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An Examination of the Correspondence between Sir Marc Aurel Stein and the Royal Geographical Society 1901–1943.

by

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This paper will examine the letters held in the archive of the Royal Geographical Society in London, pertaining to Sir Marc Aurel Stein. It will be divided into two parts; this first part will deal with the period 1901–1914 while the second will look at the period 1915–1943.

Stein is considered one of the foremost explorers of the Silk Road. His contribution to our knowledge about the Silk Road is enormous, not just through his archeological digs but also because of his extensive and detailed surveys of previously uncharted areas. He brought back literally tons of artifacts including wall paintings, sculptures, manuscripts, ancient silks and perhaps his most famous prize, the earliest known example of a printed book the *Diamond Sutra*. Peter Hopkirk in his book, *Foreign Devils on the Silk Road*, described Stein as “the giant of Central Asian archaeology.”¹

Stein was born in Budapest, Hungary in 1826. Although his parents were Jewish, they had him, like his elder brother, baptized a Christian. They felt, considering the times, he would have more opportunities open to him as a Christian.

As a boy, Stein was greatly interested in Alexander the Great, and spent much of his life trying to retrace the routes that took the Greeks into Central Asia and to show how they influenced the culture there. He studied oriental languages at the universities of Vienna and Leipzig, and received his PhD. from Tübingen at the age of twenty-one. As an orientalist England was considered the best place for him to pursue his studies. Therefore after completing his doctorate, he spent the next three years at Oxford University and the British Museum studying classical and oriental archaeology and languages. He did not, however, study Chinese, an omission that was later to cost him a number of important opportunities. He also had to interrupt his time in Britain with a year's national service in the Hungarian army. During his period of service, he was trained in field surveying, a skill that he was later to put to great use in the unmapped regions of Central Asia. His time in the army did leave its mark. Photographs of Stein show a trim, smartly dressed man with a somewhat military bearing that he retained throughout his life. His approach to planning his expeditions was also along the lines of military campaigns. Whitfield in her book, *Aurel Stein on the Silk Road*, states the way Stein conducted his expeditions, "was arranged as a series of campaigns: meticulously planned, executed to the last detail and with a strict hierarchy of responsibilities among the players: he was Commanding Officer."²

Stein got his first chance to test his theories about the Silk Road when, at the age of twenty-six, he joined the education service at Lahore as Principal of the Oriental College. While the job itself was not so important to Stein, it did get him to Asia. As a man without independent financial resources or personal connections, he had to take any opportunities that presented themselves. However, it was not until May 1900 (at the age of thirty-seven) that Stein was able to set out on the first of his three major expeditions (i.e. 1900–1901, 1906–1908 and 1913–1916) to explore the ancient trade routes linking China with India and the West. Each expedition followed a different route across the Pamir Mountains to Sinkiang (Chinese Turkestan) and traced the routes running north and south through the Taklamakan Desert.

Stein's main correspondent at the Royal Geographical Society (hereinafter referred to as the RGS) was the then Secretary of the Society, John Scott Keltie (1840–1927) also a distinguished geographer. Keltie had written a number of books on geography; been an editor for major publishing houses such as Macmillan & Co; and held a number of posts at the RGS before becoming its Secretary from 1885 to 1915.

Stein's correspondence with the RGS began in 1901, after having completed his first major expedition into the Kohtan area of Chinese Turkestan. It was during this expedition that he uncovered buried Silk Road towns and found evidence of an unknown Buddhist civilization.

Stein had sought an introduction to the RGS from his friend, Royston, who worked at the British Museum. In 1901, Stein asked him to forward to the Society an article he had written about his travels in Chinese Turkestan.³ Keltie accepted it for inclusion in the Society's journal. This marked the beginning of a long and, particularly for Stein, very fruitful relationship.

The correspondence between the two men bears testimony to the friendship that developed over the years. Not only did Keltie aid Stein above and beyond his responsibilities as Secretary, but their letters to each other also became longer and covered mutual topics of interest. As will be seen later in this paper, their opinions on people they knew also became franker.

The RGS archive contains about 131 letters of this period, 86 of which are from Stein to Keltie. Stein's letters are all on fine white stationery, folded in half and written in his clear, elegant script. They reflect his character very clearly. He was never wasteful with money but did recognize the value of good quality: hence the fine white paper. His handwriting is also indicative of his character, i.e. clear and precise.

Stein, although born a Hungarian, warmly embraced the values of the British Empire. Although he spent only a few years of study in England he developed an affection and affinity for England and came to regard it as home. Indeed when he writes of "home" in his letters it is England to which he is referring. And like many people who live abroad for long periods he had a somewhat nostalgic view of England. In 1904, he became a British citizen and was knighted in 1912.

There are only a few copies of Keltie's handwritten letters. His writing is somewhat difficult to decipher and it must have been a relief to all when he began using a typewriter.

It is perhaps difficult for us today with our emails, faxes and satellite communication media to appreciate how important letters once were. Indeed letters were the only way people could communicate over long distances, providing an essential link to home and a source of information about the rest of the world for those living in distant parts. Stein was an enthusiastic and regular correspondent. As a single man far away from home, his friends were very important to

him. Although a solitary and shy man, the friends he did make he kept for a long time. For over forty years, he wrote to his close friends, Prof. and Mrs. Allan, once a week and they responded in kind.⁴

Letters would arrive in large bundles; he received “perhaps 200 (letters) at a time, in deliveries separated by gaps of several months which emphasized the enormous distance between him and his friends.”⁵ In writing to friends, he always took care to send birthday greetings, gifts, and even pressed wild flowers; and he always mentioned how he used the presents he had received (such as gloves or books).⁶

Stein not only used his letters to keep in touch with friends but also to contact institutions and people he thought could be of help to him, whether by granting him financial aid or by publicizing his work. He felt very strongly that he was doing important work, which if recognized, would be supported. He sought recognition not for himself but for his work and although a modest man with modest needs, he never shrank from asking for help for that work. Despite this modesty however, he was quite aware of his own worth. In one instance, he asked Keltie to convince Lord Curzon, the then Viceroy to India,⁷ that the Indian Office “could with advantage to itself employ me on tasks more important and useful than those to which I am put at present.”⁸ This type of request was typical of Stein: he was quite prepared to ask anyone he thought could help him.

The early 20th century was a time of great exploration for Europeans. In Central Asia, Stein’s major rivals—Sven Hedin of Sweden, Albert von le Coq of Germany and Paul Pelliot of France—all sought to find ancient ruins for their own glory and that of their respective countries. Stein had to compete for recognition and funding for his work not only with his international rivals, but also with other British explorers. Explorers such as Scott and Shackleton were seeking to secure Antarctica for the British. Funding for all such expeditions came from grants from the government; museums; academic societies (such as the RGS); wealthy industrialists; and the public. It was not easily won. Scott, for instance, had to tour the countryside giving lectures to unenthusiastic audiences and spending many nights in cheap hotels. His frustration was clearly evident in the following extract from a letter he wrote:

Between £20 and £30 from Wolverhampton ... £40 today ... nothing from Wales ... this place won’t do, I’m wasting my time to some extent ... I don’t think there is a great deal of money in the neighborhood ... things have been so-so here ... I

spoke not well but the room was beastly and attendance small ... another very poor day yesterday, nearly everyone out.⁹

Although fundraising was a problem for Scott, the romantic and popular image of his expedition resulted in 8,000 men volunteering to join the endeavor. The “national pride” aspect of the Antarctic explorers, as each sought to be the first to plant their country’s flag at the Pole, certainly overshadowed Central Asian expeditions. It was against this high profile that Stein had to compete for funds. The shy and scholarly Stein did not court attention and his findings, although exciting to other scholars, did not as easily capture the public’s imagination in the same way as Scott’s Antarctic expedition.

REPORTS IN “*THE TIMES*”

Stein’s lack of financial independence was a constant problem for him and a source of great frustration. Not only was he forced to seek patronage, he also had to keep his work in the public eye. Unfortunately, it was not enough to show that his work was groundbreaking; it also had to be interesting enough to attract rich sponsors. Stein was well aware of the importance of publishing and his work was frequently published in the RGS’s journal and the Asiatic Society’s journal. He even wrote a “popular” version of his first expedition, *Sand-Buried Ruins of Khotan*, published in 1903. Although it was a best seller, Stein did not like writing for the general public and gave up writing in this popular style after his second expedition to concentrate on longer scholarly tomes.

One way many explorers of this period kept the public interested in their expeditions was to send regular reports of their journeys to the newspapers. In an era before television or radio, these reports must have been very exciting to the general public. As such they enabled men like Scott to gain mass popularity.

As Britain’s leading newspaper, *The Times* regularly carried reports from various explorers. Stein had relied on his close friend, Prof. Thomas Arnold, to write reports of his progress based on his letters, for submission to *The Times*. In 1906, Stein had begun his second expedition to Chinese Turkestan. In April of that year, he wrote to the RGS suggesting that data from his report might be acceptable for inclusion in the Society’s journal.¹⁰ A month later he wrote that he had completed five detailed pages of geographical, archaeological and ethnographic observations for submission to the journal and he also asked,

"In case you could kindly arrange to place the above also at the disposal of *The Times*."¹¹

Keltie acceded to Stein's request, informing him that for many years he had been responsible for all geographical matters in *The Times*; and that he had already contacted Prof. Arnold, who was happy to be relieved of his duties in this matter.¹²

Did Keltie realize that he had taken on a responsibility that would be his until he retired as Secretary of the Society in 1915? And had Stein been aware of Keltie's link with *The Times*? At this point, Keltie had been in correspondence with Stein for five years. Most of their letters till then concerned articles for the RGS journal; presentations that Stein would give to the Society; and Stein's remarks about his work. So perhaps his request to Keltie for help in placing one article in *The Times* was just that. However, it is surprising that Stein did not know of Keltie's connection to the newspaper, as he was a subscriber to *The Times* and regularly received his copy along with his letters.

Keltie was probably unprepared for the amount and frequency of Stein's correspondence. Soon after he accepted the responsibility he tried to get Stein to reduce the frequency of his correspondence. In reply Stein wrote the following: "I fully realize the truth of what you say as to the advisability of not making my communication too frequent."¹³ And again in 1907, Stein accepted Keltie's opinion that his notes were too detailed for submission to *The Times*.¹⁴

Stein was not unappreciative of Keltie's help with *The Times* and often started his letters by thanking him for writing the reports. Moreover, his trust in Keltie's opinions as to the length and frequency of the reports is also evident, as illustrated above. Clearly, he also trusted him to decide what was appropriate for inclusion. When Stein suffered frostbite, which caused him to lose two toes and the top joints of three more, he reported this to Keltie as an "awkward mishap" and asked him to "please cut it out if you think it is too personal."¹⁵ For Stein it was the reports on his work that were important not personal matters.

Having Keltie write up reports of his travels also enabled Stein to keep in contact with his friends. As he stated to Keltie in one letter, the report in *The Times* was useful "because it would give news of my doings to many friends who follow my work with a personal interest and to whom I cannot write for want of time."¹⁶

MAPS AND PANORAMAS

Numerous letters deal with the maps and panoramas Stein created. Although he did not see himself as a geographer, much of his time during expeditions was involved with surveying and geographical description. Westerners had not charted much of the area Stein covered so he recognized the importance and necessity of accurate maps. Others back home in Britain were interested in accurate maps for another reason. When Stein first arrived in Asia, the “Great Game”¹⁷ was at its height. Russia was beginning to expand southwards. The British feared Russia had its eye on India, the jewel in the British Empire’s crown. The large, uncharted desert and mountainous area to the north of the country seemed the most likely entry point for an invading army. This was the area, where officers and explorers from both sides would later come to map the terrain through which an army would have to march.

Stein was obviously aware that his maps were useful not only to explorers and academics but to the military as well. In 1907, he informed Keltie that he had been instructed by the Indian Foreign Department not to publish anything concerning North Tibet without submitting it first for approval. He was unsure about his ground survey of the Nan-shan ranges but sent it to the Foreign Office to check before publication.¹⁸

Even today Stein’s surveys are still highly regarded as evidenced in the following article by Karl E. Ryavec:

The maps illustrating the archaeological surveys of Sir Aurel Stein’s Central Asian expeditions remain to this day the most authoritative map series concerning the location of archaeological monuments in the Tarim Basin and Gansu Corridor of western China.

..... The maps thus contain a wealth of information on the historical, cultural and physical geography of a vast region of Central Asia. It is in part because of this interdisciplinary nature of Stein’s maps that they are still the main authority on many geographical aspects of a unique region of Central Asia.¹⁹

In 1902, Stein was invited by the RGS to give a talk about his first expedition to Chinese Turkestan. His two main purposes for being in London were, firstly, to be at the British Museum to unpack and catalogue the antiquities he had found and secondly, to write a report of the expedition. Originally, Stein informed Keltie that he would be able to give the talk with 1,000 photos and maps. No doubt to Keltie’s relief, Stein later limited the number of slides to

70.²⁰ For his report in the RGS journal, Stein was very particular about the detailed maps that were to accompany the article. He believed that the usual scale (1:1,500,000) would not be detailed enough to include local names. He suggested instead a scale of 1:500,000 which would be approximately identical to the scale on the original survey of 1" = 8mls. Since some of the areas were being surveyed for the first time, it was important to be as precise as possible. He suggested also that the map be put on two sheets at a cost of about £150; and that half the cost be borne by the RGS and the other half by the India Office. Mr. Holderness, Secretary of the India Office informed him that they agreed with this idea.²¹

It is unclear whether the RGS ever agreed to Stein's suggestion, but there are a number of references in later letters to the publication of the maps, which culminated in Keltie informing Stein that the RGS was unable to afford the £150.²²

Another important issue between Stein and the RGS was the publication of the photographic panoramas he had taken on his expeditions. The importance of photography had, since its invention earlier in the century, been recognized in recording archaeology. Stein took portable cameras, glass plates and all the necessary chemicals for developing with him on his expeditions. He was an enthusiastic photographer: the British Museum alone has a collection of over ten thousand of his negatives and plates.

In July 1903, Keltie received a letter from the India Office proposing that they contribute £50 toward the publication of Stein's panoramas if the RGS agreed to do likewise.²³ Unlike the maps, this proposal was successful and Stein began organizing the photos. However, in 1904, it looked like the panoramas would suffer the same fate as the maps, as the India Office refused to pay the £50. At that point, the RGS's Council came to the rescue, agreeing to bear the full cost.²⁴ In that same year, Stein had been awarded the RGS's prestigious Back Grant in recognition of his survey work in the Kun-lun Mountains. Survey work had not been Stein's primary goal, but it had grown as a result of his interest in exploration and became an increasingly important part of his work. It may be in part because of the recognition of this aspect of Stein's work that the RGS paid in full for the publication of the panoramas.

Stein, as mentioned earlier, had a great belief in the superiority of his work. He held himself and others to very high standards. Just before his photos were accepted for publication, he mentioned he had received photos from Dr.

Almassy's forthcoming work on the Thian-Shan but that they "have been prepared from materials avowedly greatly inferior to my systematic phototheodolite work, which has not had the advantage of such attention."²⁵

The work on the panoramas was rather drawn out, which is perhaps not surprising since Stein was busy writing both a scholarly report of his first expedition, *Ancient Khotan* (published in 1907) and a "popular" version, *Sand Buried Ruins of Khotan* (published in 1903); preparing for his second expedition to Turkestan; and taking up a new position as Inspector General of Education in the Punjab. That he took a long time is borne out by the number of letters in which the panoramas are mentioned; fourteen in all between September 1903 (when Stein said he started working on them²⁶) and October 1906 (when he thanked Keltie for sending him a copy of the final proofs).²⁷

In 1905, Stein received news about the panoramas while he was in Peshawar. Ellsworth Huntington, an American geographer, passed through and told Stein he had seen the proofs and they were good.²⁸ However, Stein himself was harder to please. In June of the same year, he received the proofs and realized that there was no explanation with the photos. He informed Keltie and asked advice about how much he should write for each plate.²⁹ Keltie must have given him guidelines, for in Stein's next letter he stated, "I will prepare my statement for each panorama as you suggest."³⁰

It is remarkable that he had any time to think about the panoramas, as he was busy preparing for his second expedition to Chinese Turkestan, which was to last from April 1906 to October 1908. Keltie, however, was not going to let him forget the panoramas. In February 1906, he wrote to Stein, wishing him luck on his forthcoming expedition and expressing the hope that he would finish the panoramas before his departure.³¹ This was not to be the case however, as Stein had to take them with him on the expedition promising to get them finished promptly.³²

While Keltie was undoubtedly frustrated by the slow progress of this work, Stein had much to do. He had to keep complete notes on the expedition, which he would later use as the basis for his book *Ruins of Desert Cathay*³³ and his report *Serindia*³⁴. He also had to finish corrections of the proofs of *Ancient Khotan*³⁵; the report of his first expedition; keep up with his regular correspondence; and lead his group of men and mules through dangerous mountains and gorges. In May, he described the progress of his journey thus: "despite hard marching I covered some 350 miles so far in three weeks over rough ground

mostly, but expect the real trial ahead on crossing the Pamirs.”³⁶ As he had predicted, crossing the Pamirs was extremely hard going. He led his group of 12 mules and a handful of men up a snow-filled gorge to the summit more than ten thousand feet above sea level and down the other side where a “sheer snow wall dropped a hundred feet to the almost equally precipitous mountain side. The way down was marked by steps trodden into the snow at three- or four-foot vertical intervals by indefatigable dak runners.”³⁷ It is amazing that under such conditions he managed to get any work done.

By July, Stein had finished the final corrections to *Ancient Khotan* and by September, he was in Khotan preparing for the next part of his journey across the Taklamakan Desert. As he informed Keltie, he had a little more time to complete the panoramas and prepare a short paper to accompany them.³⁸ This must have been accepted as in October he thanked Keltie for the final copy, stating that the panoramas were excellent and that he was very pleased.³⁹

The panoramas were published in 1908. Keltie wrote to the India Office informing them of the publication date and requesting them to pay the originally agreed upon £50.⁴⁰ Unfortunately, there is no response to Keltie’s request in the archive and it seems likely based on the India Office’s former reluctance that they may have refused to pay.

The only other reference by the India Office regarding the panoramas was from Col. S. G. Burrard, Surveyor General of the India Office, who wrote to thank the RGS for sending him two copies of the book.⁴¹ Stein had requested the RGS to send 59 copies to various institutions and colleagues⁴² partly no doubt to advance knowledge of his work and partly in the hope of attracting future support. No matter how much Stein disliked the India Office, his lack of funds meant he was dependent on them for a full time job. And since he had also been granted a long leave of absence so he had to show that his time had been usefully spent.

Perhaps his efforts at self-promotion were successful, since the India Office offered him the post of Superintendent in the Archaeological Department in 1909. It seemed an ideal post for Stein, but although he recognized the need for a job to keep him in India, what he really wanted was the freedom and the resources to explore as he wished.

BOOKS

During the period covered by this paper, Stein wrote three books describing the two major expeditions he had undertaken. The books take different approaches; there are two “popular”⁴³ accounts, (as Stein himself, called them) aimed at the general public and a scholarly report. Stein was never very comfortable with writing popular books, but it was essential that he keep his work in the public eye. The two books in this vein were; *Sand-Buried Ruins of Khotan*, the account of his first expedition, and *Ruins of Desert Cathay*, about the second expedition. He was only able to get his very detailed scholarly report of the first expedition; *Ancient Khotan* published in 1907.

There are a number of references in the archive to the books. These pertain not only to the content of the books, but also to the publishers. The RGS often acted as an intermediary between its members and commercial publishers. This was the case with Stein. In 1903, he informed Keltie that he had recovered the publishing rights to his first book from Fisher & Unwin, the publishers, by purchasing the blocks at a cost of £24. Stein hoped he could get Mr. Colles of Hurst & Blackell to accept it for publication and asks for Keltie’s recommendation if contacted by Colles.⁴⁴ This must have occurred, as only four months later, Stein thanked Keltie for his support and informed him the book had been republished in a new, cheaper edition.⁴⁵

Many of Stein’s scholarly books were published by the Clarendon Press in Oxford who seem to have found dealing with Stein a difficult task. In a letter to Keltie from William Foster of the India Office, the latter gave a very frank appraisal of Stein. He remarked that the two-volume book of Stein’s (*Ancient Khotan*) was much longer than the Clarendon Press had bargained for and commented as follows, “Our fascinating traveller generally gets the best of any bargain he makes—though one must own that he makes a worthy use of his encroachments.”⁴⁶ Many others who had dealings with Stein would no doubt have agreed with Foster.

Stein continued working on the scholarly report of his second expedition, *Serindia*, which would not be published until 1921. It was even more immense, comprising five volumes: three of text; one of plates; and another of ninety-four maps.

Stein had similar problems with another publisher that Keltie introduced him to; namely Macmillan.⁴⁷ Keltie was a former editor at Macmillan and obviously

maintained ties to his former employer. Macmillan were to publish the majority of Stein's books. The relationship got off to a bumpy start, with problems concerning Stein's *Ruins of Desert Cathay*, published by Macmillan in 1912. In a letter to Keltie, George A. Macmillan expressed concern about the success of the book and attested to the influence Stein had. He remarked that, "we are proud to publish (it) and I only hope that the somewhat excessive size, which the author persuaded us to adopt, may not interfere with its sales."⁴⁸ Macmillan were right to be concerned as the length of the book meant it was issued in two volumes of 1,000 pages and 350 photographs, plates and maps.⁴⁹

Preparation for the publication of the book caused Keltie and Macmillan numerous headaches as there were many misunderstandings concerning the cost of using Stein's maps that the RGS had rights to. In May 1911, Keltie asked Stein if an agreement was reached on paper with Macmillan about their paying for the use of the maps. Although Keltie stated he remembered a discussion about the issue, he had no correspondence about it but believed the sum of £40 was agreed.⁵⁰ Stein agreed with him⁵¹ and a bill was sent to Macmillan. However, the bill that was sent to Macmillan was for £70, an amount that the publisher expressed surprise upon receiving.⁵² In a rather tersely worded reply, sent one day later, Keltie informed Macmillan that the RGS had spent £250 in preparing Stein's maps and having discussed the matter with Stein, had agreed that the sum of £40 was acceptable. However, since the RGS had given Macmillan permission to use the maps, it was felt that they should also bear part of the cost. As for the increase in the amount Keltie explained it thus:

With regard to the charge, the £40 is a small proportion of the cost of lithographing the maps and the other £30 is a small proportion of the cost of drawing the maps by our men here, who were engaged for something like a year on the work. As there is no written agreement of the matter I must leave it to your sense of fairness to deal with it as you consider right.⁵³

In an equally quick reply, Macmillan agreed to pay the full amount, commenting thus: "much therefore as we regret the necessity of adding another £70 to the already serious expense of producing Dr. Stein's book."⁵⁴ In a conciliatory letter, Keltie replied to Macmillan, "I doubt that any other publisher would have dealt with him as handsomely as you have done." And he went on to mention a Col. Carruthers, who had recently returned from 18 months in Central Asia and been approached by several publishers. But after he (Keltie) told

him how well Macmillan had treated Stein, Carruthers also wanted to be published by them.⁵⁵ There were no doubt other explorers who sought recommendations to publishers, so it was likely that Keltie and Macmillan recognized the importance of maintaining a cordial relationship.

Stein's "magnum opus,"⁵⁶ as Keltie called it, was published in 1912 and initially Macmillan's concerns seemed justified. The large size and cost of the book meant slow sales. Stein mentioned to Keltie in March that he has received a letter from Macmillan, which "complain(s) of the limited sale which the book had in the first few weeks, but expresses the hope that this will mend when the leading papers will have devoted some attention to it."⁵⁷ No doubt Stein's underlining was done in the hope that Keltie, with his influence at *The Times* would review the book favorably. This seems to have been the case, for just a few months later (in May), Stein wrote that the reviews of the book "have been very gratifying especially the one in *The Times*."⁵⁸ Despite the early, slow sales, the book went on to be a great success as can be seen from Keltie's remarks: "I also ought to have congratulated you on the immense success of your book. I never saw such a series of superlatively laudatory notices as have appeared in the press."⁵⁹

MORE REQUESTS

When Stein needed help he asked anyone he thought might be of use. And he tended to ask repeatedly until he got what he wanted, as Whitfield describes it, "His main tactic was unrelenting pressure—although always politely applied—which few, in the end, could withstand."⁶⁰ Initially, his requests to Keltie were for matters directly related to the RGS such as printing extra copies of his 1902 paper;⁶¹ listing people to whom he wanted presentation copies of his book of panoramas sent to⁶² and information regarding maps of areas he was interested in.⁶³ And like many other explorers he also asked for the loan of equipment.

The RGS often aided explorers by lending them equipment and scientific instruments that they could not otherwise have afforded. Often their grants did not cover all their requirements. As Stein himself stated, the grant he received from the British Museum for his second expedition was "by no means extravagant"⁶⁴ and he requested the loan of a few simple instruments. Eight months later, closer to the date of Stein's departure Keltie agreed to loan the

instruments they had in stock. However, due to the large number of requests he had received at that time, he was unsure if they could fulfill Stein's requirements.⁶⁵ Keltie must have been able to meet Stein's request as just before Stein's third expedition he asked for the loan of the same equipment, which included "the handy hypsometer and a good half-chronometer watch."⁶⁶ Since his second expedition had been so lucky he felt using the same instruments would be "a kind of auspicious omen." Keltie subsequently agreed to the loan.⁶⁷

By 1909, Stein had returned from his very successful second expedition and was awarded the RGS Founder's Medal. His requests to Keltie from this time became more numerous and detailed and in February 1909, he sent Keltie a long list of people whom he wanted invited to the presentation. He also wanted Keltie to approach some of the people on the list to ask them to say a few words.⁶⁸ Three months later, he asked Keltie's opinion about accepting an invitation from the Cardiff Society and informed him he had received invitations from Cambridge University, some scientific societies in the north of England and abroad and that he was considering a lecture tour in October. He stated he would like to go to Scotland but first asked if Keltie would, "sound the ground there if you thought that desirable."⁶⁹ It is possible that Stein felt overwhelmed by the acclaim that followed his return from the second expedition. As mentioned earlier, he was a rather shy man and to be flooded with invitations must have been difficult for him. Stein probably thought Keltie would be more knowledgeable about which invitations would be suitable to accept. This request for Keltie's opinion does show how much Stein trusted Keltie to steer him in the right direction. He accepted the invitations to give lectures in Cambridge and Scotland,⁷⁰ perhaps due to Keltie's recommendation.

The publication of the speech he gave at the presentation gave rise to a number of requests from Stein. He was very clear about how he wanted the speech printed. In June 1909, he stated he wanted "the whole of my paper to appear in the July number of the geographical journal."⁷¹ Only nineteen days later he returned the proofs of his speech to Keltie and again requested it be brought out in one issue,⁷² which it was.

Soon after the speech was published, Stein still had more requests for Keltie. In July, he asked for 200 copies of his paper, 100 more than he had originally asked for, but which he would pay for.⁷³ Later in 1911, he asked Keltie to send copies of the paper to the Manchester Geographical Society and further he wanted 200 reprints of the maps and notes instead of the 100 he had requested

which were to be sent to those same people to whom copies of the speech had been sent.⁷⁴ Reprinting the maps however, proved to be difficult. Stein, who was used to getting what he wanted, suggested that copies could be taken for the RGS journal and then replaced when the maps were reprinted for his book to be published by Macmillan later in the year.⁷⁵ Keltie fortunately managed to find 50 extra maps and took 50 out of the RGS's journal, which were to be replaced later.⁷⁶ Problems with these maps occurred again, as mentioned above, when the publisher, Macmillan sought to use them.

PEOPLE AND PERSONAGES

One of the most interesting aspects of the correspondence between Stein and Keltie is the number of well-known figures who were mentioned in their letters and the two men's opinions about these people. Stein would probably have met many of them at the RGS dinners and monthly meetings. In the initial stages of their correspondence, there are brief references to some mutual acquaintances, but as time goes on, personal opinions on such people begin to creep into their letters.

Sven Hedin (1865–1952)

Keltie tried to keep Stein up to date on what was happening at the RGS and also to inform him of what his rivals were up to. Stein was very concerned that others would beat him to the sites he was interested in. One important "rival" was Sven Hedin, an intrepid geographer from Sweden. Hopkirk in his book, *Foreign Devils on the Silk Road*, describes Hedin as "the Pathfinder"⁷⁷ of Central Asia. In 1899, Hedin discovered the ancient Chinese garrison town of Lou-lan. Hedin's early explorations of the Silk Road were an important source of information for Stein when he was planning his first expedition. Stein took notes of the geography Hedin described and the "Turkestan words for the various items he would need to buy and the names of the men engaged by Hedin."⁷⁸ However, Stein believed that Hedin, being primarily a geographer, was insufficiently qualified to understand the importance of the buried Silk Road towns.

Keltie first mentioned Hedin in a letter to Stein in 1906 when Stein was preparing for his second expedition to Chinese Turkestan. It was during this expedition that he was to find his most famous discovery, the Cave of the

Thousand Buddhas. From this cave he removed thousands of ancient paintings and manuscripts including the oldest known printed book, the *Diamond Sutra*, which is on permanent display in the British Museum.

Keltie, in that letter to Stein, updated him as to which explorers were interested in Turkestan. He mentioned that two Americans were "at present at work partly on your old field" and that Hedin was also on his way to Central Asia. He went on to reassure Stein by telling him that he "believes he (Hedin) intends to confine his work mainly to Tibet and by the time he gets there he may find he has been to some extent forestalled."⁷⁹ Hedin was evidently more successful than Keltie had expected as in 1907 he wrote to Stein, "I had a long letter from Sven Hedin the other day. He has been careering all over Tibet, and as usual is very full of the fact that he has done some hundreds of sheets of maps and some thousands of pages of notes."⁸⁰ The tone of Keltie's letter is interesting as he clearly disapproved of Hedin. Hedin was often accused, by his contemporaries, of making his reports sound like adventure stories. Stein and Hedin were in many ways very similar. Both were short, compact men happy to trudge hundreds of miles and they both seemed to be most at home in extreme environments. There was however, according to Hopkirk, "one fundamental difference between them. Stein was a brilliant orientalist who turned to exploration to confirm certain theories he had about what lay buried on China's back of beyond ... Hedin, a highly trained geographer and cartographer was an explorer pure and simple."⁸¹

In July 1908, Stein expressed concern that nothing has been heard from Hedin. He informed Keltie that there were many letters awaiting Hedin in Koshgar and the British representative "McCarthy thinks there is cause for anxiety."⁸² However, those fears were unfounded, as in November Keltie informed Stein that both his own recent report and Hedin's account of his journey to Tibet including (his "sensational discoveries")⁸³ would be published in the RGS journal. Hedin had, despite British and Tibetan disapproval entered Tibet and explored the Southern and Western regions. He claimed discovery of a previously unknown major mountain range, the source of the major South Asian rivers and he had met the Panchen Lama.

Hedin was next mentioned when Keltie asked Stein to make comments on Hedin's paper for the RGS journal. Stein declined, stating he could not comment on the paper as it was "beyond my sphere."⁸⁴ It is interesting that Stein, who had relied on Hedin's reports and maps to guide him across Asia, did not

wish to comment on Hedin's paper. The reverse was not true as Keltie asked Hedin to review Stein's paper for the RGS journal, and Stein later thanked him for forwarding Hedin's remarks.⁸⁵

The last reference to Hedin occurred when Stein mentioned he had found a tape measure Hedin had left in the ruins at Lou-lan in 1901.⁸⁶ The tape measure had remained untouched at the site until Stein found it. He was able to return it to Hedin in person at an informal dinner at the RGS in 1909.⁸⁷

Ellsworth Huntington (1876–1947)

Another explorer whom Stein admired was Ellsworth Huntington,⁸⁸ an American geographer. Stein first met him in 1904 in Peshawar. They met again in 1905 when Huntington informed Stein of the progress on his panoramas.⁸⁹ In one letter Stein mentioned how he admired the way Huntington "moves around with a minimum of people and baggage."⁹⁰ This of course, was very much the way Stein himself liked to travel, with just a few men and his terrier, Dash. Even at the age of 52, Stein remarked he was "keeping fit and fully enjoyed the tramps of hundreds of miles."⁹¹ Stein also expressed his high opinion of Huntington's skills as a researcher and that it was only in historical matters that he showed occasionally "an inclination to take a post hoc for proof of a propter hoc."⁹² As Huntington was a geographer rather than a historian by profession, it is perhaps not surprising that he did not meet Stein's high standards in that particular area. In 1907, Huntington published *The Pulse of Asia* based on his exploration of Chinese Turkestan. It was a very well received book, winning medals from the Geographical Society of Paris and the Harvard Travelers Club. Keltie mentioned the book to Stein and suggested he might do a similar work.⁹³ Stein had in fact already ordered the book⁹⁴ and no doubt read it. However, when asked to review it by Keltie, he declined claiming he had no time.⁹⁵ It was also at this time that Stein refused to review a report by Hedin. During this period he was in fact on leave in Europe, working on his collection at the British Museum and giving lectures in several countries. In the early months of 1909, he was also preparing to give a lecture at the RGS about his second major expedition to Chinese Turkestan so perhaps he was indeed too busy to do anything else.

Count Otani

A number of letters in the archive are concerned with a 1908 Japanese expedition. Although there had been an earlier Japanese expedition to Central Asia in 1902, it had gone relatively unnoticed and unremarked. But by 1908 the situation in the region had changed: the death of the Manchu Dowager Empress that year had created a power vacuum that would result in the 1911 Peking Revolution. The major European powers—Russia, Germany, France and Britain—sought to seize the opportunity to maintain and expand their power in the area. Japan was a relatively new power on the scene. It had only been with the 1905 Russo-Japanese War that the European powers had been forced to recognize Japan as a major player in Asia. In this hotly contested area there was widespread suspicion (including among Chinese officials) of any explorers or archaeologists who could so easily be spies.

As was mentioned earlier, Stein himself was aware of the importance of his survey work and his loyalties lay firmly with the British. It was into this climate of suspicion that a Japanese expedition was sent to collect Buddhist artifacts (and bring them back to Japan). The expedition was organized by Count Kozui Otani who was the head of a monastery of the Buddhist “Jodo Shinzu” or “Pure Land” sect based in Kyoto.

Count Otani has proved to be a rather ambiguous figure. He was a Japanese aristocrat, brother-in-law to the Meiji Emperor and a published author. Although head of a monastery, he was according to Hopkirk, “not an unworldly cleric who spent his life in prayer and contemplation.”⁹⁶ It was a role he inherited on the death of his father. Before returning home to assume the leadership, he spent much time traveling in Europe and elsewhere. He was also a Fellow of the RGS. He was thought by many Westerners to be a spymaster; certainly the behavior of the monks he sent to China was rather suspicious.⁹⁷ He funded three expeditions to Central Asia, which garnered him many treasures. According to Hopkirk, Otani’s collection was the “third largest collection to be removed from Chinese Central Asia.”⁹⁸ The expeditions almost bankrupted him and he was forced to dispose of much of his collection, a large proportion of which has never been found.

As early as 1902, Otani had heard of Stein’s findings and had sent monks to sites around Taklamakan. They found some texts, paintings and sculptures, which they brought back to Japan. Their expedition was not thought to be of much significance at the time, as they did not publish their results.

However, the 1908 expedition was viewed with much more suspicion due to the change in the political situation. The British had the monks followed for much of their journey and the Russians, humiliated by their defeat at the hands of the Japanese, were convinced that Otani's monks were spies and that the Japanese were trying to extend their sphere of influence. Although Stein does not appear to have suspected them of espionage he was worried that they would get to Chinese Turkestan before him. He was however, more concerned about a Russian and possibly a German expedition to the same area. In his proposal to the Indian authorities for his second major expedition, he stressed the need for haste as competition was a serious threat and asked for early approval of his plans. "Chinese Turkestan is not like Egypt a great storehouse of things of the past," he insisted, "its sites of importance are far-scattered and for the most part quickly exhausted."⁹⁹

In 1910, Stein was in England when he received a report of the Japanese expedition. Count Otani had sent it to the RGS for consideration for publication in the society's journal and Keltie had forwarded it to Stein for his opinion. The expedition had been led by one of Otani's monks, Zuicho Tachibana. Stein expressed his interest in the route taken by the monks and the work of the young Japanese scholars, but he was very critical of the report overall. He expressed sympathy for Keltie, as it was Keltie who had to decide what to do with the report. Stein considered the report had been rather crudely compiled, as the routes taken by the Japanese were not new and there was really no purpose to publishing it. No doubt however, Stein realized the RGS did wish to publish something by the newcomers, as a way of encouragement, so he offered the following suggestions,

(It) is desirable to get an exact record of the places he visited and the archaeological results claimed. I have marked in red pencil the archaeological interesting passages and would suggest that these may be extracted or condensed if necessary. It would be well to add that at Turfan systematic excavations have been carried on for years by German expeditions, and to give the real local names I have marked on the margins in order to facilitate identification of the places Tachibana means but from one cause or the other could not name correctly.¹⁰⁰

He went on to suggest that the Japanese should avail themselves of an English speaker to review the report completely.

Although rather damning of the report itself, Stein did want to encourage the Japanese group. A month later in June he sent Count Otani the title of a

Finnish Academy's publication in which the inscriptions of the Orkhan Valley were discussed (as these were also featured at length in the Japanese paper).¹⁰¹ Although it is clear Stein did not have a very high opinion of the Japanese explorers, he did not dismiss them as irrelevant. In 1912, he asked Keltie whether he had heard anything about Tachibana (who had been back to the Tarim Basin in 1911) adding that he would like "to get details about Tachibana's doings and only wish that he will produce in the end some accurate record."¹⁰² Stein was in the process of planning his third expedition to Turkestan and was concerned with the threat of competition from the Japanese and the Russians who had recently been in the area. Keltie replied he had received a letter from Count Otani about Tachibana's journey, which he promised to forward to Stein. Keltie went on to express his also rather low opinion of the Japanese explorer's methodology when he stated, "If they are not more intelligibly written that the account of his previous journey I am afraid I shall not be able to make any use of them."¹⁰³

Tachibana must have heeded the advice he had been given, as by October, Stein wrote to Keltie; "I am very glad that there is hope of Tachibana's account being put in the journal. There is real need of some record of his doings."¹⁰⁴ After this last comment by Stein there was no further mention of Tachibana in his letters. However his fears regarding the methodology of the Japanese seem to have been justified. In 1914, Stein went to Miran to complete the retrieval of some frescos he had failed to do in 1908. Although he had refilled the excavation site, the frescos had been found and "crudely hacked" out. It was obvious someone had read his reports and found them. Stein was in no doubt as to whom that person was. In a lecture, he gave much later in 1933, Stein described that person as "a young Japanese traveler who lacked preparation, technical skill and experience equal to his archaeological zeal",¹⁰⁵ namely Tachibana.

Capt. Robert Scott (1868–1912)

Stein was interested not just in people from his chosen field of Central Asian studies but also in explorers of other areas. When in London Stein would often go to the RGS to attend meetings where he would, naturally, meet other members. This was how he first met Capt. Robert Falcon Scott in 1904. Scott was to die in 1912 in a failed attempt to reach the South Pole before the Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen (1872–1928). The circumstances surrounding his death were to raise him to the status of tragic hero, a status he still retains in Britain even today.

The first mention of Scott is in March 1913 when Stein was preparing for his third expedition. He explained to Keltie that as he was fairly isolated in Srinagar, he had just heard about “Captain Scott’s tragic fate.” Stein wrote that the few times he had met Scott he had felt “all the nobility, the classic greatness of his character”, and he went on to say he would send a “modest sum”¹⁰⁶ for the memorial fund the RGS had established. He received a quick reply from Keltie just one month later thanking him for the money. Keltie informed Stein that part of the fund was to be used to build a hall at the RGS to be named “Scott Hall.” The fund up to that point, amounted to £60,000 raised from the public,¹⁰⁷ an indication of how popular Scott had become. Keltie must have liked Stein’s letter as he said he would send extracts to Scott’s mother.

By July, there seems to have been a change in the purpose of the fund. Keltie informed Stein that the fund had reached £80,000 and part would be used to provide for the widows of the members of the failed expedition; £17,500 for publication of the scientific results; and the rest for a memorial, probably a statue. No allocation of funds was made for the “Scott Hall.” However, since the RGS had just moved to new premises at Kensington it planned to sell some land adjoining the house. About £40,000 was expected to be raised from the sale of the land, which would go to the building of the hall.¹⁰⁸

Ernest Shackleton (1874–1922)

Another Antarctic explorer who is mentioned in the letters is Ernest Henry Shackleton who followed in the footsteps of Amundsen and Scott to the South Pole. While Keltie did not think Shackleton’s expedition had much value, he was sympathetic to his need to gain funds and keep the public’s interest. Keltie writes,

Personally I do not think very much about crossing the continent. One half of it will no doubt be new but the other half will be over old lines traversed by himself and Scott and Amundson, but Shackleton admits that he had got to do something to catch the ear of the public and to get them to open their purses. One big Dundee manufacturer has just given him £24,000. He must have £50,000 or £60,000 already, still he wants more. I hope he will do good work apart altogether from the feat of crossing the continent.¹⁰⁹

It is interesting how clear his opinion about Shackleton is in this letter. Many of the letters of this latter period are franker and somewhat more gossipy showing that Stein and Keltie had reached a more intimate level of correspondence.

They had been writing to each other for about thirteen years at this point.

In this same long letter Keltie wrote about a recent meeting held at the RGS. He mentioned in particular two of the speakers—Rudyard Kipling and Theodore Roosevelt, the 26th President of the United States.

Rudyard Kipling (1865–1936)

Rudyard Kipling's father, John Lockwood Kipling (1837–1911) was a lifelong friend of Stein's. They had met during Stein's early years in India. Lockwood Kipling had gone to Lahore in 1875 to take up the dual positions of Principal of the Mayo School of Art and Curator of the newly established museum. He was a recognized expert on Grandharan art and had much to share with Stein. Rudyard Kipling had left India the year Stein arrived.

Keltie, no doubt aware of Stein's friendship with the family mentions that Rudyard gave a talk at the society entitled "Some Aspects of Travel". Considering the witty and stirring prose for which Rudyard Kipling was renowned, his talk was surprisingly disappointing. Keltie commented it was "quite an interesting and amusing paper, but unfortunately he is a very bad orator, and I am afraid only a small proportion of the people in the Queen's Hall heard him: even we on the platform had very great difficulty in hearing what he had to say".¹¹⁰ Stein, in reply, is more positive about the Kipling lecture saying it "sounds fascinating" and "once again as so many of his writings, recalls to me his father who I was fortunate to know well during my Lahore days."¹¹¹

Theodore Roosevelt (1858–1919)

Keltie was even less complimentary of the second speaker, Theodore Roosevelt who gave a talk about a tributary to the Medeira River that he had discovered in South America. Although a much more exciting speaker than Kipling, Keltie was very disapproving of his style, as he commented, "Of course Roosevelt is Roosevelt, and had it not been he who discovered this river, probably no fuss would have been made about it. Of course he was very amusing. The geography did not amount to very much, but Roosevelt himself amounts to a great deal."¹¹²

Lord Curzon (1859–1925)

Frequently mentioned in the letters was Lord Curzon. He was one of the pre-eminent and influential politicians of his day. He held the posts of Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs (1895–1898) and Undersecretary for India (1898–1905)

and Viceroy of India. He had traveled widely in Asia and wrote several books on Asia. He was awarded the RGS's highest honor, the Gold Medal, in 1895. It was said of him that he was the ablest politician of his time never to become Prime Minister.

Stein first met Curzon in 1899 when he was visiting the Punjab having just taken up his post as Viceroy. Stein was asked to show him around the Lahore Museum and, of course, he seized the opportunity to explain to Curzon the importance of his theories regarding what lay beyond the Karakoram. Curzon, having written a book on Central Asia was interested and instructed the British Minister in Peking to obtain permission for Stein to enter Chinese Turkestan via the Karakoram route.¹¹³ In 1902, Stein met Curzon again and enlisted his support for an expedition to Bactria. Curzon applied to the Amir of Afghanistan on Stein's behalf, but the Amir refused to allow Stein entry.

A few months later Stein heard of an expedition to Tibet that was supported by Curzon and decided he had to be on it. Stein was not at all interested in the expedition's real purpose, which was to impress the Tibetans with the power of Britain (in the hope they would become allies of the British rather than the Russians). He was only interested that, "the borderland between N. Tibet and Mongolia would offer me an extensive field for geographic and archaeological exploration."¹¹⁴

Stein enlisted Keltie's help asking him to write to Curzon on his behalf and remarked that if he were to succeed he would "spare no effort to utilize every opportunity for geographical work".¹¹⁵ Unfortunately, the members of the expedition had already been decided. They included a Mr. Walsh, who had studied Tibetan and was felt to be of more use than Stein. Stein did not take the refusal easily and again asked Keltie if he or Sir Clement Markham could try and convince Curzon that the "Indian Office could with advantage to itself employ me on tasks more important and useful than those to which I am put at present."¹¹⁶

According to Walker, Stein reacted "bitterly to the rejection of his plans for Tibet. His scepticism concerning administrative bodies of all kinds now reached out to embrace the Viceroy."¹¹⁷ However, this was not the impression given in Stein's letters in the RGS. When in 1909, Stein was to give a lecture at the RGS about his second expedition to Turkestan he asked in his Feb. 17th letter, that Curzon be invited as he had supported the expedition. Later in the month on the 25th, he again asked if Curzon has been invited and if it would be possible

to ask him to say a few words. Although he had little patience for those who did not recognize the importance of his work, it would seem he did not count Curzon among those. Indeed, he seemed to express sympathy for Curzon in his efforts to reorganize the British Museum located in South Kensington. He wrote,

Lord Curzon's views regarding the Indian Collection at South Kensington helps to bring home the difficulty with which any effort to ensure scientific organization by experts for ethnographic collections in this country is confronted. I only wish, the bigger scheme which is in his mind may prove capable of realization within reasonable time.¹¹⁸

Curzon became President of the RGS in 1911. The last mention of Curzon is in a letter in 1914 from Keltie. He must have found the energetic lord hard to deal as is evident when he informed Stein that Curzon was to retire and would be succeeded by Douglas Freshfield. Keltie's opinion was that Freshfield would make an excellent president "and not quite so pushing as his predecessor."¹¹⁹

HELPERS

On Stein's expeditions he was accompanied by only a few non-European helpers and his dog, Dash. He preferred to travel with a small group, of which he was the leader. As mentioned earlier, Stein planned his expeditions with meticulous precision rather like military campaigns. Unlike many other explorers he did not like travelling with other Europeans. He did, however, form close bonds with his helpers. Much of his work would have been impossible without their aid and assistance. Stein did recognize their importance and insisted on the names of his surveyors being printed along with his on any maps, which the RGS did. He also tried to get them grants and awards that would acknowledge their contributions.

By the time of his first major expedition, Stein had surrounded himself with a team of hardy men like himself. His surveying assistant was a Gurkha, Ram Singh, who due to his high caste brought with him his own cook. He accompanied Stein on the first and second expeditions. However, during the second expedition, he began to suffer from "rheumatic attacks"¹²⁰ which got progressively worse. In his letter of June 18th, Stein described the finds he made at the

Cave of a Thousand Buddhas. These were the most spectacular of his career, but he still took time to write about the condition of Ram Singh's rheumatism. It had become so much worse that he hoped he would be relieved before the next winter campaign.¹²¹ Stein was instrumental in getting Ram Singh awarded the RGS's Gill Memorial in 1908¹²² in recognition of the surveying he had done. He and Ram Singh had, during the expedition, mapped 20,000 square miles of a fairly unknown region. The importance of those maps is clear, for even today, according to Walker, they are still in use.¹²³

As Ram Singh was preparing for his journey back to India in October 1907, his replacement Rai Lal Singh arrived in December. Stein described him as a "splendid man"¹²⁴ who had started life as a trooper and had already 20 years experience of dangerous surveying work on the Afghan border. He got on well with Stein and at the age of 51 described himself as "very enthusiastic"¹²⁵ about joining the third expedition.

Another member of the second expedition was Naik Ram Singh, a Sikh corporal who had volunteered to join the team in return for a salary at least five times his normal pay.¹²⁶ He had good carpentry skills, which were necessary for building crates to transport the treasures Stein found. He had also trained, at Stein's request, in the developing of photographic negatives. It was however, an ill-fated trip for Naik Ram Singh as he was to lose his sight quite suddenly to glaucoma. Stein arranged for him to be taken back to his family. He mentioned Naik Ram Singh in a letter to Keltie on July 8th 1908, saying that as Naik Ram Singh has left there was no one to help him with developing the negatives and a bit of a backlog had developed.

Stein was very loyal to his team and fully appreciated their efforts. At the end of the expedition when he was visiting Delhi, he tried to get pensions or gratuities for Naik Ram Singh and the surveyors. As a result of pressure from Stein, Naik Ram Singh was awarded a special pension by the Indian Government. Unfortunately, his condition declined very rapidly and he died the following year.

One of Stein's most important helpers on the second expedition was his Chinese secretary, Chiang. Stein was aware from his first expedition that his lack of Chinese was a problem. When planning his second expedition, he was determined to take with him a native Chinese speaker. He came to rely on Chiang's "sympathetic companionship and what Stein regarded as his 'gentlemanly' qualities."¹²⁷ It was Chiang who was instrumental in negotiating with Wang,

the guardian priest of the Cave of a Thousand Buddhas, for the removal of its treasures. Stein was determined to help Chiang in his hopes for promotion, and as he had done for Naik Ram Singh, he used his influence to try to help him. He must have been successful as he mentioned to Keltie he was grateful for the recognition by the Government of India for his "faithful Chinese helpmate."¹²⁸

Although he is not mentioned in any of the letters in the archive, it would be impossible to ignore Stein's dog, Dash. Dash was a much-loved fox terrier. Stein was to have seven dogs named Dash, all but one a fox terrier. All seem to have been great travellers with almost as much stamina as Stein himself. He mentioned Dash in his *Times* articles and his continuing popularity is such that today Dash has his own web site.¹²⁹

PERSONAL

Stein was a modest, shy man but where his work was concerned he was extremely forceful. In the RGS's 1902 Year Book, he was described as a Chinese scholar. Stein, however, wrote to the Society describing himself as contributing towards "Central Asian geographical knowledge and historical geography of India," although he says the point was "of very slight importance."¹³⁰ He reiterated this description of himself when he was given a testimonial at the RGS for his work in Central Asia, stating, "My scientific work has always been guided by the (principle) that geographical and historical researches must combine where the elucidation of ancient Asia is concerned."

Stein's scientific work was all-important to him and his frustration at not being able to pursue it is evident in his letters. When his application to go on a mission to Tibet was refused, his disappointment is clear. In a letter to Keltie he acknowledged that since he had no independent money he could not go. And he continued, "my position as Inspector General of Education for the North-West Frontier Province and Baluchistan implies a heavy burden of routine work which leaves me practically no leisure for serious scientific occupation during the greatest part of the year."¹³¹ He was still upset as four months later he stated, the refusal of the Tibet Mission was a great disappointment to himself and "to those scholars at home and abroad who are best able to judge of the work I might have done about Lhasa and my qualifications for it. But then they

can scarcely gauge the difficulties which stand in the way of systematic organization of scientific efforts in this country.”¹³²

That he had applied to go on a mission to Tibet quite soon after taking up his post of Inspector-General of Education, a post that had been created specifically for him shows what Walker calls his “remarkable insensitivity.”¹³³ He did not mention in his complaint to Keltie that the post also had attached the part-time position of Archaeological Superintendent, which not only improved his status but also gave him, for the first time, an official foothold in the archaeological world. Despite his failure to join the Tibet mission, it did not stop him from applying for a two and a half-year leave for his second major expedition in 1905,¹³⁴ which he was granted.

Once Stein had an objective in mind, he was very single-minded in his pursuit of his goal. Shortly after he returned from his second expedition and was busy with giving presentations, writing his report and organizing his collection, he was already focusing on his next goal. He had always been interested in exploring Balkh, Afghanistan. In 1902, he had approached the then Viceroy, Lord Curzon to support his expedition. Even with Curzon’s support he had been unable to get permission to enter Afghanistan. He obviously hoped to try again as he had begun background reading, mentioning that he had traced a paper about Afghanistan by Col. Talbot published in 1886 and he went on to express his frustration, “alas after 23 years it is still closed ground to me.”¹³⁵ In another letter a few days later, he again expressed his disappointment, “I have been waiting for something close to 30 years at least for systematic investigation”, as the area “is of the greatest historical interest as the seat of that early Graeco-Buddhist civilization the influence of which make itself felt all through India and Central Asia.”¹³⁶

A few years later Stein again tried to obtain support for his plan. In a 1911 letter, he wrote to thank Keltie for his support and requested if he could find any channel to bring “my plan and my qualifications for it to Lord Hardinge’s (the new Viceroy) attention I shall not fail to avail myself of your kind offer of help.”¹³⁷ By 1912, Stein had still not given up, even though the political situation was unstable. It is clear in a letter from Keltie that Stein thought the circumstances might work to his advantage as Keltie wrote, “Things seem to be in a very agitated state at the present time in Afghanistan, but I understand you seem to think it would be rather in your favour.”¹³⁸ This was not to be the case. Afghanistan was an area that was forever to remain closed to Stein.

Stein's work was his main focus in life. When honors and accolades were given to him he displayed characteristic modesty. In April 1909 he received notice that he had been awarded the RGS's highest honor, the Founder's Medal.¹³⁹ A few months later after hearing about the RGS's building fund he decided to send a donation. He was clearly concerned about the propriety as he requested that only his initials appear on any contribution list, as "the matter is small. Yet it would be desirable to avoid even limited publicity."¹⁴⁰ That modesty was again evident in 1912, when Stein was appointed Knight Commander of the Indian Empire making him Sir Aurel Stein. However, he wrote to Keltie asking him to address him by his plain name.¹⁴¹

Another facet of Stein's character revealed in the letters is his identification with the ideals of the British Empire. Stein, although born a Hungarian, became a British citizen regarded Britain as his home. He was concerned about the consequences of the First World War, which he mentioned, in a long and revealing letter to Keltie in which he stated,

I fear this struggle will be a long and arduous one but I put my trust in time and British tenacity turning the scales in the end. How great sacrifices and anxieties could have been saved if only it had been possible to persuade the millions of the necessity of universal military training in peace time. I have been a member of the National Service League for many years past, but I have never indulged in illusions as to the difficulty of getting the people to face this necessity without preceding bitter experiences. —It is a real comfort to know India kept straight by such strong hands as those of Lord Hardinge and Lord Kitchener at the War Office is worth an army.¹⁴²

NOTES

¹ Hopkirk, Peter—*Foreign Devils on the Silk Road*, p. 69.

² Whitfield, Susan—*Aurel Stein on the Silk Road*, p. 10.

³ RGS Feb. 18th 1901.

⁴ Walker, Annabel—*Aurel Stein* p. 118.

⁵ Walker, p. 173.

⁶ Walker, p. 138.

⁷ Curzon had met Stein in April 1899 when Stein had conducted him around the Lahore Museum. Stein had used the opportunity to seek Curzon's help in getting into Chinese Turkestan. Curzon helped Stein get a passport, which allowed him entry to Turkestan. Hopkirk p. 72.

⁸ RGS April 17th 1904.

- 9 The Terra Nova Expedition 1910–13 www.south-pole.com/homepage.html.
- 10 RGS April 24th 1906.
- 11 RGS May 19th 1906.
- 12 RGS May 24th 1906.
- 13 RGS Sept. 9th 1906.
- 14 RGS Feb. 2nd 1907.
- 15 RGS Oct. 24th 1906.
- 16 RGS April 13th 1914.
- 17 Hopkirk, Peter *The Great Game*. p. 1 The term was first used by Colonel Charles Stoddart in 1842, but later immortalized by Rudyard Kipling in his 1901 novel, *Kim*.
- 18 RGS Dec. 15th 1907.
- 19 Ryavec, Karl E. *The Present-day Value of Maps Illustrating the Archaeological Surveys of Sir Aurel Stein in Xinjiang and Gansu*. Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society 1993, p. 233.
- 20 RGS April 23rd 1902.
- 21 RGS July 24th 1902.
- 22 RGS May 8th 1903.
- 23 RGS July 3rd 1903.
- 24 RGS April 17th 1904.
- 25 RGS March 13th 1903.
- 26 RGS Sept. 27th 1903.
- 27 RGS Oct. 24th 1906.
- 28 RGS April 25th 1905.
- 29 RGS June 15th 1905.
- 30 RGS Jan. 6th 1906.
- 31 RGS Feb. 5th 1906.
- 32 RGS April 24th 1906.
- 33 Popular account of second expedition, published in 1912 by Macmillan.
- 34 Academic report of second expedition published in 1921 by Clarendon Press.
- 35 Academic account of first expedition published in 1907 by Clarendon Press.
- 36 RGS May 19th 1906.
- 37 Walker, p. 137.
- 38 RGS Sept. 9th 1906.
- 39 RGS Oct. 24th 1906.
- 40 RGS June 19th 1908.
- 41 RGS August 12th 1908.
- 42 RGS July 13th 1908.
- 43 RGS Nov. 29th 1909.
- 44 RGS Dec. 16th 1903.
- 45 RGS April 17th 1904.
- 46 RGS Nov. 22nd 1906.
- 47 RGS March 19th 1912. Stein thanks Keltie for the introduction.
- 48 RGS Feb. 12th 1912.
- 49 Walker, p. 191.
- 50 RGS May 5th 1911.
- 51 RGS May 7th 1911.
- 52 RGS Feb. 19th 1912.
- 53 RGS Feb. 20th 1912.
- 54 RGS Feb. 21st 1912.
- 55 RGS Feb. 22nd 1912.
- 56 RGS Feb. 21st 1912.

- 57 RGS Mar. 19th 1912.
 58 RGS May 26th 1912.
 59 RGS June 25th 1912.
 60 Whitfield, p. 15
 61 RGS Nov. 4th 1902. Stein asked for 200 reprint copies of his paper forwarded to India.
 62 RGS July 13th 1908. Stein requested presentation copies of his panoramas in Nov. 10th 1906. Keltie replied that all 59 copies had been sent and 3 more copies would be sent to Stein plus 9 more copies as authors' gratis.
 63 RGS Oct. 10th 1906. Stein asked for Col. Bruce's survey.
 64 RGS June 15th 1905.
 65 RGS Feb. 5th 1906.
 66 RGS May 26th 1912.
 67 RGS June 20th 1912.
 68 RGS Feb. 25th 1909.
 69 RGS May 14th 1909.
 70 RGS Nov. 29th 1909.
 71 RGS June 1st 1909.
 72 RGS June 19th 1909.
 73 RGS July 31st 1909.
 74 RGS Feb. 16th 1911.
 75 RGS Feb. 24th 1911.
 76 RGS Feb. 25th 1911.
 77 Hopkirk, p. 54.
 78 Walker, p. 60.
 79 RGS Feb. 5th 1906.
 80 RGS May 23rd 1907.
 81 Hopkirk, p. 69.
 82 RGS July 8th 1908.
 83 RGS Nov. 24th 1908.
 84 RGS Feb. 21st 1909.
 85 RGS April 1st 1909.
 86 RGS Feb. 25th 1909.
 87 Walker, p. 366.
 88 Huntington, Ellsworth (1876–1947) regarded in his later years as one of the greatest geographers. He wrote 29 books and the college text book of which he was the senior editor was widely used.
 89 RGS April 25th 1905.
 90 RGS June 18th 1907.
 91 RGS April 13th 1914.
 92 RSG June 18th 1907.
 93 RGS August 13th 1908.
 94 RGS July 8th 1908.
 95 RGS Feb. 21st 1909.
 96 Hopkirk, p. 205.
 97 For a more detailed description of Count Otani and his expeditions, see Hopkirk.
 98 Hopkirk, p. 232.
 99 Walker, p. 209.
 100 RGS May 15th 1910.
 101 RGS June 26th 1910.
 102 RGS July 8th 1912.

- 103 RGS Sept. 11th 1912.
- 104 RGS Oct. 20th 1912.
- 105 Walker, p. 219.
- 106 RGS March 10th 1913.
- 107 RGS April 2nd 1913.
- 108 RGS July 14th 1913.
- 109 RGS July 1st 1914.
- 110 RGS July 1st 1914.
- 111 RGS Nov. 24th 1914.
- 112 RGS July 1st 1914.
- 113 Hopkirk, p. 72.
- 114 RGS April 17th 1904.
- 115 RGS Dec. 16th 1903.
- 116 RGS April 17th 1904.
- 117 Walker, p. 123.
- 118 RGS June 15th 1911.
- 119 RGS July 1st 1914.
- 120 RGS Feb. 2nd 1907.
- 121 RGS June 18th 1907.
- 122 RGS Aug. 13th 1908.
- 123 Walker, p. 173.
- 124 RGS Dec. 15th 1907.
- 125 RGS June 21st 1913.
- 126 Walker, p. 136.
- 127 Walker, p. 156.
- 128 RGS July 31st 1909.
- 129 Whitfield, p. 130 —home page for Dash—<http://idp.bl.uk/chapters/topics/dash/Index.htm>
- 130 RGS Feb. 27th 1903.
- 131 RGS April 17th 1904.
- 132 RGS Aug. 10th 1904.
- 133 Walker, p. 122.
- 134 RGS April 25th 1905.
- 135 RGS May 14th 1909.
- 136 RGS May 19th 1909.
- 137 RGS June 15th 1911.
- 138 RGS June 20th 1912.
- 139 RGS April 12th 1909.
- 140 RGS June 1st 1909.
- 141 RGS July 8th 1912.
- 142 RGS Nov. 24th 1914.

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