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978-0-521-05367-9 - Religion under Bureaucracy: Policy and Administration for
Hindu Temples in South India

Franklin A. Presler

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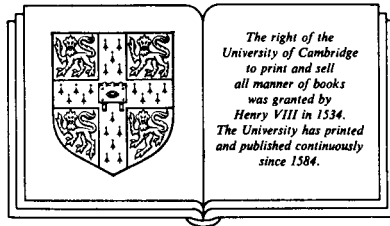
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RELIGION UNDER BUREAUCRACY

*Policy and administration
for Hindu temples in south India*

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*Department of Political Science
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To
Henry Hughes Presler
and
Marion Anders Presler

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PREFACE

This book is an analysis of the relations of state, religion and politics in the south Indian state of Tamil Nadu. It represents research and reflection at various times over the period of a decade, and a growing conviction that religion–state relations need to be studied from a comparative and historical point of view.

The central focus is the important position Hindu temples occupy in modern Tamil Nadu politics, and the state’s role in regulating and shaping them. Temples are significant in a multitude of ways in south Indian society and economy, and throughout the modern era have attracted the attention of governments and politicians.

From the perspective of religion–state relations, the study also explores aspects of change and development in twentieth-century Indian politics. The government’s official policies toward religion provide a fruitful context from which to view, for example, the relation of political parties to sources of patronage and conflict, the effect of centralized “rational” administration on local practice and privilege, the consequences of bureaucratization for democratic politics, and the legacy of traditional theories of legitimacy in the “secular” state.

The present volume is a revised and much shortened version of my doctoral dissertation of the same title. The initial fieldwork in Tamil Nadu was carried out in 1973–74 and was supported by the Foreign Area Fellowship Program of the Social Science Research Council. I was helped by many individuals, among whom I would especially like to mention: Chaturvedi Badrinath, IAS, former Commissioner, Tamil Nadu Archives; Thiru A. Uttandaraman and Thiru Sarangapani Mudaliar, former Commissioners, HRCE; Thiru K.A. Govindarajan, HRCE; Thiru Kunrakudi Adigalar, Deviga Peravai; Thiru Swaminatha Gurukkal, South India Archaka Sangham; and Professor Chandra Mudaliar, Madras University. I was affiliated during that year with Madurai University.

I am deeply grateful to Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susanne Hoerber Rudolph for their support and interest over the years, beginning with my graduate study at the University of Chicago. The depth of their

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Preface

scholarship and the richness of their intellectual insight have shaped fundamentally my understanding of what political studies can be. It is a pleasure to acknowledge my debt to Arjun Appadurai and Carol A. Breckenridge, who were also doing dissertation research in 1973–74 and whose analyses inform this work significantly. For encouragement and insight offered at various stages I want also to thank Bernard S. Cohn, Leonard Binder, A.K. Ramanujan, Robert Frykenberg, David Washbrook, Edward Dimock, Maureen Patterson, Nicholas Dirks and Rakhahari Chattopadhyay.

A grant from Kalamazoo College enabled me to make a brief trip to Madras in 1981 in order to update some of the earlier research. The final revisions were undertaken during the summer of 1983 in the stimulating environment of a National Endowment for the Humanities Seminar, held at Columbia University under the direction of Ainslie Embree, on “Religion, Nationalism and Conflict: The South Asian Experience.” My colleague David Barclay painstakingly read through the entire manuscript and offered many helpful suggestions. Portions of chapters 4 and 8 have appeared in articles entitled “The Structure and Consequences of Temple Policy in Tamil Nadu, 1967–81”, in *Pacific Affairs* 56 (Summer 1983), and “The Legitimation of Religious Policy in Tamil Nadu”, in Bardwell Smith, ed., *Religion and the Legitimation of Power in South Asia* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1978).

During the entire period I have been supported and helped in innumerable ways by Paula Presler. She has shared with me the joys and pains of doing research, and has gone over seemingly countless revisions of the manuscript. Although I am not sure she would agree, the book in many ways belongs as much to her as to me.

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NOTES ON SOURCES, ABBREVIATIONS AND TRANSLITERATION

All government records cited are in the Tamil Nadu Archives, Madras. The following abbreviations are used in the citations:

BOR	Board of Revenue
Cons.	Consultations
E & PH	Education and Public Health
G.O.	Government Order
L & M	Local and Municipal
PH	Public Health
Proc.	Proceedings

Government Order citations include the following: number of Government Order; department; date. Consultations and Proceedings citations usually include the following: volume; date; page. In some of the mid-nineteenth-century documents, however, the citations are irregular; such cases are made clear in the text.

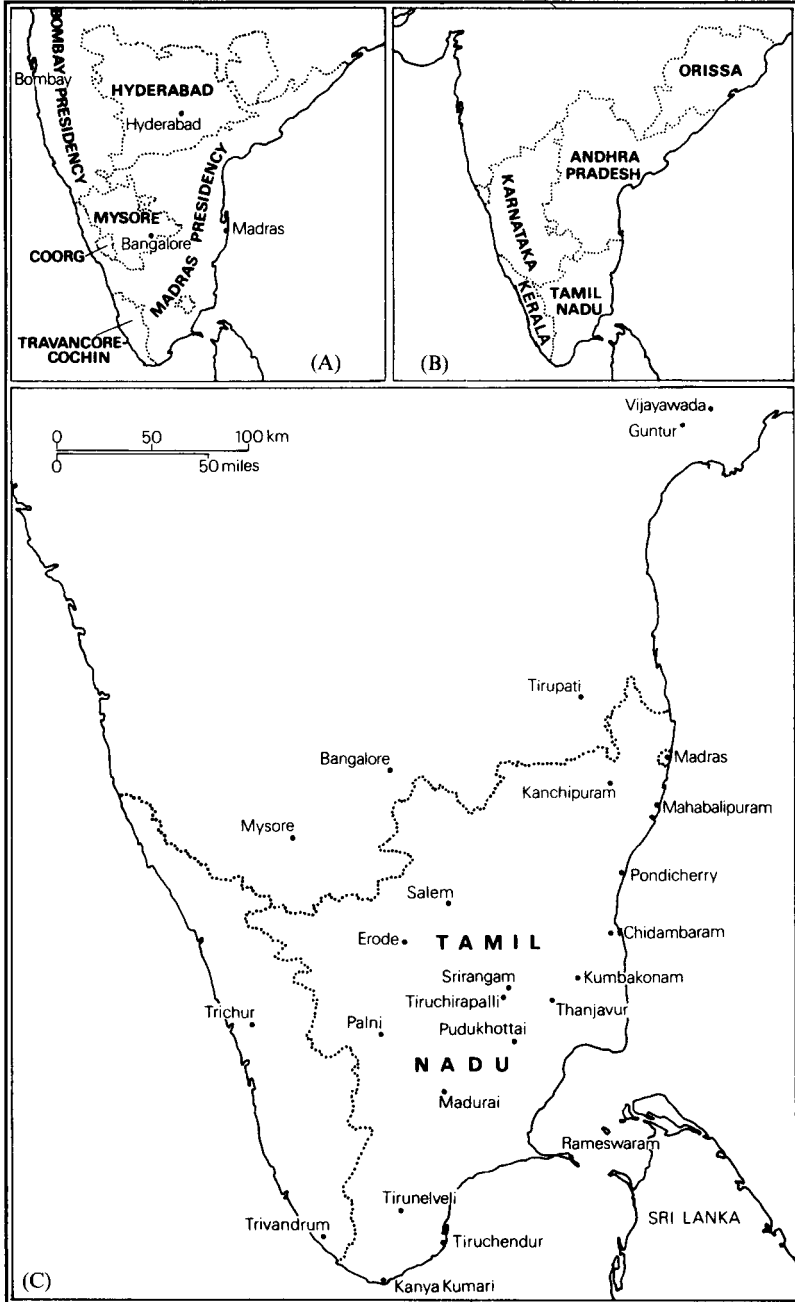
Tamil words and names are given in the form used in the government documents on which much of this research is based, although, in some cases, original spellings have been changed in the interests of overall consistency. The spelling of towns and districts is in accordance with contemporary usage. There are no diacritical marks.

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Map A Boundaries of Madras Presidency, 1947 (based on J.E. Schwartzberg, ed., *A Historical Atlas of South Asia*. Chicago and London, 1978)

Map B Southern India, 1975 (based on Schwartzberg, ed., *A Historical Atlas of South Asia*)

The geographical jurisdiction of the department has shifted over the years. The original HRE Board had jurisdiction over the entire Madras Presidency, but this changed as state boundaries were redrawn along linguistic lines in the years following Independence. The HRCE today has jurisdiction only over temples in Tamil Nadu (known as Madras State until 1969). Separate although basically similar government departments exist in the other south Indian states.

Map C Southern India, 1975 (based on *The Times Atlas of the World*, 1975)