

# MISCELLANEOUS COMMUNICATIONS

## THE WORK OF SIR M. AUREL STEIN K.C.I.E. PRINCIPAL PUBLICATIONS NOTICED

### INDIA

1892. *Rājatarāṅginī*, ed. of Sanskrit text.  
1900. *Rājatarāṅginī*, annotated transl., 2 vols., 4to  
(Constable, Westminster).  
1905. *Archæological Survey Progress Report*.

### CENTRAL ASIA

#### FIRST EXPEDITION

1903. *Sand-buried Ruins of Khotan*, 1 vol., 8vo (Unwin).  
1907. *Ancient Khotan*, 2 vols., 4to (Clarendon Press).  
1908. *Mountain Panoramas*, foolscap fol. (Roy. Geogr. Soc.).

#### SECOND EXPEDITION

1912. *Ruins of Desert Cathay*, 2 vols., large 8vo  
(Macmillan).  
In preparation, *Serindia*, the scientific account of the  
second expedition.

#### THIRD EXPEDITION

1917. *A Third Journey of Exploration*, etc., in *Ind. Ant.*, vol. xlv (1917), June–November inclusive  
(reprinted from Journ. Roy. Geogr. Soc.).

Many years have elapsed since Stein and I first met and ever since that uncertain date we have maintained occasional correspondence, sometimes taking the form of collaboration in minor matters. My latest letter from him, dated June 7, 1918, includes the following passage:—

“I have been hard at work since the winter on completing *Serindia*, and the text is now getting near the end. Since the end of May I have regained my beloved mountain top, 11,000 feet above the sea, where I have done most of my big writing tasks before. It is delightfully peaceful and cool up

here. I enclose a little photo showing my own ridge. At Śrinagar, too, I had a good working time, but the winter was long, and, of course, even far away one feels what it means living through a tragic chapter of history. May it end well! . . . Chavannes' death has been a terrible blow to me . . . who among Orientalists could have been less spared than he?"

It is a pleasure to me to comply with the request of our Honorary Secretary and supply for the Journal a summary appreciation of Stein's manifold activities.

Most people find the Indian Institute at Oxford a fairly quiet place, but it was too noisy for Stein, who hurried away from it to bury himself in the wilds of Devonshire in order to work in peace. He is never really happy until he is perched on his "beloved mountain top" in Kashmir, far from the madding crowd and alone with the sublimest of nature. In that atmosphere he is at his best.

Stein is still a comparatively young man, 56 years of age, and if the fates are kind we may expect from him many years more of brilliant research. Even if he should not feel equal to further toilsome exploration in deserts and mountains, the material already collected by him is enough to furnish work for scores of scholars during scores of lives. Stein began his Asiatic studies at an early age, and was only 21 when he became Ph.D. in 1883. During the thirty-five years since that date his labours have been incessant, covering an enormous territorial space and countless centuries of time. He has held several hard-worked official appointments in India, and yet has always been able to find leisure for research. His linguistic equipment in Iranian, Sanskritic, and numerous other tongues is unusually adequate, while he is almost peculiar in combining with the erudition of the armchair scholar all the active qualities and technical knowledge which are indispensable to the successful explorer. A reviewer has summed up the exceptional combination of gifts possessed by Stein in the words:

"In the combination of romantic adventure with scientific precision Dr. Stein is a worthy successor to his famous countrymen, Csoma Cőrösi, Leitner, and Vambéry. He has the advantage over them, no doubt, in philological training. The Government of India is fortunate in commanding the services of so eminent a master in the modern profession of archæological *cum* geographical exploration." His interest in geographical science, fitly honoured by the Royal Geographical Society, is as keen as his *flair* for unearthing the relics of the forgotten past from the rubbish heaps of Chinese Turkestan. His researches have added immensely to the world's store of knowledge concerning the geography of the almost inaccessible regions of the Pāmīrs and the mountain ranges and other features of the country to the north of the Himālaya. The details of his geographical discoveries lie outside the circle of my special studies, and I shall not attempt to appraise their exact value, which is highly appreciated by expert judges. A little-known work of his published by the Royal Geographical Society in 1908 may be mentioned. It is a foolscap folio volume entitled *Mountain Panoramas from the Pāmīrs and Kwen Lun*, photographed and annotated by M. A. Stein. The Kwen Lun is the range of mountains to the south of Khotan. The panoramic views, taken from a great distance with the aid of special instruments, are not only beautiful and interesting, but precious to the scientific geographer.

With such inadequate recognition of Stein's achievements as a geographer and surveyor, I pass to fields more within the range of my knowledge and studies.

#### INDIA

One of my most treasured possessions is a presentation copy of the annotated version of the *Rājatarāṅginī* of Kalhaṇa, the historian of Kashmir, who wrote in the

twelfth century. Stein's monumental translation, published in two massive volumes in 1900, had been preceded in 1892 by a critical edition of the text based on the *codex archetypus* secured in 1889. That edition is, I understand, all that such a work ought to be. Much personal use entitles me to speak with authority of the excellence of the annotated translation, with its supplementary essays. The book is an encyclopædia of Kashmir lore. Although the political history of the valley and surrounding territories had little influence upon the course of general Indian history, the cultural results of the forms of civilization developed in Kashmir have been immense. They might, indeed, form the subject of a large volume.

An interesting and well-illustrated *Archæological Survey Progress Report* for 1904-5, recording the results of a tour in the N.W. Frontier Province, includes a survey of the Mahāban mountain, long supposed to be the Aornos so prominently mentioned in the accounts of Alexander's campaign in the hills. Stein's investigations proved conclusively that Mahāban cannot possibly be Aornos. All other attempts at identification having broken down previously, the position of Aornos remains unknown. Stein was rather inclined to regard the Greek story of the siege as a romance, although he admits the possibility of discovering the true position higher up the Indus, where Sir Bindon Blood would place it, perhaps near Baio, which is beyond the sharp bend above Kotkai. A bend adjoining the place is required because the Indus washed the *southern* face of the stronghold. I cannot accept the suggestion that the Greek story may be a romantic invention; but, unfortunately, our relations with the local tribes are such that the solution of the problem is likely to be long deferred.

#### CENTRAL ASIA

I now pass from India to Stein's famous expeditions into Central Asia. The compilation of my notes has been

rendered easier by the help of a collection of reviews and newspaper cuttings kindly supplied by Mrs. Hoernle. I may take this opportunity of recording my deep personal regret at the loss of Dr. Hoernle, who died on November 12, 1918. He devoted ungrudging labour to the elucidation of the Stein collections. His death, following that of Chavannes, seriously interferes with the working up of the huge mass of material gathered by Stein.

*First Expedition to Chinese Turkestan, 1900-1.*— In 1897 the idea of archæological work about Khotan was suggested by examination or consideration of various manuscripts and other curious odds and ends which had been brought in from that region by treasure-seekers and sold to European collectors. With the help of Lord Curzon, then Governor-General of India, and other influential persons, the plan of an expedition was worked out during 1898 and 1899, the requisite funds on an economical but sufficient scale being provided. The explorer reached Khotan on October 10, 1900, and spent about seven months in the territory. He returned to London via the Trans-Caspian Railway, receiving much kind help from the Russian authorities, and bringing with him twelve great cases full of manuscripts and miscellaneous antiquities, which disclosed a new world to the scholars of Europe. A few weeks of hard work at the British Museum sufficed to open the cases and make a preliminary arrangement of their multifarious contents. Stein then went back to India and resumed his duties in the Education Department.

A brief account of the expedition first appeared in an official publication, a thin quarto issued by the King's printers in 1901, and entitled *Preliminary Report of a Journey of Archæological and Topographical Exploration in Chinese Turkestan*, with a map and good photographic plates.

That volume was followed in 1903 by a substantial

octavo, entitled *Sand-buried Ruins of Khotan, a Personal Narrative*, published by Unwin. The book, which gives an extremely interesting, if somewhat diffuse, narrative of the expedition, was favourably received and attracted much attention. The most entertaining part of it is the chapter describing the inquiry which resulted in the full confession of the scamp, Islam Akhun, who had deceived the very elect by his daring forgeries of manuscripts and block-books in "unknown scripts", which had cost eminent scholars many hours of futile labour. I will not reopen old sores by recalling their names. The forger, who was proud of his profitable skill, explained in detail the methods of manufacture, and was kind enough to present Stein with one of the wooden blocks employed in printing his inventions.

"How much more proud would he have felt if he could but have seen, as I did a few months later, the fine morocco bindings with which a number of his block-printed forgeries had been honoured in a great European library!"

Some of the products of his factory are now deposited in the "forgery" section of the Manuscript Department of the British Museum. The exposure of Islam Akhun was by no means the least of the valuable fruits gathered by the expedition. The guilty rascal had the impudence to ask Stein to take him to Europe in his service. The book contains a portrait of Islam Akhun.

The detailed scientific account of the same expedition, published in 1907 under the title *Ancient Khotan*, is a magnificent work in two large quarto volumes. I had the privilege of reading a proof for the author. The volume of text reprints a considerable part of *Sand-buried Ruins of Khotan*. The appendices contain contributions by eminent specialists. A mutilated Judæo - Persian document, edited by Professor Margoliouth, and dating from the early part of the eighth century after Christ, is of special interest as being "the earliest document in

modern Persian of any sort". The writer was a dealer in sheep and his letter relates to his business. It is written on paper. The separate volume of 119 plates, of which some are coloured, includes a fine map of the Khotan territory.

Stein's investigations were followed by several expeditions organized by France, Germany, and Japan, which added largely to his results, but of those foreign efforts this is not the place to speak. The surprising discoveries made by Stein alone would suffice to supply material for endless articles. The success won by the first brief expedition in the Khotan territory to the south of the Taklamakān Desert, the Gobi of old maps, whetted the appetite of both the explorer and the learned public, so that no long time elapsed before a second expedition was arranged to cover new ground as well as to re-examine the old.

*Second Expedition, from May, 1906, to December, 1908.*—The preliminary results of the extended second venture are presented in two thick octavo volumes under the title *Ruins of Desert Cathay, Personal Narrative of Explorations in Central Asia and Westernmost China*, 1912, well illustrated. It is convenient to borrow the language of a competent reviewer printed in the *Westminster Gazette* of March 30, 1912:—

"Dr. Stein was absent from India rather more than two and a half years (May, 1906–December, 1908). In the interval he traversed vast stretches of country from the unexplored passes of Afghan Wakhan and the Pamirs to far within the borders of Western China. He carried on excavations under trying conditions in remote ruined sites north and south of the Tarim desert, and in the Lop-Nor region. . . .

"The book is a fascinating one, rich in philological, archaeological, and geographical interest. . . . Some of the art treasures recovered by him have been made known to the public at the Festival of Empire exhibition, and quite a company of savants

has been enlisted in the study of the varied *trouvailles*. The volumes are, however, more than a record of discovery, although the discoveries include MSS. in many languages, specimens of quasi-Byzantine art from the Chinese border, ethnographical measurements, and a new Great Wall. They are replete with observations of men and manners. . . .

“Dr. Stein has a remarkable command of English. At times we may be conscious, no doubt, of excessive detail regarding plans, previsions, verification, and so forth. But we cannot resist a thrill in reading the cumulative account of the art, so livingly based upon the Greek, as it emerges from the sands of Lop-Nor, or the strange observation of the sentry track made by the feet of Chinese soldiers along their wall 2,000 years ago. We sympathise with the author in the mishap resulting from his final adventure among the mountains. We smile, perhaps a little grimly, as Dr. Stein himself seems to do, in reading of the delicate management whereby the childlike Chinese custodian, whose photograph is not withheld, was parted from his library of priceless MSS. and paintings. Rarely has a priest been so deeply betrayed by his patron saint.”

I hope that I may be pardoned for also “conveying” a short extract from the *Times* review dated March 7, 1912:—

“Some idea of the services which Mr. Stein has conferred upon historical, archæological, and philological science may be gathered from the fact that, in addition to an enormous amount of topographical work for the Indian Survey Department, his harvest of ancient manuscripts and records comprises some 14,000 documents, in about a dozen scripts and languages (some unknown); enough, in fact, to occupy the labours of a large staff of Orientalists for years to come. Many of these relics are evidently of exceptional interest and value, notably those which come from that rich storehouse, the walled-in rock chamber of the Grotto of the Thousand Buddhas at Tun-huang, where they had lain, undisturbed by man and unharmed by time, during nine centuries. These include the oldest existing specimens of Chinese Buddhist pictorial art; block-printed texts dating from the ninth century; a Sanscrit MS. on palm leaves of the fourth



century; Runic-Turki, Tibetan, and Manichean writings; illuminated temple scrolls, banners, and ex-votos on silk and brocade, all miraculously preserved for their predestined resting place in the British Museum. Amongst other remarkable discoveries was the finding, in the rubbish-heap of a lonely watch-tower ruin, of the ancient Chinese "Limes", a script of Aramaic origin, written on paper, and dating from the first century. Of the finding of this document Mr. Stein observes that 'it seemed as if three civilizations, from the East, West, and South, had combined to leave their written traces at this lonely watch station in the desert, and with them to demonstrate also the earliest writing materials'. The same locality yielded a beautifully written and perfectly preserved tablet, containing the first chapter of a lexicographical Chinese work of the first century A.D., which is declared by M. Chavannes to be the earliest authentic specimen of a Chinese text. A striking proof this of the extraordinarily preservative power of the desert soil and climate."

It is impossible to give, by mere words, any idea of the richness of the collections brought to England. The wonderful silk pictures which were on exhibition at the British Museum some years ago must be seen to be appreciated. The coloured reproductions in the book, although excellent in their way, are far from being as impressive as the originals, which, it is hoped, may be again on view before long. The whole book is full of marvels discovered in the country to the north of the desert as well as in that to the south. In the course of his return journey Stein suffered severe injury from frost-bite, but nothing could damp his enthusiasm. As soon as possible he started on his third and most extended adventure of exploration.

*Third Expedition, from July 31, 1913, to March, 1916.*  
—On this occasion Stein succeeded in approaching the Pāmirs by a hitherto unexplored route through the Dard countries of Darel and Yasin. Starting from Śrīnagar in Kashmir on July 31, he had crossed by September 5 no

less than fifteen passes, ranging in height from 10,000 to 17,400 feet, a wonderful feat of endurance and mountaineering skill. He notes that

“fully thirty miles from the nearest traceable bed of the Yarkand River, a small belt of eroded ground displayed on its surface abundant remains of the Stone Age, proving occupation by a Palæolithic settlement of what is now absolutely lifeless desert. Neolithic arrow-heads turned up on similar ground nearer to Chok-tagh”.

Truly, the story of mankind is a long one.

On January 8, 1914, after passing through the Khotan territory, the explorer reached the small oasis called Charkhlik, “representing Marco Polo’s ‘City of Lop’”. At Miran, two marches further east, Stein succeeded in the troublesome task of removing intact and packing an “interesting frescoed dado with its cycle of youthful figures”. Still further east, at Lou-lan, on the ancient route of the Chinese silk trade, the explorer struck “a series of large grave pits which yielded a rich antiquarian haul in bewildering confusion”. The relics dated from the time of the Early Han Dynasty, beginning about the close of the second century B.C. “There was no time then to examine the wealth of beautiful designs and colours making a feast for my eyes.” The discovery “opened up a new and fascinating chapter in the history of textile art. It will take years to read it in full clearness”. Indications suggested that “the interval separating the latest Neolithic period in Lou-lan from the advent of the Chinese may not have been a very long one”. Still further east quantities of Chinese copper coins and bronze arrow-heads of Han times marked the course of the ancient track, and testified to “the magnitude of the traffic which had once moved through these barren solitudes”. Space fails to follow the adventure farther to the east and then to the north of the great desert. Stein was back again at Kashgar on May 31, 1915.

On July 6 he marched westwards and so made his way to the Russian territories on the Oxus. During the first half of September Stein was busy with "plentiful anti-quarian and anthropometric work" in Wakhan, and, as an extra, with collecting specimens of a new Pāmīr dialect, called Ishkashmi, one of seven such Iranian tongues now known to exist. On October 22 the traveller reached Samarkand.

From Russian Turkestan the unwearied traveller made a dash into Persia, reaching Meshed (Mashhad) on November 4. Thence he plunged into Seistan, and on a hill called Koh-i Khwāja discovered the remains of a large Buddhist monastery,

"the first ever traced on Iranian soil. Hidden behind later masonry there came to light remarkable fresco remains, dating back undoubtedly to the Sassanian period [A.D. 226-641]. Wall paintings, of a distinctly Hellenistic style and probably older, were found on the wall of a gallery below the high terrace bearing the main shrine. Protected in a similar way from the ravages of man and atmospheric moisture they had unfortunately suffered much from white ants. The importance of these pictorial relics, which I managed to remove safely in spite of various difficulties, is great. They illustrate for the first time *in situ* the Iranian link of the chain which, long surmised by conjecture, connects the Græco-Buddhist art of the extreme north-west of India with the Buddhist art of Central Asia and the Far East. This connexion was reflected with equal clearness by the architectural features of the ruins, which were also of great interest."

When writing in 1911 I had recorded the observation that "it is evident that the Turkistan paintings range over a long time, and that, when their sequence shall have been worked out, much light will be thrown upon the development of the pictorial art of Asia, including India". That proposition is doubtless true, but we must now take into consideration the unexpected frescoes in Seistan as well. The tour in Seistan was of the nature of a

reconnaissance, and had to be hurried too much to allow of much exploration in detail. The traveller found "an abundant archæological harvest literally on the surface", the objects including prehistoric pottery, neolithic implements, and relics of the bronze age. He also traced a line of ancient watch-stations, which reminded him of the great fortifications on the western frontier of China.

At the beginning of February, 1916, Stein set out on his return journey to India, travelling by the Seistan-Nushki trade-route, and keeping his eyes open. After the middle of March he returned to his starting-point Śrinagar in Kashmīr, having been absent for nearly two years and eight months, during which he marched nearly 11,000 miles. His spoils consisted of 182 cases from Turkestan and twelve from Seistan.

Thus ended the third and probably the most important of Stein's wonderful expeditions. But at present hardly anything is known about its results. *Serindia*, the big book intended to supply a scientific account of the achievements of the second expedition, seems to be still far from publication, and it is obvious that we must wait patiently for a long time before we learn much of the discoveries made from 1913 to 1916.

The mass of material brought home from all the three expeditions is so enormous that it may be said that work on it will never be finished. When the explorations of persons employed by foreign authorities are also brought into consideration, the amount of labour needed to deduce coherent expositions of the whole is appalling to think of. Scores of experts may work at the hundreds of cases for generations without exhausting the subject.

Chinese Turkestan is of special interest as being the meeting-place of four distinct civilizations, Indian, Persian, Chinese, and Hellenistic, from, say, the third century B.C. to the ninth century after Christ. Khotan, Kashmīr, and Tibet were closely linked together by cultural bonds, and

the Buddhist art of China and Japan is derived from the Hellenistic art of Gandhāra through Khotan. Political and religious history receives equal illumination, while the subsidiary science of numismatics has been enriched by a multitude of novel facts. The linguistic discoveries are of such astonishing richness that it is impossible to extend this article by any attempt to notice them. Perhaps Sir George Grierson may find leisure to give some account of the new knowledge gained.

The expeditions enable us to realize the ancient state of Chinese Turkestan in every minute detail of domestic, business, and military life for several centuries. Anybody who looks at the pictures in any of Stein's books or visits the collections in the British Museum will understand what is meant. Words would be useless to give any idea of the richness and significance of the collections.

Stein always works at high pressure, whether in the field or in the study, and gets through an astonishing amount of literary work of high quality. The only adverse criticism to which it is exposed is that his books exhibit a certain diffuseness and would sometimes be improved by reduction in bulk. But he has never had time to do much pruning, and all his publications are fascinating as they stand. Nobody else living, except the fellow-workers in the same field to whom allusion has been made, has enjoyed such opportunities for astonishing discoveries on a huge scale, and it may well be doubted if any rival can equal Sir M. A. Stein in his treatment of his only too copious material.

VINCENT A. SMITH.

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THE PANJAB HISTORICAL SOCIETY

*A Correction*

My statement (*ante*, Journal for 1918, p. 660) that the Society was established by Sir John Marshall and the staff of the Panjab University is not perfectly accurate.