

Teaching on the Silk Roads: A Workshop for K-12 Educators



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Part I

The “Silk Road”

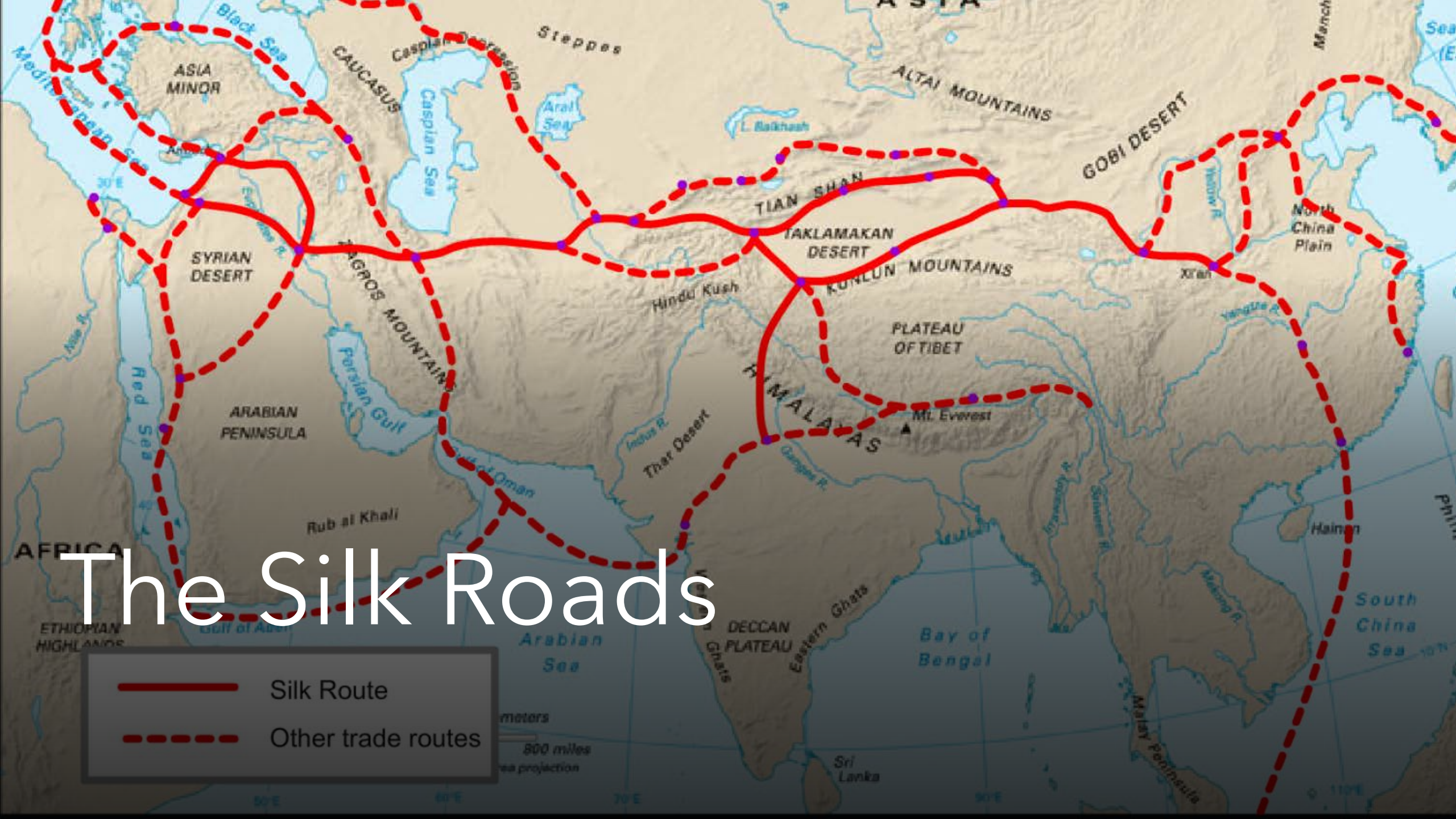
Present-day relevance

Preservation matters

Re-discovery of the Silk Roads

Dunhuang and the “library cave”

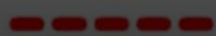
Buddhism beyond India



The Silk Roads



Silk Route



Other trade routes

1000
meters
800 miles
sea projection





The New Silk Roads: "Belt and Road Initiative"



A cyclist passes by construction cranes in Xi'an, China, a starting point of the New Silk Road. Zhang Peng/LightRocket via Getty Images



One of the BRI key projects: The Khorgos Gateway in Kazakhstan

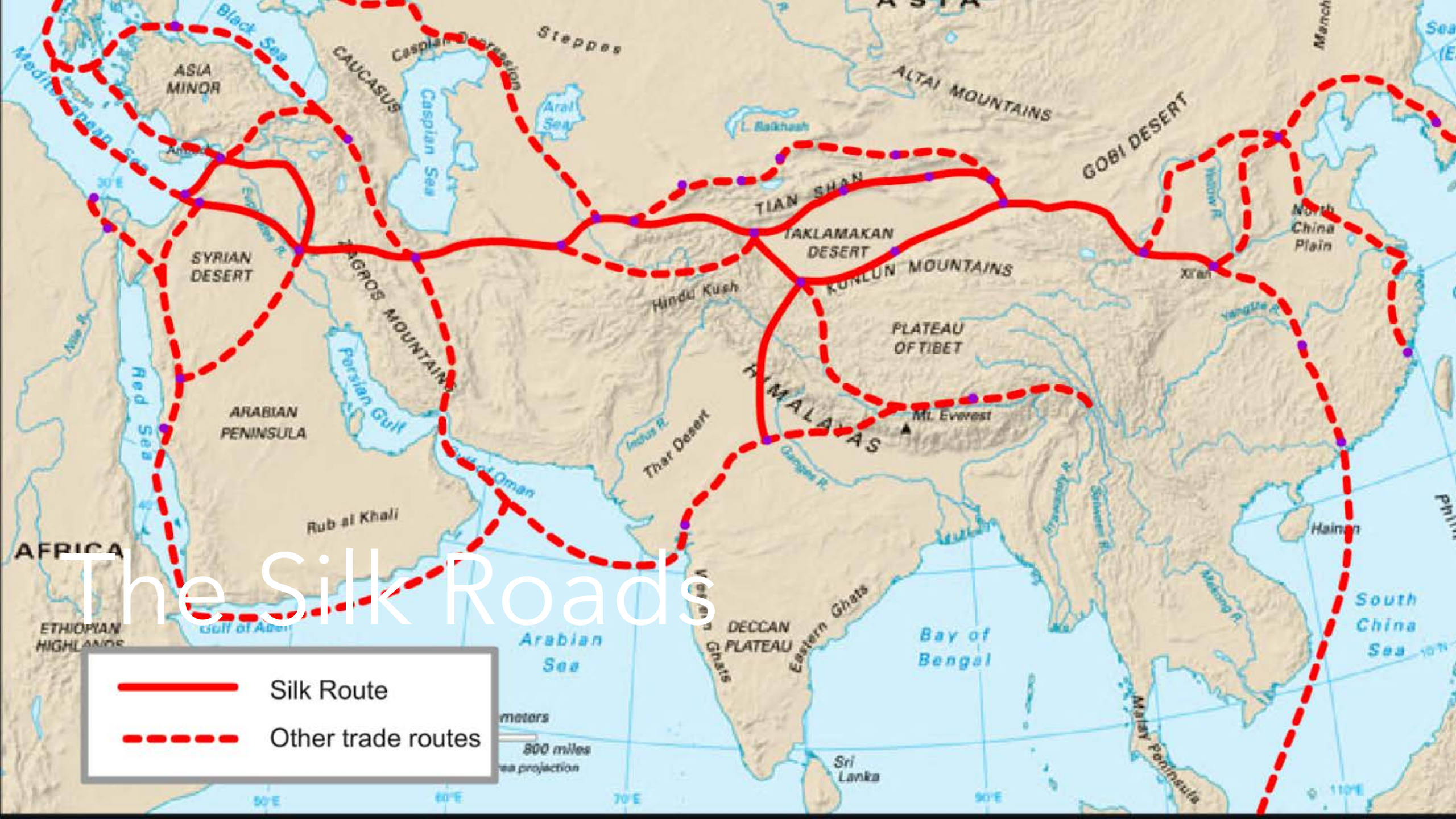
Picture Credit: Khorgos Gateway



“The Silk Road”

- Transcontinental trade route
- → networks of routes

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- They connected what we generally call “East” and “West



The Silk Roads

Silk Route

Other trade routes

0

800 miles

1000 kilometers

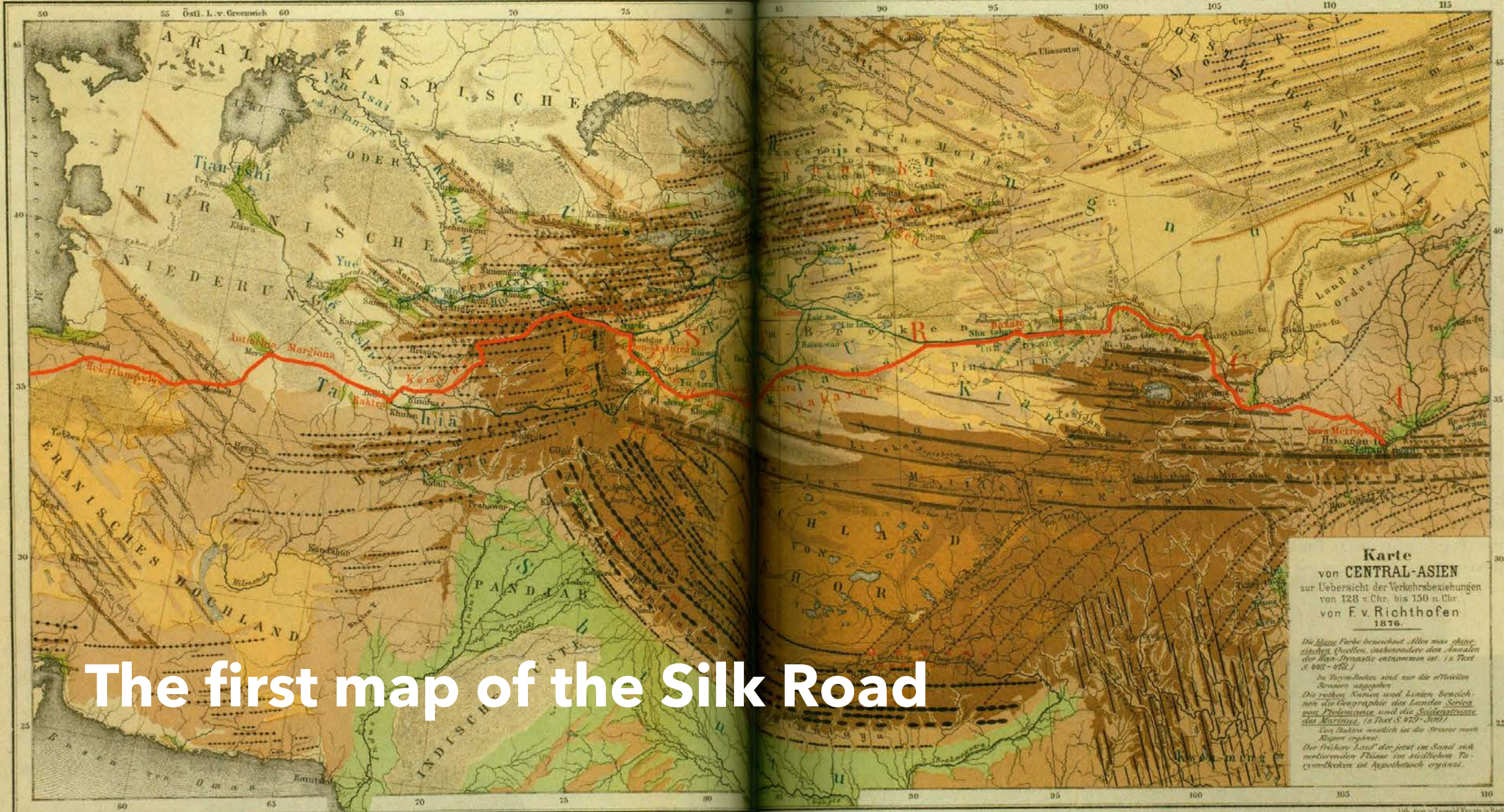
sea projection

0
800 miles
1000 kilometers
sea projection



“The Silk Road”

- Transcontinental trade route
- 5,000 miles
- 2000 BCE
- 6th or 4th century BCE to 7th century CE



The first map of the Silk Road

Karte
von **CENTRAL-ASIEN**
zur Uebersicht der Verkehrsbeziehungen
von 128 v. Chr. bis 150 n. Chr.
von **F. v. Richthofen**
1876.

Die blaue Farbe bezeichnet Alles was chinesischen Quellen, insbesondere den Annalen der Han-Dynastie entnommen ist. (s. Text S. 490-495.)
In Parenthesen sind nur die offiziiellen Namen angegeben.
Die roten Namen und Linien bezeichnen die Geographie des Landes Sere von Ptolemäus, und die Südstrasse des Marinus. (s. Text S. 479-490.)
Von Bactria nach Osten ist die Strasse nach Agypten eingezeichnet.
Der indische Landstrich ist im Stand sich nach indischen Thesen im südlichen Theile nach Osten zu organisieren.






Modern name

The "Silk Road"

Road to Samarkand, or
Dunhuang, etc.

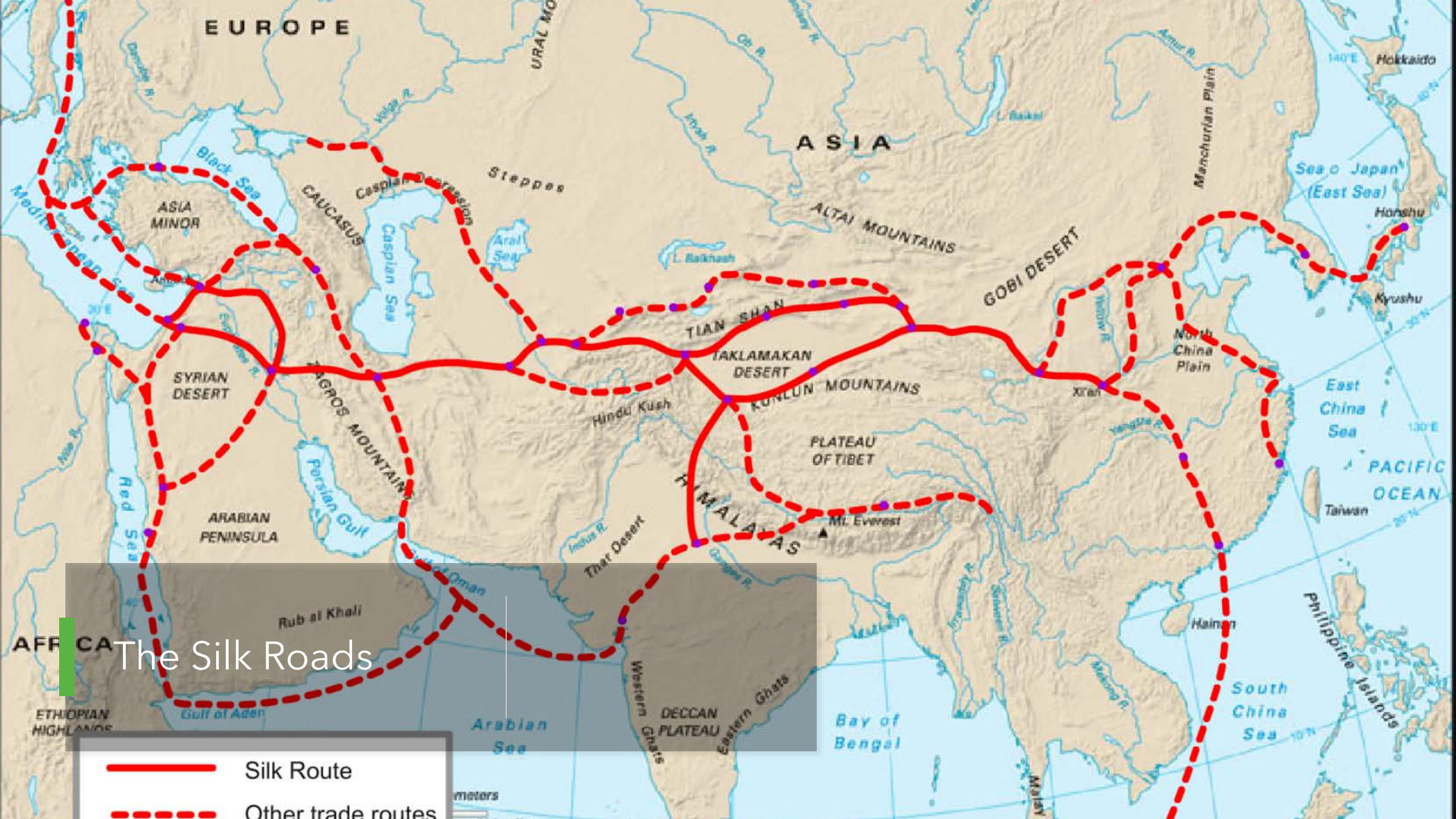
Term coined by Ferdinand von
Richthofen (1833-1905) in 1877

- 
- Von Richthofen worked in China from 1868 to 1872 surveying coal deposits and ports
 - Five-volume atlas
 - Sources:
 - Ptolemy and Marinus
 - Chinese dynastic histories



Road?

- Stretch of shifting, unmarked paths
- Need to hire guides



The Silk Roads

- Silk Route
- - - Other trade routes

Political map





Silk?

- Other goods:
- Chemicals
- Spices
- Metals
- Horses
- Saddles
- Leather products
- Ammonium chloride
- Paper




What else was transmitted?

- Ideas: philosophy, religions (missionaries, monks, people on the caravans)
- Technology
- Diseases

Relevance of the history of the Silk Road

- According to anthropologist Eric Wolf, the accepted and lazy history of civilization is one where:
- "Ancient Greece begat Rome, Rome begat Christian Europe, Christian Europe begat the Renaissance, the Renaissance the Enlightenment, the Enlightenment political democracy and the industrial revolution. Industry crossed with democracy in turn yielded the United States, embodying the rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."
- Wolf, *Europe and the People without History*. (Berkeley 1982), p. 5
- → Alternative ways of looking at history

- 
- By studying the Silk Roads we can position ourselves in other vantage points, we can learn to view history in a different light
 - Another very important reason is the so called "New Silk Roads"
 - This is a humongous project of the Chinese government that is currently being executed
 - To give you a sense of what it entails I'll just give you some brief info

DAILY

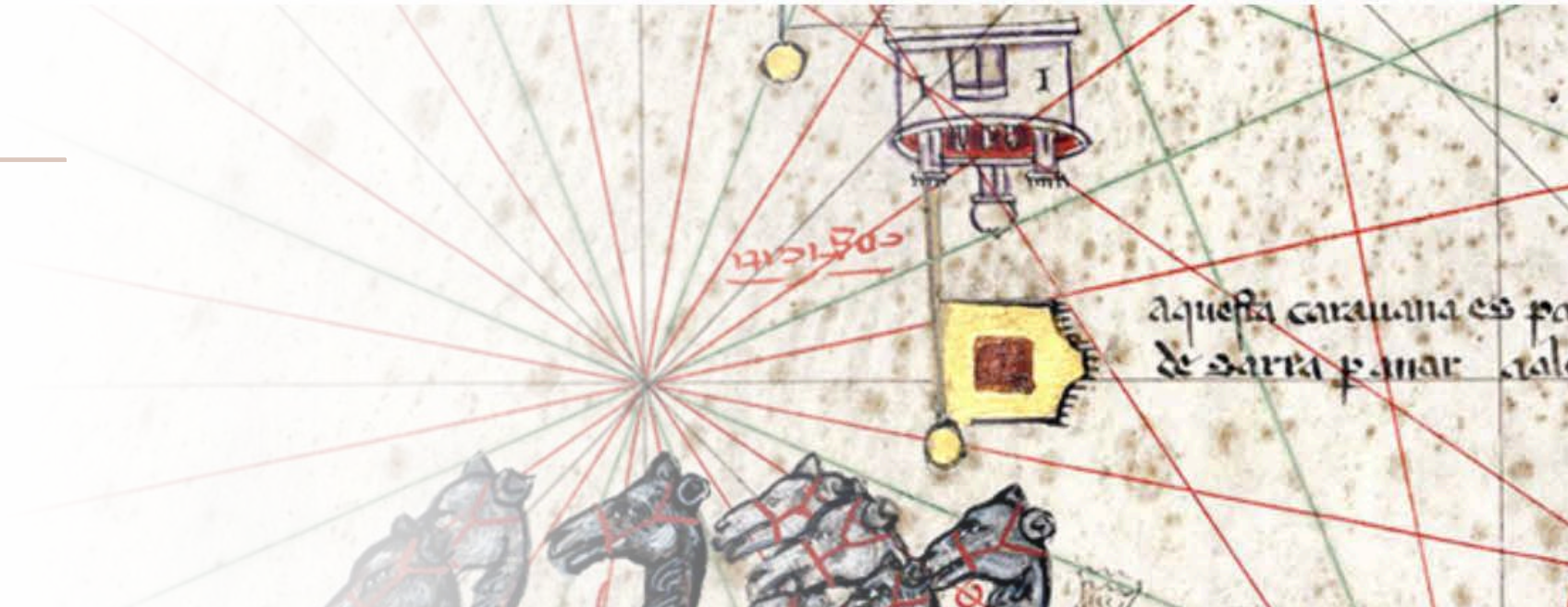
ICS & GOVERNMENT

China's New Silk Road

China's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative involves significant funding and the world, aiming to improve trade and more.


The "New Silk Roads"

<https://daily.jstor.org/chinas-new-silk-road/>



“Belt and Road Initiative” (BRI)


- Proposed investment:
- \$1 trillion, covering more than 50% of the world's population and a quarter of the global GDP
- “a creatively repurposed version” of the Silk Roads (Tim Summers of Chatam House – a British Think Tank)



"Belt and Road Initiative" (BRI)

- "Summers expects Chinese trade and investment in the Association of South East Asian Nations, including Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Philippines, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, and Myanmar, to exceed its trade with the E.U. some time in the 2020s."
- In the northwest province of Xinjiang, greater economic development is also expected to mitigate extremism among China's restive Uighur Muslim minority.
- Linking land-locked interior cities like Chongqing by rail with Central Asia has begun to address regional imbalances within China."

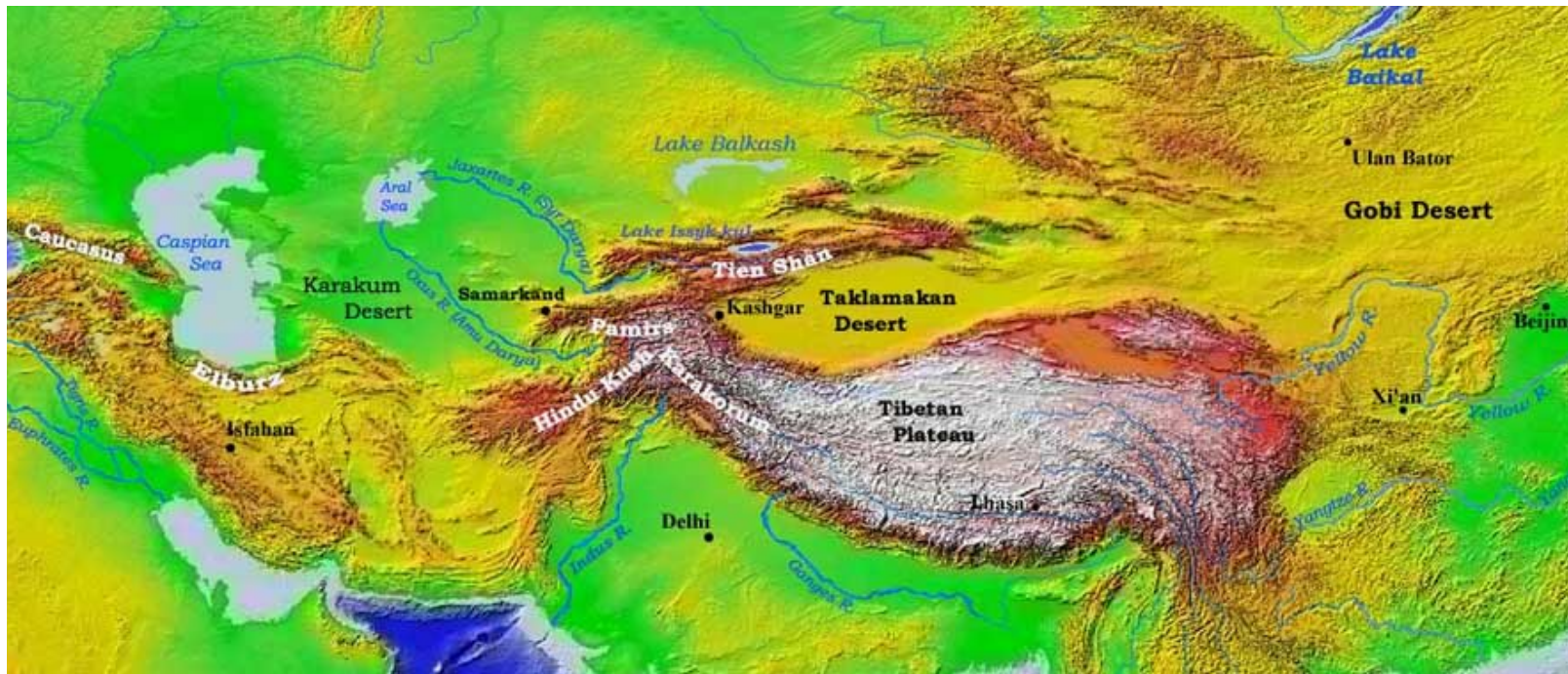
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- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cUxw9Re-Z-E&t=832s>
(00' – 6.20')
 - Benefits? Problems?
 - → Geopolitical shifts

- 
- Relevance for the history of East-West cultural and commercial relations in general
 - Another major factor is the unique quality of many archaeological finds from locations along the SR:
 - e.g. materials discovered at Dunhuang and Turfan have enabled us to obtain a first-hand look at China and some of its neighbors during the medieval period

Some Geographical Features and Archaeological Preservation



Satellite view



Taklamakan Desert



Mogao Oasis - Dunhuang, China



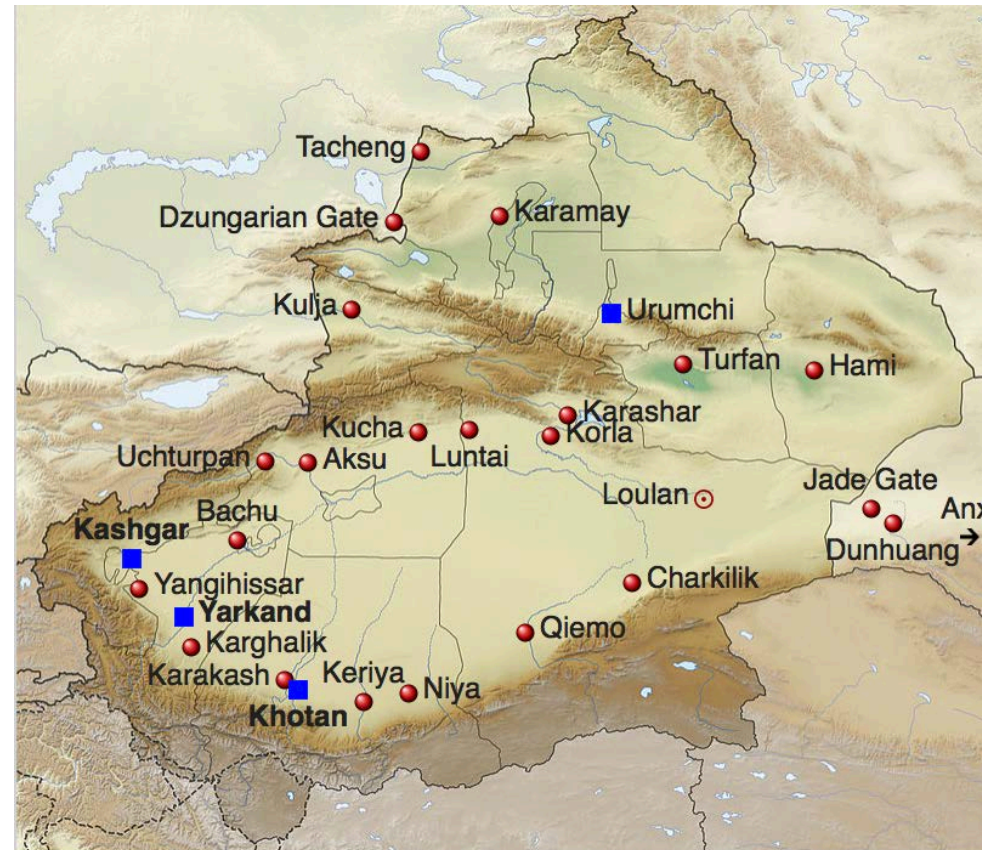
The beginnings of the Braldu river at its glacial source, Pakistan Karakorum



The South Enilchek glacier seen from the slopes of Mount Khan Tegri, Kyrgyzstan



Tarim Basin Locations





Dried silk flowers from the Astana graveyard, Turfan 7th-8th century CE



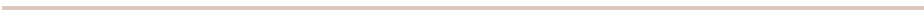



Dessicated dumplings from Turfan (7th or 8th century CE)



Subeshi woman with hat



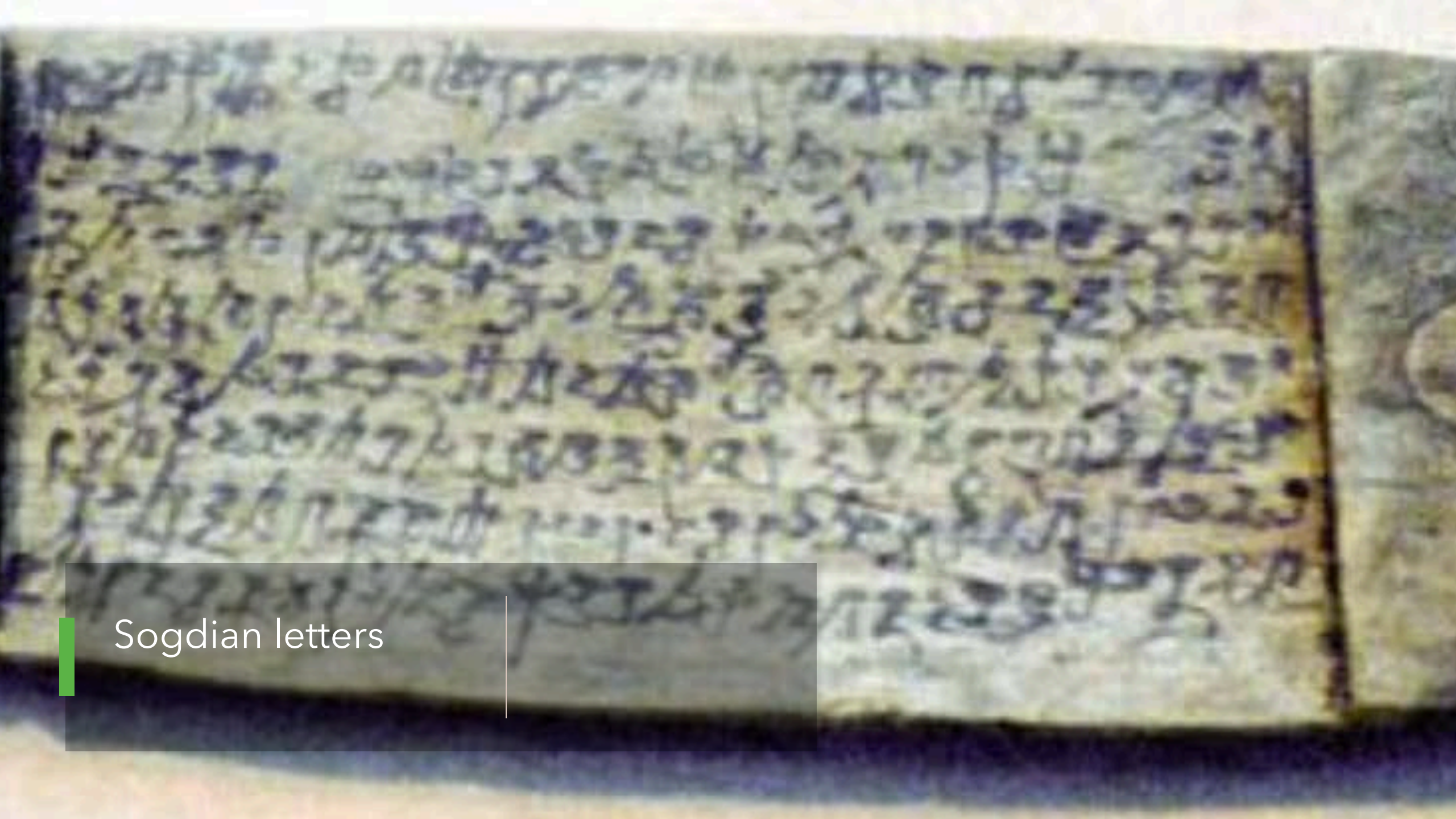




The beauty of
Xiaohe

Suggested Readings

- Articles by Victor Mair
- "Prehistoric Caucasoid Corpses of the Tarim Basin", *Journal of Indo-European Studies*, Fall/Winter 1995, Volume 23, Numbers 3 & 4, pp. 281-307
- Mair, Victor H., and Hickman, Jane, eds. Reconfiguring the Silk Road: New Research on East-West Exchange in Antiquity. Philadelphia, US: University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, 2014.



Sogdian letters



The "Discovery"

Scholars or scoundrels?





Bibliographic recommendation

- Hopkirk, Peter. *Foreign Devils on the Silk Road : the Search for the Lost Cities and Treasures of Chinese Central Asia* Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984.



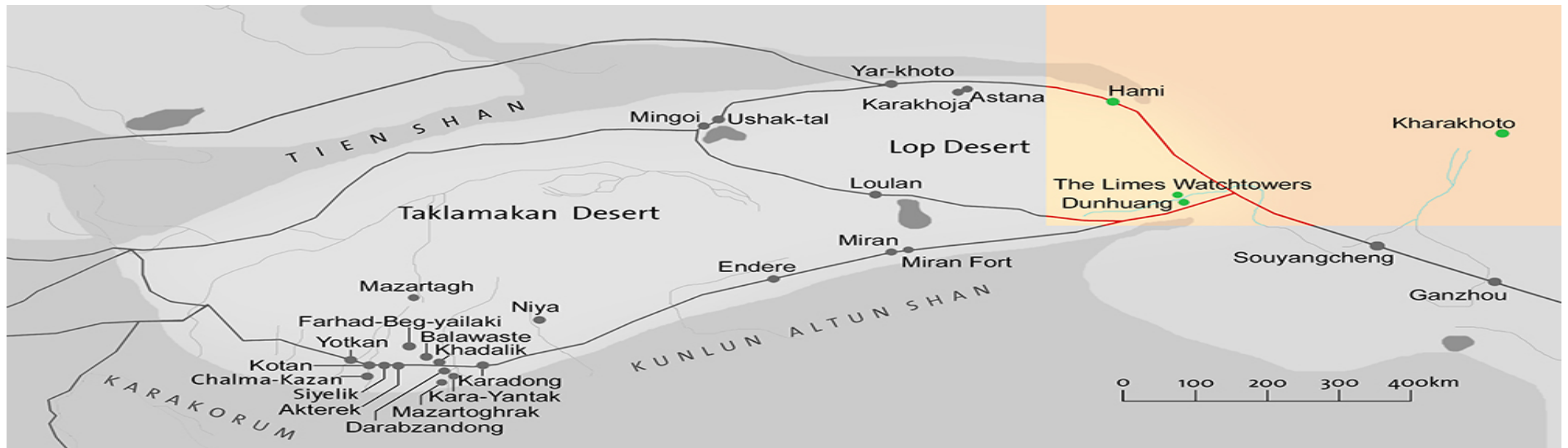
Moral issues

- "Scholars or scoundrels?"

Scholars or scoundrels?

- Aurel Stein (Britain) (B. Hungary 1862-1943)
 - Expeditions to Central Asia:
1900-1901, 1906-1908, 1913-1916 and 1930

Tarim Basin: sites explored by Aurel Stein



Scholars or scoundrels?

- Aurel Stein (Britain) (B. Hungary 1862-1943)

-Expeditions to Central Asia:


1900-1901, 1906-1908, 1913-1916 and 1930


- Sven Hedin (Sweden, 1865 - 1952)

-Expeditions to Central Asia:

1893-1897, 1899-1902, 1905-1908

- Albert von Le Coq (Germany)
- Paul Pelliot (France)
- Langdon Warner (US)
- Count Otani (Japan)

- 
- Resorted to ruse
 - Had real interest in the histories and cultures of the regions they visited
 - Diligence and skill
 - Connections with museums and universities
 - Aided by governments (funding, diplomatic support)



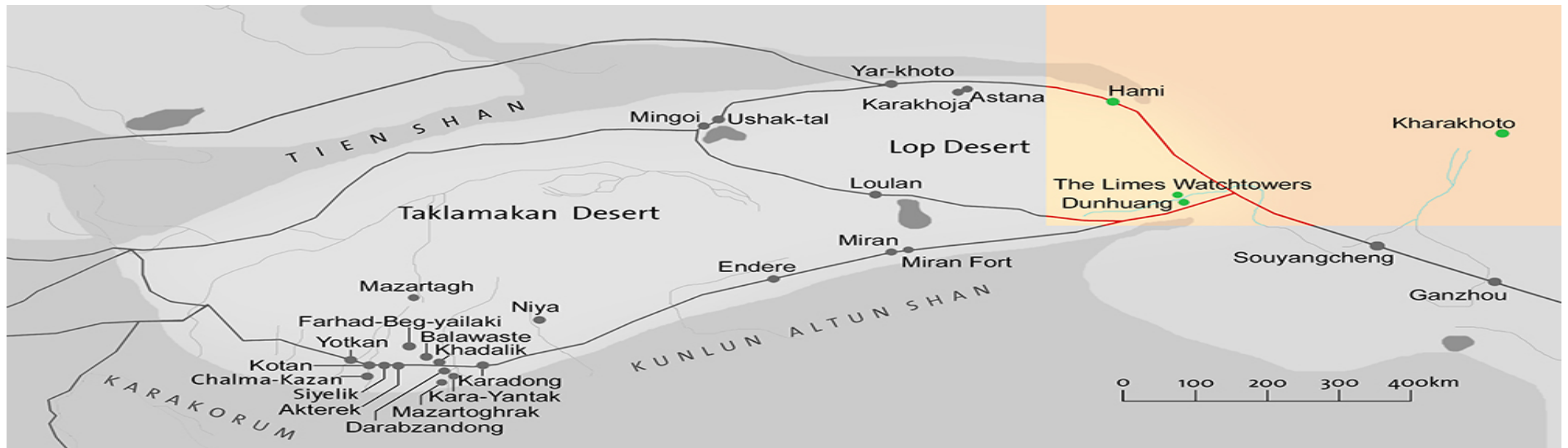
Geopolitical consequences

- Intensification of the “Great Game”
- popularly refers to the international rivalries for control of Central Asia
- especially in the second half of the nineteenth and early 20th centuries
- primarily between the British and Russian empires
- (Started in 1830)

1890 Map of Asia



Tarim Basin: sites explored by Aurel Stein





Mogao Oasis - Dunhuang, China







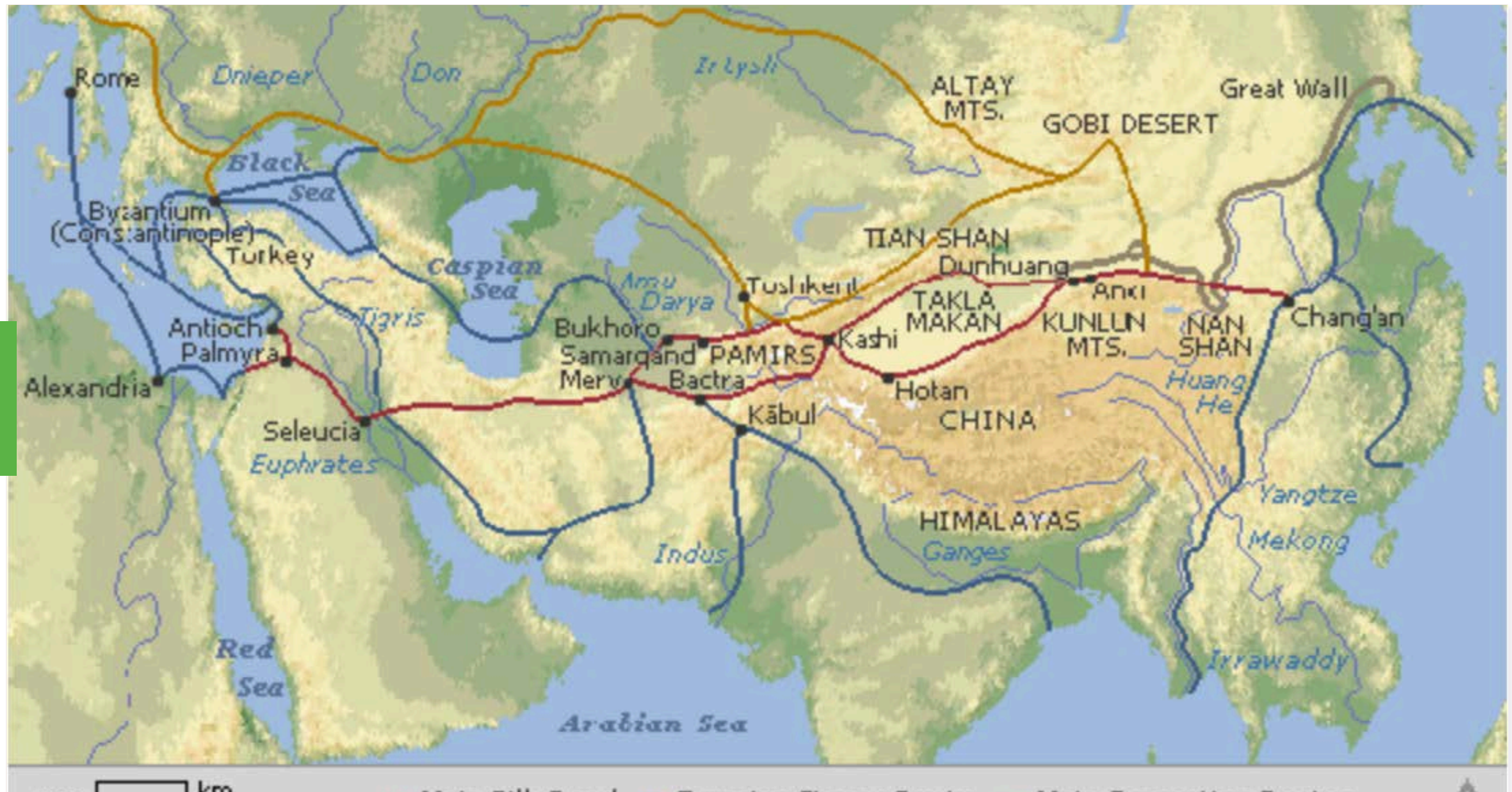




Overview

- 492 cells and cave sanctuaries in Mogao
- famous for statues and wall paintings
- spanning 1,000 years of Buddhist art:
 - - (first constructed in 366 CE through 14th century)





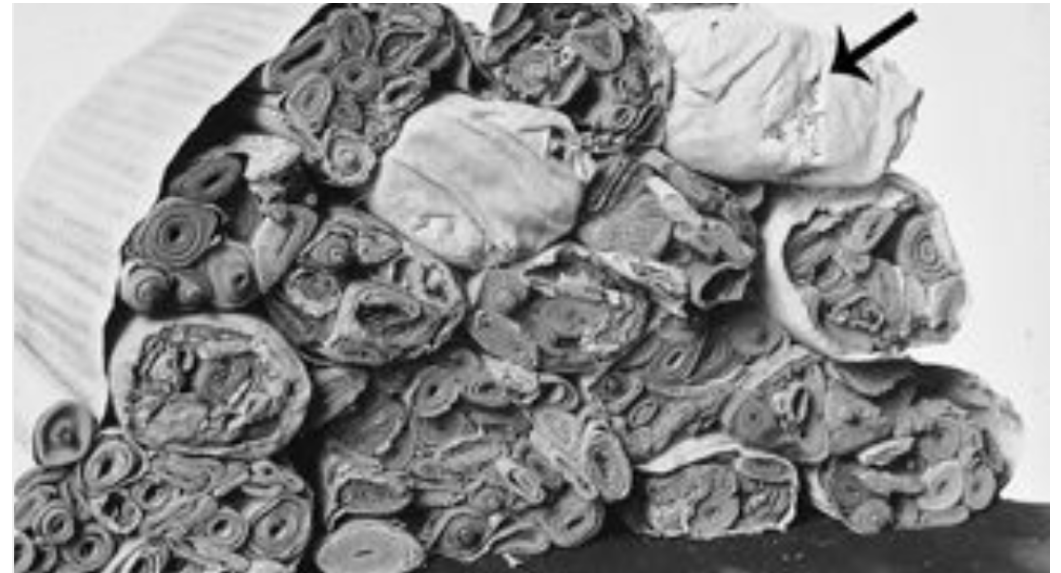


The Library Cave
(#17)






- More than 50,000 manuscripts, 4th to 11th century
- → reconfiguration of Buddhist studies
- Buddhism, Manicheism, Zoroastrianism, Daoism
- Also ritual objects, prints, paintings
- → Dunhuanology






Daoist Priest Wang



- 
- "I was performing a pious act, in rescuing for Western scholarship those relics of ancient Buddhist literature and art which local ignorance would allow to lie here neglected or to be lost in the end."
 - --The Ruins of Desert Cathay (1987)

Religion in Dunhuang

- Buddhist center:
- -- 15 monasteries
- Religious texts in Cave 17:
- Sanskrit, Sogdian, Tibetan, Uyghur, Khotanese, Hebrew
- → tolerance, cosmopolitanism
- → syncretism

- 
- e.g.
 - Manichean text:
 - The World of Light is equated with Amitabha's Western Paradise

Cave 285



Cave 285

- sponsored by a number of wealthy donors, led by Prince Dong Yang,
- -- member of the Wei imperial house (dispatched to Dunhuang in 523)
- -- fifteen years as a local governor
- sumptuous decoration reflects its aristocratic patronage
- sculpture of the Buddha dominates main wall
- flanked by figures of meditating monks
- (example for the living monks who meditated there?)
- Flying spirits and Chinese deities cavort in heavens above
- <https://www.e-dunhuang.com/cave/10.0001/0001.0001.0285>

Paul Pelliot (1908)

