

Chapter 6

Collecting portraits, exhibiting race: Augustus Pitt-Rivers's cartes-de-visite at the South Kensington Museum

Christopher Morton

It is April 1880. Gilbert and Sullivan's comic opera *The Pirates of Penzance* has just opened on The Strand, Gladstone has defeated Disraeli to become Prime Minister for the second time, and the great smog of London has just abated after several awful months. To breathe the clearer air, you decide to visit the Royal Horticultural Society gardens in South Kensington. Reading the guide to the various displays in the exhibition galleries flanking the gardens, you decide to visit the ethnological collection on loan from Colonel Augustus Henry Lane Fox. Lane Fox's collections formed part of the Educational Series at the South Kensington Museum. An 1878 edition of the catalogue to his collection notes: 'This Collection, which has for the past four years been exhibited in the Branch Museum at Bethnal Green, has lately been removed to South Kensington. It is arranged in two rooms in the Exhibition Galleries on the western side of the Horticultural Gardens, and may be reached either by the entrance in Queen's Gate, or by that in Exhibition Road' (Fox 1878a: xvi). As you enter, you are fascinated to discover a quite remarkable series of cases and wall displays, showing everyday objects, weapons and utensils from all parts of the world, and all periods of time. We know from both Lane Fox's own catalogue¹ and the report of an anonymous reviewer of the collection in *Nature* in September 1880 that a collection of photographs would have been one of the first things encountered by a visitor to his collection. The reviewer states that:

[t]he collection may be considered as consisting of three parts. Firstly, a collection of the various races of mankind which is not as yet far advanced, though it contains large and instructive series of portraits of Danes, Scandinavians, the people of Brittany, and Japanese; whilst together with the photographs is a small series of those skulls which show the best marked racial characteristics... (Anon 1880: 490)

This chapter sets out to explore the scientific contexts surrounding this remarkable 'series of portraits' which first confronted the visitor to Lane Fox's exhibition at South Kensington. Recent research has shown that these in fact mostly consisted of hundreds of anonymous cartes-de-visite – small portrait photographs pasted on to a card backing, sometimes with a decorative border, and on the reverse the name of the studio that produced it. Having recently surveyed elsewhere the range of photographic material that Lane Fox deposited at South Kensington Museum in the late 1870s (Morton 2014), in this

chapter I explore in more detail the particular scientific contexts—particularly archaeology and physical anthropology—that informed Lane Fox’s photographic collection and displays, and the wider intellectual debates around race and antiquity from which they emerged.

In May 1880 Lane Fox inherited the Cranborne Chase estate of Lord Rivers and assumed the name Augustus Henry Lane Fox Pitt-Rivers, by which name he is known to most historians of archaeology, anthropology, and museums. It is for this reason, and for the sake of consistency, that I will refer to Lane Fox as Pitt-Rivers in the rest of this chapter, despite his not bearing that name in the 1870s. He is probably best known today for donating the founding collection of the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford in 1884, and it is what remains of his photograph collection in Oxford that is the basis of this essay; that is to say, it is the period in which the photographs were collected, deposited and displayed at South Kensington in 1879 (until 1884) that I am considering here. And in particular it is to the remarkable surviving collection of cartes-de-visite collected in Germany and Scandinavia that I now turn, since these objects provide crucial evidence about a distinctive visual approach to race taken by Pitt-Rivers in his displays at South Kensington, providing a possibly unique case study within late nineteenth-century scientific didacticism.

Pitt-Rivers’s cartes-de-visite collection

We know from the South Kensington Museum receipt book (receipts given to Pitt-Rivers for deposits of material), that 1879 was the year in which he had decided, following the move of his collection from the Bethnal Green branch museum in late 1878, to establish photography as a significant component of his displays relating to physical anthropology. The receipt book shows that he sent a number of batches of photographs for display, beginning on 23 May 1879 with ‘300 photographs of natives of Upper and Lower Brittany and Normandy’, being a large collection of cartes-de-visite acquired on a trip to Brittany in the autumn of 1878 and spring of 1879 to survey ancient monuments (Thompson, 1977: 125). This was followed on 11 September 1879 by ‘468 Photographs of Scandinavian Races’, being an even larger collection of cartes-de-visite from Germany, Denmark and Sweden, collected in the summer of 1879 on a journey with his friend, the anatomist George Rolleston, who worked at the University Museum in Oxford. He also donated at this time prints of Japanese and Chinese subjects, as well as prints from Oceania and Australia acquired from the Godeffroy Museum in Hamburg. Recent research has enabled me to match nearly all the photographs originally deposited by Pitt-Rivers at South Kensington Museum in 1879 with items that survive today in the photograph collections of the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford. There is one very notable exception to this, however, and that is the collection of cartes-de-visite from Brittany and Normandy, which was not mentioned in the Oxford delivery catalogue, and appears never

to have been transferred there. It can only be surmised that Pitt-Rivers decided to remove these photographs from the collection at the time it was transferred in 1884, but the reason remains unknown.

Before this flurry of collecting activity—and immediate integration of the material into the displays at South Kensington—Pitt-Rivers does not appear to have collected photographs in any systematic or consistent way, and they did not feature, beyond possibly isolated instances of illustration, in his displays at Bethnal Green from 1874. That they did so from 1879 is evidenced in the changing descriptions we have of the physical anthropology section of his collection. This was described in 1874 at Bethnal Green as consisting ‘of a small collection of typical skulls and hair of races’ (Fox 1874), but in 1879 at South Kensington as ‘a collection of photographs of the various races of mankind ... whilst together with the photographs is a small series of those skulls which show the best marked racial characteristics, and another which is to exhibit the various modifications in the forms of their skulls which are made by different races’ (Anon 1880: 490). This shift to photographs forming the core of his physical anthropology displays, with human remains being supplementary, reflects Pitt-Rivers’s keen interest in the visual exploration of race, discussed below.

Although the connections between the historical documentation and what remains of the collections in Oxford is now clear, it is important to note that these are reformed connections, reestablished through processes of institutional documentation. The ‘collection’ has spent most of its institutional existence as a remnant, disconnected from its original contexts and histories. In contrast to most of the Pitt Rivers Museum’s photograph collections, these mysterious cartes-de-visite remained an undocumented group in a general box relating to northern Europe. It was only by systematically comparing items listed in the delivery catalogue of the Pitt Rivers’s collection as it arrived in Oxford with what had actually been catalogued in the museum, that the link was made. However, of the 468 cartes-de-visite from Germany and Scandinavia originally collected, only 318 of them were recorded as having been transferred to Oxford in 1885, arranged ‘on 11 mounts’.² Helpfully, annotations in pencil on the reverse of the cartes-de-visite allowed me to recreate these eleven mounts. The example illustrated here [*Plate 7*], for instance, shows the pencil annotation on the reverse of one of the cartes-de-visite, being the fifth card on the seventh mount, all relating to Gothenburg. It also shows the remains of glue applied when mounting them. Although we thus know which cartes-de-visite were grouped together [*Figure 6.1* and *Plate 8*], we obviously do not know the order in which they were arranged on the mounts. What we know also is that Pitt-Rivers gave instructions on *how* they should be mounted, in a letter that accompanied the deposit, since a reply exists in his papers at the Salisbury and South Wiltshire Museum, dated 15 September 1879,³ which reads ‘instructions have been given for mounting, according to your request, the photographs mentioned in your letter of the 9th instant’. Almost all the cartes-de-visite are of anonymous individuals, with only a few having personal names or professions noted. Only one small

set is dated, the reverse of a series from Korsør in Denmark having been annotated by Pitt-Rivers with the date '31 Aug 1879'. Several of those purchased in Copenhagen have had personal names annotated on the reverse, presumably by the photographer. Examples [*< Figure 6.2>*] include the name 'Otto' written in an unknown hand on the reverse of a carte-de-visite produced by Budtz Müller & Co., under which Pitt-Rivers has noted 'Copenhagen professor'. All of the cartes-de-visite have printed studio designs on their reverse, and it is the series of such designs—from Kiel, Schleswig, Korsør, Copenhagen, Lund, Halmstad, Gothenburg, Jönköping, Stockholm and Uppsala—that has enabled me to map the extent of Pitt-Rivers's journey, along with the documentation accompanying objects collected in the same places.

Modern portraits, ancient races

Having established the making of the collection, I now consider the particular intellectual contexts in which Pitt-Rivers's collection of this series of cartes-de-visite took place. The first question is what the purpose of the Scandinavian trip was, given that, despite being known as a collector of ethnographic objects, Pitt-Rivers only occasionally travelled abroad. There is little direct evidence, but the anthropologist E. B. Tylor noted that Pitt-Rivers's and Rolleston's objective was to visit universities and museums.⁴ Perhaps an equally important objective was to gain supporting evidence towards answering the question of the antiquity of Dane's Dyke, an earthwork on the Yorkshire coast. Canon Greenwell had criticised Pitt-Rivers in print in 1877 about the suggestion that this ancient ditch was dug by invaders from Scandinavia, stating that:

His [Pitt-Rivers's] opinion is that these earthworks and their arrangement for defensive purposes are only to be explained on the supposition that they were made by a body of men advancing from the East, and gradually entrenching themselves as they extended their progress towards the West... It is scarcely to be looked for that an invading people would practise any new mode of entrenchment upon their first arrival, and therefore we would expect to find in the country from which they came some arrangements for defence similar to those in question. But in that part of Europe from which it is known the Angles and other nearly-connected tribes emigrated into this country, very few works at all resembling those in question are to be found. It is true that the great line of the Dannewerk [Danevirke] runs across from sea to sea ... but if in later times it was ever anything more than a divisional or boundary work, it seems probably it represents a line of defence constructed at a time antecedent to the Scandinavian occupation of Denmark. (Greenwell & Rolleston 1877: 123-4).

To this end, Pitt-Rivers and Rolleston conducted a limited excavation of the Danevirke earthwork at a place called Korborg, four miles east of Schleswig. The Danevirke is a linear ditch and bank earthwork that runs from coast to coast across the Cimbrian Peninsula in Schleswig-Holstein, in modern-day northern Germany. Pitt-Rivers never published the results of this excavation, and the only reason we know about it is due to a brief reference in a later work,⁵ which states:

I have had an opportunity, in conjunction with Professor Rolleston, of examining the great Danewirke, which runs across Jutland from Schleswig. This fortification has been renewed and altered at different periods, and there is evidence of successive additions, but the oldest portions of it may even date as far back as prehistoric times. Borrowing a spade from a neighbouring cottage we dug into this rampart at a place where a natural breach had already been partly made, and found, at a depth of about 6 feet from the top, a layer of horizontal beams running across the rampart... (Pitt-Rivers 1881: 38)

In 2012 a plan and section of this little-known excavation was discovered amongst a donation of papers made by his great-grandson to the Pitt Rivers Museum (see Morton 2014 figure 5), which shows a more extensive excavation than his comments suggest. Pitt-Rivers's conclusion that the Danevirke had been 'renewed and altered at different periods' suggests that both Pitt-Rivers and Rolleston considered at the time that their limited excavation had demonstrated that the earthwork had been used defensively in more recent historic times, and that this might counter Greenwell's assertion that Dane's Dyke had no European precedent in the historic period. Pitt-Rivers evidently felt that this test excavation lent weight to his position, and wrote to Greenwell immediately. Although the letter doesn't survive, Greenwell refers to it in a letter he wrote soon afterwards to Rolleston:

You and Fox seem to have settled some stiffish points in Scandinavia, so at least I gather from a letter in which he tells me that his opinion is that the wold entrenchments were thrown up by the Anglian invaders. To this I entirely dissent, for reasons stated in *British Barrows*; that book will be the ruin of us both.⁶

Less than two weeks after Greenwell had written this letter to Rolleston, Pitt-Rivers began his excavation at Dane's Dyke, cutting a section through the earthwork. Finding that flint artefacts predominated, Pitt-Rivers concluded that 'the work itself is not later than the bronze period; it is, in fact, of the same age as the tumuli of the Yorkshire Wolds' (1882: 467). But as to who had constructed the earthwork, Pitt-Rivers now sought to rule out more recent 'Anglian invaders' (i.e. Denmark) as their origin, arguing that the people of the wold burials were established as belonging to the early Bronze Age, whereas 'the early

bronze age did not exist in Denmark' (1882: 467). Instead, he argued, the builders of Dane's Dyke were likely to be those same people found elsewhere in southern Britain, or else people driven to the coast by another invader 'and that the defences we are considering were associated with the last occupation of the soil of Yorkshire' (1882: 468). In many ways this volte-face on the part of Pitt-Rivers on the question of the antiquity of Dane's Dyke was a vindication of Greenwell's opinion as expressed in *British Barrows*, but it clearly shows Pitt-Rivers's ability to change his opinion when confronted with archaeological evidence.

This archaeological dispute is one immediate intellectual context for Pitt-Rivers's collection of this large series of images of local people through the random acquisition of commercially available cartes-de-visite of anonymous sitters. In his contribution to *British Barrows*, for instance, Rolleston argues that:

The tall powerfully-made brachy-cephalous⁷ Briton of the round-barrow period all but certainly presented much the same combination of physical peculiarities as the modern Finn and Dane ... the bronze-period Briton very closely resembles in his osteological remains the brachy-cephalous Dane of the Neolithic period, and the likeness between these and some of the modern Danes has been noticed by Virchow... There are not wanting ... reasons for supposing that the brachy-cephalic people of the round-barrow period may have immigrated into this country from the Cimbric Peninsula... (Greenwell and Rolleston 1877: 680)

Such questions of race were central to both archaeological and anthropological discourse at the time, and here Rolleston is arguing that the modern Dane is the same round-headed (brachy-cephalic) race as the Bronze Age Briton. As Greenwell and Rolleston further note:

This brachy-cephalic race, if they are to be regarded as the people who erected the wold fortifications, must have arrived from the opposite shores of the continent, and we may expect to find their people possessing the same characteristics. Nor shall we have to travel far in our search after them, for in the modern Danish head is exhibited the same peculiarity of type as is found to exist in the round skull of the barrows... (1877: 126)

In order to make the comparison clear to visitors to his collection at South Kensington, Pitt-Rivers placed this large series of portraits near a display of skulls illustrating both typical features from different parts of the world, but also types of skull modification. Included in this display were two casts of heads from Sweden and Finland, as well as skulls from different archaeological periods, including Neanderthal,

Romano-British, and Anglo-Saxon, as well as a Bronze Age skull excavated by Pitt-Rivers at Highdown Hill in Sussex in 1867.⁸

What comes together in the series of Scandinavian cartes-de-visite is a set of intellectual questions involving race that have subsequently been separated by disciplines, but that in this period were all part of the same enquiry, with both spatial and temporal dimensions. In this period, a series of portraits of modern Danes could provide evidence for who had built an ancient earthwork in Yorkshire. But the series of portraits of contemporary Scandinavians also played another role, visually consolidating an archaeological sense that the late nineteenth-century Briton and Dane were of the same race. As Rolleston subsequently wrote to Pitt-Rivers after their journey, 'I should be in despair if it were not for what we saw done by people of the same flesh and blood as ourselves, but much poorer and less aristocratic, last summer' (quoted, Tylor 1884: lxi).

Cartes-de-visite and visual research on race

The removal of Pitt-Rivers's collection from Bethnal Green to South Kensington in late 1878 precipitated an expansion in the photographic content of the displays, particularly the physical anthropology section. It is possible that his 1879 Scandinavian journey gave Pitt-Rivers the opportunity to collect more relevant photographic material, but given that much would have already been readily available through his various professional contacts, this explanation is not a satisfactory one. A more plausible explanation would be the influence of Rolleston, a man whose opinion, wrote Pitt-Rivers in a letter in 1880, 'I attach much value'.⁹ Although it is not known when they met, both were members of the same learned societies, including the Royal Society, the Anthropological Institute and the Anthropological Section of the British Association for the Advancement of Science (BAAS). Both Pitt-Rivers and Rolleston served on the BAAS Anthropometric Committee, which operated between 1875 and 1883 with 'the purpose of collecting observations on the systematic examination of the height, weight, and other physical characters of the inhabitants of the British Isles' (BAAS 1884: 253). As Rolleston's influence on Pitt-Rivers grew in the 1870s, it is possible that the latter's interest in physical anthropology also grew, resulting in the augmentation of this section of the displays after their move to South Kensington. Interestingly, a small collection of forty-three cartes-de-visite from Cornish photo studios, such as J. Moody of Penzance, survives in Rolleston's papers, annotated on the reverse with remarks about the subject's facial features and likely ethnic 'type'. One example reads 'Newlyn (Margaret James). Is not this Scandinavian type[?] You have photo of her brother in our St Peter's choir marked also as Scandinavian (large fair young man)'.¹⁰ These examples were not in fact collected or annotated by Rolleston, but by Rev. Wladislaw Somerville Lach-Szyrma, the vicar of St. Peter's, Newlyn. But the fact that such material had been sent to

him by Lach-Szyrma (a former Oxford student) reveals Rolleston's own interest in gathering visual data on race at the time.

But what was Pitt-Rivers's scientific or didactic purpose in collecting and displaying such a large number of cartes-de-visite? In fact, Pitt-Rivers's approach was highly innovative, and it is necessary to re-evaluate his contribution as a leading figure in late nineteenth-century visual research on race. Whilst he was not the only scientist collecting portraiture at the time, his leading role in developing anthropological guidelines, and his innovative visual presentation of racial theory to a public audience, place him as an influential, if overlooked, figure in racial science of the period. A distinctive aspect of these displays of course is that European peoples predominated; and not even minority ethnic European groups (such as the Sami of Scandinavia), as might have been expected, but a random sample of dominant ethnic groups. As Elizabeth Edwards notes, 'although British scientists were interested in the nature of European races, it was of more particular concern on the continent' (1990: 252); so Pitt-Rivers's decision to explore dominant European racial types is exceptional in the British context. Although it is likely that there was a large degree of happenstance about this display, the fact that Pitt-Rivers had ample opportunity to collect British cartes-de-visite and yet seemingly did not is particularly interesting.

The visual agglomeration of portraits to generalize race, as we shall see, was a recommendation of the Anthropometric Committee of which Pitt-Rivers was a key member. It was argued that racial types could only be satisfactorily established through a mean based on as large a sample as possible. As J. F. W. Hershel noted, 'rude and unskilful measurements of any kind, accumulated in very great numbers, are competent to afford precise mean results' (1869: 192). The committee frequently discussed photography as an important data-gathering exercise. In 1878 it appealed in the magazine *Photographic News* to photographers for assistance in accumulating photos (Brabrook 1879: 155), and between 1881 and 1885 a separate committee worked especially on 'the collection and comparison' of photographs from the regions of the UK. The results of this work can be seen in three albums held in the photograph collections of the Royal Anthropological Institute. The organization of the albums seems to follow a system eventually devised by the committee for bringing together portraits of people who exhibited similar features; what it termed comparative physiognomy. This then is one possibility for the sub-groupings of Pitt-Rivers's own collection, although they mostly appear to be organized by region.

In 1877 Pitt-Rivers published a paper in which he discusses measuring all the officers and men of the 2nd Royal Surrey Militia in May 1876 'according to the instructions drawn up by the Anthropometric Committee of the British Association' (Fox 1877: 112). His growing interest in the use of photography for physical anthropology is made explicit in a note he authored in an 1878 report from the Anthropometric Committee:

The attention of the Committee has also been drawn to the desirability of endeavouring to ascertain by means of photographs the various types of physiognomy prevailing in different districts. That characteristic differences of countenance do exist in different parts of the country appears very probable. But the difficulty of obtaining any reliable statistics on the subject is very great, owing to the almost impossibility of establishing any recognised standard of comparison for features; where one person will fix upon a particular class of physiognomy as characteristic of a district, another person in the same district will select something totally different. It is laid down that the only true method of obtaining reliable results should be by obtaining as large a number of photographs as possible of persons from different localities whose descriptions should be, as far as possible recorded in the manner laid down in the Anthropometric instructions regardless of type; and the Committee should then determine typical forms from an examination of the photographs thus obtained. This, however, entails the collection of an enormous number of photographs, to be followed possibly by some little difference of opinion on the part of the Committee appointed to estimate the type. (Fox 1878b: 393)

That Pitt-Rivers and the Anthropometric Committee favoured obtaining large numbers of photographs of people for comparison goes some way to explaining why he amassed more than 700 cartes-de-visite portraits in Brittany and Scandinavia, as well as the didactic rationale for presenting them in his displays. Although unfortunately no text accompanying these displays survives, it seems clear that, by showing numerous examples of commercially produced cartes-de-visite collected in different towns, Pitt-Rivers was intending to demonstrate certain correspondences between individuals from these various localities. By displaying a mass of portraits in order to allow the visitor to his collection to form a quick visual generalization as to physical type, Pitt-Rivers had developed a possibly unique visual approach to the public dissemination of scientific knowledge about race. Yet he was by no means the only innovator in this regard. Also in 1878, another member of the Anthropometric Committee, Francis Galton, had published his first paper on a method of creating composite images. This method also sought to establish the mean from a number of examples, although his method was to superimpose images on top of each other by repeatedly exposing a negative to a series of portraits placed in front of a camera. He stated that 'those of its [that is, the resulting image's] outlines are sharpest and darkest that are common to the largest number of the components; the purely individual peculiarities leave little or no visible trace' (Galton 1879: 134). Galton's method caught the imagination of the period, especially popular conceptions of character type that went well beyond questions of race, producing composites based on images of men convicted of violent crime, to visualize the violent criminal 'type'. Galton's composites relied however on having a uniform series of portraits, front facing and with the head roughly the same size in the image, whereas the portraits that Pitt-Rivers had collected from studios

were all very different; varying with individual choice and the style of the studio photographer, these portraits were unsuited to the creation of such composite images. The sort of comparison that Pitt-Rivers invited the viewer to make, by looking over a large number of portraits in a short space of time, was presumably an impression made on the mind as to the Danish, German or Swedish 'type'. The benefits of amassing visual data in this way was certainly acknowledged in the period, reflected in this statement in the *British Journal of Photography* on the application of photography to ethnology:

As it is much easier to take photographic portraits of a large number of living individuals than to collect the same number of authentic crania it follows that photographs of this kind will furnish an excellent method of determining ... the limits of variation in any given type. (Anon 1862: 49, see Edwards 1990: 243).

If the method of display is taken as allowing Pitt-Rivers to demonstrate to the visitor the limits of variation within any given racial type, it is also important to note that none of the photographs he collected was actually taken with racial typology as an intended register. All of the images are personal portraits acquired by Pitt-Rivers from studios as duplicates, rather than being 'type' portraits made for a commercial market, such as portraits of non-European peoples often were. One indication of this is that whilst the usual studio paraphernalia is present in the portraits, none of them includes props that might be understood as being cultural pointers, as was frequently included in 'type' portraiture (Edwards 1990: 241). And although included in his expanded section on physical anthropology, the cartes-de-visite portraits do not allow for the systematic comparison of skull or body shapes, unlike the anthropometric images he purchased from the Godeffroy Museum in Hamburg (Morton 2014: 173-9). In this sense they are similar to Galton's composites, which are likewise intended to form an impression of the mean from the many, rather than an accurate physical description of the particular. Both Pitt-Rivers's and Galton's methods however contrasted with developments, since at least 1869, in the use of photography by anthropometrists, such as those systems devised by J. H. Lamprey and T. H. Huxley, both of whom advocated differing methods of visually recording physical measurements within the photographic frame (Edwards 2001: 131-155). As Daston and Gallison (2007) note, the 1860s was a crucial transitional period in the way images were conceptualized within scientific work. Whereas we might understand images produced according to Lamprey's or Huxley's methods as providing the sort of 'mechanical objectivity' that a new type of scientific thinking required, the sort of visual data being amassed by both Pitt-Rivers and the Anthropometric Committee instead relied on the 'trained judgment' of the skilled observer. As E. B. Tylor wrote in his review of the Dammann album, 'the skill of the collector lies in choosing the right individuals as representatives of their nations' (1876: 184). Rather than seeing either Pitt-Rivers's or

Dammann's approach as a reaction against the mechanical objectivity of anthropometric photography however (we should remember after all that Pitt-Rivers included a few such photographs in his display), the collecting of cartes-de-visite should rather be seen as a complementary form of data gathering, partly due to the great difficulty of organising and producing anthropometric imagery. I have come across only one reference, for instance, to Pitt-Rivers having organised what might be considered a scientific-reference 'type' photograph, in Austria in 1882.¹¹ It is clear that the British Association sub-committee charged with collecting race photographs were in methodological flux in the late 1870s – in his report of the 1878 meeting E. W. Brabrook mentions that both Huxley's and Galton's photographic methods had been discussed, and that the latter was being considered by the committee for 'generalising the peculiar features observed in different localities' (Brabrook 1879: 156).

Since the cartes-de-visite were not produced as 'type' images in the way that portraits of non-European peoples were, the question remains whether they become 'type' images in the context of Pitt-Rivers's use of them? It is certainly the case that many photographs in anthropological collections were not explicitly produced for anthropological consumption, but were nonetheless collected and used as such within the disciplinary archive (Morton 2012: 384). The issue of the scientific use of 'type' imagery is relevant here. In other major anthropological examples from the 1870s such as C. W. Dammann's *Anthropologisches-Ethnologisches Album in Photographien*, a number of representative portraits are brought together to establish the variation within the type. As Tylor wrote about the Dammann album, 'the skill of the collector lies in choosing the right individuals as representatives of their nations' (Tylor 1876: 184). So there is something distinctive about the sheer size and *unselective* nature of the groupings established by Pitt-Rivers in his display that departs from such contemporary presentations, and shifts it on to a less directed plane of visual data in which the greatly increased number of examples each stands for itself; a cross-section of an entire local population acquired randomly from what was available from local studios.

Writing about the use of cartes-de-visite by anthropologists in the period, Roslyn Poignant suggests 'that there was a physiognomic code to be read in physical form' and that cartes-de-visite 'appeared to be the ready-made constituents of a scientific narrative waiting to be pieced together' (1992: 57). She discusses the three albums earlier mentioned in the Royal Anthropological Institute photograph collections, compiled by the British Association's Racial Committee, an off-shoot of the Anthropometric Committee on which Pitt-Rivers served. These contain 557 cartes-de-visite of British people collected by members of the committee and their networks, the intention being the 'investigation, by means of photographs, of the national or local types of race prevailing in different parts of the United Kingdom' (Brabrook 1879: 155). As Poignant notes, Pitt-Rivers saw significant methodological flaws in the project—evidenced in his 1878 remarks quoted above—and seemed to favour

the collection of as much visual data as possible ‘regardless of type’, that is, not pre-selected by the anthropologist. The work of establishing the ‘type’ from the large and apparently random data set would then be the work of the informed committee members, whose opinion (as quoted above) was admitted by Pitt-Rivers as being both subjective and variable.

Whilst Pitt-Rivers’s work on the Anthropometric Committee provides a crucial context in which to understand the rationale for his collection of cartes-de-visite, and especially the intellectual framework in which their collection was made meaningful, the fact that they were placed on public display *en masse* rather than forming the subject of private study by the committee, suggests that Pitt-Rivers had already begun to think of the didactic and pedagogical possibilities of this visual research before he left for Scandinavia in the summer of 1879. Not content with collecting visual data for the scrutiny of a select few to decide on the Danish or Swedish ‘type’, he brought this developing visual methodology and partial body of material into dialogue with his existing displays of skulls, casts and other physical specimens – a possibly unique dialogue between visual and material evidence that blended two distinct approaches to collecting, the more conventional selection of the connoisseur with that of the scientist amassing raw data.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed Pitt-Rivers’s method of collecting and displaying cartes-de-visite photographs at South Kensington Museum as part of a concerted attempt to visually demonstrate the limits of racial variation, explicitly brought into scientific dialogue with his other displays of physical anthropology, as well as the broad sociocultural evolutionism of his other ‘series’. In so doing it has been necessary to sketch some of the more important intellectual contexts in which this display must be understood, such as Pitt-Rivers’s interest in investigating the antiquity of British archaeological sites through direct comparison with the archaeology and anthropology of Scandinavia. Of equal importance was Pitt-Rivers’s work on the Anthropometric Committee of the British Association, for which he drew up recommendations on the collection of large numbers of portraits as raw visual data for racial ‘type’ analysis. Until now, Pitt-Rivers’s leading role in the visual investigation of race has been overlooked by scholars, and his public displays of this material had been forgotten.

This raises questions about why had they been forgotten, and what has been done with these cartes-de-visite since? As noted earlier in this chapter, all that is known for certain is that of the 768 photographs from France, Germany and Scandinavia deposited by Pitt-Rivers at South Kensington in 1879, only 318–grouped onto eleven mounts–were transferred to Oxford in 1885. None of the French cartes-de-visite seem to have been transferred, but it is unclear why.¹² The cartes-de-visite are all now loose, with marks in each corner being testament to their having been once glued to, and then forcefully

removed from, mounts. From this we can assume that the display was dismantled at a fairly early date and the individual photos kept with other photographs being accumulated for research by the museum's first curator Henry Balfour. And that is where they remained until their recent 'rediscovery', when their enhanced status as 'founding collection' objects—that is, objects forming part of the original donation by Pitt-Rivers—meant that they were rehoused in a special conservation file designed for cartes-de-visite. But their twentieth-century biography isn't completely blank. Quite by chance, I stumbled across the database record for an English musical photograph album (< Plate 9 >) purchased by the museum in 1942. The accession book entry for this object reads, 'Victorian album in red velvet, with musical box that plays when clasp is flat down, filled by Curator with photographs of the period given by Sir Francis Knowles, and from the museum collection, Schleswig, Kiel and Jonkoping.'¹³ The curator at the time, T. K. Penniman, had a particular interest in mechanical musical instruments, and went to great lengths to ensure that they were both playable, and listened to, by students.¹⁴ The fact that Penniman had a policy of intervening in objects in order to restore their functionality helps us understand why he would choose to fill the empty apertures in a recently donated musical album with cartes-de-visite from the museum's collection. Furthermore, it seems to have been felt important by Penniman that the visual experience of browsing through such an album be recreated as the music played. This small set from Pitt-Rivers's 1879 collection of photographs was still housed in the musical album in the museum's music store until recently, when they were photographed in situ, removed, and reunited with the rest of the cartes-de-visite. The re-use of these portraits to adorn a musical album stands as an example of just how inherently unstable collections can be, and how mutable the meaning of photographic objects are over time, especially within the institutional context of a museum where photographs have played an ambivalent representational role.

NOTES

¹ Pitt-Rivers catalogue states that his collection at South Kensington 'begins with Case I (Typical Human Skulls, etc.) which will be found by the Queen's Gate Entrance at the north end of Room L. The Screens begin with No. 2 on the EAST Wall of this room, and follow in consecutive order' (Fox 1878a: xvi).

² The relevant entry in the delivery catalogue reads 'Pictures. 318 photographs of natives of Scandinavia on 11 mounts' (University of Oxford, Pitt Rivers Museum, Catalogues, 'Delivery Catalogue II').

³ Salisbury Museum, Pitt-Rivers Papers, P124 (letter from G. F. Duncombe, 15th September 1879).

⁴ Edward B. Tylor, 'Life of Dr Rolleston', in *Scientific Papers and Addresses by George Rolleston*, ed. by William Turner (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1884), p. lxi.

⁵ He also mentions it in passing in his 1892 account of his excavations of Wansdyke (Pitt-Rivers 1892: 254).

⁶ Letter from William Greenwell to George Rolleston, 6 October 1879. Ashmolean Museum, Rolleston Papers.

⁷ Dolicho-cephalic (long-headed) skulls were generally considered by Greenwell and Rolleston as being characteristic of the British 'neolithic' population, having been found in long barrows; round barrows on the other hand also contained brachy-cephalic (round-headed) skulls, presumably belonging to those invading people who conquered them. The Dolicho-cephalic people, they surmised, could not be Angles (also long-heads) since the round barrows only contained stone or bronze items, whereas the Angles were known to have used iron.

⁸ The PRM accession number for this skull is 1884.140.149. Its entry in the Pitt-Rivers Catalogue of 1874 reads 'Case 1 Skull. Found by Col A Lane Fox in contact with a bronze socket knife or dagger (in this collection) [1884.119.292] in a grave at Highdown Hill Sussex Oct 12 1867. Index 70. Its connexion [sic] with the remains of the Bronze Age is doubtful and from its form improbable' (Fox 1874: 3).

⁹ Salisbury Museum, Pitt-Rivers Papers, P125.

¹⁰ Ashmolean Museum, Rolleston Papers, GR/F/4/1.

¹¹ Salisbury Museum, Pitt-Rivers Papers, P170. This brief document is headed 'Photographs of peasants of the dark type taken for me at Gastein in Austria. 1882. Front and side view. The document then goes on to record a few details of the subject, but most of the headings are blank.

¹² As Peter Saunders describes, Pitt-Rivers began to remove a number of objects from South Kensington Museum to his new 'Peasant Museum' at Farnham, Dorset, from at least 1883 (2014: 217). Given that some of the items removed were from Brittany, it is possible that the cartes-de-visite were seen by Pitt-Rivers as being more useful in illustrating the displays in Farnham than in Oxford.

¹³ The accession number for this object is 1943.5.1 B. It was purchased from the estate of Alphonse James Albert [Aloy] Symons via Mrs Watson in 1942.

¹⁴ See for instance Penniman's museum report for 1945-6 where he gives details of the purchases from the Symons estate and how the efforts of the staff meant that 'these instruments now give a perfect performance' (Pitt Rivers Museum Annual Report for the year 1945-6).

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