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Aurel Stein and the Kiplings: Silk Road Pathways of Converging and Reciprocal Inspiration

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Received: 4 June 2018; Accepted: 5 July 2018; Published: 10 July 2018



Abstract: Biographies of the renowned linguistic scholar and archaeological explorer Sir Marc Aurel Stein (1862–1943) inevitably yet briefly refer to the role played by John Lockwood Kipling (1837–1911), as curator of the Lahore Museum—with its extensive collection of ancient Gandharan Greco-Buddhist sculpture—in exciting Stein’s interests in and theories of what likely lay buried under the sands of the Taklamakan Desert. A more insistent focus on the coalescing influences in the Stein-Kipling relationship, including a subsequent line of evident inspiration from Stein to the internationally famed author and Nobel laureate Rudyard Kipling (Lockwood’s son; 1865–1936), helps to synthesize some of the highlights of Stein’s first expedition into the remote Tarim Basin of Chinese Turkestan, including and involving the forgeries manufactured by the Uyghur treasure-seeker Islam Akhun.

Keywords: Aurel Stein; John Lockwood Kipling; Rudyard Kipling; Rudolf Hoernle; Islam Akhun; Great Game

1. Introduction

Sir Marc Aurel Stein (1862–1943) has, over roughly the past century, been variously regarded as a colossus of Central Asian exploration and archaeology; a savant in the older imperial Orientalist vein; a man of incredible discipline, deeply dedicated scholarship, tenacity, organization, and stamina; . . . and, by some, as an exploitative opportunist. His famed excavations within Chinese Turkestan (principally the Tarim Basin) were carried out over four expeditions (1900–1930) crossing some 25,000 miles through some of the harshest terrain and climatic conditions on the planet. The Stein catalogue is immense, ranging from the archaeological, artistic, and manuscript discoveries exhumed (and voluminously photographed) at Dandan-Uiliq, Niya, Rawak, Endere, and Miran, to the extensive ruins of Khara Khoto, Khotan, and Loulan, to a previously undiscovered extension of the Great Wall, to the original site of the Jade Gate to, of course, the famed “Hidden Library” (Cave 17) in the extensive Mogao grottoes, or “Caves of the Thousand Buddhas,” near Dunhuang, where he uncovered an enormous hoard of ancient manuscripts in many languages, including the Diamond Sutra, the oldest dated printed book in the world (868 CE), along with a scattering of silk paintings and banners, all executed prior to 1000 CE—and removed multiple cratesful of them to be transported (primarily) to the British Museum. Taken together, Stein’s discoveries—and the subsequent labors of many scholars internationally to assess and translate or interpret them—have opened the door to essential components and information that have defined and are still defining the history of the eastern Silk Road.

Within the rich web of catalysts involved in the “Aurel Stein story,” reference is made, briefly but consistently, to the role played by the Lahore-based English artist/sculptor, teacher, and museum curator John Lockwood Kipling (1837–1911) in the latter years of the nineteenth century in strengthening Stein’s curiosity and lending to his crystallizing theories of what very likely lay buried in the sands of the vast Taklamakan Desert. However, then Lockwood Kipling typically exits the narrative, as quickly as he briefly enters, not to be seen again. Looking more closely at the

Stein/Kipling dynamic reveals a context much richer and more substantial than normally suggested by the treatments thus far recorded, and involves, also and intriguingly, an inspirational thread between Stein and Nobel laureate Rudyard Kipling (Lockwood's son) that manifests itself, ultimately, in Kipling's late masterpiece of a short story, "Dayspring Mishandled."

2. Lockwood Kipling, an Anchor of Lahore

As both of Stein's principal biographers, Jeannette Mirsky (*Sir Aurel Stein: Archaeological Explorer*, (Mirsky 1977)) and Annabel Walker (*Aurel Stein: Pioneer of the Silk Road*, (Walker 1995)), have revealed, Stein became involved with John Lockwood Kipling through the Lahore Museum (established 1865), where Kipling was curator from 1875 to 1893. Kipling was also simultaneously named the original principal of the Mayo School of Art, being a gifted and skilled architectural sculptor and illustrator himself, as well as a serious ideological adherent to the Arts & Crafts movement championed in England, most notably by William Morris, following the inspiration provided by John Ruskin. Kipling's commitment to Arts & Crafts merged seamlessly with the mission statement of the Mayo School, which emphasized "indigenous" traditions—consistent with the British government's colonial policy of "indirect rule" in the Punjab that recognized the village as the centerpiece of administration (Tarar 2018, p. 9). As head of both the Lahore Museum and the Mayo School of Art, Kipling sought to develop close ties between the Museum collections and the nature of instruction in the School, which focused on "molding and cast making, modeling, carpentry, carpet design, architectural decoration, wood engraving, photography, and lithography" (Kemp 2017b, p. 172).

Kipling arrived in a Lahore whose arts and manufactures he had described as early as 1860, in his account of "*Lahore As It Is*" (Part I of his book, with Thomas Henry Thornton, *Lahore As It Was*) as largely devoid of any notable art or craft for which the Punjab more broadly was recognized (Kipling and Thornton 1860, p. 48). In his 2002 Foreword to the reprinted *Lahore As It Was*, Mubarak Ali explains that Lahore "first lost political stability during the turbulence of the eighteenth century when the ruling classes either migrated to safer places or were so greatly impoverished that the arts lost their patronage. The artisan classes that manufactured goods for the ruling elite thereby became jobless and traditional crafts also suffered" (p. v). Faced with this challenge, Kipling vigorously asserted in 1876 that "it is the object of the Lahore School to revive crafts now half forgotten" (quoted in Kemp 2017b, p. 174), and he "firmly believed that training artisan students in 'the principles of their own trade' would make them 'more skilled than their fathers'" (J.L. Kipling, from his "Report on the Mayo School of Art for 1875–1876," quoted in (Tarar 2018, p. 12)).

In pursuing this commitment Kipling, like other art instructors and administrators in British India at the time, utilized a dual-emphasis on cultivating in his students a stronger awareness of their indigenous arts and crafts while also insisting on their training in geometry, perspective, and the more "scientific" Western methods of drawing and designing directly from nature and from models. While he focused on assisting his pupils to gain solid training and then successful employment, whether as local artisans continuing in their long-standing family professions or as artisans or designers in the broader public/administrative sector of the Empire, Kipling focused on "upholding traditional arts and crafts [in] an attempt to prevent their dissolution in an age of mass machine production" (Kamran 2015, p. 17).

It is abundantly clear that from "the very beginning of his curatorship, [Kipling's annual] reports demonstrate his constant commitment to education" (Kemp 2017b, p. 177), primarily, but not exclusively, as an essential means for the students of the Mayo School to have direct, tangible access to the productions of their own culture/s, in both contemporary practice and over the ages. As he put it in his "Notes at the Paris Exhibition" in 1878, "It is the thing itself that is necessary to awaken the interest of the people, and it is from the thing that the artificer learns his most valuable lessons . . ." (cited in Kemp 2017b, p. 173). To this end, Kipling expended tremendous effort to more extensively develop the collection of artifacts ("things") in the Museum, building an especially impressive collection of Gandharan Greco-Buddhist sculpture (dating from, broadly, the first century BCE to the seventh

century CE) and other relics. As [Guha-Thakurta \(2004\)](#) has explored in detail in her *Monuments, Objects, Histories: Institutions of Art in Colonial and Postcolonial India*, British officials expended great effort in the latter half of the nineteenth century to gather Gandharan (and other) sculpture and remaining temple reliefs from their original sites in the field to protect them from destruction at the hands of “unwitting natives” and move the pieces to safety in a rapidly-emerging network of museums—with all of the attendant political/colonial implications regarding custody and the subsequent puzzles and problems affiliated with dispersing and separating the artifacts, selecting in which of a half dozen or so competing museums (including Lahore) to place particular pieces, deciding how to display and describe each (and for whom), etc. Driving this effort,

... the authorities voiced immense consternation in response to a series of threats these sculptures faced: their mutilation by the local community of Yusufzai Afghans; their free appropriation by officers, civil and military, for private use and sale; their attraction also for native pilferers as their demand and prices mounted on the open market. And it was to counteract all of these that museums were seen as the only proper destination for these sculptures.

([Guha-Thakurta 2004](#), p. 62)

It is within this environment of amassing, classifying, and interpreting antiquities that Lockwood Kipling was appointed and operated as curator of the Lahore Museum, and he successfully developed a significant collection of Gandharan art (which would prove of great importance to Aurel Stein in the coming years, and which remains largely in place today) (See also “Research Project: John Lockwood Kipling.” [Victoria and Albert Museum 2018](#))

While working under the aegis of the British government’s Department of Science and Art, in the spirit of the Arts & Crafts Movement and as a “fascinating, creative, enthusiastic, and sincere champion of the arts” ([Swallow 2017](#), p. xvii), Lockwood Kipling often expressed his concern about the potential displacement of the deeply-rooted arts and crafts of India in the face of advancing industrialization and mass production, driven by English and western European forces. In an article written for *The Times* of London in November 1884, he maintained that “international Commerce with India is changing Indian customs and habits The Goths and iconoclasts actually destroyed works of art; and less violently but not less certainly, European modern usages tend to extinguish the art spirit of India” (“The Native Arts of India and Their Relation to Indian Architecture,” anonymous letter to the editor of *The Times* [London] 27 November 1884, 7. Cited in ([Kemp 2017b](#), p. 174)). “By the time of Kipling’s retirement, he had laid the firm foundations of an art institution during 18 years of service” that saw his pupils win numerous awards and a number of the graduates going on to teaching positions of their own in other schools of art across India ([Kamran 2015](#), p. 17).

This educational/training mission, coupled with an acute appreciation for the beautiful (and useful) productions of skilled artisans, together with a passionate conservationist/preservationist commitment, extended to his belief in inviting and including the general public, as opposed to only the craftsmen/students or the growing class of Central and South Asia scholars. The Indian museums and their curators of the age notably struggled with this mixed mission:

Across India, colonial administrators and museum directors, fearing [that] the dominant usage of museums . . . [“as *tamasha* (show) houses,” in the words of Edgar Thurston, superintendent of the Madras Museum] undermined their scholarly ambitions for education and research, promoted the needs of scholarly and better-educated visitors at the expense of what Kipling called the “country people, to whom the museum is really a ‘wonder-house’”.

(Kipling, from the *Report of the Working of the Lahore Museum during the Year 1875–76*, as cited by ([Kemp 2017b](#), p. 176))

Kipling’s sentiment regarding public access and education follows upon a similar expression from another government official, ten years earlier (1865), found in the *Report of the Nagpore Exhibition*

of Arts, Crafts, Manufactures, and Produce: “The natives...cannot understand a new thing unless it is held up before their eyes. ...The first time they may wonder; the second time they may understand; the third time they may observe with a view to practice” (cited in [Prakash 1992](#), p. 161).

Kipling’s own reference to the museum as a “wonder house” echoes the *Nagpore Report*, and it of course most notably and immediately resonates with (and anticipates) the Museum’s depiction, by that name, in the first chapter of *Kim* (1901), Rudyard Kipling’s internationally acclaimed novel, one which also popularized the term “Great Game,” the espionage-rich clash of territorial interests between expansionist Russia and imperial Britain, focused on India’s Northwest Frontier and Central Asia, including Eastern Turkestan (the Tarim Basin). As Rudyard Kipling describes it in *Kim*,

In the entrance hall [to the Wonder House] stood larger figures of the Greco-Buddhist sculptures There were hundreds of pieces, friezes of figures in relief, fragments of statues and slabs crowded with figures that had encrusted the black walls of the Buddhist stupas and viharas of the North Country and now, dug up and labeled, made the pride of the museum.

([Kipling 1987](#), p. 54)

And, as accurately described by Rudyard Kipling in *Kim* about his father’s approach to the museum collections,

[Anyone could hurry] up to the Wonder House to view things that men made in their own province and elsewhere. The Museum was given up to the Indian arts and manufactures, and anybody who sought wisdom could ask the curator to explain.

([Kipling 1987](#), p. 52)

As the street urchin Kim leads the inquiring Tibetan Buddhist lama into the Wonder House to see the “many images” depicting the life of the Buddha, and to visit with the “Sahib with a white beard” (p. 54)—i.e., in reality, the white-bearded Lockwood Kipling—“the old man followed and halted amazed In open-mouthed wonder the lama turned to this and that” (p. 54). The white-bearded curator walks the lama through more of the collection, the life of the Buddha displayed “incident by incident . . . on the blurred stone” (p. 56). Engaging the lama in discussion over the various pieces, the curator “in a few minutes . . . saw that his guest was no mere bead-telling mendicant, but a scholar of parts” (p. 56).

For his part, the lama recognizes the deep learning and cultural/historical sensitivity of the curator, and eventually feels therefore that the curator may be able to reveal to him the object of his quest, which is the location of the River whose waters are recorded as being able to cleanse and release one from *samsara*. Since the Wonder House’s visually depicted narrative of the Buddha seems reasonably complete to that point—and is understood well by the curator sahib—the lama presses him further:

“Surely thou must know? . . . I ask with my head between thy feet, O Fountain of Wisdom. We *know* He drew the bow! We *know* the arrow fell! We *know* the stream gushed! Where, then, is the River? . . . Think again!”

“If I knew, think you I would not cry it aloud? ... I do not know. I do not know,” [the curator replied].

([Kipling 1987](#), p. 58)

Lockwood Kipling’s broad educational mission, which included his ability to serve the interests of both the general public and “scholarly and better-educated visitors,” also came with a growing awareness as an emissary of the Colonial administration in India of the growing fascination with items emerging from explorations in northern India and Central Asia. As he reflected in a *Pioneer* article in 1877, “Central Asia is now attracting the keenest interest” (cited in [Kemp 2017b](#), p. 175). Further, as

Kemp describes, “... the influential periodical reviewer Andrew Lang remarked that the ‘untraveller’ public was ‘particularly alive to the strangeness and fascination of the works beyond the bounds of Britain and the United States’” (Kemp 2017b, p. 175). Kipling’s curatorship, educational mission, and deepening understanding of Gandharan art and Indian arts and crafts played very significantly into what emerged as Aurel Stein’s pathway toward the sand-buried ruins of the Taklamakan.

3. Aurel Stein’s Pathway to the Wonder House

After finishing his studies at universities in Tübingen and Oxford in Old Persian and Indology (with a two year hiatus training as a surveyor during military service in Hungary), and after time in London mixing with some older “India hands” and Sanskrit scholars, Aurel Stein traveled to India, hoping that a post there would afford him enough research and academic prestige to then gain a comfortable academic position in a British or European university (Whitfield 2014, p. 14). Stein arrived in Lahore in 1888, having been granted the post of principal of the Oriental College, initially, and then Registrar of the Punjab University. Oriental College had been founded in 1870, its curriculum—like that of the art schools of the time—having a mixed emphasis on “oriental learning” and western knowledge. “Classical languages—Arabic, Persian, and Sanskrit—and indigenous languages—Urdu, Hindi, Punjabi and Pashto—were taught. Other fields included engineering, mathematics, medicine, geography ... economics, logic and photography, etc.” (University of the Punjab 2018). As Annabel Walker describes, “[Stein] was fortunate in his posting. From Lahore he could easily reach the area on which his interests were concentrated: the Indo-Iranian borderlands whose ancient languages and religions he had studied, and over whose mountains and deserts the hero of his boyhood, Alexander the Great, had marched” (Walker 1995, p. 27). Beyond this, Lahore placed him in reasonable proximity to Kashmir, where he intended to search for the lost original manuscript of the *Rajatarangini*, or the *Chronicles of the Kings of Kashmir*, written by Kalhana in the twelfth century. Stein did finally track down and piece together the manuscript in 1888 (and subsequently translate it over a number of years). The document was immensely valuable because it provided one of the few works providing reliable narrative insight into the distant past of India.

In Lahore and in Kashmir, Stein was also in fairly close proximity to the vale of Peshawar, the heart of the ancient Gandharan kingdom. The remnants of architecture and art of the area held a special fascination for him. As Annabel Walker puts it, “The Buddhist art of Gandhara gave tangible expression to the fusion of cultures from East and West which had taken place there. It drew together the strands of Stein’s interests and stimulated a curiosity in him which would lead him to the deserts of Central Asia and their forgotten history. For it demonstrated the assimilation of Greek art forms with Eastern culture to an astonishing degree” (Walker 1995, p. 37). Stein’s interest in and understanding of Gandharan art was enormously encouraged by the time he spent in the Lahore Museum, led through the collections by its curator, Lockwood Kipling. In a May 1889 letter to his brother Ernst, Stein wrote that of the people he had met in his early days in Lahore, Lockwood Kipling was “by far the most interesting” (cited in Mirsky 1977, p. 42).

Stein’s interest in Gandharan art and the history it represented was also bolstered by his exposure during this time to the detailed travelogue (*Great Tang Records of the Western Regions*) written in the seventh century CE by the Buddhist monk Xuanzang (c. 602–64 CE, to whom Stein came to refer as his “patron saint”), who journeyed seventeen years from the (then) Chinese imperial capital of Chang’an, along the Silk Road via the Tarim Basin, across the vast Pamir mountains and into and around India ... and back ... in an effort to collect Buddhist texts from their source and provide more accurate and consistent translations of them into Chinese. Xuanzang’s record of his travels, together with Stein’s growing appreciation for and fascination with Gandharan art—specifically focused on the origin and migration of the Buddha image—moved him toward a determination to “trace the transmission of the Buddha image as it went overland from Gandhara to China” (Mirsky 1977, p. 43), following Xuanzang’s route over the Pamir range and into the arid Tarim Basin. Stein’s earlier knowledge of

Gandharan art, with its accompanying explications of Buddhist iconography, came chiefly through Lockwood Kipling and his extensive collection in the Lahore Museum.

One can easily imagine Kipling leading Stein through the collections of Gandharan art in much the way he (“the curator”) is described as leading the lama through the Wonder House in *Kim*, commenting on the fusion of influences visible in the depictions of the Buddha, their origins, and their historical and religious significance. It is striking to see this intersection of fiction and reality when, in a letter to Stein dated 16 May 1902, Kipling reflects fondly on their earlier encounters: “I wonder whether you have seen my son’s ‘Kim,’ & recognized an old Lama whom you saw at the old Museum & at the School” (Kipling 1900–1904, ff. 1–3).

Stein had learned enough directly from Kipling and through his own subsequent intensive study that when Lord Curzon came to Lahore on state business in 1899, it was Stein himself who led the Viceroy of India through the “Wonder House” collections:

In the course of their first tour Stein explained to him the significance of Gandhara art, simultaneously seizing the opportunity to tell him of his plan to solve the mysteries of what lay beyond the Karakorum. Curzon . . . had himself written a book on Central Asia, albeit on Russian ambitions there, and was keenly interested in what Stein had to say. He instructed the British Minister in Peking to seek from the Chinese authorities a passport allowing Stein to enter Chinese Turkestan via the Karakorum route.

(Hopkirk 1980, p. 72)

Stein’s determination that significant ancient ruins of Buddhist civilizations (whether kingdoms, cities, towns, or outposts), with their accompanying art displaying early examples of the Buddha image, would be uncovered beneath the sands of the Taklamakan was fueled by a number of sources: the visual record of Gandharan art that he encountered in the Lahore Museum and that anticipated its transmission via the Silk Road, along with Buddhism itself, into the Tarim Basin, merging further with Chinese styles to create what Stein would later term “Serindian art”; the detailed geographical and cultural observations recorded by the seventh century Buddhist monk Xuanzang, whose pathway from India into the Tarim Basin Stein would follow closely; accounts of fascinating and hard-to-reach ruins of Central Asia witnessed by Stein’s Hungarian explorer predecessors Csoma de Körös (1784–1842) and Lajos Lóczy (1849–1920); the Swedish explorer and cartographer Sven Hedin (first exploratory expedition in the Tarim Basin 1895–1897); and evidence being returned to colonial government offices from the Tarim Basin in the form of ancient manuscript fragments written in Sanskrit and a range of other ancient or unknown languages. Stein needed both permission and support to test his theories and conduct his exploratory excavations, and Lord Curzon thus supplied the weightiest advocacy, though Stein had also worked to secure support from other important sources, especially via Rudolf Hoernle . . . about whom more must be said at this point, as it feeds centrally into the Stein-Kipling intersection.

4. Enter, Rudolf Hoernle

The transmission of Indian culture (including Buddhism and Gandharan or Gandharan-inspired art) across the Pamir and Karakorum mountains and into the Tarim Basin had been most recently reestablished through discovery and receipt of the Bower Manuscript, a fifth-century set of Sanskrit medical texts found in 1889 by local scavengers in a ruined stupa near the oasis of Kucha along the northern edge of the Taklamakan, and that then exchanged hands via a chain leading to Sir George Macartney, the British consul general in Kashgar. Written in the Brahmi script, it stood as the oldest-known extant Indian book (Hopkirk 1980, p. 45; Sims-Williams 2012, p. 1). Deciphering the birch bark leaves fell directly to Rudolf Augustus Hoernle (1841–1918), a renowned Sanskrit scholar and Indologist trained in London and living in India for about two decades prior to the discovery. Principal of the Calcutta Madrasah since 1881, Hoernle had been appointed by the Government to assess various archaeological relics and was then given Special Duty to evaluate and report on the finds from Central Asia (Sims-Williams 2012, p. 2). Given the British and Russian competing interests

in Central Asia (the “Great Game”), an accelerated flow of manuscript fragments and relics (coins, pottery shards, etc.) came Hoernle’s way between 1895 and 1900 since

Hoernle appreciated the potential importance of his position as the recipient and interpreter of these documents but recognized also the possibility that the Russians, ever in competition with the British, might try to siphon off any finds in the direction of their own scholars. He therefore persuaded the Government of India to encourage its agents to buy manuscripts [and relics] wherever possible and to send them to him.

(Walker 1995, p. 48)

Hoernle’s achievements were impressive, sometimes monumental, as he was able to develop transcriptions of manuscript fragments written in some previously unknown languages, two of which were then established to be Tocharian and Khotanese (Sims-Williams 2012, p. 2). As his successes mounted, so did his international reputation grow larger; as the British Collection of Central Asian Antiquities expanded under his management, the swelling of his pride likely followed.

Stein met Hoernle as early as 1886 in Vienna, and he was in touch with him after 1890 about the possibility of publishing his translation of the *Rajatarangini*, as well as about Hoernle’s work on the Bower Manuscript. Following the discovery of various antiquities in the Khotan region, Stein became focused by 1898 on building support for a possible expedition into the region of Khotan, and he consulted closely with Hoernle, who was enthusiastic. Hoernle assisted by forwarding and supporting Stein’s proposal to the appropriate Government of India offices. “Hoernle wrote of the close literary and artistic links between Khotan and India” (Sims-Williams 2012, p. 2). Hoernle also urged exploration in order to clear up murky details about the find locations of various antiquities; the expedition could be of vital importance for the integrity of the Central Asia Collection. “... there are [also] a number of objects, mostly block-prints, the bonafides of which is not above suspicion. The truth of this matter can only be satisfactorily cleared up by an European explorer on the spot.” And, as Hoernle argued, the region of Khotan fell within the British sphere of influence, and credit for any significant discoveries there should rightly fall to the British (letter to T.W. Holderness, 13 October 1898, [Bodleian Library: MS. Stein 289, ff. 114–17] as cited in Sims-Williams 2012, p. 2).

The Stein-Hoernle relationship was, as Ursula Sims-Williams describes it, “somewhat complex” (1). On one hand, Hoernle had recommended and then helped to ensure that Stein would succeed him as Principal of the Calcutta Madrasah, a prospect that Stein very much appreciated. On the other hand, as Hoernle supported Stein’s proposed exploration in various letters to important offices, Hoernle openly identified himself as “the intellectual father” of the expedition or “the originator of the expedition”; in one letter, as Annabel Walker records, he claimed that “the idea of that expedition was first conceived by myself . . .” (Walker 1995, p. 65). Just before departing for Khotan in May 1900, Stein stoically wrote that Hoernle suffered from “deficient recollection” (Walker 1995, p. 65).

Following on Stein’s informative and persuasive tour of the Lahore Museum with him in 1899 and the written appeals to the Government of India from Hoernle, Lord Curzon gave further credence to Stein’s departure for Khotan by reiterating and reinforcing the sense of imperial mission (or destiny) by saying, in 1900, that it is “our duty to dig and discover, to classify, reproduce and describe, to copy and decipher, and to cherish and conserve” (“On Ancient Buildings in India,” cited in Kemp 2017b, p. 174). Having received his permissions and official support, and having secured his funding, Stein’s first great expedition into the Taklamakan set out over the vast Pamir mountain range. One of the numerous tasks he set for himself during this expedition was to accurately trace the purported origin of the block prints in “unknown characters” in Hoernle’s possession to determine their authenticity . . . since Stein more than suspected that they were forgeries. Stein’s experience and training in Kashmir tracking down the original *Rajatarangini* would prove invaluable in this effort. Hoernle, however, had already published and reported on receipt of the discovered manuscripts and declared them in a special issue of the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* to be authentic (Hopkirk 1980, p. 108). From Stein’s point of view, it was astounding that a scholar of Hoernle’s stature and integrity could somehow

believe in the veracity of what seemed likely, perhaps even obviously forgery. Hoernle had in fact committed the questionable manuscripts to their “rightful place” in the catalogue of the Antiquities collection. Perplexed by the documents, but apparently blinded by his desire to register another victory, ... both personally and versus the Russians ... Hoernle was now headed for a potentially disastrous embarrassment.

5. Exposing the Forger

The innumerable challenges and successes of Stein’s first great expedition are thoroughly documented, both by himself (in field notes, diaries, letters, photographs, and his book *Sand-Buried Ruins of Ancient Khotan*), and by his biographers. In this first expedition, as in his ensuing expeditions into Chinese Turkestan, Stein employed meticulous field methodology institutionalized by British India’s “founding archaeologist” Alexander Cunningham (1814–1893) as early as the 1830s. Cunningham’s emphasis on determining history from antiquities and developing an archive of reliable empirical knowledge supplied the standard for those who came after him. His model involved:

... a ground survey of the height and extent of the [site]; a layout of the structural features and measurements of the architectural remains; a record of local mythological accounts of the place; a scouring of references to the site in ancient literary texts and accounts of the Chinese Buddhist pilgrims; an identification of the sacred places and monuments mentioned in the Chinese accounts with various surviving ground structures; and, finally, a notice of all the coins, inscriptions, and other artifacts recovered from the vicinity.

(Guha-Thakurta 2004, p. 28)

Stein himself became a meticulous and prodigious producer of copious records developed via his “scientific” methods of exploration. In the early phase of the first expedition, once he crossed into the Tarim Basin en route to Khotan, Stein focused some of his relentless detective work on closely exploring areas where Islam Akhun, the local “treasure seeker” and “discoverer” of the block prints in “unknown characters,” had claimed to find his manuscripts—and where he also claimed to have discovered a vast ancient cemetery—but none of them panned out. Stein then entered Khotan and inquired after Akhun himself, but he “appeared to have left town rather hurriedly”:

However, one old book which had reportedly passed through [Akhun’s] hands was offered to Stein. When this was subjected to the “water test,” the mere touch of his finger was sufficient to wipe away the “unknown characters.” To Stein’s highly trained eye, moreover, it looked suspiciously like certain of the books in Hoernle’s collection in Calcutta.

(Hopkirk 1980, pp. 79–80)

As Stein himself describes it in his diary:

The fact that every sheet consists of a single layer of bark, at once aroused my suspicion. It was strengthened at once by the curious rough surface of the bark which seemed to betoken some artificial treatment. ... The forgery is a singularly clumsy one. The fold in the middle of the leaves shows no trace of breakage. Six sheets are put together into a single form, held by a bit of twisted bark. The twist is passed through written portions of some leaves. It is also clear that the sheets were folded up after the writing as the lines of some half-sheets run on to the other, half hidden behind the folding.

In one place, the artist evidently got tired of painting the fancy characters and breaks out into a line of mere scrawls. ... Badruddin [Khan], who was present at the time, at once spotted the forgery. He noticed that the MS. was of the same kind as one sold to him by Islam Akhun ...

(Stein 1900–1901, entry dated 13 October 1900, f. 63)

Further, “Badruddin told me that the large offers of whole books which began 4–5 years ago, aroused his suspicions since previously only small fragments of MSS. had been obtainable” (Stein 1900–1901, entry of 13 October 1900, f. 64). Stein made it clear to the local amban that he strongly desired to question Islam Akhun, not for punishment but for “only a full statement of the details concerning the work” (Stein 1900–1901, diary entry of 20 April 1901, f. 50).

It was not until 25 April 1901, following further explorations and excavations elsewhere, that Stein was able to meet with Islam Akhun and confront him before witnesses about the documents in question; along with Islam Akhun came a sheaf of documents found in his possession and at his home. Some had the same “unknown characters” of the documents in Hoernle’s possession, while others displayed the now-familiar patterns or “formulas” of the block prints. After vehement denials, Islam Akhun (when presented with various bits of evidence over the course of two days) eventually confessed, explaining the method of manuscript production. As Stein recounts it:

The manner of procedure was to colour sheets of paper by means of “Taghrugha,” a resinous product of the Toghrak which when dissolved in water produced a staining fluid. The sheets when properly coloured were printed with blocks

(Stein 1900–1901, diary entry of 25 April 1901, f. 54)

He supplies a few more details in *Sand-Buried Ruins*:

When the dyed sheets had been written or printed upon they were hung over fireplaces so as to receive by smoke the proper hue of antiquity. It was, no doubt, in the course of this manipulation that the sheets occasionally sustained the burns and scorplings of which some of the “old books” transmitted to Calcutta display evident marks. . . . Finally the finished manuscripts or books were treated to a liberal admixture between their pages of the fine sand of the desert, in order to make them tally with the story of their long burial.

(Stein 1903, p. 456)

Stein pressed for further details, discovering that Islam Akhun (in league with a few others) began his operation after being driven, beginning in 1894, to discover manuscripts from any of the “old towns” (which Stein points out “he did not explore and where he did not expect to get them”) and, realizing their value to “the sahibs,” he “tried to produce them in another way” (Stein 1900–1901, diary entry of 25 April 1901, ff. 55–56). The “supply chain” leading to Kashgar and, ultimately, into the hands of Hoernle (who had expressly pushed for discovery of more manuscripts)—and the British Collection—Islam Akhun specifically detailed.

Having irrefutable proof of the forgeries, Stein felt “keen satisfaction at the fact that the positive results of my explorations were sufficient to dispose once for all of these fabrications so far as scholarly interests were concerned” (Stein 1903, p. 456), but there thus remained the sensitive task of revealing the facts to Rudolf Hoernle, who would then be left to decide how he in turn would manage to retract his published declaration of the manuscripts’ authenticity without badly damaging his own reputation. Following his excavations, Stein makes clear that distinguishing the forgeries themselves was actually rather simple:

In the light of the discoveries which had rewarded my excavations at Dandan-Uiliq and Endere, and of the general experience gained during my work in the desert, it had become as easy to distinguish between Islam Akhun’s forgeries and genuine old manuscripts as it was to explode his egregious stories about the ancient sites which were supposed to have furnished his “finds.” Not only in the colour and substance of the paper, but also in arrangement, state of preservation, and a variety of other points, all genuine manuscripts show features never to be found in Islam Akhun’s productions.

(Stein 1903, p. 457)

Though not mentioning Hoernle by name, this widely-read account had to cut deeply into the pride of the premier expert on Central Asian antiquities.

Some of the correspondence between Stein and Hoernle is lost (Sims-Williams 2012, p. 3), but in a letter dated 25 May 1901, written from Kashgar, Stein pointedly informs Hoernle of the truth:

I have the fullest data to show that whatever you and others got in the way of MSS. etc. from Khotan since 1895 came through Turdi, an honest old fellow, ... or through Islam Akhun. Turdi's finds ... are genuine; whatever Islam Akhun supplied, is manufactured. ... Practically everybody in Khotan knew of the manufacture carried on by Islam Akhun & Co., but as the Sahibs appreciated the products it was neither Badruddin Khan's nor anybody else's business to represent the facts.

(cited in Sims-Williams 2012, p. 4)

Hoernle thought to destroy his first Report in an effort to save his reputation, but understood it would not be possible to retract a publication already so widely circulated; instead, he proceeded with Part II of his Report, "hoping that his readers would not compare parts 1 & 2 too closely" (Hopkirk 1980, p. 108; Sims-Williams 2012, p. 4).

6. Lockwood Kipling and *Sand-Buried Ruins of Khotan*

Stein's full account of his first expedition, *Sand-Buried Ruins of Ancient Khotan: A Personal Narrative of a Journey of Archaeological & Geographical Exploration in Chinese Turkestan, with Map*, replete with photographs that he took throughout the journey, was released in England in 1903 and was a hit; "500 copies, or two-thirds of the print-run, sold almost immediately" (Walker 1995, p. 119), leading to his celebrity. His expedition had been followed by *The Times*, so the reading public was already kept intermittently abreast of his high adventures and discoveries¹. Such articles anticipated and whet the public appetite for the full-blown account of *Sand-Buried Ruins* shortly following his safe return from the perils of the harsh and remote Taklamakan Desert.

He sent a copy of his published book as a gift to Lockwood Kipling who, in addition to his reputation as sculptor, illustrator, educator, and curator, was also an author of short stories and tales (occasionally collaborating with son Rudyard), and a journalist, with journalism being what he considered to be his true "bread and butter."² Kipling wrote widely-read pieces of social and cultural observation weekly over a twenty-five year period in three primary publications, the *Pioneer*, the *Pioneer Mail*, and the *Civil and Military Gazette*. He was therefore in a very practiced sense conscious of rhetorical style and audience. On 15 August 1903, he wrote to Stein offering feedback on *Sand-Buried Ruins* that is consistent with his mission to reach the broader public, as during his role as educator and curator:

Many thanks for the beautiful book which duly arrived this morning. I looked into it over breakfast & tiffin and found, apart from the splendid achievement of which it is a record, that it is very readable and also very good reading,—the right things observed and pleasantly touched in ... [with] that agreeable discursiveness which fascinates a reader.

Indian report writing is not a good School for popular writing, and nowadays a book to be read must be popularly written. In your place,—for the perspective of work I see ahead of you, I should decidedly cultivate that pleasant vein of observation and personal appreciation of things seen & experienced, that seems to come naturally to you.

Dry as dust archaeology is out of date entirely.

(Kipling 1900–1904, ff. 5–6)

¹ See (Wang 2002), for an overview of more than one hundred articles on Stein in *The Times*, covering 1901–1943.

² For an in-depth account of Kipling's journalism see (Kemp 2017a).

Slightly earlier, also, in another letter dated March 9 [no year cited, presumably 1902 as it is catalogued just before his letter to Stein from September 1903], Kipling wonders whether Stein might consider occasionally and selectively turning some of his expeditionary experiences into short “high adventure” accounts for popular consumption: “It is fortunate that you possess in capital training the recording, registering, and note-preserving faculty. As a means of making a little money for yourself—would there be any impropriety in your writing a few brief & popular illustrated travel & research stories—for English or American or French magazines?” In that same letter, Lockwood Kipling praises Stein’s photography, his “special gift of selection of subject & feeling for light and shade Every one of the pictures would enlarge perfectly & if you cared for that kind of thing should be commercially valuable” (Kipling 1900–1904, ff. 19–22). It should be remembered that Stein depended on external support for his expeditions, and his government position did not pay particularly well. Immediately following his remarks on the photographs in that same letter, Kipling writes, “I wish I could be of some use in furthering your exploration and archaeological intentions. If Lord Curzon, Col. Deane & Wilson can’t –why, nobody can” (Kipling 1900–1904, ff. 19–23).

Kipling’s continuing correspondence and support meant much to Stein, and Stein visited the Kiplings occasionally at their home in Tisbury during his months back in England. Kipling also on occasion continued to request from Stein copies of photographs depicting sculptural or architectural motifs that he could make use of in his own work. Further, Stein had asked that Kipling commit to a project he had in mind to commemorate one of his primary influences (aside from Alexander the Great and Xuanzang), Csoma de Körös (1784–1842), who remained a model for Stein because of his long and dedicated, arduous and ascetic explorations of Central Asia. Csoma had gotten as far as Leh, in far eastern Kashmir, looking for a way through the Karakorum to Yarkand in the Tarim Basin, but was warned back because of the extreme dangers. Stein gloried not only in Csoma’s adventures (including those through the Vale of Peshawar), but also his “ascetic life and iron determination” (cited in Mirsky 1977, p. 20), qualities which, like the archaeological methodology of Cunningham, Stein emulated and manifested in not just his first expedition, but all of his expeditions. Following Stein’s highly successful first expedition into the Taklamakan, he appealed to Lockwood Kipling to design a memorial of his Hungarian predecessor for the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in Budapest. Their Secretary-General in turn wrote directly to Kipling in September of 1904 that

It was with sincere gratification that I learned from a letter of Dr. M.A. Stein ... that you had shown interest in the proposal concerning a Körösi Csoma Memorial ... favoring us with a design or model for such a Memorial. ... [It] would be an honour for our Institution ... to secure a memorial worthy of that great scholar from the hands of an artist so distinguished as you are and so qualified.... Dr. Stein has communicated to us your ideas as to the manner in which Csoma’s bust or relief portrait might be shown in a tablet decorated with motives taken from that Graeco-Buddist art of Gandhara with which your studies in the Lahore Museum have made you so thoroughly acquainted.

(Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest 1904, ff. 30–31)

Kipling never completed the memorial, however, as he reluctantly and apologetically withdrew from the project, notifying Stein in a letter of 30 September, 1904: “I am sorely grieved that I must disappoint you in the matter of the Csoma memorial. But I have had a breakdown in health—and what is worse—in spirits—which after all are an integral part of health. ... I refrain from suggestions that might involve you & me in further disappointment” (Kipling 1900–1904, ff. 24–26).

7. Rudyard Kipling, *Sand-Buried Ruins*, the Forgery ... and ‘Dayspring Mishandled’

Stein’s account of exposing Islam Akhun was appreciated for its dramatic detail by both Lockwood and Rudyard Kipling. In a letter to Stein dated 4 September 1903, Lockwood Kipling writes: “Yesterday we entertained an artist & his wife who have had an old mill in this neighborhood turned into quite a

charming house. He does book & magazine illustration and is also,—guess—! An amateur blacksmith, and makes armour,—not quite a forger like your friend in Khotan ...” (Kipling 1900–1904, ff. 16–17).

The copy of Stein’s book he had sent to Lockwood Kipling was also taken up by his son Rudyard, who was riveted by it. By this time, Rudyard had proved a prolific and tireless author, and his international reputation had already been well established following publication of, among a host of other works, *Wee Willie Winky* (1888), *The Jungle Book* (1894, illustrated by his father); *Stalky and Company* (1899); and *Kim* (1901, also illustrated by his father). In a letter dated 1 September 1903, he writes:

Dear Dr Stein,

When I was down at the father’s the other day I retired bodily into your book of buried cities and only came out at meal-times. It was fascinating beyond words—fascinating with all the interest of a search for buried treasure Now the pater tells me that if I ask, you’ll give me a copy of it. I make haste therefore to ask—at the top of my voice, so to speak—for the book which will be to me a mine of material for the future. The story of the unmasking of the forgeries “in an unknown handwriting” must have made some curators of some museums dance with joy and I can imagine the deep joy that you took in unmasking the villain

(Kipling 1903, ff. 39–41)

Rudyard Kipling did receive a copy of the book from Stein, but did he in fact use it as a “mine of material for the future”? Evidently not, but to decide whether or not he returned to source material regarding the “unmasking of the forgeries” and “the unmasking of the villain” that so clearly registered with both him and his father, one would best turn to Kipling’s late short story, “Dayspring Mishandled” (Kipling 2011), which quite clearly has its inspirational roots in the Stein experience.

In returning to the unmasking of the forger, Kipling goes well beyond Stein (and any negative feelings Stein may have harbored against Hoernle) and develops a narrative that draws together strong, dark currents of arrogance, love, jealousy, and revenge. To briefly recast the central elements of the story, two young men named Manallace and Castorley are working in the same studio as “hack writers,” spinning out shallow short works for mass consumption. Manallace, quiet, modest, and brooding, is in love with a woman in the same studio whose husband wronged her and has left her ... but she is unable to stop longing for him. Castorley also has feelings for her, and he proposes to her ... but is refused. He thus leaves the studio and before long develops a rising reputation in critical circles as a Chaucer scholar ... in fact, eventually, as *the* Chaucer expert in not only Britain but across all of Europe.

During the War, Manallace and Castorley are placed coincidentally in the same department and, faced with an imminent air raid, share some secrets and experiences. “Manallace spoke of Vidal’s mother [their shared love interest, who had died recently in Manallace’s arms, paralyzed, as he cared for her], and Castorley said something in reply” that deeply disturbs Manallace and spurs him to determined revenge (Kipling 2011, pp. 508–9). Manallace’s “real life work” begins in that moment: to somehow take Castorley down.

Castorley is depicted as a competitive, brash, untrustworthy, self-promoting individual who is focused principally and by any means on making himself “Supreme Pontiff on Chaucer,” which he in fact accomplishes, “crowing unchallenged from Upsala to Seville” (Kipling 2011, p. 509). Manallace plays along as a seeming admirer, often accompanying Castorley and listening closely at his feet as he holds forth on Chaucer and on the scribes who copied out his original manuscripts:

He was shameless ... as regarded self-advertisement and ‘recognition’—weaving elaborate intrigues, ... fawning, snubbing, lecturing, organizing, and lying as unrestingly as a politician, in chase of the Knighthood due not to him (he always called on his Maker to forbid such a thought) but as a tribute to Chaucer. Yet, sometimes, he would break away from his obsession and ... tell us charmingly of copyists from the fifteenth century in England and

the Low Countries, who had multiplied the Chaucer MSS, of which there remained—he gave us the exact number—and how each scribe could by him (and, he implied, by him alone) be distinguished from every other by some peculiarity of letter-formation, spacing or like trick of pen-work; and how he could fix the dates of their work within five years.

(p. 509)

Before long, a previously undiscovered fragment of *The Canterbury Tales* is discovered pasted as a support to the inside back cover of an old Bible, and is then sent to Castorley for evaluation and authentication³. Of *course* it is sent to Castorley (he insists) since he is known to be *the* most reputable scholar in the discipline:

It was news on an international scale. . . . Yes [Castorley] said, it was all true. He had, of course, been in it from the first. There had been one hundred and seven new lines of Chaucer [discovered], . . . the whole the work of Abraham Mentzius, better known as Mentzel of Antwerp (1388–1438/9)—I might remember he had talked about him—whose distinguishing peculiarities were a certain Byzantine formation of his g's, the use of a 'sickle-slanted' reed pen, which cut into the vellum at certain letters, and above all, a tendency to spell English words on Dutch lines, whereof the manuscript carried one convincing proof.

(pp. 510–11)

"They didn't know what to make of the thing at first. But they knew about *me*! They kept quiet till I had been consulted" (p. 511). Castorley goes on to detail the forensic evidence that convinced him of the manuscript's authenticity:

I had it steamed open and analyzed the wash. It gave the flour-grains in the paste—coarse, because of the old millstone—and there were traces of the grit itself. . . . I took a wash, for analysis, from a blot in one corner . . . and I got the actual *ink* of the period! It's a practically eternal stuff compounded on . . . hawthorn bark and wine. . . . taken with all the other testimony, it clinches the thing. (You'll see it all in my Statement to the Press on Monday.) Overwhelming, isn't it?

(p. 511)

Castorley's Statement is published, and in emphatically declaring the fragment's authenticity, he "left himself no loophole" (p. 513).

The narrator then learns secretly from Manallace that he is the forger. His intent is to wait patiently until Castorley "gets his Knighthood," then reveal how he went about fooling the great scholar. Why? Because of whatever Castorley had said about what he may have said or done to the woman Manallace had loved so dearly and cared for until her death. But how had he managed the forgery? Manallace details his methods, all drawn from learning the materials and techniques of the medieval scribes Castorley boasted to know so much about. He had grown the wheat in his own garden, ground it on an old millstone according to tradition, brewed the ink from hawthorn bark and wine (after numerous trials and errors), laboriously and repeatedly studied a manuscript in the British Museum to copy Mentzel's handwriting and "Byzantine g's," located an old sheet of vellum, cut the

³ By way of additional context, and perhaps extending to the network of inspirational links in the Stein-Kipling nexus (pertaining to this particular short story), consider "Alice Kipling: Pre-Raphaelite Sister of the Raj" by Barbara Bryant (2017). Alice Kipling (Lockwood's wife), at the time Alice Macdonald, was closely involved as a poet with the Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood in England, particularly Edward Burne-Jones, John Ruskin, and Dante Gabriel Rossetti. It was Lockwood Kipling's introduction to them...through Alice...that led him to William Morris and John Ruskin (and the arts and Crafts movement). Alice became involved in assisting with decorating the newly constructed home of William Morris (the "Red House," 1859–1860) which he wanted to "imbue with the medieval spirit he so admired in Sir Thomas Mallory and Geoffrey Chaucer" (p. 330). On the walls of Red House hangs a large embroidered panel attributed to her, inspired by Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*.

reed to specification, etc.—all with a mind to deceiving the expert, seeing him publish (broadly and loudly) on the manuscript’s authenticity, and then exposing the forgery and thereby spectacularly deflating his reputation.

In this Henry Jamesian story filled with implication, suspicions, and subterfuge, the exposure of the forgery never materializes, however, because of Manallace’s psychological tug of war with another character (Castorley’s wife), who is also interested in hastening Castorley’s demise, and therefore—by innuendo—urges Manallace on. While a masterful psychological tale, further analysis of it would be outside the bounds of this study. Instead, more to the (immediate) point, it stands that the foundational source material for Kipling’s short story is all there in Stein’s account: the foremost international expert to whom a curious manuscript fragment is (“of course”) brought; this most preeminent scholar who then pronounces on and publishes his commitment to the authenticity of the forgery; the potential, therefore, for the leading scholar to be humiliated once the forgery is revealed; potentially, at least, the expert’s mistaken judgment following from the urge for further “recognition”; the details of how the manuscript is “cooked up” in what amounts to a backyard workshop. Certainly, Rudolf Hoernle (with whom Stein maintained a sound [if strained] professional relationship after the Islam Akhun debacle) is not well-reflected in the *personality* of Castorley, but the basic events and potential for humiliation via the broadcast misidentification of the forgery sufficiently inform the narrative that had earlier struck Kipling so strongly.

8. Conclusions

Aurel Stein’s biographers, Annabel Walker and Jeannette Mirsky, make brief reference to the affiliation of Stein and the Kiplings. While Walker gives a bit more attention than does Jeanette Mirsky to the mentorship provided to Aurel Stein by Lockwood Kipling, both abbreviated characterizations excite curiosity and invite a closer consideration of what then emerges as the extended, reciprocally supportive relationship between the two, and the creative spark that extended then as well to Rudyard Kipling. The way in which their paths converged and then fueled each other at such a critical juncture—as Chinese Turkestan was opening more widely for exploration—inspired an exchange of ideas, criticism, and support focused on art, history, photography, and writing. During the earlier years of Aurel Stein’s career as archaeological explorer, the Stein/Kipling dynamic opens a window on to an intriguing synthesis of influences.

Funding: Some of the research for this paper was funded by the Embry-Riddle Faculty Research Development fund. Grants supported travel to collections in 2016 and 2018.

Acknowledgments: The author is grateful for support provided by the Embry-Riddle Faculty Research Development Grant fund for travel to the Stein collections at the British Museum and British Library (2016) and to the Stein collection of letters, diaries, and field notes held at Oxford University’s Bodleian Library (2018).

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflicts of interest in the presentation of this paper.

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