

The making of *Chinese Central Asia*

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ABSTRACT *The article demonstrates how Clarmont P. Skrine, who served in 1922–1924 as British Consul-General in Kashgar (Xinjiang), constructed the descriptive narrative in his well-known 1926 book, Chinese Central Asia. The extensive archive of Skrine’s letters and other writings makes it possible to compare the book with its sources and learn about authorial intent, self-censorship, and literary devices. It may be possible to apply the methodology of this example to other Western accounts about Central Asia in order better to establish their strengths and weaknesses as historical sources.*

Descriptions of Central Eurasia by Western travelers in the second half of the 19th and early 20th centuries are numerous.¹ They range in genre from the often voluminous records of scientific or government-sponsored expeditions to adventure travel and sport. Often the authors of the non-scholarly accounts were government officials whose memoirs of their travel found a ready market thanks to public hunger for narratives set in ‘exotic’ locales. It was almost expected that those who went north from British India, for example, write a book, and not coincidentally, a good many such accounts encompassed what is now Western Xinjiang.

Given the paucity (or inaccessibility) of indigenous sources, this travel literature has long been mined as a major source of information regarding the culture of indigenous peoples or served as the basis for narratives of the ‘Great Game’ contest for political supremacy. Scholars today use ‘travel’ accounts of any kind with caution and increasingly are turning to other sources such as oral tradition (often transcribed by Westerners resident for long periods in the region) or records connected with local shrines.² With notable exceptions, those writing on the international geopolitics of the region understandably prefer official archival documentation to the published accounts.³ Yet even when used with caution or critiqued for their biases, the travel accounts for the most part have not really been analyzed.⁴ That is, they serve as sources for individual facts, with little attention to the history of their composition and narrative devices. To undertake the latter kind of analysis may require applying textual criticism through a comparison of the published narratives with their sources, both published and unpublished. The result can

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substantially deepen our appreciation of the value and limits of the published narratives. Such analysis might be applied both to the travel literature with legitimate claims of scientific substance and to that which never made such claims.⁵

The purpose of this paper is to present an example of such analysis and what it reveals. My focus is a relatively successful example of the genre of the non-scholarly account, Clarmont P. Skrine's book, *Chinese Central Asia*. Skrine served as British Consul-General in Kashgar (Kashi) in 1922–1924, and used the opportunity to travel extensively in Kashgaria. The book is a record of that service and travel, albeit one very much limited by self-censorship. It was first published in 1926, reprinted three times, most recently in 1996, and translated into Russian in the 1930s.⁶ Its success may be explained by its having been well informed for its day and quite readable; I would argue that it retains considerable value, although others' evaluations of it have not always been so positive.⁷ Skrine was the first European to set foot in some of the mountains south of Kashgar; among the more valuable sections of his narrative are his descriptions of his encounters with the Kyrgyz there. He also collected transcriptions of oral literature and published in the book a selection of it in translation. A good many of his photographs, which have documentary value, have been preserved, a number of them published in his book. In his later years, he drew upon his Kashgar experience to write the first serious study of the Kashgar consulate, during the long and important tenure of its initial incumbent, George Macartney.⁸ Skrine's 1926 book is in fact one of several first-hand accounts written by those associated with the consulate, whose broader history awaits its historian.⁹ His voluminous correspondence and well-preserved official reports enable us to apply 'source criticism' to the book, in the process highlighting analytical approaches which in turn can be applied to some of those other accounts and a broader range of travel literature.

Looking back on what he had published decades earlier in 1926, Skrine himself acknowledged certain limitations of that account:

I now realize that the picture I drew in my book on Sinkiang was sadly incomplete. The little town of Bai, twenty-five marches north-east of Kashgar and roughly half-way to Urumchi, was the nearest I could approach, in the limited time at my disposal, to the provincial capital. We in Kashgar knew little of Yang Tseng-hsin, the provincial Governor in Urumchi. . . . It was not until the 1930s that news began to seep out, showing what a remarkable governor Yang Tseng-hsin had been. We now know that his statecraft was responsible for the survival of peace and order in Sinkiang¹⁰

What Skrine suggests here is that neither he nor anyone else could have developed a very 'complete' view of the situation in the 1920s in Xinjiang. But what he fails to indicate is that even had he been armed then with the wisdom of hindsight, the rigid constraints under which he wrote in the 1920s would have precluded his revealing much about the political issues affecting Western Xinjiang.

Skrine left considerable documentation from which we can assess his purpose in writing the book and the ways in which he often exercised self-censorship in the narrative. From the time he was young while away from home he was expected to

write regularly to his mother, Helen, and he also began keeping diaries for certain of his travels. His mother obviously treasured his every letter (not to mention locks of his flaming red hair), and Skrine himself was quite meticulous about keeping drafts and carbons of many of his official reports and copies of at least some of his correspondence regarding efforts to publish his photographs after returning to England in 1925. We have a 'field diary' of his from Xinjiang, covering the period from 30 July 1923, until his return to India toward the end of summer in 1924. There is additional material in the India Office files concerning his request for official clearance to publish the book. Skrine's family archive passed to his cousin and executor, John W. Stewart, who deposited the material in the British Library Oriental and India Office Collections.¹¹

Appointed initially as a one-year replacement for Percy Etherton, who was going on leave from Kashgar, Skrine and his wife, Doris, set out on the long journey up from India through the Hunza Valley in early June 1922. Nearly two months later, they had arrived in Kashgar. In his first letter home from the consulate, he mentioned to his mother that he had kept a diary of the trip and promised to type it up and send it to her. 'In combination with my photos, of which I have a splendid collection, it will make an interesting record', he wrote.¹² After some delay, in mid-October he sent the first sixteen and a half closely typed pages, covering only the route from Gilgit to Tashkurgan, for, as he had confessed, 'I simply can't help re-writing almost every sentence of the original diary!'¹³ It took him until the following March to finish rewriting almost every line of the rest of it.¹⁴

In the meantime, he had broached for the first time the idea of his book. His mother had written to Doris, encouraging her to write a book of travels. Skrine's response was that she had no intention of doing so. 'Don't worry though,' he went on, 'the honour of the family is going to be maintained.' I might add here that Skrine's father, Frank, had written several works, including what at the time was considered a fairly authoritative study of the Russian position in Central Asia.¹⁵ One sees a thread in Skrine of trying to meet the rather rigid and demanding expectations of his father that the son 'succeed'. Success as an author might be one way of doing this. In his letter home, Skrine went on to explain what he had in mind. 'I'm going to write a book—that is, if the Govt. 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!'¹⁶

In short order, his letters home also revealed that he wanted his photographs to be an integral part of the project. Hence, he was anxious that Percy Sykes not be given any of the Persian ones (taken on Skrine's previous tour of duty) and that no one else be allowed to publish them either.¹⁷ Skrine was an eager and accomplished photographer. He set up a dark-room in the consulate and had a portable one in the field. Even in remote mountain valleys, he was photographing both with glass negatives and with nitrate ones; his diary and notes frequently underline the importance he attached to his photography. He would send home enlargements, some of them intended for the archives of the Royal Geographical Society, and

upon his return from Xinjiang, he was successful in placing his photographs in a variety of publications.¹⁸

After taking such pains with the diary, he then was disappointed that there had been no response to it from home. 'My diary of the journey up seems to have fallen rather flat,' he lamented, '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 . . .'.¹⁹ In fact, he seemed to think that the photographs might be the better sell, and feared that 'owing to my official position, it [the book] won't be much more than letter press round my photographs and (I hope) some of D's [his wife, Doris's] pictures of "types"', which she had been busily sketching.²⁰

Obviously though his mother had been sharing the diary and presumably some of the newsy and stylishly written letters, for by the beginning of 1924, he learned that Ella Sykes (the sister of Percy Sykes, who had accompanied her brother to Kashgar when he briefly occupied the consular position) had recommended Skrine to the publisher Methuen 'as a possible successor to E. V. Lucas', a very popular writer of essays and travel books.²¹ While he was sure he could not write the kind of a book Lucas did, by February, he already had a packet in the mail to the publisher with sample material for 4–5 chapters, including excerpts from his diaries.²²

Upon his return to India he sought formal permission to publish from Denys de S. Bray, Secretary to the Government of India in the Foreign and Political Office. His letter to Bray, dated 28 November 1924 is worth quoting *in extenso*:

Some time ago, Messrs. Methuen and Co., the publishers, wrote to me asking whether I would 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 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 folk-lore, 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.²³

After the request was sent all the way up to the Under-Secretary of State in the India Office of the Foreign Office, approval was forthcoming, contingent on his promise to provide the proofs before publication.²⁴

The further work on the project then occupied the better part of a year in 1925 while he was on leave in London. During that time, he gave lectures to the Royal Geographical Society, The Central Asian Society, the Royal Asiatic Society and the Irish Literary Society, the preparation for which was simultaneously preparation of material that would be incorporated in the book.²⁵ His lecture for the RGS was especially relevant, because in it he described his pioneering exploration of the mountains south of Kashgar; there is considerable overlap between the published text of that lecture and sections in *Chinese Central Asia* concerning the mountain Kyrgyz.²⁶ For the Central Asian Society, he presented a sweeping survey of 'The Roads to Kashgar' (there is no direct analogy to this material in the book).²⁷ As he wrote to his father in April 1925, the invitation from the Irish Literary Society initially perplexed him:

... The Society as such has nothing whatever to do with any of these [topics] 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 ILS is on the poetry and folk-lore 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. 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 can lecture to anybody . . .²⁸

It is clear that Skrine indeed did his homework in the literature on his subject, before, during and after his stay in Kashgar. The consulate had a substantial library of the European literature on Central Asia, and the collection was augmented, as individuals such as Aurel Stein sent or brought their books when they visited. At various points Skrine notes reading or having with him a book based on travel in the regions he visited, and he was well aware of where he was following in the footsteps of Stein, Deasy and others.²⁹ In describing the Kyrgyz, he referred to other accounts based on observations about their lives in different regions.³⁰ In short, he was not content simply to rely on his personal observations. He intended that the book be at once readable and well-researched.

By January 1926, he could report to his mother that the writing and re-writing had been finished. He had begun, somewhat naively, he admitted, thinking he would have 90–100,000 words, had ended up with 150,000, and then cut that back to 125,000. One of the sections that ended up being cut nearly in half was the description of the trip between Baltit in Hunza and Kashgar in 1922. If he agonized over the manuscript, Doris seems to have suffered too by his preoccupation. He admitted that while he had used some of her letters, it was 'fewer than I had originally intended because I had so much other material'.³¹ He did, however, dedicate the book to her and paid personally for the color reproduction of her drawing of a Kyrgyz girl that served as the frontispiece.

Clearing the manuscript with the Government of India authorities had apparently presented no problems. Skrine provided the proofs, where he assiduously

marked any passages he thought could remotely cause concern; in an official letter, D. T. Monteath noted ‘I don’t think there is a single passage that calls for criticism—much less alteration—on the score of being “political”’.³²

Having examined the formal evolution of the book, let us explore the way in which Skrine recorded his first-hand information and edited it. At least while traveling, he kept a diary, only one volume of which has been preserved.³³ In it he recorded (although not always on a daily basis) information ranging from the weather and specifics about exposures of his photographs to news about Bolshevik activity, local folklore and descriptions of local culture. When recording oral texts, in all cases he transliterated the Turki of his informants, and he took pains to inquire about the meanings of words or expressions he was not sure he understood. Generally though he left full translations for later. The descriptive paragraphs on interesting aspects of local culture often show signs of considerable re-writing (apparently done at the time he was recording the material), which would seem to suggest he may have been consciously drafting set pieces for inclusion eventually in the book.³⁴ In other words, while there seems little reason to doubt his attempt at accuracy in the record, such pieces are nonetheless not fully spontaneous.

Even when he was in remote locations in the mountains, he arranged to have the consulate’s mail courier deliver the incoming post and collect his outgoing letters.³⁵ The service ran weekly, only on rare occasions failing to meet its schedule. The reliability of the consular mail service, carried by a single rider, in fact was quite remarkable, given the distances and difficulty of travel. There were only a couple of instances during his term in Kashgar when the mail failed to get through to India (on one occasion, the courier fell off the narrow path on a steep hillside and into the river below). When Skrine wrote home, as he did to his mother on a weekly basis, he generally was finishing the letter late in the evening before the next morning’s mail pickup. Unlike the diary, the letters seem to be spontaneous. Even in cases where they overlap with the diary, they often contain additional details; the prose is fresh and generally quite stylish.

To a considerable degree, there is a close correlation between his letters and diary on the one hand and the text of the book on the other. Although much of the book approximates the chronology of his travels in Xinjiang, there are thematic chapters in which he cut and spliced material from different visits or different locations.³⁶ The effect of this editing is to create a synthetic view of aspects of culture, but with the drawback of obscuring possible specific regional differences. Fortunately, the letters and diary allow one to determine specific locations where he obtained material (for example, the oral texts).

Another aspect to his editing and rewriting of his raw material is perhaps more problematic and less obvious. In the book he presents extended sections of what appear to be quotation, generally prefaced by the indication that they are ‘in the words of a letter I wrote home shortly afterwards’, ‘from my letters home, which I have cast into diary form’, or ‘extracts from diaries and letters’.³⁷ In fact, such ‘documentarity’ of the material is somewhat contrived, not on the

whole, one suspects, to mislead the reader about the facts, but probably as a literary convention for what he conceived of as the genre of the book. In fact there is often little difference in the ways he draws on his sources between the sections set off as quotation and those that are not. Where he purports to be quoting, I have not always found the 'source' where it should be, and where I am able to compare the book with the source, there is often a lot of re-writing and occasionally even dates or other minor facts have been altered.³⁸ In many cases, obviously he did not record all the information at the time but added it later from memory, supplemented by his reading of other authors (to whom he always gives appropriate credit). His careful descriptions of the Kyrgyz in the 'Kongur Alps' illustrate this pattern.³⁹

His omissions of material from his notes when writing his book occasionally deprive us of intriguing detail. For example, when on tour northeast of Kashgar, where he was particularly concerned about information concerning Bolshevik activity in the Ili region further north across the Tian Shan Mountains, he recorded in his personal diary news of a political nature that made it into his official intelligence diaries to his superiors but clearly was beyond his self-imposed limits for what could be included in the book. For those interested in the context for oral literature, it is unfortunate he fails to mention in the book that several of the Turki sayings he recorded on this trip seem to have been told him specifically as comments on Bolshevik activity.⁴⁰ In another passage of the diary, he provides an evocative description of the sound and types of the bells around the necks of camels in a long caravan he met south of Yangi Hissar. For some reason though, he omitted in the book his note about the 'one blatant jangling ship's bell. 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 part of the world's broadest continent forty days journey from the nearest sea?'⁴¹

Sometimes his editing is more than stylistic and reflects one of his overriding concerns—that he maintain the honor and dignity of His Britannic Majesty's official representative. In one of the 'quotations' in the book he describes the entertainment provided for him and the rest of the small European community in Yarkand, when he visited there in March 1924. A group of traveling players offered the guests a chance to choose items from their repertoire for the performance.

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.⁴²

What really happened? His diary reveals a rather different story:

... 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. 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 and head shakes from me) he revelled in explaining the circumstances of the brigands' capture in the 'whore-shop' & 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!⁴³

Obviously it simply would not do to admit such a *faux pas* on the part of the official British representative. Skrine could have deep-sixed the whole incident, but it amused him enough so that he blamed the unsuspecting Swedish missionary (he did, of course, conceal her name). Apart from his desire to 'save face' for himself and the Crown, Skrine presumably wished to underscore an impression of his moral rectitude.⁴⁴ To a degree, that attitude was undoubtedly involved in his condemnation (in another context and not even hinted at in the book) of Etherton for the latter's goings-on, which among other things involved sexual relations with the local Kashgari women.⁴⁵

While he admitted to using relatively little from his wife Doris's letters home, he explicitly recognized the value of her observations: 'Thanks to the colloquial knowledge of the language which she acquired, she thus became familiar with the feminine side of Turki social life, a subject on which I have found no first-hand information in any of the books I have read about Chinese Turkestan'.⁴⁶ He quotes her at length on a wedding party she attended and obviously relied on her for other material about women and family life. Unfortunately, with few exceptions, her letters have not been preserved, or we might have had substantially more such valuable documentation.⁴⁷

One senses that even at this early stage in a marriage which later would become quite complicated and unhappy for both parties, Skrine may have been a bit uncomfortable about some of Doris's passions and tendency to flaunt social convention. While she could play the role of good hostess for official functions, she probably was more comfortable in the company of the local women than might have seemed proper to him. Dispensing medicines or small gifts of cosmetics, hosting a tea party for the Kyrgyz women in the mountain fastness of the Kaying Valley, or organizing 'Girl Guides' activities for the Kashgari children

at the consulate were acceptable activities. However, while he could admit in private to his diary that Doris's donning of the elaborate headdress of the mountain Kyrgyz was a highlight of one tea party in the mountains and he even took a photograph of her in 'native' costume, neither the picture or the comment made it into the book.⁴⁸ Perhaps even more telling is how he edited her touching account of their departure from Kashgar, which he quotes almost verbatim. She had formed close friendships with many of the local women, who insisted she join them for farewell tea near the road out of town. Of course the women could not entertain mixed company in public; but away from the road with Doris, they were free to lift their veils. It was a very emotional experience for all of them. As Doris wrote, 'I choked down a little tea, but cut the party short for they were all crying and it was all I could do to keep a stiff upper lip. They dropped their veils and came with me as far as the road.' In the manuscript of her letter, she added, 'and I wished I'd had the mental support of a veil too!'⁴⁹ That line was crossed out (presumably by Skrine) and never made it into the book. To publish such an admission presumably would have been going just a bit too far.⁵⁰

While my purpose here is not to provide a systematic critique of the information in the book with reference to primary sources and the literature, a few concluding comments about bias are in order. Those who would use Skrine's book and his unpublished writings certainly need to analyze them as colonialist discourse, but to dismiss them as of little value for understanding his subjects would be to over-react. Indeed, he is consistently self-conscious about the status of the British and their separation from 'native' society.⁵¹ The British consulate in Kashgar was a deliberate replica of the British colonial outposts in India.⁵² The consulate could set a table with the best, serve formal tea in the rose garden, even have its own soccer team, and, something not possible in Bengal, in the winter ice skating where a section of the garden had been flooded. When the Skrines went to the mountains, they took all possible comforts with them (including a 'tin-lined wooden bathtub of immense solidity'), and he even could report to his mother how he was proudly wearing in the remote fastness of the Kaying Valley the necktie she had sent him as a birthday present.⁵³

Obviously his assessment of the people in Xinjiang varied considerably, but it is far from one-sided or uniformly patronizing. While on the one hand he had a very low opinion of many of the Chinese officials, he greatly admired some of them and could discuss them with some insight. That said, as illustrated above (note 38), he occasionally merely reinforces common clichés about Chinese culture; in his letters, 'Chink' is a common epithet. Attitudes aside, he had to rely on interpreters for Chinese. He was not always kind in his comments on the urban Turki (the Uighurs), whose language he made a serious effort to learn, or ethnic groups such as the Dulani.⁵⁴ In contrast, he greatly enjoyed being with the mountain Kyrgyz, especially those in the Kongur region. Even if they had moved from their normal urban locations to the mountains, the 'Sarts' (urban Muslims) suffered in comparison with the Kyrgyz.⁵⁵ On more than one occasion in the book, citing Doris's letters in support, he referred to the 'Scottishness' of the Kyrgyz. While this may tell us more about his and Doris's Scottishness (and nostalgia)

than it does about the pastoral herders of Xinjiang, he felt the analogy to be appropriate to define their independence and what he perceived as a lack of artifice—perhaps ‘natural man’ in a twentieth-century context.⁵⁶ He seems genuinely to have respected them and their culture, even if he could not quite understand why they stuck to their leaky felt yurts in what was arguably too rainy a climate.⁵⁷ Even where Skrine’s biases show through, he displays nothing of the almost racist animosity which occasionally surfaces in the book by his acquaintance, the Russian emigré Paul Nazaroff, whom he helped to travel to India and later hosted in Scotland.⁵⁸

It is possible to read through Skrine’s biases in order to obtain a wealth of good information about both rural and urban Xinjiang in the 1920s. His essays into oral literature were pioneering and subsequently many of them were used by Jarring in his own compendium of Turki texts.⁵⁹ Since Skrine published many of the texts only in English translation, the Turki transcriptions in his notes and the specific indications of where he recorded them may be worth publication even now.⁶⁰ His ventures into the mountains indeed filled in blank spots in the geographical knowledge of the area for the Survey of India and, even as recently as 1996, still provided the only guide to some of those valleys, and an accurate one at that.⁶¹ Given the paucity of material on the trade of Western Xinjiang in this period, his frequent comments on that subject (often in connection with the issue of Sino–Soviet relations) provide useful descriptive detail, a fair portion of it not yet published.⁶²

Skrine never intended his book to provide insights into the politics of the area—in fact he fell over backwards to avoid such topics, partly because that seems not to have been what his publisher wanted and more importantly, because he assumed he would not be allowed to publish such material. Unlike Etherton, who, after compromising his career, had resigned from the service by the time his own book appeared and thus felt free to write what he wished, Skrine was looking ahead to a long career as a loyal servant of the Crown. Skrine’s official reports (and to a lesser degree, his letters home) reveal that he certainly did pay attention to politics, for the Bolshevik threat and other such manifestations that might affect British interests are to be found on nearly every page. In fact the instability on Bolshevik Central Asia and the strenuous efforts of the new Soviet regime to re-open the borders and the Russian consulate in Kashgar, combined with ongoing efforts at indoctrination and propaganda, meant that the perceived Bolshevik threat was far from a dead issue.

Skrine was unlike Etherton in another respect. Whereas Etherton’s accounts are often superficial and emphasize the sensational—indeed, his self-proclaimed ‘expertise’ on Central Asia raised Skrine’s hackles—Skrine felt that his own information was solidly based in part because he had systematically traveled in carrying out his official duties. He did not conceal his pleasure in exploring, but the travel was not simply for self-amusement. He reminded his superiors how important such regular travel was and how infrequently (if at all) his predecessor had visited some of the market towns of Western Xinjiang.⁶³ He carefully supplemented personal observation with that by others who had been in Western

Xinjiang; his early idea of just wrapping some entertaining prose around a lot of pictures does not represent accurately the book that he finally sat down to write. While one might characterize the book as ‘light reading tho’ there’s a good deal of it’ as did one of his veters in the India bureaucracy, the book still merits our attention, for it is more than just another travel account.⁶⁴

Notes and references

1. See the annotated bibliography by Svetlana Gorshenina, *Explorateurs en Asie Centrale. Voyageurs et aventuriers de Marco Polo à Ella Maillart* (Genève: Éditions Olizane, 2003). For the Russian accounts down to 1886, it is important to consult O. V. Maslova (comp.), *Obzor russkikh puteshestvii i ekspeditsii v Sredniuiu Aziuu. Materialy k istorii izucheniia Srednei Azii*, 4 pts (Tashkent: Izd’vo SAGU, 1955–1971). Much important Russian material remains to be published, as one can see, for example in A. V. Postnikov, *Skhvatka na ‘Kryshe Mira’*. *Politiki, razvedchiki, geografy v bor’be za Pamir v XIX veke. (Monografiia v dokumentakh)*, rev. edn (Moscow: Ripol klassik, 2005).
2. See, for example, I. Bellér-Hann, “‘Making the oil fragrant’: dealings with the supernatural among the Uyghurs in Xinjiang”, *Asian Ethnicity*, Vol 2, No 1 (2001), pp 9–23. She relies in the first instance on transcriptions of oral texts, many of them collected by Gunnar Jarring and Swedish missionaries and yet unpublished. The early ‘travel’ accounts she cites include the systematic description by F. Grenard (J. L. Dutreuil de Rhins, *Mission Scientifique dans la Haute Asie 1890–1895*, Part 2, *Le Turkestan et le Tibet: étude ethnographique et sociologique*, by F. Grenard (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1898)) and the book by C. P. Skrine which is the focus of this article. Several essays in the recent volume *Saints and Heroes on the Silk Road/Saints et héros sur la Route de la Soie (Journal of the History of Sufism/Journal d’histoire du Soufisme*, Vol 3) (Paris, 2002) make extensive use of descriptions by travelers. Included in the volume are translations into French of two studies (based in part on personal observation) published at the beginning of the 20th century by the Russian orientalist Nikolai Pantusov.
3. Of particular relevance here is the careful study by Lars-Erik Nyman, *Great Britain and Chinese, Russian and Japanese Interests in Sinkiang, 1918–1934* (Lund Studies in International History, Vol 8) (Stockholm: Esselte Studium, 1977). In contrast, Peter Hopkirk’s various books on the Great Game rely in the first instance, and often uncritically, on the published narratives.
4. An exception for the non-scholarly accounts about Central Asia is the work of Geoff Watson. See especially his ‘Prestigious peregrinations: British travelers in Central Asia c. 1830–1934’, in David Christian and Craig Benjamin (eds), *Silk Road Studies IV. Realms of the Silk Roads: Ancient and Modern* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), pp 209–237. To some extent it may be appropriate to explore the ‘investigative modalities’ which were common, for example, in British efforts to describe India. See Bernard Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), ch 1. However, I agree with David Gilmour’s rather blunt criticism of those who cannot see beyond the biases of a ‘colonialist agenda’ in what Indian Civil Service scholars wrote about the subcontinent and its cultures (*The Ruling Caste: Imperial Lives in the Victorian Raj* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005), pp 251–252).
5. For a nicely illustrated introduction to some of the most famous of the explorer-scholars, see the exhibition catalogue written by Aymon Baud, Philippe Forêt and Svetlana Gorshenina, *La Haute-Asie telle qu’ils l’ont vue. Explorateurs et scientifiques de 1820 à 1940* (Genève: Éditions Olizane, 2003). Perhaps because of the sheer volume of his contributions, a figure as important as Sven Hedin is only beginning to be the subject of serious scholarly scrutiny. He was well trained to describe physical geography but often lacking in empathy toward the culture of the peoples in Inner Asia. As Philippe Forêt is in the process of demonstrating in his study of the observations on climate by the last of Hedin’s expeditions, quite apart from limitations of personal bias, there may be very serious issues of political and ideological bias, which affected the scientific validity of the presentation of data even when the subject was physical geography (see: <http://www.sinoptic.ch/textes/recherche/2006/20060518_Foret.Philippe-projet.pdf#search=%22Philippe%20Foret%22> (accessed 6 October 2006); also, private communication from Forêt).
6. *Chinese Central Asia* [hereafter cited as *CCA*], with an Introduction by Sir Francis Younghusband, 2nd edn (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1971) [originally published 1926], containing a brief ‘Preface to New Edition’ by Skrine; omitting the fold-out photo panoramas, the maps showing the Kongur Alps and Xinjiang with Skrine’s itineraries, and the appendix on photography; *Chinese Central Asia: An Account of Travels in Northern Kashmir and Chinese Turkestan*, with an Introduction by Alastair Lamb (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986). I have not examined the 4th edition (Delhi: Bhavana, 1996), or the abridged Russian

- edition: Skrain, *Kitaiskaia tsentral'naia Aziia (Sin'tszian)*, Perevod s angliiskogo, predisl., primechaniia i red. Aziza Niallo (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1935). The anonymous reviewer of this article, to whom I am grateful for very helpful suggestions, notes the existence of a Chinese translation, but so far I have been unable to locate a precise reference.
7. In his introduction to the 1986 reprint, Alastair Lamb expressed his disappointment that Skrine's book has 'no underlying polemic'. He explained this by the fact that 'Skrine was really a Persianist rather than a specialist in Turki and Chinese of the kind who found Kashgar particularly fascinating. His career, so to speak, really lay elsewhere. . . . The second reason is surely that Clarmont Skrine resided in Kashgar at a period . . . when the political situation was, so it would seem, singularly stable.' Hence the book suffers in comparison with Skrine's own much later account of his predecessor (twice removed) in Kashgar, Sir George Macartney, or Peter Fleming's journalistic account of his dramatic trip across China, *News From Tartary*, published in 1935. In Lamb's eyes, Skrine's service cannot compare with that of his immediate predecessor Percy Etherton, whose own book based on his tenure in Kashgar consciously focuses on geopolitical issues connected with the Bolshevik threat (P. T. Etherton, *In the Heart of Asia* (London: Constable, 1925)). I have examined Etherton's accomplishments as consul and his self-promoting claims about them in some detail in *Etherton at Kashgar: Rhetoric and Reality in the History of the 'Great Game'* (Seattle: Bactrian Press, 2007, at <http://faculty.washington.edu/dwaugh/ethertonatkashgar2007.pdf>). Curiously, there is no mention of Skrine in the survey by David Wang, 'Xinjiang of the 20th Century in historiography', *Central Asian Survey*, Vol 14, No 2 (1995), pp 265–283, even though at least in passing he recalls Stein, Hedin and some of the casual travelers such as Fleming and Maillart. My anonymous reviewer, perhaps because his/her focus on Xinjiang differs from than mine, finds Skrine's book to be of less interest than I do.
 8. C. P. Skrine and Pamela Nightingale, *Macartney at Kashgar: New Light on British, Chinese and Russian Activities in Sinkiang, 1890–1918* (London: Methuen, 1973). Nightingale, now a noted scholar of medieval history, helped Skrine complete the book after he had suffered a stroke.
 9. Apart from Etherton's account, we have Lady [Catherina] Macartney, *An English Lady in Chinese Turkestan* (London: E. Benn, 1931); Ella Sykes and Percy Sykes, *Through Deserts and Oases of Central Asia* (London: Macmillan, 1920). The latter 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. While they say little about the Kashgar consulate, Etherton's two colleagues who accompanied him there in 1918 published their own books relating to the 'Kashgar mission' sent to learn about Bolshevik Central Asia. One of these, L. V. S. Blacker, *On Secret Patrol in High Asia* (London: John Murray, 1922), is largely a rather undistinguished adventure story. The other, F. M. Bailey, *Mission to Tashkent* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) [originally published by Jonathan Cape, 1946], is one of the 'Great Game' classics, published only long after the event because of its political sensitivity. Both books reflect a substantial amount of self-censorship. For Skrine's biography, consult J. W. Stewart, *Envoy of the Raj: The Career of Sir Clarmont Skrine, Indian Political Service* (Maidenhead: Porpoise Books, 1989), which is based primarily on a close reading of the papers in the family archive. Chapters 11–13 cover his time in Central Asia. The best study of the international relations affecting Xinjiang in this period is Nyman, *op cit*, note 3. My article is part of a project to publish a selection of Skrine's Kashgar writings and photographs with a reassessment of his Kashgar service.
 10. Skrine and Nightingale, *op cit*, note 8, p viii; for a good summary assessment of Yang as governor, 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, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2004), pp 68–71. Given geographic realities, Lamb's idea that the Kashgar consul might be expected to visit Urumqi is unreasonable. Even though Etherton frequently reported news from Urumqi (more than did Skrine), during his term as consul he did not travel there himself.
 11. The locks of hair and boyhood diaries are still in the personal possession of Skrine's heirs. I was fortunate to be able to examine the family holdings thanks to the kindness of the now late Mr John W. Stewart of Comrie, Perthshire. Skrine's 1923–1924 field diary and his correspondence with his mother are in the British Library, India Office Library and Records (hereafter BL IOLR), Mss EurF 154. I quote from them with the permission of Mr Stewart's heirs, Ms Helen Holland and Ms Robin Moore. Some miscellaneous papers regarding Skrine's efforts to publish his photographs and additional notes from his Central Asian trip are still in the family collection and will be deposited in BL IOLR. For citations to the official file concerning his request for permission to publish, see below. Copies of his official diaries and many of his reports, often in draft form, are also in Mss EurF 154, but he did not use any of that material directly in the book.
 12. BL IOLR, Mss EurF 154/8, Clarmont Skrine to Helen Skrine, July 26, 1922. There is no continuous pagination in the file, but the letters are arranged in chronological order.
 13. BL IOLR, Mss EurF 154/8, Clarmont Skrine to Helen Skrine, 31 August 1922; 12 October 1922.

14. BL IOLR, Mss EurF 154/9, Clarmont Skrine to Helen Skrine, 14 March 1923.
15. Francis Henry Skrine and Edward Denison Ross, *The Heart of Asia: A History of Russian Turkestan and the Central Asian Khanates from the Earliest Times* (London: Methuen, 1899).
16. BL, IOLR, Mss EurF 154/8, Clarmont Skrine to Helen Skrine, 22 November 1922, p [12].
17. BL, IOLR, Mss EurF 154/8, Clarmont Skrine to Helen Skrine, 4 December 1922; Mss EurF 154/9, Clarmont Skrine to Helen Skrine, 30 December 1922–4 January 1923.
18. The photographs and negatives, with the exception of a few still in the family collection, are in BL IOLR, Photo 920/1, in various files in the collection of the Royal Geographic Society, and at least some in the collection of the Royal Asiatic Society. Until recently, much of this material has been uncatalogued and unidentified, although the BL has now made considerable progress in identifying the images in its collection (in the process renumbering them). For an overview of the BL and RGS material (at the time I wrote it, I was unaware of the RAS collection), see my 'The physical and human geography of inner Asia in the early 1920's through the eyes and lens of C. P. Skrine', in Michael Gervers *et al.* (eds), *Cultural Interaction and Conflict in Central and Inner Asia* (Toronto Studies in Central and Inner Asia, No 6) (Toronto: Asian Institute, University of Toronto, 2004), pp 87–100.
19. BL IOLR, Mss EurF 154/9, Clarmont Skrine to Helen Skrine, 21 June 1923, p [7].
20. BL IOLR, Mss EurF 154/9, Clarmont Skrine to Helen Skrine, 8 August 1923, p 4. Relatively few of Doris's drawings have been preserved—some are in BL IOLR, Mss EurF 154/54; a selection of the best ones are in the family collection.
21. BL IOLR, Mss EurF 154/10, Clarmont Skrine to Helen Skrine, 1 January 1924. Lucas's 'Wanderer' series included volumes on London, Paris, Florence and Holland.
22. BL IOLR, Mss EurF 154/10, Clarmont Skrine to Helen Skrine, 13 February 1924.
23. BL IOLR, India Office, Political and Secret Department, L/P&S/11/264, P38/1925. (no continuous pagination), Skrine to Bray, 28 November 1924.
24. BL IOLR, L/P&S/11/264, P38/1925. A memorandum by L. D. Wakely, 14 January 1925, recommends permission be granted. Skrine's scrupulousness about observing what he understood to be the official constraints on his ability to publish anything while on official assignment can be seen in his response to his mother's inquiry as to whether newspaper items on Turkestan published in London had come from him. He explained to her that an Associated Press agent occasionally was fed tidbits by his superiors in the Foreign Office, information that might indirectly come from his reports, but 'I don't send anything to the Press direct. It would never do.' (BL IOLR, Mss EurF 154/8, Clarmont Skrine to Helen Skrine, 10 October 1922, p [6].)
25. He had anticipated lecturing for the RGS during his exploration of the 'Kongur Alps'. See BL IOLR, Mss EurF 154/9, Clarmont Skrine to Helen Skrine, 12 July 1923, p 5 (written from the Kaying Valley): 'I've mapped and photoed enough to make an interesting little lecture to the R.G.S'. Semi-jokingly, he hoped that his collection of botanical specimens might lead to discovery of 'possibly new varieties "Polyanthus Skrinii" sort of thing!' (on examination in London, all proved to be known species though). And he noted that his wife Doris, trained as an artist, was drawing plants in color, which he hoped might be made into lantern slides to show to the RGS. For the lectures on his return, see BL, IOLR Mss EurF 154/11, Clarmont Skrine to Helen Skrine, 21 March 1925; Clarmont Skrine to Frank Skrine, 11 April 1925.
26. His article, 'The Alps of Qungur', *The Geographical Journal*, Vol 66, No 5 (1925), pp 385–411, remains a basic source of geographical information on the mountains east of Kongur. The article has recently been translated into Russian by Otto Chkhetiani and is available on the website of the Moscow Aviation Institute's alpine club <<http://www.turclubmai.ru/heading/papers/182/>> , accessed 7 April 2006. Skrine appended a map drawn for the Survey of India, based on his surveying. See also my 'The "Mysterious and Terrible Karatash Gorges": notes and documents on the explorations of Stein and Skrine', *The Geographical Journal*, Vol 163, No 3 (1999), pp 306–320.
27. 'The roads to Kashgar', *Journal of the Central Asian Society*, Vol 12, pt III (1925), pp 226–250.
28. BL IOLR, Mss EurF 154/11, Clarmont Skrine to Frank Skrine, 11 April 1925, pp [1]–[2].
29. For example, when touring in the Tian Shan in September 1923, he noted part of the route had never been traversed by any European but that Stein and Merzbacher had surveyed in some of the area (BL IOLR, Mss EurF 154/41, Official diary for September 1923); in April 1924, traveling to the south of the Taklamakan in the Altyn Tagh region, he knew where Stein, Deasy and others had been, camped in some of the same locations and talked with people who had met them. He had Deasy's book (H. H. P. Deasy, *In Tibet and Chinese Turkestan: Being the Record of Three Years' Exploration* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1901)) with him and obviously had studied it carefully. (BL IOLR, Mss EurF 154/42, Official diary for April/May; EurF 154/43, Field diary, p 52; EurF 154/10, Clarmont Skrine to Helen Skrine, 27 April 1924). At the end of his field diary are excerpts he copied from A. N. Kuropatkin's *Kashgaria*, and notes on other readings.
30. In particular, he mined Sykes and Sykes, *op cit*, note 9. Sykes later would write a laudatory review of Skrine's book in *The Geographical Journal*, Vol 69, No 2 (1927), pp 163–164.

31. BL IOLR, Mss EurF 154/11, Clarmont Skrine to Helen Skrine, 17 January 1926, p [4].
32. BL IOLR, L/P&S/11/264, P38/1925, D. T. Monteath to Gibson, 27 April 1926.
33. BL IOLR, Mss EurF 154/43.
34. For example, *ibid.*, p 13, his description of the shrine of Qara-Sakal Atam (=My Father Blackbeard); cf. *CCA*, p 231.
35. Skrine got into some trouble with his superiors when in 1923 his response to an overture from the Acting Chinese Postal Commissioner for Xinjiang was deemed by them to imply that the British accepted the Karakoram as the northern boundary of their territory and thereby abjured any claims to regions north of it. This criticism hardly seems warranted (especially since what Skrine wrote had been approved by his immediate superior Evelyn B. Howell, then Deputy Secretary to the Government of India). The documents are interesting for their description of the consular post. See BL IOLR, L/PS/11/233 P1992/1923, where Skrine copied his letter of 21 February 1923, to Acting Postal Commissioner E. B. Cavaliere (!) into his memo No 163/64 of 22 February.
36. Notably, *CCA*, chs XII and XIII.
37. *CCA*, pp 89, 94, 106.
38. For example, a significant portion of the paragraph in *CCA*, pp 161–162, on marriage customs of the Kyrgyz is a close rendering of the diary (BL IOLR, Mss EurF 154/43, p 103a), but the bride price mentioned in the latter (a ‘minimum of 10 yaks or ponies or both to 500–1000 taels’) and age of the betrothal for the boy (7–8) become in the book ‘between ten and thirty yaks or their equivalent in other kinds of live stock’ and ‘six or seven.’ In his ostensible quotation of a diary or letter about capturing petty thieves on the road to Keriya (*CCA*, p 250), he adds details not in the diary (cf. BL IOLR, Mss Eur F 154/43, pp 46–47), among them the comment about the apparent unhappiness of the Amban possibly because the foreigner’s capture of notorious bandits meant a loss of face for him. Skrine similarly edits the subsequent account (*CCA*, pp 251–252) about ‘How we took the pelican to the wilderness’, which he had written up as a set piece in his diary (BL IOLR, Mss EurF 154/43, pp 48–51). His explanation in the book for the gift of the bird was that he had ‘somewhat rashly showed an interest’ in it by taking its picture. In the diary, his explanation is that the Amban saw this as an opportunity to put the Consul General in his debt and also to unload an ‘expensive and unsatisfactory white elephant’. Furthermore, in the re-writing for the book, Skrine stressed that he could not return the gift for to do so would cause the Amban to ‘lose face’.
39. See *CCA*, pp 154–157. In his diary (BL IOLR, Mss EurF 154/43, p 86), he has only a short note on food; in the book he adds a lot of detail on how it is processed. He has a more extended section in the diary on yurts (*ibid.*), including even the analogy to the manure piles of Mark Twain’s German peasants as an indication of their wealth, but here too he supplements the description with material from Ella Sykes’s book and some items (e.g. the dotar and matchlock hanging on the wall) that presumably he added from memory.
40. These are the first four proverbs in *CCA*, p 215; cf BL IOLR, Mss EurF 154/43, pp 2–3.
41. BL IOLR, Mss EurF 154/43, p 28; Mss EurF 154/10, Clarmont Skrine to Helen Skrine, 9 March 1924, p [1], a slightly different version of the same. Cf. *CCA*, p 244. Also, he has changed the date to 7 March from 2 March in the diary.
42. *CCA*, p 246.
43. BL IOLR, Mss EurF 154/43, p 31.
44. There is a parallel here with what John Gilchrist recommended in 1825 regarding how Europeans in India should respond if invited to witness bawdy entertainment at a wealthy Indian’s residence. Withdrawing discreetly was advised ‘to establish our superiority in breeding and morality’. Quoted in Cohn, *op cit*, note 4, p 42.
45. BL, IOLR, Mss EurF 154/39, Clarmont Skrine to Frank Skrine, 23 August 1922, quoted in J. W. Stewart, *op cit*, note 9, p 107; also, Mss EurF 154/9, Clarmont Skrine to Frank Skrine, 10 October 1923. In the broader context of British male sexual conduct in India, Etherton as a bachelor was hardly out of line, even if, in Skrine’s assertion, Kashgari society snickered behind his back. Cf. Lawrence James, *Raj: The Making and Unmaking of British India* (New York: St. Martin’s Griffin, 1997), pp 207–223, 508–510; Gilmour, *op cit*, note 4, p 135. Gilmour makes the point that almost any kind of misconduct, sexual included, tended to be forgiven, the one exception being financial corruption. Surely Skrine knew this, since he built his case against Etherton on the issue of financial malfeasance.
46. *CCA*, p 197.
47. I questioned both J. W. Stewart and Doris’s nephew, Dr David Bunbury, the two individuals most likely to know about any papers of hers. Even had her mother saved the letters, Doris herself might have discarded them; they certainly were not in her possession at the time of her death. The Skrine photo collection contains a few which Doris must have taken during the ‘purdah parties’ when no men could be present.
48. One has to wonder what exactly the Kyrgyz thought of the Skrines’ European amusements for such parties, among them ‘three-legged races’. Under 8 August 1924, he noted in his diary: ‘D’s putting on her Kgz.’

- headdress was *the* great tamasha of the party, better even than the three legged race' (BL IOLR, Mss EurF 154/43, p 85. The photograph is in BL IOLR, Photo 920/1, No 88.)
49. BL IOLR, Mss EurF 154/54, file labeled 'Kashgar Sketches by D.F.S.' Cf. *CCA*, pp 279–280.
 50. While Doris's remark echoes that of the intrepid early 18th-century traveler Lady Mary Wortley Montagu regarding the freedom of movement veiling offered women, Skrine's edit may reflect the unease the British felt about what veiling might signify regarding indigenous women's modesty. Cf. Thomas R. Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj* (The New Cambridge History of India, III.4) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp 108–109.
 51. His consciousness of social status is amply evident in his often acid unpublished assessments of his predecessor, Etherton, and Skrine's own Vice-Consul Harold Harding. Part of Skrine's problem with Etherton seems to have been the latter's having been born into a Liverpool merchant family; Harding's alleged egotism and lack of decorum followed from his Canadian background. Skrine seems genuinely to have believed that proper representation of the interests of the Crown in what he considered the elite Foreign and Political Service of the Government of India could best be done by those of a certain social upbringing and education. For a sympathetic portrait of the Indian Civil Service, albeit for the period prior Skrine's time, see Gilmour, *op cit*, note 4; cf. James, *op cit*, note 45, esp pp 307–312. One can recognize in Skrine only some of James's rather unflattering picture of ICS functionaries. Skrine certainly was well above the average in intelligence, had an Oxford degree, and while a stickler for administrative rules, showed considerable flexibility and initiative. He had little tolerance for bureaucratic nonsense.
 52. See, for example, Pamela Kanwar, *Imperial Simla: The Political Culture of the Raj*, 2nd edn (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), where the British society of Simla is, however, not her main concern; Gilmour, *op cit*, note 4.
 53. For his description of how they took all the comforts of home to the mountains, see *CCA*, pp 92–94; on the necktie, see, BL IOLR, Mss EurF 154/9, Clarmont Skrine to Helen Skrine, 2 July 1923, p 10.
 54. On the Dulani, see, e.g. *CCA*, p 124.
 55. *CCA*, p 229.
 56. *CCA*, pp 157–158, 226. One of the appeals of the north Indian hill country for the British Raj was its 'Scottishness', understandable perhaps for an officialdom a great many of whom were of Scottish origin. See James, *op cit*, note 45, pp 166, 309; Metcalf, *op cit*, pp 183–184.
 57. *CCA*, p 155.
 58. P. S. Nazarovff, *Moved On! From Kashgar to Kashmir*, tr. Malcolm Burr (London: Allen & Unwin, 1935). Nazarovff dedicated the book to Doris Skrine and illustrated it primarily with her husband's photographs.
 59. Gunnar Jarring, *Materials to the Knowledge of Eastern Turki*, Vols 1–3 (Lund: C.W.K. Gleerup, 1946–1951). Jarring's occasional comments suggest that he considered Skrine's translations to be accurate; if anything, they are more 'literary' than his own for the same texts. One should note here that one of the earliest published collections of oral literature from Western Xinjiang was that by F. Grenard (his material is mainly from the Khotan region). See J. L. Dutreuil de Rhins, *Mission Scientifique dans la Haute Asie 1890–1895*, Part 3. *Histoire—Linguistique—Archéologie—Géographie*, by F. Grenard (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1898), pp 88–124.
 60. My colleague, Dr Hamit Zakir, who specializes in Uighur literature and culture, has kindly examined Skrine's texts for me and notes that there is a lot in his transcriptions which is non-standard and that, *pace* Jarring, the translations appear in many cases not to be very accurate. Clearly if further use is to be made of Skrine's material, it will need careful analysis by an expert such as Dr Zakir who has the appropriate language competence. Of course it is possible that the newer compilations of such material now render obsolete Skrine's collection.
 61. See my 'Exploring the Kongur Alps and [the] unknown side of Mustagh Ata', *The Himalayan Journal*, Vol 54 (1998), pp 25–32. In recent years, Andrei Lebedev, a Russian mountaineer, has been active in organizing further exploration in some of the areas visited by Skrine near Mt. Kongur and in preparation has carefully studied Skrine's descriptions and photographs. In 2005, Lebedev's remarkably ambitious expedition began by ascending the Tigarmensu Valley, where Skrine had been turned back by the weather from its upper reaches, and crossed the pass at its head into the Kaying Valley. The expedition confirmed that Skrine had reached that pass from the Kaying side, and thus the Russians named it in his honor. See Andrei Lebedev, 'Moi samyi vysokii pokhod' <<http://www.turclubmai.ru/heading/papers/1120/>>, the section entitled 'Po sledam Klarmonta Skrina' (In the Tracks of Clarmont Skrine), and in Lebedev's formal diary of the expedition, section 3.3 <http://www.turclubmai.ru/heading/papers/1124/3_ch.htm#z31_03> (both accessed 7 April 2006), where there are photos and a map. He rates 'Clarmont Skrine Pass' (4743 m high) as a relatively easy category 2A.
 62. See my overview in 'Continuity and change in the trade of Xinjiang into the 1920s', in Michael Gervers *et al.* (eds.), *History and Society in Central and Inner Asia* (Toronto Studies in Central and Inner Asia, no. 8) (Toronto: Asian Institute, University of Toronto, 2007), pp 127–147.

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63. See, for example BL IOLR, Mss EurF 154/40, official diary for November 1922, p 3. His two-and-one-half month tour between October and December 1922 covered 1000 miles (loc cit, official diary for December 1922, p [3]). His tour from September to December 1923 covered another 1000 miles and involved visiting six districts never before visited by a British consul (BL IOLR, Mss EurF154/41, official diary for October/November 1923). Skrine may not give Etherton and his Vice-Consul Fitzmaurice enough credit for their travels, even if they did not visit certain towns. However, where Etherton in his reports boasted of eye-witness knowledge, it was often with reference to his adventures in Mongolia and other parts of Inner Asia *a decade earlier*, recounted in his *Across the Roof of the World: A Record of Sport and Travel through Kashmir, Gilgit, Hunza, the Pamirs, Chinese Turkistan, Mongolia and Siberia* (London: Constable, 1911).
64. BL IOLR, L/P&S/11/264, P38/1925, D.T. Monteath to Gibson, 27 April 1926.