



MOOREY, PETER ROGER STUART

MOOREY, Peter Roger Stuart (b. 30 May 1937, Bushill Park, Middlesex; d. 23 December 2004, Oxford), British archeologist and curator at the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. He published extensively on the material culture of various parts of the Ancient Near East, and his contributions to the archaeology of Ancient Iran and the Achaemenid Empire are particularly distinguished ([FIGURE 1](#)).

Education and professional life. Moorey was educated at Mill Hill School, London. After his national service with the Army Intelligence Corps in [Cyprus](#) from 1956 to 1958, he read modern history at Corpus Christi College, Oxford. Upon graduation in 1961, he was hired as Assistant Keeper of Antiquities by the Ashmolean Museum, where he spent his entire career. His doctoral thesis, submitted in 1966, was on “An Archaeological and Historical Investigation of the Luristan Bronzes.” In 1973 he was appointed Senior Assistant Keeper, and became the Keeper of the Department of Antiquities in 1983. He began to supervise doctoral students at the University of Oxford in 1972, and from 1993 onwards he also taught Near Eastern archaeology to undergraduates in the newly established Archaeology and Anthropology degree. In 1976 he was elected Fellow of Wolfson College, and after his retirement from the Ashmolean Museum in 2002, he served for two years as the college’s Vicegerent.



During his career Moorey sat on various administrative bodies and received a number of distinctions. He was elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries (FSA) in 1967. Reflecting his involvement with Iranian studies and related fields, he was a member of the Governing Council of the British Institute of Persian Studies (1972-1993) and a Trustee of the Lukonin Memorial Fund, now the Ancient Persian Fund (1988-2004). He was elected a Fellow of the British Academy (FBA) as early as 1977. The Israel Museum awarded him the Schimmel Prize in 1989 for his contributions to “the archaeology of Eretz Israel and the Lands of the Bible,” and the Biblical Archaeology Society voted *A Century of Biblical Archaeology* (1991a) the “best popular book” of 1993. He was President of the British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem from 1991 to 1999. He received the 1996 James R. Wiseman Book Award of the Archaeological Institute of America for his *Ancient Mesopotamian Materials and Industries* (1994). In 2003 the British School of Archaeology in Iraq awarded him the Gertrude Bell Gold Medal for outstanding contributions to Mesopotamian archaeology. On the occasion of his 65th birthday in the same year, Moorey was presented with the Festschrift *Culture through Objects*, which assembles contributions by 26 scholars.

Roger Moorey was a very private person who lived alone, but his quiet and studious appearance was deceptive and at social gatherings he could be a lively and entertaining companion. He particularly enjoyed the company of students and colleagues, and was a great source of information about the people and politics of Near Eastern archaeology. He was modest and unassuming, and never sought high office. It was entirely in character that he wanted no memorial service after his death, and he directed that his working papers should be destroyed.

The Ashmolean Museum. Moorey’s curatorial responsibilities extended to the whole of the Ancient Near East, originally even including [Egypt](#), and his interests and expertise were wide-ranging. Moorey made major contributions to Mesopotamia and the Levant. His interests in the excavations at Ur and Kish in [Iraq](#) led to a number of articles, a new edition of *Ur of the Chaldees* by Sir Leonard Woolley (1880-1960), and a definitive publication on *Kish Excavations 1922-1933* (1978). But his Ashmolean catalogues also contain a great deal of important information about Ancient Iran. He edited two stamp seal catalogues of Briggs Buchanan, and arranged prior to his retirement for the online publication of his catalogue of *Ancient Near Eastern Terracottas* (2005). Moorey’s interest in terracottas had previously found expression, when in



2001 he presented the British Academy's Schweich Lectures on Biblical Archaeology (2003).

History of technology. Throughout his career Moorey was keenly interested in the sources of raw materials, manufacturing techniques and the application of scientific techniques to archaeology, as his documented by his magisterial surveys (1985c, 1994). They contain much that is of Iranian interest. Mineral sources in Iran and beyond were investigated in articles in *Early Mesopotamia and Iran* (1993b), the *Boehmer Festschrift* (1995) and *La Méditerranée de l'Antiquité à l'Islam* (1999a).

Ancient Iran. First and foremost amongst Moorey's contributions to studies of Ancient Iran is his 1971 *Catalogue of Ancient Persian Bronzes in the Ashmolean Museum* (see [ART IN IRAN](#); [BERENJ](#); [BRONZE](#); [COPPER](#); [CRAFTS](#)). This revised version of his doctoral thesis is in fact much more than a catalogue of the museum's so-called [Bronzes of Luristan](#), and offers a comprehensive survey of the metalwork of Western Iran as known in 1971. Although Moorey was grappling with artefacts that are largely unprovenanced, he managed to bring order to a very confused subject. More excavated material has become available since, particularly through the publication of the finds from the sanctuary at Surkh Dum-i-Luri (Schmidt) and through the work of the Belgian Archeological Expedition between 1965 and 1979, but Moorey's conclusions remain largely unchallenged. He argued that many of the earlier Luristan bronzes find parallels in [Elam](#), Mesopotamia and even Syria, and that the most prolific phase of the industry, when the most distinctive and iconic bronzes were being produced, should be dated to after 1000 BCE. He concluded: "The bronzeworkers of Luristan, c. 900-650 BC, worked in a tradition that was essentially indigenous, developed over many centuries of contact with Elam and Babylonia" (Moorey, 1971, p. 309). This involvement with the Luristan bronzes was followed up with catalogues of the Luristan bronzes in the Adam Collection (1974a), in the British Museum (1974b), and the Heeramaneck Collection now in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (1981).

This interest in Iranian metalwork was pursued in various articles including those on bronze quiver plaques (1975b), on decorated ironwork (see [ĀHAN](#); [IRON](#)) attributed to Luristan (1991b), on high relief decoration on metal vessels (1993) and on the hammered bronzework of Iron Age Luristan (1999b). General observations were gathered in an important summary of pre-Achaemenid metalworking (1982).



In addition to his work on ancient Iranian bronzes, Moorey was keenly interested in Achaemenid art and [archaeology](#) (see [ACHAEMENID DYNASTY](#)) and made important contributions, particularly through his articles in the *Cambridge History of Iran* (1985) and the *Cambridge Ancient History* (1988a). Specific aspects of Achaemenid material culture were investigated in articles about stamp seals (1978, 1979), gold-figure decoration (see [GOLD i](#)) on silver vessels (1988b), polychrome decoration on jewelry (1998), terracotta rider figurines (2000), and Astarte plaques (2002). With the Greek numismatist Colin M. Kraay (d. 1982), who from 1947 to 1982 was his colleague in the Ashmolean Museum, Moorey collaborated on articles about coin hoards from the Achaemenid period (1969, 1981). An important monograph about the Achaemenid cemetery at Deve Hüyük in Syria was published in 1980, providing valuable information about military equipment and items of daily life. In this volume Moorey had attempted to provide an overview of Achaemenid material culture, and this survey was expanded in an article of seminal importance (1985a). A popular book largely about the Achaemenid Empire appeared incongruously under the title *Biblical Lands* (1975a).

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