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Sommario/riassunto	Nothing in history sounds grander than a trade route, one of those thick bold lines on the statistical maps by which people have exchanged the products of their hands, minds, and sporadically, even hearts. Some of the routes have shaped history, rather than merely reflecting it. Primary among them is the Silk Road, the overland route across Asia that endured for more than 1,000 years as a crossroad from East to West. Here, in this essay by historian David Grace is the story of one of the great highways of trade.