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*In Praise of Death: History and Poetry in Medieval Marwar
(South Asia)*

Propositions

[1] Travel is an apt metaphor for the change in content and form which stories may go through but this metaphor does not inevitably imply a straightforward developmental “route” in a narrative sense or even an actual movement covering geographical distances.

[2] The pastoral-nomadic aspects of the history of mobile Rajput, Charan and Bhil communities allow us to look afresh at the narrative development and historical circumstances of Pabuji’s divinization.

[3] Fictive kinship ties enabled various medieval communities in Marwar to define their socio-political, religious and economic dependence upon each other and at the same time served to give voice to relations between humans, deified beings and gods.

[4] The complementary symbolism of an active male principle versus a passive female principle in poetry dedicated to Pabuji may occur side-by-side with Shaktik concepts of female power and independence as personified by deified Charan women.

[5] Biological traits alone do not explain the preponderance of men in warfare; cultural constructs of gender can.

[6] Without knowing a community's language, one cannot begin to understand their past.

[7] Dictionary definitions of words cannot convey a person’s “feel” of and for words, especially not the intuitive appeal of words which may have existed among people of other cultures, expressed through different languages, dialects and sociolects in different periods of time.

[8] The contemporary focus on the differences between western and eastern cultures encumbers a critical understanding of western and eastern cultures.

[9] Both historians and poets try to imagine what might have been by ascribing purpose, direction and meaning to the past.