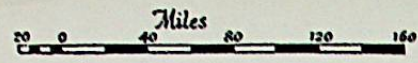
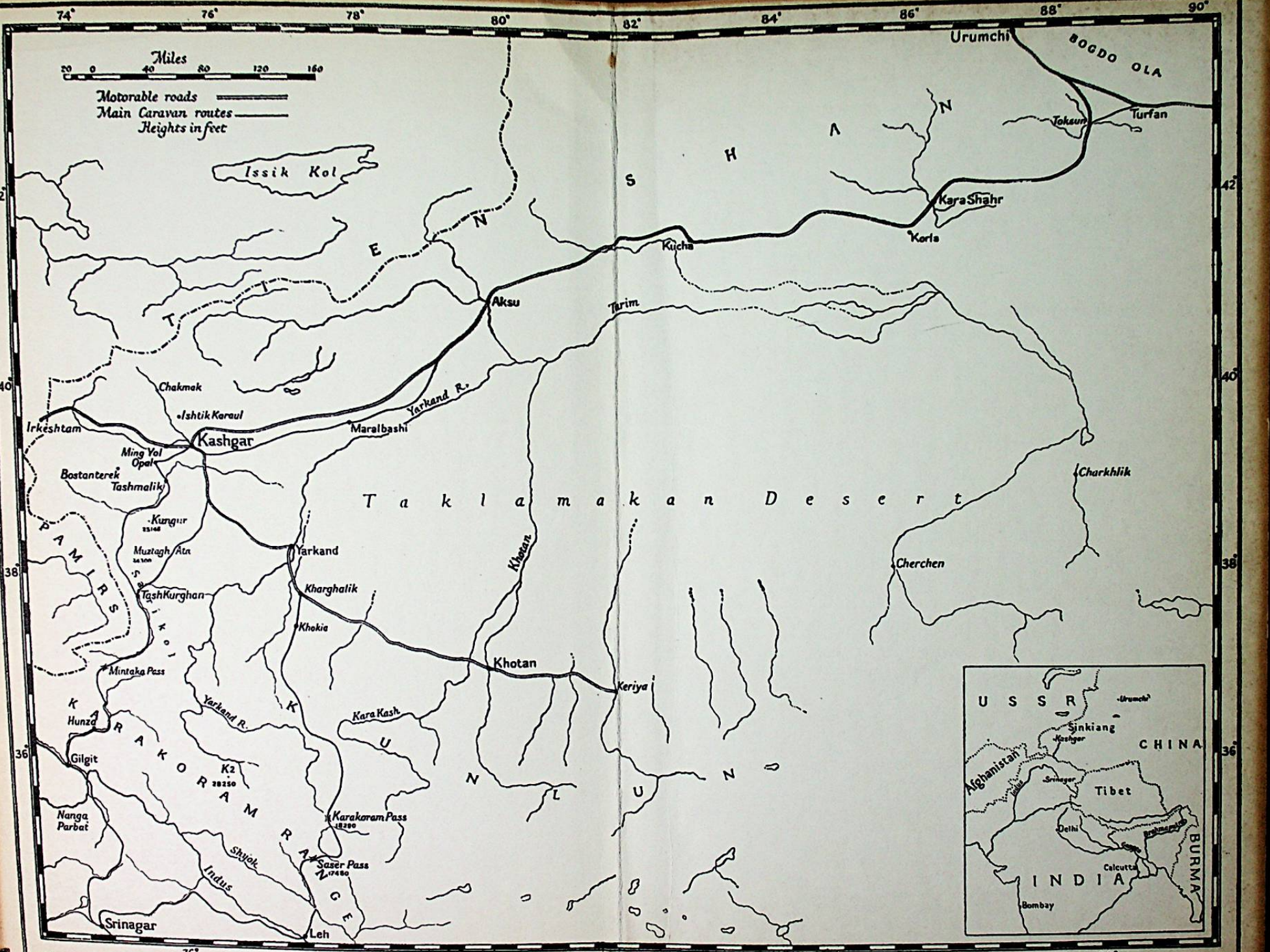


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Motorable roads
Main Caravan routes
Heights in feet



The Antique Land

Diana Shipton

With a new Introduction by the Author

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Introduction

KASHGAR (KASHI) HAS LONG BEEN one of my dream places and from my earliest days travel has been part of my life. I was born in India in 1917, the daughter of a Forest Officer. Much of my early childhood was spent in the jungles of the United Provinces as we toured the district under my father's control. Roads were few, and we all travelled on elephants and lived in tents, our home being erected and collapsed every few days. Although it was a lonely and nomadic way of life it was some years before I realized how unusual it was to keep on the move, sleep in a tent, and never see a shop, a car, a church, or a tarmac road and passing traffic. My parents were there; dogs and elephants were there; all was familiar and secure.

When I was only five years old, my parents sent me to England where I continued my nomadic existence, living with a succession of relations; I grew up accustomed to this rootlessness. At the age of 20 I returned to India to stay with a married sister. As my brother-in-law was a Forest Officer, like my father, I was back in the northern jungles of India, and occasionally I travelled with him in the foothills, marvelling at the magnificence of the Himalayas. Beyond those great mountain barriers lay Central Asia, that vast, mysterious, and usually inaccessible land.

From childhood my heroines has been the 'lady travellers', as they were called: Isabella Bird, Mary Kingsley, and Freya Stark. Much as I loved lonely remote places, and longed to travel across deserts and explore mountain ranges, I lacked the courage and determination to pursue such dreams on my own. In India I found heroes too: the men who climbed and explored the ranges of northern India and Nepal. I read avidly about their attempts to conquer Everest and to penetrate Tibet and Afghanistan.

In 1939, while staying in Srinagar in Kashmir with friends of my parents, I met Eric Shipton, one of the heroes of my Everest reading. He was preparing for an expedition to the largely unknown Aghil Range, part of the Karakoram Range, and our hosts had invited all the members of the expedition, including their Sherpa porters, to camp in their grounds. In addition to all the bustle of their preparations, there were many social activities for the team as they made ready to leave for a winter in unexplored territory. In that magic land of lakes and mountains, romance flourished in a round

of parties and picnics, and as we floated in the gondola-like boats on the Dal lake.

To my surprise, Eric invited another girl, Helen, and me to accompany his expedition for the first five days. To my even greater surprise, we were allowed to accept. This was my first experience of the tough routine of an exploratory expedition. There were none of the small luxuries of a Forest Officer's tours. Instead there were early dawn starts, long hot marches, and an evening meal of stew, prepared by the Sherpas and eaten around the fire. Eric gave me my first lessons in walking up steep hills properly, the scenery was magnificent, and the whole experience was exhilarating and exhausting. Then, with Nanga Parbat gleaming in the distance, Helen and I had to turn back.

When war was declared later that year, Eric's expedition returned to India and he joined the British army. Shortly afterwards, he was delighted to be offered the post of British Consul-General at Kashgar, in Sinkiang (Xinjiang) province in China. Its remoteness as well as its political sensitivity made it a difficult assignment. During this time, I was serving with the Auxiliary Territorial Service in England, and Eric and I did not meet again until 1942, when he had left Kashgar and had returned to England. We were married during one of my short leaves, but, apart from occasional snatched meetings, it was not until 1946 that we could enjoy married life together.

Eric was serving in Vienna when, in 1946, he was offered a second tour in Kashgar as Consul-General. With my taste for remote and mountainous country, I could not conceive of a more exciting challenge, but it involved an agonizing decision. Our son Nicolas was only nine months old — too young to face the rigours of the journey, let alone the basic lifestyle and limited medical facilities of Kashgar. After much heart-searching we left him in England in the care of someone we trusted. The remoteness of Sinkiang in 1946 may be seen in the fact that during our two years there we had no more than seven foreign visitors. (Modern tour operators now take as many as 50 visitors a day to Kashgar.)

After India became independent in 1948, the British Consulate in Kashgar was closed. Eric's next posting was to Yunnan in south-west China, where he was appointed Consul-General in Kunming. This posting brought fresh political problems. We were warned that as Mao Zedong's Communist army was marching

inexorably south through China, the British Consulate might be at risk. If the Nationalist government fell and Britain refused to recognize the new regime, the Communists might in turn refuse to recognize the British representative.

However, Eric accepted the post for as long as it lasted. The lure of new and beautiful country was too strong to resist. This time we took four-year-old Nicolas with us, and our second son, John, was born in Kunming in 1950. We enjoyed our short time there and while freedom lasted we travelled as widely as we could. When life became hazardous as well as circumscribed, I decided that the time had come to leave with the children. Eric had to stay until he was officially recalled. My journey out of China, mostly by a series of steamers down the Yangtze River (Chang Jiang), was dramatic as well as difficult, and I shall never forget the kindness of the ever-increasing numbers of expelled missionaries who helped me on my way.

When Eric arrived home we had to rethink our future yet again, bearing in mind the fact that Eric was not an established member of the consular service. It was then that Everest loomed in his life again. He was asked to organize an expedition to try to approach the world's highest mountain from the south, the northern route now being closed. Although his reconnaissance was entirely successful, to his great disappointment he was not chosen to lead the assault expedition of 1953. Instead he entered a quite different world, becoming Warden of the Outward Bound Mountain School at Eskdale, Cumberland, in England.

Sadly, it was here that our paths divided. Eric writes in his autobiography, *That Untravelled World*, 'Diana and I started to form attachments more or less simultaneously, based, I suppose, upon the attractions that we found lacking in each other.' That may be true. I am glad and grateful that we remained friends until his death in 1977.

I no longer climb high passes, nor even gentle slopes, but I will always remember with nostalgia and deep gratitude my time in Sinkiang; the remote, strange magic of what was once an 'antique land'.

THE ANTIQUE
LAND

by

Diana Shipton

Decorations by
JILL DAVIS

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THE ANTIQUE LAND

DIANA SHIPTON

Diana Shipton acquired a taste for adventure and a love of remote places from her earliest days, having been born in India in 1917, the daughter of a Forest Officer. In 1946 the author's husband, Eric Shipton, was appointed as British Consul-General in Turkestan. He was to be the last incumbent of this post as the Consulate was closed when the British left India. *The Antique Land* is a lively account of the two years they spent in Kashgar, and provides a fascinating glimpse of domestic life and diplomatic activities in this remote outpost. Diana Shipton's keen observations on local customs and her vivid descriptions of the frequent travels which she and her husband undertook are complemented by a wide selection of photographs.

This edition is reprinted with the addition of a new Introduction by the author, who now lives in London.

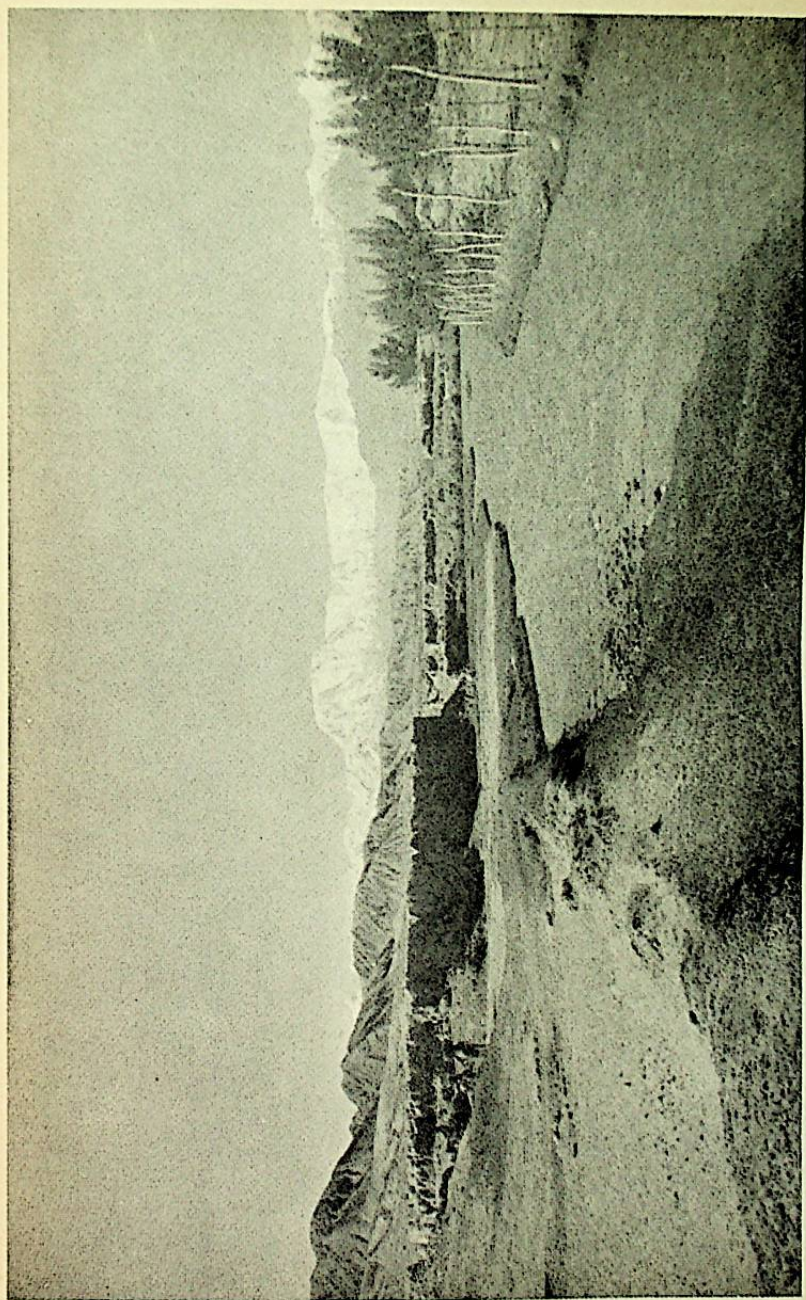
Cover illustration: Detail of a pillar at a mosque at Kashgar.
Photograph by Peter Yung.

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KUNGUR, SEEN ON THE WAY TO OITAGH