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The Silk Road in World History: A Review Essay

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The Silk Road, a trans-Eurasian network of trade routes connecting East and Southeast Asia to Central Asia, India, the Mediterranean, and northern Europe, which flourished from roughly 100 BCE to around 1450, has enjoyed two moments of intense scholarly study. The first spanned a period of little more than five decades, from the late nineteenth century into the early twentieth century. It was during this period that European, Japanese, and American scholar-adventurers, working primarily in Chinese Turkestan (present-day Xinjiang), which comprises China's vast northwest) and China's Gansu Province (to the immediate east of Xinjiang) rediscovered and documented numerous ancient sites and artifacts of the Silk Road. The second era began to pick up momentum in the 1980s due to a number of technological realities as well as the emergence of the New World History as a historiographical field and area of focus. This renewed fascination with the Silk Road has resulted in not only a substantial body of both learned and popular publications

media but also in an ever-expanding sense among historians of the scope, reach, and significance of the Silk Road

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