

COLIN THUBRON

# Shadow of the Silk Road

HARPER  PERENNIAL

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HARPER  PERENNIAL

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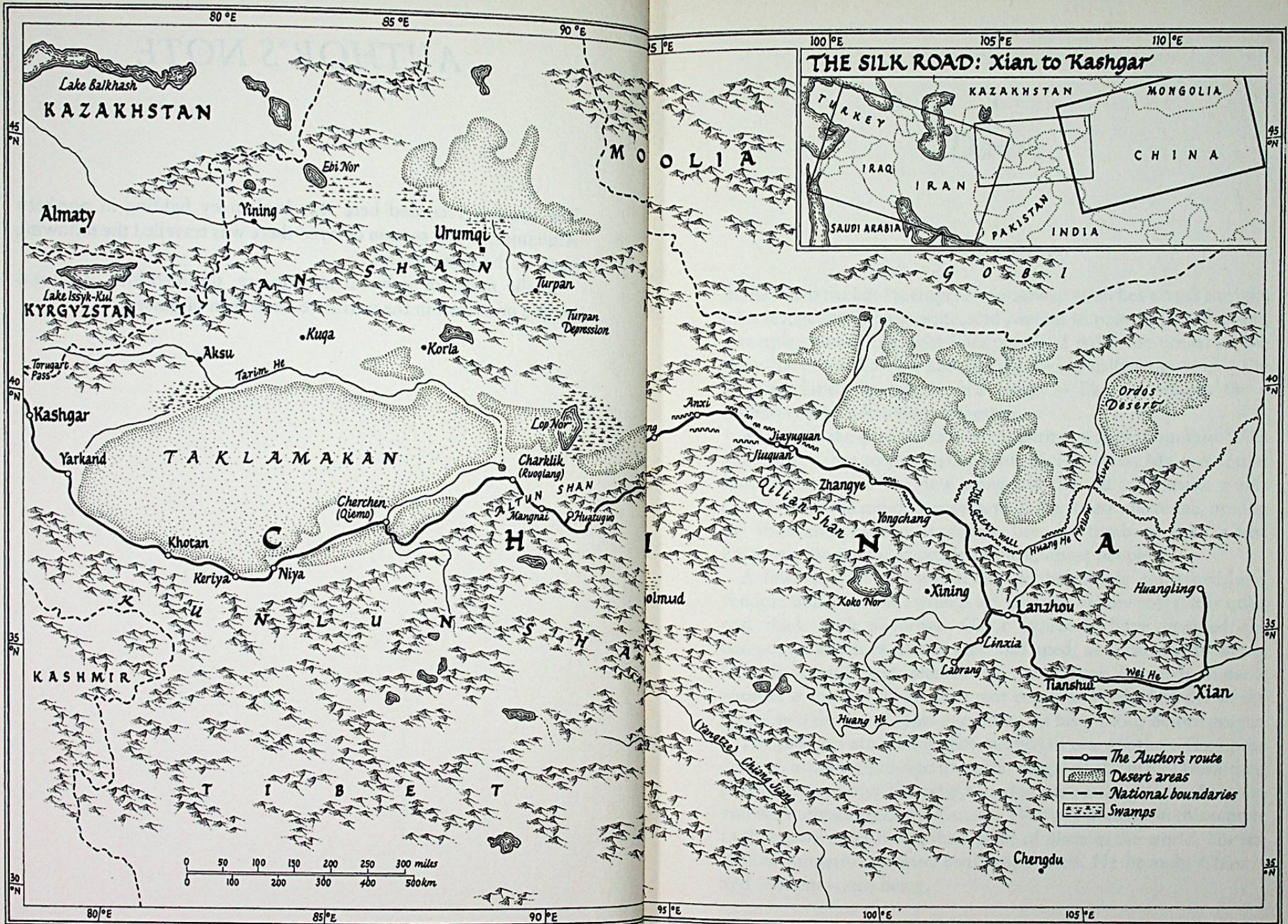
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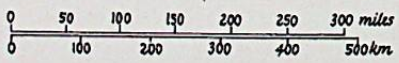
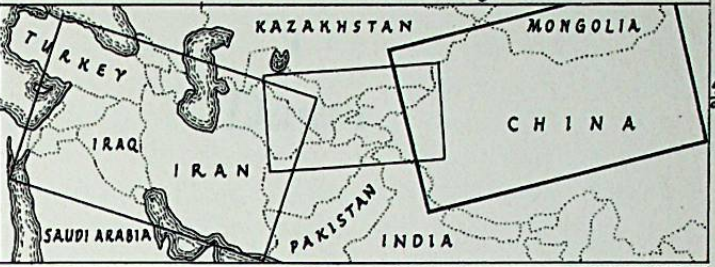
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*Maps drawn by Reginald Piggott*





**THE SILK ROAD: Xian to Kashgar**



- The Author's route
- Desert areas
- National boundaries
- Swamps



PRAISE FOR  
*Shadow of the Silk Road*

"Thubron [is] . . . a gifted linguist, a dogged reporter, and an elegant writer. . . . [His] book is too generous to have an identifiable moral, but it persistently sounds a note of profound skepticism toward any notions of culture or identity as fixed, reducible to an unchanging essence. . . . I am thrilled to be his traveling companion, if only through the medium of text."

—Christian Caryl, *New York Review of Books*

"A fantastically descriptive writer, Thubron digs through the history of Central Asia—when he isn't being hassled by thugs and corrupt policemen—on a seven-thousand-mile trek along the ancient trade route from Turkey to China. Perfect for vicarious travelers."

—*New York* magazine

"[An] elegant account of a rough two-year trek. . . . Thubron's was not a tourist's vacation. . . . [He] is a patient traveler, invariably finding someone with whom to converse, learning life stories and local legends. His accounts are . . . vivid."

—Michael Kenney, *Boston Globe*

"Colin Thubron, the intrepid, erudite author of numerous travel books, has once again undertaken an odyssey of Homeric proportions. . . . *Shadow of the Silk Road* is classical studies . . . meets exotic adventure."

—Richard Horan, *Christian Science Monitor*

"Fascinating. . . . Mr. Thubron approaches others' beliefs with curiosity and respect. . . . [He] has a novelist's empathetic feel for character. . . . From casual conversations along the way, he spins evocative sketches of the locals that provide an organic sense of these societies in flux. . . . He writes with a seductive facility."

—Timothy Farrington, *New York Sun*

"Wonderful. . . . Along this faded route Thubron witnesses the tumult of societies racing to catch up with the future."

—John Freeman, *Newark Star-Ledger*



"Splendid. . . . Sumptuously detailed, elegantly written, and riveting. . . . I found myself stopping to reread gorgeous paragraphs, bursting with legends, historical yarns, and characters met on the way, reveling in the luscious prose and fascinating information. Thubron misses nothing." —*Providence Journal*

"Epic Chinese odyssey. . . . [Thubron's] eye for telling details and curiosities—both historical and contemporary . . . serves him well. . . . He is blessed with virtually unlimited resources from which to draw. . . . The insights that emerge are generally entertaining, sometimes unsettling, and occasionally profound."

—Charles Desnoyers, *Philadelphia Inquirer*

"[Thubron's] words paint pictures with intrigue and intricate detail, and he can easily make personal comparisons along the way because he's seen many of the same spots eighteen years earlier. . . . The enjoyment of reading [*Shadow of the Silk Road*] lies in the details of every traveler, every situation and every town Thubron experiences along the way. The experiences add up to an interesting portrait of lands and people not well known or appreciated for all the twists of fate history has dealt them."

—*Sunday Oregonian*

"[An] absorbing travel epic. . . . Thubron's poetic eye still teases out gorgeous subtleties in the panorama. . . . The Silk Road becomes for him an evocative metaphor for the mingling of experiences and influences that is the essence of travel."

—*Publishers Weekly* (starred review)

"Impressive, rewarding. . . . His marathon expedition through desert, mountains, and war-scarred landscapes testifies to the author's fortitude and resourcefulness. . . . He augments his trenchant narrative with impressive historical background and evocative, lyrical prose. . . . Thubron carefully picks through the cultural and archaeological remains of a half-dozen societies with a discerning eye and a scholar's discipline. He also pauses long enough to meet and introduce a host of memorable characters."

—*Kirkus Reviews*

"An illuminating account of a breathtaking journey."

—*Booklist*



A WASHINGTON POST BEST BOOK OF THE YEAR

"Shadow of the Silk Road is moving in a way that's rare in travel literature, sidestepping nostalgia even as it notes its pull. . . .

Thubron goes to places most other sojourners can't."

—New York Times Book Review

To travel the Silk Road, the greatest land route on earth, is to trace the passage not only of trade and armies but also of ideas, religions, and inventions. Making his way by local bus, truck, car, donkey cart, and camel, Colin Thubron covered some seven thousand miles in eight months—out of the heart of China into the mountains of Central Asia, across northern Afghanistan and the plains of Iran into Kurdish Turkey—and explored an ancient world in modern ferment.

"A sublime travel writer in the tradition of Freya Stark and Patrick Leigh Fermor. . . . [Thubron captures] the most evocative details in the landscape and in the lives of ordinary people with lyricism, compassion, and wit."

—Boston Globe

"Thubron has done it all, with sparkling grace. . . . His is an experience of transformation, fittingly, for if the Silk Road was anything, it was an agent of kaleidoscopic transformation." —San Francisco Chronicle

"An exhausting journey and a marvelous book." —Harper's



An award-winning novelist and travel writer, COLIN THUBRON's books include *Among the Russians*, *The Lost Heart of Asia*, and *In Siberia*. He lives in London.

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