Beginning of early 20th century witnessed the origin and growth of the public museums in archaeological sites although the museum movement as such had its beginning nearly hundred years earlier. These class of museums under study were built up under the patronage of the Archaeological Survey of India to house the movable antiquities found in ancient sites or monuments of a certain extent and historical importance. These museums stand on the sites themselves or very close to them. The antiquities preserved in situ are kept in close association with the remains to which they belonged originally. This close association facilitates the study of the antiquities in their natural surroundings. Some of these site museums are located in far away desolate places amidst peaceful rural atmosphere. These museums play an important role in social and cultural life of the people in the area concerned. These museums are real source of joy and pride to the visitors from all walks of life. In the recent years efforts are being made to improve the existing state of affairs present in these museums and as a result, new museums with modern technique of display and set up have come up. While the basic purpose and functions of these museums remain the same, the changing needs and outlook of the society demand constant adjustments and reorientation in formulating effective methods and techniques of organization.

Here an attempt has been made to study the origin and growth of these public museums in archaeological sites, their organizational set up, methods of collection, problems
of display and variety of related problems from the standpoint of museology.

I must admit that the main impetus and inspiration in preparation of this thesis came from my late father Anil Chandra Mukhopadhyay, Cartographer and Artist. He prepared the map used here at the beginning of my work. Unfortunately he could not see the work finished. In preparation of this work, I have received help and guidance from various sources. In particular, I am grateful to Prof. D.P. Ghosh, former Curator and Head of the Department of Museology, Calcutta University, my guide, for his valuable guidance and inspiration. I should always remember my indebtedness to Prof. Z.K. Ganguly, Bhageswari Professor of Indian Art, Calcutta University, for his valuable guidance and unfailing encouragement throughout my work. I am also grateful to Sri K.R. Vijayaraghavan, Superintending Archaeologist for Museums, Museums Branch of the Archaeological Survey of India, for his valuable suggestions and information although my work in spite of his many preoccupations.

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Fig. 1. Map of India showing the site museums of the Survey.