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Pamirian Crossroads and Beyond

Human Geography and Geopolitics

By

Hermann Kreutzmann



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Cover illustration: The Sar-e Bom Darra is reached by shepherds from Baharak in Afghan Badakhshan on their way to the fertile pastures of the Shewa Pamir. The photograph was taken on 16 July 2009
© Hermann Kreutzmann.

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Foreword

This volume by the distinguished German scholar Prof. Hermann Kreutzmann presents a collection of his publications of the so-called small genre: articles, essays and notes appeared over the years and covering different issues on the ethnography and ethno-geography of peoples inhabiting a vast region, from Central Asia via the Hindukush to the Indian subcontinent and beyond – peoples speaking Iranian, Indo-Aryan, and Turkic languages, as well as Burushaski and Chinese, practicing various forms of Islam, Buddhism, and other religions.

Although the volume appears under the general title *Pamirian Crossroads and Beyond: Human Geography and Geopolitics*, its coverage is much wider, embracing, in fact, a great variety of subjects, like, for instance, poppy production and the international market for Afghan opium; issues of traditionalism and modernisation; boundary-making and delimitation practices in Pakistan; problems of international trade across the Hindukush-Karakoram Highway; corridors of exchange and generally geopolitical perspectives on border exchange; Kashmir and the Northern Areas of Pakistan; issues of animal husbandry and pastoralism; linguistic diversity in the Pamirs and the Eastern Hindukush; the transformation of high-altitude livestock-keeping in China; and even issues of climate change in the Himalayas. In short, this volume is a real treasure-trove and veritable encyclopaedia on various aspects of cultures, everyday life, social structure, local economy, language situation and native traditions of peoples belonging to various socio-cultural and civilisational environments at different levels of economic development.

Most of the material, as well as the conclusions and findings in this book are unique, because a considerable part of the basic data was collected by the author himself in the field. As such, this work can serve as a first-hand source on a wide variety of issues pertaining to this huge geographic area. All the articles included in this volume are written in a strictly academic style, free of elements of journalistic trivialisation.

It is not by chance that in the title of the book we emphasise “Human Geography and Geopolitics”, as real geopolitics presupposes a deep knowledge of human geography, its different nuances and peculiarities. The so-called geopolitically oriented research on history became today a mainstream trend in social sciences. Yet, a visible portion of the publications which appeared in the last decades in this sphere – university textbooks as well as monographs – are often theoretical speculations, lacking insight into the real human landscape and intimate knowledge of the realities of the regions they are concerned with. A normal scholarly work in geopolitics must be first of all a comprehensive and

in-depth presentation of the ethno-demographic and related dimensions of the given area. All theories and concepts pretending to be geopolitical should be based primarily on a serious research fundament created by the meticulous study of ethno-demographic, socio-economic, religious and, linguistic aspects of the territories under consideration. Without these preconditions any geopolitical study can be qualified as nothing more than mere speculation. A good example of a to a certain extent non-relevant geopolitical concept is the so-called theory of “Eurasianism”, which is entirely grounded on the purely political and ideological inspirations of its initiators, while at the same time being deprived of a factual ethno-cultural and civilisational background.

I think, Professor Hermann Kreutzmann’s book can serve as a bright example of how one can work with perseverance and true academic devotion generating a solid basis for future research, including geopolitical visions. I am convinced that this book will be in demand for decades to come, not only by narrow specialists in Oriental Studies and Ethnogeography, but also by students and lay-readers, especially those interested in the problems of geopolitics of Central and South Asia.

In the end, I would like to thank my friend Dr. Matthias Weinreich to whom the idea of including this volume in our Series belongs, and to Dr. Abdurraouf Oueslati from Brill – De Gruyter for his dedication and enthusiasm in promoting *Iran and the Caucasus Monograph Series*.

Garnik S. Asatrian

April 23, 2024, Yerevan

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- for storage. The only opening for light is in the roof above the fireplace. The lantern roof ceiling is wide as well. In general, the Wakhi house is more spacious and differentiated than the Burusho house. The basic structure is similar, with a storage area opposite the entrance and separate food preparation on an elevated platform. At the sides the sleeping and sitting arrangements can be expanded towards the entrance side 551
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