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Book review of 'Golu Devata, The God of Justice of Kumaun Himalayas' by C.M. Agrawal

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monastic centers, and linked to large *stupa* complexes outside the town's boundaries. Newar royalty elsewhere had to balance their alliances between these orders. Given the presence of twenty-three Buddhist monastic temples in Bhaktapur, I suspect that Buddhism is not quite as peripheral to the urban system as *Mesocosm* suggests.

A second topic this reviewer ponders is the manner in which history has overtaken the ethnographic portrait. The author's construction of Bhaktapur's Hindu mesocosm argues that it does not create a class of "socially destabilizing philosophers" (p. 32). Soon after his fieldwork ended in 1976, however, there was a virtual town strike against a German project doing restoration and development work. More shattering were subsequent political movements: throughout the 1980's Bhaktapur was a stronghold of Marxist parties quite militantly opposed to the country's Panchayat system; in 1990, mass demonstrations marked by bloodshed led to the overthrow of that system. Professor Levy is quite aware of signs portending the ending of the archaic urban system: but how to explain Marxist success vis-a-vis the *Mesocosm* model?

Even classical Hindu civilizations saw the regular appearance of materialists, skeptics, and agnostics: has *Mesocosm* underplayed the chaos of the bazaar and overestimated the totalizing force of the religious culture?

A final comment must note that this volume is only the first of two. The sequel will be a welcome and necessary encore to a remarkable scholarly endeavor: to demonstrate the validity of the over-arching analytical enterprise in *Mesocosm* requires corroborating anthropological data from individual studies selected across the urban community. How does the construction of urban Mesocosm in the present volume, so brilliantly argued "from above," i.e. through Brahmans, literary myths and law codes from Sanskrit texts, really work "on the ground" and in existential terms? Professor Levy has anticipated such reservations with selected quotes from case-study data and promises to demonstrate the foundations of Bhaktapur's Mesocosm with further in-depth discussions of the household, the status of women, life-cycle rites, and psychoanalytically informed individual biographies.

Traveling with Robert Levy and Kedar Raj Rajopadhyaya into the mid-montane Himalayas requires a long and arduous approach march, but the trek as well as the extraordinary destination hold the promise of unique and rewarding vistas.

Todd T. Lewis

College of the Holy Cross

**C. M. Agrawal, *Golu Devata, The God of Justice of Kumaun Himalayas.*
Almora, U.P., India: Shree Almora Book Depot, 1992. 147 pp. incl.
appendices, index, photos.**

In the village of Chitai, outside Almora, U.P., Golu Devata is regularly worshipped as a god of divine justice. There, the temple of Golu Devata is one of the greatest religious shrines in Kumaun, and worship of Golu extends throughout the region. Based on his original research, C. M. Agrawal's new book provides a fascinating account of this worship at Chitai. At the core of Golu worship is the ideology and practice of *manauti*, or the individual pledge to make an offering to the god when a request to him has been fulfilled. People come to the temple of Golu Devata with a wide variety of requests (for a son, to pass an exam or receive a promotion, etc.) but the temple to Golu is in particular seen as a "court" where pleas for justice are made. Thus most requests are for justice, for divine intervention in disputes or revenge against those who have wronged a petitioner. Worshippers write out their requests and pledges on pieces of paper, sometimes money-stamped, which are then hung from wire inside the temple. When requests are satisfied, votive bells are a common offering.

Along with a thorough discussion of Golu worship, its varied meanings in the past and at present, C. M. Agrawal provides new and illuminating data from his own survey of worship and worshippers. This comes in two parts. First is a study of the written appeals placed inside the temple. Second,

Agrawal developed a "Golu Devata Manauti Belief Questionnaire" and administered this to a sample of 600 individuals. The sample population included men and women of different ages, from both rural and urban areas, and spanned a variety of educational and occupational levels. The results of the survey provide a very detailed view of Golu worship. Along with data on each petitioner we see what types of requests were made to Golu, how they were phrased, whether or not they were fulfilled, and petitioners' comments on the strength of their faith in Golu. All of this information is presented in clear tables with a discussion of the results.

Golu Devata is organized to place these data into the context of the local region and the god, Golu. The opening chapters provide a description of the Kumaun Himalayas, Almora and Chitai, followed by discussion of the religious history of Golu Devata. Another chapter describes the temple rituals and ways of worship. Next is a chapter which discusses the concept of *manauti* and its meaning to worshippers. The next two chapters present and discuss Agrawals' own data from his study of written appeals and from his questionnaire. By this point in the book, the nature and meaning of Golu worship is fully illuminated, and a link has been made between the past and the present. Following a conclusion, the book provides appendices, which include the questionnaire and examples of written appeals. The book is beautifully illustrated with photos of the temple and activities of worship.

C.M. Agrawal's *Golu Devata* is a scholarly account of an important aspect of Himalayan religious life. The author shows how the worship of Golu emerges through the concern for divine justice and the concept of a religious pledge. This book is delightful to read and a welcome contribution to our understanding of Himalayan religion and society.

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