The Political System of Pakistan. by Khalid B. Sayeed
Review by: Richard S. Wheeler
Published by: Association for Asian Studies
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/2051725
Accessed: 18/06/2014 07:08

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Association for Asian Studies is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to The Journal of Asian Studies.
BOOK REVIEWS

abilities and contribution are manifest, nor need one tip-toe past the mistakes that any politician new to the job will make. Too often Mr. Feldman does not mention a misce; too often he apologizes for an ineffectice policy by invoking the magnitude of the problem. This shortcoming can be almost directly attributed to the cited evidence—official statements and press releases that reflected the narrowed dialogue of the martial law period. These shortcomings are perhaps the inevitable price to be paid for a sensitive journal of those days and that narrow dialogue.

The scholar will be discontented because the sub-title is unfulfilled. There is no analysis of the inner workings of the martial law administration—only its public face shows. How did General Ayub Khan keep his colonels in the barracks? How did he handle civil servants old in their jobs and wedded to their prerogatives? What was the pattern of his staffing of his own secretariat, and where did he get information untainted by the sycophants that surround any autocrat? But more intriguing and central to any “study,” how did he dismount the tiger of army rule and become a genuinely respected political leader in such a badly divided and politically bereft country?

WAYNE WILCOX

Columbia University


It is a rare pleasure to read a study of contemporary Pakistan that leaves so little room for criticism as this latest work by Professor Sayeed. His profound familiarity with the Pakistani scene is evident throughout, with none of the factual errors that have seemed inescapable in recent books on Pakistan. It is possible to take issue with him only in matters of interpretation, and differences of opinion are certainly legitimate within a framework of general agreement. Principally, this reviewer differs with the author in regard to his tendency—perhaps unavoidable in a study of this sort—to oversimplify for the reader the major conflicts of the Pakistani system. This eases his task of making sense of the complicated political changes of 1947–58 and of postmartial law developments, but at the cost of encouraging a type of political demonology that is already too popular in Pakistan. The stereotyping of issues and controversies is acceptable for the vote-seeker, but must be discouraged by those interested in dispassionate and realistic political analysis.

One of Professor Sayeed’s major themes is the conflict between politicians and the bureaucracy. This conflict has been substantial, but by no means a clear-cut struggle of “good guys” versus “bad guys.” From 1947 to 1958 politicians from both East and West Pakistan allied themselves with bureaucrats in the struggle for power, members of each group striving to use their allies against their fellows. By 1958 both “politicians” and “officials” were so tainted in the eyes of the public that only the armed forces were left with untarnished integrity. The purges of 1958–59 were directed against both, but since it was possible for the army to run the country without politicians but not without administrators, the latter were redeemed while the former became scapegoats for the ills of the whole society. During martial law, “politician” became a term of opprobrium, since 1962 applied in a pejorative sense by the political class now in power to those of their predecessors who form the opposition. The latter have their friends in the bureaucracy, just as political factions did before martial law, but—as has always been the case—the bureaucracy as a whole is in the service of the political figures in office, who can and do use the machinery of government against their political rivals. It does not seem helpful for analysis to attribute an exaggerated coherence or self-conscious group identity to either “politicians” or “bureaucrats,” or to assign unmitigated virtue or villainy to either.

A similar criticism can be made of Professor Sayeed’s treatment of the relationships between East Pakistan and the Center, which cannot fairly be described in “we” against “them” terms. Granted the great influence of non-Bengalis in the central government from the start, it remains true that East Pakistan had a majority in the Constituent Assembly until 1954, while Bengali politicians were in-
fluential in every central cabinet. The author points out (p. 85) that after 1954 East Pakistan was torn by rivalry between the followers of Fazlul Huq and Suhrawardy, but he does not make clear that the debasing of parliamentary government in Dacca after 1955 was the result of the interplay of this rivalry in successive coalitions in Dacca and Karachi, with provincial leaders invoking central intervention on their behalf. The final collapse in 1958—in the Center as well as in Dacca—was attributable more to the bitter struggle for position between East Pakistani parties, paralyzing parliamentary government in both capitals, than to the machinations of Iskandar Mirza. Since 1958 East Pakistan has been represented in the presidential cabinet and in the governors' conference, the highest policy-making bodies in the state, and Bengalis have (as the author has noted) been increasingly—if still inadequately—represented in the higher bureaucracy. Thus these East Pakistani politicians and administrators argue and act in good faith on behalf of their province, while others are vocal in their opposition to and criticism of the present provincial-central relationship. Understanding of the problems of this difficult political and economic relationship and the genuine grievances of East Pakistan is not facilitated by statements which tend to reify the central government as a living entity totally alien to East Pakistan and East Pakistanis.

The intent of these remarks is not to denigrate or undervalue Professor Sayeed's thorough and detailed analysis of the institutions and dynamics of Pakistani politics—local, provincial, and national—and economic development and foreign policies in this excellent book. It is rather to suggest that it is all too easy for the sympathetic observer to accept significant elements of the political mythology of the system under study. The conflicts discussed above are interpreted by the present opposition in a polarized good-and-evil fashion which both excuses past failings and justifies present and future demands. The same issues are recognized but are interpreted differently—with other stereotypes—by the party in power. The outside observer—and in particular the scholar—must recognize "interested" interpretations for what they are, and should strive to discourage that search for identifiable villains and simple solutions—"panacea" is the term used in Pakistan—so dear to the Pakistani politician's heart.

Richard S. Wheeler

Honolulu


There are two ways of reading this swiftly paced, well-informed political report by a former Nieman Fellow at Harvard and presently Time-Life Tokyo Bureau Chief. It may be read in terms of its subtitle, that is, as a near contemporary account of the interaction between Buddhism and politics in those Asian states where Buddhism is a or the major way of life. In this connection the author confines his chapter treatments to Burma, Cambodia, Ceylon, Communist China, Japan, Thailand, and (in greatest measure) South Viet Nam.

Secondly, the book is a clear, though minor-key, call for "the West" to remedy its "woeful ignorance" about Buddhism. As part of the West, the author holds—and cites some evidence—that "American policy in Asia has, out of ignorance, failed to recognize the political power of Buddhism." For example, he notes that "when the Buddhist storm broke in Saigon in 1963, the American Embassy had only a sketchy CIA paper on Buddhism in its files." He might have added that only then did we send to the Embassy in Viet Nam the first political officer, in part trained in and assigned to Buddhism. At another place he reports that one of our career ambassadors assigned to Viet Nam "had never set foot inside a pagoda."

By the main title of the book, Mr. Schechter wishes to convey the idea that Buddhism in Asia is not only "basic belief and bedrock identity," it also "influences power, sex, psychology and economics . . . [It] is not only religion and philosophy; it is also nationalism and ideology." These elements give Buddhism its "new face" often lacking, he holds, "the traditional gentle smile of compassion and