Skrine at Kashgar

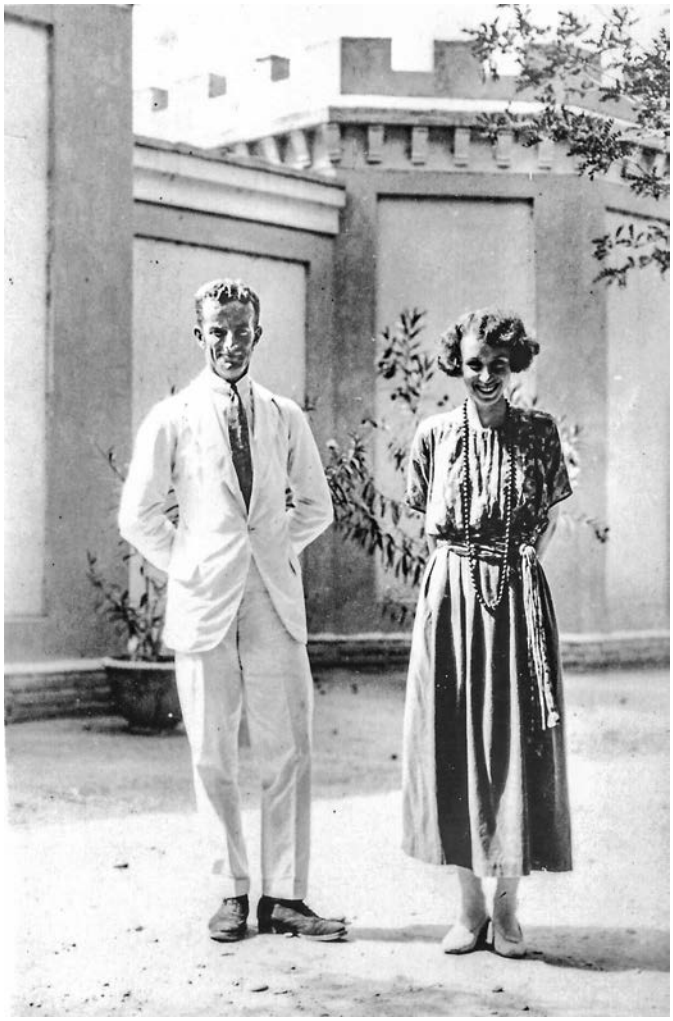
A History in Documents



Edited and annotated
by
Daniel C. Waugh

Skrine at Kashgar:
Life, Exploration and Intrigue at an Outpost of Empire

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Clarmont and Doris Skrine at the Chini Bagh,
the British consulate in Kashgar, 23 July 1923
(Photograph by General Sir Robert Pigot)

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Appendices include his *Etherton at Kashgar* (2007)

Seattle

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This documentary history of the British Consul-General Clarmont P. Skrine's service in Kashgar (Xinjiang, China) in 1922-24 draws on his previously unpublished letters, reports and photographs in British archives. The book includes an analytical introduction, edited and annotated letters (in the first instance, his regular correspondence with his mother) and selected reports to the Government of India that illustrate his professional responsibilities to defend the interests of British subjects in China and his collection of political intelligence regarding what was perceived as a threat by Soviet Russia to British interests in the subcontinent. The material complements his own, airbrushed account of his experience (*Chinese Central Asia* [1925]), self-censored so as not to violate the regulations of the Indian Civil Service. Skrine traveled widely in Kashgaria, the area of his appointment, and apart from his official functions contributed to the exploration and photo documentation of regions and local culture still relatively little known to Europeans. One of his correspondents – the letters included here – was Sir Aurel Stein, known for his exploration and archaeological work in Xinjiang. To facilitate future cataloguing, appendices to the book include chronological tabulations of Skrine's photos and his wife Doris's drawings, and the descriptive listings he compiled for his collection. A second appendix focuses on the impact in more recent decades of his explorations in the Pamir mountains south of Kashgar, including a long solo trek by the editor of this volume and important contributions by Russian alpinists. A third appendix reprints the current editor's essay on Skrine's predecessor in Kashgar, P. T. Etherton, that study still the most substantial analysis of Etherton's career there. The book provides insights into a wide range of topics: the lives of British Indian government officials in remote postings; the so-called "Great Game" rivalry between Britain and Russia; Chinese administration in Xinjiang; the culture of the Uyghurs and Kyrgyz of Xinjiang; European exploration and mapping; and the construction of descriptive narrative in the colonial era. Over 360 photographs and maps complement the edited texts.



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Preface

Clarmont Percival Skrine (1888-1974) served as British Consul-General in Kashgar, Xinjiang (China) for slightly more than two years in 1922-24 and published his own account of what he termed *Chinese Central Asia* in 1925 after his return to Britain on leave. Largely a descriptive account of travel, geography and customs, that book, several times reprinted, still shapes most perceptions of what Skrine actually did in Kashgaria even if in many ways it tells only part of the story. The present book, published on the hundredth anniversary of Skrine's book overlaps with and complements his but includes as well much which he left unsaid given the limited goals he set for it in 1925. Ours is a 'history in documents,' in the first instance Skrine's regular letters home, but inter-spliced with other letters, selections from his unpublished field diary, and selections from his official reports. While it would be wrong to attach undue importance to what he accomplished in his two years in Kashgar, the material does offer a great deal that might interest general readers as well as academics who write on Central Asia in the early 1920s.

My decision to produce this book is in the first instance a very personal one. Skrine first came to my attention as an undergraduate, when a professor recommended *Chinese Central Asia* to me. It was only decades later in 1995 that I 're-discovered' Skrine, when I had enjoyed the opportunity to travel on a mountain bike from Kyrgyzstan to Kashgar and then down the Karakoram Highway into Pakistan, part of that route following Skrine's own on his travel to and from Kashgar in 1922 and 1924. Inspired to return the following year, I arranged a solo hike in the mountains south of Kashgar, with the guidance of Skrine's own account of his pioneering exploration of those mountains which he published in the journal of the Royal Geographical Society in 1925. The map drawn up by the Survey of India based on his observations was the best map I could find on which to plan a route.

That experience persuaded me to think more seriously about going beyond Skrine's publications to learn what else he wrote about his experiences in Kashgaria (the generic term for the regions of western Xinjiang that included the major city, Kashgar). I discovered that the Skrine papers were on deposit in the Oriental and India Office Library (part of the British Library in London), where my inquiry then led to my contacting John Stewart, the first cousin once removed of Clarmont Skrine's mother Helen who was the executor of his estate and had recently used the papers as the basis for a biography of Skrine, *Envoy of the Raj*. Stewart's book, still the only biography of Skrine, follows closely the trove of correspondence. Since it encompasses all of his life up through to his retirement, the chapters devoted to his time in Kashgar necessarily condense his experience there. Stewart is an admiring biographer but at the same time very perceptive in what he reveals about his subject. *Envoy of the Raj* is my primary source of information for Skrine's biography beyond just the Kashgar years, even though my interpretations based on much the same material mined by Stewart may differ from his conclusions. We are indebted to Stewart for highlighting what by any estimate was a distinguished career of a skilled administrator and consummate diplomat.

John Stewart cordially invited me to Comrie in Perthshire (my first visit to the Scotland from which my paternal ancestors came), insisted on providing accommodations for me at the local inn, and let me loose to explore what remained in the family's possession that had not been placed on long-term deposit in the Skrine archive at the British Library. John also arranged for me to visit the Stewart relatives at Ardvorlich, the family estate not far from Comrie on Loch Earn, where Clarmont had spent much of his early years with his grandparents. I regret that John Stewart did not live to see the result of his encouragement and support, as he suffered a stroke and died a few years after my visit to Comrie.

Apart from work in the Skrine archive at the British Library, which includes his letters, various drafts of his reports and a many of his photographs, I spent time searching in the yet imperfectly catalogued photo archive of the Royal Geographical Society to try to locate Skrine's photographs. Work on the material resulted in several papers and articles – on my exploration in the mountains in his tracks, on his photography and on the economic data he collected. My most substantial piece to date is a long essay on his predecessor as Consul in Kashgar, Percy Etherton, who has frequently been hailed as one of the great heroes of the 'Great Game' struggle between Britain and Russia for control of Central Asia. Teaching a seminar on the Great Game in my final years before retirement in 2006 led me back to Skrine, via Etherton.

Skrine went to Kashgar initially just for a year, as the temporary replacement for Etherton, who went on leave. On arrival at the consulate, where he began to try to put some order in the financial records, Skrine uncovered what he saw to be financial misdeeds by Etherton. Very quickly he found many other reasons to dislike Etherton; so Skrine's letters are full of invective about him. Skrine's investigations convinced the Government of India not to allow Etherton to return to Kashgar. Whether we should totally reject Etherton's own claims about his accomplishments, is, however, a good question, which I will take up later. The re-examination of Etherton's activities in Kashgar raises interesting questions about continuities in the policies and actions of his predecessor, George Macartney, and his successor, Clarmont Skrine. With that perspective, Skrine's accomplishments appear to have been substantial, contrary to the impression some have had based mainly on a reading of his own book.

Before returning to my Skrine project recently, more than a decade had elapsed, due to other commitments. With life getting no longer, I decided it was time to finish the book, even if it may leave many loose threads. My personal interest here in a number of topics now extends beyond those which first prompted me to study him.

At the center of this book is the person and personality of Skrine himself and what we learn about his relations with his parents and with his wife Doris, who accompanied him to Kashgar. Skrine's letters to his mother, dutifully written almost every week in time for the mails, are an impressive tribute to a close and open relationship. They are not laconic billets-doux (such as those which Frederick Bailey of 'Mission to Tashkent' fame would send his mother), but usually long, consciously literary essays on what he and Doris were doing and seeing, often with extended summaries of material that otherwise he would write only into his confidential official reports. While we might question to what degree there is artifice and dissimulation in the letters, I see in them for the most part an unvarnished and immediate reflection of material which, when massaged later for his book, was subjected to extensive re-writing and self-censorship. One may not always admire the Skrine of these letters, but they are essential for any attempt to understand what he did in Kashgar and why. The letters reveal him as principled, priggish, opinionated, and self-assured. But there is more: he is self-critical, often indulges in contorted self-justification; he is obsessional, caring about family, generous at the same time that he is penny-pinching.

In short, he has all the contradictions we would expect of a human being. His relationship with his father, preserved in a few letters, is rather different from that with his mother: not unexpectedly, it is a bit stiffer and more formal. When Skrine was young, his father was his preceptor, shaped his education, instilled in the boy a set of rigid standards; even in his 30s while in Kashgar, Skrine sought his advice on professional matters, and, I would argue, labored under the burden of trying to live up to his father's expectations. Skrine's correspondence with his parents reveals a great many areas of shared interest – his father had preceded him in Indian Civil Service and his parents had married in India. The family had traveled together in Europe a great deal. Their social circle included many others who had experience or interest in Asia. They enjoyed many of the same books and shared in the appreciation of art. They were proud of their Scottish roots and values.

Unfortunately, we do not have the letters his mother wrote during the Kashgar years – what we know of their content is only from Clarmont's responses. Nor do we have Doris Skrine's letters (with one or two exceptions), which is a great loss, since she was able to move freely in female company in Kashgar and clearly must have been a close observer of the part of society closed off to her husband. Learning about Doris from Clarmont's letters is, of course, problematic, but I think we can arrive at some understanding of their relationship which helps to provide context for the two years in Kashgar. In later years they grew apart; while there is some risk in the process, we can identify some of the issues even in the largely happy early years of the marriage.

Even though it may be unfashionable in our age of political correctness and post-colonial academic discourse, I enjoy reading about the British Raj. I am not embarrassed to admit I like Kipling's stories, for example, and as at least some sober historians remind us, there can be a great deal to admire in the ethos and practice of those who ruled British India. The obsessional dislike Skrine developed toward his Vice Consul Harold Harding and Percy Etherton derives in the first instance from his holding them up to an ideal of conduct that was to be expected of His Majesty's representatives. Obviously to focus on this is not to write a history of those whom the British ruled, but we certainly can learn from Skrine's Kashgar writings a great deal about the world view of a very competent member of the Indian Civil Service, whether or not we are inclined to like all that we find. The social pretensions and the material environment which the officials and families of the Raj wrapped around themselves are of some interest to study, as are the mores, which Kipling, of course, was quite delighted to skewer.

There is also a lot here to provide insights into the communication and intelligence networks and the administrative organization and priorities of the British Government of India in the more remote outposts which were under its purview. The Kashgar consulate was one of them, of difficult access from British India with poor communications, yet surprisingly well connected, it seems. One of Skrine's lectures on his return from Kashgar was an overview of the routes to Kashgar, and among his official services was to provide the Government of India with new data on routes into and through Central Asia which could be incorporated into the confidential route book published in Simla. I personally am very interested in communications in a region where in many regards not much had changed in the centuries following the flourishing of the 'silk roads' that passed through Kashgar. In my limited way, by following in Skrine's footsteps in the mountains, I have gained a first-hand perspective on some of the conditions he encountered the better part of a century before me. While there may have been basic principles (many unwritten) to which the consul in Kashgar should subscribe and international agreements which he was obliged to observe, in many ways he had to exercise independent judgment, devise often ad hoc means to accomplish important tasks and be able to respond effectively to crises

without waiting for instructions from his superiors.

The social and political context for the British Consul's activity in Kashgaria was complex and of some interest to study. While Skrine was there, in many ways the consulate was the focal point of the social life of the small European community in Kashgar. It was no longer in the shadow of the Russian consulate, which had closed at the time of the Russian Revolution and would not re-open (under Soviet control) until 1925. There was, however, a 'White' Russian community, and a sizeable Swedish Church Mission that had outposts in several of the towns of Kashgaria. Europeans who passed through for various reasons frequently were put up at the consulate. Immediately on arriving in Kashgar, the Skrines were thrown into a social whirl, which involved attending and hosting elaborate meals attended both by the Europeans and important local Chinese officials. Even if the transportation of supplies deemed necessary for maintaining an appropriate cultural presence was difficult, we have to be amazed at the degree to which it was possible to provide many of the comforts of home, to have on hand delicacies from a renowned purveyor such as Fortnum and Mason's in London, to have small gifts shipped in time for Christmas, etc. To our eyes, some of the light entertainments (silly parlor or lawn games) in which not only the Europeans but also the consular staff and local dignitaries participated may seem rather bizarre affairs, but they seem to have been part and parcel of what British consulates elsewhere in Asia provided.

Of course an important aspect of the consul's obligations involved frequent contacts, both socially and for official business, with local officials and at least the elite members of the local community. When we encounter some of what today would be deemed demeaning language in Skrine's descriptions of the non-Europeans, we should keep in mind, first, that he could be equally blunt in his assessments of Europeans and colleagues, and second, that the use of terms such as 'Chink' was common in his time. In neither case did it mean he could not engage with the individuals socially, develop relationships of trust, admire them for their character and ability. He could on the one hand compliment and enjoy someone's company at the same time that he might in his official capacity be fighting tooth and nail with the same person while settling a judicial dispute. One of the local administrators he seems to have liked is also one whose removal by the higher administrative authorities Skrine helped engineer.

One of the major rationales for the existence of the consulate was the presence in Xinjiang of at least several hundred British subjects and their families. These were primarily merchants, both Muslim and Hindu, some of them long-term residents in Kashgaria. The elected heads (*aqsakals*) of the local 'British subject' communities were important contacts who provided the consuls with information, hosted them on visits, and helped in the dealings with other members of the British subject community. Economic and other legal disputes between the British subjects and others in the towns required the intervention of the consul in situations where more often than not, the Chinese officials were not dispensing justice evenhandedly. So there is a lot here to be learned about the actual functioning of the consulate within the framework of Chinese provincial administration and what to a degree there were autonomous local entities.

Diplomatic missions around the world also are important outposts for gathering intelligence. To a considerable degree, Etherton's prominence in the narratives of the Great Game emphasize that aspect of his activity and the counter-intelligence activity he claimed to have undertaken. Related to this intelligence activity were efforts to encourage the local administrators to adopt 'pro-British' policies. Skrine seems to have been forthright in describing the degree to which his sources of intelligence were likely to be accurate. Like Etherton, he clearly cultivated useful contacts who provided otherwise

confidential information. Very likely what he tells us about what was going on in Kashgaria was more reliable than what he could glean from agents and merchants who crossed the borders in and out of Soviet Central Asia, but undoubtedly the same might be said for Etherton's intelligence effort. Unlike his predecessor, Skrine seems to have arrived at an appreciation of the fact that the Chinese administration in Xinjiang was an often effective player in the game and set the limits as to what the foreign contenders for influence could hope to achieve. Ultimately, in his opinion, the Chinese authorities did what was in their self-interest. In considering these issues, we are limited by the possible distortions of the British lens. The only way we can hope to arrive at a full and accurate assessment of the political activity of the British consuls would be to explore material in Russian and Chinese archives, a task I must leave for others.

Consular officials often took a serious interest in local culture. A classic example is the first Russian consul in Kashgar, Nikolai Petrovskii, known for his bullying of the local officials, but also for his very active efforts to collect antiquities. The Kashgar consulates hosted and supported the activity of explorers and scholars who were beginning to describe the geography and document the history of these parts of Asia that had previously been largely terra incognita to Europeans. When Skrine set out for Kashgar, he hoped to gain at least a modicum of credit for contributions to that exploration, inspired in particular by the accomplishments of Sir Aurel Stein, who had done important mapping and extensively documented ancient sites at which he undertook archaeological excavation. Skrine thus brushed up his mapping skills in the offices of the Survey of India, and maintained a correspondence with Stein. It is interesting to see the results of this enthusiasm, some of it undoubtedly amateurish, but nonetheless some indeed contributing to filling in blank spots on the map, in particular in the mountains south of Kashgar. Thanks to Skrine, some of the Central Asian antiquities being collected locally were sent to India; on his return to London, he donated others to the British Museum. He was very interested in local folklore, collecting and translating songs and aphorisms at a time when such collections still were quite limited.

Given the rather large body of European accounts of travel and exploration in Xinjiang, Skrine's accomplishments in describing local cultures (especially the Kyrgyz in the foothills and mountains of Kashgaria) may offer little that cannot be found in other sources. However, the limited degree to which field work has been possible in some of those same regions may mean that we should attach greater value to what he recorded in areas not previously or subsequently visited and described by Europeans.

In using such material for social and cultural anthropology, of course one of the first tasks we face with any such accounts by outsiders is to critique the source of our information. While there is a growing literature on how to deconstruct travel accounts, apart from their obvious biases I think still too little has been done to compare the final (usually published) versions with their sources and thus uncover the ways in which those accounts were constructed.[1] In this regard, Skrine's material offers an excellent case study, since he drew heavily on his letters home and his field diary when writing his own book. He tells us a great deal about what he set as his goals in the book, and we can see how self-censorship and literary considerations influenced the result. Of course once we have established his sources and how he actually used them, they too invite deconstruction. Unlike many others who wrote about their travels, he

1. An example of the post-modern deconstructionist approach to analyzing 'colonial discourse', 'othering' of the subjects, etc. is the M.A. thesis by Tania Dolphin, "The Discoursive Construction of Hunza, Pakistan, in Travel Writing 1889-1999" (Carleton University, 2000). Skrine's book was not one of her examples, but she would have had a field day with him. She did discuss Etherton's adventure tale which he published in 1911 (see her pp. 157-165, 167-177), even though apparently she had little interest in his biography beyond that book.

was constrained by his employment in British India, which forbade the publication of material deemed politically sensitive. He sought permission to publish and then submitted his manuscript for approval before it appeared in print. His publisher (Methuen) wanted a travel book from him, and that is largely what he provided, illustrated with some of his best photographs, and deepened by additional reading and research he undertook once back in England. Starting back in his school years, he had learned how to write often colorful and entertaining prose. Some of that characterized his official reports, and much more of it is to be found in his letters. He continually reminds us he re-wrote everything; one result then may have been to give the impression his field observations were less than serious. Using Skrine as an example, I would argue his material is of value for those who enjoy reading and may undertake scholarly analysis of travel narratives.

Since my aim here is not to write a comprehensive history of the Kashgar consulate under Skrine, replicate what John Stewart wrote in his biography, or merely repeat what Skrine himself published in his *Chinese Central Asia*, I have decided on a 'history in documents', letting Skrine (and occasionally others) create a narrative more or less in chronological order starting from his final preparations to leave for Kashgar in 1922 and covering through his return to India in 1924 and his working up of the Kashgar material for public lectures and publications. Much of the material is in his letters to his mother, but interspersed are excerpts from various official reports, fleshing out the picture of what he was doing in his official capacity in Kashgar. Naturally my selection reflects my personal interests as outlined in this preface, but I have attempted to provide examples of the whole range of the subjects on which he wrote to his superiors and indicate the ways in which he acquired information and communicated it. There is a certain amount of overlap amongst these sources, but I have edited out much of the repetition. If he writes in some detail to his mother about events he also reports in the official diaries, I include the former, but not the latter. In many instances, it seemed best just to summarize some portion of an official report in my own words rather than quote it. I have also edited out of the letters a lot of passages with references to family members back home in Scotland who have no direct relevance to the Kashgar experience. For some readers, I may have kept a bit too much of his frequently repetitive complaints about individuals such as Harding and Etherton, but I feel it is important to lay out rather fully this material, especially on the latter, since it is essential for any inquiry into the history of the consulate following the retirement of George Macartney in 1917.

My book can, I trust, be read independently of Skrine's own book, though I should emphasize that in the latter he often arranges material topically and in the process may add details not found in the letters and documents of the present volume. In a few instances, I quote from *Chinese Central Asia*, but I have resisted the temptation to cull from it every detail not found in the present collection. There remains, however, a substantial overlap between his book and mine, since at the core they involve the use of the same sources.

My introduction includes a brief biography of Skrine and analyzes what we learn about specific subjects from the documents. To provide connecting tissue between the various documents which follow, I have added in many cases short introductions, and identifications or supplementary materials in the occasional footnote. I assume for those not familiar with some traditional British 'institutions' or Anglo-Indian vocabulary, explanations may be helpful. Given the publication of this book only in electronic format, which is readily searchable online, I have not compiled an index.

Just as Skrine himself deemed his photographs to be an important supplement to his narrative, I have included a generous selection of those images. Some are ones familiar from his own publications; others

are less known, even previously unpublished. As appropriate, I have supplemented his photographs with many of my own and some taken by others. In several of his letters, he provided sketch maps to illustrate his travels in Kashgaria or other drawings, most of which I have included here. Also, I have included the evocative drawings done by Doris Skrine.

The appendices provide several kinds of supplementary material. Appendix 1a is documentation to assist in the still desirable analysis and cataloguing of Skrine's photos. Appendix 1b is a tabulation of Doris Skrine's drawings. Appendx 1c is the formal assessment of the botanical specimens he brought back from Kashgaria. Appendix 1d is his partial draft translation of a hagiographic text he collected recounting the activity of one of the Sufi imams who were responsible for the conversion of Central Asians to Islam. Appendix 2 is a somewhat self-indulgent analysis (since it includes extensive quotations from my personal diary recording my travels 'in the footsteps of Skrine') of the importance of Skrine's explorations in the mountains south of Kashgar and the influence he had on subsequent exploration of that area. I have illustrated this with both his photos and those taken in the same area by others who have hiked and climbed in that region. Appendix 3 is a reprint of my 2007 essay on Skrine's predecessor at Kashgar, Percy Etherton, a subject still demanding additional study. This should make my reassessment of Etherton easily accessible for those who may wish to study what the British consuls in Kashgar actually achieved.

The sources and my editorial conventions in their publication.

The Skrine archive is on permanent deposit in the British Library India Office Library and Records (IOLR) collection under the shelf mark MSS EurF 154, with the photographs separately catalogued as Photo 920/1. Photographs in the collection of the Royal Geographical Society have various shelf marks; many of them have not yet been catalogued individually. The family letters for the period covering his time in Kashgar are in MSS EurF 154/8, 154/9 and 154/10. Letters to his mother are for the most part handwritten, though he occasionally typed them when he was short on time and could get access to the machine. His 'Field Diary' is MSS EurF 154/43. My draft transcriptions have been done from microfilms but then checked against the originals. Also of importance are the materials in EurF154/39, 'Drafts & copies of C. P. Skrine's official and demi-official despatches and reports about Kashgar; also copies of official and demi-official correspondence 1922-24'. I have consulted a number of the other India Office files, listed in my bibliography, even if not quoting sections of them. For his monthly diary reports, while I have looked at several drafts, I quote from the versions printed for official circulation in India and collected in the India Office in London as BL IOLR L/P&S/10/976, a file which includes the minute papers with the comments of the India Office experts who were reading the Kashgar reports.

In writing to his mother Helen, with only the rarest exceptions, Clarmont addresses her as 'Darling Mum,' and concludes with 'Your loving son Clarmont.' I have not included those salutations and closings for her letters. Letters to or from others retain here the salutations; in general my introductory notes for individual documents will specify the source if other than a letter to his mother. Skrine almost always gives his dates in the form of, e.g., 11.3.22; but to avoid confusion, I spell them out, thus 11 March 1922. He frequently uses abbreviations, where, as appropriate, I have spelled them out, bracketing the inserted letters (e.g., P[ublic] W[orks] D[epartment]). I do not, however, spell out his shorthand references to his wife, Doris, who is 'D', his father, who is 'F' or his in-laws, 'Mr./Mrs. Jim.' In passages where he refers several times to an individual, title or institution, after spelling out the first reference I generally just leave his abbreviation by the initial letter. In the annotation, I refer to Skrine's own book,

Chinese Central Asia, as *CCA*; my other citations to works included in the Selected Bibliography for the most part use the form [author name, date of publication]. URLs are not hyperlinked; if pasted into a browser they may need checking to ensure there are no added spaces. The spelling of foreign words and place names in the documents (not always consistent) follows the originals, but in occasional notes as necessary I provide modern equivalents, which I also prefer in my commentary. I trust most readers will recognize that Tashkend is Tashkent. Kashgar is preferable to the current Kashi; Sinkiang and Hsinkiang are today's Xinjiang; Peking is today's Beijing; Urumchi is Urumqi; the big mountain Kongur is also, in Skrine's writings, Qungur or Kungur; his Kirghiz are Kyrgyz, *aksakal* is *aqsakal*, etc.

Among the documents here is what I term his Field Diary (abbreviated as *FD*), a bound ledger whose first entry comes about a year after he had arrived in Kashgar. At the end are notes he took on some reading, possibly after he had returned home. There may well have been an earlier volume of the Field Diary, but if so, it seems not to have survived, possibly because he re-wrote so much of the material in it that covered his trip up to Kashgar from India. Often the Field Diary contains interesting detail which did not make it into the letters home but which fleshes out some section of those letters. In such cases, I have inserted in brackets within the letters the selections from the *FD*, set off in brackets and also identified by the use of a different type face. For example:

> We have had a patchy journey en regards pleasantness, some of it delightful, other parts less so. [*FD, p. 2:* Sept. 4th. Five miles above Sughum Karaul is a tiny shrine [...]

Quotations from the Field Diary which are reproduced as separate entries below are also distinguished from the letters and other reports by use of that same font.

My editorial notes introducing individual entries or occasionally inserted within the texts themselves are printed in Italic and also set off by brackets. My editorial omissions are marked by an ellipsis in brackets ([...]). In transcribing Skrine's writings, without any special marking I have made occasional editorial changes, such as different punctuation or correction of slips such as typos.

Acknowledgements

My debts incurred while working on this book are numerous. I might start by thanking Firuz Kazemzadeh, who inspired my undergraduate imagination about the 'Great Game' in his course on Russian Imperial Expansion and first suggested I read Skrine's book. I owe a debt to my former student, one-time boss (in her capacity as the organizer of REI Expeditions) and also collaborator in a somewhat analogous project, Frith Maier, who provided the opportunity for me to lead the bike trip that brought me to Skrine's Kashgaria for the first time. I lament the passing of Andrei Aleksandrovich Ershov (1956-2016), who hosted me in St. Petersburg and organized my travel to Xinjiang and the successful climb of Mustagh Ata on which we shared a tent in 1996.

I have acknowledged above the kindness of John Stewart as I began to work seriously on the book. He generously provided permission for me to publish from the Skrine archive, and that permission has now been extended by his daughters Helen Holland and Robin Moore, the current holders of the copyright. Helen's hospitality at her home in Oxford has been greatly appreciated. I still have fond memories of my brief visit to Ardvorlich, where Sandy and Virginia Stewart hosted me for lunch; since then I have kept them informed of my progress on the project. In Oxford, the now late Leonard Pepper kindly shared with me his transcription of Harold Harding's narrative of his travel to Kashgar in 1922 (it was published there by the Swedish Mission Press) and an unpublished study of Harding and his career which I cite below. Also, I am grateful to Pamela Nightingale in Oxford for sharing

with me her experience of writing a substantial part of Skrine's last book, on Macartney's consulate in Kashgar, after Skrine, disabled by a stroke, could not complete the project. On my first venture into the Photo Archives of the Royal Geographical Society, Joanna Scadden's support and confidence that she could turn me loose there was hugely helpful (this was before the construction of the new wing housing the library and archive); I have also benefitted from John Falconer's expertise in his responsibility for the photo collections of the British Library. My former student, Justin Jacobs, now a recognized expert on Xinjiang in the 20th century, helped me years ago in summarizing a book in Chinese related to this project, has critiqued my drafts and has provided me with correct renderings of Chinese place and personal names in addition to some biographical information on those individuals. At my request, my colleague Hamit Zakir devoted considerable time to reviewing and commenting on Skrine's transcriptions of Uyghur folklore. The Bodleian Library at the University of Oxford, The Royal Geographical Society and The British Library have generously granted me permission to reproduce materials in their collections. Apart from Skrine's own photos, drawn from both published and unpublished sources, I have included images available open access from the Swedish Missionary Archives, as posted from the Etnografiska Museet in Stockholm. In addition, several colleagues have generously shared their photos and materials: Andrei Aleksandrovich Lebedev (who has allowed me to quote and use images from his valuable pages on mountain exploration), Andrei Ershov, Michael Richter, David MacGregor and Hermann Kreutzmann. Others who have been so kind to respond to my queries and provide information are Dr. David St. Pierre Bunbury (1926-2013), Desmond Devitt, H. L. Basil Etherton, Kimberley John Lindsay, Otto Guramovich Chkhetiani, Victor Mair, Lori Selover Zaviski, Melanie King, and Tess Neighbor. The staff of the University of Washington library have ensured that I could obtain materials not its own collection and have made possible the publication of the book on-line. None of these individuals or institutions bear responsibility for any errors of commission or omission by the editor.

My ventures in Skrine's footsteps in Central Asia and my subsequent absorption with the research and writing would have been impossible without the support of my wife, Charlotte Green.

I dedicate the book to the memory of my mother, Adelaide (Ricky) Smith Waugh (1905-1994), a younger contemporary of Doris Skrine's. A resourceful and accomplished woman, Mother could have mastered the skills of hosting Kashgar society, although perhaps not enjoying the challenges. As a skilled and venturesome equestrienne, she certainly would have delighted in riding on a horse, yak or camel while exploring Kashgaria.

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For economy of space, I have used the following abbreviations here: CPS = Clarmont Percival Skrine; HSS = Helen Stewart Skrine; *CCA* 1925 = Skrine, *Chinese Central Asia* (1925); *GJ* 1925a = Skrine, "The Alps of Qungur"; and *HJ* XVII (1952) = Skrine, "Shiwakte". References to others' publications of Skrine's photos are by author or title of the work in which they appeared. Full citations are in the bibliography.

Front cover (details in listing below), images reproduced with permission from the British Library Collection: IOLR Photo 920/1, unn. neg [Fig. 130]; Photo 920/1 (104) [Frontispiece]; Photo 920/1 (25) [Fig. 178]; CPS to HSS, 30 July 1924, IOLR MSS EurF 154/10 [Fig. 181]; L/P&S/10/949. P2713/1923, fol. 210 [reproduced below p. 276].

Back cover: Mt. Kongur from the west, telephoto taken from the Karakorum Highway beyond Lake Karakul in 1995; DW with the Kyrgyz of the Kaying Valley, 1996 (photos: DW).

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Fig. 87. The Swedish orphanage at Yarkand, as photographed by the missionary John Törnquist (Public domain, Image no. 0964.8842, https://collections.smvk.se/carlotta-em/web/object/26013263; img. No. 0937.0327, https://collections.smvk.se/carlotta-em/web/object/3758950).

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Fig. 97. 'Mrs. Ma' of Khotan. Doris Skrine noted on the back of this drawing: 'The Kashgar lady married to the Chinese military officer. I tried to do this from memory and I'm afraid it gives a very poor idea of her loveliness. She was, like the Chinese ladies, a good deal made up.' (from the British Library Collection: IOLR MSS EurF 154/54).

Fig. 98. Doris Skrine on her Bactrian camel Suleyman leading the ceremonial procession into Keriya. It is possible that the photo dates to the second visit to Keriya in 1924, although on this first visit Skrine notes how her outings in the town riding her camel attracted a lot of attention. (Reproduced with permission from the Royal Geographical Society [London], no. CPS/00038.)

Fig. 99. Skrine's photo showing the compound of the Russo-Asiatic Bank in Kashgar, an image obviously made during warmer weather with all the leaves on the trees (after: Nazaroff 1935, facing p. 36).

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Fig. 101. The sketch from Skrine's letter (CPS to HSS, 7 February 1923) showing the route of the runaway horse (from the British Library Collection: IOLR MSS EurF 154/9).

Fig. 102. The Kaying Valley photographed on 19 October 1922 as the Skrine party headed up to its glacial cirque (after: *CCA* 1925, facing p. 90). This extraordinary photo was chosen by the editors of the *Times of India Illustrated Weekly* for the cover of its pictorial supplement of 6 March 1927, with a caption describing the location as 'one of the most romantic places on earth'. Presumably it was specifically this image which Skrine had in mind when writing to Stein.

Fig. 103. The stratum at Yotkan, where many artifacts were now being discovered (after: Nazaroff 1935, facing p. 56). Very likely the photo is one Skrine took on revisiting the site in May 1924.

Fig. 104. Some of the artifacts obtained by Skrine in Khotan and now in the British Museum: the Buddha head (if the one mentioned in the letter to Stein, it is not 'small' – H 27.9 cm), intact when he acquired it but presumably broken in transit; several of the small clay appliques, top to bottom, a monkey face, possibly a bodhisattva head, and a flying gandharva; and the exquisite agalmatolite carving of the god Karttikeya, riding on his peacock mount. All photos by DW, the clay figures all in storage, the Karttikeya as currently displayed in the South Asian gallery. (BM nos.: 1925,0619.2; .54; .3; .5; .40). The Karttikeya carving, dated 700-800 CE, is cited as an important example illustrating a 'fascinating feature of he first millennium AD – the extensive trade between South Asia and the western part of China'.

Fig. 105. The route from Osh via Irkeshtam to Kashgar. Schematic map overlaid on portion of a Russian map which had been given to the British explorer Francis Younghusband (after: A. V. Postnikov, *Skhvatka na 'Kryshe Mira'* [Moskva: Pamiatniki istoricheskoi mysli, 2001], Fig. 21); photograph of the Russian fort at Irkeshtam by John Törnquist (Public domain, Image no. 0937.0010 https://collections.smvk.se/carlotta-em/web/object/3755893).

Fig. 106. Skrine's travel notes, a separate sheet in the Stewart collection. The sketches seem clearly to be his (that is, not

by Doris), made at the time of the notes.

Fig. 107. The shrine of Bu Maryam near the Tarim Bridge, with a dervish in the foreground in the cemetery (after: *Die Koralle*, September 1928, p. 276).

Fig. 108. Skrine first traveled among the Dulani on the northern road around the Taklamakan. He was impressed by the comeliness of the women and the fact that they did most of the family work. Here the Dulani woman is carrying a sick lamb (after: *CCA* 1925, facing p. 124).

Fig. 109. The Swedish Mission church in Yarkand in 1923. Photos by John Törnquist (Public domain, Image nos. 0964.8845 https://collections.smvk.se/carlotta-em/web/object/26013278; 964.b.0229 https://collections.smvk.se/carlotta-em/web/object/25424448).

Fig. 110. Doris Skrine, dressed perhaps for Easter, and children, the photo probably taken at the Swedish orphanage in Yarkand (reproduced with permission from the Royal Geographical Society [London], no. CPS/00041).

Fig. 111. A photo of the luncheon group hosted by ex-Tao Yin Chu in Yarkand on 30 March 1923. From left to right: Turki interpreter (possibly Murad Qari?); Mrs. Nyström; ex-magistrate of Kashgar Chu; ex-magistrate of Yarkand Liu; Magistrate of Yarkand Li; a subordinate officer; Mr. Roberntz. (From the British Library Collection: IOLR Photo 920/1 [73]).

Fig. 112. The Kyrgyz women of 'Suget Auaghi [Aghzi], near the outlet of the Suget Valley, an upper branch of the Chighmen', 5 April 1923 (from the British Library Collection: IOLR Photo 920/1 [169]; after: *CCA* 1925, facing p. 132). This was an area of 'farming Kyrgyz' as is evident from the ploughed furrows. In the first image, the boy standing with the women is playing with a cardboard film cylinder. The second image shows Doris Skrine entertaining the women with the 'mysteries of powder and puff' so they could 'preen themselves in front of [her] camp mirror'. That is, it is not a picture showing her dispensing medicine, as a caption for the picture in *L'Illustration* indicated.

Fig. 113. Women of the Kizmak Jilgha, 9 April 1923 (after: *GJ* 1925a, facing p. 393).

Fig. 114. Probably the descent from the Kizmak Pass, traversed on 10 April 1923, with Doris riding the yak which was tobogganing down the steep slope through the snow. This photo has been erroneously captioned as the Kepek Pass, but she did not cross it. (From the British Library Collection: IOLR Photo 920/1 [19].)

Fig. 115. Skrine's sketch map of their route through the mountains from Yarkand to the Karatash Valley in April 1923 (from the British Library Collection: IOLR, MSS EurF 154/9).

Fig. 116. Wide angle panorama from ridge above Chat, looking SSW to NNE (after: *CCA* 1925, facing p. 116).

Fig. 117. Segment of a different panorama showing the highest peak of Kongur, the photo of the mountain's SE face strikingly clear (reproduced with permission from the Royal Geographical Society [London]; published in Waugh 1999, p. 314). Cf. Fig. 362 below, for a comparison of this image with one taken during a Russian expedition in 2005.

Fig. 118. The Kyrgyz at the wedding feast, Bek Targhak, 12 April 1923. (after: *GJ* 1925a, facing p. 393 (photos 1, 3); (photo 2) from the British Library Collection: IOLR Photo 920/1 [164]). Bek Targhak is 4 miles below Chat in the upper Karatash R. Valley. Skrine described the event in *CCA* 1925, pp. 133-34 ('[…] I had photographed the family party in the aq-oi, as well as the entire assembly outside.'). Date here follows *CCA* account, though letters may suggest the event a day or two earlier. In one of his later lists, he adds regarding the first photo: 'A minor Beg (sort of Justice of the Peace and tax-collector combined) in his aq-oi with his family'.

Fig. 119. Map showing the Karatash Valley route from Chat to beyond Khan Terek (overlaid on Google Earth terrain image).

Fig. 120. The Karatash Gorge, view downriver and detail showing one of the perilous rafiqs attached to the cliffs in the section above the intersection with the Karatumush stream (photos by DW 1996) and Skrine photo from about a mile below Karatumush looking upstream (reproduced with permission from the Royal Geographical Society [London]); first published by Waugh 1999, p. 316).

Fig. 121. Skrine's photo taken at the time of the Qurban festival shows the packed central market square in front of the Id Kah mosque in Kashgar (after: *L'Illustration*, 16 October 1926, No. 4363, p. [420]). A similar picture was taken by the Swedish missionary John Törnquist; now in the Etnogafiska Museet (Stockholm), no. 0036.0001.

Fig. 122. The 'Three Windows', the openings into the Buddhist caves on the cliff some miles north of Kashgar. Photo by John Törnquist (Public domain, Image no. 0964.b.0131 https://collections.smvk.se/ carlotta-em/web/ object/25422514).

Fig. 123. A portion of one of Skrine's panoramas which indeed captured the snowy mass of Kongur directly behind the British consulate (reproduced with permission from the Royal Geographical Society [London], no. CPS/00005). It is impossible in most cases to know exactly which prints he was sending in any mailing to London. Very likely the panorama of the snowy Tien Shan he mentions taking at Uch Merwan can be located; the image here from Kashgar may be one he deemed less than satisfactory, since it seems the very top of Kongur is obscured in cloud, though that may be the fault of the deterioration of the glass negative's emulsion around the edges.

Fig. 124. With the completion of the wireless station outside of Kashgar (even though its operation was still problematic), Skrine could report to his parents that he had the thrill on 30 May 1923 of being hoisted up to the top of one of the towers. The second of these photos fairly certainly shows that Doris too was given a ride up, but silence about that in writing home presumably was to avoid criticism from parents about allowing her to do such risky things. (Photos scanned from negatives in the Stewart collection.)

Fig. 125. It is difficult to know exactly which panoramas Skrine sent home in May 1923, but this image includes two of the likely possibilities. The scans of his images do not convey well the quality of the originals, due to the limitations of the published prints. I have 'cleaned' some of the dirt and scratches and the obvious folds from the top image in *CCA* 1925, which is valuable for his careful identifications printed in the margins. My photos are an effort to replicate more or less the same scenes, though taken from a different vantage point. The widest of my panoramas extends well to the NE beyond what Skrine's panorama shows.

Fig. 126. The Skrines' camp in the Kaying Valley, July 1923 (after: *The Times of India Illustrated Weekly, Pictorial Supplement*, 6 March 1927, center spread, the scan used here but a very poor quality representation of the original photograph). For other, better quality pictures, taken at this same campsite on 10 July, see below.

Fig. 127. It is sometimes difficult to determine which of the many photos Skrine took in the Kaying date to their second visit there, July 1923; matching them with his generalized descriptions of his several climbs is likewise problematic. The selection here very likely dates from that visit, the image on the left possibly taken on one of his hikes with Doris, the middle image taken from the north side of the valley, probably above their main campsite and looking across somewhat down-valley. The circled location in that image is probably the location from which the third photo was taken, looking up the valley to its head. (*Sources*: 1) from the British Library Collection: IOLR Photo 920/1, unn. neg.; 2) Stewart collection; 3) after: *HJ* 17 (1952), facing p. 75).

Fig. 128. Skrine's photos of the Shiwakte and neighboring peaks which he worked so hard to get during the visit in the Kaying Valley in 1923, all the pictures taken during the first half of July. *Top*: panorama taken from what he designated as Station IV, as described in his "Alps of Qungur", *GJ* 1925a, p. 399 and *CCA* 1925, p. 150, where this image is the foldout facing p. 258. *Middle, l. to rt.*: Chimgan and the Zumurrat group from Sarigh Yon (*GJ* 1925a, foldout facing p. 401); the Shiwakte group from Sarigh Yon (*CCA* 1925, facing p. 150); the Zumurrat Glacier from Sarigh Yon (*GJ* 1925a, foldout facing p. 401). *Bottom*: Panorama looking SW from the top of the Zumurrat ridge, taken 14 July (*GJ* 1925a, foldout facing p. 400).

Fig. 129. Skrine's photograph of the 'goat game' which the Kaying Kyrgyz put on for their guests on 10 July 1923 (reproduced with permission from the Royal Geographical Society [London], no. CPS/00029).

Fig. 130. The Kyrgyz at the 'fête' the Skrines hosted in the Kaying Valley on 10 July 1923. (Sources, clockwise from upper left: from the British Library Collection: IOLR Photo 920/1, unn. neg.; reproduced with permission from the Royal Geographical Society [London], no. 018244; from the British Library Collection: IOLR 920/1 [59]; reproduced with permission from the Royal Geographical Society [London], no. CPS/00027). There is another RGS photo from the same occasion, no. 018241, which shows all the Kyrgyz women at the fête formally lined up in back of a ground cloth, with the valley in the background.

Fig. 131 This view of the Kongur range apparently was taken on 17 July 1923, when Clarmont and Doris hiked up above their camp on what he recorded in a P.S. of 18 July was a perfectly clear day with spectacular views (after: *GJ* 1925a, foldout facing p. 400). His map (Fig. 132) marks specifically the Aqsai davan on their route.

Fig. 132. Skrine's sketch map of his June-July trip into the mountains (CPS to HSS 12 July 1923 with P.S. addendum dated 18 July, from the British Library Collection: IOLR MSS EurF 154/9).

Fig. 133. Doris Skrine's watercolors from the wedding reception for Mir Ahmad Bai's new daughter-in-law on Friday, 3 August 1923. As she described the event in *CCA* 1925, pp. 197-200, she attended accompanied by her maid Aisha Khan, who was resplendent in a new dress. At the women's reception, Doris was particularly taken by a woman in a crimson satin dress who had 8 long plaits, four of which had long silk tassels attached. The bride entered clad in glittering gold. These watercolors show Aisha (Mrs. Ishak Khan), the reception of the striking woman in crimson by the hostess, and the bride in her glory. (*Source*: the first two images, from the British Library Collection: IOLR MSS EurF 154/54; the bride, Stewart collection).

Fig. 134. Skrine's sketch of the floor plan of the consulate, showing the direction of summer and winter sun on the building (CPS to HSS 13 August 1923, from the British Library Collection: IOLR MSS EurF 154/9).

Fig. 135. Skrine's drawing of a proper design for a terrace in the hot weather and the photos illustrating the actual design at Chini Bagh. The view of the terrace is from the NW, and the view from the garden (where one can see Doris in the center and some of her birds) looks up to the terrace. (*Sources*: CPS to HSS 13 August 1923, from the British Library Collection: IOLR MSS EurF 154/9; from the British Library Collection: IOLR Photo 920/1, unn. negs. reproduced with permission.)

Fig. 136. The Mori Tim stupa complex (photo: DW 2009).

Fig. 137. A segment of Merzbacher's 1904 map on which I have overlaid a few captions. The transcriptions for Skrine's Yangi Art valley vary from map to map (Dschanart, Jannart). Pinpointing Skrine's routes is difficult, but we can assume that the red line from Kukurtuk Karaul, Merzbacher's route, is the one he followed.

Fig. 138. A view of the Yangi Art (after: *CCA* 1925, facing p. 218).

Fig. 139. A map showing as much as possible the locations Skrine mentions in his letters about their touring after coming down from the Yangi Art and heading farther east. It has not been possible to identify all the places he mentions; so I have not attempted to draw in an exact route of travel. The base map from which I have cropped this section was created in 1950 by the U.S. Army Map Service, Corps of Engineers ('A-K'O-SU', Sheet NK 44, Series 1301, 2nd ed.) from a range of earlier maps of the region, including ones by Aurel Stein for the Survey of India and Sven Hedin. Included are the routes of some of the early explorers.

Fig. 140. Skrine's panorama of the snow-capped Tien Shan from NE of Uch Turfan (after: *CCA* 1925, facing p. 258).

Fig. 141. His account about the mazar of Qāra-sakāl Ata, as recorded in his Field Diary, showing his edits (from the British Library Collection: IOLR MSS EurF 154/43, p. 13).

Fig. 142. The sheep farm of Abdus Sattar Haji at Yetim Döbe in the shadow of the Tien Shan NNE of Aqsu (after: *CCA* 1925, facing p. 226).

Fig. 143. Skrine was very interested in what he considered to be a rare sighting of a four-horned sheep. There is no particular reason to assume this photo was taken near the sheep farm, but it has to be from one of the areas he and Doris (shown on her horse) visited in the foothills of the Tien Shan (reproduced with permission of the British Library, IOLR Photo920/1, unn. negative).

Fig. 144. Hushur Beg of Qara Bulak with his hunting raptor at Kizil Bazar in the foothills of the Tienshan (after: *CCA* 1925, facing p. 232).

Fig. 145. Skrine's sketch map of his Aqsu tour, in his letter to his mother from the Garden of Abus Satter Haji in Aqsu (Old City) (from the British Library Collection: IOLR MSS EurF154/9).

Fig. 146. It is difficult to determine exactly which day and in what location Skrine took this image, since he recorded several crystal-clear opportunities to photograph the Tien Shan. He noted for this particular image that it was somewhere in the vicinity of Khan Tengri and is of interest for recording the huge glacier in front of the peaks (after: *Die Koralle*, September 1928, p. 277).

Fig. 147. Skrine's photo of the dramatic peak of Khan Tengri, taken from a valley south of the Tien Shan and presumably at least 20 miles west of Bai (from the British Library Collection: IOLR Photo 920/1, unn. print). I

juxtapose this image with two of mine, one taken from part way up Khan Tengri looking down across the south Engilchek glacier, the other from on that glacier looking up. Presumably one of the low points on the mountain ridge to the SE of Khan Tengri provided the opening for Skrine's view of the mountain.

Fig. 148. The scene of threshing with a team of oxen circling a pole and breaking down the stalks of grain likewise could have been photographed at several different places on their tour in the shadow of the Tien Shan (reproduced with permission from the Royal Geographical Society [London], no. CPS/00034, the negative in an envelope with other images from the Aqsu tour). For comparison, DW photo taken on descent from the Torugart Pass in 1995.

Fig. 149. Abdus Sattar Haji and his sons in the courtyard of their home, Aqsu (reproduced with permission from the Royal Geographical Society [London], no. 025650).

Fig. 150. Skrine's depiction of how the Tao-tai of Aqsu Circle resembled figures in the satirical skits of Heath Robinson (CPS to HSS, undated [mid-October 1923], written in the house of Abdus Sattar Haji, Aqsu; from the British Library Collection: IOLR MSS EurF 154/9).

Fig. 151. The 'city of the dead', the vast cemetery on the outskirts of Aqsu (reproduced with permission from the Royal Geographical Society [London], no. CPS/00033).

Fig. 152. The sizeable melon harvest from one of the fields rented out by Abdus Sattar Haji, Aqsu (after: *CCA* 1925, facing p. 236).

Fig. 153. Looking into the courtyard of the Daoist 'Temple of the White Cloud' on the outskirts of Aqsu (reproduced with permission from the Royal Geographical Society [London], no. CPS/00036). As Prof. Victor Mair has informed me the inscription above the door reds 'immortal winds floating over the world' and the inscription to its right refers to the date 1 April 1920 ('auspicious day of the fourth month of the ninth year of the Republic of China').

Fig. 154. A beggar and street musicians in Old Aqsu, photo taken on 26 October 1923 (after: *CCA* 1925, facing p. 184; from the British Library Collection: IOLR Photo 920/1 [101]).

Fg. 155. The market at the west gate of Old Aqsu, photo taken on 26 October 1923 (reproduced with permission from the Royal Geographical Society [London], no. CPS/00035).

Fig. 156. Dulani children playing 'cat's-cradle' (after: *CCA* 1925, facing p. 184).

Fiig. 157. Map of Maralbashi region, places visited by Skrine and mentioned by him marked in red (base map cropped from Survey of India, 'China and Kashmīr & Jammu', Sheet no. 51, Yarkānd, 2nd ed. 1926).

Fig. 158. Possibly the farm of Abid Beg where the Skrines stayed?? (scan from unn. neg. in Stewart collecton).

Fig. 159. The 'desert lake', Chöll Küll, in the sand dunes of the northern Taklamakan S of Maralbashi (after: *CCA* 1925, facing p. 192).

Fig. 160. A mazar along the banks of the Kashgar River where it disappears into the sands east of Marabashi. Captioning for the picture specifies about a mile east of the town, but if that is accurate, it cannot be the mapped Okhur Mazar, which is more distant. Clearly the architecture of the Mazar is substantial, suggesting it is an important one. (After: Nazaroff 1935, facing p. 108.)

Fig. 161. The football (soccer) teams that competed for the first 'Skrine Cup' in the third week of February 1924, the local community Hindus on the left, the Hunza staff of the consulate on the right. Presumably Skrine's trusted orderly Sangi Khan, whom he frequently mentioned in his writings, is the one in the white hat standing directly in the center. Skrine also shot a couple of images of the action in this or another of the matches. (Reproduced with permission from the Royal Geographical Society [London], no. CPS/00002.)

Fig. 162. The date when this photo of the consular staff women was taken is uncertain, but a reasonable guess is that it was around the time of the soccer match, since there would have been an interest in having formal group photos of both the male and female staff. The absence of foliage on the trees is one indication of the season. The picture of the women in the courtyard undoubtedly would have been snapped by Doris, after Clarmont set up the camera. (Reproduced with permission from the Royal Geographical Society (London), no. CPS/00019.)

Fig. 163. Clarmont's snap of the arrival of the new Mrs. Dao Tai with her retinue (after: Nazaroff, facing p. 32), and

Doris's drawing of her, presumably produced from memory after the guests had departed (from the British Library Collection: IOLR MSS EurF 154/54).

Fig. 164. Skrine's floor plan sketch for his explanation of the layout of a 'Chinese-influenced' Turki elite residence in Posgam (scanned from CPS to HSS, 12 March 1924, from the British Library Collection: IOLR, MSS EurF 154/10).

Fig. 165. Skrine's floor plan sketch for his explanation of the layout of a traditional Turki elite residence in Karghalik (scanned from CPS to HSS, 12 March 1924, from the British Library Collection: IOLR, MSS EurF 154/10).

Fig. 166. The Skrines' caravan preparing to leave the sarai at Moji Tanguya, 31 March 1924. The tarantass is in the center, flanked by mapas, left and right. (From the British Library Collection: IOLR Photo 920/1 [54]).)

Fig. 167. The 'Kapitar Mazar' (Pigeon Shrine) near Khotan. Percy and Ella Sykes photo, in 'Photograph Album, 1915 April-November', the Duke University David M. Rubenstein Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Image RL.11685-P-0020, https://archives.lib.duke.edu/catalog/sykespercy_aspace_ 78bd70a0f5e7fa243a9a240e86651ca5. The photo is published in Sykes and Sykes 1920, facing p. 206.

Fig. 168. The weaver combs Skrine obtained from Abbas Khan. Skrine collected four such combs, all of which are now in the collection of the British Museum, the two shown here in the best condition and most probably the specific ones about which he wrote in his diary (photos: DW).

Fig. 169. The amban of Keriya in his garden, 13 April 1924 (reproduced with permission from the Royal Geographical Society [London], no. CPS/00037).

Fig 170. The apprehended robbers, their victims and the 'loot', on the route into Kargalik, 12 April 1924. The hole in the ground on the left is the entrance to the subterranean home where it is possible to escape the desert heat. (Reproduced with permission from the Royal Geographical Society [London], no. CPS/00039.)

Fig. 171. Skrine's sketch map of his tour E of Khotan (CPS to HSS, 27 April 1924, from the British Library Collection: IOLR, MSS EurF 154/10); juxtaposed to the equivalent area in in Survey of India, East Turkistān and Tibet, Sheet No. 60 (Keriya) (1923).

Fig. 172. Field work at Polu, showing complex pattern of hand-dug irrigation channels (after: *L'Illustration*, 23 October 1926, p. 447 [NB: markedly overlaid by the screening pattern imposed by a poor-quality scan).

Fig. 173. Three men of Polu with their hunting raptors (after: *Die Koralle*, September 1928, p. 275).

Fig. 174. The panorama of the Kunlun from Imamläir (after: *CCA* 1925, facing p. 258).

Fig. 175. Badruddin Khan, the longtime British subjects' aqsakal in Khotan, amidst the flowering trees in his garden ca. 30 April 1923 (after: Nazaroff 1935, facing p. 152).

Fig. 176. The party attending the farewell tea-drinking on leaving Khotan, at the Temple of NyangNyang 3 May 1925. *Left to right*: Li Amban, Skrine, Kerakin Moldovack, and Ma Tungling (the identifications noted on the back of a print from the British Library Collection:, IOLR Photo 920/1 (74)). (Reproduced from a scan of a nitrate negative, with permission from The Royal Geographical Society [London], no. CPS/00040).

Fig. 177. Map marking in blue the 'high road' the Skrines took between Zawa and Kargalik on their way back to Kashgar in May 1924 (overlaid on Survey of India, China and Kashmir & Jammu, Sheet 51, Yarkand, 2nd ed. 1926).

Fig. 178. Ma Titai's palace in Kashgar New City, photographed after the military operation which ended his despotic rule (from the British Library Collection: IOLR Photo 920/1 [25]). On the reverse of this print, Skrine added a note: 'In fgd., left, Capt. Ma, who led the force with overthrew him; in front of palace, supply & ammunition-waggons loaded w/ loot from palace which was full of jade, raw opium & other valuables.'

Fig. 179. One of the little 'wee temples with ancient, lattice work "grille" & usually an enormously fat and short willow tree beside them' at Opal (from the British Library Collection: IOLR Photo 920/1, from unn. nitrate neg.).

Fig. 180. It is difficult now to correlate what Skrine reported about the main shrine at Opal with what one sees today. The location down until recent times has remained a center for worship, with an extensive cemetery sprawling across the dry slopes above the vegetation of the nearby town. The current mausoleum purportedly of Mahmud Kashgari may well be in a different location from Skrine's 'mazar on the hill'. There is a 'holy spring' and a gnarled willow on which visitors hang prayer flags. This vista sweeping across the plain to the snowcapped mountains captures a sense of what

he vividly described. (Panorama by DW 2009.)

Fig. 181. Skrine's rough map to illustrate for his family the achievements and plan for completing his surveying of the 'Qungur Alps'. I have juxtaposed it to the Survey of India map drawn from the surveying by Aurel Stein and his men, which has the big blank spot within which Skrine was able to map the Kaying Valley and the surrounding 'Qungur Alps'. For orientation, the thin lines with arrows point to the major peaks Mustagh Ata (bottom left) and Chakragil (top left); the circled area encompasses the region with the Kongur massif on its west, the Gez River at the north, and the Karatash River on the east. (Skrine's map, CPS to HSS, 30 July 1924, from the British Library Collection: IOLR MSS EurF 154/10; Survey of India, Chinese Turkistan and Kansu, No. 42 N.E. Kashgar, Muztāgh Atā. Serial No. 2 [1922]).

Fig. 182. While this photo, showing the crossing of the Gez River at the ford of Borokhotai, may not capture the crossing Skrine describes here, the picture conveys the difficulty of getting the people and all the equipment across, a process which they encountered more than once. He noted in a caption for this image the 'villagers wading with such of the loads as would be spoilt by wet. These men can wade carrying a heavy load through an 8 mph current 4 ft. deep'. Where the mountain rivers debouch on the flood plains, they spread out in 'braided' channels, one or another of which may be shallow enough to wade across at least in low water season. (Reproduced with permission from The Royal Geographical Society [London], no. 018268.)

Fig. 183. This segment of the map drawn by the professionals at the Survey of India from Skrine's notes and which accompanies his 1925 article on the 'Qungur Alps' shows clearly some of the key locations in his brief exploration that took him up to Yapchan, then through the dramatic gorge below the Bozarga cliffs and on into the Tigarmen Su Valley (after: *GJ* 1925a, map foldout).

Fig. 184. The path into the mountains from the Karatash River was through the Chopkana Valley, whose Kyrgyz were very helpful to the Skrines in providing guidance, transport and 'lodging'. The photo shows Doris Skrine in front of the Burroughs and Wellcome medicine chest dispensing minor medications in response to the requests from the herders, who had a perhaps naïve faith that foreigners had some kind of magical solution to any ailment. Word of the Skrines' travels moved ahead of them; often Kyrgyz women would travel over difficult passes to meet the party in hope for some kind of 'cure'. It is uncertain which of the Skrines' encounters with the Chopkana Kyrgyz is the one shown here. (After: *CCA* 1925, facing p. 146.)

Fig. 185. The Skrines' camp below the red-rock cliffs at 'Yapchan' (part of a two-image panorama) (scan from glass negative reproduced with permission from The Royal Geographical Society [London], no. CPS/00008). I have juxtaposed the image with mine taken from a distance in 1996. In lower left is visible the open area in which they camped and from which he took is photo looking up and right to the 'prow' of the red cliffs. The superimposed dotted lines show approximately the vantage area of his image, where it is necessary to adjust mentally to the fact the angle of his photo is a much narrower one.

Fig. 186. The picture of weaving on a ground loom was taken on a day hike the Skrines did to a location the locals called Kök Choka above the camp at Yapchan, the view looking roughly NE, down valley (reproduced with permission from The Royal Geographical Society [London], no. CPS/00024). Such practical, easily assembled looms like the one shown here, are still used decades later, as my 1996 photo from Subax near L. Karakul shows.

Fig. 187. The Skrine party emerging from the depths of the gorge below the Bozarga cliffs. The photo is scanned from a damaged, once folded tear sheet of the printing in *Die Koralle*, September 1928, p. 273, which I have chosen to use because it shows more clearly than scans of other published versions of the photo the detail and depth of field of what was a remarkable original shot. For my own passage through the same gorge, going down, not up, see Appendix 2.

Fig. 188. Skrine's drawing showing the location of Samsaq Bai's camp on a ridge above one of the red cliffs. The ascent through the gorge shown in Fig. 187 was below where 'Yapchan river' is marked on the sketch; the cliff to its left is the one shown in Skrine's photo looking up from their Yapchan camp (Fig. 185). (CPS to HSS, 8 August 1924, from the British Library Collection: IOLR MSS 154/10.)

Fig. 189. At Bel Pass, from the west (photo: DW 1996).

Fig. 190. In fact, Skrine did climb fairly high up on the west side of the Tigarmansu Jilgha, where he took this photo looking across and up the valley (after: *GJ* 1925a, facing p. 397). His map (Fig. 183) seems to suggest he was not far from where in 1996 I was able to cross into the valley from the west, but the scale is deceiving, as obviously he went

higher and farther up the valley than I was able to do. The Russians under Andrei Lebedev succeeded in accomplishing what Skrine had not in that they crossed from the Tigarmansu into the Kaying (see Appendix 2). However, even had Skrine crested the valley wall on the west he still could not have had the full view of Kongur which he sought, as there are intervening peaks.

Fig. 191. Skrine's magnificent photo of Shiwakte I, taken apparently on that last big climb he did near the head of the Kaying Valley (after: *HJ* 17 (1952), facing p. 73).

Fig. 192. Schematic map overlaid on Google Earth topo from satellite image, showing the route through the Kaying Valley over the Kepek pass into the Chimgan watershed.

Fig. 193. Skrine's closeup view of the Kepek Pass from its N side (after: *GJ* 1925a, foldout facing p. 401), juxtaposed to DW photo (1996) from a distance across the glacial moraine at the upper end of the Kaying Valley.

Fig. 194. Skrine's drawing of the difficult corner part way up to the Kepek Pass (CPS to HSS, 8 August 1924, from the British Library Collection: IOLR MSS 154/10).

Fig. 195. The view from the top of the Kepek Pass looking back to the Kaying Glacier on the N side (after: *GJ* 1925a, foldout facing p. 401).

Fig. 196. The Aq Tash Glacier and Peak III of the Shiwakte group (20,300 ft.), photographed on 5 August 1924 (after: *CCA* 1925, facing p. 276).

Fig. 197. The descent around the difficult corner on the return over the Kepek Pass into the Kaying (after: *GJ* 1925a, foldout facing p. 401).

Fig. 198. Doris Skrine (left) and one of the Kaying Valley Kyrgyz women in festive dress (the second image a formal portrait of possibly the same woman). Photos taken at the farewell fête on 8 August, when the Skrines said goodbye to the little paradise and its people which they had first visited back in 1922. (From the British Library Collection: IOLR Photo 920/1 [88, 87].)

Fig. 199. It is easy to document Skrine's summary observations about traditional Kyrgyz culture both from different areas in his 'Qungur Alps' and with comparative examples from the Pamir-Alai Mountains in today's Kygyzstan. Here on the left, the interior of a yurt in the upper Karatash, two images (bottom and middle) from the interior of a Kyrgyz summer stone hut just below At Bel Pass, and (upper), two images from the Pamir-Alai, one showing *qurut* balls spread on the ground to dry, the other the weaving of the reed mats used as partitions and to line walls in both yurts and permanent huts. Bedding has to be stacked somewhere, in the hut on a shelf above the felt-covered area that is both seating space for meals and receiving guests and a sleeping platform at night. Mark Twain is a nice touch but in the given instance probably not very relevant. (Photos: DW, 1996, 1995.)

Fig. 200. The consulate's celebration of the King's birthday, 7 June 1924, with a formal sit-down tea on the lower terrace for the Russians, Swedes and local Chinese officials (reproduced with permission from the Royal Geographical Society [London], no. 212607) and a separate carpeted space in the rose garden for the local Muslims, about to pray at mid-day (photo scanned from negative in the Stewart collection). A different image of the Muslims in the lower garden, already seated at prayer, is published in *CCA* 1925, facing p. 262.

Fig. 201. The Chakragil Massif, photographed by Skrine from Kashgar (after: *HJ* 17 (1952), facing p. 79), and in 2009 by DW from the Mori Tim Stupa complex.

Fig. 202. The map of Skrine's travel via the Arpa Bel Pass in the shadow of Charkragil, second week of September 1924 (overlay of captions and route on Google Earth terrain image).

Fig. 203. The lower Gez River valley just NE of where the Oi Tagh valley branches off of it. (Photo [left]: courtesy of Michael Richter 2005; photo [right]: DW 2009).

Fig. 204. In the lower Oi Tagh, passing through the red sandstone cliffs and beyond to one of the larger settlements (photos courtesy of Michael Richter 2005).

Fig. 205. Skrine's photo much higher on the route, looking to the snout of one of the descending glaciers (from the British Library Collection: IOLR Photo 920/1, scan from unn. neg.)

Fig. 206. Near the tip of the glacier looking down valley, Skrine's photo on the right with overlay marking of the

approximate location where Michael Richter took his photo in 2005. (Skrine photo from the British Library Collection: IOLR Photo 920/1, scan from unn. neg.; photo courtesy of Michael Richter 2005).

Fig. 207. Likely 'Sart' herder summer camp, with partially assembled yurt in left photo, which had, presumably arrived with the camel shown in the right. The exact ID of this photo difficult (in theory it might have been taken elsewhere by Skrine among the mountain Kyrgyz). However, the landscape details seem to fit well with his other photos from the Oi Tagh. (Reproduced with permission from the Royal Geographical Society [London], nos. CPS/00025, 00030, scanned from nitrate negatives.)

Fig. 208. Summer camp of herders, the view taken just below the face of Chakragil showing how extensive the pasturage is decades after Skrine visited. Circled in red is the location of the two waterfalls which both Skrine and Michael Richter photographed (see Fig. 212). (Photo courtesy of Michael Richter 1996).

Figs. 209. The Oi Tagh glacier near where the smaller Bel Ush glacier has pushed across it. The illustration juxtaposes Skrine's image (from the British Library Collection: IOLR Photo 920/1, scanned from an unn. neg.) with one taken from nearly the same vantage point in 2005 (courtesy of Michael Richter).

Fig. 210. The intersection of the main Oi Tagh glacier where the smaller Bel Ush glacier has pushed across it. The top image, taken in 1998 (courtesy of Hermann Kretzmann) shows part of the herder summer camp with the yurt and a platform on which *qurut* is drying. The bottom two images are Skrine's (from the British Library Collection: IOLR, Photo 920/1, scanned from an unn. negative), and a photo provided courtesy of Michael Richter from 2005.

Fig. 211. Skrine's sketch map in his letter describing the Oi Tagh traverse, illustrating the point of intersection of the two glaciers which he photographed. I have combined the drawing with a zoomed-in satellite image from Google Earth, rotated and inverted in order to have the same orientation as Skrine's drawing. (Scan of Skrine's sketch from CPS to HSS, 11 September 1924, from the British Library Collection: IOLR MSS EurF 154/10).

Fig. 212. Skrine's photo of the high waterfalls he described, dropping from the cliffs below the glaciated face of Chakragil (after: *HJ* 17 (1952), facing p. 74), juxtaposed with the 2005 photo provided courtesy of Michael Richter.

Fig. 213. From Gez Karaul to Bulunkul. The four DW photos here (top right 1995; others all 2009), overlaid on Stein's map to which Skrine is referring, provide a sense of what he observed as they made their way out of the gorge onto the plateau. Even though the map shows a bridge at the Gez checkpoint essentially in the same location as today, Skrine had re-entered the Gez upriver of it and never seems to have realized that the Kurghan Jilga would have provided him with the views he so sought of the E face of Kongur and all of the Shiwakte. In any event, he could not dally to explore. The glacier he mentions coming down to within a mile of the river may be just out of sight in the upper right of the photo looking down river along the N end of the Kongur massif. As in Skrine's time, decades later the sand dunes along the shores of Bulunkul are striking. The lake is a marsh on Stein's map (cropped off here), but depending on the season would be a shallow body of water. The Stein map is: Survey of India No. 42 N.E.: Chinese Turkistan and Kansu – Kāshgar, Muztāgh-Atā, Serial No. 2 (1922).

Fig. 214. Mustagh Ata as seen not far from the Bulunkul karaul (DW photos, 1995). The first of the images approximates Skrine's view of Mustagh Ata looking over the 'sai' on the right side (designated when facing downstream) of the river. My second image captures the view toward Mustagh Ata from the left side of the river at Bulunkul, the picture offering a good sense of the lower end of the Kengxuwar.

Fig. 215. Moving a yurt to accommodate Skrine's party at their campsite a mile below Lake Karakul (after: Nazaroff 1935, facing p. 64).

Fig. 216. The segment of Stein's map from just downriver of Lake Karakul to beyond the Ulugh Rabat Pass on the W of Mustagh Ata (Survey of India No. 42 N.E.: Chinese Turkistan and Kansu – Kāshgar, Muztāgh-Atā, Serial No. 2 [1922]).

Fig. 217. Skrine records photographing the reflection of the mountain from across one of the subsidiary lakes shown on Stein's map, in other words from roughly the NE. My photo from 1996 emulates what he may have captured, but from the NE side of the main Karakul lake – that is, viewing the mountain more from the E.

Fig. 218. Part of the Kongur massif, as photographed from beyond Lake Karakul and Subax. The main summit to the right of center, which is the one Skrine had discovered, is almost concealed in a wisp of cloud. The massif extends considerably beyond the left edge of this photo, which was taken from a lower vantage point than that where Skrine was

frustrated in not getting the view he wanted on what started out as a clear day. (Photo: DW 1995.)

Fig. 219. Map segment showing the route from the Ulugh Rabat Pass W of Mustagh Ata, south through Tashkurghan and then turning W to the Mintaka Pass . (Survey of India No. 42 N.E.: Chinese Turkistan and Kansu – Kāshgar, Muztāgh-Atā, Serial No. 2 [1922].)

Fig. 220. Tajik women at a small hot spring resort W of the current Karakorum Hwy. (approximately opposite Tagharma marked on Stein's map, the coordinates according to Google Earth 37.89635 N; 75.1284 E). The tradition of braiding mother-of-pearl buttons into the hair which Skrine notes continues decades later (photo: DW 1995).

Fig. 221. Looking S on the Sarikol Plateau between Tashkurghan and Dafdar (photo: DW 1995).

Fig. 222. Tajik or Wakhi families at Dafdar (Dabdar), as photographed by DW in 1995, the young couple left and center winnowing their grain harvest.

Fig. 223. The valley W of the Sarikol Plateau leading to the Mintaka Pass (the view here taken from the location on Stein's map marked Ujadbai) (photo: DW 1995).

Fig. 224. A photo taken at Jamalabad, not far from Sost in the northern part of Hunza, the inscription on the hillside greeting the Aga Khan when he was visiting the area where the local population is mainly Wakhi Ismailis (photo: DW 1995).

Fig. 225. Two views from the upper Hunza valley (on the left, photo by DW, 1995; on the right, Skrine photo, reproduced courtesy from the Royal Geographical Society [London], no. CPS/00031). Very likely the person framed in the 'doorway' on the narrow path along the cliffs is Doris Skrine, who, as Clarmont noted, preferred walking to riding on those paths. The photo would have been taken either when the Skrines traveled up to Kashgar in 1922 or on their trip back to India in 1924.

Fig. 226. Views of the 'castle' at Altit, one of the small villages that today comprise the Hunza settlement of Karimabad. Altit is located atop a cliff that drops precipitously to the Hunza River, the view from almost directly above taken from Tok, another of the small, once autonomous villages that today are part of the larger urban area. The architecture of the castle and the surrounding houses is traditional; at the time the picture was taken apricots and other produce were laid out on some of the roofs to dry. (Photos: DW 1995.)

Fig. 227. The views from Baltit/Hunza across the river to the valley of Nagar. On the left, Skrine's photo (reproduced here from a somewhat damaged print on a tear sheet from *Die Koralle* [Berlin], September 1928, p. 276); on the right, a similar view taken from a slightly different angle and zoomed in (photo: DW 1995).

Fig. 228. Skrine's photo of the suspension bridge his party crossed to Nagar in 1924 (from the British Library Collection: IOLR Photo 920/1, scan from unn. neg.). It is located slightly downriver from Altit. The bridge was still there decades later, but in a state of disrepair (see the photo in Kreutzmann 2020, p. 432).

Fig. 229. The 'palace' of Nagar (Skrine's photo reproduced with permission from the Royal Geographical Society [London], no. 088635).

Fig. 230. Polo in Nagar, the picture, taken on 7 October 1924, showing Skrine on the gray horse loaned him by the Mir of Nagar, participating in the match (see the enlarged insert, the figure wearing a necktie left of center). (Reproduced with permission from the Royal Geographical Society [London], no. 018279). Some captions of prints of this photo mis-label it as taken in Altit, when Skrine played polo in 1922, but the details convincingly place the image in Nagar in 1924.

Fig. 231. The Mir of Nagar and his sons in October 1924 (scan from negative in the Stewart collection).

Fig. 232. View of the upper Nagar valley. Spantik ('Golden Peak') is the dramatic snow-clad mountain (ca. 7000 m) framed just right of center. (Photo: DW 1995.)

Fig. 233. The new suspension bridge at Tashot, connecting Nagar (on the left bank) with the current route down the Karakorum Highway on the right bank (photo: DW 1995). After traveling down through Nagar, Skrine crossed the river on a bridge near Minapin, somewhat upstream from the Tashot bridge. Cf. an analogous view of the Tashot bridge in Kreutzmann 2020, p. 188. As Kreutzmann (ibid., p. 232) notes, several attempts had been made before the successful

construction of a permanent bridge there.

Fig. 234. A view of Rakaposhi as one heads down the Hunza valley from Baltit (photo: DW 1995). This view, taken from the Karakorum Highway on the right bank provides a sense of the impressive mountain which Skrine was anxious to photograph again by climbing to a high vantage point above the river somewhat farther down river at Chaprot.

Fig. 235. The bridge over the Astor River at Ramghat over which the Skrines would have passed in 1924. It replaced the one that had been washed away, forcing them to cross the river on cable car in 1922 on their way up to Kashgar. Photo by John Törnquist (Public domain, Image no. 0964.b.1059 [https://collections.smvk.se/carlotta-em/web/object/25505151]).

Fig. 236. Sketch map of DW's solo trek route in the 'Kongur Alps', 1996.

Fig. 237. The Gez River checkpoint and the bridge leading to the village on the terrace at the mouth of the Kurghan Jilga (Valley) (photo: DW 1996).

Fig. 238. Andrei Ershov's group looks on as DW loads his fuel bottles into his pack, 24 July 1996. (Photo courtesy of Andrei Ershov.)

Fig. 239. A family in Gez village, 24 July 1996 (photo: DW).

Fig. 240. Walking through the Gez village, its mosque on the right, DW's pack on the back of the donkey, 24 July 1996 (photo: DW).

Fig. 241. View W from beyond Gez village, part of Chakragil massif on right, 24 July 1996 (photo: DW).

Fig. 242. View of the Kurghan Jilga looking S. The dark rock of the Arakler Ridge is right of center, 25 July 1996 (photo: DW).

Fig. 243. A first tantalizing glimpse of the jagged Shiwakte peaks, 25 July 1996 (photo: DW).

Fig. 244. The Arakler Ridge and snout of the glacier above the upper Gez summer village, 25 July 1996 (photo: DW).

Fig. 245. The upper Gez summer village, views from SW. Near bottom in left photo, the yellow dot is DW's tent; on right part of the Aghalistan ridge that flanks the Kurghan Jilga on the E (photos: DW).

Fig. 246. Views from the Arakler Ridge: a panorama sweeping from the Aghalistan ridge across the Shiwakte to Kongur; details of the Shiwakte peaks, and Kongur from the E, including the expedition card for the Italian Alpine Club's centennial attempt on the mountain. (Photos: DW 1996.)

Fig. 247. Excerpts from my diary, 25 July 1996, with sketch maps, on the first of which my arrow for N is inaccurate, that direction being closer to ENE.

Fig. 248. The remains of the footbridge I had crossed in 1996, washed away by the river, as photographed from a bus in 2009 (photo: DW).

Fig. 249. The entrance to the 'wrong valley' which I entered in 1996, photographed from across the Gez River in 2009, and the view looking down from near its mouth to the Gez valley, 27 July 1996 (photos: DW).

Fig. 250. The entrance to the Tigarmansu Valley seen from across the Gez River 2009 (photo: DW).

Fig. 251. The 'wrong valley' view to the south, 27 July 1996. In the second photo left of center is the path I climbed to the ridge from which I hoped to descend into the Tigarmansu (photos: DW).

Fig. 252. The scrawny camel in the stark valley; my 'camp' in the open for the night of 27 July 1996 (photos: DW).

Fig. 253. The herder and his flock part way up the path above the 'wrong valley', 28 July 1996 (photo: DW).

Fig. 254. Views from the ridge E of the Tigarmansu Valley looking out to the edge of the desert and looking SE, with the peak of Kök Dong. The arrow points to the 'At Bel' Pass to which I was heading, located below the 17,000-ft. peak. (Photos: DW 28 July 1996.)

Fig. 255. Preferring to hike in shorts on account of the heat, I plowed through thickets of bristly bushes which did a number on my legs. As I noted in my diary: 'My arms and legs are a mass of scratches and bruises, but nothing worse than what I have accumulated in the past. I am losing weight, but not alarmingly.' As I met herders along the way, among the first things they noticed were the bare and scratched legs. (Photo: DW 1996.)

Fig. 256. Viewed from my campsite above the Tigarmansu River, a Kyrgyz family, one donkey loaded with two hewn beams crossed at the ford below, 29 July 1996 (photo: DW).

Fig. 257. Two views of the Tigarmansu Valley: on the left, Skrine's photo from 1924, taken from up on the slope to the west of the stream (*GJ* 1925a, facing p. 397); on the right, my photo from down next to the stream looking up the haze-shrouded valley, 30 July 1996.

Fig. 258. A portion of the map drawn by the Survey of India using Skrine's survey data and showing his routes (the dashed black lines), overlaid with an approximation of my route largely following his track, starting at the Gez River and ending with the descent from the Chopkana Pass into the Kaying Valley (*GJ* 1925a, foldout map).

Fig. 259. The somewhat ill-defined beginning of the trail up from the Tigarmansu in the direction of At Bel Pass, 30 July 1996 (photo: DW).

Fig. 260. An 'aqueduct' of plastic piping connecting spade-dug channels to supply water to a campsite, 30 July 1996 (photo: DW).

Fig. 261. One of the hewn beams left in the trail for later transport down through the Tigarmansu, 30 July 1996. The second photo, taken at the village of Subax next to the Karakorum Highway near Mt. Mustagh Ata in 1996 shows how such beams are shaped with an adz. (Photos: DW.)

Fig. 262. A Kyrgyz grave, marked with poles, horse or yak tails, mountain goat horns, strips of cloth and even a fur cap. On the path up toward At Bel Pass, 30 July 1996 (photo: DW).

Fig. 263. A menacing, loudly grunting yak walked past my tent site on 30 July 1996 (photo: DW).

Fig. 264. My visitor, a Kyrgyz boy who settled in to be read to from my copy of *Great Expectations*, 30 July 1996 (photo: DW). He surely would not have understood a word of the text.

Fig. 265. The gorgeous view of the Kyrgyz summer camp on the pastures below 17,000 ft. Kök Dong, the panorama taken in early morning as I rounded a bend in the steep trail up from my campsite, 31 July 1996. The 'bare' spots in the landscape are the locations of the summer huts of the families in this large community.

Fig. 266. Word of my arrival had preceded me; I was greeted by welcoming crowds, eager to be photographed.

Fig. 267. A composite with views of this community, many of the women wearing necklaces of beads or mother-of-pearl ornaments; others actively boiling the milk from their herds for making *airan* (yoghurt) or for the curds to be formed into balls of *qurut*, dried in the sun raised racks from which hung bags of the processed dairy to drain (photos: DW, 31 July 1996).

Fig. 268. The 12,000-ft. At Bel Pass and the flower fields on adjoining slopes on the way there, 31 July 1996 (photos: DW).

Fig. 269. The settlement and a home below At Bel Pass, with the family who hosted me with *airan*, bread and the dried apricots that their little girl fetched from a neighbor, 31 July 1996 (photos: DW).

Fig. 270. An excerpt from my diary entry of 31 July 1996 with a diagram of the floor plan of my hosts' summer home.

Fig. 271. Locating Samsaq Bai's encampment. The central image is one taken from below, looking up to the red cliffs from the area Skrine calls Yapchan, whose river flows down to the right (out of sight) just below the cliffs. The other images are 'shot' from above on the descent from the At Bel Pass through Skrine's 'Bozarga Glen', the arrows pointing to the possible locations of the high pastures, including the one Skrine sketched in his letter of 8 August 1924 to illustrate the location of Samsaq Bai's camp which he visited. It was located in pastureland to right of center in the main image, perched above the red rock cliffs. Photos: DW, 31 July and 1 August 1996.

Fig. 272. The red sandstone cliff above the Yapchan Valley, with the steep trail descending into the gorge below it: On the left, my photo, 31 July 1996, a small part of the trail just visible lower left; on the right, Skrine's photo from 1924 with his party ascending on the trail (image published in *Die Koralle* (Berlin), September 1927, p. 273, scanned from a somewhat damaged tear sheet). Presumably the person with the distinct 'pith helmet' at the back of the procession is Doris Skrine.

Fig. 273. Goats grazing on the precarious ledges of the cliff above the path. The path indeed descends steeply to a small stream and in some cases is overhung by the rocks, as erosion has undercut the cliff face. (Photo: DW, 31 July 1996.)

Fig. 274. A panorama looking down on the Yapchan area, the Yapchan stream on the left, which flows just below the cliff face down to the Karatash River, 31 July 1996 (photo: DW).

Fig. 275. Herders descending the path over the hilly terrain of the Yapchan, heading toward the Chopkana Valley, 1 August 1996 (photo: DW).

Fig. 276. Views back in the direction of Yapchan taken from the trail to Chopkana. On the right, the red rock cliffs, where, just left of center is the hidden passage up to Bozarga and on to the At Bel Pass. On the left, the view roughly SW, the ridge part of the mountains that flank the Kaying Valley on the other side. The forested slope angling up from the right is probably the one Skrine climbed with Doris from their camp at Yapchan to the location he called Kök Choka. He photographed there a Kyrgyz woman weaving on a ground loom (see Fig. 186). (Photos: DW, 1 August 1996.)

Fig. 277. The old gentleman with whom I shared a snack on the way to the Chopkana, 1 August 1996 (photo: DW).

Fig. 278. The rest of the family posed for a photo, 1 August 1996 (photo: DW).

Fig. 279. My 'guide' and his boys whom I followed up the Chopkana Valley to reach the Kaying, 1 August 1996 (photo: DW).

Fig. 280. The spectacular view up the Kaying Valley from the top of Chopkana Pass, 1 August 1996 (photo: DW).

Fig. 281. The map showing my route starting back at the Gez checkpoint, exploring the Kurghan Valley, and then tracing Skrine's routes to the Kaying and beyond through the Karatash River gorge to Chimgan. The parts traversed on foot are designated with red dots, the small section in the back of a truck on the Karakorum Highway with a solid red line. The route and captioning have been overlaid on a terrain 'map' from Google Earth and cannot be expected to show fine detail such as which side of a river or stream I was on.

Fig. 282. First views on starting up the Kaying Valley. On the left, a composite showing Skrine's 19 October 1922 camp which was located farther down the valley from where I entered it. On that first visit his party had come up the entire length of the valley from the Karatash River, not entered (as he did on subsequent visits) by crossing the Chopkana Pass. I have marked on his photo in a dotted rectangle the approximate section of the valley which can be seen in my image from 1 August 1996. Even though there were some permanent structures in the valley in 1922 (a stone hut can be seen on the left), the Kyrgyz herders summered mainly in yurts. In 1997, there were many adobe brick huts and walls and substantial cultivation of grain or fodder. (Skrine's image from the British Library Collection: IOLR Photo 920/1 [179, 180].)

Fig. 283. Two views of the Kyrgyz summer settlements in the upper Kaying Valley, 2-3 August 1996 (photos: DW). My yellow tent is in the lower center of the picture on the right.

Fig. 284. This comparison of views down the Kaying Valley, one taken 2 or 3 August 1997, the other 19 October 1922, suggests at least superficially that little had changed there in seven decades. (Photo credits: DW; Skrine's image on the right reproduced with permission from the Royal Geographical Society [London], no. CPS/00026.)

Fig. 285. A visit in the yurt of one of the Kyrgyz families of the upper Kaying Valley, 2 August 1996 (photos: DW).

Fig. 286. My diary page drawings from the interior of the summer dwellings in the upper Kaying Valley.

Fig. 287. The Kyrgyz families of the upper Kaying, where I pitched my tent near the home of the family depicted upper and middle left, 2 August 1996 (photos: DW).

Fig. 288. Traditional crafts for daily life in the Kaying: spinning, filling quilts with raw wool, and embroidery of felts, 2-3 August 1996 (photos: DW).

Fig. 289. Playing the three-stringed Kyrgyz *komuz*, this one obviously home crafted and missing one of the strings, 2 August 1996 (photos and diary drawing: DW).

Fig. 290. A glimpse of the Kepek-Aghalistan Pass over the debris of the glacial moraine, 2 August 1996 (photo: DW). Skrine made a quick trip across the pass in 1924; Scottish and Russian mountaineers crossed it decades later.

Fig. 291. A demonstration of spinning yarn from raw wool, the technique using a weighted spindle found in many cultures over several thousand years, 3 August 1996 (photo and drawing: DW).

Fig. 292. The grave in the wider part of the valley, and the drawing I made while eliciting an explanation from my guide

who had led me over the Chopkana Pass, 1-2 August 1996 (photo and drawing: DW).

Fig. 293. A view of the lower part of the Kaying Valley, not far from where it intersects with the Karatash River, 4 August 1996 (photo: DW). There were broken sections of a road that had been plowed up the valley but not maintained.

Fig. 294. The cantilever bridges over the Karatash River (photos: DW, 4 August 1996). The first one was located at the intersection of the Kaying with the Karatash, apparently on the same location where Skrine found a bridge in the 1920s. The second bridge was a short way up stream; the fourth one was located not far from where the gorge ended below Chimgan. All of the bridges had some reinforcement of heavy wire to hold the logs together; the bridge near Chimgan also had some cement reinforcing the supports.

Fig. 295. A longish section of good trail on the left bank of the river beyond the second bridge took me to this little farmstead at the intersection with the Karatumush stream before having to backtrack to another bridge I had missed and which had to be crossed to continue upstream, 4 August 1996 (photo: DW). The photo was taken from the right bank after crossing the bridge.

Fig. 296. Views providing a sense of why Skrine found the Karatash a challenge to traverse, some sections hemmed in by unscalable cliffs, paths (*rafiqs*) precariously clinging to the rocks above the raging torrent, and areas where the only option was to walk in the river bed. The improvements keeping bridges from washing away made my traverse easier, but I still had to risk wading up to my waist in one short section. (Photos: DW, 4 August 1996.)

Fig. 297. At the end of the gorge, the first glimpses of Chimgan, situated where the broad Chimgan stream (fed by the glacier melt from the SE side of Mt. Kongur) combined with the much smaller flow of the Karatash, 4 August 1996 (photo: DW). Instinctively one might think the Chimgan was the primary river. Given the uncertainty of the route and whether it would be possible to wade the deepest channel, I negotiated for help at Chimgan.

Fig. 298. Some of the men of Chimgan (and one camel), 4-5 August 1996 (photos: DW). In the background of the upper photo is one of the adobe houses with framed windows (but ones apparently lacking glass). The man in the lower left has something of a twinkle in his eye: he was the one who seemed most to enjoy teasing me.

Fig. 299. The view from Chat looking back over the lush fields in the direction of Chimgan from which I had come, 5 August 1996 (photo: DW).

Fig. 300. The substantial settlement of Chat, mainly adobe-brick houses but with a cultural center or school, 5 August 1996 (photos: DW).

Fig. 301. Plastering the exterior of an adobe-brick house at Chat, 5 August 1996 (photo: DW).

Fig. 302. Some of the men of Chat, on the left the elder, Turdi Ali Mamer; my diary sketches, aids to my 'conversation' with him where we had no common language (photo and drawing: DW, 5 August 1996).

Fig. 303. My guide to the upper Karatash and the schematic map I made to try to explain where I wanted to go, 5-6 August 1996 (photo and drawing: DW).

Fig. 304. Map showing an approximation of my hiking route from Chimgan to the Mustagh Ata base camp and then from there to the back (SE) side of Mustagh Ata before returning to Lake Karakul to meet Andrei Ershov's climbing party for an ascent of the mountain. The captioning is overlaid on a Google Earth terrain map generated from satellite images.

Fig. 305. The summer settlement in the upper Karatash River watershed, probably the one named 'Shargut' in the old British route book and Aksaray in the Chinese captions shown on Google Earth (photo: DW, 6 August 1996).

Fig. 306. The family (and neighbors) in front of the stone house that probably was the residence of the officiating elder of the settlement. My diagram shows the layout of the interior. (Photos and drawing: DW, 6 August 1996.)

Fig. 307. Several of the family members in the interior, 6 August 1996 (photos: DW).

Fig. 308. A visit to the yurt of another family in the settlement, 6 August 1996 (photos: DW).

Fig. 309. Heading up from 'Shargut' in the early morning to cross the Karatash Pass, 7 August 1996 (photos: DW). The views look north.

Fig. 310. DW on a riding yak en route to the Karatash Pass, 7 August 1996 (photo: anon..Kyrgyz).

Fig. 311. The final approach to the Karatash Pass, 7 August 1996 (photo: DW).

Fig. 312. The yak herd in the Ygebali valley, photographed on the descent from the Karatash Pass. The rider of the white yak can be discerned to the left of the herd. (Photo: DW, 7 August 1996.)

Fig. 313. Descending the Ygebali valley, the sequence clockwise from upper left. The photo in lower left is down at its intersection with the Kengxuwar River. (Photos: DW, 7-8 August 1996.)

Fig. 314. The view down the Kengxuwar River, ca. 8 August 1996 (photo: DW).

Fig. 315. My sketch map of my camp location above the Kengxuwar.

Fig. 316. Views looking up at the north peak of Mustagh Ata, the first taken from above the Kengxuwar along a stream descending from the glaciers; the second a distant photo taken from Lake Karakul (photos: DW).

Fig. 317. From the campsite below the Olimde Glacier: part of the Kongur massif at sunset; Mustagh Ata at dawn, 8-9 August 1996 (photos: DW).

Fig. 318. Views from the traverse around the northeast and north sides of Mustagh Ata below the several glaciers , 9-11 August 1996 (photos: DW).

Fig. 319. The trail to Mustagh Ata base camp (11 August 1996) and a view of the mountain from the highway (1995) with a circle marking the location of the base camp (photos: DW).

Fig. 320. Mustagh Ata base camp for the much-climbed standard route; our Chinese cook making noodles in one of the mess tents, and the staff washing heads of slaughtered sheep in the not so clean glacial stream that was the camp's water supply (photos: DW).

Fig. 321. On the trail down to Subax (Subashi) from the Mustagh Ata base camp, 14 August 1996 (photos: DW).

Fig. 322. Kyrgyz of the village of Subax (Subashi), 14 August 1996 (photos: DW).

Fig. 323. Houses at Subax at least in part constructed of adobe brick. Two of the tunduks, the wooden frames for the top of yurts, are stored at the building in the left photo; in front of it is dung drying for stove fuel, essential in a region where, as Skrine lamented back in 1924, there was but brush wood for fires (photos: DW).

Fig. 324. A small caravan returning from a summer camp, led by a woman on horseback carrying a baby, 4 August 1996 (photo: DW).

Fig. 325. My camp at Lake Karakul and an early-morning view of the lake, 14-15 August 1996 (photos: DW).

Fig. 326. A family near Lake Karakul in 1995 (photo: DW).

Fig. 327. A cemetery overlooking the Kengxuwar River, the view to the north, 15 August 1996 (photos: DW).

Fig. 328. Yaks grazing next to the river not far from where I inadvisedly tried to cross it, 15 August 1996 (photo: DW).

Fig. 329. The view up the Kengxuwar where it narrows in the gorge flanking Mustagh Ata on the NE, 15 August 1996 (photo: DW).

Fig. 330. Fading light on a windy evening when camped along the Kengxuwar, 15 August 1996 (photo: DW).

Fig. 331. The way forward up the Kengxuwar, near where the Ygebali Valley enters on the left, 16 August 1996 (photo: DW).

Fig. 332. The much-used campsite just below the snout of the Kuksay Glacier, 16 August 1996 (photo: DW).

Fig. 333. Mountain sheep horns piled near the hunters' campsite at the snout of the Kuksay Glacier – perhaps as a kind of shrine, 16 August 1996 (photo: DW).

Fig. 334. The cliff dwelling at the campsite, 16 August 1996 (photo: DW).

Fig. 335. The view into the Kuksay Glacier cirque, with the slope on the right partially concealing the main peak of Mustagh Ata, 17 August 1996 (photo: DW).

Fig. 336. Mustagh Ata from the SE, with the ridge ascending directly to the summit, 17 August 1996 (photo: DW).

Fig. 337. Views of the Kongur massif from above the Kengsuwar Valley. The detail on the right sweeps up from a summer herder camp to the summit pyramid of the peak (just visible in the opening of the clouds) and provides a good sense of the scale of the landscape, 19 August 1996 (photos: DW).

Fig. 338. Part of the Kongur massif in its setting. The first photo (taken 29 August 1996) looks down above the crevassed area of the Mustagh Ata glacier between Camps I and II on the normal climbing route. Karakul Lake can be seen below with the northern part of the Kongur massif on the upper right. The second photo looks across Karakul Lake to Kongur, the highest summit obscured in cloud. Photos: DW.

Fig. 339. The summit pyramid of Kongur, a telephoto from across the lake in 1995 (photo: DW).

Fig. 340. At the shore of Lake Karakul, alpine glow on the peaks in the distance beyond the ridge of the Kongur massif, ca. 19 August 1996 (photo: DW).

Fig. 341. Sheep and goats grazing below the foothills of Kongur, 19 August 1996 (photo: DW).

Fig. 342. The view from the cemetery next to the highway, looking across Lake Karakul to the Kongur massif (photo: DW, ca. 19 August 1996).

Fig. 343. Schematic map of DW's trek and the routes of Stein and Skrine in the 'Kongur Alps'. Cartography by Debbie Newell.

Fig. 344. The sad fate of the Chini Bagh, hidden behind an ugly modern Chinese hotel and converted into a restaurant with faux-oriental décor (photos: DW, 2009).

Fig. 345. The uses of historical memory: the former British Consulate as a tourist attraction, and the meticulous official designation of a lone, old tree in the courtyard as a protected landmark (photos: DW 2009).

Fig. 346. The dramatic 'Wedge' and Koskulak peaks in the Kuksay Glacier cirque (photos: DW, 17 August 1996).

Fig. 347. The SE ridge of Mustagh Ata, rising to the summit from the Kuksay Glacier (photo: DW, 17 August 1996).

Fig. 348. A telephoto from across Lake Karakul, showing the morning sun hitting the summit of Mustagh Ata with its the steep drop-off on the SE side of the summit (photo: DW, 1995).

Fig. 349. The map of Andrei Lebedev's ambitious trek and climbs in the Kongur-Mustagh Ata area in 2000. The dashed line in red traces the route on an old Soviet General Staff topo. (Courtesy of Andrei Lebedev.)

Fig. 350. The expedition postcard for the 2001 South African Kuksay Expedition, using DW's photo of 'Wedge Peak', one of their primary goals which proved to be beyond what they could accomplish.

Fig. 351. Views of Mt. Kongur from high on Mustagh Ata: on top, Russian expedition photo 2005, taken from somewhat below Mustagh Ata summit, with altitudes on Kongur overlaid (7719 is the actual summit); on bottom, photo by DW taken from Mustagh Ata summit, 5 September 1996. (Russian photo [https://static.turclubmai.ru/papers/1124/goriz.jpg] courtesy of Andrei Lebedev.)

Fig. 352. Map segments and a photo illustrating how the myth of the 'Old Karatash Pass' was put to rest. Top left: the very vague segment of Skrine's map (*GJ* 1925a) identifying the Karatash Pass on what proves to be the wrong stream valley; DW's schematic map of 1999 naming the 'Old Karatash Pass' following Skrine's information and that in the British route book; Andrei Lebedev's composite map numbering three passes above the Ygebali Valley, his No. 3 the 'Karatash Pass' identified as such on the modern Chinese topo. Overlaid is a segment from a photo taken by Ivan Zhdanov in 2007 looking down the Ygebali, on which Lebedev has inserted numbered arrows pointing to the passes shown on his map, the one closest to the camera (No. 3) being the 'real' Karatash Pass. No. 2 is the 'Western (Zapadny) Karatash' which Lebedev's expedition traversed in 2011. (Map [https://static.turclubmai.ru/papers/2223/04.jpg] and photo [https://static.turclubmai.ru/papers/2223/24.jpg] courtesy of Andrei Lebedev.)

Fig. 353. The Russians on the way to the 'Western Karatash Pass' consulting their topographic map, combining the modern Chinese one of Mi Desheng with the old Soviet Military topos. (Photo by Ivan Zhdanov 2011 [https://static.turclubmai.ru/papers/2223/27.jpg], courtesy of Andrei Lebedev.)

Fig. 354. The route of the 2005 Russian expedition, overlaid on a Soviet military topo (https://static.turclubmai.ru/papers/1124/trek2.jpg, courtesy of Andrei Lebedev).

Fig. 355. Detailed map of the first 10 days of the 2005 Russian expedition, starting up the Tigarmansu Valley, crossing into the upper Kaying and then the Kepek (Aghalistan) Pass into the Chimgan watershed, and ending with a partial ascent on Kongur. (Source: https://static.turclubmai.ru/papers/1124/f_trek_01_in.jpg, overlaid on a composite map excerpted from Mi Desheng's modern Chinese topo and the older Soviet military topos. Courtesy of Andrei Lebedev.)

Fig. 356. The fir woods of the upper Tigarmansu (https://static.turclubmai.ru/papers/1124/f08.jpg, courtesy of Andrei Lebedev.)

Fig. 357. The Russian expedition's crossing of the 'Clarmont Skrine Pass' (marked with the altitude of 4743 m) between the Tigarmansu and Kaying Valleys in 2005: two views of the ascent on the steep northern side, 2 August (https://static.turclubmai.ru/papers/1124/4743_02i.jpg; https://static.turclubmai.ru/papers/1124/4743_11.jpg), and a view of the descent on 3 August (https://static.turclubmai.ru/papers/1124/4743_05i.jpg). (Photos courtesy of Andrei Lebedev.)

Fig. 358. The Shiwakte I peak, photographed from the top of the Clarmont Skrine Pass on 3 August 2005 by the Russian expedition; compared with Skrine's photo taken almost exactly 81 years earlier on 2 August 1924 from a point slightly to the west of where the Russian picture was taken. (Sources: https://static.turclubmai.ru/papers/1124/skrine5_our.jpg [courtesy of Andrei Lebedev]; *HJ* 1952, facing p. 73.)

Fig. 359. The view down the Kaying Valley from below the Clarmont Skrine Pass, 3 August 2005 (https://static.turclubmai.ru/papers/1124/4658_01.jpg, courtesy of Andrei Lebedev).

Fig. 360. The Kepek Pass from the north: the Russian photo taken 4 August 2005 (https://static.turclubmai.ru/papers/1124/4658_02.jpg, courtesy of Andrei Lebedev); my hazy, more distant view, 2 August 1996.

Fig. 361. The Kyrgyz of the Chimgan, near the fork to the Sogato glacier, 5 August 2005 (https://static.turclubmai.ru/papers/1124/Sogato.jpg, courtesy of Andrei Lebedev). Compare the top image in Fig. 118 of the family photographed by Skrine in 1923 at a wedding not far from Chimgan.

Fig. 362. Views of Kongur from the SE: on left https://static.turclubmai.ru/papers/1124/a_5n_04.jpg, courtesy of Andrei Lebedev; on right, Skrine's photo taken from a viewpoint above Chat, reproduced with permission from the Royal Geographical Society (London), first published in Waugh 1999, p. 314.

Fig. 363. A composite illustrating the analysis of Skrine's photos by Andrei Lebedev, the goal being to identify the locations where they were taken and to match the peaks with the names given them. The images include ones I took from the Arakler Ridge in the Kurghan Valley. I have added the Roman numerals in magenta to help match the photos with the locations on Lebedev's map. The red rays and captioning on it are his. (Images and map courtesy of Andrei Lebedev.)

Fig. 364a. Skrine's careful tracing of his routes on a small-scale General Staff map of Kashgaria (Stewart collection). This map clearly must have been one he submitted to *L'Illustration* for publication with Skrine's photos to illustrate the article by Charles Rabot in the 16 October 1926 issue.

Fig. 364b. The re-drawn map, based on Skrine's original, printed in *L'Illustration*, 11 October 1926, No. 4363, p. 421.

Fig. 365. Mt. Kongur from the northeast, the telephoto taken from the Karakorum Highway south of Kashgar as it descends shortly before entering the Gez River gorge, 2009 (photo: DW).

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Introduction

Sir Clarmont P. Skrine (1888-1974) had a successful career in the Indian Civil Service even if he never rose to the highest ranks of its officials. Nowadays to embark on an appreciation of any ICS official may be looked on askance by those who do not mourn the passing of the British Empire. However, there is still much to be learned from such a study.

In the case of Skrine, there is no need here for me to trace in detail his several decades of service. Skrine's biography, written at his bequest by his cousin John Stewart, may be consulted by those wishing to learn details that are not relevant to the present book. A perceptive reviewer characterized it 'primarily as one of family *pietas*', based in the first instance on Skrine's own often verbose correspondence (Gandy 1991). Where there is no direct quotation, the text is largely paraphrase of his letters home and a few written by his parents and his wife Doris. One-sided the book may be, what is important here is its rather detailed and compelling picture of how Skrine's career unfolded prior to his appointment to Kashgar. Even though the Kashgar post came relatively early in his professional life, he brought to it an impressive amount of experience that required independent judgment and initiative, diplomatic tact, and the ability to survive rigors of travel and exploration in places distant from European comforts. Stewart's biography is not simply an air-brushed apologia. We learn here about failures as well as successes, disagreements with parents, and, even if conveyed through a personal lens, the often difficult relations with colleagues and superiors. As the reviewer, who wished for a bit less of the personal and more from government archival documents, noted, not all in the book is 'favourable' in its depiction of the man and the 'vanished world' of the Raj.

The present volume focuses at some length on a very few years relatively early in Skrine's career, which are but summarized in a relatively short section of Stewart's biography. My sources in the first instance are Skrine's letters home, with but a few other letters in the same archival collections. To the extent that there are more of the letters his parents wrote to him, I have not seen those files which John Stewart had in hand. Apparently there are also letters from Skrine's wife Doris which I did not see, although to the best of my knowledge, unlike Skrine's mother, her parents did not save her correspondence (more on this below). I have included in the edited selection of my volume a generous selection of what I consider to be the most revealing of his official correspondence and reports, since those materials do indeed help us to appreciate more fully his service in Kashgar.

My decision to undertake the project was in the first instance personal, but I came to appreciate how even this selection from his correspondence and reports may be of value to students of the so-called 'Great Game' geopolitical rivalry in Inner Asia, to historians of Xinjiang, and to others studying

European exploration of then little known regions. Not now in a position to undertake any such in depth studies on my own and recognizing the story is being told largely by Skrine himself, nonetheless I am letting him do most of the talking. My introduction will examine a few of the topics about which he wrote. My analysis and notes will, I hope, provide a framework for appreciating his Kashgar years and the written record he left us.

Notes to a biography

Clarmont Skrine, the author of these letters and reports concerning his brief Kashgar years, was already a mature and not inexperienced representative of the Raj, even though within the service he still was almost too junior to have been appointed as a Consul-General in one of the outposts of Empire. He clearly subscribed to the idealistic code of ethics for those in the Indian Civil Service and took seriously his responsibility as the representative of the Crown. While he understood that an end to British rule in India was inevitable, he was convinced that more time was needed before Indians could effectively govern themselves. So far, the efforts to involve more of them in administration had had but limited success. That the Empire's intentions were generally viewed as benign blinded ICS officials, Skrine among them, to the contradictions in the way that they viewed Russian and Soviet actions and the responses to the Russian threats on the part of Chinese officials. Skrine would even half seriously write his mother that he might even one day become 'governor of British Turkestan', and that aspiration was not really a joke. It was only years later, after he had retired and Britain was no longer the Imperial master of the subcontinent, that Skrine would admit, for example, how ill-informed and wrong he had been about the governor of Xinjiang.

It would be a mistake to try to find in Skrine (or in fact, in many humans) a paragon of consistency. He could be unsparing (yea, obsessive) in judging the conduct of others, yet could strenuously rationalize his own actions which might be criticized as inappropriate. He is openly resentful about those who would take advantage of his help and hospitality, but at best apologetic after the fact when he would impose in a similar way on others. At times he exudes confidence in carrying out his convictions about what the post in Kashgar required, whereas at other times, aware of policy differences and political sensitivities, he seems to be carefully feeling his way and seeking reassurances from those whom he particularly trusted. Naturally he was anxious to please his superiors, but by being honest enough to admit the limit on what he could accomplish, he invited perhaps unfair criticism both at the time and in the eyes of modern commentators.

There is a stereotyped negative view about the attitude of colonial officials to the colonized and others of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Yet it is clear here that more nuance is needed: at times Skrine is very generous when writing about those with whom he interacted. He can be genuinely concerned about them, and not just in some condescending way. This is not just a 'foreign devil' exercising his will in another culture. He was a careful observer of local traditions, the knowledge and respect for which was essential in his duties to advise or keep the peace by dispensing justice or moderating in local disputes that the parties would settle through customary procedures. It is true, of course, that even where sensitive to others' cultural norms, his descriptions, not unexpectedly, may invoke what today are deemed inappropriate verbiage or comparisons. In reading Skrine, we must always keep in mind that what may be offensive to us was simply part of the norm in his own times. We cannot expect him to speak in our own language with our own sensitivities.

Skrine's voluminous correspondence which is at the core of this book naturally reveals a lot about his personal life, at the same time that it conceals a lot. He is solicitous of his parents' well-being yet

imposes burdensome tasks on his mother. He is sensitive to his parents' concerns about him and his career but attempts to pre-empt criticism he expects they may raise. In writing about his wife Doris, he conveys but hints of unhappiness about their relationship, yet always takes pains to protect her in the eyes of family back home who might be overly alarmed about her safety and their domestic bliss. He was solicitous about sending holiday gifts to members of the extended family. Even though he could be almost offensively blunt in describing members of the narrow circle of European society in Kashgar, he also displayed an admirable personal concern about many of them, well beyond what was required of him in an official capacity.

All of this tempers the sense sometimes conveyed by the 'official' Skrine that he is a rigid, by his own admission even priggish, fussbudget, more concerned about appearances while defending the self-interest of Empire than in the humans who occupy the territories which it controlled or coveted. Were we to condense even more ruthlessly than I have done many of Skrine's long letters, we would be losing a lot which sheds light on him as a person and in turn helps us to appreciate fully his time in Kashgar.

It is always risky to try to read back from such evidence to explain what shaped a person by the time he had reached his 30s. Nonetheless, without undue psychological speculation, I will attempt a kind of summary assessment concerning his upbringing and education. Skrine, like many of those who distinguished themselves in service to the Empire, was obviously proud of his Scottish heritage, Scottishness somehow embodying positive character traits. In one letter he expressed this in what may seem odd phrasing: 'I am first of all an Englishman – about two-thirds Highlander and one-third Londoner.' However, any attempt to measure the impact such self-defined ethnicity, is but speculation not worth pursuing. Of arguably greater significance is what we can actually learn about his relationship with his parents, their influence on his education, the role of the educational institutions which he attended, and the other aspects of his preparation for what became his professional career.

Career patterns of the British ruling class in India had changed significantly by Skrine's time. Elite social status and personal connections and elite education no longer ensured admission to the Indian Civil Service (ICS). Passing a series of competitive examinations was now required. There was a conscious effort to diversify the service both by opening avenues for Indians who manned much of the lower bureaucracy to advance to higher positions and to enroll Britons from lower or middling socio-economic backgrounds. There were still plenty of examples where government service in India was a family affair, with sons following in their fathers' footsteps. So in many ways, Clarmont Skrine's road to becoming a member of the ICS was not exceptional. His father, Francis [Frank] Henry Bennett Skrine (1847-1933), the son of a Wimbledon clergyman, had been one of the first to join the ICS via the new regime of competitive examinations.

After three decades in the service, often involved in controversies, Frank Skrine resigned in 1897, dissatisfied with what he saw as the deterioration in the standards it had always maintained and unable to influence policy which was in his opinion doing a bad job of preparing Indians to govern themselves.[1] Once on the outside, the elder Skrine developed a reputation as an expert on the Russian Empire. His book, *In the Heart of Asia*, co-authored with Dennison Ross – now but a quaint artefact for historians of the Russian Empire – was based on a lot of the then authoritative literature. The last half of the book

1. His obituary ("Mr. F. H. Skrine. Bengal Civilian and Author," *The Times* (London), 11 December 1933, p. 17), provides a succinct summary of his many positive achievements in India, where, inter alia, 'he tried to make rural life brighter'. The obituary also notes: 'His combative temperament brought about occasional difficulties with superior authority.' The breadth of his involvement in various non-profit organizations and his publishing after he had retired is truly impressive.

covering the Russian expansion into Central Asia was largely the work of Skrine, who traveled there and found a lot good to say about the Russian colonial administration (this, in contrast to his views about the British colonial administration in India). The book lavishes praise on Governor-General Aleksei Kuropatkin, whom Skrine met. In his writings and public lectures, Frank Skrine criticized what he saw as the Government of India's mis-placed belief in a Russian expansionist threat to India. The London correspondent for *The Times of India* would quote Skrine for his expert opinion, though in some cases, for balance, would also interview officials who invoked the terror of the Russian bogeyman.[2] Naturally the defenders of the British Indian government's policies and advocates of the ability of Indians to govern themselves would bristle at Skrine's *ex cathedra* pronouncements. One riposte observed: 'When Mr. Skrine gets an idea in his head it is not readily dislodged […] and it is a pity that Mr. Skrine should disparage what is being done before taking the trouble to ascertain whether is facts are up to date'.[3] As the letters in our collection here will illustrate, when Clarmont Skrine would get an idea in his head, it was not readily dislodged either.

As a family legend suggested, Frank Skrine never wanted the responsibility of children. However, when Clarmont was born, his father took serious charge of his upbringing, trying to shape his son in ways that he would have shaped the increasingly wayward ICS and British governance in India. After Clarmont had embarked on his own career in India, his father continued to try to interfere with it through his old connections in the Indian government and in foreign office circles in London.

Even though his family did not breathe the rarified air of the highest circles of the British elite, Clarmont Skrine had a life of privilege in his formative years, one that was then reinforced by the educational institutions he attended. His formal education led through an Oxford hierarchy of elite schools, starting with the Oxford Preparatory School (familiarly known as the Dragon School even today) and at the secondary level Winchester College, in a period when its headmaster was emphasizing more athletics than scholarship, much to Frank Skrine's dismay. [*Fig. 1*] By the time of his senior year though, Clarmont had achieved some distinction in sports. He rowed with the crew, played football (soccer), had done quite well in cross-country running and became a decent shot with a rifle. Among the winter sports, he took up ice-skating seriously. During regular family trips on the continent, Clarmont obviously had opportunities to improve his foreign languages. In those travels, he was expected to keep a diary, one of the earliest ones describing his impressions when his father took him to St. Petersburg. With persistent pressure from his father (who also tutored his son in Latin when the family was on vacation), he did well enough in his studies to compete successfully for a scholarship at Oxford's New College.



Fig. 1. Clarmont Skrine in 1907 (Stewart collection).

The institutional education, and regular admonitions from his parents meant that in keeping with the norms of the time, Clarmont became proficient in the

2. See the summary of his views, with several quotations, in a review of his book, *The Expansion of Russia* (Cambridge University Press, 1903 and later editions): *The Times of India*, 8 December 1903, p. 4.

3. "West and East. The Northbrook Society," *The Times of India,* 4 June 1907, p. 7 (a dispatch 'from our own correspondent' dated London, May 17). The issue here was whether The Northbrook Society, an organization dedicated to helping Indian students benefit from their experiences while being educated in England, was in fact providing meaningful assistance. Skrine had opined that the money was not being spent for the intended purpose. For other examples, see "Bengal's Troubles," *The Amrita Bazar Patirka*, 16 November 1905, p. 4 ('he […] is regarded as a fearless, if rather incoherent, debater'); "An Outrageous Proposal," *The Tribune* (Lahore), 10 May 1913, p. 1 ('three exceptions do not prove the rule'; 'The suggestion now made degrades the people of India to the level of criminal tribes […]').

Classics, ancient and modern, with clerical reinforcement of conservative moral and ethical norms. When we come across in Skrine's letters casual references to his former schoolmasters, quotations from the Romans or from Romantic-era poets and quotations from Scripture, none of this is forced but flowed naturally out of what that schooling had ingrained. We may laugh at Skrine's observation about the trustworthiness of someone who can quote Dickens, but that was no obscure joke for those in the ICS who had similar educational background. In this period, a significant percentage of those who would enter the ICS still were graduates of Oxford or Cambridge. Skrine could write disparagingly about the other members of the service who did not have the same privileged education.

Even though it is not clear whether his father pushed him in that direction, as John Stewart states (*Envoy*, p. 32), 'some form of public service – probably in India – had for long been the tacit goal of his Oxford career'. The standard Oxford curricula did not include all the subjects which an aspiring member of the ICS had to master in order to pass the Civil Service exam. Clarmont first stayed on at Oxford for a post-graduate year in which he could fill in some of his educational lacunae in subjects such as constitutional history, and then, like most of the applicants for the ICS, took instruction for a few months at the best known of the 'crammers', Wren's in London. He passed the exams without distinction (47th out of 53 who received high enough marks to advance to appointment in the ICS), but there was still another year of training and then final exams before he could leave for India. Part of that additional training was private language instruction (in Hindi or Urdu??) from the Maharaja of Jhalawar, 'a close friend of his parents', and the exams included a medical assessment, an oral component, and a riding test (!) since the much of the work in India might require the ability to travel long distances on horseback. The results list published in 1912 indicated the province to which each of the candidates would be assigned, Skrine's appointment to be in Upper Bengal.[4]

In a sense it was only after arriving in India that the real education for an aspiring ICS official began. A long 'probationary' period of low-level, largely clerical appointments was normal, which provided the opportunity to learn first-hand bureaucratic and legal procedures and acquire some knowledge of local culture and society. Whatever language ability had been acquired in England had to be supplemented with mastering one or more of the local vernaculars. On his first attempt to pass the departmental examinations required for advancement, Clarmont failed the written exams in Hindi and Urdu, though he did well on the oral and reading parts and on the subject exams in law and financial administration. His office appointments had him posted in several different locations, one being Cawnpore (Kanpur, in Uttar Pradesh), where his father had once served. Clarmont was there in 1913 when serious anti-British riots broke out. The trial of the Muslim perpetrators underscored for Clarmont the impression that, however well-intentioned British policies were regarding India's Muslims, in practice they were failing.

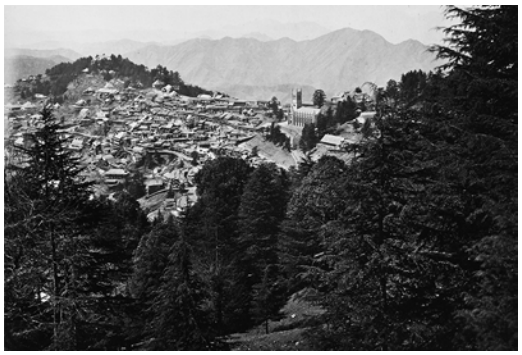


Fig. 2. View of Simla from Jakko. Photo by Samuel Bourne, 1863 (Wikimedia Commons).

Part of the 'education' of the first years in India involved adapting to the social expectations of the British elite society, with its often formal official and celebratory functions. It was of some help that his aunt Lilian, married to the Surgeon-General in Simla [*Fig. 2*], Sir Charles Lukas, would host him when he had opportunities to visit the British summer capital in the hills. That connection was especially fortuitous for

4. "India Civil Service. Final Results," *The Times of India*, 16 November 1912, p. 11.

another reason. Clarmont's immediate supervisor in Cawnpore emphasized how important it was for those who wished to advance in the service to display some prowess in the sports which many of the young British men played. The choice was between polo and 'pig-sticking'. For the former, Clarmont did not have the necessary money to purchase several polo ponies, though he later acquired some proficiency which stood him in good stead in Hunza on his way to and from Kashgar. 'Pig-sticking' involved the spearing of vicious wild boars from horseback, an activity as with any other 'blood sports' which Frank Skrine found abhorrent. Nonethless, Clarmont took it up, with perhaps some misgivings on account of his father's strictures. In one of the early competitions, a boar managed to jump up and bite Clarmont's foot. What seemed to be but a minor injury developed into tetanus and might have killed him but for the fact that the local doctor, who could not treat it properly, sent him off to Simla where Charles Lukas immediately procured anti-tetanus serum for a cure. The confrontation between Clarmont and his father over 'blood sports' also extended to other kinds of hunting, if it was only for 'sport'. This explains why in his letters home, Clarmont was always careful to emphasize the hunting he and Doris did during their tours was only for supplementing camp supplies.

The interactions between the British rulers and their servants included on occasion the mounting of fun and games for celebrations, with 'sporting events' which could include such things as a blindfolded race, a pillow fight or greasy-pole climbing. This too was part of the ethos which Skrine absorbed and would bring with him to Kashgar, such events from our perspective seemingly ridiculously out of place and perhaps even demeaning for those who, according to his accounts, seemed to be enjoying them. Apparently the interest in sponsoring such events may in part have been due to the fact that, as John Stewart somewhat quaintly puts it (*Envoy*, p. 146) Frank Skrine 'had been well known in Bengal for the festivities which he arranged in his district to brighten the tedium and hardship of the peasants' lives. Clarmont inherited this philanthropic trait.'[5]

His father's penchant for trying to shape Clarmont's career extended beyond just paternal admonitions and on occasion involved intervening directly with his son's superiors about postings. On the whole, Clarmont had developed tactics to follow his own convictions even if they flew in the face of family pressure. In one case, as he reminded his parents, the Raj of Frank's day had been changing. So, what may have been a dangerous assignment formerly was not necessarily so any longer. Moreover, to pursue a career of specialization in the judicial branch was no guarantee of being able to move up the ranks into an important secretarial position. Clarmont in fact discovered early on that he had little taste for bureaucratic routine, even if he had mastered it well enough to receive commendation.

There was a more promising alternative in the Political branch of the British Indian government. John Stewart (*Envoy*, p. 51) explains succinctly what this involved:

> The Political Service was recruited two-thirds from the Indian Army and one-third from the ICS. Although it was one department, it had two different types of work known as 'Political' and 'Foreign'. The 'Political' side consisted of service in the Indian States. (Roughly two-fifths of India was not British but was contained in these Native States). Such service was very different to that of a district officer in British India. The Political Officer did not administer; his role was to be a watchdog on behalf of the Central Government and to advise the Ruler. The 'Foreign' side was concerned with law and order in the North-West Frontier and Baluchistan, and with staffing Government of India posts outside India.

5. Frank Skrine's obituary (*The Times*, 11 December 1933, p. 17) noted: 'With the aid of an Indian committee he started annual fairs and encouraged the production of vernacular plays and operas'. So it was not just frivolous European games.

Such postings offered the appointees less direct bureaucratic supervision, the possibility for more interesting responsibilities, and opportunities to explore little-known territory. Whereas his father looked down on the 'politicals' as being rather indolent and unlikely ever to rise to the most powerful posts in the British Indian government, Clarmont was avowedly less concerned about possible future promotion and throughout his career was anxious to take advantage of every possibility to explore and document new territory, even if not as part of his official duties. Often his Kashgar writings would underscore how important the 'touring' was for his job, but also because of the personal satisfaction it gave him to pursue his 'avocations', serious ones, including filling in blanks on the map. After trying unsuccessfully to join the Indian Army Special Reserve (in the hope he might actually be able to fight in the First World War), Clarmont applied for the political service and was accepted. His first assignment in his new department was as an Assistant Political Agent in Quetta (Baluchistan, southwestern Pakistan), where coincidentally two decades later in 1935, when he was serving as Political Agent in the Kalat State, he nearly died in the earthquake that destroyed the city in the night of May 30-31.[6] In writing home from Quetta in 1915, he admitted that the British officialdom there was rather laid back, but he justified this as a reflection of the fact that actual administration was largely in the hands of the local leaders, who for the most part followed traditional tribal law (*Envoy*, pp. 53-54). His appointment in Quetta enabled him to pass easily an exam in the local language, Baluchi; looking ahead he planned to work on Persian, which he had begun in London.

The timing of his transfer to the political section was fortuitous for a young man who hoped to see not only more of South Asia but also expand his horizons and career in Persia. Developments in the war created an urgent need for more British officials in Persia. In conjunction with the successes of a military operation headed by Sir Percy Sykes, in 1916, Clarmont was posted as Vice-Consul in Kerman and, despite his lack of requisite seniority had the circumstances been normal, he soon was promoted on a temporary basis as Consul there. The responsibilities were substantial, not the least being the necessity of dealing with an outbreak of cholera. His work during this period involved extensive travel in difficult conditions and ample opportunities to explore and even map new terrain. It is clear from his letters quoted in John Stewart's biography that he was also an astute observer of local culture. Clarmont's acquaintance with Sykes, about whom he had mixed feelings, would come up more than once in the Kashgar documents we are publishing. While he hoped to be able to continue working in Persia, already he was dreaming of other appointments should that not pan out. One of them, which he mentioned for the first time in 1919, was the consulate in Kashgar. His final assignment, before Kashgar was to return to Baluchistan, as the Political Agent in the Chagai tribal area, an assignment which involved not only the challenges posed by inadequacies public services but the need to pursue bandits who took refuge in the mountains. At the same time though, when in Quetta, he was able to take a break from work and improve his ability in playing polo.

In short then, during these first years in the service, Clarmont Skrine acquired a wide range of experience which would be relevant to his service in Kashgar. He had learned the ins and outs of routine judicial and fiscal administration as well as the tact necessary for delicate diplomacy, had acquired important connections in the British India officialdom, had advanced his knowledge of several regional languages and cultural traditions, and had demonstrated a capacity for effective and rapid response to crises where he could not count on support from higher authority. Even though by the norms of seniority for such appointments he was still too junior, his superiors obviously felt he had the

6. Skrine's anonymously published article in *The Asiatic Review* (1935) vividly described the disaster and the British response.

qualifications to be appointed Consul in Kashgar at least on a temporary basis, while the incumbent, Percy Etherton, was on leave.[7]

Before we examine his Kashgar career more closely, it is necessary to say a bit more about Skrine's relations with his family.

What we have seen about his father's orchestration of his son's upbringing and young Clarmont's development of growing ability to plot his own course and push back against parental admonitions surely was not unusual in families of that time (and, for that matter, our own). Frank Skrine was obviously something of a curmudgeon, rigid in his demands, confident in his knowledge. What we have in their correspondence is evidence of what must have been a kind of uncomfortable and formal relationship, at the same time that there was respect and warm concern. In many important ways, Frank Skrine was a role model; it is clear Clarmont consciously tried to 'uphold the family honour'. He might openly resent the times when his father was trying to intervene on his behalf by contacting old acquaintances in the service. However, when encountering a crisis where he himself lacked experience as to how to proceed – the scandals he uncovered about his predecessor Etherton a case in point – Clarmont did not hesitate to write his father for advice. It was a situation that could derail Clarmont's own career if not handled properly. Although correspondence between father and son became infrequent, Frank Skrine would express dissatisfaction if Clarmont would trouble his mother about career or other problems that really were more the concern for the men in the family. A typical kind of male prejudice, which should not conceal the fact that Helen Skrine, if perhaps more gently, might also admonish her son.



Fig. 3. Helen Lucy Stewart, age 16 (Stewart collection).

Just as the somewhat formal exchanges between father and son are not surprising, so also is the contrasting warmth of the exchanges with his mother [*Fig. 3*]. Helen Lucy Stewart was from a family of Scottish lairds, whose heirs still occupy a lovely estate in Perthshire that would be young Clarmont's home (with his grandparents) for some years starting at age 3 [*Fig. 4*]. Helen was nearly 20 years junior to Frank Skrine when they met and married in India. She seems to have been an engaging and lively social

7. Documents relating to Skrine's appointment to Kashgar are in BL IOLR L/P&S/10/453, a collection of materials on the Kashgar consulate. In the file is a clipping from the London *Times*, 24 January 1922 (Issue 42937), p. 9 (The Times Digital Archive. https://link-gale-com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/apps/doc/ CS153293368/TTDA?u=wash_main&sid=bookmark-TTDA&xid=b3cdac06 [accessed May 6, 2025]), the news possibly supplied to the paper by Frank Skrine, which reads:

New Consul-General for Kashgar

We learn that Mr. Clarmont Percival Skrine, Assistant Political Agent in the Chagai district of Baluchistan, has been appointed Consul-General at Kashgar, Chinese Turkestan.

The post of Consul-General at Kashgar, which is of considerable importance, was held for several years by Sir George Macartney. Since his retirement in 1918 Lieutenant-Colonel P. T. Etherton has officiated in Chinese Turkestan as Consul-General.

Mr. C. P. Skrine, son of Mr. Francis H. Skrine, entered the Indian Civil Service in 1911, and has been Vice-Consul at Kerman, Consul for Kerman and Persian Baluchistan, and in 1919 was an Under-Secretary to the Government of India in the Foreign and Political Department.



Fig. 4. Ardvorlich, the Stewart estate in Perthshire on Loch Earn (photo: DW).

success, a talented actress who was touted for her roles in the theater of the British summer capital at Simla and during their London years spent a lot of time in theatricals supporting charitable causes. One such production which attracted a favorable review by the London correspondent of *The Times of India* on 30 November 1906 was a play by Arthur Wing Pinero, "The Profligate", which had been a sensation when first performed in 1891 due to its somewhat provocative emphasis on the double standard in Victorian society in the way the morality of men and women was treated and depicted. The play had opened the Garrick Theatre, ran for 129 performances, subsequently had successful runs in The Netherlands and Germany, and in 1894 a shorter but successful run mounted by the Simla Amateur Dramatic Society, where the role of the leading lady was played by Helen Skrine. The London performances of 1906 were put on by the Society's 'Home Branch' and again starred Helen. As the reviewer noted, naming many of the dignitaries in the audience, 'The house was filled with a fashionable crowd, and the file of waiting carriages reached down to the bottom of Adelphi Terrance'. Her father John Stewart was among the dignitaries in the audience. The long list of attendees does not mention Frank Skrine, but one might assume he attended another of the three stagings. The reviewer took particular note of her performance:

> One feature of the presentation which linked it very agreeably with the production at Simla ten years ago was that the role of the heroine, Mrs. Renshaw, was in the same hands, those of Mrs. Francis Skrine, whose skill in dramatic representation is well-known in India. She played the part of the confident school-girl bride, and of the indignant wife, dramatically discovering her husband's heartless profligacy, with good taste and feeling, and she was the recipient of several bouquets each afternoon from admirers of her acting.[8]

What the review fails to mention is whether the version of the play in this staging was the one first presented at the Garrick, where Pinero reluctantly changed his original harsh conclusion of the profiligate husband's committing suicide in expiation for his sins. The rewritten conclusion was more banal, with his wife forgiving him. We might speculate that the role played to strengths of Helen Skrine's character in real life. Her own marriage to Frank seems to have been rock solid. However, the issues the play raises certainly had some relevance for various episodes that come up in our documents. For Helen Skrine, they might have resonated in later years as she made peace with the fact that both Clarmont and Doris would find partners outside of their marriage.

Clarmont's weekly letters to his parents were the norm beginning in his school years and continuing to the end of their lives. While I cannot judge the earliest years, for the period of concern here, most of the letters were addressed to his mother and are remarkable for their substance and warmth [*Fig. 5*]. We get the sense that Clarmont could confide in his mother in ways that he would not do with his father. He exercised a certain amount of self-censorship, but there is no reason to believe he would deliberately

8. "The Simla A.D.C. Home Branch Performs," *The Times of India*, 19 December 1906, p. 7.



Fig. 5. Clarmont Skrine and his mother Helen, at Les Bosquets, France, 1939 (reproduced with permission from the Royal Geographical Society [London], no. CPS/00001).

falsify information. He wrote a lot about his work and travels, with somewhat flowery descriptive passages about landscape, customs and the people with whom he interacted. Often longish passages dwelt family concerns, material which I have tended to condense substantially in my selections for this book. He assumed anything he wrote would be shared with his father, but he would sometimes caution his mother not to quote to anyone who might 'leak' to the press some confidential news out of India which he was not authorized to transmit. There was a particular sensitivity in this correspondence in what he would write about his wife, Doris, where clearly, to avoid consternation in family circles back home, he air-brushes possible strains in their relationship and spares his and her parents concern over her health. As with any 'primary source', this correspondence, though to my mind generally trustworthy in most respects, has to be used with a bit of caution. The letters are extremely important for providing the meaningful personal context that was lacking in his official correspondence and reports.

In 1914, Clarmont thought he had found his true love in Eugénie Perfect, the daughter of George Perfect, an entrepreneurial planter and sugar cane mill manufacturer in Barabanki, near Lucknow. They had met in social situations (including dances), and in something of a last-minute, passionate rush before she was to go back to England with her mother, Clarmont proposed. Whether things had gone farther than the formality is not clear. Partly because they believed it was too soon before he had settled into his career and a better salary, Clarmont's pleas for parental approval were rebuffed.[9] More may have been involved here in their response, for perhaps an India-based planter's daughter, however well off the family may have been, was considered to be socially beneath the Skrines. Clarmont rather bitterly yielded to their pressure, feeling that to end the commitment was to play the cad (à la *The Profligate*) and damage the future prospects of the young lady. In fact, four years later Eugénie married an army officer, Reginald Penrose-Welstead, who would rise to head the extensive Indian Military Farms department, and, retired with the rank of Colonel, was named a Companion of the Order of the Indian Empire (CIE) in the New Year Honours of 1943. I have no evidence about the success of that marriage, nor is there any reason to think Clarmont might have had a happier married life had he married Eugénie.

When on leave visiting family and acquaintances in Scotland in 1919, he met Doris Forbes Whitelaw (she was 22, he 31); their engagement soon followed. For Frank and Helen Skrine, this appears to have been an ideal match. Doris stood to receive a sizeable inheritance.[10] Her grandfather was a wealthy industrialist and philanthropist who also had been elected an MP from Glasgow. Two of her uncles had also been MPs; and they and her father had attended Harrow and Trinity College Cambridge. Doris's mother Lillian, was from a landed gentry family, in earlier generations the lairds of Tamrawer Castle. So far I have found little information about Doris's father, James Baird Whitelaw, who had served in one

9. The concern that a young member of the ICS not marry right away on arriving in India was actually a common one (see Gilmour 2006, pp. 278-281). So, at least on that point, Frank Skrine's reservations were not out of line.

10. We might be cautious in making too much of the possible 'fiscal motives' in parental calculations, even though that issue could not have been irrelevant. The ability of a junior ICS official to support his wife properly was obviously a concern, but after considering it, Doris's father was happy to bless the marriage (Stewart, *Envoy*, p. 83).

of the elite Scottish army regiments following his graduation from Trinity College and thus may have had active duty in the Boer War. The Whitelaws were members of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland. In at least one of the Skrine letters he is referred to as the 'Elder', that is one of the members of the parish court. The Whitelaws lived in a spacious historic house in North Berwick on grounds which once had been a medieval abbey.[11] For the Skrines, Doris's family certainly had the social and economic status which reinforced their own self-perceptions that occasionally come out in Clarmont's letters as class prejudice.

Doris and her younger sister, Iris, seem to have been anxious to escape the family home. Marriage was the route to such liberation; there is a lot in the Kashgar letters about Doris's support for her sister's marriage. Clarmont considered the prospective husband, an army officer in India, was dull and 'beneath' her, possibly a misjudgment, since he would have a distinguished career. Doris dutifully wrote home regularly to her family, and as Clarmont wrote in one letter (30 August 1923), when home on leave, she could be expected to look after her mother. However, as he wrote disparagingly a year later (18 August 1924) near the end of their stay in Kashgar, she was deeply unhappy at the prospect of returning home: 'As I've hinted to you before, her home life was <u>not</u> happy & she dreads a return to it. She regards 1st her mother & then (to a less degree) you and nearly all her other relations and in-laws as hostile grown-ups bent on interfering with her liberty and circumscribing her movements & general independence and "grown-up-ness". You see she is still a child in many ways and simply can't look at these things yet from a sensible, fearless, matter-of-fact way like you or me.' It is hard to imagine this coming from a loving husband.

All this may simply reflect a common situation at the time where traditional parents had a hard time making peace with independently-minded daughters. One of Doris's early letters to Clarmont suggests that her father must have imposed a puritanical regime in the home, although on her mother's side, the women at least were culturally 'liberated' (Stewart, *Envoy*, p. 84). That said, judging from the expensive purchases of clothing her mother made and sent as gifts to Doris, her parents had little idea of what life would be like in the outposts of empire. It is not as though Doris herself was not pleased with the gifts; the hardheaded criticism of them comes from Clarmont. Yet, while Doris certainly seems to have been enthusiastic about her marriage, Clarmont found it somewhat odd that she showed little interest in the buying of a trousseau and jewelry. After they had been married for about two years, she would write her mother a carefully phrased letter about how happy she was she had married Clarmont. What was important, she stressed, was that despite his 'strong personality', he did not try to suppress her independence and encouraged her to grow in unexpected ways (Stewart, *Envoy*, p. 98). There is ample evidence that indeed she was able to pursue many of her own interests, even if without explicit approval from her spouse.

Doris clearly had received a good education and was particularly interested in the arts. Following their engagement, she was either enrolled in or doing volunteer work in the Edinburgh Art School, and, anticipating going to India, was trying to arrange tutoring in Hindustani. She would later learn enough of the languages of the areas in which Clarmont was posted to be able to interact meaningfully with the local women and their children. Already during their time in Quetta in 1921 she became involved with organizing Girl Guides, employed her dramatic talents, and was a leader in the Purdah Club that

11. See "Alterations for James Baird Whitelaw. Plans, sections and elevations showing additions and alterations and including details of levels of ground, heating and drainage," at Canmore: National Record of the Historic Environment (https://canmore.org.uk/collection/1511276), last accessed 5 May 2025. This reproduces the architectural plans of the Whitelaws' Nungate house drawn up for renovations undertaken in 1924.

arranged meetings between native women and Englishwomen. She was much less enthusiastic about the standard social fare of the European community and the men's sports. There is already a hint of her unconventional impulses which Clarmont would feel were inappropriate for the wife of a British official, since at one dance she dressed as a local woman and put on black-face. She was insistent in wanting to accompany him on his 'tours', even while he was pursuing bandits; sometimes he had to draw the line and say no. However, they did enjoy escapes to hike, hunt and camp in the mountains, a shared interest that carried through the Kashgar years. Much of the touring was physically demanding and involved braving foul weather, long days in the saddle, and a lot of discomfort.

It appears that, unlike Helen Skrine, Doris's mother had little interest in saving her daughter's letters. When Clarmont was writing his book about the Kashgar years soon after their return to London on leave, he had some of her letters in hand. The one and a fragment of another preserved along with his letters which I have seen are delightful, and others apparently had a lot of interesting material about Doris's interactions with the women at the consulate, material which was valuable precisely because she could meet with them socially but Clarmont could not. In some instances, he mentions having asked her to write down for him accounts about her reception by the wives of the local officials. We have a few of her Kashgar sketches and watercolors [*Fig. 6*]. Apparently no major cache of her letters has been preserved, although John Stewart had access to some of them when he wrote his biography of Skrine. We can but speculate whether, after Clarmont himself had mined the letters for his book, he or she might simply have discarded them.

Our reliance on Clarmont's letters for so much of what we know about their marriage (which took place in Bombay on 23 November 1920) leaves room for other speculation about those early years of married life. There is good reason to think they may never have shared the marital bed. On the eve of the wedding, Frank Skrine sent his son a recently published 'marriage manual' by Marie Carmichael Stopes, the book somewhat sensational for its treatment of sexual relations and advocacy



Fig. 6. Examples of Doris Skrine's Kashgar watercolors: lower left, scene outside of Kashgar dated 6 August 1922, the day of the Qurban celebration; lower right, 'The aksakal's daughter'; upper right, 'a Turki story-teller'. (Credits: two images on left, from the British Library Collection: IOLR MSS EurF 154/54; two images on right, Stewart collection.)

of contraception.[12] In his cover letter, the elder Skrine offered some unsolicited advice about how, gradually, to introduce a new bride to the intimacies of marriage. One might think Clarmont would have bristled a bit at this, but he responded calmly that taking some time in the matter was just fine with him. As they were then preparing to leave for Kashgar, a rather vigorous discussion in the family correspondence revolved around the impractical parental demand that Doris could go only if they took along a nurse for her, the obvious anticipation being she might get pregnant. Clarmont reassured them that there was no likelihood this would happen. Doris seems to have directed her passions to animals, cats over whom she wept if she could not take them with her, and gathering at their various residences over the years a menagerie of animals and birds. When the local wild dogs broke into the compound and slaughtered most of them, she was devastated. Her last years to her death in 1971 were spent living in a small house on the Isle of Hoy in the Orkneys, her companionship the animals who had free run of her house. She had willed any remaining assets to support the local SPCA.

Although the subject need not detain us, in the 1930s both she and Clarmont developed intimate relations outside of their marriage but accepted that reality and maintained the façade of marriage to the end of his career. She received commendations for her charitable activities organized in the various locations where he served and continued to arrange clever entertainments for holiday celebrations at the consulates.

In a brief correspondence I had with someone doing serious research on the regimental history of the period and had a question for me in connection with the Skrines, my correspondent judged that Doris was 'impossible' and 'virtually wrecked' Clarmont's career. I find it difficult to agree with that. Unconventional or arguably morally compromised marital arrangements generally had little consequence for officials in British service. I am not sure either Doris or Clarmont would have been easy to live with; a celibate marriage for most people would seem to be a non-starter. However, clearly they shared a lot, supported each other in important ways, and found enough of value in their marriage to continue it even in circumstances where other couples would long ago have separated. She is an essential part of this story of the Kashgar years.

Skrine's letters we include here catch him at the moment when he was adding another important credential to enable him to enter the Political branch of the ICS, namely to pass a key language exam, in this case Persian. His eventual mastery of the language was critical in his later appointments in Persia, the posts staffed by 'politicals' of the ICS. In preparation for his appointment to Kashgar, with which we begin our selection, he also began learning Turki (Uyghur), and for the geographic exploration he hoped to do while there, even though earlier he had had some basic training in mapping, he arranged additional instruction from the experts in the Survey of India. What he was perhaps least prepared to handle in his new job was the task of walking the fine line between the concerns and authority of his superiors in India and those of the British Foreign office, which was in charge of British consular appointments elsewhere in China. That he managed even this difficult task reasonably well is a testimony to training and experience which instilled in so many of the officials of Empire an ability to manage in difficult situations where action could not wait for exchanges over unreliable and slow lines of communication.

12. See Stewart, *Envoy*, p. 87. The book was Marie Carmichael Stopes, *Married Love: A New Contribution to the Solution of the Sex Differences* (London: A. C. Fifield, 1918). Since none of the standard publishers would accept it, she arranged for the limited private printing, which quickly sold out. For years the book would be banned in the United States as allegedly pornographic, simply because it openly discussed sex.

Harding and Etherton

Skrine's correspondence with his parents was a forum for unbridled criticism of those whom he personally and professionally could not tolerate. The targets of his rancor included his former acquaintance of college days, Gerard Price, his vice-consul Harold Harding (1883-1943), and especially his predecessor in the consulate, Percy Etherton (1879-1963). Even though in his official reports he could be more guarded when it came to Harding and Etherton, the critical readers of what Skrine wrote about the latter readily detected an almost obsessional animosity evidenced in passing comments and in what would become a massively documented indictment that ultimately resulted in Etherton's censure and would cost him an opportunity later in life for a significant service appointment. Readers of our book may well wonder whether what Skrine wrote tells us more about his own character and less about the objects of his criticism. In response to his parents' expression of concern, he insisted he was not simply out to get Etherton but rather was animated by loftier concerns about the service and the interests of the Empire. Such protestations of even-handedness do ring a bit hollow. At very least, it seems possible to understand why he was so negative about some of his associates, Etherton in particular.

Clarmont Skrine's upbringing and education, discussed above, is one obvious explanation. That is, from an early age, he was instilled with certain values about ethical and professional responsibility. Not only did Frank Skrine demand of Clarmont explicit commitment to a rigid code of conduct, but in his own career in the Indian Civil Service, the elder Skrine arguably set an example. At least in the abstract, the professional ethos of the ICS reinforced such values. That in practice they were not always adhered to was perhaps the principal reason Frank Skrine resigned his position, rather than fight a losing battle to maintain higher standards. It is no surprise that when the details of Etherton's alleged 'malfeasance' while in Kashgar began to emerge, before proceeding in official channels, Clarmont sought his father's counsel on the assumption that they would agree about the seriousness of what Etherton had done. In the arguably less serious matter of Harding's conduct, similar concerns over the standards to be maintained in the service by its representatives of the Crown help us to understand what, in Skrine's eyes, was wrong with his subordinate. Unlike in the case of Etherton though, when Harding had left, Skrine tried to be fair in his 'recommendation' regarding the man's abilities, even if he harbored suspicions about his reliability.

The case of Harding in fact seems to be pretty straightforward. The relationship between the two men was somewhat awkward, since Harding agreed to come to Kashgar on a temporary basis as Vice-Consul under Skrine as Consul-General, even though superior to Skrine in the length of his service. Age and 'rank' were matters taken seriously in the services. Moreover, one underlying issue was the fact Skrine represented the Government of India, whereas Harding was an appointee of the British diplomatic service in China. Institutional rivalries and the fact the two services followed different playbooks did mean something. The post in Kashgar was something of an anomaly in China, in that the Consul-General was an appointee of the Government of India and directly subordinate to Simla. Copies of official reports would also be sent to Beijing and would be reviewed in the Foreign Office in London. However, it was not unusual for the British legation in Beijing to disagree with decisions made by consuls who often had to make quick decisions on their own. Kashgar was perhaps something of an extreme case, given the difficulties of communication over long distances.

In the first instance, probably Harding rubbed Skrine the wrong way as a 'provincial' Canadian, who, even if from a prosperous family and with a good education, lacked some of the social refinements expected in the ranks of the Anglo-Scottish elites. And Harding was one, it seems, to flout convention



Fig. 7. Harold Harding, on the right, wearing a turban and Uyghur clothing (Special Collections, University of Bristol Library [https://hpcbristol.net/visual/EH-s62]. CC BY_NC_ND 4.0).

in his personal deportment, and, in an obvious way, with his choice of attire – practical 'native' dress rather than 'European' dress appropriate (in Skrine's eyes) for the representatives of the Crown [*Fig. 7*]. Such matters may, even in Skrine's estimate, have been superficial; his deeper concern was based on, it seems, largely unsubstantiated suspicion that Harding was a Bolshevik sympathizer. Thus, he could not trust his Vice-Consul to be supporting official British policies of containing the Bolshevik threat. This suspicion seems to have been based on Harding's having made an unofficial visit to Mongolia when it was coming under Bolshevik control and due to the fact that Harding's sister had gone off to Moscow and gotten herself arrested in circumstances that seem to suggest she was in fact pro-Bolshevik, perhaps a secret agent, etc. Her case became a *cause célèbre*. Yet Harding himself apparently expressed no sympathy for her situation.

Even prior to Skrine's arrival in Kashgar, the Chinese government was questioning foreign claims about extraterritorial jurisdiction over non-Chinese citizens.[13] Skrine was forced to grapple with the issue of whether his predecessors, Macartney and Etherton, had been too liberal in defending those with a questionable claim to British citizenship. In the case of Macartney, he had to tread very carefully, given the general respect for what he had done in his long tenure in Kashgar. Etherton was a different matter; in his reports, Skrine was much more blunt in pointing a finger of blame. What was abundantly clear though was the need for the British government (and its representatives in China) to agree on a more precise definition of qualifications for putative 'British citizens' in order to stake out a defensible position in the face of counter-claims by the Chinese authorities. Harding and Skrine held different views on the matter and submitted their separate recommendations to their superiors: at stake was not whether any claims of extraterritorial jurisdiction might be possible but how long it would be before they all would be rejected by the Chinese. Skrine's recommendation for a more measured response to the Chinese claims received the nod of approval. This kind of difference in policy recommendations of itself was not a reason for Skrine's criticism of Harding, although the idea that his subordinate Vice-Consul would go over his immediate superior's head and communicate with the legation in Beijing obviously rubbed the wrong way.

Skrine recognized the value of Harding's excellent command of Chinese and rued the fact that with Harding's departure for future reassignment in the British diplomatic posts in China, there was no longer a Vice-Consul in Kashgar with that ability and who could share some of the burden of the routine concerns of the consulate. In his later service in China, even if still unconventional in some matters, Harding displayed initiative in postings where there was no real guidance from above to settle delicate issues.[14] Whether the British minister in Beijing, Sir Ronald Macleay, fully agreed with Skrine's qualified recommendation for Harding is uncertain, though at least on the surface it seems they shared

13. The most thorough treatment of this issue, specifically with regard to the situation in Xinjiang and the Kashgar consulate, is in Whewell 2020, Part II (pp. 93-175).

14. See Coates 1988, pp. 413-414, 440, 458, 483-484, 529. For the official summary of his career up to the late 1920s, see *The Foreign Office List and Diplomatic and Consular Year Book for 1928* (London: Harrison and Sons), p. 266.

the same opinion of the man as talented in certain ways but unsuitable if judged by the norms of the British China service and the Government of India.

Skrine's 'Etherton problem' began even before his arrival in Kashgar, continued throughout his stay there, and into the immediate aftermath of his service in Xinjiang. As in the case with Harding, personal, not professional issues help explain the conflict. Skrine's comments about Etherton's taste in furnishings make it clear that class prejudice was involved: the man had shoddy tastes that reflected his Liverpool tradesman heritage. The Scottish lairds of Skrine's heritage were on a different social and cultural level; there is abundant evidence in Skrine's shopping lists for his personal and professional use that only the best shops in London were expected to be the purveyors. Perhaps more important here though was the disparity between the social norms of the professional military men in British India and the members of that relatively small elite club of the Indian Civil Service. Clearly Frank Skrine had no truck for the mores of the soldiers; in fact he was unhappy when at an earlier point he learned Clarmont had actually engaged in the 'sport' so many of the officers enjoyed: 'pig sticking' – the spearing of wild boars from horseback. Clarmont had to reassure his father that he was not enthusiastically embracing the culture of the military, which undoubtedly was ingrained in Etherton's makeup.

So apart from whatever the barroom scuttlebutt was about Etherton's mores, we might guess that when the men met but briefly as the Skrines were already packing for their trip north, there was no love lost. This, the more so because Etherton had done little to brief Skrine about Kashgar and had failed to keep him informed regularly about his travel plans on leaving the consulate. It did not take long on the trip for a serious incident on the sometimes treacherous paths through the mountains to provide the catalyst for a bitter indictment of Etherton, who had loaned the Skrines two of his horses (rather than have to take them on to India) without warning that one of them was a difficult mount to control. The stallion chose to pick a fight with the other horse, during which Skrine came away with a leg injury (not serious). In describing this incident to his parents, Skrine launched an already bitter tirade about Etherton's lack of consideration and irresponsibility, this even before there was any hint of Etherton's malfeasance during his tenure in Kashgar.

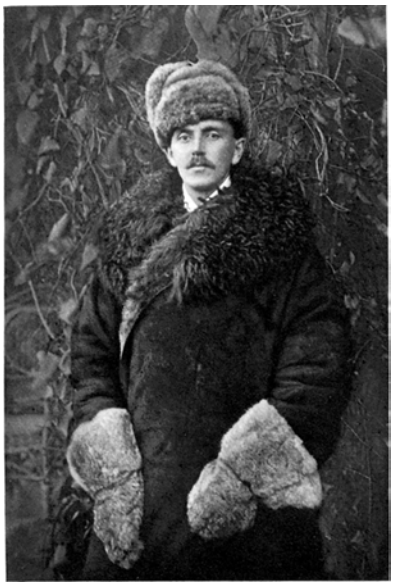


Fig. 8. Percy T. Etherton. Frontispiece to his Across the Roof of the World *(London: Constable, 1911).*

[*Fig. 8*] His dislike for Etherton was certainly exacerbated by what he perceived as moral laxity that undermined the prestige of His Majesty's representative in Kashgar. Even if later in his life, as his marital happiness unraveled, Skrine would be more forgiving of his own conduct at consular posts, at least in 1922, by his own estimate, he was undoubtedly something of a prig. The idea of Etherton's consorting with local prostitutes was bad enough, but to hire (as Skrine claimed was the case) a consular staff member as a pimp and bring the women into the consulate for dalliance was beyond the pale and allegedly was making the consul a laughing stock. Recognizing that mores in the local community allowed for 'temporary marriages', Skrine admitted that had Etherton gone that route, it would have been less embarrassing for the Crown. Of course for a handsome bachelor like Etherton to have liaisons would have been normal, had he been more discrete about them. Etherton clearly liked to boast of his achievements (as he would do in his book about defending the Empire's interests in Kashgar); his penchant for self-congratulation certainly contributed to Skrine's

irritation about the man. The histories of other British officials posted in India or in China offer analogous examples of sexual license; it was quite clear that to engage in such dalliance normally was never cause for censure or dismissal.[15] Financial malfeasance with government funds was another matter, taken very seriously, as Skrine would have been well aware.[16]

He certainly cannot be faulted for his diligence in checking the financial accounts of the consulate on arrival in Kashgar. He well knew that ICS norms for its officials included very strict accounting for the receipt and expenditure of government funds. What Skrine discovered on checking the account books was, in his telling, a mess. Shoddy bookkeeping at best, with at least some indication of erasures and fudging of figures. With his typical diligence, Skrine determined to get to the bottom of what had been going on and to set the accounting on a proper footing. In the process, he determined that Etherton had played fast and loose with the government's money, using some of it for the wrong purposes, exploiting the difficulties of currency exchange to make personal financial gain, etc. Documenting all this was not easy. In addition to summarizing all the evidence, Skrine ultimately had to supply the account books themselves for the auditors in Simla to check. At the end of the long process of review, some of the more serious charges could not be documented, given the sloppy record-keeping, but enough evidence was found to require that Etherton re-pay the government a not insubstantial amount of money that he had used for personal expenses. Skrine and those who supported him fully in the matter (not all G of I officials were sympathetic with what seemed to them an overblown set of accusations) would have wished for Etherton to be tried formally in court. However, the logistics of having to arrange that and the public spectacle it would make of the British officialdom argued for a lesser 'sentence' settling the matter if Etherton paid up. The immediate impact was the decision Etherton could not resume his post in Kashgar; he promptly resigned his commission in the service in order to embark on a new career as an entrepreneurial 'Asia expert'. Nearly a decade later, when a question arose about his possibly being appointed governor of Western Australia, the old file re-surfaced and its review cost him the job.

In an attempt to provide a more balanced assessment of Etherton's career and his time in Kashgar, I have appended, unchanged, the detailed study I wrote nearly two decades ago.[17] My focus was on Etherton's intelligence work, not on the other aspects of his duties as consul. Looking back on that now, I can appreciate how we still need more analysis of what Etherton actually accomplished in Kashgar, even though I am not persuaded that such a study will substantially change my critique of his efforts at self-promotion.[18] Others such as Peter Hopkirk have uncritically accepted Etherton's boasts that almost single-handedly he fought the putative Bolshevik threat. Moreover, beginning at the time of Etherton's consulate, the Bolsheviks in Central Asia apparently put a price on his head and the subsequent standard anti-British propaganda in Soviet-era books echoed the uncritical view of British machinations against the early Soviet regime in the politics of the so-called 'Great Game'.

15. See James 1997, pp. 207-223, with a focus on the period up to about the middle of the 19th century; Gilmour 2006, pp. 284-289.

16. See Gilmour 2006, pp. 135, 149-151; see also Coates 1988, p. 358.

17. Waugh, *Etherton* (now also, Appendix 3 below). To the best of my knowledge this extensively documented treatment of Etherton's intelligence activity has not been superseded. See also some of the more recent Russian publications, cited below in n.20..

18. Apart from more detailed research in the British, Russian and Uzbek archives, it would be of value if an archive of Etherton's personal papers might turn up. However, in response to a query from me, a distant cousin of Percy Etherton interested in the family history, H. L. Basil Etherton, wrote that he is not aware of any such archive even if family members might possibly hold some relevant documents (e-mail of 3 October 2021).

A reasoned estimate is that in many ways Etherton did the best he could to obtain good intelligence, though its quality certainly would have been uneven, given the various agendas of the agents he had to use. Undoubtedly he subscribed to the prevailing Government of India mantra that there was a serious Bolshevik threat both to India and to Xinjiang, and he did everything he could to counter it. His monitoring and translation of Russan radio broadcasts from Tashkent and his interception and forwarding of some Russian printed propaganda undoubtedly supplemented what the Government of India could otherwise obtain. However, it is not clear that any of this was hugely important for the making of British policy. At one point, when approached by leaders of the anti-Bolshevik forces in the Ferghana Valley who wanted British military support, Etherton dutifully inquired of his superiors whether he could provide it. After some deliberation in London, the categorical response was that he could not.[19] Recent work, even by scholars in Russia, has underscored how conflicted and ineffective was Whitehall in implementing any meaningful responses to events in Central Asia which were far from as threatening as the Government of India and its intelligence agents would have it.[20]

Without further study it is unclear whether he was effective in his other duties such as negotiating with the local officials the judicial problems for the 'British subjects'. Etherton's military background did not prepare him for such work in the way an ICS official would have been prepared. In recommending Etherton as his replacement, George Macartney noted as much, and Skrine himself recognized that weakness in Etherton's qualifications. To compensate, Etherton had a vice-consul, Nicholas Fitzmaurice, who was a China specialist. Skrine may have harbored doubts whether Fitzmaurice, as the one who handled most of the negotiations with local officials, did the job well. However, he also rued the fact he had no Fitzmaurice to take on some of the burdens of consular responsibilities. When asked, Etherton succinctly contested Skrine's criticism of him for allegedly exacerbating relations with the Chinese by blithely registering as British citizens individuals who had no such right. However, that issue probably was not such a pressing concern during Etherton's tenure in the consulate.

Having made so much of Etherton's financial shenanigans, Skrine put himself in a somewhat awkward position in Kashgar by engaging actively in the fur trade. His parents in fact were quite alarmed at the

19. See my treatment of this incident, quoting from the documents, in my *Etherton* (also in Waugh 2021, pp. 349-350).

20. See, for example, Ulunian 2019, based on extensive research in the British archives. The author traces the British intelligence-gathering and its reception in London for the period 1917-1922. Kashgar figures in a rather minor way in this, since the author accepts the evidence that the intelligence being obtained in Mashhad was more important. See also the recent article in Russian by M. K. Baskhanov 2018, the author agreeing with my deflation of Etherton's claims and emphasizing how the anti-British Soviet era propaganda demonized Etherton without looking at the British archival material. Baskhanov has read through and provides summary excerpts from many of Etherton's intelligence reports but leaves the reader to discover how accurate they may have been. While less inclined to dismiss the significance of British anti-Bolshevik efforts, Makhmudov 2022 looks more closely at archival materials with information about the forces whom the British consuls tried to cultivate. He attributes the failure of some of Etherton's efforts to the lack of enthusiasm amongst indigenous Pamir peoples who had greater sympathy for the Russians of the new Bolshevik regime than for the anti-Bolshevik forces – a debatable assertion. See my broad assessment of the dénouement of the British-Russian confrontation in Waugh 2021, an essay written prior to the publications by Ulunian, Baskhanov and Makhmudov, who cite my essay on Etherton that appeared in 2007. The important Russian journal *Novaia i noveishaia istoriia* (Modern and Contemporary History), 2022, No. 1, published as a kind of special section several articles which to a considerable degree revise the older Soviet-era interpretations of the 'Great Game' in the years immediately following the Bolshevik revolution. Among the articles of greatest interest here are Makhmudov's, one by Ulunian focusing on the British decision not to recognize Bukharan independence in 1922, one by A. V. Riaguzova on the failure of the Comintern to mount any meaningful 'Hindu Operation' against India in Bukhara, and one by E. Iu. Sergeev treating broadly both the Soviet and British strategies regarding Central Asia. See also Ter-Minassian 2021 for a recent treatment of the disastrous British military incursion into the Transcaspian region in 1918-1921.

extent of those dealings. Skrine bent over backwards to defend himself, making it clear he was not really 'trading' (forbidden by the rules governing his service) and was in any event using his own funds, not government money, and taking advantage of the fur market as a way to transfer his savings to England if and when the furs could be sold at a profit. This does sound a bit like splitting hairs, although there is no evidence that any of his dealings in furs ever were censured. He understood the rules about financial dealings, which also would have applied to any effort to earn money as a 'news agent' or by writing an account drawing on official papers, unless there would be formal approval by his superiors.

Undoubtedly there is more which could be learned about Skrine's personal finances while in Kashgar. His salary must have been more than adequate, with money to spare for the many gifts of furs and other things he sent home regularly. And he even seems to have been well enough off to provide some support for his parents' rent of their apartment in London. As a 'fur merchant' he seems to have been less than successful: what he thought would bring good prices in London was out of fashion or simply had little appeal to the big London furriers. And Skrine's mother had to shoulder the burden of dealing with the odoriferous packets of furs that would arrive in their apartment and take the contents to shop around at the various dealers. Skrine would apologize to her about this but nonetheless had few compunctions about exploiting her good will. His alternative, when he learned that there likely was no London market for a big batch of purchases, was to offer them to a dealer in eastern China, with little prospect of making as large profit from the transaction.

Skrine and his official duties

As with Etherton, a book-length study of Skrine's work in Kashgar remains a desideratum.[21] My assessment here is based primarily on his personal correspondence and a very selective reading in his official papers. My initial focus was on his intelligence work as it was related to the history of the 'Great Game', even though in working through the documents now I have tried to provide a broader view of his consulate. At least in the early months of Skrine's posting in Kashgar, when some of his intelligence reports proved to be wrong and he complained about the limitations in his ability to obtain better information, some of his superiors openly expressed the wish that Percy Etherton were still in Kashgar. The underlying message here seems to have been they thought his intelligence work and his ability to deal with the local officialdom were better. Yet arguably that view in part reflects the fact that they seem to have been taken in by Etherton's own claims of success. Modern writers on the Great Game such as Peter Hopkirk and Alistair Lamb, have relied uncritically on Etherton. For Lamb (introducing a 1986 reprint of Skrine's *Chinese Central Asia*), the deliberately a-political descriptive 'travel book' Skrine wrote after returning from Kashgar proved that Skrine never took his duties seriously but rather treated the post as a kind of honeymoon with his new bride. That, of course, is nonsense.

Reading beyond and critiquing the one book, whether Etherton's or Skrine's, is important here. One of the challenging realities Skrine faced was the change in the diplomatic landscape. The British hostility with the new Bolshevik regime, which gave some urgency to the perception that everything needed be done to counter Bolshevik subversion across the borders in Asia, now became an uneasy truce with the signing of the Anglo-Russian Trade Treaty in March 1921. Even some of the highly placed India-Office functionaries in London were puzzled as to what exactly now was to be British policy regarding Russia. On the Russian side, it is not as though the Soviet regime actually honored the

21. A full history of the British consulate in Kashgar is yet to be written. Max Everest-Phillips' excellent article (1991) apparently was a preview of a larger work he had completed on the British consuls there, but he never published the book. Inter alia, he used the British Library files of the Skrine materials which we are mining here.

promise stop efforts of subversion in British territories. However, insofar as it is possible to research the issue from scanty evidence, it seems that there was a lot of propaganda smoke but little real fire in efforts to export revolution. Skrine's letters and reports do convey an excessive concern over the Bolshevik threat at a time when arguably it was not so dire. However, his attitude reflected one of the core premises of the Government of India officials, who saw it as their obligation to squelch any developments that might undermine British control in India. Skrine obviously had some influence over measures taken by the authorities to secure the borders in Xinjiang, though he never claimed to have had much impact. As he began to perceive and would emphasize many years later, he underestimated the degree to which Provincial Governor Yang was concerned about border security and, irrespective of any outside prodding, took steps to ensure it. It is not as though the British consuls had to tell the Chinese officials to stiffen their spines.

Insight into the Chinese administration of Xinjiang can be gained from the book by Justin Jacobs (2016), though only part of it is relevant to the short period of Etherton's and Skrine's consulates (pp. 49-74). In reviewing for me the draft of the current book, Jacobs has pointed out various inconsistencies and weaknesses in Skrine's assessment of local conditions, which may reflect less on Skrine's abilities and more on limited perspectives that any ICS official would have brought to the task. The political situation in Xinjiang was in flux. Old assumptions about what the British consuls might demand and do were coming under pressure from the Chinese authorities; increasingly the ability of the British to impose their own views was being undermined.

Skrine complained that Etherton had overspent the budget allocated for intelligence work, which hindered his own ability to pay informants. Having been rapped on the knuckles for sending in reports that, on the basis of other information his superiors had, were patently false, he was certainly sensitive to the necessity to check the reliability of what he was told. Yet there was no guarantee that he could be certain of the result. Paid intelligence agents (often posing as merchants) might be very limited in what they could learn, especially if the Bolshevik authorities were developing a better ability at counter-intelligence. Anti-Bolshevik leaders across the border in Ferghana had every reason to communicate what would be in their best interest, even if it distorted what was actually happening. Bazaar gossip still had to be reported, some of it probably accurate, but a lot presumably not. Etherton's intelligence from Semirech'e, north of Kashgaria, was limited. Lacking reliable agents, Skrine seems to have been even less well informed about that region. Overall, as the British officialdom seems to have appreciated, the intelligence out of Kashgar was inferior to that being obtained from Russian Central Asia via Mashhad in northeastern Iran. In that regard, not much was different from the situation during the time Etherton was in Kashgar.

The first British consul-general in Kashgar, George Macartney, brought to the job essentially native Chinese and presumably during his long tenure had mastered the art of effective negotiation with the local officials in matters pertaining to the 'British subjects'. By the time of Skrine's consulate though, the political climate had changed: in resisting what the colonial powers had imposed in the 19th and early 20th centuries, the Chinese government was questioning whether foreign governments had any extraterritorial jurisdiction over those it claimed were their subjects resident in China.[22] Skrine devoted considerable time researching the history of this issue and wrote long memoranda with his recommendations. Perhaps incautiously, he criticized both Macartney and Etherton for their allegedly

22. The most thorough treatment of these issues is now Whewell 2020, in which a major portion of her book deals with Xinjiang. What she says regarding the differing views of Harding and Skrine on the matter could use some further elaboration.

having been too liberal in claiming British citizenship for members of families that had immigrated from British India, thus exacerbating the issue which was increasingly coming up as Skrine carried out his duties. During the first few months he was in Kashgar, his vice-consul Harding handled some of the negotiations with the local authorities, obviously bringing to the task not only excellent Chinese but some experience in how such issues were being dealt with elsewhere in China by British diplomats. Without Skrine's authorization, Harding submitted his own recommendations about the 'British subjects' issue to the British minister in Beijing. Skrine then found himself on the defensive to justify his criticism both of his predecessors and of Harding. Even if initially there seems to have been some hostility in higher circles to Skrine's arguments, ultimately his attempt to find a middle road in defining more narrowly what were accepted criteria regarding the registration of 'British subjects' seems to have won the day.

Apart from this issue, which looms large in the documentation relating to Skrine's work in Kashgar, we come away with the impression that in many ways he may have been ideally prepared to do effective work in negotiations with the officialdom of Kashgaria. His work with the ICS in India involved a lot of judicial cases either in an advisory or supervisory capacity. Granted, the administrative and legal framework for such cases in China was different; there is no reason to think a British India expert could impose what worked in India on Kashgaria. However, the necessity to take into account local custom and the diplomatic skills needed to achieve a positive outcome were relevant. Skrine's language preparation was relevant for communicating with the local 'British subjects'; in addition to the languages required at his posts in the sub-continent, he seems to have learned enough Eastern Turki (Uyghur) to communicate in it. At least some of the local magistrates – Chinese or Manchu – apparently knew some Turki. However, he had to rely on a translator for Chinese. In his letters and reports, Skrine might state how he often had to fight tooth and nail, perhaps even browbeat local officials, to win cases. We have reproduced in the documents below (pp. 184-211) an extraordinary, detailed record of the sessions with one of the regional officials who had been particularly difficult. This sheds light on the process of interrogation in which Skrine took an active part.

Even early in his career in India, and then in the years after he returned from Kashgar, Skrine repeatedly emphasized how important it was for a British official to 'tour' in his district and not just preside in a regional capital. The touring was an important way to learn about local conditions and establish working relationships with local officials. Often then, issues requiring attention could be handled locally. Of course for Skrine, this was not the only reason he wanted to tour, since he so enjoyed personally seeing new territory, getting away from the office, hiking, taking photos, even mapping the unknown. That he spent as much time as he did on such 'avocations' should not be taken as an indication he was not seriously involved in what he defined as his official duties. Part of his criticism of his immediate predecessors in the consulate was that they had failed to tour enough, even though they had a budget to pay the expenses. In all of the major towns he visited, he would engage in negotiations with the local officials regarding any cases involving 'British subjects'.

Of some interest is the fact that he actually got along quite well with many of those officials, perhaps because they did not create serious problems in such negotiations. He also did not hesitate to lodge official complaints against others who were seen to be particularly obstructive. Such complaints might take a long time, transmitted via the British legation in Beijing, to reach the department that might even go so far as removing the official in question. Skrine's comments on local officials in some cases are off the mark, in that he insufficiently appreciated the calculations and loyalties involved in appointments made by the governor in Urumqi. To the degree that he had information about back-room politics, it

was filtered through a few individuals he trusted (notably Zhu Ruichi); they had their own agendas and understandings.

In his Kashgar years Skrine dealt with many other matters. Consuls had to take seriously social obligations. The Skrines frequently hosted other foreign residents, notably the White (anti-Bolshevik) Russians who had been stranded in Kashgar by the Revolution in Russia, and the Swedish missionaries. A crisis arose when the missionaries with excessive zeal were converting local Muslims; Skrine had to intervene to protect the missions until the flames died down. Official visits were exchanged with various local government officials, including the cruel local military commandant, Ma Fuxing, whose overthrow and murder occurred not long before the Skrines left in 1924. The *daoyin* (civil governor) of longstanding, Zhu Ruichi, was a favorite of Skrine's (and Etherton's), in part because he seems to have been a competent administrator and agreed with the consuls on various issues. The administrators whom Skrine liked also were men of some educated refinement, their attraction similar to that of cultured British administrators whom Skrine admired, as opposed to the 'lower-class' military men such as Etherton. Here, of course, we need to recognize that just because Skrine had cultural and class prejudices affecting his attitude about Etherton, that does not mean Etherton was lacking in diplomatic and social skills required for effective interactions with the local administrators.

Skrine's speculations about the reasons for the removal and replacement of officials (Zhu among them) often are wide of the mark, but such misunderstandings had little bearing on the necessity for the consul to interact successfully with officials, however competent or ineffective they may have been. Maintaining good relations with the leaders of the local 'British subject' communities (the *aqsakals*) was less challenging, since it was in their interest to reciprocate in hospitality, help with local arrangements in the tours, etc. Of particular interest here is the example of the long-time *aqsakal* Badruddin in distant Khotan, who was well-known to the foreign explorers of Xinjiang as a purveyor of antiquities. He hosted Skrine, who arranged a shipment of mural fragments and some other objects that the vice-consul Harding delivered to Aurel Stein (see Waugh and Sims-Williams 2010). Skrine's descriptions of his dealings with local officials are valuable for fleshing out the little we might otherwise know about the individuals involved and the actual social contexts for the interactions between them and the foreigners.

Even though the initiative was not his, Skrine hosted the effort by the Marconi Company to install wireless communication between Kashgar and the outside world. In the time of Etherton, the consulate had been able to monitor Russian radio broadcasts, but the Government in India decided not to maintain the equipment when Etherton left. Communication with India continued to rely on the weekly horse post to Misgar, just over the border. From there urgent messages could be telegraphed to Simla. There was a Chinese telegraph connection via Urumqi to Beijing, but it was unreliable and there was no guarantee of the security of the communications, even though cipher was used for anything sensitive. Skrine's documents shed some light on the difficulties of getting the Marconi project up and running. He was able to track the progress, since the engineers doing the work were hosted at the consulate. The wireless connection with India was finally functioning in 1924, and Skrine did then use it to transmit reports. The fate of that service subsequently is not certain.[23]

Skrine's contributions to our knowledge of Inner Asia

It would be a mistake to draw a sharp line between Skrine's official duties and his avocations, since much of what he did even when touring and in remote locations in the mountains also was relevant

23. I have provided a more detailed overview of the consulate's communication network in my *Etherton* (Appendix 3).

for British intelligence about Central Asia. Many British officials and especially military officers had ventured beyond the mountains that formed the northern borders of 'British India'. On their return, they would supply the intelligence and mapping agencies in Simla with information about the routes they had traveled. Such information was then compiled into confidential route books that would, if necessary, have been valuable for any British military actions in those regions. Thus, Etherton's travels (some of which had occurred about a decade before his appointment to Kashgar) were a source of information, and on Skrine's return in 1924, one of his first tasks was to provide information for updating the General Staff's *Routes in Sinkiang* (1926).

Even though most of the British travelers who provided such information did not engage in serious mapping, Skrine deliberately prepared himself with some training and the proper equipment to map in areas still blank in the Survey of India maps whose coverage extended into Xinjiang. He was quite open about his desire to fill in some of those blank spots in the maps which had been produced by Aurel Stein and his Indian assistants. Skrine was quite successful in that effort, even though his efforts at serious mapping were confined to a relatively small area in the mountains south of Kashgar. There was nothing especially secret about these activities insofar as they represented contributions to the history of exploration that attracted the attention of academic geographers and might then be published openly either in book form or in learned journals such as that of the Royal Geographical Society in London. Skrine occasionally wrote to Aurel Stein about his explorations and mapping, and the latter responded with enthusiasm and helped to arrange that Skrine on his return to London would be able to lecture at the RGS.[24]

An important complement to the mapping was photography, about which Skrine was serious even if with somewhat mixed results due to bad weather or damage to the photographic plates during their shipment to Kashgar.[25] He had both larger glass plate cameras and smaller ones that used nitrate film. When the conditions were right and the images properly exposed, the results were remarkably sharp and clear. His travel diary often records his exposure settings (something that digital cameras today record electronically for each shot!). He set up a darkroom at the consulate and also was able to take along a portable one to use in the field. At regular intervals he would mail off prints to his family or to Stein; for the latter he would provide some of the technical information about individual prints. Even decades later, analysis of his mountain pictures has been of value for identification of peaks and correlation with modern maps. That most of Skrine's prints he mailed from Kashgar arrived intact is impressive, given the nature of the postal route. There was one major exception, when an important set of the photos he carefully packed for Stein had been opened and when allegedly they could not be delivered were sent back to Skrine in Kashgar. They arrived, carelessly packed and damaged; Skrine naturally was furious at what he judged was the incompetence of the British India postal clerks.

The subjects of his photography went beyond just mountain scenery. His images documented buildings, the fortifications that then surrounded cities such as Kashgar and Yarkand, collections of antiquities, scenes of daily life, etc. On official visits, he would sometimes take formal portraits of his hosts. He was particularly proud of some of his portraits and well aware that what we might call 'ethnic photography' would be of interest at least to his family. For the current book, it has been possible to juxtapose a generous selection of his images with the descriptive passages in his letters referring to

24. For my fuller treatment of what Skrine accomplished in exploring the 'Qungur Alps', see Appendix 2 and my article, Waugh 1999.

25. For an overview of his photography see Waugh 2004. Appendix 1a below contains a chronologically arranged tabulation with thumbnail images of all of Skrine's photos from his Kashgar years for which I have copies.

the occasion or the subjects. Of course with any such photography, an assessment of its value should consider the potential biases of the medium and the context in which the photo was made.

Even before he left Kashgar, Skrine made it clear to his mother that he wanted to protect his copyright to the photos so that he could get first credit in publishing them. There is a cache of his correspondence once back in India and when on leave in London testifying to his efforts to place the photos in various publications, and in fact several illustrated periodicals included them. He also was generous in providing images to illustrate the book the Russian émigré Paul Nazarov would publish about his escape to and time in Kashgar. See my Appendix 1a with some of the documents about these publications and with other material to facilitate proper identification of Skrine's photos that are now housed in several archives. At least so far it has not been possible to locate all the original negatives, and among those that have been preserved, many show quite a bit of wear and tear.

Apart from the photography, Skrine's writings have contributed to ethnographic study of the peoples in Central Asia. The raw materials for his observations are in his letters and travel diary, framed sometimes in terms that might appeal to his readers and thus, arguably, reflect his European biases (e.g., the 'Scottishness' of the Kyrgyz herders). Already at the time he was recording the material he was familiar with at least some of the other literature on Central Asia published by Europeans who had traveled there. Once home and preparing his book, *Chinese Central Asia*, he did additional research and incorporated material from Doris's letters. So the published book (Ch. XIII) provides a systematic account about customs and a long section with summaries and quotations (with translations) of the folklore he had recorded during his tours with the help of a young informant and translator. The Swedish diplomat and academic specialist on 'Eastern Turki' literature, Gunnar Jarring (1907-2002), would compile several volumes of such folklore and translate it. These volumes (Jarring 1946-1951) are very valuable for documenting local customs. In several places he cites approvingly Skrine's texts. The valuable ethnographic study of the Uyghurs by Ildikó Bellér-Hann (2008), also includes descriptive material from Skrine's book, although she finds some of the other foreign sources about customs to be more valuable and where possible locates information in native sources. Her study effectively mines the folklore for information not found in any other written sources. I have been cautioned by a knowledgeable colleague about the inadequacies in some of Skrine's transcriptions and translations of the Turki texts but feel there still is unpublished material here that merits close examination. Without the ability to provide such analysis and properly render his manuscript material, I have included in this book only a few samples.

As other modern scholarship which cites Skrine makes clear, his often cryptic comments employing imprecise terminology for designating ethnic or linguistic differences are not without value if understood within the context of a more general 'European explorer' literature about the peoples of Kashgaria. However, it is only with the more recent efforts at mining local oral tradition, where field work has been possible, that we can begin to learn about the history of migrations which shaped the ethno-linguistic landscape through which he passed. And, as this recent scholarship shows, since Skrine's day, national ethnic policy may override cultural realities and thus hinder our ability to learn more about cultural realities about which he commented as something of a sidelight to his professional assignment in Kashgar.[26]

26. In particular here I have in mind Friederich 2001, which focuses on what is known about the history of peoples Skrine and others termed 'Taghliks' and in particular analyzes what Skrine wrote about one group of them whom he encountered in but a few days' travel through the Oi-Tagh Valley on his way back to India in 1924. I am indebted to Hermann Kreutzmann for the reference to and a copy of Friederich's long article, which was part of a larger project that

Clarmont Skrine lived in an era when there was a huge appetite in many parts of what we can loosely call the 'European' world for accounts about exploration and what was perceived as the exotic cultures of other regions. This appetite was fed by publications, scholarly, popular, or sensational. Everyone from academics and officials to casual travelers and adventurers might write about what they had done and seen. Among the subjects frequently covered were the regions of Inner Asia within the purview of British India. And, more narrowly, authors who had some connection with the Kashgar consulate wrote about their experiences there.[27] Although he lectured after his return from his long service in Kashgar, George Macartney deliberately avoided writing a book about his time there. His wife would publish her own memoir, a rather bland and uninspiring contribution to the genre. Even though they had been in Kashgar only briefly while Macartney was on leave, Percy and his sister Ella Sykes published a book about their travel and experiences, the most interesting parts written by her and reflecting her curiosity, if not empathy with the local culture. All the members of the special mission of Blacker, Bailey and Etherton would publish books about their experiences. The earliest, Blacker's, is cast as an adventure tale, in fact more an apologia for his having done little of consequence than a useful record of his brief time in Central Asia. Etherton's book, which we have analyzed elsewhere, was a contrived effort at self-promotion, exaggerating his accomplishments and in the process drawing on material from his official communications Government of India regulations forbade be published. Had he not resigned his commission in the Indian Army prior to publishing the book, he could have been prosecuted. Bailey, always reserved about blowing his own horn, published an account about his indeed heroic time avoiding Bolshevik capture in Central Asia, but only long after that affair was history. There are other Kashgar-related accounts, among them one by Eric Shipton, an eminent mountaineer who would be the last of the British consuls there. However, as he explicitly stated, he was writing primarily about his pioneering ventures into the mountains of the region. His wife, Diana Shipton, wrote her own book, which is more substantial than the earlier one by Lady Macartney. The post-colonial critics of European travel accounts have focused on their biases but rarely have attempted to explore in depth the limitations within which the authors may have worked and the relationship between the printed books and their sources. Skrine's book on his Kashgar years is one of the more substantial contributions to the genre, but it too requires the kind of critique which most who have cited it had not undertaken. Our earlier article analyzing its making (2007) is a rare exception; its conclusions will be summarized here.

Although when he first headed for Kashgar Skrine may tacitly have harbored ideas of 'upholding the family hounour' – i.e., by publishing books, as had his father – his decision about writing what became *Chinese Central Asia* evolved, in part by accident, when he was already there. He certainly was familiar with at least some of the more significant academic and travel literature on the region before going, would acquire more of it as it appeared, and would take some of it along on his 'tours'. He kept a travel diary from the beginning, and once in Kashgar spent a lot of time re-writing the story of the journey north to send, along with photos, for the pleasure of his family. He admitted he had re-written the whole account, perhaps with a thoroughness that persuaded him to scrap the original notes.

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remains unpublished.

27. The books mentioned in this paragraph are: Ella Sykes; Percy Sykes (1920); Lady [Catherina] Macartney (1931); L. V. S. Blacker, *On Secret Patrol in High Asia* (London: John Murray, 1922); F. M. Bailey, *Mission to Tashkent* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1946); Eric Shipton, *Mountains of Tartary* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1950; repr. in *Eric Shipton the six mountain-travel books*, ed. Jim Perrin [London: Diadem Books; Seattle: The Mountaineers, 1985); Diana Shipton, *The Antique Land* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1950).

After spending so much time working on the account about the journey up, he was disappointed that it did not elicit comment from his family. The section of *CCA* dealing with the journey to Kashgar presumably incorporates much of that re-written account at least in summary form. A continuation diary volume for the later period of his stay, in which he recorded additional notes when back in London, has survived.

Among the books with which he was familiar was the volume published by Ella and Percy Sykes (1920). Skrine's relations with the Sykses were somewhat conflicted. He found Ella's denigration of the natural wonders and food of Kashgaria to conflict with his own descriptions about its being a kind of Arcadia. He was very concerned that his former superior in Persia, Percy Sykes, might 'scoop' him by using some of the photos which Skrine himself hoped to be the first to publish. Skrine's parents in London met with the Sykses in social situations, and somewhat out of the blue, Ella Sykes recommended Clarmont to the prominent London publisher Methuen as a possible author of a travel book. Methuen was publishing some of both weightier travel narratives and light-weight ones by E. V. Lucas, who joined the board of directors in 1910 and then headed the company from 1924-1938. Skrine quickly put together some samples of what he had to offer, making it clear he probably could not match Lucas's evocative, if vapid prose and insisting that he wanted to be sure to have lots of illustrations. That is, if anything he prized the pictures more than any text he might write and 'wrap around' them.

His duties as consul prevented him from doing any further preparation for his own book, apart from jotting some descriptive material in his diary or assuming he could cannibalize some of what he wrote home. Skrine was very careful to follow the Government of India regulations regarding public statements and publishing by its officials, unless they had official approval. He had to work within the rules, lest he jeopardize his career. He was explicit about needing to avoid controversial political information. So the book was to be a travel account, devoid of meaningful political substance, and thus providing only a marginal idea of what he had done in an official capacity while in Kashgar. When he finally finished the manuscript in London and sent it off for review to the Government of India officials, they found absolutely nothing in it that violated the rules.

Even though Skrine had written he just wanted to wrap some prose around his pictures, he put serious effort into making the book more than just a travelogue. The primary sources for the text were his letters, some of Doris's and notes from his travel diary, material he organized chronologically and or pulled together into thematic groupings (notably with regard to folklore, customs and antiquities). Occasionally it seems he altered dates either in text or in captioning pictures, though we cannot be certain whether such examples may have been lapses of memory or conscious changes better to fit his narrative. In order to give the appearance of citing the letters written at the time, in some instances he seems to have 'quoted' as letters material that in fact had not been written as such, although this of itself is no indication that the content is any kind of invention. Where we have been able to check, the material of his letters is indeed reproduced essentially verbatim, even though in the travel diary there are passages which have his very extensive editing and re-writing, of the kind he told his mother he had done when preparing the account of his travels up from India. He would admit when writing home that he had a weakness for flowery descriptive prose that his schoolmasters would not have approved. He certainly must have filled in gaps in the written sources from memory and possibly from what Doris told him. Buttressing all this material was some serious reading he did once back in London. He was already acquainted with Aurel Stein's publications; he drew on and properly cites the important expedition report by Jules-Léon. Dutreuil de Rhins and Fernand Grenard (1897-1898). For all his misgivings about

Ella Sykes's view of Kashgar, Skine found material in the book she wrote with her brother.

Skrine found ways to gloss over or simply ignore political matters that his superiors might have determined he should not publish. However, there are also a few instances where he deliberately altered his original sources, in order not to suggest that His Majesty's Consul-General had done anything that would have tarnished the image of the British Empire. The most blatant case, which is quite amusing, concerns when he was in Yarkand and attended there along with some of the Swedish missionaries, a theatrical spectacle by a touring group. The guests were invited to choose from their repertoire a play that was then performed. The Skrines were the guests of honor, and Doris thus chose what promised to be an adventure tale about a bandit. However, as it turned out, the piece included bawdy scenes which took place in a brothel and elicited a lot of laughter from others in the audience. Not willing to admit in print that Doris had made such an inappropriate choice, Skrine attributed the choice to the Swedish missionary lady (even though he identified her only by an initial, not her full name). The fact that Skrine thus altered the facts here underscores how important it was for him to defend what he perceived as the honour of the Crown by maintaining at least the façade of impeccable correctness. That concern also was evident in the harshness of his criticism of Etherton.

My analysis of the history of Skrine's book arguably provides readers with a clear understanding of what it is and what it never was intended to be. Would that critics of other Europeans' travel accounts have made a serious effort to learn more about their sources and histories rather than simply judge them by some modern standard that is largely irrelevant to the time when they were written.

In addition to writing the book, during his leave in London Skrine was busy placing photos in various publications (see our Appendix 1a). He lectured about his Kashgar experiences several times, the most important of the talks being the one he gave at the Royal Geographical Society on his exploration of the 'Qungur Alps'. That talk, published in a substantial article, was quite influential in the later exploration of the area, a subject we discuss our Appendix 2. He lectured twice (the talks then published in 1925) for the Central Asian Society on the routes to Kashgar and lectured on Turki folklore, anticipating the section of his book devoted to the subject. Later in his career he published a substantial book based on his experiences in Persia and the Middle East, and he returned to the subject of Kashgar in his last years, embarking on a study of George Macartney's consulate there.[28] Slowed by strokes, he then hired Dr. Pamela Nightingale, whose research had focused on trade in Western India, to finish his book. As he would note in a preface and she has confirmed to me in private conversation, she wrote most of it.[29] In short, Clarmont, aspiring to 'uphold the family honour' as an author, arguably ended up leaving a more lasting published legacy than what his father had done.

Last years

In recognition of his long and meritorious service, Clarmont Skrine was appointed Knight Bachelor in

28. His book *World War in Iran* (1962) remains a valuable first-hand account of events there over many years, but especially during the Second World War, when he was the British Consul-General in Mashhad, was given the delicate task of escorting Shan Reza Pahlevi into exile, and then had responsibilities at the British embassy in Tehran. Unlike with his book on the Kashgar years, he was much freer in 1962 to discuss political events, although he makes it clear that following his retirement from the service, he had no access to unpublished political documents (other than his own reports and those of his predecessor at Mashhad) and thus presents the book as a personal narrative.

29. After the publication of her study, *Trade and Empire in Western India 1784-1806* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970) and the book with Skrine, Dr. Nightingale became an expert on late medieval English commercial history. She graciously hosted me and my wife at lunch in her Oxford home so that I could learn more about her work on the book with Skrine.

the New Year's Honours List in 1946. With the postwar changes in the Middle East and the end of the British Empire in South Asia, the prospects of his continuing in the service dimmed. Already beyond the age when many of his colleagues had retired, Sir Clarmont did so in 1948.

Clarmont and Doris had remained together even though both of them had extramarital affairs beginning in the 1930s. The Skrines shared postings and travel in India and Persia until his retirement, maintaining the appearance of social propriety. When they finally separated (though apparently never divorced), she settled on the Isle of Hoy in the Orkneys, where she contributed to the local community by producing children's plays and organizing a touring concert group. He would visit her each summer until just before her death in 1972. Apparently for her by then the Kashgar years were but a distant memory.

[*Fig. 9*] Apart from his writing, Skrine filled his retirement years in London with lecturing and serving on various advisory boards. He kept all the long correspondence he had maintained with his mother, his photo archive, and various odds and ends of his Kashgar papers. He obviously was anxious that his career and accomplishments not be lost to history. At his death in 1974, John Stewart was his executor and deposited Skrine's papers and many of the photographs in the British Library after finishing the biography which Skrine had asked him to write.

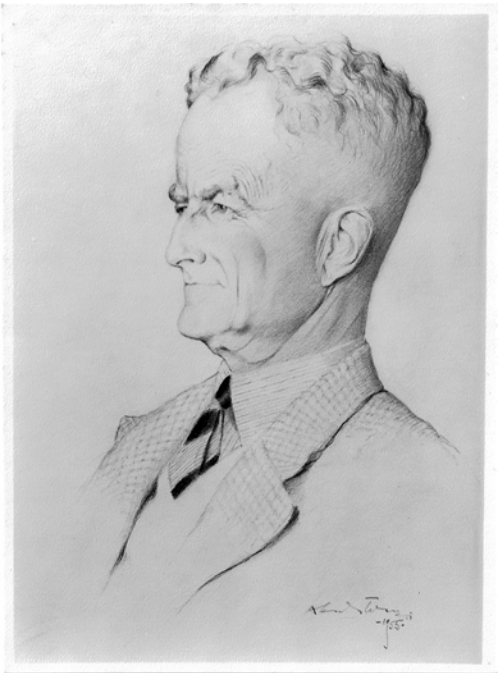


Fig. 9. Clarmont Skrine in 1955 (copy of print from a hand-drawn portrait, Stewart collection).

The Documents: Clarmont Skrine's Kashgar Correspondence and Reports

My selection begins with his final preparations in India for the trip to Kashgar, since they are revealing of the travel conditions and provide some context for appreciating Skrine's perspective on his posting. He then travels to the hill stations in the north of India, the summer residences of the British administration. Except where otherwise specified, the letters are addressed to his mother Helen, and have been reproduced here without the salutations and signature lines. Most of the letters have been reproduced in full; any editorial excisions or inserted explanations marked in brackets. Clarmont always refers to his wife Doris as 'D'. The official reports, which have been selected from a much larger body of documentation, have been excerpted for the publication here, editorial omissions or comments duly noted. Skrine often used abbreviations, for which in most cases I have filled in the missing letters in brackets. For more on my editorial conventions, see my preface to this book.

[*Skrine opens here with comments on his Persian language examination, which was very important for the career on which he had embarked in the British Indian Civil Service. He had previously been posted to a consulate on the border between what is now Pakistan and and Afghanistan, where the local language for administration in the first instance was Persian. As we learn later from the correspondence, the Persian was useful in Kashgaria, but so also, for his dealings with the local British Indian subjects, was Hindi. For communication with the local Kashgar population, the language was Turki (today's Uyghur), which he began to learn even before leaving India. He had to rely on translators for Chinese, in order to deal with most of the government officials in Kashgaria.*

In the letters regarding preparations for the trip, considerable space was devoted to the concern by Doris's parents (her mother is 'Mrs. Jim') that she could not possibly spend time safely in Kashgar unless they took along a trained nurse to deal with medical emergencies. The concern about the cats here foreshadows Doris's lifelong passion about her pets and the other animals she would add to her menagerie on Clarmont's consular appointments. In her final days, she lived alone in a cottage overrun with her pets.]

[*Fig. 10*] **Hotel Majestic, Bombay, 4 April 1922**



Fig. 10. The Hotel Majestic, Bombay (cropped from: https://www.past-india.com/photos-items/hotel-majestic-waterloo-mansion-colaba-bombay-6-pc-views-1909).

Thank the Lord I've got over my exam. Very stiff it has been too, tho' only lasting 2 days. Yesterday I was hard at it from 11 till half past 6, practically without a break; 'prose' grammar paper and unseen translation. This morning I did idiomatic sentences & viva voce, & this afternoon a stint which I didn't know about called 'dictation.' It wasn't I who wrote Persian at the dictation of the examiner, as you might think: much worse. They gave me an extract from a newspaper article on Gandhi and made me dictate a Persian translation of it at sight to a clerk, carefully timing me. I did it fairly well, I think, as I have a large vocabulary & am accustomed to talking politics in Persian; my viva-voce this morning too was a distinct success. But I am distinctly doubtful about the prose, the grammar paper and the idiomatic sentences. More than half of the grammar paper stumped me, & the trouble about the other two was that I'm a bad speller in Arabic, being totally unable to remember which of the 4 kinds of 'z' the 3 kinds of 'S' or the 2 kinds of 'h' the innumerable words containing those letters are spelt with. I know I made many mistakes in spelling, and that fact combined with my poor grammar paper may prove my undoing. The grammar paper was a rotten one containing many things which are long out of date & of no importance. There was no other candidate for H[igh] P[roficiency] but there was one for Higher Standard and one (to my great surprise) for the 'Degree of Honour.' The latter was an Indian whose parents apparently live in Persia & speak Persian as he does, practically as their native tongue. He had two or three of the same papers (e.g., the grammar & the sentences) to do as I did. He disliked the grammar paper very much. I shall not hear for a fortnight, it seems, whether I've passed or not. If I pass I get Rs. 2000/. reward, 500/. of which I shall give to my late mirza, the good Moh[amma]d Ibrahim Irani. If I pass it will be largely through his learning and scholarship.

[...] I hoped to have received various parcels from home while in Bombay this time, but alas they haven't come, & now we are off on Thursday the 6th for Simla. The things will have to be forwarded to Srinagar. We are doing some heavy shopping here for Kashgar, mostly stores & are getting many useful things done.

We were both very much relieved to get Dr. Raquette's[1] letter to Father, which Mrs. Jim has sent this

1. Dr. Gustaf (Gösta) Raquette (1871-1945) was a Swedish medical missionary posted to Kashgar and Yarkand between 1896 and 1921, who became an authority on Eastern Turki (Uyghur) and subsequently taught at the University of Lund.

mail. I was practically certain that there was more than one medical woman in the Swedish Mission, from what I had heard, but I sent for definite information from Kashgar some time ago. No answer yet. However, Dr. Raquette's information will be authoritative & he says that there are two well-qualified lady nurses among the missionaries at Kashgar. That's good enough, surely? [...]

D's main preoccupation is about the cats. I must say, much tho' I love 'Mrs. Pussy' & 'Jane,' I shall be thankful when we have left them behind. They do complicate life so much for D., and incidentally for me! Everything else is subordinated to the pussies, & now that we are so soon to part from them, D. is in a state of almost continuous tears. We are having the utmost difficulty in finding a home for them [...]

It's vilely hot and sticky here, as it always is at Bombay at whatever time of year, and I shall be thankful to get up the railway again. It is delightful to think that by July we shall be no less than 20 degrees of latitude north of where we are now!

***

[*Simla was the summer capital for the British Government of India, located in the foothills of the Himalayas and thus offering an escape from the heat and humidity of Calcutta. Even though Skrine, as was his wont, found reason to complain about the discomfort of the train ride, the railroad which the British built in 1903 to reach the summer capital is still deemed one of the most impressive engineering feats of its era, given the difficulty of the terrain. This letter introduces two of the officials who were regular recipients of Skrine's reports and private letters from Kashgar, Denys de Saumarez Bray and Evelyn B. Howell.*]

Hotel Cecil, Simla, 11 April 1922

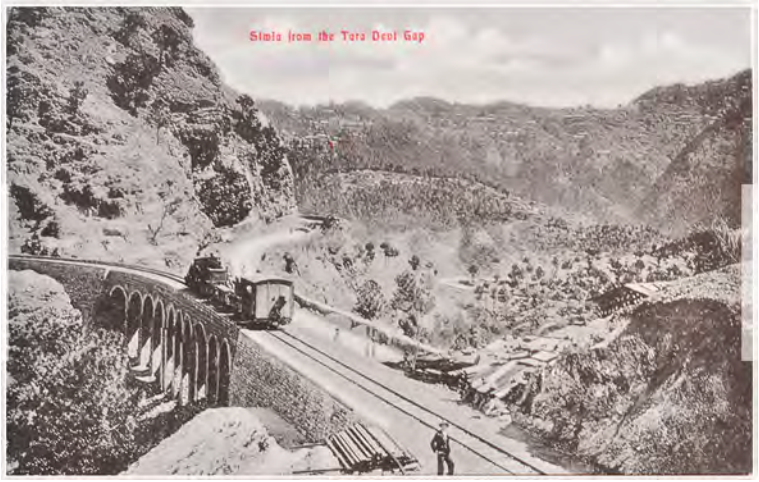
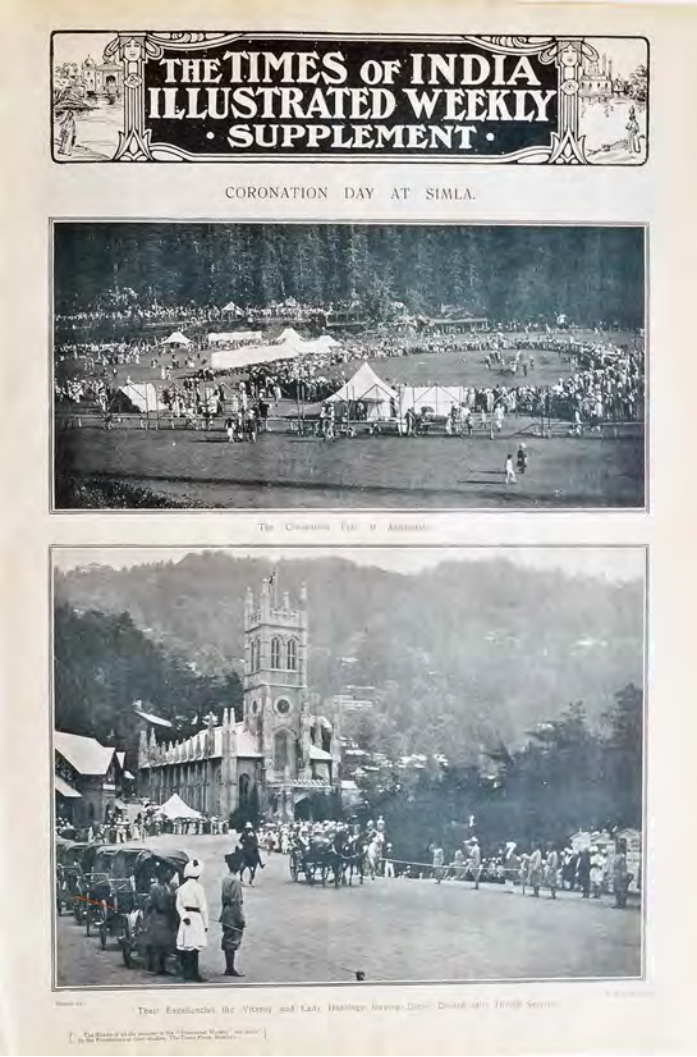


Fig. 11. On the Kalka-Simla railroad approaching the British summer capital. Source: Postcard published by Hernam Dass & Sons, Umballa (https://www.past-india.com/photos-items/kalka-shimla-railway-toy-train-2-old-pc-1903/#iLightbox[gallery26164]/0).

Nous voilà! Doris and I at Simla, having arrived safely but rather the worse for wear after a dreadfully hot and dusty journey from Bombay. Tho' only early April, it was as hot as it usually is in May, & I'm afraid D. felt the long jolty rattling day in our oven-like coupé somewhat. Bombay had been tiring & generally trying and the wrench of parting from the pussies made matters worse. [*Fig. 11*] Then our coupé was terribly jolty due to being just over the wheels of the bogie carriage – I've never been so jolted on any train, even in India – & she didn't sleep much that night. So on arrival at Simla I made her go to bed and stay there, & next day she was up to breakfast as fresh as paint & perfectly all right. This hotel is a very fine one and beautifully-run, with long English baths & sanitary arrangements & h[ot] and c[old] laid on, pukka furniture & everything best quality, & after our continuous 'roughing it' & travelling ever since we left our Quetta house last November the solid comfort & even luxury here is very pleasant.

D. is delighted and amazed by the scenery of the Simla Hills & especially by the snows, of which we have had one or two glimpses. By good luck the rhododendrons are particularly good this year & are a revelation even to me. I never saw anything like the great trees laden with huge scarlet blossoms round Summer Hill, & down towards Annandale. On Sunday afternoon D. insisted on going for a


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· SUPPLEMENT ·

CORONATION DAY AT SIMLA.

Fig. 12. Official Simla a decade before the Skrines arrived on their way to Kashgar: The Viceroy of India celebrates in the summer capital the June 22, 1911 coronation of King George V. (After: The Times of India Illustrated Weekly Supplement *(https://www.past-india.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/DSC_0094nwl.jpg.)*

long ride towards the snows, so having hired two quite good ponies I took her out to Wildflower Hall, Mahasu, where we had tea. It rained a bit while we were there & prevented us going on further, but on the way back by the lovely road along the top of the great cliffs below Dukani the sun shone and brought out the most wonderful colours in the masses of foliage, almost as fine as autumn.

[*Fig. 12*] We dine[d] with some nice senior I[ndian] C[ivil] S[ervice] (Home Dept.) people that night, & I think D. really enjoyed her first day in Simla. I forgot to say that we were good and went to the Scottish Kirk in the morning & heard an excellent tho' rather non-Scottish sermon from Padre Black, the rather 'high' meenister.

Yesterday we shopped in the morning & D. learnt the whereabouts of the chief shops. I spent the afternoon at the F[oreign] O[ffice] and we went for a walk in the evening & picked masses of rhododendrons. This morning D. went off by herself on her pony as she loves doing & explored away down the Khud beyond Annandale, scrambling about among the crofts & terraced fields & talking to the people and thoroughly enjoying herself. I was in office most of the day, but we rode out together to tea with some friends of mine under Jakko, which we climbed afterwards & D. was introduced to the monkeys.

We leave next Sunday & until then are pretty full up with engagements, many of my old friends who are still here insisting on feeding us. At the office I have been hearing and reading about very interesting new developments in Russian Turkestan, Bokhara, Ferghana etc. which are engaging the attention of both this and the Home Govt. & may affect us at Kashgar. I have had a long talk with Denys Bray, the Foreign Secretary, who was very affable; we are having tea with him & Mrs. Bray on Saturday. The Deputy Secy. Foreign is now Mr. (late Lt. Col.) E. B. Howell, who was acting High Commissioner of Mesopotamia when I went to Baghdad on leave in '19. He remembers me coming to 'Bait Máliya' & staying with him quite well. He is a good man, I think, & well-disposed but entirely lacking in humour. Takes himself desperately seriously. He is lunching with us at our hotel tomorrow to meet Col. Rowan Robinson, who is living at the Club & with whom I had a talk in the street on Sunday.

Wednesday 12 April 1922. Your letter of 16 March '22 just arrived via Quetta. [...] Another thing surprises me: when you first heard about Kashgar you were chiefly depressed about the supposed

cessation of correspondence in the winter, & your letters of 20th Jan. and onwards repeatedly referred to this. Now we heard from 'Smith of Asia'[2] during the first week of Feb. when he was staying with us at Nushki[3] that the posts went every week between Kashgar & Gilgit & India throughout the year. We were greatly relieved. I wrote off at once to you to tell you so. I am quite certain I set your mind at rest on this subject [...] Of course mails will sometimes be delayed during the winter & spring by extra heavy falls of snow, but not for long.

I have had a long day in various offices in the F[oreign] O[ffice] & at Army Headquarters. This evening I took D. on horseback to some lovely out of the way spots I know of behind Summer Hill [...] [*Society in Simla:*] I'm praying that D. won't dislike Molly [Roche] too much. She dislikes nearly all my friends, the mere fact of my having known & liked them before I met her seeming to put her off completely. It's such a pity, she always imagines that people have taken a violent dislike to her for no reason whatever, when in reality they're probably only too anxious to be friends [...]

[*Added note at end:*]

13 April

Your letter of 23 March just in [...] Can't quite make out whether you have got my letter of 1st March enclosing the list of requirements to be sent on to F. Baker's after crossing out anything you have already got for me?[4] The 1st item on that list was a 'Thresher & Glenny Trench coat with sheepskin lining,' but you say in this letter 'I knew you would get a sheepskin coat cheaper out there.' I particularly want the trench coat & other things, so I hope my list found its destination all right.

***

[*In addition to his formal duties as consul, inspired by the example and fame of some of the earlier European explorers in Xinjiang, Clarmont hoped to make a few discoveries of his own. As this letter reveals, he took seriously preparation for mapping, where the Survey of India in Dehra Dun had included in its purview Chinese Central Asia, for which the mapping by Aurel Stein and his assistants had provided detail but only along the 'corridor' routes they had traveled, leaving lots of blank spots on the maps. The consulate library included at least some of Aurel Stein's publications, and Skrine carried on some of his trips out of Kashgar H.H.P. Deasy's* In Tibet and Chinese Turkestan (1901)*, possibly a volume of Stein's, and some other works for reference. He probably knew the work of the Russian explorer Nikolai Przhevalskii from English translations made in the late 19th century. Skrine corresponded with Aurel Stein, both in regard to the mapping and the collection of antiquities.*

I have condensed here some of the discussion of whether Doris could go to Kashgar safely unless she took along a nurse. Unstated in this letter to his mother is what Clarmont had communicated in another letter home (cited by Stewart, Envoy*, p. 99), suggesting that the real concern was whether Doris might get pregnant while there. Clarmont separately assured his parents that he and Doris would make sure that did not happen. The reference to Sir Percy Sykes and his sister Ella is one of several in the correspondence, the two of them having spent several months in Kashgar while the regular consul George Macartney was on leave and then having written a book about their travel there (Sykes and Sykes 1920). In his earlier posting in Persia, Skrine had encountered Sykes,*

2. Col. Charles Smith, at one time the British Political Agent in Gilgit (now Pakistan).

3. Nushki, close to the border between today's Afghanistan and Pakistan, was officially the residence for the Skrines in his brief posting as Political Agent for the Chagai district in 1921.

4. Most likely a reference to the Chas. Baker & Co. gentleman's outfitter store, catering to high fashion, whose advertising flyers noted they were open to 'Country, Colonial and Foreign Orders'. The company was in business at least until 1939 and was 'a large and forceful presence in the world of Gentleman's Clothing' (https://www.europeanantiques.co.nz/product/a-decorative-chas-baker-co-shopfitting-unit/). The coat he ordered was described in a contemporary advertisement thus: 'The "Thresher" Trench Coat. Shell made of a hard Khaki drill, lined with sheepskin, and a special interlining rendering it absolutely waterproof. Wind, Wet & Mud resisting.' Thresher and Glenny were 'Military Tailors and Outfitters' located on the Strand in London.

who had been named to head a British military operation there in 1915. Despite the fact that they must have known better, as Skrine kept reminding his mother, the Sykeses at least in private conversation painted the posting to Kashgar in the darkest colors, as though it was totally removed from civilization.

The letter introduces Gerard Price, an acquaintance of Clarmont's from Oxford days and now a tea planter in Ceylon, whom Clarmont had invited to accompany them to Kashgar. Even though in CCA *1925 (p. 6), Skrine noted that Price was 'a welcome addition to our small party', in fact, as the subsequent letters reveal, he proved to have been anything but.*]

[*Fig. 13*] **Royal Hotel, Dehra Dun, 19 April 1922**

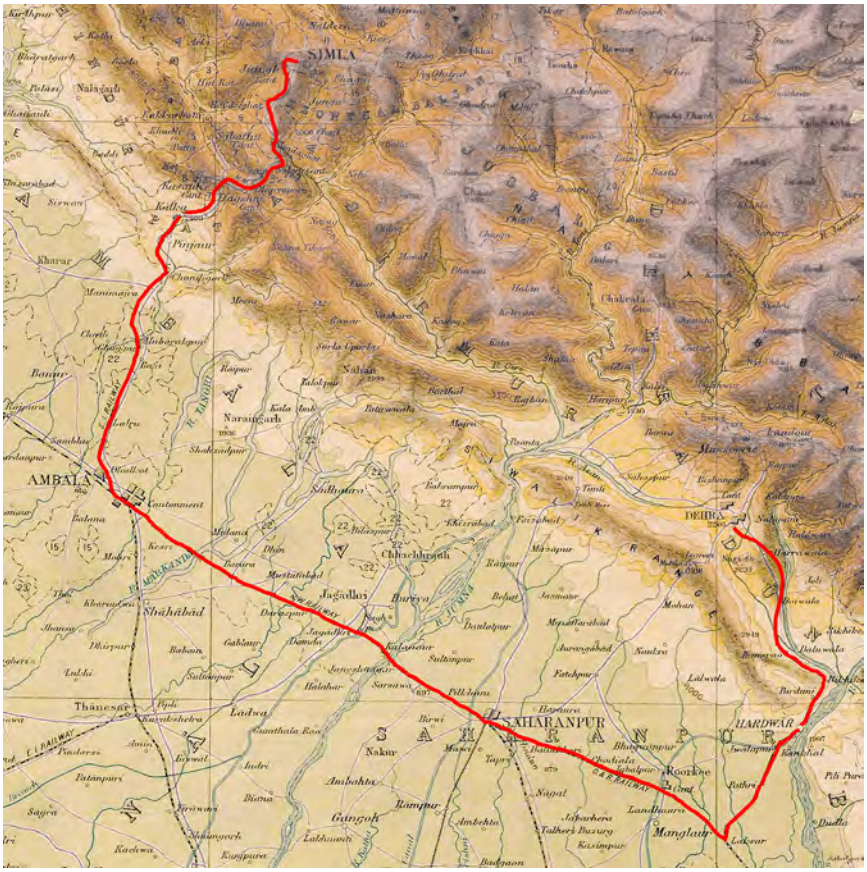


Fig. 13. The Skrines' route from Simla to Dehra Dun. Overlaid on Survey of India: Punjab, Rajputana, United Provinces, Delhi & Tibet Map, No. 53 (1915).

We arrived here early yesterday morning having left Simla by the rail motor at 2:10 the day before, quite a pleasant journey. D. enjoyed the spin down along the ridge-tops and thro' the ilex- and pine-forests in the comfortable rail-car; it wasn't very hot at Kalka and we got a carriage to ourselves to Umballa and a coupé after that through to Dehra. Have you ever been here, I wonder? Quite one of the nicest places in India – magnificent timber trees and flowering shrubs & trees of all kinds, picturesque old thatched bungalows & views on all sides of either imposing Himalayas (not the snows but 8000–10,000 ft. hills with precipitous faces) or forest-clad Siwaliks. This hotel is situated conveniently close to the h.q. of the Survey of India where I am working. The reason why we have come is because I am anxious to find out exactly what gaps there are in the new Survey of India 4 m[ile] to the inch maps of Chinese Turkestan compiled chiefly from Sir A[urel] Stein's explorations of 1900-01, -07-08 and -15-17. Although he and his Indian surveyors covered a great deal of ground, there are large tracts within reach of Kashgar, I find, which have not been surveyed or even traversed by either Stein or Przevalsky or Deasy or any of the other explorers on whose work the new maps have been compiled: the S[urvey] of I[ndia] are of course very keen on getting these blanks filled in and are quite ready to help me all they can. They are indeed being very kind to me: either Col. Cowrie, who is in charge of the station in Col. Ryder's absence, or Major Thompson head of the map-section, or Capt. Perry, assistant to the Surveyor General, has been with me all today and yesterday, giving me tips in plane-tabling or the use of the clinometer, poring over maps with me, furnishing me with all sorts of instruments and paraphernalia etc. etc. I know how to use a plane table & a prismatic compass, of course, but I have never done any real surveying of new country (tho' I have been able to make some important corrections in the 4 m. to inch map of the Sarhad with the help of a prismatic compass only)

and it is worth the trouble of coming to Dehra Dun many times over to get tips from men who have done a lot of exploratory surveying in Tibet, Persia, etc. Apart from that, I possess no instruments, nor do I want to spend more money than I can help from the Kashgar allotment, so I am borrowing everything I can from the Survey of India people. They are supplying me with a light plane-table and appurtenances, a splendid prismatic compass, a clinometer, quantities of drawing paper, and a whole set of maps specially mounted so that I can put them on my plane-table and plot in new country direct. I must say when I wrote to Col. Ryder (the Surveyor General)[5] whom I know slightly, & asked him for help in my amateur surveying operation I never expected he & his department would take so much trouble. I am now, or shall be by the time I have left here, equipped with sufficient knowledge and instruments to enable me to do some really useful exploring, in a small way, in the course of my official duties. It's a labour of love, of course, in fact it's a hobby, but a hobby that is most fascinating in itself and incidentally (tho' that's not my object) will secure me a good deal of kudos among the cognoscenti if I can map a good chunk of country.

All I will have to do will be to travel by routes off the beaten track to Maral-bashi, Aksu, Yarkand & such places, mapping my route with the plane-table & compass & calculating the heights with my aneroid and clinometer. This won't unduly delay my marches & will be very useful from the intelligence point of view also. One is more likely to get useful information if one goes off the beaten track than if one confines one's activities to the big towns.

There is a large tract of country 100 miles long by 60 wide, north of Maral-bashi which no European appears even to have traversed; there are valleys & mountains & rivers & forests & villages in it, and we don't even know where the watershed is or which way the mountain ranges run! And it will be very little out of my way if I go through it when I tour to Maral-bashi and Aksu, as I hope to do next autumn, or at any rate next spring. Won't that be fun?

Dehra isn't a very hot place ever, and although it is the middle of April and the rest of the U. P. plains are grilling, the nights are pleasantly cool here & it is possible to stay outside the whole day, as I have been doing surveying. The lights of Mussoorie are plainly visible far away up in the sky, like another Pleiades, but it does not occur to one to long to go there, as I did in '13. How well I remember that, my first visit to the Hills!

We leave here on Thursday by the 1:30 PM train, reaching [Rawal] Pindi at 4:30 next afternoon. We have an hour at Lahore & a change of trains, when I am looking forward to seeing my Mirza again, 'Mr. Irani.' He is at Lahore & is going to be at the station to see us. I haven't heard by the way whether I have passed the exam yet. I'm a bit anxious. They struck me as an Indian-run, jealous-of-the-British crowd down there; they are quite likely to pass the one (Indian) candidate there was for Degree of Honour & plough the one (British) candidate for H[igh] P[roficiency], just for the sake of *swaraj*.[6] If they do, it'll be a ramp, because as the Persian mirza they had in for the viva voce told me, I spoke, read and wrote Persian a good deal better & more idiomatically than the Degree of Honour candidate! And that's a good deal more important than grammar exceptions and fancy rules.

Your letter of the 23rd reached us just before we left Simla & was read in the rail-motor. Poor D. got an awful wigging from her mamma about the nurse-to-Kashgar business. She (D.) seems to have written a rather angry letter in the first instance [...] Between you and me the trouble simply was this.

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5. Col. Charles H. D. Ryder (1868-1945), CB, CIE, DSO, Surveyor General of India, 1919-1924.

6. *Swaraj* – self-rule, independence from foreign (British) domination, a term popularized by Mahatma Gandhi in his book *Hind Swaraj* (1909).

D. has been convinced from the very outset that neither her own people nor you approve of her going to Kashgar. In every letter she finds what she considers are 'hints' to this effect, nor will she listen to words of reason uttered by me. In vain I tell her, as I have from the first, to put herself in the place of people who love her 6000 miles away, to whom everything is 'unknown and terrible,' & she simply cannot help being anxious – but who would not merely for that reason interfere with her plans & mine. She doesn't listen, and when what you yourselves all called a 'bombshell' arrived about the nurse, she at once concluded that you had all seized upon the Sykes' advice in order to make it difficult, if not impossible, for her to go [...] I knew from the first minute that the idea of taking a nurse for D. was quite impracticable, apart altogether from the question of expense, and I felt at first that if a nurse was really necessary for D.'s health and safety, I could not undertake the responsibility of taking her without one. Hence my long and agitated letter to you on the subject [...]

I can't make out why Gerard [...] hasn't got my long & detailed letter of March 1st about Kashgar [...] I spoke (and wrote in officially) about him at Simla last week to the General Staff & to Foreign as soon as I heard from your letter that he had got permission from the Chinese Govt. to go. I gather (tho' I haven't had it officially yet) that there is no objection on the part of the G. of I.; so I am writing to Port Said to Gerard repeating my previous remarks & information & telling him we expect him at Srinagar about 16th May.

I do hope you're sending out as many of our things by Gerard as possible – [our] outfit etc. It's the least he can do, considering all we're doing & will do for him, and it will make all the difference to us. I calculate that if he brings our outfit, or most of it, in his personal luggage, on which he won't have to pay duty it will make £ 50 or 60 difference to us, for the duty is 30% on such articles imported into India now. Also it will probably mean our getting them in time – otherwise Heaven knows when they will arrive. I was counting all along on Gerard bringing them out, otherwise I would have ordered by cable.

Don't make any mistake about the kit we have ordered being luxurious or redundant! The list I sent you for Bakers' included both our outfits, and wasn't any too long. Down pillows which you laugh at us for getting are worth their weight in gold. Do you know, I still use regularly the one I brought out in 1912 & it is my most cherished possession of the kind tho' many of its feathers have percolated through its patched old case. It needs replacing & D. must have one too.

Thanks for Mrs. Dyer's letter [...] I'm afraid D. will never follow her advice about the diary, as a matter of fact, if her people have kept her letters, there is no need for her to keep a diary – she writes everything, & more, that she would ever put in a diary in those letters every week [...]

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Baramulla, 35 m. from Srinagar, Kashmir, 27 April 1922

Last week I wrote from Dehra Dun & here we are in Kashmir! It's hard to realize that one is at last in the Kashmir about which one has read & heard so much and seen so many pictures of. Unfortunately it is pelting with rain & although we went for a lovely walk by the river this evening & saw the wonderfully picturesque wooden houses & bazars of this typically Kashmiri town, there was no sun to light it all up & we had to hurry in to avoid being soaked.

We had a hot and dusty 2 days at Pindi collecting our baggage (I had a fearful time at the goods station taking delivery of our Quetta baggage and getting it to the hotel, where some things had to be opened and repacked & then taking it down to the agents' and dispatched, partly by *ekka*[7] & partly

7. A small two-wheeled vehicle pulled by a horse.



Fig. 14. The Skrines' route from Rawalpindi to Srinagar. Overlaid on Survey of India: N.W. Frontier Province, Punjab, & Kashmir & Jammu Map, No. 43 (1916).

by lorry, to Srinagar) and started off in 2 *tongas*[8] 6:15 Sunday evening [*Fig. 14*].[9] The whole world goes in motors to Srinagar nowadays in 2 days or even right through in one, but we're determined as usual to disregard what 'everybody else' does & to see the country in our own way, so we hired tongas [*Fig. 15*]. As a matter of fact, I struck a bargain with the bearded old tongawalla who was taking us about shopping in Pindi & got very cheap rates too, much less than I would have had to pay if I had done it through agents. I got one 1st class (rubber tyres) & one 2nd class tonga, taking our 2 selves, Ahmed Bakhsh, Malama and quite a respectable amount of luggage for Rs. 130/-. A motor taking 3 people only, & not so much luggage, would have cost 225/-. We didn't start till 6:15 because of the heat – Pindi towards the end of April, tho' quite pleasant at night, can be a regular furnace by day – & dined at the 1st stage 13 miles out. It is a little-used bungalow, now motors are so universal & the dinner was poor, but we were so bucked and excited about getting on the road once more, with the mountains just ahead of us on the other side of which is Kashgar, that we didn't mind.



Fig. 15. A tonga*, 1915 (George Grantham Bain Collection, Library of Congress, https://lccn.loc.gov/2014708724).*

Tonga-ing to Kashmir the first 64 miles are as unpleasant as the last 132 miles are delightful. You climb in most trying heat except near the top, from 1800 ft. Pindi to 7,200 ft. Murree, & then have 27 solid miles of downhill, getting hotter & hotter, to 1800 ft. Kohala on the Jhelum. 5,400 ft. down in 27 miles is no joke, on a hot afternoon, in a one-horse tonga. We didn't get into Tret, the 2nd stage from Pindi, till 1:30 A.M. on Sunday night, as the ponies were very tired, and we took from 10:30 till then to do the 12 miles uphill. Next day we took from 10:20 AM. till 4:30 PM. to do the 4000 ft. up to Murree. Spending the night at a rather bad, but cheap, hotel on the main road (2 miles below Murree proper

8. Another kind of light, two-wheeled horse-drawn vehicle.

9. Next to today's capital of Pakistan, Islamabad, Rawalpindi was an important transit point on the famous 'Great Trunk Road' which ran across the northern territories of British India. Skrine mentions but in passing the heat, which I experienced first-hand in 1994 during a brief stay there in suffocating temperatures of over 110° F with high humidity.



Fig. 16. Murree, ca. 1870. (http://hdl.handle.net/1887.1/item:921176).

which I climbed up to on foot to do some shopping that evening while D. who was very tired went to bed). [*Fig. 16*] Murree is a tiny station compared with the overgrown Simla and Mussoorie that I know, but it is very pretty. The 'Galis' as those hills are called are noticeably less steep-sided than the Simla hills with the result that there is more room on their tops and less crowding of bungalows & gardens. Never shall I forget the view I got at 6 o'clock that evening from the highest point of Murree over the Jhelum valley to the snowy mountains of Poonch & beyond them again on the East to the eternal snows of Kishtwar on the main Himalaya range.

We ought really to have got up at 5 next morning but D. wanted a long night after the previous one & I hadn't the heart to pull her out of bed before 8; I thought it would be all right if we started by 10. However, we didn't start till after that, & owing to delays and a certain amount of trouble with the tonga-wallas, we found ourselves jogging down the lower (and barer) half of the road at noon. It was terribly hot, & the jog jog jog with the sun beating on our legs & no breeze, was most trying. We both had splitting head-aches when we eventually arrived at Kohala on the mighty brown flood of the Jhelum. The great river roaring down its steep-sided valley, bearing with it hundreds of huge logs from the forests of Kashmir like matches, was a most impressive spectacle. Just now it is at its highest owing to the melting of the snows. Across the bridge at Kohala you enter Kashmir territory & the scenery improves every stage. Tea and aspirin worked wonders with us both, & we thoroughly enjoyed a further 12 miles drive in the comparative cool of the evening to Dulai, the next stage, where we slept the night in a romantically-situated bungalow with the roar of the Jhelum in our ears. At that level (2000 ft.) there were a lot of sandflies and mosquitoes about. I had provided myself with curtains in Pindi but had failed to get poles, so had to rig it curtains for both beds up with an elaborate string arrangement like a gigantic cats' cradle. It worked all right, and we had an undisturbed tho' all too short night. Getting up at 5 next morning was horrible, but had to be done for the sake of the ponies as well as ourselves owing to the heat. We were off by 6:15, & had quite a pleasant drive of 11 miles to a delighfully pretty spot called Domel. The bungalow there is buried in roses and beautifully shaded, with the river just below it, & we had a well-cooked and most enjoyable breakfast on the veranda while our ponies were watered & fed. Domel is where the Abbotabad road enters Kashmir, crossing the Jhelum by a picturesque bridge & joining the Pindi-Srinagar road. Another big river joins the Jhelum there too & the little town is most picturesquely situated at the junction with wild valleys shut in by snow peaks leading up from it in two directions.

Ever since Kohala on Tuesday evening we have been following the right bank of the Jhelum. Truly a magnificent road both from the engineering and the scenic point of view. It is beautifully graded, never steep, though in some places it is cut out of perpendicular rock, in others has to be carried through tunnels, in others has to dive a mile or more into deep side-glens and wild gorges. The awe-inspiring flood of the Jhelum accompanies one all the time, now only a few feet below, now several hundred feet beneath the very wheels of one's tonga, it seems. As one penetrates further into the heart of the mountains, the gorge contracts until you can almost throw a stone onto the dizzily-perched terraced fields on the opposite side: the peaks above one show more and more snow, & the bareness of the

lower ranges gives place to first one kind of fir and then another. Three kinds of fir we counted, one after the other, the last being a kind of spruce and most picturesque. Today (Thursday) we arrived for a late breakfast at a grandly situated little station called Uri, 4,200 ft. up, where we found ourselves at last in the real Kashmir – Rich Alpine pastures, chinars, apple and pear orchards, wooden carved houses, & snowy peaks all around. And the best *dak* bungalow,[10] with the best cooking I have ever struck! Such a breakfast! After having got up again at 5 & driven 18 miles (5 of which I walked) between 6 and 9:30, a first-class breakfast amid such surroundings followed by half an hour in comfortable chairs on a veranda facing an orchard, in silence only broken by the singing of birds, was a never-to-be-forgotten treat.

Our march today being no less than 47 miles, we had another 13 miles to do before lunch, which we intended to eat at a place called Rampur, where we meant to rest for 3 hours & then do the remaining 16 m. to Baramulla. [*Fig. 17*] However, we had a piece of luck. A kind person who turned out to be the Chief Electrical Engineer of Kashmir State who was visiting the big water-power electrical station between Rampur & Uri, passing us in his car 4 miles short of Rampur took pity on us & offered us a lift in his car. This we gratefully accepted (as he had plenty of room) & found ourselves at Baramulla in time for a late lunch at 2:45, instead of arriving more dead than alive, behind a very tired horse at 'n' o'clock in the evening. It was particularly lucky, because the afternoon turned rainy & we would have had a miserable drive the last 16 miles. Our benefactor, whose name I didn't learn but whom we're going to seek out in Srinagar went straight on to the capital leaving us at Baramulla where we were to stay the night. Our lightened tongas & servants arrived at 6:30 missing the worst of the rain which began just then.



Fig. 17. The Jhelum River near Baramulla, 1880s (https://www.oldindianphotos.in/2011_09_30_archive.html).

Friday 28 April 1922. Srinagar, c/o A. C. Lothian I.C.S.

We left Baramulla at half past 8 this morning & in glorious post-rain weather, the Kashmir Valley looking (I should think) its very best. Like Constantinople & a very few other famous beauty-places, it more than comes up to its reputation. As we drove along the Srinagar road which is lined practically the whole way with close-growing poplars of immense height, rendering topis[11] superfluous even at midday, the scenery for the first few miles out of Baramulla was on this particular morning at any rate, more like Perthshire or rather Forfarshire or Stirlingshire than I could have believed possible outside Scotland. The rich meadows & undulating ploughed fields (no irrigation necessary here as it is everywhere else I have been in the East) in the foreground might have been the Carse of Gowrie; in the middle distance were softly rounded hills of green and a reddish purple which was really soil but which might easily have been heather; here and there on these hills, clumps of dark firs which might have been spruce or Douglas; a wide placid river flowing among water-meadows; & in the background, masses of cloud veiling the tops of more rugged hills & so disguising their un-Scotch height & ruggedness &

10. A post station or rest house. In later letters, Clarmont regularly refers to the *dak* riders who carried the mail.
11. From Hindi = hat, but referring specifically to a pith helmet.

mighty snow-slopes as to make it easy to fancy them the Grampians seen from Stirling or Perth. I had to fix my eyes firmly on the France – or perhaps rather North Italy-like poplars to prevent myself being overcome by Highland nostalgia!

Another point of difference was the mantle of delicate blue wild iris over a large part of the meadows and grassy banks. I never saw anything like the profusion of these irises; they were of the small short-stalked kind, but there were also larger quantities here & there of magnificent full-sized iris, mostly white but also occasionally purple – whole clumps & beds of them, all wild. A further un-Scotch but very effective feature of the landscape are the farm-houses, which are of wood, quite tall & French-looking but more flimsily built. Some have thatched roofs, & they are nearly all picturesquely placed among clumps of poplar or chinar.

We lunched at a pretty little dak bungalow among beds of white iris & close to a fantastically pretty wooden village which might have been an Eastern version of a bit of Tournai or Candebec-en-Caux. As we got there early, we put in an hour before lunch wandering up the low green hills covered with cultivation & seamed here & there with tiny poplar-filled glens with wee brooks in them. The air up on these downs was glorious, & we would have liked to stay there all day. Clouds still veiled the upper half of the mighty mountain panorama all round us. Pir Panjal range to the south, Kohistan to the west & Himalaya to the North & East, but peeps of magnificent snow fields & glaciers were here and there visible, & we could make out Haramukh & the Zoji La (the pass into Tibet) & – most thrilling of all – the Tragbal Pass & the road to Gilgit & Kashgar to the north. It was wonderful to look at those grand ranges & think that we were soon to cross them!

Sunday 30 April 1922. Your letter of 6th April was awaiting us here, which was very nice – we didn't expect a mail just yet. Never mind about the under-clothes. I'm very glad to have the new ones. Such things last forever and it is just as well to have plenty when on a journey like ours. One has to duplicate everything, in case whole boxes get swept away in floods, as frequently happens, & tho' I could do with my Chilas ones, it's just as well to have an extra lot. As you say, I said at first that I wanted some more: it was only afterwards that for reasons of economy I said that if you hadn't already got them I would do without them.

As regards the trench coat, sheepskin lining, etc., what I meant was that as there must be plenty of 2nd-hand ones on the market, & as you said you had seen several sales of such kit at the stores, I would have liked you to get me a 2nd-hand one, but as a matter of fact the new ones are not so very expensive (9 guineas) & it will last me longer for being new. [...]

The '2nd female incident' as you tersely described it [*referring to the matter of taking a nurse to Kashgar – DW*] has been most unfortunate altogether [...] I'm sure you all now realize what an utterly unpractical & absurd idea it was. As if it wasn't difficulty & responsibility enough already for me, for the S[upply] & T[ransport] people, for Gilgit & for Etherton, arranging for one lady to go to Kashgar – that it should be proposed that two should go! As a matter of fact from what I hear here, the Kashmir & Gilgit people aren't over-pleased as so large a party as 3 Europeans going up together, owing to the shortage of ponies, coolies and supplies at this time of year; I don't know what they'd have said if I had told them I proposed to take a party of 4 [...] To compare this journey with the Sykes' journey to Kerman or Meshed (the latter one day's motor drive from the railway, in pre-war days) and to say that because the millionaire (comparatively speaking) Sykes took a nurse at enormous expense to those places for Lady S., therefore I should do the same for D. now, merely shows that Sir P. hadn't even begun to think the matter out [...] I simply can't understand the Sykes' attitude. From your description they simply seem to

have piled on the agony and made out life at the Chini Bagh[12] to be as primitive & uncomfortable as they could, ditto the travelling. I'm afraid it's the Sykesian egotism & conceit again. He, at any rate, thinks that his and his sister's achievement of going to K[ashgar] and staying there 7 months & travelling to Khotan & the Pamirs will be put in the shade by D. & me going the far more arduous & longer route across the Pamirs (which they merely touched on a summer excursion) & staying in those parts 15 months. So, like many another traveller, especially the book-writing kind, they exaggerate fearfully. I was simply amazed by what they told you of there being so little to eat in Kashgar. This conflicts not only with what everybody else has told us & written in books, but with what they say themselves in their book! What about the 6-course dinners of which they give the menus? I'm not sure it wasn't 8 courses! Judged by English standards no doubt the feeding may be poor, but compared with small plains stations in India where you can't even get mutton fit to eat & live eternally on murghi [chicken – *DW*], eggs & tasteless river fish, & get no vegetables for 9 months in the year but 'brinjals' [aubergine, eggplant – *DW*], the mutton - venison - beef (for one can keep & fatten one's own beef, unlike the Hindu parts of India) & unlimited chicken, which one can hang at those latitudes as you can't in the Plains provides a comparatively 'sumshus' bill of fare [...] I'm surprised too at the Sykeses emphasizing the heat and dust & winter cold, when they know Persia so well. The 2 former are no worse at K. than anywhere in E. or S. Persia, & as for the latter, I for one look forward to the winter of hard frost more than most things. I'm going to have a skating rink and get a lot of practise in, & D. is going to skate too.

I must stop. We're staying at the most charming English country house with old-world rose gardens & orchards & lawns of rich velvety turf you can imagine. Enormous strawberry beds with masses of fruit, tons of it, coming on. Our hosts are the Lothians. He is a Bengal civilian of about 15 years standing who like myself got taken on temporarily during the war but who was only confirmed in the Dept. quite recently. He is [...] a steady East Coast Scotsman. [...] We're going into tents with our own servants & *bundobust* in a *bagh*[13] close to here at the end of the week. It's worth it as we may be another month here owing to there being a[n] extra lot of snow in the passes.

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[*The cable from Srinagar referred to in this letter, with the good news Clarmont had passed the Persian exam, arrived in London on 6 May.*]

2nd Clerk's Cottage, Residency, Srinagar, 9 May 1922

We didn't go into camp after all, as at the last moment I discovered from Mr. Lothian[14] that this tiny 'desirable semi-detached suburban villa residence' which might have been transferred bodily from Ealing, was empty, & as D. was very depressed about going into camp in the bad weather we were having last week, I decided to go into this house, which Lothian offered us. It is right in the middle of the European part of Srinagar, practically on the 'Bund' which is the Piccadilly of the place (though it's really more an 'Embankment') close to the Residency & the Club &c., and is very convenient for the collection & repacking of our kit, business with the Residency Office, shopping etc. etc. Also it's a roof over our heads. Everyone told us we'd have brilliant fine weather all the time in Kashmir at this time of year, but as invariably happens when one goes to a new place, we are having 'most unusual' weather, with

12. The 'Chinese Garden' as the British consulate in Kashgar was known.

13. *Bundobust* = arrangements, organization; *bagh* = garden.

14. Arthur Lothian (1887-1962), a member of the Indian Civil Service in Bengal who held positions of some importance later in his career.



Fig. 18. The Jhelum River and, on the left, the Sher Garhi, the Maharajas's palace in Srinagar. (CPS photo reproduced with permission from the Royal Geographical Society [London], no. CPS/00013.)

a lot of rain. Just as we had the worst drought for years at Quetta & no fruit in consequence, so here we are having the 'wettest spring for years' & can't go into tents!

[*Fig. 18*] Doris loathes Srinagar & Kashmir in general, & I'm disappointed, I must say. I admit it's beautiful, but there are two great drawbacks to one's enjoyment of it: (1) it's all so well known, so enthused over year by year, every view, every mountain, every sketch of river, every 'Bagh,' every picturesque village well-known & poems written about them & pictures painted of them – very amateur in both cases, nearly all the work – that there's no romance left. (2) the people are so dirty, lying & cringing, untrustworthy and altogether detestable. It may be a question of 'only man is vile' but it's a very big 'only.' Under this head I include the bundobust and general arrangements which are bad & irritating beyond words. One pays, pays, pays all the time & yet nothing goes right. Every thing is State run and State-ridden – badly worked State monopolies mostly. E.g., firewood. One is entirely dependant on one depôt run by the Forest Department, which is supposed to allow each visiting household 10 *m[aun]ds*[15] a day. In practise you have to send a man to fetch it, taking him half the day away from other duty and as often as not he comes back with no wood at all, or half what one ordered! We moved in here on Sunday, on which day we sent for 10 maunds; the man only got 4, & although this is Tuesday we've had none since! I'm sending the man again today & demanding wood, saying I'll move the Resident in the matter if I don't get it. And not only does one have to send a man 3 miles for the wood, but one has to (1) hire a 'shikára' (boat like a gondola) to bring it to the nearest point on the river-bank to your house (2) hire coolies to bring it from the boat to your house – And this every time you're doled out 4 maunds or so by the Depot! Same sort of thing with horse-fodder – same even with rice! One's servants can't get any rice except from the State, & then they have to get a form filled up by their employer, & stand in a queue for hours every day!

The touting here is something appalling. You can't stir a yard in the European quarter, or in the bazars, or on the river-side, without being pestered by touts who want you to go in their 'shikaras,' hire their wretched ponies, buy their cheap bric-a-brac or their 'sportsman requisites' etc. etc. And yet when you want anything you can't get it, e.g. mosquito curtains, glare-glasses, men's haberdashery – you simply have to order them from India! The fact simply is, the rickety State administration & the feckless ways of the Kashmiri traders can't cope with the enormous numbers of visitors, and the latter are left to look after themselves. The visitor is practically told to make the best of the existing arrangements & if he doesn't like them he can stay away from Kashmir. And the British, especially in India, are such a set of sheep and so indolent about their own rights & conveniences, that they all lie down under it and muddle along somehow.

This tirade has taken up all my time before the mail goes! I'm afraid I must continue next week and tell you about further developments then. I sent you a cable about my H[igh] P[roficiency] exam. Great

15. 'In British India, the *maund* was [...] set equal to 100 Troy pounds (82.28 lbs. av.)' (Wikipedia).

relief. It's worth about Rs. 2,500 to me altogether, of which I give Irani 500/- as reward.

I'll start early next week and discuss your last letter & our arrangements.

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2nd Clerk's House, Residency, Srinagar, 12 May 1922

The weather continues most changeable, with very few fine days and a lot of wind and rain, and altogether we have come to the conclusion that the much-vaunted Kashmir May is a wash-out. We have certainly been very busy and even it had been really fine, would not have been able to make full use of the fine weather: For instance, we haven't yet seen the Shalimar or the Nishat Bagh or Achrabal or even been on the Dal Lake, tho' we have had good views of the latter from hills overlooking it. So we haven't seen enough to judge whether the Vale of Kashmir is as beautiful as it is painted. Srinagar itself is not beautiful – to call it the 'Venice of the East' is mere nonsense. Give me a Persian town any day. The chinars and the poplars are fine, & the grass is lovely; the river fronts are picturesque in a way, but what absolutely spoils everything is the dirt and drabness and (in the town itself) complete absense of colour. The whole of Srinagar, rivers, chinars, meadows & all, isn't worth one ghat[16] of Udaipur. The filth & the smells are indescribable, and the people all wear such dismally dirty and mis-shapen clothes. The best native thing is the local barge, with its thatched hut & its high prow & stern often laden with green stuff or picturesque piles of logs. In fact, the trail of the Kashmiri is all over the place, & (at any rate for one accustomed to the Frontier & Persia) quite destroys the romance of the place. Some Kashmiris I have met or dealt with are quite decent fellows, especially the older Mohammedan artisans; but the large majority of the Srinagar populace, so far as I can see, are quite loathsome. Filthy, lying, intriguing, untrustworthy, cringing or indolent according to circumstances, avaricious – one longs for the good old brigands of Baluchistan.

The best part of Srinagar, tho' it is a very small part, is the European quarter, which is all wide meadows and immensely tall cypresses & chinars & gardens full of the most wonderful flowers (even D. admits that the flowers are a revelation) and the house-boat-lined banks of the broad stately river. This end of Srinagar really is beautiful – only it isn't Srinagar of the East! It might easily be North Italy, & that is why D. doesn't like it, because she hated North Italy when she was there with her people. (She seems to hate all the Continental places she's been to, except Paris). I don't know N. Italy, so have an open mind, and I do appreciate the beauty of the poplar- and chinar-fringed river & the snowy mountain tops in the background & the wide green expanses & the flowers, but even for me it's all discounted by the countless descriptions I've read, & pictures I've seen, & panegyrics I've listened to, of it all in the past. I knew exactly what it was going to be like, & so there's no element of surprise. I'm afraid it will be the same with the Shalimar and the Achrabal etc. when I see them.

However, let me be quite frank – I should enjoy it all much more & be much more enthusiastic if it weren't that D. isn't happy & isn't appreciating it; partly because it doesn't come up to her expectations, partly because the climate doesn't suit her & she hasn't been well here, but mostly because she's fretting to be off up the road & is desperately afraid lest something may yet happen to prevent her going. If I'd been here by myself with my camera & books, I'd have appreciated it much more I know.

The latest from Etherton is that he was to have left Kashgar on May 4th, not the 1st, and won't be here till the 29th. As a matter of fact I very much doubt it he'll be here even by then, for he doesn't

16. In India, steps leading down to a river, understood here as a place of colorful activity.

know that the bridge over the Astor River at Ram-ghat is broken, which means either going round 3 days' extra march, or else leaving one's ponies behind, being slung across the river on a wire rope with all one's kit, & going on with local ponies (if available) or if not, with coolies. In either case he will be delayed, and so will we on the way up. Altogether it is very doubtful whether we shall get off before the 1st week in June, arriving at Gilgit with luck about the 20th, and Kashgar about 15th July. Luckily there is no great need for hurry; I don't really see what difference it makes whether we arrive at K[ashgar] on 1st or 15th July.

As I said before, we're very busy indeed. Every morning we have to go down to the town on our little ponies about various matters, & on return we do a couple of hours' Turki with the 'Aksakal'[17] of Srinagar, a Turki-speaking India official called Khan Sahib Abdul Hamid, an excellent fellow. After lunch we sort and make lists of kit and stores, and see various artisans who can make 'yakdans,' 'kiltas' (kind of leather-covered baskets for cooly transport), Gilgit boots, camp furniture, grass shoes (for snow), 'Chaplis' (kind of sandal for the mountains), gun cases, water-chagals etc. etc. We are usually busy right up to tea, & then go out for a ride or in a boat; only once so far have we managed a tea-basket picnic [...] Other nice people we've made friends with are [...] the Andrews', Sir Aurel Stein's friends & collaborators whom I think I mentioned before [...][18]

The Lothians gave a jolly little dance last Monday, 15 ladies & 17 men, which was great fun. The succès of the show was the set of cards painted by D. representing pairs of historical or other characters, one figure on each card, e.g., Adam & Eve, Henry VIII & Anne Boleyn, an ancient Egyptian man & woman, a cinema hero and heroine, etc. etc. She painted these cards extraordinarily neatly and cleverly for Mrs. Lothian, who handed them to the guests as they arrived, the idea being that each man got a male card & had to find his 'pair' or 'affinity.' It worked beautifully & everybody was delighted with the cards: the excitement & chattering & searching for pairs at the beginning of the evening started everyone off & the dance went with a swing. D. who had taken 2 whole days' work to do the cards was very popular with our late host & hostess.

Sunday 14 May 1922

Great excitement! The parcels from Selfridge's have come. First of all let me thank you, darling Mum, for taking so much trouble over the vests, scarf, socks and stockings which are <u>lovely</u>. The vests don't worry even me, and the socks fill a long-felt want, for I had hardly any really warm ones left and had had to buy 3 cheap pairs at Pindi to go on with. With the brown ones you sent me to Kerman in 1917, I have now enough warm vests to last me a very long time. I wish now I had asked you to send out 2 or 3 warm drawers too as I can only find 3 of the Kerman ones. However, I'll carry on with them all right through my Kashgar time.

The things that her mother has sent out to D. are frighteningly numerous expensive and chic. Really there's been a frightful waste of money there. She now has at least <u>four</u> very smart jumpers over and above what she will want for Kashgar. The airman's leather coat & helmet too oughtn't to have been lined with leopard – D. is frightfully pleased with them, but all the same she will look distinctly ridiculous starting for Central Asia in such things. I gather that her mother has little idea of the value

17. Aqsakals (lit.: white beards) were the elected elders heading native communities. Once in China, Skrine regularly dealt with them as the responsible administators for the British subjects resident there; they were amongst his most important informants regarding local news.

18. Frederick Henry Andrews (1864–1957), first made Stein's acquaintance in Lahore, resided for many years in Srinagar and devoted much of his energies to cataloguing Stein's collections and proofing his publications.

of money, for she could have saved at least £ 30 or £ 40 on D's outfit by getting fewer and plainer things. The only consolation is that D. will be able to wear the things during 2 winters in England & Switzerland (for we shall be 2 winters at home next furlough) & that some of our future jobs are sure to be such as will require leather coats etc. – e.g. Gilgit, Chitral, a possible repetition of Kashgar, the Persian consulate & Fort Sandeman, even Quetta. Whatever happens, she won't have to buy any more winter outfit for many years!

You mustn't worry about the expensiveness of my outfit such as trench coat, valise, quilts etc. All these things are long overdue. Do you know that my only warm coat is still the brown velvet collared one I got in 1911? that my pillows, rug & one of my blankets are the same that I brought out in 1912? that my hand-bag is the same that you gave me as a birthday present in 1904, an old one of Father's which you had refitted for the occasion? that the leather writing case I'm writing on now is the one you gave me in 1902, as good as ever? You can't call me extravagant in outfit! The hand bag literally never leaves me. We call it familarly 'bota chag'[19] (see?) & wherever D. & I go, 'bota chag' follows on pony, camel, cooly, motor, aeroplane or whatever it is, containing washing & other toilet materials for both of us, books, sketching & photographic things, & every possible odd and end, including of course my pyjamas & (if necessary) D's! By the way, do you know that when we reach Kashgar we shall have used 10 different methods of travelling in 3 ½ months, viz: (1) train (2) steamer (3) rail-motor (4) ordinary motor (5) tongas (6) houseboat (7) ponies (8) coolies and our own feet (9) yaks (10) camels!!! No. (4) was when kind Mr. Chamen gave us a lift for 20 miles on our way up here in his car: No. (10) will be the last 3 or 4 stages into Kashgar. Pretty good record, won't it be?

No sign of Gerard yet. [...]

Goodbye till next week darling Mum. Thanks ever so much again for the 'woonter willies.' I am sending you this week one of the good things produced in Kashmir, a pair of the local nut-crackers!

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Srinagar, 22 May 1922

[...] The sudden arrival of Gerard on the Monday night last week, instead of on the Wed[nesda]y which was the earliest we thought he could possibly arrive, completely upset our small household [...] First about the things you have sent per G. Many thanks indeed for the airman's helmet, map case, Onoto & wristlet watch, also for sending the Fortnum & Mason stores per Gerard. I only wish he could also have brought the Baker things which are much more important for our journey (the F. & M. things were luxuries for consumption by Chinks & other official guests at Kashgar). I can't make out what has happened about the Baker things. I have had no invoice, & even if the things arrive in Bombay this week there is little chance of our getting them in time. We can carry on without them of course, but the bucket canteen, lamps, flea-bag and valise will all have to be got locally at much greater expense as they are absolute necessaries. The trench-coat I can do without until Kashgar, as I have my poshteen, which will last me out I think [...] The wristlet watch is a beauty & I'm awfully pleased with it. It is an ideal shape & the broad strap is a great thing (the narrow ones in India barely last 6 months, as sweat perishes them). The Onoto[20] is also excellent, & I am now using it with great comfort. I'm afraid the airman's helmet is rather too small, ditto the map-case. However, I can get the former on, & will use it

19. Apparently Skrine's invention of a term, a kind of family in-joke. Possibly to be understood as a "holiday bag", conflating words from two languages.

20. A fountain pen?? See: http://www.onoto.com/history. A 'poshteen' is a sheepskin cloak..

as the protection to the ears is invaluable. The map-case I am returning & would be glad if you could exchange it for a larger size at the shop. Very sorry to bother you with more commissions!

Gerard is exactly the same as he was 10 years ago, only more so, so to speak. 6 years by himself in Ceylon have rather intensified his former characteristics. He's an interesting character – indolent, dilettante, a bit of a poseur and a distinct 'Mary' with a wonderful capacity for accepting the good offices of the 'Marthas' of the world, but good natured, original, humourous, loyal and straight withal. His manners are rather uncouth as a result no doubt of lonely life in Ceylon, & D. was somewhat taken aback at first, but she's set out to improve them & I think she will. I was afraid she might take a dislike to G. which would have been awful under the circumstances, but thank goodness she hasn't, in fact she likes him. He is always ready to talk & argue, & as he obviously admires her he is ready to concede in argument & doesn't override her arguments & convictions, which is what she hates more than anything. (Being a great talker and arguer she often gets 'up against' men.) One point in G's favour is his lack of proficiency at riding. He hasn't ridden for 16 years & has almost entirely forgotten how & so cuts a quaint figure on the local pony we've secured for him (We make him practise as it will be necessary for him to ride a lot on the journey, a fact which nobody seems to have told him). That he should be so manifestly inferior to D. in an important matter like horsemanship endears Gerard to her, whereas if he was better at everything than she is, he would probably exasperate her. She often says that her superiority to me at golf consoles her for a lot!

By the way, I've told you a lot of things about D. above in spite of my recently-taken vow to maintain a discreet silence about her. I do hope nothing I've said will form a text for sermons to N[orth] B[erwick] or D. herself or I'll be 'for it'!

I'm rather anxious about Gerard's permission to come with us. The G[overnment] of I[ndia] have referred it to the Secretary of State! Why, I can't think. [...]

Latest is that Etherton was due at Gilgit about 20th (last Saturday) & here on the 30th, but I've no news of his arrival at Gilgit yet. The earliest we can get off is about 4th June. Meanwhile we are busy getting 7 or 8 pony loads of stores & kit not required during the next 3 months off via the Zoji La, Leh, the Karakoram Pass & Yarkand. This is to lighten our own caravan as much as possible, also because by that route one can send loads weighing 100 lbs. or more, as it's ponies all the way. A Col. Brooke-Smith, an old friend of mine, who left for Leh last week & will go on to Yarkand after a month at Leh, has kindly promised to look after our stuff from Leh to Yarkand.



Fig. 19. Shikaras on the Dal Lake. Photo by Suhail Skindar Sofi. Wikimedia (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Dal_Lake_Hazratbal_Srinagar.jpg).

The mail's just off so I must stop & only briefly refer to a most successful breakfast picnic we went to yesterday – our own idea. [*Fig. 19*] We took Gerard & a Miss Lloyd-Mostyn [...] in a 'Shikara' with only one boatman & did nearly all the paddling ourselves. Starting at 7:45 we reached a lovely hill island in the Dal Lake by 9:15, & had breakfast of bacon & eggs cooked by D! She's a splendid cook. I did the toast & '*khitmatgar*'[21] & also most of the paddling, so I was pretty tired when we returned at lunch time, but it was awfully good for all of us!

***

21. Table service as a waiter.

[*Here Skrine briefly mentions the imminent arrival from Kashgar of Percy Etherton, whom he was replacing in an acting capacity as Consul, but says nothing about their first meeting. Skrine later commented to his father (letter of 23 August): 'He took in Doris and myself pretty effectually during the day or two we saw him at Srinagar.' Skrine introduces his vice-consul, Harold Harding, who was to follow them closely to Kashgar. Initial euphemistic impressions that he was 'a very interesting person and quite out of the ordinary' would give way to a litany of complaints about Harding in later letters. However, those expressions of dislike were to pale in comparison with the animus that Skrine quickly developed toward Etherton. Skrine seems not to have known that Harding's Chinese 'friend' who accompanied him to Kashgar (C. W. Hsü/Hsü Pao-Kuan) was a journalist on a clandestine assignment from the British legation in Beijing to report information that could be used to influence the Chinese government to rein in the authoritarian governor of Xinjiang. See Pepper, 'Harold Harding's year in Kashgar. 1922-1923,' pp. (4)-(5); Appendix 2 to Pepper's edition of Harding's travel diary: the letter by Beilby Alston, British Minister in Beijing, explaining Hsü's mission.*]

Srinagar, 27 May 1922

Since I last wrote Etherton has at last appeared in the offing. He arrived at Gilgit on the 23rd, 4 days late owing to 6 feet of new snow on the Mintaka Pass. He left on the 24th for Srinagar & wired to me from Astor to say that he would be at Bandipur (on the Wular Lake, 2 d[ays] by boat from here and 1/2 d[ay] by motor) on the 29th. Presumably therefore he will be here by midday next Tuesday. We are therefore arranging to start on the Friday, 2nd June. It is quite likely that he may be held up a day or two at the Burzil Pass, so we must allow some margin, & his servants, whom we are taking back to Kashgar, will require some rest. I have arranged for a '*dunga*' (cheap kind of houseboat with matting sides) & cook-boat to be off this house next Thursday afternoon, when we will get most of our luggage on board, & we will start, <u>insha'llah</u>,[22] Friday morning, reaching Bandipur the following afternoon. Although matters will be somewhat complicated on Thursday afternoon by the fact that we have to attend an enormous garden party at the Residency, our final packing and departure from Kashmir will be a great deal less trying than our move from Quetta. In fact, when we left the railway at Pindi we washed our hands of railway- steamer- and motor-time tables and travelling, bundobust and life in general have become much less of a rush.

[*Fig. 20*] Today we pushed off six pony-loads of stores and kit to Leh for Kashgar by the Karakoram route [...] It will take 16–18 days to get to Leh, where it will be taken [...] through to Yarkand, whence it will be forwarded by the 'aksakal' (British agent) to Kashgar. We hope to see it about the end of August.

On Thursday D., Gerard and I did a tremendous climb. We breakfasted at 7:30, set off on horses at 8:15 & rode for an hour along the road which runs round the E. side of the Dal Lake & then struck up a steep glen,

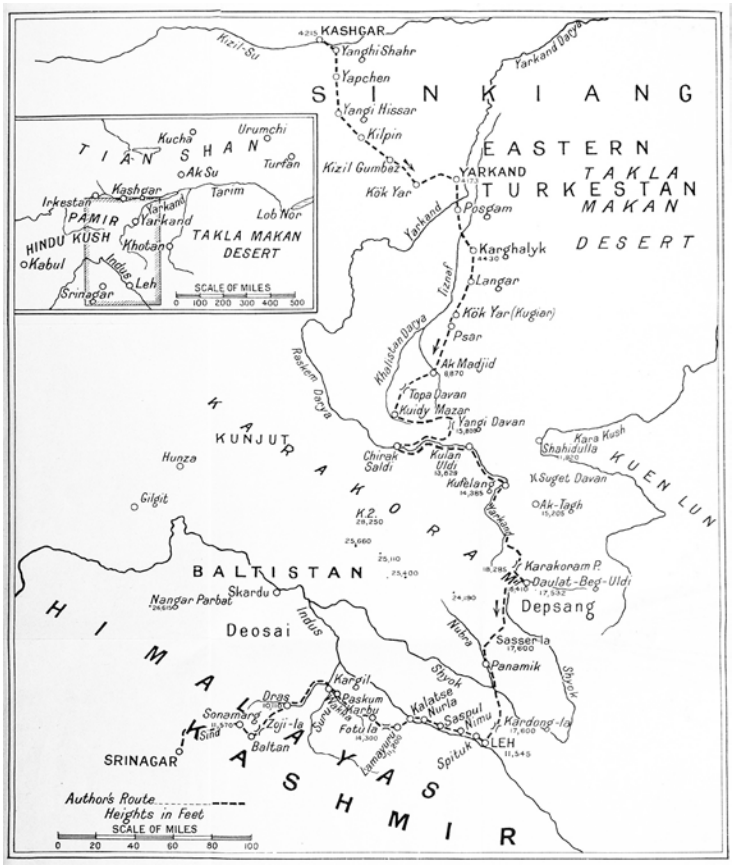


Fig. 20. The route between Srinagar and Kashgar, via Leh and the Karakorum Pass. This was the route by which all substantial loads destined for the consulate in Kashgar had to travel. (Endpaper map in Nazaroff 1935.)

22. ~ 'God willing', a common interjection in Muslim countries.

sending our ponies home. We climbed solidly from 10 o'clock till 1:30 & arrived, absolutely 'cooked,' at the top of the range, over 9000 ft. up. It was a pull! But it was worth it. The view was indescribably magnificent. The whole of Kashmir & its encircling snows, which to the N. of us were quite close. Most magnificent of all was Haramukh to the north, 18.000 ft. of snow-field and black precipice. The Wular and Dal Lakes, the former in the distance pale and the latter deep blue at our feet, were like turquoises in a setting of diamonds. Between us and the snows to the north was the magnificent Dachigaon Glen, with its foaming river winding down through the woods like a vein of silver. The ridge top on which we were was beautifully grassy & flower-carpeted with clumps of firs here and there most picturesque.

The climb had been a good deal stiffer and longer than I expected, & we had only a little chocolate with us, as I had arranged to have a 'shikára' (boat) out to meet us with lunch at the Nishat Bagh, which lies at the foot of the range we climbed, & a bit further on. Our calculations were somewhat out, for we didn't reach the Bagh till 5! [...] I can't tell you what lunch, with strawberries galore, tasted like! We simply lay in the shikara, while the 'hánjis' (boatmen) paddled, and lapped & guzzled. It was really a stiff day, & a good test for the days to come. I was very pleased with the way D. stuck it. She was out of training & 'soft' & the 3 ½ hours' pull uphill at an angle of 45° must have been most painful, while the descent was most tiring & frightening for her in places; but she stuck it splendidly, & was going quite as strong as Gerard or myself at the end.

I got some fine photographs from the top [...] I now have little or no use for a landscape photo without a sky, and as we have had some grand cloud-effects, I've got some film 'skies' to show. I use a 'light filter' which necessitates multiplying the exposure 20 to 50 times, but it's worth it for the cloud-effects which rarely appear in ordinary photos [...]

Tuesday 30 May [...] Etherton arrives tomorrow, and we're off on Friday 2nd June. Also, Harding, the new Vice-Consul has arrived, with an educated & very pleasant Chinese friend whom he is taking up to Kashgar. They are going to travel up via Gilgit about 10 days after us, arriving end of July. Harding is a nice chap, senior for the post of V[ice]-C[onsul]; he has been 2nd Chinese Secretary at the Legation Pekin, & has knocked about China for 20 years. He says he gave up his Home leave in order to take on this job for one year, & will travel back overland to Pekin next year (6 months' journey).[23] He is a very interesting person & quite out of the ordinary. I think we'll get on well. [...]

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Burzil-Chauki,[24] 11,500 ft., 7 June 1922

Behold our little party, 5 days' march out from Srinagar, and basking in the sun on the veranda of this

23. Harold Ivan Harding's career summary in the official printed *Foreign Office List* for 1922 reads (p. 236):

> born January 29, 1883. Passed a competitive examination, June 9, and appointed a Student Interpreter in China, July 21, 1902. Promoted to be a 2nd Class Assistant, September 1, 1908. Acting Consul at Wuchow in 1908 and 1909. Pro-Consul and Assistant-in-charge at Kiungchow and Pakhoi, and Acting Consul at Ichang in 1911; Pro-Consul at Foochow in 1911 and 1912. Assistant in Chinese Secretary's Office at Peking, 1913 to 1916. Promoted to be a 1st Class Assistant, July 1, 1914. Acting Consul at Harbin in 1917. Again Assistant in Chinese Secretary's Office, 1917 to 1919. Acting Chinese Secretary from June 7, 1919, to May 21, 1920. Promoted to be one of H.M. Vice-Consuls in China, April 1, 1919. Assistant Chinese Secretary, May 22, 1920.

Following his service in Kashgar, Harding returned to the British legation in Beijing; he was promoted to the rank of Consul on 20 July, 1925 (*Foreign Office List* for 1928: p. 266). Appendix 1 of Leonard Pepper's annotated edition of Harding's travel diary contains the letter by Beilby Alston, the British Minister in Beijing, to Foreign Secretary Lord Curzon recommending Harding's assignment on a temporary basis to Kashgar.

24. *Chauki* is Hindi for a lookout or observation post; here a rest-house.

marvellously-situated rest-house, at the elevation mentioned above. As we have got to get up at 1:30 tomorrow morning and start at 3, we propose to go to bed early after a cup of Bovril[25] over biscuit, and we have just finished the meal of the day, a 'high tea' of the highest consisting of Samager, coffee and enormous quantities of scones both drop and griddle made by D. with great energy during the afternoon. The weather is absolutely perfect, air like crystal and all the mighty peaks visible from here clear-cut against the blue. We are extremely lucky, for many a party has been snowed up in this rest-house for one to three days at a time, even later in the season than this. Tomorrow's march is a strenuous one: Starting at three, we climb for 6 miles, two thousand feet higher than we are at present; then 12 miles down hill. There is snow all round this house & the back is still under snowdrifts, but the thousand rills of this mountain-side are all brimming over with pale green foaming snow-water and there is hardly a dry spot upon the hill-side. Everywhere where the snow has melted are clumps of exquisite pink primulas, which really are I think the loveliest wild flowers I have ever seen. They grow in masses, and posies several inches across, of tightly-bunched blossoms abound. The birch-woods are just budding, and there is a tang of spring in the keen air even of these heights.

It has been a perfectly wonderful march so far and we are all three as happy as could be. The road reveals a new dream of beauty or vision of grandeur almost at every turn and one hardly notices the miles pass by. [*sketch in left margin of a comet; labeled* shooting star]. This is how we have come:

[*Fig. 21*] On Saturday morning the 2nd, after a terrible last two or three days of frantic packing and paying bills and getting things made or repaired which we had forgotten about before, or had ordered but the things had not been delivered & general winding up of preparations, we at last got off down the river in our 'doonga' with our household and kitchen in another 'cook boat' doonga following us. All day we floated down the Jhelum, and half the night too, for being a bit late we did not tie up till 2 AM. Personally I was sound asleep in my bed when that appeared & knew nothing about it. I was awakened by the clamour of voices and splashing of punt-poles which betokened that we were crossing the broad but shallow Wular Lake. It was a lovely morning tho' alas it was hazy and mighty Haramukh,[26] which I had looked forward to seeing reflected in the waters of the Wular (it is invisible from Srinagar) was not to be seen. It took us about 2 hours to cross the lake and it was 10 before we found ourselves being poled up the Bandepur river-channel which runs between lush meadows for a mile or more before it reaches the lake. Bandepur is a picturesque little place, buried in chinars & walnuts at the foot of a green ridge overlooking the lake. Our riding ponies which had gone out by road from Srinagar 2 days before were awaiting us, also 25

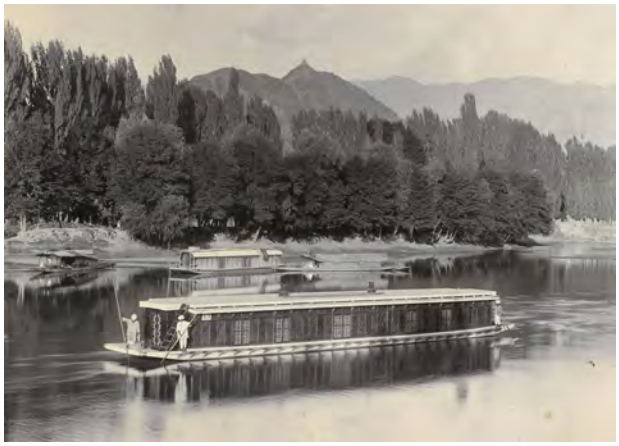


Fig. 21. Dunga houseboats, 1890s, at Srinagar (https://www.facebook.com/IndiaHistoricalMoments/photos/houseboats-at-srinagar-kashmir-1890s/561168633385680/).

25. Bovril, is a thick, salty meat extract, developed in the 1870s, commonly used to make beef tea (bullion) by diluting it with hot water, but also used as a flavoring or spread on bread like a paté. It is still marketed under the trademarked name.

26. Haramukh (alt. Harmukh) is a prominent 5,142 m (16,870 ft.) peak, believed by Hindus to be the abode of the god Shiva. It is also noteworthy for having been climbed in 1856 by Thomas Montgomerie of the Great Trignometric Survey of India. From its summit, he measured the Himalayan peaks he designated as K1 and K2, the former now known by the local name Masherbrum, the latter, the second highest in the world, still commonly called K2.



Fig. 22. The Skrines' route from Srinagar to Gilgit, overlaid on Survey of India: N.W. Frontier Province, Punjab, & Kashmir & Jammu Map, No. 43 (1916).

baggage ponies, on which with much shouting and cursing and altercation regarding the weight of loads, we at last managed to get our somewhat voluminous baggage loaded. By 12 we had paid off the house-boat and the cook & '*marchchi*'[27] we had brought out from Srinagar (thenceforward, until we met Etherton's servants in Astor, we were to depend upon the invaluable Ahmed Bux & a newly-engaged Turki boy for everything, cook, khit[magar], D's *ayah*[28] & my bearer having all been parted from one by one) & were off on our ponies, hirelings from Srinagar too. Another hour was however spent at the S[upply] & T[ransport] depôt drawing rations & making certain other arrangements, & it wasn't till 1:30 that we reached the delightful little house, built entirely under the shade of an enormous chinar, by the Supply & Transport Officer, Major Geoghegan. The Geoghegans were not there, being still in Srinagar, where we had seen a lot of them & received much good advice about the road & also, kind permission to use their house to have our lunch at and even to help ourselves to the strawberries and vegetables. We had a delightful sandwich lunch & consumed large numbers of strawberries, finally departing at about 3:30.

[*Fig. 22*] Of the 11 miles to the Tragbal Hut, all but a mile is steep uphill, and if it had not been hazy, we would have had the most marvellous views the whole way up of Haramukh, the Wular Lake, the Vale of Kashmir, & the snowy Pir Panjal. Even without these however, the ride and climb (for we did the last half on foot) to the Tragbal Rest-house on its 'alp' surrounded by magnificent deodars, was a never-to-be-forgotten experience. The Vale and Srinagar had been hot, tho' not oppressively so, and it

27. Presumably the supervisor for the staff on the 'march', the equivalent of a *sirdar*. The -chi (~-ji) suffix is an honorific that can simply be used as the equivalent of 'Mr.' The word is not in *Hobson-Jobson* and may well be a little invention of Skrine's.

28. In *CCA* 1925, p. 3, Skrine describes Doris's *ayah* (maid) as 'a delightful old Bombay duenna called Malamma' and Ahmad Bux (Bakhsh), whom he had hired back in 1920, as 'a dapper, cheerful, energetic, efficient little native of Amroha in the United Provinces, where the best servants come from'.

was as invigorating as it always is (you know the sensation well) to rise step by step into the brilliant pine-laden air of the mountains. We reached the rest house about half an hour after the caravan & after an excellent tho' rather belated dinner turned in & slept a dreamless sleep.

It was unpleasant having to get up at 5 & dress & pack in the dark, but it had to be done, and we got ourselves and our caravan (25 baggage & 3 other ponies for the servants, & our 3 selves) off before 7. This was necessary owing to the fact that it is advisable for the sake of the animals to cross the pass and get off the snow before midday, while it is still fairly firm. A tremendously steep 2 or 3 miles brought us to the end of a long snowy ridge at a height of over 10,000 ft., from which the view (now quite clear) at 9 AM was stupendous. [*Fig. 23*] Haramukh in all his glory stood right opposite us, below to its right was the vast expanse of the Wular and far away beyond floated the snows of the Pir Panjal. In the foregound, snow slopes interspersed with soaring deodars, standing out starkly green-black against the blazing white and blue. It was our last view of Kashmir proper, & a lovely one.



Fig. 23. Mt. Haramukh (5142 m / 16,870 ft.). (Photo 2016 by Mehrajmir13. Wikimedia (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Harmukh.jpg).

We wound slowly over the snow fields, rapidly melting under the hot sun, till at 11 we reached the highest point, 11,300 ft. There was very little wind & we ate our 'picnic' comfortably under a rock. The Tragbal is not at all like a pass: it is only a long ridge, which you cross, going for several miles along the top in the process. On the N. side its path drops sharply into a fine deodar-filled valley with a splendid green stream of snow-water roaring down the bottom of it. The snow comes down the nullahs and hangs in patches among the woods: we hurried for fear of avalanches. The rest-house at Gurai, 5 miles below the summit on the N. side, was swept bodily away by an avalanche from the opposite side of the valley 2 years ago. The avalanche swooped down the E. side of the valley, filled up the bed of the river and pushed a hundred feet up the W. side, carrying the bungalow up with it. No one was in the house at the time, luckily.

It was warm in the valley, and we changed out of our Arctic clothes (which after all we had not needed on the Tragbal owing to the perfect calmness of the weather & the strength of the sun) into cooler ones under thick deodar shade. We caught up the caravan at a lovely spot where two foaming green torrents meet & there are wooded islands in the river below, & there we had tea. We were also met by the '*zaildar*' (equivalent to the '*lambardar*'[29] of India) & a *chaprassi*[30] from the Gurais Tahsil on ponies, & these accompanied us to Gurais. The zaildar also came on with us to the next stage beyond Gurais: he is an excellent man of a good Frontier type called Abdul Hassan Hari. The chaprassi is still with us and accompanies us over the Burzil tomorrow. He is very useful as a mounted orderly.

Gurais is a beautifully-situated village with a *tahsil*[31] on this site of an old fort on a hillock above the Kishengunga River, up which our route lay for about 10 miles. The Kishengunga is a magnificent river flowing through amazingly picturesque gorges with snows towering away up into the blue. At Gurais the gorges widen out for a few miles and there is room for two or three villages. The elevation is about 8000 ft. The Naib Tahsildar was very attentive and we found all supplies ready for us, for which we

29. A village head-man.

30. An attendant or messenger

31. Administrative center, or, more broadly, district.

were thankful, for we didn't get in till 8:30 PM. After a march of 13 ½ hours from the Tragbal Hut we were pretty tired but quite healthily so & were supped and in bed by 11:30, sleeping luxuriously till 8 next morning. Our march next day was only 10 miles, and was even more beautiful & grand than the day before's.

We followed the magnificent gorge of the Kishenganga for 2 miles, seeing on the way the biggest spring I ever saw – an entire river gushed out with tremendous force from a cave half buried in trees about 30 ft. up the cliff. I secured a good photo of it & you will see it one day. The road then lay up the right bank of the Burzil stream which is also a very fine one flowing more steeply than the Kishenganga and among equally fine cliffs and towering snows. The deodar forests were a revelation – I never saw such trees 'fledge the wild-ridged mountains steep by steep'[32] as those deodars do in the Burzil *nullah*.[33]

Our halt (6th June) was at a grandly-placed but tiny rest-house with 2 rooms only at Pachwari, where there is no village, tho' as the grazing is good, there are always herdsmen about. The little bungalow stands on a slope of about 45 degrees rising 4000 ft. from the Burzil river straight up to eternal snows. There are few deodars at Pachwari itself, but you look across to splendid forests of them clothing the no-less-steep opposite side of the nullah. There were only 2 rooms in the bungalow and D. & I shared one, while Gerard had the other. We had to get up at a barbarous hour next morning and get the caravan off by 5, as we were told that the snow for two or three miles below the Burzil rest house would become too soft for ponies unless we got there by 10 or 11. Once we were up and started however the early start was worth while every time. Early morning up in those grand fastnesses is an experience never to be forgotten.

The scenery grew wilder & wilder as we progressed & habitations fewer until we came to the last buildings before the Burzil proper, the huts and tiny rest house of Minimarg, one of the loveliest and wildest forest 'margs' (= Swiss 'alps') of Kashmir. Immediately above Minimarg soars a snow peak extraordinarily like the Matterhorn and about 2000 ft. higher. The path turns right-handed at Minimarg & goes steeply up over moors to the snow-filled valley at the head of which, right under the pass itself, stand the Burzil rest-house [*Fig. 24*] looking over a marvellous panorama of jagged snow-peaks. Our ponies had a very stiff hour's work climbing over the soft snow-fields, in one place crossing the torrent by a snow-bridge. The glory of the Burzil rest-house is the array of primulas of the most exquisite shade of pink you ever saw, which surround it – wild of course. Several miles of marsh land where the snow has recently melted are covered with the lovely pink blooms. A less lovely, but still beautiful, reddish purple kind also abounds, but the pink ones are a dream.



Fig. 24. The Burzil dak bungalow below the pass (photo by Jules Jacot-Guillarmod, Six mois dans l'Himalaya, le Karakorum et l'Hindu-Kush *[Neuchâtel: W. Sandoz, 1904], p. 295).*

This house, which contains 3 sets of rooms, is well-built but still cold, cold enough in the middle of a June day for fires to be essential. The remains of the mighty snow-drifts which completely bury the house earlier in the year still render access from the back difficult. We arrived at 11 and are having a good rest in preparation for tomorrow's start. We must be off by 3 A.M.

***

32. Keats, "Ode to Psyche."

33. *Nullah* = river course or ravine.

8 June 1922, Chillum Chauki

Just a line before the post to Srinagar goes (which should just catch the mail home) to say that we crossed the Burzil successfully this morning between 3:15 and 11 A.M., 18 miles including a rise of 2,500 and a drop of 3000 ft., pretty good going. Gerard and I walked the whole way, D. rode. We had a trying time scrambling up the steep snow-slopes & crossing & re-crossing the stream on snow bridges in the dark, but the worst was over by 5 & after that we had an easy 4 miles over perfect ski-ing slopes to the summit (13,700 ft.) where there is a stone hut still half buried in snow. Although I had a hard time during the bad two hours in the dark, looking after D. on her pony & helping baggage ponies across bad places, I felt no discomfort in the 6 miles' climb until the very last slopes, which I didn't like at all. However, I felt no mountain sickness, nor did D. or Gerard. Later in the day I developed a nasty headache, that's all. On the whole the climb has done us all good, & we are very happy & perky. Etherton's servants & ponies have met us here. I'll tell you all about them next time.

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[*On paper stamped 'Political Agency Gilgit'*] [*Here Clarmont expresses his first serious criticisms of Etherton, on account of the incident with the latter's horses which then was to be but one point in his scathing indictment of his predecessor. Clarmont's retelling of this incident in* CCA *1925, pp. 14-15, with a certain amount of dramatic elaboration, absolves Etherton's black stallion of responsibility and instead blames the incident on Hafiz's bay, which is not designated as one of Etherton's animals. The bay, in that telling, later met an unfortunate fate, falling off one of the narrow cliff paths some 800 feet into the river below. For all the bitterness expressed in this letter, Skrine continued to ride the black stallion and later would sing his praises of it as a 'goer'.*]

c/o Political Agent, Gilgit, 18 June 1922

We arrived here after a terribly hot last 43 miles of march along the Indus and Gilgit River valleys on the 16th. Those last 2 ½ marches were very trying, because owing to the terrible famine and shortage of transport we had the utmost difficulty in getting even enough coolies to take our kit & as for riding ponies, could only get 2 or 3 here and there. So we had to take turns riding and walking. I myself walked more than ½ the distance in the sun the whole time. D. and Gerard also walked a great deal and we all suffered from heat and fatigue a certain amount. The flies, fleas and sand-flies were also very bad at the last 2 stages, Bunji and Pari, tho' at the former place things were rendered much better by the excellent bungalow and garden we were leant by Captain Deane of the (I.S.T.) [*sic, normally:* I.S.F., Imperial Service Force (not 'Troop') – *DW*] Battery. Him we met at Astor on his way with his men to Rattu, a wonderful 'hill-station' among the glaciers of Nanga Parbat. He is a charming fellow and was extremely kind, giving us breakfast at Astor and lamenting the fact that he could not be at Bunji to receive us and help us through. However, he made us use his house there, and the deep shade, roomy house and heaps of apricots and mulberries were a perfect joy after the 8 miles walk through a furnace we had had since Ram Ghat. I forget where I last wrote from, was it Chillum? If so, I can record a successful and on the whole most enjoyable march thence to (1) Godai (2) Astor (3) Dashkin (4) Doian. All these 4 places are perched on ledges high above the Astor River, which runs through the most wonderful gorges into which the path occasionally descends. The scenery is stupendous. One is skirting mighty Nanga Parbat the whole time. Tho' one can't see its head except for a short time between Chilhum and Godai, but the glaciers and snow fields send down countless streams and torrents and the road passes as often through wonderful deodar and chilgora pine forests, or over grassy 'alps' as it does through desert gorges or cut into the face of stupendous cliffs. Snows are always in sight, mostly grand jagged peaks or immense ramparts of cliff. Astor is particularly fine: I never dreamed of such scenery. It takes one's breath away!

There, the chief local feature is the size and thickness of the walnut trees which with the meadows and greenery make the place into an English park perched on a ledge of the Himalayas.

Etherton's horses have been a sad disappointment, & indeed cause of alarm. They are both wild stallions and quite untrustworthy. I had what might have been a very nasty experience with them between Astor and Dashkin. The Turki orderly, Hafiz, was riding the bay horse, and I the fine black Badakhshani. Suddenly my horse went for the other, and a terrific fight ensued on the narrow path, which luckily was at that point separated from the roaring torrent of the Astor river by a few yards of rough rocks. Neither Hafiz or I could control the horses in the least and they bit and tore and kicked each other like ponies for several seconds till finally the black reared high in the air & I (thankfully) rolled off behind. Next moment both the horses and Hafiz were on top of me in a struggling, snorting mass and how I managed to crawl out without getting my head bashed in, I can't think, but I did. Hafiz also extricated himself and the horses went on fighting for a long time afterwards, till at last Hafiz and a local syce [groom – *DW*] we had with us got them apart & they cooled down. I got off with a bruised hip, & Hafiz with bad bruises on his leg from the kicking of the horses, from which he hasn't quite recovered yet. D., who witnessed the whole thing, thought I was being killed & got an awful turn which I'm afraid has rather spoilt her nerve about horses, at any rate temporarily. The caravan, including Gerard were a long way ahead at the time & it took some time to get other ponies back, as the whole of the rest of the road was very difficult owing to past avalanches and land slides (it had not been repaired for some time). However, finally we got along the road, I riding in considerable discomfort owing to my bruised hip, and we stopped for the night at Dashkin instead of going into Doian as we had intended. We thus lost a precious day – but I couldn't possibly have got to Doian that night. Ellimans[34] and bathing speedily put the hip right, and 2 days later I walked 18 miles, so no great harm was done. But it meant that we couldn't use Etherton's horses any more, a fact which upset our calculations and arrangements badly. I'm going to write to Etherton & tell him that I can't keep and use both his horses for him while on leave as I said I would. I may take one – the other I shall certainly leave in Gilgit. It's not good enough. He didn't even tell me they were stallions! with this result that we had a fracus this very first time we met them, near Chilhum, owing to the presence of mares in our caravan; Hafiz got badly kicked then & I avoided a similar fate by inches!

Bunji, in a different way to Astor, is one of the most magnificently situated villages I have ever seen. Its view of Nanga Pargat is celebrated, and deservedly so – it's wonderful.[35] The whole massif towers up at the S. end of the great bare valley almost entirely covered with snowfields and glaciers; what strikes one is the intense purity of the whiteness, for the lower snow-clad peaks of only 20,000 or so seemed to be as white as anything could be, but Nanga Parbat makes them look a dirty pale brown! [*Fig. 25, next page*] I got a couple of fine photos of it, indeed I've got a splendid collection of negatives the whole way up (I develop as I go) as we have had perfect weather from the photographic point of view. Alas, one spool which contained what would have been some very beautiful & interesting pictures, including a most amusing one of D. & myself crossing the Astor river at Ramghat in a 'cradle' by wire

34. Ellimans Universal Embrocation, still sold, was developed in the middle of the 19th century. It is a salve or liniment which, according to the modern advertising, 'spreads soothing warmth for quick relief of muscular pain and stiffness...' (http://www.sloughhistoryonline.org.uk/ixbin/hixclient.exe?a=query&p=slough&f=generic_theme.htm&_IXFIRST_=1&_IXMAXHITS_=1&%3Dtheme_record_id=sl-sl-elliman)

35. 8,126 m (26,660 ft) Nanga Parbat is the ninth highest peak in the world, exposed to the monsoon winds due to the absence of really high peaks in its vicinity and consequently one of the most difficult and dangerous of the 8000 m peaks for climbers.

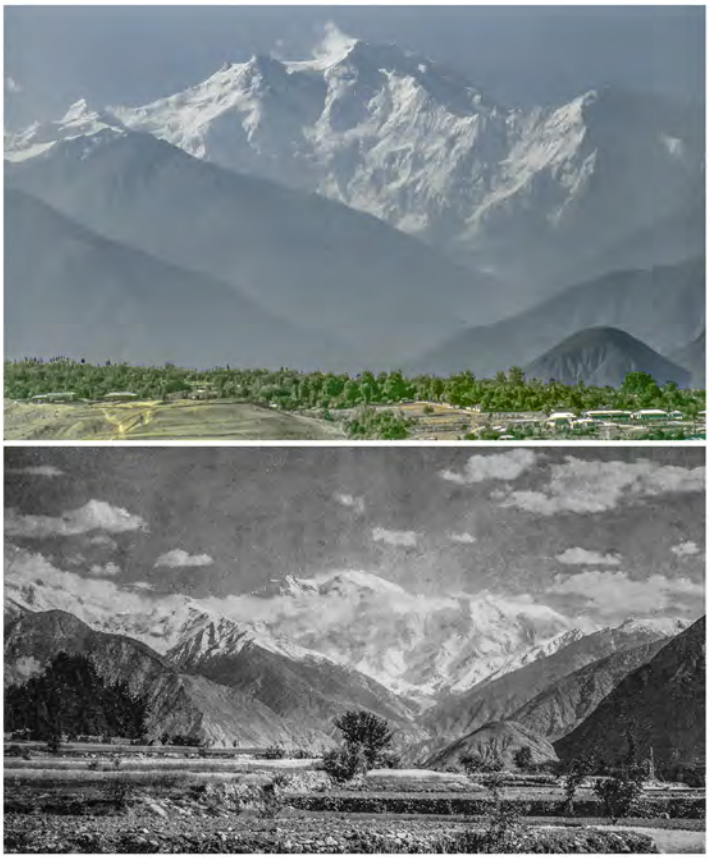


*Fig. 25. One can appreciate even today the dramatic views of massive Mt. Nanga Parbat (8126 m. /26,660 ft.) on a clear day from the Indus Valley. (*Above: *DW photo 1994, taken from Talechi;* below: *CPS photo, taken from Bunji, 1922 [after: CCA 1925, facing p. 36].)*

[*Fig. 26*], taken by Gerard, was entirely spoilt in developing owing to the heat which melted the film & made it stick to the apron in my tank. I nearly cried when that happened!

After the purgatory of marching up in the blazing heat at 2 miles an hour, mostly through heavy sand, 2 ½ stages, it was a treat to turn a corner & see spread out below us the rich cultivation and trees of Gilgit spreading over 3 or 4 miles of valley, closed in at the head by mighty mountains, with the Gilgit river, now quite broad & shallow, lying in coils around the greenery. Gilgit is <u>delightful</u>. I could ask nothing better than to have this job for 3 or 4 years. I'd never go on leave even to Srinagar. The <u>only</u> hot bit of the district is the Indus valley, all the rest consists of mountains & upland pastures

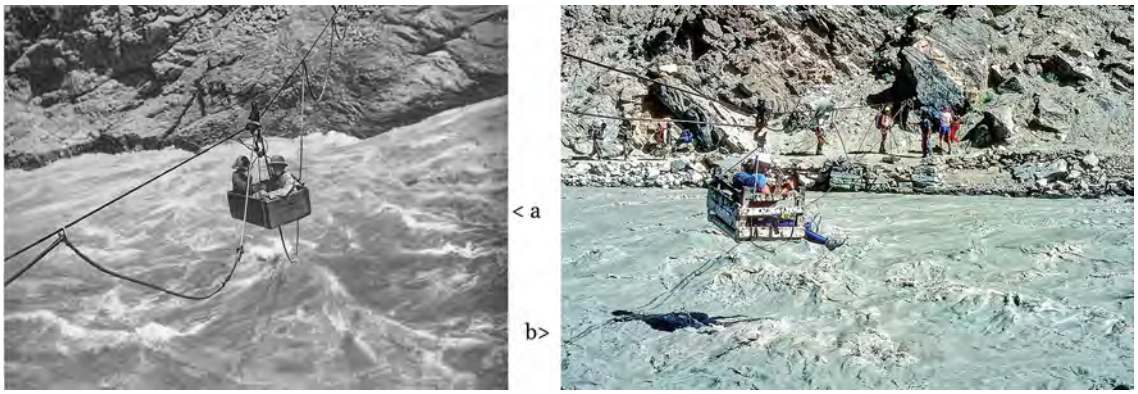


Fig. 26. As Clarmont knew in advance, the bridge at R*amghat (where the party reached the Indus) had been washed out; the Astor River had to be crossed on a cable car. Even though he lamented losing the photo in processing, apparently the picture of the Skrines' crossing on 14 June 1922, taken by Gerard Price, survived (here a), from* L'Illustration*, 23 October 1926, no. 4363, p. [450]). Even decades later, as b) shows, such easily erected cable cars for river crossings were being used, the photo for comparison by DW taken on the Baltoro Glacier in 1994.*

& deep green glens and terraced cultivation. Gilgit itself is at its hottest now, & even now it isn't hot enough to make punkahs[36] necessary. The sand flies are a pest and have spoiled 2 of the 3 nights we have had so far, but that is because our curtains are not sand-fly proof. I sleep out in the garden when

36. A ceiling fan, in India traditionally a canvas-covered frame attached along one edge to the ceiling and kept in motion by a servant pulling on a rope.

it is quite cool at night. [*Fig. 27*] The Lorimers both love it.[37] They were I think genuinely pleased to see me again & to meet D. On our part we both say how delightful it is to meet & stay with people who have wide interests and can talk on any subject, after the society of Quetta (with a few honourable exceptions) and Srinagar (with none) where the talk never varied from games, people and shop from one month's end to another. It has been delightful talking about Kerman & Persia & old days too. We haven't ceased talking & listening about every conceivable subject from the moment we arrived, except to go to bed at night! Gerard is being fed by the Lorimers but has an empty bungalow close by for himself, lucky beggar. We're sharing a bed and a bath-room & have a veranda even on which to re-pack.



Fig. 27. The British agent's bungalow, Gilgit. (After: Algernon Durand, The Making of a Frontier *[London: John Murray, 1899], facing p. 227.)*

We start tomorrow (Monday, 19th) for Baltit, the capital of Hunza State, whence I will write again.[38] The extraordinary twin (and rival) states of Hunza and Nagar will be intensely interesting, and I propose to stop 2 days at Baltit. Then we shall have 12 or 13 desert marches over the Mintaka to Tashkurgan, the first half being thro' some of the most difficult country in the world. Nobody however seems to have any doubt that we shall get through comfortably enough, as the Mir of Hunza is going to assist us in every way and is 'one of the best,' as well as all-powerful in his dominions.

[*Fig. 28*] 19 June. I must end now, as our coolies have left and we must be off to Nomal (18 miles) the first stage on our long trek. We should reach Kashgar about 20th July, I reckon, but if I stop in the country to the E. of the Mustagh Ata, for mapping purposes, as I intend to do if all goes well, we may not reach K. till the 25th. There's no particular hurry. Harding the Vice Consul, by the way, arrived here yesterday (18th). He has been treading rather too closely on our heels & I have told him to say here a week. I told you didn't I that he is 4 years older than me & was recently a Consul with a V. C. under him!

Will write again from Baltit. [*Figs. 29, 30*]

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Fig. 28. Doris Skrine's telegram to her parents, sent the day the Skrines left Gilgit (from the British Library Collection: IOLR EurF 154/8).

37. Lt. Col. David Lockhart Robertson Lorimer (1876-1962) and his wife Emily (née Overend). An officer in the British Indian Army, Lorimer held numerous appointments in the Indian Political Service. He was the political agent in Gilgit in 1920-1924 and in 1934-1935 spent significant time Hunza, where both he and his wife acquired expertise on the politics, culture and language. Lorimer was an admirer of Mir M. Nazim Khan; Emily Lorimer's book, *Language Hunting in the Karakoram*, contributed to the idealization of Hunza as a kind of Shangri La. See Kreutzmann 2020, 18, 407-409, 483-485 (including a photo of Lorimer taken in 1924 in Gilgit), and passim. Several members of the Lorimer family had important careers in the Indian Civil Service; David's younger sister, Florence, became Aurel Stein's valued assistant (see Helen Wang, "Stein's Recording Angel – Miss F M G Lorimer," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Ser. 3, 8/2 [1998]: 207-228).

38. Baltit was at one time a separate village in Hunza, now part of a larger urban area which has been re-named Karimabad after the Aga Khan.

[*On leaving Kashgar in 1924, Skrine traveled back through Hunza and described with additional detail his reception there and what he learned about the local politics. For his later letters and his transcription of the ballad 'Sultan Aziz Jan', see below. Skrine painted a perhaps unjustifiably rosy picture of his host there, Mir Nazim Khan, although his passing critical comment about the Mir's son who would succeed him in 1938, Ghazan Khan, seems to have been quite accurate. The best analytical description of Hunza is in the magnificently illustrated book by Hermann Kreutzmann,* Hunza Matters (2020). *For his discussion of Nazim*

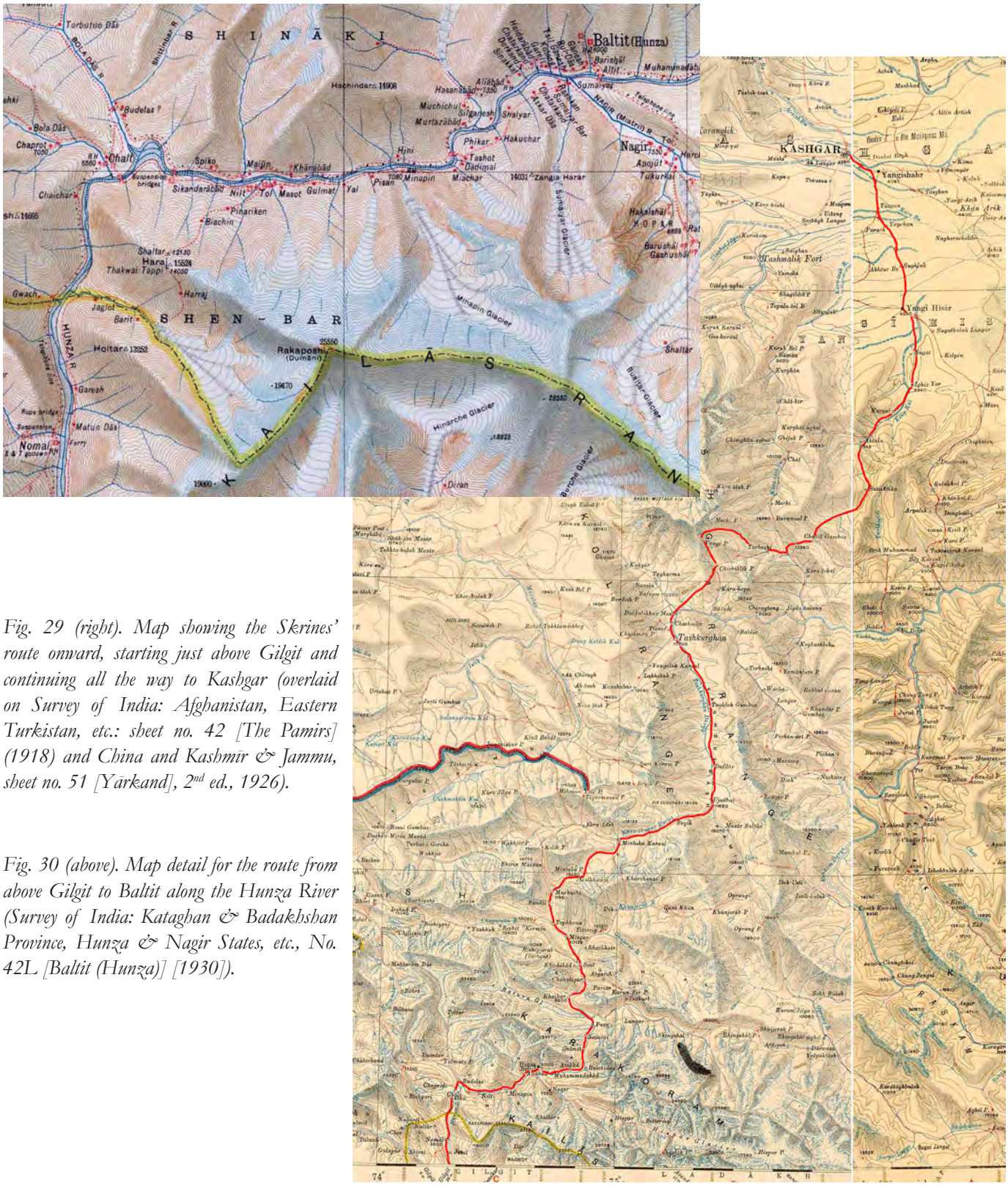


Fig. 29 (right). Map showing the Skrines' route onward, starting just above Gilgit and continuing all the way to Kashgar (overlaid on Survey of India: Afghanistan, Eastern Turkistan, etc.: sheet no. 42 [The Pamirs] (1918) and China and Kashmīr & Jammu, sheet no. 51 [Yārkand], 2nd ed., 1926).

Fig. 30 (above). Map detail for the route from above Gilgit to Baltit along the Hunza River (Survey of India: Kataghan & Badakhshan Province, Hunza & Nagir States, etc., No. 42L [Baltit (Hunza)] [1930]).

Khan and his son, see esp. pp. 383-421. Kreutzmann publishes many archival photos of the Mir; see p. 417, for one showing him, Ghazan and the latter's son Jamal Khan, who was to be the last of the autonomous mirs of Hunza.]

Camp Ata'abad, Hunza, 25 June 1922, 9:15 P.M.

I write by the flickering light of a 'hurricane balti' at our camp dining table under the stars, with Doris having a pre-bed bath in our exceedingly decrepit Kabul tent (borrowed from the Gilgit Agency) a few yards away, & Gerard retiring to rest in a smaller but less decrepit tent (brought by me from India) close by. The servants are busy packing up the kitchen things by the light of the camp fire so as to have as little to do as possible early tomorrow morning, for we have an early start before us; our march from here to Gulmit (about 17 miles) is through the most terrific country imaginable, mountains 24 and 25 thousand feet on <u>both sides</u> coming down steeply to the turbid swift-flowing Hunza River. [*Fig. 31*]. We are told that there are many '*paris*' on tomorrow's march; a 'pari' is a cliff in a river-valley formed by the action of the water sweeping round a curve. Every time the path reaches the outside of a curve of the river, it has to climb high up the 'pari' & drop down again the other side; then follows a flat sandy stretch on the <u>inside</u> of the next river bend, then another pari, & so on. One 'pari' today took us over an hour to get over, & we climbed 800 ft. in the process. On another, the path was carried on stakes, 3 ft. wide & no parapet, for the best part of a mile along the face of a nearly vertical cliff. Today's march was only 9 miles, though, & we did it very comfortably leaving the Hunza capital, Baltit, at midday, lunching in deep beds of clover under apricot trees on the way, & reaching here about 5:30 to find the tents just being put up.

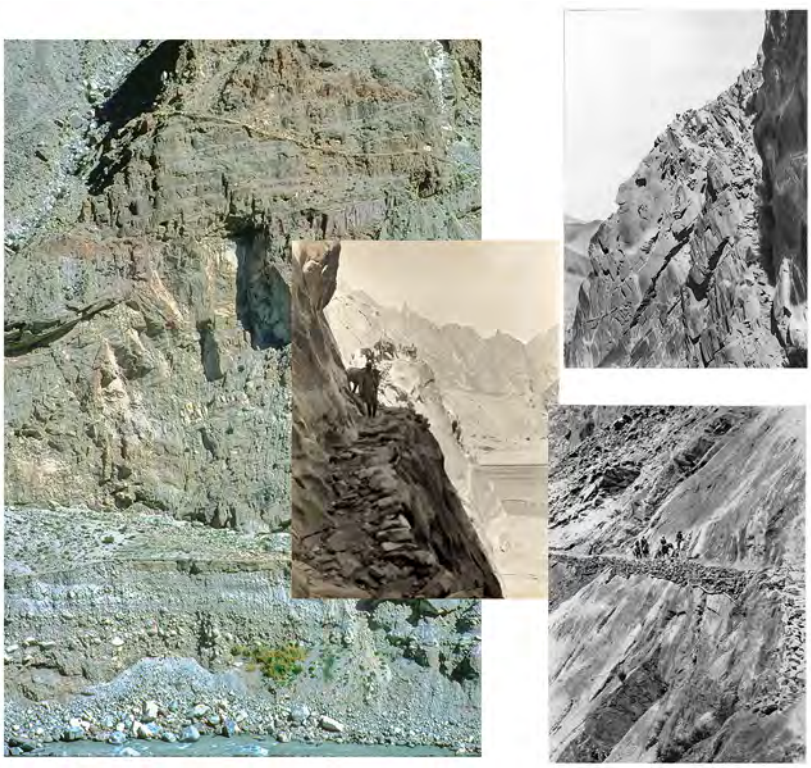


*Fig. 31. Rafiqs, the perilous paths along the cliffs (paris) above the Hunza River: 1995 DW color photo, the path snaking across the cliff face near the top; three of Skrine's images (*center – *reproduced here with permission from the Royal Geographical Society (London), no. s0005908;* upper right - *from* L'Illustration*, 16 October 1926, no. 4363, p. [417];* lower right - *from* CCA *1925, facing p. 16).*

Not counting the Mir of Hunza's palatial tents in which we lived at Baltit, this is our first camp in tents on this journey. In spite of the cramped quarters & comparative discomfort, D. & I are both delighted to get into tents again, like Baluchistan. We don't really miss the Baker kit which didn't reach us before we left Srinagar. I'd have liked a Lord's lantern instead of this 'balti,' but for <u>this</u> journey at any rate, I think. By our next big trek, I hope the Baker stuff will have reached us at Kashgar. Talking about kit, you will be glad to hear that the canvas hanging bag arrangement with three pockets which you made me in 1912 for India is still going strong & is quite indispensable. Now, as in Persia, it contains all my dressing-table, & other small requisites, boot-hooks, shoe-horn, brushes, comb, button-hook, scissors, pincushion, a few medicines, court-plaster, tape-measure, clothes-brush, stud-box, safety-pins,

knives, pencils, compass, barometer etc. etc. etc. each in their appointed pocket. I've used it everywhere, not only in camp, since 1912 & always hang it up in every house I go to; but it is while actually travelling that it becomes most useful.

Our first two marches out of Gilgit (19th & 20th June) were hot & not very interesting. But at and after Chalt, our 2nd halt, we found ourselves in what I unhesitatingly pronounce to be one of the finest countries in the world – Hunza & Nagar (the valley of the Hunza River & its side-glens beat Kashmir hollow) beat even Astor. Surely nowhere else in the world is there such a combination of delicious wooded villages with neat terraced fields & orchards, and snow-peaks with glaciers & vast cliffs of ice towering 25,000 ft. into the sky close by, all round – of romantic castles built on crags over mighty torrents, fields & orchards perched up on overhanging cliff tops, cascades & vineyards cocked at 45° & brimming irrigation-channels carried along this face of vertical cliffs, with gorges whose walls drop down to abysmal depths from regions of eternal ice, tens of thousands of feet. [*Fig. 32*] From Chalt to Nilt, Nilt to Minapin, Minapin to Baltit one passes alternately from the most appalling vertical side gorges & 'paris' to deep clover meadows, green Scotch-looking hill-sides, magnificent orchards with farms peeping from the midst of them, country that would do credit to Devonshire for richness of verdure. The crops (barley & wheat) are splendid & show that the people are excellent husbandmen. Above all, the incredibly high cliffs and knife-edge ridges of mighty Rakaposhi (25,600 ft.) [*Fig. 33*] pierce the sky far overhead & lend majesty to a landscape which is already majestic enough, with other eternal snows & glaciers visible in several different directions. I don't think there is any other place in the world where one can stand in a lovely orchard with greenery & cultivation stretching for miles in both directions & see the whole height of a mountain over 25,000 ft. high, the top of which is only 7 miles away!! That is the case at Nilt. One practically stands at the foot of cliffs the top of which is three and three quarter miles up in the air above one!



Fig. 32. Nilt in the Hunza Valley (photo: DW 1995).



Fig. 33. A first glimpse of the 'the incredibly high cliffs and knife-edge ridges of mighty Rakaposhi', taken from near Chalt (photo: DW 1995). Cf. Skrine's photo taken in 1924 above Chalt at Chaprot, in GJ*, 1925a, facing p. 392.*

Chalt (where the needle-point of Rakaposhi first bursts upon one) is fine, Nilt is finer, Minapin I thought the most wonderful plain I had ever seen, but the Baltit valley, the centre of Hunza & Nagar beats them all. At Murtezabad one crosses from the South or Nagar side of the river by a suspension bridge (the furthest & last built by the P[ublic] W[orks] D[epartment] whose 'road' ends soon afterwards to be replaced by the Mir of Hunza's 'road') to the Hunza side. All is wild & terrific here, the



<a>



b>

*Fig. 34 (*above*). The castle of the Mir of Hunza: a) Skrine's splendid image, capturing the dramatic peaks of the backdrop (*L'Illustration*, 16 October 1926, No. 4363, p. [418]); b) approximately the same view, the mountain, alas, shrouded and the castle in scaffolding for the restoration that was then underway (photo: DW 1995).*

*Fig. 35 (*below*). The reception room of the Baltit castle, its windows offering a panoramic view of the Hunza valley and Rakaposhi, photographed during the ongoing restoration in 1995 (DW photo).*



gorges being of stupendous depth. Then one finds oneself once more in rich wheat- & barley-cultivation, all terraced with neat pukka stone walls (so different from the sloppy tumble-down terracing of the Gilgiti people) & orchards & suddenly one turns a corner & there is the Baltit valley. Imagine a wide valley with sides 24,000 ft. high, a winding canyon with a river in it at the bottom, & the side vivid green up to two thousand feet or more above the river – five miles away, bang opposite you, an ancient castle of wood, amazingly picturesque on a steep hill covered with flat-roofed stone houses & trees, backed by the most stupendous gorge pitched at about 60 angle & crowned with glaciers & ice cliffs away up in the blue heavens! [*Figs. 34, 35*] The castle is the 600-year old stronghold of the Mirs of Hunza, whose dynasty was founded by one Aiyash in the 11th century & who have been there ever since;[39] Aryans of the purest ruddy-complexioned, magnificent upstanding men like their subjects the people of Hunza – as fine a race as I ever came across, & honest & straightforward & un-Oriental as could be. The people of Nagar, who live on the South side of the valley among the glens of Rakaposhi & the tremendous Hispar, are much the same type. I'd give almost anything to live for a few months among these people. The Mir of Hunza[40], who entertained us right royally with the traditional hospitality of his race, is a splendid type – largely built, stout but active as a goat & a magnificent polo player (I'll tell you about the polo later) with long drooping moustaches & short beard

39. Skrine's source here regarding the genealogy of the ruling family in Hunza may well have been what the Mir told him during the visit. The popular belief that the Ayesho dynasty began in ca. the 11th century is difficult to confirm precisely from any historical records. See the discussion in Dani 1991, esp. pp. 159-162, 196-200.

40. Muhammad Nazim Khan, r. 1892-1938, was installed by the British as the ruler in Hunza after their military conquest of the area in 1891. He was created a Knight Commander of the Indian Empire (K.C.I.E.) in June 1921, died at age 72 and was succeeded by his eldest son Muhammad Ghazan Khan (b. ca. 1895).

he might be an elderly Scotch duke [*Fig. 36*]. Though not a 'cultured' person by any means, he speaks (besides his native Burushaski) Persian, Hindustani, Chitrali, Turki & probably one or two other languages, & is well up in modern politics & full of wisdom & knowledge of the world. A kindly, humorous, straightforward old gentleman withal, & one I am most proud to have made my friend – for he took a distinct liking to D. & myself & was I think genuinely sorry when we left.



Fig. 36. The Mir of Hunza, Muhammad Nazim Khan, with his sons and grandsons on the rooftop pavilion of the Baltit castle. (Photo by CPS, scanned from a negative in the Stewart collection.)

We camped in great luxury in one of the clover-carpeted orchards of his summer residence, a wee house deeply buried in a terraced garden on a spur below the ancient castle and 'town' of Baltit. The Mir gave us tea and dinner the first evening to save our servants. Most surprisingly, considering the remoteness of the place, the tea & dinner were in the most correct style all European appointments – silver, cutlery, napery, & above all cuisine, just as you would find in a well-to-do English household! The Mir's summer residence is a quite small pavilion in a delightful little secluded garden. The *zenana*[41] was of course in another part of the garden: D. went & saw the Mir's young Chitrali wife (his first wife died some years ago; the Hunza people, tho' Mussalmans, are monogamous) the day after we arrived; she says the girl is exquisitely beautiful, a real picture, and most charming, tho' unfortunately she knows no language but Chitrali. She gave D. a lovely embroidered choga or a white pure-wool cloak, of a much prized kind which is only made in the Shimsal region, several marches N. West of Baltit & on the border of the Chinese Pamirs. Gerard and I both bought Hunza-made embroidered chogas as dressing-gowns. They are excellent value, tho' not of such fine wool as D's. The 'Rani' also gave D. a beautiful little whip of the Hunza pattern, with lovely tassles.

We dine[d] 2 nights with the Mir, & he dine[d] with us once, our cook borrowing a good deal of the Mir's matériel for the occasion! We sat down 5, the Mir's eldest son, Ghazan Khan, who by the way brought us along from Gilgit & was most useful, being usually one of the party. Ghazan Khan, tho' exactly like a young Scotch 'bonnet-laird' to look at, is by no means the man his father is, rather an ass in fact, tho' well-meaning. The Mir's second son, Ghain Khan, who is as dark & good looking as the elder one is fair & homely countenanced, is on the other hand a clever & most promising lad. It's a pity he won't be Mir.

The Mir & his son both speak Persian fairly well & like talking it, so I humoured them occasionally, but as D. can join to a certain extent in Urdu conversation but doesn't know any Persian, we generally

41. The women's quarters.

spoke the former. A great feature of the Mir's entertainments is the music & singing of the 'band'. This consists of an extremely clever & musical old Afghan Pathan rabab-player, a deserter from the Amir's band, whom the Mir of Hunza befriended, & 5 or 6 drummers, cymbal-players etc. Sometimes one of the others accompanies the Afghan on a long kind of zither, but the Afghan, who plays the surnai (pipes) also very well, usually does most of the work. He has quite a good ballad-singing voice, & his Persian and Afghan love songs to the accompaniment of his own rabab were perfectly delightful. Best of all we liked a beautiful thing called 'Sultan Aziz Jan' which had a most haunting cadence. Three boys dressed as girls also danced perfectly wonderful dancing of its kind – quite different from the Indian 'Nautch'; the foot-work was most intricate & skilful & the movements of the arms & body exquisite, even by our standards. With the 'band' sitting in a row behind them the three boys made a perfect picture, & the whole show would have created quite a furore at home. Doris, who knows a bit about dancing, was astonished at the high level of the boys' work.

[*Fig. 37*] The best of all, though, was the Hunza sword dance we saw one night, performed by 8 or 9 stalwarts of the Mir's bodyguard. I've never seen such a dance – it was magnificent, thrilling. By the light of three fires, those men danced like men possessed, & yet in perfect time & with every step and every twist & whirl of their swords correct. They kept it up too, a perfectly astonishing time – 6 or 7 minutes at least, against the 3 minutes which the Russians say is the limit a man can do in a violent dance. The wild music, the lurid light of the fires, the rows of watching faces, the flashing swords and rhythmic movement of the dancers (mostly six-footers) will never be forgotten by any of us three. After the sword dance they gave us another performance which is a peculiarity of Hunza, a dance done by a (pantomime) ibex, an ovis poli, & an eagle! The ibex was most lifelike, two small boys being the motive power thereof, but the eagle was excellent, his long neck & head being most active pecking imaginary food off the ground & also pecking at the posturing of the ibex & the markhor, urging them to conflict. The dance ended with a most realistic butting match between the poli and the markhor, with the eagle as referee!



Fig. 37. The Hunza sword dance being performed for visitors in 1995 (DW photo).

The second (and last) afternoon we were at Baltit the Mir arranged a game of the famous local polo for us, in which I myself played on one side & the Mir on the other. The polo of these parts is undoubtedly a direct descendant of ancient Persian polo, & is most interesting. The chief differences between it & modern polo are – (1) It is played with a peculiar stick, the head of which is shaped so – [*Fig. 38*];  (2) The ground is at least six times as long as it is broad (this is due to natural causes, flat pieces of ground being very rare in Hunza & only terraces available for polo)[42]; (3) The game is played between walls of loosely built up stones about 4 ft. high; (4) There are no 'chukkers' for change of ponies, the game going on for anything up to an hour and a half. In match, the game stops when one side or other has scored 9 goals; (5) There are no fouls; (6) After a side has scored a goal, the ball comes into play again by one of them taking it in his right hand, together with his stick, & galloping up the ground to half-way: he throws the ball into the air in front of him, still at full gallop, & hits it before it reaches the ground. This is a very difficult feat, and only the best

42. For Skrine's photo of a polo ground, see Fig. 230 below. Even though it has been captioned the polo ground in Hunza at Altit, in fact it must be a photo he had taken in Nagar in 1924.

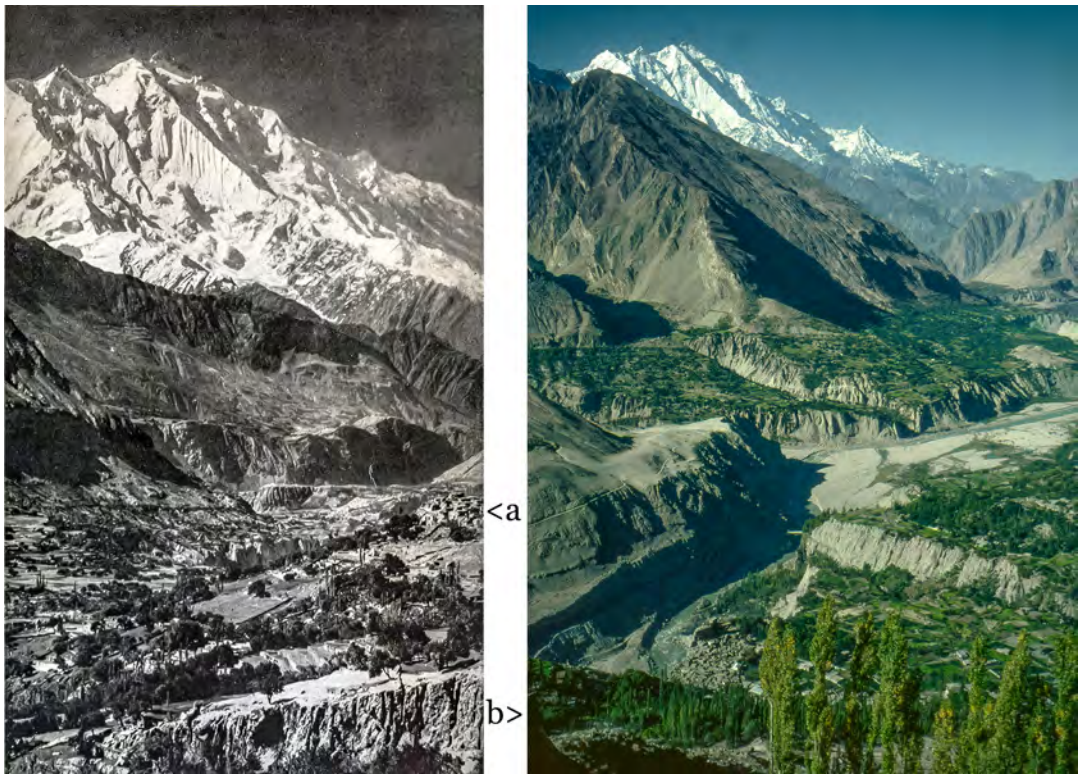


Fig. 39. The 'classic' view looking across the Hunza valley toward Rakaposhi: a) Skrine's photo taken probably from the Mir's castle (after: CCA *1925, facing p. 8); b) the view from Tok, encompassing at the bottom the river and the Altit castle (photo: DW 1995).*

players can do it at all surely; the old Mir is a marvel at it – five times yesterday he did it, hitting the ball a deuce of a long way each time. It's a most inspiring sight.

I acquired much kudos by playing, tho' I didn't hit the ball much – I couldn't make anything of the local stick. However, I got one good run down the field which elicited applause. We played two periods of 25 and 35 minutes apiece, & I was pretty stiff this morning after it.

[*Fig. 39*] I got some magnificent photos at Baltit, thanks to the weather (which had been unfavourable ever since Gilgit) turning beautifully clear the very evening we arrived at Baltit [...] One panoramic view of the whole Hunza valley from the top of a little knob just behind the 'Palace' must I think be unique [*Fig. 40*]. I developed it this afternoon immediately on arrival in camp, & it has come out splendidly. It shows the gorge which leads to Kashgar on the extreme left, the snows of Shimshal above it, then in the foreground the fine old wooden Castle on its rock; the Nagar valley with the mighty Hispar snows behind the Kailas Range dominated by Rakaposhi; the windings of the Hunza river gorge & the miles & miles of orchards & crops which clothe the steep hill-sides above it on both sides. Thanks to the very powerful 'light filter' I have, the lovely wooly clouds which were hanging over the snows have come out as finely as the snows themselves. *Fig. 40. Skrine's remarkable panorama (*Die Koralle *[Berlin], September 1928, pp. 274-75). For an almost identical modern (2019) panorama, see Kreutzmann 2020, p. 34.*





Fig. 41. Gulmit, as seen in 1995 (DW photos).

I really must stop now, as we've an early start tomorrow. D. is doing fine, enjoying every minute of the journey & as fit as a fiddle. She is tremendously thrilled by the whole country, especially Hunza, which as I hope I have indicated above is about as romantic a land as ever existed out of a fairy-tale.

I am sending this to Hunza from Gulmit [*Fig. 41*], for posting by special postal service to Gilgit & thence by ordinary post to India & you.[43] My next will probably be from Tashkurgan.

***

The telegraph line connecting to British India was extended to Misgar, just short of the Mintaka Pass, in 1918. Skrine's urgent communications sent from Kashgar were carried by courier on horseback to Misgar in order to be telegraphed from there to Simla or Delhi. CCA *1925 compresses in few pages (pp. 30-33) the travel between Gulmit and Misgar; in lieu of detailed text, I provide in Fig. 42 a few photographic highlights.*]

[*Fig. 42*] **Misgar, 30 June 1922**

Just a line to say that (as cabled today) we have arrived safely & soundly at this, the frontier telegraph post. Such a forlorn, bleak little place, over 10,000 up among tremendous black mountains powdered with snow, swept by wind & rain & bitterly cold, tho' in the middle of summer! A handful of stone huts & a few acres of young crops, barley & oats chiefly; well-built but very small telegraph station with two Indian clerks, excellent fellows, both of them (Christians I think) who put one of their own bedrooms at D.'s disposal. Gerard & I slept in our tiny tents which were nearly blown away by a storm which came on without any warning at 11 o-clock last night. We have had a tiring but successful march from Baltit in spite of the weather being rather bad the last 2 or 3 days. Today it has cleared up & is most promising for the Mintaka Pass, which we cross the day after tomorrow, the kit on ponies, ourselves on lovely riding yaks belonging to our benefactor, the Mir of Hunza.

D. is in great form, makes scones every other day almost & works hard & most successfully at the commissariat, with the result that we all three live like fighting-cocks on fare which would do

43. In *CCA* 1925, p. 80, Skrine describes Gulmit (alt. spelling Galmit) as 'an attractive village boasting about 300 acres of fields and orchards will shaded with planes and poplars. It is walled round with lofty jagged peaks of a yellowish tint, fantastically fretted and carved into minarets and towers'. The mir once resided at the end of the polo ground, which today is in effect the central square. A tiny museum features artifacts illustrating aspects of the local culture and some from the era of British rule along with a few items harking back to the era of British rule.

Fig. 42. Traveling north from Gulmit to the Mintaka Pass

Photo sources: 1) tearsheet in BL IOLR MSS EurF 154/8; 2) RGS no. 018282, reproduced with permission of the Royal Geographical Society (London); 3) Nazaroff 1935, facing p. 248; Remaining photos by DW, 1995.



the campsite at Murkushi



view downriver from Sost

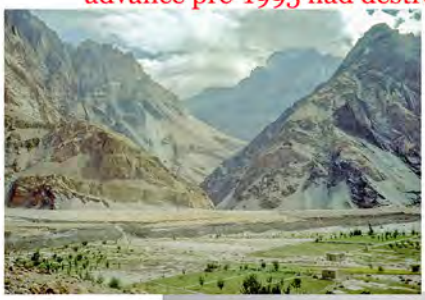


Gircha



Batura Glacier crossing; advance pre-1995 had destroyed highway





entrance to the Shimshal Valley



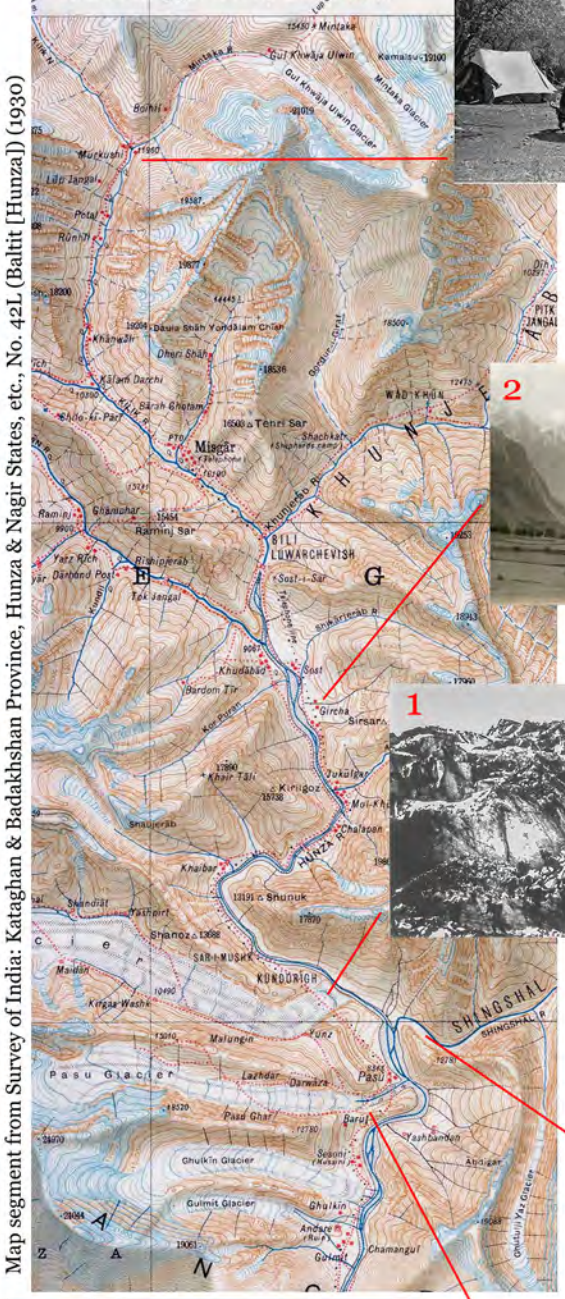
the Ultar peaks from the east



the Passu Glacier



the Passu peaks



credit to many a settled ménage in India. One or two of the marches since Hunza have been very trying, perpetually up & down cliff-sides, but D. has stood them splendidly. She sends her love. Gerard is also flourishing.

[*Fig. 43*] Just off for Murkushi (12 miles uphill) after a harassing hour or two getting the loads made up & loaded on the few ponies & coolies & donkeys available. The caravan now consists of 12 baggage ponies, 22 coolies with donkeys & 5 riding ponies: thru' Hunza we walked ourselves with our servants & our kit went on 54 coolies. One march we were 12 hours on the move continuously! [...]



Fig. 43. The camp at Murkushi (after: Nazaroff 1935, facing p. 248).

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Payik, Chinese Pamirs, 3rd July '22

I write this lying on a mat on the ground in a large Kirghiz 'Khirga' or portable hut of felts on a wooden framework.[44] These huts are put up for us at each stage on this side of the Mintaka Pass, & render tents a superfluity. We have accordingly sent back the tents we borrowed from Gilgit, & are only carrying a small one bought by me in India, which we use as a bath-room.

I last wrote from Misgar. We had glorious weather for our journey to and over the Mintaka which we did in 3 days, viz.: Misgar (10,350 ft.)–Murkushi (11,960), Murkushi–Gul Khwaja (13,650 ft.), Gul Khwaja-summit (15,450)–Lopgaz (13,600 ft.). Camp at Murkushi, which is at the junction of the Kilik and the Mintaka streams, was an excellent wood of willows & well-sheltered, so that we weren't unduly cold in spite of the altitude. We dined in front of a roaring bon-fire & slept cosily in our tents, tho' a cold wind was blowing till 10 PM. Next morning we got up when the sun was on the tent, & had our baths in delightful warmth. The path up from Murkushi to Gul Khwaja is very rough & steep in parts, in other parts flat and easy over delightful meadows. One such 'alp' called Boilip is three miles long & really very pleasant with soft springy turf & a crystal stream: two or three flock-owning families live in cave-dwellings under the hill-side. The mountain scenery on the S. side of the Mintaka is magnificent. Such stupendous crags of rich brown-coloured rock dappled with snow, jagged peaks & fretted ridges supported by dazzling snow-fields & glaciers, their lower ends vast walls of green ice; huge frozen waterfalls with cascades of green snow-water pouring down through them; below – crystal rivers shaded by groves of willow & ash & bordered with vivid green meadows, starred with flowers.

Gul Khwaja was not a very pleasant camping place, cramped & uneven & very draughty, but we didn't mind because the Pass was so near. I had a nasty headache which lasted me through the night & wasn't improved by the sudden collapse of my camp bed in the small hours! Waking up at 3 AM. with a splitting head in a temperature of about zero to find yourself on the (very nobby) floor amid the ruins of your bed, is not a pleasant experience. I extracted the collapsed bed from under my mattress,

44. Skrine later refers to the Kyrgyz trellis tents by their native name, 'ak oi' (lit. 'white house'), that is, what we call a yurt. They are circular, with a lattice-work wall and poles extending at an angle upwards to a central ring, this framework then usually secured with woven bands of cloth wrapped around it and the whole covered with felts or animal skins. The central opening in the top was to allow the smoke of the cooking fire to escape. The undyed felts or animal skins are a kind of greyish white, hence the name.

hurled it outside & continued my night on the floor. D. didn't sleep very well either & suffered slightly from breathlessness (which was completely gone next day when she crossed the pass), but none of us suffered from mountain sickness. I am convinced that this was due to our not doing too much on foot. We rode over the pass on magnificent yaks lent us by the Mir of Hunza, his own riding ones, which are kept at Murkushi. Imagine the excitement of D. when the two mighty creatures were driven up on the morning we marched to Gul Khwaja! [*Fig. 44*] 'Lovely hairy cows' exclaimed she, & leapt on the back of the black one, a perfect beauty with a tail like a – well, like the biggest yak's tail fly-whisk you ever saw! They're perfectly wonderful animals on the hill. Up they go, up a hill-side of 45°, with a man or a heavy load of baggage on their backs, no matter how rocky the path. For such bulky bison-like, low-clearance animals they are extraordinarily light- and sure-footed. The Mir at Hunza described them very well and rather amusingly in Hindustani as 'billi-patta' – literally 'pussy foot'!

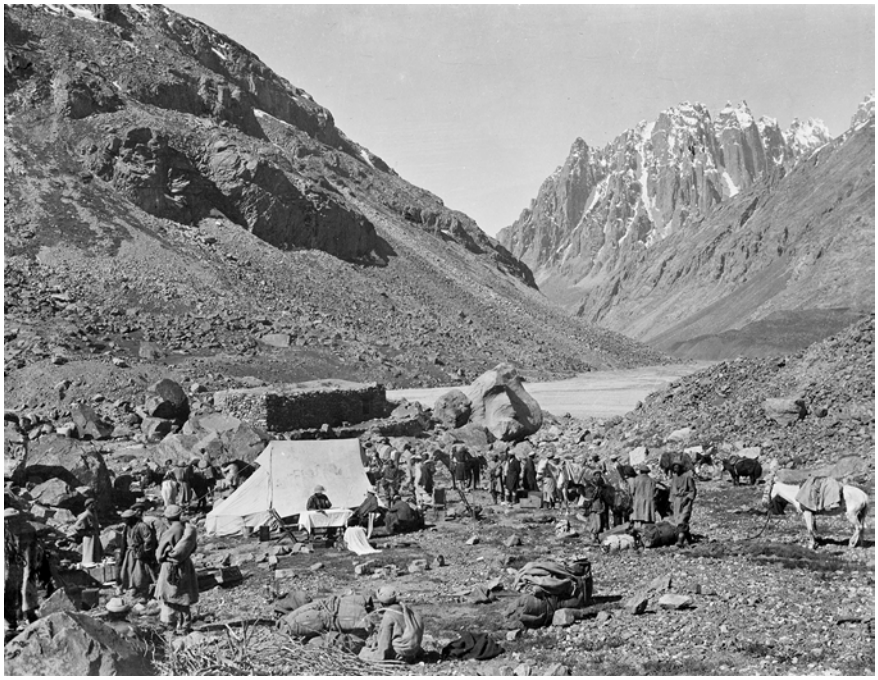


Fig. 44. The camp at Gul Khwaja in the morning of 2 July 1922 before the party ascended to the Mintaka Pass (reproduced with permission from The Royal Geographical Society [London], no. CPS/00017).



We left Gul Khwaja at 10 o'clock, D. & I riding the Mir's yaks, Gerard a hireling one; our kit on 4 yaks, 12 ponies and a few coolies. We climbed up the moraine of the Mintaka Glacier for an hour & came out at 14,300 ft. under the last steep ascent, a positively break-neck slope up which we zig-zagged painfully reaching the summit (15,450) at 12:15. [*Fig. 45*] There I took a panoramic photograph (4 films) of the wonderful array of peaks and glaciers to the south, & we halted for 1/4 hr. None of the 3 of us felt in the least sick or otherwise affected by the height. It was beautifully warm at the top in the blazing sun & calm air, & we were quite sorry to go down the N. side. However, the sight of the Pamirs consoled us. It was a thrilling moment, seeing the Pamirs for the first time – What struck us about them was (1) their mildness, compared with the tremendous scenery we had left behind, (2) their greenness – the Pamir pastures are famous,

Fig. 45. The Mintaka Pass. One segment of the panorama Skrine took just after noon on 2 July 1922, as the party was preparing to descend on the Chinese side (reproduced with permission from the Royal Geographical Society [London], no. CPS/00022).

(3) the cleanness of air, earth and water, everything pure & crystalline and clean. Altogether a pleasant land – in summer at any rate, & curiously enough strongly reminiscent of Scotland, especially the Border country, the shapes of the hills, the rolling downs & 'moss-bags' (for there are marshes, albeit not peaty or boggy ones, everywhere) might have been Dumfriesshire on a larger scale – in the early spring, when snow is still on the hills.

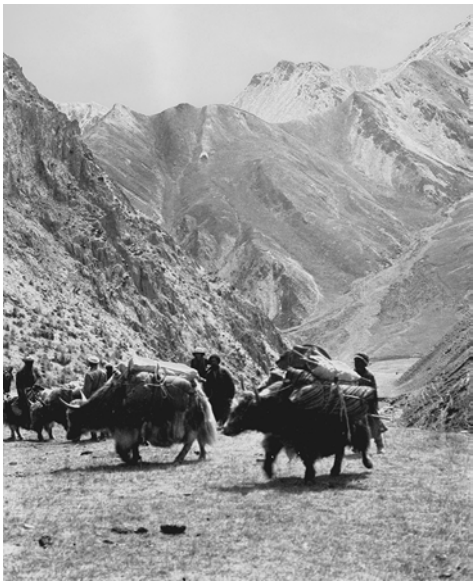


Fig. 46. The arrival of the Mir's yaks at Lopzag (Lup Gaz), the first campsite beyond the Mintaka Pass (reproduced with permission from the Royal Geographical Society [London], no. CPS/00023).

I must stop here, as the India-bound post is just passing & I'd better send this letter off & continue my impressions of the Pamirs from Tashkurgan, which we reach on 6th July.

***

[*The letter from Tashkurgan is missing. The diary of his journey up from Gilgit, to which he refers in subsequent letters, seems not to have survived, except to the degree that it served as the basis of his shortened descriptions in* CCA. *For his photos of crossing the Yangi Dawan and the lake in the Yambulak Valley, see* CCA *1925, facing p. 46. The 'route-book' to which he refers was a confidential guide to the routes in the Pamir and Himalaya, encompassing areas of Russian- and Chinese-controlled Central Asia, based on documented travel with indications of distances, campsites, and availability of water and pasture. On his return to India, one of Skrine's first priorities was to provide updates on known routes and descriptions of new ones, such as that described here, for the next edition. I copy below the update based on his notes describing the Yam-Bulak portion of the route.*]

Br[itish] Consulate General, Kashgar, 26 July 1922

[*Figs. 46, 47, 48*] [...] My last letter was from Tashkurgan – after leaving that place (July 9th) we were right off the postal route, & were unable to send any letters to India for lack of reliable messengers. We arrived here on the 21st & found that the weekly mail-bag to India had left that very morning. Hence the rather long gap between this letter and the last which I'm afraid may have worried you. However, this may console you: I have kept a full diary of the journey ever since Gilgit, & intend shortly to type it up and send it to you. It is baldly and badly written, just scribbled off in the evenings after we had settled ourselves

Fig. 47 (left). Photo on Sarikol plateau on the way to Tashkurgan. Possibly the location Skrine captioned on a different print: 'Yurghal Gumbaz with Sarikol Range'. (Photo reproduced with permission from the Royal Geographical Society [London], no. S0005903.)

Fig. 48 (right). View in the direction of Mustagh Ata from the ruins of the fortress at Tashkurgan (photo: DW 1995).







Fig. 49. Likely the Skrine's camp in a yurt below the Kok Moinak Pass, ca. 10 July 1922, although this could their camp at Paik on 3 July. The rider on the left is probably Doris Skrine. (Photo reproduced with permission from the Royal Geographical Society [London], no. CPS/00042.)

into our tents or 'ak ois' (Kirghiz huts) as the case might be; but in combination with my photos, of which I have a splendid collection, it will make an interesting record. Meanwhile I'll tell you briefly about our adventures since Tashkurgan. We had a most interesting, pleasant (on the whole) & successful journey across the Kashgarian Mountains which divide the Sarikol Valley & the Russian Pamirs from the Central Asian Plain. We did not go by the usual Gez route to the north of Kungur (25,500 ft.), because there was too much water in the Gez defile, & also because I wanted to do some exploring on my own account on the E. face of Kungur. We took the southern or Chichiklik route, to the S. of Mustāgh Āta, crossing four high passes, namely the Kok Moinak (15,400), the Yangi Dawan (16,100), the Tör Art (13,450) & the Kashka Su (12,500). [*Fig. 49*] The first was free of snow but bitterly cold, & our camping ground on the N. side of it, at 14,600 ft. was pretty bleak, the second [*Fig. 50*] was covered with snow but quite easy, & as we had a lovely clear sunny morning for it & only had 1,500 ft. to climb, it was most enjoyable; the 3rd & 4th were nothing but high grassy ridges covered with flowers and both the crossings were simply delightful picnics. In fact, the last one (Kashka Su) was so beautiful that we lay on the springy turf among the wild flowers at the top, basking in the sun & drinking in the magnificent panorama on both sides, for an hour and a half & set our faces down-hill for the last time with the utmost regret. Never shall I forget the blue of the sky, the radiance of cloud-masses and snow-peaks, the soft greenness of the turf-covered nearer ridges, the blue snow-capped ranges of the unexplored Karakash & Yarkand River gorges to the south, the parterres of gentian & saxifrage and kingcups & daisies & a dozen other flowers, the music of the glacier streams tumbling over the moors from hidden Mustagh Ata & Kongur! Even Doris, who after a month & a half among them was pretty sick of mountains & was longing for the plains, enjoyed herself those days on Tör Art and Kashka Su. We had stout shaggy yaks to carry us up the terrifically steep grass slopes on the South side of Tör Art, & sturdy little hill ponies to do the same on the Kashka Su, but we walked (sometimes ran) down the N. sides.



Fig. 50. The Skrine party crossing the Yangi Pass (after: CCA *1925, facing p. 46).*

But the most interesting & enjoyable part of the journey was our sojourn in the Yambulak glen, on the N. side of the 16,100-ft. Yangi Dawan. The interest here lay in the fact that no European traveller



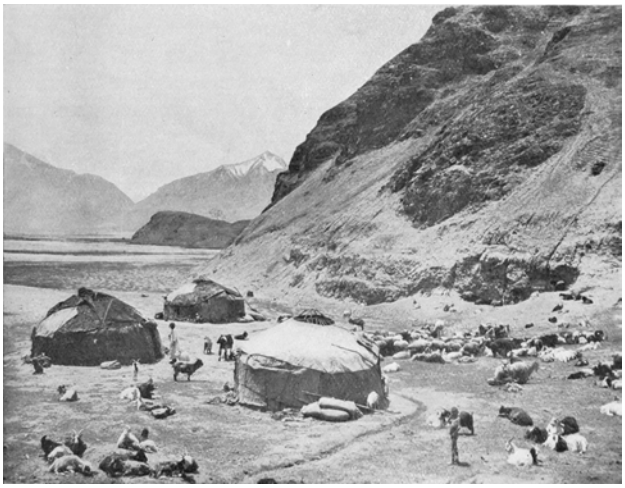


Fig. 51 (left). 'Lake Skrine', the unmapped lake at the head of the Yambulak valley (after: CCA *1925, facing p. 46).*

Fig. 52 (right). Presumably the Kyrgyz camp where the Skrine's stopped in the Yambulak valley (after: Nazaroff 1935, facing p. 64).

had ever been along this bit of road before, at least the local Kirghiz remembered none, & none of the General Staff or other maps or the route-book or any other authority marks or mentions the Yambulak route at all. From the Chchiklik Plain, a big moorland plateau covered with flowers (the name means 'flowery') of 14,600 ft. elevation to the S. of Mustagh Ata, the ordinary route used by Stein & others goes down the Tangitar (= Gorge of Darkness) to Tarbashi & Toile Bulung; all speak of the dangerousness of the road, the narrowness of the gorges and the fierceness of the flood in summer time. I made inquiries at Tashkurgan and found that by climbing up out of the Chichiklik Plateau over the Yangi-Dawan to the North & making a bit of a detour (one extra march) down the Yambulak glen, we could avoid the Tangitar & at the same time explore an unknown valley and make the acquaintance of a picturesque & interesting lot of Kirghiz whose summer h.q. is at Yambulak. So we did it, & were rewarded by discovering a large unmapped lake at the head of the Yambulak valley [*Fig. 51*], & several smaller lakes, being put up for 2 days by a delightfully picturesque and amusing family of Kirghiz, and travelling for 1 ½ days down a romantic & grandly beautiful glen positively carpeted with flowers & festooned with wild roses, growing out of crannies in the perpendicular black cliffs. The lake was perfectly lovely, a partly blue, partly white (from ice) expanse ringed round on three sides by precipitous snow mountains & bordered on the fourth by flower-strewed grassy banks. [*Fig. 52*] The Kirghiz encampment at which we stayed at Yambulak was delightful. The men were most friendly, the old chief's son Mohammed Amin & his family turning out of their comfortable ak-oi for us & regaling us with fresh yak's cream, sour cream & milk ('poi'), sheep and bread. [*Fig. 53*] The women were delicious, the quaintest



Fig. 53. Doris Skrine (on the far left) and the Kyrgyz women with their long braids at Yambulak (reproduced with permission from the Royal Geographical Society [London], no. CPS/00028).



Fig. 54. Doris Skrine's watercolor of a young Kyrgyz woman in the Yambulak Valley which was reproduced in color as the frontispiece of CCA *1925 (see ibid., p. 47).*

& most picturesque costumes you ever saw. Enormous kind of white turbans on their heads with long strips of embroidery hanging down their backs & their hair in long pigtails, gorgeously-coloured kind of dressing-gowns of striped silk & quaint stubby-toed Mongolian boots. I got two or three excellent photos of them talking to D., who was 'all over' them & made tremendous friends. In fact, the morning we left two perfectly lovely Khirgiz ladies walked quite a way down the glen at D's stirrup & almost cried at the farewell! [*Fig. 54*]

In the day we halted at Yambulak Gerard and I with 4 Kirghiz made an attempt to get to the top of a pass marked in the maps called Merki Dawan leading from the Yambulak valley into the Karatash valley. I wanted to get into the Karatash valley in order to do my exploration of the unknown east face of Kungur, & the Merki Pass, if possible at all, would be a very short cut. We had a most terrific climb up over boulders into a corrie filled with soft snow – very trying. [*Fig. 55*] We had to help the yaks over the boulders in some places, which, considering what the yak is, shows what the climbing was like. There was no track at all, & the so-called pass turned out to be a lofty 'col' completely covered with deep snow and with a terrific ice cornice at the top, at least 17,000 ft. high! The snow was so deep and soft in the corrie that I had reluctantly to abandon the attempt to reach the top of the pass and look down the N. side into the Karatash gorge, and leaving the yaks on a patch of dry rocks we climbed painfully & slowly, crawling from rock-top to rock-top and falling waist- or neck-deep into the snow every few yards for about 1000 ft. to the summit of the ridge on the right. At the top my barometer said 17,500 ft., but it over-estimates at very high altitudes and I calculated we were at 16,800 and perhaps 300 ft. below the 'col.' Gerard & I and the Kirghiz chief's brother were the only ones who got to the top of the side-ridge. Alas, when we got there, the sky had clouded over and as we were on a level with the clouds the panorama, tho' most interesting, was useless for photo purposes. However, I exposed a couple of plates & got results which will be worth printing. From the top I discovered two more mountain lakes unmarked in any map. Mustagh Ata & Kungur were alas shrouded in the clouds [...] It was an interesting experience, tho', climbing at 16–17,000 ft. altitude, & enabled one to realize what the Mt. Everest people have to contend with.[45] I found that I had to stop every ½ or ¾ minutes to take breath, & that after hauling oneself up onto a boulder one lay panting for a minute or



Fig. 55. Struggling with a yak in the deep snow on the attempt to find a route over the Merki Pass (after: Nazaroff 1935, facing p. 240).

45. Skrine would have been aware of the major British attempt to climb Mt. Everest in 1922, although he likely would not have received the news that the expedition had ended in early June when an avalanche killed seven of the Sherpa porters.

two before one could proceed at all.

We slept every night in khirgas, or 'ak-oi's' as the Khirgiz call them, which had been lent by the Begs of the neighbourhood. This was arranged by an excellent Turkoman orderly of the (Chinese) Amban of Tashkurgan, who was sent with us to look after us. He went ahead each evening & arranged the khirgas and supplies (milk, mutton & once or twice eggs) for the next day. A tower of strength for the party was Nadir Beg, the British government orderly at Tashkurgan. Nadir Beg is a well-to-do Sarikol zamindar or 'Bai' (= Beg) who is in our service and always travels with British officers & occasionally with favoured sportsmen between the Mintaka and Kashgar. He came the whole way from the Mintaka with us, & we took greatly to him. A fine, handsome, black-bearded, cheerful humourous, loyal & energetic man of about 35, a splendid horseman & hard as nails, & honest, too. He did us very well.

About 6 marches short of Kashgar, while still among the mountains to the N. of the Kashka Su pass, I had an accident: Etherton's black horse stumbled over some stones in a water-course & came on its nose, throwing me. I would have been quite all right if it hadn't been for a sharp up-sticking stone which dug into my right thigh and bruised it very severely. The pain was so great that I fainted twice after I was picked up [...] D., who was ahead at the time & didn't see me fall, was rather alarmed when she came back and found me unconscious. It was early in the march & we had another 11 or 12 miles to do, which was awkward; luckily one of the Begs had very kindly prepared a tiny tent and some tea for us at a half-way house a little further on, so when I was a bit better they got me on a yak and I had a painful ride of a mile or so with a man walking on my off side and holding my leg up in his hands. In the tent D. bathed my leg & I rested for a couple of hours & had some lunch & did the rest of the march all right on a yak with my leg in a sling attached to the front D of my saddle. I still limp slightly from it, a fortnight afterwards.

The last place we had 'ak-oi's' was Kichik Karaul, a delightful bit of greensward with poplars (thick spreading ones, not the long thin Persian kind) & fruit trees & tiny farms with fields of maize, peas & beans all round & countless springs bubbling out of the meadow. It was our first taste of the rich cultivation & greenery of Kashgaria. After that we had 3 more stages, Ighiz Yar, Yangi Hissar, and Yapchan. We weren't nearly so comfortable at nights then as we were in our ak-ois in the mountains. We had to live in well built but cramped native houses with very little courtyard room, or, at Yapchan, worse still – in the village serai! Better arrangements could have been made at Y. Hissar & Yapchan, [...] [W]e were eaten up by fleas and stifled by the heat of the windowless rooms, the alternative being to sleep out in the courtyard with the servants all round. I took the latter alternative but D. and Gerard preferred their rooms.



Fig. 56. Skrine and the amban of Yangi Hissar (after: L'Illustration*, 16 October 1926, No. 4363, p. 422).*

[*Fig. 56*] At Y. Hissar, which is a big town with an Amban (District Magistrate) & other officials, also a British Aksakal (= white beard) or (unpaid) agent, we had a lot of tamashas & ceremonial calls and return-calls and meetings and send-offs, also our first experience of a Chinese dinner. We have had several since, & find there is a sameness about them. They are always here served in courses, one after the other, & eaten not with chop-sticks but with European cutlery. On that occasion we did use chop-sticks, by special request, part of the time. I found a little difficulty at first in manipulating mine, but after a short time I got the knack and could eat almost as easily as with a fork. The difficulty of chop-sticks is much exaggerated. The standing delicacies which

appear at all these dinners are: shark's fin in soup (glutinous & indigestible, very little flavour), young bamboo shoots in soup (indigestible but not bad), fish entrails (nasty), eggs which have been buried a month or two (merely stale, eatable), lotus seeds in syrup (nice), lychees in syrup (tinned, quite good), bêche-de-mer soup (sea-slugs). Apart from these there are countless mutton and bird dishes, mostly in beignet form, very well cooked and usually very tender. These are excellent, as is also the rice, some of the many hors d'oeuvres are quite good too, others, such as pickled fish-entrails, nasty. Altogether as one isn't forced to eat (contrary to what we had heard) & can leave as much on one's plate as one likes, after a little experience one can make quite a decent meal at a Chinese banquet, & doesn't starve amid plenty as we had been led to expect. For drink, sometimes they have a very strong sort of liqueur, terrible stuff, but usually either local wine from the vineyards of Bash Karim, or fruit syrups, chiefly cherry – quite nice.

From Y. Hissar in, 2 marches. D. and I drove in an 'old but serviceable' victoria very kindly sent out for us by the Dao Tai or Governor of Kashgaria. My leg being still very stiff, I was very glad of this lift, and so was D. who tho' quite fit, was heartily sick of riding & of her riding clothes, which are rather hot. By the way, we evidently hit upon a cool spell for our descent into the plains & arrival at Kashgar, for the weather & temperatures were all that could be desired. It has stoked up since & is now (26th July) quite as hot as Quetta at its hottest. Nothing to grouse of, even so [...]

By the way, I found your letter of 31 May awaiting me here, and two more (7 June and 15 June) came by Monday's mail, which was very nice [...]

***

[*Even though Skrine would later complain about how the Chinese authorities would refuse permission to British officers to travel in border areas, suspecting them of spying even if the travel was merely for exploration or hunting, in actual fact, the General Staff of the Government of India expected the travelers would provide detailed intelligence information on the routes. This then was published in confidential route books, periodically revised to incorporate new information. Thus, on his return to India, Skrine submitted updates which were then printed in: General Staff, India.* Routes in Sinkiang *(1926). Evidence of Skrine's meticulousness is the fact that his descriptions tended to be much more detailed than those submitted by some of the British military officers who often had traveled north for hunting in the mountains. The 1926 book describes as 'Route No. I' travel from Murkushi (Hunza District) all the way to Urumqi. The first section of that route covers from 'Murkushi to Kashgar* viâ *Kurghan and Yangi Hissar', a distance of 311 miles in 15 stages. (The numbering system for the entries included the cumulative distance from the starting point, as well as the distance for the subsection of the route; hence, here, 8./147 m. is 'subsection 8, cumulative distance 147 m.' the subsection distance being 23 miles.) The main authorities for the description of Route No. I were Capt. A. R. B. Shuttleworth (1909), Lieut.-Col. P. T. Etherton (1921) and Lieut.-Col. Broke-Smith (1922). However, one subsection (pp. 7-9) is based on Skrine's notes from his journey to Kashgar in July 1922.*]

8./147 m. 4 f. YAM-BULAK 25 m. [*Note. There are two alternative Routes. The shorter via Tarbashi and the Tangitar Gorge, see Route No. I (5), is now scarcely used except in winter and spring.*

In the summer months when the water is high in the Tangitar Gorge, the regular route between Darshart and Chahil Gumbaz is as follows: –

(Authority C. P. Skrine, July, 1922.)]

The ordinary path ascends the Darshat valley, rough going for 9 m. to the Kok Moinak Pass. At m. 2 ½ the valley narrows to a defile which is usually partly blocked by ice early in the season.

The ascent to the pass is steep. After crossing it (1 ½ m. wide), the path descends to the the Chichiklik Maidan, a crater shaped plain, the head of the Shindi valley (down which a winter road leads to Tashkurghan).

On this plain are the last Sarikoli encampments met with, beyond this are Kirghiz.

A *Camping ground* (Komitek) can be found at m. 12 in a fold of the hill on N. edge of the plain. 1 m. W.-N.-W. of the larger lake and 2 m. due W. of CHICHIKLIK GUMBAZ.

Water. – Good and plentiful from springs.

Fodder. – Grazing, excellent.

Supplies. – Sheep and Yaks plentiful, chickens and eggs to be had from the Kirghiz in small quantities.

The path leads N. by E. across the plain, joining at m. 13 the direct track between Kok Moinak and Yambulak whence it runs up a side nullah to the summit of the Yangi or Yam-Bulak pass (16,100') 2 m. away, easy going, except for the last few 100' where steep and stony. On July 11, 1922, the flat top of the pass was completely covered with snow, but track was beaten firm and presented no difficulties. The descent on the N. side is steep for 500 ft., then easy. At m. 16 a lake called Yashil Koll, 1 m. long by 1/3 m. broad is passed on the left; this lake is said to carry ice all the year round. For 1 ½ m. below the lake, path is very rough and valley slopes steeply, swerving round to E. and then to S.E. A small tarn is then crossed to L[eft] B[ank] after which the track improves. At m. 19 the mouth of the Merki Glen is passed; there is supposed to be a track over the 'Merki Dawan' to the Karatash valley. (Route I.F.?), but the writer who followed it up to a height of 17,500 feet found the so-called 'Dawan' to be a ridge over 18,000 ft. high with snow cornice, quite impracticable for baggage animals even in summer.

Path enters broad open, grass-covered valley and turns E. by S. There is room for camps anywhere in the valley.

Yambulak is a Kirghiz village of 7 or 8 Akois on level meadows on both sides of the stream.

Water. – Good.

Fuel. – Burtsa and dung.

Fodder. – Good grazing.

Supplies. – Sheep, goats and yaks plentiful, milk, chickens and eggs in small quantities.

9/172 m. 4f. CHAHIL GUMBAZ. – 25 m. Continue down the valley. The track which is narrow but well marked, keeps to the L.B. of stream. At m. 2 a steep path on S. side of the valley, practicable for ponies, leads up over the Togaboini pass to Tarbashi at the hot spring and shrine of Kuchkar Ata (m. 3 ½). The valley narrows (at m. 4 a Kirghiz encampment in August 1922) and the sides become more and more precipitous until the Tangitar gorge is joined at m. 7. Shortly before the junction, the river is forded, a matter of some difficulty when the water is at its highest, but regularly done. Direction S.E. Path crosses to right bank at m. 11 and the stream joins the Tarbashi river, 4 m. above its bend to the S.

The path crosses the stream several times (probably impracticable whe the water is high) and follows down to its junction with a stream from the N. The path then turns up N. and follows the river bank for 1 ½ m. Then N.-W. up a gorge which leads to the foot of the Torat pass, 13,340 ft. The ascent is very steep and rocky in parts. The summit is a 'knife edge.' Descent is not so steep. Both sides are covered with grass. The path runs down a small nullah at Chahil Gumbaz, which is a Kirghiz encampment with 2 rubble huts.

Water. – Good.

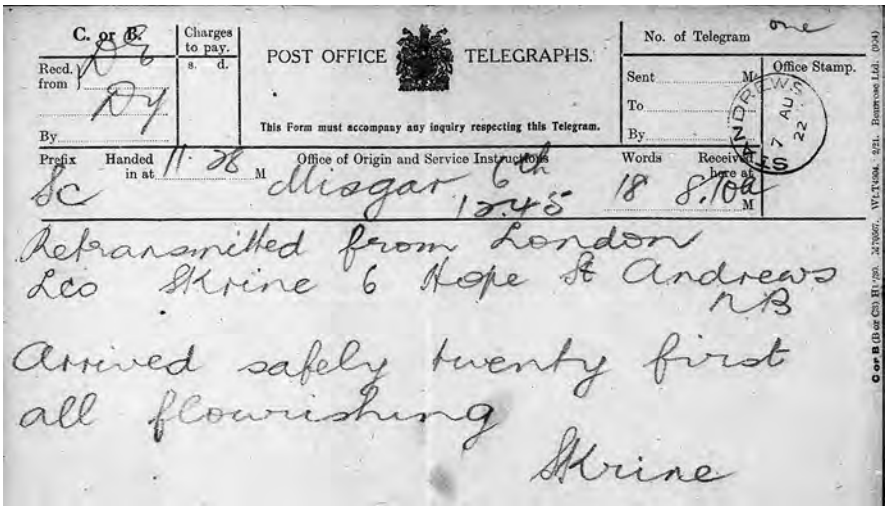
Fuel. – Scrub and dung.

Fodder. – Good grazing.

Supplies. – Sheep.

***

[*On his arrival in Kashgar, Skrine sent a cryptic note to be telegraphed from the station at Misgar; possibly it left in the same mail that carried his letter of 26 July. The telegram arrived in Scotland on 7 August, presumably some weeks ahead of when the letter would have been delivered.* From the British Library Collection: IOLR MSS EurF 154/8.]



C. or B. | Charges to pay. s. d. | POST OFFICE TELEGRAPHS. | No. of Telegram one

Recd. from Ry | Sent M | Office Stamp. | To | By

This Form must accompany any inquiry respecting this Telegram.

Prefix Sc | Handed in at 11.26 M | Office of Origin and Service Instructions Misgar 6th 1245 | Words 18 | Received here at 8.10a M

Retransmitted from London
Lco Skrine 6 Hope St Andrews NB
Arrived safely twenty first
all flourishing
Skrine

***

[*Apart from separate communications of intelligence which might require rapid transmission and more detailed reports, for at least a decade the consuls in Kashgar had submitted a monthly diary; during Skrine's tenure, an annual report also came to be required. His comment below on the 'monthly Diary' (as distinct from his personal travel diary) reflects the fact that he undertook to arrange the information under a new set of thematic headings for easy reference, the new format apparently meeting with the approval of his superiors. Skrine's papers in the British Library contain draft versions of a number of the diaries, replete with edits. The monthly diaries, were typed for submission to India and printed there in a limited edition, copies going to various offices, to the British legation in Beijing and to London. Excerpts from some of the diary entries, generally taken from their printed texts, will be interfiled below.*

Skrine's thumbnail sketches of those whom he met probably tell us as much about him as they do his new circle of acquaintances. The White Russian community described here is not to be confused with the 'Russian subject' community of Central Asian merchants mentioned in the next letter. Skrine's initial comments on the geologist Nazarov make him out as something of an innocent academic, although as Skrine later reported (see his letter home of 24 September), Nazarov had been active in organizing resistance to the Bolsheviks in Central Asia and thus was very much a wanted man when he managed to escape to Kashgar.

The Chini Bagh ('Chinese Garden'), as the locals called the British consulate, had been rebuilt and designed under George Macartney by the Swedish missionary Lars Erik Högberg. What remains of it today is hemmed in by a modern hotel, the interiors totally re-done in a kind of faux-oriental style suited to its function as a restaurant (see Figs. 66, 344 below). The extensive gardens Skrine describes have disappeared under shabby modern structures and have no connection with what is left of the original building. Skrine's initial enthusiasm in describing the consulate was tempered by his criticism of Etherton's taste in interior decor, and, after the experience of hot summer and cold winter weather, by other concerns.

Skrine's peevishness about others (the sort of thing he studiously omitted in CCA*) is amply evident here, with hints about what would in subsequent letters develop into a full-fledged critique of Harding, and a preview of the problems with the consulate financial accounts which would become the centerpiece of his indictment of Etherton. While Etherton may well have been careless in the bureaucratic niceties which Skrine took very seriously, obviously we need to be somewhat skeptical about imputed motivations for some of what Etherton did that got under Skrine's skin. Clearly class prejudice is at work here, although that should not necessarily lead one to think he concocted the serious accusations of malfeasance which are spelled out subsequently. I have excised a bit of the purple prose about Skrine's old college friend Gerard Price, referred to by his initials, G.C.P.*]



Fig. 57. Skrine' s photos of the walled city of Kashgar on the Tümen River and its environs.

Clockwise from upper left: reproduced with permission from the Royal Geographical Society (London), no. CPS/00011; Nazaroff 1935, facing p. 20; bottom images from the British Library Collection: IOLR Photo 920/1, unnumbered.

[*Fig. 57*]. **Kashgar, 2 August 1922**

I had hoped to get my Diary of the Gilgit-Kashgar journey off to you this week, but I am having to type it myself & it is proving a much longer affair than I expected – for the original was very baldly written indeed & I simply can't type it as it is – I have to expand and put into proper English – which takes time, especially as I haven't got a typewriter of my own & have to borrow the Mir Munshi's[46] when he's not using it. Also just now I am in the throes of the monthly Diary: not being au fait with the various things that are going on, it takes a long time to work out the various paragraphs, especially as Fitzmaurice has left me the scrappiest notes about July 1st–21st, when he was in charge.[47]

Our first week has been an absolutely hectic one – really rather a strain. We of course struck the one heat-wave of the year – the day of our arrival it was delightfully cool, but it stoked up after that, & became quite hot. Nothing to worry about really, but enough to make one want punkahs, and sleep

46. The chief secretary of the consulate.

47. The *Foreign Office List* for 1925 summarizes Nicholas Fitzmaurice's career as follows:

> Born October 13, 1887. Passed a competitive examination, November 21, and appointed a Student Interpreter in China, December 8, 1908. Pro-Consul at Foochow in 1911; at Tientsin in 1913-14, and at Hankow from 1915 to 1917. Acting Consul at Kiukiang in 1916. Promoted to be a 2nd Class Assistant, September 1, 1916. Engaged on special service at Kashgar from February 8, 1919, to July 29, 1922, and given the local rank of Vice-Consul while so employed. Acting Consul-General there from May 4 to July 22, 1922. Acting Vice-Consul at Nanking from December 11, 1923. In charge from July 1, 1924.

Fizmaurice was appointed Consul-General in Kashgar in 1931 and served a two-year term that 'turned out not to be a success' – his Vice-Consul termed him 'completely hopeless' (Everest-Phillips 1991, pp. 24-25).

without bed clothes on the veranda. I had no idea there was so much entertaining being entertained in Kashgar – look at the programme of our first 10 days:

July 21st. L[eft] Yapchan 6:30, drove 22 miles; met by Aksakal and 'Loyal British Subjects' 3 m. out of Kashgar, tea & fruit; met by Chinese officials & representation of Swedish Mission, Russian Subjects and Turki merchants 2 m. out; Chinese lunch in pavilion 1 PM, reach Consulate General 3:30.

July 22nd. Call on Dao Tai (Governor of Kashgar), Hsieh Tai (Officer Comand[in]g Kashgar), the Magistrate of the Old City & the Postmaster, morning; call returned by same in afternoon. Deputations of loyal British subjects and of Begs received separately.

July 23rd. Sunday. Various individual visits.

– 24th. Deputation of Qazis and of Turki merchants 10 AM. Tea & Dinner at Swedish Mission 6 PM to 11:30 PM.

– 25th. Dinner with the Hsieh Tai 8 PM–12 PM.

– 26th. Lunch at the New City, 6 m. away, with the Titai (G.O.C. Kashgaria) 1 PM; call on Distr[ict] Magistrate, New City. Swedish Mission ladies to tea with D. 5 PM.

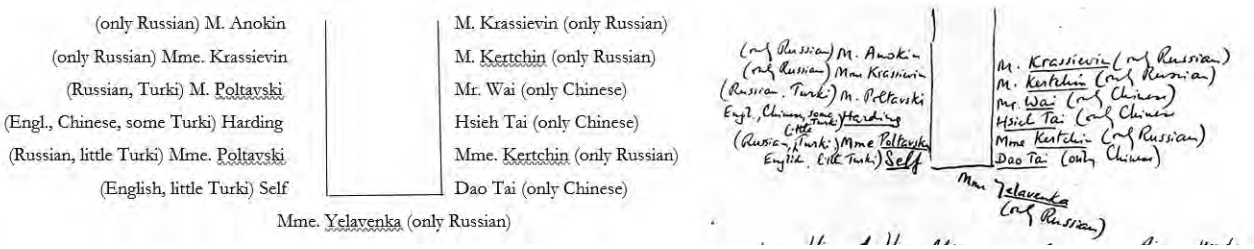
– 27th. Russian community to tea 5 PM. Dinner with Dao Tai 7 PM–11:30 PM.

– 28th. Men of Swedish Mission (3) to tea. Dine with Russian Community 8-12 PM.

– 29th. Departure of Gerard Price & Fitzmaurice: farewell lunch 2 m. outside city given by D. Mag[istra]tes of Old & New Cities.

– 30th, Sunday, D. to church at Swedish Mission; one of Swedish ladies to lunch; & so on.

The thing was that all the various communities were seizing the opportunity of killing two birds with one stone, i.e. saying goodbye to Fitzmaurice (who was very popular here) and welcome to us at the same time & with the same meal. And what meals! The Chinese ones consisted of 30 or 40 courses – we were expecting that but the Swedish & Russian ones were nearly as long and <u>much</u> solider! The Swedish one was the most Gargantuan, lasting from 7 to 10:30 <u>at the table</u>, but the Russian one ran it fine (8 to 11 d[itt]o). Then, the <u>whole</u> community was present at <u>every</u> meal – nobody could be left out for fear of hurting their feelings; and as the Chinese with 2 exceptions speak no other language but their own, & the Russians also with 2 exceptions speak none but <u>their</u> own, & the Swedes not much more, you can imagine what it was like sitting through these meals! Think of making conversation for 3 ½ hours on end at a dinner party with people who have no common language with you except a very little Turki! The Russian dinner was typical. This was how my end of the table was composed [*Fig. 58*]:



Imagine the difficulties of conversation under these circumstances! It was awful. Add to this that it was the hottest night we have had & we were all cooped in a room barely big enough to take the enormous dining table, and the sandflies feasted on our ankles throughout the 3 hours!

But let us leave the unpleasant part of our first days here, which is over now & doesn't matter, and get on to the many delightful impressions we have had; the chief is the remarkable friendliness

& bonhomie prevailing among all the people here towards the Consulate and (much more strange) towards each other. Kashgaria is a favored land, a regular Arcadia of prosperous, contented peaceable folk and well-watered green fertile lands, of trees and gardens and a hundred different crops, of big fat sheep and goats, in fact, a land flowing with milk and honey – and its atmosphere seems to favor the growth of friendliness & good feeling. Certainly the spirit underneath all the terribly long & heavy meals of last week was sincere – genuine regret at the departure of Fitzmaurice, whom they all like & of friendliness towards us the newcomers, especially of course D., whose coming caused enormous excitement and who has already won all hearts. The nicest of the Chinese, and that's saying a good deal, is the old Dao Tai or Governor [*Fig. 59*].[48] He simply beams all over with good will and humour, & he doesn't only beam – he is the best <u>host</u> I ever saw, not only at his own feasts but at those of the other Chinese! He waits on his guests (or other peoples', as the case may be) & sees that everyone's happy the whole time – his one object is to make the function go for the honour of China. It's so nice.



*Fig. 59. The Dao Tai (*daoyin*), Skrine's 'Chu' – Zhu Ruichi* 朱瑞墀 *(from the British Library Collection: IOLR Photo 920/1 [76]).*

Then there's the young Hsieh Tai (in Chinese 'Hs' is pronounced 'Sh') a quiet well-mannered youth who is only there because of his powerful, masterful unscrupulous licentious old father of 73, the Titai[49] or G[eneral] O[fficer] C[ommanding] Kashgaria; the uninteresting little Mr. Wai, Magistrate of the Old City, & quaint little old Mr. Wong, ditto of the New City; the Tungshan or Secretary to the Dao Tai for Foreign Affairs, a very nice gentlemanly friendly young fellow who (for a wonder) speaks both English & Turki, of sorts, and the Postmaster, a lively go-ahead youth who speaks English quite well and is very friendly too.[50] Last week I had both Fitzmaurice, who is a good & conscientious interpreter, and Harding to interpret for me, & with them & the Tungshan I was able to exchange a lot of ideas with the Chinese; henceforward it won't be so easy, alas, as Harding, tho' he knows twenty times as much Chinese as Fitzmaurice (he has been 2nd Chinese Secretary at the Legation for some years & is their leading expert) is too fond of monopolizing the conversation himself and doesn't do much interpreting.

The Swedish Mission is in a state of flux at present, owing to their annual holidays up in the mountains, and of the 2 men & 3 ladies who were there last week and gave us that Gargantuan meal, only one lady is here now, the rest having gone up to Bostan-Terek, which Dr. & Mrs. Gustafsson &

48. The Dao Tai (*daoyin*) is Skrine's 'Chu' – Zhu Ruichi 朱瑞墀 whose name frequently appears in subsequent letters and reports. On Zhu's appointment to Kashgar, see Jacobs 2016, p. 53.

49. Skrine refers to him by surname and title as Ma Titai – he is Ma Fuxing 馬福興.

50. As Justin Jacobs has suggested to me, it is possible that Skrine refers here to Zhang Hongsheng 张鸿升, who was later assigned to Aurel Stein's Fourth Expedition to keep an eye on him and ensure he observed the new restrictions on what Stein was allowed to do. On Zhang's assignment with Stein, see Jacobs 2020, pp. 258-261.



Fig. 60. The Swedish missionaries photographed at the British Consulate, date uncertain (possibly in April 1923, not in the early weeks of the Skrines' time in Kashgar). Photos in the Swedish Missionary archive in Stockholm make it possible to identify with a reasonable degree of certainty all the individuals here (l to r): Sigurd Larsson, Judith Svensson Andersson, John Edvard Andersson, Oskar Hermansson, Elsa (?) Andersson, Vendla Gustafsson, David Gustafsson, Georg Roberntz, John Törnqvist, Carl Persson. The Gustafssons left for Sweden ca. August 1923. (From the British Library Collection: IOLR Photo 920/1, scan from unn. neg.)

2 unmarried ladies have just come down from there. Pierson the schoolmaster is an enormously tall man with hands like legs of mutton, quite a decent fellow, & speaks English; another man whose name I forget speaks a little English; Miss Elsa Anderson is gigantic and intensely vaccine & speaks no English, only Turki; Miss Hanna Anderson is jolly & vivacious & speaks fair English; Miss Jena something-or-other, who arrived from India via Yarkand at the same time as we did) is very Boche in type and stupid. [*Fig. 60*] Dr. Gustaffson I only saw for 5 minutes yesterday; he is a good fellow, very well educated and interested in many things. I haven't seen Miss Svenson yet, but D. has & likes her very much; another Miss Anderson who also came down from Bostan Terek yesterday is dull.[51] Mrs. Gustafsson is expecting an interesting domestic event & isn't on view.

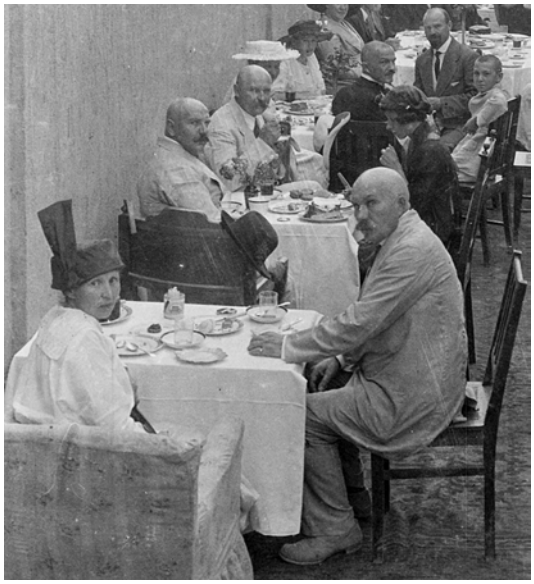


Fig. 61. The Kashgar Russians at the celebration of the King's birthday, 7 June 1924 (reproduced with permission from the Royal Geographical Society [London], no. 212607 [detail]). For the full picture, including the other guests, see below Fig. 200.

[*Fig. 61*] The Russians are a much more socially 'possible' lot than I was led to expect, in fact they are quite a pleasant surprise & if only they knew more languages they would constitute quite a pleasant little circle from the social point of view. They are all staunch Nicolaists & loathe the

51. I have not attempted to mine the extensive Swedish missionary archives for full information about the individuals whom Skrine mentions. For an overview of their activities, see Hultvall 1981. There are some short biographies in the *Biografiskt Album för Svenska Missionsförbundet*, available online at https://runeberg.org/smfbio/, last accessed 23 August 2024. The substantial collection of photographs taken by another of the missionaries (whom Skrine would later meet), John Törnquist (1876-1937), is a valuable resource; a few depict the missionaries and contain biographical information. The collection is online at https://collections.smvk.se/carlotta-em/web (enter John Törnquist in the search box). The Gustafssons are David and his wife Vendla (nee Schönning); the schoolmaster is Carl Persson, who had arrived in 1920; Hanna Andersson arrived in Kashgar via Russia during WWI and would later, back in Sweden, marry Gösta Raquette, who had spent many years in Xinjiang; Judith Svensson had arrived in 1921 and would marry John Andersson, who came in 1923; Skrine's vaguely identified 'Miss. Jena' might well be Elin Järner, who had arrived in 1921. The other Miss Anderson whom Skrine characterizes as 'dull' may well have been Gerda Andersson, who had a long career at the mission. Among the men who arrived soon after the end of the war were Oskar Hermansson (in 1920) and Georg Roberntz (in 1921), one of whom might be the individual whose name Skrine forgot.



Fig. 62. Anton Fedorovich Yelavenko (Яловенко), photographed in Nagar on 23 October 1944 (after: Rosov n.d.).

Bolsheviks, with good personal reason most of them. Of the men we have seen, only two are at all 'undesirable' socially, & even they behave quite well when sober. There are M. & Mme. Yelavenko [*Fig. 62*], the best-off & most respected of them, a very pleasant friendly bourgeois doctor and his wife; unfortunately, neither of them speaks anything but Russian.[52] Ditto M. & Mme. Anokhin; he is the Manager of the Russo-Asiatic Bank, which used to be a most flourishing concern, but which is barely struggling along now with hardly any custom owing to the closure of the Russian frontiers. The Anokhins are also very pleasant well-bred people, but have no language but their own. Then there is M. Nazaroff, a delightful, diffident, courteous though sad-looking middle-aged man who alone among the Russians speaks English, & French too; poor devil, he has reason to look sad – he was a geologist of note in Russian Turkestan before the Revolution, had a fine collection & had been working for 25 years on a magnum opus about the mineral resources of Turkestan. Then the Bolsheviks came and looted his collection and burnt all his papers, the MSS of his book, his life's work. He fled the country & tried to get over the Tian Shan into this country by the passes to the N. of Kashgar, but was turned back by the Chinese; his life was in great danger, but he managed eventually to slip over the frontier pass by night & got to Kashgar, where Macartney intervened for him and induced the Chinese to wink at his presence, though they had been receiving strict orders from the Provincial Governor at Urumchi to turn him out. Nazaroff being our only interpretor with the other Russians & also being a cut above them in education & probably in origin (tho' he's so broken down now that it doesn't show) is very much persona grata here; we had him to dinner the other night by himself & talked French the whole time for the good of our souls. Poor devil, one can't help being heartily sorry for him. Another very nice couple are the Poltavskys, who both speak good Turki, alone among the Russians; he is of the regular bearded Russian type & is good-looking, she also in her way. Krassievin is one of the drunkards & is a buffoon at the best of times; his wife is a pretty, vivacious little dark girl who understands French & can speak it a little too, so D. who has tried successfully to 'draw her out' says. The Russians have several children among them, 5 I think all told (4 boys & 1 girl), & we are having them (the children & 2 or 3 parents) to tea & games tomorrow.

Now for the Consulate. [*Fig. 63, next page*] The 'Chini Bagh' is a large house of the North Indian Commissioner's Bungalow type standing on a bluff overlooking paddy fields and the river beyond.[53] There are two courtyards with trees and lotus-ponds, one behind the other, & the front door opens

52. The doctor was Anton Fedorovich Ialovenko (Yalovenko) (1885-1956), who began work as the medical officer at the Russian consulate in Kashgar in 1912 and after its closure in 1920 remained there in charge of the property, pending the reopening of the consulate in 1925. He continued to work there for a few years, after the death of his wife in 1929 spent time in Europe, and returned to Kashgar. In the political disorders of the early 1930s, he was forced to leave and spent most of the rest of his life in India. His repeated efforts to receive Soviet citizenship were rejected; his Soviet passport was approved just before Ialovenko died. For his biography, with some photos, see Rosov, "Kashgarskii doktor A. F. Ialovenko".

53. Even though Skrine pointedly criticizes Ella Sykes' description about the difficulties of obtaining adequate provisions for the consulate kitchen, his positive introduction to the consulate and its grounds matches her more general one. Later, as we shall see, he would be more critical. Sykes (1920, p. 39) wrote:

> I was delighted with the *Chini Bagh* [...], the well-planned, airy house being set on low cliffs above the river. The large garden was full of fruit trees in blossom, its most charming feature being a terrace shaded by lofty poplars, from which we had a fine view of the river winding away to our right and could look down upon fields green with spring crops and watch the gaily clad people moving along the network of roads and paths.



Fig. 63. The British consulate in Kashgar – a.k.a. the Chini Bagh (Chinese Garden): (upper) view from NW looking across orchard to the veranda-side of the building (after: L'Illustration*, 16 October 1926 (no. 4363), p. [419]); (lower left) view from across the river looking south over the rice paddies along the river (after:* CCA *1925, facing p. 64); (lower right) what is left of the consulate today, hemmed in by modern development with none of the spacious entrance courtyard which was on the south side of the building (photo: DW 1996).*

on to the inner one; but the real front of the house is on the other or N.W. side, looking towards the river. Here there are fine terraces on to which the French windows of the big drawing room open, & a veranda belonging to the very roomy & comfortable suite of rooms (2 bedrooms 2 dressing rooms, bathroom with big English bath h[ot] & c[old], and study) occupied by D. and myself [*Fig. 64*]. There is a big hall, also a smaller hall with a side-door on to the garden used by the occupant of the flat on the upper floor (obviously intended for a Vice-Consul) a fine big drawing room & a still bigger dining room; a library room & a boudoir off the drawing room which D. monopolizes & calls her 'office.' The kitchen is larger & conveniently placed close to & on the same level as the dining room; it boasts a real English range. There are excellent ice-cold cellars too. The flat on the top floor contains 3 nice airy rooms & must be a pleasant habitation; the rest of the roof is flat à l'Indienne.

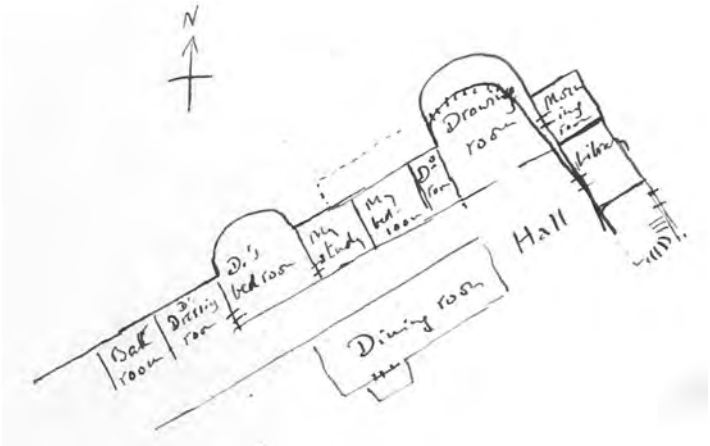


Fig. 64. Skrine's floor plan of the consulate (CPS to HSS, 13 August 1923, from the British Library Collection: IOLR EurF 154/9).

The garden consists of 3 sections at different levels besides a small 'park' with grass & thickets

down on the level of the paddy-fields. It is not nearly so big as I had expected, but is quite adequate, except that there is no lawn or other open space such as we are accustomed to in Indian gardens. Tho' the soil is very fertile, lawn grass won't grow here, only jungle grass where there is standing water. All the Kashgar gardens are small owing to the high value of land. The fruit is varied & of fair quality, tho' not to compare with Quetta; very good red nectarines, rather poor apricots, 3 or 4 different plums, rather tasteless green figs, cooking apples, excellent black mulberries, walnuts & (coming on now) peaches & pears, the latter poor. To my mind there are too many big poplars in & round the garden; it is not well laid out from the orchard point of view. However, it is delightful having a garden at all.

The staff, which now includes 8 uniformed & mounted orderlies in lieu of the I.S.T [*sic*, *normally* ISF, Imperial Service Force – *DW*] Gurkha infantry escort of 30 men which has just been abolished, is pretty numerous and their quarters, which are most palatial according to our Indian standards (each 2 families have a regular house with an outer courtyard & an inner one with trees and a pond!) take up a lot of space and form quite a little town with streets and a gate of its own. The stables are roomy & good, but 'godowns' [store-rooms, warehouses – *DW*] are insufficient. There is a quarter-guard at the gateway, but now the infantry escort is no more we don't have a guard. It isn't really necessary, & I believe the I.S.T. escort were far more nuisance than they were worth.

The household had got into pretty slack ways as you can imagine, with easy-going bachelors like Etherton & Fitzmaurice here for 4 years past, especially old Daud the cook.[54] D. is fighting him hard & is having an uphill struggle, but is persevering & hopes to get him into our ideas eventually. We've fingered up things a good deal already, ably assisted by the invaluable Ahmad Bux, the energetic, efficient 'takrāri' little bearer-khit we have brought with us from India. He is installed as head khitmatgar and tho' he doesn't speak a word of Turki rules them all with a rod of iron. He'll teach 'em all Hindustani by the time he's finished with them, you may be sure!

As we expected, Ella Sykes' gloomy descriptions of the difficulty of getting enough to eat here are all tommy rot. As I said before, this is a land of milk and honey, you can get everything, far better than India or even Baluchistan – excellent mutton, good beef, chickens, ducks, eggs, splendid cream & other dairy produce & even delicious fish (one kind only, the others may be poisonous) most days of the week. Splendid fruit of course, as much as one can eat for practically nothing particularly melons & grapes & nectarines. And all for a mere song compared with Baluchistan or India. It's costing us 350/- to 400/- a month to live here, tout compris, against 1800/- at Quetta!! Of course, one has no motor to keep here, no club bills, & I keep one less pony; but even so the difference is pretty striking. E.g. 3 ponies cost me over 300/- a month to keep at Quetta; here, 2 cost me less than 50/-.

There are flies in the ointment, of course; one is the difficulty of getting exercise. We are just outside the great walls of the city which cut off one direction from us; in the other, closely cultivated fields, gardens, houses, canals extend for miles & miles. There are no roads one can walk along with any comfort, & nowhere within 2 or 3 miles where one can gallop a horse for more than 100 yards or so at one time; there are only 3 directions one can go out at all, & when one does go out, it is de rigueur to take at

54. This Da'ud is presumably the same one Ella Sykes described in 1916 as 'the kitchen-boy left by Lady Macartney': 'Daoud *Akhun* (David, the Reader of the Koran, as his name implied) was a burly, intelligent youth, and speedily grasped my Persian interlarded with Turki words. But he had no claim to his title of *Akhun*, as he could neither read nor write, and consequently I had to prepare every dish two or three times befor he could remember the right quantities and be trusted to make it alone' (Sykes and Sykes 1920: 41, with picture facing p. 40; p. 161). With her guidance, he became the consulate cook, but under the bachelors Etherton and Fitzmaurice, presumably his skills needed refreshing (or, perhaps, the Skrines' and Sykes' tastes differed).



Fig. 65. Doris Skrine on her Bukhara pony setting off for a ride accompanied by two of the consular orderlies (Stewart collection).

least one orderly, if not two or three [*Fig. 65*]. The only other Englishman here, Harding, doesn't play tennis; the only tennis I get is pat-ball with my two clerks, both of whom are beginners (tho' the Accountant is shaping very well). There's absolutely no other exercise to be had at all! Nothing but frequent tours, I foresee, will save us from fat. [*Fig. 66*] Another 'fly' is the lower-middle-class taste with which Etherton has furnished the house. Quantities of awful pictures, terrible wall-papers (imported at vast expense, when it would have been so much better to have left the walls with their original white plaster) large ornate cabinets and sideboards & escritoires of inlaid wood & a sort of local marquetterie etc. etc. The Etherton family hails I think from Liverpool & the interior of this house is exactly what you'd expect in a Liverpool profiteer's country mansion. We've got rid of some of the furniture by storing it in the now unoccupied V[ice] C[onsul]'s flat (Harding & his Chink friend live in a house by themselves, a mile away[55]) & have taken down practically all the pictures; but we can't tear down the wall paper as we would like to. A third 'fly' is the chaotic state Etherton has left the work & (worse still) the finances of this office. Before coming here he had had no administrative experience, and obviously hadn't the least idea how an office should be run; his one idea was to keep everything in his own hands, with the result that there are no proper files, no proper



Fig. 66. The interiors of Chini Bagh as photographed in 1996 (two on left) and 2009 (photos: DW). It is impossible to see what Skrine first encountered and so disliked and what the interior was after he had done some re-decorating. The wooden staircase in the photo at the left may date from his time (descending it is Andrei Ershov, who facilitated my 1996 exploration of the Kongur Alps), but the dining room obviously was re-done and radiators installed. The Chinese restaurant which occupies the building today features jazzed-up replica oriental paneling and mouldings. In 2009, the veranda was being used as a storage dump (see Waugh, "Kashgar", p. 55); the gardens below are no longer.

55. In his published diary of the trip up to Kashgar (pp. 73-76), Harding describes his rather palatial residence in rather sensuous verbiage but says nothing about the consulate and its grounds.

registers (except the few which E. let the clerk keep & he never checked those) the office money has been thrown about in the most reckless manner & no proper account kept (of this more anon) & it is impossible for me to get the hang of most of the work owing to be[ing] unable to find the previous papers in many cases. E. has made his name out of intelligence & secret service work, for which he got liberal grants during the war; since the armistice, money has become tight & our Secret Service grant is greatly diminished. What does E. do? He makes a tremendous splash & gets any amount of kudos with Army H.Q. & the Foreign Dept. for his intelligence reports during his last five months here & pays for it with my S/S money! […] You'll gather that I'm not particularly pleased with friend Etherton. Neither of us are, for excellent reasons. He has done us pretty badly altogether. Let me tabulate:

(1) He worked it so that Fitzmaurice, who had been here as long as he had, knew the work thoroughly & had in fact been doing most of it for E., should go on leave at the same time as he did, so that I should have a new man & my embarrassments be increased further.

(2) He got the G[overnment] of I[ndia] to agree to his handing over to me at Srinagar, instead of my taking over here, as I should have preferred, so that I had to kick my heels in Srinagar 10 days longer than I need have, losing 13 odd rupees a day allowances and incurring much unnecessary expenditure.

(3) He brought down for us to take up three vicious & savage stallions with him, not even telling me that they were stallions, with the result that I twice narrowly escaped being badly hurt, even killed, & D. ran great risks too until I got rid of two of the horses.

(4) He said he would bring a cook, boy and orderly to Srinagar for us to take up, & we accordingly only arranged to take Ahmad Bux with us; without wiring to us or anything he left our three servants at Astor, & came on with one servant whom he was bringing down for Harding. Result was that it was only on his arrival, 1 day before we were due to start, that we discovered that we must take a cook & a boy at least to Astor – we had the utmost difficulty in getting anyone to face the passes, & had to put off our start a day in consequence.

(5) & (6) The money & office work chaos mentioned above.

Can you wonder at my peevishness? The man of course is as selfish, ambitious, inconsiderate a blighter as they make 'em. Talking about selfishness, our friend Gerard Price takes a lot of beating [...] A more complete wash-out as a travelling companion can't well be imagined. Instead of helping me with the bundobust & doing his bit in the ageing business of getting a big party along 700 odd miles of wild mountain road, as I expected he would, he's been a passenger the whole time & has added considerably to Doris' and my work and responsibilities. Each morning his excellent servant [...] dressed him & packed for him & got his boxes etc. onto the best ponies or coolies or yaks as the case might be, while G.C.P. lolled about & ate a hearty breakfast & complained at D. & me being late for having done all our own dressing & packing & having also been up at peep of dawn collecting the transport & getting things under way generally [...] His manners are among the worst of any man's I have ever seen [...] He never returned the salaam of a single native from Srinagar to Kashgar & behaved abominably at the meals to which we were entertained on the road, never taking any notice of our hosts & groaning audibly and obviously at the barbarousness of the fare & the irksomeness of the etiquette. He didn't take the slightest interest in the people thro' whose country he passed, & not much in the country; his main preoccupation was with the food we were going to get at the next meal. We did everything for him. Got permission for him to come (as a personal favour to me from the F[oreign] O[ffice] & Lorimer) got servant, pony, most of his kit for him [...] & do you think he said thank you? Devil a bit

– took it all for granted, & never hesitated to complain & even sulk if ever things weren't exactly as he would have liked. On this march wherever there was any difficulty he let us get the caravan out of it, only stirring himself when he saw one of his own loads falling off [...] [T]o a large extent he spoilt the journey for us. I agreed to take him because I thought he would strengthen the party; instead of that he weakened & encumbered it [...] 6 ½ years of Ceylon, combined with not having fought in the war, seem to have ruined him; he was ever so much better mannered & better company at Oxford [...] Why he came, I can't think – anyone more out of place among those mighty mountains or in this strange romantic country I can't imagine [...]

I must stop now – it's nearly 12 & the post goes at 6 AM. tomorrow. Your letters are arriving with most surprising & commendable regularity, as regularly as in Baluchistan. Your last is dated 22 June, in the height of the season [...]

***

[*This letter introduces the British and Russian 'subjects' of Kashgaria, about whom there is a lot more in later letters and reports. These were citizens of the respective empires who were resident in Kashgaria, generally long-term as merchants. The Russian subjects, who no longer had the protection offered by a Russian consul in Kashgar in this period, seem mostly to have been originally from Andijan in the Fergana Valley of today's Uzbekistan. One of the main duties of the British consul was to intervene with the Chinese authorities on behalf of the British subjects in the event of legal disputes. The foreign subject communities each were headed by an elected* aqsakal *or elder, whose selection could be influenced by the consul. Skrine was to devote considerable attention to the issue of whether those who claimed to be British subjects in fact were, where the Chinese authorities were beginning to question the legal status of some who invoked the immunities offered by British protection. The foreign 'subjects' in Kashgaria and the importance of the institution of the aqsakals are discussed in Brophy 2016, pp. 122-127 and passim, and in extenso with comparative material from the Burma frontier, in Whewell 2020.*

The Kashgar consulate's communications with Beijing and India will be explored further below. The Chinese mail service was apparently slow and not always reliable. Telegrams within China often were garbled, especially where for any politically sensitive material, they had to be sent in cypher.

The Skrines seem to have taken seriously the need to learn the local language, Eastern Turki (Chaghatai/Uyghur). Doris acquired at least some oral proficiency; Clarmont probably a more advanced ability, judging from the fact that, in consultation with his regular informant and then later, he translated some of the folklore he collected. The Swedish authority on Eastern Turki in the 1930s and 1940s, Gunnar Jarring, judged Skrine's translations to be accurate, though an academic colleague of mine who is a specialist notes some mistakes. In recording the songs and other Turki folklore in his travel diary, Skrine clearly had help with vocabulary.

The cover note for his little gift package to his mother, dated 10 August 1922 (in BL IOLR MSS EurF 154/8) reads: 'Herewith the 8 "Peke" bowls and the 3 specimens of Central Asian silk. I do hope they arrive safely.' *As we learn later, the bowls arrived broken. Other letters are full of references to little gifts both for his parents and for various of the relatives in Scotland.*]

HM's Consulate General, Kashgar, 9 August 1922

We are having a perfect Hades of a fortnight in the way of entertaining. Poor D. rushes about with dishevelled locks (at least they would be dishevelled if they weren't bobbed) moving mountains of melons, cutting cartloads of cakes and improvising ideas for ices (Stop! that way lies madness) – in short, working like a Trojan to make our parties a success in spite of the newness of the milieu, of our ignorance of the Kashgar 'ropes' & of her scanty command of the Turki language (luckily many of the innumerable orderlies and servants speak some Hindustani). This week's programme includes a full-dress dinner-party to the Dao Tai and Hsieh Tai (Governor & O[fficer] C[ommanding] Kashgar); a garden



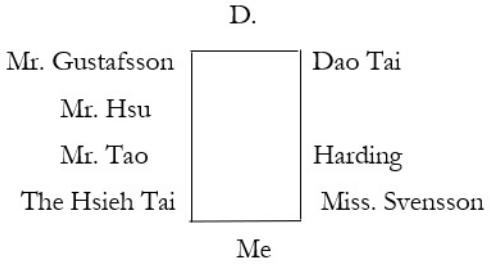
Fig. 67. Skrine took a series of photos of what may be 'our' fishermen as they prepared their nets and waded into the river (Stewart collection). For a published one from the sequence, see CCA *1925, facing p. 246.*

party to the chief British & Chinese subjects, merchants & Begs & Qazis etc.; a beano to the women & children of the Consulate staff, & another dinner party to some of the Russians & Swedes. Next week we're giving a big lunch in honour of the Titai (G.O.C. Kashgaria) on Monday & another dinner party, to the remaining Russians & Swedes, on Wednesday. Then I think we'd better go and camp among the Pamirs for a bit by way of a rest from the arduousness of life in Kashgar! The dinner party on Monday, our first, was a great success. The 'āsmān belek' (Heaven-fish) failed to get itself caught by our fisherman [*Fig. 67*], so we had to drop the fish course, and the dinner was a mere snack for Kashgar, consisting of the following courses.

Melon
Hors d'oeuvres
Soup
Stewed Lambs' Tongues
Cutlets
Pigeons
Trifles
Savoury Toast
Ice pudding with hot chocolate sauce
Dessert - Coffee

We drank Kashgar wine, mulberry syrup, liqueur brandy & one or two other liqueurs throughout dinner & I think the Chinese enjoyed themselves. The Dao Tai is always good company & a great asset at a party.

[*Seating plan, at a rectangular table:*]



The old Dao Tai ate largely & appeared to enjoy himself. The Hsieh Tai, who is only about 25, wasn't feeling very well & was even quieter than he usually is, but he wasn't actually unhappy, I think. Harding talked incessantly, as he always does, mostly in Chinese, & D. and Mr. Gustafsson carried



Fig. 68. A group of the British aqsakals or agents (including, perhaps, local begs and qazis who would have still been around in 1922), as photographed by Percy Sykes in 1915 (Duke University, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Photograph Album, 1915 April-November, p. 4, Image RL.11685-P-0007).

on a conversation the sprightliness of which was most creditable to both parties considering the fact that D., as she told me afterwards, had 2/3rds of her attention anxiously fixed on the next course!

The Garden Party on Wednesday was also a great strain & a great success. We only had a select number of the most respectable British subjects and local Begs and Qazis, & our solitary Hindu, a fat Shikarpuri *bunya*[56] who is the doyen of the Hindus here. There were some fine old greybeards present [*Fig. 68*]. One of the ex-Russian subjects, a wealthy old merchant-landowner called Ahrar Khan Tora, took the biscuit for looks. He has the jolliest old face imaginable, broad and pink & ruddy with thick wavy white beard, moustache & whiskers, & kindly twinkling old eyes full of intelligence. You can't help liking him. Old Hisam and Din Bai, too, another ex-Russian subject, is a dear old greybeard, very friendly. Of the British subjects the most conspicuous (because he is the only one who speaks Persian) is Syed Gharib Shah. Curiously enough he & his family come from Pishin where I knew some of them. He is rather an old rotter manyways but is friendly and quite useful to me with 'intelligence' sometimes. He is not likely ever to go back to Baluchistan now, but he has 2 sons there & loves talking about it. We have decided that the '*beshak shirin*' or super-melon of Kashgar (now ripe) is superior even to the melons of Baluchistan, but that the Quetta Pishin grapes, especially those of Gulistan, are better than the juiciest grapes of Kashgar – so honours are easy!

We had the gramophone out in the garden for the party, & it was a great stand-by. I forgot to tell you that we had asked everybody to bring their elder children, & about a dozen children came (we would have liked more). They were awfully sweet – 2 little girls, beautifully behaved, & the rest boys, not so beautifully behaved, all of them! They all hung spell-bound over the gramophone & we had to bring their melons & sweets & ices right up to the mouth of the horn! It was a pretty strenuous afternoon altogether. We were arranging table & chairs & putting down carpets & spreading the masses of melons, other fruit, cakes, sweets, cigarettes etc. etc. from 3 o'clock – the guests began to come at 4:15 and didn't go till half past 6!

By bad luck there happens to be a heat wave on just now, & our labours in the entertainment of Kashgar are more tiring than they would otherwise be; but this is such a healthy place, even in the hottest weather & one sleeps and eats so enormously, that it doesn't matter.

There's plenty to occupy us here. A good deal of work, for one thing, tho' not nearly so much as Etherton, who was all out to make as much as possible out of the job, would have us all believe. Except for the corrupt cypher telegrams which occasionally come from Peking (Harding and I have been working

56. *Bunya* (banyan) refers to a specific Indian caste. The Hindu financiers based in Shikarpur (Sindh province, Pakistan, today) were probably the most important group of Indian entrepreneurs in Central Asia and notorious for their often harsh demands on their clients.

at one for 4 days & haven't got it quite all out yet), I can get through the work by tea-time comfortably, & sometimes earlier. I could do it much quicker if there was any sort of arrangement or order in the files; as it is, Etherton who had no idea of filing or office procedure left the work in a state of chaos. Men like him always make things difficult for their successors, not always (certainly not in E's case) unintentionally. My spare time is going to be fully occupied the next few weeks, I foresee, in getting the current confidential papers properly filed. E. had no administrative experience whatever & his attitude towards his Indian clerks was one of distrust based on ignorance; the result was that he kept everything he could in his own hands, any old how, non-confidential matters as well as confidential. Consequently, I am perpetually 'up against it' over telegrams from Peking or India, about the subject of which office know nothing – and I can't find the previous papers!



Fig. 69. Doris Skrine on her camel Suleyman, photographed in the courtyard of the Chini Bagh on a winter day as she was setting off to church (reproduced with permission from the Royal Geographic Society [London], no. CPS/00004).

I'm getting on fine with Turki, taking lessons every morning before breakfast with the old Consulate mullah who speaks Persian & has quite an idea of teaching, tho' his grammar is weak.

I've bought a very fine cobby kind of pony from Bokhara for D., a beauty, full of breeding, no vice, beautiful manners, sound & comfortable paces, good mouth (see above, *Fig. 65*). I've also bought a <u>camel</u> for her! a fine one [*Fig. 69*]. She wants something to ride to the bazar or to the Mission etc. on, for which she won't have to get into riding clothes. It will be useful for towing too.

I am sending you some little presents by this post, which I hope you will get safely and approve of. Three pieces of silk, from Bokhara, Yarkand & Khotan respectively, typical of the silk industry of each place. I like the Yarkand Jazz silk[57] best of all – wonderful colours some of them. <u>All</u> the women & children wear these colours – you can imagine what the bazar's like on market day!

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Kashgar, Sunday 13 August 1922

The hot weather has been late in setting in this year, we're told, but it has evidently been reserving itself for us, for the weather, except for a few days during our 2nd week which were delightfully cool, has been really quite unpleasantly warm since we came. I should say, rather hotter than Quetta. In both cases of course it's only the absence of punkahs & other anti-heat arrangements that make the heat noticeable. The maximum temps., which seldom go above 102° or 103°, are nothing to write home about. What are bad, tho', are the mosquitoes. We look over paddy-fields and are surrounded by water channels &

57. Probably in particular he is referring to the tie-dyed ikats which today are still very popular in Central Asia.

ponds, so that mosquitoes are to be expected at this time of year; but I didn't think we'd have so many as we do. Poor D. who attracts all insects especially biting ones, has a terrible time, tho' a concoction which I recommended to her ages ago but which she has only lately taken to, namely half-&-half citronella oil and kerosine, has saved her from many bites the last few days.

We are still plunged or rather immersed somewhat unwillingly in the social whirl, and sigh in vain for the peace & quiet of Lytton Road, Quetta. We ourselves are giving 3 dinner parties & 1 lunch party, 2 garden-parties & 1 small tea, during the current 10 days, while we are the guests of various Russians, of Harding, of the Swedes etc. etc. every other day. Today week I spent from 10 till 3 paying 8 different visits to leading merchants, Qazis etc. & having a meal at each house, while D. has been to three 'kaffee-klatches,' morning shows given by Kashgari ladies [...] [*Fig. 70*] If we had nothing else to do, it would be quite pleasant, for several of the Swedes & Russians are cultivated & well-mannered people; I assure you, the society here compares favourably with that of an Indian station containing the same number of Europeans – not that that's saying much! The people here can talk on general subjects, anyway. Socially, we feel much more at home here than we did at Srinagar!

Monday 14th evening.

[...] At 12:10 the first of my guests came for a big lunch-party (en garçon, for reasons that will be apparent later) which I was giving for the Titai, or Commander in Chief, Kashgaria; this function went on till past 4, and at 5 we were due at the old Russian Consulate for a tea party given by a nice little Russian lady who speaks a little French, Mme. Dukovitch. Of course it was a beautifully clear afternoon with a lovely evening light, as it has also been the evening before, & of course both days we were stuck at tea-parties instead of going out into the country. At this time of the year 9 days out of ten are hazy & no mountains are visible – the dust haze here tho' it does not seem to affect the sunlight, makes it difficult to see more than 2 or 3 miles, & kills colour in the landscape.

The lunch went off very well. On my right sat the old Titai, 73 and rather like a toothless Lord Roberts



Fig. 70. Doris regularly interacted with the consular and some of the local women, hosting them for tea and being entertained by them. She was the one to photograph these occasions, as only women were present. Here a photo of one of the tea parties, a photo of a group being entertained with music and dancing, and one of her watercolors of the same entertainment, dated 6 August 1922, the celebration of the Qurban festival and probably specifically the entertainment mentioned in Clarmont's letter. (Photo credits: 1) reproduced with permission from the Royal Geographical Society [London], no. CPS/00020; 2) after: Nazaroff 1935, facing p. 32; 3) from the British Library Collection: IOLR MSS EurF 154/54.)



Fig. 71. Ma Titai, the General Officer Commanding at Kashgar, photographed by Skrine on 14 August 1922 (from the British Library Collection: IOLR Photo 920/1 [75]). For another of the photos taken in the same session, see CCA *1925, facing p. 262.*

to look at,[58] an appalling old scoundrel who lives, literally lives, on a fiery sort of Chinese arrack which contains over 70 different drugs & concoctions, & who has people executed or their noses & ears cut off for nothing in particular every week; on my left the tubby, cheery little old Hsien (Magistrate) of the New City, Mr. Wong. Harding sat at the other end of the table with the Dao-Tai on his right and the Hsien of the Old City, Mr. Wai on his left. In the middle sat Harding's Chinese journalist friend whom he brought with him from Peking, Mr. Hsü, the Secy. for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Tao & our only non-Chinese guest M. Poltavsky, a very intelligent Russian who speaks Turki very well and is excellent value at parties. The Dao Tai gets 3 guns salute when he comes to the consulate, and there was a good deal of noise & people running about & excitement & banging of guns when he arrived; but when the Titai came it was deafening. Not only does he get 6 guns, not only does he bring with him about 100 soldiers & footmen & servants of all kinds, all armed to the teeth, not only does he come in an enormous troika at full gallop through the narrow streets, but he comes with an entire band which dashes into the Consulate inner courtyard at the double, falls into line with lightning rapidity & strikes up an ear-splitting 'See the Conquering Hero Comes' sort of tune[59] as he steps from his carriage! As I went out to meet him I thought to myself that there was only one thing missing, and that was a good broad red carpet across the yard & up the steps of the Consulate. The old man came in full regimentals, of sake-blue with huge epaulettes & about 15 rows of medals, which hung about his wispy old frame like a frock coat on a scare-crow. He would have made an excellent Count Hedzoff of Paphlagonia, in 'The Rose and the Ring.'[60] Very soon after he arrived he asked me through Harding whether I would take his photo, & then we realized why he had come in uniform alone of the guests; he wanted to be photoed in his joy-rags! I had to take him out on to the terrace and take 3 different photos of him. [*Fig. 71*] I haven't developed them yet but I think they'll be good. He says he's going to send one to the President![61] No sooner had we finished the photos than he started two of his men measuring the outer walls of the Consulate & as they had no proper measuring tapes I had to go and get my surveying-tape. It appeared that his vast country house about

58. A reference to Field Marshal Frederick Sleigh Roberts, 1st Earl Roberts (1832-1914), (a.k.a. Lord Roberts of Kabul and Kandahar), an important Victorian-era general born in India and famous for his exploits in the Second Anglo-Afghan War. See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frederick_Roberts,_1st_Earl_Roberts, last accessed 16 July 2024.

59. A famous 'patriotic' chorus from Georg Friedrich Handel's oratorio *Judas Maccabaeus*.

60. '*The Rose and the Ring* is a satirical work of fantasy fiction written by William Makepeace Thackeray, originally published at Christmas 1854' (Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Rose_and_the_Ring, last accessed 16 July 2024). Count Kutasoff Hedzoff (~ 'cuts off heads off') was the cruel Captain of the Guards.

61. As Justin Jacobs has noted (personal communication), this is an 'eerie premonition', since the governor in Urumqi would orchestrate the assassination of Ma Fuxing on suspicion that the latter was planning a coup in his communications with the warlord faction in Beijing (see Jacobs 2016, p. 63).

20 miles out of Kashgar, at a place called Pokhalik ('Frogton') was burnt down last year & he wants to rebuild it on the lines of the B. Consulate General! All during lunch his men were measuring out the dimensions of the dining room, hall etc. At lunch following his usual custom, the Titai was served with his own arrack & would [not] touch any of my drinks. What was worse, he kept filling my glass & I had to drink altogether quite a liqueur glass full of the filthy stuff. He himself had been drinking ever since 8 AM., the Dao-Tai informed us, & was already half seas over; as lunch progressed he got worse & we were all relieved when suddenly, just before the ices, he nodded to his nearest servant & a second later whistles blew outside, everybody started running, the band struck up & the old man got up from the table took his leave & departed! Altogether, entertaining or being entertained by the C. in C., though trying, has its comic side. You remember how when we lunched with him our first week here, he took off his uniform & put on civvies in the dining room in front of us all, because it was too hot? This time I ushered him into the library to change before lunch.

Tuesday 15th evening.

The mail came in last night, with a letter from you of 29 June. No letter of 22 June, which is odd & annoying. No mail at all last week. We expected it would come this week, but it hasn't [...] You ask about the Baker stuff. I'm afraid we won't see it this year, not a hope of its getting up the Gilgit road at any rate [...] As you say, if only Gerard could have brought it out [...] When we think that if he hadn't been with us we could have brought a lot of stores etc. with us which we had to leave to follow us, Lord knows when, because of lack of transport, it's pretty galling. Those 4 pony loads we left at Bandipur contained all our coffee & all our tea: – I don't suppose now we'll see them this year, & will have to buy tea & coffee at enormous prices locally, & our own which may turn up next spring will have to be sold cheap to our successors when we go [...] Today D. gave a big party, purdah of course, to the wives & sisters & children of the Consulate staff (orderlies, servants, dâkchies etc.). She had a most strenuous afternoon, hid 47 presents about the lower garden & set out quantities of food & superintended the making of the tea from 3 to 4:30, then coped with 60 wildly excited women & children who fought for presents & tore their food like tigers in their excitement. In the middle of it one of the gazelles we've got here collided with a running woman, threw the woman down & itself proceeded to have a fit! D. smoothed the woman down & then proceeded to try and doctor the gazelle, with dire results to her dress – tore & soiled it all over. Finally the gazelle was deposited on straw in the hen-house & has since recovered. [...]

D. sends her love and wants you to know that only the tremendous lot she's had to do settling into this house, entertaining & being entertained, starting a poultry farm etc. etc. has so far prevented her writing to you at great length as she intends to do shortly [...]

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[*In and around all the obligatory social events, Skrine was trying to get a handle on the important business of the consulate, where one obligation was to compile a monthly report to send to India. Excerpts from them will be cited below from the printed copies received in London, BL IOLR L/P&S/10/976 ('Kashgar Diaries 1912-1930'). The first of his monthly Kashgar diary reports (for July 1922), was based mainly on information compiled prior to Skrine's arrival by the Vice-Consul Fitzmaurice. Skrine sent it on 10 August under a cover letter addressed to Denys de S. Bray, Secretary to the Government of India in the Foreign and Political Department, Simla, where it was received on 4 September. A printed copy was sent on to London on 14 September and was received there on 4 October in the Political Department of the Secretary of State for India, where several individuals reviewed it. Skrine pointed out in his cover letter that he had abandoned the chronological ordering of material followed by his predecessor, opting instead for standard set of topical headings to make for easier reference. Initially they included: (1) Movements of HBM's*

Consular Officers; (2) Chinese officials; (3) British subjects; (4) Foreign subjects; (5) Local affairs; (6) Bolshevism. The main commentator in London, J. Monteath noted with approval the new organization of the material but found nothing in the content 'particularly interesting this month'. Bolshevism, of course, was very much in the eye of the consulate, the July diary including this report, the first of many Skrine would send about Russian efforts to open the frontier to trade, re-establish their consulate, etc.:]

17. Russian Turkestan.

It is already reported by telegram, the Bolshevik Commissar at Andijan, Piechertnikoff, has been making unofficial overtures through the Chinese Aksakal at Andijan to the Taoyin of Kashgar with a view to meeting with the latter on the frontier and the negotiation of a 'Treaty'. The Commissar said he would be at Irkeshtam 10 days after the Qurban festival, i.e. 13th August, and that if the Taoyin refused to meet him he would find some other way of getting to Kashgar. Piechertnikoff, it is said, has designs on the roomy and comfortable Russian consulate here, and it came easily to be understood that the peace, plenty and low prices prevailing in Kashgaria must be exceedingly tantalizing to hungry and harassed Bolshevik officials in Bokhara.

[*Skrine included (p. 4) some last-minute intelligence about Enver Pasha, the Turkish military officer who had come to Central Asia in the hope of raising a pan-Turkic movement. He had sent this in a telegram (dispatched from the station at Misgar) dated two days before the compilation of the diary (August 8) and apparently had repeated or elaborated on it in another telegram subsequently, dated August 24. It appears that some of this information was inaccurate – see below his letter to E. B. Howell dated 22 September. On Enver's somewhat quixotic Central Asian venture, see Fraser, 1987a, pp. 53-63; idem 1988; Abdullaev 2009, esp. pp. 198-233.*]

The following is the gist of news brought within the last 2 or 3 days by Kashgar merchants returned from bartering operations at Sungak on the frontier, also by two Kashgar Turks recently escaped from Andijan:

(1) Enver has taken the town and fort of Khavast which commands the junction of the Andijan Branch with the main Trans-Caspian railway. Jizzak, 60 miles north-east of Samarkand, is also said to be in his hands.

(2) Proclamations have been issued by the Bolsheviks throughout Turkistan to the effect that Enver is a traitor and has sold himself to the British, and calling upon the populace to rise on behalf of Islam. In this propaganda they are ably assisted by the Bengali Roy, and by Abdul Majid, Ghulam Qadir and other pupils of the Tashkent propaganda college, which is still going. Enver on his side is also using Britain as a stalking-horse in his recruiting operations, declaring that Turkey will soon be at war with the British, who this time will not be able to count on the help of their Indian troops.

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[*Within a very short time of his arrival, Skrine began to indict his predecessor P. T. Etherton for an array of misdeeds. His obsession with Etherton grows and fills a great deal of the letters he wrote home. Especially noteworthy is a long letter to his father, mentioned here and reproduced after this letter to his mother*]

Kashgar, 24 August 1922

I've written or rather typed to Father at such gigantic length today that I've very little time left for you, and have also got a bit of a head, so I'll content myself with a few lines only. I enclose a few prints from plates taken at Srinagar and on the road & developed while travelling [...]

You'll be glad to hear that our 6 ponyloads that went via Leh have arrived safely. They left Srinagar more than 3 months ago but they wouldn't have got thro' even as quickly as this if it hadn't been for Col. Broke Smith's kindness in taking them with him from Leh practically all the way to Yarkand. Poor

fellow, not being as lucky as Gerard he wasn't allowed to go to the Pamirs for his poli shooting via Gilgit & had to go round via Leh & Yarkand, & it's taking him over 3 months to get to Tashkurgan that way, against 5 weeks which it took us! Except for my enlarging apparatus which got wet & is a bit rusty (tho' quite serviceable) – all the things we have opened so far are perfectly all right – pretty good considering the journey they've come.

[...] Your letter of 6th & 13th July came the day before yesterday, good going for the latter one. I hope mine are reaching you as quickly [...]

***

[*Skrine's four-and-a-half page (single-spaced) letter to his father (in BL, IOLR MS EurF 154/39) summarizing his 'case' against Etherton. The letter is dated 23 August 1922. In a subsequent letter to his father on the matter, he enclosed the excerpts from his correspondence with Howell. While some of the more serious accusations of financial malfeasance could not be proven once the accountants in India checked the Kashgar books, it was nonetheless misuse of government funds which ultimately would bring Etherton down, not his alleged sexual conduct. One may wish to dismiss the final bar-room anecdote here. However, Skrine's bitter comment with reference to the slaughter on the European front in the final stages of World War I in part has to have been animated by the fact that at least three members of his family died in Europe during the fighting. Skrine himself had tried to get transferred to a regiment that might be sent to the front, but he was unable arrange it.*]

[*handwritten;*] Confidential

[*printed letterhead:*] British Consulate-General, Kashgar

[t*yped:*]

My dear Father,

I see from Mother's letter of 13th July that Etherton was to have dined with you that week, and I fancy it is possible that you, like most other people who only know him from the blasts of his own trumpet, may be impressed and may play his game by pushing him in town. He took in Doris and myself pretty effectually during the day or two we saw him at Srinagar. How true it is that the world takes a man at his own valuation! This being so, I think you ought to know the facts concerning friend Etherton. By the way, I find that he isn't a Lt. Colonel and has no right to call himself one outside Ch. Turkestan; he was only a captain in 1918 when he was given the temporary rank of Major on despatch with the Kashgar Mission. Two years later when C.-g. he begged the G. of I. to give him the <u>local</u> rank of Lt. Colonel for purposes of 'izzat', and they quite unnecessarily agreed.[62]

First let me explain briefly the facts concerning his appointment to this place. In 1918 Etherton, Bailey and Blacker were sent up here on a secret mission to assist Sir George Macartney in keeping the British flag flying in Central Asia. They arrived here about the end of May (without Blacker who had gone round via Raskam and Yarkand chasing opium-smugglers, as described in his book), and Etherton at once proceeded to ingratiate himself with Sir George and help him in his office. Sir G. had already applied for permission to retire, and, his plans falling in with E's, he recommended E. to act for him.[63] The Govt. of India agreed. In July Bailey and Blacker went across the Border on their most dangerous

62. 'izzat' – 'the concept of honour prevalent in the culture of North India, Bangladesh and Pakistan' (Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Izzat_(honour), last accessed 16 July 2024). Skrine's 'correction' regarding Etherton's actual rank is accurate. Frederick Bailey, who had gone with Etherton to Kashgar and became famous for escaping Bolshevik efforts to track him down, likewise had been given a temporary promotion for the mission but would remind his mother his rank reverted to Major once back in India. See Waugh, *Etherton* (Appendix 3 below), p. 750, n 16.

63. See Macartney's recommendation dated 5 April 1920, addressed to J. E. Shuckburgh, for Etherton's promotion to Consul-General (from 'acting'), BL IOLR L/P&S/10/453, No. 2479.

mission, while E. sat comfortably in Kashgar understudying Sir George. A month later Sir G., whose retirement had been sanctioned, most adventurously (for so elderly a man) joined Bailey and Blacker in Turkestan. Blacker got sick of the Mission and obtained permission to return to his unit and get some fighting, Sir George accompanied Bailey to Tashkent where he helped him to get started, and Etherton sat tight here. Finally Sir G. returned to India. The following year E., thanks partly to his fluency with the pen and his amazing proficiency at the gentle art of blowing his own trumpet, partly to the critical stage at which the war had arrived and the preoccupation of Govt., got himself made 'pukka' [permanent; regular – *DW*] Consul-General with the local rank of Colonel. Thus ended his connection with the Mission, on which he had started only a year previously as a Captain!

Now for the facts as to his suitability for this important diplomatic post, the solitary one of its kind in all of Central Asia. Bluntly, he is (1) a lecher of a most pronounced type (2) a filcher of Govt. money and a past master of the art of enriching himself at Govt.'s expense (3) a blatantly egotistical pusher and self-advertiser without a scrap of consideration for others but diabolically clever at ingratiating himself with people whom he considers worthwhile – in other words, a cad of the first order.

(1) In this country, more even than in Persia, morals are extremely lax and the virtue of women, who are remarkably pretty, is a minus quantity. All the more reason why the representative of the British Empire at a place like this should keep himself and the Consulate unspotted before the world. The effect of this on British prestige is enormous; during 25 years of consuls at Kerman, only one had brought women into the consulate and he was still talked about when I was there, tho' it was 15 years before. Sir George Macartney for 28 years upheld British honour at this place and our moral reputation was as high as it could be when he left. What did Etherton do directly he found himself alone here? He started bringing prostitutes into the Consulate, and he kept it up the whole time he was here, until our name stank and the Swedish missionary ladies, as one of them hinted to D., were ashamed to be classed as Europeans and 'Sahibs' with him! If he had contracted a temporary marriage with a girl, according to the local custom, and had kept her the whole time, it wouldn't have been so bad; he could at any rate have said 'when in Rome do as the Romans do'.[64] But he had different bazar women in every week or so, employing an old so-called 'mullah' who is a pensioner of the Consulate as a pimp. Imagine the effect on the clerks and other staff of the Consulate! This spring both the British wireless operator and the Indian doctor went down with venereal. Imagine the effect on the city! Relations between Mohammedan women and European men are always apt to excite fanaticism, and things in this case came to such a pass that fatwas were issued by the mullahs saying that no woman was to visit the Consulate on pain of public disgrace or worse. After that the prostitutes had to come here only after dark.

(2) When I came here and took over from Fitzmaurice, I found the office in a chaotic state, both as regards files and papers and as regards finance. Etherton appears to have kept everything in his own hands, particularly all expenditure other than routine expenditure such as salaries, etc. In every office I have been in so far, every anna that can possibly go through office does so; the district officer rarely makes disbursements himself, except in the case of secret service payments, and if he does, he takes a receipt and sends it into office so as to have it posted up. Not so in this office under E. Out of an expenditure during the last financial year, excluding salaries and secret service, of about 30,000/-, sums totalling approximately 10,000/- were entered under various heads in the accounts unsupported by any receipts or vouchers, with merely certificates from E., 'I certify that so much has been paid to so-and-

64. On the common practices in Xinjiang regarding such 'temporary marriages', see Bellér-Hann 2008, pp. 266-271. Also, they were not uncommon amongst British Government of India officials, even if not always formalized legally (see James 1997, pp. 207-230; Gilmour 2006, pp. 284-289).

so', etc. etc. The account files are simply stuffed with certificates. They are permitted under the Account Code, of course, and the Accounts people if they trust a District Officer will not object; but in practise one hardly ever uses them except when a receipt is really unobtainable. And even when such certificates are put in, as detailed an account as possible accompanies them. In none of the big items E. spent did he even put in a detailed account. It was always 'paid to Umar Akhun on a/c of repairs to Consular Guard lines Rs. 635', or 'paid to Hashim Akhun on a/c of materials for garden, Rs. 250s', and so on. Now a good deal of alteration and building was certainly done last year, much more than ought to have been done at this time of intense financial stringency; but according to my calculations they could not have cost the very large sum assigned to them in the accounts. It is impossible to check this expenditure now, because the accounting is all fudged, i.e. thousands of rupees worth of alterations and repairs to the house itself were charged to Consular Guard (paid by the Kashmir Durbar) or to the Wireless Telegraph (paid by the Signals Corps). But in this connection what the Accountant tells me is significant. He says that the day before he left, E. found that he had not repaid all the advances he had taken from office, the deficit running into several hundreds of rupees. He said to the Accountant, 'Come along, bring the accounts and we'll soon fix that up', whereupon he proceeded to debit the Office Allowance with the whole amount under various heads, 100/- for repairs to the Guard Lines, 90/- for repairs to the Wireless Quarters, and so on. There are other extremely suspicious-looking items also.

[*marginal note written in here:* 1 tengeh = 1/16th part of a tael].

The worst financial ramp I have discovered, however, is the one E. and Fitzmaurice between them worked over the rupee-tengeh exchange at Govt.'s expense. You perhaps don't know how remote offices like this one are financed. We raise money for local expenditures by selling 'Supply Bills', which are simply cheques on the Indian Exchequer, in the open market, getting as favourable a rate as we can. Here there is not ordinarily much demand for drafts on India, and the rupee-tengeh rate is usually unfavourable, working out at about 6 ½ tengehs per rupee. Until last year the Consulate treasury used to sell S.B.s as it went along, keeping enough Kashgar currency in the treasury to finance the office for 6 months ahead. Now when I took over from Fitzmaurice, I found what seemed to me to be an inordinately large balance in the treasury, over 60,000/-, nearly all in Kashgar notes. As the monthly turnover of this office is only 3 or 4 thousand, I could not make this out. I asked Fitzm., and he said that E. had sold a lot of S.B.s during the last few months because he thought that the exchange might drop. I then had a look at the S.B. register, and found that Rs. 76,000 worth of S.B.s, or about 5/6ths of the whole, had been sold between 1st Sept. 1921 and 3rd May 1922 to Etherton and Fitzmaurice themselves! I at once smelt a large rat, and began to question Fitzm. quietly. I found out from him that there is an interesting little circular tour on which one can send one's money, with the unwitting assistance of the Govt., and make a profit of 25% on every penny sent. This is how it is done. You keep a banking account in China proper, say at Shanghai, in taels. The Chinese Post Office here are always wanting to remit to China, which is very difficult for them owing to the enormous distance, and they will always buy cheques on China at a big premium. You therefore draw cheques on your Chinese account and sell them to the Post Office. The problem then is to get the proceeds to India. No one here has any bills or cheques to sell on India, because the balance of trade is the other way. Only the Consulate General has S.B.s to sell on India. If you happen to be C.G., therefore, you can sell yourself S.B.s in exchange for Kashgar currency, at any rate you like to fix. Having thus got money in India, you transfer it to China in the ordinary way, draw cheques against in Kashgar, and so ad infinitum, making 25% profit every time. The only loser is the Consulate, which gets stuffed up with Kashgar money far in excess of its

requirements, can't cash any more S.B.s, and can't therefore take advantage of a rise in exchange. It will take over two years to get rid of the present accumulation; meanwhile the rate is rising in our favour. I calculate that Etherton and Fitzmaurice between them made 18,000/- out of this ramp. Apparently E. made no attempt for several months before his departure to ascertain whether a better rate than what he gave himself, namely 6 tengehs to the rupee, could be obtained for the office S.B.s; as a matter of fact, I am informed that office could have got a better rate all the time, and that traders several times came to the Consulate and offered 6 ½ tengehs, but E. turned them down! But this is not all. According to both Fitzmaurice and H. Harding, the value of Chinese paper money is subject to huge fluctuations. They are always juggling with the note-issue at Urumchi, and any moment the Governor may flood the province with a new issue and cause a slump. Now practically all the 76,000/- worth of currency which E. and F.M. sold to the office for S.B.s was in the form of notes. If there is a slump, Govt. will lose anything up to cent per cent of the amount. That E. was perfectly aware of this aspect is clear from his own 'Report on Chinese Turkestan' dated 3rd April this year, in which he says: 'The decrease in the amount of silver and copper in circulation has, as was to be expected, been accompanied by a great increase in the note issue [...] The financial position is unsound and a crisis sooner or later is inevitable [...] The notes are actually accepted at their face value, though such confidence appears to be misplaced or at least exaggerated [...] There is however no doubt that <u>if the confidence in these notes were in any way affected their value would depreciate rapidly</u>.' (The italics are mine.) Takes some beating, that, doesn't it?

That E. is an inconsiderate, pushing, egotistical cad will be clear from the following. He wanted a year's leave from this job. During the whole of the 3 ½ years he had been here, he had been assisted by a clever, knowledgeable Vice Consul, Fitzmaurice. The obvious thing, the only fair thing towards his locum tenens, would have been to arrange with Govt. that his leave and Fitzmaurice's should not coincide, so that the officiating C.G. should have the benefit knowledge of the job to make up for his own unfamiliarity with the peculiar conditions prevailing here. Not a bit of it. E. <u>didn't want</u> his l[ieutenan]t to make too good a show while he himself was away, so he arranged for Fitzmaurice's leave to coincide with his own – with the result that I am handicapped not only by my own lack of knowledge but by my Vice Consul's also.

Again, as regards money, E. overspent his allotment under the five chief heads which were in his hands by 49% last year. He made part of this up by carrying over expenditure to the first month of this financial year. E.g. I found on arrival that 3,400 out of 6000/-, the Secret Service allotment for this year, had been spent by E. or under his orders already, in the first 3 months of the year. E's object in this was obviously two-fold: firstly, to spend every penny he could get hold of during the last few months before his leave on S.S. so as to get masses of intelligence and be able to send in long reports which would impress and please the Gov. of India more than ever; secondly – to leave me with insufficient S.S. money so that I would be unable to send in as full reports as he did, thereby causing him to gain by contrast. As the chief importance of the C.G. Kashgar, from the G. of I.'s point of view, lies in his capacity as intelligence agent, he is judged largely by his success in this respect. Etherton was fully aware of this. He is a past master at the gentle art of acquiring merit at other people's expense. He played the same trick with the Office Allowance; he paid many of last year's bills out of my allotment for this year in April, with the result that with 8 months still to run I have only 40% of my allotment left. One depends on O.A. for various kinds of expenditure, such as diplomatic presents, which have political and administrative value and make one's way smooth. E., who over-spent his allotment last year by nearly

3,000/-, made his own way smooth, more so, at the expense of mine.

Compared with the above, it is hardly worth while mentioning the various minor ways in which he has inconvenienced me for selfish reasons; how for instance he promised us he would bring down horses and servants for us to Srinagar, and then, because he was in a tearing hurry to get back to civilization, left them behind at Astore without telling us, so that at the last moment we had to get hold of unsatisfactory local servants and horses as best we could; how again he omitted to tell us (purposely, no doubt, lest we should refuse to take them back to Kashgar for him) that the 3 horse he did bring down were all ramping, raging stallions and one of them notoriously vicious to boot, with the result that, as described in my letter from Gilgit, I was nearly killed in a fight between two of them on a 3-foot path above the Astore river. Similarly he annoyed Col. Terence Keyes very much, when the latter was under orders for this job, by writing to him and saying that as he, Etherton, wanted to get down to India as quickly as possible, he was sure Keyes wouldn't mind crossing the passes in April; it certainly was a bit dangerous, but he himself had done it before so why shouldn't Keyes? This to a distinguished man much his senior, a man with a wife and family! Keyes was furious, and swore that if he went to Kashgar he would get E. out. No wonder our friend is hated here; it is most striking, the eulogies one hears of Sir G[eorge] Macartney, who left 4 years ago, and the ominous silence that reigns about E., who left 3 months ago. For that matter I haven't heard much good of him from anyone who knows anything about him, except Fitzmaurice, who idolizes him.

Ask Col. Charles Smith, who was P[olitical] A[gent] Gilgit when he and Bailey and Blacker passed through in '18; ask Bailey and Blacker themselves! You'll hear something. Apropos, 'Smith of Asia' is very amusing about him. You might hear him taking off Etherton. 'I sy, Smith,' said he at Gilgit in '18, 'd'yer know anything abaht the wimmin at Kashgar? I've been told they're top-'ole.' Smith told him that as far as he knew that was correct. 'By Jove,' says E. with a sly look and a jerk of his thumb over his shoulder in the direction of Kashgar, 'wot a lovely time I'm going to 'ave!' And a month later, while the final death-struggles of the world-war were taking place before Chateau Thierry and Amiens, E was having his lovely time – one which went on for three and a half years, at the expense of the poor old impoverished British Empire. Our friend knows how to have it both ways. He both had a good time and made pots of money – I should say that by saving and – other methods – he must have made a lakh while here. And not only that but he made no end of a reputation and acquired any amount of merit; he may get a C.I.E. out of this.[65] I ask you, is a man like Etherton worthy, not merely of a C.I.E., but even of officiating as the King's representative? It positively hurts me to think of handing this place back to him next year; not because I want it myself, I have been promised leave and I'm not going to give it up if I can help it, but because it is so much too good a job for Etherton. What annoys me is that he thinks he has bought the place – regards it as his country house to do what he likes with. He evidently looks forward confidently to spending several more years here. He has furnished the house, ornamented it and wallpapered it lavishly (and in execrable taste) mostly at Govt. expense but partly at his own, and if you please there is absolutely no record in office and nothing known by the clerks as to what things belong to him and what to Government! What is more, he has taken away with him certain

65. CIE = Companion of the Indian Empire, the third class in the Order of the Indian Empire, the 'junior British order of chivalry associated with the Empire of India' established by Queen Victoria (Wikipedia: https://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/Order_of_the_Indian_Empire, last accessed 16 July 2024). Macartney, Etherton's predecessor as Consul-General in Kashgar, was awarded the higher second class KCIE (Knight Commander of the Indian Empire) in 1913. Skrine's appointment in 1946 as a Knight Bachelor (OBE = Officer of the Order of the British Empire) came only after his distinguished service in Iran during World War II.

of the accounts registers belonging to this office, from which I might have found things out, e.g. the advance register, and his own cash account kept by the Accountant.

I'm afraid I've taken up a lot of your time, but I thought you ought to be warned about E. so as not to play his game by cracking him up and introducing him to useful people. Please treat all this as strictly confidential, as, if E. comes back here next year it would be very awkward for me if he was aware that I had given him away. The only persons I wouldn't mind knowing what I have said are Sir G. Macartney and Sir P. Sykes, who, owing to their connection with Kashgar have a sort of right to know what has been going on.

Your affectionate son,

Clarmont

***

[*Skrine had not explicitly asked for his father's advice proffered in this draft of a letter. However, clearly Clarmont would not wait on his father's taking the initiative in the India Office in London before filing his own reports to Delhi.*]

Reply. Oct 12th

Etherton is evidently a scoundrel, who cares for nought but satisfaction of his lust-greed & ambition.

But the situation at Kashgar is abnormal.

(a) It is contrary to official etiquette for a junior officer & locum tenens to bring charges against the pucca man: he who does so incurs suspicion that he has 'his own axe to grind'. A black mark is put agt. his name.

(b) No enquiry could take place by a third party till May, owing to closure of passes.

It is your bounden duty to bring E. to justice: *coûte que coûte* [at all costs – *DW*], so:

(1) Make sure that the information given you at Kashgar is not prompted by dislike & a wish to prevent his return.

(2) Take subordinates' statements down in writing, & prepare balance sheets showing expenditure of Secret Service &c moneys.

(3) From this material draw up a Report showing E's misdoings under each head.

(4) Send it to me, under registered cover about Jan 1st: I will call at the I[ndia] Office, & lay all facts before the proper official.

(5) It is highly important that E. should not return to Kashgar: but that you should be relieved by a senior man, with orders to report on E's conduct.

(6) Meantime there can be no harm in you applying for a supplementary grant of secret service etc. money, without all showing E's [..t..ry] with expenditure.

(7) Profound secrecy!!!

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Kashgar, 31 August 1922

Really only a line this week (not one of my 8-page 'lines') because (it never rains but it pours) 24 hours before the mail goes, in comes a secret service agent who has actually managed to spend the last 2 months in R[ussian] Turkistan, at Andijan, Samarkand & even Tashkend! How he has managed to avoid being arrested by the Bolos I cannot think – anyhow he tells a most thrilling story, & I have spent

3 ½ hours cross-examining him today, followed by an hour drafting a telegram of over a closely written foolscap page to Gov't. giving the gist of his extraordinarily interesting & important news. Now (11 P.M.) I have got to cypher it! For the dâk runner must leave not later than breakfast-time tomorrow.

Herewith a half dozen prints of Burzil negatives [...] I have also done some of the post-Gilgit ones, but I am keeping them to send with my diary of the Gilgit–Kashgar journey. This by the way is taking much longer than I expected, partly because I've got a lot of work on nowadays, partly because I'm typing it myself & am not very fast with the typewriter, but mostly because I simply can't help re-writing almost every sentence of the original diary! However, I'll finish it for certain before we start on tour, photos and all, & a map.[66]

Doris, the 2 cats, the 3 gazelles, the 15 sheep, the 2 cows, the 2 calves, the 15 ducks, and the 25 hens are all flourishing.[67] So am I.

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[*Skrine to his mother, on letterhead with seal and printed British Consulate-General, Kashgar.*]

3 September 1922

We have got our first guests (not counting Gerard & Fitzmaurice whom we fed for a week before they left), namely one Guaita, an Italian who is Postal Commissioner in Sinkiang & is on his way home on leave from Urumchi, the capital of this province, via India.[68] He left Urumchi 70 days ago, and travelling quickly would have got here 25 days ago, only he caught relapsing fever in Aksu 12 marches from here and was laid up 3 times with one attack after the other. I sent the Consulate doctor towards Aksu to help him, but Guaita got better & wired to him to go back from Maralbashi. Finally, Guaita and a young Russian called Shartz who is travelling with him arrived here yesterday morning. He is a most curious & unexpected type to meet in Chinese Turkistan of all places – an Italian Cockney! Speaks English like an Englishman, slang & idiom and all but with a Cockney accent. Himself he is a wiry, sharp-featured, vivacious, cheerful, gesticulating, good-humoured little man, regular Italian temperament volatile and temperamental. Talks nineteen to the dozen, but amusingly and interestingly. Doris, who first met him when I was not in the house, was horrified & infuriated by his greeting her as 'my dear', & I had no end of a time pacifying her and explaining that it was 'only his way'! She quite likes him now, & we have great talks. He has already given us quantities of useful intelligence – not altogether intentionally, for he's easy to pump – about Urumchi doings and Bolshevik penetration in the part of this province N. of the Ti'en Shan, which I am making great use of in my reports to the G. of I. So he's worth his keep to me.

66. Skrine obviously was too optimistic about finishing the diary, the first installment of which he managed to send off only on 12 October (see below).

67. Whewell 2020, p. 145 n 29, implies that the menagerie at the consulate under Skrine was his doing, though clearly it was Doris who was responsible.

68. In his December 1921 official consular diary sent to the Government of India (L/P&S/10/976), Etherton reported how the Kashgar postal commissioner told him that the Italian in charge of the post at Urumqi (the same Guaita?) was about to be sacked. Etherton added the comment that if the Chinese were left to run the post on their own it would be a disaster. Skrine's correspondence with Urumqi regarding postal routes in Xinjiang in January and February 1923 was addressed to E. B. Cavaliere, at the time the Acting Postal Commissoner for Xinjiang (see Skrine's memo No. 163/64, dated 22 February, in IOLR, L/P&S/11/233 P 1992/1923, and below, pp. 262-265). Cavaliere was still in that post in November 1923, when he exchanged letters with the Kashgar postmaster. Owen Lattimore (1994, p. 23), on arriving in Urumqi in 1927, mentions an Italian Postal Commissioner there who was about to go on leave but does not name him.

Shartz who came to call this afternoon is another unexpected type – a young 'nut' of Shanghai society albeit a perfectly un-swanky and quite delightful specimen of the genus. His uncle is boss of the Russo-Asiatic Bank of Shanghai[69] (a concern now run by the French who always held most of the shares) & he himself has a job in it. In fact, his uncle, who is full of money, appears to have sent him overland to Urumchi to study conditions in this province and return via India, more as a sort of 'grand tour' than anything else. He's a really nice lad and a thorough sahib. We're having him to tennis tomorrow (Monday), to dinner on Tuesday, on which latter occasion he and Guaita & D. & I am going to dance to the gramophone! He & Guaita are both tremendously keen dancers & Shartz has all the latest steps from Shanghai & Peking!! Jazz steps brought five months' journey overland!!!

6 September 1922. Guaita & Shartz and our Indian doctor, who is being relieved by K.S. Fazl-i-Ilahi from Nushki, are leaving about the 16th by the Yarkand–Ladakh route so that Guaita will be another 10 days or so with us. One drawback is that we are suffering a repetition of the dinner-party craze that made our first week here so trying. We have already got 3 parties in this week & are giving two ourselves, all for Guaita & Shartz. Yesterday we all spent 4 ¼ hours during the middle of the day partaking of a Gargantuan repast given by the Postmaster to meet his chief. It was a hot day, but luckily the venue of the meal was a delightful sort of pavilion with a roof but no sides & a raised floor, in the middle of a lovely garden belonging to a wealthy merchant, lent by him for the occasion. These meals are very trying [...] Today's was at the Dao Tai's new country cottage on the top of his cliff overhanging the river on the N.E. side of the city, a lovely place with an amazing view. One thing I noticed after the dinner yesterday which gave me rather a shock, but which I was afterwards told is universal throughout China: when we had left the table, the waiters went round pouring back what remained in the wine-glasses into its various bottles! I anxiously enquired whether the same procedure is followed with regard to the food, but was reassured on the point [...]

It is particularly unfortunate that all this has come this particular week, because I'm simply snowed under with work. Not only have I got to get off my monthly diary this week, but my two most important secret service men came in from different directions by a curious coincidence, on the same day last week & have supplied me with an enormous mass of most interesting information. This means not only mammoth cypher telegrams which I have to cypher myself, every word, but detailed reports by post. I can't give myself beyond next week's mail to get off a report which will run into something like 10,000 words – & it all means examining, cross-examining, sifting, weighing evidence, comparing, tabulating, scrutinizing maps etc. etc., very hard work. Add to this that Harding is down with fever & I have to do his work too [...] You needn't worry about our trying to come home via Russia next year. We did, of course, think about it before we came here and found how things were in Russian Turkestan. For one thing, the Russo-Chinese frontier is closed by the Chinese, in which action the Consulate-General strongly encourages them (in order to keep Bolo [Bolshevik – *DW*] agents & influence out), so that I could hardly ask to be allowed to cross the frontier myself [...]

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[*Excerpts from Skrine's official August diary/report sent on 8 September 1922, received in Simla 3 October, printed and sent on to London 12 October, received there 30 October. Printed copies with appended comments and responses are preserved in several archival files: BL IOLR L/P&S/10/976, Kashgar diaries 1921-1930; BL IOLR L/P&S/10/949, fols. 289-291.*

69. It is not clear whether Skrine might have in mind here the prominent financier and industrialist Aleksei Ivanovich Putilov (1866-1940), at the time heading the Russo-Asiatic Bank's operation from Paris, its Shanghai branch presumably with its own manager.

Several items here would be of continuing importance during Skrine's tenure. Indeed, as he projected here, Chu was replaced (see Skrine's letter home below, dated 24 September). What attracted particular attention was his paragraph 7, in which he suggested laxity by his predecessors (in particular, of course, he had in mind Etherton, whom he does not name) regarding the registration of British subjects. This claim surprised the British legation in Beijing (BL IOLR L/P&S/10/949, p. 280, letter of R. H. Clive to Skrine) and prompted a flurry of exchanges between them and the Chinese foreign affairs officials. The Foreign Office in London launched inquiries of the Minister in Beijing and both Etherton and Fitzmaurice. Etherton's response, dated 20 November 1922, is below, pp. 144-145. There is a separate, extensive file entitled 'Chinese Turkestan. Effect on British subjects after abrogation of the Russo-Chinese Treaty of 1881' (BL, IOLR, L/P&S/10/297 File 3537/12. Register no. 2743), in which, inter alia (p. 39), is a copy of Skrine's summary letter and recommendations dated 2 October 1922 addressed to Beilby F. Alston, the British Minister in Beijing. For more on this issue, see Skrine's letter home from Karghalik dated 15 November 1922 below.]

2. [...] Hsū [Xu Guozhen – *DW*], Taoyin of Aksu, arrived at Kashgar New City on 18th August and stayed two days at Ma Titai's yamen. The old General met him much further along the road than was to have been expected, and altogether made much of him; this is obviously due to the possibility (only too great, it is to be feared) of Hsū being appointed Taoyin of Kashgar [...] His appointment in supersession of Chu would be nothing less than a disaster from the British point of view. For six years Chu has worked in complete accord with His Majesty's Consulate-General, his attitude regarding Bolshevism in particular being all that could be desired. Hsū, on the other hand, is a man of 65 or more and an opium smoker to boot; all his 40 years of service have been spent in the north of the Province, beyond the T'ien Shan, where he has been under Russian influence and has never had any dealings with British officials. Worst of all, it was he who in 1920, when he was Taoyin of Ili, concluded with the Soviet the Agreement which let the Bolsheviks into Ili and was the *fons et origo malorum* of that unhappy district.

3. Li, the new Amban of Yarkand, came into Kashgar on 25 August for 10 days' visit and exchanged calls with His Majesty's Consul-General. He appears to be thoroughly well disposed and anxious to co-operate [...]

His Britannic Majesty's Consul-General is informed by Mr. Guaita [...] that Major Dockray received orders in July to the effect that the Kashgar installation was to be erected after all.[70] Major Dockray was accordingly to have left Urumchi on 1st September. The transport required by him is estimated at 500 camels and 1000 carts, by far the largest caravan that has been seen in Sinkiang in modern times. Major Dockray himself should be here by the end of October but it will not be possible to erect the wireless station until next spring [...]

7. During the past few years there has been a growing tendency among Aksakals to rope in as many persons as they could lay hands on for registration as British subjects, partly under the mistaken impression that they were benefitting the British Empire thereby, partly with a view to increasing their own importance in their towns. It is to be regretted that this practice has been tacitly approved by His Majesty's Consulate General in the past; for the result has merely been the flooding of the register with numbers of persons, particularly Afghans, with only the flimsiest claims to British nationality,

70. Major Stephen Dockray was the representative in Beijing for the Marconi company. As Etherton noted in his official diary for December 1921, Dockray was heading to Urumqi to install its wireless station. In the March and April 1922 diaries, Etherton quoted *in extenso* letters from Dockray in which the latter complained about the difficulties he was having in the project, due to Chinese obstructionism in matters such as the purchase of land for the station. See also Lattimore 1994, p. 25. Skrine would tell his mother about Dockray on the latter's arrival in Kashgar (see below the long letter dated 30 December 1922–4 January 1923), and later wrote about the thrill of being lifted to the top of one of the new wireless towers which Dockray had constructed. There would be problems in getting the new station to connect properly with India.

and constant friction with the Chinese authorities in connection with numerous cases in which these undesirables have been concerned. The question has been the subject of correspondence with His Majesty's Minister, Peking, and it has been decided that in future only persons with well-established claims to British nationality will be registered; certificates already held by persons known to have insufficient right to them will be cancelled [...] There is good reason for believing that this change of policy will convince the Chinese officials of Southern Sinkiang of British good faith and the absence of any *arrière pensée* in our policy. It is too much to expect any such conviction on the part of the Urumchi Government, who will no doubt continue in their firm belief in our Machiavellian designs upon the 'Six Cities.'

[...] 12. His Majesty's Consul-General received on 23rd August a visit from Ahmad Haji, one of the chief Andijani merchants of Kashgar. Formerly all the merchants who dealt with Russian territory were obliged to register themselves as Russian subjects in order to obtain the protection of the Russian Consulate-General. Since the Russian debacle these merchants have split into two parties, consisting, respectively, of those who have become naturalized Chinese subjects and those who have remained Russian nationals. Ahmad Beg Haji and Muhammad Khan are the leaders of the latter party; if and when a Russian Consulate, Bolshevik or otherwise, is re-established in Kashgar, they will reap their reward. The former party is headed by Arar Khan Torah and Hissam-ud-Din Bai. They are of course in high favour with the Chinese and what little money is now being made in Kashgar flows into their pocket: but it is probable that this state of affairs would not long survive the return of Russian influence. [...]

[*At the end he notes sending a separate report on Bolshevism (his memo No. 101, dated September 14, copied below, pp. 145-151), concerning which a large amount of new material had just arrived, too late to include in the diary.*]

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[*Skrine elaborated on his impressions about the administration of justice in Xinjiang and its bearing on the question of the status of those claiming British citizenship in this revealing memorandum addressed to R. H. Clive at the British Legation, Beijing (BL IOLR L/P&S/10/949, pp. 273-275 [typed copy of Skrine's original]). In forwarding it to Lord Curzon, the Secretary of State, Clive, commented:* 'I venture to draw Your Lordship's attention to the statement made by Mr. Skrine [...] to the effect that every encouragement should now be given to native settlers in Chinese Turkestan of Indian origin to assume Chinese nationality, and to state that I am in entire agreement with these views' *(p. 272). Also of interest is the comment on the minute paper (p. 270) by J. A. Simpson in the Political Department of the Foreign Office, since Simpson in other cases was critical of Skrine's reports:*

> At first sight it seems illogical that Mr. Skrine should subscribe to a description of the abominations of Chinese justice a recommendation that British subjects in Chinese Turkestan should be encouraged to assume Chinese nationality, but the illogicality is lessened by the fact that the persons in question are only in the most nominal sense British subjects, are practically indistinguishable from their Turki neighbours and so by the possession of anomalous privileges, render unnecessarily difficult the position of those with a more genuine claim to the title of British (Indian) subjects.

In discussing these issues, Whewell 2020, pp. 158-159, cites a memorandum Harding sent to the British legation in Beijing on 31 October 1922, setting out recommendations that differed from Skrine's. I have not found a copy of this memorandum in the substantial India Office compendium 949 which reviews all the correspondence on the 'British citizens' issue. For Harding's detailed recommendations drawn up the next year and Skrine responses which show that in fact he and Harding did agree on certain issues, see below, pp. 295-307]

Despatch No. 38 from Kashgar of October 4th, 1922.

Sir,

I have the honour to invite a reference to your circular No. 37 of July 3rd last. As the Vice-Consul Mr. H. I. Harding and myself are both new arrivals in this Province, first-hand knowledge of the conditions described is necessarily somewhat lacking; the following notes, however, are based on the recorded opinions of our respective predecessors as well as on such information as we have been able to acquire from local experience and conversation with officials and others at Kashgar. From reports received daily from Aksakals in other towns, however, I have every reason to believe that similar conditions exist throughout the province.

Judicial methods here have undergone no change since the Chinese re-conquest of the province. There is no separation of the judicial from the executive authority and the administration of justice is entirely in the hands of the district magistrates. Ignorant of the language, cultural conditions and psychology of the people whom they rule and infatuated by the idea that the Turkis are an infinitely inferior race, possessed of no sign of culture beyond an ability to write a script unintelligible to the Chinese and therefore beneath consideration, these officials are entirely in the hands of their yamen Begs; the latter, again, are morally and socially of an inferior type among the Turki population, possessing a greater or less knowledge of the spoken Chinese language, but in the majority of cases ignorant of their own written language and out of touch, socially, with the better class of Turki.

In these circumstances it would be surprising if a judicial system at all approaching the standard of even the most backward of Western countries existed in Sinkiang. In civil cases it is a common practice for both plaintiff and defendant to be imprisoned by the magistrate. A young Turki of good position who lives in a garden next door to that of the Vice Consul recently presented a petition to the Kashgar magistrate for the recovery of a debt of some hundreds of taels due to him by another Turki. The magistrate promptly arrested the defendant and announced that he would enquire into the case in two or three days, pending which the plaintiff had better remain at the magistrate's yamen. There he has been for the fortnight past and there is still no news of the hearing of the case. Had he been willing at any time to give a douceur to the yamen Beg in charge of his case the latter would at once have reminded the magistrate and the case would have been heard.

Assuming that judgment is given in favour of a plaintiff, execution again depends on these corrupt Begs; nothing is done without payment of a doceur to them.

In criminal cases the practice of torturing the prisoner in order to extract a confession and 'witnesses' in order to extract evidence is quite common, the methods consisting of those in vogue in China Proper and of some others as well.

As regards the moral and intellectual qualifications of the district magistrates themselves to hold judicial responsibility, I need only say that at least half of them are confirmed opium-smokers. As the Turkis themselves say, nothing good can come out of an opium-smoker; even if his intentions are good their value is destroyed by the moral weakness and inattention to business which is habitual with victims of the drug. It may, in fact, be said that judicial, no less than administrative, conditions in this province are worse than they are at the present time in China Proper; they are worse even than they were in that region during the last years of the Manchu dynasty. In view of this, I have no hesitation in saying that the submission of British subjects in general to the existing conditions of Chinese judicial authority in Sinkiang would be deplorable. At the same time it must be admitted that the existence in parts of the province of considerable numbers of British subjects indistinguishable by language, dress or customs from their Turki neighbours and often owning and cultivating land in remote villages, yet free from the control of

the authorities is calculated to arouse excusable hostility on their part from which British Indian traders of the first generation likewise suffer. The majority of such persons are illiterate and, I am afraid, inclined to profit by the fact of their immunity from control in order to adopt an attitude of truculence to their neighbours and to the authorities. If such a British subject refuses, for instance, to pay the tax for sheep-pasturage paid by his Turki neighbours, it must be galling in the extreme to a magistrate to be unable to compel him to pay what is due without reference to this Consulate. I venture to suggest that the time has now come when every encouragement should be given to such persons by this Consulate to take out papers of Chinese nationality, as colonists in Chinese territory. I fear that if this is not done, the quasi-persecution to which a few of these people have recently been subjected will extend, and that, if it does so, we will be powerless to intervene effectually and will consequently suffer a serious loss of prestige.

A copy of this despatch is being sent to the Government of India.

I have, etc.,

(Signed) C. P. Skrine

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[*Here is Etherton's response to the query regarding paragraph 7 of the August diary, a copy of which had been sent to him with a request that he comment about the policies regarding the British subjects' registration. The text is a typed copy filed in BL IOLR L/P&S/10/949, register no. P4743/1922, pp. 287-288 (another typed copy is interfiled with a copy of the printed diary on p. 290). This copy is one forwarded from the Foreign Office on 24 November 1922 by Victor Wellesley to R. H. Clive in the British Ministry in Beijing. After characterizing the statement in the August diary as 'regrettable', Wellesley commented (p. 285):* 'Lieutenant Colonel Etherton and Mr. Fitzmaurice have, however, been consulted in regard to this matter and assurances have been received from them that the paragraph of the Kashgar Diary in question can only refer to a state of affairs which is now completely terminated and which has certainly not existed since the date of Colonel Etherton's appointment in 1918'. *For Skrine's response to Etherton's statement, see below pp. 306-307.*]

Note by Lieut-Colonel P. T. Etherton, H.B.M. Consul-General, Kashgar.

With reference to paragraph 7, KASHGAR DIARY for August 1922, the question of the registration of British subjects in Chinese Turkistan was the subject of correspondence between myself and H. M. Minister, Peking, and it was decided that only persons with well-established claims should be registered, and I announced my intention of referring all doubtful cases to the political or civil authorities of the place in India to which the applicant alleged that he belonged. In this connection reference is invited to Kashgar Diary for January 21. 1921, April 10. 1921, August 28. 1921, and November 12. 1921. Several doubtful certificates were cancelled by me and others allowed to lapse. Aksakals were circulated in 1920 and 1921, and Afghans were excluded. Sir George Macartney from 1911 to 1914 did register a number of Afghans but this was merely in accordance with instructions he had received from the Government of India 'to take a wider sweep of the net', and from a further letter from the Foreign Secretary to the Government of India to Sir Arthur Hirtzel, dated Delhi, March 3, 1914, which says 'The Government of India consider that Macartney should certainly be authorised to undertake a larger measure of registration than he is doing at present, as there is no doubt that by hesitating to register Afghans in Chinese Turkistan he is driving them into the arms of Russia'.

As I stated in a despatch to His Majesty's Minister, Peking, I do not think that the Chinese could point to a single case in which a registration certificate has been issued to a Chinese subject.

I mention this matter as the above-quoted paragraph is misleading, and is worded in such a way as

to give the impression that the change of policy was of very recent origin, whereas it has been in vogue for the past few years.

November 20, 1922

(Signed) P. T. Etherton

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[*The following excerpts offer a good overview of Skrine's intelligence-gathering at the early stages of his Kashgar posting. It is in fact one of the most comprehensive such reports obtained especially from intelligence agents. It is possible that the key agent, who had been sent to Andijan is one Etherton had previously used; the one reporting on Ili, if we are to believe Skrine, was betrayed by a contact that had been provided him by Etherton. The document is a handwritten draft (rather difficult to decipher because of the countless insertions and crossings-out that testify to his laboring on the text) of Skrine's memo No. 101 dated 14 September 1922 (in BL IOLR MS EurF 154/39) entitled 'The Political Situation in Central Asia.' He subsequently would refer to it in several of his monthly diary reports to the Government of India. He starts by listing his sources:*]

1) An Andijan agent of approved fidelity whose son is postmaster at Ura Tyube & who spent the whole of June, July & Aug. this year visiting Andijan, Khokand, Samarkand, Ura Tyube & Tashkend.

2) A young Indian member of the I.P. [? = Indian Political] who returned last week from Kulja (Ili) where he had spent four months, passing himself off as a budding seditionist anxious to join the Propaganda School at Tashkend. From Ili he started with a Bolshevik passport for Tashkend. He was arrested at Yarkat, the Bol[shevik] frontier post, having been betrayed by a person in the Ili to whom my predecessor had given him a letter of introduction. He escaped by bribing his jailer & managed to make his way back to Kashgar. While at Ili he lived w/ Bolsheviks and went frequently to the library referred to in para. [17] below. At Yarkat he obtained particulars of the Prop[aganda] Schools from ex-students of the Musical School with whom he associated.

3) The late Russian Aksakal of Kashgar Mohammed Khan an anti-Bolshevik & a man of excellent reputation [...*paragraph crossed out*]

4) Certain Andijani merchants of Kashgar who are on visiting terms with the C[onsul] General. Two of them have just returned from the frontier at Sungak where they have been selling sub rosa Kashgar sheep, dyes & cotton cloth to Ferghana merchants.

[*Crosses out:* '5) Regarding the Pamirs (a) the Kirghiz who come into Tashkurgan from over the border (b) an opium-smuggler who arrived a month ago from Faizabad, [...] Korla & Panja & the Little Pamir.']

5) Reg[ar]d[in]g Urumchi two recent European arrivals from Urumchi named Mr. Guaita Postal Comm[issioner] in Sinkiang & Mr. G. Shartz of the Russo-Asiatic Bank, Shanghai.

Of the notes below, those on Russ[ia]n Turk[esta]n are based mainly on (1), those on Semirechia & Ili on (2) and those on Urumchi on (5). (3 & 4 being of doubtful value have not been used to check the sources).

Russian Turkestan

(1) Recent Events in Bokhara

Reg[ar]d[i]ng Bokhara and the career of Enver I have been able to obtain very little trustworthy information. Feeling runs very high in Ferghana between pro- and anti-Bolsheviks & each side spreads the 'news' which it would like to be true. E.g. informant in (1) heard at Uzgend in the middle of June that E. had taken Bokhara & Kaltekurghan, while later in the same month he heard at Samarkand that E. had fled to Mazar-i-Sharif on the arrival of large B[olshevik] reinforcements. By the time this

report reaches the G. of I., the events in question will no doubt be well known thro' Meshed, Kabul & Peshawar & I will merely mention a few points of interest:

(i) It is firmly believed in Ferghana by pro- and anti-Bolsheviks that the B[ritish] Gov't. helped Enver thro' the Amir of Afghan[ista]n with money and amm[unitio]n: that we have not been helping the Basmachis directly & that Enver is in concealing himself somewhere in Bokhara, biding his time & that if further assistance is given him he will be able to raise all Turk[esta]n against the Bol[sheviks]. He is regarded a kind of national hero.

(ii) While at the moment of his success Enver is believed to have from the Soviet complete autonomy for the Khanates. The Bol[sheviks] however refused to relinquish control

1) of international relations

2) of railways

3) of Posts & Telegraph

4) of mines.

(2). Recent events in Ferghana

(i) At the end of June when informant No. (1) was at Ura Tyube, the regiment stationed there was moved to Tashkend & its place taken by 3 other regiments with a view to action against the Basmachis. The latter however refused to come out of their strongholds in the hills, & no action took place.

(ii) At the end of July one of the armoured trains which patrol the Tashkend–Samarkand and Cherniaevo (Khivat)–Andijan lines (v[ide] para 4A (4) below) was derailed by the B[asma]chis at Assoke 15 m. S. of Andijan. Several Red soldiers were injured. Budieny sent a detachment to try and catch the B[asma]chis who did this, but without success.[71]

(iii) Early in August when informant No. (1) was at Andijan on his return journey Gen. Budieny's cavalry brigade arrived in Ferghana from Eur[o[ean] Russia for operations against the B[asma]chis, whose h.q. had been at a place called Burunji Mazar among the m[oun]t[ains] between And[ijan] & Uzgend. They were split up & stationed some at Khokand, others at Marghilan & the rest at Andijan. Budieny operated successfully from Andijan against the B[asma]chis, 50 prisoners were taken & things were made altogether too hot for the Basm[achis] who eventually abandoned G. M. & joined Sher Moh[ammad] in Karategin.

(iv) Intense hatred exists between the people of the towns & the militia on one side and the Basmachis on the other. The Basmachis have as many spies out as the Bolsheviks and no quarter is shown. Any Basmachi who is captured is taken into the bazar & his throat cut publicly. The following well authenticated incidents illustrate the state of affairs. At Khokand on June 21st some twenty youths of the town sang a song in the bazar abusing the Basmachis. That same night the throats of every one of those twenty men were cut and their bodies hanging upon hooks in the butchers' shops. At Andijan about the end of June a Basmachi leader named Mohiuddin (not the same Mohiuddin as the Beg of that name whose capture by the Bolsh. was reported in my tele[gram] 93 of 8 August 1922) came with six followers to the Red military authorities saying that he had seen the error of his ways and wanted to join the Bolo. As an earnest of his good faith, he offered to show the Bolos. a buried store of Basmachi rifles. A detachment was accordingly sent with him to a certain village, where a

71. Semen Mikhailovich Budënnyi, who founded the Red Army Cavalry and in 1922 became commander of the North Caucasian military district. He was one of the Marshals of the Soviet Union under Stalin.

large number of rusty rifles was duly dug up and removed by the stated Bolsheviks. Mohiuddin then offered to lead the Bolos. to another village among the hills where a still larger number of rifles was buried. A force of 200 Reds which was sent out for the rifles was received with open arms as deliverers by the villagers, who showed them the hidden store of rifles and afterwards treated them to a feast in the market place. The unsuspecting Red soldiers piled their arms and set to, whereupon Mohiuddin and the Basmachis who had been awaiting their moment, fell on them & slaughtered all except twelve who escaped back to Andijan to tell the tale.

The following is gleaned from informants nos. (1) and (3):

3. The Basmachis (Turki باسماق = to tread or oppress). It is necessary to distinguish between two classes of Ferghana Basmachis – the genuine political B.; the original rebels against Soviet rule are represented by Sher Moh[ammad] and his following of 5000-6000 men who last month (August) were obliged by Bolshevik pressure to leave Ferghana and establish themselves among the Karategin mountains. Sher Moh. & his men are at present practically powerless & lack ammunition. They do little looting and are in fact popular among the villagers who feed them & otherwise keep them supplied.

On the other hand there are the purely bandit Basmachis under such leaders as Ahmad Pahlawan who terrorize the countryside. These men originally went out like the others from the hatred of the Bolos; but shortages of food & other necessities were too much for them & the patriot became merged in the brigand. The provision [?] of the harvest in Osh [...] this year is ascribed to their depredations among the people. It is against these that the strong feeling referred to in par. (2)(iv) above exists.

4. Soviet Military Organization

(A) Red Army.

(i) Infantry: 82 regts. each 600 strong. All M[ounted] I[nfantry] for practical purposes having own horses & using them when on active duty. Armed with Russian or Ger[man] mag[azine] rifles, cartridges & breast pockets or pondies [*?* ~ bandoliers – *DW*]. 8 M[achine] G[uns] on tripods & on high rests per regiment [...].

[*I have not copied the following part of the inventory of the forces, which includes cavalry, artillery, armored trains.*]

(v) Air Force

At the Air Force H.Q.s & Flying School at Tashkend there are 40 aeroplanes. Some at least of them can fly, for every day while No. (1) was at T[ashkent] one or more aeroplanes were in the air. The pilots are Russian except for 2 Ch[inese?] from Harbin. The Flying Sch. is located in the old Hippodrome just outside the town to the S. There are no regular landing grounds except at Tashkend & at Samarkand (near the Fort) but aeroplanes can land safely & easily on the Khokand & Andijan [?].

An Air Mail between T[ashkend] & Vyerni was inaugurated with much éclat on 1st August. An 'Albatross' machine actually started a 6 A.M. on that day, but it is not known whether it arrived or not. The service is not expected to materialize & is regarded as mere 'window-dressing'. The journey is advertized to take six hours, with halts at Aulie Ata & Mishpek & the machines to leave T[ashkend] Mon., Weds. & Fri.

(vi) Wireless. Besides the large 4-mast transmitting st[ation] at Tashkend, there is a receiving st[ation] in the fort at Andijan which is specially tuned to receive messages Indian W.T. st[atio]ns. The operators are Engl.-knowing Russians.

[*Sections follow on fortifications, uniforms and equipment, composition of troops, discipline, general.*]

5. Communications.

Passenger trains now run daily between Tashkend & Samarkand (& presumably beyond & in connexion with them between Cherniaevo & Andijan. It takes 3 d[ays] to travel by rail from Tashkend to Andijan, 2 d. from Tashkend to Samarkand & 2 d. from Andijan to Samarkand. Time of departure is irregular. Engine drivers are mostly Russians. The rolling stock is as maybe expected of the most makeshift type & in deplorable condition. An armed guard of regulars travels with each train in the mail-car; besides these, there are special flying detachments for searching trains. These may go through the mails, the passengers' baggage and the passengers' own persons most thoroughly. They confiscate arms carried by unauthorized persons, any suspicious-looking written or printed matter & above all gold & silver. Travelling by rail is therefore a nervous business, and the trains are not very much used by the general public, especially as there is a special travelling tax to pay in add[itio]n to the enormous fares. [*A paragraph on a railway bridge at China is indicated to be inserted here.*]

[*Following is a section describing administration, including a paragraph on the secret police (*cheka*); then a section on revenues.*]

Food supplies.

There has been scarcity in Turk[esta]n & what has had to be supplied is from Ili to supplement the Semirechian local [vi]ands [?], but there has been no famine reported (according to letters received by merchants in Urumchi seen by Messrs. Guaita & Schartz) other than Semipalatinsk. There, conditions have been as bad as anywhere in European Russia. One such letter told of the discovery by the authorities of 30 poods (1080 lbs.) of human flesh at a restaurant in Semipalatinsk; in other cases, cannibalism was actually permitted by the authorities.

8. Bolo. Propaganda (collated from the statements of Nos. (1) and (2)).

Of Pan-Turanism propaganda or even talk, no trace has been found in Turkestan by any observer. The people know little and care less about Osmanli dream of Central Asian hegemony, if such exist; certainly Pan-Turanianism does not figure in the Basmachi programme, whether inspired by Enver or not.

(i) Tashkend Schools of Propaganda.

These were closed in May or June last, whether permanently or only till the autumn is uncertain. The following information is obtained about the Indian and Chinese schools by No. (1).

The Indian School contained rather more than 40 students under the leadership of the following: Acharya, Roy, Ghulam Qadir and Abdul Majid. The latter acted as prefects & kept order. When the school closed Acharya and Roy went to Moscow; the rest have been dispersed gradually, the majority towards India via Afghanistan, a few to Persia and Vladivostok. Acc[or]d[in]g to No. (2), the agents bound for India relied on the Afghan Consul in Tashkend for permits to enter Afghanistan. The School is, or was, housed in a large 2-storeyed building belonging to one Bukhovsky in the Konstantinovsky Street; the students board and lodge at the school & have their meals together. They receive no pay, but get board & lodging, clothes washing & service free.

Chinese School. This also closed last May or June, when it contained 40 students. It was lodged in a house on the Moskovskaia & run on the same lines as the Indian. When the school was closed, a kind of 'passing out' examination was held in public at which large crowds were present. Acharya and Roy were present & applauded the national efforts of the Chinese students.

[*A following section for the School of Musical and Dramatic Propaganda was left blank.*]

(ii) Propaganda aimed at Ch[inese] Turk[esta]n.

There is a wide though loose organization throughout R[ussian] Turk[esta]n of revolutionary elements from Ch[inese] Turk[esta]n with the number of these persons estimated at 2000. The pick of the young men, 40 in no., form a special corps who are undergoing military training in the Fort at Tashkend. These youth wear their own national costume, but without boots (why, is not known). They carry Russ. or Germ. mag[azine] rifles & the remainder of the revolutionaries have their headquarters in a house provided for them by the Soviet in Tashkend where meetings are frequently held. The head of the organization, who convenes the meetings, is a Chinaman known as 'Jankih,' stated to have fled from Kashgar when things became too hot for him 5 years ago. I have ascertained from the Dao Tai that a Ch. revolutionary called Jang Kai Ün came here from China proper in the 1st year of the Revolution & became the leader of the local 'Ko-la hoi' [Gelaohui 哥老會] (revolutionaries). He was implicated in the murder of several officials & eventually managed to escape to R[ussian] Turk[esta]n. There is no doubt that 'Jang Kai Ün' and 'Jangkih' are identical.

Another personality among the Ch[inese] Turki revolutionaries is Islam Akhun, a Chinese convert to Islam who lives at Andijan but travels over all Turk[esta]n. No. (1) met him at Ura Tyube & again at Andijan. He describes Islam Akh. as follows:

> has a brusque & overbearing manner. He tried to pump No. (1) about the Tao Tai of Kashgar. One of his propaganda sheets, in Turki and Russ[ia]n, was entitled 'Uighuria, Dzungaria & Alteshahr' (i.e. Eastern Sinkiang, Ili and Kashgaria).

While No. (1) was at Tashkend 3 meetings of Ch[inese] Rev[olutionar]ies took place, at each of which Soviet officials & some Indians were present. At the 1st a resolution was passed requesting permission of the Soviet for agents to start rev[olutionar]y work in Kashgaria. This was refused by the Soviet rep[resenta]tives who said that the time had not yet come. Until a Bolo. Consulate was estab[lishe]d at Kashgar no propaganda work was to be started there. At the 2nd meeting a resolution was discussed & passed asking the Soviet to forbid the ingress of traders from Kashgaria, owing to the danger of information regarding the revolutionaries themselves reaching the ears of the Ch[inese] authorities. the Soviet promised to consider this point. The 3rd meet[ing] was convened to hear an appeal from a Chinese agitator (name unknown) who had come from Moscow to collect money for revolutionary purposes in European Russia. His efforts were unsuccessful, no subscription being collected.

It is almost certainly a fact that the Soviet policy at present is to curb the enthusiasm of the Chinese Turki revolutionaries. Up to a year ago they paid these men diet money, but now they do not. the 1st meeting referred to above may of course have been pure eye-wash; but the fact remains that I have been unable so far to detect the slightest sign of direct Bolshevik propaganda in Kashgaria. This is a marked contrast to their policy where they have established Consulates, Missions etc., vide under 'Ili' below. Obviously, until they have succeeded in obtaining an official footing at a place, it is to their interest to avoid doing anything which might frighten the authorities there.

17. Ili and Urumchi.

Personnel.

The Bolshevik Consulate and the Commercial Mission are both flourishing and active at Kulja, and have made much headway this year towards the Bolshevization of the Ili. In June Kolikoff was relieved at the Consulate by a new man (name unknown), but he is still in Ili. It is an open secret that he is destined for the Bolshevik Consulate at Kashgar, if & when that long-hoped-for institution comes into



Fig. 72. The remnants of the Russian/Soviet consulate in Kulja (today, Yili), including, in a commercial office, busts of Stalin and Lenin from ca. the 1930s (photos: DW 2005).

being. Epstein is still commercial Agent. [*Fig. 72*] The Consul has two Russian secretaries, the Comm. Agent 1 Russian & 2 Tar[anchis] on his staff. The total no. of Bolos in Ili is 80 [... *goes on about pay, weapons, etc.*]

Propaganda.

The centre of B[olshevik] propaganda is the reading room attached to [the] Eppstein Comm[ercia]l Mission. My informant succeeded in passing himself off as a candidate for the Indian Prop[aganda] School at Tashk[end] and attended this reading-room frequently [... *details of hours, activities, etc. and Bolshevik caution not to let printed propaganda be taken out for wider distribution in order to keep activities secret*]. They rely instead on careful coaching of native agents, Taranchis and Tatars mostly. The wives and d[augh]t[e]r]s of Bol[shevik] officers draw allowances for propaganda work, & have made great progress among Sart women. 1700 Chinese subjects had been secretly registered as Bolos by July & the no. is increasing daily. The Kazaks of the Kunus district between Yulduz and Ili, for example, are pro-Bolo to a man. The chief attraction is the Bolo promise (1) to remit all taxes, especially the unpopular cattle tax (2) to establish schools in which the Kazaks' sons will be brought up as gentlemen.

Another means by which the Bolo increase the no. of their adherents is by refusing permits to enter Semirechia to anyone but Bolo. subjects. For some years past two or three hundred Sarts have been in the habit of yearly visiting Semirechia for the purpose of opium cultiv[atio]n & these persons have been obliged to join the Bolshevk ranks.

Gold, including large quantities of Engl. sov[ereign]s, is also used freely.

There is no doubt whatever that large numbers of the younger generation in Ili & of the riff-raff of the towns, are ready & anxious to have a revolution, but they are lacking in initiative & want the Bolos to give them a lead. The B's on the other hand insist on the local elements making the first move. When a move is made, the chances of a serious, wide-spread flare-up are only too great. Arms & ammunition are a drug on the market [... *provides prices of weapons*].

Att[itude] of the Chinese.

The Ch[inese] are hopeless & apathetic about Ili.[72] They dislike the Bolos. but they are powerless to put a stop to their activities. When Dutov[73] was murdered in cold blood in his own house where he was

72. Skrine clearly was not well informed about Ili and more generally about the policies of Gov. Yang, who was anxious to block Bolshevik penetration of his province at the same time that he wished to promote cross-border trade. He managed to get the Soviet authorities to allow the establishment of several Chinese consulates across the border, this independently of any initiative by the central government in Beijing. See esp. Jacobs 2016, pp. 68-74.

73. Aleksandr Il'ich Dutov (1879-1921), a Cossack officer who fought against the Bolsheviks and then was forced

interned by the Chinese, nothing was done. Early in July a Taranchi, in the course of a bazar quarrel, shouted out that he was a Bolo. & that he & his friends were going to turn the dirty Chinese out. He was arrested by the authorities & imprisoned for a month, after which he was liberated obviously under B[olshevik] pressure. There is no doubt that the Ch[inese] off[icia]ls are largely bought over. The Dao Tai, for one, is making a large fortune out of trade with Semirechie. He and a local Beg, Yakut Bai, enjoy a monopoly of trade, which they carry on through the Ch[inese] Consular Agent at Almata (Vyerni) & 20 other agents, half of whom do [...] for the company at Vyerni while the other half accompany caravans. Cotton cloth, felts, cattle, horses & grain (in spite of the scarcity) are exported, being paid for in gold, silver and opium. The Bolos naturally encourage this trade & are on the best of terms with the Dao Tai, who dines every week at both the Consulate and the Comm[ercial] Mission.

The Whites.

Since the murder of Gen Dutov the 200 or 300 Whites in Ili have been without a leader and are gradually sinking into apathy and insignificance...

[*There is a separate section on Whites in Urumqi, concluding:*]

If the Bol[sheviks] do attempt to absorb N. Sinkiang, they will have to reckon with Annenkoff's men as well as with the Chinese.[74]

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[*The detail in the preceding report is impressive, even if at least some of it was inaccurate. Skrine's listing of his sources, and his various subsequent intelligence reports, which seem in the first instance to be based on his wide network of presumably unpaid informants, is interesting when juxtaposed to a document he drafted on 18 January 1923 in response to a request that he provide more details about the financial affairs of the consulate (in particular with reference to his accusations about malfeasance by Etherton). In that document (BL IOLR MS EurF154/39), he wrote that had Etherton in fact spent so much on his secret service agents, presumably those same agents would have come to Skrine for continued employment, but in fact few did. He goes on:*]

Only two such agents have I heard of, & the sums drawn by them are comparatively small. The fact is, that all sorts of intelligence used to be received regularly by Col. Etherton gratis, from anti-Bolshevik refugees, missionaries and others, while the British Aksakals at Kashgar, Yarkand, Tashkurgan, Aksu, Kulja & other places were, and are, employed in the collection of intelligence as part of their regular duties [...]

[*Skrine then specifies how much he calculated Etherton actually spent of the secret service allocation for the purposes for which it was intended. Etherton may indeed have exaggerated the importance of his network of paid agents. While complaining about the inadequacies of his budget and occasionally having to apologize for sending inaccurate information, Skrine may have tapped for better or worse pretty much the same sources as Etherton did.*]

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[*The amount of writing Skrine did in the middle of September 1922 is impressive, as he spent time with his official reports interspersed with letters home and to important colleagues. One of his correspondents was Aurel Stein, the famous explorer and*

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to flee to China, where he was assassinated in February 1921 by a Bolshevik agent (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_Dutov, last accessed 22 May 2016).

74. Boris Vladimirovich Annenkov, a leader (*ataman*) of the Siberian Cossacks, fought against the Red Army during the Civil War and in 1920 retreated with his men to Xinjiang. Gov. Yang's troops captured Annenkov and his force and in April 1921 shipped them off to be interred in Dunhuang at the Mogao Caves where the Russians defaced many of the murals. Skrine seems to have been unaware that in all likelihood by late 1922 Governor Yang had neutralized any threat from the White forces. See Jacobs 2016, pp. 59-61. In 1927, the warlord Feng Yuxiang handed Annenkov over to the Bolsheviks, who promptly executed him.

archaeologist, since Skrine had consulted with him about 'filling in gaps' in the mapping work Stein had done for the Survey of India and also hoped to document historic sites and perhaps acquire antiquities to supplement what Stein had done. Skrine's long letter to Stein, dated 17 September 1922, opens by responding to the issue of funding the re-burial of the long-time Chinese secretary of Stein's and the consulate's, Jiang Xiaowan (about which Stein had written on 4 July 1922) and then describes in some detail (the material duplicating a lot of what Skrine wrote to his mother) the travel up from India to Kashgar. This letter is is reproduced here with the permission of The Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, Stein MSS 107, fols. 47, 48, 49r,v, 50. As Stein noted in his letter to Skrine, Etherton had allocated Rs 600/- from consular funds for Jiang's re-burial. To his credit, Etherton had also noted at the end of his March 1922 diary the death of Jiang, which obviously would have been of concern to the Government of India regarding the staffing of the consulate. See the print copy of the diary in BL, IOLR L/P&S/10/976. On subsequent occasions Skrine served as an intermediary in Stein's communication with some of his local contacts in Xinjiang. See, for example, the correspondence in Bodleian MS Stein 95 between Stein and R. A. Lyall and George Gillan, Skrine's successors as consul. The interaction between Stein and Skrine continued, the former noting his meetings with Skrine in London and his appreciation for 'the excellent use he has made of his stay in Turkistan for researches in different directions' (letter to Gillan, 9 November 1925, fol. 24). Later, in 1933 and again in 1940-41, when Stein was planning travel in the Persian areas where Skrine worked, there were exchanges regarding maps and permits. See Bodleian MSS Stein 319 and 332.]

[*On letterhead of the consulate:*]

British Consulate-General, Kashgar
17.9.22

My dear Sir Aurel

Many thanks indeed for your letter of July 4th, with the cheque for Rs 300/- which has been duly cashed. Your generous contribution towards the expenses of the removal of old Chiang's body to Honan is much appreciated locally. I don't know when the removal is to take place – I gather that some time is usually allowed to elapse in such cases before the body is exhumed – but when it does take place I will let you know.

You will be glad to hear that my wife and I had a most pleasant and enjoyable journey up here, quite a picnic in fact. The worst part was from Astor to Gilgit, owing (a) to the famine (b) to the terrific heat of the Indus valley and the fact that we had to walk most of the way, as there was a great shortage of ponies. Once beyond Gilgit, however, the journey became more interesting & the country more wonderful at every stage. Hunza and Nagar beat anything I have ever seen. Never shall I forget the first sight of Rakaposhi, from near Chalt. The Mir of Hunza was very good to us and we spent three delightful days at Baltit, drinking in the amazing scenery of the place. We had bad weather for the Glaciers and beyond, but after Misgar it cleared up again & we had perfect weather for the Mintaka & most of the time in the Ch. Pamirs.

All the time in the Pamirs I had the vision of Shiwakte before me, and although the Vice Consul, Fitzmaurice, was shouting for me to come quickly as he wanted to go on leave, I determined to try the Karatash route if I possibly could. Alas, we could not get to Chimgan, though we made gallant efforts. You know the Yambulak-jilga? the valley to the North of Chichiklik-Maidan. It is marked in dotted lines in your last map, so I suppose neither you nor your surveyors went there. We did, and made a most interesting little detour. We left the Chichiklik Maidan by a high & snowy but quite easy pass called the Yangi Dawan, 16,100 ft. by my aneroid, & found ourselves at the head of the Yambulak valley. A beautiful lake, about 1 ½ m. x ½ m. lay at our feet, which I plotted in (very roughly with my compass, I'm afraid, there wasn't time to use the plane-table) & photographed. About 8 m. down the valley we came to a delightful Kirghiz camp of oldstanding – the old chief & his people have used Yambulak

as their 'yailāq' for many years, their 'qishlaq' being Toile Bulung where they have got cultivation.[75] We halted there 2 nights, my wife making great friends (as she always does on such occasions) with the picturesque & very pretty Kirghiz ladies. My idea was to cross the Merki Dawan into the Karatash Valley, so I did a reconnaissance up it to see if it was crossable. I found it was decidedly not crossable. It is not a pass at all, but a high steep ridge at the head of a shallow 'corrie' absolutely buried in snow, & very rocky. Thanks to our wonderful yaks, we struggled up (that is to say, the Kirghiz and I and a friend who was with me, not my wife) to 17,000 ft., the last 500 of which was on foot up a rocky & drift-covered slope of 45°, and gained the summit of the ridge which led up to the top of the main ridge. Thence we could, if it had only been fine, have had a magnificent view of Mustagh Ata & Kungur & the Shiwakte I was after, but alas, the sky was overcast. I saw enough of the Merki-dawan to realize that it was impossible to cross it, except perhaps on snow shoes, and that we would have to go round viâ Toile Bulung and over the Buramsal Pass. However, the Kirghiz were dead against our even attempting that, on account of the great height of the water in the upper Karatash Gorges. They said it was quite impossible to reach Chimgan – So there was nothing for it but to abandon the project. However it is only postponed: we are going up the Karatash next spring, before the water comes down, & I hope to have a week at Chimgan then.

We had magnificent clear sunny weather for all our 7 high passes, great luck. Our whole time in the Chnese Pamirs, except for the disappointment above Chimgan, was most delightful.

I need hardly tell you that we are overjoyed with Kashgaria in general & with Chini Bagh in particular. The time is passing only too quickly, it is hard to believe that we have been here nearly 2 months. Next week we go on the road again – a 2 months' tour to Uch Turfan & Aksu by the upper road, back to Maralbashi and after a week or so there, to Merket and back across the desert from the Yarkand river. We are going to ride the whole way, & avoid the beaten track as much as possible. I am particularly anxious to visit Kelpin, & intend to do some mild mapping in the neighbourhood, off the routes taken by you and your men. I am going to keep a sharp look-out for coins, pottery etc., & will send you or Sir John Marshall any thing of possible interest that I pick up.

Last Thursday was a red-letter day – "Serindia" arrived.[76] I have only had time as yet to read the part in Vol. III about Uch Turfan, Kelpin & Maralbashi, as we are going to those places so soon. Most of it I have read aloud to my wife, who is as keen as I am to follow in your footsteps – or near them. "Serindia" is a veritable mine of interest and of fascinating travel pictures, and we both look forward to a pleasant winter, after our return from Ak-su, immersed in it.

The only fly in our ointment here is the Vice Consul, Harding, who is taking Fitzmaurice's place for a year. A dreadful fellow & most unsuitable for a diplomatic job like this. Colossally conceited, boorish, tactless, aggressive and coarse, he has antagonized all the Chinese already & has caused relations between the Consulate & the yamen to be distinctly strained. I myself have some difficulty in keeping on friendly terms with him, & as for my wife, she simply can't bear the sight of him. This is a pity, as he is a wonderful Chinese scholar, & speaks it literally like a native. He has been for the last 10 years at the Legation, & it has spoiled him, evidently. His latest effort has been to assault and kick round the Consulate the wretched Chiang-tse-min [Jiang Zemin], son of your old friend, who was acting as

75. *Yailaq* and *qishlaq* are the Kyrgyz terms respectively for the summer and winter camps.

76. Stein's *Serindia* (1921), publishes the results of his expedition of 1906-1908 and remains a fundamental source for the study of the ancient 'Silk Roads'. It is impressive that Stein would have forwarded to Skrine these magnificent folio-size books so quickly.

temporary writer here in the evenings after Post-office hours (Chiang is a clerk in the P. O.). He annoyed Harding who quite unjustifiably boxed his ears & kicked him about. The Chinese of course are furious & half of my time during the last fortnight has been spent in talking and writing & trying to settle the matter – but Harding absolutely refuses to apologize to the Dao Tai even, & insists on the matter being referred to the Minister at Peking. A bad business altogether. It was bad enough, their letting Fitzmaurice go on leave at the same time as Etherton; but that I should be saddled with this fellow, who has only come here on a 'joy-ride' to write a book about it afterwards (he's got 20 years' service in the Chinese Consular Service, & is 5 years older than me!) is only too bad. I'd much rather have no Vice-Consul at all.

However, I won't bore you any longer with my troubles. I am very anxious to know how the matter of your journey to Balkh is progressing. It must be horribly tantalizing, being 'so near and yet so far', especially with that Frenchman in the field.[77]

I am taking the liberty of sending you a number of enlargements made by me here from negatives taken on the road up, which may interest you, and of asking you to send them on, after seeing them, to my people in London. I want to get them home, & I would also like you to see them, and this is the only feasible way it can be done. I am sending a board with the pictures to ensure their arriving undamaged, & enclosing packing materials, address and list so as to give you the minimum of trouble. My enlarging apparatus, in which I use an incandescent spirit lamp, came up viâ Leh in 3 months & got wet on the way, but, marvellous to relate, it is undamaged & in fine working order. The night before last I turned out 16 12' x 10" pictures, all successful, between dinner and midnight!

I have remembered you to several old Chinese friends of yours, including dear old Wang, who is now Hsien-kuan [*xianguan* 縣官, county magistrate] of the New City.[78] The latter says he has always regretted missing a last chance of meeting you; he arrived at Hami, or some such place, from one direction the same night as you arrived from the other, & didn't know you were there till afterwards.

My wife sends her kindest regards.

Yours sincerely,

C. P. Skrine

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[*The Turki lunch mentioned here was hosted by Umar Akhun, the same merchant mentioned in the trade report quoted above. On the 'assault case' involving Harding, see Skrine's letters to Aurel Stein dated 17 September (above) and to E. B. Howell dated 20 September, quoted below. I have omitted here most of a long section in this letter where Skrine writes about the likely engagement of Doris's sister Iris to an officer in the Indian Infantry, Noël Bunbury, whom he finds to be an unattractive (to put it mildly) match for her. Discussion of Iris and Bunbury appears frequently in subsequent letters.*]

Kashgar, 18 September 1922

Mr. Guaita left us on Sunday after over a fortnight's stay. We enjoyed having him very much [...]

Last week was nearly as trying as our first week owing to the feasts to which we were bidden in honour of Guaita. They ended with a vast 'dinner' in the Turki style at 1 o'clock yesterday at a beautiful garden outside the town, belonging to the wealthiest family in this place. Before lunch Gustafsson and

77. The reference here seems to be to the launching in 1922 of the Délégation Archéologique Française en Afghanistan, directed initially by Alfred Foucher.

78. Wang Changjun 王旭君, whose son Wang Min (王憫) would remember how his late father would recall fondly his time working for Stein (see Jacobs 2020, pp. 26, 144, on the latter citing this letter of Skrine's).

I walked round the orchards, & the fruit amazed me. I didn't know such pomegranates, figs, peaches of 3 or 4 kinds, pears & quinces could grow in Kashgar. Our gardener here at the Consulate is a mere cooly (Etherton sacked the good one we had in one of his tantrums 2 years ago) & our garden is in a miserable state; we actually have to buy fruit in the bazar. It is tantalizing seeing such lovely fruit in other gardens, & I am seriously thinking of importing a good India mali ('molly')[79] from Kashmir. Meanwhile I am getting another man from Yarkand who I hear is fairly knowledgeable.

[...] Guaita has made us a present of his old tarantass, a battered old vehicle, but one which, when done up, will do us well for dinners out and also when touring along main roads. We won't take it to Aksu, as we're going by the mountain route via Uch Turfan which is not fit for vehicles, but we may have it sent out to Maralbashi to meet us on our return. Have you ever been in a tarantass? They're a very practical sort of vehicle, a sort of basket slung on two long poles with 4 [*sic*] wheels at each end; you don't use seats. You just have straw and a mattress & pillows & make yourself comfortable in the bottom of the basket. The top can be made rain-proof and sun-proof, and you can travel & sleep and read in comfort through any weather and over any roads. The long poles which form the 'chassis' as it were, act as springs, & one isn't jolted much even on the 'roads' of Central Asia. Where it will come in very handy will be next spring when we go to Khotan & Yarkand.[80] The road is dead flat the whole way and all right for vehicles (tho' one has to dig oneself out of the sand of the Takla Makan every now and again) & the tarantass will save D. a lot of wearisome riding. It's for her I've taken it over; it has only cost me 24 taels or Rs. 65/- to have it repaired & repainted & re-hooded & as it is not necessary to keep driving horses (one can always hire horses here) the tarantass lets us in for very slight expenditure.

You ask about Harding. It will save me a lot of time, and you trouble in decyphering my scrawl if I enclose a copy of a private letter I have sent to Howell, the D[eputy] S[ecretary] (F[oreign]) at the Foreign Dept. Harding has moods. At times he's quite unendurable; at others he's as quiet & well behaved as a lamb. On the whole I detect an improvement. He could hardly disguise his contempt for the Indian Govt. in general, & for me as his Consul General in particular, when we first met, & worse still when we all arrived together at Ighiz Yar at the end of July. We understand each other better now, though, and he's much more 'to heel' than he was. I can understand, putting myself in his position, that it must be irksome, when you've been 20 years in the consular service & have often acted as Consul, & have spent the last 8 or 9 years in the Chancery of your Legation, to have to defer to & take orders from a man of another service with no experience of China and five years younger than yourself [...] [T]hings are a bit easier since I wrote the letter to Howell; but the assault case isn't settled yet. The latest is that I've asked the Dao Tai to bring the assaulted Post Office clerk to the Consulate tomorrow & we're going to have an informal pow-wow and 'enquiry' & let Harding give the Dao Tai his story direct.[81]

Your letters of 2nd & 9th Aug. both came yesterday, wonderfully quick work for the latter – 40 days! 12 of them from Misgar here. I think I've already told you about the Kashgar – Misgar – Gilgit dâk service, run by the Consulate. Our men take the mails to Misgar in 12 days, where special runners take it on in 4 days more to Gilgit, whence the Indian Postal Dept. takes it in 7 days to Srinagar. Even in winter, I believe, these men run wonderfully regularly.

Your letters are mostly about Bunbury and Iris [...] I've nothing whatever against Bunbury as a respectable subaltern in the Indian Infantry – he's above the average.[82] But as a husband for Iris – no.

79. Hindi *mali*, refering to a member of a caste which furnished gardeners.

80. For a photo of the tarantass taken by Skrine on their way to Khotan, see Fig. 94 below.

81. For more on this incident, see Skrine's letters to Stein (above) and to Howell (below).

82. Noël Louis St. Pierre Bunbury (1890-1971), a scion of the baronets Bunbury, was educated at the elite Royal Military

Great Scott! There are not many men living who are worthy of Iris [...] A more unromantic figure I never saw in a youngish man. [...] I can't believe she loves him, but he has no doubt got an Eastern glamour for her – much the same as I had for Doris! [...]

I must stop now. Very interested to hear about your interview with Sir H. Bax Ironside[83] & his advice about Persia. Don't worry – I haven't, for the last four years, had any idea of making a career of Persia. (For that matter I don't bother about making a career of anywhere). Persia to me is a holiday place, extraordinarily interesting from the topographical point of view, picturesque, romantic, a country in fact to go to on a joy-ride, not to work for several years in – Sir Henry only knows the Teheran side of it. I don't, & don't want to. The South & East is all I care about. There, I am convinced, there will before long be room for Britishers again; I look forward to officiating at Meshed, Sistan or Kerman again, when (as I hope) the pro-British reaction has set in in those parts [...]

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[*One of Skrine's closest confidants among his superiors, and a man who seems to have been very supportive, was Evelyn B. Howell (1877-1971), who had a distinguished career in the Indian Civil Service and at the time of this letter was the Deputy Foreign Secretary for the Government of India. (See James 1997, p. 450; Gilmour 2006, pp. 252, 268, 315). Howell was a serious reader and scholar, which may explain why Skrine felt they were on the same page in upholding the standards of the Indian Civil Service. The correspondence with Howell seems to have been quite frank; later we find Skrine including excerpts from it in his letters home that dealt with sensitive issues. Here we have an early sample, marked 'private,' dated 20 September 1922 (copy in BL, IOLR MS EurF 154/39). The litany of complaints about Harding infuses many of Skrine's subsequent letters. The incident with the Post Office clerk refers to Jiang Zemin, employed as well part-time as a Chinese secretary in the consulate. Skrine also wrote Stein about the incident involving the younger Jiang. See Bodleian Library, Stein MSS 107, fols 40r,v (Stein to Skrine, 4 July 1922), and 47, 49v (Skrine to Stein), 17 September 1922 (reproduced in full above). Entertaining even high officials visiting the consulate with what may seem to be childish games was apparently not unusual at British consulates elsewhere (see, e.g., Whewell, 2020, p. 82). Devising such entertainments at the Skrines' later postings in Persia was one of Doris's preoccupations. See also below Skrine's letter home of 28 February 1923, p. 265 below.*]

My Dear Howell,

I sent you off a long report last week about Bolshevism [*above – DW*], which I hope will be of use. I'm afraid I made rather an ass of myself over my telegrams of 8th and 24th August about Enver. My repetition of bazar 'gup' about Enver's capture of Jizzak and Cherniaveo must have appeared somewhat silly a fortnight later in India, long after the news of Enver's defeat and flight were public property. Being new to the place, I did not know that owing to the amount of propaganda of both sides flying about, rumour is even more of a lying jade in Turkestan nowadays than she is elsewhere.[84]

If you detect a falling off in the quality and quantity of the intelligence received from there compared with Ethertonian times, I hope you will make allowances and remember certain disadvantages under which I labour. In the first place, I have got very little S.S. money to play with; Etherton spent between

College, Sandhurst, and served with distinction in the British Indian Army during WWI and in subsequent campaigns. He was invested as a Companion of the Distinguished Service Order (DSO) in 1937. In WWII he was promoted to Brigadier and was an aide-de-camp to King George VI. Bunbury and Iris Whitelaw married on 29 November 1923; their son, David St. Pierre Bunbury was born on 26 July 1926 and died in 2013. I was fortunate to be able consult with him on the phone with questions about whether any of his mother's letters or possessions from the Kashgar years had survived her death in 1965.

83. Sir Henry Bax-Ironside (1859-1929), a British diplomat who served in various countries, including for a time in Persia (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_Bax-Ironside, last accessed 22 May 2016).

84. 'Rumour is a lying jade' was a widely known proverb.

13,000 and 14,000 last year, reappropriating largely and also using three or four thousand of the Kashgar mission money. Out of my allotment of 6,000 for this year 3,500/- had been spent by Etherton (who handed out 1,700 on this account in April before he left) and Fitzmaurice before I arrived. Knowing full well that it is no use expecting any more money of any kind out of Govt. this year, I have to economize, and can't afford the expensive agents Etherton and Fitzmaurice used to indulge in. In the second place, Etherton had a very useful, quiet, sensible, knowledgeable, loyal and self-effacing henchman in the shape of Fitzmaurice, who held the same views as Etherton about the Bolsheviks and most other things.

I've got Harding, who I am sorry to say is almost the exact reverse, and is more of a hindrance than a help at present. You saw him at Simla I think? He probably struck you as a wild and woolly Colonial, enormously conceited and opinionated, a born journalist who has undertaken this job simply as a stunt, for the sake of the copy afforded by a journey from Calcutta to Peking via Kashgar. He is all that, but he is more. He informs me at frequent intervals that he prides himself upon 'always saying what is in his mind' and being a 'man of action' – in other words, upon his intentional tactlessness and lack of consideration and his hot-tempered aggressiveness. I keep on good terms with him (essential in a place like this) only with difficulty, while as for my wife, she simply can't bear the sight of him; this doesn't matter so much, what is more important is that he has put all the Chinks' backs up and has made himself as unpopular as Fitzmaurice was popular. Needless to say, though my personal relations with the Dao Tai etc. are of the best, this makes difficulties for the Consulate which wouldn't otherwise exist. His latest effort has been to box the ears of a Chinese Post Office clerk who annoyed him, and kick him round the compound in full view of the Consulate staff. It must have been extraordinarily funny, and I would give anything to have seen it, but the consequences are not at all funny. The Chinese are furious and are making no end of an international affair out of it, wiring to the Governor and bombarding me with despatches and giving me no end of trouble generally. I'm working hard for a settlement and a reconciliation, and have been partially successful in pacifying the Chinese, but Harding makes it difficult by insisting that he was in the right and refusing to apologize. I'll have to send the whole thing to Peking, but it's a confounded nuisance and if Harding wasn't five years older than I am and considerably heavier, I'd d__d well box <u>his</u> ears for him.

All this is bad enough, but there's worse to come. What do you think about Harding being a convinced pro-Bolshevik?! He is. He has one of those 'minority minds' which are such a nuisance, added to which he is a Canadian and therefore has a profound contempt for the British point of view. He went for a motor joy-ride last year to Urga[85] in what used to be Chinese Manchuria (but is now of course a Republic under Soviet 'protection'). At Urga the Bolos [Bolsheviks – *DW*] got to him in their own inimitable way, flattered him to the top of his bent and filled him up with all sorts of Communist flapdoodle, which he retails here whenever he gets a chance. Pretty sort of Vice Consul to have here, isn't he? I simply can't trust him with intelligence work, while as for propaganda, for all I know he propagandizes the other way – he certainly won't help matters if he talks to the Chinese, as he does to me, about 'my friends the Bolsheviks'.

I hope I haven't bored you with all this? Please don't think I am grousing about the job – far from it. I am awfully keen on it. Kashgar and Chinese Turkestan are absorbingly interesting and I wouldn't mind being here for years (but not with Harding!). My wife and I are off next week on a two months' tour to various places which no C.G. has been to for many years, and are looking forward to it immensely, also

85. Today, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. Skrine's 'Manchuria' is odd to say the least.

to more touring next spring. On these tours, by the way, I shall have for reasons given above to keep the intelligence work and diaries in my own hands, so I hope that you'll make allowances and excuse any shortcomings in this line. One must tour in this job.

My wife I'm glad to say is very fit and is enjoying it all as much as I am. She knows all the Chinese, Turki, Swedish missionary and Russian 'burra-mems' in the place already, and is continually exchanging strange hen-feasts with them. She has taught the wives of the Mandarins 'Up Jenkins' and 'Blow the Feather' and such games, to their enormous delight. The husbands have taken to these games too, and after our last official dinner-party we played them most uproariously. I never saw such a funny sight in my life as the fat old Taoyin with his cheeks bursting, puffing away at a feather six inches from his nose, and the Commander-in-Chief of the local forces making frantic efforts to grab it over his shoulder! My wife, who was the first Captain of the Girl Guides at Quetta, is also striving to implant the principles of Boy Scoutism and Girl Guidism into the swarms of Consulate children. She has at any rate taught the boys cricket, if nothing else. She sends you her best regards.

Hope you're keeping fit and that the labours of the Secretariat are not unduly palling.

[*handwritten in margin:*] P. S. Since typing the above, I have seen Harding's sister Miss Stan Harding's article in the "Nineteenth Century" for July about her experiences in Soviet Russia.[86] You may have read it. She was a pro-Bolo like H. when she went to Moscow as correspondent of the New York "World" armed with recommendations & invitations from high Soviet officials. They imprisoned her on the merest suspicion in the dreaded 'Lubianka' directly she arrived & kept her in solitary confinement in a venomous cell on starvation diet for months. You can imagine how she writes about the Bolos now. But do you suppose this shakes her brother's faith? Not a bit of it. He says the Bolos were justified in imprisoning her, & that her experiences have unhinged her mind on the subject of Soviet Russia!

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[*Skrine's official diary for September is full of information about various Chinese measures directed at making life difficult for the British subjects, curbing their rights, etc. While he indicates he registered strong protests, he also was of the opinion that they would do no good in getting any of the policies changed. This prompted J. A. Simpson, the regular first reader of the Kashgar reports when they arrived in London, to note on the covering minute sheet:* 'It may be a case of the fallacy "post hoc propter hoc" to say so, but it certainly seems desirable that Lt. Col. Etherton should shortly return to Kashgar'. *The implication here seems to be that Etherton would be able to bring the Chinese to heel, whereas Skrine could not and may, by his weakness, have invited problems. It seems as though Etherton's stock in the India Office in London was still high. Another comment, by a Mr. Biggane, on an item in Skrine's report regarding Ottoman Turks in Kashgar whom Skrine suspected of working for the Bolsheviks, indicates Etherton claimed the individuals in question* 'are harmless and have been in Kashgar for a good may years'. *See BL IOLR L/P&S/10/976, p. (227). The September diary also included interesting information on trade, viz.*:]

In connection with a complicated settlement of accounts case recently brought up by two Afghans of Yarkand holding British registration certificates, His Majesty's Consul-General elicited from the parties statements which throw an interesting light upon the routes by which the opium traffic is carried on

86. See the vividly documented book by Melanie King (2024), for the saga of how Harding's sister, Constance (better known as Stan) (1884-?1962), ended up in the infamous Lubianka prison in Moscow and spent decades proclaiming loudly her innocence and blaming her one-time acquaintance Marguerite Harrison for denouncing her to the Cheka. What Skrine says about her brother's judgment of Stan presumably in part reflects the Vice Consul's concern that her notoriety would undermine his career. However, Skrine at the same time may be unfairly tarring Harold Harding as pro-Bolshevik. Betrand Russell met Harold Harding in China in 1920 and was 'shocked' by his 'indifference to his sister's experiences in Russia', regarding her (accurately, it would seem) 'as a tiresome person always getting into some mess or another' (ibid., p. 209). I am grateful to Ms. King for responding to my queries about Harding.

between Afghanistan and China. The defendant, Khan Mohammad, who appears to have acted as agent for the plaintiff, Said Amin, proceeded as follows:

(1) He took a large quantity of Chinese silver from Kashgar via Drosh (Chitral) to Peshawar.

(2) With this silver he bought rupees in Peshawar and took them to Jallalabad.

(3) At Jallalabad he bought Kabulis and took them to Badakshan where he met the plaintiff by arrangement.

(4) At various places in Badakhshan the parties bought opium and brought it to Yarkand.

Details as to the exact route used by the opium smugglers from Badakhshan to Kashgar have been obtained from an Afghan, named Sher Ali, who was caught by the Chinese at Tashmalik in August. At His Majesty's Consul-General's request the Taoyin sent this man to the Consulate-General for examination. He proved to have left Faizabad about the middle of July, and to have travelled via Ishkashim, Laugar, Kala-i-Panja, the Little Pamir, the Great Pamir and Rangkul to Tashmalik. In this connection it may be noted that the Government of Badakhshan recently instituted small military posts at Bozai Gumbas and Minara on the Little Pamir. These posts are ostensibly for the collection of:

(i) Customs duty on charas from Yarkand.[87]

(ii) Customs duty on calico and country cloth.

(iii) Tax on sheep belonging to the Kirghiz.

(iv) Tax on grain produced by the Wakhis.

The posts may or may not also have a connection with the opium trade. The Chinese Mission returning from Kabul [...] sent a message early in the month to the Amban of Sarikol regarding the prohibition of the export of opium from Afghanistan to China, and the Amban ordered all the Begs of Sarikol to exercise a strict watch on the frontier and bring to notice any cases of opium smuggling detected by them [...]

There is now a steady though thin stream of trade with Ferghana via Sungak. The caravans from Kashgar do not enter Russian territory but dump their goods at the frontier, where traders from Ferghana take them over on payment in gold and newly-minted silver roubles, jewelry, etc. The Chinese wink at this flagrant defiance of their own orders; no doubt it is made worth their while to do so. For example, Umar Akhun Bai, the wealthiest trader in Kashgar, recently returned from Sungak with a tiara containing 200 diamonds; this tiara is known to be now in the hands of the Hsieh Tai (Officer Commanding Kashgar), who paid a quite inadequate price for it. It is curious that the Sungak route is the only one on which this trade is carried on; nothing is passing either by the ordinary Irkeshtam route or by the Turug Art. Umar Akhun himself informed His Majesty's Consul-General that on an average 600 sheep, 30–40 bales of cotton cloth, and two or three pony-loads of die stuffs are exported weekly, also a certain amount of Indian tea, spices and muslin. The average price fetched by a sheep at the frontier is eight gold roubles; the exchange value of a gold rouble is now 12 tengas (Rs. 1-14-0) and one of the new silver roubles 8.8 tengas (Rs. 1-6-0). On the Farghana side the trade is being carried on unknown to the Soviet authorities.

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87. According to Wikipedia (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charas), 'Charas is a cannabis concentrate made from the resin of a live cannabis plant [...] The plant grows wild throughout Northern India along the stretch of the Himalayas (its putative origin) and is an important cash crop for the local people [...] [It] has been used across the Indian subcontinent for medicinal and religious purposes for thousands of years'.

Kashgar, 24 September 1922

Behold me fulfilling the unfamiliar rôle of sick-nurse! Doris is having an unpleasant, tho' not serious, 'go' of gastro-enteritis or mild inflammation of the stomach due to a chill she got on that organ a week ago. She's very naughty about going to bed when she's ill & the first day I couldn't get her to lie up; next day she had bad indigestion pains and vomiting. This is the 7th day, & according to Dr. Yelavenko she'll have another 6 or 7 days of it. The Doctor seems to know all about it, & as her temperature is practically normal and her pulse strong & she's not even very pale or thin (tho' she hasn't digested anything for a week), I'm not anxious. Until I got Yelavenko in & found what it was, I <u>was</u> anxious, very. Had a beastly time in fact. But now it's all right otherwise I wouldn't be writing to you about it!

One has to be married – or at any rate love somebody very much – to realize how <u>much</u> worse it can be to see someone else in pain & distress than to be in pain & distress oneself... All I ask is, <u>don't please</u> write to her about it or give her any advice about not getting chills, always going to bed when she feels ill, etc. It only infuriates her and does no good. As a matter of fact, she won't need any advice on these points after this – she's had a jolly good lesson.

26 September 1922 evening. D. is doing well, the doctor's very pleased with her progress. But she's been having a bad time with vomiting & retching & general upset. It's made worse by the fact that she's a bundle of nerves & doesn't stand pain or oppressive sensations well – they literally 'get on her nerves'. She still can't take food. The only nourishment she's had during the last 3 days being a few coffee-cups full of coffee and milk, a couple of cupfuls of soup and a dose of Benger's Food.[88] Yelavenko is very good, quite as knowledgeable and efficient as most British doctors one comes across in India. He speaks only a little Turki, & conversation would be difficult at his visits were it not for the kindness of M. Nazaroff another refugee whom I think I have mentioned to you as being our best friend in Kashgar. He comes round every visit with Yelavenko and translates & is generally helpful. Yelavenko when he first saw D. on Sunday night, prescribed tincture of mint for her vomiting; we had none here. Yelavenko had none, but Nazaroff if you please had the stuff! It did D. a lot of good that night and saved her a lot of retching.

Nazaroff's history is interesting; he was a well-to-do geologist at Tashkent before the revolution, & when the Bolsheviks came he refused to join them. He secretly organized anti-Bolshevik forces in Ferghana, was betrayed and had to fly for his life. He dodged round Semirechia and Ferghana, & finally slipped over the Kugart pass to the north of this into Chinese territory, with the Bolos hard on his heels. The Governor of this province didn't want him given an asylum here (afraid of giving the Bolos a handle, I suppose) & ordered the Taoyin to send him back; but Etherton fought for him & got the Taoyin to disobey the Governor's orders. There was a row about it, and even now Nazaroff's presence in Kashgar isn't officially recognized; alone of the Russians he is never asked to the Chinese official dinners (he doesn't worry!). Poor man, he was totally without news of his wife, who remained in the hands of the Bolos at Tashkend, until a month ago when a secret service agent whom Fitzmaurice had sent over the border in June returned with news that she was safe near Tashkend. Yesterday, better still, Nazaroff received, through our Consulate dâk, 2 letters from his wife – & how do you think they had come? Through Londonderry of all places!! A Mrs. Kennedy, whom the Nazaroffs know & who lives at Londonderry, has acted as go-between. I was surprised that you could post a letter across from end

88. A wheat-based powder food supplement containing proteins (pancreatic enzymes) to aid the digestion, often given to children or invalids with stomach upsets. For details see: http://www.wartimehousewife.com/2010/03/a-bit-of-a-pick-me-up/, last accessed 22 May 2016.

to end of Soviet Russia & then to a foreign country like that.

This week I am sending you viâ Dr. Stein a considerable number of what I think you will agree are rather fine enlargements of photos taken en route here. I particularly want Sir Aurel, who was so kind at Delhi & Srinagar and very appreciative of my photography, to see the pictures, & the best way of letting him see them early is for him to look at them & then send them on to you. I am therefore packing them on a board, with cover addressed to you enclosed, & sending them to him this mail in Kashmir. You ought to get them about 3 weeks after receipt of this. After you have shown them to everybody you want to show them to, Uncle George and Aunt Ethel particularly of course, you might send them round to Miss Ella Sykes & ask her whether any of them would be of any use to the Central Asian Society, or to the Geographical [...]

We were to have started yesterday on our Aksu trip, but that's off of course. I intend to do it next spring instead. As soon as D's recovered & quite strong again, & the doctor recommends it, I'm going to take her by easy stages up to a place 10,000 ft. up in the Karatash Valley, under the E. face of Kungur, called Chimgan. It is the place I tried to get to on the way here, but failed. Apparently October is the only month you can get there, owing either to snow (in winter & spring) or to the height of the Karatash River (in summer). From Chimgan I hope to survey and photograph the East face of Kungur & a part of the Kungur–Mustagh Ata system called Shiwakte, which has never been even seen by any European, even Stein. D. will have a health-giving little holiday at Chimgan while I'm exploring & then we will cross a 13,500 ft. pass called the Ghijak and travel along pleasant hill paths to Yarkand, where I have a lot of work to do & Khotan, where I have a little work and a lot of play in the way of collecting jade, rugs, brass and antiques from the 'Sand-buried Ruins' written of by Stein.[89]

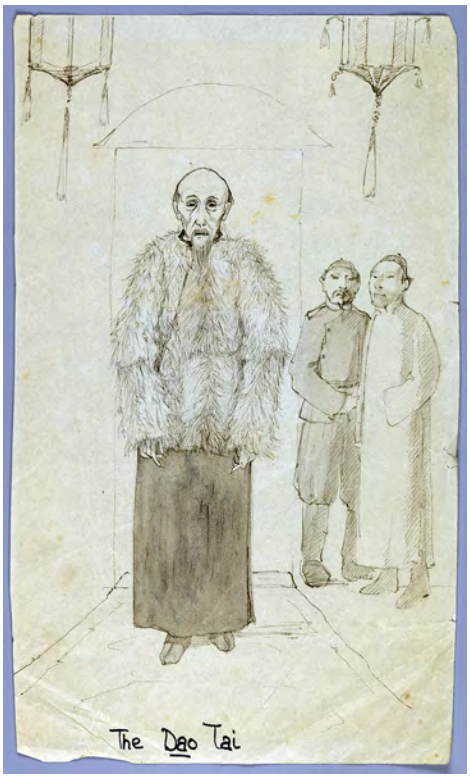


*Fig. 73. Doris Skrine's drawing of the Dao Tai (*daoyin*), presumably the Hsü of Skrine's letter (from the British Library Collection: IOLR MSS EurF 154/54).*

The long-expected blow came this morning – our Taoyin, Chu, who has been Taoyin of Kashgar for nearly 6 years & whose friendliness & good sense have been invaluable to the Consulate, was replaced by an opium-sodden, weak, obstinate and anti-foreign old fool called Hsü [Xu Guozhen], late Taoyin of Aksu [*Fig. 73*]. The latter has been here in deputation for some time, & everyone knew that sooner or later he would replace Chu, whose honesty and impartiality were the cause of a serious quarrel with the Governor of Urumchi recently.[90] The Governor's brother [Yang Zengbing

89. The reference here is to Aurel Stein's 'popular' account of his first major expedition, whose results he also would detail in a multi-volume report: M. Aurel Stein, *Sand-buried ruins of Khotan: Personal narrative of a journey of archaeological & geographical exploration in Chinese Turkestan* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1903).

90. The Governor at Urumqi, frequently is mentioned in the letters and reports, was Yang Zengxin 楊增新, who held the post from 1912 to his assassination in 1928. The governor during the revolution in China was Yuan Dahua 袁大化, who fought the revolutionaries to a standstill before finally resigning in April 1912. Yuan first recommended the then daoyin of Kashgar to replace him as governor, but he was assassinated by the Gelaohui before he could reach Urumqi. In order that he could get out of the province with his head intact, Yuan hastily recommended Yang Zengxin. Yang got the job in May 1912 (not in 1911 as sometimes is asserted). Skrine's interpretation of the policies of the Chinese regarding events in Ili reflect a very limited understanding of the policies of Governor Yang in Urumqi.

楊增炳] is Amban of Faizabad, which is a district under the Kashgar Taoyin, & recently this fellow did something wrong which Chu told him off for – he complained to his brother the Gov[..]r & the latter has determined to replace Chu ever since. The latter's being very friendly to us is against him of course. The Gov[erno]r like most up-country mandarins loathes & fears all foreigners. As for the new Taoyin, I don't mind his being anti-British, so long as he's also anti-Bolshevik; & that I'm more than doubtful about. It was he, as Taoyin of Ili in the N. of the province, who in 1920 made the fatal Commercial Agreement with the Soviet which enabled them to establish themselves firmly in Ili, with the result that their influence is now permanent, and the country is ripe for revolt against the Chinese – & that will mean nothing but its dropping like a ripe plum into the mouths of the Bolsheviks. Will he try the same game on here? is the question. Etherton (by judicious self-advertisement) collected no end of credit during his four years here for keeping the Bolsheviks out of Kashgaria; it wasn't he, of course, who kept them out, it was Chu Taoyin's good sense and cleverness which kept them at bay in 1920 when they made a determined bid for a Commercial Agreement. If Hsü had been Taoyin here, Etherton or no Etherton, he'd have concluded the same sort of agreement with the Ferghana Bolsheviks as he actually did in Ili with the Semirechian ones. If Tashkend have another try now, as they probably will when they see Hsü here, and the latter refuses to have them, it won't be my doing (tho' you may bet your boots I'll do all I can in the way of persuasion) it will be the Governor at Urumchi who has seen what has happened in Ili & fears a repetition in the case of Kashgar. That's what I'm praying for.

Whether the Bolos come or not, I foresee endless trouble with this old opium-smoker – no more straight dealing & friendly arrangements such as we always used to have with Chu. Etherton, lucky devil, had Chu as Taoyin from beginning to end of his 4 years here. Now, 2 months after I come, we get this fellow. Pretty sickening luck [...]

Thursday night 28th Sept. D. is ever so much better – on the high road to recovery in fact [...] The photos I spoke of have gone to Sir Aurel, 37 enlargements and 5 postcards [...]

If I haven't already sent the message, please thank Father very much for Varesi's book on Umar Khayyam.[91] Talking of books, I've picked up here the most priceless illustrated and illuminated manuscript book of stories in verse, in Turki translated from the Persian of the 'Panj Ganj'.[92] It is beautifully written with a double title page of the most exquisite illumination you ever saw, & has 30 coloured pictures, each an absolute gem in itself. The stories are most love stories, Laila and Majnun etc., & in one of them a succession of idyllic tea-parties à deux is depicted each in a different colour as a setting for the idyll. In one the pair are clad in vermilion, sit before vermilion fruits (pomegranate, apples etc.) with vermilion buildings and a ruddy glow over everything; in another they are in white before a white table, in a white marble courtyard with white marble cupolas, & so on. Seven different coloured teaparties are shown one after the other, each exquisitely carried out. The drawing & painting is really first class, up to the standard of the lovely postcards you have been sending me from the Br. Museum exhibition (for which many thanks by the way). The other book I have got is not illustrated, but is even more beautifully & minutely written (in Persian), & dates if you please from the year 843 Hijra or 1463 A.D.!! And what do you think I paid for these two books, both of which are absolutely and unmistakably genuine, & probably unique? The equivalent in Kashgar currency of £ 5 and £ 3-7s. respectively!!

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91. Presumably Masud Ali Varesi, *'Umar Khayyám* (London: K. Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1922).

92. The *Panj Ganj* or *Khamsa* was a widely known and illustrated collection of poems by Nizami, the 12th-century Persian poet known for his verse epics (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nizami_Ganjavi, last accessed 22 May 2016).

Kashgar, Tuesday, 3 October 1922

Doris is quite recovered and is already up and about [...]

She's made such a good recovery that I have definitely fixed on next Tuesday the 10th Oct. for starting on our tour. It's going to be 'some' tour. We make straight for the mountains, as I am particularly anxious to get up the Karatash Valley under the East face of Mt. Kungur and October is the only month in the whole year in which it is possible. Winter and spring it is blocked with ice and snow, summer it is impassible owing to the height of the water in the Karatash Gorges. Stein is the only European who has ever been through those gorges & that was in October; he went down, crossing the Karatash Pass (between Kungur and Mustagh Ata) from the Russian Pamirs side. We are going up and so will be semi-pioneers. Apart from that I want to do what Stein could not do, I suppose because he was short of time: I want to climb the heights to the W. of the Karatash valley and get a view of the Shiwakte range, part of the Kungur system, which has never been seen by European eyes, also of the E. face of Kungur itself. No maps or photographs of the E. face of Kungur exist, & it should be very interesting. Kungur is 25,000 odd feet high, & looks it. In the long narrow panoramic view of the Consulate with the snows behind, Nos. 36 & 37 of the enlargements I am sending you through Sir Aurel, the great mass of snow on the extreme left of the range is Kungur. [*Fig. 74*]



Fig. 74. Skrine made several attempts to capture a panorama of Kashgar against the dramatic backdrop of the snowcapped mountains from across the Tuman River. This image provides a sense of the photo to which he refers here though the image may not be the same panorama. He frequently complained about the dust haze, which obscured the mountains. (After: L'Illustration*, 23 October 1926, No. 4363, p. [449]).*

I propose to take 5 easy marches to get to Chimgan, 10,250 ft. up the Karatash Valley, & there we will camp for 4 days. In the bracing mountain air D. will get very fit, it is just what she wants, a holiday in the hills & a change of air after 2 ½ months of the most trying time in the year at Kashgar, the late summer and Autumn. Everybody gets ill here in the autumn they say, tummy troubles due to the sudden changes in temperature, nothing serious. All the rest of the year, they say, including the winter, is very healthy.

After Chimgan we will have a 13,500 ft. pass to cross, the Ghijak Pass, after which we cross the route from Tash-Kurghan by which we came the other day and proceed in 3 or 4 easy marches to Yarkand. I have a great deal of work to do there, as also at Posgam, Kargalik & Goma, neighbouring towns on the Khotan road. However, I hope to get to Khotan (5 marches beyond Goma) early in November. Khotan of course is where the jade comes from, also lovely brass & copper pots and a special kind of rug. It is a nice place & I would like to stay there a week, but I shall have to leave Doris there after 2 or 3 days stay and make a dash by myself to Keriya, 103 m. further eastward across the edge of the desert. It is 5 marches, but I shall dâk horses and do it in 2 days & 1 night, stop 1 day at Keriya and come back in the

same manner. About the most important case we have got on between British subjects and the Chinese Govt. is at Keriya, a land case involving elaborate boundary-demarcation which there is nothing for it but to do myself on the spot. If the Br[itish] representative (aqsaqal – 'white' beard) there were on good terms with the Ch[inese] authorities I might leave it to him, but unfortunately he isn't, & I must try & reconcile him and the Amban of Keriya. There are 2 other important cases too. D. is already howling at the idea of being left behind at Khotan for 5 days, & secretly intends to 'wangle' accompanying me to Keriya, but she won't. 206 m. in 5 days would half kill her with fatigue, even if done partly in the tarantass.

On the way back from Khotan I shall have to put in another 3 or 4 days at Yarkand to finish my work there, and then I'm going to take a holiday & tour right down the Yarkand River to Maralbashi, 8 marches. There won't be any work worth speaking of at Maralbashi, but the more a British C[onsul] G[eneral] tours the better, and from our point of view the shooting will be worth going a long way for. Shaw's Pheasant abounds down the Yarkand River, especially near Merket, and Maralbashi is a great sporting locality – the Maralbashi Stag, the M[aralbashi] Tiger, the wild boar for which its jungles are famous – to say nothing of pheasants and duck and snipe galore! A paradise for a naturalist, by the way. We ought to be able to spare 4 or 5 days at Maralbashi & then back to Kashgar, 5 marches, in time for Xmas. That's the idea. I can tell you we're looking forward 'some' to getting out on to the road again. The weather's perfect at present, clear bright and warm, with bracingly cool nights.

When we return, there'll be skating to look forward to, in our own garden! I've converted a plot of grass 40 yards by 30 in our lower garden into a skating rink – tremendous innovation! Earth work is extraordinarily cheap here, and a 'bund' of an average height of 2 ft. has only cost me about 50 rupees. Water is unlimited & free; the only drawback is that it dries up in winter & we will have to put the water into the pond once and for all sometime in Nov., before the supply ceases. So everything depends on getting a good surface of ice to begin with. Unfortunately, we shan't be here when the hard frost sets in, early in Dec., & I must leave it to the gardeners; but the pond is well sheltered by trees, and I see no reason, if they don't muddle the water, why we shouldn't find a regular 'English black ice' surface when we come back. Once formed, I will be able to renew the surface by bringing water on donkeys from the river (in which spring water flows all through the winter) & splashing it over the ice. We ought to get 2–2 ½ months' skating clear. It'll make all the difference getting regular exercise throughout the winter, & apart I ought to make good progress towards passing my 2nd test for the N[ational] S[kating] A[ssociation] – one of the ambitions of my life! [...]

No, the occasional titbits of news from Turkestan appearing in the "Pi" are not sent by me.[93] The Associated Press have an agent who frequents the Foreign Dept. & he is allowed to see such reports as the F[oreign] & P[olitical] want him to see, & I suppose he sees mine among others. I don't send anything to the press direct – it would never do. À propos, don't let any journalists get hold of the photos I send you, or of any information in letters or the diary I'm sending you shortly. I'm sending you a few more enlargements by the way, this week or next, direct. I wish I could share with you some of the fruit we are getting now! I never saw such fruit even in Kerman or at Quetta. The super-melons are over, but the peaches (large & luscious, at 3 a penny!) & the grapes beat anything they have here, besides muscatels & enormous black grapes & all the ordinary kind, a very large pinky-green grape I never saw elsewhere, which is extraordinarily pretty to look at, as well as delicious eating. Today is bright

93. The 'Pi' is *The Pioneer*, one of the two oldest English-language newspapers still published in India and which in Skrine's time would have had subscribers in Britain. The paper then was published in Allahabad.

& almost hot, the hum of bees and flies is in the air, not a leaf has fallen from the trees – it's hard to believe that it is 4th October! I do wish you could see Kashgar in October. I'm doing my best to give you a good idea of it by photographs, & will be able to send you another large batch of enlargements later on, when we return from tour.

***

[*I have not found a copy of the diary referred to here, which presumably was a source for Skrine's description of his travel up to Kashgar later published in CCA, even if in severely truncated form, since the publisher demanded he cut a lot of his long text. Given his later disappointment with the lack of any appreciative response from home about the diary, and assuming he continued to rewrite it for the book, he may have discarded the original text.*]

Camp Yapchan, 12 October 1922

I am sending you this week by registered post 16 ½ closely typed pages of Diary from Gilgit 19 June 1922 up to our departure from Tashkurghan, 9 July 1922. The remainder of the diary is also ready in a corrected draft form, & I meant to send it you with the other, but in the hurry of leaving Kashgar yesterday I stupidly put it in a drawer instead of into the envelope. I am having it sent after me & will send it to you next mail. Will you see if you can get it typed in continuation of the lot I've done, & send me the bill? [...] When the complete diary is typed up [...], have the whole thing duplicated, & send a copy to N[orth] B[erwick]. Then they can keep it & send it round to the aunts, etc. [...] I hope the diary will reach you about the same time as the 37 enlargements. I am by the way sending you 7 or 8 more enlargements, & a few contact prints, direct this week. One of the latter is a rather nice post-card size one of the Consulate-General. Nobody has ever taken this particular view before. I discovered it myself. It is easily the best view there is of the C. G. [...]

We had a strenuous morning yesterday getting our caravan off, 7 camels. They were off by 12, & D. and M. Nazaroff, the Russian geologist I have often told you of, went off in the tarantass at 3. I followed at half past on a horse, having work in office to finish up to the last possible moment. We came 27 miles here first march, pretty good. D. & M. Nazaroff were very comfortable in the old tarantass, which is a great success. We send it back to Kashgar today & go on on horseback to Altunluk 25 m. across country at the mouth of the Karatash Valley. I do hope we get up the latter all right – it depends on the water. Nazaroff, poor old dear, is beaming all over at getting out into the hills – it's the first time he's been out on any sort of expedition since he came as a refugee to Kashgar 2 years ago. He's laden with geological tools of all kinds & is going to have a great time in the unexplored mountains we're going to. It was rather a good idea asking him to come, for apart from doing the old thing a good turn he is an interesting talker in his slow bookish English or French.

I write on the guests' seat in the mihmānkhāna [guest house – *DW*] of the yuzbashi's (= Indian 'lambardar') house in this village, the 1st stage in the Yakand road. It is a fine big room with a skylight & 4 solid carved wooden pillars in the middle. It has a fireplace with a real chimney, unlike Persian houses of the kind, & altogether D. & I were quite comfortable here last night. As the camels were late we had no dinner, supping off bread and tinned soup. Nazaroff occupied a room which had been hastily vacated by the ladies of the house, apparently – for although we had given the Chinese ample notice that we wanted a house at this place, they hadn't done anything, & the local Beg had to get this house ready for us after our arrival at 8:30 last night.

The last camel is just being loaded & we must push the tarantass off to Kashgar & start ourselves. I'll get a letter to you next week somehow, from the mountains.

***



Fig. 75. Schematic map of Skrine's planned route to the Karatash, inscriptions overlaid on Google Earth satellite image.

Campar, Yangi Hissar District, 24 October 1922

I'm so sorry to have missed a mail, but it wasn't my fault. We have been very much in the wilds, exploring unknown and unsurveyed mountain country of the wildest possible kind – and the dâk bundobust I arranged apparently didn't work, for it is now 13 days since we left Kashgar and no runner has reached us. I ordered that one of the Gilgit 'dâkchies' should come up the Karatash Valley after us with our letters & take away ours for the mail – but no one found his way after us. Now we have come out onto the plain again and tomorrow morning a local man takes this to Yangi Hissar, whence the Aksakal will forward it to Kashgar in time for the mail. [*Fig. 75*] We have had a most thrillingly interesting time exploring the wild Karatash valley & the even wilder glens going up from it towards mighty Kungur. Our second night out from Kashgar, the 12th, we spent [in] a delightful village called Akhtur Bazar perched on the banks of the Karatash River, there a smiling stream of the plains, beneficent & placid – very different from the roaring grey-green flood we were to see later. A charming & most hospitable Turki gentleman entertained us at his comfortable house, where we had the run of our teeth among some of the most delicious peaches and grapes I have ever eaten, even at Kashgar. There is an interesting ruined walled-town dating from Arab days (circ. 9th century) close by, also perched most effectively on the river-bluffs. From Akhtur we marched through rich cultivation and among prosperous-looking farms to Altunluk, a village full of poplars & walnut-trees at the mouth of the Karatash Valley. There we camped in the garden of a farmer who as usual in this hospitable country, put his house & garden at our disposal. Thence we marched 22 miles up the wide stony valley of the Karatash river, fording it once only, & reaching Saman, our 4th halting place, just after sunset. We made a fire & some tea for ourselves in the open, there being only a couple of uninhabited huts at the place, until the camels came up and our tents could be pitched. Ahead of us now towered mighty snows, the peaks which are like courtiers to their lord, Kungur, and which also hide him pretty effectively unless one is far enough away to see him over their heads. We had our first taste of cold at this camp – in the morning the sun not rising



Fig. 76. Detail from the map of Skrine's explorations in the Kongur Alps, drawn by the Survey of India cartographers on his return to Dehra Dun. The focus here is on the region encompassing the Kaying Valley, which he first visited in October 1922. (Source: foldout map appended to Skrine's article in GJ *1925a.)*

above the high sides of the valley till 9:30, a cold wind was blowing and we found our sponges and basins frozen hard. [*Fig. 76*] Our next march was to Kaying Aghzi ('mouth of the Kaying' [glen]), not long but distinctly difficult. The road lay almost continuously over the stones and boulders of the river banks, & the swift, relentless green flood had to be crossed 8 or 9 times. The reason why the Karatash River is practically unknown is that while in winter and spring it is blocked with ice and snow, in summer the river swollen by melting snows & the increased volume of the glacier-streams makes the passage of baggage animals up or down impossible. Only the Kirghiz find their way along appalling 'paths' along the cliff faces, tracks which make you dizzy merely to look at them from below. Once I noticed, high up on an apparently sheer, smooth-faced precipice a tree-trunk which looked as if it had been glued to the rock-face. I was wondering how on earth it had got there, when the Beg who accompanied us told me that it had been placed there by Kirghiz to help them over a bad bit in summer! The last few miles of the march were through the Tügene Tar, a nasty bit of winding gorge down which an icy wind swept continually. The river was only just fordable, it being mid-October; a fortnight earlier we would not have got as far as we did. [*Fig. 77*] As it was, we had to give up our idea of penetrating right up to Chimgan, 10,250 ft. up & a flourishing Kirghiz settlement of the same kind as Yambulak where we stayed on the way up from India; the march between Kaying Aghzi and Chimgan we found to be quite impossible even for ridden horses, such was the force of the stream. We were too early, the Kirghiz told us, it was not possible for animals to get up to Chimgan till November or early December. The river is crossed 16 times in this section, and the wall[s] of the gorge many thousand feet high, almost meet overhead in some places. I therefore abandoned my idea of going to Chimgan and thence over the Ghijak Dawan to Ighiz Yar, and decided to explore the unknown country from below the great gorge instead of from above it. This meant more climbing, but warmer camps – which for D.'s and Nazaroff's sakes, I was inclined to think



Fig. 77. A cantilever bridge over the roaring Karatash at Kaying Aghzi, where the Kaying stream, not pictured, enters the larger river. The picture, taken in July 1996, shows why Skrine could not have attempted to go up the Karatash in summer, given the high water. As his later description of the Karatash route for the confidential Government of India route book specifies, there was a Kyrgyz bridge at this location in 1922-23. (Photo: DW.)

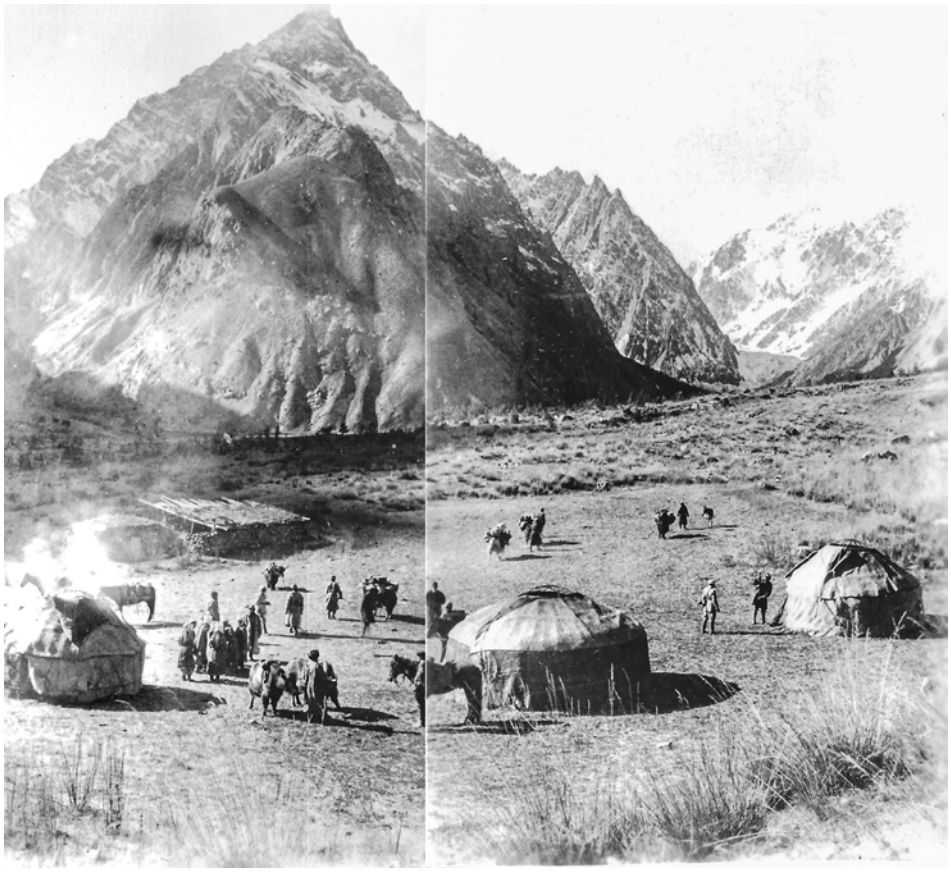


Fig. 78. The Skrine party at their camp in the Kaying on the morning of 19 October 1922, as they prepared to hike up the valley. As they discovered, Kyrgyz herders spent summers there and, as the picture shows, had at least one stone hut at this camping spot. We will see later that the permanent structures in that area of the valley in 1996 were more extensive. The photo is a composite of two images (from the British Library Collection: IOLR Photo 920/1 [179], [180]); it was previously published in CCA *1925, facing p. 96.*

was just as well. Certainly the cold was pretty bad at nights & in the early mornings. I kept D. as warm as a toast, however, by the 'fire-bucket' plan – an admirable idea which I owed to my late bearer, Amar Singh. An ordinary iron bucket is filled with red-hot embers, and put in the tent, standing on stones to prevent it from burning the durrie[94] – and in 2 minutes the coldest tent is like a lovely oven! The heat lasts for hours, if it's a good kind of wood.

The camp at Kaying Aghzi, tho' in a deep part of the valley, was well sheltered by trees and high grass and we stopped there two days while I reconnoitered. I climbed a considerable height the first day & fixed my position with the plane table, with reference to such peaks as I could see. The second day, however, I did a really terrific climb, the biggest I have ever done, 5,800 ft. sheer up from the camp. I got to a height of 12,700 ft., among snow-fields, & set my plane table and cameras up on the narrow top of a splintered pinnacle of rock from which a marvellous view was visible in all directions. Only Kungur, alas, was veiled in cloud. I spent three hours on that up-ended slab of rock, photographing and mapping, & hardly noticed the time pass, the view was so marvellous and the sun so warm. Practically all the mountains I saw were either unknown altogether, or their positions merely vaguely indicated in Stein's map. Stein went <u>down</u> the Karatash Valley in November '09, but he had not time to explore up the side-valleys, and he did not see either Kungur or any of the great peaks to the E. of it. I was therefore out to 'place' as many peaks, glaciers, valleys etc. as I could in the time, and I think I've done fairly well on the whole. [*Figs. 78 and 79, next page*] The following day we marched up the Kaying Jilga, a side glen which at first looked most forbidding, but afterwards opened out into a perfect Alpine valley, wide and sunny, with two glaciers coming down into it and great forests of deodar and juniper and with the most wonderful peaks ringing it round. I never saw such a collection of monsters – 18,000-20,000 all of them, rising sheer from the green valley-bottom. Several families of Kirghiz inhabit this little Paradise of the mountains, unseen & unknown by Westerners until discovered by us; they lent us their 'ak-ois' to live in, and we made great friends with them, D. doctoring them with the utmost assurance

94. 'A heavy cotton rug of Indian origin.'



Fig. 79. On 19 October, they hiked to the upper valley through an extensive forested area, visible in these photos. At the Kyrgyz camp in the upper valley, they hired yaks to ride up to the glaciers at the valley head. (After: Nazaroff 1935, facing pp. 104, 154.)

& I am sure great success. The women were as jolly and friendly and sans-gêne as Kirghiz women usually are – one or two were really beautiful.

In spite of the intense cold between sunset and sunrise at 9000 ft., we could hardly tear ourselves away from Kaying-Bashi, & stayed 3 nights there. The first day we went a delightful expedition by pony and yak (there are heaps of fine yaks in the Kaying Jilga) to Kaying-ning Türe, the head of the glen. Here one gets right among the forests and the snows. [*Fig. 80*] We attained a height of 12,450 ft., in a world of ice and snow far above the highest deodar. [*Fig. 81*] The air was like crystal and we were loath to come down again. I got some magnificent photos of the scenery which I will send you prints or enlargements of in due course. (Don't worry, they're not only scenery – D. appears in 2 or 3 of them!) The 2nd day at Kaying Bashi I did another big climb, partly on a yak this time tho'. I got up to 14,000 ft. [*4268 m*] and got a fairly good telephoto of Kungur, which this time was clear. [*Fig. 82, next page*] Unfortunately the peak I climbed (the only one accessible from the Kaying Jilga without ropes and ice-axes and Mt. Everest Expedition paraphernalia), was not quite high enough for me to get a complete view of Kungur, & only about half of him appears. Also, bad cess to it, the plate I used turned out to be old & the picture is imperfect. However, with expert touching-up at home it will make a good enough picture and being quite unique will be valuable. From this point (which was even more precarious than my last) I also with great difficulty (owing to the difficulty of finding room for the legs



Fig. 80. The Skrine party at the head of the valley: on left, Doris and the Russian geologist Nazaroff relaxing on the grass with the orderlies and yaks in the background below the 'folded limestone' of the cliffs; on the right, Doris on her yak with the notch of the Kepek Pass on the skyline. (After: CCA *1925, facing p. 100.)*



Fig. 81. Looking over the Torbashi Glacier to the Shiwakte peaks at the head of the Kaying valley, the photo probably taken on 19 October 1922 (from the British Library Collection: IOLR Photo 920/1, scan from unn. neg.).



Fig. 82. The top of Mt. Kongur from the east above the Kaying Valley, the ridge of the intervening peaks cutting off a full view. Photographed by Skrine on 20 October 1922. (After: GJ *135/3 (1969), pl. VIII.)*

of my table) drew 'rays' to several of the same peaks I had spotted before & I have thus been able to 'place' them with reasonable accuracy.

Good heavens! it's 11 o'clock & we march tomorrow at 8! I must stop and continue my narrative next week from Yarkand. By that time I should have 3 letters of yours to answer. Love from D. who is going very strong and has as I expected derived much benefit from the bracing air of the heights. Old Nazaroff leaves us tomorrow to return to Kashgar – he has enjoyed this trip as our guest enormously.

***

Yarkand, 29 October 1922

We arrived here yesterday after a 100 miles' march in 4 days from Campar, where I last wrote from. The going was all easy, partly over desert and partly through cultivation and villages. We both blistered and burnt very badly, especially D. who rather rashly took no topi with her, only tammies,[95] but we're both extremely fit after our little tour into the unknown mountains and the contrast between D. now and 3 weeks ago is extraordinary. She's the very picture of health. If I remember rightly, my last letter took the account of our trip up to Kaying Bashi. We spent 3 nights in that beautiful but (in late October) chilly valley during which we explored the neighbourhood thoroughly. We found that what looked like a huge glacier at the head of the valley was not a real glacier but a great tongue of debris from the surrounding heights, filling the bottom of the valley and covered with snow. Nazaroff said it was the site of the 'cirque' or birth-place of an ancient glacier, the kind of basin high up among the mountains in which it was as it were generated. He could make out vestiges of the ancient moraine. We climbed on pony, then on yak & lastly on foot to a height of 12,400 ft. up the line of this ancient moraine & secured a stupendous view of the old 'cirque' above which soared the most terrific ice-cliffs. The fact that the peaks we were looking at had never before been seen by Europeans made it all particularly wonderful. Above us on the west was a high pass which the Kirghiz said was impossible, but which from the height, 13,900 ft., to which I climbed the following day a few miles off seemed quite practicable; this pass I would have given a lot to climb, because as I saw from the lie of the land, from the top of it we would have looked straight across to the whole mass of mighty Kungur, 25,000 ft. or more high. It was to get a good view of the E. side of Kungur that I had come up into these wilds, and it was bitter to have to leave without getting a good near view; but we were already 2 days behind our scheduled programme & my presence was needed at distant Yarkand – so I had to content myself with the view of the upper

95. Topi – presumably a pith helmet; tammies – tam o' shanters.

half of Kungur which I got from the above-mentioned peak, 13,900 ft., to which I climbed our 2nd day from the Kaying Bashi camp. That day was marvellously clear, and I got a good telephoto view of Kungur, or at least of such part of it as was not hidden by a high and unclimbable jagged ridge in front of me. Unfortunately, the plates I was using in my post-card size camera were all old & nearly all the telephoto views I took were failures for this reason. The sickening thing is that good new slow plates specially suited for this kind of work, had been ordered by me from London in the spring – and up to the day of our departure on this trip from Kashgar had not arrived, though I had long before received advice of their despatch. I knew the old plates would be of little use, but I had to use them failing the arrival of the new ones; and now, if you please, I find the latter awaiting me at Yarkand, having arrived at Kashgar 1 week after our departure!! Isn't it enough to make anyone cry? If I had had those plates I would have secured some absolutely unique telephoto views which would have caused considerable stir in geographical circles. As it is, I have got some good panoramic views of the unknown ranges, not including Kungur, with my film camera, which I am going to enlarge and send home to the Geographical Society, also to the Survey of India, to whom together with my plane-table work in those parts they will be useful in correcting Sir A. Stein's map of the Kungur region. As a matter of fact, Kaying Bashi with its grass and flowers, its woods of juniper and its primeval forest of pines, is so beautiful that D. is as anxious as I am to return there sometime & we will probably go there next summer for our 'villégiature' from the heat of Kashgar. We will then go not by the Karatash Valley, which will be impossible owing to the height of the water, but by Tashmalik and the Gez route (see Miss Sykes' book[96]) & then over two easy but hitherto unknown passes called the Achik and the Chopkana Dawans which D. and I discovered on our return journey this time. The latter pass is the only outlet (according to the Kirghiz) from the Kaying Valley, other than the Karatash Gorges at its mouth. We left Kaying Bashi by this pass & came down to the Karatash River below the gorges and only 6 miles above Saman, our first camping place in this region on the upward journey. [*Fig. 83*] The Chopkana Pass and the 8-mile-long valley leading down from it to the Karatash are delightful. Lovely grass and trees, a steep but nowhere dangerous path, & the most marvellous views. At the top we saw both ordinary chikor and 'ram chikor' or 'ullar' as they [are] called in Turkestan.[97] I went after the latter but failed to get within range. They are magnificent birds, the size of bustards, marked like chikor only whiter (living as they do, like ptarmigan,



Fig. 83. View of the Kaying Valley from the Chopkana Pass (photo: DW 1996). One of Skrine's photos (BL IOLR Photo 920/1 [107]) is captioned 'Crossing the Chopkana Pass (11,600 ft.) with yaks. Kaying Valley in background (July '23). D. [Doris Skrine] on extreme left'. In fact probably the picture was taken on 1 August 1924, rather than on the second visit to the Kaying in 1923 when they crossed the pass in a storm.

96. See Sykes and Sykes 1920, pp. 106-111.

97. The chikor (alt. chukar; *Alectoris chukar*) is a partridge in the pheasant family; there are several sub-species known in Central Asia. The 'ram chikor' Skrine describes is also in the pheasant family but is indeed a much larger bird, known as the Himalayan snowcock (*Tetraogallus himalayensis*). See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chukar_partridge; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Himalayan_snowcock, last consulted 12 August 2024.

on or about the snow-line) and having a bill rather like a hawk's, very curious in a partridge. The saddle of the Chopkana Pass is about 11,500 feet high & is beautifully grassy with pretty juniper woods on the north side & only about a mile down it, a picturesque Kirghiz encampment called Ui-chi. It positively hotches with chikor and pigeons, & we all three had good sport on the downward march; I got 5 chikor & D. 2 pigeons with her new 20-bore. Old Nazaroff can't shoot for toffee but he thoroughly enjoys trying, & has the sporting instinct all right. We made friends with the Kirghiz at Ui-Chi & also lower down at Chopkana itself, a delightfully pretty place tucked away in a fold of the valley with quite a good area of cultivation and 4 or 5 families of Kirghiz. We were pleased to note that here, as in the Kaying Jilga, the Kirghiz seemed healthy and there were some children about, unlike Yambulak and the regions between Tashkurghan & Yangi Hissar, where the Kirghiz are dying out and we saw practically no children.

The Chopkana Kirghiz brought down an 'ak-oi' for us to Khan Terek, a pleasant little clump of trees near a crazy-looking native semi-cantilever bridge over the Karatash [*Fig. 84*]. Next day, as I wanted to explore the Achik Jilga & see what the pass over into the Gez valley was like, we did a short march of only 6 miles down to Saman. Nazaroff went with the caravan and my gun, while D. and I rode up the forbidding looking side-gorge I wanted to explore. It proved both easier and shorter than I had expected; though winding & steep-sided, the gorge presented no serious obstacles and we clambered over stones & through the stream, past our poor little 'ak-oi' on a spur, for 3 miles. Then we found ourselves at the bottom of a very steep ascent, which we did on foot; I measured the distance & height on the way back and found it to be a slope of rather steeper than one in two! But the path was well-marked & not difficult. At a height of only 9,900 ft., & only 3 ½ m. from the Karatash River (Stein in his map guesses the watershed to be 8 or 10 miles back) we stood on a grassy col and looked right across the Gez valley towards the magnificent massif of Chakragul, a 3-peaked 22,000-ft. mountain of the R[ussian] Pamirs on the W. side of the Gez Valley, opposite Kungur (which, alas! we could not see). We climbed another 500 ft. up a grassy ridge to our right, whence a splendid view not only of the nearer mountains from which we had come the day before, but also of both the lower Gez and Karatash valleys was to be had, & spent 2 hours basking in the sun, D. reading and dreaming & sketching (unsuccessfully) & I plane-tabling and photographing. The plates I took were all failures owing to defectiveness of the plates themselves, but my plane table work done on that height is very useful for my map. We came down reluctantly, examining in the Achik Jilga a wonderful spring of water charged with carbon dioxide which we had passed on the way up.



Fig. 84. The cantilever bridge over the Karatash River at Khanterek (after: L'Illustration, *23 October 1926, No. 4363, p. [450]). In his captions to various prints, Skrine noted that water for the nearby settlement was being carried across on an aqueduct made of a hollowed-out log and that the Kyrgyz woman in front, 'who had just been calling on us', is carrying 3-month-old twins. For a description under the date when they first saw the bridge, 15 October 1922, see* CCA *1925, p. 95; this image is reproduced in ibid., facing p. 146.*

Enormous stalactites composed of white calcareous crystals mixed with rich green mosses hung from overhanging shelves forming grottoes, and all the sticks and stones in the neighbourhood seemed petrified, encased as they were in the calcium deposit made by the water, the carbonic acid gas of which has the property of dissolving calcareous rocks. Masses of maiden hair fern grew everywhere; although it was a place where the sun never reached, the gas in the water is so good for vegetation that it more than makes up for the lack of sunlight.

It was nearly dark when we at last got down to the main Karatash valley again, & then we had 5 miles of stony path, including a nasty rough bit under a cliff on the very edge of the river, to negotiate before we reached camp – unpleasant in the dark. Next day we reached Campar, whence I wrote my last letter during the halt of a day we treated ourselves to. The view of the mountains, with Kungur behind and above them all, from Campar is unforgettable; alas, the 5 plates and the hour's work I put in exposing them with the utmost care and calculations were all useless [...] Apart from the snows, I seldom saw finer autumn tints than at Campar and most of the other villages we have passed through during the last few days – and here at Yarkand. The fruit trees particularly are simply gorgeous – and their crimsons and russets are well set off by the pale gold of the poplars above them.



Fig. 85. The walls of Yarkand. The first image shows Skrine's effort to capture their full extent, the view from up on part of the wall. The second image shows the area around the Kashgar gate, probably taken during a later, winter visit. (a). Published with permission from the Royal Geographical Society [London], no. CPS/00016; b). After: Nazaroff 1935, frontspiece.). Cf. a view almost identical to the second image, taken by John Törnquist, in the Etnografiska Museet (Stockholm), no. 0937.0235.

We haven't had time to 'take in' Yarkand yet. So far as I can see, it is a larger but less picturesque city than Kashgar. [*Fig. 85*] It is all on the flat, & there is no point from which you can see more than just a section of the walls and a bit of extra-mural bazar. Like all bazars in Ch[inese] Turkestan, those of Yarkand, both the big central ones and the minor straggling ones of the poor quarters, are extremely picturesque, in the Dutch style. Rembrandt would have revelled in the interiors of which you get glimpses through every doorway, courtyards of poor peoples' houses, serais, corners by ponds with weeping willows drooping over them, eating-shops and groceries, smithies and carpenters' shops, all with picturesquely-garbed and hatted people sitting around. If anything the <u>people</u> are more picturesque here than at Kashgar – the place is even more Central Asian & remote, the absence of Russian influence making a great difference. The shops are not so full of cheap Russian goods as at Kashgar, remnants of pre-Revolution stock, and contain mostly either Indian-imported things & products of local industries. I need hardly say I hadn't been here an hour before I started setting wheels in motion with a view to acquiring any rare old carpets, brass, copper, jade and antiques that were to be had. I have great hopes of being able to pick up something good. The room in which I sit contains a fine old rose-coloured Khotan rug which I greatly covet: it <u>may</u> yet be mine.

We had a grand reception yesterday, two 'dastar-khans' or 'chahjāns' as they call them here on the way, a lot of troops out, bands playing & all the Chinese officials out to meet us. D. loves all that part of it, & her appreciation counteracts the bored embarrassment which I in common with most of my kind suffer on these occasions. Unfortunately, yesterday a high wind blew all day & obscured everything in clouds of dust so we had an unpleasant 4 hours' ride in & the procession for several miles through the suburbs & across both the New & the Old Towns of Yarkand was also pretty trying. The army of British subjects & others who followed us absolutely smothered us in dust. We only just had time to change our clothes & wash at the very nice house & garden which has been placed at our disposal, when we had to go off in the tarantass (which is here with 2 nice new horses) for a big dinner given by the local Swedish Mission!! It was fixed for 5; we had had nothing to eat except some sweets and fruit since 8 o'clock breakfast & when we got to the mission we were kept waiting nearly 2 hours for dinner!! Very trying. However, when it did come dinner was excellent & we both over-ate ourselves. I'll tell you all about the mission & other matters of interest here next week. We stay here 8 days at least.

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[*Letter from Yarkand, presumably written on 4 November, missing opening and closing page(s).*]

Nearly all this last week has been taken up with calling & receiving calls and attending feasts of various kinds, and I haven't had time to do much casework. I have consequently no hope of getting off on the road again till Wednesday or possibly even Thursday next, the 9th. My visit here happens to coincide with the presence of an unusual number of Chinese officials, there being here besides the Amban & the other district officials (1) Chu, ex-Taoyin of Kashgar who is here on deputation by the Governor to meet & treat with the Afghans (2) Lin, ex-Amban of Yarkand, who has not yet (after 3 months!) completely handed over to Li, the new man, & has now been officially associated with Chu in the negotiations (3) Tao, the Tung-shang (Secretary for For[eign] Aff[airs]) at Kashgar, who is here to help Chu. The latter, as I have often told you, is the best Chinaman in the New Dominion & a staunch friend of ours – a big, wise, humourous, good-hearted old statesman of the old school whose loss from the Taoyinship is a serious blow for the Consulate General, another of the many bits of bad luck I have had in this job. I wish I could stay until the Afghans come; I should like very much to be here when they arrive. But they are not hurrying & won't be here till the middle of the month at earliest, & I can't wait. I will have to stop at least 2 nights at Posgam (1 march out) 4 at Kargalik (3 marches) 2 at Goma (5 marches) 4 at Khotan (12 marches) and 2 at Keriya (17 marches) & have no time to spare if we are to be back at K[ashgar] by Xmas.

Yarkand is delightful at this season. I should say it was hot and unhealthy from June till October, there are a lot of mosquitoes & flies about still, & malaria is rife. But the streets, town walls, markets, ponds, suburban farms, everything about the place, are all extraordinarily picturesque. A great deal of wood is used in construction, but the houses, barns etc. are not flimsy tumble-down affairs as in Kashmir, they are solid & comfortable & satisfactory, like old English wooden houses. [*Fig. 86, next page*] Parts of the town remind me very much of Caudebec, even of Bruges or Tournai. Everything is old, long-established, prosperous, peaceful; the countryside with its magnificent trees, big fields, brimming canals, large farms teeming with cattle, horses, sheep, goats, pigs & rosy-faced children are reminiscent of England, or rather (considering the canals) Holland. The variety of types among the people, who are on the whole less European-looking than the Kashgarians (tho' very Aryan in their types) is remarkable, and one sees



Fig. 86. Possibly a Yarkand street scene with the old houses about which Skrine remarks, and with a glimpse of the city wall in the background. One of his later lists includes a photo which he captioned: 'Street scene, suburbs of Old Yarkand'. Alternative identification would be Aqsu, where he also found the old wooden houses to be picturesque. (Scan from unn. neg. in Stewart collection.)

some perfectly wonderful beggars, positive miracles of grotesque raggedness and boniness. The universal cretinism is rather horrible; every third person you see in the streets has goitre. This is undoubtedly due to the bad water drunk by the people; although two large rivers come out of the mountains quite close to the city, the Zarafshan & the Tiznaf, everybody gets their water from one or other of the innumerable semi-stagnant ponds or 'tanks' as we would call them in India, dotted about the city. One difference from Kashgar is that much more Persian is spoken here than there. Almost all the leading traders and Bais, including the Br[itish] Aksakal, speak Persian, some very well. This is due to the connexion with Afghanistan, which has a lot of trade (mostly opium) with this place. You will be glad to hear that I have already picked up two lovely little bits of carpet – one delightfully-mellowed, soft-pile old Khotan rug of Persian design, reddish shade, the other a gem of a little Lhasa mat, of a wonderfully pure red with faded but rich mauve & grey cloud-pattern design on it, Tibetan with Chinese influence; it really is a beautiful little piece, unmistakeably genuine and old. This is a good place for antiques, there being no dealers or big exporting firms as at Kerman, where there were 7 or 8. I have also got a brass pot with graceful lines which was brought from Khokand by a Governor of Yarkand from that place 60 or 70 years ago; it bears his name cut on the rim of the top.

Your letters contain some wingèd words about Etherton, or as I chuckle to note you persist in calling him Etherington. I hope you addressed him by that name in the letter you wrote him, it will have annoyed his *amour propre*. I enclose part of a letter I have just received from him. The para. marked is absolutely typical. He has written to me 4 times since he got home, & <u>each time</u> he has told me about his hob-nobbings with the great, 'Earl' Winterton & the rest of them [...][98]

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98. Edward Turnour, 6th Earl Winterton (1883-1962), an MP, was Under-Secretary of State for India in 1922–1924, and again 1924–1929. See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward_Turnour,_6th_Earl_Winterton, last accessed 26 January 2025.

[*Here is the excerpt from Etherton's letter (BL IOLR MS EurF154/39).*]

[...] Yes, I found the little village [i.e., London – *DW*] just where it has always been; have had a busy time and seen most of the great men who help to make history and are controlling the destinies of empire. I have seen Lord Peel and he has been very good in inviting me to his place; Earl Winterton, Lord Curzon, and now the Prime Minister who is back from struggling with Reparations and wants to hear all about Central Asia. I was lunching with Sir John Jordan again the other day, and he has asked me to go to Geneva in January and give evidence before the Opium Commission of the League of Nations. Jordan is President of the former.

I expect by now you have settled down to life in Kashgar and are making the most of it as I did [...]

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[*I have omitted from this letter several sentences about Iris and Bunbury. This letter and others are of some interest for his details about the process of negotiation with the local officials. His lengthy official report, including some verbatim transcriptions of proceedings at Kargalik, is reproduced below, pp. 184-211. One comes away with the impression that his superiors should have entertained few doubts about his seriousness and ability in defending the interests of British subjects. Earlier reports he sent to India had already underscored the problems the Amban in Kargalik was creating.*]

Kargalik, 12 November 1922

A post came in this morning forwarded through the Chinese P. O. for Kashgar, but alas no mail letters. The English mail must have missed the Kashgar dak from Gilgit [...]

We had a very pleasant & very busy 11 days at Yarkand & only got away with difficulty last Thursday. Li, the recently appointed Amban of Yarkand, is an excellent fellow, most friendly and enlightened. He is a straight man, not the wily crooked Oriental at all, and is genuinely anxious to dispose justly of the multitude of outstanding cases in which British subjects are concerned and to come to amicable agreements with us on the various disputed points there are. Unfortunately, he's terribly long-winded and what with the doubling of the length of his speeches owing to the necessity for translation, interviews with him are apt to be lengthy affairs. Last Monday I went to the Yamen at 10 and didn't get away till 2:15! The next day he came to the house where we were putting up at 11, and left at 2:20. On the latter occasion I had all the Hindu merchants up to hear certain orders in a serai case affecting them, in which Li and I had come to an agreement. It took some time to explain the orders to the Hindus & consider all their various objections, & Li remained standing by me all the time while one of his Chinese-speaking Turki 'begs' explained to him what was being said; then when we had finished & I expected him to go, it being nearly lunch-time, he said he would like to say a few words to the Hindus – the few words & their interpretation occupied another hour during which we were all standing as before!

I don't think I told you last week about the Orphans' tea party we gave. The Mission of Yarkand runs an orphanage about 3 miles out of Yarkand, which contains 28 happy & well-fed infants – an excellent institution.[99] We had them all along to tea & games one day. D. ran the games with great success. First we had treasure hunting for packets of sweets, then diving for large fat copper coins (10-dachen pieces) in a mountain of flour, then spearing apples in a tub of water. All were equally uproarious & successful. For tea we were kept busy handing out bowls of milk, meat pies, large slices of melon & lumps of toffee to insatiable rows of infants. At the end they all lined up of their own accord and sang

99. On the orphanage, see Hultvall, *Missions and Revolution*, sec. III, pp. 16-18.

us Swedish hymns in Turki very prettily indeed – in much better tune than the same number of poor children in England would have sung them. One of the Swedish ladies taught them to sing their hymns last year [*Fig. 87*].



Fig. 87. The Swedish orphanage at Yarkand, as photographed by the missionary John Törnquist (Public domain, Image no. 0964.8842, https://collections.smvk.se/carlotta-em/web/object/26013263; img. No. 0937.0327, https://collections.smvk.se/carlotta-em/web/object/3758950).

On Thursday we got the caravan off at 10; this time it was 'mapas,' the local equivalent of the tonga of North India & the 'tikka-gharry' of down country. [*Fig. 88*] We got all our kit, our kitchen & servants & <u>their</u> kit onto three of these carts and the tarantass, while Moh[amma]d Nasir, the 'Mir Munshi' had another mapa for his own and the Chinese Secretary's servants & kit. [*Fig. 89*] The 4 mapas and the tarantass did the 17 miles to Posgām in 4 hours comfortably & the 24 miles of yesterday's march to this place in 6, comfortably. The official farewell tea-drinkings at various points along the road leading out

Fig. 88. A mapa cart, photographed by John Törnquist (colorized) (Public domain: img. No. 0964.b.0073 https://collections.smvk.se/carlotta-em/web/object/25419029).



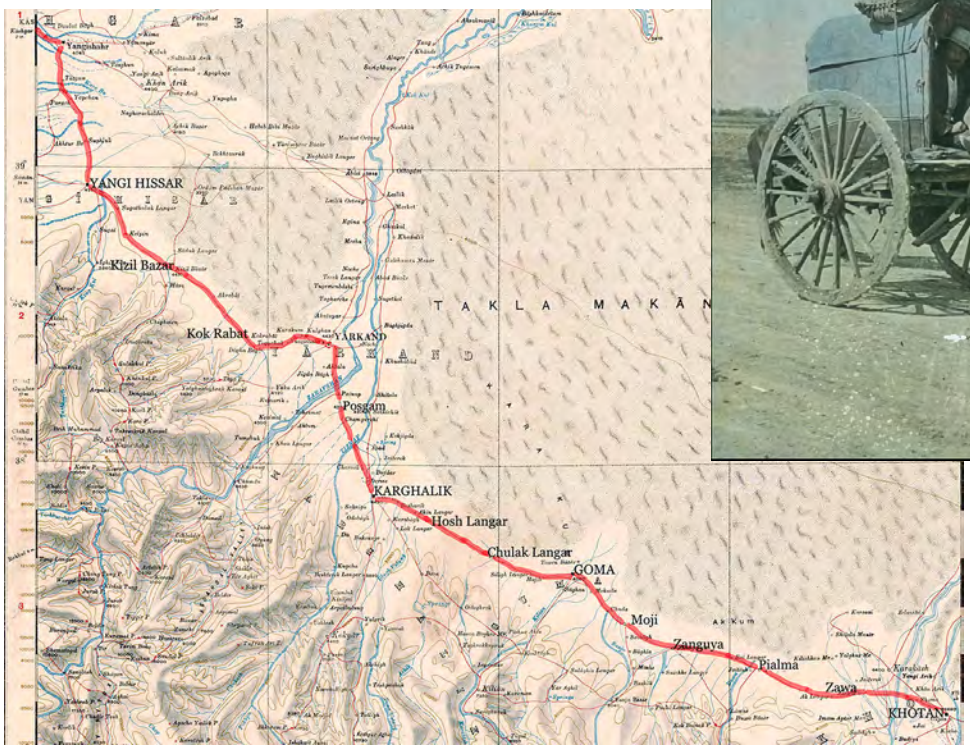


Fig. 89. The Skrines' desert route to Khotan, overlaid on Survey of India, China and Kashmir & Jammu, Sheet 51, Yarkand (2nd ed. 1926).

of Yarkand occupied an hour and a half and we didn't finally get off till 11:30. Two hours' ride through a pleasant countryside of wide fields, heavy timber & prosperous farms swarming with stock & poultry of all kinds brought us to the neighbouring houses of 2 British subjects who had a complicated dispute about right-of-way & irrigation. We lunched at the defendant's house & then I spent an hour inspecting the 'manga' as we say in India. We got away at 3 and struck across country, guided by our cavalry escort lent by the Hsieh Tai (Commanding Officer) of Yarkand, reaching the Zarafshan River at 4. The bed of this river is a mile wide but there is very little water in it at this season and the various channels are easily forded. The volumes respectively of the water in the river and the traffic on the road in the summer months is shown by the number of large strongly-built ferry-boats on the various channels, some moored, others pulled up on the beach [*Fig. 90*]. On the further side of the river we were met by the Aksakal of Posgām (who is a Maulai or follower of the Aga Khan) and a crowd of British subjects & had the usual 'chajān' (tea-drinking) in a gaily-decorated tent by the roadside. We tasted here for the first time the celebrated Kargalik pears. They are enormous, juicy & sweet, but somewhat lacking in flavour. A mile or two further on we were regaled with an immense meal of fruit, bread, nuts, pilau & excellent roast chicken by a flourishing old British subject called Turab Shah who has a house at Yarkand with one wife in it and another house near Posgam with another wife in it. Another 'potai' (2 ½ m.) & we came to the Chinese Amban's tea-drinking reception, which took another half hour, so that we didn't get to our quarters at Posgam till nearly 6 o'clock. Jove! it was cold. D. was all right, as she had her leather motor-coat, but I stupidly, thinking we would easily be in by sunset, sent my 'poshteen' by the caravan, & I froze harder and harder at each tea drinking. However, we had a nice well-built roomy set of rooms in a well-to-do house given us at Posgam, & soon thawed before roaring fires.



Fig. 90. A ferry on the Zarafshan River, photographed by John Törnquist (Public domain: img. No. 0937.0251 https://collections.smvk.se/carlotta-em/web/object/3758573).

The old Amban of Posgam is a harmless, well-disposed kindly old man, & I had no difficulty with him over the few cases we have in that district. But it took me 2 hours to get away next day, for there was (1) my call on the Amban at his Yamen (2) my call on the Aksakal at his house (3) the Amban's farewell tea-drinking by the road-side outside the town (4) the Aksakal's tea-drinking further on, (5) further on still a tea-drinking given by a friendly Beg. This time I had sent D. on with the caravan in the tarantass, & I didn't catch her up till lunch, which we ate by the banks of the Tiznaf River, on a pleasant bit of grass in the sun which was nice & warm, not pale & chilly as on the previous day.

We reached Kargalik (24 m.) after running the usual gauntlet of tea-drinkings & parades of troops at 5:30. D. rode with me on her Andijani bay from the lunch-place into Kargalik, 12 m. On the longer marches I generally arrange for her to ride on horseback half the way and either ride 'Tüge' (the camel) or drive in the tarantass the other half. This tires her much less than riding or driving the whole way.

We had a trying though funny experience riding into Kargalik. We were escorted by two Chinese trumpet bands, one in front & one behind which 'played,' i.e. gave vent to the most excruciating noises sometimes in turn, sometimes both together, the entire time. The rear band knew hardly any 'tunes' so for more than half the time it treated us to single notes beginning at the lowest & ending with the highest they could produce on their trumpets. The lowest was like the dying moo of the thousand stricken kine, & the highest like a similar number of nails being drawn across a vast sheet of glass. Each note went on for about two minutes, quavering & dying away & starting again as the bandsmen lost their breaths & found them again.

Kargalik is a much larger town than Posgam & an old-established district. The Amban is a very different type of man from either Li or old Jong, the Amban of Posgam. He is a Manchu, with a loud voice like a bull and eyes quite round, not almond-shaped at all. He is absolutely loading us with politeness & hospitality & ceremonial honour; there is a reason for this, the fact being that we have had to complain about his high-handed actions towards Mohammedan British subjects (of whom there are several hundred in this district) during the last year. I am particularly anxious to get to the bottom of this man's behaviour & find out what he has against us – whether it is personal 'anti-foreign' bias (common enough among Chinese officials) or orders from Urumchi or something wrong with the Aksakal, who is a nasty-looking Shikarpuri Hindu, one of Etherton's choices. (Almost without exception, the men whom Etherton appointed, in place of former Aksakals turned out by him, have proved unsatisfactory for one reason or another.) That Gwei,[100] the Amban, is so anxious to do us well here is a good sign, at any rate, & I have hopes of settling things with him satisfactorily; but it will take three or 4 days. Tomorrow we lunch with him; we are looking forward to this particularly, as we have been informed by Mr. Gwei that his wife & daughter as well as the wife of Captain Ma, the O[fficer] C[ommanding] garrison, will be present & will sit with us in the European style! D. is tremendously excited about meeting Manchu ladies at table with all the rest of us & seeing how they behave. Captain Ma's wife is the daughter of that redoubtable old reprobate the Titai (G[eneral] O[fficer] C[ommanding] Kashgaria) at Kashgar.

We shall probably be here 3 more days, & we then march to Goma (2 long stages).

A word about Etherton. I don't think we need worry about his coming back here. My official and private representations have borne fruit and a telegram came from Foreign by last post ordering me to report on certain points, from the tone of which it is clear to me that the G[overnment] of I[ndia] & the Accounts people are after Etherton. Over the supply-bills question he is certainly 'for it.' Foreign say that the A[ccountant] G[eneral] Punjab has reported that from Nov. 1920 to April 1922 this Consulate-General has drawn Supply Bills far in excess of the requirements & they want to know the reason why. I must of course tell them – because E. sold them to himself in order to work his exchange ramp, half a lakh's worth at its very least. Apart from the juggling with accounts & other suspicious actions of E.'s which I shall report (for Foreign have also asked me to report whether I found the a[ccount]s in order when I came) this supply-bill business alone will break Etherton now that Govt. have taken it up [...]

8 P.M. Just returned from <u>such</u> an amusing party at the Magistrate's! The most delicious Chinese ladies present, pretty as pictures, some of them. A regular family party. I wish I had time to describe it now, but this post is going this very minute.

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100. Skrine also spells his name Kwei and later provides a full name, which in Pinyin would be Gui Hutan or Gui Hudan [?=Huban].

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[*Skrine obviously made time while traveling (his entourage included the consulate secretarial staff, as indicated in the previous letter) to compile the October diary report, which in the printed version (IOLR L/P&S/10/976 P327 1923*) *was dated Kashgar, 12/16 November, and was received in Simla on 12 December, with copies to the British Minister in Beijing and the Political Agent at Gilgit. Judging from the content, he finished it before leaving Yarkand. In it he reports at some length on his negotiations with Amban Li in Yarkand about British subject cases; he also mentions the arrival of the officials in Yarkand who are to negotiate with the Afghan delegation. Chu, the former Taoyin in Kashgar, asked him to stay on* 'to assist him in the negotiations', *but Skrine declined due to his need to continue traveling to the other towns. He cites an* 'amusing report' 'from two different sources' *about how the Afghan officials discovered that the Chinese delegation to Afghanistan was illegally buying opium to bring back to China. Of particular interest, at least for the degree to which it illustrates the reliance on speculation and often dramatic rumor, is his report under the heading of 'Trans-Frontier Affairs. Bolshevism', which he qualifies with skepticism at the end. This report elicited from J. A. Simpson in London on 24 January 1923 two days after it was received there, the comment (p. 224):* 'Para. 8. A highly garbled account of Enver's death. The ex-Amir of Bokhara is included in the holocaust, a statement which is certainly untrue.']

[...] 7. Reports as to peacefulness and prosperity of Ferghana and its practical freedom from Soviet interference are so prevalent that their Bolshevik origin may be strongly suspected. The idea probably is to encourage the export of sheep, grain and cloth from Kashgaria; a brisk trade in these commodities is in fact going on by the Sungek-Uzgend route, nominally unknown to the Chinese authorities but really with their connivance (*vide* diary for September, paragraph 22 [*quoted above – DW*]). It is probable that the Soviet authorities are not, as was first supposed ignorant of what is happening. Export from Turkistan, as from other parts of Soviet Russia, being practically *nil*, payments for imports has to be made in gold, silver, and jewels commodities for which the Bolshevik have a notoriously kee[n] scent. Food and cloth supplies are of course badly needed for the large Red forces in Turkistan; the ultimate object, however, undoubtedly is to work up trade with Kashgaria with a view to demanding eventually a Trade Agreement with Hsinkiang and the establishment of a mission at Kashgar on the lines of that at Ili.

8. It is reported from Tashkurghan under dates 11th and 15th October that in accordance with a pre-arranged plan a number of Bolsheviks at Qullab near the Afghan frontier of Bokhara sent an invitation to Enver Pasha and the Amir of Bokhara to set up a nationalist government. The Bolsheviks, they said, were weary of the task of keeping order and ready to leave the country. Enver and the Amir accordingly came to Qullab with a following of a thousand men. On the following Friday, when the most of the party including Enver and the Amir were saying their prayers at the chief mosque, the Bolsheviks threw bombs into the mosque destroying it and killing every one inside. Those of the party who had not been in the mosque fled back to Afghanistan where they invoked the aid of the Governor of Khanabad. The latter sent a squadron of cavalry to Qullab, which was routed by the Bolsheviks; whereupon the Afghan Government sent large reinforcements to the frontier. The Bolsheviks are also alleged to have a great concentration of troops at their frontier posts.

No confirmation has been received of these obviously garbled reports up to date (12 November 1922) and it has not been considered worth while telegraphing them to the Government of India, who have doubtless long been in possession of the facts, if any, on which the reports are based [...]

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[*As noted earlier, when Skrine in his August diary report alluded to his predecessors' mistakes in unwarranted registration of individuals claiming to be British subjects, Etherton vigorously denied he had done so. Here Skrine confirms what Etherton had stated about the policy under Macartney but also reiterates in no uncertain terms his view that much of the blame for the current*

problems was to be laid at Etherton's feet. Should we believe what Skrine reports to his mother on his successes in resolving matters? Difficult to say, though I think he was unlikely to obfuscate on the matter, even if he perhaps wanted to impress his parents about his diligence. I copy just below the long report Skrine wrote in mid-February when back in Kashgar regarding the strenuous negotiations in November and again in December with Amban Kwei in Karghalik, since this provides an excellent idea of the substance of such interactions with the local authorities regarding the legal cases that were one of the main foci of Skrine's official activities. For an extended analysis of how these thorny issues regarding 'British subjects' in Xinjiang were treated, see Whewell 2020, Part II (pp. 95-175). She explains how the situation in Xinjiang differed from that elsewhere in China, and traces the history of how the consuls, beginning with Macartney and continuing down through the 1920s had to adapt to local norms of justice as well as take into account the more general changes in policy in the face of growing Chinese nationalism following the end of the Qing Dynasty. In her account, Etherton addressed these matters more seriously than Skrine credits him; she provides a balanced perspective on the differences between Skrine and Harding in their recommendations to their superiors. She views positively examples of Skrine's sensitivity to local custom (and not just applying blindly official British policy): 'He therefore drew upon local custom and community relations to arrive at a decision rather than simply stating that there was no offence according to the Order in Council. This demonstrates how the consideration of custom played an important part in the administration of consular justice' (p. 141). In particular, Skrine's experience previously regarding Islamic norms was of value for what he could accomplish in Xinjiang.]

Kargalik, Nov. 15th

I am putting in ½ hour before going to bed writing to you in order to catch the mail – tho' it is only 3 days since I last wrote – because we leave the day after tomorrow for Goma en route for Khotan & Keriya & will miss next week's mail. It is 10 marches from here to Khotan, but we are going to do it in 8 including a day's halt at Goma.

I've been having a most strenuous & exciting time here, fighting the Amban, who is the strongest & most capable magistrate in the Province & was specially commissioned by the (anti-foreign) Governor or 'Tuchün' at Urumchi to fight the British over the question of registration of British subjects. In this district there are a great number of more or less settled immigrants from Baltistan, Chitral, Bajaur & other frontier districts of N.W. India. Comparatively few of them took the trouble, when the 'Special Assistant' (afterwards Consul-General) was appointed, to register themselves as British subjects. But in 1911–12 when the Russians began an intensive campaign of penetration & acquiring influence with a view to ultimate absorption of this province, a large number of Chinese subjects were registered (under pressure from the Russian C.G.) as Russian subjects; & Macartney, in order to counteract & checkmate the Russians, began to register the aforesaid immigrants as British subjects. The Chinese did not object at first; while the Russians were in power, they were quite glad to play us off against them. But since the Revolution & the abolition of the Russian Consulate-General, Russian influence has been nil in this province, & the Chinese have during the last year or two objected strongly to what they describe as the taking away of their subjects by the British. Unfortunately, Etherton, whose errors of judgment during his tenure of office are as the sands of the sea, mishandled the situation hopelessly; his one idea being to increase his own importance & buck about the large number of British subjects under his charge etc. etc., he continued Macartney's policy of raking in as many British subjects as possible, although the necessity for it was past; nearly all the so-called 'Russian subjects' had reverted to Chinese nationality. Further, he worded certain notices he sent to British Aksakals (agents) at this and other places very tactlessly, in such a way as to put the Magistrates' backs up, also certain letters to the Taoyin of Kashgar about the Magistrates. The result was, last winter, a regular campaign, particularly in this district, against the recently-registered British subjects; the Amban here, acting under orders from the Governor, imprisoned & otherwise oppressed them & extorted from larger numbers of them 'affadavits' that they were Chinese subjects & had falsely pretended to be British. All sorts of other



Fig. 91. A Kargalik debtor wearing a cangue (CPS photo; after: L'Illustration*, 23 October 1926, No. 4363, p. 448).*

games were played too, which I have found out but which are too complicated to detail here [*Fig. 91*]. In March Etherton once more let British prestige down. He paid a visit to Yarkand of 25 days & even came as far as Posgam, 1 stage from here, but didn't come here. The Chinese & the British subjects & everyone else thought (rightly) that he funked it. Anyhow, no attempt whatever was made by him to grapple with the situation he had himself created, & things got from bad to worse. One of the British subjects who had been imprisoned for being a Br[itish] subject died in prison. Our prestige went down to zero and genuine British subjects went over to the Chinese by the score – as they say, 'they thought there was no more a Consul-General.' I've now been here 5 days, & all of every day but the 1st has been spent fighting the Amban in his own den, the Yamen, arguing nearly 9 hours on one day and sitting in 'joint inquiry' with him over 9 hours the next, & so on. I'm glad to say I've won nearly all along the line. The Amban, who as I told you is a Manchu, is a 'takrari' little man with a loud voice & a quick brain, & he has a wonderful flow of words as well as great keenness on his job; I respect him for that, tho' I don't approve of his methods. His efforts have been mainly directed at tiring me out by long sittings & getting me to make admissions that will help him with his higher authorities. (The whole matter, I may say, is already before the Minister at Peking). However, I've succeeded in defeating every attempt of his to obtain admissions, & I've not only shown up his arguments but publicly discredited his witnesses. [*Fig. 92*] He brought crowds of villagers, Begs, Imams & people to prove that certain persons' ancestors have always been in this country. We examined 4, & under my cross-examination they all broke down & contradicted each other hopelessly, one even admitting that he hadn't been present when an affidavit purporting to have been made by him was written & sealed! So much so that even the Amban gave up the attempt to prove his case by witnesses & had recourse (for several hours) to quibbles of all kinds. I was at the Yamen from 10 AM. till 8:35 P.M. yesterday, & I'm glad to say that as a result of the proceedings the British subjects here have plucked up courage & are coming forward to give evidence against the Amban. When I first came to Kargalik, not a single Mussalman British subject came to meet me – they were all too frightened of the Yamen! Tomorrow, I am told, thirty or forty Chitralis, Baltis, & Kashmiris are going to come and complain to me of having been forced to become Chinese subjects.



Fig. 92. A crowd outside the yamen in Kargalik listening to a storyteller (after: CCA *1925, facing p. 204).*

I must stop here in order to catch the mail, but I will be writing again from Goma & will continue then. Nothing from home by last mail, & I'm afraid we shan't get another till Khotan.

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[*The selection here is from the British Library Collection: IOR L/P&S/10/949 ('Chinese Turkestan: Status & rights of British Subjects'), a large compendium of documents dating 1920–1926. I reproduce the very long file inventoried as P1893/1923 printed in Simla for internal circulation (fols. 232-245v). What Skrine wrote provides vivid evidence about his interactions with the local officials and residents whose citizenship status was in question. The printed file opens with Skrine's memorandum of 15 February 1923 and includes sub-enclosure documentation about his negotiations in Kargalik with Magistrate Kwei. Skrine's own typed copy of the memorandum, without the sub-enclosures, is in IOLR L/P&S/10/949, pp. 126-145. The typescript is the copy he sent to the British Minister J. W. R. Macleay in Beijing. Six days later, Skrine sent an additional long memorandum (copied to Macleay), with information on taxation policies in Xinjiang which affected British citizens there. Skrine concludes his new memo of 21 February (p. 160):* 'My views and suggestions on the subjects of registration have been stated at considerable length in my memorandum on the subject forwarded under my No. 5 of 15.2.1923 and I will not repeat them here. So long as District Magistrates like Messrs. Kwei and Liu are to be found in this province, I do not think it likely that Chinese opposition to our present procedure will weaken; some arrangement such as that suggested in my memorandum is therefore, I think, necessary.' *Macleay then responded to Skrine's memoranda in a long letter dated 30 May 1923 (P 3778/1923, pp. 117-125) addressed to Lord Curzon in the Foreign Office in London. Obviously Macleay took Skrine's recommendations seriously, but noted how difficult it would be to implement some of them (for example, the desirability of pressing for the removal of the Magistrate Kwei).*

The minute paper in the cover for Skrine's report of 15 February, signed by J. A. Simpson on 15 June 1923 (register no. 1993 [1893], fols. 216r-216v), shows that he considered carefully Skrine's information. Simpson wrote:

> [...] 1. In P1893 Mr. Skrine illustrates in great detail the difficulties attending the present system of registration in Hsinkiang. This despatch displays, as did previous ones, a remarkable animosity against Lt. Col. Etherton, and, to a lesser extent, against Sir George Macartney. The part of the despatch of practical value will be found in Section 5, Page 9, where Mr. Skrine gives his suggestions for the solution of the present difficulties. These, it will be noted, correspond in essentials with the suggestion made in this office letter of 19th August, 1922, P3089/22. It seems beyond dispute that, to attain a working arrangement, some measure of harmony must be secured with the Chinese officials, for they can adopt the line of independent action with much greater effect than we can.
>
> 2. It is doubtful whether Mr. Skrine has the best of the argument with the Taoyin on the extremely delicate question of the right of Chinese subjects to mortgage land to foreigners. Usage and presumptive right is a feeble weapon when dealing with Chinese officialdom.
>
> 3. Mr. Skrine criticises certain parts of the F. O. memorandum of March 29th 1922 (Flag F). Most important is his statement that at present British subjects are <u>not</u> immune from Chinese taxation. This fact gives them a better right than had formerly been thought to be theirs to claim the privileges of their Chinese neighbours.]

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26 MAY 1923

(232) F.O.
L&N

A.P. 1346/23

CONFIDENTIAL.

Endorsement No. 20, dated the 15th February 1923, from C. P. Skrine, Esq., I.C.S., His Britannic Majesty's Consul-General, Kashgar.

Copy of the letter below with enclosures forwarded to the Government of India in the Foreign and Political Department, Delhi, for information.

Enclosure I.

No. 5.

BRITISH CONSULATE GENERAL,
KASHGAR.
(*via* GILGIT) INDIA,
February 15th, 1923.

SIR,

With reference to correspondence ending with your telegram No. 1 of 18th January 1923 on the subject of the registration of British subjects in Sinkiang, I have the honour to enclose a memorandum embodying the results of my recent investigations at Karghalik and my suggestions for the settlement of the question.

2. Attention is particularly invited to section 6 (*d*) (*i*), in which is demanded, as a condition of our returning in principle to the system of joint registration, what amounts to an amnesty for all persons prosecuted by the Chinese for "falsely pretending to be British subjects". I have to-day received petitions from both Id Akhun and Ahmad by the hand of the latter, complaining against the revengeful and oppressive behaviour of the Magistrate of Karghalik towards him. I enclose translations of the petitions. From what I saw and heard at Karghalik, I have strong reasons for fearing that the complaints of these persons are well-founded. I earnestly hope that it will be possible to obtain from the Chinese Government the amnesty desired on behalf of the defendants in these two cases at the earliest possible date. In order to assure that the amnesty will be effective, I consider it essential that Mr. Kwei should be transferred from Karghalik District to one where there are fewer outlets for his energies in the direction of the persecution of British subjects.

3. The views of His Majesty's Vice-Consul, Mr. Harding, who has been on tour since 10th January and is not expected back till 10th March, are not included in the memorandum. They differ from mine in certain respects, notably as regards the protection of Sinkiang born sons of British subjects domiciled in this province. I propose that he should visit the districts concerned next spring or summer and then send in a separate memorandum on his own account.

I have the honour to be,
SIR,
Your most obedient, humble servant,
(Sd.) C. P. SKRINE,
Offg. His Britannic Majesty's Consul-General.

His Britannic Majesty's Minister,
British Legation,
Peking.

Enclosure II.

Memorandum on the Question of British Registration in Southern Sinkiang.

Section 1. A brief résumé of the results of my first visit to Karghalik during my recent tour was given in my telegram No. 29 of 30th November 1922. I spent another 3 days at Karghalik on my return journey in December, and also dealt

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SECRETARY'S NO 36M
DATED MAY 3.
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with registration cases at Khotan, Keria, Posgam and Yarkand. The nationality question is more acute at Karghalik than elsewhere, owing partly to the relatively large number of colonists from British India, and partly to the energetic and masterful character of the Magistrate, Mr. Kwei; I propose therefore to confine myself to an account of the chief proceedings at that place, followed by a discussion of the general question of registration in this province.

Section 2. The most important questions and cases taken up with the Karghalik Magistrate were the following :—

(*i*) The publication in Karghalik District of a Consular Notice containing a translation of extracts from the China (Kashgar) Order in Council, 1920, *vide* Wai Chiao Pu's note of 30th November 1921 and Colonel Etherton's despatch No. 12 of March 28th, 1922, paragraph 1.

(*ii*) The case of Id Akhun, *vide* correspondence ending with H. M.'s Minister's despatch No. 30, dated August 29th, 1922.

(*iii*) The case of Ahmad and his brothers, referred by H. M.'s Minister in his note of 27th April 1922, to Wai Chiao Pu.

(*iv*) The case of Hassan deceased, *vide* my despatch No. 34, dated 4th September 1922 and enclosure.

(*v*) The cases of Tokhta Akhun and Daim Bai.

(*vi*) The case of Shamroz and Hussain Jan Bibi.

(*vii*) The cases of Nazar Shah Chitrali and 34 other British subjects of Jai Toghrak in Karghalik District.

I propose to deal with the above points seriatim :—

Section 3. (*i*) *Karghalik Cases—Consular Notice with Extracts from 1920 Order in Council.*—This question was brought up at the outset by the Magistrate of Karghalik. Relying on the statements made in Colonel Etherton's despatch No. 12 of 28th March 1921, I affirmed that the Turki, Persian and Urdu versions of the extracts, as published by this Consulate General through the Aksakals, were literal translations of the Order in Council and that there was nothing in them which could be construed as "enticing Chinese subjects to assume British nationality." In order to satisfy Mr. Kwei, the yamen interpreters and I compared the Persian and Turki versions word for word. As a result of this comparison, I was obliged to admit (1) that much of the language in both versions was involved and obscure, owing to the fact that the unfamiliar English phraseology of the original is followed too lavishly (2) that the use of English words such as "Order" and "Register" in the translations instead of their vernacular equivalents, further increased the obscurity, (3) that in at least two passages the Turki version varies from the Persian and is a mistranslation of the English in vital particulars, (4) that there was consequently some excuse for the Begs misunderstanding the purport and intention of the Notice and informing the Magistrate that the British Consul General was advertising for British subjects in his district. The mistranslations referred to in (3) above were most unfortunate. The first was of the words in Article 48, clause (3) "and the registration of the head of a family shall comprise the registration of all females and minors being his relatives, in whatever degree, living under the same roof with him at the time of his registration." The literal meaning of the Turki version is "and after the name of the head of a family has been written, the names of all his wives, minor children and relations of whatever kind shall be regarded as having been written" etc. Mr. Kwei and his Begs, taking this sentence out of its context and ignoring the "Explanation" and the condition about living under the same roof, were able to make great capital out of this alleged attempt to claim all relatives of registered persons as British subjects. Even when the actual wording of the Order in Council had been made clear I found it difficult to explain to the Magistrate the difference between registered persons who were British subjects and registered persons who were not British subjects. Again in Article 51 the words "A person applying to be registered under this Order" are translated correctly in the Urdu and Persian copies, but appear in the Turki version as if they

? slavishly

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were "Any person who wishes to become a British subject.....". Referring to this and to Article 50, Mr. Kwei said that the gist of the Notice was understood in his district to be: "Any body who wants to be a British subject and is not already registered, who pays a fee of 1½ taels will be registered as a British subject. Anyone whom the British Consul General thinks ought to be a British subject will be fined if he fails to register himself."

From inquiries in my office I find that Colonel Etherton did not have the Turki version, which was made by the Aksakal of Kashgar, read to him, either when he first issued the notice or at the time of writing his despatch No. 12 of 1921. The Vice-Consul, Mr. Fitzmaurice, was unacquainted with the Turki language. I also find that, acting in the belief that the British Consul General would approve, the Aksakal of Karghalik did send in very large numbers of names of candidates for registration without going properly into their claims. I cannot blame him for doing this, because Colonel Etherton's attitude, as revealed in his office orders and circulars to Aksakals gave reason for the Aksakal of Karghalik's belief. Applicants for registration must therefore have come to the Aksakal in considerable numbers, the Magistrate hearing of this at once connected it with the offending Notice and jumped to the conclusion that the British Consul General intended to register all the persons who were applying to the Aksakal. In any case, the distribution of Consular notices through Aksakals is a matter in which great care has to be taken not to offend Chinese susceptibilities, *cf.* Keria case reported in diary for December 1922, paragraph 1. I have already arranged that in future all such notices will be shown and explained fully by Aksakals to the Magistrates of their districts, before being posted even in the Aksakals' houses.

How can Mr. Stevens possibly guarantee the correctness of this statement? ?

(*ii*) *Id Akhun Case.*—In this case I assented readily to Mr. Kwei's request that a joint enquiry should be held in public. At the commencement of the proceedings Mr. Kwei asked me to take down his statement. I did so (copy attached, Enclosure No. I). I then enquired whether Id Akhun was still in chains. I was told that he was. I thereupon informed Mr. Kwei that it would be necessary, after hearing the prosecution evidence, to adjourn the case for a few days in order to give Id Akhun time to collect his witnesses and prepare his defence, and that for a fair trial it was essential that he should be released on bail during the pendency of the case. Mr. Kwei refused to release the defendant; whereupon, knowing that so long as Id Akhun was completely in the power of the Yamen officials he would not dare to speak the truth or defend himself, I informed Mr. Kwei that I could not hold the inquiry until he was released.

I consider it of the utmost importance that Id Akhun should be released pending a joint enquiry of the case by the Taoyin and myself. I am convinced that the Magistrate's refusal to release him was due to fear lest he shuld give damaging evidence regarding the methods of manufacturing evidence and of intimidation employed by the Karghalik officials.

(*iii*) *Ahmad Case.*—A copy is attached (No. II) of the proceedings in the case of Ahmad and his brothers, which was tried jointly in public by Mr. Kwei and myself. All questions and answers were recorded by me in my own hand in English, a yamen clerk taking them down in Turki and translating them to the Magistrate as he went along. In this, as in other joint enquiries at Karghalik, I had the greatest difficulty in assuring myself that the yamen clerk took down the words of the defendants or witnesses correctly; attempts were frequently made to omit some statement or alter others, especially when damaging admissions or self-contradictory statements were being made by yamen witnesses. The most shamelessly "leading" questions were continually being put by the Magistrate, in spite of my protests. From the statements of Mr. Kwei, the defendants and the prosecution witnesses, as well as from the reports sent to my predecessor at the time by the Aksakal, the following appear to be the facts of the case:—

During a period of about 2 months before their arrest, the Beg of the defendants' village brought pressure to bear on the defendants to become Chinese subjects. As they were obdurate, the 4 brothers and 2 sisters were brought to Karghalik and put into the Yamen lock-up, and their *tung-shang-piaos* taken from them. Here they were told that they would be kept indefinitely "under arrest" if they did not swear that they were Chinese subjects, and were threatened in other ways; they accordingly agreed to do so, whereupon they were

told to send for witnesses from their village to support their statements. A boy, son of one of the defendants, went back to the village and informed the "*imams*" (priests) and the *yuzbashi* (headman). These men, knowing what was expected of them, concocted an "affidavit" (Ext. A.) to the effect that the defendants' ancestors had always been Chinese subjects and that the defendants had become British subjects for the first time three or four years before, since when they had refused to pay any revenue or taxes. Five villagers, other than the priests and the headman themselves, are named in the affidavit as being the persons making it; but it is more than doubtful whether these persons had any part in the making of the affidavit. After the first affidavit had been taken from the witnesses, the Yamen officials discovered that the defendants had at home an old sale-deed in which their father Nur Mohammad was described as a Kabuli. This document was produced, and was seized upon with glee by the Yamen officials; for it afforded (in their eyes) conclusive evidence that the defendants were not British Bajauris but Afghan subjects by birth. They thereupon ordered the village priest to collect the "witnesses" again and take another affidavit (Exh. B.) from them to the effect that the defendants' ancestors had been Chinese subjects for 70 or 80 years; this affidavit was intended to square both with the new theory that the defendants' father had come from Kabul and with the previous one that their ancestors had always lived in Chinese territory. In these two affidavits, Exhibits A and B, five villagers other than the priests and headman themselves are named as being the persons making them. Of these witnesses, the first one examined, Mulla Khass, admitted that he was not present at the making or sealing of either of the documents nor were they read to him. There is no reason to suppose that the other four whom the magistrate did not produce, had anything more to do with the making of the affidavits than Mulla Khass had. Four other affidavits were similarly drawn up and the defendants were released from the lock-up; before they were allowed to go home, however, an affidavit (Exh. D.) was taken from them to the effect that their father had come from Kabul and had become a Chinese subject, and that they also were Chinese subjects and would pay all taxes and revenue in future.

In this case the question of Afghan nationality will be discussed later. The points to be noticed at this stage are:—

1. The circumstances in which the defendants gave affidavits that they were Chinese subjects. In spite of all the Magistrate's quibbling, it is impossible to avoid the conclusion that the defendants gave the affidavits because they were afraid of the Magistrate's two Begs, *i.e.*, in order to avoid further imprisonment, with or without stocks and the *kang*.

2. The methods by which "evidence" is manufactured in such cases. It is only necessary to draw up an affidavit purporting to be made by a man and obtain a Qazi's seal upon it; and that affidavit can be used as evidence in any case whatever, whether the man who is supposed to have made it was in a position to know the facts or not. Theoretically, the Qazi who seals the affidavit is supposed to satisfy himself as to the *bonâ fide* of the person making it; but in practice, a Qazi can always be found who will seal any document that the Magistrate wishes him to seal, without asking questions. In the case of Exhibits A and B, one of the witnesses betrayed the fact that documents purporting to be made by eight persons were sealed by the Qazi in the presence of only two of those persons.

Clearly these affidavits, on which alone the Chinese rely as evidence in support of their contention that the defendants in these registration cases were Chinese subjects are worth no more than the paper on which they are written.

3. As in the Id Akhun and other cases the Magistrate imprisoned the defendants and treated them as Chinese subjects although defendant No. 1, the head of the family held a "tung-shang-piao," and had therefore been recognised by the Chinese authorities as a British subject. In support of this action Mr. Kwei showed me a telegram from the Governor No. 32, dated 20th January 1922, to the following effect:—"The Magistrate of Karghalik is authorized to treat as Chinese subjects all persons who falsely claim British nationality and refuse to pay taxes, being illegally protected by the Aksakal. He is directed to make a list of such persons who are proved to be Chinese subjects; their ancestors for three generations having been

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resident in Chinese territory; proof of this will be (1) the existence of the graves of the said ancestors in Chinese territory, (2) the statements of the villagers. The list will constitute evidence in all foreign affairs cases." The implication of the last words is clear: not even a "tung-shang-piao," much less a mere British registration certificate, is to be regarded as evidence.

The policy behind these orders is clear: they are by way of retaliation for the abolition of the system of joint enquiry in registration cases. "If the British Consul General," the Chinese say, "constitutes himself the sole arbiter as to whether a man is a British subject or not, we can play the same game. I will return to this subject later.

(*iv*) *Hassan Case.*—I enclose translations (No. III) of the statements made by witnesses at a joint enquiry held by Mr. Kwei and myself on 18th December 1922 into the case of the deceased Hassan, which is referred to in my despatch No. 34 of 4th September 1922. I also enclose a copy (No. III-A) of the statement made to me in private by Rustam on the morning of the proceedings. The object of this enquiry was to discover (1) whether Hassan was really a British subject, (2) whether the affidavits he and Rustam gave were forced from them by the Chinese or not, (3) whether Hassan's death was attributable to the treatment received by him at the Yamen a short time before or not.

The first issue depends upon the parentage of Hassan. An old man named Rustam, a registered British subject who himself came from Baltistan, came forward and said that Hassan was his son. Another old man, Rozi Mohammad, who had been a neighbour of Rustam and Hassan for many years and showed an intimate knowledge of the affairs of the family, corroborated Rustam. The Chinese, on the other hand, produced one Sabit Akhun who attested to having twice written out bonds for Hassan in which the latter gave his father's name as "Ma Hassan." Another witness was also produced, but was found on cross-examination by me to know nothing about the parentage of Hassan except from the above-mentioned two bonds, which Sabit Akhun had shown him. It must be admitted that Rustam and Rozi Mohammad are persons who would be much more likely to know the facts than the two witnesses produced by the Chinese; the evidence is in fact overwhelming in favour of Hassan's being the son of Rustam, and from Rustam's account of the proceedings at the yamen it looks as if the Chinese did not at that time dispute the fact: it was only afterwards, when Hassan had died, that they tried to strengthen their case by alleging that Hassan was not the son of Rustam. This is borne out by the contemporary reports of the Aksakal, who wrote after the death of Hassan that the Chinese were pretending that he was not Rustam's son. If Rustam was not Hassan's father, why did the Chinese take affidavits both from Rustam and from Hassan as to the nationality of the latter?

It is unfortunate that Hassan, whose regard for veracity appears not to have been greater than that of the majority of the inhabitants of Chinese Turkistan, gave his enemies a loophole by falsely assuming his father's name: he obviously did this when first arrested and taken to the yamen because the certificate he had was his father's, not his own. Similarly, he seems to have given, for purposes of his own, his father-in-law's name as his father's in certain bonds. As he lied at the yamen about his own name, it is the more likely that he lied in the bonds about his father's name, a probability which of course the Chinese do not take into account.

(2) The circumstances in which the affidavits were given by Hassan and Rustam were similar to those in the Id Akhun's case, and there is no reason to doubt old Rustam's statement that the affidavits were taken from him and Hassan under compulsion. Extreme timidity is the ruling characteristic of the Turkis of this province, a fact of which the Chinese take full advantage.

(3) The exact number of days after his release from prison which elapsed before Hassan's death is doubtful. The evidence on both sides is hearsay. Whether it was eight days or twenty-eight, however, it is impossible without expert medical evidence to prove whether the illness which caused the death of Hassan was directly attributable to the discomforts and privations of the life in a Chinese lock-up, and to his anxiety regarding his fate or not. In the circumstances, the yamen officials must be given the benefit of the doubt. The injustice and *mala fides* of their treatment of the man are not, however, altered thereby, and in view of the strong evidence

in favour of Hassan's being a British subject by right, I venture to suggest that the case be made the subject of a strong protest to the Chinese Government.

Incidentally, the case of Rustam himself is a glaring instance of the *mala fides* of the Karghalik yamen in the matter of taking certificates of Chinese nationality. Throughout the enquiry Rustam's British nationality was never in question; for this very reason the Chinese went out of their way to prove that Hassan was not Rustam's son but someone else's. Yet they took a certificate of Chinese nationality from Rustam as well as from Hassan, as a condition of releasing the latter from prison.

(*v*) *Cases of Tokhta Bai and Daim Bai.*—The cases of Tokhta Bai and Daim Bai were taken up by Mr. Kwei and myself jointly at my request, as test cases. Copies of the relevant statements in these cases as taken down by me are appended (No. IV). Both these men's claims for British nationality have been verified beyond a shadow of doubt not only locally, but by reference to the native place of their fathers, Chaprot in Gilgit Agency. The statements of Tokhta Bai (1) to me in private, (2) in public before the Magistrate speak for themselves. The Magistrate admitted the truth of everything the man said except (*a*) that Tokhta told him when first brought to the yamen that his British registration certificate (probably "tung-shang-piao" is meant) had been left at his house, (*b*) that no unjustifiable treatment such as the stocks was accorded to Tokhta.

As regards (*a*), the implication is that Tokhta refused altogether to give up his British papers, and was therefore put into the lock-up until he did. This is sufficiently damning. As regards (*b*), the man's story was absolutely matter-of-fact and circumstantial, and carried conviction. In the case of Daim Bai, as in many others, a single "tung-shang-piao" was held by the head of the family. Two younger brothers were seized upon by the Magistrate as Chinese subjects and made to give certificates of Chinese nationality, the fact that they had no "tung-shang-piaos" being used as evidence against them. Their brother Daim Bai, who did hold a "tung-shang-piao," was then arrested and threatened with indefinite detention unless he surrendered his "tung-shang-piao" and gave a similar certificate, the evidence against him being that his brothers were and always had been Chinese subjects!

(*vi*) *Shamroz Case.*—I append copies of the statements made by Shamroz, Ghulam Rasul and Qadir Beg before the Magistrate of Karghali and myself (No. V) also copies of correspondence between the Taoyin of Kashgar and myself about the case of Shamroz and his deceased mother Hussain Jan Bibi (No. V a). The bringing up of this case by the Chinese was of the nature of a trap; it was hoped that I would argue that Nauroz, the father of Shamroz and husband of Hussain Jan Bibi, became a British subject when he went to India because he married an Indian woman, and that his son's British nationality was also derived therefrom. Needless to say, I did not take my stand on this argument, nor did I attempt to claim Shamroz as a British subject now. I merely pointed out the reason why Sir George Macartney was justified in registering Hussain Jan Bibi and her son, namely that Nauroz had been a petty officer in the Indian Army; and I said that in this, as in all other cases, I was perfectly ready to cancel the registration certificate of any British subject who came to me and asked me to do it, as Shamroz did. But I refused to cancel the certificates of persons whom the Chinese authorities kept in jail or frightened out of coming to me, still less would I admit the validity of "affidavits of Chinese nationality" given by persons who afterwards came to me and told me that they had been coerced by the Chinese into giving those affidavits.

(*vii*) *Case of Nazar Shah et al.*—I append a copy of (No. VI) of the statement of Nazar Shah Chitrali, made to me at my house on the fourth evening of my first stay at Karghalik, also a list (No. VIa) of the names of 34 other registered British subjects of Jai Toghrak who came to me and complained of having been forcibly converted into Chinese subjects the previous spring. Several of these persons whom I questioned told me that up to then they had not dared to come and complain to me; no Consul General had been to Karghalik for many years; Colonel Etherton had come within one march of Karghalik the previous spring and had then turned back, whereupon the British subjects of Karghalik had despaired, thinking that the British Consul General was afraid and unable to do anything for them.

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Nazar Shah's statement is important, as illustrating the lengths to which the Karghalik officials went in the manufacture of affidavits.

(*a*) Just as in the Ahmad case they took affidavits containing contradictory statements from the same witnesses on consecutive days, so here they took two sets of affidavits from the same British subject, one of them giving his father's name as Mohammad Shah, the other one giving it as Aziz Shah. The man's father's real name was Mohammad Shah, but he was nicknamed Aziz ("Beloved") Shah in Yarkand; the document should therefore have run: "Nazar Shah, son of Mohammad Shah *alias* Aziz Shah." But this would not have suited the Chinese, because the name Nazar Shah, son of Mohammad Shah, appears on the list of British subjects recognized by the Magistrate of Karghalik at a joint registration enquiry with the British Consul-General in 1914. In order to avoid this difficulty, they pretended that Nazar Shah was the son of another Aziz Shah who was the son of Qasim Shah, a Chinese subject; Nazar Shah's real father, Mohammad Shah *alias* Aziz Shah, being the son of Shah Mubarak and a British subject who had come from Chitral.

(*b*) The partiality and complaisance of the official Qazis in these cases is illustrated by the action of the Qazi to whom Nazar Shah was sent. Under Mohammadan law (Shariat, when a man is accused of a crime by another, if the complainant can produce at least two witnesses who will swear on the Quran that the accused is guilty, the Qazi puts the oath on the complainant and his witnesses; if they take the oath, the accused is convicted. If however the complainant cannot produce witnesses who will swear, or if the Qazi otherwise thinks fit, the oath is put on the accused; if he swears he is innocent, he is acquitted. In the present case, Nazar Shah asked the Qazi not to believe the witnesses who said he was a Chinese subject, but to put the oath on him. The Qazi knew (1) that the accused would swear that he was a British subject (2) that the witnesses would probably refuse to wear that he was a Chinese subject (possibly they had privately asked him not to put the oath on them). He therefore threatened Nazar Shah, telling him that if he put the oath to the witnesses and they took it, he, Nazar Shah, would be shot or imprisoned for life; if, on the other hand, Nazar Shah promised to swear that he was a Chinese subject, the oath would be put on him and he would be forgiven. I think it is clearly most undesirable that the interests, property and even lives of British subjects should be at the mercy of Qazis who behave in this manner and of Magistrates who incite them to do so.

4. *Summary.*—The facts disclosed in connexion with the cases described above throw a lurid light upon the question of the abolition of exterritoriality in Sinkiang. We are not, however, primarily concerned here with this question, which has already been reported on in my despatch No. 30, dated 4th October 1922. We are concerned chiefly with the conflict which has become acute during the last two years between the Chinese authorities and H. M.'s Consulate General regarding registration. This conflict I ascribe (*a*) to suspicion and prejudice on the part of the Chinese, (*b*) to difference of opinion as to which nationality law should apply to registration cases, the Chinese or the English, (*c*) to the refusal of the Chinese Government to recognize British claims to the protection of Afghans, (*d*) to a fundamental difference in the points of view of the local authorities and H. M.'s Consulate General as regards the laws of evidence and rules of judicial procedure applicable to registration cases.

(*a*) I should like to place it on record that in none of the districts that I visited did I detect the slightest signs of *anti*-foreignism towards myself on the part of the officials, least of all at Karghalik, where Mr. Kwei was most hospitable and courteous and treated my wife and myself almost as members of his own family. There is no doubt, however, that politically, if not socially, the British cause in this province has suffered from association in the minds of the Chinese with that of the Russians. In 1912-14 the latter, having fortified themselves at Kashgar with a garrison of 600-700 troops, were registering Turkis by the thousand as Russian subjects. In order that the Russians should not have it all their own way, Sir George Macartney, with the express approval of the Government of India, also embarked on a forward policy as regards registration, though unlike the Russians, he confined himself to persons who could be brought under the British nationality laws, and Afghans (see below). With the Russian *débâcle* of 1917-18 and the

disappearance of Russian influence in Sinkiang, culminating in the closing down of their Consulate General in 1920, the tables were turned, and the Chinese joyfully proceeded to re-naturalize, forcibly or otherwise, their lost subjects. At this juncture came, somewhat unfortunately, the Order in Council and the introduction of the new registration procedure. The violent opposition this aroused on the part of the provincial authorities, supported by the Wai Chiao Pu is well known.* The prejudice and suspicion which our forward registration policy had aroused were redoubled by way of retaliation, the Chinese turned their attention towards re-naturalizing British subjects as well as Russian, and they also attacked the hitherto unquestioned exemptions and privileges of the remaining British subjects all along the line.

It must be confessed at this point that the attitude of my predecessor towards the local authorities, particularly at Karghalik, does not seem to have been calculated to remove the causes of misunderstanding and prejudice. Colonel Etherton never, during the whole of the four years during which he acted as Consul-General, visited Karghalik, Khotan or Keria, the districts in which, with Yarkand, the registration question has always been most important. Mr. Fitzmaurice indeed toured in these districts in 1920 and did much useful work, but that was before the introduction of the new registration procedure. I am convinced that if Colonel Etherton had visited Karghalik and had discussed matters fully and frankly with Mr. Kwei, instead of fighting him on paper and sending repeated orders to the Hindu Aksakal on the spot to flout and oppose him at every turn, there would have been much less acerbity on the part of the Karghalik yamen towards British subjects, and many of the cases which have arisen there could have been prevented.

(*b*) In the correspondence between the Wai Chiao Pu and His Majesty's Legation, the former contantly speak of "Chinese subjects to whom the British Consul General gave certificates and tung-shang-piaos." Similarly, in my dealings with the local authorities I find that the latter persist in regarding persons domiciled in Sinkiang as Chinese subjects until they are proved to be foreign subjects. Hence their claim to persecute and punish such persons without reference to His Majesty's Consulate-General. Under the British and most other nationality laws, on the other hand,† a person does not lose his national status merely by changing his domicile. He cannot divest himself of his national character without obtaining the consent of his own Government. So long as a man has not been naturalized in a foreign country, the fact of his having established a permanent residence in it does not cause him to forfeit his right to the protection of his native country. His Majesty's Consul-General is therefore bound to regard persons who have a right to British nationality as British subjects until they have legally divested themselves of their British national status. In practically all the disputed cases, it is true, the British subjects concerned were born in Chinese territory, their claims being based on the British nationality of their fathers. None the less, His Majesty's Consul-General is bound to regard them as British subjects until the contrary is proved. It may be that under the Chinese Nationality Law all persons born in Chinese territory acquire Chinese national status thereby. If this is the case, the claims of each State to any individual subject can only be determined, in the absence of specific Treaty provisions by diplomatic action between the respective Governments.‡

(*c*) The question of the British protection of Afghans is one on which the Chinese have long been irreconcilable. The question is discussed fully in my predecessor's despatch No. 21, dated 9th January 1920, to the Resident in Kashmir, his telegram No. 57 of 7th February 1920 to the Government of India and his telegram No. 13 of 29th March 1920 to His Majesty's Minister, Peking. The attitude of the Wai Chiao Pu is indicated by the words in the 3rd paragraph of their note to His Majesty's Minister, dated 14th January 1922, "the fact remains that of the persons found last year to be assuming a false nationality the greater number were Turks whose families had resided for generations in Sinkiang, or who were born in the province, *or were Afghans*....."

* *Cf.* Wai Chiao Pu's Notes of 4th May 1921 and 19th August 1921.

† My authority for this and the following statements is Wheaton's International Law (Boyd), 3rd Edition, Chapter II-A.

‡ *Ibid*, page 237, paragraph 151-1.

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It is to be regretted that in the past this Consulate General has been in the habit of ignoring the distinction between " British subjects " and " British protected persons " and issuing to Afghans certificates as " British subjects " merely marking these certificates with the letters " Af." for its own private information. This was a convenient way of obtaining for them without trouble the same rights as were due to British subjects, but it was not " playing the game " with the Chinese. Out of 1,216 certificates issued by this Consulate General up to 15th October 1921, 225 were thus marked " Af." Since that date no certificates have been issued to Afghans. In paragraph 7 of my Diary for August 1922, reference is made to these Afghans ; I was not at that time aware of the subterfuge which underlay the issue of the certificates in question.

(*d*) Enough has been said in connexion with the Karghalik cases to show the extreme difficulty of assuring a correct finding in a joint enquiry so long as one of the judges disregards the common-sense laws of evidence and rules of judicial procedure. Mr. Kwei himself informed me that in spite of new codes and rules promulgated from Peking, the law still held in Sinkiang that no evidence was valid against a man except his own admission on oath ; the difficulty was, he said, that whereas in the old days torture could be applied in order to extort such an admission, now the Governor did not approve of torture. The corollary of this also applies : once a man has made a statement on oath, no amount of evidence that it was false, or that the man did not know what he was talking about, has the slightest effect upon a Chinese Magistrate. Not only in registration enquiries, but in other cases also which I tried with Mr. Kwei, I was constantly " up against " his blank refusal to admit that when one of his witnesses said " black is white " one minute and " black is green " the next, at least one of those statements must be false and the witness consequently a liar. The fact that the witness' name appeared in an " Affidavit " was enough for Mr. Kwei. The Chinese at present recognize no law in registration cases but the " Shariat " (Muhammadan law) and no evidence but affidavits sealed by Qazis but not signed or sealed in any way by the persons by whom they purport to be made. The Chinese are fully aware of the advantages of this system whereby the manufacture of " evidence " is a monopoly in the hands of the authority which nominates, pays and dismisses the Qazis. I have definite information that by the order of the Governor secret instructions have been issued to Qazis not to seal any bonds or other documents which refer to persons as " British subjects "; the object of these instructions is obvious.

Suggestions. Section 5.—The difficulties in the way of a settlement of the registration dispute being as detailed above, my suggestions are as follows :—

(*a*) In order to demonstrate our *bonâ fides* and remove finally the taint of Russian methods which has so far adhered to our registration policy, this Consulate General should submit to the Taoyins concerned complete lists of the British subjects claimed by us in each district. These lists would be cut down as much as possible by the exclusion of all doubtful cases in which the persons themselves are either willing to withdraw their claims, or totally unable to substantiate them. The Chinese authorities would be requested to recognize as many of the names on the list as possible without further proceedings, and to submit to this Consulate General within 3 months a List of the names they disputed. Failing submission by the Chinese of their List within 3 months, the British Consul General would be entitled to proceed with separate registration. Otherwise, subject to the conditions and guarantees suggested below (*d*), joint enquiry would be arranged in all disputed cases, His Majesty's Consul General or His Majesty's Vice-Consul sitting either with the Taoyin or with a local magistrate according to the importance of the case. In any case in which the Consular Officers and the Chinese authority failed to agree as to a person's nationality, a record of the proceedings, signed and sealed by both parties, would be submitted together with the respective opinions of the British Consul General and the Chinese authority to Peking for orders.

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(*b*) After discussion with the Chinese Government, a ruling may be issued by the Wai Chiao Pu and His Majesty's Legation to the Sinkiang Government and this Consulate General respectively as to the national status of the sons born in Chinese territory of British subjects who were born in British territory. Regarding persons born and permanently domiciled in Chinese territory, it should be pointed out to the Chinese Government that while this Consulate General will not attempt in any way to prevent such persons assuming Chinese nationality it cannot disregard their claim to British protection if they do not desire to become Chinese subjects.

(*c*) The question of the continuance or abolition of the protection of Afghans by this Consulate General has been the subject of correspondence with the Government of India. I append (enclosure No. VII) paraphrased copies of my telegram No. 22-105, dated 28th September 1922 and of the Government of India's telegram No. 1249-S., dated 6th November 1922, in reply. If it is decided that the British Government is to continue to protect Afghan subjects in China, it is hoped that the formal assent of the Chinese Government as regards Sinkiang will be obtained before this ruling is applied to Sinkiang. Otherwise there will be continual friction, owing to the persistence of the local authorities in regarding Afghans as non-treaty foreign subjects. It is suggested that His Majesty's Legation communicate direct with the Government of India on this subject.

(*d*) The procedure recommended in sub-paragraph (*a*) above amounts in effect to a reversion to the joint enquiry system in registration, that is to say, to a considerable concession to the Chinese demands. Before making this concession, the Chinese Government should agree to certain conditions necessary to secure justice according to British ideas.

(*i*) Persons whose claim to British nationality is contested by the Chinese are not to be treated as "Chinese subjects," *i.e.*, imprisoned, threatened or in any way interfered with by the Chinese authorities pending the decision of their case by joint inquiry. All persons now in prison or under any disability on the Chinese charge of "falsely pretending to be a British subject" to be released without bail. Similarly a person whose claim to British nationality is or has been at any time the subject of a joint enquiry, must not be regarded by the Chinese authorities as accused in a criminal case or in any way punished for having claimed British nationality.

(*ii*) Joint inquiries in registration cases are to be in the first place magisterial enquiries held in accordance with the regulations of civil and criminal procedure common to most civilized countries. Such cases are not to be referred to *Shariat* (Muhammadan law) except by agreement between both members of the joint court. If it is agreed to refer a case to *Shariat*, no oath is to be administered by a Qazi to any party or witness except in the presence of representatives both of the Chinese authority and of the British Consulate General. No sworn affidavit purporting to have been made in the past by any person in connection with a registration case will be regarded as evidence, unless a representative of His Majesty's Consulate General was present when the affidavit in question was sworn.

(*iii*) The laws of evidence observed in such inquiries are to be those which govern British judicial procedure.

Section 6.—I venture to think that if the joint enquiry system is reverted to under the above safeguards, and the registration question treated frankly and openly in consultation with Chinese authorities, the opposition of the latter will weaken and their prejudices will gradually disappear. There are other factors also which should help to reconcile the Chinese authorities. In support of their opposition to the British registration procedure the Chinese have in the past laid

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great stress on the allegation that large numbers of Turkis have falsely assumed British nationality in order to avoid payment of taxes and dues. In his note of 19th August 1921 indeed, the Wai Chiao Pu goes so far as to say that "joint investigation thus arises out of exemption from taxation." This argument can no longer be used by the Chinese Government, for domiciled British subjects now pay the same taxes and dues as are paid by Chinese subjects. Again, the present generation of sons born in Chinese territory of immigrants from British territory will die out in due course ; once the Chinese authorities understand (they do not appear to understand it at present) that the sons of these persons will not be British subjects or under British protection, it may be expected that they will not trouble themselves so much about the nationality of the fathers.

C. P. SKRINE,

Offg. His Britannic Majesty's Consul General.

Sub-enclosure No. I to Enclosure No. II.

ID AKHUN CASE.

Joint Enquiry with Magistrate of Karghalik.

Statement of Magistrate Kwei (taken down at his own request).

Id Akhun held a registration certificate which belonged to his father. This certificate is not mentioned in our list of British subjects arrived at as a result of 3 joint enquiries held by British Consul General and Magistrate. The witnesses are :—

(1) Zarif Akkun, son of Gharib Bai } 1 and 2 brothers of defendent.
(2) Ashur Akhun, son of Gharib Bai }
(3) Ismail Akhun, son of Yusaf Khoja.
(4) Ai Bibi, daughter of Gharib Bai (full sister of defendent).
(5) Muhammad Niaz Bai, son of Abdul Khaliq, uncle of defendent.

I deny Id Akhun's British nationality for 3 reasons :—

(1) because his father was not in our books as a British subject,
(2) because his own relations deny he is a British subject,
(3) because he himself denies he is a British subject.

All the witnesses came forward before Id Akhun was put in prison. I referred the case to the Governor, who ordered me to deal with defendant as a Chinese subject. I therefore put him in prison on 6th April 1922.

Muhammad Niaz will say that defendant's father and his grandfather and all his ancestors were slaves in Muhammad Niaz's family.

Besides these there are many respectable people in the district who will give evidence.

In reply to B. C. G.'s question—

Id Akhun is charged, and was imprisoned, for falsely pretending to be a British subject. Last winter because he refused to pay revenue, Id Akhun was detained by force (put under arrest) in the yamen for a few minutes. Then Aksakal came and stood surety for him, and he was released. This was about the Chinese New Year. He has paid all outstandings now. Id Akhun has a land case in which he is plaintiff.

15th November 1922. C. P. SKRINE.

Note on the Id Akhun case—

Tokhtasun Maulai, Aksakal of Posgam, informed me this evening that the Amban this afternoon addressed a large crowd of Begs and other Chinese subjects and told them that they could see how much he cared for the British Consul General.

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The British Consul General demanded the release of Id Akhun but he, the Amban, had absolutely refused to release anyone at all at the British Consul General's request.

15th November 1922. (Sd.) C. P. SKRINE.

Sub-Enclosure No. II to Enclosure No. II.

AHMAD CASE.

Magistrate—

Ahmad, son of Nur Muhammad Haji, was placed under arrest by me at the beginning of April 1922 on complaints by the Beg of the village and thousands of other people of the neighbourhood. He was kept under arrest for one night and released next day at the request of the villagers and Begs of village.

B. C. G.—

Did he claim British nationality and produce any certificate ?

Magistrate—

He did claim British nationality immediately on arrest and produced not a certificate but a tung-shang-piao. He gave this of his own accord to me next day. When I said "certificate" in the Id Akhun case I meant "tung-shang-piao."

Witnesses in this case are :—

Mulla Khass and 19 other persons who made affidavits that Ahmad was a Chinese subject.

Examination of defendant Ahmad.

By B. C. G.—

Q.—Do you, or did you, hold registration certificate No. 541 ?

A.—Here it is. I also held a tung-shang-piao, but the Amban took it from me.

Q.—Did you get the certificate yourself, or did your father get it ? if so, where and when ?

A.—I got it myself, at Kashgar, 8 or 9 years ago.

Q.—On what grounds ?

A.—My father came from Bajaur.

By the Magistrate—

Q.—Why did you tell me that your father came from Kabul ? Here is an affidavit by you to this effect ? (Exh. D.)

A.—They put handcuffs on my hands and fetters on my feet and said to me "you must say that your father came from Kabul, and not say that he came from Bajaur or Peshawar. In two months the Afghan Consul is coming and you will be his subject. Meanwhile you must pay all taxes, or you will be put in jail for 6 years." Saying this they put my sister in jail and other members of my family. I said what I did from fear of my life.

Q.—Did you not tell me that your ancestors were all Chinese subjects, but that you yourself had become a British subject 6 or 7 years ago ?

A.—I did not say so. After I was put into chains I said I was a Chinese subject because they forced me to say so.

By B. C. G.—

Q.—How long were you kept in prison ?

A.—One day and one night, with my three brothers and two sisters.

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Q.—What Begs were present ?

A.—Hushur Beg and Niaz Beg (Niaz Beg has gone to Khotan, he was interpreter of the Amban). My own Beg was after me for two months previously to become a Chinese subject, saying that if I did not, my lands would be confiscated.

Q.—Did you say anything to anybody after this or make any complaint ?

A.—Not after being arrested and released ; before I complained about persecution to the Aksakal, who said he could do nothing for me.

Q.—What village did your father come from in Bajaur ?

A.—I was a small child when my father died. I don't knew what village my father came from. But the following merchants of Yarkand, who knew my father and that I am his son, will give evidence :—

Muhammad Azam Khan.

Haji Turab Shah.

Abdullah Jan Bai of Bajaur—gave evidence in my favour before Colonel Etherton in Yarkand, that my brother was Muhammad Akhun of Bajaur.

Amir Muhammad Khan.

(At this stage defendant's two brothers Muhammad Akhun and Ali Akhun and the son of the 4th brother who is absent appeared and stood by defendant.)

Examination of Muhammad Akhun defendant 2.

By Magistrate—

Q.—Did you or did you not say, before being put under arrest that you were an Afghan subject ?

A.—I did not say so. I said I was a British subject, therefore they put me under arrest.

Q.—Did you say that your ancestors were not British subjects but Chinese subjects ?

A.—When my father came to this country we knew nothing about Chinese subjects, British subjects or Russian subjects. When the Consul came 7 or 8 years ago we became British subjects.

Q.—Did you give me on the 2nd day a document of the time of Yakub Beg Badaulat proving that your father Nur Muhammad came from Kabul ? Was the document a deed of transfer of land from one Mir Latif to your father ? Did I give you back this document ?

A.—Yes, this is true.

Q.—Did you give the certificate that your father was an Afghan, under compulsion from me or not ?

A.—I was not compled to give this certificate. I gave this after coming out of prison.

Q.—Did your ancestors come from Kabul ?

A.—My father and ancestors came from Bajaur, but as my father was described in the old sale-deed as a Kabuli, I gave an affidavit that he was a Kabuli.

Q.—Your brother Ahmad said this morning that he was forced to give a certificate that his father was a Kabuli. You say you were not forced to do so. Which is true ?

A.—I was forced to give such a certificate.

By B. C. G.—

Q.—Which of these two statements is true ?

A.—It is true that no force was being used on me when I gave the Kabuli certificate, but I had been put into prison. Do you not call that force ?

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Q.—Did Tokhta Beg press you to become a Chinese subject ?

A.—He said that the Amban had ordered me to give a certificate, that I am a Chinese subject. I refused. He said my lands would be confiscated. I said "All right I will go to Yarkand."

Names of witnesses.—

(1) Mulla Khass.

(2) Sabit Imam.

(3) Hashim Imam.

(4) Niaz Akhun.

(5) Ahmat Akhun.

(6) Muhammad Amin Haji.

(7) Islam Akhun Yuzbashi.

(8) Tokhta Akhun.

P. Witness 1.—Mulla Khass.

By Magistrate.—

Q.—Did you of your own free will give me a certificate, along with many other persons of your village that the ancestors of the defendants came to this country long ago and have been Chinese subjects for a long time and that the defendants 4 years ago became British subject.

A.—Yes, I gave it of my own free will.

By B. C. G.—

Q.—There are two documents here signed by you and other witnesses. One (Exh. B) says that the defendants and their family have been Chinese subjects for 70 or 80 years. In the other (Exh. A) it is said that the defendants' ancestors have always lived and died in this country. Did you give both of these, and if so, which is true ?

A.—Defendant's father Nur Muhammad Haji came from Kabul.

By Magistrate.—

Q.—Did you sign the second affidavit only after seeing the sale-deed (Exh. C) ?

A.—No. I knew before. Nur Muhammad Haji himself told me, also his children.

By B. C. G.—

Q.—Why did you not complain to the Amban 3 or 4 years ago when the defendants first pretended to be British subject ?

A.—I did not know anything about it.

Q.—Why did you sign this paper (Exh. A) ?

A.—The Imam Sabit Akhun brought all of us to Yamen and told us about the defendants. When the document was being written, I was a long way off and did not know what was being written. I did not sign it. They told me at the time that my name was being entered on the paper.

Q.—Where did the writing and sealing of the document B take place ?

A.—I do not know. The Imam Sabit Akhun, told me to come to Tokhta Beg's house. When I came to the door, the Imam told me that a document had been sealed with my name entered in it. I did not see the document, nor was it read to me.

P. W. 2.—Sabit Akhun, Imam of Shashut.

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By Magistrate.—

Q.—You have heard the document (A) read to you. Did you give it ?

A.—Yes.

By B. C. G.—

Q.—You have heard this document (B) read to you. Did you give it ?

A.—(At first, I only gave one document. (Then when coached by Begs standing by his elbow) I gave document A ; I gave 6 documents in all.

Q.—Is the statement in document A that the defendant's ancestors have always been Chinese subjects true or false ?

A.—It is false. Defendant's father came from Kabul.

Q.—When were defendants brought to Yamen and imprisoned ?

A.—Five or six months ago.

Q.—Was document B given before or after that time ?

A.—After.

Q.—Which was given first, A or B ?

A.—Both on the same day. I do not remember which was given first.

Q.—When did you give the other 4 documents mentioned above ?

A.—I do not remember.

Q.—Did you tell what is written in the document (B) to someone else, or did someone else tell it to you ?

A.—I told the rest of the villagers.

Q.—Who told you to write the document ?

A.—The defendant Ahmad, Muhammad Akhun and Ali Akhun asked me to write it.

Q.—Where was it written ?

A.—At the Yamen.

Q.—Were the witnesses whose names are in document B all present ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Was this document read over after sealing to all those present ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Were the defendants present ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Who called you and the other villagers to the Yamen ?

A.—The defendants' sister Saida Bibi was sent by the defendants to summon us to come to the Yamen and make affidavit and get them out of jail. (Then says) Yunas Akhun son of Hassan Akhun defendant was sent to fetch us by Saida Bibi.

Q.—Why did you not complain before about defendants' becoming British subjects, 3 or 4 years ago ?

A.—Because they were paying revenue and all Government dues. I did not complain. (Then says on being confronted with document B) they were not paying revenue.

Q.—Did the Qazi seal the document here in the Yamen or did you take it to the Qazi for sealing ?

A.—We took it to the Qazi. (Then says) I did not go to the Qazi, Ahmad and one other man went.

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Q.—When did Nur Muhammad defendants' father come to Karghalik ?

A.—As long ago as I can remember he has been in Karghalik. He was in my village before I can remember.

Q.—How old are you ?

A.—40 or 50.

P. W. No. 5 (called by Consul General to whom Magistrate left calling of P. W.s).

Ahmad Akhun.

By B. C. G.—

Q.—You have heard the document A read to you. Did you give it ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—You have heard B. Did you give it ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Did you give any other document of this kind ?

A.—No.

Q.—Which did you give first ?

A.—I gave the big one with the red Chinese writing (Exh. A) first, and the other one perhaps (Turki *miki*) 15 days later.

Q.—Is the statement in document A that defendants' ancestors have always been Chinese subjects true or false ?

A.—(At first) the defendants told me that their father came from Kabul, when I asked them. (Then says) they told me that their ancestors came from Kabul.

Q.—Did any body else besides defendants tell you this ?

A.—No. They told me in their own village.

Q.—Are the tombs of the defendants' family in the village ?

A.—No. Only their father's tomb is in my cemetery.

Q.—When were defendants brought to Yamen and imprisoned ?

A.—In Rajb month, about March 1922.

Q.—When and where were these documents written and sealed ?

A.—I forget exactly which but one of these was written before the defendants were arrested the other after they were let out.

Q.—Where were they written ?

A.—The first one was written outside the Yamen at a druggist (attar) shop about 150 yards from the Yamen's outer gate. The other one was written inside the Yamen courtyard.

Q.—Were the witnesses whose names are in document B all present ?

A.—All were present.

Q.—Was this document read over after sealing to all those present ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Were the defendants present ?

A.—No. They were not present either time.

Q.—Who called you and the other villagers to the Yamen ?

A.—No body called us either time. We came of our own accord.

Q.—Did the Qazi seal the document here in the Yamen or did you take it to the Qazi for sealing ?

A.—We all went to the Qazi for the sealing of the document.

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Q.—Did the same Qazi sign both documents or different Qazis ?

A.—Different. One was Mansur. I forget the other.

Q.—Why did you not complain before about defendents becoming British subjects 3 or 4 years ago ?

A.—I did complain two or three times.

Q.—When did Nur Muhammad defendant's father come to Karghalik ?

A.—Before I remember.

Q.—How old are you ?

A.—40.

Magistrate has no questions to ask and does not want to summon any more witnesses.

The Amban requests that all six brothers and sisters, be called up separately and asked the same question ;

(1) *Ahmad* Defendant No. 1.

Q.—Do you know what country and place your father came from ?

A.—From Bajaur in Indian Territory. I do not know what place, as I was very small when my father died.

(2) *Muhammad Akhun.*

Q.—Do you know what country and place your father came from ?

A.—We call him Kabuli but he came from Bajaur. In this country all Bajauris are called Kabulis.

(3) *Ali Akhun.*

Q.—Do you know what country and place your father came from ?

A.—He came from Bajaur. I do not know from what village.

[(4) *Hassan*, the 4th brother, is not present.]

(5) *Saida Bibi.*

Q.—Do you know what country and place your father came from ?

A.—I was told when I grew up that my father came from Bajaur. I do not know from what village.

(6) *Bibi Khanum.*

Q.—Do you know what country and place your father came from ?

A.—From Bajaur. If a person comes from Yangi Hissar to Karghalik, they call him a Kashgari (much laughter). My name is Aisha but they call me Bibi Khanum.

The 13th November 1922. C. P. SKINNER.

Sub-enclosure II to enclosure No. II.

AHMAD CASE. EXHIBIT A.

6th Shaban 1340 (5th of April 1922).

We of Shashut Khatib Mullah Hassan, Imam Said Akhun, Hasham Akhun, Niaz Akhun, Ahmad Akhun, Mohammad Amin Haji, Daulat Akhun, Tokhta Akhun, Turdi Akhun, Nasir Bai, Turdi Akhun, Thu Niaz Khoja, Abdul Rahman Akhun and Turdi Bai by the mouth of our spokesman Islam Yuzbashi make the following true statement on behalf of all Chinese subjects, great and small, that Mohammad Akhun, Ali Akhun, Hassan Bai, Ahmad Akhun, Bibi Aghacha and Saida Bibi of the same village have from their ancestors always been Chinese subjects. They paid revenue, customs duties and all other Government taxes just as we did and died Chinese subjects. Now these are six of them with

Mohammad Akhun as their leader. They used to be Chinese subjects and paid with us taxes and other Government dues. Until 3 or 4 years ago nobody ever heard them say that they were British subjects. It is only for the last 3 or 4 years that they have been saying they have assumed British nationality and they have been avoiding us and refusing to pay Government dues. They have been Chinese subjects from their ancestors and all the villagers know this fact. This is our true affidavit.

Sub-enclosure II to enclosure No. II.

AHMAD CASE. EXHIBIT B.

7th of Shaban 1340 (6th April 1922).

We, Khatib Mulla, Hassan Akhun, Imam Said Akhun, Hasham Akhun, Niaz Akhun, Ahmad Akhun, Mohammad Amin Haji, Daulat Akhun, Tokhta Akhun, Turdi Akhun, Nasir Bai, Turdi Akhun, Thu Niaz Khoja, Abdul Rahman Akhun and Turdi Bai of Shashut by the mouth of our spokesman Islam Yuzbashi make the following true statement on behalf of all Chinese subjects great and small. For the last 70 or 80 years Mohammad Akhun, Ali Akhun, Hassan Bai, Ahmad Akhun, Bibi Aghacha and Saida Bibi of the same village are Chinese subjects. We know that they used to pay all Government dues as we ourselves did. They used to be Chinese subjects. It is only for the last 3 or 4 years that the said Mohammad Akhun, Ali Akhun, Hassan Bai, Ahmad Akhun, Bibi, Aghacha and Saida Bibi have called themselves British subjects. Before that they were Chinese subjects. We of the village give this true affidavit.

NOTE.—(Exhibit C is not available, as the Magistrate retained it for submission to his own Government.

AHMAD CASE. EXHIBIT D.

7th of Shaban 1340. (6th of April 1922.)

We, Mohammad Akhun, aged 55 years, Ali Akhun aged 53 years, Hassan Akhun, aged 51 years, Ahmad Akhun, aged 46 years, Musammat Bibi Aghacha, aged 60 years, and Musammat Saida Bibi, aged 30 years of Shashot solemnly state that our father Nur Mohammad Haji is dead. Our mother is also dead. Nur Mohammad Haji, our father, was a Kabul subject. Sixty or seventy years ago he came from Kabul to Karghalik and bought land there. He brought our mother from Yarkand and settled in Karghalik. We were born and brought up in Karghalik and were known as Kabulis. We are Kabul subjects. We will pay revenue, tax on livestock and goods like Chinese subjects. We will not refuse to perform any of the duties required of us in our village as Chinese subjects, and we will be known as Chinese subjects. The Amban will protect us as he does his own subjects. We have given this true affidavit of our being Kabulis of our own accord.

Sub-enclosure No. II to enclosure No. II.

HASSAN CASE.

Statement of Sabit Imam, Prosecution Witness No. 1.

My name is Sabit Akhun. I live in Jai Tughrak. I have known Hassan for the last 20 years. I and several others gave affidavits to the Amban. Hassan lived on lease in my house for 6 or 7 years. I used to write his letters. He used to give me his father's name as Ma Hassan or Mullah Hassan. He used to go to his father's tomb in Yarkand district in the month of Barat (7th month) every year. He moved to another house in my street. I wrote two bonds for Hassan. Twenty days after Rozi Mohammad brought Hassan from the prison he fell ill and died 8 or 9 days being in bed. I read prayers with others over his body. When Hassan came to the mosque to say his prayers, he told me that Rozi Bai got him released from prison. It was the time of sowing the maize.

Thumb mark of SHABIT IMAM.

KARGHALIK ;
The 18th December 1922.

(Sd.) C. P. SKRINE.

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Statement of Niaz Haji, P. W. 2, dated the 18th December 1922.

"I live in Jai Tughrak. I know Hassan. I never saw his father. I saw his father's name as Ma Hassan given in the bonds which Sabit Imam Akhun secured from Hassan's family and shewed to me and others. This occurred 2 or 3 months ago. Before seeing these bonds I did not know Hassan's father's name. I, Sabit Akhun Imam and 5 others gave an affidavit to the Amban regarding Hassan on the 25th of Shaban (24th of April 1922). At that time knew from the bonds who his father was. By mistake I stated that I saw the bonds only 2 or 3 months ago."

Thumb mark of NIAZ HAJI.

KARGHALIK. (Sd.) C. P. SKRINE.

Statement of Rustam.

"My name is Rustam. My father's name was Ali Muhammad. I am of Baltistan and a British subject. I came from Baltistan 60 years ago. I had lived in Chabachi since I came to this country. I married a wife named Rafi Khoja. I had one son named Hassan and one daughter Hashi Khan. Nasir Beg under Amban's orders demanded my billet from my son Hassan. Hassan refused to give it up, so he threatened him and took him to the Yamen. A wrong word dropped from Hassan's mouth (*i.e.*, he called himself Rustam). He sent word to me from Yamen, where I went and found him outside the prison. The Amban held an enquiry after 12 days and put Hassan in prison. The Amban asked me some questions at the time of enquiry. I told him that I came from Baltistan 60 years ago, married a wife and had children, that I married my son to a wife 20 years ago when he was quite young, and that we lived in separate houses. Amban took four affidavits from me and four from Hassan that we were Chinese subjects. We gave the affidavits because the Chinese rod is hard, and we were afraid of the Amban's oppression. After enquiry Hassan was thrown in prison and remained there for 8 days. During this period I used to take food for Hassan whom the jailor never allowed me to see or take food to. After 8 days Rozi Bai approached the Amban and secured Hassan's release by standing surety for him. Hassan was unwell as he came out of the prison. The hand in which he held his bread trembled. He died 8 days after his release. I was also ill. We did not see each other. Rozi Muhammad Bai, Yusuf, Rozi, Ahmad, Ibrahim and Mulla Ashur know that Hassan was my son. Hassan fell ill in prison where the jailor threatened and used filthy language to him. He was detained in the Yamen for 24 days."

KARGHALIK ; *Thumb mark of* RUSTAM.

18th December 1922. (Sd.) C. P. SKRINE.

Statement of Rozi Muhammad.

"I live in Chabachi and know Hassan. He was Rustam's son. He moved from Chabachi to Jai Tughrak some 15 or 16 years ago. I used to live in Kizil Masjid. When I settled in Chabachi I found Rustam with his son there. I moved to Chabachi 36 years ago. The house of Rustam and Hassan was at the distance a man's voice can be heard from my house in Chabachi. They lived in Sit Akhun's house. Hassan had a sister too, and their mother was alive. Ma Hassan whom Sabit Imam has mentioned in his statements was Hassan's father-in-law. Ma Hassan married his daughter Baisa Khan to Hassan. Hassan married this Baisa Khan when he lived in the house of Sit Akhun in Chabachi. Ma Hessan lived in Bagh Arik in the district of Posgam. He died 10 or 12 years ago. He himself had come to this country from Shigar (Baltistan) and was a British subject. So far as I can guess Hassan gave his father's name in the bond as Ma Hassan because the lease money mentioned in those bonds was paid out of the inheritance left by accused's father-in-law Ma Hassan. I brought Hassan from the Yamen in Ramzan last (May 1922). He was in prison and I sat at the prison door. Hassan on coming out of the prison walked slowly and wept. I asked him not to grieve.

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Rustam was also there. I rode on my donkey with him up to Yakshamba Bazar, from where Rustam Bai and I separated. I went to Chabachi and Hassan to Jai Tughrak. I did not go to Jai Tughrak. Some say Hassan died 7 days after, and others say 8.

Thumb mark of ROZI.

KARGHALIK ; (Sd.) C. P. SKRINE.

18th December 1922.

Sub-enclosure No. III to Enclosure No. II.

HASSAN CASE.

Statement of Rustam, son of Ali Mohammad called Ali Bai, aged 75, of Chabachi (Yakshanba Bazar).

[*Taken by His Majesty's Consul-General separately before the proceedings*].

I came 60 years ago from Shigar in Baltistan by myself. My father was dead then. I settled at Yakshanba Bazar. Three or four Baltis were with me—Taqi Bai, Alu Bai, Abdul Hayat and Ali Yar. They are all dead. I married 2 wives in Yakshanba Bazar. From the first, Hawa Khan, I had a son and a daughter. The son's name was Hassan, the daughter Hashia Khan is a widow in Jai Toghrak in Yakshanba Bazar circle.

In the month of Barat (April 1922) Nasir Beg, the official Beg of Yakshanba Bazar at that time, asked my son Hassan for his name and billet (registration certificate). Being without experience of legal proceedings and very frightened of the Beg, Hassan said he was a British subject called Rustam, and showed the Beg my registration certificate. The Beg said " You are a liar, you are not Rustam, give me the registration certificate ". Hassan refused, whereupon the Beg ran after him with a whip and forced him to give up the registration certificate. He then took Hassan to the Yamen. (Then says) Two days after Hassan's interview with the Beg a durgha came and took Hassan to the yamen. Before he was taken to the yamen Hassan came weeping to me and told me of Nasir Beg's behaviour to him. Eight days after Hassan had been taken to the yamen I was sent for and went to the yamen. My son was not then in the lock-up. He was in the yamen yard. Twelve days after that there was an enquiry. They took my statement and Hassan's and threatened and frightened into giving affidavits that we were Chinese subjects. We were frightened of being beaten and so did not say we were British subjects. They then put Hassan in prison for 8 days. During these 8 days I brought my son food every day but the jailor would not let me see him. After 8 days Rozi Mohammad Bai came and got my son out of prison. Hassan's condition was very weak when he came out of prison. He trembled all over and could hardly get his bread to his mouth. I also became ill after this and lay in my own house ; my son was taken to his house. I did not see him again : after a week they told me he was dead.

The Amban took 4 affidavits from me. The affidavits were read to me.

Rozi and Yusaf who are relations of Hassan's mother can give evidence that he is my son. Ibrahim Bai Mulla Mohammad, Rozi Mohammad Akhun Bai. These are all British subjects. The Chinese subjects who know have all had to give affidavits to the Chinese that I am not Hassan's father, so they cannot now say I am.

18th December 1922. (Sd.) C. P. SKRINE.

Sub-Enclosure No. IV to Enclosure No. II.

Statement of Tokhta Akhun of Besh Arik, Karghalik District, son of Nazar Bai, of Chaprot, Gilgit Agency. On solemn affirmation.

[*Taken at my house at 11 p.m. before joint enquiry.*]

Eight months ago in the month of Rajab the Amban gave certain orders to the Beg of my village, Sait Beg. Sait Beg said to me where is your " billet " (regis-

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tration certificate). I said "In my house". He told me to come with him to the Amban. I went without my billet. At the Yamen an official called Sharif Topbashi abused me. The Amban asked me whether I had a billet. I said it was at my house. The Amban said that until my billet came he would put me into prison. Sharif Topbashi took me to the door of the prison lock-up and said to the jailor "Shut this *rafis* up" (rafis is a term of abuse referring to religion). The jailor then put my feet into a "*Kotak*" (kind of wooden press). Qasim Durgah, a yayi of Yamen saw me in this state. When this happened, I said to my son Ayub "Go home and bring my *tung-shang-piao*, not my billet, leave the billet in the house. My son arrived back with the *piao* the following day. When the *p'iao* was produced the Amban said to me "Give me a certificate that you are a Chinese subject". I gave four certificates. The Qazi of Pakhpu who was present at the time sealed the documents. I did not sign or seal them. The Qazi had brought with him 113 men of Pakhpu whom the Amban said had become British subjects; the Amban kept these men at the Yamen until they give certificates that they were Chinese subjects. After I had given the certificates they let me go. I did not give the certificates of my own free will. No body would give such a certificate except under pressure. I have no complaint to make against the Aksakal. After being released I went to the Aksakal the same evening and reported. The Aksakal told me to go home in peace. (Then says: I went the next morning to the Aksakal—I had forgotten.) To-day at the Yamen, Hushur, one of the Yamen Begs told me that I had better remain a Chinese subject as I had given a certificate that I was one. He said that the Amban was ready to be very kind to me; that the British Consul was going away in a day or two whereas the Amban would remain here; and that I had better remember the proverb "Either stay with the Mufti or go with the Qazi".

(Sd.) C. P. SKRINE.

15th November 1922.

Statement of Da'im Bai, son of Ayub Bai of Buksungar, Karghalik District, on solemn affirmation. (Taken at my house before joint enquiry.)

My father came to this country from Chaprot in Gilgit. I have a British registration certificate, but two of my brothers have not. The British Aksakal had gone to Yarkand to see the British Consul General. A yayi of the Yamen took my brothers to the Amban, who made them give affidavits of Chinese nationality. They were asked to submit their registration certificates. They said they had none but their brother had one. On this a yayi came for me and took me to the Amban. I was ordered to give my tung-shang-piao and execute an affidavit that I was a Chinese subject, and that I should not go to see the British Aksakal, otherwise I would be punished. I did not inform the British Aksakal of this as he was not in Karghalik. Amban did not beat me. The yayi got the affidavit written and produced me before the Qazi, who sealed the document.

(Sd.) C. P. SKRINE.

KARGHALIK;

The 15th November 1922.

Statement of Tokhta, son of Nazar Bai of Surik in Besh Arik, Karghalik District, on solemn affirmation. (Taken at Yamen in presence of Amban.)

Formerly I was a foreigner (Musafir). Eight months ago I was told by Sait Beg, the Beg of my village, to come to the Yamen. I was in my village at the time and the Beg "durgah" called me. At Karghalik Sait Beg brought me before the Amban. The Amban said to me "Orders have come from the Tuchun that you are to become a Chinese subject. Give up your billet (registration certificate). Where is it?" I said "At my house." They then put me in the lock-up prison and I sent my son Ayub home to get the billet. My son brought the billet the following afternoon and I gave it to the Amban. Up to then I remained in the lock-up. When I gave the billet, the Amban told me to give four certificates that

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I was a Chinese subject. The certificates were written by a Yamen clerk and read to me. They were all the same. I understood what was written. They said that I had formerly called myself a British subject by mistake (sahvlik-bilmaslik) and was really a Chinese subject. The Qazi of Pakhpu singned and sealed the certificates. He was in the Yamen having brought large number of British subjects to give certificates that they were Chinese subjects.

When I had given the certificates the Amban told me to go free and not to be afraid as I was a Chinese subject.

Sharif Topbashi took me to the lock-up. There he told the jailor to " shut this *rafizi* up " (rafiz bad Shia, a term of religious abuse). They put my legs into a Kotak (kind of stocks). The Kotak hurt me, it squeezed my legs. When I gave the certificates I was not in stocks or in prison, but I was afraid of being put into the stocks and prison again. If I had not been afraid I would not have given the certificates. I heard that they have taken a similar certificate from Daim Bai who lives a potai from me. When I was in the Yamen, Ambar Haji of Pakhpu told me that 113 of his villagers had been brought by the Qazi.

From that day to this neither the Amban nor any of his Begs have ever threatened me or brought any pressure to bear on me.

The Kotak consists of two pieces of wood hinged at one end which are closed on one's legs and fastened with a padlock the other end. My leg was not too big for the whole in the Kotak. I was only hurt when I moved my leg.

I am a British subject. My father came from Chaprot. I was twenty years old when he died. He told me where he came from.

(*In response to Magistrate's question*) I did not tell the Amban that my father came from Chaprot.

(In response to B. C. G.'s question.) They did not ask me. I am a small man and did not dare to say so.

(In response to Magistrate's question.) The Amban did not abuse or strike me or speak harshly to me.

(Sd.) C. P. SKRINE.

The 15th November 1922.

PROSECUTION WITNESS.

SHARIF TOPBASHI (MINOR OFFICIAL OF YAMEN).

By Magistrate (whole story of Tokhta Akhun detailed, Amban's version).

(*By B. C. G.*).—

Q.—You say " thousands of people were brought to the Yamen and dealt with at that time." How is it that you remember this man's case? Did you remember it of your own accord, or only when you heard the question?

A.—Of my own accord. I know Tokhta. I am not a neighbour of his, but he comes frequently to Karghalik Bazar.

The 16th November 1922.

Statement of the Magistrate.—

This man Tokhta when summoned to the Yamen said that the Aksakal had his billet. If he had had it with him he would have been allowed to go free and would not have been detained. He is lying now when he says that he told me it was at his house

(Sd.) C. P. SKRINE.

The 16th November 1922.

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Statement of Daim Bai, son of Ayub Bai of Buksungun, Besh Arik, Karghalik District, on solemn affirmation.

Seven months ago a Yavi of the Amban whose name I do not know came and told my family that I was wanted at the Yamen to give a certificate that I was a Chinese subject. I was at work at the time : I am a carpenter. My family came and told me. I went the next day to the Yamen, taking my billet. The Amban asked me for my billet and I gave it to him. I was not detained at the Yamen. I gave the billet because the Amban had ordered me to and I feared that if I did not I would be detained. I did not tell anybody afterwards that I had given up my billet. At the Yamen I gave four certificates. I did not dictate these certificates to the Yamen clerk, he wrote them and read them to me. I do not remember what was in them. I agreed to give them because I was afraid of being detained.

I am a British subject and have always been a British subject.

(*By Magistrate*).—My two brothers were British subjects until they gave certificates, since when they have become Chinese subjects. They did not have certificates, though they were older than myself, because we all thought that one billet was enough for all three of us. My father came from Chaprot in Gilgit Agency. I did not tell the Amban this fact because I was not asked. (The Magistrate says that all the persons who said they were British subjects were asked where their fathers and ancestors came from, what they were doing before they came, etc. This was not recorded. The men themselves were asked who they were and where they came from, and if they had any proof that they were British subjects. This also was not recorded. Altogether there were 57 persons in possession of British registration certificates from whom affidavits were taken.

(Sd.) C. P. SKRINE.

The 16th November 1922.

Note.—Tokhta Bai and Daim Bai were both obviously frightened in the presence of the Magistrate and his Begs. The former repeatedly looked nervously at the Begs while answering questions. I am convinced that he omitted certain statements made to me the day before, *e.g.*, about Hushur's words to him, because he was afraid of the Begs.

(Sd.) C. P. SKRINE.

The 16th November 1922.

25th of Jamadi-ul-Akhir 1340 (23rd February 1923).

I, Daim Bai, son of Ayub Bai of Buksungun, Besh Arik, give this affidavit on solemn affirmation.

I am a Chinese subject from my ancestors. I am a carpenter. The (Chinese) Aksakal used to put me to forced labour, giving me no time to do my own business. Being tired of these oppressions I got my name entered in (British) Aksakal's register, and having obtained a "tung-shang-piao" I become a British subject. Now when the big men of my village petitioned to the Amban that I had adopted British nationality, the Amban summoned me and held an enquiry. I have been proved a Chinese subject. I repent now and becoming a Chinese subject I gave this affidavit. I will never call myself a British subject in future, and will peacefully live as a Chinese subject. If I again call myself a British subject, the Amban may give me any punishment he likes. I give this affidavit.

Sealed by Qazi.

Sub-Enclosure No. V to Enclosure No. II.

Translation of the statement of Shamroz, son of Nauroz.

"My father Nauroz was a resident of Zong Lung. My mother had obtained a registration certificate. I never went to the British Consulate. My mother adopted British nationality in her life time, but her registration certificate arrived after her death. My father Nauroz was the son of Khoja Nazar. My mother died 8 or 9 years ago. I did not tell Haidar Beg that I had a "tung-shung-piao". My mother obtained a "tung-shung-piao". I do not know what statement she made when she got it. My mother being ill, had gone to Karghalik. On return she did not say anything to me. I am a Chinese subject. I did not appear with my mother before the Amban and the Consul-General at the time of joint enquiry for

registration in Karghalik. I am ready to take oath as to the truth of this statement. I was born in Peshawar, and came to this country when I was 6 years old."

KARGHALIK, (Sd.) C. P. SKRINE.

The 18th December 1922.

Translation of the statement of Ghulam Rasul, ex-British Aksakal, Karghalik.

" Nauroz, father of Shamroz, was in the British service for 19 years in Peshawar. He came with his wife Hussain Jan Bibi and son Shamroz on leave for a year, but died after 4 months. He was a petty officer in the British Indian army. Both Shamroz and his mother Hussain Jan Bibi appeared before the Amban and the British Consul General at the time of joint enquiry in Karghalik."

KARGHALIK; (Sd.) C. P. SKRINE.

The 18th December 1922.

Translation of the statement of Kadir Beg.

" My grandfather and Shamroz's were brothers. Nauroz, father of Shamroz, lived for 16 or 18 years in India and then returned to this country and died. He died 22 years ago. The mother of Nauroz died 7 or 8 years ago. I do not know what Nauroz did in India. He had gone from here in the service of a caravan."

KARGHALIK; (Sd.) C. P. SKRINE.

The 18th December 1922.

Sub-Enclosure No. Va. to Enclosure No. II.

Copy of a letter from Taoyin of Kashgar, to His Britannic Majesty's Consul-General, Kashgar, No. 621, dated the 11th September 1922.

Karghalik Magistrate reports as follows :—

Having received instructions to investigate cases in which people have falsely made pretence to British nationality I made public announcement of these instructions. I later received report from Ha-ti-erh (? Haider), Beg of Tsung-nung villages, to the following effect :—

(Hsia-mu-jou-hsia) Shamroz is a Chinese subject but his deceased father Nur Ju went before his son's birth to P'i-ya-w (? Bajaur) (? Peshawar) to trade and married a woman of that country named (Yu-shan-chiang-pi) Hussain Jan Bibi who gave birth to his son Hsia-mu-jou-tse [sic]. Later the family returned to Karghalik, and father and mother died there. In 1914 at the time of joint enquiry Hsia-mu-jou-tse obtained a "t'ung-shang-p'iao" owing to his mother having been a native of P'i-ya-w.' On enquiry Hsia-mu-jou-tse admitted all the above, and that he was really a Chinese subject. He handed in two "t'ung-shang-p'iao's" dated Fen, 27th, 1914, Nos. 96 and 97, being those issued in the names of his mother and himself ..... the former was really dead at the time they were issued. Please ask British Consul General to cancel registration of Hsia-mu-jou-tse and Yu-shan-chiang-pi. If he refuses to do so, please announce that all British subjects who have married Chinese women, together with their families, shall be publicly proclaimed by us as having become Chinese subjects. Magistrate transmits Hsia-mu-jou-tse's affidavit and the two "t'ung-shang-p'iaos."

Governor has also received copy of magistrate's report and instructs Taoyin to take matter up in earnest with Consul General. If latter refuses to cancel registration of the two persons in question, Taoyin should ask him whether all British subjects who have married Chinese women together with their families should be considered as Chinese subjects.

Taoyin accordingly asks for instructions.

(Seal).

Sub-Enclosure No. Va. to Enclosure No. II.

Copy of a letter from His Britannic Majesty's Consul General, Kashgar, to the Taoyin of Kashgar, No. 581, dated the 29th January 1923.

In reply to your letter No. 44, dated 22nd January 1923, I have the honour to inform you that I enquired into the case of Shamroz at Karghalik jointly with

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Magistrate Kwei. We recorded the statements of Shamroz himself, of Ghulam Rasul, ex-Aksakal of Karghalik and of Kadir Beg. From these statements and from the Consular records I find that Shamroz's mother Hussain Jan Bibi who is now dead came to the British Consul General in Karghalik and got herself and her son Shamroz registered as British subjects on the grounds that her deceased husband Nauroz had been a British subject. Nauroz was born a Chinese subject, but migrated to India and became a naturalised British subject. The latter fact is clear, as he joined the British Army in India, which he could not have done if he had not naturalised himself. Nauroz did not become a British subject merely because he married Hussain Jan Bibi. His marrying her had nothing to do with the case. It was because he had been in the Indian Army and must therefore have been naturalised that the British Consul-General registered his widow and son. Similarly, Hussain Jan Bibi's right to British nationality was not due to her birth, but to the fact that she was the wife of a naturalised British subject.

Now however, as Shamroz wishes to renounce his British nationality and become a Chinese subject, he is at liberty to do so. Just as Nauroz became a naturalised British subject in India, so Shamroz can become a naturalised Chinese subject here. I have taken his name off our register of British subjects and shall be glad if you will return his registration certificate that I may cancel it.

Sub-Enclosure No. VI to Enclosure No. II.

Statement of Nazar Shah, son of Mohammad Shah, Chitrali.

I came from Hasanabad in Chitral 30 years ago with my father, I was then 20. We settled in Jai Toghrak, Ishki Su, Karghalik district. I got this billet (produces Registration certificate No. 318, dated 11th November 1913) 8 years ago at a joint enquiry held by the British Consul General and the Amban here.

This year in March I met the British Consul General at Kok Rabat and accompanied him to Yarkand where I stayed with him 16 days and then went to Posgam with him. At Posgam, as he was returning without visiting Karghalik, I asked him what I should do, as the Chinese would certainly arrest me and demand my papers to make me say I was a Chinese subject. The British Consul General told me not to give up my certificate but to give as many affidavits as they liked : they could not make me a Chinese subject against my will. I went back to Karghalik and wandered about 5 or 6 days. Then Nasir Beg, Sait Qazi and 5 *durgas* came to Jai Toghrak and collected 50 of us in the house of a Chinese subject called Abdul Hakim. Nasir Beg told us to produce our billets. Five people including myself gave up our billets. I thought that Nasir was going to give the billets back, but when I asked for mine he refused. I begged and prayed him to give it to me and finally said that if he gave it to me I would take it to the Amban myself and give it up and say I was a Chinese subject. He told me to give an affidavit there and then. I gave one and he gave me back the billet. Sait Qazi sealed it. The 4 other men who gave up their billets were Karim Akhun Balti, Yusuf Balti, Hasan, son of Rustam and Mohammad Ju Kashmiri.

These men did not give affidavits on the spot or get their billets back : they gave affidavits afterwards at the Yamen. I remained 10 days at home and then Daud Mulla Yavi and Mohammad Nazar Yuzbashi came to Jai Toghrak and arrested myself and 36 other British subjects, Baltis, Chitralis and Kashmiris. They kept us in custody and the next day 2 Yuzbashis, Mohammad Nazar Sharif and Daud Mulla brought us into Karghalik, to the Yamen. There we saw two men in chains in the yard, with Shals (Kangs) weighing about 8 charaks (128 lbs.) each on their necks. We were taken before the Amban. While there, Id Akhund was brought up in chains from the lock-up. The Amban said to us " Do you see Id Akhun ?" We said " Yes." He said " Did you see Asadullah ?" (Asadullah was one of the men with Shals on his neck in the yard.) We said " Yes." " All right," said the Amban, " give up your billets." We were all afraid and those of us who had them gave up our billets. They then asked us our names and father's names. I said my father's name was Mohammad Shah. The Yuzbashis who were standing by said " He is son of Aziz Shah. There are two men living on the other side of the river (*i.e.*, Yarkand district) whose names are Nazar Shah and their father's name

Mohammad Shah, he has got one of their billets." At that moment I was sitting on the ground with my cap off. Two of the Begs came up and threatened me and roughly made me get up. The Amban got very angry and asked me why I was sitting. I said that the Yuzbashis were lying, the register of British subjects at Yarkand was different from that of Karghalik; my name was on the Karghalik register and if it was not, he could call me a liar. The Amban said there is no question about that. I am not going to look in the register. You must say your father was Aziz Shah. I explained that my father's real name had been Mohammad Shah but people in Yarkand commonly called him Aziz Shah. Then Sufi, Sabit Imam, Niaz Haji, Qurban Niaz, Supurgi, Niaz, Qasim Haji and another Sabit all swore that I was the son of Aziz Shah, the son of Qasim Shah (my father's name was Shah Mubarik) and that they had come to the funeral of my father. I denied this and said I was ready to take oath according to Shariat. The Amban then said, very well, you may go and swear to-morrow before Alam Akhun and you will be given back your billet. Sharif Topbashi, Tokhta Beg and Sufi took hold of me by my arms and the scruff of my neck and put me into the armoury "(topkhana)". They put Karim and Barat in with me. Next day they took Barat away and he gave an affidavit. I remained 4 days in the *topkhana* and then fell ill. They told the Amban this and he ordered me to be taken to a *serai*. They took me to the *serai* of Ila Akhun, where I remained sick for 12 days. When I was better, the 7 witnesses Mohammad Nazar and Sharif Yuzbashi came and took me before Alam Akhun. Sharif told the Akhun that I was Nazar Shah, son of Aziz Shah, etc., etc. I denied it and said to the Qazi that I wanted to take an oath that I was a British subject and get back my billet. The Qazi said "No. I will not give you the oath. I will give it to one of these 7 witnesses, and then you will be either shot or imprisoned for 12 years." At this I was afraid and agreed to swear. They took 24 sworn affidavits from me that day. Twelve in the name of Nazar Shah, son of Mohammad Shah and 12 in the name of Nazar Shah, son of Aziz Shah. Then they let me go free.

I have witnesses of my British nationality. Not here, because everyone is afraid of the Chinese. Here you have ten men at the Yamen there are a thousand. Nowadays a son dares not give evidence for his father. At Hasanabad Shah Abdul Hasan, son of Ghulam Ali, a Maulai Pir will vouch for me: he knew my father and knows me. Five years ago he came here; this year his brother Shah Sayid Mohammad came. He has just gone to Kilian.

Altogether they took billets away and extorted affidavits from over 50 inhabitants of Jai Toghrak.

Karim, son of Rahman of Bralda, Baltistan.
Sait, son of Ali Beg of Bralda, Baltistan.
Mohammad Ju, son of Abbas.
Niaz, son of Rozi Mohammad of Skardu.
Rozi Mohammad, son of Ghulam of Bralda, Baltistan.

} are all here now and will give statements.

16th November 1922.

(Sd.) C. P. SKRINE.

Sub-Enclosure No. VI (*a*) to Enclosure No. H.

List of British subjects of Jai Toghrak who complained to British Consul General on 16th November 1922.

1. Mohammad Nazar.
2. Doulat Nazar.
3. Doulat Bai.
4. Tokhta Akhun.
5. Saim.
6. Malik.
7. Rozi Mulla.
8. Khuda Berdi.
9. Tahir Bai.
10. Sayid Mirza.
11. Doulat Mohammad Mulla.
12. Razaq.
13. Turdi Mohammad.
14. Kifik Mohammad.
15. Sait.
16. Mohammad Safa.
17. Safar Mohammad.
18. Gul Mohammad.

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19. Tokhta.
20. Mohammad Supergi.
21. Niaz Bai.
22. Safar Mohammad.
23. Nazar Shah.
24. Karim Akhun.
25. Yusuf Akhun.
26. Sit Akhun.
27. Id.
28. Niaz Akhun.
29. Barat.
30. Hushur Mohammad.
31. Mohammad Akhun.
32. Mohammad Saleh.
33. Khush Nazar.
34. Tokhta.

16th November 1927.

(Sd.) C. P. SKRINE.

Petition of Id Akhun referred to in paragraph 2 of covering letter.

To

THE BRITISH CONSUL GENERAL, KASHGAR.

SIR,

I, Id Akhun of Alaghir, district Karghalik, son of Gharib Bai deceased, now in prison, beg to submit that I was in prison suffering hardships for many days before your arrival in Karghalik. You, on arrival, enquired about me and demanded my release to hold an enquiry. The Amban insisted on bringing me before you in chains. You said that I could not be examined until the handcuffs and fetters had been taken off me The Amban said that he had no orders to remove the chains. You told him that you could not hold an enquiry as long as my legs and hands were in chains, and that you would have me released from chains and produced in Kashgar for enquiry.

I was awaiting some favourable orders since you had gone back, but on the 4th of Jamadi-ul-Sani (22nd January 1923) the Amban summoned me from the prison and announced that I had been sentenced to 23 years and 9 months' imprisonment and he had chains put round my hands, feet and neck. Sir, I am in great trouble. Apart from this, the Amban put a *Kang* round my neck and recovered from me all kinds of taxes due from my relatives. I have three minor sons, who have nobody but God to look after them. My lands are left uncultivated and I am put to great loss. Now if the orders regarding 23 years' imprisonment be true, I and my family are lost.

Sir, I hope you from your fatherly kindness will rescue me from prison, for which I will be ever grateful.

Thumb impression of
ID AKHUN.
SUFIA BIBI, *wife of Id Akhun.*

Petition of Akmad and his brothers referred to in paragraph 2 of covering letter.

To

THE BRITISH CONSUL GENERAL, KASHGAR

SIR,

We, Ahmad, Mohammad Khan, Ali Khan and Hassan Khan, sons of Nur Mohammad Haji of Bajaur, beg to submit that we are registered British subjects, being the sons of a father who came down to British territory. Five or six months ago the Amban of Karghalik sent a runner for us and, having summoned us, had thrown us in prison and taken an affidavit. Dip Chand Aksakal reported the fact to you. When you came to Karghalik we were produced before the Amban and we were asked by the Amban for any old document which might throw light on

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our identification. We submitted our father's two documents in which he was described as a Kabuli. The Amban had taken these two documents from us to send to Urumchi and promised us copies thereof to keep till the original were returned. We have not received even the copies yet. You too had said that you would report about our case.

Now some 5 or 10 days ago the Amban summoned us and said that we had conspired with the Consul General to prove him a liar so either he (the Amban) will hand over charge of the Ambanship to us or will obtain orders from the President of the Republic to put us to death or throw in prison for many years. Having passed these orders he turned us out, summoned Tokhta Beg and told him to consult the villagers and fabricate a case against us. Tokhta Beg accordingly conspired with the Yuzbashi, Unbashi, Imam Muazin and others of the village and concocted a case against us to the effect that on the ground of possessing a British registration certificate we had not so far paid either duties, sheep tax or land revenue, and that they had been paying the same on our behalf by borrowing money on interest. This lying story they submitted to the Amban who having summoned the villagers and confronted them with Tokhta Beg, told them that these were the facts and took an affidavit from them.

Sir, since we were registered, we have been paying all taxes and land revenue, etc., with the exception of duty on local produce and cattle. The Beg, Yuzbashi and Unbashi instigated by the Amban have fabricated this case against us.

Thumb marks of—

Mohammad Khan.

Ahmad.

Ali Khan.

Hassan Khan.

Cross-examined by me on his petition, Ahmad states as follows :—

Up to three years ago I and my brothers used to pay only land revenue, no taxes or duties. For the last three years we have been paying all taxes and duties, the same as paid by Chinese subjects, although we were British subjects. The case concocted against us that since we registered ourselves as British subjects 5 or 6 years ago, we have not paid any cattle tax, internal customs due or forced labour.

The 15th February 1923. (Sd.) C. P. SKRINE.

G. M. Press Simla No. MC5870—28-4-23—21—E.C.M., etc.

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[*This letter to his mother introduces in passing Murad Qari, the 'young assistant aksakal of Yarkand' who, as Skrine later noted, assisted him in recording and translating Turki folklore and songs. Skrine's continuing interest in antiquities here and correspondence about them with Aurel Stein reveal an amateur enthusiasm tempered clearly by an understanding it was important to follow the advice of the expert. Although not indicated here, apparently Stein did not encourage the idea of an amateur's doing a 'little digging'. In this letter and another couple of places, Skrine expresses some enthusiasm for the accomplishments of Yakub Beg, the Khoqandi warlord who had established himself for a number of years as an authoritarian ruler in Kashgar in the 1870s.*

The letter contains the first explicit statement that Skrine planned to write a book (upholding the family honour here is a reference to his father's having been a published author), though its subject and title would end up being very different from this initial indication. Ironically, while he again criticizes Ella Sykes regarding her mis-information about food in Kashgaria, as we learn later, she was the one who would recommend him to Methuen, his eventual publisher for CCA.]

Pialma (2 marches short of Khotan), 22 November 1922

Though this is only Wednesday and I posted a letter to you from Kargalik on Friday, I'm afraid I've missed a mail. I should have written from Goma which we reached Saturday night & left Monday morning. But I not only had a lot to do at Goma, I had also to send a long cypher telegram to Peking & India about Kargalik & the result of my investigations there. This took me till nearly midnight on Sunday [...] The Chinese post goes along this road every 2 days & is fairly quick & regular, taking 5 days from Goma and 9 days from Khotan to Kashgar, but it is terribly expensive. An envelope containing our mail, some 15 ordinary letters, cost nearly a dollar (3/6) to send from Kashgar to Goma! Until we reach Keriya, our 'farthest east', we shall of course be getting further & further away from Kashgar & mail will continue to reach us only every 10 or 12 days; on the way back we shall be flooded, getting then 3 or 4 days. In my last I think I told you about the Homeric struggle I was having (officially) with the astute Manchu district magistrate of Kargalik, Kwei. Privately our relations were of the best; we became quite members of Kwei's family, & were <u>both</u> (not only Doris this time) great <u>succès</u> with the perfectly charming & deliciously pretty little ladies of Kwei's family. I took two or three excellent photos of them with my plate camera [*Fig. 93*] and will send you postcards of them when I get back to Kashgar & can do some printing. Kwei was 'all over' me, hoping, I supposed, to disarm me & make it difficult for me to report against him to Peking. He reckons without his host. I've already told them the truth, nothing more, which



Fig. 93. Amban Kwei and his family in Kargalik, photographed in his home (CPS photo; after: Nazaroff 1935, facing p. 144).

is that Kwei carried out most energetically the orders received by him from the Governor at Urumchi. Those orders were undoubtedly actuated by anti-foreign bias on the Gov[erno]r's part; the Governor has good reason to loathe the Russians, and he tars us with the same brush. Whether Kwei's motives were also 'anti-foreignism' or whether he was merely being efficient & energetic (as he certainly is, for a Hsin-Chiang official) I can't say for certain; but I am inclined to give him the benefit of the doubt & take off my hat to him as a patriotic and hardworking official. Anyhow I had the greatest difficulty in getting away from Kargalik on the 7th day (having only intended to stay there 3 days) & each day my programme was the same: to the Yamen at 9:30 or 10, back for lunch 2:15 or 2:30, Yamen again at 3:15 or 3:30 & solidly till 8 or even (once) 8:45 P.M. And arguing, insisting, persuading, or listening to Kwei's arguments, insistences, persuasions half the time; the other half examining or cross-examining accused persons or witnesses [...] [I]n each case I was able to tell Kwei that his witnesses were worthless & his 'sworn affidavits' so much waste paper, a proceeding which I'm afraid involved for Kwei a certain amount of the 'loss of face' so dreaded by the Chinese, but he had only himself to thank; if he's removed from Kargalik, as I trust he will be, perhaps he'll refrain in future from 'twisting the lion's tail'!

His hospitality, which was obviously dictated largely by official funk, was positively embarrassing; the limit was reached when he insisted on our 'dining' with him en famille at 8:30 A.M. on the morning of our departure on a 34-mile march towards Goma! It was a most confounded nuisance, but I couldn't get out of it. We went through a complete Chinese meal, partaking of 25 or 30 courses brought in in bowls which were placed in the middle of the table so that we could fish for food from them with our chop-sticks. I'm no end of dab with chopsticks now, & they have no terrors for me, but D. is no good at all; luckily a spoon & fork were produced for her. The ladies and children according to the Chinese fashion were at one table & the men, i.e. Kwei, my Chinese secretary Chu (or George as he prefers to call himself, being very American) & myself at another. Luckily for D. the 'children' included the married son of Kwei, a stout & chubby youth exactly like the Fat Boy in Pickwick,[101] who talks excellent Turki, so that D. with her smattering of Turki was not left altogether without means of communication. But I was very sorry for her, sitting there for over 2 hours. We at last got away at 11:20, but it was only to the 'chah-jing' or official tea-drinking a mile or so along the road, whither Kwei and Mrs. Kwei accompanied us in a mapa. Beyond that again there were farewells & final petitions to accept from various British subjects, & we didn't actually get clear of Kargalik till after 12. D. rode with me for 18 miles and then got into the tarantass; sunset, and with it the freezing cold of the desert, found us still 12 miles from our halting-place, Chulak Langar, and they were 12 miles of heavy sand through which the two horses had the greatest difficulty in hauling the tarantass. We made barely 3 miles an hour & time after time I had to help one of the orderlies to push the tarantass out of a sand-drift. I walked 8 miles in the sand, simply to keep warm; riding at a walk with 20 degrees of frost & a slight wind across our track was impossible for more than ¼ of an hour at a time. D. well-wrapped up in the tarantass was all right, but (thanks to the morning's long-drawn-out ordeal) dead tired when at 9 P.M. we pulled into the lonely serai, Chulak Langar, which 'King' Yakub Beg built of stone (all honour to him) 50 years ago. Splendid fellow, Yakub Beg. His serai with its pukka buildings, courtyards flagged with stone, solid doors & windows & big fireplaces would do credit to a large Indian station – much better than any of the Chinese serais we have come across. 'Chulak' means 'maimed' & refers to a man who was frost-bitten on the road many years ago and stumbled into the serai with dead hands and feet. From it, where it stands on a small hill overlooking an artificial pond & a couple of huts with a little cultivation, the

101. Joe, a character in Charles Dickens' first novel, *The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club* (a.k.a. *The Pickwick Papers*) (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Pickwick_Papers, last accessed 22 May 2016).

view at dawn is wonderful: on one side the blue Kuen Lun, rising height beyond height to glaciers & jagged peaks & dropping to S.E. & S.W. over the horizon; on the other a limitless expanse of dunes, like vast yellow waves in an ocean of sand, the terrible Takla Makan Desert. Of the two views, beautiful & wonderful though the mountains always are, the latter was by far the most arresting; remembering Sven Hedin's[102] & Stein's descriptions of the Takla Makan whose dunes extending in countless myriads to a far horizon with here and there an extra big one towering above his fellows, were inexpressibly sinister & awe-inspiring.

We supped off a chicken kindly roasted for us by my Mir Munshi, Moh[ammad] Nasir, who with 'Mr. George' and M[ura]d Qari, a young assistant aksakal of Yarkand whom I am taking with me to Keriya, had gone ahead to get the serai ready for us. When the 5 mapas arrived at 10:30 we soon had our beds & bedding ready, & D. was asleep by 11:30.

Next day we had a much shorter & very pleasant ride into Goma, 23 miles, reaching it at 4 P.M. The journey was over desert the whole way, but the air was sparklingly clear, and mountains & desert were both a delight to the eye. Our arrival at Goma where (unlike Kargalik which is on the Leh route to India & quite blasé about Europeans) no Consul-General & hardly any other 'sahibs' have been for many years, was a great tamasha, & large crowds surrounded the 'chah-jing' place. D. & I had the utmost difficulty in keeping our countenances during the tea-drinking, simply because of the Amban, who, you will hardly believe it, was an exact reproduction of George Robey![103] Short, skimpy, with a seedy old fur-collared coat, huge boots, a rubicund but dismal moustached face, crescent-shaped eye-brows which looked exactly as if they were made-up, &, most striking of all, a battered bowler hat many sizes too small for him perched a bit to one side on the top of his bald head – really, Mr. Chang, 3rd Class District Magistrate of Goma, was one of the comicest sights I've seen for years. He'd have made his fortune in the Halls merely by appearing. I'm glad to say I got a photo of him next day, bowler and all, when I lunched (a particularly beastly meal) at the Yamen.

The Aksakal at Goma is a wealthy Mussalman merchant of good class from the Punjab, much superior to the usual run of Aksakals, and he did us very well – made us extremely comfortable in his wonderfully-painted & carpeted guest-house in the bazar. He doesn't live there himself, but a quarter of a mile outside the village where D. visited his ladies on Sunday afternoon. Mrs. Akaskal insisted on D. accepting a wonderful piece of reddish-brown Andijani satin, beautifully embroidered, which is so good that D. is going to bring it out of the Consulate 'tosha-khana' where such presents are placed, & make it into a dressing-gown when she gets home. What with the things she has bought for herself in Baluchistan & here & the things I've given both before & after our marriage, D. has already got a wonderful wardrobe of Oriental silks and embroideries. I got her a lovely old Yarkandi embroidered cloak only the other day, an exquisite piece of work – and what do you think I paid for it? Six dollars (a guinea)! I also got for myself a big lump of jade, beautifully and quaintly carved to represent a mountain with an old man and some wild animals on it, at Yarkand for the absurd sum of 15 dollars (after much

102. The Swede, Sven Hedin (1865-1952), was one of the most famous European explorers of Inner Asia. His huge written oeuvre included some dramatic pages on his ill-conceived attempt to cross the western part of the Taklamakan Desert.

103. George Edward Wade (1869-1954), under the stage name of George Robey, was one of the most famous music hall comedians of the late 19th and first half of the 20th century. Among the best-known images of him are photos in which he wears a 'shabby bowler and seedy clerical costume' (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Robey, last accessed 22 May 2016). Skrine was not the only British official in China be amused by the new fashions – bowler hats among them – affected by the officialdom. See Coates 1988, p. 401.

bargaining) & am taking it to Khotan to be valued by the Armenian expert, Moldovack. Truly, Yarkand is the place for collectors! This is because there are no dealers there, barring one Kashmiri merchant who sends a few things annually to Srinagar.

We had a pleasant march from Goma to Moji (23 m.) on Monday, getting some shooting on the way for a change. We took our guns & tea-basket (for breakfast) to a lovely little (natural) lake, fed by springs but close to a small river which comes down from the Kuen Lun, right out in the desert, 1 ½ potais (4 miles) from Goma. It was rather thrilling to find that this lake was a breeding place for duck which have an impenetrable sanctuary in the dense beds of reeds, 15 feet high, which cover one end of the lake. Scores of duck rose out of these reeds the first shot we fired; unfortunately, not knowing that the duck were all in the reeds, we were both badly placed where we were stationed & failed to hit any. D. is of course only a novice at bird-shooting & hasn't hit anything in the air yet, I got nothing but 2 or 3 long-range shots which I missed. D. was desolated, as she was hoping to replenish the larder; however, later on in the day I got among the sand grouse near a village called Mokuila & hit 4, so we didn't do so badly.

Stein, when at Goma in '08, went 2 days' march out into the desert & examined one or two ancient village sites. I gathered from local enquiry that he didn't find anything of much value, & no tombs, which are the best sources. I was therefore greatly interested to hear that 2 years before, a lot of men from a village called Kara Targās 10 miles from Goma & the very last outpost of the Goma oasis towards the Takla Makan, found another site with tombs 2 days' march further out into the desert than Stein got to. They didn't touch the tombs, but found about 9 ounces of gold-leaf (ornamented) some copper coins & some iron utensils. I am writing to Stein about this find & asking him whether it would be worth while trying to get to the place next year & open up the graves. If he says yes, I'll seriously consider getting funds from Sir John Marshall, head of the Archaeological Dept., & going to the place – if it can be found again! We're both very keen on doing a little 'digging.'

There was a muddle about our accommodation at Moji & we had to put up with tiny, dirty, flea-ey, stuffy & noisy cubby-holes in the Turki serai in the middle of the bazar, & consequently neither of us slept very well. Yesterday we had a short march to an oasis called Zanguya 15 miles, where we occupied a quite decently clean Chinese serai. Ditto here, Pialma, 23 miles. Tomorrow we have got a very long march, 30 miles including a great deal of heavy sand. We will have to get up at 6:30, have our beddings & beds in the mapas by 7 & breakfast with our tea basket after the mapas have left. If we can get them off by 7:30 there is some hope of their being in by 8 at night. [*Fig. 94*] D. will drive in the 'poshta' as

Fig. 94. A halt on the desert road to Khotan. Doris Skrine is in the tarantass, accompanied by the consulate orderlies (from the British Library Collection: IOLR Photo 920/1 [67]).



they call the tarantass in this country, taking with her such things as we will want before the arrival of the mapas. The day after tomorrow we reach Khotan. Three days there, then 4 sandy marches to Keriya. D. will be the 1st white woman who has ever been to the large and flourishing town of Keriya. Miss Sykes only went as far as Khotan.

À propos of Miss Ella, the 'mystery of the milk' baffles solution. How she can have found dairy produce 'worth its weight in silver' as you describe her as saying, beats us. Prices are certainly not lower now than they were in '15, and do you know what we pay? For about a quart of excellent milk, 12 dachens or 1 ¼ d.; for a fair-sized bowl of thick cream, 2 tongas or 5 d. And never the slightest difficulty, not only at Kashgar but wherever we go – on this tour, for instance, we have had as much dairy produce (bar cheese, which isn't made in this country) as we wanted even at quite small villages. Everybody keeps cows; we keep two ourselves & they keep us in milk & cream with a certain amount of butter thrown in; all we buy is part of our cream-requirements for butter-making. As I have said before, not only in dairy produce but in all other kinds of food-stuffs Kashgaria abounds, except for one necessary which is very expensive – sugar. A bag containing 1 pood (36 lbs.) costs me 13 ½ taels or £ 2.7.3d., & that goes in no time when one is making a lot of cakes for parties & puddings for official dinners. Another big item is oil, especially on tour: at Goma I had to pay £ 1.13 for two gallons of kerosene, which with the 5 lanterns we use will last about 8 days! The dearness of oil is due solely to the closing of Russian trade; before the Revol[utio]n it was cheap enough at Kashgar [...]

Your letter to D. contains lots of good advice about her book of travels, & a cutting from the 'Bookman' about how to compose such a work.[104] I'm afraid it's wasted on D., who has no intention whatever of writing anything. Nothing will induce her even to think of writing for publication. Don't you worry though – the honour of the family is going to be maintained. I'm going to write a book – that is, if the Gov't. of India will let me! I decided that some time ago & have even thought of a title. My book will be about S. Persia, Baluchistan & Central Asia & will be called 'Lands of Eternal Sunshine.' But ssh! not a word!

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[*The introduction here of the Khotan antiquities is of considerable interest; see Waugh and Sims-Williams 2010 for details. Important fragments of Buddhist mural painting which Skrine saw there on this trip were acquired and carried down to India by Harding when he left Kashgar. They eventually would be divided between the British Museum and the museum in Delhi. Skrine also donated to the British Museum odds and ends of Khotanese clay sculptures which by and large are of little importance. As we have argued in our article, the likely purveyor of the paintings and most of the significant antiquities Skrine acquired in Khotan was the former British aqsakal, Badruddin Khan, in whose compound the Skrine's stayed while in the town, as he mentions in his official diary for November but not by name here in the letter home.*

It is not clear where some of the personal acquisitions may now be (for example, the intaglios he mentions), though some may still be in collections of the Stewart or Bunbury families. On inquiring of Dr. David Bunbury, I was informed that any Khotanese carpets which Doris may have had with her, after she and Skrine separated and she went to live in a remote cottage on the Isle of Hoy with her animals, probably were destroyed by the comings and goings of her menagerie.

Skrine's personal purchases of local products and crafts occupy a significant place in his letters; he generally is careful to indicate that none of that activity could be construed as improper use of government funds, since it all came out of his own pocket. That said, he clearly was intending to obtain things which could be re-sold to supplement his salary. In particular, he began to purchase large quantities of furs, not merely for gifts but with the hope his mother might find dealers in London interested in buying them.]

104. *The Bookman* was a popular monthly literary journal published in London. Very likely the cutting Helen Skrine sent to encourage Doris to write a travel book was the review essay by Ashley Gibson, "Travellers' Joy," *The Bookman*, Vol. 62 (371) (August 1922), p. 218.



Fig. 95. The walls of Khotan (after: CCA *1925, facing p. 204); a street in the Old City district of Khotan (after:* L'Illustration*, 23 October1926, No. 4363, p. [449]).*

Khotan, 26 November 1922

We are in the middle of a busy but very interesting visit of 3 days & 4 nights to this, one of the most ancient cities in the world. I wish we could stay longer, but we have still to go to Keriya, 4 days' heavy marching mostly over sand, & get back to Kashgar before the New Year. Leaving here on Wednesday the 28th, & only stopping 2 days at Keriya, we will have the utmost difficulty in getting back on time. At each of these towns I find much more to do than I expected, & the Chinese are so very hospitable that many hours are taken up with their feasts, in addition to the interminable calling & return calling one has to go through. Thanks to this I haven't been able to get any general idea of Khotan yet, except that like most of the other towns in this province it consists of a 'New City' & an 'Old City,' the former containing all the official buildings & the residences of the Chinese & being separately walled round, while the latter is the main Turki-inhabited town built mainly of wood & full of picturesque streets and alleys & corners of all kinds [*Fig. 95*]. The ancient city is at Yotkan, about 6 miles to the W.; we intend to visit the site on our return journey. Present-day Khotan is more interesting for what it produces and has produced than for what it is. To collectors in a mild way like ourselves the place is a Paradise. First there are carpets. The really valuable old rugs, curiously enough, are not to be had here, but we are told on good authority that we may be able to get some at Keriya, where there has been no buying (here there has been a good deal of exporting in the past). However, a delightful old Armenian called Moldovack, who speaks French perfectly & English very well, has a factory here & turns out beautiful rugs & has also a few moderately old Khotanis. I have got two very nice little rugs from him. Then there is jade. 1st quality jade is very hard to get even here, as the Chinese keep a sharp look-out for it & take every scrap they can get hold of. However, I have set wheels in motion which I hope will result in some 1st quality jade which I can send to Peking to be carved (the good carving is not done here). Meanwhile we are having some good-quality (but not best) cups & bangles made for ourselves & as presents, getting the raw jade from the 'mines' & selecting pieces for making the things out of. So far we have only seen the white, grey-green & black kinds, but I think I'll be able to get some of bright green kind too, which is so popular in England.

Thirdly there is brass and copper. I have been able to get hold, from the houses of old Khotan families, 4 or 5 specimens in excellent condition of genuine 18th century Khotan copper- and brass-ware. They're simply delightful old pieces; three are 'kuzehs' or water-jugs with an inner receptacle for the water and a beautifully-shaped pierced brass- or copper-work outer shell with graceful necks, handles and spouts & quaint hinged lids; a fourth is a kind of round chafing-dish, also of pierced work, standing on 4 black wood legs joined by rods, a particularly quaint old piece; a fifth is a small jug with a funny straight up spout, of copper pierced work, very ancient. It also has two shells, an outer pierced work one and an inner solid one; we ought to use it as a coffee-pot I think.

Then there are Takla Makan antiquities. This is a great center for the activities of the 'Takla Makanchies' described by Stein, the men, useless for any thing else, who spend all their lives searching for treasure from the lost cities under the sand. Thanks to Stein, the people here realize that objects other than gold ornaments (which is what the TaklaMakanchis want on their own account for melting down) have a value for mad Europeans and so there are two or three people here who have got small collections of things from Yotkan, Domoko & other sites. I have examined one such collection & am seeing another tomorrow. The fragments of mural painting are particularly good, & I am going to photo a lot of them & send the prints to India to Sir A. Stein or to Sir John Marshall, the head of the Archaeological Dept. asking whether they would like me to send the paintings (which are on plaster & rather heavy) to India. [*Fig. 96*] There are also some wonderful Graeco-Buddhist plaster-cast heads, two or three simply exquisite, the rest rather archaic; large numbers of clay figurines and ornaments which used to be appliqué to vases etc. & broke off; some are very quaint monkeys playing musical instruments etc. Then there are MSS; I have got hold of two practically complete books, in wonderful preservation, of exactly the same kind of script and material as some of the MSS described and pictured in "Serindia".[105] These I will send as soon as I can to India, as they may be extremely important. The above are all Museum things, & I don't want to buy them for myself, only for the Archaeological Dept. whose authority I have to spend money on their behalf; what I do propose to acquire, if I can at a reasonable price, on my own behalf are two or three delicious little cornelian & garnet intaglios & a copper seal or two, all dating from the early centuries of our era, & in two cases at least bearing exquisite little works of art



Fig. 96. Some of the antiquities which Skrine photographed at (we assume) the compound of the Khotan aqsakal Badruddin. Most of what is shown in this picture was delivered to Stein in India (by Harold Harding) and donated to the National Museum in Delhi or brought back to London by Skrine himself for the collection in the British Museum. (Reproduced with permission from the Royal Geographical Society [London], no. CPS/00014).

105. Aurel Stein, *Serindia* (1921). See Skrine's letter of 17 September 1922 to Stein (above), thanking him for sending a copy of *Serindia*. Later, on 25 February 1924 (see below), Skrine acknowledged receipt from Stein of the latter's *Memoir* (1923) and its accompanying maps, which Skrine then would consult during his travels.

carved on them; one is a rectangular bit of corullian with a most lifelike wild boar cut into it; the other a copper seal of a Pegasus-like winged horse, a beautiful piece of work. There is also, if you please, a pair of dice, just like modern dice but larger & with the dots rather uneven & the whole very worn, which were unearthed from a site 15 days journey into the desert from Domoko!

Next there are furs. I haven't bought any yet, but there are excellent grey foxes & snow leopards from the Kuen Lun to be had here, & I shall probably get a few as they are cheap. I am thinking of sending Marjorie a couple to make a stole out of, or a muff. D. has already bought a beauty. I had thought of sending Father a sheepskin coat from here, they make them very nicely at Yurungkash close to this place; but on trial I find that like the Afghan 'poshtuns' they moult & that wouldn't do at all for London. So I am sending to Kuchar in the N. of the province for a kind of astrakhan great-coat lining they produce there, which is famous throughout this part of Asia. Sheep is the most wearing of all fur linings, better than snow leopard which wears badly under the arms & at the neck; and this Kuchar astrakhan, as I know for a fact, does not moult at all & wears for years. I am only sorry I didn't know about the Kuchar coats earlier, & I could have sent F. his one in time for this winter; as it is, I'm afraid he won't get it till next year now.

Last but not least there is silk. Khotan produces a remarkable variety of delightfully-coloured silk fabrics, both pure silk & a very strong and durable silk woof on cotton warp. All these are of an amazing cheapness. D. has bought a lot & I am buying some representative rolls too to send to one or two friends [...]

So you see Khotan is a place where money can be spent to some advantage! I don't care how much I spend here on genuine artistic old things, because whatever we don't want for presents & our own house we can sell profitably either in India or England. In fact I hope to make a little money when I go on leave from here by selling surplus furs, rugs copper & jade, & thus help to eke out my leave pay.

Don't think that I've forgotten you all this time, darling Mum; so far as the exiguous winter posts will allow, some nice things will I hope find their way to you ere long, by way of belated Xmas presents.

We have just (8 P.M.) returned from a big dinner given by the Magistrate of this place & the 'O[fficer] C[ommanding] Khotan Area,' Mr. Wong and Major Ma respectively. A theatrical company from Tientsin is here, and they performed for our benefit a series of Chinese costume plays, most amusing some of them. I never saw anything like the costumes & particularly the head-dresses – they would have knocked 'His Majesty's' hollow. The dinner was in the open-air because there is no hall in Khotan big enough to contain the theatrical company's portable stage, & you can imagine how cold it was towards the end of the 4 hours we sat there! [*Fig. 97*] D. dined separately with



Fig. 97. 'Mrs. Ma' of Khotan. Doris Skrine noted on the back of this drawing: 'The Kashgar lady married to the Chinese military officer. I tried to do this from memory and I'm afraid it gives a very poor idea of her loveliness. She was, like the Chinese ladies, a good deal made up.' (From the British Library Collection: IOLR MSS EurF 154/54.)

the Chinese ladies on the other side of a low partition, according to the usual Chinese custom. The decorations were all in red, the walls of the Yamen building just behind us being covered with wonderful red embroidery & with Chinese gold writing on red scrolls; red Khotan carpets under foot and countless red Chinese lanterns hanging from the roof of the veranda & the trees. Some of these lanterns were very beautiful, hexagonal with fantastic tassels hanging from them and red silk embroidered panels instead of the usual paper. Most of this embroidery, I was interested to learn, was done by Turki women taught by Chinese. The dinner wasn't a typical one, as it contained (for our benefit) fewer purely Chinese & more local dishes than usual; one missed (or rather was thankful to escape) such delicacies as fishes' entrails, seaweed soup etc. However, the menu, which I managed to make a note of as we went through the dinner, may interest you; here it is:

Tea and dessert
Syrup dumplings
sharks'-fin Soup
Roast Duck
'Traveller-fish' Soup
Ox Tongue
Stewed Bamboo-Root
Roast Chicken
Fish Rissoles
Meat Dumplings
Sea-Slug Soup
Fried Eggs
Mutton Fritters
Baked Mutton
Baked Partridge
Cold Roast Pork
Cabbage Soup
Pastry Dumplings
Stewed Chestnuts
Stewed Pears and Rice
Lotus Seeds
Mutton Fat Fritters
Boiled Rice
Tea
Dessert

This, as I say, is not a typical dinner, being much more eatable than usual, & in fact we both got plenty of decently-cooked dishes we could eat; usually after 25 courses or more one doesn't feel as if one had had a square meal.

We start, with a pony caravan this time (as the track is too sandy for 'mapas') the day after tomorrow very early for Keriya, 4 marches. We have got 35 miles to do the 1st day! No other way of doing the journey. However, we can take the tarantass for the 1st 20 miles, so D. will drive in it and ride the last 15 only.

***

Keriya, 4th Dec.

I had hoped to write you a nice long letter from this place, where we have had three days' halt, but have been prevented by an extraordinary & (in my case) unprecedented head-ache, which came on last Friday morning the 1st Dec. as we were galloping away from the inn at our last halting place before Keriya. It got bad towards evening, I woke up with it next morning, it continued bad the whole of next day [...] If I had been doing a lot of reading & writing in the evenings I'd have said at once 'eyes,' but I've been doing practically none on the journey from Khotan here; [...] all I've read between Khotan & here is a couple of 'Truths' and a story or two from Blackwood.[106] [...] Anyhow it has effectively spoilt my time at Keriya; I have just been able to get successfully through the work I came here to do with the Ch. authorities & the Aksakal, big cases & so forth, but I've seen practically nothing of the place, taken hardly any photos & not worked at any of my arrears of correspondence. Very annoying. Now it's evening on our last day, we're off at 8:30 tomorrow on a 30-mile march, & I must content myself with a page or two to you only.

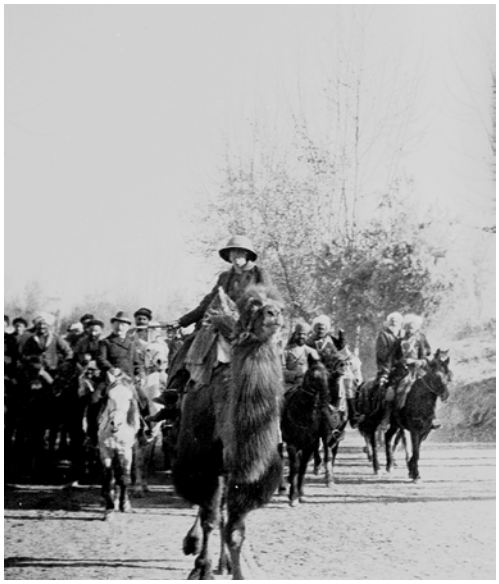


Fig. 98. Doris Skrine on her Bactrian camel Suleyman leading the ceremonial procession into Keriya. It is possible that the photo dates to the second visit to Keriya in 1924, although on this first visit Skrine notes how her outings in the town riding her camel attracted a lot of attention. (Reproduced with permission from the Royal Geographical Society [London], no. CPS/00038.)

My chief disappointment has been the non-appearance of the magnificent Kuen Lun & Altyn Tagh ranges, which fill the entire southern horizon & the nearest peak of which (21,500 ft.) is only 50 miles from here. We had a marvellous but hazy glimpse of these mountains, seen by a mere handful of European explorers so far, on our last march into Keriya [*Fig. 98*]. Next day everything was thick with a dust-laden wind from the desert, yesterday nearly as bad [...] If only I could get a telephoto panorama of these hills, they would make a wonderful picture & one probably quite unique, for Stein, practically the only explorer who has been much in these parts, has none [...]

Another disappointment has been our failure to secure good green jade. Plenty of the greenish-grey & a certain amount of good white – but beyond a couple of seals I have been given as a present here, & a pair of bangles at Khotan for which they are asking 40 taels (= about £ 6) there is none of the beautiful green stone to be had. This is because that old bandit the 'Titai', the opera-bouffe 'general' at Kashgar of whom I have often told you is cornering the entire supply through his local O[fficers] C[ommanding] at Khotan & Keriya! He has ordered them on pain of dismissal to produce for him altogether over 4000 catties (a Chinese weight = 1 ¼ lb.) in the year & the wretched Chinese officials, in terror of their lives, have got their agents out everywhere & punish severely any attempts at 'smuggling' good jade. E.g., a mine-worker found a piece of good green jade 8 months ago, which is valued at 1500 taels in the rough. The Chinese took it from him & sent it to the Titai, & he hasn't received a sou for it yet! Naturally, there is no good jade to be had. Bad luck, isn't it. If only someone had cut the old blighter's throat before we came.

106. Algernon Henry Blackwood (1869-1951), known for his ghost stories, especially the collection *Incredible Adventures* (1914) (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Algernon_Blackwood, last accessed 22 May 2016). I have not found an explicit citation indicating which collection Skrine may have had with him, though possibly it would have been *Ten Minute Stories*, also published in 1914.

However, we're not leaving Keriya empty-handed. We've examined scores of old Khotan rugs, & bought, at trifling prices, 3 of the best – delicious old pieces all of them. With the 3 I have already got at Khotan & Yarkand, we've a nice little collection of old Khotanis to add to our Persian rugs. Then furs. We're on a good thing here, I can tell you. Keriya is the place for furs. They all come from the above-mentioned Altyn Tagh ('Mountains of Gold') between here and Cherchen. Snow-leopard, natural lynx (not snow-lynx apparently), wolf & a small dark fur they call 'sosai' which may be a kind of sable – I haven't seen it yet – are all amazingly cheap. Cherchen (300 odd miles across the desert, at the foot of the Altyn Tagh) is the 'market' for them – there they're much cheaper even than here. I am making arrangements for getting a lot of furs from Cherchen through the Aksakal, at more or less Cherchen prices; these will come to hand next spring. Meanwhile I am sending you as a belated Xmas present a couple of nice little lynxes, the pick of those we have seen here, to make yourself a stole and muff out of. I hope you'll like them, Darling Mum. As regards Father's fur coat, I can now offer him (or rather you, for I'd rather it was a surprise) a choice between black astrakhan or lynx for the lining. Which do you think he'd like? The cost to me would be about the same, I think, so he's not to worry about that. Thirdly, I'm sending you a very fine large wolf skin, which I want you to have made into a wrap for Aunt Marie, if you will. I sent her a couple of small panels of old Ch. embroidery from Yarkand, but it struck me here that a fur wrap would be a far more suitable & useful present so I'm sending her one, not instead of, but as well as the embroidery. When you're having this wolf skin re-cured (if necessary) & made up, will you ask the shop what they think it is worth, (a) wholesale trade price (b) retail price as a wrap? Also, could you kindly ascertain if possible what is likely to be the fashionable fur next year for ladies? If it happens to be any of these I can get in Kashgaria, I might be able to defray some of our leave ex[pens]es with them! [...]

[T]his place appears to have knocked off work and to be engaged in nothing but looking at us, or rather, I should say, at Doris, for she draws ten times as good 'gazes' as I do. The people of Keriya follow our every step, in the town & out of it, in vast crowds – so that we, who object to being butchered to make Keriya a holiday, stay at home. Now the populace occupy the surrounding roofs; I believe you have to pay two sheep or half a load of melons for a front seat at a Departure of Mrs. British Consul General to call on Mrs. Amban. When she went out shopping on Tüge Sulaiman, her camel, the other day, seats went up to 10 sheep & several roofs collapsed! Considering that no European lady & hardly any men, have ever been to Keriya before, this isn't perhaps surprising. We have been put up most comfortably by the Aksakal, a delightful gentleman of Afghan extraction, in his comfortable new house; the Aksakals of Goma, Khotan & Keriya are all excellent fellows, & this man is the best of them I think. The day after tomorrow I hope to visit one of Stein's chief ancient sites, Domoko. We are going slightly out of our way in order to spend the night as near as possible to the site. I don't expect to get anything, but hope to secure useful photos showing how much the sites have 'sanded up' since Stein's visit. This is important archaeologically.

Apropos of photos, please don't give Sykes any of my Baluchistan ones. I will be using some of them in my book, which will contain some chapters about the parts I presume he is writing about, & I don't want any of my best ones to [be] lost to me by appearance in a previous work. That one he borrowed of Kerman, for his "History of Persia", is part of a larger view which I would certainly have used; so that you see, as it is, one of my best Persian views has 'gone west' for book purposes. I really don't see why I should spoil my own book for the sake of his. The photos will be its (my book's) only merit! Break it to him as tactfully as you can, & don't let anybody publish any of the photos I've sent you [...].

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[*This letter is the last in the file of BL IOLR MS EurF 154/8. For his official reports about the meeting with the Afghan 'consul-general', see below, esp. pp. 233-235.*]

Hosh Langar, 18 m. E. of Kargalik, Fri. 16 December 1922

Tho' this letter needn't be posted till we reach Kashgar, I am starting it this evening because it is your birthday & I want to wish you (by telepathy) many happy returns of the day, darling Mum. I'm not going to work out exactly how many birthdays you've had in the past, because whatever the number is it bears no relation to your real age, you're such a wonder of personal youth. Anyhow, may you have many more birthdays in the future, happy ones with those you love and who love you. Alas, it's many years since I was with you on your birthday. But there is every prospect of my being with you or at any rate nearly with you, both your next two birthdays. We sail either Nov 1st or Dec. 1st next year, by Lloyd Triestino Bombay to Venice [...]

However, these may be castles in the air. My leave hasn't been sanctioned yet, tho' it was promised me verbally at Simla in April; there's always the possibility that Etherton being almost certainly ruled out, the G[overnment] of I[ndia] may not be able to find a suitable man willing to come here next year. I worded my official application for leave so strongly that I'm sure they'll do their best to relieve me; but they may not be able to do so till early summer 1924 [...]

We are within 11 or 12 days of Kashgar now, and much though we've enjoyed our tour we won't be at all sorry to get back to the Consulate. It's intensely cold out in these deserts now, & riding along in the mornings when there's no sun & a wind from the Takla Makan one's feet get half frozen even with felt-lined 'Gilgit boots' on. D. gets into the tarantass when the wind gets too cold, I walk leading my horse. In my Afghan 'poshteen' & Gilgit boots it seldom takes more than quarter of an hour for me to get warm as a toast walking; & D. lying comfortably in the tarantass on 2 mattresses with 2 quilts & a rug over her and the leather apron well buttoned down all round so that the wind can't get in, soon gets warm too. Etherton's black horse, which I left at Goma on the way out because it had been lamed by bad shoeing, is full of beans from 3 weeks' idleness: This doesn't matter so much on an open desert road as it did in the narrow precipitous paths of Astore, & in fact it is rather an advantage. This morning as he was 'playing up' rather when I mounted, I let him rip, and do you know, he galloped 5 miles straight off, over heavy sand in 20 minutes! what is more, two minutes after pulling up at the end of the 5th mile, he was fretting to be off again! Wonderful goer. He's a Badakshi horse. They're about the best horses in the East, I should say.

You would be surprised at the comparative comfort with which we travel in these remote parts. No tents required; at every stage there is a 'langar' or rest-house reserved for officials, as in India. Mostly these rest-houses are built of unbaked brick & consist of a Chinese-looking gateway a courtyard with stables, servants' quarters & go-downs round 3 sides & the officials' rooms on the 4th side opposite the gate. There are usually two rooms opening off a central sort of ante-room which, having no fire-place is unusable in winter. Sometimes there are 2 rooms on each side of the ante-room. When there are only 2 habitable rooms altogether, D. & I share one & use the other as a bath-room; when there are 3 or more we have separate bedrooms. Our servants' quarters & the kitchen are located in near-by rooms on the sides of the courtyard, & Moh[amma]d Nasir (the Mir Munshi), Chu or 'George', our new Chinese Secretary & M[ura]d Qari, a young Assistant Aksakal of Yarkand whom I have taken with me on this trip, sleep in other rooms nearer the gate. The kit of the whole party including our kitchen, stores etc. went on 4 'mapas' or country carts to Khotan from Yarkand, but we're using 5 for the return journey

as we've some carpets & other 'loot' to carry & also wanted to travel quickly. The 'mapas' arrive at the 'langar' between 4 and 8 P.M. according to the length of the stage; we ourselves arrive much earlier of course, as the riding horses & the tarantass travel quickly, and we generally have our tea-basket tea, & sometimes even our picnic lunch, at the 'langar.' D.'s bed, bedding, washing materials & basin, & our box of clothes, go in the tarantass, as does my office-box with books, papers & writing materials, so that in the afternoon we can settle down & D. if she likes (she very seldom does) can go to bed, while I work at my diaries, reports, cases, etc. or write letters. Often I develop photos, and D. often also makes scones, which she is most successful at even on the worst and smokiest 'langar' fires. A few – too few – of the 'langars' are not Chinese-built and 'Kacha', but splendid stone buildings with big rooms & large fire-places; these date from Yakub Beg Bedaulat's time, he who turned the Chinese out in 1860-something and reigned for many years as Turki King of Kashgaria. He may have been a tyrant & an adventurer, but he was a good man for public works: all the best 'langars' & bridges are his – the Chinese skimp their work, I'm sorry to say. Today's & yesterday's 'langars' are both Yakub Beg's. We're sleeping tonight in a vaulted-roofed room with 2 fireplaces, a hall that would dine 60 people comfortably.

On the march itself I ride while D. either rides (most often) with me, or goes on her camel, or drives in the tarantass. I spend a lot of the time talking Turki with M[ura]d Qari, who is an excellent person to learn the language from as he speaks excellent Persian & Hindustani, both of which we use freely to supplement my still somewhat limited Turki. I have made a great deal of progress with the latter language this trip & can now understand most of what I hear & carry on a conversation on most ordinary subjects.

Christmas Day

Another Xmas spent travelling! Last year we were in our 'reserved logia' bumping along between Mirjawa and Dalbandin, which latter place we reached late in the afternoon & were at once asked to the Christmas dinner of the tiny community, which we had to leave hurriedly at 9:50 to catch the ten o'clock train to Nushki.[107] Our present Christmas surroundings are even more remote, tho' much less desolate, than the southern frontier of Afghanistan. We woke up this morning, I after a disturbed night, in two tiny cold rooms in a serai or 'langar' at Kok Rabat, the first stage out from Yarkand on the Kashgar road. After ablutions of rather a 'lick-and-polish' nature, we 'fell upon the road' as the Persians say and rode 28 miles across almost completely barren desert to Kizil Bazar, whence I write. As our carts, which we pushed off at 9 from Kok Rabat, did not arrive till 7 this evening, Doris couldn't do much in the Christmas dinner line and we had the same kind of dinner that we usually have on tour & a deuced good one too – soup, stewed duck with potatoes and spinach & rice pudding with stewed (dried) apricots. Better a meal of herbs,[108] etc. etc.!

I last wrote from Hosh Langar, where for the 2nd time I was harrowed by the sight of lovely glassy ice on the big pond & me with no skates. The first time was at Chulak Langar, the stage before. We marched from Hosh Langar to Kargalik, an easy march, 4 hours including a chase after enormous flocks of sand grouse. We only got one bird as, tho' the numbers of birds were large, there was absolutely no cover & the birds flew about everywhere except over us. At Kargalik, Kwei, the formidable Manchu Amban, received us as effusively as ever & asked us to mid-day dinner, which we ate at the Yamen with his ladies in the self-same smallish room in which he and I had been trying cases & arguing and fighting

107. These three towns are near the border between today's Iran and Pakistan. Nushki was the location of Skrine's posting a year earlier.

108. Proverbs 15:17.

the whole morning! Kwei simply turned out his myrmidons & the litigants & witnesses, the ladies came in, two tables were laid for dinner in the Chinese style (men at one table, ladies at the other) & after the usual hour a 25-course Chinese dinner, eaten with chopsticks, was served!! Afterwards the ladies disappeared, D. went back to our house & Kwei & [I] fell to it hammer and tongs once more till 8 P.M. I wish I had time to recount to you the countless amusing incidents which took place at Kargalik over the nationality and other questions between Kwei and myself – the Gilbertian procedures of Chinese 'law', the theatrical effects worked by Kwei and his Begs for the confounding of the British Consul General, the subterfuges, the lies, the machinations of the Chinese... it would take twenty pages to tell you half of what happened. I must postpone doing so till I see you. Suffice it to say that my whole time at Kargalik from 9 A.M. on the day after my arrival from Khotan till 3 P.M. on the day of my departure for Yarkand, was spent arguing with, protesting to, cajoling, threatening & flattering Kwei, or examining & cross-examining witnesses. Hard work indeed. On the 20th I pushed D. off in the tarantass at 9 to Yarkand, 41 miles, and myself went to the Yamen. I meant only to do two or three hours' work with Kwei & then follow D. and my kit; but the 2 or 3 hours lengthened out to 6, stormy ones too, and I didn't get off till past 3, having had no food since a tea-basket breakfast at 8. I galloped with one orderly the 24 miles to Posgam in 2 ½ hours, did some work there with the Amban & talked to the British subjects who had tea & fruit ready for me, & went on at 7:30 to Yarkand in the dark. Three miles beyond Posgam I crossed the Zarafshan River, a strange experience. The bed is a mile wide, but there is only water in two channels at this time of year, a racing, shallowish flood of green water spinning down with a never-ending procession of ice-floes from the glaciers of the mountains. It was a wild dark night with only a yellowish glow in the western sky from behind the clouds, no stars, no moon. I had the Aksakal & two or three men from Posgam with me as well as my own orderly, & we and our horses were ferried across the two channels in big flat-bottomed barges by strangely-hatted ferrymen by the light of a couple of enormous & fantastic Chinese lanterns covered with strange symbols, carried by 'yayis' (chaprassis) lent us by the Amban of Posgam. After crossing the river we had 15 miles of road, a lot of it under ice, to Yarkand; it was so dark that we had to go slowly and we didn't get in till midnight, when I found D. still awake & rather worried about me (I had promised I would be in to dinner!). We occupied a much roomier & better house than we had in Oct.–Nov. inside the town this time. This was just as well, because it was intensely cold & the 'Bargah' our former house, was very draughty & only boasted 2 rooms & a small bathroom for D. I had pitched an office tent to receive people in & a bath-tent for myself – this time it would have been impossible to do this. The chief excitement at Yarkand was the Afghan Mission. I was particularly anxious to meet the chief delegate, who calls himself 'Consul General' (a title which the Chinese refuse to recognize in the absence as yet of any treaty between the two Powers). I had heard he was a devout and excellent man, so much so that all the Yarkandis were doing him honour & flocking in crowds to see him whenever he went out, much to the annoyance of the jealous Chinese.

I was therefore rather annoyed when he omitted to call on me, merely sending his mirza with his card (which I noticed had printed in Persian on it 'Afghan C.-G. for Chinese Turkestan'). He ought of course to have called on me. However, in view of the new 'Treaty of Friendship' between India & Afghanistan, I determined not to be unfriendly, so I asked him & his mirza to dinner 2 days later (last Saturday) to meet Chu, ex-DaoTai of Kashgar, & Liu ex-Amban of Yarkand, the Chinese delegates who have been appointed by the Governor to negotiate an agreement with the Afghans. This was a bold step on my part, because the negotiations are at a standstill owing to the absurd demands & allegations of the Afghans, & relations are pretty strained between the Chinese & Afghan delegates

owing to various 'incidents' which have occurred. However, it was a success. The Afghans came & although their delegate turned out a disappointment, an inferior type of ignorant & somewhat stupid Persian official he might have been, the dinner went off very well. D. and the cook & Ahmed Bakhsh between them evolved an excellent 10-course dinner. I produced numerous liqueurs & we gave the Afghans, Chinese & 3 Swedish Missionaries a 'sumshus' entertainment. I had dear old jovial Chu on my right & the Afghan 'Consul General' on my left at one round table, while D. presided at a smaller one with a male Swede on one side of her & the Afghan secretary, who speaks Turki, Pashtu, Russian, Persian & Hindustani all equally perfectly, on her right. The conversation was polyglot, as usual at such dinner parties; when for instance the Afghan delegate wanted to say anything to a Chinaman, he had to say it in Persian for me and I in English to my interpreter, the volatile 'Mr. George', who turned it into Chinese for the Chinaman's benefit. Nyström, the head of the Swedish Mission at Yarkand, is a bigoted Christian, a positive fanatic, & he lectured the Chinese, through George, on the Bible teaching for about an hour at one period; otherwise conversation was general & quite amicable. Chu was in great form, but I had very heavy work with the Afghan, whose Persian is poor and his ideas poorer. D., the Mirza, young [Georg] Roberntz & Mrs. Nyström at the 'women & children' table were quite uproarious, the conversation being mostly in Turki which the 2 Swedes speak very well. After Chu & Liu had gone the 2 Afghans stayed on & talked more freely. The Mirza, a boy of about 25, is almost certainly a Bolshevist spy! He has come straight from Moscow to join the Afghan Mission as Secretary, & has been all over Europe & also knows Persia very well. He was actually for a short time at Kerman in 1917 when I was there! Needless to say I am keeping a sharp eye on him.

Owing to the Afghan 'Consul General's' rudeness in not calling on me, I was unable to get at him & into his confidence as I had hoped to do. This is unfortunate as I particularly wanted to come to an understanding with him about certain important matters & so defeat the Chinese, whose sole object in flirting with the Afghans at the outset was to play them off against us. Besides, India & Afghanistan are officially the best of friends now, and a rapprochement between the British Consulate General & the Afghan Mission would have been favourably noticed, at Kabul & perhaps at Delhi! I did my best; I wrote the 'Consul General' an honorifically-worded letter in my own hand asking him to dinner, a trouble I very seldom took even at Kerman (as a matter of fact I was rather glad to have a chance of keeping my Persian hand in!).

After an extremely busy, not to say rushed, 3 days at Yarkand we finished up by 'lunching' on Xmas Eve with Mr. Liu, the wealthy & enlightened but extremely troublesome ex-Amban of Yarkand. The 'lunch' was a full sized Chinese banquet of 30 or more courses & lasted from 1 till quarter to five. The worst part of it was sitting in a small room for an hour before it was served, in which the thermometer stood at 43° Fahrenheit! The Chinese never feel cold indoors, because they wear (very sensibly) clothes completely lined with thick fur from top to toe, and velvet-covered fur boots; they wear very little more out of doors than in. I was wearing riding breeches with putties & ankle boots with only 2 pairs of your warm socks on, not nearly enough. D. and Mrs. Nyström, fortunately for them, spent that hour interviewing Mrs. Liu and her baby in warm female quarters. After the enormous lunch, excellently cooked & mostly quite eatable (i.e., not too many fish-entrail, shark's-fin, sea-slug etc. dishes) we were photoed by the official photographer & then started off on our 1st march on the last lap of our journey, 22 miles to Kok Rabat. There was a lovely winter sunset, just like a Farquharson picture,[109] & I at any

109. The Scottish painter Joseph Farquharson (1846-1935) was known for his landscapes, especially snowscapes with strategically-placed sheep in them (https://www.kingandmcgaw.com/prints/joseph-farquharson, last accessed 22 May 2016).

rate enjoyed the first few miles on my horse; D. too was nice & warm in the tarantass, her feet in my woolen sleeping-bag & herself buried in quilts & furs. But after 6 it became terribly cold on horseback, & tho' I galloped & trotted as much as I could to keep warm, I was at last forced to get off and walk to prevent my feet being frozen. We got in at 9 & found our 'mapas' (which we had only pushed off with great difficulty at 12 noon owing to the difficulty of loading them in the narrow lanes of Yarkand) only just arrived. So we dined off Oxo[110] & buttered eggs in the minute cubby-holes we were provided with at the local 'langar'. For some reason they did not put us into the excellent Beg's house we had on our outward visit to this place. I did not get to sleep till 1 owing to the chattering & noise in the serai outside; I did not start Xmas day with very Christian feelings this time! However, breakfast this morning was cheerful owing partly to my Xmas present to D. which was much appreciated – an exquisite little circular jade ornament beautifully carved, which she now wears on a velvet ribbon as a sort of pendant.

Tomorrow we have 30 miles to go, the next day 51 – & then Kashgar once more – & right glad we shall be to taste the (comparative) comforts of the Consulate-General! [...]

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[*Skrine's official monthly diaries for November and December report on the events recorded in his letters home printed immediately above and include, of course, much other detail. According to its opening page, the diary for November was sent from 'Camp, Goma, the 15/20th December,' received on 27 January in Simla, and read and annotated in London only in the second week of March (IOLR. L/P&S/10/976. P842/1923, fol. 221). In his report, Skrine wrote at some length about specific negotiations with the Chinese officials regarding British subjects' cases (in particular one involving an Anant Ram about whom Harding had written a report). Skrine's summary regarding his dealings with the officials during his tour concluded:*]

6. His Majesty's Consul-General has been much struck by the uniform courtesy and hospitality shown by the Chinese officials at the various towns visited, as well as by the friendliness of the Turki population. With the partial exception of Karghalik, no difficulty has been found in settling amicably with the Chinese officials questions which have in the past been the subject of acrimonious and fruitless correspondence. No British Consul-General had been to Karghalik, Goma or Khotan since 1915 when Colonel (now Sir Percy) Sykes visited these places; as for Keriya, an important district containing some 30 British subjects, the only Consular officer who has ever been there is the late Vice-Consul, Mr. Fitzmaurice, who visited the place in 1920.

[*In London, a reader of the printed copy of the diary drew a double line next to the first sentence. Presumably this was the ever skeptical J. A. Simpson, whose annotation on the minute-sheet began:* 'Mr. Skrine seems to have met with remarkable cordiality from Chinese officials during his recent tour in Kashgaria. Whether the courtesy was more than superficial is doubtful' (p. 220). *As would become clear, Simpson was prescient. Skrine's letters to his mother do underscore the cordiality at that same time that they emphasize the difficult and often acrimonious official negotiations. In writing his report, at very least Skrine wanted to justify his long trip and, subtly, throw another brick at his predecessor Etherton (without naming him) for not having traveled enough in fulfillment of his official duties. Skrine went on to describe his impressions of some of the Chinese officials, including his negative assessment of Hsü, the new Taoyin of Kashgar He also included more or less what he had written his mother about the venality of Ma Titai in controlling the jade market.*

The arrival of the Afghan delegation in China merited special attention in the diary, with the account showing that Skrine seems to have had good sources of information about events back in Yarkand even while away on tour far to the southeast. Many subsequent reports provided details about the conduct and pretensions of the Afghan mission and its unsuccessful effort to obtain official recognition from the Chinese. A separate file assembled in the India Office: (BL IOLR L/P&S/11/222, 'Chinese Turkestan: Recognition of Afghan Consul-General 24 Nov. 1922–22 Jan. 1924') included copies of Skrine's initial telegrams

110. A brand name for a popular beef bouillon cube (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oxo_%28food%29, last accessed 22 May 2016).

reporting the arrival of the Afghans (the first sent on 24 November from Misgar), a translation he did of propaganda they were distributing against the British, and some related materials as the negotiations dragged on.]

The Afghan Mission headed by General Muhammad Shariff Khan, together with the returning Chinese Mission to Kabul, arrived at Tashkurghan on 4th November. The two Missions left on 12th November for Yarkand, which was reached on the 22nd. Under orders from His Majesty's Consul-General the Aksakal and a considerable number of other British subjects of Yarkand met the missions and entertained them at the usual ceremonial tea-drinking at a point two miles outside the city. The General and his staff appeared greatly to appreciate this compl[i]ment and send friendly messages to His Majesty's Consul-General through the Aksakal [...] The Afghan party consists of the General, his secretary Abdul Khaliq, four aides-de-camp and ten servants. The reception given by the Mussalman population to the General, who is a devout and highly respected member of the Muhammadzai family, was most striking. Such was the press of the people in the streets prostrating themselves before him and trying to kiss his hand, that he had to walk through the bazars to his residence. Great crowds flock to the Jama Masjid [*i.e.: main, Friday mosque – DW*] whenever he goes there. These popular demonstrations are reported to be most distasteful to the Chinese, who are said to have instructed their Begs to prevent the people going in great numbers to the Jama Masjid. The General is stated to have remonstrated with [ex-Taoyin] Mr. Chu on this account.

As regards business, up to 2nd December only two meetings had taken place between the Afghan and the Chinese representatives. A certain amount of friction has already arisen between the two sides on account of the Afghan General's insisting on calling himself Consul. This the Chinese rightly object to as being at least premature [...]

So far as can be seen at present, the only way in which British interests are likely to be affected by the negotiations, is by Afghan claims to certain persons of Afghan origin who hold British registration certificates by virtue of residence in India at one period of their lives. In the event of the establishment of an Afghan Consul in Hsinchiang, it is presumed that His Britannic Majesty's Consul-General will hand over the protection of the Afghan subjects to him. But there are certain wealthy Yarkandis who, though originally from Afghanistan, can genuinely claim domicile in British territory; these persons for obvious reasons prefer to remain outside the power of an Afghan Consul [...]

Further information is to hand regarding the doings of the Chinese delegation in Afghanistan [...] [*Skrine corrects his earlier report about opium dealings, which were not illegal in Afghanistan as he had previously indicated.*] Towards the end of his stay at Kabul the Chief Chinese delegate dined with other foreign representatives at the Amir's Palace, sitting next below the Bolshevik envoy. He was made an Honorary Colonel and given a horse and a sword of honour by the Amir. He was also presented with letters for the President of the Chinese Republic and the Governor of Hsinchiang.

The following laconic summary of the conversation between the Chinese delegates and the Amir has been reported.

The Amir asked the Chinese three questions:

(1) Why was no reply made to the letter I sent to the Governor at Urumchi?

(2) Why was the deputy I despatched to China sent back and not allowed to proceed?

(3) Why was no response made by the Chinese to my overtures of friendship?

The Chinese replies were as follows:

(1) The letter addressed to the Governor was neither signed nor sealed by yourself.

(2) Your deputy was stopped because he was a man of bad character. He absconded from his own country at the age of 14 to Germany where he qualified himself in certain matters and afterwards took refuge in your country. We regarded him as a suspect and refused him permission to enter China.

(3) Your letter regarding friendship was received, but as we could not understand the meanings of certain words in it we were unable to reply.

If the above is correct, the Chinese are to be congratulated on their second reply. Mahendra Pratap can seldom have been more succinctly disposed of.

[*Skrine goes on here to mention that a* 'notorious anti-British agitator Maqsud Gul and his opium smuggling associate Khuda Nazar' *had arrived with the Afghan delegation; he wrote a separate telegram on the subject (see below). Gul had been promptly expelled by the Chinese; Skrine would do his best to make sure the same happened with the latter, who had been allowed to proceed to Yarkand. For the British, the concern over anti-British agitators who were encouraging 'sedition' in India is a constant theme in the reports from Kashgar. Mahendra Pratap was one of the most famous of these. As the annotators in London noted, the reference to Pratap seems to have been garbled (he went to Germany apparently in 1914 around age 30, not at age 14). Simpson's note on this report might be read as sarcastic:* 'A thumb-nail sketch of Mahendra Pratap by a Chinese artist'. *More significantly, regarding the Afghan delegation, he noted:* 'Remarkable account of the reception of the Afghan mission at Yarkand by the Mahommedan population. This may quite possibly arouse in the Amir's excitable brain projects of extension of Afghan territory at the expense of China. Any practical step in this direction would, however, imply the annexation of the Russian Pamirs also. The long tongue of Wakhan could hardly serve as a jumping-off ground for expansion from its extremity.' *Skrine's report on 'Bolshevism' is also of some interest here.*]

The Chinese authorities have at last woken up to the danger of shutting their eyes to the brisk trade which has been going on *viâ* the Sungek-Uzgend route with Bolshevist Ferghana. The Chinese frontier official at Sungek was replaced early in the month, and several merchants who have been illicitly trading with Andijan have been imprisoned and their goods confiscated. As these measures have been taken by the Titai and not by the Taoyin, they obviously emanate from the Governor at Urumchi; whenever the latter requires any action to be taken in Kashgaria which he cannot trust the Taoyin with, he invariably acts through the Titai.[111] The Governor has excellent reasons for keeping the Russian frontier of Kashgaria effectively closed; see penultimate paragraph of Kashgar Secret Memorandum No. 101, dated 14th September 1922.

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[*At the same time he was writing his November diary in Goma, he composed a separate telegram, which was sent off to Misgar and on 1 January from there to Delhi. India forwarded it to London on 18 January where it arrived on 5 February. On the minute paper, D.T. Monteath noted on 12 February, addressing Mr. Biggane:* 'This may be of some small interest to you as Maqsud Gul went to Turkestan in 1920 apparently with the idea of making the way easy for Mahendra Pratap's overland journey to Peking, which never came off.' BL IOLR L/P&S/11/229. P465/1923. 'Chinese Turkestan: Mulla Maqsud Gul, an Afghan turned back by Chinese Authorities 1 Jan 1923–14 Feb. 1923.']

Telegram P.

No. 126.

Guma. The two men Maksud Gul and Khuda Nazar referred to in Kashgar diaries of November 1920 to March last came last month to Tashkurghan with Afghan mission. Chinese authorities stopped

111. This interpretation by Skrine inverts what probably was in fact the case, since Yang seems to have been very suspicious of the Titai at the same time that he trusted the Taoyin.

Maksud Gul and sent him back to Afghanistan, without head of mission making any objections. Khuda Nazar has arrived with mission at Yarkand. I am visiting Yarkand next week and will take necessary steps and report after doing so.

Precis.

1. In August 1917, Sir George Macartney, His Britannic Majesty's Consul General, Kashgar, secured the deportation from Chinese Turkestan of two Afghans, Mulla Maksud Gul and Khuda Nazar, both of whom were in collusion with the German agent Hentig and were inciting the Afghan faction in Yarkand against the British Government. They were described as dangerous intriguers, and very anti-British. Nothing further was heard of them until Maksud Gul appeared at the Afghan Consulate in Tashkend in the winter of 1919 and was employed there in visaing passports of Afghans from Russian to Chinese territory. Khuda Nazar returned to Yarkand in the winter of 1920 and was received favourably by the Amban. In the spring of 1920 he visited Tashkend. Hearing that Maksud Gul contemplated returning to Yarkand via Sarikol, the Consul-General made a representation to the Taoyin and the latter issued orders forbidding the entry of Maksud Gul. Consequently, Maksud Gul, who had penetrated as far as Tashkurghan was turned back and escorted over the frontier. The Taoyin also reported to the Governor regarding the presence of Khuda Nazar in Yarkand.

2. Later on, it was reported that both Maksud Gul and Khuda Nazar had come back to Yarkand and the Amban had not taken any steps to expel them; on the contrary he had treated them with marked attention and had unofficially appointed Maksud Gul as representative for Afghans in Yarkand. It was also reported by an Agent of the Consul-General that mulla Maksud Gul was in possession of a document signed by the Kazis and the leading Chinese subjects of Yarkand to the effect that he was a man of peaceable character and that the British Consul-General secured his expulsion for no fault and that they would not raise any objection to his being in Yarkand. The Agent also reported that the document bore the seal of the District Magistrate, i.e. the Amban. Maksud Gul came to Tashkurghan in November 1922 with the Afghan Mission and submitted a protest in writing to the Amban of Sarkol [*sic*] against his expulsion from Chinese territory. He claimed one thousand yamboos as damages. The Amban arrested him and expelled him over the border towards Afghanistan. His petition was, however, it was said, forwarded to the Chinese authorities in Urumchi.

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[*One of the frequent concerns of the Kashgar reports is the position of the Ismaili followers of the Aga Khan living in the Sarikol region and the occasional visits of the representative of the Aga Khan to collect tithes from them. A number of incidents prompted the India Office in London to assemble a file 'Kashgar: Ill-Treatment of followers of the Aga Khan by the Chinese Amban of Sarikol Aug. 1923–7 March '24' (BL IOLR L/P&S/11/244). The file contains the report Skrine sent the Government of India on 27 December 1923 as No. 118. In it, he refers first to the reports in the monthly diaries for August and October–November 1923, then writes:*]

2. From further reports received by me from Tashkurghan it appears that the Amban had not only imprisoned and insulted the Pir and his followers, but had had him thrown down and given 200 strokes on the legs by Chinese soldiers. A recent arrival from Sarikol informs me that he saw the wounds on the legs of the Pir. The latter was released by the Amban only after payment by the Maulais (followers of the Aga Khan) of a large sum in money and kind. This was claimed by the Amban as the equivalent of the tribute alleged by him to have been sent by the Maulais to the British Government.

[*Skrine then spoke to the Tao Tai, who claimed ignorance and distress at the news but would send someone to investigate and, if the report turned out to be true, would write to the Governor in Urumchi to have the Amban disciplined. Among the documents Skrine*

appended was a telegram he had received from the Wazir of the Aga Khan in Karachi, which read: 'Have received telegraphic intimation that Mukhi Imamdad has been imprisoned by Sarikol Amban for missionary Sabzali's appointing Khizmatgars among his highness Aga Khan's jamat. Above Khizmatgars have been appointed for religious purposes only, so I request your honour will kindly arrange for immediate release [...]' *As Skrine then noted with reference to his August diary, para. 13, these 'khizmatgars' were appointed by Sabzali Ramzanali to collect tithes from the Ismaili followers (jamat) of the Aga Khan in the Sarikol Valley. Skrine then wrote on 4 January a message telegrammed to India (No. 3) and received there on the 16th of January:*]

It appears that Imam Dad was not released by Amban as stated in paragraph 2 of my lettter but was rescued by followers from lockup. Followers of Agha Khan representing practically whole of Tajik population of Sarikol have come here to submit petition to Taotai against Amban. Latter has sent in one of his Begs with a counter petition signed by a dozen Sarikolis to effect that Agha Khan's followers were plotting to hand over Sarikol to British [...]

[*In a follow-up telegram, dated 10 January and received on 22 January, Skrine then reported:*]

My telegram No. 3, dated January 4th. Taotai has promised Maulais to recover 600 taels paid to Amban, vide my dispatch No. 118, Paragraph No. 2, and has given them official permission to pay Agha Khan annual tithe equivalent to 125 Maunds grain 100 sheep. Petitioners refuse to return to homes unless Amban is removed as well. If necessary, they will telegraph to Governor.

Counter petition mentioned in my telegram No. 3 broke down, no one speaking to petitioner.

I have traced whole affair to certain subordinate officials at Karasu barrier who are in close touch with Bolsheviks at Murghab and reported to petitioner alleged collusion between Maulais and British in order to stir up trouble.

Detailed report by post.

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[*While Skrine's suspicions about the possible Bolshevik connections of the Afghan mission likely were exaggerated and not always shared in London (see below), he provided a steady stream of evidence regarding the perceived threat to British interests. His telegram No. 130, sent from Misgar on 8 January (thus written at least 12 days earlier around the time he returned to Kashgar from his tour, read (BL IOLR L/P&S/11/222):*]

Mohammad Sharif who is Afghan representative claims to have the status of a Consul General. He bases his claim on the ground of an agreement which it is alleged was reached last summer between the Afghan Government and the Chinese Deputies. The agreement is denied by the Chinese who refuse to recognise that Sharif has any status beyond that of a delegate. Pending settlement of this question which has been referred to the respective Governments, negotiations are suspended. There is a considerable amount of ill-feeling on both sides since the Chinese who greatly resented the alleged cavalier treatment to which their mission was subjected in Afghanistan are now treating the Afghans in precisely similar fashion.

Abdul Ghani, the new Secretary of the Mission arrived post-haste from Moscow via Tashkend and Kabul on December the 19th. He is a distinctly suspicious character. His father was Abdul Rahim Bajauri of Yarkand. In 1910-11 Abdul Ghani worked as an Interpreter for the Russian Consul-General here. Macartney suspected him in a case of theft and he fled to Afghanistan where he entered Government service. He travelled all over Persia in the latter years of the War and when I was in Kerman in 1917, he came there for a short time. He was afterwards clerk at Tashkend in the Afghan Consulate. He has been all over Northern India and in 1921 apparently travelled with some mission in France, Italy, etc. He

informed me himself that recently he came from Moscow to Tashkend in four days. I am having him watched. He is of slight build, with black hair and moustache, short stature, aged about 28 and speaks Hindustani, Pushtu, Turki, Persian and Russian fluently.

[*On the Minute Sheet D.T. Monteath of the India Office noted on 8 February:* 'Nothing is on record, apparently, about Muhammad Sharif; but Abdul Ghani's name has cropped up several times in recent years, generally in connection with Afghan attempts to get into relations with Chinese Turkestan, or the Ferghana Begs (to whom he went on a secret mission in 1920). He is clearly a man of parts: he has acted as interpreter to Sven Hedin & Sir A. Stein. It was known that he accompanied Md. Wali Khan's Mission to Moscow, but not that he had been with it as far as France & Italy.']

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[*Skrine sent the December diary from Kashgar on 11 January 1923; it was received in Srinagar 16 February and annotated in London in the first week of April. The selections here are from the copy in BL IOLR L/P&S/10/976, P1122/1923, fols. 216-218, annotated in the India Office in London. Significant parts of it continue his earlier reports about dealings with Chinese officials while on tour. Apart from such immediate business, he had been collecting information on natural resources with the intention of summarizing it in separate reports:*]

[...] Interesting information was also obtained through British subjects of Keria regarding the gold mine at Surghak in the foot-hills of the Altyn Tagh, and the jade workings in the mountains immediately south of Keria. It is hoped to incorporate this information in a memorandum on the mineral resources of Chinese Turkistan to be compiled later for the information of Government [...]

[*Skrine's efforts to impress with his diligence elicited from Simpson in London a marginal note* 'Mr. Skrine does not hide his light under a bushel'*, next to:*]

Owing to the necessity of reaching Kashgar in time for the new year official festivities, several double marches had to be done in spite of the intense cold and the shortness of the days. On 20th December, for example, His Majesty's Consul-General spent a stormy six hours with the Kargalik Magistrate from 9 A.M. to 3 P.M. and then rode two stages into Yarkand, arriving at midnight; on the way, at Posgam, the headquarters of a newly-formed but flourishing district, two hours were spent conferring with the British subjects and Magistrate of the place. Again on 26th December His Majesty's Consul-General arrived at the important town of Yangi Hissar at 4 P.M. after a 30-mile march; the same evening, three leading Chinese officials were visited and two hours' case work put in at the Yamen with the extremely friendly and reasonable new Magistrate, Mr. Chang. Next day the remaining two stages (51 miles) to Kashgar were successfully accomplished before sunset.

3. During his tour, which lasted 2 ½ months, His Majesty's Consul-General and party covered 1,000 miles and visited, besides the Kirghiz-inhabited valleys of the Karatash, eight different districts, at each of which the whole of the outstanding case- and other work was reviewed and, so far as was possible, disposed of. In all cases which could not be settled at once, good progress as made and first-hand knowledge obtained of the facts and of the point of view not only of the British subjects concerned but (equally important) of the Chinese authorities. There is no question but that much of the misunderstanding which has during the past few years marred relations between the Consulate-General and the districts beyond Yarkand, may be ascribed to the absence of personal relations with the officials of those districts. It is not too much to say that if His Majesty's Consul-General were to tour as far as Keria regularly every year, the work of this Consulate-General, on behalf of British subjects, would be both smoothed and simplified to a marked extent.

Chinese Officials.

4. Major Dockray, who interviewed Governor Yang just before leaving Urumchi in November, states that he lives in almost complete seclusion and never stirs from his room. Now that his wife is not with him, he cooks all his own food for fear of being poisoned. He sent his wife with a large quantity of the spoils of his office down the road to Tientsin last summer: unfortunately, an old enemy of the Governor, P'an, who was once Taoyin of Urumchi but is now Civil Governor of Kansu, seized the opportunity of paying off old scores by forcibly detaining Mrs. Yang and the loot at Lanchow.[112] P'an has moreover sworn to shoot Yang himself if he tries to come through that way. The Governor of Hsinchiang is therefore in a position of considerable difficulty. General Ma Fu Hsiang is in Mongolia, waiting for a chance to oust him; he has a multitude of enemies in Urumchi itself and may be assassinated any moment; he would be only too glad to effet a 'moonlight flitting' to-morrow with a reasonable proportion of the cash, but all his avenues of escape are barred; Transcaspia and Siberia are closed by the Bolsheviks, to whom (to give the devil his due) he has never truckled, while the passes on the road to India are far beyond his physical powers. The situation is an interesting one. One thing is certain, and that is that the present state of affairs cannot last much longer; and when the crash does come, it is to be feared that there may be a slump in the currency. Urumchi or 'gompiao' taels are worth barely a third of their face value in silver: even Kashgar taels are at a 25 per cent. discount, with silver completely out of circulation. in both cases the value of the paper currency is based solely on the ill-founded belief of the populace in the permanency of the present régime, and not on any metallic reserve.

[*Skrine's prediction of an imminent 'crash' clearly was premature, but interestingly elicited a marginal annotation in London ('*Cf. Col. Etherton'*) at the mention of silver currency having disappeared, the note probably reflecting knowledge of the case Skrine had been building about the fiscal affairs of the consulate. In the next section of the diary, Skrine reports on the challenges Dockray faced in obtaining land on which to build the wireless stations, difficulties which made his success in completing the Urumchi station so quickly all the more remarkable.*]

[...] During September and October at Urumchi he received messages regularly from all the North Indian stations, Calcutta being particularly clear, even in the day-time. He frequently called up Indian stations, but failed to get into touch with any of them.

[*Among the several other subjects covered in this diary report, the greatest interest for the commentators in London was elicited by the material on the Afghan delegation in Yarkand. Simpson seems to have taken Skrine's suspicions of Bolshevik involvement seriously: '*The most important section of the diary is that on Sino-Afghan relations with its account of the Afghan Mission (Paras. 9-10). Mr. Skrine suspects that "the Afghan Mission has been arranged in collusion with the Bolsheviks and is being used by the latter as a kind of advanced base in Chinese Turkestan."' *However, Mr. Biggane, to whom Simpson referred for further comment, expressed some mild doubts about the likelihood that the Afghans would be acting on behalf of the Bolsheviks, crossed out that sentence, and then wrote:* 'I think that Mr. Skrine suspects too much.' *Here is Skrine's report:*]

Sino-Afghan Negotiations.

9. [...] The delay in the commencement of negotiations, and the cause, have already been reported by telegram. With regard to the somewhat premature claim of the Afghan Envoy to the rank of Consul-General, it may be mentioned that on his (European style) visiting card, which he had printed in Kabul before leaving, he called himself in Persian 'Consul-General of the High Afghan State in Chinese

112. The reference here is to Pan Linggao 潘齡皐, who was replaced as civil governor of Gansu in mid-August 1922 (see http://www.chinaknowledge.de/History/Rep/governors-gansu.html, last accessed 24 August 2024). Ma Fu Hsiang is Ma Fuxiang 馬福祥, who was governor in Suiyuan (Inner Mongolia).

Turkistan'. When, on first arrival at Yarkand, he went to call on the Chief Chinese delegate, *ex*-Taoyin Chu, the latter refused to accept the card.

Before arriving in Yarkand on his return journey, His Majesty's Consul-General took care to convey indirectly to Mohammad Sharif his desire, in view of the existing Anglo-Afghan Treaty, for friendly official and social relations with the Mission. It is to be regretted that in spite of these overtures the Afghan delegate omitted to call in person; a fact which did not escape the notice either of the Chinese authorities or of the local Mohammadans. In spite of this, His Majesty's Consul-General gave a dinner-party in honour of the Afghans, at which, among others, both the Chinese delegates were present. This was the only occasion on which His Majesty's Consul-General saw any of the Afghans. Mohammad Sharif is an official of distinctly Persian type, not, it would appear, of very high birth or rank, and somewhat lacking both in energy and *savoir-faire*. The brains of the party are undoubtedly to be found in the new Secretary, Mirza Abdul Ghani, who (as already reported) arrived post-haste from Moscow *viâ* Tashkend and Kabul on December 19th. This youth is decidedly clever and is a really remarkable linguist, speaking Persian, Russian and Pashto perfectly, besides being fluent in Hindustani and Osmanli Turkish. He made no secret at dinner of having come from Moscow, though he did not appear so anxious to avow his connection with the Afghan Consulate at Tashkend. Like many persons of doubtful antecedents who have come recently from Russian territory, he extolled the peace and prosperity reigning there and emphasized the fact that he had only taken four days to travel from Moscow to Tashkend.

The following facts show which way the wind is blowing:

(i) A Turki Chinese subject recently handed the Afghan delegate in public a petition against a Badakshi. He was arrested and imprisoned by the Chinese authorities for doing so. The Afghan delegate protested to the Magistrate but without effect.

(ii) The Badakhshis and other Tajiks of Yarkand during the winter play a kind of Rugby football on horse-back called 'buzkashi' on a *maidan* just outside the walls of Yarkand.[113] The Afghan Envoy once watched this game on two consecutive days; the second day, a large crowd assembled at the playing-ground and gave the Afghans an ovation. This so incensed the Chinese that they forbade the playing of 'buzkashi' until further notice. Again, protests made by the Afghan representative were of no avail.

(iii) Tokhta Mullah, the interpreter who accompanied the Chinese Mission to Kabul, is preparing a list of the Chinese subjects in Faizabad, Jirm, Rustaq, Balkh and Kabul districts.

(iv) There exists a register, said to contain 13,000 names, and to be sealed by the District Magistrate of Yarkand on every page, of all the Afghans, Bajauris, Badakhshis, Kashmiris, Gilgitis, Wakhis and Shighnis in Yarkand and neighbouring districts. Before the British Consulate-General was established in Kashgar, when there was no British Aksakal at Yarkand, one Mullah Ilchi Beg acted as Aksakal on behalf of all these foreigners; the Chinese policy in those days, more enlightened than that at present prevailing, was to encourage immigration, and all the persons on Mullah Ilchi Beg's register possessed permits to reside from the Governor, according them, among other privileges, exemption

113. The 'game' in question here is one with a long history in Central Asia, where the two teams battle for possession of a goat carcass to see who can first carry it across a goal line. The Sykeses witnessed such a contest which they termed *baigu* and photographed (Sykes and Sykes 1920, three good images facing p. 150); a contest was put on in the Kaying Valley for the Skrines which Clarmont photographed (see below). Skrine's term (Persian: بزکشی) is the more common one. A *maidan* is an open space, often a marketplace or parade ground.

from all *corvées*. On the death of Mullah Ilchi Beg the register passed through several hands until Liu, the late anti-foreign Magistrate of Yarkand, managed to secure it, in spite of the strenuous efforts of Sir George Macartney to obtain possession of it. A certain Yusaf Akhun, who was instrumental in securing the register for Liu, was made a Beg and afterwards chief Foreign Affairs Beg as a reward for his services in saving this valuable piece of evidence from the clutches of the British Consul-General. The Afghan representative is now after the register and has secretly offered a large reward to any body who can secure it for him by theft, bribery or otherwise, from the yamen.

10. The latest reports to hand are to the effect that shortly after the New Year the Afghan delegate and Abdul Ghani interviewed some thirty Badakhshis at his house with a view to ascertaining their opinion regarding the proposed Treaty. The first request the Badakhshis made, one which speaks for itself, was that Afghanistan should insist on the removal by the Chinese of their ban upon the import of opium into Chinese territory. Mohammad Sharif said that this was impossible, but that there were enough 'secret ways'. The Badakhshis then asked for exemption from Chinese import duty on other goods. The Afghan representative said that he would reserve discussion of this point 'until the arrival of the Bolshevik Consul'. This remark is significant. Taken in conjunction with the selection of Abdul Ghani as Secretary to the Mission, and with certain other indications, it strengthens the suspicion entertained from the first by His Majesty's Consul-General that the Afghan Mission has been arranged in collusion with the Bolsheviks and is being used by the latter as a kind of advanced base in Chinese Turkestan.

[*Skrine's final section under the rubric 'Trans-Frontier Affairs' is revealing about the permeability of borders and his sources; his report on the commercial deputation from Andijan attracted one of Simpson's comments in London.*]

12. *Russian Pamirs*. – About the middle of November last 33 Kirghiz families of Tagharma (Sarikol) migrated to the Murghab district owing to the oppressive measures of the Amban detailed in the last paragraph. A Yamen *darogha* who was sent after them was given a letter for the Amban telling the latter exactly what they thought of him. This *darogha* was arrested by the Bolshevik commandant at Murghab as a spy and kept under surveillance for a week, then allowed to return. He states that there were only 12 soldiers at Murghab when he was there, the larger part of the garrison having been temporarily moved to Kharukh. From another source the strength of the Russian Pamir garrisons is given as follows:

Kharukh	150
Ishkashim	40
Langar	40
Murghab	50

	280

A regular mail service now runs between Kharukh and Andijan.

13. *Ferghana*. [...] As already reported by telegram, a commercial deputation from Andijan headed by V. P. Shmukler reached Irkeshtam about 10th December, and sent a message to the Taoyin requesting permission to come to Kashgar. They had 16 pony-loads of goods with them. Under orders from Urumchi, the deputation were refused admittance into Kashgaria, and have returned to Andijan.

Although the deputation themselves stated that they were not authorised to conclude any trade agreement with the Chinese, there is very little doubt that they came with the knowledge and approval of the Tashkend authorities as a kind of feeler, with a view to establishing relations with the Chinese.

Vasili Petrovitch Shmukler was once manager of the Russo-Asiatic Bank here, and is now working for the Bolsheviks in Ferghana as a financial expert. He is not himself a Bolshevik, a fact which no doubt accounts for his appointment as head of the deputation. As pointed out in Kashgar Secret Memorandum No. 101 of 14th September 1922 (bottom of page 9) the Bolshevik game here is not to frighten the authorities by direct propaganda, but rather to lull them into a state of false security and confidence which will be favourable to the reception of their Commercial Missions, Trade Agreements and so forth. Another member of the deputation, however, Rudenko, formerly assistant postmaster at Osh, is said to be a secret worker in the Communist cause [...]

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[*Skrine telegrammed his superiors (the message sent out from Misgar on 13 March 1923) informing them he was sending by post his translation of some of the Afghans' anti-British propaganda. His translation of one leaflet, dated 28 February, reads (L/P&S/11/222. P1586/1923):*]

According to news received by him who is Amir of Kabul by the grace of God, forty thousand boxes of cartridges, three thousand several hundred guns, thirty odd thousand Government tents of first-class quality, several hundred thousand munitions of war and many cities formerly under Turkish rule had fallen into the power of the English. Now Mustafa Kamal Pasha, the Turkish Minister of War, marched out with a first-class brave army of 3,000,000 men, whereupon the English seeing this pomp and display and becoming helpless and unable to fight, evacuated the cities in question and surrendered them to Mustafa Kamal Pasha. News are also to hand that several million gold coins also have been given up. Three thousand European, that is to say English and Greek prisoners, as well as a large number, in fact an innumerable host, of Christians with their arms have fallen into the hands of the Turks.

This is the gist of the news that the writer has heard out of all the good news that has been made known by the King of Islam (? the Amir of Afghanistan).

[*In London, D.T. Monteath rather soberly remarked:* 'This does not seem to be particularly pernicious stuff, & appears rather to boom the Islamic Power than to vilify Gt. Britain. I should have thought news so old as this would have reached even Hsin-Kiang from the Russian side long ago and in a more distinctly anti-British form.']

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[*This is the first of Skrine's letters home filed under BL IOLR MS EurF 154/9. While the account of the last stages in his tour overlaps with what he inserted in his monthly report quoted above, it is interesting to see how he includes here a lot of local color. Presumably his mother would have received this letter long before his superiors in London would have read the monthly diary. His comments on Harding include verbatim repetition of what he had written earlier to Howell (see above, pp. 156-158).*]

Kashgar, 30 December 1922 – 4 January 1923

My last was written on the road and sent off about Xmas Day from Yangi Hissar. We had a bitterly cold march of 30 miles from Kizil Bazar to Yangi Hissar partly across desert but mostly through a succession of cultivated patches with small villages in the middle. All loess country, the roads deep in the exceedingly fine loess dust, heavy work for horses. D. got into the tarantass at m.15 after we had had a very chilly sandwich lunch under a ruined mud-wall where we tried in vain to warm ourselves at a fire of semi-green thorns. None the less, in spite of the cold it was an exhilarating march, & while D. rolled along behind snugly ensconced in the tarantass, I galloped ahead the last 10 miles over a vast prairie towards the low hills which enclose Yangi Hissar on the south. It was funny approaching Y. Hissar

again from nearly but not quite the same direction as we did in July under such different weather and seasonal conditions! Then, all was green and hot and thirsty – now, all was khaki-coloured & black or grey, & where in July I had noticed & wondered at an aqueduct across a small river-canyon composed (the aqueduct I mean) of one enormous tree-trunk sliced in half and hollowed out, now nothing was visible but a slender bridge of ice with the most wonderful icicles of vast size depending from it. Away to the south mighty Kungur, to which we had said good-bye in October, was just visible, wreathed in mists, 60 miles away.

I arrived, after running the usual gauntlet of 'chah-jans' (reception tea-drinkings on the road), at Y. Hissar at 4:30, & found that this time we had got the Swedish Mission bungalow to live in all right – unlike our awful experience last July, q. v. I had a lot of work with & calling on, Chinese to do at Y. Hissar, where we have a lot of (Shikarpuri Hindu) British subjects, so I didn't wait for D. but pushed out on my round. I called on 2 Chinese officials & then went to the Yamen where I talked to and wrangled (tho' in a friendly spirit) with the Amban about British cases. The Amban has studied Law at Peking & is a much more reasonable & easy person to deal with than some Ch[inese] officials I have had to deal with [...]

Next day we were up very early & off by 8:30 on our last – and longest – march, 51 miles into Kashgar. As it was also the best bit of road of the whole tour the 51 miles didn't worry us much. All dead flat & excellent clay surface, with only a few heavy stretches of road & a little water or ice here & there. Once more we re-lived our memorable arrival at Kashgar in July; we felt so different this time, our sensations were so different, that it was hard to recover our first impressions of the Kashgar oasis. One impression, however, we had no difficulty in remembering by way of contrast: our lunch on 20th July was a sultry affair of warm drinking-water, dry sandwiches from a sun-baked tin & half-melted chocolate; this time the water was frozen in the thermos, the hard-boiled eggs were frozen (D. thought the first one she broke was bad, & threw it away!), the cold leg of chicken was cold indeed, being frozen through & through, & the Kucha pears were thoroughly iced & had to be thawed before we could get our teeth into them!

[...] We did the last 25 mi. in 3 hours, arriving near the city at 4:30, when we were met by Harding. The latter looked (as usual) an extraordinary sight in an enormous Turki fur hat with vast ear-flaps (rather a good head-gear as a matter of fact) strange Canadian clothes & moccasins & his feet in stirrups guarded with the sort of leather wind-screen businesses that they favour in the 'wild and wooolly West'. He was as full of talk as ever about everything except what I particularly wanted to hear about, namely the Bolshevik situation; he sort of resents my or the Gov't. of India in general's nosing into Bolo affairs, as being impolite to his friends the Bolos (that's what it comes to) & he never gives one a word more information about them than he can possibly help. He must hear a good deal among the Turkis whose society he frequents (rather too much for the prestige of the Consulate, I fear), but he doesn't make use of it or collate it. One must make allowances for his being completely untrained in Intelligence work of course; but I'm afraid there's a good [deal] of 'where there's a will there's a way', only it's a 'won't' here! He's not actively pro-Bolo – you mustn't pay any heed to D's wild & only half-serious imaginings about him – but he's not anti-Bolo as he ought to be for a job like this. He's got a 'minority-mind' for one thing, & for another, he was fooled to the top of his bent by the Bolos at Urga – they must have spotted his amazing vanity at once & played upon it.

It's nice getting back into the Consulate, but there are one or two drawbacks. One is the awful Russian stoves, vast shiny black things like the funnels of monstrous locomotives, which disfigure &

either under- or over-heat every room. They eat up wood (it's rather expensive here, & there's practically no coal) & are most cheerless compared with a bright roaring English fire. Fancy? a British Consulate General in a place with a real nice old-fashioned winter like Kashgar, & not a single fire-place!![114] Did you ever hear of such a thing? If ever I see old Macartney I shall tell him kindly & politely but firmly, what I think of him for perpetrating this crime. I've started right away putting a fire-place in the drawing room, not to replace the stove which is immoveable, but to supplement it: I hope to be able to get a fire-place into Doris' bedroom; but owing to the construction of the ceilings & the upper story, I'm afraid fires won't be possible in any of the other rooms, without great expense at any rate.

The skating-pond I made just before going away in the lower garden, & left such elaborate 'bundobust' about filling and freezing when the time came in November, is rather a disappointment. The ice formed well to start with, then the water gradually sank underneath from percolation, & now about 1 foot of solid ice rests unevenly upon the bottom with many cracks & a steep kind of Brooklands banked track round the sides. I <u>can</u> skate on it, but only just, & unless I can get some more water on it, which is very doubtful, I'm afraid my efforts will have been in vain. However, I know of two or three marsh-lakes within 5 or 6 miles of this, & I propose to ride out to one of them tomorrow (Sunday) morning & try it. The ice I saw on similar lakes down Yarkand way was <u>perfect</u> – so I hope these lakes will be similarly covered with lovely glassy ice. If so, I'll go out as often as I can. As old Nazaroff said today, Kashgar could be made into an ideal winter resort – it's sunny, bracing, healthy, not very cold, & there's skating & excellent shooting in the neighbourhood. He & I went out this afternoon to some rice fields just under the lower walls about 2 m. from here, & got several snipe – we had great sport for an hour or so. The skating is magnificent, & I'm having a great time [...][115] The real skating is on the marsh lakes round Kashgar, the ice on which is almost perfect. I have already skated on one of these & I hope to be able to go out two or three times a week, D. coming occasionally with the tea-basket & her gun for duck. I hadn't had skates on for 11 years & was pretty groggy on my 'edges' at first, but I'm already firmer & hope in a week or two to regain my old form. It's splendid exercise and will keep me tremendously fit. I wish D. would skate too, but she was <u>made</u> to skate against her will as a child & therefore hates it.

We have got another whirl of gaiety on this week, owing to the New Year. Big official dinner at the Dao Tai's at 6 tomorrow night (Sunday 31st Dec.); dinner here on New Year's Day, 16 of us, all men (7 Chinks, 4 Russians, 2 Swedes, Dockray, Harding & self). On the following night, dinner at the Hsieh Tai's; on the 3rd, Christmas tree and bran-pie for all the children grown up & otherwise, including 2 small Chinese boys.[116] D. & I will both be pretty thankful when Thursday comes round. There will still be the <u>Russian</u> Christmas party on Monday the 8th & a few other shows – however, sufficient unto the day...[117]

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114. Even though I did not see much of the interior of the old British consulate when there for the first time in 1995, I saw no fireplace or stove. The heating was supplied with metal radiators which presumably would not have been to Skrine's taste in the 1920s. The major renovations since 1995, which have, it seems, totally erased any evidence of the building's interior as Skrine would have known it, may well now have replaced the radiators with some kind of more modern heating.

115. Skrine's files contained a few photographs of the ice skating on these lakes. Presumably Doris took the photos. The nitrate negatives are in a packet Skrine had labeled 'Kashgar (fair)' which (at the time I examined it) had been stored for the RGS at at the climate-controlled Hulton Getty facility prior to the construction of the new wing of the RGS in London. Those negatives are now at the British Film Institute's safe store in Warwickshire.

116. Bran-pie is not a food item but, as the *Oxford English Dictionary* explains, 'A tub full of bran with small gifts hidden in it to be drawn out at random, as part of festivities at Christmas, etc.'

117. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof' (Matthew 6:34, from the Sermon on the Mount).

I haven't told you about Dockray yet. He arrived on 24th Dec., while we were still on tour, & stayed with Harding for a few days but is now in his own house, an unoccupied Russian building. He's a great addition to society here, a real good type, an ex-flying man with the rank of major who has been on service & on constructional work all over the world – Chile, Somaliland, all over China & Heaven knows where else. Tall, well-brushed, clean shaven, good-mannered, of Irish extraction & accent but typically British in his love of racing, shooting & sport of all kinds & his incapacity for learning languages. As you can imagine, an extremely interesting person, & what is more important in a place like this, one who doesn't jar & with whom one can always be at ease – a complete contrast to Harding & a welcome relief from him. I don't think I've told you who Dockray is & why he's here. There's no harm in my telling you: he's constructing wireless stations in China for the Marconi Company & has just finished a big one at Urumchi (Tihwafu) the capital of this province, 60 marches to the N.E. He has now come to Kashgar & is going to construct one, the last of the Chinese chain linking up with India, here. He has brought a caravan of 117 5-horse carts and 1000 camels! That is to say, he has come ahead of them & they'll be in in a few days. Some caravan. He's a tremendous worker, Dockray, looks after every minutest detail himself, & in other parts of the world has put up wireless stations in record time, I believe. He had the Urumchi station working in August last, & was in touch regularly with Calcutta, Lahore, Peshawar etc. & sent us the news of the resignation of Lloyd George, the Greek débâcle[118] & other matters long before we got them from India. When the station here is up, which will be in April or May, Dockray hopes, we'll be right in the world. I'll be able to send you telegraphic messages by wireless, inland telegraph & cable and get an answer in three days! I will certainly do so immediately Dockray has got the station in working order, if only for sentiment's sake.

31 December 1922. 11 PM. Just back from the Dao Tai's dinner, a boring affair in a stifling atmosphere [...]

In your last letter you ask what are Doris' views about Bunbury. In case I haven't already made it clear (I think I have) D. is strongly in his favour. She took to him from the start – why, I can't think, but then there never is any accounting for girls' taste in men [...] The truth of course is that Iris wants to get away from N[orth] B[erwick] & D. wants her to get away too [...] Another knotty, tho' much less important matter is Sykes and my Persian photos [...] [Y]ou tell me he's taken 35 photos including all my best 'subject' pictures of Kerman, the Sarhad etc. – Really, darling Mum, I wouldn't have sent you those photos if I'd thought they would be passed on for publication in somebody else's book. I'm going to start writing my own book about Kerman, S. E. Persia, the Sarhad & Western Baluchistan as soon as I get on board the steamer at Bombay, & in that book the chief, in fact the only, merit which raise it above other books about the same countries will be the pictures, particularly the mountain pictures. Practically none of the existing travel books about Persia or Baluchistan have anything but snaps, rotten photos mostly. It's the picture that people go for in travel books, they only read the letter-press because they're interested in the pictures & want to read about the places shown. If Sykes published all my best photos of those parts, it simply wouldn't be worth writing about them – and all the labour I had & the worry & expense of developing my films & plates in camp, the hopes & fears & calculations & triumphs & failures, would be (from one point of view at any rate) wasted. Of course I can't let Sykes have them. Thank goodness he had the grace to await my permission, otherwise I'd have had to cable

118. David Lloyd George resigned as British Prime Minister on 19 October 1922. The The Greek débâcle refers to the ill-conceived Greek military offensive against the Turks which resulted in total defeat, the Turkish occupation of Smyrna (Izmir) and the evacuation of the entire Greek population of that city in September 1922. The overthrow of the Greek government followed.

about it. He tells me by the way in his letter to me that you wanted him to take & publish whatever he wanted without asking me, but that he virtuously insisted on referring to me. I simply don't believe that. It's very awkward. I've got to write a difficult letter. What I'll do is this: I'll ask him to send me out the ones he wants & I'll send him back whatever I don't want to publish [...]

You'll be interested & I hope pleased to hear that two very nice Siberian lynx skins, well cured locally, start for 147 Victoria St. this mail in a strong parcel enclosed in ordinary cloth & oil-cloth. They'll make up into a very nice wrapper & muff for you which I hope will be ready in plenty of time for the latter part of the fur-wearing season. I wish I could send them in a box, but I can't because of the 4-pound rule for parcels which remains in force until June 1st. Àpropos of parcels, I'm sorry the Peke bowls arrived broken, but never mind; they were very cheap and I'm pretty sure I can get others just as pretty, possibly even of the same design, & will send them immediately the Gilgit P.O. begin to take 10-lb. parcels. As for the packing, I packed them exactly as they were received by the shop here from Peking! 3,500 miles by cart or carrier across China. They're always packed with only paper in between – it's the strongest way, because they reinforce each other. They must have been opened in the Customs & badly repacked; I've suffered from that several times [...] By the way, I'm also sending a pair of very fine wolf-skins in separate parcels. I hope they reach all right. Will you very kindly take them to the same furriers you take the lynxes to & have them made up into wraps, one for Aunt Marie one for Aunt Lilian?[119] I enclose a cheque for £ 3 on a/c of the cost [...] At the same time you might get out of the furriers an idea of the value of the skins as they are, i. e. the wholesale price paid by the trade in London [...]

3 January 1923. I enclose the Chinese menu of our dinner party on Monday night (New Year's Day). We sat down 17; all men, including 7 Chinese, 4 Russians, 2 Swedes, 1 Irishman, 1 Canadian & myself. The dinner was a great success. Luckily a consignment of 1st class dry champagne arrived for me only in December, so that I was able to do a bust & impress Kashgar by opening 4 bottles of it. The new Dao Tai did in over half a bottle himself alone; altogether the political effect of the dinner was excellent. Last night I dined with the Hiseh Tai (O[fficer] C[ommanding] Kashgar) & today came off our great Christmas party to the children, grown up and otherwise of the community, including 3 Chinese kids. 31 sat down to tea & consumed enormous quantities of the excellent cakes & sandwiches produced by Doris, the most popular edible being Doris' own éclairs made by herself yesterday evening while I was at the Hsieh Tai's. She really is a dab at éclairs. Tea and chocolate (in our lovely new samovar purchased at a ridiculously low price in September) flowed like water & the 12 children were all uproarious. Harding who is very fond of children (it is one of his few pleasant attributes & in fact he rather overdoes it and spoils kids) was put at the children's table & was very happy. The 3 little Chinese boys, all aged about 12, were beautifully behaved & perfectly delightful; one of them, the son of the Master of the local Mint, is particularly bright; he speaks both Turki and Russian beautifully!! He acted as interpretor between us & the other little Chinks, grandsons of the late & the present Dao Tais respectively. After tea we went to the big drawing-room and gazed in admiration at a magnificent Xmas tree blazing with candles, gilded walnuts, red paper festoons & silver-covered chocolate croquettes, also at a brilliantly illuminated Bran Pie, contained in nothing less than our Kashgar-made camp bath-tub which has just travelled 1100 miles with us on camel and cart! After the rifling of the tree & the Pie, we played musical

119. Aunt Lilian was Lilian Stewart, the sister of Clarmont's mother. Aunt Lilian married (Sir) Charles Lukis, who became the British Surgeon-General in India. They would host Clarmont in Simla and oversaw his lifesaving treatment for tetanus there. When Lukis died, Lady Lilian returned home. Aunt Marie presumably was Helen Stewart Skrine's youngest sister, who also had married in India.

chairs to the gramophone, followed by 'puff-feather', both games novelties to Russians & Swedes alike & enormously successful. Lastly came hot chocolate & (unrehearsed effect) a performance outside in our front garden of Chinese devil-dancers. There are men & boys who dress up in extraordinary masks & dragons & lions' heads & go about like 'waits' at the New Year, performing at Yamens and big houses, where they hope to collect money. They have elaborately-illuminated dragons & ships which dance about, most curious & interesting with, at times, really beautiful fire-work effects. It was a fitting climax to what was undoubtedly (tho' we says it as shouldn't) the best Xmas party given at Kashgar for many years. [...]

The furs for you and the aunts have been sent to Lorimer at Gilgit for onward transmission by hook or by crook to Srinagar, a special messenger to be sent with them over the Burzil if necessary. I do hope they reach you in time to use this season. A pair of jade bangles from Doris is enclosed for you in one of the parcels as a belated Xmas present with her love. It would be rather interesting to have them valued too by a dealer; I have got several pairs of the same jade & can get plenty more, very cheap.

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[*Readers may tire of Skrine's tirades about Harding, which in fact I have cut about in half here. I feel that, for better or worse, they underscore some of Skrine's deep-seated prejudices. As much as anything the fact Harding was Canadian and thus presumably lacking in proper English upbringing is what annoyed Skrine, but Skrine also found it impossible to tolerate those who did not conform to his idea of how British officials should present themselves in the countries to which they were assigned. The 'romantic' posing to which Skrine refers can be sensed from the little vignettes Harding included in his otherwise fairly straightforward account of his trip to Kashgar from India that was published by the Swedish mission press in Kashgar.*]

Kashgar, 11 January 1923

After a trying fortnight of New Year entertaining, arrears of work and Harding, we have at last a peaceful two months by ourselves at the Consulate General to look forward to. Harding went on a longish tour yesterday & won't be back till mid-March [...] I simply can't describe how we both, D. particularly, detest that man. He is without exception the most conceited, egotistical, affected, boorish and intentionally tactless bounder I have ever had the misfortune to come across [...] His whole attitude & mode of life are affected and posing; in his own estimation he is a romantic, almost Byronic figure, roaming over Central Asia & China where the common herd cannot go, living the life of the people and penetrating to the innermost soul of the nations which he honours with his presence. Hence his mode of travel on the way up, which I mentioned before, & his adoption of Turki dress, skull-cap or fur hat, quilted dressing gown of bright hues, waist-cord of silk, Russian boots & all. An excellent fancy dress, & all right if one is a journalist in search of copy & determined to manufacture it if not found; but <u>not</u> suitable for a middle-aged man in the commissioned service of the Crown – unless perhaps as a disguise for secret service purposes, a use which is about the last Harding would put his Turki costumes to [...] Even Doris, whom he daren't sneer at to her face, he squashes and puts aside in company on every possible occasion – nothing one can take hold of, you know, it's just his conversational attitude towards her & his apparent desire to shine at her expense or at everybody else's [...] About the Gov't. of India, again, though (or perhaps because) he knows I belong to it and am likely to stand up for it, he is insufferably superior and contemptuous, making no secret of his opinion (based on two days' stay at Simla out of a total of 3 weeks in India) that everyone in the Gov't. of India is an ignorant, lazy, stupid, insular, obstructive jack-in-office & that the Gov't. of India as a whole is a parochial, red-tape-ridden machine entirely out of touch alike with the Indian people & with the Great World (to which of course

Harding himself belongs). This attitude is partly due to his native conceit, partly to his connexion with the Legation at Peking (the Diplomatic Service, to which, though only a Consular service man really, Harding always regards himself as belonging, is always most amusingly jealous of the I[ndian] C[ivil] S[ervice]) partly to his being a Canadian & therefore despising all Englishmen, particularly Public School & University men, as 'gringoes' [...]

What a tirade! I feel better now I've got my opinion of H. off my chest – after all, he doesn't matter so very much, and he can't spoil Chinese Turkestan for us more than to a very limited extent [...] Anywhere else, one could snub him or otherwise shut him up because one would have other decent-minded people to back one up, & also because one could get away from him – here, where he's the only other Britisher & I have to see a lot of him every day, work with him, have him frequently into the house, one simply can't quarrel with him – it would bring about an impossible situation. I regard him as a penance, a chastisement from above as it were, to balance the extraordinary good fortune we have had in getting this job. [...]

I think the best thing I can do to give you an idea of the man will be to send you the copy, printed by the Swedish Mission here, of his diary of the journey up which he has presented to us.[120] His conceit about this effusion is indescribably blatant & offensive. If only it were possible to make him realize how he has succeeded in vulgarizing even the Karakoram Mountains!

Your letter of 23rd Nov. came yesterday [...] The enlargements do seem to have been a success! I'm very glad. They certainly give a better idea of the country than reams of word-pictures of mine. You ask several questions about them – first, as to how they got to you; I sent them to Stein in Kashmir with a stamped & directed cover, string boards & all complete, for him to send them on to you. Second, what are the women doing in the orchard picture where D. is holding up her fingers; no, she is not telling them to look at her hand & be photoed. It was much more natural than that – neither she nor they noticed they were being photographed. She was asking how old a baby was & counting on her fingers to supplement her limited knowledge of the Burushaski language! Thirdly about 'Lake Skrine' – I did tell you I think that it was not more than a mile and a half long, so far as I could see, & ½ m. to 1 m. broad.[121] By the way, I've never sent you on the latter part of my diary – the journey, from Tash-Kurghan to Kashgar – I meant to take it out into camp for typing a fair copy, but left it behind by mistake, so never got the thing finished; now I shall have time & finish it & send it to you.

We have had a fearful time this week: Monday lunch at the Hiseh Tai's Yamen, tea with a Russian family, dinner with all the Russian Community at the Bank [*Fig. 99, next page*] (Monday was their Christmas Day, hence the festivities) [...]

Tomorrow I've fixed up a nice day, it being Friday & therefore an off day in office; I'm riding over to Yangi Shahr in the morning, picking up a Swede called Persson who is keen on skating & taking him with me to a lovely marsh-lake covered with absolutely glassy ice about 2 ½ miles from Y.S. where Persson runs the Mission School. D. is coming later in the tarantass with Miss Svensson & lunch, which they're going to cook gipsy-fashion while we skate, & we'll all come home (over 8 miles) together in time for tea. It ought to be great fun & will be the first holiday I've had since we came back from tour. [...]

120. Harding, *Diary* (1922).

121. The two photos referred to here are ones that in a separate caption Skrine labeled as: 'D.F.S. talking to a group of Hunza women in an orchard between Baltit & Gulmit' and that published in *CCA*, facing p. 46 [reproduced as Fig. 51 above], captioned 'Unmapped lake at head of Yambulak Valley; spurs of Muz Tagh Ata in background'. I have not found a copy of the first.



Fig. 99. Skrine's photo showing the compound of the Russo-Asiatic Bank in Kashgar, an image obviously made during warmer weather with all the leaves on the trees (after: Nazaroff 1935, facing p. 36).

What times you've been living in at Home over the Turkish crisis and the General Election.[122] The former has no repercussion here, by the way. The Turkis of Chinese Turk[ista]n are much more Aryan than Turanian & being kept in complete ignorance of the outside world by the Chinese, know nothing and care less about the Osmanli Turk. It's just as well. As for the new Gov't. – the question which is worrying me is, will this reactionary-looking Gov't. have the sense not to be too reactionary & anti-Labour, so as to prevent the otherwise inevitable landslide towards Labour at the next election. The Communist capture of Scotland is awful. What, oh what, are the so-called canny Scotch coming to?[123]

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[*Since so few of Doris Skrine's letters have been preserved, I copy this one in its entirety. It is illustrated with sketches of the two Kashgar consulate women and of the imagined reaction of the Skrines welcoming back to London their progeny, visibly overfed from their stay in Kashgar. The notes about the 'zoopark' in the garden highlight one of Doris's passions about animals, which would later turn tragic when wild dogs invaded the compound and killed many of the birds.*]

H.B.M.'s Consulate General, Kashgar, Chinese Turkestan, 16 January 1923

Dearest Helen,

The Christmas Box arrived last mail, in excellent condition. I can't thank you enough for all the perfectly delightful things you sent – it was most awfully sweet of you. Each present will be more popular than the last, and the pink pearl brooches will create a 'furore.' I can picture 'Mrs. Mohammad Rahim' and 'Mrs. Gulam Mohammad' fighting for the possession of one! [*Fig. 100, next page, left*] I have to confess that I have 'pinched' the little pink pincushion and that it now adorns my dressing table!! It looked so nice I had to – my late pincushion having come to grief while we were on tour.

On the first opportunity there will be an oppressed Persons tamasha, and I will make them dig in a bran-pie for the little presents.

We have been having a pretty festive time since we came back, what with the Chinese New Year and

122. The reference here is to the political situation in Turkey, where the advance of Turkish nationalist forces under Mustafa Kemal was seen by the Western powers to be in violation of the Treaty of Sèvres limiting territory controlled by the Turks and protecting Greeks in western Anatolia and Eastern Thrace. This nearly led to a military confrontation with Britain, which hawks in the British government supported. When the crisis was settled by negotiation, the fallout in British domestic politics was the collapse of the coalition government led by David Lloyd George and the calling of new elections which resulted in a resounding Conservative victory (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chanak_Crisis, last accessed 30 April 2016).

123. Skrine's expression of horror here may be referring primarily to the fact in the election Labour emerged as the largest political party in Scotland and not just the fact that in one district a lone Communist was elected. See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1922_United_Kingdom_general_election_in_Scotland (last consulted 9 August 2024).



Fig. 100. Doris Skrine's sketches illustrating her letter to her mother-in-law 16 January 1923 (from the British Library Collection: IOLR EurF 154/9).

the Russian Christmas & New Year, and various parties which C. & I had to get off our chests! Now however Kashgar is settling down again and we have time to look round a little! C. will have told you of his skating expeditions. While he twirls on the ice like Pavlova,[124] I crawl about in the neighbourhood, armed with a gun, as wild duck are pretty plentiful now, whereever there are springs or running water. Last Friday, the office half-holiday, we took two of the Swedish Missionaries out with us, and while C. and the man skated, the lady & I 'fried' lunch over a camp fire and had rather fun! We hope to do this again next Friday.

I have seen the new Mrs. Dao Tai once and was rather thrilled by her. She is the image of Catherine de Medici – small, humped, with a sallow pointed face and vivid black eyes – and I should think was just as wicked. I went with the three Missionary ladies to call on her and as we all sat at a large table eating tea & cakes she made remarks about us all in turn to a little Chinese maiden who was with her, she also spat on the floor, and watched us like a cat watching mice!! The Swedes who are used to the exquisite ladylike manners of the last 'Mrs. Dao Tai,' were rather alarmed, but I'd met with some rather quaint-mannered Chinese ladies on our tour, so I was hardened, and took up the rôle of another cat, watching her just as unwinkingly as she watched us. Then we caught each other's eyes – both laughed, and finally got on quite well. She's been ill so hasn't been able to return my call, but I hope to get her to come to a Chinese ladies' tea party next week. Dear, delightful Mrs. ex-DaoTai is still here, and when I saw her the other day, informed me that the new 'Tai-Tai' (her successor) had a 'bad heart' – meaning wicked, not diseased! Kashgar is lonely just now, and though it is so frosty, it is so dry, that the cold doesn't matter. In spite of the Sykes 'croakings' (as I feel I must call them) we are getting so much to eat, and everything is so good, that we shall both return looking like this: [*Fig. 100, right*]

Scene – Waterloo Station

Arrival of the Junior Skrine's – note yourself, Mr. Frank, Mum, Dad, & various relations all fainting with horror.

Wild ducks are the equivalent of 6 d. each! Large farmyard geese can be had for about 2/- each! Apples are about 2 or 3 for 1 d., and we are still feasting on the vegetables out of the garden, which owing to the intense dryness, keep very well, stored in a shed. Be it said in favour of the Sykes remarks, that the Russians tell us that since about 1917 the winters have been getting finer and brighter each year,

124. Anna Matveevna Pavlova (1881-1931), the famous Russian ballerina, who moved to London in 1912.

and that this year Dec. and January have been particularly nice. We have added to our 'Zoological Park' (the field below the garden) 1 tame 'Ram-Chikkor,' caught in the mountains and brought to Kashgar alive for sale. In the meantime, I have to tie it by a long string to a tree, but I hope soon to let it loose, to run about with the ducks, and sleep in their house at night. It is rather like asking a Montenegrin Prince to live quietly with some little Dutch shopkeeper, but still, the ducks are very affable to him, and he is getting quite accustomed to them!

Please excuse my writing a longer letter, but I am still struggling to thank kind people who have sent Christmas letters and things.

With very much love to Mr. Frank and yourself, and again very many thanks for your lovely parcel.

Always yours

Doris

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[*A month after writing this letter, Skrine sent to India a copy of the formal response he had made to the proposal by the Chinese Post Office to offer mail service to British India (see below, pp. 262-265). Skrine's draft of his detailed report on Etherton, dated 18 January, the day before this letter, is in BL IOLR MSS EurF 154/39, a file which also includes his later drafts sent in response to queries for clarification and details. The January 18 report was a very belated response to the initial request telegrammed to him back on 23 October, to which he had been unable to respond as he was out on tour.*]

Kashgar, 19 January 1923

I am writing this two hours after the mail ought to have gone! but as I am Postmaster General as regards the Kashgar–Gilgit dâk it doesn't matter. The Chinese Post Office want to take over the Kashgar–Gilgit service, at any rate as far as the frontier, but I'm all against that – not only would you, we ourselves & everyone else who writes to or from Kashgar have to pay foreign postal rates, but we would have to send our letters to the Post Office by a fixed time after which delivery would be refused – a great come-down!

The reason why I am so late this time is because I have only just managed to get off a heavy and difficult, but I hope fruitful, piece of work – my report on the accounts of this Consulate-General. I have 'sweated blood' over this for ten days past, seldom getting to bed before 12 or 1 and getting no fresh air or exercise to speak of. I was determined to get it off this mail, & have just managed it. This report, I think I told you, was wired for (in cypher of course – it's all very secret) last October by Foreign. Owing to my not getting back from tour till 27th December & having then not only a lot of arrears of current work but the Xmas & New Year entertaining & festivities, I didn't get to work till the 2nd week in Jan. My report, which is one long indictment of E. & his methods, covers __ pages & has attached to it a long statement by Firoz, the Accountant & 4 big schedules with several columns, each simply bristling with figures. I have proved conclusively (1) that E. made about Rs. 10,000 illegally by his Supply Bill ramp (2) that he played ducks and drakes with Gov't. money in all directions, while I have adduced strong presumptive evidence that he supplied himself with all sorts of things, luxuries & necessities, at Gov't. expense, things to which he had no right whatever. I have shown up his methods of accounting (which he kept in his own hand, instead of employing the Accountant) and indicated pretty clearly <u>why</u> he used those methods – merely in order to camouflage and cover up his tracks & make it possible for him (as he thought) to explain away any objections the Accountant-General might make. Why the Accounts people, usually such sticklers, have shut their eyes so long to the irregularities

which even my amateur eye spotted immediately I came here. E. seems to have been a 'chartered libertine' (libertine is rather appropriate by the way), but he won't be chartered much longer now Govt's eyes are opened. I calculate he made half a lakh net profit out of this job during his last year and a half alone, his total pay for the period being well under 30,000 rupees! [...]

[*P.S.*]

Just out for the day again skating at the Salarma Lake 8 miles out with the Swedes. Our picnic there last week was great success.

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[*The political news about the Governor in Urumqi (with speculation and a certain amount of colorful detail that contradict information in other sources) repeats almost verbatim what Dockray told Skrine and the latter included in his December diary sent to India on 11 January and quoted above. In writing his mother, Skrine was specific in tying Etherton to the potential problems with the currency, whereas in the diary report he left that connection for his superiors to divine, as one of the annotators in London obviously did. I have deleted here another long paragraph about Harding, in response to comments his mother sent responding in turn to one of Skrine's earlier letters. Also, I have not included a paragraph in which he expresses alarm at his mother's news she is heading off to the gaming tables at Monte Carlo.*]

Kashgar, 25 January 1923

[...] We are continuing to revel in Kashgar without Harding. The weather is perfect, cold enough to make the skating excellent (if only I had more time to enjoy it) but warm & sunny enough in the daytime to give quite a Swiss winter sports feel to the air. Personally, in spite of the wonderful fruit & flowers in the summer time, I think that winter in Kashgaria is as good a season as any. Skating and duck-shooting both first-class; Riviera skies; bracing and healthy as you like; no insects; roaring wood fires to sit round in the evenings (if you're sensible enough to do away with these horrible Russian stoves & put in fire-places) last but not least, lovely game to be had in the bazaar of all kinds: 'ūlār' or snow-cock, pheasants, duck and teal – at ridiculous rates, ranging from 5 tengehs (1 shilling) for the biggest snow-cock (a bird the size of a capercailzie[125] & magnificent eating) to 1 ½ tengehs (3 ¾ S.) for a teal or small duck.

You might mention this to Miss Ella next time you see her. Apart from the game, more different kinds of fish are available at this time of year than at others, owing to the great distances from which frozen fish can be brought. Last week we were eating fish, practically fresh, brought from Chuguchak on the Semipalatinsk frontier, 52 marches away from here, in the extreme north of the province.

If you'll promise not to let the newspaper men get hold of it, I'll give you an idea of some of the interesting developments mentioned above. In the first place, the position of the semi-independent and wholly autocratic old villain of a Governor of this Province, Yang, is distinctly rocky. There is at least a chance that the Peking worm may turn and a certain General Ma Fu Shian, now in Mongolia, may be commissioned to come along with an army to Urumchi and turn Yang out. The old blighter cooks all his own food nowadays for fear of poisoning, his wife being no longer with him; he sent her with an enormous quantity of loot towards Tientsin last year (Tientsin is where he intends to retire, having bought the best house in the European quarter). The joke is that she has been held up at Lanchowfu capital of Kansu province & kept as a hostage, with the loot, by a mortal enemy of Yang's

125. This is the Scottish spelling for the capercaillie, a wood grouse, probably here specifically the black-billed capercaillie (*Tetrao parvirostris urogalloides*) (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black-billed_capercaillie, last consulted 9 August 2024). The snow-cock (probably here *Tetraogallus altaicus*) is in the pheasant family (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Snowcock, last consulted 9 August 2024).

who became Civil Governor of Kansu after the old lady started from Urumchi! The Governor is thus in a position of considerable difficulty; Ma Fu Hsiang is waiting to oust him (8 months' march away for troops, it's true); he has a multitude of enemies and may be assassinated any moment; he would be only too glad to do a 'moonlight flitting' tomorrow with a reasonable proportion of the cash, but all his avenues of escape are barred. Mongolia is too dangerous; his mortal enemy is astride of the Kansu road; Transcaspia and Siberia are closed by the Bolos, to whom (to do the old beast justice) he has never truckled, while the passes to India are far beyond his physical powers. He is consequently raking in as much money as he can from all directions, looting everybody right and left. The probability of a crash is already affecting the exchanges: the Urumchi paper tael has dropped 40 per cent in the last few weeks, and the Kashgar tael, hitherto so steady, is shaky. If there's a crash, the Gov't. of India will lose many thousands of rupees worth of paper currency sold to the Treasury here by Etherton for Government rupee cheques on India [...]

Another very interesting development is the appearance within one month of two different missions from Transcaspia on the Western frontier of this province. About Xmas a Bolshevik trade delegation came to Irkeshtam & asked to interview at Kashgar authorities with a view to a trade agreement (which would of course involve the establishment of a Consulate or Commissar-ship at Kashgar). The Chinese refused to receive the delegation which went back to Tashkend. Now, another mission, a political one this time, has suddenly appeared at Muk, on the Bokhara frontier. The head is an extremely clever Bokhara Turki called Abdul Hamid, and he represents – whom do you think? Enver Pasha! Nobody yet knows whether Enver really died or not last autumn; rumours have been persistent that he still lives in the fastnesses of Eastern Bokhara and is awaiting his chance to rise again, and once more put himself at the head of a nationalist rising against the Bolshevik régime in Bokhara, Khiva and Turkestan. This Abdul Hamid may merely mean that he represents Enver's policy and successors at the head of the Bokharan Nationalists; but he certainly told the Chinese deputy, who was sent out by our old Tao Tai to turn him back, that he represented Enver and the Federated Republics of Bokhara, Khiva and Turkestan. I have great hopes that this may mean a strong recrudescence this year of the anti-Bolshevik movement in Transcaspia. The Chinese don't want representatives of the anti-Bolos here any more than they want the Bolos, and they have refused Abdul Hamid entrance to Kashgaria; but a letter he carried for the Governor has been delivered, and it is probable that he & his party are waiting somewhere in the Alai region for further developments. An interesting situation. For the Lord's sake don't breathe a word of this to anyone who might pass it on; I oughtn't to be saying anything about Central Asian politics – but they're so interesting that I don't like to sit here and not share the excitement with you! Truth is indeed stranger than fiction; the career of Enver for example, whether he's alive or dead now, is more romantic than the wildest flights of fancy on the part of a novelist could invent for his hero – or villain.

[...] By the way, did I tell you of the wonderful illustrated Turki book with 30 delicious pictures of incidents in the story of Laila and Majnûn & other romances, which I picked up for (comparatively speaking) a song last autumn? It's only 60 years or so old, but the writing and painting are by a real artist, someone in Samarcand or Bokhara probably [...][126]

I'm sending you by this post two very good red fox skins [...] They're nice foxes. D. and I spotted a man with 19 fox skins just in from the Tien Shan laying them out to dry in the sun in a back street of Kashgar, outside the walls. We at once took him and all his skins along to the Consulate & took his best

126. So far I have been unable to locate these books, which Skrine might have donated to the British Library or British Museum.

4, 2 for D. & 2 for myself, at quite cheap prices, owing to the fact that the skins hadn't been into the bazar. I'm buying a lot of furs, specially marten and wolf. The latter is a particularly good fur to buy, as the rates are ridiculously low here. Between you and me, furs are a good deal better as an investment here than Kashgar paper currency – of which I've got more than I feel safe with; so that I'm converting as much as I can of it into furs, gold & even diamonds, which are very cheap here. I bought 30 martens only yesterday; when you are at the fur-shop, you might try and find out what their wholesale rate for marten-skins is: (1) large Mongolian (2) smaller Turkestan. I'm awaiting the verdict about your and Father's fur coats by the way – hope you got the letter in which I put it to you. Anyhow, there's plenty of time before next year.

Must close now – very late.

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[*Skrine's diary for January, sent from Kashgar on 9 February and received in Simla on 22 March, arrived in London on 30 April in printed form. The excerpts here are from BL IOLR L/P&S/10/976, P1597/1923, fols. 212-215, the India Office copy with annotations. It largely repeats what he wrote his mother about Governor Yang, with details of some of his financial exactions in anticipation of his possibly being deposed. Skrine reports on the location secured by Dockray for the new wireless station about five miles north of the city and on various matters pertaining to British subjects. The diary then continues:*]

Local Affairs. *Sarikol* [...]

A deputation from all the larger villages of Sarikol came into Kashgar early in the month and complained to the Taoyin against the oppressiveness and rapacity of their Magistrate. Their action has been effective and the Magistrate is being replaced by a certain Wang, now in Kashgar. Strenuous efforts were made by the Magistrate to prevent the departure of this deputation, but without effect. Things came to such a pass that the people talked openly of calling in the Bolsheviks, who have been treating the inhabitants of the Russian Pamirs liberally for propaganda purposes.

[*On the Sino-Afghan Negotiations, Skrine notes the replacement of Chu as the chief Chinese delegate and the fact that the Afghan 'Consul-General' had begun issuing passports for Afghanistan as though he were already confirmed officially. Further:*]

The Afghans of Yarkand have been discussing with Mohammad Sharif the question of developing the Barogil–Ishkoman–Chitral–Dir–Peshawar route to India in place of the Ladakh road. The question of the customs duties to be paid in Afghan Wakhan has also been discussed at great length in this connection. The Envoy promised finally that as soon as the Afghan Consulate question was settled he would 'take the matter up with the Mehtar of Chitral'. The way in which the British point of view is ignored by both parties is amusing.

[*Skrine's suspicions about Bolsheviks lurking under every rock continued to elicit skeptical marginal annotation – here, a question* 'Why?' *and a response,* 'Because he has been in Moscow.'–]

[...] A trustworthy report dated 29th January from Yarkand is to the effect that Abdul Ghani, the extremely clever young Secretary to the Mission, is returning very shortly to Kabul. He is probably merely reporting progress to the Afghan Foreign Office <u>and to the Bolshevik Minister</u> [*underlining added in London*] [...]

[*The following section, which I quote in full, also raised an eyebrow in London, where the skeptical Biggane wrote on the minute sheet on 15 May:* 'I think that Abdul Hamid has <u>not</u> been acting as a secret Bolshevik emissary.']

Trans-Frontier Affairs. *Bokharan Mission.*

15. Full telegraphic reports have been sent in regarding the mysterious Mission, headed by one Abdul Hamid of Bokhara, which appeared about 5th January at Muq, a small Chinese post on the Alai border,

with letters for the Governor and the President of the Chinese Republic. Abdul Hamid's request to the Taoyin to be allowed to come to Kashgar and 'give the Taoyin information regarding the state of affairs in Bokhara and Turkistan' was refused, and Wei, the Magistrate of Kashgar Old City, was sent out to Muq to turn the Mission back. Wei, who gave His Majesty's Consul-General an account of his experiences immediately on his return to Kashgar, was greatly impressed by the bearing and intelligence of the Bokharan Envoy. From this and another independent source His Majesty's Consul-General has been able to piece together the following account of the proceedings. Abdul Hamid stated (in effect) that he represented the federated States of Bokhara, Khiva, Russian Turkistan including Semirechia, Azerbaijan and 'Kavkaz' (presumably Georgia) and had been sent to Kashgar by Enver Pasha, the President of the Federation. Wei asked him point blank whether Enver was not dead. The envoy prevaricated, saying that even if Enver was dead, his policy remained; and he launched into metaphor, speaking of the vine which Enver had planted years ago and which had now come to fruit, how the peoples of Transcaspia had eaten of its grapes and found them sweet, and how they were determined that the people of Chinese Turkistan should eat them too. Abdul Hamid showed Wei a richly jewelled sword which he said had belonged to Enver and had been given to him, Abdul Hamid, by the latter on his death-bed.

Finding he could not prevail upon the Chinese official to allow him to come further into Kashgaria, the envoy handed over the letters and informed Wei that he would wait near the frontier for three months for a reply. The party then returned whence it came.

16. On his post arrival at Muq, the Bokharan envoy sent a letter written in Bokharan Turki and addressed to His Majesty's Consul-General to the Taoyin for delivery. The Taoyin suppressed this letter for 15 days, *i.e.*, until the envoy had left Muq and there seemed no danger of His Majesty's Consul-General being able to reply to the letter. Translations of Abdul Hamid's letter and a reminder he afterwards sent were dispatched to Government on 25th January (letter No. 12). The words 'Kundurulgan Hait' (paragraph 3 of the letter in question) appear to mean 'Publicity Department' or 'Department of Propaganda.'

17. His Majesty's Consul-General has been able to obtain information, believed trustworthy, regarding the contents of the letters sent through the Taoyin to the Governor at Urumchi and the President of the Chinese Republic. The letters, which were in Turki, purported to emanate from Enver Pasha and demanded that the Chinese Government should grant independence to the Mussalmans of Hsinkiang so that they could join their liberated brothers in Bokhara, Turkistan, Khiva, the Caucasus and Azerbaijan. Otherwise the Mussalmans of the latter states would send an army to enforce their demand.

18. Speculation is rife in Kashgar regarding the Mission. The Taoyin is seriously frightened, and has sent a number of spies into the bazars to ascertain whether there is any sympathy among the Turkis with the objects of the Mission. Every one is convinced that the letter emanates from Enver, who is said to have 'died' merely to be born again on the Bolshevik side. It is secretly believed at the yamen, for reasons detailed in Kashgar telegram No. 7-13 of 1st February 1923, that Abdul Hamid is no other than Enver himself. His Majesty's Consul-General was himself inclined to this theory, but the aspect of the case is altered by the papers since received from the Government of India regarding the despatch by the Bolsheviks of Moscow University students to India *viâ* the Pamirs, and the loyal efforts of the Afghan Government to intercept these agents in their territory. His Majesty's Consul-General now inclines to the belief that the 'Bokharan Mission', which has caused such a flutter in the Chinese dove-cot, is merely an elaborate attempt by the Bolsheviks to turn the Afghan obstacle by sending these agents through Chinese territory. It will be noted that in his first letter to His Majesty's Consul-General

Abdul Hamid asked that if it could not be arranged for him to come to Kashgar, he might be allowed to pass through Chinese territory to India, *the direct road to which was blocked by the Afghans*. The reason given for the Afghans' blockade, namely that they were friendly with the Bolsheviks, was obviously intended to throw His Majesty's Consul-General off the scent.

19. That the Bolsheviks are behind the Mission is confirmed by a report received from a Kashgari merchant lately returned from selling grain to the Bolsheviks at Murghab. According to this man the Bolsheviks held a kind of durbar shortly before he left (circ. January 20th) at which they gave out that independence had now been granted by the Soviet Government to all the Mussalman states on the Russian frontier and that the Soviet hoped that the Mussalmans of Bokhara, Ferghana and the Pamirs would bring their brothers across the Chinese frontier under their banner. They themselves, the Bolshevik said, could not take overt action across the frontier, for fear of compromising themselves with the world: but if, as a result of a purely Mussalman movement, the inhabitants of Chinese Turkistan decided to throw off the yoke of Peking, the Soviet would support them secretly.

This looks very like the work of the Bolshevik propaganda centre near Kala Panja referred to in Supplement to North-West Frontier Province Intelligence Bureau Diary No. 40 for the week ending 19th October 1922. [*Here, a marginal note, added in London:* 'more like the work of the new Bokharan Govt.']

20. A fur trader who arrived from Faizabad (Badakhshan) towards the end of December tells the following story. In October when he was at Faizabad Sami Bey and 50 others came from Kabul on their way to join Enver in Bokhara. About the same time a party of Lakais from Qullab came to Faizabad with Enver's horse, saying that he was dead. The men with Sami Bey, hearing this, went back, but Sami himself went on secretly to Bokhara. The same informant states that the frontier is strictly closed by the Afghans. Attempts at fraternizing on the part of the Russian post of 50 men at Langar-i-kish were repulsed by the Afghan authorities.

21. Kashgari traders engaged in the secret traffic with Andijan by the Sungek–Uzgend route report that the Bolsheviks have closed the frontier on their side in retaliation for the Chinese blockade. Early in the month under report a force of 40 cavalry, which had been collecting rifles and ammunition formerly issued to the border Kirghiz, received orders to remain at the Russian frontier Karaul on the Uzgend road and stop all travellers from Chinese territory, as well as all persons coming from the Russian side without passports for China. Following on this, the interception and confiscation of 150 pony loads of Kashgar goods by the Russians caused a panic among the traders and the traffic is at a standstill.

The Bolsheviks, however, appear to be trying to play the same game here as in Ili, namely differentiating between Kashgaris who are actual or potential Russian subjects and those who are not. One of the traders has connection with a certain Yusuf Akhun, a Kashgari revolutionary now living as a refugee in Andijan; this man's goods were allowed through at the same time as the 150 pony loads were confiscated.

Opium Trade

22. [...] Russian opium, presumably from Semirechia, is known to be now entering Kashgaria by secret roads in much larger quantities than before. This fact, combined with the placing upon the market of the twenty boxes of the drug imported by the Chinese delegates returning from Kabul [...], has caused the price of opium in Yarkand to fall from 17 tengehs (Rs. 2-20-0) to 7 tengehs (Rs. 1-1-0) per tael weight (3 tolas). The official export duty on opium leaving Afghanistan is not cent per cent as previously stated, but Rs. K. 25, 20 and 15 on 1st, 2nd and 3rd class opium respectively. The Afghan Envoy at Yarkand has

definitely informed the Chinese Government that the export of opium from Afghanistan to China cannot be forbidden. The Chinese authorities in this province continue to declaim publicly against the import and use of opium, while taking no practical measures to stop it. Here and there, for purposes of eye-wash, an importer is caught and punished; but the retailers in the towns, on whom the whole traffic depend, are never raided. It may be taken for granted that they all pay liberal blackmail in return for this immunity.

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[*His description of the uncharted peak he saw as being higher than Kongur previews what his later exploration and photography confirmed. Skrine had in fact discovered the peak he called Qungur II (in contrast to Stein's Qungur I, which is a lower summit (today known as Kongur Tyube) on the long Kongur ridge. Most of the photos Skrine mentions taking in the Kaying Valley have survived; a selection may be found, passim, in this book. His mapping activity and photography of the mountains was later nicely summarized in the talk he gave at the Royal Geographical Society in London in 1925 (published in its journal). Starting with this letter, Skrine devotes substantial space to his purchases of furs and hopes for his mother's being able to sell them in London. I have condensed much of that material. From the perspective of a century later, it is disturbing to read his comments about the abundance of furs from now endangered species such as snow leopards.*]

[*printed letterhead. On upper left:*]

Postal Address: c/o Political Agent, Gilgit
Telegraphic Address: Misgar, India
H.B.M's Consulate General, Kashgar

1 February 1923

Only for this week, as it's heavy & would be expensive if I were writing a long letter, I'm using my new note-paper Harrod's have just sent out. They've made it much too thick & heavy & the 'HBM's Cons'te Gen'l Kashgar' much too large, which is a nuisance.

Your letter of 16th Dec. just in, in which you acknowledge mine from Campar after the Karatash Valley trip. My letter about Kaying etc. can't have been a very good one, for you seem to have got the impression that we had a bad & unpleasant time up there, for you speak of those 'Arctic scenes', 'all we went through', & the scantiness of our meals. I hope the enlargements of which I'm sending a big batch next week viâ Sir Aurel as before, will disabuse you as to the unpleasantness of Kaying. It really was a find, a gem among mountain valleys, more beautiful than Switzerland & infinitely more thrilling because previously unknown and unexplored. I have good representative pictures of both the kinds of woods at the head of the Kaying Valley juniper and pine, another showing an extraordinary geological formation in one of the precipices which overhung our camp, & several delicious ones of Kirghiz ladies with their unique head-gear, amazingly pretty blonde girls some of them. Knowing your preference I contrived to get D. into several of the best pictures, & there is a specially good one of her physicking the Kirghiz at a mid-day halt at a high-up encampment, & another of her on a lovely white & black yak at a height of 13,000 ft. among the mighty snow peaks of the Shiwakte, never even seen by European explorer before. But the most thrilling thing of all about our Kaying trip is that I have discovered a hitherto uncharted mountain, the real top (I think) of the Kungur range right in the middle of the blank patch on Stein's map which I went up the Karatash to try & fill in. Owing to the tremendous difficulty of the country, I have only been able to map about a quarter of the blank patch so far, but I sighted this great peak twice & managed to photograph it with both my cameras. Unfortunately, I only saw it from one of the high points to which I climbed, the second one (14,000 ft.); the first time it was under

heavy clouds. The result was that I could not fix its exact position & distance from me; for that at least two 'rays' are necessary from two points wide apart. However, I know roughly where it is, namely at least 10 miles East of the highest point of the Kungur range, marked by Stein 25,146 ft. It is visible from Kashgar on very clear days, along with the whole of the Kungur range & the 22,000 ft. peaks of the Russian Pamirs; yesterday we could see them, & there is no doubt that my peak is higher than Stein's 25,146 ft. one. It only remains now to get back to Kaying somehow next summer & carry on my observations & mapping; I shall then (if only the weather is clear) be able to fix the exact position & altitude of this peak, or rather mountain (for it is vast & massive & towers over the whole range when seen as only we have seen it from the East), & above all get good photos [...]

Will you please tell Father that if he wants information for the 2nd Ed'n. of the 'Heart of Asia' about Turkestan since the Revolution, he should get a very interesting brochure published by Joseph Castagné in the *Revue du Monde Musalman*, Vol. L, 1922 called "Le Turkestan depuis la Revolution, 1917-1921". It is published as a separate pamphlet by 'Editions Ernest Leroux', 28 Rue Bonaparte, VIe. I'd get it for him myself, only I would have difficulty in paying for it from here, as the price isn't marked on the brochure. Nazaroff, who is mentioned by name in it, lent me his copy. By the way, Mark, like the sahib he is, wrote a letter recently to poor old Nazaroff, which gave the latter great pleasure. He (Nazaroff) has had bad news (via Londonderry again!) from his wife in Tashkend; she has been seriously ill and is making a slow recovery owing to lack of good food & comforts & poverty under the Bolshevik régime. He is 'wanted' – very much so – by the Bolos, who keep her, according to their vile policy, as a hostage in order to have a strangle hold on him.

We are seeing a lot of Dockray, whom we like very much. By Jove! he's a worker. There are few or no flies on him. His camels & carts are all here now & you should see the move he's got on over his Marconi station. It'll be ready, and functioning in April, he says, tho' he only got his site finally fixed up yesterday! He's got everything, machinery, materials, instruments etc. ready down to the last brick to start work the moment the site is handed over to him. He tried hard to get an excellent site quite close to the Consulate, but the owners wouldn't sell and he has been obliged to push out to a piece of desert 4 miles to the North of this on the northern edge of this oasis. It's wonderful to think that in 3 months time we shall be [in] immediate telegraphic communication with India for both sending & receiving messages, & will be able to <u>receive</u> messages from almost anywhere in the world! I shall wireless a cablegram to you via the Lahore or Peshawar Marconi station the very first moment I can. Alas, the Urumchi & Kashgar stations being Chinese Gov't. affairs will almost certainly only remain in working order so long as a European officer remains in charge; a man called Casperd is coming from Peking to run the Urumchi station, but as soon as Dockray leaves here, early in the summer, the station will probably go to rack & ruin. I'm going to do my best to get a European for this station, but it's nothing to do with me really, it's for the Chinese Gov't. and the Marconi station between them to fight it out. I'm afraid the Jew-run Marconi Co. having got their contract for the erection of the stations & having been paid for it out of a special loan issued by the Chinese Gov't., will take no further interest in the stations once they're erected.[127] However, we'll hope for the best. Not a word about this, mind, lest it get in the papers too soon – at present nobody outside official & Marconi circles knows about

127. Skrine's epithet here presumably refers to the fact that Isaac Schoenberg (1880-1963), born to a Jewish family in what was then the Russian Empire (now Belarus) and a British subject since 1919, was rising in the ranks of the London-based Marconi company. He would become its joint general manager in 1924; one of the patents he developed was the basis for the television cameras which BBC later would use. He was knighted by Queen Elizabeth II in 1962.

the Urumchi & Kashgar W[ireless] T[elegraph] stations.

I'm sending you two specimen marten skins, raw this time but well-rubbed with alum and naphthaline, & will be very grateful if you could show them to some fur dealer or other and get a quotation. I have over 50 of these martens [...] We are using some of them, but I want to raise the wind by selling the rest in London, if I can get good rates [...] I have been investing a certain amount of my local savings in other furs too, especially fox [...] I've got some fine snow leopards & 'natural' lynxes, & some big wolves too; the latter are dirt cheap here, but they're too bulky to send home in any quantity, unless I used my official position to obtain transport on the India road, which wouldn't be playing the game.

By the way, I wrote to you recently about Father's fur coat. Don't worry any more: I've got it! at least I've got the lining, ready made up, a really magnificent lynx affair containing the best parts of at least 20 skins & bits from many others too. It's too big at present & the sleeves are much too long, being cut in the Turkoman style (it was made for a rich Beg in Ferghana but was never worn), but that is a fault on the right side. I won't be able to send it until the routes open about June, but that will be plenty of time for it to reach London & be made up by my tailors into a nice coat for Father in any colour and kind of material he likes [...]

***

Kashgar, 7 February 1923

[...] The 'chhilleh-i-buzurg', as the Persians call the forty coldest days of winter, is over and the frost has loosened considerably. Instead of 20–25 degrees of frost nightly, we are having 4 or 5, while in the day-time the shade temperature goes up to 45 or more. The ice on my lake is still unaffected, though, in spite of the quite hot sun there has been the last day or two; after the snow-fall the other day I got hold of some villagers & paid them a little money to sweep the ice for me, & cleared a good big rink this way. I'm glad to say that this swept ice is better than ever. I had a good 2-hours' skating on it only this afternoon, and hope it will last some little time yet. Occasionally D. comes out with me & leaves me at the pond while she goes off after duck down the river which runs close by, then comes back & we have a tea-basket tea in a sheltered spot by the lake's edge, right in the eye of the setting sun. On clear evenings the fantastically-shaped peaks of the Kungur, Alai and Tien Shan ranges are visible, black against the sunset, or half-hidden by cloud [...]

D. and I had a somewhat alarming and quite extraordinary experience the other night. Of the two horses we bought for the tarantass before our big tour we sold one, the smaller of the two, soon after our return, but kept the other one as it is a very strong and willing beast. We didn't realize quite how strong and willing it was until last Friday when we started to come back from the Swedish Mission where we had been dining. The horse was always inclined to fidget at the start, but on tour he had so much hard work to do that he never gave trouble. A month of good feeding and very little work however makes a lot of difference, and on this occasion, it being a cold night (luckily with a full moon) he fidgeted a bit too much. Directly we got in he broke away from the orderly who was at his head; the driver, who for some reason always used to start him from the ground and jump on to the box as the carriage moved, was left standing, the orderly's horse also broke away kicked our horse as he passed & galloped off out of the compound and down the road, and off went our horse after him! We shot out of the compound at a gallop, took the corner on to the road on two wheels & were off down the road before we knew where we were. You know what a tarantass is like, a great big roomy affair with a hood & no seats; you sit or lie on mattresses on the bottom of the basket-work body and the coachman sits

on a high narrow box-seat in front. The body of the carriage is very long & has no springs, being as it were slung on four beams resting on the front and back axles. The front wheels are very small, for turning purposes, and the back wheels large; the wheel-base is very narrow compared with the size of the vehicle, & it is always a mystery to me why it doesn't turn over more easily than it does. Anyhow, there we were lurching and swaying along the (of course unmetalled) road, the horse cantering and the reins un-get-at-able, mixed up with the traces somewhere below the shaft. There was nothing for it but to sit tight and wait for the crash. We thought of course that the horse was bolting. But he wasn't. He wasn't a bit annoyed with the other horse really. He merely wanted to go back to his stable as quickly as possible. And he went! like the wind; galloping and cantering, with the tarantass & us in lurching about like a ship in a storm. The road is awful; there are two right-angled corners between the Mission & the Consulate, a total distance of a mile & worst of all, a narrow bridge over a (now dry) canal set at right angles to the road. Here is a (foreshortened) plan of the road: [*Fig. 101*]

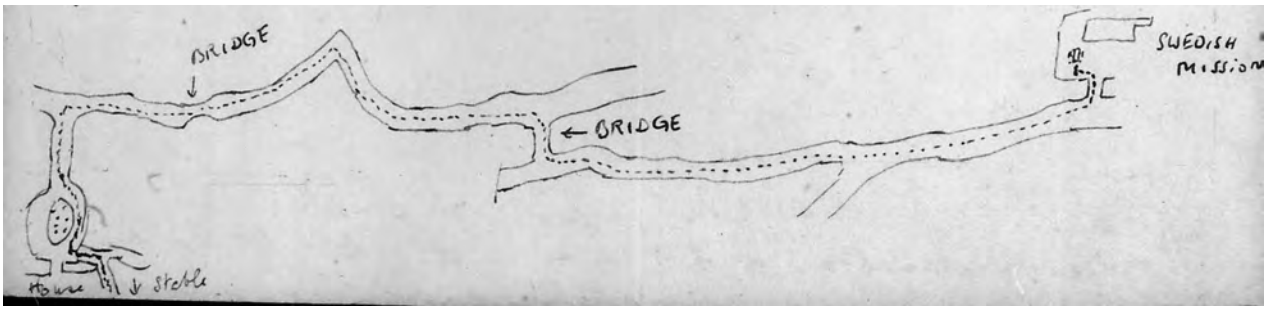


Fig. 101. The sketch from Skrine's letter (CPS to HSS, 7 February 1923) showing the route of the runaway horse (from the British Library Collection: IOLR MSS EurF 154/9).

The bridge is not more than 12 ft. broad made of wood & very bumpy, and has no parapet or railing. We thought the horse must bungle it, having no one to drive him, in which case the carriage would have overturned into the dry bed of the canal & we should have been squashed under it probably & probably also mixed up with the kicking horse. Would you believe it, he slowed down just sufficiently to take the bridge, our right wheels keeping on the bridge with about 6 inches to spare, & set off at a gallop again after it? He took both the corners pretty fast, but cleared them beautifully giving plenty of margin & not 'cutting' them as horses generally try to do. We thus entered the Consulate grounds at the gallop, & we wondered whether he would pull up at the proper place. He ignored it. He went straight for the stable going round two more narrow right angled corners & missing first the office & then a railing by a foot. Finally he came to a standstill blowing & panting, at his stall next Tüge Sulaiman, D.'s camel! We hopped out pretty quick, I can tell you, & fell on each others' necks! What we're now saying is, why pay a coachman when your carriage horse can drive himself?!

I've been buying quite a lot of very fine fox-skins [...] By the way, apropos of curing skins here before sending them: is the 'luxury tax' (import duties on luxuries) which was on in 1919 still in force? If so, it has struck me that it will apply to cured but not to uncured skins; so I must be careful about sending skins home. On the other hand there is the much higher cost of curing skins in England than here. Those cured here by a good man (& I have got a good man) are quite good enough [...]

This is a funny country. It's so old world and quaint that one's ideas get quite altered. I found myself this afternoon discussing perfectly gravely with a garrulous mandarin from Urumchi the infesting of a certain desert route in NE Hsinkiang by stone dragons! These beasts, my informant told me, cause terrible fiery storms merely by breathing, and whole caravans, nay whole armies, have been wiped out

by them; so much so, that the Urumchi Gov't. have officially closed the route to caravans owing to the stone dragon danger!! I found myself asking him nervously whether there were any on the Merket road along which we intend to tour next month!!! [...]

P.S. Have any of my letters been reaching you opened? We have been receiving alarming reports from N[orth] B[erwick] about letters of D.'s arriving obviously opened by someone on purpose; one of D.'s to her father arrived with only the envelope remaining! A letter of mine too, to Howell at Delhi arrived opened and several dollars worth of Hsinkiang stamps I had sent him in it removed. Rather worrying [...]

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[*Skrine's letter to Aurel Stein, 14 February, reproduced with permission from The Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, Stein MSS 107, fols 41-46v. Unfortunately, so far it appears that Stein's letter of 5 November 1922, to which Skrine refers, has not been preserved. In writing to Stein he provided a lot more detail about his recent explorations than he wrote in his letters home.*]

Chini Bagh
Kashgar 14.2.22 [*sic – should be 23 – DW*]

[*Note added at top of first page:*]

P.S. Thank you very much for dropping the 'Mr.' Don't be anxious about Chiang's money. I've got it all right for him including the Rs 600 from office, which I have found by re-appropriation. He doesn't want the money just yet: as soon as the time comes for old Chiang's body to be removed the money will be paid over.

Harding is as insufferable as ever. We count the days till his departure (1st Aug. insha'allah.[)] He has had further 'rows' with small Chinese. I've got rid of him in a 2 months' tour to Kuchar just now, thank goodness, & we're all much happier.

[*Overwritten, presumably by Stein, in bold red pencil:* Skrine]

[*Letter proper begins:*]

My dear Sir Aurel

I was delighted and honoured by your extremely kind letter of 5th Nov., which reached me at Kargalik on my return from Keria a month and a half later. I am very glad you liked the enlargements and did not mind the trouble of sending them on to my people. I am thereby encouraged to send you another set herewith, taken during our recent tour, & to request you to forward them as before to Mrs. Skrine, 147 Victoria St. SW.1. As you will see, we did not go to Aksu and Uch Turfan last autumn; we went instead to Yarkand, Khotan & Keria, prefaced by an exploring trip up the Karatash [*underlining in red pencil – DW*] Valley. I had to change my mind at the last moment about going to Aksu, because important work cropped up in the other direction & necessitated my going to Keriya. The problem of Chinese opposition to the registration of British subjects in Kargalik, Khotan & Keria districts became very acute last year & demanded personal investigation on the spot. I was astonished to find that Etherton, the great traveller and 'thruster' who drew moreover 200/- a month fixed T[ravel] A[llowance], never toured beyond Yarkand during the whole of his 4 years here! He confined himself to fighting the District Magistrates on paper, at a safe distance, with the result that things got into a chaotic condition during his last year or two. I have just finished a memorandum covering 24 foolscap pages of type on the whole business, for Peking, a laborious and thankless task, but not the first of the kind that I have

inherited from Etherton. He left me worse kinds [*underlining in red pencil – DW*] of mess to clear up even than that.

You will be interested I think to hear that my object, partially carried out, in going up the Karatash Valley last October was to fulfil an ambition implanted in me by you, namely to explore the valleys running up from the Karatash Gorges to Kungur & Shiwakte. I hoped to penetrate up the gorges to Chimgan-ayaki & from there up the Chimgan-jilga to the Shiwakte, but fate willed otherwise; though it was 16th Oct. when we reached Kaying-~~Bas~~ aghzi & I had hoped that the water would be low enough to let us get up to Chimgan next day, a reconnaissance showed the river to be still much too high. My wife & I, 2 servants, 3 orderlies & a Beg of Y. Hissar were mounted on ponies & our kit on camels; if I had been alone I might have left half the kit behind and gone forward riding camels, which I found much better than horses on bad fords; but with Doris I decided not to take the risk. With 20 or 30 bad crossings to make & the water going at 15 m. per hour, a mistake on one of our camels' part would have been fatal. As it turned out, I was very glad we did not go up to Chimgan, for it would have been horribly cold and bleak there & we couldn't have had a more interesting time than we had. I forgot to tell you that we took with us on this trip a delightful elderly geologist, a Russian 'white' refugee called Nazaroff, a most learned scholarly man from Tashkend who has travelled all over Europe & speaks French excellently. Poor devil, his life's work, a magnum opus on the mineral resources of Turkestan, was wantonly destroyed in MS together with his collections by the Bolsheviks in '19. We like him very much, & as he has a miserable time here we thought we would give him a holiday after his own heart, exploring the Karatash region geologically. He thoroughly enjoyed himself, was a most interesting companion & has written me a most useful note on the geology of the regions we explored.

We camped 2 days in a well-sheltered little thicket near Kaying Aghzi, while besides reconnoitring up the gorge, I climbed to points as high as I could get up the exceedingly steep valley-sides. On the 2nd day I took 2 Kirghiz with me, an orderly carrying my plane table, & ray camera & went early in the morning 2 m. up the Kaying jilga, which comes into the Karatash from the W. With great difficulty I managed to measure a baseline of 1350 yards, from both ends of which I could see the point I had reached the day before; having fixed that, I proceeded to climb 5,250 ft. by my aneroid, reaching the lower of the 2 summits of the mountain marked 'Kaying Beli' in your map. It was one of the stiffest climbs I have ever done, crack and couloir work, quite Alpine in places, but well worth the labour; for from the top I got a magnificent view not only of the entire mountain-system of the Karatash Valley & its tributaries, but of part of the Kungur range, & the Chakargal massif on the north side of the Gez-darra. Alas! the highest peak of the Kongur range [*underlining in red pencil – DW*] (or so it appears from Yangi Hissar & Kashgar), which is not marked in your survey, but is about 7 m. ESE of the point marked by you 25,146, was covered in clouds; what I afterwards identified as the 25,146 ft. peak was however visible & appears in my panorama. I would, by the way, have liked very much to have sent you with the other enlargements the fine panoramas I took on that day & 2 days later from another peak further W., but I cannot spare them until I have finished the rough plane-table survey I am working on. Later on if you would like to see the panoramas and my map, I will send them to you.

Meanwhile my wife and Nazaroff had been exploring on their own up the Kaying Jilga, & the report they brought home that evening was so enthusiastic about the beauties of the scenery further up, that we decided to move up to Kaying Bashi next morning. This we did, I plane-tabling as we went. 7.4 miles up the jilga, to my surprise, it widened out to a wonderful basin among high craggy peaks, about 3 m.



Fig. 102. The Kaying Valley photographed on 19 October 1922 as the Skrine party headed up to its glacial cirque (after: CCA *1925, facing p. 90). This extraordinary photo was chosen by the editors of the* Times of India Illustrated Weekly *for the cover of its pictorial supplement of 6 March 1927, with a caption describing the location as 'one of the most romantic places on earth'. Presumably it was specifically this image which Skrine had in mind when writing to Stein.*

long by 1 broad & covered with juniper-forest & scrub. My photo of the camels grazing at Kaying Bashi gives an idea of the basin, but does not show the forests. We camped here 3 nights very happily; the Kirghiz of the place were delightful & most friendly, & kept us well supplied. The first day we all three explored up the Kaying-ning Türe glen at the head of the K. basin, which you will see from my photo is extraordinarily beautiful, with both pine & juniper forests, magnificent snow peaks & extraordinary geological formations [*Fig. 102*]. We reached a point 13000 ft. up that day, with yaks this time. Next day I again left camp early, the weather being magnificently clear, and climbed 3,800 ft. to a point from which I hoped to get a clear view of Kongur. It was about the only peak in the Kaying basin which was scaleable at all, so I hadn't much choice; I got a splendid view, but alas, only a peep of Kongur, which was mostly hidden by the too-near 'Kögdöng' massif at the head of the ~~Kaying~~ Nichke-gir nulla which comes into the Kaying Bashi basin from the W. However I got a good panorama & a telephoto of the bit of Kungur that was visible, very clearly visible this time. From these 2 panoramas & the 'rays' I took with my table from the 3 high points I reached in this region I am making a (very amateurish, I'm afraid) map of the region; I also took a lot of clinometer readings, but haven't worked them out yet. By the way, my aneroid, which everywhere else has agreed fairly closely with ~~you~~ the heights given in your survey, showed heights just 1000 ft. higher than yours at both your points in the Karatash valley, Camp XI and XII! Very curious – and unfortunate, for all my clinometer readings will be merely relative to my aneroid ones. I had no hypsometer with me.[128]

We left the Kaying Bashi basin by another route, over a beautiful <u>dawan</u> covered with grass & juniper just over 11,000 ft. high, which led us down into the Chopkana Jilga. This is a delightful winding glen with 'ak-ois' here and there & many chikor, 'ular' and pigeons. It is 8 miles long & comes out near

128. These are the surveying instruments commonly used at the time which Skrine mentions. 1) A plane table is a flat surface, mounted on a tripod, that can be leveled and from which sightings can be taken to record the angle of higher objects in the distance and the compass bearing of them from a baseline, the results recorded on a map sheet laid out on the table. 2) The aneroid barometer measures air pressure and thus altitude through changes in the metal casing, rather than using liquid. 3) By measuring the boiling point of liquid, which is lowered with gain in altitude, a hypsometer can be used to determine altitude. 4) A clinometer measures the angle of a slope. 5) The 'ray camera' recorded images that could include compass bearings at the top of each frame.

Khan-terek. where we camped. Next day Nazaroff & the kit did a short march to Saman while Doris & I, on horses & afterwards climbing on foot, explored the Achik Jilga. This dark & narrow glen goes up S. W. at first, as shown in your survey, but after 1 mile turns N.W. & leads up to an easy pass 9,600 ft. high which is the divide between the Gez and Karatash valleys. This divide is not as ~~mark~~ guessed in your survey (you of course didn't have time to penetrate up every side ~~jilga~~) 5 ½ - 6 m. back from the Karatash river; it is only (as the crow flies) about 2 miles. We climbed to a point about 1000 ft. above the saddle, to the N., and from there could see quite clearly most of the bottom of the Gez-dara from Langar to the foot of Chakragal; I took some useful 'rays' & also 3 telephotos of Chakragal & Kögdöng (which looks very fine from there; Kongur is hidden by the mountains at the head of the Tigarmansu Jilga) but alas, the plates all turned out duds. It was sickening luck, by the way, that I had about the plates for my 5 ½" x 3 ½" camera; I had ordered Imperial Fine Grain Ordinary (slow) plates in March, & they reached Kashgar on 16th October, just 5 days after I had left for the Karatash! I found them waiting for me at Yarkand on the 27th. I only had 3 or 4 old & rather moth-eaten slow plates with 1 of which I got a fair telephoto of Kungur, and a lot of ultra-rapid 'seed' plates which turned out absolutely useless for telephoto work – no results at all.

Leaving the Karatash next day we camped at a pretty village (unmapped) called Kampar, on the Shahniaz Ustang due S. of Altunluk. From there next day, it being clear we had a wonderful view of the mountains of the Karatash & Gez valleys, with Kongur rising grandly behind it. In the photo (taken with my film camera, 11-in. focus; the plates I took were again all 'duds') the unmapped peak which I mentioned above, as appearing higher than your summit marked 25,146 opposite Chakragil, is seen in the middle of the picture, dominating the range. It is 4 miles nearer the view-point than your peak, certainly, but this difference out of 44 miles is not, I think, enough to account for the apparent difference in height. Kögdöng will be noticed just below my peak, on its left.

I was very interested to read the remarks in your letter about the Gez & Karatash valleys, & your suggestion that I should try to get up one of the side-valleys [*e.g., the Kurghan?! – DW*] of the Gez-dara & get through to the Shiwakte that way. It is an excellent idea, & I shall certainly do it some day. I hope in fact to get up to these parts again in June or July for a summer outing, & my idea is, as the Karatash route to Kaying Bashi will be blocked by water, to go by the 'Tokkus Dawan' to Kaurük Bel & from there either over the Achik Pass which we found, & then to Kaying Bashi via the Chopkana Pass (this avoids all crossings of the Karatash) or up the Tigarmansu Jilga into the unknown. The trouble is that there is no possible path for transport, even yaks, out of the Kaying Bashi basin except down the river or over the Chopkana Pass – you can't cross the ring of mountains at the head of the valley except with difficulty on foot, & that only by our track, which the Kirghiz told me leads round to Chimgan. If we went again to Kaying, as we want very much to do as we like it so much, I would try & cross by this track the very high Kayingning Türe pass & get a really good view from behind Sarighyon (v. my photos) of the E. face of the Kongur range & the Shiwakte. I shall have the great advantage of having my enlarged panoramas taken last time with me, so that identifying the peaks will be easy.

After 10 days at Yarkand & 6 days very strenuous and trying work at Kargalik, fighting the Manchu Amban over registration and other cases, we marched to Goma where we stayed one day, Khotan (3 days) and Keriya (3 days). We loved this journey, each place we came to being more interesting & delightful than the last. Khotan & Keriya were both fascinating towns & districts. I should like to spend a whole year at each, exploring the oases and the Takla Makan in the winter and the mountains in the summer. The snows of the Kuen Lun [*underlining in red pencil – DW*] and the Altyn tagh S. and S.E. of

Keriya were particularly exciting, and I was very sick at the bad luck we had as regards seeing them; our last march but one into Keriya, from Chira to Karakir Langar, it was fairly clear and the grand snows in front of us tho' too far away for photo. purposes, were wonderful. But alas! next day it thickened up & during the whole of our stay at Keriya & the 1st 2 days of our return journey the mountains were invisible. At Khotan it cleared up again! So I got no photos. Nevertheless our 4 days' march with baggage on ponies from Khotan to Keriya, our 3 days there & march back, were a never-to-be-forgotten experience. Up to Khotan it was a comparatively beaten track we were treading; after that it was not – no Consul General, much less any C-G.'s wife (or any other European lady [*underlining in red pencil – DW*] for that matter) had ever been to Keriya before.

We are determined to go down that way again someday possibly (if we are still here) in spring 1924. My idea is to do a circular tour, starting via Yarkand, visiting Khotan & Keriya with an extra fortnight, perhaps, ~~at~~ in the latter district for a trip into the Altyn tagh, and then crossing the Takla Makan via the Khotan River route to Aksu & Kuchar, thence back by Uch Turfan. Do you know that there are now Chinese Govt. langars, 14 of them, at every stage along the Khotan [*underlining in red pencil – DW*] River route? Ch'en, the late Amban of Khotan, who was there 6 years and was most go-ahead in the P[ublic] W[orks] line, built them. He assured me that they were kept up and quite habitable. This will save us a lot of extra expense for tents, etc. if we ever do the circular tour I speak of.

As regards archaeology, we were so hurried this trip owing to the greater amount of work than I expected at Yarkand & Kargalik ~~losing~~ delaying us 10 days, that I wasn't able to study "Ancient Khotan" & "Serindia" on the spot as I had hoped to do, except to a very limited extent.[129] We visited Yotkan (of which more anon) & Khadalik, near Achma Bazar, voilà tout. I also examined carefully two collections of antiques of all kinds from your various sites made by Badr ud Din and Moldovack respectively. Selections from these collections I photographed, & I brought away with me some seals & intaglios, also two MS books in fairly good preservation. I did my level best to get particulars as to provenance in all cases, but alas neither Moldovack nor Badr ud Din [*underlining in red pencil, with red pencil line in margin of sentence – DW*] (tho' the latter at any rate ought to know the importance of data as to provenance by this time!) could tell me much. However I know where a few of the things came from. I haven't had time to write up the things or take prints of my plates of them yet, when I do I will send you the whole thing, and I hope you will be able to tell me what to send to India and what not to send. I will also send you a photo of the Khadalik site as it now looks; it took us half the day to find it from Achma, as our guide (who had accompanied you, Ibrahim Beg [*underlining in red pencil – DW*] by name) lost his way; in fact, it was only after I had decided to give up the search and when we were striking across the desert by the compass for Gulakhma, that we suddenly came upon ~~the~~ a spot which Ibrahim Beg recognized as Khadalik. As it was late, we couldn't stay long & we merely pottered about & tried (unsuccessfully) owing to the drifting of the sand) to make out the plan of the buildings from my memory of your description & plan in "Serindia". The photo may be of interest to you as showing the amount of drift-sand which has accumulated since you were there.

You will certainly be interested to hear of two new sites, one of which we ourselves examined & the other we heard of. The first is at Yotkan. 1/3rd of a mile to the south east of the chief site among the rice-fields, 100 yards to the E. of the house of Allah Turdi, is a 'yār' or bluff about 20 ft. high. A new water-channel which was made last year ~~had its outlet~~ was taken over this bluff in a kind of water-

129. The references are to the detailed, multi-volume reports by Stein concerning his expeditions in 1900-1901 and 1906-1908: *Ancient Khotan* 1907; *Serindia* 1921. It is impressive that Skrine apparently carried these large-format volumes with him when on tour.



Fig. 103. The stratum at Yotkan, where many artifacts were now being discovered (after: Nazaroff 1935, facing p. 56). Very likely the photo is one he took on revisiting the site in May 1924.

fall [*Fig. 103*]. Very soon objects began to be found in the stream bed below the water fall, as the water ate away the bluff; the local people immediately began digging, they had by the time the water stopped dug out a bay about 60' x 40'. In this bay, at a depth of 15 ft. below the level of the field above, a stratum of bluish clay is clearly visible; on the E. side it is 5 ft. 3 ½ in. thick except in one place on the N.E where it is only 2 ft. 3 ½ in.; on the west side it is 3 ft. 9 ¾". This stratum is full of potsherds (2 kinds, a thick coarse redware and a finer kind which is red on both surfaces and black inside; fragments of charcoal; bones, usually mixed up with pottery; Chinese coins, all terribly rusted, & other small copper articles; small pieces of white jade, red & green glass etc. [*Fig. 104*] I secured a few good things found by the local people last summer; a very pretty little Graeco-Buddhist female head from a clay figurine, one or two other good figurines and appliqué ornaments, and, best of all, a beautiful little Buddhist figure [*underlining in red pencil – DW*] of a woman in high relief against a scalloped background like a spread peacock's tail, in a very soft grey kind of soap-stone which Nazaroff says is 'agalmatolite'. It really is a lovely little 'find', & I hope to show it you some day.

Fig. 104. Some of the artifacts obtained by Skrine in Khotan and now in the British Museum: the Buddha head (if the one mentioned in the letter to Stein, it is not 'small' – H 27.9 cm), intact when he acquired it but presumably broken in transit; several of the small clay appliques, top to bottom, a monkey face, possibly a bodhisattva head, and a flying gandharva; and the exquisite agalmatolite carving of the god Karttikeya, riding on his peacock mount. All photos by DW, the clay figures all in storage, the Karttikeya as currently displayed in the South Asian gallery. (BM nos.: 1925,0619.2; .54; .3; .5; .40). The Karttikeya carving, dated 700-800 CE, is cited as an important example illustrating a 'fascinating feature of he first millennium AD – the extensive trade between South Asia and the western part of China'.



Meanwhile I can't send anything to India until the insured parcel post opens in June.

The other new site was one we heard about at Goma. You know the Kara Targas oasis, 10-12 miles out into the desert from Goma, where the Karaküll stream comes to an end. There is a big marshy lake, marked with "?"'s on your map, beyond. I haven't yet found your description of your diggings [*underlining in red pencil – DW*] in this area, but I know you spent some time there. Well, about 2 days' march beyond the furthest point you then reached, some Kara Targas men discovered 2 years ago some 'yaghāch-koilaki' as they call it, with many signs of graves. They arrived at this place one evening with very little food or water left; they dug that evening (in one of the house-sites, not among the graves) & again next morning; then they came across gold-'dust' (evidently ancient gilding as described by you in other places). They secured 9 oz. of this & were so delighted that they dug no more, went back to Goma, sold it and 'blew' the proceeds. A 'rush' from Goma followed; hundreds went out to the place and dug, but found nothing (from their point of view) but two iron bars, uninscribed. I got all this from one of the original finders, who also accompanied the rush; he assured me that the graves (i.e. places where bones and cloth wrappings were noticed sticking out of the sand) were not tampered with. I should say this is doubtful. But I am very keen on getting to this site if I can, in case any graves remain undamaged [*underlining in red pencil – DW*]. Unfortunately the people say they can't find the place again, it being a long way out and their landmarks having all disappeared; but money I think would do wonders, e.g. a reward promised to the person who found the site, etc. I would like to know what your opinion is as to whether it would be worth while spending some money on getting to this site? The details as to this finding of the gold and the 'rush' from Goma are vouched for by the Aksakal.

I must end now – the post is going, and I must get these long-delayed enlargements off this week! I shall be writing to you again later with further particulars about our 'finds' and prints of the photos I took of them, possibly with some of the originals. Meanwhile I hope I have not trespassed unduly on your time.

My wife sends her warmest regards. She enjoys every minute in Kashgar and every yard of our tours. She has got the 'exploring' and 'digging' fevers badly.

Yours very sincerely
Clarmont P. Skrine

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[*I have placed the 'monumental Report', to which he refers, following his letter home of 15 November above, since much of the report describes his negotiations with the amban in Kargalik back in the late autumn, although with a few supplements of later date.*]

Kashgar, 16 February 1923

Only 2 lines to show you I'm alive because it's already 3 hours after the time the dakchi ought to have left!! The reason of this (1) a monumental Report covering 21 pp. of foolscap typed & 42 pp. of enclosures I have just barely succeeded in getting off this mail, on the subject of the Registration of British subjects & Chinese opposition threats – one of the worst messes Etherton left to me to clear up, & the reason for my tour to Kargalik & Keriya last autumn – (2) a 12-page letter to Stein accompanying the enlargements (20 in number) which I am sending him to look at & forward to you. The descriptions on the backs of them alone amount to a good-sized letter so I won't apologize for not writing this week.

Nothing from you for 2 mails.

Must finish my other dak now! also send 2 cypher telegrams! [...]

P.S. I enclose Sir Aurel's last letter to me. Keep it, it's valuable.

We're giving a Fancy Dress Ball tonight! 16 people all in costume. D. is going as an ancient Khotan lady of 500 B.C. & I as a pirate [...]

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Kashgar, 22 February 1923

I enclose a description by D. of a rather nice old embroidered Yarkandi 'chhaddar' [prayer shawl] I picked up at Yarkand last October. You said in a letter some time ago (I can't find the passage, but I'm sure you did) that you would like a bit of embroidery, so if this chhaddar would be any use to you as a foundation for a dress of any kind, I'll send it along. Don't write back & tell me to give it to D. She's done very well lately (1 magnificent lynx coat, 1 jade bead chain, 1 carved jade ornament, 4 large bottles of eau de cologne (Jean Marie Farina[130]) and a few other things). This chhaddar is genuine old Yarkandi, done by Turki women taught originally by the Chinese. You can see the Chinese influence strongly.

I also enclose a thing I was much amused to get; a copy of the 'good luck snowball' started by an American officer, of which I first heard quite a long time ago [*a chain letter on which he expounds further– DW*].

[...] You've no idea the rush one lives in. There's so much work! This week I have with difficulty pushed off 3 despatches to Peking & 2 letters to the G[overnment] of I[ndia], all longish & requiring very careful wording; I spent the whole of yesterday trying cases with the Amban of Kashgar; in office from 10 till 4 people are in & out the whole time; the intelligence work, involving much organization & weekly cypher telegrams, takes a lot of time up; the Chinese, Russian & Swedish entertaining & being entertained takes up still more. For the last month I have been working in office right up to dinner time, & often after dinner, every day.

Tomorrow we're off for a week-end visit to Yangi Hissar, which ought to be a pleasant little change. I have a little work there, but it's not for that I'm going so much as for a jaunt. We go through in one march (51 miles) tomorrow & return ditto on Monday. D. will drive in the tarantass to Yapchan (27 mi.) & ride the rest, I riding the whole way. We are praying, not that the weather will be fine and sunny – it is never anything else in this wonderful climate – but that it will be crystal-clear, as it has been several times during the last 2 months, for I am going to do some surveying & particularly want to get good a view of the Kongur and Karatash ranges so as to solve one or two problems about the topography & heights of the mountains we made the acquaintance of last October. Talking of surveying, I can't make out what made you think that Sir A. Stein was in London last Nov. & December. I never told you he was going Home. So far as I know, he has been in Delhi all the cold weather as usual. The letter from him I sent you last mail made no mention of going Home [...]

P.S. I'm going to make a real effort to finish the fairing of the journey diary this weekend.

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[*Apart from his long treatise on the British subjects issue, referred to in the previous letter, Skrine was writing to India regarding a recent exchange with the Chinese authorities about the postal system. The documents on this subject, entitled 'Kashgar.*

130. The company founded in 1709 by this Italian perfumer, Giovanni Maria Farina, still markets the Eau de Cologne he is credited with inventing. See Markus Eckstein, *Eau de Cologne: Farina's 300th Anniversary* (Köln: J. P. Bachem Verlag, 2009) (http://history.eau-de-cologne.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Eau_de_Cologne_Farina_s_300th_Anniversary.pdf, last accessed 22 May 2016).

Establishment of Postal Services between Kashgar and Neighbouring Countries', were pulled together in London in the file BL IOLR L/P&S/11/233. P1992/1923. In his memo No. 163/64 and dated 22 February, Skrine reported that he had received from the Acting Chinese Postal Commissioner in Xinjiang, E. B. Cavaliere, a letter dated 5 January, in which the official wrote about the 'closing of the Kashgar British Post Office' and asked about the British interest in mails to India – in other words, apparently suggesting the Chinese could offer such a service by extending their own postal network. Skrine drafted this reply on 21 February:]

[...] While fully sympathetic with the desire of the Chinese Postal Department to extend its system to the Indian frontier, I may be permitted to point out the following considerations:

(1) The Chinese Postal Department is under a misapprehension as to the existence of a British Post office at Kashgar. No such post office exists, or (so far as I have been able to discover from any of our records) has ever existed. A weekly Service of Couriers is maintained for the purpose of delivering the letters, parcels and telegrams addressed to this Consulate-General received at the nearest British Post Office, Gilgit, and of carrying those sent from this Consulate-General to the Gilgit Post Office. It is true that certain approved British subjects who are not attached to this Consulate-General, and certain non-British Europeans resident in this province, both receive and send letters (not parcels) by the Consulate-General mail bag: but the total amount of letters so received or despatched is very small, not more than one or two pounds weight per week. The entire mail of this Consulate-General, in fact, including parcels, is carried by a single courier in a bag tied to the horse upon which he himself rides.

(2) The Tashkurghan–Gilgit route is not an open one: it has been organised by the Government of India solely for the purpose of communication with His Britannic Majesty's Consulate-General, Kashgar. Except in very special circumstances, travelers, even officers serving under the Indian Government, are not permitted to use the route unless proceeding on duty to or from Kashgar. Apart from political reasons connected with the rights of the semi-independent chiefs of Hunza and Nagar, through whose territory the route passes, this restriction is necessitated by the extreme difficulty with which even the present volume of traffic is carried on over considerable sections of the route; for example the only possible method of transport is by porters, the supply of whom is insufficient and uncertain. It is extremely unlikely therefore, that the Government of India would agree to extend their postal service from Gilgit to the frontier to connect with a service instituted by the Chinese Post Office between Kashgar and Tashkurghan: more especially as, owing to the high price in Kashgar of many commodities such as dyes, sugar, saffron etc., the merchants of Kashgaria would certainly take advantage of the service to import very large quantities of these commodities by parcel post.

3. The only alternative to the Tashkurghan–Gilgit road is the regular trade route via Karghalik, the Karakoram Pass and Leh. I have no doubt that, if approached on the subject, the Indian Government would be ready to co-operate in the institution of an international postal service along this route. But it is extremely doubtful whether the advantages of such a service to the Chinese Postal Department would justify the cost of its up-keep. The difficulties and dangers of the route are enormous; passes 18000 feet high and more have to be crossed and a stretch of 15 marches is absolutely barren and desert, not even grass or fuel being available. The number of ponies and yaks available to carry the existing traffic is not more than 25% of what is required: the hire demand per pony is Rs. 100/- or more from Leh to Yarkand alone, and the average time taken by goods from Srinagar to Yarkand 3 months. As pointed out above, the service would be extensively utilized by traders for the import of certain commodities; it would not, on the other hand, be used to at all the same extent for the import trade, the commodities exported from Kashgaria to India (with the exception of charas) being unsuitable for despatch by

parcel post. Most of the postal receipts therefore would go to the Indian Postal Department, while the Chinese would have to carry the traffic over the longer and more difficult portion of the desert route that between Karghalik and the Karakoram pass.

[*Skrine's report on all this was approved by E.B. Howell, the Deputy Foreign Secretary to the Government of India on 7 May and on 9 June in London by the Secretary of the Public Works Department, which referred it to others in the India Office and copied it to the Foreign Office. At the beginning of 1924, Skrine again reported to the Government of India about a proposal from the Chinese post office, this time to re-open the old route which ran via Irkeshtam to Osh, at the head of the Ferghana Valley in Russian Central Asia. Skrine assumed this idea, floated when the frontier was still officially closed, was related to ongoing negotiations in Urumqi between the Governor and a Soviet delegation that was pushing for opening the frontiers for Soviet trade. In reporting on this new proposal, Skrine also noted that the Kashgar postmaster had just returned from Khotan and had recommended favorably about the possibilities of establishing an international postal route to Leh. With regard to the Irkeshtam route, Skrine enclosed internal correspondence of the Chinese postal authorities, where Cavaliere had inquired of a colleague about the conditions on the route via Irkeshtam. The response he received from James S. Chu, the acting Chinese Postal Commissioner at Shufu, dated 18 November 1923, is of interest for what it tells us about the traditional route between Kashgaria and the Ferghana Valley:*]

> [Fig. 105][...] The nearest Russian Office is at Osi (i.e. Osh). That part of the country between Osi and Ierhkoszetang [Irkeshtam] is mountainous, and the distance between is 7 stages. Commercial prospects are great, and the route is quite safe. As there are already many Russian subjects and natives trading between the two countries, postal connection is much expected.
>
> Ierhkoszetang is some 8 li from the frontier, where a Russian postal agent once functioned. Four mounted couriers used to carry mails between Osi and Ierhkoszetang once a week, and their salary was 15 taels per month. Letters numbered about 300 while parcels amounted to 50 or 60 every time. Food for animals could be easily obtained in the stages between them. As formal relationship between the two countries has not yet been established, people are forbidden to cross the frontier here. But eager traders have found a roundabout way to Osi at Shu-nek, which is over 10 stages from the former.
>
> All of the above informations are collected from different sources especially from those who are trading between the two countries.

[*Skrine's report on this latest initiative was forwarded from India to London on 28 February 1924, arriving in the India Office on 17 March. On 21 March, the ever-cautious J.A. Simpson, probably seeing now for the first time the file that combined the two different sets of reports about the Chinese Post Office proposals, recorded on the minute sheet a serious criticism of Skrine, not for the latest report, but for the one of a year earlier:* →

Fig. 105. The route from Osh via Irkeshtam to Kashgar. Schematic map overlaid on portion of a Russian map which had been given to the British explorer Francis Younghusband (after: A. V. Postnikov, Skhvatka na 'Kryshe Mira' *[Moskva: Pamiatniki istoricheskoi mysli, 2001], Fig. 21); photograph of the Russian fort at Irkeshtam by John Törnquist (Public domain, Image no. 0937.0010 https://collections.smvk.se/carlotta-em/web/object/3755893).*



It should be noted that in the last paragraph of his letter of 21-2-23 (P1992) Mr. Skrine by implication prejudged the position of the Indo-Chinese frontier. The Karakorum range has never been officially recognized as the frontier, and our claims to the regions to the north of it (e.g. the Oprang Valley) may be damaged by Mr. Skrine's admission.]

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Kashgar, 28 February 1923

My birthday today. I ought to be depressed about being 35, i.e., having reached half man's allotted span, but I'm not. All my time so far I have enjoyed life more and more & got more and more out of it as time has gone on, & I see no reason why the process shouldn't continue. I wouldn't mind the clock going back 5 years, but I'd hate it to go back 10, while as for finding myself 20 or (still more) 15 again, the thought absolutely makes me shiver.

We have celebrated the occasion today by a great *tamasha*[131] (the word is as common & expressive in Turki as in Hindustani) for the Consulate staff in the form of sport. No less than 30 men all on the pay-roll, Gov't and private, & they all had to enter for all the events. It was an enormous success. We started with a flat race, twice round the 'park' with the 5 oldest men getting a start of about 50 yards & the rest all in a bunch. Great excitement – to everybody's surprise the race was won in a canter by our old coachman, Abdulla, a hoary old beaver who got 50 yards start but ran better than all except one or two of the young men! Then we had a 3-legged race, with pairs drawn by lot so that they couldn't practice together, which produced many tosses and much amusement on the part of the onlookers. Then cock-fighting, a sack race run in heats (which were rather spoilt by several of the sacks being old and coming to pieces, so that a heat would be won by a totally undeserving person with both his feet sticking out of holes in the bottom of the sack, & have to be run again). Towel- and rattle blindfold fighting & a potato-and-spoon race, also run in heats. The latter was won most appropriately by the scullery boy, who left the cook standing! The efforts of some of the orderlies, large long-legged beefy Turkis who excelled in the fighting events, to pick up their potatoes with a tea-spoon caused much joy to the spectators. Then there was a hotly contested tug-of-war between two teams of Gov't. and two teams of private-servants, in which, in the final the private servants' team was surreptitiously helped to victory by over-enthusiastic supporters in the crowd, & with the result that there was nearly a free-fight & I had to have the tie tugged over again with all spectators kept 20 yards away. Then the Gov't. servants won! The two funniest events were the wheelbarrow race and the donkey race. The former was done by drawing pairs of competitors, one of each pair holding the legs of his partner who walked on his hands. Needless to say, having had no practice, they fell about all over the place. The donkey race was a scream. We collected 6 donkeys belonging to the water-carrier & the gardeners & put one man on each facing the tail. No reins or sticks were allowed, & they had to cover a flat course of about 100 yards. The men couldn't keep the donkeys straight of course & they all cannoned into each other & careered wildly about, upsetting the spectators & each other amid wild merriment. The winner was given his prize – a fine big bundle of lucerne – on the spot! The only outsider D. & I had to help was old Nazaroff, who enjoyed it all hugely & was most useful. We didn't get any tea till 6 when the events were over & the men all sat down to tea, bread, dried fruit and 'mantas' (kind of meat pies beloved of the Kashgari), after which D. gave out the prizes of which there were 23, so that there were not many heart-turnings.

The last week end we spent at Yangi Hissar, partly for work & partly for a holiday. We rode & drove

131. Entertainment or spectacle.

the 50 miles there on Friday & back on Monday without undue inconvenience, the tarantass conveying D. half way & both our beddings etc. the whole way. I found that work & social duties with the Chinks took up most of my time, but we did manage one very pleasant morning exploring the unmapped neighbourhood of the town with a plane table. We discovered a lovely (artificial) lake among the low hills & a very interesting old shrine with wonderful tiles. I made a 1 inch to the mile map of about 8 sq. miles of country, just to keep my hand in. We went out at 9, returned at 2:30, lunched, then I worked at cases with the Amban from 3:30 to 6:30. D. came along to the Yamen at 7 and we dined with the Amban & his ladies, getting home dog tired at 10. The Swedes were (temporarily) at Y. Hissar where they have a Mission House, at which they periodically open the dispensary for a fortnight or so. Piersen of Yangi Shahr, the schoolmaster, has a Chinese school at Yangi Hissar also, which he inspects now and again.

Your letter of 4th Jan. came yesterday. Yes, I'm afraid there is more than a chance that I will have to stay on here another winter, as I don't see how they can possibly send E. back here after getting the report I have been obliged to send in about his doings here. In fact, it would be nothing short of a scandal if they did send him back [...] Presumably they're postponing consideration of my leave application until the Etherton question is settled. I needn't tell you how terribly disappointed we both will be, if I am asked to stay on here – it will be impossible to refuse [...]

After all, it's only a question of 9 months – not much; we shall be Home in September '24 instead of in Dec. '23.

Harding is not back from tour yet, but alas he will be here next week, I fear. Only one more peaceful weekend with the place to ourselves. However, we are pushing out on a short tour to Merket, Maralbashi and possibly Yarkand about the 15th [...]

P.S. I'm glad the enlargement of my telephoto of Kongur has arrived. I told them to send you a copy. Mine hasn't come yet. As I told you from Yarkand, that photo is absolutely unique. There is no photo in existence of the E. side of the Kungur Range, & only Stein's of the West side. What is more, the snow mountain you see over the dark near ridge is an uncharted one the exact position and approximate height of which (25,600 ft.) has been determined by me for the first time. Stein knows about it but never succeeded in measuring its altitude or fixing its exact position; it does not appear in his map, which gives another peak (25,140 ft.) 7 miles to the N.W. as the highest point of the Kongur Range. The peak (13,500 ft. high) from which I took that photo is itself uncharted & is in the middle of country visited (& now mapped) by me first of any European. Much more important than 'Lake Skrine.' C.

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[*I have kept a fair portion of this next diatribe about Harding (but excluded repeat comments about Etherton), since it is revealing of the way in which a consulate's effectiveness might be compromised, and in the monthly diary quoted next, Skrine opens with passages relating to Harding's dealings on the British subjects while on tour, granted, not with the same invective and criticism found here. For Harding's own memo on the subject and Skrine's careful response to it, see below, pp. 295-306. Some of the pro-Bolshevik views allegedly held by Harding are imputed to him* ex silentio *in Skrine's summary for his mother. The comments about hunting in the marshes of the Maralbashi area are sad evidence to contrast with the present, where several of the species he mentioned are no longer to be found in that district.*]

Kashgar, 8 March 1923

Harding turned up at breakfast time this morning [...] His wasting many hours per week of my time with his interminable talk wouldn't matter so much if he looked at our problems from the same point

of view as I did, but he doesn't. Take two important subjects – Bolshevik designs on this province and British claims as regards the registration of British-Indian subjects. It is an understood thing in this Consulate that tho' open propaganda or other hostile action against the Bolos can't be indulged in, lest the crafty B[olshevik]s use it as a handle against us, it is permissible to keep the Chinese up to the mark unofficially as regards keeping the frontier closed against agents from beyond, & in other ways to keep an eye on (and if possible check) the schemes & intrigues of the Bolo. But if one talks about anything of that kind to H., he looks blankly at one & disagrees with every word one says. He <u>wants</u> the frontier opened to trade (which means opened to Bolo. agents, who always travel as traders), and he looks forward to the day when there will be a Russian Consul-General here again. He doesn't say so, but I know he does. As regards registration, the policy of the Consulate-General, definitely approved by the Gov't. of India, has always been to keep a hold on immigrants from India & their sons, even if they have settled permanently in this province; the idea has been to checkmate Russian designs, as the Russians used to register as 'Russian subjects' large numbers of Turkis who were nothing of the kind and had no right to Russian nationality [...] We should keep as many of our subjects on our register as can be proved to be British subjects, & give the rest to the Chinese, apologizing for the mistakes made in their cases. And whenever the Chinese contest case[s] of persons who are genuine British subjects, we should fight them (not only on paper, as Etherton did, but face to face). Harding, however, doesn't agree to this at all. He's so imbued with Chinese ideas that he is jealous of British claims to residents in this province as British subjects. He says that all such persons should be 'encouraged to become Chinese subjects' (he means abandoned to the Chinese). Regardless of the fact that even tho' the Russians aren't here now, they infallibly will be some day, he wants to get rid of as many of our subjects as possible, genuine as well as Etherton's spurious ones, because forsooth they are colonists & therefore no use to India or the Empire in general. The men themselves of course fear and dread losing their British nationality, because they know they will be under the absolute power of the local Chinese without any appeal whatsoever.

The result is that on two of the most important questions I have here, my own Vice Consul is working in a diametrically opposite direction to me [...]

We are having nasty misty & muggy weather just now – today for the first time since we left Kashmir, we have not seen the sun for a whole day. We are hoping it will clear up before our Maralbashi–Merket tour, which will probably begin about Monday week, the 19th. Maralbashi [Maralbexi] is a sportsman's paradise, being stiff with pheasants, partridges, wild boar, duck, snipe, stags and even a special kind of tiger. This latter however is very difficult to get, being rare and shy, & there is no bundobust for hunting it as in India. However, we're going to have a try. We hope at any rate to get a skin, also a head of the 'Maral' (stag) after which Maralbashi (stag's head) is named.

Do you know if good, oldish, pleasingly-coloured Chinese mandarins' cloaks fetch a good price in England nowadays? If so, what sort of prices? I can get two or three genuine ones (not brand new ones worn a few times in a Chinese theatre in Peking, which is what they do to make them look old) of rich Chinese embroidery, in red or yellow silkground. One particularly fine one on maroon silk, beautiful cloud- and dragon-design, which is curiously enough already made up into a European dress (probably at Peking) I have acquired for D. She loves it & is going to wear it a lot at home. But another red one, & a magnificent yellow dragon cloak which I haven't bought yet but can at any time if I like for about £ 10 might fetch good prices in London. The dress I asked you the other day if you would like is not a madarin's cloak, it is a Turki woman's dress beautifully embroidered by Turki women in the Chinese

style 60–80 years ago & in excellent preservation.

[...] By the way, I was agitated last week to see in the telegrams that the India Mail had been robbed between Marseilles & Paris & 30 bags of registered letters & parcels looted, on Feb. 14th. I calculated that your 2 lynx-skins from Keriya & possibly the wolf-skins I sent for Aunts Lilian & Marie also, must have gone with the mail that was robbed [...]

Lovely box of short bread just came from Aunt Ethel – too kind of her. I am going to send her a fur next week, a fox I think.

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[*Skrine sent his February monthly diary from Kashgar on 9 March, and a printed copy of it arrived in London on 14 May. It elicited no special comments there, though it contained some interesting information. The copy here is from the one sent to the India Office, BL IOLR L/P&S/10/976, P1802/1923, fols. 207-211. The diary opened with a report on Harding's recent tour and positive observations about the Magistrate of Aksu and then carefully comments on Harding's opinion regarding the British subject issue:*]

[...] Mr. Harding is much impressed with the difficulty of exercising any effective control over the British subjects resident in the Kuchar and Aksu districts. A report by him on the subject of the disadvantages of extra-territoriality in these regions will be submitted separately. He also speaks strongly about the faction warfare between present and former Aksakals at Aksu and Kuchar. He describes the atmosphere of intrigue and backbiting at the former place as 'poisonous', and his advice is 'whenever you have to change an Aksakal, shoot the old one'.

[*While there was no progress to report on the Sino-Afghan negotiations, Skrine added considerable detail about suspicious activities of one of the Afghan staff directed against British interests:*]

9. The activities of Ghulam Nabi, one of Mohammad Sharif's staff, during his recent visit to Kashgar have been reported to Government by telegram and a translation of one of the Kemalist propaganda leaflets distributed by him was sent by post last week. This person is entitled *Karguzar-i-Siyasi* [~political agent? – *DW*] to the Envoy, and draws Rs. 1,500 per annum; he is not head clerk, as previously reported, that post being held by one Gulam Rasul Mirza on Rs. 3,000 per annum.

Ghulam Nabi brought a large sum of money with him as well as the leaflets, and is reported to have liberally 'rewarded' several members of Abdul Kamal's pro-Turk party. This information emanates from one source only and is not corroborated, but the facts regarding the anti-British talk indulged in by Ghulam Nabi His Majesty's Consul-General has from two different trustworthy authorities, and may be regarded beyond doubt. There is also the leaflet actually seen by His Majesty's Consul-General, and there are the rumours which have been current in the bazar, during the last month only, about the defeat of British armies by the Turks, the evacuation of Constantinople by the Allies, the rendition of Mosul, etc. etc.

[*He goes on to describe details about the expenditures of the Afghan mission and the salaries of the key members. The next sections of the report reinforce Skrine's earlier observations about Bolshevik intrigues. It appears that much of his intelligence about those collaborating with the Bolsheviks comes from sources in Kashgar, not individuals who were coming from the Russian side of the border. How much here was really news is a good question. The details about Abdul Hamid may seem a bit curious, but the point here was to provide evidence that might be used by the Indian authorities to identify him if he showed up in British India. The readers in London marked this passage of the diary.*]

Trans-Frontier Affairs.

11. [...] The frontier is still effectively closed for trade, the measures taken on the Russian side being

reinforced by the exceptionally heavy snow and intense cold on the Alai and T'ien Shan. An agent whom His Majesty's Consul-General sent out towards the end of January with letters for Andijan and Tashkend has been obliged to return from the frontier after having tried four different routes through the mountains. He reports that about 15th February the Russians arrested and sent to Tashkend Kadir Beg and Yusuf Beg, two Basmachi leaders who had robbed a Kashgari caravan in the Alai. Two other Basmachi Begs, Jamshid and Jani, escaped with 400 men.

Two Artush men who did succeed in coming through from Uzgend recently arrived suffering from severe frost-bite on hands and feet.

The following Kashgaris in Ferghana are working with the Bolsheviks to secure the opening of the frontier by the Chinese:

(1) Abdul Rahim, nephew of Umur Akhund Bai who is one of the 'millionaires' of Kashgar;

(2) Abdul Karim, agent of certain Hindu traders;

(3) Yusuf Akhund (mentioned in paragraph 21 of Diary for January).

Nos. (1) and (3), like many other Chinese subjects of Kashgar, owned considerable property in Russian territory at the time of the Revolution. This was confiscated by the Communists; it has now, however, been returned to the owners. The latter are in high favour with the Russians. They alone are permitted to smuggle goods across the Chinese frontier from Ferghana: other Chinese subjects who attempt to engage in this traffic are punished and their goods confiscated. The intention obviously is to cause the merchants of Kashgar to agitate with their own authorities for the opening of the frontier for trade and for the initiation of negotiations with Tashkend.

An interesting fact is that the price of sheep's gut in Kashgar has recently risen from practically nothing to 30 *dachins* (3*d.*) per piece. That of wool has also advanced. This is due to heavy buying by the above-mentioned Abdul Rahim, also by Ma Titai (who has taken to trade in his old age) and a merchant from Urumchi. Before the war, certain German firms in Tashkend used to import enormous quantities of gut from Kashgaria; the reopening of this traffic appears to confirm the reports received by Peshawar of the activities of Russo-German firms in Transcaspia. In this connection it may be noted that a petition for the opening of the Russian frontier was recently presented to the Taoyin by Umar Akhun Bai and several other merchants with Russian interests, and was forwarded to the Governor with Taoyin's recommendation.

Bokharan Mission.

12. [...] The following information has been obtained from the son of Yetmish Beg, the chief Kirghiz of the Muk region. This youth is unmistakeably trustworthy and well-disposed and spoke mostly from first-hand knowledge.

(i) Abdul Hamid, the 'Envoy of the Five Kingdoms' wore khaki-coloured clothes and a blue turban when he first came to Muk. He appeared to be a Turcoman. He was accompanied by one Mirza Azim and two Bokharan soldiers named Papir and Narzi. This Mirza Azim spoke and wrote Russian as well as Persian, Western Turkish and Eastern Turki. The party spoke Persian among themselves. Abdul Hamid said that he had been to Peking and also to Moscow, where he had been sent along with troops from Ferghana in the early days of the Revolution. He said he had been to Kabul a month before and had come straight from there to Muk.

(It may be remembered that in his letter to His Majesty's Consul-General, dated 3rd January 1923, copy of which was sent to the Government of India with Kashgar letter No. 12 of 25th January

1923, Abdul Hamid said that the Afghans had refused him passage to India.)

(ii) When the Chinese authorities refused the party ingress into Kashgaria, they retired to Kizil Kull, a place one day's march from Muk and situated, so far as can be made out, circ. lat. 39°15' N. long. 73°20' E. From this place Abdul Hamid secured from Chinese traders in Muk three or four Kashgari cloaks of different colours, some fur-rimmed Kashgari caps and black top-boots. He shaved his head and the middle of his upper lip, letting his moutstache on each side and his whiskers and beard grow. Thus disguised he left Kizil Kull about 5th February with one of the soldiers and travelled *via* Rangkull and Muz Kull towards Chitral and India. At the same time Mirza Azim and the other soldier left for Karategin. Abdul Hamid had with him three seals, one of which was Enver Pasha's, and he wrote letters purporting to come from Enver Pasha.

(iii) Abdul Hamid is described as follows: Height about 5 feet 11, large hands with fat fingers, spare build, long nose, big eyes of light colour, face fattish, complexion red, hair black, short stubbly beard.

(iv) Since the flight of Sher Mohammad Kor to Afghanistan and the capture and death of Mohiuddin the Basmachi movement has languished. Two lieutenants of Mohiuddin named Nur Muhammad and Yar Muhammad, however, still command a following of about 400 with headquarters at Darawat in the Alai region. Local chieftains on the Bolshevik side are Firzail Tajik in Karategin with 400 men, also Jamshid and Qadir Beg of Uch Topa. The Bolsheviks at Kharukh and Murghab have no regular courier service with Ferghana now. Their letters are carried for them by friendly Kirghiz, who also sell them food and other supplies. Uch Topa is the chief source of supply.

The Chinese authorities are now fully alive to the Bolshevik origin of the 'Bokharan Mission' in particular and in general to the increase in propaganda and espionage from beyond the border.

13. [...] It is reported from Yarkand that Mulla Maqsud Gul has arrived secretly at that place and is living in a friend's house in the Shamal Bagh outside the city. He is said to be engaged in collecting a debt of 50 yambus (Rs. 6,200) from a Badakhshi called Baba Jan, with the help of the Afghan Envoy. The latter, who has undoubtedly encouraged the mulla to come in defiance of the Chinese authorities' prohibition, had both parties to his house on the night of the 24th–25th February and examined their accounts.

His Majesty's Consul-General has informed the Taoyin of the report in question.

Russian Pamirs.

4. Unconfirmed reports have been received from Tashkurghan that the Bolsheviks at Murghab are expecting an attack from Sher Muhammad Kor, who is supposed to have returned from Afghanistan to Bokhara, with 400 men of Qullab. The Kirghiz of the Russian Pamirs, it is stated, are being mobilized.

It is also reported that the well-known Shirin Sha Shighni arrived on the 14th February at Murghab with a detachment of 20 Red troops and has arrested 7 Kirghiz, who have been sent to Kharukh in custody *viâ* Wakhan.

Little reliance can be placed upon the reports at present received from the Russian Pamirs, but, His Majesty's Consul-General hopes to have more trustworthy information on the return of the agent mentioned in his telegram 7/13 of 1st February, who, after 3 weeks' delay owing to heavy snow, crossed the Alai frontier about 20th February with the hep of Yetmish Beg and his Kirghiz.

Miscellaneous.

15. There is every prospect of a 'rush' on the Mecca pilgrimage from southern Sinkiang this season. Between 300 and 400 persons are reported to be desirous of performing the pilgrimage from the Kashgar area alone. This is undoubtedly due to the favourable reports brought back by the few Hajis

who ventured on the journey *viâ* India last year. Passports are difficult to obtain from the Chinese authorities, partly because the latter are extremely jealous of any influence tending to take their subjects out of the country, partly because of the natural dilatoriness and corruption of the yamens. Many of the poorer would-be pilgrims, moreover, cannot afford the journey to Kashgar and the expence of obtaining a photograph, in addition to the 5 ½ taels passport fee and the 'palm-oil' required. It is not surprising, therefore, that numbers of persons are already arriving at Leh from Khotan, Keriya, etc., without passports. His Majesty's Consul-General has been in correspondence with the British Joint Commissioner, Ladakh and the Taoyin of Kashgar on the subject.

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[*This letter is of some interest for Skrine's comments about his personal views of the international situation. While I have excised some longish passages with his usual griping about how intolerable Harding is, I kept the passages on Etherton, since they address one of the key issues in how we might, objectively, assess his tenure as consul. It is important to recognize that just because he may have claimed unjustified credit for a lot, of itself the boasting does not prove he mis-handled some of the important consular duties as an intelligence agent assigned the task of countering Bolshevik subversion.*]

Kashgar, 14 March 1923

I am sending you this week the Tashkurghan–Kashgar section of my diary of the journey up. It is somewhat late in the day, but as in the case of the first half, I had to rewrite – or at any rate did rewrite, almost every line of my original diary [...]

We are looking forward very much to hearing what the French are saying chez eux about the Ruhr occupation.[132] Are they really as chauvinistic as would appear from their behaviour over reparations? I mean, it has been pretty obvious that whereas we were trying all along to evolve a scheme whereby Germany would be able to pay, France was taking jolly good care that Germany wouldn't be able to pay, so that an excuse would be furnished for occupation of German territory. I must say I don't like their invasion of German territory 4 ¼ years after the end of the war. The time to have invaded it was in Nov. 1918 when France could have taught the Germans a lesson as to what invasion meant – could have made them feel something of what France suffered – and would have had the excuse of war-time not blood. Now, it is obviously not blood, but cool, calculating desire to humiliate Germany & invade her without risk.

We are more immediately concerned with the Turkish treaty here, as it indirectly affects us, that is to say, the question of peace or war with Turkey is of great importance as regards our relations with Afghanistan & Persia.[133] The effect either way on this province is slight. In spite of repeated attempts, the Bolsheviks have not yet succeeded in getting any important agents into this province, except in the extreme north. They are perpetually trying to open up trade relations with southern Sinkiang, but the Chinese won't have any traders or commissions or consuls or anybody from the Russian side in the place. The frontier is certainly carefully guarded and beyond a little smuggling there is no trade &

132. French and Belgian troops occupied the industrialized Ruhr region of the Weimar Republic from 11 January 1923 to 25 August 1925, as a response to the German default in reparation payments at the end of World War I. Skrine's apprehension here about the possible consequences proved to be prescient, as the move would undermine the German economy and contribute thus to the rise of Hitler.

133. The 'Turkish treaty' refers to the negotiations in 1922-1923, which would result in the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne, 24 July 1923, officially ending the conflict between Allied powers and the Ottoman Empire (allied with Germany in World War I). An important provision of the treaty was the Turkish abandonment of any claims to formerly Ottoman-held territory in Syria and Mesopotamia.

hardly any coming and going. The same applies to the Bokhara frontier and the efforts of the Pan-Turanian people. I help the Chinese with information & advice, but I don't claim any credit for their policy of exclusion of Bolsheviks and Pan-Turanians; that is mainly due to the extreme jealousy of the Chinese about their frontiers. They won't let any body in they can possibly help letting in. Etherton, of course, claimed credit for everything they did in this line: whenever a Bolo agent was turned back, E. wired to India & Peking saying that he had 'induced' or 'advised' them to do it. All balderdash for there was nobody to tell Gov't. that it wasn't E. – hence his reputation. I was much interested to hear Col. Bannerman's[134] verdict on E. to you – which showed that we, like everyone else, were taken in by E.'s valuation of himself – 'not quite one of us, but good at his job.' There is only one job at which Etherton is good, and that is the job of blowing his own trumpet. I think that if he comes back here I shall retire from the service and go into business. My faith in Gov't. and the grinding of its mills will be gone.

We are off next Tuesday to Merket, thank goodness [...] In July we'll be going up the Kaying Bashi for a 3 weeks' holiday & by 1st Sept. Harding will be gone for good. So if we can survive this week we won't have so much more of him [...]

Social engagements always come in batches in this place & always at the most inconvenient times [...]

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[*The venting about Etherton is almost out of control, but interesting for what we learn about how he was now carving out a post-Kashgar career of lecturing as an expert on Asian politics and, as it turns out, soon would publish his own book, unfettered by the constraints of still being in the service of the Indian Government once he resigned his position. His talk at the Central Asian Society, published as 'Central Asia' (1923), provides a good preview of the kinds of sweeping geopolitical generalizations to be found in his various other publications of the 1920s. The short article about Etherton's talk, which Skrine thanks his mother for clipping and sending to him, is: "British Influences in Central Asia: Colonel Etherton's Task,"* The Times*, Friday, Jan. 19, 1923, Issue 43243, p. 9. Etherton's interview with the newspaper, anticipating his talk on 18 January, was published as "Central Asian Market. Possibilities of Trade,"* The Times*, Tuesday, Jan. 16, 1923, Issue 43240, p. 9.*]

Kashgar, 18 March

Our caravan starts tomorrow (Tuesday) for Merket, & we follow next day [...] I haven't had a letter from you for 3 weeks & it will be sickening if we go out on tour without our arrears of home letters. If it weren't for the post, we'd have gone out with the caravan tomorrow [...] [W]e will be very glad to get out into camp again. Kashgar is delightful & we love the Consulate & our garden & our animals & the river & the distant hills; but it is somewhat of a Capua,[135] and the Open Road with its freedom & its discomforts and its changing scenes and its plain fare beckons, to D. no less than to me [...]

134. Presumably Lt.-Col. Sir Alexander Bannerman of Elsick (1871-1934).

135. A reference to Cicero's warning to the Romans in his oration *De Lege Agraria* 2: 95 about the dangers of being 'charmed by the fertility or excellence' of Capua in Campania: 'The Campanians have always been proud, owing to the fertility of their lands, the abundance of their crops, the healthiness, arrangement, and beauty of their city. It is this abundance, this affluence of everything, which is the origin of that Campanian arrogance which made them demand from our ancestors that one of the consuls should be chosen from Capua, and next of that luxury which vanquished by pleasure Hannibal himself, whom arms had been unable to conquer.' (Campani semper superbi bonitate agrorum et fructuum magnitudine, urbis salubritate, descriptione, pulchritudine. Ex hac copia atque omnium rerum adfluentia primum illa nata est adrogantia qua a maioribus nostris alterum Capua consulem postularunt, deinde ea luxuries quae ipsum Hannibalem armis etiam tum invictum voluptate vicit.) (https://www.attalus.org/cicero/agraria2_2.html, last accessed 11 August 2024). This is a subtle reminder to modern readers about Skrine's immersion in the Classics while in school, at the same time that it sets up his condemnation of Etherton for indulging in luxury rather than attending to his duties.

19 March 1923, 11:30 PM. The post came in the afternoon & I have been so busy dealing with it that I haven't been able to get on with this letter, so that as we are off at 8:30 tomorrow morning on a 48 mile drive I'm afraid I must go to bed soon & write a short letter only. I hope the photos will make up.

It is splendid hearing in your letters of 15th & 22nd Jan. about your safe arrival at Monte and the delightful time you are having there [...] Thanks for the *Times*' cutting and Aunt Lilian's letter, both about Etherton's lecture to the Central Asian Society. When I think of the humbug and camouflage and blarney and day-in, day-out self-glorification with which the work of this Consulate-General was carried on for 4 years by that man, when I think of the way he grew fat in luxury and semi-idleness, lining his pockets all the while it makes me perfectly sick to see the way people take him at his own valuation and how successfully he poses as the self-sacrificing intrepid servant of the Empire, nobly and unselfishly toiling in remote and dangerous places & saving his country by his wonderful grasp of all the problems of Central Asia & his untiring energy in upholding British influence. Faugh!

Personally I blame the Gov't. of India as much as any one for putting in an unqualified & untried man in a job like this on nothing but his own reports. I have seen in the files the positive campaign he carried on in '19–'20 to get himself confirmed in the post. Knowing what I do now I absolutely gasp at the lies he told – lies which the G. of I. could not check, but in which they ought to have suspected the arrière pensée [ulterior motive – *DW*]. If I'd been in command at Simla and read E.'s stuff, I swear I'd have been put right off him. Instead of that they confirmed him!

No more now.

I'll write from camp in time to catch next mail.

***

[*Skrine was recording details about distances, travel conditions, the availability of supplies, and so on while touring out from Kashgar, anticipating that this information would later be used to update the confidential route books published in Simla by the Government of India. Identified on the reverse of one as 'Kashgar – ~~Lailik~~ Merket route. To replace Rte. No. 23, 4 stages' are two small, hand-written sheets in the Stewart family archive which will be added to the BL collection of Skrine's writings. These appear to be drafts for the update of the route book, the information recorded during Skrine's trip to Merket. (The standard route book format numbers the stages and provides the cumulative distance traveled – e.g. 2/50 = stage 2, 50 miles). Some of the descriptive detail in these rough notes goes beyond what would be printed in the route book. I copy the entirety here and also, for the drawing on fol. 1, include a scan of the page (Fig. 106, next page). Judging from the continuity of the ink, the drawing is probably Clarmont's, not one by Doris.*]

K[ash]g[a]r. – Moh[ammad] Amin's Serai.

19/3 L[eft] Kgr. ~~8:45~~ 11:15. 14 ponies. Camped Besh Karim Bazar. We left 20/3 at 8:45 tarantass 9:40 horses & did double march to Yupogha arr. 8:20 PM.

6 m. Yangi Shahr.

11 m. Tokoi.

13 m. Faizabad River (same that Yarkand–Kgr. road crosses 2 m. from Y. Shahr) reached & followed for 4 m. to

17 m. Yailaq Bridge. Beg's house with 2 habitable rooms - & small bazar.

25 m. Moh.-Amin's serai one or two shops (? = "Yangi arik"?)

2./50 [m.] Yupogha. 25 m.

At 5 m. Khan Arik or Doshamba Br. Reached. Road now turns due E. (from S.E.)

14 m. Yakshamba Br. ("Dong Arik").

25 m. Yupogha.

3./70. Tarim Br. 20 m. Ponies l[eft] 9:40 arr. 4:20

Sandy scrub reached 1 m. out of Yupogha. sand-grouse. At 8 m. two or 3 small lakes on right, then, cultivation reached Yilchizlik 10 m. 12 m. Habib Bibi M[aza]r – school – high sand hills with many toghraks. We lunched in grove no leaves & no shade, very hot. Lady from house near by talked to us – had come from Kgr. 2 years before. [*drawings*] She was picking dandelions.

Reached Tarim Br. 3:30 ponies 4:20. [*Fig. 107*] Very old Mazar of Bu Maryam, younger sister of Ordam Padshah. Many tombs & an artificial mound built up with stakes with a thick bunch of poles on top. Tombs had 3 green sticks planted in front of them & an earthenware bowl filled with ashes in wh[ich] oil is burnt in order to keep the dead warm. The sticks so long as they are green show that nothing can harm the dead. [*in margin here a line and note probably added when Skrine pulling material together for CCA*: Religion & Superstition]

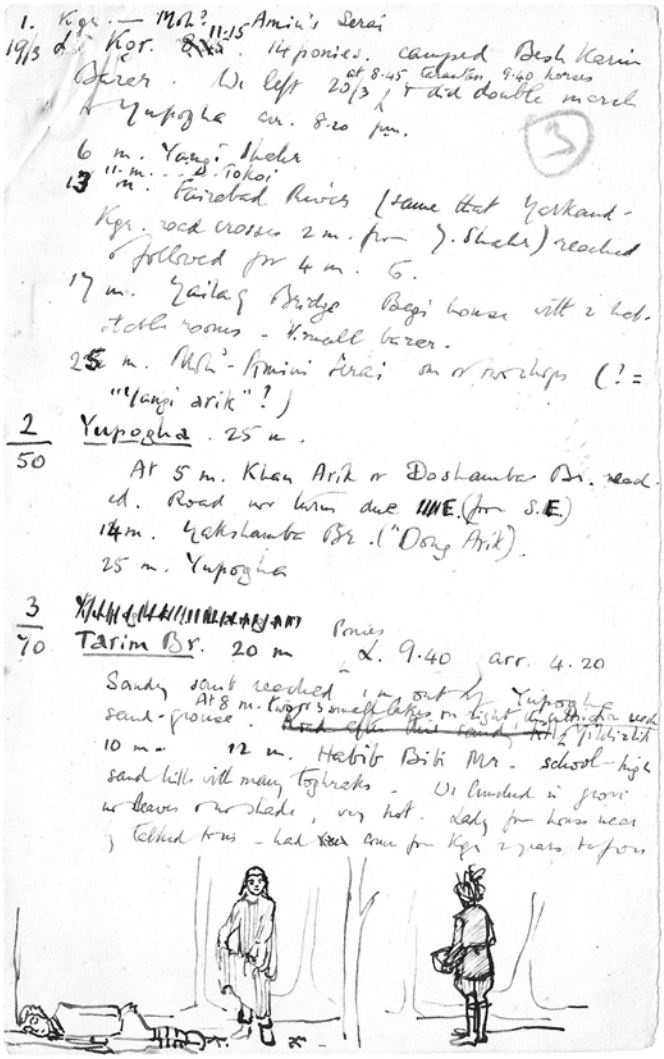

1. Kgr. — Mzr? Amin's Serai
19/3 d. Kgr. 8½ 11:15 14 ponies. camped Besh Karin
Serai. Di left 20/3 / at 8:45. Charklik 9.40 horses
Yupogha ca. 8.20 pm. and double march
3
6 m. Yangi Aheh
13 11 m. Dokoi
Tarimbad River (same that Yarkand-Kgr. road crosses 2 m. from Dokoi) reached
followed for 4 m. 6.
17 m. Yailaq Bridge Bagi houses with 2 bed-rooms - small bazar.
25 m. Mzr - Amin Serai on river bank (? = "Yangi arik"?)
2/50 Yupogha. 25 m.
At 5 m. Khan Arik or Doshamba Br. road-ed. Road now turns due NNE. (from S.E.)
14 m. Yakshamba Br. ("Dong Arik").
25 m. Yupogha
3/70 Tarim Br. 20 m Ponies l. 9.40 arr. 4.20
Sandy scrub reached 1 m. out of Yupogha
At 8 m. two or 3 small lakes on right, then cultivation reached
sand-grouse.
10 m. 12 m. Habib Bibi Mz. - school - high
sand hills with many toghraks. Di lunched in grove
no leaves or shade, very hot. Lady from house near
by talked to us - had come from Kgr 2 years before,



Fig. 106 (left). Skrine's travel notes, a separate sheet in the Stewart collection. The sketches seem clearly to be his (that is, not by Doris), made at the time of the notes.

Fig. 107 (above). The shrine of Bu Maryam near the Tarim Bridge, with a dervish in the foreground in the cemetery (after: Die Koralle*, September 1928, p. 276).*

4./96. Langar 26 m.

Cultiv[atio]n left at m. 3. Road at first good. Then gets sandier & heavier until during latter part of march it is very heavy. Ponies l[eft] 9:20 arr. 6:10. Went v[ery] well. Sand-grouse in some number (1) at edge of Tarim oasis (2) at Enghizlik l[anga]r. (3) (fw) near Langar. Duck at Langar.

16 m. Oi Kuduk water hole. Water at 2 ft.. Desert has a well clothed with brushwood & toghraks. All humps & tussocks up to 12 ft. height. These tussocks are composed of the roots & leaves of hundreds of generations of toghraks or other bushes, built up in layers until the tree or bush on top gets too high above the water supply.

Only 3 or 4 houses. Water good.

***

Sunday 25 March 1923, Merket

We came here comfortably enough in 4 days from Kashgar arriving yesterday at midday. We did 53 miles the first day, D. riding in the tarantass the whole way & I riding. Next stop was 20 miles further south-east at Tarim Bazar; so far we were travelling thro' cultivated land practically the whole time, but after Tarim we found ourselves in the real Takla-Makan, nothing but hummocky sand-hills & sparse scrub and dead 'toghraks' (desert poplar) as far as the eye could reach in every direction. In one place however water came very close to the surface, for at a water-hole called Ui Toghrak the water was only 2 ft. below the surface. Our third halt was at a little oasis, an outlier of the Yarkand River cultivation, called Langar, 28 m. from Tarim. Here four or five families lived in tiny houses, one of which, consisting of one room & a veranda only, was vacated for us. The Mir Munshi, Moh[amma]d Nasir, billetted himself on another family & we went to bed to a perfect chorus of braying donkeys. However, we slept very well at Langar because we had had rather broken rest the night before; Tarim, where we occupied quite a nice little Bai's house, was the noisiest place we have yet struck. Throughout the night cocks crowed, donkeys brayed, cats mewed, babies yelled, people coughed, talked & even sang within a few yards of us. Luckily this extent of noisiness is rare – usually our halting places are reasonably quiet.

The Yarkand River, which we crossed yesterday morning, has very little water in it just now, & there was only one fairly deep channel which we had to be ferried across. A picturesque crowd of British subjects, and Chinese subjects with petitions against British subjects, was awaiting us on the slightly raised eastern shore, and I got one or two good photos of the ferry-boats crossing laden with fur-hatted men & gaily decked ponies towards the eastern bank and the waiting petitioners. A mile to the east of the river in a grove of trees from which last year's leaves had not yet fallen (so windless & calm is the winter here) the Amban of Maralbashi was waiting for us in a Russian troika. Merket, tho' 4 long marches away from headquarters, is in Maralbashi district & this magistrate, very different from nearly all the rest of his kind in Sinkiang, tours frequently. He had even been across the desert to Tarim Bazar just before we were there. He is a very nice young fellow of about 30, speaks Russian very well & knows English too – the latter imperfectly but quite enough to get on with. He tells me that he learnt English as a child, as well as Russian, but has had little chance of speaking it since his student days at Peking; whereas he spent a year at Irkutsk before the Revolution, & so came to know Russian really well. We lunched with him today at the office of the local Chinese subordinate authority where Mr. Chu is staying. I am thinking of asking him to come to a tea-basket picnic with us tomorrow – which shows how Western he is – the idea of Mr. Wei of Kashgar, Mr. Chang of Y[angi] Hissar, Mr. Kwei of Kargalik or any of the other Mag[istrate]s of this province coming for a tea-basket picnic is too ludicrous for words!

Merket is an interesting little place 4 m. from the E. bank of the river & about 3 from the W. edge of the main, the terrible, Takla Makan – the desert in which Sven Hedin lost all his caravan & all but one of his followers from thirst, & nearly died himself.[136] [*Fig. 108, next page*] Merket is populated by a strange race called Dolans, distinctly different in appearance & characteristics from the surrounding Turkis; they are supposed by some to be aboriginal.[137] The bazar is small, & nestles under the lee of a

136. Hedin made much of this narrow escape in 1895 to illustrate his boldness as an explorer, rather than his irresponsibility in pushing on when wisdom would have dictated caution. It was a centerpiece in his lectures to adoring audiences later, leaving his listeners gasping for water as they exited the hall. Skrine presumably would have read the detailed, illustrated account in Hedin, *Through Asia*, I (Boston; London: Harper, 1899): 476-623.

137. On the Dolans, updating what little Skrine seems to have known about them, see Svanberg 1996. Svanberg



Fig. 108. Skrine first traveled among the Dolani on the northern road around the Taklamakan. He was impressed by the comeliness of the women and the fact that they did most of the family work. Here the Dolan woman is carrying a sick lamb (after: CCA *1925, facing p. 124).*

ridge of sand crowned with little mud-built shrines & tombs; there are some picturesque ponds among these sand-hills, & some very fine timber trees. Autumn w[oul]d be the time to come here, the tints must be perfectly wonderful. We are living in a fairly good house just outside the bazar; we would have preferred to be further away, but there is nowhere, & we can't pitch tents as the fields have all had water & are still damp. The crowds of tamasha-chis that scan our every movement are rather a nuisance: they stand in crowds outside the house all day, & follow wherever we go. The extraordinary thing is that they are nearly all men, not children & women, as at Keriya, which is the next worst place for tamashachis we have been to. I counted 75 grown men outside the house when we went out to lunch with the Amban today, all able-bodied men who ought to have been working. The Dolans, whatever their origin, appear to be a race of loafers.

I have had to alter my plans and give up my visit to Maralbashi once more – it seems to be fated that we shall not see Maralbashi! We were to have gone there from here, & I had made all the arrangements. Now however I have got to go to Yarkand, for two reasons; one in connexion with an important murder case which has just been reported to me, the other my teeth. I have had a lot of toothache this winter & the trouble has during the last week spread to another tooth, with unpleasant results. I fear at least two, if not three will have to come out – & Dr. Nyström at Yarkand is the only dentist in the Province. He is not a fully qualified dentist, & can't do the elaborate work which the Americans are so good at & which I would like to have done now. I'll have to wait till I get back to India for that [...]

[W]e are going to go back to Kashgar from Yarkand but not by the direct road; I want to go by a little-known mountain road part of the way, do some explorations & mapping and also have some healthy hill-climbing for both of us before returning to the fleshpots of Kashgar. Will write again from Kashgar.

***

Yarkand, 1 April 1923

So busy this week-end, during a flying visit to Yarkand, that I only discovered this afternoon that it is (1) Easter Sunday (2) April Fool's day. Even D., the Elder's daughter, didn't know it was (1) until this afternoon when she attended a Communion service of over 1 ½ hours at the Mission Orphanage at which she had to kneel bolt upright on a hard floor while the Swedes indulged in lengthy extempore prayers in Turki, one after the other. [*Fig. 109, next page*] It was her second service today, she having attended the one at the Mission here this morning (the Orphanage is 3 miles out in the country) so she's pretty tired. I fetched her at 5 & had coffee with the Orphanage people, delicious Swedish coffee which I think is the best cafè au lait I have ever tasted.

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mines the older travel accounts; it is clear that Skrine's brief comments reveal relatively little about the Dolans and their way of life.



Fig. 109. The Swedish Mission church in Yarkand in 1923. Photos by John Törnquist (Public domain, Image nos. 0964.8845 https://collections.smvk.se/carlotta-em/web/object/26013278; 964.b.0229 https://collections.smvk.se/carlotta-em/web/object/25424448).

We went out yesterday also to the Orphanage so that I could see over, as I hadn't been before. It is an extraordinarily good show, 35 children from about 10 months old to 14 or 15, & all as happy as sandboys [*Fig. 110*]. The orphanage has only been going for two years, but it is already most flourishing, with nice 'pukka' buildings & quite a big bit of land which the children help to cultivate, as well as the usual play-grounds. As I've told you before, Turki children are indistinguishable from English or Scotch children of the same class, cheery apple-cheeked little beggars all of them. They are mostly not real orphans, i.e., without either father or mother, but children of the temporary marriages which are so common here, or of divorced mothers. For instance, little Daud, one of the cleverest of the boys, is the son of Ashar Khan, Doris' maid at Kashgar, by her last husband but one! Both the ladies at the Orphanage speak a little English, but they are much more at home in Turki, and we talk to them chiefly in that language. The Nyströms & Mr. Roberntz, who are at the Mission itself all speak English fairly well. I was glad to see that they are teaching English, not Swedish, in the school – very sound!



You will be glad to hear that Nyström diagnosed the offending tooth which has been the cause of the toothache I have been having on and off all this winter; & on Thursday morning he had it out. He has no gas or chloroform, only some of the new local anaesthetic, & that rather old; however, it worked to a considerable extent, & tho' the tooth (as usual with mine) broke & came out with great difficulty in three pieces, the pain, though bad, wasn't anything like as horrible as I had been fearing it might be. I had been looking forward to having no anaesthetic at all – I never expected such amenities in Yarkand of all places, tho' I knew Nyström did a lot of dental work here. It is a great relief getting it over.

Fig. 110. Doris Skrine, dressed perhaps for Easter, and children, the photo probably taken at the Swedish orphanage in Yarkand (reproduced with permission from the Royal Geographical Society [London], no. CPS/00041).

Both yesterday and the day before we were subjected to dreadful Chinese feasts, the one on Friday was at the Yamen, & came after I had done 4 hours' work with the Amban, & had a splitting head. Talking to the Chinese through Turki interpreters is very good for my Turki, but is a frightful strain; one has to concentrate both on the language and on the subject in hand, which on Friday was a somewhat controversial one & full of pitfalls. Moh[amma]d Sharif, the Afghan Envoy, & his interpreter Abdul Ghani (who speaks Turki, Russian, Persian, Pashto, Urdu and Turkish, all perfectly) were at the lunch; I had a bit of a talk with the Afghan, & liked him rather better than I did the only previous time I had seen him, i.e. at my own dinner party here last December. However, he is being very silly about calling; he apparently expects me to call on him first, which of course is absurd; I'm a resident C[onsul] G[eneral] in Ch[inese] Turkestan, & he is only a visiting envoy with no status whatever. However, all Afghans have wind in the head & he evidently doesn't intend to call, so I can't get much forrader with him. He told me he was absolutely fed up with Yarkand & wanted to go to Kashgar for a change; apparently the Chinese won't let him. The negotiations about an Agreement between Afghan[ista]n and China are still pending, replies being awaited both from Kabul & Peking. It will be interesting if he comes to Kashgar on a visit, to see whether he calls at the Consulate General or not. It will be pretty patent if he doesn't. Chu, ex-Taoyin, who as I told you is conducting the negotiations, is pretty bored too & wants to get back to Kashgar. He doesn't love the Afghans any more than he did before.

Yesterday we lunched with Chu at a garden in the city. [*Fig. 111*] It was quite a pleasant function, as Chu's always are (he is one of the best hosts I've ever struck, & thoroughly understands European ways), but the pity of it was that after a storm the day before, the 'buran' to which the heat of the previous ten days had been leading up, the air was delicious & the sky full of fleecy white clouds, a rare event in Chinese Turkestan. It was just such a day as I had been longing for, to take some photos of the picturesque environs of Yarkand, the old city walls, the ancient timber-trees & tumble-down old farm houses etc. But what with a long call from a Chinese official at 10 & this party from 12 till 4, the day was absolutely wasted, & now again it is thick & dull. There must have been snow in the mountains, & we are expecting to have it pretty cold on our way home. As I think I said in my last, we aren't going straight back to Kashgar by the dull plains road; we are going among the mountains mostly by paths hitherto untrodden by Europeans, & expect to be 9 or 10 days in the



Fig. 111. A photo of the luncheon group hosted by ex-Tao Yin Chu in Yarkand on 30 March 1923. From left to right: Turki interpreter (possibly Murad Qari?); Mrs. Nyström; ex-magistrate of Kashgar Chu; ex-magistrate of Yarkand Liu; Magistrate of Yarkand Li; a subordinate officer; Mr. Roberntz. (From the British Library Collection: IOLR Photo 920/1 [73]).

hills. If only the weather isn't bad; it ought to be a most enjoyable trip; unfortunately, at this time of year the weather in the hills is rather a gamble. However, we shall never be more than 2 days' march from the plains, & mostly only 1 day's march, so we won't be deeply committed & will always be able to come down if it snows too much.

Lovely long letter from the Casino Reading Room [*in Monte Carlo – DW*] dated 1st February arrived yesterday [...] Many thanks indeed darling for all the information about furs, & the promise to send me more after seeing your City shop. I'm very glad to hear that foxes are so popular & fetch good prices, for I have about 60 including a good number of cross foxes as good as, or better than, the pair I sent you for Dulcie & Marjie. I have also a very good lot of gray foxes, which I picked up for (relatively) a mere song [...] You don't mention lynxes – perhaps they are rare at home. Anyhow they are lovely skins & worth five or six times as much as an ordinary fox. I have got a good lot of them, mostly the red lynx of Russian Turkestan [*Lynx lynx isabellinus – DW*] [...]

I'm glad too to hear that green jade is still popular. I hope you got the bangles D. sent you; I got them for her at Khotan for 4 s. 6 d., & will be interested to hear what the dealers say about them. The best green jade is very difficult to get indeed; I only succeeded at Khotan in securing 1 pair, which cost me £ 4. 10 s. I'm not risking sending this home until I can do so by insured parcel post. I had a lovely necklace of 100 beads made for D. out of the same stone as your bangles; it cost me the large sum of 27 s. [...]

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[*In this letter he mentions still needing to prepare his monthly diary for March, but in fact when he finally sent his next one, it was for both March and April. It contains a number of interesting sections that correlate with material in these letters from his 'tour' (see below). His hand-drawn map for the journey up through the mountains described in this letter is Fig. 115 below, p. 283.*]

Sarai Jilga, Kizil Tagh mountains, Yangi Hissar district, 5 April 1923

I am writing this on a rickety little camp table in my tiny 80-lb. tent which, with Doris' more swagger 120-lb. one, is pitched on a grassy field at a height of 10,000 ft., i.e., nearly 6,000 ft. above the hot plains of the Yarkand district from which I wrote last week. On Monday we had an early march of 15 miles through cultivated country to the house of the British Aksakal of Yarkand, a tall fine-looking man of Afghan extraction called Tilla Khan. I didn't get away from Yarkand without some difficulty, however; I talked business with the Amban for an hour & a half (thro' Turki interpreters) at the farewell tea-drinking by the roadside while poor Doris sat by, bored stiff. We galloped most of the way from there to the Aksakal's, arriving about 4. The house is a brand-new one in the Turki style, & our rooms were large, airy & clean, which was nice. The garden was full of apricot blossom. No European had been that way before, we were told.

Next day we headed for the mountains, but it took us two long and wearisome marches over terribly desolate foothills winding among dry watercourses & crossing low passes. On the whole of this stretch there was only water at one place, & that was brackish; this was where we camped on Tuesday night [by] a little stream flowing over a pebbly salt-encrusted bed among high grasses in a wide, desolate valley. What made the scenery more depressing than it would otherwise have been to us accustomed as we are to the scenery of Baluchistan & E. Persia, was the inevitable dust-haze of Ch. Turkestan. It is a positive curse, this haze, which spoils even the finest weather. It kills all colour in a landscape & prevents one appreciating the fine shapes of the hills from any distance. On Tuesday, & again on Wednesday, we could not see even the nearest of the mountains we were making for; we wandered about among the foothills as it were in the dark. Neither Stein nor any other European or Indian surveyor had been along

this route and I got no help from the map – nor was I able to correct the latter as I would otherwise have done, with the help of my plane-table.

At last, on Wednesday afternoon, we crossed a low saddle & found ourselves in the lower reaches of the Chighmen Jilga, a long valley which runs up into the innermost fastnesses of the Kizil Tagh mountains. It was delightful, coming suddenly on a clear ice cold burn & a little mill, buried in willows which were just showing their spring green. D. was exceedingly thirsty, as she had not been able to drink the brackish water of the last camp, & she positively wallowed in the Chighmen stream. We filed steadily up the valley behind our baggage-ponies, passing three or four Kirghiz crofts, each with their rough stone-built homestead, steeply-terraced corn-fields now just begun to be ploughed with the help of water carried along the hill-side in narrow channels, and their thick-furred ta[w]ny dogs guarding the sheep & goats grazing along the river-brink. We stopped to talk at the house of the local Qazi, a thin-bearded, high-cheek-boned typical old Kirghiz who earnestly begged us to pitch our tents on one of his two or three pocket-handkerchief fields & be his 'mihmans' (guests). But it was only 4, & we wanted to get as far up as possible so as to have a really short & restful march next day to the head of the valley, so we packed on another mile and a half, tho' the tiredness of our weaker baggage-ponies reproached us for doing so, & pitched our tents on a nice little meadow surrounded with 'Kumush' (long grass) in a bed of the stream. Here we were well away from 'tamasha-chis,' alone with the mountains & therefore happy. Though nearly 7,000 ft. up & only early April, it was surprisingly warm; yesterday & today too, at 9,000 & 10,000 ft. or over, it has been ever so much warmer than I expected, a pleasant surprise indeed. In my tent now, at 10 P.M. & 10,000 ft., I am quite comfortable with only a dressing gown over my tweed coat & riding-breeches. The temp. outside is 42 only, I doubt if it will even freeze tonight.

Yesterday we did a half march of 8 or 9 miles only, all easy ascent of the valley with only one difficult bit near the end. We camped at 8,800 ft. on a fallow field belonging to some Kirghiz of Suget, which is the name of the westernmost of the branch valleys into which the Chighmen Jilga splits as you go up. There were three cheerful vast-turbaned apple-cheeked Kirghiz ladies at 'Suget Ayaki,' also 4 tiny tots of children whom we surprised toddling down to the still ice-covered stream with blackened copper water-jugs to fill – a pretty sight. [*Fig. 112*] The women came & talked to D. with great delight – one of them turned out to be a Yambulak girl, younger sister of the Ibrahim Beg who entertained us in that delectable glen last July. She



Fig. 112. The Kyrgyz women of 'Suget Auaghi [Aghzi], near the outlet of the Suget Valley, an upper branch of the Chighmen', 5 April 1923 (from the British Library Collection: IOLR Photo 920/1 [169]; after: CCA *1925, facing p. 132). This was an area of 'farming Kyrgyz' as is evident from the ploughed furrows. In the first image, the boy standing with the women is playing with a cardboard film cylinder. The second image shows Doris Skrine entertaining the women with the 'mysteries of powder and puff' so they could 'preen themselves in front of [her] camp mirror'. That is, it is not a picture showing her dispensing medicine, as a caption for the picture in* L'Illustration *indicated.*

had married a son of the Beg of Suget, & had evidently been to see her relations at Yambulak since last July, for she knew all about D. & her works, & was tremendously pleased to meet her. They all three, & 2 small children, crowded into D's tent as soon as it was up, & had sore hands & chapped faces anointed with oil – & not only with oil, for, remembering a treat D. had given the Yambulak ladies, they coyly asked for a powder puff & were soon powdering their noses & preening themselves in front of D.'s glass with much delighted giggling! They're a cheery, jolly lot, the Kirghiz girls, & (what I like about them!) not a bit afraid of men, they talk to me just as cheerfully as to D.!]

Today we struck camp early and crossed two passes, both easy, before getting to this place at 4 o'clock. Today there has been much less dust in the air & the mountains have been clearer & the colours richer, a welcome change. We ate our sandwiches, or rather our bread-and-chikor, in a delightful grassy 'Alp' called Tam Jilga, between the two passes, while the grey-beards of the neighbouring farm-steads came & chatted to us sitting on rocks nearby. I got two delightful photoes in this jilga of Kirghiz ploughing: in one, a pair of ponies & a pair of ordinary bullocks are ploughing on the same field, in the other a magnificent pair of yaks, with vast bushy tails, & great masses of shaggy hair under their tummies, are harnessed to the plough. Tomorrow we have another & higher (but still quite easy, they say) pass [which] has to be crossed & then we will descend out of the 'Red Mountains' into the Karaul valley down which we came last July when we debouched for the first time onto the plains of Central Asia. Tomorrow night we shall be camping at a comparatively low level, but the next day we go high up again for we aren't going back to Kashgar quite yet – we are taking a (we think) well-earned Easter holiday of 10 days in the mountains first. We expect to reach Kashgar not later than the 14th or 15th. As a matter of fact, it's not all holiday, for I have several files & papers with me & am doing some writing work most evenings. I have also the whole of my diary for March to draft before I get back to Kashgar.

Saturday 7th April. We crossed the Sarai Dawan (unsurveyed) this morning without difficulty. I made it 11,500 ft. by my aneroid; there was no snow. It is tremendously steep on both sides & a regular knife edge on top, but our baggage ponies, accustomed to the Karakoram road, regarded it as child's play & came over almost without a stop. Coming down the glen on the N.W. side of the pass D. shot a chikor, a great event, it being her first. She went after the covey up the hill-side shot her bird (running, bien entendu [of course! – *DW*]) & retrieved it all herself – jolly good for a girl. Chikor shooting is one of the most strenuous forms of sport, I know; the birds never stray far from the foot of a steep, often precipitous, hill-side, & at the least sign of danger they make for it and climb. You have to climb as hard as you can after them; as they seldom 'get up' when pursued, unless a shot is fired, one usually takes a long shot at one of the covey running, when the rest generally get up & as often as not fly back over one's head, when one can get a shot in the air with one's left barrel. In the mountains we always try to live by our guns, & this trip we have been very well off for our larder: on the 5th I got 6 chikor, pigeon & 1 hare & D. got 4 pigeon (all with one shot, on the ground!), & today I got 3 more chikor & D. one. These 'jilgas,' above about 8,000 ft., are absolutely hotching with chikor. I never saw so many, even in Baluchistan. As we only shoot for the pot, we packed up our guns on the 6th & sent them with the caravan, & marched resolutely with eyes averted past covey after covey of chikor cackling at us from the hill-sides. The Turkis call chikor 'keklik,' obviously from the sound they make.

At one o'clock today we debouched from a long 'jilga' on to our road of last July, at a place called Kichik Karaul, where there are some pretty farms shaded with tall poplars, & a number of springs of the most delicious water I know outside of Scotland. We lunched there & then marched 7 miles up the Sarikol road to the mouth of the jilga we are in now, the Chumbuz Jilga. It is unexplored, & leads by a

high & rather difficult pass, the Kishmat Dawan, over into the Upper Karatash Valley. No European has ever been over the Kishmat Dawan, which makes us very anxious to do it if we can, & we are thinking of going over on yaks with a portion of our kit next Tuesday & sending the rest on our baggage-ponies via a lower and easier pass to the north, the Ghijak Dawan, which has been surveyed by Stein & crossed several times by Europeans. Tomorrow we halt here, having done 6 consecutive marches since we left Yarkand. D. proposes to spend the day baking scones, doctoring the Kirghiz ladies & children of Chumbuz & sewing. I am going to survey the Chumbuz Jilga with my plane-table in order to be able to fix the exact position & altitude of the Pass on Tuesday. [*Figs. 113, 114*] On Monday we march up this Jilga to the foot of the Kishmat [*alt.*: Kizmak] Pass where there are more Kirghiz; I shall complete the survey of the upper part of the valley then. Once over in the Upper Karatash, we have great hopes of getting down through the mysterious & terrible Karatash Gorges, which you remember baffled us last October when we tried to get up through them. There must be very much less water in the river now, & we are going to have a try, at any rate. If we can't we can get back over the Ghijak Dawan & so to Ighiz Yar, Yangi Hissar and home. As all this geography will be very puzzling for you without a map, p.t.o.



Fig. 113. Women of the Kizmak Jilga, 9 April 1923 (after: GJ *1925a, facing p. 393).*



Fig. 114. Probably the descent from the Kizmak Pass, traversed on 10 April 1923, with Doris riding the yak which was tobogganing down the steep slope through the snow. This photo has been erroneously captioned as the Kepek Pass, but she did not cross it. (From the British Library Collection: IOLR Photo 920/1 [19]).

[*Fig. 115, next page*] Above is a very rough small scale sketch map, showing our present hill tour with each day's camping place. We are at present at '6th,' Chumbuz Aghzi, & the rest is problematical.

Alas, the weather has turned hazy again, & we are desperately afraid it may still be so when we get to the upper Karatash. If it is, it will be sickening luck, for it will be my only chance of getting a sight of the mysterious Shiwakte Mountains & the east face of Kungur, unless by any chance we manage to get up into those parts next summer for our holiday. The difficulty then is the water, of which there is too much in the streams for safe travelling – now that is all right, the snows not yet having commenced to melt. Can't keep the 'yaya' (chaprassi) waiting any longer for my letters, or he'll miss the post at Yangi Hissar, so I must hurriedly close. Next mail you will hear all about our Karatash adventure.

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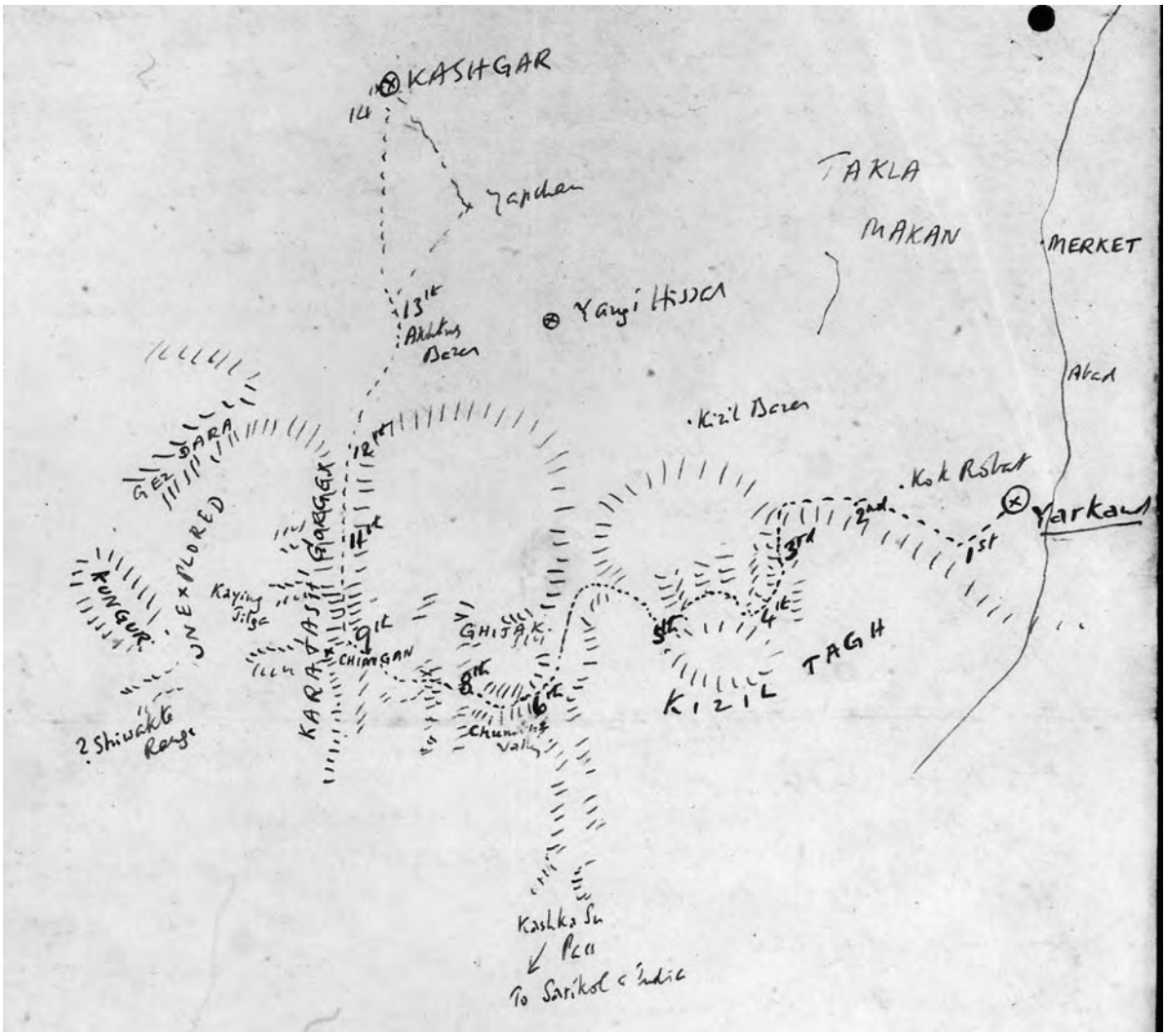


Fig. 115. Skrine's sketch map of their route through the mountains from Yarkand to the Karatash Valley (CPS to HSS, 5 April 1923, from the British Library Collection: IOLR, MSS EurF 154/9).

[*Even though there is some new detail in this letter about Etherton's alleged misdeeds, I have excised most of it. The observation about Doris's 'spy-mania' and suspicions about Harding is curious, given what we have seen of Skrine's own comments on such matters. Since this letter condenses substantially their experience of traversing the Karatash Gorge, I have placed relevant photos further along in his description for the official route book, his correspondence with Stein and in my Appendix 2.*]

Kashgar, 19 April 1923

By yesterday's mail came a telegram dated 29th March from the Gov't. of India as follows: 'Your letter of 25th Sept. Regret we cannot relieve you this year. Will do so in 1924.' So that's that [...] If I could have shown up E. officially earlier, the G. of I. might have had time to find another man to come here next autumn; but tho' in private letters to the Deputy and Assistant Secretaries at Simla I told them all about E., as early as August 1922, I didn't get official orders to report on his financial goings on till November; then, I was on a long tour & couldn't possibly report till my return. I got busy at once when I came back to Kashgar at the end of the year and had the whole very complicated & voluminous report, with 4 Schedules & columns of calculations, off by 18th Jan. – that was the best I could do. Evidently the G. of I., who had not only to correspond with the Accounts people about it but also to consult the Foreign Office at home, didn't decide finally till late in March that E. wasn't coming back here [...]

As you may imagine, I'm torn between opposing feelings – sorrow at not getting home this year & seeing you both which I had been looking forward to so much. I tell you, after 12 ½ years during which I've only had 5 months of Home and you, I'm jolly home-sick, & the thought of having to wait another 16 months, instead of only 7, to see the white cliffs of Dover is at times a most depressing one. At other times, though, I confess that the thought of spending another round of seasons, or at any rate another autumn, winter and spring in this delightful Arcadia of romance at least counterbalances the nostalgia, there is so much to do and see and explore, so much to learn about this vast, remote, ancient land, & much work to do for the Empire at this strategic point in Anglo-Russo-Chinese relations [...]

By the way, if you have reason to address Etherton again in writing or verbally, don't forget that he's not a 'Colonel' but only a Major now. He merely wangled the Lt. Col. out of Gov't. as local rank, & when he loses this job he loses the rank with it. Do you know that he was really only a Captain when he wangled the 'Colonel' as above? He had already wangled a temp[orar]y majority for himself when he was appointed to the Kashgar Mission, which he deserted in order to step into Macartney's comfortable shoes.

[...] [T]here'll be a lot of work connected with the taking over of furniture, fittings, crockery etc. from Etherton [...]



Fig. 116. Wide angle panorama from ridge above Chat, looking SSW to NNE (after: CCA *1925, facing p. 116).*

Alas, I haven't much time left either to acknowledge three lovely letters from you since I last wrote from the mountains, or to describe our subsequent adventures. The latter I must leave till next week, when I hope I shall have some fine and absolutely unique photos to send you [*Figs. 116, 117*]. Suffice it to say now that we discovered and crossed a pass 14,000 ft. high which no European had ever been near before; that we camped for 2 days in snow in the magnificent Upper Karatash Valley above the great gorges, having alternately snow-falls and glorious clear sunny weather; that we were guests at a fashionable Kirghiz wedding [*Fig. 118, next page*] in a glen which is totally inaccessible during 7 months every year, from about 20th April to 20th Nov.; & that we came down through the wonderful and terrible gorges of the Middle Karatash River, where for 10 miles the green glacier-flood roars down between cliffs from seven to ten thousand feet high on both sides!!. Only one European, Stein has ever been through those



Fig. 117. Segment of a different panorama showing the highest peak of Kongur, the photo of the mountain's SE face strikingly clear (reproduced with permission from the Royal Geographical Society [London]; published in Waugh 1999, p. 314). Cf. Fig. 362 below, for a comparison of this image with one taken during a Russian expedition in 2005.



Fig. 118. The Kyrgyz at the wedding feast, Bek Targhak (4 miles below Chat) in upper Karatash R. Valley, 12 April 1923. (after: GJ *1925a, facing p. 393 (photos 1, 3); (photo 2) from the British Library Collection: IOLR Photo 920/1 [164]). Skrine described the event in* CCA *1925, pp. 133-34 ('[…] I had photographed the family party in the aq-oi, as well as the entire assembly outside.'). Date here follows* CCA *account, though letters may suggest the event a day or two earlier. In one of his later lists, he adds regarding the first (lower left) photo: 'A minor Beg (sort of Justice of the Peace and tax-collector combined) in his aq-oi with his family'.*

gorges before; we tried, as you know to go up through them last October, but there was far too much water. This time there was only about half as much as then; even so, we had to cross a river average 40 ft. in width, 2 ½ ft. deep & flowing at 6 miles an hour over rough stones twenty-six times in 2 days. Once it took us two hours to do one mile, the ponies having to be unloaded & reloaded one by one four or five times & the kit manhandled along ledges or among boulders. It was huge fun, & we both enjoyed it thoroughly, though that day we didn't pitch our tents till nearly 8, when it was quite dark, & then it was on a narrow bit of land with mighty dark cliffs on one side & the foaming river & even mightier & darker cliffs on the other! [...]

Very relieved to hear that my letters have been arriving intact, & not open as most of D. have been doing at N[orth] B[erwick]. I agree with your theory of over-fatness being the cause of the opening of D.'s letters, in spite of the implied exiguity of my epistles! I told her so myself from the first, but she would have it that her letters were being opened by spies or censors en route. She's got the spy mania bad, since the War, & sees the hidden hand everywhere. Hence her absurd suspicions about Harding! [...]

***

[*Apparently Skrine sent off in the same mail with the preceding letter a message dated 19 April that then was telegrammed from the Misgar station, and subsequently sent on from Simla to London by telegram on 1 May (citation here is from BL IOLR L/P&S/11/232, 'Reported appointment of Hagelstrom on the Tashkend Trade Delegation at Urumchi 1 May 1923–8 Nov. 1923'):*]

Reports are current that Russians are negotiating a Trade Convention with Governor of Urumchi. Trade on the barter system has actually been opened between here and Ferghana boundary, entrepôt having been officially established at Irkeshtam. As, however, Turkestan cotton crop is likely to be very short this year owing to the failure of Soviet to provide seeds and loans promised, while export of precious metals, jewellery and furs from Turkestan is prohibited, trade is not likely to be heavy. Attempts will probably be made to pay for imports from China in forged Chinese paper currency, large quantities of which have, I am informed, been manufactured in Russia.

***

[*Even though Skrine would express exasperation when the Chinese authorities might refuse to grant permission for foreigners to travel in some border areas, suspicious, as he put it, that they might not simply be exploring or hunting innocently, in fact he and any of the other British officials and officers from India were expected to provide intelligence information about the routes in Xinjiang. The government press in Simla published confidential route books for Central Asia; they were updated at intervals. When Skrine returned to India from Kashgar in 1924, he provided updates for the revision of the route book that covered Xinjiang (General Staff, India 1926). As an example from the book, here are excerpts (pp. 236-240) for the description of the route down the Karatash River Valley, briefly summarized in his letter home. Compared to other entries in the route book, this one is quite detailed and as such offers a good summary of key information Skrine had accumulated from his travel and mapping in the mountains south of Kashgar. For additional information on this route, see Waugh 1999 (which quotes Stein's record from his manuscript description and includes two previously unpublished photos Skrine took) and my Appendix 2.*]



ROUTE No. I. F.

From TARBASHI [Route I(5), stage 1] to KASHGAR *via* the KARATASH VALLEY

132 Miles
8 stages.

Authority. – C. P. Skrine, April 1923.

Epitome. – This route can as a rule only be used in the months of October, November, December and April, and not always then. [*Fig. 119*] In January, February and March, and sometimes also in December and April, the Buramsal Pass is blocked with snow; while between May 1st and September 30th the volume of water in the Karatash is so great that the passage of the gorges between Chat and Khanterek is impossible, even for the local Kirghiz on foot. Mr. Skrine descended the Karatash Valley in 1923 between April 11th and 13th with loaded ponies, and Sir A. Stein did so with the help of local camels at the end of September 1913.

Water. – Plentiful and good throughout.

Fuel. – In small quantities up to stage 4, thereafter plentiful.

Fodder. – Grazing poor during the month in which route is practicable.

Supplies. – Except in Sarikol and between Altunluk and Kashgar, nothing can be had except few sheep and small supplies of milk and eggs from the Kirghiz.

Fig. 119. Map showing the Karatash Valley route from Chat to beyond Khan Terek (overlaid on Google Earth terrain image).

No. of stage and total distance			Details
1	BURAMSAL […]		
17 *m.*			

[…]

3	CHIMGHAN AYAGHI	15 *m.*	The valley below Kizmak gradually
46 *m.*			broadens out and the track is well marked

and easy. The river is crossed 5 times before Chat (m. 8); in the low water season the fords present no difficulty. The Karatash River which comes down with great force from a *nullah* on the left bank is crossed at m. 5 (see Route 5). At Chat there are two stone-built farms belonging to Kirghiz. The Ghijak *nullah* is passed at m. 9 on the right bank. At Bek Targhak m. 12 there is a Kirghiz farm. Below this point the valley contracts and the river has to be crossed four more times (7 since Chat) before Chimgan-ayaghi is reached; these fords can only be used in the low water season. At the halting place (alt. 10,100') the Chimgan river comes in on the left bank. Owing to the snows of Kungur and the Shiwakte this river carries twice as much water as the Karatash, and it, rather than the latter should be regarded as the main stream. The floor of the Chimgan valley is 1 m. wide and nearly flat, with woods of mountain ash and alder. 20 or 30 Kirghiz families live up it and supplies in small quantities may be obtained.

4	KAYING AGHZI	14 *m.*	The whole of this march lies through
60 m.			the Karatash Gorge and is rough and trying for

loaded ponies. [*Fig. 120*] The combined waters of the Chimgan and Karatash are crossed 8 times; none of the fords presents any great difficulty in the low water season, but the river is unfordable at any point in the summer, even by camels. In April 1923 the river at the fords averaged 50' broad and 1'5" deep, with a velocity of 5 m.p.h. The sides of the gorge are from 8 to 10 thousand ft. high and precipitous throughout. The best form of transport is undoubtedly the local camel, which owing to its height can take its load without difficulty among rocks which necessitate the frequent unloading and reloading of ponies. The worst section of the gorge is between Bezillik and Karatumush Aghzi, miles 5-11, where the stream is unfordable even in winter, the track keeping to the right bank and consisting at times of a little more than a ledge on the cliff face. After this it improves, though still very stony, and the river is forded 5 times without much difficulty. [*See above, Fig. 77.*] At Kaying Aghzi there is a Kirghiz bridge which connects the Kaying, Karatumush, Chopkana and Yapchan Jilgas on the left bank (40 families) with the Terek Kichik Jilga on the right bank (60 families).

Supplies. – In limited quantities can be had from these valleys by arrangement with the Beg, 8 miles

Fig. 120. The Karatash Gorge, view downriver and detail showing one of the perilous rafiqs attached to the cliffs in the section above the intersection with the Karatumush stream (photos by DW 1996) and Skrine photo from about a mile below Karatumush looking upstream (reproduced with permission from the Royal Geographical Society [London]); first published by Waugh 1999, p. 316).



up the Kaying Jilga there are considerable woods of deodar and juniper and good pastures used by 8 Kirghiz families.

5	SAMAN	15 m.	For 4 m. the track lies through
75 m.			the Tugene Tar gorge and crosses

the river 5 times. Then the valley widens out and at m. 5 the river is crossed once more, 1 m. above Khan-terek.

[*NOTE. Route I F (b). – From this point a well-marked track leads S.W. up the Chopkana Jilga over the pass of that name at m. 8 (11,500') into the upper Kaying Jilga, which is otherwise inaccessible in the summer months owing to the volume of water in the Tugene Tar. A branch of the same track takes off at m. 6 across the ridges to the W. of the Chopkana Jilga and affords access to the forests and pastures of the Yapchan Jilga, which debouches at Khan-terek by an impassable gorge; thence a very steep track, usable by loaded yaks, leads over a pass (12,000') into the Tigarmansu Jilga, an affluent of the Gez Darya (see Route 5, stage 3).) From the head of the Kaying Jilga (m. 16 from Khanterek) a very difficult pass (15,250') which can only be crossed on foot during the months of August–October leads over to the Chimgan Jilga, see st. 3 above.*

(Route I. F. route continued).

At Khan-terek (Khurgan) there is a Kirghiz bridge connecting farms on both sides of the river. The path keeps to the left bank and a mile lower down rounds an awkward corner of rock just before reaching the mouth of the Achik Jilga. […] At Achik Aghzi the Karatash takes a sharp bend from N.W. to N.E. and from this point to Saman the going is good and the valley wide. At the camping place there are some large trees and a deserted farm house.

Fuel. – Plentiful.

Supplies. – Nil. […]

8	KASHGAR (Old City)	18 m.	The road, which is fit for
132 *m.*			wheeled traffic, traverses

Cultivated lands and crosses several streams by strong wooden bridges. The Walls of Kashgar New City are passed at m. 12. One m. to the N.E., the main Kashgar–Yarkand road is joined at m. 13.

***

[*Due to his travels, Skrine combined the March and April official diaries into one, which in the printed version is indicated as having been sent from Kashgar on 9 March, surely an error for, probably, 9 May. The excerpts here are from the printed copy sent to the India Office in London, BL IOLR L/P&S/10/976, P2712/1923, fols. 201-207. This is a long (more than 10 pages of single-spaced print) report with a great deal of interest. Among other things, it illustrates how Skrine was obtaining his information, short of having secret-service agents on his payroll: his contacts in Yarkand, presumably via ex-Taoyin Chu, were obviously valuable, and he was able to tap into the network of merchants who managed to cross into Kashgaria over the Russian border. How accurate the latters' information may have been is a good question. His predecessor, Etherton, apparently had engaged in the regular publication of news to counter Bolshevik propaganda in Kashgar and claimed to have been responsible in cases where the Chinese actually did something to counter subversion. Here we have one instance of Skrine's issuing a news bulletin (to counter rumors emanating from the Afghan envoy), and a couple of other cases where he provided information to the Chinese authorities in the hope that they would take action. However, he avoids the kind of chest-thumping Etherton tended to do and seems more than ready to admit that prodding the Chinese officials did not always produce the desired result. Skrine's comments on the 'barbarous' treatment of the White General Annenkov reveal his biases and ignorance regarding the activities of Governor Yang in northern Xinjiang.*

The comments on the minute paper (fol. 201) are dated the beginning of August in London, among them several by the now principal annotator, D.T. Monteath, who found Skrine's explorations in the mountains worthy of being reported to the Royal Geographical Society, took note of the incident involving the Swedish Mission and the news about the Afghan Envoy from

Yarkand, and devoted his longest comment to the news about the fate of the Annenkov. Following its now standard format, the opening section of the diary summarizes the movements of the consular officials and need not be quoted here, since the same details and more are in Skrine's letters home. He then includes in his section on 'Chinese officials':]

3. At Khan-terek in the Lower Karatash Valley His Majesty's Consul-General was approached by a deputation of Kirghiz who said they were in imminent danger of a visit from the soldiers of Captain Ma, one of the henchmen of Ma Titai, General Officer Commanding Kashgaria. Apparently a thief who had recently been captured by Captain Ma's men had implicated the Kirghiz of certain neighbouring valleys as receivers of his loot, and had thereby afforded the Chinese an admirable opportunity for blackmail. Two hostages and a considerable sum of money were taken from the Kirghiz of the valleys implicated, with the result that the people of Khan-terek fled in terror to their loftiest *yailaqs* (summer grazing grounds), whence they only came down to petition His Majesty's Consul-General. Needless to say, nothing could be done for them, for the autocratic old General and his minions are bound by no law and brook no interference where Chinese subjects are concerned. The incident is interesting as showing the extent to which the Titai interferes in civil matters and usurps the authority of the District Magistrate.

[*Regarding the Kashgar wireless station, Skrine reported on Dockray's rapid progress and expectation of beginning to function by 20 May. His replacement sent to be in charge of the station, Mr. Casperd, arrived in Urumqi but wrote ahead pessimistically regarding any meaningful support in personnel or funding from the Chinese. Skrine concludes here:*]

[...] Little or no interest is being shown in the new wireless station by the Chinese official world here, while as for the Governor at Urumchi, wireless stations are about the very last things he wants in this province. The local Turki population, of course, regards the new station as a British Government enterprise *pur et simple*.

[*On the ongoing issues regarding British subjects, Skrine lists his several memoranda sent earlier, including one with* 'comments and criticism*' about Harding's recommendations and another,* 'replying to certain points raised by Colonel Etherton [...] in a note dated 20th November 1922 on the subject of his policy as regards registration during the years 1918-1922'. *I copy these below. As Skrine emphasizes and then elaborates with examples, the attention devoted to this issue is essential given the increasingly obstructive Chinese policies. His diary provides details of the murder case he had to take up in Yarkand (see his mention in his letter home) and then offers an interesting follow-up to his earlier report on his dealings with the Magistrate in Goma:*]

9. [...] Reports brought by the Aksakal of Goma, Abdul Karim Khan, a wealthy and respected merchant of Kashmiri parentage who has arrived in Kashgar recently, show that the Magistrate of Goma has recommenced his ill-considered campaign against British subjects. He has been threatening the British subjects of Goma, both Hindu traders and Moslems, with unspecified misfortunes if they do not quickly naturalize themselves as Chinese subjects. He drafted the usual 'affidavits' for British subjects to attest before the Qazi, to the effect that they had no claim to British nationality and had been tutored to apply for registration as British subjects; one of them, Juma Mullah by name, complied, and a copy of his affidavit is in the hands of His Majesty's Consul General. The Magistrate next attacked the Aksakal and his brother, ordering them to naturalize themselves as Chinese subjects on the grounds that they had been resident in Chinese territory for more than five years, and were therefore Chinese subjects!

This behaviour on the part of the Magistrate of Goma, which is obviously inspired by his next-door neighbour the redoubtable Magistrate of Karghalik, is the more regrettable in that last November, when His Majesty's Consul General visited Goma, most friendly relations were established with the

Magistrate and the latter promised not only to be particularly gracious to the Aksakal, but to write privately to His Majesty's Consul General whenever any question of importance came up concerning British subjects [...]

[*After a curious report about a plea for support from a man claiming to be a British subject but born in St. Petersburg and long resident in Mongolia, Skrine then turned to the very interesting news regarding the Swedish Mission with details which supplement the brief treatment of 'The Persecution of 1923' by Hultvall 2019, pt. IV, pp. 34-37:*]

11. *Religious agitation against Swedish Mission*. During the last few months the Swedish Mission, headed by Dr. Gustafsson, has been conducting a proselytizing campaign on evangelical lines which culminated at Easter in an unusual number of conversions. At the same time a proposal to build a new school has been on foot; in various ways, in fact, the Mission has been indulging in a forward policy. As might have been expected, these activities have become obnoxious to the mullahs and mosque-school teachers of Kashgar, who in their turn have had no difficulty in playing on the feeling of the large numbers of ignorant and fanatical country-folk who crowd into Kashgar during the Ramazan fast. On 20th and 21st April monster petitions were presented to the Tao Tai and Wei, Magistrate of Kashgar old city, demanding the stoppage of all the Mission's work, the removal of the Mission[a]ries and the punishment of the new converts according to the Quranic Law. Six of the converts were brought before the Magistrate by the Qazis and Mullahs and were imprisoned. Some of the more fanatical mullahs indulged in the widest talk, and inflammatory sermons were preached on more than one occasion at the *Andijan* Mosque, inciting the mob to attack and destroy the Mission and kill the Christians. There is no doubt that the Chinese authorities were seriously frightened by the agitation: they behaved with weakness and vacillation, thereby fanning the flames. The entire staff of the Mission, Christian and Mussalman, ran away and the hospital, school, printing press, etc., had to be closed. Rumours were spread that the agitators were going in a body to the new city to lay their grievances before Ma Titai, who, being a Mussalman himself, was expected to sympathise with the movement. This increased the panic, for the General, against whom even the Tao Tai is powerless, is a kind of popular bogey and inspires terror by his merest nod.

His Majesty's Consul General did what he could to assist the Missionaries, lending them servants to carry on with and uniformed orderlies to impress the populace, arranging for the mission ladies to come to the Consulate for safety's sake and urging the Tao Tai, both in person and by letter, to take strong measures to put a stop to the agitation. He gave to Tao Tai the names of the mullahs who were inciting the mob to a *jihad* and demanded that they should be suitably dealt with. Nothing, however, was done for some days, and there is little doubt that had the Titai not refused to support the agitation, and had the mob not realized that His Majesty's Consul General was protecting the Mission, there might easily have been a repetition of the anti-Christian riots of thirty years ago, when the newly-opened Mission was attacked and only saved by the timely intervention of the Chinese soldiery.

At last on 30th April the Tao Tai plucked up courage enough to summon the chief merchants and Qazis and tell them plainly that they must put down the agitation at all costs. The matter, he said, had become an 'international one', having been taken up by the British Consul General, and neither he (the Tao Tai) nor they wanted a repetition at Kashgar of the Boxer riots and their unpleasant sequel. Umar Akhun Bai, the *doyen* of the traders of Kashgar, and two of the chief Qazis, Abdul Kasim and Islam Damullah, convened a public meeting at which the Qazis informed the people that they did not approve of the agitation against a Mission which has done such good medical and charitable work for 30 years; that the converts had already been beaten and were still in jail, and that there was no cause

for further agitation. This had the desired effect and up to date (May 5th) conditions have been entirely normal.

The situation now is that the Swedes naturally wish to 'save their face' by resuming all their activities as soon as possible, while the Chinese authorities want them to confine themselves in future to medical work. The Tao Tai, however, refuses to take the responsibility either of ordering them to remain closed for fear of further disturbances or of definitely permitting them to re-open. He is obviously afraid of the Mussalmans on the one hand and of infringing the terms of the Swedish Treaty on the other. His Majesty's Consul General has advised Dr. Gustafsson to keep perfectly quiet and engage in no religious work for some time to come, and in the meantime move the Swedish Minister to obtain a definite pronouncement from the Chinese Government as to what activities the Kashgar Mission may resume and when.

His Majesty's Consul General personally considers it at least arguable that Southern Hsinkiang being a purely Mohammadan country, treaty provisions relating to missionary enterprise which apply to other parts of China should be applicable only in a modified form to Southern Hsinkiang. Converting Mussalmans to Christianity is a very different matter to converting Chinese, and the Chinese Government cannot be expected to regard with equanimity activities on the part of foreigners which may give rise at any moment to serious disturbances among their Mussalman subjects. It may be urged that the mission has been working here for more than thirty years, and the Chinese ought to have thought of this before but the fact remains that the fanaticism of the Mussalmans has been roused now and has to be reckoned with. If the mission had continued on the quiet, cautious lines on which it was conducted in the days of Dr. Raquette and his predecessors, the active fanaticism of the Mussalmans need never have been excited and the Mission would not have experienced this serious, possibly fatal, set-back. For it is to be feared that most of the Mission congregation has melted into thin air, nor is it likely that there will be a single new conversion for many a long day; Kashgari Turkis are not of the stuff of which martyrs are made. The best motto for Missionaries in Muhammadan countries is undoubtedly '*surtout, pas trop de zèle*.'[138]

12. Russian 'White' Refugees. [...] Colonel Savin and two other White officers have at last, after two years' imprisonment in chains, been liberated and sent to the coast. The wife of Colonel Savin was allowed to accompany her husband. General Annenkoff, however, is still in prison and it is reported that he is seriously ill and likely to die there unless released soon. He is said to have taken to opium as a relief from his miseries.

No protest could be too strong against the barbarous behaviour of the Urumchi Government towards these unfortunate officers. They have been punished for no crime but that of taking refuge from the vengeance of the Bolsheviks in the territory of an allied Power – for the Governor appears to forget that General Annenkoff and the other refugees represented a Government which fought on the same side as China in the war.

13. His Majesty's Consul General recently received several letters in Russian from a certain Colonel Tchemagin, a White refugee in confinement at Aksu [*His account of how he got there follows*...] The Magistrate of Aksu assured His Majesty's Vice-Consul that there was no question of surrendering Colonel Tchemagin to the Soviet Government and that he would 'probably' be released shortly. This information has been communicated by His Majesty's Consul General to Colonel Tchemagin, who has also been told that any official interference on his behalf by His Majesty's Consul General would be

138. 'Above all, not too much zeal.'

useless and would merely result in more stringent measures being taken against him [...]

Local affairs.

14. Mongolia. Camel-men arriving in Urumchi from Kweihwa (Shensi) state that the Mongols, at the instigation of the Bolsheviks, have opened several Customs stations and are collecting customs at the rate of 20 per cent. ad valorem. Caravans now make wide detours in order to avoid these stations, joining the main road just below Hami.

[*Then, a follow-up on earlier news about replacement of the oppressive Magistrate in Sarikol.*]

Sino-Afghan Negotiations.

16. [...] While on tour at Yarkand at the end of March His Majesty's Consul General obtained the following information regarding the Independence Day entertainment and other activities of Mohammad Sharif:

(i) The guests on February 28th numbered 380 and consisted of 197 Chinese subjects including all the Chinese and Turki officials; 61 Hindu and Muhammadan Indian traders; 41 Russian subjects and 81 Badakshis.

(ii) Before the Chinese officials arrived, a Persian address was presented by the Afghan subjects to Mohammad Sharif, who replied in the same language as follows; [... *long quote*]

The above speech was mistranslated to ex-Taoyin Chu, no doubt of *malice prepense*, by Tokhta Mullah, the interpreter who went with the Chinese delegation to Kabul last year. Mohammad Sharif was reported by this man as having said not only that the Afghans had attained independence by sacrificing much treasure and countless lives, but that the Muhammadans in other countries could do the same if they wanted to. This caused a considerable flutter in the Chinese dovecot until the matter came to the ears of Mohammad Sharif, who denied having made the statement in question and furnished Mr. Chu with a copy of his speech.

(iii) Another incident which annoyed the Chinese on this occasion was the flying by Mohammad Sharif of the Chinese flag in an inferior position to that of Afghanistan. Ex-Magistrate Liu was sent to remonstrate about this and to inform Mohammad Sharif that none of the Chinese officials would attend the feast unless the position of the flags was reversed. The Afghans complied.

(iv) In order to avoid giving the Afghan Envoy an opportunity for appearing in public and having his stirrups kissed by the populace [...], the Chinese forbade the holding this spring of the famous Jahan Bagh Fair. The '*oghlak*' or '*buzkashi*' game which [...] had been forbidden by the Chinese for similar reasons is now permitted again, but Chinese subjects are not allowed to attend. Mohammad Sharif managed, however, to get in a little publicity work on the last Friday before Ramaza[n], when he attended service at the Charsu Mosque and delivered a short religious harangue to the congregation afterwards [...]

The long-expected letter of authority to Mohammad Sharif from the Afghan Government, which the Chinese had been demanding, arrived on 7th April and was delivered by the Envoy to ex-Taoyin Chu. When translated to the latter it was found to refer to Mohammad Sharif as 'Afghan Consul-General in Chinese Turkistan.' This of course could not be tolerated [...].

Addendum

Note to paragraph 17.

Since the above was written, a report has been received from Yarkand to the effect that on 4th May the

Chinese delegates informed Mohammad Sharif that the Government of Hsinkiang recognised him as Trade Commissioner, not as a Consul General, and had directed the Chinese delegates to conclude a Commercial Agreement with him. They therefore requested him to state the terms upon which the Afghan government were prepared to conclude such an agreement.

In reply to this, Mohammad Sharif insisted that he had been appointed Consul General by his Government and could not negotiate in any other capacity [... *He went on to list his terms, which included residence in Kashgar; none of them were deemed acceptable to the Chinese.*] *Ex*-Taoyin Chu and his colleagues are no Bismarcks or Delcassés,[139] but they have at any rate a firm grasp of the principle that until the Afghans have a treaty with China and a Minister at Peking they can have no Consular officers in Chinese territory.

[*Details on customs duties involved in the negotiations with Afghans*]

20. [...] No evidence of pro-Turkish or anti-British propaganda was discovered by His Majesty's Consul General at Yarkand, and it is quite possible that the leaflets were issued by Ghulam Nabi at Kashgar without the knowledge of his chief. In order to counteract the ill effects of Ghulam Nabi's leaflets, His Majesty's Consul General with the permission of the Taoyin, issued a notice to prospective Haj pilgrims that the rumours of war between Great Britain and Turkey were false, that the road to Mecca was perfectly safe and that the British government assisted pilgrims in every way.

21. Abdul Ghani (Diary for December 1922 paragraph 9) suddenly appeared in Kashgar old city about April 20th, wearing his uniform and a sword. A day or two later he was found by some of Ma Titai's men loitering in the new city and taken before the old General who cross-questioned him as to his identity and business. He at first tried to conceal both, but had finally to admit that he was on the Afghan Envoy's staff. He has been more or less in custody at the Titai's Yamen ever since. It is probable that he came merely to spy out the land on behalf of his chief, who is very anxious to come to Kashgar but is not permitted to do so by the Chinese.

22. The presence of a young Indian, probably one of the *muhajirin* [~emigrant-converts – *DW*], on the staff of the Afghan Mission has been reported to the Government of India by telegram. This person appears to be identical with Ghulam Rasul, mentioned in paragraph 10 of Diary for February as being head clerk on Rs (Kabuli) 3,000 per annum. He keeps very much in the background, and his Majesty's Consul General was unable to obtain a trustworthy description of him at Yarkand until one evening the Mir Munshi, M. Mohammad Nasir, met him in the street. He describes Ghulam Rasul as follows: Age 28; height 5 feet 6 inches; body thin; complexion dark; cheeks hollow; cheek bones high; nose strongly *retroussé* [upturned – *DW*]. He is unmistakeably a Punjabi of Lahore district; wears English clothes with an Afghan cap, and can speak English.

If not a *muhajir*, this person may be one of the batch of students who ran away from the Mission and Medical Colleges at Lahore some ten years ago.

23. Mulla Maqsud Gul [...] Early in March His Majesty's Consul General received information that Maqsud Gul had come to Yarkand from Badakhshan and was hiding at the house of some relations. He informed the Taoyin at once and suggested that a search should be made. Instructions were accordingly sent to the Amban of Yarkand to find and arrest Maqsud Gul, but the Amban's efforts have so far been unsuccessful. His Majesty's Consul General is informed that the Begs and runners are searching with great vigour everywhere except at the house where Maqsud Gul is. The latter has powerful connections

139. References to Otto von Bismarck, the famous Prussian chancellor and foreign minister from 1862 to 1890, and Théophile Delcassé, the French foreign minister between 1898 and 1905.

at Yarkand, apart from the secret support of the Afghan Envoy, and although the Chinese are genuinely anxious to get him, he is probably not in much danger. The Afghan Envoy is reported to be helping Maqsud Gul to collect his debts and to have held hearings of his cases by night at his (the Envoy's) house.

Trans-frontier affairs.

[*No new news from Bokhara beyond that in a separate report sent on 26 April.*]

25. *Fergana* [...] A trader, formerly a Russian subject, named Abdulla Haji arrived from Andijan on 20th April with a small party. These men state that they paid 2,000,000,000 roubles for a permit to travel to Kashgar, but were none the less stopped by Red soldiers near Osh and relieved of all their goods. They report that the Basmachis have it all their own way in Fergana now, the Reds keeping to the towns and a few military posts. This information is confirmed by a messenger who has just (May 7th) brought letters from Andijan for certain White refugees in Kashgar. This man, who crossed the frontier on foot and by night, states that the frontier is almost completely closed by Bolsheviks and Basmachis between them and that the population of Fergana, other than Red officials and troops, Kirghiz in their pay, and Basmachis, are threatened with starvation and are migrating in large numbers to Siberia, Orenburg, etc. The Reds encouraged the cultivation of wheat and cotton by promises of seed, which they have now failed to produce; this, combined with the depredations of the Basmachis, has produced the above result. A letter from Tashkend tells the same story: Commissars and bourgeois business men (now flourishing under the new economic regime) alike rolling in wealth, everyone else suffering the miseries of hunger, cold and disease.

26. *Trade*. The trade arrangements foreshadowed in Kashgar telegram No. 50, dated 3rd May, need not be regarded as involving any general resumption of trade between Kashgaria and Russian Turkistan; all that appears to be happening is that the two chief merchants formerly engaged in the Russo-Kashgarian trade Umar Kahun Bai ('Akhundbaieff') and Bahauddin Bai ('Musabaieff') have 'squared' the Chinese authorities with a view to resuming operations on a monopoly basis. The exports and re-exports from this country of which Bolsheviks are most desperately in need are –

(1) Wool (raw).
(2) Cotton (raw and manufactured).
(3) Gut.
(4) Dyes.
(5) Tea.
(6) Live stock, especially sheep.

Muslins, dues and tea are practically all of Indian origin: the price realized in Tahskend for Indian tea by anyone who is fortunate enough to get any through to that place, works out at Kashgar taels 2 ½ (Rs. 6-12-0) per lb. As regards cotton, a lurid light is thrown on the results of 4 years of Soviet 'rule' in Fergana by the fact that the latter country, which used before the Revolution to export annually an average of 17,000,000 poods (273,000 tons) to the Moscow factories, now cannot produce enough for its own requirements.

That there is little prospect of trade on any considerable scale with Russian Turkistan is due, apart from political considerations, to the fact that Russian Turkistan has few or no exports with which to pay for its imports; Andijan satins and silks are still produced, but in relatively small quantities, and gold, jewellery and furs remain the chief means of payment for such goods as are imported.

Miscellaneous.

27. [...] The Chinese authorities, after much deliberation, refused to issue passports for the Mecca pilgrimage, on the ground that Chinese subjects should stay quietly at home and not spend in foreign countries the wealth they or their ancestors had amassed in China. The unfortunate would-be Hajis, who had sold their property and bought up all the gold (chiefly Russian gold roubles) they could lay hands on at high prices, were obliged to unload their gold at a heavy loss. The price of a gold rouble in Kashgar, which had risen from Taels .75 to .80, slumped to .71. Then the Chinese let it be known quietly that any Mussalman who liked to take out a passport to go to India for *trading* purposes could have one, for a consideration. Accordingly some 97 Turkis, most of whom have never engaged in trade in their lives, have already brought 'trade' passports to His Majesty's Consulate-General to be *visé*, and the gold rouble has again risen to Taels .785. This is a typical instance of the ways of the Chinese bureaucracy in this Province.

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[*Here is the printed copy of the recommendation Harding had made on the British subjects issue, Skrine's response to Harding, and also his commentary on Etherton's November 1922 response (printed above, pp. 144-145) to the controversial passage in Skrine's August 1922 official diary. The copy is from the British Library Collection: IOLR L/P&S/10/949. P2713/1923, fols. 210-215v. In the cover minute paper (fols. 209r,v), D. T. Montheath wrote on 2 August 1923:*

> Mr. Harding's recommendations [...] are very scraping[?] – perhaps not surprisingly so since he starts from the assumption that the 'one outstanding British interest ... is the maintenance of Chinese authority.' We certainly do not wish to see Chinese authority succumb to Russian aggression in any form: but the reformation of policy that he recommends lest Russian Machiavellis find too useful a lesson to be learned from our present policy (which at its worst is only a leaf taken from the Russian book), seems quite uncalled for. Mr. Skrine seems certainly to have the better of the argument, but it may be hoped that the G. of I. will formulate some line which the Consular officers at Kashgar may confidently follow without misgivings, in future. The particular question of protecting Afghan subjects has just been settled in other papers (P2922/23); & it only remains for definite instructions to be issued to the C.-G. on the point.
>
> In his letter 2014 Mr. Skrine seems to have disposed effectively of Col. Etherton's criticism of his remarks animadverting on August on the latter's action, but it seems a pity that this vendetta should be pursued in official papers to the extent that it is.

Whewell 2020, pp. 158-159, discusses a Harding memorandum sent to the British legation in Beijing at the end of October 1922 which we have not seen. She does not comment directly on these later memoranda regarding the British subjects issue which would seem to suggest Skrine's recommendations in many ways coincided with Harding's and, judging from the minute paper comments were judged to be reasonable. Some additional work on this complicated documentation might clarify certain points.]

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... 13 1923.

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No. 13, dated (*viâ* Gilgit) India, the 20th/21st April 1923.

From—C. P. SKRINE, Esq., I.C.S., His Britannic Majesty's Consul-General, Kashgar,

To—His Britannic Majesty's Minister, Peking.

With reference to paragraph 3 of my despatch No. 5 of 15th February 1923, I have the honour to enclose herewith a memorandum prepared by Mr. Vice-Consul Harding on the subject of the policy of this Consulate General regarding exterritoriality, and on certain other matters, together with a note by myself containing my views on Mr. Harding's proposals.

2. On questions relating to China and the Chinese point of view, Mr. Harding speaks with authority, and his views merit the closest consideration. I can claim no previous knowledge whatever on these subjects, my experience being limited to Upper India, Baluchistan and Persia; and it is perhaps natural that while Mr. Harding sees things from the point of view of Anglo-Chinese relations, I should look at them rather from that of British policy in Muhammadan countries. Apart from this, Mr. Harding's Memorandum was compiled by him on his return last month from a tour to Maralbashi, Aksu and Kuchar, at which places he found an extremely unsatisfactory state of affairs; this has caused him to advocate "modifications" of the policy of my predecessors which amount in effect to a reversal of that policy. I have not been to any of the above-mentioned towns; on the other hand, I have visited Yarkand three times, Posgam, Karghalik, Goma and Khotan twice and Keriya once. Mr. Harding is only now about to visit these places, where the enormous majority of the British subjects of this province are to be found, for the first time. My experience is thus different from his, and I have different data to go upon. If, therefore, I criticisie his arguments and dissent from some of his conclusions, I trust that I shall not be regarded as in any way hostile; I am merely doing my best to ensure that both sides of the question are adequately presented to Government.

No. 42. Dated the 21st April 1923.

Endorsed by the Consul General, Kashgar.

Copy of the above despatch with enclosures forwarded to the Secretary to the Government of India in the Foreign and Political Department, Simla, for information.

Enclosure I to Serial No. 36.

Memorandum by Mr. Harding recommending modifications in policy on the part of British Consulate General, Kashgar.

This Memorandum is written on the assumption that the one outstanding British interest in Hsinkiang is the maintenance of Chinese authority in that province. Of very minor importance are the encouragement of the insignificant trade with British India and the assurance of proper protection at the hands of the Chinese authorities for those genuine British subjects in the province who maintain a connection with British India. I propose to deal mainly with our one outstanding interest and the policy which we should follow in order to safeguard it. It appears axiomatic that if our main interest is the maintenance of Chinese authority, we should do nothing to undermine it. It is because the existing system appears to

me one which undermines Chinese authority that I venture to advocate the new policy outlined below.

Persons recognised in Hsinkiang as British subjects consist at the present time of all who, being able to satisfy the Consul General that they or their fathers were born within the present confines of the British dominions, apply to him for registration as British subjects or for assistance. Such persons may be divided into the following classes :—

1. Colonists from Indian territory, being persons who many years ago were encouraged by the Chinese authorities to come and settle in Hsinkiang.
2. The sons of such, born in Hsinkiang.
3. Traders.
4. The sons of such, born in Hsinkiang.

Members of all these classes have in the past acquired land, but vastly the greater proportion of the land owned in the province by British subjects is in the hands of members of classes 1 and 2. Such land-owners are farmers living in small villages, often at a distance of several days' journey from a city where there is a British Aqsaqal or Consular agent ; in a number of instances considerable blocks of country are inhabited by colonies of such British subjects. Members of such colonies are free from all save their own communal control and even individual farmers who are British subjects in practice enjoy a freedom from control which is doubly necessary in view of the low standard of many of the persons concerned ; the local Beg is powerless, the local magistrate is normally afraid to interfere, Heaven is high and the Consulate at Kashgar remote. When a British officer was first established at Kashgar, members of classes 1 and 2 were not considered as British subjects. *Cf.*, instructions issued by Mr. Macartney to the British Aqsaqal at Yarkand on August 2, 1904 :

" . . . . If you are satisfied that (the applicant has never claimed Chinese nationality) you should next satisfy yourself that the man has not really made Chinese Turkistan his domicile. A simple practical test for this purpose is to ascertain whether the applicant proposes to return to India ever, or whether he intends to make Turkistan his home for good. In a word you should see whether his circumstances amount to those of an emigrant or not " :

Again Mr. Macartney issued the following instructions to the British Aqsaqal at Khotan :

" It is possible that a person who, having come from India, was originally a British subject has ceased to be one now . . . . Then again there are others who originally came from British Indian territory and who have now settled down in Kashgaria in such a way as to have made this country their home, they having cut off, for many years, their connection with India and never in all probability intending to return thereto ".

Subsequently the Russan Consul began to sweep into his net large numbers of Turkis who, or whose ancestors, hailed from Russian Turkistan, regardless of whether or not they had abandoned all connection with that region. Mr. Macartney some years ago obtained the authorization of the Indian Government to his following suit, with the result that hundreds of members of classes 1 and 2 received recognition as British subjects.

It should be noted that at the time the Chinese authorities permitted these foreigners to take up land and settle in Chinese territory, they had no inkling that such persons would ever be enabled to remove themselves from the control of the Chinese magistrates and their Turki Begs ; no authority in its senses would throw open its doors to large numbers of foreigners destined to enjoy the rights of a native

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while benefitting by freedom from native control; the hundereds of such persons whom we claim as British subjects had been settled in the country for many years before; with the change of policy noted in the preceding paragraph, they were enabled to obtain British protection, and I believe it would even to-day be possible to find and register hundreds more. Furthermore, great numbers of members of class 2 are ignorant of any language other than Turki or of any conditions other than those which prevail in this Chinese province. They have no experience of the laws, customs or government of India, which is to them in every respect a foreign country save that by a stroke of good fortune they are able to place themselves under the nominal control of an Indian Government authority at Kashgar and thus remove themselves from the control of the local authorities. Again, nearly all the British subjects in class 1 come from Indian frontier regions in which they have never been under British Indian administration; they have either been subjects of States such as Kashmir or Chitral or members of petty hill tribes into whose territory a British officer would, at the time they left it, have had to enter with his life in his hands.

To justify us in giving British protection and the enjoyment of extra-territorial rights to members of classes 1 and 2, it appears to me that overwhelmingly urgent grounds are requisite. It is unnecessary now to go into the question whether such grounds existed at the time the policy of protecting them was initiated; I am confident that they do not exist now. Russian influence and prestige in the portion of Turkistan in which British Indian subjects or interests exist are at the moment *nil*. If and when they return either Russia will be compelled to follow the same policy as we follow or she will annex the province or the south-western portion of it which alone concerns British India;—in which case we shall have failed in maintaining our one outstanding interest in Hsinkiang. By inducing China to improve her methods of Government in Turkistan it may be possible to ward off the day of Russian encroachment; the day is past when the registration of a few hundred British subjects at a Consulate too remote to control them efficiently could appreciably affect the scales in which Russian or Chinese predominance in the province are being weighed.

There remain British subjects of classes 3 and 4. In China Proper almost the only foreign subjects possessing extra-territorial rights who do not live in close proximity to a Consular Officer are missionaries; and these, whatever criticism may be directed against them, are rarely involved in cases which ought to lead to their attendance in court as defendant. Under such circumstances the evil attending the existence of extra-territorial rights is relatively small and is no doubt correctly estimated to be outweighed by the necessity of their maintenance in view of present shortcomings in China's judicial system.

In Hsinkiang, to speak only of places which I have personally visited, we have isolated colonies of British subjects living at places like Aksu and Kuchar, 300 and 500 miles distant respectively from a British Consulate; and individuals who could in some cases show an indisputable claim to British nationality live at numerous other places. At Bai, over 400 miles from the Consulate, is an individual who 18 months ago accepted the jurisdiction of the Consulate, who had since failed to comply with an order then made in respect to him by Mr. Vice Consul Fitzmaurice, but who until my recent visit laid claims to British nationality. (I then informed the magistrate that he was no longer regarded by us as a British subject.) At Toksu, some 20 miles from Kuchar, are six British subjects and at numerous other places are isolated British subjects. In such cases these people are a law unto themselves and their creditors have little or no chance of bringing pressure to bear on them to meet even their admitted debts when they refuse to pay. In theory British subjects throughout Hsinkiang are, it is true, under the control of their Consular authorities at Kashgar. In practice, this control is inefficient and for months on and non-existent. The first visit paid by a Kashgar Consulate officer to Aksu or Kuchar took place 18 months previous to my visit. In a number of cases orders then issued by Mr. Fitzmaurice were found not to have been complied with, and I have little doubt that some of those issued by myself will be similarly ineffective. During the 18 months between the visits of Mr. Fitzmaurice and myself British subjects at Aksu and Kuchar were under no effective control whatsoever.

If all these people were quiet, law abiding people who did their best to meet their debts, there would be little to be said in favour of the abolition of extra-territoriality in their case. Unfortunately, however, this is not the case. Out of the 17 British subjects living at Kuchar, one is a self confessed opium trader and I am convinced that at least three others are or have been interested in the trade, while it is by no means improbable that others are also implicated. Two have been made bankrupt, at least three others not yet bankrupt are not in a position to meet their debts, one is a confirmed opium smoker. At Toksu one of the British subjects is a victim of the hashish craving and in consequence unable to collect or pay his debts; another has been taking advantage of his British nationality to give assistance and protection to Chinese defaulters.

In case it may be suggested that the Aqsaqal or Consular agent has authority enabling him to assist in controlling persons such as the above, it is necessary to mention the following. An Aqsaqal is the go-between in matters which British subjects desire to bring before the Chinese courts and if he refuses, for instance, to take up a bogus claim he becomes a target of abuse for the claimant and very likely for the majority of resident British subjects who take the side of the "under dog". At the same time he gets into the bad books of the Chinese authorities if he presents claims which five minutes enquiry proves to be bogus and also, unjustly no doubt but in view of human nature inevitably, if he constantly brings even just claims against Chinese subjects who are penniless; and a good many claims which actually reach the courts are of this class. At Kuchar six British subjects or ex-British subjects brought charges against the Aqsaqal which were all found to be frivolous. At Aksu one unsuccessful British litigant reviled the Aqsaqal in the couryard of my inn. A consular officer when present may be able to deal with such actions properly but as soon as he leaves the town all vestige of authority leaves the Aqsaqal and he again becomes merely a go-between liable to abuse by British subjects and to dislike by the Chinese authorities. Moreover, Aqsaqals themselves are by no means above reproach. The man who for many years had been been our Aqsaqal at Aksu showed himself on my visit to have been guilty of perjury, blasphemy, embezzlement and committing or knowingly concealing fraudulent alteration of his accounts. Our present Aqsaqal has since my departure dishonestly endeavoured to obtain money from me; and he is the only British subject at Aksu capable of doing the work of Aqsaqal. An ex-Aqsaqal at Kuchar, whom I found it necessary to hand over to Chinese control owing to his refusal to obey orders issued by me, is one of those who, I am convinced, has in the recent past been connected with the opium trade. It is unfair to the local authorities that foreign colonies of this sort, thus free from control by their own or by any other authority, should exist. This unfairness is, I am convinced, the root cause of any difficulties which British subjects may experience in collecting their debts from Chinese subjects over and above those which the latter experience when dealing with one another. In this connection the complaint of the Kuchar Aqsaqal that in a case of assault in which the blame lies with a Chinese subject he does not punish the latter by two or three days imprisonment, as he would in the case of an assault by one Chinese subject on another, may be mentioned. The reason no doubt is that if the blame is with the British subject, he cannot punish or even fine him; witness the case of Mohamed Khan's assault on a Chinese subject at Aksu in which he nearly strangled the victim—all the magistrate did was to "order" him over a year ago to pay the man's medical expenses and this he failed to do.

It should be noted that most of the British subjects at Aksu and Kuchar come or are the sons of people who came from wild regions on the northern and western frontiers of India in which law in the European sense of the word or even "law and order" in the Chinese sense of the term hardly exist. Their children, born in Turkistan, are in some cases law abiding people, in other cases they find it profitable to continue to make their way by bluff and violent demeanour in the same way as their fathers. Half the British subjects at the above two places have been born in this country, are ignorant of the language, laws and customs of any region other than Chinese Turkistan and have no connection with India other than the fact that their fathers were born within its frontiers. At least half the remainder have been born in Bajaur and are liable on occasion to describe themselves as Afghans because they are of the same race and speak the same language as inhabitants of that country, while stoutly maintaining their claim to be regarded as British subjects.

The Aqsaqals at each place I have visited have complained that the local magistrate is prejudiced in favour of Chinese and against British subjects. I have found no trace of such prejudice. In a case brought by a British subject or a Turki against a Chinese there might well be prejudice but British subjects rarely have dealings with Chinese; among a hundred or more Chinese subjects against whom British subjects at places visited by me brought claims there was one case against a Turki-speaking Tungani, not a single one against a Chinese. From the Chinese point of view all Turkis and Mohammedan British subjects are alike mere "turban-heads" (ch'an-t'ou); children to be spoken to severely or humored, as the case may be, but on the whole to be dealt with justly. (The Chinese courts refer matters to the Qazi in the same way as we do, and magistrates and inhabitants, whether Turkis or British subjects, are alike satisfied that in the vastm ajority of cases the Qazi decides justly according to Mahommedan law.)

Were the unfairness to the Chinese authorities caused by our maintenance of extra-territorial righrs under the conditions noted above, the only evil consequence of our action; it might be contended that if the Chinese wished to do away with the unfairness, all they have to do is to reform their administration and that all objection to placing persons with a claim to British protection under their jurisdiction would then be removed. The existence, however, of colonies of British subjects of the kind existing at Aksu and Kuchar acts in a sense directly opposed to the attainment of our one outstanding interest in Chinese Turkistan, *viz.*, them aintenance of Chinese authority. Without attaching undue importance to the case of armed instruction headed by a British subject at Kuchar in 1918, the mere existence at important towns of colonies of foreign subjects requiring strong control but actually under no effective control has a disintegrating effect which cannot but tend to blind the eyes of the provincial authorities to the identity of the British and Chinese "Outstanding interest" in this region.

I venture, therefore, strongly to recommend the following modifications of the policy pursued during recent years by the Consulate General at Kashgar:

A. Withdrawal *in toto* of British protection from class 1 and cancellation of British nationality of class 2. I see no objection to the retention of members of class 1 on the list of British subjects if they, and the Indian Government, think it worth while to do so.

B. Cancellation of British nationality of members of class 4 in all cases in which these are unable to show that they have maintained a connection with India, whether by ability to speak a language spoken within the frontiers of India, visits to India or trade connection with India.

C. The transfer to Chinese judicial control of British subjects of class 3 and of the remaining British subjects of class 4 at Aksu, Kuchar and all places in Hsinkiang, the visitation of which at least once every six months by a Consular officer from Kashgar cannot be guaranteed. In informing the Governor of our decision we should make two conditions:

(1) British subjects at all places at which they have been placed under Chinese judicial control (as elsewhere) must still be free to register at and address petitions to the Consulate General, which shall be at liberty to communicate with the Chinese authorities in any case in which fuller information is desired or in which it is suspected that injustice has been done; all information affecting such case to be then freely imparted to the Consulate.

(2) If the Consulate General requests the production of any British subject whom the local Chinese authority may have punished by imprisonment for more than three months or sentenced to death, such British subject shall be handed over to the Consulate which shall, at the least, deport him to India in perpetuity, no sentence of death to be carried out within three months.

We should at the same time state that these modifications of policy are merely provisional and are liable to be revoked ; a warning which should do much to protect British subjects from unjust or corrupt magistrates or Begs and would, I anticipate, result in the continuation to a large extent, in the case of law-abiding British subjects of the freedom from petty annoyance by yamen underlings which they now enjoy. We should add that the Consul General (or Vice Consul) proposes shortly to visit Urumchi in order to discuss further matters with the provincial authorities. These matters appear to me so secondary in importance that I do not consider they should be made conditions precedent when informing the Governor of our decision to make the above modifications in policy (A, B and C). They are :—

1. elimination of opium smoking magistrates ;
2. the requirement by the provincial authorities that in future magistrates newly appointed to Turki-speaking parts of the province in which reside colonies of British subjects which have been handed over to Chinese judicial control should have a certain acquaintance with the Turki language. (Advantage might be taken of the visit of the Kashgar Consular officer to Urumchi to bring up in conversation other evils of the Chinese administration in Hsinkiang ; *vide* memorandum on that subject enclosed in Kashgar despatch* to Foreign and Political Department No. 110 of October 10th and despatch to Peking No. 42 of the same date.) From observations during my recent tour and previous thereto I am convinced that a Chinese of the old school may be as desirable a magistrate as a man of modern type. If opium-smoking magistrates were removed from office and their place taken by persons of a calibre similar to that of the remaining magistrates with whom I have become acquainted in this province, those whom they govern would have little of which to complain. My reason for including the second desideratum is that in the one case which has come under my observation of a magistrate who has studied Turki for six months the knowledge required, while insufficient to enable him to carry on a conversation, was sufficient to deter any court interpreter who might desire to misinterpret evidence.

Half measures appear to me useless. Merely to hand over colonists to Chinese control would mean that many British subjects of a kind requiring strong control would remain a law unto themselves. To constitute the magistrate's court a court of first instance with an appeal to Consul General and Taoyin would, if the Chinese agreed and if the appeal court did its duty seriously, involve an immense amount of work in petty cases ; work of necessity inefficient owing to the distance of Kashgar from the places where the cases originate. It might be taken for granted that appeals would be lodged in a very great proportion of cases. To hand over only certain of the less law-abiding British subjects would involve insoluble questions as to whether each individual was or was not a law-abiding person. Masses of evidence and witnesses could be produced in either sense in the case of any British subject. If the Consulate decided against a man who happened not to be in the good books of the Aqsaqal, then charges supported by a number of other British subjects would at once be brought to show that the Aqsaqal himself was not a law-abiding person and ought to be handed over to Chinese control. I see no option but to hand over to Chinese judicial control all British subjects living at the places above indicated. As regards Aksu there are, including colonists and their sons, only 8 British subjects ; at Kuchar and Toksu on the same basis there are only 23 persons whose claims to British nationality have been established and four whose claims have not yet been investigated.

A further change of policy which I advocate is the reversion to the principle underlying the following instructions issued by the Resident in Kashmir to Mr. Macartney in 1907 :—

> "Sir F. Younghusband would recommend that you might let the Chinese authorities take their own course with their own subjects and not, therefore, take any exception to their prohibiting the people of Turkistan from borrowing from Shikarpuris*.....I am to add that

Money lenders in this province of British nationality are practically all Hindus from the city of Shikarpur.

you should be as careful in the future as you have been in the past to avoid the appearance of supporting persons who are not legitimate traders but unprincipled usurers who make themselves a pest in the country."

Though Colonel Etherton took a strong line with usurious Shikarpuri moneylenders, the practice of recent years has been not to distinguish between Shikarpuris *qua* moneylenders and *bonâ fide* British traders. After some months experience of conditions in this province, including a visit to Yangi Hissar for the purpose of enquiring jointly with the magistrate into claims by and against British moneylenders, I am satisfied that our good name suffers through association with cases brought with Consular assistance against Chinese subjects by these Shikarpuris; they are in fact "unprincipled usurers who make themselves a pest in the country." Consular support has in the past enabled these people, following in many cases the objectionable practice of lending money without security, to compete with other non-Mussalmans who only lend on security and their methods are oppressive even when within the limits of the law.

I therefore recommend that Chinese authorities and Shikarpuris be informed that as far as the money lending business of thelatter is concerned, Consular assistance will not in future be forthcoming.

As regards Afghan subjects, whatever may be the decision reached by the Indian Government after* consultation with Kabul, it will in fact be impossible for British Consular authorities in Hsinkiang to render assistance to such persons. During my recent tour some half dozen cases were brought by British subjects against Afghans. In one case in which I summoned the defendent under the impression that he was a British subject, he declined to appear. The others were all summoned by the magistrate; in one case, that of a former British Aqsaqal, it was necessary to ask the magistrate to raid his house, seize and hand over to me documents which he had held as Aqsaqal. Afghans, like British subjects, must be under the control of some authority. It is impossible to have a man summoned in the Magistrate's court on one day and then give him Consular protection on the next. Even at the time when by Treaty with Afghanistan we undertook the protection of Afghan subjects abroad we had no Treaty with China permitting us to do so and it was only owing to Chinese ignorance that we were long able to protect them; now that our Treaty relations with Afghanistan are on a different basis, as is well known to all Chinese authorities in Hsinkiang, it will be futile to ask the Chinese authorities to recognize such a right.

I therefore recommend that these circumstances be reported to the Indian Government with a view to their informing the Kabul authorities that we find it in practice impossible to accord protection to Afghans in Hsinkiang.

I consider it urgent that the modifications recommended above be carried out at the earliest possible moment.

H. I. HARDING,

His Majesty's Vice Consul, holding rank of Second Secretary, British Legation, Peking.

KASHGAR; *16th March 1923.*

Enclosure to Serial No. (36).

Notes on preceding Memorandum.

1. Mr. Harding's contentions and proposals may be summed up briefly as follows. The one outstanding British interest in this province, he says, is the maintenance of Chinese authority. This Consulate General has in the past claimed too great a measure of exterritoriality and has registered too many British subjects. Many of these British subjects are uncontrolled and uncontrollable, owing to the distance at which they live from Kashgar and the untrustworthiness of some of our Aqsaqals. The resulting state of affairs has tended to militate against the above-mentioned one outstanding British interest. We should therefore denationalize

* *Vide* telegram from Foreign and Political Department to His Majesty's Consul-General, Kashgar, of October 20th, 1922. (File No. 191-F.)

large classes of the persons recognized by us in the past as British subjects, and also surrender exterritorial rights over considerable sections of Southern Hsinkiang which we have hitherto regarded as within our effective sphere.

2. Mr. Harding's basic hypothesis, that in comparison with our interest in the maintenance of Chinese authority the individual interests of British subjects and our trade with the province fade to insignificance, is a somewhat dangerous one. This argument, pushed to its logical conclusion, could be used to support almost any sacrifice or surrender. It would, for example, enormously strengthen the position of the Chinese in this province and add to their prestige if the British Consul General attended daily at the Yamen and kow-towed before the Taotai; but this does not necessarily mean that he ought to do so. It is as a matter of fact a moot point whether anything this Consulate General does will ever have any appreciable effect upon China's chance of retaining this province; Mr. Harding himself points this out on page 4 of his Memorandum. A representative of the Government of India, therefore, may be forgiven for regarding the definite and tangible interests of British Indians in Hsinkiang and of Indian trade with this province as of more account than any problematic bolstering up of Chinese prestige.

3. Passing on to the questions of exterritoriality and registration, I admit at once that the policy of this Consulate-General in the past has not been unexceptionable. I have already dealt with this subject at some length in paragraph 4 of the Memorandum forwarded with my despatch No. 5 of 15th February 1923 and in my despatch No. 14 of to-day's date. But the mere fact that mistakes were made and Aqsaqals insufficiently kept in order does not mean that the policy of registering persons who were legally British subjects, and of claiming exterritorial jurisdiction over them, was radically wrong. The policy of Sir George Macartney in his early days, abandoned later by him but commended by Mr. Harding on page 2 of his Memorandum, is a distinctly questionable one; it is a surprising interpretation of the British nationality law that British subjects who domicile themselves in foreign countries automatically lose their British nationality. I maintain that in 1912—18, when British interests demanded it, the British Government acting through Sir George Macartney, had a perfect right to register as many persons with legal claims to British nationality as it could find; and what is more, the Chinese authorities expressly admitted that right and jointly registered the persons in question with Sir George Macartney. British interests no longer demand such a policy of expansion; as I have indicated elsewhere, it ought to have been abandoned long before it was, and I am as opposed as Mr. Harding is to any further registration of persons who speak no language but Turki and have severed all connection with India. But that does not mean that the reverse policy of what the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs recently described as "universal skedaddle," should be initiated now. There is no need whatever to break our faith with the British subjects or registered in those years, by depriving them willy-nilly of their British nationality and thus handing them over to the mercies of vindictive and triumphant Yamen Begs.

Minor points which may be noticed in Mr. Harding's memorandum are (1) his argument (page 3) that the Chinese would not have allowed the persons in question to settle in their country if they had known that the latter would one day be enabled to remove themselves from the control of the Chinese Magistrates and their Begs; (2) his statement (page 4) that if and when the Russians return to this province they will either be compelled to pass upon themselves the same self-denying ordnance as Mr. Harding proposes we should pass upon ourselves, or will annex this province. In reply to (1) I may mention that many of the immigrants in question came during the time of the rebel "King," Yakub Beg "Badaulat", when the Chinese had no say in the matter at all; in any case, theorising about what the Chinese would or would not have done had things been otherwise is besides the point, because they subsequently accepted the very position which Mr. Harding says they would never have agreed to. As regards (2), Mr. Harding's alternatives are not by any means exhaustive; in my humble opinion it is much more likely that the Bolsheviks will copy their predecessors' policy of penetrating the province by underhand means, so as to be able both to exploit it commercially and to use it as a base for intrigue against India, without incurring the odium of openly annexing

it. In any case because the Russians have, perhaps only temporarily, lost the position they had improperly acquired, it does not follow that we should throw away the privileges openly and fairly won from the Chinese by Sir George Macartney after many years of devoted work.

4. Turning to the present state of affairs as regards British subjects, I may say that my experience of the southern towns of Kashgaria, where the large majority of the British subjects of this province reside, differs widely from Mr. Harding's at Aksu and Kuchar. I have twice spent several days at a time in Karghalik district, and only month ago I was staying in a neighbourihood 15 miles from Yarkand where several families of British subjects reside; and I have found nothing that could reasonably be called a "colony" of British subjects living "free from all save their own communal control." In Yarkand and Karghalik, where most of the "colonists" live, the latter certainly have no headmen or communal organization of any kind; they pay revenue and taxes through the Chinese revenue-collecting machinery just as their neighbours do and so far from the local Begs being powerless and the Magistrate afraid to interfere, the very reverse is the case; witness the various proceedings described in paragraph 3 of my Memorandum on registration above referred to, and my predecessor's frequent complaints against Liu, Magistrate of Yarkand. The state of affairs described by Mr. Harding at Aksu and Kuchar is most regrettable, but it seems to me that the way to deal with it is not to "skedaddle" from those places, but to visit them more frequently, and on the one hand to exercise stricter control over the British subjects there, on the other effectively to support the Aqsaqals in the exercise of their duties. The same applies to Khotan, Keriya and others of the more remote portions of Southern Hsinkiang where there are British subjects.

I do not agree with Mr. Harding (page 10) that there are any such places "the visitation of which at least once every six months by a Consular officer from Kashgar cannot be guaranteed." The Government of India pay Rs. 200 per month fixed travelling allowance to the Consul-General and Rs. 175 to the Vice-Consul; and they have a right to expect that each of these officers should tour at least once a year as far as Kuchar in one direction and Keriya in the other. If the Consular officers at Kashgar take a proper interest in their work, there should be no difficulty whatever in preventing the actual or potential abuses indicated by Mr. Harding.

5. Mr. Harding's recommendation "C" (page 10) does not therefore commend itself to me. Turning to his recommendations "A" and "B", with all due respect to their author's ability and his intimate knowledge of China and the Chinese, I do not think that these proposals will work in practice. They are in effect (1) that we should withdraw British protection *in toto* from "colonists" who themselves came from India, (2) that we should cancel the British nationality of all permanently-domiciled persons whose fathers, whether colonists or traders, came from India. Neither of these proposals appears to me practicable, chiefly because the Chinese and (what is more important) the Begs and village headmen who are the real rulers of the country are totally ignorant of international theory and practice regarding national status, and would be incapable of distinguishing between British subjects who were under the protection of the British Consulate-General and those who were not. They invariably talk of the British "giving" so-and-so to the Chinese or *vice versâ*, and if we informed them that we were handing over to them jurisdiction over certain persons hitherto claimed by us as British subjects, the Chinese would at once say "Then you admit them to be Chinese subjects?" Whenever there has been any question of allowing a Magistrate to exercise jurisdiction over a British subject, this question has always been put to me by the Magistrate concerned. More particularly, the Chinese and their Begs have never yet quite comprehended the fact that we only claim immigrants and their sons, not their grandsons. To illustrate the local ideas on this subject, I may mention a case of parricide which occurred near Yarkand last month. The murdered father having been a British subject, the case was brought to me at Merket where I happened to be on tour at the time. On examination of the murderer I discovered that his father had been a 2nd generation British subject, which meant that he himself was a 3rd generation man and a Chinese subject. I immediately sent the accused and witnesses to the Magistrate of Yarkand, whom I afterwards told personally that as the accused was a 3rd generation man, I claimed no jurisdiction over him. The Magistrate was obviously

puzzled and incredulous and asked me several times whether I was quite sure that I disclaimed jurisdiction. A few days later I happened in the course of my tour to spend a night close to the scene of the murder. I discovered there that my "giving" the murderer to the Chinese has caused great elation to everyone, from the Magistrate down to the village priest, and that the Beg of the neighbourhood was engaged in on the strength of it collecting compulsory affidavits from the villagers to the effect that the deceased's ancestors had lived and died on Chinese soil, with a view to securing as Chinese subjects all the surviving relations of the murdered man, including his brother! Moreover, explicitly to relinquish jurisdiction over any particular class or classes of persons, and *à fortiori* to cancel their registration altogether, would certainly be regarded by the Chinese and their Begs as tantamount to an admission, not only that those persons are Chinese subjects now, but that they have always been Chinese subjects.

The one idea of the Chinese is to prove as many British subjects as possible to have "falsely assumed British nationality," and we may take it as a certainty that any person we "give" to them will be at once advertised as evidence that this Consulate-General has been in the habit of registering fraudulent British subjects in the past. It is bad enough that there already are certain registered persons, the falsity of whose claims to British nationality we have been or will be obliged by sincerity and fairness to admit to the Chinese; all the more reason not to "give" to the Chinese British subjects whose claims were genuine, thereby putting ourselves (from the Chinese point of view) infinitely more in the wrong than we are already. For similar reasons, I doubt whether the safeguards proposed by Mr. Harding would work in practice and whether it would be possible to make his "modifications of policy" provisional. Once the Chinese succeeded in taking away from us a large measure of our exterritorial privilege, they would hold on to it like grim death; far from agreeing to "give us back" our subjects, they would utilize the advantages gained as levers to obtain further concessions. This process is already going on over the questions of land-tenure and taxation, *vide* my despatch No. 7 of February 21st, 1923.

6. In conclusion, I would urge that the need for drastic changes in our policy is not at all so urgent as the concluding words of Mr. Harding's Memorandum indicate. Conditions are already changing quickly enough without our needing to accelerate the change. Many colonists have in point of fact assumed Chinese nationality, a course in which they have the blessing of this Consulate General. If in individual cases we uphold the law of the land against the British colonists who offend against it, and if we honestly entertain and enforce debt and other civil claims against British subjects, this policy will operate in the same way as a recent important alteration in conditions, namely, the abolition of British subjects' exemption from trade taxation; "colonists" will find less and less material advantage in steadily adhering to their British nationality, and their number will decrease. Add to this that the colonists and their sons who remain British subjects are gradually dying off and are not being replaced by new immigrants, and the need for the "skedaddle" policy recommended by Mr. Harding becomes less and less apparent.

7. As regards the Shikarpuri money-lenders dealt with by Mr. Harding on pages 12-13 of his memorandum, I am inclined to agree with him that it would be better if all official countenance were taken away from their purely money-lending transactions. To do this would as a matter of fact be no more than making a virtue of necessity, for in practice it is almost impossible to induce the Chinese to enforce decrees in money-lending cases.

8. My views on the subject of the protection of Afghans are given in paragraphs 4 (*c*) and 5 (*c*) of my Memorandum of February 15th, 1923. Mr. Harding on pages 13-14 of the enclosed Memorandum goes further than I did there and states definitely that it is impossible for us under present conditions to protect Afghans, and that it would be futile to ask the Chinese authorities to recognise our right to do so. Recent experience inclines me to agree with him on both these points; but in view of the negotiations at present proceeding at Yarkand between the Chinese and the Afghan Governments, as a result of which a permanent Afghan representative of

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some kind capable of looking after the interests of Afghan subjects is almost certain to be established in Hsinkiang, it is probable that the question will before long become one of purely academic interest.

C. P. SKRINE,
His Britannic Majesty's Consul-General.

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(37)

No. 14, dated (*vid* Gilgit) India, the 21st April 1923.

From—C. P. SKRINE, Esq., I.C.S., His Britannic Majesty's Consul-General,

To—H's Britannic Majesty's Minister, Peking.

I have the honour to acknowledge receipt of your docket No. 2 (330-23) of 14th January 1923, forwarding copies of Foreign Office despatch No. 878 of 24th November 1922 and Colonel Etherton's note, dated the 20th November 1922, on the subject of the registration of British subjects in this province. As the accuracy of certain statements in paragraph 7 of my diary for August 1922 is called in question, I trust that I may be excused if I reply briefly to the points raised in Colonel Etherton's note.

2. The gist of Colonel Etherton's remarks is that the paragraph of my diary in question gives the impression that in August 1922, this Consulate General's reversion to a conciliatory policy as regards registration was of very recent date, whereas in point of fact the changed policy had been in vogue for several years past.

3. In support of this contention Colonel Etherton first refers to the correspondence between himself and His Majesty's Minister, Peking, in which it was decided that only persons with well-established claims should be registered, etc. This correspondence is the same as that referred to in the paragraph of my diary in question; it took place only in the spring and summer of 1922, the decision referred to being conveyed in your telegram No. 16 of 31st July 1922. I had that telegram in front of me when I wrote the paragraph in question, and I naturally concluded from it that the policy of this Consulate General had been different in the past and was now being changed under instructions from His Majesty's Legation.

4. To prove that this was not the case, Colonel Etherton states that "Aqsaqals were circulated (*sic.*) in 1920 and 1921, and Afghans were excluded." I have thoroughly searched the records of this office for any circular or individual orders to Aqsaqals in 1920 or 1921 warning them in any way to be careful about registration or directing them to exclude Afghans; I have found none, and my Head Clerk is certain that none were issued. Colonel Etherton's policy may have been, as he says, to refuse registration certificates to doubtful applicants, but he certainly did not make this policy clear to Aqsaqals. The first, and last, indication of it is in a circular of January 1922 in which Aqsaqals are told, without any particular emphasis, to send in the names of "genuine British subjects only" nothing said about Afghans, whom last autumn I found the Aqsaqals in question still regarding as "genuine British subjects".

5. If the Aqsaqals chiefly concerned, namely those of Yarkand, Karghalik and Khotan, had understood the Consul General's policy, they would scarcely have acted as they did in the spring of 1922; they would not, that is to say, have sent in several hundreds of names of unregistered persons whose claims turned out to be entirely unfounded. Moreover, at least one circular that they did receive, that forwarding for publication extracts from the China (Kashgar) Order in Council 1920, appeared to Aqsaqals to encourage them in their efforts to collect British subjects. The provocative nature of this circular was commented on in your telegram No. 16 quoted above. The Aqsaqals (as one of them himself told me

regarded the joint registration fiascos of 1920 (referred to in Colonel Etherton's despatch* No. 45 of the 1st December 1920) as a signal defeat for the British Consulate General ; when in the autumn of 1921 they received the above-mentioned circular, they hailed with joy the strong line the Consul General appeared to be taking and interpreted the instructions to mean that the latter intended to register as many persons as he liked without reference to the Chinese authorities. In February 1922, the Aqsaqal of Yarkand sent in over 200 new names of alleged applicants for registration, while the Aqsaqal of Khotan falsified the wording of the proclamation and secured applications for registration from all the persons who had been rejected by Mr. Fitzmaurice in 1920. The action of the Aqsaqal of Karghalik was even more striking ; he sent in a list of over 300 names, against many of which he himself wrote " 3rd generation ", " Afghan " and so on. He further brought to Yarkand in April, when Colonel Etherton was there, a large number of new " British subjects " to make their applications in person ; Colonel Etherton did not register them, but he interviewed them all and gave them application forms to fill up. All this of course became known to the Chinese authorities of the districts concerned, and through them to the Governor. Taken together with the proclamation of the Order in Council (certain unfortunate mistranslations in which are described in paragraph 3 of my Memorandum† of February 15, 1923), the actions of these Aqsaqals and the British Consul General were construed by the Chinese as a renewal of the registration campaign ; they accordingly retaliated, with the results described in my Memorandum just quoted.

6. Colonel Etherton's statement that the registration of Afghans by this Consulate General in the past was in accordance with instructions received from the Government of India is correct. My views on this subject are contained in paragraphs 4 (*c*) and 5 (*c*) of my Memorandum of February 15th. I submit that in view of the fact that the names of 225 persons expressly described as Afghans appear in our register of British subjects, the remarks in my diary for August 1922, about the " flooding of the register with numbers of persons with but the flimsiest claims to British nationality " were strictly true. At the time of writing I was not aware of the endorsement by the Government of India in 1912 of the policy of registering Afghans. Even if I had been aware of this fact, I would probably not have written otherwise.

7. Finally, I am afraid that the statement made in the last paragraph of Colonel Etherton's note is somewhat rash. The Chinese have since Colonel Etherton's departure pointed to several cases in which they allege that registration certificates were issued by the British Consul General to Chinese subjects. In most cases these allegations have been demonstrably false, but in a few it has been necessary to cancel the certificates for total lack of verification. I myself found a registered " British subject " at Khotan who was the son of a *yaya* (runner) of the Magistrate's yamen, and Mr. Harding discovered a similar case at Kuchar during his recent tour.

8. In conclusion, I can only express my regret at the embarrassment which has been caused to His Majesty's Legation by the above-indicated mistakes of policy on the part of this Consulate General, and trust that the frank and conciliatory policy adopted by the Vice Consul and myself towards the Chinese authorities in these matters will in course of time lead to a better understanding. In particular, the virtual return (under safeguards) to the joint registration system recommended by me in my Memorandum† of February 15th, will, I think, if adopted, pave the way at least to a *modus vivendi* on this thorny subject.

No. 43, dated the 21st April 1923.

Endorsed by His Britannic Majesty's Consul General, Kashgar.

Copy of the above forwarded to the Secretary to the Government of India in the Foreign and Political Department, Simla, for information.

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* Not traced.

G. M. P. S.— MC216FD—27-6-23—6—K.C.M.

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[*Skrine's next letter to his mother, echoing the information in his official diary regarding the Mission crisis, and interesting in retrospect, given what has happened in Afghanistan since, regarding his father's optimistic projection about that country's future.*]

Kashgar, 3 May 1923

The Mission crisis has blown over and the missionaries are sadder and (I trust) wiser men. I sincerely hope they will have the sense not to try and do any more proselytizing or new school building while we're here at any rate. Now the people are quiet, of course. Gustafsson is full of buck & ready to fight any body; a week ago he wanted to come round and take refuge along with the Mission ladies at this place.[140] The Chinese behaved with inexcusable weakness and vacillation at first; they first imprisoned the converts, then let them go again, then rearrested them, then handed them over to the Qazis to be publicly flogged according to Muhammedan law – similarly they first peremptorily ordered Gustafsson (verbally) to stop all the Mission work, then 3 days later sent another verbal message to say that all was well and the Mission could start all their work again, then denied having given any such permission, the denied having given the first order, & so on. I did my best to stiffen the Tao Tai, alternately frightening him by dark hints of foreign intervention if there were any disturbances, & flattering him by telling him how well he had managed the Qazis & prevented any disturbances – so far. I don't know whether my efforts really had any effect; no doubt the mere fact that the British Consul General was protecting the missionaries and consulting daily with the Chinese authorities made the Mullahs think a bit; anyhow last Sunday, after a week of excitement, the chief local merchant & two or three leading Qazis after an interview with the Tao Tai collected all the mullahs and school-masters & students (they're always the most fanatical) at the 'Idgāh[141] [*Fig. 121*] and harangued them, telling them that the agitation must cease, & it has ceased. So long as the missionaries keep quiet, there's not the slightest danger to anyone; all their new converts and most of their old ones too have gone back to Islam – your Turki is not of the stuff of which martyrs are made – & the entire work of the Mission is stopped, & there is nothing to annoy the fanatics. The mission ladies are leaving the



Fig. 121. Skrine's photo taken at the time of the Qurban festival shows the packed central market square in front of the Id Kah mosque in Kashgar (after: L'Illustration*, 16 October 1926, No. 4363, p. [420]). An almost identical picture is in the collection of photos taken by the Swedish missionary John Törnquist in the Etnogafiska Museet (Stockholm), no. 0036.0001.*

140. It is possible that the photo of the missionaries at the consulate (Fig. 60 above) was taken when the missionary women were staying there for their safety after the rioting in Yarkand.

141. The main, congregational mosque in the center of old Kashgar.

Consulate to return to their own quarters tomorrow.

Dr. Gustafsson & the others have had a fright and a set back; they have only themselves to thank. They undertook a regular evangelical and proselytizing campaign about Easter – just before Ramazan! Can you imagine anything more idiotic! Gustafsson hasn't the judgment & steadiness that the last head of the Mission, Dr. Raquette, had. The latter realized that the motto of a Mission in a Muhammadan country sh[oul]d be 'surtout, pas trop de zêle' – open zeal, anyway. Missionaries can be as zealous as they like so long as they keep quiet about it.

Yours of 15th March just in (good going!) is mainly about Iris and Bunbury [...] If only her mother had let her marry that nice young American! all this would have been saved.

I was much interested to see in 'Reuter' that Father had been lecturing at King's College about the Central Asian situation. I think his suggestion that the reorganized Afghan State may become a nucleus of an Asiatic Empire is a distinctly likely one. With the British out of India, as we shall be within 10 years at the present rate, especially if a Labour Government gets in at home, there is nothing to prevent the Afghans coming to an understanding with the Bolsheviks and partitioning Asia; Afghanistan relinquishing her claims to Russian & Chinese Turkestan in return for a free hand in the absorption of East Persia, Baluchistan, Sind, Kashmir and possibly the whole of Upper India. As soon as I have time I am going to write a brief confidential résumé of the situation for Father; being in touch through my agents with Semirechia, Ferghana, Bokhara, the Pamirs & the Afghan border & in receipt of all the latest news from the Indian intelligence people, I know a good deal about it. Interesting about Montague's lecture on N. Persia in 1918. He must have been with 'Dunsterforce'[142] & have known many men I know [...]

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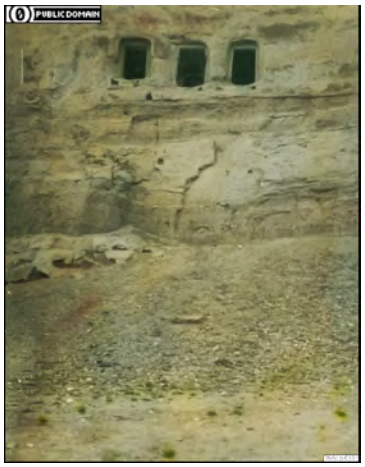


*Fig. 122. The 'Three Windows', the openings into the Buddhist caves on the cliff some miles north of Kashgar. Photo by John Törnquist (Public domain, Image no. 0964.b.0131 https://collections.smvk.se/ carlotta-em/web/*object/25422514).

Uch Merwan ('The Three Windows'), 5 May 1923

Our address sounds rather like a pub, but as a matter of fact it isn't. We are spending the week-end at a little place about 8 miles from Kashgar to the north-west, in the valley of a river which comes down from the Tien Shan, just over the horizon of two of the pictures I am sending you this week taken from the Consulate. The river, which is of a rich chocolate colour not crystal-clear like the Karatash and its tributaries, flows under perpendicular cliffs of clay about 200 feet high on one side and open stony 'sai' (gravel desert) on the other. There are two or three lovely little oases of greenery, a mill buried among tall poplars, a farm with tiny fields of young corn & willow-plantations nestling under the cliff, a wayside shrine and a tiny shop in an orchard carpeted with wild irises. Our tents are under mulberry-trees on a strip of land between the shallow brown river and the great cliff. The 'Three Windows' are half a mile below us, where the cliff is lower, about 100 ft. perhaps. [*Fig. 122*] They are carved out of the clay half way up the perpendicular (slightly overhanging in fact) face of the cliff, side by side, and lead I believe to an ancient Buddhist

142. The reference is to the undermanned and largely unsuccessful British military force under General Lionel Dunsterville, which operated for less than a year in northern Iran and the southern Caucasus from the end of 1917 to September 1918. Its goal had been to organize local resistance to the Ottoman Turks.

temple with frescoes. Stein has not been inside this temple, but mentions it in 'Serindia' and says that a German savant once got into it with help of a Russian sailor who rigged up ladders for him, and wrote an account (the German, not the sailor) of the temple & frescoes in a German archaeological journal.[143] Stein had no time for ancient sites that someone else had discovered before, so he passed it by. I am very anxious to get into the place and take photos of the frescoes, by flash-light if necessary, and when Dockray has finished work on the wireless station (which is only 4 m. from here, on the road from Kashgar) he is going to put his steeple-jack crowd (who, being accustomed to wireless masts 300 ft. high think nothing of a 100-ft. cliff) on to getting us into the place. That won't be for another 2 or 3 weeks tho'.

We are only spending 2 nights here, as I have got to be back in Kashgar for one of those awful Chinese banquets, at 3 o'clock in the afternoon of all dreadful times. The Tao Tai is giving it; Gustafsson & Hermansson have been asked, as well as all the Russians, so I fancy it is intended as a kind of celebration of the safe deliverment of the Mission from the recent danger. The agitation by the way is really past, & Chinese authorities & Mussalman leaders alike are trying to make out that it was a much smaller & less important affair than it really was. In point of fact, two things alone prevented serious riots in which lives might have been lost & property destroyed: the first was the non-intervention of the Titai whom the agitators expected to sympathize with them as being himself a Muhammadan; the 2nd was the fact that I conferred daily with the Chinese, lent the Mission uniformed orderlies & servants & took the ladies in at the Consulate – this impressed the mob, undoubtedly, & made them think twice before doing anything rash.

Dockray has been working tremendously hard & has put up his station with incredible rapidity. The most ticklish part of the work, the erection of the 3 towers made of steel girders, each 305 ft. high, took exactly 1 month, including 6 days during which work was impossible owing to wind. He gets up at 4:30 A.M. every day & works practically without a break till nearly dark. He's one of those men who are always trying to break their own records and do a thing this time faster than ever before. He once put up a wireless station, towers machinery buildings and everything, in Somaliland of all inhospitable parts of the world, in 28 days!! That was with Indian troops to help him, though. Here he has a nucleus of Chinese skilled workmen & all the rest ordinary Turki artisans and day-labourers.

Dockr[a]y now expects to be through by the end of May, tests and everything, & intends to go down the road early in June. At my request, Lorimer has given him permission to travel via Gilgit, which is a great thing for him. He is going back to Peking after this, after 2 years in the wilds during which time he hasn't seen a train and only one motor; the Marconi Co. have paid him a great compliment by appointing him their agent for all China, a 'step' he never expected. He hopes to be home in England after a year or two, so I hope will see him in town. You would like to meet him – he certainly fulfils Father's requirements of a man who 'does things'. Few men of his age can boast that they have erected wireless stations in Patagonia, Portugal, Mongolia, Somaliland, Chinese Turkestan, Chile and Heaven knows where else!

After a glorious week of bracing cool winds, pellucid atmosphere, bright sun and picturesque cloud-effects the weather has settled down again into the good old Kashgarian haze. This is a pity, for we

143. Stein 1921, Vol. 1, p. 82 and fig. 30. Skrine's memory here is somewhat faulty, as Stein indicates that the caves were first visited apparently by Russian Cossacks (probably under the orders from the Russian consul Petrovskii?) and then subsequently by the German expedition of Grünwedel and von le Coq. There is no mention of a Russian sailor helping the Germans. I have not checked to see what is in the Germans' published reports. Skrine never managed to get up into the caves as he had hoped.

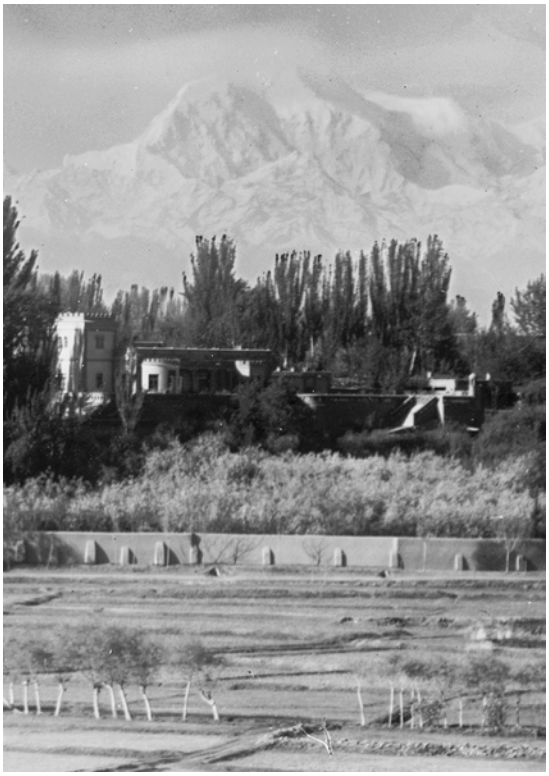


Fig. 123. A portion of one of Skrine's panoramas which indeed captured the snowy mass of Kongur directly behind the British consulate (reproduced with permission from the Royal Geographical Society [London], no. CPS/00005). It is impossible in most cases to know exactly which prints he was sending in any mailing to London. Very likely the panorama of the snowy Tien Shan he mentions taking at Uch Merwan can be located; the image here from Kashgar may be one he deemed less than satisfactory, since it seems the very top of Kongur is obscured in cloud, though that may be the fault of the deterioration of the glass negative's emulsion around the edges.

were hoping it would continue over the week-end we were to be in camp. However, I seized the opportunity of the clear weather to get some glorious photos, a few of which I am sending you p[late] c[amera] prints of this week. The telephoto showing the Tien Shan mountains, covered with new snow, is a great triumph; the Tien Shan are seldom visible from Kashgar even to the naked eye, much less to the camera, which as you know is usually useless for distant mountains. But wait till you see my telephoto views of the Pamirs from Kashgar – they are magnificent. They haven't quite come off yet, for I have been pursued by bad luck [...] From the point from which I take the telephotos, [*Fig. 123*] Kungur stands up grandly just behind the Consulate! tho' separated by 70 miles of countryside, oasis, desert, foothills & lesser snow mountains one behind the other.

[May] 11th. I had intended to continue this letter at Kashgar on return, but I've written to Father at such length in reply to his long letter about Etherton that I haven't time, & the post is now just off. However, I make up by enclosing a picture of D. on her camel at Yarkand, also some of the telephotos I took after writing the last paragraph above [...]

***

[*One might well ask whether Skrine's estimate of his standing with his colleagues is not somewhat self-delusional, but the letter to his father is of interest for his undoubtedly honest attempt to reassure his parents he was not jeopardizing his career. Of course Skrine's 'blowing off of steam' to his parents about Harding and Etherton was on more than 'one or two occasions'. The concluding paragraph of the letter, which I have deleted, dealt with Skrine's insistence he contribute toward the expenses of his parents' London apartment. It does appear that E. B. Howell was consistently sympathetic to what Skrine reported. The excepts copied from his correspondence with Howell referred to here are in BL IOLR, MS EurF 154/39 (see below). In this letter, Skrine also refers to sending his parents a draft of his official report about Etherton's doings. The comments about how Etherton did nothing to obtain monetary bonuses for his staff may seem rather at odds with the indication quoted earlier in Skrine's exchange with Stein that Etherton had allocated a substantial sum toward the burial of Jiang, the long-time Chinese secretary at the Consulate. However, he may have done so only with substantial prodding. That Etherton's amatory escapades made him a 'laughing stock' of the town may well have been true. Rumors spread easily. Awareness of how the local population would view cohabitation of unmarried Europeans was a taken seriously by the Swedish missionary authorities, concerned as they were about maintaining moral authority in the eyes of the Muslim public.*]

Kashgar, 10 May 1923

Dear Father,

I see from your letter of 22 March that you've been worrying a bit over this business about Etherton, and are inclined to think that I and my 'career' may be damaged in some way. That is a pity, because

there really is nothing to worry about. I've acted perfectly openly and straight-forwardly in the matter, and have obviously been actuated throughout by no other motive but indignation at E. and his ways and a desire to save Government from being further swindled and disgraced by him. That the Government of India not only absolve me from unworthy motives but commend my action will be clear to you from the extracts which I enclose from letters I have received from the Deputy Secretary in the F[oreign] and P[olitical] Dept., Howell. I don't know what grounds you've got for thinking that I have enemies at Simla and that Etherton has powerful friends there. Etherton has no friends in the F. and P., only some enemies such as Col. Terence Keyes, whose opinion about him is unprintable; nor has he any real friends even at Army Headquarters, though he may have some acquaintances. I on the other hand have no enemies; of that I am absolutely certain. My rise has not been rapid, as you think; I have had one or two important jobs for my age, such as Consul Kerman and P[olitical] A[gent] Quetta, but they have been jobs that no one has envied me or been kept out of by me. Nobody is being kept out of this job by me, except Etherton; witness the fact that though India have (presumably) been trying to get someone to come here this year to relieve me, they have failed. Apart from that, now that the gradation system has been abolished and we are all on a time-scale of pay, no one loses pay from a junior man being put in over his head, and so people don't worry about it so much. E.g. when I officiated for 7 months as P.A. Quetta, there were it is true some men senior to me holding posts in Baluchistan of less importance than that of P.A. Quetta; but they went on drawing their higher time-scale pay and I my lower, just the same. All I got was an officiating allowance of 200/- for acting in a 'superior' post while having less than 10 years' service. Finally, I have always taken care to keep on good terms not only with my brother civilians and military colleagues in the F[oreign] and P[olitical] [Department], but with the soldiers not in civil employ whom I have met – a more difficult task, owing to the jealousy there is in the Army against the 'Political'. (My sporting tastes, and particularly my polo, have been useful with the latter). As a result I can confidently say that I am on good terms with everybody at Simla, Delhi, Quetta etc. with whom I have had anything to do, officially or privately. In fact, I happen to know that I have something of a reputation for being able to get on with difficile people.

Apropos, you needn't worry about my relations with Harding or imagine that I have an animus or zidd[144] against him. I have no zidd against Harding or anyone else. But he has from the very outset been so rude, and intentionally rude, to me and (much worse) to Doris, and is so insufferable a character altogether that I simply can't help disliking the fellow; it has on one or two occasions been a relief to 'blow off steam' about him in my letters to you and Mother. If I can't blow off steam to you two, whom can I blow it off to? But don't think that H. has the least idea of my feelings towards him. I have never quarreled with him, and don't intend to [...]

To return to the Etherton affair, as you are anxious lest I should have been insufficiently judicial and impartial in the matter, I am sending you herewith the rough draft of my report. I am sorry I have no better copy to send you, but the only copy I have must remain on the file for reference. I am also sending you, along with the extracts from Howell's letters, extracts from three of mine to him which will give you an idea of the way things have gone. Needless to say, these extracts are strictly confidential; the draft report, however, can be shown to Sykes if he wants to see it. It is amusing to see from your letter how E. bamboozled old Syko, by the way; I can see it all, Sykes holding forth about Kashgar and Asia in general and Etherton, determined to make a good impression, listening with flattering deference and

144. In Urdu, ضِد , 'enmity', though the characterization of Skrine's comments on Etherton as a 'vendetta' by the reader of Skrine's reports in London may be a more precise equivalent.

playing between whiles the rôle of bluff, strong, able but simple and kind-hearted 'Nature's gentleman' which is his pose. The bit Sykes told you about E. appearing to be particularly keen to get a bonus or something for his clerk made me roar. So far from going out of his way to do things for his clerks, he doesn't care a brass dump for them, and is always ready to sacrifice their pecuniary interests to his own convenience. I got two different concessions out of Government for the Head Clerk and doctor respectively the other day, both of which E. refused to ask Govt. for, though in both cases the concession in question represented the barest justice to the men concerned. The truth was that E. wasn't going to ask Govt. for anything he couldn't get a whack out of, lest he should spoil the market for proposals, such as increased Secret Service grants, which could be made lucrative.

I don't agree with you and Sykes about E.'s habitual indulgence in the delights of local Leicester Square[145] being a venial matter. It might easily be pardonable in a commercial man or tourist at a place like this, but it is most decidedly not what the British taxpayer keeps expensive Consuls General in Muhammadan countries for. Do you know that he kept an old villain, the image of one of the Minor Prophets, at the Consulate simply and solely as a pimp? that this gentleman used to get common prostitutes from the streets up to the Consulate for the night, telling E. that they were the daughters of this or that wealthy Turki merchant or big land-owner, and that E. used to believe him and used to boast about his 'conquests' to the Russians, through whom of course it eventually got round to the supposed father on several occasions? Etherton was the laughing-stock of the town, until the mullahs (the same ones who tried to wreck the Swedish Mission the other day) made a religious fuss about it and began tying E's lady-loves on to the backs of donkeys, face to tail, and whipping them through the town. Then the supply of daughters of the aristocracy began to fail! [...]

***

[*Excerpts from the letters Skrine sent to E. B. Howell and Howell's letters to Skrine, this typed set of copies presumably the ones which Clarmont enclosed in his letter to his father of 10 May. It is hard to imagine a more severe indictment of Etherton than that concluding the second paragraph in the excerpt from Howell's letter dated 20 March. Skrine obviously found in Howell a likeminded advocate for upholding the honor of the service. During WWI, as a captain in charge of the censorship department in the ICS, Howell had no truck for soldiers from India whose 'escape' from the stresses of fighting was to write verse ('a rather ominous sign of mental disquietude'), and 'the prissy Howell' removed from one soldier's mail 'saucy French postcards' (James 1997, p. 450).*]

Kashgar, 20 January 1923.

I.

My dear Howell,

Many thanks for your letter of 13 Nov. I am very glad you did not misunderstand my attitude as regards Etherton. It is an invidious and unpleasant thing to have to do, to show up one's predecessor, and one's motives are peculiarly liable to misconstruction in such a case. As a matter of fact, I have positively sweated blood over the accounts during the last few days, and the report which I sent off yesterday has taken up my time to the exclusion of all else. I sincerely hope it will enable you to bar the door effectively against E.'s return. Since I wrote to you and Loch before, I have learnt a good deal more about our friend, over and above what I have put in my report, and I know now that he is the last man whom the people here, inside the Consulate and outside it, want back. People do not dare to say much, but I have gathered fairly clearly that the chief things against him are (1) his filling the Consulate with bazar women (they even say that he used to send Fitzmaurice out on long tours in order to have the

145. Leicester Square in London had the reputation of being a major red-light district.

Consulate to himself!) (2) his meanness in money matters (3) his ignorance of law, and his arbitrary slap-dash methods in case-work. As regards (2) I may mention that although he drew 200/- a month fixed T[ravel] A[llowance], he hardly ever toured; a summer trip to the hills and occasional visits to Yangi Hissar (2 stages) and Yarkand (5 stages) was the sum-total of his touring during four years. When he did go to Y. Hissar and Yarkand he borrowed somebody else's carriage to go in and lived practically free at the expense of the aksakals and British subjects. I discovered this on my recent visits to these places, and greatly relieved the former hosts of Etherton by informing them that I always paid my own way. In Kashgar, again, he appears to have treated Fitzmaurice pretty shabbily; he made him pay half the entire expenses of the household, including entertaining, although he, Etherton, drew 250/- a month sumptuary allowance while Fitzmaurice didn't. I have moreover definite proof in certain cases that he gave rewards for personal services to chaprassis and others as from his own pocket, and afterwards charged them to Government, the idea being to acquire cheaply a reputation for liberality and open-handedness.

However, I'm not going to waste more of your time on so unsavoury a subject. As regards myself, as I told Loch, if there is any difficulty in finding a suitable successor for E. able and willing to come up here this summer, I am quite prepared to stay over till next spring or summer (1924) rather than that E should have to be sent back faut de mieux [for want of something better – *DW*]. I merely ask for an assurance that I will be relieved in 1924, not because I want to leave this place (I don't) but because both my wife and I will get into fearful trouble with our respective families if we stay out here longer. In particular I am somewhat anxious about my father; he is 73 and has no other children to look after him.

II

Kashgar 2 May 1923

Dear Howell

Many thanks for your letter of 29th March, in which you tell me that you are not sending Etherton back. I must say, I am greatly relieved; I did not expect you would be sending him back if you could help it, but the wicked (as we are told on the best authority) have a way of flourishing like the green bay tree,[146] and our friend is a born wangler. I now look forward to a strenuous time coping with E.'s claims to furniture, crockery, glass, fittings and property of all kinds in this place. I am in the awkward position of being morally certain that most of it belongs to Gov't., but unable to prove the fact in the case of more than a small proportion. As I shall have to pay E. out of my own pocket for everything I can't prove to belong to Govt., I am somewhat intimately interested in the matter.

Loch has wired that I am to stay here another year; as I think I have explained to you, from the purely selfish point of view my wife and I could ask for nothing better, but for reasons connected with our respective families at home it is rather a misfortune. However, I hope things won't be so bad, and that in the outcome it won't make much difference whether we go home this year or next.

[*This is on a separate sheet, not in sequence on the one with the other letters, but clearly is the third excerpt in the series*:]

Kashgar, 10 May 1923

Dear Howell

Many thanks for your letter of April 2nd, in which you acknowledge the dollar stamp...

146. 'I have seen the wicked in great power and spreading himself like a green bay tree' (Psalms 37:35). Quoting Scripture was apparently not uncommon amongst the I.C.S. officials. See, for example, the particularly amusing back-and-forth between David Barr and the Viceroy, Lord Curzon, where quotations from the Psalms conveyed the writers' opinions apparently without need for further explication (Gilmour 2006, pp. 217-218).

...Very kind of you to say that you find my diaries interesting. I had long ago settled down in the conviction that no one reads one's diaries, and that the main use of the latter is to fix and assort one's knowledge and ideas about the various subjects one has to deal with. There's no better way of finding out what one knows and thinks about a question than by sitting down and writing about it in one's best copy-book English. I am sure that, in your case at any rate, I have been unduly pessimistic about the attention paid to my long-winded screeds, but at any rate that is better than taking for granted, as Etherton and that sort of person does, that Lord Curzon asks for special Cabinet meetings to discuss one's diaries and that the King regularly props them up against his breakfast coffee-pot!

I think you hit the nail on the head when you opine that, though the shadows of coming events are falling thick on this Province, mutual jealousy between Russia and Afghanistan may keep the status quo hanging on here for quite a while. If I had thought of it, I would have said as much in the addendum to para 17 of my diary sent in this mail, in which I discuss the situation which has arisen from the refusal of the Chinese to make a treaty with the Afghans or recognize Muhammad Sharif as a Consul General. The Afghans may take this very badly, but if they make a *casus belli* they'll have Russia to reckon with. The danger however is that Russia and Afghanistan might agree to partition this province, Russia taking Ili and Afghanistan Kashgaria. Not likely, I hope, but...

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(From Howell)

Extract I.

Curzon House, Delhi, 13 November 1922

I also saw your private letter to Loch and quite appreciate the altogether creditable motives which prompted you to write it. The course which I am endeavouring to shape is to pull some of the Kashgar loose ends by .. [*illegible*] .. with the Accountant General to bar the door to Etherton's return without disclosing your share in bringing the state of affairs to light.

II.

Curzon House, 20 March 1923

I received a letter from you dated the 20th Jan. but cannot trace one dated Feb. 1st. Loch however tells me that he is in no doubt as to your wishes and you really wish to go on leave this summer, to which I imagine there will be no objection, though it is a pity in some ways.

We have told the Secretary of State that it is not proposed to reappoint Etherton to Kashgar. This decision has been taken solely on the ground of his dealings in exchange. The other points in the count are being separately dealt with. It is a sordid and disgusting business, of a kind which tends very much to inflame one's anger and warp one's judgment. A man who does not play the game at the outposts is a traitor to our order. [...]

Here we continue to live the life of goldfish, swimming round, round, round in the same old bowl. However the water is kept at an agreeable temperature – and that is the main attraction to the job.

If I can be of any service to you with Blackwood let me know.[147] He is very generous and would, I think, probably be glad to have a look at your stuff, but of course never publishes illustrations in the magazine.

147. *Blackwood's Magazine* was a well-known periodical, founded in Scotland in the early 19th century and throughout its lifetime down to 1980 published by the eponymous family. It contained essays and fiction by some prominent writers and seems to have enjoyed considerable popularity in the British colonies.

III.

St. Bernard's, Simla, 2/4/23

I find your diaries very interesting and cannot help seeing the shadows of coming events falling very thick on your New Province. However, mutual jealously between Russia and the Afghans may keep the status quo hanging on for much longer than would seem at first sight likely.

***

[*A significant portion of this letter to his mother and the immediately following ones concerns the parcels of furs Skrine was sending off to London. I have deleted most of that.*]

Kashgar, 16 May 1923

[...] The profits from these extra skins (which I don't want myself) will be more than enough to cover the cost of both the coats. Dockray is taking them down early next month to Srinagar for me, & from there they will be forwarded thro' Messrs. Cox & Co (now Lloyd's Bank) to you by passenger steamer. I hope they'll arrive by September or October in time for next season [...]

I'm sorry the skins give out such a 'niff' when they arrive and (not to put it too delicately) stink the flat out. Couldn't you arrange with some dealer to have the boxes opened in your presence at his store? when you could check them & get his offer for each skin as it appears from the box? Mind, the last thing I want you to do is to tote a lot of evil-smelling skins all over London, looking for the best terms for them [...]

I'm sending you 8 or 10 enlargements this week, all I have been able to do since we came back from tour owing to an unfortunate shortage of enlarging paper. I have lots more beautiful negatives & when my paper comes I'll do some real beauties & send them along. By the way you have got the former enlargements I sent you from here, haven't you? because I may someday soon ask you to send them round to the R[oyal] G[eographical] S[ociety] with a note from me asking whether they w[oul]d like to exhibit any of them. Oh, and Doris wants to know if you could possibly find time some day – no hurry – to take the 'Burroughs & Welcome' enlargement sent this week to B. & W.'s shop in Holborn, show it to them & hint that we're badly in need of a new medicine chest, a real nice one, for use among the Turkomans & Khirgiz, & that if either this picture, or another one showing 'Tabloid' or 'B. & W.' more clearly, would be any use to them...[148] You understand? It w[oul]d be rather amusing to see what

148. Possibly the picture to which he refers is the one showing Doris medicating some of the Kyrgyz in the Chopkana Valley (see Fig. 184 below, in which the B and W medical chest is open in front of her). Burroughs and Wellcome is a well-known pharmaceutical manufacturer to this day. As the firm's website relates (http://www.wellcome.ac.uk/About-us/History/WTX051562.htm, last accessed 4 May 2016),

> To eliminate the competition, in 1884, Wellcome registered as a trademark one of the most famous and powerful brand names in business history, 'Tabloid' – a word he coined by blending the words 'tablet' and 'alkaloid' – to denote his firm's pills.
>
> Over the next few years Burroughs Wellcome & Co. fought and won legal battles to prevent other firms using the same name. In 1904 Burroughs Wellcome & Co. v. Thompson & Capper made history as the 'Tabloid' case. The prosecution argued that doctors prescribed 'tabloid' products because they had faith in the purity and accuracy of Burroughs Wellcome & Co products. And the judge ruled that 'tabloid' specifically referred to the products of that firm.
>
> Not only did the 'Tabloid' brand name prevent the competition from taking a slice of the market, its associations with quality and precision also made it an effective marketing tool. The name was applied to the full range of the company's products, including 'Tabloid' first aid kits and medicine chests, the 'Tabloid' photographic developer and even 'Tabloid' Tea.

For the follow-up to this suggestion by Skrine, see his letter of 22 September 1923 below.

they say. A lovely 'ad'!

Father sends a long quotation from Henry Ford about harmony in business relations.[149] Very sound & I fully agree. But if Father thinks that I have daily scraps with Harding or that the atmosphere of the offices over which I successively preside becomes charged with high-tension envy hatred and malice, do please disabuse him of the idea [...]

Thursday night 17th. Just heard from Dockray in time to tell you before posting that he tested the receiving machinery today for the first time & got on almost at once to Nauen (Hanover), Rangoon and 5 Russian stations! Of the latter, one was very strong and near – obviously Tashkend.

***

[*The information here about the wireless station is important for what it tells us about communications between Kashgar and the outside world, although as we learn from later letters, the inability to transmit continued. Skrine's initial comment here on Casperd was obviously wrong, as we learn in later letters which suggest he was, if anything, more competent in technical matters than was Dockray. Exactly what Etherton's role was in the fate of the previous wireless receiver at the consulate is not clear. It had been established there as part of the intelligence effort by the British in 1918 (which included sending Etherton, Blacker and Bailey and the latter on to Tashkent). Etherton's reports frequently included translations of intercepted Russian radio transmissions from Tashkent. Just prior to Etherton's going on leave, the Government of India decided to withdraw the consular military guard, presumably in the first instance to save money. The withdrawal of the wireless operation probably was animated as well by fiscal considerations. Its value certainly had come under question, as the consular monthly diary for June 1922 indicated – the apparatus apparently was not functioning properly; so its elimination was not 'a matter for regret'. As that diary reported, the apparatus and its operator left for India on 27 June.*]

Kashgar, 24 May 1923

We're living in a whirl just now, and I've hardly time to scribble you a page or two before turning in, or I won't get enough sleep. Dockray has got the W[ire]less station working and is receiving from Nauen, Leafield, Paris, Tashkend, Rangoon, Colombo & all sorts of places! Any moment he expects to get an answer from one of the Indian stations, Lahore, Peshawar or even Simla, and I'll then have to dash out to the station and 'talk'. Unfortunately, he is short of gasolene, having only what he brought with him from Peking, & he won't be able to do much signalling for me. However, he is very anxious to get in touch with somebody, preferably India, in order to prove that he's put up the station against all odds & has fulfilled Marconi's contract with the Ch[inese] Gov't. Of course Urumchi ought to be communicating with him, but Casperd, the man who has been sent there to operate the station, appears to be a complete dud, is thoroughly fed up with China & everything, & wants to go home; he's even shorter of gasolene than Dockray is, for the Chinese have made away with most of what Dockray deposited there for the test, and Casperd like a fool brought none with him.

Fancy, when Dockray on the 16th put the receiving headpiece to his head for the first time, he picked up Nauen (Hanover) almost at once! The operator was sending off message after message to America, private ones, mostly this sort of thing – 'Mrs. Hiram Z. Schnozzelroder 489 Q West 819th St. Chicago. Having mighty fine time did Berlin 17th Dresden 18th Munich this morning going Paris tomorrow please send another million dollars Sadie.' That wan't so interesting, but yesterday morning at 4 A.M., he heard Leafield broadcasting news of Baldwin's becoming P[rime] M[inister] and Horne Ch[ancellor] of the Exch[ecquer], and 2 ½ hrs. later he heard Nauen repeating this to America! He is getting the Tashkend station very loud, so loud that you don't need to put on the ear-pieces even – in fact at times Tashkend is

149. Probably this is the quotation: 'You can hardly have too much harmony in business [...]' (Henry Ford, *My Life and Work* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1922): pp. 264-265.

apt to jam him. The Bolos are simply spouting out propaganda for all they're worth, as usual. Curiously enough, Colombo & Rangoon are the only stations from the direction of India or beyond that Dockray has heard. The little tiny receiving set we had here until that selfish hound Etherton had it abolished just before I came here, used to pick up Lahore & Peshawar regularly – can't think why D[ockra]y hasn't done so yet. As soon as he does & can transmit messages that way, I'll try & send you a cable via wireless to India & cable thence.

Dockray had a big opening-of-the-station beano for Chinese officials & foreigners, men only, this afternoon, at which he gave us an exhibition of the working of the engines (50 H.P. 25 Kilowatt semi-Diesel ones), of the electrical machinery including the arc itself & of 'listening in' – as for the latter, it was a bad time of day & half a gale-wind was blowing also 'atmospherics' was bad, so that it was only possible to hear one station, Nauen – & that very faintly. However, at least one of the Chinese big pots heard the tiny intermittent note which is high and quite musical (quite different to what I expected) & they were all clearly impressed, tho' quite uncomprehending. Dockray with great dramatic empressement announced the news of the change of British Prime Ministers which really did interest the Chinese, who couldn't help reflecting that otherwise they wouldn't have heard that bit of news for at least 2 months, if then – for the Governor at Urumchi censors all correspondence of Chinese officials & Mussalman subjects alike, telegraphic & postal, & lets as little news filter thro' to Southern Sinkiang as he can.

It is all very exciting & wonderful to think that we are in touch with Europe, with England!

A lovely letter dated 5th April (only 1 month and a half in transit!) came yesterday [...] Well your letter only just came in time to stop 2 large boxes of furs of all kinds starting off on the long trail via Leh and Srinagar to you – a day later & they'd have been off down the road – such an escape, both for you who would have been in despair as to what to do with them, & would have probably been done over them by those London fur-sharks, and for me who would have lost a lot of money. For I've got a safe and profitable market for them in China, a minimum of so much per skin offered 'blind' and I'm sending all my furs there

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Kashgar, 25 May 1923

[...] I'm not trading in furs, & I don't want a big profit; I merely want to remit my savings, which I otherwise can't do. If I sell my furs well enough to pay the original price here, the packing and freight & just enough profit to pay for the making-up of the furs I want myself for you, Father, D. & one or two friends & relations, I'm content. By dealing direct with me, therefore, Mr. Curran would have eliminated the middleman, the wholesale trader who never makes less than cent per cent on the furs he sends to Europe or America – that I know for a fact. By refusing to quote a price, sneering at my wolves and calling my lynxes 'Chinese common cat' your friend Mr. Curran lost a chance of getting other similar wolves and lynxes at prices at least 50% cheaper than he will have to pay for them from his Chinese wholesaler [...] I've got a definite offer from an American Jew in Tientsin for my skins 'blind' – i.e., a minimum so much for lynxes, so much for wolves, & so on. Wolves by the way are the best bargain of the lot; I'm getting up to the equivalent of £ 3 each for my wolves, which only cost me an average of 8/6 here. I wish I had more of them.

It's a serious matter, getting one's money away from this place. Etherton solved the problem and made a handsome profit at the same time, as you know, by using the Gov't. of India as a bank and

drawing cheques on it ad lib. I can't do that, and other cheques or drafts on India being unobtainable, I have to buy either gold or some other saleable commodity. Gold is only available in the form of Russian (pre-Revolution of course) gold roubles in limited quantities; the price fluctuates 10 per cent or more, and as often as not is too high to make remittance to India possible without loss. Besides, one can't entrust large parcels of gold to the chances & dangers of the road to India without risk. There remain furs, which are undoubtedly a good investment, and I bought a good many last winter; but I wouldn't have thought of sending them en masse to London if you hadn't yourself suggested it in a letter written shortly before Xmas. The most convenient markets for this place (tho' they're far enough away in all conscience) are Tientsin & Srinagar. Fox, wolf, lamb and marten fetch excellent prices (for the American market) at the former place and snow leopard & lynx at the latter [...]

Sunday evening. Another storm. We're having extraordinary weather, quite unlike what I thought May would be like here – Changeable, windy, cloudy, sudden storms with a few drops of rain (never more) followed by spells of glorious sunshine when everything sparkles and the Pamirs & the Tien-Shan shine like burnished silver under the blue. But always wind, wind – here, which is supposed to be such a wind-less place – where we had hardly a breath of wind all last Aug., September & October, & again Jan. Feb. & March of this year. Everyone says that it is the windiest spring and early summer they remember – but then it's always exceptionally something, wherever one goes – either it's the rainiest summer or the driest winter or the hottest June or the coldest December remembered by the oldest inhabitant. Have you noticed that curious fact?

Thursday 31st May. Your letter of 12th April which came yesterday is much more favourable and optimistic about furs. A caravan was leaving the very next day for Tientsin & a Chinese friend who was already taking two big boxes of furs of mine offered to take 2 more as he had room in his carts, at a very reasonable rate. There was no time to wait till your next letter came, so I took the opportunity & sent the 2 boxes I had addressed to you, to Tientsin instead. They contained 40 foxes, red and grey, 39 martens, 7 lynxes, 1 snow leopard, 14 black lambs & 4 wolves, all picked skins, especially the foxes; about 10 of the red ones and 5 of the grey were really enormous skins with very long silky hair. Mind you, I saw many hundreds of foxes this last winter & never bought more than about 10 per cent of what I saw. The martens were a mixed lot, half being a somewhat inferior kind I bought as a job lot, cheap, but the rest, like the foxes, were picked skins out of 100's that I saw [...]

What reams I've written about furs! & there's so many other things to talk about too – the wireless for example, the Etherton case, the King's Birthday dinner party we gave last night & the K[ing]'s B[irthday] garden party (200 people at least) we're giving on Saturday – I'll have to be brief. Dockray [...] can't get into touch with either Urumchi or India. As to the former, there's dirty work at the cross-roads. The Chinks don't want these stations & don't want to pay for them; they think they can get out of it if they can show that the Urumchi & Kashgar stations are duds & can't communicate with one another. So having tried to square Dockray & having of course failed, they've got at Casperd, the man at Urumchi – at least it looks very like it. He's supposed to be listening for Dockray's signals all this week, & to be sending messages to Dockray; but D[ockray] hasn't had a sign from him, not a call. Why? It's a funny business altogether – make a grand plot for a novel, one could out of all this Marconi business in China. Wish I was a free man & could write it [...] It'll be a pity if they fix the whole show now, & do him out of the credit (the financial reward) of it all. I'm doing my best for him wiring to India & Peking, but I'm doubtful what it's all going to come to. I doubt if he'll get away next month, now. I'm trying to arrange for him to have tests with India now instead of with Urumchi.

Foreign have returned to the charge about Etherton & are evidently going to run a case against him (departmental, of course). They've written to me for more evidence besides what I sent before. I can give them chapter & verse for practically everything, & can add some damning bits of evidence into the bargain; but it's all a beastly nuisance & a lot of work for me [...]

I presided an official men's dinner of 18 covers last night; D.'s menu & arrangements were admirable, & I worked pretty hard at the arrangements myself too – but I rather spoilt matters by forgetting to invite no less than 8 of the guests! I suddenly remembered at 7 P.M. that none of the Russians or Swedes, whom I had intended to ask, had actually been asked. Luckily both crowds behaved like sportsmen on receipt of my hurried & agitated notes and rolled up to a man, late and perspiring but in time to save my face. We dined all together & uproariously in spite of the fact that another fiasco was furnished by the champagne, expensive 1915 Bollinger, all of which was hopelessly corked!! 4 bottles – all I had left. Wasn't it awful? Oh, I must tell you what D. saw. Peeping out of her bedroom window on to the terrace where we had all been sitting drinking tea & brandy and soda. She saw, directly we went in to dinner, the Chinese servants of the Tao Tai, Hsieh Tai & co. calmly going round & finishing the contents of the tea-glasses & brandy pegs! Aren't they priceless, these Chinks?



Fig. 124. With the completion of the wireless station outside of Kashgar (even though its operation was still problematic), Skrine could report to his parents that he had the thrill on 30 May 1923 of being hoisted up to the top of one of the towers. The second of these photos fairly certainly shows that Doris too was given a ride up, but silence about that in writing home presumably was to avoid criticism from parents about allowing her to do such risky things. (Photos scanned from negatives in the Stewart collection.)

Must go to bed now – very late [...]

[*Fig. 124*] I forgot to tell you that I was swung up on a 2 ½ ft. by 6-inch plank to the top of one of Dockray's 300-ft. masts yesterday morning, grand view & a most delightful experience.

***

[*Much of this long, typed letter concerns furs, with its somewhat disingenuous explanation as to why Skrine is not violating government policy with his dealings, which would seem to be more than 'small scale'. His P.S. here and his belabored response to parental concerns that he may have been walking a fine line are certainly very defensive.*]

Kashgar, 7 June 1923

Do you mind very much if I use the typewriter in future for our correspondence? I don't like the idea of typewriting intimate letters as a rule, but needs must when the devil drives and it will be such a saving of time every week. I am more than ever rushed nowadays [...] The Legation's plans for relieving Harding have fallen through, and we will almost certainly have no Vice Consul here until autumn 1924, by which time we shall have left. I don't know whether to be glad or sorry. Personally I think I can get on all right without one, though a man like Fitzmaurice would undoubtedly be a great help; but there is little hope of getting another Fitzmaurice, and I'd infinitely rather be saddled with four times my present work than have another Harding. One thing, I don't propose to let having no V. C. interfere with my touring. I shall leave the Mir Munshi in charge – he is a man whom I could trust with my last dollar – and take my cyphers and secret papers about with me. One is already far enough off the telegraph line from India, and an extra week or so won't make much difference.

A propos, there is no likelihood whatever so far as I can see of the wireless station here working after Dockray goes; everyone concerned is being very short-sighted about it, and no attempt is being made to arrange for it to be operated in future. Dockray has now received messages of all kinds from the following stations: Nauen, Leafield, Paris, Rome, Tashkend, Batoum, Port Aleksandrovsk, Delhi, Simla, Calcutta, Allahabad, Colombo and Rangoon. But so far he does not know for certain whether any other station has picked him up yet, nor has he been able to talk even to Urumchi, where Casperd is supposed to be ready to test the two stations with him. We strongly suspect foul play on the part of the Chinese [...] The Chinese politicians who carried out the deal were only concerned with the 'squeeze' they made out of it; once the contract was signed and the various bribes had changed hands, they ceased to take any interest in the matter. The money to pay for the stations (and the squeeze) was raised by a loan on the London market; now if the Chinese can prevent the tests being carried out, they think that the Company will be unable to prove that the stations were well and truly laid, and that they (the Chinese) won't have to pay back any of the Loan. This is all confidential of course; I'm only telling you and Father because I trust you and because it must be very puzzling for you and difficult to understand the facts about the wireless station I have been telling you about. You have probably been thinking that it was a British Gov't. concern. As you will understand from what I said about touring above, I'm not altogether sorry that we shall <u>not</u> be in regular wireless communication with India for the rest of this year after all; one of the chief charms of this job is not being at the end of a wire.

Now about the furs [...] Don't be worried by visions of me buying every skin I could lay hands on, rooms-full of evil-smelling and unmarketable wolves and snow-leopards. I'm not such a mug as all that! Nor am I a trader – my position precludes any idea of buying large quantities of furs or anything else for sale. I have merely bought the <u>best</u> furs I have seen this last season, exactly in the same way as I bought carpets in Persia; partly as a legitimate method of transmitting my savings, partly on the off-chance of making a little money out of them, mostly for the fun of the thing – because furs are beautiful and interesting things, like carpets, and well worth learning something about. The <u>only</u> way to learn about things is to buy and sell them, if only on a small scale and for a short time; and a Consul who does <u>not</u> know about the values and prices of important products of his charge is <u>pro tanto</u> less useful than one who does [...]

Post is just off, so I must reserve my news till next week [...]

P.S. [...] [A]s you yourself have been pointing out, it isn't desirable that I should get the reputation of a trader, otherwise actual or potential enemies may make capital out of it. You know how things are multiplied & exaggerated by rumour. That's why I'm a bit worried at your having sold the lynxes to the Sykes' at a big price. You will tell him, and other people you've sold or offered skins to on my behalf, that it was a mistake, won't you? & that I never sell furs or anything else to friends for profit.

***

Kashgar, 14 June 1923

Herewith another batch of prints, rather a good lot considering I only had <u>locally acquired</u> paper to work with. The brown ones are made from some ancient packets of 'self-toning' paper given me by Dr. Gustafsson, of the Mission [...] [*Fig. 125, next page*] The panoramic views of the Kashgar oasis and the snows are unique, not only as regards the subject and the place they were taken from, but because I don't know of any good photos of a snowy range up to 25,000 ft. high having ever been taken before from a distance of 70–80 miles. The Geographical Society w[oul]d I think like these views, so after showing them round will you keep them carefully until I send you a chit to the secretary to



CPS panorama taken SW of Kashgar, extending from Kongur to Bostan Terek (the location of the Swedish missionaries' summer camp). *After*: *CCA* 1925, foldout facing p. 116.





Panoramas taken from near the Mor Pagoda outside of Kashgar (the wider one above composed of 14 images). Photos by DW 2009.



CPS panorama taken across the river from Kashgar, with Kongur on the far left and Chakragil on the right. *After*: *Die Koralle,* September 1928, p. 272.

Fig. 125. It is difficult to know exactly which panoramas Skrine sent home in May 1923, but this image includes two of the likely possibilities. The scans of his images do not convey well the quality of the originals, due to the limitations of the published prints. I have 'cleaned' some of the dirt and scratches and the obvious folds from the top image in CCA 1925, which is valuable for his careful identifications printed in the margins. My photos are an effort to replicate more or less the same scenes, though taken from a different vantage point. The widest of my panoramas extends well to the NE beyond what Skrine's panorama shows.

enclose with the photos & send to the R.G.S.? Only to look at, of course; if they want the pictures I'll get good professional enlargements done of them.

Both your and Father's last letters are 'molto agitato' about my trading in furs!! Darlings both, I suppose one must fuss when one's only son is 5000 miles away in a strange wild country in the middle of Asia – so I'll merely remark that I'm not quite such a mug as to run the risk of being run in for breach of covenant, least of all when I'm as much in the limelight as I am at present. As I said in my last letter, you have got an altogether exaggerated idea of the number of furs I have bought. Why my whole purchases for the winter, including your & D's and Father's fur coats go into 4 smallish chests! True, I have bought more than I want myself – but I had a reason for it. If I only bought just the furs I want myself, I should be quickly ruined by the expense of having them cured & made up at home. To cover that expense, I bought more than I wanted & am selling some to pay for the curing & packing-up of the rest. Not even the most conscientious stickler in the Service could call that trading. Everybody in India, when he gets a real bargain, buys it even tho' he may not need it personally. Same here. Nobody will blame me for snapping up a bargain when I see one [...] The clause of the Covenant Father refers to is intended to preclude officials using their official position and facilities for trading purposes on a certain scale, not to prevent them buying a few scores of skins in order to cover the expense of curing and making up other skins not for sale [...]

As for Etherton finding out about my 'trading' and discrediting my case against himself thereby – if he tried that on, I would not only send the G[overnment] of I[ndia] the whole accounts of my own fur transactions without hesitation, but I would tell them a good deal they don't know about his purchases here – they really did amount to trading, & not even honest trading either. I've said nothing about them to Gov't., because the other things, his Supply Bill transactions & his fudging of accounts etc. etc. were so much more damning. If he had only traded, I would not have said a word against him, because Gov't. did not lose directly thereby, and they wouldn't have thanked me for raking it up. No – Etherton is about the last person who could afford to accuse me of trading in furs or anything else.

We go out into camp next week, Friday the 22nd. Probably, I shall have to attend a murder trial at Yangi Hissar on the way [...]

***

[*Skrine sent his May diary from Kashgar on 14 June; it was received in London on 8 August. The selections here are from the printed copy sent to the India Office in London, BL IOLR L/P&S/10/976, P2979/1923, fols. 196-200. J.A. Simpson's annotations there (fol. 196), dated 13 August, approved the clever way Skrine had contrived to get the Chinese authorities to act in one of the British subject disputes and also singled out the 'historical interest' of the letter from the Russian Lt. Colonel Papengut, whose query about the Army of General Wrangel, dispersed after its defeat in the Crimea in 1920, indeed might be characterized as 'pathetic' (Skrine's word). Clearly what Skrine reported about the ongoing Sino-Afghan negotiations and the tensions between the Afghans and the Bolsheviks in the Pamirs also was of interest. After a brief account of Harding's latest tour to Khotan and Karghalik, the diary reads:*]

King's Birthday Celebrations.

2. In connection with the King's Birthday, His Britannic Majesty's Consul -General gave a dinner party on May 30th to 17 members of the official and foreign community. The garden party on 2nd June was attended by 9 Chinese officials, 20 Russian and Swedish ladies and gentlemen, 30 Mussalman British subjects, 35 Hindu British subjects and 120 Turki Chinese subjects, 214 guests altogether.[150]

150. For Skrine's photographs of the 1924 garden party on the occasion of the King's birthday, see below Fig. 200.

Chinese Officials.

3.[...] The blackmailing Captain Ma has met his deserts. Apparently he had been in the habit of carrying on his depredations without the knowledge of the Titai, or at least without paying latter his full lion's share of the spoils. At any rate, early in May the Titai suddenly arrested Ma and held an enquiry, as a result of which Ma was forced to disgorge in full and was thrown ignominiously into prison. It is not expected that any of the loot will find its way back to the victims.

His Majesty's Consul-General had previously mentioned the matter to the Taoyin, but does not suppose that his unofficial representations had anything to do with the downfall of Ma, which may be ascribed solely to the Titai's disciplinary methods.

4. [...] It is reported on all sides that Wei, Amban of Kashgar Old City, is not likely to hold the post much longer. This may have something to do with his failure, in spite of further promises, to do anything whatever in cases concerning British subjects. Unofficial followed by official complaints to the Taoyin have alike proved useless, and more than one wealthy landowner of Kashgar who owes money to Indian merchants has coolly advised his creditor to 'sue him in the Consul-General's court and see whether he got anything out of it.'

Things having come to this pass, His Majesty's Consul-General judged that the time had come to allow British creditors to apply, on their own account and not through the Consulate General, to the Titai for assistance in the collection of their debts. One merchant, Abdul Karim Khan of Goma, accordingly did so. The result was exactly as had been forseen. The Titai proved only too willing to insert his hand further into civil affairs, and he at once commenced to put the screw on the debtors. A day or two later the Taoyin sent a verbal message to His Majesty's Consul-General saying that if British subjects took their debt cases to the Titai 'the transaction of foreign affairs work between the Chinese authorities and the British Consulate General would become difficult' and asking that the British merchant who had gone to the Titai should be sent instead to the Taoyin, who would personally see that he was paid his debts. His Majesty's Consul-General replied, also verbally, that thanks to the inefficiency and slackness of the magistrate, the transaction of foreign affairs work in Kashgar district could not be more difficult than it already was; that the Taoyin must not be surprised if British subjects, despairing of relief from the civil authorities, applied to the military; that he, the Consul-General, had had no dealings with the Titai, but could not prevent British subjects from having recourse to the latter if they wanted to.

It remains to be seen whether, from fear and jealousy of the Titai if for no other reasons, the Taoyin succeeds in obtaining repayment of any British subject's debts in the near future or not.

[*On the wireless station, Skrine reports Dockray's success and celebration in which* 'It is to be feared that the officials were attracted not so much by interest in the wireless station as by the constructing engineer's excellent champagne.' *In order to facilitate Dockray's establishing contact with India,*]

His Majesty's Consul-General has telegraphed to the Government of India asking that arrangements be made for one or other of the Indian Government radio stations to converse with Kashgar at a fixed time. June 14th, 15th and 16th at 8-11 P.M. have been suggested for the tests.

In view of the interest taken up to date by the Indian Army General Staff in the Kashgar wireless station, it is somewhat surprising that Major Dockray, who has been listening almost continuously hours day and night for the last three weeks and has repeatedly addressed Indian stations, should not have received a single message addressed to him or any acknowledgment of his existence from any Indian Government or other radio station. He is now running short of gasoline and is reserving his supplies for the expected tests with India.

It is now known for certain that Mr. Caspard will not come to Kashgar, so that when Major Dockray leaves on completion of his tests, there will be no one to work or even properly to look after the station. The Chinese engineer sent by the Board of Communications to take over from Major Dockray, is hopelessly incompetent, his sole qualification consisting of having attended a course of theoretical lectures on wireless telegraphy. There is every reason to fear that unless arrangements can be made for a competent engineer to be sent here, the station will in a few months become unworkable from deterioration.

[*On this matter, Simpson in London noted:* 'It is not yet known whether the G. of I. have found it possible to supply an operator for Kashgar.' *Skrine follows with information on, e.g., White Russians in Xinjiang, and quotes an interesting letter in this context:*]

13. The following translation of a letter received by a Russian at Kashgar from Lieutenant-Colonel P. Papengut,[151] one of the interned White officers in Ili, is of a somewhat pathetic interest:

> We have a very difficult task here in keeping our detachment together. We can only do this so long as there is a possibility of foreign interferences in the affairs of Soviet Russia. Germany is very friendly with Russia now, and is in alliance with her, but France must surely see the danger in this and must be working to separate them. What is the Russian Monarchical Party doing nowadays?
>
> We are having great trial and difficulties in keeping up the hearts of our men in the middle of Bolshevik propaganda and in sore privation. We do our best but we cannot afford to give the Cossacks much. Nevertheless, our detachment is strong enough and ready for action, and in the future we should work to keep up its strength. But is there anything to be gained by this? Is there any reason for supposing that in the future Europe will be more active in opposing the Soviet? We ask you to be so kind as to send us information on these matters. What is the army of General Wrangel doing? Is it disbanded; or interned in Roumania? If it still exists, would you be so kind as to inform the Staff that our detachment is still in being but that circumstances are too much for us and we are utterly forsaken. It is very difficult to fulfil our duty of keeping our force together in the absence of moral support for the soldiers, especially when we cannot even feed them. If there is no Army we can do nothing; in that case we must not deceive our men. Though the Army of the East fell, we still stand; but this cannot last forever.
>
> Please write to me at Suidun, C-o Father Colomb, Catholic Mission.'

His Majesty's Consul-General is trying to obtain information as to the exact strength of Colonel Papengut's detachment [...]

[*Skrine then included a short report about a mysterious traveler, who then appears later in Kashgar. The annotators in London marked this with a big arrow in the margin.*]

15. [...] Zavitsky, the mysterious missionary-tourist from the United States, is now reported to be in Ili and to be trying to obtain permission from the Bolsheviks to go to Tashkend. If he fails in this, he intends to come to Kashgar. According to information received from Major Dockray, the man appears to be a sufferer from religious mania.

[*In reporting on the Sino-Afghan negotiations, with reference to his earlier enumeration of the Afghan demands in his March–April diary, here he lists point-by-point the responses sent from Urumqi and the responses in turn by the Afghan Envoy. Skrine concludes the diary with some additional information about Abdul Ghani and Ghulam Nabi, associated with the Afghan delegation, about whom he had written earlier:*]

151. Pavel Petrovich Papengut (1894-1933), active in the anti-Bolshevik forces of General Dutov, continued into the 1930s as a commander of White forces in Xinjiang (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pavel_Pappengut, last consulted 2 May 2016).

18. [...] The following information regarding the origin of Abdul Ghani is from a trustworthy source. He was bought for 30 taels at the age of 7 by a Russian doctor called Polovtseff from a very old and dirty Afghan beggar in the streets of Yarkand. Polovtseff took the boy to Russia and had him educated. On his return to Kashgar, Abdul-Ghani acted for some time as interpreter at the Russian Consulate-General.

19. [...] Ghulam Nabi recently took despatches from the Envoy to the Afghan frontier, where he handed them over to the Afghan authorities and started to return. The route used by him was that by which opium-smugglers and other travellers between Afghanistan and Kashgaria regularly travel, that is to say, from Tashkurghan across the Great and Little Pamirs (Russian Territory) to the Wakhjir border. This saves the long detour *viâ* Paik and the Taghdumbash Pamir in Chinese territory. Near Shangan Karaul in the Little Pamir, however, he was captured by Kirghiz in Russian employ and taken before the Nacharlik [*sic – nachal'nik*, commandant – *DW*] of Murghab, who detained him for several days.

This is not the only attempt that has been made by the Bolsheviks to intercept the mail of the Afghan Mission. Towards the end of May, they captured a certain Shah Ismail Badakhshi thinking that he carried the mail. He secured his release by informing the Bolsheviks of the whereabouts of a courier who was following a few days behind him. Kirghiz accordingly waylaid the courier, one Karakhan, and took him to Murghab where he was detained for several days. Finally he was released by order of the Nacharlik of Kharukh. The Afghan Envoy is reported to be furious at these actions of the Russians in the Pamirs. A report regarding the strained relations between Afghanistan and the Soviet authorities of Turkistan has already been sent in [...]

***

[*Apart from his inclusion here of some additional damning evidence about Etherton's misdeeds, which I have excised, Skrine does put his finger on what undoubtedly ultimately settled how the Government of India dealt with the case, not wanting to make a public scandal out of it, even if the result was that Etherton was not reappointed to Kashgar and had to reimburse for some unwarranted expenditures using government funds.*]

Kashgar, 21 June 1923

Only a short letter this week, as I'm terribly rushed getting a heavy official dâk off before going into camp. We leave on Saturday afternoon for Yangi Hissar, where I have a murder case & thence on Monday evening for Altunluk <u>en route</u> for Kaying Bashi. Would you believe it, there was <u>over half an inch of rain</u> yesterday, a deluge in the morning and another during the night, and we <u>may</u> be held up by floods, bridges washed away etc. etc., on the road – but we hope to get to mouth of the Karatash Valley somehow. Once there we can thread our way up into the mountains with the help of guides, even if the ordinary road is impassible.

We had another deluge, tho' a short one, on Tuesday evening besides yesterday's, so Kashgar has been making up for not having rained since the previous May, 1922. The result is that it's been beautifully cool today & yesterday, & D. & I have reverted to our spring clothes, discarding tussores & silks. This is a great relief after the hot spell we had the last 3 weeks. It'll stoke up again now all right, but we can snap our fingers when we get up into the mountains. I <u>wish</u> we could stay 2 months there instead of only 3 weeks!

I've been fearfully over-worked this week – the main thing is the final report about Etherton [...] They asked me if I could prove the various charges against E. beyond the evidence I had already sent [...] [A]s I've said at the end of my report, I don't see how Etherton's going to <u>defend</u> himself without

coming to Kashgar; that would (1) cost him Rs. 5000/- at least (2) take 5 or 6 months at least, and that not possible this year now (3) be highly undesirable from the point of view of this Consulate General. It would be perfectly dreadful if E. came up here next year. Talk about scandals! Central Asia, nay the whole of Asia north of the Himalayas, would ring with the prosecution by the British Gov't. of the favoured and successful British C.G. of Kashgar. And what's more, most Aksakals & British subjects in Kashgaria would say 'We thought as much.' Sir G[eorge] Macartney, who lived with him for several months – ought to have known better [*than to have recommended E.--DW*]. He can't be much of a judge of men. Without unduly 'bucking,' I think I can claim to have sized E. up pretty accurately in a fortnight when several thousand miles away from him, merely by studying his writings and his methods of accounting [...]

The other big thing that has taken up my time this week has been the work connected with a big opium raid which I brought off last Friday. It was a great success. With Harding and Tao, the For[eign] Aff[air]s secretary to the Taoyin, I suddenly burst into an inn kept by a certain British subject and seized no less than 35 lbs. of pure opium hidden in the rooms of the innkeeper and 5 different Afghans from Badakhshan. I had been working up to this for some time through secret agents, & was only waiting for absolutely definite information about the whereabouts of a large consignment of opium before striking. As I say, we got 35 lbs. of opium right away; but there was more to come. We ransacked the whole place, including the roof and the ground under the horses in the stables, but couldn't find any more; and yet I knew there was some somewhere. That night Harding was for putting a guard on the serai & turning everybody out & resuming the search next day. I at first agreed, but afterwards had a brain-wave. I magnanimously allowed the accused – i.e. the Afghans we had caught with the opium, & the inn keeper – to stay in the serai for the night guarded by the 4 or 5 Chinese soldiers Mr. Tao had with him & 2 of my orderlies. I knew that if there was any more opium in the serai, the owners would try and smuggle it out during the night, and I secretly warned my orderlies, trustworthy men (not the Chinese soldiers) to keep a sharp look out for any such attempt. Sure enough the smugglers did try it on – their confederates cut a hole in the roof of the serai from outside, and they passed up 3 packets of opium weighing 33 lbs. from a secret cache through it! One of my orderlies heard a noise on the roof, hopped up a ladder, saw the hole and raised a hue and cry; the confederates who had made the hole were caught hiding the opium in a wheat-field, 2 packets in the ground & 1 in a tree, and the whole lot was recovered. Next afternoon the Taoyin, the Magistrate, Mr. Tao, Harding and I were all present at the public burning of the 68 lbs. of opium in the street opposite the Taoyin's Yamen. It was most amusing. The joke is that the Taoyin himself is an opium fiend, & I haven't the least doubt that his agents buy their master's supplies from these very Afghans. The Magistrate is also an opium sot. And yet there we all were, patting each other on the back for our 'cooperation' in striking a blow against the terrible secret evil of the opium traffic from Afghanistan and publicly burning stuff which the Taoyin himself would have given a thousand taels for if he'd had the chance. Of course he & the Magistrate will make a lot of capital of this case with the Governor, saying how energetic they are in the suppression of the opium traffic & how they did it all, the British Consul General merely looking on and putting difficulties in their way because one of the suspected persons was a British subject; and the Governor will wire to Peking in the same strain & compare his province favourably with others in which the opium trade is not interfered with & flourishes exceedingly. As a matter of fact, this case and a raid which Etherton brought off in '21 in cooperation with the Taoyin, the energetic & honest Chu (a much easier affair it was because Chu really cooperated) are the only opium prosecutions that there have been in the south of the province in 3 years! The Chinese officials, half of whom smoke opium

themselves, allow the trade to go on under their very noses. I've studied the matter fairly carefully & have already told Gov't. a lot about it in my Trade Report. By the way, I must try and get hold of a copy of that work for you when it's printed, which will probably be in the 'Board of Trade Journal.' It may interest you. I've sailed as near as I could to importing a little of the 'romance of trade' into it. By the way, talking of literary works – my diary of the journey up seems to have fallen rather flat – probably because it came along too long after the event! The 2nd part, like the first, you just acknowledge, & I don't know yet whether it amused you or not. As a matter of fact, I have not got the journalistic mind and neither know nor care 'what the public wants,' i.e., what is supposed to interest or amuse people. I know what interests me in a travel-book, namely to get a clear idea of what the country is like through which the writer went, and what amuses me, namely the experiences he had with the people and animals; but when travelling myself I not only don't regard what I see and do as 'copy' but do my best to avoid falling into that facile and fatal habit. To me it seems as dreadful, or more so, to be unable to see or do or feel anything without regarding it as 'copy' as these journalists and novelists do, as it must be to be an actor and always listening to oneself talking.

The 3rd great excitement this week, which has taken up a lot of my time, is Dockray's success in getting into touch with the Peshawar and Simla wireless stations [...] [A]bout a fortnight ago I got busy and arranged by land line with the General Staff at Simla to carry out 'tests' with Dockray at certain fixed times on certain dates. This was necessary because Dockray's w[ireless] t[elegraph] station is an 'arc' installation whereas the Indian stations are 'spark' ones, and very careful adjustment by skilled engineers are needed for 'spark' stations to pick up an 'arc' one properly. The result has been as good as could be, & Dockray is frightfully pleased & relieved. Peshawar and Simla have both been very good & have established perfect communication with Dockray every morning this week. So the utility of the Kashgar station is proved all right, & the failures of the Urumchi station (which Dockray left in perfect order last year and is a duplicate of this one) is on Casperd's head.

Another cypher message from Simla in for Dockray – must knock off to decypher it & reply!

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[*Skrine's "Report on the Trade of Kashgar, 1922-1923" (excerpted here) was published as part of a pamphlet on the Chinese economy by H. J Brett, the commercial secretary to the British legation in Shanghai. While Skrine has some statistical information on the volume of trade in various directions and currencies, to a considerable degree his essay is a finely crafted narrative description which offers an astute summary of factors affecting the local economy and important local resources. Of course such a report in the first instance was intended to alert British officials to possible economic resources that somehow, some day, the British might be able to exploit. The section on mineral resources is reproduced verbatim in* The China Yearbook 1928*, ed. by H. G. W. Woodhead (Tientsin), pp. 402-403. A single narrative page overlapping with the larger text also appeared under the title "Trade of Chinese Turkistan with India and Adjacent Countries for the year ending the 31st May, 1923," as a* Supplement to the "Indian Trade Journal," *Vol. LXX, No. 899, Sept. 13, 1923. After the overview of trade with India, Afghanistan, Russia and China Proper, it consists of detailed tables of imports and exports, broken down by specific products, their quantities, their prices and values. Skrine also compiled separate and more detailed reports, among them one on oil (see below). For my brief overview of Xinjiang trade, with a discussion of Skrine's reports, see Waugh, "Continuity and Change" (2007b). A much more thorough treatment of the subject is Kreutzmann 1998. On the routes of communication, especially the 'The Roads to Kashgar', see Skrine 1925b, the published version of a talk he gave for the Royal Asiatic Society in London, with some long comments by Aurel Stein and George Macartney.*]

[...] (iii.) Passable roads connect all the chief towns and larger villages, and it is possible to drive in a carriage almost anywhere within the great oases of Southern Hsinkiang – I cannot speak for the north

– without much difficulty. There is of course no metalling of any kind, but as the clay sol is firm and only about one per cent. of the traffic is wheel-borne, there are no ruts: indeed many of the roads would compare not unfavourably with the average rural unmetalled road in Europe. Bridges, albeit often rickety ones, over the numerous canals and streams are kept in some sort of repair on the 'begar,' forced labour system [...]; over the big rivers ferries, with barges large enough to take 100 men or 20 horses at a time, are kept up. The only draw back from the point of view of the more rapid forms of wheeled transport is the frequency of shallow irrigation channels which cross the public highway and have to be negotiated slowly. Government rest-houses (often small and jerry-built affairs, it is true) are to be found at every stage along the main routes, in addition to the local *serais*. An interesting instance of enterprise in the opening up of new routes on the part of officials is afforded by the work of Ch'en Chi-shan of Khotan, who built rest-houses along the Khotan river route from Khotan right across the Takla Makan desert to the Tarim River south of Aksu, a matter of 300 miles, without a habitation except the huts of a few wandering shepherds.

The only motor car in the province is a 12-cylinder Packard in the possession of the Postal Commissioner at Urumchi. This car was brought from Peking and is to return there at the first opportunity. Motoring is not to be recommended in Southern Hsinkiang; even if it were possible to transport a car across the high passes and sandy deserts which defend the country on every side, the irrigation channels mentioned above as crossing the roads every few yards would be a source of irritation even in the cultivated areas, while between the oases the exceedingly fine sand of the loess desert would make progress impossible without a caterpillar wheel attachment or similar contrivance.

The *Post Office* is a well-run department and the service is regular and efficient, though rates are necessarily high. Letters take two months to reach Kashgar from Inner China, parcels four to five months. From Kashgar to Keriya, 413 miles, including 150 miles of sandy desert, the postal couriers take ten days. The service between Keriya and railhead at Pingtang, nearly three thousand miles, is by far the longest courier-borne postal service in the world. The efficiency of the postal service is the more creditable in view of the enormous difficulties the Department has to contend with. These, to quote a recent 'Report on the Chinese Post Office,' include 'the vastness of this province of desert and mountains, the lack of reliable information the scanty and nomadic population, the diversity of races and languages, the small proportion of the population able to read and write, the ignorance on the part of the public of postal regulations or even of the benefit to be derived from a postal service, the poor elements from which to recruit postal employees, the constant difficulty encountered not only in procuring but in training couriers to run along difficult lines through arid country where subsistence for neither man nor beast can be found, where there are dangerous rivers to negotiate, and where attacks on couriers by wandering tribes are frequent.'

[*Goes on to describe inadequacies of the telegraph service, not the least of which is that it does not extend beyond Kashgar into southern Xinjiang. Summarizes the progress in establishing the Marconi wireless telegraph and then describes the monetary system.*]

[...] We have here, in fact, the surprising economic phenomenon of a paper currency unsupported by any reserve, a currency which no one ever dreams of trying to exchange at the Government Treasury for coin, still commanding the confidence of the public and acting as a perfectly efficient and reasonably stable medium of exchange. This Arcadian state of affairs could only exist of course in an isolated and practically self-supporting country in which education and commercial enterprise are alike at a primitive stage; it depends on the confidence of the people in the stability of the existing regime, any serious disturbance of which would almost certainly result in a slump.

(II) Mineral Resources.

Southern Hsinkiang is exceptionally rich in valuable minerals and oil, none of which are exploited on modern lines and some not exploited at all. The following are worked in the order of their importance: jade, gold, copper, oil and coal. Other deposits which are known to exist but which are not, so far as is known, worked at the present date are: silver, lead, iron, antimony, sulphur and mica.

Jade. Jade is found in the micaceous and horneblendic schists of the Kuen Lun Mountains, whence it is carried down in lumps and pebbles of varying size by the Karakash, Yurungkash and Keriya Rivers. The people of Khotan, Keriya and neighbouring villages recover the stone in considerable quantities from the river beds; formerly it was mined in situ at an almost inaccessible spot in the gorge of the Karakash south of Khotan, but the mine has not been worked for many years and its very existence is now forgotten locally. There is no longer the free market for the product of the river beds that there used to be; most of it is taken up at prices fixed by themselves by the Chinese officials, and lumps of first quality translucent green stone seldom or never come into the open market. The white and dull green jades cost little in the uncarved state, the value being in the carving, which is done by artists at Peking. This work is not and has never been done at Khotan itself, where the stone is only worked into simple articles such as beads, bangles, cups, etc.

Gold. 'Placer' gold workings of considerable importance exist at several places, notably at Surghak on the Niya River 45 miles east south-east of Keriya and at Kapa 25 miles south of Keriya. There are also workings at Chugullak and Chapchand in the same neighbourhood; the high snowy range, part of the Kuen Lun system, at the foot of which these mines are situated, being known as the Altyn Tagh or 'Golden Mountains.' The mines are exploited in a primitive manner by the Chinese officials through local contractors, who slave-drive the miners to such an extent that being sent to work in the gold mines is a common form of punishment for criminals in the Khotan and Keriya districts. The Chinese frequently have trouble with the contractor and the output varies accordingly; in a good year as much as 900 lbs. of gold is produced by an average of 2,000 miners. Nuggets of a pound or more are frequently found. Gold 'placers' are also worked at an extremely lonely and desert place called Ak-tagh in the Karakoram, eight day's march south of Yarkand. This place is so inaccessible that it can only be worked for two months in the early summer, after the snow has melted and before the summer floods have reached their height, and then the miners have to bring all their food and firewood with them. Owing to the lack of pumping plant the output of these workings, which are continually being flooded, is small; but the gold-sand is very rich and if worked properly would yield large profits. There are also undoubtedly gold deposits in other parts of the mountains to the south of Yarkand, but the people keep them secret in order to prevent the Chinese starting mines and forcing the local people to work in them.

Copper. Extremely rich deposits of red, black and green copper ores, from which pure metallic copper is produced by one smelting only, exist on the Terek river in the foothills of the T'ien Shan to the north of Kashgar and at Kanjigan, west-north-west of Kashgar. The 'mines' are mere scratchings, as the Chinese who exploit them do not know how to carry their shafts to any depth, but even so about 40,000 lbs. of the metal are produced annually and made into all kinds of utensils for the local market. Copper is also worked at Onbash on the Muzart River, 70 miles north-east of Aksu, while the ore is found near Kokya on the Yarkand-Ladakh road and in the Alai Mountains to the west of Kashgar. No one in Kashgaria has any idea of how to refine copper chemically.

Oil. The 'Ferghana series' of oil-bearing strata extends into Kashgaria through Kanjigan, along the

foot of the T'ien Shan, past Aksu and right up to Kuchar. The chief wells worked by the Chinese are at Kanjigan, Aksu and Kuchar; boring and chemical refining are alike unknown, the crude oil being scooped out of surface wells and holes. Even so, the strata are so rich that gasolene, kerosene, machine oil, grease and mineral wax (ozokerit) of tolerable quality are all produced by means of primitive plant and used freely in the chief towns. Here again the exploitation and manufacture, such as they are, are kept carefully in their own hands by the Chinese. The chief refineries are those worked at Kashgar by the Titai (General Officer Commanding, Kashgaria) and at Aksu by the Magistrate.

Coal of fair quality, rich in coke, is found at Kanjigan, where shallow and primitive mines are worked by the Chinese. As only out-crops and weathered layers are mined, the coal is full of ash and is unsatisfactory for domestic use; but it would make an admirable fuel for metallurgical purposes. Coal exists and many other places in the province, but the only other mines worth mentioning in the southern part are near Aksu and in the Karatash Valley south of Yangi Hissar.

Besides the above minerals, the following are worked by the local Turkis and are always to be found in the bazaars: ozokerit (found in natural state near Kuchar and south of Yarkand; used extensively for candles); alum, sal ammoniac, gypsum. Good quality fireclay is found in the carboniferous strata and is extensively used by the natives in their smelting operations; it will be invaluable if and when the mineral resources of this country are ever properly worked. At present the one idea of the local Chinese authorities seems to be to keep foreign enterprise out and exploit the minerals of the province for their own sole benefit.

[*In reviewing trade, Skrine offers little regarding exchange with Soviet Russia and Afghanistan that is not laid out in his monthly diaries. However, in the case of trade with British India, he sees a great opportunity, given the current limits on the Russian trade.*]

(III.) The Trade of the Year.

(i.) **With India**. Trade in the chief commodities show either large decreases or large increases. In the former category come cotton, twist and yarn, medicines, skins of small animals, unmanufactured leather, metals other than iron, velvet, European silks other than satin, Surat brocade, spices, unrefined sugar, Indian and green tea and 'other manufactured articles.' The deficit in all these imports, however, is more than made up for by the increases in European and Indian cotton piece goods, indigo and refined sugar. The only articles the import of which has remained approximately steady are dyes (synthetic), satin and foreign tea. From this it is permissible to draw the conclusion that traders have ceased, for the time being at any rate, to dabble in miscellaneous commodities for which there is a limited demand, and have begun to concentrate on necessities such as cotton piece goods, sugar and dyes. So far, traders have shown insufficient foresight and enterprise in fostering and stimulating markets and have been inclined merely to import each year the commodities which fetched the best prices the year before, regardless of whether the market could stand it or not.

This latter tendency has been the more regrettable in that the tremendous difficulty of the route via Ladakh and the limited amount of transport available render it particularly important to study the Hsinkiang market carefully and only import commodities which are both carriable with a minimum of deterioration and certain of a relatively unlimited market. The difficulties and dangers of the Karakoram route, are well known[152]; suffice it to say that no other trade route in existence crosses such high passes or runs for so many weeks across mighty glaciers, through precipitous gorges and along breakneck ledges among some of the highest mountains in the world. The total number of ponies and camels plying on the route is estimated at 2,000; even if the carrying trade were in a healthy state this would not

152. On the trade over the Karakoram Pass between Leh and Yarkand, see especially Rizvi 2001.

be nearly enough; as it is, however, most of the carriers are insolvent and entirely in the hands of the Hindus. The latter, shortsightedly, lend the carriers money on unfavourable terms and exact repayment in the shape of free transport of goods; the carriers who must get cash from somewhere to feed their animals, accept two or three times the amount of goods their ponies can carry and take it along the road in instalments, on what is known as the 'dubko' system. This causes them to fail in carrying out their contracts within the specified time, whereupon they become liable for damages to the Hindus and thus still deeper in debt to the latter. The effect on the carrying trade, and therefore on the trade in commodities, is very bad, [and] while certain Hindus profit individually by getting their consignments carried by their debtors at cheap rates, the carriers' ponies die like flies on the road from over-loading and under-feeding, consignments are frequently left for months by the roadside and the number of ponies available for the increasing trade steadily diminishes.

It would be a pity if an unrivalled opportunity for capturing the Hsinkiang market for some years to come were lost owing to disorganization of the carrying trade on the main Indo-Central Asian route. Just before the Russian revolution the Tsarist Government was energetically developing the trade between Ferghana and Southern Hsinkiang, and bid fair to eliminate the Indian merchants altogether. With their railhead at Osh only eight days' march from Kashgar and with only one pass to cross, the Russian traders had an enormous advantage over their Indian rivals, and this advantage was further increased by the establishment at Kashgar of a branch of the (State-aided) Russo-Asiatic Bank. Now, however, all is changed; nothing comes from Russia but small driblets of Andijan silk and velvet from Tashkend; industry, trade and agriculture in Transcaspia are alike completely disorganized, to an extent which may be gauged from the fact that whereas before the Revolution Ferghana exported a quarter of a million tons of cotton to European Russia, now it has to import from Kashgaria what little cotton it can afford to pay for. As the trade with China Proper is on a small scale and is chiefly confined to commodities used by the Chinese, Kashgaria is obliged to depend on India for may quasi-necessaries such as cotton piece-goods, dyes, tea, sugar, etc., which formerly came from Russia. By stimulating the export trade of Hsinkiang, which is capable of considerable expansion, a much greater volume of imports could be paid for by exports than at present. Moreover, [...] large profits are to be made by re-export of the above-mentioned commodities to Russian Turkistan, which can still pay in gold, furs and jewellery for a limited quantity of such imports. Mention may be made of the route via Tashkurghan, the Baroghil Pass and Chitral, which during the last two or three years has been used to an increasing extent as an alternative to the Leh route by Indian traders [...]

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[*Given the current Chinese emphasis on petroleum extraction in Xinjiang, with major fields opened there, I reprint here Skrine's detailed report on oil in Chinese Turkestan, which I first published as an appendix to Waugh 2007b. Skrine's original typescript with handwritten edits is in BL IOLR EurF 154/39; the Government of India file containing the text is IOLR L/P&S/11/247. P2511/1924, 28 Mar. 1924-18 June 1924.*]

Occurrences of Oil in Chinese Turkestan

A. Places where oil is actually obtained.

1. Kanjigan 75° 12' E. 39° 35' N.

Oil is found at surface level here in large quantities. The springs are jealously guarded by the by the Chinese, and I have been unable to obtain first-hand information as to their appearance or the manner in which they are worked. They are exploited by Ma Ti-T'ai, G.O.C. Kashgaria, who uses both military

and local forced labour and retains the entire profits. The following is extracted from Kashgar Trade Report for 1922-23:

> The springs at Kanjigan are worked by Ma Ti-T'ai G.O.C. Kashgaria who manufactures gasolene, kerosene, lubricating oil, paraffin and zerosin. Recently at the Ti-T'ai's request I imported 6 thermometers and 6 hygrometers for him through the Trade Commissioner, Calcutta. The kerosene produced by the Ti-T'ai (which is the only product of which I have personal experience) is quite up to the standard of the cheaper grades sold by the A.P.O.Co.[*marginal note, probably added later*: Anglo-Persian Oil Co.], and there is no doubt that, given the requisite plant, the very best grade oil could be produced.

2. Toghrak Dong. 8 m[iles] N. of, 82° 55' E. 42° N.

These springs are situated at the southern foot of the Tien Shan, 20 m. north-east of the important town of Kuchar. I have obtained an acct. of them from an intelligent eye-witness who visited the spot for the purpose. These are about 100 springs in one place, each walled round and roofed over. As in the case of Kanjigan, the military auth[oritie]s have the disposal of the oil, the Commandant of the Kuchar garrison leasing them to Tungani (Chinese Mussalman) and other contractors. This has only been done since the closing of the Russian frontier and the practical cessation of the import of Russian oil into Sinkiang. At present there are 7 such contractors. They are strictly limited to one day's operations per week (Thursdays). Each Friday the Commandant at Kuchar receives 100 'chings' (133 lbs.) of oil from each contractor for which he pays at a fixed price. The contractors are supposed not to keep any oil for themselves, but if they obtain more than 100 chings on the Thursday nobody asks any questions. The oil is skimmed off the tops of pools of brackish water. These pools measure up to 12 ft. in circumference. My informant visited the place (in the guise of a prospective contractor) on a Sunday, on which day 1 to 1 ½ bucketfuls of oil had collected on the top of the best wells since the preceding Thursday. There are iron mines higher up among the mountains worked by the same lessees, not far from the oil springs.

In a ravine 5 miles from the springs there is a single large spring which is not walled around and appears to be worked by the local people. It consists of a pool of bitter water 40 ft. in circumference, on to the surface of which oil oozes from the steep sides of the ravine. My informant noticed recent footprints round the sides, as if people had been collecting the oil a day or two before; nevertheless the surface of the pool was quite covered with oil.

Large quantities of mineral wax (ozokerit) are found in the neighbourhood; that near the oil wells is yellow-coloured and greasy; that found higher up among the hills is brown-coloured and dry.

3. Tarlak Tagh, circ. 80[°] 45' E. 41[°] 45' N.

This source of oil is situated in a valley of the Central Tian Shan 28 m. N.N.E. of Aksu. It is in the hands of the Amban (Magistrate) of Aksu Old City who refines it in limited quantities for the use of himself and his friends. The whereabouts and even the existence of the spring is kept as quiet as possible, and the Beg of Tarlak is held responsible that no unauthorized person visits it. I spent several days shooting in this very neighbourhood last September and must have passed within a few miles of the spring, but neither I nor anyone in my camp had any suspicion of the fact. Subsequently the following information, obtained indirectly from the Beg in question, has reached me:

The spring is situated in a ravine of the Kizilyar Tagh, 7 miles from Tarlak and 2 m. from Noshka

Tagh. Its elevation is about 750 ft. higher than that of Tarlak (about 8000 ft.). The oil collects in a pool 220 ft. long and 85 ft. wide, and can only be reached by a ladder. The outlet of the pool is blocked, a hole about 1 inch in circumference being left through which the oil trickles. Two Begs and 20 workmen collect the oil and bring 'one large tin' (the Russian oil tin which holds 3 poods or 108 lbs. is meant) to Aksu every week. Half of this after refining goes to the Amban, and the Begs take the rest. A Chinese representative of the Amban is stationed at the spring to supervise operations. The output is greater in summer than in winter.

(Note: Tarlak is marked on the new Survey of lndia [Sir A. Stein's] 8 inch map of Chinese Turkestan. I have not got the sheet with me, but I think it is No. 12.)

B. Places where oil is reported to occur.

1. At Burghawal near Shangan Karaul in the Tagharma district of the lower Sarikol Valley, north of Tashkurghan.

2. In Karghalik district, 1 m. W. of the point where the Yarkand–Karghalik road crosses the Tiznaf river, 27 m. S. by W. of Yarkand. Here there are reported to be pools with only black stuff on the surface. I will look at this place on my return journey to Kashgar in May and report.

3. In the Kokshal Valley of the south-westem Tien Shan, 110 m. N.E. of Kashgar and from 70 to 120 m. W.S.W. of Turfan.

4. Near Urumchi, where a White refugee called Vassilieff in 1920-1922 is reported to have mined oil-clay from which he obtained lamp-oil by distillation.

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Camp Kaying Bashi (10,250 ft.), Chinese Pamirs, 2 July 1923

I'm afraid I have missed a post owing to our starting for this place at an awkward time in the week. We are rather cut off here, as owing to the volume of water in the Karatash river making the route via the lower K[ara]tash gorge impassible, it is necessary to cross 2 high & very steep passes to get here. A messenger arrived last night with mail from Kashgar in 4 days, & brought a letter from you dated 17th May to my great joy.

We are now enjoying our 4th day at this beautiful place, & are wishing that we had another 2 months here instead of only a fortnight. We must get back to K[ash]g[a]r by the 19th or 20th at latest, as Harding leaves on the 25th. We did not come here direct via Akhtur & Altunluk, the route by which we returned last time; I had an important murder case at Yangi Hissar & we had to go there first in 2 marches & then across in 1 march to Altunluk, the village at the mouth of the Karatash. Leaving Kashgar at 4 P.M. on a brilliantly fine & hot day we rode 28 miles to Yapchan by 8 P.M., poor D. with a splitting headache all the time. Next morning, I rode & D. drove to Y. Hissar between 9 and 1, & put up at the Swedish Mission house which stands in a nice thick shady orchard & garden. D. kept quiet the rest of the day as she still had remains of her headache, & I paid & received various calls. Next day I spent the whole forenoon trying the murder case with the Amban. An interesting case of a murder by a Kirghiz 'budmash' [*a bad or evil person – DW*] of a Chitrali British subject riding alone with some money & silk in his saddle bags (the profit no doubt of opium smuggling into Turkestan from Afghanistan). The Chitrali arrived one night last December at the house of this Kirghiz, a lonely hut situated in a wild valley of the Kizil Tagh (I know the place), & asked for shelter for the night. The Kirghiz' wife and 3 children were all ill, apparently, & he told his guest he must sleep outside the hut, which the Chitrali,

dog-tired, agreed to. The latter accordingly went to sleep in the open on a 'Kirghiz' felt of his host's. At dead of night the Kirghiz got up, took a big stone, and threw it on the head of the sleeper, who never moved again. The murderer dragged the body away behind a rock on its felt, & next morning, telling his wife (who knew nothing of the affair) that he was going to the coal mine at which he works (a tiny surface-scratching affair run by the Chinese) he went and rolled up the corpse in the same felt and loaded it on the deceased's horse, which he then drove up a side glen where no-one ever went, a cul-de-sac of the Kizil Tagh. Away up near the snows he buried the body by rolling down big stones on to it; the poor horse he disposed of by tying its legs together and pushing it over a cliff. The money he took – some 20 taels (£ 3 about) – & the silk he told his wife were the proceeds of the sale of stone-martin skins. Four months later the Beg and Yuz bashi (corresponding to the Tehsildar & the lambardar of a similar valley in British Indian territory) – came to know by report that the Kirghiz's wife was wearing fine silk clothes & that the family, formerly the poorest of the poor, had blossomed out into comparative affluence; they got hold of the man & badgered him until at last he confessed. Meanwhile I had received enquiries through the A[ssistant] P[olitical] A[gent] Chitral as to the whereabouts of the missing man, whose relatives knew he had left Y. Hissar for Chitral in December, & were wondering why he hadn't turned up. I had of course requested the Ch[inese] authorities to make enquiries, & the Amban of Y. Hissar & his Begs put two and two together. When the murderer confessed, the Amban – a fat but intelligent ex-law student of Peking – had to trundle all the way out to the scene of the murder & hold the inquest – 4 marches from Y. Hissar. I sent my 'Aksakal' at Yangi Hissar & 2 friends of the deceased with the Magistrate; the body was exhumed & identified as that of the missing Chitrali. Under Chinese law, whenever a murder takes place, the chief Magistrate of the district must go and dig it up in person, no matter how inaccessible the place nor how long the body has been buried; as most Chinese ambans never stir outside their yamens on any other occasion, & never by any chance tour, they don't like murders occurring in their districts. It isn't a bad law at all, for China. After the trial was over, I told the Amban (thro' his Turki interpreter) the Bible story of Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite,[153] & he agreed that the cases bore a remarkable resemblance!

After the trial I had to undergo the usual Yamen feast, which lasted from 12 to 3:30, & then D. & I rode off to Altunluk on a glorious evening. As we mounted the slope on which the village is situated, the sun set right over the western Tien Shan mountains which separate Kashgar from Ferghana; it was so clear that the whole Kashgarian plain, 60 miles across, could be seen & the green villages stretching up to the foot-hills of both the Russian Pamirs to the S.-west and the Tien Shan to the west and north. But alas! ominous banks of clouds enveloped the Chinese Pamirs for which we were bound, which had been so clear in the morning.

During the next 2 days we turned or surmounted three different obstacles between us and the Promised Land of the Kaying Valley. First there was the Karatash river itself. This carries an enormous volume of water, but at Altunluk where it debouches on to the plain it flows in several different channels – seven, I counted altogether. It could thus be conquered in detail. But only just; 2 of the 7 were so swift and deep that it was only with the help of 10 stalwarts of Altunluk that we got our 10 baggage ponies, 7 donkeys laden with grain for the animals, 4 orderlies 3 servants 1 camel & our private donkey (Tooty, short for Tutankh Amen, the sweeper's mount) across them. One of the ponies was very nearly carried away with his load, & the donkeys had to be practically carried by 2 Altunluk men each; but we got off with no loss & only a little wetting of our legs & some of the loads.

153. Judges, esp. 5:24-27: the murder of a marauding invader who was first given traditional hospitality.

Three hours further on the path, along which the Altunluk guide was taking our caravan among the cliffs above the (now quite unfordable) Karatash, proved to be impassible, having been carried away by the recent heavy rains. At 3 in the afternoon, having been on the move since breakfast, we were faced with having to return to Altunluk and try to get to Khan Terek, our first camp in the K[ara]tash valley, by a long & wearisome waterless route through the foothills – a dismal prospect, & one that w[oul]d have lost us 2 days. Luckily at that very moment a funny little old Kirghiz who had once before guided us in the Kaying neighbourhood, came along. Quite by chance he happened to be returning to his home in one of the side valleys of the Karatash from Yangi Hissar; he had been held up just in front of us by the same wash-out. He is slightly dotty, & we couldn't at first make out much of what he said in his funny Kirghiz Turki, but eventually it appeared that he knew of a pass away up in the hills to our left, by which the bad bit of the track above the K[ara]tash river could be circumvented. So we decided to camp for the night near where we were, & I with 1 orderly rode 6 miles up a stony glen with the old Kirghiz, to see what the pass was like. I wasn't going to take the whole caravan up there (no water anywhere) next day in the broiling sun & then find the pass was impracticable! Luckily my reconnaissance proved that the pass was practicable, tho' terrifically steep at the top, where the track climbed at an angle which I measured as 1 in 3 up between 2 crags of a knife-edge ridge of rock. No zigzagging possible as the gully, rather like an Alpine 'chimney,' was only 15–20 ft. across. It took us 2 hours next day to pull & push the wretched ponies over this place – but we did it. Luckily it was 9000 ft. up & therefore cool. Twice ponies lost their heads & went down the khud [*alt.* khadd – *a precipitous hill-side – DW*]; luckily there was no cliff for them to go over, only a narrow-bottomed nullah for them to roll down, & they weren't hurt. Most of the loads had to be taken off the ponies & man-handled up. The rest of the march was easy, tho' an awkward corner of rock round which the waters of the Karatash lapped to a depth of 2 ft., had been circumnavigated at one place, & in one or two others small causeways had to be built across new nullahs cut across the track by the recent rains. Our camp that night (the 27th) was in a perfectly delicious place – a little orchard of apricot-trees situated near the end of a long spit of richly cultivated land at the lower end of a fine broad reach of the lower Karatash. It was deliciously cool after the hot lowlands (Khan-terek is 6,400 ft. up) & the wonderful verdure & rich colours of the rocks made a wonderful picture. Away up the valley, surmounted by brilliant snows lit by the evening sun, we could see the gloomy portals of the Lower Karatash Gorge – the river disappeared between terrific walls of rock soaring 7 or 8,000 ft. in the air, & if it had not been that we had twice been thro' that gorge we wouldn't have believed it possible for anyone to penetrate it. And yet the Lower K[ara] tash Gorge is easy compared with the Middle Gorge, thro' which we came down from the Pamirs last April on our spring tour. The walls of that gorge are ten thousand feet high, & the river-bed is pitched much steeper.

Next day we circumvented the Lower gorge, up which we couldn't go because the river has to be crossed 8 times in it, by going up the Chopkana Jilga, a valley with a steep but quite practicable pass at the top, which we discovered last October. It is the only other access there is to this valley, besides the mouth of the Kaying river where the latter joins the Karatash at a point just above the Lower gorge. If it was not for this comparatively easy, tho' high (11,000 ft.) pass, the Kaying Valley would be absolutely inaccessible during the 5 summer months, the best time. As it is, we have proved that this little Paradise, which knocks all Indian hill-stations I have seen absolutely sideways, can be reached at any time of the year by baggage ponies fully loaded.

We had quite heavy rain going up the Chopkana Jilga & had to take refuge in a Kirghiz hut with

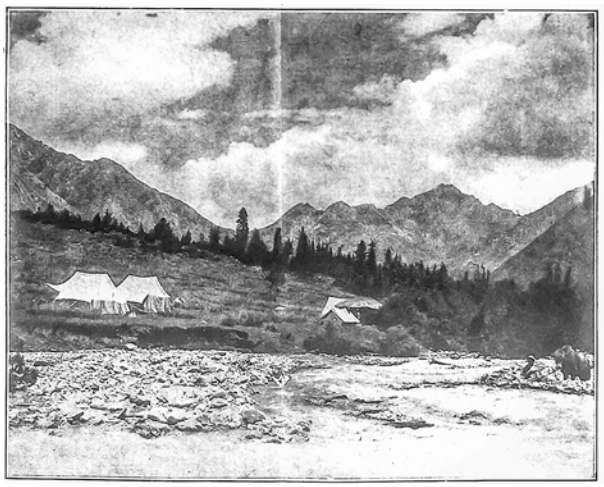


Fig. 126. The Skrines' camp in the Kaying Valley, July 1923 (after: The Times of India Illustrated Weekly, Pictorial Supplement*, 6 March 1927, center spread, the scan used here but a very poor quality representation of the original photograph). For other, better quality pictures, taken at this same campsite on 10 July, see below.*

a lady & her jolly fat little boy, while the rest of the caravan sheltered in the Kirghiz family's cattle-sheds. Afterwards it cleared up & we crossed the pass safely at 1, nearly losing a pony & load at the very top – the silly beast suddenly lost his head while his load was being adjusted & kicked himself over the side of the narrow path within 15 yards of the top. Luckily 4 men were within reach & they managed to prevent him rolling down the terrifically steep grass slope 500 ft. into a Kirghiz encampment among the pines below!

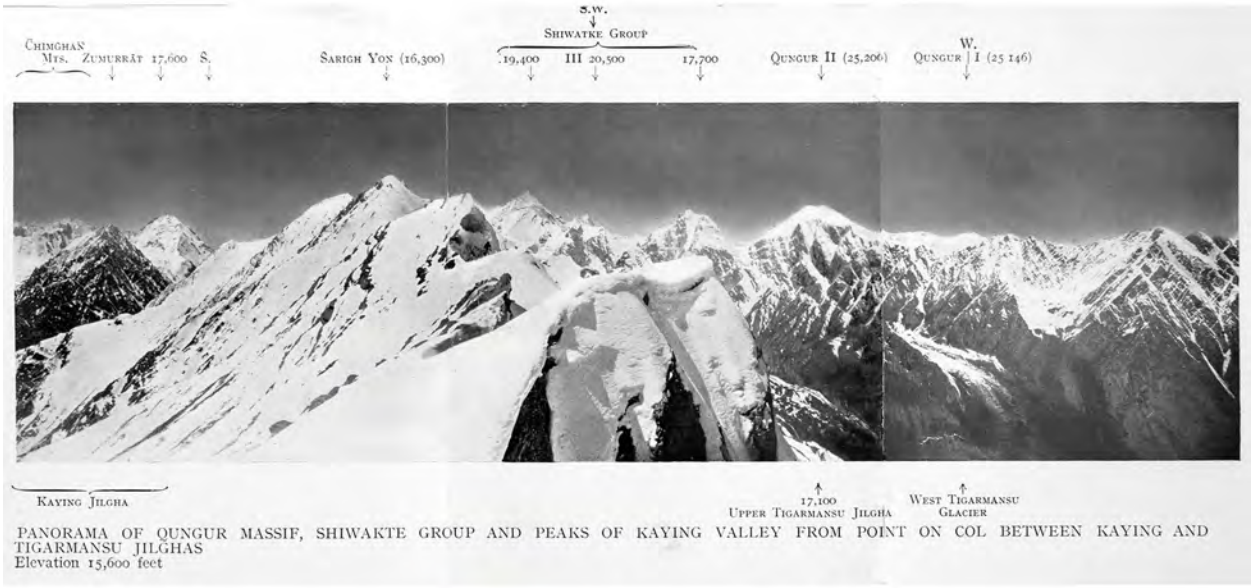
I need hardly say how happy we were to find ourselves [once] more in our own little Arcadia of pine forests & rich grass and multitudes of flowers & yaks and friendly, quaint Kirghiz & glaciers and incredibly high & steep mountains. [*Figs. 126, 127*] The place we have chosen for our camp is a nearly level meadow of the most wonderful grass, close to a brawling glacier stream, with the pine-forest coming within 30 yards of our tents on one side 100 yards on the other. Above the tops of the pine trees rise stupendous crags crowned with snow, & away at the head of the glen glows like a vast diamond a mighty mountain 20,000 ft. high with glaciers hanging from its flanks. Though there are 10 peaks from 13,000 to 20,000 ft. high within a radius of about 6 miles of the camp we are not by any means shut in: the valley is quite wide & the meadows are broad enough to pasture a brigade of cavalry. Apart from the mountains, however, the forest is the great attraction. It is not big, but it is virgin – I've never camped in a real virgin forest before. With only 10 families living in the whole Kaying valley & nobody else coming here at all, you can imagine the forest is in no danger of being cut down. Such tall straight pines, such moss and flowers beneath them, you never saw. D. & I have collected 30 varieties of flowers already, & are pressing them – there may be some rare or even hitherto unknown species.

Fig. 127. It is sometimes difficult to determine which of the many photos Skrine took in the Kaying date to their second visit there, July 1923; matching them with his sometimes generalized descriptions of his several climbs is likewise problematic. The selection here very likely dates from that visit, the image on the left possibly taken on one of his hikes with Doris, the middle image taken from the north side of the valley, probably above their main campsite and looking across somewhat down-valley. The circled location in that image is probably the location from which the third photo was taken, looking up the valley to its head. (Sources: 1) from the British Library Collection: IOLR Photo 920/1, unn. neg.; 2) Stewart collection; 3) after: HJ *17 (1952), facing p. 75).*



The only drawback at present is the weather, which isn't by any means the dry clear sunshiny variety we expected; it rains hard and often & we have got quite accustomed to the drumming of the rain on the outer flies of our tents. But as it never rains till evening or night, & is invariably brilliantly fine in the mornings, we don't mind so much. [*Fig. 128*] In fact we have already been 3 climbs, taking lunch with us & getting back before the evening rain. On each of these we have reached 14,000 ft. or thereabouts & in the 3 days we have discovered no less than 8 new glaciers, 3 of them being really big ones. Today we lunched at 14,200 ft. & then I left D. in a warm sunny place with a Kirghiz to look after her & climbed

Fig. 128. Skrine's photos of the Shiwakte and neighboring peaks which he worked so hard to get during the visit in the Kaying Valley in 1923, all the pictures taken during the first half of July. Top: panorama taken from what he designated as Station IV, as described in his "Alps of Qungur", GJ *1925a, p. 399 and* CCA *1925, p. 150, where this image is the foldout facing p. 258. Middle, l. to rt.: Chimgan and the Zumurrat group from Sarigh Yon (*GJ *1925a, foldout facing p. 401); the Shiwakte group from Sarigh Yon (*CCA *1925, facing p. 150); the Zumurrat Glacier from Sarigh Yon (*GJ *1925a, foldout facing p. 401). Bottom: Panorama looking SW from the top of the Zumurrat ridge, taken 14 July (*GJ *1925a, foldout facing p. 400).*



PANORAMA OF QUNGUR MASSIF, SHIWAKTE GROUP AND PEAKS OF KAYING VALLEY FROM POINT ON COL BETWEEN KAYING AND TIGARMANSU JILGHAS
Elevation 15,600 feet





SHIWAKTE GROUP, LOOKING SOUTH-WEST FROM STATION V, 18,200 FEET, ON ZUMURRAT RIDGE. 75° 31' E., 38° 36' N

with 2 men up a terrifically steep rock-face another 1500 ft. in order to get a view of the unmapped & unknown Shiwakte mountains. I failed to reach the top of the knife-edge ridge over 16,000 ft. high I was climbing, but I got a very fine view & have taken a panoramic photo which will I think help me very much in my mapping of this region.

The great task I have set myself, though, is to get up to a point whence I can see and photo the E. face of the mighty 25,000-ft. Kungur range, hitherto seen by no European. Owing to the terrific steepness of the mountains round this valley & the vast height of others between us & Kungur, the latter, tho' only 14 miles distant, is extraordinarily difficult to see. I have made 2 unsuccessful attempts already to climb to a point whence I can see it, but have now discovered a way up one of the peaks which will enable me to do so, I think. It will be a terrific climb, some 7,000 ft. clear out of the valley, but with the help of yaks for the lower portion & 2 or 3 sturdy men to carry my things, I hope to do it. If only Kungur is clear of clouds when I do see it, I'll get a grand and quite unique photo – which I think will interest the scientific world not a little.

Must stop now – the messenger has got to start early tomorrow for Kashgar & do it in 3 days to catch the mail. If he falls off any of the passes or gets drowned crossing the Karatash, you won't get this letter. Ever so many thanks for the lovely tie, darling Mum – I'm wearing it at this moment & love it. It ties beautifully, & the colour or rather mixture of colours is most attractive. It was lovely getting it in this remote spot – a link with Home indeed. D. loves her beads too.

***

Camp Kaying Bashi, 12 July 1923

I'm afraid I've missed another mail, quite unavoidably – it takes the messenger 4 to 5 days to get here from Kashgar with our letters, so that he can only get back in time for the next mail but one. After this you'll get your letters regularly again; we shall be back at Kashgar next Wednesday the 18th & will not be going on tour again for 6 weeks. [... *two long paragraphs here on furs*]

It's sad to think that we must soon leave this little Paradise, perhaps never to return. We talk of visiting the Kaying Valley on our way down to India next year by making a 4 day's detour from the Gez route to Tashkurgan, but it probably won't come off. We're sure to be late in starting from Kashgar & won't have time. When you see my photos that I've taken this time you'll get some idea of the beauties of this place – but only a partial one, for you won't get the flowers of a hundred kinds which enamel every yard of turf and every foot almost of hill-side – nor the rich green of the meadows nor the deep blue green of the more distant forest nor the intense blue of the sky – when it's fine! For one has to pay for the flowers and the turf, just as one has to pay in the Highlands for the rich vegetation – it rains, little or much (usually but little, be it said) nearly every day. But one doesn't mind – because, firstly, the mornings are always fine; secondly, whenever it rains more than usual, the next day is brilliant all through; thirdly, because after years of the 'lands of perpetual sunshine' it's lovely to feel real rain on one's face, & to see mountains wreathed in mists once more. I've taken (and developed) a superb set of photos – both of quaintly-costumed Kirghiz & of the unrivalled scenery – enough to stock an entire picture-gallery. When I get Home, as a matter of fact, I'm thinking of having an Exhibition! At any rate, to find room for half my beautiful, or interesting, or both, photos, I'd have to write half a dozen travel-books – and I haven't time for that!

Taking full advantage of the fine clear days, I've both plane-table mapped and photoed a considerable section of the mysterious blank space on the map east of the great Kungur range. Not all of it, alas,

because at this season it is physically impossible to climb to the tops of certain peaks and passes, from which I know now that the rest of the country could be seen – because of the snow. We are in fact a month too early for my object, namely getting a clear view of the whole of the East face of the Kungur massif itself. Had it been August, there would have been much less snow & I could have climbed much higher than we have. It's a pity, but we had to come when we did, because of Harding. H. returned from Khotan 3rd June, and two months of him at a stretch was unthinkable. Besides, we shall have to begin our autumn tour earlier than last year in order to see the country we want to see, Ili, better known as Dzungaria. To cross the difficult Muzart Pass & get back over it again before the winter, we must leave here not later than 1st Sept. So an August trip here was impossible. However, I've mapped and photoed enough to make an interesting little lecture to the R.G.S. I think, in fact I know, that the scientific world will be interested in the results of my intensive study of this region. It is, in a way, unique, because so difficult of access and so amazingly complex from the physical & geological point of view. Besides mapping & photoing, I've collected specimens of rocks &, with Doris, of the flowers of the different levels of this valley we visited, from 9,000 to 14,500 ft. D. has been awfully good, pressing and painting pictures of the various specimens, some of which are extraordinarily beautiful. We hope & pray that one or two of them may be rarities – possibly new varieties 'Polyanthus Skrinii' sort of thing![154] When we get home I'm going to try and get lantern-slides (in colour of course) made from her pictures.[155] I think she'd like to see her pictures on the screen at an R.G.S. lecture. It's exciting work, exploring in country like this. I think I told you that one of my chief objects, besides getting a view of the E. face of Kungur, was to find the mysterious Shiwakte range, which Stein heard about and indicated with a '?' in his map, but never saw. Well, last year on one of my climbs I caught a glimpse of tremendously high mountains wreathed in cloud, half behind a nearer giant. I guessed it might be the Shiwakte but wasn't certain, & anyhow couldn't fix it on my map. This year, after 3 unsuccessful attempts (each time baffled by either snow or cloud) I have found the Shiwakte. Seen it twice from different points – each view sufficiently startling – and what's more, I've got excellent photos of the range, which must run up to 21–22,000 ft. or more. Most striking it is – with the most wonderful 'aguilles' and ice-cones and hanging glaciers & vast cornices of ice like castles made of icebergs.

We've also seen a lot of the local Kirghiz, and are very popular. Chiefly thanks to D. who is a regular Lady Bountiful and lady doctor, both at once, & is thus much sought after. Only 8 families live actually in this 'jilga' (glen) but the people from two or three neighbouring 'alps' frequently cross one or more high passes to come and see us & get 'daru' (medicine). To one of these little alps, called Bozargha, we propose to go on leaving here Sunday, just D. & self & 3 men with beddings and tooth-brushes and a minimum of kitchen utensils. Our baggage-horses can't go to Bozargha because 2 of the 3 'dawans' (passes) are only passable by yaks with light loads; so our yaks [*sic, read* ponies – *DW*] are going straight

154. Skrine was to be disappointed in this. Both on this trip into the Kaying and on his subsequent visit, he and Doris collected and pressed specimens. On his return to Britain, he showed them to the specialists in the Botanical Gardens in Edinburgh and then sent them to The Herbarium in Kew for identification. The Stewart family papers contain a typed 'List of Plants Collected. Determinations and distributional details,' drawn up there by W. B. Turrill, M.Sc., F.L.S., from which it appears that all of the plants had been previously identified. He did note in the case of *Trollius lilacinus Bunge* that 'the Kashgar mountains would appear to be near the S.W. limit of its distribution.' For Turrill's summary assessment, printed as a supplement to Skrine's article on 'The Alps of Qungur', see *The Geographical Journal* 66/5 (1925), pp. 409-410; for his fuller report, see our Appendix 1c.

155. I have not seen Doris's paintings of the flowers, which might still exist, possibly reproduced in lantern slides for Skrine's lecture at the RGS. These lantern slides apparently still exist in the collections at the Royal Geographical Society, but they could not be made available at the time I was looking at the other Skrine photos there.

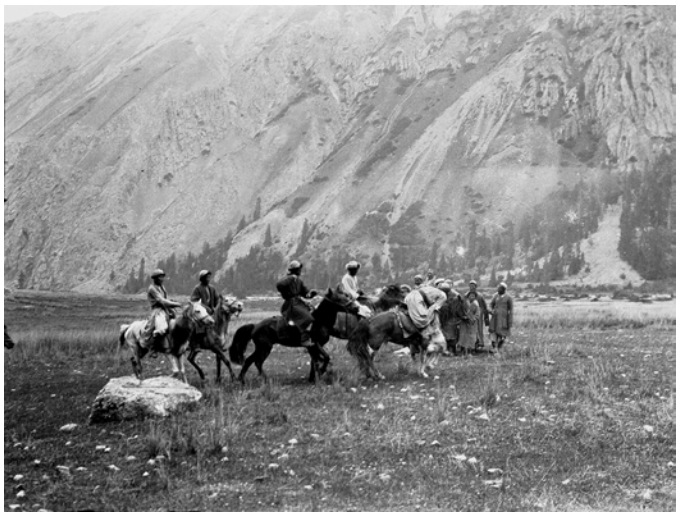


Fig. 129. Skrine's photograph of the 'goat game' which the Kaying Kyrgyz put on for their guests on 10 July 1923 (reproduced with permission from the Royal Geographical Society [London], no. CPS/00029).

to Saman and waiting for us, & we are taking yaks to Bozargha & staying there 2 nights to explore; I have great hopes of further light on the geography of the region, & a new view of Kungur, if not of the Shiwakte. Last Tuesday we had a 'jour de fête' for all the Kirghiz, men women & children, who liked to come. D. had a ladies' tea party, and I a men's feast – this was preceded by the game of 'oghlak,' which you will find described, with photos, in Sykes' 'Through Deserts & Oases.'[156] [*Fig. 129*] It is a kind of Rugby football on horseback played with the headless body of a freshly-slaughtered goat (I paid for the 'football' which cost 8 tengehs or 1/8 d.). In this remote little colony of Kirghiz only 8 ponies & men could be scraped up for the game (which the Kirghiz themselves offered to play as a 'tamasha' for our benefit) & it wasn't much of a show compared with the



Fig. 130. The Kyrgyz at the 'fête' the Skrines hosted in the Kaying Valley on 10 July 1923. (Sources, clockwise from upper left: from the British Library Collection: IOLR Photo 920/1, unn. neg.; reproduced with permission from the Royal Geographical Society [London], no. 018244; from the British Library Collection: IOLR 920/1 [59]; reproduced with permission from the Royal Geographical Society [London], no. CPS/00027). There is another RGS photo from the same occasion, no. 018241, which shows all the Kyrgyz women at the fête formally lined up in back of a ground cloth, with the valley in the background.

156. The Sykes' photos to which he refers (published in Sykes and Sykes 1920, between pp. 150 and 151), which are good closeups, may be viewed online in an album in the Duke University David M. Rubenstein Rare Book and Manuscript Library, https://archives.lib.duke.edu/catalog/sykespercy_aspace_ 22383a873d03755b8493e2f92d71dcd5; […]_2698712d47b7a35ae5db48c0bd425fb5; […]_76c5729a3da073cc97123fc2983bf21a.

elaborate and fast 'oghlak' played on the Pamir plateau. But it was interesting to watch, & the ponies' staying-power was a revelation. Afterwards we all trooped back through the juniper woods to camp, the winner with the 'football' as the prize of victory at his saddle-bow, & sat down to our respective feasts. [*Fig. 130*] D. had the ladies & small children, 18 or 20 in number in a circle behind her tent, & picturesque they looked with their flowered silk and cotton gala-dresses & wonderful head-dresses, mountains of muslin & embroidery & fringes of tassels – they tucked into highly sugared tea & their own kind of bread & pastry & masses of boiled mutton straight from the cauldrons. I had about the same number of men & boys in a circle about 50 yards away on the grass, tucking into boiled mutton (which they ate with their fingers with their own waist-bands spread in front of them as plates) & tea; I didn't have bread baked for the men, but gave them 2 sheep (total cost 7 s.), all of which they polished off without difficulty. I got some excellent photos of each stage of the day's proceedings, which you will get in due course – it was a quaint, homely and picturesque jour de fête none the less so for the grand and beautiful back-ground, the mighty pinnacles of rock, the pine forests, the hanging glaciers, the eternal ice of the incredibly high peaks soaring up at the head of the valley.

Every day we have picknicked, either breakfast (once lunch or tea) & every day in a more wonderful place than the last. Some of the glaciers we have irreverently made Bovril on ... the mossy ledges high up on precipices we have boiled our tea-kettle on ... the exquisite little glens whose inmost fastnesses we have penetrated... One such we took our tea-basket up yesterday. Its crystal-clear burn issues from narrow gates in the steep grassy hill-side a couple of hundred yards from our camp. You clamber up the stream-bed thro' a short winding gorge & then find yourself in a wee secluded Paradise of grassy lawns, thickets of juniper, tall pines, willow, alder & even – would you believe it? – <u>rowan</u>! And not only rowan, but wild currants – just to make the illusion more complete. And flowers, flowers everywhere, filling every nook & cranny in the glen, polyantus, antirrhynun, mallows, marigolds, blue and white forget-me-nots, orchises, vetches of every colour of the rainbow, purple and pink bell-like flowers we don't know the name of, violets ordinary & violets <u>yellow</u> (never saw these latter anywhere but at Kaying) saxifrage, millions of marvellously blue gentians, rock-roses, King-cups, everything you can think of... And in the inmost recess of the glen, a lovely waterfall ... a pure white column of water pouring over a 50-ft. cliff which said 'thus far shalt thou go & no further.'[157] This lovely glen is only one of hundreds of ideal picnic-places within reach of our camp. In spite of the terrific height of the mountains and their almost perpendicular sides, in spite of the glaciers & Arctic conditions <u>above</u> 14,000 ft., <u>below</u> that level you get true Alpine luxuriance of grass, flowers and trees, especially on north-facing slopes where the snow lasted longest & the heat of the sun has not had such effect.

<u>Bozarga, Sunday 15th July</u>. We stopped an extra day at Kaying & came here today instead of yesterday. This enabled me to do one more big climb for surveying purposes yesterday. It was a glorious day & I managed to get up to the top of a knife-edge ridge 16,250 ft. high which I had previously failed to reach owing to snow. There was less snow this time in the 'couloir' up which I and our Hunza orderly Sangi Khan (grand mountaineer) & 2 Kirghiz lads crawled & hauled ourselves for 2000 feet sheer. It was a terrible climb – 6000 ft. up from our camp between breakfast & lunch, & the 2000-ft. couloir was a terror. There was still too much snow in the upper part for it to be possible to go up the bottom of the couloir & we had to keep to the south-facing rock face which was mostly free of snow. As half the rocks were loose & came away in our 'ands & the other half were covered with needle points & <u>razor edges, you</u> may imagine one didn't come through unscathed. When I came down I had: 14 cuts

157. A quote from the Bible, Job 38:11, in the King James version 'Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further. And here shall thy proud waves be stayed?'

& scratches on my hands; 2 bruises; 1 violent headache. The Kirghiz gave in about 500 ft. from the top & Sangi Khan & I after having a bit of food went up by ourselves. It was well worth while tho'. As I had expected, the position was a magnificent one & enabled me to draw 'rays' on my plane-table to, and photograph, two most important new ranges and several new peaks; with the result that I can now claim to have definitely discovered the Shiwakte Range, to have fixed their position & traced their connexion with the main Kungur range and with the mountains of the Karatash basin. My plates too, if they are successful (& I have no reason to suppose they won't be, tho' I haven't developed them yet) will be both beautiful and unique & will I think interest the geographical & mountaineering worlds. One thing is certain, & that is that although Kungur & the Shiwakte may be lower than Everest, they are far more inaccessible & would never be climbed, however many years expeditions tried to climb them; for whereas Everest has rock all the way to the top from the North Col, i.e., the last 6000 ft., both Kungur & the Shiwakte are completely encased in ice hundreds of feet thick – the Shiwakte, indeed, look like nothing but Pelion upon Ossa[158] of icebergs, rising up tier upon tier until you think that they must come down. I never saw anything like it.

Today we left our caravan to find its way back to Saman in the Lower Karatash valley by itself, and came here on yaks, with a minimum of bedding & cooking utensils. Doris turned out an excellent three-course dinner this evening, thick soup, fried chicken & stewed apricots with custard, all by herself (the chicken had been previously boiled, that's all). This is a wee Kirghiz encampment on a perched up 'alp' belonging to a friend of ours, Samsaq Bai, a funny old wizened gnome-like Kirghiz with a strange habit of bursting into elfin laughter at unexpected moments. We crossed 2 passes & an excessively steep forest-clad mountain-side seamed with land-slides to come here, while the last bit of the journey was worthy of the cinema – we dived down into the depths of a terrific red gorge, rocks red as blood, and climbed like flies up an almost perpendicular cliff on the other side [*see photo below taken in 1924, Fig. 187*] – If we hadn't known that people lived up the glen we climbed, we wouldn't have believed it possible to get up it at all. The path had been carefully made by the Kirghiz, making use of every ledge & cranny & reinforcing them with logs laid across poles sticking out of the cliff. The yaks toiled up, we hanging on to their tails, & finally we came out onto a glorious Alpine country of rich green pasture and pine-crowned red sandstone crags, glens full of trees and flowers & clear streams, & vistas to the south & east of high greyish brown peaks & hills descending, tier after tier, to the plains which looked like a mighty ocean stretching away to the north. Ankle-deep in flowers, we made our way up to a sheltered 'Alp' on which were the 'ak-ois' (Kirghiz tents) of Samsaq Bai. Our ak-oi is a cosy one, not too big, on a grassy knoll below the settlement. We are surrounded by baa-ing sheep & goats, grunting yaks & whinnying ponies, & a Kirghiz above is twanging his 'rabâb' & singing an endless song; it doesn't sound as if we shall sleep much!

D. is having a great time this little side-trip doing the cooking. She's a born cook & loves nothing better than a chance of making herself useful in that way. As we have plenty of methylated spirits with us, we've decided to dispense with a fire in the middle of the ak-oi (the proper thing) & she is cooking on a couple of spirit lamps. It is remarkably warm – much warmer than at Kaying Bashi, tho' it is 1000 ft. higher & much more open – curious. I surveyed the whole of our march here today with my plain table, as the country is quite unknown, & this evening I took my table up to a grassy point 500 ft. above the camp (12,000 ft. altogether) & got the exact position of this place on my map. One of my

158. From Wiktionary (https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/pile_Pelion_on_Ossa): 'From the Ancient Greek story of Otus and Ephialtes, who piled Mount Pelion on Mount Ossa in an attempt to storm Mount Olympus,' with the idiomatic meaning 'to make a difficult situation even worse.'

reasons for coming here is to be within close reach of a dawan (pass) whence a very useful view must be obtainable, not only of Kungur but of the back of the high peaks to the west of the Kaying valley. To my delight I find the dawan quite close above us, 20 minutes on a yak, so that if it is clear tomorrow D. will be able to come with me & enjoy the view too. It has so far been a great pity, that owing to the terrific height & steepness of the mountains round Kaying, she hasn't been able to climb to any point from which a good view out of the valley has been obtainable. I've barely been able to do it myself. She's a genuine geographer, that is to say she takes a great interest in our explorations & has a good head for locality & she always gets genuinely excited when a new view is to be seen. She loves this life of roving about wild beautiful mountain scenery exploring new glens & discovering new glaciers & peaks more than anything she has ever done in her life before. She doesn't want to go back to Kashgar even, much less to civilization!

Monday evening. What a surprise & disappointment! the remarkable warmth of yesterday evening turned out to be the prelude of a real dirty day – wind and rain from morning till evening, & bitter cold. We literally haven't been able to stir from our ak-oi all day! but have lived huddled up in coats & dressing-gowns & rugs, D. cooking breakfast, lunch & dinner in turn, I writing, reading and working at my map. Sickening, as it's our only day in this beautiful bit of country – there was so much to explore & see & now we shall have to go down to Saman tomorrow & join our caravan, for we can't afford another day, nor have we food enough. Apart from the disappointment, the discomfort in the ak-oi, the roof of which leaks while the holes in the side-felts let in the draught like an Arctic blizzard, has been rather trying. We've been dodging the dripping from the roof and wrapping up our legs in rugs to keep off the draught all day, & yet everything we've got is damp & our feet have been cold all day! Nevertheless, we don't despair; it's sure to clear up during the night, & before starting downhill tomorrow we ought to get a fine view from the dawan. Anyhow, D's had a great day cooking and I've done a lot of useful writing & map making, which had to be done some time or other. In spite of the rain, D. had 'hospital parade' this morning as usual, dispensing medicines & rubbing sore infants & advising Kirghiz ladies as to diet, all in the driving sleet with a group of gaily and quaintly dressed women & children crowded round her – men too, for they all bring their ailments to her. One woman had come all the way from a wild glen among the snows beyond Kaying, with her child, crossing a snowy 15,000 ft. pass and three others as well, and several foaming torrents – all in order to consult D. as to how to be sure of having some more children!! D. was rather stumped by this 'case.'

I'll have to close this letter tonight, as we shall be marching very rapidly the next three days & will barely get into Kashgar in time to catch the Gilgit courier. [... *a paragraph here on Etherton*]

By the way, the wristlet watch arrived safely from Selfridge's. Many thanks for bothering about it. I'm sorry to say it doesn't go properly even now, as it loses about 3 minutes every day. It's a dud watch, I fear, as I said before, when I first sent it. You know, you were rather taken in by Selfridge's over that watch when it appeared for repairs; they stuffed you up about the 'hard usage' & 'horrible wear & tear' it must have had. As a matter of fact it hadn't had any hard usage & very little wear. Gerard brought it up in his luggage, & I wore it at Kashgar only – no rough usage at all. Selfridge's pointed out to you the state of the strap and the black on the silver of the watch, & made out this showed terrible wear & tear, probably wetting. Why, no leather strap lasts more than 3 months in a hot climate, while the damp of the Bombay–Red Sea journey home is quite enough to blacken any silver article – the fact was that after I had been wearing the watch, under ordinary conditions, at Kashgar for 2 or 3 months, it began stopping at irregular intervals & was continually losing time – that's why I sent it home, carefully packed.



Fig. 131 This view of the Kongur range apparently was taken on 17 July 1923, when Clarmont and Doris hiked up above their camp on what he recorded in a P.S. of 18 July was a perfectly clear day with spectacular views (after: GJ *1925a, foldout facing p. 400). His map (Fig. 132) marks specifically the Aqsai davan on their route.*

It may of course have been opened by those infernal Customs people, who cause no end of loss and disappointment to the public by their beastly habit of opening carefully packed parcels & doing them up again carelessly; but if nothing was visibly wrong with the watch when it arrived but a rotted strap and black on the silver case, I'm afraid Selfridge's were talking through their hats.

One more matter. You remember Sykes asking you for 35 of my Persian negatives for publication in his next book? I wrote to say that I was very sorry I would certainly want some of them for my book, & asked that the lot he wanted could be sent me so that I could choose which he could have. Sir P[ercy], I'm afraid a little piqued, returned the lot to you & wrote to me that he couldn't think of having the negs sent out to me as they might get lost in the post. Well, I'd be very glad if you would send out those Persian negs., the ones he wanted, all the same. There's no risk if you register them, & insure for, say, £ 20 (I'll pay cost) & I'd like to do the old bird a good turn & give him any negs. I won't be publishing myself. Could you send them along some time? As soon as poss. after receipt of this would be a good thing, as otherwise the Srinagar P.O. won't receive insured parcels for Gilgit. The season for insured post between Kashmir & Gilgit, i.e., Kashgar too, is June to Oct. inclusive, beastly nuisance it is, too [...]

P.S. **18 July 1923 Altunluk**. Just reopening the day before reaching Kashgar to say that after an appalling day cooped up in an ak-oi 11,600 ft. up at Bozarga, yesterday dawned perfect, & it & today have been two of the finest days I have ever known. We climbed on yaks to a grassy point 1500 ft. above the ak-ois & saw a stupendous view: hundreds of miles of snowy ranges on one side, hundreds of miles of plain, oasis & desert, bounded by the infinitely distant Tien Shan on the other [*Fig. 131*]. Then we came down & marched all day thro' the most wonderful scenery of vivid green pastures, masses of wild roses red crags 1500 ft. high crowned with pines, waterfalls, yaks grazing among flowers, & high over all appallingly high snow peaks positively blazing like fire – flames of snow-white fire licking the zenith...[159] Great Scott! I'm lapsing into poetry! My VI[th] Book don at Winchester, Montague John Randall would have blue-pencilled this last remark 'P', as he frequently did on my compositions – in the margin of a prose comp: it meant 'poetical' & in that of a verse comp, it meant 'prosy.'

[*Last page of this letter is a map showing route taken on trip June-July 1923* (*Fig. 132, next page*).]

159. Presumably inspired by Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, Book II: 201 ff. (A. S. Kline version) (https://ovid.lib.virginia.edu/trans/Metamorph2.htm#476707496, last accessed 17 August 2024): 'The earth bursts into flame, in the highest regions first [...] The meadows turn white [...] The woodlands burn, with the hills. Mount Athos is on fire [...] Etna blazes with immense redoubled flames [...]'

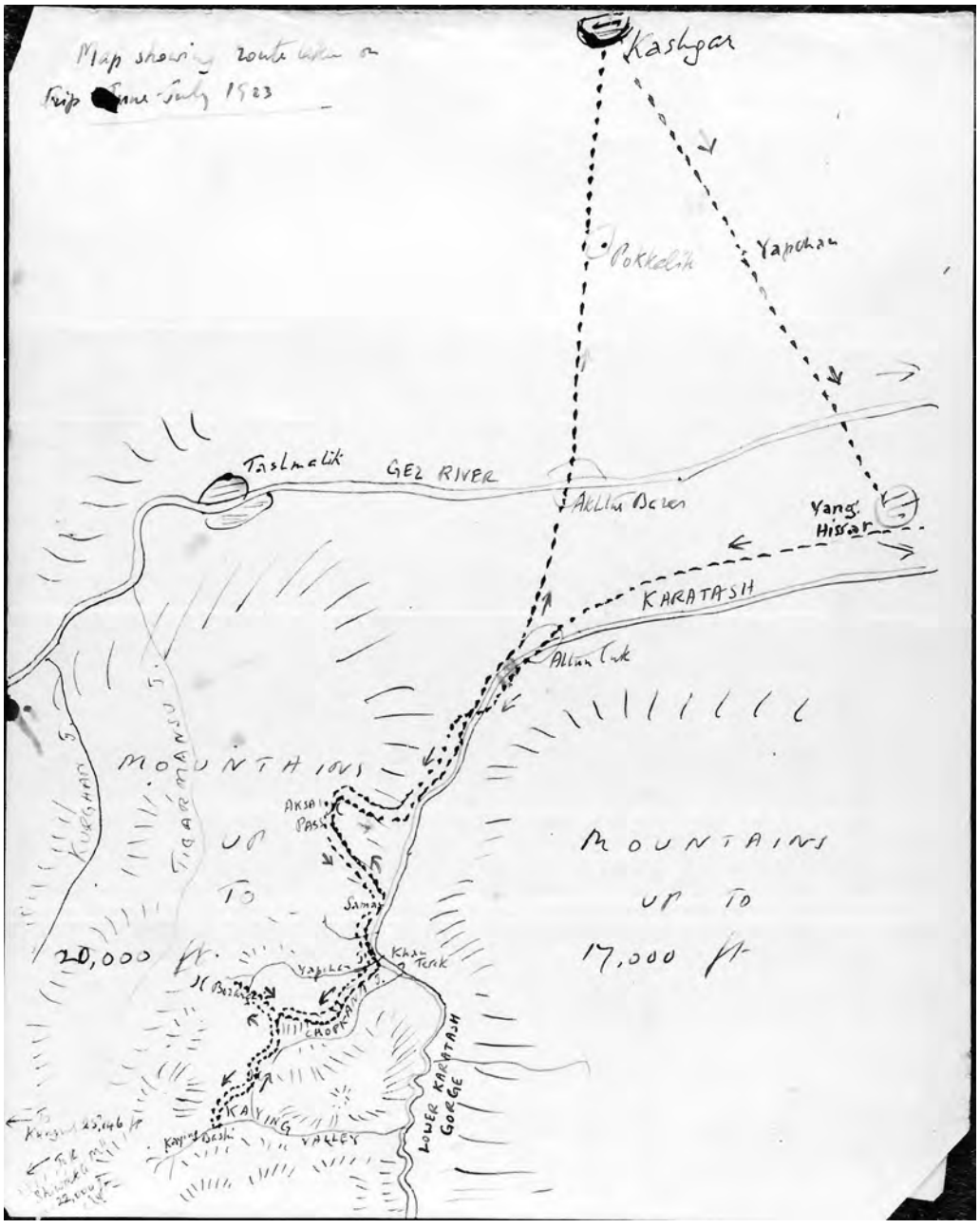


Fig. 132. Skrine's sketch map of his June-July trip into the mountains (CPS to HSS 12 July 1923 with P.S. addendum dated 18 July, from the British Library Collection: IOLR MSS EurF 154/9).

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[*I have condensed quite a bit of Skrine's litany of complaints about Harding in this letter. Indeed, Harding had been writing separately to the Legation in Beijing, though whether most of those letters merit Skrine's characterization of them requires further study. There certainly were differences of opinion between the China specialists at the Legation and the Government of India officials. In the 'non-recommendation' he wrote about Harding to the British Minister in Beijing a few days later (see below, pp. 352-355, for his letter to Sir Ronald Mcleay and the Minister's response), he provides what in many ways is a more balanced assessment of his now departed Vice Consul than he tended to do in venting to his parents.*]

Kashgar, 25 July 1923

Harding has gone, for which Heaven be praised, I am now without a Vice Consul, and will have my work cut out to keep things going for another year [...]

He's left things in a muddle – not only the work I handed over to him when I went up the Karatash last month, but his own work. He's given me an unconscionable amount of extra work & worry by his goings-on & his slackness & carelessness [...] What's more, he's been opposing me & my policy steadily throughout, in two or three important matters [...] He's perpetually been writing demi-official or private letters to his pals at the Legation [in Beijing –*DW*] throwing doubt & even ridicule on my policy, sometimes he has shown me these letters, at other times he hasn't. Being 'more Chinese than the Chinese' [...], his main idea is to prove what fine administrators the Chinese are, how excellent individually are the Ambans etc. how annoying & unreasonable the British subjects in this province are and (above all) how ignorant other Consuls General, Consuls & Vice Consuls are of the Chinese & their ways [...] The Legation like other branches, the F[oreign] O[ffice], are jealous of the Gov't. of India and would take H.'s side in any altercation [...]

Now I must tell you about our distinguished visitor. We've got a General staying with us! Brig[adie]r Gen[era]l (retired) R. Pigot, late of the Rifle Brigade, D.S.O. & M.C., served in France right through the war with great credit.[160] A thoroughly sensible, matter of fact well-bred British officer, tactful considerate and unprejudiced – in every way the exact antithesis of Harding, and therefore profound relief from the latter. Gen. Pigot has travelled, mostly in search of sport (he's a keen, but humane sportsman of the naturalist, rather than the trophy-hunting type) in most countries of the world, & tho' being a typical regimental officer he's a little borné and 'roast-beef' in his point of view,[161] he takes a thorough interest in everything he sees & is very interesting about the countries he has travelled & shot in [...] He got a visa on his passport at the Chinese Legation for Kashgar & came straight here, without worrying the Gov't. of India (except for an inquiry which they passed on to me and which I answered in the affirmative last spring, as to whether he could shoot in the Tien Shan with safety). He travelled via Leh over the Karakoram route [...] I wasn't expecting him [...] Well, we arrived

160. Brigadier General Sir Robert Pigot, 6th Baronet of Patshull (1882-1977) would later publish an account of his big game hunting, *Twenty-Five Years Big Game Hunting* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1928), in which Chs. XV-XVII (pp. 206-289) cover the expedition that brought him to Kashgar. He devotes several pages to his route from Leh to Kashgar and the difficulties of the Karakorum Pass; there also is an interesting section on the Muzart Pass. The book is illustrated with a few dozen quality black and white photographs. For Skrine's response to Pigot's geopolitical advice to the Government of India on returning from his big game expedition, see below., pp. 593-596.

161. Borné = narrow-minded; roast-beef ~ embodying Englishness. Cf. OED example: 'Her husband is one of the thin dried old race of true hunter and shooter men and roast beef of old England-men'; https://www.oed.com/dictionary/roast-beef_n?tab=meaning_and_use#176947675.

here in Kashgar from the mountains, after a 45 mile march 35 of which D. rode with me, at 3 on a hot afternoon – & heard that the General was expected the same day! [...] Frantic confusion, D. & I scurrying about moving furniture, producing basins & lamps & table cloths & flowers & curtains & carpets & generally 'doing up' the late quarters of the wireless telegraph operator (vacant since April '22 when the Consulate receiving station was 'axed,' except for Guaita's visit last September) [...] However, Gen. Pigot didn't turn up till next morning, & was very nice about it all, so all was well. He will be with us a week or ten days, we hope, at least, & then goes up to Aksu, over the Muzart Pass into Ili & (after a couple of months or so shooting) back via the Yulduz Valley and Kuchar. This is roughly (cutting out most of the time for shooting) the same trip I was intending to do with D. this autumn; we won't now be able to go as far as the Yulduz & Kuchar, but I still intend to pop over the Muzart Pass & have a look at Ili (= 'Dzungaria' in the books) & pop back again before it gets too cold. Pigot will be very useful, as he has promised to send us back 'Khabar' [news – *DW*] in Ili regarding the shooting, so that we shall be able to make the most of the 3 or 4 weeks which is all we shall be able to manage in the wonderful Tekkes Valley. Pigot isn't going back this autumn to India as most people do from these parts – he's staying over the winter & will be back in Kashgar in Jan. & Feb., which will be nice. He intends to shoot in the Pamirs in the very early spring – the best time to get the ovis poli, if only you can stand the cold.

<u>26 July 1923</u>. [...]

Got a short letter from Howell this week, in which he told me (dated July 6th) that the G. of I. had 'definitely refused' to have E. back at Kashgar. Before, it was merely 'did not propose' to send him back here; evidently E. has been pulling strings at home and trying to wangle himself back here after all. Howell says that 'there is talk of a criminal prosecution' and that the lawyers are looking into the matter, but he says that in view of the difficulty of producing evidence at Lahore of irregularities committed at Kashgar, he himself does not think a prosecution advisable. However, it is evidently the Accounts people who are after E.'s blood, & it may not rest with the F[oreign] & P[olitical] [Department] as to whether he is to be prosecuted or not. If the lawyers say he can be, it is quite likely he <u>will</u> be. It will serve him right if he is prosecuted, but it will be a beastly business. I myself said very much the same as Howell does about the inadvisability of prosecution at the end of my last report on the subject, dated 23rd June, which crossed his letter. I told you in my last letter that Harding had written to me in camp about a 'defence' put up by E.; I saw the papers on return here, and they are very interesting. It seems that way back in March the G. of I. sent extracts from my report of 18th Jan. to the India Office & asked them to tackle E. about them. Mr. Wakely of the India Office, whom I know, had E. up in person. It must have been an awkward interview. The extracts sent by the I.O. were only about E.'s transactions in exchange through the medium of Gov't. cheques (Supply Bills), none of the other numerous charges being at that stage touched. E. after the interview put in an involved and wordy Memorandum, followed by a Note, in which he attempted to throw dust in the eyes of Gov't. & explain how, in drawing Rs. 74,000 worth of S.B.'s when half a lakh's worth would have been ample, he was actuated by the noblest motives and was benefitting Gov't. at his own expense. It's all extraordinarily thin, and the F. & P. people, in their rejoinder to the India Office (copy of which is also sent me) have no difficulty in pointing this out. In official phraseology, they say that E.'s 'excuses ... do not appear to be borne out by the facts,' they call his actions 'indefensible' and wind up by stating that '<u>prima facie</u> Lieut. Col. Etherton's explanation does not appear to the Govt. of India to be satisfactory.' Since then the matter has progressed a good deal further, as you know, and I think we may safely assume that it will be friend Etherton's funeral all right.

Good Heavens, it's nearly midnight and I've got to be up early tomorrow getting the dak off. I am without an office at present, Harding having insisted on taking the Mir Munshi, Moh[amma]d Nasir, with him to Yarkand and the 2nd Clerk being ill, beastly nuisance [...]

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[*One volume of Skrine's field diary has been preserved, as BL IOLR MS EurF 154/43, the first entry dated 30 July 1923. Presumably there was an earlier volume which served as the basis for the travel diary on the journey to Kashgar he kept referring to which he re-wrote and sent home. Possibly he so marked up the original with his re-writing that he chose not to save it. As appropriate in what follows, I will include passages from the 'Field Diary', abbreviated FD, with an indication of the page numbers and set off by a different font.*]

[*FD, p. 1*] **30 July 1923**. Mure Anokin told me a story of a Kashgar mullah who intoned the prayers from the roof of a mosque next to a big clothes shop. One day they noticed that some clothes were missing from the courtyard in which the shop man kept his stock. Precautions doubled, door locked more securely, night watchman put on. Thieving went on. For a whole month clothes continued to disappear mysteriously. Finally one evening prayer-time which the mullah was intoning the call to prayer, a pair of lady's trousers was observed ascending on the end of a string from the clothes-store towards the roof of the mosque. The mullah had been fishing with a hook and a string all the time!

A clear young voice intoning the call to prayer was heard from a neighbouring mosque. Mure Anokin told me it belonged to a mulla[h] of 70.

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2 August 1923

[...] [Gen. Pigot] leaves us tomorrow (Friday) for Aksu en route for Ili. I advised him to go by the upper road, via Uch Turfan, as being shorter and cooler, but he wants to see the Maralbashi jungles and the chances of getting sport there in the winter, & so he is going that way. He'll have an awful time with the mosquitoes (which are reputed to be as big as wasps) & the gadflies in the jungles. He will be crossing the Muzart Pass towards the end of the month & shooting in the Tekkes & Agiass Valleys in Sept.–Oct. after which he proposes to work round by the Yulduz Valley & Kuchar back to Aksu by the Tarim River. We ourselves hope to cross the Muzart Pass at the beginning of October, & Pigot is going to leave word for us at Muzartski Post on the Ili side as to where he has had good sport or khabar of sport. We shall only be able to allow ourselves a fortnight or so actually in the Tekkes Valley or thereabouts – I'd like to spend the whole autumn there! but alas, there's no Fitzmaurice for me to leave in charge here [...]

Please thank Sir. P[ercy Sykes] very much for the information about the S. Persia medals. I will certainly write when I've time to Army H.Q. & ask if I'm eligible for any nice little bits of ribbon to stick in my coat! I doubt if either Lorimer or I will get anything, tho', because in the notification about medal issues they always say 'on the strength' or 'attached to the strength' of some force. Neither Lorimer or I were at any time attached to or in any way officially connected with any military force. S. Persia was not a war area (I don't quite see how they make it one now!) – we were ordinary Consular officers in a neutral foreign country and the S[outh] P[ersian] R[ifles] were a part (theoretically) of the Persian forces. However, I'm glad Sir P. is looking into the matter.

I'm keeping a careful eye on your fur information for next winter and noting the friends & relations who want furs [...]

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Kashgar, 8 August 1923

General Pigot left us last Friday, and we are alone once more and doing our best to make up for lost time [...]

One deep abiding joy we have now which we didn't have last time we had the Consulate to ourselves – Harding is no more. It is indeed a blessed thought. I enclose a copy of a private & confidential letter I have written to Macleay, the Minister at Peking, about him in lieu of a formal confidential report. It may interest and amuse you. (Not to be shown to anybody by the way). I don't think Macleay will draw unfavourable conclusions from it about me, do you? I mean, it doesn't betray 'zidd' [~antagonism – *DW*] or an unduly carping disposition? It was a difficult letter to write, & one I could easily have left unwritten; but H. (according to his own account at any rate) is such a little tin god at the Legation & everybody is so afraid of him that I really think it is up to me to let the Minister see how H. strikes a Gov't. of India man, & not let H. have it all his own way. I have also longed for months to have a smack at somebody about Fitzmaurice being relieved at the same time as Etherton; they had no business to do that, it wasn't fair on me – apart altogether from the absurdly senior man they sent in Fitzm.'s place [...]

Your letter of 27th June arrived yesterday, in 41 days! That's a record – worth writing to the papers about. It's really rather a triumph for the British Postal arrangements and our Kashgar–Gilgit courier service [...]

The 2 typed copies of my Gilgit–Kashgar diary also came this week, many thanks for them [...] Except that you sent the 3rd copy to N[orth] B[erwick] you don't mention having shown the diary to anyone, or even having read it yourself! I meant [it] to be in lieu of letters from the Gilgit–Kashgar section of our journey, which may be seen from the style which is not that of a book or a newspaper article but of a chatty letter. However, I am sending back one of the copies, with some corrections & the first paragraph rewritten in such a way as to make the thing a separate piece, not (as it is at present) a continuation of my letter to you from Gilgit. I'd be very glad if you will note the bits which people particularly notice & like ('people' include yourselves of course) as well as those that are dull reading – because I've definitely decided to write some sort of book on this 2 years' trip – owing to my official position it won't be much more than letter press round my photographs and (I hope) some of D.'s pictures of 'types' – and I want very much to get an idea of the sort of stuff people like best. My tastes seem to be different from most people's & in any case nothing's more difficult than to 'see one's writings as others see them.'

D. & I went to a wedding party the Sunday before last [29 July – *DW*] – given by the wealthiest British subject of Kashgar, an old Afghan called Mir Ahmad Bai. We only went for an hour or so and ate some lunch in an inner room; we weren't allowed to mix with the common herd. Afterwards, however, D. went in to see the bride, & Gen. Pigot & I went out and talked to 20 or 30 Turkis & Indians who were there. At first I imagined that these were all the guests, but I soon found out my mistake; the guests had been coming in relays since 8 A.M. (it was then 2 P.M.) & would continue so to come till evening, when hundreds of poor people would also be fed! Altogether, Mir Ahmad told us afterwards, some 1000 guests had been invited & about 1200–1300 actually came – & ate enormously as all Turkis do. You can imagine what it costs a rich man in this country to marry his son off! What is more, the bride also was a niece of his, & her parents had a lot of expense – so the family expenses must have been something colossal. D. says the bride's clothes & ornaments were a perfect marvel – all kinkhab [*alt.* kincob – gold brocade – *DW*] of the finest quality, gold & turquoises, & pearls. [*Fig. 133, next page*]



Fig. 133. Doris Skrine's watercolors from the wedding reception for Mir Ahmad Bai's new daughter-in-law on Friday, 3 August 1923. As she described the event in CCA *1925, pp. 197-200, she attended accompanied by her maid Aisha Khan, who was resplendent in a new dress. At the women's reception, Doris was particularly taken by a woman in a crimson satin dress who had 8 long plaits, four of which had long silk tassels attached. The bride entered clad in glittering gold. These watercolors show Aisha (Mrs. Ishak Khan), the reception of the striking woman in crimson by the hostess, and the bride in her glory. (Source: the first two images, from the British Library Collection: IOLR MSS EurF 154/54; the bride, Stewart collection).*

She has painted a picture of the girl, also (an excellent one) of a scene at an exclusively ladies' wedding party given by Mrs. Mir Amhad (more expense for the family!) the following Friday, to which D. was asked. She says that the customs at these ladies' wedding parties are most interesting & picturesque – all kinds of funny things they do. I've asked her to note down some of these for record,[162] for I don't suppose any European lady has witnessed them before, certainly neither Miss Sykes nor Miss. Kemp, who have written about their experiences here, mention any such parties. We've been lucky this year – we've seen a Kirghiz & a rich Kashgari wedding all within 4 months. The Kirghiz one, at which I sent you an enlargement of the group I took, was a great bit of luck [*Fig. 118 above*] – it just happened to be going on as we passed a lonely little encampment at 11,000 ft. in the Upper Karatash Valley last April. I have got a lot of information about their marriage customs too.

This is a funny country. The other night, having got to bed at quarter to 1 after doing a big batch of enlargements, I was extremely annoyed at being woken up at 4 by a particularly loud Turki band playing at a house about a quarter mile away. The music consisted of a series of wild, very rapidly-played melodies, each repeated several times in succession, on a kind of cornet with drum accompaniment. I couldn't make it out; it sounded like some strange Bacchanal, but what house would be making merry at 4 A.M. that had been silent at 1? Anyhow, it kept me awake & showed no sign of stopping, & finally I got fed up, hopped out of bed roused the orderly [Hafiz] who sleeps at the gate and sent him round to stop the row. Just then, however, the music stopped suddenly of itself. Next morning I heard that my neighbour, Nur Haji, had been very ill for some days & had become worse during the night, so the witch-doctors had been sent for to make their magic music and drive away the evil spirits which possessed Nur Haji. They had driven away Nur Haji's own spirit instead, for he died at 5; and no wonder.

162. He quotes Doris's description in *CCA* 1925, pp. 197-200.

Must end now. Am posting you a number of enlargements and a few small prints too, including one you may or may not like taken by Gen. Pigot. [*see the frontispiece to this book – DW*] More next week I hope.

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[*Skrine's interest in popular culture (a.k.a.'superstition') is evident in several entries of his Field Diary, including this one recorded two months later, p. 14. His notes from Dutreuil de Rhins,* Mission*, II (1898) regarding various folk customs include a section on 'Magic music', describing the musical 'cures' attempted by 'witch doctors' at the bed of an ill person. See BL MS EurF 154/43, p. [133]. It is clear from a parenthetical insertion ('I heard playing only') that Skrine took the notes after the experience recorded in the letter home published just above. His reading in Dutreuil de Rhins probably dates from after his return to London when in the process of doing further research for* CCA *and for a talk he gave on folklore. On healing rituals, see Bellér-Hann 2001 and especially her* Community Matters *(2008): 400-420.*]

13 October. Q[ari] tells me that at a meeting of doctors at Yarkand last year it was estimated that whereas the people of Yarkand had spent two yambus in doctor's fees during the year, they had spent 350 yambus on the magicians. A 'bakshi's' house is visited by numbers of clients, mostly women every day. There are 25–30 'bakshis' in Yarkand & they make large profits. This is due to the weakness of the doctors; there are no good, influential doctors nowadays, the best is an Arab who received 20 yambus in fees last year.

Fees for incantations & magic music range from 1 tengeh to 20 sars or more. Apart from the 'medical' magic the chief magic practised is that which sows enmity between persons; this is bought by a third party who expects to profit thereby; spell-casting and spell-removing; and love-inducing magic.

This magic is indigenous, not introduced by the Chinese – the spell-casting magic is forbidden by the Qur'an, but the mere fact that the Qur'an says that a spell cast upon the Prophet himself was (temporarily at any rate) efficacious, encourages people to believe in, and therefore practise, magic tho' they know it is wrong to do so.

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[*Skrine's archive (BL IOLR MS EurF154/39) contains two typed copies of the long letter he wrote to the British Minister in Beijing about Harding on 6 August 1923 and the original, handwritten response by Macleay (plus a typed copy) dated 19 October. For all his bluster about Harding in letters home, in many ways he achieves a certain balance here. The reference to Harding's sister (Constance, better known as Stan), a journalist, concerns the fact that she had gone to Moscow to report, been thrown into prison, and when finally released, began to write very negative assessments of the Bolshevik regime and accuse her one-time acquaintance Marguerite Harrison of falsely denouncing her to the Soviet secret police (see King 2024). Harold Harding refused to believe his sister's accusations, claiming that she no longer had her wits about her, although that hardly makes him into a Bolshevik sympathizer. Macleay's reply suggests that Skrine's views on his Vice Consul were not out of line with the impressions Harding left on others, especially for his occasional un-professional dress and conduct (see Coates 1988, p. 483). Macleay's letter is also of some interest for what it tells us about the problems of staffing British diplomatic posts in China. There is ample evidence to suggest that Harding in many ways did an excellent job under often trying conditions.*]

6 August 1923

Private and Confidential

My dear Sir Ronald Macleay,

In my semi-official confidential letter of 1st June I promised to give you later my impressions of Harding, who left us on the 24th of last month. I had already then, as a matter of fact, written about him at considerable length, but I tore the letter up because I thought it better to wait until he had gone, when I would be able to look at things in their proper perspective. So long as one is thrown daily with a man like Harding, one's judgment is apt to be warped by the exasperation his conceit, egotism and general 'woolliness' cause; after one is delivered from him, one can afford to laugh at him in retrospect

and give him full credit for his many good qualities. I am therefore only going to deal very briefly with my impression of him, and do not propose (unless you particularly want one) to send in any formal confidential report about him.

Harding's merits and qualifications are unmistakeable, and there is no need for me to remind you at the Legation in detail about them. He is, I think, absolutely straight, and is a good-hearted fellow in many ways. He is also of course a remarkable linguist; there surely cannot be many Europeans who know Chinese better than he does. Further, he has energy, keenness for travel and observation of people and things, and an excellent, forcible style on paper. Altogether, were it not for the conceit and other drawbacks I mentioned above, he would be as useful an officer as any service could wish for. He has done a lot of useful work for me in connection with the recovery of British subjects' debts, and he has helped me greatly by holding charge of the Consulate General during my absences on tour; it is all the more to be regretted that he has these particular characteristics, because they make it so very difficult to appreciate and be duly grateful to him. One can smile at, perhaps (in retrospect) forgive, a man who thinks himself the finest and handsomest specimen of mankind, the best linguist and the most tasteful, artistic and original personality of his generation; who is continually posing and posturing, looking at himself, listening to himself, and expects everyone else to fall down and worship; and who, if you persist in refusing to be impressed, obviously writes you down as a provincial, hide-bound Philistine. But it is difficult wholeheartedly to like or admire such a man.

To listen to Harding, one would think that he and no one else had been running the Legation for the last seven years. He was always impressing on me that it was no use my putting up such-and-such a proposal to the Legation; he knew exactly what they would think about it, because he, Harding, had drafted all the Legation's previous despatches on the subject. His cocksureness on such subjects as exterritoriality and registration drove me at times (secretly – we never quarrelled) perfectly wild. He came here with his views on these matters fully formed. During the two days Etherton, Harding and I were in Srinagar together last summer, Harding scarcely ever ceased talking about the necessity for abolishing exterritoriality in this province, about the urgent need for a Convention regulating our rights and interests, and about the appalling dilatoriness and stupidity of the Government of India which threw cold water on the scheme. As regards the Convention, Harding has quietly changed his views, though nothing would induce him to admit that the Government of India were ever right about anything. But as regards exterritoriality, as might have been expected, he has had no difficulty, wherever he has gone in collecting any number of facts or fancies which he can use in support of the opinions already formed by him; hence the various memoranda, etc. shot in by him, in the firm conviction (expressed to me almost in as many words) that nothing I wrote would have the slightest effect on the Legation if it conflicted with <u>his</u> views. He actually asked me to send a copy of his 'Memorandum recommending certain modifications in the policy of the Consulate General Kashgar' direct to the Foreign Office, 'so that' if you please 'the Legation could wire to the F. O. referring to it and thus enable his recommendations to be brought into force the sooner'. This, although he knew quite well that I disapproved of most of his proposals. He seemed quite hurt and surprised when I refused to 'short-circuit' you, and he proceeded to send a copy on his own account semi-officially to a friend of his at the Foreign Office. His confidence in his own infallibility is extraordinary, quite laughable at times; for instance, at Khotan he refused to accept as a British subject a man who claimed that his father had come from a place in the Eastern Punjab; when I asked him why, he said 'Because he is quite a different type from the inhabitants of the Eastern Punjab'. I asked him whether he knew the inhabitants of

the Eastern Punjab so intimately as to be able to tell at once whether a particular person's father had come from that part of the world or not? 'Why,' he said, 'I traveled through it in the train coming up from Calcutta to Rawal Pindi last year, and from what I saw of the people at the stations I am perfectly certain that So-and-so's father didn't come from there!'

His vanity renders Harding peculiarly susceptible to flattery, a fact of which Turkis, Chinese and Russians alike took full advantage. His chief pose was that of being 'more Turki than the Turkis', in pursuance of which he paraded in the most richly-coloured Turki clothes he could buy, took his shoes off when entering his own bedroom and made boon-companions of various raffish youths of the city. Any of the latter could get anything they liked out of him by pretending to treat him as one of themselves, and especially by complimenting him on his wonderful command of the Turki language (Harding has an altogether exaggerated idea of the importance of linguistic attainments, and firmly believes that he has only to learn the language of a people to understand them as thoroughly and intimately as it is possible to understand them). I fancy his openly-expressed Bolshevik sympathies, which rather startled me at first in an officer paid by the British Government to look after its interests in Central Asia, date from his visit to Urga where, no doubt, the wily Bolshevik got at him by playing on his vanity in much the same way; though the said leanings may also, perhaps, be partially ascribed to the fact that Harding is the possessor of one of those 'minority minds' which are often so admirable in the abstract and as difficult to deal with in the concrete. When, à propos of his sister's case, he told the company at one of our dinner-parties that he believed nothing he heard against the Bolsheviks, even his own sister's complaints against them, because there was so much lying propaganda out on both sides – I realized how hopeless it was to try and argue with him.

I have already written at greater length than I intended, and will not take up your time further. The fact is that Harding, if an irritating, is at any rate an interesting personality, quite a 'character' in fact, and cannot be dismissed in a few words. It was a little unfortunate, perhaps that the appointment of an exceptionally junior Consul General by one authority should have happened to coincide with the appointment of an exceptionally senior Vice Consul by another. How often during the past year did I envy the undeserving Etherton his luck in having a man like Fitzmaurice as his loyal and self-effacing assistant during 3 ½ out of the 4 years he was here! Anyhow, I bear Harding no grudge – nay, I am sincerely glad to acknowledge the able assistance he did in many ways give me – and I hope he will prosper in his future career and will always get the job he wants most – so long as it isn't one in which I am likely to be associated with him.

[*Macleay's reply, on small note paper embossed with the British state seal:*]

Private & Confidential.

Peking

19th October 1923.

My dear Skrine,

Your private and confidential letter of the 6th of August with its trenchant appreciation of Harding amused me very much, all the more because your views coincide with mine. Harding was Assistant Chinese Secretary here during my previous stay in Peking when I was Counsellor of Legation from early in 1914 to the autumn of 1916 and while I could not but admire his linguistic talents I formed a very poor opinion of his judgment. Like you I was frequently exasperated by his conceit and cocksureness, characteristics which I am sure would accentuate rather than diminish with advancing years. I am afraid you must have had a trying time with him and if you will allow me to say so it speaks volumes for your tact and sense of humour that you were able to keep the peace. I

am sure that I would not have done so and so long as I am here nothing will induce me to have him working in the Legation in any capacity whatever.

I am afraid I am getting too long in the tooth and too short in the temper to – well, I won't say to suffer fools gladly because Harding is certainly not a fool – but to tolerate the idiosyncrasies of 'personalities' of his description however otherwise interesting, being like the lady in 'Our Mutual Friend' (if I remember right) 'otherwise engaged, Mr. Boffin!'[163]

It is unfortunately not easy to secure the best class of junior for the Vice Consul's post in Kashgar and I fear that I shall have to leave the post unfilled for a while. The trouble is that all these young fellows get married so early nowadays and though there are candidates for the job it would be useless to send you a man who would be unsuitable for the particular conditions of life and work in the New Dominion.

Another difficulty is the huge size of China which makes it impossible for the Minister in Peking to get to know personally all but a small proportion of the China Consular Service. I would give anything to be able to travel about and visit some of the outlying parts of China such as Yunnan and Hsinkiang, but owing to the chaotic state of the country and the bankruptcy and ineffectiveness of the government I find it extremely difficult to get away from Peking even for a flying visit to Shanghai. I have never even seen Canton or Hankow, and if things continue as they are and I see no prospect of improvement there appears to be very small chance of my doing so.

I hope we shall meet some day, but I fear the only chance will be if we both happen to be on leave at the same time.

Yours very sincerely,

Ronald Macleay

[*For Skrine's appreciation of Macleay's response, see below, p. 422, his letter home dated 19 December 1923.*]

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[*There is relatively little in Skrine's June diary sent on 11 July and received in London ca. 13 September which he had not already described in his letters home cited earlier. The selections here are from the printed copy sent to the India Office in London, BL IOLR L/P&S/10/976, P3422/1923, fols. 193-195. He summarizes the news about the wireless station's having successfully established contact with Simla and Peshawar, adding:*]

2. [...] A quantity of Russian 'News' received by Major Dockray from Tashkend has been translated for His Majesty's Consul-General. As it is almost entirely of the nature of 'window-dressing' by the Soviet authorities and is probably received by Indian stations as well as by Kashgar, it has not (except for a single specimen sheet) been considered worth forwarding to the Government of India. [...]

[*He summarizes somewhat less colorfully the case of the murder of the Chitrali by a Kyrgyz of the Yangi Hissar district, and adds:*]

4. [...]Any matter, however, in which the Consulate General is concerned is apt to be looked at by

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163. This is a somewhat garbled reference to Charles Dickens' last novel, where the phrase (not quite precisely remembered by Macleay) is the response by Silas Wegg when Nicodemus Boffin asks him whether he is familiar with Gibbons' *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. The illiterate Boffin wanted to hire Wegg to read it to him so he, Boffin, could acquire a veneer of being educated. The hilarious passage in question reads:

> 'You know him, Wegg?'
>
> 'I haven't been not to say right slap through him very lately,' Mr. Wegg made to answer, 'having been otherways employed, Mr. Boffin...'

See Charles Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend* (London: Chapman & Hall, n.d.), p. 43, online at https://archive.org/stream/ourmutualfriend00dickiala#page/42/mode/2up, last accessed 5 June 2016.

the Chinese mainly from the political point of view, and it is quite likely that the man will be let off with imprisonment merely because his victim was a British subject. If the Chinese authorities take this line, they will at least be able to point to an equally bad case, that of the murder at Goma of a Chinese subject, named Qadir by two British subjects (*vide* Kashgar Diary for July 7th, 1921) in which my predecessor convicted the accused of culpable homicide not amounting to murder and sentenced them to transportation for life. [...]

[*Here, J.A. Simpson, the annotator of the file in London and a man who seems not to have minced words, wrote in the margin (fol. 194v)*: 'Why again drag in Col. Etherton? Mr. Skrine should have been born in Corsica.' *The diary goes on with a description of the opium raid, whose success elicited marginal flagging in London. The dealer who was caught,*]

6. [...] Mr. Wali is to be fined and deported by His Majesty's Consul-General under Article 27 (iii) of the China (Kashgar) Order in Council and the Afghans by the Taoyin under the anti-opium regulations of the Republic. Meanwhile a Turki Chinese subject who keeps a neighbouring *serai*, but has hitherto been 'cut out' by Mir Wali in the competition for the patronage of the opium smugglers, is happily repairing and extending his *serai* with a view to a busy time now that his rival is out of the way. [...]

[*Skrine corrects his earlier report that had indicated the Chinese had accepted the establishment of an Afghan consulate in Kashgar – all they were agreeing to was a Commercial Agency. So the negotiations again stall. The last report of substance is:*]

10. *Trade*. [... *Referring to report sent earlier, 14 June.*] His Majesty's Vice Consul recently obtained from a 'White' Russian merchant of Kashgar information confirming the report noted above. According to this informant, Umar Akhun Bai is exporting 15,000 poods (240 tons) and Haji Bahauddin 80 tons of wool to Ferghana by arrangement with the Soviet authorities and with the express permission of the Governor of Sinkiang. The wool is several years old and is not of the best quality.

11. *Tashkend*. [...] Abdul Rahim, nephew of Umar Akhun Bai, who has been negotiating with the Soviet authorities on his uncle's behalf and has recently returned to Kashgar, gives further interesting details regarding conditions in Tashkend. The volume of trade between Turkestan and European Russia is very small compared with pre-Revolution days and is carried on almost exclusively through the medium of the parcel post. The unit of currency in which all business accounts are calculated is a new one known as the 'Chervonietz,' a note equivalent to five gold roubles. The notes themselves are very scarce, and are only issued sparingly by the People's Bank to approved clients. The issue is said to be secured by 20 million gold roubles held by the Government: but this may be merely a report officially circulated with a view to maintaining confidence in the Chervonietz note issue. Ordinary paper roubles are still in common use, but as they drop in value 2–3 per cent. every day merchants who receive them in payment for goods hasten to exchange them for valuable property, chiefly jewels.

At the head of nearly all Soviet institutions are still to be found ignorant ex-workmen ('Towaristchi' [*Russ.*: tovarishchi – comrades – *DW*]) whose sole qualification for high office is that they are 'good communists.' At the head of the Cotton Bureau, for example is a man who was until the Revolution a weighman in a small native-owned cotton mill. He owes his good fortune to the fact that he betrayed to the Cheka about 700 persons, half of whom were consequently executed.

The same informant states that hatred and contempt for the Soviet administration is widespread and unmistakable, not only among the agricultural, trading and industrial populations but among the officials and Red troops themselves. Nothing but terrorism and vigilant espionage keeps the universal dissatisfaction from expressing itself. One soldier out of every three in the Red Army is an agent of the Cheka.

Although armed with every manner of 'mandat' and permit to travel, Abdul Rahim was arrested at

the frontier by a detachment of Cheka, and was only released after a night in custody on payment of a substantial bribe in Chinese money to the soldiers.

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[*The July monthly diary was sent from Kashgar on 9 August and received on 1 October in London, the selections here copied from the printed text sent to the India Office in London, BL IOLR L/P&S/10/976, P3712/1923, fols. 190-192. The diary contained quite a bit on the intrigues and changes with regard to the Chinese administrators in Kashgaria. Skrine reported the removal of the obstructionist magistrate Kwei from Kargalik, which he liked to think was due to his report to the British Minister in Beijing and the latter's protests to the Chinese government. Ma Titai's financial exactions and cruel punishments inflicted on the locals in Kashgaria continued. In two murder cases discussed in earlier reports, the local authorities had sentenced the defendants to death. A report which attracted particular interest in London was:*]

9. [...] Mr. Peter Zavitski[164] arrived in Kashgar on July 15th and put up at the Russo-Asiatic Bank. He appears to be a harmless youth and to be travelling round the world 'on the cheap' living after the manner of the poorer inhabitants of the countries through which he passes. This fad (for he is well off and could travel more comfortably if he wished) has resulted in two serious illnesses, small-pox and typhus, respectively, since he entered Sinkiang.

Mr. Zavitski is an American subject and his passport, except for the fact that its first year of validity expired last November, is in order; as its owner has not been within reach of an American Consular officer since he left Shanghai 15 months ago, he could not be expected to have renewed it on due date. His Majesty's Consul General accordingly affixed his *visa* to the passport, and Mr. Zavitski proceeded to Yarkand on 1st August *en route* for Leh. He is traveling with one pony-load of luggage in the company of a Hindu trader's caravan, and proposes to eat and sleep, as usual, with his travelling companions.

10. [...] Mr. Zavitski, when travelling near Kulja, met the convoy which was taking the Russians in cages to Urumchi. He states that there were seven of them and that they were cooped up in cages carried on carts, one to each prisoner, with scarcely room to turn round. Exposed to the blazing sun by day and the cold wind by night, and starving except for an occasional crust spared them by their Chinese guard or thrown them by passersby, their plight was appalling and it is not surprising that two of them appear to have died before the convoy reached Urumchi.

11. Agitation against the Swedish Mission [...] It appears that the Mission at Yarkand has not been unaffected by the Kashgar agitation after all. A petition against the Mission was presented early in July to the Amban of Yarkand by a deputation headed by a mosque-school teacher named Mullah Saifulla Akhun. As was anticipated by His Majesty's Consul General, however, the Chinese authorities at Yarkand, who are much stronger and more efficient than at Kashgar, prevented the movement attaining

164. This is Peter Ishmael Zavitski (1898-1971), whose biography would appear to anticipate that of a later generation of American 'hippies' who were on voyages of self-discovery, interested in anti-establishment political ideas and often exploring Asian religions. Skrine termed him a 'crank' in one report. When in China, Zavitski wrote at least one letter to the well-kown American socialist Anna Louise Strong; he admitted to having Bolshevik sympathies. He would spend some time in India where he met Gandhi and Nehru. Presumably responding to Skrine's information, the British authorities tracked him to see if he was involved with Indian revolutionaries. A file on Zavitski in BL IOLR L/P&S/11/236 P3719/1923 ('Peter Zavitski, a missionary-tourist, at Urumchi, 14 June 1923–27 Mar. 1924') includes a long narrative about his activities in his first months in India and copies of the reports by Skrine and the British agent in Srinagar. Alerted by Skrine, who clearly did not take Zavitski very seriously, nonetheless the British Indian security police tracked him through Srinagar, Rawalpindi, Bombay and Madras, recorded with whom he met and even transcribed a rather confused public address Zavitski delivered in support of the Indian Nationalist idea of Swaraj. In his later life Zavitski lived in a remote log cabin in Washington State (near where his father had been a coal miner) and aquired a reputation as a 'hermit'. I am grateful to Lori Selover Zaviski for sharing with me materials on her husband's half grand-uncle Peter.

any considerable proportions. None the less, only the comparatively few baptized members of the congregation frequent the Yarkand Mission now. The Orphanage, which is situated in the country at a distance of 3 miles from the headquarters of the Mission, was recently visited by a number of Qazis and Mullas, who demanded the release of all the older children. The two ladies in charge courageously shut their doors in the faces of the deputation, but are now obliged to watch day and night against attempts to kidnap the children.

[*Paragraph 12 is a reiteration of Chinese demands regarding the possibility of the establishment of an Afghan consulate.*]

13. The presence of the Afghan Mission at Yarkand during the last nine months has made itself felt in various inconspicuous but significant ways. More than one intelligent observer has reported that, while there is nothing like open propaganda, it is remarkable how the idea of 'Islam *versus* Kufr' (heathendom) has spread in Yarkand of late. Among the intelligentsia of Yarkand there is a distinct pro-Afghan cult, and some are actually learning Pashto; Tokhta Mulla, the interpreter who accompanied the Chinese Mission to Kabul last year is said to be charging 2–3 Taels per month for teaching the language. The Envoy recently presented 15 or 20 copies of the 'Ganj-i-Paashto'[165] to leading Mullas and Qazis of the city.

[*The case of one Haji Ismail sheds some light on Governor Yang's political maneuvering to strengthen his position by measures addressing concerns of the local Muslim population:*]

Local Affairs.

14. Keriya. – A very interesting report has been received from Keriya in the extreme south of the province regarding a certain Haji Ismail, who appears to have been elected in 1921 by the inhabitants of Keriya as their deputy in the Provincial Council at Urumchi. This person returned to Keriya last March on leave. Very soon he began to talk in the meeting-places of the people about the delinquencies of the Magistrate, Tung. His chief charges against the Magistrate, were –

(1) That he never sat in court.

(2) That he made no attempt to suppress the traffic in opium, which was smoked openly in the city by yamen officials and others.

(3) That he unduly favours his Chinese friends, whose usurious money-lending debts he recovers for them, while Mussalmans' petitions are thrown into the waste paper basket.

(4) That Chinamen, even those who have no official claims to respect, are given a chair in the Amban's presence, and are seen off by him at departure, while the heads of the Muslim community are made to stand.

(5) That the Magistrate, his younger brother and his clerks lend Government money at 30 per cent. per month interest and pocket the profit.

(6) That the Magistrate's own Chinese servant has been appointed customs officer and charges three times the duties fixed.

The Magistrate, hearing of this talk, determined to get Haji Ismail into his power and 'blacken his face.' He accordingly arranged through his confidential Beg, Rozi Beg, that an assault should be trumped up by a prostitute against Haji Ismail; the parties were brought to yamen, whereupon the Magistrate struck the Haji in the face and had him thrown into prison. The people of Keriya have petitioned the

165. Apparently the standard introductory level textbook for Pashto, written by Rev. T. B. Hughes in 1897 (See Ali Jan, 'Pashto under the British Empire,' http://www.britishempire.co.uk/article/pashto.htm, last accessed 23 May 2016).

Magistrate in favour of their deputy, but without result. The brother of Haji Ismail consequently left Keriya for Urumchi on 30 June to put the case before the Governor, and trouble may confidently be expected shortly for the oppressive Tung.

The interesting feature of the case is the evidence of racial feeling on the part of the Mussalman deputy as shown in the 3rd and 4th complaints above. Such manifestations are exceedingly rare in this province. In the present case, the Haji's temerity may presumably be assigned to influences under which he came while at the provincial capital.

More than one District Magistrate during the last year has hinted privately to His Majesty's Consul General that he has to be much more careful than of old not to hurt Mussalman feelings, because of the readiness with which the Governor lends an ear to appeals from Mussalmans against Chinese officials. It looks very much as if the Governor, conscious of weakness, had adopted a conciliatory policy towards the once despised 'Ch'an tou' (turban-head) with a view to strengthening his position. [...]

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[*Etherton is still not far from Skrine's mind, the cases referred to here ones where, in an earlier letter, he explained Etherton had personally pocketed money from selling opium instead of destroying it and keeping money paid as a fine. He wrote in some detail about them when pressed by the Government of India to provide better documentation to support his accusations against Etherton, the main point being that in one case, rather than have confiscated opium destroyed, Etherton sold it, and apparently pocketed the proceeds (there was no evidence of its having been deposited in Consulate accounts) and, likewise, a fine that was collected never made it into the books. The draft of the June 20 report to which he refers here may be found in BL IOLR MSS EurF/154/39.*]

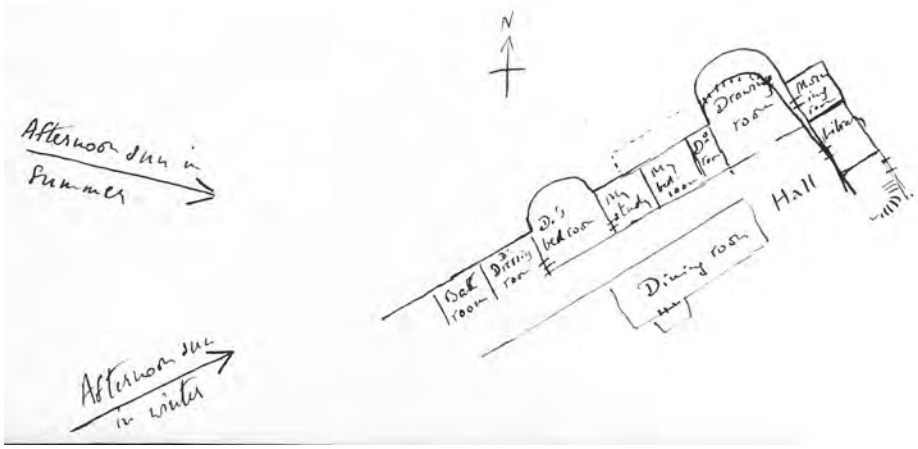


Fig. 134. Skrine's sketch of the floor plan of the consulate, showing the direction of summer and winter sun on the building (CPS to HSS 13 August 1923, from the British Library Collection: IOLR MSS EurF 154/9).

13 August 1923

We are having a heat wave, such as it to be expected here at this time of year. If it were not that the house, tho' imposing to look at, is about as badly planned as it could be for hot weather, we wouldn't notice the heat; work and the social round are both slack & one seldom has to go outside the Consulate grounds unless one wants to. But the temperature inside our living-room compares favourably with the Indian plains. D.'s bedroom & dressing room, my study & bedroom & the drawing room are all on the N.W. side of the house so: [*sketch, Fig. 134*] As you will see from the diagram, our rooms on the N.W. terrace get all the afternoon & evening sun in the hot weather, when the sun sets well north of west, and no sun <u>at all</u> in the winter, when it sets south of west! Well-thought out, this house isn't it? Similarly, in a country of verandahs, high deep ones, this house has no veranda worth speaking of – only a short & shallow one about 8 ft. wide on the N.W. side opposite 2 of the rooms, & a mere outside passage of a veranda, 6 ft. wide, on the north side. All the better-class local houses have verandas like this: [*drawing, Fig 135, next page*] with vines or roses growing up over them, & looking into the garden, an admirable plan. Here our view is magnificent – we look out over

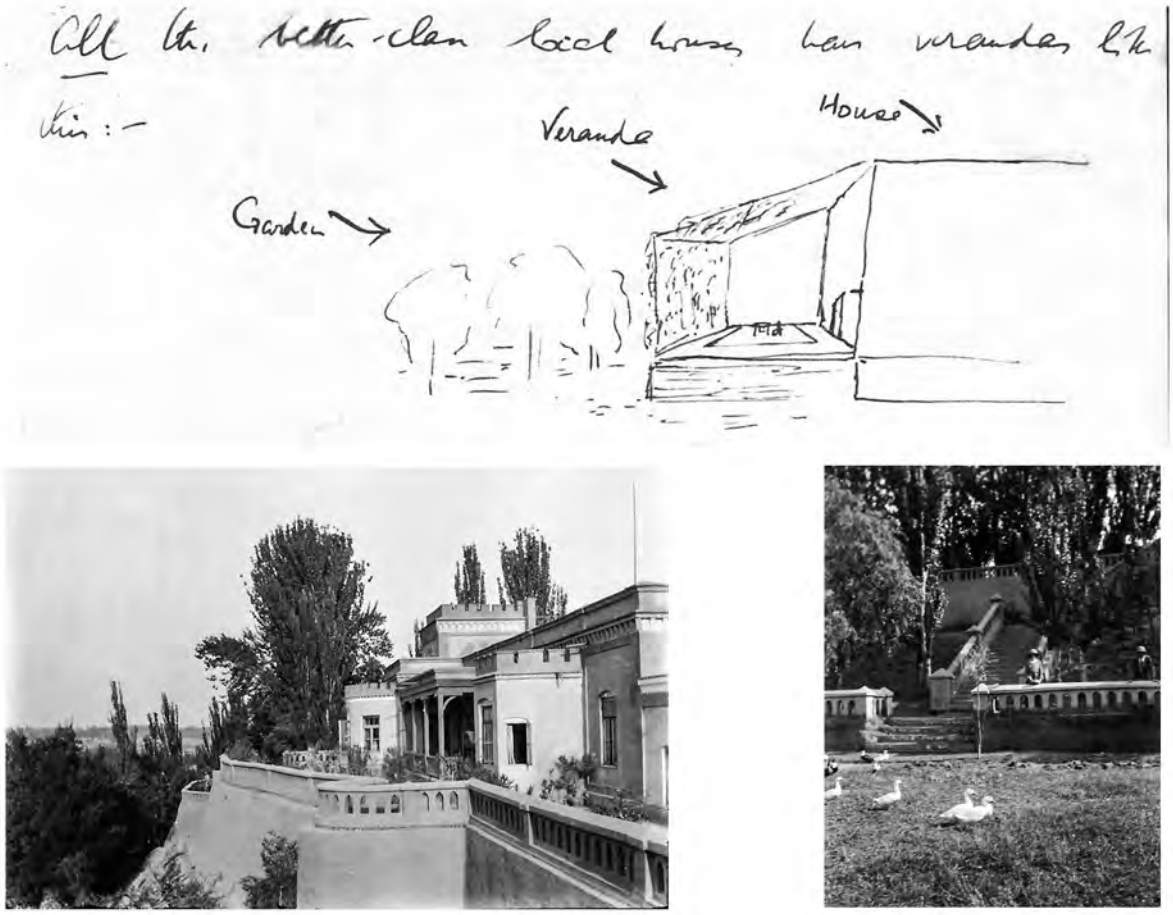


Fig. 135. Skrine's drawing of a proper design for a terrace in the hot weather and the photos illustrating the actual design at Chini Bagh. The view of the terrace is from the NW, and the view from the garden (where one can see Doris in the center and some of her birds) looks up to the terrace. (Sources: CPS to HSS 13 August 1923, from the British Library Collection: IOLR MSS EurF 154/9; BL IOLR Photo 920/1, unn. negs. reproduced with permission.)

miles of greenery, the river with its cliffy banks & the desert hills beyond; but our terrace, immediately outside our windows, is a heat trap in summer without any shelter from the sun whatever. The shady parts of the garden, too, are down several steps and along narrow paths, awkward for taking chairs & tables out to, and we never sit in it.

Tho' this is the hottest time of the year, & the thermometer has been touching 103°, we don't miss punkahs. Mosquitos & sandflies are apt to be a nuisance, but we ward them off with citronella oil. The nights are never unbearably hot, at least mine aren't, for I sleep outside; how D. stands sleeping in her hot bedroom under muslin sandfly curtains, I can't think. The temperature of her room, even outside the curtains, never goes below 85° nowadays. She won't sleep outside because she can't sleep in the early morning owing to the noises. She's exactly the opposite to me as regards sleep; I sleep lightly at first & more & more heavily as the morning approaches & heaviest of all in the hour or two before *chota hazri* [a 'light breakfast' – *DW*]; she sleeps heavily at first and lightly in the early morning. The fruit is getting near its best – our garden is full of peaches, nectarines, greengages & plums with grapes and a 2nd crop of figs & mulberries (we've had one crop of each already) just coming on. We don't grow melons, but magnificent ones are to be had in the bazar, all kinds. The King of melons, the 'Beshak Shirin' is just beginning; it only lasts for a fortnight, but during that fortnight we get as good, or better, melons as any where in the world. The 'Beshak,' vast, scented, ambrosial, oozing with juice, is quite indescribably good.

Your letter of 5 July 1923 just in. Please don't apologize for having warned me to walk warily in the Etherton case! A 'verb-sap'[166] never came amiss. As you say, there are many pitfalls [...] As you will probably be interested to hear further developments, I send you the rough draft copy of my report of 20th June which I sent in reply to a request for further evidence & in elucidation of certain misunderstandings. The first part won't interest you, but you should read the 6th–8th paragraphs. The 'Yangi Hissar Opium Case' & the 'Hussain Balti Fine Case' are only two typical instances of E.'s methods. I could have given several others, but space and time forbade: e.g., he took three sporting shot-guns belonging to Gov't. with him to Yarkand a month or two before he left and made the British subjects there raffle for them, practically ordering them to subscribe more than twice the value of the guns when new; &, as if this wasn't enough, one of the guns turned out to be out of order, & E. must have known it! [...]

Howell, at Simla has expressed a wish to see some of my photos, so I am sending the big batch of enlargements wh[ich] I have ready to him first & he will send them on to you [...]

P.S. (to yesterday's letter) **17 August 1923**

Could you very kindly get a few small Xmas presents for me, for the Russian children? They must be small things that will come by letter or book post, or they won't arrive in time, & they sh[oul]d be packed separately, bar the expense. I think children's picture books in Russian (Mark will know where to get such things in London) w[oul]d be best for the 3 elder children (1 girl 2 boys) and for the 4 smaller, 1 rag doll for a 3-year old girl and 3 toys of any kind for the other who are older – 6–7 etc. Could you spend about 25–30 shillings on these & let me know the damage?

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Kashgar, 22 August 1923

[...] I am sending a large batch of pictures to Howell this week to look at and then pass on to you [...] My object in sending the enlargements to Howell is to give them an idea at the Foreign Dept. what a beautiful place this is and what a nice Consulate General we have, so that they will be able to secure a suitable Consul General to take my place. At present people in India have the vaguest ideas of this place; they mostly seem to think that we are on the top of a pass somewhere in the Pamirs, that it is fiercely cold for 8 months in the year and that there is nothing to do but watch caravans go by [...]

Your letter of 5 July just in. Very glad to hear that the 2 pairs of jade bangles arrived safely. I shall be very interested to hear from you next week what Liberty's think they're worth.[167] The value in Khotan, i.e., at the source, of the two pairs respectively will probably surprise you; the transparent, duller green pair cost me the equivalent of 3 shillings, the opaque vert foncé [dark green – *DW*] pair 3 pounds. The latter kind of jade is very valuable and hard to get [... *The bulk of the letter turns to furs.*]

By the way, I'm delighted to hear that the 2 pushties have arrived. You have probably forgotten that I told you over a year ago that they were coming from Kerman; they have taken their time about it. You don't say what they are like; what colour are they, and would you say they are prettier or less pretty than the one you have, the pair of which I gave to Katie? These are Kashanis, by the way; they make better

166. *Verbum sapienti satis* (Lat.) — a word to the wise.

167. Liberty Jewellery on Regent Street was 'a London emporium laden with luxuries and fabrics from distant lands'. It was, in the words of Oscar Wilde, 'the chosen resort of the artistic shopper' (https:// www.libertylondon.com/us/information/our-heritage.html, last accessed 19 August 2024). 'Pushties' (next paragraph) are probably scatter rugs.

silk carpets even than at Kerman. I will never cease kicking myself until my dying day for not having bought a magnificent pair of Kashani silk carpets, 7 by 5 or bigger, which I could once have got for 300 tomans but refused to pay more than 200 for [...] Could you just throw the pushties over chairs or something, until we come? don't worry about them getting dirty, it won't do them any harm.

We've been having a nasty heat-wave lately, temp. up well over 100 which without punkahs is not very pleasant. However, no one minds heat if one knows it isn't going to last. It gets cool in Sept. here, and it's now already 22nd Aug. [...]

***

Kashgar, 30 August 1923

Once more we are in the throes of preparation for departure on a long tour, no small business. This time we are having difficulty in actually getting off, because we can't get transport; owing to the cessation for several years of the trade with Russia, ponies have been getting fewer and fewer every year, and the margin available at any one time has become very small. Now quite suddenly comes a partial revival of the Russian trade, owing to the demand from Tashkend for wool, which is being exported from here in considerable quantities; with the result that all the available ponies are taken up. I have been trying to get transport for the last fortnight, and have only just succeeded in getting hold of a mixed lot of ponies and donkeys at exorbitant rates for the Aksu journey. The alternative is to go by the main road by Maralbashi, in 'mapas'; but apart from this taking three days longer, the insects of all kinds, mosquitoes, sandflies, gadflies etc., in the Maralbashi jungles in the hot weather are very bad and D. quails at the thought of them. Besides, we are coming back that way in November when it will be very nice, and it is always better to come back a different way from that by which one goes. It is worth paying a bit more to go by the upper or Uch Turfan road, if only to get into the hills again; we are getting a bit sick of the hot weather at Kashgar. But the expense makes one think a bit; this little spell of 10 days travelling only a quarter of the tour, will cost me 70 taels (Rs. 175) for transport only, besides minor items such as T[ravel] A[llowance] to servants, additional food expenses in the desert, wear and tear of kit and clothes etc. [... *long section on jade and ignorance of London dealers about it*]

Tell Father that I never heard of such nonsense as his ideas about the occupation of the flat when we come home next year. He says he will go round to the Wilton Hotel and leave you, D. and me in the flat. If anybody goes round to the Wilton Hotel it will be <u>me</u>, or rather I! [...] D. who isn't thrilled by London and doesn't want to stay there a day longer than she has to [...] says that whatever I do, she will go up to Scotland after a few days and stay there. However, we'll see [...] [W]e could take the flat on at the same terms as long as you wanted to be away. At other times we could either carry on as I have suggested above, or D. and I could take furnished rooms. We shall only have a few rugs and two or three pieces of old Persian and Khotan brass or copper with us, no other impedimenta or furniture; but I shall want a certain amount of room for my photo materials and books and papers, and 'appartements' in which one can make as much mess as one likes are the best, if one is going to be any length of time in one place.

Whatever D. does, I'm going to make London my headquarters while on leave; it's the only possible place. D. has got her people at N[orth] B[erwick], so she's all right; as a matter of fact, she will have to spend most of our leave looking after her mother who will have lost Iris, and I certainly don't propose to bury myself at N B merely because of that – I've got <u>my</u> little Mum to look after, haven't I? It's very nice to think that only this time next year we shall be really on our way home; for I have told Govt. that I am going whether they find a successor for me or not, and they can put that in their pipe and smoke it.

Great excitement, a couple of pony-loads of parcels and wines just in via the Gilgit road. Out of three dozen champagne, port, brandy etc. only 3 bottles broken – pretty good. But all the parcels that D. and I were most in need of have not turned up in time to catch us before our tour; D. is particularly desperate because quantities of underclothing she had been hoping against hope for from the last 3 months have not turned up. Instead come three magnificent summer dresses from her mother, in the very latest fashion – dresses which would be absolutely wasted on Kashgar 'society' and which she will simply have to put away until home next year. Pretty sickening for her, I must say. The wines, by the way, arrived exactly 3 hours too late for a big dinner party we gave last night, at which I had to apologize to my guests for giving them local brandy to drink! Wasn't it rotten [...]

***

[*For Skrine's sketch map of the route of this tour, see below Fig. 145, p. 391.*]

Surghun Karaul, Foot of Tien Shan Mts., 3 September 1923

A short line from our 2nd camp out from Kashgar just to avoid missing a mail. As usual our last few days before starting on tour were a fearful rush specially for me, and having pushed the caravan (9 ponies and 4 donkeys) off on Saturday afternoon we got off ourselves with great difficulty on Sunday morning. The Chinese in their entertaining consider the convenience of their guests less than any other consideration, and they have a perfect genius for giving parties at the wrong time. Their favourite trick is to find out when you're starting on a long journey and ask you to lunch or dinner the same day, pointing out airily that 'you can leave after dinner and get out to your stage quite easily by nightfall'. This has happened every time we have left any big place in this country. I accordingly, whenever possible, tell the Chinese that we are starting a day earlier than we really are, so as to get the dinner over the day before we actually march. That's awkward enough, but it's better than the other. On this occasion I wasted 4 of the middle hours of Saturday having an enormous meal at the Dao Tai's Yamen, (I had seen the old man 3 times during the preceding week & there was no need whatever for this infliction) with the result that (1) I was unable to see the caravan actually start on Saturday, (2) I didn't escape from final bundobust, tidying up and office work until 1 P.M. on Monday, D. having started with our orderly at 10. I galloped 10 miles without drawing rein, blazing hot and dusty tho' it was, and found D. sitting by the roadside at 2:15, where we lunched. Her horse was slightly lame owing to bad shoeing the day before (the farriery in this country is too primitive and slipshod for words) and she had had to walk her horse the whole 10 miles & was very hot & tired. That was contretemps No. 1. At 3 we pushed on with Murād Qāri (a very nice, well-educated & intelligent young British subject of Yarkand whom I am taking with me this trip instead of a clerk). There were crowds of pilgrims on the road, bound for a famous shrine [*in FD:* of Hazrat Sultanim (Sadik Boghra Khan)] at Altyn Artush which has a festival once a year at which pilgrims from all over Kashgaria guzzle the delicious figs of the locality in enormous quantities.[168] At 4 we passed, in the middle of the desert, a wonderfully well-preserved Buddhist stupa sticking out of the

168. Satuq Bughra Khan (ca. 920–955), according to legend, was the Karakhanid ruler who adopted Islam and converted the Kashgar region. For an early narrative text about the conversion, see "Jamal Qarshi: The Conversion to Islam of Satuq Bughra Khan", in Scott C. Levi and Ron Sela, eds., *Islamic Central Asia: An Anthology of Historical Sources* (Bloomington; Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 2010), pp. 73-76. He was associated with Artush, where a mausoleum, restored in the 1990s, is considered to be his resting place and indeed was a destination of mass pilgrimage in the early decades of the 20th century. On the modern biographical novel based on the earlier hagiographic accounts about him, see Thum 2014, pp. 163-164, 198-203.



Fig. 136. The Mori Tim stupa complex (photo: DW 2009).

sand, the place is called Mauri Tim [*Fig. 136*], & is at least 1500 years old.[169] After this 15 miles of open flat desert, very good road-surface, have to be crossed before Tugh, the place where I had arranged that the caravan should stop that night was reached. Tugh is 40 miles from Kashgar, and when we were within a few miles of it & it was getting dark, a tremendous dust-storm came along and nearly blew us away. Poor D. got very tired & sick of riding a slightly lame pony along this interminable road & kept asking how much further it was to Tugh, & the orderlies and the Turki yamen servants who had been sent with us as guides kept saying it was 'very close' 'only a little further' after the manner of their kind. At last, at 9 P.M., we arrived in pitchy darkness at the solitary inn and shop on the edge of the desert which is called Tugh. No caravan or tents! We were told to our disgust that the caravan had come along that afternoon & had gone on to a place a good deal further on – no one knew how far. Contretemps no. 2! There was nothing for it but to plug on in the dark. I forgot to say that we had a mapa (country passenger cart) with us, our beddings etc. being on it. Another wild storm with rain & a gale of wind & much dust came on – we could scarcely see the way. Suddenly I noticed something large fall out of the mapa just in front of me & lie huddled on the road while the mapa went on – My horse nearly trod on it. It was the mapa-kash (driver) who had fallen off the cart fast asleep! How he wasn't run over by one of the wheels I can't think. His sleep was so heavy that he didn't wake up even from the fall & we thought (hearing him breathing stentorously) that he was drunk, but he wasn't.[170] He didn't wake up till half an hour later, when we had put him on the mapa and his horse had been led thro' the darkness by an orderly for a mile or two! All the time the storm raging – it was a curious affair – contretemps no 3. We eventually arrived at Kuduk, to which the caravan had pushed on that day against my orders, at 11 o'clock, having covered 50 miles and having eaten nothing except a bun or so for tea since lunch. We supped off soup & milk pudding & were in bed by 12:30. The 2nd storm, just before we came in, had nearly blown D.'s tent down and had broken one of the poles, Contretemps no. 4. By the time we arrived they had replaced the pole by one belonging to one of the servants' tents; a new one was made by the local blacksmith next morning, & all was well.

This morning we not unnaturally slept late, our already shortened night having been still further spoilt by a 3rd storm, with much thunder, which came on at 3 and kept us both awake for an hour or more, contretemps No. 5. Heavy rain, which however did not flood the tents out and constitute our 6th contretemps. The latter did not occur till half an hour after D. started, when she noticed that my white pony, which she was riding instead of her own, was going very badly. The poor beast was found to have terrible girth galls, fresh ones, which cramped its action. Contretemps no 6. She sent the pony

169. On the stupa and the history of its study, see Di Castro 2008.

170. In the Field Diary, Skrine explains that this was an attack of 'a kind of sleeping sickness' that the driver had previously experienced.

back with her orderly and walked on. I was behind, having spent a lurid hour cursing the carrier's men & everyone for loading up & getting away so slowly. I found that one of our servants had ridden the white pony both the two previous days without my permission instead of the pony I had hired for him, and had girth galled it badly – more blasphemy. I made him walk most of today's march, & serve him right.

We arrived at this tiny farm and patch of cultivation among its willows and poplars about 4 o'clock, & the loads at 5:30 – not a long march compared with yesterday. Tomorrow we cross a low pass, 6000 odd feet, over the outer foot-hills of the Tien Shan. For the next 8 or 9 days we shall be skirting the foot of the Tien Shan until we leave them at Uch Turfan and come to Aksu, where there is a Chinese Taoyin or 'prefect' equal in importance to him of Kashgar. We pass thro' nice high grassy country populated by Kirghiz & cross 2 passes, neither of them difficult but one of them 11,000 ft. high, between here and Uch Turfan. All to the right of our track is an unknown country of wild hills up to 10,000 to 12,000 ft. with little or no water; the whole patch of country 100 miles by 50, has only once been traversed by European explorer, Stein of course [in] 1914. He found an interesting little town called Kelpin in the middle of it, with a Muhammadan 'Amban' – the only non-Chinese district official in S. Sinkiang.[171] I should like to visit Kelpin very much but the water difficulty is too much for us. We have no proper tanks and couldn't afford the extra water- and fodder-transport if we had.

It has been beastly hot these last 2 (or rather 3) marches & it will be pleasant getting up in to the Kirghiz country. We are looking forward very much to making the acquaintance of the Kirghiz of the Tien Shan and comparing them with those of our beloved Chinese Pamirs. D. is certain she won't like them so much, just as she'd determined that the Tien Shan aren't so wonderful and beautiful as the Ch. Pamirs! The local people say that no European lady, even Russian, has ever been through this country before. Hardly any have even been to Aksu, & any who have been there must have gone by the main (and longer) plains road viâ Maralbashi.

I'm half asleep and must close, because the man who is to take this back to Kashgar to catch this week's mail leaves at peep of dawn.

***

[*Starting here I insert into the letters bracketed passages from the Field Diary that fill a gap with new information. Skrine was busy collecting local folklore with the help of Murad Qari; so some of the proverbs the latter heard are included. The transcription is Skrine's original, even if it may not correspond to what is considered today proper academic transcription of Turkic texts. To a considerable degree in* CCA *1925, Ch. XIV, his description of the several days' tour into the foothills of the Tien Shan mountains follows closely what he wrote in his diary and letters home, with the excision of the longish section of political intelligence quoted below. However, even in cases where in the diary some paragraphs contain a great deal of stylistic editing, words crossed out, etc., the final version in the book reflects yet further re-writing. Also, the treatment in the book does include some details not found in what I am quoting here.*]

Uch Turfan 12 September 1923

[...] We have had a patchy journey en regards pleasantness, some of it delightful, other parts less so. [*FD, p. 2:* Sept. 4th. Five miles above Sughum Karaul is a tiny shrine 'Allahyar Beg' consisting of a post decorated with the skull and backbone of a donkey & the head-gear (bök) of a man who died there once. In the evening at Kupruk Bulak we talked to a young Kashgari who had just come in with 4 donkeys. He said

171. Possibly Skrine's memory in writing this was faulty? Stein 'discovered' Kelpin on his expedition of 1906-1908, as he recorded in *Serindia*, III, pp. 1304-1306. There, he referred to 'Kasim Beg, the intelligent local head', not specifically the amban. Probably Kasim Beg was an aqsakal. As Justin Jacobs has reminded me, the statement about the uniqueness of a Muslim amban would be true only if it ignored the numerous Hui officials in Xinjiang. For Stein's traverse of the area in 1914, see his *Innermost Asia*, I, esp. pp. 74-81. However, apparently he did not then visit Kelpin.

he had brought flour from K[ash]g[a]r & was going up in to the mountains to sell it & buy sheep. A good life, & he seemed a good type of youth, sturdy, cheerful & independent.] After leaving Sughun Karaul we crossed a low pass and found ourselves in a big plain as flat as a pancake, complete[ly] encircled, by a subsidiary range of the Tien Shan with peaks up to 12,000 or 13,000 on the north, & by foothills up to 8,000 on the south. No outlet from this plain, which is consequently well covered with grass and tamarisk, also with a scattered forest of desert poplar – a tree remarkably like an oak & distinctly picturesque. Twenty square miles or more of the lowest part of this great plain is covered with salt, and has patches of salt water on it here and there; there are springs of fresh water among the desert poplar forests, and wee Kirghiz farms in a few places. In other places there are the 'ak-ois' (felt huts) of the Kirghiz of the mountains, who come down at this season to reap their tiny fields of corn and barley. Several hundred families of Kirghiz, I was told, live in the glens of the mountains to the N. of the Yai Döbe plain.

We marched for 54 miles (I calculated) over the Yai Döbe plain & then ascended a very long, barren, gradual slope up a wide desert between low hills for another 20 miles, & turned up a 'jilga' (valley) which took us up among high grassy hills and more Kirghiz for another 25 miles. The last 55 miles was all through unexplored country, and I mapped it roughly as I went – tho' unfortunately I had omitted to bring my surveying table & other materials, not knowing that we would be going off a known route (the guide took us by the route we went, saying that it was much easier than the one Stein went by farther north; and I think he was right).

In this wild unknown country there are hardly any springs, the Kirghiz living chiefly on rain water which collects in small tarns or ponds in the grassy hollows of the hills. Plenty of rain falls in these hills relatively speaking, but the geological formation is such that it does not collect underground & appear in springs; it goes underground beneath the wide desert plain & foot-hill country to the south & comes out in springs on the edge of the Maralbashi & Kelpin jungles. On Saturday we camped beside one of these 'kölls' in the middle of a big richly-verdant basin among rounded Scotch-like hills; there were 10–12 Kirghiz families living in ak-ois in the basin, and their flocks of ponies, sheep goats and cattle grazed about over the wide expanse. Away to the north glittered the mighty snow peaks of the Tien Shan in Russian territory. When the glowing golden light of evening bathed the whole scene, it was an unforgettable sight. But it was 10,500 ft. up & jolly 'parky' at night, I can tell you; all water, sponges etc. froze hard. Next day we travelled thro' another 20 miles of unknown mountain country, which I sketched in roughly and crossed a pan which brought us into the great Taushkan Darya Valley. This is a magnificent wide river valley with mountains 17,000–18,000 ft. high on the N. and 11–12,000 ft. on the south. The Taushkan ('Hare') River rises in Semirechensk territory and cuts thro' the Tienshan into Chinese territory; the middle & upper course of it is very little known.

[*FD, pp. 2-3:* **Sept. 7th.** The enormously fat Beg of Pichau, a regular Falstaff, exchanged hats with Hafiz on the march. Most comic sight I ever saw, H. in the huge Astrakhan Kirghiz hat and the Beg with H.'s '*dopa*' perched like a Glengarry on the top of his vast head and face.

He told us that the little community at Pichau had been practically ruined by the influx of refugees from Semirechia 3 years ago, because they brought enormous quantities of sheep & goats which ate all the grass, so that there was none for the Pichau flocks and they died. The stock was thus destroyed & now they can't recover because there is no surplus for breeding. But the Chinese have not reduced their 'cattle tax' fixed many years ago at 15 dachins for sheep – they still take 50 taels a year off Pichau on this a/c, tho' there are no sheep. On the other hand, Pichau is not assessed for land tax tho' there is a good deal of cultivation.

Proverbs apropos of the Bolos: (Qari)

(1) Haiwanning alasi tashida, insanning alasi ichida.
'A beast's spots are on his back, but a man's are inside him (i.e. not visible).'

(2) Ishak minmagan adam ishak minip ulturedar.
'The man who has never ridden a donkey when he does get one to ride, he kills it.'

(3) Ishak khotaka minmaganlar emde minar tai
Arpabadian ichmaganlar emde ichar chai.
'Those who never rode even a donkey's foal, now ride yearling horses; those who never even drank barley gruel now drink tea.'

The ladies of Yairan Bulak were immensely interested & impressed by the gold in my teeth. Asked D. all about it. Thought it was a kind of ornament. They also asked her what my other wife was like, and whether she travelled? I explained that in the west a man had only one wife, whereupon they exclaimed 'Aren't you lonely'?

Sept. 8th […] The journey from Keklik to Kelpin takes 2 days & comes out at Subashi (v[ide] Stein's map) […]

The Kirghiz of these hills are much shyer than those of the Ch. Pamirs, and they never ask one into their ak-ois nor do they appear to regard one as their guest as the latter (often quite embarrassingly) do. Two reasons (1) Living on the Russian border they are at once less secure and more sophisticated (2) this is a trade route much used by Sart merchants who are (I believe) continually cheating them by taking supplies & not paying for them.

Another proverb very applicable to Turkestan.

Man mushukni ishgha buiradem, mushak quruqene buirade.

'I gave an order to the cat, and the cat gave it to its tail.']

We had some glorious vistas and views travelling down this valley to Uch Turfan, which took us two days to reach from the time that we debouched on to the river; I got some very fine photos with good cloud-effects. The soil of the valley at the foot of the high fantastically peaked mountains to the S. is very rich & all kinds of crops and lucernes grow in profusion; the population until within a few miles of Uch Turfan is almost entirely Kirghiz. I'll tell you in a later letter my impressions of the Kirghiz on this side of the province compared with those of the Ch[inese] Pamirs.

Uch Turfan is an interesting town planted with tall poplars and cypresses and standing among curious abrupt craggy hills 100–200 ft. high, on the tops of some of which are ancient Chinese fortifications. On a clear day like yesterday the panorama of mountains almost completely encircling Uch Turfan is indescribably fine. 150 miles of the Tian Shan are visible including the wonderful massifs of the Central T. S. with completely glaciated peaks up to 23,000 ft, cleft in one place by the awe-inspiring gorge of the Kum Arik River which brings the waters of a large part of South-eastern Semirechia through to the Takla Makan Desert where the sands of Lop Nor eventually swallow them up.

We have given up our idea of crossing the Muzart Pass to Ili and shooting in the Tekkes Valley. The crossing of the pass takes 9 days from Aksu, & is too much of an undertaking to do twice for the sake of 10 days, even in the Tekkes Valley, which I have for years longed to see. Between you and me, I think that the Muzart Pass (which is difficult & very cold at this time of year) would be a bit too much for D. Instead of doing that, we are going to explore (1) certain valleys on the south side of the Tian Shan, 1–2 days' march north of here, (2) the untraversed mountains on the south side of the Taushkan Darya which I shall map as best I can, coming out at a quaint little known town called Kelpin [...] & after a day or two there travel to Aksu. There I have a week's work to do early in October.

The post is just off & I must catch it as it only goes every 2nd day. Hope this catches the mail at K[ash]g[a]r.

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[*Skrine's August official diary went off to India on 16 September and reached London on 30 November. The excerpts here are from the printed copy sent to the India Office in London, BL IOLR L/P&S/10/976, P4521/1923, fols. 186-189. In it Skrine included his usual updates on the Chinese officialdom, where the news was not all favorable to British interests, viz.*:]

2. A much less satisfactory transfer is that of Li Ch'i, Magistrate of Yarkand to Kuchar and his replacement by an officer named Lo. Li is of the best type of Chinese official, and is particularly distinguished by a strong sense of justice and fairness in his dealings with British subjects. The sole reason for his removal is the necessity of finding a place for Lo, who is the father-in-law of Governor Yang's newly-married son [...] Lo was recently Taoyin of Aksu, in which post he found insufficient scope for his acquisitive instincts and he is reported to have asked for the lower but more profitable post of Yarkand Magistrate. His Majesty's Consul-General understands that in China the office of a Taoyin, which corresponds roughly to that of a Commissioner in British India, is popularly described as a 'clear-water Yamen' as opposed to that of a district official which is called a 'dirty-water Yamen.'

[*We learn from Skrine's Travel Diary under 17 August, that this information was passed on by the ex-Taoyin Chu. The official August diary continues with a report on the arrival of Pigot and notes the difficulty posed by his having shown up with no advance warning. Then there is a brief note that the murderer of the Chitrali, discussed in an earlier report, had been executed. Given continuing suspicions about foreign travelers as possible Bolshevik agents, Zavitsky, described in the previous month's diary, received some attention:*]

7. [...] His Majesty's Consul-General arranged to have Zavitsky watched at Yarkand and has received reports of conversations held by him with one or two local Musalmans of note, Dr. Gustafsson of the Swedish Mission acting as interpreter. In these talks Zavitsky seemed to be chiefly interested in the former autonomy of peoples now under the Chinese, Russian, British or Afghan yoke. He asked many questions about the times of the 'Amir' Yakub Beg; about Bokhara and the former indigenous rulers of Badakhshan, and even about Baluchistan regarding which he was particularly concerned to find out whether it had formerly been part of the dominions of the Moghul Emperors or of the Amirs of Afghanistan.

His Majesty's Consul-General is convinced that Zavitsky is not a Bolshevik agent or actively hostile to this country, and that his talk is merely the outcome of such vague, crude sentimentalities about liberty and self-determination as might be expected in an indifferently educated young American of Polish birth, but he considers that it would be as well if an eye were kept on Zavitsky while in India, lest he fall into undesirable hands.

Zavitsky left Yarkand on or about 17th August in company with Mr. and Mrs. Gustafsson and child *en route* for India *viâ* Leh. [*J. Monteath, the annotator of the file in London, noted here (fol. 187v) in the margin:* 'He left Srinagar for India on the 15 October.']

8. *Swedish Mission Agitation*. [...] In spite of hints from the Chinese to the effect that the reopening of the Mission Hospital would be welcome, Mr. Hermansson who is acting as head of the Mission has quite rightly refused to resume any of the Mission's activities at all until it is definitely decided whether they may resume all of them or not. The Chinese appear to be employing their favourite delaying tactics and to be leaving it to the Mission to make the next move. On the request of Mr. Hermansson, His Majesty's Consul-General has telegraphed to His Majesty's Minister asking how the matter stands as

regards the resumption of their work by the Mission. It is presumed that the Swedish Minister at Peking is working on behalf of the Mission and is insisting on the admission by the Chinese Government of the Treaty right of Swedish subjects to engage in any kind of missionary activity in any part of the dominions of the Republic.

His Majesty's Consul General is convinced that the serious proportions to which the agitation grew in Kashgar Old City were due to the weakness and cowardice of the Magistrate, Wei, and to the age and pusillanimity of the Taoyin. Had Chu Taoyin been still in power, it is highly improbable that anything of the sort would have occurred; witness the weakness of the agitation at Yarkand and Yangi-Hissar. At the same time, it is more than likely that the Governor used, and is still using, the affair as a weapon against the Mission to which he is no less hostile than he is to all other foreign activities within his dominions. This attitude was no doubt aggravated by the announcement by the mission headquarters in Sweden last winter that they proposed to send no less than nine missionaries of both sexes to Sinkiang this year. When visas for these persons were applied for, the Governor refused to let them be granted and it is probable that he used the Kashgar agitation as an argument. A compromise has now apparently been arrived at, and five missionaries are on their way to Kashgar [...]

Local affairs.

11. *Kuchar.* [...] A copy of a notice issued by the Magistrate of Kuchar has been received, in which any persons thinking of performing the Mecca pilgrimage are warned of the difficulties and dangers of the road and strongly advised not to go. This is evidently a counter blast to the perfectly innocent notice recently circulated by His Majesty's Consul General to Aksakals for verbal communication to Qazis informing intending Hajis that the road to Mecca via India is perfectly safe and that the British Government gives all possible assistance to pilgrims. As usual, the Chinese invest everything the British Consulate-General does with a political significance; but as they have no written announcement to show, they cannot (according to their own ideas of evidence) make any objection. [*The underlining above was done by the annotator in London, who wrote in the margin:* 'Why?'] [...]

13. Sarikol. An agent of his Highness the Agha Khan named Sabzali Ramzan Ali has been visiting the Sarikol Valley collecting tithes from the Maulais. He avoided visiting Tashkurghan itself, in order, he told the British Aksakal, not to have to call on the Chinese Amban.

[*Earlier Kashgar reports going back prior to Skrine's time include information about tithe collection on the part of agents sent to the Ismaili followers of the Agha Khan, Sarikol being the region in S.W. Xinjiang near the border with Afghanistan (the Wakhan Corridor) and British India, today's Pakistan. After summarizing information about the routes of trade still going on despite the official blockade along the border between China and Russian Central Asia, Skrine provides some detail about a new undertaking on the part of the Bolsheviks to open up that trade:*]

16. A grandiloquently-styled 'Soviet Trade Commission' arrived at Sungek on or about 28th August to treat with Umar Akhun Bai and his agent, Mr. Poltavsky. His Majesty's Consul-General has received from the latter an amusing description of the 'Commission'. It consisted of a 'President', an illiterate Tarter of the name of Mussin, and an 'Expeditor' (Transport officer), a Russian named Semenoff. The former calls himself a Wool Specialist and is always talking and boasting, but appears to be a fool of the firstwater. The latter is an ordinary uneducated peasant, formerly a weighman at factory. He too is a great talker, and very little else. Two Red soldiers, whom Mr. Poltavsky describes as much more intelligent than the Commissioners, escort the party. For some days after their arrival, Mussin was perpetually organizing sessions, conferences, etc., and wearied Umar Akhun Bai and Mr. Poltavsky to such an extent that they were obliged to bribe the 'Commission' to keep quiet Mussin with 100 Kashgar

taels, Semenoff with a few pieces of good cloth and the soldiers with several bottles of vodka. After this the 'Commission' became more human. They confided among other things to Mr. Poltavsky that it was very hard to pick up a livelihood in Soviet Russia, and that all officials without exception took bribes. There is little or no risk in doing so, because of the severe punishment inflicted on any one who brings a charge of corruption against a Soviet official and fails to prove it.

Finally, at the end of the month, the Commission departed without settling anything, Mussin saying that he had not full powers. The latest news is that a second delegation is expected shortly at Sungek, and that the Kashgar distillery has received an order from Umar Akhun Bai for another thirty bottles of vodka.

17. The above-described delegation need not be taken very seriously, but one that is expected to arrive shortly at Urumchi is of a different nature. It has already been reported to the Government of India that the dragoman of this Mission is to be Hagelstrom, who was formerly Secretary at the Russian Consulate-General here and was transferred to Harbin as Vice-Consul in 1914.[172] When he found that it suited him to do so, he became a Bolshevik, and he has been extremely useful to the Soviet Government as their representative at Harbin. He is one of the best living Russian exponents of the Chinese language, and is an extremely capable and cunning intriguer. The Soviet are evidently about to make a strong attempt to capture Urumchi diplomatically – a bid, in fact, for the recovery of the lost influence and privileges of Russia in Sinkiang. The first Mission which was sent to Urumchi in 1921, has been, as has already been reported, a complete failure so far as negotiations with the Chinese is concerned. It is still there, but except for a certain amount of propaganda work it has done nothing but sit in the house provided gratis (not let on lease, be it noted) by the Urumchi Government.

[*The diary concludes with comments on propaganda, especially in Yarkand and indications that it is being funneled from the Bolsheviks through the Afghan Mission there.*]

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[*Field Diary, pp. 3–13. I have shifted the section with Qari's intelligence from 21–25 September, obtained in the bazaar of Uch Turfan, to fit in the chronological sequence after the entry of 18 September. Presumably Skrine left him behind in town, and Qari then caught up to the Skrine caravan. The last entries of the notes here anticipate what is in the subsequent letters home, but it seemed best to keep this section of the diary as a unit.*]

Uch Turfan, **11 September 1923**. Alt. 4,700.

Ma Amban (Tungani) rather insolent; no chah-jan, etc. Dinner at 'Nine Springs' however – curious place. Sort of house-boat anchored in a small square pond at the end of a pier. Great horticulturist evidently. Very fine asters & dahlias everywhere.

Tungling (Inf[antr]y) a Kuchar Mussalman of the 'Wongzada' (!) family (ancient rulers of Kuchar & (at times) of all Altishahr! Known as 'Khojan'. Dresses like a Chinaman, but is tall, stooping, cadaverous and very hairy. Looks like a cross between the Prophet Moses and a Skye-terrier dressed in Chinese clothes.

172. Viktor Vladimirovich Gagel'strom (Hagelstrom) had been a student interpreter at the Russian legation in Beijing, then a translator at the Russian consulate in Kashgar from 1910-1912, and in 1913-1914 the Secretary there before the transfer to Harbin which Skrine mentions. While still a student interpreter, he co-authored with I. S. Brunnert, *Sovremennaia politicheskaia organizatsiia Kitaia* (Peking, 1910), which was translated into English as *Present Day Political Organization of China* (Shanghai, 1912). Skrine had reported the information about Hagelstrom in a telegram dated 24 August, which described him as an 'exceptionally dangerous man' and requesting more information about him. L.D. Wakely in the India Office in London passed on the request for more information to the Foreign Office, only to receive a response on 2 November that so far no information had been obtained. The Hagelstrom file, BL LOIR L/P&S/11/232 P1936/1923, includes a copy of Skrine's telegram, stamped P 3825/1923, as well as a copy of Skrine's telegram dated 19 April with information about Bolshevik trade negotiations in Urumqi and his comments on the cross-border trade.

A gentleman, tho. speaks very good Turki, & told me all about his ancestors, reminding me that it was they who successfully rebelled against the Chinks in '65 and not Yakub Beg – the latter turned the Wongs out. He gets 200 taels a month pension from the Ch. in lieu of land at Kuchar, in addi[tio]n to his pay as Tungling here.

'Kho Darin' an unpleasant sensual type is Commandant of the 'Cavalry'. I omitted to call on him at first but rectified it after some broad hints. He surprised me in the middle of my call, apropos of something quite different, by asking me if I ate pork? I said yes, fearing the worst – whereupon he proceeded to explain that he w[oul]d have liked to give a dinner party in my honour, but could not give me pork as he w[oul]d like to if the other 2 officers were invited, as one of them was a Tungani (Ma), the other a Kuchar Turki; as he could not offend the 2 latter by asking me without them, he thought he had better solve the problem by not having a dinner party at all! Again, he explained that he would have sent me round lots of beda [? = fodder – *DW*] and grain for my horses, but he had heard that Ma Darin had done so, and he had therefore denied himself the pleasure. Funny people, some of these Chink officials.

14 September 1923

Trade between here and Karaküll (i.e. Przhewalsk)[173] is flourishing. Certain Bolo importing agents, esp. two called Ismail Kirghiz & Daud Bai Tungani, are buying up mata, chakman[174] & all kinds of articles of local manufacture & exporting them to Semirechia sub rosa. Two passes are used, the Bedal and another. Within the last 2 months they have exported 400 yambus worth from here. The payment is of course in opium, the price of which in Aksu has fallen from 4 taels per sar 2 years ago to 2 taels per sar.[175] The carriage rate to the frontier (i.e. to the other side of the passes) is 8 taels per pony; local carriers refuse to go further. Best season is Sept.–Nov.

Very many Uch T[urfan] traders have been ruined in the trade during the last 2 years, owing to the treachery & competition of the Kirghiz, who unlike those of the Ferghana-Bokhara frontier do not help Sart traders but have instead succeeded in getting the trade into their own hands. These Kirghiz (& Tunganis) are Russian subjects. Even they lose heavily sometimes: e.g. only 20 days ago 150 pony-loads of mata & kham [a cotton textile – *DW*] were seized by one of the Russian karauls [border guard posts – *DW*].

The only B[ritish] S[ubject] here is Khwaja Ghulam Khan, s[on] o[f] Khwaja Abdus Samad Khan Kandahari, who came from Afghan[ista]n here 100 years ago, collected many followers, became venerated throughout the whole of Altishahr and died at the age of 147 [*sic*] in 1911. Ghulam Khan seems a good man, & is certainly very knowledgeable about the country. He has murids [disciples – *DW*] everywhere – most of the local people, & others up to Kuchar & down to K[ash]g[a]r.

The country round U[ch] T[urfan] is extraordinarily rich & well cultivated. No villages here, only farms standing on their own plots – the small-holding system to perfection. Fields are broad and well laid out. Country well timbered: cypress-like poplars particularly in evidence. From the tops of the curious cliffy chain of hills which juts right out into the oasis from the Kelpin mountains, on an isolated spur of which the castle is built, the view is superb. In the foreground the town with its solid walls, picked out with tall poplars and embowered in greenery – miles and miles of rich heavily timbered champaign, almost perfectly flat; rocky hills like islands rising out of the sea of green and autumn gold; and beyond, to the west, north & northwest the magnificent array of the snowy Tien Shan, furrowed deep with glens and rising high to Pelion piled upon Ossa of eternal snow; to the south and south west the fantastic tumbled brown peaks and crags of the unexplored Kelpin Tagh, tier beyond tier, each a little hazier and more mysterious than the last.

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173. The town is at the eastern end of Lake Issyk-kul in what is now Kyrgyzstan. The famous Russian explorer Nikolai Przhevalskii was buried there.

174. *Māta* is 'a coarse textile made from cotton' (Nazaroff, *Moved On!*: p. 125); *chakman* (in modern Uzbek, *chakmon* or *chekmen*) is a robe or caftan.

175. The names of the monetary units here were standard, but their value could fluctuate. A yambu generally referred to a silver ingot; a tael was a unit of weight with a value measured by an equivalent in pure silver. Etherton's extensive "Report on the Trade" (1922), pp. 137-138, includes an overview of the monetary system, though the equivalencies he indicated were not the operative ones by the time Skrine wrote from Uch Turfan.

At night – until 11 or 12 o'clock at any rate – one listens to the double clack-clack of the watchman going his rounds. As he patrols the streets, he knocks two pieces of wood together to warn thieves that he is awake. An admirable arrangement – for the thieves.

Bolo education is booming in 'Karaküll'. There are 200 schools including several colleges for youths over 20 in the towns. Coeducation. Age 8–20 in ordinary schools. Children are at first taught the Quran etc. as in ordinary Mussalman schools. In 1921 Isra'il s[on] o[f] Achmet Bai aged 18 was sent to Moscow for training in Bolo prop[agand]a. He returned this year and has been made a master in one of the schools. He is universally believed to have married his own sister. (This form of incest is supposed to be permitted by the Bolo 'religion'.) This Israil teaches that the Quran is true & valid, but has been wrongly interpreted by the translators.

Boys of 12 & over are drilled with arms daily. There is no prohibition in the keeping of firearms, but people are not allowed to take arms out of Russian into Ch[inese] territory. Last year 20 or 30 pistols were confiscated by the Ch. karauls.

Mussalman traders from this side are all asked & advised to bring their young brothers & sons to school in Karakull. They are told that their sons will become learned in the 'Yangi Fikr' [new ideas – *DW*] and in world-knowledge as opp[ose]d to provincial knowledge. They are promised that if they do this the Bolos will help them in trade. About 50 traders from Uch T[urfan], Ak[su], Kuchar & Kashgar have actually taken their y[oun]g brothers or sons to school in Karakull. These men are called 'Yasilganlar', 'those who have entered (their sons, br[other]s' etc.) names.'

About 2000 traders are engaged in the Russian trade, nearly all R[ussian] subj[ect]s (Kirghiz & Tunganis).

Until this year the Soviet auth[oritie]s have not tried to put down the looting of caravans, have in fact openly joined in it. Now they discountenance it; but there is a great deal of looting between the karauls & the towns. Some traders have appealed to Przhevalsk, & have received heavy compensation. Much bribery. No import duties, tho' all goods are stamped.

A common form of blackmail by officials or traders is for an official to come & close a shop, pretending that there is a case against the shop-keeper and the goods are attached. But the attachment can be removed by a bribe. One trader says he has 5 times had his shop closed by an official, & opened it by a bribe each time.

18 September. All Uch Turfan thinks we are bound for Karakull. One said to Qari, 'Tell the Consul-Sahib not to go by the Yangi Art Pass. It is the most difficult of all the routes from Uch T[urfan] to K[ara]kull.' Special orders were sent out by the Amban to all the 5 karauls of the frontier 'not to let any opium traders meet the C.G.' The A[mban] is deeply in the trade, most of the export trade being done by his agents.

Information obt[aine]d. by Qari at Uch T[urfan] **21st-25th Sept**.

(1) On 19th or 20th Sept. at Qurghan Tash on the R[ussia]n side of the Bedel Pass 100-150 mounted merchants & servants, incl. 5 or 6 Ch. S[ubject]s & the rest R[ussia]n Subj[ect]s (mostly Tungani) with pack-saddles full of Ch. goods were attacked by 6 Russians & 19–20 Kirghiz & there was some firing. The Ch. S[ubject]s were let go but their goods & ponies confisc[ate]d. The R[ussian] S[ubject]s were taken prisoner. The Ch. S[ubject]s only got back on foot with great difficulty & are now hiding in their homes from shame.

Chief articles exp[orte]d:
Kham several kinds
Shoes Turki pattern
English (Indian) muslins & other goods
Dyes
Tea

(2) Karaküll (Semirechia)

Some 2 yrs. ago some 2000 Sart women from Uch Turfan district migrated to Karakull leaving their husbands, some after obtaining divorce others not. Many of their husbands afterwards pursued them and 10 or 12 were killed by the latter. One brought his wife back to Uch Turfan & killed her here lately; the

Amban hanged him on the 19th Sept. Many agr[icultura]l labourers have also deserted to Karakull.

(Cf. what Karabagh women told D. about women having a better time in Karakull than in Uch Turfan).

Return of R[ussian] S[ubject] deserters from Ch. territory to Semirechia.

Since the Bol[shevik] revol[utio]n (5 years) Mirza Jan R[ussian] Ak[sakal] at Uch T[urfan] estimates that 25,000 Turki (Tungani, Kirghiz) came over to the Ch. terr[itor]y. & were settled in various districts of Sinkiang. During the last year only, they have been gradually returning, owing to a message rec'd. by them from the Bolos saying 'Our quarrel was with the Cossacks, not with you; now no Cossacks are left; come back & take your lands again'; i.e., an amnesty was offered. These persons on return to Semirechia find that the Bolos give them land (not their old land) to cultivate only, on terms that the State takes 2/3rds & the cultivators 1/3 only. But the carrying out of this system is very defective & few cultivators pay 2/3 rds – all depends on the officer – much consumption.

Although all the other tenets of Communism are v[ery] slackly carried out, or not at all, the community of houses is adhered to and any one can demand accommodation in anyone else's house. Freq[uent]ly Bolos come with their men & demand a share in a house, & have to be bought off. No purdah; men & women live together; much vice. A man can only protect his woman according to Shariat with great difficulty and payment of much bribes.

The Russians all live in bad tumble-down houses & terrible filth – & bad taste. Many of them beg for food.

Trade. The only export allowed from Semir[echia] is opium. All others forbidden. The acceptance of paper roubles is compulsory on R[ussian] S[ubject]s but not on Ch. S[ubject]s. All R[ussian] S[ubject]s are furnished with a mandāt on leaving R[ussia]n terr[itory] for protection at the frontier on return. No one allowed to enter R[ussia]n terr[itor]y without a mandat, even those who have a mandat are sometimes greatly troubled.

The opium trade is on the increase. Some traders go themselves & others entrust Kham etc. to Kirghiz. Latter are not nearly so trustworthy as those of the Afghan border – many cases of cheating & misapp[ropriatio]n which are the subject of complaints to the yamen sometimes. The Amban orders such cases to be settled out of court by the Begs.

Ma Amban last year imported 6000 jings [jing = 133 lbs. – *DW*] of opium & sold it in Aksu, Kuchar etc.; this year he has imported 2000 j. already. He exports Kham etc. in exchange thro' certain Kashgari agents; has agents also at Aksu. This has greatly encouraged the general trade. Occasional 'nām ki waste'[176] opium burnings, but no real effort made. In 1921 1500 charaks [charak = 19.5 lbs. – *DW*] were imported, in '22, 2000 ch.; this year 2,500 ch. (Auth[ority]: R[ussia]n. Ak[sakal]). Prices: In Karaküll: 1 Russian pound = 11 sars costs 1 Kash[gar] sar which buys 2 Khams; i.e. the traders pay 2 Khams, worth to them 1 sar, for 11 sars weight of opium. They buy from the Bol[shevik] auth[oritie]s as well as from the cultivators, for the former take their 2/3rds share from the cultivators in opium as well as in other crops. Opium is frequently confiscated at the frontier by the auth[oritie]s, put into the treasury & resold to traders!!

Muslin & thread are the 2 Engl. goods which are particularly in demand in Karakull. In 2 months 5000 sars worth of Engl. goods have been exported.

Normally, debts have been enforceable in the courts during the last year, unlike before; but this is more nominal than real; any rich debtor can get off paying his debt. Rich colonists from Turkestan are well off, except that large numbers of Russians have to be fed by them. Certain wealthy ex-Ch. S[ubject] merchants have to feed 50 or 60 unemployed Russians daily – by order (Communism).

Moh[amma]d Niaz Akhun, Aksakal of the Kashgaris in Karakul

Duties: to keep a reg[iste]r of arrivals & departures of Ch. S[ubject]s. Takes anyone who comes from Uch T[urfan] straight to the Bol[shevik] dept. concerned. The dept. officials examine the newcomer closely reg[ar]d[in]g the news in this country. Perform other ord[inar]y Aksakal's duties. V[ery] difficult for him from this country to get any of their deceased relations' property out of the Ak[sakal]. The Ch. auth[oritie]s

176. Hindi: 'for the sake of a name' ~ so-called, a euphemism.

refuse any help in such matters & 2 or 3 pet[itio]ns have been given. The Ak[sakal] makes much profit out of enforcing (!) the Bol[shevik] laws about transfer of property tho'.

Many women, especially Kirghiz are employed in the towns as Cheka & police officers. They all have swords, like all Bolo. officers; also on propaganda. These women speak Russian very well. No uniform; some wear Kirghiz, some Russian clothes; some have cropped their hair & are indistinguishable from men, some not.

News. At 4 offices in the city (?Przhewalsk) & 2 in the country news is published every other day. The public can come & hear free. Formerly v[ery] few came; now 500 people are to be seen at the office, listening to the news read by those who can read, long queues. The chief news in Sept. was (1) the Japanese catastrophe (2) the peace betw. Turkey & Britain (3) that the Amir of Afgh[anista]n had become an Emperor!

Bolo Spies. 4 m. ago a Bolo spy dressed as a merchant stayed 1 month in Uch T[urfan] & 1 week in Aksu. The R[ussian] Aksakal told the Amban ab[ou]t this man, whom he recognized as a Russian, but the A[mban] only summoned the Russian & 2 Tunganis (R[ussian] S[ubject]s) who were living in the same rooms at the serai & took their statements & jai-khatts fr[om] the Tunganis certifying that the Russian spy was a merchant & perfectly harmless. The Ak[sakal] knows that the spy spent 100 tls. in the Yamen. Kirghiz & Tunganis R[ussian] S[ubject]s have also been coming as spies & the local people recognize them, but it is no use informing the Ch. auth[oritie]s.

Arms Factory at Almota.[177] Rifles of all kinds & m[achine] g[un]s are manufactured in large quantities at Vyerni, not at Przhevalsk, 1 month ago 4 m[achine] g[un]s came to Karaküll & it is rumoured were sent to karauls (not likely).

V[ery] few real Russians in the frontier, nearly all Kirghiz & Tunganis.

Ma Darin ex-Amb[an] is reported to have amassed value of 85,000 charaks of grain during his term. This kind of inf[ormatio]n comes out at or after an Amb[an]'s departure if he displeases any of his subordinates by not sharing equally with them, as it is customary to do. Disgruntled clerks who know the books blow the gaff.

29 September 1923. On the road I was explaining to Qari about 'peace being the chief British interest' and how it was bad for us when there was war between our customer-states. 'I see,' said Q., 'Just like in a town, if there is an epidemic of cholera, the bakers suffer.' 'Yes,' said I, 'and it would pay them to subscribe money and procure the services of the best possible doctors to deal with the epidemic, wouldn't it? Similarly, the Br. nation spends quite a lot of money on Peace Palaces, Councils of Ambassadors, Leagues of Nations & so on, in order to keep the peace. How, then, can our enemies accuse us of wanting world-dominion, which cannot be attained without many wars?'

More popular sayings

Buyerda tukhe-sūtdin bilak hamanarsa tapaledur.

You can get everything here except ~~bird's-milk~~ hen's milk.

(Apropos of an exceptionally fertile country like Uch Turfan, Taghak etc. Said to us by the Beg of Taghak 29 September 1923).

Maning bokam chushse, Khudaning yurteda chushedur.

If my hat falls, it falls on God's ground. (i.e. I haven't even enough land to support my hat if it falls off.)

Tügening qosaqe āchse, yentaq-qa boinini uzutedur.

If the camel's stomach is empty, he reaches his neck down even to the thorn-bush.

(i.e., in time of necessity the haughtiest will condescend.)

Noticed machāns [platforms – *DW*] in all the fields directly we got into the Kum Arik Valley against pig. They call them 'süra' here. Gates (usu[ally] left open!) on all the estates. Maize grows to perfection, also

177. Almaty (formerly Alma-Ata) in today's Kazakhstan; Vernyi in late tsarist times. Still the largest city in Kazakhstan, it had been the Kazakh capital prior to its transfer to Akmola (Astana) in 1997.

rice – everything in fact. V[ide] proverb on pre[vious] page.

The bed of the Kum Arik, including the jungle, must be 2 ½ –3 m. wide. About 12 channels, all swift. No game in the jungle, mostly shrub veg[etatio]n, incl. black-thorn, barberry and wild rose. Wonderful colouring in autumn.

Camped at Sheiku Tulumush Mazar 3 m. E. of Taghak cultiva[tio]n edge, delicious camping place at spring on upper side of little oasis in the great daman of Sai.[178]

Ilanlik, where we camped on 29th Sept., is on the Pakkalik water just where it bursts through a curious red range of foothills which bank up the Sai. This range, tho' low & well-covered with grazing, is uninhabited & is the haunt of wild sheep similar to the Ovis Karelini. I hunted these sheep assiduously for 3 days.

The old Sheikh of Tulumush Mazar came with us to Ilanlik by way of being my shikari, 'mergen' as they call it here,[179] but he was far too old & decrepit. Couldn't see the ovis even when I pointed them out to him, & as for moving, we covered barely a mile an hour. The Beg of Taghak, Daud Beg, also came with us – he is a cheerful soul, & we seemed to cause him great amusement. At any rate he guffawed frequently, specially over my keenness on getting a ghulja (ovis).

Ghulja = wild sheep; arkak = ram, chishe = female

From the top of the red hills the view is extraordinary; over a wild sea of knife-edge ridges & perpendicular-sided nullas dropping away from the cliffs at the top down to the distant Sai, towards Aksu the snows of the Tian Shan must be very fine, quite close in fact from the same pl[ace], but alas today (**1 October 1923**) they were barely visible thro' the dust-haze.

In this country there is much talk of hospitality, and everywhere one goes one is called 'mihmān'. But this does not connote what we mean by 'guest' and 'hospitality'. We regard it as the host's duty to consult the convenience of the guest – that must come first. Here the one object of the Begs etc. in whose ilāqa [territory – *DW*] one is, is to avoid trouble and expense (even tho' one may pay for everything). They will tell you any lie and subject you to any inconvenience to save themselves a little trouble. Never listen to what the Beg says about the best place to camp or spend the night – always choose your own place & camp where convenient to you. If they want you to go on 'just another potai', late in the evening, beyond a pleasant camping place, don't. If you are shooting and have found game, and they want you to move somewhere else where there is still more game, don't. The only people one can in any way trust in this country, I find, are the Kirghiz, specially those of the Kashgarian Mts., tho' we were fairly well done in the S. Tian Shan.

Again, with the Chinese hospitality is not real – it is all forced & formal. It is their 'face' that counts, not your convenience, their chah-jings, farewell feasts etc. are all calculated to give a maximum of inconvenience to the incoming or outgoing guest, but they whiten the face of the Chink which is all they care about.

***

Camp, Kikurtuk, Uch Turfan District, 17 September 1923

I am knocking off a few lines on the typewriter at 11 p m in camp at the foot of the Tian Shan, just so as not to miss the post which leaves Kashgar on the 29th. Our courier lost his way in the mountains between Kashgar and Uch Turfan, and instead of our getting our mail about the fifth or sixth march out from Kashgar, as I had intended, we did not get it till this morning, just as we were leaving Uch Turfan for the mountains, in despair after having waited 5 days for the post. Among other misfortunes, our bread from Kashgar arrived all mouldy & unfit to eat, because the courier came by a hot moist route thro' the Maralbashi jungles instead of by the cool dry mountain road! D. is almost in tears about it. Such are the difficulties of housekeeping in Central Asia! Luckily there was not much work to do on the official dak, and only one cypher telegram to decypher and reply to, so (as the march was a short one) I have been able to get the return dak off, and the man will start back for Kashgar first thing

178. Daman = foothill; sai = the stony desert rising above the watered valleys.

179. Shikari = hunting guide, tracker; mergen = bowman.

tomorrow, while we go up into the mountains.

Tomorrow night I hope we will be camping among pines and on Alpine meadows once more, with quaint Kirghiz in their funny bee-hive 'ak-ois' round us. Alas, we have a long way to go yet before reaching Aksu where our headquarters will be during Oct., and we can't afford to spend long among the Alps of the Tian Shan. However, I hope to get an ibex and some good photos, if only the weather is propitious. At present it is rather unsettled.

I am keeping D. awake with the typewriter, and must stop and write to you more fully from our 'yailaq' (summer pasture) in a day or two. I have your letter of 26th July to acknowledge and discuss.

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[*One might question Skrine's assurance here that he could rely on bazaar gossip in Uch Turfan as his main source of intelligence, that material quoted above. The note in the last paragraph concerning the exchange with Borroughs and Wellcome is a follow-up to the request Skrine had made in his letter of 16 May 1923 that his mother see if the firm would be interested in using photos of their products being used in Kashgaria and in return might provide them with a new medicine chest.*]

Camp, Yangi Art Jilga, Southern Tian Shan, 22 September 1923

I am typing this sitting in my little tent pitched alongside of D.'s larger one on a grassy 'alp' among leafy mountain-ashes and tall pines in one of the valleys which go up into the Tian Shan north of Uch Turfan. The crags rise up thousands of feet all round us, and a burn fringed with alder and ash, which might have come straight out of Perthshire, makes its music just below our tents. Above and beyond our camp the pines 'Fledge the wild-ridgéd mountains steep by steep'.[180]

In other words we are in the sort of country we like best. At the moment it is raining; to be exact, it is the second rainfall we have had in three days; but yesterday and most of the day before were so beautiful, with skies of Mediterranean blue and argosies of creamy clouds floating in them, that we forgive the weather which, like the burn, is strongly reminiscent of Perthshire.

The first night out from Uch Turfan we camped at a little patch of cultivation on the edge of the 'sai,' the gravel-covered slopes which extend in a belt 15 miles broad between the abrupt foot of the Tian Shan and the Taushkan River which waters the rich district of Uch Turfan. Next day we marched 20 miles over perfectly empty 'sai' north-eastwards to the mouth of the Yangi Art Valley. Unfortunately, the spell of brilliant weather with which we had been favoured while at Uch Turfan broke, and we were cut through during the whole march by an icy wind which came to us from a new fall of snow on the mountains. On the left of the mouth of the Yangi Art is a group of two or three Kirghiz farms and a little shrine, beautifully sheltered with a south aspect under the precipitous foot of the Tian Shan. Here we saw many wild pigeons, and went after them as they flew wildly about the cliff-face; at last they settled and, according to our usual wont, D. stalked them with a view to a sitting shot while I placed myself where I thought they would come over me when she put them up. At last 'Bang' I heard her 20-bore, and over came the pigeons; I duly dropped one and shouted to D. to know if she had got one with her shot. Imagine my astonishment when she shouted back 'Five'! She was at once delighted and ashamed of the slaughter, especially when I ragged her unmercifully about her 'browning' habits.[181] But

180. Keats, 'Ode to Psyche' (1819).

181. Back in Clarmont's college days, his father had criticized him for what he felt was hunting of wild animals over and above what could be justified for consumption or sport. See Stewart, *Envoy*, p. 22. Judging from the comment in this letter and in others, Skrine never forgot that admonishment, even though (see below) he would have no qualms about trying to inflict a painful death on the wild dogs in Kashgar who killed all of Doris' poultry. In *CCA* 1925, p. 226, Clarmont described Doris's shooting but briefly, how she, 'twenty-bore in hand, chased the elusive hill-partridge up minor precipices in charge of Sangi Khan'. In his letters home, he minimized such hunting by emphasizing it was to supply the larder.

from the point of view of the pot, if not from that of le haut sport, it was great effort, and in view of this I forgave her and promised that when describing the incident in my book I would say that she had, of course, fired at the leading bird according to régle and had hit it, but that just as she had fired four other pigeons had arranged themselves en échelon behind the leader and had received the balance of her charge.

We got rid of the very scratch lot of ponies, donkeys and human carriers we had (with the utmost difficulty owing to the Russian trade boom) got together in Kashgar for the journey to Aksu, and had secured a really good lot of ponies and carriers at Uch Turfan; and these are proving splendid marchers. They did the 20 miles over the 'sai' in 6 hours, an average pace of 3.3 miles an hour, as against 2.5 m.p.h. or thereabouts which was the other lot's fastest. We accordingly, caravan and all, reached the 'karaul' or Chinese frontier post, 2 miles up the valley, at the gentlemanly hour of four, and were able to pitch our tents on the patch of grass by the guard's hut in comfort. The Chinese Lieutenant and two r[ank] and f[ile] whom the O[fficer] C[ommanding] Uch Turfan had insisted on sending with us, nominally as escort but really to spy on us, were delighted to foregather with the out-at-elbows, opium-smoking N.C.O. and six men who formed the garrison of the karaul. I may mention here that not a soul in Uch Turfan, from the Amban and the O.C. downwards, believes my story of going up into the Tian Shan to shoot ibex; it is taken for granted that I am reconnoitring the Russian frontier, with special reference to the flourishing trade in Semrechian opium which is going on between Przhevalsk and Aksu via the Bedal, Kukurtuk, Yangi Art and one or two other passes. The trade is of course forbidden, but like that between Yarkand and Badakhshan (Afghanistan) it goes on on a large scale with the connivance (and participation in the profits) of the entire Chinese administration, from the Taoyins of Kashgar and Aksu respectively down to the lowest 'onbashi.' As I say, the Chinese think that my real object in coming up here is to find out about the opium and other illicit traffic (for all trade with Soviet Russia is still supposed to be forbidden), if not indeed to cross over into Semirechia itself and conspire with the Bolsheviks to arrange a joint invasion of Chinese Turkestan. The joke is that I am out for information about the trade with Semirechia and the doings of the Bolos in that province, but that it wasn't necessary for me to come up the Yangi Art Valley to get it; I have already found out all I wanted to know in the bazaar at Uch Turfan, which, if the Chinese had thought a bit, was the obvious place to find things out, rather than a wild mountain valley where the few Kirghiz w[oul]d be careful not to give anything away, while any smugglers who came along would be only too careful to pass our camp at night. My sole object, of course, in coming up into the mountains is to get a Tian Shan ibex, if that can be done in the very few days I can spare from work; but the Chinese, who have from the outset put down everything that the Consulate General has done to politics, will never believe this, even when the Lieutenant of our escort tells them (if he does tell them) that I never went near the pass nor interviewed a single smuggler.

Early the following morning began the rain for which it had been working up the day before, and by seven o'clock it was coming down cats and dogs. D. and I were snug as the proverbial bugs in our double-fly tents, but the men (servants and orderlies) were not so well off in their single-fly 'shuldaris,' and I was glad I had had the forethought to camp at the karaul instead of further up the jilga, as we could easily have done in the time; for servants and orderlies alike crowded happily (you know how the Oriental loves a fug) into the little mud building along with the Chinese 'soldiers' and the (no doubt) numerous other inhabitants. Marching up to the '*yailaqs*' (summer pastures) was out of the question, as the tents were drenched and would have been too heavy for the ponies to carry, even if the sun dried the rocks of the river-bed sufficiently to enable the animals to keep their footing on them; so we settled

down to a rainy day in camp. As is safe to happen if you do that in a properly pessimistic frame of mind, it cleared up at eleven, and turned out a glorious afternoon. I went up the pine-clad grassy hillside all sweet-smelling with thyme and juniper after the rain, in one direction with my gun and camera and got one or two fine photoes and a brace of chikor, while D. went with her gun in [the] other and got no birds, but found a lovely valley full of pines and alders and green meadows tucked away in a fold of the mountain round the corner from the karaul. She wanted at once to camp there, but I pointed out that we would find just as nice places further up, and that it was advisable to get as near as possible to the ibex-ground, consistently with finding a nice camping place where we wouldn't be too cold o' nights. For September in these latitudes is not like September on the Indian borders or even in our beloved Chinese Pamirs 300 miles to the south; during the rain the cold was bitter, even near the mouth of the valley, and it gave us a foretaste of what we might be in for further up if the weather was bad.

[*Fig. 137*] In the afternoon we took 'pieces' and explored up the valley to find a good camping-place. Eventually we found this one, and moved up here the next day. The Yangi Art valley is about 15 miles long, from the mouth at 7000 ft., or 3,500 ft. higher than Uch Turfan, to the top of the pass at 14,500 ft. The only Europeans who have ever been up it before are the explorer Merzbacher and his party of Germans in 1903; I have got Merzbacher's book with me here.[182] As he mapped this and the other valleys of the Southern Central Tian Shan, it is not necessary for me to do any mapping, which is rather a blessing as it leaves me free to add to my collection of mountain photos [*Fig. 138, next page*] – I have got some beauties already – stalk ibex and go out after chikor with D. who is developing into a most keen and adventurous small-game sportswoman – a true daughter of her papa. Needless to say, though, we never shoot more than we need to feed ourselves and the men.

I am very anxious to get a specimen of the Tian Shan ibex, but the prospects are not bright. The only Kirghiz in this jilga who knows anything about the ibex and (what is still more important) about the mountains is a boy of about fifteen called Tokhta who owns a quaint old matchlock about a mile

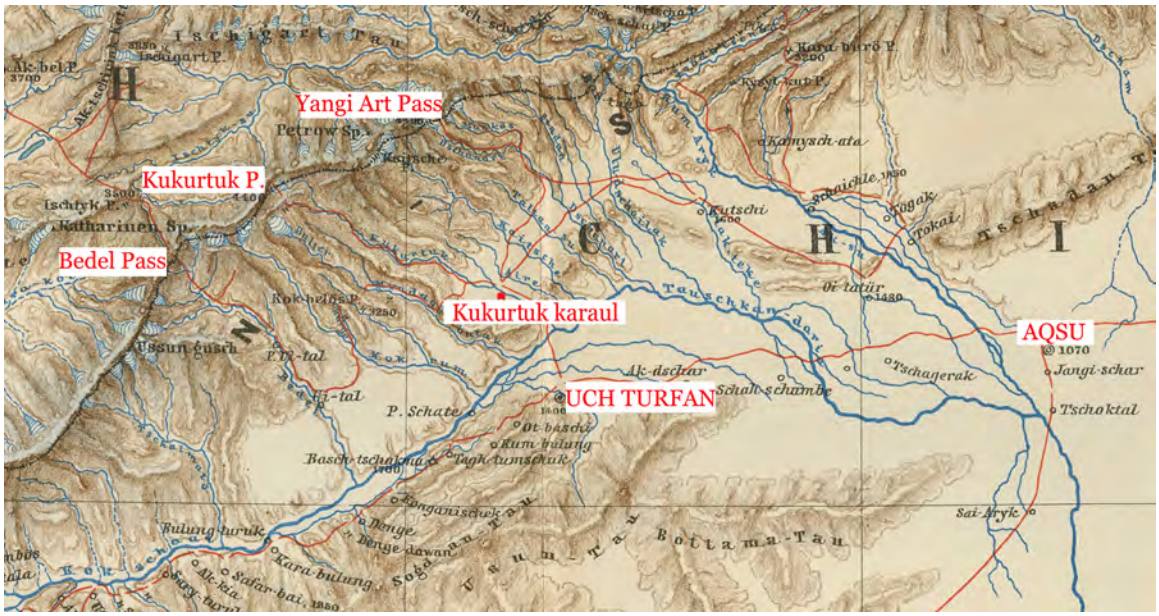


Fig. 137. A segment of Merzbacher's 1904 map on which I have overlaid a few captions. The transcriptions for Skrine's Yangi Art valley vary from map to map (Dschanart, Jannart). Pinpointing Skrine's routes is difficult, but we can assume that the red line from Kukurtuk Karaul, Merzbacher's route, is the one he followed.

182. Gottfried Merzbacher, *The Central Tian-Shan Mountains 1902-1903* (London: John Murray, 1905).

long, the barrel of which has to be supported on a forked stick when it is fired. With this weapon he says he has shot 20 ibex – but I don't know! Anyhow he comes out with me and shows me the likeliest places for ibex and acts as a guide among the terrific precipices of this region, and generally makes himself useful. He is a cheerful youth, the image of an intelligent Scottish laddie of his age and class, and he and I are great friends. The way I got hold of him was rather amusing; as we were marching up the valley to our present camp we met him and his whole family trekking down to the mouth of the jilga with their 'ak-oi' and their pots and pans loaded on two ponies and a camel; among the pots and pans I noticed the forked stick of Tokhta's ancient bundook and said to myself at once 'Hurrah, a shikari!' We stopped the cavalcade and asked what other families were still at the yailāqs; hearing that only one was left, and that it did not contain a sportsman, I at once commandeered Tokhta and took him along with me back up to his yailaq, promising him unlimited bread and a good fat tip if he found a good ibex for me. I'll give him the tip even if he doesn't help me to get an ibex, he's such a cheerful and willing laddie.



Fig. 138. A view of the Yangi Art (after: CCA *1925, facing p. 218).*

This afternoon, when I was on my way back from the ibex-grounds (from which I was driven after several hours' climbing by thick mists and sleet) I saw a pretty sight; the family which had alone remained at the yailaq about a mile above our camp were moving down with all their sheep, goats, cows and ponies and their one camel. From far above I spotted the white backs of the sheep crossing a stream by a narrow steeply-sloping bridge of pine-trunks, and when I came down I found the whole flock of about 200 sheep and goats being shepherded by their owner, a lean-visaged Sart (not a Kirghiz, strange to say) up a terrifically steep cliff and along a dizzy ledge. This was necessary because the river was too deep for the short-legged muttons to cross, and they had to keep the same side of it the whole way down. Meanwhile a procession consisting of half a dozen mares with their foals, a man and two boys perched on piles of bedding on top of ponies, a neat smiling-faced Sart woman with her two-year-old baby and another man leading a camel literally groaning, in the way camels do, under the framework and felts of the family mansion, came filing down the rocky path and splashed across the stream. I got a photo, as good as could be expected considering that it was raining at the time, of the cavalcade crossing the stream immediately below the breakneck track up which the sheep and goats were crowding. The family halted at our camp and the lady had a talk with D, who is awfully nice to the poor people of the mountains we travel among and positively loads the ladies and children with presents of cloth, beads, pocket mirrors, buttons etc., besides doctoring them whenever necessary to the best of her ability. I tell you, the seven families of Kirghiz at Kaying were genuinely sorry when we left them last July, and begged and prayed us to come back next year and all thanks to D's kindness.

While I am out looking for ibex D spends her time very happily either out after chikor, or writing letters, or (her favourite occupation of all) baking with her camp oven. She is a great baker, and makes

real delicious scon[e]s and things, every bit as good as those Margaret of The Cottage used to make. Yesterday she tried her hand, with the help of the Boston Cookery Book, at puff pastry for the first time.[183] The results were most creditable; she turned out a dozen deliciously light jam puffs, as good (or so it seemed to me) as anything that Rumpelmayer[184] could have produced, at any rate under the same circumstances. I encourage her to bake in cold climates like this, because it keeps her warm and is a better occupation than sitting with icy feet in a tent writing letters; the case is different in the heat of summer in the plains, when she sometimes insists on baking in front of a roaring fire and half melts herself away.

Many thanks for your letter of 26th July with the letter from Dr. Balfour of B[urroughs] and W[ellcome]'s and the reduced copies of the enlargements of D doctoring the Kirghiz. I'm so glad they were interested in the photos, and I confidently expect some tangible mark of Messrs B and W's interest. You were partly at any rate correct in telling Dr. Balfour that D's yakdan was full of the firm's products, for D. has a great many of their Tabloid medicines. You might also have told him, if you had known, that the enlargements, like all of mine were developed with Tabloid 'Amidol' and the negatives from which they were made, with Tabloid 'Rytol.'

Must stop now. I note that a friend of yours wants a Chinese embroidered coat in blue on satin & will look out for a good one at Aksu as well as at Kashgar.

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[*Skrine's September official diary, sent under a cover dated 10 October and received in London 17 December, to a considerable degree replicates the information quoted above that he wrote into his Field Diary, based on reports obtained in Uch Turfan. The excerpts here are from the printed copy sent to the India Office in London, BL IOLR L/P&S/10/976, P4839/1923, fols. 183-185. In the diary he refers to a separate report he had sent based, it seems, on the information Qari had acquired. Much of the rest of the September diary deals with changes instigated by the Urumqi governor in the Chinese officialdom (para. 2), the exactions of Ma Titai in Kashgar (para. 5), and (para. 8) the appearance of two suspicious, apparently anti-Bolshevik individuals (unknown to the annotators in London) at the Afghan mission to Yarkand, asking for passage to India. The diary includes (para. 9) a brief summary of the strength of the Russian garrisons and the Pamir forts. The section on the Chinese officialdom is of particular interest, even if Skrine's emphasis on the financial motives may seem speculative*:]

3. With a fine disregard of their merits and qualifications, the Governor of Sinkiang has removed a large number of District Magistrates from their posts during the last two or three months. Among the changes which concern this Consulate-General are those at Yarkand, Kashgar Old City, Ker[i]ya, Kuchar, Goma and Karghalik. The Magistrates of Uch Turfan and Bai have also been changed during the last month. Most of the new Ambans are relations or connections of the Governor and have come straight from Urumchi. The sweeping nature of these changes indicate a process which His Majesty's Consul General has noticed for some time past, namely, the strengthening of the Governor's hold over Southern Sinkiang, the weakening of the authority of the Taoyins and the general centralization of the administrative machine. The question is mainly one of money; the Governor's main object is and has always been to exploit the country for the benefit of his private pocket, and as time goes on he perfects

183. Presumably this is a reference to Fannie Merritt Farmer's famous *The Boston Cooking-School Cook Book* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1896), probably used by Doris from the 1918 ed., the last one authored entirely by Farmer. In the revised 1936 6th edition, the recipe for puff paste is on pp. 618-619. I learned to bake cakes using my mother's Fannie Farmer.

184. Anton Rumpelmayer (1832–1914) was a famous Austrian confectioner who, inter alia, was awarded the title of 'Purveyor to the Royal and Imperial Court' (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anton_Rumpelmayer, last accessed 23 May 2016).

more and more methods of attaining this object. The most lucrative of these methods nowadays is to appoint as Magistrates of the districts on the Russian frontier 'officials' who are really nothing more than commercial agents of his own; these persons engage heavily in the trade with Russia and in opium with Afghanistan, which they are themselves supposed to be responsible for suppressing, and the enormous profits they make are shared with the Governor. [...]

5. [...] His Majesty's Consul General continues to hear complaints on all sides against the exactions and atrocities of Ma T[i]tai. Apart from his bleeding of the wealthier inhabitants, he makes large sums out of the middle and lower classes by forcing them to buy the products of his oil refinery, his 'mines' and his other industrial enterprises at exorbitant prices. As a recent instance of his methods may be cited the following: a few days ago the Aksakal (headman) of the Kashgar shoemakers petitioned the Titai's steward not to supply the shoemakers with any more of the Titai's wax, as it was not suitable for use in their trade and was too expensive.

The sole result of this piece of arrogance was that the unfortunate man was beaten to death by order of the Titai, and his widow forced to sell all her property to pay a heavy fine.

Not long ago the Titai asked His Majesty's Consul General for advice regarding the import from India of hydraulic power plant and electric light installation. At first His Majesty's Consul General thought that the instillation was required for the Titai's magnificent new palace now being constructed in the New City; but it was soon apparent that the Titai wanted electricity on a much larger scale. Knowing that any such scheme, if it succeeded at all, would merely mean that the inhabitants of Kashgar would be forced to use the Titai's electricity at a heavy cost, His Majesty's Consul General threw cold water on it and has heard no more on the subject. [*This last sentence was flagged in London with a double line in the margin – DW.*] [...]

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[*His archive also contains a rather general descriptive piece, which he later would note (probably not quite accurately), as dating from about the end of September (it references the September diary and thus must be later). From draft copy in BL OILR MSS EurF 154/39.*]

Situation in R[ussia]n Turkestan and Fergana.

POLITICAL.

1. The most striking feature of the political situation in Turkestan and Fergana in these days is the growing power and influence wielded by Muhammadans. Supreme executive power in the 'Independent Soviet Republic of Turkestan' is vested in the 'Turkestan Central Committee', generally known as 'Turzik'. The President of this body is a Mussalman. In Fergana the 'Revkom' (Revolutionary Committee) is supreme; the President of this also is a Mussalman, a Kirghiz of the name of Akbar Urasalieff, who was in pre-revolution days interpreter to a Commissary of Rural Police. This man is all-powerful in Fergana. At Tashkend there is a Resident appointed by Moscow, a semi-educated Russian Communist by name Lavroff; during the absence of this person, the head of the Turkestan 'Vnieshtorg', Zakarmenny, officiates for him, see below para.b. The Independent Soviet Republic of Turkestan is represented at Moscow by three deputies, all Mussalmans.

2. All responsible positions are statutorily open to Communists alone. Nevertheless, the power and numbers of the Communist party are steadily on the wane. Many have resigned from it in order to escape from party discipline, while many more have been turned out for treachery and other reasons. There are now few or no communists in the rural districts. The weapon of the Communist civil power

is still the Cheka, but under another name; it is now called the 'Osobiy Otdel' [special department – *DW*]. Members of this force, mostly Russians, are to be found at all frontier posts and in the ranks of every platoon in the Red Army. The Communist Government, or at any rate the Russian element in it, is very much afraid of the growing power of the Muhammadans and is continually making concessions, there is even talk of Turki being made the official language of the Independent Republic.

3. An interesting movement, of which the Soviet auths. can hardly be unaware but which they are perhaps afraid to tackle, is the formation of a special Muhammadan Army for Turkestan by a certain Captain Kuchakoff, a Muhammadan ex-officer of the Tsarist army.[185] White refugees in Kashgar who knew this man personally in Turkestan speak highly of his courage and ability, and say that there is no doubt whatever that he is, secretly at any rate, a strong anti-Bolshevik. A Bashkir from the Orenburg district, he fought in the War and was severely wounded; after the Revolution in Turkestan he and his sister helped the Whites effectively and offered to raise a force of 1500 Kirghiz if necessary.

4. A very large proportion of the regular troops in Turkestan is composed now of European Russians. The Commander in Chief is a Hungarian ex-war prisoner, Colonel Kujallo. Even so exalted a personage has not been above taking a heavy bribe from Umar Akhun Bai.

5. In spite, however, if the nervousness of the Communists about the increasing ascendancy of Islam, the general impression seems to be that there is very little likelihood of a serious attempt to overthrow the Bolsheviks in Turkestan at any early date. Communism is no longer rammed down people's throats as it was at first, and the people are allowed to go about their own business. Indifference to politics is the rule, the country being in a state of apathy after the misfortunes and horrors it has gone through. This does not, of course, apply to Bokhara, only to Turkestan proper and Fergana.

ECONOMIC.

6. Briefly, trade is in the hands of private enterprise now while industry is a monopoly of the State. The State, however, both produces and distributes its products. Two conjoined Departments called the Vnieshtorg and the Gostorg, the precise respective functions of which I have been unable to determine, are concerned with the working of the State factories, the supply of raw materials to them and the sale of their products. The following particulars regarding the personnel of these departments have been obtained:

Tashkend: Chief Manager, N. J. Zakarmenny (mentioned above as occasionally officiating for Lavroff as Resident in Turkestan). This person was formerly a lawyer at Tashkend and a pronounced Social Democrat; but being persecuted by the Communists after the revolution, he changed his views and became an ardent counter-revolutionary. He assisted the Whites with money and otherwise actively sympathized with the anti-Bolshevik cause. More recently, however, he appears to have realized which side his bread was buttered.

Khokand (headquarters of the Fergana Gov't.):

Chief Manager, Toporoff, an illiterate ex-workman at the Tashkend Railway Workshops.

Secretary, Gavriloff, former Secretary of the Cotton Exchange, Khokand; a capable man with a good knowledge of Turki and Persian.

Assistant Manager, Moldovanoff (see Diary for Sept. para. 11)

7. In spite of, or because of, all this State organization of industry, production in Turkestan as in other parts of Soviet Russia is at a very low ebb. The country, which (as remarked in a previous report) used

185. Possibly *Shtabs-kapitan* Petr Ivanovich Kuchakov who had fought at Gallipoli in 1920.

to export 250,000 poods of cotton to Moscow, now has to import cotton for its own requirements. The oil industry used to flourish in Turkestan, which is immensely rich in petroleum; now such petroleum naphtha products as are available are imported from Baku. This is a matter of some difficulty, for the Republic of Azarbaijan refuses to take Soviet paper for its oil and insists on payment in precious metals or goods; as a result, the railways of Turkestan are starved of the oil fuel on which they depend, a fact which partly accounts for the irregularity and inefficiency of their working. Coal is only produced on a very small scale compared with former times; the same applies to the metallurgical industries. Sugar, formerly produced on a large scale, is now imported from Denmark, the amount produced by the Soviet refineries being small and the quality so bad that even the Communists themselves will not eat it. Cotton fabrics: only twelve spinning factories are working in Moscow, and the warping mills are working half time, so that production is at a low ebb. Woolen fabrics: only a very coarse kind is produced.

8. The chief imports dealt in by the Turkestan Vnieshtorg are: hides, furs, wool, cotton, floss-silk and gut. These materials are re-exported after manufacture to France and Italy, Germany (Russia's best customer before the war) being out of the market owing to the depreciation of the mark.

9. Currency.

All payments are calculated in silver roubles, but the actual tender of silver or gold currency is strictly forbidden. Payments have to be made at the official exchange rate which is published periodically at all towns and rural markets. The process of devaluation (which accounts practically to the repudiation) is repeated with each new issue of paper currency, with the natural result that each issue begins to slump as soon as it appears. During the last two months, for instance, the paper rouble (already enormously devalued) fell from 112 to 160 1 silver rouble. The only note issue that has any stability is the new 'Chervonietz' note of the face value of five gold roubles [...]; and even this slumped temporarily during the Anglo-Russian crisis in May. The State Banks ('Narodni Bank'), controlled in their own financial interests by Jews, move enormous quantities of currency backwards and forwards between Turkestan and Moscow, large private fortunes being made at the expense of the community by the manipulation of the note issue.

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Bai, Akin Circle (420 m. from Kashgar on the Urumchi road) ca. 11 October 1923 [*date added by Skrine later*] [*Fig. 139, map of his travels, next page*]

Since I last wrote from Uch Turfan we have covered a lot of ground and have seen many little- or unknown parts of the Southern Tian Shan. After a first visit of 5 days at the beautifully-situated little town of Uch Turfan, of which I got some very fine panoramic and other views before I left, we went up one of the valleys of the Tian Shan, the Yangi Art Jilga, and camped for 4 days at a height of 8000 ft., my object being ibex, which I heard at Uch Turfan abounded in these valleys. The valley is lovely about 10 miles long and surrounded by magnificent snow-peaks & rocky walls of all colours of red an ochre, clothed with grass, juniper scrub mosses and plants of all kind & with their every cranny & sheltered corry filled with picturesque groves of pine. Pretty mountain-ashy sort of trees grow in some of the glens too, & it was on a grassy patch among some of these that we pitched our tents. The glen, steeply pitched as it is and affording unlimited cover, simply swarmed with small game as well as ibex, & we had grand sport. Alas, I was cheated of my ibex after three days' hard climbing and stalking over the most terrific precipices, by the miss-firing of my rifle just when I had a careful bead on a magnificent ibex at a distance of 40 yards only. I couldn't have missed him, as I had my rifle resting on a rock &

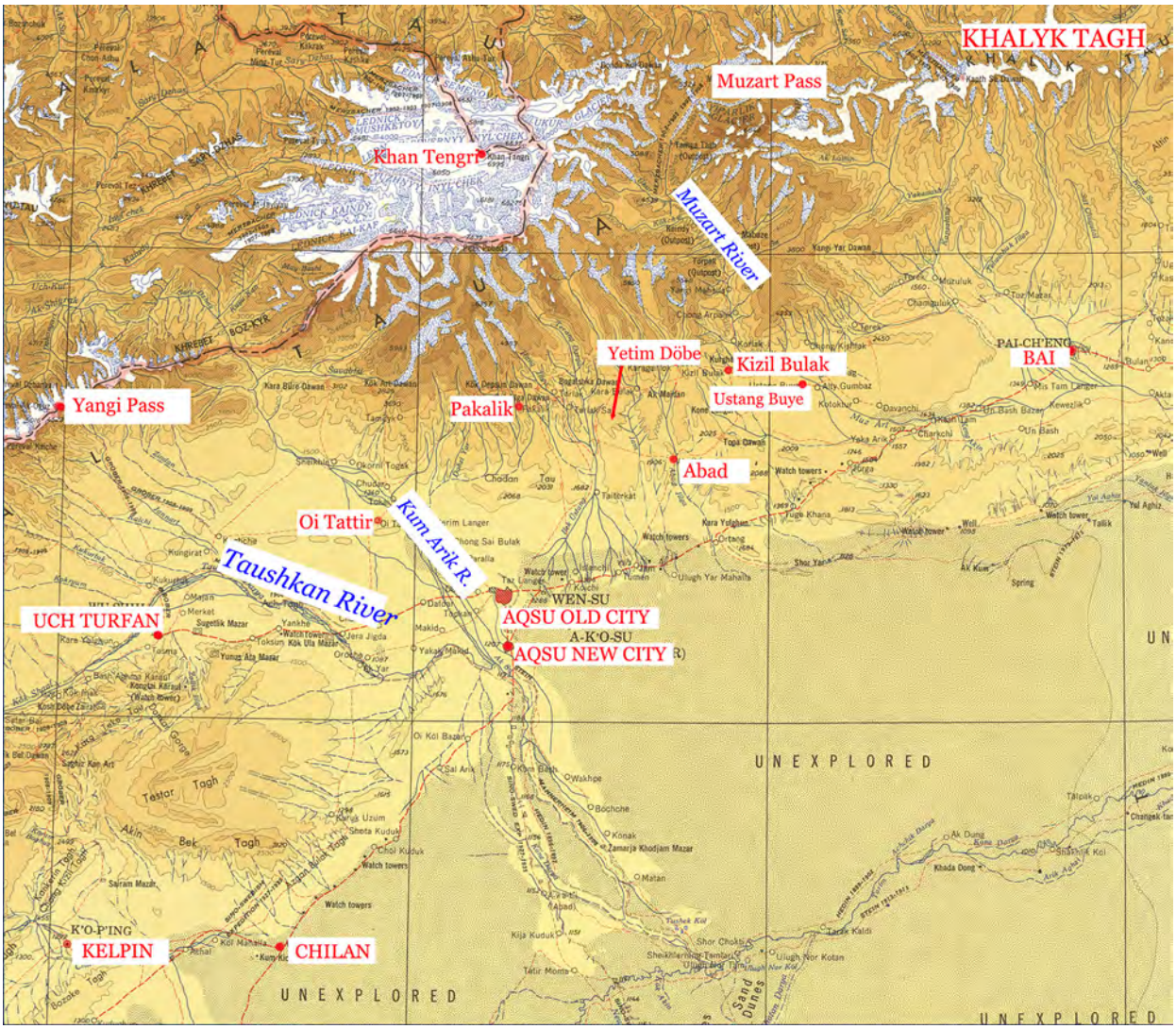


Fig. 139. A map showing as much as possible the locations Skrine mentions in his letters about their touring after coming down from the Yangi Art and heading farther east. It has not been possible to identify all the places he mentions; so I have not attempted to draw in an exact route of travel. The base map from which I have cropped this section was created in 1950 by the U.S. Army Map Service, Corps of Engineers ('A-K'O-SU', Sheet NK 44, Series 1301, 2nd ed.) from a range of earlier maps of the region, including ones by Aurel Stein for the Survey of India and Sven Hedin. Included are the routes of some of the early explorers.

was perfectly cool. This is the second time I have been cheated out of a good head by a miss-fire at close quarters, with different rifles too; it is most extraordinary. This time it may have been due to the intense cold (I was 12,000 ft. up) thickening the oil on my bolt. I was particularly keen on getting a specimen of the Tian Shan ibex, & it was pretty disheartening after all the climbing and stalking I had done – mostly unaided, for the Kirghiz boy who was acting as my ghillie knew very little about it – to lose one's chance like that.

The weather was unsettled while we were in the mountains, but between whiles we had glorious clear skies & cloud effects & I got some magnificent photos of the Yangi Art Jilga. Merzbacher in 1903 is the only European who ever penetrated that part of the Tian Shan before; Stein did not go there. Coming down from the mountains on 24th–25th Sept. we camped 26th & 27[th] on a beautiful meadow on the banks of the Taushkan River 10 miles north of Uch Turfan, which town I avoided this time lest I sh[oul]d have to exchange calls again with the Chinese officials. [*Fig. 140, next page*] The weather was now perfect & the air like crystal, & it was lovely being able to see the whole range of the Central Tian



TELEPANORAMA OF TIEN SHAN PEAKS ON NORTH SIDE OF TAUSHKAN VALLEY, SEPARATING CHINESE TURKISTAN FROM SEMIRECHIA, FROM POINT 10 MILES N.E. OF UCH TURFAN
In foreground, loess bluffs on left bank of Taushkan River. Elevation 4,400 feet. Distance 31–34 miles

Fig. 140. Skrine's panorama of the snow-capped Tien Shan from NE of Uch Turfan (after: CCA *1925, facing p. 258).*

Shan across the river valley to the north, as well as fifty miles of rich cultivation dotted with farms & heavily timbered on the other, with the town of Uch Turfan & its castle backed by the black strangely-carved Kelpin mountains in the distance. I spent the 2 days getting rid of my dâk, two weeks of which I had to deal with, & D. as usual baking scon[e]s and biscuits at her 'Chūla' (fireplace) on the green-sward by a crystal spring – most poetic. The ponies, Tüge Sulaiman the camel and Tutankhamen the donkey all had a lovely time, almost literally in clover with nothing to do. Then on 28th Sept. we were off again, doing a march of no less than 35 miles that day across rich country and barren desert in alternate stretches. We did not reach the tiny farm on the banks of the Kum-Arik river, at which we were to put up, till 8:30 P.M., & the caravan came along at 11, so that night wasn't very pleasant; but we had an easy & pleasant march next day across the Kum Arik, thro' a belt of amazingly European, almost English, meadow – and arable land & up a bit of gravel desert to a charming little oasis overlooking the Kum Arik valley. This place, a regular island of greenery, & rich autumn tints in an ocean of gravel desert – the 'sai' or gravelly apron of debris from the mighty Tian Shan – is the site of an old 'mazar' or shrine of a Mussalman 'pir' (saint) called Sheikh Tulumush. This gentleman (as usual) caused the beautiful spring there is to gush out of the desert with a wave of his holy hand, and settling there (somewhere in the middle ages) he became holier & holier & founded a family of Sheikhs who still, 4 families of them, live at the little place in tiny picturesque farms, cultivating wee orchards of peaches, fields of maize & barley, vegetables & so on. The offerings of the neighbouring faithful are but scanty & the Sheikhs are poor; but they are a quaint friendly crowd and we liked them very much. An extraordinarily nice middle-aged woman who might have stepped straight out of a Scotch manse (like the Kirghiz, these people are amazingly Scotch) made great friends with D. She was the wife of one of the old Sheikhs.

[*FD, pp. 13-14. The description seems clearly to be of a different shrine (or might even be a pastiche constructed from images of other shrines?) – there were many such 'mazars' scattered in the foothills. Skrine devoted much effort to editing this little piece and included a version of it in* CCA *1925, p. 231. Fig. 141, next page shows the rewriting he did in his Field Diary.*]

The Mazar of Qāra-sakāl Ata or 'Father Black Beard' is situated in the loveliest little glen imaginable. A stream of crystal waters plashes down thro' an open grassy valley from the fir-clad yailaqs of the Tian Shan, until it joins a deeper and larger one by a narrow neck between rocky ridges. Just above this neck is a little wood of fine old mountain ashes enclosing a glade of rich smooth turf and a tiny spring. Barberry bushes, now a mass of carmine berries and the brilliant orange-yellow of the trees resplendent in their autumn foliage, blend wonderfully with the rich reds and ochres of the surrounding rocks; looking back, the grassy steppe sweeps up to firclad yailāqs, above which again tower the snow-clad peaks of the Tian Shan,

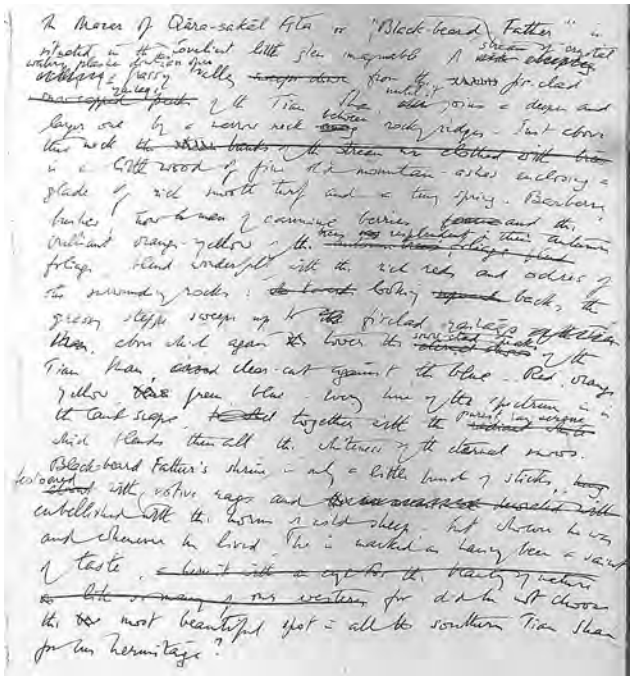


Fig. 141. His account about the mazar of Qāra-sakāl Ata, as recorded in his Field Diary, showing his edits (from the British Library Collection: IOLR MSS EurF 154/43, p. 13).

clear-cut against the blue. Red, orange yellow, green, blue – every hue of the spectrum is in the land-scape, together with the purest ray serene which blends them all, the whiteness of the eternal snows. Black-beard Father's shrine is only a little bunch of sticks festooned with votive rags, and embellished with the horns of wild sheep; but whoever he was and whenever he lived, he is marked as having been a saint of taste, for did he not choose the most beautiful spot in all the southern Tian Shan for his hermitage?

Turki Proverb:

'Ishengan tāghdā kik yatmās.'

It is not in the ~~mountain~~ fastness where you expect to find him that the ibex lurks.]

General Pigot when passing thro' Kashgar in August had told me a story he had heard in London about a special kind of wild sheep which lived 'on a plateau north of Aksu' & I was anxious to verify this. Imagine my excitement, then, when decorating the roof of the principal Sheikh's hut I saw several heads of wild sheep! I found on enquiry that wild sheep did live in the low hills stretching parallel to the main snows of the Tian Shan eastward from Sheikh Tulumush Mazar. The oldest of the Sheikhs, a wizened little man, had shot many in his youth, & a less old (but fairly decrepit) Sheikh offered to show me some of the sheep. I measured the heads on the hut-roof & found that they went up to no less than 56 inches, which is very big; from this I concluded that the sheep were Ovis Karelini, the wild sheep of the Tian Shan, which I had supposed were only found on the north side of the Central Tian-Shan. I was much interested, & determined to try and get one; so having 3 or 4 days to spare we moved eastward & camped in a very lovely place on a stream which comes down from the Tian Shan and cuts thro' the low hills I spoke of. To cut a long story (which I am going to tell in an article to the 'Field' later[186]) short, I failed to get any of these sheep, again having the most fiendish luck; the local people, not the Sheikhs but 'Sarts' of the villages in the lower glens of the Tian Shan, let us down very badly, mis-guiding us and lying to us right and left with the result that we left the good part of the country, where I saw two herds of the wild sheep, & camped in a part where there were none. The one day I went out stalking in the good part, I myself unaided 'spotted' sheep in two different places, in one case I got a difficult shot which I missed, in the other I did a long stalk alone and finally lost the sheep thro' not knowing the country. Without a proper guide who knows something about stalking as well as the habits of the local game, one is 'up against it'. If I had had more time, I'm pretty sure I would have got a sheep by going back to the first place we camped at; but I had arranged a rendez-vous with the Mir Munshi, who was coming up from Kashgar with letters & papers to met me, at a place called Bai, and I could not allow myself any more time. Pretty sickening, wasn't it?

You will find Bai on the map, 113 m. ENE of Aksu and about 40 miles E. of the mouth of the great Muzart Valley, which runs for 50 miles right up into the Central Tian Shan, near Khan Tengri (23,500 ft.)

186. *The Field* is a British journal, founded in 1853 'for those who loved shooting, fishing, hunting and could sniff out a decent claret at 1,000 paces'. So far I have no evidence that Skrine ever wrote the intended article.



Fig. 142. The sheep farm of Abdus Sattar Haji at Yetim Döbe in the shadow of the Tien Shan NNE of Aqsu (after: CCA *1925, facing p. 226).*

to the Muzart Pass leading over to Dzungaria, otherwise known as Ili. The same Beg and villagers who let us down over the stalking also deserted us when we came to move from that country, & we were left without any guide in an un-mapped part of the Tian Shan; luckily the day was clear, and I managed to steer the caravan by the sun to a point on the map 20 m. further east. Here, far away across the 'sai,' I spotted a man on a camel going towards Aksu; I sent a man after him & 'pukkaro'd' him [*lit.* 'caused him to be seized' – *DW*] & made him guide us to a place where we could get some grass for our horses. Luckily the man turned out to be a servant of a wealthy old Turki of Aksu who put up Fitzmaurice in 1921 and is a friend of the Consulate; the old Haji has a big sort of ranch among the grassy valleys of the Tian Shan about 15 m. up from where we were, and we made the boy (much against his will, for he was going on an errand from the ranch to Aksu) guide us up to the Haji's place. Leaving the 'sai' and diving into a maze of deep red perpendicular-sided foothills, among which we saw here and there snow-white efflorescences of salt like frozen springs coming out of the cliff, we crossed a pass and came out into a fine valley which led out onto the grassy uplands. By half past 8, in almost pitch darkness, we heard the welcome sound of dogs barking and a few minutes later were warming ourselves by a roaring coal fire in a cosy room of the Haji's farm-stead. [*Figs. 142, 143*] The H. himself wasn't there; but his son was, and we were entertained most kindly and given a long room spread with felts with a coal fire, while our following was feasted royally on mutton and maize bread & our animals browsed over the rich grassy meadows. It was better than what I had been expecting, namely a desert camp with little or no water and nothing for the animals to eat! Next day we had the most delightful march of the tour guided by the Haji's son's men and also by the Beg (= lambardar) of the area, who had received orders from the Chinese authorities at Aksu to look out for us & had been rushing about the mountains unable to find us. The way led over one little pass after another into and out of lovely green valleys dotted with trees clothed in the most gorgeous autumn tints, orange, russet, gold and scarlet. It was a perfectly clear day and the magnificent snows of the Tian Shan glittered high above, fringed with pines. We



Fig. 143. Skrine was very interested in what he considered to be a rare sighting of a four-horned sheep. There is no particular reason to assume this photo was taken near the sheep farm, but it has to be from one of the areas he and Doris (shown on her horse) visited in the foothills of the Tien Shan (from the British Library Collection: IOLR Photo920/1, unn. negative).

lunched under a little group of trees in the middle of a hay-field in which a picturesque Sart woman was working, quite close to us, gathering the wisps of cut hay and loading them on to one of the quaint wheel-less bullock-carts of the country. She was quite sans-gêne [in no way discomforted – *DW*] and exchanged remarks with us the while. In one valley I picked up within an area of about ¼ of a sq. mile, (1) chikor (2) hares (3) see-see (tiny quail-like partridges which we used to get in Baluchistan & haven't seen since). Next day when we had come down out of the mountains again and were marching thro' partially-cultivated country along the flat Bai valley, I got 2 see-see, 2 hares & 4 sand grouse & missed (alas!) a brace of imperial sand grouse, magnificent birds.[187] Our larder did well those 2 days.

We arrived here on the evening of the 7th, and ever since I have been hard at work with Nasir, my Mir Munshi, and the Aksakal of Kuchar, not only doing Kuchar work but dealing with a heavy mail which Nasir brought with him. We are in a roomy Chinese rest house & are quite comfortable; the weather is warm and pleasant. Bai is a sleepy little market town populated partly by Sarts and partly by Tunganis (Chinese Muhammadans); there is a very 'jungly' Amban, who was obviously ill-at-ease during my call and his return call, and has taken as little notice of our existence as he safely could. Having finished most of my letters & other business, I have nothing more to do at Bai & we return down the road to Aksu, which I carefully avoided on the way up by going thro' the mountains. It's bad enough having to go thro' all the ceremonial of arrival & departure at a big place once, & one doesn't do it twice within a month if one can help it. Down on the plain here (Bai is only 3,650 ft. up by my barometer) the season is not so advanced and the autumn tints are only beginning; at Aksu we look forward to a regular feast of colour. We shall be there a week, from 16th–23rd Oct., & thence will go to Maralbashi, stay there a week and reach Kashgar about 12th Nov. We have had such fun exploring the southern slopes & glens of the Tian Shan that we are both very glad we gave up the project of crossing the Muzart Pass and spending 10 days – far too short a time – in the Tekkes Valley. That may come at some future time – something to look forward to.

Your letter of 14 August 1923 reached us here – about the remotest spot a letter of yours to us has ever penetrated, & that's saying a lot! [...]

D. is going to write next week from Aksu.

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[*The Field Diary, pp. 14-16, gives a sense of the raw material Skrine then shaped into letters and reports and the way in which, while on 'tour', he was obtaining information (or at least anecdotes) about events even off in Yarkand. Murad Qari looms as a very important source for Skrine. Cf. Skrine's somewhat more elaborate description of Hushur Beg and his hunting eagle along with the photo of him in* CCA *1925, pp. 232-33.*]

187. In *CCA* 1925, pp. 230-231, he elaborated on his list of shootings and sightings (the Latin identifications of species added by me):

> '[...N]ever had I found myself in such a small-game shooter's paradise as the southern valleys of the Central Tien Shan. Without straying a hundred yards from the road I shot (1) red-legged partridge, (2) *sisi* [*Ammoperdix griseogularis*], a kind of very small and succulent partridge common in Baluchistan and Persia, but not seen by us elsewhere in Chinese Turkistan, (3) sand-grouse, (4) teal, (5) hares, (6) blue pigeons, besides which I missed an easy chance at a pair of those fine birds (7) imperial sandgrouse [*Pterocles orientalis arenarius*]. [...O]n this tour altogether we came across no less than fourteen different kinds of small game [...] Besides the seven enumerated above, we saw, either in the mountains or in the jungles of the Tarim River valley, the following: (8) Shaw's pheasant [*Phasianus colchicus shawii*], (9) duck, including mallard pintail, gadwall, golden-eye, and red-crested pochard, (10) snipe, (11) woodcock, (12) geese, (13) plover, (14) Tibetan snowcock. Of these I shot specimens of all except woodcock and Tibetan snow-cock.'

Bai 8th–11th Oct. ’23

Snows of the Khalyk Tagh faintly visible far to the N.

Lowest-class and worst-mannered Amban I ever saw – sullen, hang-dog, quarrelsome type.

Wonderful show of purple irises, evidently after recent heavy rain. Autumn tints marvellous: mulberry, poplar & willow all yellow, fruit trees red brown and orange; the various plants on the grassy meadows, miles & miles of them, also turned a rich colour.

Town pop[ulate]d by Sarts (about 3/4) & Tunganis (1/4), Bazar Friday. Beautiful brown-yellow peaches obtainable, grapes also are good & cheap. Melons poor.

Shooting: Ustang Buye in the extreme W. of district, 10 m. from Kizil Bulak, is v[ery] good for sand-grouse, ord[inar]y & imperial. Yakan Arik has sisi, mallard, & ? teal – as well as ordinary sand-grouse. Fish in the Muzart River, wild sheep in the hills of the S.W. end of the district, south of Ilkache.

15 October 1923

Qari got some interesting information today about affairs in Ili from a family we overtook on the road & who spent the same night as us at Abād. The Bolsheviks are all in the Noghai Gōl, the Russian quarter, and are ‘escorted’ regularly by 300 soldiers. The old Russian Consulate is unoccupied, but the surroundings are in the hands of the Whites. The latter petitioned the Taoyin recently saying that they were in great straits & could not get enough to eat, & it is said that the Chinese are going to settle these Whites upon the land.

Re Yarkand.

Q. told me today that during Liu’s regime things got very bad in Yarkand & many wretched Turkis, once well off, were so hunted by the Yamen durgahs that they were forced to sell their children 5-10-15-20 tls. according to age. A durgah would say to a defaulter ‘No money or goods or house or land to sell? All right, sell your child & look sharp about it.’ In these cases the affidavit before the Mullahs, of course, made no mention of money – it was only adoption – mutabauni farzan. The son of the late chief Beg of Y[ar]k[an]d. Qadir B[ai], a youth who was made beg in his father’s place by the Chinese, is really an adopted child, but very few people know it. Similarly, the father of Umar Akhun Bai was really the son of a cotton-carder, & was known by the nickname of ‘Pokhta’ [*Uyghur*: pakhta پاختا, cotton – *DW*] all his life.

So ignorant are the people of Y[ar]k[an]d that when Moh[amma]d Sharīf came, many thought he was a new king come to rule over Y[ar]k[an]d. An old washerwoman asked Q. ‘is the new Padshah a Mussalman?’ Another said, ‘They have got the Consul Sahib at Kashgar – now we’ve got a Padhsah!’

Hushur Beg of Qara Bulak is one of the best, well-disposed and a sportsman. When I saw him first yesterday he had spent the night at Uslang Buye and had seen our caravan in the distance crossing the Topa Dawan – he was mounted on his pony and standing on the crest of the ridge along which I had been looking for ovis and on his right arm he carried a magnificent Qaraqūsh or black hunting eagle. [*Fig. 144*] He wore a white fleece gauntlet and supported his arm on the saddle with a piece of wood about 1 ft. long. From his saddle on the near side dangled a ball made of the head-skins of antelopes: this he uses to attract the bird back from wandering. The bird does not belong to him, but to a friend who he says would not part with it for 100 taels. When very hungry it is apt to turn nasty and claw man. It was netted as a baby on the precipitous red ridges immediately E. of Abad. The Qaraqūsh is dull black in colour with a ruff of rust-red feathers, yellow claws, black beak with yellow base, & fine red-brown eyes.

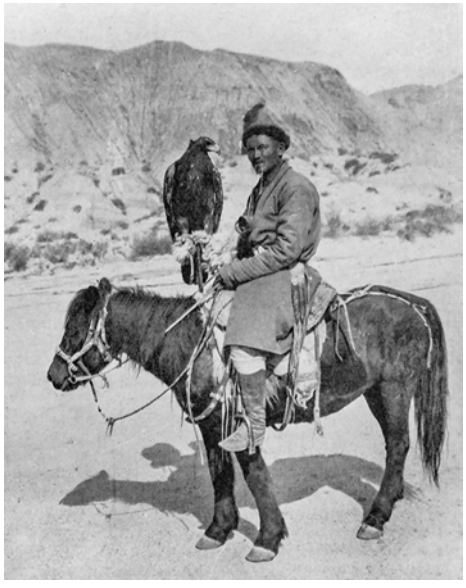


Fig. 144. Hushur Beg of Qara Bulak with his hunting raptor at Kizil Bazar in the foothills of the Tienshan (after: CCA *1925, facing p. 232).*

Of the hawks the most prized is the toighun or white hawk, which is very valuable. The Mehtar of Chitral was trying hard to get one last year from Kashgar, but failed. The Hsieh Tai bought one caught

near Kgr. for 20 yambus (??). They are rarely caught S. of the Tian Shan, but are brought over from Ili sometimes: price 50-60-100 taels dachen.

[*In his FD, p. 23, Skrine added this information, provided to him by Paul Nazaroff:* '[T]he white ones referred to by Hushan Beg which are so much sought after are the Hierofalco Altaiensis (as they are caught in Ili). At the Koltuban fair specimens of Hierofalco Uralensis used to fetch 1000 roubles. These white falcons are not the grey ones we have seen here & there, but are pure white with dark spots.']

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[*Skrine wrote Gen. Pigot to provide information on the sport hunting, which I have condensed somewhat here. The description of trying to communicate in remote areas is of some interest.*]

Bai, 11 October 1923

Dear Pigot,

I am afraid you will have been pretty mad with me for failing to turn up at Shato with your letters as arranged, and for not getting any word through to you. You will have been classing me with the Chinks, as one who is not as good as his word. The enclosed papers including my letter from Uch Turfan will show you what happened. When I found that I could not myself manage the Tekkes trip, I took counsel as to how I should get your letters to you and at the same time get the letter that I knew would be waiting for me at Shato. Everyone advised me to apply to one of the Aksu officials for a runner, as the runners were accustomed to travelling quickly and finding people among the mountains, and the Muzart Pass was nothing to them. I accordingly sent my card and a polite letter dated 15th Sept. enclosing 10 taels dachen to the Amban of Aksu Old City by the hand of our Aksakal with the request that he should send the letters for you by a specially trustworthy 'yayi' (runner) to Shato so as to arrive not later than 25 September and order the man, if your messenger was not there, to wait at least a week for him. The Aksakal took the letters to the Amaban on or about the 17th Sept., and I thought all was well.

Now I get a letter, copy of which I enclose, from the Aksakal reporting that the yayi has brought your letters back as he did not find your man at Shato! It will be interesting to hear from you on what dates your messenger arrived at and left Shato. The Amaban's yayi cannot possibly have left Aksu before the night of the 17th, and it was a physical impossibility for him to have reached Kalmak Khora (wherever that is) beyond Shota to have waited there 3 days and to have got back to Aksu on 28th Sept. It is perfectly obvious that the Amaban and his minions between them 'ate' the 10 taels (as a matter of fact I am told they gave the yayi 30 tengehs for his expenses) and that the man went to the south side of the Muzart, waited there a few days, got news from a traveller that you had gone towards Karashahr and were no longer in the Tekkes Valley, said to himself 'That's good enough' and went back to Aksu. Can you beat it?

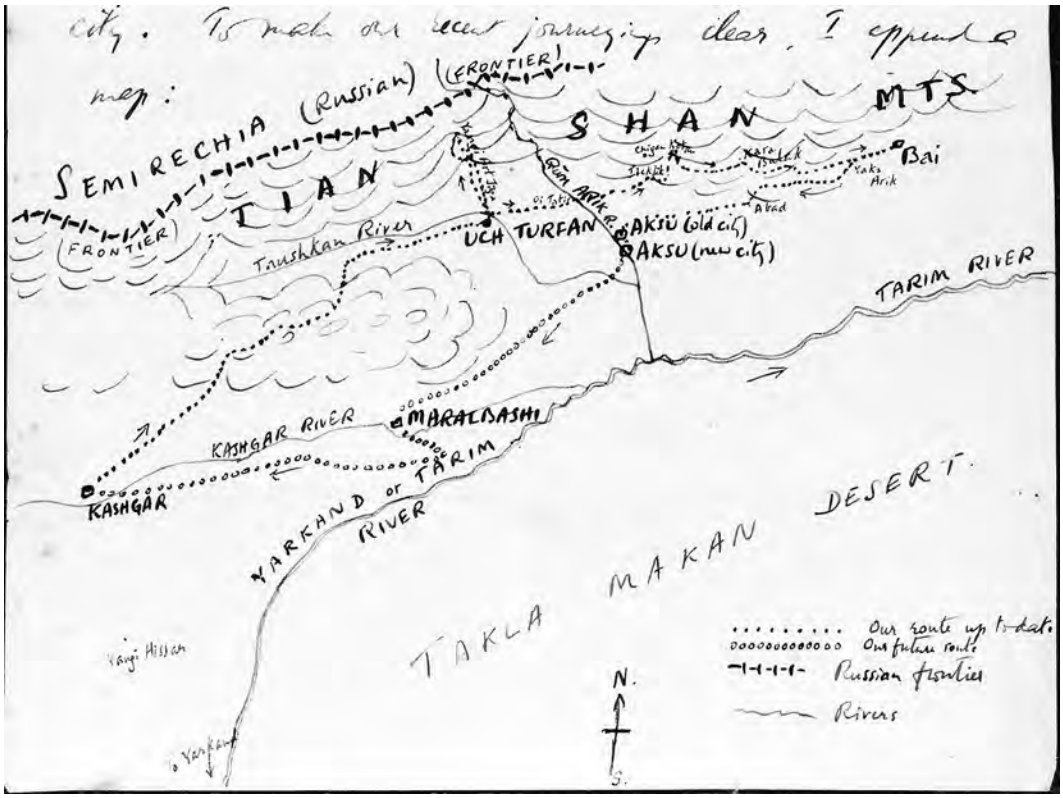
I can only hope that you weren't seriously put out by not getting the letters you expected or hearing from me. I am sending this back to Kuchar with the Aksakal of that place with orders to await word from you as to your arrival at Kuchar, and to send all your letters out to meet you. He will also look after you as regards house etc., and if you come via the Tarim river as you thought of doing he will fix you up as to guides and obtain orders from the Chinese authorities to their Begs to pass you along.

You remember telling me about the wild sheep on the plateau north of Aksu? Well, I thought I'd have a look at them, and so accordingly travelled up to this place not via Aksu, but along the slopes of the Tian Shan to the north of it, crossing the Kum Arik River at Oi Tattir and striking eastward. My experiences will interest you. The Beg of Oi Tattir, whom I asked for a shikari, was very helpful and all that but sent with me an ancient Sheikh from a shrine of the neighbourhood who had shot the sheep in

his youth, about 50 years ago I should say; I saw some of his heads on the roof of his hut and measured them; they ranged from 40 to 56, which excited me some, so as I could not get any more modern ghillie I entrusted myself to the old man. He was all right so far as showing us the ground was concerned; he guided our caravan to a place called Ilanlik, about 10 miles south of Pakalik and (I should say) 20 miles N. by E. of Aksu Old City. There are no people at Ilanlik, it is a gorge cut by the Pakalik river through a range of low red hills [...] He took me up by a nullah out on to the almost flat gravel 'sai,' and before we had gone 100 yards blowed if I didn't spot a couple of rams walking along in the open half a mile away from us! The old man was almost blind, and couldn't see them even when I pointed them out to him, so as he also couldn't walk more than 2 m.p.h. I left him behind and did the stalk by myself. I actually got within 100 yards of them – the light was so bad I didn't take any chances – but there was practically no cover and I was unable to get a lying shot [...] There was nothing for it but to stand up and let drive, which I did at one of the rams which was standing head on – and of course missed. I didn't mind much, as I was very bucked at finding sheep so quickly, and I confidently expected to see more next day [...*goes on in some detail about failure, attributing it to the problems of having the elderly guide*].

Next thing that happened was that the Beg of the district turned up from Pokkalik – another Beg, not the Oi Tattir man – and told me that there were very few sheep where we were camping, all the best ones were near another place about 2 potais to the N.E. He and a shikari, a younger man, swore there were really good heads to be had there, and they worried and worried me to strike camp and move up there. Not imagining they had any particular reason for lying, I believed them [...] There were no sheep there [...]

I have told you all this at length in case you should think it worth your while to go and have a smack at these sheep from Aksu. I found afterwards that the reason why the Beg of Pokkalik had lied to me was because he wanted to get me away from Ilanlik; we had to rely on him for fodder, and it didn't suit him to send us fodder 10 miles to Ilanlik (though we paid for everything); so he got us to move to a place where there was natural grazing [...] So, be warned [...] Don't rely on any of the local shikari [...]



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Fig. 145. Skrine's sketch map of his Aqsu tour, in his letter to his mother from the Garden of Abus Sattar Haji in Aqsu (Old City) (from the British Library Collection: IOLR MSS EurF154/9).



Fig. 146. It is difficult to determine exactly which day and in what location Skrine took this image, since he recorded several crystal-clear opportunities to photograph the Tien Shan. He noted for this particular image that it was somewhere in the vicinity of Khan Tengri and is of interest for recording the huge glacier in front of the peaks (after: Die Koralle*, September 1928, p. 277).*

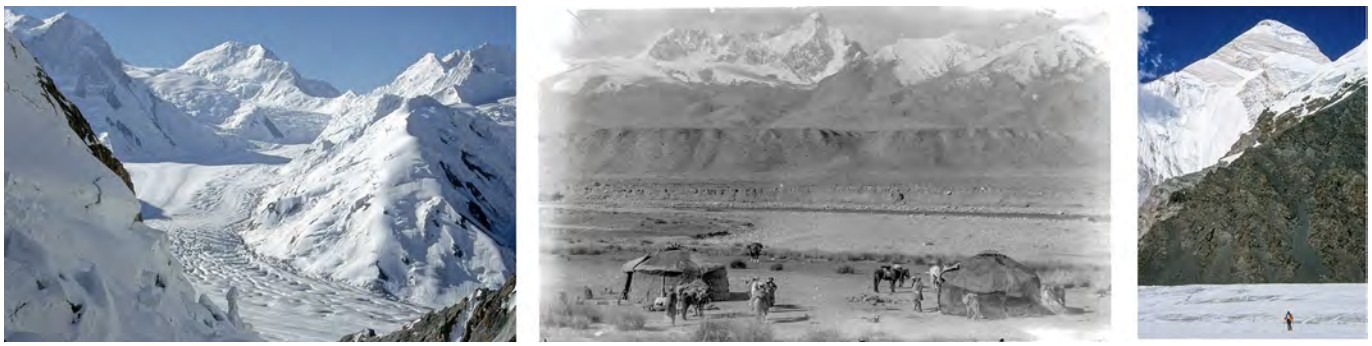
Garden of Abdus Sattar Haji, Aksu (Old City)

I last wrote you from Bai, since when we have come 5 days' march down the road to this ancient and famous city. To make our recent journeyings clear, I append a map: [*Fig. 145*].

I'm afraid it isn't very clear, but at any rate you will see roughly how our track has lain with respect to the mountains, the rivers and the desert, also the respective positions of the chief towns. When I get back to Kashgar I am going to send you a map which will enable you to follow our travels much better & get really *au fait* with the geography of Ch. Turkestan.

Our visit to Bai lengthened from 3 days to 4 owing to an official quarrel which arose between myself and the Amban of the place. It would take too long to go into details. I will merely say that he 'tried it on' against me, and against British rights in Sinkiang in general, and I had to fight him. This took time, and we did not get away till the 12th. We travelled (as usual) not by the main road but by side ones through the curious red clay ranges of hills running parallel with the Tian Shan camping at two or three places 'off the map.' Two of our stages were on the main road however, though we none the less pitched our tents and did not sample the exceedingly fleasome 'langars' (inns). Though it costs a little more in transport, it is well worth while taking tents with one on these journeys; apart from avoiding the dirtier 'langars', one is enabled to keep off the beaten track and to find one's own halting-places instead of being confined to the main road. It is scarcely an exaggeration to say that every single

Fig. 147. Skrine's photo of the dramatic peak of Khan Tengri, taken from a valley south of the Tien Shan and presumably at least 20 miles west of Bai (from the British Library Collection: IOLR Photo 920/1, unn. print). I juxtapose this image with two of mine, one taken from part way up Khan Tengri looking down across the south Engilchek glacier, the other from on that glacier looking up. Presumably one of the low points on the mountain ridge to the SE of Khan Tengri provided the opening for Skrine's view of the mountain.



camp we have pitched this journey, at any rate since the 5[th] or 6th day out from Kashgar, has been in delightful surroundings; nearly all have been on grass, nearly all close to running water, and all without exception have commanded wonderful views of mountain, desert, cultivation or river, or all 4. Except in really cold weather, give us tents and our own camping places every time, say D. and I. Of course it's only in the 'lands of eternal Sunshine' that one can ignore the possibility of bad weather spoiling one's camping, as one does in this country.

The day we marched into Aksu along the high road (a fine road it is, too, albeit heavy sandy going, for it is 40 or 50 ft. wide most of the way and lined with close-growing unpollarded willows throughout, a regular boulevard) was one of the finest as regards weather I remember. [*Figs. 146, 147, previous page*] The magnificent snows of the Central Tian Shan, reigned over by the great Khan Tengri (23,500 ft.), absolutely dazzled one with their brilliance 30–50 miles away to the north, north-west and north-east. Aksu Old City, buried in splendid trees and extraordinarily mediaeval-looking with its ancient walls and bastions & its vast Chinese gateways, nestles at the foot of a long line of perpendicular loess cliffs about 60–80 ft. high; where we are, to the west of the town itself, the masses of foliage and the tall white stems of the poplars, all clothed in flaring autumn tints, contrast most effectively with their 'drop-scene' (as it were) of warm grey-brown cliff Nullahs, mostly blocked by huge masses of loess but occasionally affording a passage to the upper level, cut the line of the cliffs every few yards almost; if you go up one of the paths or roads up the unblocked nullahs, you suddenly come out onto an immense expanse of perfectly flat 'sai' or gravel desert, without a house, without a tree, without any landmark whatever for hundreds of square miles, right up to the glittering wall of the Tian Shan! It's a most extraordinary contrast; you can hardly believe that only 2 minutes ago you were in a rich, moist, heavily-timbered, intensively-cultivated, thickly populated, green land [*Fig. 148*]; moreover, no sound from the city reaches you and you might, if you keep your eyes off the sea of greenery to the south beyond the edge of the cliffs, be in the middle of a howling wilderness hundreds of miles from the nearest human habitation. [*For a continuation of this description in his FD, see below.*]

Fig. 148. The scene of threshing with a team of oxen circling a pole and breaking down the stalks of grain likewise could have been photographed at several different places on their tour in the shadow of the Tienshan (reproduced with permission from the Royal Geographical Society [London], no. CPS/00034, the negative in an envelope with other images from the Aqsu tour). For comparison, DW photo taken on descent from the Torugart Pass in 1995.



We passed through the dirty but picturesque wood-and-mud-brick town with its rambling bazars a kaleidoscope of colour, like all Chinese Turkestan towns, and came out into cultivation almost at once, orchards melon-beds maize-fields chiefly, and soon were shown into a nice



Fig. 149. Abdus Sattar Haji and his sons in the courtyard of their home, Aqsu (reproduced with permission from the Royal Geographical Society [London], no. 025650).

garden full of dahlias and asters & zinias, with house consisting, Turki fashion, of a deep veranda with two airy comfortable rooms separated by an anteroom opening on to it [*Fig. 149*]. Big stables & servants' quarters & a good kitchen, all separate blocks shaded by big trees; a channel with clear flowing water close by. Best of all, fire-places in the rooms & not the Russian tin stoves we made sure we would suffer from; for the house belongs to an old Russian subject Abdus Sattar Haji, a wealthy merchant with many connexions in Semirechia formerly. You remember how, between Uch Turfan and Bai the week before last, we were abandoned by a treacherous Beg and had to find our own way one march? How we saw a man on a camel miles away in the desert, & how he led us through torturous gorges and over rocky passes to a sheep-farm right up among the Tian Shan where we were entertained most hospitably? Well, that house at Yetim Döbe belonged to the same old Haji that owns this one, and it was his son who entertained us & his servant (camel-herdsman) who guided us. Truly a good Samaritan!

There are very few British subjects here, barely enough really to justify a visit to this place, were it not for the larger number of B[ritish] S[ubject]s at or near Kuchar further N.E. whose business I dealt with at Bai; also for the fact that it is of the utmost importance that the British Consul General should show himself at least once a year in <u>all</u> the chief towns of Southern Sinkiang – if only ostensibly for shooting purposes! I have been at pains to emphasize the purely sporting nature of my tour in this direction, in order to distract attention from its real object, about which you will hear in due course.

I never saw anything like the grapes that grow in this country. [*He has drawn a large oval on page and written around it.*] This is the exact size and shape of one picked at random from a bunch on our dinner table this evening. A bunch weighing about 1 ½ lbs. all as big as this one, costs twopence halfpenny! The water melons are also very fine here, both red-fleshed and (what I have never seen before) yellow-fleshed; but the ordinary melons are very poor, quite a contrast to Kashgar where the famous 'Beshak-Shirin' must surely be the finest melon in the world. All food-grains, fruit etc. are amazingly cheap here; agricultural labour is so plentiful & cheap (equivalent of 2 ½ d. per day) while the market prices of land average <u>one quarter</u> of those at Kashgar! The reason is that the people are appallingly lazy while the soil is fortuitously fertile; as at Uch Turfan, it has all been brought down right <u>through</u> the Tian Shan from fertile Semirechia by big rivers, in this case the Qum Arik, in the case of Uch Turfan the Taushkan Darya. This rich alluvium is deposited on the loess of the Taklamakan Desert, itself extremely fertile wherever it is watered.

One of our few British nationals here is a solitary (Hindu) Shikarpuri trader, who must surely be lonely so far from the oven-like plains of his native Sind! He is a nice old thing and D., who took a liking to him when he first met us on the road coming into Aksu (the rest of our supporters being all Moslems), said she would get him to help her with her shopping in Aksu town next day. Accordingly, he came along & went with her to show her the shops & help her defeat the wily Chink shopkeepers. He first insisted on her visiting his home, which consisted of one room a serai, where he lived with his portly old Turki wife. The latter was taken by surprise & evidently worried at not being properly dressed to entertain the wife of his Consul General, for what do you think she did? She made her husband squat on the floor between her and D. & solemnly proceeded to take off her tea-gown and put on her party frock in D.'s honour! As she was about 50 round the waist & her Shikarpuri husband rather a lean old person, D. had some difficulty in not witnessing the lady's toilet, as well as in suppressing her own mirth!

There is a 'Tao-Tai' of Aksu Circle, under whom are the magistrates of Aksu Old & New Cities, of Uch Turfan, Bai etc., but he lives over at the New City some 7 miles to the south of this. I went over

to call on him today. I could hardly believe my eyes when I saw him; I assure you, he is the exact model and prototype of all Heath Robinson's middle-aged men[188] – you know, the stout persons whom Heath R. depicts collecting birds'-eggs off perpendicular cliffs, being eaten by boa-constrictors etc. They always have pyramidal heads and wear small felt hats perched on the top, & have comic elderly spreads. The Heath Robinson head and hat is something like this, only more so: [*sketch*] [*Fig. 150*]. Well, the Tao Tai of Aksu, who rejoices in the name of Erh, is just like that, only more so! I wish I could draw, & could indicate properly his beady little eyes, his ears and his multitudinous chins incarnadined, as Shakespeare would have (perhaps) described them.[189] The ruddiness of his countenance indeed excels that of the fattest monk Christendom can boast, and is due no doubt to the fact that Lieutenant Colonel Erh (for he is a military man; of which more anon) is a noted toper and gourmand. At a dinner which my Chinese clerk attended at the New City last week, the Tao Tai absorbed the equivalent of 7 ½ lbs of wine – strong heady stuff too, – without turning a hair. (They measure wine by the ching, i.e. by weight, in this funny country.) Lt. Colonel Erh informed me that his last appointment had been that of Staff Officer in the Sinkiang Army! & not only that, but he had seen much active service in the north of the province, defeating large armies of bandits, repelling Bolshevik invasions of the frontier etc. etc. – indeed, I gathered that he had received the Taoyinship of Aksu as a reward for his military services! I wish Heath Robinson was here, and he would give us Lt. Col. Erh at the head of a Heath Robinson army defeating no less Heath Robinson bandits!



As a matter of fact, everyone, including even the British Aksakal, says that the Tao Tai is very friendly and satisfactory from our point of view – not like some of the big officials in this province. The Amban of this town is a very nice old thing, beautiful manners & quiet, old-mandarin sort of ways, but very weak, and no good for getting money out of Turki debtors for our people, which is what I am chiefly concerned with. D. and I are both feeding at his Yamen tomorrow, I with the Amban & D. with Mrs. Amban separately. The Tao Tai is coming over for the feast, and I fear it will be a 40-course shark's-fin sea-slug fish-entrail affair of the most poisonous type.

We are staying here at the Old City for 6 days & then moving for 2 or 3 days only to a beautiful house & garden near the New City. I saw the place today – it is topping – a huge garden full of grapes, figs, peaches, dahlias & a lovely house, which we are to have all to ourselves! I wish we could afford a longer stay there, but we are due at Maralbashi 6 days' march away on the 31st & must go. Nazaroff is to meet us at Maralbashi for a week's shooting and exploring in the extensive jungles of the Yarkand & Kashgar Rivers: poor old thing, we thought we'd give him a treat so we're having him out to meet us and camp with us as our guest, like we did at Kaying last October [...]

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188. William Heath Robinson (1872-1944), a well-known British illustrator and cartoonist, who became famous for his depictions of implausible, Rube Goldberg types of machines. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ W._Heath_Robinson, last accessed 5 May 2016).

189. *Macbeth* II, ii:

> Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood
> Clean from my hand? No; this my hand will rather
> The multitudinous seas incarnadine,
> Making the green one red.

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[*In his Field Diary, pp. 17-21, Skrine expands considerably on his description of Aqsu, starting with more or less the same descriptive paragraph included in the letter above. Clearly he worked on re-writing and editing this description, which then served as the basis for much of what is in* CCA *1925, pp. 234-38. I have not attempted to show all the crossings out and insertions but only the 'final' text.*]

[…] [O]ne comes out onto a vast, absolutely empty desert. Except on clear days when the strangely-corrugated foothills & possibly the soaring ice-fields & glaciers of the T[ian] Shan appear like a vision to the north, half the circle of the horizon is a complete blank. It is hard to believe that five minutes ago one was in the midst of a landscape worthy of Constable or Corot.

In Mussulman countries the dead are not as a rule buried in earth that might support the living, and here too the uncultivable (because un-irrigable) cliff-tops above the town itself are covered with domed tombs of all sizes. [*Fig. 151*] In this strange place in fact a City of the Dead with streets, squares & boulevards complete overlooks the City of the Living. Looking up from the streets of the town, the domes of the cemeteries crown the bluffs at every point save one: only at the north-west end of the town, the ruins of Amir Yakub Beg's fortress one one cliff & of his hospital on another, break the serried ranks of the tombs.

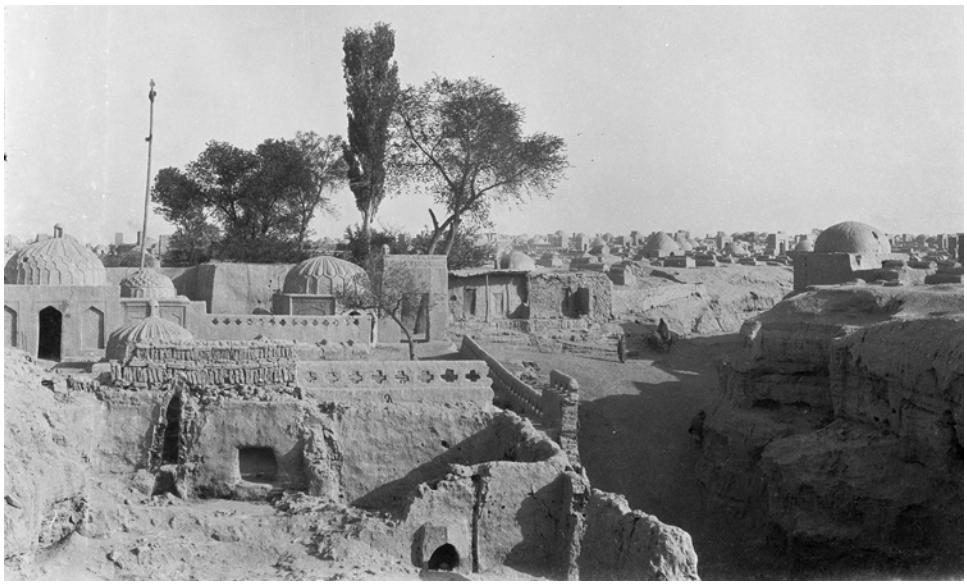


Fig. 151. The 'city of the dead', the vast cemetery on the outskirts of Aqsu (reproduced with permission from the Royal Geographical Society [London], no. CPS/00033).

Bedaulat's Citadel[190] is all of unbaked brick, & is in ruins now. Some years ago a Russian offered the Tao Tai of Aksu 5000 tls. for the site, which was refused; he then offered 10,000 tls. This made the Chinese so suspicious that they blocked up the only 2 paths which led to the top. It is still possible, however, to get up if you know how. On the town side a wave of mud and wattle houses surges up to within 15–20 ft. of the top of the cliff, and by trespassing on these owners & obtaining permission to use their roofs, it is possible to scramble from one rickety hut-roof to another & so reach the bottom of a steep flight of steps cut in the clay. The 'Bagh' is a table about 50 acres in extent of uneven surface, & is almost entirely covered by the remains of mud-brick buildings & enclosures; the highest ground is occupied by Bedaulat's palace; below it is a flat rectangular area containing the court houses, treasury etc. and the gardens. It is pathetic to trace faintly the lines of the flower-beds & lawns & of the water channels which fed them, now but a dead-white, clayey sah 'blank of Nature's works expung'd and rased.'[191] The walls & bastions by which the edge of the cliff was further strengthened are still visible; in one place a cavity on the cliff face is pointed out as the place where a lucky Aksulik found, quite by accident, a hoard of 350 silver yambus (about £ 3,500) 8 years ago. The Ch[inese] took most of it from him.

From the bastions above what used to be the lock-up in the W. corner of the fortress one looks across a nullah filled with trees and houses to the Golden Shrine, a beautiful blue-tiled mazar standing among

190. Yakub (Ya'qūb) Beg (d. 1877), a Khoqandi, who unified much of Xinjiang in an independent state in the late 1860s, was also known by his epithet '*bedaulat*' – 'the one with fortune (or blessing)'. For the history of the Muslim rebellion against Qing rule and his state, see Kim 2004.

191. John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Book III.



Fig. 152. The sizeable melon harvest from one of the fields rented out by Abdus Sattar Haji, Aqsu (after: CCA *1925, facing p. 236)*

tombs & trees on the top of another perpendicular-sided Table Mountain of loess. Beyond it again a further promontory of cliff carries the picturesque 'Daru Khana' which is in better repair than Bedaulat's other buildings because the Ch. turned it afterwards into an arsenal; it is still kept up, & my efforts to visit it failed.[192]

The fertility & cheapness of living in Aksu district are amazing. You can get 'anything except milk from a chicken' there. Day labour costs 30 dachens (2 ½ d.) per day, the best land, close from a town, sells for 10 taels (£ 1-10) per charak as against 40–50 tls. at K[ash]g[a]r, & prices range as low as 1 tael. Food grains: maize 2–2 ½ tgs., wheat 3 tgs., rice 3 ½ tgs. per 'charak' (?sack) (16 chings = 21 lbs.). But the melons beat the band. In a field close to our garden (that of Abdus Sattar Haji, late R[ussian] S[ubject]) was spread out 15,000 melons. [*Fig. 152*] They were the larger part of a crop raised by a cultivating lessee of some of the Haji's land. This man paid 100 tls. for the rent of the land (1 year) & spent 80 taels on labour, seed etc. The crop, about 20,000 melons, mostly ordinary but a few hundred water, he sold at from 25–30 taels per 1000, netting approx[imate]ly tls. 550 for a total outlay of the 180 or a profit of over 200 %! And this is a land where the crop never fails, as it does not depend on rain or other climatic conditions!



Fig. 153. Looking into the courtyard of the Daoist 'Temple of the White Cloud' on the outskirts of Aqsu (reproduced with permission from the Royal Geographical Society [London], no. CPS/00036). As Prof. Victor Mair has informed me, the inscription above the door reads 'immortal winds floating over the world' and the inscription to its right refers to the date 1 April 1920 ('auspicious day of he fourth month of the ninth year of the Republic of China').

Abdus Sattar Haji is a very keen-witted old man; a Marghilani like Hisam-ud-Din Bai at Kashgar.[193] He is a dear old thing. He and the Qazi Quzzāt came to return my call on the last day we were at the Old City. We talked chiefly of conditions in the sacred lands, to which 50 or 60 Hajis had gone from Aksu this year. The Qazi Quzzāt cross-examined me about the rulers of Hedjaz, Irāq etc. – were they independent? I explained about Feisal & Hussain.[194] When I mentioned Hussain he said 'Oh, he is not a Mussalman, is he?' When I said he was, the Qazi replied, 'I thought he was a Wahhabi!' – rather significant.

[*Fig. 153*] The 'Temple of the White Cloud' at Aksu New City (just outside S. gate) is a picturesque & well-kept-up place, tho' quite

192. The designation 'Daru Khana' (~gunpowder factory) seems to derive from the later use of the building; in CCA, Skrine calls it the 'Hospital'.

193. Marghilan (today, Marg'ilon) is a historic city in the Ferghana Valley of Uzbekistan.

194. Leaders in the Arab nationalist movements at the end of World War I which resulted in the creation of independent kingdoms in Syria, Iraq and Arabia: Faisal I bin Hussein bin Ali al-Hashim (d. 1933); Hussein ibn Ali al-Hashimi (d. 1931). See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Faisal_I_of_Iraq, and https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hussein_bin_Ali,_Sharif_of_Mecca, last accessed 23 May 2016. The irony here of the qazi's (qadi's) response is that the conservative Wahhabi sect of Islam was the official religion of the Saudi kingdom

recent. It was founded by a certain Wang Tungling & improved & endowed by Peng Tao Tai. The God of the White Cloud communicates with his followers by magic writing, which curiously enough used to be done by a sort of planchette. The planchette consists of a wooden board with one leg only, the place of the 2nd & 3rd legs of the planchette being taken by handles which are held on each side by the mediums. One is shown the big wooden tray on which is sprinkled the sand in which the planchette writes, and the sacred chairs which are placed for the God to sit on at the séance. Facsimiles of the sacred writings are hung on the walls of the shrine; the strength of many of the strokes is more than mortal; the piety of the sentiments expressed is unimpeachable. It is most unfortunate that since the departure 12 yrs. ago of the 2 Tientsin merchants who acted as mediums, the god has vouchsafed no more calligraphic messages to his flock. It would appear indeed as if he had no flock nowadays, for noone appears ever to visit the shrine except on the official holy day when the Tao Tai, Amban etc. attend service by order of the 'Dazuntun'; only the old priest potters about, dusting a joss-stick tray here and a lamp there, clanging the great bell & beating the mighty drum at the appointed times & occasionally changing the written prayers in the frames which stand before the god. The courtyard is grass-grown, but clean; the little square garden behind the temple is thick with a tangle of vines & young poplar undergrowth, but the two pavilions half hidden in the temple are in good repair & the shrines in them are reverently tended; the guest room with its hideous framed embroideries & its strange-designed carpets is reminiscent of the drawing room of a sea-side hotel, but it is always kept ready for the distinguished visitor who never comes. A fine Maralbashi stag inhabits its garden; he is sleek & glossy but remarkably fierce, the snarl with which he greets one being quite terrifying. Tho' it is unfrequented, tho' it represents a dead faith, the shrine of the God of the White Cloud is an abode of peace & reverence, very different from the filthy, tawdry travesty of a temple which is all that Kashgar can boast.

Money is scarce and dear in Aksu; the land is so fertile that there is a round glossy 'nān' and a slice of melon daily for the very poorest, but few can do more than just carry on. The people are so lazy that there is no surplus; rice at 3 ½ tengehs per charak (22 lbs.) & maize at 2 ½ tgs. are exported to other towns in exchange for Kashgar khām & māta (cloth), Goma paper, Maralbashi chetayes [?] & other articles that the people ought to be able to make for themselves but can't. Land costs 1–10 sars per charak against 40–100 sars at Kashgar; unskilled labour fetches 30 dachens a day.

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Garden of Mirza Ali Andijani, Aksu, New City, Friday, 26 October 1923

We moved over here last Tuesday, a distance of 8 or 9 miles only – and found ourselves in a perfectly delightful house and garden belonging to a rich Andijani who used to be Russian Aksakal. The garden is large, and consists of orchards of every kind of fruit tree from pear to pomegranate, lucerne-fields, grass paddocks and two magnificent vine-pergolas each about 100 yards long. I never saw anything like the grapes, mostly of the long 'ladies' fingers' variety others a particularly sweet & strong-flavoured rose-red kind, small round & pipless, delicious. You walk along under the pergolas and munch grapes almost without the trouble of putting your hand up. The house consists of the usual three rooms, nice big ones in this case, with European hinged windows & shutters & fire-places. D. has been particularly comfortable & happy here, except for a nasty cold due to too much baking and not enough out of door exercise!

I have been so busy with cases & calls & so on that I haven't had much time to sample the delights of the garden or to explore the very picturesque environs of Aksu. What little exploring I have done, however, has been with a camera, & I have secured some very fine pictures. Today has been a particularly full day, up at 6, breakfast 7:30, office work 8–10, call on a Chinese military official 10:15, shopping 11–11:30, ride over to Old City 11:30–12:30, case-work with Amban 12:30–3, lunch with him 3–4:30, ride back to New City with half an hour's duck-shooting on the way, 4:30–6:0[0], office 6:0[0]–7:0[0], dinner – 7:30! Today was bazaar day in Old City & I got some very interesting pictures there too, better than





Fig. 154. A beggar and street musicians in Old Aqsu, photos taken on 26 October 1923 (after: CCA *1925, facing p. 184; from the British Library Collection: IOLR Photo 920/1 [101]).*

any I got while I was staying there, the light being far better. [*Fig. 154*] I never saw such a picturesque lot of beggars, street singers, 'kalandars' (= Indian faqirs), story-tellers etc. & one or two pictures I got of them, with a background of mediaeval streets and Chinese gateways & old Turki houses, ought to be really interesting. [*Fig. 155*]

27 October 1923. I am continuing this after the departure of the loads under D's charge as the mail leaves at 12 and I must post before leaving myself. My fountain pen has <u>of course</u> run dry. I had expected to get the load off comfortably by 9 & have from then till 11 to finish my mail. But the Chinese as usual have upset my calculations. They have a perfect genius for being polite at the most inconvenient times for their 'guests'. This time, entirely without warning, the Taotai, Amban and O[fficer] C[ommanding] Garrison came to call, one after the other, just as our last loads were being tied on!! Tea, cakes sweets etc. all had to be arranged hurriedly and I spent the next hour being polite (with 'Mr. George's' help) to the Chinks while D., purple in the face, sat confined to her room (because she couldn't get out without meeting the Chinks) & the whole caravan was held up outside. What is more, various other final arrangements as regards British subjects' cases were held up & now it is nearly 11:30. I don't know when I shall catch D. up! Anyhow I'm afraid I'll have to cut this letter short. The Tao Tai, a fat old officer whom I think I described to you in my last gave me a meal on Wednesday and has been otherwise very friendly, but I think this unexpected (& most unwelcome) extra politeness is due to my sending him this morning a present of an English ham, rather rash of me. He is a great gourmet and loves ham, and he probably decided suddenly to call and thank me for it – and as he was calling, of course, all the other officials had to call too!!



Fg. 155. The market at the west gate of Old Aqsu, photo taken on 26 October 1923 (reproduced with permission from the Royal Geographical Society [London], no. CPS/00035).

I had meant to tell you in this letter about the temple of the White Cloud here, also about the fifteen thousand melons, but will now have to postpone it till next letter, which I will begin writing tonight & will send from Maralbashi. The temple is <u>most</u> interesting, because of the god's habit of <u>writing</u> messages (in the best Chinese hand) to his followers & how do you think he does it? By planchette!! Must stop now [...]

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[*Field Diary*, pp. 21–22]

Between Aksu and Ai Küll we overtook a caravan of about 200 camels loaded with wool from Kuchar, which was going to Kashgar for reexport no doubt to Ferghana. The wool belonged to Kuchar bais, the camels came from Bai district. They were to take 30 days between Aksu & Kashgar.

Yaide & Chilan are in Kelpin district; the people are noticeably good looking, the women having regular, almost Greek features & the children being particularly sweet, tho' very dirty. I asked about the Mussalman Amban of Kelpin; it appears that he 'fell' (*zhigalde*) last year & is now living privately at Aksu. He was not a Wang of Kuchar like the O.C. Uch Turfan, but the son of a Bajanri colonist who had the foresight to teach his boy Chinese. Soon after leaving Yaide the road follows a dry irrigation-canal; this has quite obviously never carried water & turned out to be another 'folly' of a Ch. amban, a former incumbent of Kelpin who sought to gain promotion by bringing a large area of Yaide land under cultiv[atio]n by means of a canal taking off from the Yaka Kuduk ustang. As is the case of the 60,000 tael canals & langars made by Tao's brother on the yar between Aksu New & Old Cities, everything was done most thoroughly and the scheme was most successful except that the water would not flow along the canal, which has therefore been abandoned. It may be explained that the Governor gave out some years ago that any Amban who brought not less than 30,000 mu [1 *mu* = .6 acre] of new land under cultiv[atio]n would be promoted...

3 November 1923. Nazaroff told me today that in Semirechia the best locust-destroying agent is the red starling [*Pastor roseus*] (specimens of which we caught at Kongdong between Oi Küll & Chilan). This bird kills locusts in enormous quantities merely for the fun of the thing; it doesn't eat them. After a time the starlings' beaks get so sticky that they must wash them; but as in the desert where the locusts are there is no water, the farmers make special canals & reservoirs out in the desert for the starlings to wash their beaks in.

Once in Maralbashi district, one is among the Dulans again [*Fig 156*], & is immediately struck, (1) by the good looks of the women (dark, gipsy type, very good features) (2) by the laziness of the men. Hordes of adult male tamashachis everywhere one goes, just like Merket; ¼ m. from the village we came across two large gambling parties, mostly men but a few women, sitting under trees. This was in the middle of the afternoon. What work is performed in Dulan districts is done by the women.



Fig. 156. Dulani children playing 'cat's-cradle' (after: CCA *1925, facing p. 184).*

Heard today that at K[ash]g[a]r some time ago during a drought a certain mullah, at the request of the Mussalmans of K[ash]g[a]r, prayed for rain. His prayers were answered only too well; rain came in such torrents that the crops were ruined. Whereupon the Amban gave the mullah 1000 sticks!

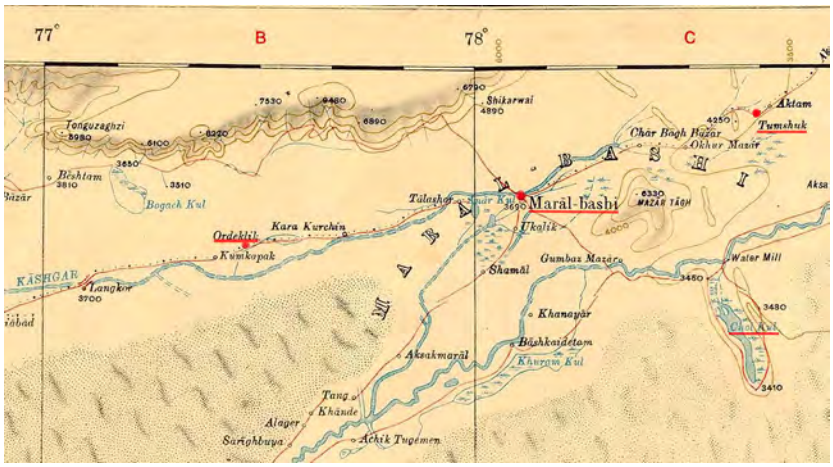
N[azaroff] says that in the Turgat district the wild (grey) geese assemble in thousands & do much damage to the crops, but are never shot owing to their wonderful sentry system. They frequently use cranes as sentinels; N. has seen flocks of geese acres in extent feeding in the fields with 5 or 6 cranes keeping 'cave' [*Lat.*: ~guard].

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[*Skrine to his mother, with some interpolated passages from the Field Diary.*]

Maralbashi, 11 November 1923

I'm dreadfully afraid I may have missed a mail, as this letter may not reach Kashgar in time for this week's Indian dâk – it is very difficult to hit it off while on these tours, however smooth-running one's bundobust may be – I have managed to secure the receipt of our mails (mostly by Chinese post) fairly regularly, in fact since we turned our heads Kashgar-wards from our 'Farthest North-East' at Bai, we have been positively inundated with letters, papers & parcels. E.g., I am three weeks behind in my daily



Fiig. 157. Map of Maralbashi region, places visited by Skrine and mentioned by him marked in red (base map cropped from Survey of India, 'China and Kashmir & Jammu', Sheet no. 51, Yarkānd, 2nd ed. 1926).

paper, about 6 months in arrears of any private correspondence, while last week at a place called Tumshuk where we were stopping at a tiny Chinese rest house we suddenly received two large sacks full of parcels & boxes by post!! mostly things we didn't want a bit until Kashgar!

I have some 3 or four of your letters to answer – those from your Commercial Hotel at Dieppe and afterwards the Flat [...]

We were very lucky last week to get our little trip off the main road to the wilds of the Yarkand River and the lakes of the desert-edge over before the winter cold set in. We had a regular 'Indian Summer' of fine clear warm weather, quite wonderful for November. [*Fig. 157*] As we were in tents all the time, this was very lucky. M. Nazaroff joined us at a place called Tumshuk on the main road, 40 miles on the Aksu side of Maralbashi, & thence we struck southwards through marvellously picturesque villages with masses of autumn foliage and placid canals & ponds & quaint wooden houses – quite Dutch scenery – for 10 miles or so. Then we came to a strange precipitous range of hills, the foot of which we skirted leaving the cultivation behind. Salt desert like snow, cliffs & one side, high sand-hills – the outliers of the great 300-ft.-high dunes of the Takla Makan – on the other the wild poplar and tamarisk jungle, thicker and thicker, till suddenly we came to a beautiful placid, clear river flowing between wooded banks all of orange and spun gold & on its banks a little lonely shrine where a solitary Sheikh lived at the foot of a precipitous crag, the last of the line of rocky hills. The river was one of the channels of the Yarkand Darya, the main stream of which flowed in great curves and reaches through meadow-land & jungles a mile beyond. There wasn't room in the little shrine buildings for us 3, only for our men, so we pitched our tents on the banks of the stream. I seldom saw a lovelier spot. But there were no duck or wild geese or pigs or pheasant, so as we had invited Nazaroff to shoot those animals, I rode over next day across the big river to find a place where the shooting was good. I found one, a lovely place, the <u>only</u> house for 20 miles each way on the <u>south</u> side of the Yarkand River. [*Fig. 158*] All the land for miles is cultivable, would in fact support a large population, and there is water in plenty, but it is not wanted. Curious, because in other parts of this province the available land is insufficient for the



Fig. 158. Possibly the farm of Abid Beg where the Skrines stayed?? (scan from unn. neg. in Stewart collecton).

population. The farm of Abid Beg stands among small groves of toghrak (desert poplar), [*FD, p. 22:* each tree at this season a mass of bright gold like a Kashgar woman's 'chach-pufak'], in one of which we pitched our tents, our servants using the house. [*FD, p. 22:* Tonight (10 P.M.) the stars are blazing both in the sky & in the wide reaches of the river, and a sound of cheerful but subdued merrymaking issues from the farm: 3 or 4 of the Beg's men are singing love-ditties in unison to the strains of a dota. To the north far beyond the river, the rugged outlines of the Mazar Tagh and Tughan Tagh break the rim of the starry heavens; to the south-west tower the peaks of the Chok Tagh behind which lie the moonlit waters of the Chöll Küll; to the south can be seen, glimmering faintly, mighty sand-dunes which mark the verge of the Takla Makan Desert.]



Fig. 159. The 'desert lake', Chöll Küll, in the sand dunes of the northern Taklamakan S of Maralbashi (after: CCA *1925, facing p. 192).*

Pheasants abounded in the neighbourhood of the farm, magnificent gaily-plumaged 'Shaw's pheasants'; a beautiful glassy lake lay in the bosom of the woods only a mile away, at the foot of a high rocky range of hills; the other side of these hills was a much larger & even more beautiful lake, the Chöll Küll [*Fig. 159*] , a sheet of water 10 miles long by 2 broad, spring fed, emptying its waters into the Yarkand River by a lovely stream flowing amid rich pasturelands. The Yarkand River itself, now very low, lapped the foot of the crags on the S. side with long calm reaches & deep pools full of fish, fine big ones some of them a kind of trout too, but alas, alas! we had no rods with us! Every tour up to this one I have taken both our rods with us & we've never found occasion to use them – this time I didn't & we bumped into the best fishing in Sinkiang. Delicious eating too – we bought a monster, ab[ou]t 20 lbs., & he was delicious.

I got some fine photos of this interesting neighbourhood, only visited by Stein among previous European travellers, & we had some good duck and pheasant shooting. The duck-shooting was particularly difficult but great fun. I got a magnificent drake 'red-crested pochard' [*Netta rufina*] the head of which was so fine that Nazaroff kindly cured & stuffed it for me.

Our first 2 days at Abid Beg's farm, where by the way we made great friends with the poor lonely herdsmen and their families who live there & look after the Beg's flocks & herds, were exquisitely clear, calm & sunny – a regular Indian summer. [*FD, 6 November 1923, p. 23:* Nothing grown but melons, tho' plenty of water. 3 brothers, Dulanis, live here & make a living out of (1) trapping foxes (2) shearing sheep for flock-owners. They get 1 fleece for every 10 shorn by them. Out of this wool they make rope & socks & sell them in M[aral]bashi. The men are Abid Beg's herdsmen, but he only pays them by zakat, i.e., the 1/40th charity at Ramazan. He pays revenue on the sheep etc. herded by these men. Abid Beg's sheep, goats, cattle & ponies feed in different parts of his estate each year; at present they are elsewhere. The 3 families separated 3 months ago owing to quarrels. They still live in their farm, but no longer jointly. There were 3 joint cocks; now they each own 1 cock. District is called Choka Tagh. Any amount of good water from the Chöll Küll, apart from the big river, running to waste; an arik 1 m. long would bring an enormous area round this house under cultiv[atio]n; flat, good soil.]

Then came two bright but windy days, not so pleasant. Then came the good old Takla Makan haze, almost blotting out the sun, accompanied by a cold wind from the desert (which by the way was only a mile or two from us to the south-east, three hundred miles of it stretching to Khotan & eastwards for a thousand miles to far Tun-hwang) so we left our little remote 'strip of herbage strown, that just divides the desert from the sown'[195] and marched in 2 days to Maralbashi, the 'county town' of the district, with an Amban, a Tung-ling or Military Commandant (he commands an army of 75 men on paper; it used to be 150 strong, he solemnly assured me, but after the Washington Conference[196] it was reduced by half!!), and a bazar about a mile long, well-roofed and fairly clean & tidy. [*Fig. 160*] There is no town properly speaking: the bazar runs parallel to the river, along which are a few narrow lanes of houses, but the 'town' consists of a market, the Chinese fort with 'yamen,' a barracks, & little else. Maralbashi is a rich agricultural district & the population is entirely rural. The Amban is a very different type from the usual Chinese official of the provinces; he is a 'young Chinaman' of about 25, well-educated, speaks Russian fluently and a little English too, enlightened and progressive. His mounted police force is unique in Kashgaria: it only consists of 25 men, but they are smart, reasonably well turned out, helpful and not unduly oppressive. Young Chin Da-Heng (the Amban) chose them all himself and trained & equipped them off his own bat. Then he has a Fire Brigade, & has recently roofed the bazaar – so Maralbashi is (for Kashgaria) a model town. From my point of view he is satisfactory too. I am having great tussles with with him over British subjects' cases, for in argument he is a foeman worthy of my steel, but he has a sense of justice and is not in the least anti-British-subjects as Kwei Hutan [?=Huban] of Kargalik was, for instance (I've at last managed to secure the latter's transfer, by the way, Gott sei dank [*Ger.*: Thank God!]). I have got one more sitting with him tomorrow at the Yamen, when the various issues between us will be (I hope) finally settled, & then I will ride quickly the 15 miles to our first stage on the Kashgar road, Shurga, whither D. & Nazaroff will have preceded me on the caravan. D. & I both like young Chin personally very much; he is genuinely friendly & anxious to do us & the British Empire honour & he has good traits besides his ability; for instance he is an animal-lover, and has the Yamen garden absolutely full of pets – about 100 lovely ducks, 20 pheasants, rabbits, goats, gazelles and, most notable of all, a family of Maralbashi stags [*Cervus elaphus maral*, also known as the Caspian Red Deer –



Fig. 160. A mazar along the banks of the Kashgar River where it disappears into the sands east of Marabashi. Captioning for the picture specifies about a mile east of the town, but if that is accurate, it cannot be the mapped Okhur Mazar, which is more distant. Clearly the architecture of the Mazar is substantial, suggesting it is an important one. (After: Nazaroff 1935, facing p. 108.)

195. Omar Khaiyyam, 'Rubaiyat,' (Edward FitzGerald translation), stanza 10.

196. A reference to the 1921-1922 Washington Naval Conference which concluded a nine-power treaty promising to respect the territorial integrity of China (the exception being Manchuria, where Japanese dominance was recognized) at the same time it ensured equal commercial access to China for the signatories. See: https://history.state.gov/milestones/1921-1936/naval-conference, last accessed 29 January 2025.

DW] – stag, hind and fawn, lovely creatures. The stag is bigger than the Scottish red deer & has a head of a quite different shape, also horns different; this one is an 8-pointer, & the points are much longer relatively to the whole antler than in the case of the red deer. The hind too is much bigger than the red deer hind, relatively to the stag. The M[aral]bashi stag is getting rarer every year, & I was glad to see a specimen.

We are living in a lovely pavilion (3-roomed) in a big garden, not quite so good as that at Aksu New City (vide last letter) but very nice. The place belongs to old Abdul Aziz Haji, the British Aksakal here, a dear old thing & a great friend of mine. He is just off to Mecca with his whole family for a second time by the way – he ought to be quite safe for Paradise, oughtn't he?

Must stop now or I'll miss the dâk.

***

Kashgar, 22 November 1923

[...] You can imagine what a lot of arrears I have to face after so long a tour with no Vice Consul [...] The whole of the 5 days since we returned has been taken up from sunrise till midnight with reports, telegrams, cyphers, memoranda, inquiries, interviews with Chinese, Russians, Afghans, Turkis & Hindus, wrangles with contractors & gardeners, domestic arrangements & last but not least, private business with India which has fallen sadly in arrears [...] Tonight I'll just tell you briefly about the end of our journey & arrival here.

We came here in 5 days from Maralbashi in absolutely perfect weather. I never saw such skies, such clearness of the air, such colours, and in a winter (or very late autumn) landscape too! Coming down the road we seemed to be in a valley, a flat-bottomed valley perhaps 15 miles broad with snow-topped hills say 7–8,000 ft. high on either side – instead of being in the middle of a plain 120 miles broad, with mountains 25,000 ft. high 70 miles to the south of us and others 18,000 ft. high 50 miles to the north! Such sunrises and sunsets too; after breakfast in our draughty, dusty little 'langar' rooms we would sally forth to superintend the loading of the ponies, and there would be the rays of the rising sun like a great golden search-light playing across the plain, making trees & houses, sandhills, river-cliffs, wild poplar woods or the multitudinous tamarisk-cones of the desert, as the case might be, glow as if they were made of beaten gold. So warm too – we were hardly once cold – I once perhaps when we didn't get in till extra late. An 'Indian Summer' indeed – but one that is lasting, for it is still beautifully clear & warm (except at night) here at Kashgar. Really there can't be another climate like this in the whole world – all the year round [...]

Nazaroff came back with us as far as Ördeklik only, 2 marches this side of Maralbashi, where he stayed on a couple of days to shoot wild pig which is apparently the supreme form of sport to Russians. Whether it's the sport, which Russians absolutely adore, or what, but the Russians of Kashgar regard wild-boar shooting as the finest form of hunting imaginable. At first it seemed heresy to me, the spear being in India the only legitimate method of killing a pig at any rate in 'rideable' country; but at Ördeklik I fell, and organized a pig drive for the delectation of Nazaroff & D. It turned out splendid sport, exciting as could be, & I'd like awfully to have another chance – the jungle extends for many miles south of Ördeklik, & we put beaters at about mid-day through one of the thicker patches, stationing ourselves at the other end. Nazaroff sat behind a mound & I with D. as spectator, took my position behind some tamarisks. Hardly were we in position before we heard rustlings in front of us, and a moment later there I spotted an enormous pig peeping round a bush at me 30 yards away! He didn't

stay, but slipped out of sight among the bushes, which were rather thick; only to be closely followed by another! Directly I saw the 2nd one's head I let drive at it, standing, with my .375 Evans 5-shot rifle, and next moment there was no end of a hullaballoo – squealing and kicking and grunting and shaking of bushes. Poor D. got the wind up rather, and I don't blame her, for unless one is accustomed to wild pig at close quarters as I am they're so huge and black and violent & make such a noise that they are rather terrifying. However, the rest (there were 4 altogether) bolted and 3 more shots finished off the pig. She (for it turned out to be a lady I'm sorry to say) proved to be a real monster, and enormously fat, to Nazaroff's great joy, for we promised him and the other Russians the whole of the meat except one piece for our table! He also saw a lot of pig and fired at 2 different ones, but missed. He's not a great shot I'm afraid – not that I need talk, after my previous performances this tour!

Ördeklik is altogether a wonderful shooting place, being positively infested not only with pig (which do a lot of harm to the crops, hence the willingness of the (Mussalman) inhabitants to beat for us & even to pull the pig's body in 3 miles afterwards) but with pheasant (the gloriously-plumaged 'Shaw's pheasant') duck & (later) snipe. 'Ördeklik' means in Turki 'duckful', and it <u>is</u> [تۇردەك = duck].

[*Under 25 November in his FD, p. 25, Skrine adds this on the disposal of the wild boar:* The pig we shot at Ördeklik has been divided among the delighted Russian colony & today we had 'Mr. George' & the Post Master Chu to lunch to help eat our bit. It had to be roasted in the wireless quarters by a Chinese cook produced by George, & served by ourselves – but it was worth it. Pig weighed 100 lbs. 1 week after being cleaned – must have been 220 lbs. when fresh. Pork costs 7 miscals per jing in the bazar, including bone; so our pig must have been worth 70 sars; it cost me: Beaters, 1 sar; 2 men who dragged it in, 8 tengehs, araba into Kashgar, 1 sar; cartridges (say) ½ sar; total 3 sars. Net profit, 67 sars. Our guests suggested floating a company for shooting pigs at Ördeklik & selling them to the Chinese at 1,700% profit! Better even than melons at Aksu!]

After 4 longish but very pleasant marches, mostly through wild poplar forest with occasional villages, we reached Faizabad, where the old Amban, a nice old person, was particularly friendly to us and <u>sent us round</u> to our langar (1) a complete Chinese dinner in the evening, (2) another complete dinner at seven A.M. next morning, (3) 2 cartloads of fodder, (4) about a hundredweight of grain, (5) 20 delicious melons! And we were only in his place 12 hours, for we arrived after sunset and left almost before sunrise. That's what I call hospitality! I called on him of course & we had a great talk, through our Chinese Writer, 'Mr. George.' The Amban is a cousin of the Governor's, a Yunnanese, & the direct antithesis of the (also very nice and friendly) young Russian- and English-speaking clever, progressive and energetic Chü [? Chin] of Maralbashi.

We did the last 52 miles into Kashgar in one day, by 5 P.M. in fact, half on horseback and half in the tarantass, which came out to meet us [...]

Meanwhile I am, among other things, busy with the construction of fireplaces to replace the horrible black fuel-ravenous Russian stoves that Etherton put in – dreadful things that overheat the house and chill it in turn – for the wood one puts in burns up in 10 minutes, the stove gets fearfully hot, & then unless one is perpetually feeding it, it gets cold again. Last winter, fearing E. <u>might</u> be coming back, we didn't like to put in more than one English fireplace, that in the drawing room; that has been a great success & much applauded, so now I've had a nice big fireplace put into D.'s room & the dining room & am thinking of one for the library too. They make all the difference to the cheerfulness of the house, are easy to regulate and much more economical of (very expensive) fuel than Russian stoves are. The latter may be all right for Siberia, but are unnecessary at Kashgar.

<u>Ever</u> so many thanks for the toys and children's books. They're delightful, and will be an enormous

success. We're going to have a 'pond' as well as our Xmas tree this year, and I'm sure we shall bless you for providing such a nice lot of 'fish'. So cheap too – 21/6 is absurd. You couldn't get this lot for 30 rupees in India. Influence of the Boche reasserting itself, I suppose [...]

Iris' wedding day today. We drank 'the Bunburys" health in port tonight at dinner. It's our wedding-day tomorrow – in quarter of an hour's time in fact – & I must go to bed [...]

***

[*Field Diary, 24 November 1923, p. 25:*]

At 5 P.M. today D. saw 23 gaggles of red geese flying down the valley of the Tüman Darya at once. Beautiful sight in the golden light of the setting sun, she said.

Yesterday we rode to Akhtan for a wedding-day picnic lunch – no duck or snipe, but wonderful view of snow. Crossed afterwards to Bu Khazina mazar on l[eft] bank. Old woman there asked D. if she had come to pray for children? 'Bu Anam' must be an efficacious saint, for the neighbouring villages positively hotch with babies.

***

Kashgar, 26 November 1923

Last week I did not have time to answer your letters of 21 September, 4 October and 11 October, so am beginning betimes this week. First and foremost about the furs [...]

I don't think I told you by the way, apropos of motors, that the Rover, after costing me all told over 14,000 rupees, came to a sad and mysterious end without bringing me in a single anna? I had to try and sell it, of course, when I was ordered here, and I sent it first to Delhi and then to Calcutta for commission sale by motor-companies. I couldn't sell it at Quetta, as they use nothing but cheap American cars, and patriotic efforts to encourage Home industries are not the fashion there (or anywhere else in India, for that matter). I must I suppose have spent about 100 rs. in telegrams and reg[istere]d letters about that car throughout 1922 – only to hear, this autumn only, that the company to which I had entrusted the car at Calcutta had 'gone phut' the Manager and staff bolting with the cash and all the property of the firm, including my car! What do you think of that for luck? The Commissioner of Police, Calcutta, informs me that criminal proceedings have been instituted, but that neither the defaulting manager nor my Rover have been traced. Of course the car has gone, and with it all hope of my getting the Rs 7,000 I was confidently expecting for it. As a matter of fact, the car which was as good as new, having only run 4,000 miles and having been done up and repainted for sale purposes at Quetta in Jan. 1922, would have been cheap at 10,000, and if I had been able to stay in India and look after its sale myself, I would have got that for it. Serving one's King and country at remote places like this is liable to be pretty expensive at times [...] Hence it is that we shall be unable to have a car when we go home, or for some years afterwards for that matter. As a matter of fact, after the life we have led the last two or three years neither D. or I care a d--n about motors; we far prefer camels, and failing them we shall get no end of fun chugging about on a motor bike, especially in the remoter parts of the Highlands where we intend to go for our holidays. D. is even stronger on this subject than I am; she views all motors with disfavour after the tragedy of the Rover [...]

27th Nov. A horrible farm-yard tragedy has overtaken poor Doris' poultry. You remember we brought back last year, with much difficulty, a magnificent cock from Yarkand and a beautiful hen of vast size from still remoter Khotan. With these as a nucleus D. started a really fine lot of poultry, and has taken

no end of trouble over them, spending what must amount to hours every day feeding and otherwise looking after the cocks and hens. Two splendid broods were hatched out last summer, and we had almost more eggs than we wanted; now, though the hens were not laying, D. was counting on keeping our table supplied with fine young pullets throughout the winter. Three different large and commodious houses were made by the local carpenter under D's personal supervision, and the lower garden became a regular poultry-run for the ducks and hens, a couple of tame wild geese given us by the Krassavines being the latest addition. Last night by mistake D. left the little side-door of the hen-house not quite properly closed. This morning we found that the horrible semi-wild dogs of the neighbourhood (the same that killed our gazelles in the spring, you remember) had got into the hen-house and had killed every single one of the hens as well as the beautiful Yarkand cock which boasted every colour of the rainbow in his plumage, stood 18 inches or more high and used to strut about as if he were the Consul General! Isn't it disgusting? Poor D. is desperate, and so disheartened that she has forsworn poultry-keeping and has given all her ducks and geese away. Besides the gazelles, I forgot to mention, the dogs killed some ducks and hens of hers once before. On those occasions I 'sat up' for dogs and shot one or two and we put down poison which accounted for two or three of the brutes; the difficulty about poison is that we have now four cats, and it is difficult to get hold of them all in the evening and shut them up so as to prevent them getting at the poisoned meat and sharing the fate of the dogs. However, I have declared war once and for all on the Kashgar dogs which hunt at night, and am going to either shoot or poison every dog in the neighbourhood of the Consulate before I leave the place. I feel toward them much as I do towards the Bolsheviks; they are incarnations of evil on this earth. They only actually ate one or two of the fowls; the rest they just killed for the lust of slaughter. Well, they're going to suffer for it.

The weather remains wonderful, the sun being brighter, the air clearer and the sky bluer than they have been since May last. We were far away in the south of the province last year in November and didn't realize what a beautiful month it is here. Every day the whole glittering snow range of the Pamirs and Alai Mts. is plainly visible to the south and west; at sunset they turn dark blue and stand so solid on the horizon that it is hard to believe they are 60–100 miles away. With the leaves off the trees one can see more of the picturesque beauties of the country-side, fine old farms, glassy ponds, rich brown river-cliffs, ancient walls of city and fortress. Truly, each season of the year seems more beautiful than the last – thanks to the 'eternal sunshine' which bathes this land like a perpetual benediction [...]

P.S. Just as this is being posted comes your letters of 18 October and lovely parcel for D. & self containing wooly waistcoat for me and wonderful super-housewife for D. Latter encloses a letter with this. She is <u>delighted</u>; so am I with lovely warm 'wekker'. Thanks <u>ever</u> so much Darling Mum. Jade bangles also received safely.

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[*Adding to Skrine's backlog of paperwork was the return of some of his intelligence agents who had spent significant time in Soviet territory. Within the space of a week, he wrote two detailed reports based on their information. It is hard to know how accurate the intelligence was, but clearly he trusted their reports more than he tended to trust what merchants based in Kashgar and traveling across the border would report. It is worth quoting in their entirety both of these reports, preserved in draft in BL IOLR MS EurF 154/39. The first is undated, but bears Skrine's later notation that it is from approximately the end of November 1923.*]

To the secy. F & P

EASTERN BOKHARA, July-Sept 1923

Sir

In continuation of my report No. 44 of 26th April 1923, I h[ave the] h[onour] to forward herewith a memo embodying information obtained thro' trustworthy agents regarding the events of July, August and Sept. in Eastern Bokhara and Ferghana. A further report regarding affairs in Russian Turkestan and Semirechia follows next week.

[signed]

1. Two agents of mine crossed the Bokhara frontier about the middle of July and stayed in the Alai district with the chief rebel Beg, Nur Moh[amma]d, until the end of the month. One of them then went to Marghilan via Uch Qurghan, near which latter place he was arrested by the Bolsheviks on the information of a Kashgar trader. The following account of his examination at Uch Qurghan by a board of two Russian & two Kirghiz officers may be of interest:

Q. Where have you come from?

A. Kashgar.

Q. What is your nationality?

A. Afghan, but resident in Kashgar. (The man is really from Hunza, but was furnished with an Afghan passport.)

Q. Have you been in this country before?

A. No. I came last winter to Alai only, not Ferghana.

Q. Why did you go to Alai?

A. In pursuit of a debtor. I went as far as Karategin.

Q. Did you see Fazail?

A. No.

Q. Did you see Nur Moh[amma]d and Yar Moh[amma]d in Alai?

A. Yes. I was told the Begs looted everybody, so I went to them with a present of tea and cloth. They robbed me of everything.

Q. The Begs gave you a letter, did they not? To whom did you deliver it?

A. They gave me no letter.

Q. Do you know where the B.C.G. lives at Kashgar?

A. I have heard that he lives at Chini Bagh, but Kashgar is a big city and Chini Bagh is far from the Qum Darwaza where my serai is.

Q. You brought a letter given you by the B.C.G. to whom did you deliver it?

A. I did not bring any letter.

The same or a similar questionnaire was put to my agent three or four times both at Uch Qurghan & later at Marghilan, but needless to say nothing in the slightest degree implicating this Consulate General in the anti-Bolshevistic efforts of the Alai or Karateghin Begs could be extracted from him. After payment of the usual bribes, he and his companions were released.

2. My agents were joined near Mukh on their way to Alai by a messenger, Taman Bai, who had been sent by the Alai Begs with letters for me. This man had been intercepted, robbed & stripped by the Bolsheviks near Por Karaul but had managed to throw the letters into a mountain torrent before they

were seen. Nur Moh[amma]d wished to give my agents letters for me, but they had strict orders not to accept anything in writing from anti-Bolshevik sources and succeeded in evading Nur Moh[amma]d's request.

3. Independent accounts of events in Alai and Karategin during August & September are given by the 2 agents, one of whom remained in Alai & returned thence close on 16th October, the other returning direct from Marghilan 2nd Oct.

Alai. Two different advances appear to have been made by the Bolsheviks into the Alai region. The first was early in August when 200 Russian soldiers and 200 Kirghiz 'Tortinji' [~ militia – *DW*] under Qadir Beg arrived from Osh with 2 machine guns and called upon Nur Moh[amma]d & Hamra Qul to surrender. (Yar Moh[amma]d, the chief Alai Beg, as at this time with Khosa Qazi [Sami Pasha's agent] in the Marghilan mountains supporting Ahmad Pahlawan). Nur Moh[amma]d and Hamra Qul retreated towards Marghilan with his forces & joined the other Begs. The Bolsheviks occupied Alai for about a month, i.e., until early in September, after which 300 of them returned to Osh taking with them the wives, mother and daughters of Nur Moh[amma]d and wife of Hamra Qul as hostages. The remaining 100 men stayed in the valley.

Meanwhile the Begs had concentrated on the shrine of Sher Mardan in the mountains south of Marghilan whence they made preparations to recover the Alai Valley. My agents, who had the information direct from members of the Begs' following a few days after the fighting, put the effective force of the Begs at 200 only, well armed with magazine rifles: the rest of the Basmachis were armed with swords, etc. About 1st September a detachment of 80 Russians under an officer accompanied by a Mussalman named Abdur Razzak approached Shah Mardan from Skobelef[197] and attempted to parley with Nur Moh[amma]d and the Begs, promising them an amnesty and other concessions. The Begs replied by falling on the Russians and wiping out the entire detachment, Abdur Razzak as a Mussalman being alone spared. This incident led to the despatch from Skobelef a few days later of an all-Russian force of about 600 with machine-guns before which the Begs' following melted away. No engagement took place, and the Russians over-ran the Alai once more. Nur Moh[amma]d, Hamra & Tokhta Bai 'came in' shortly afterwards, but judging by the smallness of the quantity of arms surrendered by them (only 21 rifles, 14 swords & 1 pistol altogether) their subjection does not appear to have been very effective. Yar Moh[amma]d and Ahmad Pahlawan retreated to their fastnesses above Shah Mardan where they still were early in October. The latest report I have received is that there is a strong religious movement in the towns of S. Fergana against the Russians, due to the expropriation by the latter of waqf revenues throughout the province, and that the leaders of this movement have been in communication with Yar Moh[amma]d and Ahmad Pahlawan.

Karategin.

About the same time as these last events, a force of above 1000 Reds and Tortinji advanced into Karategin. Fazail resisted them, but owing to lack of ammunition was obliged to retreat with heavy loss to the mountain fastnesses of Wakhayana, north of Doshambe and Hissar. The Reds then indulged in a massacre, killing many hundreds of innocent people: this caused a jihad, in which (my informant states) even the women joined. Meanwhile Fazail had mustered about 1000 men with whom he attacked the Reds, but was driven off with heavy loss. At Zafar he was joined by Sami Pasha & his Turks, who sent one of their usual blustering 'ultimata' to the Russians; the latter however refused to treat.

197. The town in the Ferghana Valley was named Skobelev in 1907, after the first Russian military governor there; in 1924, it was renamed Fergana (in Uzbek today, Farg'ona).

The account stops here, but it must have been very shortly after this that Sami gave up the struggle and fled to Meshed. Fazail however had not surrendered up to the middle of September. From all accounts, indeed, the spirit of revolt against Bolshevism, though important, is as strong as ever in Eastern Bokhara when the rebels are still encouraged by (doubtless false) reports of Nur Pasha's stout resistance on its Ashkhabad front.

4. Military Dispositions.

The agent who went to Marghilan reports that shortly before his arrival (circ. 15th August) 18,000 Red troops came to Skobelef from Russia. It was generally understood that these troops were intended for the suppression of the rebels in Bokhara & S. Fergana, & for the garrisoning of the frontier. The forces which occupied Alai and Karategin in September were drawn from these new troops. Subsequently detachments left Skobelef for Osh, Andijan, Irkeshtam and the Pamirs, while early in October larger drafts left for south-western Bokhara (this latter movement no doubt gave rise to the above-mentioned report about Nur Pasha's successes).

In Marghilan city there were in September only 80 Russian troops & some militia (tortuji); at Uch Qurghan 50 militia and 18 Russians. By the end of the month only 50 militia under a Russian officer remained in the Alai region: in addition to these 100 militia had been enrolled and armed by the Reds from its people of Alai themselves. On the whole, the conquest of the Alai and Karategin regions seems to have been of a very half-hearted and partial nature, and it is more than likely that the Begs will reoccupy their lost districts as soon as the passes open next spring, if not earlier.

5. One result of the occupation of the Alai, however, has been the consolidation of the Red line communications between the Russian Pamirs and Osh, for which latter place the garrison at Murghab, Kharukh etc. are supplied. A bi-weekly courier service is kept up vi Gulcha, the Kizil Art Pass and the Great Karaküll. The Pamir garrisons were reinforced by a mixed force of 250 including 60 Russians about Oct. 15th.

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[*Once back in Kashgar from his tour, on 29 November Skrine wrote a long intelligence report, which I quote here from the draft in BL IOLR MS EurF 154/39.*]

Ferghana and Tashkend

1. An agent of mine crossed the Ferghana frontier at Sungek in July, spent 3 weeks at Uzgend a few days each at Namangan & Khokand and a week in Tashkent in September. At Kanibadam near Namangan he got into touch with a friendly Sart to whom he had an introduction and at Tashkent with the wife of a white refugee. He was unfortunately unable to bring any Bolshevik printed propaganda or newspapers back with him, as he was searched 'to the shirt' as he described it, several times on trains and near the frontier.

2. Basmachi Revolt.

Regarding the Basmachis of S. Ferghana this agent had no news, but from his statement it is clear that in the north and east of the province the Reds are still having trouble. Among other rebel chiefs, Baiaz with 500 men in the Chotkal Valley north of Namagan and Jani Beg Kirghiz in the mountains east of Uzgend are still unsubdued. The Arpa Valley trade route is closed by the Kirghiz, who have been attacking Russian posts. The morale of the Reds in this area is said to be doubtful; they are mostly Siberian troops under the Semirechian command and have no love for the Turkestan Soviet.

3. Military Dispositions.

The agent confirms the concentration of troops in Ferghana in Aug. but thinks the 18,000 mentioned in para. 4 of my last report (No. 107/37 of 23 November 23) an exaggeration. Apart from these new troops, he estimates the chief garrisons as follows (Regulars only):

Khokand	2000
Namangan	400
Andijan	500
Uzgend	600.

The large majority of the troops in Tashkend & Fergana are Tartars from Kazan. None of the rank & file wear regimental badges which makes it difficult to ascertain which units are represented. Some wear grey uniforms, some black with red stars on their caps and red stripes across the front of the tunic. This agent, like the last, heard no suggestion anywhere that the Red troops were to be used against anyone but the Basmachis, a recrudescence of whose revolt is much feared by the Soviet Govt.

4. Armoured Trains.

My agent saw three armoured trains at Namangan, 2 at Andijan and 1 at Uzgend. These consist of an armoured locomotive with a mountain artillery gun mounted [on] a platform in front, and 3 [or] 4 armoured waggons with [a] gun in each. These trains are based in Khokand where there are large repair sheds. During [...] the line between Namangan [and] Andijan was broken by [...] of the Chotkal Valley, and to get to Namangan my agent had to travel round by Khokand. Most of the smaller stations on the Ferghana railway had been gutted by the rebels at one time or another and were under repair.

[*from here, typed:*]

5. Aviation.

During the whole of the week he was at Tashkend my agent saw no aircraft in the air. He was told that there were aeroplanes at Tashkend, but now that the Basmachi revolt had been crushed it was unnecessary to keep them perpetually in flying trim. The Tashkend–Vyerni air mail service which was inaugurated with so much éclat last year has never materialized. The machines, it is said, are 'not ready yet'.

6. Propaganda.

There are altogether eight Communist propaganda schools open at Tashkend, Khokand and Marghilan, with a total (alleged) number of 5,000 students including native Sarts, Chinese, Persians, Armenians, Jews and Indians. The full training course is one of 5 yrs. including a period in the Moscow schools for the brighter young Communists. An interesting, and possibly a new, feature of the Bolshevik propaganda system is the touring of frontier districts by large parties of newly-fledged Communists, these tours apparently serving the double purpose of propaganda among the inhabitants and education of the students. I have already reported by telegram to the G[overnment] of I[ndia] the departure from Marghilan early in Oct. of 400 members of the 'Komsomol' (Union of Young Communists) on a propaganda tour through the Pamirs. These youths were fresh from school and full of enthusiasm for the Cause. They made no secret of their destination; in fact, the tour was widely advertised, its object being given out as the education of the Tajiks in the principles of Communism and in present-day world-politics. The number reported, 400, is probably exaggerated like everything else advertised by the Bolshevik, but the party was undoubtedly a large one, for at Uzgend on his return journey in

mid-October my agent was unable to find a single horse owing to the fact that every available animal had been taken up by the Komsomol for their journey to Pamirski Post. In September I received an unconfirmed report from Sarikol that the military auth[oritie]s at various Pamir posts had received orders to collect large quantities of supplies for a party of travellers expected shortly from Tashkend; while, as stated in para 5 of the memorandum enclosed with my letter No. 107.37 dated 23rd Nov., 250 new Red troops are reported to have arrived in the Pamirs about the middle of October. These latter may well be identical with the Komsomol party, all of whom are said to have been well equipped and armed.

At Kanibadam, a small town in the Khokand district, my agent was present at a propaganda meeting at which the chief speaker was a young native Mussalman Communist from the Tashkend schools. Most of the speech was a diatribe against the British, whom he accused of having seized Jiddah, Mecca, Constantinople and all the sacred places of Islam, and of having killed thousands of good Moslems. He appealed to his audience as good Turks to join cause with Russian Muhammadans and with the Western Turks against the common foe, England.

There seems to be no doubt now that the Bolsheviks have definitely identified themselves in Turkestan with a pan-Islamic policy. Although, as has already been reported, this policy is largely nullified in Ferghana by Basmachi propaganda, it is certainly strengthening the power of the Soviet for the time being in Turkestan generally. As an illustration of the new point of view I may mention the return to Turkestan of the famous Qur'an of Caliph 'Omar which until 1867 was the glory of the Mosque of Tamerlane in Samarkand.[198] This relic, which is stained with the blood of the Caliph who was reading it when he died, was commandeered by General Abramoff at the capture of Samarkand in 1867 and was sent by him to the Imperial Libraries at St. Petersburg. In 1917 Kerenski, an adept at doing the wrong thing, presented it to the Tatar town of Ufa, which had no right to it whatsoever; this caused much discontent throughout Turkestan, which the Soviet Govt. until this year ignored. Now, however, the historic Qur'an has been taken from Ufa and sent to Tashkend, where it has during the past two or three months been the subject of fierce competition between the religious representatives of several different parts of Turkestan. These 'Muftis' have collected at Tashkend and are squabbling so violently among themselves over the holy relic that the authorities have decided to keep it at Tashkend. Why it should not have been restored without question to the mosque at Sarmakand whence it came, is not clear.

Altogether the Soviet Govt. appears to have been making strong efforts this year by means both of military display and of intensive propaganda, to consolidate their hold upon Turkestan; and their slogan in this campaign is 'Down with the English'.

7. Economic.

The fall in the value of the paper rouble continues unchecked by the somewhat rudimentary economic expedients adopted by the Turkestan Soviet. The 1923 issue represented a millionfold devaluation, i.e. each note was to be regarded as equivalent to a million times its value in the paper roubles of the last

198. Skrine's account about the history of this famous manuscript of the Qur'an differs in some regards from what seems to be accepted today. While there is no reason to think it is the oldest known copy of the Qur'an, as some would wish to believe, by tradition it is associated with Caliph Uthman. In the nomination for it to be considered for listing by UNESCO in the 'Memory of the World' register, the Uzbek authorities indicate it was sent to Tashkent in 1924, that is, in the year following Skrine's report about its transfer. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samarkand_Kufic_Quran, last accessed 23 May 2016.

issue. In para. 9 of the report enclosed with my letter No. 95/31 dated Oct. 10th I mentioned that the value of the new paper rouble had fallen within two months from 112 to 160 = 1 silver rouble. By October, I am now informed, it stood at about 400 = 1 silver rouble. Very little is seen of the much-advertised Chervoniets, gold-secured note-issue, most of which no doubt circulates exclusively among Soviet officials and Jews.

Trade with Chinese Turkestan

As already reported by tele. to the G[overnment] if I[ndia], comrade Rudenko on behalf of the Ferghana 'Gostorg' arrived at Sungek 17th Oct. and stayed till 20th Oct. I append a translation of an official letter sent by him from Sungek to the Taoyin of Kashgar, a copy of which I obtained without the knowledge of the latter. The representative of the company referred to, from whom Rudenko claims 15,000 poods of cotton, is a M. Krassavine of this place, who has ever since the collapse of the old régime faithfully guarded the property of his company, and does not intend to give it up now unless forced to do so by the Chinese. Very large quantities of wool are being imported by the Soviet from this country through Umar Akhun Bai and Bahauddin Bai; on the road between Kuchar and Aksu last month I myself saw a caravan of 200 camels laden with raw wool being brought to Kashgar from Kuchar, a distance of over 500 miles, for export to Ferghana.

In this connection I may mention that Umar Akhun Bai came to me shortly after my return from tour with a request for assistance and advice in his dealings with the Vnieshtorg.[199] He told me that the Russian agent with whom he dealt had offered payment for the next consignment of wool etc. in the shape of a sterling draft for £12,000 to be remitted by the (British) 'Commercial Bank' at Moscow to Umar Akhun's credit with the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank, Hankow; and he wanted to know (1) whether such an operation was possible, (2) whether I would telegraph to the Bank at Hankow to remit Omar Akhun the amount in taels when it arrived from Moscow. I replied that I did not know of the existence of a branch of any British bank at Moscow, but that if there was one and if the Soviet Govt. really paid the equivalent of £12,000 into it, there would be no difficulty so far as I knew about remitting the money to Hankow. As regards (2), I said that though unofficially I was well aware of Umar Akhun's trade with the Soviet, I had not as yet received any intimation from the Chinese auth[oritie]s that they knew and approved of his transactions; last spring the Taoyin had informed me that the Russian frontier was still strictly closed, and I had had no further intimation from him in the matter. I could not therefore do anything for U.A. without first ascertaining from the Taoyin that he approved of the transaction in question. Needless to say I have not heard again from U.A. Bai.

As a matter of fact, the Taoyin knows all about the trade which is being carried on by Umar Akhun and Bahauddin with the Vnieshtorg; indeed, it is more than likely that he is sharing in the spoils himself, probably through his son who is barrier officer at Sungek. Officially, however, the position is that recommendations for the opening of the frontier to a limited extent were submitted to the Governor last winter by the Taoyin, but no reply has been received yet. It is safe to assume that the question is the subject of the negotiations now proceeding at Urumchi between Hagelström's mission and the Governor of Sinkiang.

At the aforementioned visit U.A.B. was accompanied by a certain Muhammad Ali alias Ahmed Khodjaieff, on whom I am trying to keep an eye. This person came from Moscow in September and is well known to be on very friendly terms with certain Bolshevik Commissaries at Tashkend. He has I gather been the chief intermediary between Umar Akhun Bai and the Vnieshtorg in the wool

199. Gostorg is the abbreviation for the State Trade Agency, and Vnieshtorg for the State Agency for Foreign Trade.

transactions. He is of Kashgari origin, but was for many years in business at Hankow. It is he no doubt who has arranged for the opening of an account of U.A.B. in the Bank at the latter place. I have little doubt that U.A.B. came to me at his instigation, the idea being to obtain by a ruse the seal of this Consulate General's approval upon Umar Akhun's transactions with the Soviet.

On the Russian side, the frontier is effectively closed against all trade except that between Vnieshtorg and the two above-mentioned Kashgar merchants. Many other merchants large and small, are engaged in smuggling tea, muslin, dyes etc. across the frontier, but those consignments are frequently stopped and confiscated by the Russian frontier guards. Such goods, being mostly of English origin, are officially boycotted in Russian territory, and are (theoretically at any rate) destroyed whenever found. On such occasions the Bolshevik auth[oritie]s give out that Soviet Russia is amply supplied from its own factories with all the manufactured goods it needs [...]

[*Subsequent sections of the report deal with a Chinese proclamation of 20 October about possible restitutions for those who suffered losses due to the Russian revolution, this apparently connected with the ongoing negotiations between the Soviets and Chinese in Beijing; information on Semirech'ia, especially on the opium trade, obtained from opium merchants while he was on tour and the subject of a separate report; Soviet education and propaganda efforts and the plight of refugees who were enticed to return from Kashgaria into Soviet territory. In particular, of some interest is this:*]

(iii) Agents have also been at work among the women. In the Uch Turfan district the women are in a majority over the men and even the smallest farmers have two or three wives apiece. Moreover, they do most of the work, and are also noted for good looks. My wife, in her capacity as travelling dispensary, made the acquaintances of several of these ladies, and one and all they complained to her of the hard life they led and how much better things were for women in 'Karakoll'. I was informed by the ex-Russian Aksakal that in 1922 many hundreds of Uch Turfan women actually deserted their husbands and crossed the passes (none of which are less than 14,000 ft. high and all difficult) into Semirechia. In ten or eleven cases the outraged husbands followed them up and murdered them in their new homes; one man actually brought his wife back to Uch Turfan and killed her in his own home. He was executed for the crime during my stay at Uch Turfan. The emigration of the Uch Turfan ladies has now ceased.

[*The final sections of the report deal with the often lax application of the principles of Communism and with the operations of libraries and public readings in propaganda work.*]

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Kashgar, 4 December 1923

Yours of 25th Oct. just in – wonderfully quick. Noel Bunbury had just arrived and you and Father were getting the full benefit of Mrs. Jim's reaction to that event [...]

Poor D., she positively <u>dreads</u> the arrival of the mail from home nowadays, & each week it reduces her to more violent tears than the last. This last week has been a particularly bad one for her owing to the tragic end of the beloved cock and 13 hens that she was so proud of and looked after with such loving care [...] As I told you, I have declared war on the dogs of the neighbourhood, & I mean it. I have shot 4 already, & I've taken care to hurt 'em too, no wasting of cartridges on 'putting them out of their misery'. What is more, I'm devising means of catching them alive, & any that I get into my hands I am going to beat to death. These dogs are not real wild dogs, they're semi-wild dogs kept by the inhabitants as watch dogs & not fed, but encouraged to hunt for their livelihood. They are not true scavengers like the old Constantinople dogs were, for they hunt in packs & don't keep to their quarters.

Poor D. hasn't the heart now to go on with the ducks & the pair of geese – she has given them away because she couldn't bear to go down to the lower garden where the hens used to be.

Xmas is coming near and we have already begun to make preparations for a tree & a big children's party (mostly consisting of grown-up children, the real article being scarce). Thanks to your energy and discrimination we have a lovely selection of toys for the little Russians, besides which I have a magnificent knife about 6 inches long positively bristling with tools for the elder Poltavski boy, to console him for the loss of his mamma! I told you didn't I that poor Mrs. Poltavski died after 6 days' illness in September? Pneumonia – plus too many cigarettes. Her husband was on the Russian frontier at the time acting as intermediary between a firm of local merchants and the Soviet authorities of Ferghana. He came back post haste & arrived just too late to see his wife alive. Tho' she was a cigarette fiend & also drank a bit, Mrs. P. was a good mother and was bringing up her two boys really well – the oldest is a particularly well-behaved & unspoilt kid. For Xmas therefore the Russian community will be reduced but to make up the Swedes will be increased, for while the Gustafssons are no longer with us, there have been four new arrivals. Mr. & Mrs. Palmberg have come from Sweden to take the Gustafssons' place, and the Yangi Shahr mission, which has up to now boasted only one missionary (Mr. Persson) has been strengthened by the arrival of the latter's fiancée, Miss Larsson, and of a Mr. Törnquist. Of the new 4, three are colourless but the last named is of a different type altogether. Törnquist looks and talks exactly like an English schoolmaster or don, except that he is particularly nervous & highly-strung. Clever and alert as could be, rather unpleasant & foxy to look at, combative and argumentative. D. hated him from the outset & even I was rather repelled, but I determined not to be swayed by appearances & first impressions & paid him a long return visit at Y. Shahr where I succeeded in getting below the surface, I think. At any rate, he is human, because I find he is the even more demented photographer than I am – much more in fact, because whereas I never opened a book or journal on photography in my life, he has all the latest processes and 'jims' & 'gadgets' at his fingers' ends![200]

5 December 1923 [...]

I think I told you that I have been corresponding quite a lot with Len this year over some carpets & Chinese cloaks I have been getting for him [...] He is frightfully pleased with the 2 rugs I sent him and quite demented about one of the cloaks, an old red Yarkand embroidered one; the magnificent Peking imperial yellow dragon-embroidered mandarin's cloak rather overpowers him, I fancy, the yellow being such a very full-blooded colour, but he is taking it to Loralai on approval for his mother & sister to see. If he doesn't take it, I've told him to send it to you to await my arrival home, as it is quite possible that somebody may be ready to pay the price (£ 14) (cost price here) for a genuine Ching Dynasty imperial dragon-cloak. But what a pity that the Imperial Yellow was such a terrific colour!

Before closing I must just regale you with a couple of Ethertonisms I picked out a file only yesterday:

(A). How E. got himself made a Colonel.

(i) Telegram from Major Etherton to Sir John Jordan, Minister at Peking:

In view of appointment of Vice Consul and to increase my position (*sic*) vis à vis the Chinese authorities, I propose asking the Gov't. of India to grant me the temporary rank of Lieut. Colonel. Do you concur?

(ii) From Sir J. Jordan, Peking, to Major Etherton, Hon. C.G. Kashgar – 'I concur.'

(iii) Extract from letter sent by Major E. to the Gov't. of India:

200. John Törnquist (1876-1937) indeed was a serious photographer. An extensive collection of his photos from Xinjiang is available online at: https://collections.smvk.se/carlotta-em/web, last accessed 29 January 2025. I have used a few of them to fill in gaps in Skrine's photos for this book. He shot some video, for samples of which, see https://www.alvin-portal.org/alvin/view.jsf?pid=alvin-record%3A88753&dswid=5600, last accessed 29 January 2025.

> ...Sir John Jordan informs me that he fully concurs in the proposed step as being desirable in every way. (Italics mine)

The cream of the joke is that at the time E. was really only a captain! India, of course, took E.'s word for what Sir John Jordan said, & granted him the desired rank, which I see he still retains in correspondence, tho' he had no right to it except while C[onsul] G[eneral] Kashgar.

(B) You remember Sykes saying that he had rather liked E. & had been struck by the latter's goodness of heart because he had told Sykes all about his efforts to secure from Gov't. a reward of some kind for his clerk? Well, this is the true story. E. was 'in with' K.S. Iftikhar Ahmad the Head Clerk here, who was a pretty fair old scoundrel himself & knew all about E's goings-on. In 1920 Iftikhar Ahmad retired & petitioned for a gratuity besides his pension. E. forwarded the petition which was granted. I. Ahmad then asked for a grant of land too, which E. again forwarded; it was refused, of course. By this time, E. had realized what a desirable billet this was and how nice it would be to stay in it for several years more with which object in view he had begun his remarkable campaign of self-laudation, in season & out of season, in every telegram, dispatch, demi-official letter & diary he sent to Gov't. Here, he said to himself, was an admirable opportunity for blowing his own trumpet once more. So he returned to the charge, telegraphing to Gov't. as follows (extract)

> ... His (sc. Iftikhar Ahmad's) services have been most meritorious, particularly during the past 2 ½ years during which time he has loyally cooperated with me in my propaganda and has assisted me in calming Moslem feeling which was running high over the Turkish question. He has also assisted me in combatting many difficulties and dangers arising out of the situation in Central Asia of which it is not possible to convey any adequate conception.

Can you beat it?

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Kashgar, 11 December 1923

A very mouldy dâk this week, with not a single letter from home for either of us, although the papers have all arrived as usual. It is an exciting period of home happenings, especially for D. who is worried by not hearing how things have been progressing during the early days of Bunbury's leave, also by not having received the cablegram which B. promised to send announcing that he & Iris are safely wed. I calculate it ought to have reached Misgar well before the date on which our last mail passed that place (28th Nov.). Can it be that something has happened at the 11th hour?

I'm afraid our wedding presents to the happy pair will be pretty belated. They are: (1) from D. to Iris, 1 year's services of a good *ayah* in India (she had hoped to pass Malama on to Iris, but that remarkably efficient person is in service with a lady whom nothing will induce to part with such a treasure), (2) from both of us to Iris diamond ring with 7 stones, rose-form, Russian work, (3) from me to Iris, magnificent dark grey fox, the best I have seen in Kashgar, (4) from me to Bunbury 1 complete English saddle & bridle and accessories. This was I hope delivered to B. before he left England, but I'm afraid I ran it rather fine and it will have to be sent after him, in which case it won't reach him till long after he gets to Sandeman. I don't know what D. has given Bunbury, or whether it has reached him in time. Anyhow, I hope everybody concerned will realize how difficult it is for us in C[entral] Asia to get things done in India & Europe up to time. Your attaché case sounds most opulent and useful and I fancy it will be a blessing to Iris for many a year, like most of the nice things you have given me during the last twenty years or so! E.g., your dressing-bag (minus, it is true, the fittings which were stolen long ago) given in

1901 is at Srinagar with kit left by me there last year against my return; your leather writing case given the following year is beside me as I write, etc. etc. down to the canteen of 1912 which was in regular use till last year when we left it at Quetta with other kit and the still more magnificent ditto of 1920 which is with us here!

Nothing much is happening here just now, the weather being very cold and the passes all blocked with snow, for all except hardy and lightly-laden couriers. Surely no other large country in the world is so absolutely cut off as Kashgaria is during the winter months – Tibet perhaps, no other. Pigot, you will be interested to hear is due back here by the end of the month. We are wondering whether he realizes what he will be in for it he comes back in time for our New Year entertainments! He writes from Aksu that he has had a wonderful time and splendid sport in the Tian Shan, his chief triumph being a record head of ovis Karelini, 56 1/5 inches. He has also got an enormous ibex, 53 or 56, I forget which. I think I told you he was going to try and find tiger in the jungles of the Tarim River south of Karashahr and Kuchar (500 to 600 m. N.E. of here, about half way to the end of the river in the marshes of Lop Nor). Well, he managed with great difficulty & in spite of much obstruction by the local ambans, to find his way to the Tarim from a place called Karashahr, & he found tiger tracks, unmistakable; but the elephant grass (just like the Indian Terai, apparently) was so thick & the jungles so vast & desert that he came to the conclusion that he wouldn't have a chance of a tiger within 1 month so he quit & came up to Kuchar & thence to Aksu. At the latter place I had left letters for him telling him among other things about my experiences with the local brand of O. Karelini north of Aksu; he is much interested, and says in his letter that he is going to spend a week on the same ground before coming on to Maralbashi where he is going to have another try for tiger & stag. We are looking forward to having him again very much. He intends going from here in January to the Alai mountains to the W. of Kashgar after O[vis] Poli & returning here before starting in March down the road. Whether he will travel via Chitral or via Gilgit is at present uncertain.

Meanwhile I am hard at it clearing off arrears of work including 2 months' diary, three or four reports & (as yet uncommenced) an Annual report for '22–'23, which the G[overnment] of I[ndia] has suddenly called upon me to produce. Neither Sir G[eorge] Macartney nor Etherton ever sent in an Annual Report, & it is rather trying of Gov't. to call for one now and in future, especially as I have no Vice Consul now. Did I tell you by the way that the post of V.C. is probably being abolished?[201] The legation at Peking simply can't get men to come! added to which the expense is enormous. I have written (in reply to a request for my views) acquiescing in the abolition of the post (anything rather than another Harding!) but strongly urging Peking to second a Consular Service man for at least a year here next summer, as a very necessary assistant for my successor. This job is a touring one, & unless there are 2 officers it is difficult for the C.G. to tour especially when he is new. (I am touring this year without a V.C. as much as I did last year with one, but my successor will probably not be as demented a tourist as I am).

No news as to who is to relieve me next year as yet [...]

201. On the position of the vice-consul, the decision to abolish the position, and then to restore it, see Everest-Phillips 1991, pp. 27-29, citing in some detail the example of Harding with reference to Skrine's letters. More generally, on the difficulties the British Foreign Office began to experience in filling consular positions in China following WWI, see Coates 1988, pp. 431-452.

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[*Skrine's official diary indeed covered two months, October and November. He sent it off to India on 14 December; it arrived in printed form in London on 18 February. The excerpts here are from the printed copy sent to the India Office, BL IOLR L/P&S/10/976, P 824/1924, fols. 179-182. The annotator in London, J. A. Simpson on 21 January noted the interest of Para. 2 ('general relations of Gr. Britain, China, & Japan'), Para. 5 ('Chinese methods of extortion'), Para. 6 ('Amban's action […] in accord with the general Chinese policy in Turkestan'); Para. 9 ('Reopening of the Swedish mission'). Indeed, there is much here of interest for details about Chinese administrative issues affecting British subjects, on the Swedish mission, and on the situation involving the Ismailis in Sarikol. Skrine begins by reviewing his just-completed tour and concludes:*]

1. […] During this tour, which lasted 2 ½ months, His Majesty's Consul-General covered 1,013 miles and visited six districts, in none of which had a British Consul-General ever been seen before. With the exception of Bai (*vide* paragraph 6 below) most friendly personal relations were established with the officials in all these districts, and certain difficulties and misunderstandings, which had previously been the subject of somewhat acrimonious correspondence with the Chinese, were successfully cleared up.

2. *Japanese earthquake*.[202] – The Japanese catastrophe has been a source of much quiet satisfaction to the Tao Tai and other Chinese officials with whom His Majesty's Consul General has conversed. It is universally ascribed, of course, to the sins of the Japanese nation in general and to the infamous 'Twenty-One Demands' in particular.[203] At the Tao Tai's request, His Majesty' Consul-General sent round to the Yamen a number of 'L'Illustration' containing photographs of the horrors of Tokyo and Yokohama. The only comment the old man made on them next time he came to the Consulate was 'Surely Japan will no longer be one of the Great Powers now?'

In this connection it is perhaps worthy of mention that the one political event of the last few years which has reconciled the Chinese in this province to Great Britain and reassured them regarding our intentions is the non-renewal of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance.[204] Compared with this, the rendition of Wei-Hai-Wei and our assistance to the Chinese in the recovery of Kiao-Chau are of minor importance.

[*There is the usual longish news about Chinese officials, starting with a correction of information previously reported about the poor quality of the new Amban of Kashgar, who in fact* 'is proving himself the firmest and most energetic magistrate that has been seen at Kashgar for many a day'. *In Yarkand though (Para. 4), the administrator has figured out new ways to squeeze money out of the local merchant community, and in Kashgar (Para. 5), the Titai's wax monopoly and his forcing shop-keepers to purchase wax is creating problems. The long entry under the heading of 'British Subjects' is of some interest for what it reveals about administrative practice:*]

6. An issue of considerable importance to British Indian trade in this province was raised during His Majesty's Consul-General's visit to Bai by the action of the 3rd-class magistrate of that place in forbidding the local Qazis to seal bonds taken by British subjects from Chinese subjects for trade debts. A complaint was received from a British subject that the Chief Qazi had refused to seal the bond of a local shop-keeper who had bought some cloth from him on credit, with the result that he (the British subject) had had to cancel the sale. His Majesty's Consul-General interviewed the Qazi, and was informed that only four days previously the magistrate had summoned the Qazis of the place and had informed them that orders had come from the Governor that they were not to seal bonds brought to them by British subjects 'in order', the Magistrate said, 'to prevent international cases arising'. His

202. The earthquake on 1 September 1923, which hit in the Tokyo-Yokahama area and generated a huge tsunami, had a magnitude of 7.9 on the Richter scale and is estimated to have killed more than 140,000 people.

203. The 'Twenty-One Demands' refers to Japanese demands for special privileges in China, 18 January 1915. The Chinese were forced to acceed to this ultimatum, the humiliating concessions confirmed in a series of treaties.

204. See https://www.britannica.com/topic/Anglo-Japanese-Alliance, last accessed 29 January 2025.

Majesty's Consul-General went at once to the magistrate and politely remonstrated, whereupon the magistrate stoutly denied having given any such order; but when requested to order the Qazi in question to seal the British subject's bond, he refused. Next day he summoned the Qazi and the Chinese subject who had given the bond and threw them both into jail.

It was now perfectly clear (1) that the Amban had really given the objectionable order; (2) that he had imprisoned the Qazi for betraying the fact to the British Consul-General; (3) that he had imprisoned the Chinese subject as a warning to local shop-keepers not to deal with British subjects. His Majesty's Consul-General accordingly paid another visit to the Amban and said that unless the latter without further delay ordered the Qazi to seal the bond for the British subject, he, the Consul-General, would be forced to believe that the Amban supported the Qazi in his action, and it would be necessary to refer the matter to the Taoyin. Towards the end of the interview the Amban, who is a man of low birth and without manners, completely lost his temper, shouted and stormed and finally himself terminated His Majesty's Consul-General's visit by practically 'showing him the door'.

There was nothing but for His Majesty's Consul-General to leave Bai and place the matter in the hands of the Taoyin. It would be highly inadvisable to let the matter drop, for the following reason. The Chinese do not admit any bond as evidence in a debt case unless it has been sealed by a Qazi. It is therefore practically impossible to recover a debt through a Chinese court without such a bond, and if British subjects are to be deprived of the means of obtaining such bonds from their debtors, they will be unable to rely on the Chinese courts. This will seriously affect their trade, for cash is seldom paid by retailers to wholesale merchants in this country. His Majesty's Consul-General had previously received reports from the British Aksakal at Keriya of similar order given by the Amban to the Qazis there, and has reason to believe that they emanate from the Governor, whose object is to make things as difficult as possible for Mussalman traders who are British subjects and thereby induce them to change their nationality [...]

Foreign subjects.

9. *Swedish mission agitation* [...]

A reply was received from His Majesty's Minister on 16th October to the effect that the Swedish Chargé d'Affaires was urging the Chinese Government to instruct the authorities at Urumchi and Kashgar to cancel the orders prohibiting the re-opening of the Swedish mission here. The Swedish Chargé d'Affaires 'advised the missionaries to use their own judgment regarding activities and to consult the British Consul-General privately'.

After consultation with His Majesty's Consul-General on his return from tour, the missionaries decided to re-open the mission in all its branches and see what happened; this was accordingly done on 1st December. As was expected there has been no fresh outcry from the mullas nor any sign of popular discontent, nor have the Chinese authorities on their part made any move. On the other hand, the eleven converts, whom Wei Amban imprisoned when the agitation took place, are still in confinement, and so long as this outward and visible sign of official disapproval exists, the mission cannot be expected to make much progress among the timid inhabitants of this country. The Taoyin when tackled on the subject stoutly maintains that the eleven persons are not and never have been Christians and that the mission had, therefore, no right to claim their release; this, however, is demonstrably false, for the mission can prove that they were baptized in the presence of a large congregation on Easter day. It is to be hoped that the Swedish Chargé d'Affaires has been impressing this fact upon the Chinese Government and is demanding the release of the converts.

10. The following Swedish missionaries arrived in Sinkiang *viâ* India and Leh in October:

(1) Mr. Palmberg.
(2) Mrs. Palmberg.
(3) Mr. Tornquist.
(4) Miss Larssen.
(5) Mr. Anderson.

Numbers 1 and 2 are posted to Kashgar Old City; numbers 3 and 4 to Kashgar New City and number 5 to Yarkand.

11. *Local affairs*. There has been an exceptionally heavy snowfall on all the passes across the mountains surrounding Kashgaria, and many are already blocked. A pilgrim caravan, which attempted to cross the Karakoram to Ladakh a few weeks ago was caught in the snow and 17 persons are reported to have perished. The Chitral route, however, is still open; several returning Hajis have arrived within the last few days and others are preparing to start on pilgrimage by the same route.

12. *Sarikol*. There are indications that the new Amban is anti-British and probably under Bolshevik influence. (i) As reported in Kashgar diary for August, paragraph 3, an agent of the Agha Khan has been collecting tithes from the Maulais of Sarikol. This came to the ears of the Amban, who summoned the Chief Maulai Pir Imam Dad, abused him, spat on his face and charged him not only with being secretly a British subject and sending tribute to the Viceroy but with plotting to hand over Sarikol to the British. Refusing to listen to any explanations, he threw the Pir into prison and had closed his yamen to all Maulais, whom he sneeringly advises to seek the aid of their masters, the British.

There are obvious difficulties in the way of His Majesty's Consul-General taking up a matter like this officially, and he has, therefore, contented himself for the time being with sending a verbal message to the Maulais through the British Aksakal at Tashkurghan, advising them to send a deputation to Kashgar to petition the Tao Tai for the release of their Pir, in which case His Majesty's Consul-General may be able to assist them.

(ii) The Amban has been doing his best to evict the British Aksakal from the house he occupies at Tashkurghan. This house was built in 1904 on the land of one Maulan Qul by the Officer Commanding Tashkurghan, at the expense of the Kashgar Consulate; the arrangement between Sir George Macartney and the Taoyin of the time being that the British Government should have the house rent-free for 24 years, after which the house would belong to Maulan Qul who would thenceforward receive a fixed rental from the British Government for house and land together. At the instigation of the Amban, Maulan Qul has claimed possession of the house and has several times lately abused and treatened the Brtish Aksakal, and has been telling everybody that he never agreed to let the British Aksakal have the place rent-free, etc. etc. He is also said to have informed the Aksakal that he had petitioned the Tao Tai who had told him to take the house from the British Aksakal by force if necessary.

His Majesty's Consul-General spoke to the Taoyin about the matter on 3rd December and furnished him with a copy of the written agreement about the house signed by the former Tao Tai in 1904. It is quite possible that the yamen copy of the agreement has been lost and that the Chinese were unaware of the terms on which the British Government held the house. But it is at least curious that no question should ever have been raised or objection made by Maulan Qul until the arrival of the present Amban.

[*The diary concludes with a report on a big shipment of Afghan opium brought across the mountains by a large band of smugglers. Some was intercepted; the rest made it through to Yarkand and other towns.*]

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Kashgar, 19 December 1923

Your letter, with enclosure from Father, dated 1st Nov. was particularly interesting because of the particulars given of Sir G. Macartney's call. What a pity you weren't in yourself. Never mind, let us hope he will come again next time he is in town. I fancy he is a bit of a recluse, however, & doesn't leave his beloved Jersey often. He sems to have given Father a lot of information in the time, but to have been chiefly concerned with explaining the position as regards financing the Kashgar Treasury [...]

I would have been interested to hear how Sir George struck Father. I have always rather wondered whether his Chinese mother didn't somewhat detract from his value as an administrator, while it added to his capacity in negotiations with the Chinese. His work on the judicial side here was 'kachcha' [imperfect or makeshift – *DW*] in the extreme. Many cases I have nowadays date from his day and may be directly attributed to slackness or ignorance of law on his part. It was perhaps the less important, at any rate the less showy, side of his duties here – but I wish he had paid more attention to it.

Etherton has I see been given a further extension on 'M.C.' of 4 months – he has already had 4 months – which means I fancy that the departmental enquiry is to be at the India Office, and that he will not come out to India again. He made so much money during his 4 years here that I can well understand his being ready to retire from the Army. It remains to be seen whether they allow him to do so. I confess I wouldn't be sorry if something was done to prevent him from continuing to pose for the rest of his days as a 'great Central Asian Consul' & an expert on matters connected with this part of the world. If he were really an expert, I wouldn't mind so much; but as I know only too well from having had to succeed him & read practically every word he wrote officially from here, he is a complete humbug, & his knowledge of and insight into, Central Asian problems is of the shallowest and most journalistic order. What can you expect of a man without education or training, to say nothing of birth?

Now to pleasanter subjects – I have three bits of good news for you.

(1) […] [*Details on shooting more of the Kashgar wild dogs in the consulate garden.*] I killed three and put charges of shot into two more which will make them think a bit. It was a great night – & the best was when I shot the biggest and nastiest of the lot at the very window of D.'s room on the terrace, a most suitable ending for one of the murderers of her chickens over which she had wept so many tears.

(2) You remember I sent my collection of skins last year to Tientsin for sale instead of to you as you found the London dealers so unsympathetic? [...] The dealer at Tientsin snapped up the lot when they reached him last month, at a price which you may be sure leaves him a good profit in re-sale but which gives me one of nearly 50%! And the joke is that probably many of those same skins will go to London & be bought at higher rates by the same crew of London dealers who offered you prices like 6/- for a wolf & 15/- for a marten.

I can't help smiling, I must say. These are some of the average prices my skins realized:

Red fox	£ 1 " 12
Grey fox	£ 1 " 0
Wolf	£ 2 " 0
Lynx	£ 2 " 0
Martens	£ 1 " 10

The martens I sent were a mixed lot, as I foolishly bought two or three lots of 15 or 20 skins in order to get some good ones as I thought cheap. Even on the martens, however, I didn't lose [...]

(3) I sent you a copy of the letter I wrote to Sir Ronald Macleay about Harding in August. I was a little anxious about the result, for I knew Macleay had been at Peking before & from what Harding was always impressing on us about his influence at the Legation, I thought it possible that Macleay was an admirer of his like the rest. However, needn't have worried. I enclose Sir Ronald's reply in original [*see above, pp. 354-355*]. Apart from his more-than-sympathy with me about H., which has cheered me up not a little, you may imagine – isn't it a nice letter? What is particularly pleasing about it is that the only previous private letter I received from him was couched in rather formal terms & had obviously been typed by a secretary. I shall certainly keep a look-out for Sir Ronald when we're home on leave. I think he's a friend. His quoting Dickens is very much in his favour – you're generally safe with people who quote Dickens.[205]

The great excitement this week is the introduction of Association Football (what you called in one of your letters to me at Winchester 'soccer', much to my delight) into the Consulate. The ball, complete with two bladders, came more than a fortnight ago, & we were delighted, D. wanting to start the boys on it that afternoon & I demanding it for the chaprassis and dâkchies. But when we came to blow it up, it was found that the only bicycle-pump Kashgar boasts (which we borrowed for the occasion) wasn't any use at all, being old & wheezy & quite incapable of inflating a quarter of the ball! Efforts were made to repair the pump, but in vain. Meanwhile having as powerful lungs as most people, I blew the ball up sufficiently for D. and her 'Boy Scouts' to be able to play with it, and I refereed at two or three of her games. The boys took to it like ducks to water. The next effort I made to inflate the footer properly was to get hold of an old motor-pump (you can get almost anything in Kashgar; Dockray got a high-pressure volt-meter in the bazaar when his one at the wireless station broke!) But alas! tho' the compression of the pump was excellent, there was no tube! It then struck me that a bellows would be a good thing to use, & I had a pair made by the local carpenter according to carefully-drawn diagrams. After much delay the bellows were completed. Again, alas! the compression was too weak, and bellowing full blast I wasn't able to blow the ball up even as tight as I had with my own lungs. Finally, as a last resort, I begged the owner of the motor pump to let me have it again, & without telling him I had a metal tube soldered on to the orifice, in place of the missing rubber one. This time, cheers! the ball was inflated fully in about thirty seconds & I carefully removed the tube & all traces of solder and returned the pump to the unsuspecting owner. Soccer was now possible for grown-ups, and a trial game, six a side, was played in the yard which contains the (mud) tennis-court last Monday, between times captained by old Ghulam Mohammed, the jemadar of the orderlies, on one side and Ahmad Bakhsh, our 'tugra' little head khit from Delhi, on the other. The excitement & fun were enormous. The Hunza men were the best by a long way but the others entered thoroughly into the fun of the game & kicked & shoved and fouled and ran wildly hither & thither & shouted & yelled like Trojans. Several players received 'hacks', including Ahmad Bakhsh, who performed his duties next day with a limp of which he was obviously tremendously proud, but nobody minded & I was glad to say there was no quarrelling. I had a busy time as referee & tho' there were about 20 degrees of frost going on at the time (4–5 P.M.) I was almost 'giving off' (as they say in the servants' hall) at the end, more especially as I had no whistle and had sometimes to intervene in person with considerable violence to stop play after a

205. Of course this is a quaint way of measuring the qualities of one's professional associates. Would Skrine have changed his opinion of Alfred Lyall, the prominent G. of I. official of the 19th century whose reputation he very much admired, had he known that Lyall, a voracious reader, once wrote his mother with a request she send him Macaulay and Michelet and "'any other good new book" unless it was written by Dickens'? For he considered that Dickens 'had been 'going backwards ever since "Pickwick"' and [was] 'unable to write anything but broad farce' (Gilmour 2006, p. 84).

particularly obvious 'hands' or foul. That day there were far more candidates for football than there was room for in the yard, so next day I had an eleven-a-side game on the field not far from the Consulate, where there was at least twice as much room – tho' the 'ground' is still not nearly big enough. Already, after only 2 games the men are learning the rules & don't handle the ball nearly as much as they did at first, & tho' they have no idea of 'passing' or tactics of any kind, they understand that it doesn't always pay to kick the ball in front of you as hard as you can whenever it comes to you.

The cable from Iris and Bunbury 'Love from Mr. and Mrs. Sam' arrived on Monday & we were both much relieved – D. of course was overjoyed as she has been the match-maker in this case [...]

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Kashgar, 27 December 1923

I haven't time for much this week, as we are all very busy over Xmas festivities, on top of which Gen. Pigot has suddenly returned, several days earlier than was expected. I am also still in arrears with my office work, my Annual Report which I promised to send in before the end of the year not being even begun yet, while I am in the middle of negotiations with the Tao Tai on the thorny question of the registration of British subjects [...] I am thankful to say that I heard recently officially from the Minister at Peking and the Gov't. of India to the effect that the Home Gov't. approved my suggestions for a settlement of the question and did not agree with Harding.

You ought to have been at our Christmas party this year. It was huge success. D. had taken no end of trouble over the tree, and even I had helped a bit, and I assure you the effect was magnificent. D. had imported a lot of Xmas tree stars and tinsel flowers etc. from India, and we had also made a lot of things, besides which we had about 60 candles on it. Thirty-seven guests came including 5 Chinese and 5 Russian children. After a terrific blow-out on cakes mostly baked and iced by Doris, at four large tables lit by candles decorated with flower-painted shades of D's manufacture, we all moved into the drawing-room where the big tree was. Shortly afterwards the sound of sleigh-bells was heard in the distance, gradually approaching; then a banging on a side-door, at which I shouted 'Who's there?' in Russian specially learnt for the occasion. 'The Father of Ice' (['*Ded Moroz*' – Father Frost – *DW*] Russian equivalent of Father Xmas) came the reply, and in staggered a decrepit but striking figure in a red robe with a white (cotton-wool) beard reaching to the ground, carrying a sack. Huge delight, mixed with a little nervousness, on the part of the children, most of whom had never seen Father Xmas before. We had provided presents for every guest, child or grown-up, a matter of some difficulty in spite of the most welcome parcel of children's presents sent by you. D. gave the ladies silks and bits of lace etc., while I turned out some enlargements of my best negatives and mounted them for some of the men, and devised 'rag' presents for others. E.g., I gave the Russian doctor Yalovenko a saw with 'For Operations' on a vast label in Russian and English, the reference being to a successful operation he recently carried out (entirely without any theatre or hospital appliances usually regarded as essential for major operations) when he amputated a man's leg, a feat of which he is very proud; to old Krassavine, whose hobby is poultry-keeping, I gave a live duck, to the enthusiastic photographer Tornquist a tin of hypo, and so on. After Father Xmas (which part was taken by Doucovitch[206] who quite entered into the

206. Apparently Spiridon Vasil'evich Dukovich, who had been the director of the Kulja (Ghulja/Yining) branch of the Russo-Asian Bank in the Ili Valley and for a time headed a commission dedicated to the concerns of the Russian immigrants who lived there (see Abdullaev 2009, p. 281). Skrine earlier mentioned Mme. Dukovitch; so it seems that the couple had moved to Kashgar, perhaps forced to leave Kulja.

spirit of it) had finished we played musical chairs, several rounds, and afterwards other games. In these the best value among all the guests was the 10-year-old son of the Chinese Mint-master, Lu. This lad is a perfect treasure; beautiful manners and quite unspoilt, in spite of being preternaturally precocious – he speaks both Russian and Turki perfectly, and is invaluable as an interpreter on these occasions, besides which he enters with the utmost zest into every game and what is more, takes trouble to explain them to the other children. In fact, it's quite delightful to watch him looking after the wee Chinese kids and even the smaller Russian ones. His little sister, whom I had not seen before is awfully sweet, so are the three tiny tots that Mr. Tao, the Secretary to the Taoyin for For[eign] Aff[air]s brought. Two small boys whom we had particularly hoped to see at the party were the young Pol[t]avskys. You remember their mother died quite suddenly in September. The poor little beggars have since then been out at Sungek on the Russian frontier with their father, in the midst of ice and snow, and the three of them were expected in for the 25th as matter of course, for though the Russian Xmas isn't for another 14 days, Poltavsky must have known that there would be a Xmas tree at the Consulate, and he had said in a letter to Yalovenko that although he hadn't much stomach for Xmas festivities himself, he didn't want the children to miss them as they were too small to take in the loss of their mother. However, tho' we had extra good presents for the children on purpose, they didn't appear and we heard next day that Poltavsky and the children had arrived at 5 P.M. Xmas afternoon, just too late to come to the party.

On Boxing Day[207] took place the great Exhibition Match between the Staff and the Orderlies on one side and The World on the other. I played centre half and also refereed! The Mir Munshi and the Indian doctor were the other two halves, and right nobly did they play up, hoofing the leather (as the football reporters say) with the utmost elan whenever they got within reach of it. The Accountant who tho' young is fat and lazy, kept goal, while the backs and forwards were all orderlies, beefy Hunza men mostly. I made the mistake of having the goal posts too near together, with the result that nobody succeeded in scoring a goal on either side even tho' we played extra time with the goals double width, so the boxes of cigarettes I had ready for presentation by D. to the winning team weren't won; but as we are consequently going to play the match over again on Saturday, everybody is delighted! You've no idea how keen the men are! especially the Hunza men, who are obviously born soccer-players, tho' none of them had ever seen a football before in their lives. If ever I'm P[olitical] A[gent] Gilgit, as I hope and pray to be one day, I shall certainly introduce football into Hunza and Nagar. I'd give anything to see a match between representative teams of those two States – the only thing is that a whole possee of referees would be required, preferably armed, to keep the game from developing into a free fight! As soon as I have time I'm going to write an account of the introduction of soccer into Kashgar for the 'Draconian,' including the difficulty I had in blowing the football up which will amuse them at Lynam's.[208]

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207. 'Boxing Day is a holiday celebrated on the day following Christmas Day, when servants and tradesmen would traditionally receive gifts known as a "Christmas box" from their masters, employers or customers' (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boxing_Day, last accessed 7 May 2016).

208. The reference here is to the Oxford Preparatory School (a.k.a. The Dragon School), in which Clarmont was enrolled in autumn 1900. Its headmaster was C. C. Lynam; hence the appellation 'Lynam's', and there was a school magazine titled *The Draconian*, founded by several of the former students (Old Dragons) who, as Clarmont would, had gone on to Winchester and then the University of Oxford. The journal was a vehicle for keeping in touch with other Old Dragons. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dragon_School, and https://skipperswar.com/the-draconian/, both last accessed 27 August 2024. As Desmond Devitt (then Registrar at the school) kindly informed me in an e-mail 4 March 2003, 'there are quite a few articles and letters' from Skrine in *The Draconian* from 1906-1936. So it is possible Skrine did send in his article about soccer. I did not follow up on Mr. Devitt's information to check.

Pigot is looking very fit and has had a most successful trip. As I have told you he is the most modest of men and belittles everything he has done and the difficulties he has gone through, but the ground he has covered and the visible signs of his prowess with the rifle, in the shape of simply magnificent heads of Ovis Karelini (including a record, 56 ½ in.) ibex and wapiti speak for themselves. We had the utmost difficulty in persuading him to be our guest again during his present stay, but we succeeded, and now he will I hope be here for two or three weeks before starting out again for a month's shoot after Ovis Poli on the Bokharan border, the edge of the Russian Pamirs, 1 January. He wants me to come with him, and I would give anything to be able to, but I have too much work to get through before going on my long tour to Ker[i]ya in the spring [...]

P. S. [...] Great excitement at the Consulate of the Election news, just come! What an ass Baldwin is – from the Parliamentary point of view. But I'm not nearly so afraid of a labour Gov't. than I was. Ramsay Macd[onald] is a good man, & knows something about India having been on the P[ublic] Services Comm[issio]n.[209]

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[*Skrine's letters home filed as BL IOLR, MS EurF154/10 begin here. The first letter is of particular interest for its information on the genesis of his* CCA.]

Kashgar, 3 January 1924

This week has been a truly Kashgarian whirl of gaiety, or rather entertainments, and it isn't over yet by any means. I told you last week about the Xmas party we gave. Last Saturday came a 'burra khana' at the Swedish Mission, at which who do you think were the ladies on my right and left respectively? Mrs. Palmberg, who is so shy and knows so little English (and no Turki) that she hardly uttered the whole meal; and – Doris! The Swedes have an extraordinary habit of placing husband and wife together at dinner parties, it seems. On D's other side was Mr. Tornquist from Yangi Shahr; we call him the 'Twister' rather a good name, invented by Gen. Pigot; as he is a bete noire of D's, having taken Harding's place (almost) as the pro-Bosh, pro-Bolshevik and general arch-fiend of Asia, I expected the fur to fly. However, all went well except for a flare-out of D's when the Twister said to [her] 'Surely you're not an Imperialist?' This sort of reflection on the British Empire always infuriates the patriotic D., and I had to intervene with a view to preventing a breach of the peace. [*marginal note:* Two days later we all 3 went to the Tao Tai's New Year banquet at the Yamen – the usual terrible affair with quantities of sharks' fin & fish entrails & sea slugs & flat sweet 'sparkling' Moselle.] Next night came our own big dinner, a terrible affair of 22 covers and some nine courses. The best of dry fizz flowed like water in a vain attempt to make the function a gay one, but in vain. The language difficulty alone makes these functions almost impossible socially, added to which neither the Chinese nor the Russians, most of them, have any 'social conscience' and are perfectly content to sit throughout a long meal without a word beyond occasional remarks in an undertone to the nearest of their compatriots. At our dinner, for example, Mrs. Yalovenko on my left and Mrs. Anohin on my right carried on an animated but barely audible conversation in Russian across me half the time, a fact which rather cramped my efforts to make conversation with them and with the neighbouring Chinese through Chu. Matters were made still worse by the Hsieh Tai (O[fficer] C[ommanding] Kashgar) who sat on Mrs. Anohin's right being taken ill about the fish and bolting from the room. Solicitous enquiries on my part revealed the fact that the

209. The selection of Ramsay MacDonald (1866-1937) as the first Labour Party prime minister in Britain's history, replacing the Conservative leader Stanley Baldwin, was indeed major news.

gallant officer was being violently sick in the veranda, and that he put it down to my champagne! As he had come unwell (having in fact been thoroughly upset by the Tao Tai's dinner – and dope – the night before), had eaten nothing at our table and had drunk two or three glasses on an empty stomach, his theory was probably the correct one. He did not return to table, which rather knocked the bottom out of the gaiety at our end of the table. However, D. was better off at her distant end and reported afterwards that the Tao Tai did himself very well. I always give her the cheeriest and best English-speakers of the foreign community at her end, because unlike the Chinese she has a very strongly-developed social conscience and takes it out of herself frightfully trying to make a party 'go' conversationally.

Last night again we had to trail round to the Hsieh Tai's yamen (unfortunately he had recovered sufficiently to give his dinner) and wade through a complete Chinese meal. We let Pigot off this time and allowed him to stay at home with an imaginary headache, as we thought he had had a sufficient lesson about the way we earn our pay in these sort of jobs. He admitted he had had no idea of the social trials we have. He is not a great conversationalist himself, and he said that in spite of the climate and the opportunities for sport, he no longer envies me my job as was inclined to do before! However, thank goodness only one more party, that given by the Ambans of the New and Old Cities, and then no more Chinese parties for quite a long time I hope. The next thing will be the Russian New Year parties – they're worse than the Chinese in some ways, as the food is over-plentiful and very indigestible.

This week I am sending you quite a lot of things. First, no less than 44 enlargements, none of which I think you have seen before. They are all numbered and a list is enclosed, so you will have no difficulty in identifying them. Then there is a parcel of three very fine foxes (red) [...]

How very nice of Miss Sykes to give Methuen's my name as a possible successor of E. V. Lucas![210] I wonder whether anything will come of it. I'm afraid if they want a book in the Lucas style they'll have to send E.V. to Kashgar to write it. I wish they would! Anything more different from Lucas's style than mine, I can't conceive. I could no more write in his delightful, kindly, humourous, fanciful style than I could compose an ode to a Ming Emperor in Chinese. However, if it's just a well-illustrated travel-book they want, with politics cut right out, I may be able to deliver the goods. Let us see if they write to me, and if so, what they say. I may ask you to send round some of my last two big lots of enlargements to them to look at; they are all numbered, and you will have no difficulty in picking out the ones I w[oul]d like them to see. It is really most kind of Miss Ella, and whether I click with Methuen's or no I shall certainly write to her as nicely as I know how, and possibly send her a few martens or something. By the way, I've ordered 'E. S. Stevens'' book,[211] it looks most attractive from the notices. Have you read the new Bolivian buried treasure book by Prodgers?[212] You ought to, it's all as true and matter-of-fact and amazing as could be.

Funny, when you wrote your last letter but one you were just about to meet V. Scott O'Connor and Sir E. Cook, both of whom said they knew me (tho' they don't), but in your last you don't say anything

210. Edward Verrall Lucas (1868-1938), a prolific essayist and humorist, wrote a series of popular 'Wanderer' travel books whose appeal to the modern reader may now be somewhat difficult to appreciate. He was a reader for Methuen's and then became head of that publisher in 1924.

211. Ethel Stefana Drower neé Stevens (1879-1972), a cultural anthropologist, focused on the Middle East. Probably Skrine has in mind here her *By Tigris and Euphrates* (London: Hurst & Blackett, 1923).

212. Cecil Herbert Prodgers (d. 1924), an Andean explorer who attempted to find a fabled hoard of gold that may in fact have been a hoax. He wrote about his explorations in *Adventures in Bolivia* (1922), which is probably the book Skrine had read. See esp. Daniel Buck, 'Atahualpa's Ransom & Other Treasure Fables,' *Peruvian Times*, 26 August 2011 (http://www.peruviantimes.com/26/atahualpas-ransom-other-treasure-fables/13455/, last accessed 7 May 2016).

about them. I have just been reading the former's excellent articles on Morocco in the *Times of India*; really good stuff they are, and the most wonderful pictures.[213]

It's very late and I have still a lot to do before I go to bed in order to get the dak off tomorrow early. Having a guest like Pigot is extraordinarily pleasant, but it doesn't conduce to the disposal of work.

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HM's Consulate General, Kashgar, 8 January 1924

A mere line this week for besides having Gen. Pigot still, we're not clear of Xmas & New Year feasting yet. Only last night Pigot and I (D. having caught a providential cold & being in bed with a sore throat to her great joy) were subjected to a Russian Xmas dinner at the Bank. We didn't sit down to table till 9:15 & got up from it at 11:15. Russian dinners are always trying with their habit of having not only the zakouska [*Russ.*: hors-d'oeuvres – *DW*] but four or five equally indigestible courses before the soup & several more courses of intensely tough meat after it, followed by very sweet and creamy puddings. Poor Poltavsky was there, the one who I told you lost his wife suddenly from pneumonia in September. He has been for 6 months at Sungek, 5 marches up in the Tian Shan to the north, on the frontier where he has been acting as intermediary between a Turki firm of merchants and the Bolos; & whether it's grief at loss of his wife (to whom he was devoted) or meagre fare at 10,000 ft. but he's lost 2 ½ stone since I saw him last & looks a different man. Still as cheery at parties as ever; he and I talked across the table in Turki throughout dinner (as there was no one else I could talk to) & he was full of stories and jokes. [*See below.*]

Pigot is off on Saturday to the Chinese Pamirs up the Gez Dara to Bulunkul and thence along the Russian frontier to the W. and N.W. in search of poli. We are going out for the week-end with him to a place called Borokhotai which is on his way, & staying there a couple of nights partly for a change of air for D. who has a cold & partly to have a pop at the duck which are said to be there in millions. Apropos of travels I am sending you this week what you have been clamouring for (justifiably) for months, namely a map.[214] It's a map issued by the General Staff, & strictly speaking I suppose I oughtn't to send it out of official circles – but it's on a very small scale and not really a bit secret or confidential, & it'll make a lot of difference to your following our tours if it interests you to do so. I've marked our journeyings up to date in red and the frontiers in blue for you

I [...] am rather short of time – especially as I have got off a record amount of cypher telegram this week, 4 big ones aggregating about 500 groups. [...]

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[*Apparently one of the telegrams on which he was working concerned a new proposal by the Chinese to open postal service via Irkeshtam (the border crossing) to Osh, at the head of the of the Ferghana valley. In his No. 16, dated 10 January (copied in BL IOLR L/P&S/11/233), Skrine wrote:*]

213. Vincent Clarence Scott O'Connor (1869-1945) was a prolific author of illustrated travel books, including ones on Burma and Kashmir. His book *A Vision of Morocco: The Far West of Islam* was published in 1923. Probably Skrine was reading illustrated excerpts published in the weekly magazine of the *Times of India*, a source which so far we have been unable to search. The reference to 'Sir E. Cook' is mystifying, since the well-known journalist and author of biographies, Sir Edward Tyas Cook, had died in 1919. Perhaps 'meet' in this case is metaphoric for an intention to read one of his books.

214. This map (or a very similar second copy) probably is the one we reproduce below [*Fig. 364a*], which with some alterations apparently was later used by *L'Illustration* to produce a simplified version for the article by Charles Rabot that was illustrated by Skrine's photos.

The proposal (of which no secret is made) is the more surprising in that the frontier is still strictly closed from both sides. It is possible that the Hagelström Mission at Urumchi, who have been negotiating with the Governor of Sinkiang for the opening of trade relations between Russia and Chinese Turkestan, have also been in communication with the Postal Commissioner on the subject.

[*He goes on to say that the Kashgar postal Commissioner had gone on tour as far as Khotan, apparently to investigate the possibility of opening the route to Leh. Skrine enclosed copies of the correspondence between the Urumqi and the Kashgar postmasters, the one in Kashgar, James S. Chu, laying out for Cavaliere in Urumqi in a letter dated 18 November 1923 details of the feasibility of the Irkeshtam (Ierhkoszetang) route which we published earlier (p. 244) with other documents about the postal connections.*]

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[*Field Diary, pp. 26-27*]

8 January 1924. Poltavsky told me (in Turki) last night at dinner at the Amban's the latest joke against Krassavine. K. & Yalovenko are great rivals over their sporting dogs. Neither dog ever retrieves anything, but K. at any rate is always full of hope & 'trains' his dog. The other day K. was in the bazar with it when a Turki passed carrying two ducks. The dog grabbed one of them from the man's hand & bolted down the street followed by a hue & cry. The other Russians congratulated K. warmly when he came back & asked him why he bothered to go out shooting up the river when his dog is so good at retrieving ducks in the bazaar!

Tao sent his watch round this morning with a message to ask me to set it by mine, so that I would know when to expect him and the Tao Tai who were due to call at 2 P.M. I of course set mine by his & returned it. A good idea & shows what a difficulty the time is here. Whenever we meet the Chinese officials, we always set our watches together. The only person who can get the correct solar time here is Yalovenko, who has a portable sun-dial. That at the Consulate was put up by Etherton, & as usual is mainly for show & it is placed in the middle of the terrace & looks all right, but is hidden by the shadow of the house during 6 months or more!

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Kashgar, 16 January 1924

Your letter of 22nd Nov. with its delightful description of the Maharaja's[215] dinner party in the bus made us both roar. What a perfectly priceless idea! Has anyone ever thought of having a dinner party in a bus before? And so practical too. You had an awkward journey which had to be taken just at dinner time. So you dined on the journey – what could be more sensible? Such an arrangement appeals strongly to my time-saving mind. I will keep the historic menu most carefully. How good the Maharaja is to his old friends! [...]

I have heard from Methuen's about the book they want as a result of Miss Sykes' kind recommendation. They say 'a good new book of travel and description on Central Asia' on the plan of EVL's 'Wanderers' books & 'is to bring in items of historical, archaeological & artistic interest in a light almost chatty manner'.

Not a word about pictures, you see. Now the chance is too good a one to lose, and I am going to do my best to secure the commission, but I'm so convinced of the importance of good photos in a travel book & have such a large selection of my own to choose from, that I'm not going to write for Methuen if they bar photos. Personally (and I think most people will say the same) when I pick up a travel book at the shop I first look through the pictures. If they please or interest me, I then look thro' the list of

215. Presumably the Maharaja of Jhalawar, H.H. Sir Bhawani Singh Bahadur (1874-1929), with whom Frank Skrine had become acquainted when on service in Bengal and whom he later helped when the Maharaja was in England. See Stewart, *Envoy*, p. 217, n. 13.

chapter-headings. If that sounds promising (and there's a lot in good chapter names!) I read a page or two, to see if my perhaps too fastidious taste can stand the style, after which I think about buying the book or not. Pictures first, you notice. No doubt, if you happen to be an E.V.L. or a Kinglake or a Borrow,[216] you can write a book which doesn't need pictures – but 999 travel books out of a 1000, including my prospective one, do need them, most decidedly. I'm going to say so to Methuen's in a letter shortly & I will at the same time ask you to be so kind as to send round to them the 49 enlargements acknowledged by you in your letter of 22 November 1923, or as many of them as you have together with any others which have descriptions with them you think fit. I'll tell Methuen's I am having sent to them a lot of pictures & will ask them (if they don't bar photos) to choose out which they think will interest the public most and let me know. But don't do anything till you hear again from me. They ask me for a 'specimen chapter or so'; I'm afraid I can't possibly write one for them while I'm single handed here – the earliest start I can make is on the ship going Home – all I can do is to send them stuff I've already written. Here again you could help me. In Feb. 1917 – I think the date was the 17th but I'm not sure – the 'Times' published a short article of mine in just the style I fancy Methuen's want – sort of reflections on arrival at Kerman.[217] I have no copy of this article, & I wonder if you could look through the file of the 'Times' for Feb. 1917 either at the publishers' or at the British Museum, find the article (it's not signed, but it's unmistakeable) & get from the Times office a copy of the number? You will probably have to pay 2/6 for it, which please chalk up against me – when you hear from me, send the number with the article marked, to Methuen's along with the enlargements.

I'm as usual giving you a lot of trouble, darling Mum, but it'll be a real help with Methuen's if you would do this. I'm sure I can write them a book they'll publish & one that (if there are enough pictures!) will be a success – but one has got to impress the publishers with the same conviction, a much more difficult matter. I haven't yet decided whether to offer Methuen's to write about Persia & possibly Baluchistan as well as this country, or only about this country. Possibly the latter alternative would be best, from the point of view of artistic unity – one could draw interesting parallels & comparisons with Persia etc. without actually writing about it. One of my chief advantages in writing about this country will be my familiarity with Persian life language & scenery.

Last week end we pushed out to a place called Borokhotai on the Tashmalik road, 25 m. from here, accompanying Pigot on his first march to the snowy Pamirs. It was bitterly cold & we were thankful that

216. Alexander William Kinglake (1809-91), best known for a multi-volume history of the Crimean War, also was a popular travel writer, whose first book concerned his journey to the Middle East in the 1830s (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_William_Kinglake, last accessed 13 May 2016). George Henry Borrow (1803-81) wrote travelogues mainly about Europe. He spent time in Russia supervising for the British and Foreign Bible Society a translation of the Bible into Manchu; while there he met the famous Russian poet Alexander Pushkin. He also worked for the Bible Society in Spain. His empathy for the Roma was unusual for his times (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Borrow, last accessed 13 May 2016).

217. "In a Persian City" (1917). The article is datelined Kerman, Dec. 8. To give a sense of what Skrine had in mind here about narrative style, the article opens:

> For many days past I have been travelling at the slow, dignified pace of the Eastern camel caravan over broad, sweeping plains and range after range of wild mountains. Now at last I have come to Kerman, most renowned of the cities of East Persia, and am resting in the enjoyment of civilized surroundings and the consciousness of a goal attained. The spell of the desert road is still upon me. At night the tinkle of the many-toned caravan bells still seems to float to me up shadowy valleys, and I have only to shut my eyes to see the tall, black shapes of the camels stalking in slow procession against the crimson dawn [...]

Skrine goes on to highlight the return to peace in the region thanks to the forces commanded by General Percy Sykes; so British prestige has been re-established.

we were staying in the plains and not accompanying him up the forbidding 50-mile-long Gez Defile to the Arctic conditions of the Pamir border. Pigot, who is an extremely experienced traveller & knows all about cold has a complete Arctic explorer's outfit of Burberry gabardine as worn by the Shackleton expeditions, & laughs at cold. He says that it beats 'poshteens' and fur coats hollow. He has the Arctic sleeping bag of reindeer skin & can sleep in the open at 40° below zero if he likes. All the same he may have an unpleasant time from snow – for which this is just the season – added to which there's a lot of ice in the Gez River & the crossings are awkward, I'm told. However, he's pretty certain to get a good *ovis poli*, for at this time of year they're all feeding on comparatively low ground, 10-11,000 ft., because of the snow. No one has ever shot Poli in the Pamirs in the middle of winter before.

Pigot is a charming person, best manners we've either us struck for a long time & a soldier of the best type (D.S.O. & M.C.). A mighty hunter almost in the class of Aflalo & Salous,[218] but more of a naturalist than a sportsman in that he studies the beasts & their habits for the love of it rather than for the purpose of killing them. He only kills the big old beasts which are too old for breeding purposes, as specimens, because otherwise the world would never see those magnificent heads, & he knows all there is to know about tracking & stalking. He must be a first-class shot too, for he doesn't seem to have missed at all on his recent tour in the Tekkes and Yulduz! [...]

Must stop now – frightfully full up with reports & correspondence & negotiations with the Chinks and lawsuits between British subjects etc etc. By the way, I heard today from Yarkand that last Sunday there were anti-Swedish Mission riots there, Mr. Nyström & an ex-Mussalman convert being mobbed & dragged to a Qazi's house where they were kept all day! All due to the preaching of a mullah who has been riding all over Yarkand on a camel (very unusual for this country) inciting good Mussalmans to down the Missionaries! Further details next week. All quiet here.

***

HM's Consulate General, Kashgar, 23 January 1924

[*Several paragraphs on furs* ...]

I am also this week sending you a Prussian-blue (as D. calls it – I call it greenish-blue) coat for Miss Symonds. With one exception (which was already ear-marked for presentation before I heard about Miss Symonds) it is the only blue coat I have come across. The embroidery is good in parts, and perhaps Miss S will take it at the price, 35/-. The aniline-dyed coarse embroidery on the edges is not, of course, part of the original cloak and may be removed. By the way, your dress-maker misinforms you about the chain-stitching on the cloak D sent you. I bought the cloak in question for her and know all about it. There are not, and never have been, any chain-stitching machines in this part of Chinese territory. The stitch is a speciality of Khotan where the women have used it for a very long time. It is done with a special, very fine needle called ilmek and the silk is carried on a wooden frame like a tambourine [...]

Talking about going home, I am getting seriously alarmed about the possibility of the G[overnment] of I[ndia] not finding a successor for me again this year, for I haven't heard a word yet. If I don't hear within the next two or three weeks I will wire to Howell to send somebody whether suitable or not, for I really can't stay here another year [...]

218. Frederick George Aflalo (1870-1918) was a much-published British specialist on sports and hunting, the author and editor of *A Book of the Wilderness and Jungle with Big Game Hunting Anecdotes* (1912). Skrine's 'Salous' presumably is Frederick Courteney Selous (1851-1915), another well-known British explorer and hunter who wrote about safaris in Africa. Information about them and their books may be found at https://www.shakariconnection.com/index.html, last accessed 27 August 2024.

I am now engaged in my scanty spare time just now in 'writing up' an account of our journey up from Srinagar based on, and containing several extracts from, the diary you had typed for me. This is by way of supplying Methuen's with a 'specimen chapter'. I will send you a copy at the same time as I send it to them. The Diary was only from Gilgit to K[ash]g[a]r, whereas much of our most interesting experiences were before Gilgit, e.g. my narrow squeak in the gorge of the Astore River when the black and red horses fought. By the way, there is another piece of mine which Methuen's ought to see, as I haven't time to write anything about Persia for them, and that is the article called 'A Persian Adventure' which appeared in the *Near East* two or three years ago. You remember, the account of how my horse fell down a forty-foot well in a Kerman suburb, very nearly taking me with him, and how we got him out again. When you are getting hold of the *Times* article I spoke about last week, could you kindly at the same time secure a copy of this one too? Unfortunately, I haven't the least recollection when it came out – all I remember is that Father asked me to write something for the N.E. and I sent this along. It can't have been before 1918, for that is when the thing happened. The article seems to have attracted some attention, for it was reprinted (without my permission) with my name under it in 'Indian Ink' for 1919 or 1920, I forget which, and it also appeared in the *Basra Times* and other dailies.[219] When I'm ready to write to Methuen's I'll ask you to send both the articles and certain photographs to them from me.

It has been horribly cold and comparatively sunless (tho' the sun's record of having appeared for at least an hour every day since we came is still unbroken!) during the last week or two, and I have had a nasty cold which has prevented me from getting out to the skating pond. However, I've made good progress this year and am nearly back to my old Swiss form! D's cold is all right and she is very fit. Pigot is after ovis poli in the Pamirs. He writes that it is lovely and warm and sunny, no colder than Kashgar, owing to the fact that the air is so much clearer and drier which makes up for the great height (10,000 ft. and over). I have not decided yet whether to visit the Pamirs next month or not, afterwards going straight from Tashkurghan to Yarkand over a pass 13,000 ft. high but easy. I don't want to run any risks with D., but I really see no reason why we should not be as right as rain at the end of Feb. and beginning of March, if even now, at the coldest time of the year, Pigot says the cold is nothing to write home about. You ask about O. Poli, O. Karelini and O. Ammon. The first two are very much alike, the horns of the Poli being longer but slenderer than Karelini; six feet, measured round the spiral, is the length of a good Poli! Ammon are the biggest of all, the horns being of a positively incredible size and weight. It takes two strong men even to lift a pair of O. Ammon horns off the ground! Poli are found only in the Pamirs, Karelini in the Tian Shan and Ammon in W. Tibet. The sheep I was after N. of Aksu was a different species, much smaller. Must stop now.

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[*This letter is revealing for the light it throws on Skrine's attitudes regarding British rule in India, feeling that self-rule was premature at the same time that he recognized its inevitability.*]

Kashgar, 25 January 1924

Your letters of 29th Nov. & 6th Dec. arrived together today [...]

On 6th Dec. you were still without news of the wedding. This mail D. has received lots of news of it, from three points of view, having got letters from (1) her mother, (2) her father and (3) her aunt, Queenie Graham. It appears to have been a fairly grim affair even for a wedding [...]

219. The unauthorized reprint was in *Indian Ink*. Fourth year (Calcutta, 1917): pp. 33-36. So far I have not located the original publication he mentions.

29 January 1924. Another post in with your letter of 13 December 1923 written just after the Election debâcle. What a misfortune indeed, the Conservatives seemed so safe in power with a good solid majority, and we in India had settled down to two or three years of peace and quiet. And now – that ass Baldwin goes and throws away his majority and the prospects of his Party by hitting on the one war-cry which everyone but he and the Protectionist die-hards knew would ensure its defeat. Great heavens! I should have thought that the land-slide of 1906 would have taught them a lesson, but apparently it didn't. Personally I don't care a brass dump what else this new Gov't. does, but I and every other European in or near India do care very much if the Labour Party comes into power (as seems inevitable) because they'll play Old Harry [Satan – *DW*] with India. The Liberals, Morley Montagu & Co. were bad enough, but they were Jingoists compared with Josiah Wedgwood, who I suppose will be Secretary for India.[220] Anyhow, the Tories, whatever one may think of some of their ideas, are sound about India. When you're dealing with a dependency like India, in which development must be slow and sure, merely because of the gigantic population involved, a Conservative policy is the only one. To think that it is to be given to narrow-minded, uneducated, class-jealous demagogues like Josiah Wedgewood to play the fool with, perhaps prejudice for good and all, over the little remaining prestige and authority we have in India, just when the Swarbjists with their professed policy of cracking the Councils have swept the board in the recent Elections too. Won't they be cock-a-whoop when Josiah gets to work! Mark my words – before the year is out he or whatever other, ca'canny patriot of the Labour party becomes Secretary for India, will have met the extremists on India half way and will have taken all kinds of irrevocable steps towards a too-hurried Indianization of the Services, the repeal of the Press Act (already a dead letter, it is true) & all-over various other safeguards against anarchy. I shouldn't be surprised if Reading resigned.[221] My only hope is that if the other parties in the Commons will only take up the Indian question they will combine to defeat the Labourites' measures. But you know how apathetic the House is about India. Ten to one they won't challenge a single division, reserving their ammunition for the Socialist measures which concern England (i.e. the various members' constituencies) more closely.

The worst of it is, anything done to hasten processes in India is always irrevocable [...]

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[*Skrine sent from Kashgar his official monthly diary combining December 1923 and January 1924 on 1 February 1924; it arrived in London on 7 April. The excerpts here are from the printed copy sent to the India Office in London, BL IOLR, L/P&S/10/976, P1660/1924, fols. 174-178. Several items in it follow up on earlier reports with new information; we can again appreciate here the range of sources Skrine was tapping, the ways in which he was trying to influence the Chinese authorities, but also the limits of that influence. He himself casts doubt on rumors that the Governor of Xinjiang Yang might be about to be replaced, with Yang's response being to secure his position by substantial bribes to the central authorities. However, in keeping with his* idée fixe *about the pecuniary manipulations of the governor, Skrine undoubtedly misses the mark, as would become apparent when the governor engineered the murder of Ma Fuxing precisely because he suspected the latter of conspiring against Yang with officials in Beijing.*]

220. Josiah Clement Wedgwood (1872-1943), liberal and Labour politician, known for his advocacy of the disenfranchised and support for those opposed to colonial rule. Skrine's speculation that he might be appointed by Ramsay MacDonald to be State Secretary for India proved to be unfounded. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Josiah_Wedgwood,_1st_Baron_Wedgwood, last consulted 7 May 2016. Skrine refers to the Swarbjists (Swarajists), the new political faction in India in the early 1920s advocating self-rule, starting with a more active role in the legislative councils the British had established.

221. Rufus Daniel Isaacs, 1st Marquess of Reading (1860-1945), after several years as Lord Chief Justice of England, was appointed Viceroy and Governor-General of India in 1921, a post which he held until 1926. Even though he worked to implement the Government of India Act of 1919 that aimed to give Indians a greater role in government, he also suppressed unrest and arrested Gandhi for sedition. See https://en.wikipedia.org/ wiki/Rufus_Isaacs,_1st_Marquess_of_Reading, last accessed 28 August 2024.

[There is] an interesting statement by a new arrival from Urumchi, Mr. Antonoff […] to the effect that last year the Governor spent no less than 800,000 dollars in bribes among the Peking officials, thereby securing his continued recognition as Governor of Sinkiang. This sum is probably part of the sixty cart-loads of gold and silver which Yang despatched to Inner China the year before last in charge of his wife […] One of Yang's chief sources of revenue, according to Mr. Antonoff (who knows the district well) is an amazingly rich gold mine at a place called Sharasume in the Altai Mountains, from which gold of a purity averaging 985 per mille is panned out from mere surface scratchings at the rate of 10-15 grammes per ton of ore. A detailed report regarding this mine is being submitted separately.

[*Indeed, as we have already seen, Skrine was assiduous in collecting and reporting information on valuable natural resources of Xinjiang.*]

[*A longish entry in the diary regarding the difficulties Pigot faced in obtaining permission from the Chinese authorities to hunt in the Sarikol region is of interest for what it reveals about the efforts of the Chinese government to curb foreign activities and for the indications of British sensitivity about any move which might be taken as a concession to China regarding with the British saw as their rights in the border regions of the Karakorum. The annotator of the file in the India Office, J. P. Gibson, noted with reference to this part of the report:* 'Chinese opposition to exploration of the Oprang Valley. The Govt. of India have acknowledged this failure to supply Kashgar with detailed information about Gen[era]l Pigot's proposed route.' *The Oprang is the name given by Francis Younghusband to the river better known as the Shaksgam, which flows into the Yarkand River.*[222] *At its upper end is a settlement which today is on the Pakistan side of the border. British concerns over their claim to the Oprang were evident in the response cited earlier to Skrine's letter about postal routes February 1923. Skrine's profession of how British sportsmen in the frontiers were there solely for the hunt, not for collecting intelligence, rings hollow, as he himself used exploration and hunt as an excuse to gather intelligence.*]

3. [...] When General Pigot informed the Taoyin that he proposed to travel in Sarikol, the Taoyin became greatly agitated and said that he could not allow General Pigot to enter the Sarikol District. General Pigot gathered that in consequence of the declared desire of the British to survey the Oprang region the Governor has issued orders to the Amban of Sarikol not to allow any Europeans in his district. As there was not time to refer the matter to the Legation His Majesty's Consul-General decided to try and persuade the Taoyin to reverse his decision. He pointed out that the Chinese authorities could see for themselves that General Pigot's sole object was sport and that he had no surveying instruments with him at all; that the Oprang incident, so far from giving the Chinese grounds for suspicion regarding our intentions, ought to have allayed any suspicions that they had before; and that in any case the British government would be justified in regarding it as an unfriendly act, if the Government of Sinkiang closed Sarikol to British sportsmen who had for so many years been accustomed to shoot in that district with the full knowledge and approval of the Chinese authorities.

After some cogitation the Taoyin evidently discovered that he had bitten off more than he could chew, for he eventually withdrew his objection with regard to the whole of the Sarikol District with the exception of Oprang in the extreme south-east corner. His Majesty's Consul-General did not acquiesce in the closing of the Oprang Valley, any more than in that of other parts of Sarikol District [...]

It is probable that this new attitude of the Chinese [*regarding any British presence in Sarikol*] is not unconnected with the negotiations proceeding at Urumchi between the Governor and the Bolshevik Mission. It may be safely guessed that the latter are claiming, on the most-favoured-nation principle, the same rights and privileges as the British, and in particular it may be taken for granted that they are demanding possession of the fort at Tashkurghan formerly occupied by them. The Governor imagines,

222. See 'Shaksgam River,' (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shaksgam_River, last accessed 7 May 2016).

no doubt, that by completely excluding the British from Sarikol he will cut the ground from under the Bolsheviks' feet in this argument.

As regards the Oprang, the amusing aspect of the case is that until last spring when His Majesty's Consul-General told the Taoyin about it and showed him on the map where it was, neither the Taoyin, nor the Governor, nor the Amban of Sarikol himself had ever heard of it [...] [I]t is not surprising [...] that with the sole exception of the road which connects their Yamen with Urumchi all parts of their districts are alike *terra incognita* to the large majority of Chinese officials.

Foreign subjects.

4. *Agitation against the Swedish Mission* [...]

Four of the eleven baptized converts remain in custody at the Yamen, the rest having at various times been released by the Chinese, not at the request of the Swedish Mission, be it noted, but at that of the Muhammadans. It may be taken for granted that the released converts have recanted. The missionaries have until recently been feeding the remaining prisoners in the lock-up, and maintaining their families; now, however, they are no longer able to do so, as owing to intimidation on the part of the Mullahs no one dares to carry food from the Mission to the prisoners. Another petition was presented to the Taoyin by the Mussalmans in December. On this occasion the Taoyin informed the petitioners that the Swedish Mission had a treaty right to practise in Chinese territory and must not be molested, but that they (the Mussalmans) need not send their children to the Mission school or otherwise encourage the Mission if their religion forbade them to do so.

5. At Yarkand, as at Kashgar, the agitation described in this Consulate-General's diary for July 1923, paragraph 11, has continued to smoulder. Early in December another petition was presented to the Amban against the Mission, but was refused. Towards the end of the month a fanatical Mullah of Turkish extraction, popularly known as 'Ishan', began to preach in the bazars against the Mission. In order to attract attention to himself he conducted his campaign from the back of a camel, an animal which is seldom used in this country for riding purposes. At first he confined himself to exhorting all good Mussalmans to found schools and orphanages for themselves instead of allowing Mussalman children to be educated at infidel institutions. Encouraged, however, by the crowds which listened to his sermons (though of practical response in the way of subscriptions there appears to have been none) he soon began to adopt a more truculent tone, and he eventually took up his position on some open fields outside the city walls close to the Mission itself. On Sunday, 13th January, he tried to prevent people going to the Mission church service and seemed intent on creating a disturbance. The Revd. R. Nyström, head of the Mission, accompanied by a Chinese evangelist and a recent Mussalman convert, named Mohammad Ali, went out and tried to persuade the Mullah by argument to desist. As might have been expected, a quarrel arose; the Mullah shouted to his hearers to help him and the crowd (which consisted mainly of the riff-raff of the city) set on the three Christians and dragged them with kicks, blows and abuse to the house of a Qazi, named Alam Akhun, within the walls of the city. Here the crowd, which had by this time increased to several thousand, demanded the trial of the Christians by the Qazi according to Mussalman law. The Qazi with considerable strength of mind protected the Christians and kept the crowd at bay for several hours, until in the afternoon, with the help of some runners and minor officials of the Magistrate who had arrived, he managed to convey Mr. Nyström and the converts to the Mission with a military escort. On the following day an enquiry was held, as a result of which the Mullah 'Ishan' and another of the ringleaders were imprisoned and the Mussalmans were reprimanded for using force and told that the case had been referred to Urumchi, pending which the

ringleaders would remain in prison. Besides examining him in public, the Amban questioned Mullah Ishan very closely in private with the object of discovering whether he had been paid or otherwise instigated to preach against the Mission. The Mullah, however, staunchly maintained that his 'jihad' was his own affair and the result of a call from Heaven.

The use of force by the agitators, who have thus put themselves in the wrong, and the firm line taken by the Chinese officials have cleared the air at Yarkand and there is not (according to reports received by His Majesty's Consul-General) much fear at present of further disturbances. His Majesty's Consul-General has good reasons to believe that *ex*-Taoyin Chu, who is the strongest and at the same time the most pro-foreign official in Southern Sinkiang, is responsible for the action taken by the Amban. He spent a long time at the Magistrate's Yamen, both on the evening of the 13th and on the 14th, conferring with the Magistrate. As he has nominally no executive authority, being only charged with the negotiations with the Afghan Envoy, no orders were issued in his name; but his prestige is great and all other Chinese officials are afraid of him. As suggested by His Majesty's Consul-General at the time of the Kashgar agitation of last spring, there would have been no imprisoning of converts and closing of the Mission here if Chu had still been Taoyin.

[*Of course Russians and Russian affairs were never far from Skrine's mind as the next items show. Of some interest are his somewhat exaggerated comments on Petr Kozlov, the military officer and explorer who had discovered Khara-Khoto a good many years earlier. Kozlov encountered problems both with opposition to his plans on the part of prominent Russian academics and with the Bolshevik authorities on account of suspicions about his possible anti-Bolshevik leanings, even though there apparently is no reason to think he was planning the expedition as a means of escaping Soviet Russia. Kozlov arrived in Ulaanbaatar (Urga) on 1 October 1923, and his expedition was able to undertake significant exploration of the now famous Xiongnu cemetery site at Noyon uul in Mongolia. In his minute paper comments, Gibson noted (fol. 174):* 'Kosloff and Sven Hedin had arranged to meet one another in Tibet about a year hence; the Tibetan Govt. has however been induced to refuse either permission to enter the country.' *Despite the fact that permission was received from Beijing in 1925 for Kozlov to enter Tibet, he never did so. See the excellent summary introduction to the publication of the expedition diaries (Kozlov 2003). In 1923, after a lecture tour in the United States, the Swedish explorer Sven Hedin returned home through Mongolia where in fact he met with Kozlov (see ibid., esp. pp. 74-80, 172-173, for Kozlov's enthusiastic account). Hedin never returned to Tibet after his expedition there more than a decade earlier, but his final expedition to China beginning in 1926 took him again to Mongolia.*]

6. *Kosloff Expedition*. – Information has been received from Paris to the effect that Kosloff, who joined the rest of the expedition at Urga in November, is bound for the ancient site of Khara Khoto in Mongolia. It is probable that Kosloff, whose sympathies are well known not to be with the Bolsheviks, induced the Soviet to send him on this expedition chiefly with a view to escaping from Soviet Russia at the earliest opportunity. Following their usual procedure, however, the Soviet Government detailed a number of agents to shadow Kosloff wherever he goes, and there are said to be no less than 30 of these agents on the personnel of the expedition. It is not known whether Kosloff intends to go to Tibet after finishing with Khara Khoto or not.

7. A Russian named Antonoff, who has recently been appointed representative of the German firm of Faust & Co., Tientsin, has arrived in Kashgar from Urumchi. A native of Semipalatinsk, he escaped four years ago to Urumchi, where he has since been making a living by making wine. He confirms all the worst stories His Majesty's Consul-General has heard abut the behaviour of the Chinese to the white refugees at Chuguchak, Kuldja, etc. [...]

Local Affairs.

8. *Mongolia*. Information regarding Mongolian affairs is difficult to secure from this side owing to

the policy of isolation adopted alike by the various Mongol States and by the Urumchi Government. Under Soviet influences the Western Mongols appear to have formed themselves into various republics, one of the Yakuts, another of the Buriats, a third in the Tangnu Urianbai country, and so on. The Bolsheviks are credited with the intention of forming further States from the Tungans, Taranchis, and other 'Uighur' populations of Turkistan and Western Mongolia.

His Majesty's Consul-General hopes shortly to be able to send in a more definite and detailed report regarding the situation in Mongolia.

[*Following here is the quotation of several paragraphs from a letter sent Skrine by Revd. G. W. Hunter of the Scottish Church Mission at Urumqi, who had recently been in Gansu Province. Then there is a long report on the situation in Sarikol, about which Skrine had written in his previous diary and in a subsequent telegram sent to India.*]

10. [...] During the past year the garrison at the Russian Pamirs has been victualled largely from Kashgar, and very large stocks of supplies from this place have been accumulated in the godowns at Murghabi (Pamirski) Post. The Bolsheviks in the Pamirs, unlike those in Ferghana and Semirechia, have been paying in gold and silver for all purchases, the currency used being partly tsarist gold roubles, partly old Bokharan currency. Some idea of the prices paid can be gathered from the fact that 5 gold roubles per *charak* (20 lbs.) has been regularly paid for all cereals. The chief Kashgari merchant in the trade (which, of course, is strictly forbidden) is one Khoja Akhun, who has made large profits. These he has been sharing with the following persons at Karasu, the Chinese frontier post on the road to Murghabi: – Gu Daloya, the Chinese Officer Commanding detachment; Musa Beg, Kirghiz; Tajiz Beg, Tajik; Tesha Tajik. The three latter persons are all *ex*-Russian subjects. With Gu Daloya they have been communicating regularly with the Bolsheviks at Murghabi and passing Khoja Akhun's caravans through to them. It was Gu Daloya who, armed with affadavits signed by these Begs and their men, reported to Wang, Amban of Sarikol, that the Maulais were secretly paying tribute to the British Government and desirous of handing over the Sarikol Valley to them. This was the reason why Wang Amban imprisoned and ill-treated Pir Imam Dad as described in last diary.

The Tajiks of Sarikol are a very different race from the timid, peaceable Turkis of the plains, a fact which is apt to escape Chinese Ambans who never stir from their Yamens, and in this case they acted with considerable spirit. They first tried bribery, paying Gu Daloya Taels 250 (Rs. 600) to intercede with the Amban, and afterwards Taels 500 to the Amban himself to release Pir Imam Dad. Finding that these bribes had no effect, they first of all (on December 14th) mobbed Gu Daloya in the Tashkurghan Bazar, pulled him off his horse, kicked and beat him and rolled him down several times from the top of a steep hillock until the unfortunate Chinaman was half dead. On the 22nd December, after further fruitless negotiations, they came in a body to the Yamen, and while some of them noisily petitioned the Amban and thus distracted his attention and that of the Yamen officials, the rest broke into the lock-up and smuggled their Pir away in broad day light. (This, the true account of the Pir's release was received by His Majesty's Consul-General after the dispatch of his letter No. 118-43 of December 27th). The Pir, who is a youngish man of good physique, made his way with a few followers to a safe hiding-place in the fastnesses of the Chinese Pamirs, and the rest of the Maulais, some 50 in number, left Tashkurghan the same day for Kashgar. Knowing that they were going to complain against him, the Amban scraped up every available man and sent a force down the main Kashgar road (*viâ* Bulunkul) to intercept the Maulais; but the latter took the summer road over the passes to the east of Mustagh Ata and arrived safely at Kashgar on the 27th. Here they laid the case before the Taoyin, whom they informed that they would not return to their homes until the Amban and Gu Daloya had been removed and were

powerless to hurt them. Meanwhile the Amban, greatly alarmed, tried through his Begs to get up a counter-deputation to go to Kashgar and petition the Taoyin in his favour, saying that the Maulais had been intriguing with the British; ten or twelve persons and a Beg did come in at his orders, but when they arrived they turned against the Amban and joined the main body of Maulais in their deputation.

After two or three weeks of negotiations with the Taoyin the latter gave way to the Maulais to the extent of sending orders to the Amban to pay them back the Taels 500 paid to him, and giving them formal permission in writing to send annually to His Highness the Agha Khan 500 *charaks* (125 maunds) of grain and 100 sheep as tithes. He refused, however, to remove the Amban. Accordingly the Maulais, who are determined not to return to Tashkurghan so long as Wang is there, have petitioned the Governor by telegram against him. They also talk of invoking the aid of Ma Titai, who will probably be only too glad of an excuse for interfering in Sarikol affairs with a view to taking over the administration of the district after the fashion of the military chiefs of Kansu described by Mr. Hunter (paragraph 9 above). It is to be hoped for their own sakes that they will not do this, as it will only mean exchanging King Log for King Stork.[223]

His Majesty's Consul-General has been careful not to give the Chinese any handle for an accusation of collusion with the Maulais, but he has at the same time conveyed a hint to the Taoyin that he knows about all that is going on, together with a warning as to the activities of Gu Daloya and his Mussalman associates and the probable implication of the Bolsheviks. It is self-evident that the latter's purposes would be double served by an intrigue which brought about that the same time an anti-Chinese disturbance in Sarikol, and estrangement between the British and the Chinese.

[*Skrine goes on to provide details of a bombing incident at the Chinese border post of Mukh, the responsibility apparently of 'Bokharan "die-hards", probably members of Sher Mohammad's following' and notes that it is unlikely Sher Mohammad would be allowed by the Governor to enter Xinjiang. He then reports on the lagging Sino-Afghan negotiations and provides details of the funding of the Afghan Mission, apparently through the sale of opium. Then there is an interesting report from far-away Kuchar*:]

13. *Anti-British Propaganda.* A telegraphic report has already been made to the Government of India about the activities of a violent anti-British agitator at Kuchar, 500 miles north-east of Kashgar. His Majesty's Consul-General has heard of this person from two or three different sources, particularly from a Swedish independent lady missionary who has been living alone at Kuchar for the last eight years and has just come into Kashgar on a visit.[224] This lady knows nothing about extremist propaganda in India and states merely what she has heard the Arab 'Mullah' saying. The statements she reports him as having made in her hearing include most of the stock accusations of the Khilafatists,[225] e.g., that the British hold India by artificially keeping communal hatred alive between Hindus and Moslems; that the authorities cause cows to be slaughtered in Hindu temples and pigs in mosques for this purpose; that the Sharif of Mecca holds the Holy Places as a vassal of the British Government, with whom he shares the oppressive taxes which he imposes on pilgrims, and so on.

223. A reference to the Aesop fable 'The Frogs Desiring a King', where they ask Jove for a ruler and he drops a log in the pond. When they discover it does not move, they jump on it and ask Jove for a 'real king'. So he sends down a stork, who eats the frogs. The moral: 'Better no rule than cruel rule'.

224. The missionary is Lovisa Engvall, who had first come to Turkestan at the beginning of the century, then broke with the Swedish mission after an affair and then marriage with her Muslim 'servant'. She worked independently as a nurse, finally settling in Kuchar. In 1924, presumably the visit during which she met Skrine, she spent time at the Mission in Yarkand before returning to Kuchar. See Hultvall 1981, Sec. IV: pp. 19-21.

225. The reference here is to the Khalifat movement in India amongst the Muslims, who were reacting against rumors that the British planned to abolish the caliphate, whose head had been the Ottoman sultan, and were desecrating the holy places in Arabia. See James 1997, pp. 469-470.

This last statement is one which, according to trustworthy information received, has also been put about at Yarkand by several Hajis who have recently returned from pilgrimage *viâ Kabul*. Fortunately, the much larger number of Hajis, who have returned during the last year or two via India, have had nothing but good to say about the arrangements for pilgrims both in India, on the sea and in the Hedjaz. It is not too much to say that the diversion of the pilgrim traffic from the Russian route via the Caspian and Constantinople to that via Bombay has had a far-reaching and lasting effect upon the reputation and prestige of Great Britain in Central Asia. This year it is expected that an even larger number of Hajis will leave Kashgar for the Holy Places via India; in fact, the exodus has already begun. [*The annotator in London, J. P. Gibson, marked the above passage with a double line and noted on the minute sheet:* 'An interesting & important comment on the division of the pilgrimage routes caused by the War.']

Another tendency due to the closing of the Russian frontier since the Revolution is that of religious students to seek instructions from teachers in India instead of in Russian Turkistan. Several leading mullahs of Kashgar now regularly send their pupils to Indian teachers, among others to the following: Maulvis Habib-ur Rahman and I'zas Ali Khan of the Madrisa Arabiyya Islamiyya, Deoband, Saharanpur; Abdul Qadir, Madrisa Hanafiyya, Ajmere.

[*This long diary continues with information about Bolshevik mobilization in Ferghana, a matter on which a separate message had been telegraphed. Supplies from Xinjiang are supporting it. And the final entry is a somewhat sarcastic one concerning the*]
Bolshevik Mission at Urumchi. – The Kazanski Mission was, last autumn, replaced by one headed by Ozornin, late Envoy of the Far Eastern Republic at Peking. Kazanski was not a success; he was a drunkard and sot of the lower type, a professional 'laundry-woman's husband' at Tashkend in pre-Revolution days. Ozornin with his wife and some of the staff arrived at Urumchi with a great flourish of trumpets and quantities of luxurious furniture, grand pianos, etc. They are socially boycotted by the whole European community as well as by the Chinese, except for entertainments. They live by themselves and are unable to stir anywhere without an escort. The negotiations with the Governor do not appear to be making much headway, in spite of the optimistic statements which appear from time to time in the Soviet Press.

Hagelström, who as already reported was specially detailed from Harbin as Secretary to this Mission on account of his remarkable knowledge of Chinese, is stated by Mr. Antonoff to be thoroughly disgusted with his new job, on which it appears he was sent against his will. It is probable that he is jealous of Ozornin and thinks that he himself ought to have been head of the Mission.

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Kashgar, 5 February 1924

For the first time this winter, the post hasn't come in by Tuesday evening. The last three or four weeks it has been arriving a day late, i.e., on Tuesday, the reason given being heavy snow on the Mintaka. This time the dâkchi hasn't arrived yet. The arrangement is that our dakchis here only go as far as Tashkurghan, 10 marches, which they do (on horseback of course) in 5 days; another set of dâkchis takes the mail bewteen Misgar and Tashkurghan, & a third between Gilgit and Misgar. Considering the road, it is wonderful how regularly they go, winter and summer. In 2 years there have only been two losses of dakchis, one who fell off the path in Hunza & was drowned in the river, & the other frost-bitten on the Mintaka. The dakchis get very good pay, I need hardly say, and here I fill vacancies among the orderlies from them as a rule, so there is much competition.

Just heard from Pigot again, unexpectedly. A funnly-looking little square bag of dirty green silk was pressed into my hand yesterday by a hairy 'yayi' (yamen runner) which on being opened contained a pencilled letter written by Pigot from Kara Zak, wherever that may be somewhere bang on the Russian frontier within a march or two of Mukh, I fancy, in the extreme western-most corner of this province. He says that it is undoubtedly cold, and he is suffering from headaches, but that his Arctic Suit which I think I told you about (Burberry overalls & headgear & moccasins, exactly as used by the Shackleton Expedition) prevents him from feeling the cold at all, and (except when he's got a headache I suppose) he's as happy as can be. Sport is disappointing, though, no large heads, which worries him. Literally thousands of ovis poli but all small. He's only got one over 50 inches, which is nothing for poli of course. 72 is the record I think – anyhow one doesn't look at anything under 60". As I told you, I was thinking of taking D. round by Tashkurghan to Yarkand, if Pigot said the cold wasn't bad and there were really whacking poli to be had – there is work for me at Tashkurghan & I would have liked also to explore the little-known Tashkurghan–Yarkand road – but now I've given up the idea – not good enough. We haven't got Polar kit, & as Pigot says that his breath freezes mornings & evenings, he gets headaches (obviously neuralgia due to cold) & his hands get cold in woollen gloves inside furlined leather ones, I gather it's pretty parky and we might get frostbite. So now we are leaving here Wednesday or Thursday 27th–28th Feb. & going straight to Yarkand in 5 days. I have a great deal to do there & won't get away in less than a fortnight. Kargalik will take four or five days, Goma 2 or 3, & we ought to reach Khotan about 5th April, 4 days there & 4 to Keriya. Thence I hope to do a little trip we are both very keen on, namely to the Altyn Tagh or 'Mountains of Gold,' a magnificent range going up to 22,000 ft. stretching away from due south of Khotan hundreds of miles to the north-east along the south of the desert. It has practically only been explored in 2 places, by Deasy and Stein, and though I won't have time to do any mapping I hope to get some good telepanoramas & some data about the fauna and flora of the many unexplored valleys of the range. Also we want to see the Surghak gold mines from which the range takes its name (altyn is Turki for gold) if we have time.

Allowing 10–12 days for this trip, we shall hardly get back here much before the end of May. I will have to spend another week at Yarkand on the way back. As I have said before this Consulate General ought really to be at Yarkand which is the centre of gravity of British Indian subjects and their interests in this country. If I were here 'pukka' I would make a practise of moving most of the Consulate General office and staff to Yarkand for a considerable period, at least 2 months, every year. One of the worst of the many bad points about Etherton as C.G. was the way he sat at Kashgar & hardly stirred out on tour at all. Do you know that he never went beyond Posgam, 1 march to the other side of Yarkand, only as far as that once, & never went even as far as Maralbashi in the Aksu direction? And yet he was drawing Rs. 200/- a month fixed T[ravel] A[llowance] all the time!

Wednesday. Another post in (2 days late), but with no English mail. I'm afraid it is hung up by snow on the Burzil or something [...]

News of the Labour Government by this week's Reuters'. I must say Ramsay Macdonald is proving himself a real statesman. He has had the sense not to put Josiah Wedgewood in as Secretary for India – a job which the ineffable Josiah had ear-marked for himself – & that's a point very much in his favour. The absolutely constitutional manner in which the Labourites have assumed office will be a nasty pill for the Bolsheviks who will now have given up all hope of a revolution in England. It doesn't matter so much whether we recognize the Soviet or not – personally I rather hope we do, as it may enable us to come home next autumn via the Trans-Siberian or Trans-Caspian Railways! [...]

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Kashgar, 13 February 1924

It looks as if the Burzil and Tragbal Passes between Srinagar and Gilgit are too deep in snow to allow all our mails through, for a miserable little post came in today 2 days late & last week it was the same. However, a lovely pair of letters from you and Father arrived (d[ated] 20th Dec.) which was the main thing. Many many thanks for the delicious little calendars [...]

It is excellent news to hear that Father has got over the bronchitis-flu – nasty tricky things one's lungs. Why even I with my lungs like the bellows of a blast furnace got what I think must have been a wee touch on the top of my lungs the other day; had a temp. for a day & a nasty feeling in the chest. I cured it in 24 hours with antiphlogistin[226] – do you know the stuff? Wonderful thing – will cure any form of inflammation whether on the little toe or the lungs it's all the same. Sort of super-bread poultice. Its equine equivalent 'Equinoint'[227] is an old ally of mine in India; it will cure any lameness that is due to strain or sprain, bowed tendons etc. Both antiphlogistin & equinoint are pretty expensive, but they're worth their weight in gold.

Another chit from Pigot with the welcome news that he may be here by the 20th Feb. & will certainly be here by the end of the month, which means that we shall see him as we aren't off till the 28th. He has been shooting in the extreme westernmost corner of Sinkiang, as I think I told you, a little peninsula of Chinese territory wedged in between the Russian Pamirs, Bokhara and Ferghana. He has got a 54 ½" head & now thinks that the sheep he has been among are <u>not</u> poli but O. Littledalii, in which case his 54 ½" must be nearly a record. He has <u>heard</u> of bigger-horned sheep, no doubt Poli, further south & is going to try & get one before coming in. It will be nice seeing him again. We have had an awful time with his stag from the Lop Nor – it has been suffering from a kind of skin disease on its back which has made it necessary to bathe it with disinfectant every day – the beast <u>hates</u> this process, & in its struggles to avoid being bathed it hurls beefy orderlies about like rats being worried by a terrier. It takes <u>six men</u> to hold it anything like still. It can drag two of our largest orderlies along with it at the run! I had no idea stags were such terrifically strong beasts. Needless to say its horns have been cut off – otherwise it would have killed somebody long ago. I told you didn't I that Pigot is going to try and march it down to India? & that the Zoo will probably meet it there and have it brought to London where no 'Maralbashi stag' as the species is called has ever been seen.[228] He'll have an awful time on the journey with it. It took 20 days to bring it from Aksu, 11 marches! & that was dead flat all the way – how he'll get it over the Mintaka and the Burzil, to say nothing of those hairy Hunza marches, I don't know.

<u>14 February 1924. Midnight</u>

Just got off my letter to Methuens' with enough to make four or five chapters as specimens! I thought it better to send them a lot of my stuff, extracts from diaries etc. – as well as a regular specimen chapter

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226. An ointment used for relief of muscle pain, arthritis, etc, which was marketed under the brand name Antiphlogistine in the early 20th century (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RUB_A535, last accessed 27 May 2016).

227. At the time Skrine wrote, it apparently was a well-known product for treatment of horses. A New Zealand newspaper in 1914 included this description in an advertisement: 'Equinoint: Makes Lame Horses Sound. The horses' friend. The one Remedy above all others for curbs, splints, enlarged joints, sprung tendons and similar troubles.' See *Wanganui Chronicle*, Issue 20178, 23 September 1914, p. 3 (http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-bin/paperspast?a=d&d=WC19140923.2.7, last accessed 28 August 2024).

228. Presumably this is the species known today as the Yarkand deer (*Cervus elaphus yarkandensis*) (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yarkand_deer, last accessed 27 May 2016).

so that they can say what they like best and to give me a line to go on. Could you now kindly send to Methuens', 36 Essex St. W.C. 1 (1) my last three lots of enlargements with numbered lists in toto (I can't bother you or myself with picking & choosing – let them say which they like best.) (N.B. the best lot is that which I listed 'Mountains', 'Plains' 'Bal[uchista]n & Persia' etc. (2) the 2 articles I told you about last week, the one in the *Times* of (I think) Feb. 17th or 27th 1917 & that in *Near East* called 'a Persian adventure'.

Very tired – must go to bed now. More about interesting local affairs next week.

***

Kashgar, 19 February 1924

We've been having some alarums and excursions lately – quite a little excitement in fact. Apparently the Chinese Mussulman commandant at Ulugchat, the frontier post on the Kashgar–Tashkend road, has been having a rumpus with the Bolshevik O[fficer] C[ommanding] detachment (about 100 strong) at Irkeshtam, the Russian post on the other side of the frontier. As far as I can make out, the Chinese O/C sent some men into Russian territory to collect debts & as the Bolos have closed the frontier strictly & don't allow anyone across, these soldiers of the Chinese O.C.'s got themselves fired on, & 2 or three taken prisoner. The Chink officer, an enormously fat comic-opera sort of person who is always called 'Haji Tungling' (Tungling is Chink for Colonel Comm[an]d[an]t, whether he has ever really been on Haj or not I don't know) sent in alarmist reports about the hostility of the Bolos and how they might at any moment send over large forces to fight him, and what was he to do, and could he have several thousand troops as reinforcements (his nominal garrison is 200) etc. etc. This doesn't seem to have alarmed the wily old Tao Tai, our sort of Civil Governor of Kashgaria, very much but the 'General', Ma Titai 'G[eneral] O[fficer] C[ommanding] Kashgar Area' (a sort of 'Pirates' Major-General-cum-Jack Ketch-cum-Nero person[229] I have often mentioned to you) got the wind up proper, sent off frantic wires to the Governor at Urumchi & even to Peking and funniest of all, called up 8 or 9 of the official Begs of this district and ordered them to recruit an army of 2000 men for him! Went so far as to order 2000 pairs of boots and the same number of coats in the bazar!! You see, tho' Ma Titai draws from the Treasury the pay of about 10,000 Chinese soldiers, he only actually keeps up an 'army' of 2 or 3 hundred & pockets the pay of the rest – 'eats' it as the Persians would say. He is thus enormously rich, but is also terrified of his bluff being called by the Russians or anybody else. The idea of the Titai ordering an army from the Begs – just as he orders so many hundredweight of grain from a wretched farmer whom he wants to 'milk' – is causing much amusement.

I don't think there's anything in it, or that the cause of the trouble is anything more than a 'regrettable incident' on the frontier, but there's a certain amount of nervousness among the Chinese & the timid Turki begs, the sort of thing one must expect in a country where all news is rigidly censored and the people are kept intentionally in the densest ignorance. No less a person than Mrs. Chu, the wife of the late Tao Tai, who came to see Doris yesterday, said to her 'Times aren't what they were in Kashgar – there's a lot of talk – I'm frightened!' 'The other day,' she went on to say, 'I had actually packed up my things and had given orders that if there was any trouble I was going straight round to the British

229. The 'Pirates' Major-General refers, of course, to Major General Stanley in Gilbert and Sullivan's *Pirates of Penzance* ('I am the very model of a modern Major-General, with information vegetable, animal and mineral...'). Jack Ketch (d. 1686) was infamous as King Charles II's executioner, in more than one instance requiring several blows of the axe before he managed to chop off the poor victim's head. His name became synonymous with death or executioner (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jack_Ketch, last accessed 8 May 2016).

Consulate General!!' Doris is frightfully pleased with this 'chit' to the British Empire. I haven't the heart to tell her that, whether it was true or not, the reason why Mrs. Chu said it to D. was to blacken the face of the present Tao Tai – whose wife is Mrs. Chu's great rival and enemy. It's a fact – Chu Tao Tai was a much stronger and safer man than the opium-sodden, doddering old scrap of parchment, Hsü.

Apropos of the Titai, I must tell you about his latest villainy which is closely connected with the present excitement. The 'G.O.C.' with the paper army enriches himself not only with the pay of troops he does not keep up, but by various commercial and industrial enterprises chiefly mining. His most lucrative mine is his shale-oil workings near Kanjigan, 30 m. west of here. He produces kerosene oil, grease & – here's the rub – paraffin wax of inferior quality; & as there is no competition (Russian oil no longer coming in any quantities) he makes a good thing out of selling these commodities at monopoly prices to the public, including myself. But while lamp-oil and grease are always in demand, the Kashgar market can only take up very small quantities of wax, which is a large bye-product of the Titai's. Accordingly, some months ago, he began to sell it forcibly. Portioning out the Old & New Cities into wards, he appointed a number of his Begs and bottle-washers to distribute so much wax per month to each shopkeeper, whether he wanted it or no, at the rate fixed by the Titai. The wretched cobblers, who use a little wax in their trade, had to take double supplies. Very soon complaints began to arise, which were eventually voiced by the Aksakal (headman) of the cobblers who petitioned the Titai to let the cobblers off taking any more of his wax, as they were over-stocked – besides which they preferred bees'-wax. Do you know what happened to him? he was beaten to death by order of the Titai, & his widow was so heavily fined that she had to sell the house over her head to pay the fine... Well, as might be expected this wax-tax grew & grew, not only by the Titai's impositions, but by the 'squeezement' (as our Mr. Chu calls it) of the man who collected it. They all lined their pockets literally. Thus, a fortnight ago, came the alarmist reports from the frontier. What do you think the Titai did, in order to turn public opinion in his favour and facilitate the recruiting of his 'army'? he hauled up 8 of his own wax-distributors, charged them furiously with over-charging the shopkeepers and sentenced them to have their hands & feet cut off!! Four of them escaped from custody (bribery no doubt) but the other 4, including a well-known Beg called Rozi Beg, had their hands chopped off in a special machine the Titai has, like a huge bacon-cutting machine, after which they were placed one at each of the 4 gates of the city, as an example, if you please, to robbers![230] And the extraordinary thing is that the people are so pleased at the stoppage of the wax-distributions & the lagging of those men (who undoubtedly were over-charging) that there's been quite revulsion of feeling in favour of the Titai! Nine Begs representing the people of Kashgar waited on him one day last week at the New City to thank him for his justice and mercy! Isn't it revolting? & doesn't it shed light on the reasons why the Chinese have been able for so long to keep their hold on this province?

[*Figs. 161, 162, next page*] I enclose 2 or 3 interesting photos this week – the football teams are rather historic – for they were playing in the first Cup-tie ever played in Central Asia, 'Skrine Cup'. Except that the Imp[eria]l Service troops escort of 35 (very inferior quality) Kashmiri 'Gurkhas' used occasionally to kick a football about in a desultory way, no footer has ever been seen in Ch. Turk[esta]n before. I told you the other day about the difficulties I had about inflating the ball – eventually surmounted by the aid of a motor-type pump (of all things to find in Kashgar!). Well, I've been coaching the Consulate

230. Skrine's lists of his photos include one that shows some of the victims of the Titai's cruelty. Nazaroff 1935, facing p. 80, includes a photo of several of the amputees but does not attribute the picture to Skrine, even if it might be his. I think Skrine was less inclined than the Russian émigré to publish 'sensationalist' images of the Titai's activity and his violent overthrow in 1924.



Fig. 161. The football (soccer) teams that competed for the first 'Skrine Cup' in the third week of February 1924, the local community Hindus on the left, the Hunza staff of the consulate on the right. Presumably Skrine's trusted orderly Sangi Khan, whom he frequently mentioned in his writings, is the one in the white hat standing directly in the center. Skrine also shot a couple of images of the action in this or another of the matches. (Reproduced with permission from the Royal Geographical Society [London], no. CPS/00002.)



Fig. 162. The date when this photo of the consular staff women was taken is uncertain, but a reasonable guess is that it was around the time of the soccer match, since there would have been an interest in having formal group photos of both the male and female staff. The absence of foliage on the trees is one indication of the season. The picture of the women in the courtyard undoubtedly would have been snapped by Doris, after Clarmont set up the camera. (Reproduced with permission from the Royal Geographical Society (London), no. CPS/00019.)

team hard – 3 practices a week – & they've been coming on like anything – keen as mustard most of them. Considering that not one of them (they consist entirely of the house-servants, Gov't. menials & servants of the clerks) had ever kicked a football in his life, they've made great progress. Then we challenged the Hindu traders of Kashgar to a 'rubber' – best out of 3 matches, & I promised a cup. Huge excitement. The Hindus have 2 or 3 very good men, young fellows who have been to colleges in India & played (2 played in their college teams); 3 or so others who are novices but play quite well, and the rest duds. They are much quicker & better kickers than the big heavy Turkis and Hunza men – but the latter have weight & enthusiasm. So the sides were quite well matched. However, the Hindus have won the Cup this year, chiefly thro' the efforts of the 2 college men – they won 2 matches, each 2 goals to 1, amid huge excitement, half the Turki population of the suburb looking on. Our best player is our sturdy faithful Sangi Khan, the man the Mir of Hunza lent us as an orderly on our way up. He is a good lad and really promising soccer-player. The Hunza men are all good – they take to football naturally, which is merely another evidence of their affinity to the Scotch. As I told you in my letters from Hunza in '22, put them in kilts & plaids & you wouldn't be able to tell them from Highlanders at a Gathering.

I'm getting a small cup up from India & am going to leave it as a challenge cup to be competed for every year between the Consulate and the Hindus of Kashgar. I'm also leaving 2 or 3 footballs & making arrangements for a better ground next year. I do hope the next C.G. takes an interest in it and referees – the great difficulty is a referee. I've trained the Mir Munshi, Moh[amma]d Nasir as referee & he'll do all right, but he knows nothing about the game except what he's learnt from me [...]

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[*Skrine's monthly diary for February, sent to India from Yarkand on 9 March and received in London after the middle of May. The excerpts here are from the printed copy sent to the India Office, BL IOLR L/P&S/10/976 P2241/1924, fols. 170-173. The report included, in the words of the commentator there, J. P. Gibson, 'nothing of very great interest' (fol. 170). Skrine's description of the new electoral system he instituted for the British Aksakal includes some detail not in his letter home and reminds us that what Skrine had done was institute a system that even today (witness the mayoral elections in London in May 2016) is still used, whereby voters include on their ballots a second choice.*]

1. [...] There are five candidates, of whom three are in the running, namely, the out-going Aksakal, Tilla Khan; Haji Turab Shah, who has already held the post once for three years, and Khwaja Abdul Hamid, a Kashmiri of high standing who has hitherto held aloof from public life. So far as can be seen at present, it looks as if the Hindu vote were going to be the deciding factor. H.M.'s Consul General has decided to introduce an innovation in Aksakalship elections in the shape of the Alternative Vote. If only 'first choices' are counted, the successful candidate may prove to be one who has a majority of the voters bitterly hostile to him. By making every British subject vote for two candidates in order of preference, it will be possible to ascertain which of the candidates is at least tolerable to the largest number of British subjects.

[*Skrine did provide details of the Irkeshtam border incident, without the joking tone of his letter home but with the same conclusion that it undoubtedly would not lead to a serious conflict, and he recounted the story about the exactions by Ma Titai. To the latter, Gibson noted: 'An incredibly barbarous form of punishment for the year of grace 1924.' Skrine went on to provide some optimism that the difficulties with the Chinese officials over British subject registration were finally being resolved. The Afghan delegation in Yarkand seemed to be settling in for the long haul; on the occasion of the Afghan Independence Day celebrations on 29 February, Muhammad Sharif nonetheless delivered a speech that would have to have upset the local Muslims:*]

7. […] The Afghan State, he said, had been a prisoner for generations but was now independent, and sent its ambassadors to all countries so that the world might know what manner of men the Afghans

were. The Mussulmans of all countries should rejoice at this and should unite. In the past they had wasted their time and had given their infidel enemies and opportunity to manufacture 9-shot and 11-shot magazine rifles and attack them. The faithful had shut themselves up in a cave in the hope of keeping their enemies out, but the infidels had dropped bombs upon them from the air. The Mullahs and Qazis of Chinese Turkestan were still in the depths of ignorance; they pride themselves upon the size of their turbans and the length of their beards, but they have no knowledge, no art; they waste their time in their cave, counting the beads of their rosaries. Turbans and beards are of no importance; it is not necessary to have a beard more than a few inches long or indeed to have one at all, for one's prayers to be acceptable. Alas! if only Afghanistan had awakened twenty-five years earlier, how different things would have been already!

[*Gibson's minute note on this paragraph: '*The beard of the Prophet appears to be at a discount in the eyes of "advanced" Mohammedans!*' Skrine then went on to indicate that the kind of 'Pan-Islamism' Muhammad Sharif was preaching was not making much headway in Yarkand, inter alia because:*]

[...] Apart from their natural timidity and fear of the Chinese the Turkis of this province are very much in the hands of their Mullahs, and the latter are not likely to be drawn to Mohammad Sharif after his unsympathetic remarks about their beards and turbans.

[*Reports on Bolshevik activities and conditions across the border suggested there were serious problems confronting the Soviet regime, but Skrine was careful to qualify the trustworthiness of his information:*]

[...] 9. Turkestan. As already mentioned, the Bolsheviks have once more strictly closed the Chinese frontier, and it is still almost impossible to cross even by means of heavy bribes. This caused a crop of rumours of revolt and anarchy in Ferghana, Communists murdered at Khokand etc. etc., which appear to have been entirely without foundation. As stated in a recent report, however, the strength of the Mussalman opposition to the Soviet is increasing. At a recent public meeting at Khokand, held a few days after the death of Lenin [d. 21 January 1924], the orators of the 'Ulema' party were remarkably outspoken. They said that the wealth of the country had been stolen and frittered away by the Communists and its people reduced to beggary; that millions of Mussalmans had been starved to death in famines brought on by Communist methods, besides large numbers executed without trial; that nothing was left to Mussalmans but their religion, and even this the Communists were trying to take away, for they were sending Mussalman boys to their schools where nothing was taught but atheism and debauchery [...]

11. *Bokhara and Samarkand.* — There was a recrudescence of the Basmachi revolt in November, in which the following leaders were concerned:

West Bokhara	.....	Abdul Kahar.
Karshi	.....	Berdi Datka.
Yakka Beg	.....	Abdur-Rahman.
Samarkand	.....	Haltu Bai.
Baisun	.....	Mustafa Baibacha.
Mountains on left bank of Waksh River	...	Abdur Rahim
Kizil Kum Sands	.....	Mullah Abdul Qadir.

Owing chiefly to dissensions among the leaders themselves the movement failed; Abdur-Rahman and Haltu Bai were killed (the latter by his own men), Berdi Datka was driven into the Kitab district and the other bands scattered. The Bolsheviks are now engaged in the organization of a special Bokharan Red Army.

[*Skrine then provided statistics on the present strength of Russian detachments in the Pamirs and concluded:*]

This represents a considerable reduction in strength, which is ascribed to the despatch of drafts as reinforcements for the Red troops operating in the Darwaz area (? against Basmachis).

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[*Just before leaving for Yarkand, Skrine typed a long letter to Aurel Stein, reproduced here with permission of The Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, Stein MSS 107, fols. 51-54.*]

[*printed letterhead:*] British Consulate-General, Kashgar

25th Feb. 1924

[*handwritten*] My dear Stein

I had by last mail a most delightful surprise, which has absorbed me ever since to the detriment, I fear, of my regular work. I refer, of course, to the "Memoir" and the complete set of maps which you have so kindly presented me with.[231] It is a most magnificent gift, and is particularly valuable to me because of your autograph in the Memoir. The Maps I had already, a complete set which I bought before leaving India and had mounted for travel and housed in a specially-made box with compartments: but I am very glad indeed to have another and lighter set, as I shall now be able to bequeath my travelling box of maps to my successors and take the new set home with me.

As for the "Memoir", I need hardly say how intensely interesting it is to me, and what a joy the photos are. As you know, my speciality in photography is mountain views and panoramas, and I hardly know any kind of picture that gives me a greater thrill of pleasure than a really good view of distant snow mountains, or of a pine-clad valley among great peaks. If I may select among so many beautiful pictures, I think that the ones that gave me the greatest thrill were: 16 c, 'Alexander III Range from above Huo Ning To Pass'; 19 b, 'Main K'un Lun Range from near Nura Oasis'; and 25 a, 'View across the SW end of Lake Lighten'. If only the magnificent vision of Chakragil had been visible at the top of the Bostan Arche valley when you took No. 30 A! I hope to secure a good picture of the same type (inshallah, with Chakragil visible) up the neighbouring Oi Jilga next summer.

I have not yet finished the letter-press of the Memoir, but so much as I have read fills me with awe at the immensity of the work achieved by you and your Indian surveyors. I had partially realized it already, of course, by travelling myself over a good part of the country surveyed by you between Tashkurghan and Bai, Artush and Keriya, your maps in my hand, and then casting my mind's eye eastwards along both roads and trying to visualize the vast deserts and mighty ranges to which I had not even come half way; but reading about how you did it, even in the modest descriptions of the Memoir, brings it all much more vividly before me. I may add that my wife fully shares my enthusiasm for and interest in the record, written and pictorial, of your labours.

It seems little less than presumption, after reading of such achievements, even to mention the tiny scrap of amateur exploring and cartography which is all I have been able to achieve so far. As you know, I am single-handed here nowadays, and what with the great increase in trade and the number of British subjects on the one hand, and the complicated political situation on the other, I have about as much as I can cope with by touring among the towns half of the year and sitting on an office stool at Kashgar for the other half. True, I always get off the beaten track if I possibly can, and I have made two or three short plane-table route traverses which it might be worth while showing to the Survey people one

231. Stein, *Memoir on Maps* (1923).

day; e.g. from Chimbuz Agzi in the Kinkol valley up the Chumbuz Valley and over the Kizmak Pass to the Upper Karatash Valley; through the Kizil Tagh by a cross-route not traversed before; from Yai Dobe to Somtash in the Taushkan Valley by a route crossing the north-west corner of the big blank patch NW of Kelpin, and so on. But the only attempt at accurate surveying I have achieved – and that without the help of astronomical observations, which are beyond me – is contained in the half-inch map of the Kaying Valley and neighbouring jilgas enclosed herewith. I told you in a previous letter how my wife and I were foiled in an attempt to ascend the Karatash Gorge towards the beginning of Oct. 1922, and how instead we discovered a beautiful little Alpine resort up among the pine and juniper forests of the Kaying Jilga. Well, last June we went up the Karatash Valley again (this time having to make long detours over steep passes in two cases, the Aksai D[awan] above Saman and the Chopkana D[awan] respectively, because of the huge volume of water in the Karatsh River) and spent a happy tho' chilly three weeks camping up the Kaying Jilga at 10,400 ft and afterwards at Bozarga near the top of the Yapchan Jilga. We found that even in early July the summer had not yet set in; it was cold, with an average min. night temp. of 36°, and it rained almost every day, usually in the afternoons and evenings; but between whiles I scrambled hopefully up the sharp rock-ridges which shut the jilga in on nearly every side. The climbing is really 'hairy', regular rock gymnastics most of it, and, it was only after several unsuccessful attempts that I succeeded at two points in getting my plane-table and cameras to the top of the ridges. One of these points (Stn 4) 15,600 ft., gave me the unforgettable view which is unworthily pourtrayed in my Panorama A(II) enclosed herewith. The most striking thing I saw from that point was the group of needle peaks, averaging apparently about 20,000 ft., immediately to the east of Kungur II. I never saw such sharp peaks anywhere; they beat the aiguilles of the Alps hollow. But it was from the other point, Stn 5, a terrible knife-edged ridge 16,200 ft. high which entailed a climb of just under 6,000 ft. from camp, that I got the view (shown in Panorama No. B(V)) that caused me most excitement, for those ice-crowned black mountains can be no other than the mysterious Shiwakte indicated doubtfully on your map, which you especially advised me to go and look for. They are a wonderful range, the intense black limestone precipices contrasting most effectively with the brilliant white of the névé and the hanging glaciers. If only it had been possible to cross either of the two passes, the Kepek and the Argalistan, visible in the foreground of this panorama, I could have got over into the upper Chimgan Jilga and had a much closer view of the seeming Shiwakte; but those passes were still quite impossible, even in July.

Being quite unpractised in contouring, I have had considerable difficulty in getting the contours more or less correct even over so small an area, and with the large vertical interval of 500 ft. I had no idea that contouring was so difficult! Perhaps however the Survey people may be able to correct and add to my map from the panoramas which I have enclosed. Unfortunately the points from which I took the panoramas were none of them astronomically fixed, only by intersection from points (some of *them* not astronomically fixed) on your map. As regards the E. face of the Kungur range (the majesty of which is only faintly indicated in my Panorama, No. C(VII)), I muddled my attempts to indicate it by dotted contour lines, and no attention need be paid to my map on the subject; I found that I had insufficient data for my unskilled hand to work on. But I am revisiting that region next summer, and will not leave Kashgaria until I have at least two more good telepanoramas like No. CVII taken from astronomically fixed points e.g. the top of Sargalang, which I intend to climb, several times if necessary. It is the coign of vantage for the photographing of the N. face of the Kungur ridge. The Survey people will then, if they want to, be able to map it in themselves much better than I could in a month of Sundays on the spot.

By the way, one thing has puzzled me throughout very much àpropos of elevations, and that is the discrepancy between my aneroid readings in the Karatash Valley and those in your map. My readings (averages of 4 or 5 readings at different times of the year) for (1) Altunluk (2) Saman (3) Bash Kupruk were more than 1000 ft higher than yours. This is the more curious in that my barometer (which I had tested at Dehra Dun and correction tables made out for it before coming) has agreed with practically every other reading of yours with which I have compared it. Moreover, a clinometer reading of Kungur (25,146) from Altunluk (on r. bank of Karatash R. at debouchure) showed the height of Altunluk as 5,306 ft., which agreed within 50 ft. with my aneroid, whereas your map shows 4,340 ft. The latter figure must indeed be considerably below the true one, for the water of the Karatash flows rapidly NE for some way beyond Altunluk and eventually reaches Yangi Hissar, which is entirely irrigated by it. Now the height given for Y. Hissar is 4250, i.e. only 90 ft less than Altunluk, and this again agrees closely with my barometer. I have therefore had no other course than boldly to take my readings for the Kaying Jilga as correct and regulate my contours accordingly.

If you think it worth while, perhaps you would send on the map and photos to the Survey of India for consideration? Even if they can't make any use of them, they will perhaps be interested, and at any rate Col. Cowie and Capt. Perry, who were so kind and helpful when I visited them in April 1922, will see that I have done something, however small, in return for their assistance.

My ambition, of course, is to get an account of the bit I have explored into the R.G.S. Journal, with a map and some of the photos. Do you think that after next summer, when I hope to have covered more ground, they would put some such account in? I shall be home in December, I hope, and could give a lecture, but I should be far too frightened to do so – unless of course you should happen to be in town at the same time and willing to support me in the ordeal of facing the pundits of the RGS.

I forgot to mention that besides our trips up the Karatash Valley, we came down it last April when we travelled right through the Kizil Tagh from Yarkand via Karaul Jash, Chighmen Bashi, Suget then across 3 passes over successive shoulders of the Kizil Tagh and down to Kichik Karaul in the Kinkol Valley, thence up to Akta ala and up the Chumbuz Jilga, over the Kizmak Pass and down thro' the gorges to Altunluk and Kashgar. We stopped at Chat in snow for two days and, luckily happening upon a fine morning, I got the beautiful panorama No. III which shows Kungur II so well. I wish I could identify those of the Shiwakte and Chimgan peaks to the right of Kungur which must be the same as those I 'shot' from Kaying! Most unfortunately, the cold and unsettled weather prevented a trip up the Chimgan Jilga; the servants and carriers would certainly have struck. We had no serious difficulty in descending the Karatash river as the water was still (April 12th) low, though a couple of miles of the track not far above Karatumush Aghzi took us three hours. If I were to do it again I would take your tip (Memoir p. 25) and use local camels.[232] The Chumbuz-Kizmak route is an interesting one, and the pass (14,000 ft.) is not difficult though very steep; there was remarkably little old snow on it, for April.

One remark in the Memoir rather depresses us; we start on Friday next for Yarkand–Khotan–Keriya, and we wanted very much to have a look at the N. valleys of the Altyn Tagh SE of Keriya between Polur and Burghak where the gold mines are; but judging by the experiences described at the top of p. 8, we shan't see very much and my prospects of getting good telephotos of the high tops of the K'un Lun and pictures of the scenery in the Altyn T. are not very bright.[233] However, I hope for the best.

232. Stein had written (*Memoir*, p. 25): 'The constant crossings of the river tossing between precipitous rock walls could not have been effected without the help of hardy local camels secured from the Kirghiz camps higher up the valley.'

233. Stein (ibid., p. 8) concluded: 'Subsequent experience has shown how serious is the obstacle presented to survey

Anyhow, I intend to make pilgrimages to the Rawak stupa and Old Domoko, if to no other of your sites, and will I hope get photos showing their present state which will interest you.

I sent your letters to K. S. Badruddin and Ibrahim Beg, and the photo and Persian translation to the latter. I enclose Ibrahim Beg's reply. He is evidently delighted (as well he might be) at your remembering him so effectively. That old scoundrel Badruddin [*underlining in blue pencil along with a marginal line next to this sentence – DW*] has not yet acknowledged your letter, sent to him 3 months ago. When I reach Khotan I will find out whether he has written to you direct, if not, I will tell him what I think of him.

A small matter which may interest you: on p. 44 of "Ancient Khotan" you discuss the mention by the 'Western Pilgrim' (as they all call him here) of jade being found in the district of Wu-sha, i.e. presumably in the Yarkand River valley.[234] Well, last summer the mines to which Hsuan-tsang must have referred were rediscovered by the Chinese, and are now being worked with much energy. They are at a place called Tung on the Yarkand River, 56 m. ESE of Tashkurghan and 78 m. SW of Yarkand. The Chinese official who is working them has brought most of the jade-cutters of Khotan here to Kashgar, and has also impressed the unfortunate local Tajiks as labourers in the mines. One of the latter actually committed suicide the other day as a protest against the impressment of his village. How the Chinese heard about the mine I don't know; thanks to their inane methods of exploiting the mineral resources of their country, anyone who knows about valuable minerals or oil on his estate keeps it as dark as he can for fear lest the Chinese hear about it and impress him and his neighbours for forced labor.

I must finish now. I hope I am not giving you too much trouble about the map and panoramas. There is no hurry about them: I shall not require them again before the end of the year. If you are so good as to write to the Survey people on the subject you might mention that I am looking forward to seeing them at Dehra Dun on my return to India, I hope next October or November. I ought really to write to Col. Cowie myself and perhaps I shall find time to later, at present I am very busy indeed and hardly able to get everything in before I go off again on a long tour.

I know you will forgive type, my writing is really too bad for infliction on my friends at any length, and it is really better manners to spare them the trouble of wading through it than to stand on ceremony about typing.

My wife sends her best regards. She is only too happy here and at such places as Kaying, and there will be many tears I foresee when the time comes for departure.

[*handwritten:*]

Yours very sincerely

C. P. Skrine

P.S. If you have one of the same photos of yourself to spare as the one you sent to Ibrahim Beg, I should be greatly honoured with one. It is an excellent photo.

operations by the fog-like haze of this region. All along the southern edge of the Tārim basin and the adjoining mountains it rarely lifts except for short periods of the late autumn and winter.'

234. Stein (1907 [1981], I, p. 44) wrote:

> In the general description which Hsüan-tsang gives of the products, climate, &c., of Wu-sha, the reference to the jade found there alone calls for notice. I am unable at present to adduce exact evidence as to jade-mining within the limits to which I believe the territory of Wu-sha to have extended. But it must not be supposed that the find-places of this much-prized stone are limited in Turkestān to the Khotan region […] Modern Chinese accounts […] distinctly mention jade-mining operations in the mountains near the Yarkand river, and it remains to be seen whether some of the places meant are not situated to the north of the river, within the region of the ancient Wu-sha […]

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[*Appended on a separate sheet, typed with some handwritten insertions (The Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, Stein MSS 107, fol. 55r,v). I have inserted in brackets the Fig. numbers for the photos that I am fairly confident correspond to what he sent Stein and which have been reproduced above in this book. Clearly he sent Stein a fairly complete set of his most important photos documenting the 'Qungur Alps', most of then to be published on his return from Kashgar.*]

List of Panoramas and other photographs sent with map of Kaying and neighbouring Jilgas.
(Number of each photo & panorama is on a tab at the side)

* * *

(A) Taken with 9.5" focus Film Camera (Goetz Dagor F/ 6.3 lens single combination)

(I) Panorama (7 piece) taken from Stn. 2, alt. 12,750 ft., looking S.E. – S. – W.

(II) Panorama (10 pieces) taken from Stn. 4, alt 15,600 ft., looking E. – S. – W. – N.W. [*Fig. 128 – top photo*]

(III) Panorama (5 pieces) taken from above Chat near debouchure of Ghijak glen into Upper Karatash Valley, alt. 12,400 ft., looking S.S.W. – N.N.W. [*Fig. 116*]

(B) Taken with 6.1 inch focus Plate Camera, Goerz Dagor F/ lens ~~single combination~~, fine grain dry plates.

(IV) Panorama (upright, 3 pieces) taken from r. bank of Karatash R. opposite debouchure of Karatumush Jilga, looking SSW – WSW.

(V) Ditto 10.1 inch focus, single combination Panorama (2 pieces) taken from Stn. 5, 16,200 ft., looking SSW – WSW. [*Fig. 128 – bottom photo*]

(C) Taken with 14.1 inch focus Telephoto (Dallmeyer Adon lens and back combination of Goerz Dagor, fine grain dry plates.)

(VI) Panorama (5 pieces) taken from top of Kurghan Stupa opp. Br. Consulate General Kashgar, looking S – SW – WSW. [*Fig. 125*]

(VII) Panorama (3 pieces) taken from top of Aksai Dawan alt. 9,400 ft. looking SW – W by S. [*Fig. 131*]

(VIII) Panorama taken from above Chat, 1 m. to N. of (III), alt. 11,500 ft. looking NW. [*Fig. 117, one of pieces, showing the SE face of the highest peak of Mt. Kongur*].

(D) Single Photographs.

(1) Telephoto taken from Stn 4 of Shiwakte Pks. 1 and 3, with (?) back of Pk. 2. [*cf. ctr. segment of his panorama A (II) – DW*]

(2) Telephoto taken frm Stn. 5 of Shiwakte Pk 2, (a) and (b) looking S. [*cf. rt.-ctr. segment of his panorama B (V) – DW*]

(3) 6.1 inch focus view taken with plate camera looking NNW from juniper and pine woods along banks of Kaying stream, showing Chopkana Pass and Kaying Beli.

(4) inch focus film camera view taken from ledge of cliffs on SE side of Kaying J., showing Shiwakte Pk 1 and Zumurrat. [*Fig. 127, 3rd photo*]

(D.) (5) 6.1" foc. view S. from l. bank 1 m. below Karatumush Agzi, showing Karatash Gorge [*Fig. 120, photo on rt.*]

(6) Telephoto of Kungur II from Stn 3. [*Fig. 82*]

[*signed*] Skrine

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[circ. 27 February 1924]

A hurried scribble just on the point of departure for Yarkand, Kargalik, Goma, Khotan & Keriya. Our departure coincides with a heavy mail which also leaves today, so I'm terribly rushed – just getting the 'mapas' (Chinese carts) off by 11 A.M. to Yapchan (24 m.) where we stop tonight [...]

***

Yapchan, 1 March 1924

Herewith 5 enlargements from my plate camera which after showing to anybody who wants to see them, you might send round to Miss Ella Sykes with a note asking whether she thinks the R[oyal] G[eographical] S[ociety] people would like an 'exhibition' of these & a lot of similar views for their 'Photo Room'? She knows the right R.G.S. official to ask. Tell her at the same time that I have pushed off a lot of stuff to Methuens' some of which may take their fancy. I wrote to her the other day thanking her for her good offices. Very few authors are applied to by leading publishers for their first book! Usually it's the other way on!

***

Camp, Yarkand, 9 March 1924

We had a curious journey from Kashgar; the first two days it was bitterly cold, water freezing on the road at mid-day and a horrible wind; the third day middling, and the fourth and fifth marches hot as summer almost! at any rate the sun was so strong that we had to wear our topees and got quite badly burnt.

The only incident worthy of note was our passing, a little way out of Yangi Hissar where the road crosses a wide absolutely flat grassy plain, the most musical camel-caravan I have ever heard. It was rather an interesting one, too, for it was carrying sugar from Russian Turkestan and oil from Baku to Khotan, a visible sign of the somewhat improved industrial conditions in Trans-Caspia. They were fine big Kashgari camels, about 60 of them, and they were as impressive as such caravans always are as they filed slowly across the plain; but it was the bells that we shall never forget. I never heard such a carillon! There were big bells and little bells, loud bells and soft bells, high-pitched bells and low, booming bells and cracked bells, double bells one inside the other, iron bells from Toqsun in the far north-east with camels' bones as clappers, big copper bells from Kashgar, and, alas! one blatant, jangling ship's bell of which I need hardly say they were most proud of all. (I wonder which sea it came from, by the way? We're a thousand miles from the nearest steamer here.) Some of the camels had two bells hanging from their necks, which is unusual; as a rule only the leader of each string has one.[*In his Field Diary, p. 28, a much re-written passage (later printed in edited form and dated 7 March in* CCA*, p. 244), containing essentially the same*

text as the foregoing under 2 March, concludes: How harsh & discordant the note reminiscent of cross-Channel steamers and indigestible meals in crowded dining-saloons & yet in after thought it had its romance: how came a ship's bell to this the part of the world's broadest continent forty days journey from the nearest sea?]

It was lucky having a really brilliant day for our 'triumphant entry' into Yarkand with about a hundred British subjects of all kinds and religions mounted on fiery Badakshi ponies behind us; for ever since it has been nasty and cold with a dust haze and very little sun. That was Tuesday; it is now Sunday, and I have been hard at it ever since paying and receiving calls. Yesterday for example I started the afternoon (after a morning's case-work) by a visit to the dentist (Nyström at the Mission) and then paid six calls of half to three quarters of an hour each, at three of which I spoke Persian, two Turki and one Hindustani. I slept well last night, I can tell you. D. has been busy too. However, we have only had one dinner party as yet, and in this respect the coming week bids fair to be far more strenuous even than the last. There will be at least three Chinese dinners; we have got to give two ourselves (not being able to accommodate more than nine guests at a time, even in the big tent I have brought down specially from Kashgar for the purpose); Mohammad Sharif, the Afghan Envoy (soi-disant Consul General) will probably weigh in with a lunch; the Hindus are giving a tremendous beano in their big serai on Wednesday, at which D and I are to act as hosts to the Chinese and Moh[amma]d Sharif; and last but not least, there is Election Day and the festivities connected therewith next Sunday. I must explain that the election is of a new Aksakal (lit. white-beard, i.e., the British Consular agent at this place, who looks after the interests of British subjects (especially his own) and brings their cases before the Amban). Although the pay is small the izzat attached to position of British Aksakal is considerable, which is just as it should be, and there are no less than five candidates of whom three are in the running. The Aksakal has to be a Mussalman, as although there are over a hundred Hindu traders living here at the present moment, theirs is a floating population whereas the Mussalmans are mostly landowners. Each of the chief Mussalman communities of British Indian origin, the Kashmiris, the Bajauris, the Baltis and the Followers of the Agha Khan (who are quite numerous even in this remote part) is running its candidate, and each is trying to capture the Hindu vote. But the Hindus themselves are divided as usual into two factions, bitterly hostile and each determined that the other's favourite shall not be Aksakal. So you can imagine what a welter of intrigue, back-biting and slandering the British Indian 'community' is just now? It is most amusing. I have decided to introduce two innovations in Aksakalship elections, namely secret ballot and the Alternative Vote. The latter will at any rate give me an idea as to which of the candidates is least hated by most of the electors.

The one dinner-party we have been to was a terrible affair at the Yamen of the new District Magistrate, Liu, who has unfortunately replaced the excellent Li Chi-i, who was here last year. The new Amban is a sad falling-off; he is the father-in-law of the Governor's son, and was for several years Taoyin of Aksu, a much more exalted post than Amban of Yarkand. The reason for his apparent 'demotion' is this. He got into fearful debt, and is said to have owed 70,000 taels last year, so he applied for a fat Ambanship in order to recoup his finances! I may explain that in China a Taoyin's yamen is called a 'clear-water yamen' while an Amban's is called a 'dirty-water yamen' because it is the Ambans who have the collection of revenue (like Collectors in India) whereas the Taoyin is an inspecting and supervising officer lik[e] a Commissioner.[235] This man only intends to stay a year or so at Yarkand and pay off his

235. Back on 17 August 1923, Skrine had recorded in his Field Diary, p. 1, the following: 'Chu tells me that Li of Yarkand is being transferred to make way for the Governor's son's aged father-in-law. The latter has been Taoyin of Aksu, but doesn't want another Taoyinship – not enough 'squeezement' as Chu puts it. I[n] China a Taoyin's yamen is called 'clear-water yamen' as

debts, and then return to Urumchi to get another Taoyinship from his daughter's father-in-law. Anyway, he is a fairly mouldy specimen and his dinner was one of the worst of the kind we have suffered from. When after the preliminary tea-drinking at side-tables we all (about 30 including all the Swedes, Chinese officials and Moh[amma]d Sharif) sat down to table I found opposite me a tumbler of tea, which turned out to be stone cold, so I sent it away. The soup was even colder, all the dishes Chinese filth of the most virulent kind, and the only drink raw cheap brandy, neat as usual (Next to cheap, flat, sweet 'champagne' or sparkling Moselle, brandy neat is <u>the</u> drink at Chinese dinner-parties). I had a headache all the following day as a result of the brandy. But the funniest was what happened to D. At dinner Chu ex-Taoyin, with whom as you know we are great friends, poured away a lot of his brandy into his tea in order to avoid drinking it, tipping the wink to me to do the same. That was all right, but after dinner when we returned to the side-tables to drink the final tea and eat dessert, D. found herself served not with fresh tea but with Mr. Chu's glass full of cold tea mixed with raw brandy!! She says it very nearly turned her up, and no wonder.[236]





Fig. 163. Clarmont's snap of the arrival of the new Mrs. Dao Tai with her retinue (after: Nazaroff, facing p. 32), and Doris's drawing of her, presumably produced from memory after the guests had departed (from the British Library Collection: IOLR MSS EurF 154/54).

This week we have had horrible hazy cold weather, and I haven't taken any photos except what I thought was two plates of the Afghan 'Consul-General' and his staff when they came to call on me – and they (the photos) weren't exactly a success, because when I came to develop them I found that there were no plates inside the holders! I had forgotten to change these particular plate-holders before leaving Kashgar! But a roll of films that I took during Feb. at Kashgar has turned out very well, and contains two or three very interesting photos; two of Chinese ladies coming to call on D., which I took secretly from the window of the dining-room, and one very good group of wives and daughters of Consulate staff taken by D. at a party with my camera according to my instructions.[237] [*Fig. 163*] One of the former is particularly

opp[ose]d to a Hsien's yamen which is called 'dirty-water yamen.''

236. Skrine frequently commented on what he felt was a kind of ostentatious but at root insincere display of hospitality on the part of his hosts. For example, in a later entry of his Field Diary, p. 45, he recorded what his secretary Murad Qari (from Yarkand) told him, referring in the first instance perhaps to Turki customs, not Chinese:

> According to Qari, there is (or at any rate used to be) much the same sort of hollow ostentation in hospitality & cutting a dash on false pretenses as we have at home. E.g., the Kakcha or big flat round 'bread' is made with an admixture of something glutinous in order to make it hard and durable, so that not only can the same set of kakchas appear before guest after guest in the same house, but they can be loaned to friends for the same purpose! Again, the chunks of mutton, chicken etc. put before guests are always half-cooked, so as to look larger. Tough meat is preferred to tender because you owe it to your guests to give their teeth plenty to do.
>
> Besides kakchas & other implements of hospitality, clothes and ceremonial hats used to be lent round for feasts a great deal. Some of these hats were very big and heavily embroidered and expensive, & few could afford them; but they were essential to a really smart turn out, hence the system.

237. It is not clear which of the photos we have included above (*Fig. 70, lower left; or Fig. 162*) is the one to which he refers here that Doris took. Both images show the musicians who performed at the women's entertainment, the first an informal snapshot of substandard quality during a dance, the second the formally posed group in the consular courtyard.

good; it shows the wife of the Titai and her daughter-in-law walking up the drive preceded by one of my chaprassis carrying their red cards aloft, with a background of Chinese troops, i.e., the escort without which the ladies in question never stir out, as well as their military band! The pompous cortège contrasts effectively with the two tiny figures of the ladies stumping along on their squashed feet. In the other photo the wife of the Tao Tai is arriving and D. is just going out to meet her. I don't think many previous Europeans in Central Asia have got such photos.

Tuesday 11 March 1924. I hoped to have had a letter of yours to answer, but it looks very much as if there had been an accident to the dâk from India, for it had not reached Kashgar even by last Saturday when the clerk in charge last wrote to us. It ought to get in on Mondays, but in winter it is ofte[n] as late as Wednesday; I have never before known it as late as Saturday or even Friday. It will [be] exceedingly awkward if anything serious has happened to the mail, for I am expecting all sorts of important letters and telegrams, including news of my leave and who is to succeed me.

Pigot has also arrived here. I advised him (as there was difficulty about his travelling via Gilgit) to go down by the Chitral route, and he has decided to try it. But it involves crossing a strip of Afghan territory, which until two or three years ago was out of the question, as Afghanistan was strictly closed to British officers. Now however we are by way of being friends with Afghanistan and the country open to British, so though no one has used the route yet I don't see why Pigot shouldn't. What is more, <u>we</u> may use it ourselves if Pigot's report is favourable; I am rather taken with the idea of returning to India by a different route to the one we came up by. The Afghan envoy here actually suggested our going down <u>via Kabul</u> next autumn, so he isn't likely to refuse Pigot a visa for three or four days transit across this remote bit of Afghan territory. It would be awfully nice to go down via Kabul, but I don't know whether it will be practicable. Afghan Wakhan and Badakhshan (the ancient Balkh) are safe enough and the country is easier than the Gilgit route, but it is a longer route and it would be impossible to spend less than a week at Kabul. From Kabul we would of course go by motor to Pashawar in a couple of days.

I must knock off now as I have much case-work to get through and we are due at six-thirty (of all hours) to a dinner party at the 'Chih-li Club'. This will be an <u>out-door</u> affair as there is to be a Chinese theatre performance and I fear we shall be frozen stiff before the time for the sea-slugs and fish-entrails arrives, somewhere about nine o'clock.

***

[*The Field Diary, pp. 28-32, contains several interesting entries from the visit to Yarkand. In particular, note the account of what really happened at the theatrical performance, and compare that with the excerpt which then I quote from* CCA*, showing how Skrine re-wrote the story in order to preserve the dignity of His Majesty's Consul-General. Significantly, he seems to have omitted the embarrassment of the theatrical event from his letters home. His speculation about Bolshevik intrigue to keep Governor Yang in place is way off the mark, as Yang was vigorously trying to keep them at bay.*]

The new Tungling of Yarkand is quite an interesting person. He differs from every other official I have met in being a native of Sinkiang, not of some other province of China. His ancestors have been in military service of the Urumchi gov't. for 6 generations. Incidentally he is about as un-martial-looking an individual as could possibly be imagined, but he has had quite a varied career all the same. He has been to Harbin and to Moscow; he has been on special duty in wild Kansu; he has been staff-officer to a General who was banished to Sinkiang for implication in the Boxer rising. But perhaps his most remarkable job was when he & 2 other 'wei-yuans' (Special Officers) were detailed to take 500 horses from Urumchi all the way to

Both images have been preserved from nitrate negatives and thus could have come from the single roll of film Skrine mentions as the source for the prints he is sending.

Peking as a present to the great Yuan Shih Kai.[238] I asked him whether he got the whole 500 safely over the 3000 mile road journey? He said 'Oh, we lost some, but we had a margin of several tens & we delivered 500 horses all right.'

Apropos of the Karaul Jash parricide case, Chu ex-Taoyin told me this afternoon that under the Ching Dynasty an Amban was always punished for the occurrence of a murder in his district. If the murder took place within 4 potai of his yamen he got it in the neck; if outside that radius, his punishment was lighter.

10 March 1924. Had long interviews with Liu Amban and Chu ex-Taoyin, 3–7 P.M. Latter particularly important. I gathered from him that he was hoping to get back to Kashgar as Tao Tai; that he had been turned out in 1922 by the 'Hidden Hand', apropos of which he told me that in the spring of that year he saw in a Bolo paper an article in which they said 'Now we have got our men everywhere in Sinkiang except at Kashgar, so we must give Kashgar a wide berth in the meantime.' Thus came his downfall & the advent of Hsü [who] is one of the Bolos' men.

Chu noted that the influence of the H[idden] H[and] was very noticeable of late throughout Sinkiang. Disturbances everywhere, law & order relaxed, intrigue rife. E.g., (1) opium (2) treatment of Moh[amma]d Sharif. The Governor knew all about the opium importation scandal, but did nothing, & Ambans went on being corrupted. As for M.S., he, Chu, had recommended (1) that a special clause sh[oul]d be included in the draft agreement to the effect that any Afghan found smuggling opium sh[oul]d be severely punished; this clause was omitted by the Urumchi gov't. (2) that as M[ohamma]d Sharif refused to accept the Ch. terms or conclude any agreement he sh[oul]d be told to go home again. Gov't. had not approved this proposal & M.S. was still here, calling himself C[onsul] G[eneral].

I told Chu about the financing of the Af[ghan] 'C[onsula]te Gen[era]l' by opium sales by the Af[ghan] gov't. in Sinkiang, also about my suspicions re Pan-Islamic propaganda, viz.:

(1) Ishan Khalfa, the Swedish agitation.

(2) Said Kemal at Kashgar & the man at Kuchar – their anti-British talk; all since M.S. came.

(3) The increasing talk in Yarkand ever since M.S. came about Islam vs. Kufr – unity of Islam.

(4) M.S.'s exhortations in his speeches about unity of Islam, Mussalmans arise etc. In short a new channel for the entry of propaganda & money had been opened by the estab[lishmen]t of Sino-Afghan relations, & it looked very much as if that channel were being used. Chu emphatically agreed with me. He practically told me in as many words that it was the Bolos who were corrupting the Urumchi Gov't. thro' their Mission. He actually used the word bribery.

Perhaps it is the Bolos who are preventing the Central Gov't. from replacing Yang.

'Baltur ke Consul shu.'

11 March 1924. Dinner and theatre at the Chihli Club with ex-Daotai-Chu. Party: D., self, Nyströms, Chu, Liu Amban, Chu's Tungling, Li ex-Amb[an], 2 or 3 minor offic[ia]ls, Ch[inese] Writer Chu's friend the banker who now runs the Chihli club. Latter is a club of Chinese merchants in Yarkand; it was formed 12 years ago. The large courtyard had been roofed entirely over with cloth; on the left was a temporary stage on which the company performed; on the right was the dinner table set for 20 or more and many small tables. Crowds of Chinese servants, secretaries, soldiers, & bottle-washers of all kinds, & still larger crowds of Turki hangers-on, children and tamashachis filled the place up. As we sat at table our 'view' of the stage was continually being blocked by the latter who edged forward in solid phalanxes to be furiously driven back from time to time by Chinese minions. The Tao Tai's children were there – an exquisitely pretty little girl (12 but looked 7) dressed in red with a wonderful butterfly ornament of enamel & jade & jewels with a sort of aigrette of gold spraying downwards from it; an older boy & 2 or 3 young children, far too young to stay up to 12:00 or later. All the children of the Chinese bureaucracy of Yarkand were there. One in particular spent most of the time planted solidly in the middle of the open space between our table & the stage staring solemnly at the players. Dressed in grown-up clothes with a fur-lined black satin jacket

238. Yuan Shikai 袁世凱 (1859-1916), a powerful general who became the first president of China following the overthrow of the Qing Dynasty in 1912 and then attempted to restore the monarchy with himself as emperor in 1915. See Spence 1991, esp. pp. 265-268, 277-287.

& black silk skirt surmounted by an absurd green Homburg hat; his back view was that of an exceptionally fat Amban about 2 feet high and as broad as he was long.

All Chinese actors are men & all sing or speak in falsetto, that of the female characters being only uglier & more strident and more absurd than that of the males. Some of the 'women' are quite well made up. Others the reverse. Most wear magnificent embroidered dresses, especially the Emperor's Prime Ministers and Generals in the classical plays. In the latter the masks & headdresses are magnificent & portentous. A great feature is the acrobatic & other dancing. The evolutions [*sic*] they perform and the speed of their movements betoken practice since early childhood; how they do it on so small a stage is the wonder. One of them was quite a first-class gymnast; he did some remarkable long-arm & even single-arm balance feats. But the best thing was the dance of the Generals in one of the old war plays. They came in wearing wonderful cloaks, masks and enormous pagoda-like erections on their heads & sticking up from their backs, behind their heads a trophy of four flags showing that they each commanded four armies or four platoons or something. These vast grotesque figures danced like two-year-olds. Their ordinary walk, even, was inexpressively comic for every now and again they (for no apparent reason) stood on one leg well bent forward with the other held horizontally in front of them. How they kept upright in that extraordinary position was a mystery. The company, which charges nothing for seats but expects fat tips not only from the host but from each of the guests (we usually gave Ts. 4 each) sends a long red paper list of plays it can put on; its repertoire, in fact, and each of the more important guests chooses a play. Not knowing one from another, of course, D. & I relied on Chu who suggested one about a famous robber.[239] D. was delighted & the robber play was duly acted. Imagine D.'s confusion when it turned out to be most improper, the plot being that the robber & his band were caught by the help of the ladies of easy virtue at whose residence they were inveigled into spending the night. Chu when he knows one of the less common English words or slang phrases never fails to impress the fact on the company & in spite of furious winks & head-shakes from me he revelled in explaining the circumstances of the brigands' capture in the 'whore-shop' and telling us in a loud voice exactly which of the characters were prostitutes and which weren't. Luckily Mrs. Nyström's English is very elementary, but Nyström must have been greatly shocked. The dance of the brigands was very fine & full of movements & postures strongly reminiscent of the Russian Ballet (who must have borrowed them from China), but what brought the house down was the nautch-dancing of the chief prostitute. This was most realistic, judging at least by the amusement & appreciation of the tamashachis, many of whom still further embarrassed us by casting sidelong glances at us every now & again to see that we weren't missing the point!

Later on there was another 'classical' play about brigands, a much better & less risqué one – the bandit kidnaps no less a person than the Gov[erno]r of the Province, whereupon a band of public-spirited heroes determine to rescue him. This is done by a ruse, the heroes dressing up as a troupe of actors in full rig & passing in carriages near the mountains where the chief Brigand has his fastness. Plenty of comic relief over the carriages, which are represented by two gaudily-decked poles which the occupant of the 'carriage' holds in his hands horizontally, one on each side, the horse being a boy running in front holding the fore-ends of the poles and the driver another boy behind. Horse jibs, runs away etc. & the carriage upsets. The 'troupe' is duly captured by the Chief Brigand & dragged to his lair where they are made to act & dance to amuse him. The C.B. is a wonderful sight with a magnificent yellow embroidered robe and an enormous black mask of appalling ferocity surmounted by a head-dress of vast size and complexity. At the psychological moment, actors throw off their cloaks & produce clubs, knives, swords etc. & a battle royal ensues, the C.B. fighting for his life and laying about him like a good 'un. The dance combat is accompanied by a truly appalling noise made by the band, reinforced specially for the occasion by men with brass trays & cymbals. To me this was the most trying part of the whole 5 ½ hours' entertainment, for the clashing and banging went on for half an hour or more & towards the end each bang of the tray and smash of the large solid cymbals seemed to operate direct onto my nervous system. D. says her nervous system, specially her feet were so numbed & cold & the absorption of 30 odd courses of shark's fin, bêche de mer etc. that it wasn't affected by the noise, which was something anyway. We eventually escaped at quarter

239. The several mentions of Chinese with the surname Chu (Zhu) here is confusing. The one who helped select the play and then proclaimed its humor loudly was Chu, the 'Mr. George' who was the Chinese translator for the consulate.

to 12 having arrived at 6:15. The theatre was still in full swing, & the children still looking on. Wonderful people, the Chinese.

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[*While much of the description of the theatrical in* CCA *1925, pp. 245-247, follows verbatim what Skrine recorded in his diary, one crucial paragraph (p. 246) in the book has a significant difference:*]

At these 'command' performances it is customary for the actor-manager to put on plays from his repertoire (they all seemed to be short, about the length of an average curtain-raiser) according to the wishes of the chief guests, who are expected to reward him liberally for the compliment. A long red paper scroll is brought round inscribed with the names of the plays from which you choose your fancy. We foreign guests had, of course, to rely on the Consulate interpreter, C., to tell us the titles of the plays; D. and I chose classical war-pieces, Mrs. L., of the Swedish Church Mission, one about brigands which she thought would be exciting. It was, but not quite in the way she expected. It proved to be highly improper – the only improper play we had the whole evening, and also, I am sorry to say, the most popular. The 'gallery', of course, thought that the foreign lady had chosen it on purpose. They approved highly of her taste and kept looking round at her with delighted grins to make sure that she did not miss any of the points, especially during what was apparently a most realistic imitation by the leading 'lady' of a Chinese nautch-dance. What made matters worse was that C., who is immensely proud of his command of the language, in spite of furious winks and head-shakes from me, insisted on explaining in a loud voice exactly what was happening and which of the female characters were no better than they should be. It was most embarrassing and we were all covered with confusion.

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[*The cable he refers to with the news, sent from the station at Misgar, arrived in London on 22 March. Apparently there was some delay in delivery of the cable, since Frank Skrine wrote on 24 March to one of his contacts in the India Office inquiring as to the reason for Lyall's appointment, about which he first heard from Lyall himself. See the file in BL IOLR L/P&S/10/453.*]

Yarkand, 18 March 1924

Just off to Posgam after a terrible week of dinner-parties & cases, cases came all day long – and the Elections which I'll tell you about next week. This is just so as not to miss the post, & also to say that I have heard at last that my leave is granted & who my successor is. I am cabling this news to you. I don't know 'Lyall' but presume he is a civilian as otherwise they would have given his military rank.[240] I don't know any Political Dept. man of that name, but it is just possible that there may be a Lyall in the N[orth] W[est] F[rontier] P[rovince] or somewhere I haven't heard of. It's a good name!

240. Lt. Col. Robert Adolphus Lyall (1876-1948) had a distinguished military record, had been promoted to Major at the beginning of WW I and received the Distinguished Service Order in 1917. His appointment to Kashgar in 1924 was one of several positions he filled for the Indian Political Service. His languages included Persian and Pashto. Lyall arrived in Kashgar just before Skrine left in 1924 and remained in the post only until 24 July 1925, when he was relieved by Major George Van Baerle Gillan, who, after distinguished service in WWI, embarked on a series of civilian appointments for the Government of India. On Lyall, see the web-page for the auction of what apparently was the formal dress uniform he had ordered to use while serving at the consulate in Kashgar: https://hansonslive.hansonsauctioneers.co.uk/m/lot-details/index/catalog/506/lot/229213?url=%2Fm%2Fview-auctions%2Fcatalog%2Fid%2F506%3Fpage%3D4%26view%3Dgrid, last accessed 30 January 2025.

Chinese post to Kashgar is just closing so goodbye [...]

We're tremendously relieved at being at last out of suspense.

***

Kargalik, 21 March 1924

We had such a terrible rush our last few days that I wasn't able to do more than scribble you a few lines last mail, which was a pity. As usual, everything came at the end of our visit – it is the same at all these places. Petitions, which might have been presented immediately on arrival are thrown at one on the day before one's departure. Same with meals. We were 13 days in Yarkand, the first six days we had one party; the last 7 days we had six parties. We gave two ourselves, bringing down cutlery glasses etc. for 10 people from Kashgar for the purpose, also a very large tent to use as a dining room. The first one we had only Chinese officials, the 2nd was a less official one & we had Mrs. Nyström, Miss Engvald (ex-Missionary lady from Kuchar), the Afghan Envoy and his secretary, & my Mir Munshi, Moh[amma]d Nasir. I think I told you last year all about Moh[amma]d Sharif & his mission from Kabul to be Afghan Consul General in Sinkiang, how he started right off by calling himself C.G. but hasn't yet been recognized as such by the Chinese who don't like him or any of his works! I am pretty sure that he and his secretary, Abdul Ghani, who is a protégé of the Bolsheviks are working against us too – but I have no proof and superficially we are the best of friends. We exchanged calls with great ceremony, he dined with us 'en famille' almost, & we dined with him – it's an amusing situation. Personally I rather like the man, tho' he is not a very good type; he isn't at all the hairy Pathan but is much more like a Persian, being, I believe an ex-minor official of the Amir's court. Speaks bad Persian but enough to be able to converse with one fairly freely; his native language is Pashtu. His secretary is a really remarkable linguist; speaks (1) Persian (2) Russian (3) Turki (4) Chinese (5) Arabic (6) Hindustani. Of those, the 3 I know (Persian, Turki & Hindustani) he speaks with perfect fluency & good accent; I can't vouch for the others but he <u>sounds</u> fluent. His Chinese is not good – only Yarkandi colloquial. At dinner with us Moh[amma]d Sharif really enjoyed himself, told & listened to innumerable stories, roared at various jokes rendered into Persian for him (sometimes with considerable difficulty) by Abdul Ghani or myself, took off his tarbush [~fez – *DW*] & beamed all over. I have never seen a Mussulman take off his hat at a dinner party before!

Apart from a tremendous amount of case-work, some of it very complicated, my last few days were very much occupied in buying horses. You have probably heard of the horses of Badakhshan, the northernmost of the provinces of Afghanistan? Badakhshi horses are second only to those of Arabia in the East. Well, I heard in Kashgar in the winter that there were many in Yarkand, mostly brought by opium smugglers the autumn before, & I determined to get hold of one or two. The trouble was that the Afghan Gov't. prohibits the sale by Afghans of registered Badakhshi horses & Moh[amma]d Sharif has been enforcing this rule on his Afghan subjects in Yarkand. I didn't want to have to apply to him for permission, which I knew he would only grant as a favour, if I could possibly help it, so I tried hard to get hold of Badakhshi horses in the hands of British & Chinese subjects. I did as a matter of fact get one very fine thoroughbred Badakhshi, about 14-3 high from a Chinese subject. But D. (for whom I was buying as her mount has gone hopelessly lame) didn't like its paces, & wouldn't look at anything but a big black 3-year-old stallion with long legs and an arm-chair gallop. This I eventually got for her, but only by asking Moh[amma]d Sharif's permission, because it belonged to a Badakhshi opium-smuggler. The horse must be over 15 hands (I haven't measured it yet) & looks like a possible racer, being long in

the leg and full of bone. My own purchase is a magnificent beast, over 8 years old I should say, but full of life and showing breeding in every line – though poor beast he has been fed by his late owner on nothing but manes of wheat middlings & lucerne, & is therefore as round as a barrel and in hopeless condition. If I can get these two horses down to India, I'll sell them for a pot of money; but it's a big 'if'.

And what do you think I paid for them? Nine pounds six shillings and eightpence each.[241]

Truly Chinese Turkestan has its advantages!

We broke away with difficulty at last on Tuesday morning and marched 15 miles to Posgam, the headquarters of a small district. On this occasion we had a record number of 'chah-jans' or wayside tea-drinkings, no less than 6 being prepared for us, namely:

Farewell:

(1) the Amban & Military C.O. of Yarkand

(2) the British Subjects of Yarkand

(3) the Beg of the last village in Yarkand district [*alt. from FD:* Beg of Sehshamba Bazar, half way, Yarkand Amb[a]n's orderly [?]]

Welcome:

(4) the British subjects of Posgam, on the right bank of the Yarkand river

(5) Haji Turâb Shah, the wealthiest Br. subject of the district, at his house 3 m. [*alt.* 4 m.] from Posgam bazar

(6) the Amban of Posgam.

Nos. 1, 2, 4 and 6 were formal and it wasn't necessary to do more than sip tea & smoke a cigarette but Nos. 3 and 5 were regular Gargantuan meals with vast dishes of stewed chicken & mutton & mountainous pilaus. In both cases the cooking was excellent, especially No. 5 [*FD, p. 32:* as for H. Turab Shah's super-Irish stews of chicken, turnips and spinach & his savory pilaus, words fail me] and I at any rate ate too much! D. didn't do badly either. To the above 6 functions add my exchange of calls with the Amban of Posgam the same evening, and you will arrive at the remarkable total of eight tea-parties in one afternoon. Have you ever heard of any one beating that record, even in London?

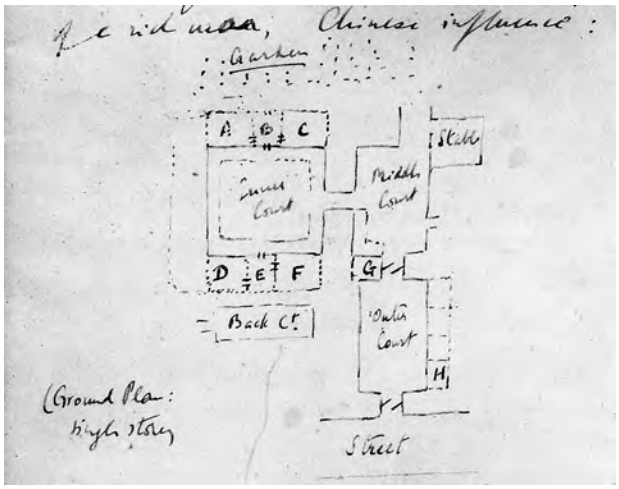


Fig. 164. Skrine's floor plan sketch for his explanation of the layout of a 'Chinese-influenced' Turki elite residence in Posgam (CPS to HSS, 12 March 1924, from the British Library Collection: IOLR, MSS EurF 154/10).

At Posgam which is a small place but growing, with fine big bazaars only partially occupied as yet & an enormous Yamen we were lent a big new Turki house with a lovely garden, still in the grip of winter of course. It may interest you to see the plan of a typical Turki house of a rich man, Chinese influence: [*sketch plan. Fig. 164*]

There is a front door, you see, and a long court behind it with servants' rooms on each side; another

241. In his Field Diary, under 18 March, p. 32, he records the price as '£ 8.6s. each (tls. 80)'. In what follows in this letter, I indicate in brackets the alternative readings in his diary entry.

gateway & a middle court with a few houses and the stables & a well-paved, better-built inner court with two suites of rooms in the Chinese style, i.e. each consisting of a draughty and uncomfortable anteroom in the middle and two good rooms, one on each side, opening off it. (ABC and DEF). All Chinese Yamens, private houses, dâk bungalows (gwandans or gondans they call them here) etc. are built on this plan, and a damned inconvenient plan it is too, for a respectable European married couple travelling in these parts for the following reason: the lady must have a separate & private bathroom, which means that she takes up both the good rooms (for the middle room, being the only avenue of access to the other two, is extremely public) and the man has either to share the lady's room usually barely big enough to contain one camp bed & a table, or sleep in the middle room which is never provided with a fireplace and is always vilely draughty and cold, its doors being large and ill fitting as a rule – sometimes it has no doors at all, being in fact a front hall or ante-room rather than a living room.

[*In his Field Diary, pp. 33-34, 19 September, he adds these notes taken down in Posgam:* Present & ex-Amban of Posgam told me today that when new land is brought under cultivation no revenue is demanded for 3 years, & only half rates 4th–7th years. Any amount of water available here from Yarkand River.

Every Amban on relinquishing charge is supposed to return to Urumchi and revert as a clerk in the Governor's Secretariat. Shows how determined the Gov[erno]r is to keep a hold on all his district mag[istrate]s.

Interesting to consider the position in Sinkiang in the light of Ch. I of the New Constitution promulgated on Oct. 10th 1923,[242] which defines 'National Powers' as opp[ose]d to 'Provincial Powers' (i.e. division of functions between Central & Prov[incia]l Gov'ts.) Among other forces reserved to P[e]k[in]g are

1. For[eign] Aff[air]s
2. National Defence
3. Currency
4. Customs
5. Stamp tax
6. Communications (railway, roads, telegraphs, post & aviation)
7. Control of Civil & military officials

Provincial powers limited to:

8. 'Provincial' taxation including land revenue
9. Provincial and municipal affairs
10. Education
11. Police

All of Nos. (1) to (7) are in hands of Gov[erno]r except the following:

(a) Post Office
(b) Certain officials who belong to regular cadre & are sent to and from Sinkiang by Peking.
(8), (9) & (11) also; (10) does not exist.

Chu[243] told me solemnly today about a fabulously rich Chinese merchant, who made a fortune out of rubber & afterwards started breweries & steamship lines etc. etc. & how he got his first rubber concession in the Philippines. There was a huge snake (?dragon) which lived in a rubber forest & nobody dared to attack it. The Governor of the Philippines offered the concession to anyone who would kill the snake. The Chinaman led a party armed with machine-guns and revolvers, found the snake and fought it. The snake swallowed the Chinaman, who however cut his way out of the beast's stomach with his knife and killed it, thus winning the rubber concession which made his fortune.]

242. Here Skrine seems to be excerpting from the printed copy, *Constitution of the Republic of China*, Translated and published by the Commission on Extraterritoriality (Peking, 1924) (digital copy: https://digitalrepository. trincoll.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1058&context=moore, accessed 31 August 2024).

243. This is the consulate's interpreter, who accompanied Skrine on this tour, not the ex-Taoyin Chu.

After two nights at Posgam where I had a lot of work to do with the Amban (I spent from 11 to 6 solid at the Yamen on the Wednesday) we had a pleasant 25 m. march here arriving yesterday evening. Last year, if you remember, the inwardly hating but outwardly over-hospitable Manchu Amban, Kwei, positively loaded & embarrassed us with attention, and insisted on our staying at the house of one of his begs, an inconveniently-planned and gardenless abode right in the middle of the town. Now, thank heaven, Kwei is here no more: to be exact, I got him turned out for 'anti-foreignism' last year. He really went too far in his persecution of British Indian subjects. So I have been able to select the house we stay at myself and I had no hesitation in asking the British Aksakal, a takra [? sour, quarrelsome – *DW*] Shikarpuri Hindu called Dip Chand, to borrow this one from a wealthy British subject of the place – It is really a delightful little place. Quite small but almost ideally comfortable, convenient & above all quiet and private, tho barely 200 yards from the main bazaar. Note the plan – from Central Asian Mohammedan, no Chinese influence: [*plan, with legend*, *Fig. 165*]

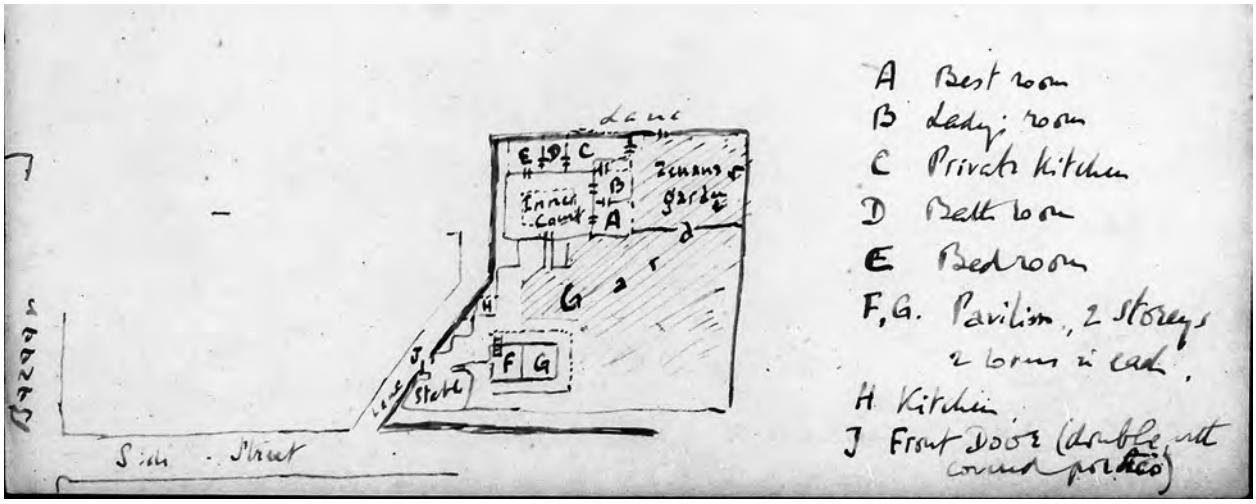


Fig. 165. Skrine's floor plan sketch for his explanation of the layout of a traditional Turki elite residence in Kargalik (CPS to HSS, 12 March 1924, from the British Library Collection: IOLR, MSS EurF 154/10).

No regularity or symmetry here you see, just natural building for convenience & privacy, with special reference of course to the ladies! The owner of the house receives guests in his nicely decorated bright pavilion rooms, F and G, looking out on to the garden with big verandas, in the hot weather the upper storey veranda is delightfully cool. The inner courtyard or anderûn is quite shut off with a little patch of garden of its own about as big as ours at 19th Grove and as tightly enclosed by walls – but not overlooked by other houses! Room A is bright & cheerful, with a big window with real glass opening on to the zenana garden & another on to the courtyard – one gets the evening sun and the other the morning – an ideal sitting- and dining-room; B is smaller and cooler, with no window on to the garden, an obvious 'purdah' room for D.'s bedroom; C, the ladies' kitchen, is a great joy for D. who makes scones, breads, pastry & toffee in it half the day; D the bathroom is convenient for both of us & E makes a comfortable bedroom for me. All the rooms have good fireplaces and they & the little courtyard are as clean as could be, & no tamashachis can get near us. Last & best of all, we have a back door on to fields (from the zenana garden) & can thus escape for walks or rides without running the gauntlet of the tamashachis of the streets. Can you wonder at our wanting to stay here more than the allotted 4 days?

22 March. Your letter of 24 January 1924 just in (Monte [Carlo]). Nice to think of you all safely there in the sun of the Riviera [...]

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[*Field Diary, pp. 34-35:*]

24 March 1924. A most extraordinary thing has happened – this morning at breakfast D. told me that she had had a funny dream about ex-Taoyin Chu. In the dream she had seen Chu who had told her that he wanted to see me at once as there was very serious trouble at Aksu and he (Chu) had been ordered to go there and deal with it. I went to see him at Yarkand & he told me that there was a rebellion at Aksu led by a very bad English man of Bolshevistic tendencies who had come from Afghanistan.

This morning towards the end of my sitting with the Amban Wang, the latter told me through Chu 'seer' that he had received a letter from Liu Amban of Yarkand saying that Chu ex-Taoyin had been suddenly ordered by the Gov't. to go at once to Aksu on important duty!! Immediately on return from the Yamen I took Chu 'seer' and Nasir to D. and asked her to repeat her dream, which she did. Then we told her about the fulfilment – in part.

A delightful little touch marked the cavalry parade in our honour on arrival here (Kargalik). One of the officer's horses was restive as we passed the troop drawn up by the side of the road. The officer, who was holding his sword at the 'present' somewhat spoilt the effect of the salute by using his sword as a whip to beat his horse with to keep it quiet! It was here last year that coming suddenly round the corner on the cavalry waiting for us the 'Ma noise' merchant who blew the trumpet was caught napping without his trumpet. Frantic shouts & signals across the road, & the little street boy who had been practicing with it ran across the road and handed the trumpet to the owner, who blew his first blast only just in time to make our horses shy as we passed.

Amban Wang gave us some interesting details this morning about the Governor, Yang. The redoubtable Gov[erno]r gets up at 4 A.M. every day and reads reports from districts etc., noting on them & passing orders. After 2 or 3 hours of this he has a wash; then he works at his book, a kind of Confucian diary (the Gov[erno]r is a famous calligraphist and author) until 9 A.M. when he has breakfast at a long table with all his secretaries. At this, as at the only other meal he has in the day (3 P.M.) he eats 2 plates of rice and some food from whichever dish happens to be nearest him. After breakfast comes what w[oul]d in India be called 'peshi' – the secretaries put up files to him for orders, drafts for approval etc. This goes on till 3, when dinner is served (after the Chinese style, a meal exactly similar to 'breakfast').

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Goma, 29 March 1924

Once more only time for a hasty scribble on the point of departure of our caravan for Khotan. The Chinese post for Kashgar leaves this place tomorrow.

We marched here in 2 days from Kargalik, 55 miles, & have stoppped 2 nights only as we are 2 days behind our schedule. The Amban is a cheerful fat 'modern' Chink who was transferred here from Hami in the extreme east of the province last year. He took the place of 'George Robey' whose picture I sent you last year, bowler eyebrows and all complete. G.R. was a malevolent little beast & his acts belied his comic exterior, so I had to complain against him to the Taoyin & the legation with good results. This man is quite good, but he annoyed us both very much at the 'chah-jan' (official reception) by appearing drunk & being most inconveniently boisterous & exuberant. He ignored me and subjected D. (thro' Chu) to a fire of questions such as 'Tired after the journey?' 'How many children have you?' 'Do you like Sinkiang?' one after the other without waiting for the answers. Finally I had to shut him up rather severely & Chu afterwards dropped him a hint, with the result that at our next meeting (my official call the same evening) he was all right. Yesterday, I spent the whole day at the Yamen trying cases, 10–7, less an interval of 1 hour at 3 when I came back & had some tea. At 7:30 I had to return to the yamen & go through a complete Chinese meal as the guest of the Amban, returning at 10:30! You may imagine how tired I was by the time I had packed my things, & got into bed! The dinner was well cooked but

extra Chinese with not only the usual sharks' fins, sea-slugs, fish entrails & bamboo root but two or three even nastier courses not usually given, such as leather-like fragments of sheep's stomach, hanks of an extraordinary water-weed sort of plant which looked like what one sees in sewage channels, & so on. One of the guests had been barrier-officer at Suget [*FD, p. 36:* the nephew of Chu Taoyin], the Chinese frontier post on the Karakoram road, & had some remarkable facts to tell us about the yak, which I suppose he thought we had never seen. He said that the yak is so clever on the mountain side that when crossing precipitous faces he uses his horns as hooks which he digs into the earth & thus swings himself across places where there is no foot-hold! Again when rounding corners of rock where the path is so narrow that he can't get his load past, he turns side-ways with his hind legs over the edge, & works himself along on his forelegs and stomach until round the corner, when he climbs up on to the path again & resumes his normal mode of progression!

I must stop now as we are just off after great difficulty in replacing one of the 'mapa' (cart) ponies which is ill. The Begs will not produce good ponies on these occasions. I had to send my card with a letter in Chinese on it to the Amban before a fairly good pony was produced. It is rather convenient in China, one's visiting card being usable as a sheet of writing paper.

Mail from India arrived yesterday but with no English mail. 'Lyall' is a member of the F[oreign] & P[olitical] [Department], I'm glad to say. Major Lyall, D.S.O. I don't know him but D.S.O. sounds all right. I'm glad they have taken my emphatic advice, given them last year re Etherton, to send a F. & P. man here & not an outsider.

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[*Apart from a short version of the tale about yaks which is appended to the entry for 29 March, the Field Diary includes:*]

Melons. **29 March 1924**. At dinner at the Goma Yamen yesterday evening Chu Amban who came here from Hami last autumn told me that the reason why the melons of Hami were so much prized was because they retain their flavour even when dried. Under the Ching Dynasty, they used to be sent dried to Inner China, but presents of fresh Hami melons were also sent to the Emperor every year. Ten times as many melons as the number intended for the present used to be sent, packed each separately in a box with cotton wool, as only 10 percent used to be fit for an Emperor when they arrived. The melons of Lanchow are also very famous; they are a small kind bursting with juice, but they won't keep more than 5 days after picking.

Features of the Goma oasis, to one coming from K[ash]g[a]r, are (1) Villages islanded in sand (now further N.W. than E. end of K[ar]g[a]lik oasis), where we saw a small village being absolutely buried in sand dunes advancing from the N.W. A dozen houses had already been abandoned & were in ruins; 2 or 3 more were still occupied, but had sand up to the roof. The loess sand is white here whereas it is yellow in Kashgar & in the North.

(2) Pigeons much kept (? nearness of Kum-rabat Padshahim![244]). Each farm here one or more tall pigeon perches, & the people breed them.

(3) Goat-skins are votive offerings on the shrines.

(4) Extraordinary naughtiness of the small boys. Their cheek in pursuit of a tamasha has to be seen to be believed.

(5) Wattle & mud buildings universal […]

[*Following the anecdote about yaks, the FD continues, the passage on the 'Sino-Turkis' serving as the basis for his text in* CCA *1925, pp. 247-48:*]

244. A reference to the famous 'pigeon' shrine/mazar, which they visited near Khotan.



Fig. 166. The Skrine's caravan preparing to leave the sarai at Moji Tanguya, 31 March 1924. The tarantass is in the center, flanked by mapas, left and right. (From the British Library Collection: IOLR Photo 920/1 [54].)

30 March 1924. Moji Tanguya. [*Fig. 166*]

Qari told me this morning about the Janbagh Fair at Yarkand, in Feb. Every year there is a struggle between the religious leaders on the one side who want it suppressed, & the bakers, food merchants, pimps, jugglers, acrobats, dancers etc. on the other – the latter subscribe many hundreds of taels each year for bribing the Yamen to give permission to hold the fair. This year the mullahs won outright & there was no fair – just because we happened to be in Yarkand in Feb., of course – very annoying. Usually 3–4 weeks. Directly it starts the pashraps began to make their profits out of the fair, blackmailing nonmarried couples chiefly. Much immorality – Naubais [prostitutes – *DW*] etc. do tremendous business. Mullahs don't bribe the yamen.

Two 'Sino-Turkis' were in possession of the 'gondan' here when we arrived, with their families. They courteously turned out by the time our mapas arrived, about 2:30. Interesting types. Born in Khotan, of the Beg clan I fancy, they learnt Chinese as children & were selected by the Amban as 'M.P.'s' for Khotan in the Urumchi 'Provincial Council'. 'Doumalik'[245] one of them called himself, explaining. They were 3 years at Urumchi & were evidently much impressed by the town & the Gov'r. One, Rajab, seemed very intelligent; both wore Chinese clothes. Rajab had neat short black beard & moustache, black velvet fur-trimmed 'tumaq' & ordinary Chinese black satin clothes. One was on his way from Khotan to Goma, the other to Kargalik, as 'Suloya' or Chief of Police. They came & called & were very friendly.

Apparently the Chinese dress is obligatory on those who take admin[istrati]ve jobs under the Chinese. These men wore black fur-rimmed tumaqs & K[ash]g[a]ri shoes, not Chinese boots.[246] The mullahs object

245. As he explains in *CCA* 1925, p. 247, 'douma' was the term referring to the Governor's advisory council. Presumably it is from the Russian 'duma' (council).

246. Tumaqs, distinctly shaped fur hats, were considered to be national attire of Uyghurs.

strongly to the 'Sinization' of Turkis – call even the Begs 'Khitaining balasi' [~ Chinese children – *DW*] as a term of abuse. Begs used to wear a blue belt as a distinguishing mark – not now. Except for the late M[ussul]man Amban of Kelpin, the Wang Tungling we saw at Uch T[urfan] & Eyub who went as 'deputy' to Sarikol last autumn. Qari knows of no other such 'Kashgari' Turki turned into Chinese. These are pioneers [...]

1 April 1924. Q[ari] told me today that the alliance of the Chief of the Beggars & the Chief of Police at Y[ar]k[an]d over the opium running is no new thing. The Kalandars and the Pashraps have long cooperated in the organization of burglaries & thefts, sharing the spoil. Practically everything that is stolen in Y[ar]k[an]d comes into the hands of the Shangias of the Pashraps & the Kalandars. Recently the Titai heard about the big profits made by the latter, and sent for him to Kashgar...

'Hassan'[247] might be easily be adapted to present-day Yarkand:

Haroun ar-Rashid = the Titai
Chief of the Beggars = Shangia of the Kalandars
Chief of the Police = Shangia of the Pashraps
Captain of the Military = the Tungling

The Torture scene w[oul]d be easily presented with the aid of the Titai's hand-chopping machine etc. [...]

[*Over several pages (pp. 39-42) of the FD, Skrine recorded many folk sayings, transcribing them in Turki and then glossing various words in preparation for translating them. It is clear that the Yarkandi Murad Qari who was traveling with him as secretary and translator helped in this. Skrine devotes a significant part of Ch. XIII in* CCA *to this material; therefore I do not reproduce most of it here. See also my comments on it in my introduction. Major parts of the next passages of the diary served as the basis for paragraphs in* CCA *1925, p. 248-49.*]

[...] Wen Amban of Lop is a refreshingly unconventional official. Last year we met him on the wrong side of the chahjan hurrying out on his horse to receive us with only one attendant. He explained that the reason why he was late was because he had been cooking the lunch! And a jolly good lunch it was too, with a minimum of sea slugs and other Chinese atrocities, and a maximum of perfectly-cooked pilaus & roasts & beignets. This year thanks to an 'interesting domestic event' his ninth daughter – on the very day of our arrival, he let us off both coming and going chahjans, at my request; an almost unique concession. Chu says that when he went to the Yamen to explain how bad my toothache was & would he please omit the chahjan, Wen met him with a long face and his right hand raised with the forefinger bent in the form of a hook – the Chinese finger language sign for 'nine'. He made the same sign to me across the table during my official call and told me how particularly disturbed and anxious he had been that day, not so much because his wife had been 2 hours unconscious but because she had been so furiously angry at having another daughter! (There were only 7 when we met the ladies at Chulak Langar in Dec. '22 on their way from Urumchi to join Mr. Wen at Lop.)

I was sorry to miss a gentleman they call the 'Gong Begi'. This is a youth of 22 who is the descendant of the Hakims of Khotan.[248] [*Further on in the diary, he elaborates:* The Gong Beg is the grandson (or gt. grandson) of Niaz Hakim Beg who was the last of the indigenous Hakims of Khotan. Similarly, Taj Hakim Beg was the last of the rulers of Yarkand, and Durgah Beg of Kashgar. These were shorn of most of their power by [Yakub Beg] Bedaulat, & finally reduced to the position of pensionaries of the Ch[inese] Gov't. after the suppression of Bedaulat. The 'Gong Beg' gets 400 tls. p[er] m[onth].]. He receives an allowance from the Chinese and (presumably) is supposed to furnish the Governor with a contingent when required. The

247. The verse drama 'Hassan: The Story of Hassan of Baghdad and How He Came to Make the Golden Journey to Samarkand' by James Elroy Flecker, published posthumously in 1922.

248. The Qing administrative structure of Xinjiang employed as local officials, hakims, members of some of the ruling families from the formerly independent or autonomous kingdoms of the region. Under Yakub Beg, a Khoqandi, apparently most of these begs were replaced by Khoqandis, though Niaz Hakim seems to have been a notable exception. On the Begs in the first century of Qing rule in Xinjiang: Newby 1998; Millward 2007, pp. 100-102; on administration under Yakub Beg: Kim 2004, pp. 102-108; on late Qing judicial administration: Schluessel 2017.

The requisition came the other day in connection with the Governor's concentration of troops at Urumchi – a demand for 500 men from Khotan. So the lad who (as he himself said) had never shot so much as a sparrow, was obliged to do something to earn his allowance. All he could manage was about 12 retainers as 'soldiers' & a lump sum of about T[ael]s 5000 collected from various sources with which to buy himself off at Urumchi. He started today for Urumchi via Keria, Cherchen & Karashahr with his retinue.

***

Zawa, Khotan District, 1 April 1924

[*See Fig. 89, p. 177, a map marking most of the places Skrine mentions en route to Khotan.*]

Travelling away from Kashgar one has to write every 2nd or 3rd day to keep up with the mails – so here I am again only 3 marches from the place where I last wrote to you. We have crossed the desert successfully and are in the beautiful Khotan country once more. How lovely it is after all those miles of sand & gravel desert! [*] Spring is here, and the country is a blaze of pink and white with a delicate green background of weeping willows. The latter tree is a feature of this part of the world, & grows to a size undreamt of in Europe. Huge trees as big as elms, with great streamers of delicious greenery like mermaids' hair. The ordinary willows are not so far forward and still in bud. You should have seen the blossoms though, in the village oasis where we stopped the night before last – I never saw such a sight even in Baluchistan. Everything grows *à merveille* in this Arcadia & the apricots are no exception. Some trees were so buried in blossom that you couldn't see the trunk above 4 feet from the ground & hardly any of the branches either! [*][249]

Yesterday's & today's have been long marches; yesterday's 2[.?] miles heavy sand the whole way; today's 28 miles good going half the way, but the other half containing as bad a lot of sand as is to be found on any of the main roads of this country. A belt of sand-hills 150 ft. high & 6 or 7 miles broad has to be crossed. In the middle of this is a most interesting shrine called Qûm-rabat Pad-shahim or 'My King's Castle in the Sand' or more tersely, the 'Kapitar Mazar' or Pigeon Shrine.[250] Here there are 2 or 3 thousand sacred pigeons, lovely fat dark blue birds which make a noise like no thing you ever heard before – the noise of the cooing is so loud as to be almost deafening, if you can imagine such a thing as deafening cooing! Three elderly Sheikhs look after the pigeons, which are supported partly by 'waqf' land in Khotan & partly by grain donated by travellers. We always bring a donkey-load of corn for the pigeons when we pass the Kaptar Mazar. It is such a pretty sight when they are hungry and come steaming out of the shrine in a great aerial river to the place where you scatter grain for them. Today unfortunately

249. To give another sample of Skrine's editing of his material, the Field Diary, under 9 April, pp. 44-45, contains a version of the same description marked here by my asterisks, which in fact is closer to what he included then in *CCA* 1925, pp. 249-50. The entry in the diary shows much evidence of editing and re-writing, possibly done at a later point when Skrine was back in London preparing his book:

> The tender green mist of spring rested upon fields which lay cheek by jowl with the dark grey wastes of gravel desert; pale green where the wheat was sprouting, more vivid for the young lucerne; over the road drooped gracefully the roadss of weeping willows; tall flame shaped poplars and the ubiquitous pollarded willow of Kashgaria marked the boundaries of every plot. But we had no eyes for green when on every side flamed peach blossoms of every shade from rich red to palest shell pink, set off here and there by the luxuriant white of the quince orchards for which Lop is famous.
>
> We were much struck by a kind of woodpecker, rather large in size, marked black and white on wings and head with bright red under his tail and body and on his crest.

250. The Sykses (1920, pp. 205-208) visited the shrine and photographed it. For Stein's description of the site and analysis of its possible ancient antecedents, see Stein 1907/1981, I, pp. 119-122. The Survey of India map, Sheet 51, Yarkand, 2nd ed. 1926, shows several shrines in this area north of Zawa and NW of Khotan, but none identified by the name given by both Stein and Skrine for the Pigeon Shrine. The shrine is associated with the Imam Shakir and in modern times named for him. See Thum 2014, p. 109, and for his description of worship there in 2007, ibid., pp. 101-105.



Fig. 167. The 'Kapitar Mazar' (Pigeon Shrine) near Khotan. Percy and Ella Sykes photo, in 'Photograph Album, 1915 April-November', the Duke University David M. Rubenstein Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Image RL.11685-P-0020, https://archives.lib.duke.edu/catalog/sykespercy_aspace_78bd70a0f5e7fa243a9a240e86651ca5. The photo is published in Sykes and Sykes 1920, facing p. 206.

they didn't play up having only this morning been fed by a Chinese official coming from Khotan whom we passed on the road. [*Fig. 167*] They were quite replete when we arrived with our grain & we had to be content with leaving the grain on the ground with assurances from the Sheikhs that not a scrap would be left by noon tomorrow.

We had a few drops of rain at Goma which cleared the air, and for 2 days out of that place we had glorious sunny clear weather, sun bright but not strong enough to burn our faces. Yesterday it was less bright, & today quite dull & misty. This was very annoying, as I particularly wanted to get a good photo of the Kaptar Mazar and the pigeons which somehow I failed to do either of our visits in 1922. But the light was so bad at 3 o'clock this afternoon that I had to give it up. However, we have been lucky in one thing: we <u>might</u> have been favoured with a '<u>burān</u>' (sand-storm) either of the last 2 marches & that is a thing to dread. Harding had an awful time in a <u>buran</u> in May 1923 & this is the time of year for them. Whole caravans have been lost on this road, losing the track in a storm & wandering out into the Takla Makan where the water is 200 ft. or more below the level of the ground. We are not going to come back by this road next month. I have decided to return the whole way from Keriya with <u>ponies</u> (instead of carts which we are travelling with now) by routes which thread the foothills of the Kuen Lun Mountains 20–50 m. south of the desert road & much cooler. We shall have better air up there in the early summer heat and will not (I think) be exposed to <u>burans</u> or at any rate to the danger of losing ourselves in the Takla Makan. Besides we have now been along this road 3 times & a 4th would pall.

We are looking forward very much to seeing Khotan again & our friends there especially the dear old Armenian Moldovack, who in his double breasted blue serge coat & Homburg hat and white side whiskers is the very image, D. says, of her mother's father at Sterling. He is an old dear. I have a sheaf of *Pioneers*, *L'Illustrations*, *Times of India* etc. for him & will spend hours talking to him about carpets, jade & old brass & copper etc. etc. Ma Tungling the C[ommanding] O[fficer] of Khotan is a good fellow & will make us very welcome I think. He has already sent out loads of grain & lucerne for our horses to this place 20 miles from Khotan!

We aren't going direct to Kh. tomorrow but are spending 1 night at Karakāsh on the river of that name, a district headquarters 8 m. S.E. of here where I have some work to do with the Amban. We didn't visit Karakash last time; Nasir (who accompanied Harding last summer) says it is a nice place among meadows. Don't mix up Kara<u>k</u>āsh with Kara<u>t</u>āsh. Both are big rivers & both come out of almost inaccessible mountains (the Karakash runs for 100 miles among the ranges of the Kuen Lun

through absolutely impassible gorges) but the Karaṯash – it is that which we explored last summer south of Kashgar.

More from Khotan next week. Hope to get a post there with letters from you.

***

[*Excerpts from the monthly diary for March, BL IOLR L/P&S/10/976 P 2744/1924, fols. 166-169, sent by Skrine on 17 April and annotated by J. P. Gibson in the India Office on 5 July. News had already reached London that the evil Ma Titai in Kashgar had been killed on 31 May; Gibson noted on the minute paper that now it might be possible for ex-Taoyin Chu to return to Kashgar. This hope was a response to what Skrine, had written nearly two months earlier.*

Skrine painted an optimistic picture about the improvement in the Chinese officials' policies regarding British subjects. In mentioning the replacement of some of the officials about whom he had sent complaints to the British Minister in Beijing, he credited that minister's representations, not his own reports (as he had suggested to his mother). He noted that the border incident at Irkeshtam and in general the tightening of Bolshevik controls at the border probably were to be explained by the news he had recently learned about the threatening demands the Soviet mission to Peking headed by Lev Mikhailovich Karakhan had been placing before the Chinese government. So the Chinese were now having to take a more serious look at the illegal trade that had been supplying the Russians with horses and other necessary items. As much as anything, Hsü, who had replaced Chu as Taoyin in Kashgar, was responsible for the weaknesses in standing up to the Bolsheviks. It was he who had presided over the agreement that opened the Ili Valley to Soviet trade in 1921. The lack of caution by the Chinese in dealing with their subjects had just been illustrated by the massacre of the Amban of Kuchar, Chien, and his family by the local Tungans he had offended with his policies.]

3. [...] Before going to Kuchar, Chien had been for six years Amban of Khotan […] It is very surprising […] that [he] did not know better than to treat the Tungans of Kuchar in the same manner as the peaceable Turki inhabitants of Khotan. The Chinese in this province are as a whole notoriously afraid of the (Mussalman) Tungans of the North and East, the possibility of a revolt of this formidable race being viewed with the utmost apprehension. Moreover, it is an open secret that the Governor, himself a Moslem of Yunnan, relies heavily on the goodwill and support of the Tungans in his precarious tenure of absolute power in Sinkiang.

4. Chu, *ex*-Taoyin of Kashgar, who has been representing the Governor in the negotiations with the Afghan Mission at Yarkand […] was suddenly ordered to Aksu at the end of March and left on the 28th. At a special send-off given by the British subjects of Yarkand Mr. Chu appeared depressed, and said that he had been placed on special duty of great importance by the Governor. He sent a message to H. M.'s Consul-General promising to write to the latter from Aksu. It is suspected that Mr. Chu's transfer to Aksu is connected in some way with the murder of the Magistrate of Kuchar. Though Governor Yang is extremely jealous of him, Mr. Chu is in fact loyal to the Provincial Government and there is no doubt that he is by far the most influential and capable official in Southern Sinkiang. H.M.'s Consul-General had been hoping against hope that he would be reappointed to Kashgar, but Mr. Chu hinted at an interview at Yarkand that though he had recently been offered the post, he was unable to accept it so long as Ma Titai was all-powerful at Kashgar. In the circumstances this is the only attitude that a self-respecting official could take up.

[*In the Yarkand Aksakal election (para. 5), the independent candidate had won handily, as apparently the local British subjects were tired of the previous incumbents who seemed most interested in feathering their own nests.*]

6. H.M.'s Consul-General seized the opportunity of the presence of the entire British Indian community at Yarkand to make clear to them the situation as regards the registration of British subjects, which, as more than once reported to His Majesty's Legation in despatches on the subject, has so far been imperfectly understood in this Consular district. He added a few words on the subject of the mobbing

of the Rev. R. Nyström of the Swedish Mission reported in diary for December 1923–January 1924, paragraph 4. A copy of relevant extracts from the speech, which had to be delivered in three different languages (Urdu, Persian and Turki) is appended hereto. [*See text below.*]

[*Skrine went on to describe (para. 8) having established cordial social relations with the Afghan Envoy in Yarkand; the transfer of a large part of the Tashkurgan garrison, probably as part of an effort by Governor Yang to collect troops for his personal defence in Urumqi (para. 9); and the fact that Maulan Qul in Sarikol who had been plotting to oust the British aksakal from his house had now apparently turned to arson as a weapon to that end (para. 10). The final news entry, before the appendix, was on:*]

13. *Haj Pilgrimage.* [...] A larger number than ever of pilgrims intend to perform the Mecca pilgrimage *viâ* India this year. During March two caravans of 60 and 70 pilgrims respectively arrived at Tashkurghan intending to travel *viâ* Chitral. The former, which was led by the British Aksakal at Maralbashi Abdul Aziz Haji, was provided with Chinese passports duly viséd by the British Consulate General and was allowed to pass; but the other party had omitted to do so, and were held up by order of the Taoyin. During the last year and a half H.M.'s Consul-General has repeatedly requested the Chinese authorities to issue notices to the effect that persons arriving either in Chitral or at Leh without proper passports will be turned back; but without the slightest effect. From Yarkand, Karghalik, Khotan, etc., large numbers of would-be Hajis intend to start, with passports or no passports, as soon as the passes open. Either the Chinese authorities do not issue the proclamations or the people take no notice of them; probably the former is the case, for it is well-known (1) that the Chinese do not like their subjects to go on Haj and spend money out of the country (2) that they believe, or affect to believe, that the British Government entices Chinese subjects to go on Haj in order to secure them as British subjects (3) that having refused large numbers of their subjects passports, the Chinese view with equanimity the prospect of many of them going on Haj without passports and being turned back across the high passes of the Karakoram by the British authorities. This eventuality would serve the double purpose of teaching would-be Hajis a lesson, and casting the odium of their hardships and failure upon the British Government.

[*The appendix with the English text of Skrine's speech in Yarkand. J.P. Gibson wrote on the Minute paper:* 'Mr. Skrine's endeavour to secure fair treatment of the Swedish Mission is welcome.']

Extract from speech made by His Majesty's Consul-General to the British subjects of Yarkand, March 15th, 1924.

[...] Now I have a few words to say to you on the subject of the registration of British subjects. You all, I hope, realise that the policy of this Consulate General has somewhat changed on this subject during the last year or two, as a result of orders from the British Government. Formerly, persons who had any claim to British nationality at all were encouraged to come forward and apply for registration, even if they had severed all connection with India. This however has led to complications with the Chinese authorities and I have had to hold long and troublesome enquiries with the Chinese on behalf of persons who have nothing whatever to do with India or the British Government and who ought long ago to have adopted the nationality of the Government in whose territory they and their descendants were to live. It is not possible for a Consul-General living far off to undertake to protect such persons particularly farmers in remote country districts, from the actions of Begs and Chinese authorities, and I strongly advise them to adopt Chinese nationality. However, I am not going to force anybody to do so against his will, and any genuine, registered British subject whether living in a remote district or not may remain a British subject if he prefers to do so and I will do my best for him. Similarly, any such person is entirely free to become a Chinese, Afghan or any other national he likes; but in this case I must insist that he inform the British Consulate-General, so that our registers may be kept accurate and complete.

I want everyone here to understand clearly that it is not, as some people appear to think, a favour to the British Government for a person who has no right to British nationality to come and register himself as a British subject. Rather is it a privilege to be a British subject and protected by the British Government, a privilege only granted to those who can rightfully claim it, either having themselves come from British territory or being the children of immigrants from British territory. We do not want any person as a British subject who does not come under one or other of these categories. As I have often told Aksakals, no one whose father was born in Chinese territory is eligible for British citizenship.

A word in conclusion to those of you who are Mussalmans. Not long ago an agitation, resulting in serious disturbances, was fomented by evil-minded persons against the Swedish Christian Mission here. I am very glad to find that no genuine British subject was concerned in this agitation, and to hear also from the Rev. Mr. Nyström that several British subjects afterwards came to him and expressed sympathy with him and anxiety regarding his health. This was an excellent example to the Mussalman Chinese subjects of Yarkand. As you know, the law in the dominions of China and Great Britain alike is toleration for all creeds, and it is unlawful for the followers of any one religion to persecute those of another. I hope all of you here will continue to exercise a good influence upon the people of this town and do what you can to prevent them from persecuting members of a Church which is that of your own 'Sarkar'.[251]

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[*Field Diary, p. 46, following which is a description dated the next day describing the incident of catching the robbers that he included in his letter home.*]

Achma, 11 April 1924.

A nice looking intelligent Turki woman came along with her 6-month old baby (so puny compared with pure Turki infants!) & a dish-full of eggs & said she was the wife of ?Mangan Mall a Shikarpuri Hindu of this place. (The man's mother wrote to me from Shikarpur the year before last asking me to get money for her from her son; I got Rs. 100/- w[ith] a most pathetically worded appeal [concocted by the local petition writer of course] which was repeated last year, & now I have got to return to the charge). The eggs & the infant were of course to emphasize her appeal that her husband should not be made to send anything to his mother. D. said she was sorry for these Turki wives of Hindus. I said 'Don't you believe it. A Turki woman married to a Hindu is much better off than one married to a man of her own people. She is in a much stronger position. Her husband has no legal rights over her; if she runs away, the Mullahs won't lift a finger for him, & he has to pay another big sum for another lady. She holds over him the threat of returning to her family, & taps his money bags for herself & her family with confidence. When he dies, she invariably gets away with some or all of his money, e.g., Naram [? = Narain] Das at Karakash the other day.'

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[*Field Diary, p. 47. The weaving combs and the 'recumbent angel' (apsara) are among the items deposited by Skrine in the British Museum on his return to London. For the apsara, see Fig. 104 above. He elaborates on the gold mines in his later letter to his mother.*]

14 April 1924. New stupa found by Abbas Khan at Khadalik.

Abbas Khan brought me today 2 heavy wooden weaving combs in remarkably good condition, a recumbent angel in stucco and a no. of small fragments of writing which he said he got last year out of a 'house' he found 1 potai N. of Stein's Khadalik site. Loess hill '100 gaz high', earth was perpetually falling in as he dug. Went about 12 ft. in, then falling in became so bad that he had to desist. Found a chamber with plaster frescoes on all 4 walls, roof supported by wooden beams & columns all of which collapsed destroying the frescoes on 3 sides at the same time. 4th fresco remains, circ. 3 ft. by 2, pictures of people on horses etc.

251. 'A man in a position of authority.'



Fig. 168. The weaver combs Skrine obtained from Abbas Khan. Skrine collected four such combs, all of which are now in the collection of the British Museum, the two shown here in the best condition and most probably the specific ones about which he wrote in his diary. (Photos: DW).

Other finds were a huge stone flour mill, too big to be turned by hand, and a big earthenware pot, circular, with 2 handles, full of bones, some charred. This was found 3 ft. from outside of frescoed room. Combs were found embedded in firm loess; woodwork of structure was in sand & absolutely rotten [*Fig. 168*].

16 April 1924. Keriya man said today that the stories about the Miran mine are quite true but the 'Dukhan' one found last year is fabulously rich. Dildar Shah from Cherchen says there is a mine in Cherchen district too. Regular Klondike, the mountains all the way from Keriya to Tun-huang must be.

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Keriya, 14 April 1924

Here we are once more at the furthest south east we attained in Dec. 1922. Keriya is the very last big oasis and town of 'Alteshahr' or the Six Cities of Kashgaria. It is a romantically-situated place, the houses being built on bluffs marking an old bed of the Keriya river looking out over the wide shallow valley filled with rice-fields & a trickle of water (all the ditch water there is in the river at this time of year being used for irrigation) to the sand dunes of the Takla Makan which stretch for hundreds of miles to the east and north without a break to far Tun-hwang and Karashahr. There is a small oasis at Niya, 55 m. away, a larger one with a small town at Cherchen 242 m. away, another small settlement called Chargalik 417 m. away and then nothing but the terrible desert of the dried-up ancient Lop Sea until Tun-hwang 824 m. away. And even then you only cross a Chinese trade route, the road from Inner China to Sinkiang for if you go on eastwards you will find yourself lost in the limitless wastes of the Mongolian Desert, on the fringe of which as you have doubtless heard Roy Chapman Andrews & his American expeditions have been discovering dinosaurus' eggs and other wonderful things.

And yet, wild though that road is it is civilization compared with the appalling solitudes which stretch away for thousands of miles to the south east – the vast lofty plains of N. Tibet and the little-known ranges of the E. Kuen Lun and the Nan Shan Mountains. Caravans, though not many, come and go along the Cherchen – Tun-hwang route exchanging the cotton cloth & other fabrics of this country for the fine silks and satins of Inner China – but no traveller, still more no caravan has ever come to Keriya from Lhasa or Chiamdo.

Keriya itself is picturesque with many trees and quaint wooden houses & winding narrow streets and bazaars with streams fringed with willows threading the lanes here and there. The people are a lazy good for nothing lot who do little but loaf about (this only applies to the townspeople, the countryfolk are industrious enough) while the gamins are all the naughtiest little beasts we have struck anywhere. They must have a bad lot of Mullahs here, because though there are supposed to be mosque schools no children ever seem to be in them; the shrill chorus of sung (or rather shouted) lessons which always marks a Mussalman school in full swing is never heard. Here the children run absolutely wild and spend their whole time hunting for tamashas. As you may imagine, D. and I are 'some' tamasha, and I assure you the entire small boy population hunts us from morn till dewy eve. They run after, in front of and

beside us wherever we go, either walking, riding (unless, as we usually do where possible, we gallop to shake them off) or driving in the Amban's carriage, and when we are 'at home' in the Aksakal's nice town house they and their sisters & some of their mothers & fathers too man the roofs of neighbouring houses waiting for us to come out and watching who comes and goes from the house. It all gets rather on one's nerves after a time.

The Aksakal is an exceptionally nice man of delightful manners and wonderful hospitality, an Afghan from Ghazni who somehow fell foul of the Afghan Govt. many years ago and migrated to Chitral & thence to this country. His wife and family are stowed away in a little country house & garden 2 m. from here (D. visited the ladies there this afternoon) and the town house has been beautifully and lavishly decorated for us with miles and miles of rich silks and gaily coloured cotton-cloths and satins, & carpets and flags. D. has a whole suite of rooms obviously constituting the anderûn or women's quarters, & I occupy a room looking on to a tidy little courtyard with big oleanders in tubs and Chinese lanterns hanging about. Moh[amma]d Nasir and Chu (the latter with his new Tungani wife) occupy other rooms on the courtyard. We are only halting 4 days here and I am fairly busy with the Amban, an intelligent Chinaman of the Southern Provinces with whom also I dined yesterday, D. exchanging calls with the ladies. [*Fig. 169*]

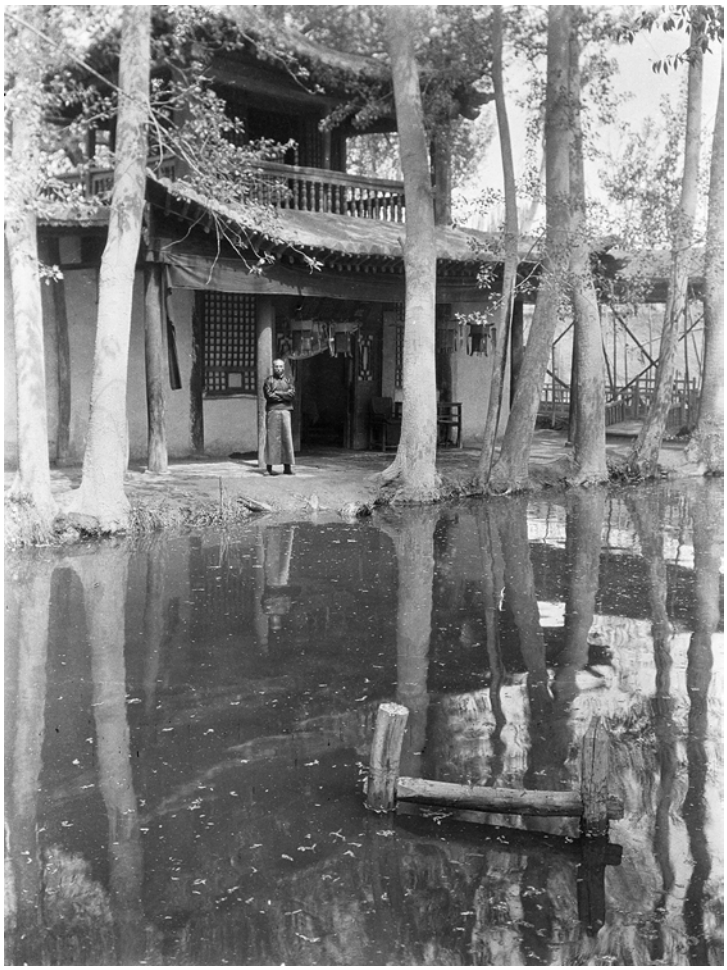


Fig. 169. The amban of Keriya in his garden, 13 April 1924 (reproduced with permission from the Royal Geographical Society [London], no. CPS/00037).

Our last day or two at Khotan and our first 2 or 3 days on the road here weren't altogether pleasant, owing firstly to the unusually early summer heat, secondly to the incidence of the Ramazan fast & thirdly (in my case) to a nasty go of tooth ache which gave me h--l for 3 days, particularly our first march out of Khotan. Never shall I forget that 20 mile ride with frantic toothache! The annoying thing is that it was (and still is, a little) in a tooth which Mr. Nyström was supposed to have extracted at Yarkand! He was certain he had got all the bits of root out, but I was doubtful owing to the way the wound refused to heal for several days; however, all went well until I got a cold in it at Khotan. I do hope I don't get another cold in it before I return to Yarkand.

The worst of the Ramazan fast is that the nights are so noisy when we're in the towns. In this part of the world the walls are all lath and plaster and voices etc. travel through them like paper, so that pandemonium reigns until nearly midnight when the chief meal of the 24 hours is finished & cleared away, then at 2:30 the musicians of the town begin beating their tom-toms to awake the Faithful for the sahri or morning prayer, also for the cooking

of the pre-dawn meal. Their tom-toms are awful, & go on for nearly an hour, sometimes varied by the monstrously-chanted refrains of the singing kalandars or dervishes. From 4 onwards the town (including one's own entourage, quiet tho' the latter try to keep I must say) is wide awake and busy either cooking or praying; add to which of course the normal pre-dawn noises of a Turki city, the donkeys braying, cocks crowing, dogs barking, cows lowing, horses neighing and stumping about in their stables, pigeons cooing & sparrows twittering.[252] If one's blood is well oxygenated, of course, one listens to this sort of thing for an hour or two only and finishes one's night's rest comfortably enough afterwards, but when halting in towns one does not get much air and exercise, and both D. and I have had one or two bad nights. Thank Heaven in 2 or 3 days' time we shall be in right off the road, for we are returning via the mountains to Khotan & nearly all the rest of 'Roza' will be in tents & (I hope) out of hearing of most of these noises.

Talking of 'Roza' I got rather a nice little ruba' from a singing dervish in Khotan the other day which incidentally throws light on the Turki's philosophy.

'Rōza tutdum jān uchun
Kecha qopdum gāl uchun
Tutmae, desām qurqaman
Gorda, tukhmāq, bār uchun.'

literally

I keep Ramazan for the sake of my soul;
I get up at night for the sake of my belly;
I fear to say 'I won't keep Roza.'
For the sake of the scourge there is in the grave.

(i.e. I only keep fast and feed at night because I'm afraid of the punishment I'll get in the Hereafter if I don't).[253]

I must tell you about the most amusing and welcome diversion we had in the very middle of a long, hot, dusty march coming into Keriya the day before yesterday. Crossing a 20-mile-wide stretch of 'steppe' we were suddenly accosted by a lachrymose lady and her daughter & a shepherd-lad who appeared out of the reeds and weepingly informed us that their hut close by had just been burgled! The two robbers, it seemed, had looted their little all, consisting of 3 copper pots and a kazān (small cauldron) & a chāpān (quilted coat), the husband of the lady being absent at the neighbouring village for the weekly bazaar. The lad who seemed plucky & intelligent had chased the robbers & thought they

252. Skrine drafted some of this in his Field Diary, p. 42: 'Noises. Donkey chorus: hoopoi's hoo-hoo-hoo; pigeons cooing; red-belted woodpecker tapping; various birds; plash of water; cows mooing; camels gramuffing; ponies squealing; dogs barking; tomtoms; cocks crowing.'

253. A draft version of this song with the indication it is from Merket (Dulanis) is in the Field Diary, p. 38, following the entry for 1 April. Skrine recorded it in transcription and in Arabic script and glossed a number of the words. His translation there differs somewhat from that which he sent his mother. In *CCA* 1925, p. 184, which contains his last re-working of the translation, he renders it: 'I fast in Ramazan to save my soul;/ I wake at night to keep my belly full;/I fear to say, "I am not going to fast,"/ For there's a rod that waits in Hell for me.' My colleague, Dr. Hamit Zakir, who is familiar with the specialized literature, kindly went through all of Skrine's transcriptions and translations for me. He pointed out that the transcriptions do not follow the current standard (which of course could not have been expected back in the 1920s) and occasionally may distort the original. Dr. Zakir also suggested in many places alternative translations. While I will occasionally note in what follows any key comments he provided on particular texts, since my purpose here is not to attempt a scholarly edition of the Turkic material, I leave the Skrine texts in my selection as he recorded them.

had thrown the booty away in the grass somewhere & would come back for it. Off went I, three of my orderlies, a Turki Beg who was with us & his man helter skelter over the steppe in the direction pointed by the victims, with whom D. remained on the road somewhat apprehensively awaiting our return. The going was very bad but we charged along somehow, our horses floundering in and out of holes and through sand-dunes and thick reed-jungle, until there was a hurroosh on my right and a 'view holloa' from my best orderly, Hafiz. We all galloped full split after two running figures & soon caught them up. After a little prevarication they admitted to the old Beg that they had robbed the poor shepherd family's hut, & we dragged them back to the road (about half a mile) and the two evil-looking scoundrels in dark-coloured chapans were duly identified by the shepherd boy. We all rode over to the scene of the robbery a couple of half-underground huts between a low range of sand-hills and a marshy lake. Near by sure enough the 'booty,' a few miserable pots black with age and a man's chapan (doubtless the absent bread-winner's second & only other garment) were shown us by the thieves & identified by the stout lady who wept with delight & gratitude & wanted to kiss D. whom she evidently looked upon as her saviour. [*Fig. 170*] I photoed the scene & the entire cast together with the props, and we all



Fig 170. The apprehended robbers, their victims and the 'loot', on the route into Kargalik, 12 April 1924. The hole in the ground on the left is the entrance to the subterranean home where it is possible to escape the desert heat. (Reproduced with permission from the Royal Geographical Society [London], no. CPS/00039).

proceeded on our way to Keriya taking with us the robbers. The latter turned out to be a pair of real bad 'uns who had been convicted only a year before and after receiving a terrific flogging (1000 stripes I was told!) had been banished to Cherchen. They had come back secretly to their home (which was only 2 miles from the scene of the robbery & 1 from where we caught them) & had re-commenced their old habits. The Amban is awfully pleased & the incident, as showing cooperation between the 2 nations etc. etc., has been most useful politically! The funny thing is that during the whole of my service in countries like U[ttar] P[radesh] & Baluchistan, where hundreds of thefts are committed every day and one is responsible for stopping them, I never once had the luck to help actually to catch a thief – and here in the remotest corner of Sinkiang where I'm not responsible, I bring off a capture!

I haven't said a word about the two nice letters from you from Monte [Carlo] I got yesterday, to say nothing of a delightful letter from Aunt Lilian & a picture p[ost] c[ard] signed by you, Father & A[un]ts E. and L. for which many grateful thanks to all concerned [...]

Wonder if you saw or heard anything of Col. Lyall (my successor) before he left home?

***

[*Field Diary, pp. 48-53. The long set piece on the pelican is also in* CCA *1925, pp. 251-52, with a certain amount of verbal emendation. While Skrine did not always keep a close record in the field diary of distances, altitudes, temperatures, etc., he continued such entries for subsequent days of this trip, the information being of the type which he then supplied to the Government of India officials on his return so that it could be incorporated into revisions of the confidential route books for Central Asia. I include a few here as examples but have omitted later ones. Polu was where he recorded with the help of Murad Qari a significant amount of folklore, the few proverbs in this section but a small portion of the total. His diary notes on Polu contain some detail not in his subsequent letter home.*]

17 April 1924. How we took the Pelican to the Wilderness.

Yesterday to my horror the Amban (suitably named Too) once more overwhelmed me by informing me that his Tai-Tai absolutely insisted on presenting my Tai-Tai with the Yamen pelican. I tried hard to ride him off, but to no effect. It was far too good a chance to miss of pulling the B[ritish] C[onsul] G[eneral] under an obligation and at the same time getting rid of a (to the Yamen) expensive and unsatisfactory white elephant. Finally I had to agree, and the huge bird was accordingly taken round to Ghulam Moh[amma]d Aki's house by chiriks, I having previously warned D. by a letter what to expect.

Never shall I forget the extraordinary sight that bird presented, sitting in the middle of the little courtyard, surrounded by gaping Turkis. Most of the time it spent sitting back on its elbows – or sh[oul]d one say haunches? – a position which is somehow extraordinarily comic in a bird. Folding back its neck and resting its enormous beak on its breast, the wicked lidless eye appearing to be watching in every direction including backwards at the same time, it was the very embodiment of distrustful grumpiness. We soon found out why. They had not told us at the Yamen that the only way in which it could be kept alive was by forcible feeding of the most brutal nature. Either it had been caught too old & pined in captivity – a sort of hunger-strike, or (more probably) its digestion was upset by the diet of meat offal which they had from the first (it seemed) given it; whatever was the reason, nothing would induce it to swallow meat, fish or any other kind of food, & the Yamen chiriks had been in the habit of shoving large hunks of offal down its throat & simply holding its beak open and its head up until the 'food' had gone too far to be returnable.

This was not good enough and when we found that the poor brute either would not or could not keep down not merely offal, but fresh fish and meat (the former it swallowed greedily to our delight, but afterwards vomited) we decided that taking it to Kashgar was out of the question. (We had already had a strong cage made, with a view to putting the bird in it on an araba along with the convalescent Abdulla and taking it to K[ash]g[a]r; Abdulla was to have [been] appointed temp[orar]y Lord High Keeper of the Pelican). But what to do with it? We could not return it to the Yamen, even if we wanted to condemn it to a continuance of Chinese torture, nor could we ask the Aksakal or anybody else to undertake the responsibility of keeping it – and feeding it – indefinitely for us. There was only one thing to do – to take it out in to the Desert & leave it in some secluded spot where it could fish for its living. This was difficult to arrange, as we only came to the decision late in the evening & we were starting on a 24-m. march next day; but we decided to do it. Accordingly, I told the Amban that I would not be starting till about 1, as I had much work to do at home, and swearing him to secrecy I arranged with Nasir that his mapa should be ready next morning at 9. Loading the pelican in his new cage on the mapa at about the same time as the baggage ponies were starting, Niaz (also sworn to secrecy) was to conduct the mapa along the Cherchen road leaving the bazar by devious paths in order to put the Kerialiks off the scent and keeping the cage well hidden. D. & I were to follow at a suitable interval & find a suitable place among the river marshes beyond the limits of the Keriya oasis, returning about mid-day; by that time the loads would be well on their way, & after a bit of rest & lunch we would follow them, D. avoiding the chahjing, by getting out before the Amban.

The plan did not work without a hitch in its initial stages. First of all the mapa could not be brought up to the door of the house as the lane was too narrow; the heavy cage with the pelican inside had therefore to be carried down to the main bazaar, where D. (who was superintending op[eratio]ns) told the men to put it in the mapa, half Keriya looking on. Then the cage proved too big to go into the mapa! Tableau. The pelican had to be taken out and lifted kicking & struggling by himself, to the large delight of the Kerialiks. Niaz & the driver sitting firmly [?] in front & doing their best to prevent the bird (which objected strongly to its involuntary cab-drive) getting out. Off it started, followed 5 minutes later by D. Having disposed temporarily of my work, I started off after the party, galloping the young black horse along the Cherchen road only to find to my horror, when I got outside the town that the mapa had not been along it! Turning back I spent a mauvais quart d'heure hunting wildly for D. & the pelican through the narrow up- &-down streets of Keriya. Time after time nearly thrown off by the black horse as he shied backwards & forwards across the streets and tried to dart up side-lanes which he thought led to water or his stable. Shouting to gaping townspeople as I flew past 'Have the Khanim & a mapa passed this way?' & invariably receiving a negative, I at last got on their trail and charged along a cork-screw-like lane which seemed to have no ending. Finally a steep descent down which the black horse nearly tumbled head over heels & I found myself out of the town & on the edge of the paddy-fields. A mile further on to my relief I saw through the dust-haze D. & Hafiz hacking along peaceably eastwards & the mapa in front of them. Congratulating ourselves on having outwitted the tamashachis, we crossed the almost empty bed of the Keriya River and conducted the mapa at a good pace (risking sea-sickness on the part of the pelican) down the Cherchen road. Beyond the last fields of the oasis, a shallow valley among sand dunes led to the main river-bed half a mile to the north. There were many people on the road, men driving donkeys loaded with firewood into Keriya for the next day's bazaar, families coming in from Oi-toghrak or maybe Niya to market & so on, & we had to loiter about till favoured by the mist, we were able to drive off the main road down the little valley, turning a corner we appeared to be absolutely in the wilds & thought we were safe, but no – 10 yards further on the top of a sand-dune appeared two boys watching us! We made short work of them. We had only to turn our horses in their direction & they ran like hares. But we took no risks; I chased the little beasts right into their home farm where I informed their mother that if she valued their lives she would keep them at home. It may be explained that we knew only too well that if even the smallest child saw us depositing the pelican in the wilderness, that pelican's fate would be sealed. It would be re-caught and either killed or taken back to the Yamen, where the Amban would probably send it after us as our lost property...

Fate now smiled on us & we found we could take the mapa right down to the edge of the river marshes where we soon found a secluded channel through which spring water from the valley we had come full of small fish flowed into the Keriya river. It was worth all our toil to see the happy expression on the pelican's face when he found himself once more on his native heath. On the grassy edge of a clear pool he stood proudly his wings outspread after the manner of his kind, as if offering thanks to the pale sun for his new found liberty. But we could not leave him in too open a place, & so Niaz & I carried him down along the little stream & deposited him where no enemy would find him, far from the Yamen & the brutal chiraks & the tamashachis of Keriya. And there we hope & pray he will be safe & will find a living until the spring lengthens his clipped wings (already half grown) & he will be able to fly away northwards far over the Takla Makan to the impenetrable marshes whence he came.

Proverbs

Bai baigha, su saigha (i.e. rich men back each other up)

Zhitkan mal-ning sape altün 'The lost whip had always a golden handle.'

Adam ottuz, Khuda toqquz 'Man proposes' etc.[254]

Shoe Superstitions.

254. In *CCA* 1925, pp. 215-16, Skrine translated these, respectively, as: 'The rich stand by the rich as the stream seeks the desert'; 'The whip that's lost always had a golden handle'; 'Man says thirty, God says nine (Man proposes...)'. Dr. Hamit Zakir noted that Skrine's 'deserts' might more correctly be translated 'valley/canyon' and his 'whip' is more properly a generic 'good/thing/item'. Of course the 'whip' here probably does correspond to the reality in which a whip was an item of special value and importance.

18 April. Qari told me today that several curious superstitions exist about shoes (cf. the Rajput yokel who threw his shoes at us on a dark night thinking we were demons). If a man finds his shoes, which he took off outside someone's mihman-khana right way up, up side down when he goes out, that means that he has outstayed his welcome. The host put them like that so that the mysterious link between shoes and owner might operate & affect the master. Many owners are attached to shoes; if one is found lying on top of the other, that means that the owner, if a man, is going to get a new wife, if a woman, a new husband. Shoes found lying anyhow, as if thrown haphazard, are a v[ery] bad omen for the owner.

17 April.

Boghuz Langar 15 m. 5,150 ft. Temp. min. 48°, 8 P.M. 64, 8 A.M. 60°.

Shrines of Iman Ghazz Ali & Bu Hanifa. wonderful trees.

18 April. Yol-arish (*airishmaq* = to separate; point where roads to Polu and Tört Imam diverge) 18 m. 6,500 ft. temp. 8 P.M. 55°. Min. 35°. Water by hand from river 300 ft. vertically below. Clear bright night.

19 April. Polur. L. 9:15 arr. 1st watering place 1 P.M. (car[ava]n 2.0) Polu inhabitants' chahjing on remarkable flat-topped crag 800 ft. above river. Blinding dust- & sand-laden winds up valley all aft[ernoo]n. Polu Alt. 8,400 ft. Camp on sheltered fields, just above village, Weather hopeless, thick dust. Temp. 8 P.M. 49°.

Inhabitants exceptionally kindly. Beg of Chahar come over officially (Polu is in his ilaga). Everyone remembers Stein & one man Deasy too. All know Ibrahim Beg who is with us (joined us last night at Yol Arish having been home to water his fields). Gold workings just below village opp. a shrine where a spring comes out of cliff among trees. Other workings at ___ 3 marches away. Jade also worked. Moh[amma]d Khan a young Khotan trader is in Polu: very useful & full of inf[ormatio]n. Nice lad.

Polu is in Chirā district, not Keriya as one w[oul]d think, K. getting its water from here. Reason is that Polu has always been under the Beg of Chakār & Chakar is the chief hill village of Chira district.

Everyone here says it is Polū, not Polūr.

20 April. Temp. Min. 35° 8 A.M. 50° Max. 88° 8 P.M.

Bar. 8,400 Halt Polu.

Polu village is in Gov't. books as 10 families, really ab[ou]t 80. People have much trouble from belonging geographically to Keriya but admin'vely to Chira district. All petitions have to be taken to both Yamens.

1 2 3

Called on Nur Akhun, Tokhta Khalfa and Sait Akhun, Bais. Nur's family up in the yailaq up the Tereklik J[ilga] 3 potais, T. Khalfa, v[ery] nice fellow – remembers perfectly Deasy whom his father Rahim Khalfa helped v[ery] much. Graphic description of Qasim's death (Deasy p. 317). Stein not remembered (?did he come) Ref. Deasy p. 308. The very room in which the Keriya Amb[an]'s dayi (Sia) lived & the stable in which Deasy's horses were kept still exists & is pointed out with pride.

People here, at any rate the old families, regard themselves as of Tibetan, not 'Sart' stock. Always been under the beg of Chakar, who is called the 'Beg of the 300 Hill families'.

Went up Tereklik J[ilga] this afternoon & visited strikingly situated shrine on grassy knoll on r[ight] bank. Altyn Tagh faintly visible, afterwards disappeared altogether in terrible dust-haze which is the curse of the country. Yaks' tails sheep-skins & a very few wild sheep (& burrhel)'s heads, heads small, no ammon, 1 hand-mirror-shaped votive sign of copper with pierced inscription v[ery] curious & old.

21 April. Min. 48° 8 A.M.?

21 April 1924. Halt Polu. Max.

No change – weather was hazier than yesterday. Snow p[ea]ks, 20–21,000 ft. 10 m. away invisible.

Visited one of many gold 'placer' workings 1 m. below village in Tereklik J[ilga]. 4 boys (eldest ab[ou]t 18) worked for our benefit. Hole 40 ft. deep horizontally in sai river bank. Boys dug out some dark grey gravelly earth which eldest washed in stream in a shallow cone-shaped wooden pan with a big crack in it. 1st 2 pans yielded about 12 small laminae of gold – more than I expected. Next 2 pans yielded only one or 2 each. Whole worth about 1 tg. (they said). I took & gave the boys 2 tgs. between them.

Boys said that they get, as a result of a day's working anything from 1 miscal to 10 sars worth of gold. Nuggets are found. Gold here is of good quality, better that Surghak. A Beg from Keriya is in charge of all the workings and gives leave to Polu-liks to wash for gold, taking their gold at the fixed price of Ts 25 per sar weight. They secretly sell it also to merchants etc. at 30 or more sars (M[ar]k[e]t price I believe 35 sars). Workings do not belong to anyone in particular – no private ownership.

***

27 April 1924, Kutaz Langar, 20 m. S.E. of Khotan

We have had an interesting but unsatisfactory little tour of 10–12 days round by the Altyn Tagh and Kuen Lun from Keriya, & are now approaching Khotan, once more. Interesting, because the flourishing mountain villages and their inhabitants are so picturesque and so little known & because the tremendous ice-crowned wall of the Kuen Lun at the foot of which they stand is the almost uncrossable barrier which separates this country from Tibet; unsatisfactory, because we have hardly been able to see anything owing to that curse of this part of the world – dust haze! Deasy, one of the very few explorers who has visited the valleys we went to, says in his book about the end of May 'the season of dust haze had now set in.'[255] So I planned our visit for April, hoping that we would get a little clear weather, at any rate among the mountains themselves. But it seems to be always the season of dust haze here; in '22, at the beginning of December, the snows were invisible; now again, tho' we have been within range of the snows of the Kuen Lun & Altyn Tagh for the last fortnight, we have only seen them once, for an hour or two in the morning! [*sketch map of route, Fig. 171*]

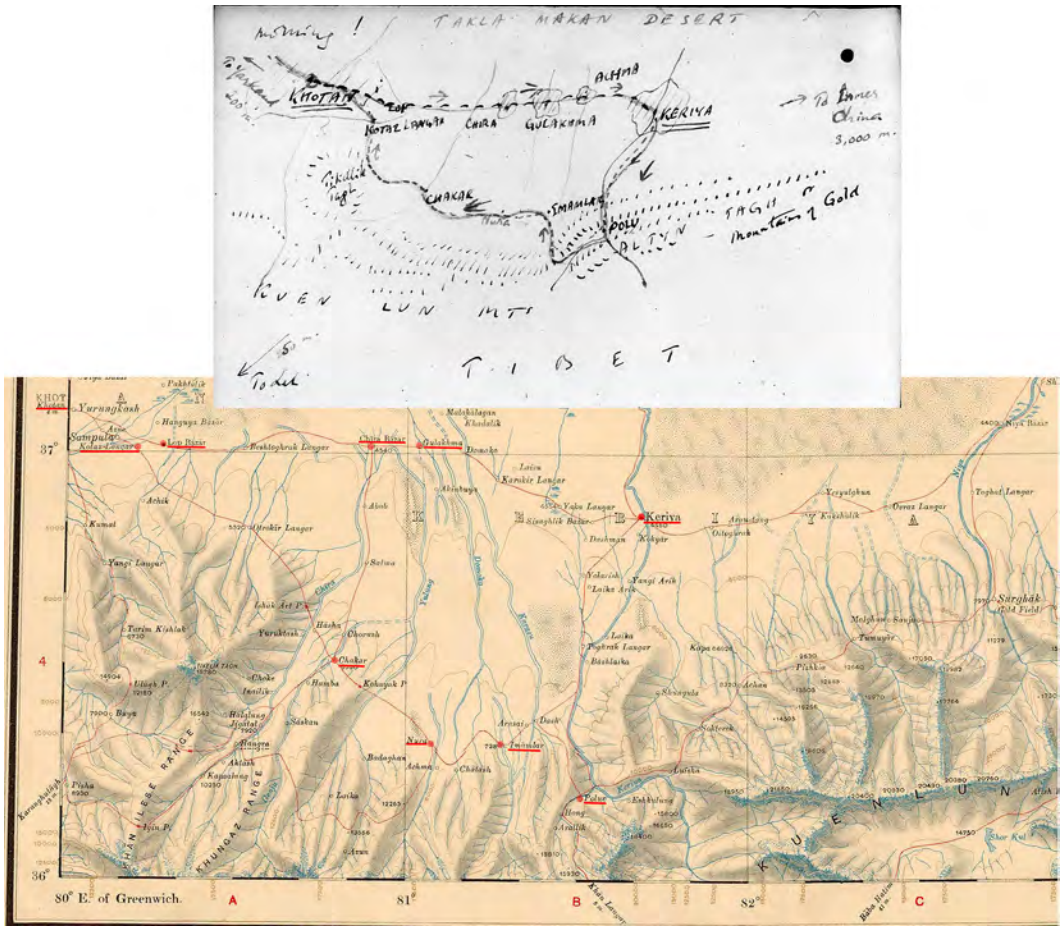


Fig. 171. Skrine's sketch map of his tour E of Khotan (CPS to HSS, 27 April 1924, from the British Library Collection: BL IOLR, MSS EurF 154/10); juxtaposed to the equivalent area in in Survey of India, East Turkistan and Tibet, Sheet No. 60 (Keriya) (1923), with locations he mentions underlined in red.

Above is a rough map which you can compare with the G[overnment] S[urvey] map I sent you. We came by Polu partly for coolness, because we dreaded the desert journey back from Keriya with the prevailing wind (E.) behind us. Polu

255. Deasy 1901, p. 157: 'I had hoped...to obtain the longitude of Chaka by triangulation, but the season of thick haze had now set in, and, for the present, the attempt had to be abandoned.'

is 8,400 feet up & it would have been very jolly there if only it hadn't been so thick and hazy. We got there in 3 days from Keriya travelling up the Keriya River, the gorge of which cuts through the 'Sai' (gravel slopes) rather strikingly. You don't know there's any river for miles & everything looks desert and plain, then suddenly you find yourself looking down into a chasm 800–1000 ft. deep with a blue-green glacier-fed river far below.



Travaux d'irrigation pour la culture de l'avoine près de Polou, sur les pentes du Kouen-lcun.

Fig. 172. Field work at Polu, showing complex pattern of hand-dug irrigation channels (after: L'Illustration*, 23 October 1926, p. 447 (NB: markedly overlaid by the grid pattern imposed by a poor-quality scan).*

We camped one night on the edge of this at the only place in 20 miles where it was possible to get water from the river. A giddy mountain-path led down a series of ledges which only practised climbers could use & up and down this went the local men with buckets of water for us and our ponies. Eight men supplied our whole camp with water by working for several hours. Polu is a big village of stone houses with flat-roofs clustering on a round-topped loess ridge between two streams which come down from the Altyn Tagh the glaciers & peaks (up to 21,500 ft.) of which ought to have been (but weren't) magnificently visible, towering only 8–10 m. away. The village is very picturesque with its many tall poplars & its big chinars & its masses of apricot-blossoms. [*Fig. 172*] We camped on a delightful little field sheltered on 3 sides by a low bluff, just above the village. The people of Polu are exceedingly friendly, in fact they are as hospitable and nice and natural as the Kirghiz, and that is saying a good deal. All round Southern Sinkiang we have noticed how much nicer and more natural the mountain-people are than those at any rate of the big towns (I confess the country people in the oases are very decent folk on the whole). Deasy who surveyed these parts and went two or three times by this route to Tibet in 1900-1903 spoke very highly of the Polu people and we agree with him. They insisted on regarding us as their guests and I had the utmost difficulty in paying even for our horse fodder. [*Fig. 173*] I made great friends with 3 or 4 of the greybeards of the village, all of whom remembered Deasy well, & I gave them a feast our last evening [*FD, p. 53:* in the house of Nur Akhun] which they appreciated very much. It being Ramazan, the party had to be after dark & in a house, so I contented myself with going



Fig. 173. Three men of Polu with their hunting raptors (after: Die Koralle*, September 1928, p. 275).*

down to the village after our own dinner and looking in on the company which consisted of about 15 graybeards of Polu, the Priest and Mu'azzin of the place, 3 Khotan traders who were there selling cotton cloth & flour & haberdashery for gold dust (of which more anon), 2 'durgahs' or minions of the Beg of Chakar who had been sent by the latter to look after us, 3 'kirākashes' (our pony-men) & a few odds & ends. After the custom of the country the local rabābchi (fiddler) & a friend regaled the company with song throughout; very attractive were some of the cadences, & the words sometimes quite delightful, old snatches mostly but also home-made 'topical' verses (the Polu rabābchi, a simple-looking young shepherd is a well-known poet throughout Keriya and Khotan districts). [*FD, p. 53:* One of the songs was about how someone went to Marghilan ('Sim') & was in exile there. I caught the word 'curls' from which I gathered that the exile didn't have such a bad time. (Another was an almost recitativo local song which made every body giggle & which I therefore presumed was improper). V[ery] difficult even to catch a word here & there.]

I collected quite a number of the songs he sang while at Polu with the help of Murad Qari of Yarkand who accompanies us on the trips; the Turki of the more colloquial ones being quite beyond me without an interpreter. What I got at Polu was mostly 2-line 'epigrams' in the Greek sense, many of them in the romantic vein, others comic, others ironical. What struck me was the strong sense of metre and rhyme of these rababchis, also their use of poetical play on words, alliteration etc. I give a few examples below:

1) Ātam sürse, ānam sürse, 'Yurāidur' danglär
'Kungle ghamdā, küze yāshdā yighlāidur' danglär.
If my father asks you, if my mother asks you, say 'He is wandering'; say 'His heart is full of sorrow, his eyes are wet with tears, he weeps.'[256]

(Apropos of an exile)

2) Tukhelär chirlashidur; tangatār bolde miki;
Chārsūdā yiglashidur, danglik jawān ulde miki
The cocks are crowing to one another; surely the dawn is near?
In the market-place, men are weeping to one another; surely a famous Beauty is dead?

3) Taqdīr ullah tāghni yeratde, tāghni yeratde;
Tāghārasini qarangū dep, aini yeratde.
Almighty God created the mountains, the mountains
then saying 'It is dark in the heart of the mountains,' he created the Moon.

4) (Romantic)

Uchdum, kepila boldum, gul-luk bāghingga tushdum;
Kichikīna boi-am bīrlan, jallābning boigha chushdum.

256. The original notes for these sayings and some additional ones are in the Field Diary, pp. 55-58. In *CCA*, pp. 207-208, 210, the translations respectively are: (1) If my father ask you, if my mother ask you, / Say 'He is distraught.' / Say 'His heart is sorrowful, his eyes are full of tears.' / Say 'He weeps for you.' (2) The cocks are crowing to each other: / Surely it is the dawn? / At the street-corner men are weeping to one another: / Surely a famous Lady is dead? (3) Almighty God created the mountains, the mountains; / Then because it was dark in the depths of the mountains, / He created the moon. (4) I became a butterfly, I flew away, / I came to thy garden of flowers. / Though my stature be so tiny / I am afire with love for my mistress. (5) The neck of my guitar is painted like a partridge / And like a snake's head inlaid; / But search where I may I cannot find / My Love of the curls and the pencilled eyebrows. (6) A fearful tiger lying on the path / Can keep even a lion at bay; /He upon whom has fallen his father's curse / Can go no further on life's way. (7) If I sow maize upon a mountain-top, / 'I'll scatter to the winds,' it says; / If I take a sweetheart from a far country, / 'I'll throw you o'er,' she says. (8) Aqsu kine are fat kine, they love a luscious meadow; / Keriya lads are bad lads, they love a pretty woman.

I flew away, I became a butterfly, I came to this garden of roses;
Tiny though my stature, I fell sick of a great love.[257]

5) Rabābim ning dastasi keklik-qāshi, yīlān-bashi
Izdasām tapilma'idur sikelik jawān qalam-qāshi.
My lute is lovely as the eyebrows of a hill-partridge, the head of a snake*
But search where I will, I cannot find the curls and the pencilled eyebrows of my love.

*The rabābs are sometimes beautifully inlaid and inscribed with arabesques, & their owners take great pride in them.

6) (Proverbial)

Yamān yollbars yolldā yetip*
Shergha yoll bermās
Ātasidin qārghash algān
Ilgiri kelmās.

*Note alliteration.

If a mighty tiger lie in the path, not even a lion can pass.
If you have been cursed by your father, you will never go forward.
(i.e., a father's curse is as terrible a thing as a tiger lying in your path.)

7) Ighiz tāghgha qunāq chachsām, 'Chachrap keteman' daidur;
Yerāq yurkdin adāsh tutsām 'Tashlap keteman[']daidur.
If I sow maize on a high mountain, it says 'I will be scattered.'
If I love a girl in a far country, she says, 'I will throw you over.'
(i.e. to love a girl who lives too far away is apt to result in a waste of one's love.)

8) (Local)

Aksu kalaläre simiz sürün yerni khālāidur
Keriya balaläre yamān chailiq yārni khālāidur.
The fat kine of Aksu love a cool rich pasture.
The bad lads of Keriya love a pretty maiden.
(Note the play on words 'kala' (cow) 'bala' (boy) yer (place) 'yar' (sweetheart)).

I got a few longer things too[258] – but mostly snatches like the above, some of them obviously very

257. Dr. Zakir noted for me that Skrine's transcription here (in particular, 'jallābning') does not seem to make sense in the context. He has also noted some other options for a more precise translation of some sentences.

258. One is the song he translated as 'The Sad Story of Mulla Tokhta and the Farthing's Worth of Tripe' (*CCA* 1925, p. 211, attributing the text to Khotan, not Polu), whose Turki text (and his glosses) in the Field Diary, p. 58, reads:

Mulla Tokhta 'kām[1] Unbāshi
Kirde bazārgha ming[2] bashi
Alde ishakni kirāgha[3]
Un tört pulgha kula[4] alip
Alti pulgha upka[5] alip
Asde[6] ishakning yānigha[7]
Ishake chapsān[8] kelip
Tepde gadaining[9] qārnigha[10]
Upkani uigha apārip
Kutak[11] pichaqda pārchalap
Kutak chumuchda[12] māltalap[13]
Yeile dep ulturganda
Alte amaldār basip[14] alip
Upkasini yep ketde.

old. At Khotan the other day I got from a singing dervish an entire ballad in 8-syllable blank verse about a famous robber & how he was caught (by treachery of course) by the Chinese and executed[259]; the hero was a real man & the events described happened only a few years ago, which shows that ballads are still made and sung as they were in England & Scotland of old. In this as in other respects, this country affords a remarkable glimpse into the world of two or three hundred years ago – that is what makes it so extraordinarily interesting. And not only 2 or 3 hundred years ago. You went to J.E. Flecker's play 'Hassan' of course? I read it before it was put on at home & was interested afterwards to read in the papers of the furore it caused. Well, do you know that counterparts of most of the characters are to be found at the present day in a place like Yarkand, & the events could be staged almost exactly from real life, mutatis mutandis? At Yarkand there is an army of beggars with a recognized Chief who is secretly very wealthy; the Chief of Police & the Chief of the Military are hated rivals; there are fat philosophic bakers & lovely houris, as beautiful as any Baghdad ever saw; the Chinese Amban who keeps up great state might easily imitate the ways of Haroun ar-Rashid &, last but not least, he has an Executioner and a whole set of torture-instruments and as gloomy and hopeless a dungeon as imaginative story-teller could desire!

How I run on. I must return to our trip. One very interesting thing about Polu is that it has gold mines, which are the very westernmost extreme end of the tremendous gold fields of the Altyn Tagh, which extend for a thousand miles to the eastwards, and maybe more. I assure you there is a vaster Klondyke hidden away in this remote corner of Asia, only awaiting modern exploitation to become the greatest gold-field in the world. From Keriya eastwards to Tun-hwang in Kansu province, all along the northern border of the Tibetan plateau, there is a series of ranges of high mountains with an ancient (and still used) trade route running along their foot, and a[n] excessively scattered population – largely a handful of settlers here and there along the route. A stretch of four hundred and fifty miles of the route is absolutely barren & almost waterless. But there is water among the high mountains themselves, & the tiny population could be greatly increased. Now literally everywhere where there is water for the washing, gold is found, & in many places it is actually worked by the few men there are available to work it. Within the last three years two new gold fields have been discovered, one about 500 miles & the other about 1000 m. east of Keriya, and very large quantities of gold have been obtained by comparatively few workers using (as you may imagine) the most primitive methods. At Polu we watched 4 boys getting gold out of a hole in the river-bank about 40 ft. deep. They dug out the gravel & the biggest of them washed it in a mushroom-shaped wooden pan. The first two times we watched him wash perhaps 3 or 4 lbs. of sand, lo and behold 7 or 8 nice little bits of gold-leaf remained on the bottom of the pan. The lad said that he usually got a taels worth & sometimes 10 taels worth in a days washing and sometimes he found nuggets as big as a walnut.

How tantalizing it was to think of all those 1000 miles & more of gold fields producing nothing but a few thousand pounds of gold annually, most of which goes into the pockets of the effete and corrupt Chinese, who sit like dogs in the manger and even if asked would never grant concessions to work them. They view with the utmost suspicion any interest taken by foreigners in the mineral resources of this province: I have had the utmost difficulty in getting information about the wonderful oil-fields that

1. akam – 'my brother Tokhta'. 2. 'like a Mingbashi' 3. hired a donkey 4. rope. 5. sheep's gut, tripe. 6. hung it. 7. at the side of. 8. ran away, bolted. 9, 10. 'the beggar's stomach'. 11. without a handle. 12. ladle. 13. stirring. 14. 'came bursting in'.

259. He refers here to the text he published in translation as 'The Ballad of Said Nochi Gangung' (*CCA* 1925, pp. 212-14, where he indicates it is a Kashgar one). Gunnar Jarring noted, in his pioneering compendium of Turki folklore (*Materials* [1949-1951], Vol. II, No. 105, p. 121) that Skrine's text seems to be a full version of what he (Jarring) was publishing from an inferior variant.

are all along the southern foot of the Tien Shan & the same with the gold-fields. However, I've got a good deal of stuff which has been duly communicated to Gov't. *Who knows? perhaps one day ... What a job, Governor of British Turkestan!* [*my emphasis – DW*]

We came to the Khotan oasis once more in 5 marches from Polu, crossing wide slopes of sand or gravel and halting at delicious oases of rich greenery with the most wonderful fruit and other trees & lovely green meadows on the banks of streams coming down from the snows of the mighty Kuen Lun. I never saw such chinars anywhere. In one village close to a lovely old shrine, there were two, both over 40 feet in circumference and so gnarled & knotted that their trunks looked like conglomerations of mountain boulders. At one of the villages, Nura, a great feature was the red apple blossom, which was in its full glory.

I didn't know there was such a thing as red apple blossom, but there is, & I assure you it is a sight. One big tree made a canopy which I measured & found to be 130 ft. in circumference, of piled up red blossom with hardly a leaf or a branch showing, it was so thick. Such a colour! much richer than peach blossom, & so pure a red, rather a sort of deep pink. Standing under it in the morning one was bathed in rosy light. There were masses of white apple blossom everywhere in the villages too – and a colossal chinar [*Platanus orientalis*, oriental plane tree – *DW*] which must have been 150 ft. high & certainly was 34 ft. round, for I measured it.

In 4 days we had two bad burāns or dust storms, most unpleasant experiences. Neither of them was anything like the terrible one I went through with Sir P. Sykes, George Farrar & Pat Gian near Bam in March 1918, but they were bad enough. [*FD, p. 54:* [W]ind kept up all evening. V[ery] unpleasant. Whole 10 m. down valley done in clouds of dust & sand. Saw 3 enormous black eagles sitting on a hillside quite close above us just below Yetim Döbe. Were prob[abl]y weathering the buran. All black wings & bodies, dark grey ruff; fine light brown heads with black round the eyes & black beak. D. put them up – fine sight.] The morning after the first one we were rewarded by clear air for once, at a place called Imam lär, and we revelled in a magnificent panorama of the Kuen Lun, 20–21,000 ft. high, 30 m. to the south. I got a beautiful panorama with my plate camera, from just outside the garden we were camping in, a telephoto, which I developed in great trepedation at the next camp, and which I'm glad to say came out well.[260] [*Fig. 174*] It shows, as well as the foothills & the soaring snowfields & glaciers of the Tien Shan, three or four of the delightful little orchards & farms dotted about like island among the green fields of the valley-floor.

Several of the villages we have visited since leaving Keriya are historically interesting being on the route followed by the Four Imams who converted this part of Sinkiang to Islam in the 11th century. The 'conversion' was as usual forcible, and only took place after terrible battles with the 'but-parasts' or idolaters (Buddhists) of the country.



Fig. 174. The panorama of the Kunlun from Imamlär (after: CCA *1925, facing p. 258).*

260. What apparently was a subsequent photo panorama, from a place called Nura, was less successful. The Field Diary, p. 54, includes one of a number of notations he made in his travels about exposure data: 'Took telepanorama (5 pl.) of Kuen Lun 8:15–8:30 F/16 at ++2′ 10″ down to 1′45″. Result rather u[nder]exp[ose]d; proper exp[osu]re w[oul]d have been 3′ to 2′45″.'

In the last of these battles the Four Imams & 120,000 of their followers (so the legend goes) became martyrs, i.e. were killed in battle; this took place near the above-mentioned village Imāmlär, & there is a very holy shrine there which owns more waqf land than almost any shrine in Sinkiang.[261] We visited the shrine (we had to walk about a mile owing to the extreme holiness of the country round, and it was very hot so we weren't in too good temper when we got there) & were disappointed to find nothing good in the way of buildings or trees. But after making friends with the numerous hoary old Sheikhs of the place and bestowing 2 taels in alms, I managed to get hold of a modern copy of the 'Khazāna' or history of the shrine & of the 4 Imams [*FD, p. 54:* for 8 tgs.], the text of which has been handed down from sheikh to sheikh since the 16th century when the shrine was founded. It is in Turki, of course, & though I have only read a little of it, it promises to be interesting. It may prove an important addition to the authorities for the history of Sinkiang for the period! I am translating it in my spare time – it is quite a short book, probably much boiled down & mutilated from the original text which is lost.[262]

[*FD, p. 59:* **27 April 1924**. March Upper Otro Kir to Kutaz L[anga]r. […] Beautiful mazar with 2 ½ ruined Gumbazar in a toghrak-grove, with many tombs. 'Sultanning Yetkan Kizening Mazare' 'The Shrine of the King's Daughter who died in the Flower of her Youth.'

28 April 1924. Kutaz L[anga]r to Khotan 18 m. arr. 12:30.

Road crosses several pretty glens which carry the water of the Yuruq Kash River. All have grassy banks & trees, some are quite like English county streams. Many 'red-rumped woodpeckers' which with enormous weeping willows are a characteristic feature of the Khotan oasis.]

[3]0 April 1924. Khotan

Just time to add a few lines to the above to say that we are here for 3 days only & then start for Kargalik by a mountain-road for coolness, not by the ordinary flat desert route which we have now traversed 3 times & are rather tired of. I am pretty busy as you can imagine having several farewell meals as well as work & repacking and two large mails to deal with including several cypher telegrams to get off. Your letters of 20th and 27th Feb. from Monte and Menton respectively to hand also Father's of 19th – many many thanks [...] [*Fig. 175, next page*] I write in the garden of Badrud Din Khan [...]

D. thanks you ever so much for the French fashion papers and says that she's going to write very soon, probably during our 9-day hill-march to Kargalik. She's desperately busy here these 3 days, shopping and baking and repacking and doctoring and attending ladies' parties both Turki and Chinese & mending clothes & what not. She went to a Turki party this afternoon. Rather interesting: she says the women dance much better & more seriously than they do at Kashgar, really graceful and intricate steps, & their clothes show better taste.[263] Also there's less giggling and silliness among the girls; but they're not nearly so pretty as the Kashgari women.

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261. The location is indicated on the Survey of India map (q.v.). Possibly it is the shrine at a location called Ujma 'in the mountains southeast of Khotan' which Thum 2014, p. 121, notes was shut down by the authorities in 2013 or soon thereafter.

262. Even though it is possible this version of the text, which was widely distributed in many variants, offers little that is new, I have reproduced in Appendix 1d a facsimile of Skrine's draft translation, preserved in the Stewart family archive (and to be deposited in the British Library with the rest of his papers). This gives us a good idea of the amount of effort he expended for such translations and the difficulties presented by the languages. A substantial portion of Thum 2014 is devoted to the analysis of the manuscript traditions and their relationship to oral ones and the practice of worship at such shrines.

263. Stein (1907/1981, I, pp. 141-42) also took note of the dancing at Khotan and elaborated with some interesting comments about the position of women in Khotan, in contrast to some of the other areas he had visited.



Fig. 175. Badruddin Khan, the longtime British subjects' aqsakal in Khotan, amidst the flowering trees in his garden ca. 30 April 1923 (after: Nazaroff 1935, facing p. 152).

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Kosh Tagh, Goma dist., 8 May 1924

Yours of March 5th reached me, at 11:15 P.M. in the middle of a 2-days' wind- & rain-storm, in my tent in a garden of the beautiful Sanju Valley half way from Khotan to Karghalik by the upper road. It had been forwarded with my other dâk by the clerk in charge at Kashgar to the town of Goma on the edge of the Takla Makan, 50 m. NW of where we were. Thence it came out (by arrangement) by the hand of a mounted servant of the British Aksakal of Goma, the excellent Abdul Karim, who brought it to Sanju bazaar 5 miles above where we were between sunrise & sunset, in a storm. At the bazaar they directed him to our garden, on his way to which in the inky darkness, he fell off a bridge into the Sanju river. He lost his poshteen but the letters were saved, & beyond a wetting neither he nor his horse were hurt [...]

Another letter which came by the same adventurous post was a very nice one from Howell, who has been officiating as Foreign Secretary since August last and is now going to Waziristan as Resident (the latest new big job in the F[oreign] & P[olitical] [Dept.]!). Telling me this, he goes on 'So I am afraid I shall not be there to receive you when you come to Simla, as of course you will be doing during the summer. I am sorry, because I take a great interest in your isolated corner of the world, & should much have enjoyed asking many questions about it and hearing some of your tales.' That is a pretty clear hint that the G[overnment] of I[ndia] would like me to come to Simla before going Home, so I have definitely decided to do so. As we shall not be at Srinagar before the end of October and have to visit not only Simla but Dehra Dun (for the Survey people) & Quetta to pick up & repack our kit, I'm afraid we won't be home much before the middle of December [...]

As we shall be so late in the year, & you will be wanting before that to get off to the Riviera, why shouldn't we all meet in the S. of France? [...] We are either

(1) going straight from Bombay to Venice (or Trieste) by Lloyd-Triestino boat sailing 1st Dec. or

(2) getting off the boat at Port Said and going up to Constantinople by steamer for a few days, whence (if you are on the Riviera) we would go on by Menageries steamer to Marseilles as we three did that delightful winter of 1909–10, otherwise going by train to Calais from Con[stantino]ple, or

(3) going via Karachi & Basra to Baghdad, few days sight-seeing & then across the desert to Beirut by motor & home via boat & Marseilles [...]

I last wrote from Khotan just before leaving. It was a lovely day when we marched to Zawa; D. went ahead to avoid the farewell ceremonies & I started amid the usual discordant fanfares with the entire cavalry & infantry forces of Khotan marching in front of me & squadrons of British subjects caracoling behind me, the caravan of 11 baggage ponies & 5 or 6 mounted servants bringing up the rear. The 'Chah-jing' or farewell tea-drinking was in the prettiest surroundings I have ever attended such a function



Fig. 176. The party attending the farewell tea-drinking on leaving Khotan, at the Temple of NyangNyang 3 May 1925. Left to right: Li Amban, Skrine, Kerakin Moldovack, and Ma Tungling (the identifications noted on the back of a print in BL, IOLR Photo 920/1 (74)). (Reproduced from a scan of a nitrate negative, with permission from The Royal Geographical Society [London], no. CPS/00040).

in: a pavilion in the garden of a Chinese temple, that of the lady divinity Nyang Nyang. [*Fig. 176*] Through the doorway in front of where we sat was a vista of vine-pergola & the outer gateway beyond; through the doorway behind us a vista of big old fruit-trees making a tunnel of greenery, at the other end of which could be seen the picturesque doorway of another pavilion. Beyond that again came the courtyard of the temple, unusually well-kept & the temple itself, consisting of a single room which could be turned into a sort of deep veranda by removing the 6 big wooden doorways which enclosed it. The Goddess & her surroundings were an extraordinary affair – three great wax life-like figures of the lady, seated & wearing different gorgeous costumes, about 4 times life-size, besides 3 or 4 standing figures at each end of the temple; that was what you expected. But the whole of the façade, as it were, between & beyond the 3 great seated figures, consisted of a painted wooden mountain-side, just like a Chinese picture, with trees and waterfalls & bridges, over the whole of which was being waged a most realistic war à la mediaeval China, by dolls about 8–10 inches high! The little soldiers were most realistic, all in their different uniforms, infantry & cavalry & sappers & cross-bow men & Generals with vast headdresses & gorgeous clothes, all marching to and fro & climbing the steep paths & advancing to the assault or repelling it; here a string of sappers hauling for dear life at a rope, there a squad of infantry storming a hill-top – really most realistic! Unfortunately, I had no interpreter with me but an unintelligent Turki beg, & couldn't find out what it was all about & why a lady-god should be surrounded by such martial scenes (she didn't <u>look</u> like a Minerva!). However, I photographed part of the dolls' battle & one of the images of the goddess, as well as I could in the difficult interior light, & will send you a copy in due course. One thing struck me very much, & that was the complete lack of reverence shown by the two Chinese officials who were with us. I took off my hat & spoke low etc. but to my surprise when I asked questions thro' the Turki Beg the Chinese officials roared with laughter & treated the whole thing as a vast joke. The Turkis of our respective retinues naturally behaved similarly, it being a 'but-khana' & not sacred to them & their masters giving the cue – so altogether it was a most irreverent affair! Quite different, curiously enough to the Temple of the White Cloud at Aksu, which I described to you last October, where the old custodian was most reverent & in keeping with the idea of the shrine.

On my way to Zawa I turned off the main road and revisited the ancient site of Yotkan in the hope of picking up something of value. You remember how on our previous visit we found that a new stratum of remains, unknown to Stein, had only just been tapped by the local people in their irrigation workings,

the water having broken away a big bit of cliff. I got hold of a delightful little Graeco-Buddhist carving in 'agalmatolite' stone & one or two intaglios, which had been found in the new stratum [*see Figs. 103, 104, p. 260*]. This time I hoped that after more than a year the local people would have something to show me; but I was disappointed. I got hold of nothing but a few terra-cotta figurines and appliqué ornaments off pottery, & 1 small vase, besides a couple of tiny intaglios. [*FD, p. 59:* Paid 1 K[ash]g[a]r tg. each for the appliqués, 8 tg. for cornelian intaglio, 4 tgs. for stone white-on-black one, chipped slightly.] Disappointing. However, it was a lovely day and the surroundings of Yotkan are delightfully pretty, & I enjoyed the trip. Also I got a couple of very good plates with my P.C. camera of the new stratum, which shows up very well in the perpendicular face of the bluff at a depth of about 15 ft. from the ground level above. These may interest the archaeologists. The stratum when it was laid bare appeared to contain nothing but bones and broken pottery, in places very densely packed.

[*Fig. 177*] [*FD, pp. 60-61:* 3 May 1924. Zawa – Lamus 32 m. Boy in last stage of emaciation brought in yesterday evening with his left arm covered with dirty cloth. We were told it had been badly broken 32 days before. When they uncovered the arm, it made us feel almost sick. The whole of the upper arm was rotten, with bone showing – eaten away as if by maggots. Wanted 'medicine'! I told the father that the boy would shortly die of it, & that it was his, the father's fault & no one else's. He didn't mind a bit. If these people knew about amputation, which they don't, nothing would induce them to allow it. As it is, they 'treat' such a case themselves – never cleaning out or even washing the wound or doing anything that hurts the patient until the last stage is reached, when if there is a European near, they take the patient to him & demand medicine. Obviously, they regard it as a case for magic & Europeans as wizards. They must have 'medicine' – they simply don't listen to advice as regards treatment, much less carry it out.



Fig. 177. Map marking in blue the 'high road' the Skrines took between Zawa and Kargalik on their way back to Kashgar in May 1924 (overlaid on Survey of India, China and Kashmir & Jammu, Sheet 51, Yarkand, 2nd ed. 1926).

The old man who guided us to Lamus is an interesting person – Hussain Beg. He is in charge of the station at Tarbugaz Langar, where he keeps a register in which the names & other particulars of all persons entering or leaving the Khotan oasis are entered (this is a bottle-neck, there being no practicable roads except that across the Tarbugaz marshes which is laid on faggots). Hussain Beg got his beg-ship by catching a rebel who set himself up to be 'King' of Karakash some years ago. Collected a band of 100 desperadoes & defied the auth[oritie]s for a long time. Hussain got him. He says that the Governor for this ordered that he should be granted 'anything he asked for' – but the Khotan auth[oritie]s kept this order from him & simply made him a Beg. He knows the countryside extraordinarily well – best guide we've had yet. Pious old bird too – throughout a 10 ½ hour march on a hot day from 9:45 to [?] 7:15 – he didn't even drink, tho' he had water with him. Told Qari about 6 P.M. that he was 'nearly had'! He has 4 sons, & this is what happened to the youngest, a lad of 18, 9 months ago.

The boy's wife had a quarrel with another woman, & killed her with a knife. She was arrested by the Assistant Amban of Karakash, Wang, now Amban of Posgam. She gave evidence that her husband had been privy to the murder and had lent her the knife & now had it. The Amban arrested Hussain Beg's son & tortured him to make him confess & produce the knife. They used an instrument with which sharp blows are delivered by a sort of hammer in the ankle bone. After many days of this the bone was partially destroyed. Afterwards the woman confessed the crime & exonerated the boy, who was released. No compensation, not even an apology. He remained on his back for 4 months & is now able to walk a little (9 months). His father expected us to give him medicine that would cure his son''s ankle at once – as treatment. Obviously magic!

Beautiful fine morning at pigeon mazar, but by extraordinary & most unlucky coincidence we again (as

on the way out) happened to strike a day on which the pigeons had been fed the same morning! They would not stir for our big bag of grain. Sheikhs said this happened 'very seldom'!! However, I got 1 or 2 good pictures of the M[aza]r with the birds sitting on the roof & flying all about.]

Next day's march turned out to be the longest we have ever done. Stein's map proved inaccurate, showing the distance to be 33 miles whereas I calculate it to be at least 37. D. & I & our small following just struggled into Lamus by 7 P.M. after 10 hours' solid riding but a break of 1 hour for 'sand beef' lunch but the caravan didn't get in till quarter to 11. What is more, after sunset a 'buran' or storm of wind and dust with a little rain, came on & there being no moon it was absolutely pitch dark in the desert & the poor caravan had a fearful time & lost their way several times, tho' we sent back people to guide them in. The 37 miles were solid desert (no water for the last 20 miles) all the way; at the end we were cheered by the lovely green fields & tall trees of Lamus village nestling in its valley. All along the northern foot of the Kuen Lun the green villages tucked away in folds & clefts of the great barren 'sai' (gravel slopes) are a great feature & a most attractive one. Knowing the caravan would be late, I had taken the precaution of having a special load-pony loaded with our beddings & beds & a few necessaries, and led quickly along with us, so that we could make ourselves comfortable in the evening in some house until the caravan came. On this occasion we couldn't find a house; so as it was getting dark and a storm was coming on we settled down in a tiny orchard which was fairly well sheltered. D. had a sauce pan etc. with her & we set to work to make a fire at once & cook the dinner, I helping D. by making the Bovril, grating the chocolate for the pudding's sauce,[264] etc. By 8, our usual dinner time, D. had dinner ready in spite of the storm & we had a nice 3-course dinner in the rain & wind under a peach tree. The storm reached its climax while D. was cooking the scrambled eggs (joint course) but the latter were a great success none the less. After dinner we washed up, boiled a dozen eggs for the men to eat with their breads (it was still Ramazan & they had had nothing since before dawn) & lay down on our beds with felt mats over us to keep the rain off. There we lay while the drizzle spattered fitfully on us & the gale howled in the tops of the tall bushy poplars until at last the glad sound of the ponies' bells was heard as they crossed the river. Tents were up & we in bed inside them, in spite of the dark & the rain, within 3/4 of an hour of arrival, & we were both asleep by midnight – not bad work! But next day we halted at Lamus, as the ponies were too tired to do another long march at once.

The origin of the name of Lāmūs is rather interesting. It is corrupted from Ulam-Su, which means 'Grafted Water' & the legend is this: When the Imams who 'converted' the Six Cities (by the sword) came to invade the Kingdom of Khotan, they were opposed by the army of the Idolaters between Zawa and Pialma where there is a stretch of 25 miles of sandy desert. They encamped at a place called Takhtuban 10 m. from Pialma & the enemy lay at the place where afterwards was founded the 'Pigeon Shrine' 10 m. to the E. The Commander of the Faithful thirsted, & there was no water at Takhtuban, so (there being no water there in those days) his army lined up in single file all the way to Lamus and passed water in buckets all the way, 20 miles, from hand to hand! 'Ulam' means graft, or something fastened to something else, describing the joining or linking up of Lamus to Takhtuban in the desert by the hands of the Faithful. An old Haji of Lamus told me this legend. [*FD, pp. 62-63, on the Haji:*

264. Field Diary, p. 62, adds detail on the 'pudding': 'sponge fingers (made by her at Khotan) with Chocolate S[au]ce (made with A. & W. catering choc. brought in my pocket).' His reference is squeezed in above the line as an afterthought, with the possibility of confusing 'A' and 'C' when writing in haste. Might he have meant 'C. & W.', referring to the chocolates of Charbonnel et Walker, since 1875 'one of Britain's first and finest chocolatiers'? 'Our original shop opened at 173 New Bond Street in Mayfair and has remained in Bond Street ever since. It is housed in one of London's most elegant arcades, the Royal Arcade on Old Bond Street. We feel proud and privileged to be endorsed by the Royal Warrant as one of the few chocolatiers to Her Majesty The Queen' (https://charbonnelchocolates.com/about-us, last accessed 31 August 2024).

The Haji is a dear old beaver. Obviously fond of animals, for when I called there was (1) a very fat white pigeon which joined in the conversation so loudly that one had to raise one's voice; Qari said it joined in the prayers that morning; (2) a white lamb which walked about the room all the time & finally got up beside me and helped itself to a plate of raisins on the low table by my side, finally it had to be lifted forcibly away from the raisins; the Haji delight[ed]ly remarking that 'it had become his mihman as well as I!' (3) a brown, black & white cat which purred loudly when petted.]

From Lamus after 1 day's halt we marched to the rich Sanju valley & camped 5 m. below the little bazaar. Beautiful country it is – magnificent trees, rich meadows, crystal waters, flowers, orchards, gardens – all in a mile-wide valley running down from the Kuen Lun between vast stretches of howling wilderness, relieved at longish intervals by tiny villages tucked in folds of the 'sai.' Alas, we weren't able to enjoy Sanju, because the weather was awful. We arrived in a high wind after a 35-mile march (our guide from Lamus lost his way and took us 10 miles out of our course!) & next day it rained & blew all day. [*FD, p. 64:* Our host [*at Chaskam*] was [*Kepek*], Russian Aksakal & was victim of a fearfully anti-foreign & ferocious Amban of Goma in 1913 who beat, tortured & imprisoned him on charge of 'falsely assuming', etc. Big case about it.] The day after it was still raining, but seemed to improve by midday, so we struck camp & marched 10 miles up the Sanju valley, then turned off to the west hoping to reach this place (Kosh Tagh). But in the afternoon the rain came on heavier than ever turning into icy sleet (bang in our faces) as we mounted the hills west of Sanju, & we had to stop at a tiny forlorn little place called Sulaghiz Langar. It wasn't pleasant riding the whole 12 miles from the Sanju valley to Sulaghiz in the teeth of gale with sleet beating in our faces – so we didn't waste time, I can tell you. We did that 12 miles in 5 minutes over the hour. The poor caravan came in 3 hours later absolutely drenched. We were pretty wet too, D. not so badly because she had my 'Trench Coat' but I had only a light shower-proof Burberry. We took refuge for the night in a tiny house in the village & dossed down as best we could among the inhabitants, human & insect. [*FD, p. 64:* Dined off soup, Army ration & Horlick's.] Next day it rained again & we had another unpleasant 12 miles to this place against the wind. We had intended to go on another 7 ½ m. & pitch tents at a spring, if it was fine, but it wasn't so we stopped here, in a very nice comfortable house with plenty of room & nice roaring fires in the grates [*FD, p. 65:* house of an old 'Pashrap Beg' at Kosh Tagh, most comfortable quarters we have had since Keriya. Old man down with sciatica; gave him 8 Aspirin tabloids as a present.] – a very pleasant change from the last 3 days. We are only 6000 ft. up or less, & yet it is as cold as Kashgar in winter! Extraordinary climate – quite like the English summer. The joke is that we came this 'upper road' partly to avoid what we thought would be the great heat of the desert road in May – & now we've been wishing we hadn't – it would have been chilly marching even along the lower road, but by this one we've been simply frozen since the morning we left Sanju. However, it's a very healthy life we're leading and we're both very fit, & anyhow after this we're sure to have some glorious clear weather to reward us – which will make the rather dull 2 ½ marches from here to Karghalik go quickly.[265]

265. In fact, he did enjoy some clear days. Here from the Field Diary, p. 65, are some of his notes on successes and failures in photography:

9 May 1924. Kosh Tagh to Oi Tograk, 20 m. Caravan l[eft] 9:30.

Completely cleared up after 3 ½ d[ays'] bad weather incl. 2 of rain. Brilliantly clear. White ranges of Kuen Lun visible for ___ miles, with new snow coming quite low down – wonderful sight. Took 4 telephotos from Kosh Tagh:

1,2 at 10 A.M. F.16 teleph., colour screen +++, 2 min. (Result: 1 very good, 2 over-exposed (? mistake in taking).

3,4 Mountains to W. of Kilian Pass, 45-60 m. away at 10:30-10:45. F16 teleph. c. s.+++, 1 ½ minutes. Both good, but No. 4 partially spoilt by light leak.

Also one at 12 noon from between Peshna & Oi T. – very fine view of the Kilian Pass & high snows. Same as above but F 8 and ½ min exp. Result: hopelessly over-exposed & no detail: Moral: however clear a distant view of snows looks at midday don't try to take it.

I have many other letters to write before we reach Kargalik, so I will stop here. Best love from both.

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[*The Field Diary contains, pp. 66-67, a number of short entries revealing of the kinds of information Skrine was collecting while on tour.*]

From Jail Suptat[?] Kargalik, a Mussalman ex-Deputy for Lop District on the Urumchi Prov[incia]l Council, I got today foll[owin]g inf[ormatio]n – 27 'elected' (probably nominated) persons of his district, Lop, came into Khotan & chose him out of their number to be deputy for the district. S. Sinkiang sends 22 Mussalman members, Northern Sinkiang 14 Chinese & 4 Tungan members (? Chinese in S. Sinkiang unrepresented?). Election is indirect, as above 1 deputy for each district; voting takes place at nearest large town, in Y[ar]k[an]d, K[ash]g[a]r, Kh[o]t[a]n, Aksu etc. Council at Urumchi sits 80 days in the year, besides extraordinary sessions. Functions I gather are purely advisory.

From Wang Amban: Governor Yang wouldn't allow any body to come in from the districts to the wedding of his son to Liu's daughter last year. Sent circular to all district off[icia]ls saying wedding was private show & if any of them came in without leave they w[oul]d get the sack. Similarly no presents allowed.

From Ma Tungling: Soldiers under his command include only 10 Chinese, all natives of Sinkiang. Can't get proper Chinese soldiers on low pay given. Turki soldiers can't even open their rifles, much less shoot them straight. Whereas in China proper if you order a soldier to walk through water he will do it, here the soldiers walk carefully round puddles in the streets in order not to get their feet wet.

12 May 1924. Halt K[ar]g[a]l[i]k.

Wang Amban told me today that after Stein's discovery '20 years ago' of very fine old Ch[inese] writings near Tunhwang, & his publication of facsimiles of them in his book, certain Chinese students in England spotted that they were very valuable in China and wrote out to the Ministry of Education about it. The Imp[eria]l Gov't. ordered the Sinkiang Gov't. to send along any other such writings there might be at the places found by Stein, which was done.[266]

A damaged writing by a T'ang scribe was recently bought by the Japanese for 20,000 dollars. Stein found T'ang writings including some by same man.

Divorce here is entirely in the hands of the man. He can grant it to the woman or not as he likes. Usually the woman is the suppliant – often she pays for it heavily tho' this must not come to the ears of the Qazis. All that is nec[essar]y is for the man (the woman's presence not nec[essar]y) to go to the Qazi & affirm (give a 'jai') on the Qur'an that he divorces his wife. (Lawful) conditions & terms, if any, are included in the jai, which also states whether the divorce is to be ba'in (final & binding) or raja'i (wife may return (muraja'at) to her husband – If ba'in remarriage is illegal [)].

Instl. [? =Instances]: (1) Opium-smuggling B.S. in Y[ar]k[an]d left his wife in Gilgit. P[olitical] A[gent] wrote for maintenance, which was collected with great difficulty for a short time. Then the husband got sick of paying maintenance & the B[ritish] Ak[sakal] induced him to settle the matter by giving the woman a divorce. Doc't. sealed by Qazi, about 5 lines, was sent to me & forwarded to wife thro' P[olitical] A[gent] G[ilgit].

(2) Hashia Khan's good-for-nothing husband lived on her for years & refused to give a divorce. Lately he married another laundry-woman & lived on her too – a double 'laundry-woman's husband.' Finally, last week H.K. managed by giving up all the household property brought by her to the house, induced him to divorce her.

Sino-Turkisms: 'Damallah' which puzzled me at first. I find means merely 'big mullah' like Darin – big man.

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266. Interesting that such information was being passed along, even if it oversimplifies the matter. For the responses to Stein's discovery of the 'Library Cave' at Dunhuang and removal of so many of its treasures, see Jacobs 2020, pp. 108-114, and Ch. 4 (pp. 150-186).

Camp, Kizil Bazaar, 20 May 1924

How very interesting your seeing Lyall, & how very sensible of him to get into touch with you! [...] D. of course is wildly excited about the niece – & was at first furious when I read to her what you said about having thrown cold water on Lyall's idea of bringing the niece, until I persuaded to her to stop and think a bit about the responsibility you would have incurred if you had strongly advised Lyall to bring the girl. As a matter of fact, we both hope and pray he does bring her, for it will make all the difference not only to him but to the Consulate and to Kashgar in general if there is someone to act as hostess, however inexperienced. A lady is badly wanted at the Consulate, especially when the C.G. is single-handed, as Lyall will be at any rate for his first year. As for the girl and her point of view, unless she's of the butterfly type or quite hopelessly bornée I simply can't see why she shouldn't have a perfectly delightful time all through. She can't help loving Kashgar; the journey is made so easy & safe for a woman that there's nothing to fear from that (surely D's experiences have convinced you by this time that, mile for mile, travelling as the wife of a C.G. in Central Asia is about 4 times as safe, mile for mile, than it is in India? And it's certainly much more comfortable). However, as I tell D. (we discuss the matter daily) if the niece is the right sort of girl, she'll insist on coming, & if she isn't, it is better that she should not come.

Lyall himself sounds delightful from your letter to me [...] A son of Sir A. Lyall[267] – a sportsman – a traveller with interests in S. Africa & above all a sahib, as you particularly noted – he can't be the wrong sort of man for Kashgar. You do not want brainy highbrows or ambitious bureaucrats here – you want, first of all, a gentleman, with no axe to grind & kindly disposed to the extraordinarily varied lot of people he has to deal with; secondly, someone fond of travel for its own sake; knowing something about law, or, if not, at any rate endowed with a sense of justice & impartiality if possible, either knowing enough Persian to ask to talk to Persian speakers direct, or willing to learn Turki. Disinterestedness & impartiality are the main things; what made E. such a bad C.G. was not so much his untrustworthiness in money matters & his low-class habits & outlook as the fact that he had an axe to grind & was out for 'Number One' the whole time. In this remote & un-supervisable but very important post, the main thing from Govt's point of view is that they can trust the man on the spot to tell them the truth and Lyall will do that, I think.

Did I tell you that another English girl is coming out this summer to Kashgar? A Miss Wingate, daughter of Col. Wingate who was once Br[itish] Joint Comm[issione]r at Leh; not so far as I can gather one of my Wingates, the 'Sardar's' children Ronnie & Victoria. She has joined the Swedish Mission, if you please, & is coming out with their next batch via India and Leh – which, by the way includes two if not three other ladies! As D. says, Lyall's niece if she comes will have only too much female society at Kashgar!

Tell Father not to be afraid of E[therton], & not to be unnecessarily discreet about the circumstances of E's dismissal from the services of the F[oreign] & P[olitical] Department. It is desirable in the interests of Gov't. that the facts should be circulated privately [...] [I]f he starts circulating lies about me I'll take the keenest pleasure in circulating truths about him – lots more than are in any official reports

267. Sir Alfred Comyn Lyall (1835-1911), who had a long career in Indian Civil Service, including the Vice-Governorship of the Northwest Territories. He was known for seeing all sides of a question, but could take sides and did not shy from changing his mind. He read widely, including some of the most important writers of his time (among them Tolstoi and Dostoevskii); as did many of his ICS peers, admired the Romans as a model for British rule even though he was skeptical about the ability of the English to prepare Indians for self-rule. He published several books on Indian history. He is a central figure in Gilmour's study of the Raj (2006, passim).

too. E.g., how he & an Indian accomplice made a good thing out of confiscating smuggled opium & selling it privately for their own pockets, while all the while E. was reporting to Gov't. how energetic he was in the suppression of the opium traffic & how many consignments he had confiscated and burnt! Such kudos did he acquire in this matter that he was specially invited by the Opium Comm[issio]n of the League of Nations to give evidence before them at Geneva!!

I had a hectic 5 days at Yarkand, the last 3 particularly being very hard work. On Saturday I did office- and case-work at the Bārgāh (the garden we live at when at Y[ar]k[an]d, just outside the walls) until 11 when I galloped down to Yamen & worked with the Amban till 8; on Sunday I did the same except that I got away earlier from the Yamen & worked at files & intelligence reports all the evening, even unto midnight; yesterday (Monday) I was up at 7 and had pushed off the caravan (4 carts) at 9 and spent the next 4 hours taking down evidence in a big burglary case which had just occurred at the Hindu Serai; after a hurried lunch with D. off sandwiches I sent her off down the road & stayed behind myself to take down the enormously long and confused statement of a Swedish (ex-missionary) lady doctor of Kuchar [Lovisa Engvall – *DW*] (450 m. N.E. of Kashgar on the Peking road) in a civil case she has against a British subject of the same place. I got rid of her (after having covered 5 ½ pp. of foolscap) at 4 & galloped off to the 'chah-jan' of the Chinese officials, the official farewell road-side tea-drinking 1 m. outside the Kashgar Gate of the city. Thence on to the British subjects' chah-jan, where besides saying good bye to everyone I had to take 2 or 3 more witnesses' statements in the burglary case. Getting away at 5:30 I galloped almost without drawing rein to Kok Rabat, 22 m. from Yarkand, where I found D. waiting for me & dinner on the table. After dinner more work on the mails (I received 3 in 1 week since reaching Kargalik!) & bed at quarter to 12. Some day, what?

The weather is delightful, not a bit hot as we expected it would be for our return journey to Kashgar in May: blue skies cool breezes & fresh nights needing 2 or more blankets on one's bed. Yesterday was too lovely – one of those days when the air is so limpidly pure & clear that not only are snow peaks 120 miles away visible but all the rich colours of the countryside, the many shades of green of young corn, lucerne, poplars, willows, planes the yellow-green of rice, the yellow of mustard, the silvery white of poplar-bark, the browns & ochres of the river cliffs, the blue of lakes & rivers & of the sky itself are all so vivid as to be scarcely real. Such a sunset too! Never shall I forget my ride to Kok Rabat, cantering along lanes & among reedy lakes & over wide grassy plains towards a sky of scarlet & crimson, against which the jagged outlines of the Kizil Tagh & the 100-mile-distant ramparts of the Pamirs stood out as if cut from black velvet. This morning again it was radiantly clear & throughout what is usually a wearisome desert march, 28 m. long, our eyes were feasted by the changing panorama of the snows, the rich colours of the sand hills & gravel slopes, the rich blue of the lower mountains & the green villages islanded in the desert behind & before us. We are camped tonight in a jolly little clump of fruit trees outside a solitary farm-house 1 m. from the main oasis of Kizil Bazaar, in full view of the mighty expanse of 'sai' leading up, dotted with villages & farms, up & up to the blue snow capped mountains. Can you wonder we are sorry that it is our last night in camp for quite a long time? for tomorrow we stay with a newly-married Missionary couple at Yangi Hissar in their comfortable mission house, & next day we dash the last 47 miles into Kashgar.

I'll keep this open in case (as I hope) there'll be another mail for us at Yangi Hissar & a letter from you.

21 May 1924. Yangi Hissar. Your letter of 3rd April awaited us.

Don't be worried about Lyall's coming late in the season upsetting our plans – it fits in with them

very well. I don't want to leave Kashgar now till early September, for these reasons:

(1) I've so much still to do at Kashgar e.g. two years Annual Reports which India has called for (we never sent in an Annual Report before, so I suppose they like my literary style!) also (unofficial) surveying & photo-ing the rest of the Shiwakte & Kungur region.

(2) Sept. & Oct. are the best months to go down the road in. Weather at its best & water in the Hunza river low enough to permit travelling in the river-bed instead of going over those terrible precipices.

(3) I can't hope for more than 21 months' leave, & if I get that, I want to get in 2 London seasons; so if, excluding 'joining time,' I manage that my leave sh[oul]d start from Dec. 1st or thereabouts, I shan't have to come out again till August 1926, whereas if it started early in Sept. (as it w[oul]d if we left Kashgar in July) I would have to come out in June – the worst possible time in every way [...]

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Kashgar, 27 May 1924

Fancy, we are once more in wireless communication with the outer world! Casperd, who is staying with us, came here from Urumchi nearly a month ago and after putting the station in order soon got busy talking not only to Peshawar, as Dockray succeeded in doing last year, but to Urumchi where Chinese Operators are working the station. The contract tests which the Marconi Co. had to satisfy are thus carried out. Last year, as you know, they weren't, & the Co. were in the soup – the Chinese Gov't. repudiated the contract on the grounds that Dockray & Casperd had failed to satisfy the test, namely 'regular and continuous wireless communication between Kashgar and Urumchi'. Caspard (who doesn't love Dockray, it is true) says that last year the fault was entirely Dockray's because there was a (technical) fault in the wiring of the receiving apparatus here which made it impossible for the Kashgar Station to receive signals from the Urumchi station. Dockray ought to have spotted this & put it right. Casperd found it out after some days & puzzling & has now got everything in working order for communication with Urumchi. Certainly things are going well. I fancy Dockray tho' a wonderful fellow for push & drive & enterprise, isn't very accurate or painstaking – rushes his fences, as they say.

Casperd has been our guest in our absence since 2 days after his arrival. I met him with a letter from Khotan in which I asked him to stay at the Consulate & be fed by our cook Daud, who doesn't accompany us on our tours. After trying the Russian Bank for 2 days & finding it a wash-out (they neglected him shamefully and were most inhospitable) he decided to take advantage of my offer, & moved over. We found him installed & quite happy. We only see him during the 2nd half of the day, for if you please he breakfasts at 3:30 A.M.! Goes out to the station at 4, & works till noon when 'X's' (i.e., 'atmospherics' or electrical disturbances due to the sun beating on the desert) become too bad. He returns to lunch, sleeps in the afternoon, plays tennis, doesn't appear to tea but eats a hearty dinner & talks afterwards till 10 or 11. He's a curious little man, poor physique, a naval moustache beard (not a very strong growth) Cockney accent & rather too-assured a manner – D. didn't like him at first. She judges everybody's manners by her father's standard & it requires a Pigot to win her full approval – but he's a very decent fellow on the whole – plenty of stuffing in him and remarkably intelligent in the wide sense. Talks interestingly & shows keen observation not only of people but of nature. Has thought for himself & is by no means circumscribed by his own 'shop'. I have taken quite a liking to the little man in spite of his mannerisms & I think D. has melted a bit. Anyhow he's with us for another 10 days or so. For it'll take us that to get him off down the road to India, probably by the same route that Pigor went by, via Chitral. Meanwhile I find it extremely useful having him here working the station, for I have got off

several important cypher and other telegrams to India which would otherwise have taken a fortnight – arrears of work due to touring. What is more, Casperd has got the Chinese W[ireless] T[elegraph] man here to whom Dockray handed over last year & whom I imagined to be quite useless, working quite remarkably well and sending & receiving messages from Peshawar & Urumchi quite efficiently! So that, so long as the engines run smoothly, even after Casperd goes we shall be in communication with India. Unfortunately, tho' Chien, the operator mentioned above, is quite intelligent & knows a little about W. T., the lad who is by way of being engineer to the station is very inexperienced & cannot be trusted to keep the engines running indefinitely. Sooner or later there'll be a breakdown, & then no more W. T. till the next European comes along! [...]

Congratters on the I[rish] L[iterary] S[ociety] lecture on Chinese Turkestan – it really was most sporting of you & I'm quite certain you delivered a far more interesting lecture on the subject than I ever will! Incidentally you must have learnt a lot about this country that you wouldn't otherwise have – for there's no way of learning about a thing so good as mugging it up with a view to teaching somebody else about it. You're thrown into deep water & have to swim. By the way, what's a kibitka?[268] You say you described D.'s visit to one to cure a broken leg. We can't either of us recall the incident, & we don't know what a kibitka is! I had a vague idea it was a kind of soldier in Siberia!! [...]

P.S. Please thank Father for the copy of Etherton's article on 'Chinese Turkistan' in the *Asiatic Review*.[269] What infernal cheek he's still calling himself, in March 1924, HM's C.G. for Ch[inese] Turk[esta]n etc.! Can't something be done to stop it? And Colonel, too – he's only a Major. It's rather worrying me that people at home don't seem to be getting to know about him. I'm dreading meeting him at Central Asian Society lectures & so on. Why, he might get on his hind legs & criticize (or, worse still, patronize) me! I simply won't go to any function at which there's the least chance of his being present – & if I find him still posing as the 'great Central Asian consul' I'll show him up, tell everybody. He daren't risk a libel suit.

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Kashgar, 29 May 1924

Dear Father,

[...] I must say, I'm sorry to miss the [British Empire] Exhib[itio]n for D's sake as well as for my own.[270] I have always been grateful to my stars and to you for my having had the luck to see the Paris Exposition of 1900, many details of which I still remember vividly, and it would have been great fun to have seen this one too and to have compared the two. In one respect at any rate the Wembley show will hardly compare with the 1900 one, and that is in the surroundings. At Paris half the battle was the magnificient milieu, the Seine with the Pont Alexandre III and the Pont d'Iéna and the other beautiful bridges, the Champ de Mars and the Invalides and the Trocadero – yes, and even the Tour de 300 Mètres [The Eiffel Tower – *DW*], for the latter tho' an eyesore in a work-day capital, was very much in place in the fantastic

268. Odd Skrine would not have known this, a commonly used term (at least in Russia) for a yurt, hut or tent of non-Russian peoples.

269. Etherton 1924, published in three installments. Presumably Skrine had received only the first one in the April No. 62 issue.

270. The Exhibition, at the time the largest such exhibition ever mounted anywhere, was located at the London suburb of Wembley, hardly, as Skrine's comment suggests, a picturesque location. It ran from 23 April to 1 November 1924, and, after a winter break, again for several months in 1925. For a retrospective summary and critique, see Kenneth Walthew, "The British Empire Exhibition of 1924," *History Today* 31/8 (1981), online at https://www.historytoday.com/archive/british-empire-exhibition-1924, last accessed 1 September 2024.

carnival world of the Exposition.

I'm very glad you were nice to Lyall, and also that you put him wise to Etherton and his case [...] I think I quoted to M[other] in a recent letter what Howell said to me in his last, dated 23rd March? He said: 'Your friend Etherton is not going to be prosecuted, but I do not think he is likely to trouble the F[oreign] and P[olitical] [Department] further. It was a blunder ever to put a man of that class into such a post.' The Italics are mine [...]

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[*The official monthly diary, in fact covering both April and May 1924, went off to India on 12 June, was forwarded to London in a printed copy on 17 July and arrived there on 5 August. The excerpts here are from the printed copy sent to the India Office, BL IOLR L/P&S/10/976 P3212/1924, fols. 162-165. On 11 August 1924, J. P. Gibson, the annotator on the minute paper appended in London, characterized it as* 'unusually interesting'. *With the wireless station now fully operational, key intelligence messages, including the news about the coup that overthrew Ma Titai, had long before been received. Skrine telegraphed a short summary via Peshawar to the Government of India on 3 June; forwarded to London, this arrived there on 1 July. A copy, along with a printed copy of the February Kashgar official diary, with its details of one of the then recent bloody deeds of Ma Titai, is in the file BL IOLR L/P&S/11/248 P2742/1924: 'Chinese Turkestan: overthrow of Ma Titai, the General Officer Commanding, Kashgar. 9 Mar. 1924-15 Jul. 1924'. On the minute paper on 15 July, J. P. Gibson noted:* 'Nemesis has come with justice & comparative swiftness & the rejoicing at Ma Titai's overthrow is not surprising.' *Skrine's letter to his mother describing that event is missing (though he does have an account in* CCA *1925, esp. pp. 263-69). The April–May diary opens with material on the recent tour, including an account about capture of the robbers and a description of the gold fields. He notes that the road through Polu leads to a pass that should provide a route into Tibet. The total distance covered on the tour was 906 miles. Then follows the account about the fall of Ma, quoted here in full. In describing the build-up of military forces, Skrine is re-interpreting the goals of the troop transfers he had reported on earlier as being aimed mainly to ensure the security of the Governor in Urumqi. However, he still had but a limited understanding of the decision by Governor Yang to get rid of Ma, the real reason being his discovery that the Titai was conspiring with the central government in Beijing to overthrow Yang. Skrine's favorite local official, Chu, presumably did not play a key role in the events. Skrine's comments in para. 12 about the appointments following the overthrow of Ma are speculative at best.*]

6. *Operations against Ma Titai.* A telegraphic report has already been sent to the Government of India regarding the retribution which has fallen upon Ma Titai, General Officer Commanding Kashgaria, and his son, the Hsiehtai (Commandant) of Kashgar Old City. The misdoings of this arch-brigand and the manner in which for several years past he has systematically fleeced the countryside and has established almost a reign of terror, have frequently been commented on in these Diaries [...] His sins have at last found him out. His numerous enemies, headed by Chu ex-taoyin of Kashgar whom the Titai ignominiously deposed in 1922, appear last winter to have persuaded the Governor that the time had come to assert his authority in Kashgaria once and for all. Accordingly it was decided to concentrate and train in Aksu as strong a force as possible and send it against the Titai. The strategy of the expedition was not unskilfully conceived. Fearing lest the Titai might escape to Russian territory, the Governor first of all reinforced all the frontier posts to the north of Kashgar, using as his pretext the crisis in the Sino-Russian negotiations and the fear of invasion from across the border. In February and March detachments of regular Chinese troops were drafted from Urumchi and Ili and even from distant Sarikol to Aksu, where also the various 'Wangs' (political pensioner descendants of the ancient Turki ruling families of Kuchar, Khotan, etc.) were summoned with their retainers. The latter constituted a kind of militia which the Chinese call upon in time of need, and on the present occasion a force of about 5,000 of these men and of others directly recruited by the Chinese appear to have been mobilized at Aksu. During April and the first half of May drill-sergeants from Urumchi gave these recruits some sort of

hasty training, and they were then formed into platoons and companies with a stiffening of Chinese regulars in each unit. There appears to have been no lack of rifles and ammunition, mostly of modern type, and two machine-guns and a few trench mortars (taken over no doubt from the White Guards in 1920–1921) were provided.

7. The Governor has for years exercised a strict censorship in all post and telegraph offices in Sinkiang and it now stood him in good stead. During the preparations none but the wildest and most inaccurate rumours reached the Titai, who up to the last moment was quite in the dark as to the nature and magnitude of the danger with which he was faced. Only two days before the blow fell the Hsieh Tai called on H.M.'s Consul General with the object of 'pumping' the latter as to the numbers and whereabouts of the Governor's troops. 'Whom the gods wish to destroy, they first make mad',[271] and it is probable that the Titai, whose megalomania had been increasing during the last years believed himself invincible. He also evidently took it for granted that his scouts would inform him in plenty of time of the near approach of the enemy.

8. The Government troops started from Aksu on May 24th in two columns. The main body, under the command of Erh Ying, late Taoyin of Aksu, straggled down the main road *viâ* Maralbashi; no attempt was made to keep its movements secret, and the Titai duly heard about them and calculated, rightly, that so large a force (about 3,500) could not reach Kashgar before 4th June. But another column of about 500 under an old and bitter enemy of the Titai, Ma Hsih Ying,[272] late Amban of Uch Turfan, marched *viâ* Uch Turfan through the outer ranges of the Tien Shan to Artush on the Kashgar–Naryn road, due north of Kashgar, by a route nearly the same as that used by H.M.'s Consul General on his tour to Uch Turfan and Bai last autumn (*vide* diary for September 1923, paragraph 1). This column, which consisted mostly of infantry, covered the distance of about 230 miles in 7 days, no mean performance. They captured 10 of the Titai's scouts on the way. Lying up near Artush on Sunday, 31st May, Captain Ma marched his men during the night to Kashgar New City, the Titai's headquarters; at dawn when the gates were opened as usual (the Titai, as has been said, expected no one before the 4th) Ma and 20 of his men rushed in and made a straight line for the Titai's magnificent new four-storeyed palace of painted wood. [*Fig. 178, next page*] The New City was full of the Titai's troops, but the latter were an undisciplined, slack, opium-smoking lot, and the attack completely surprised them as well as their General, who was still in bed when Ma rushed the outer gate of the palace, shooting or bayonetting the guard. The Titai hastily collected a few personal orderlies and fired at Ma and his party as they crossed the courtyard, killing a lieutenant and wounding two other ranks. But Ma was not to be denied his revenge, and he was into the house and up the three flights of stairs to the Titai's bedroom before the latter could organize a proper defence. The old General fired at Ma with his magazine pistol but missed him, whereupon Ma disarmed him with a revolver shot in his right arm and speedily had him a prisoner. *sauve qui peut* [headlong flight – *DW*] of the Titai's men ensued and the affair was over.

9. The Hsieh Tai and his troops at Kashgar Old City, six miles away had still to be dealt with, and a company under the command of a Captain Chien was at once detailed for the purpose. The Hsieh Tai's Yamen is provided with massive mediaeval fortifications and occupies the western quarter of the city. Its outer walls, which are also those of the town, are only 150–200 yards distant from the British Consulate-General, over which bullets whistled freely during the fighting. The Hsieh Tai had about 150

271. Skrine's quote here is one often mis-attributed to Euripides, and probably taken from *Daniel, a Model for Young Men* (1854) by William Anderson Scott. (https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Euripides, last accessed 9 May 2016).

272. Presumably Ma Shaowu 馬紹武, (1874-1937), who had a key role in the events.



Fig. 178. Ma Titai's palace in Kashgar New City, photographed after the military operation which ended his despotic rule (from the British Library Collection: IOLR Photo 920/1 [25]). On the reverse of this print, Skrine added a note: 'In fgd., left, Capt. Ma, who led the force with overthrew him; in front of palace, supply & ammunition-waggons loaded w/ loot from palace which was full of jade, raw opium & other valuables.'

soldiers armed with inferior rifles and ammunition and he appeared at first to be ready to surrender; Captain Chien informed H.M.'s Consul General the same afternoon that he and ten of his men were admitted into the fort, while the rest of the Governor's troops occupied strategic points outside it, and that he parleyed for some time with the Hsieh Tai. Suddenly a shot was fired, by which side is not known; a hot fusillade at once began, both sides apparently shooting wildly in all directions. Chien found himself in an unpleasant position and was obliged to cut his way out of the Yamen, losing two officers and two men killed and being himself wounded in the process. His men from outside the fort, however, soon overpowered the Hsieh Tai's inferior troops and rushed the Yamen, killing the Hsieh Tai and 13 of his men. As at the New City, once they had lost their leader the local troops ran, and the rest of the day was spent by the Governor's soldiers looting the Yamen and chasing the Hsieh Tai's men among the streets and suburbs of the town. About 50 were taken prisoners; quarter was given whenever asked, but several men who did not throw their rifles away were shot in the streets. Looting was confined to the Fort, and no violence was done to the civilians or their property either before or after the engagement; the troops indeed appeared to be well in hand. H.M.'s Consul General who went round the city on his way to the Tao Tai's Yamen half an hour before the fighting began and again in the afternoon, noticed that although there was an unusual number of people in the streets, the shops were not shut nor was there any undue excitement. The contrast with Persia, where in such circumstances the bazar would have been closed and half the population 'taking bast' somewhere or other, was most remarkable.

10. Next day, Monday, 2nd June, Ma Titai was shot publicly and his body exposed in front of the main

gate of the New City, to the great delight of the populace who collected in large crowds to spit upon and otherwise defile the body of their late tyrant.[273] The corpse of his son, the late Hsieh Tai, was not exposed publicly but was left lying on the ground inside his Yamen for two days, where it was seen by many persons. Rejoicings have been general throughout both cities and in all Southern Sinkiang at the overthrow of the self-styled 'King' who had oppressed Kashgaria so long. The 32 ladies of the Titai's harem together with the Hsieh Tai's womenfolk are prisoners at the Yamen of the New City Magistrate, but are to be released later and maintained at State expense. All the captured soldiers of the Titai and his son have already been liberated; no trouble is expected from them as they cannot obtain arms. Vast areas of land which the Titai had bought at his own price with his ill-gotten gains, or had merely taken by force, are to be returned to their owners.

11. Apart from the great increase in prestige gained by the Urumchi Government from this display of power and the summary justice visited upon the Titai, the position of the Chinese in Southern Sinkiang has been greatly strengthened from the purely military point of view.[274] As has been frequently pointed out in the reports and diaries of this Consulate General, during the last few years Chinese military power has reached a low ebb; the Titai kept up an army of a few hundred at Kashgar instead of the 4,000 or 5,000 he was supposed to maintain, and even they were mostly ill-equipped and untrained. Frontier detachments such as the Sarikol garrison of about 200 and that of Ulugh-chat (opposite Irkeshtam) of about the same strength were under direct orders of Urumchi, and were of a somewhat better type; but without a strong force at Kashgar to back them up, they were strategically negligible. Now, there are upwards of 4,000 troops in the Kashgar area, all well armed; a large proportion, it is true, are quarter-trained recruits, but there is a stiffening of old soldiers, and several of the officers with whom H.M.'s Consul General has exchanged calls are of a type very different from that of the 'Officers' to whom Kashgar is accustomed.

12. Erh, the Tao Tai of Aksu mentioned in paragraph 9 above as being in supreme command of the expedition, arrived with the main body from Aksu on 6th June. On the 9th he took over charge of the Taoyinship of Kashgar from the decrepit and opium-sodden Hsu. The fall of the latter is understood to be due to his failure to keep the Titai in order. Erh is a much younger man and has a reputation as a soldier, gained in the extreme north of the Province where the people are of sterner stuff than the Kashgaris, so there is hope that there will be more life in the administration than there has been during the last two years. Everyone hoped and expected that Chu, who was Taoyin from 1917 to 1922, would again be appointed, but it is probable that the Governor is jealous of his outstanding ability and personal popularity. He has been appointed to the less important Taoyinship of Aksu in place of Erh (see diary for March, paragraph 4).

[*Following are two paragraphs updating the information on the Kashgar wireless station, with details of the repairs instituted by Caspard, one being the switch from powering the stations with gasoline, imported expensively ('brought on carts 3000 miles from China'), to kerosene, obtained from 'local or Russian' sources. Skrine reported having had regular transmissions with India between 23 May and 6 June with no significant corruption of the messages. Skrine's next diary section is of interest for what it says about intelligence and efforts to intercept suspicious individuals. Understandably, he speculated about the meaning of the information, but*

273. Nazarov (1935, facing p. 82) included a picture of Ma's crucified corpse on public display and one of a dead body lying next to a rifle in a courtyard, probably to be identified as the corpse of the Hsieh Tai. Neither photo is attributed to Skrine, unlike the others in the book.

274. As Justin Jacobs has pointed out to me, Yang had to explain to the other warlords why he had killed a Muslim he had installed a decade earlier. Yang said nothing about Ma's contacts with Beijing, instead insisting that it was necessary to forestall a rebellion by those whom Ma had so ruthlessly been exploiting.

he is careful to lay out clearly the various options. As the follow-up comment in London quoted below suggests, whatever the facts here, they seem not to have been read as alarming.]

16. *Party of Russians in Yarkand District.* – A report has already been sent by wireless to the Government of India regarding the appearance in Yarkand district about the beginning of May, of a mysterious party of Russians and Kirghiz, seven in number, well-mounted and armed and apparently making for the south-east. Immediately on learning (at Yarkand on 14th May) of the presence of this party, H.M.'s Consul-General (i) despatched a trustworthy mounted agent to get on their track and report their movements; (ii) wrote to the British Aksakals at Karghalik, Goma, Khotan and Keriya to keep a look-out for any attempt on the part of the gang to leave Sinkiang territory through the districts in question; (iii) visited the Amban of Yarkand (who knew about the affair but had said nothing about it), pointed out that the strangers evidently had no passports, were certainly bent on no good and were probably bound for British territory, and requested the Amban to write immediately to his colleagues in the above-mentioned districts to intercept the party at all costs. This he promised to do. On his return to Kashgar on May 22nd H.M.'s Consul-General obtained a similar promise from the Taoyin as regards the Ambans of all the districts concerned.

17. Reports just received from the Aksakal of Merket (40 miles north of Yarkand) confirm the identification of Yakub Haji Badakshi mentioned in H.M.'s Consul General's telegram No. 28, but mention no Russians. According to this source, the party originally consisted of 13 persons of whom 8 went towards Kashgar and 5 towards Yarkand. At Failu on the edge of Yarkand district, where they stopped for two nights, they had a brush with the village headmen and police who tried to arrest them, but they fired shots in the air and frightened their opponents into letting them go. One of their spare horses loaded with grain stuck in a quicksand and was captured by the police and taken to the Amban of Yarkand. To replace this animal the gang seized the horse of a local landholder, who collected some men and gave chase The pursuers came up with the party at Kumush Mahalla, a village on the edge of the desert in Karghalik district, and succeeded in persuading them to return the horse.

18. The last that has been heard of the gang up to date is a report from the Aksakal of Goma that the agent sent by H.M.'s Consul General had traced them as far as Doshamba Bazar, three miles south of Goma and just off the Yarkand–Khotan road. Enquiries at Kashgar regarding the eight men alleged to have come here have been fruitless, but the excitement and confusion caused by the operations against the Titai may explain this. A separate report from Merket, however, lends colour to the theory that other trans-border agents came into Sinkiang territory at the same time as the party of five. This is to the effect that on 28th May the Subordinate Magistrate of Merket arrested two strangers, one of whom he took to be a British subject and asked the British Aksakal to come and interrogate him. The Aksakal describes the man as about 26 and well dressed 'in the fashion of the old nobility of Ferghana' with embroidered belt, silver and gold thread buttons set with turquoises, etc. He spoke Persian 'like a Persian', *i.e.*, not like an Afghan or an Indian, and seemed to be very well educated and intelligent. He at first pretended to be an Afghan from Badakhshan, but afterwards admitted that he was a Bokharan called Nur Ali, son of Hafiz Ali of Haji Habibullah Street, Bokhara City. He stated that he had left Bokhara four years ago. Questioned as to his movements since then, he prevaricated and was unable to account for them. His companion is one Ahmad Kashgari. Both men are still in custody at Merket. On receiving this report H.M.'s Consul General called on the new Taoyin and requested him to have Nur Ali brought into Kashgar for interrogation, which the Taoyin promised to do.

19. From the above three possibilities emerge:

(1) That the party consists of Bolshevik or other emissaries *en route* through Southern Sinkiang to Tibet or Nepal;

(2) That they are Jadidi Bokharans of Sami Bey's late following;

(3) That they form part of a larger gang of spies, propagandists or other agents sent by the Turkestan authorities to Southern Sinkiang in connection with possible Sino-Russian hostilities.

Of these (1) is inherently improbable, but should not be overlooked in view of Mahendra Pratap's known desire to visit Nepal, and the existence of a Bolshevik mission bound for Lhasa. (2) is supported by the capture a month later of the Bokharan Nur Ali at the very place where the gang first appeared. The description of this person is strongly reminiscent of Abdul Hamid and the other Bokharan followers of Haji Sami Bey.[275] Having tried in the spring of 1923 without success to obtain permission from the Chinese to enter Sinkiang by the Mukh route, they may now have entered it without permission by another. Their object may either be to get through to India and so to Turkey, or to further Pan-Turanian schemes in this country. Colour is lent to (3) by the fact that according to reports received at Yarkand, they spent one of their nights in Yarkand district at the house of an ex-Russian Aksakal, where they indulged in much Bolshevik talk, and by the fact that they seem to have entered Kashgaria from Semirechia and not from Bokhara.

20. If the party, whoever they are, are bound for Tibet or Nepal, there are only three routes by which they can get there; namely:

(i) by Sanju or Kilian and the Karakoram Pass to Leh;

(ii) by Sanju or Kilian and Shahida-ullah to Chang Chenmo;

(iii) by Polu in Keriya district and Baba Khatun.

From enquiries made by H.M.'s Consul General at Polu (vide paragraph 2 above) No. (iii) is so difficult and requires such elaborate preparations (which could not be carried out without assistance from the local authorities) that it may be ignored. The Aksakal of Keriya has however been instructed to stop the Polu outlet. (i) and (ii) are being watched by agents at Sanju and Kilian and it ought to be possible to give ample warning to Leh if the party are reported to be using either of these routes.

21. A highly suspicious fact is that the Afghan Envoy at Yarkand, Mohammad Sharif, has twice recently visited the neighbourhood of Failu where the gang first appeared in the Yarkand district. The first occasion was at the beginning of April, when the Envoy with Mirza Abdul Ghani and a small following went to a place called Toghraghe 20 miles north of Yarkand ostensibly to watch the local fishermen at work; next day he marched on for some miles northwards and came back to Yarkand by another route which must have brought him through the country afterwards traversed by the mysterious new comers. More remarkable still, on 22nd May, he and Abdul Ghani went in two marches to Failu, the very place where the party spent two nights at the beginning of the month as described above. Mohd. Sharif and his secretary stayed two days at Failu and then returned. These trips of the Afghan Envoy's are the more noticeable in that they are the first he has indulged in since he came to Yarkand in November 1922. Until last April he never stirred more than two or three miles from the city walls.

275. On Sami Bey (Salim Pasha), see Abdullaev 2009, pp. 215, 226, 234-238. He supported Enver Pasha's Central Asian adventure and following his death was one of the leaders of resistance to the Bolsheviks in Eastern Bukhara. He then fled to Mashhad, where he sought British help; he died in an attempt to enter Turkey in 1927. Abdul Hamid Arifov was one of his associates, about whose attempts to enter Kashgaria Skrine reported in some detail in his letter home of 25 January 1923 and his January and February official diaries of 1923.

22. Trans-Frontier Affairs and Bolshevist Activities in Sinkiang. – A separate report is being submitted embodying the gist of large quantities of information received during the two months under report from the Russian Pamirs, Ferghana, Semirechia and Ili as well as from *contre-espionage* sources in Kashgar.

[*On the minute paper, J. P. Gibson noted with reference to paragraphs 16-21*: 'A full report about a mysterious Russian party, five in number, in the neighbourhood of Yarkand, of which we have already heard by telegram. It is improbable that they propose to enter Tibet, though nothing definite is known about this object. So far as we know Mahendra Pratap is still at Kabul; his latest professed object has been to travel to Japan in connection with the establishment of an Afghan legation at Tokyo.']

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[*Skrine's intelligence report which he dated on the draft copy 19 June 1924. From BL, IOLR, MS EurF 154/39.*]

TRANS-FRONTIER SITUATION AND SOVIET ACTIVITIES IN SINKIANG.

1. FERGHANA.

About the same time that the Riga correspondent of the 'Times' was reporting the revolt of Ferghana and Semirechia against the Soviet,[276] there was much talk in Kashgaria of the overthrow of Soviet power in Turkestan, the surrender of the Red Army to the rebels, the capture and execution of many Communists, and so on. As the reports were not verified from trustworthy sources and strongly resembled anti-Bolshevik propaganda, they were not communicated to the G of I. There has in point of fact been no revolt or even any serious disturbance in either Ferghana or Semirechia this year. The facts which seem to have given rise to the rumours are

(i) dissensions at Tashkent among the leaders of the Communist Party, which are said to have led to the execution of certain Communists in April

(ii) the successes of Junaid Khan[277] in Khiva and the sympathetic recrudescence of Basmachi activity in the neighbourhood of Bokhara and Samarkand

(iii) a politico-religious campaign organized by the 'Ulema' party against the Turkestan Soviet.

2. Last year's harvest in Ferghana was good, and bread is even now cheap; the next harvest is also expected to be a good one. Meat and all manufactured commodities are very dear, and taxation is heavy. There is undoubtedly much discontent, but the chances of its attaining revolutionary force in the near future are exceedingly remote. Active agitation against the Soviet auths. is confined to

(i) the 'Ulema' or Mussalman clerical party

(ii) the few surviving Basmachi begs of the mountains and their sympathizers.

To what extent (i) and (ii) are in league it is difficult to say, but there is reason to believe that Turkish agencies in Bokhara and Ferghana are still at work among both of them.

The chief grievances exploited by the anti-Soviet party are:

(a) Oppressive taxation; 'They will tax our beards next' is a popular cry.

(b) The abolition of 'Waqfs' and the alienation of 'waqf' property.

276. The reference here is to an article published in *The Times of India*, 10 April 1924, p. 7, headlined "Revolt Against Soviet. Turkestan Insurgents. Well-organized Army Gains Successes," citing a report from Riga by the Riga correspondent of the London *Times*. Copied below the main section of the article is a short Reuter's dispatch from Riga about the revolt in Turkestan. A perusal of the London *Times* reports on Central Asia in 1923 and 1924 turns up mostly articles about the Bolshevik successes there; so this Riga report seems to be an outlier, as Skrine's analysis suggests.

277. On Junaid Khan, see Abdullaev 2009, pp. 152-156, 536, 539-540. His successes in Khiva were already 'ancient history' (1918) by the time of Skrine's report.

(c) The consequent closing of mosque schools and the substitution for them of Communist establishments at which, it is alleged, nothing is taught but atheism and debauchery. Great efforts are made by the Soviet auths to secure Mussalman children for these schools; in March a high official of Andijan called Khwaja Sulaiman toured the Russian Pamirs for this purpose, but met with little success, only securing thirty or forty children of very poor Kirghiz.

(d) The tyranny of the Cheka, or 'Osobiy Otdiel' as it is now called, and its interference in every detail of private life.[278] The most unpopular of the Cheka agents are the women. These, whether Muhammadan or European Russian, affect the garb of the tricoteuses of the Russian Revolution and make their way into the women's quarters of Mussalman houses where they work for the 'emancipation' of the occupants.[279] This has resulted in several cases in the murder of the agents.

(e) The interference of the 'Gostorg' and 'Vnieshtorg' in trade. The merchants and petty shopkeepers are against the Soviet to a man. As a result of the 'swing to the left' in the Soviet administration, the State monopoly of trade and industry is more strictly enforced than last year and many would-be private enterprises have been ruined. Great hardship has also been caused by the slump in the Chervontzi gold-secured paper rouble. Last autumn this rouble was at a premium (vide my report No. 9/3 of 18th Jan. 1924, para 4), but now it is at a discount of 20%.

3. That the Turkestan Soviet cannot be very apprehensive of the spread of the Bokharan and Khivan rebel movements to Ferghana is shown by the fact that the total Red forces in Trans-Caspia were estimated in May to have been reduced to about 30,000. Apart from this, the 'Tortinji' or Militia have been reduced by about 80%. The militia in Ferghana appear to have been badly organized and controlled from the start, and to have been a complete failure in most parts of the country. There is no doubt, on the other hand, that the Basmachis of the Marghilan Alaiko and Namangan mountain districts are no longer a force to be reckoned with, except for petty brigandage. The pacification of the districts in question described in my report No. 107/37 of 23rd Nov. 1923 appears to have been more complete than was at first suggested. Jani Beg, the chief Basmachi beg of the Uzgend region, for instance, is now (ostensibly at any rate) entirely on the side of the Government.[280] He received a full amnesty and now keeps up a personal following of 30 men, armed and regularly inspected by the Soviet. He represents the Soviet in political dealings with the Kirghiz, and an agent of his by name Yakoff is the chief intermediary between the latter and the Gostorg as regards the trans-frontier trade. Jani Beg is reputed to have large stores of arms and ammunition still concealed among the mountains, and he may of course be merely biding his time; but at present, he refuses all overtures from the Bokharan 'die-hards' to join them against the Soviet.

[*next to this next section in margin an inked note:* Extract 1 copy for PA Gilgit.]

RUSSIAN PAMIRS.

4. For the first time since the Bolshevik occupation, there has been personal communication between

278. Cheka, short for the *Vserossiiskaia chrezvychainaia komissiia* (All-Russian Extraordinary Commision), the first Soviet era secret police, succeeded by the State Political Directorate (GPU) in 1922. Skrine's 'Osobyi otdel' is Russian for 'Special Section', the military division within the Cheka created at the beginning of 1919.

279. The effort to undermine traditional Islamic cultural norms by unveiling and 'emancipating' women was indeed significant; see Marianne Kamp, *The New Woman in Uzbekistan: Islam, Modernity and Unveiling under Communism* (Seattle; London: Univ. of Washington Pr., 2006). The abolition of waqfs (religious endowments) was also very important.

280. On Jani Beg's submission to the Soviet authorities, see the brief mention (based on British intelligence sources) in Abdullaev 2009, p. 330. In the early 1930s, Jani Beg was involved militarily in Xinjiang.

the Russian mil[itar]y auth[oritie]s in the Pamirs and the Amban of Sarikol. The Russian commandant of the small post at Kizil Rabat came in person to Tashkurghan on 15 April and stayed there for three days as the guest of the Amban. He made several attempts to get into the old Russian fort, but the Amban managed to ride him off successfully. The ostensible cause of the visit was a quarrel which had arisen between the Kirghiz of Aktash in Russian territory and those of Tagharma on the Chinese side over some cattle. One Musa Beg of Tagharma, whose cattle had previously been raided by Kirghiz from across the border, seized a number of sheep and camels belonging to the latter by way of 'baramta'.[281] The Russians took the case up and an acrimonious correspondence between them and the Amban of Sarikol continued throughout April and May. Finally the Kirghiz parties settled the matter among themselves at a meeting at Karasu on 3rd June, when affadavits sealed by Qazis were exchanged and a complete reconciliation was effected without the help of the auth[oritie]s on either side of the border.

5. Another matter which was brought up by the Russian officer was the recent migration of a number of Russian Kirghiz families to Chinese territory. These 'hijrats' are common from both sides of the frontier and are nearly always the result of exceptionally bad misgovernment on the part of the auth[oritie]s. In Dec. 1922, for example, thirty-two families migrated from Tagharma to Russian territory as a protest against the misdeeds of Wang Amban, who was afterwards dismissed for the same reason. In the present case the hijrat is said to have been due to the educational methods of the Bolsheviks described in para. (2) above. As a result of the pourparlers between the Commandant of Kizil Rabat and the Amban, an agreement was drawn up in Chinese and Russian and signed by both officers binding the parties to refuse sanctuary to unauthorized immigrants from each other's territory. The latest news, however, is that this agreement has been repudiated by the Nacharnik [*nachal'nik* – commandant – *DW*] of Murghab, who is said to have dismissed his subordinate at Kizil Rabat for acting *ultra vires* [acting above his legal authority – *DW*] in his neg[otiatio]ns with the Chinese [...]

7. The illicit export of grain, cloth etc. trade from Kashgar via Tashkurghan to the Russian Pamirs described in Diary for Dec. '23 and Jan. '24, para. 10, continues. Khwaja Akhun at Tashkurghan deals direct with Jani Qul, the Russian barrier officer at Aktash. It is well known that the Amban, after the manner of his kind, shares the profits. An agent who returned from Murghabi in April states that there are there three large godowns filled with loose barley and three other godowns of the same size filled with flour in sacks. The same informant states that in Feb. a convoy of 150 pony-loads of ammunition and other supplies for Murghabi arrived from Andijan, as well as 250 loads from Kharukh and the Shighnan posts. The latter were held up for several weeks at Murghabi by snow [...]

[*Then lists military force distribution.*]

BOLSHEVIKS IN NORTHERN SINKIANG

8. An agent recently returned from Ili gives the following account of the Bolshevik colony at Kulja: Whereas in the autumn of 1922 there were not more than 300 Bolsheviks at Kulja, now there are at least 500. The colony inhabits the Noghai Got or European quarter outside the town. The Consul and his staff, with an escort of 20 cavalry, occupy the old Russian Consulate [*Fig. 72, p. 150*]. Besides the Consular guard, a guard of 16 Chinese soldiers accompanies the Consul wherever he goes, in town or country. There is very little intercourse between the Bolshevik Consul and the Tao Tai or other Chinese officials except for the usual official dinners, and the Bols. very seldom come into the Chinese town.

281. The Turkic term here refers to a traditional nomad practice of compensation involving raiding another's property and carrying it off. See Karl Reichl, *Singing the Past: Turkic and Medieval Heroic Poetry* (Ithaca and London: Cornell Univ. Pr., 2000), p. 74, citing the famous German/Russian Turkologist Wilhelm Radloff.

The reading-room kept up in the town for propaganda purposes, described in my Report No. 101 of 14th Sept 1922, has long been closed; altogether, matters seem to have greatly improved from the Chinese point of view since the summer of 1922, the Governor having evidently been successful in checkmating Bolshevik attempts at penetration.

That the Chinese are unmistakeably 'top dog' in Ili is shown by the fact that they have no less than 2000 troops in the Kulja area. Of these, about 200 are real Chinese and the rest Kalmucks and Taranchis. These troops are located partly at Kulja, partly at Kalmuck Karaul 3 marches from Kulja on the Aksu road and partly at Changchun Karaul on the frontier opposite Yarkat on the Vernoi road, 15 miles from Kulja.

The Bolshevik Consul has no exterritorial jurisdiction, and does not therefore hold joint trials or enquiries with the Tao Tai in mixed cases as I do here. Cases of dispute between Bolsheviks and Chinese subjects are generally referred by the Tao Tai to the arbitration of a special Beg, Yakub Durga, the same as the Yakub Bai mentioned in my report No. 101 quoted above (para on 'Attitude of the Chinese'). The Consul is not as a matter of fact universally known as Consul. The Russians in the Noghai Got are nearly all traders or connected with trade; the export of wool, raw cotton, guts, dye-stuffs and articles from China Proper to Russian Turkestan is highly profitable, payment being made in bar silver, oil, sugar and iron. As at Kashgar, the Gostorg pays for wool at the rate of 15 gold roubles per pood.[282]

9. I have no recent inf[ormatio]n reg[ar]d[in]g the Bolo colonies at Urumchi and Chuguchak. The Ozornin Mission is still at the Provincial capital; what progress it is making in its negotiations with the Govr. for a Trade Agreement is not known. The Irkeshtam frontier incident last Feb., when 5 Chinese soldiers were arrested on the Russian side and packed off to Andijan regardless of the Taoyin of K[ash]g[a]r's protests (v. diary for March para 2) has not been settled yet. It is a mistake to assume, as most of the foreign community at Kashgar do, that because an Agreement has been signed by Karakhan and the Wai Chiao Pu at Peking a Bolshevik Consul and his attending horde of 'experts', propagandists, female agents, schoolmasters etc. is to be expected here at any moment. It may be presumed that the Governor of Sinkiang will only regard the Karakhan Agreement as affecting him and his province just so far as it suits him to do so, and no further.

[*He has crossed out a big section with details on the White Russians in Ili.*]

[*The report concludes with 'Who's Who' biographies of suspected Bolshevik agents: Sultan Giri-Akchuarin, Rafaat Bey, Abdul Khaliq alias Khalikoff.*]

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[*Field Diary, pp. 68-69*]

7 June 1924. 'Erh,' new Taoyin, sent a message to Chu this morning to say that he had taken over the seal of the Taoyinship at 'Tiger-time' this morning, i.e., 3–5 A. M.! The various 'times' in the Chinese day are as follows:[283]

1 A.M.	– 3 A.M.	Ox	time
3	– 5	Tiger	"
5	– 7	Rabbit	"
7	– 9	Big Dragon	"
9	– 11	Small Dragon	"

282. Gostorg was the government department in control of trade; a pood is 36 lbs.

283. Skrine (or his translator Chu) could have compiled this from Herbert Allen Giles: *A Chinese-English dictionary*. 2nd, revised and enlarged ed., 2 vols. (Shanghai: Kelly & Walsh, 1912), Vol. 1, where there is a similar tabulation on p. 28.

11	– 1 P.M.	Horse	"
1 P.M.	– 3	Sheep	"
3	– 5	Monkey	"
5	– 7	Chicken	"
7	– 9	Dog	"
9	– 11	Pig	"
11	– 1 A.M.	Rat	"

Our coachman Abdulla Akhun, is a much-married man. He goes one better than the celebrated guard on the PLM who had one wife and establishment at Paris and another at Marseilles, each totally ignorant of one another's existence, for he has one wife at Yarkand and two at K[ash]g[a]r, one of the latter living in the city and the other at the Consulate. The Kashgar wives were much perturbed recently by news that the Yarkand lady intended to come to K[ash]g[a]r. As the Consulate wife wailed, 'It's bad enough his having another wife in the city here, but if this Yarkand woman comes there'll be trouble!' However, a few days ago glad news came to the effect that the Yarkand wife's last husband who had been to Leh trading came back the other day and was so annoyed with his late wife (who presumably had got a divorce from the mullahs) for marrying Abdulla, that he promptly slit her nose! The K[ash]g[a]r wives are now not at all afraid of her.

[*1st paragraph typed; apparently pasted in*:]

D. says that old Mrs. Chu, with whom she had tea today, was extraordinarily funny about the Titai affair. She told D that when she heard there was fighting at the Hsiehtai's Yamen she immediately ordered her carriage and drove over to see the fun; she had to be sent back by the O.C. with an escort of 20 rifles to her garden. Next day when she heard that the Titai had been shot and his body exposed, she drove over to the New City to see it. 'There he was,' she crowed, 'The "King" who had lorded it over everybody and looted everybody right and left up to only a few days before, nailed up to a wooden stake and all full of holes! Twenty-five holes there were in him, I counted them. One extra big one in the middle; Ma Darin said he made that. And all the Chantous were spitting on him and throwing mud at him and calling him "Padshah". His hands and feet were cut off, just like what he used to do to people who annoyed him[284]; they've been sent in a box to the Jang-jun at Tihwa. I went to see the Hsieh-tai too; he hadn't nearly so many holes in him. Yesterday all the Titai's ladies went in mapas to petition Ma Darin for food, as they were starving. He gave them a lot of rice and flour and two hundred taels. Someone said to them, Can't we get a pushta? but the Hsieh-tai's mother answered, "No, we can't have pushtas now, we must go in mapas like common folk."'

Chu and I have been putting our heads together on the difficult subject of Lyall's Chinese name. After much agitation, consultation with Tao and searching of 'Giles'[285] we have settled on 'Lai-i-lu' which means 'A Sage's hut (pure dwelling) on the top of a high mountain' (Mt. Lai in Szechwan), & is a very face-giving appellation. But it has pitfalls. If you pronounce the first word 'Lai' in the fourth tone instead of the 2nd, it means 'a man who takes advantage of his strength to repudiate his debts'!

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[*Skrine also recorded in his Field Diary, p. 129, a song that he indicated was sung at Kashgar within three days of the death of Ma Titai. Skrine quoted several stanzas (not in the same sequence) in translation in* CCA *1925, pp. 268-69; I have placed them alongside the corresponding ones in the Turki text, reproduced in its entirely from his transcription. The translation is somewhat free: where the local epithet for Ma Titai apparently was the 'Bald Wax-seller' on account of his forcing shopkeepers to buy the paraffin on which he had a monopoly, Skrine sometimes substitutes that epithet for the text's 'Titai'. Skrine notes that the appellation 'Frogtown' (lit. 'full of frogs') was the name of the suburb of Kashgar, Pakalik, where the Titai had built his new palace. The Titai then banned use of that demeaning name and re-christened the town Sukho.*]

Titai

284. Unless it happened after the picture printed by Nazaroff was taken, the body still had hands and feet attached. Perhaps some wishful thinking here by those wanting their revenge?

285. As cited in note 283.

Sukho yulle qumushluq
Orghak1 salip orāghān yoq.
Uniki yil mansap tutup
Titai guidak bolghan yoq.

Bajin din chirak ketde
Asman da ke yulduz dak
Titai gu'i ulup kelde
Sukho da ke tung uz dak.

Bir arik da su āqadur
Bir arik da qūm aqadur
Momchi taz ulup kelde
Dāshu Khān ni kim baqadur.

Qafas dake keklikne
Uchup ketishini kim bilde?
Titai gu'i ni hasratda
Ulup ketishni kim bilde?

Un ulaghda māl ketde
Khudaiyamgha amanat
Kashgharliqgha hech gap yoq
Momchitazgha ahānat.

Momchi taz ning chiraklari
Amandaki yulduz dak
Yangi chīrikni kurganda
Kachip ketde tunguz dak.

Sukho dake qumushni
Kuk uradingghu, urdingghu?
Ist! ghana! mumchi taz
Lo salghangha toidungghu?

Shamāl chiqde ya allah	By Allah! a wind arose
Burān chiqde ya allah	By Allah! a tempest arose
Titai guining chiraklar	The soldiers of the Bald Wax-seller
Kachip duqde ya allah.	By Allah! they have fled away.
Ma Darin uze chāqqān	The wily Ma Darin
Kalmak balalarni baqghān	He brought his Kalmuck lads
Yanti Shahrni tusup tushup	He fell upon the New City and took it
Momchi tazni tutup atghān.	He seized the Bald Wax-seller and shot him.

Surkhodake chong ustang
Har tarafgha yār ketde
Momchi tazning ulgane
Alte shahrgha dang ketde.

Momchi tazning ulake
Asilde ighiz dārgha
Chiriklare kachip ketip
Chikip alde Ighiz yargha.

Mumchi tazning ulushini

Kashghar shahrda kim bilde?
Oqlärni tola yep
Badanläri tishilde.

Beshanglarning qulphutine
Kisip yeding Momchi taz
Bir zulur da ulganing
Hamasidin takhe az.

Momchi taz tulun sachqān
Alwanni tola chachqan
Khānning gapigha kirmae
Pukluk oragha kachqan.

Tawar konglak yakalikdin
Durdun konglak yakalikdin
Hsiehtai Khan ulup ketde
Momchi tazning khafalikdin.

Bajindin khabar kelde	Word came from Peking
Mā darin yansun dep	That Ma Darin was to return;
Ma darin unumaidur	Ma Darin refused to go
Dāshū Khanni bersun dep	Saying 'They must give me Shujia Khan.'
Pakhtada yatgān Ma Titai	The Bald Wax-seller who slept on cotton-wool
Poshtada yakgān Ma Titai	The Bald Wax-seller who lolled in his carriage
Pakkalikga shahr salip	Who founded the city of Frogtown
Tort ogda ketgān Ma Titai	Four bullets were enough for him and he is gone.
Ma Titaining hoilesida	In the palace of Ma Titai
Qirq yamchak da gul galde	Forty vases of flowers are left;
Ma Titaining khatunlari	The wives of Ma Titai
Yaman waqtda tol qalde	On an evil day are widowed.
Atim bar digan birlan	Though he boasted in his pride
Jān Khudaning qulida	His soul was in the hands of God!
Yiglamanglar Kashgharliq	Weep not, O people of Kashgar!
Shahr Khudaning qulida	Your city too is in God's hands.

***

[Kashgar]. 12 June 1924

[...] The stirring events of last week and the developments that led up to them have not only upset day after days office work, but have had to be described fully to Govt. both by cypher wireless and by written report, apart from which the complete change in the personnel of the Kashgar officaldom has entailed a host of calls and return calls, for some of which I have had to trek twice out to the New City.

As for [Casperd's arrival to take over the wireless station – *DW*], I never saw such a complete contrast between any two men as that between Casperd and our last guest, Pigot [...] To be brief, Casperd is about the most complete specimen of the genus Wangler, species Sponge, that I ever struck. We were a little surprised at the way he took for granted that we would put him up indefinitely, whether we were in Kashgar or not (he was our guest here for 3 weeks before we came back, you know) and at the way

he treated the house as a hotel and ordered his meals at the times that suited him (he actually tried to bounce us into having lunch at 12 and dinner at 6 every day because those times suited his wireless hours!), until he told us one day, quite casually and incidentally to something else, that Cavalliere of the Post Office at Urumchi had put him up for a whole year! [...] But worst of all was C.'s inability to do anything (outside his job) for himself and his habit of regarding everybody else's time as his own whenever he wanted any help, which was about twice an hour. [His] never having travelled by pony or any other kind of pack caravan before, and knowing nothing whatever about the road to India, I had to tell him everything about everything, get his ponies for him, advise him about his luggage, get boxes made for him the right size for cooly transport, arrange the contract with his carrier to take him to Misgar, test and mend his camera for him (this took several hours spread over a week and was an infernal nuisance) help him to buy new ponies and sell his old ones, as well as to buy various embroidered cloaks, carpets etc he wanted to take to his wife [...]

Well, thank goodness we got him off last Tuesday[...]

And now to more interesting matters. Two lovely long letters from you this week, dated 24th April and 1st May – fancy the latter reaching here in 40 days! You give us a lot of interesting information about Lyall, which is very useful [...] Never mind if he doesn't mountaineer or photograph or survey ... that's not part of the job! I'm a worse and not a better C.G. for spending so much time and energy on those pursuits, they're really parerga[286] and my only excuse is that here there are no distractions such as polo or amateur theatricals to take up one's spare energies. Funny thing that I haven't heard from him direct yet, though he knew he was coming as far back as March. He seems to have consulted everybody about Kashgar and how to get here and what to bring here except the obvious person to tell him – me! [...] I took it upon myself last week to wireless to him some information about the Russian route and how to get here. Knowing (1) that he would be mainly concerned with the state of the railway to Andijan and not with the much more important question of how to get from Andijan here, and (2) that he wouldn't realize how independent and indeed jealous of Moscow the Turkestan Soviet are, I sent him the following (paraphrase of cypher wire):

> 'Understand you intend coming via Russia. If so, on no account start without definite assurance from Turkestan Soviet of safe conduct to frontier. Irkestam route not recommended; best if via Uzgend and Turgat Pass.'

Not knowing within a month when he will arrive, by the way, is a confounded nuisance for us and upsets our plans badly [...] [W]e daren't leave Kashgar for more than a very few days after 20th July, lest he turn up suddenly and find no one here, which would be very 'bad face' as the Chinks say. If he does come via Russia, I pray he isn't delayed and we kept in Kashgar all through the hottest time for nothing!

Such a nice letter from Mr. Rieu of Methuen's last mail. He seems really impressed both by my material and style and by my photographs. The latter doesn't surprise me, but the former does. I haven't replied yet, but when I do I will tell him what I said to you last week, that I am only too glad to keep the book to Chinese Turkestan and leave S. and E. Persia for a later date. I'm all for artistic unity and homogeneity, it's so much easier. Rieu is a good critic; he marked the passages in my stuff that he liked best, and I find they are on[e] and all the bits of sincere description, the parts where I felt what I was writing. He didn't mark any of the consciously literary bits. Rather sad, because I had hoped the latter would take him in. However, he says he 'enjoyed everything I sent him, including the newspaper article

286. 'Work that is subsidiary to one's ordinary employment.'

about Kerman' so I suppose it's all right. He also says, 'Judging from the material you have submitted, I do not think you will find any difficulty in selecting the appropriate style for each portion of your book,' which is cheering. He talks about my 'marvellous' photos, and says we should include at least 24 of them as full-page plates. He's only seen about half my best ones! He offers terms, which of course I shall accept without question, and talks bewilderingly about 'foreign and colonial sales', 'American [? rights]'.

[*Letter breaks off here -- he probably appended a separate sheet which would have had end and signature.*]

***

Kashgar, 19 June 1924

No letter from you this mail, no doubt because of the remarkable speed with which your letter of May 1st came the mail before – out of its turn so to speak. But instead arrived yesterday a cable from you via Peking in reply to my wireless message. Dated 13th June, its arrival here by 18th June was a real triumph for the Chinese telegraph line – I would never have believed it! As a rule it takes me anything up to a month to get a reply from Shanghai or Peking & then it usually comes hopelessly corrupt [...] Now Lyall may come by 10th or 11th July – & it just depends whether he's a sahib and won't mind my not handing over for a bit so as to enable us to stay on here till 10th Aug. I think he won't mind, for after all his leave isn't up till 31st Aug. and he will be our guest until we go, so he won't be the loser by not taking over charge for a few weeks [...]

As a matter of fact, if Lyall's sensible he'll be only too glad to have me with him for his first three or four weeks – to put him <u>au fait</u> with the work and show him the very complicated ropes, especially as there's no Vice Consul. I know I suffered very much by not having Fitzmaurice for more than 6 days when I first came, & those 6 days entirely taken up with the awful farewell-cum-welcome feasts one suffers from here [...] Now <u>continuity</u> is a great point with me – in all things when administration is concerned. Procedure, policy, methods should be changed gradually & not affected too suddenly and catastrophically by changes of personnel. Whenever I come to a new post, I set about discovering the methods & policy & point of view of the last man, & even if I think I disapprove, I carry on for a bit in the same way & only change gradually. That seems to me one of the best ways of keeping up the prestige of the 'Sarkar', to present continuity – then the governed know where they are. For this reason I always try when vacating a post to make things as easy as possible for my successor. Etherton for example never wrote anything down – all his orders were verbal; he practically only put pen to paper to indite [*sic*] his self-laudatory dispatches and diaries and letters to Lord Curzon. Imagine what that means for his successor! I on the other hand record everything worth recording, not only write down my orders, but the reason for them; and I've instituted a proper filing system which didn't exist before, so that Lyall will have the benefit of my experience as well as his own [...]

We've got another guest coming in a few days, a female one this time, our first since we came. Little Esther Piranian, the 18(!)-year-old daughter of the only Armenian in Yarkand & of his Russian wife, is sort of attached to the Swedish Mission & in this year coming with one of the Yarkand ladies to join the Kashgar missionaries in their summer camp in the mountains West of here. She will probably be here a week – the Yarkand Swedish lady who's chaproning her will not stay here but at the Mission. She's a very nice little thing, Esther P. & quite pretty in a wee mousey dark kind of way, & D. is very fond of her. We tried to get her here last Xmas for a bit but the dragon-ladies of the Swedish Mission at Yarkand wouldn't let her come as they rather disapprove of us. We talked them round the other day

when we were at Yarkand.

It's hotter and less pleasant weather than last summer but we're both quite fit except for a cold D's got – nothing to worry about [...]

***

[*In view of the events of later years, when Doris lived alone but for her animals in a cottage on Hoy, the P.S. here is somewhat prescient.*]

Kashgar, 25 June 1924

I am making up for a short letter this week by sending you a power of photos – some 33 enlargements and 17 small prints – illustrative of our last 2 tours, with some recent Kashgar pictures thrown in. I think you will find that they don't fall below the level of previous batches. 15 of the enlargements are professionally done in England, the rest are mine. I can't enlarge my postcard size plates here, nor can I compete with the 'pros' in toning & carbon process. Don't you think the sepia-toned picture of the reedy lake, Chöll Küll, is lovely? By the way I think Mr. Rieu of Methuen's would be interested to see this batch of enlargements, especially the telepanoramas, so would you mind posting them round to him when everybody else has seen them? The November telepanorama of the Kungur and Chakragil massifs is more beautiful, I think, even than the May 1923 one you already have, and I want to know if Methuen's will run to including it in the book, as a folding illustration. I have mentioned the matter in my reply to his letter.

I enclose the list of enlargements with this, but am sending the photos themselves under separate cover so you will get them later. In your letter of 8th May which has just come you say 'I am longing to see the forbidden film of the Chinese ladies arriving to pay calls.' Well, I enlarged both of them last week and they're among this lot. One of them is of particular interest, that of the Hsieh Tai's mother and wife, because the tragic fate of both their husbands since the photos were taken. Then, they were as queens in Kashgaria – the elder one wife of the 'King,' Ma Titai, the younger wife of the 'Crown Prince'. Pomp & ceremony everywhere they went, untold wealth at their disposal. Now both are widows huddled into wretched quarters in the yamen of a minor official with barely enough to eat – & no one troubling about them.

We have a guest once more – but a different kind of guest to any we've had so far – an Armenian girl of 18! Such a pretty little person too – Esther Piranian, eldest daughter of a family of nine at Yarkand. Piranian père & Moldovack at Khotan are the only two Armenians in Kashgaria & as the latter is a bachelor poor little Esther has no one of her own race outside his family to play with, so to speak. So we have managed (after one failure last Xmas) to get the dragon-like females of the Swedish Mission Orphanage at Yarkand where Esther works to let her come to us for 10 days on her way to summer camp in the hills. She is a nice little person and D. and she are very fond of one another & chatter away in Turki (!) all day. Esther knows no languages but Armenian and Turki, which she speaks very well as from childhood. D. struggles along somehow & they understand each other very well [...]

[*FD, p. 70:* Esther Piranian told us this morning about a Russian girl of about 25, very pretty, who is the prisoner-wife of a Tungan at Yarkand. She had just been married when the Bolos killed her husband & she escaped to Ili. There she sold her wedding presents & clothes, all except a beautiful wedding dress which she still has. Finally she was seized more or less forcibly by a Tungan who threatened to shoot her if she did not come with him to Y[ar]k[an]d as his wife. There she is now, in complete Chinese rig & desperately

miserable. Has taken to opium. Her husband beats her & won't let her go out of his sight. She told E. that she was longing to escape to K[ash]g[a]r – but didn't dare to try.]

P.S. Fancy you meeting Laszló the painter.[287] One of the very greatest [...] How different it is living in London to anywhere else in the B[ritish] Isles – meeting such people almost every day, as you do. D. is a country mouse and hates town, or says she does & threatens to go off by herself to Deeside or some other favourite spot while I frequent town. I foresee I shall be sadly torn.

***

[*Skrine's description of the shrine of Hazrat Maulam must refer to the tomb and cemetery complex located in Upal (Opal, Wuper) which today is associated in the first instance with Mahmud al-Kashgari, the 11th -century savant who is famous for compiling the first dictionary of the Turkic languages. The association of the shrine with Mahmud Kashgari seems to be modern 'invention of tradition' based on sources of questionable date and historicity (see Barat 1994). That Skrine describes the site decades prior to its current attribution thus is of real interest.*]

At the House of the Chief Qazi, Opal, 1st July '24.

I am having a little 'holiday' all by myself at a charming little village, as pretty as its name, about 28 m. from Kashgar to the west. D. is not alone, little Esther Piranian being with her until Thursday when she goes with some of the missionaries to their Bostan Terek 'hill station.' They get on famously (in the Eastern Turki language!) those two, in fact I rag D. about finding at last another little girl of about her own age to play with. Having a very difficult Report to write I came to the conclusion that there was no hope of my getting under weigh with it unless I got away from Kashgar somewhere, so off I pushed on Saturday & am putting up with the local 'Qazi Akhun' the chief religious judge of the neighbourhood in a tiny but very green and pleasant garden full of ancient fruit-trees, geraniums in pots and running water. There is a wee bazaar round the corner and rich golden corn-fields varied here and there with lucerne or young maize surround garden & bazaar on every side. A lovely little 'jilga' or glen with a crystal-clear stream passes a hundred yards behind the house; another larger 'jilga' winds parallel to the first two-hundred yards northwards with rich yellow cliffs of 'loess' mud & masses of greenery filling tiny side-jilgas and picturesque farmlets perched on bluffs and a willow-fringed stream flashing down amid golden corn fields, the two glens (called the Kizil and the Kara Jilgas (Red and Black Valleys) respectively) are in one place only separated by a narrow ridge of loes[s] along the top of which there is just enough room for a little canal, fringed with ancient willows, and the winding path. [*Fig. 179*] Here and there wee temples with ancient, lattice work 'grilles' & usually an enormously fat and short willow-tree beside them. A mile and half up between the two jilgas you come to the butt end of a rocky range of low hills & there there is an interesting and extremely picturesque old shrine, the mazar of Hazrat Maulam. The lower part of the ridge is of loess earth & is covered with ancient trees, which clothe its slope, in a way



Fig. 179. One of the little 'wee temples with ancient, lattice work "grille" & usually an enormously fat and short willow tree beside them' at Opal (from the British Library Collection, IOLR Photo 920/1, from unn. nitrate neg.).

287. Philip Alexius de László (1869-1937), known for his portraits of aristocrats.

one seldom sees in this country where as a rule trees only grow where they can be reached by streams or irrigation-channels, i.e., on relatively flat ground. Little mosques and many tombs, mostly overgrown with greenery, dot the ridge and peep coyly out among the trees; behind is the bare craggy hill, and the great expanse of 'sai' or gravel desert, in front the incredibly rich and fertile champaign, well timbered & heavy with crop, cut by the winding 'jilgas' with their yellow bluffs. And on the afternoon I first saw it a rare sight at this time (at most times in fact) of the year, the whole vast panorama of the snows spread for a hundred and fifty miles along the horizon from S.E. round to west. Words can never express the sense of spacious majesty given to the landscape of that wondrous vision. [*Fig. 180*]

There is a cave in the rocky hill at the foot of it a few yards from a corn-field. This cave which is about 50 yards deep used long ago to be inhabited by a dragon, which preyed upon the countryside after the manner of its kind. This went on until the Four Imams who converted Kashgaria to Islam came along. They commissioned one of their captains, Hazrat Maulam, to slay the dragon & gave him a magic belt which enabled him to do it. Unfortunately, the dragon's poison was too much for the Hazrat and he died in the moment of victory. He is buried not at the Mazar on the hill but at the meeting-place of the two Jilgas, Black and Red, some miles below Opal; this was because the people of the two jilgas could



Fig. 180. It is difficult now to correlate what Skrine reported about the main shrine at Opal with what one sees today. The location down until recent times has remained a center for worship, with an extensive cemetery sprawling across the dry slopes above the vegetation of the nearby town. The current mausoleum purportedly of Mahmud Kashgari may well be in a different location from Skrine's 'mazar on the hill'. There is a 'holy spring' and a gnarled willow on which visitors hang prayer flags. This vista sweeping across the plain to the snowcapped mountains captures a sense of what he vividly described. (Panorama by DW 2009).

not agree as to which should have his grave. I was told all this by my host at tea yesterday, a nice old beaver full of ancient lore.

Same evening. My letters have just come out from Kashgar & include yours of 15th & 22nd May [...]

No news of Lyall yet – we suppose he must be past Tashkend by now but there is no means of getting in touch with him or hearing from him. I'm afraid he'll just turn up suddenly when we least expect him. It's a beastly nuisance not knowing – we can't make any plans for ourselves. Wish to goodness he had come by India.

***

Kashgar, 9 July 1924

We were electrified yesterday by the news in your letter of 29th May that Lyall is not coming by Russia after all but by Srinagar. We were expecting him almost any day, & I had messengers out along both the two possible routes from Ferghana to come back post haste with news of him. You see, your telegram by Chinese line which reached us nearly 3 weeks ago telling us that Lyall started on 12th June did not say

which route he was going by, so there having been no question of any route but the Russian we took it for granted that he was coming by Russia. Now we must change all our plans, for instead of leaving here about Aug. 10th as we expected we shall not get away before September 7th or 8th. In the latter case we shall not have time to make any big detours or explorations, and less any ovis poli hunting, especially as we are determined to spend at least 5 or 6 extra days in the wonderful Hunza-Nagar country. So we have decided to go up to the neighbourhood of the Kaying Valley & complete our reconnaissances of the Shiwâkte as a separate trip, as we did last year of about 3 weeks' duration, coming back about Aug. 12th. This will give us 10–15 days before Lyall can possibly arrive.

On the whole we're very glad L. hasn't been able to come via Russia. In the first place it is excellent propaganda. All the pro-Bolos (which means anti-British) in the town were cock-a-whoop over L.'s coming via Tashkend; at the present moment the 'on dit' in the bazaar is that the new Russian Consul General whom they are all (without any grounds whatever) expecting daily is bringing the B[ritish] C[onsul] G[eneral] with him! Corresponding depression among the anti-Bolo refugees such as Nazaroff who fear lest Lyall should be got at by the Soviet & arrive a full blooded 'comrade' as Harding would undoubtedly have done if he had come that way. Now when it gets about (as we shall see that it does) that the Bolos refused L. a safe conduct because of the dangerous state of affairs in Ferghana the effect will be excellent [...]

I must say I do think L. ought to have taken some steps however sketchy to keep us informed of his movements [...] For one thing, I could have sent a couple of servants & some cooking pots & a tent & some camp furniture down the road for him, at any rate as far as Gilgit or Hunza. I shall still do that, but the stuff will probably be superfluous when it meets him as not knowing I am sending it L. will have made shift by borrowing or buying elsewhere.

Another thing we are in the dark about is whether he is escorting Miss Wingate or not. I wish we knew, for we could make things so much easier for her on the journey up if she is coming. The other missionaries are not leaving London till July 25th, so they won't be here before the end of Oct. Very sound of Miss W. to wangle the escort of a C.G. designate all the way, via Gilgit too, instead of pigging it with a lot of missionaries (3 other women mind you & only 2 men) by the fearfully tedious Ladakh road.[288] I don't know who told you Miss W. was joining a Moravian mission: it is the Swedish Mission here she is coming to of course. She is 24, and knows some Arabic, which is somewhat surprising. The number of girls of 24 who know Arabic in England cannot be large. We very much hope she is coming with L. as otherwise we shall not meet her. D. has long been dying to see what sort of a girl she is & whether she is worthy of Kashgar. If, as we fancy & rather hope, she has only joined the Swedish Mission here as a means of getting to Kashgar, she probably is worthy. Talking about the journey down, I don't think I've explained that I had some time ago to give up any idea of going via Kabul owing to Pigot's description of the bit of road in Afghan Wakhan, about 5 marches, he traversed. If I had been alone I'd have done it every time, but with D. a difficult & almost unknown stretch like Afghan Wakhan might result in disaster. Travelling which in British or even Chinese territory, however mountainous, is child's-play is a very different proposition in a country like Afghanistan. I know that from my experience in Persia; there, at any rate in the S.E. of it [...] [A]ll the touring we have done has been picknicking compared with some of my journeys in S. E. Persia [...]

288. In fact Miss Wingate did travel with the Swedish missionaries via Ladakh. On his way down to India at the Sasser La (Pass), Paul Nazarov (1935, p. 208) met their party – 'seven missionaries, three men and four women, and their caravan of seventy horses'.

Just seen in Reuters the bare facts of the death of Mallory & Irvine on Mt. Everest[289] – very disheartening news. But I always thought Everest was unconquerable – thanks to its weather [...]

***

[*Skrine to Stein, reproduced with permission from The Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, Stein MSS 107, fols. 56-57r. Skrine's letter to Stein of 25 February 1924, which had been returned to Kashgar and not delivered, has been copied above.*]

[*typed on letterhead of consulate*]

British Consulate-General, Kashgar

15th July 1924

[*salutation handwritten:*]

My dear Stein

You will no doubt have been surprised to get from me two cablegrams (sent by the way by our new Chinese Wireless as far as Peshawar) in quick succession regarding a letter enclosing map and photos sent by me to you last February. I think you will agree with me that a more sickening piece of luck can't be imagined. From the letter, which I now enclose, you will see that I had spent many days (which I could ill spare from my work) last winter in drawing the map and preparing the telepanoramas and other enlargements, all of which were mounted so as to fold conveniently and fully provided with tabs giving names and references to peaks and other features. This work took me right up to the day before we left Kashgar on our long spring tour, and I had a terrible rush to get it off to you. I had no idea that you were going home this year, so I sent the whole thing, most carefully and strongly packed between boards and packed in (as I thought) absolutely waterproof oil-cloth, to you care of the Archaeological Dept. (education Dept. Raisena, Delhi [)]. Three months passed and no word from you, so I at last decided to wireless to the Educn Dept. to ask whether you were in India and if not, what your address was; getting their reply and your address, I sent off the cablegram to you one day before I received the package back from the Gilgit Post Office in a distinctly damaged condition! No word with it, nothing on the cover itself, to show why it had not been delivered to the Education Dept at Delhi, who presumably would have forwarded it to you; just readdressed to me and thrown back at my head in the delightful way of that most irritating of all Public Departments, the Indian Post Office. On opening the package I found, as I expected, that 3 ½ month of rattling about in the post and exposure to the double journey across the mountains had resulted in the pieces of wood being broken and the map and panoramas being torn, creased and in one or two cases damaged by wet, not hopelessly but too badly to be of use to the Survey people as they are. I nearly wept when I found what had happened, and I intend to take the cover of the parcel with me to Delhi next November and not leave the place until I have got satisfaction from the Posts and Telegraphs in the matter. I'll find out the babu who was responsible for that parcel being thrown back at my head and get his head well washed, or perish in the attempt!

The only thing to do now is for me to take the map and panoramas, what is left of them, to Dehra Dun myself when I am in India on my way home in November. I was in any case going there to see

289. George Leigh Mallory and Andrew Comyn Irvine disappeared close to the summit of Mt. Everest on 8 June 1924; it is still uncertain whether they might have reached the summit before dying on the descent. Mallory's body was discovered in 1999, but Irvine's has never been found. Everest eventually was first climbed by Tenzing Norgay and Edmund Hillary on the British Expedition of 1953. *The Times of India*, citing Reuter's, reported the deaths of Mallory and Irvine on 23 June 1924, p. 9; the London *Times* (26 June, Issue 43688, pp. 17-18) ran a long article by E. F. Norton, who became head of the expedition while it was underway, with details of the final attempts and the deaths. See also the well-researched book by Walt Unsworth, *Everest: A Mountaineering History* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1981): pp. 99-141.

Col. Cowie and Major Perry and thank them for their assistance in my amateur surveying operations. I am – we both are – looking forward very much to seeing you at Oxford or in town next winter, when I will show you what I have done, together with my large picture-gallery of Sinkiang and the road thither. I would much rather you had given my efforts a fair wind towards the Survey people, but Fate and the Indian Post Office willed otherwise.

One good thing is that the parcel of map and panoramas has arrived just in time to enable me to take them up to the same part of the world next week and use them to complete (as I hope to do) my survey of the Shiwakte. This time I hope to take a bivouac tent across the very steep 15,000-ft. Argalistan Pass at the head of the Kaying Jilga and thus gain access for a few days to the Upper Chimgan Jilga; from there I ought to be able to get good photos of the S E face of the great salient of Kungur, and of the extraordinary Shiwakte peaks below it. I should also be able to satisfy myself that there really is, as the Kirghiz say, no possible track over the Kungur–Mustagh Ata chain except the one by the Karatash Pass. There ought to be a track over from the head of the Chimgan jilga to Sarikol.

As you may have heard, I am being relieved by Col. Bob Lyall of our Department. He says that if he likes the place he will stay out his time here, another five years. I think we may take it for granted he will like it – I can't imagine anyone not liking this job! He has just married his first cousin, a lady of 40 called Rivaz (daughter of one of the I[ndian] C[ivil] S[ervice] Rivazes) and is apparently bringing her up with him. He wanted very much to bring her via Russia, but Turkestan is in far too unsettled a condition and he could not get a safe-conduct. He is therefore coming via Gilgit, and we expect him here about the end of August. After handing over we shall push off down the road via the Oitagh Jilga (N. of Chakragil), the Gez Dara and Tashkurghan, spending as long as we dare on the way. We shall also stay a week in Hunza-Nagar wandering round, and will cross the Burzil as late as we safely can. After visits to Delhi, Dehra Dun, Kampti where my wife's sister and her husband are and Quetta where our baggage is, we embark on the Lloyd Triestino boat which sails for Venice on Dec. 1st. If you find time to drop me a line in reply to this, do so care of Messrs Lloyd's Bank Ltd. (Cox's Branch) Bombay. My address in London is c/o F H Skrine Esq. 147 Victoria St. S W.1. [*underlining added in red pencil – DW*] On arrival I will at once take steps to get in touch with you, as I am looking forward tremendously to a long 'buck' about Kashgar.

As I unfortunately cannot send you the photos which were spoilt in the post, I am enclosing a couple of contact-printed panoramas one taken in Novr. last year of the Kashgar Range from here, the other of the Shiwakte peaks as they first burst upon my astonished eyes as (after a previous failure) I managed to get to the top of a knife-edge ridge 16,200 ft. high near the head of the Kaying Jilga.

[*handwritten:*]

Yours sincerely

C. P. Skrine

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Kashgar, 17 July 1924

Two lines only this week, it being late on Thursday evening & a heavy official dâk just about to go off. The couriers go by night nowadays so I can't keep the mail open till Friday morning as in winter. Another excitement this week re Lyall, your letter telling us of his marriage having arrived! We're all of a fluster, not knowing whether he is coming with her, or bringing Miss Wingate & not his wife, or both, or neither! Extraordinary fellow – not one line have I had from him from the beginning. You

would have thought he would have written to ask about bringing ladies up here, doctors etc., what can be obtained here & what not, etc. etc. Now perhaps you will revise your idea that I was particularly happy-go-lucky about bringing D. up here [...] And here's a colonel, 15 years older than me, treating the journey as if it were a trip to Brighton!

The result is we don't know what to expect & I am awaiting a reply by wireless as to when he expects to reach the frontier and whether he is bringing his wife. It makes a lot of difference to our plans. D. doesn't know whether to take her beloved pony down to India or whether to leave it, as she would do if there was a lady to ride it; several other things we would much rather take away or sell, but will hand over to Mrs. L. if there is one. By the way, I hope you didn't give L. the impression we had a large quantity of stuff we want to sell him; we have very little, nearly all the cutlery, napery, glass & furniture being either Gov't. or Etherton's – & the latter probably won't want to sell his stuff to L. He will want the much higher prices he would get in the bazaar. You know in these places it is a favour to the incoming man if the outgoing one sells him all his stuff not vice versa, because European things fetch such enormous prices in the bazaar [...]

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[*The Field Diary, pp. 70-72, includes several notes mostly about local superstitions, which were apparently jotted down just before they left for the Kaying.*]

These people are funny about snakes. The Kashgaris all believe that if you kill a snake, his mate will follow you about everywhere and eventually kill you – sort of 'sending'. It is very hard to induce a Kashgari to kill a snake.

Some women were talking to D. about ghosts (jinns).[290] They are all terribly frightened of jinns in this country, but the ones they are most frightened of are Chinese ghosts. Apropos of Karashahr, they said that it was an awful place for Chinese jinns. You have to put money on your doorstep at night to pacify the jinns & when you look in the morning, if the money is gone you know that the Chinese jinns have taken it. Turki men don't as a rule admit to being afraid to go out in the dark, they always plead that the town gates will be shut. But if one has to be out at night, e.g. melon-watchers – one sings at the top of one's voice all the time.

The mazar opposite the Consulate, where the ladies assemble every Wednesday morning early & pray for children, is not 'Bu Ana' as we thought but 'Sultan Buwam.' A thing about the real Bu Ana, ab[ou]t 5 m. fr[om] K[ash]g[a]r to the W. on the r[ight] side of the Tuman Darya valley, which Miss Ella does not mention is that when the ladies put their hands into the hole in the wall, they have to eat whatever their hand first touches – whether it be a lump of dirt or a piece of wood or a beetle or what – then they will get a child.[291]

D. says that the child from Y[ar]k[an]d whose marriage to Mir Ahmad's young son she assisted at this time last year is not very happy. The boy is all right, it is his mother. Mrs. M.A. is a lean eagle-visaged, black-eyed Kabuli Pathan & a veritable Tartar among these plump, good-natured, easy-going Turki women. She rules her poor little daughter-in-law with a rod of iron.

Qurban at Kashgar[292]

290. On the Uyghur beliefs about jinns, see Bellér-Hann 2008, pp. 380-382.

291. There obviously is some confusion here about the shrines. Ella Sykes is quite explicit that the shrine of Bibi Anna, which women visit especially if wanting divine help in finding a husband, is the one located across from the consulate. There, the women put their hands in holes in the wall while praying (Sykes and Sykes 1920, pp. 92-93). Later in the Sykes book (facing p. 320) is a picture of a woman at a shrine throwing mud, hoping to invoke divine intervention to effect a cure. The confusion probably is to be explained by the fact that in Kashgaria 'there is a remarkable number of mazars named after Büwi Märyäm' (Dawut 2013, p. 180). Skrine's 'real' one is presumably the Büwi Märyäm Khenim Mazar, in the village of Bäshtoghraq (ibid., pp. 178, 180-181, and figs. 10.3, 10.4), where the ritual is that which he describes.

292. Qurban Bayrami (in Turkish; Eid al-Adha in Arabic), celebrating the willingness of Abraham to sacrifice his son,

Only wealthier persons sacrifice a sheep or goat, which is disposed of thus:

Skin to the Imam
Head and feet to the Muazzin
Neck & offal to the butcher
Body is boiled & put on table for guests who come to salaam, but some is kept for the kalandars.

Everybody goes round to his friends' houses, usually in droves to have a bite and say 'Amin' at the same time salaaming with the face-washing movement.

Only men go first day; women go 2nd day, separate tables being spread for them in the andarūn. Only heads of families sacrifice; but sometimes 2, 3 or even 4 sheep are killed in one house, brothers, cousins etc. of the head of the house sacrificing.

Apropos of the rumours current when the Radio St[atio]n was built, about 40 children having been buried under the towers, the kidnapping rumours which resulted in 6 Sikhs being murdered by the Muhammadans in Calcutta lately are a case in point. It got about that the Sikhs building a certain dock were sacrificing M[uhammada]n children. Another instance was the excitement in Colombo when the Grandpass Victoria Br[idge] was commenced. It was firmly believed that 2 children had been sacrificed to the god of the River (the Kelani). Similar rumours at the time of the Sara Bridge building.

The ingrained laziness of the Kashgaris is shown by the difficulty one has in the bazaar in getting anybody to carry one's purchases home. The boys will hold your horse for you but they won't carry your things even for 10 or 20 pul a time. Contrast anywhere in India when they crowd round you clamouring for the job! Life is altogether too easy. One good famine would wake them up a lot. There is no need to save in this country.

The paper-making at Goma & Khotan represents the earliest true paper known – Ts'ai-lun, a eunuch of the Han Court in 75 A.D. after 30 years' research work produced a paper made from mulberry bark pulp. 800 years later the Arabs stole the secret from China.

D. was astonished at one of her 'Girl Guide' parties the other day to hear one of the girls, aged about 6, address the others as 'ladies' 'Wai Khanumlär, I'm so tired!' Our Yakub addressed 2 tiny tots of children, combined age about 8, as 'Khanums'.

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Salarma (10 miles from Kashgar on road to Kaying Bashi), 23 July 1924, 10 P.M.

No time even for 2 lines this week, as we are hurrying out into camp a day earlier than we meant to – For the first time since we came, it has not been pleasant at the Consulate; very hot and a really terrible plague of wasps. Quite extraordinary – I never saw such a lot of wasps in my life. They swarm into the house from every side, & tho' we have killed thousands with fly flap, fire, boiling water etc. they have got worse & worse until the last day or two life has been almost unbearable! We have had to live, in spite of the great heat (100° without any kind of punkah is as bad as 115° with) with all the doors and windows tight shut, simply to keep the wasps out! D. has been stung badly twice and I once – very bad stings, really painful for 2 days. As I have told you before, the Consulate is badly planned for real hot weather, owing to the fact that all the living rooms are on a side of the house facing N.W. so that in the summer months they get the afternoon & evening sun, & they have no verandas or any protection from the sun whatever. D.'s bedroom is the most oven-like of all; it has averaged 90° in her bedroom for the last 2 days & this morning at 7 A.M. it was at that figure! No joke when you have to sleep under muslin (not mosquito gauze) curtains because of the sand flies. So it's just as well we're off to Kaying! It's topping being in tents tonight: we are on a little rise just above a lake, a very jolly place indeed. A

is one of the most important Muslim holidays, taking place on the 10th day of Dhu al-Hijjah. The meat of the sacrificed animal is divided amongst the hosting family, relatives and neighbors, and the poor. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eid_al-Adha, last accessed 10 May 2016). For the festival in Kashgaria, see Bellér-Hann 2008, pp. 350-351.

wee cool breeze is blowing from the lake & D. is just settling down (without curtains at all) to sleep the clock round almost. Tomorrow we have a long and hot march to Altunluk at the mouth of the Karatash Valley, but next day we dive into the mountains; it will be lovely. Lyall left Srinagar on the 13th & sh[oul]d be here in another month.

I send a lot of prints this week to make up for a short letter.

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Tigarmansu, 30 July 1924

Once more we are being treated to the vile luck* [*note added in upper margin*: This has since (2 August 1924) improved g[reatl]y.] as regards weather which we are so accustomed to. Last year if you remember we went to Kaying Bashi on 25th June & returned on 19th July. That period coincided with an exceptionally cold & rainy time at Kaying, and a correspondingly cool and pleasant June at Kashgar. So the Kirghiz told us that we were too early: it was still spring in the mountains, summer and fine weather came later. So this year once we knew for certain when Lyall was coming, we decided to take our 3 weeks' spell in the hills from 22nd July to 10th Aug., which would ensure that we were past the spring rains at any rate. Well, this year June has been exceptionally hot at Kashgar & they had from 4th–25th June at Kaying 3 weeks of perfect weather; and on the 26th, the very day we reached the Alpine forests & pastures of the Yapchan Jilga (close to Kaying) the weather broke! Now as I write in my ak-oi at Tigarmansu, 1 march from Yapchan, the rain is drumming merrily on the felts & coming in at the round hole in the top which is at once sole window & chimney for the fire. We fully expect that it will be like this all our time (only for a fortnight this time) actually in the mountains and that when we get back to K[ash]g[a]r we shall hear that they have had a cool spell!

Still, tho' the bad weather and the lost opportunities it entails for surveying & photography in this unexplored country are intensely annoying, it is delightful to be in the mountains again & revelling at 10,000 odd feet in greenery & flowers and pine trees and freedom from wasps & mosquitoes and sand-fleas, & a pleasantly cool temperature – not cold as at Kaying last year. It only rains now and again & there is sunshine in between; it is the heavy clouds veiling the mountains which we came to see that is the chief tragedy.

[*Fig. 181, next page*] I enclose a small scale map showing this very interesting country with the various features, the Karatash and Gez Rivers, Mts. Kungur, Mustagh Ata (which we don't go near) & Chakragil, the Kaying, Yapchan, Chopkana, Tigarmansu and other side valleys and a shaded portion showing the bit I am trying to survey. You will see that a considerable portion of the latter lies to the W. of the upper Tigarmansu Jilga, where we are now; this, including the whole N.E. face of the Kungur massif which has never been seen from close quarters by any European can only be reached by climbing the fearfully steep but not impossible W. side of this jilga, the Tigarmansu, whence on a good day the whole N.E. face of Kungur & the very high & strangely shaped mountains below it would have been visible. I started this climb with yaks, D. to accompany me part of the way, this morning, as (after heavy rain last night) it seemed to have cleared up, but we had hardly been out an hour before down came the clouds & we had to give up the attempt. Yesterday, our first day in this jilga, was worse: heavy clouds & rain all day, on and off, no sun. We went up the valley to the foot of the great glacier which we examined, but rain drove us down again.

Our journey from Kashgar was very hot and glarey but otherwise quite pleasant, the chief pleasantness being the escape from a super-heated Consulate and a plague of wasps to our cool Alps. We had some

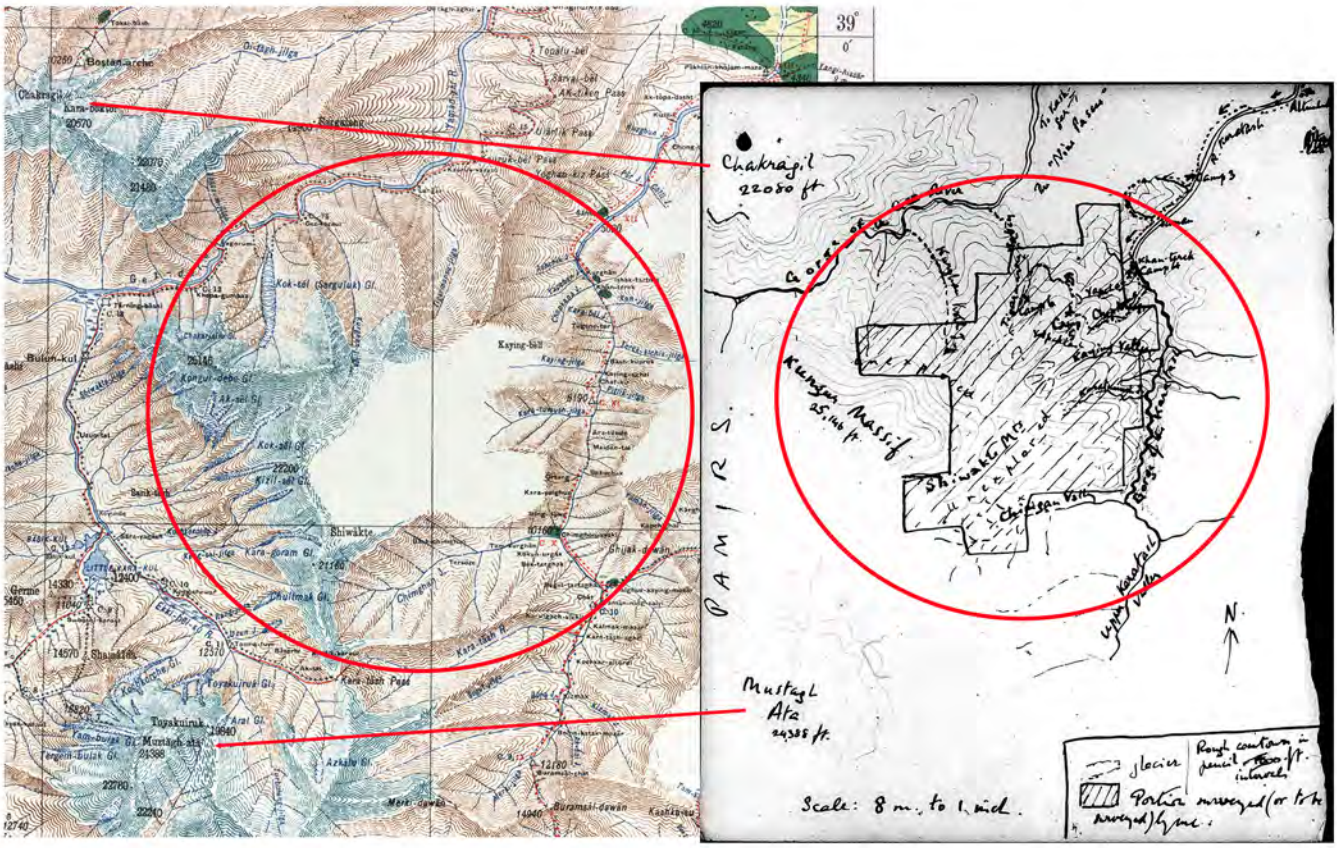


Fig. 181. Skrine's rough map to illustrate for his family the achievements and plan for completing his surveying of the 'Qungur Alps'. I have juxtaposed it to the Survey of India map drawn from the surveying of Aurel Stein and his men, which has the big blank spot within which Skrine was able to map the Kaying Valley and the surrounding 'Qungur Alps'. For orientation, the thin lines with arrows point to the major peaks Mustagh Ata (bottom left) and Chakragil (top left); the circled area encompasses the region with the Kongur massif on its west, the Gez River at the north, and the Karatash River on the east. (Sources: Skrine's map, from CPS to HSS, 30 July 1924, the British Library Collection: IOLR MSS EurF 154/10; Survey of India, Chinese Turkistan and Kansu, No. 42 N.E. Kashgar, Muztāgh Atā. Serial No. 2 [1922]).

obstacles tho'. I shall never forget crossing the Gez River where it flows across the marshy plain 15 miles S. of Kashgar (Excuse me, my pen has run dry and I've no ink with me – left it at the last camp! [*He has switched here to barely legible pencil.*]). The bridge had been washed away and the river shot past at about 12 m.p.h. with waves 2 ft. high. Average depth must have been about 3 ft. and breadth at the 'ford' 50 yards. It was <u>just</u> possible to ride a horse across, as the bottom was good but our baggage on the ponies was a different matter as the water caught the loads and would have swept them away if a dozen men whom we had collected [...] had not rescued the leading ponies and brought them back. There was nothing for it but to unload completely and have all the things taken across by <u>hand</u> & the ponies empty. Stout villagers waded across with our boxes & things on their heads & the water swirling past them was strong & sometimes chest-high [*Fig. 182, next page*]. How they did it I don't know but there was only one mishap – one box containing our 4 lanterns & the man carrying it were swept away & only retrieved with the utmost difficulty (the box that is to say – the man managed to climb on to some wreckage of the bridge) a mile down stream! 2 villagers ran like hares down the bank until they got below the box, & then waded in & got it.[293]

293. Although he gives a different name for the river, apparently the entry in the Field Diary, p. 73, refers to this same crossing: 'L[eave] Salarma 8:40. arr. Tashmalik river 1 m. beyond Surkho (Pokkalik) 10:45. Got across only with great difficulty in



Fig. 182. While this photo, showing the crossing of the Gez River at the ford of Borokhotai, may not capture the crossing Skrine describes here, the picture conveys the difficulty of getting the people and all the equipment across, a process which they encountered more than once. He noted in a caption for this image the 'villagers wading with such of the loads as would be spoilt by wet. These men can wade carrying a heavy load through an 8 mph current 4 ft. deep'. Where the mountain rivers debouch on the flood plains, they spread out in 'braided' channels, one or another of which may be shallow enough to wade across at least in low water season. (Reproduced with permission from The Royal Geographical Society [London], no. 018268).

2 August. I broke off the above in the Tigarmansu Jilga because it is so difficult to read! I resume at Kaying Bashi, but haven't time to write much more this week because the messenger who arrived from Yangi Hissar yesterday is waiting to go back with our dâk for the mail at Kashgar. So I'll just briefly indicate our movements which you will be able to follow in the map. 2nd night from Kashgar we spent in comfort at the house of the same excellent Beg with whom we stayed twice before, at Akhtur Bazaar (off the map), 3rd day we marched up to ALTUNLUK & crossed the Karatash River (not so much water or difficulty as in June last year) 3 m. above it, then marched 10 m. further & camped at the foot of a side-valley. As last year, our loads had next day to go up this side-valley, across a very stiff little pass (all the loads had to be manhandled over) & down 5 miles to the Karatash again. D. & I however this time avoided the pass by going <u>on foot</u> guided by Kirghiz along a dizzy path up among the cliffs of the K[ara]-tash gorge, thus getting through the narrows where our loads couldn't follow. [*Fig. 183*] We sat under a tree at Saman above the narrows & waited for the loads, which came along at 4 (7 hours from camp!) &

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1 ½ hrs., 8 coolies (mostly chiraks of Ma Tungling of Khotan) man-handling the whole of our loads across […] Breadth of Tashmalik river at ford about 60 yards; current at least 6 m.p.h. throughout; depth 2 ½ – 3 ft. with big waves. Bot[tom] good, crossing took 1 ½ hrs. & reloading another half hr. About 1 m. from ford opp. Akhtur B. a bridge over an <u>arik</u> had been carried away and 4–5 ponies had to be unloaded & reloaded here. Didn't arr. Akhtur till 5:30. Couldn't go to Altunluk as intended.' The entry then continues with data for correcting Stein's map:

<u>Position of Akhtur B[ridge]</u>. Stein's map certainly wrong:
He puts it 39° 5' 20" N.
76° 2' 12" E.
But it is universally agreed to be
22 ½ m. from Yangi Hissar
15 m. from Yapchan
12 ½ m. from Tashmalik.
The position 39° 6' 50" N.
75° 50' 40" E.
fits all these distances.



Fig. 183. This segment of the map drawn by the professionals at the Survey of India from Skrine's notes and which accompanies his 1925 article on the 'Qungur Alps' shows clearly some of the key locations in his brief exploration that took him up to Yapchan, then through the dramatic gorge below the Bozarga cliffs and on into the Tigarmansu Valley (after: GJ *1925a, map foldout).*

then all moved on together to KHAN TEREK where we camped in a delicious little apricot orchard on the banks of the roaring Karatash. All these days out from K[ash]g[a]r, by the way, it was grilling hot, only the healthy open air life and the thought of the cool mountains ahead sustained us. At Khan Terek we were 7000 ft. up, but it was still warm. [*Fig. 184*] Next day however we began to rise in earnest; we went up the Chopkana Jilga & by mid-day were 9,500 ft. up & lunching happily under a tree by the banks of an ice cold burn in a steeply-tilted glen all crags and pine-trees and waterfalls. From there we and the baggage ponies climbed by narrow paths hugging steep mountain-sides over various ridges (one of which contained a really nasty rock face up which the ponies & their loads had to be literally lifted by our men) until suddenly we turned a corner & found ourselves in a lovely pine-forest with a level, well-engineered track cut in the hillside through it with views of green Alpine pastures and great towering red cliffs for all the world (bar the red cliffs 1500 ft. high, which are unique) like the Simla Hills!! [*Fig. 185*] We pitched our tents on a lovely alp thick with flowers, including great beds of a wonderful tall pink delphinium-like flower & masses of azure campanula, right opposite the wonderful red pine-crowned cliffs. Now if only the spell of fine weather had continued all would have been well, but next day must needs be overcast, with rain from 5 P.M. to 8 P.M. which drove us in from a wonderful climb among the pines to a Kirghiz encampment high up under the 17,000-ft. crags of Yelpaktash. However, tho' the weather had obviously broken, I decided to



Fig. 184. The path into the mountains from the Karatash River was through the Chopkana Valley, whose Kyrgyz were very helpful to the Skrines in providing guidance, transport and 'lodging'. The photo shows Doris Skrine in front of the Burroughs and Wellcome medicine chest dispensing minor medications in response to the requests from the herders, who had a perhaps naïve faith that foreigners had some kind of magical solution to any ailment. Word of the Skrines' travels moved ahead of them; often Kyrgyz women would travel over difficult passes to meet the party in hope for some kind of 'cure'. It is uncertain which of the Skrines' encounters with the Chopkana Kyrgyz is the one shown here. (After: CCA *1925, facing p. 146.)*

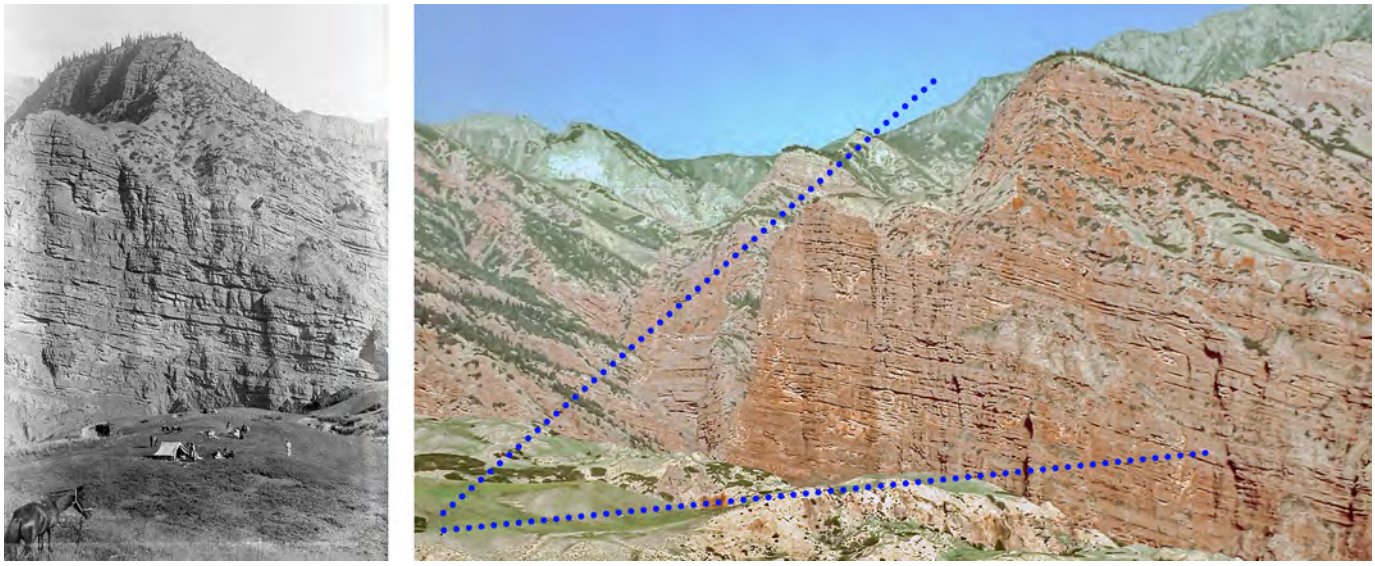


Fig. 185. The Skrines' camp below the red-rock cliffs at 'Yapchan' (part of a two-image panorama) (scan from glass negative reproduced with permission from The Royal Geographical Society (London), no. CPS/00008). I have juxtaposed the image with mine taken from a distance in 1996. In lower left is visible the open area in which they camped and from which he took his photo looking up and right to the 'prow' of the red cliffs. The superimposed dotted lines show approximately the vantage area of his image, where it is necessary to adjust mentally to the fact the angle of his photo is a much narrower one.

carry out my original intention of visiting the TIGARMANSU Jilga, another pine-forested valley never before visited by European, chiefly because I hoped by climbing from there to get to a point whence I could photo & map the wild mountains to the NE of the main Kungur massif & possibly the unknown N. face of the monster himself.

How we fared must wait till next week for the messenger is just off, & it's getting dark too (7:45 P.M. outside my tent) & there isn't room to write inside!

Best love from both.

[*map on this page, Fig. 181 above*]

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[*The Field Diary, under 27 July, p. 74, adds detail. Skrine took a photo, reproduced here, of the woman weaving on the ground loom.*]

Halt Yapchan Y[ailaq]. Temp. min 49°, 8 A.M. 66°. Beautiful little garden among pine woods above camp, great beds of pink delphinium-like plant.

Flowers in Bozarga Bagh:

(1) Tall pink delphinium-like plant
(2) Blue campanula, small white inside, long white pistil.
(3) Bushy pale purple, many headed flower with dock-like leaves, short & squat
(4) Purple mallow.
(5) Vetches white yellow, crimson & purple; small & also (over) v. large variety.
(6) Pale blue anemone
(7) Forget me not, white blue
(8) Blue gentian.
(9) Daisies purple yellow, white double & single.
(10) Purple ragged daisy like flower, 12-15 heads on one stalk.
(11) Yellow snapdragon

(12) Buttercup
(13) Meadowsweet
(14) Edelweiss
(15) White poker-like flower
(16) ? Star wort (little white star-like flower on tall stalk)
3 or 4 diff[eren]t mosses & do. grasses.

Went up to Kök Choka with tea basket – 1 ak oi, 1 hut elev[atio]n 10,500. Spectacular path up knife-edge ridge covered with grass & pines between 2 vast land-slides, path on edge of one or other most of time. Gen[eral] angle 30°, down into land-slides 60°. One of ladies at Kok Choka is a Yangi Hissar woman; doesn't like the mountains. A girl was weaving sacking on a long loom laid along the ground called 'kuzuk', with sheep's wool. [*Fig. 186*] Camel's is better. Temp. 8 P.M. 53°. Rain began 6 P.M. after beautiful morning, cont[inue]d till 8:30, not heavy.

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Kaying Bashi, 8 August 1924

To begin where I left off last week – just off from the beautiful alp of Yapchan on a 3-days' dash to the Tigarmansu Jilga. As it was impossible for loaded ponies to do the journey, we had to use yaks, and only 4 of these useful animals being available for baggage, we had to cut down our kit to the smallest dimensions; one tiny bivouac tent, a kitchen bucket fitted with cooking utensils, our beddings and a box of provisions. We took 2 orderlies & our Hunza camp cook, Murad-Shah. [*FD, p. 74, in addition*



Fig. 186. The picture of weaving on a ground loom was taken on a day hike the Skrines did to a location the locals called Kök Choka above the camp at Yapchan, the view looking roughly NE, down valley (reproduced with permission from The Royal Geographical Society [London], no. CPS/00024). Such practical, easily assembled looms like the one shown here, are still used decades later, as my photo from Subax near L. Karakul taken in 1996 shows.

to baggage yaks: ourselves riding 2 more. Murad on Polu pony & H[afiz] & S[angi] K[han] sharing a yak.] You remember last year after leaving Kaying Bashi we did a similar dash for 2 nights to Bozarga, an alp high up on the opposite side of the Yapchan Valley? That time we came in for a fearful rainstorm & were confined shivering to our ak-oi all day. Going from the Yapchan yailaq to Tigarmansu we passed Bozarga, & had the same hair-raising ascent from the depths of the Yapchan river gorge to negotiate. You dive down a break-neck descent through pine woods & masses of wild roses to the river



Fig. 187. The Skrine party emerging from the depths of the gorge below the Bozarga cliffs. The photo is scanned from a damaged, once folded tear sheet of the printing in Die Koralle*, September 1928, p. 273, which I have chosen to use because it shows more clearly than scans of other published versions of the photo the detail and depth of field of what was a remarkable original shot. For my own passage through the same gorge, going down, not up, see Appendix 2.*

which tumbles wildly in cataract after cataract over red sand-stone boulders below 1500 ft. cliffs of the same material, crowned with pines. Scrambling up the gorge for quarter of a mile you suddenly turn up what seems at first sight an absolutely impossible side-nullah. The cliffs actually overhang you straight in front! But the track goes up them all right, the nullah turning sharply to the left instead of being a cul-de-sac as it seems at first. [*Fig. 187*] After zizagging a couple of hundred feet up under the overhanging red cliffs you find yourself on a broad ledge which slants quite safely up to the left, and you come out on a sort of balcony from which you can see the main river foaming past the narrow mouth of the side gorge almost immediately under your feet. A little further on the path again climbs an almost vertical hill face to avoid an impassible gorge, but after that you find yourself in a lovely little valley, quite small and narrow but with pines and wild roses & clematis in profusion & a little clear stream with grassy banks. Old Samsaq Bai with whom we stayed at Bozarga last year has his ak-ois pitched this year on another alp immediately above this glen we went up, a green ridge dotted with clumps of juniper & pine with sides pitched at 45° and ending in one of the 1500-ft. red sandstone cliffs mentioned above. [*sketch – Fig. 188*] We visited the encampment on our return journey, & I may as well tell you about it now. The ak-ois are pitched in a most wonderful site, perched up on green lawns with pine woods & juniper brakes & a perfect view of the whole Yapchan Jilga & the towering snow peaks and richly coloured foothills stretching right away to the plains, aye and on clear days over the plains too with their hundreds of miles of dark green cultivation or pale brown desert; but the site has one disadvantage. You have to go down 600 ft. almost sheer for your water! Luckily the Kirghiz never wash & drink little but milk, so they don't use much, but we did the descent ourselves with an aneroid barometer & the return journey & found it to be 600 ft. On the outward journey 8 or 9 ladies & 10 or 12 children [*FD, p. 74:* mostly boys] from Samsaq's encampment were gathered at the spring in the little glen, having descended from their green eyrie to meet us, all in their best clothes & most wonderful head-dresses, a pretty sight. They brought great bowls of cream & Kirghiz cakes for us after the hospitable manner of their kind, & made us promise to visit them on our return.

Fig. 188. Skrine's drawing showing the location of Samsaq Bai's camp on a ridge above one of the red cliffs. The ascent through the gorge shown in Fig. 187 was below where 'Yapchan river' is marked on the sketch; the cliff to its left is the one shown in Skrine's photo looking up from their Yapchan camp (Fig. 185). (From CPS to HSS, 8 August 1924, the British Library Collection: IOLR MSS 154/10.)



Fig. 189. At Bel Pass, from the west (photo: DW 1996).



From there to the top of the pass (12,000 ft.) the track is steep but well made, & the pass itself is easy [*Fig. 189*]. A thousand feet down on the other side is a big encampment called Oi, nine ak-ois including that of the petty Beg of the Tigarmansu Jilga [*FD, p. 75:* the elderly 'Nasir Beg' M[uhamma]d Isa Beg]. Everybody tried to make us stop the night there instead of attempting to get to the Tigarmansu yailaq, which they said we could not reach before nightfall. But Oi, though attractive in its way was no use to us, & we were determined to camp in the forests of the real Tig[arman]su valley, not up a side-glen; luckily a very nice Kirghiz called Yunus (= Jonah) Akhun had come to meet us at Oi; he said his own ak-oi was in the Tig[arman]su forests, & that we could get there under his guidance quite easily by evening. So (rather offending the old man, I'm afraid) we refused to stay more than an hour with the Beg at Oi, during which we sat in a super-heated ak-oi with about 20 men & gaily-dressed women & quantities of children in it, D. as usual being the cynosure of all female Kirghiz eyes & discussing their ailments with the cheerful ladies. [*FD, p. 75:* Women & children of this place all have the same complaint, a curious kind of sore in the mouth & on the tongue.] Then having reinforced our transport with 2 more yaks, so as to lighten the loads (our original 4 were pretty done after the awful climb up out of the Yapchan gorge) we left the Oi pastures and set off along a path which for half a mile was decidedly hairy – it was 8–10 inches wide for quite a long stretch along a mud hill-side pitched at angle of more than 45°. A long descent of a narrow winding glen, the path in two or three places climbing up over 'paris' as they call them in Hunza to avoid waterfalls & canyons, & a steep 500 ft. climb over a spur brought us at last to the main Tigarmansu Jilga, another Alpine valley like Kaying unvisited by any Europeans. It is beautiful with its green pastures, fields knee deep in meadowsweet, foaming glacier torrent & tall pines, & it is grand with its eight-thousand-foot walls of glacier-hung precipice & its peaks capped with eternal snow; but its upper reach is quite straight, not beautifully curved like our beloved Kaying & is both smaller & less lovely than the latter.

Rather too like an immense trough among the mountains. I must say though we had rotten weather while we were there and didn't see the place properly. [*FD, p. 76:* Crossing the violent Tig[arman]su stream at 5:15 we went up the right bank for 1 ½ m.] The 3 Kirghiz huts including that of our friend Yunus were pitched on a steeply sloping grassy clearing in the forest & commanded a beautiful view down the valley to the hills of the Gez Dara of which the Tig[arman]su is a tributary. The people were exceptionally nice & cheerful & we liked them very much. D. refused to inhabit an ak-oi because those of these parts are usually rather holey and their privacy from curious Kirghiz eyes leaves something to be desired; so she took the little tent & I sat in state in the ak-oi which Yunus insisted on evacuating for me. His father-in-law evacuated a second hut for our men & the 'kitchen' & the two families, men, women, sheep, goats, yaks & everything camped out quite cheerfully under the pines. We arrived at 6 and amid much excitement I had D.'s little tent pitched under the trees close to my ak-oi & we soon had the X-pattern bed up & inserted with some difficulty into the tent where D. was snug as could be, if rather cramped!

[*FD, pp. 79-80:* Revenue etc. in Tig[arman]su Jilga (fr[om] Yunus Akhun).

18 houses (Oi & Tig[arman]su) pay 12 tls. per an[num]. Also 20 sheep to the Beg (their own man). Also provide transport (ponies or yaks) to Ch[inese] off[icia]ls or distinguished visitors – the jilga is in Tashkurghan district, where as Bozarga over the pass is in Yangi Hissar.

Copper. Mine is up the Tikkelik jilga, a glen set at a positively terrifying angle under the NW side of K[ara]d[a]g. Last worked 18 years ago by a man who set up a gun-smith's shop at Tig[armen]su & made a lot of money. Lest the Ch[inese] sh[oul]d hear of it, the Kirghiz got rid of this man & kept the mine quiet, but last year chiraks of the Tungling of Y[angi] Hissar came & took specimens of ore away. All the K[ir]g[hi]z ran away except Yunus Akhun. No more was heard & now the Titai is (alhamdulillah [*Arabic*: اَلْحَمْدُ لله – Praise be to God – *DW*]) dead.]

[*FD, p. 103a:* Kirghiz Marriage customs (Yunus A[khun])

Bride price varies from minimum of 10 yaks or ponies or both to 500–1000 tls. Paid in instalments, 1 or more animals per ann[um] from the first engagement or qalam usually at 7 or 8 yrs. age, till marriage at 16 yrs. (nikal). At the qalam the bride's father gives the boy's a chapan or shirt & receives 1 animal in return. The 'engagement' can be broken off any time during the 8–10 yrs. & bride price paid to date returned. At the nikal big party given & marriage announced, no ceremony. Not till whole bride-price has been given. The bride's parents then begin to fit out an ak-oi & furnishings for the young couple; this takes 3–5 months during which time the bridegroom lives chez soi if near, or in another aq-oi lent him by the bride's people if far, & visits the bride every week or 10 days; this is supposed to be secret from the bride's father, who must not see the bridegroom leaving the bride's ak-oi in the morning. B[ride]g[room] during whole of this time must never appear before his father-in-law without tumāq and boots on. When ak-oi finished he takes it & the bride away to his own people's place; no party there. After a year or so (not before) the bride can 'give a divorce' to the husband by returning his bride-price & not vice versa as in the plains.]

As I said, we had rotten weather at Tig[arman]su, but the mornings were not so bad, gleams of sunshine before the great clouds settled on the mighty ranges all round. The steeply sloping meadow cleared from the forest, on which the encampment was perched is really the terminal moraine of an ancient glacier which must have come right down the jilga – with the desiccation of Central Asia it, like all the other big glaciers of this region, has retreated & its foot (which we visited one day in the rain) is a couple of miles & 2,500 ft. above the encampment. Below the latter, at the foot of a steep bank covered with trees, is the most wonderful spring I ever saw: a whole river of pink water gushes out of 3 large holes & goes roaring down the valley, a lovely sight. It is the main glacier stream which travels for 2 miles far underground. We saw it at the foot of the glacier above mentioned. The pink colour is caused by a great stratum of red clay which we saw; the water passes, immediately after leaving the ice, through this clay. [*FD, p. 77:* We also found at 13,300' a plant of the scented primula found last year on the Kaying Türe glacier – this time over & in seed; seeds not ripe, but we preserved them [...]

How Kirghiz catch their yaks

A fine black bull, one of the ones we had had at Kaying last year, was grazing on the meadows below the glacier foot; we wanted to saddle him to relieve the very weak & small one I was riding. Yunus Akhun took a rope & went after him; the yak, sensing what was coming, trotted off but Y.A. lassooed his horns & stopped him just enough to enable him to come up & hobble his forefeet. The yak then tried to butt him off, but Y.A. slipped the other end of the rope over his nose & brought it down to the nostrils, which are pierced; slipping the end through the hole he had the yak harnessed for riding.]

Another interesting bit of the Tigarmansu Jilga is the shrine & old mill ('Tigarman' is Turki for mill, & 'su' = water or river, hence the name). It is a lovely spot, all green & a big clear-water spring flowing among scattered pines in picturesque altitudes. I got a lovely photo of it which will enlarge beautifully & give an excellent idea of the charm of the place. The shrine has big old ibex-horns on it; the mountains

of the Tig[arman]su J[ilga] hold many ibex (as well they might, judging by their appalling steepness) but I have no time to go after them, too busy surveying & photoing.

We returned from the Tig[arman]su J[ilga] over the pass to Yapchan with regret because we hadn't seen it properly, &, worse still, I had not had the chance I wanted of climbing its western wall (which is possible, tho' difficult, in one place only) & getting a view of the hitherto unseen North Eastern face of the Kungur massif [*Fig. 190*].

[*FD, pp. 78-79:* **31 July 1924**. March Tig[arman]su to Yapchan.

Again sun in early morning but clouds soon down on mountains & everything dull, hazy & invisible. Last chance of seeing the Shiwakte from this jilga gone. Wonderful show (& scent) of meadow sweet in field 1 mile below forest. Caravan (6 yaks) l[eft] 9, arr[ived] Oi Jilga ak-ois 11:30 – much quicker than when they went down! Changed here on to other yaks & ponies & went on at 1:00. Lunched at same place on way out 1–2, 11,250'. Loads went straight to Yapchan, we to Bele Tök, Samsaq's camp. Reached top of At-bel (12,000') at 2:30. Bozarga 2:45, l[eft] 3. Trader happened to be at B[ozar]ga on his rounds. Had 6 donkeys, 4 laden with flour, 2 with melons (!), apricots, Kham, red h[and]-kerchiefs etc & haberdashery. Said he had come by the 9 Passes and the Achik Dawan from Tashmalik where he lived; that he was going back via Oi & the Tig[arman]su J[ilga] & the Gez Dara; that he came this round 4 or 5 times in the season & that no other trader was on this beat. Bartered goods for sheep, felts etc. D. bought 5 pieces of cloth, red & kham for ___ & gave them to the Kirghiz women of Bozarga.



Fig. 190. In fact, Skrine did climb fairly high up on the west side of the Tigarmansu Jilgha, where he took this photo looking across and up the valley (after: GJ *1925a, facing p. 397). His map (Fig. 183) seems to suggest he was not far from where in 1996 I was able to cross into the valley from the west, but the scale is deceiving, as obviously he went much higher and farther up the valley than I was able to do. The Russians under Andrei Lebedev succeeded in accomplishing what Skrine had not in that they crossed from the Tigarmansu into the Kaying (see Appendix 2). However, even had Skrine crested the valley wall on the west he still could not have had the full view of Kongur which he sought, as there are intervening peaks.*

Took us 40 minutes to do the mile or so to Bele Tök owing to the ups & downs in & out of green nullahs & up hill-sides thick with juniper. Wonderfully situated, Samsaq's ak-ois, on a long 'Qir' clothed with forest on the N. & terrifically steep-sided, jutting out over the Yapchan valley with a red cliff crowned with first 1500 ft. high & perpendicular like the prow of a ship. The top of this ridge is turf jewelled with flowers, mallows & gentian & yellow daisies ('a lovely yellow, just like well-made buttered eggs' acc[or]d[in]g to D.) with neat clumps of juniper making it look like a park & the forest peeping up on every side. But it has drawbacks. Itself 11,000 ft., the camp draws its water from a spring at 10,400, down a terrifically steep drop of 600 ft. Unlike some of the other valleys, the K[ir]g[hi]z of this part are increasing in nos., not dying out, so some say; the 4 houses at B[ozar]ga produced 11 small children between them, & there were others we didn't see. One woman had 6. All v[ery] friendly & appreciative, like the Tig[arman]su people & unlike those of Oi, whom D. didn't like as she didn't get a 'thank-you' from any of them for all the doctoring she did & free medicine she gave. We were given sour cream & fresh cream & bread, all very good, to which I did justice but not D. The latter had a spinning lesson from one of the women, but without success. One of the spindle[s] was weighted with a disk of pink marble, said to have been got from near Saman.

[*p. 77*] Samsaq & D.'s presents was [*sic*] rather interesting: she sent him some coral necklaces & a silk hanky for his ladies thro' Tash 'Qari' last spring from Yangi Hissar, the same time that I sent the Kashmir

hunting knife which Samsaq never got. The old man wasn't able to ack[nowledge] them so the day after we arrived at Yapchan he waylaid D. & myself when out for a walk and pulled out all the presents, knelt down on the ground, spread them all out & thanked D. most effusively for them singly & severally.]

That night at Yapchan it rained cats & dogs from 7:30 P.M. till 8 next morning. I had foolishly omitted to 'trench' the tents, with the result that the floors of both our tents were soaking in 10 minutes, but we managed to bale [*sic*] them out, & proper trenching prevented any further water getting in.

Next morning it was still cloudy, but cleared up & we had a pleasant & very clear day for the march to Kaying Bashi. We waited till 11 in the hope that the sun would come out & dry our tents & durries, but it didn't, so we had to go with them wet, a great additional weight for the unfortunate ponies which carried them. I never saw anything like the colours of the Yapchan & neighbouring jilgas all washed by the rain – reds & ochres & dark greens & vivid greens & the blue sky towards the plains & the violet of the distant foothills & the pale yellow patched with dark blue of the plains themselves 6000 ft. below & 30 miles away.

Unlike last year, when we crossed the Chopkana Dawan into the Kaying Jilga in icy wind & rain & sleet & were greeted by a downpour at our camping place, this year it was lovely & warm & sunny when we looked down on the beautiful upper reaches of the Jilga, clothed with forests & bright with rich green meadows spangled with a dozen different kinds of flowers, the big white glacier stream with its smaller but even whiter tributaries threading the valley like a river of quicksilver. We put up our tents in real comfort & happiness on a perfect evening delighted to be once more in our own private mountain Paradise. The Kirghiz were delighted to see us – not only I hope because of the presents & feasts we give them & the money they get for hiring us their yaks & selling us their cream & milk. I think they really like us, for they are a most refreshingly natural, gay, well-disposed simple people, no Eastern guile & inscrutability about them at all.



Fig. 191. Skrine's magnificent photo of Shiwakte I, taken apparently on that last big climb he did near the head of the Kaying Valley (after: HJ *17 (1952), facing p. 73).*

After the bad weather we had been having it cleared up with a will & our first 4 days here were gloriously fine. The very first day, not wishing to waste any fine weather, D. & I went on yaks with an orderly & 3 Kirghiz up a side-glacier called by the local people 'Tör-bashi' but by us 'Oxo' because when we went up it last year & had lunch at 14,200 ft. in the snow we warmed ourselves by brewing Oxo, & with a view to a possible free packet from the firm one day I took a photo of D. making it with the packet in her hand clearly marked with the name. Unfortunately, the photo wasn't a good one. This time we were luckier than last year, for the new snow on top of the glacier had gone & we were thus able to gain a higher elevation (14,500') much easier than last year. [*Fig. 191*] After lunch I left D. to look after the things & took a Kirghiz lad [Tash] (the only one who wasn't suffering from mountain-sickness headache, which

all Kirghiz seem to be very liable to) & climbed another 1550 ft. to the top of a ridge from which, perched rather precariously on a snow cornice, I got a glorious view including a bird's eye one of the Tigarmansu Jilga which we had just visited. At 16,050 ft. I was right up on the ridge shutting in that valley from the South. But as a possible route connecting the Tig[arman]su & Kaying jilgas it was a washout, for precipices a thousand feet high, crowned with overhanging cornices of snow rendered a descent from where I was into the Tig[arman]su Jilga quite impossible. There is absolutely no possible track between the two glens other than the roundabout one, 2 days' journey, which we used.[294] Gives you an idea of the difficulty of the country. In this extraordinary region you can spend the whole summer a couple of miles from a friend in another jilga, & be completely cut off from him for several months, or at the best you can only get at him <u>on foot</u> by a detour occupying 3 or 4 days.[295]



Fig. 192. Schematic map overlaid on Google Earth topo from satellite image, showing the route through the Kaying Valley over the Kepek pass into the Chimgan watershed.

[*Fig. 192*] Except the track up the Kaying river (only usable in autumn, winter, & spring) & that over the Chopkana Dawan (only crossable in summer) absolutely the only possible exit from the Kaying Jilga where we are is one which can be used during the months of August, September & October. This is the Aghalistan Pass which leads over to the Chimgan Jilga, a big branch valley of the Karatash which joins the latter just <u>above</u> the great gorges & is then inaccessible from Kashgar in the summer months by the Karatash river route. This Chimgan Jilga has always interested me very much because not only is the upper part of it, like the Kaying J[ilga], unexplored but it leads right up to the mighty eastern buttress of Kungur, over 25,200 ft. high & to the extraordinary Shiwakte Mts. which I have been the first to see, map & photograph. The Shiwakte are totally inaccessible by any other route than the Chimgan Jilga. In April 1923 when we came in cold & snow down the Karatash River (still not too high to ford in certain places) we passed at 10,200 ft. the mouth of the Chimgan Jilga, a fine wide valley with woods of ash and alder with magnificent snowy ranges on both sides; I looked longingly up it but it was too cold & the weather too unsettled so we decided to go straight down the Karatash lest the water rise & cut us off from Kashgar. 2 months later when we came to Kaying for part of June & July I tried hard to get over the Aghalistan Pass to Chimgan, but it was quite impossible owing to the snow – the pass wasn't open, in fact, even as late as July! I was bitterly disappointed. This time, however, I have done it; <u>the pass being</u> far too difficult for D. (yaks being unable to go over it) I had to leave her for a night in

294. Of course snow conditions would have changed some decades later, but the Russian expedition led by Andrei Lebedev disproved this assertion about the impossibility of crossing from the pass at the head of the Tigarmansu into the upper Kaying (see Appendix 2). The Russians appropriately dubbed the pass the Clarmont Skrine Pass in honor of his pioneering efforts in the region.

295. Apart from his surveying, Skrine was recording daily temperatures in the Kaying: minimum, maximum, 8 A.M. and 8 P.M. Between 2 August and 10 August, the minimum ranged from 37 to 46° F and the maximum 65 to 75 (See Field Diary, p. 81).

charge of the trusty Hafiz. I had a notable experience which is worth describing.

The night before I went I had a lot of plates to develop which was necessary in order that I might get the exposures right on my next day's trip, & I didn't get to bed till half past 11. Nevertheless, I was awake at quarter to 4, 4 o'clock being the time I had ordered my Chota Hazri. When I have got to get up at an early hour, 4 or 5, I always wake up of my own accord at the right time even without trying to. But I never trust myself to do so & make no arrangements to be called – that would interfere with my night's sleep. On this occasion I made a hearty meal at the hour named off 2 boiled eggs & 4 pieces of toast & butter, & was on my yak sharp at 5, the scheduled time for the start. Sangi Khan my excellent young Hunza orderly (a splendid cragsman) on another yak & my baggage consisting only of a Jaeger sleeping bag with a few necessaries rolled in it, an unnecessarily large quantity of food prepared by the solicitous D, and my surveying and photographic impedimenta.

The first half hour of the ascent was spent winding up in the darkness through the pine forest, some of the immensely tall trees of which looked extraordinarily dignified & stately against the stars. As we emerged on to the wide grassy 'alp' on which the 5 Kirghiz huts of the Kaying Bashi encampment are pitched, the first golden light of dawn had painted the stupendous ice-cliffs & hanging glaciers of 'Shiwakte I' at the head of our valley a wonderful luminous yellow against the violet of the sky, & quarter of an hour later the first rays of the sun were touching it. My 4 Kirghiz porter-guides stopped at their huts & had drinks of *kattak* (sour cream), the only food they took so far as I know till we arrived at the Aghalistan yailaq at 2 P.M. Yaks move slowly on long climbs, & it took us 4 hours to get up to 14,000 ft [*Fig. 193*]., i.e. near the foot of the great couloir of glacier & snow which forms the Aghalistan Pass. Here I put up my plane table & took some 'rays' which I hoped would help me on my survey of the other side. I also ate some chocolate. A little further on, the snow-slope of the glacier became too steep for the yaks and we had to leave them under a rock, where one of our party brought up for the purpose took them down again & up to meet us the next day. The next 1200 ft. or so were among the stiffest climbs I've ever done. The 3 Kirghiz, Sangi Khan & I took turns to hump the various packages of my kit & our party thus slowly dragged itself & the baggage up the couloir formed by the precipitous rocks of 'Shiwakte I' on the right and the glacier, which here sloped at an angle of over 45° on the left.

Fig. 193. Skrine's closeup view of the Kepek Pass from its N side (after: GJ *1925a, foldout facing p. 401), juxtaposed to DW photo (1996) from a distance across the glacial moraine at the upper end of the Kaying Valley.*



Most of the way lay up ice & steps had to be cut. Great care had to be taken to dodge falling stones which every now & again hurtled down from the cliffs above, usually, however, passing over our heads. It being between 8:30 & 10 that we were doing the climb, & the sun being strong, the surface of the ice was melting & I got unpleasantly wet. At one point we had a nasty corner to negotiate which I illustrate [*sketch*]. [*Fig. 194*] We had to get up from one buttress of rock to another above us across a tongue of ice which ran up between the two rock-buttresses. Nothing to a properly equipped & roped Alpine party, but these Kirghiz don't understand & don't trust ropes & absolutely refuse to be roped together. Sangi Khan & I cut the steps between us with a small hatchet & we all crossed safely. [*Fig. 195*] By 10:15 we had reached the top, & I looked with what interest you may imagine upon yet another landscape never before seen by European or indeed by any other eye than a Kirghiz – the upper Chimgan Jilga. Unfortunately, by 10:30 it was already partly clouded over & not so clear as it would have been if only I could have got up earlier – however I saw two new ranges of great snow mountains on the S. side of the valley quite well & was able to photograph them before the 'visibility' became too bad for the camera. What was more important, I soon had my plane table up on the top of a table rock on the pass and took a complete set of 'rays' & clinometer readings (for height of peaks). After that I found a sheltered cranny in the rocks and boiled my boiling-point thermometer. I found the height of the pass to be 15,240 ft. I had come up 5000 ft. since Chota Hazri. One disappointment was that owing to a jagged-topped black ridge of rocks which screened them off, I could not yet see the wonderful Shiwakte mountains which I knew about from last year & had come to examine more closely. I feared, rightly as it turned out, that later in the day they would be covered with cloud.

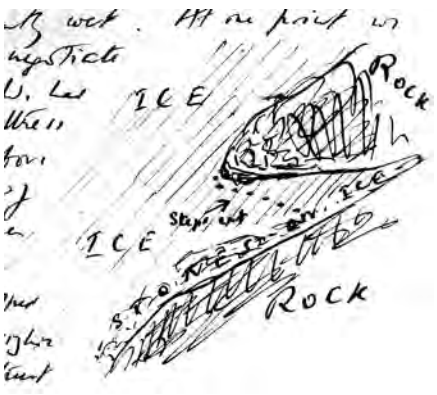


Fig. 194. Skrine's drawing of the difficult corner part way up to the Kepek Pass (from CPS to HSS, 8 August 1924, the British Library Collection: IOLR MSS 154/10).



After nearly 2 hours at the top – even when the sun was hidden it wasn't unduly cold – we started down the S. side. This is quite easy & gently sloping most of the way & can be done by yaks, the only obstacle being the snow fields near the top which get very soft after mid-day. We ploughed through these all right & were 2000 ft. down in less than an hour. Then we found ourselves on the edge of a magnificent glacier of which the small one coming down from the pass we had just crossed was a tributary. This big glacier came down in a vast curve, with wonderful white sérac & a chaos of vast boulders on its bosom, from a vast horse-shoe formed by the highest peaks of the Shiwakte – surely the steepest mountains in the world! I never saw anything like them. Eight thousand feet sheer of cliffs culminating in knife edge peaks sheathed in glittering ice, with hanging glaciers like colossal frozen waterfalls five or 6 thousand feet high. Imagine half a dozen Victoria Falls one above the other, all frozen stiff & you get <u>one</u> only of the hanging glaciers of the Shiwakte which feed the great glacier.

Fig. 195. The view from the top of the Kepek Pass looking back to the Kaying Glacier on the N side (after: GJ *1925a, foldout facing p. 401).*

It was nearly 2 before I reached the first huts of Kirghiz [*FD, p. 82:* belonging to one Bazar] on a flat grassy meadow sheltered by the lateral moraine of the glacier. I had intended to go further down & stay with the Beg of the Chimgan Valley, whom I knew already, but hearing his ak-ois were a good bit further down & having a bit of a headache – it later developed into a real snorter which incapacitated me for the rest of the day – I decided to stop at one of the two huts. The women hospitably turned out for me & they & their husbands & the livestock & my companions all squashed into the other ak-oi for the night. It was a great excitement for them, this stranger suddenly dropping on them unannounced from over the dreaded & seldom-crossed Aghalistan Pass! I dossed down in the ak-oi & had some lunch – the first food bar a slab of chocolate I had had since chota hazri at 4. The mountains all clouded over in the afternoon, & I could do no surveying – in any case, I couldn't have done much owing to my ever-worsening headache. Aspirin only made me feel sick and rendered me incapable of eating any supper & at 7 P.M. feeling very sorry for myself, I rolled myself up in my sleeping bag for the night. Before I did so, I had an interview with the Beg of Chimgan [*FD, p. 82:* Sayāt Beg, Beg of the whole K[ara]tash Valley, had his ak-ois a mile or two & a good many feet lower down], who hearing I had come over had hurried up from his camp to see me. He agreed to come back over the pass with me the next day; I had been commissioned by the Kaying Bashi to try and get him to come over and hear some grievances of theirs with a view to petitioning the Chinese [*FD, pp. 82-83:* (at Qadir Mullah 'Aksakal's' request). Some complaint about the revenue corvées demanded by the Chinese; app[arent]ly the Khan Terek K[ir]g[hi]z even have to supply horses or yaks for the Kinkol [?] Valley. Tokoi Bashi – Kashka Su, 6 days' journey in summer. Exam[ine]d the Beg re revenue exactions:

Karatash (i.e. upper Karatash Valley above the great gorges)	60 houses
Chimgan J[ilga], incldg. Ter-söze Jilga, Aghalistan & other Yailaqs	60 houses
Khan Terek, incl. Kaying, Yapchan, Bozargha, Chopkana	30 houses
	total 150 "

Pay: 4 Saghins, i.e. the output in cheese of 4 yaks in a year.
Can be commuted for 40 charaks of flour.
40 Arghams (ropes)
100 charaks of flour
10 yaks or ponies whenever required for transport of officials or 'guests.'

Found also by enquiring that

(1) There are no pines in the Ch[imgan] Jilga or tributaries.

(2) There is a pass over the range into Sarikol by the Tersöze Jilga but v[ery] difficult & icy, only poss[ible] for men on foot, worse than the Aghalistan Pass.

(3) The 'Shiwakte', whatever it is, lies at the head of the Ch[imgan] Jilga. The Beg seemed hazy about it, whether a yailaq, mountain or what.

(4) My 'Shiwakte' is called Ak-tash: obv. from the serac of the big glacier which stands up like big white cliffs.]

It rained a bit that afternoon & evening & appeared to thicken up, & I expected not to get any views next morning; but for once I was agreeably surprised; at 5 when I got up (blessedly free from headache) it was beautifully clear, & remained so until 8 when the Shiwakte clouded over. [*FD, p. 83:* Not at all a bad night thanks to good pillow & surprising warmth. Too hot inside my sleeping bag & with Gilgit boots on. 3 cups Bovril, hard boiled egg & 2 scones & butter at 5.] On the way back to the Pass I did a lot of surveying and also got some beautiful plates of the Shiwakte & the great glacier. [*Fig. 196*] I fancy the people at home will be interested in them. I was able to map the range and also some of the other mountains of the upper Chimgan Jilga & its tributaries, all unexplored country. We reached



Fig. 196. The Aq Tash Glacier and Peak III of the Shiwakte group (20,300 ft.), photographed on 5 August 1924 (after: CCA *1925, facing p. 276).*

the top of the pass at 10 & the next hour was spent in a very trying & rather dangerous descent. It was a bit late in the morning & the exceptionally warm weather & strong sun had melted surface of the ice on the glacier a good deal which rendered the descent slippery & unpleasant. We had to let ourselves down by our eyelids as it were in some places. [*Fig. 197*] At the worst place where we had to cut steps across a face of ice our steps had been spoilt by melting & I didn't trust myself to them. I untied one of the loads & belayed the rope round a projecting rock, & let myself down over the steep ice face about 30 feet to the rock-shoot below. It was a perfectly safe and easy way of doing it, but do you suppose the Kirghiz would follow me? Not a bit of it. They distrust ropes & all 4 of them set to work and remade the ice-steps – a most hazardous proceeding in the circumstances – & climbed down by them, fortunately without a slip![296] Shows how hopeless it is to try & climb in the proper Alpine way in these parts. Further down a worse danger was met in the shape of treacherous crevasses. Most of the way we hugged the foot of the rock-face, but here and there we had to crawl out on to the glacier & then we had to be very careful. The crevasses were mostly narrow and their mouths choked with soft snow; once the Kirghiz in front of me [*Sayat Beg*], close enough for me to touch him, suddenly went in up to his arm-pits! He pulled himself out by his own efforts by getting a purchase on some flat stones lying in the snow, & I thought nothing of it until I looked into the hole he had made – it was at least 50 feet deep! [*FD: p. 84:* Further down, jumping off the snow on to the loose stone steep slope at the side we set a slide of stones going, & they all plunged under the snow field we had just left & roared away far underneath for a long time – rather unnerving. Lower still we had to dodge rocks bounding down from a glacier snout 500 ft. above. Here I found a flourishing colony of our primulas, at 14,000′, where a little earth appeared under the apron of rocks.]



Fig. 197. The descent around the difficult corner on the return over the Kepek Pass into the Kaying (after: GJ *1925a, foldout facing p. 401).*

Finally we arrived safely at the bottom of the last 1000 ft. & there quickly scrambled over the debris to the highest grassy 'alp' of the valley where [*FD, p. 84:* Abdur Rahman was waiting at the top of the grass (13,750′) with yaks] [...] to take us down the rest of the way.

The yaks and my best Kirghiz & I myself all had to recuperate for a day or two after that, halcyon days of brilliant sunshine in the mornings of which I worked at my map & in the afternoons took the tea basket & D. out to beautiful little picnic-places we knew of since

296. In the Field Diary, he indicates (as shown in the photo) one of the Kirghiz in fact did follow him in roping down.

last year – 'Glen Scotland', 'The Perfect Tea Place', etc. 'Glen Scotland' which emerges within 200 yards of our tents is a steeply pitched little glen, so called because it has 7 things also found in Scotland:

1. Firs
2. Mosses (2) The real huge shining forest mosses falling in cascades over wet banks.
3. Blue bells (3) Big ones exactly like Scotch blue-bells only bigger. Campanula also common.
4. Rowans (4) The real article, berries & all!
5. Wild currants
6. Thistles
7. Rain (7) If it rains nowhere else in the Kaying Jilga, it rains in Glen Scotland. We thought of christening it Ballachulish instead.[297]

We leave tomorrow for Kashgar & I have alas done no more big climbs, as after 2 brilliant days wasted recuperating after the Aghalistan venture the weather became cloudy & dull and though it hasn't rained it looks as if it might any day. We are going back to Kashgar by a route the same as that used last year for the first half, but for the 2nd half different as I strongly suspect the Survey of India of a serious mistake in their map which I hope to verify by going this new way back to Kashgar. I'll tell you about it next week.

Lyall only leaves Misgar on the 10th August now, so he won't be here before the 27th I think. This will suit us quite well, as we don't want to leave till about 5th Sept. Our passages are booked for 1st December via Trieste.

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[*Field Diary, pp. 84-89. As we have seen in other cases, Skrine would record 'uncensored' information in his Field Diary along with some 'literary' descriptive pieces, much of the latter worked into CCA 1925, pp. 154-157, supplemented there with a reference to check Ella Sykes for comparative figures on the cost of a yurt. Here he notes with approval, it seems, the fact that Doris's donning of Kyrgyz costume was the entertainment highlight of their final party in the Kaying, even though this is exactly the kind of detail he would choose not to include in his book, presumably because it might somehow impugn the dignity of H.M.'s Consul-General. To the best of my knowledge, he never published the photo of her in Kyrgyz costume which I reproduce here. The tale about Governor Yang in his earlier career trying a poplar tree is obviously a popular concoction; we might assume Skrine recognized as much.*]

8 August 1924. Fine but M[ountains?] heavily clouded all day. Gave party to Kirghiz women & men 3 1st class hats, took 3 colour photos 1 sec. at F8 without sun 1/2 sec. with sun. Three-legged wheelbarrow & ordinary races for the men, great success. 1st 2 were unfortunately both won by the same pair, Phoku & Tümür who came with us over the Aghalistan Pass, but running race (h[andi]cap) won by the nice old 'Aksakal' of Chopkana. Gave latter 8-miscal K[ash]g[a]r knife, 2 former a 3-miscal knife and a 2nd-hand whip each.

Names of women. A lady of K[ayin]g Aghzi has 3 girls called Roza Khan, Genesta Khan & Tilla Khan

297. Ballachulish is a Scottish village on Lake Leven. In the Field Diary, p. 84, he wrote somewhat differently about his 'Glen Scotland' in the Kaying:

In aft[ernoo]n went up 'Glen Scotland' with tea basket. 6 Scotch things:

(1) Firs.	(1) ? Douglas or spruce or deodar.
(2) Rowans	(2). Berries still green; one red one we saw.
(3) Currants	(3) " " "
(4) Mosses	
(5) Bluebells	(5) Very big, 2 or 3 times Scotch size. We found some lovely white ones. There is also a bigger campanula [?], orange inside otherwise similar.
(6) Thistles	

Wonderful show of flowers. In one place 30 magnificent heads of the purple flower were growing out of a mossy bank in a circle of 1 foot diam[eter]. We found a little colony of pure white ? mallows or anemones of the common kind usually purple.

respectively. In the plains the usual names are Nura, Hamza, Aishe etc. Khan.

At a ladies' party at K[ash]g[a]r the procedure is usually as follows: Chinese tea with sugar is served first. Then singing & dancing, then Indian or brick tea with milk & sugar. Then more singing & dancing. Then the ash [pilaf – *DW*]. It is believed that tea is given at the end but D. never stayed for this.

There are fewer Kirghiz ladies this year at Kaying than last, 6 instead of 9. One girl has married a man at Tig[arman]su, where we saw her. An old lady & her daughter have gone to live at Kök Choka, where we also saw them. A Ghorumda lady didn't come to the party because she had to go to a wedding at ?Terek Kichik (N.B.: The bridge over the K[ara]tash just below K[ayin]g Aghzi has been carried away & the Pitlik Jilga people (1 house) are cut off from the rest of the world, & you can't go by the short way to Terek Kichik). D.'s putting on her K[ir]g[hi]z head-dress [*Fig. 198*] was the great tamasha of the party, better even than the three-legged race.

At about ten o'clock I looked out of my tent and saw an unforgettable sight. Heavy clouds filled the sky & haze the valley, but in a gap right above 'M' sailed the moon, & its light shone full on the river roaring past me down its rocky bed. The night was still & brooding; the haze veiled everything in darkness except the gleaming river and the top-most ice pinnacles & cornices of M.; but standing out black even against the blackness rose the tall pines nearest me on one side, & on the other the needle points of the Cathedral Spires, far up into the starless sky. All else – the lower precipices of the Spires, the heights immediately above us on each side, the pine forests, the snouts of the great glaciers – all was wrapped in darkness & mystery; only the moon & the river were bright with the brightness of another world.

[*Fig. 199*] Two favourite Kirghiz foods are qurut, cheese in balls, & mŭch or mach, a kind of gruel or broth boiled in a large cauldron & made simply of flour, water and milk. Kattak or sour cream is also much eaten.



Fig. 198. Doris Skrine (left) and one of the Kaying Valley Kyrgyz women in festive dress (the second image a formal portrait possibly of the same woman). Photos taken at the farewell fête on 8 August, when the Skrines said goodbye to the little paradise and its people which they had first visited back in 1922. (From the British Library Collection: IOLR Photo 920/1 [88, 87]).

An average ak-oi is full of interest. A fire burns merrily in the middle & a cauldron of stew or much simmers upon it. Furthest from the door is the ashkhana, screened off from the rest of the hut by a 'chick' of more or less brightly-coloured design.[298] Behind this screen the goodwife keeps her milk & cream & kattak in vast wooden bowls; it is really a dairy, not a kitchen. Another arc of the circle is occupied by the

298. A 'chick' or 'chik' is a 'screen-blind made of finely-split bamboo, laced with twine, and often painted on the outer side' (*Hobson-Jobson*, p. 193). Probably what Skrine describes was woven from reeds, as still is the case today among the Kyrgyz in the mountains south of Kashgar.



Fig. 199. It is easy to document Skrine's summary observations about traditional Kyrgyz culture both from different areas in his 'Qungur Alps' and with comparative examples from the Pamir-Alai Mountains in today's Kygyzstan. Here on the left, the interior of a yurt in the upper Karatash, two images (bottom and middle) from the interior of a Kyrgyz summer stone hut just below At Bel Pass, and (upper), two images from the Pamir-Alai, one showing qurut balls spread on the ground to dry, the other the weaving of the reed mats used as partitions and to line walls in both yurts and permanent huts. Bedding has to be stacked somewhere, in the hut on a shelf above the felt-covered area that is both seating space for meals and receiving guests and a sleeping platform at night. Mark Twain is a nice touch but in the given instance probably not very relevant. (Photos: DW, 1996, 1995).

kids & lambs which lie or stand tethered closely to a rope pegged down close to the walls of the tent. At Aghalistan when I first went into the ak-oi & threw myself down on the kighiz put down for me, I leaned up against what I thought was a bolster under the top end of the kighiz, & it moved; it was a solitary lamb, very woolly & very surprised.

Round the sides of the ak-oi, from the convenient pegs provided by the upper ends of the lattice-work, hang all kinds of odds and ends: bashtiks or gaily-coloured patch work saddle-bags full of odds & ends, sieves, fur-rimmed hats, big balls of newly-spun wool, skins full of butter, implements of various kinds, spare chapans etc. A quarter of the circumference is usually occupied by a vast pile of rolled-up felts & bolsters & carpets; the wealth of the owners can be accurately gauged from the size & richness of this pile, just as that of the cottagers in a German forest may (according to Mark Twain) be judged by the size of the dungheap outside the doors.

Cost of an ak-oi:

40 roof-poles & connected woodwork 80 tgs.

felts 8–15 sars according to grandeur

Total 13–20 sars. Taghar strips & ropes home-made.

9 August 1924. Saturday. Last day at Kaying. Heavy clouds all day except for time in morning when sun shone. In afternoon it thickened up very bad & we risked a severe wetting when we took the tea basket out up to the foot of the terminal moraine to look for flower seeds & specimens. Had to take shelter under firs, but only drizzle happened. I went up on top of foot of moraine & got some big gentians and delphiniums. Pressed altogether 9 varieties this year at Kaying including the pink stocks at Yapchan. Disappointing. Late season.

10 August 1924. Sunday. March Kaying – Saman […]

11 August 1924. Saman – Yelgan […]

Turdi Akhun's father was awaiting me with a chah-jing of big melons & nuropi [?] grapes at the cave by the riverside above Ak Topa Dasht […]

13 August 1924. Tokuz Ak – K[ash]g[a]r

[*First passage here marked in margin*: superstition; *second marked*: family life*, presumably annotations he added later when organizing material thematically for his book*]

A[isha] K[han] has been feeling seedy lately and she informed D. rather shamefacedly – ashamed to admit belief but obviously believing – that her friends all tell her it is the wife of her late (divorced) husband who is 'making jarakash' on her, i.e., casting the evil eye on her.[299] The lady is one of those who set on A.K. last year and pulled her hair out when we went round & investigated with such excellent effect. The trouble is, says A.K., that her enemy's brother is a professional du'a-khwan which gives her an unfair advantage.

Another instance of 'washerlady's husband': Mrs. Doctor's servant, a fine strapping woman, has an under-sized husband who doesn't do a hand's turn. Asked if he wasn't ashamed, Mrs. Doctor said, 'Oh no, he is a very good husband, very yawash and quiet, very tame: sits quite quietly & doesn't interfere with his wife's comings & goings or make trouble in any way. His wife always says that he works and is earning good money, but everyone knows he lives on her.'

5 [?] August 1924. Chu told me today a remarkable story he heard here recently about a case once tried by Gov[erno]r Yang when he was a D[istrict] Mag[istrate] in Kansu, in which the accused was a poplar tree! A discharged soldier was returning to his home after a long absence with a sum of money in silver which he had saved. (On the way he was told that his wife loved him no longer.) In order to test her, he decided to conceal his wealth & appear in the disguise of a beggar & see how he was received. The question was where to secrete his money in the meantime; eventually he decided to put it in a bird's nest which he saw in the top branches of a very tall tree near his house, and did so. The result of the test was satisfactory; in spite of his apparent poverty & failure his wife received him with love and honour & did her best to comfort him. So he went off to the tree to get the money and give his wife a pleasant surprise. To his horror the nest was empty! Off he went to the Mag[istrate]'s court, where Yang sat receiving petitions in the courtyard of the Yamen. He told his whole story, but as there was no person he suspected of the theft, the court officials & police wanted to throw his case out. 'No,' said Mag[istrate] Yang. 'The complainant entrusted the money to a tree; therefore the tree must be charged with the crime.' 'But how are we to bring the tree into the dock, your worship?' asked the police. 'You must pretend to bring it,' said the Mag[istrate]. Accordingly the case was solemnly tried; the yayis & shirgaks [?] solemnly bringing in an imaginary tree & placing it in the dock to hear the evidence against it. When the compl[ainan]t had finished his statement, the Mag[istrate] turned to the 'tree' and asked it what it had to say? If it had not stolen the money entrusted to it, who had? Hardly had he finished speaking when a bird flying overhead dropped a small dead twig in to his tea-cup. At once Yang cried 'Kan-che!' Dead-twig! 'Find a man called Kān-che: he is the thief.' So the district was ransacked for a man called Kānche, & finally a shepherd lad of the name was produced and at once confessed that he and another boy, seeing birds flying round & round a nest & behaving oddly as if something strange were in it, had climbed up & found its silver taels & taken them. Mag[istrate] Yang was

299. On the 'evil eye' and its remedies, see Bellér-Hann 2008, pp. 382-385, where she cites Skrine's brief comment, *CCA* 1925, p. 187, based on his earlier entry here in the diary.

now able to do Chinese justice in the case; he ordered the boy or his relations to pay up the money in full and the complainant to receive 200 stripes (1) for giving trouble to the auths. (2) for distrusting his wife without cause & devising silly tests to catch her out!

26 August

Weighed & measured a typical Beshak Shirin from our new melon beds today. Weight 17 ½ lbs. Circumf[eren]ce 33".

[*Skrine then records, pp. 90-93, a number of folk sayings he took down from Qari on 25 August but which I have omitted here.*]

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[*This letter has a lot of interest. Skrine's comments to his mother about Doris may strike the reader as unkind, male superciliousness, but I think they may help explain some otherwise puzzling aspects of the fate of their relationship (see my introduction). The annual report to which he refers, of which I do not have a copy at hand, summarizes highlights of the work he did in Kashgar and his overall assessment of the situation in Xinjiang, material which is covered extensively in the other documents published here.*]

Kashgar, 18 August 1924

My last letters have been so full of Kaying Bashi and the mountains that I haven't properly dealt with yours of 18th & 26th June & 3rd & 8th July. First and foremost let me thank you ever so much and lovingly for your trouble in selling off the furs to friends so very lucratively. Your accounts appall me – £ 70 nearly for skins sold this year, as well as over £ 21 balance due to me. What a lot of money and what a lot of accounting and correspondence and talk and worry it must have involved you in!! The £ 68.2.6 you got this year for 26 martens and 2 foxes represents a profit of no less than 54 per cent on my outlay here (including exchange profit) [...]

One thing is that you as well as I (and D. too to a certain extent) have gained some useful experience in the fur trade which may come in handy one day when our Reforms policy (or lack of it) has lost India to the British Empire and our respective pensions & pay have all gone west. D. and I are going to start business as an Oriental curio, fur, carpet and general dealers; we will want somebody to mind the shop while we travel in Central Asia, Persia etc. collecting, and we have decided to invite you to join the firm for the purpose. Don't forget.

So glad the sultanas arrived. As usual you didn't know where they were from or what was the point of them. That's the worst of sending things from this country; you can't enclose letter with parcels and if you write by post about them at the same time the addressee gets the goods months after the letter and has long since forgotten what was in the letter! Those sultanas are a special product of Khotan; they were green if you noticed, and I would like to know if you have ever seen ones quite like them in England? I never did. Their flavour too struck me as different from sultanas you get at home. I intended them to be used as dessert; they make nice little dishes & if eaten as dessert the colour and flavour are noticed.

About accommodation when we arrive home [...] The fact is that D. is very 'difficile' about anything to do with our time at home. She hates the idea of returning to England and everything connected with leave plans is distasteful to her. As I've hinted to you before, her home life was not happy & she dreads a return to it. She regards 1st her mother & then (to a less degree) you and nearly all her other relations and in-laws as hostile grown-ups bent on interfering with her liberty and circumscribing her movements & general independence and 'grown-up-ness'. You see she is still a child in many ways and simply can't look at these things yet from a sensible, fearless, matter-of-fact way like you or me. Further, she dislikes (or thinks she dislikes) London and always says that nothing will induce her to live there. This is merely

because of childish unpleasant associations (she loathes Continental travel for the same reason – how different from me and my youthful associations regarding it!) and I hope to overcome it in time. But she will require very careful management in this as in most other matters if I am to prevent her not only being thoroughly unhappy herself during our leave, but spoiling mine too! One can't help thinking of oneself a little too – to me, England (including Scotland!) is my 'home' in very truth, I have never taken root in Asia nor do I regard India or any other eastern country as my home, as so many in the Indian services do. I always regard myself as 'living' in England (147 Victoria St. to be exact) and only 'going to work' in the East, like a suburban boarding the 9:11 daily to the City. D. on the other hand appears to have no feeling for 'home' at all – curious in one so passionately patriotic as she is [...]

[Lyall] is already in Chinese territory, in fact he must be well past Tashkurghan and we expect him on the 28th or 29th. I am making most careful and elaborate arrangements for his journey & I think he will have an easier time than we had, at any rate the last 3 marches which, though nearest to Kashgar, were the most uncomfortable we had the whole journey, thanks to the almost complete lack of bundobust on Fitzmaurice's part. Two chaprassis with supplies & camp furniture and a letter from me met Lyall at the frontier (the Mintaka Pass 15 marches from here) and a letter has come (by Chinese post from Tashkurghan) from one of the chaprassis about Lyall and how the[y] met him and what servants & kit he has got & so on, but not a line from Lyall himself! Do you know that I haven't yet had a single word from Lyall not even from Srinagar or Gilgit? I've had to find out everything myself by wiring to the Gov't of India, the Resident in Kashmir etc., apart from which you have been most useful telling me lots about his plans which I would otherwise have been completely ignorant about. I must say he seems a pretty casual sort of bird. D. is furious with him for not writing from home & offering (as he certainly should have done) to bring up anything from India we wanted. There are at least half a dozen things such as a bit of bacon for the road, some good canvas for mending our battered tent, furniture, camera films & so on which we were counting on his bringing up for us, but he never offered to, so we couldn't ask him. So different from Pigot [...]

I hope L. will realize that we are putting ourselves out for his sake in staying on here 8–10 days after he comes simply in order to be able to hand over everything at leisure & properly & put him wise to the 101 things peculiar to this place, things which F.M. did not tell us, & which we suffered from not knowing at first – how to deal with the Chinks, who's who among the British subjects, how much to trust to the clerks, tips about touring & so on. I would rather have got away 1st September, but now we can't leave before the 6th. As I think I told you, I have still a little exploring to do in the Chinese Pamirs and we shall not go straight to Tashkurghan; then we want to have a week's tour in Hunza and Nagar, so it will be right at the end of October that we shall cross the Burzil and Tragbal. If Gov't. want to see me at Delhi I shall insist on an extension of my 'joining time' to the end of November, i.e., my leave won't begin till 1st Dec. when we sail from Bombay. That will give me a month (1) to visit Delhi (2) to see the Survey people at Dehra Dun (3) possibly to go up to Simla to see the Army Headquarters people; General Staff Branch want to see me about routes & Chinese military dispositions in this province; (4) to go to Quetta to collect & repack our kit for home, & probably sell of some of it, (5) to visit Iris and Bunbury, probably at Kampti near Nagpur. We will probably go there first and drop Nazaroff, whom Iris & B. will be glad to put up I'm sure, thus solving the problem of his maintenance in India during our various visits. We would like if possible to have Nazaroff on the boat with us – the poor old dear would be so lonely all by himself on the long journey home. But I don't want to pay his hotel bills for a whole month in India if I can help it! so D. has asked Iris to put him up. By the way, I forgot to tell you

that N. is not coming down with us, but is escorting an enormously fat missionary lady down by the Leh route, Miss Elsa Anderson by name. She badly wanted company on the way down and hinted broadly at intervals all last winter and spring that she w[oul]d like to travel down with us. The thought appalled us – for though we like her personally very much her 25 stone [= 350 lbs.] or thereabouts would have been a fearful responsibility on the road & would have cramped our style terribly – and we were in despair until I had the brilliant idea of sending Nazaroff (who was to have come with us) with her as escort by the Leh road. Both were delighted – she for a male escort, he for a splendid cook to feed him on the way down (for like most Swedish ladies she's a born baker and cook and doesn't believe any more than we do in pigging it on the road). True, the Leh road is much longer and less pleasant than the Gilgit one; but I hinted (a) to Elsa that she might have to walk at least 2 marches in Hunza (b) to Nazaroff that the Gilgit road passed for several marches along the Russian frontier & the Bolsheviks might come over one night & nab him... Both of them now would not go down by the Gilgit road for any money.[300]

This evening (Thursday) I signed my Annual Report, a great relief – 49 foolscap pages of type. It's an extra long one because it covers 2 years not only one, & is the first that has been submitted by this Consulate. I think it is good – of its kind, at any rate I've put a lot of work and hard thinking into it. I wanted to sum up my experience and views on all the chief questions we come up against here, as well as to give the gist of political developments throughout Central Asia during the last few years as I know them. Not only Chinese Turkestan but Mongolia, Semirechia, Ferghana, Bokhara etc. have to be dealt with. I hope someone will read it!! Last year after enormous labour I sent in a really very interesting trade report – 25 pp. with appendices. Peking read it, but the Indian Govt. didn't. I know that, because long afterwards when it was printed up by the Indian Trade Commissioner in Calcutta as a supplement to the Indian Trade Journal, I got into trouble with the G. of I. for including some political remarks about Russia in a Trade Report! Obviously they hadn't seen the remarks until somebody drew their attention to the printed Report! 'Out of sight, out of mind' applies very much to the G. of I. I must make an honourable exception tho' in the case of my friend E.B. Howell, late Dep[ut]y Sec[retar]y Foreign. He is a man of understanding and imagination. I hope to serve under him one day.

I mustn't end before telling you briefly about our return journey from Kaying. We crossed the Chopkana Pass (11,250') first day under a lowering sky & camped at Saman. Next day starting at 8 & breakfasting on the way we crossed the Aksai Pass (9,100') which is terribly steep on the south side at the top – had to let each pony down for about 100 feet 2 men holding his tail & 2 his head. Vast clouds overhead & the mountains black as night – it was obviously working up for a downpour. However, we hoped to get to Tashmalik (not Akhtur this time – we used a different route for surveying purposes) before it broke. We didn't. At 4 o'clock, shortly after leaving the shelter of the Karatash river-cliffs & striking across a great bare plain towards a range of low barren hills we had to cross before debouching on to the plains, a most terrific rainstorm struck us, regular water spout. It got through our waterproofs in about 5 minutes, filled our boots and trickled down from the pommels of our saddles until we were soaked. Our loads which we were accompanying got very wet too. I had had a headache all day & D. wasn't very bright – we had had an early start and the thunderous weather & the terribly monotonous

300. They left Kashgar on 24 August. In devoting half of his book, *Moved On!*, to the journey across the passes to Leh and on to India, Nazaroff thanks Skrine for making initial arrangements and, once in India, for arranging to meet him. However, Nazaroff makes no mention of Miss Anderson in his account and casts the journey largely as his personal trip, on which he was responsible for all the local arrangements along the route. His account is of some interest for its descriptions of nature and the difficulties of the trek but also is infused with his often racist observations about the local population.

marching over stones in dry river-beds for miles & miles affected us – & this rain put the lid on. My headache & D.'s temper both got much worse about the 2nd hour of it, & we were both of us speechless for different reasons when at half past 7 we at last left the stony 'sai' & entered the oasis of Tashmalik. Bedraggled & miserable beyond words, we dragged ourselves another mile or two & at last reached the more than welcome shelter of a delightful Beg's [FD: Bakhti Beg – *DW*] house with fine big fireplaces and a quiet courtyard where we were well secluded from the tamashachis. My head was so bad that I went straight to bed without eating anything, just taking off my wet clothes & throwing them to the servants to dry; D. had some supper and dried her own things & some of mine too before the fire. My headache was undoubtedly due to too much surveying with the prismatic compass. It is trying work for the eyes especially in bad light, & I had a lot to do that day, even in the rain. Next morning after a good night's sleep we were both OK & our things being dry & the sun shining brightly we had a late & very pleasant breakfast under the trees of the Beg's zenana courtyard (the most hospitable Turkis always turn their womenfolk out of the anderun for us!!) & had a delightful march across the rich smiling plains to Tokuz Ak, the last stage before Kashgar, with an incredibly blue sky & lovely great fleecy fine-weather clouds overhead. It was a wonderful contrast to the day before's march, which was one of the worst I've ever experienced! Next day's 15-mile march into Kashgar was equally pleasant & we were in by mid-day to find a mountain of letters awaiting us. D. as usual made a bee line for the rabbits, but not before she had received a lap-ful of pussies from the adoring Aisha Khan, her maid who is responsible for the cats during our tours.

More next week.

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[*Skrine managed to pull together his final official diary (covering both June and July) and send it off to India on 26 August. Its printed copy was forwarded to London on 1 October, arriving there on the 20th. The excerpts here are from the printed copy sent to the India Office, BL IOLR L/P&S/10/976 P4210/1924, fols. 159-161. London subsequently was to receive from Col. Lyall much less fulsome diary reports, almost all of them amounting to no more than a single page in print (Skrine's had occasionally run 6-8 pages). The report is of some interest for filling in details about the state of affairs in Kashgar following the bloody coup against Ma Titai. The speculative comments about Ma Hsih-Ying are puzzling, as Governor Yang would not have sent on the mission to depose Ma Titai someone he distrusted and then given him the position as a reward. Skrine first briefly summarized his just-completed tour, noting in particular:*]

[...] A very rich copper mine, the existence of which the Kirghiz had concealed from the Chinese for over twenty years, was discovered 13,000 feet up among the precipices of the Tigarmansu valley; this mine is unfortunately too difficult of access to be of much value commercially [...]

2. King's Birthday Celebrations. – The garden party this year had to be postponed from 3rd to 7th June owing to the operations against the Titai's troops which had only just concluded on the former date. Sixteen Chinese officials including the new Tao Tai and Ma Hsih-ying twenty-one Swedish and Russian ladies and gentlemen, 127 Mussalman and 42 Hindu gentlemen were invited, but a much larger number was actually entertained. [*Fig. 200, next page*]

An official dinner-party was also held on May 31st at which nineteen members of the official and foreign community were present; it was broken up prematurely by the news that Ma Hsih-ying and his column were approaching Kashgar New City and that meeting between him and the Titai was expected at dawn.

Chinese officials.



Fig. 200. The consulate's celebration of the King's birthday, 7 June 1924, with a formal sit-down tea on the lower terrace for the Russians, Swedes and local Chinese officials (reproduced with permission from the Royal Geographical Society [London], no. 212607) and a separate carpeted space in the rose garden for the local Muslims, about to pray at mid-day (photo scanned from negative in the Stewart collection). A second image of the Muslims in the lower garden already seated at prayer is published in CCA *1925, facing p. 262.*

3. [...] The slayer of the Titai, Ma Hsih-ying, is now in command of all the troops in the Kashgar area, his late chief, Erh, having accepted the civil post of Taoyin. This Ma is the same as the Ma Amban of Uch Turfan whose success in the Semirechian opium trade was described in H.M.'s Consul General's report No. 95-31 of October 10th, 1923. Being a Yunnan Mussalman like the Titai himself, Ma is not trusted by the Governor, who brought much pressure to bear on him to accept the lucrative Magistracy of Kashgar Old City; but Ma resolutely refused to give up his military command. He evidently intends to step into the Titai's shoes, at any rate in respect of the latter's commercial exploitation of the country.

In the mean time, the troops are being gradually drafted away from Kashgar to frontier posts and to other towns in Southern Sinkiang; some have also been sent back to Ili and Urumchi. Those that remain are behaving (contrary to expectation) quietly, and there have been no disturbances. Thefts, drunkenness, gambling and all kinds of crime have however enormously increased in both the cities of Kashgar as a result of the presence of the troops. To such an extent has theft become prevalent that very few of the wealthier inhabitants have this year followed their usual custom of retiring to their country estates for the hot weather; the large majority have preferred not to leave their town houses unoccupied. This state of affairs has been aggravated by the continued ill-health of the Magistrate of the Old City, Chien, who has left all his work to subordinates since the beginning of the year.

4. *Yarkand.* – A similar or even worse state of affairs exists at Yarkand, where (there being no large number of new troops at that town) it must be put down entirely to the shortcomings of the Amban Liu [...] In April last he released nearly all the worst criminals he found in the jails, with the result that crimes against property have increased tenfold compared with last year [...]

[*Skrine goes on to indicate the Chinese in Yarkand have been unsuccessful in attempts to get the Afghan envoy to leave, but the latter's position has been compromised by his antagonizing the local mullahs and by the fact that his interpreter Abdul Ghani defected from the delegation, declaring he wanted to adopt Chinese citizenship.*[301] *Skrine posits that this may all be a ruse for him to travel around Xinjiang collecting intelligence. Afghan government efforts to promote trade in Yarkand have largely been a failure, in part because the goods sent were priced too high for the local market.*]

[...] 9. Earthquake. An earthquake shock sufficient to rock a camp bed and move pictures on the walls, etc., was felt at Kashgar on Friday 4th July at 00-10 hours and another of about the same intensity on 12th July at 20-25 hours (Indian mean time). What must have been the same earthquakes were also reported from Keriya, where they were much more severe, the timing being as follows: (1) 14-00 hours on Thursday July 3rd, (2) 00-30 hours on Saturday July 12th (approximate local time in both cases) Kashgar local time being 26 minutes slow on Indian mean time, it will be seen that the first earthquake took about 10 hours to travel from Keriya to Kashgar (363 miles as the crow flies) and the second 19 ½ hours.

The summer has been the hottest that Kashgar has known for several years, maximum shade temperatures of over 100 being recorded on 6 days in July and 105 being reached on one occasion. Punkahs being unknown and the European houses built to withstand cold rather than heat, considerable discomfort has been felt. The same cause has resulted in heavy floods on all the rivers owing to exceptionally rapid melting of the snows, and practically every bridge in Kashgaria has been washed away. For cereals and fruit crops however the season is a bumper one and prices are unusually low.

[*J. P. Gibson, the annotator in London, noted mordantly next to the beginning of this last paragraph:* 'Perhaps this is where our summer went to!']

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[*Although the first section of this intelligence report (from BL IOLR EurF 154/39) is signed by Skrine's successor Lyall, clearly the agent was one sent out by Skrine. Attached is a second report initialed by Skrine, dated 28 August (a copy also in L/P&S/10/837). Taken together, these are the final significant intelligence reports he submitted, interesting to juxtapose with his letter quoted later critiquing the assertions of General Pigot about the Russian threat. The London commentator D. T. Monteath on 23 October 1924 was disappointed that the second report dealt with 'past events', not 'current affairs'.*]

The following is the gist of information received from a trustworthy agent, who travelled from Kashgar via the Sungek route, Uzgend and Andijan to Tashkend which he reached toward the end of July. He was in Tashkend for a fortnight and returned by the same route.

1. Military.

The total number of troops in all Transcaspia is estimated at 35–40,000. These are entirely Russians but include a minority of Mussalman Tartars from Samara, Orenburg, Kazan etc. It is almost impossible to obtain accurate information regarding identity of units, as neither officers nor men bear any regimental or other distinguishing badges on their uniforms.

The troops are being perpetually moved about, to prevent deterioration of morale from too much contact with the civilian population. There is much discontent among the ranks owing to the disparity between the pay of officers and that of the men: the former receive 50–80 gold roubles a month whereas the latter are paid only 75 gold Kopeks in addition to rations consisting entirely of black bread.

2. Relief of the Pamir Garrisons.

301. When Paul Nazarov was on his way from Kashgar to India in 1924, he talked with Abdul Ghani in Kargalik, the conversation curiously devoid of the suspicions Skrine had about the man's possible Bolshevik connections. Apparently Ghani was not entirely forthcoming about his personal history and told Nazarov that he had been named the Afghan Consul General in Yarkand, though not recognized as such by the Chinese. See Nazaroff 1935, pp. 143-146.

On 15th August the agent saw a detachment of 150 regulars on the march between Andijan and Osh. He was informed that they were part of the Pamirs reliefs, 600 strong, which were on their way from Andijan to Murghabi and Kharukh via Khojabad, Osh, Alai, Kizil Art and the Great Karaküll. Large quantities of supplies had been laid down in depôts at the above places.

RAILWAYS.

(a) Andijan Extention.

Between Tashkend and Andijan the service consists of one passenger and one goods train each way per diem. The railway between Andijan and Osh is working as far as Karasu beyond which place motor charabancs capable of taking 30 passengers work in connection with the trains as far as Osh. A motor road is under construction between Osh and Gulcha on the Kashgar road.

(b) Chimkend–Vyerni.

A new section, Aulia-Ata to Pishpek, was opened officially with a flourish of trumpets on 8th August. High officials flew from Tashkend to Pishpek specially for the occasion. Construction is being pressed on to Vyerni.

3. Aviation.

The big aerodrome at Tashkend has 80 machines 40 of which are always kept ready for military use. The remainder are employed on air mail and passenger services to Vyerni (3 times a week), Khiva, and Samarkand. There are no fixed passenger fares; anyone who wants to travel by aeroplane is made to pay as much as can be extracted from him. A Mussalman merchant at Tashkend told the agent that he had recently flown in from Pishpek (about 320 miles by rail via Chimkend) in 6 hours.

At the School of Aviation many Mussalmans are among the pilot[s] trained. From one to three aeroplanes are to be seen in the air above Tashkend most mornings. (See Kashgar Memorandum No. 101 of 14 September 1922 paragraph 4 (V)).

4. Wireless.

At Tashkend the following were seen:

(1) A six-mast station close to the Railway Station.

(2) A similar station at the chief church of the town, the aerials being suspended between the top of the Church steeple and a single mast.

(3) A field wireless set which is occasionally put up and worked in public, doubtless for propaganda purposes. The agent saw one of these demonstrations. The set, which is worked by a gasolene engine, has two masts, and can be packed for transport on 2 two-horse waggons.

5. Civil Administration.

Baidulla Khojaeff (vide Kashgar report No. 9/3 of 18 January 1924, paragraph 8) is still in power, but he is retiring very shortly when another Mussalman will be elected President of the Communist Party etc.[302] As already reported majority of the civil officials are now local Mussalman Communists. Taxation is no less crushing than it was two years ago, but the stabilization of the currency by means of the (theoretically) gold-secured Chervontsi ten-rouble note has greatly improved matters. In the

302. The most detailed study of Faizulla Khodzhaev (Khoja-oghli) in English remains Roger D. Kangas, "Faizulla Khodzhaev: National Communism in Bukhara and Uzbekistan, 1896-1938" (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Indiana University, 1992; open-access online). Khodzhaev headed the Bukharan Soviet Peoples' Republic in 1920-1924 and its successor the Uzbek SSR. However, like other 'national communists', he was a victim of Stalin's purges and was executed in 1938.

outlying districts of Ferghana the Chervontsi is at a premium of two roubles.

6. The Soviet and Islam.

There is no doubt whatever that the Bolsheviks are out to undermine and finally destroy, or radically modify, Islam. The abolition of Waqfs already reported is a vital step in this direction: it results of course in the starving not only of the Mussalman priesthood but, more important of the mosque schools. As if they were not hard enough hit already by the cutting off of their income from waqfs, all Imams have to take out a licence costing 30 gold roubles every six months.

7. Local Politics.

There is much talk in Turkestan of 'Tashkend for the Kirghiz and Cossacks, let the Uzbegs (i.e. Sarts or Turkis) keep to the city of Tamerlane (i.e. Samarkand)'. The Sarts of Tashkend do not like this idea at all and refuse to be called Uzbegs and relegated to Samarkand. The Mussalman papers, 'Turkestan' of the Sarts and 'Ak Yoll' of the Kirghiz, devote much space to this subject and feeling runs high.

The Uighuri.

(See Kashgar reports Nos. 101 of 14 September 1922 paragraph 8 (b) and 9/3 of 18 January 1924, paragraphs 6 and 7).

The most striking facts brought to light by this agent's investigations concern the 'Uighur' movement and the progress it has made during the last two years.[303] Whereas in 1922 the numbers of 'Uighuri' were estimated at 2000, now upwards of 30,000 are said to have been enrolled, including the whole population of many villages in the Andijan and Marghilan districts which were colonized two generations ago by Kashgaris. Not only Chinese and Turki revolutionaries and others 'wanted' by the Sinkiang Government, but large numbers of respectable traders of Kashgari origin are enrolled. The chief organizer is Qasim Effendi of Andijan, an account of whom was given in report No. 9/3 of 18 January 1924, paragraph 8 (Who's Who) and his associate Karim Puchak. During the past two or three months the former has been conducting a campaign throughout Ferghana, holding meetings in the towns and collecting subscriptions for the foundation of new 'Uighur' schools in the country districts. There are already three such schools in each of the following towns: Andijan, Marghilan, Khokand. As explained in the reports quoted above, the object of the movement is to overthrow Chinese dominion in Sinkiang and establish an autonomous 'Republic of Uighuria, Dzungaria and Alteshahr'. Qasim Effendi and his associates boast that were it not for the Bolsheviks, who say that the time is not yet, the Uighuri would have over run Sinkiang long ago. There is reason to believe that the Bolsheviks officially recognize and approve of the movement: at any rate the 'Uighur Association' in the various towns make no secret of their activities, and their meetings are regularly held in public.

8. Afghan Consulate at Tashkend.

The following incident throws light on the relations existing between the Tashkend authorities and the Afghan Consul at that place: A wealthy Afghan trader told the agent that on arrival at Tashkend from Afghanistan recently he had been imprisoned and his goods valued at Kabuli Rs. 16,000 confiscated for no particular reason. He appealed to the Afghan Consul, without the slightest result. Finally a lawyer offered to recover the goods for him, and did so after a third of their value had been paid in 'fines' and commission.

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303. This paragraph is of considerable interest for its focus on the movement in Ferghana. Cf. the recent analysis of the Uyghur movement, what in practice it accomplished before its dissolution, who was involved, and what the concept may really have meant, in Brophy 2016, pp. 155-186.

Propaganda schools no longer exist.

Pan-Turanianism no signs found. The Uighuri movement is not connected with Turkey and is pro-Bolshevik. There are no Turks in Tashkend at all. No one seems to have taken the place of Enver and his successor Sami Pasha.

[*signed in ink:*] R. A. Lyall, Lt. Colonel

[*typed:*] His Britannic Majesty's Consul-General.

[*written in by a different hand below:* (Successor at Kashgar in 1924)

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TRANS-FRONTIER SITUATION.

FERGHANA.

1. Following on the skirmish between Haji Tungling's Chinese soldiers and the Bolshevik detachment at Irkeshtam in Feb., which resulted in five of the former being captured and sent to Tashkend (see diary for March para 2), another 'regrettable incident' took place at the beginning of the current month at Sungek on the K[ash]g[a]r–Uzgend road. This place is the frontier post on what is now the only trade route in use between Kashgar and Ferghana, and there has been a certain amount of traffic on it this season in spite of the strict prohibition of the Soviet auths. About two thousand Kashgari agricultural labourers also had gone by it to Ferghana in search of work; before the war, there used to be a regular seasonal migration of such labourers across the frontier, and it was resumed this year for the first time. About 5th August a party of Kashgari carriers and traders carrying British muslin and dyes (bought from the Hindus here) appears to have been stopped by two Cossack frontier guards at Sungek who attempted to confiscate the proscribed English goods. The traders and carriers overpowered the Cossacks, tied them up and proceeded. Next day a detachment of Cossacks on patrol released their comrades and gave chase to the traders. Coming up with the latter they fired on them, killing six. As a result of this affair several of the traders and carriers were sent under arrest to Andijan, and their goods confiscated. All the Kashgari labourers have been deported back to Ch. territory and traffic is once more at a standstill. It is not known what action the Chinese are taking in the matter, but it may be presumed that the neg[otiatio]ns. at Urumchi with the Soviet will not be facilitated by this new complication.

2. An agent sent specially to the Russian Pamirs in June to investigate the strength and armament of the garrisons reports as follows:

Murghabi (Pamirski Post): 105 Russians, 8 machine guns, 10 native followers.

Kizil Robat: 10 Russians, 3 m.g.s, 1 native interpreter.

Rangkul: 7 Russians (frontier guards)

Langar-i-Kiken (Wakhan): 35 Russians, 3 m.g.s

Ishkashim: 36 Russians, 3 m.g.s

Panja Roshan: 35 Russians 3 m.g.s

Kharukh: 328 Russians, 80 Tajiks, 10 m.g.s

3. Soviet Mission at Urumchi.

Ref[eren]ce report sent with my letter 45/11D of 19 June 1924, para 9.

At HMCG's suggestion a (White) Russian doctor[304] at this place who knew Hagelström before the Revolution wrote a friendly letter to that person asking him certain questions reg[ar]d[in]g the progress of the neg[otiatio]ns, the intentions of the Soviet in respect of the White refugees and their property in Kashgaria and the prospects of a Soviet representative coming to Kashgar. An interesting though guarded reply written early in July was received not long ago. Hagelström says (confirming the predictions made at the end of the para quoted above) that the negotiations between the Gov[erno]r of Sink[ian]g and the Soviet are quite separate from those at Pek[in]g between M. Karakhan and the Wai Chiao Pu; that nothing is settled yet and that there is no immediate prospect of a Soviet representative being received by the Chinese at Kashgar. He himself was going in a few weeks' time to Moscow (presumably to report) and would return to Urumchi afterwards. He reassures the Russian community here as to the safety of their persons and property, and says that whatever grounds there may have been at one time to apprehend 'requisitions' by the Soviet, there are none now.

Hagelström gives the name of the Head of the Mission as Osolin, not Ozornin as previously reported. He praises M. Osolin who he says is a very intelligent and well-educated man, a native of Moscow. (This may be taken cum grano, but there is no doubt that Osolin or Ozornin is a far superior type to Kazansk, the head of the Mission which was at Urumchi from the spring of 1922 until the following summer). The writer admits that the rest of the Russian community completely boycotts the Mission. He concludes by significantly advising his correspondent not to return to Soviet Russia.

4. SEMIRECHIA.

The Chimkend-Vyerni branch of the Transcaspian Railway has been completed as far as Merki between Aulia Ata and Pishpek, and trains are now running to the former place. It is expected that the service will be extended to Pishpek by next winter.

The Soviet authorities are trying to stimulate trade by a revival of the famous Karkara Fair in the Przhevalsk district. For this purpose the Chinese frontier was declared open from 1st June to 30th August and merchants were invited to Karkara with cattle, horses, sheep, hides, wool and other raw materials. had it not been for the trouble at Sungek described in para. 1 above large numbers of Kashgari traders would have attended the fair.

6. [*sic – no number 5*] The Semirechian auths are very nervous of nationalistic movements among the Kirgiz. Three brothers named Kamal, Mukush and Hisam-ud-Din, sons of Shabdan, who were the ringleaders of the Kirghiz revolt of 1916, were allowed to return by the Bolsheviks and given important militia commands (their revolt having been against the Tsarist régime and therefore pardonable).[305] Of late the Semirechian Soviet has been regretting this action, as the Kirghiz leaders have shown signs of putting themselves at the head of an anti-Russian movement among the Mussalman population. Consequently, the three men were not long ago sent to Bokhara, ostensibly for propaganda purposes among the Basmachis but really to cut them off from their own following.

7. In this connection I give below a free translation of extracts from an interesting letter received in Kashgar from an engineer called Krustalloff in the Irrigation Department at Tashkend. [*He had been sent by authorities to America and once on ship was able to write what he thought. It is an overview of Soviet effort to introduce Communism in Central Asia and now instead propagandizing Muslim Nationalism. A villain in the piece is 'a young Jew named Safaroff'. To a considerable degree it is a diatribe vs. the Muslims who seem to be taking over the administration.*]

304. This would have to be Ialovenko, who is mentioned in Skrine's earlier letters.

305. On the revolt in 1916, see the recent book by Alexander Morrison et al. eds., *The Central Asian Revolt of 1916* (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Pr.: 2019), which, however, does not mention the leaders as named here.

'This Nationalist movement in Turkestan is not Pan-Islamism, nor is it Pan-Turanianism; it is a purely local movement consisting on the one hand of opposition to European culture and on the other of the selfish struggle of the Muhammadan leaders for power.

Turkestan is full of Jews, none of whom care for anything but bribes and licentious self-indulgence […]'

8. Bokhara. The same writer gives a short account of the situation in the 'Republic of Bokhara', which he says is governed by a Committee of three, namely Faizulla Khojaeff, a Lett called Capenlus and a Jew called Barkum. The two latter are mere boys of 20–22 sent from Moscow. The country is full of Basmachis, especially in south-west Bokhara and in the Nurata Hills north-west of Samarkand, the headquarters of the Uzbeg tribe, and neither life nor property is safe off the railways.

Bokhara is not a 'Socialistic' but a 'National' republic, and the right of private ownership of property still exists there. In 1922 the Bolsheviks schemed to bring about a 'proletarian revolution' there and convert the country into a 'Republic of Peasants and Workmen', but the fighting with Enver Pasha prevented the intended coup d'état. There is much movement of Red troops along the railways, but never sufficient numbers for a real Soviet victory. The troops suffer heavily from malaria and dysentery.

Relations with Afghanistan are continually strained, but the Bolsheviks are more afraid of the Afghans than the Afghans are of them and elaborate precautions are taken against invasion. Trade with Afghanistan is purely local and quite insignificant. All propaganda schools in Tashkend are now closed, but Indian revolutionaries are often seen there.

WHO'S WHO.

Reutoff. This person, who is at the head of the Trade Mission waiting at Osh to come to Kgr. whenever the Trade Agreement between the Soviet and the Gov[erno]r of Sink[ian]g is concluded, was some years ago representative at Kgr. of the Tver Manufacturing Co. He speaks excellent Turki and is a capable man, but uneducated. Although he was doing very well here and had plenty of money, he decided in the spring of 1920 to go to Soviet Turkestan and try for a post in the administration, with a view ultimately to coming back to Kashgar as Bolshevik Consul General. Directly he crossed the border, however, he was arrested as a spy and thrown into prison where he remained for a year. On his release he sat for months on the frontier trying to get back to Kashgar, but Chu Taoyin refused him ingress and he eventually returned to Tashkend and took up a post in the official Trust which took over the business of the Tver Mfg. Co. He has for some time past been in communication with Umar Akhun Bai, Bahauddin and other big merchants of Kashgar and with Chinese officials and has spent considerable sums in his efforts to obtain a footing once more in Kgr. He is strongly Anglophobe and would be a most undesirable Russian Trade Commissioner here from our point of view.

***

Kashgar, 28 August 1924

Just a hurried line this week to say that Col. Lyall arrived yesterday (Wednesday 27th) & is safely installed in the 'Wireless Quarters'. I like him very much – as you say, a thorough sahib, & what's more he's got a real sense of humour – a quality above all others useful in this country. He's evidently a capable and experienced Political with a wide knowledge of the frontier and (what few in the Indian services have) service in other parts of the world behind him, East Africa, Palestine & the War in France. A most

interesting talker with a great fund of stories which he retails in a low mild sort of voice which makes the point all the funnier when it comes. He's genuinely interested in the country and the work [...] As you'd expect from his father's son, a voracious reader and a man of excellent taste in art and literature [...]

He is evidently much impressed with the beauty & amenities of the place & is already regretting he didn't bring his wife. He talks of going down to Kashmir to meet her & bring her up next summer. Luckily there was a day or two of the nearest approach to bad weather as we ever have here – clouds and only 3 or 4 hours of sunshine and a couple of rain-storms in the middle of the night – just before he arrived and it cleared up beautifully yesterday so that our lovely view from the terrace over the Tümen river valley & the gravel desert beyond & the Tien Shan was at its best, as it seldom is in the hot weather. It's lovely & cool now & I'm wearing tweeds again all day, temp. down to 51° last night. We're off in a week now, Friday 5th Sept. being fixed for our departure. From now till then we're chock-a-block with parties, calls etc. & I've also about 12 hrs. work a day to put in finishing certain reports & having everything ship-shape for Lyall.

We sent off 17 packages of baggage including antiquities (4 boxes) & rugs (2 bales of our own, 2 for other people) with Nazaroff via Yarkand last week & will meet him & them in Srinagar end of October [...]

***

Kashgar, 29 August 1924

My dear Father,

Many thanks for yours of 15th July [...]

I saw Etherton's lecture before the Central Asian Society in the *Journal* some time ago.[306] That was in January before he had actually received the 'coup de grace' to his hopes of returning here, so there might have been some excuse for his imagining himself to be still C[onsul] G[eneral] in Ch[inese] Turkestan. But in March, after final orders had been passed turning him out & appointing Lyall, he wrote an article in the *Asiatic Review* to which he signed himself in the same way! As a matter of fact of course he ceased to be C.G. 4 months after he left here, i.e. when his 4 months' privilege have (as opposed to furlough) ended.

I agree with you that it is better to leave him alone & not waste powder and shot on him, more particularly as [...] he may be relied upon to pass into obscurity in due course, in spite of his efforts to keep in the public eye. The world will not listen to so amazingly dull a dog indefinitely.

Please don't think I don't appreciate your help with Lyall. I'm quite sure that you & Mother were largely instrumental in preventing him doing what he might otherwise have done – throwing Gov't. over at the last moment and thus stopping my leave. He has told me in as many words that he wanted to cry off when he married, but didn't like to put Gov't. in a hole as he had accepted as far back as January. I'm very glad he didn't cry off. Mind you, it would have been better for me officially if I'd accepted Gov't's offer in 1923 of the post pukka. I'd have 'got something out of it' in the unpleasantly-sounding phrase you hear so often in Indian official circles if I had taken on this job for 3 or 4 years instead of only officiating for two. But though I'm tremendously attracted by this country, I do not believe in spending too many of the best years of one's life in a remote Arcadia 'the world forgetting, by the world

306. Etherton 1923, pp. 87-103.

forgot.'[307] Keeping in touch with one's friends & with the great world of London, keeping au courant with what is being done in art, letters, science, even politics is more important than scoring parochial successes in an Indian department; I've done my best for Government and worked like a nigger here where I needn't have worked at all. I've done them and the Empire a notable service by showing up Etherton and (even more difficult) thoroughly cleaning up the hideous mess he left in almost every department of the work, & left our prestige noticeably higher than I found it, and considering that in 12 years' service I've only had 5 months at home I do not see why I should hang on here indefinitely in the hope of a problematic 'good mark'. I count the days now till I see you and Mother and dear old London once more.

Your affectionate son,

Clarmont

***

Kashgar, Midnight, 4 September 1924

Our last night in Kashgar. It is most harrowing. D. is weeping bitterly. Nothing but the terrific rush of packing, parties & handing over to Lyall has saved her from crying her heart out every day this last week. It is no use my telling her we will certainly come back to Kashgar in the not very distant future – as I really intend to do if I possibly can – she is not an optimist like me, and moreover hasn't that balance and detachment which save one from the talons of one's own emotions.

This is Thursday. On Tuesday & Wednesday, 2 days, Lyall and I attended 11 tea-parties and three dinner-parties – not a bad record. The t[ea] p[arties] were at the houses of the Chief Qazis and Bais (rich men) & the dinners were with the Russian doctor (Yalovenko) at the Mission and (1–5 P.M.) at the Tao Tai's. Today D. has had 2 ladies' parties & has one more tomorrow before we start!

I must say everyone, Chinese Russians Swedes Turkis and British subjects, especially our own staff, seem to be genuinely sorry to see the last of us. We gave a big dinner (23 covers) on Monday to the official world & the foreign community & many nice things were said in five different languages. We have also had letters & even presents from almost everybody, & as for our departure tomorrow, I don't know how long we'll take to do the (luckily) very short march to Tokuz Ak – there will be I calculate six

307. Alexander Pope, 'Eloisa to Abelard' (published in 1717), where the stanza with the quoted line reads (http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poems/detail/44892#poem, last accessed 11 May 2016):

> How happy is the blameless vestal's lot!
> The world forgetting, by the world forgot.
> Eternal sunshine of the spotless mind!
> Each pray'r accepted, and each wish resign'd;
> Labour and rest, that equal periods keep;
> 'Obedient slumbers that can wake and weep;'
> Desires compos'd, affections ever ev'n,
> Tears that delight, and sighs that waft to Heav'n.
> Grace shines around her with serenest beams,
> And whisp'ring angels prompt her golden dreams.
> For her th' unfading rose of Eden blooms,
> And wings of seraphs shed divine perfumes,
> For her the Spouse prepares the bridal ring,
> For her white virgins hymeneals sing,
> To sounds of heav'nly harps she dies away,
> And melts in visions of eternal day.

different chah-jans! (1) Chinese officials, (2) Turkis, (3) British subjects, (4) Russians, (5) Chinese ladies (6) Turki ladies (the last 2 for D., the other 4 for both of us).

Lyall is a terrible person for anecdotes. He spends half the day telling us stories, which propensity I calculate has cost me about one full day's work since he came, & has added to the pressure very considerably. He is also depressingly lacking in enthusiasm. He takes a sort of mild interest in things and is undoubtedly most favourably impressed by Kashgar – there is no longer the slightest question of Mrs. Lyall not joining him next year. But though I say it as shouldn't, I'm afraid the Consulate won't be nearly such a live place as it has been during the last two years. Lyall is going to do a minimum of work, I can see that, and will spend most of his time with his books and in the garden. However, what work he <u>does</u> do will be sound, I think, and he's going to tour a <u>lot</u> – down to Khotan this autumn & a long tour next spring too – believes in touring half the year, as we have done, which is excellent.

It's very late & I must resume my packing.

***

[*In his next letter, written a few days later, Skrine ends by indicating his description of the departure day from Kashgar will have to wait until he is home. He did write up a brief account of it in* CCA *1925, pp. 279-80, devoting most of the space to quoting a composition by Doris which has been preserved in her own hand (BL, IOLR, MS EurF 154/54), possibly written at his request and reproduced here in full. Probably he was the one who crossed out one telling line, kept here in my Italics, presumably because he felt it unseemly that the British Consul-General's wife should express such a wish.*]

We left Kashgar on Sept. 5th. Usually when one leaves a place the 'goodbyes' are all got over at the same time; – on the doorstep, or at the railway station, but in Kashgar owing to the friendly custom of going out along the road some miles, and having a farewell tea party by the roadside, they were prolonged until in the evening. C. had a lot to do that morning and couldn't get away till after lunch, but as Mrs. J. – and some of the other Chinese ladies had asked me to stop on my way and lunch with them in a garden outside the city, at 12 o'clock, I had to leave before him. The first 'goodbyes' were to some purdah ladies of the consulate, and they were not altogether tearless! The next were silent ones to the cats, the rabbits, the house and the garden. Then just before I rode away I said goodbye to the clerks, the Aksakal and to the chaprasis, servants and gardeners, and left with a lump in my throat and my head in my boots.

I found J. 'Tai Tai' and Miss. L. and her mother already in the garden when I got there and lunch spread in a most comfortable garden house, roofed but open on all sides. We all made a pretense of eating but it was rather trying, specially so as J. Tai-Tai was shortly leaving Kashgar herself and was nearly as sad about it as I was. – 'You are going away to the South,' she said, 'and I am going away to the North, and God knows if either of us will ever see Kashgar again.' Out came all our handkerchiefs on the spot.

I took my leave after this and trotted off along the road. Near the edge of the Kizil Darya I found the Russian colony assembled, and a long table spread with cakes and other dainties, placed under the tents, with the inevitable samovar simmering in the background. Tea and a cigarette were very welcome, and then there were more goodbyes and I got on my pony again. A little farther on, some of the British subjects were busy erecting a platform and the usual red festoons in preparation for C.'s passing in the afternoon. They asked me to stop – said they would get tea ready, but as they had only just begun to unpack their things, so I said it was my own fault for leaving unexpectedly early, shook hands all round, and with Hafiz and his horse as pilots, urged my pony into the waters of the Kizil Darya. On the other shore were the Swedish missionaries with delicious coffee & cakes laid out in a cool & shady spot off

the road. As I was drinking a last cup of coffee, we saw the Dao Tai carriage with an escort of Chinese cavalry fording the river, and when I came to the road again, there were the 'Dao Tai's Tai-Tai' and the Yamen Beg & all the arrangements for a little 'tea-drinking,' set up in a wayside baker's shop. This lady had recently come to Kashgar, and we had only met twice before, so our Goodbyes were of the more ceremonious and usual kind. But this wasn't the last. About 2 miles further on Aisha Khan and some of the wives of the Consulate staff were assembled. They had left the consulate before I did in 'mapas' and had arranged their little feast in a field about 50 yards from the road, the mapas being drawn up to screen us from the gazes of any passers by. I choked down a little tea, but cut the party pretty short, for they were all weeping and my own face was stiff with the effort not to do so. They dropped their veils over their faces and came with me as far as the road, *and I would I'd had the mental support of a veil too!* [*my emphasis – DW*]

I said goodbye & rode off, but slowed down before reaching a corner and looked round. I shall never forget the picture they made, standing together under the trees, with the afternoon sun slanting through the branches on to the blue and red and purple of their dresses. Then I turned the corner, and they were hidden from sight.

***

[*Since Skrine was writing his mother in some haste in these next letters and glossing over some of the details, I have liberally spliced into it segments of his field diary, even though this then involves a few overlapping sentences, and part is summarized again in the second letter. Some of altitudes given in the Field Diary differ from those in the letters, where he seems to have been rounding off and perhaps just writing from memory. Much of the description of their travel along the route in the shadow of Chakragil is repeated in* CCA *1925, pp. 281-285. For a detailed analysis of what can be established about the inhabitants of the Oi Tagh, where Skrine was surprised that so many of them were, in his terminology, 'sarts' – that is mountain pastoralists of sedentary origin whose native language was not Kyrgyz but Turki – see Friederich 2001.*]



Fig. 201. The Chakragil Massif, photographed by Skrine from Kashgar (after: HJ *17 (1952), facing p. 79), and in 2009 by DW from the Mori Tim Stupa complex.*

Oi Tagh Jilga (4 marches from Kashgar), 11 September 1924

I had intended to write you a nice long letter from our first real halt on the march down, to make up for the hurried scrawl I sent you on the eve of our departure, but alas my three days in this beautiful valley have been almost entirely taken up with writing two official reports which I ought to have done before handing over to Lyall but simply couldn't find a moment for. It went against the grain, bringing two fat files out here and 'swoiting' away at official

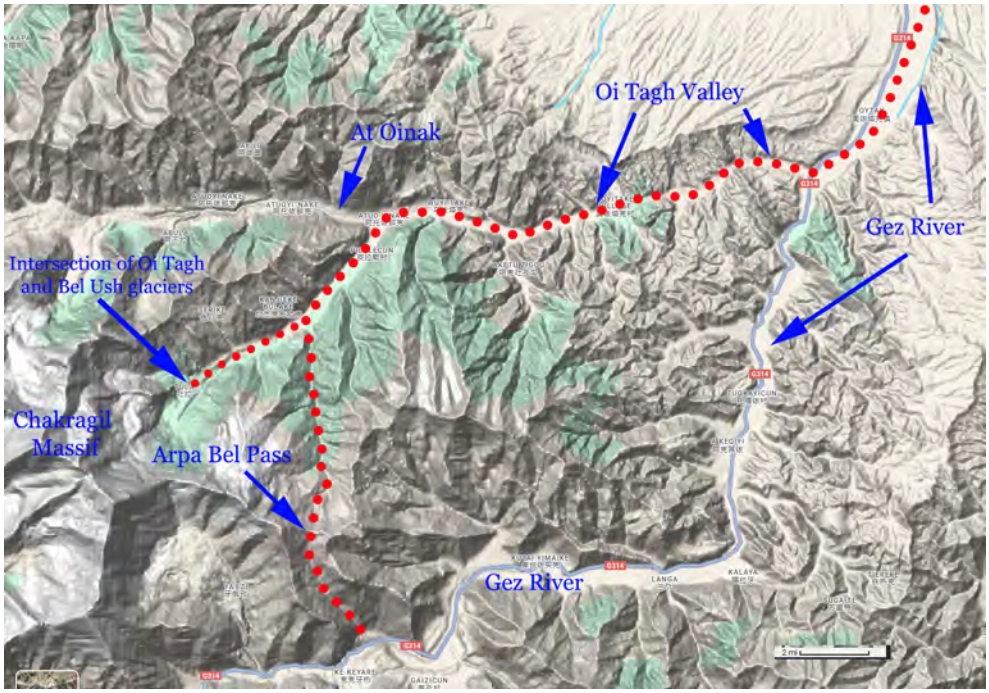


Fig. 202. The map of Skrine's travel via the Arpa Bel Pass in the shadow of Charkragil, second week of September 1924 (overlay of captions and route on Google Earth topo).

work when I am no longer C[onsul] G[eneral], but it had to be done, as both were things I couldn't leave to Lyall. Now the messenger is off shortly and I must confine myself to telling you briefly how we got here and where we are. Look at the 'Gez Dara' route between Kashgar and the Pamirs, i.e., Kashgar–Tashmalik–Bulunkul–Tagharma. On the S.E. of the Gez river is the great massif of Kungur hiding the Shiwakte and Kaying etc. which we surveyed the last 2 summers. [*Fig. 201, previous page*] On the N.W. of the Gez is another great mountain, Chakragil, 22,200 ft. and only a little less massive than Kungur. I was determined before leaving Kashgaria to have a look at the valleys coming down from the N. face of Chakragil & see if they contained alps and forests as fine as those of Kungur. [*Fig. 202*] Also, I wanted to ascertain whether there was a practicable route up the Gez Valley, avoiding the dangerous fords of the lower half but also avoiding the terrible 'Tokuz Dawan' or 'Nine Passes' route on the east side of the river.

[*FD, pp. 95-96:* Qasim Beg, a young man who succeeded his father the well-known Tash Beg 2 years ago, met us in Tashmalik and took us up the Jilga. There was very nearly a bad muddle our 2nd evening, when in spite of our having given out and officially informed the Amban that we wanted to stop at Karim Beg's house which is on the road, young Qasim Beg & his yuzbashis etc. tried to get us to stop at his house right off the road & 2 potai below Karim Beg's. Luckily we were suspicious & believed nothing we were told, luckily also the caravan ahead of us firmly went to Karim Beg's house, so we eventually fetched up there all right at 6.

No view – the same old deadly haze enveloped everything for the first 4 days of our march. Warm & mosquito-y at Tashmalik. Hot march next day up the r[ight] bank of the Gez for 6 m. then across & over stony wastes for another 5 to an awkward 'dawan'. [*Fig. 203*] At the Gez crossing one of the ponies, loaded as usual with our private kit (loads that don't matter never get wet) went completely under water. There was one bright spot in the 1/3-mile wide crossing: one of the carrier's men, a great big lazy bearded & chapaned Turki climbed as usual on top of the biggest load he could find in order to avoid getting his feet wet. The wretched pony soon began to stumble and sway in the rushing torrent, but our friend managed to keep his balance until the deepest & swiftest part, when the pony half came down & the man rolled off



Fig. 203. The lower Gez River valley just NE of where the Oi Tagh valley branches off of it. (Photo [left]: courtesy of Michael Richter 2005; photo [right]: DW 2009).

plump into the water, chapan & boots & all. He was entirely immersed for a second or two.

The crossing of the Oitagh River at the mouth of the valley produced another excitement. A miserable little white pony with kit & grain of the carriers on it – much too small an animal to take on a journey like this at all – lost its footing and was swept away load and all, to be fished out by the agitated & half-naked carrier twenty yards lower down.

[*Fig. 204*] Two miles up the Oitagh Jilga the river cuts through a sharp vertically-stratified red sandstone ridge, & it is necessary either to ford it 4 times or to manhandle the loads over about ¼ m. of cliff path. We first tried to ford, but the first was so difficult owing to the tremendous pace of the current that we gave up the other 3 and after having tea on the l[eft] bank returned. There were luckily a lot of men passing and they carried our loads over the bad bit for us. Five miles further up the road climbs what looked like the terminal moraine of an ancient glacier & you suddenly come upon cultivation & farms buried in willows & tall poplars on each side of a deep gorge rather like Hunza. Again they lied to us saying the Beg's house was 'just ahead' – as a matter of fact it is at the very furthest end of the cultiv[atio]n, 3 m. above the lowest farm. A mile short of it at 8 P.M., D. very dead beat, we struck and broke into an unoccupied farm house where we lay on nams [?] of hay in a barn until better quarters were produced for us by the Beg close by. Caravan arrived at 9. There we halted next day. Elev[atio]n 5,650' (?6,650). The village is called Agh Aghzi, after a jilga which goes up towards Sargalang near by – 30 houses, people mostly at the yailaqs but some of them down for the barley harvest. Barley is the staple crop here, but maize also grows. Latter crop was spoilt this year by terrific rains in August. Macartney came up the Oi Tagh Jilga 6 or 7 years ago as far as Pilal, the other village 8 m. above Agh Aghzi. Etherton came up to Agh Aghzi 3 years ago, didn't like the look of it and crossed by an easy pass to Bostan Arche & thence to B. Terek.]



Fig. 204. In the lower Oi Tagh, passing through the red sandstone cliffs and beyond to one of the larger settlements (photos courtesy of Michael Richter 2005).



Fig. 205. Skrine's photo much higher on the route, looking to the snout of one of the descending glaciers (from the British Library Collection: IOLR Photo 920/1, scan from unn. neg.)

To cut a long story short, after 1 short and 2 longish marches we reached the picturesque village of Agh Aghzi, 7 miles up the Oi Tagh Jilga, an affluent of the Gez which joins the latter from the west 15 miles above Tashmalik. Here we halted a day – I ought to describe to you our accidenté 3rd day's march & our arrival at Agh Aghzi, but it must wait till I see you – to recuperate, the people, who though friendly were far from pleased to see us, fearing zulm[308] of all kinds (they are 'Sarts' by the way, not Kirghiz), did their level best to stop us trying to get over the Arpa Bel, telling us it was very difficult and dangerous, only crossable by yaks etc etc. However, I was determined to get over it – anything rather than go back and round by the Tokuz Dawan – & asked the young Beg who accompanied us to collect 50 yaks to take us and our kit over, our ponies following empty.

[*FD, p. 97-98:* **9 September 1924**, we marched up the Oi Tagh Jilga. Had to cross and recross the river twice to avoid paris. The first crossing they dropped my black office-box right into the deepest part. Amir Tai fished it out full of water. Spent the next hour on the stones drying the papers, maps, stationery, etc. inside – most annoying.

At m. 7 (7,150 ft.) the jilga divides, the left branch heading up to the highest peaks of Chakragil & the Arpa Bel Pass; that to the right (called At Oinak and inhabited by Kirghiz not Sarts). Curious that the 2 main branches of the Oi Tagh J[ilga] sh[oul]d be populated by different races [...]

Pilal village with its huge chinar-tree – passed 1 m. up the glen. Then comes U[ch] Chām Jilga to the left (2 m.) & at 5 m. U[ch] Arpa J[ilga] leading up to the pass. They had prepared a house & ak-oi for us at Arpa Aghzi but as we & the loads were there by 3 & we wanted to camp somewhere where we could see the snows, [*Figs. 205; 206, next pages*] I pushed a mile or two on towards the forests & from a rocky juniper-clad ridge saw a delectable green yailaq within easy reach. Forests stretched up to the very top of the limestone crags above & below was a vivid green meadow set among thickets of fir with here and there a solitary sentinel fir of enormous height. Pushing on we arrived at half past three at an ideal camping-place – a grassy glade among thickets of young fir and barberry bushes, perched on the cliff above the glacier stream & protected from the noonday sun by high crags forest-crowned & pinnacles of limestone rock. [*Fig. 207*] Three ak-ois stood on a knoll just beyond & a crystal-clear stream bubbled out of a patch of moorland at the foot of the crags close by.]

[*Fig. 208*] Next day we came up here, a lovely 'Alp' among fir-forests right under the 14,000-ft.-high ice-clad northern face of Chakragil whose two peaks pierce the sky above us. Seeing the game was up, the good beavers of the Oi Tagh admitted that yaks were not necessary for the Arpa Bel pass – that, though steep and high it was not dangerous and could be crossed by loaded ponies & donkeys!! Our trusty orderly Hafiz wormed the explanation of their lying out of them – they are desperately afraid lest the Chinese discover that there is a much easier summer route up the Gez Valley to Tashkurghan than the Tokuz Dawan one, which is so long and labourious that it is scarcely even used by caravans which usually go via Yangi Hissar–Chihil Gumbaz–Chichiklik (the route we came up by in 1922). They have managed so far to keep the Arpa Bel secret, & no European or Chinese [*text continues p. 558*]

308. "Ẓulm is the Arabic word used interchangeably for cruelty or unjust acts of exploitation, oppression, and wrongdoing, whereby a person either deprives others of their rights or does not fulfill his obligations towards them. It is used in Urdu and Hindi in the same sense" (Wikipedia).

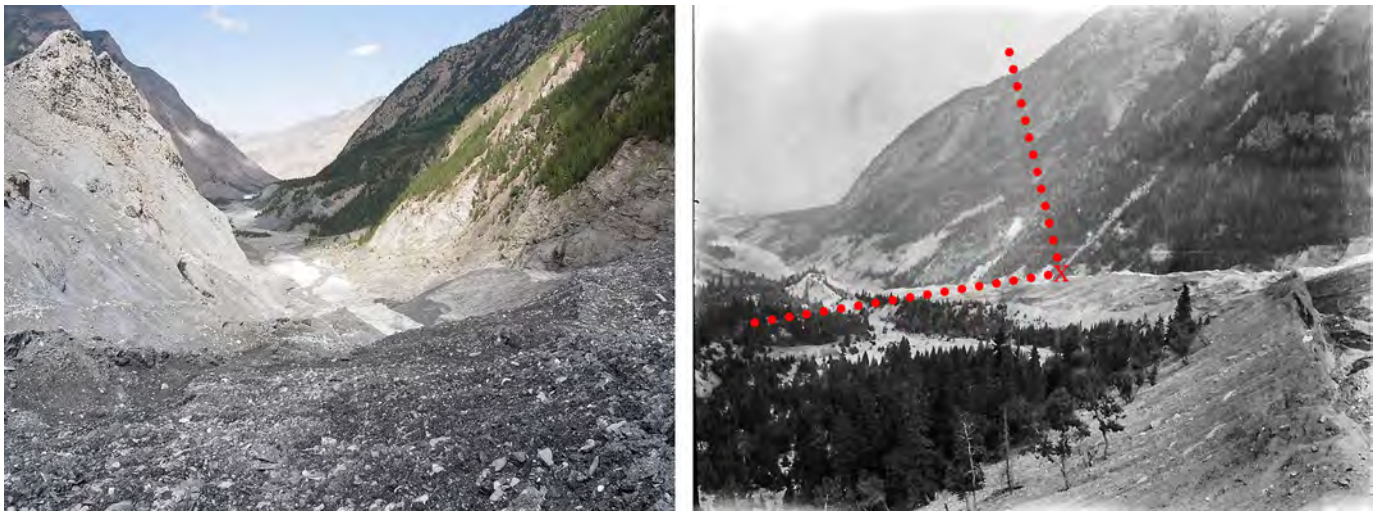


Fig. 206. Near the tip of the glacier looking down valley, Skrine's photo on the right (from the British Library Collection: IOLR Photo 920/1, scan from unn. neg.) with overlay marking of the approximate location where Michael Richter took his photo in 2005 (on the left).





Fig. 207 (above). Likely 'Sart' herder summer camp, with partially assembled yurt in left photo, which had, presumably arrived with the camel shown in the right. The exact ID of this photo difficult (in theory it might have been taken elsewhere by Skrine among the mountain Kyrgyz). However, the landscape details seem to fit well with his other photos from the Oi Tagh. (Reproduced with permission from the Royal Geographical Society [London], nos. CPS/00025, 00030, scanned from nitrate negatives).

Fig. 208 (left). Summer camp of herders, the view taken just below the face of Chakragil showing how extensive the pasturage is decades after Skrine visited. Circled in red is the location of the two waterfalls which both Skrine and Michael Richter photographed (see Fig. 213). (Photo courtesy of Michael Richter 1996).



Fig. 209 (above). The Oi Tagh glacier near where the smaller Bel Ush glacier has pushed across it. The illustration juxtaposes Skrine's image (from the British Library Collection: IOLR Photo 920/1, scanned from an unn. neg.) with one taken from nearly the same vantage point in 2005, and provided courtesy of Michael Richter.

Fig. 210 (below). The intersection of the main Oi Tagh glacier where the smaller Bel Ush glacier has pushed across it. The top image, taken in 1998 (reproduced courtesy of Hermann Kreutzmann) shows part of the herder summer camp with the yurt and a platform on which qurut is drying. The bottom two images are (left) Skrine's (from the British Library Collection, IOLR, Photo 920/1, scanned from an unn. negative), and a photo provided courtesy of Michael Richter from 2005.



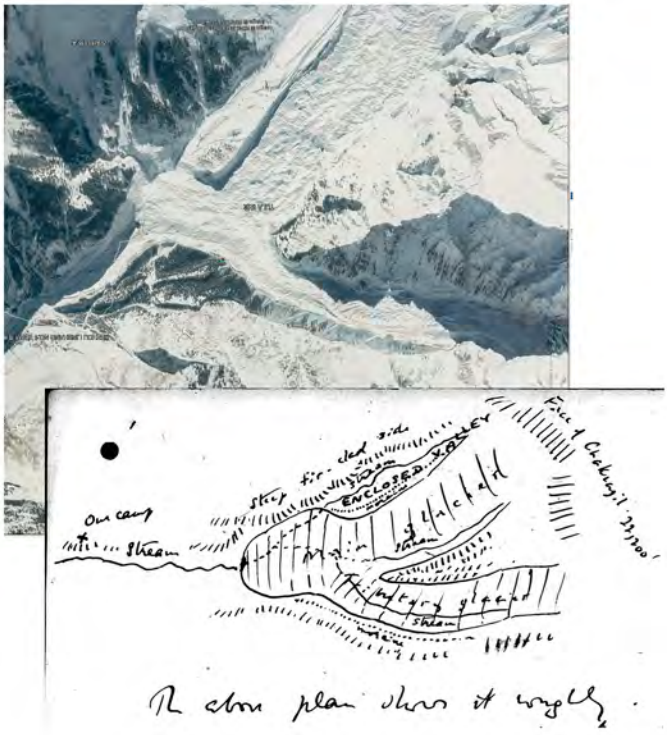


Fig. 211 (above). Skrine's sketch map in his letter describing the Oi Tagh traverse, illustrating the point of intersection of the two glaciers which he photographed. I have combined the drawing with a zoomed-in satellite image from Google Earth, rotated and inverted in order to have the same orientation as Skrine's drawing. (Scan of Skrine's sketch from CPS to HSS, 11 September 1924, the British Library Collection: IOLR MSS EurF 154/10).

Fig. 212 (below). Skrine's photo of the high waterfalls he described, dropping from the cliffs below the glaciated face of Chakragil (after: HJ 17 (1952), facing p. 74), juxtaposed with the 2005 photo provided courtesy of Michael Richter.



traveller has ever been over it. I only found out about it last time we went to Kaying when on a clear day from a height of 13,000 ft. I saw the pass in question and asked the Kirghiz about it. They told me its name and whereabouts and I made a note about it & determined to reconnoitre it one day.

We would have liked to spend a month in this lovely region – I must confess it is even more beautiful and awe-inspiring than Kaying, the forests being much finer and the size of the snow mountains ringing in the valley twice that of the Shiwakte. It is very unlucky that I have so far been unable to get any photos, as the deadly dust-haze of Kashgaria, the great enemy of the landscape photographer in this country, has completely frustrated me. However, the mighty snows of Chakragil and the glaciers which beat anything I ever saw before, have been visible most of our 2 days here though not photographable – and we have explored part at any rate of the wonderful forest-filled glens and alpine pastures among firs perched on precipice-tops above the glaciers, though it would take weeks to see everything.

[*FD, p. 99:* **11 September 1924**. Rode and walked up to Yoghan Aik, the highest yailaq on the right bank of the great staircase glacier, close under the staircase itself – Reached 10,500 ft., lunched in enclosed glen on right bank called Tut Nagel (summer camping-place of Chikir Aghzi Sarts, 8 houses). Completely blocked by enormous snout of glacier, pushed across by western tributary Bel Üsh glacier. [*Figs. 209, 210*] River disappears in deep depression under ice & reappears at great cave at foot of big glacier. Remarkable lateral moraines on l[eft] bank of big glacier, 3 very well marked parallel moraines, innermost & sharpest has double edge with trough 2-4 ft. deep between. Remarkable that firs grow in some numbers on outer slope of moraine.]

Today we had a lovely lunch picnic in the most secluded 'happy valley' of fir forest & green pastures you can possibly imagine. [*sketch map*] [*Fig. 211*]

The above plan shows it roughly. Ordinarily the valley between the moraine of the big glacier and the mountain-side on its right would run parallel with the glacier right down to its foot, but here a tributary glacier from the left, about half as big as the main one, pushes the latter over to the right and thus blocks the entrance to the 'enclosed valley' with a wall of black ice 200 ft. high. [*Fig. 212*] Another beautiful sight was a precipice about 2000 ft. high with three magnificent waterfalls on it – the bottommost one is the finest – it must be 500 ft. high & a straight drop – no dissolving into spray like the S[t]aubbach in the Lauterbrunnen valley.[309] You can't see the bottom, because it drops into an enclosed valley on the left bank of the big glacier apparently like the one we got into on the right bank (by crossing the big glacier). The 2nd waterfall a bit to the left of the 500-ft. one comes spouting out of a cave in the precipice, a lovely sight. The 3rd is away up at the top of the precipice, must be 300 or 400 ft.

[*FD, p. 99:* The Chikir Agzi Sarts (including a Qazi) said that they had 70 Ch[inese] cavalry horses billetted on them for a month this year, ate all their grass. Chiraks not bad. 8–10 years past Titai's chiraks & horses used to come, 20–25 horses usually. Tash Beg 'gave away' the Oi Tagh Jilga & its splendid pastures in order to curry favour with the Chinese, they say.

Yesterday (**10 September 1924**) they moved down from among the firs in the Bel Üsh Jilga to Chikir Aghzi, because the mice were eating all their bread!! Don't keep cats because cats drink their milk [...]

The Oittagh Jilga evidently has a lower rainfall than the Kaying [*he has multiple question marks in the margin of this sentence – DW*]. The fir forests are much larger, but the trees don't grow above 11,000 ft. – nor do they in K[ayin]g & Tig[arman]su J[ilga]s for that matter. But the S. facing hill-sides are more parched here than at K[ayin]g. Still, close up to the great north face of Ch[akra]gil it must rain pretty hard & often. Rowans are much more common – fine ones with enormous berries like cherries. Currants grow well too – we found some and ate them not far from camp. Firs grow to 120 ft. or more. I measured one what had

309. With a drop of nearly 300 m., the Staubbach waterfall near the Swiss village of Lauterbrunnen is famous as one of the tallest in the world.

fallen, 112 ft. At Bel Üsh besides fine firs and some splendid old junipers there were (1) a curious laurel-like tree: one I saw had quite a big trunk (2) a sort of wild poplar ?toghrak.

The Sarts of Oi Tagh are assessed at 500 charaks of 'āsh' in wheat or maize (not barley) which can be commuted at 12 tgs. per charak (ag[ain]st a market price of 4 tgs.). An epidemic of some sort swept away large nos. of them 3 years ago. 'There was weeping in every house,' my informant told me.

The Arpa Jilga is remakably well afforested. Its sides are terrifically steep – every available cranny is taken up with trees. In fact the only parts of the mountain-side which have no trees are the recent landslides and the perpendicular precipices.

Arpa Bel Camp. Sm[all] aneroid 10,800' [...]]

Must stop now – here's the man for the dak.

Our seven chah-jings or ceremonial tea drinkings on the road side out from Kashgar must wait for description till I see you.

***

Chuchul Jilga, Saturday 13th Sept. 1924

I wrote to you three days ago from Oi Tagh a letter which will reach you a week later than this one. The explanation is that the Oi Tagh letter had to be sent by hand back to Kashgar, where it will only catch next week's courier to Gilgit. Meanwhile however we have crossed the Arpa Bel Pass leading from the Oi Tagh to the Gez Valley and are now camping a few miles from the route followed by the couriers, so that we can catch this week's post. As a matter of fact, the courier who left Kashgar yesterday (Friday) morning will probably spend his 3rd night out at the same place that we are due to camp at tomorrow; however to make sure, I am sending a Kirghiz to stop him on the road tomorrow morning in case he passes the mouth of this jilga before we reach it.

You will have to wait till you get my last letter to hear about our trip up the Oi Tagh Jilga & our discovery of a hitherto unknown route which avoids both the high water in the lower Gez River (where there are no bridges as there are in the upper half of the gorge) and the terrible 'Nine Passes' route. When I wrote it we were starting next day to cross the one pass there is on this hitherto carefully-concealed route, the Arpa Bel Pass. Yesterday we left our wonderful camping place among the great fir forests and vast glaciers of the upper Oi Tagh Jilga, right under the 14,000-ft. precipices of Chakragil, and marched a few miles down the Oi Tagh stream & then turned sharp to the left (southwards) up the Arpa Jilga. This glen is just like Kashmir, quite different from Kaying or Tigarmansu or the upper Oi Tagh. Terrifically steep sides covered with fir forests growing on every available surface – everywhere except on the more recent land-slips, that is to say, or on the vertical cliffs – a torrent roaring over a boulder strewn bed at the bottom & hardly a square yard of level ground anywhere. We climbed up the glen for 4 miles, 2,300 ft. rise, & camped at 10,800 ft., above the forest line, on a spit of ground where two or three places had been levelled for the pitching of 'ak-ois.' The track is so bad, tho' not actually dangerous, up the Arpa Jilga that we were very glad we had halved our loads by hiring from the local Sarts (not Kirghiz in the Oi Tagh) 10 donkeys and 5 ponies to take the other half. Our Kiraya-kash (carrier) Amin Jan's 15 ponies with only half loads on waltzed up the glen without turning a hair. The morning we left Oi Tagh it was a little less hazy than it had been during the rest of our time & so I stayed behind 2 hours taking photos. D. waited for me at 12 o'clock half way up the Arpa Jilga, on a grassy patch under tall firs near the stream. She saw a pretty sight while she was waiting: a herd of great shaggy yaks came trooping down through the forest all by themselves to drink from the stream close

to where she was. She says she thought it was a land-slide when she first heard them coming down, they came with such a rush bringing masses of earth & stones with them. Then they stood about in the water and on the grassy sides of the ravine just like Highland cattle. They were still there when I came up & I got a snap, but not a very good one as they were disturbed by my cortège & all herded together in a lump in the streambed.

This morning at 9:15 we started up the really steep part of the pass, again with half loads, the local donkeys having gone off earlier as they were slower movers. We had a gruelling climb of 2,550 ft. straight up a ridge sloping at an angle of 40°, the last mile of it being really rather nasty – a 6-inch track across a breakneck slope of loose stones. About the middle of this slope one of the carrier's ponies suddenly got staggers and dropped off the path, sliding rapidly down the slope load and all. The carrier, my two orderlies & I all dashed after him and just managed to stop his glissade before it got too fast to stop, thus saving him & the load from a fall of a thousand feet or more. We had to take the load off – it was only two sacks of bread & some tent poles – & get the pony up to the track again empty, no easy matter on a shingle slope of 40°.

The top of the pass when we got there proved to be a knife-edge ridge 13,350 ft. high. If only it had been clear we would have had an unrivalled view not only of 22,000-ft Chakragil above us on the right but of Kungur and all the Shiwakte mountains, our own particular preserve, across the Gez valley to the south; but alas, the disgusting dust haze which has spoilt our whole trip so far was worse than ever today, & we saw nothing.

The south (Gez) side of the Arpa Bell Pass is worse than the north side, the track being really bad in two or three places. I am sorry to say we lost a pony, the same one which we just saved on the ascent. At one point in the descent the track climbs very steeply for 200 ft. or so out of a nullah, slanting up a shingly side. Two thirds of the way up the pony was again attacked by staggers & dropped off the track. He went spinning down followed by his pack, and fetched up in the dry stream-bed about 150 ft. below, stone dead. The sudden climb in the middle of a long descent must have caused the return of the staggers, which with these ponies is always due to over exertion on an ascent. Scores of ponies die this way every season on the fearful Leh–Yarkand route with its 4 different passes over 17,000 ft. high. This is the first time we have lost a pony on all our 3,700 miles of caravan travel in C. Asia, not a bad record. We did our best this time, halving the loads, but this particular pony must have been constitutionally unsound. All the other ponies, & the donkeys, got over without mishap. Poor Amin Jan is fearfully depressed, losing a pony is a serious thing for him. I'll have to make up part at any rate of its value to him, as I took him over a difficult pass not ordinarily used.

We had a drop of 4,100 ft. to negotiate from the pass to where we are now camped, the open stream bed of the [Chuchul] Jilga, 9,250 ft. elevation. The yailaqs with their green pastures & firs and clumps of juniper are left behind far above us & we are in a grim world of grey precipitous hill-sides & deep-cleft river valley, the eternal snows of Chakragil & Kungur invisible in the southern sky. [*FD, p. 101:* There is a small yailaq with room for tents on turf among junipers & small firs at 10,800 ft. Arr. with loads 3 P.M. & decided not to go on to Gez. Arpa Bel would be all right with yaks. Unfortunately, the Oi Tagh people being Sarts not Kirghiz don't use yaks for riding or loads, tho' they breed them in large nos. for the Kgr. market. Juma Beg, the Kirghiz beg of Chuchul brought 3 fine ones up the S. side of the pass for us. He hasn't enough for loads.] If only it were clear! I am convinced that now we have left the Oi Tagh & crossed the pass from which we could have had such a view, it will clear up & blue skies & crystal-clear air will mock us in the depths of the Gez gorges whence nothing can be seen. All this year the fates



Fig. 213. From Gez Karaul to Bulunkul. The four DW photos here (top right 1995; others all 2009), overlaid on Stein's map to which Skrine is referring, provide a sense of what he observed as they made their way out of the gorge onto the plateau. Even though the map shows a bridge at the Gez checkpoint essentially in the same location as today, Skrine had re-entered the Gez upriver of it and never seems to have realized that the Kurghan Jilga would have provided him with the views he so sought of the E face of Kongur and all of the Shiwakte. In any event, he could not dally to explore. The glacier he mentions coming down to within a mile of the river may be just out of sight in the upper right of the photo looking down river along the N end of the Kongur massif. As in Skrine's time, decades later the sand dunes along the shores of Bulunkul are striking. The lake is shown as a marsh on Stein's map (cropped here), but depending on the season would be a shallow body of water. The Stein map is: Survey of India No. 42 N.E.: Chinese Turkistan and Kansu – Kāshgar, Muztāgh-Atā, Serial No. 2 (1922).

have conspired to prevent me getting the plane-table 'rays' and the photographs I specially desired.

[*Fig. 213*] [*FD, pp. 101-02:* Arr[ived] Gez Dara 10:40, say 3 miles or 5 from top of pass. Elev[atio]n 7,600. Gez Karaul 12:20 (loads [arrived]) 7,750. Found Isar Akhun dakchi for K[ash]g[a]r with our letters etc. Also saw & photoed a Chinese courier.

Yailaqs of the Gez Dara above Chuchul.

(1) Kurghan Kull. r[ight] bank mouth at Gez K[arau]l. 14 houses K[ir]g[hi]z' junipers but no firs.

(2) Kull Yailaq, r[ight] bank (Stein's Chakar jailu) with big glacier coming within 1 miles of road; yailaq is up a side valley to right, 14 houses K[ir]g[hi]z, no junipers even, only grass.

(3) Yagh Aghzi (St[ein]: Yaghorum) l[eft] bank 2 houses K[ir]ghi]z Can be reached by yak or pedestrian only from Gez river & also from Arpa Bel. No trees.

Two big streams of green water, both spanned by bridges, flow from the Kull Yailaq glacier. There is a

difficult bit of path among big boulders on l[eft] bank further on.]

D. sends her love. She hopped over the pass, walking quite a large part of the way, in great form. In fact I had to implore her at times to get on her pony or yak as the case might be & conserve her energy.

***

[*The Field Diary, pp. 103-09, substantially fills in the narrative for the journey from the Gez gorge past Lakes Bulunkul and Karakul and on to Dabdar, where he wrote his next letter.*]

Stones, stones, stones the whole way from Gez Karaul to the head of the gorge. Horse must be walked all the time.

Curious atmospheric conditions these days. Another time of the year the day starts clear and hazes up 10–12 noon; now it starts hazy and clears temporarily in the afternoon, then hazes up again either in the evening or during the night.

Khapa Gumbaz consists of stones & mud domes adhering to big boulders on a little plateau above the rapids. One enormous boulder has three such 'rooms' nestling under it. Until 3 m[onths] ago there was a detachment of Ch[inese] soldiers here. Elev[atio]n 9,650', Kungur 25,146 is only 5 m. S. of here. Part of the highest ridge is visible from the camping place.

15 September 1924. Khapa Gumbaz ('Uch Khapa' locally) – Bulun-Kull. L[eft] 9:25, arr[ved] (caravan) Langtai 2 P.M., B[ulun]kull 4:30. Terrible wind up the gorge, v[ery] cold. Hazy again, dismal march. As we emerged at 1 P.M. on to the Bulunkul basin the wind got worse & blew a gale during lunch & afterwards as we were riding along the N. shore of the lake. Langtai is an old half-ruined fort, a square of battlemented mud walls: inside, a curious wooden house with 4 or 5 rooms made of planks placed end ways. A K[ir]g[hi]z karaulchi and his friendly wife in full K[ir]g[hi]z rig welcomed us. She knew Tig[armen]su & the Arpa Bel and about our 'tamasha'ing' in the mountains […]

We lunched in a sort of hay barn full of very dry hay quite comfortably & much less smelly than in the Kirghiz family's room with fire burning next door. They told us that when Pigot stayed there last Jan. he set fire to the place! burnt part of the floor. Must pull his leg about this when I see him – fearful zulm burning poor Kirghiz host's house down – complaints to Chinese – F[oreign] O[ffice] probably going to take the matter up – heavy compensation, etc. etc.

Never experienced such a gale as we had between Langtai & B[ulun]kul after lunch. As we skirted the lake (v[ery] shallow mostly sandy flats & channels of water) the wind simply blew the top off the water & we were often spattered with spray. Fortunately, it was behind us all day. Memo never go down the Gez route – only up it.

We were surprised in the gorge not far above Khapa Gumbaz to see the same rather ugly whitish wild rose-like small flowering shrub we saw in the river bed opposite our camp at Kaying Bashi.

Another phenomenon not seen for a long time was the sand drifts covering the hillsides on the South side of the Bulunkul lake, just like the Altyn Tagh at Polu. Shows what a windy place Langtai is – regular Sarristan.

At B[ulun]kull we were met by mounted chiraks. One was of a hawk-visaged alert dark type with a big astrakhan tumaq & we were puzzled as to who he could be; he turned out to be a Kirghiz from Tokmak – Semirechia which he left 5 years ago – prob[ably] a Russian spy. V[ery] friendly, brought along his 'garmonie' [accordion – *DW*], an out-of-tune squeaky old instrument & played a long & unmelodious tune on it very badly in our ak-oi – somewhat painful but we hated to hurt him & were most appreciative. B[ulun]kul a squalid little enclosure called a langza, or fort in Ch[inese], middle of dead flat grassy plain. A Chinese 'Loya' & ___ men; latter married to Kirghiz with ak-ois, 1 in & 1 outside the 'fort.' Been here 5 years. Elev[atio]n. 10,850.

[16] September 1924. Bulunkul to N. end of L. Karakull.

The 'Loya' turns out to be a son-in-law of the late Titai who somehow or other managed to stick on at his post. Only 3 or 4 chiraks, including the Tokmaklik Kirghiz of the 'garmonie' now with him; he had a lot of



Fig. 214. Mustagh Ata as seen not far from the Bulunkul karaul (DW photos, 1995). The first of the images approximates Skrine's view of Mustagh Ata looking over the 'sai' on the right side (designated when facing downstream) of the river. My second image captures the view toward Mustagh Ata from the left side of the river at Bulunkul, the picture offering a good sense of the lower end of the Kengxuwar.

sheep but the Kirghiz cleared off with them after the Titai's fall; subsequently by complaining to the Amban he, the Loya, got some & small proportion of the value of the sheep back from the Kirghiz.

It rained & snowed quite a bit during the early hours & was still snowing slightly at 7. We both got our heads & pillows dripped on from holes in the felts of the ak-oi. Going out in pyjamas and bedroom slippers to the bath tent through the slush at 7 was not pleasant, nor was trying to bathe in a far-too-small soaking wet single-fly tent [...]

Left 10 A.M. 2 loads off in 1/4 mile in spite of late start, say 10:15. Met party of 10–12 Hajis returned by the Chitral route – v[ery] picturesque & hairy some of them. Left K[ash]g[a]r early spring, had great trouble then on passes, everyth[in]g easy on return journey. No snow [...] Lunched under rock on r[ight] bank of river about m. 13. V[ery] fine view of Mustagh Ata & the Shiwakte [...][310] [*Fig. 214*]

Met by Nadir Beg & many Kirghiz headed by Rahim Qul Beg – cheery lot & completely bossed by Nadir – most friendly. Well-sheltered camp in hollow 1 m. down the stream from L. Karakull. 4 big ak-ois. They moved one of them for our servants up to place we selected – photoed the move. An amusing sight as usual. [*Fig. 215*]

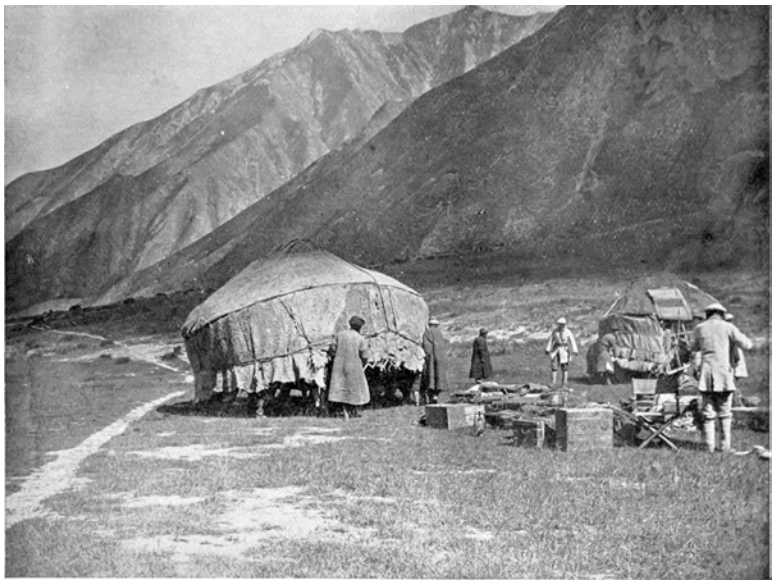


Fig. 215. Moving a yurt to accommodate Skrine's party at their campsite a mile below Lake Karakul (after: Nazaroff 1935, facing p. 64).

Went with D. in evening to the Kirghiz camp to see a sick man who turned out to have dropsy. Gave him castor oil and quinine & found out from book afterwards that no medicines at all should be given for dropsy!! Hope he doesn't die while we're here.

17 September 1924. Halt Karakull.[311] Snowed again during night, intensely cold. Mountains cleared gradually, as the day

310. As Stein's map shows, the normal path from Lake Karakul down to the intersection of what he labeled the 'Ekki-bel-su R.' (Ygebali, now Kengxuar) with the Gez at Bulunkul, started on the left (i.e., W) side of the Ygebali and soon crossed to the right side. The current highway runs entirely along the left side. Skrine mentions seeing also the Shiwakte, but by this he probably mean what Stein had mapped as the 'Shiwakte-jilga' and the mountain above it at the end of the long Kongur massif.

311. The lake here on Stein's map is termed 'Little Kara-Kul', which distinguishes it from the 'Great Kara-kul' located

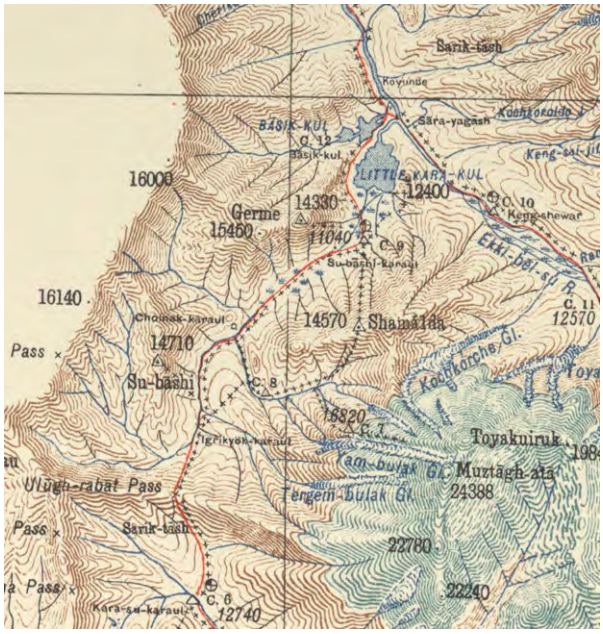


Fig. 216. The segment of Stein's map from just downriver of Lake Karakul to beyond the Ulugh Rabat Pass on the W of Mustagh Ata (Survey of India No. 42 N.E.: Chinese Turkistan and Kansu – Kāshgar, Muztāgh-Atā, Serial No. 2 (1922)).

before when Mustagh Ata was out, Kongur was in, & vice versa. Latter magnificently clear by 12:45.

Went after duck & geese – got 2 teal, 1 snipe & a shot at 40 yds. at standing geese. Being only loaded with 6's, no good. Had tea on the banks of Basik Kull behind which the sun set stormily.

Wonderful sight in the evening when the last pink rays of the sunset struck across from under heavy clouds & lit up the 'aisles' of Kungur, the snows of Shiwakte & all Mustagh Ata's dome. Upper part of Kungur was shrouded, only a section of the 'aisles' right along was vivid pink. Developed 12 IFGO plates 9–12 P.M.

18 September 1924. March Karakull – Subashi (Stein's 'Chainak Karaul,' which name is not known) [*Fig. 216*].

Brilliant morning after hard frost during night. Four of the 12 plates which had been put out to dry inside tent had ice flowers on them, & none were dry. The 4 frozen ones were those which had been furthest from the lantern turned low which stood on the table. [*Fig. 217*] Two of these quite spoiled by freezing, needless to say the 2 best, 1 a beautiful reflection picture of M[ustagh] Ata with the afternoon light on it, mirrored in one of the side lakes of Karakull. Went after geese & duck – 9 A.M.; caravan leaving 9:15. Geese all out in middle, n[o] g[ood]. Shooting at distant duck I stampeded the caravan which was passing 200 yds. away. 4 loads off ponies all over the place. While this was going on a whole flight of teal came low & easy over my head. I couldn't shoot for fear of increasing the stampede.

Fig. 217. Skrine photographed the reflection of the mountain from across one of the subsidiary lakes shown on Stein's map, from roughly the NE. My photo from 1996 emulates his, but from the NE side of the main Karakul lake – that is viewing the mountain more from the E.



in what is today northeastern Tajikistan, not far from the border with Xinjiang. The Karakul (~ 'Black Lake') below Mustagh Ata is variously spelled Karakull, Karakuli, Kara-köl, etc. depending on the language and its transcription.

Took set of rays & 4 plate[s] from hill close to edge of lake – alas reflections were no more. Ought to have taken pictures first & gone for the duck afterward.

On pool among pastures 1 m. beyond end of lake D. shot 2 teal on the water with one shot and I got one flying.

Arr. Subashi 1:20, about 4 ½ potais or 11 miles. V[ery] fine ak-oi put at our disposal. Gave letter for A[cting] P[olitical] A[gent] Chitral to Khokan Beg Mingbashi, a fine-looking old Kirghiz in a green turban, who used to be Mingbashi of Great Karakull in Tsarist times (where he entertained the Sykes' in 1915). Going on Haj via Chitral in 1 month. No hope of poli. The nullahs towards the Russian border all full of Kirghiz at this time of year. Kirghiz say best time of year is July–Aug. when Kirghiz are all on the plains. But I fancy very little chance here any time – too much shooting by the K[ir]g[hi]z all of whom have guns & shoot for food indiscriminately. A head from the Russian side shown to me here, measures 56" left horn (r[ight] horn broken) & 15 1/8" girth, looks same sort of head as those Pigot got near Moji in January.

19 September 1924. Halt Subashi.

Snow again during night but not v[ery] cold. All melted by 9:00. Started 9:45 with S[angi] K[han], 2 K[ir]g[hi]z & 3 yaks up 'Shamalda,' one of Stein's stations 14,570. [*Fig. 218*] Beautifully clear when we started 9:20 – whole K[un]g[u]r range & Shiwakte visible. Long ride & climb 6 m. 3000 ft., took 2 ¾ hrs. When we reached top whole thing under cloud – no tops visible at all. Complete washout. Waited 1 ½ hrs. for it to clear but it got worse, so I came down, arr. 3:45 v[ery] hungry & slight 'tutak.' Small aneroid gave 15,350' for Shamalda.

A[hmed] B[ax] brought some curious things he said he had found in the stream close to the encampment: brown balls of gelatine, varying in size from a pea to a walnut, full of water & translucent. Sort of eggs – but eggs of what?

B[oiling] P[oint] Thermom.: 88° C. / 190.4° F., air temp. 6° C. (= 42.8°) 6:45 P.M. (i.e. 6:15). Sm[all] Aneroid 12,400'.

Fig. 218. Part of the Kungur massif, as photographed from beyond Lake Karakul and Subax. The main summit to the right of center, which is the one Skrine had discovered, is almost concealed in a wisp of cloud. The massif extends considerably beyond the left edge of this photo, which was taken from a lower vantage point than that where Skrine was frustrated in not getting the view he wanted on what started out as a clear day. (Photo: DW 1995).





Fig. 219. Map segment showing the route from the Ulugh Rabat Pass W of Mustagh Ata, south through Tashkurgan and then turning W to the Mintaka Pass . (Survey of India No. 42 N.E.: Chinese Turkistan and Kansu – Kāshgar, Muztāgh-Atā, Serial No. 2 [1922]).

[*Fig. 219*] 20 September 1924. Subashi – Ghujak.

3 inches of snow during night, still snowing breakfast time. No sun & beastly cold. No wind tho'.

L[eft] 9:25. Top of Ulugh Rabat by aneroid 13,650.

Note. For Karakull, Shamalda etc. on N. side of Ulugh R. Pass my sm[all] aneroid shows 800-900 ft. higher than Stein's map; for Karasu on S. side it shows 100 ft. lower (12,650 ag[ain]st 12,740). Arr[ived] Ghujak camp (loads) 5:15.

The Kirghiz of these parts are by no means a dying race. They have heaps of children. One woman from Karakull told D. she had 8! Bad digestions, all of them, even small children. Due to bolting Kattak (sour cream) & also in case of poor people to maize bread.

When a man dies, it has a bad effect on the health of his surviving near relatives, e.g., a boy was shown to D. who had been 'ill ever since his father died' 2 years ago – no particular illness, just ailing. The woman here told me she hadn't been well since her husband died 3 years ago.

Ht. of Ghujak (aneroid) 11,600'.

A[hmed] B[ax] has got his tail well up now that his foot is soon to tread his native heath once more. Every evening during dinner we hear the most terrific discussions going on in the servants' ak-oi – always with A.B. as the chief speaker. The others twit him about being a 'bai-bacha' because of his quantities of luggage & smart clothes.

He 'gave his wife a paper' i.e. divorced her before leaving K[ash]g[a]r. For the child, a girl, he was obliged by Hafiz & the other relations of his wife (H.'s sister) to leave a provision of 50 taels, 25 paid now for maintenance for 2 years, the rest to be paid when the child is sent to India. This is always done, but usually the 'widow' manages to keep the child, the 'musafir' ex-husband being relied upon to forget & relinquish his claim after 2 years have elapsed. Sometimes the child is sent to India to the father – in the more well-to-do cases. E.g. Sardar Khan's little boy is to join his father next year.

24 September 1924.

At Nadīr Beg's house in Tughlan Shahr D. was greeted most enthusiastically by a woman who entertained her for 10 minutes at Mintaka Aghzi in '22, a vivacious hawk-visaged little woman whose 1st husband died some time ago & who was living with her father, the Beg of M. Aghzi when we passed. A few months ago she married a 2nd time into N[adir] B[eg]'s family. She rushed at D. & patted her all over and began rearranging her hair which had suffered from the ride across from T[ash]kurghan. Kissed her when leaving etc. Another of the women of the household was a chokān, i.e. married but no children yet (opposed to jawān which here means a woman with children, not as in K[ash]g[a]r). A chokān wears big mother of pearl buttons in her hair just over the ear & at intervals of 2 inches down each braid of hair (chāch) [*Fig. 220, next page*]. Various darus of course were required which D. had to promise to send back from next camp. A youth accompanied us on a pony all the way to Y. Gumbaz specially for the purpose of bringing back the darus, which consisted of castor-oil and anteczema, the former for an infant of 1 ½ the latter for an elderly widow. In spite of D.'s most careful & explicit instructions to the messenger the betting is that they rub the widow with the castor oil and administer the anteczema internally to the baby!



Fig. 220. Tajik women at a small hot spring resort W of the current Karakorum Hwy. (approximately opposite Tagharma marked on Stein's map, the coordinates according to Google Earth 37.89635 N; 75.1284 E). The tradition of braiding mother-of-pearl buttons into the hair which Skrine notes continues decades later (Photo by DW 1995).

The Maulais here are greatly perturbed by news from Kharukh of persecutions by the Bolos. The latter have apparently been up against the M[aulai]s in the same way as the Chinese in Sarikol for sending 'tribute' to the British (i.e., the tithes collected by the Agha Khan's 'missionaries'); they had all the M[aulai]s up & told them not to. The M[aulai]s asked for 3 days' grace to think it over. After the 3 days they told the Bolos that they could take their lives but not their faith etc. etc. Whereupon the Bolos shot the chief M[aulai] Pir, Syed Mahmud Shah Shighnani & imprisoned 70 of his followers. The Agha Khan is evidently exploiting the loyalty of his followers in these parts for the purpose of 'raising the wind'. I shouldn't be surprised if his nephew Samad Shah didn't put him on to it as a result of his visit in '21–'22. The visit of the so-called 'missionary' Sabzali Ramzamali last autumn was obviously with a view to tapping this source of income. The 'missionary' got the M[aulai] Pir, Imam Dal into a bad mess by raising the suspicions of the Chinese & causing all last winter's trouble. He appointed no less than 99 mukhtars or agents for the collection of tithes. Nadir B[eg] is one of them. Each family pays 50 or 60 taels & altogether they have collected (says N.B.) 400 yambus (20,000 tls.) which they would send to Karachi if only the Chinese would let 'em. All this gain to the A[gha] Khan is loss to the Pirs, S[ye]ds Imam Dal, Maula Bakhsh and Hassan Shah. They used to get the tithes before, & live on the fat of the land – now they're very much disgruntled.

And all the while at the back of one's mind is a picture of His Holiness flâning on Newmarket Heath or on the Lawn at Ascot in a grey topper and spats![312]

At Tughlan Shar just as D. was mounting her horse to leave N[adir] B[eg]'s house, the vivacious daughter of N[adir] Beg pressed on her a blue milk-jug – w[oul]d take no refusal. D. had to put it in her coat pocket & carry it all the way 25 m. to Y[urghal] Gumbaz!

25 September 1924. Y[urghal] Gumbaz – Dabdar.

A quite poor Tajik woman at Yurghal Gumbaz told D. that she had had 9 children of whom 7 had died. One of her daughters had been very beautiful. 'She died when she was a bride (chokān),' said the old lady. 'She was very lovely, her eyes were full of fire (ut). She was so beautiful that I used to sit making clothes for her all day long.'

A poli head brought me at Y[urghal] Gumbaz measured 54 ½ and 15 7/8. It was shot last autumn in the Wacha neighbourhood.

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312. The reference here would be to Sir Sultan Muhammed Shah, Aga Khan III (1877-1957) who was known for his breeding and successful racing of horses. The current Wikipedia entry on him has a 1936 photo capturing something of the image Skrine rather sarcastically describes (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aga_Khan_III, last accessed 28 May 2016). Earlier reports mentioned Samad Shah, an officer working for the British, as the Aga Khan's agent sent into Sarikol in connection with collection of tithes.

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Dabdar, 40 m. S. of Tashkurghan, Chinese Pamirs, 25 September 1924

A dâkchi (who already carries a letter for you) is just passing so I take the opportunity of slipping in another line to you and enclosing a *Pioneer* cutting for Father about Chitlagong which may interest him. We reached here safely from Tashkurghan in 2 shortish marches, this afternoon. While crossing the high Pamirs north of Tashkurghan, & at the latter place itself (where we spent 3 days) we had cold unsettled snowy weather, but now it has cleared up & is fine as it can be fine only on the Roof of the World – mountains a hundred miles away as clear as crystal, rivers and lakes sapphire blue, sky deepest azure. Now we are on our way up to the Great Divide between the Indian and the Chinese Empires, the Karakoram or rather its western extension towards the Hindu Kûsh. We cross the Mintaka Pass, 15,600' I think it is, on the 28th – inshallah – & then our troubles from high passes will be over for a long stretch – until we find ourselves up against the Burzil about 25th Oct. I don't expect any trouble on either the Burzil or the Tragbal, in fact the snow on them ought to be at a minimum. October is really the best month in the year for these high passes. As for Hunza, the 'paris' (cliff paths) in which were such an obstacle in June–July 1922, we shall have a very much easier time in that wild region this journey, for the water in the Hunza River will be very much down & we ought to be able to ride down the river bed, fording where necessary. Altogether travelling on this road is very much easier at this time of year than in June & July tho' a bit colder maybe.

Talking about cold, we certainly have had it pretty parky lately. Since we emerged at Bulunkul (10,300 ft.) from the Gez Gorges we have been living in tents or 'ak-ois' both which kinds of habitation are decidedly draughty. I generally sleep in an ak-oi, whenever at least the one produced for me is provided with reasonably good felts, but D. prefers her own tent to any ak-oi – more private! All Turkis, Kirghiz, Tajiks etc. are born 'tamasha-chis' & subject our every act to the closest and most open-mouthed scrutiny and the numerous peep-holes in the sides of the average ak-oi give them ample opportunities to scrutinize the toilet of the Farangi inside.

At Subashi where we spent two nights at an altitude of 12,300 ft., though brilliantly fine by day it snowed hard each night, & each morning D. found the snow drifted into the front of her tent through the interstices of the 'front door.' It might amuse you to hear how we warm ourselves on these occasions. The great drawback to the Pamirs as a health resort is the lack of fuel. There are only 2 kinds: a tiny shrub called *boortsa* by the Russians, and dried dung. The latter tho' possible for warming bath-water is out of the question of course for cooking or warming one's self, & the little shrub has to be used. This varies in different parts of Sarikol. In the Karakull-Subashi-Tagharma district it is very poor – little stumps of root merely with a twiggy growth about the size of a bath sponge at the end of it. Up this end it is much better, the plants being quite big & bushy some of them. The bad boortsa is the very epitome of what firewood should not be: it smokes furiously, it won't light even when you hold lighted newspaper under it, when (after ten minutes' furious blowing) you get it alight, it flares up like a bundle of hay and dies down in a few seconds. The only way to get any warmth out of a fire of that sort is singly to devote all your time to it, having a large pile of the stuff handy & putting one bit after another onto the fire before the last one has died down. This keeps one busy and warm and is one way at any rate of spending a cold evening in the Pamirs. The better burtsa is much less unsatisfactory: it burns too quickly and fiercely, but it is no trouble to light & leaves a certain amount of ash which retains the heat for a little time. We are very much better off now as regards warmth that we have left the bad boortsa area and entered a good one. Having got one's boortsa, the problem is how to warm a tent or an ak-oi

which has no chimney. For the latter, you simply make a fire in the middle of the circle & let the smoke go out (if it will) of a large circular hole at the top which can be & usually is covered with felts. If there is no wind the smoke is good and goes out at the top, but usually there is a strong draught through the ak-oi and the smoke fills the whole place and makes one's eyes water horribly. When you go to bed, you have one last good blaze & as soon as it has died down you have the top felts pulled over the central aperture in the roof, thus retaining the precious warmth until you're snugly in bed. For a tent, in which you can't have a fire burning, the only thing to do is to use what we call a 'fire-bucket,' i.e., we fill one of our water-buckets with hot ashes from the kitchen or ak-oi fire & it keeps the tent warm for quite an hour (this varies of course with the firewood: some kinds make much better-lasting fire-buckets than others). Each morning at Chota Hazri I have a 'firebucket' made up for D. while I'm having my bath in the canvas collapsible tub in front of my ak-oi fire & it is taken to her tent for her at the same time as her bath. In the middle of the summer it isn't necessary to have a fire bucket with one's bath even in the highest camps, because the sun gets up early & as one <u>always</u> has one's tent pitched with the bath-room facing the east (this is a tip I give free of charge to any traveller in high altitudes) one's 'bath-room' is lovely and warm by 7:00 or even under favourable conditions at 6:30.

[*Fig. 221*] During the last week we have intercepted two mails on the road from Gilgit to Kashgar & I have ruthlessly broken the seals and taken our letters & papers out, resealing the bag afterwards (this by arrangement with Lyall of course). I have thus had three very welcome letters from you dated 4 August, 13 August and 20 August [...]

P.S. I forgot to say that D. is baking some scones over a boortsa fire in the same 14 ft. by 10 room in which I write!!



Fig. 221. Looking S on the Sarikol Plateau between Tashkurgan and Dafdar/Dabdar (photo: DW 1995).

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[*The last leg of the journey from Dabdar in Sarikol until the Skrine party arrived in Hunza is but cryptically described in the Field Diary, pp. 110-11, though with additional detail in the subsequent letter sent from Gulmit.*]

26 September 1924. Dabdar – Payik.

[*Fig. 222, next page*] 25 Wakhi families came & settled in Dabdar 30 years ago. During the last 4–5 years about 25 more families have gradually immigrated & settled owing to the personality of Alif Beg, who has recently been app[oin]ted Beg in place of his useless brother, Bigun (Buku). The W[akhi]s are very prolific, unlike the Tajiks who have small families (or big ones who all die!). I warned Nadir that the Tajiks of Sarikol were in danger of being turned out by the racially more powerful Wakhis. He said, 'We're not afraid of the Wakhis. They're '<u>musafirs</u>' & can't get more land than we choose to let 'em have. The Ch[inese] may call them Ch[inese] S[ubjects] – who are the Chinese? <u>We're</u> not going to let the Wakhis be anything but <u>musafirs</u> (i.e. get a hold on the country).'

The ___ glen opposite where we lunched in '22 between Paik & Dabdar was once occupied by a colony



Fig. 222. Tajik or Wakhi families at Dafdar (Dabdar), as photographed by DW in 1995, the young couple left and center winnowing their grain harvest.

of maidens under their own Queen. They got water by raising it by machinery from the river over the crag which blocks the mouth of the glen. Their story is forgotten – a man who knew all about it died not long ago, & now nobody can tell the legend (acc[or]d[in]g to Nadir – not very accurate).

Ch[inese] N.C.O. & detachment have withdrawn from Paik. Result no decent firewood. Memo. when burning boortsa lay the 'battas' with their stalks outwards.

V[ery] draughty ak-oi. Ht. 12,450 by aneroid.

27 September 1924. Paik – Lopgaz.

L[eft] 8:20, breakfast & load. Nasty cold head wind all way up to [?] M. Aghzi. Took photo up at Sarigh J[on] to v[ery] fine p[ea]k. 2 houses, 3 ½ m. above P[ai]k.

No K[ir]g[hi]z @ M. Agzi – Only some Tajiks & an exiled Chitrali Pir buried at Y. Mehtar 6 yrs. ago. Arr. Lopgaz 4:30, loads 5 [...]

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Gulmit, 2nd Oct. '24

Here we are well down the road to India and (touching wood, unberufen etc. etc.) finished with all the most difficult – or rather let us say least civilized – portions of the road. One more long march, tomorrow, will see us into the Mir of Hunza's capital, Baltit, at which place and at two or three other beauty spots of the wonderful Hunza–Nagar region we look forward to spending some halcyon days. Who knows when we may next have a chance of seeing this strange, awe-inspiring, lovely, terrible land? And October is the very best time of the year. The mulberries are already beginning to turn & some of the fruit-trees have already turned – in another week each little Arcadian village on cliff-top or nestling in cavernous glen will be a feast of colour – and all under the sky of the Hills in October.

You know what that can be, no doubt. You must have been at Simla or Na'ni [?] or Darjeeling in that loveliest of seasons, just as I was at Simla in Oct 1922 [*sic, presumably 1920 –DW*].

Last time I wrote was at Dabdar, I think, 2 marches before crossing the Mintaka. [*Fig. 223, next page*] It was cold, but fine in the Pamirs, and if only we had had decent firewood it would have been enjoyable enough. As it was we had distinctly 'parky' camps both at Paik and at Lopgaz. The former place is 12,450 ft. up and the latter 14,200, right under the N. face of the Mintaka Pass. Paik is windy, and while D. sensibly had her remarkably cosy and wind-proof tent pitched, I took up my abode in the exceedingly daughty 'ak-oi' provided for us, and tried to keep myself warm with a 'boortsa' fire. The fuel was nearly as inferior as at Subashi (see my letter from that place) and I was smoked out without being warmed.



Fig. 223. The valley W of the Sarikol Plateau leading to the Mintaka Pass (the view here taken from the location on Stein's map marked Ujadbai) (Photo: DW 1995).

However, once in bed all was well, & next morning fortunately it was calm & wind-less at first. We rather over-estimated the distance from Paik to Lopgaz & made an unnecessarily early start, 8 A.M., breakfasting on the road off – what do you think? Sausages and mash! D. is splendid on these occasions – in fact she revels in a 'breakfast-on-the-road' march, as it gives her a chance of cooking. This time a tin of Morton's Oxford Sausages[313] & a can-ful of ready boiled potatoes fried together into a delicious dish, eaten under the lee of a projecting buttress of the Karakoram.

I had been looking forward with some anxiety to the Lopgaz camp for some time past, fearing (1) intense cold blizzards, etc. (2) a violent headache for myself and maybe unpleasant symptoms for D. owing to the great height. Fortunately (2) didn't come off, & (1) only partially. Against (1) I had tried to take precautions by solemnly adjuring the Beg who was looking after us to be sure and provide really wind-proof ak-ois and plenty of firewood, given which D and I hoped we would be able to keep off the cold until we were safely in bed, & next morning have not such an unpleasant uprising. Imagine our disgust therefore when, at about 4 in the afternoon when the sun was already dipping behind the snowy ridge across which we had to pass next day, we arrived at the absolutely blank and open Lopgaz camping-ground and found nothing but two of the miserablest & most poverty-stricken ak-ois we had ever seen, sides like sieves and smelling like badgers from the old and dirty tattered felts on the floor – & no firewood! The Beg was a long way behind with our loads, & there was nothing for it but to set to work & collect firewood for ourselves. There was nothing to be had in the bottom of the valley at any rate but the tiniest & scantiest growth of 'boortsa' you can imagine, little plants the size of face-sponges & damp at that. After an hour we had collected a small heap of this & then the Beg came up and got it in the neck from me. He was very contrite and sent a couple of wretched Tajiks far up the hillside where better boortsa was to be had, & before nightfall we had enough for our needs & those of our men. The ak-ois were impossible for us so we both had our tents pitched & let the servants have one of the ak-ois for the kitchen. They made themselves snug enough with a roaring fire. D. sensibly got straight into bed as soon as her tent was up, i.e. about 6 & we dined quite snugly by her bedside at 8 off our usual 3-course camp-dinner with coffee, which the excellent Murad Shah never fails to turn out, no

313. Obviously a well-known product, advertised, for example in the *Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser*, 24 April 1919, p. 4, by John Little & Co. ('Mortons Real Oxford Sausages') along with other presumably popular brands such as "Maconochie's Kippered Herrings' and 'Spratts Dog Biscuits' (http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/newspapers/Digitised/Article/singfreepressb19190424-1.2.16.1.aspx, last accessed 12 May 2016). A. H. Riise (est. 1838) advertised as 'Received by Recent Arrivals': 'Robinson's Patent Barley', 'Horlick's Malted Milk', and, inter alia, 'Morton's Oxford Sausages' (*The Virgin Islands Daily News*, 29 April, 1932, p. 2: https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=757&dat=19320429&id=Yi0wAAAAIBAJ&sjid=k0MDAAAAIBAJ&pg=4833,2290559&hl=en, last accessed 12 May 2016). The Skrines, incidentally, do mention having had Horlick's with them in Kashgaria.

matter how unfavourable the circumstances!

Though my tent isn't nearly as wind-proof as D's, in fact is rather a draughty one, I wasn't a bit cold during the night & was quite surprised when I woke up in the morning [*28 September – DW*] to find it apparently quite wind-less and balmy. When I unlaced my tent door and looked out I saw why – there was several inches deep of snow on the ground and it was still snowing hard! This was rather a blow, for whatever snow fell at Lopgaz, several times as much would have fallen on the top of the pass, besides which there was the possibility of having to cross in a snow-storm. However, luckily it stopped snowing & cleared up by 9 A.M. & we got off all right. The ascent on the N. side is very much easier than on the south, which is terribly rocky and steep, but the snow made it very slippery for the ponies and it took us till past mid-day to scramble up, in spite of the fact that I had lightened the loads by hiring as many yaks as I could collect through the Beg. D and I rode yaks over the pass, & splendidly they took us, too. At the very top, at a little heavily-built stone hut built by the 'Sirkar' for the Gilgit–Tashkurghan couriers to shelter from blizzards in, we met the Kashgar mail – two young Hunza lads with sacks slung over their ponies' backs, struggling among the rocks and snow just as we were. There were possibly letters and papers for us in the mail bag, but needless to say I didn't go through the long process of opening and re-sealing it, especially as I had no sealing wax or seal on me! In deep snow at 15,800 ft., with the possibility of more blizzards and an exceedingly rough 3000 ft. of descent before us, [...] we didn't worry about letters. We shall get them, if there were any in that bag, back from Kashgar before we leave Gilgit, I think. Probably however the Gilgit P[ost]m[aster] didn't enclose our mail in that bag which must have left Gilgit as late as 22nd Sept.

The afternoon was brilliantly fine and the sun was quite strong on the south face of the pass, so that the new snow had quite disappeared before we got to the bottom of the highest and worst slope of the pass. But it was all very sloppy, and we positively marvelled at the way the ponies got down without a single casualty. Two or three had to be reloaded on awkwardly narrow ledges, and during one of these operations some biggish stones dislodged by other ponies higher up came unpleasantly near; but that was all. After a long and tiring scramble down two miles of the lateral moraine of the Mintaka Glacier, we arrived at 2:30 at Gul Khwaja where we camped in 1922 before crossing the pass & had an excellent lunch of hard-boiled eggs, biscuits and cheese washed down by strong Bovril. How well we remembered camping at this bleak spot right under the white snout of the Mintaka Glacier in 1922! D. suffered from breathlessness during the night & I developed one of the appalling headaches (due as I afterwards discovered chiefly to the sun-glasses I used to wear) I suffered from in those days. During the night my bed collapsed & deposited me on the extremely knobby ground, headache and all. This time we didn't have to camp at Gul Khwaja as it was all down-hill and we pushed on after lunch to Murkushi, next stage. This march tho' short is very rough & we didn't get in till 7 P.M. when we pitched our tents in a pretty little glade of willows and alders. Here for the first time since the Oi Tagh Jilga more than a fortnight before we revelled in the luxury of unlimited firewood, for there are quite extensive coppices at Murkushi & wood lying about for the taking. No one who hasn't been starved of decent firewood as we had been in the Pamirs can properly appreciate what it means to sit in front of a roaring fire of logs instead of shivering in the smoke of a measly heap of smouldering boortsa at 12,000 ft. or more in late September.

[*FD, p. 111:* Sent back the 8 yaks we brought over (5 riding; 3 loads) paying 8 tgs. per yak.

Note that Runhil 3 m. below M[ur]kushi is a prettier & better sheltered camping place than M[ur]kushi & also a better half way house between Misgar & Gul Khwaja on way up.

Ponies got into quicksands not far below M[ur]kushi & several boxes got wet.]

Murkushi was our last desert camp. Next day [*29 September – DW*] after a simple tho' fearfully stony march we reached Misgar [L[eft] 10:15 arr. Misgar 5 [...] Elevn. 11,800] where we saw for the first time since July '22 a P[ublic] W[orks] D[epartment] building, albeit a tiny one, the Telegraph Station. The operator, a Kashmiri Pundit (the exceptionally nice and intelligent Mr. Jacob who was there in 1922 had alas been transferred) gave D. his tiny bed-room to sleep in and I pitched D.'s tent for myself just outside, and we were very snug. It was quite a curious sensation receiving and sending telegrams over a counter once more & hearing the tap-tap of Morse! One of the wires we got was from Bunbury saying that he expected to get home again from Quetta before his leave was up, i.e. that Iris would not join him in India in Oct. as we had expected her to do, but would wait at N[orth] B[erwick] & sail with him in January. D. was rather depressed to hear this as she would much have preferred to have Iris to herself at Quetta in November than only see her, under the maternal eye in December at N.B.!

Next morning I paid off Amin Jan, our Kashgari carrier, for his 16 ponies (I had by the way to pay him for the return journey empty as well as for carrying our stuff to Misgar). He wasn't a good carrier, chiefly because he had only 2 underlings with him and they weren't much use at loading or looking after the ponies on the way, & he let a good deal of our baggage, especially mine, get wet and otherwise damaged, but I had to give him some <u>bakhshish</u> & altogether the damage came to 237 taels (= Rs. 530/- about). All except 5 taels had already been paid him, either in advance at Kashgar or on the road, so I didn't have to shell out much at Misgar.

D. told me that what struck her most about Misgar as the first outpost of India, what brought it home to her most I mean, was buying a sheep at a price calculated on the weight of meat on the sheep, not as in Kashgaria at a price arrived at by bargaining!

[*Fig. 224*] Between Misgar and Baltit is really 6 marches, but we are doing it in 4, as against 5 on the way up in 1922. That will make 10 days between Tashkurghan & Baltit, good going. The reason for this haste is this: – The new P[olitical] A[gent] of Gilgit in succession to Lorimer is no other than my old friend & contemporary Major P.G. Loch, who was Asst. Secretary at the same time as I was U[nder] S[ecretary] at the Foreign Dept. He has been doing First Asst. to the Resident in Kashmir lately and as they apparently have had some difficulty in replacing Lorimer he is coming up to stop the gap. He is due at Gilgit on 11th Oct. That means that the Mirs of Hunza and Nagar must go in to Gilgit to meet him, & they are as a matter of fact leaving their respective capitals on the 7th and 8th respectively. The Mir of Hunza who is particularly anxious to entertain us in person asked me to come in from Misgar as quickly as possible for this reason, & so we are hurrying and



Fig. 224. A photo taken at Jamalabad, not far from Sost in the northern part of Hunza, the inscription on the hillside greeting the Aga Khan when he was visiting the area where the local population is mainly Wakhi Ismailis (photo: DW 1995).

arriving at Baltit on the 3rd. This will enable us not only to have 2 days with Hunza at Baltit but also to spend a day at Nagar with the Mir of that place whom we haven't yet met. We are particularly anxious to see Nagar, as it is off the beaten track and is also within reach of the tremendous Hispar Range which contains the biggest glaciers in the world outside the Arctic & Antarctic Circles & has also the world's 2nd highest mountain, K2. Also Nagar is the 'opposite number,' so to speak of Hunza, its ancient rival, & it will be most interesting to compare the two.

The march from Misgar to Baltit was very much easier than the reverse way in 1922, partly because it is downhill most of the way instead of up, but mostly because the Mir of Hunza (with Gov't. money) has greatly improved the road. Even so, however, it is a march which requires a good head. [*Fig. 225*] Most of it is 2 ft. or less wide and overhangs first the Kilik and afterwards the Khunjerab gorges at heights varying from 20 to 800 ft. D. who can't face these 'paris' as they are called on horse-back had to walk most of the march. As she says, it is better to be tired than frightened, and certainly those three consecutive difficult marches which entailed much walking, Lopgaz – Murkushi, Murkushi – Misgar and Misgar – Gircha did her no harm, in fact left her remarkably fit. We have a long double march with much pari tomorrow, but I don't think it will be too much for D.



Fig. 225. Two views from the upper Hunza valley (on the left, photo by DW, 1995; on the right, Skrine photo, reproduced with permission from the Royal Geographical Society [London], no. CPS/00031). Very likely the person framed in the 'doorway' on the narrow path along the cliffs is Doris Skrine, who, as Clarmont noted, preferred walking to riding on those paths. The photo would have been taken either when the Skrines traveled up to Kashgar in 1922 or on their trip back to India in 1924.

Besides re-making the road the Mir has built funny little 'dak-bungalows' at 3 intermediate stages, Khaibar, Pasu and Galmit [*sic*], quite the tiniest erections of their kind I have ever seen – just 2 minute rooms and a bath-room, in each case perched on the top of a knoll overlooking the orchards & terraced fields of the little crag-girt villages. At neither Pasu nor Khaibar was there any building we could use on the way up, & we had to skip Pasu and camp late at night in the rain at Khaibar after crossing the dreaded Batura Glacier, an unpleasant experience. A bungalow however tiny with roaring fires in it would have been most welcome then. This time we skipped Khaibar and marched straight from Gircha to Pasu, crossing the Batura between 4 and 5 in the afternoon. It being late in the season, the Batura was much easier than in June 1922 and we got across in 50 minutes without mishap, horses and all. But it was tiring work. One is perpetually going up and down, up and down, over ice ridges & into stone-filled crevasses and skirting green pools & skipping streamlets flowing down channels of obsidian. The horses which are led throughout carefully, one man at the head & one at the tail, skate about all over the place & it isn't very good for their feet, but there is no real danger.

Next day we had a short march, Pasu–Galmit, the only one in a week of journeying & the loads got in very early. We made a day of it by going a bit out of our way to see a beautiful little lake there

is at a place called Baurit. This lake lies in the lap of ancient moraines and is fringed at one end by orchards & 2 or 3 wee farms with terraced fields, but most of its shores are wild & rocky, a mass of flowers in early summer but somewhat parched now. It was covered with duck & teal with a few snipe about too. Unfortunately, I forgot to replenish my cartridge belt and when I had shot a teal and a snipe after blowing off 5 cartridges I found I had no more. We lunched pleasantly under a boulder looking over the placid lake in which we were mirrored, wild moorland, green & gold orchards (autumn is just turning the fruit trees) & at one corner glaciers and ice-crowned peaks 24,000 ft. high. These latter are stupendous. While I was shooting D. had the luck to see a tremendous avalanche come down the face of one of the highest of them. Tho' 5 or 6 miles distant horizontally and at least three miles vertically above her head, D. says that when this avalanche came down the whole side of the mountain seemed to be moving, a most awe-inspiring sight.

Here at Galmit there is the Mir's 3rd son, Shah-baz Khan, who has placed (or rather his father has) a fine old wooden Hunza house with a vast single upper-story room at our disposal. It has a veranda which looks out among tall poplars over the rich oasis of Galmit to fantastic peaks and splintered crags in every direction. Wonderful variety of colour in the rocks here, altogether what with autumn tints a feast of colour for the gods all bathed in the brilliant sunshine of the season. I have taken some colour plates, but don't expect at all worthy results.

Nagar, 7th Oct.

Before describing this fascinatingly interesting place and what we are experiencing here, I must tell you about the march from Galmit to the Hunza capital and our 3 days' stay there. The gorges of the Hunza River are at their worst on this section, & everything is on the vastest scale. The Middle Karatash Gorges were bad enough, with sides ten thousand feet high, but if any sort of made track had been available there we would have had little difficulty in negotiating them in April '23. The gorges of the Hunza River have sides fourteen to sixteen thousand feet high, and if there were not a track seldom less than one foot and often as much as three feet broad made at enormous expense the whole way, they would be absolutely impassible. For miles the cliffs above the river are perpendicular, or nearly so, on both sides! & the angle is seldom less than 60°. Wonderful sight, these gorges – the stately river, broad & smooth (no rapids for several miles), swings grandly to and fro across the flat bottom of the gorge, which is wide enough in most places to let the sun shine on the water and turn it to molten silver. Black, dark brown and ochre cliffs rise to appalling heights one behind the other, like the wings of a Titan's theatre. Far away up in the sky can be seen autumn tinted thickets of ash and broad though steeply tilted Alpine meadows, absolutely inaccessible even to the local people & above again snow cornices and hanging glaciers and glittering spires of ice-clad rock. The path, now carried on piles driven into the cliff face, now following a two-foot ledge goes up and down over bastions of rock & deep into dark clefts on the precipice, sometimes high above the gleaming river, sometimes within a few feet of it. Every now and again, as the silent procession of walking people and led horses files along it, a stone dislodged from the brink by a horse's hoof goes crash-crash-plop! There are long stretches where it is impossible to turn a horse, so if two parties with horses met or an obstacle such as a breach in the path were encountered, it would be a very serious business, for nothing will induce a horse to allow himself to be backed under such circumstances. Luckily horses are hardly ever taken along that path & we found the road in perfect repair – the Mir looks after it very well – so we got our 7 ponies through safely, to say nothing of Tootie (short of course for Tutankhamen) our donkey, Yakub the Knight of the Broom's mount. But we miscalculated the distance to Ataabad, where we camped in 1922 & where we intended



Fig. 226. Views of the 'castle' at Altit, one of the small villages that today comprise the Hunza settlement of Karimabad. Altit is located atop a cliff that drops precipitously to the Hunza River, the view from almost directly above taken from Tok, another of the small, once autonomous villages, that today are part of the larger urban area. The architecture of the castle and the surrounding houses is traditional; at the time the picture was taken apricots and other produce were laid out on some of the roofs to dry. (Photos: DW 1995).

to lunch this double march; turning a bend in the gorge at about 1:30 we saw the place right in front of us & thought we would get there by 2, but instead of that we didn't get over the intervening paris and 'mauvais pas' till 3 when we sank exhausted & famished beside a mint-fringed brook under a waterfall and gorged ourselves on the whole of the eggs, biscuits & cheese, scones & cake that we had intended for lunch & tea separately.

Leaving at 4 we still had a whole march to do, albeit a small one, and after 9 more miles mostly terrific pari we arrived at nearly 8 P.M. at the hospitable Mir's house at Baltit. We were met by his son, the sandy-moustached Ghazan Khan & his tall Wazir at the castle of Altit [*Fig. 226*] a mile short of the capital & escorted in with a big following. Tired though we were it was thrilling when we approached the foot of the heights on which the Mir's summer residence is situated to hear the shouts greeting us from retainers above and to see the torchlight procession forming up which solemnly preceded us to our quarters. The torches were great brands of blazing juniper wood and they were carried in file by stalwart Hunza men to the accompaniment of the Mir's band. The latter I described to you in 1922 – a wild crew of drummers and rababchis (players of a kind of guitar) and curious sort of pipes. An unforgettable experience, that march in behind the torches and the minstrels of ancient Hunza. The Mir was there to receive us with smiles and words of genuine welcome, looking as large and kindly and humorous as ever, quite one of the most delightful personalities I know & as unlike the typical Oriental potentate as you can well imagine. But of this more anon.

Last time we were in tents in the town, but this time the Mir insisted on our occupying his little guest-pavilion in the garden, a well-built and furnished little house with one relatively big room, used as a dining room, one tiny bedroom & 2 small bath-rooms. Our coolies, I forgot to say, were a lazy lot and had been left far behind; we did not expect them that night, so after a wash with the Mir's soap and towels we sat down as we were to a 'sumshus' dinner with the Mir and his eldest son, Ghazan Khan. That night we slept in our clothes in the little room off the dining room, D. on a firm bed with a spring mattress and full complement of sheets & blankets & I on a camp bed with a carpet as mattress and a quilt over me. Both of us slept like logs! Our baggage didn't arrive till 10 o'clock next morning – the

Galmit coolies are the laziest crowd in Hunza and made no attempt to get beyond the usual stage, Ataabad! But I must confess that the distance and the road were too much for even good coolies to cover in one day. The Mir oughtn't to have asked us to do it in one, we ought to have camped at Ataabad where he could easily have sent out a tent or two to meet us.

Words cannot describe the amazing grandeur & beauty of the Hunza–Nagar country in autumn. In England you talk of autumn 'tints' – a suitable word for the colouring of an autumn at home. Here the trees turn the vividest and richest hues imaginable – everything from pure gold to orange, scarlet and even pink. 'Tints' indeed! The richest oil vermilions and yellows wouldn't do justice to these scenes – & when you add to the massed colours in the foregrounds the most stupendous snows & precipices & thousand-foot river cliffs with castles or quaint piled-up stone village on their crests, terraced cultivation filling every cranny, every plateau, every nook and corner of the valleys – you will join us in lamenting that no great painter has ever found his way to these inspiring scenes. A Turner here would find himself living in the middle of one of his own, most imaginative pictures!

I am doing my best with the few 'fine-grain' plates I have left to give the world an idea of what these regions are like, but it is a hopeless task. I am also trying colour plates, but the process is far from perfect yet and my results will not be up to much, I fear.

Our 2nd night we dined again with the Mir (otherwise we ran our own bundobust, tho' living in his guest-house) & afterwards were delighted once more by the music and dancing I described in my diary of the journey up which you have got. It was delightful hearing the melodious and romantic 'Sultan Aziz Jan' again; this time I took down the (Kabuli Persian) words from the Chief Musician, they are curious & interesting.[314] The same three boys in Kashgari girls' costume 'nautched' for us, but alas!

314. In *CCA* 1925, p. 26, Skrine publishes musical notation for the tune. In his Field Diary, p. 112, he recorded the words, citing Mohammad Azam, Rababchi of Kabul, as his source:

Rafti na gufti yak yār daran
Bimar hastam gham khwar na daran
Sultan Aziz Jan
Birachur Aziz Jan
Dahan-i-tavila dis asb-i-Waler
Sultan Aziza burdand ba hila
Dahan-i-Kachari du asb-i-sawari
Aziza burdand ba uzr o zāri
Ursī bālā-kun lāltin-i-pā-Kun
Toshak awār kun wadai khwab shud
Sultan Aziz Jan
Rafti bala-i-kuh narinj-i-khushbu
Yārim mi-kard lū Sultan Aziz Jan
Rafti Alamgan lungi chapar band
Maulaim Kunid ranj, biravan Aziz Jan
(I)
Didan nigari binishastan chūn gul
Ba daur-i-ruyash chatr-i- zi sumbul

[*A line indicates that section above—[refrain?] — should be inserted here.*]

Guflam ki ai mah, kai baz binam
Su-yi-ji - faqiran ba in tajammul
Az shang-i-husnash gashtim chih Majnūn
Az man bipurs yār in sabr tahammul

they are terribly grown, long & lanky youths, not nearly so attractive to look at, tho' they dance even better. Then and at other times during our visit I had most interesting talks with the Mir, with whom I discussed all sorts of questions concerning the Chinese, the Russians & the Afghans. It makes all the difference having been 2 years at K[ash]g[a]r – when I saw him before, I knew nothing about these matters, nor about the fascinatingly interesting subject of Hunza's relations with the Chinese Empire. I will say nothing about these matters here for fear Father may write to the papers about them, but you may take it from me I could fill an entire copy of the Times with good 'copy'!! But that is no reason why I should!!

[*FD, p. 113:* Mir spoke regretfully of the days when Hunza men used to raid the Ladakh road & the things they used to get – pearls and coral and gold from India, silks and furs from Turkestan. Lovely things there used to be in the Palace at Baltit but Safdar Ali squandered them all. Fool that he was. (This obviously to explain any superior magnificence we might find at rival Nagar.)]

I had brought the Mir two lovely Khotan carpets as a present & D. had some beautiful (and extremely expensive) Shantung silk from Kashgar for the Rani which we duly presented. (Being on leave & having no political connexion with these parts I considered that the ordinary rules regarding presents could reasonably be waived in our case.) In return the Mir has given us a most interesting old knife and sheath, a mediaeval relic, & some Shimshal cloth, a kind of very fine and strong puttoo which makes excellent sports suits; the Rani gave D. a lovely whip with the coloured tassels they make so artistically here, & one or two quaint silver ornaments. If only all officials could be trusted to give as good value as they receive in presents, it would be an excellent thing if the presents rule could be waived throughout the Frontier, for there is no doubt that chiefs in these parts enormously appreciated such exchanges of presents & value things given them by Sahibs above all else – but (bar photos) they hardly ever get any!



Fig. 227. The views from Baltit/Hunza across the river to the valley of Nagar. On the left, Skrine's photo (reproduced here from a somewhat damaged print on a tear sheet from Die Koralle *(Berlin), September 1928, p. 276); on the right, a similar view taken from a slightly different angle and zoomed in (photo: DW 1995).*

[*Fig. 227*] It is seldom that one walks away from a visit to an Eastern potentate's palace, but we did on the 6th when we marched to the capital of the rival state of Nagar, only 6 m. to the East. This was because you have to go down a breakneck descent for 1500 ft. down which ponies have to be led, & then cross one of the dizzily-poised & horribly-swaying suspension bridges

Raghayi janam ai shukh-i-tauha
Yak yak girya kard ba zulf-o-kakul
Āgl-o-khirat rā akhir ghiyāsi
Ghārat namadan ja dasta tawul.

The song apparently was widely known, as L.V.S. Blacker, who had accompanied Percy Etherton and Frederick Bailey to Kashgar in 1918, mentions hearing it in his own account of his adventures (*On Secret Patrol in High Asia* [London: John Murray, 1922], p. 215).



Fig. 228. Skrine's photo of the suspension bridge his party crossed to Nagar in 1924 (from the British Library Collection, IOLR Photo 920/1, unn. neg). It is located slightly downriver from Altit. The bridge was still there decades later, but in a state of disrepair (see the photo in Kreutzmann 2020, p. 432).

of the country to the Nagar side of the Hunza River gorge. [*Fig. 228*] There we were met by the young Heir Apparent of Nagar in an orchard perched on the top of a 500-foot cliff, where we lunched pleasantly under the shade of a tree positively weighed down with pears, & enjoyed the wondrous view of all Hunza & the 24,000 ft. heights above it opposite us. The Nagar prince is not the same as the one who met us at Nilt in '22; that one died shortly afterwards & this is the 2nd son. A charming lad with perfect manners & Greek features all but the nose which betrays Pathan blood mixed with that of Alexander's followers whose descendants most of the ruling houses in these parts – Hunza, Nagar, Yasin, Purneal etc. – are. Young Mahbub Ali Khan is a smart lad being Subedar Major of the Nagar Levies, 260 strong, & having profited greatly by a month's military training at Gilgit each autumn for some years.[315] He is also a magnificent polo player, of which more anon.

Besides Mahbub Ali, the Subedar of the Levies came to meet us, a middle-aged but most sprightly active & amiable man whom we met in '22 at Minapin. The 2 of them & some followers escorted us along the 'pari' road (rather alarming in 2 places where it crosses permanently sliding landslides) 5 miles in to Nagar talking all the time (the Nagaris are all great talkers, more so than the men of Hunza, tho' the latter are strong but hardly silent men). We arrived at 5 & were met on the long narrow polo-ground by the Mir & all his retinue, including his Wazir, several 'Trangpas' (= lambardars) & 'yerpas' (tax-collectors), several falconers, & his Body-guard, stalwart lads in grey puttoo uniforms, dark brown ibex skin boots & the peculiar rolled quoit-like headgear of the country with red Nagar badges on them. [*Fig. 229*] It was a sight worth seeing, especially with the background of the high green hillside, clothed with fruit-trees in every autumn colour of the rainbow, immensely tall poplars, on one side the ancient citadel of the Mir & on the other green glades and a lovely little natural lake reflecting the stone houses of the little town clustering on the steep face of the citadel hill; away up in the air, the white-washed walls and old timbered verandas & balconies of the summer houses of the Mir and his family crowning a poplar-lined ridge. Nagar & its surroundings are not nearly



Fig. 229. The 'palace' of Nagar (reproduced with permission from the Royal Geographical Society [London], no. 088635).

315. This positive assessment notwithstanding, the British administrators decided at the time of the succession to the Nagar throne to install the *tham*'s grandson, Shaukat Ali Khan, rather than Mahbub Ali Khan, and, to reduce the tension in the family, later arranged for the latter to be appointed Governor of Yasin (see Kreutzmann 2020, pp. 415-416).

so grand and spacious as Hunza with its vast green-lined valley walled in by towering cliffs & eternal snows & its gleaming river winding far below, but it is more intimate & cosy & picturesque in a less magnificent way. Even so, it is vast & grand enough, for the mountains rise to enormous heights on each side & away up the valley you get peeps of the mighty Hispar snows, which contain the greatest glaciers in the world outside the Arctic regions. Nagar is more broken up into little basins & 'happy valleys' and amazingly picturesque ridges & knolls crowned with villages & clothed with autumn-tinted orchards – altogether an Arcadian country at any rate in the perfect Autumn weather we are having now.

But great Scott what an inordinate length this letter has reached! I must stop & send this off by the courier who is going to Gilgit tomorrow [...]

P.S. We reach Venice on the 16th Dec. and stay three nights there (we can't do less with the opportunity!), then Paris 21st–23rd reaching London probably the night of the 23rd just in time for Xmas [...]

***

Astore, 21st October '24

NOT FOR PUBLICATION!!

Darling Mum,

My last letter took us down to Nagar in which 'mountain fastness' I wrote it. I hadn't time to tell you about Nagar itself. As you know, Nagar is the rival state to Hunza. For centuries they warred against each other across the deep and swift Hunza River (Hunza State & capital are mostly but not all on the right bank, Nagar on the left) until both were conquered by us in the nineties, since when they have been living outwardly in amity – inwardly – I wonder! There are noticeable differences between the two States & their people, Hunza is more grandly situated, Nagar more cosily and picturesquely [*FD, p. 113:* Nagar is divided into 2 Wizarats, each under a Wazir. Under him there are Trangpas (lambardars) for each village and yerpas or tax collectors. No other off[icia]ls. Hunza men have taken a lot to trade lately; Nagar less so. They cultivate more – cf enormous heights to which cultivation is carried (lucerne on highest levels).] [G]rapes [& peaches] grow best at Hunza, pears (lovely 'Williams' imported from Kashmir) [& apples] at Nagar. [*FD, p. 114:* [...] Present Mir's grandfather performed many exploits, e.g., going and building a burj in Chitral right under the Mehtar's nose & coming back unscathed [...] Nagar are not feudatory to China even in name, as the Mir took care to impress on me. Hunza used to be Shias like Nagar but have lately seceded to Maulaism. Both chiefs are descended from same ancestor.] Hunza has always had a connection with Chinese Turkestan with which it marches, its men have long traded and raided towards Kashgar & Yarkand, its Mir has from time immemorial acknowledged a shadowy fealty towards the Governor of the New Dominion, whereas Nagar has always looked towards India. But the most noticeable difference is an interesting one, namely that the Nagaris seem to look back more to their remote Greek ancestry than the people of Hunza. In Nagar you see more of the Greek type of features, modified by a liberal infusion of the Pathan nose, than in Hunza; in Hunza you seldom see the children playing with bows and arrows, whereas in Nagar, not only does every child carry a bow but archery on horseback is still regularly practised! Altogether the Nagaris appear to be rather better at games & sports of all kinds than the Hunza men, tho' the latter are very athletic, magnificent cragsmen etc., too. I got the impression that the Nagaris are a slightly smaller race, but make up for it by having a somewhat better eye. Certain it is that the Nagaris are better at polo, for their team has been unbeaten in the Gilgit Championship ever since the latter was started. They have won four different challenge shields in the Gilgit Tournament whereas neither Hunza nor Yasin, nor Gupis have won any outright.

[*FD, p. 113:* [T]he Nagar team beat Rawlinson's hollow – latter didn't get a single goal, tho' using their own sticks […] The Mir wanted to tour India and play Patiala, Jodhpur – but the Viceroy dissuaded him on the ground that it would be such a sharm for a big state like P. to be beaten by a small one like N.!] The 'tamasha' the Mir of Nagar gave in our honour the day after our arrival (he postponed starting for Gilgit, where he had to meet the new P[olitical] A[gent], specially in order to do so, which was nice of him) was a more interesting one than we had at Hunza in '22; then there was only polo, whereas at Nagar there was first of all archery on horseback, then tent-pegging, then polo & finally a dance by the Bodyguard, much more varied.

The night of our arrival the State Band consisting of local pipes and drums played wild music terrifically loud for over an hour about dinner time: we were puzzled by this until it was explained to us that the band always played the night before polo, as a signal that is to say, the players are summoned for polo (as up to less than a generation ago they used to be summoned for raids) by the Band's playing. Next afternoon at 3 we all went down to the Polo Ground, a lovely piece of turf long and narrow with stone walls on each side, tall trees shading it and a lovely little lake mirroring the old citadel and houses of the village at the lower end. The Band sat on the hill-side close above one of the side walls; on the opposite side under shady trees a shamiana had been set up as a sort of royal box from which D. and the Mir's younger children spectated. The Mir lent me a beautiful grey Badakhshani pony of his own, a noted polo pony, & on this I tent-pegged[316] and played polo with great elan but very moderate success. The first thing was the archery. A tiny silver mark the size of a beech-leaf was stuck in the ground and the competitors, mounted, each with his bow slung over his shoulder & an arrow in his belt, collected at the far end of the ground. Then the band started a barbaric melody & one by one the competitors galloped down on the mark. As they galloped they fitted an arrow into their bow & held it ready with their left hand; when within 20 yards or so of the mark, which they passed close on the right, they dropped the reins with their right hand and fired the arrow very quickly at the mark. A respectable proportion put their arrows very close indeed to the silver leaf, but noone actually transfixed it. Anyone who either transfixes it or grazes it so as to cut the edge of the silver leaf gets it as a trophy. I tell you, when I saw those fellows tearing down on the mark, bow in hand, their hair & shirts fluttering in the wind, I could hardly believe I wasn't back in B.C. and looking at the Parthians or Alexander's Macedonians doing archery practice, for it's exactly what they did in those days. What's more, I've many a time watched Persians doing a similar stunt with carbines from horseback, & actually shooting gazelle thus at full gallop – obviously a modern version of the Parthian archery which is still practised in Nagar.

Then everybody, plus myself, had three runs at a peg, but not a nice big wooden peg such as we stick in India – just a little little leaf-like silver mark stamped with the arms of Nagar & almost impossible to 'carry.' As a matter of fact none of the competitors did more than touch it. I didn't even get as near as that, but they politely pretended I did and the Mir formally presented me with one of the silver marks with a nick out of one edge! I shall always keep it as an interesting souvenir.

Next came the polo, which I have already described (see my diary of the journey up in '22, at Hunza). The Mir himself plays, but isn't nearly so good as the Mir of Hunza; the other players on other hand were noticeably better, especially young Mahbub Ali the Mir's eldest surviving son, an amazingly good-looking youth with charming manners and a seat on horseback worth going miles to see. I am convinced that Mahbub Ali if he played our polo in India would be worth 5 goals handicap. I twice

316. Tent-pegging is a very old cavalry 'sport' obviously developed as a kind of military training exercise. What Skrine describes here involved trying to pierce and pick up on the end of a lance the small object placed on the ground while riding at full gallop. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tent_pegging, last accessed 12 May 2016.



Fig. 230. Polo in Nagar, the picture, taken on 7 October 1924, showing Skrine on the gray horse loaned him by the Mir of Nagar, participating in the match (see the enlarged insert, the figure wearing a necktie left of center). (Reproduced with permission from the Royal Geographical Society [London], no. 018279). Some captions of prints of this photo mis-label it as taken in Altit, when Skrine played polo in 1922, but the details convincingly place the image in Nagar in 1924.

had to do the 'tombuk' when my side scored a goal [*Fig. 230*]; this is a stunt peculiar to Gilgit polo, in which either the man who has scored the goal or some other player on his side to whom he gives the ball, gallops furiously up the ground holding both stick and ball in his right hand, & at a fixed mark throws the ball in the air in front of [him] at full gallop and smites it (if he can!) before it touches the ground. This is of course a fearfully difficult feat but so good are these fellows' eyes that most of them get the ball fair on the curious fish-shaped crookedly-fixed head of the stick & send the ball flying, & some actually 'tonk' it right through the enemy's goal first hit. When they gave me the ball I thought of course I would miss it clean, but by some extraordinary fluke I hit it (though not very far) both times, which of course raised my prestige in Nagar State by several pegs!

A great figure in Nagar State is the jolly old 'Subedar Sahib' who is second in command of the Levy Corps under the Mir's son & is also a Wazir & generally the Mir's right-hand man – in fact he is the 'power behind the throne,' people say. He is a most cheerful bird and a great talker. We were amused & delighted but by no means surprised when, after the polo, he led the dance, hopping and skipping out across the polo-ground to the wild strains of the band, the rest following him in single file & performing similar steps. As a matter of fact the Subedar was the best dancer of the lot – his arm-movements & the swaying of his body were up to ballet form, & the curious kind of two-step he did most of the time would have delighted a London ball-room before the War!

Last night we dined in state with the Mir and Mahbub Ali in the big room of the 'Palace,' quite a fine room, & well-decorated with the polo shields & cups won by Nagar, magnificent sporting trophies of ibex, barasingh etc., shot by the present Mir (who is a great shikari), etc. etc. The table & service were faultless, as at Hunza – it is difficult to get over one's surprise in these wild regions to be dined by a local chieftain in as correct English style as one would be at any Indian station by one's English friends. D. had visited the Rani in the morning, but didn't see her on this occasion, in fact we didn't linger long after dinner & were back in our rest-house by 9:30. The Rest House by the way is a jolly little place with two comfortable sets of rooms, overlooking another poplar-lined polo ground on the top of the Mir's hill-park close to his own 'palace.' (The other polo ground which they chiefly use is below, in a little valley.)

Our 2nd morning we said farewell to our host who was going to Gilgit (4 marches); we ourselves were to stay on another 2 days. Before he left with his retinue (including archers and falconers) I took what turned out to be two magnificent photos with my plate camera of the Mir & his family, one on horseback, the other standing. [*Fig. 231, next page*] I am going to have these enlarged & send him framed



Fig. 231. The Mir of Nagar and his sons in October 1924 (scan from negative in the Stewart collection).

copies from India.[317]

That day we did an expedition guided by the Subadar who remained behind to look after us on behalf of the Mir. [*Fig. 232*] We went to Hopar, a hill village or rather group of villages 6 miles above Nagar, & looked over a perpendicular cliff on to one of the great glaciers of the Hispar. It was a magnificent sight – far the biggest glacier I have ever seen (bar the Batura of which one doesn't get at all a good view when crossing it on the Gilgit–Kashgar road) & 24–25,000 ft. peaks shut it in at the upper end. [*FD, inserted sheet:* It was the Kepal, one of the great glaciers of the Hispar, a sea of ice indeed which swept down from towering snows in immense curves of glittering serac streaked with rock-debris. the Kepal glacier is still slowly eating away the Hopar basin, against which it presses. We climbed



Fig. 232. View of the upper Nagar valley. Spantik ('Golden Peak') is the dramatic snow-clad mountain (ca. 7000 m) framed just right of center. (Photo: DW 1995).

317. Skrine may well have sent prints of the family portraits to the Mirs of Hunza and Nagar soon after his return to India. He kept the negatives or rephotographed prints made from the originals. The negatives remained in the Stewart family collection, in an envelope with the notation that he had prints sent to the Mir of Hunza in 1968.



Fig. 233. The new suspension bridge at Tashot, connecting Nagar (on the left bank) with the current route down the Karakorum Highway on the right bank (photo: DW 1995). After traveling down through Nagar, Skrine crossed the river on a bridge near Minapin, somewhat upstream from the Tashot bridge. Cf. an analogous view of the Tashot bridge in Kreutzmann 2020, p. 188. As Kreutzmann (ibid., p. 232) notes, several attempts had been made before the successful construction of a permanent bridge there.

down on to a section of cliff which had subsided 200 ft. having evidently been undercut by the ice.] We lunched in a cranny of the cliff & returned in the afternoon. It was a glorious day & I got some very fine photos (plate) of the exquisitely picturesque hill-villages & autumn-tinted orchards of Nagar (these last I took colour-plates of too). All the photos I took at Nagar I developed there in the evenings & nearly all were brilliantly successful.

On the 10th we marched to Minapin where we joined the main Gilgit–Baltit road. [*Fig. 233*]. It was interesting seeing the left or Nagar bank of the Hunza River below Baltit – if anything the villages & fields & orchards in their glorious autumn colours, pink & orange and scarlet and gold seemed even more beautiful than on the Hunza side but that may have been because the autumn tints had improved during the few days since we left Hunza. We had our tiffin in one of the most beautiful spots we have ever lunched at – and that is saying a good deal now! To a steep mountain-side a thousand feet above the blue and white Hunza river, clung a little group of farmhouses buried in an orchard of bright scarlet apple & pear trees, orange apricot-trees and rich golden mulberries. From a gap in this riot of colour we looked out along the vast Hunza Valley with its gleaming river far below, winding between lofty capes and promontories of greenery and autumn colours crowned with villages, right away to the Hunza capital ten miles away, its ancient Castle visible as a speck beneath the mighty glacier-crowned cliffs 24,000 ft. high which rise immediately behind it. What a picture – and what a frame for it!

Fig. 234. A view of Rakaposhi as one heads down the Hunza valley from Baltit (photo: DW 1995). This view, taken from the Karakorum Highway on the right bank provides a sense of the impressive mountain which Skrine was anxious to photograph again by climbing to a high vantage point above the river somewhat farther down river at Chaprot.



Minapin we were glad to see again; it is one of the prettiest villages I know & situated in the most awe-inspiring surroundings [*Fig. 234*]; Nilt and three or four other similar villages lower down run it close though, especially Nilt which is right under Rakaposhi, whose amazing summit of glittering

ice over 25,000 ft. high hangs away up near the zenith above it. In my diary of the journey up I wrote that Rakaposhi seen from Chalt is 'like a sword of ice brandished to heaven,' & that simile suits it even better as seen from Nilt. Truly a marvellous mountain. This time we stopped at Chalt 2 nights, the weather being perfect, & fulfilled another of our dreams: ever since we passed Chalt on the way up we have said to ourselves that we must spend a whole day there on the way down and climb up to Chaprot village, up the glen [to] the west not only to see Chaprot but to view Rakaposhi from the best vantage point. It was a case of a dream coming true & the reality surpassing even the dream. We rode & walked for 2 hours up the glen, the mighty sword of Rakaposhi rising ever higher & higher behind its pine-clad shoulders behind us, till we came to a village which might have stepped straight out of a fairy-story (only a village can't step!). At the junction of two forest-filled glens with crystal clear burns tumbling out of them, stood a little ancient castle with the roofs of the village clustering round it, high-porched on a cliff above the streams which were both buried in fruit-tree foliage of every colour of the rainbow. Terraced fields dotted with walnut & other trees stretched away up to the verge of the dark evergreen forests; some of the trees were garlanded with vines, a mass of deep blood-red foliage. I never saw such a colour as some of those vines had turned. I didn't know vines could turn such a colour!

Not far above the castle and village we left our ponies and climbed another 1600 feet, where we found ourselves among beautiful 'chilghoza' firs.[318] The chilghoza is a magnificent tree & sometimes grows to enormous heights: it has a white bark, long silky needles growing in big bunches, huge fat cones hanging vertically like dolls from a Xmas tree and an irregular shape which makes it a much more attractive ornament to a mountain-side than the monotonously regular and orderly pine of Europe.

From this point the view of Rakaposhi was indescribable.[319] The 3000 feet we had come up from Chalt made no appreciable difference to its vast height above our heads; only, some of the lower shoulders having sunk away, we saw more of the great mountain's ice-clad flanks & knife-edge ridges. The actual top is an extraordinarily sharp ridge with a curve in it, like the top of a shallow bowled tea-spoon on end. With a field telescope, even, I could detect no flatness at the summit; it must be a real 'razor-edge,' & it certainly looked as if it would puncture any Zeppelin which might be so ill-advised as to try and land on it!

Two dull marches brought us into Gilgit, where we were hospitably entertained by my old Simla friend Major [Gordon] Loch. He himself had only arrived 3 days earlier from Srinagar; he had to come up on short notice to fill a gap, but I think he is going to stay now he is there. Certainly I would prefer Gilgit to First Assistant to the Resident in Kashmir if I were he. Loch is an Edinburgh Aidinburry buddy & thoroughly enjoyed his cracks with a buddy from North Berwick. It was quite a novel situation to find ourselves in a well appointed European house once more – for Loch, tho' a grass widower & only just arrived, has a high standard of living and did us remarkably well – after over six weeks in the wilds, English white bread baked by the Commissariat at Gilgit, too, was an unfamiliar luxury: bread is not the strong point of the Consular cook at Kashgar, nor is the flour you get there up to the standard of English white flour. We had a great deal to do in our 2 full days at Gilgit overhauling our kit, re-provisioning, dealing with a voluminous dâk etc. etc. but I managed to get in an afternoon at the local polo, on the kind invitation of the very pleasant young Scouts officer (Gilgit Scouts, not Boy) who runs it. I played two of the ponies I had brought from Kashgar, & they did remarkably well considering

318. *Pinus gerardiana*, 'native to Afghanistan, Tibet in China, Jammu-Kashmir in India, and Pakistan' (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pinus_gerardiana, last accessed 6 September 2024).

319. For Skrine's photo of Rakaposhi, from what was truly a wonderful viewpoint at Chaprot, see *GJ*, 1925a, facing p. 392. The mountain was first climbed in 1956 via the SW ridge, the more difficult route from the N in 1979.

neither of them had ever seen a stick or ball before! There is first-class fly-fishing (trout) near Gilgit in a stocked river, & D. and I were offered rods on it by kind friends, but had reluctantly to refuse. I didn't know about the fishing before; it is a notable attraction to the place and I am seriously thinking of applying for Gilgit on my return from leave!

Our journey down from Gilgit so far has been a very different affair to our journey up in '22. Then, if you remember, we had everything against us.

(1) We had a third party with us who embarrassed us in several ways, especially at the smaller rest houses when D. & I had to crowd into 1 small room.

(2) It was the 2nd of 2 famine years & not only were supplies very hard to come by, but the coolies were so emaciated that they could hardly stagger from stage to stage. This is the 2nd of 2 good years.

(3) Owing to the Mountain Battery stationed at Bunji being just then on its annual move from Bunji to its summer camp, all the ponies in Astore were taken up & we couldn't get even mounts for all of ourselves, so that I had to walk all the way & D. and Gerard about ½ the way from Dorian to within 7 miles of Gilgit – & that in June – June in the Indus Valley!

(4) The Ramghat suspension bridge had broken down the winter before & we were kept 2 hours in grilling heat getting ourselves & our kit pulled across in a box, slung on a steel cable.

This time (1) we are blessedly alone;

(2) supplies are plentiful & the people fit;

(3) having secured through transport (mules) from Gilgit to Kashmir we are independent of the ordinary local stage-to-stage coolies or ponies;

(4) there are now not one but two whole and sound suspension bridges at Ramghat [*Fig. 235*]. & we rode the whole way from Bunji to Dorian including the fearful grinding ascent of the Hattu Pir (3000 ft. sheer) in 8 hours.



Fig. 235. The bridge over the Astor River at Ramghat over which the Skrines would have passed in 1924. It replaced the one that had been washed away forcing them to cross the river on cable car in 1922 on their way up to Kashgar. Photo by John Törnquist (Public domain, Image no. 0964.b.1059 [https://collections.smvk.se/carlotta-em/web/object/25505151]).

Besides which, the weather is perfect – not to[o] hot even at Bunji (4,500 ft.) nor too cold even here (7,700). So it has been a complete picnic & bids fair to continue to be so, even over the Burzil & Tragbal passes. We now expect to get to Srinagar on the 27th.

Kuragbal **25th Oct.**

We had as easy and uneventful 2 days' march from Astore to Chillum Chauki (11,050 ft.) and from there a perfect picnic of a march over the Burzil Pass. Eating our lunch on the sunny side of the Burzil but at the very top of the pass (13,800 ft.) we were so hot that we had to move into the shade! Neither of us needed the 'woonter willies' we had been reserving for what we imagined would be the bitter cold we would suffer on and near the Burzil Pass. There wasn't a scrap of snow on the pass except on steep north-facing nullah-sides – none in the open at all.

At Burzil Chauki rest-house (11,600 ft.) on the southern slope of the pass we met Capt. Deane, commandant of the Mountain Battery at Bunji (Kashmir State troops). He it was who gave us an excellent breakfast at Astor on the morning of the famous day when my horse

and Hafiz's fought on the narrow path above the foaming Astore River, and who so kindly placed his bungalow at our disposal at Bunji (he himself being on his way to the Battery's summer camp under Nanga Parbat). We were very glad to see him again & make him some return for his kindness of 2 years ago by giving him dinner. We had a great talk about Kashgar & other matters. [*FD, p. 116:* Deane [...] told us that the son of the Raja of Yasin asked him about London one day. It was a fine big town wasn't it? 'Many shops?' 'Oh yes, many very fine shops.' 'I suppose it is in a nice wide nullah, isn't it?'

He said that it was generally supposed that the reason why the Nagaris are a joyless lot compared with the cheery Hunza-wallas was because Hunza got all the sun, whereas Nagar gets hardly any in winter owing to the high mountains all along the south of the valley. The Mir of Nagar is proud & aristocratic, Hunza is a man of the world & a judge of men.]

We are moving more quickly this year than in '22 and are doing the Gilgit–Srinagar journey in 11 days instead of 14. We have already done 2 double marches and are doing another tomorrow over the Tragbal Pass (11 thousand odd ft.) & right down to Bandipur, the little port on the Wular Lake which is the beginning of the Gilgit Road. There we sleep the night in a houseboat which the following morning early will be poled across the shallow Wular to Sopar, a village on the opposite side from which a motor lorry and a touring car will take us & our servants and (I hope) all our kit to Srinagar in a couple of hours. The resident, Sir John Wood, and his wife are old friends of mine & have kindly offered to put us up, but can't have us till the 30th because the Viceroy happens to be on a visit to Kashmir & doesn't leave the Residency till the 29th. So I have arranged to go into camp for 2 days, really just as well for we are neither of us in a fit state to appear in very polite society. I have clothes but no wearable hats or shoes; D. has hats & shoes but no wearable shoes, besides which we absolutely must have somewhere to ourselves for a day or two to begin the sorting out & repacking and disposing of our belongings. I shall have a great deal to sell & a lot more to store while on leave, & D. likewise.

I told you didn't I that Mr. Nazaroff and the Swedish missionary, Miss Elsa Anderson, who left Kashgar for India via Leh before we did, left the latter place (12 marches from Srinagar) on the 16th Oct., so they ought to arrive at Srinagar about the same time we do. We pray they do, for they have a lot of boxes of ours including D's only decent frocks – she brought nothing down by the Gilgit road. Also our carpets & old Khotan brass & old embroidery & other 'loot', 4 bales of carpets for friends in India & 4 boxes of antiquities from Khotan which I am taking home for Sir A. Stein to see. All our more valuable & important possessions went with Nazaroff & we pray they're all right. We had of course to cut down our baggage by the Gilgit route as much as possible because of the transport difficulty in Hunza–Nagar. I have arranged a houseboat at Srinagar for Nazaroff and Miss Elsa & they will be all right I hope when they do arrive; N. will leave Srinagar with us on the 2nd Nov. for Bombay whence he sails about the 10th of the month, so he will be home before us. D. and I are very anxious to give Nazaroff & Elsa a good time if they're at Srinagar with us and we're going to take them out motor trips to the Shalimar Bagh, Anantnag etc. & otherwise show them the sights. Unfortunately, Elsa weighs about 20 stone (or did when she left Kashgar – I fancy she'll be a good deal lighter after the Leh journey) so a 3-ton lorry will be required for the trips, not a touring car, I fancy!

Your letter of 25th Sept. awaited us at Gurais (It and its predecessors would all have reached us earlier than they did if you'd only gone on addressing them to Kashgar until you heard from me – naturally I arranged with the Kashmir & Gilgit postal authorities that all letters addressed to me at Kashgar would be delivered en route) [...] Father encloses a letter from the Secretary to the Central Asian Society asking when I was due home and whether I would lecture to them. Please thank him for answering [...] As I explained to you not long ago, tho' I sh[oul]d like very much to lecture before the C.A.S., there

are one or two difficulties, e.g. (1) politics: as a Gov't. official who has just vacated the post it would be undesirable for me to say in public what I think of the Central Asian situation, the Bolsheviks in Transcaspia, the Chinese etc. etc. – and that's what the C.A.S. want to hear. (2) Etherton – if he is to be there, I'm not going to lecture to anybody & run the risk of his getting on his hind legs (as he certainly would) and patronizing me ex cathedra as an authority on Central Asia. I see by the way he is still writing articles, only now he signs himself 'late C.G. in Ch[inese] Turk[esta]n' which is something [...]

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[*Stein to Skrine, reproduced with permission from The Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, Stein MSS 107, fol. 59r,v. This is a very faint (carbon?) copy of a handwritten letter, difficult to read.*]

23, Merton Street, Oxford: Oct. 22, 1924

My dear Skrine,

Please forgive my thanking you belatedly for your full and most interesting letters of Febr. 25th and Jul. 15th which together with those fascinating two panoramas reached me safely early in September. I have been rather increasingly busy ever since by many urgent tasks connected with 'Innermost Asia', the detailed report on my third journey and knowing that you were not likely to reach India proper until next month allowed myself to lapse into this delay. I feel very sorry for it but trust you will kindly excuse it & believe that I am deeply interested in all your splendid work and very grateful for having taken so much trouble to let me have a foretaste of its ample result.

Today, too, I can write but briefly, for I do not command a quick pen, & am much pressed by work including arrangements for a R.G.S. lecture. I was most sorry to learn first through your wireless-cable messages of July that your big 'despatch' with its valuable enclosures had suffered so badly through that incredible density of some postal 'brain' at Delhi. I trust you will succeed in bringing the responsibility home in the right quarter. I too have suffered before through such stupid treatment of packets and have learned to send parcel post with anything that can possibly be sent by letter post or bookpost. Your experience is, however, particularly aggravating owing to the great loss of time and the damage your fine panoramas and map had suffered.

I do not believe, however, that the delay will prove to have had any consequence in respect of the working up or publication of your result by the Survey Dept. I am sure that your ample materials will suffice for a very adequate representation of the fascinating mountain region you have so successfully explored. I am equally certain that the R.G.S. will be most glad to welcome your lecture on the work achieved by you near those wonderful Shiwakte & Kongur peaks. I shall speak about this to Hinkley the Secretary of the R.G.S. next week and should have done so already, but he was away in Spain until last week & since had [ba..] over the Mt. Everest meeting.

I hope your final visit to Shiwakte was a complete success and that your journey through Sarikol, Hunza, etc., has been thoroughly enjoyable. I wish that I could see those old trails of mine again. Qui vivra verra [*Fr.*: time will tell] – It is a special satisfaction to me to think that Mrs. Skrine has been able so thoroughly to share your enjoyment of these years in old Hsin-kiang.

When in town last week, I had the great pleasure of seeing Mr. & Mrs. [Frank] Skrine who received me most kindly. I had failed on a previous occasion to get them [?] in time.

Many thanks for sending the letter & news of ever faithful Ibrahim Beg & for showing him attention. From Bad ud Din I received a letter in August, no doubt thanks to your enquiry – When you are home again I shall be delighted to present to you the desired portrait & a better one if [?] one can [.....] you.

– I am looking forward very eagerly to the great pleasure again[?] with kindest greetings to you both.
Yours very sincerely. A. Stei[n].

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[*Field Diary, inserted sheet and pp. 117-118, somewhat rearranged.*]

Embarking late on the night of the 26th Oct. at Bandipur we were poled across the Wular to lake front of Sopor. Here the following afternoon we boarded the twentieth cent[ury] in the shape of a large ['Republic'] motor lorry which rattled us & baggage & most of our servants into Srinagar 35 m. away in a couple of hours.[320] It was amusing to watch the effect of the said 20th cent[ury] upon an intelligent K[ash]g[a]r[i] like Hafiz, who had never seen so much as a Ford in his life. As we jerked wheezily forward at three miles an hour through the bazaar he murmured, his eyes goggling, 'Ajait bir nersa shu!' Later on the main road, a touring car from Srinagar dashed past us. His exclamation was 'It's got eyes!!' A day or two later we took him & Sangi Khan (to whom also it was all new) for a drive in a powerful touring car lent us by our kind host, Sir J. W[ood]. When the chauffeur let her out along the smooth poplar-fringed road to Dachigam Hafiz turned to me (D. & I shared the back seat with him, S.K. sitting in front with the driver). 'When he goes fast the trees come running, running!' (zhügurip keladur).

I think it is the Mongolian in him that gives Hafiz his character, his self-control, promptness, pluck, loyalty; humour & irrepressible spirits & imperturbable good temper are not all purely Kashgari traits. Younghusband's contrast between his Pathan surveyor and his Gurkha escort is illuminating – The former stern, reserved, ambitious; the latter cheery, childish, living for the moment. Yet the Pathan is a complete contrast to every type of Indian of the plains. Everyone finds the Pathan more akin to us, easier to treat as a man & a brother than the mysterious, totally different Indian proper – but compared with the Turki & the Gurkha & the Tibetan, the Pathan & the Indian are alike inscrutable & remote from us. It must be the Mongolian race which is more akin to us, more humorous & cheery than the Indian.

There was much to do in a very few days at Srinagar. I had to fit in visits to the h.q. Delhi as well as to the Survey of India at Simla before we sailed for Bombay. One of our chief preoccupations was the finding of homes for the ponies. Tutak had already been given by D. to our friend the [.] S. of Nagar of whose children he was to be a pampered mount. A Br[itish] officer at Chilas bought three of the ponies including 'Polu pony' for which lovely [...] staunch little beast I was more than sorry to part. Another trustworthy Briton acquired the Badakhshani, and D. presented her beloved Farghana gelding to a lady who promised to give it a good home. Then there were the men to be paid off and the return journey to Kashgar to be arranged, quickly before the snows of winter closed the passes. These and other affairs such as selling of our worn and battered kit, repacking gave us little time to think. At last the car stood ready what was to take us in two days to R[awal]pindi. A[hmet] Baksh sat in it, for he was to come with us to Bombay.

Our men for Hunza and Kashgar, Hafiz Akhun, Sangi Khan, Yakub and Murad Shah, stood in the roadway outside the Residency gate. Seldom have I seen an express[io]n of deeper gloom than appeared on their weather beaten faces. They had said goodbye to D. She told me afterwards that they all wept while doing so. Now my turn came. I said something to them in Turki about having made all arrangements for their transport and rations as far as Gilgit on the return journey & hoping they would have a good journey; then a lump came into my throat and I stood looking at them. No more would the sturdy cheerful Hafiz amble at our side or gallop at [...], Kalmyk steed always at hand, to make our [ways] smooth with his tact and local knowledge. No more would the strong right arm of S[angi] K[han] be ready to support his memsahib over difficult mountain paths. The tension was relieved by the sturdy Hafiz striding forward & grasping my hand. They all shook hands with me in turn, silently, and turned away to their boat. A minute later I was spinning southward towards India; our last link with Kashgar was broken.

320. U.S.-based Republic was one of the most significant manufacturers of trucks in the period; for an image of a 1923 model, perhaps similar to what Skrine mentions, see https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/ File:Republic_1923_(15709748649).jpg, last accessed 6 September 2024.

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[*Skrine's liking for Paul Nazarov (Nazaroff) is clear from their first acquaintance in Kashgar. The Russian obviously was a fount of knowledge about the natural history of Central Asia; we learn here that his expertise also was valuable for Skrine's intelligence work. Nazarov would illustrate his book* Moved On! *(1935), about his time in Kashgar, with Skrine's photos and dedicate the book to Doris. The frontispiece of John Stewart's* Envoy of the Raj *is a picture taken in 1925 showing Nazarov with Skrine, his parents and his father-in-law Jim Whitelaw at Tournaig in the Scottish highlands.*]

Lahore
7.11.24

Dear Father

You have often read in my letters about Paul Nazaroff our great Russian friend at Kashgar. I think I mentioned also that I was helping him to Europe because I – we both – were so sorry for the poor devil, marooned there in Kashgar, his gifts and great knowledge of his job & his culture all wasted, with no prospect of ever getting a job or even away from Kashgaria, never without the haunting fear of being recaptured by the Bolsheviks who had treated him so cruelly & were still 'out after' him, above all hopelessly cut off from his wife who for 4 years has been a hostage in the hands of the Bolsheviks at Tashkend.

Now he is with us here and I am sending him down to Karachi tomorrow with a 2nd class ticket on the 'City' line, Karachi–Liverpool, in his pocket, also £ 10 for expenses on the journey & 3rd-cl. Ticket Liverpool to London. Poor beggar, he doesn't know whether he's standing on his head or his heels for joy at getting away from Kashgar and finding himself a free man in a free country with hopes of work & of regaining his self-respect.

He has a small nest-egg of 500 gold roubles or rather over £ 50 in which he can subsist for a few months until he gets a job (of this more anon). This gold I took over from him at Kashgar (lest he should be robbed of it in the long journey through strange lands) & am now giving him a cheque in London for the equivalent: he will thus be provided for on arrival in town, for a while at any rate. But as he knows nobody in London; & as his English is so quaint that he would certainly be put upon and maybe cheated out of some or all of his money by the sharks who look out for foreigners, I have directed him to go first of all to you and ask your help about getting good cheap lodgings, preferably in Pimlico or neighbourhood so as to be near us. I am sure Behrens will be able to help in this matter: the cheaper the better, so long as it's clean & he can keep body & soul together in the grub. Perhaps for a day or two Nazaroff could live at some cheap little hotel until he gets a room. I can leave that to you can't I? He should arrive at exactly when the ship reaches Liverpool, but suppose it takes 21–22 days.

I have given Nazaroff Mark's address & am also sending him by post (c/o you) a letter I hope to get at Delhi introducing him to Lanchester, a great architect, who is a great helper of lame ducks over styles (according to a great friend of his whom I know, Sir Geoffrey de Montmorency, Private Secy. To the Viceroy). When I get home I will do my best to help him to get a job as a prospecting geologist for some mining or oil company, preferably Belgian or French, as he speaks excellent French & wants particularly to go to Africa. I applied to 20 different British firms last year but without result – the market is over-stocked.

Nazaroff did good work against the Bolo's in Turkestan in 1919–20 & since he has been in Kashgar has regularly helped the Consulate General in secret service matters as well as interpreting & translating documents etc. Until my time he received little or no payment for his help.

Nazaroff will hand you a short chit from me by introduction, but this is just to warn you of his coming so that you won't be taken by surprize.

Your affectionate son
Clarmont

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[*While Skrine is verbosely petulant in justifying his delay in arriving home, this letter to his mother does fill in some detail about the kinds of matters which legitimately demanded his attention upon his return from Kashgar. The comments toward the end about Stein are of particular interest, given the glimpses we have seen about his interaction with Stein during the time in Kashgar.*]

Hotel Majestic
Bombay
10/11/24

[*handwritten*] Darling Mum

Excuse the typewriter again, but I must show off (and practise on) my new typewriter, the first I have ever owned. It is a delightful toy, a Portable Remington which fits into an incredibly small space, only weighs about 15 lbs. and yet writes every bit as well as a full-sized machine. Still more remarkable, its keyboard is exactly the same size as that of the big one and one's style isn't a bit cramped as I found was the case with the 'Corona' which I used to take about with me on tour in Kashgaria. That much-advertised and much better known machine has other faults too which this one hasn't. I hope to commit the whole of my book to paper by means of this little Remington, which I can use equally well on board a train or on the ship, a great blessing. I intend to do a lot of work on the book during the voyage home in the intervals of nursing the sea-sick D. I think I told you that I have got separate but adjoining cabins (single-berth) on the Promenade Deck of the 'Pilsna' (Lloyd-Triestino); the cabins are furnished with proper brass bedsteads with spring mattresses, almirahs, writing tables etc as cabins should be, not like the cubby-holes fitted with coffins which the P and O have the cheek to supply in return for the exorbitant fares charged. Why people go by the P and O at all I can't think; no other steamship line in the world dares to treat is passengers as they do. It's just that we British are a lot of sheep and do what 'everybody' does. People go by the P and O because they know ther[e] will be lots of people they know on board, and for no other reason.

I'm very sorry our not arriving till nearly Christmas has upset you all. But if you look in my letters of July and August you will find at least one exposition of our plans which will show how difficult it wd. be for us to get home a fortnight earlier (the Ll. Tr. only sail twice a month). I did hope earlier in the year to get home in November, but that was when I thought Lyall was coming out via Russia which would have meant (if he cd. have done it) arriving early in August; this wd. have enabled us to get away about the middle of Aug and home by the end of Novemeber [*sic*]. I can't make out why you were puzzled by our allowing 6–7 weeks for the journey from Kashgar to Srinagar. You can't have read the diary of the journey up in '22 which I compiled with so much labour and had typed up for you – that made it clear enough what a long journey it is. We took 48 days going up and 52 coming down, the difference being due (1) to my very important explorations on the west side of th[e] Gex [*sic, read* Gez] Valley (2) to the little trip we took into Nagar State, a trip whi[ch] it would have been a sin to miss and which we may never get a chance of doing again. These two detours took up 9 extra days altogether, but we hurried over other parts of the journey and saved 5 of them. There remains the month we are spending in India

now before sailing. In making our plans we supposed that Iris would be at Quetta – that was the latest news we had until reaching Gilgit. As we had a lot of kit at Quetta which we wanted to overhaul and get rid of some of it, we decided to go there as well as to Dehra and Delhi. This made it impossible for us to catch the Lloyd–Triestino boat of the 15th Nov. and I took (and paid half the price of) our passages by the Pilsna sailing 1st Dec. When we found that Iris was not going to be at Quetta, we cancelled our visit to that place letting the kit go hang, for the immense railway journey each way made it not worth while if Iris was not to be there. But it was too late to scrap our Pilsna tickets and go by the 15th Nov. boat, because in the meantime I had received a wire from Foreign saying that the Foreign Secretary 'particularly wanted to see me' on 22nd November. What it's about I don't know; I hope I'm not 'on the mat' about something; but there it is.

I must say, I think it is a little unfair to expect us to upset our plans and incur loss and maybe lose chances we may never get again in an effort to suit Iris and Bunbury's plans. The latter, in the first place, ought not to have gone home at all this year, for the third year running; if he doesn't stick to his work better than that he'll never make himself worthy of Iris. In the second place they completely changed their plans and arrangements at least twice, news of which reached us of course far too late – how were we to know that if we cut our programme short and hurried home to see Iris and B before they sailed there would not be a third change, Bunbury perhaps staying in India and Iris sailing to join him in Novemeber [*sic*] and crossing us on the high seas? As for the unseasonableness of our arrival, there's nothing in that; December is a bad month in which to arrive, but November is worse, and anyhow, if one worries about weather, the later one arrives the better, because there's less of the English winter to get through! As a matter of fact the weather doesn't worry me in the least; I know it will be disgusting whatever time we arrive, but it won't make the slightest difference to either of us; D won't be any less miserable if it's fine nor I less happy if it's foggy, cold and wet when we arrive. Of course, what is at the back of N. B.'s mind – and perhaps of 147's too, Darling Mum? – is that we ought to be more in a hurry to get home and see our respective families after so long an absence. We – I speak for myself at any rate – are in a hurry; I'm simply counting the hours – but when one has been away for five years and is going to be home for more than one and a half, a fortnight or even a month one way or the other doesn't make much difference; especially as in the present case I allowed for the month's delay when I applied for leave, that is to say I asked for one month more than I otherwise would have. So that we shall be home December '24 to the end of June or beginning of July '26 instead of Nov. '24 to the beginning of June '26, that's all.

We had intended to stay three nights at Venice, which neither of us has seen before, and also a day or two in Paris for D to buy some clothes, but now because of Iris we are only stopping two nights in Venice and not in Paris at all, so we hope to reach London on or about the 20th Dec. Of course we will wire exact time of arrival as soon as we can work out the journey exactly. At present we're having a hectic three days at Bombay, at least I am, D is less busy. I am (1) extracting Rs. 1200 out of a Bombay firm for Govt.; I may have to prosecute, hence it has been necessary for me to come here some time before going on leave so as to carry the matter through (2) having various enjoyable interviews with my American dentist (I got some 2 ½ years' arrears of dentistry work cleared off at Srinagar, but by no means all) (3) selling several thousand rupees worth of Russian gold brought from Kashgar, partly for myself and partly for other people (4) clearing off various arrears of business with Lloyd's Bank, settling accounts with shops, etc. – and various other things. You've no idea when one has been away from civilization for two and a half years, what a lot of things there are to do when you get back. I need

hardly say we wouldn't have inflicted on ourselves the unpleasantness of 2 nights and a day in the train each way, to say nothing of the expense, if it hadn't been a case of dire necessity. We couldn't put our stay in Bombay off till just before we sail, because I may be kept longer either at Dehra or Delhi or both than I expect.

Very interesting hearing about your talk with Sir A. Stein. I hope (and am sure) you were nice to him, for he is a real friend and well-wisher, and to have a man like that, one of the two or three greatest living explorers and archaeologists, as one's champion is something to be proud of and grateful for. He is tremendously interested in my little bit of exploration in the Shiwakte region and in my archaeological finds at Khotan; it is at his earnest recommendation that I am spending several days at Dehra with the Survey people, and in return for his encouragement and help I am bringing home (at considerable expense) six cases of antiques, mostly from Khotan and beyond. Stein, you tell me, is arranging with Hinks of the R.G.S. for me to give a lecture; this is very nice, and I hope to be able to do so before Easter, but I shall have to get a little practice first – public lecturing isn't a thing the average person can make a success of at the first attempt. It is a much greater honour to lecture to the R G S than to the Central Asian Society; the former is a real 'learned society' of world-wide importance, the latter isn't. But the same difficulty about Etherton will apply to the R G S; I am not going to risk being patronized publicly by him, and if he has the bad taste to be present I shall have to make it a condition that Chairman does not ask him to speak.

I'm rather worried about what Mr. Rieu said to you about my publishing myself as 'C G in Ch Turkestan'. Of course I can't do that; I ceased to be CG when I handed over to Lyall. He will understand that, I am sure; but what worries me is that he should rely, for the success of the book, on its having been written by a Govt official. That means that in spite of my clear statements to him that the book will not contain any politics or any information which could only have come to me in my official capacity, he still expects me to write the same sort of book as a journalist who had been at Kashgar might have written. I can't possibly do that. I hold very strong views on the use by officials of their position for the purpose of making money or advertizing themselves by writing for the Press. Apart from that, I have got to obtain the permission of the [*the letter continues and is signed at the top of the first page, next to the return address*] G of I to publish under my own name at all; I may not be successful (it is one of the things I am going to Delhi about) in which case the book will have to be anonymous; if I do get permission, the typescript will of course have to be submitted to the G of I for approval before publication, and they will not allow political stuff. However, I shall be seeing Rieu before long now, and will have it out with him.

[*handwritten;*] Only another 6 weeks Hurrah!

Your loving son
Clarmont

***

[*While working with the military intelligence staff in Simla, Skrine apparently was asked to comment on a memorandum Gen. Pigot had submitted on 15 July 1924, after his return from hunting in Central Asia. The observations about routes and issues of larger strategy which it brought up are important, but, for all his respect for Pigot, Skrine chose to disagree with a lot of what the General had said. I am not sure that Skrine's conclusions about the Bolsheviks' 'losing ground' are consistent with his more recent intelligence reports cited above, though his overall assessment of the prospects for an invasion was sound and, interestingly, seems to coincide with some of what his father had been saying years before. Reproduced from copies in BL IOLR, MSS EurF 154/39.*]

Simla, 24th Nov. 1924

D.O. Confidential

Gen Pigot's Note on the Gilgit and Chitral routes.

Dear Parsons

With reference to our conversation at Delhi on the 20th instant, I forward herewith in duplicate a memorandum I have compiled, commenting on Gen. Pigor's arguments in light of experience gained by me during the last two and a half years as Consul General Kashgar.

In my Annual Report for the two years 1922-23 together, sent in from Kashgar towards the end of August last, you will find the results of my observations regarding the two routes in question and the general political situation set out in greater detail. The paragraphs of the Report which might be worth your while glancing through are the following: Paras. 4-8, 12-18, 21 and 24-29.

I am sincerely

[initialed]

[*to:*] Major Gen. E. B. Parsons
D[e]p[ut]y S[e]c[retar]y F[oreign] & P[olitical]

--

Memorandum on Gen. Pigot's note dated July 15th 1924.

1. Gen. Pigot's argument may be summed up as follows: An early Bolshevik occupation of the Province of Sinkiang is inevitable; this will mean a common Indo-Russian frontier from the Mintaka Pass to the Tibet border. War may result, in which case the more British officers we have who know the country the better. At present sportsmen and other persons not travelling on duty are confined to the Leh–Yarkand route; this is too long to allow of visiting the Chinese Pamirs, getting some shooting and returning within the same leave season. The Gilgit and Chitral routes, which are shorter, easier and cheaper, should therefore be opened to British officers.

2. The reasons given for asserting the inevitability of an early Russian occupation of Kashgaria are a mass of fallacies.

(i) Whatever may have been the tendency before the War, no one who has studied Bolshevik Russia would say that she is now 'an Eastern rather than a European Power.' In any case, the mere desire of Russia to expand, if it exists, does not mean that expansion in a particular direction is within the range of practical politics.

(ii) To occupy the narrow strip of the Pamir plateau which lies within Chinese territory would be easy enough. To debouch on to the Kashgarian plain in face of serious armed opposition would be a very different matter. During the last two and a half years I have made a close topographical study of the area in question, and I have no hesitation in saying that the routes connecting the Chinese Pamirs with Kashgar, Yangi Hissar and Yarkand traverse as difficult a country as can be found anywhere in the world, consisting as it does almost exclusively of ice-clad ranges seamed by gorges from eight to eighteen thousand feet deep. The Chinese would probably make no attempt to hold the easy passes on the Pamirs frontier, but they most certainly could and would hold the Gez Dara, the Ulugh Art and the passes on the Tashkurghan–Chchiklik–Yangi Hissar route.

(iii) The mineral resources of Chinese Turkestan are by no means 'untouched' by the Chinese. Here again Gen. Pigot is thinking in terms of pre-war Russia. The methods of the Chinese may be

primitive, but they are probably at least as efficient as those of the Central Asian Soviets, which have allowed the once rich and flourishing mines of Ferghana and Semirechia to fall into decay. In any case, a country with no railways or even motor roads across the tremendous mountain barriers which separate it from the rest of the world is not going to be developed by a Government like Soviet Russia. How are the minerals, and a fortiori the fruits, of Kashgaria to be put on the market without communications which would take many years and a vast capital expenditure to establish?

3. The U.S.S.R. is if anything losing ground in Transcaspia. Last spring the Red Army of Turkestan was reduced from 70,000 to about 30,000 troops. The Kirghiz and Usbeg Nationalist movement, in alliance with the clerical 'Ulema' party, has made great strides during the last two years, especially in Semirechia where large numbers of Russian colonists have been evicted by the Kirghiz Nationalists. Finally, the Turkestan Soviet is as desperate for money as Moscow is. We may presume therefore that the Central Soviet will for a long time to come be far too much preoccupied with maintaining its position in Central Asia to think of further expansion. Moreover, any further territorial aggrandisement at the expense of China would hopelessly compromise Russia with the Powers, especially Japan, which is not going to sit still while Russia takes more of Asia than she has got already.

4. I am not qualified to comment on Gen. Pigot's arguments regarding the danger of a Russian attempt on the N. frontier of India from a base in the Pamirs. Perhaps, however, as a layman and with all due deference to expert military opinion, I may be permitted to wonder how anybody, who has seen or even studied intelligently the Leh and Gilgit routes, can continue to believe in the possibility of a Russian invasion of India via Kashmir.

4. [*sic*] Turning to the particular question of the use by British officers of routes to Kashgaria other than via Leh, Gen. Pigot is correct in saying that the Gilgit and Chitral routes are easier, shorter and cheaper than the latter. The policy of exclusion in the case of the Gilgit road (I have no information as regards Chitral) is presumably based on political grounds connected with the susceptibilities of the Mirs of Hunza and Nagar. I stayed for three or four days last month with each of these Mirs, and I must say I did not find in either of them any desire to exclude British officers in search of sport. In fact the Mir of Hunza hinted to me plainly that he thought the last Political Agent, Col. Lorimer, was unnecessarily strict in refusing permission to use the route. I received the impression in both States that the liberal cooly- and pony-hire paid by the occasional official travellers was a welcome addition to the scanty resources of the people. Of course, large parties demanding from 50 to 100 coolies would be unpopular, especially at seed-time and harvest; but I venture to think that if the pre-war practice of allowing three parties a year with strictly limited baggage to use the Gilgit route were reverted to, there would not be any objections either on the part of the Kashmir Durbar or on that of the Mirs of Hunza and Nagar.

5. The facts regarding Gen. Pigot's journey from Kashgar to India by the Chitral route are as follows. In December last he applied, both through me and direct to the Government of India, for permission to travel down by Gilgit in April or May. It was urgently necessary for him to be in India by June, so that the Leh route which does not open till July was out of the question. No reply was received to either of the applications, and in March Gen. Pigot asked me to help him go down by the only other possible route, Chitral, at once. It struck me that it would be a good thing for an experienced soldier and traveller like Gen. Pigot to see and report on the little-known route through Afghan Wakhan, if it could be managed; I accordingly arranged personally with the Afghan Envoy at Yarkand (who had for more than a year been granting transit visas for Wakhan to large numbers of pilgrims from Kashgar and

Yarkand) that he should affix his visa to General Pigot's passport. He was most polite and obliging and raised no objections whatever; from which I concluded that he was sure of his ground and considered it unnecessary to refer the matter to Kabul. At the same time he hinted clearly enough that he was doing it as a special favour to Gen. Pigot and the British Consulate-General, and he certainly did not commit himself or his Government to permitting any future British travellers to cross Wakhan, much less to proceed to Kabul.

6. The circumstances were thus exceptionally favourable for Gen. Pigot, who accordingly minimizes the political as well as the physical difficulties. He says 'I cannot see what trouble the Britisher can meet in Wakhan, however much he may look for it.' He does not know that the Bolsheviks were out after him in the Wakhan and only missed him by half a day. Last September I met on the Pamirs, returning from Mecca, the old British Aksakal (headman) of Maralbashi whom Gen. Pigot helped over the Kukturuk Pass in April, when it was deep in snow. The Aksakal told me that on the Wakhan side of the pass he and his party separated from Gen. Pigot who pushed ahead towards the Baroghil. The same evening a party of eight Russian soldiers under an officer from the neighbouring important post of Kizil Robat appeared at the Aksakal's camp and were much annoyed to find that Gen. Pigot was not there. The Aksakal had the sense to put the Bolsheviks on a wrong scent, telling them that Gen. Pigot was going to Kabul, and nothing more was heard of them. If they had found Gen. Pigot, what would have been easier for them than to have arrested him on the pretext that he had been caught on the Russian side of the frontier, reconnoitring the defences of Kizil Robat? The Bolsheviks are adepts at making diplomatic capital out of anything which they can construe as hostile activity on the part of a British officer.

7. It would seem advisable, therefore, to leave the Chitral-Wakhan route alone, and to limit travellers to the Gilgit and Leh routes. As regards the general question of the advisability of British officers travelling in the regions in question, I can verify from my own experience General Pigot's remarks about the friendliness and respect felt by the mountain peoples for the British Raj. These feelings are largely due to the excellent impression left by traveller after traveller, men like Younghusband, Deasy, Stein and many others. From this point of view the more British officers <u>of the right stamp</u> we have in those parts the better. More than three parties a year suggested above would, however, raise the suspicions of the Sinkiang Government and cause complications for the Consulate General at Kashgar.

[signed] C. P. Skrine

I[ndian] C[ivil] S[ervice]

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Simla, 27 November 1924

Just a hurried line which sh[oul]d reach you a week before we do, to say that everything has gone splendidly & my visits to Delhi & Simla have been most useful and gratifying.

(1) About Etherton – Denys Bray, the Foreign Secretary, had wired to me at Srinagar that he 'particularly wanted to see me'. When I saw him at Delhi it transpired that the Summons was about E. & that what the Secretary had to say was that 'they', i.e. the Gov't. of India 'owed me a very real debt of gratitude' for my showing up of Etherton. He evidently meant it, for he used those words or similar ones no less than 4 times during 2 interviews. He was really very nice to me indeed.

(2) Here at Simla I have been handing over my survey work and panoramas in the Kaying–Shiwakte–Karatash–Kungur region to Major Mason of the Survey of India who runs their 'Drawing Office' up here. He is <u>the</u> expert in the S[urvey] of I[ndia] about Kashgaria and the Pamirs & he has been

tremendously interested quite excited in fact about my work which he is now incorporating in the S. of I. map of Ch. Turkestan. As I expected he has found many minor inaccuracies in my plane-table work, but he says he will be able to put my map in bodily & is going to have specially printed for me a large-scale map of the hitherto unexplored region in question, from my map and photos, which the R.G.S. will be very interested to see & which will constitute my contribution as a Fellow. They will certainly ask me to lecture, he says.

(3) I have been 'sweating blood' all these last 3 or 4 days with Capt. Prinsep of the General Staff over his new edition of the Military Route Book of Ch[inese] Turkestan. I have given them careful & accurate route reports on 8 different new routes & supplied corrections for 5 or 6 reports they already have. I have also answered innumerable questions concerned with military & administrative questions in Ch. Turkestan, & altogether the General Staff are most grateful to me. The boss up here, Col. somebody or other said 'I wish more of our fellows in remote countries gave us such useful information!' [...]

***

[*At the same time, Skrine was already working on obtaining permission to publish his planned book on his time in Kashgar. All the documentation relating to the clearance he was given was collected in a file (BL IOLR L/P&S/11/264) entitled 'Kashgar: Book by Mr. G.[sic] P. Skrine,' in which the opening document is Skrine's formal request dated Delhi, 28 November 1924, addressed to Denys de S. Bray, Secretary to the Government of India in the Foreign and Political Department:*]

Dear Mr. Bray,

You will doubtless remember my speaking to you last Friday on the subject of a book I propose to write next year about Kashgar.

Some time ago Messrs. Methuen and Co., the publishers, wrote to me asking whether I could write for them a book 'somewhat in the manner of Mr. E. V. Lucas' 'Wanderer' books on the subject of Central Asia, to be written in a light and interesting vein, bringing in items of historical, archaeological and artistic interest'. I agreed provisionally, subject to the approval of the Government of India.

I need hardly say that I would keep scrupulously within the bounds of official discretion and would avoid all subjects directly connected with politics or military strategy. Unavoidable references to the Chinese administration and the present state of the country would be of such a nature as to improve rather than impair our relations with the Chinese Government, while anything to which other Governments such as Afghanistan or Russia could possibly take exception would be rigidly excluded. I have a large quantity of material in the shape of personal diaries of travel, photographs, notes on archaeology and art, scientific observations, collections of Turki and Kirghiz popular sayings poetry and folklore, and so on, and I would confine myself to these. I would further submit the proofs to the India Office for approval before the final correction.

In these circumstances I trust that there will be no objection on the part of the Government of India to the publication of the book in question.

Yours sincerely

S[igned] C. P. Skrine

[*The initial response from Bray, dated 18 December was signed for him by A.E.B. Parsons and indicated that publication would be allowed if proofs were submitted. Naturally all this had to go through the India Office bureaucracy in London too, where in a memo dated 14 January 1925, L.D. Wakely wrote:*]

Mr. Skrine spoke to me about this proposal when he called a week or two ago. He was clearly anxious not to do anything that would be considered improper, & fully alive to the necessity of avoiding anything approaching controversial political matter. There seems to be no reason to think that there would be anything intrinsically objectionable in a book limited as he proposes, & having regard to the lines followed in other cases it seems hardly possible (if it was thought desirable) to object simply on the ground that he is a government servant writing on a subject within the sphere of his official duties. But the F[oreign] O[ffice] should presumably be given the opportunity of commenting, & of reading the proofs.

[*This then was cleared all the way up the line.*]

***

[*Once back in Britain on leave, as we learn from various letters, Skrine was busy preparing and giving talks based on his experiences and writing his book. On 21 March 1925, he wrote his mother about the success of the lectures for the Central Asia Society and the Royal Geographical Society, on respectively, 'The Roads to Kashgar' and 'The Alps of Kungur'. On 11 April, he mentioned to her taking his botanical specimens to the Botanical Gardens in Edinburgh, where, apparently, at least one of the plants was previously unknown to them. On the same day, 11 April 1925, he wrote his father (BL IOLR MSS EurF154/11):*]

[...] Finally there is the question which seems to me very much to the point – on what am I to lecture the Irish Literary Society? Not on 'The Roads to Kashgar' or 'The Alps of Kungur' or our travel in general; the Society as such has nothing whatever to do with any of these though no doubt the individual members would like to see pretty pictures as everyone does. The only subject on which I could properly lecture to the I.L.S. is on the poetry and folklore of Kashgaria, and this I would like to do very much next autumn, say about the beginning of November. I am as a matter of fact lecturing to the R[oyal] Asiatic on Nov. 10th on this very subject. As you know, I have studied and can speak and write the Eastern Turki language, and have collected a certain amount of ballad and love poetry, stories and folk-lore at Kashgar, Yarkand and Khotan; this seems to me to be a particularly suitable subject on which to discourse to a Society which is both Irish and Literary [...] I will have to do a lot of work at the School of Oriental Studies on the subject before I am [to] lecture to anybody [...]

***

[*Already by 29 November 1925, he had completed much of his book manuscript and was confronting the fact that it was too long. As he explained in another letter to his mother, dated 17 January 1926:*]

[...] The labour of writing down and rewriting whole chapters proved, as usual, greater than I expected and it took me a fortnight's hard labour reducing the MS from 140,000 w[or]ds to 125,000. I had previously cut out 10,000 words, so that altogether I have snipped 25,000 words out of 150,000 or one sixth of what I had written – a month's work, plus three weeks' for rewriting and editing. That comes of being an amateur – I started off on too generous a scale for my material, never dreaming that I had too much and only thinking of how to pad it out to 90-100,000 words. Anyhow, the book has been greatly improved by this last recension and the removal or rewriting of the weakest sections. For instance, I had included most of the account I wrote at Kashgar for private circulation of our journey up from Gilgit in '22; it was in diary form and far too detailed, totalling 23,000 w[or]ds for the Baltit–Kashgar section alone. I cut these down first to 17,000 words and now to 13,000, putting it into narrative form. My first chapter, introductory, I reduced from 11,000 to 7,400, and so on [...]

[*He goes on to indicate that Doris is not happy with his being so absorbed in writing the book. He writes he is using some of her letters* 'but fewer than I originally intended because I had so much other material.*' However, he also was paying*

personally to include a color reproduction of her sketch of a Kyrgyz girl as the frontispiece (Fig. 54, p. 111 above).]

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[*Meanwhile, Skrine had been in correspondence with Aurel Stein, who was back in England and had attended Skrine's lectures. On 14 December 1925, Skrine wrote Stein (reproduced with permission of The Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, Stein Collection MSS 107, fol. 60r, v) asking whether he would write a short preface or introduction to his book.*:]

Bradbury's Hotel
North Berwick
Haddingtonshire

14.12.25

My dear Stein

I was very much honoured and flattered when in spite of your many preoccupations you not only found time to attend my Asiatic Society lecture the other day, but made an extremely kind speech about it afterwards. I felt then that my labour had not been wasted. It was not a very large audience, and if you had not been there, to say nothing of Sir George Macartney & Sir D[enison] Ross, it would have been a disappointing show; as it was, I would have come twice as far to lecture to such a distinguished gathering.

Well, your kindness ought to content me but it merely emboldens me to ask for more. I am writing to you to ask whether you could possibly find time, some time before next March, to write a short preface or introduction to my book, 'The Far West of Cathay'. It is a great deal to ask, and I would not dare to if I didn't know what a kindly interest you take in my studies of 'Innermost Asia' and my attempts to tell the public something about it in an amateur, popular way. I look upon you very much as you do upon Hsuang Tsang, and upon your books as a sort of Bible as regards the Central Asian countries which have such a fascination for me. I quote you more than anyone else in my book, both in the travel part of it and in the sections dealing with legends, superstitions, art etc. It would lend the book a cachet and an authority – undeserved, no doubt – which it would otherwise lack, if you introduced it to the public in a few kind words. I know I mustn't ask you for more than that. I th[us] hope that you may feel inclined to accede to my request. I am taking the liberty of posting to you spare typescript copies of my two chapters on 'Archaeology, art, legends, & superstitions', and 'Customs, folklore & poetry' respectively. My remarks on archaeology are of course brief, as I know little or nothing about it; I really do little more than summarize one or two of your conclusions and refer the reader to your works, including your 'Innermost Asia' paper in the Geographical Journal. The rest of the two chapters is based mostly on my own collections and observations, also a good deal on Grenard's 'La Haute Asie'.

The rest of the book consists of 13 chapters, 11 of which are more or less lightly-written accounts (partly in diary form) of our various travels, which extended to a distance of about 4,300 miles, including the Srinagar–Kashgar journey each way. The remaining 2 chapters are about life and work at Kashgar, and conditions in Southern Sinkiang generally. There are of course no politics in the book. Generally speaking, my book is an unexaggerated travel-book – I try not to embroider and romance & make the most of difficulties and 'adventures'. I have not quite finished my last chapter, but I think I shall have the whole book in the publishers' hands by next week, & it ought to be out in April.

If perhaps you would rather not commit yourself to writing a preface until you see the whole book, I will send you a proof copy in due course and try to arrange with the publishers to leave space for the preface. The trouble is that they don't have 'galley-proofs' nowadays – only one set of page-proofs &

Methuen's are insisting on my giving them the whole of my matter, once and for all.

Hoping that you will forgive the liberty I am taking, and that we shall meet again soon, I am

Yours very sincerely

C. P. Skrine

P.S. My wife and I are going for a small motor-tour with our two-seater in Morocco next month, leaving town about 7th Jan. I want to study French methods of dealing with frontier tribes.

[*Stein replied on 13 January, the occasionally illegible carbon copy of his letter reproduced with permission of The Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, Stein Collection MSS 107, fols. 62-63v. Since it proved impossible to receive in time from Stein the foreword he offered he might write, Skrine arranged instead for it to be written by Francis Younghusband, famed for his explorations in the Central Asian mountains and his role in the bloody British invasion of Tibet in 1904.*]

GPO c/o Postmaster, Rai[]in[g] [Kel.]
Dehra Dun Jan. 13, 1926

My dear Skrine

Your full letter of Dec. 14 reached me last week at Dehra on my return from a short tour and the typewritten copy you were kind enough to send me of your forthcoming book arrived via the British Museum Sunday ago just before I left for some mapwork here. I hope you will kindly excuse if I did not reply to your letter at once and now do so but briefly. I am exceedingly pressed by work and have been so ever since I left England in the third week of November having had to read plenty of proofs of my big publication […] on board [?] of an overcrowded mail box.

Let me assure you that I feel much honoured by your kind invitation that I should write a preface or introduction for your forthcoming book, and also that I am fully convinced of its deserving to be welcomed very heartily by those who like Macartney and myself are deeply attached to the New Dominion. Did I possess the great gift of a facile pen – and the perhaps even greater boon of full leisure & freedom I should be most glad to promise you a brief envoi as it were, at once, for I must think it a privilege to express my thorough appreciation of the excellent use to which you have put your stay in the country and your journeys to and fro. It is a real pleasure too if I could be of some little help to a valued friend such as you.

As things are, I can only say in this hasty note that if the claims of my manifold urgent tasks permit I shall do all that is possible to write a short introductory note before the middle of February so that it may reach you early in March. If this were too late for your publisher I should be grateful for your letting me know at once eventually by a cabled word (Address Centrasia Delhi). For my time is exceedingly scarce now. In addition to having still hundreds of 4to pages of print to inspect with the care needed, I have to prepare for a short but very interesting archaeol. tour beyond the Peshawar border for which at last the long desired opportunity seems assured. I am starting it by March.

Wishing you and Mrs. Skrine a very happy in Morocco post all that eggnog[?] in the New Year.

Yours very sincerely

A. Stein

***

[*When Skrine finally submitted the proofs to the officials in the India Office for their review, they passed muster, one memo, written to J. P. Gibson by 'D.T.M.' (Monteath?) on 27 April 1926 commenting with reference to the markings Skrine had himself made on possibly questionable passages:*]

He has done his marking on the most extreme basis & I don't think there is a single passage that calls for criticism – much less alteration – on the score of being 'political.' It is light reading tho' there's a good deal of it [...]

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N. Over the Kepek Pass and down to the Chimgan River 736
O. The attempt on the southeastern ridge of Kongur 737

Appendix 3: Daniel C. Waugh, *Etherton at Kashgar* **(reprint of 2007 essay)** 743

Appendix 1a. A guide to Skrine's photographs

Skrine was a serious photographer, even though, as the evidence above illustrates, his effort to document what he saw in Hunza and Kashgaria was not always successful, the failures not necessarily attributable to a lack of skill. Apart from the details about equipment and exposures which he recorded in his diary and in writing to Aurel Stein, he wrote a short appendix for his book to provide some guidance for others who might undertake photography in Central Asia (*CCA* 1925, pp. 297-29). At least one of the reprints of the book deleted the foldout mountain panoramas of the original edition and the given appendix. While on his 'tours', Skrine would develop his pictures in order to monitor the results. In Kashgar he regularly printed photos (including enlargements) to send home and to his colleagues. In the first years after leaving Kashgar, he was 'shopping around' his best images and succeeded in placing many of them in publications. Presumably a lot of the prints we now have are ones he had sent home from Kashgar or were produced during his leave in London when he was lecturing and preparing his book. He recognized that professional printing and enlarging could produce better results than he himself achieved. However, when we look closely now at the extant prints (either as separate images or in publications), it is easy to see how there was some wear and tear on the negatives – scratches, dirt spots, etc. – which had not been eliminated. The glass plates in many cases have marked deterioration of the emulsion around the edges; nitrate negatives often are somewhat washed out around the edges. That said, it is easy to see that he had a very good eye and considerable technical ability, especially for the mountain and landscape photography of which he was particularly proud.

My purpose in this book has been to use Skrine's photos (and some by others) to complement the transcribed texts, where possible juxtaposing the pictures to specific evidence in the texts regarding when and where he took them. A 'photo album' of Skrine's work, which this is not, would require going carefully through all his negatives and arranging for high quality and properly processed scans or prints, in addition to using the best of his extant prints for which we no longer have the negatives. For my project I spent some time in the main collections of Skrine's photos, at the RGS and BL, taking notes on all the prints and negatives I could locate and then ordering but a selection of copies for possible use in this book. Many of his pictures, reproduced here in small size, have been scanned from his publications of the 1920s, which is sufficient for my limited goal of illustration. A full catalogue of his photos is still a desideratum, but one that would require additional work in those collections and possibly one or two other repositories. Since I began this project more than two decades ago, the BL and RGS collections have been re-organized, and photos re-numbered in cataloguing. In both cases, the collections were moved from one physical repository to another: the BL India Office collections now in the new building of the British Library, and the RGS collection of the photos through one temporary move within the RGS building to a permanent home in its new wing (the nitrate negatives still stored off site). Since I have not had the opportunity to do yet another thorough review of Skrine's photos, taking advantage what I have since learned about many of them, it has been difficult to coordinate my current knowledge with notes about images of his for which I do not have a picture. It is clear though that much remains to be done: many of the images lack correct identification, and many of them are extant only as negatives. The online listing for his photos in the BL is incomplete and includes no images; and the cataloguing at the RGS so far encompasses only a small fraction of his material from his Kashgar years, in the first instance the images for which I ordered copies two decades ago.

This appendix offers material which may assist in a future project to catalogue and make available all of Skrine's photos from Hunza and Kashgaria. There are two parts, the first an extended chronologically organized tabulation, with thumbnail images, of all those photos for which I have an image, be it from publications or directly from copies made for me by the repositories. The second part is facsimiles of the photo lists Skrine himself compiled soon after his departure from Kashgar when he was attempting to place his photos in various serial publications. Those lists (and the related correspondence, which I do not copy here) are from the Stewart archive material which will be deposited with Skrine's other papers housed in the BL. Skrine's own captioning, even in the absence of an image, is often helpful for identifying the images themselves. However, not all the captions he wrote or pasted to prints are consistent or even accurate.

C. P. Skrine's photographs 1922-1924:

A draft tabulation for reference, arranged chronologically

Included here are only those pictures for which I have copies of whatever quality that are adequate for identification; those copies have been reduced to thumbnail size with limited effort to process them for greater fidelity to the original pictures. A few of the photos were taken by others, not by Skrine himself, as specified in the notes, but they have been included here in that they document the Kashgar years of the Skrines.

The chronology established here is based on my best efforts to match the photos with the evidence in Skrine's writings and in a few specific captions he himself wrote. In many instances, it is possible to specify an exact date and the circumstances in which a photo was taken. In other cases, all I can do is provide a range of dates and hypothesize about the location. The obvious example is photos taken in Kashgar, where it is generally impossible to know an exact date, even though details may suggest one season of the year. Each descriptive entry identifies first the source for the thumbnail image, either a current archival copy or a publication. The table then includes information I currently have on any other publication of the image and archival numbers of additional copies. Where I cite Skrine's 'later listings', I am referring to the ones reproduced below from his correspondence about placing the photos in various publications. The thumbnails from the RGS and BL collections are reproduced here with permission of those repositories.

Date of photo	Thumbnail image	Descriptive notes and references (source of thumbnail cited first)
[May-June 1922]		RGS CPS/00013. Srinagar, on the left the Sher Garhi, the Maharaja's palace on the Jhelum River. If taken when heading to Kashgar in 1922, after Skrines arrival on 28 April, but photo could be from a different visit in another year.
14 June 1922		*L'Illustration*, 23 October 1926, p. [450]. The Skrines crossing the Astor River at Ramghat on a cable car, since the bridge was washed out. Photo apparently taken by Gerard Price, not by Skrine. Cropped from fuller version published in *The Times of India Illustrated Weekly*, 20 February 1927, p. 17; and in RGS print PR/088656.
14 June 1922		*CCA* 1925, facing p. 16. The crossing of the Astor River at Ramghat, in the cable car 'our Indian Khitmagar'.
ca. 15 June 1922		*CCA* 1925, facing p. 36. Nanga Parbat from Bunji (also published in *The Sphere*, 30 July 1937, pp. 22-23). The second shot is from *L'Illustration*, 16 October 1926, p. 416 (also published GJ 1925a, unn. pl. 2; *Times of India Illustrated Weekly*, 6 March 1927, inside unn. spread, with wrong (transposed) caption, the correct one on the previous page). Prints in RGS, nos. 88629, 88660; BL IOLR Photo 920/1 (141).

20[21]-23[24] June 1922		RGS CPS/00009. 'Baltit and the Hispar Snows'. The Baltit castle, residence of the Mir, is on the left, probably taken on the day of the Skrines' arrival in Hunza.
20[21]-23[24] June 1922		*Die Koralle*, September 1928, pp. 274-275. Panoramic view of the Hunza Valley, the castle of Baltit on left. For an almost exact modern, color equivalent taken in 2019, see Kreutzmann 2020, p. 34.
20[21]-23[24] June 1922		*Die Koralle*, September 1928, p. 276.Telephoto view of the Nagar valley, probably taken from Baltit. Vantage point somewhat to the right and lower from where Skrine took the panoramic view of Hunza (previous picture).
20[21]-23[24] June 1922		*CCA* 1925, facing p. 20. Baltit Castle in its context from below. It seems likely most of Skrine's photos of Baltit and Hunza (as opposed to Nagar) date from his first visit there on the way to Kashgar in 1922. Also published in *The Sphere*, 12 July 1958, pp. 22-23.
20[21]-23[24] June 1922		*CCA* 1925, facing p. 26. Baltit Castle from below. For a somewhat closer but analogous view, see the 1954 photo in Kreutzmann 2020, p. 370.
20[21]-23[24] June 1922		RGS 088650. The Mir of Hunza taking his siesta on veranda overlooking Altit.
20[21]-23[24] June 1922		Scan from nitrate neg. in Stewart collection. 'Mir Muhammad Nazim Khan, Mir of Hunza, with his two eldest sons & his grandsons on the roof of the ancient castle at Baltit.' Prints also in BL IOLR Photo 920/1 (72).; RGS X0038/018280.
20[21]-23[24] June 1922		*CCA* 1925 facing p. 8. View of Rakaposhi and the Hunza Valley probably taken from the vicinity of the Mir's castle.
20[21]-23[24] June 1922		Altit Castle from below. Scan from loose tear sheet in BL IOLR EurF 154/8. Not certain it is a Skrine photo; no evidence so far of another of his publications that might have included it.
[26 June 1922]		*CCA* 1925, facing p. 28. In the Hunza gorges between Ata'abad and Gulmit. The second picture is from *CCA* 1925, facing p. 16, showing surely the same stretch of the path as in the preceding photo but shot from on it at the end one sees in that picture and looking back. A print is in RGS X0038/018285.
[?26 June 1922]		RGS X0038/018284 (?). RGS caption: 'Another part of the road between Ata'abad and Gulmit'.

[?26 June 1922]		RGS CPS/00031. Probably on the path from Camp Ata'abad beyond Hunza and Gulmit. Very likely Doris Skrine is framed in the 'doorway'. This photo and the preceding one could have been taken in 1924 when the Skrines were on their way back to India through Hunza.
27 June 1922		Crossing the Batura Glacier. Unattributed photo printed on loose sheet with picture (above) of Altit, in BL IOLR EurF 154/8. Possible it is not Skrine's photo. He described in *CCA* 1925, p. 31, the difficult crossing of the Batura Glacier, footnoting a recent exploration of it by Ph. C. Visser, which does not appear to be the source. See Jenny Visser's book on their glacier exploration and Ph. C. Visser's article "Explorations in the Karakoram," *GJ* 68/6 (Dec. 1926): 457-473, which has several good photographs.
[last week of June 1922]		RGS 018282. The Hunza Valley at Gircha. In one of his later photo lists, he specifies Gircha as 'the only flat piece of ground in North Hunza'. Gircha is located just below Sost.
30 June 1922		Nazaroff 1935, facing p. 248. Probably this is the Skrines' camp at Murkushi (see his letter home of 3 July: 'an excellent wood of willows and well sheltered') but it may also be a photo labeled 'Porters in birch wood at Runhill'. Runhill is between Misgar and Murkushi. He wrote on 30 June before leaving Misgar for Murkushi, arriving at the latter on the same day.
2 July 1922		CCA 1925, facing p. 36. Breakfast of Skrine party at Gul Khwaja, on S. side of Mintaka Pass. Also RGS CPS/00017, scan from nitrate negative; RGS No. 88655.
2 July 1922, between 12:15 and 12:30		RGS CPS/00022. Skrine party crossing the Mintaka Pass, the picture one of the middle parts of a four-shot panorama. Possibly the same image is in the small RGS print No. 88658, captioned 'Mintaka pass and gl. looking SE'. Another RGS print, No. 88653, shows the N. side of the Mintaka pass. Nitrate negatives of both are in the RGS collection.
2 July 1922		RGS CPS/00023. 'Arrival of the Mir's yaks at Lopzag. c. 1922', the caption for a copy of what apparently is the same photo in BL IOLR, Photo 920/1(63). Envelope annotation for RGS nitrate negative: '1921 Kashmir to Sinkiang', where the year is wrong. Lopzag (Lup Gaz) was their first camp after the crossing of the pass.
[3 July 1922]		RGS CPS/00042. Likely taken at Payik on the N. side of the Mintaka Pass, but could be from near the Kok Moinak Pass, ca. 10 July. RGS catalog caption: 'Journey up VPK (Sarikol Plateau)'.
[ca. 7 July 1922]		RGS CPS/00003. Photo ID difficult to establish. The cataloguing statement 'possibly fort between Mingon and Murkashi' is puzzling. This could be a fort on the Sarikol Plateau south of Tashkurghan. The photo print in the RGS is X0038/018248, where Skrine's label on the back is mostly torn away. It seems likely this is the photo he later listed as 'Mustagh Ata from Tashkurghan, with a Chinese fort in the background'. However, the mountains in the distance seem not to be Mustagh Ata. Another of his later lists includes 'A farmstead on the Roof of the World', which could refer to this photo. On his route from the Mintaka via Dafdar to Tashkurghan, there is a location on today's highway vaguely visible on Google's map with structures that could have been erected on the remains of what Skrine had photographed (coordinates: 37°04'07.04" N; 75°30'52.37" E) and might be this, with a flat plain extending to the mountains.

ca. 10-11 July 1922		*CCA* 1925, facing p. 46. Crossing the Yangi Davan. Also published in *GJ* 1925a, unn. pl. 4; was used as a cover image for one of the reprints of Hopkirk's *The Great Game*.
ca. 10-11 July 1922		*CCA* 1925, facing p. 46. Unmapped lake ('Lake Skrine') at the head of the Yambulak Valley. Also published in *GJ* 1925a, unn. pl. 4
12 July 1922		Nazaroff 1935, facing p. 240. 'On the pass'. A print in BL IOLR Photo 920/1 (62) is more precisely labeled 'Tobogganing yaks down over a snow cornice, Merki Dawan (16,500 ft.). Jul. 1922'. See the description of this unsuccessful attempt to cross that pass, *GJ* 1925a, p. 388.
11-12 July 1922		RGS CPS/00028. As suggested in a letter Skrine wrote home, the photo likely taken in the Yambulak Valley, beyond the Yangi Pass which they crossed on the way to Kashgar. The date is a reasonable estimate. Doris Skrine is partly visible on the far left.
11-12 July 1922		Nazaroff 1935, facing p. 64. Location not definite, but Yambulak Valley in 1922 on Skrine's trip up to Kashgar seems most likely.
19-20 July 1922		*L'Illustration*, 16 October 1926, p. 422. The *amban* of Yangi-Hissar and Skrine. See *CCA* 1925, pp. 51-53 for details of the stop in Yangi Hissar prior to the Skrines' arrival in Kashgar. Skrine described the Amban as 'a stout, clean-shaven, intelligent type of person, rather like a medieval monk'. The 'stout' may not fit the picture, but the rest and the description of the Yamen where Skrine was entertained do. Also published in *Times of India Illustrated Weekly*, 20 February 1927, p. 17.
[1922-1924] [many of Skrine's Kashgar pics have no precise date]		Nazaroff 1935, facing p. 20. The approaches to Kashgar (photo apparently from across the Tuman River [Tümen Su]). This shows the same gate tower as in the next photo, the two taken together then providing a substantial view of the old city wall.
[1922-1924]		RGS CPS/00011. One of several photos taken of Kashgar from across the Tuman River, this apparently part of a multiple-shot panorama. Skrine photographed the city from this perspective more than once, hoping to catch a clear day when the mountains could be seen beyond the city.
[1922-1924]		*CCA* 1925, facing p. 54. Walls of Old Kashgar. The gate shown in center is not the same one on the right in the preceding photo.
[1922-1924]		Scan from unn. neg. in Stewart collection. Presumably a view of people crossing of the Tuman R. at Kashgar over a low bridge.
[1922-1924]	 	BL IOLR Photo 920/1, two unn. images showing river or canal and bridge, in one with veiled women riding donkeys. The location as Kashgar is confirmed by a photo taken of the same bridge by the Swedish missionary, John Törnquist. A print, apparently of the second picture, is in BL IOLR, Photo 920/1 [old no. 108]. In a later list, Skrine describes this picture: 'In a country lane, Kashgar district; villagers riding to market on their donkeys by the side of an irrigation-channel'.

[1922-1924]		*CCA*, facing p. 64. The British consulate from the N bank of Tuman River. One of best of his several shots for this, since it shows clearly the rice paddies along the river in the foreground.
[1922-1924]	 	RGS CPS/00012, CPS/00005. Photos taken from a vantage point opposite the consulate on the other side of the Tuman River. Skrine photographed the city from this perspective more than once, hoping to catch a clear day when the mountains could be seen beyond the city. The mountains are barely visible in these scans, and the emulsion on the glass negatives has decayed around the edges. However, it is possible to enhance the sky area to bring up detail showing the snowclad peaks, with the highest of the Pamirs, Kongur, directly behind the consulate.
[1922-1924]	 	Two of Skrine's panoramas on clear days from Kashgar showing the mountains, the highest peak on left Kongur, the other prominent peak (center in upper photo, right in lower) Chakragil. As published in *CCA* 1925, facing p. 116, and in *L'Illustration*, 23 October 1926, unn. p. [449]. Separate segments, showing Kongur and Chakragil, published in *HJ* XVII (1952), facing p. 79. The 2nd photo also in *Die Koralle*, Sept. 1928, p. 272, and *Times of India Illustrated Weekly*, 20 Feb. 1927, p. 17. In one of his later lists, Skrine specifies for 2nd photo: 'Eastern suburb and city walls of Old Kashgar' with the mountains 60 miles away, three section panorama. A print of the 1st photo (a four-section panorama) is in BL IOLR, Photo 920/1, (48) with inscription in French on reverse, probably the copy sent to *L'illustration*: 'Télépanorama d'une partie de la chaine méridionale Kashgarienne…Prise entre 9 et 10 heures du matin vers la fin de Novembre…Pour obtenir cette photographie j'ai employé des chlichés specials tres fins et un écran gradué très fort nécessitant une exposition de 6-8 minutes pour chaque cliché. Direction de Sud jusqu'à sud–sud-ouest.' A different panorama (6 parts) is in BL IOLR, Photo 920/1 (47), taken between 7:15 and 8:00 AM in May, the exposure information the following: 'taken w/ x4 telephoto lens at F32, and x40 'graduated' filter, on 6 slow plates. Exposure for 6-8 min for each plate.' My notes indicate photo interesting more for Kashgar landscape in foreground, as the mountains are somewhat pale. Possible one or another part of this panorama used in separate prints. This photo may be one he refers to in his letter home of 5 May 1923.
[1922-1924]	 	Nazaroff 1935, facing pp. 40, 304. 1st photo: Chinese cemetery, view to W from roof of consulate, the tumuli raised over bodies of Chinese massacred in the rebellion of 1864, one segment of a two-section panorama. 2nd photo: Kongur range [specifically Charkragil on left, Karaboktor on rt.] from Gez R. valley S of Tokur Ak.
[1922-1924]		RGS CPS/00006. Tuman River Valley and snows. Presumably taken on outskirts of Kashgar, looking to the N to NE. Cf. a different photo from more or less the same location but a lower vantage point, X0038/18271, published in Nazaroff 1935, facing p. 16, captioned 'On the Tümen Su, Kashgar district'.
[1922-1924]		Nazaroff 1935, facing p. 16. On the Tümen Su, Kashgar district.

[1922-1924]		Nazaroff 1935, facing p. 144. A wayside booth. Skrine's own description: 'A riverside pedlar and his wares under his sun-umbrella'. He lists the photo in a group under the heading 'Kashgar and Its Environs'. Apparently photographed on the banks of the Tuman River near Kashgar.
[1922-1924]		Scan from unn. negative, Stewart collection. Described by Skrine in one of his later photo lists as: 'Farm labourer digging in rice-fields irrigated from the Tümen R.'
[1922-1924]		*CCA* 1925, facing p. 72. Evening on the Tümen Su above Kashgar. A print in RGS: X0038/018256. Cf. a different view, X0038/018279.
[1922-1924]		RGS 018244. Ponies taken for their evening bathe in the Tümen Su, Kashgar. In a later list: 'Man on horse, leading another horse, wading up the shallows of the Tümen River into the sunset'.
[1922-1924]	    	1st image, *CCA* 1925, facing p. 246. See description, ibid., p. 79. Other prints of the fishermen, taken on same day as this one, from unnumbered negatives, Stewart collection.
[1922-1924] [?ca. 4 August 1922]		*CCA* 1925, facing p. 80. Market in Kashgar in front of the Id Kah (Friday) mosque at time of the Qurban festival. Also published in *L'Illustration*, 16 October 1926, p. [420]; *Times of India Illustrated Weekly*, 20 February 1927, p. 16. Prints: RGS X802/25647; somewhat different views: BL, IOLR, Photo 920/1 (20), (115), (135). The Qurban festival is the annual Eid al-Adha celebration, which began in 1922 on 4 August, in 1923 on 24 July and in 1924 on 13 July. Skrine's letter home of 9 August 1922 ends with a note about the colorful costumes to be seen, suggesting that possibly the Qurban pictures date to that year when he presumably was fitting in a lot of the photography in Kashgar soon after their arrival. Also, Doris was painting some of her watercolors during that year's Qurban festival. Alternatively, an entry in his Field Diary, apparently written in August 1924 records various traditions pertaining to the Qurban festival that year and might suggest a date for the photos. However, in 1924, he was very busy preparing to leave town to go to the mountains and likely was not spending time on the photography.
[1922-1924] [?ca. 4 August 1922]	 	*CCA* 1925, facing p. 138. Kashgar children dressed for the Qurban Id (Eid al-Adha) festival.
[1922-1924]		BL IOLR Photo 920/1 (21). The market place, Kashgar, from the mouth of one of the covered streets which lead to it.
[1922-1924]		RGS CPS/00018. Catalog entry reads 'Fruit sellers and barrow, Kashgar', though it seems what they are selling is not fruit but some kind of soup.

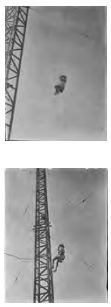
[1922-1924]		Nazaroff 1935, facing p. 16. Bazaar crowds and performing goat, Kashgar. Print in BL IOLR 920/1 (102).
[1922-1924]		Nazaroff 1935, facing p. 36. The Russo-Asiatic Bank compound in Kashgar.
[1922-1924]	 	There are several of Skrine's photos of the British Consulate (Chini Bagh) and its garden, some of the views from only slightly different angles. The first one here shows the terrace side of the building, printed from an unnumbered negative in BL IOLR, and previously published in Waugh, "Kashgar," p. 55. Listed by Skrine as 'Terrace and North Facade, British Consulate General'. The second photo, from the same set of negatives, is a view from the garden looking up to the terrace. Probably the woman in the picture is Doris Skrine. For other images, see just below.
[1922-1924]	  	The first two images are published in Nazaroff 1935, facing pp. 88 and 20; the third (apparently a different crop of the same photo in the second) is in *L'Illustration*, 16 October 1926, unn. p. 419. The views are from the west. Print (not certain of which photo) in BL IOLR Photo 920/1 (23).
[1922-1924]		Scanned from print in Stewart collection. Doris, escorted by consulate orderlies, at Chini Bagh, as they headed out for a ride. Other prints BL IOLR Photo 920/1 (77). Published in Waugh, "Kashgar," p. 56.
[1922-1924]		RGS CPS/00020. 'Ladies tea party, Kashgar'. Presumably taken by Doris Skrine, since men would not have been present.
[1922-1924]		Nazaroff 1935, facing p. 36. A group of Chinese officials at Kashgar, photographed on the terrace of the British Consulate.
[1922-1924]		BL IOLR Photo 920/1 unn. neg. Swedish missionaries photographed at entrance to the British Consulate, presumably in warm weather, date uncertain. Possibly late April 1923, when the consulate was a temporary refuge for the Swedish missionary women at a time of anti-mission rioting in Yarkand. By examining photos from the Swedish Missionary archives in Stockholm posted to the Museum of Ethnography there, it is possible to identify the individuals (l to r), most of them with a high degree of certainty: Sigurd Larsson, Judith Svensson Andersson, John Edvard Andersson, Oskar Hermansson, Elsa (?) Andersson, Vendla Gustafsson, David Gustafsson, Georg Roberntz, John Törnqvist, Carl Persson. The Gustafssons left for Sweden ca. August 1923.
[1922-1924, end of November]		Scan from neg. in Stewart collection. Women in a courtyard spinning. This is probably the photo Skrine described in one of his later lists as 'Kashgari women spinning cotton in the sun' (ref.: unpubl. letter to E. R. R. Linklater, 31 January 1927, obverse [list of prints sent to *The Times of India*]). In another of his lists he specifies: '…sous le dernier soleil d'automne (Novembre)'. He elaborates in one list: 'Within 1/5th of a second after they heard the click of my shutter they had bolted, leaving their spinning-wheels and raw cotton on the ground, and there was not one to be seen. Kashgari women are exceptionally camera-shy, especially when there are several of them together.'
[1922-1924]		Scan from neg. in Stewart collection. The background seems to show ruined walls of a substantial fortress. Kashgar might be the most likely site of the photo, but Yarkand or even Aqsu cannot be excluded.

[1922-1924]		Nazaroff 1935, facing p. 80. 'Some of the Tao Tai's Victims'. Unlike with most of the photos in his book, Nazaroff does not credit this one to Skrine. However, in one of Skrine's own lists we read: 'Group of victims of the late General Ma, Titai (G.O.C.) of Kashgaria. All have had their fingers, and some also their toes, cut off in the specially-constructed hay-chopping machine that the Titai used to use.'
14 August 1922		*CCA* 1925, facing p. 26; description p. 88. Gen. Ma Titai, commanding officer at Kashgar. Photo taken on veranda of British consulate, date est. from Skrine letter home on same day. Also published in *Times of India Illustrated Weekly*, 20 February 1927, p. 17. The second shot taken on same day (without the sundial) is from BL IOLR Photo 920/1 (75); a second copy, (97).
[? mid-August 1922]		BL IOLR Photo 920/1 (76). Captioned: 'Chu, ex Taoyin of Kashgar. Here for six years, and a first-class man, 1917-1923. 1922-23. Copy made for me.' So, apparently, not a photo Skrine himself took, though one might think he had photographed Chu at one of the first receptions after arriving in Kashgar.
15 October 1922		*L'Illustration*, 23 October 1926, p. [450]. Cantilever wooden bridge over the Karatash River at a location called 'Bash Kupruk' (~bridgehead). His notations (on more than one print of this) mention the first of the Kyrghiz ladies on the bridge is carrying 3-month-old twins and the fact that water is carried across the bridge on a hollowed tree trunk that serves as an aqueduct. Published in *CCA* 1925, facing 146 with ref. to p. 95 where he is describing presumably the same bridge. Also printed in *L'Illustration*, 23 October 1926, p. [450]. Additional prints of this in BL IOLR Photo 920/1, nos. 52(60), 51(61), 165; RGS X0038/018270.
[19 October 1922]	 	*CCA* 1925, facing p. 96. Morning start in the Kaying Valley, October 1922. Apparently a composite spliced from two separate images, shown here from prints in BL IOLR Photo 920/1 (179), (180).
[19 October 1922]		*CCA* 1925, facing p. 90. One of Skrine's later listings of his photos specifies this is 'The Kaying Jilgha as we first saw it, Oct. 1922', the photo presumably taken as they moved up to the head of the valley on 19 October. Print in RGS X0038/018258. Also published *GJ* 1925a, unn. pl. 5; cover photo, *Times of India Pictorial Supplement*, 6 March 1927
[?19 October 1922]		Nazaroff 1935, facing p. 104. Kaying valley looking up from around its middle. In a later list, Skrine captions it 'A glade in the Happy Valley'. Date here is a guess that it was taken during the 1922 first visit though it could be from one of the later ones (1923, 1924). Also published in *Times of India Illustrated Supplement,* 6 March 1927, center spread, the caption misplaced onto facing page. Possibly the print in RGS X0038/018257 ('Marching through the fir-forests of the Kaying Jilgha, Oct. 1922').
[?19 October 1922]		Nazaroff 1935, facing p. 154 with simple caption 'Kirghiz camp' (also, print in RGS CPS/00026); and CCA 1925, facing p. 158. View looking down the Kaying Valley from upper part. Dating these to Skrine's first visit there is tentative, but we know he, Doris, and the Russian geologist Nazarov all rode yaks to the upper part of the valley on their first full day there, when he took other photos he subsequently published in *CCA* 1925, facing p. 100. The second photo seems to have been taken at the same location as the first, but looking up toward where the first photo was taken near the trees.
19 October 1922		*CCA* 1925, facing p. 100. Kaying Valley; Paul Nazarov and Doris Skrine are in the foreground. This photo is one Skrine published with a caption that it illustrates the folded limestone strata. Also published in *L'Illustration*, 23 October 1926, p. 451. Print in BL IOLR Photo 920/1 (10).

19 October 1922		*CCA* 1925, facing p. 100. Kaying Valley. Doris Skrine on a yak at the glacial moraine of the upper part of the valley. Also published in *L'Illustration*, 23 October 1926, p. 447; *Times of India Illustrated Weekly*, 20 February 1927, p. 17.
19 October 1922		BL IOLR Photo 920/1, unn. neg. View looking over Torbashi Glacier at the head of the Kaying Valley toward the Shiwakte peaks. On upper right perhaps the peak Skrine termed Sarigh Yon. Picture could be from one of his later visits to Kaying, but it seems to fit with his description in *CCA* 1925, pp. 100-101, of sitting in the sun on October 19 looking up at the glaciers and the surrounding spires.
20 October 1922		*GJ* 135/3 (1969), Pl. VIII. The top of Skrine's 'Qungur II', the highest peak of the mountain, as seen from the east. Photo undoubtedly taken on the last day of his initial visit to the Kaying valley, when he climbed to a rock ridge he termed Nichke Qir in perfectly clear weather and 'obtained an excellent telephotograph, the first ever taken of the east face of Qungur', which was 'just visible over the top of the Kök Döng ridge' (*GJ* 1925a, p. 394).
ca 21-22 October 1922		*CCA* 1925, facing p. 146. Doris 'medicating' Chopkana Valley Kyrgyz. Date est. from letter Skrine wrote in Yarkand on 29 October, describing their 'discovery' of the Chopkana Valley and its pass, when they spent a couple of days with the Chopkana Kyrgyz, the ones here possibly at a settlement called 'Ui-Chi' about a mile down from the pass, more likely another one lower down. Though they went up the Chopkana on the way to the Kaying Valley the following year, it was in bad weather, and there is no suggestion they stopped to socialize.
[?28 October-9 November 1922]		RGS CPS/00016. Walls of Yarkand, probably photographed on the first of Skrine's several visits there, as he noted in a letter home written 29 October that 'there is no point from which you can see more than just a section of the walls'. The amount of vegetation in the photo might suggest a visit in warmer season, though this one would have been prior to the onset of really cold weather.
[?28 October-9 November 1922]		Nazaroff 1935, frontispiece. The Kashgar Gate, Yarkand.
[?28 October-9 November 1922]		*CCA* 1925, facing p. 108. Shrine of Hazrat Pir, gateway of madrasa, Yarkand. Tentatively dated with the rest of Skrine's Yarkand images from his first and longest visit there. Print in BL, OIOC, Photo 920/1 (27).
[?28 October-9 November 1922]		Scan from unn. neg. in Stewart collection. Tentative location here Yarkand, since on his first visit there he was enthusiastic about the old architecture using a lot of wood. One of his later lists has a 'Street scene, suburbs of Old Yarkand'. Glimpse of city wall in background. Alternative might be Old Aqsu where he spent time photographing in the Old City. Should compare several BL prints, IOLR Photo 920/1, old nos. [132, 134-137].
ca. mid-November 1922		BL IOLR Photo 920/1 (67). The Skrines' party on the desert road between Yarkand and Khotan, with Doris riding in the wheeled *tarantass*. Exact date and location indeterminate, but we know they used the vehicle on this trip and that Doris would ride part of each day in it.
12 (?13) November 1922		Nazaroff 1935: facing p. 144. Amban Kwei (in pinyin probably Gui) and his family at Kargalik. Taken presumably when Skrines hosted by him at a lunch. Doris interacted with the women and children and Clarmont mentions taking the photos. Slightly cropped; fuller version in RGS CPS/00007.
12-15 November 1922		BL IOLR Photo 920/1 (81). A storyteller and his audience at Kargalik in front of the yamen (residence of the magistrate). Dated tentatively to Skrine's first visit to the town, since on later occasions he passed through rapidly. Published in *CCA* 1925, facing p. 204.

19 November 1922		*L'Illustration*, 23 October 1926, p. 448, slightly cropped; also *CCA* 1925, facing p. 124 (where the Chinese characters are washed out). A debtor with a cangue locked around his neck, in the amban's yamen. *CCA* 1925, p. 111, identifies the location as Goma, although the caption under the picture says Kargalik.
24-27 November 1922		*L'Illustration*, 23 October 1926, unn. p. 449. A street in Khotan. Tentatively dated to Skrine's first visit to Khotan. In his letter home, written 26 November, he comments that the Old City 'is the main Turki-inhabited town built mainly of wood & full of picturesque streets and alleys & corners of all kinds', though he complains about being too busy to have done much exploration of the place.
24-27 November 1922		*CCA*, facing p. 204. The walls of Khotan.
27 November 1922	 	RGS CPS/00010, 00014. Khotan antiquities (mural fragments, sculptures and pottery) photographed at the home/shop of Badruddin Khan in Khotan during Skrine's visit there, many of the depicted objects later purchased and delivered to Aurel Stein in India. There is a third glass negative in this sequence in the RGS collection, but I do not have a print from it or an ID number. Photos published in Waugh; Sims-Williams 2010: 70-71, and in Chinese translation of the article (2012).
27 November 1922	 	*CCA* 1925, facing p. 170. Skrine enthused about Khotan antiquities when writing home about his first visit in 1922. These photos may have been made at the same time that he examined the collection depicted just above, though they could be later 'studio' shots when packing the objects for shipment home. He donated them with other antiquities to the British Museum. The current condition of the Buddha head is poor, apparently having been broken in transit (BM inv. No. 1925,0619.2). Other prints of probably the same photo in BL IOLR Photo 920/1 (98), (99), 'Graeco-Buddhist plaster head (Khotan)'. The agalmatolite carving of Kārttikeya (Skanda) (BM No. 1925,0619.40) is currently on display in the Indian art section of the museum. Skrine's unpublished photos include other objects he acquired in Khotan.
end of November 1922		RGS CPS/00038. 'First trees of Keriya oasis, DFS on her camel.' A later list adds 'with our mounted orderlies, near Chira'. Some uncertainty about ID here, in that BL IOLR Photo 920/1 (62) dated November 1922 indicates it shows their ceremonial entrance into Khotan, and they visited Keriya on that tour too (letter of 4 December from there). Clearly there is a separate photo specified in Skrine's lists as an image of their entrance into Khotan. Skrine had noted she would ride in the tarantass for part of a day's journey and then on horse or camel; in Keriya her excursions on her camel were a sensation. To her left in the photo is what looks like a European in a homburg riding a white horse, but identifying who it could be so far is impossible. The image is vague enough to leave open the identity of the rider, where we know some of the local officials and consular staff might adopt European dress.
[end 1922-early 1924]		RGS CPS/00004. Another print in BL IOLR Photo 920/1 (2) [alt.: no. 7], captioned 'DFS starting for church on her riding camel, Sulaiman, on a winter's morning. In the background, the Consulate General offices, Kashgar, on the right the quarter guard and gateway of the private residence of the C.G. 1922-1924.' CPS bought the camel for Doris to ride soon after their arrival in Kashgar (ref. letter dated 9 August 1922).
21 March 1923, late afternoon		*Die Koralle* (Berlin), September 1928, p. 274. The Shrine of Bu Maryam at Tarim Bazar (see description in *CCA* 1925, pp. 121-122, with the date of the visit to the shrine clarified from Skrine's handwritten notes, Stewart archive). A dervish (*qalandar*) is in the picture; in the background is the 'tall conical mound of faggots and sand surrounded by a bundle of long poles'.
ca. 24-25 March 1923	 	*CCA* 1925, facing pp. 124, 184. Dulani woman carrying a sick lamb on outskirts of Merket; Dulani children playing 'cat's cradle'. For first, see *CCA* 1925, pp. 123-124; see also, Skrine letter of 25 March from Merket. Prints in BL IOLR Photo 920/1 (82), (83). Possibly the photo of children taken on return trip from Aqsu at Chadar Kul (30-31 October 1923): see *CCA* 1925, p. 241, where he mentions specifically the 'cherubic but incredibly dirty children'.

30 March 1923		BL IOLR Photo 920/1 (73). At ex-Tao-yin Chu's lunch party, Yarkand. L to R: Turki interpreter, Mrs. Nyström, Chu, Liu (ex-magistrate of Yarkand), Li (magistrate of Yarkand), subordinate officer, Mr. Roberntz (Swedish Mission). Second print, Photo 920/1 (103).
[?31 March 1923]		RGS CPS/00041. Probably taken in Yarkand (named on the envelope with the negative), when the Skrines visited the Swedish mission orphanage at Easter. The also had visited it on an earlier trip between 28 October and 9 November 1922, but in this picture, Doris Skrine, in back, looks to be dressed for warmer weather and may be wearing her 'Easter bonnet' in anticipation of attending the Swedes' church service. See his letter home dated 1 April 1923.
5 April 1923	 	BL IOLR Photo 920/1 (169) (another copy, [171]; a mediocre print is [47]), and *CCA* 1925, facing p. 132. The location is 'Suget Ayaghi, near the outlet of the Suget Valley, an upper branch of the Chighmen'. This was an area of 'farmer Kyrghiz' who plowed fields (the furrows are visible in the photos). The Kyrgyz women in the two photos are the same ones, the standing boy in the first one playing with an empty cardboard film cylinder. See the description in *CCA* 1925, pp. 129-130. In the first picture, Doris is entertaining them with the 'mysteries of powder and puff' so they could 'preen themselves in front of [her] camp mirror'. A cropped version of the first photo was published in *L'Illustration*, 16 October 1926, unn. p. 417, where it is captioned (probably erroneously) 'Consultation en plein air: Mme. Skrine donne ds soins médicaux à des femmes kirghizes'.
9 April 1923		BL IOLR Photo 920/1 (167). Women of the Kizmak Jilgha at 11,000 ft. Published in *GJ* 1925a, facing p. 393; description (without the photo) in *CCA* 1925, pp. 132-133. ID confirmed in two of the photo lists he compiled.
10 April 1923		BL IOLR Photo 920/1 (19). Descent from the Kizmak Pass (?). Captioning in BL (Kepek Pass [?]) wrong, as Doris did not cross it. Photo does not seem to fit any of evidence for the pass crossings on the way up to Kashgar in 1922. ID here based on *CCA* 1925, p. 133, where Skrine writes: 'The Kizmak Pass next day proved terribly steep […] but the […] yaks provided by the Kirghiz carried our loads up it […] They then tobogganed neatly down the still steeper descent on the west side, which contained snow and showed signs of recent avalanches.'
11 April 1923		*CCA* 1925, foldout facing p. 116. Panorama taken from a climb above Chat, showing Qungur II (the higher Kongur peak) from the SW. Ref. for date: ibid., p. 133.
11 April 1923		Waugh 1999, p. 314, printed from unn. glass negative in RGS. Telephoto of Kongur from the SW, taken above Chat. This shows the peak much more clearly than in the panorama he shot from the same location (see above).
12 April 1923	  	BL IOLR Photo 920/1 (163), (164). Kyrghiz wedding feast, Bek Targhak (4 miles below Chat) in upper Karatash R. Valley. 1st and 3rd photos published *GJ* 1925a, facing p. 393. Second photo published *CCA* 1925, facing p. 132, with description of event on pp. 133-34 ('[…] I had photographed the family party in the aq-oi, as well as the entire assembly outside.'). Date here follows *CCA* acct., though letters may suggest the event a day or two earlier. Skrine's later lists confirm IDs, with added caption for first image: 'A minor Beg (sort of Justice of the Peace and tax-collector combined) in his aq-oi with his family'. Print of group photo in BL IOLR Photo 920/1 (170).
12 April 1923		Waugh 1999, p. 316, printed from glass negative in RGS. View up the Karatash R. gorge about a mile. below the intersection with it of the Kara-Tumschuk stream. Presumably this is one of the photos a print of which Skrine sent to Stein, describing it: '6.1" foc. view S. from l. bank 1 m. below Karatumush Agzi, showing Karatash Gorge'.

30 May 1923		Scans from unn. negatives in Stewart collection. These show two different individuals being hoisted up one of the 305-ft. steel radio masts erected for the Kashgar wireless station by the Marconi employee Dockray. The Skrines visited the area; he wrote about the work and the possibility that once the work was done, Dockray's men could hoist him into the otherwise inaccessible Buddhist caves on a nearby cliff. His letter home with an internal closing date of 31 March mentions the thrill of having been hoisted up the radio tower on the previous day. There is no mention that Doris was too, even though it seems fairly certain she is the one shown in the first of the two photos. Presumably silence about her adventure would have been deliberate, to avoid worrying the parents back home.
[after 28 June-ca. 9 July 1923]		Both photos scanned from unn. BL IOLR Photo 920/1 negs. Probably taken in Kaying Valley in July 1923, as Skrine mentions (letter of 12 July) going off with Doris on a picnics frequently in picturesque spots. Photo on right shows her with the picnic basket.
after 28 June -14 July 1923		*Times of India Illustrated Supplement*, 6 March 1927, center spread. The camp in the Kaying which the Skrines set up on arrival there from over the Chopkana Pass on 28 June 1923. This is the view from the river looking up at what one sees in the photos from the fête they mounted for the Kyrgyz on 10 July. See Skrine's letter written 2 July: 'The place we have chosen for our camp is a nearly level meadow of the most wonderful grass, close to a brawling glacier stream, with the pine-forest coming within 30 yards of our tents on one side 100 yards on the other.'
after 28 June -14 July 1923		*HJ* 17 (1952), facing p. 75. In one of his later lists, captioned 'Kaying Bashi and Shiwakte I (from ledge of cliffs on east side of valley', the photograph taken on the S side of the valley, but well to the E of its upper end. Annotations on various prints of this date it to July 1923, one specifying 'evening'; another: "Cathedral Spires' of Zumurrat on left'. Prints: RGS X0038/018289; BL IOLR Photo 920/1 (32), (35), (36).
after 28 June -14 July 1923		BL IOLR Photo 920/1, unn. Kaying Valley, view from N side looking SW. Very likely the vantage point from which previous picture taken is about midway up the slope ascending to the right from the lower middle. There is an obvious ledge system which could have been climbed to that spot.
ca. 7 July 1923		*CCA* 1925, foldout facing p. 258. The photo taken on the climb Skrine describes in *GJ* 1925a, p. 399 (and *CCA* 1925, p. 150), at his Station IV, where in a note he indicates that the peak he calls Sarigh Yon obstructs the view of some of the Shiwakte peaks. In this panoramic view, the angle of the photo suggests he was to the NE of Sarigh Yon on the ridge he terms elsewhere Nichke Qir. Identifications here are made difficult by the discrepancies between his altimeter readings and those taken by more modern devices and recorded, e.g., in the modern Chinese topographic map of the area by Ma Desheng. A small print of this panorama is in BL IOLR Photo 920/1, bx. 79-142, 'The Shiwakte range (on rt.) from W (end on [?]) taken from 15,600 ft. on knife-edge ridge above our camp of Kaying'. Ten nitrate negatives of the 'Panorama from Stn 4' are in the RGS; two glass negatives (broken) in the RGS appear to show the middle portions of this same view.
ca. 7 July 1923	  	1st photo, *CCA* 1925, facing p. 150; all three in *GJ* 1925a, foldout facing p. 401. These photos apparently were taken from what Skrine terms the Sarigh Yon ridge a week prior to his final surveying climb on the day before their departure from the Kaying (ref. *GJ* 1925a, p. 399; *CCA* 1925, p. 150). However, they may be from a second ascent (not the one producing the preceding panorama), where the viewpoint has to be from Sarigh Yon proper. Other copies: Print of 2nd photo: RGS X0038/018265 ('Telephoto from same point showing Chimghan I (18,200 ft.) and the ice walls at the head of the Ghorumda and Zumurrat Glaciers, on the left and in the middle respectively'); small print of same in BL, IOLR Photo 920/1, box with Nos. 79-142. Print of 3rd photo: RGS X0038/018266 ('From the shoulder of Sarigh Yon, circ. 15,000 ft.: Chimghan I (18,200 ft.) on extreme left; head of Zumurrat Glacier; Zumurrat ridge; neve-clad dome of Aghalistan Pk. III (17,400 ft.) and on rit. Aghalistan pks. I and II above head of Kaying Glacier').

10 July 1923		BL IOLR Photo 920/1 (59). The men at the fête the Skrines put on for the Kaying Valley Kyrgyz on 10 July 1923.
10 July 1923		RGS CPS/00027. Taken at the fête the Skrines put on for the Kaying Valley Kyrgyz on 10 July 1923, Doris Skrine on the right serving the women and children. This photo was published in *L'Illustration*, 23 October 1926, p. 451. There is second, almost identical image, which shows the Kyrgyz women but without Doris; it was published in *The Sphere*, 4 September 1926, pp. 18-19.
10 July 1923		Scan from unnumbered negative in BL IOLR Photo 920/1. Doris Skrine and Kyrgyz women in Kaying Valley, photo apparently taken on same day as the preceding two, at the time of the fête put on for the Kyrgyz families.
10 July 1923		RGS 018241. Kyrgyz Women in the Kaying Valley. Probably taken on the same day as the fête from which the other photos here.
10 July 1923		RGS X0038/018244. Young Kyrgyz married woman in full dress. Alps of Qungur. Presumably taken in the Kaying Valley on 10 July 1924 during the fête which the Skrines put on for the local herders. Another photo taken that day shows a tent in the background with a woman next to it in festive dress; in this picture one can see the guy rope of a tent. On their last visit to the valley, on 8 August 1924, they had a little celebration at which Doris and one of the Kyrgyz women were photographed in festive dress, but the Kyrgyz woman's attire in that photo is not the same.
10 July 1923		RGS CPS/00029. The Kaying Valley Kyrgyz playing the 'goat game' of buzkashi for the entertainment of the Skrines; published in *Geographical* 92/3 (2020), p. 78. A second photo of the buzkashi (neg. no. 19) is in the same envelope with this negative. For his description of the event, see his letter home written there on 12 July and *CCA*, p. 160.
14 July 1923		*GJ* 1925a, foldout facing p. 400. Panorama to SW from top of Zumurrat Ridge (Station V). Ref.: letter from Bozarga 15 July; *GJ* 1925a, p. 400; *CCA* 1925, pp. 150-151. Print of at least right half with Shiwakte II and IIa in RGS X0038/018263.
17 July 1923		*GJ* 1925a, foldout facing p. 400. 3-part panorama of Qungur Range, view SW from Aqsai Dawan. Date ref., Skrine letter PS of 18 July from Altunluk. Print listed with others sent to Aurel Stein, 'taken with 14.1 inch focus Telephoto (Dallmeyer Adon lens and back combination of Goerz Dagor, fine grain dry plates)'. Left part of panorama reprinted in *GJ*, Sept. 1969, facing p. 473. Print in RGS X761/025316.
23 July 1923		BL IOLR Photo 920/1 (104). Clarmont and Doris Skrine, photographed at the British Consulate in Kashgar by General Pigot, date est. from Skrine letter home of 8 August.
11 September 1923		*CCA* 1925, facing p. 258. Panorama of Tien Shan (2 parts) taken on N. side of Taushkan Valley, 2 September, 10 miles N. of Uch Turfan. Date est, from letter written in Uch Turfan. Print in BL IOLR Photo 920/1 (76) with notation 79°20' E, 41°15' N., looking NNW, Sept. 1923. (Alt. date: 26-27 Sept. – see letter written in Bai on 11 Oct.)
[mid-September to mid-October 1923]		Scan from unn. negative in BL, IOLR Photo 920/1. Doris Skrine is on the horse in background. Cf. in RGS, X0038/018255: 'One of two four-horned sheep seen in a flock belonging to Kirghiz of the S.W. Tian Shan, Uch Turfan district. We saw no other such four-horned sheep in all Kashgaria'. In the indicated date range, the Skrines were exploring the foothills of the Tien Shan in the area around Uch Turfan NE of Kashgar. I have found no specific reference to pinpoint the location or date.

20-24 September 1923		*CCA* 1925, facing p. 218. Yanghi Art valley in the Tien Shan, where Skrines were 20-24 September.
[September 1923]		RGS CPS/00032. A Kirghiz and his Aq Oi sitting at 12,000 ft. Print from a negative in a group taken during Skrine's tour in the Tien Shan in September and October 1923. Possibly in the Yangi Art valley, which they visited ca. 20-24 September, hiking up to about 12,000 ft. while hunting for ibex.
[end September-1923]		*Die Koralle*, September 1928, p. 277: 'Gebirgszug im Innern des Tiän-schan am Nordrande des Tarim-Beckens'. Possibly the same image is BL IOLR Photo 920/1 (46) [old no. 75?], captioned 'Central Tien Shan from N. of Aksu. C. 1923'. In his later listings Skrine offered several 'Telephotos of the Central Tien Shan snows'. One such, previously numbered 75 in BL, has annotation 'Specimen section of telepanorama of Central Tien Shan taken from wild sheep ground near Chigan Chöll 26 m[iles] N. of Aksu end of Sept. 1923. Note snout of enormous (unexplored) glacier which comes down from somewhere near Khan Tengri (23,600 ft.). Note also the forests of the alpine belt. Distance 20-25 m.'
[October 1923]		RGS CPS/00034. Threshing scene, in envelope labeled 'Aqsa [*sic*] tour'. Probably taken during excursion near the Tien Shan mountains prior to his arrival in Aqsu on 16 (17) October. A possibly related photo in BL IOLR, Photo 920/1 (91) is captioned 'Chopping straw at a farm on the southern slopes of the Central Tien Shan (the trees were all bright gold). 1920-1922'. On a visit to a farm near Posgam, a photo preserved under the general heading 'Oases on Yarkand-Khotan Road', there is a threshing scene, but other details in it suggest it is not this one.
[October 1923]		*CCA* 1925, facing p. 226. The sheep farm belonging to Abdus Sattar Haji at Yetim Döbe in the Tien Shan mountains.
[October 1923]		BL IOLR Photo 920/1 (45?). Caption for this print is 'The Central Tien Shan from near Uch Turfan; Khan Tengri (23,950 ft.) in middle background. C. 1923'. It seems more likely that the photo was taken between Aqsu and Bai. Skrine was in the mountains in that area in the first week of October, spent 7-12 October in Bai, and then left for Aqsu. In his letter written from Aqsu after arrival there on 16 October, mentions the clarity of the day they were traveling there and in particular Mt. Khan Tengri, which it seems certain is the peak in the photo.
15 October 1923		*CCA* 1925, facing p. 232. Also published in *L'Illustration*, cover photo, 23 October 1926 (photo flipped horizontally so facing right, not the original direction). Hushur Beg, the Kirghiz headman of Qara Bulaq, photographed on the Topa Dawan in the Tien Shan. Skrine identifies the bird as a *qara qush*, black hunting-eagle. His Field Diary under the given date has a substantial entry under the given date which served as the basis for the description in *CCA*.
16 (17)-ca. 22 October 1923		RGS X0802/025650. In one of his later lists of photos, CPS describes what must be this one: 'In the Courtyard of a Turki merchant's house: our host, Abdus Sattar Haji, and his sons at Aqsu'. The Skrines stayed there in the Old City until ca. 22 October and then moved to the New City. They had visited his farm at Yetim Döbe in the Tien Shan mountains. Originally from Marghilan in the Ferghana Valley (today, Uzbekistan), the Haji was very wealthy.
16 (17)-ca. 22 October 1923		*CCA* 1925, facing p. 236. Date as per preceding. As the text explains, this field was owned by Abdus Sattar Haji but leased out.
16 (17)-26 October 1923		CCA 1925, facing p. 236. The 'City of the Dead', Aqsu, described by a longish essay on Aqsu in his Field Diary entry written while there 16 [alt. 17]-26 October. Also, print in RGS CPS/00033.

[23 -27 October 1923]		RGS CPS/00036. Entrance to the Daoist Temple of the White Cloud, just outside the New City at Aqsu; the custodian is the figure inside. Skrines visited the temple prior to his letter home dated 27 October; they had moved to the New City on 23 October. See Field Diary and published description of the temple in *CCA*: 237-238. The inscription (per Prof. Victor Mair) is Daoist and dated 1 April 1920.
26 October 1923		RGS CPS/00035. Presumably, as he described in lists he compiled later, it is 'The Western Gate, Old Aqsu'. For date, see letter home written on same day.
26 October 1923		*CCA* 1925, facing p. 184. A beggar at Aqsu. Date as per preceding photo.
26 October 1923		BL IOLR Photo 920/1 (101). Street musicians, presumably photographed in Old Aqsu at the same time as the preceding picture.
[?October-early November 1923]		Scan from a negative (in poor condition) in Stewart collection. Tentatively dated here on the basis that the headdresses of the women seem to differ from those in the many photographs Skrine took in the eastern Pamirs. It seems more likely this photo was taken during his tour south of the Tien Shan in autumn 1923. However, NB one of his photos which he captioned 'Kirghiz women waiting to receive D.F.S. at their encampment at the summit of the Chopkana Pass'.
ca. 1st week November 1923		*CCA* 1925, facing p. 192. Choll Kul Lake on edge of Taklamakan, Maralbashi district. (ref. Skrine's letter from Maralbashi, 11 Nov.). 'At the foot of a high rocky range of hills; the other side of these hills was a much larger & even more beautiful lake, the Chöll Küll, a sheet of water 10 miles long by 2 broad, spring fed, emptying its waters into the Yarkand River by a lovely stream flowing amid rich pasturelands.' In 2003, two glass negatives for Skrine's panorama of the lake were in RGS, B 14833C (the same number for several images) in a box labeled "Aqsu Tour' not required for exhibit 15/5/25'. The box also contained other images from Maralbashi region, including ones of the small Lake at Choka Tagh.
ca. 11 November 1923		Nazaroff 1935, facing p. 108: 'Kashgar Darya one mile below Maral Bashi'. Skrine's letter of 11 Nov. from Maralbashi describes the travel there in the company of Nazaroff through the often marshy landscape.
[ca. 11 November 1923]		Scan from unn. negative in Stewart collection. Photo placed here mainly on the basis of the landscape and fact of much water in the Maralbashi area which Skrine visited at the time. This could be the farm of Abid Beg which 'stands among small groves of togrhrak (desert poplar)' and where the Skrine party stayed.
15-19 February 1924		RGS CPS/00002. Photo taken at the time of the football (soccer) match Skrine organized with teams from the local British Indian community (on the left) and the consular staff (on the right). The consulate is in the background. Ref. letter home 19 February 1924.

February 1924	 	1st photo: RGS CPS/00019. Probably same image is in BL IOLR 920/1 (79), captioned 'Group of Turki women, probably at Chini Bagh, Kashgar'. The second lady from the right in the front row is the Kashgari wife of Firuz-ud-Din, the consulate's Indian accountant. Even though Skrine's letter of 9 March probably refers to the second of these photos of the consulate women, the first, formal one, likely dates from this time, taken in the winter and possibly seen as a counterpart to the formal picture of the consulate men on the soccer team. 2nd photo: Nazaroff 1935, facing p. 32. IDs of individuals on the reverse of a print in BL IOLR Photo 920/1 (78): *Front row*, starting with full figure standing left: Mrs. Rahim Khan (wife of one of orderlies); Aisha Khan (laundress and Doris's maid); X; Tatar girl from near Aksu brought back as his bride by a young Indian policeman we sent to Ili on Secret Service. Left with her husband for India last Monday; professional musician [with tambourine]. *Back row*, starting on left: Wife of one of the Dak-runners between Kashgar & Misgar; wife (Kashgari) of Firuz-ud-Din, our Indian accountant; niece of Hafiz, one of our orderlies; X; professional musician [dancing]; X. Photo dated from Skrine's letter of 9 March 1924: 'a roll of films that I took during Feb. at Kashgar has turned out very well, and contains two or three very interesting photos […] [including] one very good group of wives and daughters of Consulate staff taken by D. at a party with my camera according to my instructions'."
February 1924		Nazaroff 1935, facing p. 32. In Skrine's listing of the photo later: 'The Titai's chief wife and daughter-in-law calling in state […] about a month before the Titai's defeat and execution at the hands of Govt. forces sent from Urumchi to avenge his many crimes.' In fact, the date is wrong, as we know from his letter of 9 March 1924 cited above about photos he took in February: 'two of Chinese ladies coming to call on D., which I took secretly from the window of the dining-room…One of the former is particularly good; it shows the wife of the Titai and her daughter-in-law walking up the drive preceded by one of my chaprassis carrying their red cards aloft, with a background of Chinese troops, i.e., the escort without which the ladies in question never stir out, as well as their military band! The pompous cortege contrasts effectively with the two tiny figures of the ladies stumping along on their squashed feet. In the other photo the wife of the Tao Tai is arriving and D. is just going out to meet her.'
31 March 1924		BL IOLR Photo/1 (54). Starting on the day's march with mapas (Peking carts) from Chinese rest-house at Moji (Yarkand-Khotan road). Date est. from Skrine's field-diary entry of 30 March datelined Moji Tanguya. Published in *CCA* 1925, facing p. 246.
[? end March-beg. April 1924]		BL IOLR Photo 920/1, scan from unn. nitrate neg., presumably source for Photo 920/1 (19) captioned 'Camel caravan laden w/ 'kham' (Kashgar cotton cloth) between Goma and Khotan on the ancient 'silk road'.' Photo printed in Nazaroff 1935, facing p. 154, and in *Times of India Illustrated Weekly*, 20 February 1927, p. 17. Date uncertain; placement here tentative on basis of Skrines traveling the route from Yarkand to Khotan, stopping at Goma and then the rest-house not far from it at Moji, on the long desert road. *CCA* 1925, p. 245, has a description of, apparently, a different caravan seen between Yangi Hissar and Yarkand on 7 March. Skrine's later photo lists include what appears to be this photo but captioned 'A camel caravan with Khotan silks and felts crossing an arm of the dreaded Takla Makan Desert between Khotan and Yarkand.'
[? end March-beg. April 1924]		RGS S0026130 (alt. S0015938 – a different print?), captioned 'An old galandar (beggar) on his way across the desert from Yarkand to Khotan'. In a later list of photos for a French publication, Skrine specifies the location as being 'entre Ecroma (?) [read Goma] et Khotan,' which reinforces my placement of the photo here during his tour in 1924. Published in *The Sphere*, 4 September 1926, p. 18.
12 April 1924		RGS CPS/00039. Robbers apprehended by Skrine party outside Keriya and posed with their loot next to the dugout home they had robbed (ref. Field Diary under that date and letter of 14 April; descr. also in *CCA* 1925, p. 250).

13 April 1924		RGS CPS/00037. The amban of Keriya in his garden, where Skrine dined on the given date (ref. his letter home 14 April).
19-21 April 1924		*Die Koralle*, September 1928, p. 275. Men of Polu with their hunting raptors. Dates of visit recorded in Field Diary, but cf. *CCA* 1925, p. 257, where he writes: 'Four days we waited at Polu for the weather to clear, and then, on 24 April, we gave it up and started for Khotan.'
19-21 April 1924		*L'Illustration*, 23 October 1926, p. 447. Digging of irrigation network for oats at Polu on N rim of the Kunlun Mtns.
19-21 April 1924		Published in *The Times of India Illustrated Weekly*, 20 February 1927, p. 18, with the caption: 'An aged pilgrim. An old Turki lady and her grand-daughter at Chira, near Keriya, 400 miles south east of Kashgar, close to the north border of Tibet. The lady asked Mr. Skrine to vvisa her Chinese passport for the Hag pilgrimage […]'. Polu, where the Skrines stopped, is in the Chira district.
ca. 24 April 1924		*CCA* 1925, facing p. 258. Panorama of Kunlun mountains from N end of Imamlar Oasis, Keriya District, taken at 7400 ft., distance 16-24 miles. (Date est., Skrine letter of 27 April.)
ca. 30 April 1924		Nazaroff 1935: facing p. 152. Badruddin Khan, the former British subjects' *aksakal*, in the garden of his town house, where the Skrines stayed during their second visit to Khotan. His caption mentioning the blossoming peach trees confirms date as that visit, not the first one in late autumn 1922. Another copy from negative, RGS CPS/00015 previously published in Waugh; Sims-Williams 2010, p. 72.
3 May 1924		RGS CPS/00040. Photo taken at the shrine of local 'divinity' Nyang Nyang, outside of Khotan, described by CPS in letter dated 8 May. A BL print of this picture (IOLR Photo 920/1 [74]) is captioned, identifying l to r, Ma Tungling, Kerakin Moldovack, CPS, and Li Amban. Moldovack was an Armenian entrepreneur living in Khotan; the others are the local officials. Previously published in Waugh; Sims-Williams 2010, p. 74, and its Chinese translation (2012, p. 331).
3 May 1924		Nazaroff 1935, facing p. 56. Skrine first visited Yotkan, the ancient site of Khotan, in late November 1922 and wrote at some length to Aurel Stein about the artifacts being uncovered there where a new stratum had been opened by the erosion from a local irrigation project. This is one of two photos Skrine took there, which probably date from his second visit to the site in May 1924 (the trees are in summer foliage), at which time he noted taking pictures of the strata with his plate camera.
Ca. 1-2 June 1924		BL IOLR Photo/1 (25) [*10*]. Another copy, no. 107. The suburban 'palace' in Kashgar New City of the O.C. Ma Titai, photographed with the leaders of the coup which killed him a day or two after the event, one of them Captain Ma (presumably Ma Shaowu 馬紹武, [1874-1937]).
7 June 1924		RGS 212607. Guests seated on the terrace of British Consulate during the garden party celebrating the King's birthday. Russians seated at first three tables, Swedes at next one, and Chinese officials beyond. There were two such celebrations during the Skrines' time in Kashgar, but the numbers of attendees cited in his reports correspond most closely to this one; also, the annotations on the next photos specify 1924.
7 June 1924		*CCA* 1925, facing p. 262; scan from nitrate neg., unnumbered, in Stewart collection (now published in Waugh, "Kashgar," p. 55). The Muslim guests at the King's birthday celebration, where carpets were laid out in the rose garden below the terrace for them to pray. Print of first one in BL IOLR Photo 920/1 (24), with notation that the imam is kneeling in front leading prayer. Skrine describes the second one as 'The Chief Qazi (Muhammadan religious judge) of Kashgar walking in rose-garden of B.C.G.'

29 June-1 July 1924		Scan from unn. negative in BL IOLR Photo 920/1. Most likely the photo he described in one of his later lists as: 'Mussulman tombs and shrine in a woodland glade near Opāl, showing Chinese influence in carved woodwork'. He took a little break from Kashgar and traveled south to this village, which today is known for the shrine dedicated to the famous Muslim lexicographer, Mahmud Kashgari. In writing from Opal r on 1 July, he noted: 'Here and there wee temples with ancient, lattice work 'grilles' & usually an enormously fat and short willow-tree beside them.'
23 July 1924		RGS X0038/018268. 'Crossing the Gez river near Borokhotai…' Caption added to card with the print. CPS described crossing in a letter home of 30 July, but crossing apparently occurred on 23 July, where at the time he calls the river the Tashmalik (Field Diary).
[27 July 1924]		RGS CPS/00008. As dated from the Field Diary, Skrines camped at Yapchan on 26 and 27 July 1924, the location also identified as Bozarga for the neighboring glen. RGS has a second glass negative, which, with the one for this image apparently formed a panorama showing the red-rock cliffs in the background. The two were together in the storage area with a caption 'Bozarga Cliffs from Yapchan, III'.
27 July 1924		RGS CPS/00024. As established from his Field Diary, photo taken at a place called Kök Choka to which the Skrines had hiked from camp at Yapchan above the Karatash R.: 'A girl was weaving sacking on a long loom laid along the ground called 'kuzuk', with sheep's wool.'
29 July 1924		*Die Koralle*, September 1928, p. 173 (also published in *GJ* 1925a, facing p. 396). The Skrine party ascending out of the Bozarga gully on their way to the Tigarmansu Valley. In July 1923 they had first been guided up this gully from their camp at Yapchan just below; this photo apparently dates from the second time they ascended it in a small party riding yaks. See *GJ* 1925a, pp. 401-402; his letters of 15 July 1923 (the second section of a letter begun on 12 July), and 8 August 1924.
29-30 July 1924		*GJ* 1925a, facing p. 397. View of Kök Dong and the Tigarmansu Valley. Taken from slope on W side of valley, where Skrine was attempting to find a pass across to where he could see Kongur. See description in *CCA* 1925, pp. 271-272 and his letter written in Kashgar on 8 August.
2 August 1924		*HJ* 17 (1952), facing p. 73. Shiwakte I from above Torbashi Glacier on ridge that divides the Kaying from the Tigarmensu valleys (see *CCA*.1925, p. 273. Also published *GJ* 1925a, facing p. 404; *CCA* 1925, facing p. 164. Prints: BL IOLR Photo 920/1 (40); RGS X0038/018252.
ca. 4-5 August 1924		*Times of India Illustrated Weekly*, 20 February 1927, cover photo, captioned 'Hunters of Chinese Central Asia'. While it is possible the photo dates from one of the earlier visits to the Kaying, in describing his venture over the Kepek Pass on 4-5 August, he mentions he was accompanied by his orderly Sangi Khan and three Kyrgyz hunters, the two he names, Phoken and Tümür ('the two best *mergens* or ibex-stalkers in the valley as my guides' – *CCA* 1925, p. 273), presumably the ones pictured here, definitely in the Kaying Valley.
5 August 1924	 	*CCA*, 1925, facing p. 276 (also, *HJ* 1952, facing p. 78); *GJ* 1925a, unn. pl. The first photo shows Shiwakte III, viewed over the Aq Tash Glacier, S. side of Kepek Pass. The remaining images show the north side of the pass, including the detail of the somewhat hairy descent Skrine described. All three images taken on 5 August, the day he returned over the pass to the Kaying. The Shiwakte III image and the third of the Kepek photos also published in *Times of India Illustrated Weekly*, 6 March 1927, inside spread. The first and second of the Kepek photos also published in *CCA* 1925, facing p. 272. Prints from the Kepek Pass sequence are in BL IOLR, Photo 920/1 (17), (18)
8 August 1924		BL IOLR Photo 920/1 (88). Captioned 'Portrait of two Kirghiz women', where in fact the one on the left is Doris Skrine in Kyrgyz festive attire. From his Field Diary entry of 8 August, we know the date: 'D's putting on her Kirghiz head-dress was the great tamasha of the party'.

8 August 1924		BL IOLR Photo 920/1 (87)[*45*]. This is possibly same Kyrgyz woman on the right in the previous picture where she was photographed with Doris.
11 September 1924		Photos 1, 2, 6 and 7, scanned from unn. negs. in BL IOLR 920/1; others all from *HJ* 1952; No. 4 also in CCA 1925, facing p. 282. Prints of several of these photos are in BL IOLR Photo 920/1 (12)-(16), misdated to 1922. On his return to India in 1924, Skrine avoided the impassible section of the Gez River gorge by going up into the mountains on its north side whose dominant peak is Chakragil. The photos here probably were all taken on the same day, when he and Doris hiked to the intersection of the Oi Tagh and Bul Ush glaciers, which he found fascinating, and ate their lunch nearby before hiking down in order to cross the Arpa Bel Pass the next day. Date ref.: letter home of 11 September, and Field Diary, p. 99; descr. also in *HJ* 1952, p. 77; *CCA* 1925, pp. 281-285.
[? 11 September 1924]		RGS CPS/00030, 00025. Pictures probably taken at the same time and location. The camel photo is in an envelope identified as containing images of 'Kaying Bashi Kirghiz, etc.', though not all the pictures seem to be from that location. What appears to be the snout of a glacier in the background of the second photo does not seem to correspond to one of the locations he otherwise photographed in the Kaying Valley. So it seems likely from the topography that these photos were taken when traversed the Oi Tagh route near Chakragil in 1924.
16 September 1924		Nazaroff 1935, facing p. 64. Skrine's Field Diary specifies that this photo was taken at their camp one mile below L. Karakul en route back to India in 1924. In one of his photo lists, Skrine writes: 'How the Kirghiz 'moves house' literally; a Kirghiz aq-oi or felt- and wood house being moved bodily by men lifting it from the inside'.
6 October 1924		Scan from unn. neg. in BL IOLR Photo 920/1. Bridge connecting Hunza with Nagar just below Altit. Cf. photo from 1954 showing it in its 'partially dilapidated stage' (Kreutzmann 2020, p. 432). Presumably photo taken when the Skrines crossed the river to visit Nagar on the given date. When they left Nagar, they traveled by a different route.
7-10 October 1924		RGS PR/088635. Nagar State: castle of Mir and summer residence from lake. Also apparently RGS X0038/018288.
7-8 October 1924		Scan from unn. negative in Stewart collection. The Mir of Nagar and his sons on horseback. Probably taken in first two days of the Skrine's visit there on their way down from Kashgar, since the Mir left before the end of their visit.
7 October 1924		RGS CPS/00043. 'Polo in Hunza'. Photo taken of the match in Nagar, where left of center on the gray horse is CPS. He would have set the camera up ahead of time at one end of the polo field. A print from this negative is in RGS: X0038/018279. Exact date est. from CPS letter of 21 October 1924. Other copies identify the polo match as taking place at Altit on the Skrines' travel up to Kashgar in 1922, but close examination here suggests that is mistaken or refers to a different photo.

11-12 October 1924		*GJ* 1925a, facing p. 392. Rakaposhi from Chaprot (roughly 30 miles north of Gilgit and above Chalt, on the Hunza River). Also published (cropped or from a slightly different image) in *Times of India Illustrated Weekly*, 6 March 1927, inside spread, where caption mistakenly transposed to facing page. Having seen the mountain from lower-down Chalt on the way to Hunza in 1922, the Skrines deliberately stopped for two nights at Chalt on the return journey in 1924 and hiked up to the higher vantage point at Chaprot (ref. his letter dated 21 October).
1939		RGS CPS/00001. C. P. Skrine and his mother Helen, at Les Bosquets (southern France) in 1939.

Skrine's correspondence regarding publication of his photos and his captioned lists of them

Skrine's enthusiasm for writing about his travels and especially for publishing the photos in which he took great pride clearly was stimulated by the opportunity to publish *Chinese Central Asia* and his hope that the book might sell well. To place his photos from Kashgar in various journals might increase the interest in the book on which he worked assiduously during his leave in London. A collection of his unpublished correspondence from 1927 sheds some light on this interest in publication.[1] The photo lists he compiled, reproduced below, are very helpful for cataloguing his images.

Apparently while on leave in London and while writing *Chinese Central Asia*, Skrine had established connections with Charles Rabot, a noted French explorer who had written extensively (often for general audiences) on the peoples of the Arctic and the Ural region. In an effusive handwritten letter dated 9 January 1927, Rabot wrote, regarding *CCA*:

> Your book is one of the best, if not the best, of all those I have read on Chinese Turkestan. It has a quality that the French appreciate, namely the absence of pretension. You have simply recounted what you saw, and reading all the little facts that you report shows the country and its inhabitants in a very clear and precise manner, much better than the books of great scholars who are more concerned with finding arguments in favor of their theories than noting the striking facts. The illustrations in your book are also perfect; all have documentary value and are perfectly executed. The frontispiece in color is very welcome and I would be grateful if you would express my compliments to Madame Skrine for her talent as a watercolorist [tr. from French by Google].

Skrine obviously already knew about *L'Illustration*, as he received that beautifully illustrated magazine in Kashgar (see above pp. 418, 467). Presumably Rabot recommended Skrine to Gaston Sorbets, the editor of the French journal and then wrote for it a two-part article on Skrine's explorations in the mountains, illustrated with

1. The letters are in the Stewart family collection and will be deposited in the British Library along with Skrine's other papers. The correspondents include E.R.R. Linklater, Charles Rabot, Gaston Sorbets, J. E. Pryde-Hughes, editors or agents for Houghton Mifflin (Boston), the journal *Asia* (New York), and Verlag Scherl (Berlin). Since this material clearly is somewhat fragmentary, further examination of Skrine's papers would be necessary to document all his efforts to publish his Central Asian material.

excellent reproductions of the latter's photos.[2] Rabot suggested additional subjects which might interest Sorbet, but apparently there was no follow-up on Skrine's part.

Skrine had several exchanges with E.R.R. Linklater, an assistant editor of *The Times of India*. In a letter to Skrine dated 25 January 1927, Linklater wrote enthusiastically about *CCA*:

> It is one of the most fascinating stories I have ever read. It is extraordinarily impressive, and yet completely avoids the heaviness which almost invariably accompanies impressiveness. I cannot recall a better travel story or a more attractive literary rendering of what one may call, perhaps, animated geography. I don't know that it is an imperishably great book – it is probably too human for that – but I do know that it is an amazingly good book.

Linklater thus promised he would write a review for his newspaper. Skrine was delighted, especially since so far he felt the book had received but limited attention, and in his response of 31 January highlighted the possibility that the paper could publish some of the photos. Some had already appeared in *The Sphere*: *The Empire's Illustrated Weekly* (London).[3] Prior to receiving Linklater's letter, Skrine had sent a proposal with prints of some 43 of his images to Linklater's editor-in-chief. Skrine copied the caption list for those photos on the reverse of his letter. Skrine's photos thus appeared on two cover pages, an internal full page spread and as illustrations to Linklater's review in the 20 February and 6 March pictorial supplements of the paper. In his letter thanking Linklater, dated 13 March, Skrine noted that already 'The American paper "Asia" are after me for pictures, also a Berlin paper (which I shall <u>not</u> oblige).' Indeed he politely held at arms' length the rather general expression of interest from the Berlin publisher Verlag Scherl, which had admired his pictures in *L'Illustration*.

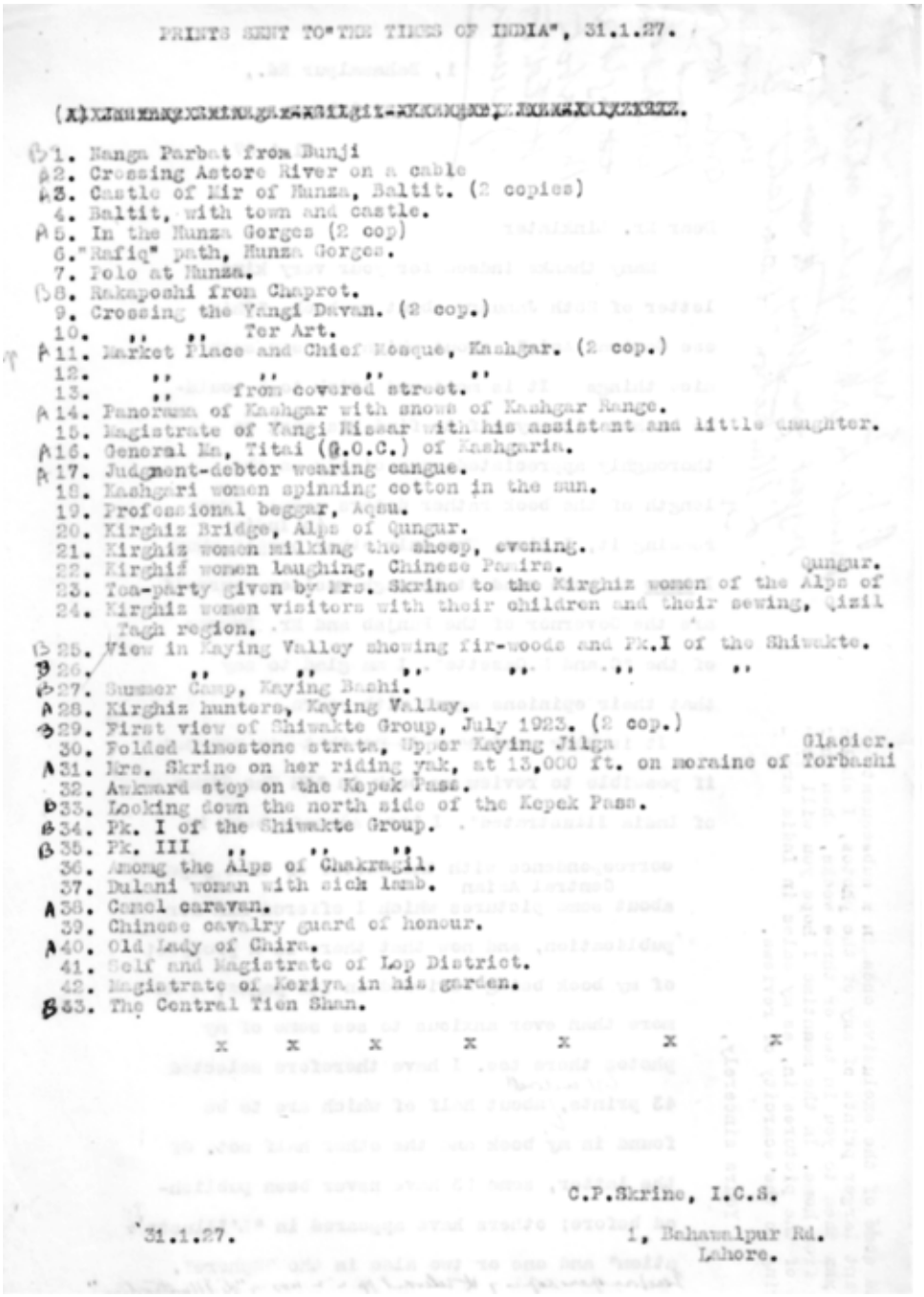
We have some of Skrine's correspondence with *Asia*, whose editors turned down an offer that included photos published in *CCA*, since the American edition of the book was about to appear. Skrine had offered to provide captions but informed them they would need to find someone else to write an accompanying article based in part on his book. On 27 July, Skrine then sent a list of some 200 images and summaries of half a dozen articles he might find time to write. Presumably not optimistic about *Asia*'s response and having been approached by a literary agent based in London, J.E. Pryde-Hughes, Skrine responded on 22 July that he would be happy to have Pryde-Hughes represent him and enclosed a revised copy of the long photo list and article proposals he had just mailed to New York. As far as we know, this may have been the end of any serious efforts by Skrine to promote his book and mine the Kashgar material for other, possibly lucrative publishing opportunities.

The reproductions which follow include: the list of the photos sent to *The Times of India*; the caption list provided, we assume, for *L'Illustration*; the annotated list dated 4 May; and the long caption list and précis of possible articles which he sent to Pryde-Hughes. The handwritten markings in ink specified which images were published.

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2. Writing to his mother from Morocco on 28 June 1926, Skrine mentioned having talked with the editors at *L'Illustration* in Paris regarding the publication of his pictures. Rabot's letter makes it clear they had interacted socially, presumably during that visit in Paris.

3. *The Sphere* published a two-page spread (4 September 1926, pp. 18-19) under a heading "The Turki and Khirgiz of Chinese Turkestan: Mr. C. P. Skrine's Pictures from the Mountain Country". I have not been able to see a decent copy showing both pages, but the images I can identify include his view of Mt. Rakaposhi from Chaprot, the Khirgiz women seated around a felt at the fête in the Kaying Valley on 10 July 1923, the lone beggar photographed crossing the desert near the road to Khotan, and the Aksakal of Aqsu and his sons in his courtyard. *The Sphere* also used Skrine's photos to illustrate later news: a report on the disastrous second German attempt on Nanga Parbat (3 July 1937, pp. 22-23 – his photo of the mountain from Bunji); and a report on the successful a British-Pakistani ascent of Rakaposhi (12 July 1958, pp. 22-23 – his photos of Rakaposhi from Chaprot and of the castle of Baltit).



PRINTS SENT TO "THE TIMES OF INDIA", 31.1.27.

(x) [illegible]

1. Nanga Parbat from Bunji
2. Crossing Astore River on a cable
3. Castle of Mir of Hunza, Baltit. (2 copies)
4. Baltit, with town and castle.
5. In the Hunza Gorges (2 cop)
6. "Rafiq" path, Hunza Gorges.
7. Polo at Hunza.
8. Rakaposhi from Chaprot.
9. Crossing the Yangi Davan. (2 cop.)
10. " " Ter Art.
11. Market Place and Chief Mosque, Kashgar. (2 cop.)
12. " " " "
13. " from covered street.
14. Panorama of Kashgar with snows of Kashgar Range.
15. Magistrate of Yangi Hissar with his assistant and little daughter.
16. General Ma, Titai (G.O.C.) of Kashgaria.
17. Judgment-debtor wearing cangue.
18. Kashgari women spinning cotton in the sun.
19. Professional beggar, Aqsu.
20. Kirghiz Bridge, Alps of Qungur.
21. Kirghiz women milking the sheep, evening.
22. Kirghiz women laughing, Chinese Pamirs. Qungur.
23. Tea-party given by Mrs. Skrine to the Kirghiz women of the Alps of
24. Kirghiz women visitors with their children and their sewing, Qizil Tagh region.
25. View in Kaying Valley showing fir-woods and Pk.I of the Shiwakte.
26. " " " " " "
27. Summer Camp, Kaying Bashi.
28. Kirghiz hunters, Kaying Valley.
29. First view of Shiwakte Group, July 1923. (2 cop.)
30. Folded limestone strata, Upper Kaying Jilga Glacier.
31. Mrs. Skrine on her riding yak, at 13,000 ft. on moraine of Torbashi
32. Awkward step on the Kopek Pass.
33. Looking down the north side of the Kopek Pass.
34. Pk. I of the Shiwakte Group.
35. Pk. III " " "
36. Among the Alps of Chakragil.
37. Dulani woman with sick lamb.
38. Camel caravan.
39. Chinese cavalry guard of honour.
40. Old Lady of Chira.
41. Self and Magistrate of Lop District.
42. Magistrate of Keriya in his garden.
43. The Central Tien Shan.

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C.P.Skrine, I.C.S.

31.1.27. 1, Bahawalpur Rd.
Lahore.

The images marked 'A' are the ones selected for the first of the two articles in *The Times of India* and those marked 'B' for the second. Exception: one Kaying view, either no. 25 or 26, appeared in the first.

LEGENDES DES PHOTOGRAPHIES DE M.CLAREMONT P.SKRINE

Les légendes marquées d'une croix au crayon noir indiquent que la photo existe agrandie .

Les légendes marquées d'une croix au crayon rouge indiquent les photographies devant retenir l'attention pour la reproduction .

Une croix à l'encre, avec les initiales (G.J.) devant la légende, indique que la photographie a été reproduite dans le Geographical Journal .

Planche n°1 (paquet 1)

1) Mendiant du vieil Aksou
+ + 2) Beg Karghez des monts Tian-Chan partant pour la chasse à la gazelle avec son aigle noir ( )
3) Aksou
+ 4) Juments et poulains Kerghizs-Qaragor
Route de Kachgar à Oud-Toanfane
+ 5) Jeunes Kerghizs jouant
6) ?
+ + 7) Monts Tian-Chan - La vallée de Yangi-Art (2.850m.) Les montagnes du fond constituent un excellent terrain à l'Ibex.

Planche n°2 (paquet 2)

1) Tombes à Bou-Maoriam
Route de Kachgar à Merket
+ 2) Femme de Tchira (entre Khotar et Keryab et sa petite fille posant pour la photographie du passeport qui lui est nécessaire pour le pélérinage à la Mecque
3) La cangue - Un procédé pour faire payer des débiteurs
4) L'"Ambane" (gouverneur) du pays de Lop et M.Skrine
5) Karghalik . Un indigène racontant des légendes devant un auditoire rassemblé devant le "Yamen" (résidence de l'autorité chinoise)
6) Une femme Doulane de Merket
+ + 7) Mendiant traversant le désert du Takla Makane entre Keroma(?) et Khotan .

Planche n°3

+ + 1) Vallée du Kara-tasch . Pont Kerghez
Un sentier indigène grimpe à travers les roches de l'autre côté du pont . Une des femmes qui va s'y engager est chargée de deux jumeaux agés .
+ + + (G.J.) 2) Vallée du Kaying Jilgha à la limite supérieure des épicéas (fir) (3540m) . Remarquer le redressement des couches calcaires sur le versant de la montagne .
+ 3) Femmes Kirghizes
+ + + (G.J.) 4) La "Vallée heureuse" (Kaying Jilgha)
Vue prise du camp situé à 3120m en dessous de la forêt .

+ 5) Mme Skrine montée sur un "yak" traversant le glacier de Torbachi (4.200 m.) Alpes de Lungur)
+ + 6) Five,O.Clock offert par Mme Skrine à des dames Kirghizes à Kaying Bachi (Alpes de Qungar) Outre le thé et les "rotis" le menu de la collation comportait 2 moutons
(Les agrandissements portent les n° 25 et 108)
+ 7) Sur la mo..... du glacier de Kaying (Alpes du Lungur)
+ 8) Chasseurs Kirghizs de Kaying Bachi - Remarquer la fourche servant à appuyer le mousquet pour assurer la justesse du tir .
+ + (9.7.) 9) Pic n°1 du massif du Chivakté (5820m.)
Vue prise du col à l'extrêmité supérieure du Tigarma-sou-Jilgha (4830 m.)
+ + + (9.7.) 10) Pic n°3 du massif du Chivakté (6120m) . Vue prise d'Aghalistan (Chimghan Jilgha)
+ 11) Alpes de Chakragil . Glacier d'Oi-Tagh - Morane latérale couverte de bois
12) Dans les Alpes de Chakragil
13) Pic n°2 du Chivakté . Vue prise du col Kepek (4572m.) au fond de la vallée du Kaying Jilgha .
14) Aiguilles du massif de Chivakté (4.600 m. à 6.000 m.)
Vue prise de la crête du Sarik-Yon dans la vallée du Kaying-Jilgha .
15) Vallée du Kaying Jilgha et camp Kirghiz .

Planche n°4 (paquet 4) Kachgar

+ 1) Le vieux Kachgar, avec un temple . Vue prise de la rive nord du Tumen-Daria . Au fond le Pomir chinois distant de 90 à 115 kilomètres .
+ 2) Consulat général britannique à Kachgar
3) Kachgar /- Rue conduisant au marché !
4) Femmes tissant du coton sous le dernier soleil d'automne (Novembre) .
5) L'"Ambane" (gouverneur de Yangi-Hissar) avec son secrétaire et sa petite-fille .
+ 6) Le marché et sa principale mosquée de Kachgar
+ + 7) Le coucher de soleil sur le Tumen Daria, pris du Consulat général britannique à Kachgar
+ 8) Le Général Ma-Titaï exécuté en punition de ses crimes le 2 Janvier 1924
9) Le nouveau palais de Ma-Titaï à Kachgar .

Planche n°5 (paquet 5)

+ + (9.7.) 1) Sur la route de Gilgit . Baltet dominé par le château des seigneurs du Hunza . Au fond, montagne de 7.200 m.)
+ (9.7.) 2) Toujours sur la route de Gilgit . Le pic Rakaposki (7790m.) Vue prise de Chaprot .
+ + (9.7.) 3) Le Nangat-Parbat (8.100 m) . Vue prise de Bunji dans la vallée de l'Indus .
+ + (9.7.) 4) Route de Gilgit . Les gorges du pays de Hunza . Entre Baltet et Gilnit .
+ 5) Un passage difficile de la route de Gilgit
+ + + (9.7.) 6) La caravane traversant le col de Yamboulak (4830 m.) .
Route de Tasch-Kourgane à Kachgar .

7) Le château des seigneurs du Hunza à Baltet
8) On selle les yaks pour franchir le col de Mintaka
9) Traversée de la rivière d'Astor à son embouchure dans l'Indus (le pont suspendu avait été détruit)
10) Le Polo à Altit (Hunza)

Planche 6 (N'ayant pas trouvé les légendes des photographies de cette planche, je les ai reconstituées d'après le Geographical Journal)

n°15) Campement Kirghiz dans la vallée du Kaying-Jilga (Alpes de Qungar)
n°16) (en haut) Le glacier de Kaying . Vue prise du sommet du col Kepek
n°16) (en bas à gauche) - A l'escalade du col Kepek
n°16) (en bas à droite) - Le bassin supérieur du glacier de Kaying et le col Kepek

Agrandissements dont la collection ne renferme pas d'épreuves originales

A.5 (K) Le marché de Kachgar
6 - L'orchestre du Seigneur du Hunza sur le pavillon couronnant le château de Baltet
16 - Route de Yarkend à Khatan . Départ de la station de Moji dans les charrettes chinoises (pékinoises) (mapas)
17 - (H) Le col de Mintaka (4605m.) et le glacier de Mintaka
17 - Voleurs capturés près de Kérya
18 - Le jardin du "Yamen" du magistrat de Kerya . Kerya est à 660 kilomètres de Kachgar
20 - Une rue de Khotan
24 - La traite vesperale des brebis à Yamboulak (campement Kirghiz dans le Pamir chinois)
31 - Le marché de Kachgar
32 - Telephoto de Qungur (7500 à 7600 m.) prise à une distance de 22,4 kilomètres de la montagne . Face orientale du pic.
42 - Telephoto du Qungur . Vue prise de Samon (Vallée de Karatach)
43 - Cavalerie chinoise
44 - Tombe Kirghize au milieu des bois à Tigarman-sou (Vallée de Tigarman)
45 - Yaks au pâturage . Pamir chinois . Noter le redressement des coaches .
46 - Femmes Kirghizes s'installant pour travailler devant la tente de M.Skrine et passant là l'après-midi à tailler des bavettes .
Remarquer le costume de la femme de gauche dont le bariolage ressemble à celui des robes parisiennes .
47- Alpes de Qungur . Forêt dans la vallée de Kaying .
48 - Tombes dans le cimetière d'Outch-Tourfane
49 - Caravane chargée de cotonnades entre Gourma et Khotan
50 - Massif de Chakrogit . Jonction des deux principaux glaciers .
51 - Alpes de Qungur . Vallée de Tigarman avec ses forêts et

ses anciennes distantes de 5 kilomètres du front actuel du glacier .

+ 52 - Mme Skrine donnant une consultation médicale à des Kirghizes dans la vallée de Chopkana

+ 53 - Même sujet à Kizil Togh

54 - Vue prise dans la vallée de Kaying à 13 kilomètres en amont de Kaying Aghsi

55 - Tombe au milieu des bois dans la vallée de Tigarman

From C.P. Skrine, H.M. Consulate, Sistan, via MIRJAWA, India.
reference letter dated 4.5.27.

ENLARGEMENTS

(A) JOURNEY FROM SRINAGAR TO KASHGAR, JUNE-JULY 1922. ? never sent

From "Chinese Central Asia"

1. Castle of the Mir of Hunza, Baltit (See p. 26 bot.) Face p. 26.

This castle is reputed 600 years old, and is built almost entirely of wood, as a precaution against earthquakes. For a description of the people of Hunza and their history, see pp. 18--23 of book)

2. In the Hunza Gorges. (See pp. 29-30) Face p. 30.

Our small party, my wife ("D.") leading, marching on foot along the cliff-tracks above the turbid Hunza River, which here runs through gorges the sides of which are 20,000 to 24,000 feet high. For three marches no horses can be taken.

3. Crossing the Yangi or Tambulak Pass, Chinese Pamirs. (See p. 46) Face p. 46.

The highest of the seven passes we crossed between India and China 16,100 ft. Party riding yaks, kit following on ponies.

Not in "C.C.Asia".

4. Mt. Rakaposhi, Nagar State, N. Kashmir (25,500 ft.) (See p. 24 top, and 294 top)

"Like a sword of ice brandished to heaven"---Mt. Rakaposhi, seen from the pine-woods above Chaprot village, at a distance of only 12 miles,

5. The State Band, Baltit, Hunza State. (See p. 26.) (Unpublished)

6. The Mir (Chief) of Hunza and his entourage taking the air on a favourite chibutra (platform) commanding a marvellous view out over the valley and the snows of Hisper beyond. The Mir spends an hour or two at the spot every day in fine weather. (Unpublished)

7. The Mir of Nagar with his sons and grandsons, mounted on thoroughbred Badakhshani ponies, on the polo-ground at Nagar. (See p. 292) (Nagar is the rival State to Hunza; the two tiny principalities used to be deadly enemies, until the pax Britannica was enforced by Col. Durand's column in 1891. Note the attendants with hawks at their wrists. For a description of Polo in Hunza-Nagar, see p. 27) (Unpublished)

8. A House of the better class in Hunza; Ghalmit, village, two marches north of Baltit. (Unpublished)

9. Our caravan halting at the top of the Mintaka Pass, 15,600 ft. (P.35 The Mintaka marks the Divide between India and China, also between the deep-cut gorges and lofty peaks of N. Kashmir and the plateau of the Pamirs, "Roof of the World". Note the Mintaka Glacier, scored with moraines, far below in the background. (Unpublished)

(B) THE OASES OF THE TARIM BASIN.

From "C.C.Asia"

10. The Market Place and Chief Mosque, Kashgar, during the Qurban Festival. (Face p. 80)

11. In the Courtyard of a Chinese rest-house; our carts loading up and taking the road. (Face p. 246)

Not in "C.C.Asia"

12. Looking out from a covered street on to the market-place, Kashgar. Note the booths with their huge sun-umbrellas made of reeds. Unpublished

13. Buying vegetables off a donkey-pedlar, Kashgar
While his mother haggles with the pedlar, the little boy in the fore ground seizes the opportunity to pinch a carrot. Unpublished

14. In a country lane, Kashgar district; villagers riding to market on their donkeys by the side of an irrigation-channel. (Unpublished)

15. Rustic Scene, ~~XXXXXXXXX~~ Yarkand ~~XXXXX~~ district. In foreground, woman and her spinning-wheel. In background, oxen treading out corn; a girl drives them round and round a centre pole, and a man pitchforks the corn under their feet. (Unpublished)

16. Troop of Chinese Cavalry, Karghalik (See p. 110 top) (Unpublished)

17. A Camel Caravan with Khotanx silks and felts crossing an arm of the dreaded Takla Makan Desert between Khotan and Yarkand. (For caravans, see pp 239 and 244)

18. The Sheep Market, Khotan. (For Khotan, see pp. 113-4) (Unpublished)

XX. (c) THE ALPS OF QUNGUR. (The previously unexplored region to the south of Kashgar which we penetrated 3 times, and of which I made the map at the beginning of my book)

From "Chinese Central Asia"

19. Kirghiz visitors, (Face p. 132) Unlike the Turki women of the plains, the nomad Kirghiz women of the almost inaccessible X valleys of the "Alps of Qungur" are perfectly natural, do not veil and are not in the least shy. Often when we pitched our tents in a new valley, they would bring their sewing and their children and sit in front of our tents, watching my wife at her housekeeping and waiting to be invited inside her tent. (See Chinese C. Asia, p. 230)

20. "Folded" limestone strata, Kaying Jilgha. In foreground, our party with yaks and Kirghiz guides resting on the greensward at 11,500 f near the upper limit of the fir-woods. (Face p. 100)

21. The Kaying Jilgha as we first saw it, Oct. 1922 "The Happy Valley face p. 90) For description, see p. 100. For explorations in neighbourhood of Kaying Valley, see Ch. VII and pp. 148-152.

22. Peak III of the Shimshte Group, 20,500 ft., from moraine of Aqtash Glacier. (Face p. 276; for description, see p.275).

23.

Not in book.

24. Kirghiz Women of the Kizmak Jilgha, Alps of Qungur. (See p. 132) Elevation 11,000 ft. Note the yak in the background, saddled for ~~XXX~~ riding. These animals are used exclusively for crossing the higher and more difficult passes in this region. Note also portion of Kirghiz tent (aq-oi) on right. They are made of felts stretched over a collapsible willow-wood framework. The lady at the right-hand end is the Urkashi ~~XXXXX~~ (headman) of the valley which she rules with a rod of iron. This is not unusual in Kirghiz communities, where ~~XXXXXX~~ women have perfect equality with men and do more than half of the hard work. (Unpublished).

25. A minor Beg (sort of Justice of the Peace and tax-collector combined) ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ in his aq-oi with his family. See caption under picture. (Unpublished)

26. A Kirghiz Wedding, elevn. 11,500 ft. (See pp. 133-4, 161-2) (Unpublished)

27. Two Kirghiz ladies crossing a local-made bridge over the Qaratash River at Khanterek (ref. p.98 bot.) after calling on my wife. The front lady is carrying twin babies. Note the two different types of Kirghiz women's turban worn; these turbans contain from 30 to 40 yds. of cloth and are wound quite differently ~~XXXXXXXXXXX~~ to the turbans of India, Persia or other Mussulman countries. The men do not wear turbans, only the women. (See back of picture) (Face p. 146)

28. ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ Reconnoitring a glacier in the Alps of Qungur; elevation 14,000 ft. My wife on her yak "bogged" in the snow (July '23 (Unpublished)

29. Summer Camp at Kaying Bashi, Alps of Qungur (10,400 ft.) See back of picture, and book pp.148-50).

and caption)

29. Spring of rose-pink water in the Tigarmansu Jilga (See p. 272) Unpublished

30. Kirghiz nerzens (hunters) with their flint-locks, Keying Jilga. (See p. 273 and back of picture)

31. Junction of Oi Tagh and Bul Ush Glaciers, Alps of Chakragil (See pp. 282-3). ~~[illegible]~~ Another previously unexplored region. Unpublished

32. Peaks IIa, II and III of the Shimakto Group, first discovered by me in the Alps of Qungur region. See back of picture.

~~[illegible]~~

33. Telephoto of Qungur II, 25,200 ft. from 2x m. to north of Saman (see map inside cover) This summit of the Qungur massif was fixed by me for the first time and found to be the highest point of the Chinese Pamirs. The point previously ~~[illegible]~~ supposed (as a result of Sir Aurel Steins explorations in this region) to be the highest was another summit of the same massif, No I, 7 miles to the N.W., height 25,146. Reference pp. 276-7. Unpublished

1—2

I. IN THE WILDS OF NORTHERN KASHMIR.

1. Graeco-Buddhist Ruins at Anantnag, Kashmir Valley.
~~2. A Waterfall in Gurais.~~
3. Birch-woods and Needle-peaks of Minimarg. (2)
~~4.~~ The Burzil Hut.
~~5.~~ 7. - ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ A Woodland Pathx in Astore.
6. Crossing the Astore River by cable.
7. - The Most Beautiful Mountain in the World; Rakaposhi, 25,000 ft. From 9,500 ft. Chapursan
8. "Like a Sword of Ice Brandished to Heaven"---Rakaposhi from Chalt. At level of R. Hunza River, abo
9. - A Glen in Hunza-Nagar Country (with the snows of Kailas, 24,000 ft., at its head)
10. - A Feudal Chieftain of the Kashmir Highlands; the Mir of Hunza ~~xi~~ with his sons and grandsons at Baltit.
11. - The Mir of Hunza's Band.
12. - Polo at Altit. (The game of polo, which was played in the Middle Ages in Persia but has long been unknown in that country, has survived in the mountains of North Kashmir which were once on the confines of the Persian Empire. Polo was introduced by British cavalry officers of the Guides, chief among them my late great-uncle Major-Gen. George Stewart, from Manipur into British India in the sixties.)
13. - In the Hunza Gorges, ~~xhx~~ which ~~xxxxx~~ the Karakoram Range with its peaks rising to over 28,000 ft.
~~14.~~ - D.F.S. talking to a group of Hunza women in an orchard between Baltit & Gulmit.
~~15~~ 14. A hair-raising section of the "road" between Baltit and Gulmit.
16 ~~15~~. - The Pasu Glacier---"Like a flood of deadly coldness, invading this earth from Outer Space."
17 ~~16~~. Gulmit and the fantastically-fretted peaks of Ghircha.
18 ~~17~~. The Only Flat Piece of Ground in North Hunza---Ghircha.
19 ~~18~~. - Misgar, Northernmost Telegraph Station of the Indian System.
20 ~~19~~. 16. Our ~~XXXXXXX~~ Porters in the birch-woods of Hunhil.
21 ~~20~~. Saddling our Riding-Yaks for the Crossing of the Mintaka.
22 ~~21~~. - Our Two Most Sturdy Henchmen, Hafiz and Sangi Khan.
23 ~~22~~. The Mintaka Glen at 13,000 ft.
24 ~~23~~. Our Caravan halting at the top of the Mintaka Pass, 15,000 ft. the Great Divide between the Indian and the Chinese Empires.

II ON THE ROOF OF THE WORLD.

1. Our Yaks fording the Lopgaz glacier-stream, north side of Mintaka P.
2. A Kirghiz Beg and his Family at the Door of their Ac-oi.
3. //// Panorama of Tashqurghan, Capital of the Chinese Pamirs.
4. The Chinese Fort at Tashqurghan; in the distance, Muz Tagh Ata, Father of the Ice Mountains, 24,388 ft.
5. A Tajik Beg and his sons, Chinese Pamirs (The Tajiks are an almo pure Caucasian race.)
6. Parade of the Garrison, Tashqurghan.
7. A Farmstead on the Roof of the World.
8. A Kirghiz Camp near Tashqurghan.
9. Yak tobogganing down snow-slope.

15

2-3

10. Reconnoitring a High Pass in July (Kirghiz, yaks and ourselves floundering in deep snow on the Merki Dawan, 17000 ft.)

11. Kirghiz mausolea, Chinese Pamirs.

12. The Summit of the Ter Art Pass with yak caravan halting (2-section panorama.)

13. My wife surrounded by a bevy of Kirghiz beauties clamouring for medicine.

14. How the Kirghiz "moves house" literally; a Kirghiz aq-oi or felt-and-wood hut being moved bodily by men lifting it from the inside.

15. A Pamir Sky-scape; cloud-effects in the Lake District of the Pamirs.

16. A Party of Pilgrims returning from Mecca to Chinese Turkistan across the Roof of the World. Men, and even women and children, leave their homes on the borders of the Gobi Desert and cross the Seven Passes to India in the spring, and rail down to Bombay and take the Pilgrim Ship to Jeddah in June, returning the same autumn. Numbers of them are lost in blizzards and avalanches on the Pamirs or the Karakoram, others fall victim to the thousand diseases of India to which their race is unaccustomed, others die in the deserts of Arabia. But they go all the same, for the merit of dying on the way to the Holy Cities is as great as that of actually performing the "Haj" Pilgrimage. (See No.)

17. Kirghiz camp at Little Qarakul, with Qungur (25,200 ft.) in background.

18. Little Lake Qarakul with the 'Father of the Ice Mountains' (Muz Tagh Ata, 24,388') in the background. (2-section panorama)

19. Telephoto of summit of Muz Tagh Ata from Subashi, showing rift up the edge of which Sir Aurel Stein climbed to a height of 20,000 ft.

III. KASHGAR AND ITS ENVIRONS.

1. Central Bazaar and Jama Masjid on a feast-day in spring. (Roof covered)

2. Looking Out from Side-street on to Central Bazaar.

3. Street Scene with Performing Goat.

4. Telepanorama of Eastern Suburb and City Walls of Old Kashgar with Snows of Kashgar Range, culminating in the massif of Qungur (25,200 ft.) sixty miles away in the background. (3 sections) "Like the marble bastions of a British Citadel of the Gods."

5. Telepanorama (2-sections) from roof of Consulate General showing snows of Russian frontier 50 miles distant and, in foreground, Chinese cemetery with tumuli raised over bodies of Chinese massacred in the rebellion of 1864.

6. A Riverside Pedlar and his wares under his sun-umbrella.

7. A Busy Cross-roads outside the Yarbagh Gate of the Old City

8. A Kashgari housewife doing her marketing from a passing donkey-pedlar.

9.

10. Buildings of old Russo-Asiatic Bank, now closed and handed over to Chinese authorities.

11. Wayside pedlars and their customers.

12. Terrace and North Facade, British Consulate General (or 11a. Br. C. Gen'l p.m. (K-0058))

13. The Chief Qazi (Muhammadan religious judge) of Kashgar walking in Br. C. Gen'l

14. Uch Merwan ("The Three Windows"). Ancient Buddhist cave-temple near Artush, 9 m. N. of Kashgar. There are remarkable frescoes on the walls of this cave temple, which is almost impossible to get into as it is 60 ft. above the ground and the cliff overhangs.

15. Mussulman tomb and shrine in a woodland glade near Opāl, showing Chinese influence in carved woodwork.

16. One of the enormous willows, hundreds of years old, at Artush 10 m. north of Kashgar.

17. Mongolian camels enjoying themselves after a long march in the Tümen River. ~~in the Tümen River.~~

18. Dervish feeding village dogs as a sawab (merit-acquiring action)

19. Kashgari women and girls spinning in the sun. (Within 1/5th of a second after they heard the click of my shutter they had bolted, leaving their spinning-wheels and raw cotton on the ground, and there was not one to be seen. Kashgari women are exceptionally camera-shy, especially when there are several of them together.)

20. Farm labourer digging in rice-fields irrigated from the Tümen R.

21. Man on horse, leading another, wading up the shallows of the Tümen River into the sunset.

22. Tao Tai (Prefect) of Kashgaria in durbar, receiving the emissaries of the Mir of Hunza who annually bring presents of gold-dust and woollen cloth. The Chinese call these presents "tribute" because in the 7th and 8th centuries A.D. part of Northern Kashmir, including Hunza, was occupied by Chinese troops and formed a part of the Empire of the Tang Dynasty. China has not held Hunza for eleven hundred years now, but she still claims a shadowy sovereignty over it, though it has formed part of the Kashmir State for a hundred years past. The Tao Tai of Kashgar sends presents of porcelain and silk, worth ten times the Hunza "tribute", every year to the Mir, so it is worth his while to send return emissaries (who incidentally are fed and transported free while in Chinese territory) with an ounce and a half of gold dust and a few bales of rough tweed. The ceremony of delivering the "tribute" to the Tao Tai is photographed every year and copies sent to Urumchi and Peking as a proof that Hunza is still part of the Chinese Empire.

23. Public burning of smuggled opium in the streets of Kashgar. The opium is smuggled from Afghanistan into Chinese Turkistan by Chitrali bootleggers; occasionally the British Consul General manages to capture these gangs with the help of the Chinese authorities, and the confiscated opium is handed over to the Tao Tai who has it burnt publicly, in the presence of the Consul General, so that there may be no doubts as to its disposal. No opium is grown anywhere in Chinese Turkistan, a fact of which the Governor is justifiably proud.

23a. Debauchees' Congress. (p. 111 ff.)

24. Group of Victims of the late General Ma, Titai (G.O.C.) of Kashgaria. All have had their fingers, and some also their toes, cut off in the specially-constructed hay-chopping machine the Titai used to use. (See pp 85-9 and Ch. XVI, "Chinese Central Asia")

25. The Titai's chief wife and daughter-in-law calling in state on my wife, escorted by a hundred infantry and a brass band and received with a salute of six guns, about a month before the Titai's defeat and execution at the hands of Govt. forces sent from Urumchi to avenge his many crimes. (Ch. XVI)

Mountain

26, 27, 28. Photos taken at a feast given by the Amban (District Magistrate) of Kashgar New City, showing Chinese summer-houses, artificial "mountain" etc.

(From 47 negs)

IV. THE OASES ON THE SOUTHERN EDGE OF THE TAKLA MAKAN.

(A) Yangi Hissar and Merket.

1. Drawing Water for the Yamen Garden, Yangi Hissar. Note the massive walls of the Yamen (District Magistrate's quarters) in the background.

2. The Amban (District Magistrate) of Yangi Hissar, his assistant and his little daughter.

3. The Officer Commanding the Garrison, Yangi Hissar.

4. Shrine of Bu Maryam, Tarim Azni, with conical-hatted qalandar (dervish) pottering about among the graves of the Faithful.

5,6. Crossing the Yarkand (Tarim) River in big ferry-barges near Merket.

7. Dulani Types, Merket.

8. Forge with Dulani woman working the bellows, her husband and two other loafers looking on.

9. Street scene, Merket.

10. Baby donkey wearing garters for luck, Lailik.

(B) Yarkand

11. Rice-husking mill in action, Yarkand oasis.

12. Sweetmeat seller and his barrow, Yarkand.

13. A Gambling Party outside the city walls.

14. Street scene, suburbs of Old Yarkand.

15. In the Garden of the Magistrate's Yamen, Yarkand; carved wooden summer-house built out over lotus-pond.

16. Rope-seller's shop, Old City bazaar, showing his wares.

17. The Walls of Yarkand.

18. Pond with picturesque wooden houses reflected in it waters.

19. Group of veiled Yarkandi women.

20. A Dog Fight outside the walls.

21. In the Courtyard of the Kök Madrisa (Blue College)

22. A Vegetable Pedlar and his customers, with walls of Yarkand New City in background.

23. Women mounted on donkeys on their way to market.

24. Street scene with two gaily-dressed women crossing bridge over water-channel.

(C) Oases on Yarkand-Khotan Road.

25. Farm Scene near Posgam: In foreground, a woman and her spinning wheel. ~~oxen treading out corn, women spinning, etc.~~ In background, oxen treading out corn; a girl drives them round and round a centre pole, and a man pitch-forks the corn under their feet.

26. A Chinese Family Group, with ladies and children. ~~(Hsiehsu Amban of Yanghissar)~~

6

27. Guard of Honour of Chinese Cavalry, Karghalik.

28. Caravan of Mongolian Camels carrying Khotan silks and felts to Yarkand for the Indian market.

29. Our Tarantass and mounted orderlies halting in the desert

30. Ancient Buddhist "Stupa" near Karghalik ~~in the desert~~.

31. Tarantass, with D.F.S. in it, nearly upsetting on a sand-dune in the Takla Makan between Goma and Khotan.

32. The Amban of Goma (christened by us "George Robey" owing to his extraordinary resemblance to that comedian).

33. Farewell by the wayside to the British Subjects of Goma.

34. ~~.~~ Types of Desert-dwellers; man and two sons, Pialma, Goma-Khotan Road.

(D) Khotan, the Kingdom of Jade.

35. ~~.~~ Our Triumphal Entry into Khotan, escorted by mounted British subjects.

36. ~~.~~.~~.~~ Street Scene, Khotan, overhung by enormous weeping willows.

37. ~~.~~.~~.~~ Crowded bazaars, Khotan Old City.

38. ~~.~~.~~.~~ A Leading British Subject of Khotan, Khan Sahib Badruddin Khan, in the garden of his town house. (~~Showing~~ masses of peach-blossom and the windows of the guest-rooms decorated with silks and embroideries ~~in our honour~~).

39. ~~.~~ Amban and O.C. Garrison, Khotan, in the Garden of the Temple of the goddess Nyang Nyang.

40. A Leafy Open-air Bazaar in the middle of Khotan; the Sheep Market.

41. A Donkey-load of New Spinning-wheels on its way to Market.

42. An Interior at Yotkan (the ancient capital of the Kingdom of Khotan) where modern villages and cultivation overlie a rich "culture-stratum" 18 ft. below ground level.

43,44 Showing a section of the above-mentioned culture-stratum laid bare by a fallen piece of river-bluff.

~~.~~.~~.~~.

(E) Under the Northern Rim of Tibet; the Keriya Oasis and Polu.

45. The First Trees of the Keriya Oasis; D.F.S. on her camel with our mounted orderlies, near Chira.

46. "Tuesday Bazaar" near Keriya; a country market-place (which, as often, boasts no name but that of its weekly market-day. The rest of the week it is practically deserted.

47. Another snap of the same.

48. Our party hunting for an ancient site among the desert-poplar jungles on the edge of the Takla Makan Desert near Keriya opened up by Sir A. Stein.

49. Wealthy old Lady of Chira Oasis and her grand-daughter, sitting for their passport-photo with a view to proceeding on the Haj Pilgrimage (see No. II.1b above)

50. The British Aqsaqal (lit. grey-beard, i.e. headman of the British subjects) with his little boy in his arms in the courtyard of his house at Keriya. Note part of enormous crowd of sight-seers in background.

51. The Amban of Keriya in his Garden, showing two-storeyed pagoda and ornamental water with reflections.

52. The Amban with his little boy in his arms, close-up.

53. Sacred plane-tree of immense age, shrine of Boghaz Langar, south of Keriya.

54. Shrine among trees, Boghaz Langar.

55. Shrine of the Four Imams, Imamlar, at the foot of the Kunlun south of Keriya. The yaks' and horses' tails hanging at the tops of the poles are relics of human sacrifice; according to the ancient Chinese chroniclers, the Turki ribes used to sacrifice human victims on the graves of the great and stick their heads up on poles as a record of the fact. Until quite recently the Turks of the Altai region sacrificed horses in the same manner, hanging up the skins over the grave with the heads facing east.

56. Group of citizens of Polu, an 8,000-ft. hill-village of the Kunlun within 3 or 4 miles of the almost impassable frontier of Tibet, in front of their two-storeyed wooden mosque under an enormous plane-tree.

57. Men of Polu with hunting eagles on their wrists.

58. Polu cultivators irrigating a newly-sown field of barley with a curious key-pattern of water-channels peculiar to the country.

59. The Pelican in the Wilderness. For amusing story of the pelican presented to us by the Amban of Keriya and how we returned to the wilderness in spite of all obstacles, see Chinese C. Asia pp. 251-2.

V. THE MOUNTAINS OF HEAVEN AND THE NORTHERN EDGE OF THE TARIM BASIN.

1. Mares and Foals grazing near a Kirghiz camp, grassy uplands to South of the Taushkan River valley, Semirechian frontier.

2. Kirghiz of the Tien Shan fetching water from rain-pool.

3. Uch Turfan villagers on ponies splashing across a flooded field.

4. Panorama of the Taushkan R. Valley, near Uch Turfan. (2 sections)

4a. Group of Chinese and Sino-Turki Officials, Uch Turfan.

5. A Pedlar of Uch Turfan.

6. Rural Scene, Qara Bulak, southern slopes of the Central Tien Shan.

7,8,b. Telephotos of the Central Tien Shan snows.

10.7. A Street in Old Aqsu.

8 b.a. Kyrgyz hill hunting eagle.

11.9. The Western Gate, Old Aqsu.

12.9. A Party of Singing Dervishes.

13.XX. In the Courtyard of a Turki merchant's house; our host, Abdus Sattar Haji, and his sons at Aqsu.

14.XX. In the Indian Serai, Aqsu Old City, with the only two British subjects of the town, one Mussulman and one Hindu.

15 XX. The City of the Dead. (cf. "cathedral")

16 XX. ~~Another view of the same.~~

17.XX. The Road between Aqsu Old and New Cities, from the top of the loess bluffs, with camel caravan passing down it. (2)

17a. Aqsu Old City from top of loess bluffs with Snows of Central Tien Shan.

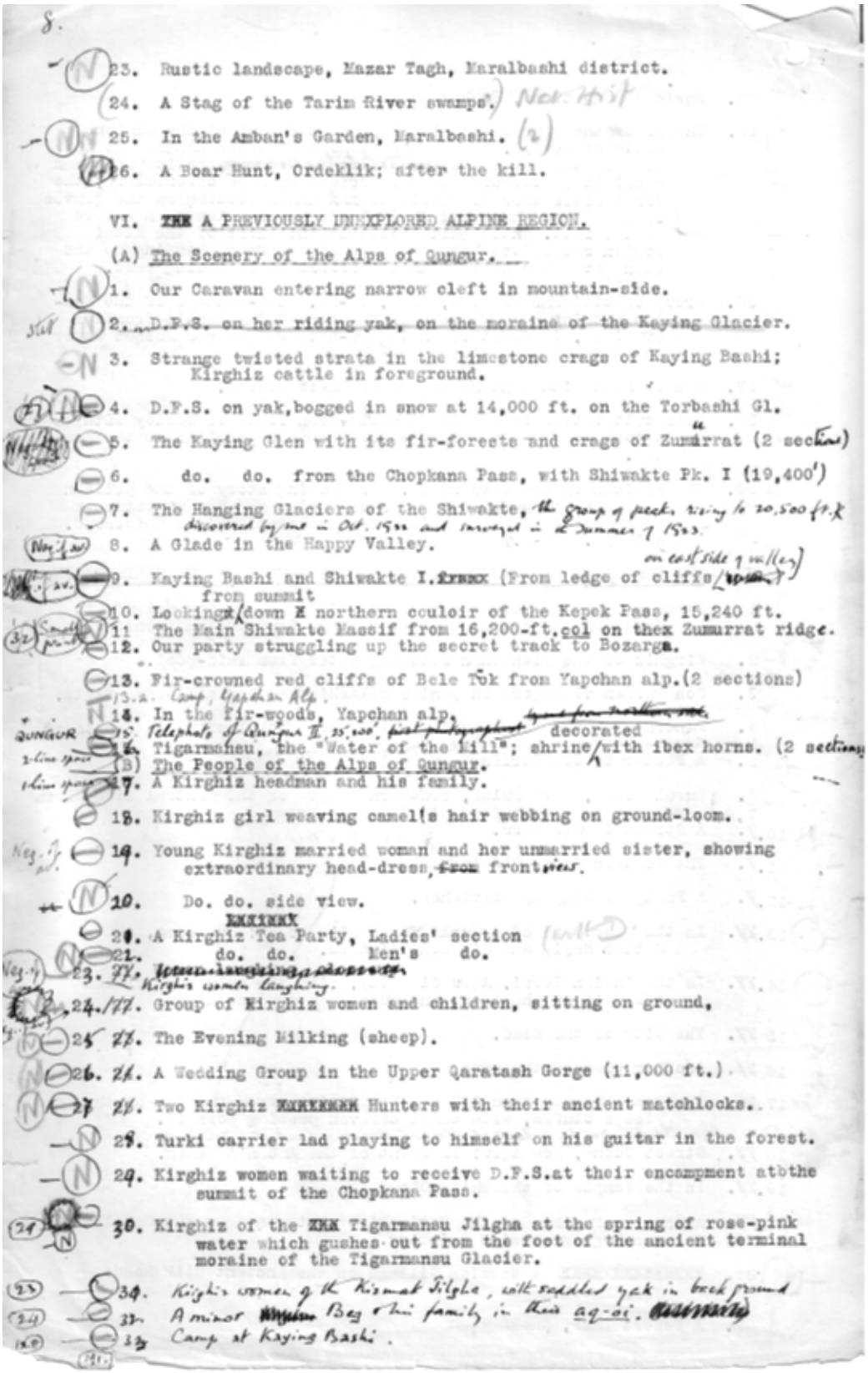
18 XX. Street Scene, New Aqsu; in front of the Amban's Yamen.

19.XX. In the Temple of the White Cloud.

20.XX. Among the Marshes of the Tarim River between Aqsu and Maralbashi; our baggage-ponies drinking.

21. ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ A Wayside Village on the ancient Silk Road: Yaka Kuduk.

22. A Desert Lake, Choka Tagh



8.

23. Rustic landscape, Mazar Tagh, Maralbashi district.
24. A Stag of the Tarim River swamps.
25. In the Amban's Garden, Maralbashi.
26. A Boar Hunt, Ordeklik; after the kill.

VI. ~~THE~~ A PREVIOUSLY UNEXPLORED ALPINE REGION.

(A) The Scenery of the Alps of Qungur.

1. Our Caravan entering narrow cleft in mountain-side.
2. D.F.S. on her riding yak, on the moraine of the Kaying Glacier.
3. Strange twisted strata in the limestone crags of Kaying Bashi; Kirghiz cattle in foreground.
4. D.F.S. on yak, bogged in snow at 14,000 ft. on the Torbashi Gl.
5. The Kaying Glen with its fir-forests and crags of Zumurrat (2 sections)
6. do. do. from the Chopkana Pass, with Shiwakte Pk. I (19,400')
7. The Hanging Glaciers of the Shiwakte, the group of peaks rising to 20,500 ft. discovered by me in Oct. 1900 and surveyed in the Summer of 1903.
8. A Glade in the Happy Valley.
9. Kaying Bashi and Shiwakte I. from summit (From ledge of cliffs on east side of valley)
10. Looking down ~~X~~ northern couloir of the Kepek Pass, 15,240 ft.
11. The Main Shiwakte Massif from 16,200-ft. col on the Zumurrat ridge.
12. Our party struggling up the secret track to Bozarga.
13. Fir-crowned red cliffs of Bele Tok from Yapchan alp. (2 sections)
13.a. Camp, Yapchan Alp.
14. In the fir-woods, Yapchan alp.
15. Telephoto of Qungur II, 25,400', first photograph ~~taken from Maralbashi, 100 miles~~ decorated
16. Tigarmansu, the "Water of the Hill"; shrine with ibex horns. (2 sections)

(B) The People of the Alps of Qungur.

17. A Kirghiz headman and his family.
18. Kirghiz girl weaving camel's hair webbing on ground-loom.
19. Young Kirghiz married woman and her unmarried sister, showing extraordinary head-dress, ~~from~~ front view.
20. Do. do. side view.
21. A Kirghiz Tea Party, Ladies' section
22. do. do. Men's do.
23. ~~Kirghiz women laughing~~ Kirghiz women laughing.
24. Group of Kirghiz women and children, sitting on ground.
25. The Evening Milking (sheep).
26. A Wedding Group in the Upper Qaratash Gorge (11,000 ft.)
27. Two Kirghiz ~~HUNTERS~~ Hunters with their ancient matchlocks.
28. Turki carrier lad playing to himself on his guitar in the forest.
29. Kirghiz women waiting to receive D.F.S. at their encampment at the summit of the Chopkana Pass.
30. Kirghiz of the ~~THE~~ Tigarmansu Jilgha at the spring of rose-pink water which gushes out from the foot of the ancient terminal moraine of the Tigarmansu Glacier.
34. Kirghiz women of the Kizmat Jilgha, with saddled yak in back ground
33. A minor ~~MUSLIM~~ Beg & his family in their aq-oi.
32. Camp at Kaying Bashi.

Synopsis of 8 Illustrated Articles on
Travels in Central Asia, 1922-4.

1. The Hunza-Nagar Country, North Kashmir.

The Gilgit Road; the Indus; Rakaposhi and the Gates of the Hunza-Nagar Country; Baltit. Antiquity of the stock; unique language, Burushaski; isolation and incredible difficulty of the region. Connection with China dating back to the 7th century A.D. Annual "tribute" still paid. Raiding and slave-traffic prior to 1891. Campaign of 1891 and foundation of the pax Britannica. Rival principalities of Hunza and Nagar; differences and similarities. Ancient sports which have survived from pre-Islamic Persia; archery on horseback, polo. Fondness for music and dancing. Feudal conditions prevailing. Husbandry in Hunza-Nagar. Transport, difficulties of. Sketches of the "road" through Hunza-Nagar to the Mintaka. The Greatest Glaciers in the World outside the [illegible] Polar Regions.

2. On the Roof of the World.

Contrast between the country to the south and that to the north of the Hindu Kush-Karakoram Divide. The Pamirs Boundary Commission and its solution of the problem of keeping the British and the Russian Empires apart. Russia on the Roof of the World, before and after the Revolution. The Chinese district of Pu-li or Sariqol; isolation and unpopularity of, with Chinese officials; difficulty of administration from the capital of Chinese Turkistan, Urumchi, 3 months' journey away The Tajiks, pure Caucasian stock. The Kirghis, Turki stock. The sect of Moulais or followers of H.H.the Agha Khan; flourishing worship on the Pamirs of [illegible] prominent figure on English Turf. Life on the Pamirs; cultivation; flocks and herds. Game; Ovis Poli. The Lake District of the Chinese Pamirs; the "Father of the Ice Mountains." "Peripheral gorges" of the Pamir plateau.

3. The Kashgar Oasis.

First impressions of the Oases of the Tarim Basin. The Wall of Snows. Fertility of the soil; loess and its peculiarities; rivers and canal system. People, diversity of types among; clothes; characteristics compared with Indians. Kashgar "Queen of Ninety-Nine Thousand

Cities." Old and New Towns. Temple of Pan Chou. Bazars. Chinese officials and their yamens. The Tyrant Ma Titai and his doom. Stability of Chinese rule. Failure of Russia to re-establish her influence. Culture of Tarim Basin predominantly Chinese, not Russian or even Islamic. Natural features of the Kashgar Oasis; picturesqueness and old-world charm. Relics of ancient Buddhist culture.

4. A Unique River: the Yarkand or Tarim.

The Unexplored Upper Reaches of the Yarkand River; the Oprang and Raskam Gorges; quarrel between Mir of Hunza and Chinese authorities regarding. Yarkand and its great Oasis; a cosmopolitan city; spread of cultivation; curious water-supply; goitre. Market; Sven Hedin's voyage down river. Maralbashi and its marsh-jungles; Chokn Tagh and the Desert Lakes. Bazar Tagh, the Holy Mountain. The Great Silk Road from Cathay to ancient Europe. ~~XXXX~~ Lop Nor. Fauna of the Tarim Jungles; the big Swamp Deer; the elusive "cloudy tiger."

5. The Takla Makan.

The Westernmost Bay of the Gobi. Attempts to cross the Takla Makan. Sand-dunes 300 ft. high; the Khotan and Keriya Rivers. Dry Deltas The Belt of Tamarisk and Desert-Poplar jungle. Explanation of the dwindling of the rivers within the last 2000 years and reconciliation with fact that Central Asia has appreciably not desiccated during ~~xxxx~~ this period. Legends and Superstitions connected with~~xx~~ the Takla Makan; their solid basis in fact; The Forty Buried Cities of the Takla Makan. The Treasure-seekers Excavations of Sir Aurel Stein. Wealth of antiques still to be had at places like Khotan, Yarkand, Goma.

6. The Kingdom of Jade.

The Ancient Kingdom of Khotan, the "Jade City". A colony of Indo-Scythian India before Christ. Interaction with China; Han culture received in exchange for the Buddhist religion. Hsuan Tsang and Marco Polo. The Road to Khotan and beyond; a cul-de-sac. The Caravans. Takhtu-ban Langar and the Pigeon Shrine; connection with the legendary conquest of Khotan by Islam. Scenery of the Khotan Oasis; weeping willows and grassy water-meadows. Khotan Old and New Towns; ~~x~~ leafy streets and market-places. Arts and Crafts of the Khotanese; brass- and copper-work, silk, embroideries, carpets. Yotkan, the ancient capital of the Kingdom, now represented by a "culture-stratum" 18 ft. below ground level.

7. Keriya and the Mountains of Gold.

The Ultima Thule of Kashgaria. Peculiarities of the Keriya and neighbouring oases. A Friendly Amban and his Ninth Daughter. A Courtly Afghan "Greybeard" and his Keriya house. Curiosity of the Kerialiks. The "Mountains of Gold"; placer workings at Surghak and elsewhere; a goldfield a thousand miles long. The Impassable Barrier of the Kunlun. The "Dark Mountains". Under the Northern Rim of Tibet; the Shrine of the Four Imams; ancient trees; relics of human sacrifice. The Hill Villages of the Altyn Tagh; Polu; a friendly race of mysterious origin; the Begship of the Three Hundred Hill Families. Peculiar domestic architecture and methods of cultivation. Minstrelsy and folklore. Hunting with Eagles in the Kunlun. Use of sheep as transport animals.

8. The Southern Slopes of the Tien Shan.

The Two Roads to Aqsu. Among the Outer Ranges of the Heavenly Mountains. The Land of the Seven Rivers beyond the Tien Shan. A miniature inland drainage basin. Kelpin and the Ingan Tagh. The beautiful Valley of the Hare River. Uch Turfan; a small-holders' paradise. The Discontented Ladies of Uch Turfan. A Wild Glen of the Tien Shan; ibex-stalking; opium-smuggling. The unexplored southern slopes of the Central Tien Shan. The Muzart Pass and the Road to Dzungaria. Aqsu, Old and "New". The World's Cheapest Country to Live In. A Turki notable of Aqsu and his house. The Cities of the Living and the Dead. The Temple of the White Cloud. The Tungans, an anomalous race. Kucha, Qarashahr, Turfan and Hami; the Road to the Far East.

9. The Hidden Fastnesses of the Kashgar Range.

Explorations with plane-table and camera among the hitherto unknown glens of the N.E. versant of the Kashgar Mountains. First view of the north-eastern face of Qungur. Discovery of the Shimakte Group. The deeply-recessed glacier-valleys of Qungur and Chakragil and their Kirghiz inhabitants. Isolated patches of fir-forest not previously known to exist in these parts. Chinese administratio of these fastnesses. Copper and Coal Mines. Method of life of the Kirghiz; nomads with an annual range of 5-10 miles; unimaginably hard life. Surveying and mountaineering pictures. Our summer camp at Kaying Bashi; how to keep house at 10,400 ft. in unexplored country.

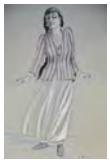
Appendix 1b. Doris Skrine's drawings

Doris Skrine's eye for detail and artistic talent enabled her to produce a visual record which significantly supplemented Clarmont's photography and enhanced the entertainments which they frequently hosted at his various postings. This may not be 'great art' (however one might define that), but nonetheless merits our attention. Unfortunately, much of her art has not been preserved, but it makes sense to provide here a tabulation of those images of which I have copies. Many are explicitly identified with captioning. I have grouped them according to provenance, established by the subject matter, or artistic style in ambiguous cases. Some are from their time in Kashgar; others clearly from postings elsewhere, mainly, it seems, when they were in Kalat State in 1932-1934. The images have been reproduced with permission; except as noted, they are in the Skrine papers in the British Library, IOLR MSS EurF 154/54. Larger versions of several shown here in thumbnails are in some of the illustrations above.

<table>
<tr><th colspan="4">Kashgaria</th></tr>
<tr><td>  </td><td>'Sarikoli hats'</td><td>   </td><td>'Kashgar. Aug. 6th 1922'. The date is two days after the Qurban celebration Eid al- Adha.</td></tr>
<tr><td>  </td><td>'The new Mrs. Dao Tai comes to call'. Presumably the visit in February 1924 when Clarmont photographed the arrival of the party in the consular courtyard.</td><td>  </td><td>'The Dao Tai' (Hsü). Date: after 26 September 1922, when he was appointed.</td></tr>
<tr><td>  </td><td>'Mrs. Ma' of Khotan. 'The Kashgar lady married to the Chinese military officer. I tried to do this from memory and I'm afraid it gives a very poor idea of her loveliness. She was, like the Chinese ladies, a good deal made up.' Date: after 26 Nov. 1922, when Doris met her.</td><td>  </td><td>  </td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">   </td><td colspan="2">Illustrations (tongue in cheek) in letter of DFS to HSS, 16 January 1923, IOLR MSS EurF 154/9.</td></tr>
<tr><td>   </td><td colspan="2">Two images from a wedding reception Doris attended on Friday, 3 August 1923, described in CCA 1925, pp. 197-200. The 'bride from Kashgaria', the new daughter-in-law of Mir Ahmad Bai, is the second image, in the Stewart collection.</td><td>  </td><td>'Mrs. Ishak Khan (Kandahari)', Doris's maid Aisha, dressed in finery to attend the reception on 3 August 1923.</td></tr>
</table>

	'The aksakal's daughter'. Stewart collection.		Might this be Esther Piranian, the young woman whom Doris delighted in hosting in 1924? See CPS to HSS, 19 June 1924 (IOLR MSS EurF 154/9).		'Turki story-teller'. Stewart collection.

Other postings

					
	'Lady from Reksht'				  Stewart collection
		'Seen at Mastung road station, between Quetta & Nushki'. The Skrines were in residence at Mastung in Kalat State in 1932-1934.	  Stewart collection	The 2nd image: 'Camel drivers'	
	'A Brahui Sirdar'. Likely dated 1932-34, when Doris attended 'a wedding of one of the Khan's daughters to a son of a leading Brahui Sardar' in Kalat State (Stewart, *Envoy*, p. 161)			'An old Sidar'	
	'A Pathan'. Stewart collection		'A "Marri" Sirdar at the Sibi Durbar'. Probably from 1932-1934. The Skrines were at Sibi 'in the mid-winter months' of 1933 (Stewart, *Envoy*, p. 164)		
	'Daulet Rai's Daughter-in-law'		'Modern Military Persia. H. H. The Amir-i-Lashkar'		

Appendix 1c. The identification of Skrine's botanical collection

Skrine often mentioned flora and the fact that he and Doris collected specimens in the hope that they might have come across some previously unknown species. On his return home, he asked the professionals at the Herbarium, Kew, to identify what he had collected. The response was a disappointment, in that the collection had no rarities. However, the formal identification of the species by W. B. Turrill, but briefly summarized in remarks following Skrine's presentation at the RGS on the Qungur Alps (*GJ* 1925a, pp. 409-410), is worth reproducing here. The document is among the miscellaneous ones retained in the Stewart archive that will be deposited with the rest of the Skrine papers in the BL.

LIST OF PLANTS COLLECTED.

Determinations and distributional details by
W.B. Turrill M.Sc., F.L.S.,
The Herbarium, Kew.

Delphinium speciosum M. Bieb. sensu Huth.
Distrib. Caucasus, E. Asia Minor, N. Persia, Turkestan to Kashmir and N. India.

Anemone narcissiflora L.
Distrib. N. Tempt Regions.

Paraquilegia grandiflora Drummond et Hutchinson.
Distrib. Cent. Asia, China, N. India.

Trollius lilacinus Bunge.
Distrib. Cent. Asia. The Kashgar mountains would appear to be near the S.W. limit of its distribution.

Trollius altaicus C.A. Mey.
Distrib. Cent. Asia: Turkestan, Altai.

Callianthemum coriandrifolium Reichenb. sensu latiore (Witasek).
Distrib. (of the species in the wider sense) Cent. Eur. mtns., Cent. Asia mtns, Himalayas to W. China.
The specimens probably belong to the subspecies alatavicum (Freyn) Witasek, which is limited to Turkestan and the district to the immediate east.

Draba alpina L. sensu lato.
Distrib. E.N. Tempt. Regions, mtns, arctic and subarctic.

Parrya flabellata Regel.

Distrib. Cent. Asia.: Thian-shan.

Viola biflora L.

Distrib. Mtns of N. Tempt. Regions.

Viola thianschanica Maxim.

Distrib. N. Tibet, W. Mongolia, Turkestan.

Polygala vulgaris L. sensu latiore.

Distrib. S. N. Tempt. Regions.

Geranium collinum Steph. var. glandulosum Ledeb. albiflorum (?).

Distrib. Cent. and S. Russia, Orient, Cent. Asia and N.W. Himalayas.

Thermopsis alpina Ledeb.

Distrib. Cent. Asia: Turkestan, Alatau, Altai.

Astragalus alpinus L.

Distrib. Mtns of N. Tempt. Regions.

Astragalus sp. ab A. alpino calycibus longioribus differt.

Astragalus lepsensis Bunge.

Distrib. Cent. Asia: Alatau, Rs. Lepsa and Sarchan.

Potentilla salesowiana Steph.

Distrib. Altai, Tian-schan, Alatau, Alai, Himalayas, N.E. Tibet.

Potentilla multifida L.

Distrib. Cent. and N. Asia, N. Europe, W. Alps.

Epilobium angustifolium L.

Distrib. N. Tempt. Regions.

Valeriana sp.

Senecio robusta G.H. Schultz.

Distrib. Pamir, Tian-schan, Songaria, Sairam.

Leontopodium sp.

Richteria pyrethroides Kar. et Kir.

Distrib. Pamir, Tian-schan, Turkestan.

Mulgedium azureum DC.

Distrib. Turkestan, Altai.

Campanula sp.

Codonopsis ovata Benth. var. cuspidata Chipp.

Distrib. Afghanistan, Turkestan, Himalayas, China.

Primula farinosa L.

Distrib. The most widely distributed species of the genus. Mtns., arctic and subarctic regions of N. hemisphere and through the S. Amer. Andes.

Androsace flavescens Maxim.

Distrib. Cent. Asia.

Androsace chamaejasme Host.

Distrib. E.N. Tempt. Region.

Cortusa Matthioli L.

Distrib. Mtns of Eur. and Tempt. Asia.

Gentiana sp.

Gentiana barbata Froehl.

Distrib.

Gentiana kaufmanniana Regel et Schmalh.

Distrib. Turkestan and (a variety) Afghanistan.

Gentiana prostrata Haenke

Distrib. Cent. Eur., Cent. Asia, N.W. America.

Gentiana falcata Turcz.

Distrib. Cent. Asia.

Gentiana umbellata M. Bieb.

Distrib. Cauc. and Cent. Asia.

Pedicularis venusta Schenk.

Distrib. Cent. Asia.

Dracocephalum imberbe Bunge.

Distrib. Cent. Asia.

Scutellaria alpina L.

Distrib. Cent. and S. Eur. and Cent. Asia.

Polygonum viviparum L.

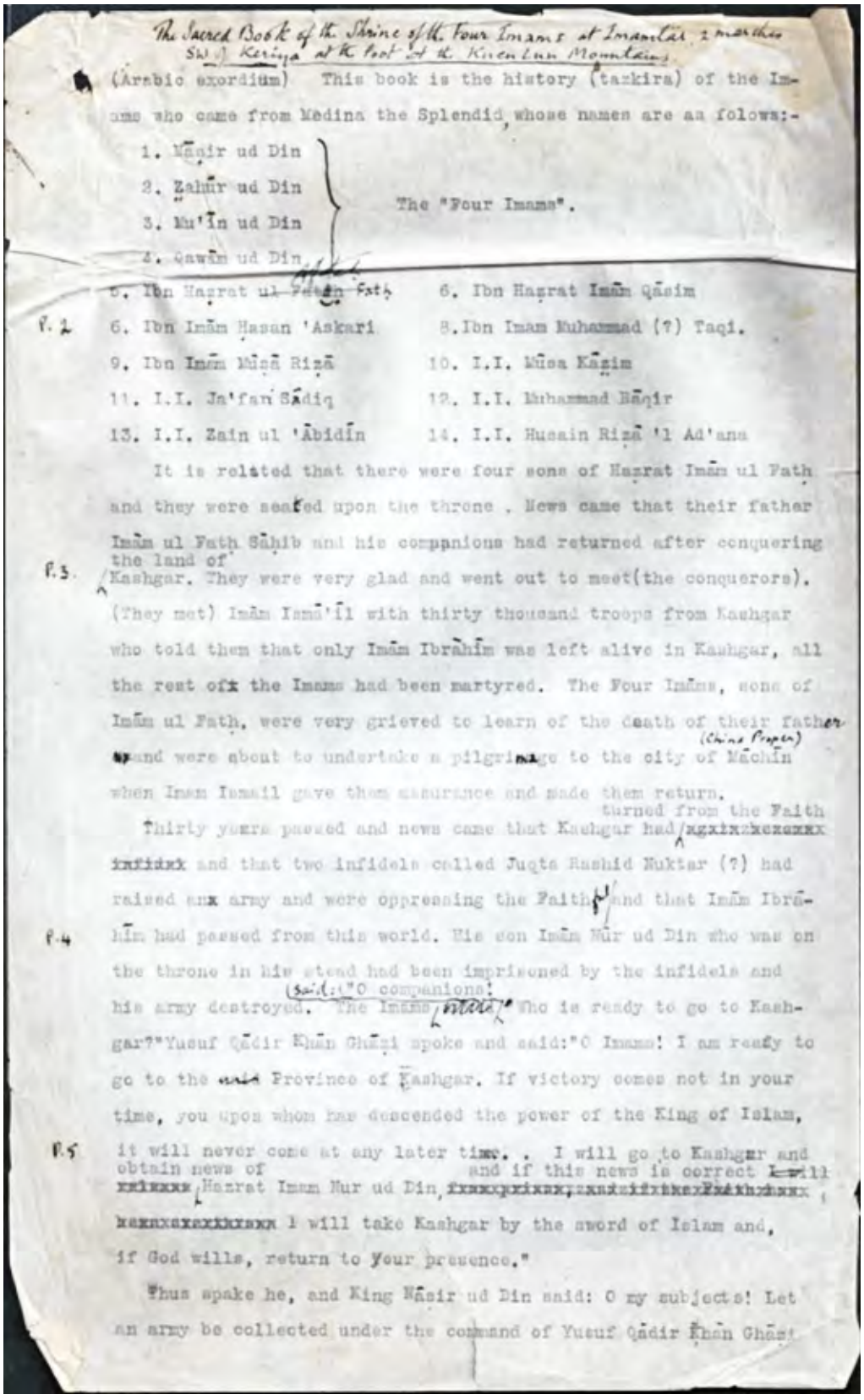
Distrib. N. Tempt. Regions.

Salix nastata L.

Distrib. Cent. and N. Eur. to Cent. Asia and Himalayas.

Appendix 1d: Skrine's draft translation of the *Tazkirah* of the Four Imams

While on tour in 1924, Skrine reported acquiring at a remote shrine southwest of Keriya a manuscript of the hagiographic text concerning the exploits of the Sufi Imams who were involved in the spread of Islam into Kashgaria. The text is one known in numerous variants in western Xinjiang. How Skrine's variant might relate to the others would require additional research. He worked diligently on his own and with some assistance from his local informant-translator Qari, who had accompanied him on the trip, to translate the text from Turki (~Uyghur today). The facsimile here is his working version of the translation which he then put aside and presumably never finalized, even though he discusses the text at some length in *CCA* 1925, pp. 175-180, with reference to the earlier study in Dutreuil de Rhins and Grenard (1897-1898), which he consulted only when back in London working on his own book. If nothing else, the draft translation is vivid evidence of his how seriously he undertook the task (however accurate the result may have been). He collected a lot of other local folklore and similarly produced translations of it, many of which he then published in *CCA*. The facsimile here reproduces from the Stewart family archive the pages which will be deposited in the BL with the rest of Skrine's papers.



The Sacred Book of the Shrine of the Four Imams at Imamlar 2 marches SW of Keriya at the foot of the Kuen Lun Mountains

(Arabic exordium) This book is the history (tazkira) of the Imams who came from Medina the Splendid, whose names are as folows:-

1. Nāṣir ud Din
2. Ẓahūr ud Din
3. Mu'īn ud Din
4. Qawām ud Din

} The "Four Imams".

5. Ibn Hazrat ul Fatḥ
6. Ibn Hazrat Imām Qāsim

P. 2

6. Ibn Imām Ḥasan 'Askari
8. Ibn Imam Muhammad (?) Taqi.
9. Ibn Imām Mūsā Riẓā
10. I.I. Mūsa Kāẓim
11. I.I. Ja'far Ṣādiq
12. I.I. Muhammad Bāqir
13. I.I. Zain ul 'Ābidīn
14. I.I. Husain Riẓā 'l Ad'ana

It is related that there were four sons of Hazrat Imām ul Fath and they were seated upon the throne . News came that their father Imām ul Fath Ṣāhib and his companions had returned after conquering the land of

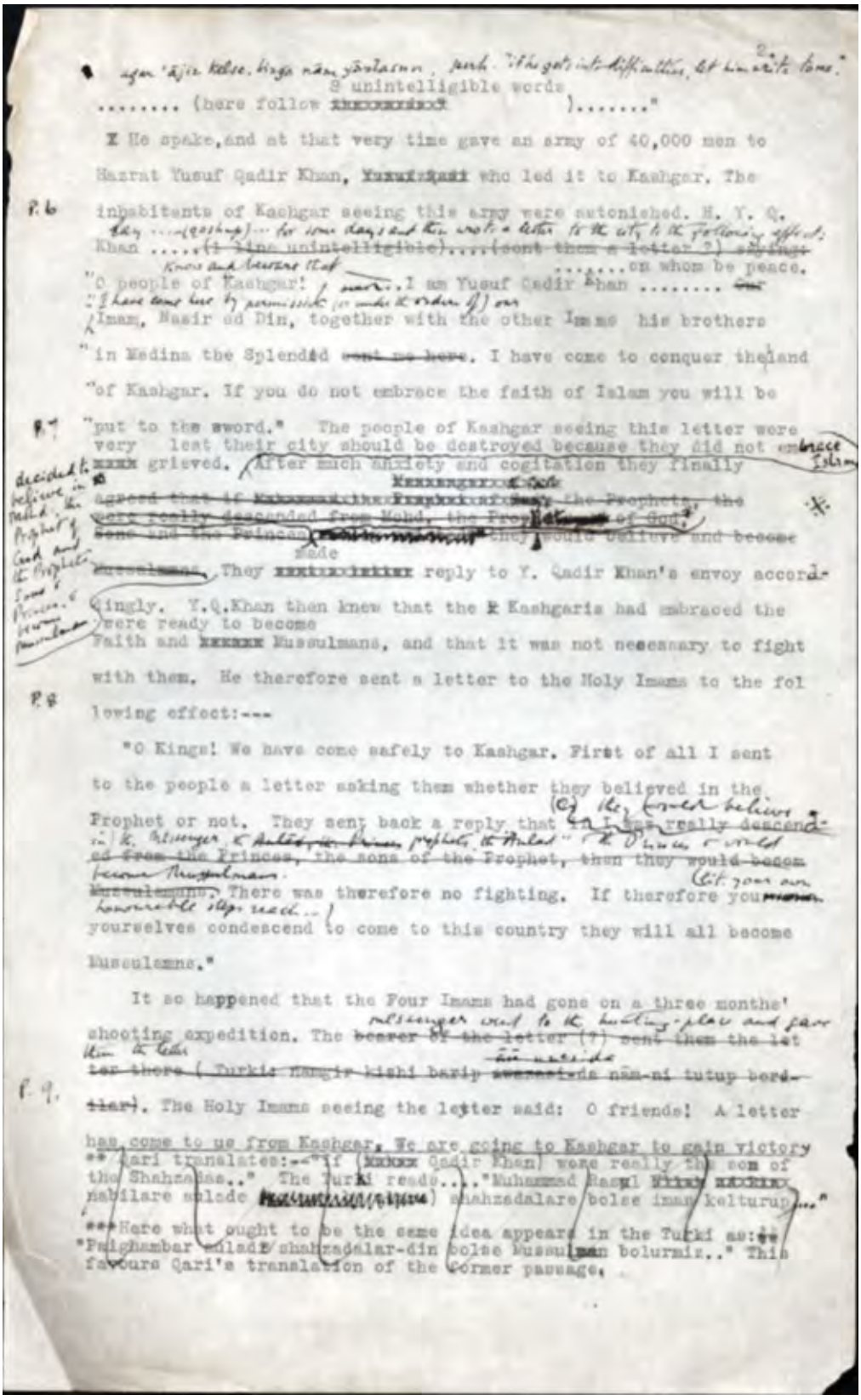
P.3 Kashgar. They were very glad and went out to meet(the conquerors). (They met) Imām Ismā'īl with thirty thousand troops from Kashgar who told them that only Imām Ibrāhīm was left alive in Kashgar, all the rest of the Imams had been martyred. The Four Imāms, sons of Imām ul Fath, were very grieved to learn of the death of their father and were about to undertake a pilgrimage to the city of Māchīn (China Proper) when Imam Ismail gave them assurance and made them return.

Thirty years passed and news came that Kashgar had turned from the Faith and that two infidels called Juqta Rashid Nuktar (?) had raised an army and were oppressing the Faith and that Imām Ibrā-

P.4 hīm had passed from this world. His son Imām Nūr ud Din who was on the throne in his stead had been imprisoned by the infidels and his army destroyed. The Imāms said: "O companions! who is ready to go to Kashgar?" Yusuf Qādir Khān Ghāzi spoke and said: "O Imams! I am ready to go to the Province of Kashgar. If victory comes not in your time, you upon whom has descended the power of the King of Islam,

P.5 it will never come at any later time. . I will go to Kashgar and obtain news of Hazrat Imam Nur ud Din, and if this news is correct I will I will take Kashgar by the sword of Islam and, if God wills, return to your presence."

Thus spake he, and King Nāṣir ud Din said: O my subjects! Let an army be collected under the command of Yusuf Qādir Khān Ghāzi



agan 'Ajiz kelse. Kisga nam yazalasun, meth. "He got into difficulties, let him write home."
2
3 unintelligible words
..... (here follow) ....."

He spake, and at that very time gave an army of 40,000 men to Hazrat Yusuf Qadir Khan, who led it to Kashgar. The

P.6 inhabitants of Kashgar seeing this army were astonished. H. Y. Q. Khan ....(3 lines unintelligible)....(sent them a letter ?) saying: Knows and believes that ..... on whom be peace.

"O people of Kashgar! I am Yusuf Qadir Khan ..... I have come here by permission (or under the orders of) our Imam, Nasir ud Din, together with the other Imams his brothers

"in Medina the Splendid. I have come to conquer the land

"of Kashgar. If you do not embrace the faith of Islam you will be

P.7 "put to the sword." The people of Kashgar seeing this letter were very grieved. After much anxiety and cogitation they finally agreed that if the Prophet of God, the Prophet, the Prophet's sons really descended from Mohd. the Prophet of God, and the Princes, the sons of the Prophet, then they would believe and become Musulmans. They made reply to Y. Qadir Khan's envoy accordingly. Y.Q.Khan then knew that the Kashgaris had embraced the Faith and were ready to become Musulmans, and that it was not necessary to fight with them. He therefore sent a letter to the Holy Imams to the following effect:---

P.8

"O Kings! We have come safely to Kashgar. First of all I sent to the people a letter asking them whether they believed in the Prophet or not. They sent back a reply that if I was really descended from the Princes, the sons of the Prophet, then they would become Musulmans. There was therefore no fighting. If therefore you yourselves condescend to come to this country they will all become Musulmans."

It so happened that the Four Imams had gone on a three months' shooting expedition. The messenger went to the hunting-place and gave him the letter. [illegible] ter there (Turkis [illegible] kishi bariy [illegible] nam-ni tutup berdiler).

P.9. The Holy Imams seeing the letter said: O friends! A letter has come to us from Kashgar. We are going to Kashgar to gain victory

** Qari translates:-"if (Yusuf Qadir Khan) were really the son of the Shahzadas.." The Turki reads...."Muhammad Rasul [illegible] nabilare salade [illegible] shahzadalare bolse iman kelturup ..."

*** Here what ought to be the same idea appears in the Turki as: "Paighambar sulade shahzadalar-din bolse Musulman bolurmiz.." This favours Qari's translation of the former passage.

over the Infidels. Anyone who is on our side must certainly come with us. He who does not come will afterwards [illegible] (nidāmat)

So saying the Imams, without returning (to Medina) went to Hazrat Rauza'-i-Mubarak (Garden of Rasul Karim). There they performed the pilgrimage and consulted the omens. The omens said that they would conquer Kashgar and would be martyred there. At this reply the Imams were exceeding glad and started for Kashgar with their whole army .....(Turki: ahl bait khanlarimiz alip kelghale padshah P 10 saltanatlarini ?iztun alip ....lar dep).....The Holy Imams themselves (ghaza etfa ?????? atlandilar ?iztun yurup) came to Andijan and camped there. At this place the Holy Imams decided to take a census of their army. As the number which had come was very great, they took one grain of maize for every ten men and then weighed the maize. The maize was found to weigh a charak (about 20 lbs.). The number of the army was by this means computed to be 140,000.

The Holy Imams said:--"A very great army has come with us. Have "(the soldiers) come of their own free will or under compulsion? It "has been granted to us to spread Islam and fight with the infidels. P.a "It is not right that we should take so large an army with us. Let "us take only our own friends; with God's favour and the help of the "Prophet we will gain the victory." So saying they paraded the army, gave it their blessing and dismissed it. The soldiers fell at the feet of the Imams and cried "O our Kings! Have our faces become so black that we are not to be allowed to proceed? If each of us had a thousand lives they would all be dedicated to you. If you will not grant our request, shoot us here; our lives will be given to God in P.12 front of you; but we will not go back if you give us our lives. (If when we appear before our Intercessor with God, etc etc., we go back) your holy ancestor the Prophet on the day of judgment we shall be ashamed .....(Turki:--altun Jubbar toghalare-ning ...bāshimiz hazratlare-ning arqalarda..birla ārkāship yurgaimiz dep edilar...) The Imams were pleased at these words of the soldiers and gave order that all present should raise their hands for prayer. All raised their hands and said "Amen". The Four Imams turned their eyes to Mecca, lifted up their hands in prayer and sang the following hymn :-

[illegible]:--

P. 13.

Ai īgīslārni qelghūchi pasti

Sār-ni yoq, yoqni qelghuchi hasti;

Zikrgha jārī qelsāne

Lashkarni qārī qelsāne:

Salma konglegha ghair yādini

Ber bu 'ājiz tiklārning murādini;

Konglegha 'ilm xx 'ishq tūshqārghil

Ber 'amal rāst, yollgha bāshqārghil ;

Būbākam hurmatidin, ai Bārā

Barja (?) mushkil ishigha ber, Yārā;

Mana mushkil-lāreni āsān ait

'Ishq xx faiz o futūh xxxx ait.

Allahu Akbar!

(Translation)

O Thou who makest high places low

Who makest Nothingness out of Existence and Existence out of Nothingness;

Make (xx mouths worthy to) utter Thy name

Make our army (worthy to) read (Thy word).

Put not in our hearts the thought of anything other (than Thee)

Grant the desire of these our humble tongues.

Implant xxx knowledge and love (of Thee) in our hearts

Grant that we may act aright and guide us in our path;

By the virtue of our Ancestor, O God

Help us in our difficult work, O Beloved (God);

Make all our difficulties easy

Grant us Thy love and favour, grant us victory.

O God Almighty!

So saying, they bent their eyes in prayer and said "O Friends! Look upwards". Then, "Look ~~downwards~~" they said.....

(Then follow the remarkable words <u>noshti nāhi taht-us-sarrā'i ni kurup hemalāre suliya'i zabardast boldilār</u> "seeing the....fish beneath the.....they all became sons of strength")

P. 14.

Meanwhile Yusuf qadir Khan Ghazi at Kashgar sent a letter to the Imams and was waiting (and wondering) xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx whether they were coming themselves

S. 1.

or not. At length a cloud of dust became visible in the direction of Andijan and a banner appeared, the sign of an army of 1000 men. At the head of this army was Hazrat Sultan Shah Qasim of Osh. He wore very bright armour and (jarranalar) and he had in his belt. all the munitions of war; so that it looked as if he had come to conquer unaide terrible was he It seemed to the land of Kashgar. Yusuf Qadir Khan the heavens were darkene

P.15 when he met him ... "O King, whence you come and where left the Imams?" Shah Qasim of Osh replied "O Buzurgwar (lit. ancestor) the Holy Imams have pitched their camp in Andijan and have sent me ahead to announce their comidg. Go thou ahead and tell Yusuf Qadir Khan that we are coming". Yusuf Qadir Khan was exceeding glad and Shah Qasim and his army made halt at his own place. The Imams sent greetings to Yusuf Qadir Khan, and he was wondering whether he should go out and meet them, when a great dust appeared and from the

P.16 midst of it four banners, the sign of 4000 men. Of this army there were four captains: Hazrat Sultan Mansur Oshi, Khwaja Sa'id Oshi, Khwaja Ahmad Oshi and Khwaja 'Aziz Oshi. ..... "O Yusuf Qadir Khan! The Imams ordered that until they came we were to halt the army from place to place" Yusuf Qadir Khan agreed and found a place for the 4000 men in one quarter of the city That day they struck camp (?kuch) ??? Qari; see below. At the time of chashtgah (about 10 a.m.) another cloud of dust was seen. From the midst of it nine banners

P.17 appeared, the sign of nine thousand men. The captains of this army were:-- Hazrat Sultan Sinjri Kashani, Khwaja Isma'il Kashani, Khwaja Sultan Haidari K., Khwaja Yusuf, K., Khwaja Yaqub K., and Kh. Sulaiman K. ... found a place for them in one quarter of the city. That day (?next day) camp was struck. Next day at the first streak of dawn, at the time of chashtgah, another cloud of dust appeared from the midst of which twelve standards became vis-

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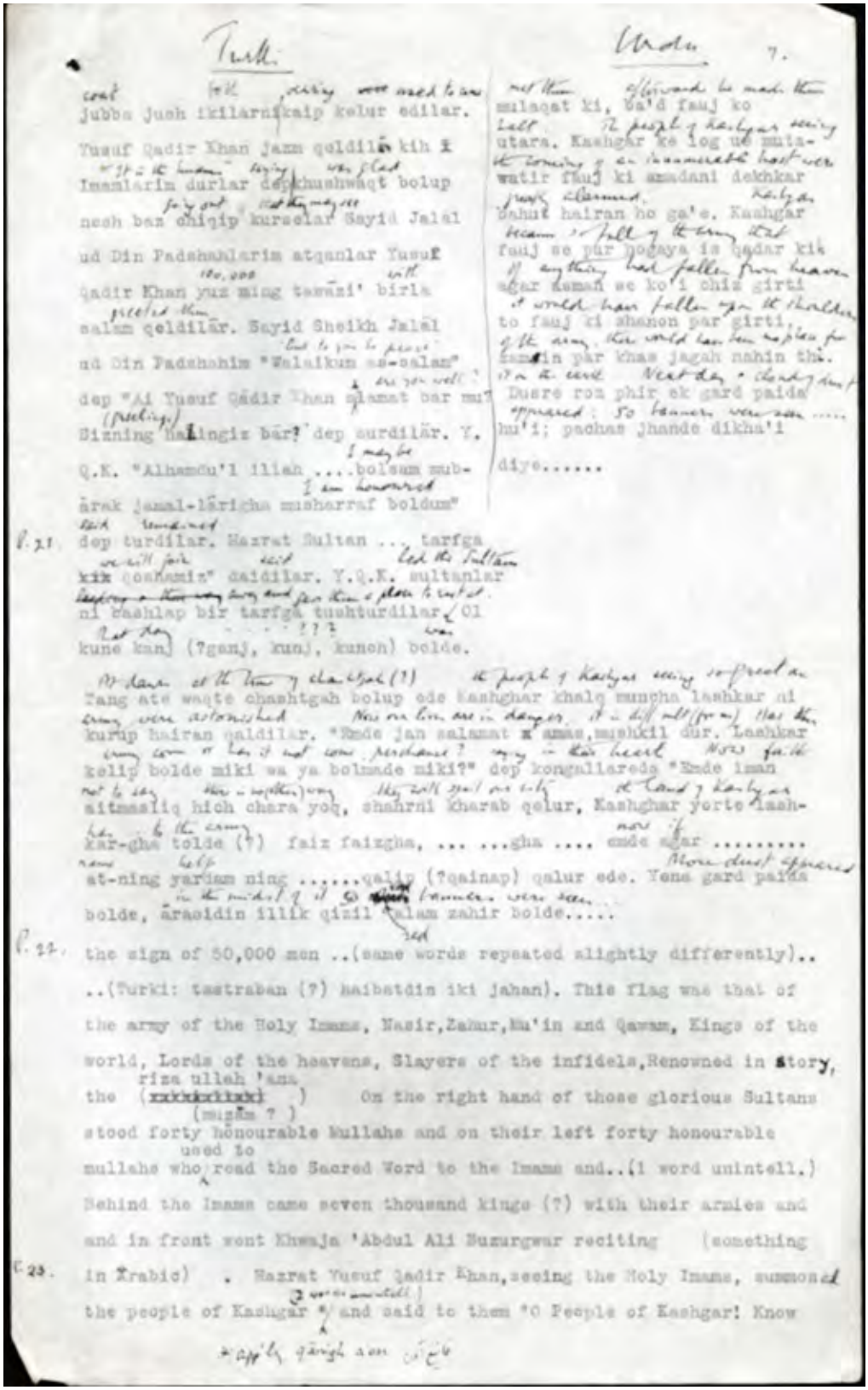
Padshahlare kelde

X ** Turki: YusufvQadir Khan Ghazi nesh baz chiqip kuruchup wa hardoq surashtilar. Similar passage next p. reads: Padshahlare kelde Hazrat Y.Q.Khan Gh. bularning aldigha barip kuruchtilar wa hardoq surashtilar

ible, the sign of twelve thousand men. The captains of this army were: SUltan Abu'l Muzaffar Khwarazmi, Sultan 'Aziz Khwarazmi, S. Hashim Khw., S. Qasim Khw., Khwaja A'zam Khw., Khwaja Ja'far Khw., Khwaja Ibrahim Khw., Khwaja Muslim Khw., Kh. Kuchik Khw., Kh. Shahbaz Khw.. The kings arrived. Yusuf Qadir Khan ..(1 wd. illegible.).. went out again and gave ..(1 wd. illegible.).. honour and met them. He gave them a place in the city to stop in. The people of Kashgar seeing so great an army were astonished. That day camp was struck. It was the time of chashtgah, when a cloud of dust was seen and from the midst of it appeared 17 standards, the sign of 17,000 men. The captains of this army were all Sheikhs of the Khanqa' of the Ajnab Hazrat Ghaus-ul-A'zam Pir Dastgir of Holy Baghdad.....(here follow various other religious titles)....(namely) Sultan'Alawu 'd Din Baghdadi, Khwaja Hasan B., Khw. Muhammad B., Khw. Mahmud B., Khw. Shukur B., Khw. 'Abdul Karim B., Khw. 'Abdur-Rahim B., Khw. 'Abdul Ghafur B.. These were the king who came..... (Next page and a half difficult. Original Turki and Qari's paraphrase are placed side by side below:---

Original	Q's paraphrase.
Hazrat Sultān Sayid .....Jalāl ud Din Buzurgwār Hazrat tört atlanip Imāmlārimiz ghazzātgha aklanip(?) chiqqānlārini anglap Pir Dastgir-ning arwāchlarini (?)tawajjuh qelip bashārat takhsip (?) qoshan-ghan edilar. Igitlare ung sul jaf-ship (?) atlarening qaushedin (?) yarkusni (?) tashratip kus tamur (?)	Chhār Imām Sahibān ke ba ma'iyat ghaznāt ravana honeki khabar sunkar imdad ke liye bā ma'i apne fauj hamrah ho ga'e the. Fauj nihayat qabil wa jarrah lohe ki zire pahinkar haibatnak tariqa se a'e. Yusuf Qadir Khan Ghazi ne istiqbal ke liye jakar tawāzi ki sath salam ki aur

** Turki:-- ham padshahi Hazrat Sultan Sayyid Sheikh Jalal ud Din Khwajam-ning un qullarida Sultan As'ad-din zat sul (?) qullarida Sultan Ziyad ud Din Baghdadi arqalarida



Turki

jubba jush ikilarnikaip kelur edilar.

Yusuf Qadir Khan jamm qeldilär kih ɪ
Imamlarim durlar dep khushwaqt bolup
nesh bar chiqip kuselar Sayid Jalal
ud Din Padshahlarim atqanlar Yusuf
Qadir Khan yuz ming tewazi' birla
salam qeldilär. Sayid Sheikh Jalal
ud Din Padshahim "Walaikum as-salam"
dep "Ai Yusuf Qadir Khan salamat bar mu?
Sizning hallingiz bär?" dep surdilär. Y.
Q.K. "Alhamdu'l illah ....bolsam mub-
arak jamal-lärichа musharraf boldum"
dep turdilar. Hazrat Sultan ... tarfga
qoshunin" daidilar. Y.Q.K. sultanlar
ni bashlap bir tarfgа tushturdilar. Ol
kune kanj (?ganj, kunj, kunon) bolde.

Tang ate waqte chashtgah bolup ede Kashghar khalq munchа lashkar ni
kurup hairan qaldilar. "Emde jan salamat amas, mushkil dur. Lashkar
kelip bolde miki wa ya bolmade miki?" dep kongallareda "Emde iman
aitmasliq hich chara yoq, shahrni kharab qelur, Kashghar yerte lash-
kär-gha tolde (?) faiz faizgha, ...gha .... emde agar .....
at-ning yardam ning .....qalip (?qainap) qalur ede. Yene gard paida
bolde, ärasidin illik qizil alam zahir bolde.....

the sign of 50,000 men ..(same words repeated slightly differently)..
..(Turki: tastraban (?) haibatdin iki jahan). This flag was that of
the army of the Holy Imams, Nasir,Zahur,Mu'in and Qawam, Kings of the
world, Lords of the heavens, Slayers of the infidels,Renowned in story,
the (rxxxxxxxxx) (mugam ?) On the right hand of those glorious Sultans
stood forty honourable Mullahs and on their left forty honourable
mullahs who read the Sacred Word to the Imams and..(1 word unintell.)
Behind the Imams came seven thousand kings (?) with their armies and
and in front went Khwaja 'Abdul Ali Buzurgwar reciting (something
in Arabic) . Hazrat Yusuf Qadir Khan,seeing the Holy Imams, summoned
the people of Kashgar and said to them "O People of Kashgar! Know

Urdu

7.

milaqat ki, ba'd fauj ko
utara. Kashgar ke log ye muta-
watir fauj ki amadani dekhkar
bahut hairan ho ga'e. Kashgar
fauj se pur hogaya is qadar kih
agar asman se ko'i chiz girti
to fauj ki zhanon par girti,
zamin par khas jagah nahin thi.
Dusre roz phir ek gard paida
hu'i; pachas jhande dikha'i
diye.....

S. 8

and beware
that these are the kings of the earth who are coming. Unless you
be slain.
go out at once and confess the Faith, you will all xxxx xx xxxx
xpxyxurxtixxxxxtxtxxxxxxtixx Let no one remain; I have warned you".
So saying he went out to meet the Imams. When he came near them he
greeted them.
threw himself off hi horse and xxtxxxtxxxtxxxxx. The Imams returned
his greetings and asked after his health. Y Q Khan replied "Thanks
be to God, I am well and honoured by your happy arrival. My heart.....
(Turki:---
P.24 (4 words)..... So saying..xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx
ta'azzum..(1 wd).kelturup turdilar). At the same time the Kashgaris
also gathered together and (9 wds. translated by Q. as foll: throw-
ing aside their bows and arrows and taking many presents) came and
greetd the Imams. The Imams gave no reply to their greetings and asked
"Are these people Musulmans or not?" Y.Q.Khan answered that they were
the people of the city who had come out in order to embrace Islam. The
Imams said " O Y.Q.Khan, ask these men whether they have come of their
own accord or from fear". Y.Q.Khan Gh. asked xx the Kashgaris what their
reply was. They said "O Kings! for a long while past we have desired
P.25 to become Musulmans. Now, praise be to God! we have attained our desire".
? Eship
The Holy Imams hearing these words xx dismounted and administered
the oath to them. The (Barjas) took the oath and became Musulmans.
The Imams said to them "O Musulmans! Say Amin after us". They all
said Amin. The Imams prayed, and from the hearts of the people of Kgr
all darkness went out and the recognized the One God. They acclaimed
Each man (1 wd.) tea and honoured them. The Kashgaris
P.26 the Imams and brought them into the city, xxx worked for th e Imams
(ie.many)
for several days.

Spoke to him as follows:—
The Imams made Yusuf Qadir Khan King of Kashgar and xxxxxxxxxxx
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

waqf auqaf qelip bizning haqq- (1 wd.) imizda du'a.....qelghuding (4-5 wds.) sheikh ..... qoighaisiz."

Establish sacred trusts in our name; let not the sheikhs who pray for us remain without substance or honour."

So saying the Imams gave advice to Y.Q.Khan and left for Yarkand. When they come (near) to Yarkand.....there were ? kurselir (? within sight of) a hundred persons (yarni kullap) sitting in the midst of the road who had been engaged in disporting themselves with their mistresses and hunting. Hearing of the arrival of the Imams they went forward and....[biqadar hal .....lar qelip turde The Imams administered the oath to them and they took it and became Musulmans. The Imams dismounted and bared their heads and prayed, saying that the capital of the land of Kashgar had come to be in this place (Yarkand). Thus prayed they, and having finished their prayer proceeded towards Machin. (i.e. Eastwards) On the road some people were standing; some became Musulmans, some ran away; the Imams were suspicious (gumān) of these latter, wherefore they called the place Gomā. Moji was given that name because the army of the Imams .....(obscure: Turki seems to read Imamlarning leshkare khajunlarini ekhtarip baqqandin Moji at qoide)... The Holy Imams rested one night there and went on

Appendix 2

Revisiting the 'Qungur Alps' and the 'Mysterious and Terrible Karatash Gorges'

The legacy of Clarmont Skrine's service in Kashgaria is open to a range of interpretation. His own book, *Chinese Central Asia* [here abbreviated *CCA*], presumably reached a wide audience, given the fact that it was reprinted several times. As we have seen, he himself envisaged it as popularization for an imagined general readership. Yet, unlike many of his contemporaries who published such 'travel books', he made a serious effort contextualize his own observations in at least some of what at the time was the authoritative literature. The result was arguably more substantial than what readers of his era would have found in the popular books by E. V. Lucas, even though from the perspective of a century later, Skrine's book may seem but a quaint artifact of a time gone by.

Skrine argued that his extensive 'touring' was essential for his professional obligations. Indeed, there is ample evidence that direct negotiations with local officials were important in an era when the extraterritorial powers of foreign diplomats were under attack. Furthermore, as was true for any diplomat in another country, one of Skrine's tasks was to collect intelligence information. Even if some of his travel and exploration was not undertaken specifically for that purpose, on his return to India, he supplied updates for the confidential route books published in for the British military. Arguably, Skrine's enthusiasm for his travel went well beyond these professional tasks. On the most basic level, he simply liked escaping the tedious routines of office work and the 'social whirl' of the consulate, even if in fact he brought his paperwork along and could not escape formal social obligations. In his formative years, he had delighted in roaming and photographing in the Scottish highlands; this carried over in his early years in the I.C.S. The exciting vistas of the mountain knot of Asia through which he traveled to and when in Kashgaria invited closer examination, and he was inspired by the example of the serious explorers and scholars – Aurel Stein in particular. Thus, in planning for Kashgar, Skrine took a quick course in surveying in the hope that he might fill in even some small blank spots in the maps Stein and his surveyors had produced. What Skrine accomplished in what he admitted was little more than a semi-professional avocation, would prove to be one of the most lasting contributions from his two years in Kashgar.

His correspondence with Stein attests both to the importance Skrine placed on this work and to the appreciation of his efforts by an acknowledged expert. Upon his arrival back in India from Kashgar, Skrine submitted his mapping materials to the Survey of India; the cartographers there then incorporated them into the next updates of the standard detailed topographic maps. Stein was happy to recommend Skrine to the Royal Geographical Society (RGS) in London, where in 1925 Skrine gave an illustrated presentation on his discoveries in the 'Qungur [Kongur] Alps' south of Kashgar, and the RGS quickly printed the paper in its prestigious journal. Even more than Skrine's book, that one article was a landmark contribution to historical geography (even if focused on a relatively small region) and, as my essay here will show, inspired further exploration of what was still relatively little known territory.

It is important to qualify that 'little known' – in dealing with exploration and mapping such as that undertaken by Stein and Skrine, we are describing what may have been previously unknown to Europeans. However, even if the high peaks were not climbed by them, the local inhabitants of the mountain of interest to us here – in the first instance, Kyrgyz pastoralists – knew the valleys and at least some of the passes. The European visitors relied on that local knowledge as they 'discovered' the region and described it in print. Even in the late 20th century, the time I first visited the same area as Stein and Skrine, I was experiencing the same thing: having to tap local knowledge despite the difficulties of trying to communicate in a language I did not command. Skrine in fact was better equipped in that regard, and the drama of some of his descriptions notwithstanding, could travel with reasonable certainty that he would find his way back to the relative comfort of Kashgar.

Even though I had read *CCA* decades earlier (and then promptly put it aside), I renewed my acquaintance with the book in the 1990s, and his 'The Alps of Qungur' accompanied me as I tried to follow in his footsteps. What was initially for me a kind of escapist 'adventure travel' in the mountains led to a much more serious study of Skrine's Kashgar years than I had first envisaged. And that experience of following in his footsteps helped reorient my academic interests both in terms of publication and teaching. This appendix reviews in some detail what I experienced in the 'Qungur Alps' (described in two earlier publications) and juxtaposes that material with what Skrine saw and described. I have provided additional material from my unpublished diaries and photographs and from presumably little-known records of some explorations by my contemporaries who have explicitly re-examined Skrine's observations in order to update our knowledge of the mountains he first photographed. This then should enhance our appreciation of what he accomplished, even if my personal narrative may leave readers scratching their heads about my occasional folly and misadventure. Those who become impatient with my indulgence in personal narrative can easily skip ahead to the later parts of this essay (starting on p. 724) with the details concerning other expeditions in the region.

A. *The lure of big mountains*

Since the beginning of serious alpinism in the world's highest peaks some two centuries ago much has changed in modes of travel, accessibility, equipment and what we might term the 'style' of expeditions. In Skrine's day, as he well knew from the history of the attempts on Mt. Everest which he was following closely in the news, expeditions generally relied on huge support caravans and rather slow and methodical stepwise ascents. Even if his ventures into the mountains could in no way compare to tackling Everest, he bluntly stated that he was not an advocate of 'toothbrush' travel. His was an escape into the wilderness, but in relative comfort. So there were spacious tents, beds and other furniture, even a zinc-lined bathtub with hot and cold water tanks. He did have some concerns about the safety of his mountain travel, especially since he was always accompanied by his wife Doris. At least an unstated justification for traveling with a parade of retainers was his ingrained conviction about maintaining a proper image for His Majesty's representative. And in addition, he had to take some of his office work along in order to write reports and letters and have them ready for the weekly mail whose riders usually knew exactly where to find him even if he was camped in some remote mountain valley. For his photography and surveying, he packed a considerable amount of gear. The modern era of rapid, lightweight alpine ascents by small teams with minimal, if sophisticated, gear had not yet arrived.[1] Even if it had, to travel that way would not have suited his purpose, which was, after all, not to prioritize a highly technical ascent of some previously unclimbed route on a major peak.

1. For some brief comments on the 'styles' of alpine expeditions, see Bonington 1982, pp. 57-59.

By Skrine's definitions, what I attempted in 1996 might well be classified as 'toothbrush' travel, although some qualifications are needed here. Lest it seem that my adventure was a totally hare-brained scheme, I should say a few words about the qualifications I brought to it and the planning. Despite the fact that for safety reasons it is generally not recommended, I already had some experience of solo, unsupported alpine ventures in our not insignificant mountains of Washington State. I also had been on supported treks and climbs in the Caucasus (summited on Mt. Elbrus) and in the Pamir-Alai mountains of what are today Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. My first really big mountain was 23,000 ft. Peak Lenin in 1991, on which I made it up to around 21,000 ft. before giving up in the face of the wind. In 1994 I was part of 'siege-style' expedition (supported by an army of porters to and from base camp) to one of the 8000 m. peaks in the Karakorum. Once at base camp, we did not use high altitude porters, but stocked our own higher camps. The expedition put several climbers on the summit, but I was not among them.

Of particular relevance for stimulating my interest in what Skrine did was leading in 1995 a supported mountain bike trip from Kyrgyzstan, across to Kashgar, and down into Pakistan on the Karakorum Highway. We rode most of the way on the bikes (my odometer registered some 1250 km when we finished), but a vehicle accompanied us with the camping gear and a crew to feed and shelter the group. Significant portions of that route overlapped with ones Skrine traveled to and from his posting in Kashgar. Thus I traversed the Gez River gorge, skirted Mts. Mustagh Ata and Kongur, rode across the Sarikol plateau, and reveled at the beauty the Hunza Valley. In preparation I 're-discovered' Skrine, and I then vowed to return if at all possible, to climb the high but non-technical Mustagh Ata (24,758 ft / 7546 m), a mountain first attempted in 1894 by the Swedish explorer Sven Hedin, who somehow thought yaks could take him most the way up to the top. Two noted British mountaineers, Bill Tilman and Eric Shipton (the latter the last British Consul in Kashgar) made a bold, lightweight attempt on the mountain in 1947 but were turned back by the cold and weather just short of the summit. The initial successful climb of the peak was in 1956; in recent decades, given the non-technical nature of the standard route, the mountain is frequently climbed. So I was certainly not looking to break new ground, as much as anything simply wanting to follow in the footsteps of those whose accounts I had read and see whether my middle-aged body would take me to a very high altitude. The higher, rarely climbed Mt. Kongur (7719 m), which I was fortunate to see on a clear day in 1995, was in my dreams but far beyond my abilities.

As I read more of what Skrine had done, it occurred to me that I might, however, venture on my own into the mountains around Kongur, hoping thereby to see for myself what he had described and photographed, and, in the process, acclimatizing for an ascent of Mustagh Ata. I was inspired by what he wrote about the Kaying Valley and its Kyrgyz herders and by his description of his traverse of the Karatash River on a route that only Stein had previously traveled. I hoped I might see the little-known SE sides of Mustagh Ata and Kongur, not knowing until after the fact that two British expeditions had been in those areas in the late 1980s. If possible, I wanted to make a circuit on foot around the Mustagh Ata massif.

Since these goals required acclimatization to spend significant time at high altitude, my long summer away from home began in late June 1996, leading an organized trek in the Kyrgyz Pamir-Altai, followed by some hiking in the mountains south of Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan. I had arranged with the China-Xinjiang Mountaineering Association to receive a permit for my proposed hike, even though I think they had relatively little knowledge of the areas I wanted to visit. And it was clear that while I was out there, they would bear no responsibility for me. Since part of the region in those mountains is

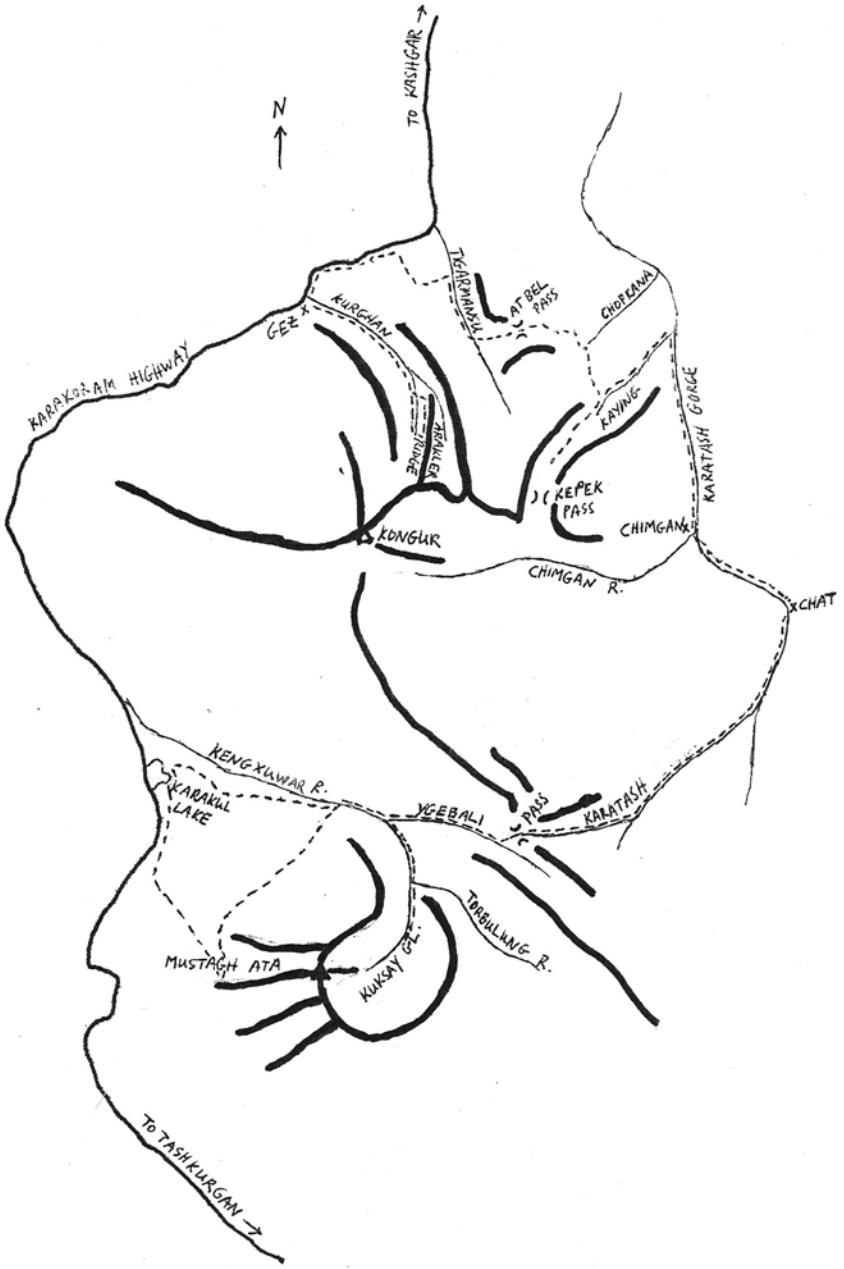


Fig. 236. Sketch map of DW's solo trek route in the 'Kongur Alps', 1996.

in a restricted border zone, there had been no certainty the permit would be forthcoming or that the route I proposed would be acceptable.

[*Fig. 236*] I traveled to Kashgar from Bishkek with a Mustagh Ata expedition led by a previous acquaintance, Andrey Ershov, an accomplished mountaineer from St. Petersburg. The understanding was that while his group was on the mountain, I would do my trek and just prior to their departure for home, meet them at the base camp (where some of my extra gear would be stowed). I would continue my independent hiking until he returned with a second Mustagh Ata group in a couple of weeks. Then I would join them for the climb. My equipment for the independent part of my venture had to include appropriately lightweight gear for the trek, pre-packaged food for about a month on my own, and for the climb, serious cold-weather gear and mountaineering hardware. Even if my trek was to be the kind of 'toothbrush' travel Skrine eschewed, it was anything but lightweight to carry: full camping gear (including tent, summer-weight sleeping bag, a light foam mat, MSR stove with a couple of fuel bottles), trekking poles, appropriate clothing layers, and food for nearly three weeks before I could re-supply from my cache at the Mustagh Ata base camp. My main meals were to be from dried soups and standard freeze-dried camping dinners for two (I assumed I would eat both portions at a time), supplemented with minute rice. I had instant oatmeal for breakfasts, snack bars, some dried bananas, beef jerky, some sugary sweets, Gatorade powder, cocoa, and tea bags. Whether all this by itself really would have sufficed is hard to know in retrospect, since, along the way it was supplemented by food offered by the hospitable Kyrgyz I met. As it was, not surprisingly, I lost weight on the trek. Saving weight in the pack was critical; as much as possible I wanted to minimize fuel consumption by not having to do significant cooking. The dinners could be re-constituted with boiling water added to the packets. Since it was possible I would try to cross an icy pass, I carried an ice axe and crampons.

B. *A solo trek but not alone in the 'Kongur Alps'*

[*Fig. 237*] At the Gez checkpoint, we filled my stove bottles from the diesel of Ershov's truck. [*Fig. 238*] With a 'Good-bye, good luck,' he and his Dutch clients disappeared up the road on 24 July 1996. It was a hot day to start out on my own with a pack weighing 35-40 kgs (perhaps half my body weight) which I could barely lift.



Fig. 237. The Gez River checkpoint and the bridge leading to the village on the terrace at the mouth of the Kurghan Valley (photo: DW 1996).

My main map was Skrine's from 1925, on a scale of 1:250,000, but it did not cover the initial and final stages of the route I planned, for which I apparently had some less than adequate Chinese one.[2] Unlike Skrine, who usually when in the mountains could be found by the weekly mail rider on the route down to India, I had no means of communication with home during my trek. Just before leaving Bishkek for China, on 21 or 22 July I received a letter my wife, Charlotte, had e-mailed, and I carried it with me while trekking. Even once I had made it to the Mustagh Ata base camp, there were no letters from home. The first letter she received from me was dated 26 August from base camp; forwarded by a German climber once he was home, it arrived in Seattle on 9 September. Some of my 'diary' entries from the trek and climb are in the form of letters to Charlotte, which there was no way to mail. To my surprise when I started opening my food packets, I discovered she had pasted on them little loving message stickers of the kind one can obtain for Valentine's Day. As my days out alone seemed to lengthen and I increasingly began to doubt the wisdom what I had undertaken, I found myself wishing I was back home with her enjoying the flowers on our deck. In my account here I have deliberately edited out some of those snippets of homesick longing and toward the end of the climb my counting the days until we would meet in Istanbul for a week's pleasure in exploring Turkey. It is easy to narrate the obvious physical challenges of my adventure, but there were substantial psychological ones as well.



Fig. 238. Andrei Ershov's group looks on as DW loads his fuel bottles into his pack, 24 July 1996. (Photo courtesy of Andrei Ershov.)



In the early pages of the account which follows, I engage in a kind of dialogue with Skrine, summarizing some portions of my own diaries, occasionally quoting from his letters and diary, and juxtaposing what I was seeing with his observations. Once I pass beyond the limits of Skrine's own exploration, I rely on long quotations from my own diary. The numerous illustrations are primarily my own pictures, his more fully to be found in my edition above of his letters. My trek through Skrine's 'Kongur Alps' and beyond was one of the truly memorable experiences in my life, the uncertainties, self-doubt, and occasional miscalculations more than compensated for by the privilege of walking through spectacular mountain

2. At the *end* of the M.A. climb, I acquired a copy of Mi Desheng's excellent (but also, for trekking, inappropriatedly scaled) Chinese topo for Kongur; I am not sure what exactly may have been any map I carried to supplement Skrine's. Naturally I carried a compass, and I had an Avocet altimeter watch, which provided readings, somewhat on the low side compared to Skrine's. In my narrative, all my own readings are the ones taken from it.

landscapes and, despite the limitations in communication, the opportunity to meet and learn from the people for whom this was home. The photographs may best convey for readers a sense of what it was like – an impressionistic narrative with no pretense of analytical profundity. Once my personal narrative ends, I transition in (section I) to a discussion of the ventures other than my own into these mountains 'following in the footsteps' of Skrine. Readers impatient with my wandering account may wish to jump ahead to learn what others have done in the region.

My initial goal was to visit the Kurghan Jilgha (Valley), accessed from the Gez checkpoint. Skrine did not visit that valley and thus missed an opportunity (hinted at by Stein, see p. 258) to add substantially to his documentation of the geography in the area. When Skrine traveled up to Kashgar in 1922, on reaching Tashkurgan he took a route east of the Mustagh-Ata/Kongur mountain knot. It was summer, with high water in the Gez River gorge (the route of the modern Karakorum Highway), which would have been impassible. In 1924, Skrine's route to return to India started up the Gez River, but, relying on local informants, he was able to find a summer route that left the Gez at the entrance to its gorge and then brought him back just beyond the checkpoint and on past Mustagh Ata to Tashkurgan.[3]

My choice to start with the Kurghan Jilgha was in the hope I might see a route over a pass from there into the mountains Skrine had explored and mapped. In 1980, inspired in part by Skrine's account of the Shiwakte range, the noted British mountaineers Chris Bonington and Michael Ward had gone into the Kurghan Jilgha (riding on camels and with a support team) for reconnaissance about possible routes for a first ascent of Kongur.[4] They climbed to a few high vantage points, had at least some clear weather for photography (as Skrine reminds his readers, the dust haze or weather 'generated' by the peaks often obscures them), and determined that the steep NE side of Kongur was too challenging to guarantee success; it would be better to tackle the mountain from the other side, where they could establish a base camp at a higher altitude. They did extensive reconnaissance on that side of the mountain, climbing a number of subsidiary peaks, and made the first ascent of Kongur in 1981. Even though Bonington's group saw and photographed the peaks that flanked the Kurghan Jilgha on the south (the Shiwakte group) and east (the Tigarman or Aghalistan group), they were not the main focus of the reconnaissance in 1980.



Fig. 239. A family in Gez village, 24 July 1996 (photo: DW).

[*Fig. 239*] On 24 June 1996, as I made my way through the fairly sizeable Gez village, accessible from the highway by a substantial

3. Oddly, the map drawn for Skrine to accompany his published account of the 'Qungur Alps' shows his route through the foothills of Charkragil ending on the Gez River below the location of the current checkpoint. Surely that is in error, as he still would have had to traverse a stretch of the river largely impassible from the summer floods. I believe my map above (Fig. 202, p. 553) illustrating his route in 1924 is more accurate. The vagueness of the Chakragil topography may have been responsible for the mistake, since the erroneous route seems on the face of what was known to the mappers to have been a logical descent route.

4. Bonington 1982, pp. 15, 59-60, 84-95. In his introduction to the Bonington book, the co-leader Michael Ward wrote (p. 15): 'The main and most recent information about Kongur was from an article in the *Geographical Journal* by Sir Clarmont Skrine, Consul-General in Kashgar 1922-1924. Not only was he the first to identify Kongur as a separate peak but he had explored the surrounding Shiwakte and Tigarman groups. His photographs and maps gave some flesh to our project.' The map of the Bonington-Ward exploration into the Kurghan valley is on p. 86.



Fig. 240. Walking through the Gez village, its mosque on the right, DW's pack on the back of the donkey, 24 July 1996 (photo: DW).

bridge over the river, I encountered some of the local residents, who were curious about the odd *aksakal* (greybeard) with the huge pack. My age, they estimated, must be 70s. Invariably in such encounters, photos were requested and offers were made to carry my pack on a horse or donkey for what undoubtedly was an exorbitant, but negotiable price [*Fig. 240*]. In this regard, thinking about Skrine's experiences, not a great deal seems to have changed: the Kyrgyz he encountered were delighted to be photographed and hire animals and guides. The vistas looking back from beyond the village included a glimpse of the snowy massif of Chakragil [*Figs. 240, 241*] Clearly the villagers I met were very familiar with the valley, since there were several clusters of summer huts adjoining pasture areas in its upper reaches. My first camp, after an altitude gain of some 2100 ft. was at about 9640 ft. part way up the valley, the hike having taken me about 4 ½ hours to the point of exhaustion [*Fig. 242*].[5]



Fig. 241. View W from beyond Gez village, part of Chakragil massif on right, 24 July 1996 (photo: DW).



Fig. 242. View of the Kurghan Jilgha (Valley) looking S. The dark rock of the Arakler Ridge is right of center, 25 July 1996 (photo: DW).

5. I re-read with a smile what Bonington wrote about his exploratory hikes into the Kurghan Valley in 1980 (*ibid.*, p. 57): 'It was easy walking but our packs were heavy and Michael [Ward], that little bit older, was finding both the pace and his load excessive. The previous day Al [Rouse] and I had reduced his load as much as possible, increasing our own to about twenty-five kilos each, but even so we still found ourselves pulling ahead and having to wait for long periods…' Ward (1925-2005) was then 55, but a few months younger than I was in 1996, and nine years older than Bonington. Ward, who had been an expedition doctor on the successful 1953 British Everest



Fig. 243. A first tantalizing glimpse of the jagged Shiwakte peaks, 25 July 1996 (photo: DW).

The valley ends in a dramatic cirque of sharp peaks [*Fig. 243*], flanked closely on the east by the Tigarman/Aghalistan ridge, on the south by the snowy pinnacles of the Shiwakte, and on the west by the huge face of Kongur. [*Fig. 244*] The climbable Arakler ridge separates the Shiwakte glacier from the one below Kongur. Presumably in Skrine's time, glaciation extended farther down the valley; my second camp was ca. 11,000 ft. at the snout of a glacier where there was a trickle of clear water (as opposed to the main stream of glacier melt, which was very silty). [*Fig. 245*] Just below the snout of the glacier was a sizeable summer settlement of sun-dried mud-brick houses amidst fields, but with no sign of the inhabitants. Fortunately, in my three days in the valley I had a crystal clear day, and, as had the British in 1980, I climbed the Arakler ridge (to a little over 14,000 ft.), from which it was possible to photograph panoramas of all the surrounding peaks [*Fig. 246, next page*]. These were views which for Skrine would have been hugely valuable to complement his photography and mapping from the east. Like Skrine in his letters home, I included in my diary



Fig. 244. The Arakler Ridge and snout of the glacier above the upper Gez summer village, 25 July 1996 (photo: DW).

Fig. 245. The upper Gez summer village, views from SW. Near bottom in left photo, the yellow dot is my tent; on right part of the Aghalistan ridge that flanks the Kurghan Jilgha on the E (photos: DW).





expedition, was honored by the Royal Geographical Society in 1982 'for high-altitude medical research and leadership of the British Mount Kongur Expedition' (Wikipedia).

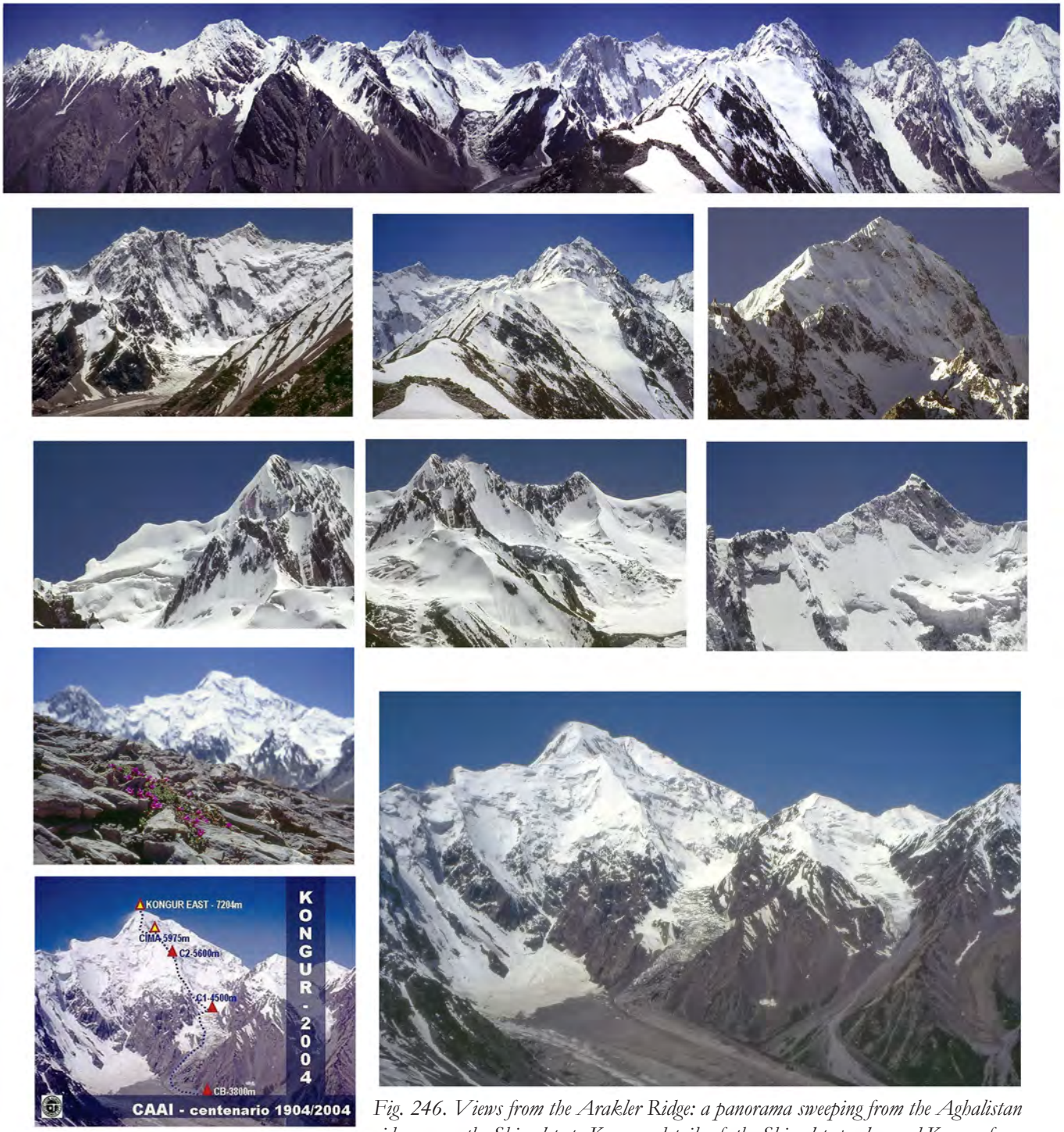


Fig. 246. Views from the Arakler Ridge: a panorama sweeping from the Aghalistan ridge across the Shiwakte to Kongur; details of the Shiwakte peaks, and Kongur from the E, including the expedition card for the Italian Alpine Club's centennial attempt on the mountain. (Photos: DW 1996).

sketches, though my maps lack the precision of his [*Fig. 247, next page*].

Little did I imagine that the photos would be of some interest to others within a few years. In 1998, I published two of them in a short article about my trek; that brought them to the attention of Russian alpinists as they planned an expedition in the region and would update information about the 'Kongur Alps' (see section I below). Also, I was surprised that my image of Kongur inspired the Club Alpino Accademico Italiano, celebrating its centennial, to plan a climb of the mountain from the

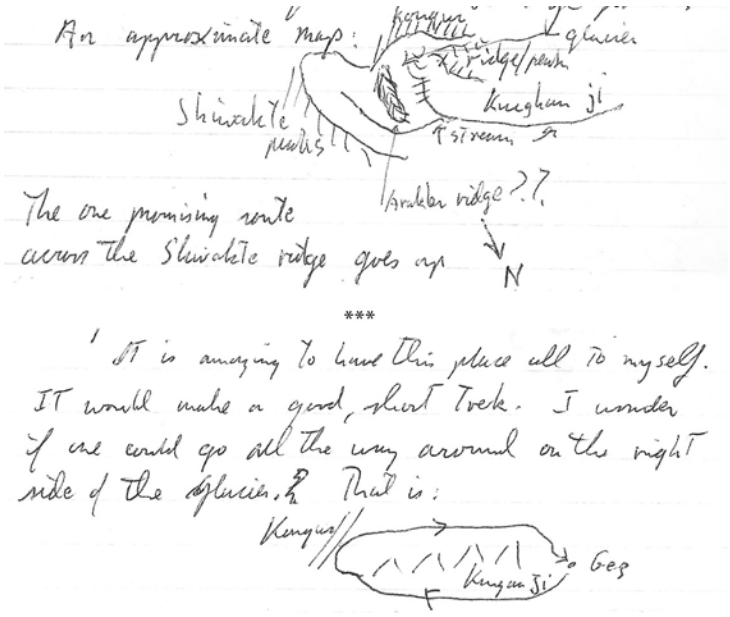


Fig. 247. Excerpts from my diary, 25 July 1996, with sketch maps, on the first of which my arrow for N is inaccurate, that direction being closer to ENE.

east, an ambitious undertaking that ultimately had to be abandoned on account of weather some 3 km distant but about 400 m vertical from the main summit at 7719 m.[6] The Italians plotted the route using some of my images and chose one of them for the publicity about their expedition.

Not having seen a feasible route from the Kurghan into Skrine's area of the Kongur alps, I returned to the highway, with the intent of using his descriptions and map as my guide into the mountains. Trying to get directions from those whom I encountered at Gez and later in my trek (where we had no common language and communication was largely by gestures and sketching maps) was a challenge. Typical exchanges were: 'Is there a Bridge?' – 'Yes'; 'Do I have to ford the river?' – 'Yes'; 'Which way should I take? That one? – 'Yes'; 'Or that one?' – 'Yes'; 'Is that one the Tigarmansu?' – 'Yes': 'Or that?' – 'Yes'.[7]

I had some ten or a dozen km to go on the road (heading back in the direction of Kashgar) and was happy enough on a hot day to accept the offer of a ride in a passing truck, whose crew 'held me up' for an exorbitant 50 yuan payment after we had set off. I wasn't about to argue. The agreement was they would let me off at a foot bridge over the river, which I had seen in a location not too far from where Skrine had marked one on his map. [*Fig. 248*] The bridge, incidentally, was no longer there, washed away by the summer floods, when I traveled the Gez in a tour bus with another group in 2009. The foot bridge was not far from the first valley leading into the



Fig. 248. The remains of the footbridge I had crossed in 1996, washed away by the river, as photographed from a bus in 2009 (photo: DW).

6. See the reports by Mauro Penasa, 'New route on Kongur East (about 7300) – North East ridge of Kongur Tagh,' online at https://www.summitpost.org/new-route-on-kongur-east-about-7300-north-east-ridge-of-kongur-tagh/169770, and with a few pictures, his 'North East Ridge "Centenario CAAI route",' online at https://www.summitpost.org/north-east-ridge-centenario-caai-route/163428, last accessed 22 September 2024. For the successful Russian ascent of Kongur from the north in July and August 2004, see 'Complex expedition of Moscow Federation of Mountaineering and Rock-climbing (MFMRC) and Sports Club of Moscow Aviation Institute (MAI) on Kongur (7719m) (Kun-Lun Shan Mountains, China Pamir),' online at http://www.mountain.ru/ expeditions/2004/kongur/index_eng.shtml, last accessed 26 September 2024.

7. When encountering the local Kyrgyz during their reconnaissance of Kongur in 1980, Bonington and his group had similar experiences with the language barrier. 'We used a note book to draw pictures to try to illustrate the help we were requesting. One of the Kirghiz drew a picture of a donkey and, as far as we could see, he was offering us its services. It seemed most unlikely that the animal could get either across the Koksel river or over the glacier but we nodded our assent vigorously, and after a few more attempts at word pictures gathered that the donkey would be available the following day' (Bonington 1982, p. 74).




Fig. 249. The entrance to the 'wrong valley' which I entered in 1996, photographed from across the Gez River in 2009, and the view looking down from near its mouth to the Gez valley, 27 July 1996 (photos: DW).

mountains, but I did not realize that valley was not the one I really sought [*Fig. 249*]. What I wanted was the Tigarmansu Valley, a few km further down the road [*Fig. 250*]. My efforts to get precise information through the haze of inadequate language had helped mislead me. So, already, as Skrine would have put it, this was Contretemps No. 1. I had misread his map, managed to enter a very narrow defile into a rather stark and forbidding valley [*Fig. 251*], my only company a wandering, scrawny camel, and realized only after there, as dusk was approaching, that I was in the wrong place.[8] I decided to camp under open skies at about 8250 ft. (the night clear) *[Fig. 252, next page*]. Optimistically, I wrote in my diary:



Fig. 250. The entrance to the Tigarmansu Valley seen from across the Gez River 2009 (photo: DW).

Fig. 251. The 'wrong valley' view to the south, 27 July 1996. In the second photo left of center is the path I climbed to the ridge from which I hoped to descend into the Tigarmansu (photos: DW).




> Skrine's map does show a trail heading up from the other [Tigarmansu] side in the direction of the pass I can see from this valley. That gives me reason to think it will fly. If I get into the Tigarmansu tomorrow, I will be OK on schedule & it may be the pass & then the descent will be enough of a day's work. If his marking is correct, I will come out right where the trail heads off to the pass he calls At Bel, which

8. Bonington's group had its own lonely camel experience when doing reconnaissance on the other side of Kongur, as one 'attached itself to their party' (Ibid., p. 75). As he wryly commented: 'The Kongur reconnaissance expedition was rapidly sinking into pure farce.'





Fig. 252. The scrawny camel in the stark valley; my 'camp' in the open for the night of 27 July 1996 (photos: DW).

is the one I want next. A short day tomorrow would be nice!

Little did I know what lay ahead…. Contretemps No. 2, the result of another bad decision by a supposedly experienced hiker. When later publishing a summary of my trek, I deliberately left out the embarrassing details of what transpired. My diary continued (two days later, written in retrospect):

> Turned out that the 'easy pass' was not so easy. [*Fig. 253*] The shepherd boy I met on the way up indicated it was steep, but my first mistake was leaving an obvious trail up & taking another obvious trail that led to a dry gully […] Getting out of the latter was the problem – I spent a lot of time teetering over oblivion following goat (mountain variety?) tracks. So, I finally made it to the pass, where there was an obvious trail, but not leading down [the other side] […]



Fig. 253. The herder and his flock part way up the path above the 'wrong valley', 28 July 1996 (photo: DW).

[*Fig. 254*] The vistas from the top were inspiring, since the inevitable dust haze had not yet developed. It was possible to look ahead to the 12,000-ft. 'At Bel' Pass which I had to cross. However, after scrambling through thorny plants [*Fig. 255*], I made yet another bad route decision following animal tracks leading down to a precarious perch at the edge of an impassible 100 ft. cliff. Exhausted, feeling I did not have the strength to retreat (go back up), I elected what seemed like the only option (one that will seem laughable it sounds so absurd). I looked down, decided the slope below was fairly flat. So, why not just unload some of the pack and drop the items over the edge, to retrieve them later from below after I had found a way down. Well, the angles of slopes can be very deceptive when viewed from above or below, and





Fig. 254. Views from the ridge E of the Tigarmansu Valley looking out to the edge of the desert and looking SE, with the peak of Kök Dong. The arrow points to the 'At Bel' Pass to which I was heading, located below the 17,000-ft. peak. (Photos: DW 28 July 1996.)



Fig. 255. Preferring to hike in shorts on account of the heat, I plowed through thickets of bristly bushes which did a number on my legs. As I noted in my diary: 'My arms and legs are a mass of scratches and bruises, but nothing worse than what I have accumulated in the past. I am losing weight, but not alarmingly.' As I met herders along the way, among the first things they noticed were the bare and scratched legs. (Photo: DW 1996.)



Fig. 256. Viewed from my campsite above the Tigarmansu River, a Kyrgyz family, one donkey loaded with two hewn beams crossed at the ford below, 29 July 1996 (photo: DW).

what I dropped bounced, rolled and scattered over the landscape. Mountaineers are continually reminded that at altitude and in a state of physical exhaustion, it is all too easy to make questionable decisions…

To make the long story short, carrying now only about half the original weight, I found a way down on a rather steep and slippery slope. With dark coming on, I decided to bivouac in the open, with no water left and not all of my gear. I could wrap myself partly in one flexible sleeping mat and stick my legs down into the pack to stay warm overnight. In the morning, I first descended to the Tigarmansu, re-hydrated, ate, and then went back up the slope to spend some hours scouring the bushes for all my equipment. Miraculously, even though some bags were torn, the gear and the food packs survived. All I lost was possibly one of the prepackaged dinners and definitely one of the sandals I had packed along to wear for river crossings (so I abandoned the other). I spent what was left of the day camped comfortably at about 8440 ft. just above the vigorous stream of the Tigarmansu and next to the remains of an unoccupied herder camp. [*Fig. 256*] From my vantage point, I could watch as a couple of groups of Kyrgyz with a donkey or two, crossed just below me, a reassurance that I was on the right track and presumably could cross there too.

In August 1924, having already in the previous year done most of his important surveying in the Kaying Valley region, Skrine set out on the trek which would take him to the Tigarmansu (traveling in the opposite direction along the route I was attempting). He hoped to be able to ascend the valley and climb high enough above it to get sightings of Mt. Kongur that would supplement the earlier surveying he had done. He wrote in his letter home a few days later:

> As it was impossible for loaded ponies to do the journey, we had to use yaks, and only 4 of these useful animals being available for baggage we had to cut down our kit to the smallest dimensions; one tiny bivouac tent, a kitchen bucket filled with cooking utensils, our beddings and a box of provisions. We took 2 orderlies & our Hunza camp cook, Murad Shah, ourselves riding 2 more [of the yaks], Murad on Polu pony & Hafiz and Sangi Khan sharing a yak.

They were able to 'reinforce' their transport with two more yaks en route, and in a 'three-day dash' reached the Tigarmansu, 'another Alpine valley like Kaying unvisited by any Europeans'. He described it thus:

> It is beautiful with its green pastures, fields knee deep in meadowsweet, foaming glacier torrent & tall pines, & it is grand with its eight-thousand-foot walls of glacier-hung precipice & its peaks capped with eternal snow; but its upper reach is quite straight, not beautifully curved like our beloved Kaying & is both smaller & less lovely than the latter.
>
> Higher in the valley they were welcomed at a summer herding camp by Kyrgyz whom they had met



*Fig. 257. Two views of the Tigarmansu Valley: on the left, Skrine's photo from 1924, taken from up on the slope to the west of the stream (*GJ *1925a, facing p. 397); on the right, my photo from down next to the stream looking up the haze-shrouded valley, 30 July 1996.*

before. However, the plan for surveying was scuttled by bad weather, even though they did manage to ascend further to the snout of the Tigarmansu glacier, which he noted was in rapid retreat from its earlier extent.

I never even attempted to go that far up along the stream and thus missed the scenery which Skrine so appreciated, even has he lamented 'rotten weather' that prevented his seeing it properly. As my photo [*Fig. 257*] shows, the Tigarmansu was largely shrouded in mist and haze starting near the trail intersection where I had to turn in order to retrace Skrine's path. However, as we shall discuss later (section M), when Russian alpinists, led by Andrei Aleksandrovich Lebedev, undertook their extensive exploratory trip into this same area between 30 July and 6 September 2005, they entered the 'Kongur Alps' by following the Tigarmansu all the way to the top of the pass at its end and crossed over from there into the Kaying. On the way, they recorded data which would enable them to establish the exact locations from which Skrine had taken his photos above the Kaying, and they dubbed the crossing from the Tigarmansu as the 'Clarmont Skrine Pass'.

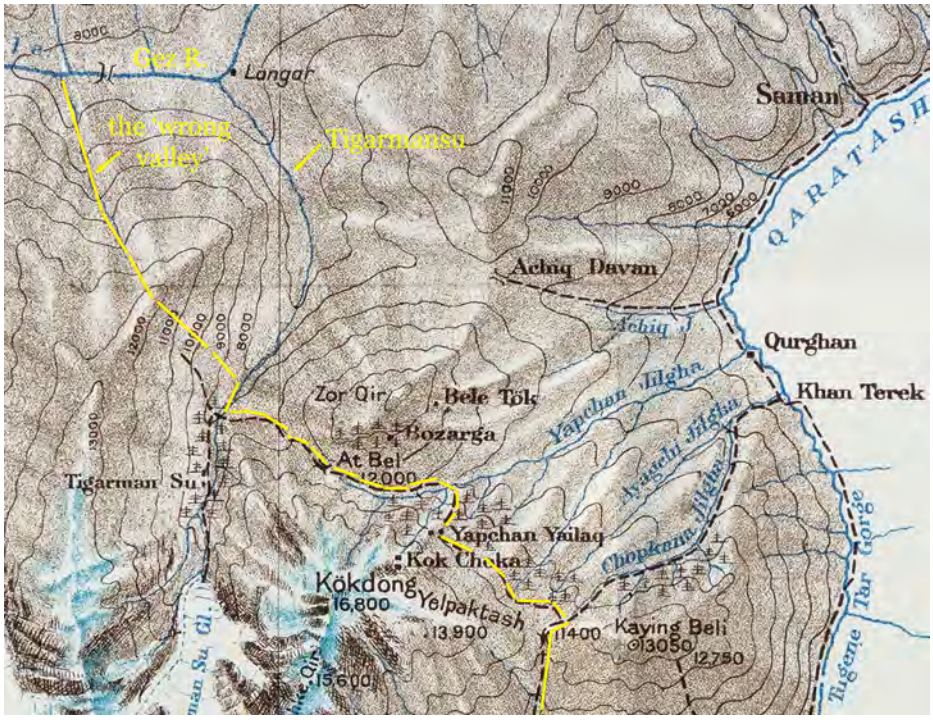


*Fig. 258. A portion of the map drawn by the Survey of India using Skrine's survey data and showing his routes (the dashed black lines), overlaid with an approximation of my route largely following his track, starting at the Gez River and ending with the descent from the Chopkana Pass into the Kaying Valley (*GJ *1925a, foldout map).*

C. *From the Tigarmansu to the Chopkana*

Skrine's map [*Fig. 258*] (the final cartography done at the Survey of India offices in Dehra Dun) in many ways is quite precise, even if the topography is somewhat generalized. The

Fig. 259. The somewhat ill-defined beginning of the trail up from the Tigarmansu in the direction of At Bel Pass, 30 July 1996 (photo: DW).



scale of 1:250,000 (4 mi./in.) means that it is less than ideal for foot navigation. As I crossed the Tigarmansu just below my camp and headed up valley, I had no way of anticipating there would be two additional stream crossings and then some uncertainty about where was the trail intersection I sought [*Fig. 259*]. Fortunately, one of the Kyrgyz parties I had seen descending included a donkey on which had been loaded two long beams shaped from tree trunks. I could follow the track where the beams had dragged on the trail. The path then wound easily up into the forested area, where there were several points of interest including a narrow irrigation channel and some plastic piping to take its water across a gulley (this, presumably, to feed it down to some lower campsite) [*Fig. 260*]. I passed the location where the beams had been cut, since there were yet two more on the ground, surrounded by the wood chips from



Fig. 260. An 'aqueduct' of plastic piping connecting spade-dug channels to supply water to a campsite, 30 July 1996 (photo: DW).

having been shaped with an adze and awaiting transport to the village [*Fig. 261*]. I saw what I learned later must have been a grave site, with some tall poles decorated with horse or yak tails and strips of cloth and at the base of which was a pile of ibex horns [*Fig. 262, next page*].

At various points in his description of travel in the mountains, Skrine remarked on the size of the forested areas. While there may not be much old growth left now, the forests are still there and are exploited for the wood that is still so essential for building the traditional housing. Apart from those few shaped beams, I saw later in the Kaying Valley a



Fig. 261. One of the hewn beams left in the trail for later transport down through the Tigarmansu, 30 July 1996. The second photo, taken at the village of Subax next to the Karakorum Highway near Mt. Mustagh Ata in 1996 shows how such beams are shaped with an adz. (Photos: DW.)





Fig. 262 (left). A Kyrgyz grave, marked with poles, horse or yak tails, mountain goat horns, strips of cloth and even a fur cap. On the path up toward At Bel Pass, 30 July 1996 (photo: DW).

Fig. 263 (above). A menacing, loudly grunting yak walked past my tent site on 30 July 1996 (photo: DW).

stack of long tree trunks awaiting some use. Skrine also noted in various places mazars or shrines, marked by precisely the kind of array I saw here (and later an analogous one I passed in the Kaying). Archaeology has revealed how even in ancient times, the local communities in some of the remote and mountainous areas of Inner Asia carved irrigation channels, often extending over long distances, to bring water to their settlements. Of course the piping I saw was modern, whereas in Skrine's day, such a channel would have bridged a small gorge with a hollowed tree trunk.

My next campsite on 30 July was just below what turned out to be a substantial Kyrgyz settlement in one of their summer pastures (probably Skrine's Oi; see p. 682). A narrow stream gorge and intersection was a mass of animal tracks, whose makers began to appear: cows, probably some dzos (cow-yak hybrids), yaks, the latter emitting loud, frightening guttural sounds, even though it turned out they shied away quickly [*Fig. 263*]. The owners of the herd were not far away. As I settled into my tent, a Kyrgyz boy came by [*Fig. 264*] and clearly was trying to persuade me to follow him home (moving on would have to wait for the next morning). He didn't want to leave, settled down as I was reading, intrigued by my book. So I read aloud to him from *Great Expectations*, even though it was unlikely he could have understood a word of it.



Fig. 264. My visitor, a Kyrgyz boy who settled in to be read to from my copy of Great Expectations*, 30 July 1996 (photo: DW). He surely would not have understood a word of the text.*

Dickens in the 'Kongur Alps'? Recall how Skrine wrote his mother on 19 December 1923, in reference to the letter he had received from the British ambassador in Beijing: 'His quoting Dickens is very much in his favour – you're generally safe with people who quote Dickens.' I had taken along the book (in my school years read as a requirement) partly because it was easily portable and perhaps promised I would



Fig. 265. The gorgeous view of the Kyrgyz summer camp on the pastures below 17,000 ft. Kök Dong, the panorama taken in early morning as I rounded a bend in the steep trail up from my campsite, 31 July 1996. The 'bare' spots in the landscape are the locations of the summer huts of the families in this large community.

gain new appreciation for it. Maybe my young Kyrgyz visitor somehow thought it would enlighten him, although more likely any book in a foreign language was such a rarity that it would be treasured for show-and-tell. In any event, more than once in my letters home, I found appropriate quotations from Dickens that I could apply to my experience of the moment.[9]

Next morning, I walked up the steep path to the summer home of the Kyrgyz, and there had the full experience of the sensation that the appearance of a foreigner might create (the *tamasha*, or entertainment that Skrine frequently mentioned): crowds would follow every move; people would hover around for any sighting or surreptitious glance. The Kyrgyz were camped high on a vividly green sloping plateau below the striking 17,000-ft. Kök Dong [*Fig. 265*]. As I struggled up the last switchback, I could see a couple dozen young faces peering down, obviously having been alerted of my arrival. And

9. Climbers do take literary classics to read in the idle hours in tents: back in 1994, I had Tolstoi's *War and Peace* (in the original Russian and French, not translation) with me on the expedition in Pakistan and learned later that an alpinist on a climb of K-2 also had taken Tolstoi to read. In Bishkek before heading to China in 1996, I had read Kozinski's *The Painted Bird* ('a horrifying tale') and begun my other Dickens, *David Copperfield*, which also went with me to Mustagh Ata. I carried on the trek a little Kyrgyz-Russian phrase book, which was only marginally useful, oriented for urban practicalities in places where Russian might be a second language. The longer I was without a good bath and a haircut, I could identify with characters in *David Copperfield*: 'I thought it was better [in the debtor's prison] to borrow Captain Hopkins's knife and fork than Captain Hopkins's comb. The captain himself was in the last extremity of shabbiness, with large whiskers, and an old, old brown great-coat with no other coat below it….'; and then I found myself in Dr. Strong: 'with his clothes not particularly well brushed and his hair not particularly well combed.' At the Mustagh Ata base camp, amidst the braying donkeys which would occasionally walk through next to our tents, I thought of Aunt Betsy Trotwood who had a 'thing' about chasing donkeys off her property…



Fig. 266. Word of my arrival had preceded me; I was greeted by welcoming crowds, eager to be photographed.

Fig. 267 (next page). A composite with views of this community, many of the women wearing necklaces of beads or mother-of-pearl ornaments; others actively boiling the milk from their herds for making airan (yoghurt) or for the curds to be formed into balls of qurut, dried in the sun on raised racks from which hung bags of the processed dairy to drain (photos: DW, 31 July 1996).

by the time I got to the top, the crowd had multiplied. Lots of friendly smiles, [*Figs. 266, 267 (next page)*], amazement at my scratched legs (I was wearing shorts), my hiking poles, and the weight of my pack; offers to buy one or another piece of my essential equipment…. I was greeted with the ceremonial *airan* (yoghurt) and able to watch its preparation and that of the *qurut*, the dried curd which could be stored for later consumption. Unlike in Skrine's day, when most of the herders in the summer lived in their portable yurts, now the summer housing here was huts, the rear wall cut into an embankment, the front built up with substantial timbers.

[*Fig. 268*] I went on, at one point ascending a broad alpine meadow covered with flowers (presumably

Fig. 268. The 12,000-ft. At Bel Pass and the flower fields on adjoining slopes on the way there, 31 July 1996 (photos: DW).

























Fig. 269. The settlement and a home below At Bel Pass, with the family who hosted me with airan, bread and the dried apricots that their little girl fetched from a neighbor, 31 July 1996 (photos: DW).



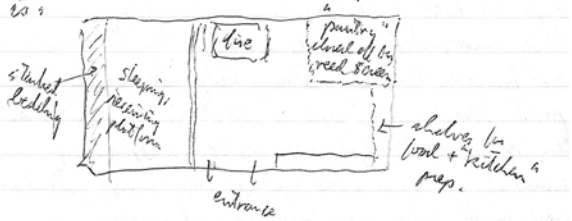








vertical ones. The layout, in a space that is about the size of your living room + kitchen is:



Dirt floor, sooty beams holding up a sod roof, smoke hole over the fire, no windows. The sleeping platform was covered w/ a gaily decorated felt. There are a few interior posts supporting the roof. Really quite cozy + somewhat more "elegant" (not the right word) than equivalent homes we saw in the Aksu.

Fig. 270. An extract from my diary entry of 31 July 1996 with a diagram of the floor plan of my hosts' summer home.

some of the same species Skrine had marveled to see), and after a certain amount of floundering for taking the wrong path, crossed Skrine's easy At Bel Pass at 12,000 ft. There I met a man and his young sons and accepted the invitation to visit his home just below, one of the substantial huts cut into a slope with the interior layout similar to that in a yurt. [*Figs. 269, 270*] On the left is a slightly raised platform serving both as a 'living/dining' alcove and a sleeping space. It was covered with a felt decorated with a traditional appliqué design; stacked against the wall behind it were the bed quilts. In the center at the back of the dirt floor was a fire pit, no chimney but

a smoke hole above. On the right, behind a screen of reed mats, a pantry and some shelves for kitchen implements. No windows. Before I was allowed to take some photos, the man's young wife insisted on tidying up and sweeping the floor; and then we sat for *airan*, the bread they presumably would have cooked using their wok (*kazan*) as a reflector oven, and some apricots which their little girl had been sent off to borrow from a neighbor. I offered to send pictures once home (*mea culpa*, I never followed through on that promise). It was the wife who wrote out the address for me. I had the impression that her husband was illiterate. In all these encounters with the herders, for want of the language(s), I could not carry on any significant conversation. I can only assume on the basis of appearances that some families *may* be of mixed ethnicity, even though historically the sedentary Uyghurs and nomadic Kyrgyz probably did not intermarry.[10]

The limited nature of my 'exploration' in this area made it difficult to match Skrine's experience with my observations. It is not clear whether the Kyrgyz families I was meeting might have been the descendants of those whom Skrine met, even though it is logical to assume that there could have been some continuity over decades in the occupation of the same summer pastures. The key passage in his letter home dated 8 August 1924 describes the trek he and Doris took from their camp in the Yapchan watershed across to the Tigarmansu. After ascending through a dramatic gorge (about which more below),

> you find yourself in a lovely little valley, quite small and narrow but with pines and wild roses & clematis in profusion & a little clear stream with grassy banks. Old Samsaq Bai with whom we stayed at Bozarga last year has his ak-ois pitched this year on another alp immediately above this glen we went up, a green ridge dotted with clumps of juniper & pine with sides pitched at 45° and ending in one of the 1500-ft. red sandstone cliffs mentioned above. We visited the encampment on our return journey, & I may as well tell you about it now. The ak-ois are pitched in a most wonderful site, perched up on green lawns with pine woods & juniper brakes & a perfect view of the whole Yapchan Jilga & the towering snow peaks and richly coloured foothills stretching right away to the plains, aye and on clear days over the plains too with their hundreds of miles of dark green cultivation or pale brown desert; but the site has one disadvantage. You have to go down 600 ft. almost sheer for your water! Luckily the Kirghiz never wash & drink little but milk, so they don't use much, but we did the descent ourselves with an aneroid barometer & the return journey & found it to be 600 ft. On the outward journey 8 or 9 ladies & 10 or 12 children [*FD, p. 74:* mostly boys] from Samsaq's encampment were gathered at the spring in the little glen, having descended from their green eyrie to meet us, all in their best clothes & most wonderful

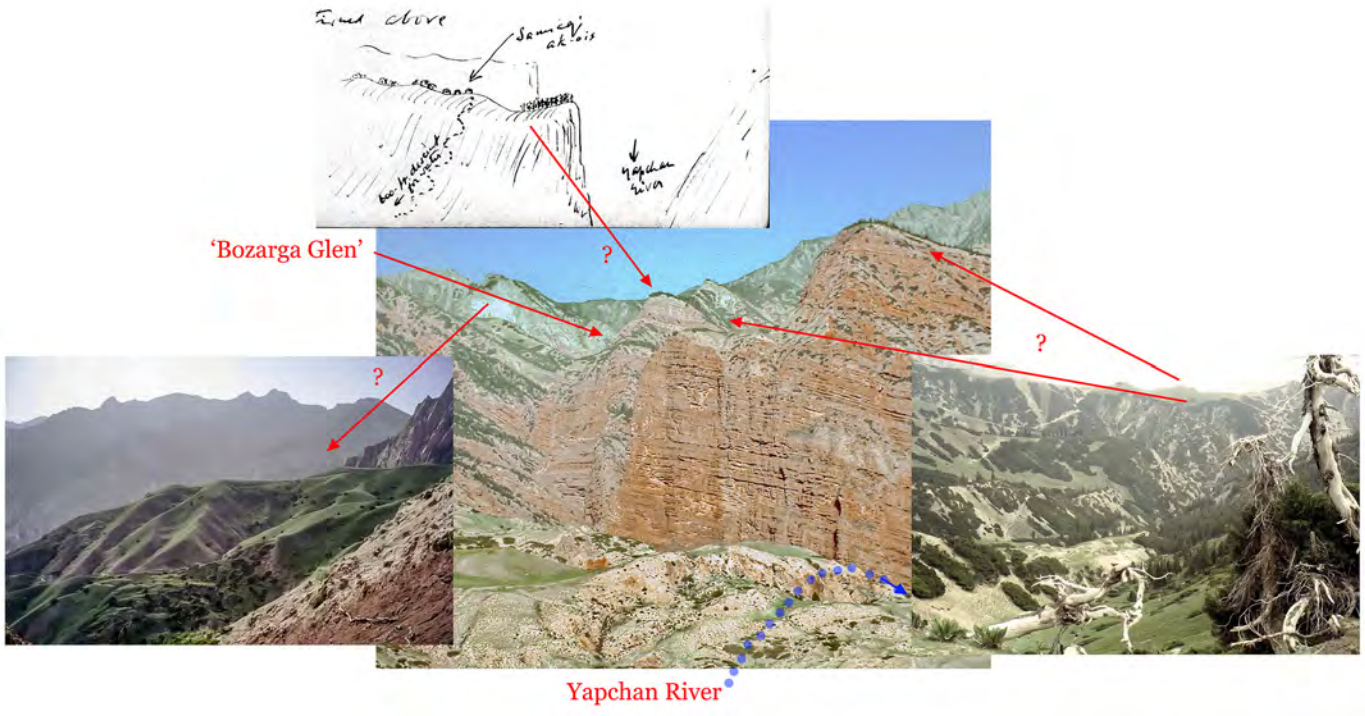
10. When the Skrines headed back to India in late summer 1924, traveling up the Oi Tagh valley on the north side of the Gez river, somewhat, I think, to his surprise, he encountered what he assumed were Uyghur pastoralists, not just Kyrgyz ones. And further along the route, there are Tajik and Wakhi settlements on the Sarikol plateau. At the time of my trek and at least for some years after, I found very little material based on ethnographic field work amongst the Kyrgyz in this area, since foreign anthropologists had a difficult time obtaining permission to undertake such study. In one of the few studies based on some field work in the Mustagh Ata area in 1990, Thomas Hoppe (1995) notes but in passing (p. 247) that intermarriage amongst Kyrgyz and Uyghurs is rare; Kyrgyz men have nothing against it, but the Uyghurs look down on the Kyrgyz as culturally inferior. Additional evidence about the interethnic relations in these mountains is in Friederich 2001, which examines in some detail the complex history and evidence of the ethnic communities in the Oi Tagh, in part on the basis of interviews he was able to do there during a larger project to study the region that has never been fully published. Ethnic identification in recent times can be obscured by native language preferences reinforced by modern economic and educational development.

head-dresses, a pretty sight. They brought great bowls of cream & Kirghiz cakes for us after the hospitable manner of their kind, & made us promise to visit them on our return.

From there to the top of the [At Bel] pass (12,000 ft.) the track is steep but well made, & the pass itself is easy. A thousand feet down on the other side is a big encampment called Oi, nine ak-ois including that of the petty Beg of the Tigarmansu Jilga [*FD, p. 75:* the elderly 'Nasir Beg' M[uhamma]d Isa Beg]. Everybody tried to make us stop the night there instead of attempting to get to the Tigarmansu yailaq, which they said we could not reach before nightfall. But Oi, though attractive in its way was no use to us, & we were determined to camp in the forests of the real Tig[arman]su valley, not up a side-glen; luckily a very nice Kirghiz called Yunus (= Jonah) Akhun had come to meet us at Oi; he said his own ak-oi was in the Tig[arman]su forests, & that we could get there under his guidance quite easily by evening. So (rather offending the old man, I'm afraid) we refused to stay more than an hour with the Beg at Oi, during which we sat in a super-heated ak-oi with about 20 men & gaily-dressed women & quantities of children in it, D. as usual being the cynosure of all female Kirghiz eyes & discussing their ailments with the cheerful ladies.

Even though the suggested topography does not quite seem to match, very likely the large encampment I visited on the west side of the At Bel Pass is Skrine's 'Oi'. [*Fig. 271*] In descending from At Bel to the east, I saw no evidence of another large settlement high above my route in what might have been the location of Samsaq Bai's summer residence in the 1920s. However, I never climbed out of the 'lovely little valley' to explore the pastures I could see but partially from below.

Fig. 271. Locating Samsaq Bai's encampment. The central image is one taken from below, looking up to the red cliffs from the area Skrine calls Yapchan, whose river flows down to the right (out of sight) just below the cliffs. The other images are 'shot' from above on the descent from the At Bel Pass through Skrine's 'Bozarga Glen', the arrows pointing to the possible locations of the high pastures, including the one Skrine sketched in his letter of 8 August 1924 to illustrate the location of Samsaq Bai's camp which he visited. It was located in pastureland to right of center in the main image, perched above the red rock cliffs. Photos: DW, 31 July and 1 August 1996.



On leaving the hospitality of the family below At Bel and passing through that 'lovely little valley', I descended the dramatic gorge Skrine had ascended. Compare his and my descriptions and our photos:

My diary, 31 July 1996	Skrine's letter of 8 August 1924
[M]y descent was initially through fir forest […] into a gully, where the trail was basically the dry stream bed. At about the point where water appeared (not a rushing torrent), the gorge really got serious, ever deepening walls of red sandstone & whose upthrust strata were visible. The trail took dramatic steep switchbacks & one ended up in quite a canyon. When I finally got essentially to the bottom, where two additional streams from other valleys join, I was confronted right away w[ith] stream crossing problems – of the sort, hop quickly & if your foot goes in the water, don't leave it there… So here I am at 9300 ft., on a grassy promontory at the stream intersection…	You dive down a break-neck descent through pine woods & masses of wild roses to the [Yapchan] river which tumbles wildly in cataract after cataract over red sandstone boulders below 1500 ft. cliffs of the same material, crowned with pines. Scrambling up the gorge for quarter of a mile you suddenly turn up what seems at first sight an absolutely impossible side-nullah. The cliffs actually overhang you straight in front! But the track goes up them all right, the nullah turning sharply to the left instead of being a cul-de-sac as it seems at first. After zigzagging a couple of hundred feet up under the overhanging red cliffs you find yourself on a broad ledge which slants quite safely up to the left, and you come out on a sort of balcony from which you can see the main river foaming past the narrow mouth of the side gorge almost immediately under your feet. A little further on the path again climbs an almost vertical hill face to avoid an impassible gorge, but after that you find yourself in a lovely little valley, quite small and narrow but with pines and wild roses & clematis in profusion & a little clear stream with grassy banks.

Probably at least subconsciously imitating the nicely framed photo he took at the top of the path below the red cliffs, I took essentially the same shot [*Fig. 272*]. The main difference here is that his party is shown on the path as they emerged from the climb. As I passed down through, I saw a few goats



Fig. 272. The red sandstone cliff above the Yapchan Valley, with the steep trail descending into the gorge below it: On the left, my photo, 31 July 1996, a small part of the trail just visible lower left; on the right, Skrine's photo from 1924 with his party ascending on the trail (image published in Die Koralle *(Berlin), September 1927, p. 273, scanned from a somewhat damaged tear sheet). Presumably the person with the distinct 'pith helmet' at the back of the procession is Doris Skrine.*



Fig. 273. Goats calmly grazing on the precarious ledges of the cliff above the path. The path indeed descends steeply to a small stream and in some cases is overhung by the rocks, as erosion has undercut the cliff face. (Photo: DW, 31 July 1996.)

Fig. 274. A panorama looking down on the Yapchan area, the Yapchan stream on the left, which flows just below the cliff face down to the Karatash River, 31 July 1996 (photo: DW).



grazing on the ledges along the cliff face [*Fig. 273*]. There could be no question here but that I was on Skrine's track, even though once down, my navigation further to the Chopkana valley at least in part may have been on trails he had not used. At this point I counted some ten dinners remaining in my food supply, which meant I had a somewhat tight schedule to maintain if I was to reach the Mustagh Ata base camp on time. As I was about to turn in for the night next to the Yapchan stream, four horses wandered down through my patch of grass to drink before dark [*Fig. 274*].

[*Figs. 275; 276, next page*] My route obviously was one much traveled. I encountered a party with a horseman with another man and a boy leading a couple of donkeys and with three sheep; another party consisted of a woman carrying her baby and walking, while her husband rode their donkey. As noon was approaching at a stream crossing with a trickle of water, I met a 60-year-old gentleman who persuaded me to join him in the shade, and we shared lunch [*Fig. 277*]. He got to try Oberto Beef Jerky, a piece of a Clif Bar, and some of my home dried banana strips. I think he liked the jerky and bananas; I am not sure about the peanut-butter Clif Bar. In turn, I got to eat some of the slightly moldy bread he pulled out of his pocket. We were having a nice time together until the rest of the family showed up, some young and brash members wanting to paw over all my belongings. [*Fig. 278*] I took some photos of everyone, and recorded addresses for possible mailing of prints.



Fig. 275. Herders descending the path over the hilly terrain of the Yapchan, heading toward the Chopkana Valley, 1 August 1996 (photo: DW).

In the Chopkana, the valley





Fig. 276. Views back in the direction of Yapchan taken from the trail to Chopkana. On the right, the red rock cliffs, where, just left of center is the hidden passage up to Bozarga and on to the At Bel Pass. On the left, the view roughly SW, the ridge part of the mountains that flank the Kaying Valley on the other side. The forested slope angling up from the right is probably the one Skrine climbed with Doris from their camp at Yapchan to the location he called Kök Choka. He photographed there a Kyrgyz woman weaving on a ground loom (see Fig. 186). (Photos: DW, 1 August 1996.)



Fig. 277. The old gentleman with whom I shared a snack on the way to the Chopkana, 1 August 1996 (photo: DW).



Fig. 278. The rest of the family posed for a photo, 1 August 1996 (photo: DW).



which Skrine discovered would provide relatively easy passage to reach the Kaying, I was accompanied ('guided') up the trail by a man with donkey and three boys, two of them his sons, who happened to be heading in the same direction [*Fig. 279*]. I was happy to accept some fresh *nan* (bread) on the way; in return I offered some of my banana strips. My impression was that they slowed their pace so I could keep up, the last part of the ascent to the Chopkana Pass involving some steep switchbacks.

Fig. 279. My 'guide' and his boys whom I followed up the Chopkana Valley to reach the Kaying, 1 August 1996 (photo: DW).



Fig. 280. The spectacular view up the Kaying Valley from the top of Chopkana Pass, 1 August 1996 (photo: DW).

At the top, in clear weather, I had the enthralling vista down across the Kaying [*Fig. 280*], which Skrine had photographed from the same location, one of his images including Doris on her yak. My 'guide' and the boys accompanied me part way down but then hurried off to reach 'home' before dark. I set up my tent around 6:30 at an altitude of about 9640 ft. [*Fig. 281*]

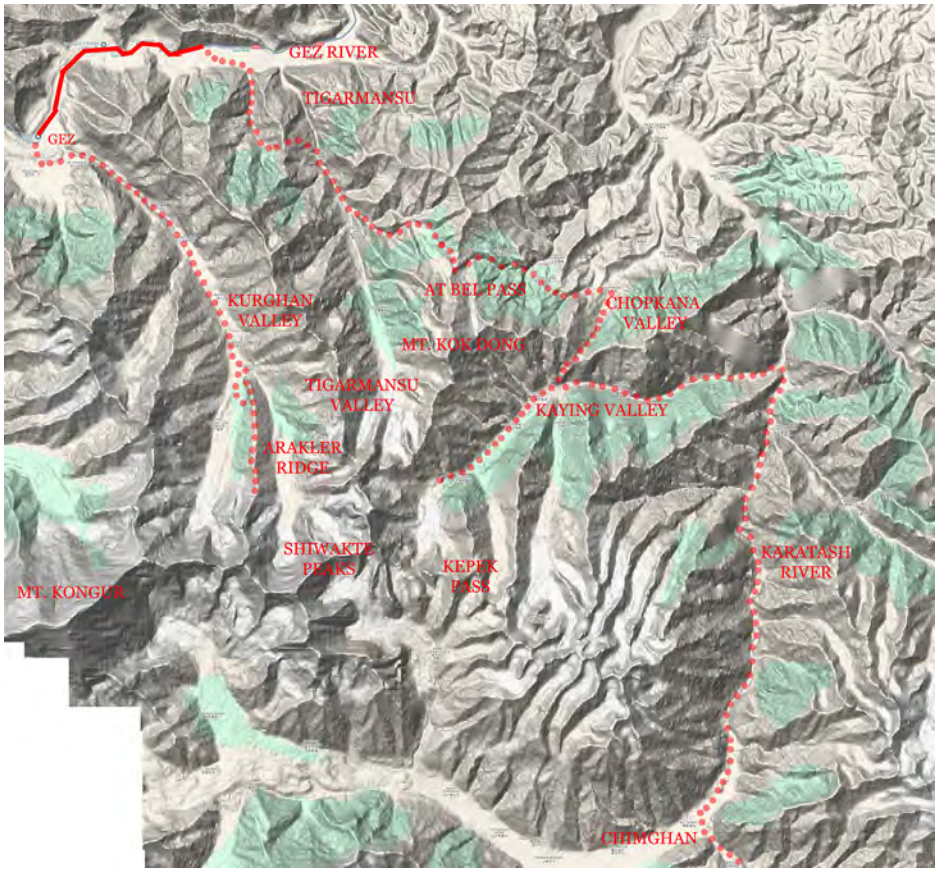


Fig. 281. The map showing my route starting back at the Gez checkpoint, exploring the Kurghan Valley, and then tracing Skrine's routes to the Kaying and beyond through the Karatash River gorge to Chimgan. The parts traversed on foot are designated with red dots, the small section in the back of a truck on the Karakorum Highway with a solid red line. The route and captioning have been overlaid on a topographic 'map' from Google Earth and cannot be expected to show fine detail such as which side of a river or stream I was on.

D. *In the Kaying Valley*

While writing up my diary for the day (1 August 1996), I noted:

> As I continue to use Skrine's map and re-read his article, I continue to be impressed by how invaluable it is. No way I could have done this trip without him. He wrote of the red sandstone cliffs & precipitous route through them. His 'directions' for today were right on the mark.
>
> The weather continues remarkably good. Last night there was a shower but it gave way to the now nearly full moon. The haze Skrine laments indeed is very much evident as you get to the eastern fringe of these mountains, since you are then close to the desert. Temperatures remain mild – I have been quite warm enough in my 40° sleeping bag with only shorts and a T-shirt. Of course over on the Mustagh Ata side where I am headed it could be very different & I certainly need to go higher if I am to get to where I am going.

Before a somewhat late start to ascend the valley the next morning, I continued in the diary:

> I was looking at Skrine's photos (poorly reproduced in xerox in the copy I have with me). He has a page of group photos of Kyrgyz – seems back then they also liked to line up the whole extended family for formal pics. Of course clothing has changed – the women then were noteworthy for high 'headdresses', whereas now they will wear a bright scarf. Braids for women are still in – rare you see one w[ith] loose hair. Women wear mid-length dresses. Everything seems to be store bought. Men & boys often are in the typical drab, cheap suits that one sees in pictures of Chinese workers – kind of a provincial, late '50s Soviet style. Jacket and pants don't always match. Sometimes jackets are synthetic windbreakers w[ith] a logo. Occasional items of what looks like military surplus clothing. Sometimes a bright & decent looking sports short (e.g., the man who was with me on the trail yesterday had a nice long-sleeved one w[ith] nautical motifs [slightly incongruous way out here]). Hats for men vary – a few white, embroidered [or knit] muslim skull caps; occasional traditional Kirgiz felt *kolpaks*, but not as tall as the ones we saw in Kyrgyzstan; a number of men in woven pork-pie hats that had 'World Cup' written on them; a few, esp. older, people in traditional herder caps probably made from sheepskin (a kind of skull cap but often w[ith] a turned up edge).
>
> I did see & photograph one woman who had a fairly elaborate necklace of beads & coins (I think, Chinese ones & older obviously, w[ith] a hole in the middle already). She also had some in her braid. She must have been 40's, at least. Men occasionally have rings, but people don't seem to wear wedding rings. One young woman we met coming down as we were nearing the top of the pass (accompanied by her husband; they knew my 'guide'), was wearing a coppery looking ring on a scarf or ribbon around her neck.
>
> One doesn't know what is stored away. Generally I happened on people & photographed them in their ordinary lives. If they were getting dressed up for a photo, a lot more interesting 'ethnic' costume might come out. It was mainly the older people who were 'traditional' looking, as one might expect.
>
> One other clothing note – the standard issue men's shoes are a medium height canvas sneaker, the uppers of which are a camouflage color. The people w[ith] older & crummier shoes have something analogous.
>
> On the first part of my walk up the Kaying I was passing stone or adobe walls enclosing fields of



Fig. 282. First views on starting up the Kaying Valley. On the left, a composite showing Skrine's 19 October 1922 camp which was located farther down the valley from where I entered it. On that first visit his party had come up the entire length of the valley from the Karatash River, not entered (as he did on subsequent visits) by crossing the Chopkana Pass. I have marked on his photo in a dotted rectangle the approximate section of the valley which can be seen in my image from 1 August 1996. Even though there were some permanent structures in the valley in 1922 (a stone hut is on the left), the Kyrgyz herders summered mainly in yurts. In 1997, there were many adobe brick huts and walls and substantial cultivation of grain or fodder. (Skrine's image reproduced from the British Library Collection: IOLR Photo 920/1 [179, 180].)

grain or fodder and huts [*Fig. 282*], none of them inhabited. There was a lone donkey in a sod-roofed stone shelter, a lone yak and a jackrabbit. [*Figs. 283; 284, next page*] The upper valley was another matter, alive with people, including my guide of the previous day and his family. Skrine had found in the valley many yurts, some of which were rented for his party. I found a number of them higher in the valley, where many of the women wore more traditional dress – especially fur-trimmed flat caps with a scarf coming down the back. In some ways, as I wrote, it was 'as though I have finally found Skrine's Kirghiz'. Of course in many respects they were very little different from the ones I had been meeting – most of the young men, such as the two looking into my tent and hanging over my shoulder as I was writing, 'are somewhat pesky' and perhaps unfairly, I worried for the safety of my gear.

Skrine was always impressed with the traditional hospitality of the herders in the mountains and in his multiple visits in the Kaying established warm relations with them. I would imagine that at least

Fig. 283. Two views of the Kyrgyz summer settlements in the upper Kaying Valley, 2-3 August 1996 (photos: DW). My yellow tent is in the lower center of the picture on the right.





Fig. 284. This comparison of views down the Kaying Valley, one taken 2 or 3 August 1997, the other 19 October 1922, suggests at least superficially that little had changed there in seven decades. (Photo credits: DW; Skrine's image on the right reproduced with permission from the Royal Geographical Society [London], no. CPS/00026.)

some of the families I was meeting in the mountains in 1996 are the descendants of the ones he met in the 1920s: it is not unusual for several generations to continue to herd in the same valleys. However, without enough language to ask the right questions and without a proper supply of good prints of Skrine's photos to show, there was no way I could know. His description of the typical yurt and its interior (s.v. his Field Diary entry written in the Kaying on 8 August 2024) could well apply to the one I visited [*Fig. 285*] , where I was hospitably received, served airan & bread in a yurt & again in a stone shelter. The yurt was as close to authentic [*sic*!] as any I have been in – no stove – they build a fire on the floor & use the smoke hole. The structure is covered w[ith] hides. Among the implements [*Fig. 286*]:

Fire grate
Bread board
Rolling pin

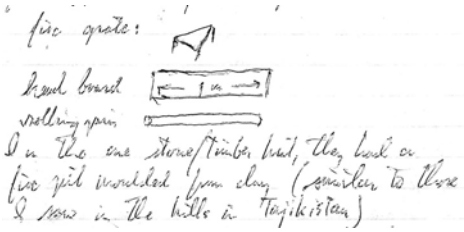


Fig. 286. My diary page with the drawings from the interior of the summer dwellings in the upper Kaying Valley.



Fig. 285. A visit in the yurt of one of the Kyrgyz families of the upper Kaying Valley, 2 August 1996 (photos: DW).

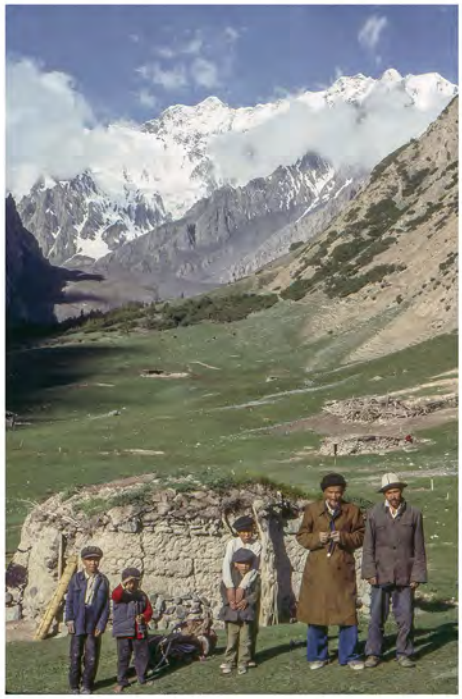






In the one stone/timber hut, they had a fire pit moulded from clay (similar to those I saw in the hills in Tajikistan). [*drawing*] You can put a *kazan* on top of it. The bread does vary quite a bit – made in the *kazan* in every case, but biscuit-like in shape and consistency.

Fig. 287. The Kyrgyz families of the upper Kaying, where I pitched my tent near the home of the family depicted upper and middle left, 2 August 1996 (photos: DW).































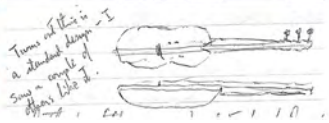








Fig. 288 (right). Traditional crafts for daily life in the Kaying: spinning, filling quilts with raw wool, and embroidery of felts, 2-3 August 1996 (photos: DW).

Fig. 289 (above). Playing the three-stringed Kyrgyz komuz*, this one obviously home crafted and missing one of the strings, 2 August 1996 (photos and diary drawing: DW).*

[*Figs. 287, 288*] Wherever I set foot there is a crowd. I have taken lots of pictures, including women spinning & stuffing a quilt w[ith] wool, my 'guide' [and one of the boys] playing his home-made stringed instrument [the traditional Kyrgyz *komuz*] [*Fig. 289*] – carved & glued out of wood. It was intended for three strings, I think (three pegs), but he had only two & played it as if it was meant that way. Someone else had a larger & fancier, obviously city-bought one. […]

[I]n the yurt, the family consisted of husband, wife, a 10-yr.-old daughter, 5- and 1-yr-old sons. The one-year-old is just beginning to walk and is still being breast-fed. The man of the family is 35 but looks older. The kids look small for their age, except the toddler.

The area around these summer camps is swarming w[ith] goats & esp. sheep. Also, the occasional cow, yak, donkey. Inside one of the huts were several big bags of sheep wool; I assume that was what was being spun. The women also embroider.



After leaving my pack in a hut, I walked up to a vantage point for a first view to determine whether I might venture to follow Skrine in crossing the Kepek Pass [*Fig. 290*]. However,

Fig. 290. A glimpse of the Kepek-Aghalistan Pass over the debris of the glacial moraine, 2 August 1996 (photo: DW). Skrine made a quick trip across the pass in 1924; Scottish and Russian mountaineers crossed it decades later.

the last part of the ascent is steep, snow or ice on one side, rock of unknown quality on the other, and no way of knowing whether the descent on the other side would be worse. Wisdom was the better part of valor here – to attempt it alone without being roped and while carrying such a heavy load was not a good idea.



Fig. 291. A demonstration of spinning yarn from raw wool, the technique using a weighted spindle found in many cultures over several thousand years, 3 August 1996 (photo and drawing: DW).

I prepared my own dinner from my supplies, but then,

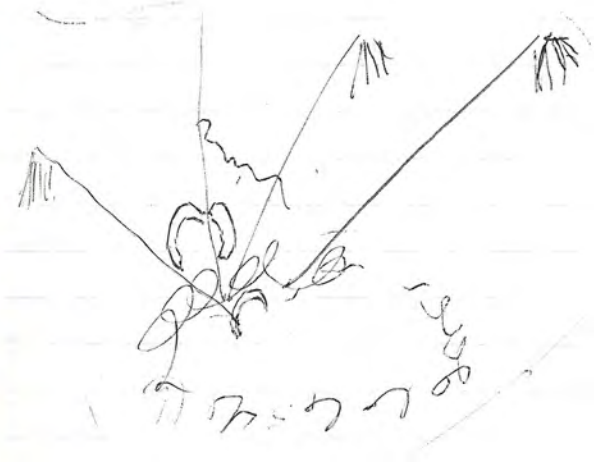
> Somewhat later – they keep bringing me food – first, a bowl of noodles in warm milk – really good – I would imagine they made the noodles. Then a warm bowl of *airan* mixed w[ith] ? (possibly some flour? – It was like cream of wheat but w[ith] traces of *airan* lumps in it and a somewhat sour taste. […] Eating utensils may include wooden bowls & spoons. One is supposed to break up the bread & put it in the *airan* & then, if there is one, eat it w[ith] a spoon.

I politely declined the offer of a second helping, as I really was full. Skrine's Field Diary entry from the Kaying explains what I had been eating: 'Two favourite Kirghiz foods are qurut, cheese in balls, & mŭch or mach, a kind of gruel or broth boiled in a large cauldron & made simply of flour, water and milk. Kattak or sour cream is also much eaten.' I had seen the balls of *qurut* drying in the sun on a raised platform at the pasture camping ground below the peak of Kök Dong (and also on treks in Kyrgyzstan).

[*Fig. 291*] I was interested to watch the women in the Kaying spinning, did a sketch in my diary of how it was done. Referring in the diary to the 'bobbins' used, I asked about what the weight on the sticks was made of; turned out in at least in one case it was the knee-cap of a yak. Historically, of course, there could be any number of different ways to make such weights: ceramic shards, stones, wood. [*Fig. 292*] With the help of a drawing I made, I also tried to elicit from my 'guide' what exactly was the array of poles, yak tails and ibex or mountain goat horns that I had seen further down the valley (similar to the one I had seen on the way from the Tigarmansu) . He established (we used pantomime here of someone sleeping)

Fig. 292. The grave in the wider part of the valley, and the drawing I made while eliciting an explanation from my guide who had led me over the Chopkana Pass, 1-2 August 1996 (photo and drawing: DW).





that indeed it was a grave but could not give me a name or term for it (taboo??).

On 3 August, after a breakfast which my hosts supplemented with noodles and *airan* (I declined the bread in *airan* since I was by then full), I headed down the valley. The day was clear, lovely early morning light on the mountains; I deluded myself into thinking the descent to the Karatash would be uneventful. There were indeed a couple of bridges, but I made the mistake at the second one of misreading why on my end of it some brush partially blocked the access. I crossed it anyway. A bit beyond there had been a third bridge, but it had been washed away. Since I could see something of a trail on the other side, I figured people might have forded the stream to reach it.

Wrong! (Contretemps No. 3!) I chose the wrong place (likely, given the power and depth of the water there, probably there was no right one). Slammed against a boulder, bruising a knee and bloodying one big toe; one of my trekking poles broke and was swept away with one of my water bottles, and I followed them down, pack on my back and boots around my neck. Fortunately, I quickly was swept up onto the side of the stream on which I had started and had the sense to go back to the earlier bridge which did access a trail on the opposite side… There was yet another somewhat chancy stream crossing before I arrived at a place where I could dry out what was wet (most in the pack had been protected by plastic bags and my cameras had been securely wrapped). At least my knee was functional, if sore when I would try to kneel. After this experience I came very close to giving up going on, thinking I might have to locate the Achiq Dawan (pass) that Skrine mentions in order to exit quickly to the Gez Valley. Needless to say, as I proceeded, it was with some dread every time I came to a river crossing.

Might I have avoided this mistake? Perhaps, as I then jotted in my diary, had I remembered from my summer camp days of my youth that, in taking a canoe down rapids, we had been warned about the dangers of broadsiding it against a rock, since the water pressure would make it impossible to get it off and could break its back. I should at least have recalled that in his book on the successful climb of Kongur, Bonington described how he and his liaison officer Liu Dayi had been swept off their feet while trying to ford the Konsiver (Kengxuwar) River on the other side of Kongur during their reconnaissance climbs. Or perhaps I should have learned a lesson from the fact that one of his team badly sprained (came close to breaking) an ankle during that reconnaissance when all he was doing was to jog down a slope.[11] Had I seen the *Times of India Illustrated Weekly* issue of 6 March 1927, which published on its cover a photo Skrine had sent, one of his lovely views of the Kaying, I might have had second thoughts about the whole venture. The photo, of course, was enticing, but the caption warned: 'It is dangerous to go alone for one might lose one self in its romantic spirit and forget to return.' The dangers, of course, were of a different sort.



Fig. 293. A view of the lower part of the Kaying Valley, not far from where it intersects with the Karatash River, 4 August 1996 (photo: DW). There were broken sections of a road that had been plowed up the valley but not maintained.

11. Bonington 1982 pp. 67-69, 64-65.

E. *Ascending along the Karatash River*

[*Fig. 293, previous page*] As it turned out, my somewhat uncomfortable campsite, around which I spread out things to dry, was but a short distance from where the Kaying entered the Karatash (Qaratash) River. Just short of the intersection were some what appeared to be ruined huts, possibly the remains of Skrine's Kaying Aghzi. At first view of the Karatash, I thought the game was over: a broad and fast-flowing torrent that reminded me somewhat of the upper Indus, and no bridge in sight. [*Fig. 294*] However, there was a bridge to the opposite bank and trail heading upstream. Traditionally [*sketch*] these cantilever bridges in the mountains have been placed where large boulders extend somewhat and around which a crib of logs could be filled to provide a solid foundation for tree trunks long enough to span the water well above flood level. One of Skrine's most frequently reprinted photos (*CCA* 1925, facing p. 146; my



The first and second bridges



The fourth bridge,
the last before Chimgan,
reinforced with concrete

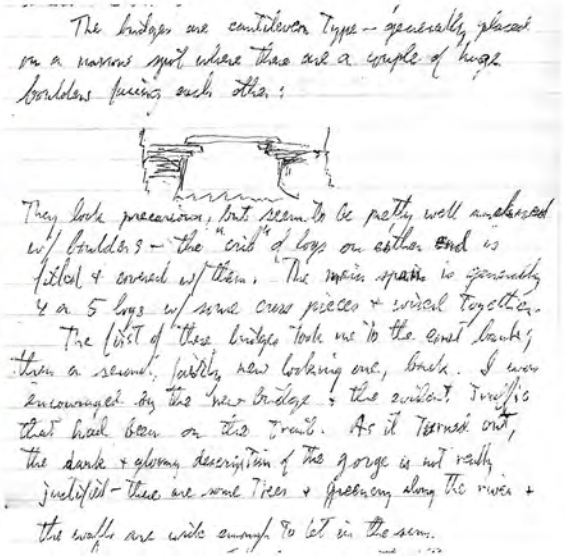


Fig. 294. The cantilever bridges over the Karatash River (photos: DW, 4 August 1996). The first one was located at the intersection of the Kaying with the Karatash, apparently on the same location where Skrine found a bridge in the 1920s. The second bridge was a short way up stream; the fourth one was located not far from where the gorge ended below Chimgan. All of the bridges had some reinforcement of heavy wire to hold the logs together; the bridge near Chimgan also had some cement reinforcing the supports.

Fig. 84 above) shows just such a bridge, a downstream (at Khanterek) from where I was, across which there was a hollowed tree trunk serving as an aqueduct for fresh water. I was to encounter several such cantilever bridges as I ascended the river, having to cross from one bank to the other to avoid impassible cliffs. The bridges I saw were built on the same principle, the logs usually secured nowadays by wire



Fig. 295. A longish section of good trail on the left bank of the river beyond the second bridge took me to this little farmstead at the intersection with the Karatumush stream before having to backtrack to another bridge I had missed and which had to be crossed to continue upstream, 4 August 1996 (photo: DW). The photo was taken from the right bank after crossing the bridge.

and, less commonly, cement. At least in the early going, the terrors of the Karatash gorges were not much in evidence, the going fairly easy, and the valley wide enough to be sunny and with patches of vegetation.

However, at one point, not seeing where a trail forked to lead down to another bridge, I followed the obvious footprints up to what seemed to be a dead end at a little farmstead [*Fig. 295*] where the Karatumush stream entered the Karatash. Skrine had photographed on just this stretch of the trail, looking upstream to where a distinctive rock 'tooth' projected.[12] It happened that there were two boys in the farm buildings next to a small field of wheat. With a bit of sign language and a few words of Kyrgyz, I elicited from them the directions back to the bridge I had missed and some reassurance that I would be able to continue by trek up to Chimgan. The little detour cost me about three hours.

Even though the walls of the gorge closed in along some stretches (and I could see one of the precarious *rafiqs* clinging to a sheer cliff over the rapids), on the whole it seemed that the passage along the river had been substantially improved since Skrine's day. There still were a few places where the trail dropped to water level and might have been impassible in high flood. [*Fig. 296*] I had to wade one of these up to my



*Fig. 296. Views providing a sense of why Skrine found the Karatash a challenge to traverse, some sections hemmed in by unscalable cliffs, paths (*rafiqs*) precariously clinging to the rocks above the raging torrent, and areas where the only option was to walk in the river bed. The improvements keeping bridges from washing away made my traverse easier, but I still had to risk wading up to my waist in one short section. (Photos: DW, 4 August 1996.)*

12. See his photo, printed in Waugh 1999, Pl. V, p. 316, and *Fig. 120* above, p. 287.



Fig. 297. At the end of the gorge, the first glimpses of Chimgan (Chimghan), situated where the broad Chimgan stream (fed by the glacier melt from the SE side of Mt. Kongur) combined with the much smaller flow of the Karatash, 4 August 1996 (photo: DW). Instinctively one might think the Chimgan was the primary river. Given the uncertainty of the route and whether it would be possible to wade the deepest channel, I negotiated for help at Chimgan.

waist, in the process carelessly losing my last, unsecured, water bottle and having to replace it by emptying out and rinsing a 1-liter fuel bottle. However, if I understood correctly from an exchange with a man I met who was hiking downstream, the local inhabitants were pleased with the efforts officials had made to strengthen the bridges and ensure they would not be swept away. As I was approaching the village of Chimgan the next day, I walked along some spade-dug irrigation channels in a very narrow strip of vegetation above the river where it appears there had been some effort to plant some crop [*Fig. 297*]. The last part of this stretch was fairly flat; Chimgan itself by my altimeter was a 8790 ft., not too far off from the measurement on the Soviet General Staff Map – 8839 ft/ 2694 m (Skrine gives a significantly higher 10,160).

By the time I got to Chimgan around 2 PM on 4 August, I had only about 5-6 days of my own food left; that effectively ended any idea I had had about possibly ascending the Chimgan River to see the Shiwakte and Kongur from that side. It would have been very easy to make the mistake of thinking the Chimgan was my route, since it is a larger stream than the Karatash where the latter intersects with it. But what I needed to do was cross the Chimgan and go approximately another 5 miles to reach the next village, Chat. Not willing to risk the river crossing on my own, I negotiated support to be guided and carried across with my gear on a horse. [*Fig. 298*] Chimgan is a sizeable cluster of traditional stone and mud-brick houses, where there was one particularly 'elegant' one under construction or renovation with real windows and window frames and a room decorated with Islamic-style muqarnas columns. I assumed this was a private home, though possibly it was intended to be a mosque. On the way over to Chat the next day, a donkey

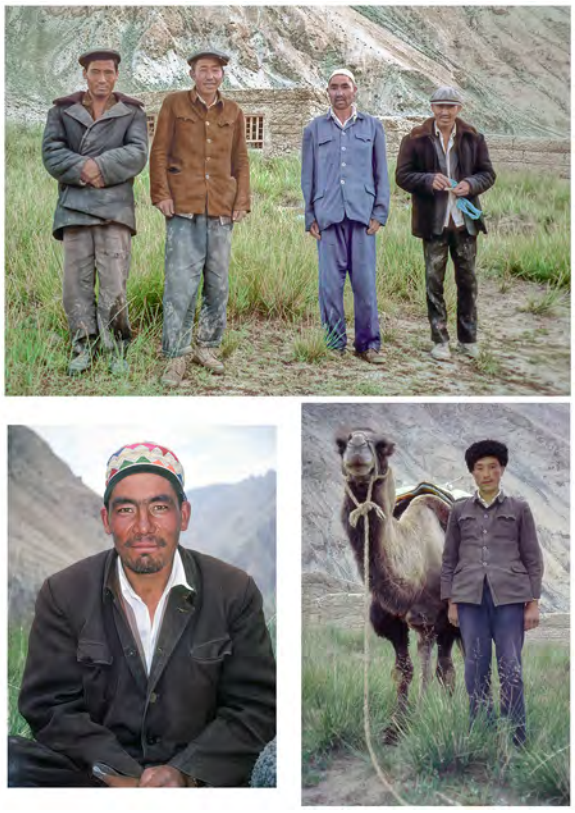


Fig. 298. Some of the men of Chimgan (and one camel), 4-5 August 1996 (photos: DW). In the background of the upper photo is one of the adobe houses with framed windows (but ones apparently lacking glass). The man in the lower left has something of a twinkle in his eye: he was the one who seemed most to enjoy teasing me.

carrying one of the window frames met us on the narrow path. I did not try to explore Chimgan closely for fear of appearing too nosy; one of the local young men probably simply for amusement found ways to annoy me with joking and poking at my gear. On demand, I took a few formally posed portrait photos, even though I would have preferred more casual snapshots.

My transport to Chat cost me the princely sum of 100 yuan (about $12), but I was not about to try to bargain. There was no possibility of negotiating a longer ride, since the boy who accompanied me was to go downstream on a family errand the next day. Before we set out the next day, they hog-tied the horse to shoe it and my hosts fed me some breakfast: a rice dish with some Chinese cabbage in it, cooked apparently in some kind of a meat-base broth. I got to see how the locals know where there is a possible river ford, by tossing rocks into the stream and listening to the sound: a quick 'thunk' means shallow enough water, no sound – too deep a channel. As we rode along the path, in one place narrowly hewn out of a cliff face, my young guide, riding on a donkey ahead of me, could comfortably swing around 'side-saddle' facing backward and rolling a cigarette. I did little to guide the horse, assuming it was more sure-footed on the path than I would have been. In one short section where the trail had nearly fallen away (it was a sliding 'ledge' less than a foot wide), I had to dismount and carry the pack ahead on foot before it was safe to remount. A bridge across the Karatash at this point in what was still a dry and stark valley had concrete piers set on the rocks of the river bed [*Fig. 299*].



Fig. 299. The view from Chat looking back over the lush fields in the direction of Chimgan from which I had come, 5 August 1996 (photo: DW).

[*Fig. 300*] Chat (Qat – the name can refer generically to a location at the intersection of two rivers) was obviously a much more substantial town, accessible via a road over the Ghijaq Pass, presumably on the same route that carried some of Skrine's baggage after he had paused in Chat to climb to a

Fig. 300. The substantial settlement of Chat, mainly adobe-brick houses but with a cultural center or school, 5 August 1996 (photos: DW).





Fig. 301. Plastering the exterior of an adobe-brick house at Chat, 5 August 1996 (photo: DW).

vantage point from which he could see and photograph the upper part of the SE face of Kongur.[13] In 1996, there were fairly extensive wheat fields, an official building with a frescoed portico (a school, or the local administrative center?) and at least one other substantial building. The residences were the typical mud-plastered stone or mud-brick and timber-framed houses, one of which was getting a fresh coat of the mud/straw plastering [*Fig. 301*]. On arrival, I had to show my documents, and in fact more than once while there, they were examined by all the curious onlookers, for some of whom apparently the Chinese was not legible, but at least they could point to the purple 'tamgha' (seal) that seemed to indicate I was legal. Presumably the 'first secretary' I never met to whom the papers were taken (local Party boss??) knew Chinese. I was hosted by what may have been one of the less prosperous families who served me a lunch (including bread – the bagel-like *girde nan – airan*, and topped off with half of a small watermelon, a huge treat after my not seeing any fresh fruit for such a long time). The dirt-floored house I was in had one room apparently for storage, another with a sleeping platform, a fire-place niche with a vent, and kind of a kitchen/pantry corner with a wok and shelves with dishes.



Fig. 302. Some of the men of Chat, on the left the elder, Turdi Ali Mamer; my diary sketches, aids to my 'conversation' with him where we had no common language. (Photo and drawing: DW, 5 August 1996.)

[*Fig. 302*] My most intriguing 'conversation' while in Chat was with an older gentleman, Turdi Ali Mamer, who obviously knew a bit about the outside world. I sketched a map or two, on which he could recognize the U.S. and England (I had to remind him about the ocean in between); we reviewed the names of some historic Soviet leaders and established their ethnicity. I tried to explain how the letter from my wife which I had been carrying had been sent over the Internet to Bishkek, where it

13. See the lower picture on the Plate VIII appended to his note about the Qungur Massif in *GJ* 135/3 (1969) and the fuller view from another of his telephotos, previously unpublished, in Waugh 1999, Pl. III, p. 314 (*Fig. 117* above).

was printed out, but presumably my drawing of a computer did not ring a bell… In another of my 'conversations', one of the local Kyrgyz was very interested in Kyrgyzstan and its President Akayev and wondered whether I could write to get an invitation for my interlocutor to visit Kyrgyzstan. Naturally there was no way I could promise anything like that.

Since Skrine's map was less detailed for where I wanted to proceed from Chat – he had not himself traversed the upper reaches of the Karatash in the direction of Mustagh Ata – I made it clear to my hosts that I wanted to hire someone to guide me. It was one of those situations though where one is told to hang around (waiting for something to happen or someone to return), and then the day is gone. My efforts to reach an agreement for the next stage of my trek seemed to have failed; so the next morning I packed up my tent and started walking out of town, hoping somehow to find my way. I was but a couple hundred feet up the trail when called back. [*Fig. 303*] I now had a guide; he drove a hard bargain, and we agreed on 200 yuan, about $24, for him to take me and my pack at least half way up to the Karatash Pass. He was a short, fortyish fellow, somewhat abrupt with me, who figured out how to tug my chain to get sometimes irritated responses that probably amused him. He rode one of his two donkeys; the other carried my pack. I walked. One of the challenges for me was the stream crossings where I had to stop and take off my boots while he just continued on; so I was continually playing catch-up.

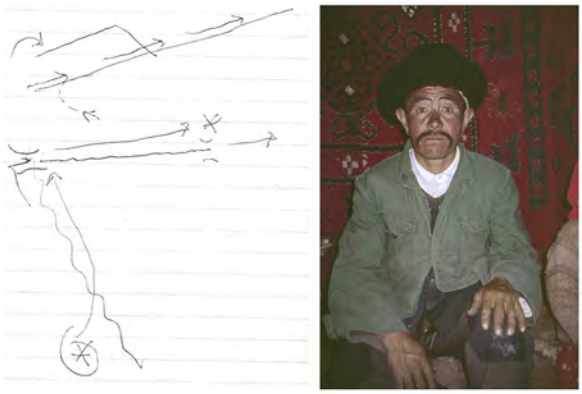


Fig. 303. My guide to the upper Karatash and the schematic map I made to try to explain where I wanted to go, 5-6 August 1996 (photo and drawing: DW).

[*Fig. 304*] One of the first places where his guidance

Fig. 304. Map showing an approximation of my hiking route from Chimgan to the Mustagh Ata base camp and then from there to the back (SE) side of Mustagh Ata before returning to Lake Karakul to meet Andrei Ershov's climbing party for an ascent of the mountain. The captioning is overlaid on a Google Earth topographic map generated from satellite images.

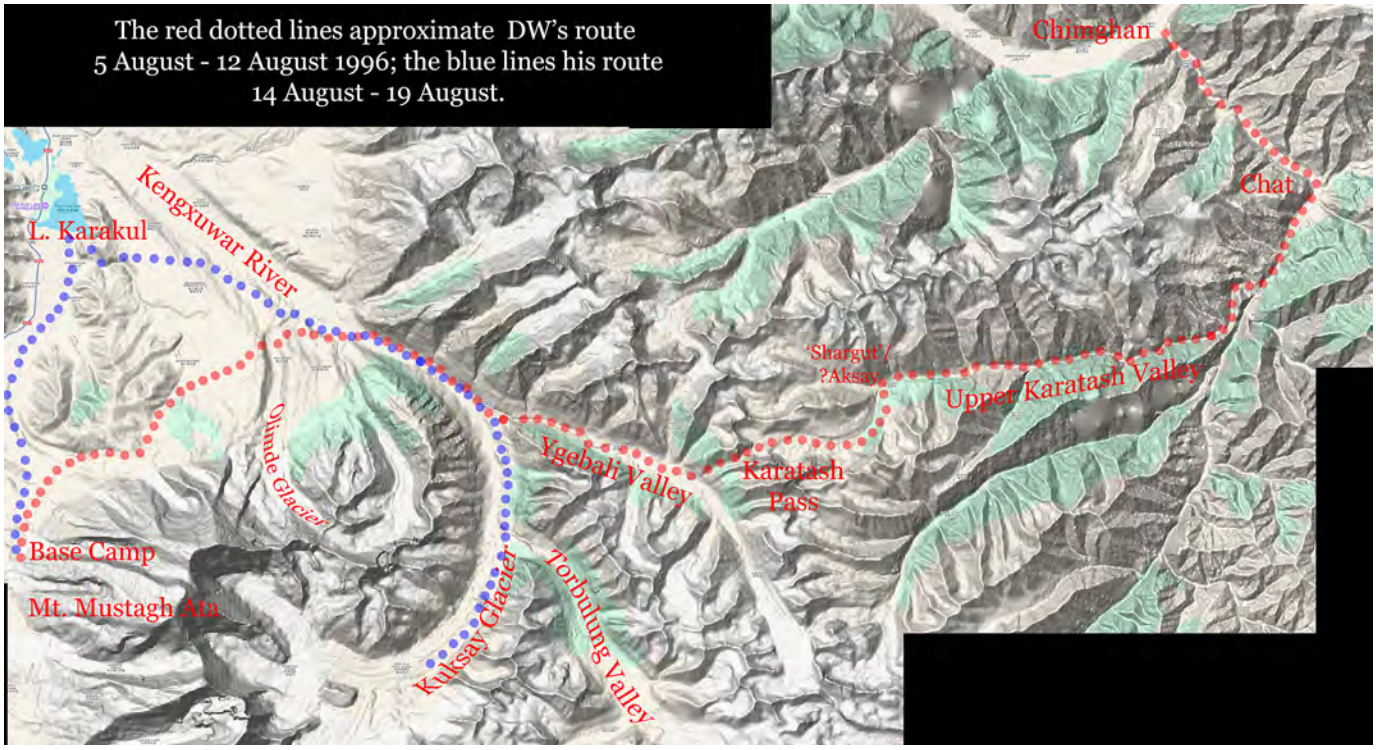




Fig. 305. The summer settlement in the upper Karatash River watershed, probably the one named 'Shargut' in the old British route book and Aksaray in the Chinese captions shown on Google Earth. (Photo: DW, 6 August 1996.)

proved critical was not far out of Chat. What seemed to be the major stream flow continued to the south, but the Karatash unexpectedly came into it at right angles. On taking that turn, it seemed as though we were heading to a dead end at a blank wall. However, the stream turned a right angle to the left and then followed a gradual rise in a valley that was dotted with evidence of habitation – stone walls, occasional huts, some of them occupied. The higher we climbed, the more the people, since this clearly was summer pasturage. My guide seemed to know everyone along the way. We arrived finally at a sizeable village of yurts and well-constructed stone huts. [*Fig. 305*] The ground had been trodden by sheep and yaks, and the people were busy collecting dung to dry for cooking fuel. Thus was presumably the settlement called Shargut in the British route book description (on which, more below). My diary entry for 8 August begins as here, continues with what I have described just above, and then resumes:

> 8/8 – Skipped a day – not because of crisis but because I wasn't given a moment's peace to write. Now am ensconced on a patch of green on an otherwise rather bleak river gorge – at least on my side. On the other side of the river is a ridge of rather steep peaks w[ith] hanging glaciers. I hope this is fairly near the end of the valley that leads me to the river [the Kengxuar] that takes me to Lake Karakol… […]
>
> [At Shargut] I managed to get my tent up in a stone-walled enclosure (with the usual round of poking, pawing, gawking and giggling) & I was taken on a round of ceremonial visits – where you walk into the dwelling and are offered bread & airan. You are first served & when you are finished, the food is removed & everyone asks the blessing on the food. Then you leave and go into the next place. The idea is not really a meal but ceremony; by the time you have done 3 or 4, you are



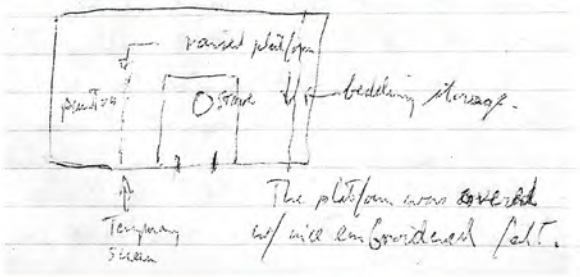




Fig. 306 (left). The family (and neighbors) in front of the stone house that probably was the residence of the officiating elder of the settlement. My diagram shows the layout of the interior. (Photos and drawing: DW, 6 August 1996.)





Fig. 307 (right). Several of the family members in the interior, 6 August 1996 (photos: DW).

fed. At the last, the offering was homemade noodles into which one poured airan – the noodles being served in a bowl in the starchy cooking juice. […]

[*Figs. 306, 307*] The stone house of the first family (my guide's friends) I visited was really quite nice for such – much better than what I saw in Chat (which may have been low end). The layout is: [*sketch*]. The platform was covered w[ith] nice embroidered felt. I got the impression that this was a family of some substance. The yurts I was in [*Fig. 308*] also had stoves & gave the impression of reasonable prosperity. In one it was the woman of the house who took the active role in wanting to buy something of mine & she was a much fuller participant in the ceremonial 'feed' than normal –



Fig. 308. A visit to the yurt of another family in the settlement, 6 August 1996 (photos: DW).







normally the women serve but hang on the fringes on the pantry side of the room – the men being the chief active participants.

I probably conveyed to my hosts a rather crotchety, unpleasant demeanor. I certainly had nothing with me that could be offered, even if very small, as a reciprocal gift for the hospitality, and, as my diary continually reiterates, the inevitable attempts to buy one or another of my possessions were getting under my skin, my irritation probably compounded by the increasing urgency I felt about being sure to get safely to the end of my trek. In Chat, I had written:

> I patiently (increasingly impatiently) explain this [my tent] is my home for another month & I need it on Mustagh Ata as well as my boots & my ice axe. And, no, I am not about to sell my wedding ring. And, as for my glasses, yes you may try them on (no one here has glasses & that certainly cannot mean they don't need them)…

At Shargut, in the same vein, I wrote:

> In the past few days I have gotten increasingly annoyed by the pestering everywhere I go. When I was setting up my tent in the stone enclosure, there was a crowd around. Immediately one gentleman, who was 'more groomed' than some of the others (he rather reminded me of e.g., Nikolai Kirsanov, the English gentleman type in [Turgenev's] *Fathers & Children*, who is a kind of superfluous man), immediately offered to trade his cheap Chinese watch for my Avocet (the Avocet attracts a lot of attention). I really stuck it to him verbally & I think at least my gestures & tone of voice made the point (I don't seem to have offended anyone). I basically did a pantomime of giving away everything & ending up w[ith] no clothes on my back.

My ice axe in fact somehow got spirited away as I was making the social rounds, but I pointedly inquired about it and it re-appeared. As I noted later in my diary, after going through the same kind of experience near Lake Karakul, I came up with the response of 'pawing' back, which seemed to be an effective way of stopping the whole charade. Probably to do that was quite offensive culturally…

As I settled in for the night, the question of what would happen the next day was still un-resolved.

F. *From the upper Karatash to Mustagh Ata*

The confidential British route book published in 1926 (which incorporated some of Skrine's material and whose earlier edition he had used) described going over a difficult Karatash pass above Shargut, citing as its authority a 19th-century Russian officer's account. As we now know, thanks to recent Russian exploration, that attribution is flawed (see below, section J). My guides beyond Shargut followed a somewhat different direction to an easier pass. My diary continues:

> Morning came earlier today than I would expect. On my arrival [in Shargut] yesterday, I made what I thought was a serious mistake – giving my guide an extra 100 yuan on the assumption that we had gone far enough & the pass was just around the corner. (That is, he had overfulfilled his quota.) Before bed, there was some talk about its being another 4-5 hours to the *dawan* (pass).
>
> Even before it was light, he roused me & told me to pack up, since we were leaving. We argued over the price, partly for miscommunication and agreed the total from Chat to the pass would be 400 yuan (hence the extra 100 counted). We had quick bread & airan (I thought I would die of thirst but it turned out not to be too bad) & were on our way – two donkeys, three dogs & a young fellow along w[ith] the guide.
>
> I soon shed my pile; fortunately I had kept available essentials that otherwise would have been



Fig. 309. Heading up from 'Shargut' in the early morning to cross the Karatash Pass, 7 August 1996 (photos: DW). The views look north.

buried w[ith] no easy access. [*Fig. 309*] The early start was actually nice – the scenery worthwhile (although it was kind of a hazy day all day). We climbed through pasture right up to 15,000 feet or so; it was only the last section of glacial moraine that was really stark. My guide kept twitting me about which pass (of the many) – to make the point that I needed him. – He obviously knew but pretended he didn't and he kept raising the issue of more money or some piece of my gear. But he kept going. A ways just before the pass, a saddled yak & rider & two other fellows (one w[ith] a dog) caught up to us. I actually sat on the yak [*Fig. 310*] & at one point was offered the chance to ride behind its rider. A very impressive white male, but sorely abused as are the animals here – he had open sores on his back behind the saddle, presumably from being clubbed by the rider, who had an elongated stone he was using as a whip. Not a pretty sight. They pierce the yak's nose & run a lead rope through it. Donkeys get miserable treatment – pounded, poked, kicked, dragged. And dogs too – two were leashed simply w[ith] a rope around the necks (in tandem) & they were dragged even if wanting to stop to relieve themselves. One didn't look very well to begin with.



Fig. 310. DW on a riding yak en route to the Karatash Pass, 7 August 1996 (photo: anon. Kyrgyz).



The last stretch to the pass [*Fig. 311*] was (for the animals) pretty nasty scree, but then the descent was very smooth (also scree). The donkeys turned back w[ith] the young fellow, I paid the guide, threw a tantrum at the effort of the yak rider to get me to give up my Goretex jacket. And the yak driver & his friends

Fig. 311. The final approach to the Karatash Pass, 7 August 1996 (photo: DW).



Fig. 312. The yak herd in the Ygebali valley, photographed on the descent from the Karatash Pass. The rider of the white yak can be discerned to the left of the herd. (Photo: DW, 7 August 1996.)

& my guide descended. Turned out the yak rider had a whole herd of them in the next valley & they needed to be moved [*Fig. 312*].

As usual, I was waylaid at the one herder camp I saw in the valley below – but it was OK – three youngish fellows, a couple of lovely horses, some fresh bread. They tried to get me to stay, but I wanted to make some distance & got away [*Fig. 313*].

The pass, if it is the same one Skrine mentions, is a long way in from Chat & is not intuitively obvious. I suspect there may be two or three from the same valley.[14] He gave the altitude at something like 16,383 ft. I measured 15,340 (incidentally, the herder camp last night was 12,040). It certainly is 'easy' – nothing steep. Remains to be seen how easy it is for me to



Fig. 313. Descending the Ygebali valley, the sequence clockwise from upper left. The photo in lower left is down at its intersection with the Kengxuwar River. (Photos: DW, 7-8 August 1996.)

14. On my confusion about the pass and the later correction in my account by Andrei Lebedev, see below section J. Never having himself traveled the upper Karatash, Skrine provided only a schematic and vague sense of the topography for the Survey of India cartographers.



Fig. 314. The view down the Kengxuwar River, ca. 8 August 1996 (photo: DW).

finish the descent tomorrow. I tried going down the river bed, which was probably a mistake, but I can get back up higher from where I am.

This campsite is somewhat weird in that it [has] remains of dead donkeys [*later I wrote*: probably sheep] scattered around. Lots of pieces of animals. […]

This campsite is windy & cold & at an altitude of 13,200 ft. This is the highest I have camped so far & I have to expect colder days & nights now that I am going to be in Mustagh Ata area – Karakol Lakes, as I recall, are around 12,000 ft. & quite unprotected.

A few minutes ago, I saw a group headed up valley on the trail up above where I am camped. That is some reassurance as to where I must go tomorrow & suggests at least that one should be able to get through OK in the other direction. Judging from hoofprints etc., the way up & down this valley is used.

[*Fig. 314*] When I wrote the next day, **9 August** (my compressed account even now a bit difficult to follow on the ground!) I was

safely ensconced at about 4:30 PM up near the moraine of one of the glaciers on the [N]East side of Mustagh Ata. If there is a nice sunrise tomorrow, could be spectacular. Right now things are hazy – pretty much the way it has been all day.

The high road was indeed the path today; fortunately I saw where a couple of the locals were crossing the big river. Withal it was not easy though; the very last of the many streams into which it spreads out proved, naturally, to be the hardest & deepest. My informant of a couple of days ago who said there is a bridge is wrong [or perhaps I simply misunderstood him]. So the bottoms of my feet are bruised from the rocks but everything stayed dry. I was foolhardy enough not to wrap the cameras up, but I got away with it this time.

Turns out I was misreading the map & thought last night I was still simply in the valley descending from the pass. In fact I was already well down the major side valley (labeled the Ygebali Gully on the Chinese map). This presumably means the pass I crossed was the Karatash [*Chin.*: Kalatax] Pass [4816 m/15,800 ft], although there is one other just above it. So I came to the Konxiwa River (Kengxuwar) sooner than I thought & could see the snout of the Kuksay Glacier, which leads to that mysterious face of the mountain. I could see where the Torbulung River comes in & thus, if I have the energy to tackle it (and submit to the river crossing again), know where to go in the next round.

When I crossed the river, had I stayed low & immediately crossed the stream coming down from the mtn., I probably would have ended up already at the lake. But this is nicer, since I have it to myself. Assuming that going up to the moraine to cross above the glacial stream works, and assuming that the info from the Kyrgyz, who unexpectedly showed up wet on my doorstep is correct, I am within easy striking distance of the lake & might even get beyond it tomorrow [*sketch*].[*Fig. 315*]

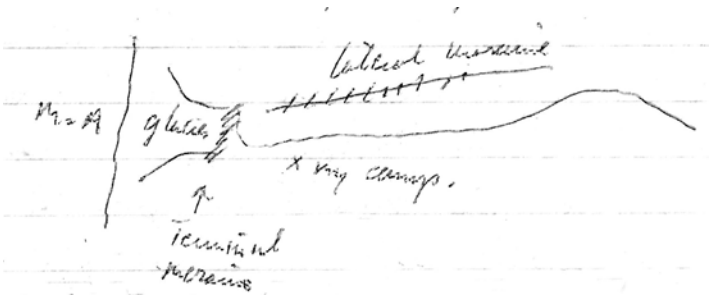


Fig. 315. My sketch map of my camp location above the Kengxuwar.

I even came upon a semi-sheltered bivouac spot, surrounded on three sides by a low stone wall & on the other by a boulder. It is very windy; so I have really tied down the tent. [*marginal note*: camp at 12,540 ft.]

So I am within a day or so of 'making' it. I hope at this point there are no further major surprises. My mental & physical powers to deal with them are stretched pretty far. If my trip were to end w[ith] this & my heading back to Bishkek in three days, I could be quite happy. As it is, I'm not quite sure how I will handle another month. Even in its lightened state, the pack feels heavy. I don't expect real R & R at base camp – that is, I think I will be pretty much on my own devices there, will not be royally fed but probably will be subsisting on the food I brought [stored there with Ershov's group]. Fortunately there is some extra left from Kyrgyzstan. Dinner tonight is the next to last of my packets – Mountain House Mexican Style Rice & Chicken. I'll finish the soup too.

Tomorrow, August 10 is a very special day – being here is very far removed from a sunny summer day in the Rose Garden at Woodland Park [in Seattle, 1990, the venue for our wedding]. If I had to choose, the Rose Garden gets the vote, of course.

Later – Strange how you look in one direction & don't always look around. Coming up this valley, Mustagh Ata is staring you in the face – this side of it is somewhat like the Willis Wall on Mt. Rainier, only multiplied by a factor of 3 or more. [*Figs. 316, 317, next page*] As I was filling water for morning (to let the silt settle), I looked in the other direction; there, in silvery evening light is Kongur – can't quite see the real summit, but much of the ridge to its west. I had noticed in the haze earlier the Kongur range, but it didn't particularly stand out. Now the haze is blowing away & the late light is quite lovely.

8/10 Happy Anniversary! […][15]

15. I did manage to write a letter home that opened with the wish and described briefly my having survived the long trek and anticipated arrival at M.A. base camp the next day. One there I gave it to a Russian climber, Alexey Shalaev, who



Fig. 316. Views looking up at the north peak of Mustagh Ata, the first taken from above the Kengxuwar along a stream descending from the glaciers; the second a distant photo taken from Lake Karakul (photos: DW).

As usual, the day proved more eventful than planned. It began on a good note – overnight the water in the glacial stream went down enough so I could rock-hop across & not have to take a detour. Encouraged by that, I went straight up what I thought was moraine – some several hundred feet of climbing, only to find myself on a high, windy & barren plateau, ahead of me a ridge. I assumed I would find the lakes behind the ridge; so I elected to skirt it on the right.

Along the way, I came to the jeep track going up to a village, but rather than double check the map, when I saw the track heading apparently away from where I wanted to go, I circled around, climbed a ridge, made a half-way effort to follow it along, backtracked in the direction of the village, climbed what I thought was a pass that would bring me down to the lake, found myself on another endless rising plateau (max. alt. reached about 15,200 on my wrist) & finally persisted to find a descent to a glacier already 'around the corner' from the lake, which is precisely where I want to be to get to the base camp tomorrow.

So, trial & error & wasted effort notwithstanding, I ended up close to my objective & possibly could have pushed it through today (I bagged it at 3:00). I did plenty of climbing & up high; so

Fig. 317. From the campsite below the Olimde Glacier: part of the Kongur massif at sunset; Mustagh Ata at dawn, 8-9 August 1996 (photos: DW).



then e-mailed a copy to Charlotte after he reached home in Nizhnii Novogorod some days later.



Fig. 318. Views from the traverse around the northeast and north sides of Mustagh Ata below the several glaciers , 9-11 August 1996 (photos: DW).

with a decent camp spot in sight, I decided not to push the level of exhaustion. [*Fig. 318]* I <u>think</u> my main obstacle left is to cross the glacial stream or the glacier above its stream; I am camped just where that can be done. The campsite (14,320 ft.) is on a patch of green in a little gully tucked between the hillside I descended and the rubble of the glacier. To look at the latter from my tent, you'd think it was just another scree slope. But I saw it from above & not far away there is a pretty hefty stream of water flowing right out of the side of the rubble. My patch of green has been used by various & sundry animals, probably in the first instance the yak herd I passed on the descent. It wouldn't surprise me if they showed up here during the night.

I have even managed to take something of a sponge bath & a bit of afternoon sun (on what has been kind of a hazy day) is warming the tent.

I had better find where I'm going tomorrow, since the food is coming down to the day – one dinner left, one pkg. of oatmeal, snack bars, some Gator Ade, one tea bag, etc.

The dinner will be Alpine Aire, Wild Rice Pilaf with Almonds.

8-12-96. Sitting here at Mustagh Ata base camp waiting for the sun to warm me up. Andrei and his group are packing – the camels should be coming for their gear soon. Arriving here yesterday was almost a homecoming – to see familiar faces & be greeted so warmly. All of a sudden again, I will be alone, in a camp inhabited by dozens of climbers & support persons.

It turned out (as I should have expected) that getting here from my last camp was longer & tougher than I had thought. I had more glacial moraine & rubble to cross than I thought – you look at one ridge & think that is where you go; turns out it is still short of your goal. So I have seen up close the snouts of several M. A. glaciers. It was a great relief to come across the trail well trodden by camels that I assumed had to lead to base camp [*Fig. 319, next page*]. But there was still that uncertainty, until finally I spotted tent city.





Fig. 319. The trail to Mustagh Ata base camp (11 August 1996) and a view of the mountain from the highway (1995) with a circle marking the location of the base camp (photos: DW).

[*Fig. 320*] There is a cook hut & a lot of mess tents here all summer. They serve meals that offer either Chinese or Western food. Andrei calls the Chinese food 'Camel Shit'. – I gather it gets old quickly & there is not much variety. But first impressions were fine. It was nice to have a couple of real meals prepared from fresh ingredients. Temptation was to overeat vastly. Last night was a 'farewell banquet' with booze (dreadful local liqueur & wine); fruit for dessert, more food than people could eat.

I can arrange to be fed so long as I am in base camp & pay extra for the meals. I figure on resting for a couple of days here & then going out, since this place will wear thin quickly.

It is a barren flat area right at the tip of the ridge with the climbing route. One looks up on a scree slope where there is a winding trail that goes up to Camp I at snowline. So one sees only a thin line of snow & ice up on the skyline.

The two Dutch groups 'realigned' in a somewhat weird way during the climb. The leader of one summitted & then simply took off for Kashgar, leaving the rest of his group to fend for itself. Another of the climbers took ill & never fully recovered & left for Kashgar. Four people summitted, including Andrei. Weather was a factor – lots of bad visibility up high & a fair amount of fresh snow.

Well, the camel caravan has gone along with my friends. The sun is fairly warm, but I think I will wait a bit to wash, in the hopes that the last of the morning chill will disappear & the day will be hot.

Later – [for those who might have read Dickens, I would remind them of a Capt. Hopkins or Dr. Strong, 'in the last extremity of shabbiness, with large whiskers', 'clothes not particularly well brushed, and his hair not particularly well combed'], I washed (bathed) at least a sponge







Fig. 320. Mustagh Ata base camp for the much-climbed standard route; our Chinese cook making noodles in one of the mess tents, and the staff washing heads of slaughtered sheep in the not so clean glacial stream that was the camp's water supply (photos: DW).

bath. Laundry done, after a fashion, using some detergent in a tube that the Dutch gave me and borrowing a basin from the Japanese.

I have just had a conversation with Mr. Du [the official from the China Xinjang Mountaineering Association] & told him about the details of my trek. He says once they took a group up the Karatash or at least thought of it, but felt it was too dangerous. He obviously doesn't really know that area. He informed me of one important thing – I cannot go to the SW side of Mustagh Ata even if I want to, since that is not in my permit. Thus, if I want to see the SE face, I need to backtrack. There doesn't seem to be a wildly attractive alternative; it leaves me in something of a quandry. […]

8/13 […] I keep being fed well although probably not enough to put back on lost weight. Need to start re-packing this afternoon & be ready to head out tomorrow. I simply can't sit and vegetate for a week. The plan is to go down to the lakes & then across to the river – that way I should avoid having to do extra climbing over stony terrain, as would happen if I stayed up high on the route I took over here. If I can time it right, I might do the river crossing early morning when the water is lowest. Ideally, I would take no more than three days to get up onto the glacier on the other side of the mtn. in order to see that face. I figure one day there to explore & then turn around to retrace my steps. That might get me back to the lake at the point where Andrey's [next] group comes through. […]

My watch gives 14060 ft here, but I know others' Avocets were reading 100-200 ft higher.



Fig. 321. On the trail down to Subax (Subashi) from the Mustagh Ata base camp, 14 August 1996 (photos: DW).

G. *Visiting the little-known 'back side' of Mustagh Ata*

8/14 – Off again – late (9:20 start). [*Fig. 321*] Took a little more than a couple of hours to get down 2000' to vicinity of Subashi [Subax]. Then contoured around the hills staying just above the marshes and stream. Stopped at one nice house & had hospitality. In same village tried my new tactic on first guy who started fingering my stuff – that is, start fingering all his clothes aggressively. It worked. [*Fig. 322, next page*] In the house, the old gentleman I photographed w[ith] the girls is 74. Somewhat more sophisticated [*sic*!] lot here – among other things they have motorcycles & in one house in the large village across the lake from the resort, a satellite dish (!) [*Fig. 323*]. But a plastic water bottle still sets heads spinning. All the little boys have colored rocks for sale, one old lady was peddling an embroidered purse, and a woman & her son came along where I am camped – she riding a horse & carrying a baby & [with] two loaded camels in tow [*Fig. 324*]; she took off one of her bracelets (they are pretty, but a standard issue of no particular value) & had her son try to peddle it. I assume this goes on w[ith] the tourists at the lake all the time.



Fig. 322. Kyrgyz of the village of Subax (Subashi), 14 August 1996 (photos: DW).

Fig. 323. Houses at Subax at least in part constructed of adobe brick. Two of the tunduks, the wooden frames for the top of yurts, are stored at the building in the left photo; in front of it is dung drying for stove fuel, essential in a region where, as Skrine lamented back in 1924, there was but brush wood for fires (photos: DW).



Fig. 324. A small caravan returning from a summer camp, led by a woman on horseback carrying a baby, 4 August 1996 (photo: DW).



Fig. 325. My camp at Lake Karakul and an early-morning view of the lake, 14-15 August 1996 (photos: DW).

[*Fig. 325*] So I am camped at windy Karakul, across from the resort & around the corner out of sight of the town. I can see the whitecaps on one arm of the jade-green shallow far side of the lake from the hwy. and see the N end of the ridge of Kongur. Although the water in the lake has to be dreadfully polluted from animal waste, it happens there is a little spring coming out of a rock promontory right near me (& right near where there is the worst fetid stink-hole of marshy pollution…). So I am able to draw on what seems to be really fresh water. The area around Karakul on the S & W is all marshy grassland. Not many animals – the yaks are probably up in the hills & who knows about the camels.

The big village area near the lake has some substantial looking complexes of houses & a mosque. About 2:50 I saw one fellow praying.

The goal tomorrow is to ford the river & hike up it as far as possible. I have no idea how long it will take to get to the ford, but presumably no less than 3 hrs. from here. I would have headed in that direction today but worried about having to hike too far to get to a source of water. Quitting between 3:30 & 4:00 was enough anyway.



Fig. 326. A family photographed near Lake Karakul in 1995 (photo: DW).

I just had a visit from a herder on his way to his pasture from town. Seemed like a nice man & seemed to understand a bit of my English.

I was curious in the one house I visited today – the old man seemed to know of my coming from Chimgan – I wonder whether the word really has spread across the mountains? […]

[*Fig. 326*] I showed the herder the photo I made long the road across the way last year (an older woman & three kids) & he claimed to recognize her & I asked him to give it to her.

Clouded over – a few gleams of sunlight still on Kongur. To the S is clear still. Almost looks like some real weather moving in from the NW.

8/15 Went for another unwanted swim today. Took 4 hours or so to get to the river – I followed the jeep road as far as I could, which involved climbing & then descending, but at least I have an idea now of the way I want to return – it will



Fig. 327. A cemetery overlooking the Kengxuwar River, the view to the north, 15 August 1996 (photos: DW).

be the best route back to the lake. [*Fig. 327*]



Fig. 328. Yaks grazing next to the river not far from where I inadvisedly tried to cross it, 15 August 1996 (photo: DW).

[*Fig. 328*] Tried crossing in a different place but to my surprise stepped into deep water. A bit of stuff got wet, including the boots, and marginally (it still works) the small camera. I was cold & psyched & stopped to dry out/ warm up. Almost bagged it, but finally went a bit further up to where I had crossed before [*Fig. 329*]. Made it, but only barely.

Managed to arrive at where the other valley I descended [the Ygebali] comes into the big one [the Kengxuwar]– late – around 6 PM. But this is where I had hoped to reach.

A herder's circle of stones, but not a very high one. Very windy, although I think it may die down as the sun sets. Clear blue sky – the peaks at the intersections of the valleys really stand out – unlike the other day in the morning haze. Windy enough to blow up a regular dust storm in the river bed & to blow spray upstream from the standing waves in the river.



I saw a fellow working on crossing the river upstream from where I did – had two dogs & a donkey. Apparently made it as he came by here after I had set up camp & tried to persuade me I should go up the valley I descended a few days ago, as this is a bad camping spot. I pointed to the other branch of

Fig. 329. The view up the Kengxuwar where it narrows in the gorge flanking Mustagh Ata on the NE, 15 August 1996 (photo: DW).



Fig. 330. Fading light on a windy evening when camped along the Kengxuwar, 15 August 1996 (photo: DW).

the valley as the one I am going to, by way of explanation. […]

There is a clear stream a couple minutes walk from where I am camped; so I don't have to draw silty water from the river.

Losing light; must button down for night. Just took a long-lens photo of river reflecting glow from setting sun [*Fig. 330*] Wind blowing so hard still (in gusts) that I had a hard time holding steady even when propped against a rock. […]

8/16 (AM) The wind kept up something fierce a good part of the night. At times I thought it was going to shred the tent. Right now, as I work on breakfast, things are relatively calm. A clear day so far w[ith] just a few clouds. I can sit here still in my sleeping bag & look up valley to where I am headed…wondering what awaits [*Fig. 331*].



Fig. 331. The way forward up the Kengxuwar, near where the Ygebali Valley enters on the left, 16 August 1996 (photo: DW).

Later – I hope this isn't a mistake – giving up half a day. At about 11:30 I arrived at a little oasis, right where the Torbulung comes into the main valley at the snout of the main glacier. [*Fig. 332*] Green, stone walls, even a little stoned in 'cliff dwelling', a lovely little waterfall coming down a couple minutes' walk away. I can't imagine anything up on the rubble of the glacial moraine that would be better; so why not wait here, cross the Torbulung at low water



Fig. 332. The much-used campsite just below the snout of the Kuksay Glacier, 16 August 1996 (photo: DW)



Fig. 333. Mountain sheep horns piled near the hunters' campsite at the snout of the Kuksay Glacier – perhaps as a kind of shrine, 16 August 1996 (photo: DW).

first thing in the morning, and spend the day hiking the glacier. If I'm lucky w[ith] the weather, it will get me what I want. The Torbulung does look crossable – no worse than what I crossed this morning coming out of the Ygebali (the side valley I hiked) – it was kind of scary to look at but felt reasonably secure.

There were some yaks in residence here when I arrived, but they have wandered off. Some were crossing the Ygebali when I did & some others were wandering down valley. Met one fellow w[ith] a donkey.



Fig. 334. The cliff dwelling at the campsite, 16 August 1996 (photo: DW).

Have explored a bit – lots of horns of mountain goats (curved [*sketch*]) – one little rock-walled repository for them overlooking the river up high [*Fig. 333*]. In some niches (caves) in the rock face above the green flat area, evidence of fires & feasting on goat or sheep – lots of bones. The stone 'house' built into the cliff [*Fig. 334*] has three rooms – you enter on left by a low door & find yourself in the 'kitchen'. From that, inside, you pass into what must be sleeping area – relatively clean flat floor. There is a separate door to the third & separate room, which looks as though it is for animals. The camp is at 12,590 ft. (last night was something like 12, 260). […]

8/17 Winding down after a tough but successful day. Got off about 20 of 8: with a light pack. Forded the Torbulung fairly easily (though cracked my shin on a rock). It was even easier on the way back – I picked a better spot – that, late in the day too. Obviously I am not the only one to have gone up the left side of the glacier – lots of mtn. goat tracks, at least one set of human footprints and cairns. Between the gully below what I suppose we can call lateral moraine (in fact some of it is active glacier) and walking along top of said moraine (mainly higher up), there is a pretty decent route. But it is a long haul to get [to] the point where you finally see M.A.'s central peak and the ridge, since a ridge across the glacier that parallels it effectively blocks the view of the cirque. In fact I quit without seeing the right side of the cirque. Altimeter where I stopped 14,100 ft. Weather was clear for pictures, although some thin clouds had already begun to move in on summit of M.A. before I headed down. So I really lucked out with the weather.



Fig. 335. The view into the Kuksay Glacier cirque, with the slope on the right partially concealing the main peak of Mustagh Ata, 17 August 1996 (photo: DW).

[*Fig. 335*] The mountain looks so odd from this side. On the NW, the view is: [*sketch*].



On the SE, one sees [*sketch*]



The ridge might be climbable – the problem is not the upper part though. [*Fig. 336*] The lower part sticks way out into the glacier & looks to have a knife edge of rotten rock. There might be a ramp on the left side, in a ways from the tip. The crux would be the middle section w[ith] steep rock & not much snow.



Fig. 336. Mustagh Ata from the SE, with the ridge ascending directly to the summit, 17 August 1996 (photo: DW). As the climbers who did the first ascent learned, the final pitch at the top of the route is very steep and difficult to protect

Quite a place to sit having lunch – looking out over the glacier and at that cirque & 'wall'. I wonder if indeed I am the first Westerner to see that view.[16]

There was a lot of climbing amongst rocks & a lot of uneven footing. It felt as though I was pushing pretty fast to get up there (but it still took 4 hours). Returned to my tent by a little before 4:30. I caught a glimpse of a magnificent waterfall (about Snoqualmie [Falls, 270 ft., in Washington State] size?) at the outlet of the Torbulung. It is tucked away in a gorge; once you have crossed the stream to my side, getting easy access to it seems to be a problem.

With a little luck on river crossings, I now should be able to get back comfortably to the lake on schedule. I think I will do a short day tomorrow – even though there is no ideal camp site on this side near where I cross, there is one possibility. That way I could do the major crossing in the morning and probably get back to my old campsite on the side of the lake closer to me. Then it would be an hour's walk or so to get to the other side. There is no hurry, it seems. Two river crossings – the first tomorrow morning is (judging from last time) the lesser of the two although not trivial by any means. […]

8/18 – I decided to bag it early before the last major river crossing & tackle that in the morning. Not the ideal camp spot – but some flat grass and somewhat protected from the wind. The water supply is pretty slimy – seepage from OK source, but right into the swamp where yaks graze. Further decided to have two dinners today, since I have an extra. The Natural High beef teriyaki is the mid-afternoon fare. I'm really worried about not having much energy. Doubtful that the situation can improve much before the climb. Not sick, at least not in any obvious way, but have lost a lot of weight & there probably is a limit as to how many days one can hike w[ith] a pack before needing a substantial break.

I got a late start this morning – cold enough to put frost on the tent & freeze the remnants of water in my cup when I set it down. No real desire to be out and moving about. The river crossing was about as on the way up. One little deeper spot where my pole began to collapse & I almost lost my balance. There was a cool breeze. I stopped about 11:00 at the semi-windbreak where I had camped on the way up & ate a leisurely early lunch & warmed up. While I was there, a herd of yaks appeared from somewhere in the direction whence I had come, came pell-mell to the green area I was in & then moved on. I caught up to them where I camp now & scared them on further down valley. Curious how they head off at a pretty determined pace for no particular reason (no one was driving them).

The Natural High Beef Teriyaki is much more conventional (less spicy) than the Mountain House version. It does not go down as easily as latter though more filling.

Time for a siesta, although perhaps I should go refill my cooking pot w[ith] water, just in case the source dries up by supper time. That is what happened to that nice little waterfall at my previous campsite – late in the day it dried up.

Fortunately there are some clouds moving in – cools the place down a bit. Most of these campsites have no shelter from the sun, since there is no vegetation taller than grass. Where I am lying, I can look out the door & across the river & see the N. side of the subsidiary peak of M.A. I can also look back up the valley & see the glacier-clad peaks at the intersection w[ith] the Ygebali.

16. In fact, of course, I learned only after publishing about my trek in *HJ* that I was not the first. See below, where I also tell about the first successful ascent of the ridge I describe, a climb that was the first traverse of the mountain and which my pictures and article had 'inspired'.



Fig. 337. Views of the Kongur massif from above the Kengxuwar Valley. The detail on the right sweeps up from a summer herder camp to the summit pyramid of the peak (just visible in the opening of the clouds) and provides a good sense of the scale of the landscape, 19 August 1996 (photos: DW).

The closer views are stark brown rock crags and scree.

The clouds by 5 PM really are socking in & the wind has picked up – now just the opposite direction from when I pitched the tent (naturally). It has gone from too warm to chilly. I am less well protected from wind coming down the valley than wind going up. Tempting to start dinner early although I really should wait. Have just built a little wind-screen for the stove.

8/19 – Camp set up & 'happy hour' at 4:00 (snack & Gator Ade).

It has (so far) been an almost ideal day. The threatening clouds last night brought only a few raindrops. And as the clouds broke up this morning, the light was spectacular – sun catching peaks but w[ith] clouds around, swirling mists on cliffs, clear air so things that were visible were crystal clear.

The river crossing was the easiest yet. [It starts with a short shallow section and crosses a little island before the deeper channel.] – one final deep section hardly seemed the worst; so maybe there is something to an early start w[ith] low water. It felt very good to have that out of the way early.

As I began to climb up the hills on the other side, there was a striking view of Kongur [*Fig. 337*]; in fact the real summit showed for quite a while, while the other parts of the ridge never quite came out of the clouds. Then it socked in. On the other side, the subsidiary peak of M. A. was mostly out and in the sun.

My navigation to pick up the road to the lake was perfect (I even found myself for a stretch on my previous footprints); the only drawback to the descent along the road was a strong and chilly wind – the valley the road goes down seemed to funnel it in my face. Right at the end, I went up over a saddle to descend to the lake (and thus avoided the village). Nearly froze before I got down to campsite & got some more clothes on. The view of the lake from the top is spectacular – all turquoise w[ith] whitecaps and even surf [*Fig. 325, photo on right*].

So I have camped in about the same spot as before (near the spring), the difference being I'm

down in one of the usually marshy depressions, to get some shelter from the wind. If the water table rises overnight or it pours rain, I will be in trouble, but on the whole it seems pretty dried out.

Hard to say what to do tomorrow […] I could spend two nights at the current campsite, since a short morning hike would get me to the other side day after tomorrow in plenty of time. It is much nicer over here – even though on a well-used path, I am basically away from people, unless the somewhat surly looking guy who came by about the time I arrived & watched me set up my tent brings the whole village by.

So the solo part of my adventure is almost over & I seem to have survived it in one piece. In some ways it is going to be hard to get used to teamwork. I have been thinking about issues of stocking camps, sharing tents, etc. Very different when you set your own pace & have it all to yourself. Although my second trek was somewhat abbreviated & and not a circumnavigation [of Mustagh Ata, as I had originally hoped], I feel it accomplished its main goal. Even if it had been legal, the circumnavigation probably would have been too much physically. After an easy day yesterday, I felt substantially more energetic today; tomorrow should be a relaxing day too. This is probably what I need to get a little rested for the climb.

To date (since Gez), I have climbed 61,340 ft. […]

8/20 Today was a lazy day and thus, perhaps, an energyless one. Slept poorly – even though I thought I had enough clothing on, it was cold. Got up late, got a late (10:00) start. The day consisted of walking, incrementally, half way around the lake to its outlet. Only about half an hour after starting, I spent an hour or so watching Kongur – missed the early opportunity to photograph the true summit before clouds moved in & never got another chance. Otherwise,



Fig. 338. Part of the Kongur massif in its setting. The first photo (taken 29 August 1996) looks down above the crevassed area of the Mustagh Ata glacier between Camps I and II on the normal climbing route. Karakul Lake can be seen below with the northern part of the Kongur Massif on the upper right. The second photo looks across Karakul Lake to Kongur, the highest summit obscured in cloud. Photos: DW.

photographed the whole panorama [*Fig. 338*]. The missing pic. I have from last year but not as close. [*Fig. 339, next page*]

In general it was a blue sky day – most of M.A. was visible – must have been windy up there – a bit of cloud right near summit much of time. [*Fig. 340*] Just to wander around near the lake & look first at one mtn. & then the other is a sensual treat.

On my way back to set up camp (I carried everything w[ith] me to be on safe side) I stopped



Fig. 339. The summit pyramid of Kongur, a telephoto from across the lake in 1995 (photo: DW).

w[ith] a herder who had been lying around sort of keeping an eye on his approx. 200 sheep (a few goats). [*Fig. 341*] He was toothless & had leather-like skin on his soles. The sheep are fat-tailed & had recently been shorn – made them look rather skinny. At one point the herd came through where we were sitting – a determined lot; it is amazing how they eat w/o stopping – one can see why the sheepherders & cattlemen in the American West went at it. The sheep are just like mowing machines.

The lake sports several bird species – a medium size gull-like bird – there may in fact be a couple of varieties. The one I saw today had grayish wing tips (from underneath) & a black & white pattern on top. Also a black, pretty good sized duck (did not see it fly – can't be sure of markings). Most interestingly, a large bird like a goose – black, w[ith] some white on wings & possibly throat. There were four of them. The proportions – neck to body & wings somewhat reminded me of a Canada goose, although this one may have been larger. Saw a flight of 5 – if the same bird – they were honking as they flew.



Fig. 340. At the shore of Lake Karakul, alpine glow on the peaks in the distance beyond the ridge of the Kongur massif, ca. 19 August 1996 (photo: DW).



This morning before the wind came up was a good time for getting photos of reflections of the mtns. The wind when it did appear tended from the SW, opposite of what it was yesterday. That does mean I am sheltered by the ridge next to my camp, but things keep shifting

Fig. 341. Sheep and goats grazing below the foothills of Kongur, 19 August 1996 (photo: DW).

& there has even been a good gust or two straight into the tent.

Tomorrow I must get an earlier start to make sure I am over on the other side of the lake with plenty of the morning left. I can't imagine they will arrive before lunch (I was dropped off at Gez sometime around noon; that is another hour away). On the other hand, the plan last time was to have the group stay at the lake (Andrei protested, but I don't know with what success). If they eat lunch, then go load the camels, then hike to base camp, that will mean arriving there pretty late. Actually from Subashi it is about 2000 ft. elevation gain on a good trail. W/o packs that might mean only a couple hours' hiking.

[…] my last dinner; I am also running down on fuel. There should be enough for breakfast though. […]

I have put on pile bottoms for bed tonight in the hope of sleeping better. I begin to worry I don't have enough warm clothing for the climb. Left my heavier parkas at home & have hoped to layer everything to stay warm. Yet here I am not even on the mtn. wearing polypro & pile. It has to be getting colder up there, as we are now in late summer. I'm OK w[ith] boots & mitts, I think, but the rest?[17]

I'm working on trying to get psyched up for the climb – mentally 'rehearsing' the various stages & trying to see myself actually pushing to do them. I am not yet steeled enough to make the necessary push. Perhaps Andrei and the others will inspire me, but I do recall Andrei's grousing about too many people last time letting a few clouds or a little weather persuade them to stay in the tent. Do I have the physical stamina left after being out so long? I seem to find myself hiking more & more slowly; that will never do on a big mountain.



Fig. 342. The view from the cemetery next to the highway, looking across Lake Karakul to the Kongur Massif (photo: DW, ca. 19 August 1996).

8/21 So, here I am at the 'resort' on the highway side of the lake, having stopped on my stroll to take a few photos of the village across the way and in a cemetery [*Fig. 342*] along the road. One kid in the village rolling a wire hoop w[ith] another piece of the same wire as a stick. How many kids in U.S. do that? It was hard to get him to understand I wanted a photo of him doing it, not standing there like a stump.

Groups of tourists being taken for camel rides (I think the latest group is Japanese). Glad I

17. My purpose here is not to write about the climb, but a note or two on clothing: the mitts were fine (heavy OR over-mitts) except that I made the mistake on summit day of taking them off briefly while making a bathroom stop just before heading for the top and got frostbitten fingers (not serious). The boots (high-end Lowe Denalis) were fine even though I discovered to my dismay I had left the warmest liners home. Otherwise the layers with the pile bibs etc. were quite OK. My warmer sleeping bag (not the one I took on my trek) was a good Feathered Friends one rated to well below freezing.

spent my time on the other side. Let's hope the wait is not too long. Windy, not terribly cold so far, since we have some sun.

So my solo adventure in Skrine's Kongur Alps was over near the end of the 20th century, this map outlining my route and juxtaposing it with those by Stein and Skrine back during its early decades [*Fig. 343*]

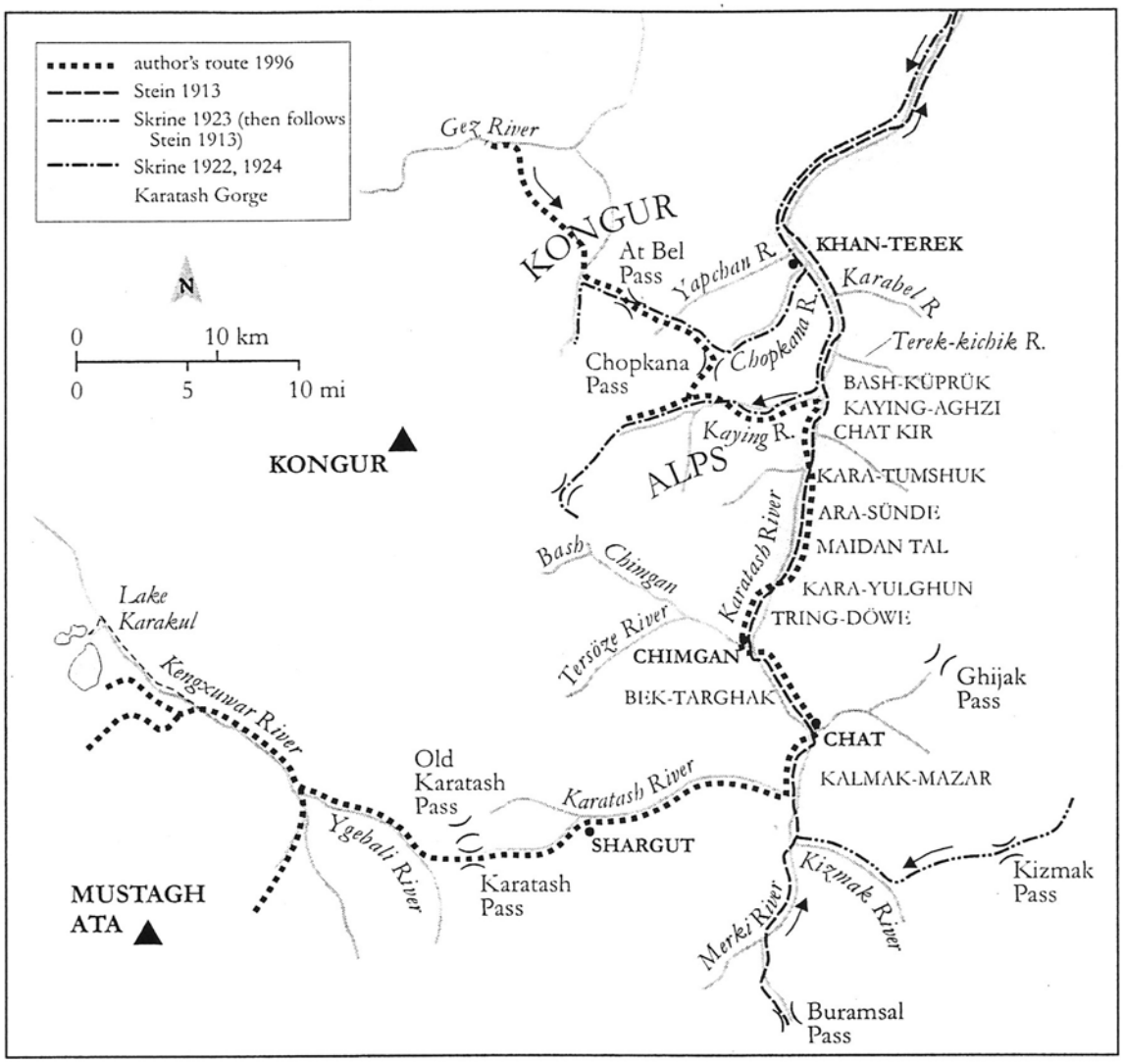


Fig. 343. Schematic map of DW's trek and the routes of Stein and Skrine in the 'Kongur Alps'. Cartography by Debbie Newell.

H. *The denoument: the Mustagh Ata climb*

To make the long story short, I almost missed Andrei and his group, but we connected. Made it up to base camp without incident. Having expected he might bring me a letter from home (transmitted via Bishkek or Kashgar), I was saddened when none came. My diary of the climb is detailed, but no need to repeat it here. The very pleasant group of Andrei's Dutch clients were probably slightly un-prepared for such a big mountain; none of them summited. I tented with Andrei higher up; on 5 September he set out from our Camp III before me but then wisely turned back before his feet froze from the cold.

I plodded up what seemed like an endless expanse of windswept snow, summited on a blessedly clear day and got to look across at Kongur and down that ridge of M.A. which I had seen from below. It was cold enough so I managed only a couple of photos before the camera froze. Met a British group on the summit plateau as I was descending. I then had to pack up all our remaining gear from Camps III and II and take it down, gingerly traversing the glare ice above Camp I. The load as almost more than I could carry; with base camp near, I was having to stop and rest every few steps [...]

Since starting my solo trek on July 24 and concluding with the return to base camp after the successful summit, according to my Avocet I had climbed a total of 30,315 m (99,460 ft). The trek, not including the climb, had covered about 170 km (106 miles).

We packed and headed back to Kashgar a day early. On the way, we stopped at the bridge in the Gez where I had crossed to start the main part of my trek. There, surprise, was a camera crew and support team on contract from the *National Geographic* to go into the mountains where I had just been to film marriage and burial ceremonies. The chief camera person, an award-winning photographer, Nevada Wier, had actually spent some time in the area a decade earlier.[18] I later learned that they aborted the expedition, when she, reportedly something of a Prima donna, became unhappy with the arrangements to do this all efficiently and in relative comfort.



Fig. 344. The sad fate of the Chini Bagh, hidden behind an ugly modern Chinese hotel and converted into a restaurant with faux-oriental décor (photos: DW, 2009).

Once back in Kashgar, we attempted to recover from the privations of Chinese cooking at base camp by indulging in more of it (but more variety) while overeating at Mr. Daniel's (no relation) café just across from the Seman Hotel, from which I was able to fax home the news of the success on M.A. On the hotel grounds are still the remains of the historic Russian consulate, which in recent years has been re-decorated as a Chinese restaurant. We also did some sightseeing, including visiting Skrine's Chini Bagh, which also was a Chinese café, concealed behind a modern hotel which bears the name but not yet (as it was later in 2009), totally gutted to be re-furbished in pseudo-oriental style [*Figs. 344, 345*]. Skrine would have been appalled to see it now. Ironically, apart from what is left of the buildings, shells of what they once were, the main historical interest in the post-colonialist era is to invoke the past to lure tourists, who probably would not think much about a 'venerable' tree



Fig. 345. The uses of historical memory: the former British Consulate as a tourist attraction, and the meticulous official designation of a lone, old tree in the courtyard as a protected landmark (photos: DW 2009).

18. Her work is indeed stunning; she continues to lead tours for, inter alia, the *National Geographic*. See examples of her work on her website (https://www.nevadawier.com/).

in the courtyard, whose sign suggest it has landmark status, since it would have been a 34-year-old sapling when Clarmont and Doris said farewell to the consulate in 1924.

I. *The not so 'unknown' sides of Mustagh Ata and Kongur: some earlier and subsequent explorations*

When planning my trip and at the point I wrote about it for *The Himalayan Journal* and *Geographical Journal* in the late 1990s, I had been unaware of previous expeditions which may yet be little known to those interested in the 'Kongur Alps'. To rectify my omission, I provide a summary here, though I cannot attempt to provide a full treatment of all the climbing in the region.

A standard encyclopedic 'dictionary' with information on climbs of 7000 m peaks in Asia mentions a 1982 American expedition that ascended the northwest ridge of Mustagh Ata and a Sino-Japanese climb of the mountain's southwest face.[19] However, the climb of the face apparently did not follow the ridge I had seen and photographed. While waiting at Subashi (Subax) for the bus to take us back to Kashgar in 1996, I talked with Japanese climbers who had gone into the cirque on the other side of M.A. to scope out a possible traverse of the mountain via that ridge, but then decided it was too difficult and would have to wait for another year (on the first traverse, see below).

After my account was published in *HJ*, I received a kind note from David MacGregor informing me that my 'unknown' side of Mustagh Ata was not quite so unknown, as he had led an ambitious expedition into that area in 1989 with students of the Aldenham School, the results of which were summarized in *The Alpine Journal* and published privately in a nicely illustrated account that detailed not only the hiking and climbing but the observations about botany, ornithology, geology, and the local culture.[20] He generously sent me a copy of this rare publication and brought to my attention the Scottish expedition in the previous year into the Chimgan region SE of Kongur (more on that below). Aldenham School is an elite public (in American parlance, private) one in England with a history dating back several centuries.

Theirs was certainly not 'toothbrush travel'; its ambition and accomplishments were impressive and connect in interesting ways with my experience later. They traveled up from Pakistan through Hunza on the Karakorum Highway. Once at Lake Karakul, they hired local transport from the Kyrgyz but not without difficulty (and found that the Kyrgyz were unreliable in sticking to the agreed-on terms). Of course this was not a matter of a single guide and one or two animals, but needing transport for a couple dozen or so people. The route crossed the Konsiver (Kengxuar) River and followed it up to the intersection which they hoped could provide access to the Karatash Valley, a route via the Uzun Jilgha to the Tersöze Jilgha, and access to the unexplored route along the Torbulung River and its adjoining peaks. From what I can tell, their 'Karatash Valley' in fact was not that but what I think is properly the Ygebali; on it they seem to have ascended most of the way up to one of the passes which in fact would have led to the headwaters of the Karatash – that is, approximately on the route of my descent although perhaps to the west of it. They reached 5200 m. (see Aldenham, p .10 and on p. 31, the two lower photos). However, further exploration in that direction had to be abandoned, leaving unresolved the questions about what in fact was Skrine's Karatash Pass. From the standpoint of my exploration on the back side of Mustagh Ata, the most interesting achievement of the expedition was that they spent time going up the Torbulung River and climbing peaks above it, which provided some vistas across to the great Kuksay glacial cirque on the SE side of Mustagh Ata (they termed that glacier the Aral). One of their photos

19. Jill Neate, *High Asia: an illustrated history of the 7,000 metre peaks* (Seattle: The Mountaineers, 1989), p. 190. Neate has entries for earliest ascents on several of the other lesser peaks in the region.

20. MacGregor, "Orina"; *Aldenham School. Expedition '89*.



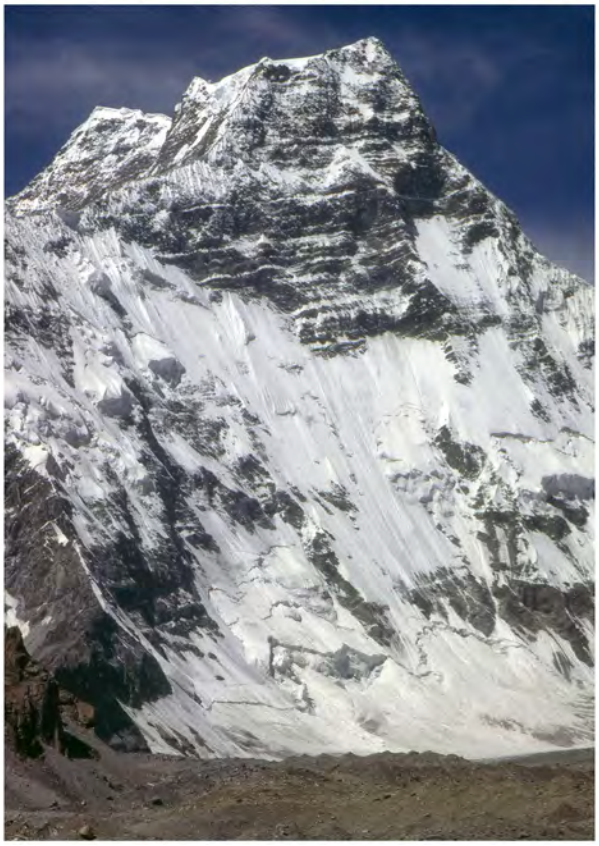


Fig. 346. The dramatic 'Wedge' and Koskulak peaks in the Kuksay Glacier cirque (photos: DW, 17 August 1996).

(ibid., p. 41) shows clearly what they called 'Wedge' peak [*Fig. 346*] (6355 m, one which I too photographed but from down on the glacier). The Koskulak Peak next to it has a vertical face rising to 6956 m., almost concealing the actual summit. The Aldenham map suggests they did climb to a vantage point where they could see the ridge going up from the glacier directly to the summit of Mustagh Ata. However, their concluding summary notes only in general terms the wonderful opportunities on unclimbed peaks surrounding the cirque, ones which later expeditions would tackle.

Even though my visit to the cirque had, as the Russians would say, only 'discovered America' (i.e., that which had already been discovered), my materials on the Kuksay cirque attracted some attention from serious climbers, and the area seems to have become a hot destination for first ascents. In 1998, inspired, it seems, by my image [*Fig. 347*] of the ridge leading directly to the summit of Mustagh Ata, a strong group including Dan Mazur and John Otto first climbed Mustagh Ata by the standard route, which let them look down on the Kuksay ridge from the summit. Then, acclimatized, they went in to the cirque to climb the ridge, had to abandon the effort due to bad weather and lack of time, but made a pioneering ascent on one of the subsidiary peaks.

They returned in July 2000 to do the pioneering 8-day traverse of Mustagh Ata, starting at the base of the ridge and experiencing a certain amount of difficulty during the ascent. They encountered heavy snow and Mazur, who had many times climbed much higher, developed cerebral edema just below the final pitch, which was 15 meters of 85 degree rock and ice difficult to protect. (My comment in my trek diary about the upper part of the route being less problematic obviously



Fig. 347. The SE ridge of Mustagh Ata, rising to the summit from the Kuksay Glacier (photo: DW, 17 August 1996).



Fig. 348. A telephoto from across Lake Karakul, showing the morning sun hitting the summit of Mustagh Ata with its the steep drop-off on the SE side of the summit (photo: DW, 1995).

ignored the final pitch, whose angle I had seen in a telephoto taken the year before from Lake Karakol [*Fig. 348*].) Otto and Walter Keller barely got Mazur over the top and down to safety on 16 July by the normal route. While this surely has not entered the international directory of geographic names, they dubbed one feature on the ridge the 'Waugh plateau'. The route was repeated in a fast five days in 2005 by two Japanese climbers.[21]

Not long after their climb, between 5 August and 2 September 2000, a small Russian group from the Mountaineering Club of the Moscow Aviation Institute (MAI) undertook an important light-weight exploratory trek in the region of Kongur and Mustagh Ata.[22] [*Fig. 349, next page*] Led by Andrei Lebedev and seconded by Otto Chkhetiani, they divided their 248 km (!) route into three sections, with food caches in accessible locations for the second and third of them. The first section took them from Karakul Lake into the cirque on the south side of Mustagh Ata, then threaded through passes flanking the cirque and back around to where they could enter the Yegebali and cross a pass which would take them over into the Chimgan. Their photographs document much more of the mountains around the Kuksay cirque than I had been able to do; inter alia, they got excellent images of the ridge which the Americans had just climbed to the summit of Mustagh Ata. In finding the pass that eventually took them to the Chimgan,

21. See the American expedition report in *The American Alpine Journal* 2001: 404-406. A detailed account, 'Mustagh Ata New Route' is on-line at https://www.summitclimb.com/news/archive/mustagata-new-route-news, although as of 21 September 2024 the photos do not show, the first of them being my picture of the ridge. Walter Keller kindly provided me with the initial report; we subsequently exchanged a few e-mails about planning another serious expedition, though I never was able to pursue the opportunity.

22. The detailed report (in Russian) is Lebedev and Chkhetiani, "Otchet […] 2000"; a long summary narrative is Lebedev, "Pokhod vslepuiu", emphasizing how there was no documentation for their route other than dated maps. Their report includes an enlargeable (if somewhat less than ideally sized) map showing the route overlaid on an old Russian General Staff topo of the area. Sections 2.1-2.7 of the full report are Chkhetiani's valuable 'Historical and Geographical Survey' of the area (mentioning, inter alia, my trek). Sections 3.1-3.6 describe the Mustagh Ata portion of the expedition through to the beginning of the descent toward the Chimgan. On the way down, they began to get stunning views of the south and southeast side of Kongur, which Skrine had so much wanted to see. Eventually their route took them back over passes to the southwest side of Kongur. Most of the passes they traversed were pioneering ascents; the expedition concluded with a climb over 7000 m to the east summit of the previously unclimbed Yamanjar peak, located between the saddle leading to the main Kongur summit and the lower Kogurtiube, to the west along the ridge. They would have summitted on Yamanjar but for an admitted mistake when in low visibility they could not locate their high camp and thus had to descend. Even such accomplished climbers have to admit, as they did, the consequences of making a mistake: serious mountains are not very forgiving.

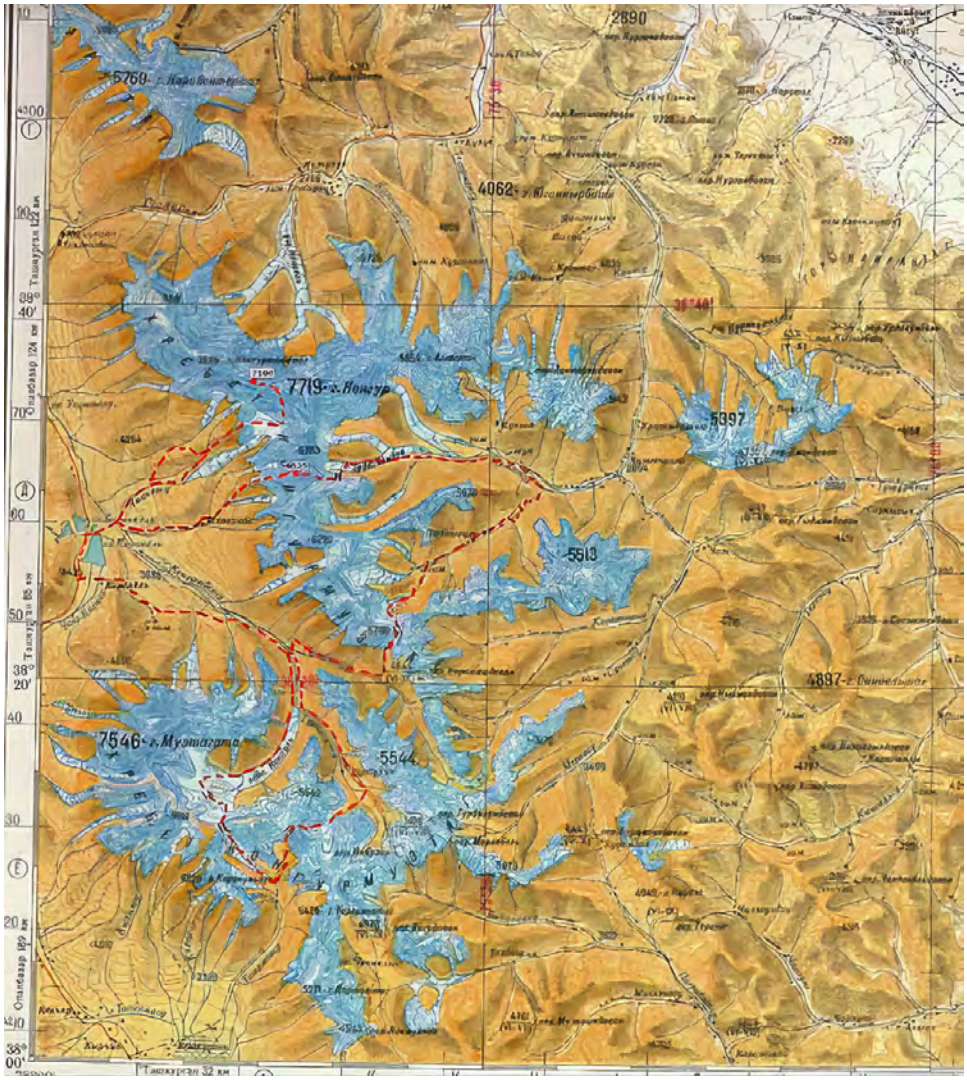


Fig. 349. The map of Andrei Lebedev's ambitious trek and climbs in the Kongur-Mustagh Ata area in 2000. The dashed line in red traces the route on an old Soviet General Staff topo. (Courtesy of Andrei Lebedev.)

they made a significant contribution to solving the puzzles (which we will discuss shortly) about the routes across the mountains from the upper Karatash. Their pass seems to have been west of the one I had crossed.

I had begun corresponding with Chkhetiani soon after their return from the expedition, sending him materials about my trek which would eventually be incorporated into the important, detailed accounts of the several MAI expeditions in the Kongur region. While some of their reports were translated by them into English on the Internet, significant ones are only in Russian. In looking at material on the non-Russian expeditions into the region which followed, it appears that little of this material became sufficiently widely known. Taken as a whole, it constitutes the most substantial, detailed accounting of the early 21st century exploration of the region.[23] These expeditions of their mountaineering club at MAI are among those which several times received the top award in a national competition in Russia rating extreme mountain expedition in the highest category of complexity. More on their other explorations in the Kongur-Mustagh Ata region will follow here.

Apparently the first serious attention to some of the 'lesser' peaks in the Kuksay cirque was a 2001 expedition by the Mountain Club of South Africa, led by Ulrike Kiefer, with logistics arranged at least in part by Andrei Ershov. Between late February and late May, as they were gathering information about possible routes in the cirque, Dan Mazur and I were in active e-mail correspondence with expedition member Pawel Wuzyk and Kiefer, sending materials and photos. While I had good ones for the west and south sides of the cirque, presumably Mazur's material would have documented for them the eastern

23. One good example of how they have brought together data from the historical record and from their own observations is Andrei Lebedev and Otto Chkhetiani's 'Opisanie raiona khrebta Kongurmuztag. Klassifikator perevalov Kashgarskikh gor' (http://www.mountain.ru/world_mounts/pamirs/2004/geogr_kongur_mustag/, last accessed 23 September 2024), intended as a guide for those who might undertake further expeditions into the region.



Fig. 350. The expedition postcard for the 2001 South African Kuksay Expedition, using DW's photo of 'Wedge Peak', one of their primary goals which proved to be beyond what they could accomplish.

side, which I had barely seen. I was flattered that they used my photo of the 'Wedge' (peak 6355) in their publicity [*Fig. 350*]. They managed to do several first ascents, but were unable to summit on 6355. [24]

While emphasizing that this was just normal to expect in any expedition, Kiefer's summary comments in the news bulletin of their club made it sound as if just getting into the cirque was harder than what I had experienced: 'The local Kyrgyz didn't know the way…The camels lost their way'; when there were not enough pack animals, the climbers 'had to portage part of our equipment, 1000 kg. in total, ourselves'; later there was 'a critical shortage of food at base camp.'[25] A couple of trekkers who joined the South African group late reported in the same news bulletin some disappointment in finding no easy peaks they could climb and being somewhat terrorized by rock fall, potential avalanches, and walking around on the glacier.

In Kiefer's remarks are echoes of what the Aldenham group and other expeditions had to say about the difficulties of obtaining reliable transport from the local Kyrgyz. The Scottish Mountaineering Club expedition to the Shiwakte area in 1988 (about which, more below) had an analogous experience, not getting enough animals and among them two camels not suited for traversing part of their route.[26] The problem is *not*, after all, that the Kyrgyz do not know the way, since there is ample evidence that at least some of them do. Rather, the issue is whether those who contract to provide the transport are reliable and competent to hire individuals who had both the local knowledge and the animals that were needed. As the Scottish experience illustrates, there are competing jurisdictions in the area, and at least at the time of these early expeditions into the region, the Chinese Mountaineering Association officials seem not to have been very familiar with the mountains, beyond what was of relatively easy access from the highway. 'Even officials in Kashgar had only the haziest notion of the geography of the east side of the range.'[27] At the time I was on Mustagh Ata, it appears that a local honcho had the monopoly for hiring out animals to take climbers to base camp. A party of two had somehow found

24. The formal report on the climb by Kiefer is 'Kuksay expedition 2001,' *Journal of the Mountain Club of South Africa* 104 (2001): 14-24. In that article, Kiefer wrote (p. 17): 'Our goal was to explore unknown terrain and to climb some of the virgin peaks in the Kuksay glacier area. We had a few odd pictures of that mountain range, taken by Russian trekkers and two Americans, and a map…My personal favourite was peak 6355, a strikingly beautiful pyramid of 6555m and a serious challenge.' In response to receiving those 'few odd pictures' Wuzyk wrote to me and Mazur on 2 May: 'Your material so generously shared with us already helped us a long way towards the expedition / route planning.' On 23 May he wrote to Mazur: 'Thanks for the permission to publish your pictures, we will make sure the credits are included. The set from the top of Mustag Ata is great. It helped greatly to formulate our possible goals. I attach the Virtual Kuksay Experience in form of Excel spreadsheet. It is not IMAX yet... Best save it as web page and open in Explorer. The blue triangles show from where (approx.) the pictures were taken and in what direction. Click on triangle to get to the picture. Circles around the peaks are linked to descriptions of potential routes. There are some more detail maps there.'

25. The club news bulletin I cite may be found at: https://mcsajohannesburg.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Newsletter-2001-4-September.pdf, last accessed 21 September 2024.

26. See Cohen, *Shiwakte*, esp. pp. 2-3.

27. Ibid., p. 22.

transport independently, and he sent his minions up to make sure he was paid and the offending independent contractor disciplined. Presumably requests for expeditions to more remote areas would not have received the same attention.

I had not realized until November 2001, when he wrote me, that Andrei Ershov had been with the South African group on their expedition. He found the expedition

> really very interesting but included several problems with going to BC because (I understood that only in the mountains) CXMA [China Xinjiang Mountaineering Association] managers really don't know their own mountains well enough. But the area is really amazing! We could do only the easiest routes there because the peaks like 6355, 6841, Koskulak, etc. are very difficult for climbing from that side […] I think that for such persons like me it will be better to do an expedition from the other side. Kalaxong (7277 m) and Koskulak (7028 m) peaks are still unclimbed and I am sure I will be able to climb them (one or both) from the West. If I can find some persons for that […][28]

When in July and August 2007 an experienced group of British climbers visited the glacier and did several demanding new routes on its peaks, they noted that the cirque up to that point still had 'seen relatively few visits'.[29] I have not tried to track all of them, but note the important Russian expedition of 2005 led by Andrei Lebedev, which explored and photographed the cirque, then crossed a pass from it to do extensive climbing on the subsidiary peaks to the SW and W side of Mustagh Ata before ascending its main summit.[30] Their meticulous documentation of this expedition is truly impressive. I personally am struck by one of their photos, looking across to Kongur from below the summit of Mustagh Ata, since the view matches closely my own picture of Kongur taken from the actual summit [*Fig. 351*]



Fig. 351. Views of Mt. Kongur from high on Mustagh Ata: on top, Russian expedition photo 2005, taken from somewhat below Mustagh Ata summit, with altitudes on Kongur overlaid (7719 is its actual summit); on bottom, photo by DW taken from Mustagh Ata summit, 5 September 1996. (Russian photo (https://static.turclubmai.ru/papers/1124/goriz.jpg) courtesy of Andrei Lebedev.)

J. *A geographic myth exposed*

To jump ahead a few years though, there was another very ambitious Russian expedition in 2011 that visited Mustagh Ata and whose reports enabled its organizer Andrei Lebedev in Moscow to clarify what exactly was 'Old Karatash Pass' which I had labeled as such in in publishing about my own trek.[31] Judging from the Scottish report about their Shiwakte

28. Andrei Ershov to Daniel Waugh, e-mail, 21 November 2001.

29. See Lindsay Griffin, 'Exploratory First Ascents in Chinese Xinjiang' (online at https://alpinist.com/ newswire/exploratory-first-ascents-in-chinese-xinjiang/, last accessed 21 September 2024.

30. See Lebedev, "Otchet […] 2005," the section https://static.turclubmai.ru/papers/1124/3_ch2.htm, the map showing parts of their route in detail (https://static.turclubmai.ru/papers/1124/map_08.jpg) and the impressive composite panorama of the cirque (https://static.turclubmai.ru/papers/1124/5180_pano_in.jpg), last accessed 27 June 2025.

31. For a lavishly illustrated account of the expedition, see Lebedev, "Kratkii otchet … 2011 g.". There were two groups that for much of the time worked independently; they covered just short of 300 km. between late July and early September, crossing a dozen passes and engaging in some serious technical ascents, including the southern ridge of Mustagh Ata (not the SE ridge that Mazur had climbed). Two members of the expedition were hit by rock fall, breaking

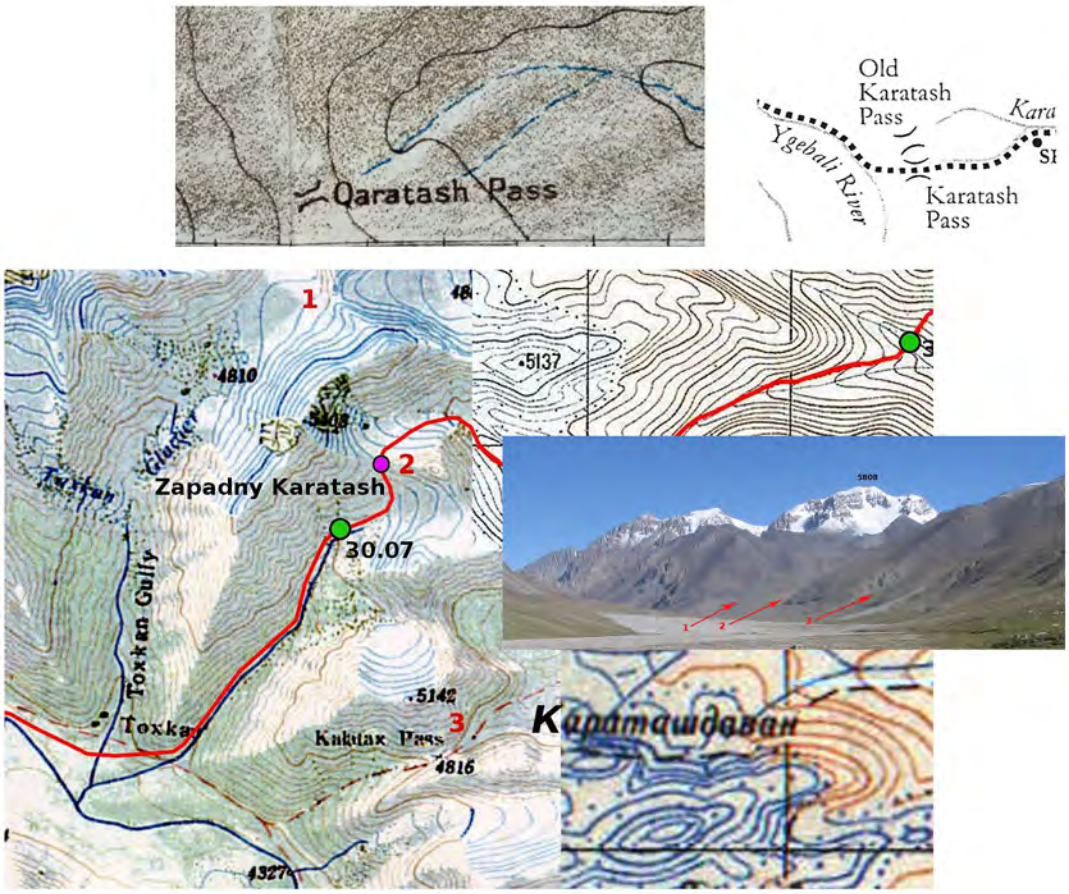


Fig. 352. Map segments and a photo illustrating how the myth of the 'Old Karatash Pass' was put to rest. Top left: the very vague segment of Skrine's map (GJ 1925a) identifying the Karatash Pass on what proves to be the wrong stream valley; DW's schematic map of 1999 naming the 'Old Karatash Pass' following Skrine's information and that in the British route book; Andrei Lebedev's composite map numbering three passes above the Ygebali Valley, his No. 3 the 'Karatash Pass' identified as such on the modern Chinese topo. Overlaid is a segment from a photo taken by Ivan Zhdanov in 2007 looking down the Ygebali, on which Lebedev has inserted numbered arrows pointing to the passes shown on his map, the one closest to the camera (No. 3) being the 'real' Karatash Pass. No. 2 is the 'Western (Zapadny) Karatash' which Lebedev's expedition traversed in 2011. (Map (https://static.turclubmai.ru/papers/2223/04.jpg) and photo (https://static.turclubmai.ru/papers/2223/24.jpg) courtesy of Andrei Lebedev.)

expedition in 1988, which I had not seen, the route starting at Lake Karakul, ascending the Konsivar (Kongxuwar) River to the Ygebali, and from there crossing the Karatash Pass into the headwaters of the Karatash River must have been well known. When traveling in the opposite direction, relying on Skrine's map, where a Karatash Pass is marked near the edge and the topography rather vague, I too had to rely on local knowledge, since otherwise I never would have found the 'normal' pass which the Scots had used. Since Skrine had contributed to the revision of the confidential British route book, where there was a description of the Karatash route across to Lake Karakul, in writing up my article, I cited the reference there to Col. Lavr Geogievich Kornilov's description of a very difficult Karatash Pass of some 16,500 ft., which I knew could not have been the one I crossed. In the schematic map of my route, I marked both passes, labeling the Kornilov one as the 'Old Karatash' pass [*Fig. 352*]

This then was the catalyst for Lebedev's article, which begins by reproducing my map and my citation of the description in the 1926 British route book. Lebedev then describes three passes over which it might be possible to travel north from the Ygebali Valley. His No. 3 is the now 'normal' route which

bones, and had to be evacuated to Tashkurghan. Lebedev's analytical article, which is an excellent example of archivally based historical geography incorporating new expedition data, is 'Po sledam Bogdanovicha […]'

the Scots and I had followed, marked as such on the modern Chinese topo. West of it, as No. 2, is what the Russians had crossed in 2011 and labeled the 'Western Karatash' pass; that *appears* most closely to correspond to the Kornilov description. Yet farther west is another pass (No. 1), which would not have been viable for animal transport.

Lebedev then raises the question of whether Kornilov actually had himself crossed the pass attributed to him in the British description. Kornilov had been attached to the Russian consulate in Kashgar to obtain intelligence on routes that might be of interest for the Russian military. Between 1899 and 1901, he followed and described three routes. By juxtaposing Kornilov's information with a modern topo, Lebedev shows that the Colonel in fact had never crossed any 'Karatash Pass' nor did he traverse the upper reaches of the Karatash River. Thus he must have borrowed his description from some other source. The source was another Russian, a geologist Karl Ivanovich Bogdanovich, who in fact had traveled the route over the 'normal' Karatash Pass but in his description mis-stated its altitude. A Russian topo of the region published in 1912 distinguishes (vaguely) the three valleys heading north out of the Ygebali, marks the 'normal' pass by name, but gives the erroneously higher altitude for it. In referring but cryptically to what Bogdanovich had done, Kornilov had exaggerated the difficulty of the pass and retained the erroneously higher altitude for it. In short, the 'Old Karatash Pass" is a myth that in a sense I had created.



Fig. 353. The Russians on the way to the 'Western Karatash Pass' consulting their topographic map, combining the modern Chinese one of Mi Desheng with the old Soviet Military topos. (Photo by Ivan Zhdanov 2011 (https://static.turclubmai.ru/papers/2223/27.jpg), courtesy of Andrei Lebedev.)

Lebedev concludes his article with a description, illustrated with some excellent photos, of his expedition's crossing of the 'Western Karatash Pass' into the headwaters of the Karatash River. One of his photos shows the expedition members consulting a large paste-up map they had printed, combining the new Chinese topo of Kongur and Mustagh Ata with segments from the old Soviet General Staff topos of questionable accuracy. [*Fig. 353*] Would that I had had such a map for my trek, although I still might have hired a guide at Chat!

K. Skrine and the Scots' Shiwakte expedition

For those who do not read about mountaineering, it may come as a surprise to learn that Scotland has been the home and/or training ground for many of the elite climbers who have conquered the world's highest peaks. To celebrate the centenary of the Scottish Mountain Club in 1988, a small team of highly skilled Scottish alpinists planned an appropriately demanding expedition in Asia. Negotiations for Tibet fell through, partly for logistical reasons, but a backup plan to tackle some of the so-called Shiwakte peaks SE of Kongur was possible. As they related in the expedition report:

> These peaks were first described by C. P. Skrine in *The Geographical Journal* in 1925. His photographs, and the reports of the 1980-81 British Kongur expeditions indicated that the Shiwakte mountains, though only just over 6000m, offered many exciting mountaineering challenges. No climbers had ever visited the range […] On the basis of Skrine's map we wished to place our base camp on the East side of the Shiwakte group [i.e., in the upper Kaying Valley] however the Chinese would not allow us to approach from this side but insisted that we leave the road at Karakul lake […] This

meant crossing the Karatash Pass (c 5000 m) and effectively semi-circumnavigating the Kongur and Shiwakte group in order to reach our base camp on the Ak Tash glacier.[32]

The Scots wondered whether the refusal to allow them to go into the Kaying along Skrine's route was not simply a matter that the Chinese authorities had but a dim idea of that region. I had a somewhat similar sense even though granted permission for my solo trek; that lack of knowledge was confirmed in my later conversation with the representative of the CXMA at Mustagh Ata base camp. The main drawback in the route they had to take was that they had to jump through more bureaucratic hoops and lost some extra days they might otherwise have spent on their climbs.

Skrine himself had managed to cross the Kepek Pass at the upper end of the Kaying and had descended part way down into the Chimgan watershed. He was particularly anxious to gain a different perspective on the peaks he was mapping (among them the Shiwakte) and obtain a clear view of the massive southeast side of Kongur. Frustrated by the weather, he achieved only part of his goal, and, running out of time, he had to cross back into the Kaying. In any event it would have been impossible for him to bring Doris and all his equipment up over the steep and icy Kepek. Skrine's account inspired me to think of crossing the Kepek or hiking up the Chimgan after traversing the Karatash gorge. I abandoned the first as too dangerous and had no time to contemplate seriously the second by the time I reached Chimgan. Here are a few notes on what I have now found of particular interest in the Scots' report (beyond the comments above about the Karatash Pass), a narrative from which I could have benefitted had I known about it in 1996.

One of the challenges in navigation using existing descriptions and maps (even the most modern ones) is nomenclature. Some place names are generic, e.g.: Karatash ('black stone'), Chat (marking a place where two rivers intersect), Chimgan (Skrine himself noted its ambiguity in meaning, as used by the local Kyrgyz). The modern Chinese map locates a 'Chat' (Qat) in a different location from the village which Skrine, the Scots and I had visited. The Chimgan village on the Scots' and modern Chinese maps (there, labeled Baxiqimgan [= Chimgan bashi]) is not the same location of the one Skrine and the Soviet General Staff mark on theirs (the latter shows scattered settlement all along the nearby rivers) and through which I passed.[33] Some discrepancies such as this one obviously can be the result of re-locations of settlements over time, perhaps due to expanding population pressures or deterioration in natural resources. I can but guess whether the 'Ak Sai' in the upper Karatash where the Scots managed to arrange for more transport is the same location as the 'Shargut' mentioned in the 1926 British route book.[34] I speculate whether the Hari Beg whom they praised for providing reliable transport from Ak Sai might have been the ancestor of the Kyrgyz who hosted me at what may have been Shargut.

The Scots note the 'illogic' in the designation of the Karatash above modern Chat. In my own experience, turning 90 degrees away from what seemed like the main river to head up to the pass

32. The fullest report on the Scottish expedition is Cohen, et al., *Shiwakte*, here p. 1. A summary excerpted from it was posted to the MAI website in Moscow (https://static.turclubmai.ru/papers/732/), illustrated by the Russians with a segment of Mi Dehseng's modern Chinese topo and photos of the Shiwakte by Waugh and Lebedev. Cohen published as well summary reports: 'Chinese Chequers in Shiwakte,' *The Alpine Journal*, 1989: 97-100 +Pls. 33, 34; 'Shiwakte II," *American Alpine Jounal* 1989: 291-293 (including Pl. 78).

33. *Routes in Sinkiang* (1926 ed., p. 238) notes for the Chimgan-ayaghi (valley). 'At the halting place (alt. 10,100') [i.e., the Chimgan village I visited – *DW*] the Chimgan river comes in on the left bank. Owing to the snows of Kungur and the Shiwakte this river carries twice as much water as the Karatash, and it, rather than the latter, should be regarded as the main stream. The floor of the Chimgan valley is 1 m. wide and nearly flat, with woods of mountain ash and alder. 20 or 30 Kirghiz families live up it and supplies in small quantities may be obtained.'

34. *Ibid*, p. 236: 'A few huts of nomad Kirghiz are usually to be found at, or near, Shargut.'

seemed to make little sense; there may still be some need to clarify which tributary in the far upper reaches merits the name (a chronic problem historically where explorers have attempted to track rivers to their ultimate source). The Scots mention a bridge on concrete piers over the Karatash just short of its intersection with the Chimgan, a bridge I also crossed. And their description of the near disaster when Hari Beg's caravan tried to cross the Chimgan just at the intersection would seem to match the fact that the same crossing was chosen by my Chimgan guide. Unlike with the earlier caravan, one of whose horses was swept part way down river, my mount was able to cross there at a time when presumably the water was lower.

In their exploration and climbing in the Shiwakte from the Chimgan valley, the Scots were limited by bad weather and too few days. However, they did a few satisfying ascents, obtained some good photos (including a clear view of the SE side of Kongur), and made some modest corrections to Skrine's observations. Two members of their party did hike over the Kepek Pass into the upper Kaying and noted seeing there some of the same forested areas about which Skrine had written. For various reasons when they had to leave for home, the Scottish group split, some members retracing the route to Lake Karakul, and two others instead crossing the Ghijak Pass from Chat on what they described as a decent trail.

L. *The Russians in Skrine's Alps of Qungur*

As his letters, especially those to Stein, attest, Skrine took seriously the task of documenting photographically and mapping the 'Alps of Qunqur', about which he then lectured at the RGS not long after the return from Kashgar. While he could be acerbic about what he perceived as the faults of others, he also was able to look in the mirror and be quite honest about the possible limitations of what he had done. Of course he was more likely to be self-critical when corresponding with an acknowledged expert like Stein. At the end of his RGS lecture, Skrine briefly expressed his appreciation for the seriousness with which Major Kenneth Mason of the Survey of India had reviewed all the mapping materials in order to create the map which Skrine showed and which was appended to his article the RGS published. Mason also wrote a memorandum, published as an addendum to the article, on the compilation of that map, noting carefully the ways in which Skrine's data corrected or supplemented what had previously been done. As Skrine himself had admitted, some of the kinds of readings he took were of less value than others. Nonetheless Mason concluded (*GJ*, 66/5 [1925]: 409):

> Skrine's explorations fill in several important blanks in our knowledge of the eastern flanks of the Qungur massif. They give a very good picture of the 'peripheral gorges of the Pamir plateau,' and while emphasizing the difficulties of the ground, reveal a certain amount of vegetation and habitation of which we previously had no knowledge whatsoever […] One of the outstanding features of the exploration is the further evidence of the existence of Qungur II [the highest summit – *DW*]. Its great featureless dome has been the cause of uncertainty for years. Its height is not yet settled, but we know now that it competes with Qungur I. for the post of the highest point of the Pamirs.

Skrine had every reason to be pleased, the more so could he have known how often, as we have seen, those interested in the same region have consulted his work and been inspired by it. I personally have 'followed in his footsteps'. Among the most interesting evidence about the impact of Skrine's 'Alps of Qungur' decades later is the exploration done by Russian alpinists, the way in which they analyzed Skrine's data, and then supplemented it.



Fig. 354. The route of the 2005 Russian expedition, overlaid on a Soviet military topo (https://static.turclubmai.ru/papers/1124/trek2.jpg). (Courtesy of Andrei Lebedev.)

Between 30 July and 6 September 2005, led by then 49-year-old Andrei Lebedev, a group of seven alpinists from the Mountaineering Club of the Moscow Aviation Institute explored the 'Alps of Kongur' and beyond.[35] Over the 39 days of the expedition, they covered 232 km with a total elevation gain of 16,198 km., finishing with an ascent of Mustagh Ata [*Fig. 354*]. In the planning for the part of the expedition around Mustagh Ata, one of those whom they consulted was Andrei Ershov, who had led my climb of the mountain by the standard route and participated in the South African expedition to the Kuksay cirque. What I shall focus on here is the opening portion of this ambitious expedition, where:

> [...] we chose passes in the Agalistan ridge which Clarmont Skrine had explored back on 1922-24. The expedition began in the Tigarmansu Valley, which Skrine had described as a kind of dead-end which could be accessed only via the At Bel Pass. Ahead of us was the 'discovery' of two additional entrances – from the mouth of the Tigarmansu through the canyon and over a glacial pass into the Kaying Valley.[36]



Lebedev's group went on to cross the Kepek Pass (which Skrine and much later the Scots had traversed), descended to the Chimgan and then further explored the routes southeast of Kongur before heading off to Mustagh Ata [*Fig. 355*]. Whereas in following Skrine's footsteps I had to rely on his 1925 map, the Russian expedition had tested and was equipped with a GPS system. Moreover, they had a rigorous fitness and acclimatization plan, with careful monitoring of health along the way.

Fig. 355. Detailed map of the first 10 days of the 2005 Russian expedition, starting up the Tigarmansu Valley, crossing into the upper Kaying and then the Kepek (Aghalistan) Pass into the Chimgan watershed, and ending with a partial ascent on Kongur. (Source: https://static.turclubmai.ru/papers/1124/f_trek_01_in.jpg, overlaid on a composite map excerpted from Mi Desheng's modern Chinese topo and the older Soviet military topos. Courtesy of Andrei Lebedev.)

35. The report is Lebedev, 'Otchet […] 2005". The images and text from it which I reproduce and translate here have been used with permission. I am indebted to Andrei Lebedev, with whom I had valuable exchanges regarding this expedition and the subsequent work he did in analyzing the results.

36. Here and below, my translations from the Russian report are set off by a different font.



Fig. 356. The fir woods of the upper Tigarmansu (https://static.turclubmai.ru/papers/1124/f08.jpg). (Photo courtesy of Andrei Lebedev.)

M. To the Clarmont Skrine Pass

The Russian traverse of the Tigarmansu up to the glacier below the pass at its head has interesting details which can be read on the website. Among other things, there were some issues with the hired donkey for carrying gear and negotiation for a replacement further along – the typical kind of thing we have seen in other instances. In the section below where I had entered the Tigarmansu on my trek (and which was not on Skrine's route), there is a narrow canyon with sections when the water is high which require some detours on adjoining spurs. Where the valley widens out a bit, as I experienced, there are multiple crossings up to the point where the path leading to the At Bel Pass branches off on the left. The main valley continues more or less straight to the right. Skrine had written how beautiful were some of the landscapes farther up the valley, a sense of which can be obtained from one of the Russian photos [*Fig. 356*]. In the final stages up to the glacier, donkey transport had to yield to backpacking of heavy loads.

The ascent near the top of the pass was on steep snow and ice, the descent on the south more gradual [*Fig. 357*]. As the report wryly notes: 'The ascent to 4700 [m] on 55-degree ice with supplies for 16 days on the 4th day of the expedition was not a minor ordeal.'

> The Clarmont Skrine Pass [4743 m] is located on the watershed between the Tigarmensu and Kaying rivers between peaks 5241[m] on the west and 4829[m] on the east. The Pass is oriented north to south and connects the central branch of the Tigarmansu Glacier (on the north) with the Tor-Bashi Glacier (on the south). The location of the crossing of the ridge is 200 meters to the east of the obvious saddle, from which on the north a complex icefall descends [...] The pass has been named in honor of the explorer of the Kashgar mountains, the English diplomat and traveller Clarmont Skrine, who was the first to visit the Tigarmansu and Kaying valleys and ascended from the south to the adjacent (western) saddle in the summer of 1924.

They spent the night in stormy conditions on the saddle but awoke to a crystal-clear morning, which revealed to the south a magnificent view of Shiwakte I that is interesting to



Fig. 357. The Russian expedition's crossing of the 'Clarmont Skrine Pass' (marked with the altitude of 4743 m) between the Tigarmansu and Kaying Valleys in 2005: two views of the ascent on the steep northern side, 2 August (https://static.turclubmai.ru/papers/1124/4743_02i.jpg; https://static.turclubmai.ru/papers/1124/4743_11.jpg), and a view of the descent on 3 August (https://static.turclubmai.ru/papers/1124/4743_05i.jpg). (Photos courtesy of Andrei Lebedev.)



Fig. 358. The Shiwakte I peak, photographed from the top of the Clarmont Skrine Pass on 3 August 2005 by the Russian expedition; compared with Skrine's photo taken almost exactly 81 years earlier on 2 August 1924 from a point slightly to the west of where the Russian picture was taken. (Sources: https://static.turclubmai.ru/papers/1124/skrine5_our.jpg [courtesy of Andrei Lebedev]; HJ *1952, facing p. 73).*

compare with Skrine's photo. [*Fig. 358*] Skrine had written of his own experience (quoted in abridged translation in the Russian report):

> I climbed via the Tor Bashi glacier to the top of the knife-edge ridge at the head of the Tigarman Su glacier. Here, at 16,100 feet on a south face, there was still a great deal of soft snow, and with only a Qirghiz boy to help me I had great difficulty in reaching the top of the cornice. I was armed only with a prismatic compass and my film camera on this occasion. With the compass I obtained some very useful angles on to some of the mountains on the other side of the Chimghan Jilgha, which appeared above the peaks of the Aghalistan range, also down the Tigarman Su and on to the rest of my map. With the camera I secured a fine picture of the ice-clad peak of Shiwakte I (19,400 feet) piercing the cloud right opposite me. [*GJ* 1925a, p. 404.]



Fig. 359 (right). The view down the Kaying Valley from below the Clarmont Skrine Pass, 3 August 2005 (https://static.turclubmai.ru/papers/1124/4658_01.jpg) (Photo courtesy of Andrei Lebedev.)

Fig. 360 (below). The Kepek Pass from the north: the Russian photo taken 4 August 2005 (https://static.turclubmai.ru/papers/1124/4658_02.jpg) (photo courtesy of Andrei Lebedev); my hazy, more distant view, 2 August 1996.



The Russians concluded that Skrine's photo must have been taken a bit to the west from the somewhat lower saddle. In their later analysis (see below), they systematically plotted the locations from which Skrine had done his photography and the angles of view to the peaks in his photos. After the more gradual (30-35 degree) descent, they took a quick glance down the Kaying [*Fig. 359*] but then focused on their next objective, the Kepek Pass [*Fig. 360*].

N. *Over the Kepek Pass and down to the Chimgan River*

Skrine's crossing of the Kepek Pass, accompanied by a couple of his men who had no mountaineering experience, was somewhat dramatic: 'In several places steps had to be cut across tongues of ice running up into clefts in the cliff, and the loads had often to be sent up from hand to hand over difficult bits' [*ibid.*, p. 404]. On his way back, one of his men fell part way into a crevasse. Conditions in more recent

times for the crossing may not have been substantially different. I was afraid to risk it on my own even though probably I had adequate technical skills. The Scots made no big deal of it; the well-equipped Russian group rated the pass as a moderate 2A by their system.

After a night on the glacier at 3590m the MAI party descended on a clear day to the large settlement of Chimgan-Bashi (the same one the Scots had passed through). 'There we wound around for a long time among stone walls of the endless gardens until we arrived at the bridge across the Chimgan. The substantial terminal moraines of the Chimgansu Glacier extend down here. Beyond the bridge the path ascends along the right bank of the Chimgansu through rubble deposited by a pair of streams.' After passing over a spur dividing the Chimgan from the Tersöze, they arrived at a grove and some greenery. 'At the point where there was a turn to the south to the Sogato Glacier in a green expanse among the hills was a large Kyrgyz settlement. Here a crowd of adults and children met us. Then they took us to a yurt for the hospitality of bread, *airan*, and clotted cream' [*Fig. 361*]. The photo of the Kyrgyz they took is interesting to compare with the group photo Skrine had taken not that far away at the settlement he had visited on his way to Chimgan on the Karatash. The traditional hospitality has survived the decades…



Fig. 361. The Kyrgyz of the Chimgan, near the fork to the Sogato glacier, 5 August 2005 (https://static.turclubmai.ru/papers/1124/Sogato.jpg) (photo courtesy of Andrei Lebedev). Compare the top image in Fig. 118 of the family photographed by Skrine in 1923 at a wedding not far from Chimgan.

O. *The attempt on the southeastern ridge of Kongur*

Even though the expedition had no intention of mounting a serious assault on the formidable south or southeast side of Kongur, it undertook a reconnaissance climb on one of the ridges in order to plot a possible route up the mountain. Their exploratory climb on one of the ribs was cut somewhat short by a snowstorm that forced them to descend in avalanche-prone conditions. One of the photos of the southeast face of Kongur taken on an earlier MAI expedition was insufficiently detailed to plot a future climb, but they managed this time from further down in the Chimgan to piece together telephoto images showing a possibly feasible and safe ascent route. Skrine was disappointed at never being able to photograph thoroughly Kongur and its subsidiaries from the SE. [*Fig. 362*] It is interesting though to compare his telephoto, taken from above Chat, showing the upper part of the great mountain and one of the peaks to its east with the photo the Russians had taken of the whole face from a lower vantage point and more to the west in their earlier exploration of the area.

Fig. 362. Views of Kongur from the SE: on left https://static.turclubmai.ru/papers/1124/a_5n_04.jpg (courtesy of Andrei Lebedev); on right, Skrine's photo taken from a viewpoint above Chat (reproduced with permission from the Royal Geographical Society [London], first published in Waugh 1999, p. 314).



As one of the important supplements to the detailed account of the Russian expedition in 2005, Otto Chkhetiani translated Skrine's article on the 'Alps of Qungur', and Andrei Lebedev did a careful analysis of all the photos of the Shiwakte and Aghalistan peaks, correlating them with the maps of the area.[37] [*Fig. 363*] illustrates this analysis, with a map on which the rays from the presumed vantage points

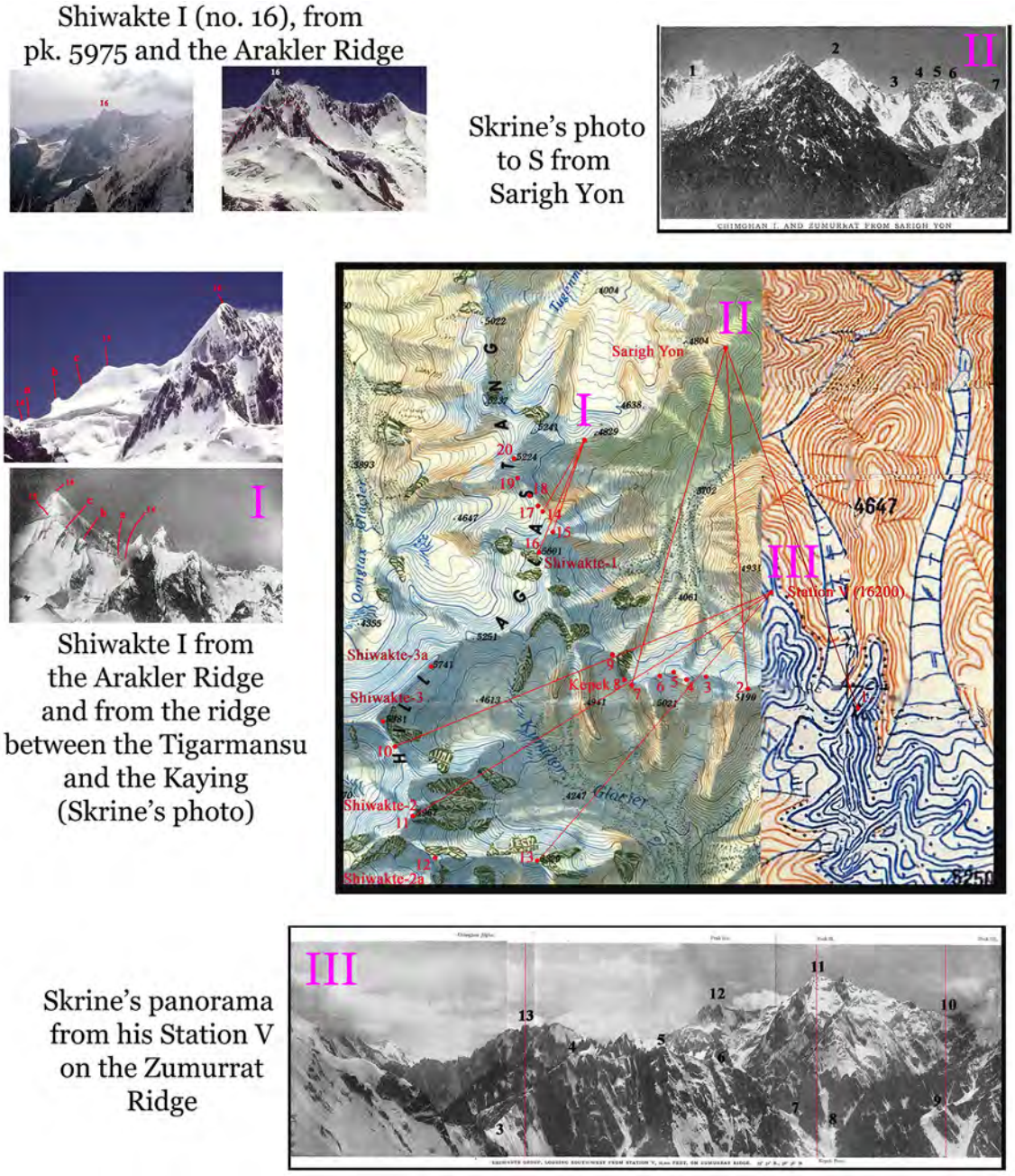


Fig. 363. A composite illustrating the analysis of Skrine's photos by Andrei Lebedev, the goal being to identify the locations where they were taken and to match the peaks with the names given them. The images include ones I took from the Arakler Ridge in the Kurghan Valley. I have added the Roman numerals in magenta to help match the photos with the locations on Lebedev's map. The red rays and captioning on it are his. (Images and map courtesy of Andrei Lebedev.)

37. For the translation: https://static.turclubmai.ru/papers/1124/index_scr.htm; Lebedev's identification of the peaks and mapping of them is on https://static.turclubmai.ru/papers/182/scr_foto.htm. The other supplements to the translation of Skrine's article include Chkhetiani's history of the exploration of the Kongur-Mustagh Ata region, Lebedev and Chkhetiani's well-lllustrated description of that region with a classification of its major passes, Lebedev's tabulation in English (accompanied by photos and maps) of all the peaks in the region higher than 6000 m., and a link to my personal

of Skrine's photos point to the numbered peaks identified in the comparative photos. It was possible to correlate views taken from different angles. While this was not an effort to do the same kind of surveying Skrine was attempting, it is a very valuable contribution to the record of exploration in the area and for our knowledge of the historical geography. I have not included here images showing the preliminary analysis Lebedev did with the material in order to pinpoint where and in which direction photos were taken. This involved a colossal amount of careful work of the kind that in analogous fashion both Skrine and the cartographers of the Survey of India who processed his rather raw material had to undertake to fill in a 'blank spot' on the Survey's maps. As far as more recent cartography is concerned, one of the interesting contributions of the Russian work was to show the inadequacies of the maps produced by the Soviet General Staff from aerial surveys. Those who read the aerial photos did not always decipher topographic details accurately, as is evident where the Soviet maps have been spliced around the edges of Mi Desheng's more recent Chinese topo. In the era of satellite photography and sophisticated GIS technology, detailed and accurate topographic maps can be produced without having to rely on the vagaries of individuals' ability to read an aerial photo.

However, as this review of exploration in the 'Qungur Alps' suggests, correlating what is on the map with the real experience on the ground still challenges the skills of the individuals who can undertake expeditions such as that the Russians mounted in 2005. These modern expeditions are still filling in blank spots on the map for those who would follow in the footsteps of the earlier travelers. Skrine combined pleasure with surveying; his results improved the existing maps and route books. However, he himself recognized there was more to be done. What we now know helps us to appreciate his contribution and is correcting mistakes in the old route books and even more recent ventures (*mea culpa*). The expeditions such as those of MAI have documented meticulously many possibilities for alpine adventure in one of the most beautiful mountain areas in the world. But their value goes well beyond that by providing a record that can be juxtaposed with the evidence from decades earlier to learn about the impact of climate and human cultural change. There is much yet to be learned by those who would be inspired to follow in their footsteps.

***

When he was arranging for the publication of his photos in *L'Illustration* in 1926, to accompany their publication in the article by Charles Rabot, Skrine provided the journal with a printed copy of a small-scale color map of Kashgaria that had been produced for the General Staff in India [*Fig. 364a, next page*]. On it, he had carefully drawn in red ink the routes of all his travels in 1922–24 and for clarity added some captioning of locations in larger lettering. Probably this map, preserved in the Stewart archive, is based on the one he had sent to his mother with his letter of 8 January 1924, which he then emended for the French publication. As the markings make clear, the French journal used the map to produce a somewhat simplified version incorporating the edits [*Fig. 364b*]. The maps provide a clear summary of the extent of Skrine's travels starting with the route up from Srinagar and encompassing all his major tours. His passion for 'touring' indeed took him into what for Europeans was new territory; his documentation of it contributed to geographic knowledge.

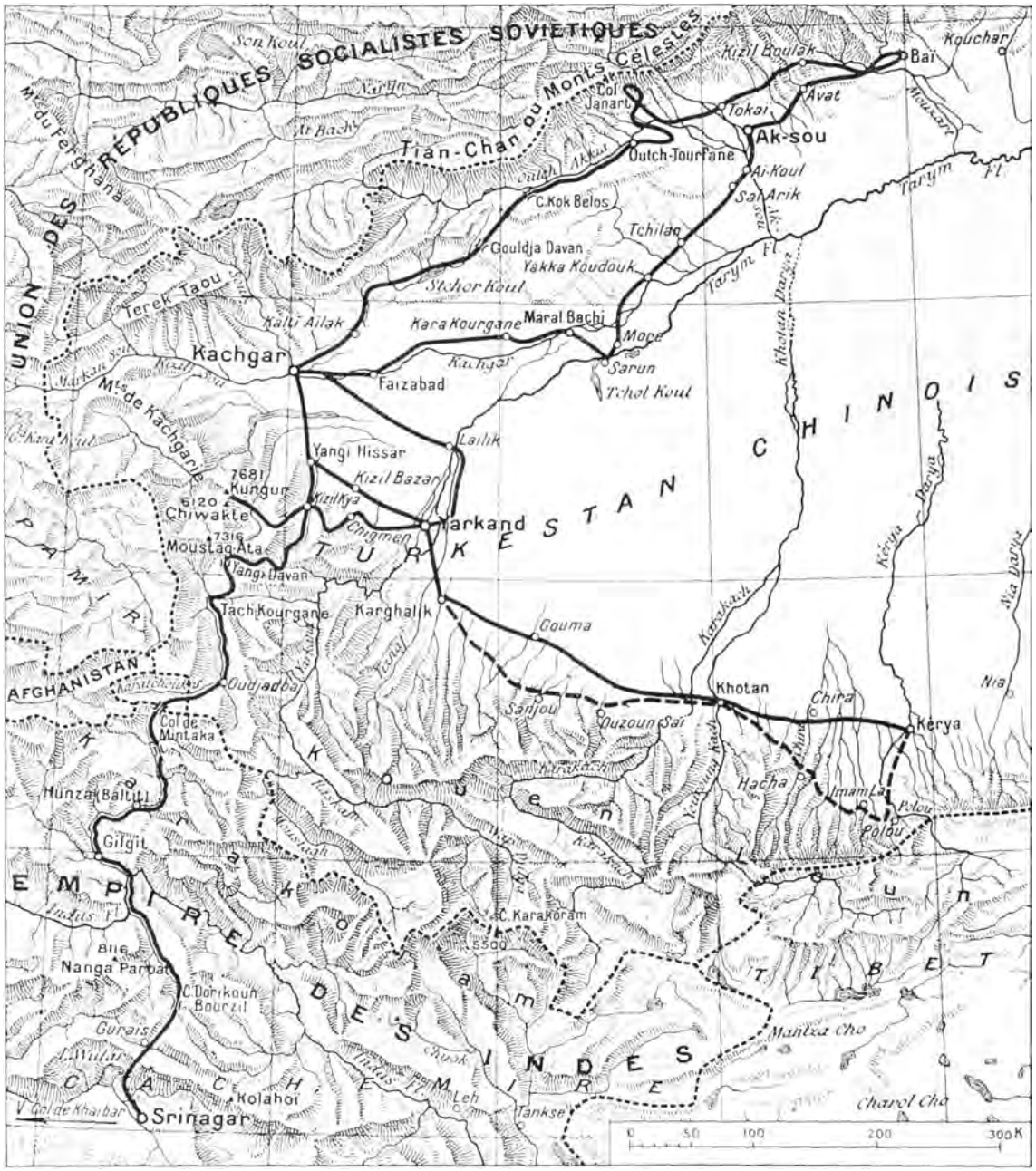
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web page with my photos of Kongur and the Shiwakte peaks. My composite panorama of images in the Kurghan Jilgha subsequently was re-done by Lebedev and improved.



Fig. 364a. Skrine's careful tracing of his routes on a small-scale General Staff map of Kashgaria (Stewart collection). This map clearly must have been the one he submitted to L'Illustration *for publication with his photos to illustrate the article by Charles Rabot in the 16 October 1926 issue.*

Fig. 364b. The re-drawn map, based on Skrine's original, printed in L'Illustration*, 11 October 1926, No. 4363, p. 421.*



As a tribute to Skrine's pioneering work in documenting his travels and the modern explorers of his 'Alps of Qungur', here is one final image of the big mountain, Kongur itself, taken from the Karakorum Highway heading down into the Gez River gorge from the northeast in 2009. The mountain continues to inspire those who are fortunate enough to see it on a clear day [*Fig. 365, DW photo*].

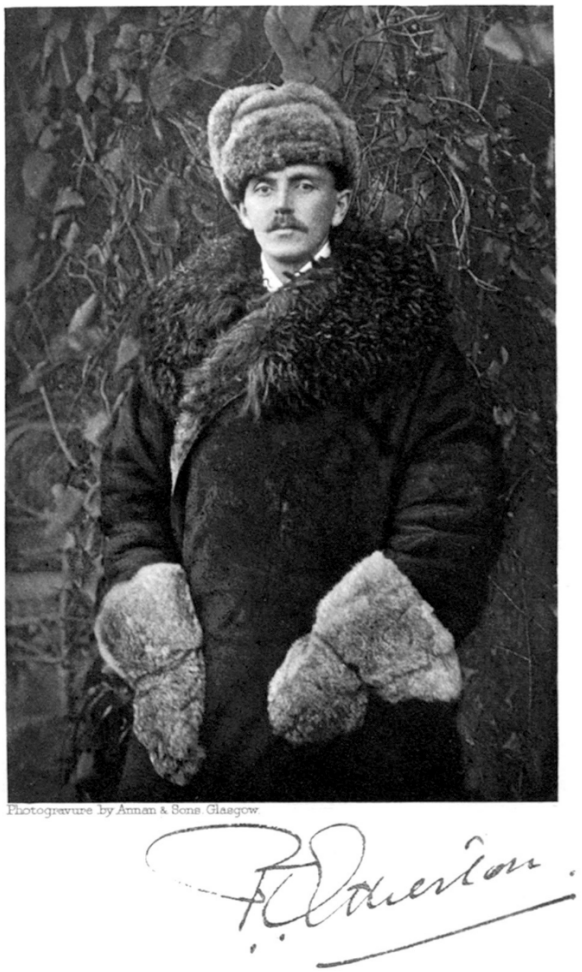


Appendix 3

[This essay was first published at https://faculty.washington.edu/dwaugh/ethertonatkashgar2007.pdf. It has been reformatted here with but minor edits. No attempt has been made to update the citations or interpretation. References which some scholars have made to the original edition will perforce have a different pagination. For additional comments about Skrine and Etherton, see my introductory essay in this book, pp. 54-59.]

Etherton at Kashgar: Rhetoric and Reality in the History of the "Great Game"

(Seattle: Bactrian Press, 2007)



Frontispiece from P. T. Etherton, *Across the Roof of the World* (London: Constable, 1911).

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The Soviet regime's intent to spread revolution in Asia in the years immediately following the Bolshevik Revolution is quite well known, as is the international response. However, there is much yet to be learned about events in Central Asia, where initially the new regime had but a toehold and local resistance was widespread. Long-lasting. Soviet historiography understandably exaggerated British machinations to subvert the new regime there, a view that oddly enough mirrors the emphasis in Western sources which exaggerate the danger of Soviet expansion and the efforts of a few individuals to combat it. Dramatic as the story is, we still know far too little about the shadowy world of agent-provocateurs, intelligence and counter-intelligence, in part simply because evidence which has long been available has never been subject to critical scrutiny. I shall initiate here a re-examination of the British response to the establishment of a Soviet regime in Central Asia and the perceived threat it posed to British interests in Xinjiang (China) and to British India. More specifically, this is a re-assessment of the response by the British consul in Kashgar, Xinjiang, in 1918-1922, Percy T. Etherton (1879-1963), whose own account about those years has in fact hindered a critical assessment of that history. The focus on Etherton reveals a great deal about contemporary disagreements among British policy-makers, the mechanisms of intelligence gathering and the quality of information, and the ways in which source criticism must be applied to locate the truth behind rhetorical claims.

As Peter Hopkirk puts it, in Kashgar Etherton "fought a ruthless, almost personal war against [the Soviets] ... So effective were his anti-Bolshevik operations that a price was put on his head by the Soviet authorities in Tashkent."[1] In this telling, Etherton is the hero of a dramatic chapter in the history of the 'Great Game' rivalry for great power dominance in Central Asia. Yet the activities of Etherton and his successors as consuls in Kashgar await serious historical treatment.[2] While there were many consular duties, my focus will be on Etherton's anti-Soviet activities, which indeed were extensive although arguably by no means as important as Hopkirk would have it. Moreover, Hopkirk is silent about the

1. Peter Hopkirk, *Setting the East Ablaze: Lenin's Dream of an Empire in Asia* (New York, etc., 1984); reprint ed. 1995 pp. 2-3. Since he writes for a popular audience, Hopkirk eschews footnotes. He did research in some of the archival material which serves as the basis for this paper, but as in his other writing, he relies uncritically on published accounts by contemporaries. My work shares with his the limitations of using mainly British sources and thus cannot pretend to be the study we yet need for this topic. I have not yet consulted Robert Johnson, *Spying for Empire: The Great Game in Central and South-East Asia, 1757-1947* (London, 2006).

2. The career of the first British consul in Kashgar, George Macartney, is treated in some detail by C.P. Skrine and Pamela Nightingale, *Macartney at Kashgar: New Light on British, Chinese and Russian Activities in Sinkiang, 1890-1918* (London, 1973). Macartney's wife wrote a memoir of her years in Kashgar: Lady [Catherina] Macartney, *An English Lady in Chinese Turkestan* (London, 1931). Ella Sykes and Percy Sykes, *Through Deserts and Oases of Central Asia (*London, 1920), covers the brief period in which Percy Sykes relieved Macartney while the latter was on leave in 1916 but is really Ella Sykes's travel account and says little about consular affairs. An overview of the consulate of Etherton's successor, Clarmont Skrine, is in John Stewart, *Envoy of the Raj: The Career of Sir Clarmont Skrine, Indian Political Service* (Maidenhead, 1989), chs. 12-13, and encompassed by Skrine's own *Chinese Central Asia* (London, 1925), which, however, carefully avoids political questions. Diana Shipton, *The Antique Land* (London, 1950), is a memoir by the wife of Eric Shipton, the last British consul in Kashgar before the consulate closed in 1947. The crucial documents for writing the history of the consulate are in the India Office files of the British Library and the Public Record Office in London. My analysis is based on the first of these collections, which contains a quite complete, if rather disorganized and repetitious, array of documents about intelligence and counter-intelligence. The Kashgar consulate was under the supervision of the Foreign and Political Department of the Government of India.

denouement of Etherton's Kashgar career, a chapter in his story which helps explain why he produced such a flawed account of his Kashgar years.

Etherton's Career

Etherton distinguished himself as a British officer, as a traveler in often remote parts of the globe and as a prolific author of books on travel and the geopolitics of East Asia. He fought for the British in South Africa in 1901, where he attracted the attention of Lord Kitchener, and then joined the Garhwal Rifles, a largely native regiment in northern India.[3] As a Lieutenant in 1909-1910, he took a leave in order to travel overland from India to the Trans-Siberian Railway, a journey which resulted in a book which he described modestly as "a plain record of a year's wandering in the lesser known parts of Central Asia for the purposes of sport and travel."[4] Significant segments of the book focus on big game hunting in the Central Asian mountains, a popular destination for British officers stationed in India. Since Etherton traversed in part terrain not previously followed by any Englishman, his book is also a useful record of descriptive geography, more attentive to its physical than its human side. His occasional excurses into history and ethnography were reinforced by an apparently limited amount of reading in the literature which was readily available at the time.[5] We come away with an admiration for Etherton's logistical planning and toughness. He crossed the mountains in winter, and he and his Indian orderly finished the trip frostbitten in the bitterly cold Siberian winter.

After distinguishing himself in World War I, Etherton returned to India, where he was a logical choice to be part of the Government of India's intelligence-gathering mission to Kashgar and Tashkent in the summer of 1918. Etherton's second book, *In the Heart of Asia* (1925), is more solidly grounded than the first in the literature on Inner Asia, but first and foremost is a vehicle for emphasizing the importance of his work in Kashgar and is drawn extensively from his consular reports.[6] With its geopolitical observations, the book helped launch a new phase in his career, that of author and commentator on East Asian affairs.[7] By the time he died at age 83, his bibliography included eight solely authored

3. My acquaintance with the bare facts of Etherton's biography relies in part on the short and not fully accurate obituary by his colleague on the Kashgar-Tashkent Mission and later on the Everest adventure, Stewart Blacker, "Colonel P.T. Etherton," *The Times* (London) April 2, 1963 Issue 55665 p. 15 col. A. I am not aware of any substantial biography, nor have I found any references to an archive of Etherton's papers.

4. P. T. Etherton, *Across the Roof of the World: A Record of Sport and Travel through Kashmir, Gilgit, Hunza, the Pamirs, Chinese Turkistan, Mongolia and Siberia (*London; New York, 1911; reprint, Camden, S.C., 1994), p. xv. On his way to India to join the Kashgar mission with Etherton, F. M. Bailey wrote his mother about Etherton's being on board the *S.S. Egra*, bound for Bombay and noted that Etherton had written the book but confessed to not having read it. See: British Library India Office Library and Records (hereafter abbreviated BL IOLR) Mss EurF157/178 F. M. Bailey to Florence Bailey February 21, 1918.

5. Etherton never tells us what he had read. It is clear that the section of his book on the history and ethnography of the Ili Valley, pp. 296ff., closely follows Henry Lansdell, *Russian Central Asia including Kuldja, Bokhara, Khiva and Merv*. Vol. I (Boston, 1885; reprint, 2005), pp. 201 ff. He may also have read Eugene Schuyler, *Turkistan: Notes of a Journey in Russian Turkistan, Khokand, Bukhara, and Kuldja*. Vol. II (New York, 1877), where compare pp. 197-198 with Etherton's p. 299. In passing Etherton notes he took along on the journey a limited library, including Boswell's *Life of Johnson* and a book (unnamed) on the Russo-Japanese War. The latter anticipates the serious interest Etherton developed regarding the Japanese position in Asia.

6. P. T. Etherton, *In the Heart of Asia* (London, 1925; Boston, 1926). There is an unpublished Russian translation in the Institute of the History of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan (see L. N. Khariukov, *Anglo-russkoe sopernichestvo v Tsentral'noi Azii i ismailizm* [Moscow, 1995], p. 236n171). For details on Etherton's book and its sources, see below.

7. Soon after he returned from Kashgar, Etherton gave a talk for the Central Asian Society which previews the kind of sweeping generalizations he would provide in several of his books and a number of articles in the 1920s. See P.T.

books on world affairs and travel and an equivalent number of volumes as co-author or contributor.[8] His travels eventually would include the Balkans, the Caribbean and South America. He helped secure financing and organize the historic first flight over Mt. Everest in 1933. His military career resumed while he was chief staff officer to Admiral Sir Edward Evans between 1940 and 1946, in which capacity he played a role in Britain's wartime defense. In short, Etherton's career is that of an energetic and resourceful man. Judging from his photographs, he had movie-star looks, and both in image and his writings, he exudes self-confidence. While he might grate on some colleagues, he knew how to be diplomatic. All these qualities are evident in his Kashgar years.

When asked by the India Office whether Etherton should be given the regular consular appointment (to that point he was only 'acting'), on April 5, 1920, his immediate predecessor George Macartney provided this assessment:

> Without actually being brilliant, Etherton is a scholarly man and energetic. His judgment is sound and mature, and in any society, he is capable of exercising a powerful influence. Always self-possessed, he seems to be just one of those men to remain calm in danger, and to be outwardly unruffled when irritated by intrigue, answering an opponent with arguments rather than threats. When he was with me in Kashgar, he made, I believe, an excellent impression on the Chinese and the Russians...[9]

The Challenges of Being British Consul in Kashgar

Given the geographic isolation of Kashgar and its limited communications with the outside world, the British consul indeed had to be self-possessed and resourceful. This was the more necessary on account of the rather low priority the Government of India placed on the consulate. Although George Macartney had come to Kashgar in 1890 to represent British interests in the face of the already-established Russian presence, his government saw fit to appoint him officially as Consul only in 1908. He found himself in a situation not atypical for the distant representatives of far-flung empires in an earlier era, where guidance about policy often arrived with much delay, if at all, and human and financial resources had to be stretched to cover responsibilities for a vast territory. Looking back from the perspective of 1925, Etherton would interpret his responsibilities thus:

Etherton, "Central Asia: Its Rise as a Political and Economic Factor," *Journal of the Central Asian Society* 10/2 (1923), pp. 88-103.

8. The other books are, roughly in chronological order: *China, The Facts* (London, 1927); under title *The Crisis in China* (Boston, 1927; New York, 1970); (with H.H. Tiltman) *The Pacific: A Forecast* (London, 1928; Boston, 1928; New York, 1970); (with A.D. Allen) *Through Europe and the Balkans: the Record of a Motor Tour* (London, etc., 1928); *Adventures in Five Continents* (London, 1928); (with H.H. Tiltman) *Manchuria: The Cockpit of Asia* (London, 1932, 1934; New York, 1932); (with P.F.M. Fellowes, D. Douglas-Hamilton, L.V. Stewart Blacker) *First over Everest! The Houston-Mount Everest Expedition, 1933* (London, 1933; New York, 1934; [5th ed.] New York, 1934); (with H.H. Tiltman) *Japan: Mistress of the Pacific* (London, 1933; 1934); *The Last Strongholds* (London, 1934); repr. ed: *Glimpses of Tibet, Nepal and the Himalayan Mountains* (New Delhi., 1983); (contribution to:) Stephen King-Hall, *The Book of Speed* (London, 1934, 1935); (with V. Barlow) *The Trail of the Conquerors* (London, 1936); German transl. *Auf den Spuren der Eroberer* (Berlin, 1937); *All over the World* (London; New York, etc., 1946); *Across the Great Deserts* (London, 1948; New York, 1948 (2 eds.)); *Haunts of High Adventure: Sidelights and Cameos on Travels in Venezuela, Panama, Mexico, Cuba, and the West Indies* (London; New York, 1950); (with V. Barlow) *Tempestuous Isle: the Story of Lundy* (London, 1950; new ed., 1960); *On Either Side of the Equator* (London; New York, 1953; New York, 1954).

9. BL IOLR L/P&S/10/453, Kashgar Consulate, Reg. no. 2479, George Macartney to J. E. Shuckburgh, April 5, 1920. Macartney also pointed out that Etherton needed to learn more about the relevant legal enactments pertaining to British subjects in China and commented positively on his linguistic qualifications for the job.

> The Consular area committed to my charge was one of the largest in the world, comprising four hundred and sixty thousand square miles, equal in area to that of France and Spain combined, over which were scattered British subjects in more or less insignificant numbers. The predominant questions to study and keep a close and constant watch over were of a political nature, and these assumed such importance to India and the Empire during the period in question that trade and commercial matters played but a minor part.[10]

In fact, trade and commercial matters were also important, even in the period from 1918 to 1922. The Consul had responsibility for the interests of British subjects in its region of China, that is the Indian merchants who in many cases had long been resident there. They controlled the trade across the passes from Kashmir, were actively involved in the trade with Russia, and played an important role in the financial life of the oasis towns in Western Xinjiang. There were continual tensions with the Chinese authorities about issues such as registration and extraterritoriality, and the consuls had to devote substantial time to negotiation and judicial functions. Since the Russians had been the first to gain privileges for their citizens who occupied similar roles in Xinjiang, the change in the Russian political status from 1917 until new agreements would be negotiated between the Soviet regime and China several years later created problems for the British as well. Etherton's monthly consular diaries contain ample evidence of the degree to which he was forced to pay attention to these matters.[11]

Etherton certainly prioritized political issues and in particular those pertaining to what he described in 1925 as the "ever-increasing Bolshevik menace." To some degree though, this emphasis reads back into the situation a threat which in fact his own reports at the time did not necessarily support. About his anti-Bolshevik credentials there can be little doubt, but the 1925 book must be read in part as an exercise in self-justification not simply with his future career in mind but also because he was perhaps rightly upset with the equivocal policy of the British government regarding the new Soviet regime. The importance of the Kashgar consulate in this period can be assessed only if we take into account the confusion in government policy and in particular the reluctance of the government in London to engage in an active anti-Bolshevik policy.

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10. Etherton, *In the Heart of Asia*, pp. 97-98.

11. The series of Kashgar consular diaries may be read in two files of the India Office collection, BL IOLR L/P&S/10/825, Kashgar Monthly Diaries 1912-20; L/P&S/10/976, Kashgar Diaries 1921-1930. These are printed copies of the diaries, each with their own pagination which will be used in citations below. The cover sheets (minute papers) generally precede each individual issue. In addition, on the complex problem of the rights of British subjects, see BL IOLR L/P&S/10/297, Chinese Turkestan. Effect on British Subjects After Abrogation of the Russo-Chinese Treaty of 1881; and BL IOLR L/P&S/10/949, Chinese Turkestan, Status of British Subjects. The number of legal cases involving British subjects seems to have been compounded by the notorious exactions of the Indian Shikarpuri money lenders, who had continual run-ins with the local Central Asians who had borrowed from them. Almost immediately upon arriving in Kashgar in August 1922, Skrine wrote complaining about the unduly liberal policy of his predecessors in registering all comers as British subjects and the problems this was creating with the Chinese. This statement was run by Etherton and the former Vice-Consul Fitzmaurice, who insisted that while it might have been true under Macartney, such was not the case once Etherton took over as consul. See Kashgar Monthly Diary for August 1922 p. 2 and the various minutes and other documents attached to the September 1922 Diary. Skrine had barely arrived when already J. A. Simpson of the India Office was wishing Etherton were back in Kashgar. Whether or not Skrine was really aiming the remark at Etherton is hard to say, but the record does suggest that Etherton was on top of the issues about British subject rights. I have drawn on the Kashgar consulate materials in my overview of the Xinjiang trade, "Continuity and Change in the Trade of Xinjiang into the 1920s," in: *History and Society in Central and Inner Asia*, ed. M. Gervers et al. Toronto Studies in Central and Inner Asia, 8 (2007): 127-147.

The Origins of the Kashgar Mission

When Etherton was sent to Kashgar in 1918 World War I was still being fought. The initiative for the mission came from the British Government of India, which had serious concerns over German and Turkish efforts to penetrate the Middle East and Central Asia and the consequent threat to control critical resources and foment political disorder in India. So the decision was made to reinforce British intelligence gathering by dispatching two missions. One was a small force under General Wilfrid Malleson, posted to northeastern Iran, and the other was the mission to Kashgar. In the absence of clear instructions, Malleson promptly exceeded his mandate and engaged in military actions with anti-Soviet forces in Transcaspia.[12] What had started as part of the anti-German war effort morphed into an effort to contain the new Soviet regime only shortly before the November 1918 Armistice would undercut any rationale for British military intervention in Russia.[13] Given the unreliability of his allies and the small size of his force, within a matter of months Malleson was ordered to withdraw to Meshed and focus on what had been his primary mission all along, gathering intelligence. The importance of this activity was enhanced by the coup which brought to power in Afghanistan a regime that foolishly embarked on a war against the British in 1919 and actively tried to court Soviet support.[14] Malleson later would boast of how thoroughly he infiltrated the Soviet-controlled areas of southern Central Asia, and indeed it seems that the quality of the intelligence he was able to telegraph quickly to the Government of India was first-rate.[15] Among other things, he intercepted Soviet radio messages which often contained critical information at a time when the rail and telegraph lines connecting Tashkent with Moscow had been cut by White forces in Siberia.

The mission to Kashgar, which left India in July 1918, included three officers: Frederick Bailey, L. Stewart Blacker, and Percy Etherton. All had to their credit service in the War and extended travel

12. For a hard-nosed re-assessment of the British Transcaspian mission see Michael Sargent, *British Military Involvement in Transcaspia (1918-1919)* (Defence Academy of the United Kingdom. Conflict Studies Research Centre. Caucasus Series. April 2004) Online at http://www.da.mod.uk/CSRC/ documents/Caucasus/04%2802%29-MS.pdf, accessed May 14, 2006. The unstated undercurrent of Sargent's well-substantiated criticism of the muddle in the intervention is obviously the current muddle of ill-conceived intervention in Iraq. Failures to coordinate policy and appreciate the implications of intelligence are evident in both examples. A substantial number of Malleson's intelligence reports and other materials pertaining to the mission may be found in BL IOLR L/P&S/10/741, Central Asia. Correspondence (1917-1920). The decision that Malleson should withdraw followed a personal inspection mission by General Milne, the new commandant for British forces in Transcaspia, sent there from Constantinople in January 1919. His report is in BL IOLR L/P&S/10/741, fols. 207-209, Report no. G.M.-62 from Constantinople February 1, 1919 enclosure no. 3 to Telegram no. 75081-M.O. from Secretary of War Office, London, to Commander in Chief, Delhi February 8, 1919. Note: citations from this file and another important one containing Central Asian intelligence, L/P&S/10/836, use the continuous foliation added by the archivists, since the multiple paginations of the documents themselves do not allow one easily to identify the locations in the books.

13. On this issue, see Richard H. Ullman, *Anglo-Soviet Relations, 1917-1921*. 3 vols. Princeton, 1961-1972), esp. Vol. 2. *Britain and the Russian Civil War, November 1918–February 1920*, ch. 9.

14. See the summary in Ullman, *Anglo-Soviet Relations*. Vol. 3. *The Anglo-Soviet Accord*, pp. 341-345. For greater detail on Afghan foreign affairs, see Ludwig W. Adamec, *Afghanistan, 1900-1993. A Diplomatic History* (Berkeley; Los Angeles, 1967), esp. chs. 6-7, and Idem, *Afghanistan's Foreign Affairs to the Mid-Twentieth Century. Relations With the USSR, Germany, and Britain* (Tucson, 1974), chs. 2-3. The most thorough treatment of early Afghan-Soviet relations, one which makes good use of Soviet archival material, is S.B. Panin, *Sovetskaia Rossiia i Afganistan. 1919–1929* (Irkutsk, 1998). The frictions in that relationship were more substantial than the British seem to have realized at the time.

15. See Malleson's talk to the Central Asian Society in London, January 24, 1922: "The British Military Mission in Turkistan, 1918-1920," *Journal of the Central Asian Society* 9/2 (1922), esp. p. 106. It is important to realize that Malleson's statements here to some extent are an apologia justifying his actions.

through difficult parts of Asia.[16] Etherton and Blacker had first-hand experience with Russians.[17] Ostensibly their mission was to find out exactly what was going on in Soviet Tashkent and to try to cultivate good relations with the new Soviet regime there in order that it prevent Central Asian cotton from being shipped to the Germans. Even though there was communication between Tashkent and Kashgar, the British consulate had at best a very vague idea of what was happening on the other side of the border, and it seems to have been blissfully ignorant of Bolshevik ideology. Although apparently the original intention had been that Bailey would relieve the longtime consul at Kashgar, George Macartney, since the latter was retiring, Etherton stayed behind in Kashgar while Bailey, Blacker and Macartney went off to Tashkent.[18] At the moment it arrived there the British mission had no idea that Malleson's Transcaspian force had just engaged in military action against a Soviet one. So the mission's protestation of friendly intentions was met with understandable disbelief from the Soviet side. The upshot of this was that Macartney and Blacker quickly departed. For somewhat unclear reasons, Bailey stayed behind,

16. In 1914 Blacker had traveled the standard route from Leh to Kashgar and then Tashkent, returning home through Russia. See his "From India to Russia in 1914," *The Geographical Journal* 50/6 (1917), pp. 393-418. Bailey had participated in the British invasion of Tibet in 1904 and later explored extraordinarily difficult terrain in the southeastern part of the country. See Arthur Swinson, *Beyond the Frontiers: the biography of Colonel F. M. Bailey explorer and special agent* (London, 1971), esp. chs. 2, 4, 5 and 7. All received temporary promotions in rank for the duration of the mission. As Bailey wrote his mother, "They have made me a local Lieut. Colonel for the job but I shall go back to Major when I return to India" (BL IOLR Mss EurF 157/178, F.M. Bailey to Florence Bailey, April 23, 1918). He would later chide her for continuing to use "Lt. Col." in addressing his mail, since he had reverted to Major: "I was only Lt. Col. for the show & now it's over I revert. It was very useful being Col. up there as the Russians paid much more attention to me [...]" (BL IOLR Mss EurF 157/180, F.M. Bailey to Florence Bailey February 2, 1920). In contrast, Etherton, a Captain promoted to Major for the mission, not only managed to get himself an additional temporary promotion to Lt. Col. but continued to call himself by the latter rank even after it had lapsed. This was one of the many strikes his successor at Kashgar, Clarmont Skrine, held against him. See BL IOLR Mss EurF 154/9, Clarmont Skrine to Helen Skrine, April 4, 1923 p. 4: "By the way, if you have reason to address Etherton again in writing or verbally, don't forget that he's not a 'Colonel' but only a Major now. He merely wangled the Lt. Col. out of Gov't. as local rank, and when he loses this job he loses the rank with it. Do you know that he was really only a Captain when he wangled the 'Colonel' as above? He had already wangled a temp[orar]y majority for himself when he was appointed to the Kashgar Mission [...]" This is not just Skrine's animus. Bailey confirmed as much to his mother, who apparently had referred to Etherton in one of her letters: "I think Col. Etherton is only colonely [*sic*] while he holds the Kashgar appointment" (BL IOLR Mss EurF157/183, F.M. Bailey to Florence Bailey, Calcutta, March 14, 1923, fol. 1v). The file title notwithstanding, the transcript made from Etherton's military record in 1930 confirms that he retired on December 7, 1924, with the rank of Major (BL IOLR L/P&S/11/228, "Col. Etherton", Reg. no. P231/1923). I am grateful to the copyright holders, Ms. Helen Holland and Ms. Robin Moore, for permission to quote from the Skrine archive.

17. Of the three, Etherton was the only one to claim Russian language ability at the start of the mission. In his assessment of Etherton's qualifications for the permanent position, Macartney wrote: "His linguistic attainments appear to be rather high. He reads and writes Hindustani and Hindi, and I believe he knows Pashtu. On arrival at Kashgar [...] June 1918, he began taking lessons in Russian and Turki, and probably he has already acquired a good working knowledge of those languages [...]" (BL IOLR L/P&S/10/453, Macartney to Shuckburgh, April 5, 1920). One has to wonder how well he could have learned Russian. His intelligence reports from Kashgar included translations from Russian, possibly made by him, but with ample opportunities to have obtained assistance in doing them.

18. John Stewart notes that Bailey later told Clarmont Skrine that he, Bailey, had been the first choice to replace Macartney but turned down the job and suggested Etherton have it: having the job would postpone his home leave; also he wanted to get away from Etherton and Blacker. See Stewart, *Envoy of the Raj*, p. 221n46. In a letter to his mother at the time, Bailey merely noted that he had been offered the opportunity to stay on as consul once the mission was over, but had declined it (BL IOLR Mss EurF 157/178, F.M. Bailey to Florence Bailey, June 15, 1918). Later he repeated as much, adding that "I did not fancy it [the job--DW]" (BL IOLR Mss EurF 157/180, F.M. Bailey to Florence Bailey, Delhi, February 12, 1920, fol. 2).

managing to avoid Bolshevik arrest and survive on the run for more than a year, and finally escaped in late 1919. His exciting story is the stuff of legend but need not be repeated here.[19] For all the hoopla around Bailey's adventures though, the realistic assessment is that the intelligence value of his mission was very small, since he was largely cut off from outside communication, and what messages he did manage to send were too dated to be of any use.[20] His presence certainly complicated Anglo-Soviet relations and caused no end of concern for British officials from London to Simla.

The Tashkent mission was, however, only one element in the strengthening of the Kashgar consulate's political capacity in a period of instability in Central Asia. The Government of India made

19. For fear of offending the Russians, the Foreign Office blocked publication of Bailey's own account in 1924; it appeared only in 1946 as F.M. Bailey, *Mission to Tashkent* (London, 1946; repr. Oxford; New York, 1992, 2002). See Swinson, *Beyond the Frontiers*, p. 200. Bailey sent the manuscript to Macartney to read, and the latter made a number of suggestions for improvements. See BL IOLR Mss EurD 658, George Macartney to F. M. Bailey, March 9, 1940). Hopkirk's stirring retelling of the Bailey mission is in *Setting the East Ablaze*, chs. 2-5; Swinson's more sober account is in *Beyond the Frontiers*, chs. 10-12. Blacker published his own description of his part in the mission, which amounted to very little, since he took ill while in Russia and only afterward spent some time chasing through the mountains a band of Afghan smugglers who proved not to be some threatening force of German agents. See L.V.S. Blacker, *On Secret Patrol in High Asia* (London, 1922), in which, ostensibly for diplomatic and military reasons, he does not even mention Bailey by name. For further detail, see below, n. 95.

The members of the mission to Kashgar and Tashkent apparently did not get along very well. On more than one occasion, Bailey complained about not receiving communications from Etherton, although apparently that was not for want of Etherton's trying. See, for example, BL IOLR L/P&S/10/741, fol. 67, Etherton telegram no. 90 to Foreign and Political Department, Government of India May 16, 1919; fol. 72v, Etherton telegram no. 132 to Foreign and Political Department, Government of India July 7, 1919. However, whether Etherton went about things in the right way is another matter. On escaping to Persia, Bailey wrote a long letter home detailing his escapades. In it he noted: "I got a few letters in October and then the stupid Consul in Kashgar Etherton, when I asked for newspapers by post, sent letters as well. The result is that one packet was received at the address they were posted to [and] had to be burnt when the Bolsheviks were searching the house, and some were intercepted in the post by the Bolsheviks & read...." (BL IOLR Mss EurF 157/180, F.M. Bailey to Florence Bailey,. Sarakhs, Persia, January 10, 1920 fol. 5v). Bailey apparently complained to Etherton in February 1920 after he had escaped, and the latter wrote back in self-justification as to how his agents had tried unsuccessfully to locate Bailey in Tashkent (BL IOLR Mss EurF 157/232, P.T. Etherton to F.M. Bailey,. Kashgar, April 10, 1920). See also below, n. 20.

20. See Swinson, *Beyond the Frontiers* pp. 198-199; Sargent, *British Military Involvement*, p. 25. A couple of examples will illustrate the problems of communication. On September 28, 1918, before he knew of the trouble Bailey was in, Etherton sent a messenger to Tashkent who actually managed to deliver into Bailey's hands a bag of dispatches. The messenger left Tashkent October 24, two days after Bailey went into hiding, was searched several times on the road back to Kashgar and returned only on November 17, reporting Bailey had sent no messages back, probably because of the haste with which he had to hide. Etherton sent this information to India November 18, his courier reaching Gilgit December 6; that same day Gilgit wired the information to Simla. (BL IOLR L/P&S/10/741 fol. 231v, Etherton telegram no. 344 to Foreign and Political Department, Government of India November 18, 1918). On December 28, Etherton finally received messages from Bailey dated October 19 and December 5 and a message with information from the American Consul in Tashkent, Tredwell, who had been in touch with Bailey (loc. cit. fol. 235, Etherton telegram to Foreign and Political Department, Government of India December 29, 1918). In his confidential Report on the Kashgar Mission, 1918-1920, Bailey wrote (p. 3): "All this time I was eagerly expecting messages sent off in August, September and October, but nothing came until on 13th December 1918 a man I had sent to Kashgar returned, but instead of bringing the long cypher message I expected, he brought a very short message in slang dated 17th November containing practically no news" (BL IOLR Mss EurF 157/275, Bailey Papers, General Correspondence and Reports re Tashkent Mission, 1918-1923).

My colleague Florian Schwarz has been examining the Bailey papers for information on Bailey's Bukharan contacts which were maintained at least through emigres after he escaped. Prof. Schwarz disagrees with my skepticism about the value of the mission although he notes that opportunities to take advantage of this Bukharan connection were squandered when Bailey's superiors backed away from a forward policy in Central Asia.

a special budgetary allocation which went well beyond the costs of travel and support for the three officers and their staffs. Other measures included appointing a Vice-Consul, strengthening the consular guard, establishing a wireless receiver at the consulate, and providing funding for expanded intelligence gathering. All this was seen as a temporary arrangement, subject to review should the perception of political urgency change.[21]

The Consulate's Intelligence and Communications Networks

Etherton then was the key person in implementing this program, and it is clear he did much more to further its goals than Bailey ever did. Very importantly, he cultivated a network of agents which seems to have been more extensive than the one Macartney had tapped or Etherton's successor, Clarmont P. Skrine (who had to operate under budgetary constraints once the 'special mission' ended) could afford. There was a network of British-subject communal elders (aksakals) scattered in the towns of Xinjiang, who were closely connected with the wealthy local merchants on both sides of the border.[22] Many

21. BL IOLR L/P&S/10/836, fols. 466-470, contains various documents regarding Etherton's request in June 1920 that budgetary reauthorization be given to continue the 'Kashgar Mission' into the next year. The request received mixed comment in the India Office, some stressing the value of the Central Asian intelligence, but others, probably more out of fiscal concerns than anything else, wondering whether it was worth the cost. In his Kashgar Monthly Diary for February 1921 (BL IOLR L/P&S/10/976, p. 6), Etherton reported that his Hunza courier riders were unhappy that they were not being paid on time even though the demands on their services had grown substantially with the greater use of the consular mail after the closing of the Russian border in 1917 and the supplementing of the consular staff in 1918.

As the budget extension was nearing its end, there was another exchange between Etherton and his superiors, in which they proposed "in view of anticipated increase in Bolshevik activity in Ferghana, Semirechia, Chinese Turkestan, and Pamirs in early summer, that Intelligence Organisation in this area should be strengthened by placing at your disposal for period of six months a King's Commissioned Indian Officer as Intelligence Officer." Etherton responded to the proposal for help with enthusiasm, indicating that it would be good if they could also send a couple of well-trained agents capable of operating incognito on the Russian side of the border. The particular agent the Government of India had in mind was one Capt. Samad Shah, none other than a cousin of the Aga Khan who had worked in British intelligence and obviously was a very knowledgeable analyst. In his book, Etherton claims that Samad Shah was sent "as the result of my representations to the Government of India concerning certain matters in Russian and Chinese territory," even though in fact the initiative seems to have come from India (Etherton, *In the Heart of Asia*, p. 273). There probably were several agendas involved in choosing him, since an effort was made to have him bring along a message from the Aga Khan to his Ismaili followers in the Pamirs. See BL IOLR L/P&S/10/836, fols. 440-444. The quotation is from Government of India telegram to Kashgar no. 177-S February 8, 1921, fol. 444. See also BL IOLR L/P&S/10/741, fols.126-129v, October 2, 1919, the translation from Persian of Barakatullah's anti-British pamphlet reconciling Bolshevism and Islam, at the end of which (fols. 128v-129) was appended a short analysis of the arguments by Samad Shah. On his activity once in Kashgaria, see below, n. 25.

22. BL IOLR L/P&S/10/741, fol. 198v, Etherton no. 5 to Foreign and Political Department, Government of India, January 1, 1919, with a report from Ferghana from "Baud-ud-din, one of the three richest merchants in Kashgaria, who returned three days ago from Andijan." He appended to the same report a number of separate items, including news on Badakhshan from one Haji Ghulam Rasul, who left Faizabad (in Afghanistan) December 11 (fol. 199); a report from Sarikol sent by Mahomed Sharif, the British Aksakal at Tashkurghan and agents of the Kashgar Taoyin (ibidem); a report on troop strength at the forts in the Pamirs from "Nur Mahomed, a well-known Beg at Pamirski Post and on the Pamirs, who arrived at Kashgar, some of his property having been confiscated by the Bolsheviks" (fol. 199v). In a report dated February 1, Etherton again cited Nur Muhammad, who in turn had information from Sharif Beg and one other beg arrived from Murghabi (Pamirkskii post). Ferghana news received on January 13 and sent on by Etherton on January 18 came from "Obaidullah, Akhun and several merchants from Tashkent" (loc. cit., fol. 194). In his report no. 75, April 21, 1919, Etherton's news from Ferghana came from "recent arrivals and secret service agents." He mentioned also one Yakub Akhun, who had left Tashkent March 26 and arrived at Kashgar April 14. For the Pamirs, his sources included Mahomed Sharif, British Aksakal at Tashkurghan and Sayid Jalal Shah, Pir of the Aga Khan in Sarikol. An agent Toksa Bai (Toksa Alam, a Tajik Beg) had been sent by the Chinese back in the autumn to the Wakhan and Badakhshan to report

of their Russian-subject counterparts were against the Soviet regime and equally willing to provide information. Members of the local Russian emigré community in Kashgar, all of them White opponents of the Soviet regime, were valuable sources, since they maintained cross-border contacts. Some of the Russian garrisons on the Russian side of the border for some time were not securely controlled by the Bolsheviks and might readily be tapped for information.[23] For a time there was even a White Russian garrison which provided intelligence in Tashkurghan on the Chinese side south of Kashgar.[24] Etherton was able to cultivate Kyrgyz tribal leaders in the Pamirs for information on the status of the border garrisons, and for the Sarikol plateau and Wakhan corridor, his informants included Tajik Ismailis (followers of the Aga Khan).[25]A considerable amount of the information Etherton collected came from north of the Tian Shan Mountains – from the Ili Valley, the provincial capital of Urumqi and even the far northern areas along what is now the border between Xinjiang on the one hand and Kazakhstan,

on possible German or Turkish agents, but was arrested there and only recently had returned with a report that none had been found (loc. cit., fol. 154v, Etherton report no. 75 to Foreign and Political Department, Government of India, April 21, 1919). He, Sayid Jalal Shah, and the Russian commanding officer at Tashkurghan also reported on the garrisons in the Wakhan and Badakhshan.

23. One of those reporting to him on garrisons in the Murghab region had secured for Etherton a Bolshevik official strength report of April 1919 (BL IOLR L/P&S/10/741, fol. 155, Etherton report no. 75 to Foreign and Political Department, Government of India, April 21, 1919). On June 6, 1919, he reported receiving intelligence on the Pamir posts from a Russian officer who left Murghab May 24 (BL IOLR L/P&S/10/741, fol. 166v, Etherton telegram no. 105 to Foreign and Political Department, Government of India, June 6, 1919, received June 18). Etherton reported that he and the Russian Consulate in Kashgar (still in the hands of the Whites) had an agent in the commandant at Irkeshtam who had pretended to be a Bolshevik sympathizer. When a certain Popov was being sent as the consul-designate to Kashgar, the commandant at Irkeshtam had him arrested and sent back to Osh (BL IOLR L/P&S/10/741, fol. 82, Etherton telegram no. 207 to Foreign and Political Department, Government of India, October 1, 1919).

24. In March 1919 (BL IOLR L/P&S/10/741, fol. 181v, Etherton telegram no. 57 to Foreign and Political Department, Government of India, March 11, 1919, received March 25), Etherton reported on garrison strength in the Pamirs as told him by a Cossack officer who had come to Kashgar. The Russian garrison at Tashkurghan turned over its fort to the Chinese in March 1921. In his monthly diary under March 29, Etherton noted the arrival of its commandant, Capt. Vilgorski, who "has co-operated very well with me for the past three years and has done much towards the success of the informal arrangements I have in force on the Russian Pamirs with regard to Bolshevik movements and propaganda" (BL IOLR L/P&S/10/976, Kashgar Monthly Diary for March 1921, p. 5).

25. It seems as though this network and more generally the surveillance in the Pamirs were still only in the planning stages as late as February 1920. The Government of India wrote to Etherton and its Political Agent in Gilgit indicating that the latest intelligence was that the Pamirs might become the main route for infiltration of Bolshevik agents and propaganda. The Government of India asked both its officials for advice on how to stop this (BL IOLR, L/P&S/10/741, fol. 20v, Telegram no. 142-S, February 5, 1920). Etherton responded they could be stopped only if British would man the forts, which were currently in the hands of anti-Bolshevik garrisons answering to the rather unstable opposition forces in Ferghana. "In Ferghana and on Russian Pamirs I might exploit elements friendly to us and arrange for that important area being more effectively controlled and guarded, but I would ask to be informed of policy of Government of India in this matter before elaborating any scheme" (loc. cit., fol. 25, Etherton telegram no. 62 to Foreign and Political Department, Government of India, February 9, 1920, received February 21). See also his long message to the Resident in Kashmir, outlining measures already in place to try to keep track of movements across the borders and prevent the spreading of anti-British propaganda (loc. cit., fols. 30v-31, Etherton no. 17 to Resident, Srinagar, Kashmir, January 8, 1920). The full organization of the Ismailis may have come even later, as Etherton reported in his Kashgar Monthly Diary for November 1921 (BL IOLR L/P&S/10/976, p. 1) that Samad Shah, who had contacts with all the Ismaili pirs in the region, "in conjunction with me is organizing an intelligence scheme to cover the Russian Pamirs and all the territory where Maulais are found." See also his note of progress in this endeavor in the January 1922 monthly diary (p. 2): "Heard from Captain Sumud [*sic*] Shah to-day. He has been visiting the followers of the Aga Khan throughout Sarikol and appears to be doing a lot of good to our cause. He is getting together a fine band of workers and between the two of us I think we shall be able to check the Bolshevik schemes through the Russian Pamirs."

Russia and Mongolia on the other. His sources in these areas varied – agents sent on the long and difficult journey to Kashgar by White Cossack generals, a Belgian missionary whom he had met on his trip in 1909-1910, or some of the Europeans who worked in the Chinese civil administration.

Apart from tapping into the resources in the local communities of those sympathetic to British interests, Etherton would send his own agents on specific missions, where they could cross the border disguised as merchants. These might be Indian staff at the consulate or individuals recruited from the local community (rarely do we know details). He even managed to get one of his agents attached to a Chinese diplomatic mission sent off to Kabul in 1921.[26] He also would receive missions sent by anti-Bolshevik leaders to solicit his support for their activities in Ferghana and managed to obtain information from staff attached to Bolshevik missions which were trying to negotiate entry into Kashgar.

The role of the local Chinese officialdom in this scheme is less clear. Both in his reports and later in his book, he would praise the cooperation of Chu, the Civil Administrator (Taoyin) of Kashgar, who indeed seems to have supported British interests. In his monthly diary for February 1921 Etherton gives "the Taoyin every credit for the admirable way in which he has kept Kashgaria clear of Bolshevism [...] the one man in Chinese Turkistan who has maintained a solid front," even though the Taoyin admitted to Etherton that he was powerless to control the anti-British Amban of Yakand.[27] However, later in his book, Etherton conveys the sense that he was the one who really set policy in the sensitive political issues and the Taoyin was little more than his right-hand man: "He worked with me loyally and well [...] I shall ever look back with gratitude for the manner in which he seconded me in many harassing and trying moments."[28] For the most part Etherton suggests that the flow of intelligence about possible political threats was a one-way street – that is from him to the Chinese – although occasionally we hear of agents of the Taoyin's.[29] Etherton frequently reported instances where on the receipt of intelligence about possible agitators or other potential trouble, the Taoyin would carry out arrests. In one of the more intriguing examples of the methods used by the local authorities, he reported a case where a former Kashgaria resident of some importance, Qarim Puchak, was armed by the Bolsheviks to be sent back across the border to train a subversive force. "The scheme, however, met with little or no favour and has practically fizzled out," for "the Taoyin of Kashgar retain[ed] several members of his family who are residents of the Artush district near Kashgar, and attach[ed] his estates and property there as a guarantee for future good behaviour."[30] In a tacit admission of the limits of his influence, Etherton rightly lamented the "anti-British" stance of the Amban of Yarkand in harboring Afghans, who were seen as a threat to British interests, and the failure of the Chinese to keep the Bolsheviks from establishing a foothold in Ili in 1920.[31] Yet he seems to have underappreciated the degree to which

26. BL IOLR L/P&S/10/976, Kashgar Monthly Diary for April 1922, p. 2.

27. BL IOLR L/P&S/10/976 fol. 314v, p. 4.

28. Etherton, *In the Heart of Asia*, pp. 102-103.

29. For example, in the same February 1921 Diary where he praised Chu, when discussing Bolshevik agents in Kashgar, he went on to state that the Chinese were "hopelessly out of touch with the situation and in justice to this Consulate General, I ought to say that every scrap of information of any value has been furnished from here. Left alone it is certain the Chinese would not last a week in the face of the Bolshevik menace" (BL IOLR L/P&S/10/976, p. 5). See also below, n. 92.

30. BL IOLR L/P&S/10/836, fols. 488-489, Etherton no. 214, August 1, 1920, citing his earlier telegram no. 174 of June 1, 1920. One might assume that Etherton tipped off the Taoyin in this case, although he claims no direct credit.

31. See, for example, BL IOLR L/P&S/10/836, fols. 410-411, Etherton no. 45 to Foreign and Political Department, Government of India, March 21, 1921, where he reports on the Amban of Yarkand's harboring of one Maqsud Gul, an Afghan agitator whom Macartney had persuaded the Chinese to expel back in 1917. See also BL IOLR L/P&S/10/976, Kashgar Monthly Diary for February 1921.

the autonomous Governor Yang Zengxin in Urumqi defended the interests of his province.[32]

Apart from these networks which generally operated by direct personal communication or traditional means such as post or courier, there were some, rather limited means to employ modern technology.[33] A telegraph connected Kashgar with Urumqi and beyond to Beijing, although it was notoriously inefficient, with messages which should have arrived within hours often taking days or longer. As with the Chinese post, it could not guarantee that messages would not be copied or intercepted, although anything really sensitive sent via these means was put in cypher. It is not clear to what degree any incoming information came from the telegraph, although Etherton used it to copy many of his reports to the British ambassador in Beijing.[34] While there had also been a telegraph connecting Kashgar to Tashkent via Irkeshtam and the Ferghana Valley, it apparently ceased to operate with the outbreak of the Civil War which disrupted communications through Ferghana.[35] A proposal by the Taoyin to extend a telegraph line to the British station at Misgar, just across the Mintaka Pass in what is today northern Pakistan, never led to any result. In fact it was only at the very end of 1918 that the British line in India had been extended from Gilgit as far as Misgar, the latter being about 10 days' ride for the consulate's weekly courier. Part of the Government of India's effort to improve communications with Kashgar involved the sending of wireless apparatus and technicians to the consulate in late 1918; they remained there until shortly after Etherton left in 1922.[36] They could receive messages but not transmit. This way India could radio to Kashgar critical instructions, and other sources such as the regular Reuters news reports could be received. Furthermore, the wireless intercepted Soviet radio signals from Tashkent, which Etherton would summarize and occasionally translate. However, he could read only those sent in the clear (that is, not cyphered) and only those sent via short wave, since the receiver did not pick up long wave signals.[37] While the Marconi Company was in the process of building two-way radio stations

32. For a balanced assessment of Yang and more generally the political rivalries in Xinjiang between 1918-1934, see Lars-Erik Nyman, *Great Britain and Chinese, Russian and Japanese Interests in Sinkiang, 1918-1934* (Malmö, 1977), esp. pp. 19-25; for a more recent summary, see James A. Millward and Nabijan Tursun, "Political History and Strategies of Control, 1884-1978," in: S. Frederick Starr, ed. *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland* (Armonk; London, 2004), pp. 68-71.

33. There is a lot of valuable information on the functioning of the postal routes connecting Kashgar in BL IOLR L/P&S/11/233, a collection of materials compiled in connection with Chinese proposals in 1923 to extend their postal service and perhaps in the process eliminate the consular couriers.

34. Etherton at one point indicated that the White Russian Consul in Chuguchak had telegraphed his counterpart in Kashgar, presumably via Urumqi, with a request that a telegram be transmitted from the White Russian commander at Semipalatinsk to his counterpart on the Ashkhabad front (Transcaspia) regarding possible collaboration against the Bolsheviks. Etherton indicated he could serve as the conduit for transmission of such telegraphic communication, but whether there was any follow-up on this is not indicated in other records in this file. See BL IOLR L/P&S/10/741, fol. 203, Etherton telegram no. 15 to Foreign and Political Department, Government of India, January 24, 1919.

35. In April 1919 Etherton noted "All postal and telegraphic communication with Kashgar, so far as Chinese subjects are concerned, has been interdicted by the Bolsheviks. The Chinese subjects in Ferghana, through their Aksakal at Andijan, have requested the Taoyin to give them immediate moral and material aid" (BL IOLR L/P&S/11/741, fol. 148v, Etherton report on Ferghana, April 1, 1919).

36. In the discussion after his talk to the Central Asian Society in June 1919, Macartney had to clarify for one skeptical listener how cut off he was in Kashgar and Tashkent. He noted that the wireless officer being sent to Kashgar was "going up to establish it when I passed Gilgit on my way down to India." See George Macartney, "Bolshevism as I Saw It at Tashkent in 1918," *Journal of the Central Asian Society* 7/2-3 (1920), p. 55.

37. See his comment attached to his transmission of several intercepts, BL IOLR L/P&S/10/741, fol. 51, Etherton no. 48 to Foreign and Political Department, Government of India, February 1, 1920. A further limitation at certain times of year was the weather. Etherton reported that between July 24 and August 28, 1920, there were constant thunderstorms, the result being no intercepts at all for August (BL IOLR L/P&S/10/836, fol. 477).

across China in this period, the construction of the one in Urumqi was completed only well along in Etherton's consulate, and the station in Kashgar did not become fully operational until late in Skrine's tenure.

In sum then, the consulate tapped a good many sources of information. The human networks were unpredictable though, since often agents never returned or took so long en route that the information they brought was dated. Further, as with any such intelligence work, there is always the question of self-interest and accuracy on the part of those reporting. 'News' in local society passed by word of mouth and often was merely unsubstantiated rumor. The anti-Bolshevik forces in Ferghana clearly had their own agendas and would manipulate the news however they perceived it might best encourage British support for their cause. Similarly, the merchant networks were most concerned with what might support their commercial interests and were certainly not impervious to infiltration. As one might expect, the more distant the source of information, the less likely it would be accurate or retain any value by the time it was sent on to India. There is good reason to think that Malleson's claim about the superior work of his services operating out of northeastern Iran is accurate.[38] He and his successors were certainly able to provide more detailed information faster than Etherton for Bukhara, Tashkent, and much of what might relate to Afghanistan. For events along the Wakhan Corridor in Afghanistan, generally the Political Agent in Gilgit was better informed than was Kashgar.[39] Similarly, the events in northern Xinjiang or Southern Siberia to which Etherton frequently alluded were reported more effectively by British representatives embedded with the White Forces, so long as they controlled sections of the Trans-Siberian Railway.

Insofar as effective intelligence work requires that information be obtained in a timely fashion, the consulate operated under a severe handicap. Information might be a month old before it ever reached Kashgar, and then the fastest it could arrive at Delhi or Simla was ten to a dozen days. Really important items might be then telegraphed to London, arriving there in two or three days. However, more substantial reports submitted in writing took a lot longer and all too often elicited comments on the cover sheets in the India Office to the effect that the information was already dated or had been received from other sources.[40]

38. Recognition of this fact is in the comment by L.D. Wakely of the India Office: "Information regarding Bokhara is more readily available to the Military-Attaché at Meshed than to H.B.M. Consul General at Kashgar tho' valuable sidelights are occasionally known on this subject by the latter officer" (BL IOLR L/P&S/10/741, fol. 367v). Wakely's comment is in a draft of a memo he sent to one of the under-secretaries in the Foreign Office summarizing India Office discussions about lines of communication for Central Asian intelligence and the expense thereof. Commenting specifically on an Etherton report of December 1, 1921, regarding possible Bolshevik support for the Emir of Afghanistan to take over Bukhara, one of the important under-secretaries in the India Office, D. T. Monteath, wrote: "Col. Etherton's despatch is very interesting but it is not in all respects confirmed by our information from other sources [...] The statements in para. 2 of this page [p. 2] are entirely at variance with what we have been able to deduce from very secret information which tho' meagre is reliable." The underlining was done by another commentator who added emphatically that it was also "intrinsically most improbable" that the Russians would accede to the loss of Central Asia (BL IOLR L/P&S/10/837, Register no. 518, P 2992/19).

39. The Government of India asked its Political Agent in Gilgit to clarify what passes were being watched by what forces (BL IOLR L/P&S/10/741, fol. 175v, Telegram no. 830-S, June 6, 1919). He responded (loc. cit., June 7, 1919): "Passes into Afghanistan from the Irahad to the Baroghil have been watched by men of political districts concerned as a precautionary measure to give notice of Afghan movements of troops and check attempts of Hakim of Wakhan to spread unrest by agents and by letters. Twenty to thirty are on duty." There was also a temporary Indian guard force at the Paik post on the Chinese side of the passes.

40. For example, D.T. Monteath, noted with reference to the intelligence compendium in file no. P5325/1920, "The reports of events are of course much out of date, and the important reports have been received long ago" (BL IOLR

Confusion in the British Government's Policies toward the Bolsheviks

The purpose of Etherton's network then was twofold: to gather intelligence and to enable him to take steps which might counter possible political threats. While he seems to have formed a clear enough idea as to the nature of the threats – virtually all of them had some connection to Bolshevik schemes – the policy of his government was much less clear and certainly not always supportive.[41] This fact emerged quite early in his tenure. On February 20, 1919, he reported that Argash, one of the anti-Bolshevik leaders in the Ferghana Valley, had inquired about possible British support. Without making any commitment, Etherton asked what his response should be.[42] Etherton's message reached Misgar on March 7 and was telegraphed to the Government of India the same day. The Government of India forwarded a copy of Etherton's message and a request for guidance to London on March 18. On March 25, the Under-Secretary of State in the India Office, John Shuckburgh, annotated the file and sent it on to the Secretary of the Military Office for further comment. Shuckburgh, who was in fact well informed on Russian and Central Asian affairs, wrote:

> The Consul-General at Kashgar (Maj. Etherton) appears to have acted with entire discretion. But I think it desirable that both he and the Government of India should be furnished with precise instructions from His Majesty's Government, as soon as possible, as to the attitude to be adopted towards anti-Bolshevist overtures from Ferghana or elsewhere. As to our general policy towards the Bolsheviks, I am still rather in the dark. Do we regard them as declared enemies, or as people with whom we may eventually be prepared to live in comparative amity? Is our immediate intention

L/P&S/10/741, fol. 17, minute of July 30, 1920). Another example is his minute with reference to no. P3776/1920 (loc. cit., fol. 78). In a minute he wrote on December 9, 1921, regarding Etherton's telegram no. 185, dated November 21 (BL IOLR L/P&S/10/836 fol. 325), Monteath noted (fol. 324): "This telegram is, at its face value, rather disturbing; but an agent reporting at Kashgar on 21 Nov. after so extensive a tour, must have begun it a considerable time ago. This information, even if accurate when obtained, might be out of date when delivered; and this seems to be the case in regard to the reported relations of the Amir [of Afghanistan—DW] with the Begs of Ferghana." Etherton's agent had gone through the Pamirs and on as far as Balkh and Mazar-i Sharif, indeed a long trip. It should be stressed that such comments generally appear with reference to the printed intelligence summaries prepared in India and sent with considerable delay to London. Often that information indeed was stale, in contrast to the intelligence contained in telegrams forwarded earlier.

41. For details about divisions within the highest echelons of the British government regarding policy toward the new Soviet regime, see Ullman, *Anglo-Soviet Relations, 1917-1921*.

42. BL IOLR L/P&S/10/741, fol. 197, Etherton telegram no. 35 to Foreign and Political Department, Government of India, February 20, 1919. This was not the first such query Etherton had sent. In fact earlier the same month the local Chinese authorities had asked him whether in the event of a Bolshevik attempt to enter Chinese territory he could provide any military support from the consular guard. The question arose apparently not from fear of a major incursion but from the expectation that Bolshevik forces defeated by the insurgents might try to flee across the border. Etherton, of course, could make no commitment. He commented to his superiors that he would be unwilling to deploy the small force at the consulate outside of Kashgar in any event, unless his government would see fit to reinforce it with some cavalry, which would be highly desirable in the circumstances (loc. cit., fol. 201v, Etherton telegram no. 21 to Foreign and Political Department, Government of India, February 10, 1919, received February 24). He elaborated on this with a slightly different emphasis in his long no. 36, February 20 (loc. cit., fol. 185v), where he reported the threat by the Bolshevik representative Shuster (Shestra), after he was refused entry into Xinjiang, that he would make trouble for the population in the Osh and Andjan districts: "Being apprehensive of some such eventuality the local Chinese authorities have approached me, as already reported to you, with a view to ascertaining what degree of help I could afford them should matters come to a head, since they know only too well that their own military preparations are quite inadequate to meet the situation." By March 3, the Government of India reported to London and copied to the British Minister in Beijing the information that "Consul-General has been instructed by us not to enter into any engagements with Chinese authorities and not to commit consular guard to anything beyond their ordinary duties" (BL IOLR L/P&S/10/741, fol. 193, Telegram no. 251-S).

> to make war on them, or somehow or other to settle with them peaceably? But whatever may be the answer to these questions, the fact of our withdrawal from Trans-Caspia stands, and with our withdrawal all possibility of bringing effective influence to bear upon Turkestan will necessarily disappear. In these circumstances let us make no promises. We shall not be able to fulfil them.[43]

After a flurry of consultations, on April 10 the Secretary of State for India telegraphed the Viceroy in the Foreign and Political Department there that "instructions should be issued to Consul-General, Kashgar, not to give any promise of support or assistance to any political party or organisation in Ferghana or elsewhere in Russian territory." Ten days later, The Secretary of the Foreign and Political Department finally telegraphed this instruction to Etherton (that is, the message was probably radioed via Peshawar). Of course the response is noteworthy for its avoidance of communicating anything about the larger issue of the British government's official stance regarding the Bolshevik regime.[44]

The Government of India summarized some of its concerns to the India Office in London in a telegram of July 26, 1919:

> Authorities concerned are all alive to importance of intercepting Bolshevik agents and literature. On our land frontiers both Gilgit and Kashgar are on the *qui vive*, and the latter is working for suppression of Bolshevik propaganda in close touch with local Chinese authorities. Resident, Kashmir, has been empowered to intercept any postal article entering Kashmir territory, except *viâ* British India. Meshed, which at present is our most active centre for watching Bolshevik activities in Central Asia, is doing its best to close the route through East Persia. But the come and go on our enorm[o]us land frontiers is too constant for us to hope for more than very partial success [...][45]

The key to success would have to be effective intelligence about what was going on in Bolshevik centers, since that alone could help in devising countermeasures.

Over a year later, the India Office continued to express its frustration about the unwillingness of the Foreign Office to spell out government policy toward the Bolsheviks. In late January 1920, the Government of India had sent London a message on "anti-Bolshevik Measures in India," which included the creation early in February of a "Special Bureau of Information" for "counter-propaganda, the coordination of intelligence both internal and external, and the organisation of measures to keep

43. BL IOLR L/P&S/10/836 fol. 251v. On March 31, after consultation with the Secretary of State for India, Erwin S. Montagu, Shuckburgh sent to the Under-Secretary of State in the Foreign Office Montagu's proposal that the Government of India "give categorical instructions to CG at Kashgar 'to give no promise of support or assistance to anti-Bolshevik elements in Ferghana or elsewhere in Russian territory.' It is an obvious corollary of the decision to withdraw Genereal Malleson's forces from TransCaspia, that no fresh commitments should be incurred by His Majesty's Government in the region lying to the east of that area." (BL IOLR L/P&S/10/741, fols. 155v-156). On April 4, J. A. O. Tilley, acting for the Foreign Secretary Lord Curzon, replied to Shuckburgh that Curzon concurred with Montagu but suggested that the words "any political party or organization" replace the "anti-Bolshevik elements" in the draft of the message to be sent to Etherton (BL IOLR L/P&S/10/741, fols. 157v-158; BL IOLR L/P&S/10/836, fol. 250; BL IOLR L/P&S/10/741, fols. 157v-158).

44. As Ullman makes clear, while there were differences between Montagu, the Secretary of State for India and Curzon, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, with regard to the Bolshevik issue, the more serious differences were between Curzon and the Prime Minister David Lloyd George. Ullman concludes that the Foreign Office in fact had surprisingly little influence on British policy toward the Soviet regime in this period. See Ullman, *Anglo-Soviet Relations, 1917-1921*, Vol. 3, p. 457. To have hoped to get clarification from the Foreign Office regarding policy toward the Bolsheviks was probably quite unrealistic.

45. BL IOLR L/P&S/10/741, fol. 139, Telegram no. 1089-S from Viceroy, Foreign and Political Department, Government of India, Simla, to Secretary of State for India, London, July 26, 1919.

Bolshevist emissaries and propaganda out of India."[46] A few days after that was announced, the Secretary of State for India wrote to Delhi quoting a speech given by Prime Minister David Lloyd George in which the latter in a sense declared for "masterly inactivity" with regard to the Soviet regime. The British government was not prepared to conclude peace with the Bolsheviks, nor did it see fit to try to bring them down by supporting military intervention. "The sole remaining course, therefore, is to try to bring Russia back to sanity by trade."[47] The Secretary of State for India went on to say that in the opinion of the Foreign Office, "no efforts should be spared to check propagation of subversive doctrines throughout Central Asia by the agents of the Bolsheviks." While that seems explicit enough, in fact what India was being told was that the Prime Minister and Foreign Office were at odds on the issue. As Ullman has pointed out, Lloyd George "was largely his own Foreign Secretary" and held at best "tolerant contempt" for Lord Curzon who held the appointment.[48]

A new round of concern over a lack of guidance on policy soon arose in a parliamentary challenge to Lord Curzon, asking him to comment on press reports of unrest on the Northwest Frontier of India which might somehow be connected with Soviet schemes. While the India Office officials indicated they had no indication of an imminent attack, they were uncertain as to whether it would be appropriate to inform the Indian population on the matter of possible Bolshevik intentions. Imminent attack aside, the Government of India remained convinced that every possible measure was needed to thwart Bolshevik efforts to foment revolution.[49]

The Government's position finally did become clear (and in the process caught some of its far-flung representatives such as Etherton by surprise) with the signing in March 1921 of the Anglo-Soviet trade agreement, one stipulation of which was that the contracting parties would cease efforts at subversion and propaganda directed against the other side on territories beyond their borders.[50] The immediate impact of this at Kashgar was to tie Etherton's hands with regard to what he considered to be one of

46. The quotation is from BL IOLR L/P&S/10/741, fol. 109v, Telegram no. 80F from Foreign Secretary, Foreign and Political Department, Government of India, to Field Marshall Viscount Allenby, High Commissioner for Egypt, Cairo, February 21, 1920. The communication about creation of the new department is in loc. cit., fol. 109, Office Memorandum no. 59-F, from Deputy Secretary, Foreign and Political Department, Government of India, to the Home Department. The documents I have examined leave unclear exactly what this new department ended up achieving.

47. BL IOLR L/P&S/10/741, fols. 25v-26, Telegram from Secretary of State for India, London, to Viceroy, Foreign and Political Department, Government of India, Delhi, February 21, 1920, referring to Government of India Telegram No. 116-S, January 28, 1920. For details of the debates within the British government over policy toward Russia in this period, see Ullman, *Anglo-Soviet Relations, 1917-1921*, Vol. 2, ch. 8, and Vol. 3, ch. 1. He quotes (Vol. 3' p. 37) Lloyd George's speech of February 10 which he delivered in Parliament following the Address from the Throne.

48. Ullman, *Anglo-Soviet Relations*, Vol. 3, p. 14.

49. BL IOLR P&S/10/836, fols. 500 ff., especially the minute papers for Register no. 5443, with comments beginning July 24, 1920, and the attached documents.

50. For the history of the negotiations leading up to the treaty, see Ullman, *Anglo-Soviet Relations*, Vol. 3, ch. 10. Ullman publishes the text on pp. 474-478. The stipulation about cessation of propaganda was the first condition for fulfillment of the treaty (p. 474): "Each party refrains from hostile action or undertakings against the other and from conducting outside of its own borders any official propaganda direct or indirect against the institutions of the British Empire or the Russian Soviet Republic respectively, and more particularly that the Russian Soviet Government refrains from any attempt by military or diplomatic or any other form of action or propaganda to encourage any of the peoples of Asia in any form of hostile action against British interests or the British Empire, especially in India and in the Independent State of Afghanistan. The British Government gives a similar particular undertaking to the Russian Soviet Government in respect of the countries which formed part of the former Russian Empire and which have now become independent." A British memo containing a draft of this provision had been provided the Soviet negotiators as early as June 30, 1920 (ibidem, p. 399).

his important activities, to spread British propaganda and world news as widely as possible to counter the Bolshevik propaganda which was issuing from Tashkent. As early as November 1918, he had arranged to compile British propaganda material generated in China, Mesopotamia and London and send it to each of the British aksakals with instructions about distribution "amongst the leading British, Russian and Chinese subjects, the Mullas and the Kirghiz headmen." Also he had an agreement with the Taoyin of Kashgar that the latter distribute a tri-monthly abstract of war news and post in public various news posters Etherton received from Shanghai.[51] The issue of whether his activity might be violating the new treaty is an undercurrent in subsequent communications between Etherton and his superiors in 1921 and 1922. Etherton would continue to advise the Chinese officials to do everything necessary to maintain stability and defend their borders, but he had to be much more careful about publicizing information which might be deemed anti-Soviet and in fact ceased distributing the news reports to the British subjects, Chinese officials and others.[52]

Etherton's Intelligence Activity

Keeping in mind this framework of larger policy issues, let us examine more closely his intelligence activity. Throughout his tenure at Kashgar, Etherton sent a steady stream of communications, generally summarizing the most recent reports from his agents in telegrams but then once or twice a month compiling long analyses of the information on various fronts. While most of his reports went to the Secretary of the Foreign and Political Department of the Government of India, he also on occasion would copy them to the Chief of the Indian General Staff, the British Minister in Beijing or the British political agents in Kashmir. The point, of course, was to alert these officials of issues which might be addressed by them directly. The telegraphed reports usually were then forwarded by telegraph to the India Office in London and were as well repeated in various printed compilations of intelligence about Soviet activities or Central Asia. Not surprisingly then the annotations on the minute papers in the India Office often indicate that the latest copy of one of Etherton's reports contained nothing of interest or information which had already been received.[53] One cannot always tell whether that meant his information was seen as inferior in quality or timeliness compared to that received from

51. BL IOLR L/P&S/10/741, fol. 242, Etherton report no. 350 to Foreign and Political Department, Government of India, November 25 1918. He repeated much of this same passage in a message to the British Resident in Srinagar, Kashmir, early in 1920, adding that distribution also encompassed "Ferghana, Semirechia and the Russian Pamirs, through the cordial cooperation of various Russian officers and others" (loc. cit., fol. 30v, Etherton no. 17, January 8, 1920). A number of his other reports refer to his distribution of 'counter-propaganda', although usually in very general terms.

52. For example, Etherton reported under May 7, 1921 (BL IOLR L/P&S/10/976, Kashgar Monthly Diary May 1921, pp. 2-3): "Taoyin called today, ostensibly for a walk in my gardens, but I gather really to let me know that he hoped we should continue to consult together with regard to the Bolshevik menace. I gave him to understand that I was quite ready to assist him as far as possible with advice as in the past, but that I could not, in view of the recent Anglo-Russian Trade Agreement, do so officially. He said he quite understood. I am not relaxing vigilance in any way with regard to Bolshevik designs against India and the East in general, but my enquiries and investigations have to be conducted with great circumspection in order to avoid being placed in a false position. I have, of course, ceased all propaganda and have even discontinued the news sheets which were regularly sent out from the Consulate and created widespread effect in our favour." Etherton provides some concrete sense of the impact of his news sheets in his Kashgar Monthly Diary for July 1921 (loc. cit., p. 1): "The District Magistrate of Maralbashi has certainly benefited by the news-sheets and propaganda sent out from here, and he and his subordinates have it all at their finger's end, and it is refreshing to hear them expatiate on the iniquities of Bolshevism, etc. Since the conclusion of the Trade Agreement with the Soviet I have, of course, ceased my anti-Bolshevik propaganda work throughout the province. I think I am fully justified in saying that it had an excellent effect and I look upon the time, labour, and energy involved as well spent."

53. For examples, see above n. 40.

other sources, such as Malleson's operation in Meshed. Occasionally though the documents explicitly address the issue of possible greater accuracy and timeliness of reporting coming from places other than Kashgar. Certainly the repetition of multiple copies must have been extremely wasteful and time-consuming. At one point there was in fact an exchange of memos emphasizing that Etherton should only most sparingly telegraph copies of his reports to Beijing, given the substantial cost involved in using the Chinese telegraph service.[54] Despite some of these limitations, his reports were systematic and substantial, and certainly many of them were of great interest from London to Beijing.[55]

A typical example is his No. 265, dated October 20, 1920, on the general political situation in Russian and Chinese Central Asia.[56] He begins with the most important item, the arrival at the border post of Irkeshtam of a Bolshevik mission whose ostensible purpose was to negotiate a trade agreement and establishment of a Bolshevik representative in Kashgar. This was by no means the first such effort, but in this case the somewhat threatening tone of the mission resulted in the Taoyin's being instructed (apparently by the governor in Urumqi) to go meet the delegation at the frontier. Etherton provides information on the two chief members of the delegation, Tigar and Pechatnikov. The latter was the agent-delegate for Kashgar and "an expert in Bolshevik propaganda" (fol. 455), as were several other members of the mission. The Taoyin had been in regular consultation with Etherton, who advised "referring all questions to higher authority" (fol. 456). Etherton's expectation seems to have been that the mission would ultimately give up, as had all the others and that "the serious situation in Siberia and the reported defeat of the Bolsheviks by an Afghan Bokharan combination may contribute to keeping Kashgaria clear of Bolshevik influence." While Etherton's contribution to the Chinese rejection of the Bolshevik mission is made clear here, at the same time he is not making the kind claim he would in his book, where he credits himself with getting the Taoyin to go to Irkeshtam, noting it was the first time any Chinese official had stirred from his headquarters.[57] Apart from the Bolshevik mission, Kashgaria

54. Budgetary matters were never far from the minds of the administrators in the Government of India and their superiors in London. See, for example, Ullman, *Anglo-Soviet Relations, 1917-1921*, Vol. 3, pp. 329-330.

55. As he mentioned in his Kashgar Monthly Diary for July 1921 under July 12, he also contributed to longer-term compilations of information about Central Asia: "I am again occupied on a further revision of 'Who's Who in Central Asia' and 'Routes in Hsin-Chiang', for the Chief of the General Staff, whilst I am devoting much time to the preparation of a report showing the Chinese military strength throughout the province with details as to numbers, organization, supplies, distribution, etc., for the information of Government" (BL IOLR L/P&S/10/976, p. 4). The route book, which was a standard reference work maintained by the General Staff in India, certainly bears ample evidence of Etherton's contributions and those of several other Kashgar consuls. See General Staff, India, *Routes in Sinkiang* [rev. ed.] (Simla, 1926). I have not seen the other works he cites. An earlier report on Chinese military strength is in BL IOLR L/P&S/11/175, Reg. no. P5466/1920, Chinese Turkestan: Chinese Military Strength and Administration in Hsin Kiang.

56. BL IOLR L/P&S/10/836, Register no. 8984, The Political Situation in Russian and Chinese Central Asia, fols. 455-465 (typescript copy); fols. 451r-453 (printed copy). Another printed copy is in BL IOLR L/P&S/18/C/202.

57. Etherton, *In the Heart of Asia*, p. 231. Here Etherton has pulled together the several instances of Bolshevik efforts to get an official foothold in Kashgaria, all of them turned back (in his telling) by virtue of his pushing the Chinese to beef up the border garrisons, not permit the delegations to enter, etc. It is interesting to compare with other sources Etherton's version of the effort by a mission headed by one Shestra (Chister, Shuster) which arrived apparently at the Torugart Pass "late in 1919" (not the usual route in those days, travel through Ferghana being blocked). Etherton claims he arranged that the Chinese should let the mission secretary proceed to Kashgar, once he had determined he was a Hungarian war prisoner. There Etherton had a chance to talk with him at length, presumably pumping him for information. "Shestra's representative was obviously impressed with all he saw at my Consulate, and the solidarity existing between me and the Chinese, and he returned to the frontier bearing the letter drafted by the Taoyin and myself, intimating that, pending formal recognition of the Bolsheviks, a mission could not be received" (ibidem, p. 229). In an intelligence report a few months before the Shestra mission, Etherton noted that Shestra's threats to enter Kashgaria by force (he had been rebuffed on an earlier occasion too) were hardly to be credited, since the Bolshevik position in Ferghana was so shaky.

was quiet: "My counter-propaganda continues to exert a good effect and has been largely instrumental in keeping Kashgaria clear of Bolshevism." This is a frequently-repeated assertion in Etherton's reports and book.

Etherton then turns to military matters, indicating that the Bolsheviks had been unable in spring and summer to increase their forces in Ferghana due to commitments on the Persian front and in the Caucasus. The Bolsheviks occupied only a few key cities in Ferghana, the countryside being in the hands of the anti-Bolshevik forces – a regular refrain in Etherton's reports over much of this period. Although the Bolsheviks were trying to recruit Muslims, they had limited success both in Ferghana and in Semirech'e. In fact one such regiment deserted to the anti-Bolshevik forces "a circumstance for which our counter-propaganda from here is to some extent responsible, the Fatwa from the Sheikh-ul-Islam denouncing Bolshevism having been translated into Turki and distributed broadcast in Ferghana and Semirechia, and it has had a very considerable effect on Muhammadans, especially those in the service of the Bolsheviks."[58] This is one of the rare cases where we actually learn detail about Etherton's

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Nonethless, the Taotai called on Etherton, asking his advice and was told "to show firm front" (loc. cit., fol. 193, Etherton no. 28, February 16, 1919).

One of Bailey's few intelligence reports, sent from Tashkent September 1, 1919, essentially confirms this account, but lacks the embroidery on Etherton's role: "Man named Shuster was sent by Government as Commercial Attache for Kashgar taking 1,000,000 roubles for political propaganda. He was turned back by Chinese at frontier, but his Secretary managed to reach Kashgar and reports he had secret friendly interview with Taotai who said that orders from Peking prevented him from receiving Bolshevik agent" (BL IOLR L/P&S/10/741, fol. 39v, forwarded by Etherton with his report no. 40 to Foreign and Political Department, Government of India, dispatched January 24, 1920, two days after its very delayed receipt).

It is somewhat rare to have the Soviet side in such an incident, but we have an intercepted message from Bogoiavlenskii, Foreign Commissar, Turkistan, to Foreign Commissar, Moscow, Eastern Section, Voznesenskii:

> Chister, who was appointed by us commercial agent to Kashgar, and is now on the Chinese frontier, telegraphs as follows:
>
> My secretary was sent by my orders to Kashgar, where he has been since May 26th under arrangements made by the Taotai. The British Consul and Uspenski [the White Russian consular secretary – DW] have protested against his release, and have suggested to the Taotai that he hand him over for arrest. The Taotai has hitherto refused, and has telegraphed for orders to General (? Ludu) at Urumchi. The British Consul is protesting energetically against my coming to Kashgar and I am, therefore, waiting here. Probably there will be a difference of opinion between the British Consul and the Taotai [loc. cit., fol. 158v, Intercept no. 209 made at Jutogh, not far from Simla].

There is also a somewhat garbled intercept of a Soviet radio message to Moscow which gives a propaganda read on the mission, claiming that it had been admitted to Kashgar since Macartney had fled. (loc. cit., fol. 166, Intercept no. 205, apparently made at Jutogh).

Etherton's initial telegraph (no. 264, October 10, 1921) on the arrival of the Bolshevik mission by Tigar and Pechatnikov at Irkeshtam had been copied to the British Embassy in Beijing, which took up the matter of the possible threat from Bolshevik negotiators with the Chinese foreign ministry. On October 15, Clive reported from the embassy that the Minister of Foreign Affairs "readily agreed at my request to instruct Kashgar authorities to be very cautious in dealing with Bolshevik Mission recently reported at Irkestan [*sic*] who are trying to force their way to Kashgar" (BL IOLR L/P&S/10/836, fol. 482). It seems clear then that Etherton did at least have some influence on what the Taoyin did, both directly and indirectly.

58. The *fatwa* referred to here is apparently that contained in BL IOLR L/P&S/10/741, Telegram no. T-7132, February 15, 1920, sent by the General Officer Commanding, Army of the Black Sea, Constantinople, to the Commander-in-Chief, Delhi. It is very likely that Government of India then included it in a packet of propaganda it posted to Etherton along with instructions that his policy should be one of "absolute non-intervention," and that he should stick to propaganda. See loc. cit., fol. 58v, Telegram no. 439-S radioed from Foreign Secretary, Foreign and Political Department, Government of India, to Etherton April 14, 1920.

serious counter-propaganda campaign. He goes on to relate news of how one of the important anti-Bolshevik leaders in Ferghana tried to negotiate for support from the Afghans, but nothing came of the overture, when he failed to follow up on it. In other reports, Etherton frequently provided statistics of Bolshevik and anti-Bolshevik troop dispositions, the former tending to show that the city garrisons were quite small, even though the claims of the anti-Bolshevik forces ran to the tens of thousands of supporters.[59]

Turning to Semirech'e, Etherton reported little change; he mainly repeats earlier information about leaders of anti-Bolshevik forces, the General Annenkov and the Cossack Ataman Dutov, who had taken refuge in Urumqi and Ili respectively.[60] On its side of the border, the Soviet regime was conscripting Tungan and Dungan minorities to send to the Caspian front. Again repeating material reported earlier, Etherton indicated the Soviets had succeeded in obtaining crucial supplies from northern Xinjiang. As a consequence of their commercial agreement with the Chinese, the Chinese would have a consul in Almaty. The Bolsheviks agreed that Russian subjects in Ili would be subject to Chinese law, a provision that played into the intentions of the Chinese to abolish extraterritoriality (and thus had implication for the future of British subjects).

These comments on Ili underscore Etherton's special interest in that area which was so open to Russian penetration, despite the fact that Kashgar's communications with it were intermittent, the most direct route lying across difficult mountain passes. One of his most detailed reports, sent directly to British Ambassador Jordan in Beijing, was a careful overview of the region's history and current situation.[61] In its early sections Etherton drew on his own book and experiences of 1911 (some of the material coming from Henry Lansdell's 1885 description), but for the most part the focus was on the events since the Bolshevik Revolution, including the details of Ataman Dutov's murder by a Bolshevik agent early in 1921. An appendix provided thumbnail sketches of all the other important White officers who had taken up residence there. Although this report on Ili, as Etherton's other reports, was confidential, he had no qualms about drawing heavily upon it for his 1925 book, in which he rearranged the material so that the Dutov murder became a fitting conclusion to a chapter, as a way

59. For an example of the Bolshevik troop dispositions, see BL IOLR L/P&S/10/836, fols. 317-318, Etherton report no. 158 to Foreign and Political Department, Government of India October 10, 1921. One of the astute annotators in the India Office, J.A. Simpson, noted how Etherton's telegram no. 131, August 27, 1921, stating that a Bolshevik force of 700 had taken Gulcha and was moving on Irkeshtam, "sheds a somewhat ridiculous light on the statement in the telegram of 10 August that Sher Mahommed and his allies had forces numbering 84,000 of whom 34,000 were armed" (BL IOLR L/P&S/10/836, fol. 354). Etherton's no. 122 of August 10 is on fols. 364-365. Although Etherton seems to pull few punches in pointing out the discord amongst the Ferghana leaders, perhaps the India Office began to wonder whether Etherton did not make too much of them. Right after he left Kashgar, his Vice-Consul Fitzmaurice submitted the Kashgar Monthly Diary for May 1922, in which (BL IOLR L/P&S/10/976, p. 2) he termed the Ferghana begs "a contemptable lot of brigands." That phrase caught the eye of J.A. Simpson, and another of the astute commentators in the India Office, J.E. Shukburgh, then noted that this assessment disagreed with Etherton's that they were "very sincere and patriotic and have put up a significant resistance with practically no assistance & firearms." Certainly there was ample evidence that their exactions from the local population at times were no less onerous than those of the Bolsheviks.

60. Allowing for the usual Soviet biases, one can obtain a lot of useful information on the Bolshevik takeover of Semirech'e from S.N. Pokrovskii, *Pobeda sovetskoi vlasti v Semirech'e* (Alma-Ata, 1961), which makes extensive use of archival material. The focus of the book is on the period up to the flight of Ataman Dutov and General Annenkov across the border into Xinjiang, which is mentioned only in passing (p. 334).

61. BL IOLR L/P&S/10/836, Etherton no. 21, October 25, 1921, fols. 297-315, copied also to the Secretary of the Foreign and Political Department and to the Chief of the General Staff of the Government of India.

of dramatizing Bolshevik perfidy.[62]

Regarding the southern frontiers in the Pamirs, Etherton reported on October 20 that the Bolsheviks still had not occupied the frontier forts, which were in the hands of anti-Bolshevik garrisons.[63] The Russian commandant at Tashkurghan (a White officer) provided him with the precise statistics on garrison sizes, composition and artillery for the half dozen key forts. As Etherton noted, none of the figures he provided marked any significant change.

Etherton reserved the largest amount of space in his report for two subjects that clearly were of lasting interest to him – Pan-Islamic movements and the role of the Japanese in East Asia. Of course the British were particularly concerned about possible pan-Islamic movements that could enlist Muslims in British colonies. Here, as in most of his other reports, Etherton presented a rather skeptical view about their having much appeal in Central Asia. After going into a sweeping overview of the history and distribution of Muslims from the Caucasus to Western China, he concluded: "I do not consider that the Pan-Islamic movement has as yet any inward vitality, and certainly so far as concerns Chinese Turkistan and the adjacent Russian provinces, it has not assumed a form that could be characterised as a menace" (fol. 464). Informative as Etherton's survey of Central Asian Muslims might have been (its sources still need to be established – probably works readily accessible to his superiors), it contributed very little to immediate needs of intelligence.

Turning to the Japanese, Etherton started by repeating information he had submitted three months earlier about there being only two Japanese agents left in Ili.[64] He noted that they had apparently met with Turkish Pan-Islamists there; this fact seems to have attracted attention in London, where one of the readers of the report marked that sentence with a triple line in the margin. The remainder of his comments are geopolitical speculation about Japanese intentions in Asia and the world and seem to have nothing to do with concrete intelligence received.

Etherton's report was in fact well received in London when it finally arrived there at the beginning of January. One of the under-secretaries in the India Office, J. A. Simpson, who regularly read the reports on Central Asia, noted that Etherton had no illusions about the real purpose of Bolshevik so-called trade missions; he also noted the effect of distributing the Sheikh-ul-Islam's fatwa. He caught a passing comment about Afghan hostility to their Amir and suggested it be checked and in fact found the survey of pan-Islamism to be of interest to the extent that he copied out Etherton's conclusion quoted above. Simpson was probably the one who marked the Japan-Constantinople connection suggested by the information from Ili. J.E. Shuckburgh, another of the key readers of the Central Asia reports,

62. Etherton, *In the Heart of Asia*, ch. 8.

63. The story of the Central Asian frontier garrisons still needs to be written. The near silence in published documents concerning the period in question seems to be an admission of the lack of a Soviet presence on the border in the first years after 1917. See: *Pogranichnye voiska SSSR 1918–1928. Sbornik dokumentov i materialov* (Moscow, 1973).

64. Etherton had communicated the information on the Japanese yet another time on August 1, 1920 (his no. 214). That report caught the attention of Victor Hillary, an under-secretary in the Foreign Office, who sent a minute back to the India Office on November 4 terming Etherton's information a "most interesting despatch" and suggesting: "It is in my opinion desirable that as close a watch as is feasible should be kept upon the whole system of Japanese agents throughout China. I am aware, of course, that in a large number of the more remote districts there are no British Consular Officers who can obtain and forward first-hand information on such a matter, but it may perhaps be practicable to enlist the co-operation of selected reliable British missionaries or British members of the Chinese Postal and Salt Administration Services to furnish, in confidence, either to yourself or to His Majesty's Consular Officers in China, periodical reports on this subject and I request that you will take such measures as seem to you suitable to obtain trustworthy information of this nature, and to forward it to me from time to time" (BL IOLR L/P&S/10/836, fols. 475-476).

added a question: "I think it might be useful to have this valuable report printed? Do you agree?" And a third of the key under-secretaries, L.D. Wakely, responded: "I think it might be. Some of the other officers engaged in watching Bolshevik methods of propaganda would like copies." A distribution list for (we assume) the then printed version of the report specified two copies were to go to the Foreign Office, two to the Department of Military Intelligence, one to the Military Department and two to other key officials in the India Office who dealt with intelligence and military matters. The printing and distribution were completed by mid-February, nearly four months after Etherton had written his report in Kashgar.

What we see here then is quite typical of Etherton's intelligence reports – a mixture of information that simply repeats that which might have been sent weeks or months earlier, some new reports including ones with great precision even if the data did not necessarily represent any change over earlier information, some claims of the successes of his propaganda or interventions with the Chinese authorities, and a certain amount of rambling geo-political speculation drawn on much older material which at some point he had read and his current ideas about the future of East Asia.[65]

How Serious Was the Bolshevik Threat?

While there is a constant thread in his reports about possible infiltration of Bolshevik agents and propaganda and his strenuous and largely successful efforts to prevent that from happening, it is also worth emphasizing how often Etherton rather bluntly dismisses any real Bolshevik threat at least so long as the regime was struggling for its very existence and was committing atrocities and requisitioning brutally from the local population.[66] In his talk to the Central Asian Society in London on his return in 1923, he stated: "It cannot be said that the movement [for the emancipation of the East] made much progress, for scarcely any of the Central Asian nationalities wished to be emancipated by this particular means, and the propaganda fell mostly on stony ground."[67] True, in his intelligence reports at times his statements seem to contradict one another, possibly a reflection of constantly changing circumstances, but possibly also an indication that even if the situation was not in actuality threatening, he needed to maintain the sense that it was by periodically waving red flags of alarm.[68] There can be no question but

65. One senses that the India Office officials who sifted through all the intelligence reports on Central Asia may occasionally have tired of these sweeping generalizations, especially when they referred back to Etherton's travels in northern Inner Asia in 1909-1910. In a minute attached to the Kashgar Monthly Diary for August 1921, D. T. Monteath noted it contained "Col. Etherton's *obiter dictu* regarding Mongolia's future" (BL IOLR L/P&S/10/976, fol. 289), and in the margin next to some sweeping comments by Etherton about relations between the Chinese government in Beijing and the Governor in Urumqi, someone placed a large question mark. Etherton continued to flog his views about Mongols in sweeping terms in his Mongolia and Muhammadan-Buddhist Confederation (BL IOLR L/P&S/11/215, Reg. no. P2422/22, Etherton report no. 50, 1922), which he sent in response to a question raised in an intelligence report from Port Arthur in July of 1921.

66. For a still-useful scholarly treatment of the challenges faced by the Bolsheviks in Central Asia, see Alexander G. Park, *Bolshevism in Turkestan 1917-1927* (New York, 1957), esp. chs. 1, 6.

67. P. T. Etherton, "Central Asia: Its Rise as a Political and Economic Factor," *Journal of the Central Asian Society* 10/2 (1923), p. 90. In the first instance he attributed this failure to the conservative nature of Islam amongst the people of Central Asia.

68. For the alarmist viewpoint, see for example a telegram about a suspected Bolshevik agent Yusuf Akhun, concerning whose case see below. He refers to his Kashgar Monthly Diary for December 1918, in which he reported on a Bolshevik organization in Kashgar, and then states: "I suggest that entry into India should be refused to all doubtful persons from Chinese Turkistan unprovided with credentials from me. Strenuous efforts for revolution in India are being made by Bolsheviks with the help of Afghans. Ferghana swarms with their agents whose aim is India and China. I have had several suspects put under surveillance and some have been deported. Chinese realise the danger but are terrified of arresting any

that he tried continually to emphasize how important was the work he was doing in Kashgar; this in turn justified requests for maintaining the special budgetary allocations for secret service work.

Here are some examples of his dismissal of Bolshevik threats. In June of 1919, he telegramed "Position of Bolsheviks in Ferghana daily becomes more precarious. They lack food-stuffs, oil, ammunition, money and all kinds of supplies, and this is telling on them [...]" In the Pamirs where the same situation prevailed, a leading Kirghiz beg of the Murghab region assured Etherton that "Kirghiz on Russian Pamirs are decidedly pro-British, and that no credit is given to Bolshevik reports and proclamations concerning us."[69] In a telegram of November 1920, Etherton wrote: "Bolsheviks hold on province [Ferghana] is weakening, and recent events in Bokhara and Afghan intervention have increased feeling against them, whilst detailed account of Bolshevik massacres of Moslems in Baku, which I sent out, has still further aroused that animosity."[70] Discussing the Soviet propaganda schools in Tashkent, he asserted in March 1921: "I certainly think the potential activities of these propagandists are assessed at far beyond their true value. The schools were first opened in the autumn of 1919, but so far as Southern Chinese Turkistan, Ferghana, Semirechia, and the Pamirs are concerned the efforts of these trained agents have been a negligible quantity, and they have met with practically no response."[71] He took some credit for this result and went on to note for Chinese Turkestan: "As in Ferghana the Qazis and Mullahs in Kashgaria have been active in exhorting the people to oppose Bolshevism and to maintain law and order by every means in their power." This report echoed one from the end of the previous year in which he noted the reaction of the local population to the Chinese breakup in Kashgar of a supposed secret Bolshevik organization which Etherton had fingered: "Leading Mullahs, Qazis and merchants have expressed to Taoyin their approbation of Chinese action. Bolsheviks have no sympathizers in Chinese Turkestan and any propaganda on their part will be a failure."[72]

one for fear of rousing Bolsheviks and their sympathisers, coupled with consciousness that their preparations are utterly inadequate to resist any *coup*" (BL IOLR L/P&S/10/741, fol. 119v, Etherton telegram no. 168 to Foreign and Political Department, Government of India, August 22, 1919, received September 2).

69. BL IOLR L/P&S/10/741, fol. 135v, Etherton telegram no. 118 to Foreign and Political Department, Government of India, June 24, 1919, received July 6. Early the next year, the Political Agent in Gilgit confirmed the fact that the population in the Pamirs was pro-British and anti-Bolshevik (loc. cit., fol. 24, Telegram no. 10-C to Foreign Secretary, Government of India and to Resident in Sialkot, Kashmir).

70. BL IOLR L/P&S/10/836, fol. 473, Etherton telegram no. 271 to Foreign and Political Department, Government of India, November 1, 1920, reporting news obtained by an agent who spent over a month in the camp of anti-Bolshevik leader Sher Mohammed.

71. BL IOLR L/P&S/10/836, fol. 405, Etherton report no. 45 to Foreign and Political Department, Government of India, March 21, 1921. Etherton reiterated this view in an almost identical paragraph on the schools in a letter he sent directly to Lord Curzon, the Foreign Secretary, August 26, 1921 (BL IOLR L/P&S/10/836, fol. 333v). Contrast his alarmist assessment of the schools and the propaganda danger a year earlier (BL IOLR L/P&S/10/741, fol. 30v, Etherton telegram no. 17 to Resident in Srinagar, Kashmir, January 8, 1920), and his mention of Tashkent-trained agents being dispatched for India (loc. cit., fol. 14v, Etherton telegram no. 114 to Foreign and Political Department, Government of India, April 20, 1920, received May 6). One might wonder whether the agents destined for Kashgaria were "a negligible quantity" because they were less competent, reflecting Bolshevik priorities in a situation where there were limited human resources for such missions. In a message concerning Bolshevik and Pan-Islamic propaganda in Central Asia, Malleson noted of one Petrov that "while good enough to send to Kashgar, Bokhara or Khiva, he is not good enough for India or Persia" (BL IOLR L/P&S/10/741, fol. 191v, Malleson telegram no. M.D.-0160 to Government of India, May 14, 1919).

72. BL IOLR L/P&S/10/836, fol. 271, Etherton telegram no. 380 to Foreign and Political Department, Government of India, December 29, 1918. In June of the following year, Etherton confidently stated "There are no Bolshevik organisations in Kashgaria, and since they were broken up no attempt has been made to revive them" (BL IOLR L/P&S/10/741, fol. 166v, Etherton telegram no. 103 to Foreign and Political Department, Government of India, June 5, 1919, received June 18).

In August 1921, he wrote directly to the Foreign Minister Lord Curzon a long summary report on Central Asia.[73] To a considerable degree it is a catalogue of Bolshevik failures, for few of which Etherton even tried to claim credit: Despite having several thousand Muslim troops in Ferghana, the Bolsheviks "are not using them for offensive operations, and to all intents and purposes, they may be regarded as non-existent" (fol. 333); an attempt in autumn 1920 to recruit Kyrgyz "proved to be so unpopular that it had to be abandoned"; it is "unlikely" that plans to try to stabilize Bolshevik currency in Turkestan "can be complied with"; in Ferghana "the resistance of the begs and the vast majority of the Mahommedan element continues, and repeated overtures by the Bolsheviks have met with consistent rejection" (fol. 333v); in Semirech'e, "the population remains disaffected" but lacks leadership and supplies to revolt."

In noting that the Bolshevik hold on the Pamirs was "precarious" because of the occupation of key routes by Sher Mohammed, one of the key anti-Bolshevik leaders in the Ferghana region, Etherton added: "Without giving any indication of ulterior motives, I had suggested to Sher Mahomed last autumn that he should exercise control over the Russian Pamirs, as I considered this the only means of checking the Bolshevik designs on India through the Pamirs, apart from my propaganda at that time amongst the people there, and the informal arrangements I had concluded with Russian officers and others in the area in question." (fol. 334). There is no evidence that his advice in fact had any effect on Sher Mohammed's actions, since the latter undoubtedly did what was in his best interest without any prompting – the Pamirs, after all, provided a refuge if Bolshevik military operations in the valleys proved too threatening. He did intercept "several Bolshevik detachments sent from Tashkent in connection with the schemes against adjacent countries, and the hope of the Soviet that great things would eventuate from their campaign directed through the Pamirs seems unlikely of fulfilment."[74] Among the garrisons in the Pamirs which Etherton enumerated for Curzon, the Tajik and Shignani troops "are really anti-Bolshevik at heart, a proportion from amongst these tribes serving only to avoid reprisals and the confiscation of land and property which a negative or hostile attitude on their part might provoke."

In Kashgaria there was "an abortive attempt to foment revolution" which the local authorities foiled by arresting suspects and seizing arms, all on Etherton's suggestion.[75] He then stressed he was being careful not to violate the terms of the trade agreement regarding propaganda while at the same time not "relaxing the customary vigilance, and in conjunction with the Chinese [...] taking such steps as may from time to time be deemed desirable in our joint interests." Surprisingly perhaps, he adds: "I have

73. BL IOLR L/P&S/10/836, fols. 333-336, this copy being a printed version of the letter. The letter is, with few emendations, identical with Etherton's no. 120, sent from Kashgar on August 8, 1921. Among the differences between the two is a statement in the August 8 intelligence report that efforts to create a "Young Kashgarian" party had failed due to the conservatism of the local population about any kind of reform (fol. 348).

74. The news of anti-Bolshevik successes in the Pamirs made its way into a London *Times* report dated Simla, August 8. Its source is clearly Etherton's telegram of July 22, 1921, presumably leaked to the press in Simla. Its publication, along with Etherton's messages of this period raised vigorous discussion in London as to whether what he had advised back in the previous year was somehow in violation of the subsequent trade agreement stipulations about ceasing hostile propaganda and agitation. At least one of the commentators in the India Office criticized the timidity of the Foreign Office's position regarding its stance about the Bolsheviks. For the documents, see BL IOLR L/P&S/10/836, fols. 379ff.

75. Was the only such incident the one he reported in December 1918? See above, n. 73. Etherton's predecessor, George Macartney noted to a London audience in June 1919 that the first Bolshevik proclamations urging Muslims to rise up in China and India, issued at the end of 1917, led to the Chinese taking precautions, "but in reality none were needed; so flat did the crude Bolshevist manifesto fall in Kashgaria that it failed to disturb the country even with a ripple of unrest." See Macartney, "Bolshevism," p. 43.

not detected any anti-British propaganda since the conclusion of the agreement [...] This shows that, so far as Chinese territory is concerned, the Bolsheviks have ceased their anti-British pronouncements, for the time being at any rate" (fols. 334-334v). He concludes this long and interesting letter, which ranges back and forth over material he had reported from well over a year earlier, by elaborating his views on why pan-Turkism and pan-Islamism could not be exploited to unify Central Asians against British interests.[76]

The greatest causes for alarm on the part of Etherton and his superiors in India were not so much what the Bolsheviks were doing on their own territory or what they were fitfully trying to do in Kashgaria, but rather their support for agitators who might be trying raise revolution in British India.[77] The greater the desperation of the Bolsheviks' position in Central Asia, the greater their effort seems to have been to intensify the campaign of anti-British intrigue. What comes out of his reports though is often vague and insubstantial – statements about huge quantities of propaganda being prepared, very little of which makes it beyond the border. In at least one instance, the large batch of propaganda never made it out of Osh, since the White General Mukhanov operating in the Ferghana valley captured it and burned it, something for which Etherton could hardly claim credit even though he tried to do so.[78] Etherton reported somewhat casually in April 1920 that "A friendly Russian with whom I am in touch has seized a further consignment of Bolshevik propaganda on Russian Pamirs destined for India and Afghanistan and has destroyed it."[79] This brought a response radioed to Etherton about two weeks after receipt of the news: "Please telegraph any further information you may have about Bolshevik propaganda in Pamirs. What language was it in and how was it sent? By what route was it proposed to forward it, and against whom was it specifically directed? Who were the agents who brought it and what was their nationality?"[80]

The presence of Mahendra Pratab in an Afghan delegation that was trying to obtain permission to pass through Kashgar on the way to Beijing was one of the more prominent and concrete instances of such concerns. The British had a warrant out for the arrest of this Indian nationalist leader, but as

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76. The threat from Pan-Islamic movements was continually on the minds of officials in the Indian Government, who tended to blame the government in London for adopting policies which in fact heightened Pan-Islamic feeling against Britain. See Ullman, *Anglo-Soviet Relations*, Vol. 3, pp. 328-329. Clearly what Etherton had to say on the subject, which on the face of it seems sensible enough, was read with great interest.

77. Although the book is very 'Soviet' in its emphasis (the author died in 1987, leaving the unpublished manuscript), one can obtain a decent overview of this important subject from G. L. Dmitriev, *Indian Revolutionaries in Central Asia* (London, 2002).

78. BL IOLR L/P&S/10/741, fol. 94v, Etherton report no. 247 to Foreign and Political Department, Government of India, November 21, 1919: "With the temporary defeat of the counter-revolutionaries the Bolsheviks redoubled their propaganda efforts and despatched a number of agents from Tashkend, who had been in special training there. So far, the effect produced by these agents has been insignificant as the result of my counter-propaganda. During the temporary occupation of Osh by the counter-revolutionaries, Mukhanoff secured several large boxes of propaganda recently arrived from Tashkend, and printed in Persian, Turki and Chinese, all of which he destroyed by burning."

79. BL IOLR L/P&S/10/741, fol. 4, Etherton telegram no. 116 to Foreign and Political Department, Government of India, April 3, 1920, received April 16.

80. BL IOLR L/P&S/10/741, fol. 8, Telegram no. 521-S from Foreign Secretary, Government of India, to Etherton, April 29, 1920. Etherton apparently already had anticipated the request, since he had sent a bunch of translations on April 1, noting in his cover letter that he did not "consider it necessary to forward to you copies in every case, since they are mostly in the same strain and contain no new features" (loc. cit., fol. 12v, Etherton no. 113 to Foreign and Political Department, Government of India, April 1, 1920). On numerous other occasions he sent such translations.

Etherton explained, when he actually had the temerity to cross the border to Tashkurghan, Etherton's vice-consul who happened to be there did not dare do anything, since the Afghan delegation was well armed and the Chinese feared an incident. So Pratab was simply turned back.[81] In his book, Etherton used a somewhat embroidered version of this tale as the concluding example of efforts to infiltrate Kashgaria by both Bolsheviks and Afghans. The refusal to let them pass, he noted, "was anathema to the Soviet, and they broadcasted a notice, published in Turki and Russian, that Kashgar must be taken from the Chinese and the British Consul and his officers put to death."[82]

Of course prominent figures such as Mahendra Pratab were known quantities whose credentials as perceived threats to British India were without question. What about the various other anonymous or obscure individuals whom Etherton fingered and the local Chinese authorities arrested? Such incidents were at best infrequent. More importantly, can we be sure such 'agents' were what he claimed? One example which is lavishly documented raises serious doubts. On June 27, 1919, he telegrammed the Resident in Kashgar to warn him that two Chinese subjects "believed to be in touch with the Bolsheviks and on behalf of the latter [...] journeying to India to gain touch with Indian revolutionary party" could be expected to pass through Leh. He had had them shadowed to Yarkand but had been unable to get them arrested. "Evidence is insufficient, the Chinese authorities being unwilling to apprehend any suspect who is not actually guilty of a breach of law."[83] He then provided physical descriptions of the two, Yusuf Akhun, son of Musa Bai of Kashgar, and his brother Ibrahim. When asked for "amplification" of his initial report, he wrote "In spring of this year Yusuf was in Tashkend, and he is known to have been in collusion with Bolsheviks. He was identified with local Bolshevik organisation reported in Kashgar Diary for last December."[84]

When Yusuf showed up in Leh with a group of Kashgarian merchants (his brother never made the trip), the Resident duly interrogated him but turned up nothing suspicious. The Kashgaris indicated they were going on to Amritsar and then Bombay; so he passed this information along to the Punjabi police.[85] The authorities in Kashmir did determine that when they left Srinagar by motor car for

81. Etherton first reported Pratab's arrival at the border and in Tashkurghan in a telegram dated June 7, 1920, which was forwarded to the Department of Military Intelligence in London in a secret cyphered telegram on June 23 (BL IOLR L/P&S/10/836, fols. 419-420). The full Etherton report is in BL IOLR L/P&S/10/836, no. 214, August 1, 1920 fols. 491-493. He provided very precise information on the members of the mission and seems to be somewhat apologetic for having advised the Taoyin to turn it back before he, Etherton, knew Pratab was one of the members, thus missing a possible opportunity to apprehend him. Pratab's movements were obviously a continuing source of British concern. See, for example, the Telegram from the Political Agent in Gilgit sent March 23, 1921 reporting "it is rumored that he will enter Chinese territory with a Chinese representative before the end of March" (BL IOLR L/P&S/10/836, fol. 430). Rumors about Mahendra Pratab were abundant. On February 22, 1922, Etherton wrote: "Mahendra Pertab reported to be in Peking with Afghan representative. Can you confirm?" On the cover minute to this file, D.T. Monteath wrote: "Is it worth while asking the G. of I. to telegraph to disabuse Col. Etherton's mind of any impression that M.P. can be in the East at present?" The response to this in another annotation was: "I think we might. He is certainly in Germany" (BL IOLR L/P&S/10/837, Register no. 959 P 2995/19).

82. Etherton, *In the Heart of Asia*, p. 239.

83. BL IOLR L/P&S/10/741, fol. 139v, Etherton telegram no. 120 to Resident, Kashmir, June 27, 1919, enclosed with his no. 125 to Foreign and Political Department, Government of India.

84. BL IOLR L/P&S/10/741, fol. 119v, Etherton telegram no. 168 to Foreign and Political Department, Government of India, August 22, 1919, received September 2. This was in response to telegram no. 1208-S to him from the Foreign Secretary, Foreign and Political Department, Government of India, August 21, 1919, which was also repeated to the Resident, Kashmir (loc. cit., fols. 113v-114).

85. BL IOLR L/P&S/10/741, fol. 116v, Memo no. 425-C from Resident, Kashmir, to Foreign Secretary, Foreign and Political Department, Government of India, August 22, 1919.

Rawalpindi the suspects had with them a substantial amount of gold, silver and ruble notes. The Punjabi police decided to detain them in Rawalpindi and confiscated the ruble notes. The suspects also had correspondence with commercial agents in Amritsar and planned to stay there with a certain Imamdin, who apparently was a subject of interest to the Indian police. Further, this suggested some connection between the Yusuf group and a party, "probably Russian Tatars," that the Calcutta secret service had indicated would be arriving in Bombay and then traveling to Amritsar.[86] The exact outcome of the affair is somewhat unclear – maybe in the end Yusuf and his companions were 'remitted' to the tender mercies of Chinese justice. As of February 1920, the Chinese authorities were wondering where Yusuf was and whether his rubles had been sent back. The Indian government responded that he was detained temporarily in Rawalpindi due to snow and his rubles were on deposit there.[87] In short, no hard evidence was to be had, it is not clear that the suspects were ever arrested and formally charged, and at most the rubles they were carrying were confiscated but then apparently to be returned with them to China.

Was this not simply a well-endowed commercial mission? The whole incident reminds us of Kipling's *Kim* where we never can be sure how much substance there is to the shadowy Russian agents who lurk in the background of the story. Etherton did use the suspicions he raised in his initial message about Yusuf to propose that no one should be allowed to cross from Kashgaria into India without an identification document provided by him.[88] In support of this idea, he cited both the Yusuf case and sweepingly alarmist indications of a Ferghana that "swarms with their agents whose aim is India and China."

How Important Was Etherton's Battle against Bolshevism?

Overall, it is difficult to share Peter Hopkirk's enthusiasm regarding the importance of Etherton's secret service political activity. The record seems in fact to be rather mixed when one takes into account the rather narrowly focused goals of his superiors and their ability to obtain information more rapidly and perhaps more accurately from other sources. Much of what he reported was simply irrelevant if his government could not even make up its mind about what policy to adopt toward the Soviet regime. With the conclusion of the Trade Agreement in 1921, much of what Etherton had been trying to do on the propaganda front was also forbidden. One must ask too, how really serious was the Bolshevik threat to set the East ablaze? That there was an intent to do so is undeniable.[89] However, the heat of their propaganda rarely seems to have resulted in flame. They were so hard pressed in Central Asia to survive that they were barely in a position to carry out such a program. Etherton himself would conclude his book with the prognostication (which proved very wrong) that the Bolshevik regime would soon collapse.[90] Their self-destructive policies in their dealings with the local population reinforced its indifference to the Bolshevik's message, so that one has to be somewhat skeptical about how necessary

86. Much of this detail is from the extended summary of the case provided by P.M. Stewart, a Special Officer, to Foreign and Political Department, Government of India entitled "The Kashgari Bolsheviks" (BL IOLR L/P&S/10/741, fol. 123-123v, Memo no. 7120-C, Simla, September 3, 1919).

87. BL IOLR L/P&S/10/741, fol. 38, Etherton telegram no. 69 to Foreign and Political Department, Government of India, February 20, 1920, received March 1; with response in Government of India no. 428, March 19, 1920. Here the reference is to Yusuf Khan, but apparently it is the same Yusuf as in the other documents.

88. BL IOLR L/F&P/10/741, fol. 119v, Etherton telegram no. 168, August 22, 1919, quoted above, n. 68.

89. See, for example, the documents in Xenia Joukoff Eudin and Robert C. North, eds. *Soviet Russia and the East 1920-1927. A Documentary Survey* (Stanford, 1957).

90. Etherton, *In the Heart of Asia*, pp. 296-297. We can hardly fault him for his mistake. Think of all the experts who were taken by surprise when the Soviet Union finally did collapse in 1991.

and effective Etherton's propaganda efforts were. Where the Bolsheviks were having so hard a time convincing Muslims to come over to their side and could not trust those who did enroll in their army to do their duties, a *fatwa* from the Sheikh-ul-Islam was hardly needed to get the Qazis and Mullahs to preach against the Soviet regime.[91] It is true that some of the Bolshevik propaganda – for example, the claim that Britain had desecrated the Muslim Holy Places – needed to be refuted, as Etherton diligently did. But a population that in the first instance was politically indifferent and, secondly, probably more inclined in any event to side with the British, hardly needed his guidance.

The same may be suggested about the local Chinese officialdom. Etherton's messages to Beijing occasionally may have resulted in the Chinese government's warning its far-flung minions to tighten border security, as did his direct representations to the Taoyin in Kashgar. But were the Chinese quite so spineless and ill-informed as Etherton would have us believe? There is evidence that at least some of their officials in border districts on their own initiative were engaging in intrigues to secure the allegiance of the local population on the other side of the border.[92] Only a few months after Etherton had departed, his successor Skrine reported:

> The Chinese authorities have at last woken up to the dangers of shutting their eyes to the brisk trade which has been going on via the Sungek–Uzgend route with Bolshevist Ferghana. The Chinese frontier official at Sungek was replaced early in the month, and several merchants who have been illicitly trading with Andijan have been imprisoned and their goods confiscated. As these measures have been taken by the Titai [that is, Ma Titai, the 'despotic' military commander of the Kashgar district – *DW*] and not by the Taoyin, they obviously emanate from the Governor at Urumchi; whenever the latter requires any action to be taken in Kashgaria which he cannot trust the Taoyin with, he invariably acts through the Titai. The governor has excellent reasons for keeping the Russian frontier of Kashgaria effectively closed.[93]

While we need to recognize that the Chinese could have toughened their policies (perhaps in part to Etherton's prodding), Skrine's blunt assessment in one of his tirades against Etherton in 1923 rings true:

> The Chinese won't have any traders or commissions or consuls or anybody from the Russian side in the place [southern Xinjiang – *DW*]. The frontier is certainly carefully guarded [...] The same applies to the Bokhara frontier [...] I help the Chinese with information and advice, but I don't claim any credit for their policy of exclusion of Bolsheviks and Pan-Turanians; that is mainly due to the extreme jealousy of the Chinese about their frontiers. They won't let anybody in they can possibly help letting in. Etherton, of course, claimed credit for everything they did in this line; whenever a Bolo [Bolshevik – *DW*] agent was turned back, E. wired to India and Peking saying that he had 'induced' or 'advised' them to do it. All balderdash, for there was nobody to tell

91. On the early relations between the Soviet regime and Muslims in Central Asia, see Shoshana Keller, *To Moscow, Not Mecca. The Soviet Campaign Against Islam in Central Asia, 1917–1941* (Westport; London, 2001), ch. 2.

92. BL IOLR L/P&S/10/741, fol. 154v, Etherton report no. 75 to Foreign and Political Department, Government of India, April 21, 1919: "Diwana Shah Ishakaga Beg has written to the Kirghiz of the Aktash district on the Russian Pamirs (about 45 miles west by south of Tashkurghan recommending them to come under Chinese protection. This has probably been done at the instigation of the Chinese authorities in Sarikol who are constantly intriguing with the Kirghiz across the frontier against the Russians." In the same report he goes on to mention an agent, the Tajik Toksa Bai, who had been sent by the Chinese authorities to the Wakhan and Badakhshan in the previous autumn apparently on their own initiative.

93. BL IOLR L/P&S/10/976. My quote is from Skrine's draft copy of the diary in BL IOLR Mss EurF 154/40, Diary for November 1922, p. [8].

Gov[ernmen]t that it wasn't E. – hence his reputation [...][94]

Indeed, without exception, Etherton's claims to effectiveness are those he made himself, frequent enough in his reports from Kashgar but then given an exaggerated twist when he published his account of those years in 1925. He alarmist verbiage might well be subjected to the same kind of deflation that he undertook in describing the centerpiece of Stewart Blacker's book on his experiences on the Kashgar mission back in 1918. Blacker devoted a major section of his tale to his pursuit through the rugged Pamirs of a group of infiltrators who were assumed to be enemy agents.[95] Although he finally cornered them in Yarkand, he never revealed exactly who they were and leaves the reader with the impression of his having accomplished a great service in performance of his duty. Here is Etherton's version of the events, cleverly written to display his own great perspicacity and, while praising Blacker, put him in his place:

> At Tashkurghan they had news of *soi-disant* German and Turkish agents who were reported to have crossed the frontier into Chinese territory and to be making for Yarkand. The number of these agents and their followers was given as two hundred, but when I received the news I felt at the time it was the usual Sarikoli exaggeration, especially in view of the reports regarding the arrival of the original mission in Kashgar, when our numbers ran into many thousands and we were credited with cavalry, artillery, giant birds that vomited shot and shell and every kind of warlike appliance. However, Major Blacker wisely set off in pursuit, in the course of which he crossed sixteen passes, none of which was less than fifteen thousand feet in height, and finally ran down the party, consisting of nine Afghan subjects intent on opium smuggling, in a serai in Yarkand [...][96]

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94. BL IOLR Mss EurF 154/9, Clarmont Skrine to Helen Skrine, March 14, 1923, pp. 1-2. Curiously, in contrast to his various assertions in some of his intelligence reports and in his book about Chinese inability to face up to foreign threats on their own, Etherton told the Central Asian Society in January 1923 that "the basic principles of Chinese policy in Turkistan is freedom from foreign interference" (Etherton, "Central Asia," p. 90). In his comments at the end of Etherton's talk Sir John Jordan, who had recently been the British Ambassador in Beijing, took the speaker to task for not making enough of the standoff between Russia and China, one in which the Chinese, with their "great staying power and tenacity" were more than able to hold their own (pp. 100-101).

95. Blacker, *On Secret Patrol in High Asia*. Curiously, Blacker never once mentions Bailey by name, ostensibly because of concerns about the political sensitivity of Bailey's time in Soviet Central Asia, even though by the time the book appeared Bailey had already lectured in London on his experiences. Possibly the silence reflects as much as anything the fact he and Bailey apparently did not get along. Swinson, *Beyond the Frontiers*, notes (p. 137): "Bailey did not take to him [Blacker], and indeed regarded him as a complete liability." Bailey's talk before the Central Asian Society in London in November 1920 was published as [F. M. Bailey], "In Russian Turkestan under the Bolsheviks," *Journal of the Central Asian Society* 8/1 (1921), pp. 49-69. In a letter to his mother from Bhutan on June 23, 1922, Bailey wrote: "You sent me the enclosed cutting, but the back of it was a review of Blacker's book on Turkestan. He was under me, but I had to kick him once for being useless and other reasons. You only sent one half the review. I wish it had all been there. I have not seen the book but he absolutely ignores me, and Sir G. Macartney has written to the 'Times' about it with reference to the review but I don't think they put his letter in [...]" (BL IOLR Mss EurF 157/182). Macartney sent Bailey a copy of *The Times* review and his own letter to *The Times* on May 24, 1922 (BL IOLR Mss EurD 658).

96. Etherton, *In the Heart of Asia*, p. 116. Etherton wrote Bailey from Kashgar on Feb. 3, 1922: "I return under separate cover your R.G.S. journal containing the lecture by Blacker. It is inaccurate in many respects and gives one the impression that they were chasing German agents whereas they were seven opium smugglers, all Badakshis and they had one old Russian rifle between the lot. However, I suppose the other yarn made better reading" (BL IOLR Mss EurF 157/232). The lecture referred to is: L. V. S. Blacker, "Travels in Turkistan 1918-1920," *The Geographical Journal* 58/3 (1921), pp. 178-197. In his review of Blacker's book (*Journal of the Central Asian Society* 9/4 [1922], pp. 247-248), T. H. Holdich seems to accept the idea that these were Afghan propagandists working for the Bolsheviks, but he notes the oddity that Blacker "leaves us

The Denouement of Etherton's Kashgar Career

In order to understand why Etherton filled his book with so much evidence of his own perspicacity and diligence, it is necessary to examine why he never returned to Kashgar. When he took leave from the post in 1922 he had every intention of returning. Certainly at the time he left there is no indication that his superiors had any reason to be dissatisfied with his performance.

The man who exposed Etherton was his successor Clarmont P. Skrine, who, ironically, has always lived in Etherton's shadow. Skrine had no sooner arrived in Kashgar, ostensibly for only a year until Etherton returned, when he discovered that the financial accounts in the consulate were in total chaos. A stickler for proper procedure and accounting, Skrine tried to make some sense out of the records. As he dug further into them though, he became convinced that Etherton had cooked the books to cover up the use of government funds for personal purchases and to engage in speculation on the differences in exchange rates in order to line his pockets. Within a month of arriving in Kashgar, before submitting his official complaint, Skrine sought his father's advice. He sent home a scathing indictment of Etherton, not only for the latter's financial dealings, but regarding other matters in which he had besmirched the image of Britain, which as a servant of the Crown he was sworn to uphold. This initial diatribe on Skrine's part was merely the opening salvo of a continuing litany of complaint about Etherton, all of which may raise questions about Skrine's objectivity. There is class prejudice here, a clash of egos, and an exaggerated sense of holding the higher moral ground, even if it all seems to have been motivated by a genuine passion about the service ethos of the officials of the British Crown. There is no reason to think that Skrine was trying to prevent Etherton from returning to Kashgar in order to keep the consular post for himself – he fully had expected to go home after a year (he himself was overdue for leave), and while he admitted he enjoyed being in Xinjiang, he became impatient when the appointment of a successor was postponed.[97]

While he was careful not to put all his accusations into official reports, Skrine seems to have been quite open and honest in his letters home. Thus he expressed his disgust at evidence (supported by interrogation of the consular staff) that Etherton engaged in sexual dalliance with the local prostitutes in the official residence in Kashgar, in the process both offending the local population and making the consul a laughing stock. For what it is worth, the somewhat priggish Skrine produced a club-room anecdote to confirm this aspect of Etherton's character:

> [...] I haven't heard much good of him from anyone who knows anything about him except Fitzmaurice, who idolises him. Ask Col. Charles Smith, who was P[olitical] A[gent] Gilgit when he and Bailey and Blacker passed through in '18; ask Bailey and Blacker themselves! You'll hear something. Apropos, 'Smith of Asia' is very amusing about him. You ought to hear him taking off Etherton. 'I s'y, Smith,' said he at Gilgit in '18, 'D'yer know anything abaht the wimmin at Kashgar? I've been told they're top-'ole.' Smith told him that as far as he knew that was correct. 'By Jove,' says E. with a sly look and a jerk of his thumb over his shoulder in the direction of Kashgar, 'Wot a lovely time I'm going to 'ave!' And a month later, while the final death-struggles of the world-war were taking place before Chateau Thierry and Amiens, E. was having his lovely time – one which went on for three and a half years at the expense of the poor old impoverished British Empire.[98]

to conjecture where those Afghans came from and what was their real purpose."

97. See, for example, BL IOLR Mss EurF 154/9, Clarmont Skrine to Helen Skrine, Kashgar, April 19, 1923, p. 2.

98. BL IOLR Mss EurF 154/39, Clarmont Skrine to Frank Skrine August 23, 1922. Elsewhere in the letter, Skrine laid out the specifics of the sexual scandals, in part, however, attributing the situation to the lax morals of the local society:

Of course as Skrine (and any reader of Kipling) has to have known, Victorian morals were not always observed by Government of India officials, and, for the most part, those in power never cared to discipline people for the personal lives.[99] A handsome bachelor was probably going to have some fun in Kashgar, even if in the process it would be difficult to keep the details from local gossip-mongers. As Skrine would soon learn, there were worse things one might do to offend local sensibilities, such as the conversion campaign which Swedish missionaries stupidly prosecuted during the month of Ramadan.[100]

Skrine's occasional critical comments in his reports regarding Etherton's policies and his active prosecution of the case about financial malfeasance received a mixed response from some of the commentators in the India Office. The most picturesque of these was a marginal annotation made in London on a printed copy of Skrine's Kashgar Monthly Diary for June 1923: "Why again drag in Col. Etherton? Mr. Skrine should have been born in Corsica."[101] In the very extended official file of the investigation into the allegations about Etherton's wrongdoing, Under-Secretary of State in the India Office Political Department, L.D. Wakely, noted: "Consideration of the case [...] is hampered by the fact that Mr. Skrine writes with an obvious adverse bias, in the spirit of a detective rather than of an impartial enquirer and so throws an atmosphere of suspicion over everything." He then asterisked the word 'detective' and noted, "I should rather have said a prosecuting counsel."[102] Yet Skrine also had his defenders, notably Evelyn B. Howell, at the time the Deputy Secretary to the Foreign and Political Department of the Government of India, who wrote Skrine upon conclusion of the investigation:

We have told the Secretary of State that it is not proposed to reappoint Etherton to Kashgar. This

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"What did Etherton do directly he found himself alone here? He started bringing prostitutes into the Consulate, and he kept it up the whole time he was here, until our name stank. And the Swedish missionary ladies, as one of them hinted to D. [Doris, Skrine's wife—DW], were ashamed to be classed as Europeans and 'Sahibs' with him! If he had contracted a temporary marriage with a girl, according to the local custom, and had kept her the whole time, it wouldn't have been so bad [...] But he had different bazar women in every week or so, employing an old so-called 'mullah' who is a pensioner of the Consulate as a pimp [...]" He included a shorter version of this statement in a personal letter to Evelyn B. Howell, who was sympathetically receiving Skrine's material about Etherton in the Government of India offices in Delhi. See the excerpt of Skrine's letter to Howell, January 1, 1923, in BL IOLR Mss EurF 154/39. See also his letter to his father, BL IOLR Mss EurF 154/9, Clarmont Skrine to Frank Skrine, May 10, 1923, p. 3, where he further elaborates that Etherton was being misled into thinking the ladies being brought to the consulate were daughters of the Kashgar elite. The trafficking in women declined when the mullahs "began tying E's lady-loves on to the backs of donkeys, face to tail, and whipping them through the town." Should we believe this? Hard to say, but clearly Skrine did.

99. See, for example, David Gilmour, *The Ruling Caste: Imperial Lives in the Victorian Raj* (New York, 2006), pp. 152, 284-289.

100. See the extended account of the incident in BL IOLR L/P&S/10/976, Kashgar Monthly Diary for March-April 1923, pp. 5-6.

101. BL IOLR L/P&S/10/976. The comment may be something of an overreaction to the point Skrine was making, but it shows the degree to which his obsession with Etherton had come to seem excessive.

102. BL IOLR L/P&S/11/228, minute paper of October 27, 1923. This file is entitled in the India Office inventories: "Colonel Etherton: Unethical practices as Consul-General at Kashgar; not to be recommended for Political employment elsewhere. 29 May 1900–20 Aug. 1930." At one time a copy of apparently the same file had been in the Foreign Office archive of the Public Record Office. Lars-Erik Nyman noted: "The documents from the disciplinary proceedings are all properly indexed, but they are removed from the files. The rumors [of Etherton's being disciplined for 'an illicit currency deal'—p. 64] have been collected from a very reliable anonymous source" (Nyman, *Great Britain*, p. 147n7). Did Nyman begin his work prior to Skrine's death and consult with him? He does give credit to Pamela Nightingale, Skrine's collaborator on the book about Macartney. Should we read anything sinister into the disappearance of the documents from the Foreign Office archives?

> decision has been taken solely on the ground of his dealings in exchange. The other points in the count are being separately dealt with. It is a sordid and disgusting business of a kind which tends very much to inflame one's anger and warp one's judgment. A man who does not play the game at the outposts is a traitor to our order.[103]

Etherton, a "traitor to our order," is a far cry from Etherton the hero of the lonely struggle against Bolshevism in Kashgar.

Apart from issues of morality, what exactly did he do wrong? The investigation centered on the consular accounts, which were formally audited in India to determine the accuracy of Skrine's claims.[104] He had made a number of accusations, one of the most important ones, alluded to by Howell, concerning the way that Etherton had been manipulating exchange rates in China to make a personal profit on the cashing of consular letters of credit in rupees in exchange for Chinese currency. The audit confirmed Skrine's accusations regarding a consistent patterns of erasures and apparent fudging of figures and indeed raised serious questions about deliberate falsification of the records by Etherton. Apart from the exchange rate issue, among the questions were ones concerning purchases of items he may have turned to his personal use, a consistent habit of drawing on consulate funds for his personal use and only after long intervals reimbursing the consular account, even while he was depositing funds in his own bank account in India, and at least one blatant instance of his claiming to have converted funds at one rate, when in fact the rate had been different. One portion of the records that raised particular questions was the extraordinary expenditure charged to Secret Service operations in 1921–22, for which there was no full accounting.[105] A second audit was much more cautious in its conclusions, but still found several instances that documented Etherton had wrongly used government funds.

Whatever the degree of Skrine's bias, the upshot was that an independent examination of the record determined Etherton had been guilty of misconduct. Financial malfeasance was in fact practically the only thing that inevitably would result in sanctions for those in the Indian Civil Service.[106] At the same time, the Government of India felt it would be difficult to make a court case against him, and presumably they were not anxious that the matter develop into a public scandal that would damage the image of the Indian Civil Service. Thus they considered but backed away from the idea of a formal inquiry (which would have had to take place in Kashgar and India, with Etherton present) and a

103. BL IOLR Mss EurF 154/39, excerpt copy of letter from E. B. Howell to Clarmont Skrine, dated Curzon House, Delhi, March 20, 1923.

104. A printed version of the audit is in BL IOLR L/P&S/11/228: Preliminary Report of an Examination of the Original Accounts Records of the British Consulate-General at Kashgar for the period 1918 to 1922 (Delhi, 1924).

105. Note that Wakely, in his minute paper of October 27, 1923 (BL IOLR L/P&S/11/228) felt that Skrine's claims about misuse of Secret Service funds were "mere suspicion." In the draft of a response to questions the Government of India had raised about his accusations (pp. 6-7), Skrine indicated clearly the basis for his suspicions, which included interrogating agents as to how much they were being paid and determining that much of Etherton's intelligence had been obtained gratis. See BL IOLR Mss EurF 154/39. Etherton's own justifications for the special allocations can be seen in, e.g., his request of May 13, 1920, that he be allowed to spend 4700 rupees to reward his agents: "Various persons here and elsewhere in Chinese and Russian territory have rendered good service in connection with Bolshevik propaganda and have cooperated with me in my counter propaganda and in our interests generally. In order to enable me to retain my influence over these persons and for the good effect it will have I propose to make them monetary and other gifts [...]" (BL IOLR L/P&S/11/175, Reg. no. P5814/1920). Only 3000 R was approved in this case. On a separate occasion he requested permission to present gifts of saddlery to the Chinese commandant of Kashgar and several frontier officials and asked that six sets of regulation gear be sent. The response was that regulation equipment could not be sent but an equivalent would be and 600 rupees charged to the consular budget.(loc. cit., Reg. no. P5909/1920).

106. Gilmour, *Lives*, p. 149.

possible Court Martial. Etherton was told to reimburse the government for a not inconsiderable sum of some 1000 rupees; he did so, "in settlement of the amount alleged to be due from me," in other words without admitting any guilt.[107] He was informed that he could remain in the military service (his original appointment before Kashgar) but that he could not expect further employment in the Indian Political Service. So he was barred from resuming his position in Kashgar. The India Office debated whether to commend Etherton, since it had "no reason to doubt that [he] did good work at Kashgar," but decided "the circumstances will not be held to render it appropriate." Understandably, as the same minute paper reported, "The absence of any such commendation is, as Col. Etherton has respectfully mentioned in conversation, a point on which he feels very sore."[108] Etherton resigned from active military service a month later.[109] The consequences for him re-surfaced in 1930, when an inquiry came to the India Office as to whether Etherton's record would merit his appointment as Governor of Western Australia. Understandably, the answer was a definite "No."[110]

In his defense in 1924 and foreshadowing the theme of his book, Etherton provided the following self-justification, which was not quite to the point of some of the accusations and ultimately not accepted as valid:

> I would respectfully submit that with regard to the monetary transactions and financial expenditure on behalf of the Government, despite the inevitable difficulties arising from their being carried out in four different currencies, it was my consistent endeavour to economise in every direction. This I submit is proved by the large sums which were saved the Government throughout the years 1918, 1919, 1920, and 1921 when I was confronted with Bolshevik, Afghan, and enemy propaganda, intrigue, missions and agents of every kind whose aim was directly against India and the borderland, and who, although I was given a free hand with regard to expenditure, were successfully combatted with a minimum outlay, when large amounts could have been expended had one been so inclined.[111]

To read between the lines, what he seems to be saying without admitting guilt is, forgive me any small transgressions, for I was laboring in a good cause, and, even if you say I pocketed some money due the government, I saved it even more. The publication of his book a year after this letter, with its full repertoire of claims about his single-handedly defending British interests in Central Asia by his anti-Bolshevik activities in Kashgar may be seen as a further effort to justify his actions and ensure his place in history.

Etherton's Book as Political Discourse and Self-serving Propaganda

Etherton surely knew of the regulations governing conduct by all officers in Indian Government Service,

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107. BL IOLR L/P&S/11/228, Reg. no. P231/1923, Etherton letter of November 1, 1924.

108. BL IOLR L/P&S/11/228, Reg. no. P231/1923, Minute paper of November 6, 1924, initialed by L.D. Wakely.

109. BL IOLR L/P&S/11/228 Reg. no. P231/1923, the review of his service record obtained from the Military Department, compiled August 8, 1930, indicates he retired December 7, 1924. The file makes the perhaps significant remark: "We have only one of his Confidential Reports in 1924 in which his C. O. and superior officers say they do not know him." Cf. Skrine's comment in a letter home: "Etherton has no friends in the F. and P. [Foreign and Political Department], only some enemies such as Col. Terence Keyes, whose opinion of him is unprintable; nor has he any real friends even at Army Headquarters, though he may have some acquaintances" (BL IOLR Mss EurF 154/9, Clarmont Skrine to Frank Skrine, May 10, 1923 p. 1). A quick glance through Keyes's letters to his family in BL IOLR Mss EurF 131/44 did not turn up any comments on Etherton.

110. BL IOLR L/P&S/11/228, Reg. no. P231/1923, Letter of Sir M. Seton to E.H. Marsh, August 20, 1930.

111. BL IOLR L/P&S/11/228, Reg. no. P231/1923, P.T. Etherton to L.D. Wakely, June 14, 1924.

namely that "all communications to the Press or public of official matters, are strictly forbidden, unless made with the prior consent of the Government of India in the Foreign and Political Department."[112] In fact soon after his return from Kashgar he had requested permission to give an 'interview' to *The Times* on Russian Central Asia and Bolshevism and even provided a text to be vetted. Permission was denied, since this was considered to be against departmental regulations.[113] By retiring from the service, in a situation where the regulations apparently had not yet been updated to apply to retirees, he was legally able to publish his book, but not without raising the hackles of those who later reviewed the investigation file about his conduct in Kashgar. In response to a question raised about his having incurred official displeasure possibly for having published without sanctions, one of the annotators wrote: "There was no correspondence with Col. Etherton about the publication of his books; he published them without consulting either the F[oreign] O[ffice] or us. He had already retired from the C.A. He should have consulted as a matter of propriety; we can hardly say he was under any definite obligation to do so."[114]

Indeed, had he still been in the service, surely he would have been censured and perhaps even worse, for major parts of the book draw very explicitly on his official intelligence reports, many of them classified as confidential or secret. That he did so was more than a matter of ego (with which he was well endowed) and rescuing his career and tarnished reputation.[115]Apart from his not having received a commendation for his political service at Kashgar, where he may genuinely have believed that he had kept Bolshevism at bay, he held emphatic and hard-line political views about Bolshevism. He was undoubtedly angry at a government which had shown on too many occasions that it was "soft" on the Soviet regime. On numerous occasions he underscored a belief that even a modicum of British support might bring down the Soviet regime in Central Asia, and he confidently predicted that even without that, the regime would probably soon collapse. His book then has a place in the political discourse of the time and the arguments that had divided the upper echelons of British government ever since the Bolshevik Revolution.

One might admire Etherton for crafting a compelling tale, carefully rearranging evidence to provide dramatic climaxes, and inflating his sources with generally not so subtle hyperbole. His ability to produce

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112. See: *Manual of Instructions to Officers of Political Department*, 2nd ed. (Simla, 1924). The copy of this book which I am using from the University of Washington Library has various printed updates pasted throughout, generally undated. One here is significant in its specificity, that the rules apply "with special force to all Political Officers. At no time, either during active service or after reitrement, may they, without the express permission of Government, publish any book or make any contribution to the Press on a subject connected with the official duties performed by them or divulge information acquired in the performance of those duties [...] Steps have already been taken by the Foreign Office to make it clear to officers of the Indian Political Department appointed to Consular posts under the Foreign Office that they are subject to the same restrictions in this respect as are members of the regular Consular Service." And a further addendum indicated that "Former members of the Indian Political Service or of those Services which are now incorporated in the Indian Political Service, remain subject to the Indian Official Secrets Acts as regards all confidential information obtained by them while members of the Service." One is tempted to read these in part as a response to Etherton's publication of his book, although there is no direct evidence here that the two are connected.

113. BL IOLR L/P&S11/218, Reg. no. P3369/1922.

114. BL IOLR L/P&S/11/228.

115. Etherton's ego raised Skrine's hackles; one can easily see why from the excerpt of a letter to Skrine from Etherton after the latter's return to London, which contains a catalogue of the important individuals who received him there (BL IOLR Mss EurF 154/39). This appears to be a copy Skrine forwarded to his mother in a letter of November 1922 from Yarkand. See BL IOLR Mss EurF 154/8 (the letter is missing the opening page; it is located just before the letter of November 12, 1922, from Kargalik).

the book in a relatively short period of time is understandable when we see how he used his sources. Apart from cannibalizing his official reports, he paraphrases or quotes a number of sections from his first book on his travels in 1910–1911. He also draws upon some of the obvious older accounts about Central Asia, without, however, telling the reader that he is presenting material more than a quarter century old and perhaps in need of updating. Thus we find paraphrases of material from Przhevalskii (1879), Kuropatkin (1882), Lansdell (1885), and Hedin (1899).[116] This of itself might not be bad, since, after all, it shows he did a certain amount of reading for context, but a close comparison of select passages reveals distortions and perhaps some deliberate invention. An excellent example is where in his ethnographic overview of Xinjiang he discusses the Dulani, a small group that he actually did visit, and the Lopliks, the people of the Lop Nor region, which he did not, even though in passing he conveys the impression that some of what he relates on the latter is his first-hand observations.[117] Where his sources often are neutral in judgment, Etherton chooses to use the same information to show primitiveness. He adds anecdotes about sexual license which his sources apparently do not contain and even seem to contradict.

Unfortunately this cavalier treatment of sources and exaggeration is not confined to his contextualization but is evident in his re-telling of the official tale of his mission in Kashgar, as examples cited earlier demonstrate. And in itself the official, documented record contains more than a little exaggeration and inflation of a small number of examples to create an impression of an unrelenting assault by the Bolsheviks on Xinjiang. In its tone, as well as its polemical nature then, *In the Heart of Asia* (1925) is vastly different from his first book on his travels in 1910–1911. This is not an account of sport and an exciting journey. He is writing of a world in crisis, of the confrontation between good and evil. The book is a rhetorical excursus by an author with an axe to grind. Unfortunately, this fact seems to have been missed by readers through the decades, be they Soviet historians intent on denouncing Etherton and the evil machinations of the British Empire or authors such as Hopkirk who are nostalgic for the days when British heroes fought the Russian menace.[118] The activities not only of Etherton but all those heroes and their opponents (who are even less well served) need close scrutiny if we are to understand the events in Central Asia in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[119]

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116. Of these, in 1911 apparently he used only the Lansdell, for part of his description of the Ili Valley. The books are: N. Prejevalsky. *From Kulja across the Tian Shan to Lob-Nor*. Transl. by E. Delmar Morgan (London, 1879); A.N. Kuropatkin, *Kashgaria: (Eastern or Chinese Turkistan) Historical and Geographical Sketch of the Country; Its Military Strength, Industries, and Trade* (Calcutta, 1882); Henry Lansdell, *Russian Central Asia Including Kuldja, Bokhara, Khiva and Merv*. 2 vols. (Boston, 1885); Sven Hedin, *Through Asia*. 2 vols. (New York; London, 1899). Etherton undoubtedly consulted other sources, for which I have not attempted an exhaustive search.

117. The passages in question are in: *In the Heart of Asia*, pp. 145, and 90-94. Even if Etherton did not reciprocate in his comments about Blacker, the latter gave Etherton's book a laudatory review, his only criticism being: "One cannot help regretting that Colonel Etherton does not put forward some definite practical plan for staying the Bolshevik tide in Asia." See the review in: *Journal of the Central Asian Society* 13/2 (1926), pp. 175-176.

118. An example of the Soviet use of Etherton is A.Kh. Babakhodzhaev, *Proval agressivnoi politiki angliiskogo imperializma v Srednei Azii v 1917–1920 gg.* (Tashkent, 1956), pp. 68-71, 126.

119. Skrine's own account of his term in Kashgar, the antithesis of Etherton's in its being deliberately a-political, also requires 'de-construction'. See my "The Making of *Chinese Central Asia*," *Central Asian Survey* 26/2 (2007): 235-50.

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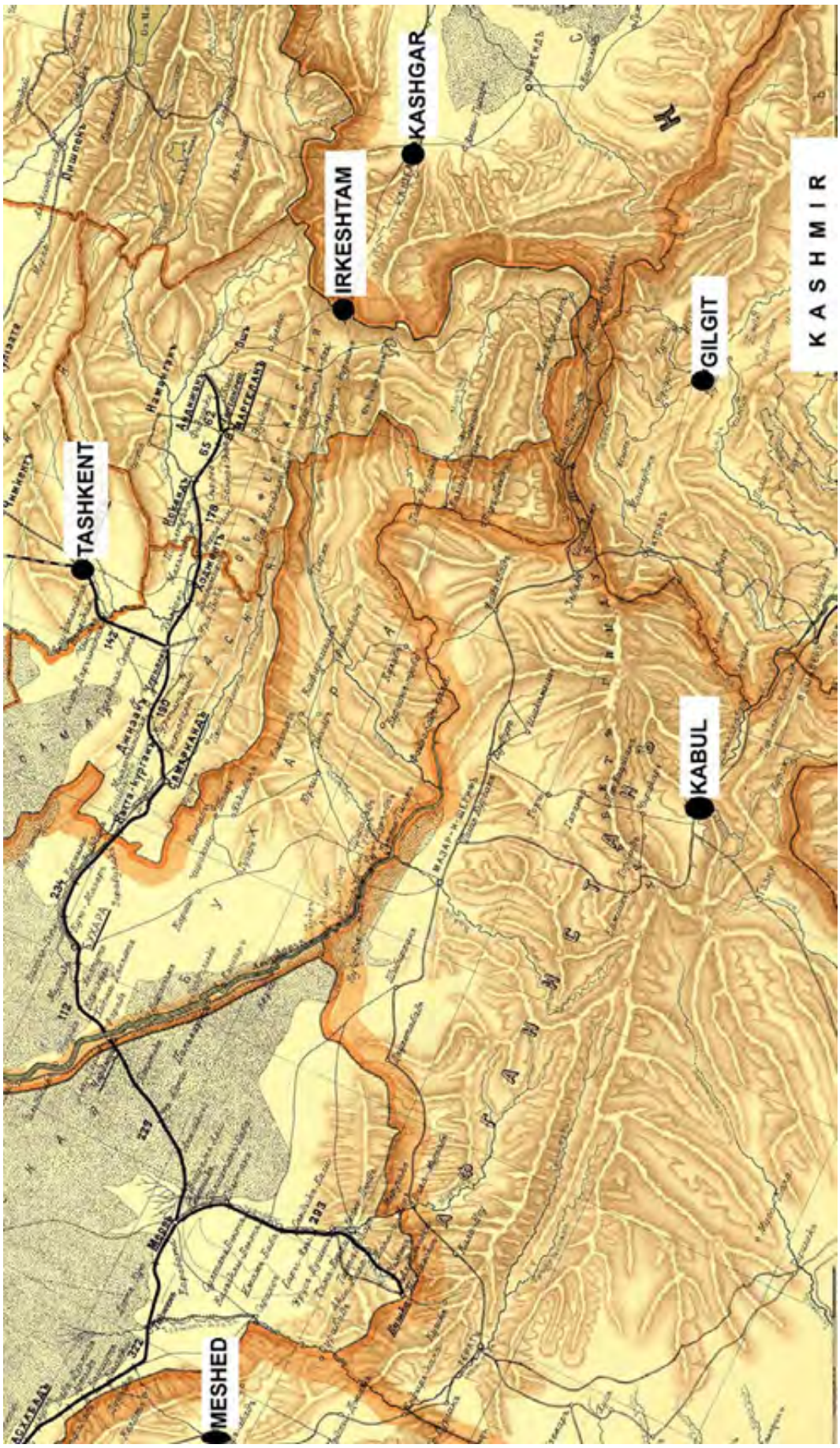
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