

*Land of
Yesterday,* *Land of
Tomorrow*

DISCOVERING
CHINESE CENTRAL
ASIA

PHOTOGRAPHS BY
*Paul, David and
Peter Conklin*

TEXT BY
Brent Ashabranner

COBBLEHILL BOOKS / DUTTON
New York

To
Stephen Chicoine

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and only reopened in 1984.

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Author's Note

I first met Paul Conklin in West Africa thirty years ago. He was an adventurous young free-lance photographer learning to make a living with his camera, and I was in charge of the Peace Corps program in Nigeria. In the years that followed we kept in touch and during the past decade have collaborated on ten books. Our subjects have ranged from America's everyday heroes in *People Who Make a Difference* to the plight of migrant farmworkers in *Dark Harvest*.

Paul asked me to write the text for this book and I agreed because by doing so I could in a small way share in the Conklin journey of discovery. Their photographs and notes were my principal writing guides. My research sources are listed in the bibliography. I wish to acknowledge the considerable help that I received from my friend Stephen Chicoine, whose research on and travel in Central Asia have made him a keen student of that fascinating part of the world.

Brent Ashabranner

Land of Yesterday, Land of Tomorrow

Chinese Central Asia: the Western world knows little of this remote northwestern area of China, long cloaked in mystery and legend. It was the route of the ancient Silk Road over which goods and ideas flowed between China and Persia, India and Europe. It is a land of towering mountains and a desert so fearful that its name, *Taklamakan*, means "if you go in, you won't come out."

Although Chinese Central Asia bears almost no resemblance to the heavily populated rice-growing heartland, Xinjiang Province is a prized and closely guarded part of The People's Republic of China. It is the testing ground for China's nuclear weapons. Most important, geological exploration has shown that billions of tons of petroleum lie beneath the sands of the Taklamakan Desert.

Closed to outsiders by the Chinese Communist government in 1949, Xinjiang Province was opened briefly to foreign visitors between 1984 and 1990. Seizing the opportunity, award-winning photographer Paul Conklin and his sons, David and Peter, were among the few Westerners to travel to Xinjiang. They became acquainted with the friendly Uighurs and nomadic Kazakhs. Their main destination was Kashgar, a two-thousand-year-old city where Marco Polo paused during his thirteenth-century journey to the court of Kublai Khan.

Through the eyes of the Conklins' cameras, *Land of Yesterday, Land of Tomorrow* provides a fascinating look at a little-known part of China that was of great importance in the country's past and will be even more important in its future.

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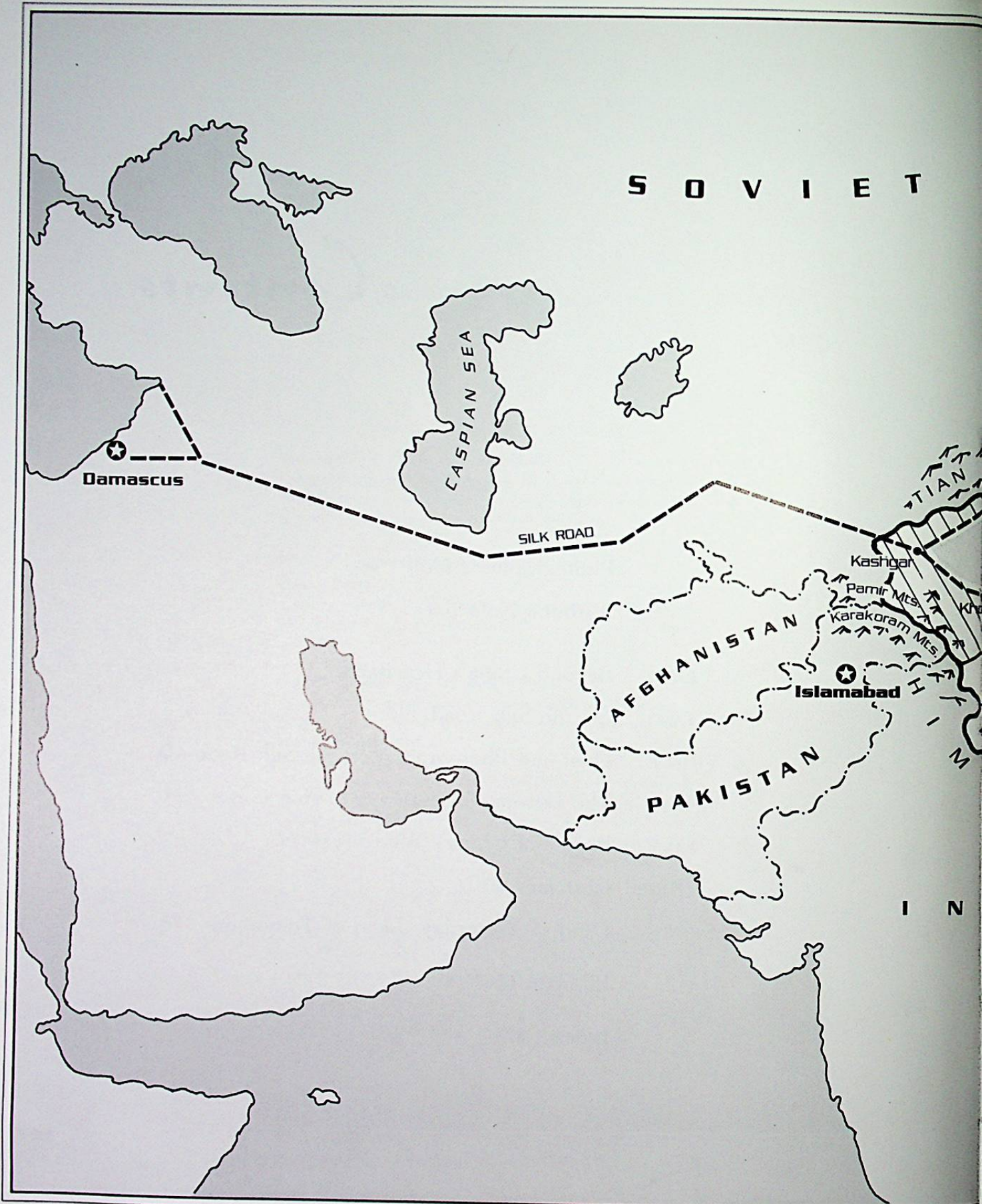
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Shanghai

Jiayuguan

XINJIANG

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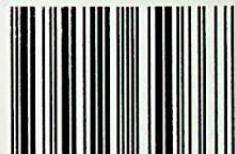
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