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## **Worship and the Ceremonial Economy of a Royal South Indian Temple (Mellen Studies in Anthropology)**

*Anthony Good*

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**Anthony Good : *Worship and the Ceremonial Economy of a Royal South Indian Temple (Mellen Studies in Anthropology)*** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised *Worship and the Ceremonial Economy of a Royal South Indian Temple (Mellen Studies in Anthropology)*:

The temple of the god Kalugacalamurtti - the local name for Murugan, Siva's younger son - is the largest economic enterprise in the town of Kalugumalai, South India, yet ostentatious display and devotionism loom far larger in the conduct of its affairs than economic rationality, despite attempts at bureaucratic rationalism by successive governments. This book describes this Hindu temple's complex patterns of public liturgy and private worship, and explores the metaphysical themes which underlie them according to the Saiva Siddhanta philosophy governing temple worship. It shows how temple rituals portray and enact the sexuality, kinship, and regality of the gods. It then recounts how temple economy and administration have changed over the past two centuries, how groups and interests within Kalugumalai town challenged the temple's hegemony over their affairs, and how and why the Rajas of Ettaiyapuram, the temple's hereditary Trustees, successfully resisted repeated government attempts to assume control of the temple over the past 50 years. There have relatively few previous ethnographic studies of large Hindu temples and no other

field-worker has access to such detailed information on the orthodox and ceremonial economies of any Hindu temple in South India. The result is a unique synthesis of ethnographic and historical material.

"This important work draws on a wealth of material to elucidate the character and meanings of the transactions among donors, worshippers, temple servants, and deities in the context of the Hindu temple. By focusing on a particular temple in a small town in the far south in India, the author is able to produce a vivid portrait of temple life, through his lively descriptions of ritual activities and local personalities, and through his exploration of the historical dynamics which have brought about profound changes in religious arrangements. Equally, this book sheds lights on broad issues which are significant for our understanding of Indian society in general: questions of caste and hierarchy, politics and religion, colonialism and community. In this study, Good skillfully brings together detailed field observations, extensive research into archival and judicial records, and cosmological and theological considerations.....this book is especially valuable for its contribution to religious and social history" - Leslie Orr, Concordia University and author of *Donors, Devotees and Daughters of God: Temple Women in Medieval Tamil Nadu* (Oxford Press, 2000); "This is an impressive work of scholarship. Anthony Good's study of the ceremonial economy of a major Hindu place of worship, the ancient temple of the god Murugan at Kalugumalai in Tamil Nadu, combines the perspectives of history and social anthropology with great success. Its complex subject matter is presented in a refreshingly inclusive and readable manner. Building on extensive ethnographic fieldwork as well as archival research, the book addresses issues which have long been central to key debates both within and beyond South Asian studies." - Dr. Susan Bayly, University of Cambridge and author of *Caste, Society and Politics in India from the Eighteenth Century to the Modern Age* (Cambridge University Press, 1999) and *Saints, Goddesses and Kings: Muslims and Christians in South Indian Society, 1700-1900* (Cambridge University Press, 1999)"About the AuthorAnthony Good teaches social anthropology at Edinburgh University. His research focuses on Hinduism, kinship, rural development, and political asylum issues involving South India and Sri Lanka. Previous books include *Research Practices in the Study of Kinship* (1984, with Alan Barnard) and *The Female Bridegroom* (1992).