

Editor, *Journal of Asian Studies*:

I want to thank you and Professor Frank Darling for the challenging review of my book *Politics in Thailand* which appeared in the May, 1963, number of the Journal. I have found it sufficiently challenging, in fact, to respond, particularly to the doubts cast upon the accuracy of my scholarship.

Professor Darling cites as one of a presumed number of "errors of historical fact" the following: "Pridi became Regent just before, not just after the Japanese invasion in December, 1941." The fact is that Pridi became a member of the Council of Regents by approval of the National Assembly on December 16, 1941. Among other possible sources, I cite Sawai Suthipithak, *Dr. Pridi and the Revolution*, pp. 561-562. The Japanese invaded Thailand on December 8, 1941. The review also says that "Phibun's irredentist efforts in 1940 did not regain title to former Thai territory in French Indochina." In the relevant passage, I merely make the point that Phibun's prestige as a national leader was enhanced by his claim to have regained lost territory. This interpretation may be disputable but it does not depend upon the fact of Japan's intervention in the affair. Moreover, Professor Darling might ponder the distinction between a necessary and a sufficient cause when thinking of Phibun's role in those events.

Some objection arises to my use of the terms splendour and splendid to describe the traditional monarchy. It seems to me that anyone who has seen the Royal palaces and temples is purblind if he balks at a term which precisely denotes colorful or gorgeous. On the other points the book speaks for itself.

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Comment on Professor Wilson's Letter

It seems unimportant to me to quibble over the exact date of Pridi's assumption of the position as Regent as it had little if any political significance in the long run. Yet Professor Wil-

son's citing his source and the date of December 16, 1941 as the day Pridi was formally confirmed by the Thai National Assembly confirms my correction that Pridi became Regent just before not after the Japanese invasion. The confirmation by the National Assembly was a mere formality and Pridi had been in the position as Regent for several weeks before this took place. My major source on this is a personal interview with Dr. Kenneth Landon who served as the chief adviser on Thailand to the United States government throughout World War II. Dr. Landon was also in contact with the Free Thai underground movement in Thailand led by Pridi throughout most of the war.

A brief comment on the terms "splendor" and "splendid" which Wilson used to describe the Thai absolute monarchy. His book dealt with politics, not art and architecture. Certainly the palaces and temples built in Thailand by the absolute monarchy are indeed "splendid." Yet the absolute political system and the suppression of human freedom in my opinion was not "splendid."

FRANK C. DARLING

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Editor, *Journal of Asian Studies*:

In his discussion of Max Weber's *Religion of India* (August, 1963 issue, pp. 506-507), your reviewer has attempted a critique of Weber's sociological method that, to say the least, indicates a serious lack of understanding. The stumbling block for him is Weber's concept of charisma. (Charisma, according to Weber, is "the gift of grace"; it is the quality by virtue of which the holy man, the visionary, the ecstatic, "is set apart from ordinary men"—*Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, p. 358.) Your reviewer is distressed because "Weber cannot show how charisma emerges . . ."; yet the proper work of *verstehende* sociology in this case is not to explain the origins of charisma, but to understand what it means

to those who perceive and value it. (Usually, says Weber, it is "regarded as of divine origin" —*TSEO*, p. 359.)

Weber does say at one point that it seems to be an empirical fact "that men are differently qualified in a religious way" (*Essays in Sociology*, p. 287), and that not everyone can become a holy man. This suggests that Weber, although he did not pursue the matter further, was thinking in terms of a psychological interpretation. And yet your reviewer says that Weber warns us: "It must be observed that psycho-physical difference is not the primary way to understanding" (*Religion of India*, p. 339). The difficulty is that Weber in this sentence is not talking about understanding charisma at all! This sentence occurs in the midst of a rather trivial discussion of how Westerners are to interpret "the reserved dignified countenance" of the Asian scholar! (Weber suggests it may have something to do with education, among other things.)

Elsewhere your reviewer states that "one gets his charisma by virtue of his position, and he holds the position by virtue of his charisma." Here he is confusing what Weber calls routinized (or objectified, or institutionalized) charisma, which rests on one's position in society and not on one's personal qualities, with what he calls genuine or pure charisma. Contrast, for example, the figure of Gandhi, who

possessed pure charisma, with the familiar figure of the Indian guru, who is respected by the populace simply because he has inherited a position of respect.

"To explain the role of individuals or groups," your reviewer continues, "in terms of some inexplicable quality supposed to inhere in them, without explaining that this quality can appear only where its inexplicable status as a quality already exists, can be frustrating to the reader . . ." But does the charismatic individual appear only where a status position has already been prepared for him? Consider Weber's remarks on the Biblical prophets (*Ancient Judaism*, p. 273): "The prophet's vehement attack was countered by an equally vehement reaction of the public. In the open street the opponents of the prophets engaged them, insulted them, and struck them in the face. . . . And when Jeremiah, who was repeatedly taken into custody and threatened with death, escaped this fate, it was due to the fear of his magical power." I myself am acquainted with a Protestant minister who would probably be regarded as something of a holy man in India. For some time he could not find a position here in New England, where his denomination, it seems, had no openings for holy men.

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