

Arthur MacGregor and Moira Hook, *Ashmolean Museum Oxford: Manuscript Catalogues of the Early Museum Collections (Part II), The Vice-Chancellor's Consolidated Catalogue 1695 (British Archaeological Reports, International Series, No. 1569)*. Oxford, Ashmolean Museum and BAR, 2006. ISBN 1841719374. xii + 255 pp., £40.

The rediscovery of the mis-shelved vice-chancellor's consolidated catalogue of the Ashmolean collections of 1696 came too late for it to be included in the publication in 2000 of sixteen manuscript catalogues of the collections extending from 1683 to 1886 (reviewed in the *Journal of the History of Collections* 13 (2001), pp. 99–100). Since the consolidated catalogue is a copy of the early set of catalogues, intended to be kept by the vice-chancellor 'for the preventing of fraude or embezelment', the first question that arises, as Arthur MacGregor points out in his historical introduction, is whether this new transcription and translation from the Latin has independent value. The answer is a resounding yes. Such value is most evident in the catalogue of fossils, minerals and shells, since nothing in the 'Catalogue of Artificial Works' assigned to the Junior Proctor some ten years earlier corresponds to it. Moreover, the hand of the scrivener who received £3 for transcribing the individual Visitors' catalogues is generally easier to follow than those of Robert Plot and Edward Lhwyd, and the

condition of the consolidated catalogue is rather better than that of the Visitors' working copies.

When the same item is found in both volumes, therefore, it is recommended that both *Part I* and *Part II* should be consulted, although on the whole both the transcriptions and the translations of the latter are more accurate. Sometimes an improved reading has led to a different translation, as in the case of the entry that was 'Rasura Ebonis' (a shaving of ebony) in *Part I* and has become 'Rasura Eboris' (a shaving of ivory) in *Part II*. The original book of the Regius Professor of Medicine, compiled by Lhwyd, contains a reference to a kind of thistle-melon with spines that 'closely resemble the [] of Gerard'; this enigma has now been unravelled in the entry in *Part II* (p. 119) for spines that 'closely resemble the "beak" of a Stork's-bill'. The rather mythological-sounding 'Very large golden fruit from the island of Bermuda' of *Part I* has become the more tangible 'Very large orange from the island of Bermuda' (p. 121). What was described in *Part I* as a French medal 'struck with a Punic apple halved [?]' is more recognizable in the form of a medal struck 'with a pomegranate halved' (p. 6). Some obscure references to biblical themes have also been cleared up in the course of the transition from *Part I* to *Part II*: as a result of the emendation of the Latin 'castere' to 'carcere', a relief depicting 'the severed head of St. John the Baptist, on a shield [?]', with its echoes of *Salome*, has now become 'the beheading of St. John the Baptist in prison' (p. 35). The original mis-translation of 'filiabus' has thankfully been corrected from 'sons' to 'daughters' in a reference to the intoxication and seduction of Lot by his children (p. 14). Another change of gender from *Part I* to *Part II* can be found in the puzzling reference to the gift of 'an elongated rectangular embuscatum [?] by a Mrs Whitrig of Wadham College'; this has become an 'elongated rectangular embossed work' given by 'Mr Whiting of Wadham College' (p. 71). Further prosopographical refinement can be found in the shift from 'Picture of John Tradescant the Younger with his friend, the brewer of Lambeth' to 'Picture of John Tradescant the younger with his friend [Roger] Friend, brewer of Lambeth' (p. 89).

If some of these examples may seem trivial or hair-splitting to some, a case that is particularly revealing and goes beyond the niceties of manuscript emendation and translation is that of what was described in the Book of the Dean of Christ Church in *Part I* as a

'picture of an American from the North-West in a boat from those parts'. The inclusion of four more Latin words in the new transcription adds two further pieces of information: that the boat was called a canoe, and that the man had been taken prisoner ('capti') (p. 91). The inclusion of the information about the local name for the boat looks forward to the wealth of ethnographic material that came to enter the Museum's collection after Cook's voyages of discovery in the Pacific; and the inclusion of the reference to kidnapping enables us to key this brief reference into the much wider and longer history of the European kidnapping and display of native American and other non-European peoples.

As in *Part I*, brief introductory comments are provided on the contents of each of the individual Visitors' catalogues, singling out points of particular interest and placing the selection and arrangement of the objects (where known) within the different models of a museum collection that developed over time. Thus the stones, whether natural specimens or cut and polished, in the Book of the Dean of Christ Church would be not at all out of place in any of the European *Kunstammern* that had developed in the course of the sixteenth century, the pictures do not appear to have been displayed in any picture gallery founded on aesthetic principles, and the accumulation of so many minerals and palaeontological specimens has few precedents in seventeenth-century England.

Finally, the presence of not only a glossary of Latin terms for natural specimens but also a glossary of Brazilian, Mexican, Nahuatl and other American Indian terms for such specimens represents a substantial scholarly reference work that will prove invaluable in years to come. The patience of the editors, who have had to wade through and try to make sense of the vagaries of a by-no-means-pellucid seventeenth-century Latin, is most commendable and has been amply rewarded by the publication of this signal volume. At last, more than three centuries after the date of the earliest of these manuscripts, they have made accessible what was the most extensive documentation of an English collection of its kind until the compilation in the following century of the multi-volume catalogue of the collection of Sir Hans Sloane.

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