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Review of *Sucāruvādadeśika: A Festschrift Honoring
Professor Theodore Riccardi* edited by Todd Lewis
and Bruce McCoy Owens.

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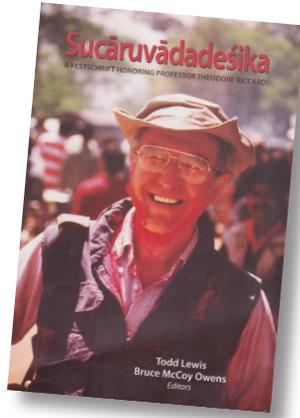
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Sucāruvādadeśika: A Festschrift Honoring Professor Theodore Riccardi.

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Reviewed by Bal Gopal Shrestha

This festschrift is published in honour of Theodore Riccardi (b. 1937), who taught at Columbia University (USA) from 1968 until his retirement in 2000. Riccardi spent a large part of his life in Nepal, carrying out research on Nepalese philology, archaeology, history, art, and culture. A brilliant scholar, he encouraged and inspired a large number of students to carry out research in these fields as well as in the fields of South Asian literature, music, ritual, and religion, with a focus on Nepal and Himalaya. Paying respect to and venerating teachers is a long-established tradition in Nepal and India. The following mantra not only addresses the Hindu Trinity, it also acknowledges lessons learned through life experiences and honors one's tutors.

Guru Brahma, Guru Visnu, Guru devo Mahesvara

Guru saksat, param Brahma, tasmai sri guruvay namah.

These words may be translated and interpreted thus: Our creation is that guru (*Brahma*, the creator); the duration of our lives is that guru (*Visnu*, the force of preservation); our trials, tribulations, illnesses, calamities and the death of the body is that guru (*devo Mahesvara*: the force of destruction or transformation). There is a guru nearby (*Guru saksat*) and a guru that is beyond the beyond (*param Brahma*). I make my offering (*tasmai*) to the beautiful (*sri*) remover of my darkness, my ignorance; (*Guru*) it is to you I bow and lay down my life (*namah*).

Riccardi's students Todd Lewis and Bruce McCoy Owens, both to be credited for their enduring contributions to Nepalese religious and cultural studies, have edited the present festschrift. *Sucāruvādadeśika* can be translated from Sanskrit into English as "the beloved/beautiful teacher/guide whose speech is charming/delightful." It is therefore a well-suited title because the contributions presented here are mainly by Riccardi's former students whom he inspired so greatly. Other contributors include peers as well as colleagues who have either collaborated closely with him or benefitted from his scholarly achievements.

In total, *Sucāruvādadeśika* consists of 30 articles, which cover a wide range of subjects. They are subdivided into five sections: "Homages and Love Songs" (5 articles), "Revealing Histories and Recovering Voices" (7 articles), "Identity, Argument, and Resistance" (7 articles), "Translation" (4 articles), and "Beyond Asia" (7 articles). As Todd Lewis states in his introduction, "The contributors to this volume reflect the astounding breath of [Riccardi's] academic expertise, moral engagement, and artistic inspiration our dear maestro

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professor commanded in students, peers and colleagues. The festschrift is our attempt to express the respect, love and thanks for his role in our own journeys” (p. xii).

J. Gabriel Campbell’s contribution entitled “Love Does Not Look for Caste” describes how teenagers in Jumla, a remote district located in the far western part of Nepal, not only create but also present love songs during singing parties in order to entice their future partners. Campbell extracted this article from an unpublished section of his thesis he had submitted as a student of Theodore Riccardi at the Columbia University in 1978. Campbell has the following words of praise for Riccardi: “He possesses the alacrity of intellect, the command of modern and classical languages, the knowledge of Western and Asian histories and their intersections, and a genuine respect for other traditions and peoples that is rare indeed. For Ted differences in caste, ethnicity, religion, or any other basis for discrimination are not relevant to personal and professional relationships—any more than they are to Jumli Nepalese in love or in consultations with their gods” (p. 4).

The most important feature of *Sucāruvādadeśika* comprises the presentation of the religious and cultural significance of various Nepalese ethnic groups, such as the Khas (Campbell, Singha B. Basnyat), the Newars (S. Lienhard, Nirmal Man Tuladhar, Bruce Owen, Gérard

Toffin, Gautam Vajra), Mustangi-Gurung (Charles Ramble), and Thakali (William E. Fisher). Moreover, it contains a number of contributions regarding certain aspects of Indian and Tibetan religious traditions, including “India’s Nietzsche: The Supermen in the East” by Jason Freitag, “The Wheels of Karma Turn Slowly: Indian Buddhist Deployments of the Medical in Gender Construction” by Amy Langenburg, “The Mina Becomes a Demon: Crafting Tribal Identity in Contemporary India” by Maxine Weisgrau, “From Hyderabad to Florence: Documenting Transmission of Science” by George Saliba, and “Sex, Death, and “Reform” in Eleventh-Century Tibetan Buddhist Esotericism” by Christian Wedemeyer.

Notably, several articles highlight the importance of the cultural heritage of the Kathmandu Valley, including the literary tradition persisting in the language referred to as Nepalbhasa (Newar/i). For example, two contributions portray Chittadhar Hridaya’s illustrative life (1906-1982). This great poet of Nepal was imprisoned by the Rana regime (1846-1951) for writing in his mother tongue, Nepalbhasa, the language he loved and promoted his entire life. In “Memories of Chittadhar Hridaya,” Siegfried Lienhard recalls his friendship with Chittadhar Hridaya, who assisted him in many ways during his research into and translating of Nepalbhasa songs (S. Lienhard. 1974. *Nevārigitīmañjari: Religious and Secular Poetry of the Nevars of the Kathmandu Valley*. Stockholm:

Almqvist & Wiksell International). In “An Unpublished Interview with Chittadhar Hridaya in 1975,” Nirmal Man Tuladhar not only informs us of Chittadhar Hridaya’s struggle for not being allowed to write in his mother tongue but also unravels the history of Nepalbhasa, including how Rana rulers began to suppress the Newar language by disconnecting it from any official use (pp. 32-33). Chittadhar recalls how, when in prison, he secretly finished writing the epic poem, *Sugata Saurava*, which is now considered to be one of the most important works of Nepalese literature created in the course of the twentieth century. It may be added here that Lewis and Subarna Man Tuladhar have translated this text into English (2010. *Sugata Saurabha: An Epic Poem from Nepal on the Life of the Buddha* by Chittadhar Hridaya. New York: Oxford University Press).

Bruce Owen’s article “Accounting for Ritual in the Kathmandu Valley” deals with his account (*kham/bakham*) of Bungadyo or Karunamaya, also referred to as Matsyendranath. He examines five texts—the *Svayambhu Purana*, *Matsyendrapadayasatyakam*, *Bungadyo Nepāle Hagu Khaṃ*, Padmagiri’s *Vamsavali*, and Wright’s *Chronicle*—in order to substantiate the accounts of the origins of Nepal’s largest festival, Bungaya. In the article “Ritual as Theatre: the Theatrical Dimension of the Indra Jātrā Festival (Nepal),” Gérard Toffin discusses how the Newar people have intermingled theatre with rituals. For example, the living goddess

Kumari and her chariot procession through the ancient town of Kathmandu (*Yem*), and the raising of the *yasim* pole are the most important elements of Yamya, more widely known as Indra Jatra. Theatrical performances featuring the *Devi pyakham* (dance), *Mahakali pyakham*, *Savabhaku pyakham*, *das avatar* (ten avatars), *Pulukisi*, *Majipa Lakhe* as well as displaying the *Hathadyo* (liquor spouting gods), *Akas Bhairav*, and *Sveta Bhairav* are also essential components of this festival.

The Kathmandu Valley, historically Nepal proper, is renowned for its abundance of religious monuments, art forms, artifacts, and an uncountable number of images portraying gods and goddesses. Little wonder, the UNESCO has declared no less than seven world heritage sites within this small valley. However, local authorities are not seriously concerned with preserving or protecting these important sites where numerous statues of deities which amplify the artistic beauty of Nepal are scattered unattended. Though venerated by the local population, these statues have thus become the target of rapacious individuals who have taken them out of the country. Kanak Mani Dixit's contribution "The God is Gone" uncovers this deplorable situation by providing certain accounts drawn from Riccardi's fictional oeuvre, which describe how diplomats, tourists, art smugglers, and tradesmen collaborated to remove thousands of religious items from Nepal and turn them into showpieces in museums and private homes in the US or Europe.

Contributions presented in the first four sections mainly concentrate on South Asia and deal with history, culture, and rituals, and also include translated texts. Part Five moves

"Beyond Asia." Here Lewis, in his article entitled "Globalization, World Citizenship, and Religions Studies Liberal Arts Education in the 21st Century," exposes the xenophobic ethnocentricity encountered in the cultures of dominant nations, i.e., the West. While pleading to bring about change in western education systems in order to encourage students to broaden their attitude towards "other" cultures, Lewis asks numerous questions, including, for instance, "Do non-Western conceptions of the mind enter into our reckoning of psychology?" and "How can students connect the Western scientific fields with non-Western people?" (p. 335).

Also included in Part Five is Mark Turin's discussion of the valuable work carried out by the Digital Himalaya Project, which comprises the diligent and zealous digitization of, for instance, manuscripts, papers, dissertations, photographs, film, and video and sound recordings accumulated by anthropologists and researchers active in the Himalayan region. Academics researching Nepal and the Himalayas have indeed hugely benefitted from this impressive work facilitated by the University of Cambridge (UK) and at Yale University (USA).

Of interest, too, are the descriptions of the contributors, which clarify how Riccardi not only motivated and encouraged them each to work in their field of studies but also how he furthered their careers. Regrettably, he did not permit the editors to add biographical details to the text. The exclusion of a list of Riccardi's publications is disappointing, too. Nevertheless, *Sucāruvādadeśika* will be an asset to all those interested in Nepal and Himalayan studies for many years to come.

Bal Gopal Shrestha is an anthropologist and obtained his PhD from Leiden University, the Netherlands. He is the author of The Sacred Town of Sankhu: The Anthropology of Newar Rituals, Religion and Society in Nepal (Cambridge Scholar Publishing, 2012) and The Newars of Sikkim: Reinventing Language, Culture and Identity in the Diaspora (Vajra Books, 2015). He is currently an affiliated fellow at the University of Oxford.