

and undemocratic way in which the reforms were implemented left little opportunity for citizen input or careful planning.

The final chapter draws some conclusions by synthesizing the findings of these case studies which lend support to the argument that decentralization can, under the right conditions, contribute to better democratic governance. However, these studies also underline that actual decentralization processes have often produced mixed results for democratic governance as well as for equity. Such variance in outcomes of decentralization can be attributed to several factors. A significant gap remains between the rhetoric of decentralization and the actual policies implemented. The kinds of institutional arrangements employed often limit the capacity and autonomy of subnational governments to implement their functions. The uneven texture of state-society relations conditions the effects of decentralization on democratic governance within countries. Finally, the book indicates several challenges for policy-makers that should be resolved for improving democratic governance: The need to respond to the varied and uneven nature of subnational democratic regimes, to improve the design of institutional arrangements for decentralization, and to find inclusive strategies to debate and decide on future decentralization reforms.

The book provides a succinct overview of various post-colonial decentralization movements in different parts of the world. Though it is not about South Asian experiences in this field, this book will be of much interest to South Asian policy-makers and academics in the area of public administration. The book also contains a useful bibliography and indexes.

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Tahir Jahangir, *A Travel Companion to the Northern Areas of Pakistan* (Karachi, Oxford University Press, 2004), viii + 140 pp., maps, colour ill., index.

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An ex-Aitchisonian's wanderlust has found fruitful expression in this pleasant travelogue, which complements Ahmad Hasan Dani's booklet, *Guide to the Karakorum Highway* that was expanded into *Human Records on Karakorum Highway* (1983). Dani then just as ambitiously prepared a one-volume *History of Northern Areas of Pakistan upto 2000 AD* (rev. edn 2001), a monograph of mixed value. He focused therein on Pakistan's Central Asian legacy that was diligently discovered under his and the late Karl Jettmar's supervision of the Pak-German archaeological expeditions (1979–88). The present title can be added to three catering for those with hardier appetites in the *Lonely Planet* series: *Karakoram Highway* (3rd edn, 1998); *Trekking in the Karakoram and Hindukush* (2nd edn, 2002); and a comprehensive *Pakistan and the Karakoram Highway* (6th edn, 2004).

The intrepid Mr Jahangir, however, stretches his sojourns into the Parachinar valley of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), thus extending the Northern Areas' limits, which, geographically, include only Baltistan and the Gilgit

Agency but culturally – and incorrectly – were considered an extension of Hari Singh's Kashmiri realm. Politically, it is viewed askance as not a province of Pakistan.

Basic literature here and elsewhere about the Karakorum (KKH) or Pak-China Friendship Highway is often conflicting or overlooked. Constructed between 1966 and 1978 by the Frontier Works Organization and the People's Liberation Army, the KKH is the world's highest, metalled, international crossing. It was opened for official travel and trade in August 1982 and to tourists in May 1986. While the 16,000 ft sign of the Khunjerab Pass is exaggerated, the toponym lives up to its description in Wakhi as 'red [or bloody] valley', unlike that in Balti for 'place of roses', Siachen – a Dantesque hell whose glacial ridges ranging anywhere from 18,000 to 23,000 ft constitute the world's highest combat zone. More plausible estimates of the 'Khunjerab Top', as known in local parlance, are between 15,397 and 15,528 ft. (Signposted at 18,380 ft as the highest motorable road, when it is approximately 17,585–17,713 ft, is the equally nonsensical Indian claim of the Khardung La Pass, Ladakh.) The KKH does not cover a 'total distance of 600 km' (p. 7) but some 681 km between Kashgar and Gilgit. It starts from Havelian, situated northeast of the Grand Trunk Road junction at Hasan Abdal, winding onto Mansehra, Chilas and Gilgit, where trekkers and cyclists converge from Chitral and the Shandur Pass. Gilgit is the base point for the alpine ascent into the Hunza valley up to the frontier post of Sust. Pakistani and Chinese buses ply between here and Pirali, the Chinese checkpoint, via the thrilling Khunjerab Pass, onto Tashkurgan and Kashgar, the 'wild west' of Chinese Turkestan. Jahangir's itinerary though does not include the neighbouring Khunjerab National Park. Established in 1974 and located between the Khunjerab *nala* and Ghujerab valley, it is Pakistan's third largest reserve and only home to blue Marco Polo sheep besides Siberian ibexes and snow leopards, the last concentrated here unlike anywhere in the Himalayan ecosystem.

This sensible work raises the reader's sense of immediacy and sensitivity absent in manuals. For example, on page 3, anti-histamines, apart from 'the usual medicines' mandatory for sub-continental visitors, are advised because 'the lower valleys have plenty of dust, and the upper ones are full of wild flowers'. And on page 130: 'There is a tribe called 'Mallikhels' who are thieves by profession, at least in Parachinar. A Mallikhel boy is not allowed to marry until he has stolen something of value.' While the FATA obviously remains off-bounds to tourists, the Northern Areas or Western Himalayas, however, still awaits its Wilfred Thesiger.

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J.G. Suthren Hirst, *Śaṅkara's Advaita Vedānta: A Way of Teaching* (London: RoutledgeCurzon 2005), 248 pp.  
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Śaṅkara is one of the most well-known thinkers from India, with his particular presentation of Advaita Vedānta one of the most significant influences on modern