

# New Zealand India Research Institute

## NZIRI SEMINAR SERIES:

### “Polemics and Practicalities: Hindu Book Publishing in Colonial India”

By Rick Weiss

This paper begins to survey the range of books published on religion in India in the 1850s and 1860s, the dawn of popular publishing in the region. Book publishing in this period was dominated by the editing and printing of classical devotional texts, along with a handful of original literary works. I pay particular attention to the polemical features of these publications, which authors and editors used to contribute to debates about caste and ritual. I argue that this theistic poetry, which at first glance may appear to be disengaged from current social controversy, served as one of the most important polemical literary forms in Tamil in this period.



Dr. Rick Weiss is senior lecturer of South Asian religions at Victoria University. His book *Recipes for Immortality* (OUP, 2009) examines the rhetoric of traditional practitioners of Tamil siddha medicine as they seek patronage and legitimacy in the modern world. He is currently completing a book on the emergence of modern Hinduism, focusing on the Tamil mystic and poet Ramalinga Adigal. His newest project examines the impact of print technology on religion in nineteenth-century India.

#### EVENT DETAILS:

Wednesday 7 June, 4.00-5.30pm  
Wood Seminar Room (OK 406)  
History Programme, Old Kirk Building Level 4  
Kelburn Campus

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