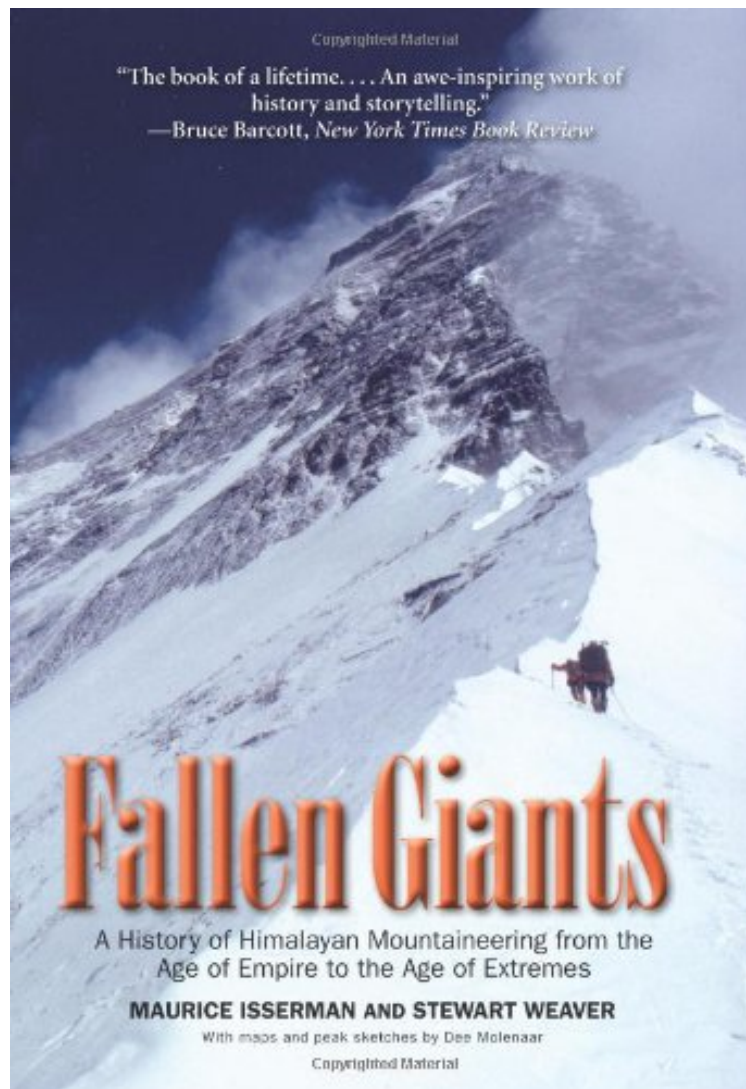


(Free pdf) *Fallen Giants: A History of Himalayan Mountaineering from the Age of Empire to the Age of Extremes*

Fallen Giants: A History of Himalayan Mountaineering from the Age of Empire to the Age of Extremes

Maurice Isserman, Stewart Weaver
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Maurice Isserman, Stewart Weaver : Fallen Giants: A History of Himalayan Mountaineering from the Age of Empire to the Age of Extremes before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised *Fallen Giants: A History of Himalayan Mountaineering from the Age of Empire to the Age of Extremes*:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Superbly Written and Exciting Overview of Himalayan ClimbingBy J. BlilieI enjoyed this book more than any climbing book I've read in many years. It is superbly written and

meticulously researched and annotated. As I approached this book, I felt its size and heft, looked at the text and saw the smallish font and the amount of print on each page, and I thought, oops, this might be a tough slog. Nothing could be further from the truth. I'd been in a spate of reading thriller novels and this book was more un-put-down-able than nearly every one of those novels. This book was a page-turner throughout and only indulged in tiny doses of navel gazing, when called for by the individuals being described. This is the story of mountaineering in the Himalaya from the earliest historical accounts to the 2000s, told like a fireside tale. Gripping and full of life. It would help to have some knowledge of the climbing history and the terrain covered to get the most out of this book; but it really does provide plenty of detail. As with any NF book that moves across the land in its story, it's a good idea to have an atlas or maps handy if you need to orient yourself. The emphasis is on the fourteen 8000-meter peaks, their first ascents, and other of the very highest peaks in the range. This is understandable, since these were, for nearly the entire history of Himalayan climbing, the greatest challenges: Just getting to the top of the greatest peaks. They were the lodestones of almost all climbers until the 1960s. Therefore, many of the smaller, more technical peaks are not covered (though some of the most famous and earliest are.) The book also focuses on other firsts, such as first ascents by climbers of various nationalities and by women. By the time of the 1970s and beyond, when the range was opened to far more expeditions (and commercial trips) a severe selection of which climbs were to be covered had to be made. I think the climbs covered in the later periods reflect the interest of most readers of climbing narrative. You may not find your favorite ascent from the 1970s through the 2000s covered in detail (or at all); but a good selection of "firsts", newsworthy, and, especially, influential climbs are covered well. The intent of the book seems to be to indicate key climbs that drove the mountaineering ethic and climbing style in the Himalaya (including commercialization); and the authors accomplished this well. And did it in a very entertaining and readable style. Bravo! Highest recommendation. Regarding the charge of anglo-centrism: Well, yes, they tailored the book for the British and American reader. And they primarily used feet for elevations and miles for distances. Tailoring your book for the intended audience? Wow, who knew?! 19 of 19 people found the following review helpful. An Uplifting Read By Gary M. Olson This is an excellent history of mountain climbing in the Himalaya. Isserman and Weaver do a masterful job, not just of recounting the history, but placing the efforts in political and cultural context. There were long periods where access to these mountains was restricted or forbidden. There has also always been a competitive thread to the missions, as climbers tried for all kinds of "firsts." Of course the history is filled with both triumphs and tragedies, and the authors tell these stories in a most engaging way. I have only two small nits with the book. First, it ends in the mid 90s, even though the book was published this year. And second, while there are lots of photos and maps, I wish there were more of the latter, as I kept looking for the mountains, glaciers, towns, and other geographical entities. But these aside, this is an altogether wonderful book. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Great book with some flaws By Global Nomad All has been said about the problem with maps, and I concur. I also agree with the reviewer from Spain about the anglo saxon and anglophile bias of the book. I would add that the authors are unfair and judgmental when talking about climbers of recent years. The old amateur (noble, romantic, selfless and idealistic) vs pro mountaineer (self centered, materialistic and unfeeling) comparison ignores the fact that the "gentlemen" of the old days came from the privileged classes and did not have to worry about how to make a living AND pay for expeditions. I particularly disliked the portraying of John Roskelley obviously colored by Andy Harvard and Peter Lev's opinions (see acknowledgments and bibliographies). Anyone who read accounts of the 1976 Nanda Devi expedition knows that Harvard and Lev were at odds with Roskelley almost throughout the trip. Otherwise a fascinating, gripping history of Himalayan climbing, told in the context of the times of each expedition, with portrait of mountaineers not only as athletes but as men and women with the qualities and flaws of the era of which they were the products.

The first successful ascent of Mount Everest in 1953 by Sir Edmund Hillary and his Sherpa teammate Tenzing Norgay is a familiar saga, but less well known are the tales of many other adventurers who also came to test their skills and courage against the world's highest and most dangerous mountains. In this lively and generously illustrated book, historians Maurice Isserman and Stewart Weaver present the first comprehensive history of Himalayan mountaineering in fifty years. They offer detailed, original accounts of the most significant climbs since the 1890s, and they compellingly evoke the social and cultural worlds that gave rise to those expeditions. The book recounts the adventures of such figures as Martin Conway, who led the first authentic Himalayan climbing expedition in 1892; Fanny Bullock Workman, the pioneer explorer of the Karakoram range; George Mallory, the romantic martyr of Mount Everest fame; Charlie Houston, who led American expeditions to K2 in the 1930s and 1950s; Ang Tharkay, the legendary Sherpa, and many others. Throughout, the authors discuss the effects of political and social change on the world of mountaineering, and they offer a penetrating analysis of a culture that once emphasized teamwork and fellowship among climbers, but now has been eclipsed by a scramble for individual fame and glory.

From Booklist This survey history establishes base camp for readers interested in the history of Himalayan climbing expeditions. Its strength lies in the way it puts each undertaking within the context of evolving styles of high-altitude mountaineering. It has the additional attribute of pithily capturing the driven, not to say sometimes nutty, personalities

attracted to an extremely perilous sport. Written by professional historians with an alpine avocation, the narrative opens with nineteenth-century identifications of the 8,000-meter titans of the Himalayas that became the mesmerizing goals of most expeditions. Why outfits picked K2, Annapurna, or Kangchenjunga are stories in themselves, in which Isserman and Weaver insightfully engage factors of organization, nationalism, and even aesthetics. The unique obsession with Mount Everest sums up Isserman and Weaver's divisions of Himalayan mountaineering history: its name reflects the sport's birth in empire building, its conquest in 1953 symbolized climbing's most spectacular moment, and its littered slopes testify to climbing's decline from because-it-is-there ineffability to contemporary commercial enterprise. Including photography of personages and majestic scenery, Isserman and Weaver's history is well worth any library's consideration. --Gilbert Taylor "Fallen Giants" captures the spirit of Himalayan climbing. It is wonderfully written and will become an indispensable reference."--Charles S. Houston, co-author of "K2: The Savage Mountain" -- Charles S. Houston "In "Fallen Giants: A History of Himalayan Mountaineering from the Age of Empire to the Age of Extremes," Maurice Isserman and Stewart Weaver share unforgettable stories of the history of the world's highest peaks and the climbers who challenged their lofty summits. Their in-depth research gives us unique insights into previously unknown controversies, mysteries, and dramas. This thoughtful book, from a scholarly perspective, introduces us to the greatest peaks and personalities of mountaineering. The new information, intriguing details, insightful interpretations and dry humor make this a must read for armchair mountaineers as well as all who aspire to the heights."--Arlene Blum, author of "Breaking Trail: A Climbing Life" "Fallen Giants captures the spirit of Himalayan climbing. It is wonderfully written and will become an indispensable reference."--Charles S. Houston, co-author of K2: The Savage Mountain -- Charles S. Houston "This will be the definitive history of mountaineering in the Himalaya, clear, free of jargon, and readable, and so thorough that it will not be worth anyone's time to repeat this effort."--Nick Clinch, leader, 1958 American Hidden Peak expedition, and past president, American Alpine Club "This would be a great first book to expose a reader to the amazing stories and sacrifices held within the body of mountaineering literature. Additionally, the historian, scholar, and collector will delight in the unique, in-depth look at the evolution of climbing, and its driving factors, in the Himalaya."--Greg Glade, owner, Top of the World Books "Isserman and Weaver, both unassuming wanderers of high hills, have pulled off a great first ascent: a scholarly, grippingly readable history of Himalayan mountaineering that not only captures the tenuous essence of great successes and failures, but places the accounts of these climbs into historical context."--Tom Hornbein, author of Everest: The West Ridge "In Fallen Giants: A History of Himalayan Mountaineering from the Age of Empire to the Age of Extremes, Maurice Isserman and Stewart Weaver share unforgettable stories of the history of the world's highest peaks and the climbers who challenged their lofty summits. Their in-depth research gives us unique insights into previously unknown controversies, mysteries, and dramas. This thoughtful book, from a scholarly perspective, introduces us to the greatest peaks and personalities of mountaineering. The new information, intriguing details, insightful interpretations and dry humor make this a must read for armchair mountaineers as well as all who aspire to the heights."--Arlene Blum, author of Breaking Trail: A Climbing Life "This survey history establishes base camp for readers interested in the history of Himalayan climbing expeditions. Its strength lies in the way it puts each undertaking within the context of evolving styles of high-altitude mountaineering."--Booklist "Heroism, death, and drama abound. . . . The author's thoroughness and range make this hefty volume nearly encyclopedic in scope; the details on the "how" of climbing, the no-margin-for-error experience, and the bonus of Vittorio Sella's unmatched photographs make for a great book."--Foreword Magazine (Outstanding University Press Books 2008) "In Fallen Giants: A History of Himalayan Mountaineering from the Age of Empire to the Age of Extremes, Maurice Isserman and Stewart Weaver share unforgettable stories of the history of the world's highest peaks and the climbers who challenged their lofty summits. Their in-depth research gives us unique insights into previously unknown controversies, mysteries, and dramas. This thoughtful book, from a scholarly perspective, introduces us to the greatest peaks and personalities of mountaineering. The new information, intriguing details, insightful interpretations and dry humor make this a must read for armchair mountaineers as well as all who aspire to the heights. Arlene Blum, author of Breaking Trail: A Climbing Life -- Arlene Blum

From the Author

A conversation with Maurice Isserman and Stewart Weaver

Q: What distinguishes your book from the many others on mountains and mountaineering?

A: Fallen Giants is the first comprehensive history of Himalayan mountaineering to appear since the mid-1950s. It is also the first attempt to tell the story of Himalayan mountaineering from the bottom up, which is to say understanding mountain climbers as the products of particular times and particular cultures.

Q: What do you mean by fallen giants?

A: The title is, on one level, meant to be ironic. After climbing Nanda Devi in the Indian Garhwal region of the Himalaya in 1936, the British climber Bill Tilman wrote regretfully that the first time a great mountain is ascended, some of its mystery and grandeur are diminished. He added that a book recounting the fall of one of the giants would be bought by mountaineers more likely borrowed with misgiving and read with loathing. We hope our book will inspire feelings other than misgiving and loathing, even though it describes the fall of many such giants. But the title has another meaning, because in Fallen Giants we are chronicling the rise and fall of a set of values and norms that once nurtured a strong sense of fellowship and responsibility to others among mountaineers. In the later decades of the 20th century, such attitudes faltered on the slopes of high peaks, as the ideal of a brotherhood of the rope succumbed to self-seeking

commercialism and a reckless indifference to others. So we are not just recording the falling of mountain giants in our book; we are also paying tribute to admirable and endangered values, embodied in mountaineers like Tilman and his longtime climbing partner Eric Shipton, as well as such American climbers as Charlie Houston and Bob Bates, among others. Q: Are either of you mountaineers yourselves? A: Not like the ones we write about. We share a love of mountains and have spent a lot of time climbing and trekking, including in the Himalaya. But we cannot, alas, claim the ascent of a single 8,000-meter peak between us. Our hope is that as historians we bring other useful abilities to bear on telling the story of Himalayan mountaineering.