



# The Raja's Magic Clothes: Re-Visioning Kingship and Divinity in England's India (Hermeneutics: Studies in the History of Religions)

By Joanne Punzo Waghorne

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**The Raja's Magic Clothes: Re-Visioning Kingship and Divinity in England's India (Hermeneutics: Studies in the History of Religions)** By Joanne Punzo Waghorne

In *The Raja's Magic Clothes*, Joanne Punzo Waghorne places before our eyes British imperialism and a small South India kingdom in the actual settings in which they performed their interplay—not only in the Indian world but also in the world of English courtiers, diplomats, and scholars. *The Raja's Magic Clothes* explores the refashioning of the rituals of kingship in Pudukkottai during the crucial period from 1858 to 1947. Waghorne discusses these changes in the context of a profound but undeclared reciprocity that occurred between British overlord and Indian prince, between British bureaucrat and Hindu pandit, and between British scholar and British civil servant in creating the grand ceremonial system of the Raj, and with it the multifarious world of ornamental things that permeated Victorian life.

While scholars at Oxford and Cambridge worked diligently to create distinctions to mark West from East, rational from magical, and British from Indian, the British governors were sitting beside native princes like the Raja of Pudukkottai on his very throne and under his sacred canopy. *The Raja's Magic Clothes* reveals how the gap between the pragmatic need for a shared royal ritual and the theoretical construction of difference left open a space where overt theologies were masked, allowing the British and their Indian players to don old royal ornaments—recovering religious things from a world beyond magic and reason.

Since Joanne Waghorne was permitted use of the Palace Records for the first time, *The Raja's Magic Clothes* includes significant new material for scholars. In addition, the book provides the first full photographic documentation of the old palace at Pudukkottai, the Dakshinamurti temple within that palace, and the interior of the state Tirugokarnam temple, giving readers the opportunity to see the palace and both temples not only for the beauty of their art and architecture but also in the context of the complex ritual system.

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

“*The Raja's Magic Clothes* is a sumptuous object, a delight to hold, look at, and read. . . . Joanne Waghorne's prose is often refreshingly stylish and lively. To most historians of religion, accustomed to dry text and unillustrated exposition, this work will bring unaccustomed pleasure.”  
—*History of Religions*

#### About the Author

Joanne Punzo Waghorne is Associate Professor of Religious Studies at the University of North Carolina. She is the author of *Images of Dharma: The Epic World of C. Rajagopalachari* (1985) and co-editor of *Gods of Flesh/Gods of Stone: The Embodiment of Divinity in India* (1985).

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