

APPENDIX B

LETTER DATED JUNE 30, 1931, FROM SIR AUREL STEIN TO THE EDITOR OF 'THE TIMES'

The Times, in its Weekly Edition of May 21, the latest issue so far received by me, contains a notice of its Simla Correspondent concerning the abandonment of the expedition, archaeological and geographical, into Chinese Turkistan on which I had started from Kashmir some 10 months ago with the support of Harvard University and the British Museum. For the sake of those whom the results of my previous three Central-Asian expeditions (1900-1, 1906-8, 1913-16) as published in detailed reports under the orders of the Indian Government and in personal narratives may have induced to take some interest in this later enterprise, I may be allowed to supplement that statement by an account of the main facts as far as they bear upon the preparatory steps for this expedition and upon the obstacles which it encountered through the proceedings of the Chinese Government.

In May of last year the Chinese Minister of Foreign Affairs at Nanking, upon the recommendation kindly made by Sir Miles Lampson, H.B.M. Minister, sanctioned the issue to me of a passport authorizing me to trace and closely to investigate ancient remains in Hsin-chiang Province and Inner Mongolia. The object and scope of the proposed labours had been fully indicated in a memorandum submitted through the British Minister. They were also explained in some detail at an interview with Dr. C. T. Wang, which Sir Miles Lampson had very kindly secured for me and which he personally attended. The passport was understood to provide also permission for such survey work as would be found necessary in connexion with the above task. I had expressed the distinct wish to associate with my work a Chinese scholar and a Chinese topographer if competent helpers could be secured. But none was proposed by the Chinese Foreign Office nor were they otherwise obtainable during my stay at Nanking.

Regard for the fact that explorations such as contemplated in the waterless Taklamakan and Lop deserts are practicable only while the winter cold lasts and permits of water being carried for a large party in the form of ice induced me to hasten as much as possible the start from my base in Kashmir. Before, however, by the close of August more than one-half of the month's journey to the Chinese border on the Pamirs had been covered information was received that the entry of my party into Hsin-chiang was to be stopped under orders from Nanking. The effective intercession of the British Minister succeeded in removing this obstacle, but two weeks had been lost over an enforced halt. In order to meet the ostensible ground of the agitation fostered in certain Chinese press organs to which that action was attributed I had meanwhile offered a formal undertaking not to remove any ancient objects from Chinese territory without the previous consent of the Chinese Government. In the end I was asked to proceed to Kashgar, where arrangements were to be made for my proposed work.