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## Japanese ‘Spies’ along the Silk Road: British Suspicions Regarding the Second Ōtani Expedition (1908-09)



The beginning of the 20th century saw the Golden Age of archaeology in Chinese Central Asia. Part of this great adventure were the three expeditions (1902-1914) organized and financed—as a private enterprise—by Count Ōtani Kōzui, leader of the Nishi Hongan-ji branch of the Jōdo Shin-shū sect in Kyōto. Towards the end of the second expedition, when the two members of the Japanese team arrived in Kashgar in June 1909, the acting British Consul was the young Captain Shuttleworth, temporarily replacing the experienced George Macartney who at the time was on leave. Influenced by allegations originating from Russian sources, Shuttleworth gradually became convinced that the Japanese explorers were engaged in espionage and archaeology was merely a disguise. In a series of correspondence with his superiors in British India, Shuttleworth made the case for seeing in the two explorers undesirable visitors. As a result, after crossing over to India, they were denied entry back to China through the British frontier, and had to re-enter through the Russian side, via Europe. From the distance of a century, archival sources in British and Japanese collections provide no evidence to support contemporary suspicions and it seems highly unlikely that the Japanese explorers would have been involved in espionage.

*Keywords:* Silk Road – Japanese spies – Ōtani expeditions – Xinjiang – Tachibana Zuichō – Ōtani Kōzui.

### *Introduction*

The exploration of Western China in the late 19th and early 20th century is one of the most fascinating episodes of modern history. This was the period when Russian expansion in Central Asia began directly threatening British India and the two empires faced each other on two sides of a vast territory known at the time as Chinese Turkestan. Both Britain and Russia fought hard to uphold their influence

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in the region, which formally was still part of the Chinese empire. With this intense political rivalry in the background, a series of scientific expeditions were conducted with the aim of excavating the ruined sites of the ancient Silk Road and collecting antiquities.

The most significant explorations were led here by the Swedish Sven Hedin (1865-1952), the Hungarian-born British M. Aurel Stein (1862-1943), the German Albert von Le Coq (1860-1930) and the Russian Sergei F. Oldenburg (1863-1934), all of whom returned home with rich archaeological collections. Beside these European enterprises, the Nishi Hongan-ji 西本願寺 in Kyōto headed by Count Ōtani Kōzui 大谷光瑞 (1876-1948) also organized three trips into Western China, and these are known today as the Ōtani expeditions. On the Japanese side the whole enterprise was portrayed as a religious mission with the aim to locate ancient Buddhist scriptures and relics, a justification that drew on the image of medieval Chinese pilgrims traveling through here to India.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, unlike the trips of Western explorers, the Japanese expeditions were initiated and financed by a private religious institution, namely, the wealthy and powerful Nishi Hongan-ji. With Ōtani's grand visions of pan-Asian Buddhism and religious expansionism at the foundation, his missions into Chinese Central Asia also had a pragmatic undertone, which in many ways resembled the imperialistic character of Western exploration: beside the immediate goal of discovering ancient sites and acquiring archaeological material, exploration also served the larger purpose of establishing presence in the region, or "claiming" it, even if initially in the name of science.<sup>2</sup>

1. The connection with medieval Buddhist pilgrimages is also emphasized in the title of the publication that gathered together the diaries and reports of the expeditions: it was named *Shin Saiiki-ki* 新西域記 (New Record of the Western Regions), a clear reference to the work of the celebrated Tang monk Xuanzang 玄奘 (ca. 600-664) who wrote about his travels under the title *Xiyu ji* 西域記 (Record of the Western Regions). The title of the Japanese publication implies that Ōtani's enterprise was in fact the continuation of Xuanzang's medieval quest for relics and scriptures.
2. We should also point out that Chinese Central Asia was only one of the many places where Ōtani sent his followers for travel or exploration. Other places included China proper, India, Manchuria, Siberia, Sakhalin, Southeast Asia, Hawaii, Europe, and the United States. In some places formal branch temples were established, others were only visited. That amidst these activities the Central Asian expeditions received an unprecedented amount of attention was largely due to their archaeological success, which elevated Japan into a major player in the exploration of the Silk Road. The expeditions were also no doubt vital in the rise of the nation-wide fascination with the Silk Road which developed in Japan around the 1930s, and continues to this day.

Despite their significance in Japan, little has been written on the Ōtani expeditions in European languages, especially for the general public. One of the few available sources is Peter Hopkirk's popular book called *Foreign Devils on the Silk Road*, in which the Ōtani expeditions feature in the chapter "Spies Along the Silk Road." (Hopkirk 1980: 190-208) Hopkirk relies on the Political and Secret Files in the India Office Library, including communication between Kashgar and the British Resident in Kashmir in 1909-1910 regarding the suspicious activities of Tachibana Zuichō 橋瑞超 (1890-1968) and Nomura Eizaburō 野村栄三郎 (1880-1936), the two members of the second Ōtani expedition. Albeit written for a general audience, due to the lack of other material on the subject Hopkirk's book has been influential in propagating the notion that the two Japanese explorers, as well as Count Ōtani used archaeology as a disguise for espionage.

When the Japanese expedition arrived in Kashgar in the summer of 1909, George Macartney (1867-1945), the British representative was back in England on a year of leave, and his duties had been temporarily taken over by the young Captain Shuttleworth. The consular reports for this period show that Captain Shuttleworth regarded the two Japanese explorers with growing suspicion but these concerns had fully subsided once Macartney came back and resumed his post. Similarly, when Tachibana came back two years later to Kashgar to continue his exploration, Macartney's references to him are restricted to recording his activities in a matter-of-fact manner, without any implication that he found those suspicious.

In this paper I would like to look at the Political and Secret Files once more and contrast those with information available from other sources, the most important of these being the travel diary of Nomura (1937), the elder member of the Japanese team. I would like to show that although we can never completely exclude the possibility of ulterior motives when it comes to geographical expeditions, there is really no evidence to assume that these two explorers were involved in espionage. Because it represents the most complete record of what happened in Kashgar in June 1909, I will use Nomura's diary as the narrative framework, citing other documentation whenever relevant.

### *Spies and Explorers on the Silk Road*

Needless to say, it was no accident that the caravans of foreign explorers began appearing in China's westernmost province at the time of colonial rivalry between Russia and Britain, and some of the visitors were likely to have been engaged in gathering intelligence. In a sense any scientific expedition which aims to survey, explore and describe unknown lands would classify as an intelligence-gathering activity, and surely this is one of the reasons why geographical exploration always walks hand in hand with colonialist expansion. The line between a scientist gathering information purely for the sake of science and a spy reporting back to an

official agency has never been so smudged as in the case of Central Asia. Some of the most successful explorers admittedly, sometimes of course only in retrospect, conducted military intelligence missions disguised as scientific exploration.

Among the first of such visitors was Chokan Valikhanov (1835-1865), a Kazakh officer in the Russian army who traveled in 1858-1859 to Kashgar in disguise of a local merchant. Beside his military mission, he also gathered a wealth of ethnographical information and published these in a succession of books and articles.<sup>3</sup> Even more important were the expeditions of Nikolai M. Przhevalsky (1839-1888) who traveled in full military attire with a regiment of cossacks and even fought against native tribes whenever he considered it necessary.<sup>4</sup> Although he never achieved his life-long aspiration of reaching Lhasa, he became canonized in Russia as the quintessential “scientific explorer,” with books about his achievements filling the shelves of Russian libraries. Yet another famous explorer working for the General Staff of the Russian Empire was Carl Gustaf Mannerheim (1867-1951), a Finnish baron who led an expedition from Tashkent to Kashgar, partly accompanying the French Sinologist Paul Pelliot (1878-1945). Traveling on a military intelligence mission, he utilized his Scandinavian background and disguised himself as a Swedish scientist. In later years, he went on to a spectacular career, having served as Regent, Marshal, and eventually President of Finland.

On the British side, Sir Francis E. Younghusband’s (1863-1942) journeys from 1887 in Central Asia are representative of semi-military travels. Although he visited the region as an officer on leave from his regiment, he also published an account of his trip (Younghusband 1896) and was consequently elected as member of the Royal Geographical Society. Once a British representative was stationed in Kashgar, the Indian Government encouraged its officers to go on hunting trips in the region, as a means of both establishing presence and gathering intelligence. These officers who spent their leave hunting in the Pamirs or Western Tibet would fit neither the category of spies nor that of explorers, yet they were an important part of the Indian Government’s general strategy to increase influence in Western China.

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3. Valikhanov’s collected writings have been published in 1961 by the Academy of Sciences of his native Kazakhstan (Valikhanov 1961). In English, a small selection of his work had come out in a collection titled *The Russians in Central Asia* in 1865 (Valikhanof *et al.* 1865).
  4. Przhevalsky’s main books were translated into English shortly after their appearance in Russia. Thus both his *Mongolia, the Tangut Country and the Solitudes of Northern Tibet* (Prejevalsky 1876) and his *From Kulja, across the Tian Shan to Lob-Nor* (Prejevalsky 1879) were well known in England in the second half of the 19th century.

Having said this, there were also purely scientific expeditions led by scholars with no military background, such as Sven Hedin and Aurel Stein.<sup>5</sup> Although they did general surveying and made maps of unknown areas during their trips, they are almost never understood as having been involved in espionage.<sup>6</sup> The Japanese expeditions were largely inspired by the achievements of these European explorers, who by the beginning of the 20th century had become celebrities in Europe. The man who conceived and organized the Japanese exploration of Central Asia was Count Ōtani Kōzui, an heir to the abbacy of the powerful Nishi Hongan-ji in Kyōto. As a young man, while his father still serving as a head of their sect, Ōtani spent two years in Europe in 1900-1902, during which time he became acquainted with the work carried out by European explorers in Western China. He traveled extensively in Europe and visited several well-known explorers and professors of Asian history. As a result, when the time came to go home, he decided to return to Japan via the overland route by way of Xinjiang and India. Thus in 1902, he traveled together with a handful of his trusted followers through Russia to Central Asia, and this was the enterprise that is known today as the first Ōtani expedition (1902-04). Later on, when he succeeded his father as the Abbot of Nishi Hongan-ji, he financed two more expeditions but was unable to take part in them personally. These two trips were the second and third Ōtani expeditions which took place in 1908-09 and 1910-14, respectively.

This paper addresses the events at the end of the second expedition, when after having separated in Korla almost five months earlier, Tachibana Zuichō and Nomura Eizaburō had made their way to Kashgar to reconvene before they left China. Tachibana had been designated as the expedition leader, even though he was the younger of the two. According to strict instructions from Ōtani, both members methodically kept a diary about the daily events during their trip. Unfortunately, Tachibana's diary was subsequently lost when his family temple in Nagoya burned down in a fire. Several years after his death in 1968, a portion of this lost diary was discovered and published under the title of *Shimei-ki* 使命記 (Record of a Mission).<sup>7</sup> Regrettably, this newly found part only covers the early segment of Tachibana's trip through Mongolia and does not include his experiences in Xinjiang.

5. Of course, Stein had received military training in 1885-1886 as part of his compulsory one-year service in Hungary. The techniques of surveying and mapmaking he learned during this time in later years became an essential part of his exploration.
6. As an exception we should mention that the Communist government in China considered Stein a spy who worked on Chinese soil, although this image gradually evolved into him being an archaeological plunderer and thief.
7. Tachibana (2001). This book was published by the explorer's adopted son Tachibana Shōrei 橘照嶺 and his son Tachibana Shinkei 橘真敬, with the help of the writer and scholar of Silk Road exploration Kaneko Tamio 金子民雄.

We are much more fortunate with regard to Nomura's account of the Kashgar events. His diary survived and was later published in *Shin Saiiki-ki* 新西域記 (New Record of the Western Regions), a monumental two-volume work that gathered the diaries, reports and travel accounts from members of the three Ōtani expeditions.<sup>8</sup> Nomura's diary is meticulous, with an entry for practically every day. Each entry begins with the date, a one-word weather report (e.g. sunny, rainy, cloudy), and the maximum and minimum temperature. This is followed by a description of what happened during the day, whom he met, what he bought, where he traveled, etc. It even includes occasional poems Nomura wrote along the way about things he witnessed.

Nomura's diary reveals to what extent the expeditions were managed by instructions from Ōtani who was in Japan conducting the affairs of his sect with millions of believers. Amidst his no doubt busy schedule, the exploration of Central Asia was one of his pet projects and a stream of communications ran between Xinjiang and Nishi Hongan-ji, his headquarters in Kyōto. Tachibana and Nomura sent telegrams and mailed handwritten reports to him and in return received instructions by both mail and telegram. Every major decision was made in Kyōto, and the two explorers obediently followed their orders.

As a telling example of Ōtani's hands-on management, the collection of the Ryūkoku University Library includes two small handwritten booklets written by Ōtani for his expedition members. One of them is the *Ryokō kyōhan* 旅行教範 (Travel Guidelines) in which he gives a long list of general rules to follow in the field, including the daily distances one should cover on foot or horseback, items to be recorded in the diary, or even what to wear when meeting local officials and gentlemen. He writes, for example, that "especially on British territory you should not forget to have a tailcoat at your disposal." (Ueyama 2001: 34-35) The other booklet called *Tanken shizusho* 探検指図書 (Expedition Instructions) is a detailed itinerary mailed to Yoshikawa Koichirō 吉川小一郎 (1885-1978), member of the third expedition, shortly after he had begun his trip in 1911. These instructions reveal that to a large extent Ōtani planned the entire expedition ahead and was running it remotely while the actual onsite explorers were merely acting in compliance with his instructions. Accordingly, there was very little leeway for individualistic ventures, the expedition members were always told exactly what to do. From Nomura's diary it is apparent that the explorers tried to maintain constant communication with Ōtani, and the disruptions caused in this by the

8. Uehara (1937). This large publication project was initiated by Uehara Yoshitarō 上原芳太郎 more than 20 years after the end of the expeditions. Because of the time gap, Uehara often had difficulties in tracking down first-hand material, since some, such as Tachibana's diary, had already perished by that time. He contacted each participant and asked for whatever material they had in connection with their travels.

frequent technical difficulties sometimes created serious problems, such as running out of money needed for the return trip.

The continuous flow of information back and forth between Ōtani in Kyōto and the explorers in Xinjiang certainly did not go unnoticed in a region where communication was notoriously difficult and expensive. Both Russian and British intelligence networks were set in motion and the expedition was kept under constant surveillance. Nomura's past as a veteran in the recently finished Russo-Japanese War (1904-05) was another reason for mistrust, especially on the Russian side. Captain Shuttleworth, for example, claims in his consular report that he had been told by the Russian Consul that Nomura was an officer in the Army and Tachibana was in the Navy but, as he added, he was not sure about the truth of these claims. (See Appendix below)

The first thing that should be ascertained here is that Tachibana had never been part of the Navy but was a Jōdo Shin-shū Buddhist priest. He was a hereditary abbot of the Shinkō-ji 真廣寺 in Nagoya but was chosen early in his life by Ōtani to take part in the exploration of Central Asia. As his former years and education are relatively well documented, it is highly unlikely that by the age of nineteen he could have already gone through any amount of secret military training. Even after the expeditions, he continued his work as a priest and a devoted follower of Ōtani. Shortly after his return to Japan in 1912, he began organizing the material he brought back from Western China and published some of his research on the Uighur fragments in the academic journal called *Niraku sōsho* 二樂叢書.<sup>9</sup> After Ōtani resigned as abbot and left Japan in 1914, Tachibana followed him to Shanghai and Dalian (Jp.: Dairen) where he continued to work for him, also participating in the editing of the journal *Daijō* 大乘, known in English under the name *Mahayana*.<sup>10</sup> Eventually, he went back to Japan and lived in his family temple at Nagoya, dying there in 1968 at the age of 79.

It is also worth pointing out some of the misconceptions about the tenets and lifestyle of Jōdo Shin-shū priests in Japan. Being Buddhist clergy, they are often portrayed as monks and this brings to mind ascetic notions associated with Indian or Chinese practices. However, Jōdo Shin-shū priests are not monks who live in monasteries but leaders of hereditary family temples of varying size. They

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9. This was a journal newly founded by Ōtani. The name *Niraku* comes from the name of Ōtani's villa on the hills above the city of Kōbe. Villa Niraku was an enormous architectural structure built in 1909 and its construction, together with his Central Asian expeditions, was one of the projects Ōtani was most criticized for within his own sect. Allegedly, these expenditures caused the financial difficulties of the Nishi Hongan-ji that led to his forced resignation.
  10. This was a successful and influential journal which Ōtani began in 1922 from his Shanghai residence called Villa Asoka, in Japanese *Muyū'en* 無憂園, or "Garden of no sorrow."

marry, eat meat, wear non-monastic clothes, even though in the West many of these customs would be associated with laypeople's practices. According to Ōtani's own explication of their faith, it is in many ways analogous to Protestantism in the West.<sup>11</sup> Jōdo Shin-shū (True Pure Land Sect) derives from Shinran 親鸞 (1173-1262), a Buddhist reformer of the 13th century. Ōtani himself was a direct line descendant of Shinran, and through marriage was related to the Japanese imperial family. He succeeded his father as the 22nd Abbot of Nishi Hongan-ji which was the head organization for this branch of Shin Buddhism, encompassing thousands of temples and millions of followers. Tachibana also came from a family that owned a temple within the Nishi Hongan-ji branch.

Nomura was one of the very few non-clergy followers of Ōtani. His father used to work in his youth for Nishi Hongan-ji, and hence he grew up partially within this temple. His elder brother fell ill and died in Henan province when accompanying Ōtani on his first trip to China in the spring of 1899. Nomura himself was a veteran of the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05, but in this he was not different from over a million of his fellow countrymen. Only in the last decisive battle at Mukden, the number of Japanese troops was estimated at 270,000 men, thus it is fair to conclude that a substantial portion of the young Japanese male population had participated in the war. Japan's spectacular victory against Russia earned it a prominent place among the leading military nations in Asia. With Britain and Russia competing for control over Central Asia in what came to be known as the Great Game, Japan was an unexpected newcomer whose colonial appetite was soon appreciated by both powers. Although Britain entered into an alliance with Japan in 1902, it was nevertheless cautious with regard to potential Japanese intelligence gathering activities, especially after their 1905 victory over Russia.

Naturally, the Russians were even more alert when it came to Japanese travelers in politically highly sensitive areas such as Xinjiang. Not surprisingly, the Russian Consul was aware of Nomura's involvement in the war, even if his information about Tachibana was incorrect. As a similar example of misinformation about Japanese espionage and military activities in Xinjiang, the case of Mannerheim comes to mind, who visited Kashgar in 1906 on covert intelligence mission. After his arrival into town, Sergei A. Kolokolov, the Russian Consul showed him secret reports of Japanese activities southeast of the city. Mannerheim was skeptical about the rumors, as his diary reveals:

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11. Ōtani (1900). In this English language article, Ōtani writes that they are the Protestants of Buddhism and describes the analogies between Christian and Buddhist Protestantism.

S. A. Kolokoloff seems, however, to be convinced of that and reposes confidence in the curious reports about 26 Japanese appearing in Khotan and establishing a store of arms south of that town or on the road from Kashgar to Naryn, i.e. quite close to the Indian and Russian borders, etc. However, all this seems to me more a product of pathological suspiciousness than reality. Anyhow, I decided to take a trip to the south in order, if possible, to convince myself personally of the correctness of these incredible rumours. (Mannerheim 2008: 65)

Mannerheim traveled to Yarkand and Khotan to investigate the matter. He found no Japanese there, but managed to collect from local treasure-seekers a substantial amount of antique artefacts and manuscripts. (Screen 1993: 67)

### *The Japanese Team in Kashgar*

In the summer of 1909, when Nomura and Tachibana were in Kashgar, George Macartney was on leave back in Britain, and he was temporarily substituted in his post by Captain A. R. B. Shuttleworth from the Indian Army Corps as the acting British Consul.<sup>12</sup> The Russian acting Consul at this time was Titular Councillor Bobrovnikov who maintained social connections with his English colleague, although both naturally reported each others' moves to their superiors on a routine basis. On the night of June 7, Bobrovnikov hosted an official banquet at which the entire foreign colony was present, including the officials of the Russo-Chinese Bank, officers of the Russian customs office, members of the Swedish Mission, and Shuttleworth.

This party was also attended by Gyula Prinz (1882-1973), a Hungarian geologist and traveler who had arrived in Kashgar a couple of days earlier, after having crossed the Kipchak Pass on the Russian-Chinese border. Upon his arrival, he went to the Russian Consulate and was met by Bobrovnikov who allocated him a large house with a garden as a temporary residence. The same night, at the Russian banquet he met Shuttleworth, whom he later described as the "only European in Kashgar." Prinz's account of these days describes how the two of them became good friends, much to the annoyance of the Russian authorities:

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12. His full name was Allen Robert Betham Shuttleworth and although it is less known of him, he was an accomplished painter, repeatedly winning the Viceroy's prize in Simla for both his watercolors and oils. His paintings are still occasionally traded under the name of Allen Shuttleworth, thus a lot of 28 aquarells called "From Srinagar to Kashgar" (May 13th-June 18th 1908) was sold in April 2008 at Christie's, South Kensington. In the Indian Army, Shuttleworth reached the rank of a Brigadier. He died in 1935 in Ajmere.

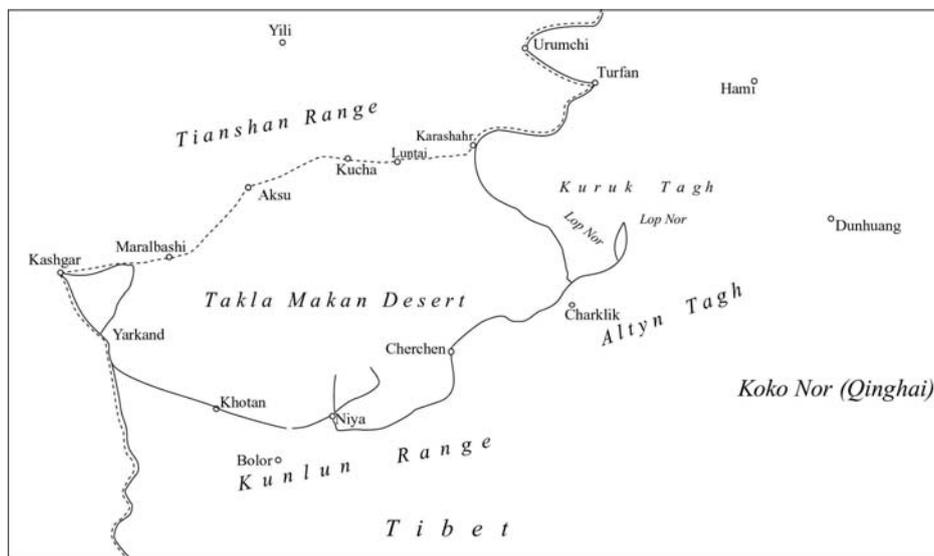
At the banquet, Shuttleworth and I found each other's company intellectually stimulating and, understandably, became good friends. The next day the British Consul invited me for lunch and from there on I became an everyday guest at Chini-Bagh, Shuttleworth's friendly residence. Bobrovnikov did not appreciate our friendship. The reason for this was that all the prestige that had been accumulated by the great Petrovsky, deemed "the King of Kashgar," was gradually deprived from his weak successors by the British Consul. Today the British Consul rules Kashgar. The Daotai (governor) follows his will in everything, and I was able to witness myself how little Bobrovnikov's connections were worth. The Daotai could not care less about the Russians. For this reason, Bobrovnikov sought in me a British spy and from there on did his best to hinder me in everything. Naturally, all this was in vain because Shuttleworth's word gave me so much support in the eyes of the Chinese authorities that I nearly felt uncomfortable being such an "important person."

My afternoons were spent walking or riding together with Shuttleworth around Koni-shahr and the suburbs. We visited the Chinese garrisons and fortifications, or climbed the watch towers. In other words, I was able to see everything without having to go through official channels. Soldiers saluted and the city gates flew open. At night we enjoyed the cool garden of Chini-Bagh, drank whisky and talked at length about Chinese Turkestan, and especially about hunting. (Prinz 1911: 214-215)

Right about this time, Nomura arrived in Kashgar from the direction of Aksu. Shuttleworth reported this event as having happened on June 11, which can be partly attributed to the delay in the news reaching him, but also to the fact that there is a discrepancy between the dates in Nomura's diary and the consular reports. Although unaware of this at the time, at the end of their trip Tachibana noticed that their diaries were off by two days. In reality, the time lag between Nomura's and Shuttleworth's accounts varies, but as a general case, information taken from Nomura's diary should be understood to have taken place two days later.

Upon his arrival, Nomura took residence in a house outside the southern gates of the old town. The old town was also known as the Uighur town, in contrast with the new town a few miles away, called the Chinese town. The next day the young man mailed a report to Ōtani in Kyōto, in which he described his excavations up to that point and listed the objects he had recovered. He also sent an 18-word telegram for which he had to pay over 13 Taels, a high price considering that ten days later he found out that the telegram was returned from Lanzhou because the text was too long. In the telegram he told Ōtani that he had split up with Tachibana at Karashahr, and while the latter proceeded to the Lop Nor region, he himself explored the sites around Kucha, before coming to Kashgar via Aksu. A couple of weeks later, he mailed more reports and a few letters to Japan.

While recuperating in Kashgar, Nomura also had to attend to his cargo and pay courtesy visits to the authorities. At the same time he began breaking up his



The Second Ōtani expedition. The solid line marks Tachibana's route, and the dotted line that of Nomura.  
(Map drawn by the author)

luggage into smaller chunks. He had been told that during the crossing of the Karakoram Pass, one yak could carry 50 pounds of weight. Nomura hired a local craftsman and bought wood for making new cases. He also borrowed scales from the Yamen so he could weigh the wooden crates. After a few days of work, they packed about 50 wooden crates, arranged according to their content: manuscripts, wall paintings, Buddhist sculptures, plant seeds, items that need to be protected against rain, pear wood, unused clothing, unused objects. After that, he began maintenance work on the wall paintings which occupied him for several days.

In the meantime, he was anxiously awaiting instructions from Kyōto but when on June 14 he went to the Telegraph Office to check for possible news, he found out that the cables had been damaged and even his own telegram sent a few days earlier remained undelivered. The reason why he was so eager to get communication from Japan was because he needed to know whether he and Tachibana would have to go down to India to meet Ōtani there. At this time Ōtani was still only planning his trip to India and his schedule was not definite. Without knowing for sure whether he really had to cross the Karakoram Pass, Nomura's work on the luggage was largely a guesswork. Nevertheless, he continued his maintenance of wall paintings. He also continued buying artefacts, since by now the locals knew that he was a collector and brought items for sale. He writes in his diary that on June 24 he was approached by a man from Kucha offering him some excavated manuscript fragments. The fragments bore the date of the 7th year of the Jianchu 建初 reign, which at the time he identified as AD 82. In reality, this Jianchu reign was that of the Western Liang dynasty, thus the actual date of the manuscript

was AD 411. Nevertheless, he was justly thrilled by the acquisition and immediately sent a telegram to Ōtani about it.

On the morning of June 23, Nomura gave a courtesy visit to Shuttleworth, the acting British Consul, and at this occasion presented a gift consisting of a set of Japanese coffee set illustrated with pictures of Chūshingura, the story of the forty-seven masterless samurai.<sup>13</sup> He had bought the grossly overpriced set the day before from a Russian shop in town but felt appropriate to arrive with a Japanese gift. His diary records that the Consul welcomed him in a kind and friendly manner and they discussed the possibility of crossing the Karakoram Pass. At the interview he learned that the Indian Government had already sent instructions to extend their protection over the two Japanese travelers but no word has been said about the possibility of crossing the Pass. Shuttleworth promised to enquire again and repay the visit in a couple of days. Another thing that became clear at this time was that when traveling through the Pass, one animal could carry 160 pounds of weight, which was a significant difference from what Nomura had been told earlier. Accordingly, in the following days Nomura repacked his luggage in accordance with the new information on weight limits. He packed the wall paintings and made some last minute purchases for the upcoming mountain crossing. He also had special crates made from pear wood for some of the fragile items.

Turning to the Political and Secret Files of the India Office Library, we learn that Shuttleworth was already expecting the Japanese explorers, knowing about them from at least two independent sources. The earlier of these was a letter Ōtani had written to him from Kyōto in January of the same year. Shuttleworth's official report reads:

In February of this year I received a letter from a Mr. Kozin Atain [sic] despatched from Kyōto, Japan, in January. He informed me that he had sent two of his "student assistants" in the "research of Budhistic Archaeology" in Chinese Turkistan. He said that they would arrive in March and desired me to send all the letters I had received for them to the Taotai to be despatched to Kuchar to await their arrival. (Letter of Shuttleworth to the First Assistant to the Resident in Kashmir, dated Kashgar, 10 October 1909, L/P&S/IO/55/240: 3)<sup>14</sup>

13. This calling on the Consul at June 23 is the only date in which Nomura's and Shuttleworth's reports coincide. It is hard to understand the reason for this, since all other events before and after this visit were recorded to have happened earlier according to Nomura's diary.
14. For the complete letter see Appendix below. Although I cite portions of this document whenever relevant to my line of thought, I append it to the end of this article in its entirety, because of all documentation associated with the Japanese travelers in Kashgar in the summer of 1909, it represents the most coherent and complete narrative, written by the acting Consul himself.

Thus the British Consulate was also the address used by Ōtani and others associated with him to send mail to the two explorers in Xinjiang. The reason for this was partly historical, going back to 1902 when Ōtani himself had traveled through here and had been warmly welcomed by Captain (later General) P. J. Miles, the British agent in Kashgar. In addition, having spent over two years in England, Ōtani was much more comfortable in dealing with the British in Xinjiang than with the Russians who understandably had a distrustful attitude towards Japan. Thus when Nomura arrived in Kashgar, there were already 16 letters and 3 parcels waiting for him at Chini-Bagh, and Shuttleworth had these delivered to the Japanese traveler's residence by an *aksakal*.<sup>15</sup> The Consul insisted on handing him the last letter in person, as he suspected that it was from a certain Mr. Ama, a Japanese individual whose involvement in espionage was taken by the British authorities for a fact. Thus a letter from him immediately cast a shadow of a doubt on Nomura. Nomura's diary confirms that the letter was indeed from Ama, although naturally he had no idea of the British suspicions. This mysterious Mr. Ama was in fact Hashiramoto Zuishun 柱本瑞俊, one of Ōtani's men who was originally going to take part in the next expedition.<sup>16</sup> Eventually Ōtani decided against sending him on the trip, most likely because he became aware of the British suspicions towards him and this would have jeopardized the entire enterprise.

But Shuttleworth also knew about the presence of the Japanese explorers from his own intelligence network of local Muslim *aksakals* scattered around Xinjiang.<sup>17</sup> In his report, the Consul writes the following:

I first heard of the arrival of the travelers in this country through Sahib Ali Khan, British Aksakal of Kuchar. He wrote to me on 10th of March and informed me that they had arrived. He said that they were in search of "Budhistic remains," but that they were sketching and surveying as well, and went on to say that they were

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15. *Aksakal* (in modern transliteration: aqsaqal) is an Uyghur term which literally means 'white beard' but is generally used in the sense of 'elder' or 'chief'. The British employed such aksakals as commercial and administrative agents in most parts of Xinjiang, and they reported to the British Consuls at Kashgar.
  16. "Mr Ama" of British reports was identified as Hashiramoto Zuishun only recently by Katayama (2002).
  17. An amusing first-hand testimony about one such local agents in British employment comes from Peter Fleming's *News from Tartary* (Fleming 1936: 268) where he writes about the *aksakal* at Cherchen: "Though he was five weeks' journey from Kashgar and had never, in all his long life, seen any of the Consuls who had been successively his superiors, and though he had never set foot on British soil, he was full of snobbish but touching loyalty to the Empire whose interests he served."

to separate, one going to Kashgar by the Lob Nor and Khotan while the other was going direct via Aksu. (Shuttleworth L/P&S/IO/55/240: 4)

As the travelers made their way through Xinjiang, they were kept under constant surveillance and the Consul received reports from the towns along their itinerary. Naturally, the work of surveying and sketching is perfectly consistent with scientific exploration, and this was done by Hedin and Stein as well. Nevertheless, similar activities of the Japanese explorers were regarded with distrust, especially when the Russian Consul disclosed his “intelligence” with regard to their alleged military affiliation. On May 20, Shuttleworth received a letter from the *aksakal* at Khotan by the name of Badruddin Khan, informing him of the movements of Tachibana along the southern Taklamakan route:

One Japanese traveler accompanied by one Chinaman and a Kuchari Muhammadan interpreter has arrived at Keria. He lives in European fashion and can talk Chinese. He has visited all the places visited by Dr. Stein. He has also explored many ruined cities. The Amban of Keria gave him the services of Ibrahim Beg who was with Dr. Stein. The Amban has asked me to prepare my house for his reception if he comes here. If he comes to Khotan I will report his movements and will tell you what he has done in this city. (Shuttleworth L/P&S/IO/55/240: 4)

This report contains no negative observations. Tachibana seems a bit eccentric with his European lifestyle but he was obviously treated with proper courtesy by the Chinese authorities in both Keria and Khotan. The problems began when he arrived in Yarkand, where the Magistrate of the city, who was a Chinese official and thus not part of the British network, complained in a letter to Shuttleworth about his “beating Chinese subjects” and “making himself a general nuisance.” (Shuttleworth L/P&S/IO/55/240: 6) It is hard to see from the available material what actually happened that made the Chinese official write such a letter. But it is noteworthy that among the various reports on Tachibana’s movements this is the only case where such acts of violence are mentioned. In addition, we should keep in mind that Tachibana was of a very small stature, almost childlike in appearance, a fact often mentioned in contemporary reports.<sup>18</sup> This makes it even less likely that he would have engaged in any physical confrontation with others.

The Magistrate also mentioned in his letter to Shuttleworth that Tachibana asked him for all the maps and records of the place. This was something that the European explorers visiting Xinjiang did not do. But the Japanese explorers, who were on account of their cultural background much more acquainted with the Chinese tradition, were obviously aware of the value of local gazetteers for

18. Shuttleworth (L/P&S/IO/55/240: 9), for example, claims that Tachibana “looks about fifteen years old.”

geographical exploration. Nomura also mentions going to the Yamen at the Chinese town of Kashgar to ask for gazetteers, although he found the official there so crude and uncultured that he could not get anything out of him.

Nomura's diary describes Tachibana's long-awaited arrival as having happened on July 6. In contrast with this, Shuttleworth's report says that Tachibana arrived on July 13, which is too great a difference to be attributed to Nomura's diary being two days ahead of real time. It is likely then that the consular report is mistaken here, since Nomura records to have reported his friend's arrival to the Consul the next morning.

After separating in Korla, the two members of the Japanese expedition team had been apart for almost five months and were understandably excited to see each other. The first thing they tried to do was to notify Ōtani by telegraph but once again the lines were down. Yet the very same afternoon they received a telegram from Kyōto addressed to Nomura, instructing him to carry on exploration work southwest of Kashgar. In the telegram, Ōtani also expressed his anxiety over Tachibana, since he had not heard from him in months.

The two explorers finally managed to have their telegram sent the next day, conveying the news that Tachibana arrived safely via Yarkand and that he had found some fragments written in non-Chinese characters. He added this was the only thing Tachibana had found, which is surprising because it was precisely on this trip that Tachibana found in Loulan the famous Li Bo document, a small group of letter fragments dating to about AD 320-340, a find that made his name known in the West.<sup>19</sup> By spring 1910 when he arrived in London, Tachibana was already a celebrated explorer and before long the Royal Geographical Society elected him a member. It seems that despite the overall importance of the manuscripts recovered by Tachibana during this trip, at this point they were completely unaware of the significance of the acquired material.

In the same telegram, Nomura also asked Ōtani to send them funds to cover the costs of transporting their luggage, which according to the British Consul's estimate was going to cost 3,000 Taels.<sup>20</sup> Financial difficulties were to play an important role in the following weeks because when the money did not arrive, the two explorers turned to Shuttleworth for a loan of 2,000 Taels. Surprised by this request and judging the sum too large to make a decision on his own, the Consul

19. These fragments are listed today in Japan as a national treasure and are kept in a vault at the basement of the Ōmiya Library, Ryūkyō University (Kyōto).

20. Just to compare the value of money in Kashgar at the time, in 1912 Tachibana and his fellow team member Yoshikawa Koichirō paid 400 Taels for 369 scrolls of manuscripts at the Mogao Caves, which became one of the largest collection of Dunhuang manuscripts. (On the acquisition of these manuscripts in Dunhuang, see Galambos 2008.)

turned them down and suggested to approach the Chinese authorities, since they were on Chinese soil. Shuttleworth's report makes it evident that it was specifically this incident that became the turning point in his assessment of the Japanese explorers to whom he was initially well inclined.

But this was of course still in the future when the two Japanese paid a visit to the Consul on July 19. There they were told that because the Indian Government's telegram did not come through clearly, the Consul had to telegraph once again for instructions with regard to their passing through Gilgit. Nomura's diary for these days simply records the facts without commenting on them, but surely it must have been frustrating to have to wait around in vain. The next day Tachibana paid a courtesy visit to the Bobrovnikov, the Russian Consul. Bobrovnikov reciprocated their visit three days later, arriving together with Shuttleworth. This obviously was a simple courtesy visit, as the two consuls shortly excused themselves, yet it seems that from this time on the Japanese travelers were already viewed as spies.

On July 30, the British Consul came by to enquire about their planned schedule for crossing the Karakoram Pass, provided that the telegram with the Indian Government's permit came through. Nomura tried to explain that he was entirely dependant on orders from Kyōto and was still ignorant of their schedule. At this point the Consul also mentioned that two Americans came from inland China and in two-three days time would leave for India via the Karakoram Pass. Two days later, on August 1 Shuttleworth hosted a dinner to which he invited the Japanese. Among the guests were the two Americans, Mr. Don C. Sowers and Prof. Chester G. Fuson who had come from Xi'an via Lanzhou, Hami, Turfan and Kucha, and were to leave the next day for Yarkand and then proceed to Khotan. Then they planned to return to Yarkand again and from there make their way to India through the Karakoram Pass. According to Nomura, the dinner was far beyond their expectations in a remote spot like Kashgar, they were served soup, fried vegetables, cutlets, curry with rice and fruits. After the meal, the guests were entertained with gramophone music.

The two Americans were part of the Washington Magnetic Expedition and had arrived in Kashgar on July 28, after seven months of overland travel from Peking. Fuson was a missionary and a professor at the Canton Christian College, and joined the scientist Sowers as chief assistant. According to the 1909 *Year Book* of the Carnegie Institution of Washington, "from Kashgar the party proceeded to Khotan via Yarkand, and thence via the Saniu, Suget, Karakorum, Saser, and Khardong Passes to Leh, India, arriving there September 28, 1909. From Leh the railway at Rawal Pindi was reached via Srinagar." (Carnegie Institution of Washington 1909: 195)

The meeting with the two Japanese explorers at Shuttleworth's residence was also remembered by Fuson who wrote about them in his unpublished diary the following way:

Into this far interior of Asia, the Japanese also have penetrated. Two Japanese, ostensibly archaeological explorers but suspected by the other foreigners of being secret service men, were invited to dine with us at the consulate. We had great difficulty in conversing with them since our interpreter was not present, and the conversation had to be carried on through five languages, - from English through Hindustani, Turki, Chinese, into Japanese, and return! Upon being asked the straight question what they were doing in this far part of the world, for no one comes here for fun, they replied, "Private business." Their private business may have been to keep informed as to Russian power in Central Asia.<sup>21</sup>

It is evident that Fuson here reiterates Shuttleworth's belief regarding the reason why the two Japanese appeared in Xinjiang. We also learn from Fuson's diary that they were believed to have been reporting on Russian activities in the region. As to their own explanation of being there on "private business," this is likely to have referred to not having been sent there by any official Japanese organ, rather than being secretive about their mission. No doubt, language problems only added to the difficulty of getting a clear understanding of their objectives, and thus increased their mysteriousness.

After two weeks of idleness, on August 15 Tachibana and Nomura finally received the long-expected telegram from Kyōto. Ōtani wrote that Tachibana was to go through the Mustagh Pass, whereas Nomura should go lightweight, carrying only the most valuable items, proceeding through the Karakoram Pass towards Leh. As for the bulk of the luggage, they were to leave it in the care of the British Consulate. He also informed them that he was going himself to India in November and that they would all meet there. The explorers replied to the telegram, confirming the arrangements but also asked, as a matter of urgency, for the sum of 1,600 Taels they needed for the trip, as they could not get a loan from Shuttleworth.

Next morning they put in a request with the Consul for hiring 16 horses for crossing the pass. The two young men used the remaining month before their departure for India to explore the sites lying within a few days' distance from Kashgar. Tachibana left on August 18 in the direction of Yarkand with a native boy as his assistant. On the way there he visited Maralbashi and Lailik. After a couple of days he left for Kargalik, from where he made trips to the Tiznaf and Azgar valleys, coming back to Yarkand on September 18. The following day he went to see Shuttleworth who also happened to be in Yarkand and discussed with him the possibility of traveling through the Mustagh Pass, and joining Nomura only on the

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21. "Diary of Chester G. Fuson's ten month magnetic survey trip across Asia." (Fuson: 152-153) I am indebted to Shaun Hardy of the DTM-Geophysical Laboratory Library, Carnegie Institution of Washington, for locating and sending me this part of Fuson's diary.

other side, in Srinagar. Yet the Consul was adamant that his permit was only good for the Karakoram Pass and that both of them would have to travel on that route.<sup>22</sup>

After Tachibana's leaving Kashgar, Nomura stayed behind for a few more days to complete the preparations for their long journey to India. Then he hired two horses from the Yamen and explored the ruins of Akbashkhan-shahr and Kalmak-shahr. After this, he proceeded eastward trying to find the ruins of an old town allegedly about 200 *li* into the desert northeast of the village of Sakon. According to local folklore large quantities of silver had been buried here but native fortunehunters had not been able to recover any of it. After unsuccessful attempts to find the place, he made his way back to Kashgar, from where he made a couple of additional excursions. On September 22, he sent a telegram to Ōtani informing him that the Shuttleworth denied Tachibana the crossing of the Mustagh Pass and that both of them would have to travel via the Karakoram Pass.

Finally, everything was ready for the trip. Nomura paid the Magistrate 15 Taels for the hundred days he spent at his residence and on September 23 left Kashgar. At Yarkand, he joined forces with Tachibana and they began their journey to India, with 3 saddle and 13 packhorses. At this point they also let go the two Chinese servants who had traveled with them all the way from Peking, and sent them back. In Leh, Nomura, being slowed down by their luggage, stayed behind, while Tachibana with a boy servant pushed on to Srinagar. Nomura arrived in Srinagar after two months on November 9, and shortly afterwards reunited with Ōtani and Tachibana. His diary for this expedition ends with the last entry made on November 13.<sup>23</sup>

### *Reaching India*

Sailing from Kōbe at the end of September 1909, Ōtani arrived in Bombay on October 18. With him came his wife Kazuko 籌子 and his newly married sister Takeko 武子 with her husband Baron Kujō Yoshimune 九條良致. With them were also several priests from Nishi Hongan-ji, including Aoki Bunkyō 青木文教, Hashiramoto Zuishun, Watanabe Teshin 渡邊哲信 and Ashikaga Zuigi 足利瑞義. After landing in Bombay, Ōtani traveled by train and coach to Srinagar to meet the two explorers who were arriving there from Xinjiang.

After traveling for about a month in three separate groups, the whole party rejoined in Delhi and at the end of November arrived in Calcutta. This is where

22. In his report, Shuttleworth (L/P&S/IO/55/240: 9) claimed that "Tashibana [sic] was cheeky to me when I told him he could not go by the Mustagh Pass and I had to sit on him severely."

23. The last entry explains that he became aware that his diary was two days early, he adjusted the date for the current day from November 11 to November 13.

they spent the New Year as guests at the Japanese Consulate. After this, while the rest of the group continued their tour of Buddhist sites around India, Tachibana stayed behind in Calcutta to organize his travel notes and study old Uighur with Dr. (later Sir) E. Denison Ross (1871-1940), Principal of the Calcutta Madrasah.<sup>24</sup> The manuscripts they studied together were no doubt the ones acquired by the Japanese explorers a few months earlier in Southern Xinjiang, as suggested by Ross's correspondence with the German archaeologist Albert von Le Coq (1860-1930). In a letter Le Coq expressed great interest in the Uighur manuscripts shown to Ross by the Japanese guests, and was wondering if these were from Ōtani's expedition.<sup>25</sup>

Tachibana was only beginning his studies in reading old Uighur, although after having spent over a year in Western China he must have had basic skills in modern Uighur, or "Turki" as it was called in English at the time. Of course, Ross was not only an able language teacher but also the foremost authority on reading newly recovered manuscripts and evaluating their scientific significance. Le Coq's letter is witness to the speed with which the news of the discovery reached the academic circles in Europe, partly due to Ross's enthusiasm. Ross also published, albeit anonymously, a short article in *The Times* with the title "Exploration in Chinese Turkestan" in which he gave a general overview of the schedule and results of the Japanese expedition.<sup>26</sup> Ross sent the newspaper excerpt to Aurel Stein and described in a letter that he had "put the article together from the very indistinct account we received verbally from Count Otani."<sup>27</sup> He also added that Stein "would probably meet these gentlemen in London as they are on their way to Europe via Egypt."

24. The Calcutta Madrasah was the most prestigious Muslim educational institution in Bengal, called today Aliah University.

25. This letter is dated January 29, 1910. See Ross (1943: 106-107). A few months later, when Tachibana was embarking on his next expedition and passed through Berlin, he paid a visit to Le Coq, who wrote about this to Ross: "Tachibana was here a few days ago. Jove! He was in luck not to have fallen into one of those waggon ruts in the Turfan loess-soil; he could not have got out of it again. Otherwise he is a fine little chap, and I think will become a most useful member of the Turfanite crowd. Sharp enough of wit he undoubtedly is, and his being a Buddhist priest gives him a tremendous pull." (Ross 1943: 107) This letter is dated August 23, 1910 and describes a visit that must have happened shortly after Tachibana left London on August 16, stopping in Berlin before proceeding farther to St. Petersburg.

26. "Exploration in Chinese Turkestan." *The Times* (February 3, 1910).

27. Letter of Ross to Stein, dated Calcutta, 13 January 1910, Catalogue of the Collections of Sir Aurel Stein in the LHAS, Correspondence 8/fol. 196.

From India, the whole party was to travel to Europe, leaving behind only Nomura to tend to the expedition material. Ōtani's final destination was London where, among other plans, he was going to participate in the Japan-British Exhibition which was being set up at Shepherd's Bush. Nomura, on the other hand, was going to travel back to Kashgar along the same route via the Karakoram Pass to retrieve their expedition material which they had deposited at the British Consulate and transport it overland through China to Japan. However, to cross into China through Leh, he needed to apply for a permit to the Indian Government. On December 7, 1909 while the entire Ōtani party was still together in Calcutta, T. Hirata, the acting Consul General for Japan wrote on Nomura's behalf a petition to the Secretary to the Government of India in the Foreign Department, Calcutta:

I have the honour to state that Mr. Yeizaburo Nonura [*sic*], Secretary of the West Hongwanji, Head Monastery of one of the biggest sections of Buddhism in Japan, who have traveled through Mongolia, with the mission of investigating in the matter of religious interest and arrived in this country through Karakoram Pass, desire to proceed again to China Proper pursuing the same route, that is through the said pass via Leh, expecting to reach the latter towards the end of March 1910.

On his behalf, I have to request that you would be good to take steps to give him permission for passing the above-mentioned route. (Letter of Hirata to Secretary to the Government of India in the Foreign Department, dated Calcutta, 7 December 1910. L/P&S/IO/55/240: 11)<sup>28</sup>

On December 21, the Secretary passed on the application to the Resident in Kashmir, saying that the route might not be open yet in March. Only two days later, the reply came back saying, "Japanese traveler Nomura does not seem to be a desirable visitor but I have not had time yet to form a definite opinion." (L/P&S/IO/55/240: 14) Accordingly, on January 17, 1910 the Deputy Secretary to the Government of India notified the Japanese Consul that "the Government of India regret that they are unable to grant Mr. Yeizaburo Nonura [*sic*] permission to recross the British frontier via Leh and the Karakoram Pass."

With this denial, Nomura was unable to return to Kashgar and retrieve the remainder of the expedition material. Therefore, while the rest of the party sailed out of Bombay towards Europe,<sup>29</sup> Nomura was instructed to return directly to Japan by sea.

28. Although the letterhead states the year as 1910, this surely must have been a mistake for 1909, as it is evident from the context.

29. On the way there, they stopped at Port Said to visit Egypt and Palestine, before eventually landing at Marseilles.

*Spies or Explorers?*

As for the reason why these two Japanese explorers who had not been in Xinjiang before were so consistently suspected in espionage, Kaneko Tamio (2002: 130-131) suggests that some of these rumors might have been spread intentionally. He thinks that this was possibly done by the Russian Consulate. One thing is sure, that the Chinese (both Manchu and Han) were quite friendly towards the explorers, partly because of Japan's recent victory over Russia, whose aggressive politics in the border regions of the Qing empire, including Manchuria, Mongolia and Xinjiang, have often been the cause for antipathy. The fact that this giant European colonial empire was defeated by a small Asian nation at the time very much resonated with Chinese sentiments. The British also maintained a general goodwill towards the Japanese. With the signing of the Japanese-British alliance, the two countries were officially on friendly terms. For this reason, following their investigation of Tachibana and Nomura, the Foreign Department of the Government of India could not find a suitable explanation for the presence of Japanese spies in Kashgar.

The Russians, however, obviously had reasons to be concerned about the Japanese. After the defeat in the war, they were neither friendly nor good-willed towards those few visitors from this rapidly rising empire who showed up within their sphere of influence, especially in such politically sensitive regions as Kashgar. And let us not forget that it was the Russian consul who had told Shuttleworth of the alleged military affiliation of the two Japanese explorers. That the Russians perceived Japanese intelligence activity in Xinjiang as a real threat is evidenced, for example, in a telegram sent from Shanghai which claimed that the Japanese secret agent Komatsubara Hayashi [*sic*] was organizing in Peking a group of young agents and spies to send those to Kashgar and those districts of Chinese Turkestan that share a border with Russia, "with the aim of spreading Japanese political propaganda among the local population." (Osmanov 2005: 416) This telegram was also forwarded to the Russian Consul in Kashgar. While the document is dated July 10, 1905, and therefore is in no way related to Tachibana and Nomura, it is introduced here merely as an example of the threat of Japanese espionage as perceived by Russian diplomatic bodies.<sup>30</sup>

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30. I regret that before completing this paper I have not been able to consult the Archives of the Foreign Affairs of the Russian Empire (Arkhiv Vneshnei Politiki Rossiiskoi Imperii) in Moscow, where the consular reports regarding Tachibana and Nomura are held today. Having talked to researchers who have seen these archives, it seems that the reports were written under the assumption that the "Japanese missionaries" had in fact been engaged in espionage.

Russian spellings of the above Japanese secret agent vary (Hayashi, Hayashide Kamatsu, Komatsu Harayashide) but it is likely that they all refer to Hayashide Kenjirō 林出賢次郎 (1882-1970), who later went on to a highly visible career of a diplomat, serving at embassies and consulates in Hankou (1929), Shanghai (1929) and Mukden (1932). At one point he also served as a personal interpreter to Pu Yi 溥儀 (1906-1967), the Japanese-installed emperor of the puppet state of Manchukuo.<sup>31</sup> In view of his activities in Xinjiang, it is rather ironic that it was the movements of Tachibana and Nomura that generated an array of secret correspondence between Kashgar and Simla. Surely, as a trained intelligence officer on an active mission, Hayashide would have been careful not to do anything that might have caused suspicions.<sup>32</sup> In contrast with this, everything Tachibana and Nomura did appeared suspicious to outside observers. One such thing was their library of English books, that proved a great mystery in light of their lack of language skills. Shuttleworth's report describes the library the following way:

27th June. I returned Nomura's call. The Chinese have made him exceedingly comfortable in a very nice house with a large garden outside the city. He showed me some of the antiquities he had collected. I noticed he had a large library of English books, including Curzon's "Pamirs," Stein's "Ancient Khotan," Putnam Weale's "The Truce in the East and its Aftermath" and books by Deasy, Ellsworth Huntington, Sven Hedin and Cobbold. I also saw several military works, such as "The War in the Far East" by the military correspondent of the *Times*, and one or two naval books by Mahan. Nomura distinctly told me he could neither speak nor read English. (Kashgar Diaries and News Reports, Diary for the ten days ending 30th June 1909, L/P&S/IO/55/230)

Although at this point Nomura claimed that Tachibana could speak English fluently, this later proved to be completely untrue, at least from the point of view of native English-speakers such as Shuttleworth and his American guests. Of course, it is by no means a distinguishing attribute of a spy to carry with him a library of books in a language he could not read, but these circumstances made the Japanese explorers appear odd, and consequently suspicious.

The correspondence between Kashgar and Simla also triggered further actions, among which was that Sir Claude MacDonald, the British Minister (i.e. ambassador) in Tōkyō made a formal enquiry towards the Japanese Ministry of

31. The Diplomatic Record Office of the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs contains a wealth of material related to Hayashide's activities.

32. Mannerheim's diary mentions Hayashide when passing through Urumchi in June 1906 in connection with the newly established high school, finding irony in the fact that the Japanese was in charge of teaching English, although according to the Russian Consul he did not speak English at all. (Mannerheim 2008: 352)

Foreign Affairs regarding the two Japanese travelers.<sup>33</sup> Count Komura Jutarō 小村 壽太郎, the Minister for Foreign Affairs replied to this personally:

... In reply I have the honour to state for Your Excellency's information that the two persons named above (i.e. Tachibana and Nomura) are not Japanese Government officials and that as regards the travel of these men in that region the Imperial Government have no concern with or cognizance of them.

(signed) Jutarō Komura,

Count, Minister for Foreign Affairs

(Letter of Komura to MacDonald, dated 22 November 1909, L/P&S/IO/55/240: 16)

This answer exemplifies what British authorities could find out about the two Japanese young men in Kashgar. Since surveillance could never confirm the suspicions, a final comment in the Political and Secret Files regarding this incident and the team leader Tachibana's role in Xinjiang was that "It is not unreasonable to suppose that this man's business was archaeological, and that in his leisure moments he collected what information he could for his government." (L/P&S/IO/55/240)<sup>34</sup>

### Conclusions

As we have seen above, contemporary suspicions regarding the Japanese expedition's engagement in espionage remained speculative and in the end they abated. Similarly, recent scholarship could not recover anything in British or Japanese archives that would suggest that either Tachibana or Nomura were involved in spying. Based on the relatively detailed information available in Japanese sources concerning the history of the expedition and the background of the two team members, we can be fairly certain that neither of these two young men worked for the government or was employed as an agent. Of course, they equally lacked training as archaeologists or explorers but that is a matter of their professional competence, rather than an indication of being on a secret mission.

It would be fascinating to know what would have happened in terms of the Japanese exploration of Central Asia if Ōtani was not forced to resign from his position as leader of the Nishi Hongan-ji. However, a financial scandal within the organization—partially blamed on the ostensibly extraordinary costs of the expeditions—left him with no choice but quitting his position. He also renounced

33. Sir Claude MacDonald was the first British ambassador to Japan, serving between 1905 and 1912.

34. This opinion appears as a handwritten comment on the cover page of the folder containing the details of the entire incident.

his rank and title, left Kyōto to spend the following three decades outside Japan. A close circle of devotees, including Tachibana, followed him into his voluntary exile, and initially settled in Shanghai. From there Ōtani continued working on his vision of pan-Asian Buddhist dominance but his attention switched from Central Asia to China proper and Southeast Asia. In the course of raising money for new projects, part of the spoils of the three expedition was sold, other parts were moved to Korea and Manchuria, and gradually the entire collection became dispersed.

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#### Appendix<sup>35</sup>

Copy of a letter No. 929/5, dated the 10th October 1909, from Captain A. R. B. Shuttleworth, His Britannic Majesty's Officiating Consul, Kashgar, to the First Assistant to the Resident in Kashmir.

With reference to your confidential D.O. No. 6058, dated the 11th November 1908, and the instructions contained therein, I have the honour to state that I have reported to you fully, from time to time, the movements of the two Japanese travellers, Nomura and Tashibana and I now give a general summary.

In February of this year I received a letter from a Mr. Kozin Atain despatched from Kyoto, Japan, in January. He informed me that he had sent two of his "student assistants" in the "research of Budhistic Archaeology" in Chinese Turkistan. He said that they would arrive in March and desired me to send all the letters I had received for them to the Taotai to be despatched to Kuchar to await their arrival.

My Mir Munshi received a letter in November or December 1908 from the Post Master at Gilgit asking him to return all letters for these two men to him if they did not arrive by a certain date. I took no notice of the Post Master's letter and kept all the letters and parcels with me.

I first heard of the arrival of the travellers to this country through Sahib Ali Khan, British Aksakal of Kuchar. He wrote to me on the 10th of March and informed me that they had arrived. He said that they were in search of "Budhistic

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35. This letter by Captain Shuttleworth is part of L/P&S/IO/55/240: 3-10 among the Political and Secret Files. This document is singled out and published here because it is a complete description of what transpired during those months in the summer of 1909 regarding the two Japanese visitors in Kashgar. Although the entire folder dealing with the Japanese 'spies' in the Political and Secret Files is much larger, this letter conveniently summarizes all the events and opinions that were transmitted from Kashgar to the Government of India. I have kept the original spelling, even if in places where it is clearly incorrect (e.g. Tashibana, Kozin Atain).

remains", but that they were sketching and surveying as well, and went on to say that they were to separate, one going to Kashgar by the Lob Nor and Khotan while the other was going direct viâ Aksu.

On the 12th of June I received a letter from Badruddin Khan, British Aksakal of Khotan, which was despatched on the 20th of May. The letter was as follows: —

"One Japanese traveller accompanied by one Chinaman and a Kuchari Muhammadan interpreter has arrived at Keria. He lives in European fashion and can talk Chinese. He has visited all the places visited by Dr. Stein. He has also explored many ruined cities. The Amban of Keria gave him the services of Ibrahim Beg who was with Dr. Stein. The Amban has asked me to prepare my house for his reception if he comes here. If he comes to Khotan I will report his movements and will tell you what he has done in the city."

Nomura, who came direct viâ Aksu, arrived at Kashgar on the 11th of June. A house had been prepared for him by the Chinese. He sent his card and asked for any letters which may have come for him. I sent my Aksakal over with 16 letters and 3 parcels for which I obtained a receipt. One letter which I had received through Abdulla Jan, a trader of Yarkand, and which had been given to him by a servant of his who told him that a Japanese gentleman had given it to him at Leh, I told him I would give him when he called on me. This letter was probably from Ama. Nomura called on me on the 23rd of June. He brought me a lot of letters which he wished me to despatch to Japan. I told him I had no stamps and that this was not a proper Post Office and sent the letters to Major Dew and asked him to have them posted and to bill Nomura through the Resident in Kashmir on the former's arrival at Srinagar.

At this interview Nomura told me that he had received instructions from Japan informing him that he and his companion could return to their country viâ India. I told him that I had had no instructions and so wired to you for the necessary permission, at his request. He told me that he and Tashibana had travelled from Peking northwards to Urga in Mongolia and from thence to Uliassitai. From Uliassitai they went to Kobdo and from there to Guchen, in Hsin Chiang, by the ordinary trade route. From Guchen they went to Urumtchi where they were well treated by the Chinese authorities and entertained by the Futai. They stayed about a fortnight there and then left for Turfan. They thoroughly explored the neighbourhood of that place but found that Stein, von Le Coq and others had done their work very thoroughly and had stripped the place of everything worth taking. From Turfan they went to Kuchar and there separated Tashibana going to Khotan viâ the Lob Nor while Nomura came here direct.

Shortly after Nomura's call I received a letter from the Fu of Yarkand complaining about Tashibana's behaviour. He said that he had been beating Chinese subjects and making himself a general nuisance. I wrote and told him that

he was not a British subject nor was he under the protection of the British but that I would give him a hint on his arrival here.

Tashibana arrived here on the 13th of July. On the 14th he paid a visit to Min-Yul, the first stage on the Kashgar Osh road, but I have not been able to find out the reason of this visit. When at Yarkand he asked the Fu for all the maps and records of the place which were in his possession. He called at the Consulate on the 21st of July and asked me when he and Nomura could start on their return journey. I told him they could start as soon as I received an answer to the telegram which I had despatched. On the 23rd I returned his call, accompanied by the Russian Consul. I received the answer to my telegram on the 29th and I informed them that they could proceed to India viâ the Karakoram and Leh accordingly.

On the 3rd of August they dined with me and I promised them all help on the road and told them that my Aksakal at Yarkand would make arrangements for their transport.

On the 20th of August they came to me and asked me for a loan of 2000 taels (about Rs. 4000). They said that they had spent all their money and had not any left for the return journey. I did not feel justified in advancing such a big sum on no security and so I refused. I pointed out to them that this was a Chinese country and that the Taotai was the proper man to go to. I also told them that had they asked me for this money when they asked me to wire to India for permission to travel viâ Leh, I could have also wired at the same time for sanction to make the advance. They did not go to the Taotai for the money but wired to Japan.

Shortly after this call, Tashibana left for Maralbashi and from that place he went to Yarkand viâ Lailik. He stayed at Yarkand for two days and then left for Kargalik. He made several trips from Kargalik to the Tiznaf and Azgar valleys and returned to Yarkand on the 18th of September. I was at Yarkand at the time and he called on me on the 19th and asked me to witness his signature to a power of attorney empowering Nomura, who was still at Kashgar, to draw the money which had been received at the Russo-Chinese Bank from Japan in his name. He told me that he intended to go to India viâ the Mustach Pass and Rondu and meet Nomura, who was going by the Karakoram, at Srinagar. I had great difficulty in impressing on him that my orders were very clear and that both he and his friend would have to keep together and go by the Karakoram.

On the 25th, on my return to Kashgar, I met Nomura at Yapchan. He was on his way to join Tashibana at Yarkand and then to proceed at once to India. He told me he had got his money from the Bank.

On the 4th of October I got a letter from Lala Gauri Mal, British Aksakal at Yarkand, informing me that he had got together all the transport which was required for the travellers and that they were on the point of starting.

I think there is no doubt whatsoever that both these men did a great deal of surveying and secret intelligence work. They sent me many bulky letters for the

post which I forwarded to Major Dew and which looked as if they might contain maps and reports. Nomura was seen sketching around Kashgar on many occasions. I once saw him on the walls of the city with what looked like a plane-table. Tashibana sketched the road from Maralbashi to Yarkand viâ Lailik. He was also seen examining the telegraph poles and measuring the distances between them and was very diligent in enquiries at the local telegraph Office.

Nomura is the older and quieter of the two. Tashibana looks about fifteen years old. They cannot speak any English though Tashibana knows a few words; they have a good library of English Naval and Military books though. They know no Turki but both talk Chinese fluently. They made themselves very unpopular here with the Chinese as they gave themselves airs and beat the men who were sent to help them if anything went wrong. Tashibana was cheeky to me when I told him he could not go by the Mustagh Pass and I had to sit on him severely. They were both inclined to be off-hand when they asked me for the money and expected me to comply at once.

The Russian Consul told me that Nomura was an Officer in the Army and that Tashibana was in the Navy, but I do not know whether there is any truth in this statement.

P.S. I have just received the following from Mr. Tashibana, dated 27th September 1909: - "I have given 100 taels to your Aksakal at Yarkand to pay for the telegrams you sent to India about us. We start tomorrow."