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Arjun Appadurai

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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge

London New York New Rochelle

Melbourne Sydney

Cambridge University Press
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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo

Cambridge University Press
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521231220

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First published 1981
This digitally printed version 2008

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data

Appadurai, Arjun, 1949–
Worship and conflict under colonial rule.
(Cambridge South Asian studies; 27)

Bibliography: p.

1. India – Religion – Case studies. 2. Religion and
state – India – Case studies. 3. India – Politics and
government – 1765–1947 – Case studies. I. Title.
II. Series.

BL2003.A66 294.5'09548 80–24508

ISBN 978-0-521-23122-0 hardback
ISBN 978-0-521-05358-7 paperback

Cambridge University Press
 978-0-521-05358-7 - Worship and Conflict under Colonial Rule: A South
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PREFACE

This study is part of a larger ongoing effort to develop methods and models for the study of colonialism from a cultural point of view. As such, it draws upon the materials and techniques of social history but shares the methods and comparative concerns of anthropology. It follows, also, that the findings of this case study are relevant to the intrinsically cross-cultural problem of colonialism.

These larger aims, however, do not occupy the bulk of the pages that follow. Their content is culturally and historically specific and consists of an ethnohistorical analysis of conflict in a single South Indian temple over a two-hundred-year period. The arguments of the substantive chapters bear directly on the institutional formation of a set of South Asian ideas concerning power, ritual, and authority, especially in the colonial context. These arguments result from deliberately juxtaposing ethnographic fieldwork and archival research.

The results of this enterprise bear the marks, both for better and for worse, of a serious effort to achieve two goals, for which there are few clear precedents in the scholarship on South Asia: first, to provide a sustained analysis at the micro level of the cultural processes of an institution over a substantial period of time; second, to conduct an “archeology” of the ethnographic present, which entails a particular type of historical journey.

In the course of researching and writing this study I have incurred many debts to both individuals and institutions. At various stages I received financial support from: the Danforth Foundation, St. Louis, Missouri; the Committee on South Asian Studies of the University of Chicago; the Center for the Study of World Religions at Harvard University; and the American Institute for Indian Studies.

During my fieldwork, which was conducted in 1973–4, I was privileged to be affiliated with the Institute for Social and Economic Change in Bangalore and was permitted scholarly access to the Śrī Pārtasārati Svāmi Temple by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department of the State of Tamiḷnāṭu. Officials at the India Office Library in London, the Tamiḷnāṭu

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Preface

Archives in Madras city, and the High Court of Judicature at Madras were also good enough to give me access to their archival holdings.

Of the many individuals who helped me with my research in Madras, I can name only a few: Mr. M. Rajah, who was then second assistant registrar of the High Court of Judicature at Madras; Shri M. G. Anantha Bhattachariar, head priest of Cinnai Murai Miras at the temple; Mr. Arumugam, then superintendent of the temple, and Mr. and Mrs. T. K. Ramanujadoss of Triplicane.

My natal family in Bombay and many relatives in Madras were throughout a source of encouragement. My father, the late Mr. S. A. Ayer, and my mother, Mrs. Alamelu Ayer, continued to believe in me even when my scholarly pursuits seemed esoteric and aimless. My late paternal uncle, Lieutenant Colonel Annaswami, and his family in Madras, were throughout a home away from home. My late brother, Vatsal, was a model of scholarship and humility to me all his life, and it is to his memory that this book is dedicated. Vatsal and his wife, Tusi, helped me through difficult times in Madras.

In the shaping of my thought and the crafting of this book, I have benefited from the advice, encouragement, and criticism of many academic colleagues: Victor Turner, A. K. Ramanujan, Bernard S. Cohn, Ronald Inden, Nur Yalman, S. J. Tambiah, K. K. A. Venkatachari, and John Carman. I owe a special debt to Burton Stein, who, by his own scholarly example, patient criticism, and steady encouragement, has helped make this study much stronger than it would otherwise have been. Professor M. N. Srinivas, who supervised my original fieldwork, has been generous in his support and impressive by his example throughout. My colleagues in the Departments of Anthropology and South Asia Regional Studies at the University of Pennsylvania have helped me refine my thought in more ways than they are likely to suspect. I would also like to acknowledge the patient assistance of Peter Just, without whom I would not have been able to prepare the Index, and the South Asia Regional Studies Department at the University of Pennsylvania for financial aid toward the preparation of the Index.

My greatest intellectual and personal debt, however, is to my wife and colleague, Carol A. Breckenridge. Because she has been engaged in her own study of a South Indian temple, our own collaboration has been a very special one. Many of the ideas contained in this study are equally hers. Her generosity and self-sacrifice, in a period of frequent professional and personal strain, have made this study possible.

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NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

Technical words

In general, this study follows the system of transliteration of the *Madras University Tamil Lexicon*.¹ However, in two kinds of case the system followed here departs from the *Lexicon*.

In the case of words whose usage has become standardized in English, and particularly in South Indian English usage, the strict *Lexicon* form has been abandoned and the more conventional usage adopted; namely, *pūjā*, *bhakti*, *varna*, *Brahmin*, *Sūdra*, *Āgama*, *Vēda*, *dubāshi*, *mirās*, *dharmakarta*, *mahout*, *Prabandam*.

For words in Sanskritized Tamil whose *Lexicon* transliteration would render them virtually unrecognizable, this study follows the system appropriate to modern *maṇḍiravālam*, that is, the normal Tamil script with the five most common Grantha additions: *j*, *s*, *ṣ*, *h*, and *kṣ*. In this style, Sanskritic consonant clusters and the contrasts indicated by the foregoing Grantha additions (but not voicing and aspiration) are represented. Sanskritists should note that the words, although recognizable, are *not* Sanskrit and therefore do not follow *its* normal transliteration. The following is a sample of words transliterated according to this system, accompanied by their equivalents in the official *Lexicon* system.

Maṇḍiravālam system

arccakaṇ
brahmōtsavam
jīyar
karpakkriham
naṣattiram
prāṇa pratiṣṭai
prasātam
samskāram
utsavam

Lexicon system

aruccakaṇ
piramōrcavam
cīyar
karuppakkirukam
naṭcattiram
pirāṇa-p-piratiṣṭai
piracātam
camakkāram
urcavam

¹ *Madras University Tamil Lexicon*, 8 vols. (Madras, 1925–63). I am grateful to Professor David McAlpin, University of Pennsylvania, for his help in formalizing my system of transliteration. The inconsistencies that remain are my responsibility.

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*Note on transliteration***Names**

In transliterating the names of persons, castes, and places, the principle followed in this study is based on the *context*, both the context provided by the source on which the relevant portion of the text is based (namely, Vijayanagara inscriptions, British revenue records, and Anglo-Indian legal records) and the context of the usage of the period in question. Thus, the word for a given personal name or caste name might appear in different portions of the study variously, as *mutaliyār*, *moodeliar*, or *mudaliar*. In the case of place names, compromises have been arrived at to balance strict *Lexicon* transliteration and common scholarly usage, namely, Śrīrangam instead of Śrīraṅkam.