from the *Exposition Universelle* of 1867 – perhaps having been sent there by Wadiyar himself.<sup>43</sup>

Chess is indeed thought to have originated in India by the sixth century CE at the latest, emerging from a wider family of such games, and to have made its way over the next 500 years or so to Europe via Persia and the Muslim world. In the form in which it became widely



**Fig. 10.7.** Chess pieces (Indian style) of ivory, coloured and gilt, in the form of elephants and camels. Acquired 1867. Jodhpur. 02443-5(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

established, the two sides in the Indian game are composed of opposing forces comprising infantry, cavalry, elephants and chariots, with the principal pieces identified as the raja, minister, war elephant, horse and chariot, supported by foot soldiers (fig. 10.7).<sup>44</sup> A number of pieces within the drawer of the compendium mentioned above conform to this type, as do two extensively surviving sets, one with 16 men stained green and gilt, the other with 11 men stained red and gilt. In addition there are two elephants stained red and gilt, one with a howdah and the other with a rider, and two camels – a whimsical variant – with riders, both red and gilt.

Some of the playing men are represented in entirely abstract forms, lathe-turned, painted and lacquered to distinguish one side from the other. These may have been made specifically for the Muslim market.

The pieces above are easily distinguished from those clearly made for European customers, with their conventionalized king, queen, bishop, knight and castle, together with supporting pawns, although there do exist some hybrid sets: one set from Berhampore, originally associated with a chess table, is thought to have been made for a European, although the castles are here represented as Hindu and Muslim forms, the bishops are replaced by a mullah and a pandit and so on. Fully European sets are lathe-turned in ivory with minutely carved details, some stained red or green as appropriate.





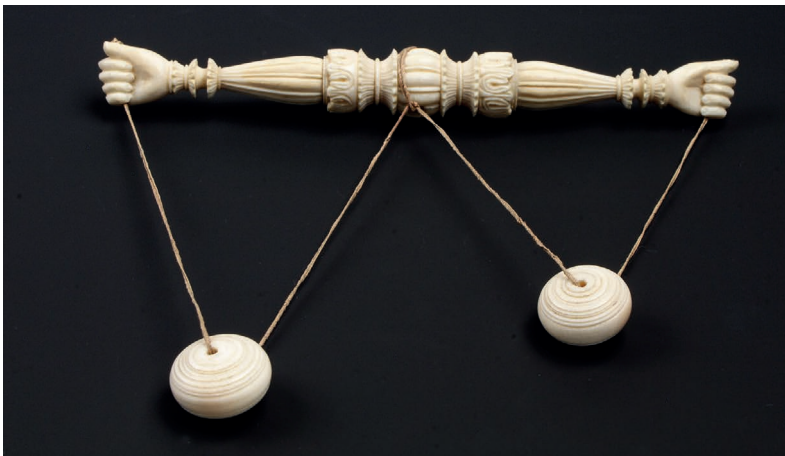
Fig. 10.8. (a) Textile gaming board for *pachisi*; one of an original group of 'Crosses, patchwork, seven ... for native games'. Madras. 06219(IS); (b) Playing men for *pachisi*, ivory, stained red, green and yellow, with floral decoration. Unprovenanced. 02503-5(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

The game of *pachisi* ('twenty-five'), more commonly known among present-day adherents as *chaupat*, is also of Indian origin but did not travel so widely (although variants exist in the West, with ludo bearing a close resemblance). The earliest secure reference to it seems to be from the court of Akbar, where an entire courtyard or a garden might be laid out for the game with the playing pieces represented by slaves. At a more conventional scale, the 'board' is very often of embroidered textile rather than timber; cruciform in outline and with a square reserve at the centre, the arms are usually divided into eight rows of three squares each; certain squares (here marked with star motifs) are more propitious than the others. Controlled by a throw of the dice (usually oblong – see below), the players – men or women – try to move all their counters (whether in the form of cowrie shells,<sup>45</sup> seeds or custom-made) around the perimeter of each arm and home to safety ahead of their rivals. Several 'boards' are represented in the collection – all in textile (fig. 10.8a), and mostly collected as specimens of embroidery rather than for their function – but there are also playing men from several sets to indicate an interest in the game itself; these are either in ivory or in wood, domed or conical in shape and mostly painted with floral motifs (fig. 10.8b).

Dice boxes are present, intended for games of chance rather than skill: the range of these is referenced by the compendium of games described above, which has provision for fox and geese, cribbage and a variety of other games. Several of the folding games boards in the collection have one side set out for backgammon. Ivory is the most commonly encountered material, although one entry refers to horn and two dice boxes are in painted wood with incised ornament. Dice are represented by several examples that are parallelepiped (fig. 10.9a) – oblong or stick dice, *pasa* – from Berhampore and Lahore, the latter acquired (along with some wooden chess pieces) in 1857, perhaps from the *Exposition Universelle* of that year. Such dice were the normal accompaniment of race games such as *pachisi*.<sup>46</sup>

Other games and puzzles represented in the collection include four of ivory (fig. 10.9b), all from Sind – one 'square, carved and perforated', one rectangular with carved sides, one 'with rings and pegs' and two 'toy boxes with snakes' of painted wood, from Bangalore, and a 'magnetic toy' and a puzzle lock presented by the Raja of Nabah.

*Ganjifa*, the most popular of Indian card games, is represented by several sets. The cards, generally round but occasionally rectangular, are of wood or pasteboard, hand-painted with a plain background colour and with their distinguishing characteristics, and lacquered



**Fig. 10.9.** (a) Parallelepiped (oblong) dice, ivory, incised and inlaid with pigment. L 8.1 cm. Unprovenanced. 08237(IS); (b) Puzzle 'in the form of arms and hands, with two balls attached'. Sind. 02437(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

for their protection; they are generally stored in purpose-made boxes, often with a sliding lid. There are many variants of the game, involving a number of suits (between 4 and 10) and arranged in sets of generally up to 120 cards. Those represented in the collection (fig. 10.10) include a Mughal variant (favoured in Orissa, for example) with 96 cards in 8 suits, and *dashavatara ganjifa*, played by 3 persons with 120 cards in



Fig. 10.10. *Dashavatara ganjifa* set (housed in a lacquered and gilt box with sliding lid); four cards from a set of 120; pasteboard, painted, gilt and lacquered. D 11.2 cm. Sawunt Waree. 02360(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



10 suits.<sup>47</sup> Other variants not in the collection include one developed in Mysore in the mid-nineteenth century under the dedicated gamer Krishnaraja Wadiyar III, which involved as many as 360 cards. For all of these at least three players are required; participants may play in pairs, with the objective of gaining as many cards as possible by the taking of tricks, with or without trumps, depending on the complexity of the particular variant being played.

## Notes

- 1 'A visit to the East India Museum', *The Leisure Hour* 7 (1858), 470.
- 2 Harold S. Powers, quoted in Bor, 'Rise of ethno-musicology', 55.
- 3 Solvyns repeatedly stresses, however, that his interests lie exclusively with the Hindus and exclude anything to do with Muslim culture, so that his coverage is necessarily partial.
- 4 Something of their range may be seen in a compendious engraved illustration from Baden Powell's *Hand-Book of the Manufactures and Arts of the Punjab* of 1872, facing p. 272.
- 5 Day, *Musical Instruments of South India*, 101. For the most part, musicians too came from lower-caste families.
- 6 This observation was kindly provided by Dr Katherine Schofield (personal communication, 13.05.2022) who, as an illustration of the true degree of sophistication prevalent among instrument makers, cites the Urdu treatise of Sadiq Ali Khan, *Sarmaya-I Ishrat* (1869), which provides evidence for the techniques and tools in use by luthiers as well as their engagement with the accomplishments of contemporary musicianship.
- 7 02061(IS), from Madras.
- 8 It seems likely that the ancestors of many of today's metal-stringed instruments would have had strings of gut or of spun silk or cotton (or some combination of these). Such are the difficulties of reaching a decision on individual instruments (in which strings may in any case have been replaced innumerable times before their arrival at the museum) that no account is taken here of any strings that may survive. It may be noted that certain instruments were particularly associated with (or were prohibited to) certain castes: all instruments with gut strings, or with a skin sound table, would have been shunned by Brahmins.
- 9 Day, *Musical Instruments of South India*, pl. iv. Baden Powell (*Handbook of Manufactures*, 275), on the other hand, acknowledged that he had heard the instrument played 'with considerable skill' with a bow 'fitted with a number of black horse hairs, and stiffened with rosin (*biroza*): the hairs of the bow are not arranged flat as in a European violin bow, but in a bunch, with a piece of wood at one end, which can be adjusted to tighten the hairs'.
- 10 Miner, *Sitar and Sarod*, 57.
- 11 Solvyns, *Collection of Etchings*, pl. xlvii.
- 12 Day, *Musical Instruments of South India*, pl. vii/vii; Bor and Brugière, *Gloire des princes*, cat. 132.
- 13 Sorrell, 'Sāraṅgi'.
- 14 Surveying such instruments from a wide geographical range, Sorrell ('Sāraṅgi') characterizes them as having at least two and as many as four bridges: the most essential are the principal bridge, placed on a strap across the sound table, and a second lying at the upper end of the neck.
- 15 These general characteristics are taken from Bor, 'Voice of the sarangi'.
- 16 02118(IS), received in 1867, perhaps from the Paris *Exposition Universelle*.
- 17 Bor, 'Voice of the sarangi', 13; Baily and Dick, 'Sārindā'.
- 18 Bor, 'Voice of the sarangi', 13.
- 19 Day, *Musical Instruments of South India*, 1891, pl. v.
- 20 Dr Katherine Schofield (personal communication, 13.05.2022).

- 21 02041(IS) and 05185(IS) respectively.
- 22 Both the boat-shaped and crocodile-shaped forms are discussed by Ralph Isaacs ('Burma', 338–40), who also reproduces a near contemporary illustration from *The Harmonicon*, 26 January 1826.
- 23 Mundy, *Travels of Peter Mundy*, 199.
- 24 Day, *Musical Instruments of South India*, pl. 17, calls it a *kurna*, whose use is restricted to the most solemn occasions, often by priests and Brahmins.
- 25 Greig, 'Musical instruments of Akbar's court', 161.
- 26 02063 (IS).
- 27 Day, *Musical Instruments of South India*, pl. xvii.
- 28 See, for example, a double-reeded metal *nagasara* in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (89.4.2671) with seven finger holes.
- 29 02074 (IS): clarion (*surna*) from Madras.
- 30 Greig, 'Musical instruments of Akbar's court', 159.
- 31 Both of these – from Madras – were acquired for (or from) the Vienna Exhibition of 1873.
- 32 Another drum was mistakenly given this number in Bor and Brugière, *Gloire des princes*, cat. 101.
- 33 For the picture summarized here, see Nurullah and Naik, *History of Education in India*.
- 34 Day Books, July/August 1856.
- 35 Forbes Watson, *Vienna Universal Exhibition*, 224–9.
- 36 Nurullah and Naik, *History of Education in India*, 8.
- 37 Day Books, 11 July 1812, with inserts from 22 July and 9 September 1812, 11 August and 12 September 1815, 7 August 1816. Similar entries appear on 14 July 1836, when '200 Wooden pens for writing Nagari' are also included, as well as 'Persian writing reeds'. The museum and library evidently acted as a clearing house for supplies destined for the Company's colleges at Haileybury (for civil cadets), Addiscombe, Croydon (for military cadets) and the College of Fort William at Calcutta (for Writers and so on already in post). Datta ('India Office Library', 104) records that from 1805, Charles Wilkins was also 'Visitor for Oriental Literature' at Haileybury.
- 38 Some of these handwriting exercises could relate to girls' schools, some of which contributed handwriting samples to the Vienna Exhibition, as catalogued by Forbes Watson (for example, 'specimens of handwriting from memory and dictation, translation and composition by boys and girls of aided schools in the Dacca district'). Otherwise, girls' schools are registered in the India Museum only in a 'card, containing bead trinkets, used by Hindu females', contributed by the Female Normal School, Dacca.
- 39 Revd Lang's globe was, however, included by Forbes Watson among the 'Means of Instruction' he catalogued for the 1873 Vienna Exhibition (Forbes Watson, *Vienna Universal Exhibition*, 226).
- 40 Presented by Claude Russell (Day Books, 9 May 1818).
- 41 Perhaps the instrument described by Forbes Watson: 'The original form from which this instrument was made by an astronomer in the service of the Maharaja Man Singh of Oudh. It is used to ascertain the altitude of heavenly bodies and the position of the sun in the heavens for ... Lucknow'.
- 42 The *dhruba yantra* (or *dhruvabhrama-yantra*) is a general-purpose nocturnal instrument that operates on 'the apparent diurnal rotation of the stellar sphere around the celestial poles': see Sarma, 'The dhruvabhrama-yantra of Padmanābha'. I am grateful to Dr Federica Gigante for this reference, which explains the astronomical principles of the instrument.
- 43 See Finkel, 'A Raja's diversions', in Mackenzie and Finkel, *Asian Games*, 133, no. 11:5.
- 44 For a recent survey, with further bibliography, see Gunter, 'Chess and its visual culture', in Mackenzie and Finkel, *Asian Games*.
- 45 One entry in the catalogues is for a 'Stand, *gaychura*, with a quantity of small shells for a Mahomedan game', from Bombay. For the game, see further Finkel, 'Round and round the houses', in Mackenzie and Finkel, *Asian Games*. Finkel mentions (p. 54) that in some instances cowrie shells are used as dice rather than as playing men.
- 46 See Finkel, 'Dice in India and beyond', in Mackenzie and Finkel, *Asian Games*.
- 47 A number of lids from *ganjifa* boxes also survive.

## Imaging India

Complementing the thousands of artefacts that presented the sub-continent in terms of its material culture and natural resources were representations in a variety of media of the peoples themselves and the territory they occupied. This lent both a human face and a sense of place to the collection which, as we have seen, was assembled primarily with an economic or mercantile imperative but which gained an increasingly ethnographical dimension. There can be little doubt that this aspect went a long way to recommending the museum to the wider public and, it may be suggested, to rendering it a singularly advanced institution in museological terms: certainly no other London museum of the period could offer such a richly immersive experience with respect to India.

It would be erroneous to claim that an altruistic or specifically educational agenda lay behind the panorama presented initially at East India House, but while many of the drawings and paintings in particular were of primarily human interest, there was an important sense in which the human images that populated the cabinets and the walls of the museum played a progressively more important role in articulating the collection for the benefit of the primary audience of manufacturers and merchants attracted to the museum by an ambition to understand more clearly the distant markets with which they were to be engaged. The paradigm of this movement was perhaps exemplified by Forbes Watson's volumes on *The Textile Manufactures and the Costumes of the People of India* (1866) and *The People of India: A Series of Photographic Illustrations, with Descriptive Letterpress, of the Races and Tribes of Hindustan* (1868–72), the latter produced jointly with John William Kaye. While both of these works aimed to promote



an understanding of the diverse but otherwise generally faceless populations with which Britain now found itself engaged politically as well as commercially, it is difficult to disentangle the relative importance to be ascribed to the purely mercantile ambitions of these exercises as opposed to their role in representing the imperial populations to the metropolitan public.

Inevitably, a disproportionately high profile was enjoyed by the princely rulers and their generals, with whom the East India Company engaged, compared to the millions of their compatriots who were commonly conceived in only the most general terms. A striking effort, nonetheless, was made to represent every level of society – certainly the lawyers, teachers, priests and soldiers, but also the most modest craftsmen in wood, metal and textiles, the rural population living at subsistence level with an ox or two to their name, dancing girls, conjurers and street musicians. Despite Forbes Watson's exhortations that manufacturers should not limit their ambitions to serving merely 'the upper ten millions of India' but should cast their net more widely, it seems hard to imagine that the most indigent of those who found a place in the India Museum could realistically have formed a tempting market: a significant element of the display seems rather to have been formed at the initiative of the curators for whom the museum, in addition to its commercial role, was also a site of representation.

## Modelling the population

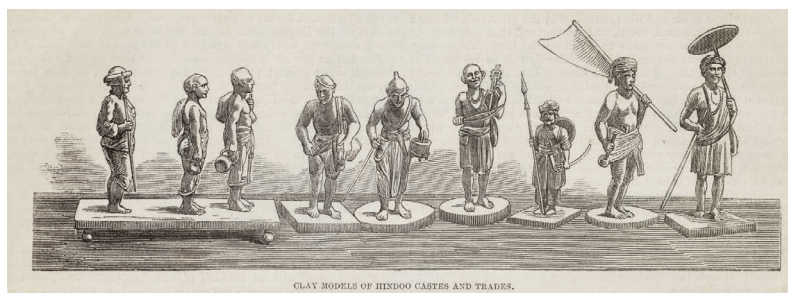
An exceptional contribution to the displays was made by the many small-scale figures, mostly in unfired clay but also carved in wood (fig. 11.1a). These formed exhibits in their own right as well as functioning as highly effective means of articulating displays of, for example, craft tools or scenes from everyday life, or dress fabrics by showing them as worn. These models – mostly of human figures but occasionally accompanied by livestock – were so numerous in the museum as to form one of its defining features. They are considered elsewhere and in greater detail by the present author.<sup>1</sup>

A visitor to the museum in 1858 – that is to say, on the very eve of the Company's winding-up – made the following observation:

The models of figures may be numbered by the thousand. Perhaps the most useful and interesting are those which represent the

workers at their several crafts and occupations ... we see them at work, weaving, digging, carrying water, tilling the soil, grinding the corn, cooking their food, or juggling, conjuring, snake-charming, and exercising themselves in feats of agility or muscular exploits – at all their occupations, in short, as they would be found actually engaged on their native soil.<sup>2</sup>

Among the production centres that were widely recognized, a degree of specialization in subject matter as well as technique was detected by Henry Hardy Cole in his *Catalogue of the Objects of Indian Art*:<sup>3</sup>



**Fig. 11.1.** (a) Model in painted wood, of two women grinding rice. W 21.6 cm. Belgaum. 255(IS); (b) Figures from the India Museum display, as illustrated in *The Crystal Palace and Its Contents*, p. 101. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

At Poonah, in the Bombay Presidency, all kinds of models are made to illustrate the castes and trades of Western India, as, for instance, dyers, singers, and musicians, oil-sellers, dancing or nautch girls, weavers, jewelers, merchants, all classes of domestic and State servants, women grinding corn, corn dealers, carpenters, shoemakers, blacksmiths, butchers, barbers, tailors, potters, Parsees, native officials, water-carriers, sweepers, &c. At Lucknow models are also made of figures, but the best are those representing different kinds of fruit. Models of the latter description are also made in Calcutta, Agra, and Jaloun in the North-west Provinces. The models of fruit made at Gokak, near Belgaum, are celebrated throughout India.

The models form numbers 1 to 274 in the first part of the catalogue printed in 1880, plus a further 120 or so entries scattered through the second part. They include some sizeable groups and tableaux, so that the total number of figures would have been higher: one such group of 68 figures was 'painted, in native costume'; another box contained 40 'painted and draped figures'; a third comprised '15 perfect and a number of imperfect figures'; and there was a further set of 40 unclassified. It seems possible that each of these may reflect attempts to summon up a visual index of India's population in terms of dress and/or physical types. Other formal groupings were certainly arranged to illustrate themes – 'an Indian<sup>4</sup> village and Court of Justice, with a European Judge, presiding for the purpose of promoting its dispensation'; and perhaps most impressively,

a kind of regal levee, at which a prince, sitting in front of a tent of crimson velvet, fringed with a massive bordering of silver-work, receives the homage of his ministers and chiefs, or perhaps his guests. The whole affair is of the most gorgeous description, blazing in gold, silver, and brilliant colours.<sup>5</sup>

The production centres mentioned in the catalogue include 56 entries relating to Kishnagar (Krishnanagar), 4 to Lucknow and 9 to Poona. For Gokak 16 entries are recorded, to which we might add a further 33 models assigned to Belgaum and 17 entries given to 'Desnoor' (Deshnoor), also in Belgaum. More unexpectedly, there are 13 entries for South Arcot, 17 from Trichinopoly and 2 from Condapilly (Kondapalli) – all within the Madras Presidency, which, at its greatest extent, stretched from coast to coast in the southern part of the sub-continent.

A further 63 entries are given simply to 'Madras', but for the above reasons it is difficult to assign meaning and importance to them, except to say that southern India has hitherto been underrepresented in assessments of these figures.

The seemingly alarming scale of the losses suffered by those that reached the India Museum – none of which survive today – needs to be seen in context. In the first place, the unfired state of the clay in which many were produced<sup>6</sup> meant that they were almost certainly doomed to self-destruction – or at least they would be exceptionally vulnerable to damage during their peregrinations first from India to London, then to the several venues in which the museum came to rest in the course of its 80-year existence and finally in some instances to exhibition elsewhere, even on an international scale. Secondly, it seems clear that few of these would have been treasured for their own sake as works of art – even as folk art: in the museum and exhibition context they seem to have functioned rather as props or visual aids – as means of representing the wide social themes or large-scale industries or preparative processes that were at the heart of Britain's interest in the sub-continent but which otherwise would certainly have defied treatment in the cramped quarters of the India Museum. Added to that, the undoubted perception that they would have been infinitely replaceable simply by sending a repeat order to the appropriate Presidency must go a long way to explaining the seemingly cavalier attitude to de-accessioning.

Although the bulk of those listed are entirely anonymous, a single name stands out – 'Joodoonath Pal' – but it turns out to be of real interest. The Pal family – Jadunath, his brother Ram Lal Pal, his nephew Bakkeswar Pal and their neighbour and relative Rakhil Das Pal – were said by the 1880s to be the only modellers of real note then working in Kishnagar,<sup>7</sup> which we may take to mean the only ones considered as artist-craftsmen with a wide European market. Their work is represented by four models now in the British Library: representing a Brahmin, two potters and a tailor, they came to the library from the collection of Sir William Foster, registrar and historiographer to the India Office, and are said to have first been brought to England for the Great Exhibition.

Apart from the assembly of its own publicly accessible museum, the Company contributed hugely (as already mentioned) to the 1851 Great Exhibition (under the coordination of Royle) and to several succeeding world fairs, generally overseen under the regime of the India Office by Forbes Watson. At all of these, the contextual role of the small-scale models is clear. One contemporary observer in 1851 enthused:

If the East India Company had conceived the idea of fitting up a large portion of the Exhibition Building with the machines and implements employed by the Hindoos, and had, at the same time, imported the native workmen to use them, and grouped Indians of every caste around as spectators, they could not have better succeeded in portraying the peculiarities of oriental costume and habits, than by exhibiting those interesting models in clay and wood, illustrative of many ceremonials and customs of a novel and characteristic description. They did not merely represent machines and men, but had so much life and sprightliness infused in their every attitude, that they looked more as if they were intended for models of manners.<sup>8</sup>

Included among these displays were not only individual figures and small groups but also quite elaborate tableaux featuring multiple objects. The *Reports of the Juries* of the 1851 exhibition single out for comment a contribution from a Mr Mansfield of the Company's civil service, showing the encampment of a government collector on his tour of duty, which was populated by some 300 figures contributing in various ways to the scene. The potential of some models for the instruction of those who might be expected to render improvements to the Indian agricultural economy was also appreciated: commenting on one group including a representation of six oxen being used to raise water from a well, the authors of *The Crystal Palace and Its Contents* observed that 'this set of models might afford the means of a very useful and interesting lecture on the application of simple machinery to irrigation. To intending colonists [i.e. recruits to the Indian civil and military service] such lessons would have great value.'<sup>9</sup> Among the awards made to the Company in 1851 was a prize medal for 'Clay figures, representing the various Hindoo castes and professions, manufactured in Kishnagur', a selection of which made an appearance in the 'illustrated cyclopaedia' of the exhibition (fig. 11.1b).<sup>10</sup> Following the exhibition, at least some of these were sold off, indicating that they were perceived to have fulfilled their essentially ephemeral function.<sup>11</sup>

In 1855 the Company had a presence at the *Exposition Universelle* in Paris, about which we know rather less in detail, but a Christie's catalogue of two years later lists among the surplus material sold off by the Company in London after the exhibition 'An elephant with a figure in a howdah, a sacred bull, a dog, various male and female figures, two horsemen and four figures carrying a palanquin'.<sup>12</sup>

In 1862 it was again London's turn to host the International Exhibition, installed on the western side of Exhibition Road. The Indian Section there was arranged by Forbes Watson, whose *Descriptive Catalogue of the Collections from the Indian Department* of the exhibition lists over a hundred models, several of the entries being for multiple figures. Major groups illustrated the various 'native classes, trades and professions', most contributions being credited to the Government of India but with a sizeable number described as 'Condapully figures' from the Kistna district, exhibited by the Madras Government.<sup>13</sup> In 1865, several models showing ploughing and harrowing are known to have been sent for exhibition in New Zealand.<sup>14</sup>

Records of a further 55 models and figures in the 1880 catalogue are annotated with the date 1867, suggesting (and in some instances specifically stating) that they formed part of the *Exposition Universelle* that ran in Paris from April to November in that year. A point of special interest in these is that many of the records also mention a price in rupees (all modest, varying from 2 or 3 rupees up to 18 rupees for a group of dancing girls and musicians), strongly suggesting that they resulted from a specific buying campaign undertaken with the exhibition in mind.

Others specifically mention the Vienna Universal Exhibition of 1873, for which Forbes Watson compiled a *Classified and Descriptive Catalogue of the Indian Department*.<sup>15</sup> Interestingly, some of the models there were by now being used to demonstrate ways in which traditional Indian practices had been superseded by industrial processes introduced from or inspired by Europe. There was, for example, a major display on the cotton industry in which use of the traditional foot roller was included. The only cotton shown which had been prepared by the traditional method was described, however, as having been 'much injured by the foot roller' and re-cleaned by another method, so that the models now carried new messages of obsolescence and the need for industrial reform.<sup>16</sup>

### Plaster modelling

An increase in the use of plaster rather than clay as a modelling medium becomes increasingly apparent in the later nineteenth century. T. N. Mukharji attributes the introduction of plaster in this genre chiefly to Italian artists employed in the schools of art founded in India by the British<sup>17</sup> – closely modelled on that of the Science and Art Department at South Kensington – an assertion that finds support from Sir Edward

Buck, who writes, in the preface to the catalogue of the Colonial and Indian Exhibition of 1886,<sup>18</sup> that

the system for the first time adopted in connection with this Exhibition of reproducing [this] work in Plaster of Paris seems likely to give prominence and encouragement to the plastic art of the country, since it will now be possible to meet any demand which may arise for such work with less risk of breakage and at much smaller cost.

Buck attributes its introduction specifically to ‘Mr J. Schaumburg, artist, attached to the Geological Survey Department of India’. A group in plaster ‘representing “suttee,” &c., formerly exhibited at the Paris Exhibition, 1867’ suggests that this movement got underway at quite an early date in the history of the international exhibitions.

It seems entirely likely that modelling in the art schools would have followed European practice by making extensive use of plaster of Paris, and some items in the 1880 catalogue are clearly from that milieu: in particular, ‘Five perspective drawing models’ in plaster can clearly be so attributed, as well as seven plaster casts of decorative architectural panels. Casting was also used, evidently in quite a systematic way, to record sculptural details from temple sites and other locations in the Bhubaneswar region – 26 from the Great Temple, 23 from the Parushameshwar temple, 31 from Bhogabatt, 4 from Kadereshwar, 42 from Mukteshwar, 31 from Rajrani and 58 from Saridcul, among others.

There is also evidence, however, for plaster being in comparatively commonplace use in everyday society. For example, in the collection of Dr Leitner – gathered in the Peshawar basin, far from European influence – there are numerous heads, busts and religious figurines, as well as a ‘group of grotesque figures’ from Takht-i-Bahi – the latter no doubt of typical Gandharan clay with a coating of stucco.<sup>19</sup> From other sources come numerous idols, deities and effigies, a group of 36 Buddhist votive plaques and two model temples. There are also numerous figures which sound indistinguishable from those discussed above, except for their being identified as of plaster. These include a ‘Native, with textile girdle and turban’ and a ‘Warrior, with sword and shield’ – seemingly generic social types; a ‘Female, costume covered in tinsel’ and ‘Dolls, twenty-three, plaster, dress[ed] in native costume’ – evidently illustrating modes of dress; and models of a loaf of bread on a plate and fruit on a plate in painted plaster – a type that may have had its origins in the offerings that accompanied devotional installations.<sup>20</sup>



Some of these are even from Kishnagar – so strongly associated with the production of unfired clay figures – including a ‘Model of an oil mill, with bullock’, and two further figures of bullocks. We might do well to avoid placing too narrow a distinction on the use of the term plaster in considering these figures, for clearly not all references are to the refined plaster of Paris of the art school milieu.

## Casts of human features: anthropometry and the museum

A quite exceptional face-to-face experience was provided by the extensive series of casts of living human features compiled by the Schlagintweit brothers, Adolphe, Hermann and Robert, with the aim of illustrating the range of ethnic types (*ethnographische Raçentypen*) to be encountered on the sub-continent. These were the product of an unprecedented attempt to compile a physical record of the diversity of the population, as encountered by the brothers during their sojourn in India under the auspices of the Company, from 1854 to 1857. They originated as moulds formed in plaster of Paris, the casts from which somewhat resemble death masks, although they were invariably produced from living subjects, subjected to the moulding process with no more than a breathing tube in their nostrils to sustain them while the plaster hardened. The very unequal relationship between the practitioners, with their checklists, callipers and casting materials, and their objectified subjects – few of whom could have been enthusiastic volunteers (some were indeed prisoners at the time) – seems harshly inscribed in every fold of their faces.

The aim of this exercise was to provide those engaged in formulating a methodology for physical anthropology with a set of specimens capable of repeated interrogation (notably by detailed measurement) as to their facial characteristics, captured in three dimensions, with a view to establishing the relationships between these imagined *Raçentypen*. The nineteenth century saw a huge investment of time and effort in attempts to establish a ‘typological’ basis for the classification of human diversity by means of mensuration – notably of the skull: literally hundreds of detailed measurements might be carried out on a single skull in order to achieve objective formulae for the determination of race – both on European populations and on others across the world. By the 1920s the entire movement had become discredited and genetic scientists like Lancelot Hogben could look back at the ‘stupendous persistence

in fruitless and trivial exploits of repetitive mensuration' in racial science<sup>21</sup> – even before the Nazis added their particular misconstruction to racial theory – but in the Schlagintweits' day the movement was very much alive. With their three-dimensional casts they aimed to provide practitioners with a set of objective, three-dimensional data from the Indian sub-continent from which new observations could be derived.

Although their collection represents one of the most spectacular monuments of this movement, the Schlagintweits were by no means among its initiators. Before leaving Europe, they had taken care to consult Adolphe Quételet (1796–1874), a leading exponent, and throughout the exercise they relied extensively on his 'list of objects to be measured', with the aim of arriving at a 'physical definition of the various subdivisions of the human race'.<sup>22</sup> A total of 730 individuals were intensively measured in this way and some 275 facial casts produced.

It may be noted that (as well as the head) hands and feet – also recorded among the casts – were believed to embody discriminating features that could be used in such an exercise. In India, where cadavers were particularly hard to come by due to the prevalence of cremation, these casts are characterized as having served as 'virtual corpses'. Little evidence survives to suggest that the brothers made any sustained attempt at synthesis from these physical records, although they did produce a statistical survey of the collection compiled in terms of castes, tribes and races, and finally on skin colour.

In a more nuanced analysis of the collection than is attempted here, Felix Driver has discussed the degree to which the Schlagintweits' practice of identifying their subjects by name is at odds with their supposedly objective ethnographic aims.<sup>23</sup> The significance of this element of individualization in recording what would otherwise be depersonalized anthropological 'specimens' is further discussed by Paul Basu in his treatment of the work of Northcote W. Thomas in West Africa, in the early years of the twentieth century.<sup>24</sup>

The original moulds were among material forwarded from London to Berlin at the brothers' initiative (the collection having been formed jointly with Prussian input, with a view to their establishing an ethnographic museum there). From Berlin they were passed to the company of J. A. Barth in Leipzig, where multiple castings were made from them in zinc; it was a set of these that eventually (and by prior arrangement) were returned to the India Museum (fig. 11.2).<sup>25</sup> The surface of the casts received a thin coating of tinted copper (graduated in tone to match roughly the skin colour of the subject) in order to render them more lifelike and, perhaps with a final nod towards individual verisimilitude,



**Fig. 11.2.** Facial cast of Nain Singh (inscribed erroneously 'Naim Singh'), produced by the Schlagintweit brothers. © National Museum of Ireland.

each casting was mounted in a standard oval picture frame. In most instances the metal background is marked with the name of the subject and an identifying number, in addition to the Schlagintweits' own name and the series title 'Ethnographical heads 1854–1858'.

Having assembled their extensive series, the Schlagintweits' primary aim was to resolve them into 'types', in line with current discourse on matters of racial difference – an exercise that finds wider parallels in the theories formulated by Francis Galton and Cesare Lombroso.<sup>26</sup> The tenor of their approach may be judged from a number of papers presented by the brothers to both the British Association for the Advancement of Science and the Anthropological Society, as in the following by Hermann from 1864:<sup>27</sup>

1. The Brahman is chiefly presented for showing his well-defined Aryan type in opposition to the following casts:
2. The Gond and Bhils, are decidedly the most savage and the most irregular in features; the upper part is somewhat Negro-like; the lower jaw decidedly more feeble.
3. The Santals are much more regular and approaching the lower castes of Indians than any of the other aboriginal tribes.

As for the collection transferred to South Kensington, it may be summarized from the text of the catalogue as follows:

**Table 11.1.** Objects from the Schlaginweits' collection transferred to the South Kensington Museum

Catalogue number	Group	Number of casts
2632	Hindu castes: Brahmans	12
2363	Hindu castes: Rajputs	5
2364	Hindu castes: Gorkhas	8
2365	Hindu castes: Pahari Rajputs, Thakurs	28
2366	Hindu castes: Dogras	5
2367	Hindu castes: Bhot Rajputs	9
2368	Hindu castes: Kanets	21
2369	Hindu castes: Bais or Viasias	5
2370	Hindu castes: Sudras	
2371	Hindu tribes, isolated	25
2372	Aborigines	5
2373	Mussalmans	54
2374	Tibetans: Buddhists	31
2375	Tibetans: Mussalmans	23
2376	Turkish races of Central Asia: Moghuls	5
2377	Turkish races of Central Asia: Argons	5
2378	Foreign tribes of India	8
2379–400	Hands	22
2402–5	Soles of feet	5
2406–13	Hands	8
2414	Sole of foot	1
2415	Foot and ankle	1

The Schlagintweits' preference for these evocative but rather unwieldy casts invites comparison with other methods of recording, in particular with drawing and with the increasingly widespread use of photography – both of which techniques they also utilized. Driver notes the presence in the India Office Collections of four full-size pictures – three graphite drawings and one lithograph – by Hermann Schlagintweit, whose 'size, expression and posture suggest more than anthropometry' – a reference to the tension Driver explores between the abstract but strictly documentary aims of anthropological recording and the Schlagintweits' tendency to personalize their subjects.<sup>28</sup> He records too the recent discovery of a series of anthropometric drawings by the brothers, 'suggesting that at some stage the casts might have provided the basis for more precise quantitative study' – a possibility that would render them all the more interesting but which must remain speculative.<sup>29</sup>

All the casts listed above were acquired by the India Office at a cost of £19 12s 6d. Interestingly, when first exhibited there, their ethnographical interest was not emphasized, for the face masks were 'most tastefully arranged in the sculpture room'.<sup>30</sup> For a time, they featured in plans by the Commissioners for the 1851 Exhibition to encourage the establishment of regular exhibitions of 'objects illustrative of the ethnology and geography of the various parts and races of the British Empire, especially the races of India' and ultimately the foundation of a permanent 'Museum of Mankind'. The moment passed, however, and the casts were transferred in the first instance to the South Kensington Museum in 1879 and later, in 1888, to the Dublin Museum of Science and Art, founded 11 years earlier; more material followed in 1895, to be housed within the Dublin Museum's new Kildare Street building, opened in 1890. Thereafter, the casts sank from public consciousness until they were rediscovered in 1998 in a basement of the Kildare Street building, by then occupied by the National Museum of Ireland; subsequently, the museum transferred them to storage at Collins Barracks, from where they were restored to wider attention by two publications in 2018.<sup>31</sup>

Such is the history to date of this extraordinary collection. In a sense, these 'likenesses' do indeed bring us face to face with their subjects in a disconcertingly direct manner, although the manner of their production also confronts us inescapably with the fact that they are, in the words of Andrew Zimmerman, 'artifacts of colonial corporeality, embodied enactments of the extreme power hierarchies that characterize every European colonial project'.<sup>32</sup> Perhaps more

acutely than any other exhibit here, they impress upon us the truth that museums embody much more than mute collections of objects: collected with supposedly scientific objectivity in the course ethnographic survey, they speak with unmatched eloquence of the unequal relationships that existed inescapably between the observer and the observed, the collector and the collected.

## Photographs

The Company and the subsequent colonial administration under the India Office must surely count among the earliest institutional users of photography in a systematic and purposeful way – no matter that the sub-continent presented a challenging environment for its practice in the earliest decades of the technique's development. A photographic society had already been established in Bombay in 1854 and others followed in Calcutta and Madras two years later, demonstrating the presence of a receptive community of enthusiasts and contributing to the spread of expertise.<sup>33</sup>

In England the first major public display of photography's potential had been mounted at the Great Exhibition in 1851, and given the close involvement of the Company in other aspects of the Exhibition's organization, it is scarcely surprising that its personnel were among those who seized on the potential of the technique for topographical, architectural and ethnographic survey. As if to encourage precisely such a move, the *Reports of the Juries* of the Exhibition exhorted photographers to employ the medium to make 'copies of ancient inscriptions ... delineations of tropical or remote scenery ... and a thousand other applications'.<sup>34</sup> By the end of 1852, the pioneer practitioner Roger Fenton had published in *The Chemist* an essay on 'Photography in France' in which he praised the systematic advancement there of the technique.<sup>35</sup> The lessons of these initiatives evidently were quickly absorbed by the personnel of the Company – and indeed by the Court of Directors, for by 1855 photography had been added to the curriculum at the military seminary at Addiscombe.<sup>36</sup>

An early convert was Captain Thomas Biggs (1822–1905) of the Bombay Artillery, a gifted linguist with an interest in antiquities, who attended lessons on the calotype process while on sick leave in England in the early 1850s and quickly saw the potential of photography in the recording of the inscriptions which he had hitherto transcribed by hand. Biggs lobbied the directors of the Company, expounding on the

advantages of photography to such good effect that he was provided with an appropriate large-format camera; by 1854 he was designated official photographer to the Bengal Presidency. Biggs would describe himself as:<sup>37</sup>

the originator and the first officer employed to carry out the design of copying the sculptures and inscriptions in India with a view to recovery of the Pali language and the lost history of India, and the ancient manners, customs, employments and ceremonies which are so faithfully and beautifully represented in stone.<sup>38</sup>

Alexander Hunter (1816–90), a military surgeon born in India to Scottish parents, also played an important part in furthering the new medium: as well as establishing the first School of Arts in India (in Madras in 1850), he founded the Madras Photographic Society in 1856. By this time the Company had formally signalled the introduction of photography to its survey programme and had begun to encourage instruction in appropriate establishments under its control,

as a means by which representations may be obtained of scenes and buildings, with the advantages of perfect accuracy, small expenditure of time and moderate cash. We have recently desired the Government of Bombay to discontinue the employment of draughtsmen in the delineation of antiquities of Western India, and to employ photography instead, and it is our desire that this method be generally substituted throughout India ... We shall be prepared to forward the necessary apparatus for the use of any of our Governments which may make application for them.<sup>39</sup>

A definitive step forward in the application of photography to the Company's needs came with the appointment in 1856 (at Hunter's instigation) of Captain Linnaeus Tripe (1822–1902) of the Madras Infantry as official photographer to the Madras Presidency. Like Biggs, Tripe's introduction to photography appears to have come during home leave in 1851, when, in the aftermath of the Great Exhibition, he was elected a founding member of the Photographic Society of London on 3 February 1853, demonstrating the degree of his commitment to the subject at an early stage in its development.

Once returned to duty, Tripe dedicated the next four years of his life to implementing his new skills. In 1854 he set off from his base at Bangalore, in the company of Andrew Neill, an assistant surgeon,



on a self-financed expedition to survey and photograph the temples at Belur and Halebid, some 130 miles to the west. The results were of excellent quality, and their use of systematic coverage from several angles shows an effective blending of army surveying skills with aesthetically pleasing viewpoints. His images won a first-class medal at the Madras Exhibition of Raw Products, Arts and Manufactures of Southern India in early 1855, the jury recommending that the entire series of 68 pictures and two accurate groundplans of the temples should be forwarded to the Court of Directors in London.<sup>40</sup>

The success of this initiative no doubt played a key role in Tripe's secondment to Lord Dalhousie's mission to Burma in 1855, when he made an extended record of the mission's progress as it made its way upriver to the capital, Ava (hitherto largely closed to the West). The resulting haul of over 500 negatives – including some of the earliest photographs of Burma – represents a very considerable achievement, and scarcely less so were the 9,000 prints demanded by Dalhousie on the mission's return to India.

During Tripe's third phase of photographic activity, he again served in the years 1857–8 as official photographer to the Madras Presidency. During this time he set out to 'secure before they disappear the objects in the Presidency that are interesting to the Antiquary, Architect, Sculptor, Mythologist, and Historian', and to form a record of all the races within the Presidency, 'their customs, dress, occupations ... arms, implements, and musical instruments &c'. He accurately defined the project as 'the 1st attempt at illustrating in a complete and systematic manner the state of a country by means of photography'.<sup>41</sup> This new role saw him ordering a further large-format camera as well as three additional cameras adapted to take stereoscopic pairs of images. Major survey campaigns at this time carried him to Madurai, where several major Hindu temples were recorded (fig. 11.3), and to the Brihadishvara Temple at Tanjore where a tour-de-force precision survey of a carved inscription running round the base resulted in a collage of 21 prints, pasted together to form a panorama almost 19 feet in length. This must surely be equated with the 'Inscription around basement of the Bimanum of the Great Pagoda at Tanjore' later registered – albeit anonymously – in the India Museum, hinting at how the authorship of many other less distinctive photographs may have been lost even in the few decades leading up to the museum's closure. No identifiable prints from the India Museum survive today.

Robert Gill, who had toiled for years painstakingly drawing copies of wallpaintings in the Ajanta caves, found himself unable to continue



**Fig. 11.3.** The western *gopuram* of the Great Pagoda at Madurai, 1858. Albumen print by Captain Linnaeus Tripe. The print illustrated was acquired by the South Kensington Museum in 1889: whether it came originally from the India Museum collection is uncertain. IS.40:10-1889. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

the project in the immediate aftermath of the Uprising of 1857, but turned his attentions instead to the possibilities offered by photography. In 1861 he wrote to the authorities explaining:

During the last disturbances, I taught myself photography and occupied myself from time to time at such times I was able in taking pictures of all parts of the caves of which the light

permitted, and I have herewith dispatched by banghy 45 prints. I have several negatives from which I have not yet printed, but shall do so shortly and forward – all the camera can command without artificial light I have accomplished.<sup>42</sup>

By 1863 Gill had been supplied with a camera by the Company and sent back to England nearly 200 stereoscopic views of Indian architecture, as well as views of life in the countryside. Around this time, the Bombay Government also gave him an 8 × 10-inch camera with a specially made wide-angle lens that allowed him for the first time to take photographs within the confines of the cave complexes at Ajanta and Ellora. These were sent to James Fergusson (a vigorous supporter of photography), who chose 74 of them to illustrate his *Rock-Cut Temples of India* (1864): he judged them ‘by far the most perfect and satisfactory illustration of the ancient architecture of India which has yet been presented to the public’.<sup>43</sup> Among the few images attributed to a named individual in the India Museum collection were ‘Two photographs of paintings in the Adjunta Caves. In gilt frame, glazed; by Major Gills’ – seemingly the only photographs in the display accorded a gilt frame; they, like the majority of the other photographic images, have long since been written off.

Following an initiative of the viceroy in 1867, a move was made to mobilize amateur as well as professional photographers in India to record as many as possible of the country’s monuments. The India Office requested that two copies of all relevant photographs should be sent to London and that the original negatives, wherever possible, should be secured as government property. Images of so many antiquarian and ethnographic subjects were sent back to headquarters that in the 1860s a photographic section was established within the museum, supervised by Forbes Watson and with the distribution of duplicate prints to other institutions as one of its principal missions. Lord Canning was instrumental too in securing the establishment of the Archaeological Survey of India, whose presiding genius was General Sir Alexander Cunningham (1814–93), a strong advocate of the use of photography: some 400 photographs are known to have been taken by his assistant, J. D. Beglar.<sup>44</sup>

In September 1868 Lieutenant Henry H. Cole of the Royal Engineers – eldest son of Henry Cole of the South Kensington Museum and recently appointed Superintendent of the Archaeological Survey for the North-West Provinces – left Cawnpore with two Indian surveyors and John Burke, a professional photographer of Murree and

Peshawar, with a mission to survey Kashmir. The first instalment of his two-volume *Illustrations of Ancient Buildings in Kashmir*, published by the India Museum, appeared with commendable speed in 1869; volume II followed four years later.

Independently of these more formal initiatives, the Schlagintweit brothers (mentioned above) had by this time made an extensive contribution to the museum's holdings with the presentation of a sizeable photographic archive. The 1880 catalogue records as part of their collection over 90 frames containing over 470 photographs: of these only six are of human subjects – all Brahmins – while the remainder comprise respectively 32 images of ancient sculpture and 68 showing rock-cut temples, as well as 23 of Chalukya architecture, 81 of Jain architecture, 179 of Dravidian architecture from the south and 82 showing the styles of northern India.

Despite the limitations of early emulsions, photography proved an attractive medium to the wider British community in India and had the particular benefit of being promoted in its early years by the governor-general of the day, Lord Canning, and his wife (Lady Canning was herself a keen amateur photographer and was patron of both the Bengal and the Madras Photographic Societies). Their personal project was to assemble a pictorial record of the country they had grown to love – its people, its architecture and its landscape; Lady Canning also seems to have been the instigator of a more purposeful study to record all the main ethnic groups of the sub-continent.<sup>45</sup> Civilians and army officers were mobilized by the governor-general to carry cameras with them on travels and to deposit copies of the resulting prints with Lord Canning; doubtless it was his influence that resulted in the project gaining official status.<sup>46</sup>

The end result must surely have exceeded all expectations, being published as a series of unbound folio volumes with handsomely tooled covers: a print of each original image was pasted onto a sheet of card with identifying labels, interleaved with typeset sheets expounding on the subject matter (and with occasional summary essays, as in 'General Sketch of the Frontier Afghan Tribes', etc.). The series, titled *The Textile Manufactures and the Costumes and People of India*, was published in eight volumes by the India Museum between 1868 and 1875, under the editorship of Forbes Watson and J. W. Kent; it is acknowledged as 'among the most important nineteenth-century attempts to harness photography to the service of ethnographic documentation' and as 'a Herculean attempt to encapsulate and categorize a society'.<sup>47</sup> The same author, John Falconer, further acknowledges that while they



**Fig. 11.4.** Glazed frame containing nine albumen prints of ‘costumes of the various races of India’, showing different types of headgear. Original photographs by W. W. Hooper and Surgeon G. Western, published in Forbes Watson and Kent’s *Costumes and People of India*. Probably some of the ‘forty-five photographs of native heads’ displayed at the London International Exhibition in 1871. 0932(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

stand as 'a straightforward contribution to ethnology', the volumes may also be interpreted as 'an example of the nineteenth-century fascination with accumulating and classifying exhaustive archives of data and knowledge' or as 'a prime illustration of the use of an ostensibly scientific project for political ends in the colonial arena'. Nonetheless, Falconer's claim that these images form 'a landmark in the history of nineteenth-century photography' is entirely apposite.

Most of the 480 photographs are identified primarily by ethnic group and by geographical location, though some are listed by trade or by religion or caste; the geographical coverage is uneven – with the northern territories more closely documented than the south – reflecting the preordained fields of operation of the particular officers concerned rather than a systematic and countrywide coverage. As well as forming an early exercise in ethnological survey, several of these images were later recycled by Forbes Watson (fig. 11.4) in order to demonstrate to British manufacturers the form and style of dress worn in the export markets they aimed to penetrate.<sup>48</sup>

The advent of photography had provided a means for the wider community of Company servants to involve themselves in making records of an ethnological nature – even if the science of their interpretation remained rudimentary. Some of those who engaged with this activity (including many drawn from the ranks of the surgeons) were indeed systematic in their own terms. Perhaps the earliest exercise in this field is the series of calotypes taken by John McCosh (1805–85), a surgeon with an extraordinary record of active service with the Bengal Army. As well as producing records of the Second Anglo-Sikh War (1848–9) – believed to be the earliest war photographs by a known photographer – and producing portraits of his contemporary officers and their families as well as of Indian dignitaries, McCosh turned his camera on the ordinary population and their surroundings in the Punjab, before repeating the exercise in Burma during the Second Anglo-Burmese War (1852–3) and later in Lahore.

Only slightly later in this field was the work of Aeneas MacLeod Ross, based at Cape Comorin, Travancore:

I have undertaken, at the desire of the British Resident, to collect information regarding the ethnology of this country and of Cochin, and to illustrate it by photographs of typical examples of the people, public and religious buildings, and monuments, private dwellings, arms, musical instruments, etc. Of the typical people I propose taking of men and women, one full length



photograph, and two of the bust, one being full face and the other profile – and one photograph of the top of the head. Of course photos of all the agricultural instruments will also be taken, and a few of the country, in order to give an idea of its general outline, as well as the way in which it may have modified race distinctions.<sup>49</sup>

In 1873 the India Museum published *An Account of the Primitive Tribes and Monuments of the Nilagiris* by the late J. W. Breeks, Commissioner of the Nilgiris. Much of this work had been done for the Indian Museum in Calcutta,<sup>50</sup> which wanted a record of the costumes, weapons, ornaments and utensils of the indigenous tribes.

Forbes Watson was one of those who appreciated the advantages of photography in ethnographic survey as practised at that time, although he observed that ‘the materials for a scientific basis by an exact measurement of the anatomical elements of the body and of the cranium are as yet utterly insufficient’ – a deficiency that was only partially resolved by the introduction to the background of such photographs of a measured grid, constructed of fine cord within a frame or painted onto a flat surface. Nineteenth-century preoccupations with cranial measurements and the belief that they might hold the means of constructing a scientific basis for physical anthropology are, of course, entirely discredited today. Ethnological interest in India – and particularly in the fast-disappearing itinerant populations – would continue to be conducted in a freelance manner until 1901, when the Ethnological Survey of India was formally constituted.<sup>51</sup>

With the few exceptions mentioned above, little evidence survives to link the photographs listed in the catalogue with the above-mentioned practitioners. ‘Eleven glazed frames containing photographs of views, manners and customs’ in Calcutta were presented by D. H. Macfarlane, while another entry is for ‘Eight frames, containing photographs of views in India, by O. Mallitti; Jubbulpore’, but otherwise the practitioners and the donors remain anonymous. The dates of their respective acquisitions are also unknown: most seem likely to have arrived in the 1860s and 1870s, and full use of them was being made in the displays by the time of the handover to the South Kensington Museum, when the following – showing a wide range of subject matter – are among those listed:

‘Photographs, seven, Burmese monasteries’, and one of ‘Burmese monks’; Six photographs of ‘Dancing Girls and Musicians’; ‘Toddy



drawers', 'Thakurs' and 'Costumes' (the latter hand-coloured); 'Three glazed frames containing 18 photographs of personal ornaments'; 'Four glazed frames containing fourteen photographs of views in India'; 'Photographs of architecture. Fifty-one'; 'Twenty-one photographs of irrigation works, on two stretchers; Madras Presidency'; 'Two glazed frames containing eight photographs of Ruins, &c.'; 'Seventeen frames, ten glazed, seven unglazed, and one mount, containing numerous photographs illustrating the people of India'; 'Seventeen double frames (for a rotating stand) containing 72 photographs of Hindu deities and temples'.

## Maps and topographical drawings

Responsibility for mapping lay with the Survey of India, which dates its foundation from 1767 – that is, under the Company's regime – and claims to be the oldest scientific department of the present-day Indian Government. Under its auspices, a hugely ambitious trigonometrical survey was carried out over a large part of the sub-continent over a period of 80 years, forming a basis for relief maps produced by the topographical survey and cadastral maps which recorded land ownership and formed a basis for taxation – all-important to the Company but a source of untold resentment and hardship among the population. The whole operation, employing many thousands of men, had produced around a quarter of a million maps by the time the India Museum was dissolved. Its holdings of such material, however, seem to have been of an incidental nature, some perhaps compiled especially to help the visitor to locate the origins of the specimens on display. The majority of the more important maps coming from India would more likely have been absorbed by the Company's library – later by the India Office Library – and would not at any point have formed part of the museum collection.<sup>52</sup>

A 'Sketch Map of Dardistan and neighbouring Countries' formed an appropriate accompaniment to Dr Leitner's loan collection, helping to locate the remote sphere of his ethnographical researches; it was returned to him with the remainder of his collection. 'Twelve Outline Maps of India, on stretchers', inventoried in the stores, could have been intended to systematically demonstrate some theme, or themes, but seem never to have progressed further. 'Seventeen portions of Profile Maps', large and small, sound more purposeful, as do 16 entries each for 'A map in relief, in two parts', but lack of further information limits speculation.

## Paintings and drawings

To judge from the latter-day distribution of the Company's paintings, most of those reaching the India Museum (as opposed to the more prestigious Company apartments at East India House – the Court Room, the Director's Boardroom and so on – were composed on a comparatively small scale. Today, the majority of the larger works are among the India Office Collections held by the British Library, indicating that they had formerly fallen within the purlieu of the India Office Library. Some, at least, evidently were hung within the museum – an account of 1843 mentions the presence there of the portraits of Nadir Shah and Fath Ali Shah that are now in the British Library.<sup>53</sup> During the sojourn of the museum at Fife House, any formal distinctions were certainly lost – a description from 1861 mentions 'the valuable pictures which were formerly in the possession of the EIC' as hanging on the staircase<sup>54</sup> – but it seems unlikely that the subsequent accommodation in the attics of the India Office would have offered much opportunity for extensive display. Indeed, many of the larger-scale oil paintings would almost certainly have been earmarked for immediate display in the grander apartments of the building when its internal decorations had been completed; thereafter, most appear to have moved seamlessly to the India Office Library and ultimately, in 1998, to the Oriental and India Office Collections of the British Library.<sup>55</sup>

The more modest status of those that survived within the museum collection is acknowledged in the way that many of the pictures catalogued in 1879 were grouped together in glazed frames to illustrate themes such as historical personalities, crafts, customs and so on. Small-scale paintings on themes such as these had grown in popularity from the later 1700s onwards, as artists displaced by the disintegration of the Mughal empire sought new outlets for their talents (the illustration of botanical and zoological specimens for European naturalists forming another major new market). Numerous stock subjects illustrating aspects of India's culture, topography and architectural heritage came to be recognized as also finding favour with a European audience: copying was widespread, and while native Indian artists adapted well to the demands of miniature painting, no particular premium was placed on originality, either by members of the artist community themselves or by their patrons.

It may be noted that the so-called Company School of painting – an interesting and important amalgam of European aesthetics

and local painterly techniques, modified from traditional practices developed in Mughal and other courtly circles – emerged not under the corporate influence of the Company itself but rather at the impetus of certain scholarly individuals who patronized the many talented painters at hand while seeking to impose on their practice some of the norms of European convention. Again the naturalists proved of particular significance, for the emergence of the Company School was particularly influenced by the requirements of objective scientific recording, and much effort was directed towards communicating these requirements to the Indian artists employed to record natural history subjects. Some of the most respected of these emerged under the aegis of the botanists at the Calcutta botanic garden, while others benefited from the private patronage of committed amateurs, among whom the best known is Mary, Lady Impey (wife of the Chief Justice of Bengal) in the same city, although there were many others. The resulting works were widely and deservedly admired, generally escaping the criticisms levelled at the emergence of hybrid styles among the portraitists and landscape painters: European critics, it seems, were unable to see beyond the styles of the classical canon in which they had been educated. Those pictures that did make their way to East India House seem for the most part to have been botanical drawings preserved in the museum rather than the library; later they joined the botanical specimens themselves on their transfer to the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew. There were, however, other pictures that claim our interest.

The founding of the government schools of art mentioned at intervals in the above text – established initially at Madras, Bombay, Lahore and Calcutta but later becoming more widespread – may be seen as a response to the developments taking place at South Kensington in the aftermath of the 1851 exhibition. In that context, however, they can only be judged to have failed to meet the government's expectations, for the intention that they should introduce the sons of Indian artisans to the perceived benefits of Western conventions proved to be in vain. The schools soon became the province of the wealthier middle classes in pursuit of a European training in the fine arts, with their ambitions fixed on the milieu of the salon rather than the industrial studio – specifically not on the government agenda. Far from bringing about a beneficial fusion of practice in design, they came to provide in the twentieth century an arena in which a new national school of Indian painting would take shape and flourish.<sup>56</sup>

## Paintings on paper

Comparatively few of these small-scale paintings in watercolour or gouache (opaque watercolour) survive among the remnants of the India Museum now in the V&A; many more were held within the library collections and are now at the British Library. Paintings collected with a historical perspective are limited: an example showing the reception of the Persian ambassador at the court of Shah Jahan – now dated to the early nineteenth century – is an exception (fig. 11.5). The identity of the participants was unknown in 1879, however, when it was catalogued simply as ‘A Court reception’.

More typical are views of well-known monuments such as the Diwan-i Khas (fig. 11.6), the imperial hall of audience within the Red Fort at Delhi, and scenes of courtly life that would have been witnessed by few British residents in India, let alone visitors to the museum. There are also two or three images of princes and noblemen whose individual identities are now lost and an illustration of a ‘Procession at the festival of Jaggarnauth’.

A few portraits in watercolour or gouache on paper also survive. Among the interesting historical figures represented are Begum Samru (1837), born Farzana Zeb un-Nissa (fig. 11.7a), a fiery Kashmiri lady who began adult life as a nautch dancer, converted to Catholic Christianity and married a European soldier of fortune, Walter Reinhardt Sombre; at her husband’s death<sup>57</sup> she inherited both the infantry force he had raised and the principality of Sardhana (in present-day Uttar Pradesh), over which he had gained control. By now immensely rich, she proved an astute ruler, popular with her troops whom she led into battle in person on more than one occasion, including a creditable role at the Battle of Assaye. Reconciled to the British, she became familiar with many of the most distinguished figures of the day: Lord Lake, Lord Combermere, Bishop Heber and others.<sup>58</sup>

Also featured is another important figure in the diplomatic and military history of the period of the Second Maratha War, Ahmad Baksh Khan (fig. 11.7b). A trusted intermediary with the British, he was later rewarded with the district of Loharu and Ferozpur in the Punjab, and with the title of nawab. His many friends among the British included Sir Charles Metcalfe and William Fraser, Commissioner for Delhi; forced to intervene in a succession dispute at the nawab’s death, Fraser was later assassinated by Ahmad Baksh Khan’s eldest son and heir, Shams ud-Din, for which crime the latter was



Fig. 11.5. *The Arrival of the Persian Ambassador Muhammed Ali Beg at the Court of Shah Jahan, 1631*; gouache and gold on paper. Early nineteenth-century copy of seventeenth-century original. 40.7 × 27.7 cm. 03532(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

hanged in 1835. Both of these paintings were presented to the India Museum by General John Briggs.

A panorama of Indian sports belongs firmly in the tradition of much representative illustration, aimed primarily at forming a record





**Fig. 11.6.** *The Diwan-i Khas, Delhi*, watercolour on paper. The view shows the exterior of the building, with an encompassing sunshade; court servants prepare horses and a sedan chair for the departure of the emperor. Erroneously inscribed 'A Rajah's Garden Pavilion by a native Artist'. Copy after a view painted in 1817 by Gulam Ali Khan, the last court painter of the Mughal empire. 52.5 × 75 cm. Unprovenanced. 03538(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



**Fig. 11.7.** (a) *Begum Samru*, watercolour on paper, c. 1830, by Jiwan Das or Jiwan Ram. The begum wears a Kashmir shawl and holds a *huqqa* snake; her direct gaze radiates the self-confidence she displayed throughout her life. 10.5 × 8.5 cm. Delhi. 03554(IS); (b) *Ahmad Baksh Khan*, c.1810, watercolour on paper. 12.5 × 10.5 cm. Presented by General John Briggs. Delhi. 03552(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

rather than artistic expression. This comes to the fore in a more ambitious family group (see fig. 10.1) being entertained on a tiled or carpeted terrace by musicians with *sarangis*, drums and cymbals, as well as dancing girls.

### Paintings in oils

Two small portraits are of interest for the fact that they are of oil on canvas and also because they represent not powerful figures in contemporary history but two middle-class merchants, Ardaseer Bomanjee and Bomanjee Hormerjee (fig. 11.8), both of them Parsees. Both pictures were presented by Sir Alexander Johnston to Sir Charles Forbes in 1836, and by the latter to the museum.

The other paintings in this group are by English artists; their role within the museum would, however, have been indistinguishable from those by Indian artists. A painting of Samuldas Dessai is by the



**Fig. 11.8.** *Bomanjee Hormerjee, Parsee Merchant of Bombay*, oil on canvas, c. 1836. Painted by an artist working in Bombay. 41.5 × 34 cm. Presented by Sir Charles Forbes. 03524(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.





Fig. 11.9. Painting, oil on canvas, recording a fresco scene in Cave 1 at Ajanta, by Major Robert Gill, 1850–4. 203 × 274 cm. IS.55-1885. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

historical painter Charles Landseer (1799–1879), who never visited India: the subject was, in fact, recorded in London, while the landscape setting with a temple was contributed by Captain R. M. Grindlay, the donor of the picture.<sup>59</sup> The anonymous Konkani girl shown in another picture was also known personally to Grindlay: she was the daughter of Gangadhar Sastri, who had acted as an envoy to the Gaekwar of Baroda before being himself murdered. Grindlay's painting is based on a sketch he had made in 1805; it is painted over a proof stipple engraving of the same subject, and in a further version it formed the frontispiece to the first volume of his *Scenery and Costumes* (1826). Captain Grindlay was the sole author of 11 further oil portraits formerly in the museum, of which three survive: all were presented by J. Matthews – most likely the same with whom the partnership of Grindlay, Christian & Matthews was formed in 1839.

To be added to this small corpus is the huge archive of oil paintings on canvas that recorded at actual size the historical painted decoration of the Ajanta caves (present-day Maharashtra), an exercise

undertaken over many years by Major Robert Gill, mentioned above. In 1844 Gill was granted extended leave from the Madras Infantry to fulfil a commission from the Court of Directors to undertake a full survey of the murals, which date mostly from the fifth century CE; although essentially devotional in nature, these Buddhist murals provide unique insights into aspects of early dress, ornament and costume, as well as forming an art-historical resource of primary importance. With the aid of ‘the necessary establishment of assistants’, Gill devoted a large part of his life to the project (ultimately stretching over two decades), continuing with the work after he was invalided out of his regiment. The whole scheme of decoration was eventually captured in some 30 large canvases (fig. 11.9), augmented by architectural elevations and ground plans. They all came to rest in the India Museum for a time, but the majority were placed on loan for display at the Crystal Palace at Sydenham, where they perished when the building was consumed by fire in 1866: only four of Gill’s canvases escaped destruction at this time.<sup>60</sup>

### Devotional paintings

A distinct group of South Indian devotional paintings, in gouache on panel, card or stiffened cloth, in some instances inlaid with gold foil, glass or mica, stands out as unrelated to any of the Mughal- or European-influenced works in the collection. The genre has been surveyed by Anna Dallapiccola, who contrasts their ‘robust earthiness’ and expressive style with the conventional principles of courtly and Company painting and mentions their use by picture showmen in narrating to a provincial audience the stories from the *Mahabharata*, the *Ramayana* and other texts.<sup>61</sup>

### Paintings on mica and talc

As with so many other groups of material, the development of the practice of painting on mica and talc is attributed – in Bengal, at least – to the displacement of artists formerly reliant on the patronage of the Mughal court (where decorated translucent sheets of mica were produced for use in lanterns and lamps to be carried in procession on state and civil occasions). These painters, principally in Murshidabad but also at Patna and Benares, turned particularly to a European market, initially selling standardized sets showing crafts and castes or festival scenes to passengers in the riverboats passing up and down the Ganges

and later expanding their range both iconographically and geographically. A representation of a group of seated female musicians, disposed rhythmically across the image, serves as an example of their typical output, and there was always a market in the European community for images of the mysteries of Hindu religion, but occasionally the artists in question might be commissioned for more ambitious projects. Mildred Archer provides quite exceptional background to a group of 19 such paintings illustrating the process of opium manufacture at Gulzabagh, Patna, the prototypes for which were commissioned by Dr D. R. Lyall for a series of paintings intended for the walls of the opium factory itself;<sup>62</sup> when Lyall was killed in the Uprising of 1857, the artist, Shiva Lal (c. 1817–c. 1887), used the designs instead to produce small-scale sets on paper and mica for general sale.

Archer identifies a separate school of mica painting centred on Trichinopoly in the south:<sup>63</sup> the India Museum acquired a number of sets of such paintings, the most exceptional being a set of four volumes, titled *Trichinopoly Exports* and showing gods and temple chariots; it was first exhibited at the Great Exhibition of 1851. Other such groups in the collection include some 230 individual paintings, forming sets of between 3 and 18 images illustrating various themes – trades and craftsmen, domestic servants, modes of transport, musicians, dancing girls and other entertainers, ascetics and mendicants, Hindu temples and Muslim mosques and tombs.<sup>64</sup>

### Miniature paintings on ivory

The painting of portraits and views on small plaques of ivory seems to have developed as a result of European influence only in the eighteenth century, spurred, perhaps, by visits to India by a number of British miniaturists at that time. This suggestion was made by Mildred Archer, who notes also an earlier fashion in Mughal India (particularly at the court of Shah Jahan) for small portraits of the emperor, painted on card, to be worn in the turban. Indian artists readily adapted their techniques to the requirements of painting on ivory, with stippling and watercolour tinting displacing the use of line drawing and body colour.<sup>65</sup>

With the exception of the nineteenth-century historical portrait of Shah Jahan already mentioned, the most extensive group of such pieces within the collection comprises portraits of Sikh notables, many of whose names would already have been familiar in Britain. A number came to the museum earlier in the 1800s, but they were boosted by



**Fig. 11.10.** *Maharaja Ranjit Singh* (1780–1839), watercolour on ivory. Having lost an eye to smallpox in his infancy, Ranjit Singh, ‘the Lion of the Punjab’, consolidated the Sikh Empire in the north-west of India by his military skill; he also presided over a period of cultural renewal and established peaceful relations with the British. D 5 cm. Delhi. 03580(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

the arrival of over 40 further examples, the gift of Charles C. Prinsep, author of *Records of Services of the Honourable East India Company's Civil Servants in the Madras Presidency* (1885) and sometime assistant to Sir Thomas Metcalfe, Resident at Delhi (1811–19). Charles was the grandson of Henry Thoby Prinsep (1793–1878), who served in the Company's civil service and who rose to be a member of the Legislative Council of India. Henry Prinsep's volume, *Origin of the Sikh Power in the Punjab and Political Life of Muha-rajah Runjeet Singh* (1834), provides the background for many of the personalities portrayed, and the collection must surely have been his in origin. The majority of the subjects were protagonists in the Anglo-Sikh Wars, mostly ministers and military commanders at the court of Ranjit Singh (fig. 11.10),<sup>66</sup> together with a number of his Afghan opponents. The campaigns in the Punjab and in the North-West Frontier region were reported in detail in the British press; one may imagine that the 20 and more portraits of the rulers and generals involved would have aroused acute interest – even



**Fig. 11.11.** *'A Half Caste Young Lady of Bengal'*, watercolour on ivory. H 7 cm. Presented by Charles Campbell Prinsep, 1874. 03627(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

though tiny in scale (some were evidently produced as buttons). By the time Prinsep's donation was added to the museum in 1874, a generation had passed since the momentous events in which the subjects participated, but they would surely still have been fresh in the minds of the visiting public. The sojourn of Duleep Singh in Britain would have made his image very familiar.



Women are less well represented among the ivory portraits. Few of the individuals in the small number of named portraits can now be identified, but ‘Taj Mahal Begum’ is clearly intended for Mumtaz Mahal (d. 1631), wife of Shah Jahan, in whose memory the Taj Mahal was raised in Agra. The series of anonymous women (some with their children) include, in the language of the day, a ‘Half caste young lady of Bengal’ (fig. 11.11) – the acknowledgement of the subject’s ladylike appearance scarcely redeemed by the unsympathetic reference to her dual heritage. She wears a Regency-style dress, a pearl necklace and drop earrings. The dress suggested to Mildred Archer a date of c. 1810–20, making it one of the earliest ivory paintings in this genre.<sup>67</sup> The picture forms a comparatively rare representation of the sizeable Anglo-Indian population that emerged under the Company’s regime to occupy an uneasy position in contemporary society. More conventional (though equally unredeemed by its title) is an image of ‘Native women playing the saranghi and tom-tom’.



**Fig. 11.12.** *The Taj Mahal and Eight Other Views*, watercolour on ivory. The lesser views show (from the top) the Qutb Minar; the Mosque of Roshan ud-Daula; the Jami Mosque; the Salimgarh Fort, Delhi; the Golden Temple, Amritsar; the Red Fort [?], Delhi; the Red Fort, Delhi; the Pearl Mosque, Delhi. W 13 cm. Bought in 1867 for £6 8s. Delhi. 03572(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Postcard-like views of the country's best-known monuments formed particular favourites with the British; in one instance in the collection, these were distilled to a set of nine such views reproduced on a single plaque of ivory (fig. 11.12). All the principal sites are represented among the (other) single views, from the Golden Temple at Amritsar, the mausoleum of Akbar at Sekundra and the Qutb Minar mosque in Delhi in the north to the *gopura* of the temple of Minaksi-Sundaresvara in Madurai in the south. Interiors are less frequently illustrated, with the exception of the Diwan-i Khas at the heart of the Red Fort in Delhi: one of several images in the collection shows in intricate detail the setting of the Peacock Throne. (The original throne had been seized as a trophy of war by the Persian Emperor Nadir Shah in 1739 and was replaced with a substitute.)

### Drawings

Little or nothing separates some of these images from those classified elsewhere as watercolour or gouache paintings. Their illustrative value is made clear by the fact that several of them – including views of temples, tombs, rituals and everyday life but also, interestingly, ‘A glazed frame. Containing 27 drawings of personal ornaments, as shown in ancient Hindoo and Buddhist sculptures’ – are designated as displayed on the walls of staircases and galleries at South Kensington at the time of the museum's dispersal. In the later 1800s the opportunity was also taken to display works by students at the various government schools of art established in India: architectural, natural history and other subjects were shown from schools at Madras, Calcutta, Benares and Lucknow. Drawings were also contributed by John Griffiths of the Bombay School of Art (fig. 11.13a), including ‘Four frames, glazed, containing seventeen drawings ... illustrations of mode of wearing garments’, and by his colleague John Lockwood Kipling (‘Twenty-eight frames, glazed, each containing two sketches ... illustrating the craftsmen of North-western India’ and ‘Nine frames, glazed, each containing two sketches ... [of] illustrations of cotton culture’). The latter series includes studies from life showing seeds being sown, gunny bags being filled with cotton (fig. 11.13b) and farmers going to market. Both artists were enormously talented draughtsmen whose output constitutes, from a documentary point of view, some of the most valuable graphic evidence of the period.

The contribution of these drawings to the displays was highly rated by George Birdwood. They had been, he suggested in 1881





**Fig. 11.13.** (a) *Painting of a Bullock Rekla*, by John Griffiths, 1872. Watercolour on paper. Bombay. 0931(IS); (b) *Filling the Gunny Bag with Cotton at Khamgaon*, by John Lockwood Kipling, 1872; pencil, pen and wash on paper; one of a series on the culture of cotton, from sowing to the weaving of finished goods, undertaken at the behest of the government. 26 × 36 cm. Khamgaon, Berar (in present-day Maharashtra). 0930:14/(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

(by which time the India Museum had been absorbed into the South Kensington Museum),<sup>68</sup>

Objects of particular interest, during the last ten years ... They are from life and being rendered with perfect truthfulness, and skill, they serve to give a remarkable reality to the Museum in which it would be wanting without them, as an exhibition of the industrial arts of India.

More recently, they have been presented by Tim Barringer as 'replicating familiar tropes of racial difference, [indicating] a response to Indian handicraft skills among the Arts and Crafts group redolent of a critique not only of industrialisation but also of the imperial project itself'. The anxiety of Birdwood, Kipling and others of like mind led them, in Barringer's words, 'to invert the standard account of imperialism's triumphal technological transformation of "backward" colonised lands'.<sup>69</sup> The unforeseen ambivalence generated in contemporary society by the messages emanating from the international industrial expositions of the later 1800s and mediated in the museum context undoubtedly contributed to the widening re-evaluation of the ethical basis of imperialism whose ramifications continue to be passionately debated today.

## Sculptures

The former importance of Indian sculptures within the museum displays hardly emerges in the current survey, since the bulk of the collection went in 1879 to the British Museum and the remainder makes little impact among the material transferred to the South Kensington Museum.<sup>70</sup> The fortunate presence at the British Museum of Augustus Wollaston Franks (1826–97) as Keeper of British and Medieval Antiquities and Ethnography – a talented polymath, and very much the ideal person to fulfil the post at that time<sup>71</sup> – ensured a sympathetic reception there for a genre that had yet to gain a widely appreciative audience. While it is true that 20 years earlier a remarkably percipient correspondent in *The Times* had written of the Amaravati marbles – the principal focus of Franks's interest – that 'A more interesting collection of sculpture does not exist, and many of them will bear favourable comparison with the Elgin marbles in beauty of design, while they greatly exceed them in point of finish and careful execution',<sup>72</sup> there remained few who would go so far or who had yet developed an aesthetic sense that would encompass an interest in the unfamiliar field



**Fig. 11.14.** Railing coping (*uṣṇīṣā*) from Amaravati, carved in limestone: with young men carrying a garland emerging from the mouths of *makaras*. The lower parts of the garland are adorned with male worshippers flanking a *dharmachakra* ('First Sermon'), a tree (the 'Enlightenment') and a lost object. Borders top and bottom decorated with vine cartouches. Third century c.e. Now British Museum, 1880,0709.29. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

of Indian sculpture. Certainly, no sense had hitherto emerged that Indian antiquities should be a matter of concern to the British Museum: although as early as 1836 the Keeper of Antiquities, Edward Hawkins, had indeed felt it 'something of a disgrace to have so few memorials of our Indian empire' in the collections,<sup>73</sup> the terms in which his observation is couched are at best ambivalent. It would take the advent of Franks to bring about a fundamental change in collecting policy (fig. 11.14).

The sculptures from Amaravati ought to have formed a talisman for the awakening of European interest in Indian art, but for all that they represented far and away the most distinguished group of material in the India Museum, their history since they were first encountered on site by Colonel Colin Mackenzie had been a halting and irregular one. When Mackenzie first visited the *stupa* at Amaravati (in present-day Andhra Pradesh) in 1797, he found it reduced to 'a great low mound crowned by a smaller one, some 90 feet in diameter and 20 feet high, and covered with bricks and slabs of stone'. On a return visit in 1816, he excavated seven carved slabs, two of which were forwarded to the India Museum while others remained in Madras. Thirty years then passed before Walter Elliot arrived in 1845 to find the *stupa* further reduced to

a rounded mound, or hillock, with a hollow or depression at the summit, but without a vestige or indication of an architectural

structure or even a fragment of stone to show that a building had once stood there, every fragment of former excavations had been carried away and burnt into lime.

Elliot's own excavations produced a few sculptured fragments, which were sent to Madras, where they remained exposed to the elements for nearly 14 years before they too were forwarded to London; there they spent a year in a Company warehouse in Southwark before being transferred in 1861 to the India Museum – by then at Fife House – or rather to further unsuitable storage in the coach houses in the garden.<sup>74</sup>

It was there that they were effectively rediscovered by the architectural historian James Fergusson, who had been asked by Henry Cole to compile a photographic exhibit on Indian architecture for the 1867 *Exposition Universelle* in Paris; as a result of Fergusson's intervention, a complete photographic survey was now carried out to scale by William Griggs, registering all of the 160 fragmentary marbles, from which Fergusson attempted a reconstruction of the sculptural programme of the *stupa*, while four or five original pieces were chosen to accompany the display in Paris – an early illustration of the growing importance now seen to attach to them. Fergusson's *Tree and Serpent Worship ... from the Sculptures of the Buddhist Topes at Sanchi and Amravati* – a milestone in the scholarship associated with Indian sculpture – was published by the India Museum in 1868; it stands as a demonstration of the growing commitment of the museum (and of its keeper, Forbes Watson) to this novel field of study.<sup>75</sup> Fergusson's text is also revealing of the unsympathetic nature of the wider climate of opinion in which the work was undertaken: he strove, on the one hand, to avoid his subject being considered 'a mere local Indian superstition' by attempting to place it in a worldwide historical context, while at the same time attempting to ensure that it avoided relegation to the 'diminishing body of enthusiasts who are supposed to delight in the despised local antiquities of India' – that it should not be seen as 'a mere antiquarian crotchet on my part'. The volume's continuing reputation is an index of the degree to which he succeeded in avoiding both pitfalls.<sup>76</sup>

Little detail survives concerning the other sculptures that came to the V&A via the India Museum, beyond the few small-scale deities and other pieces considered here under the heading of religion. A number of pieces had been wall-mounted in the display space shared by the museum and the library at East India House. The 1851 guide to the

museum mentions 'in the immediate vicinity of the mantel-piece' (in addition to the Jain sculptures mentioned below) a representation of Rama, the God of Plenty

in white marble, with Sita, his consort, Lakshmana, and other satellites of his tribe; not forgetting Hanuman, a favourite monkey, who seems to form a most important personage in the list of these celestial ornaments. Krishna, the God or Goddess of Happiness, has also here two statues erected to his memory; as well as Durga, a terrible female divinity, who exemplifies the Goddess of Destruction, and is here represented as setting forth to slay the Makeshasura, some unhappy individual who has incurred her resentment.<sup>77</sup>

Sculptures had accumulated in sufficient numbers to form the dominant part of the display in the Mughal-style display space designed by Matthew Digby Wyatt which opened in 1858 (see [fig. 1.4](#)) – a development that would seem to signal an enhanced level of interest in sculptures already held in the collection rather than the arrival of a new influx. Although modest in number, a few of these pieces were nonetheless associated with some of the outstanding names in the history of British engagement with Indian sculpture. In the first decade of its existence, a number of pieces had arrived as gifts from Colin Mackenzie, a distinguished soldier and surveyor who ended his career as the first surveyor-general of India.<sup>78</sup> The majority of the pieces reaching the museum from Mackenzie were small-scale figurines (perhaps mostly near-contemporary in date), illustrative of the pantheon of Hindu deities:<sup>79</sup> only two larger antiquities will be mentioned here, both of them representing venerated teachers (or saviours, or *jinas*) of the Jains.

Acquisitions for the museum were deliberately sought at the sale in London in 1830 of the collection of sculptures assembled in Calcutta by Colonel Charles 'Hindoo' Stuart (c. 1757/8–1828): Michael Willis identifies one piece now in the British Museum – a hero-stone – which was acquired for the India Museum on that occasion, but there appear to have been others.<sup>80</sup> The extensive museum installed in Stuart's house had evidently been the most spectacular private collection available to the interested public, but it seems to have been treated with almost complete indifference by his contemporaries, both European and Indian. Its owner had been preparing to return to England with his collection when he died; the

fact that the sculptures in particular – many of them massive slabs – made it to London is remarkable enough; the purchase of these, almost *en bloc*, by the goldsmith John Bridge (1755–1834) ensured that most of them stayed together as an ensemble, to be displayed in a purpose-built pavilion in the grounds of Bridge’s house in Shepherd’s Bush<sup>81</sup> – forming at a stroke by far the most extensive display of its kind outside India. The fact that there are so few contemporary references to Bridge’s museum speaks volumes about the continuing lack of esteem in which Indian sculpture was held at this time. Following Bridge’s death, the bulk of the collection was acquired by Franks for the British Museum, where it still forms a major component of the recently redisplayed sculpture collection.

## Architectural models

Although conceived in a wholly different ethos from the foregoing, models of Indian architecture provided visitors to the museum with a further sense of the settings from which the other exhibits derived. Some models evidently recorded existing buildings and hence were, in a sense, commemorative, but others seem likely to have been constructed by designers for clients in the course of building projects. Hence, one entry in the catalogue of the Colonial and Indian Exhibition is for a model in ivory and ebony of ‘a tomb now being erected in white and black marble at Junagad, to the memory of the late Nawab’.<sup>82</sup>

Temple architecture was most numerous represented, although seldom in such numbers as to suggest a deliberate effort at systematic representation. Models of five Buddhist temples from Ladakh were lent by Sir Douglas Forsyth, forming a complement to the 76 figures of Buddhist deities from the same donor. Two further temple models in plaster from Yarkand may also have come from him. No fewer than 13 ‘models of religious houses, &c. of Thibet’, each identified individually, were presented by Captain H. Strachey. Temples of unspecified religions included one in ivory, with its own ‘painted and gilt wooden box lined with mirrors’, while 11 others (two in wood and the others of unspecified material) came from the remarkable collection of the Schlagintweit brothers.<sup>83</sup>

Classed as pagodas rather than temples are three models (see [fig. 5.13](#)), each of gold, embossed and chased, found together in the relic chamber of an ancient *stupa*, close by the Shwe Dagon temple in



Rangoon, being cleared by labourers to make way for a new barrack block in 1855. These were surely conceived as votive pieces and were found together in a relic chamber at the base of the temple; the type is well known, but the gold of these pieces renders them exceptional. They date to the fifteenth or sixteenth century and hence derive from the Mon kingdom of Pegu. They were found along with a gold headdress studded with gems, believed to have belonged to the Mon queen Shin-saw-bu (r. 1453–60) and to have been worn on royal progress. Other model pagodas appear in brass, and three further Burmese temples are listed in stone, wood and bronze.

The last-mentioned were among items transferred to the South Kensington Museum directly from the Company's store in Belvedere Road, rather than from the displays in the Eastern Galleries on Exhibition Road. A number of models of religious processions and ceremonies (as well as some secular houses) also accompanied them. It seems possible that these had formerly combined to form part of a thematic display for which no space had been found during one or other of the museum's migrations.

Of related interest here is an early copper-alloy model of the pillared hall of the Pudu Mandapa temple at Madurai,<sup>84</sup> thought to have been a votive piece, which was collected by the surgeon Adam Blackader in the 1780s: it came to the South Kensington at the same time as the Company's collections, but initially it had been presented to the Society of Antiquaries rather than the India Museum.<sup>85</sup> A single model temple in sandalwood is recorded from Benares and another is unprovenanced. A 'Mohammedan pulpit' in sandalwood came from Ahmedabad.

One source gives rather more character to the Indian domestic architecture represented in the collection (none of which survives) than can be gleaned from the listing of 1880:<sup>86</sup>

The models of Indian dwelling-houses of the upper class afford us some insight into the comforts and luxuries of the rich, and, surrounded as several of them are, with groups of the natives employed at their several avocations, enable us to form some notion of the domestic establishment and operations of an Indian household.

Military architecture – in which the Company demonstrated a particular and immediate interest with the curriculum at its military seminary at Addiscombe<sup>87</sup> – is similarly noted, with special notice given to:



A most beautiful model, executed in soft white wood, represents a fort on an eminence, surrounded by square, barrack-like buildings at its base; diminutive figures of soldiers are standing singly or in ranks about the ground, and the whole is carved with consummate skill and delicacy of finish.<sup>88</sup>

A large-scale model of the fortified city of Lahore mentioned in [Chapter 1](#) was certainly a European construction rather than an Indian one.

China was generally underrepresented in the India Museum, considering the country's economic importance to the Company by the mid-1800s, but a notable exception was formed by four models of Chinese 'villas', three of which claimed a position of prominence at East India House ([fig. 11.15](#)). For one observer in 1842 they formed an impressive introduction to the whole display:<sup>89</sup>

On entering the room usually first shown, our attention is at once directed to three large stands, upon which are models most beautifully executed in wood, mother-of-pearl, ivory, and silver, of Chinese villas. They were designed as a present from the Emperor of China to the Empress Josephine; but, on their way to France, were captured by a British ship-of-war. At the peace of Amiens, they were offered to Napoleon; but ... he refused to have the models, and thus the East India Company became possessed of them.

Nine years later, the author of the museum's first guide book thought them<sup>90</sup>

remarkably pretty subjects of their species. The work is of the most minute and elaborate description; all the details, even down to a representation of the happy proprietor of the charming demesne, being carefully given. It is impossible to imagine a more delightful bijou of a residence than any of these three models present.

Despite their former high profile, all but one of these models have disappeared without record over the years: the single survivor (now minus its pedestal) retains enough of its former delicacy to show how sophisticated they would have appeared compared to the more workmanlike products that constituted the Indian collection.



**Fig. 11.15.** Model of a garden villa in moonlight, executed in wood, metal, pearls, beads and feathers, with carved ivory figures. H 57.5 cm. Scu, China. 9348(IS).  
© Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

## Notes

- 1 MacGregor, 'Modelling India'.
- 2 'A visit to the East India Museum', *The Leisure Hour* 7 (1858), 470.
- 3 Cole, *Catalogue of Indian Art*, 109.
- 4 Here, on the other hand, the generalized 'Indian' setting was evidently conceived as less important than the presence of the presiding European judge.
- 5 One of the most impressive tableaux surviving today, representing an indigo factory with some 100 figures at work on various tasks, was commissioned by T. N. Mukharji of the Bengal Civil Service (and also a curator in the Indian Museum in Calcutta), whose published works are extensively cited here, for the Colonial and Indian Exhibition of 1886; it now forms part of the Economic Botany Collection at Kew Gardens. The maker is recorded as Rakhil Chunder Pal (1834–1911). See Caroline Cornish at <https://www.kew.org/read-and-watch/kew-empire-indigo-factory-model> [accessed 11.05.2023].
- 6 By the later nineteenth century, however, it seems that those figures destined for export to the international fairs, at least, could be fired to render them more durable – representing not only a technological development but a significant conceptual shift away from the ethos described above. See Bean, 'The unfired clay sculpture of Bengal', 615–22.
- 7 Mukharji, *Art-Manufactures of India*, 59, 62.
- 8 *Dickinson's Comprehensive Pictures of the Great Exhibition*, pl. v. In this context it may be noted that 'Indians of every caste', along with individuals from other parts of the empire, were indeed deployed as living exhibits at exhibitions of the later nineteenth century – certainly at the *Expositions Universelles* of 1867 and 1889 and most notably at the Colonial and Indian Exhibition of 1886, where a number of Indian prisoners were pressed into service to animate various craft exhibits. See Qureshi, *Peoples on Parade*, 240, 256–8; *Illustrated London News*, 17 July 1886, 88.
- 9 *The Crystal Palace and Its Contents*, 102. Among the figures sent to the Glasgow International Exhibition in 1888 were some illustrating 'irrigation by swing basket', 'irrigation by lever', 'well irrigation by leathern bags', and 'irrigation by Persian wheel' (Mukharji, *Art-Manufactures of India*, 71).
- 10 *Great Exhibition, List of Awards*, 44.
- 11 Messrs Hoggart, Norton & Trist (London), *A Catalogue of ... by far the greater proportion of the valuable and interesting Collection as exhibited by the Honourable the East India Company at the Great Exhibition in 1851*, 7 June 1852: lots 2043–54 (Native Trades, Habits and Costumes), 2055–60 (Wood figures Illustrating Native Customs), 2061–72 (Figures Curiously Carved in Wood, Models, &c.) and 1962–7 (Artificial Fruits and Vegetables).
- 12 Messrs Christie & Manson (London), *Catalogue of the Celebrated Collection of the Works of Art and Manufacture of British India exhibited by the Hon. The East India Company at the Exposition Universelle at Paris in 1855*, 9 March 1857, lots 3320–34.
- 13 Forbes Watson, *International Exhibition of 1862*, 275–7.
- 14 Forbes Watson, *New Zealand Exhibition, 1865*, 45.
- 15 Forbes Watson, *Vienna Universal Exhibition, 1873*.
- 16 The 'toys and waxworks' shown at Vienna included 10 figures in carved wood from Belgaum illustrating various trades and classes, and a further 26 'wood figures of animals' from Surat.
- 17 Mukharji, *Art-Manufactures of India*, 74.
- 18 Sir Edward Buck, in *Colonial and Indian Exhibition* (1886), 3.
- 19 Blurton, *India*, 64, fig. 1.
- 20 An entry in the Day Books (25 November 1857) records the transfer from the library 'to the New Museum' of 'A collection of Models of Fruits & Vegetables of India', but neither the material nor the number of items is noted.
- 21 Stepan, *Idea of Race in Science*, xviii and *passim*.
- 22 Brescius, *German Science in the Age of Empire*, 146–8, fig. 4.7.
- 23 Driver, 'Face to face with Nain Singh', 459–60.
- 24 Basu, 'N. W. Thomas and colonial anthropology'.
- 25 In addition to the India Museum, sets of castings were offered to museums in Madras, Lahore and Bombay (Schlagintweit, 'Notes on some ethnographical casts'); individual

- casts survive in museums around the world. The original plaster moulds were sold by Emil Schlagintweit to the Völkerkundemuseum in Berlin in 1883.
- 26 Zimmerman, 'Die Gipsmasken der Brüder Schlagintweit'.
  - 27 Schlagintweit, 'Notes on some ethnographic casts'. It may be noted that Adolph Schlagintweit took no part in the post-collection analyses, for he was murdered in Kashgar in 1857 (evidently having been mistaken for a Chinese spy), while attempting to return to Europe via the landward route.
  - 28 In this context it is of interest to note that when originally displayed at East India House, the casts were hung in the museum's sculpture gallery – perhaps another acknowledgement of the individual personality with which each was imbued.
  - 29 Driver, 'Face to face with Nain Singh', 459.
  - 30 Brescius, *German Science in the Age of Empire*, 266.
  - 31 See MacGregor, *Company Curiosities*, 155–6, and, more comprehensively, Driver, 'Face to face with Nain Singh'.
  - 32 Zimmerman, 'Die Gipsmasken der Brüder Schlagintweit'.
  - 33 See MacGregor, *Company Curiosities*, 157–66, with further references.
  - 34 *Reports of the Juries* (1852), class X, 279.
  - 35 Significantly, the achievements of the *Commission héliographique* were also noted with approval, particularly in its use of photography to record the national patrimony and in identifying those monuments in need of preservation: see Fenton, 'Photography in France'; Taylor, 'Pioneering photographic expeditions', 12–22.
  - 36 Falconer, 'Ethnographical photography', 30. In the following year the Day Books (16 July 1856) record 'Received from Secretary Four hundred & sixty six Photographs of Indian Scenes, Edifices & Native figures colored & numbered'; they had been 'purchased of Mr Fiebis of Champion Grove Camberwell at a cost of £71 – 8'. It remains unclear at present whether these remarkable early acquisitions came to the museum or were retained in the library.
  - 37 Biggs to the Secretary of State for India, 3 December 1877; IOR: L/E/2/103, item 50; Taylor, 'Pioneering photographic expeditions', 23. Biggs ('Retrospect of photographic experience', 232) records that the most legible results were to be obtained by applying whitewash to the inscribed stone and then washing it off the original surface, leaving the incised letters standing out in white.
  - 38 [http://www.luminous-lint.com/app/photographer/Thomas\\_Biggs/A/](http://www.luminous-lint.com/app/photographer/Thomas_Biggs/A/) [accessed 11.05.2023]. Biggs retired from active service with the rank of colonel.
  - 39 IOR: E/4/829, India and Bengal Despatches, 7 February 1855, fols 623–5.
  - 40 Taylor, 'Pioneering photographic expeditions', 24.
  - 41 Taylor, 'Pioneering photographic expeditions', 40.
  - 42 IOR: P/249/75, 595, quoted in Patel, 'Robert Gill and his circle of friends', 326–7. The term *banghy* originally signified a consignment suspended from either end of a bamboo pole or yoke, but came to be applied more generally to a messenger or to a messenger service.
  - 43 Fergusson, *Rock-Cut Temples of India*, Preface.
  - 44 During the era of the India Museum, the Archaeological Survey's work was primarily for the purpose of recording. Only after 1904, with the enactment of the Ancient Monuments Protection Act under Lord Curzon, did it assume formal responsibility for the protection and preservation of field monuments, sacred sites and portable antiquities.
  - 45 Deserving of mention here is Sir Benjamin Simpson of the Indian Medical Service, a member of the Bengal Photographic Society, whose exhibit of 'eighty racial types of northern India' at the 1862 International Exhibition in London won him a gold medal. Later he provided the illustrations for Edward Tute Dalton's *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal* (1872); this had its origin in a scheme to assemble in Calcutta 'in one exhibition typical examples of the races of the Old World, to be made the subject of scientific study' – that is to say, actual human beings – but when the potential for disaster in such a scheme came to be acknowledged, photography played a vital role in providing surrogate images.
  - 46 Desmond, *India Museum*, 119. It was Canning's intention that a copy of every print should be sent to India Office. Falconer (*Pioneering Photographers*, 24) records that prints made there from copy negatives were duly mounted in albums by John William Kaye and John Forbes Watson of the India Museum.

- 47 Falconer, 'A pure labour of love', 52, 54. Falconer acknowledges that while they stand as 'a straightforward contribution to ethnology', the volumes may also be interpreted as 'an example of the nineteenth-century fascination with accumulating and classifying exhaustive archives of data and knowledge' or as 'a prime illustration of the use of an ostensibly scientific project for political ends in the colonial arena'. Nonetheless, they form 'a landmark in the history of nineteenth-century photography'.
- 48 Acknowledgement should be made here of the contribution made by William Griggs, employed as a photographer within the museum and responsible (among other duties) for production of the prints used in Forbes Watson's *Textile Manufactures*. A reviewer in the *British Journal of Photography* knew of 'no other photographer who could have worked up such rough material into the presentable shape which the illustrations now assume'; George Birdwood later concurred regarding Griggs's abilities, although in the matter of the colouring of the chromolithographic illustrations he thought there was not one that was not 'an atrocious caricature of the original' and utterly misleading as an exemplar for artists and manufacturers. See Desmond, *India Museum*, 98–100.
- 49 Quoted in Falconer, 'Ethnographical photography', 32.
- 50 The Indian Museum itself was at this time in a state of transition. Founded by the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1814, the collections had been made over to a board of trustees appointed by the Government of India in 1865. The trustees opened the museum to the public in 1878; today it functions under the Ministry of Culture.
- 51 Falconer, 'Ethnographical photography in India', 33–5, 40.
- 52 Although it never impinged directly on the India Museum, for the profound implications of territorial mapping as one of the kinds of knowledge that were 'constitutive of the extension of certain forms of power', as a form of inventory 'testifying to the historical movement of colonization, occupation, and decolonialization', see Richards, *Imperial Archive*, 12–72.
- 53 *Sea-Pie* 1 (1842), 301–2. Now British Library, Foster 44 and 116. Some works are on long-term loan to the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, housed in the former India Office building in Whitehall.
- 54 *Illustrated London News*, 3 August 1861.
- 55 In 1893 William Foster produced a *Descriptive Catalogue* of the paintings, statues and prints in the India Office, many of which had come from the Company's collections. A number of paintings today held in trust by the British Library continue to hang in the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. Most are portraits of statesmen and military men, with a few historical scenes; also included is the large allegorical ceiling painting of *The East Offering Its Riches to Britannia* by Spiridione Roma, formerly in the Revenue Committee Room. All are by European (mostly British) artists. Information from Dr Richard Smith.
- 56 See Mitter, 'Art and nationalism'.
- 57 A note in the slip books, seemingly supplied by General Briggs, informs us that Sombre 'entered the service of Scindia and raised a brigade of infantry for that Prince. These troops mutinied for want of pay, and he & the Begum fled, on which occasion Somers [sic] under an erroneous supposition of being taken, shot himself, and the Begum returning to camp pacified the mutineers and deserting the cause of Scindia transferred her allegiance to the English Army under Lord Lake, who confirmed her in the estate she held from Scindia after its conquest by the British'.
- 58 At her death, Begum Sumru's wealth was inherited by the great-grandson of her husband's first wife, David Ochterlony Dyce, who thereupon also adopted the name Sombre; he was the first Anglo-Indian to be elected to parliament at Westminster.
- 59 Rohatgi and Parlett (*Indian Life and Landscape*, 257) record that Desai, a landowner from Gujarat whom Grindlay had met in 1805, came to London with a petition for the Company (perhaps the scroll he holds in the picture); in this approach he was aided by Grindlay.
- 60 The *Friend of India* (16 May 1873) tells us that the survivors were later found among the stores and thereafter were hung in the corridors of the India Office; by this time the paintings were said to have 'suffered much since they were copied by Major Gill, some have almost, if not entirely disappeared'. Some of these were in turn lost or destroyed in a fire in the Indian Section of the South Kensington Museum in 1885.
- 61 Dallapiccola, *South Indian Paintings*, 225, cat. 34.

- 62 In the later eighteenth century the Company came to dominate the opium trade in India and for a time developed a profitable (if clandestine) export market to China. Attempts by the Chinese Government to stamp out this trade led to the Opium Wars of the mid-nineteenth century, in which the Company, together with the British Government, sought to enforce access to this market by military force.
- 63 Archer, *Company Paintings*, 193–4.
- 64 For further details of these, see Archer, *Company Paintings*, 201–14.
- 65 Archer, *Company Paintings*, 215–16.
- 66 For the wider context of these images, see Archer, *Paintings of the Sikhs*.
- 67 Archer, *Company Paintings*, no. 244.
- 68 Birdwood, *Portfolio of Indian Art*, Preface.
- 69 Barringer, 'South Kensington Museum', 20, pl. 30.
- 70 No further account is taken here of the sculptures of British personalities (Wellington, Clive, Hastings, Coote, Wellesley and others) mentioned as occupying the lobby of the museum during its sojourn at Fife House: like the large-scale oil paintings mentioned above, these had graced the Company's administrative apartments at East India House rather than the museum. Several are now held in the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (information from Dr Richard Smith).
- 71 See especially the chapter on 'Sculpture from India' by Michael D. Willis, in Caygill and Cherry, *A. W. Franks*, 250–61.
- 72 'The India Museum, Whitehall', *The Times*, 22 July 1861. This was exactly the time at which James Fergusson (see below in the main text) rediscovered the marbles there: it seems not unlikely that he had a hand in the report (if he was not actually its author, his identity concealed in the *nom-de-plume* 'Observer').
- 73 Quoted in Willis, 'Sculpture from India', 251.
- 74 A single slab is said to have been affixed to an exterior wall of Fife House to proclaim its new museal function. Richard Blurton (personal communication, 14.07.2022) observes that some fragments reached the British Museum less formally – one from a barber's shop in the City – hinting that the lack of adequate curation provided years of opportunity for pilfering. Of those slabs that remained in India, many are now in the Government Museum, Chennai.
- 75 Fergusson (*Tree and Serpent Worship*, iv) mentions that the project was sanctioned specifically by the Secretary of State for India in Council, granting 'the permission and funds necessary for its execution, in the section of the India Museum devoted to the reproduction of works of artistic value'. The vast casting exercise undertaken at Sanchi by Henry Hardy Cole in 1869–70 was destined to directly enrich the South Kensington Museum rather than the India Museum.
- 76 On the other hand, Cohn ('Transformation of objects', 318–19) has revealed a curious ambivalence and lack of sympathy towards Fergusson's own engagement with Indian art and architecture: he maintained that it could be comprehended only with the benefit of a European classical education and that its analysis lay beyond the capacities of the Indian mind – a chilling reminder that individuals of a scholarly frame of mind might be no less imbued with prejudice than their contemporaries in the political and civil administration.
- 77 *East India Museum*, 4.
- 78 Treated at length in Howes, *Illustrating India*.
- 79 Horace Hayman Wilson (*Mackenzie Collection*) lists the Mackenzie material which included, in addition to an extensive paper archive, a coin collection and numbers of 'Images, Antiquities, &c'.
- 80 Willis, 'Sculpture from India', 261 n. 26.
- 81 See MacGregor, *Company Curiosities*, fig. 155.
- 82 *Empire of India*, 216.
- 83 For the Schlagintweits' further interest in Buddhism, see Driver, 'Face to face with Nain Singh', 448.
- 84 V&A, 98 to D-1870.
- 85 Guy and Swallow, *Arts of India*, fig. 25.
- 86 'A visit to the East India Museum', *The Leisure Hour* 7 (1858), 470.
- 87 See MacGregor, 'Fortifications in the sand'.

- 88 'A visit to the East India Museum', *The Leisure Hour* 7 (1858), 470. Richard Blurton comments (personal communication, 14.07.2022) that this seems likely to have been a representation of the rock fort at Trichinopoly (Tiruchirappalli), a popular subject in Company School paintings from south India.
- 89 *Sea-Pie* 1 (1842), 209–10. How much credence is to be given to the Napoleonic connection now seems uncertain.
- 90 *East India Museum*, 8.



## Collections of individuals and the emergence of ethnography

A number of assemblages of different kinds – mostly ethnographical – are treated as discrete collections within the 1880 catalogue,<sup>1</sup> though for the most part the kind of material they contain differs little in nature from items listed elsewhere beyond having been collected in a single place or province – in several instances by expeditions penetrating beyond the frontiers of India – and with a perspective that encompassed specific societies of producers or users rather than single objects or classes of material. In some cases the items concerned were only ever on loan to the museum (and were later returned to the owner), so that a degree of administrative convenience may have applied to the treatment of this material, but the preservation of these distinct groups may also be taken to reflect more significantly a growing awareness of the aims and methods – as yet still very generalized – of anthropological enquiry as a slowly emerging discipline and of the potential and practices of ethnography. It may be suggested that material acquired earlier by the museum was by this point recognized as being somewhat deficient in terms of records of the cultural context from which it had been recovered;<sup>2</sup> while the role of individual field collectors in this process is highlighted here, the contributions of Forbes Watson in recruiting such methods to forwarding the essentially mercantile aims of the museum nonetheless deserve to be appreciated. Absent from most of their respective records in the India Museum is any mention of the role played by the native Indian intermediaries in facilitating the formation of these collections. The names of those assisting the Schlagintweit brothers were carefully recorded elsewhere in the first volume of their scientific report, however, with exceptional recognition

going to one of these, Nain Singh, who received the gold medal of the Royal Geographical Society for his many services.<sup>3</sup>

## Captain Crawford Cooke's collection

Crawford Cooke enjoyed a successful career with the army of the East India Company, from his enrolment at the Company's Addiscombe Military Seminary until his retirement as quartermaster-general. The son of an officer in the Madras Civil Service, Cooke was born in the East Indies in 1816, was sent to Addiscombe aged 17 and arrived in Madras as a Cadet in 1835. Serving briefly as an ensign with the 33rd Regiment of Native Infantry, he moved quickly to the 2nd Madras European Regiment as a lieutenant and within a year had been made regimental adjutant, in which role he excelled. His knowledge of Hindi was such that he became regimental master and interpreter, entitled to draw an additional 'Moonshee allowance'.<sup>4</sup> Administrative skills were clearly his strong point, and the successive volumes of the *Indian Army and Civil List* show him progressing through the commissary-general's hierarchy and thence to the Adjutant-General's Department, first as a deputy assistant adjutant and ultimately as deputy adjutant-general of the army. In terms of rank he progressed to captain in 1852, major in 1859 and lieutenant-colonel in 1863. He is recorded as being in Burma with his regiment in 1853, during the Second Anglo-Burmese War, and on furlough in 1857. It seems most likely that this period of leave, after his service in Burma and before his promotion to major two years later, would have provided the opportunity for Captain Crawford Cooke to make his donation to the India Museum in London.<sup>5</sup>

The whole of the collection (25 catalogue entries) consists of 'Clothes, &c. worn by the Kachyen tribe, Burmah', along with weapons – spears, swords or knives, two powder horns, three bags and some miscellaneous ornaments. A contemporary account characterized the Kachin as follows:

The Kay-kyens, a very large and numerous tribe, of Singpho origin, extend from the Irawaddy to China, and from Bamoo to Thibet. It is not certain whether they have a distinct territory. Many of them reside in the province of Bamoo, particularly around Mogoung, and are distinguished by tattooing the space between their eyes ... Their language resembles the Burman, but as a

people they are remarkably different from Chinese or Burmans. They are much less civilised than the tribes around them.<sup>6</sup>

The mechanism by which Crawford Cooke acquired these items is unrecorded, as is any hint as to whether he developed a more sympathetic relationship with them than is evident in this rather chilling passage.

## Sir Douglas Forsyth's collection

To read the *Report of a Mission to Yarkund in 1873* compiled by Sir Douglas Forsyth (with contributions from H. W. Bellew and others) is to gain a sense of a man singularly well suited to the undertaking. He freely expresses his admiration for all levels of the remote societies he encounters, 500 miles north-east from Lahore as the crow flies, but reached with great difficulty over some of the highest ice-bound passes in the world, and he takes appropriate interest in every detail of the natural and the man-made world he encounters. Some 20 years earlier, however, he had developed a reputation as a distinctly harsh deputy commissioner who (according to his entry in the *Dictionary of National Biography*) 'relished' hunting down rebels in the aftermath of the Uprising and who, only a year before the mission, had lost his appointment as Commissioner for Umbala (Ambala) for approving the 'blowing away' of 16 Sikhs implicated in murder from the muzzles of cannon. It is noteworthy that at several points in his narrative, Forsyth compares Indian society unfavourably with that which he encountered in Turkestan, giving the impression that he felt considerably more in sympathy with the peoples he encountered there than with those for whom he had day-to-day responsibility.<sup>7</sup>

Forsyth had received instructions from the viceroy and governor-general in council in Bengal 'to endeavour to obtain the fullest and most precise information on every subject, connected with the condition, resources, history, geography, and trade of Yarkand and the neighbouring countries', a commission in which he must be said to have succeeded admirably, aided by an extraordinarily able team of military and civilian personnel and scientific associates, supported logistically by Indian personnel. Although it is tempting to view the collection of anthropological objects as the physical analogue of Forsyth's published report, nowhere in that text – nor in his *Autobiography*, nor in the equally engaging narrative of the expedition produced independently

by Forsyth's deputy, Lieutenant-Colonel T. E. Gordon – is there any mention of the acquisition of any such material. Considering that both men were keen – if not altogether unbiased – observers of every aspect of the societies they encountered and that the quantities of material brought back clearly must have presented quite a logistical problem, it seems almost perverse that there should be no record of it before the collection appears unequivocally in the 1880 catalogue as 'Ethnological collection from Yarkund, made by Sir Douglas Forsyth in 1873–4', but for the moment that is how things stand.

Forsyth's expedition, begun in the summer of 1873 and concluded a year later, proved a success in diplomatic and commercial terms. As well as Yarkand, a sizeable city of some 5,000 households with extensive suburbs ruled over by an amir described by Forsyth as enlightened and free from all prejudice,<sup>8</sup> the mission visited Kashgar and Yangi Hissar. The team was also eager to undertake some impromptu archaeological excavations which, although no further details are given, sound distinctly opportunistic and unsystematic:

We learned that there was a ruined city not far off which had belonged to an Uighur chief and which ... had been destroyed by Arslan Khan more than 800 years ago. Starting next morning with spades and pickaxes, we determined to see what remains of former civilization could be dug up, and after a weary search found broken pieces of pottery, bits of copper, broken glass and China, and two coins ... The discovery of glass here is remarkable, for there is none used now-a-days and the art of making it seems wholly unknown.

None of these antiquities appear in the collection as catalogued, which amounts to some 458 entries; of these, 38 items were not gifts to the museum but were entered as 'Lent by Sir D. Forsyth' (though not all seem ever to have been recovered by him or his heirs). Although not listed by type or by function, the principal contents (most of which are indeed from Yarkand,<sup>9</sup> while others come from Yangi Hissar, Ladakh and Kashgar) may be summarized as follows.

Textiles form a considerable part of the collection and were, perhaps, more purposefully sought out than other materials. They range from a sample of raw cotton from Yangi Hissar and 'bundles of thread' to finished muslins, chintzes and velvets to striped, chequered and printed cottons. Silk is represented, from cocoon stage and raw silk to finished textiles in flowered patterns. As well as these (presumably)

local products, care had been taken to acquire 'Two bundles of coloured chintz. Samples of Russian goods selling in Kashgar market'. Carpets, rugs and blankets are present in some numbers. Two cloth dolls and a fakir doll are also mentioned.

Clothing forms another major area of interest: garments for men, women and children are well represented. There are ladies' trousers, *chogas* (long-sleeved robes), underwear in embroidered silk, cotton shirts, braids for headdresses, neckties, veils and waistbands; Chinese silk coats also make an appearance. Menswear includes leather trousers, several turbans and a 'piece of turban cloth made of silk, cotton, and gold, and stamped with a few lines of the Koran, worn in time of battle'. Caps and hats for both sexes are well represented, many of them in flowered silk; there is also 'hair sold for making up plaits'. There are woollen stockings, shoes (some of them for children) and leather boots, some lined with fur and others embroidered with silk; some shoes are accompanied by leggings. Accessories include embroidered bags and purses.

Concern for personal care is witnessed by numbers of companion sets, scissors, tweezers, razors and wooden combs (one 'with bone ends, in wooden case') – not to mention a 'cake of Yarkundi soap'. There are *chillums* and pipes of various forms and materials (brass, clay, wood, gourds) and a leather snuff flask and tinder pouches, as well as 'two bundles of split wood matches'. Personal ornaments receive less attention, but they include rings, bracelets and decorative buttons.

Musical instruments are represented by an unspecified reed instrument, a 'zittar', drums, rattles (three of them 'dervish rattles'), cymbals and three brass horns from Ladakh, the latter including two 'long' horns – probably telescopic trumpets, a well-known feature of Himalayan Buddhist monasteries. 'Five Buddhist Temples' from Ladakh were presumably models, as were two Buddhist temples in plaster. They were accompanied by 'Seventy-six Buddhist deities, lamas and chortens' of clay and plaster from the same source. Also from Ladakh came a turquoise-mounted bronze shrine, a hand prayer wheel and a prayer bell. There are also several jade idols from Yarkand.

Articles from everyday life are represented by several vessels of bronze or tinned copper. There are three cups of green soapstone, lamps and spoons of glazed earthenware, a horn oil holder, several turned wooden cups and wooden ladles and spoons. Several locks and keys are listed, and a number of knives with sheaths. More warlike are several daggers, a sword and scabbard, some arrows in a quiver, and 'Ten iron crows' feet for disabling cavalry' – that is to say, caltrops. Firearms are

barely mentioned: one matchlock only, and a horn powder flask. Horse gear includes several saddles, saddle pads, a pair of stirrups, a saddle cloth and a chintz horse covering.<sup>10</sup>

Trades and industries are represented by some fairly mundane items – a carpenter’s line and a handsaw, cobblers’ awls and knives, weaving implements including six sleys – the frameworks that support the reeds through which the warps are threaded on a loom – and a wooden die for stamping cloth. Samples of the kind of paper used locally are included, as well as ‘Ten sheets of Russian paper used in Yarkund’. A pair of scales and a wooden steelyard stand duty for commerce in a general sense, and a single sickle and a ploughshare for agriculture. Everyday life is represented by models of a watchman’s cart and a pieman’s cart.

The collection also includes six manuscript volumes identified by title, four of them in leather bindings, and a number of casts of inscriptions.

## Sir Frederic Goldsmid’s collection

The small collection of ethnographic items contributed by Sir Frederic Goldsmid (1818–1908) accurately reflects the theatre in which he spent much of his service, firstly during the installation of the telegraph line between Europe and India, through Persia and Baluchistan, during which time, as director of the Indo-European Telegraph Company, he personally supervised the erection of the poles along much of the route, and secondly as chairman of the commission that sought to establish mutually agreed boundaries between Persia and Baluchistan and between Persia and Afghanistan respectively.

Clothing accounts for most of the collection – socks and leggings from Angora and elsewhere in Asia Minor and from Bam in Persia; caps from Tehran and elsewhere in Persia and from Baluchistan; *baruk* cloth samples from Badjistan in Persia; waistbands from Darjeeling; a saddlebag from Kutch. They have all the appearance, however, of a collection of personal souvenirs, with no organizing principle and lacking a particular programme.

## Colonel Charles Seton Guthrie's collection

The most spectacular group of hardstones and precious gems in the museum collection is that composed of 100 items assembled in the mid-nineteenth century by Colonel Charles Seton Guthrie (1807/8–74). During a long and successful career in the Bengal Engineers, Guthrie had applied himself to the accumulation of the most outstanding collection of its kind; his individual purchases of high-quality precious objects were boosted by some spectacular pieces acquired at the prize sale of Punjab state property at the conclusion of the First Anglo-Sikh War in 1846; at the dispersal of the Sikh treasury at the end of the Second Anglo-Sikh War in 1849; and again at the dismemberment of the Mughal treasury in Delhi at the fall of the dynasty in 1857. After his retirement in 1862, Guthrie continued to expand his collection with purchases made on the European market. His collection formed a special attraction at the *Exposition Universelle* in Paris in 1867 and the following year Guthrie offered it in its entirety to the India Office for £8,000, with the alternative that a selection could be made: ultimately, £5,000 worth was chosen for the India Museum. Following Guthrie's death, the remainder was sold at auction by Christie's in 1875, when further items were acquired directly by the South Kensington Museum.<sup>11</sup> The many gem-set ornaments in the collection include finger rings in white jade, some set with rubies and emeralds, and others with diamonds set in gold; several archers' thumb rings in white jade are similarly ornamented with gems. Other personal ornaments account for much of the collection: of special note are a pendant of white jade, enamelled and set with emeralds and rubies; a similar pectoral ornament with a pendant emerald; a head ornament; and a bracelet composed of plaques of dark green jade with rubies set in gold. Buckle- and belt-ornaments are present in white jade, with diamonds, rubies and emeralds set in gold. A comb of white jade set with rubies finds a companion scent bottle in jade in the form of a tiger's head. There are vessels studded with rubies – cups, bowls, handled vases, flasks – as well as plates, saucers, knives, spoons and trays in the form of leaves and scallop shells – all in jade. Boxes include some with covers in white jade, one set with diamonds rubies and emeralds, another with rubies and crystal, and one ornamented with gold bands; a pen box and cover and a pen holder of white jade set with diamonds, rubies and emeralds. Daggers with handles in various colours of jade are listed, one in the form of a goat's head with tiger



skin sheath; a gem-set sword hilt in white jade forms a particularly noteworthy piece.

While it was displayed with the India Museum collection in the Eastern Galleries at South Kensington, the Guthrie collection continued to be identified as such and had a case to itself, rather than being merged with the other material. Since that time, occasional opportunity has been taken to reunite certain outstanding pieces that were dispersed at the Guthrie sale. In 1962 the most important of these – a wine cup of white nephrite jade bearing an inscription showing that it was made for the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan (r. 1628–58) – was purchased for the V&A, where it forms an eloquent testament to Guthrie's taste and enterprise (see [fig. 5.18](#)).

## Sir George Harvey's collection

Twenty-six entries in the catalogue refer to items loaned by Sir George Harvey (and subsequently returned to him). They account for nine sabres, several with hilts gilt or decorated with *koftgari* and one with an inscribed blade; two straight swords, one with a watered blade; two long two-edged swords, one with a gauntlet hilt (*pata*); two maces; two kris; a pair of brass-mounted cavalry pistols and a blunderbuss; a 'leather belt, with two embroidered cartouche pouches, three horns, and three small tools'; an embroidered quiver with 26 arrows; two shields with metal bosses; and one 'Shako with plume. Old'.

The identity of Harvey – and hence his motives and methodology of collecting – remain uncertain.<sup>12</sup>

## J. L. Hopkins's collection

Described as 'of Trinity College, Cambridge', this can only be John Larkin Hopkins (1819–73), organist and composer of church music, whose life was devoted entirely to music and who had no recorded connection with India. At the age of 22 he was appointed organist of Rochester Cathedral and in 1856 was elected organist of Trinity College, Cambridge, where he took a doctorate in music in 1867. In the course of his life he published several collections of anthems, carols and songs. How he came to present to the India Museum a collection of nearly 40 items from Central Asia is entirely unclear: since his name is otherwise unknown in collecting circles, it seems

likely that they had been gathered by an unnamed friend or relative and that Hopkins saw the India Museum as the most appropriate repository for them.

## Dr Gottlieb Leitner's collection

The extensive collections assembled by Gottlieb Wilhelm Leitner (1840–99) in the course of a number of expeditions to Central Asia, undertaken between 1865 and his return to England 15 years later, were given a striking degree of prominence in the India Museum in its final home in the Eastern Galleries at South Kensington. The 1880 catalogue records nearly 600 entries for material displayed there, occupying 11 glass cases. Many of the entries are for multiple objects – ‘Seventy seven relics from Tibet reliquaries, many containing the ashes of deceased Lamas’ – perhaps the most reprehensible of trophies to our eyes<sup>13</sup> – ‘1,529 coins and casts’; etc. A great many come from the Himalayas and from ‘Dardistan’ – a term coined by Leitner himself to designate a region occupying parts of present-day northern Pakistan, Kashmir and parts of north-eastern Afghanistan – as well as Tibet and various cities in what was then Turkestan. During his time in office as Principal of Government College in Lahore, Leitner mounted several expeditions to the region, the encyclopaedic aims of which are encapsulated in the title of the volume he published describing his visits: *Dardistan in 1866, 1886 and 1893: Being an account of the history, religions, customs, legends, fables, and songs of Gilgit, Chilás, Kandíá (Gabriál), Yasin, Chitrál, Hunza, Aagyr, and other parts of the Hindukush* (1893). He further published *The Languages and Races of Dardistan* (1877), the whole forming an eloquent testament to the breadth of Leitner’s scholarship. His personal resourcefulness was no less impressive: unlike the well-provided team that accompanied Sir Douglas Forsyth on what was effectively an embassy as well as a survey, Leitner’s earliest expedition was undertaken with a single companion, who died in the Himalayas, rendering his achievement all the more remarkable.

Leitner is perhaps better remembered for his early interest in ‘Graeco-Buddhistic’ carvings: Gandharan sculpture (as it is now termed) held – and continues to hold – huge interest for its mingling of classical (Greek) styles and motifs with traditional Indian carving. Five display cases of material (plus some individual objects) are identified in the 1880 catalogue as containing material coming from Takht-i-Bahi, a

Buddhist monastery forming a key site in the recognition and understanding of the Gandharan style. Most come under the heading of 'Fragments of carvings in stone', but some 20 entries are seemingly for more complete figures in stone, terracotta and wood.

A somewhat fuller description of Leitner's collection is given in a publication of some six years earlier: *A Descriptive Catalogue of Dr Leitner's Collections Partly Exhibited at the Vienna Universal Exhibition of 1873 and Now Shown at the Royal Albert Hall Gallery*.<sup>14</sup> A few items are sufficiently detailed as to suggest a large degree of overlap between the two exhibits. For example, entries in the 1880 catalogue relating to friezes representing, respectively, 'figures engaged in games', 'seated figures and Buddhist railing' and '(Segment) with serpent pattern and moulding' may be compared with the following from 1873:

a very remarkable carving showing Indians at Olympian games, which, both in cast and original, is at the Vienna Exhibition. The most remarkable feature about the collection is the minuteness of the carving on the stone or slate, and the variety and completeness of historical and religious representation ...

... architectural fragments, in which the 'Buddhist railing', the device of serpent ornamentation ... is in the middle, and should be compared with a curious phallos brought from Tibet, and a Hindu emblem of the same kind, which is placed in Dr Leitner's Hindu group of architecture.

It seems likely that a large part of the collection shown in these two exhibitions (which evidently ran concurrently to some degree, and which contained at least some part of the body of material on which Leitner based his own understanding of Gandharan sculpture) subsequently found its way to display in the South Kensington Museum. All were later annotated 'Returned to owner, 1884–5'. In 1912, 11 years after his death, 'the Oriental Museum formed by the late Dr G. W. Leitner' was dispersed at Woking (where Leitner had lived and founded an Oriental Institute and mosque on his return from India) by the auctioneers J. C. Stevens.<sup>15</sup>

## J. W. Power's collection

The donor in question may be the J. W. Power recorded as a judge in the North-West Provinces in 1878. The collection, numbering over 100 items of arms and armour and described in the 1880 catalogue, had been loaned to the India Museum. Evidently it was not on display at the time of the museum's dispersal, and the collection was returned to the owner on 22 January 1886.

The collector clearly had a well-developed idea of his own interests, for there is a coherence to the lists of objects concerned. There are 30 swords, with little more description than having 'long', 'straight' or 'curved' blades (in one instance 'saw edged') and with some details of the associated scabbards – extending to little more than 'leather', 'velvet' or 'silver-tipped'. Five daggers have no further specification, beyond one being curved and one having two blades. There are in addition 16 *kukris* (one double-bladed), 17 *katars*, one double-bladed and one long, with a silver-tipped scabbard, 15 knives, long and short, and two sacrificial knives 'used by the Goorkhas' with scabbards. There is also one entry for a 'Double dagger. Horns, with steel points' – that is, a *madu*, designed for parrying as well as stabbing – and another where a similar item is more accurately identified: 'Shield. Small, with two antelope horns for daggers'.

Other weapons include six battle-axes and a brass-handled hatchet 'with receptacle containing pointed implements', an iron mace and a flail, consisting of an iron ball and chain attached to a handle. One detached spearhead is accompanied by a long spear 'used at marriage festivals, &c.' and a bill hook 'used by the natives beyond Nynee Tal'. Six Sikh quoits (*chakram*) and a steel bow complete this category. Firearms are few in number: a single blunderbuss, a gun barrel and 'Part of a matchlock stock, mounted with silver and ivory'.

On the defensive side are a 'Suit of armour worn by the Peishwars. Four steel plates on red velvet', and six hide shields with bosses varying in number from four to seven. With less of an appearance of cohesion, the collection also includes entries for iron spikes 'used by burglars in India', and for a Munipoori whip of leather.

Power's collection can have added little to the displays of the museum's own weapons, and indeed at the time of cataloguing in 1879 they were 'packed in [a] rough Wood Case'.

## The Schlagintweit brothers' collection

Under the laconic heading 'Ethnographical series of casts of heads of nations of India and Central Asia', the 1880 catalogue has reduced to anonymity one part of the spectacular contribution made to the India Museum by the brothers Adolph, Hermann and Robert Schlagintweit; apart from a dozen scattered agricultural implements and a single sword, other material added by the Schlagintweits – mostly in the field of natural history – finds no acknowledgement here, since it would already have been earmarked for the British Museum (Natural History) or the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew, depending on its nature.<sup>16</sup>

Having long harboured ambitions to penetrate the Himalayas, the German-born brothers – who had already earned their reputation with work on the physical geography of the Alps – found themselves at first rebuffed by the East India Company: it took the combined weight of the kings of Prussia and Bavaria, backed by the presidents of the Royal Society and the Royal Geographical Society – not to mention the Prussian Ambassador Baron von Bunsen and Alexander von Humboldt himself (whose holistic approach to research the brothers enthusiastically endorsed) – to secure the Company's agreement that they would undertake a much wider survey, principally involving completion of the Magnetic Survey of India. To this considerable task the Schlagintweits, with supreme self-confidence, added surveys charting the ethnology, zoology, botany, geology and topography of the territory they would investigate, stretching from Ceylon to the Himalayas. Moritz von Brescius has provided extensive documentation to show that these ambitions were based on no mere personal whim but stemmed from plans that the brothers should establish an entirely new India Museum in Berlin, under the patronage of King Frederick William IV; agreements were reached in principle that the collections would be shared equally between England and Germany.<sup>17</sup>

The same author finds evidence that the brothers spent considerable time in the India Museum and the associated library before they set out, and that the experience proved a powerful influence in shaping the institution the brothers intended to establish in Germany. In the course of their mission in India, from 1854 to 1857, the material gathered has been summarized as follows:<sup>18</sup>

Geology: from Ceylon to Khotan, and from Sind to Assam –  
20,000 specimens

Botany: c. 3,000 species in 12,000 specimens

Zoology: 6,000 birds (two-thirds as skeletons, the remainder as skins)

Ethnology: 64 skulls and 21 complete skeletons;<sup>19</sup> 250 plaster casts of faces and 50 of hands and feet; ethnographic material including clothing, weapons, ornaments, household implements, models of boats and houses, etc.

Not specifically mentioned in that summary was an important collection of manuscripts, while a taste for textile and paper manufacture resulted in some hundreds of specimens, labelled and mounted in nine albums for presentation to the Company.<sup>20</sup> This was precisely the kind of material sought by Forbes Watson, Reporter on the Products of India and curator of the museum, who is said to have found in them ‘a paradigm for his vision of a portable museum of applied natural history of specimens’.<sup>21</sup>

The valuable collection of casts of human features assembled by the Schlagintweits was discussed in [Chapter 10](#). Of the remainder of their ethnographical collections that reached the India Museum, a dozen zinc casts of Buddhist prayer stones survive, along with two original artefacts – both square-tipped chopping knives (*dao*), one from Assam and one of Burmese origin.

## Robert Barkley Shaw’s collection

The habit of mounting annual shooting expeditions from his home in the Kangra Valley in the southern Himalayas led Robert Barkley Shaw (1839–79) to make several excursions which carried him as far as Kashmir. Feeling himself suitably ‘initiated in the art of Asian travel’ and intrigued by the seasonal appearance near his home of Tibetan ‘petty traders’, Shaw set out on a private initiative in May 1867 for Ladakh and perhaps as far as Khotan, with the aim of meeting up with the caravans from Central Asia that annually come to Western Tibet and making the acquaintance of the merchants. He visited Yarkand and Kashgar – one of the first Englishmen to reach those places. Returning to England, he began to write up his account of his *Visits to High Tartary, Yarkand and Kashgar* (1871), but while it was still under preparation for the press, he volunteered his services to join the official mission about to be sent

to the same area under Douglas Forsyth in 1869–70. Accordingly, the manuscript was largely completed in the comparative discomfort of a return voyage to India.

Shaw had seen comparatively little of the city of Yarkand on his first, freelance mission, due to the restrictions imposed by prevailing etiquette, and Forsyth's mission too would meet with frustration due to the ruler, Yakub Beg, being elsewhere in his realm at the time of their visit. Nonetheless, in recognition of the valuable services he performed on these outings, Shaw was appointed to the political department by Lord Mayo and was made a joint commissioner in Ladakh. In 1875 he returned to Yarkand to oversee ratification of the treaty drawn up with the ruler by Forsyth the previous year.

Shaw's collection was dominated by clothing: there are over 20 caps – velvet and silk, felt and wool, embroidered and plain or fur-trimmed; some 25 robes; a dozen pairs of boots and slippers; and a similar number of bags and pouches, variously embroidered. There are also 76 entries for enumerating textile samples of named varieties, 'collected at the fair held at Peshawar December 1869'. Various dress ornaments – pendants, bracelets, earrings and so on – are listed, half a dozen fans and their cases, and a number of combs. Among items relating to crafts and industries, carpenters' tools are particularly represented: saws, a plane, a spokeshave, an adze, a rule and a carpenter's line housed in a horn (the latter illustrated in Shaw's *Visits to High Tartary, Yarkand and Kashgar* (1871)).

There are two steelyards and a 'weighing machine', and miscellaneous products – scissors, snuffers, lamps and half a dozen tinder pouches. Horse gear includes a saddle, several pairs of stirrups and girths, and a complete set of leather trappings – bridle, martingale and crupper – and a whip; anti-cavalry 'crows' feet' are also included. Arms and armour are not well represented – two bows, a few arrows, a double bullet mould and 'a piece of chain mail'. A number of items point to successful encounters with Chinese traders – over 30 items in jade, three sets of chopsticks in carrying cases and perhaps also the abacus listed from the collection. Natural history specimens listed include several trophy heads and five yaks' tails.

The collection received on loan by the India Museum is identified as having been formed during the 1869 expedition. With the exception of about 20 textile fragments, it was later withdrawn and 'sent to Oxford', before becoming the property of Miss Anne Younghusband.<sup>22</sup> (Robert Shaw's sister Clara had earlier married Major-General John Younghusband; Anne would have been his aunt.)



## Notes

- 1 For the contributions of other donors – which might be more numerous than those considered here but which were not identified as discrete collections in the 1880 catalogue – see the survey of ‘Contributors to the India Museum’ presented online at <https://www.vam.ac.uk/research/projects/the-india-museum-revisited>.
- 2 In this context, the care taken by the early curators to preserve indigenous nomenclature (see Appendix) is of particular interest.
- 3 Driver, ‘Face to face with Nain Singh’. In another context, Colonel Colin Mackenzie was notable in acknowledging his debt to the ‘pandits’ who accompanied his surveying expeditions and on whom he relied totally for the translation of texts and inscriptions (see Chapter 11).
- 4 IOR: L/MIL/11/45/139.
- 5 In the slip book entries for the items in the Cooke collection, the acquisition date is given as 7 November 1877, but since the donor had by that date held the rank of Colonel for 14 years, it cannot be right. It may be an error for 1857, as suggested above.
- 6 Bell, *Account of the Burman Empire*, 97–8.
- 7 Numbers of Forsyth’s friends leaped to his defence in this matter. In a letter to *The Times* of 18 May 1872, written at the behest of several others, Lawrence Peel claims that Forsyth had been the victim of misconstruction: ‘only a man new to India would put a slight on him’; he was good, earnest and courageous, ‘and above all, his tenderness towards and love of the natives have placed him ... as high in my esteem and love as any man I ever knew’.
- 8 Whatever the accuracy of Forsyth’s impression of the amir (and independent evidence either way has not been found), his assessment clearly indicates that the two men experienced a meeting of minds.
- 9 A few items were bought in the market, but the sources of most are unrecorded; seven pairs of coarse woollen socks were ‘received from the Mir of Shighnan, Yarkand’.
- 10 Some items – polo mallets and balls – were presented by Forsyth to the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford, where they remain today.
- 11 For examples, see three jewelled thumb rings from the collection described by Susan Stronge in Skelton, *Indian Heritage*, nos 304–6.
- 12 See <https://www.vam.ac.uk/research/projects/the-india-museum-revisited>.
- 13 These were returned to Dr Leitner in 1885 along with the remainder of the collection and their current whereabouts are unknown, rendering their removal from Tibet all the more unfortunate.
- 14 This catalogue lists 1,000 coins, 184 sculptures, 3,200 butterflies and beetles, 177 ethnographic articles and some 200 miscellanea from Leitner’s collection.
- 15 Stevens, *Oriental Museum*. A number of musical instruments were bought at the sale by Henry Balfour, on behalf of the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford, where they remain.
- 16 The collection of ‘ethnographical heads’ was presented to the East India Company in 1859. In the course of the closure of the Leadenhall Street premises and the reopening of the India Museum two years later at Fife House, some of the collections had already been depleted. *The Times* reported on 22 July 1861: ‘Some very considerable inroads were made into the collection by the trustees of the British Museum, who were authorized to take any specimens they thought proper, and they availed themselves of the liberal offer to the extent of clearing off nearly all the specimens of natural history.’ Economic botany collections from the museum, including 557 Schlagintweit timber specimens, each bound in metal, were transferred to Kew in 1879.
- 17 Brescius, *German Science in the Age of Empire*, passim. Stephanie Kleidt, in her ‘List und Last’, observes that the brothers’ particular skills lay in geological and geographical survey; much of the collecting in other areas was delegated to members of their team.
- 18 Kleidt, ‘List und Last’, 117.
- 19 Undoubtedly, these would have been collected in response to the brothers’ interest in physical metrology and certainly without the agreement or support of the communities involved. No trace has been found of their present-day whereabouts, which, combined with the disrepute into which that pseudoscience has fallen in the meantime, renders their collection all the more regrettable.

- 20 The volumes in question now form part of the British Library's India Office collections: see Armitage, 'Schlagintweit collections', 2.
- 21 Driver and Ashmore, 'Mobile museum'; Driver, 'Face to face with Nain Singh'.
- 22 The transfer brought the material in the first instance to the Indian Institute in Oxford; later (in 1932) the bulk of the items joined the permanent collections of the Pitt Rivers Museum, where many of those that survive can be related to the 1880 catalogue of the India Museum. A smaller number, primarily textiles, went to the Ashmolean Museum.

## The India Museum (partly) recollected

A primary aim of this review has been to summon up something of the content and character of the India Museum through those parts of the collection whose ownership was transferred at the institution's closure to the South Kensington Museum. Considering the comparatively high profile enjoyed by the museum that emerged at the heart of East India House and which functioned independently in changing form for some 80 years, little sense has survived of the immersive experience enjoyed there by the nineteenth-century visitor, the methods by which the collections were presented or the messages they sought to communicate. According to George Birdwood's final reckoning of the collections,<sup>1</sup> natural history specimens outnumbered the manufactured items by 21,000 to 15,000; even though those figures have been amended by subsequent cataloguing and research, there remain good reasons for proposing that the items reviewed here probably played the larger role in impressing the visiting public. Those parts of the original collection dispersed to other recipients – particularly the natural history collections, aptly characterized by Jessica Ratcliff as 'the stuff of science: specimens, records, observations, data, and information of many kinds'<sup>2</sup> – were undoubtedly of major significance, however, and although they lie beyond the scope of the present exercise, they demand acknowledgement here in order to secure a context for the claims made for the material culture collections. At the closure of the museum, specimens from the various collections were offered to (among others) the Indian Museum in Calcutta, the Indian Institute of the University of Oxford, the Science and Art Museum in Dublin, the Philosophical Society at Scarborough, the Maidstone Museum in Kent and the museum of the Pharmaceutical Society in London, while some

were transferred to the Food Museum or the Animal Products Museum at Bethnal Green. All of those materials would have formed important elements of the museum, but the bulk of the collections alienated at this time went in major tranches to one or other of two national institutions: the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew and the British Museum.

## Material transferred to Kew

In numerical terms, the principal beneficiary when the collections were dismembered was Kew. The specimens concerned included some of the earliest material collected in a systematic manner by the East India Company – some of it dating to the two or three decades preceding the opening of the museum itself – but extending to material gathered up to the 1870s in evolving patterns of acquisition that kept pace with those detected in the previous pages. In scientific terms, many of these may be said to have constituted the most enduringly important element of the collection, and the names of the Company's botanists are forever engraved among the pioneer researchers of the Indian flora.<sup>3</sup> By virtue of their fragile nature, however, herbarium specimens in particular are not well suited to (and indeed are prone to being damaged by) prolonged exposure; for all their extensive numbers, therefore, the original specimens – even those forming the type specimens on which present-day botanists continue to rely – will never have played a major role in the public displays mounted in the museum. Indeed, many of the Indian specimens shipped to London at the Company's behest remained in the crates in which they arrived, awaiting the attentions of their original collectors or other scholars for their classification, research and publication. A rare example of this process in operation is formed by the 1828 arrival from Calcutta of Nathaniel Wallich, superintendent of the Company's botanical garden in that city and a towering figure in Indian botany, accompanied by 30 crates containing some 8,000 herbarium specimens; Wallich would spend the next four years working intensively on this material, although, significantly, the work was undertaken in rented accommodation in Frith Street rather than in the museum itself.<sup>4</sup>

By the mid-century there was already concern over the condition of the herbarium specimens in the Company's care, many of which remained in unsuitable storage in the basements of East India House or in nearby warehouses. In 1858 Joseph Hooker, then assistant director at Kew, was given access to the collection with a view to arranging it

and supplementing his own research in India. The report of what he discovered makes sobering reading:

I found these Collections to be of enormous bulk; some are in unopened Chests; others are partially arranged, & the confusion is so great that it will be difficult to determine where, or by whom, many were collected – they have also suffered to such a degree from damp & the ravages of worms that it is to be feared many of them are irretrievably ruined.<sup>5</sup>

Hooker requested that the herbarium collections should be transferred in their entirety to his care at Kew, in order ‘to make their contents accessible to Scientific men’ and ‘to give the Hon[ourable] Company’s officers the credit of their labours’, to which suggestion the Company gratefully acceded. A dozen van loads of specimens duly made their way to Kew, along with the corresponding collection of some 3,360 botanical drawings which themselves formed a resource of major importance. These circumstances, along with the fact that it would take Hooker a further six years to put it all in order, will be sufficient to show how little impact this material could ever have made in the public spaces of the India Museum.

A further tranche of material, forming the Economic Botany Collection, would follow in another major transfer at the museum’s dissolution in 1879. These had been more narrowly aligned with the declared purposes of the India Museum in demonstrating the richness of the natural resources of the sub-continent and their potential use in trade, industry and manufacturing, and they chimed too with the thrust of the series of international exhibitions with which the museum was closely associated during the final three decades of its existence. Visitors ascending the staircase to the museum at East India House, having made their way past displays of textiles and mats, would have found on a landing ‘specimens of the hemp plant, and of various kinds of substitutes for hemp prepared from the fibre of other plants. Together with all these are shown some fine samples of ropes, cables and cordage’.<sup>6</sup> Whether the devices for manufacturing ropes recorded among the South Kensington Museum material were integrated with this or some further display is not recorded, but whatever their proximity, they and other elements of the technological displays clearly functioned in a complementary manner to those illustrating the natural resources of the sub-continent.

These parts of the botanical collections had more direct messages to contribute to the merchants, manufacturers and members of the

public who penetrated the museum's galleries. At the closure of the displays, they presented logistical problems of their own: among the material transferred to Kew in 1879, for example, were some 36 tons of timber specimens, ranging in size from small sample plaques to sizeable planks, the whole amounting to over 3,000 pieces, each stamped with an identifying number. The fate of this collection – only a fraction of which could ever have been on public display – is little short of tragic: having taken delivery of the material, Kew applied to the Company for the corresponding inventory that would provide the key to the numbered sequence (known to have been compiled in 1869 – significantly at one of the Company's storehouses rather than in the museum), but no trace of it could be found; all but a few hundred of the samples, having been rendered largely useless without their respective identifications, were accordingly disposed of, only for the catalogue to turn up shortly afterwards among Forbes Watson's private papers.

While other parts of the collection proved similarly challenging – notably the collection of 2,000 samples of rice amounting to 3 tons in weight and indicative of the Company's concern with finding the most productive strains – elements of it went on to play important roles in the Museum of Economic Botany established at Kew, an institution that remained aligned with the mission outlined for that part of the collection by Charles Wilkins in his founding manifesto for the India Museum.

In addition to exhibiting their collections in a comprehensible manner, it remains a common function of museums to maintain reserve collections that allow researchers to enlarge upon the messages communicated in the displays; in some institutions the reserves may vastly outweigh the exhibited material. It is paradoxical that despite the importance of the botanical material as outlined above, the period of its sojourn in the India Museum added little to the importance of most of it. With the honourable exception of Wallich's collection, it was only with the provision of ordering, precise identification and labelling in their new setting at Kew that the specimens, in the words of other authors, 'accrued new botanical and economic value'.<sup>7</sup>

For many of them, Kew would by no means form their final repository, for while some remained there to make a continuing contribution to research, thousands of specimens entered a new round of circulation as they were redistributed to other scientific and educational institutions or to individuals whose academic credentials earned them privileged access.<sup>8</sup> The practice was one that had always been at the forefront of botanical collecting in India as elsewhere, and had indeed

been prescribed in the agreement transferring ownership from the India Office. In several senses, therefore, the botanical collections may be said to have begun to play a more dynamic role after they left the India Museum than they had performed in the whole of the previous century.

## Material transferred to the British Museum

The collection that passed to the British Museum in November 1879 (and in a continuing trickle over the next 20 years) was of a dual nature: on the one hand lay the zoological and geological specimens and on the other material of an antiquarian or archaeological nature. Like the India Museum, which it preceded by only some 50 years, the national museum in Bloomsbury had since its foundation embraced a broad programme that accommodated all of these fields of interest,<sup>9</sup> although by 1880 work had largely been completed on the new British Museum (Natural History) – today the Natural History Museum – at South Kensington and the process of decanting the natural collections was about to begin.

Unlike the herbarium specimens, the animals and birds had indeed formed integral parts of the India Museum display. A description of the museum from 1851 singles out one room in the sequence visited as

by far the largest and most handsome of the series. It contains an extensive collection of Birds, the smaller Mammalia, and objects in Natural History, many of which are exceedingly beautiful. The heads of an Indian Buffalo and Elephant, with the Monkeys, and above all, Butterflies, will be found especially attractive.

In the following gallery, designated ‘the new museum’, the visitor was counselled to ‘inspect the various interesting objects in Natural History – chiefly Birds and the smaller animals – including, however, the Buffalo, Thibet Sheep, and Goats, which it contains’.<sup>10</sup>

These rare snapshots convey some sense of the display, but a more comprehensive picture of parts of the collection, at least, is presented by the publications prepared by the sometime keeper of the museum, Thomas Horsfield, namely his descriptive catalogues of the Mammalia (with accounts of 289 animals, represented by mounted specimens, skins, horns, antlers and so on), the birds and the lepidopterous insects.<sup>11</sup> These are more than dry scientific listings, for they include accounts



of the habits of the species in the wild in a manner that must (if reflected in the labelling) have rendered the displays highly engaging; the insect volumes in particular draw attention to repeated attempts made at various times from 1820 onwards to rearrange the collections, a laborious process that formed a necessary preliminary to the task of compiling the catalogues themselves.

'A large donation of Asiatic Mammals from the old Museum of the Hon. East India Company', as well as 584 bird specimens, had already reached the British Museum in 1860, well before the final dissolution.<sup>12</sup> When the time came for their transfer, Albert Gunther, keeper of zoology at the British Museum, immediately began the process of listing the items received and within three months had reached totals of 672 mammals, 6,409 birds, 125 fishes and over 1,250 other specimens. Although the numbers are impressive, some parts of this harvest ultimately proved all too fragile, for within 25 years a review of the bird specimens made depressing reading: many of Horsfield's type specimens, for example, had been very imperfectly preserved, 'and during the removal of the collections from Leadenhall Street to Fife House, although they were carefully packed, moths destroyed nearly the whole of them; they are now ... nearly all devoid of feathers'.<sup>13</sup>

The mineral collections that Wilkins had singled out for mention in his initial proposal to the Company had duly arrived in quantity. Most spectacular were the fossil mammals excavated by Captain (later Sir) Proby Cautley and Dr Hugh Falconer during canal building in the Siwalik Hills – discoveries that had earned each of them the Wollaston medal of the Geological Society and which occupied 22 cases delivered to the museum, some parts of the contents of which were displayed there by 1846. Also among the most numerous were the 2,000 specimens of rocks and fossils from the survey work undertaken by the Schlagintweit brothers. Before the establishment of the Geological Survey of India in 1851, the museum had functioned as one of the most important repositories for such material, and new material continued to arrive thereafter: in 1853 John Fleming wrote of an extensive collection sent by his son Andrew from the Salt Range, Kashmir and Attock, that 'it must have reached its destination. I fear however, it may repose in some crypt until he [Andrew] returns on furlough' – and so it proved. By 1879 the British Museum took delivery of some 4,500 rock specimens alone from the India Museum, originating from a number of historically important collections and hinting at the importance of the whole.<sup>14</sup>

In terms of antiquities, the single most important group of material was represented by the marbles from Amaravati – part of the sculptural scheme that had enclosed and decorated the dome of a Buddhist stupa dating from the second century BCE to at least the eighth century CE and considered ‘one of the greatest achievements of ancient Indian art’ (see [Chapter 10](#)).<sup>15</sup> The sheer scale of these enormously important sculptures had posed massive logistical difficulties for the excavators (Colin Mackenzie and Walter Elliot, respectively) and for those responsible for their transport to England – where they consistently exceeded the capacities of the India Museum to display them. With their arrival in Bloomsbury, a major part of the collection was for the first time displayed in a coherent manner in a prestigious setting on the museum’s grand staircase; today they form a spectacular installation within the newly redisplayed Indian Galleries.<sup>16</sup> Other antiquities entering the British Museum at this time included the gold casket or reliquary from Bimaran (see [fig. 5.14](#)), excavated by Charles Masson, together with Masson’s coin collection and other numismatic material, the Roman mosaic from Leadenhall Street (see [fig. 3.8](#)) and a number of lesser antiquities.

## The collection remaining at South Kensington

Despite the alienation of large parts of the collection, as outlined above, the major elements of the displays in the Eastern Galleries remained on site on the western side of Exhibition Road. The authorities at the South Kensington Museum, subsequently the V&A, were content to leave the residual collections in place and to operate them as a satellite of the Indian Section within their own institution<sup>17</sup> – an arrangement that survived for almost as long as the original museum had endured.

A further subtle but nonetheless radical change was wrought, however, in the way those collections were now articulated, for although there had always been important areas of overlapping interest between the two collections, the commercial imperative that had been the primary driver of the India Office’s administration now ceased to play a direct role, and the cavalier attitudes to the integrity of the collection embraced by Forbes Watson were left behind as the India Museum collections began to operate within the very different programme of the South Kensington Museum.

The *First Report* of the Commissioners for the 1851 Exhibition – from which event the founding collections of the latter museum had

been drawn – had set out succinctly ‘the four great sections’ into which the Crystal Palace exhibit had been divided:

the first comprising the raw materials which nature supplies to the industry of man; the second, the machinery by which man works upon those materials; the third, the manufactured articles which he produces; and the fourth representing the art which he employs to impress them with the stamp of beauty.

Apart from the increasingly industrialized milieu in which production now took place, there was little enough to separate these preoccupations from those presented by Charles Wilkins to the directors of the Company over half a century earlier. Prince Albert’s vision that each of these categories would be perpetuated by national institutions founded on the South Kensington campus was only partially realized, but the ethos continued to prevail in the series of museums that took root there. It was from one of these, the Museum of Ornamental Art, that the South Kensington Museum had emerged by a change of title in 1857, with a mission that complemented that of the India Museum while greatly expanding upon its educational functions. At the merging of the two institutions, Sir George Birdwood of the India Office staff was appointed art referee for the Indian Section. His *Industrial Arts of India* was completed in time for the reopening of the collections in May 1880, and three years later Caspar Purdon Clarke was appointed as the Section’s first keeper. Even in this seemingly more stable environment, battles had to be fought to fend off moves to incorporate the collections into the neighbouring Imperial Institute that flourished for a time on the site adjacent to the Eastern Galleries – a move that would certainly have seen their reinterpretation with significantly more overt colonialist messages – or to a proposed Indian Museum whose grandiose outlines took shape on paper but which failed to be translated into bricks and mortar<sup>18</sup> – or indeed to disperse them throughout the remainder of the South Kensington Museum’s collections according to their typology and material but without reference to their origins.<sup>19</sup>

In their new context, however, the India Museum collections began to communicate messages relating primarily to the matters of design and manufacture that lay at the heart of their parent body. They had already begun to enjoy a newfound prominence in this field in the aftermath of the 1851 exhibition, when critics noted the superiority of Indian and Middle Eastern products in their consistency and coherence of design over the industrialized manufactures of Europe which, by

comparison, seemed to have entirely lost their way. Richard Redgrave had found the Company's displays of textiles 'not only simple, beautiful and correct ... but strictly ornamental, and abounding in suggestions of great value to those who will study them', a theme echoed by the pioneering Owen Jones, whose own designs for 'Indian Ornament' drew heavily on material from the Company's displays in London in 1851 and Paris in 1855, and subsequently from the permanent collections at South Kensington.<sup>20</sup> Perhaps to a greater extent than anyone else – and in direct opposition to the tastes forwarded by the influential John Ruskin – Jones succeeded in introducing aspects of the everyday vocabulary of Indian design to a wide public, finding within it 'all the principles, all the unity, all the truth, for which we had looked elsewhere in vain'; no doubt by the same token he attracted a more aesthetically aware audience to the museum displays at South Kensington.<sup>21</sup>

A further appreciation of Indian sculpture and painting – or at least a wider awareness among the British public of their independent validity – is attributed in no small measure to the zeal of E. B. Havell, former head of the Calcutta School of Art, in educating Western audiences in the values that had largely escaped recognition during the previous three centuries of contact – at least beyond the rather narrowly drawn membership of the Asiatic Society from the late 1700s. Havell's pioneering *Indian Sculpture and Painting* (1908) and *The Ideals of Indian Art* (1911) were widely read, while the founding of the India Society (in which Havell had a hand along with William Rothenstein) established Indian studies in London on a stable, committed and more diverse basis.<sup>22</sup> The Indian collections at South Kensington undoubtedly formed the first port of call for this growing community.

While periodic debate continued as to the desirability of amalgamating all the South Kensington Indian collections with those of the British Museum, the V&A's curators under the keepership of K. de B. Codrington embarked on a programme of redisplay in the late 1930s that took account of increasingly enlightened attitudes towards Indian culture by concentrating on broad historical, religious and cultural themes rather than the material and technological preoccupations of the earlier displays.<sup>23</sup> The intervention of World War II saw these initiatives put on hold; subsequent national impoverishment and lack of resources within the museum saw the achievement of independence by India and the subsequent partition of the population pass virtually unremarked in the collections, which were brought to a new low when the Eastern Galleries were scheduled for demolition in the mid-1950s

to make way for the expansion of Imperial College. Some of the most high-profile exhibits were moved to the main V&A complex at this point, but many more embarked on a series of peregrinations to offsite storage facilities, a process whose end is now foreseen, more than half a century later, with the anticipated completion of the V&A East Storehouse in the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, due to open in 2024.

Undeniably, the India Museum fell short in some of the declared aims of its own ambitious mission and from an added twenty-first-century perspective may be said to have failed in aspects of its representation of the sub-continent – just as British society as a whole has been slow to develop a set of attitudes that do justice to the unwilling subjects of its erstwhile empire. The potential of the collections has by no means been exhausted today, however, and by presenting them here in some degree of context, the present volume aims to contribute towards the return of this material to a field of debate that now engages a wide public distributed on an international scale.

Many aspects of the museum's history and significance remain to be explored, just as the objects themselves continue to offer a rich field for research. By intensively focusing on one aspect or another of the surviving material, curators at the V&A and other scholars have revealed in a range of exhibitions and publications (for which see the bibliography presented here) the variety and quality of the collections gathered at the India Museum over the space of some 80 years in the nineteenth century. Many of the highlights of the collection are now well known as a result of all this industry, but the broad overview of the museum's holdings presented here may serve to highlight some of the less spectacular but potentially rewarding aspects that remain to be investigated. That task will not be made easier by the fact that so many elements of the collection have been lost over the years, but the initial reconstruction presented here – together with the presentation of associated documentation through the India Museum Revisited website – may encourage others to continue to add flesh to the bones of this long-lost institution.

But perhaps it will be as an artefact in its own right that the museum will continue to attract most attention. The successive keepers of the museum each had a vision of the role they intended to pursue, and in the institutional history outlined above, it will be seen that all of them could claim a considerable degree of success. It is their stories that have formed the focus here, in order to give meaning and structure to the collections they accumulated. By contrast to the

metropolitan public addressed by the museum at East India House and later venues, today's audiences for the lessons to be learned from the collections are worldwide, including not only the population of the sub-continent itself but the enormous diaspora of South Asian peoples now distributed around the world. Their perspectives will be very different from those the nineteenth-century curators sought to project and will surely contribute to the enrichment of understanding of the collections: Indian and other South Asian scholars have already been at the forefront of this movement,<sup>24</sup> but by enhancing access to the documentary record and to details of the collected objects, the India Museum Revisited project also holds out the possibility for engagement 'beyond academia', as signalled in the introductory material above.

The material collections have been central to the present survey, and the lessons they have to offer are not to be denied. Undoubtedly, however, the India Museum will continue to feature most regularly in wider debate that centres on matters of colonial history and current preoccupations with the processes of decolonization. These are entirely to be welcomed, and if such matters have not featured strongly in the present text, their exclusion is to be explained by the stated ambition that this exercise has aimed primarily to reconstruct something of the content and character of the museum as it was actually constituted, rather than engaging at length with present-day interpretations of what it might have signified. Deconstructing it in socio-historical terms is a task that has had to be left to others – no doubt a great many others. That debate too should benefit, however, from the present reconstitution of a lost reality: by all means let us have much more discussion of the colonialist programme in which the India Museum played a significant role, but that museum was a physical construct and not an abstract concept. The 20,000 objects that came to the V&A following its closure form an eloquent body of evidence that can contribute much to continuing debate.

## Notes

- 1 Desmond, *India Museum*, p. 152.
- 2 Ratcliff, 'The East India Company', 497.
- 3 See, for example, Desmond, *European Discovery of the Indian Flora* (1992) and the many outstanding works of more recent date by Henry Noltie.
- 4 Wallich and Bentham, 'Numerical list'; see also De Candolle and Radcliffe-Smith, 'Nathaniel Wallich'.
- 5 Royal Botanic Garden Kew: 'Herbarium presentations to 1900', vol. I, 5 February 1858, fols 249–51.

- 6 'A visit to the East India Museum', *The Leisure Hour* 7 (1858), 470.
- 7 Cornish, Driver and Nesbitt, 'Kew's mobile museum', 103.
- 8 Cornish and Driver, 'Specimens distributed'. The botanical collections in particular had long been subject to periodic redistributions from within the India Museum itself: Wallich had been notably liberal in sharing material of his own and others' gathering, and the Linnean Society had been considerably enriched from the Company's collections in the 1830s.
- 9 Early moves to have the entire India Museum collection transferred to the British Museum are recorded from the 1830s and 1860s. At one point in 1879, the very year of the India Museum's demise, serious consideration was again given to transferring the whole of the collection there, on condition that it should be kept together as an entity; the British Museum's trustees responded favourably, but with certain provisos concerning funding which ultimately proved unacceptable to the Treasury. See Skelton, 'Indian collections', 301.
- 10 *East India Museum*, 12.
- 11 Horsfield, *Catalogue of the Mammalia; Catalogue of the Birds; Catalogue of the Lepidopterous Insects*. For the complicated history of the publication of these catalogues, see Cowan, 'Horsfield, Moore, and the Catalogues'. Horsfield's insect collection was transferred to the British Museum in 1860 (*History of the Collections contained in the Natural History Departments*, 564).
- 12 *History of the Collections Contained in the Natural History Departments*, 9, 254.
- 13 Bowdler Sharpe, *History of the Collections*, 396.
- 14 Moore, 'Geological collectors and collections'.
- 15 Willis, 'Sculpture from India', 256.
- 16 In the interim period the marbles were stored elsewhere for safekeeping during World War II, after which they were returned to the front hall for a time before being stored in an air-conditioned basement; in 1992 they were displayed in the Asahi Shimbun Gallery (at the end of the Hotung Gallery), where the interpretative display was much enhanced in 2017. Information from T. Richard Blurton.
- 17 Other oriental collections were later moved into adjacent gallery space, adding a certain coherence to the site.
- 18 For the unrealized design by Robert Chisholm, formerly government architect at Madras, see *The Builder*, 30 July 1910.
- 19 The latter proposal caused a particular stir, but the opponents of the proposal (including former Viceroy Lord Curzon and Commander-in-Chief Lord Roberts) eventually carried the day, with a printed memorial to the effect that such a move would 'annihilate a most valuable means of learning to understand Indian Art and, which is more important, something of India itself' (Desmond, *India Museum*, 200–1).
- 20 Ashmore, 'Owen Jones'. Ashmore mentions that Jones drew inspiration from metalwork, lacquerware and textiles – even from the India Museum's copies of the Ajanta cave paintings. Henry Cole bought extensively from these displays for the Museum of Ornamental Art, convinced that they would prove of 'the highest instructional value to students in design'; quoted in Tarapor, 'John Lockwood Kipling', 13–14.
- 21 The heavily contested debates concerning the capacities of Indian design to benefit that of increasingly industrialized Europe (which was seen to have lost its way in matters of integrity of design), and the largely negative effects wrought on Indian production by the introduction there of South Kensington-style schools of art and design, are discussed in Prasch, 'A strange incongruity'.
- 22 See Partha Mitter, 'Havell, Ernest Binfield (1861–1934)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/37520> [accessed 13.03.2022]. Curiously, the spur for the founding of the India Society was provided by a particularly insensitive and negative response at a meeting of the Society of Arts to Havell's claims for Indian art from none other than Sir George Birdwood.
- 23 Skelton, 'Indian collections', 303.
- 24 Contributions listed in the bibliography by Vinita Damodaran, Rajeshwari Datta, Benoy Ghose, Rustam Mehta, Partha Mitter, Tirthankar Roy and Kavita Singh are among those that have been found particularly useful in the present exercise.



## Appendix: glossary of indigenous terms describing objects listed in the 1880 catalogue

Terms are reproduced here as they appear in the text of the *Inventory of Objects transferred from [the] India Museum, November 1879* (1880); some (but not all) also feature in the present text. For the full text, reference should be made to the online version, reproduced at <https://archive.org/details/india-museum-inventory-of-the-collection-of-examples-of-indian-art-and-manufactu> [accessed 25.05.2023]. No doubt the inept-looking attempts at transliteration could themselves be looked upon as representing just another example of clumsy colonialist practice in which ill-informed Company officers rode roughshod over the nuances of local vocabulary, but a more benign (and in this case, it may be suggested, more appropriate) interpretation would see in them a genuine attempt at cultural contextualization. The fact that they may offer the possibility of further interpretation today in any case justifies their original careful notation in the field and their reproduction here: the conventions involved may prove of interest in their own right and of independent linguistic value. These terms are here followed in turn by the English translation as supplied (or implied), the geographical origin of the item (where one is recorded) and the relevant catalogue number. The majority of the entries carry no such identities; the local names tend to occur in blocks of entries for particular kinds of material, such as weapons, boat and carriage models and cooking utensils, and must correspond to some degree with the assiduity of particular collectors in preserving linguistic evidence along with the objects that found their way to the museum. It remains possible that indigenous nomenclature was supplied for some items from an early stage during the collection's 80-year development by well-informed curators or others; by the time accessions were being made from the international exhibitions, they

were perhaps more likely to be accompanied by an identification. In later years the arms and armour certainly benefited from intensive research at South Kensington (see [Chapter 8](#)), but surely no one in London was so knowledgeable in the field of kitchen equipment or agricultural implements, for example.

The extent to which these terms were recorded on the labels within the museum displays is also unclear: evidently, some of them were indeed preferred to the exclusion of their English counterparts, to judge from the lament of one commentator in 1851 that ‘it is much to be regretted that names intelligible to Europeans are not made use of in the official designation of many subjects in the interesting collection. The subjects are thus divested of half their value to the great majority of metropolitan visitors.’ At some future date – if all the records might at some time be fully digitized – comparison of the slip catalogue numbers (which appear to be chronological to some degree) with those assigned in the 1880 catalogue might provide a means of charting the relative frequency with which indigenous nomenclature accompanied new acquisitions.

The translations supplied are also those given in the catalogue, reduced to their simplest form. Some of these are elaborated in greater detail in the *Inventory*, but in the absence of certainty as to whether those descriptions apply generically to the type of object or refer more specifically to the specimen in question, translations here are limited to one or two words only (though some further discussion may be found in appropriate parts of the main text, above). Where different translations are given at different points in the catalogue, both are reproduced and designated (1), (2) and so on. Some words had evidently become sufficiently widespread as to be used in their own right and without specific translation – for example, *kincob* (damask) and *lota* (*lota* – a water vessel); hence they are not listed here. While many headings have multiple entries, the number existing as single examples is sufficient to suggest a degree of systematic collecting of – as it were – type specimens. For example, the largest group of specimens with indigenous identifiers – the fishing nets – is represented by single examples of each individual type, derived from a limited number of sources – firm evidence of a systematic collecting campaign. Among the other material, some examples of specific types are provided with names and others are not – among the spoons, for example, some receive the designation *pullee*, while many others have no indigenous name. The suggestion here is that the compilers of the 1880 catalogue, working under considerable pressure, recorded such information when

it had been provided by the collector but did not go out of their way to similarly identify those items that had arrived without local names.

Places of origin may carry implications for the linguistic and cultural background of the nomenclature supplied, although in some instances – the long-barrelled *torador* matchlocks, for example – the range of geographical provenances given suggests either that the term had become widely disseminated among different linguistic groups in India, or had simply become generally adopted by the British. The circumstances of collection are also relevant here: for example, the weapons designated ‘taken at Lahore’ – perhaps during the Second Anglo-Sikh War or in the aftermath of the Uprising of 1857 – may have been carried by combatants whose origins lay at a considerable distance. In short, the collection point of the object can carry no certainty as to the linguistic currency of the terms given. Perhaps of independent significance is the fact that kitchen equipment, for example, originates disproportionately from comparatively few (and otherwise unremarkable) places – Ahmednuggur in the Bombay Presidency and Burdwan in West Bengal are particularly common sources – pointing to intensive assembling of material there by inspired individuals or offices, and the careful recording of its nomenclature. Place names are generally given as supplied, apart from occasional cases of regularization – for example Karachi instead of Kurrachee, Udaipur rather than Oodeypore – where it has seemed unnecessarily pedantic to follow the forms as given. Until such time as a full list of synonyms is linked to each of these terms, however, successful searches of the catalogue will be dependent upon use of the appropriate original spelling. The waywardness of the spelling of place names also warns of the unreliability of the rendering of all other names.

Where multiple provenances (sometimes amounting to dozens of entries) are encountered, only the first catalogue number is recorded, followed by ‘etc.’. A few place names are enlarged by the name of the appropriate presidency or principality – Hassar, Mysore or Porebunder, Kattywar, for example – but most are not. The usage encountered in the catalogue is followed here.

Nonetheless, the archive of names preserved in the inventory – some of them along with the surviving objects to which they relate, others constituting the only record of the original specimen – constitutes a valuable repository of nineteenth-century indigenous nomenclature, albeit filtered through the distorting lens of contemporary European scholarship in material culture, which remained in its infancy at the time of its publication.

*abbasi* (1) sword, Udaipur (3138); (2) sabre, Udaipur (3328), Vizianagaram (3189–90)  
*abishakpatra*, vessel with pointed ends, Ahmednuggur (04835), Poona (04781, 04783)  
*abrnr*, textile, unprovenanced (1718)  
*adkeeta*, betel cutter, Nassil, Ahmednuggur (06073)  
*adoo*, iron wedge, Poona (06760)  
*adpowe*, a measure, Bangalore (4145–6)  
*akie*, hook, Belgaum (07240)  
*akree*, rice-grower's hook, Dharwar (07217)  
*ali rajpoor*, forehead ornament, Malwa (06009)  
*angdan*, vase for holding fire, Bombay (04361)  
*ankus*, elephant goad, Jaipur (02693), Nepal (3092), unprovenanced (3333)  
*arain*, hoe, Dacca (07142)  
*arghija*, cup, Ahmednuggur (04837)  
*arsee*, thumb ring, Delhi (08616–17, 08700)  
*arsola*, a measure of weight or capacity, Masulipatam (3994)  
*asood*, whip, Poona (07928)  
*assara*, twist winder, Khandeish (08057)  
*assoo*, fishing net, Poona (06878)  
*atlus*, woman's garment, Porebunder, Kattywar (0568, 0584)  
*ayda-kathi*, sword, Coorg (2550, 2552, 2770, 2773, 2792, 2796, 2798–9, 2801, 2814, 2822–4), Hassar, Mysore (2819–20), Malabar (2803, 2805, 2807, 2851–2, 2855–6)  
*bacha painj*, fishing net, Dacca (06943)  
*badna*, spouted water pot, Hooghly (04352)  
*bagh-nakh*, tiger claws, Gwalior (3209–10), Kolapore (3196), Sattara (3197, 3211)  
*bagote*, stand, Indore (04984)  
*bahadry*, a measure of weight, Bangalore (4143–4)  
*bahailee*, two-wheeled conveyance, Vizianagaram (3788)  
*bahakna*, cooking vessel, Burdwan (04338)  
*bahugna*, cooking vessel, Hooghly (04344, 04386)  
*baitak*, goblet, Hooghly (04350)  
*bajobund/bajoobund*, armlet, Benares (03256), Nagode (03488)  
*bajria*, amulet, Bhopawur (05001)  
*balee*, earring, unprovenanced (08487b)  
*bandy*, apparatus for teaching children to walk, Madras School of Art (3794) [*Hobson-Jobson*: a carriage or cart]  
*bangree*, bracelets, Bengal (08027)

*bank*, dagger, Indore (3198), Kolapore (3208)  
*banslee*, flute, Bengal (02090)  
*baoti*, fishing net, Serampore (06969)  
*bara jamdadoo*, dagger, Vizianagaram (3215–16)  
*barah*, tripod stand, Seeksagur, Upper Assam (04568)  
*baranea*, cloak, Oudh (05417)  
*baree*, cargo boat, Karachi (06457)  
*barsil*, spear, Vizianagaram (06704)  
*baruk*, woollen cloth, Badjistan (9205)  
*basirphand*, bird trap, Dacca (06976, 06979)  
*basur nuthoo*, nose ornament, Madras (08693)  
*batelle*, sailing boat, unprovenanced (3676)  
*bathule*, cooking pot, ?Sylhet (04404)  
*bati* (1) bowl, Hooghly (04383, 04425); (2) cup, Bengal (04427–8)  
*battera*, water vessel, Benares (04646)  
*bayhet*, neck ornament, Burma (03163)  
*becheba*, tent, Jabalpur (06259)  
*begha*, head ornament, Nagode (03462)  
*behondy*, fishing net, Chittagong (06989)  
*belun*, cane kneader, Khandeish (07254)  
*benti*, fishing net, Nuddea (06946)  
*berj*, neck ornament, Kathmandu (03034)  
*berjal*, fishing net, Attiah (06962), Rajshaye (07000)  
*beter phand*, bird trap, Dacca (07022)  
*beyok*, skull cap, Turkish (08976)  
*bhad*, sailing boat, Calcutta (3761)  
*bhalee*, neck ornament, Burma (03162)  
*bhar pansi*, sailing boat, Calcutta (3761)  
*bhaulea*, sailing boat, River Ganges (3678)  
*bhed*, ferry boat, Attiah (3743)  
*bheerut*, hand mill, Dharwar (07252)  
*bheestie*, water carrier, unprovenanced (06340–3)  
*bhela*, raft, Bancoorah (3696), Bengal (3688), Bogra, Philippines (3687)  
     *gharnai bhela*, fishing raft, Gyah (3693)  
*bhensal jal*, fishing net, unprovenanced (07001)  
*bheral jal*, fishing net, Fandpur (06992)  
*bhoo ka*, fishing net, Chittagong (06956)  
*bhotea*, necklace, Kathmandu (06049)  
*bichwa*, dagger, Gwalior (3498, 3508), Lucknow (3213), Punjab (3529),  
     Sattara (3180–1), unprovenanced (3199, 3488, 3528)  
*bindee*, forehead ornament, unprovenanced (08487)

*bitee*, finger ring, Bhopawur (08296)  
*bojhinka*, boat (partly dug out), Sylhet (3771)  
*bolna*, cake roller, unprovenanced (06421)  
*bonckal*, a measure of weight or capacity, Prince of Wales Island (3892)  
*boogady*, ear ornament, Madras (08654)  
*boolaku*, nose ornament, unprovenanced (08478)  
*boolockar*, nose ornament, Madras (08726), Nepal (08730)  
*boondu kutaru*, dagger, Vizianagaram (3547)  
*bor*, forehead ornament, unprovenanced (0808487c)  
*botty*, bow, Bengal (07880)  
*buckhoo*, robe or coat, Nepal (05628)  
*buckie* (1) battle-axe, Kolapore (3217, 3546); (2) crow-bill, Kolapore (3505)  
*budditch*, spearhead, Vizianagaram (06649)  
*budgerow*, river boat, Calcutta (3753), Murshidabad (3681)  
*budhee/buddhee* (1) shoulder ornament, Delhi (03282); (2) double necklace, Nagode (03490)  
*buggy*, two-wheeled conveyance, Bombay (3854)  
*bugla*, sailing boat, Kutch (3673, 3725)  
*bukkur*, bullock hoe, Indore (07105)  
*buli patra*, vase, Kathmandu (04490)  
*bullum*, spear, Vizianagaram (2778, 2785)  
*bulsal*, bullock rake, Belgaum (08678)  
*bundookh* (1) fowling gun, Gurjanwala (2588); (2) percussion gun, Lahore (2585, 2589)  
*bundookh jowhurder* (1) rifle, Bhawalpur (2650), Hyderabad (2651); (2) flintlock, Hyderabad (2653), Sind (2652)  
*burg*, textile, unprovenanced (1721, 1725)  
*burradurree*, bridal litter Gyah (3804)  
*burwanwee*, necklace, Malwa (05993)  
*butoowal toombeee*, powder-flask, Nepal (3051)  
*butwah*, box, unprovenanced (03184)  
*cabai*, fishing net, Chittagong (06955)  
*cassovie*, tooth powder box, Ahmednuggur (04620)  
*catamaran*, catamaran, Madras (3689–91, 3700, 3703–4)  
*catiyah*, sailing boat, Kutch (3735)  
*catty ootan*, a weight, Sumatra (4192)  
*cha cutty*, chopper, Vizianagaram (2816)  
*chabbi*, fishing net, Serampore (06908)  
*chaddar/chudda*, woman's coat, Dehra Ismael Khan (05607), Omrair (07)

*chadi*, fishing net, Serampore (06965)  
*chagur*, water pot, Bombay (04328–9, 04412–13)  
*chahjal*, fishing net, Fandpur (06987)  
*chak jal*, fishing net, Dacca (06983)  
*chakni*, fishing net, Serampore (06931)  
*chakra/chakram*, quoit, Benares (06263), Punjab (3249, 3261)  
*chakulu*, pen knife, Vizianagaram (06091)  
*chalum*, strainer, Bombay (04353)  
*champakallee*, neck ornament, Delhi (08424)  
*champoni*, two-wheeled cart, Purneeah (3852)  
*chanci*, fish trap, Rajshaye (07007)  
*chandi*, fishing net, Fandpur (06967)  
     *dora chandi*, fishing net, Fandpur (06968)  
*chandol*, conveyance for idols, Bancoorah (3847)  
*chandsess phool*, ornament, Madras (08648)  
*chanpala*, litter, Calcutta (3801)  
*chant*, fishing net, Serampore (06953)  
*chap jal*, fishing net, Fandpur (06984)  
*chapatee*, earring, Kathmandu (08672)  
*char aina* [of the four mirrors] (1) belt, Nepal (3079); (2) cuirass,  
     Jodhpur (3316), Kerauli (3343), Lahore (3473), unprovenanced  
     (3184)  
*charga*, sacrificial axe, Nepal (3102)  
*charpoy*, bed, unprovenanced (9288)  
*chata kattar*, axe head, Vizianagaram (2813, 2813a)  
*chatka jhal*, fishing net, Dacca (06910)  
*chatky*, fishing net, Chittagong (06942)  
*chatoo*, baking pan, Hooghly (04500)  
*chatram*, inn, Bangalore (06377)  
*chatu hari*, cooking vessel, Burdwan (04336)  
*cheep*, boat, Dacca (3768), Murshidabad (3724)  
*chegdy*, fire stand, Bombay (04457)  
*chellanum/chil anum*, dagger, Nepal (3070), Vizianagaram (3545)  
*chemboo*, drinking vessel, Bellary (04241)  
*chick*, blind-making apparatus, Patna (08794)  
*chick goodlie*, mattock, Mysore (07135)  
*chick moonoo goodalie*, pick, Mysore (07109)  
*chick mutchoo*, chopper, Mysore (07197)  
*chick surtay*, draw hoe, Mysore (07259)  
*chilumchee/chillumchee*, basin, Burdwan (04378), Hooghly (04381),  
     Purneah (02941), unprovenanced (04374)



*chipa*, fish trap, Nowgong, Assam (06971)  
*chipla*, castanets, Madras (02098)  
*chitki*, fishing net, Serampore (06921)  
*chittlekee*, castanets, Mysore (02097)  
*choga*, coat, Amritsar (0197), Bokhara (05445), Central Asia (9187–8),  
 Delhi (0199), Kabul (05412), Kashmir (019, 0198), Lahore (0200,  
 05597, 05643)  
*cholee*, bodice, Kattywar (0696), Ruttam (05757)  
*chonghra*, bangle, unprovenanced (08657)  
*choola*, oven, Benares (04507), unprovenanced (04527)  
*choomla*, stand, Indore (04617)  
*choor cutty*, dagger, Vizianagaram (3543)  
*choorie* (1) bracelet/bangle, Ahmednuggur (08302, 08307), Bengal  
 (08292); (2) knife, Ulwar (3353), unprovenanced (08313, 08432–9)  
*doosty choorie*, roll of bracelets, Bengal (08298)  
*choppas*, stamps, Nuddea (04614)  
*chopuns*, chessmen, Tatta Karachi (08206)  
*chorsa*, woman's garment, head covering, Nowanuggur (036)  
*chow-foola*, spice box, Ahmednuggur (02874)  
*chowdane*, earring, Alipur, Bengal (03017)  
*chowk*, box, Dharwar (03063)  
*chowkee*, a measure of weight or capacity, Bengal (4049–50)  
*chowree*, whisk, Jaipur (05878–9)  
*chucke*, grinding mill, Khandeish (08947)  
*chucker*, quoit, unprovenanced (2821)  
*chuckrabburray*, hoe, Mysore (07112)  
*chuckrias*, pulley, unprovenanced (06436)  
*chudder*, scarf, Hazara (05482), Nepal (05674, 05676, 05679), Punjab  
 (05616)  
*chunam*, box for lime, unprovenanced (04460)  
*chundaree*, head covering, Jhallawar (034), unprovenanced (035)  
*chungah*, a measure of weight or capacity, Commercolly (4015)  
*churka* (1) cotton cleaner/gin, Arracan (08035), Bombay (06430),  
 Chittapore (08032), Dharwar (06431), Gwalior (06427), Khandeish  
 (06429), Kutch (06428), unprovenanced (9284); (2) loom, unproven-  
 anced (07967–8); (3) spinning wheel, Chutterpore (06439), Madras  
 (07055), Patna (07049, 08058)  
*churtree*, bridge, Kangra, Punjab (3862)  
*chusee*, toy, Bengal (05014)  
*chutky*, fishing net, Chittagong (06914)  
*chuttack*, a measure of weight or capacity (4017 etc.)

*cochoo coopy*, head ornament, Madras (08629)  
*collogah*, a measure of weight or capacity, Bangalore (4055–6)  
*congavellum*, chopper, Vizianagaram (2826)  
*coodoogaloo*, reaping hook, Mysore (07188)  
*kanlay coodoogaloo*, weeding hook, Mysore (07188)  
*cooreegay*, drill Mysore (08050)  
*coorfa*, grass cutter, unprovenanced (07151)  
*coorgee*, drill, Belgaum (07339, 08156)  
*coortie*, coat, Hagara (05687)  
*cotia*, sailing boat, Karachi (3683)  
*cuchola*, tray and cup, Benares (04799)  
*cumblie* (1) blanket, Ioonar, Bombay (05404), Sattara (05403), unprovenanced (05396); (2) scarf, Sattara (05401)  
*oojoo cumblie*, blanket, Mysore (05400)  
*cummerbund/kummerbund*, waistband, Ahmedabad (0684), Jhallawar (05554), Kotah (05551), Rewah (0616)  
*cumphool*, ear ornament, Madras (08655)  
*cuppie*, part of a huqqa, unprovenanced (03991)  
*cuthree bavalee*, ear ornament, Madras (08701)  
*dabor*, vessel, Hooghly (04415)  
*dak nao*, mail boat, Assam (3747)  
*dalangu*, fish trap, Nowgong, Assam (06972)  
*dali*, fishing net, Nuddea (06964)  
*dank mira phand*, bird trap, Dacca (07019)  
*dantala*, rake, unprovenanced (07330)  
*dao*, chopper, Calcutta (07275), Chittagong (07274), Dacca (07273), Sylhet (07305)  
*ram dao*, sacrificial axe, Nepal (3102)  
*dapu*, drum head, unprovenanced (05163–4)  
*datal*, rake Poona (08766)  
*datro*, sickle, unprovenanced (07289)  
*daw*, sickle, Calcutta (07293)  
*dawat*, ink pot, Bengal (05008)  
*deck*, cooking pot, ?Sylhet (04342)  
*deepdan*, oil lamp, Kathmandu (04533, 04546, 04550)  
*deephun*, drill, Dharwar (08026)  
*degohee*, cooking pot, Indore (04595)  
*dha*, sword, Assam (2920), Burma (2569–70, 2572, 2574, 2900, 2965–9, 2976–80), Rangoon (2566, 2571), Bhutan (2901, 2905, 2909), Darjeeling (2908, 2914), Siam (2975), unprovenanced (2970)  
*abor dha*, sword, Assam (2916)

*bootan dha*, sword, Darjeeling (2580)  
*khamti dha*, sword, Assam (2885, 2887, 2894, 2898), unprovenanced (2895)  
*kapee dha*, sword, Sibsagar, Assam (2874)  
*mishmi dha*, sword, Assam (2886)  
*ram dha/ram dao*, sword or axe, Nepal (3085, 3098, 3102)  
*shan dha*, sword, unprovenanced (06665)  
*dhaga*, tassel, Kathmandu (05776)  
*dhaknee*, domed cover, Hooghly (04440)  
*dhal*, shield, Agra (3111), Ahmedabad (3403), Bhooj (3388–90, 3393), Bhutan (2884), Bikanir (3321), Haraoti (3322), Hyderabad (3165, 3167, 3226), Indore (3168), Jodhpur (3110, 3112–13, 3152, 3311, 3336), Kerauli (3106), Lahore (3236, 3238, 3440), Malabar (2771–2, 2780, 2784), Oude (3114), Sialkot (3486), unprovenanced (3115–17, 3237, 3325, 3405)  
*nagphnee dhal*, shield, Nepal (3060)  
*dhala*, spouted wine pot, Nepal (04666)  
*dhara*, mace, Kolapore (3169)  
*dharjal*, fishing net, Rajshaye (06998)  
*dharma jal*, fishing net, Attiah (07015), Dacca (06913)  
*dhas*, chopper, Burma (07314, 07897)  
*dheri*, suspension bridge, Kangra, Punjab (3863)  
*dheza*, thread tassel, Nepal (05630)  
*dhial*, fish trap, Rajshaye (07013)  
*dhol*, drum, unprovenanced (05127)  
*dholi*, litter, Bancoorah (3803), Begrah (3839), Calcutta (3808, 3815)  
*dhondghoongie*, neck ornament, Delhi (08425)  
*dhony*, boat, Ceylon (3628)  
*dhoopdhan*, fire stand, Bombay (04437)  
*dhotee/dhoty*, male garment, Maiduk, Madras (0561), Rajputana (0108)  
*dhothaki ghurra*, water vessel, Burdwan (04334)  
*dhoupdan*, cup, Nepal (04606)  
*dhour jal*, fishing net, Dacca (06947)  
*dhruba yantra*, direction-finding instrument, Oudh (06489)  
*dhurmo*, fishing net, Chittagong (06988)  
*dinghi*, river boat, Serampore (3762)  
*dingi shorangah*, dugout boat, Chittagong (3754)  
*khela dingee*, river boat, Bengal (3767)  
*kheya dingi*, dugout ferryboat, Chittagong (3757)  
*dirhem*, coin, unprovenanced (9151)  
*docha*, reticule, unprovenanced (08978)

*dod mutchee*, chopper, Mysore (07298)  
*doda goodlie*, mattock, Mysore (07136)  
*dodras*, muslin, Mangalore (0113)  
*doharu*, fish trap, Rajshaye (07009)  
*dokra*, a coin-shaped weight, ?Anjar (4186)  
*dola*, conveyance, Calcutta (3786)  
*khattola dola*, conveyance for spiritual instructors, Assam (3838)  
*dolna jal*, fishing net, Attiah (06944)  
*donee*, agricultural implement, Belgaum (07347)  
*donga*, double dugout, Bancoorah (3755)  
*doogdogee*, musical instrument, Murshidabad (05213)  
*doolie*, conveyance, Madras (3785)  
*doonda*, sailing boat, Karachi (3668)  
*doputta*, garment or scarf, Benares (0209, 0427), Bengal (06), Jaipur (08, 0318), Nagpore (046, 0203, 0205–6), Udaipur (0210)  
*dorjee*, sceptre, Darjeeling (02886)  
*dubba/dubda/dubee*, lidded box, Ahmednuggur (04821), Bombay (04416, 04423, 04609), Poona (04609)  
*dubla*, snuffbox, Ahmednuggur (04784)  
*dumady*, tambourine, Mysore (05160)  
*dungaree*, cloth, Kutch (099)  
*dur*, earring, unprovenanced (08487a)  
*dustana*, arm guards, Jodhpur (3317), Udaipur (3329)  
*dustar boonga*, quoit turban, Lahore (3458, 3462)  
*ecka*, two-wheeled conveyance, Bengal (3795, 3853)  
*ekkala*, trumpet, Madras (02064)  
*ektara*, stringed instrument (1) ‘fiddle’, Deccan (02125); (2) ‘guitar’, Bengal (02011)  
*ekullyan*, harrow, Kattyawar (07138)  
*ela*, reaping hook, Dharwar (07226–7)  
*falone*, fishing net, Chittagong (06990)  
*fanpura*, stringed instrument, ‘guitar’, Bengal (02048, 02124), Benares (02058), Dacca (02013), Patna (02015), unprovenanced (02043)  
*fasha sharoe*, fishing net, Serampore (06909)  
*ferra jal*, fishing net, Dacca (06937)  
*fowra*, mattock, Patna (07211)  
*fulleeta*, cigar light holder, Kangra, Punjab (02694)  
*furrung*, sword, Lahore (3187)  
*galalee*, pellet-bow, Nepal (3104–5)  
*gamla*, basin, Burdwan (04382)  
*gandy*, two-wheeled conveyance, Madras (3797)

*ganjam-maa*, horn (animal), unprovenanced (02084–5)  
*garassa*, fodder cropper, Patna (07220)  
*garn*, spouted ewer, Hooghly (04345)  
*garri* (1) two-wheeled carriage, Nagpore (3826); (2) four-wheeled carriage, Nagpore (3789)  
     *megalhi garri*, two-wheeled carriage, ?Bellary (3828)  
*gaychura*, stand, Bombay (06539)  
*ghada*, water vessel, Hooghly (04332)  
*ghagur*, water vessel, Bombay (07323)  
*ghata kattar*, axe-head, Vizianagaram (2813)  
*ghodi*, winnowing stool, Broach (08786)  
*ghokala jal*, fishing net, Nowgong, Assam (06958)  
*ghoonee jal*, type of fish trap, unprovenanced (06895)  
*ghotee*, water vessel, Hooghly (04401–2)  
*ghun*, mining hammer, Poona (06774)  
*ghunta*, bell, Indore (04596), Sattara (02638)  
*ghurki jal*, fishing net, Dacca (06948)  
*gitchi*, hoe, Garo Hills (07165)  
*glagra*, petticoat, Nepal (05441)  
*goatta* (1) agricultural implement, Belgaum (07986); (2) drill, Belgaum (08012)  
*goate*, bangle, Ahmednuggur (08301)  
*gochacatta dah*, scythe, Jessore (07300)  
*godoga mettu*, ring, unprovenanced (08462)  
*goga ber*, fishing net, Dacca (06911)  
*gogo talooka*, cart, Ahmedabad (07140)  
*golabdlan/goolabdan*, perfume or rosewater sprinkler, Kashmir (02695), Nassik, Ahmednuggur (01844)  
*golabpash*, rosewater sprinkler, Chunderee (02631), Cuttack (02736–7), Hyderabad (02692), Indore (02628, 02632), Malwa (02627), Patna (02630), Ulwar (02629), unprovenanced (02633–6)  
*goobee*, musical instrument, Murshidabad (05212)  
*goodgoodee*, huqqa, Sawunt Waree (07930)  
*goodlee*, mattock, Balgaum (07127)  
*goojah/gooyo*, bottle, Trichinopoly (01789, 04719–20)  
*goolal*, pellet-bow, Lahore (3420, 3463), Nepal (3104–5), Udaipur (3323)  
*goona*, set square, Poona (06770)  
*goongoon*, huqqa base, Calcutta (04861)  
*goontavay*, horse grubber, Mysore (07106)  
*goorburro*, bottle, Sind (04102)

*goorguree*, huqqa, Bhurtpore (02688)  
*goree*, shovel, Hooblee, Dharwar (07342)  
*gotahars*, girdle (royal), Lucknow (0381)  
*gud ka cheet*, cotton cloth, Agra (085)  
*guj*, iron bar used in mining, Poona (06860)  
*guj*, Muslim woman's dress or tunic, Sind (05457)  
*gull*, fish hook, Poona (06900)  
*gung*, cooking pot, Bombay (04372–3, 04377, 04408–10)  
*gungal*, cup [or form of brass?], Ahmednuggur (04787)  
*gunjifa*, playing cards, Kashmir (06159)  
*gupti*, sword stick, Bombay (3127), Lahore (3461), unprovenanced  
 (2797, 3162, 3243–4, 3262)  
*gurguz*, mace, Kolapore (3173), Myhere (3136), Sattara (3164)  
*gurra*, cloth, Patna (0101)  
*gurrooah*, spouted pot, Nepal (04667)  
*gurz*, mace, Hyderabad (3507), Indore (3201), Lahore (3455)  
*guttos*, goblet, Cachar (04682)  
*guz*, a rule or measure of length (4065, etc.)  
     *and guz*, Bengal (4061–2)  
     *guz shaw*, Bushire (4086–7)  
     *zilla guz*, Bombay (4083)  
*gyatar*, cap, unprovenanced (08967)  
*hackery*, bullock cart, Berhampore (07171), Chicacole (07156),  
 Serampore (07123)  
*haladie*, double dagger, Chirkaree, Bandelkhand (3358)  
*halavay*, bullock rake, Mysore (07982)  
*halka*, bullock rake, Belgaum (07333)  
*halkartee*, lamp, Poona (04789)  
*halwan*, cooking pot, Bombay (04384)  
*hanclara*, clod-breaker, Belgaum (07348)  
*handa*, water pot, Bombay (04331)  
*har*, necklace pendant, unprovenanced (08695)  
*hath*, a measure of length, unprovenanced (4088)  
*hatsuta*, fish line and reel, Fandpur (06975)  
*hatta*, ladle, Hooghly (04556)  
*hattah*, sweetmeat maker's wooden spoon, Murshidabad (06772)  
*haurah*, mill, unprovenanced (08954)  
*heelung*, merchant's boat, Assam (3745)  
*honcha*, fishing net, Fandpur (06986)  
*hoolbanttay*, neck chain, Burma (03161)  
*hoolurge/hoorlurge*, crow-bill, Datiah (3502), unprovenanced (3398)

*husson*, sickle, Patna (07193)  
*hoot*, rice weeder, Belgaum (08776)  
*hossi*, beads, Delhi (03483)  
*huit*, plough, Sind (06799)  
*hur*, plough, Patna (08022)  
*hurr*, plough, Sind (06799)  
*hurrut*, water-raising apparatus, Roorkee (08061)  
*hurtur*, camel saddle bag, Jacobabad, Sind (05386)  
*husson*, sickle, Patna (07193)  
*huttee* (1) winder, Dharwar (08844); (2) wooden ladle used in irrigation, Patna (07222)  
*huttee koorgee*, drill, Dharwar (08046)  
*imroo*, chintz, Aurungabad (0297)  
*inwaie*, cooking pot, Bombay (04376)  
*iomboo*, water vessel, Bengal (04627, 04632), Travancore (04653)  
*jadabilli/jadypilly*, head ornament, Madras (03006–7), unprovenanced (08458)  
*jahngi*, bird trap, Chittagong (07021)  
*jaklore*, fish trap, Rajshaye (07010)  
*jali*, fishing net, Attiah (06991)  
*jambia*, drinking vessel, Bombay (04343)  
*jambiya/jumbeea*, dagger, Deccan (3271–2), Gwalior (3539), Hyderabad (2853, 3534, 3537–8, 3541), unprovenanced (2854)  
*jamgla ber*, fishing net, Dacca (06926)  
*jampan*, sedan chair, Darjeeling (3840)  
*janul*, drum, unprovenanced (05138)  
*jentee koontee*, rake, Belgaum (07334)  
*jhabooa*, bangle, unprovenanced (08509)  
*jhakai*, fish trap, Nowgong, Assam (06973)  
*jhaki*, fishing net, Chittagong (06927)  
*jhaki jal*, fishing net, Bengal (06903)  
*jhala*, salver, Charar (04390), Hooghly (04392–3, 04407)  
*bogi jhala*, salver Burdwan (04391)  
*jhangi*, bird trap, Chittagong (06977)  
*jhangu*, strainer, Hooghly (04558)  
*ghanjh*, cymbals, Patna (02144)  
*jhawa*, rubber for feet, unprovenanced (03856)  
*jhimjhim*, toy, Bengal (05015)  
*jhoolee*, bag, Lucknow (0386–7)  
*jhoomka*, necklace, Delhi (03323)  
*jhubjia*, neck ornament, Nagode (03455)



*jhumka*, earring, Bhopawur (08624)  
*jhumtee*, sailing boat, Karachi (3694)  
*jomdane*, scarf, Dacca (9632)  
*joshun*, bracelet, Alipur, Bengal (03015)  
*joti*, fish spear, Rajshaye (06974)  
*jour bahler*, rice bowl, Calcutta (06712)  
*jubla*, child's dress, Surat (9645-6)  
*juluki*, fish trap, Nowgong, Assam (07003)  
*jumdhur kutaree*, dagger, Nepal (3048)  
*jumneah*, bowl, Indore (04860)  
*jungar*, ferry boat, Cochin (3698)  
*juti*, fishing spear, Fandpur (07017)  
*kachi*, sickle, Dacca (07291)  
*kada kuni*, bangle, unprovenanced (08454-5)  
*kadjul nattah*, holder for lamp black, Calcutta (04977)  
*kai jal*, fishing net, Attiah (06960)  
*kaish*, woollen plaid, Bam (9180)  
*kaja-brata*, implement for collecting lamp black, Bengal (04494)  
*kajar/kaijar*, dagger, Vizianagaram (3206, 3532, 3540)  
*kakooma*, textile, unprovenanced (1722-3)  
*kala dour*, agricultural implement, unprovenanced (07326)  
*kalemdan*, pen case, Hyderabad (02340-1), Kashmir (02338, 02342-3, 02345), Kurnool, Madras (02348), Sind (02344)  
*kalep*, cup cover, unprovenanced (08964)  
*kallah*, bullock hoe, Broach (07137)  
*kalos*, water vessel, Upper Assam (02848-9, 04647)  
*kaman*, bow, Ahmednugger (3487), Cambay (3241), Delhi (3227, 3443, 3482), Gwalior (3550), Indore (3158), Jaipur (3332), Lahore (3221), Lucknow (3245), unprovenanced (3220, 3228)  
*kambali*, blanket, Kurnool (05407)  
*kangari*, tambourine, Madras (02123)  
*kanoon*, musical instrument, Indore (05190)  
*kanzak*, tobacco pipe, Tibet (08961)  
     *yilling kanzak*, tobacco pipe, Northwest China)  
*kaoo*, necklace, Tibet (03069)  
*kapu*, bangle, unprovenanced (08452, 08456-7)  
*karbuz*, cotton cloth, Sekohma, Seistan (9181)  
*karra ling*, spear, Kattiawar, Bombay (06679)  
*karunda*, bowl or basin, Bombay (04354, 04371)  
*kathoo*, oil mill, Patna (07962)  
*kati*, fishing net, Serampore (06923)

*katodh*, dough mixer, Khandeish (07255)  
*kattaree* (1) 'boomerang', Modura (2831, 2834, 2836–7), Tinnevely (2835); (2) chopper, Hooghly (07272)  
*katureea*, 'boomerang', Gujarat (2761)  
*kayjerlee*, dagger, Vizianagaram (3200, 3212)  
*kelek*, fishing boat, Singapore (3723)  
*keron*, four-wheeled Mahratta conveyance, Bengal (3796)  
*kerun*, earth drag, unprovenanced (08781)  
*kess*, cotton cloth, Hyderabad (067, 091)  
*khady*, fishing net, Chittagong (06929)  
*khanda*, sword, Gwalior (3525)  
*khanjar*, dagger, Lahore (3465, 3475), unprovenanced (3467)  
*khapla*, fishing net, Serampore (06919)  
*khara jal*, fishing net, Fandpur (08830)  
*kharaberhal*, fishing net, Dacca (06954)  
*kharaya*, ink stand, Indore (04578)  
*khatok*, litter, Gyah (3807)  
*khatoli*, litter, Gyah (07047)  
*khelan*, pleasure boat, Kheelna (3752)  
*khele nao/khelnao*, rowing boat, Assam (3746, 3778)  
*khelna*, boat, Attiah (3751)  
*khepla*, fishing net, Nuddea (06928)  
*khepla jal*, fishing net, Fandpur (06939)  
*kheya nae*, ferry boat, Midnapore (3702)  
*khodali*, hoe, Bengal (07121, 07159), Chittagong (07162)  
*khonda/khunda*, dugout boat, Attiah (3756), Murshidabad (3748)  
*khooki jal*, fishing net, Rajshaye (06961)  
*khoonchee*, weaver's brush, unprovenanced (08842)  
*khooree*, drill, unprovenanced (08047)  
*khoorgee/koorgee*, drill/drilling machine, Belgaum (08775), unprovenanced (07245–6)  
*khoorpe*, weeding hook, Poona (07189)  
*khora jal*, fishing net, Rajshaye (06995)  
*khore*, spade, Poona (07214)  
*khorki jal*, fishing net, Fandpur (08828)  
*khowae*, fishing net, Poona (06901)  
*khuiya*, fishing net, Attiah (06985)  
*khumballah*, earring, Bengal (03198)  
*khund*, cloth, Ahmedabad (0178)  
*khundadee*, cotton cloth, Dharwar (05752)  
*khuntee*, spatula, Bengal (06827)

*khurpai*, grass cutter, Bengal (07150)  
*kigalee*, sacrificial axe, Mirat (2682)  
*kirchee*, necklace, Tibet (03070)  
*koaloo mutchlee*, chopper, Mysore (06764)  
*koappu*, ear ornament, unprovenanced (08472-3)  
*kodal*, mattock, Kosseah Hills (07302), unprovenanced (07303)  
*kodali*, hoe, Bancoorah (08009), Bengal (08001)  
*kodaree*, hoe, unprovenanced (08005)  
*kokoosan*, churn, Malacca (06411)  
*kole*, a measure of length, Travancore (4075-6)  
*kolpa*, weeding machine, Dharwar (07341, 08163)  
*kolupnees*, bullock yoke, Poona (08778)  
*kombu*, trumpet, Madras (02063)  
*kona*, fishing net, Nuddea (06945)  
*koodgole*, sickle, Belgaum (07179)  
*koodul*, pick, Poona (07202)  
*koofdy*, oil vessel, Indore (04601)  
*kookie*, earring, Cachar (03513)  
*kool*, bullock cover, Dharwar (05850)  
*koolaghee*, textile, unprovenanced (1760)  
*kooloo/koolow*, bullock hoe, Dharwar (08764), Poona (07981)  
*koolpee* (1) hoe, Khandeish (07152); (2) bullock hoe, Dharwar (08765)  
*koondli phinsi*, mace, Kolapore (3214)  
*koonichee*, plate, Indore (04615)  
*koontee* (1) bullock hoe, Belgaum (07115), Hooblee, Dharwar (07116);  
 (2) hoe, unprovenanced (07247)  
*kooralee/korali*, axe, Dacca (08011), Howrah (07286)  
*koorayasso*, vegetable slicer, Nepal (07940)  
*koorgee*, drill, Hooblee, Dharwar (07993)  
*koork*, textile, unprovenanced (1719)  
*koorpee*, weeding implement, Patna (07200)  
*koortha*, vest, unprovenanced (05452)  
*kopla jal*, fishing net, Rajshaye (06999)  
*kora*, sword, Nepal (2554, 2563, 3058-9, 3061-3, 3071-2, 3074-5)  
*korduk*, kettle drum, Patna (05157)  
*koring*, irrigation apparatus, Patna (07350)  
*kosa*, holy water holder, Howrah (04553)  
*koyatta*, bill hook, Poona (07199)  
*koyea painj*, fishing net, Dacca (06934)  
*koyta*, scythe, Belgaum (07206)  
*kris/kreese*, dagger, Keddah (2564), Malaya (3010-12, 3015-20, 3031),

Singapore (2999, 3001, 3003–9, 3025–7, 3032–4), unprovenanced  
 (2998, 3000, 3002)  
*kudala*, fishing net, Poona (06877)  
*kudayee*, frying pan, Bombay (04387)  
*kudhayee*, bowl, Bombay (04438)  
*kudlie*, pickaxe, Belgaum (07224)  
*kuhn-kuhn*, bodice or sari blouse [or silk?], Sattara (042); silk, Bombay  
 (0581)  
*kukri*, sword, Nepal (2555–6, 2560–2, 3086–91, 3093, 3095–7)  
*kulak*, a measure of weight or capacity, Fort Marlborough (3893)  
*kulanjee*, a measure, Travancore (4137–40)  
*kullo*, rake, Belgaum (07331)  
*kulpa*, plough, Indore (08767)  
*kulsoo*, water pot, Bombay (04337)  
*kumballah*, earring, Bengal (03198, 03208, 03210–12)  
*kumbar busta*, gun accoutrements, Deccan (2631)  
*kummel*, ear ornament, unprovenanced (08451, 08459, 08465, 08471,  
 08473–4)  
*kumr* (1) matchlock accoutrements, Hazara (2601), Lahore (2599),  
 Hyderabad (2654), Madras (2632), Udaipur (2658, 2660), unprov-  
 enanced (2583, 2583a); (2) rifle accoutrements, Bhawalpur (2659)  
*kumul*, stand, Ahmednuggur (04607)  
*kunabez*, textile, unprovenanced (1761–2)  
*kunda*, dish, Howrah (04405)  
*kundasarum*, neck chain, unprovenanced (08484)  
*kunkurah*, fishing net, Rungpore (06886)  
*kunti*, hoe, Dacca (07166)  
*kuroney buttee*, Jessore (06759)  
*kusi*, ladle, Howrah (04552)  
*kutar/kuttar*, dagger, Bikanir (3338), Jhellarwar (3320), Lahore (3235,  
 3445–6, 3449), Lucknow (3134), Nepal (2579, 3077), Pattiala (3451),  
 Punjab (3239, 3447), Udaipur (3313–14), Ulwar (3347), Viziana-  
 garam (3203), unprovenanced (3134, 3205, 3219, 3450, 3452)  
*garsoee kutar*, dagger, Bhooj (3404)  
*jumdhur kutaree*, dagger, Nepal (3048, 3066)  
*kutar bank*, dagger, Nepal (3069)  
*kutaradam*, cup, Jacobabad (05777)  
*kuttre pavul*, ear ornament, Madras (08667)  
*kworthie*, implement with conical ends, unprovenanced (08072)  
*kye batchee*, adze, Mysore (07108)  
*langady*, ferry boat, Mirzapore (3699)

*langi jal*, fishing net, Nowgong, Assam (06959)  
*lat*, irrigation apparatus, Patna (08029)  
*lham*, boots, unprovenanced (08973)  
*lohengi kati*, club, Indore (2758), Satara (2749)  
*loo*, fishing net, Poona (06893)  
*loongee*, garment/scarf (lunggi), Burhampore (0675), Burma (052, 073–4), Goodaspore (0670), Jhelum (0693), Kangra (043), Lahore (0707), Loodiana (05, 020), Madras (026), Mooltan (028, 0782), Nagpore (02–3), Punjab (0215, 0787), Sind (025, 040–1, 0172, 0174–5, 0181, 0556), Udaipur (04), unprovenanced (029, 05851)  
*lubbays* (1) man's garment, Madras (056, 072, 075); (2) scarf, Madras (069)  
*lumbing*, spear, Johore, Singapore (06705)  
*lyzum*, chain bow, Lahore (2683)  
*maak/mark*, raft, Chittagong (3697)  
*macoin*, Persian wheel, Mysore (08043)  
*madu*, parrying shield, Lucknow (3107–8)  
*mag*, loom, Kattyawar (06433), Khandeish (06444), Surat (08810)  
*san mag*, loom for tape making, Dharwar (06451)  
*mahapaya/mohapaya* (1) litter, Belasore (3834); (2) conveyance for Muslim women, Bancoora (3798); (3) marriage litter, Burdwan (3836)  
*maijal*, fishing net, Attiah (06938)  
*malar panshi*, sailing boat, Attiah (3770)  
*malli*, oil cup, Nepal (04691)  
*mamaty*, hoe, Madras (08006)  
*manilla cappoo*, bangle, Madras (03472)  
*maratt pugdee*, turban, Poona (0363)  
*maroo/maru*, parrying shield, Benares (3224), Datiah (3234, 3240), Delhi (3223, 3225), Lucknow (3107–9)  
*masaldan*, torch holder, Indore (04621)  
*mashatt*, saddle cloth, Lhasa (05390)  
*masoolah*, open boat, Madras (3733–4)  
*maygaloo*, plough, Mysore (08023)  
*mazlang*, ear covers, unprovenanced (08971)  
*mechla*, basin, Hooghly (04379)  
*mee-gyoung*, stringed instrument in form of an alligator, Burma (02024, 02052)  
*mel puttah bemoh*, two-handed sword, Vizianagaram (2802)  
*mercal*, a measure of weight or capacity, Dindigul (3984–5)  
*metah*, necklace, Madras (03074)

*mincheel*, hospital conveyance, Madras (3790)  
*mita ghurra*, water vessel, Burdwan (04399)  
*moe*, fishing net, Chittagong (06933)  
*moejal*, fishing net, Dacca (06952)  
*mogh*, loom, Ahmednuggur (07046)  
*moghree*, rake, Kutch (08074)  
*mohijal*, fishing line, Fandpur (06970)  
*mohr punkee*, pleasure boat, unprovenanced (3734)  
*momaty*, hoe, Vizianagaram (07173)  
*moodley*, ladle, Bombay (04432)  
*moolea*, a measure of weight or capacity, Bengal (4053)  
*moora*, a measure of length (4071 etc.)  
*mootho coopoo*, ear ornaments, Madras (08653)  
*mota* (1) agricultural implement, Khandeish (08805); (2) machine for raising water, Bombay (07352)  
*motherum*, finger ring, unprovenanced (08461, 08464, 08482-3)  
*muchwa*, sailing boat, Karachi (3674)  
*mudaku*, finger ornament, unprovenanced (08467)  
*mukhaninai*, clarion, Madras (02069)  
*mulnee*, type of fish basket, Poona (06894)  
*muruga*, ear ornament, unprovenanced (08477)  
*mushroo*, satin or silk, Ahmedabad (0308-9), Benares (0296), Deccan (9743), Hyderabad (0185, 0295, 0299, 0303), Madras (0298, 0304-5), Surat (0302), Tanjore (0294)  
*myana*, litter, Gyah (3842)  
*myirtuatee*, ear ornament, unprovenanced (08485)  
*nadek*, small drum, unprovenanced (02037)  
*nagara*, kettle drum, Madras (05125)  
*nagasara*, drum, Mysore (05162)  
*nagasura/nagasaram*, clarion, Bangalore (02072), Coimbatore (02155-6), Madras (02065)  
*nagur*, rice plough, Dharwar (07987)  
*nai-gyee*, clarion, Burma (02071, 02075)  
*nalkee/nalki* (1) litter, Tirhoot, Hajeepore (3818); (2) wedding conveyance, Patna (3814, 3816); (3) conveyance (chiefly for idols), Calcutta (3787)  
*nana*, hoe, Dacca (07142a)  
*nangiri*, bracelet, Delhi (03482)  
*nangur*, plough, Khandeish (08049)  
*naphnee dhal*, shield, Nepal (3060)  
*nara berhal*, fishing net, Dacca (06935)

*nauka*, boat, Bancoorah (3764)  
*nayee*, drill plough, Indore (08056)  
*neeranjunee*, Ahmednuggur (04819)  
*negal*, plough, Dharwar (08161)  
*neza*, spear, Jind (3161, 3230), Lahore (3159)  
*nhyng*, stringed instrument, 'fiddle', Burma (02026)  
*noat*, water-raising apparatus, Poona (08054)  
*now kутten*, comb, Nepal (03031)  
*nowpul daw*, knife, Calcutta (07236)  
*nuddea*, tambourine, Bengal (02134)  
*numud*, textile, unprovenanced (1727)  
*nuth/nath*, nose ring, Alipur, Bengal (03018), Bhopawar (08487e),  
unprovenanced (08487d)  
*nuttu*, nose ornament, unprovenanced (08463)  
*oklee* and *moosl*, mortar and pestle, Patna (07282)  
*oothar*, fishing net, Dacca (06915)  
*otharjal*, fishing net, Nowgong, Assam (06930)  
*ottu*, clarion, Madras (02066)  
*paneama ottu*, clarion, Madras (02068)  
*timiri ottu*, clarion, Madras (02067), Patna (02149, 02160-2)  
*pa-ma* (1) drum, Burma (02009); (2) harp, Burma (02019, 02044)  
*pa-ta-lah*, balapong, unprovenanced (05202)  
*pabhar*, drill, Poona (07990)  
*pabu*, boots, unprovenanced (08970, 08983)  
*pachees*, board game, Sind (0408)  
*pahar*, pointed iron bar, Poona (06767, 06777)  
*paicha*, bracelet, Alipur, Bengal (03016)  
*pal*, tent, Jabalpur (07025)  
*palki*, conveyance, Bancoorah (3799), Belgaum (3841), Bombay (3823),  
Burdwan (3800), Calcutta (3781), Gyah (3851), Shikarpore (3783),  
unprovenanced (3784, 3824, 3837)  
*boncha palki*, sedan chair, Bancoorah (3821)  
*meyan palki*, open-sided litter, Burdwan (3835)  
*palo*, fish trap, Rajshaye (07011)  
*palyarwal*, hatchet, Tinnevelly (07205)  
*pamban manche*, river boat, Cochin (3739)  
*pambei*, drum, 'tom-tom', Madras (02038)  
*pan dan*, pan dish, Cachar (04852)  
*panchpatra*, beaker, unprovenanced (04347)  
*panda*, cooking utensil, Bombay (04360)  
*pandan* (1) salver (08251); (2) spice holder, Cachar, Madras (02654)



*panju*, cap, unprovenanced (08972)  
*panpooda*, lidded box, Ahmednuggur (04597–8)  
*paor*, fish trap, Rajshaye (07008)  
*paori*, rake, unprovenanced (07332)  
*papaninapam-magadi*, clarion, Madras (02070)  
*parabaich*, writing slate, unprovenanced (06583)  
*parah*, a measure of weight or capacity, Travancore (3991–2)  
*paran*, child's shirt, Shikarpoor (05577)  
*parat/parath* (1) dish, Indore (04616); (2) salver, Burdwan (04388)  
*parheeta*, cotton winder, Nagpur (08848)  
*parindu*, boat, Murshidabad (3720)  
*pata*, ladle, Hooghly (04358)  
*patanee jamdadoo*, dagger, Vizianagaram (3204)  
*patee*, a grain measure, unprovenanced (4054)  
*patnili*, litter, Bhagalpore (3819–20)  
*patso*, 'man's garment' (in fact a skirt), Tenasserim (0487)  
*patta/puttah*, gauntlet sword, Indore (3207), Lucknow (3326), Oude  
 (3120, 3327), Punjab (3287)  
*pattamar*, sailing boat, Bombay (3675)  
*pattanchee koka*, scarf, Arni, North Arcot (010)  
*patti*, writing tablet, Bombay (06500, 0657)  
*pattisa*, sword, Central India (3521)  
*pattlies*, [roll of] bangles, Ahmednuggur (08299)  
*pe tib*, cap, unprovenanced (08968)  
*peetamber/petombur*, scarf or garment, Benares (0666), Sattara (012)  
*pehran*, coat, Sind (05697)  
*perak*, girth, Tibet (03050)  
*peshkubz*, dagger, Bandelkhand (3351), Bhawalpur (3339), Bijnur  
 (3419), Bunnoo (3253), Datiah (3319), Gujarat (3385, 3392), Kashmir  
 (3408), Lahore (3432–3, 3436, 3470), Nepal (2558), Peshawar (3425,  
 3428), Sind (3386, 3394, 3399), Vizianagaram (3434), unprove-  
 nanced (3413, 3415, 3429, 3456)  
*pete*, cuirass, Indore (3509)  
*pettanchoo* (1) woman's garment, unprovenanced (021); (2) scarf,  
 Coimbatore (024, 0191)  
*phagal*, water bag, Khandeish (08070)  
*phalaka yantra*, [?], Benares (06537)  
*phaodi*, hoe, Poona (07344)  
*pheter*, levelling implement, Chutterpore (07346)  
*phing tib*, cap, China (08979)  
*phirangu*, cannon, Vizianagaram (06661)

*phiranjī*, sword, Lahore (3187)  
*phirankathi*, sabre, Vizianagaram (3150, 3153)  
*phool*, cup, Patna (04591, 04610), unprovenanced (04592)  
*phoolpatra*, cup, Ahmednuggur (04820)  
*phoosee*, vessel for boiling rice, Kathmandu (04212)  
*phowra*, rake, Dharwar (07343)  
*phulsa*, battle-axe, Nagpore (06675)  
*phurpa*, dagger, Tibet (02887)  
*phurrea*, petticoat or skirt, Kathmandu (05439)  
*picata*, irrigation machine, Madras (07997)  
*pichungutty*, dagger, Coorg (2548, 2800, 2806), Hyderabad (2804)  
*pinjara*, cotton cleaner, Dharwar (08064)  
*pira pany*, fishing net, Dacca (06912)  
*pisan raoot*, knife, Johore, Singapore (07174)  
*pitullu watiacha gunj*, cups and cover, Ahmednuggur (04605)  
*poaria*, handled water pot, Bombay (04414)  
*pola*, fish trap, Nowgong, Assam (07004)  
*polpat*, cane kneader, Khandeish (07254)  
*ponnchee*, bracelet, Madras (03014)  
*pool kery*, muslin, Gwalior (0429)  
*poonjae*, cattle bell, Burma (02870)  
*pootoor*, a measure, Travancore (4141)  
*potha kadeyalla*, anklet [or tye of brass?] Ganjam, Madras (06832)  
*potombur*, woman's garment, Sattara (012)  
*pottu*, neck ornament, unprovenanced (08475, 08480–1)  
*prahu*, armed vessel, Indian archipelago (3692)  
*lanum prahu*, pirate vessel, Mindanao (3685)  
*puddy*, a measure of weight or capacity, Vellore (3989–90)  
*pul*, coin, unprovenanced (9154)  
*pula/pulee* (1) ladle, Bombay (04559, 04833), Poona (06766);  
(2) spoon, Ahmednuggur (04941), Bombay (04833)  
*pullu*, textile, unprovenanced (1720)  
*pulwar* (1) river boat, Murshidabad (3758); (2) open boat, Sylhet (3763)  
*punch patree/punch patra/puncha pottrum*, beaker, Ahmednuggur  
(04960), Bombay (04488, 04502), Madras (02655)  
*punchapali*, spice box, Kurnool, Madras (02332)  
*punchimee*, two-wheeled cart, Vizianagaram (07120)  
*pundee bullum*, spear, Vizianagaram (2697)  
*punjab*, state barge, Singapore (3706)  
*purath*, dish, Bombay (04380)  
*purinda*, boat, Murshidabad (3749)

*putthee*, head ornament, Madras (08683)  
*puttoo*, textile, unprovenanced (1724)  
*pyala*, cup, Ahmednuggur (04589)  
*pyjamas*, trousers, Beckaneet (05627), Bhopal (0649), Birtpore (05636, 05704, 05764), Dehra Ghaza Khan (05715), Dehr Ismail Khan (05716), Derajat, Punjab (05689, 05826), Dhurmsala (05703), Hazara (05609), Jeysulmere (05690), Jhelum (05606), Kangra (05644), Kashmir (05631), Kohat (05621), Kotah (05844), Ladak (05699), Lahore (05643, 05701), Loodiana (05717), Sind (0201, 05620, 05647), Udaipur (05629, 05692, 05835), unprovenanced (0648)  
*rackabi*, salver, Khatywar (02906)  
*rahat*, spinning wheel, Dharwar (08044)  
*raj yantra*, sextant Oudh (06560)  
*rakhree*, head ornament, Bhopawur (08528)  
*rakula bandy*, two-wheeled conveyance, Madras (3791, 8850)  
*rama*, speaking trumpet, Madras (05204)  
*rampourie*, hoe, Bancoorah (08008)  
*rangola*, perforated roller, Ahmednuggur (04838–9)  
*rantee*, plough, Dharwar (08160)  
*rantul*, a measure, Travancore (4142)  
*rati chembu*, jar, Terutani, North Arcot (01782)  
*rekla*, cart (0931)  
*ratt*, wheel for inlaying, unprovenanced (06412)  
*rhat*, spinning wheel, Dharwar (08801)  
*rhel*, book rest, Oudh (06495), Punjab (06494)  
*rokit painj*, fishing net, Dacca (06924)  
*rowtie*, tent, Jabalpur (07024)  
*ruah*, axe, Garo Hills (07264)  
*rumbo*, hoe, Jacobabad (07155)  
*rumjole*, anklet, Madras (03294)  
*ruth*, wheeled conveyance, Calcutta (08159), Nagpore (3827), Rutlam (06399)  
*samaee*, lamp, Poona (04778)  
*sampan*, boat, Johore (3721)  
*sampitan/sampeetas/sampeetor*, blowpipe, Malacca (2938), Singapore (3041, 3043–4), unprovenanced (07879)  
*san*, polishing wheel, Patna (07960)  
*sanai*, clarion, Bengal (02083)  
*sandie jal*, fishing net, Rajshaye (06996)  
*sangha jal*, fishing net, Fandpur (06993)  
*sangoo*, spear, Vizianagaram (2722–4)

*saranghi/saringhi*, stringed instrument, 'fiddle', Bangalore (02016), Bengal (02057), Dacca (02014), Indore (02045), Karachi (02018), Madras (02021), Murshidabad (02047, 02120), Mysore (02118), Patna (02055, 02119, 02127), unprovenanced (02027)

*sarbutle*, stringed instrument, 'fiddle', Madras ((02041)

*saree* (1) woman's garment (sari), Bombay (027), Ganjam (0179), Gougam (045), Madras (01, 017, 023, 050), Nellore, Madras (0111), Tanjore (016, 032); (2) scarf, Balachoor (0196), Hoobley, Bombay (076), Kangra (05477), Surat (05537)

*saregei*, scarf, Madras (0204)

*sarinde*, stringed instrument, 'fiddle', Patna (02053)

*saudi jhal*, fishing net, Dacca (06920)

*seeboo coodogooloo*, Mysore (07260)

*seena*, skin bag (for crossing rivers), Shikarpoor (05834)

*seer*, a measure of weight or capacity (3879 etc.)
 

- cucha seer* (4135 etc.)
- punjseer*, Bangalore (4151-2)
- sultany pucka seer*, Mysore (3987-8)

*seera*, fish trap, Bhajulpore (07006)

*sendao*, knife, Calcutta (07237)

*shal*, weaving machine, Kutch (08839)

*shalbot*, tray, Hooghly (04394)

*shammeeana*, tent, Jabalpur (07027)

*shamsher*, sabre, Delhi (3464), Kabul (3375, 3377), Lahore (3252, 3259, 3427), Peshawar (3468, 3474), unprovenanced (3371, 3376, 3378)

*shangula jal*, fishing net, Rajshaye (06963)

*shanye*, pipe (musical instrument), Burma (05110-13)

*sharanga*, dugout boat, Attiah (3760)

*sharoe*, fishing net, Serampore (06905)

*sher batcha*, *sher bacha* (young tiger) (1) musquatoon, Kashmir (2603-4), Oude (2649); (2) mountain gun or wall piece, Lahore (3266)

*sheshguldharee*, stand, Ahmednuggur (04782)

*shisth*, fishing line, Bhagalpore (06966)

*shomgila jal*, fishing net, Dacca (06932)

*shoontee jal*, fishing net, Rajshaye (06997)

*shor*, bird trap, Chittagong (08829)

*shourd*, stringed instrument, 'fiddle', Benares (02020), Patna (02056)

*shunga*, amulet, unprovenanced (08987)

*silkea jal*, fishing net, Rajshaye (06994)

*singa*, 'boomerang', Southern India (2830)

*singhouta*, parrying shield, Lucknow (3107–8)  
*sitar*, stringed instrument (1) ‘fiddle’, Patna (02022); (2) ‘guitar’,  
 Benares (02133), Madras (02126)  
*vaira sitar*, ‘guitar’, Scind (05175)  
*smaramandalam*, musical instrument, unprovenanced (05192)  
*sonamukhi*, open boat, Dacca (3769)  
*sonta*, fishing net, Fandpur (06950)  
*soogund patty*, spice box, Ahmednuggur (02875)  
*soorhee/sooryee*, water vessel, Bombay (04411), Nepal (04672)  
*soorool goloosoor*, bracelet, Madras (03288)  
*soosee* (1) trousers and/or trousering, Hoshiyapore (083), Kangra  
 (05440), Khora, Khyrpoor (054, 077), Madras (053), Sind (088),  
 Udaipur (05611), unprovenanced (070); (2) pyjamas, Hazara (05515)  
*sootkee*, stone-breaker’s hammer, Poona (06768)  
*suckoonda*, lamp, Kathmandu (02922)  
*suggur*, cart, Bancoorah (07131), Patna (07145)  
*sukhasan*, ?litter, Burdwan (3843)  
*sulawar yatagan*, sword or Khyber knife, Peshawar (3265, 3270)  
*sumpoosta*, lidded box, Ahmednuggur (04825)  
*sungeen*, bayonet sword, Nepal (3121)  
*sunthera karum*, neck chain, unprovenanced (08460)  
*surpeish*, turban ornament, Benares (03255), Bengal (03175–6)  
*tabar/tabor*, battleaxe, Bhooj (3409), Malabar (2846), Seistan (3269)  
*tadha tappu*, drum, Madras (07924)  
*tai kan tain*, stand, unprovenanced (07051)  
*tail*, a weight, Sumatra (4193)  
*takee*, punch, Poona (06765)  
*tambangan*, sailing boat, Surabaya, Java (3729)  
*tamuncha/tummuncha*, pistol, Lahore (3231–2, 3480–3480a), Mysore  
 (3170–1)  
*tanaholy*, fishing net, Chittagong (06951)  
*tanga*, two-wheeled cart, Ahmednuggur (3844)  
*tangani jal*, fishing net, Nowgong, Assam (06957)  
*tangna*, hoe, Buncoorah (07168)  
*tangooh*, fishing net, Chittagong (06936)  
*tanjam* (1) conveyance, Chittagong (3782); (2) sedan chair, Nilgiri Hills  
 (3822)  
*tank*, a measure of weight or capacity, Surat (4188)  
*tanra*, drill plough, Patna (08021)  
*tapwa*, open boat, Dacca (3769)  
*tarajali*, fishing net, Dacca (06906)

*tarkash*, quiver, Lahore (3417, 3469), unprovenanced (3334)  
*tas*, silk and gold gauze, Ahmedabad (0635, 0709), Hyderabad (0631, 0698)  
*tat*, tray, Hourah (04395)  
*tatan*, drum, Patna (02039)  
*taulah hari*, cooking pot, Burdwan (04364)  
*taulah jhanjarah*, sieve, Burdwan (04365)  
*tauvut*, cotton rack, Dharwar (06441)  
*tavra*, fishing net, Chittagong (06916)  
*teygah*, sabre, Jodhpur (3135, 3318), Vizianagaram (3140)  
*thaki jal*, fishing net, Dacca (06941)  
*thakroo*, quiver, Nepal (3103)  
*thama*, coat, Jhallawar (05685)  
*thamburu*, stringed instrument, 'guitar', Madras (02017)  
*than-lyn-gyee*, cymbals, Burma (02146-7)  
*thanthana*, musical instrument, Madras (02050)  
*tharau*, stringed instrument, 'fiddle', Nepal (02028)  
*thayithi*, neck ornament, unprovenanced (08479)  
*thela jali*, fishing net, Dacca (06949)  
*therugani*, ear ornament, unprovenanced (08469-70)  
*tholee*, a measure of weight or capacity, Bengal (4051)  
*thoomur*, head ornament, Delhi (08670)  
*thooshee*, fish trap, Rajshaye (07012)  
*thopoocha*, spouted wine pot, Nepal (04669)  
*ti*, knife, unprovenanced (08965)  
*tical*, a measure of weight, Pegu (4096 etc.)  
*ticha*, a measure of weight or capacity, Bengal (4052)  
*tillah*, coin, unprovenanced (9155, 9158)  
*tindur kanta*, box for vermilion, Bengal (08312)  
*tippan*, drill, unprovenanced (08758)  
*tiper bati*, marking pot, Bengal (08529)  
*tippree*, a measure of weight or capacity, Bombay (3957-9)  
*tir*, arrows, Lahore (3438, 3453)  
*tir-o-tarkash*, arrows and quiver, Lahore (3437, 3483), Udaipur (3309)  
*tironee*, tripod stand, Poona (04619)  
*tiwaree*, fishing net, Poona (06892)  
*tola*, a measure of weight or capacity (4177 etc.)  
*toognee*, neck ornament, Delhi (08426)  
*toombe*, vessel, Ahmednuggur (04582)  
*toomkoor*, padlock, Mysore (04918)  
*toorah*, head ornament for horse, Delhi (03309)

*tope*, cooking vessel, Bombay (04385)  
*tope*, helmet, Bhutan (2925), Gwalior (3182, 3484, 3497, 3519, 3522),  
 Kerauli (3131), Lahore (3466), Nepal (3084)  
*tora*, fishing net, Chittagong (06982)  
*torador/toradar* (1) matchlock, Delhi (2586), Bareli (2622, 2646),  
 Belgaum (2630), Bijnur (2641, 2643), Coorg (2629, 2810), Gurjanwala  
 (2584), Gwalior (2640), Indore (2618, 2620, 2623, 3194), Jaipur  
 (2642, 2644), Jodhpur (2647), Kerauli 2645), Lahore (3248),  
 Lucknow (3141), Madras (2627), Mahratta (2617), Malwa (2648),  
 Mysore (3176), Punjab (2587, 2591–7), Udaipur (3145), unproven-  
 nanced (2602, 2621, 2625, 2628, 3247, 3262–3, 3267); (2) sporting  
 gun, Jodhpur (2655); (3) lady's gun, Gurjanwala (3250, 3290)  
*bundookh toradar*, wall piece, Lahore (3267)  
*torah*, fishing net, Bengal (06904)  
*tradpa*, boots, unprovenanced (08969, 08984)  
*tsong-gouk*, stringed instrument, 'harp', Burma (02012)  
*tubr/tabar*, battle-axe, Chota Nagpore (2702–12, 2728–37, 2752–6),  
 Cuttack (2738), Jodhpur (3312), Kutch (3395, 3402), Udaipur (3118),  
 unprovenanced (2794, 3119)  
*tubukudee*, plate, Ahmednuggur (04815)  
*tulwar*, sabre, Bhoj (3407), Datiah (3337), Hyderabad (3397, 3400),  
 Indore (3520), Kotah (3346), Lahore (3391, 3418, 3430, 3435, 3444,  
 3459), Punjab (3260, 3426), Ulwar (3348), unprovenanced (3412,  
 3454, 3471, 3481)  
*abasi tulwar*, sabre, Gujarat (3431)  
*kathi tulwar*, sword, unprovenanced (3175)  
*tumbou/tumbow/thumboor*, stringed instrument, 'guitar', Madras  
 (05184), Mysore (05174), unprovenanced (05181)  
*tumbu*, ladle, unprovenanced (08963)  
*tunkee*, hoe, Belgaum (07126)  
*tupala*, cooking pot, Bombay (04326–7, 04330)  
*turya yantra*, sextant, Oudh (06482)  
*tusi*, stylus, Malabar (2547)  
*tuttari*, trumpet, Madras (02154, 02157)  
*tuttoo*, dish, Madras (02761)  
*kurry tuttoo*, dish, Madras (02759)  
*ulak*, sailing boat, Bhagulpore (3750)  
*ulwan*, textile, unprovenanced (1740–3)  
*ungurka/ungurkha*, coat, Indurgurh (05557, 05573), unprovenanced  
 (05648)  
*untee*, spouted wine pot, Nepal (04663)



*unzree*, rubber, Ahmednuggur (04818)  
*vakea*, a weight, Bussorah (4191)  
*vanga*, trumpet, Madras (02115)  
*veecharooval*, scythe-shaped weapon, Tinneveli (2829)  
*veeltee*, scraper, Khandeish (07238)  
*velli tuttoo*, plate, Madras (02663)  
*vendy*, stringed instrument, 'guitar', Bangalore (05185)  
*venmuroo*, battle-axe, Malabar (2845, 2847)  
*vewa*, raft, Jessore (3701)  
*vina*, stringed instrument, 'guitar', Madras (02061), Patna (02139),  
 unprovenanced (02060)  
*viranam*, drum, Madras (08255)  
*vooterany*, spoon, Madras (02662)  
*vunky valyel*, bangle, unprovenanced (08453)  
*wah-lot-koak*, castanets, Burma (02101)  
*wara warree*, spud, Mysore (07111)  
*wedung*, knife, Java (3029)  
*willa*, sickle, Poona (07196)  
*wodie batee danee*, taper stand, Ahmednuggur (04822)  
*wogeale*, ladle, Ahmednuggur (0767)  
*wonnapu*, ear ornament, unprovenanced (08466, 08468, 08476)  
*wookpurnee*, cup [or form of brass?], Ahmednuggur (04788)  
*wooral*, rice mill, Madras (08951)  
*wuttee*, rope-making machine, Dharwar (06443)  
*yedookoontee*, bullock hoe, Hooblee, Dharwar (07128)  
*yog-tib*, cap, unprovenanced (08966)  
*zaree*, water pot, Bombay (04473)  
*zooruck*, sailing boat, Karachi (3671)  
*zellie koontee*, bullock hoe, Belgaum (07130)  
*zer mashk*, paper support, Oudh (06590)  
*zirrah-buktur/zirrah buckter*, mail coat, Gwalior (3183), Lahore (3372),  
 Nepal (3050, 3073), Udaipur (3331)  
*zutzan*, pin, Bengal (06623)

## Descriptive terms for materials encountered (but not always translated) in the catalogue

*baruk*, woollen cloth  
*chuj*, straw  
*chukun*, muslin

*chusmaee*, shot silk  
*chutee*, chintz  
*chwina*, cotton cloth  
*dall*, binding or ribbon  
*dungaree*, coarse cotton cloth  
*endie/eudi*, wild silk  
*erria/errie*, wild silk  
*farashu*, carpet  
*goph*, cord  
*gud ka cheet*, cotton, used for petticoats  
*gunga jumna*, bicoloured metal mixing brass and copper  
*gungal*, a form of brass [?]  
*gunny*, coarse cloth  
*gurrah*, cotton cloth  
*haut talla*, wood  
*imroo*, silk  
*jamdane/jomdane*, muslin  
*juntee*, ribbon  
*karbuz*, cotton cloth  
*keish*, woollen plaid  
*kess/khess*, cotton cloth, Hyderabad  
*kharwar*, canvas  
*khund*, silk and gold cloth  
*khus khus/kus kus*, grass fibre  
*kincob*, dask  
*lungoatee*, muslin  
*luppa*, silk and gold cloth  
*moonga*, wild silk  
*mushroo*, satin or silk  
*padam*, tape  
*punjum*, cotton  
*soosee*, trousering  
*soajnee*, quilted counterpane  
*tussur*, wild silk

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# Index

Throughout this volume, the forms of place names adopted are primarily those that appear in the 1880 catalogue; present-day equivalents follow. Similarly, indigenous names added for convenience in the index are those that appear in the catalogue (although they do not necessarily apply to all the corresponding entries in English). Only through the adoption of these conventions will it be possible for those searching further in the original 1880 text to find references to the places and objects concerned. Further indigenous terms from the 1880 catalogue given in the Appendix (pp. 383–412) but not appearing in the present text are omitted from the index.

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The museum of the East India Company formed, for a large part of the nineteenth century, one of the sights of London. In recent years, little has been remembered of it beyond its mere existence, while an assumed negative role has been widely attributed to it on the basis of its position at the heart of one of Britain's arch-colonialist enterprises.

Extensively illustrated, *The India Museum Revisited* provides a full examination of the museum's founding manifesto and evolving ambitions. It surveys the contents of its multi-faceted collections – with respect to materials, their manufacture and original functions on the Indian sub-continent – as well as the collectors who gathered them and the manner in which they were mobilized to various ends within the museum.

From this integrated treatment of documentary and material sources, a more accurate, rounded and nuanced picture emerges of an institution that contributed in major ways, over a period of 80 years, to the representation of India for a European audience, not only in Britain but through the museum's involvement in the international exposition movement to audiences on the continent and beyond.

**Arthur MacGregor** is an Andrew W. Mellon Visiting Professor at the Victoria and Albert Museum's Research Institute.



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