Acknowledgments

The fieldwork for this book spans many years across three geographic fieldwork sites (Chhattisgarh, Hyderabad, and Tirupati). Thus, my gratitude has compounded many layers that I can never fully excavate.

In Chhattisgarh, I have found a welcoming home with the royal family of the erstwhile princely state of Kanker. The present Rajmata’s quiet strength and grace inspires all of us who have found a place in the family. Surya Pratap Deo (Jolly) and Ashwini Pratap Deo (Jay) provided logistics for many field trip outings, in particular to attend Dussehra village celebrations in fall 2014; I have learned from them many subtleties of Chhattisgarhi culture. Aditya Pratap Deo has been an important intellectual conversation partner and friend about all things Chhattisgarhi.

Akhilesh Nand, whom I’ve known since he was a baby when I lived with his family in a Chhattisgarhi village during my PhD fieldwork, is now a teacher at Salem English School in Raipur. I thank him for taking me on the back of his motorcycle to the Dussehra celebrations in Raipur in 2014 and helping me navigate crowds of thousands. Folklorist and Raipur resident Mahendra Mishra served as a guide to many Ravana images sprinkled across Chhattisgarhi landscapes, which I would have never found on my own.

In Hyderabad, the Thangavelu family has welcomed me to their home—over and over again, almost yearly, since 1989. I have learned so much from each of them over cups and cups of tea during morning newspaper reading and sitting on the verandah late afternoons. In Tirupati, the Kaikala family—in particular, Venkateshvarlu and his mother, Kamalamma—was more patient than anyone should have to be with my unending questions about Gangamma traditions over multiple return trips. Kamalamma periodically reminded me, “I already told you that last year!” but she would always try again.
I am grateful for generous support from several funding agencies at different steps along the way of this project. Emory University’s University Research Committee provided funding for a semester free from teaching that gave invaluable time to read theoretical scholarship on materiality in order to prepare me to write subsequent fellowship applications. In 2014–2015 the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship and National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Stipend Award supported new research conducted for this project and time to begin writing this book. The American Institute of Indian Studies supported my fieldwork on Gangamma goddess traditions in Tirupati in 1999–2000. The Center for Faculty Development and Excellence at Emory University provided support to hire an external editor for the manuscript of this book before it was submitted to press. I have never worked before with an editor at this stage and am so thankful for the keen eye and imagination of Katie Van Heest of Tweed Academic Editing. At SUNY Press, series editor Wendy Doniger, James Peltz, and Jenn Bennett-Genthner shepherded the book to publication with grace, when there were significant shifts at the press.

Ann Grodzins Gold and Tulasi Srinivas were readers of the manuscript for SUNY Press, and they pushed me to refine my arguments; however, their friendship and intellectual companionship have been the real gift. Over so many years, Kirin Narayan, Leela Prasad, Susan Wadley, and David Shulman have been invaluable friends in fieldwork and writing. Velcheru Narayana Rao has remained my guide long after he was my dissertation guide/advisor. To each of them, I offer gratitude.

At Emory University, Marko Geslani (now at the University of South Carolina), Ellen Gough, Jim Hoesterey, Harshita Mruthinti Kamath, Sara McClintock, Devaka Premawardhana, and Brajesh Samarth have been important conversation partners. The chair of the Department of Religion at Emory over the period I was researching and writing this book, Gary Laderman, has provided invaluable friendship—and departmental travel funds. One of the greatest joys of my years at Emory has been working with creative graduate students from whom I have learned new intricacies of everyday Hindu worlds; each one has gifted unique perspectives and data from their fieldwork research and responses to my own research and writing.

My children and their partners, Peter and Rebecca Flueckiger and Rachel and Matt Angrisani, and now precious grandson, Benny Flueckiger, have helped me keep my center amid the swirls of fieldwork, writing, and teaching. A heart full of thanks, which words cannot fully hold, to my
husband, Michael Flueckiger, for his continual support of my frequent trips to India, when he has kept home fires burning, and of my passions for everyday Indian worlds about which I write.

The section of chapter 1 about the *tali* in Gangamma traditions and an earlier version of chapter 2 first appeared in Joyce Burkhalter Flueckiger, *When the World Becomes Female: Guises of a South Indian Goddess* (2013) and are reprinted with permission from Indiana University Press. © 2013 Joyce Burkhalter Flueckiger.


A version of chapter 5 first appeared in Joyce Burkhalter Flueckiger, “Standing in Cement: Ravana on the Chhattisgarhi Plains,” *South Asian History and Culture* 8, no. 4: 461–77. It is reprinted with permission from Taylor and Francis.