

Francis Cody Book Launch

The Light of Knowledge: Literacy Activism and the Politics of Writing in South India

Francis Cody

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**Tuesday, April 8th, 2014
2:00 PM- 4:00 PM**

Asian Institute, Munk School of Global Affairs
1 Devonshire Place, 208N, North House

Register Online at: <http://munkschool.utoronto.ca/ai/event/15003/>

In *The Light of Knowledge*, Francis Cody's ethnography of the Arivoli Iyakkam (the Enlightenment Movement), highlights the paradoxes inherent in social movements that seek to emancipate people through literacy when literacy is a power-laden social practice in its own right. This book is about activism among laboring women from marginalized castes who have been particularly active as learners and volunteers in what is considered to be one of the most successful mass literacy movements in recent history. In their endeavors to remake the Tamil countryside through literacy activism, workers in the movement found that their own understanding of the politics of writing and Enlightenment was often transformed as they encountered vastly different notions of language and imaginations of social order. Indeed, while activists of the movement successfully mobilized large numbers of rural women, they did so through logics that often pushed against the very Enlightenment rationality they hoped to foster. Offering a rare behind-the-scenes look at an increasingly important area of social and political activism, *The Light of Knowledge* brings tools of anthropology to engage with critical social theories of the postcolonial state.

Francis Cody teaches at the Asian Institute and the Department of Anthropology at the University of Toronto. His research focuses on written language and the social dynamics of collective action in southern India. His new project is centered on the daily newspaper market, and it traces the emergence of populist politics through print-mediated publicity in Tamil cities and small towns.

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