

KREUTZMANN, HERMANN: *Pamirian Crossroads and Beyond. Human Geography and Geopolitics. Iran and the Caucasus Monographs Vol 3.* 741pp. 174 figures, 36 tables. Brill. Leiden, Boston 2024. ISBN 978-90-04-70435-0. Euro 149,80.

Between 2015 and 2020, Hermann Kreutzmann, Professor of Human Geography at the Freie Universität Berlin until 2020, published a synthesis of his research in High Asia over more than 40 years, from 1977 to 2019, in three massive volumes: *Pamirian Crossroads* (2015), *Wakhan Quadrangle* (2017), and *Hunza Matters* (2020). Within the larger regional context of High Asia, the trilogy focused on the ‘Pamirian Knot’ at the junction of the Hindukush, Karakoram and Tian Shan with the overriding aim to put “the peripheral space between major players into the center of attention” (KREUTZMANN 2020: 23) and to trace the historical roots of current developments. It must have come as a surprise even for those who know Hermann Kreutzmann as an extremely prolific writer (the list of his publications that is included in the book under review runs over 38 pages!) that four years on, yet another volume of more than 700 pages has come out.

Garnik S. Asatrian, General Editor of the *Iran and the Caucasus Monographs* series, in which Hermann Kreutzmann’s new book *Pamirian Crossroads and Beyond. Human Geography and Geopolitics* has been published as volume 3, presents these writings in his foreword as belonging to the ‘so-called small genre’: articles, essays and notes published between 1998 and 2022 in a highly diverse assortment of publication outlets ranging from academic journals and edited books to conference volumes, and further on to more peripheral or ephemeral sources for which *Goft-O-Gu* (= Dialogue, Teheran), in which chapter 3 on Afghanistan and the opium world market was originally published in a translation into Farsi, is a good example. Each one of the altogether 30 chapters concludes with a reference to the original publication. The book concludes with an Index.

The foreword is followed by ‘Hermann Kreutzmann: Opera minora. A tribute to geographical concentration and inquisitiveness’, a contribution by Eckart Ehlers, which combines a ‘laudatio’ on Hermann Kreutzmann’s approach and achievements with an introduction to the volume. Eckart Ehlers rejects the application of the term ‘minor works’ as not befitting the output of Hermann Kreutzmann because “there are no minor works by this author!” (p. 1). He characterizes Hermann Kreutzmann as the prototype of the

geographical fieldworker who has focused his research with single-minded dedication on High Asia for more than 40 years. Other hallmarks of Hermann Kreutzmann’s work are the combination of fieldwork and archival studies to place field-based results into historical contexts, and a transdisciplinary approach involving exchange with scholars from other fields. Eckart Ehlers’ assessment of Hermann Kreutzmann is best summed up in the statement “regional concentration and focus coupled with remarkable perseverance in the pursuit of his research themes as well as incessant inquisitiveness and search make Hermann Kreutzmann a geographical explorer unlike others” (p. 5).

The title *Pamirian Crossroads and Beyond. Human Geography and Geopolitics* links the book to the preceding trilogy, indicating at the same time that its regional scope goes beyond the *Pamirian Crossroads* to include the periphery of Central Asia, e.g. Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan, China, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, and – in one special case – a place as far away in time and space as the former Prussia.

The chapters are not arranged in strict thematic order or chronological sequence. There is, however, a perceptible clustering of topics into four broad groups: boundary-making, trade and transport, pastoralism, and languages - research interests that permeate the entire oeuvre of Hermann Kreutzmann.

Most of the first half of the book – roughly up to chapter 15 – is devoted to the geopolitics of High Asia with boundary-making, cross-border relations, transport routes and trade relations figuring as prominent areas of investigation. The central theme that runs through these chapters is how development stimulated by external actors leads to local transformations, especially on the periphery of power complexes. The historical context for these changes is the Great Game, i.e. the contest for supremacy in Central Asia in the 19th and early 20th century mainly between Russia and the British Empire – which resulted in the drawing of boundaries that continue to shape the geopolitical realities of this region especially by having created buffer states such as Afghanistan or buffer regions such as the Wakhan corridor, delineated by borders that cut through the settlement areas of groups like the Pashtuns or the Wakhi. The effects of boundary-making are the central theme of chapters 5, 10, and 11.

The current context is the ‘New Great Game’ powered by the hegemonial aspirations of the former Soviet-union, Russia and China, in which especially roads play an important role as agents of change. The theme of roads and trade connections is explored in chapters



6, 8, 9, 12, 14, and 15 with a focus sometimes on the larger complex of 'Crossroads Asia', sometimes on core areas such as Chitral, and sometimes on individual road connections like the Karakoram Highway. Road planning dates back to the colonial period, but British plans for a road connection between the Punjab and Kashmir with Xinjiang through three possible routes never materialized. The construction of cross-border mountain roads was pioneered by the SU through building the Pamir Highway, and culminated in the completion of the Karakoram Highway as a "prime exchange corridor between Pakistan and China" (chapter 8). Nepal is introduced in chapter 14 as a counter-example to show that physical infrastructure is not always the major agent of change and that remote communities have found other ways of regional development, e.g. through labor migration and by engaging in tourism.

In chapters 13 and 23, Hermann Kreutzmann focusses on the Wakhi and on Wakhan, a group and a region to which he has devoted much effort and attention, especially through his postdoctoral research from 1990 to 1992 on the Wakhi. 'Wakhan Woluswali – winds of change in Afghan Badakshan', co-authored with his wife Sabine Felmy, which presents Wakhan as a prism of the effects of boundary making, is also a prime example of the couple's performance as fieldworkers who conducted extensive interviews during three journeys in 1999, 2000, and 2003. Acknowledgements provide an insight into the network, through which Hermann Kreutzmann and his wife had organized these journeys. It includes the late Commander Najmuddin Khan under whose protection the couple travelled, and international aid agencies.

Chapters 16 to 22 deal with pastoralism or, more specifically, with the dichotomy of mobile pastoralism and sedentary agriculture which is a topic to which Hermann Kreutzmann has been recurring time and again. A theme that runs through these chapters is the "tragedy of responsibility" which covers the contrasting issues of no responsibility by state authorities for vulnerable communities such as pastoralists in time of crisis on the one hand, and of interference of state authorities with the lives of pastoralists through e.g. sedentarization campaigns and the conversion of pastures to arable land on the other.

Chapters 24 and 25 on the persisting linguistic diversity in the eastern Hindukush and Karakoram are based on a survey of 500 villages in northern Pakistan and adjacent regions that was carried out 1990-1991 in the context of the Pak-German 'Culture Area Karakoram' project of the German Research Council. The chapters translate Hermann Kreutzmann's notions of boundary-making and cross-boundary bridging into the linguistic realm, where borders created during colonial

times delineate territories of colonial languages and cut through the domains of vernacular languages.

Chapters that do not fall into these clusters include chapters 2 and 3 on poppy cultivation in Afghanistan, which was linked to the world market for opium quite late, i.e. in the early 1980s. Chapter 26 on the proposed 'Pamir Peace Park' contains a statement lifted from Immanuel Kant's lectures on physical geography on the importance of improved knowledge about High Asia as a key to all history (p. 627) as proof of Hermann Kreutzmann's stupendous erudition and persistence in sifting through historical sources. Chapter 27 describes 'Alexandrovka', a model Russian village that was established in 1827 in Potsdam as an expression of the alliance between Russia and Prussia to repel Napoleon, and as a showpiece of Prussia's new agricultural policy. It is now part of Potsdam's World Heritage Site. Chapters 4 and 29 are the result of Hermann Kreutzmann's not so frequent excursions into the domain of urban geography. Chapter 29 contains an analysis of how the planned new capital of Pakistan – Islamabad – was adapted to changing contexts and expectations while chapter 4 shows how oases towns like Kashgar have evolved from trading towns to centers of modernization. Chapter 28 'From Himalayan Dilemma to Climate Change Dilemma' which was written as a tribute to Jack Ives, draws parallels between the debates on the 'Theory of Himalayan Environmental Degradation', in which Jack Ives as co-author of the book 'The Himalayan Dilemma' was heavily involved, and the current debate on climate change which, in the eyes of Hermann Kreutzmann, exist in the practice of limited knowledge influencing far-reaching decision-making. The book concludes with a chapter on the efforts made by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC) to preserve the cultural heritage of five settlements as a key to obtain benefits from tourism which followed the opening of the Karakoram Highway.

The book is richly endowed with maps and diagrams, most of them designed by the author himself. Photographs which play such an important role in the trilogy are confined in this book to 9 of the altogether 30 chapters, mostly to those on pastoralism. Some of them are historical, some of them were taken by the author in the field. An excellent example for Hermann Kreutzmann's ability to unearth hidden material is the photograph of a sketch map of the proposed alignment of the first motor road from Peshawar to Kashgar and beyond from the India Office Library, 1943, which was classified as 'most secret' (p. 57).

*Pamirian Crossroads and Beyond* provides a conspectus (to borrow one of Hermann Kreutzmann's favorite terms) of the broad range of his research themes within the covers of a single volume like no other one of his

books. It is impossible to do justice within the limits of a book review to the wealth of content presented in this book. The book is also evidence of Hermann Kreutzmann's persistent effort to disseminate his findings to audiences in remote places who may have no or limited access to academic outlets, thus living up to his frequently stated conviction that "periphery matters".

My concerns are few. I found missing an editorial note on the principle of selecting publications for inclusion as chapters. While some chapters fit the term 'minor works' at least in terms of the relative obscurity of where the originals have been published, others, such as chapters that were originally published in reputable journals like *Erkunde* (chapter 10), do not. Another issue is what may appear as redundancy to those who read the book from cover to cover, as is the task of a reviewer: the frequent repetition of contents and illustrations from one chapter to the next, especially in the central sections of the book. This must be accepted, however, as a necessary consequence of presenting a cross-section of the work of an author who has spoken to a greater multiplicity and diversity of audiences than others in his field. Because of its broad topical range and because of the inclusion of publications in peripheral sources, *Pamirian Crossroads and Beyond* serves as both, an entry point for those unfamiliar and a treasure trove of hidden gems for those already familiar with the work of Hermann Kreutzmann.

## References

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