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Remembrance for Professor Paul Wallace (1931-2020)

Jugdep S. Chima

Department of Political Science, Hiram College (Ohio).

The field of Sikh and Punjab studies lost a senior member in political scientist Paul Wallace, who passed away peacefully in his sleep on February 22 at his home in Columbia, Missouri. Professor Wallace had a distinguished career spanning over five decades as an internationally-renowned expert on Indian politics, particularly Sikh and Punjab politics, at the University of Missouri starting in 1964 until his formal retirement as professor emeritus in 2005. In the field of Sikh and Punjab studies, he was fondly known as one of the “Missouri twins”---the other being the late historian Professor N. G. “Jerry” Barrier who also taught at Missouri during the same period of time. Professor Wallace’s career included several dozen research/professional trips to India including Punjab, the last one only a few weeks before his passing.

Paul Wallace was born in Los Angeles, California in 1931. He graduated from the University of California—Berkeley in 1953 with an undergraduate degree in political science, and subsequently served in the US Army during the Korean War. He returned to Berkeley to complete a M.A. in 1957, and a Ph.D. in political science in 1966. Paul Wallace’s dissertation was one of the first major academic studies on Punjab politics, particularly focusing on how internal factionalism within the state’s two major political parties (the Akali Dal and Congress) helped integrate a variety of societal interest groups into the emerging democratic political process in India. It emphasized the essential role “factions” play within political parties in aggregating interests and deepening democratic vibrancy in postcolonial settings.

During his long career, Professor Wallace wrote or edited ten books on various aspects of Indian politics and elections including Punjab, and dozens of academic articles and book chapters. Some of his most noted academic works included the edited book *Region and Nation in India*¹ which examined the evolving structures of identity and nation/state-building, and *Political Dynamics and Crisis in Punjab*² which remains one of the most comprehensive and in-depth collections on various aspects of Punjab politics during the years of militancy.

¹ *Region & Nation in India* (New Delhi: Oxford and IBH, 1985).

² *Political Dynamics and Crisis in Punjab* (Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University Press, 1988).

The political turmoil in Punjab during the 1980s and 1990s turned Professor Wallace's research interests even further toward Sikh politics. As Professor Wallace would often say in personal conversation, "I did not want to study political violence, but the topic came to me whether I wanted it or not." The constructive nature of political factionalism he had studied in the early part of his academic career, quickly turned "destructive" in terms of political instability and the tragic loss of human life with Operation Bluestar, the November 1984 anti-Sikh pogroms, and decade of both anti-state insurgency and state-sanctioned counterinsurgency in Punjab. The result of these emerging political dynamics was a series of academic articles on the topic in various journals and edited volumes including the following: "The Sikhs as a 'Minority' in a Sikh Majority State in India,"³ "Religious and Secular Politics in Punjab: The Sikh Dilemma in Competing Political Systems,"⁴ "Sikh Minority Attitudes in India's Federal System,"⁵ "The Dilemma of Sikh Revivalism: Identity vs. Political Power,"⁶ and "Political Violence and Terrorism in India."⁷ His most important academic contribution during this period was the chapter "Religious and Ethnic Mobilization, and Dominance Patterns in Punjab"⁸ which offered a detailed and comprehensive analysis of patterns of dominance and mobilization in Punjab from the colonial period to the 1980s including on the basis of caste, class, region, and ethnicity/religion. Professor Wallace also wrote a number of election studies on Punjab during this period including on the pivotal 1989 parliamentary elections and the (cancelled) 1991 parliamentary elections in Punjab, which included personal field interviews with activists and leaders of various political parties in the state.

After the end of armed insurgency in Punjab, Professor Wallace's academic interests turned toward national election studies in India. This interest resulted in series of six edited election studies books published by SAGE Publications covering every parliamentary election from 1998 to the present. The most recent titled *India's 2019 Elections: The Hindutva Wave and Indian Nationalism* was

³ *Asian Survey*, vol. XXVII no. 3 (March 1986), pp. 363-377.

⁴ *Political Dynamics and Crisis in Punjab* (Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University Press, 1988), pp. 1-44.

⁵ Joseph T. O'Connell, Milton Israel, Willard Oxtoby (eds.), *Sikh History and Religion in the Twentieth Century* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1988), pp. 256-273.

⁶ James Bjorkman (ed.) *Fundamentalism, Revivalists, and Violence in South Asia* (New Jersey: Riverdale Press, 1988), pp. 57-75.

⁷ Martha Crenshaw (ed.) *Terrorism in Context* (College Station, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), pp. 352-409.

⁸ Francine Frankel and M.S.A. Rao (eds.), *Dominance and State Power in India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 416-481.

published just a few weeks before Professor Wallace's passing. In a personal communication to me shortly after the 2019 national parliamentary elections, he expressed his deep concern about the direction which Indian politics and nationalism was taking in the contemporary period, in contrast to the 1950s when he first began to study India.

Yet, Punjab and the Sikhs were never far away from Professor Wallace's heart. Two of Professor Wallace's last works were written as academic reflections and analysis of the aftermath of the so-called "Punjab crisis." In "Sikh Militancy and Non-Violence,"⁹ Prof. Wallace examined the Sikh tradition of "non-violent militancy" -- that is, the willing to sacrifice oneself for a political or social cause -- which he argued had been more effective in the postcolonial period than armed militancy. Professor Wallace's last work on Punjab was "Punjab, Terrorism, and Closure: It Ain't Over 'Till It's Over,"¹⁰ in which he argued that Punjab, the Sikhs, and India could never reach effective "closure" from the turbulent 1980s unless a truth and reconciliation commission was appointed to objectively examine the reasons behind the "Punjab crisis" and identify both non-state and state actors who engaged in violence during the period. This work demonstrated Professor Wallace deep commitment to humanity.

In addition to teaching and research, Professor Wallace also served as an expert consultant for numerous non-government organizations and governmental agencies including the US State Department. One of Professor Wallace's particularly notable personal contributions was his regular expert testimony in Sikh political asylum cases in the US, including on the west coast. He never charged the usually lucrative professional fees for his expert testimony on behalf of asylum seekers, but instead asked only to be reimbursed for travel and living expenses, explaining that this was a part of his "educational" and "humanitarian" duties as an academic.

Professor Wallace was, in fact, a product of Berkeley in the 1960s---that is, committed to social justice, peace, and human rights. Throughout his life, both he and his wife Robin (who was also a political scientist at the University of Missouri and herself passed away in September) remained deeply committed to humanitarian causes and values. Their home in Columbia, Missouri was appropriately named "Peace Haven," and regularly hosted visiting students and scholars from throughout the world for decades. His hospitality and "Punjabi hugs" always demonstrated a

⁹ Pashaura Singh (ed.), *Sikhism in Global Context* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 122-144.

¹⁰ *Journal of Punjab Studies*, vol. 22 no. 1 (2015), pp. 5-25.

sense of warm and caring for his guests and graduate students, who adored him as both a mentor and father figure. The pizza parties he hosted for his graduate teaching assistants at Shakespeare Pizza or appetizer parties at the Heidelberg Pub after finishing the semester were always festive and fun-filled occasions.

Paul Wallace passed away peacefully in his sleep on February 22, having returned from a book release trip to India only two weeks earlier, and having played his beloved game of tennis with friends earlier that same day. One of his secrets to a long and healthy life was his often-quoted phrase, "Never worry about anything except only once." With his passing, the field of Sikh and Punjab studies lost a long-time contributor, and the world lost one of the most cheerful and caring people to have walked this Earth. The field of Sikh and Punjab studies, his colleagues and former students, and the world in general are much better because of him. He may have "passed on" but lives within all of those, including myself, who had the blessing to have known him as a mentor, colleague, and friend. He will be missed but certainly never forgotten by all those who knew him.