

THE SILK ROAD

A BIBLIOGRAPHICAL PROFILE

**A select bibliography of 152
antiquarian, scarce and scholarly titles**

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The Silk Road reached its height during the T'ang Dynasty (AD 618-907). Along this great trans-Asian highway linking Imperial Rome and distant China travelled precious cargos of silk, gold, ivory, exotic animals and rare plants. The Silk Road was also the means of conveying new ideas, art and knowledge. Its oasis towns blossomed into thriving trading cities and centres of Buddhist art and learning. As the Chinese lost control of the Silk Road, its traffic declined and its cities were covered by sand. When in the tenth century Western China fell to Islam, the Buddhist treasures of the Silk Road were almost entirely obliterated.

The principal theme of this select bibliography is the rediscovery of the Silk Road during the last 120 years, but there are also included works which illustrate the historical background of the Silk Road from the earliest times. In 1896 Sven Hedin rediscovered one of the former cities of the Silk Road; his *Through Asia*, published in 1898, established Hedin's worldwide fame. His discovery started an international race to discover the Buddhist and other treasures of this remote part of Central Asia. Following Hedin's discovery, archaeologists from England, Germany, France, Japan, Russia, and the United States led successive expeditions to the region. During the next thirty years enormous quantities of paintings, sculptures and manuscripts were removed from the former cities of the Silk Road and are now scattered throughout the museums of a dozen countries.

The most important of the archaeological raids from Europe were led by six men – Sven Hedin of Sweden, Sir Aurel Stein of Britain, Albert von Le Coq and Albert Grunwedel of Germany, Paul Pelliot of France and Langdon Warner of the United States. At the time these archaeologists, particularly Sir Aurel Stein, believed that their removal of the Silk Road treasures to such institutions as the British Museum was an unquestionable contribution to the scholarship of Central Asia. Despite later Chinese rancour at these archaeological activities, many scholars are now of the opinion that it is mainly due to European archaeologists that many of the Buddhist treasures of the Silk Road have survived.

In recent years, the literature of Central Asia, and particularly of the Silk Road, has become much sought after by scholars and travellers alike. This bibliography contains an extremely good representation of the writings of the pioneers who rediscovered the Silk Road. The most notable inclusion is a copy of Sir Aurel Stein's excessively rare *The Thousand Buddhas*, 1921, copies of which are hardly ever offered for sale. Also included are Stein's *Sand-Buried Ruins of Khotan*, 1903, *Ruins of Desert Cathay*, 1912, *The Art of Central Asia* (the Stein Collection is the British Museum), 1983, Albert Grunwedel's *Altbuddhistische Kultstätten in Chinesisch-Turkistan*, 1912, Sven Hedin's *History of the Expedition in Asia (1927-1935)*, 1943, Langdon Warner's *The Long Old Road in China*, 1926 and Albert von Le Coq's *Auf Hellas Spuren in Turkistan*, 1926. There are included scarce and informative works on almost all the people and places connected with the Silk Road throughout its history.

In the mid 1930s the Chinese put a stop to the pillaging of Silk Road treasures and that part of Central Asia was closed to foreigners for more than forty years. However, from about 1978 onwards, the Chinese have reopened some of the cities of the Silk Road and expeditions to this part of the Central Asia have become extremely popular. It is hoped that this bibliography of books on the Silk Road will help scholars and travellers to understand something of its long eventful history.

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