A modern epic journey from East to West along ancient trade routes

Formed around 206 BC during the Han Dynasty, the Silk Road expands from China to central Europe, passing through India, the Middle East and North Africa along the way. This network of roads was the first trade route to connect East and West, and enabled the formation of great civilizations, such as the Persian Empire and Ancient Rome. Its position today, both culturally and geopolitically, is no less significant, as the region struggles to forge its own identity, distinct from the consumerism of the West, and the traditional values of the East.

In *Tearing up the Silk Road*, Tom Coote chronicles his journey along this ancient trade route, and allows the reader to glimpse at the true cultures of the people and places he visits, presenting an alternative, 'unofficial', viewpoint, which usually remains hidden from Western eyes. By bus, train and battered car – through deserts, mountain ranges, rapidly expanding megacities and ancient ruins – Tom meets, befriends and argues with an epic range of characters. From soldiers and monks, to pilgrims, travellers and modern-day Silk Road traders; all are striving for something more and most dream of being somewhere else.

Again and again Tom finds himself at the front line of a desperate war for hearts and minds. In an increasingly interconnected world, archaic conceptions of race, ethnicity and nationalism are becoming obsolete. Instead, new forms of identity are emerging, founded more upon shared cultural preferences and aspirations than on the remnants of tribal allegiance. The greatest clash of civilisations, however, seems to be between the few who have so much, and the masses now uniting to demand so much more.