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Sir Aurel Stein

Proceedings of the
British Museum Study Day
23 March 2002

**Edited by
Helen Wang**

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List of Contributors	iv
Preface	v
Sir Aurel Stein and his Hungarian Background Éva Apor	1
Aurel Stein and the Hungarian Academy of Sciences Ágnes Kelecsényi	5
Letters, Reports and Bestsellers: Stein's Accounts of his First and Second Expeditions Lilla Russell-Smith	9
A Biographer's Dilemma Annabel Walker	15
Sir Aurel Stein's Fourth 'American' Expedition Shareen Brysac	17
Aurel Stein and Bahman Karimi on Old Routes of Western Iran Vesta Sarkhosh Curtis and Nasser Pazooki	23
Leave No Stone Unturned: Stein and Williamson's Surveys Compared Seth M.N. Priestman	29
Catalogue of the Sir Aurel Stein Papers in the British Museum Central Archives Helen Wang	37

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Ágnes Kelecsényi is a Librarian at the Oriental Collection, Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, where she works on the Indian collections. Together with Ágnes Kárteszi, she catalogued the correspondence, manuscripts and cuttings in the Stein Collections for the *Catalogue of the Collections of Sir Aurel Stein in the Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences* (2002).

Lilla Russell-Smith, a freelance art historian, is a founder of the Circle of Inner Asian Art at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London (1995), and is co-editor with Madhuvanti Ghose of the Circle's first book, *From Nisa to Niya: New Discoveries and Studies in Central and Inner Asian Art and Archaeology* (London: Saffron Books, in press). Together with John Falconer, she catalogued the photographs of the Stein Collections for the *Catalogue of the Collections of Sir Aurel Stein in the Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences* (2002). She is currently writing a book on Uyghur Patronage in Dunhuang (Leiden: Brill, 2005) based on her PhD dissertation (SOAS, 2001).

Annabel Walker is an independent writer based in the UK, and author of the biography, *Aurel Stein, Pioneer of the Silk Road* (1995).

Shareen Brysac is an independent scholar and the co-author with Karl E. Meyer of *Tournament of Shadows: the Great Game and the Race for Empire in Asia* (1999). She is contributing editor of *Archaeology Magazine*, where an earlier version of her article first appeared in the November/December 1997 issue.

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Seth M.N. Priestman was the 2003 Sackler Fellow in the Department of the Ancient Near East, at the British Museum. His research involved a review of the Sasanian and Islamic pottery from Stein's Iranian expeditions as part of a wider investigation of survey evidence from southern Iran and the Gulf.

Helen Wang is Curator of East Asian Money at the British Museum. She edited the *Handbook to the Stein Collections in the UK* (1999), *Sir Aurel Stein in The Times* (2002) and led the UK team in the preparation of the *Catalogue of the Collections of Sir Aurel Stein in the Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences* (2002). Her book *Money on the Silk Road* (2004) includes a new catalogue of the pre-Islamic coins found by Stein in Eastern Central Asia.

Editor's note: metric and imperial conversions

1 mile = 1.6093kilometres

1 yard = 0.9144metres

1 foot = 0.3048metres

1 inches = 25.4millimetres

1 square mile = 2.59 sq kilometres

1 square yard = 0.8361

1 square foot = 0.0929 sq metres

Preface

On 23 March 2002 the British Museum held a study day devoted to Sir Aurel Stein. The occasion celebrated the completion of a three-year international project resulting in the publication of the *Catalogue of the Collections of Sir Aurel Stein in the Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences*. The Catalogue was jointly published by the British Museum and the Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (Budapest, 2002). Details of the project can be found in the Introduction to the Catalogue and in the *British Museum Magazine* 42 (spring 2002). It was also organised as the British Museum's seventh Central Asian Study Day, in response to the great public interest expressed in Stein during the series of Central Asian Study Days held at the Museum in 2000–2001.

On the day, eight speakers from the UK, Hungary and the USA presented papers that looked at very different aspects of Sir Aurel Stein, and his life and work. Five of the papers were given by members of the UK-Hungarian team that had worked on the *Catalogue*: Éva Apor, Ágnes Kelecsényi, Lilla Russell-Smith, John Falconer and myself. Similar papers were also presented at the Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences on 14 May 2002 to mark the completion of the project in Budapest. Éva Apor spoke about the dynamic new city of Budapest into which Aurel Stein was born and the influence of this particular environment on the young scholar in his formative years. Ágnes Kelecsényi looked at the lifelong relationship Stein maintained with the Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, where he had experienced his first taste of oriental studies. Lilla Russell-Smith considered the discipline with which Stein conducted his professional life, and how his strict working methods enabled him to produce a variety of written records with impressive speed and accuracy. John Falconer confirmed that Stein was a self-taught and competent photographer, and talked us through Stein's photographic collections now in the British Library and the Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Annabel Walker offered us a biographer's insight and snippets of feedback from her biography of Stein, first published in 1995. Shareen Brysac looked at the build-up to Stein's Fourth Expedition to Chinese Central Asia, his American assistant, Milton Bramlette, and the role played by William Hung in bringing down the Expedition. Vesta Sarkhosh Curtis introduced us to Bahman Karimi, the Iranian inspector who travelled with Stein in Iran, and who was unique among Stein's companions in publishing his own version of the Expedition. It is heartening to learn that a new book has just been published in Persian on Stein's work in Iran. Finally, my paper surveyed the media coverage of Stein during his lifetime, in particular how he was portrayed in *The Times* newspaper.

Six of those papers have been written up for presentation in this volume. The missing two are by John Falconer and myself. John had presented a visual tour of the photographic collections at the British Library and the Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, which could not be adapted easily for publication here. My paper was an abridged version of the Introduction to my book *Sir Aurel Stein in The Times* (Saffron Books, London, 2002), which was launched at the study day. As substitutes for those papers, Seth Priestman has compared the archaeological work of Stein and Williamson in Iran. He is one of the first people to examine Stein's archaeological methods in any detail and to compare his results with those of a more modern era. Finally, my new offering here is a listing of the Stein papers in the British Museum Central Archives. Unlike the other papers it does not offer a new perspective on Stein's life or his work. It is, however, the first listing of these papers, and serves to bring this volume full circle by returning to the task of cataloguing, which was, after all, the original impetus for holding the study day.

As Stein himself recognised, the task of cataloguing, which ranges from identifying, sorting and classifying material right through to publication, is fundamental to understanding the broader picture. Accurate cataloguing takes time and care, which makes it all the more satisfying to see how the cataloguing of the Stein Collections has grown from the early catalogues of the collections of objects, paintings and manuscripts to the more recent catalogue of Stein's correspondence housed at the Bodleian Library, Oxford, and the Stein Photographic Database at the British Library. The desire to bring such information together in the form of the *Handbook to the Stein Collections in the UK* (British Museum Occasional Paper 129, 1999) was also the inspiration for the project that resulted in the *Catalogue of the Stein Collections in the Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences*.

All extracts taken from Stein's correspondence in the Bodleian are quoted with the permission of the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford. Shareen Brysac's paper is adapted from her book *Tournament of Shadows: the Great Game and the Race for Empire in Asia*, in which she quoted from the Harvard archives, with permission from Harvard and the families of Paul Sachs and Langdon Warner, and from the British Library.

The views of the individual authors expressed in this volume do not necessarily reflect the opinions and policies of the British Museum.

Helen Wang
The British Museum
January 2004