

**Max Weber's *Hinduism and Buddhism*
Reflections on a sociological classic a 100 years on**

Call for papers, conference at SOAS London, 8-10th September 2016.

Following the successful Weber and China conference at the School of Oriental and African Studies in September 1913, attention turns to another anniversary. In April and December 1916 and May 1917 the *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik* published two long articles on the religions and the social and political structures of S. Asia in historical perspective. *Hinduism and Buddhism* was Weber's second essay (after Confucianism and Taoism) on the economic ethics of the world religions. 'Indian religiosity, theoretically and practically, was the cradle of the most world denying form of religious ethic that the world has ever brought forth.'

Certain weaknesses of his analysis have received attention in previous conferences and publications: his overreliance on the sacred texts rather than on how religion was lived, the biases of western Indology, his conceptualization of caste. Equally, Weber thought a modern India would emerge in the process of nation state formation, just as he noted the emergence of modern capitalism in Shanghai in 1911. South and East Asia are now shaping capitalism in the 21st century according to their own requirements.

Hinduism and Buddhism marks Weber's intense preoccupation with the religions and ethics of S. Asia and their diffusion throughout the region. He reaches back to texts, which today can only be reckoned ancient, brilliantly characterizing their fundamental precepts and attitude to inner and outer worlds. Weber lacked the knowledge to interrelate religions to social, political and economic currents according to today's much richer scholarly sources. But his handling of a number of themes remain classic and exemplary, issues so fundamental that they remain unresolved and just as relevant today.

The conference organisers particularly welcome papers on the following themes:

1. Translation and editorial strategies of Weber's text.
2. Max Weber and the sociology of religion: comparative methods and social theory.
3. Economic ethics, markets and capitalism in S. Asia.
4. Sects, class, caste and religious communities in S. Asia.
5. Empires, patrimonialism and law in S. Asia.
6. Cultures of the individual. Life conduct and forms of asceticism.
7. Multiple rationalities. Theodicies and the sociology of knowledge.
8. Alternative paradigms on comparative sociology of cultures.

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Confirmed speakers include Professors Romila Thapar (New Delhi), David Gellner (Oxford), Richard Gombrich (Oxford), Wolfgang Schluchter (Heidelberg), Martin Fuchs (Erfurt), Roland Lardinois (Paris and New Delhi).