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In praise of death : history and poetry in medieval Marwar (South Asia)

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Citation

Kamphorst, J. (2008, June 18). *In praise of death : history and poetry in medieval Marwar (South Asia)*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/12986>

Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)

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Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Janet Kamphorst · *In Praise of Death*

This study of heroic and epic “war poetry” transmitted by the poets of pastoral-nomadic communities in medieval Marwar (Rajasthan) evokes the lived past of the Rajput, Bhil and Charan of the Marwari desert with a detailed analysis of poetic sources concerning Pabuji, a fourteenth-century warrior and present-day Hindu god. The author, who undertook three years of archival and anthropological research in western Rajasthan, offers an interpretation of Pabuji’s world that allows us to look afresh at the narrative process of deification and the related construction of socio-political and religious identities in South Asia.

Employing historical, literary and socio-linguistic approaches to shed light on the form and content of medieval poetry dedicated to Pabuji, this multi-disciplinary study sets forth the relation between Rajasthan’s warlike history, the politico-military purpose of its poetry and the religiously inspired ideal of self sacrifice in battle.

Also part of this study is an introduction to the history and prosody of medieval Dimgal, a specialized Rajasthani poetic idiom, as well as a full academic transliteration of the selected medieval and contemporary poems.

Janet Kamphorst is a literary historian specialized in the study of South Asia.

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HISTORY AND POETRY IN MEDIEVAL
MARWAR (SOUTH ASIA)



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