

Book review: Hermann Kreutzmann: Pamirian Crossroads - Kyrgyz and Wakhi of High Asia. Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz Verlag, 2015. ISBN 978-3-447-10449-4

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Book Reviews

HERMANN KREUTZMANN, *Pamirian Crossroads: Kyrgyz and Wakhi of High Asia*. Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz Verlag, 2015. 559 pages, 122 maps, €98.00. ISBN 978-3-447-10449-4

It will be difficult to do justice to this extraordinary book within the word limit of a standard book review. With about 560 pages, 122 maps, 313 illustrations, 15 diagrams and 25 tables, *Pamirian Crossroads* is the first of a total of three volumes – its companion volume *Wakhan Quadrangle: Exploration and Espionage During and After the Great Game* was published in 2017 and another volume on Gilgit-Baltistan’s Hunza Valley is currently under preparation. Together, they are likely to become the capstone of Hermann Kreutzmann’s remarkable career. For more than 35 years, Hermann Kreutzmann – from the beginning in the company of his wife Sabine Felmy – has focused his attention single-mindedly on High Asia and especially on the “Pamirian Knot” at the junction of the Hindukush, Karakorum and Tien Shan, which provides the regional framework for this book. Over this time span, Kreutzmann has visited the region every year and carried out more than 6 years of fieldwork. Frequent visits and long stays in the same locations characterise his field research and have enabled him to observe the area’s “winds of change”, which he so frequently invokes, from a better-informed vantage point than that of any other contemporary researcher. A map on p. 13 shows the dense network of routes that he explored in High Asia between 1977 and 2017. His high standard of empirical research is paralleled by the diligence with which he has carried out work in archives and libraries in London, Delhi, Islamabad, St. Petersburg and Berlin. The confluence of empirical and archival research is one of many features that make *Pamirian Crossroads* such a unique undertaking.

Pamirian Crossroads is set in the border areas of Afghanistan, Pakistan, China and Tajikistan – in the Pamirs and Wakhan, high mountain regions that have been utilised by people for a very long time. The book singles out the Kyrgyz and Wakhi ethno-linguistic groups as representatives of mobile pastoralism and sedentary farming, respectively, though this book reveals that these two lifestyles are not neatly separated from each other, and that mobility is a defining feature of life for all people in this region. Hermann Kreutzmann also drives home the point that the diversity of livelihoods in the Pamirs and Wakhan is determined less by the ecological setting, which he describes as fairly homogenous across the region, than by the divergent paths of development which the Kyrgyz and Wakhi have experienced and continue to experience in the four countries whose mountainous margins they inhabit. One of

the leitmotifs of *Pamirian Crossroads* is that “peripheral” does not equal “isolated” and that the lives of people on the periphery of states in the Pamirs and Wakhan are influenced by forces or events that originate far away geographically or that have their origins deep in the historical past. This is one reason that Hermann Kreutzmann accords so much space to the period of the “Great Game” – the contest for supremacy in Central Asia in the 19th and early 20th century between Russia and the British Empire – which resulted in the drawing of the boundaries that created the peripheries described in his book. How life plays out for the Kyrgyz and Wakhi under the varying conditions in four different peripheries is a central theme of the book.

It is, however, impossible to reduce *Pamirian Crossroads* to a single or even a central theme. Its aspirations are far too broad and complex. In a total of nine chapters, Hermann Kreutzmann elucidates the historical perception and exploration of the Pamirs and Wakhan; the making of boundaries and the development within the confines of these boundaries; Kyrgyz and Wakhi livelihoods within the context of the ecology and economy of the Pamirs; mobility and multi-locality in High Asia; and a comparison of changing minority policies. Interspersed with these large thematic blocks are more narrowly focused studies on, for instance, political and religious discrimination in the Pamirs and vehicular traffic in High Asia. The final chapter, “Portraying the Present Age”, describes the current situation in ten Pamir locations. It is followed by an epilogue which, by the standards of the book, is surprisingly short and which ends by giving voice to female shepherds in different locations. This is a rather abrupt ending, and one could have wished for a more conclusive tying together of the many strands that this volume has taken up.

One of the outstanding characteristics of this book is the loving care and meticulousness with which it has been produced. Each chapter is followed by endnotes, and each map or illustration is accompanied by a detailed legend. Some of these legends are stand-alone micro-essays, sometimes of considerable length and supported by references. The book ends with a glossary in 20 languages that also contains toponyms and their previous transliterations and usages.

The book is lavishly endowed with maps, diagrams and illustrations. The maps, especially, are a central feature of this volume. The author himself designed 50 of the 122 maps as an outcome of his empirical research. Of the beautifully reproduced historical maps, the majority are from the Pamir Archive Collection, which was compiled by the Swiss cartographer Markus Hauser and was recently acquired by the University of Central Asia. Another outstanding feature is the use of historical photographs, some dating back to the late 19th century, some published here for the first time.

Hermann Kreutzmann defies established categories of academic writing – in the foreword he refers to his book as a “conspectus”. As such, it can be

read as a consecutive narrative, mined for information like an encyclopaedia, or simply enjoyed as a magnificent picture book. One can read it from cover to cover or explore its content according to one's own specific interests. Such exploratory reading could have been aided by a list of maps and illustrations.

The work stands out for the fact that it has been written by a single author. The rule of the day is that syntheses as comprehensive and complex as this one generally appear as edited volumes containing the contributions of many authors. That Hermann Kreutzmann has taken upon himself the staggering work of writing and compiling this volume on his own commands respect, to say the very least, and is a testament to his unique and dedicated career. Finally, as a vast repository of knowledge on the Pamirs and Wakhan, *Pamirian Crossroads* offers particular value as a reference point from which to gauge the influence of the current and impending geopolitical shifts in this region, such as China's Belt and Road initiative, on the lives of Kyrgyz, Wakhi and other residents of this highly dynamic region.

Dietrich Schmidt-Vogt

KARL JETTMAR, *The Religions of the Hindukush: The Pre-Islamic Heritage of Eastern Afghanistan and Northern Pakistan*. Bangkok: Orchid Press, 2018. 591 pages, 3 maps, 24 figures, 14 plates, \$65.00. ISBN 978-974-524-218-0

In 1975 Professor Dr Karl Jettmar (1918–2002), the eminent Austrian-German scholar and doyen of anthropological and historical research on the high mountain peoples of Eastern Afghanistan and Northern Pakistan, published his seminal work on their pre-Islamic cultural heritage. This German-language book became a classic within the international scientific community. The present volume is its first complete English edition; it contains contributions by Georg Buddruss, Schuyler Jones, Max Klimburg and Peter S.C. Parkes as well as an obituary written by Harald Hauptmann. The book was translated by the late Adam Nayyar (d. 2008) as well as other (unfortunately unnamed) colleagues and edited by Hugh van Skyhawk. Thanks to the persistent efforts of Wolfgang-Peter Zingel this English edition has finally seen the light of day.

The voluminous study is divided into six parts: in addition to an introduction and an epilogue the main parts investigate the religions of the pre-Islamic Kafirs in Eastern Afghanistan, the speakers of the Shina language (i.e. the main group of the so-called Dards), the Burusho, the Kalasha and the Kho. The latter ethnic groups inhabit the valleys of the eastern Hindukush, Karakoram and Western Himalaya. In detailing the ancient religious systems of these