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STUDIES

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**Romila Thapar** has written many books and articles on early Indian history and historiography. She is Professor Emeritus of History at the Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi.

## Editorial

Peter Flügel and Sam Whimster

This issue publishes the second instalment of papers coming out of the conference on Max Weber's Hinduism and Buddhism study (known in English as *The Religion of India*). As many of the papers point out, the Hinduism and Buddhism study was part of the series of 'The Economic Ethics of the World Religions'. The English translations of that series have mangled the continuity of Weber's project. He wrote the Introduction to the series (translated by Gerth and Mills in their collection *From Max Weber* as 'The Social Psychology of the World Religions'), and then Weber proceeded to the study on Confucianism and Taoism (translated as *The Religion of China*). At this point Weber wrote a linking essay that took the reader, so to speak, from China to India. This was the 'Intermediate Reflection' (published in the Gerth and Mills collections as 'Religious Rejections of the World and their Directions'). Hinduism and Buddhism then followed.

As a result, critical attention in the Anglophone world has been somewhat wrong-footed. Very broadly, it is incorrect to gloss Hinduism and Buddhism as the negative case for the preconditions of modern capitalism, with the Protestant Ethic study as the positive case. Rather it is part of a large-scale comparative exercise that investigates the religions of Asia in their sociological, economic and political dimensions.

The other main point, here in summary, is that Weber – despite his insights – was a prisoner of the sources available to him c. 1910, something he freely admits and accordingly cautions the reader. Karl-Heinz Golzio shows that Weber completely misread the evidence of Buddhism displacing Hinduism in Southeast Asia, Siam in particular, not realizing the periods or the kingdoms to which his sources actually referred. Richard Gombrich asserts that Weber fundamentally misapprehended the nature of Buddhism and its

diffusion across Southeast Asia. But he holds that Weber's sociology of religion is vital in the investigation of new religious movements, and Gombrich applies this to the Fo Guang Shan movement in Taiwan.

Wolfgang Schluchter argues that Weber's Eurocentrism is heuristic and not normative, there is no assumption of western superiority. Examining the heterodox religions of India, Buddhism and Jainism, these salvation religions are normatively on the same footing as Christianity.

Schmidt-Glintzer notes Weber's argument that India was the spiritual pivot of Asian religiosity. This is critically considered as typical of the approach of European intellectuals at the beginning of the twentieth century but can no longer held to be valid in the light of present academic knowledge. That approach still influences western attitudes to how Asia and its religions are conceptualised. The relation of literati to the masses in China and India are compared as well as the role of the saviour figure in Asia and the Christian west.

Hermann Kulke takes the reader through the various phases of Indology, as it influenced Weber and subsequent developments. As did David Gellner (in *Max Weber Studies* 17.2), Kulke assesses Weber's interpretation of the role of Hinduization in the construction of political legitimacy in the process of state-formation. He does this through a close reading of Indian history and finds no grounds to support the opposing thesis, adumbrated by Sheldon Pollock in *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men*, that Sanskritization was an aesthetic and cultural movement and that the western, nineteenth century concept of legitimacy has no place in South Asian history.

Romila Thapar observes with an historian's eye that Weber was dependent on colonial sources, he ignored eighteenth and nineteenth century Indian history, in particular the rise of western industrial capitalism at the expense of mercantile capitalism in India, and he treated India as a whole civilizational unit often without sufficient regard to chronological period and place. India as a land of villages and entrenched and unchanging patrimonial states, misses the complex dynamics of Indian history.

In the review section a previously unpublished habilitation thesis by M. Rainer Lepsius has now been brought out by his son Oliver Lepsius. *Social Stratification in Industrial Society* is an important part of a sociological literature that included the work of Ralf Dahrendorf, René Koenig, Helmut Schelsky, T. H. Marshall, David Lockwood, Reinhard Bendix and Martin Lipset. It is neo-Weberian, given edge

through Marxist theory, and it answered the question of how complex, class-conflictual societies operated with reasonable integration at the then levels of economic inequality and status difference. As many advanced societies have now regressed into a neoliberal formation, this analysis needs to be looked at again if we are to explain the major morphological development of our time.

## Max Weber's view on the religions of Southeast Asia

Karl-Heinz Golzio

### Abstract

In a small section of his study of the sociology of religions related to Hinduism and Buddhism Max Weber dealt with the socio-religious development in Mainland Southeast Asia. He maintained that Theravāda Buddhism displaced Hinduism, but this is only partly true in the case of Cambodia (a country he never mentioned).

Keywords: Étienne Aymonier, Lucien Fournereau, Saveros Pou/Lewitz, Buddhism, Hinduism, Theravāda, Rāma Khamheng, Mongkut, Angkor Empire, Angkor Vat, Thailand, Burma, Cambodia, inscriptions as main source, Sukhothai.

In his Hinduism and Buddhism study, which deals mostly with India, Max Weber took a sideways look at the religious development of mainland Southeast Asia, or *Hinterindien* as he termed it; that is Thailand, Burma (and Cambodia) (Weber 1920: 281-86; MWG I/20: 411-18; RI: 258-64).<sup>1</sup> In order to give an encompassing view he tried to show (without specifying how) that Theravāda Buddhism (referred to by Weber as Hīnayāna) displaced Hinduism. This unfortunately ignored the fact that Hinduism has never prevailed among the Burmese and Thai people. The place where Hinduism had flourished (mainly as Śaivism, but not exclusively) was the Empire of Angkor, a political entity seemingly unknown to Weber (see below). Weber's statement that the rulers invited scribes (Brahmans and Buddhists) into their countries to improve the administration is true for the first phase of 'Indianization' (the spread of Indian culture in the broadest sense), but after a certain time such an import was no longer necessary as meanwhile indigenous experts had grown up. The main source for this period is inscriptions and hardly any textual material dating to before the 17th century has survived.

First of all, it is astonishing that he never refers to Cambodia or the Khmer or Angkor, even though he made numerous references

to that country but without naming it. One reason for this could be that one of his main sources, *Le Siam ancien* of Lucien Fournereau (1846–1906) was published in 1895; that is at a time when large parts of Cambodia including Angkor belonged to Siam and before these provinces were given back to Cambodia in 1907. In order to illustrate that Brahmanical and Buddhist education existed side by side, he quotes an 8th century inscription from the work of Fournereau (1895: 129-36), calling it a Buddhist inscription in Siam (pp. 282/411). Indeed, this Sanskrit inscription (No. K. 407)<sup>1</sup> hails from Nakhon Si Thammarat in the northern part of the Malayan Peninsula<sup>2</sup> around six or seven centuries before the Thai occupied the land. This location points to the Mahāyāna Buddhist kingdom of Śrīwijaya centered round Sumatra and the Malayan Peninsula. Weber's statement that Brahmans even in the 16th century were supported by Buddhist kings sounds like a surprise for him, as he seemingly did not know that the influence of Brahmans had never come to an end in these so-called 'Indianized' countries. Apparently, in some cases it was not clear to him which religion prevailed in a certain region and at what time. The inscription K. 414 from Prachinburi was characterized by Weber as a kingly edict of the 10th century. Indeed, it was an inscription of the Angkor King Jayavarman V (r. 968–c.1001) where his *guru* (teacher) and *ācāryas* (preceptors) are mentioned (Fournereau 1895: 141; Aymonier, *Le Cambodge* II: 80).

Between the reference to K. 407 (the 8th century inscription) and K. 414 Weber inserted another one claiming that in the meantime and in due form Ceylonese Buddhism had become the state religion in Thailand. This is the very controversial so-called Rāma-Khamheng inscription, named after a Thai king of Sukhothai who ruled at the end of the 13th century between ca. 1272 and 1299. Weber quotes it very often as it conveys the picture of a well-organized and fully developed Theravāda Buddhist (which Weber refers to as Hinayanistic) state giving detailed information about the grading of the dignity and titles of monks according to seniority. What impressed Weber in this inscription was the description of the titles of the monks (*guru*, *thera* and finally *mahāthera*) as being partly cenobites and partly eremites. Accordingly, a chief preceptor, called *sankharat* ('King of the Order')<sup>3</sup> was appointed by the king and headed the

1. K. stands for Khmer inscription.

2. Cœdès, RS I, No. XXVII: 34.

3. Note that the term was not used in the inscription, but known to Weber.

*saṅgha* as patriarch of the Buddhist community. Weber compared the position of the king as secular patron with that of the Indian king Aśoka (3rd century BC). The inscription, translated by Fournereau (1895: 233-41; see also Prasert and Griswold: 241-90) goes further saying that king Rāma Khamheng had also called upon the Buddhist sages for the purpose of inventing a national system of writing (stanza 106). And the king was also engaged in military expansion in all directions and was fighting against Chinese attempts at expansion (stanzas 111-24). The administration developed a royal army and a bureaucratic administration. A star-chamber juridical procedure was employed (stanza 32) and the administration strove to break the power of the –presumably feudal– notables (stanza 26: one should go directly to the king, not to the notables).

I have given some space to the contents of this inscription which attracted Weber's attention because they seemed in a certain sense more or less modern. And, not surprisingly, most modern scholars think the inscription is a fabrication of recent times. Only a few of the arguments, which can be found in the book *The Ram Khamhaeng Controversy* (edited by J.R. Chamberlain) can be presented here. The first surprise is the use of the Thai language, while allegedly later inscriptions are written in Khmer. An examination of the script reveals an anomaly in that all the vowel signs are placed on the line, a feature unknown to any Indic script of Southeast Asia. Also strange is a complete tone-marking system, not found again until the 17th or 18th century after very gradual and tentative developments; moreover, certain vowel signs common to modern standard Thai were not used in the 14th century Sukhothai corpus (Vickery 1991: 13). Comparing the contents of the so-called Rāma Khamheng inscription with an inscription of king Līdayarāja Dhammarāja I of Sukhothai (1347-1370) in Khmer language (K. 413), translated by Fournereau (1895: 159-79), Coëdès (1917; 1-28) and Prasert and Griswold (1992: 425-601). Weber described it as one of 'the great Siamese king of the 14th century' (pp. 282/412) and accentuated that the king on one hand was informed in the Vedas and yearned for Indra's heaven, but, on the other hand, was also striving for *nirvāṇa* at the end of the transmigration of souls. He concluded that regardless of the Buddhist character of the inscription its main object was the construction of two statues and temples to the great Hindu gods Śiva (Maheśvara) and Viṣṇu. This seemingly astonished him and he continues: 'As the crowning act of merit the king then sent to Ceylon and has a Ceylonese sage import the first Tripitaka-canon' (RI: 259; MWG I/20: 413). Weber did not compare

the story of that sage with the sage of the Rāma Khamheng inscription who allegedly had already introduced Ceylonese Buddhism, coming from Nakhon Si Thammarat. Alexander Griswold examined the problem as follows: 'If an important teacher had already introduced Sihala [Ceylonese] Buddhism to Sukhothai, why would it be necessary to invite another one to do the same thing? That is, if a Mahāthera had come from Nakhon Si Thammarat bearing Sihala Buddhism in the late 13th century, as related by R[āma] K[amhaeng], why did Sukhothai rulers find it necessary to restart the whole process in the middle of the following century?' (Vickery 1991: 31). The Mahāsāmī or Mahāthera of the 14th century inscriptions came from Laṅkādvīpa (Sri Lanka) and had 'studied the Three Piṭakas in their entirety'.<sup>4</sup> Directly he came to Sukhothai from Nagar Bann, believed to be at, or near, Martaban in Ramaññadeśa (Burma), a centre of Theravāda Buddhism.<sup>5</sup> King Ḷidayarāja Dhammarāja I (of Sukhothai) built a monastery for the reception of the Mahāsāmī who after his arrival first went to a retreat at the beginning of the rainy season. When he came out on Wednesday, 22 September 1361,<sup>6</sup> great celebrations were arranged.

In the Rāma Khamheng inscription the protagonist, a Mahāthera Saṅghharāja came from 'Möang Sri Dharmmarāja', presumably Nakhon Si Thammarat. This is only one of the crucial points as it is unlikely that this place at that time was a centre of Theravāda Buddhism of the Ceylonese variety (Weber himself referred to one Mahāyāna Buddhist inscription, K. 407, see above) and this is also backed by historical investigations (Vickery 1991: 33). It seems that this inscription was a fabrication of the 19th century; Piriya Krairiksh goes further saying that the Rāma Khamheng inscription should be seen as a secret testimony of King Mongkut (Piriya 1991: 553-62). This king, also known as Rāma IV, ruled Thailand from 1851 to 1868. Before his kingship he was abbot of Wat Bovoranives and a great scholar, well-versed in Latin and English literature and Western religion, too.

Although Weber did draw far-reaching conclusions from this so-called Rāma Khamheng inscription he cannot be blamed for it, as the inscription was valued as an original for more than 100 years. But he is to be criticized of using his source material in a completely

4. From inscription No. 5 of Ḷidayarāja Dhammarāja I; see Prasert ṅa Nagara / Griswold (1992): 498.

5. Inscription No. 4: Prasert ṅa Nagara / Griswold (1992: 473).

6. Inscription No. 5: Prasert ṅa Nagara / Griswold (1992): 496.

unhistorical (and political geography?) manner considering probably all of them as “Siamese” following probably the title of Fournereau’s book. As we have seen above, Weber saw as main object in Līdayarāja’s inscription(s) the construction of a temple to the Hindu gods Śiva and Viṣṇu ignoring thereby that the coming of the Mahāsāmī and the spread of Theravāda were the main purpose of the inscription.

Weber continues that the king personally joined the order— ‘doubtless in order now as pontifex to guide the church and by this means to lead his subjects. However, according to the inscriptional account, in consequence of his excessive piety such dangerous wonders occurred that the power of the kingdom urged him again to leave the order and rule the empire as a lay person’ (pp. 283/413). The ordaining of the king is testified in inscriptions 5 and 6, the earthquake in 5,<sup>7</sup> but not the fact that he has left the order, and it is an exaggeration to stylize him as a pontifex. The king is better characterized as the secular patron of the Buddhist religion (pp. 283/414). As Max Weber was not able to distinguish between the different political entities, he came to the conclusion that ‘only since the 15th and 16th centuries it has been unambiguously clear that cloisters means Buddhist, and indeed, Hinayanistic ones’ (RI: 282, MWG I/20: 412).

As we have seen this is not true of Siam/Thailand and Laos, but might be correct for Cambodia, a country which Weber strangely enough had not recognized as a separate country although he referred to some inscriptions from Cambodia thinking they belonged to Burma (RI: 285; MWG I/20: 416). Instead he again was surprised that ‘still in the 16th century the ‘Buddhist and the Brahmanical religion’ were supported’ (RI: 282; MWG I/20: 412) not knowing that even until today Brahmans played an important role in the court ritual. The inscription, dated Sunday, 18 August 1510, Year of the Horse (Fournereau 1895: 187) was incised at Sukhothai, at this time no longer an independent kingdom. And he referred to an inscription where a Mahāsaṅgharāja (Weber: ‘Head of a congregation’) occurs (Fournereau 1895: 143-45) which bears the date Monday, 21 November 1496, Year of the Dragon, and was published in Chiang Saen, part of the kingdom of Lān-nā (today northern Thailand). In another inscription from Luang Prabang, capital of the kingdom Lan Chang (Laos), dated Wednesday 14 April 1518, Year of the Tiger, Asterism Mārگاśiras (Fournereau 1895: 153) the mentioning of ‘the correct Triratna: Buddha, dharma, saṅgha’ was important for Weber

7. Prasert ṇa Nagara / Griswold (1992): 497 and 513.

as a proof for the final victory of the Theravāda (Weber: Hinayāna creed. He also thought that the Theravāda depreciated caste dharma 'even more strongly than did Mahayanism, or where Hinayana was introduced into new land it did not permit its development (RI: 285; MWG I/20: 417). The problem is that Weber did not realize that the term *varṇa* ('caste') in Southeast Asia by no means has to do with purity, impurity and pollution as in India where it has a religious connotation. In Southeast Asia *varṇa* means simply occupation, society, guild, etc. The Cambodian inscription K. 221 from Bantāy Prāv, dated Saturday, 9 January 1014, refers (Northern tower, line 7-8: IC III: 57) to a society of Easterners (*varṇa anak pūrva*), and another one from the southern tower of the same place (K. 222, line 15: IC III: 62) to a guild of dancers (*varṇa rṇam*).<sup>8</sup> Because Weber believed that Burma was the only kingdom where an Indian caste system never existed, he observed here the necessity of importing lower-caste Hindus for intensive modern types of labour (cotton seed, oil making, oil refineries), as a 'proof of the strong training for work by the caste but lacking in Burma' (RI: 285; MWG I/20: 417). He came to the conclusion that 'correct Hinayanistic Buddhism by its nature simply could not well be other than inimical to or at best tolerant of industry... In Burma as elsewhere the religious interests of the correct Buddhist laity were oriented primarily to rebirth opportunities as indicated by source inscriptions of recent times'.

One is expecting now that some examples from Burma will follow, but strangely enough, Weber refers instead to inscriptions from Cambodia and was probably not even aware of their origin. He quoted them from an article of Étienne Aymonier (1844–1929) who was one of the pioneers of scientific work on Khmer language and who, moreover, also worked for a short time (1879–1881) as resident (title of an administrator in protectorates) of Cambodia. These inscriptions are all placed on the famous temple of Angkor Vat and were classified by Saveros Pou alias Saveros Lewitz as 'Inscriptions Modernes d'Angkor Vat' (IMA). They are presented here in the order chosen by Weber: (1) In the inscription IMA 2, dated Sunday, 29 June 1577, year of the Oxen (Aymonier 1900: 146f.; Lewitz 1970: 99ff.) the queen mother prays always to be born again as a high personage, endowed with devoutness and good qualities. When the future Buddha Maitreya comes, she wants to be permitted to go to *nirvāṇa* with him. (2) In the great inscription IMA 38

8. More references in Jenner 2007: 532.

with the youngest date 'Year of the Monkey, 19th May 1704 [stanza 153]' someone wishes to escape rebirth in a bad family (Aymonier 1900: 164 / Pou 1975: 309 [stanza 49]). (3) There is (in IMA 31, dated Wednesday, 1 November 1684, year of the Rat) the hope of achieving omniscience and attaining *nirvāna* (Aymonier 1900: 153; Lewitz 1973: 224). (4) Still another (in IMA 34, dated Tuesday, 10 September 1697)<sup>9</sup> would like to be born again and again together with his present family (parents, brothers and children). (5) And another (again in IMA 38) wishes in a future life to possess a particular woman as a wife (Aymonier 1900: 170; Pou 1975: 313 [stanza 127]). (6) In IMA 10 (dated Sunday, 20 February 1628, year of the Rabbit) the following is demanded: In case they should be reborn as lay persons, monks often wished, in any case, to have pretty wives (Aymonier 1900: 151; Lewitz 1972: 223-24). (7) And besides such hopes there is the prayer (again in IMA 31) that good works be conferred on dead persons, especially those who are in hell (Aymonier 1900: 151; Lewitz 1973: 224). Weber characterized all these wishes as the familiar late-Buddhist representation of the karma doctrine also appearing in Hinduism. In fact, it was intrinsic to Buddhism since the very beginnings of that religion.

Weber has laid so much stress on depicting the Theravāda societies as being centered around religion only, omitting that all these countries participated in the maritime trade with Malays, Chinese, Spaniards, Portuguese, Dutch and Japanese. This is even true for Cambodia as all the inscriptions presented above are found at Angkor, the former capital which had become a sacred place not only for the indigenous people, but also for [Buddhist] Japanese traders who went as pilgrims to Angkor. The new centres more southward as Udōn, Phnom Penh and Loñvek were prosperous trading cities with foreign factories. For these developments see Mikaelian 2009; Kersten 2003, 2006; Golzio 2012. But it is also true that Cambodia at the end of the 17th century cut herself from relationship to foreign nations except to the immediate neighbours Siam and Vietnam, so it is not surprising that Weber was not even aware of the existence of that country.

### Conclusion

Weber has rightly observed that the ties of the laity in Burma, Thailand and Cambodia to Theravāda Buddhism are much stronger

9. Aymonier: 1900: 154, gave as year śaka 1614, but Pou (1975: 286) corrected it to śaka 1618, year of the Rat; here the following year śaka 1619 is meant.

than to Hinduism. Both religious traditions were imported from outside, but Hinduism remained a religion of the elite in Southeast Asia while Theravāda became vital for the average life of the people alongside the popular beliefs in spirits and natural powers. During the prevailing of Hinduism the normal people had not much to do with the ideas and great rituals of that religion. Weber considered the spread of Theravāda as a cultural decay, pointing to the necessity of importing lower-caste Hindus for intensive modern types of labour in Burma at the end of the 19th century, but saw on the other hand the preconditions for the industrial development in Thailand as not unfavourable. The question arises whether it was a matter of religion as suggested by Weber or were 'the lower-caste Hindus' coming from a British ruled India much more familiar with the 'intensive modern types of labour'. Considering the development of Thailand, Weber had neglected totally her international commerce and trade activities (see Breazeale 1999 and Bhawan and Pimmanus 2017) as well as the reformed Theravāda Buddhism initiated by King Mongkut (Kirsch 1975)—all contributing to make the country the modern state that we are facing now one hundred years after Weber's study.

#### *Abbreviations*

BEFEO	Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient
JA	Journal Asiatique
JSEAS	Journal of South East Asian Studies
JSS	Journal of the Siam Society

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## Max Weber's Work and the Study of Buddhism today

Richard Gombrich

### Abstract

Weber's work on early Buddhism relied on such poor information that it is almost worthless. But the concepts he used for his analysis of religion in its social aspects were so well devised that many of them are still valuable for guiding our research and understanding. And the very fact that most of them came initially from his analysis of Christianity creates a basis for comparative study, as we examine where they fit other religions and where they do not. I hope to illustrate this point by introducing some recent research by Dr. Yu-Shuang Yao and myself into contemporary Buddhism in Taiwan. After contrasting the social structure of Buddhism as a whole with that of Christianity, I introduce the new Buddhist movement Fo Guang Shan, created in Taiwan in the 1960s, and show that if one uses the typology of religious movements initiated by Weber and elaborated by his followers, it fits the definition of a denomination (not a sect); I then discuss how and why it is modelled not so much on Protestantism as on Roman Catholicism.

Keywords: Buddhism, Christianity, Protestantism, Roman Catholicism, Fo Guang Shan, Hsing Yun, Tai Xu.

I am no sociologist, and my knowledge of Max Weber and his work is extremely limited. However, I have for many years had an interest in the sociology of religion. I acquired this interest while doing fieldwork in Sri Lanka on contemporary Sinhalese Buddhism, and I nurtured it by regularly attending the weekly seminar which Bryan Wilson used to run in All Souls. I remain a great admirer of Bryan's work, and the way he analysed the relations between religions and society was clearly in the Weberian tradition.

Since for many years most of my duties lay in teaching classical Indology, I naturally read what Weber wrote about the main indigenous Indian religions – Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism. I saw that what he wrote about Buddhism, my central interest, was mostly vitiated by the poverty of the factual information available to him. I see no point in dwelling on that today – and in any case, I expect that

any of my colleagues here could do so better than I.<sup>1</sup> Our meeting has a more useful focus: to celebrate the Weberian tradition, and to attempt to demonstrate how his insights can enhance research even today.

Since my retirement in 2004 from my post at Oxford University, I have accepted two invitations to do a spell of teaching at universities in Taiwan, both run by very successful modern Buddhist movements: Dharma Drum Mountain (Fagu Shan) and Buddha's Light Mountain (Fo Guang Shan).<sup>2</sup> These visits led to my acquaintance and then friendship with Dr. Yu-Shuang Yao, a teacher at Fo Guang Shan University. Dr. Yao had worked under Peter Clarke at King's College London, and in 2002 gained her PhD there.<sup>3</sup> Her thesis was on a third Buddhist movement, besides the two I have just mentioned: Tzu Chi (meaning 'Compassion and Charity').<sup>4</sup> These three movements are generally recognised as the main representatives of the broader movement called 'Humanistic Buddhism' which was founded in mainland China by the monk Tai Xu (1890–1947). Humanistic Buddhism as a whole was given a new name (I can hardly say 're-Christened'!) in 1967 by the Vietnamese Zen monk Thích Nhất Hạnh as 'Engaged Buddhism', a name which in the West has become much more familiar than 'Humanistic Buddhism'. Most of the main Buddhist institutions and activities in contemporary Taiwan form part of one of the three movements I have just mentioned.

My getting to know Dr. Yao led to our collaborating on research into contemporary Taiwanese Buddhism, some of it already published, and the research I am about to talk of now has been produced by that collaboration. It is essential for me to make this clear, because I know no Chinese, and entirely depend on Dr. Yao for collecting and interpreting our material, both written and oral.

By this I am referring mainly to primary sources: though there have been some publications in Chinese by local scholars on humanistic

1. This paper retains the form in which I gave it on 9 September 2016 at the SOAS conference on Weber's work on Hinduism and Buddhism.

2. I cannot be consistent in my transliteration of Chinese because my sources are not. My policy has been to try to follow them.

3. Her examiners were David Martin and Peggy Morgan.

4. It was published as Yao, Yu-Shuang, *Taiwan's Tzu Chi as Engaged Buddhism* (Leiden: Global Oriental / Brill, 2012). I reviewed it at length in the *Journal of the Oxford Centre for Buddhist Studies* vol. 2 (2012): 248–56. It contains several mentions of Max Weber and many of Bryan Wilson.

Buddhism, and Dr. Yao has of course read them, neither the quantity nor the quality of the secondary sources is at all impressive. To this there is one notable exception: a book by Richard Madsen of the University of California at San Diego: *Democracy's Dharma: Religious Renaissance and Political Development in Taiwan*.<sup>5</sup> I think very highly of this book. Madsen declares that he is hoping 'to build upon the classic Durkheimian and Weberian traditions' (p.147), and he provides a few excellent Weberian nuggets, but the book is quite short and a great deal is left to be explored.<sup>6</sup>

We have already published a book (see fn. 4) and an article<sup>7</sup> about Tzu Chi. Since our more recent research, as yet unpublished, has been on Fo Guang Shan, and this article cannot do any justice to more than one movement, it will deal with Fo Guang Shan.

#### *Two Approaches to studying modern Buddhism*

In order to obtain a broad picture of how Buddhism over the last 150 years has developed certain currents and traditions which stand in contrast to the older traditions, one can of course take several different approaches. My recent work has concentrated on two of them. One is in the genre of historical narrative and largely concerns cultural influences; the other tries to adhere fairly closely to the sociological tradition initiated by Max Weber. I shall talk about the latter mainly in the second half of this paper.

Christianity is the religion which Weber and his followers have chiefly had in mind in forming their categories and the theories in which they put those categories to work. This means that it is essential to explain, at least briefly, major features of Buddhism which radically differ from Christianity.

#### *Salient features of Buddhism as a social phenomenon*

In all the major religions born in India—not only Buddhism but also Jainism, and all members of that amazingly varied cluster of

5. Richard Madsen, *Democracy's Dharma: Religious Renaissance and Political Development in Taiwan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

6. On 2 October 2016, shortly after this lecture was given, Professor Madsen gave a splendid keynote speech entitled 'Practice not Dogma: Tzu-chi and the Buddhist Tradition' at the 4th Tzu Chi Forum, held in Taipei, and this is due to be published in the Forum's proceedings.

7. Richard Gombrich and Yu-Shuang Yao: 'A Radical Buddhism for Modern Confucians: Tzu Chi in Socio-Historical Perspective'.

religions which we try to bundle together under the name of Hinduism—doctrine is extremely important, and yet it plays a very different role from that which it plays in the great monotheistic religions. True, in the latter also, when they have become embedded in societies, ritual and customs have permeated the lives of adherents more than has theology; but even in such cases, membership of the religion has been determined by assent to credal statements such as 'There is no God but Allah and Mohammed is his prophet'. The fundamental requirement is orthodoxy, rather than orthopraxy.

The Buddha preached that those who accepted his teaching could only do so fully if they accepted a certain lifestyle: they had to enter (take ordination in) the community (Saṅgha) of monks and nuns which he established, and punctiliously follow the code of conduct he laid down. The distinction between conduct and doctrinal belief was—and remains—absolute, and there was no such thing as heresy, even though the ordained were strongly advised not to follow other teachers if their views differed from the Buddha's. Creating schism in the Saṅgha was a heinous offense but could only arise through disagreement over a matter of behaviour.

Membership of the Saṅgha has to be achieved by ordination. In most circumstances there are two levels of ordination. The first or 'lower' is preparatory and creates novices. The second or 'higher' (called *upasampadā* in Pali) is crucial and hence may simply be referred to as 'ordination'.<sup>8</sup> One enters the lineage of the monk who presides at one's ordination ceremony, and this lineage is analogous to a patrilineage in lay society. The situation for women/nuns is almost the same as that for men/monks.

By Buddhist tradition, the Buddhism which can and should be regulated and administered consists only of the Saṅgha, i.e., the ordained clergy. In most Buddhist societies the state undertakes to help enforce the clear demarcation between the ordained and the unordained. The Order and the laity<sup>9</sup> are treated in Buddhist social thought in entirely different ways, to such an extent that it is only a slight exaggeration to say that in traditional Buddhism it is only the ordained (the Saṅgha) who are considered true Buddhists. For traditional Buddhists, the history of Buddhism is the history of the Saṅgha.

8. This terminology is widely used; it is not my invention.

9. How Buddhists define the laity is explained in Gombrich, *Theravāda Buddhism*, 2nd edn, pp. 75-78.

The Saṅgha and the laity have complementary roles, which are held to be hierarchically related. The laity are to supply the Saṅgha with the necessities of physical existence (food, clothing and shelter), and in return the Saṅgha preserve the Buddha's teaching and convey it to the laity (as well as trying to follow it themselves). Thus Saṅgha and laity are two moieties which are interdependent. The Saṅgha has the monopoly of supramundane (Sanskrit: *lokottara*) matters, while the laity are allowed, even sometimes encouraged, to follow practices which we might consider 'religious' but deal with happiness and success in this world (Sanskrit: *laukika*); the only restriction is that they must not infringe Buddhist norms (e.g., perform blood sacrifices).

Buddhist norms were so constructed that the Saṅgha, whether as a body or as individuals, lacked the means to wield political power, and depended for their place in society on the government, typically the king. Like Hindu Brahmins, the Saṅgha thus often formed a diarchy with the king: they legitimated his rule, while he gave them authority (and often a great deal more than that).

Where Buddhism dominates in a society, so that the Saṅgha is closely allied with the state and secular powers, in Weberian terms it functions as a 'church', with the corollary that members of the society are for the most part born as Buddhists: being Buddhist is a status ascribed to one by the government. Buddhism itself, however, has seen this differently. In some societies there has been no social demarcation among the local lay population between who is a Buddhist and who is not; it is mainly a matter of self-ascription and can vary and even oscillate. In this respect Buddhism in China has generally borne a striking resemblance to its social presence in ancient India.

Within the Saṅgha organizational structures and offices vary, but the most important principle has been that simple seniority, measured by years since full ordination, determines rank. When the Buddha was dying, he refused to appoint a successor, saying that he had preached the same teaching (Dhamma) to all, so anyone who thought he could do it was equally entitled to lead the Saṅgha.<sup>10</sup> This explains why Buddhism has no overarching organisation and no branch claims authority over another. There can be no Pope in Buddhism. Unlike Islam, its decentralisation is a matter of principle.<sup>11</sup>

10. *Dīgha Nikāya* II, p.100.

11. I am of course referring to Buddhism as a whole.

*The Social Segmentation of Buddhism*

In all traditionally Buddhist countries, however, the Saṅgha over the course of time has split into two or more bodies. In Theravāda these bodies are called *nikāyas*;<sup>12</sup> scholars usually call them all 'sects'. What they are is ordination traditions, lineages. As Heinz Bechert wrote:

In the first instance, a *nikāya* or sect can be described as a group or community of monks that mutually acknowledge the validity of their... higher ordination and therefore can join together in the performance of ... acts prescribed by... Buddhist ecclesiastical law.<sup>13</sup>

It is a pity that although he was German and knew Weber's work, Bechert did not bring precision to the terminology: in the sociological tradition inspired by Weber, these are not sects but denominations.<sup>14</sup>

The *Wikipedia* article 'Religious denomination' begins: 'A religious denomination is a subgroup within a religion that operates under a common name, tradition and identity.' Anglicanism is named as an example; within Britain, another would be Roman Catholicism. The article gives examples drawn from Christianity, Judaism, Islam and Hinduism; but not from Buddhism. But I would argue that in Buddhism too the term can be apposite provided that one understands that the differences between Buddhist denominations always relate primarily to matters of practice, not soteriology, and that the laity may direct their own practice (primarily their charity) to members of whichever denomination(s) they please.<sup>15</sup>

Against this background we can understand something that to a person with a Christian cultural background may seem baffling. To put it simply: whereas Christians are segmented vertically, according to their beliefs, Buddhists are segmented in two ways: firstly horizontally, with the clergy (the Saṅgha) ranked above the laity, and then the Saṅgha vertically – but according not to beliefs but to behavioural criteria (e.g., style of dress) which find expression in their organization.

This neat summary leaves two obvious gaps. It suggests that beliefs do not serve to structure the Buddhist population, and it suggests that the laity in such a population are an unsegmented mass.

12. The word *nikāya* also has some quite different uses, not relevant here.

13. Bechert, Heinz: 'Mahāyāna literature in Sri Lanka: the Early Phase', p. 362.

14. Weber himself only offered definitions of 'church' and 'sect'. This typology is further discussed below.

15. In my book *Theravāda Buddhism: a Social History* I have gone into more detail (see esp. pp. 111-14) but unfortunately kept the term 'sects', albeit in scare quotes.

The second of these points is close enough to the truth for us to leave it as it stands; the first however requires clarification.

### *Buddhist Ideology*

As the name for a set of ideas, 'Buddhism' refers to the teaching of the Buddha, though there are some variants in interpretation of that teaching. The Buddha taught a soteriology, i.e., a doctrine of how one may obtain salvation, which ultimately means escape from rebirth into this world. Life is seen as a trap in which suffering normally preponderates. This suffering is primarily due to the frustration of our desires, and may thus be evaded by not having desires. In early Buddhism this is summarized succinctly as eliminating all passion, hatred and delusion.

If we ask anyone who knows the first thing about Buddhism whether there are two kinds of Buddhists, they are likely to reply that yes, there are the Mahāyāna and the Hīnayāna. They may be aware that these are Sanskrit terms and that Mahāyāna means 'the great vehicle' and Hīnayāna 'the inferior vehicle'. When one goes into detail, it becomes relevant that *yāna* is a pun and also means 'path' [to salvation]. Even without going into detail, one can see that Hīnayāna is an opprobrious term; it derives from some polemical Mahāyāna texts.<sup>16</sup> Therefore it is usual nowadays to use the Pali term Theravāda, meaning 'doctrine of the elders', for Hīnayāna. Theravāda and Hīnayāna do not in fact have exactly the same referents, but in this context we can ignore this detail.

The critical difference between these two 'paths' is their ultimate goal. The follower of the more archaic Theravāda aims simply to escape from rebirth by emulating the Buddha in attaining perfect clarity of vision and peace of mind. The Mahāyānist aims to live as a Bodhisattva, one committed not only to their own Enlightenment but also to furthering the Enlightenment of others. This does not mean, as Mahāyānists often claim, that Theravādins are selfish; indeed, eliminating selfishness stands in the centre of their doctrine and practice. Theravādins maintain, however, that ultimately everyone has to achieve Enlightenment for themselves: the Buddhas are only teachers who point the way.

16. This was not yet clear in the sources available to Weber, so he deserves no criticism for sometimes misusing the term Hīnayāna.

We know tantalizingly little about the origins of the Mahāyāna teachings, which are many and varied; they seem to have begun four or five centuries after the Buddha, perhaps just before the turn of the Christian era, and only become widely popular a good deal later than that. On the other hand, the Buddhism that went to China (starting in the second century AD) and from there to Korea and Japan was predominantly Mahāyānist, and the same is true much later of the Buddhism which went to Tibet. Thus the great majority of Buddhists today are Mahāyānists.

What is relevant to my explanation is that adopting the Mahāyāna (usually by taking another ordination, as a Bodhisattva) is purely an individual matter, whatever one's religious status. We know that in ancient India there were many monasteries in which Mahāyānists and Hīnayānists lived together. What has been written above should make clear why this was not remarkable. Trivial though it may seem to us, when one asks a monk in Sri Lanka, where all are Theravādin, why he does not cultivate close relations with any Mahāyānist, he is likely to reply that this is because Mahāyānist clergy break the rule that a Saṅgha member may not eat after midday.

When modern scholarship began, there arose a widespread notion that the Mahāyāna was a lay movement. We now understand how this wrong idea came to be popular. Japanese study of ancient Buddhism became prominent about a century ago. The Japanese are all Mahāyānists. In the late 13th century they developed a denomination (Pure Land) which departed from the general Buddhist tradition of considering the Saṅgha superior by validating marriage and lay life; this fed easily into the modernisation and westernisation which Japan adopted in the late 19th century (the Meiji restoration). As a result, the idea spread that Mahāyāna Buddhism had begun and developed as a lay revolt against clerical conservatism.

*'Protestant Buddhism': the narrative*

At this point we have reached modern times. If the rise of the Mahāyāna, gradual as it was, can be considered the first great watershed in the history of Buddhism, we are now witnessing the second. The most fundamental influence on religion in Asia over the last century and a half has been the colonial dominance of Western powers from Europe and North America, and the Christianity they brought with them. It was Gananath Obeyesekere who invented the name 'Protestant Buddhism' for the new form of Buddhism which arose in

Sri Lanka in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The term had a double meaning: that it imitated the Protestants, and that it was a protest movement against them and the colonial power.

Obeyesekere and I argued in *Buddhism Transformed*, the book we wrote together, that the foundations of this novel strain of Buddhism were laid by rivalry between Sinhalese Buddhists and British missionaries between 1860 and 1885 (rivalry in which initially the Christians took the initiative<sup>17</sup>), and that then ‘the movement became more widespread and longlasting as the result of close contact with the West: the arrival of modern knowledge and Western-type education, printing and increased use of literacy, and the rise of a Sinhala middle class and the embourgeoisement of Sinhala society’.<sup>18</sup> This dual causation is reflected in my theme: the contact with Christians provoked emulation – in the Sri Lankan case, ‘rivalry’ might be the best word for it; on the other hand, the socio-economic shifts in society made the movement more powerful and influential. We are thus employing the idiom of historical narrative and cultural influence, but also giving it what many will recognize as a Weberian flavour.

There were some striking similarities with the Protestant Reformation, even if they occurred on a very much smaller scale. We wrote:

The essence of Protestantism as we understand it lies in the individual’s seeking his or her ultimate goal without intermediaries... The hallmark of Protestant Buddhism is its view that the layman should permeate his life with his religion; that he should strive to make Buddhism permeate his whole society; and that he can and should try to reach *nirvāṇa*. As a corollary, the lay Buddhist is critical of the traditional norms of the monastic role; he may not be positively anticlerical but his respect, if any, is for the particular monk, not for the yellow robe as such.<sup>19</sup>

It is interesting to compare this with how Christian influence has affected Buddhism in China and Taiwan. It was the monk Tai Xu, mentioned above, who spent his life trying to reform traditional Chinese Buddhism; and it is a fair summary of his aims to say that he wanted the Buddhist layman to ‘permeate his life with his religion’ and ‘strive to make Buddhism permeate his whole society’. That Tai

17. The best historical account is still that in Malalgoda, Kitsiri: *Buddhism in Sinhalese Society 1750–1900*. This book began life as an Oxford D.Phil. thesis supervised by Bryan Wilson.

18. *Buddhism Transformed*, p. 203.

19. *Buddhism Transformed*, pp. 215–16.

Xu had very little success is not at all surprising, given that the general increase of prosperity and literacy which accompany the rise of a middle class, and are fertile ground for individual aspirations to carve out one's own life, were almost totally absent in his surroundings. During his lifetime China was desperately poor, subjected to the depredations of foreigners, constantly ravaged by war and social turmoil, and largely unaffected by the advances of modernity. Though few were able to put his ideas into practice, what he achieved was to sow seeds which bore fruit when they were carried to less chaotic and somewhat more prosperous societies, such as Taiwan gradually became, when it fell under the aegis of the United States.

Tai Xu had no time whatever for Christian doctrine, which he declared to be incoherent rubbish.<sup>20</sup> What deeply impressed him, however, was the Christian concern with the practical requirements of life in this world, which he constantly contrasted with the Chinese Buddhist emphasis on death rituals and ancestor worship. Among the three Taiwanese movements which descend from Tai Xu, it is only Tzu Chi which has gone so far as to abolish the cult of ancestors; but all of them have inherited such fundamentals as the value of supplying the needs of those in distress and the importance of education throughout society. Moreover, even if societal conditions (widespread immiseration, illiteracy, etc.) could hardly have allowed Tai Xu to turn Chinese Buddhism in a Protestant direction, the feature of Protestantism which he, as a Mahāyānist, was naturally able to take to heart was its universalism. The injunctions of Buddhism were 'to apply to everyone at all times'. When he thought of the world, this was (alas) an idle dream—though one must not forget that he played a major role in creating the formal world Buddhist movement, such as it is. But when the aspiration was aimed at China, it was more influential.

When Master Hsing Yun (b.1927), the founder and still the leader of Fo Guang Shan, as a very young man in China encountered Tai Xu, he was inspired by his teaching 'that every person was responsible for the survival of the nation, and every monk was responsible for the advancement of Buddhism'.<sup>21</sup> As mentioned above, however, it

20. Darui Long, 'An Interfaith Dialogue between the Chinese Buddhist Leader Taixu and Christians', *Buddhist Christian Studies* vol. 20 (2000): 167-89.

21. Fo Zhi Yin, *Chuan Din: Biography of Hsing Yun*, chap. 4: 'The Survival of Buddhism is my personal Responsibility'. Translation from <http://www.templevisit.org>.

is the basic *Protestant* assumption that the *lay* adherent 'should strive to make Buddhism permeate his whole society'; and here we find Hsing Yun applying it specifically to monks! Hsing Yun has however preserved Tai Xu's internationalist aspirations, and they have inspired him to mastermind the spread of Fo Guang Shan into over 200 temples and meditation centres, with maybe 6 million members, distributed across the entire world.

### *Fo Guang Shan as a Denomination*

The classification of social phenomena is not necessarily a worthwhile exercise, but sometimes it has heuristic value. So far I have referred to both humanistic Buddhism and the three Taiwanese movements which derive from it—Fo Guang Shan, Tzu Chi and Fagu Shan—simply as 'movements'. Taking inspiration from Max Weber, a typology<sup>22</sup> of religious movements has been devised which is based on the premise 'that there is a continuum along which religions fall, ranging from the protest-like orientation of *sects* to the equilibrium-maintaining *churches*'. 'Churches, ecclesia, denominations and sects form a continuum with decreasing influence on society'. (We may ignore the ecclesia.) As against sects, churches are 'closely allied with the state and secular powers; frequently there is overlapping of responsibilities'. A church is 'organized as a hierarchical bureaucratic institution with a complex division of labour'. 'Denominations come into existence when churches lose their religious monopoly in a society. A denomination is one religion among many'.<sup>23</sup>

The three Taiwanese movements I have referred to above can all be characterised as 'New Religious Movements'; and those who have studied new religious movements which derive from Christianity are likely to expect them to fall within the category of sects. However, Dr. Yao and I would argue that in Fo Guang Shan Master Hsing Yun has created a Buddhist denomination. We think that this development has not been produced by his intentions—indeed, he may well find it of no interest or importance—but by the circumstances in which he has lived and worked. Since we further think

22. The typology began as a dichotomy between church and sect; it was later elaborated by Weber's colleague Ernst Troeltsch. See Johnstone, *Religion in Society*, pp. 111-15.

23. All the above quotations are from the *Wikipedia* article 'Classification of religious movements'.

that the denominational character of FGS casts light on many of its other features, this point deserves emphasis and expansion.

Neither in China nor in Taiwan did Buddhism ever command the allegiance of so large a part of the population that it could be called a church (in this technical vocabulary). At the end of the Second World War, Buddhism was already widespread in Taiwan, but was scattered in many different and uncoordinated institutions, as it had been on the mainland.<sup>24</sup> When in 1949 the Communists under Mao Tse Tung were finally victorious, and Chiang Kai Shek and about 2 million followers fled to Taiwan, the Guo Min Dang<sup>25</sup> government brought over from the mainland, and re-created as a state body in Taiwan, the Buddhist Association of the Republic of China (BAROC). The antecedents of BAROC go all the way back to the Revolution of 1911, and in the next two decades such associations proliferated; many of them were either set up by Tai Xu or quarrelled with him. The first which lasted was set up in Shanghai in 1929, initially by Tai Xu's enemies, and he finally won control of it in 1945.<sup>26</sup> Until the end of the GMD dictatorship in 1989, all ordinations in Taiwan had to be performed by and registered with BAROC. Thus for the first 20 years of its existence, FGS was allowed to grow beside BAROC, and can be said to have gradually infringed the state's monopoly of control. In both China and Taiwan BAROC for a short while had some church-like features, in that the government not only recognised it but also gave it control over Buddhist personnel, property, institutions and activities. It is by applying this yardstick that we see FGS as a denomination developing in contrast to a church.

Hsing Yun was born in Jiangsu province in SE China and has always spoken Chinese with that regional accent; for public speeches to a Taiwanese audience he commonly uses an interpreter into Hokkien. His career in Taiwan began in Yilan province in NE Taiwan, when he became abbot of a temple there in 1954.<sup>27</sup> In 1967 he founded Fo Guang Shan near Kaohsiung in southern Taiwan, and it acquired a constitution in 1972. Strictly speaking, the name Fo Guang Shan refers only to ordained members, the Saṅgha of monks and nuns; but

24. For the position of Buddhism in Taiwan during this period see Yu-Shuang Yao: *Taiwan's Tzu Chi as Engaged Buddhism*, chapter 1, and 'Japanese Influence on Buddhism in Taiwan', *Journal of the Oxford Centre for Buddhist Studies* vol. 6 (November 2014).

25. In English also Kuomintang.

26. Welch, *The Buddhist Revival in China*, pp. 62-65.

27. Chandler (2004: 307).

here I use the term in a wider sense, as many people do, to include its lay supporters. The laity had no formal organization until in 1992 Hsing Yun founded for them, and himself headed, the Buddhist Light International Association (BLIA) (Guo Ji Fo Guang Hui) as a global extension of FGS. He resigned as abbot of the FGS monastery, but this did not diminish his paramount status in FGS. There is nowadays no formal term which includes both the FGS Saṅgha and the BLIA, but such informal terms as 'the Fo Guang people' are widely used.

Ronald L. Johnstone, in his Weberian book *Religion in Society: A Sociology of Religion*,<sup>28</sup> provides the following eight characteristics of denominations:

1. similar to churches, but unlike sects, in being on relatively good terms with the state and secular powers and may even attempt to influence government at times.
2. maintain at least tolerant and usually fairly friendly relationships with other denominations in a context of religious pluralism.
3. rely primarily on birth for membership increase, though it will also accept converts; some actively pursue evangelization.
4. accept the principle of at least modestly changing doctrine and practice and tolerate some theological diversity and dispute.
5. follow a fairly routinized ritual and worship service that explicitly discourages spontaneous emotional expression.
6. train and employ professional clergy who must meet formal requirements for certification
7. accept less extensive involvement from members than do sects, but more involvement than churches.
8. often draw disproportionately from the middle and upper classes of society.

Considering that the above is only an attempt to describe an ideal type, we shall see that the extent of the fit to FGS is remarkable.

1. When Hsing Yun began his career in Taiwan the government of Chiang Kai Shek had vested monopolistic control over Buddhism in BAROC, so the founding and growth of FGS could take place only because Hsing Yun was extremely skilful in maintaining good

28. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 5th edn., 1997. I have slightly abbreviated the wording.

relations with the secular powers, even to the extent of occasionally wielding some influence with them. That he took bureaucratic control of his lay membership may well have helped to consolidate his position in the eyes of the government. A detail which indicates his position is that in 1999 he persuaded the government to make the Buddha's birthday a national holiday.

2. After the introduction of democracy in 1989, rapid political and social change brought true religious pluralism to Taiwan, even within the Buddhist fold. Since then, the state holds no control over ordinations, and (unlike the governments of most countries where Buddhism is entrenched) does not even register them, so many more Buddhist movements and institutions have sprung up. We shall see under point 4 that FGS is what Christians term a 'broad church' and accepts a remarkably wide range of doctrinal belief and practice. Master Hsing Yun's catholicity goes even further, in that he has always followed his eirenic policy of being on good terms with everyone, and it is said that FGS chaplains are happy to offer consolation etc to members of other religions.

3. At first blush it would appear that FGS obviously cannot rely on birth for membership increase, both because it has been founded too recently and because its more devoted members tend to be celibate clergy. And yet, if we take account of its circumstances, this criterion fits FGS very well. Hsing Yun and his followers undertake a good deal of evangelisation, normally in a moderate tone; but most of their audience will be people from a Buddhist family background, who experience joining FGS as an intensification of a mild or dormant commitment. This will tend to be true whether they join as laity or as Saṅgha members. We must remember that joining the FGS Saṅgha is a very long, slow process, involving years of preparation, so that it cannot be carried out in a sudden short spell of enthusiasm.

4. One aspect of Hsing Yun's pragmatic genius has always been his easy tolerance of a range of diversity in doctrine and practice. This reaches a point at which it may puzzle a Westerner, but it follows a strong tradition in mainstream Chinese Buddhism. Buddhism is of course an ideology, and in particular holds strong views on some ethical matters; but at the same time it often finds room for very different lifestyles and religious practices.

This comes across strikingly in the FGS combination of Zen and Pure Land Buddhism, traditions which in Japan have usually been contrasted: Zen is held to be typical of *jiriki*, literally 'own power', meaning that one has to reach Enlightenment by one's own efforts, while Pure Land Buddhism is typical of *tariki*, literally 'other power', according to which Enlightenment can only come through the help of Amida<sup>29</sup> Buddha. In China, however, these two have often been combined. Describing the great Ch'an (Jap: Zen) monasteries of central China in the 1930s, Holmes Welch writes that many monasteries had both a meditation hall and a hall for reciting the Buddha's name, though in some monasteries the same hall could be used for both. Every day monks sat all day in Ch'an meditation, which was their 'work'. There were perhaps 8 periods of work a day, mostly of about an hour, and 'each period was divided into circumambulation and sitting. While the inmates circumambulated, they recited Buddha's name aloud'. While they sat they either tried to solve a metaphysical riddle<sup>30</sup> (Jap: *koan*) or concentrated on the Buddha's name. Senior monks gave explanations 'of both Ch'an and Pure Land methods ... Since both sects aim to reduce attachment to the ego, they saw no contradiction'. The abbot remarked to Welch: 'Who is going to help you stop your whole mind from stirring? You have to do it yourself. In Pure Land just as much as in Ch'an, you have to depend on yourself'.<sup>31</sup>

However, simply to say that FGS combines Ch'an with Pure Land Buddhism seriously understates its catholicity. As Hsing Yun has said in an FGS promotional video, FGS is like a 'department store that sells many things'.<sup>32</sup> Madsen continues:

Buddha's Light Mountain also intends to unify the eight major lineages of Chinese Buddhism. Almost any kind of Buddhist practice can be engaged in at the temple ... Since most people in Taiwan engage in some form of Buddhist practice at some phase of their lives, the complex of symbols offered by [FGS] contains something that can speak to almost everyone. Its symbolic net is wide enough... even to include non-believers. 'This isn't a religion', said one of the [FGS] nuns... 'It is our cultural tradition'.<sup>33</sup>

29. His cult began in early Indian Mahāyāna. His Sanskrit name is Amitābha, meaning 'Of Infinite Light'.

30. Not a good translation of *koan*. 'Paradoxical question' may come nearer.

31. Welch, *The Practice of Chinese Buddhism 1900–1950*, pp. 398–99.

32. Quoted by Madsen, p. 58.

33. *Ibid.*

5. Though Buddhism is indeed an ideology, institutionalised Buddhism has always tended to pay more attention to behaviour than to belief. For example, nowhere in Buddhism can one be expelled from the Saṅgha for a belief; that can only be the result of certain forms of deviant behaviour. It is therefore to be expected that corporate ritual and worship are routinised in FGS, and allow hardly any scope for spontaneous emotional expression.

6. From the outset of FGS, Hsing Yun has always laid enormous emphasis on the training and certification of professional clergy, the Saṅgha (point 6). The mere fact that the first thing he set up when founding FGS was not a shrine but a seminary speaks volumes. This illustrates on the one hand how Tai Xu moulded Hsing Yun's views, and on the other how FGS (in our broad sense) contrasts with those Buddhist movements which promote lay leadership – a stance which in a Buddhist context is distinctly sectarian.

7. The creation of the BLIA, giving some formal recognition to the role of lay support, fits the criterion that by and large the involvement of lay members is less intense than one usually finds in sects.

8. The only characteristic of a denomination in Johnson's terms which may not fit FGS particularly well is the last in the list: that denominations tend to appeal mainly to members of the upper and middle classes. Madsen sees in FGS a 'relatively high identification with community-based business owners and local officials'. He could only use preliminary data from a social survey conducted by other researchers, and we have not yet acquired firmer data ourselves; but we have the strong impression that most 'FGS people' are drawn from the lower middle class. The main explanation for this lies in the historical situation. No doubt many of the refugees who arrived at about the same time as Hsing Yun were from the upper echelons of Chinese society, but they had to leave most of their possessions behind them when they fled. Others were from the military. Particularly in the early years, Hsing Yun, himself a powerless immigrant, drew much of his support from these refugees from the mainland, most of whom were now *déclassé* and had become lower middle class. But he rose to become a member of the GMD's central committee, so one could argue that his links with the GMD do offer an analogy with what in more settled societies would be identifiable as support from the upper class.

*Non-Buddhist practice by Buddhists*

In theistic religions, it is normal to ask God or gods for goods and welfare, and this is called petitionary prayer: 'Give us this day our daily bread.' Buddhists do not deny that there exist spirits who can give us bread, and where Buddhism is a church, they generally accept that people make such requests, which may or may not be answered. Ideally, however, the ordained, i.e., monks and nuns, are not supposed to have worldly desires or make requests for their fulfilment. (Naturally, practice does not always reflect theory.)

Thus a lay person who is otherwise Buddhist may make any request, from winning the lottery to the birth of a son, to a non-Buddhist deity, whether the deity be a local spirit, a saint, or the god of some other religion, and non-Buddhist beliefs and practices which some regard as superstitious, such as fortune-telling, are likewise tolerated. However, Buddhist reformists tend to take a stricter line in this regard, and condemn recourse to other belief systems. In this they resemble the leaders of the Protestant Reformation who regarded parts of Roman Catholicism as idolatry.

Despite its ancient history and wide diffusion in China, the Buddhism which Tai Xu struggled to reform was a minority religion. As he was constantly complaining, Buddhism in China was extremely disorganised, decentralised and correspondingly varied. So it is not surprising that Tai Xu took a Protestant line against superstitious practices and the worship of folk deities. As Madsen writes of Tai Xu's determination to modernise Buddhism:

Modernization was in part conceived of as Westernization. For Tai Xu this entailed adaptation of some of the social gospel approach of contemporary Protestant missionaries, and a purge of 'superstitious' folk religious practices, together with an emphasis on the systematic philosophical articulation of religious beliefs sought by European scholars of religion.<sup>34</sup>

Hsing Yun's situation has been very different. Until 1989 Taiwan was a dictatorship and one had to be very cautious in uttering criticisms of the *status quo*. Besides, even though Buddhism was the largest religion, it did not command the allegiance of the majority of the population (and thus could not be considered as the equivalent of a church), and it was controlled by an official body, BAROC. Thus,

34. Madsen, pp. 62-63. In the latter respect, Tai Xu would have been resisting not so much folk religion as the widespread syncretism of Buddhism with Daoism and Confucianism.

although he has always deprecated certain customs such as fortune-telling, Hsing Yun has not tried to stop people from practising folk religion by worshipping folk deities. He is reported to have said:

Folk religions are based on desire. The aims of the followers of folk religions are just to gain the Bodhisattvas' or gods' protection and assistance in becoming rich. They seek security, good family life, longevity, and good fortune. Therefore their starting point is desire. We should establish our beliefs and actions on the basis of giving all things to others. Religious belief implies devotion, sacrifice, and altruism.<sup>35</sup>

Thus Hsing Yun's tolerance of folk religion concerns mainly beliefs about this-worldly reality, but does not necessarily extend to concomitant practices.<sup>36</sup>

*Buddhism modernised but with Saṅgha leadership*

Tai Xu cared passionately about raising the educational standards of all Chinese Buddhists, but he naturally concentrated his efforts on educating the Saṅgha, in the hope that they would in turn educate the rest of the Buddhist population. Moreover, conditions were so bad that he always had the greatest trouble in raising money. Hsing Yun, while he began his career amidst poverty and hardship, came to work in a peaceful and relatively stable society, which enabled him to found educational institutions of all kinds. How, then, did he come so far to deviate from the Protestant model that he laid the responsibility for the flourishing of Buddhism squarely on the shoulders of the Saṅgha?

Hsing Yun's model, unlike Tai Xu's, has been the general Christian idea that the clergy must involve themselves with the laity: in Christian terms, they should act as priests rather than monks or nuns. He still sees the Saṅgha as quite distinct from laity; but the analogue in his vision is the Roman Catholic hierarchy. He has even expressed a vision of creating a Buddhist equivalent to a Vatican Council.<sup>37</sup>

We have suggested in a previous publication<sup>38</sup> that an understanding of 'humanistic Buddhism' in Taiwan is seriously deficient

35. Darius Long: 'Humanistic Buddhism from Venerable Tai Xu to Grand Master Hsing Yun', p. 69.

36. See Madsen, p. 65 for more on this point.

37. *FGS Yearbook* 31, p. 26.

38. See fn. 7 above.

if it leaves out of account that Taiwan, historically a part of China, remains fundamentally a Confucian society. Confucianism teaches that it is the collective which demands our total allegiance, and the concerns of the individual must always be subordinated to the concerns of the larger unit—ultimately to the welfare of the whole of Chinese society. How the welfare of society is determined and how it can be attained is to be decided by a hierarchy of authority. Throughout society the model for this hierarchy is supplied by the patriarchal family. The details of how all this is carried out are supplied by the bureaucracy, a form of organization which China has bequeathed to the world.

Hsing Yun has found it easy to appreciate the straightforward hierarchy and authoritarianism of the Roman Catholic church, and to institutionalise it in Fo Guang Shan, where it is applied with the bureaucratic rigour which assures the authorities and the local public that this institution follows the best tradition of administration.<sup>39</sup> Within the FGS Saṅgha there are 8 named ranks with many more scales, and an elaborate code for promotion. Many criteria contribute to ranking, but the most important is educational attainment. The certified qualifications which entitle monks and nuns to hold office are nothing but the educational qualifications in Buddhist studies earned at the movement's own colleges. This overwhelming emphasis on formal education is the legacy of Hsing Yun's own teacher Tai Xu; but perhaps even Tai Xu would have been surprised by the degree to which written academic examinations serve the purpose of establishing the monastic hierarchy. The model for this feature is presumably the traditional practice of the Chinese government.

While a complex hierarchy of ranks and offices was traditional in large Chinese monasteries, probably the only features of the FGS administration which distinguish it from the traditional monastic norm are this emphasis on formal education as the paramount qualification, and the very large role given in the hierarchy to nuns.<sup>40</sup>

If we look at the summit of this hierarchy, the authority wielded by the movement's founder, now known as Grand Master Hsing Yun, is of course charismatic, as against traditional or rational/bureaucratic. This status is perhaps symbolized by the fact that he

39. We have been asked whether this indicates that FGS is becoming a (Weberian) church, but this cannot be, as its members are only a minority of the population.

40. *FGS 20th Yearbook*, 1987, pp. 38-40.

resigned as abbot of the main monastery in 1992, when he founded the BLIA, and since then has as it were floated in the stratosphere above all who hold designated positions.

The Grand Master is now 90 and, alas, blind. In theory his authority is undiminished, but it has to be conveyed to the world by a small inner circle of followers, most of them senior nuns. Hsing Yun has over the years designated particular monks as his successors by making them abbots, but two have already predeceased him. (The current abbot is Ven. Xin Bao.) It is noteworthy that while some 90% of FGS monastics are women (i.e., nuns),<sup>41</sup> and women likewise predominate (though slightly less) in the upper ranks of the bureaucracy, no designated successor has ever been female.

Things may change; but until now Hsing Yun has had more complete control over his church than the Pope has over Roman Catholics. This is not considered remarkable, since it stands in the general Chinese tradition of the autocratic 'master'. Hsing Yun recognises that his position is comparable to that of the Pope. He has visited Pope John Paul II, and cultivated a relationship, both in public and in private, with the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Taiwan, the late Paul Shan Kuo-Hsi, S.J.. FGS has features which show Christian influence, but, in contrast to Theravāda Buddhism in Sri Lanka, it is not Protestant influence. Hsing Yun sees his monastic disciples as comparable to Roman Catholic priests and nuns, whose calling should bring them into constant involvement with the laity. He thus preserves the Buddhist tradition of the special status of the Saṅgha, while showing them how to adapt to a more secular world.

But that is another story.

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41. It is not entirely clear or generally agreed why in Taiwan nowadays nuns so greatly outnumber monks. The most important reason may simply be the shortage of male vocations. This in turn may be due to the decline in the size of families, which by tradition require a male head, and to the compulsory military service for males over 20. On the other hand, the career of Buddhist nun offers an unmarried woman the chance to contribute to society.

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## Max Weber's Concept of Legitimation in Hinduism Revisited

Hermann Kulke

### Abstract

This paper demonstrates the continuing relevance of Weber's concept of legitimation as an intrinsic and seminal aspect of his study on the Hindu social system and processes of state formation and Hinduization. In the light of this analysis the paper questions the validity of Sheldon Pollock's recent strong critique of the concept of legitimation.

Keywords: Max Weber, J.C. van Leur, L. Dumont, M. Singer, S. Pollock, Hinduism, legitimation, early medieval state formation in India and Southeast Asia, tribal deities and chieftaincies, little kings.

This paper has two areas of focus. Its main emphasis is to demonstrate the continuing relevance of Weber's hitherto almost unnoticed concept of legitimation as an intrinsic and seminal aspect of his study on the Hindu social system and processes of state formation and Hinduization. The second concern is a reflection on Sheldon Pollock's recent strong critique of the concept of legitimation.

As Wolfgang Schluchter (1984b: 45) rightly points out, Weber focusses his analysis of the Hindu social system on the order of the castes. Weber's definition of the caste system strongly affected conceptual discourses on his definition of Hinduism. But it had little influence on actual anthropological research, as is even perceivable in Louis Dumont's *Homo Hierarchicus. The Caste System and its Implications* (Dumont 1980). In contrast to this, Weber's concept of legitimation had and still has a direct impact on actual research on processes of Hinduization and early state formation in India and Southeast Asia. As will be shown in some detail, it played an essential role in mid-twentieth century in redefining processes of Indianization of Southeast Asia (Kulke 1986b; Legge 1992). And more recently it influences directly and indirectly the analysis of Hinduization and early state formation in slightly Hinduized tribal polities and kingdoms of early medieval India. Moreover, Weber's legitimation concept has left clear traces on the 'Processual Model of Integrative State Formation', emphasising the achievement of

legitimation as an essential aspect of state formation. It has now been accepted as an alternative model to Indian feudalism and the segmentary state (Singh 2011; Sahu and Kulke 2015).

A major cause of the scant attention paid to legitimation in more general discourses on Weber's concept of Hinduism is that, in contrast to legitimacy, legitimation plays only a minor role in Weber's central work *Economy and Society* (E&S) as is already apparent from a short look at its index.<sup>1</sup> Another minor problem is the observation that the distinctly different meanings of legitimation and legitimacy is not always clearly distinguished. To my understanding, legitimation refers to socio-political and cultural *processes* that aim at establishing or reconfirming and consolidating a not yet fully accepted legitimacy of domination, whereas legitimacy constitutes an already existing legitimate order. But it is not the intention of this paper to enter into a debate on Weber's famous three types of legitimate domination. Its intention is to emphasize the actual significance of legitimation in Weber's study of Hinduism and its persistent influence on more recent studies of state formation and Hinduization.

### *Weber's Legitimation Thesis*

The most relevant source of Weber's concept of legitimation is his introductory pages to Hinduism and Buddhism in its sub-chapter 'Diffusion Patterns of Hinduism' ('Die Art der Propaganda des Hinduismus') (RI: 9-18; MWG 1/22: 60-72). They contain several dispersed but precise statements that comprise, when taken together, a fairly clear presentation of his concept of legitimation applied to the Indian context. But hitherto they have been barely noticed.<sup>2</sup> A

1. The index of original German edition of the year 1956 counts only six pages referring to legitimation, its English translation not even one.

2. Rare exceptions are Sam Whimster (forthcoming *Max Weber Studies* 18.2) and Gellner in the previous issue of *Max Weber Studies* (also, Gellner 2009: 53) and Kaesler (2014: 156f.) who also refer briefly to the relevant pages 9-21 of RI. As will be pointed out in greater detail, even Pollock (2006: 32, 518 and 607-648) refers in his separate subsection 'Legitimation, Ideology and Related Functionalisms' only very briefly to E&S, whereas *The Religion of India*, hereafter RI, is not even mentioned at all in his otherwise very detailed bibliography. The same applies for example to S.S. Wollin's article 'Max Weber: Legitimation, Method and the Politics of Theory' (1981) and P. Lassman's article (2000) on 'Politics, power and legitimation' in the *Cambridge Compendium to Weber*. In this context Gellner (2001: 86) is certainly correct when he writes 'It is my impression that it [RI] has been only partly read and rarely understood'.

notable exception is Georg Berkemer's short but precise summary of Weber's statements in the German text of RI (Berkemer 2012: 49-51). In the following I shall quote at some length Weber's relevant passages as I regard their applicability to the study of Hinduization and pre-colonial state formation in India and Southeast Asia as one of Weber's most important still relevant statements.

But before taking note of Weber's quotations, a short explanation of his terminology might be appropriate. The second subsection of his first chapter 'Das hinduistische soziale System' has the title 'Die Art der Propaganda des Hinduismus' (MWG I/20: 1).<sup>3</sup> It is remarkable that Weber does not explain the use of the rather unusual term of 'propaganda' in the context Hinduism. A possible explanation could be that he used it uncritically as an equivalent of 'Hinduisierung' (MWG I/20: 66 twice and once in 67; RI: 14, 16). The term Hinduization was already common in English in Weber's time but most likely not yet in Germany, the reason why he put it once even in quotation marks (MWG I/20: 67). The otherwise often criticised translators Gerth and Martindale had understandably problems with Weber's strange term 'Propaganda' and translated the title of the subtitle to my mind correctly as 'Diffusion Patterns of Hinduism'. We shall come back again to these matters in connection with Weber's differentiation of 'extensive' and 'intensive' propaganda.

The following quotation is the beginning of the subsection 'Die Art der Propaganda des Hinduismus' (Diffusion Patterns of Hinduism). It clearly demonstrates that 'Propaganda des Hinduismus' refers to processes which are usually understood as Hinduization.

Hindu propaganda [*sic*] in the grand manner occurred in the past. In the course of about eight hundred years the present Hindu system has spread from a small region in Northern India to an area comprising over 200 million people.<sup>4</sup> This missionary propagation was accomplished in opposition to 'animistic' folk belief and in conflict with highly developed salvation religions. Ordinarily, the propagation of Hinduism occurs in approximately the following way. The ruling stratum of an 'animistic' tribal territory begins to imitate specific Hindu customs in something like the following order: abstention from meat, particularly beef, the absolute refusal to butcher cows; the total abstinence from intoxicating drinks. [...] The ruling stratum gives up mar-

3. It is interesting that this title occurs only in the Table of Contents, but not as a subtitle in Weber's original text. One would expect it at the top of p. 60 of MWG I/20. In RI its changed title is rightly placed on the corresponding p. 9.

4. It is expedient to be reminded of South Asia's meanwhile eightfold increase of its population at this centenary celebration of Weber's Hinduism studies.

riage practices that may deviate from Hindu customs and organizes itself into exogamous sibs. [...] The assumption of additional Hindu customs follows rapidly; restrictions are placed upon contact and table community; widows are forced into celibacy; daughters are given into marriage before puberty without being asked (RI: 9).

Native deities are rebaptized with the names of Hindu gods and goddesses. Finally, tribal priests are eliminated<sup>5</sup> and some brahman is requested to provide and take charge of ritual concerns and [...] provide testimony to the fact that they – the rulers of the tribe – were of ancient, only temporarily forgotten, knightly (*kshatriya*) blood. Or under favourable circumstances, the tribal priests borrow the way of Brahman's way of life, acquire some knowledge of the Vedas, and maintain that they are themselves priests of some special Vedic school and members of an ancient well-known sib (*gotra*) going back to such and such sage (*Rishi*). Presumably it had only been forgotten that they had immigrated from an ancient Hindu region centuries ago. Now they seek to establish relations with recognized Indian Brahmans. [...] Pedigree, and the required origin-myth, possibly reaching back to epic or pre-epic times, are borrowed or simply invented, documented, permitting the claim to the rank of a Rajput (RI: 10).

Weber then points out the efforts of

the ruling stratum [to seek] social intercourse on equal footing with equivalent strata in ancient Hindu territory [...] to attain intermarriage and commensalism with its Rajput sibs, acceptance of food cooked in water from Brahmanas [and] admission of their own Brahmans to old Brahmanical schools and cloisters. But it is extremely difficult and as a rule does not initially succeed. [...] Alas, time and wealth make a difference. Large dowries to Rajputs who marry their daughters, and other means of exerting social pressure, are employed and there comes a time – today often relatively quickly – when the manner of origin is forgotten and social acceptance is completed. A certain residue of rank degradation usually remains the lasting burden of the parvenu (RI: 10f).

Weber's immediately following statement is important as it introduces his concept of 'extensive' and 'intensive propaganda'.

There, in substance, is the typical way in which Hinduism has been extensively propagated in new territories since its full development. This extensive propaganda was paralleled by an intensive propaganda which followed similar principles wherever Hinduism held sway (RI: 11).<sup>6</sup>

5. As will be pointed out later on, Weber is clearly wrong in this point. Hinduization of tribal deities and priests is not achieved by their elimination but primarily by their integration into the stepwise emerging royal Hindu cults (Kulke 1992; Schnepel 2002, 2005b; Mallebrein 2011a).

6. 'Dies ist im wesentlichen der Typus, nach welchen sich die extensive Pro-

It is worth mentioning that this distinction of extensive and intensive propaganda of Hinduism remains otherwise unmentioned in RI. It can be regarded as Weber's rough but accurate classification of the two modes of Hinduization. Extensive propaganda/Hinduization and its modes of legitimation was promoted by chieftains and little kings in still predominantly tribal areas. Intensive propaganda/Hinduization refers to socio-economic and cultural processes, e.g., matters of caste mobility, in already fully Hinduized regions. It is obvious that our analysis of Weber's concept of legitimation focuses on the 'extensive propaganda' and its various facets. We shall meet again this distinction of both modes of 'propaganda' in connection with the post-Weberian concepts of Rajputization and Sanskritization.

Perhaps because of personal life experience with social and cultural restrictions in Wilhelmine Germany (Kulke 1984a), Weber was particularly fascinated by the motives of those social groups that desired Hinduization, despite the anticipated rigid rules and restrictions of personal freedom and cheerfulness. Because, according to Weber,

the tribes which would be transformed into 'castes', particularly their ruling stratum assume an enslaving yoke (Sklavenjoch) of rituals, hardly duplicated elsewhere in the world. They surrendered pleasures—for instance, alcohol, which is relinquished in general only with great reluctance. What, then, was the reason? (RI:16).

For Weber the answer is evident.

Legitimation by a recognized religion has always been decisive for an alliance between politically and socially dominant classes and the priesthood. Integration into the Hindu community provided religious domination for the ruling stratum (Herrenschicht). It not only endowed the ruling stratum of the barbarians with recognized ranking in the cultural world of Hindus, but, through their transformation into castes, secured their superiority over the subject classes with an efficiency unsurpassed by any other religion (RI: 16).

Weber summarised his conclusions about the role of legitimation, referring indirectly also to the two modes of intensive and extensive propaganda/Hinduization:

paganda des Hinduismus in neuen Gebieten seit den Zeiten seiner Vollentwicklung vollzogen hat. Neben ihr her ging eine intensive Propaganda innerhalb seines Herrschaftsgebiets von prinzipiell ganz ähnlicher Art' (MWG1/20:62).

The approximately correct view may be formulated provisionally: the internalization of the Hindu order by underprivileged strata, guests or pariah tribes, represent the adjustment of the socially weak strata to the given caste order – the legitimation of their social and economic situation. However, the struggle for or against acceptance of Hinduism for entire territories generally was led by the rulers or ruling strata. In any case, the strongest motive for the assimilation of Hinduism was [in both cases] undoubtedly the desire for legitimation (RI: 18).

Moreover, Weber's thesis that legitimation was a major reason for the resurgence of Hinduism and its final victory over Buddhism is certainly also noteworthy:

Favourable political circumstances contributed to the victory. Decisive, however, was the fact that Hinduism could provide an incomparable religious support for the legitimation interest of the ruling strata. [...] The salvation religions were unable to supply this support (RI: 18).

This statement is, though albeit with limitations, applicable only to India and its Mahayana Buddhism and certainly not to Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia where Theravada Buddhism functioned as the dominant state religion.

*The First Application of Weber's Legitimation Thesis:  
Van Leurs Studies on Early State Formation in Indonesia*

Initially the reaction to Weber's *Hinduismus und Buddhismus* (1916/17, 1921) was rather reluctant. In Germany, it was disregarded or just bypassed by the dominant classical Indology. Internationally, the language problem might have mattered until Hans Gerth's and Don Martindale's translation of *Hinduismus und Buddhismus* was published in 1958 under the title *The Religion of India*. Therefore it may not be completely coincidental that most likely the very first direct influence of Weber's Indian studies is discernible in the Netherlands where German language was and still is very familiar. And it is also not surprising that in the Netherlands Weber's thesis on Hinduization and early state formation was applied not to India but to Indonesia at the University of Leiden, the centre of Dutch studies on *Nederlandsch-Indië*. Already in 1934, Jacob Cornelis van Leur, a young 26 years-old Dutch scholar submitted his thesis on Indonesian trade and society which contains very direct references to Weber's concept of Hinduization and legitimation. As a civil servant in Dutch Indonesia he continued his studies but was killed in March 1942 in a battle in the Java Sea. The English translation of

his dissertation was published posthumously in 1967 by the Royal Tropical Institute at Amsterdam together with a selection of his further publications under the title *Indonesian Trade and Society. Essays in Asian Social and Economic History* (Van Leur 1967).<sup>7</sup> In their Foreword the editors pointed out that Van Leur

made an attempt at analysing early Asian society with the aid of the methodology of sociology and economic history developed by Max Weber, a methodology which at least for Indonesian history had not yet been applied. That Van Leur came to such surprising and often revolutionary conclusions lay not only in the method applied, however, but just as much in the broad catholic knowledge and the sharply critical attitude regarding the theories current at the time which despite his youth he was able to bring to bear (Van Leur 1967: V).

It's worth reading what Van Leur wrote in 1934 about Weber:

As a first orientation and introduction to India, *The Hindu Social System* and the remainder of the second volume of Max Weber's studies in the sociology of religion should be mentioned before anything else. It is a work unfortunately too little known – as the work of that great master of social sciences is in general too little known, especially in Dutch circles – but one more valuable and stimulating for the reader than the specialized publications of indologists on the subject. The indologists, still predominantly philological in their aims, work in the field of socio-economic history chiefly with traditional, threadbare categories (Van Leur 1967: 22).

Van Leur's new 'revolutionary' hypothesis was his uncompromising attack on the imagined theories of the expansion of India's culture to Southeast Asia. According to the then internationally prevailing theories, the Indian culture had been transplanted in its entirety to the still uncivilized barbaric Southeast Asia by victorious Indian kings and warriors with their entourage, and by traders, Brahmins and Buddhist monks. This idea was likewise favoured by the ideology of European colonial powers as the new western transmitters of culture and by Indian nationalists with their imagined concepts of 'Greater India' and 'Hindu Colonies in the Far East' (Majumdar 1963).<sup>8</sup> In 1926, the Greater India Society was established in Calcutta. Its *Journal of the Greater India Society* and the series *Hindu Colonies in the Far East* doubtlessly also published scholarly articles and monographs about

7. The Dutch title of his thesis is *Eenige beschouwingen betreffende den ouden aziatischen handel*. (Some Observations Concerning Early Asian Trade) Middelburg: Den Boer, 1934. (His thesis comprises pp. 1-116.)

8. In this context the term 'Hindu' is always treated as an equivalent of 'Indian'.

India's cultural influence in Southeast Asia (Chong-Guan 2013). But they became the mouthpiece of the adherents of the Greater India idea. In a special lecture Majumdar pointed out in 1940:

Intercourse in this region first began by way of trade, both by land and sea. But soon it developed into regular colonization, and Indians established political authority in various parts of the vast Asiatic continent that lay to the south of China and to the east and southeast of India. Numerous Hindu states rose and flourished during a period of more than thousand years. The Hindu colonists brought with them the whole framework of their culture and civilization and this was transplanted in its entirety among the people who had not yet emerged from their primitive barbarism (Majumdar 1940: 21).

Internationally, 'the much maligned term of colonies' and the concept of Greater India did not survive for long the demise of the European colonies in the East and the independence of their colonies (Sarkar 1970: 5). However, it is significant for the survival of the nationalist ideology of 'Hindu Colonies' and 'Greater India' in India that Majumdar's lecture was reprinted in 1949 and 1958 and again in a selection of his articles published in 1979, the year before his death.<sup>9</sup>

Under the influence of Max Weber Van Leur instead 'uncompromisingly accorded primacy to indigenous initiative' (Mabbett 1977:143) and emphasized the active role of Indonesia's rulers as they invited Indian Brahmins for organizing their emerging kingdoms:

The chief disseminator of the process of 'Indianization' was the Brahmin priesthood; the aim of the 'Brahmin mission' was not the preaching of any revealed doctrine of salvation, but the ritualistic and bureaucratic subjugation and organization of the newly entered regions. Wherever the process of 'Indianization' took place, 'religious' organization was accompanied by social organization—division of castes, legitimation of the ruling groups, assurance of the supremacy of the Brahmins (Van Leur 1967:97).

Van Leur's accordance with Weber's concept of Hinduization and legitimation becomes particularly obvious by his quoting verbatim in German in his Dutch thesis (Van Leur 1934: 121f.) Weber's comparison of the invitation of German people by Slavic princes with the invitation of North Indian Brahmins by early South Indian rulers (MWG I/20: 69, reproduced here in its English translation):

9. R.C. Majumdar, *India and South East Asia*, edited by K.S. Ramachandran and S.P. Gupta (Delhi: B.R. Publishing Corporation).

As the Slavic princes of the East called into their lands German priests, knights, merchants and peasants, so the kings of the East Ganges Plain and of Southern India from the Tamils to the southern tip called upon Brahmins trained in writing and administration. Their services were enlisted to assist the prince in formal organisation, in the Hindu manner, of his patrimonial bureaucratic rule and status structure and to consecrate the prince as a legitimate Raja or Maharaja in the sense of the Hindu Dharmashastras, Brahmanas, and Puranas. Telling documents of land-grants issued sometimes simultaneously to dozens, even hundreds of obviously immigrant Brahmins, are dispersed throughout India. Similar to the legitimation interest of the ruling groups are the interests lying back of the voluntary acceptance of Hindu rites by pariah peoples (RI: 16f).

Van Leur's seminal contribution to the early history of South East Asia and Indonesia in particular was his application of Weber's interpretation of processes of Hinduization and state formation in southern India directly to Indonesia:

By means of trade, whether carried on Indonesian shipping or through the intermediacy of Indian shipping, the Indonesian rulers and aristocratic groups came in contact with India, perhaps seeing it with their own eyes. In the same sort of attempt at legitimizing their interests [...] and organizing and domesticating their states and subjects, they [the early Indonesian rulers] called Indian civilization to the east, that is to say, they summoned the Brahman priesthood to their courts.

In view of the then dominating concept of 'Hindu colonies' his conclusions were indeed revolutionary:

There was then no 'Hindu colonization' in which 'colonial states' arose from intermitting trading voyages followed by permanent trading settlements, no 'Hindu colonies' from which the primitive indigenous population and first of all its headmen took over the superior civilization from the west and no learned Hindus in the midst of Indian colonists as advisers to their country men (Van Leur 1967: 98; 1934: 122).

It is significant that Van Leur quotes in a footnote again verbatim in German Weber's conclusion as it summarizes in a nutshell Weber's legitimation thesis and its applicability to processes of early state formation and Hinduization in Indonesia:

The movement against as well as in favour of the reception of Hinduism for whole territories emerged regularly from rulers or ruling strata and the reception had doubtlessly its strongest motive/reason in their interest in legitimation.<sup>10</sup>

10''Die Bewegung sowohl gegen wie für die Rezeption des Hinduismus für

Van Leur did not live to see the recognition of his bold and heretical hypothesis, not even in the Netherlands. But in 1946, only few months after Indonesia had declared its independence, F.D.K. Bosch delivered his famous inaugural lecture at Leiden University on 'Problems of the Hindu Colonization of Indonesia' (Bosch 1961). In his emphasis of the dominant role of the Brahmins in the propagation of Indian culture and his refutation of the existence of 'Hindu colonies' in Southeast Asia, Bosch referred explicitly to Van Leur's direct references to Max Weber. His lecture and the English publication of Van Leur's thesis initiated a long and often controversial discussion about processes of Indianization and marks the dividing line between colonial and post-colonial historiography in Southeast Asia (Coedès 1968; Mabbett 1977; Legge 1992; Kulke 2005a: 183-90, 2005b).<sup>11</sup> As Van Leur's and Bosch's concepts can be traced back directly to Weber, his legitimation thesis of external propagation and legitimation can thus be regarded as a truly seminal and sustained contribution of his Hinduism studies, even though initially to Southeast Asia rather than to India.

#### *Cultural Convergence of India and Southeast Asia*

In my contribution on 'Max Weber's Contribution to the Study of "Hinduization" in India and "Indianization" in Southeast Asia' to the conference at Delhi in 1984 on *Recent Research on Max Weber's Studies on Hinduism* (Kantowsky 1986), I referred already in some detail to Weber's influence on Van Leur's concept of Indianization of Southeast Asia (Kulke 1986b:108-11). In a kind of consistent advancement of Van Leur's application of Weber's concept of 'external propagation of Hinduism' to Southeast Asia, I drew up in 1989, in a special lecture at the Oosters Genootschap at Leiden, the concept of cultural convergence of corresponding cultural and socio-political processes of early state formation on both sides of the Bay of Bengal (Kulke 1990, 2015).<sup>12</sup>

ganze Gebiete ist regelmäßig von Herrschern oder Herrenschaften ausgegangen und die Rezeption hatte in deren Legitimationsinteresse ihr unzweifelhaft wichtigstes Motiv' (MWG1/20: 71; Van Leur 1934: 144 n. 34; engl. trans. 1967: 349 n. 37).

11. In his partly autobiographical article of 1995 about his Indonesian studies for more than sixty years, Wim Wertheim mentions that he wrote in 1956 in the Preface of his *Indonesian Society in Transition: A Study of Social Change*: 'My view of early Indonesian society is based to a large extent on the analysis of J.C. Van Leur' (Wertheim 1995: 20).

12. The paper 'The Concept of Cultural Convergence Revisited' was the keynote

If we look at the societies of these regions in the middle of the first millennium A.D., we observe a nearness and convergence in regards to their social evolution and the emergence of translocal chieftaincies and early patrimonial kingdoms. Parts of India, particularly North India under the Guptas, were certainly far advanced in comparison to Southeast Asia. But it was the nearness of processes of early state formation on both sides of the Bay of Bengal rather than the socio-political distance between imperial North Indian states and Southeast Asian chiefdoms which made the Indian model so attractive to early Southeast Asian rulers. For obvious reasons the Hindu model of a 'limited universal kingship'<sup>13</sup> was taken over by early local rulers of Southeast Asia from the princely states of South and Eastern India, rather than from the truly imperial Guptas of Northern India, and certainly not from the imperial court of China - a model that did not at all fit the requirements of contemporary Southeast Asia. Brahmins and scribes who brought the South Indian so-called Pallava *grantha* (script) to Indonesia in about 400 AD were thus not emissaries of powerful Hindu rulers of South India (where indeed no powerful empires existed at that time). They came rather from princely courts whose rulers had been and were still facing quite similar problems of legitimation of their newly acquired royal authority and 'domestication' of their people like their Southeast Asian colleagues. Obviously in South India and Southeast Asia there existed the same or at least similar socio-political need for a new type of legitimation which their traditionally egalitarian social norms and institutions were unable to provide (Kulke 1990, 1991 and 2014). Thus there seems to have existed an 'elective affinity' (to use Goethe's and Weber's term of 'Wahlverwandschaft') between Indian and Southeast Asian rulers based on the convergence of their societies. Once we look at converging processes of early state formation in this way, we understand why India's culture did not reach the various regions of Southeast Asia directly from India through an act of 'transplantation'. The spread of India's influences emerged from a 'complicated network of relations' (de Casparis 1983) of partners and of mutual processes of civilization on both sides of the Bay of Bengal.

of the conference 'Asian Encounters. Exploring Connected Histories' at Delhi University in November 2011 (Singh 2014; Kulke 2014).

13. Hinduized chieftains and 'little kings' could proclaim without hesitation divine universal kingship despite the limitation of their actually controlled territory.

*Reactions to The Religion of India*

The reaction to Weber's *Hinduism und Buddhismus* (1916–1920) showed an initial reluctance to engage even after Hans Gerth's and Don Martindale's translation had been published in 1958 under the title *The Religion of India*. It may be partly explained by the fact that 'contemporary discussions of the influence of religion on social change are largely dominated by Max Weber's thesis on the role of the Protestant ethic in the rise of capitalism,' as pointed out by Milton Singer in his often quoted article 'Religion and Social Change in India: The Max Weber Thesis, Phase Three' (Singer 1966: 497).

As a consequence of the dominant influence of Weber's Protestant ethic, his Hinduism studies were affected in India by his alleged intention to reveal India as a negative, contrasting case to western rationality and modernity.<sup>14</sup> This misinterpretation of Weber's sociology of religions is indicated already in Gerth's and Martindale's Prefatory Note of their translation:

Why had those countries failed to display the full consequences of those rationalizing tendencies which, to Weber's mind, had so powerful an affinity with the scientific-technical transformation of the West? He isolated religious institutions and the key social strata which mediate them to the wider society as crucial for the original formation of social-psychological orientations to the practical concerns of life and, hence, for receptivity or resistance to industrialization (RI: V).

Detlef Kantowsky (1982b, 1986b and Bhadrinath 1986) regards prevailing misinterpretations of Weber's Hinduism studies and of his Protestant ethic concept by American scholars as the major reason of the unease and rejection of Weber by Indian scholars.<sup>15</sup> Misleading attempts to look at Weber's Hinduism studies through the spectacles of his Protestant ethic concept, might have also been reinforced by the fact that the publication of Gerth's and Martindale's translation of *The Religion of India* in 1958 was overshadowed by the concurrent reprint in the same year of Talcott Parson's early magnum opus *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* after twenty-eight years.

14. 'One of these "distortions" is the risk of using Weber's thesis as a basis of a quick diagnosis of the ideological and structural factors impeding or facilitating economic development, and then translating such diagnoses into policy recommendations for far-reaching transformations' (Singer 1966: 498). See also Gellner 2009 and in the previous issue of *Max Weber Studies*.

15. For a rejoinder see Singer 1985.

Without going into further details of the controversial debates about the otherwise very significant revival of Weberian studies in the United States in the fifties and sixties, the ambivalent assessment of Weber's Indian studies during these years is remarkable. It may be exemplified by an important conference at the University of Chicago in 1965. Its voluminous conference proceedings *Structure and Change in Indian Society* were edited by Milton Singer and Bernhard Cohn in 1968. Out of twenty authors only four authors make a total of seven brief references to Weber. Even more striking is the fact that both editors are completely silent about Weber in their joint Preface and even in their two individual articles. This is particularly remarkable in Cohn's keynote paper 'Notes on the History of the Study of Indian Society and Culture' (Singer and Cohn 1968: 1-28) and in view of the fact that Singer had written a comprehensive review of Weber's RI (Singer 1961). This more or less complete negation of Weber's Indian studies in a comprehensive publication on the Indian society by the dominating Chicago School of Indian Studies is striking. It is also noticeable that the publication of the work of Singer and Cohn coincide with the publication of Guenther Roth's and Claus Wittich's epoch-making translation of Weber's *Economy and Society* by the University of California Press in 1968.

In contrast to Singer and Cohn's negative reaction to Max Weber, Louis Dumont's perception of Weber is ambiguous. In a fundamental article 'For a Sociology of India' (Dumont 1970a),<sup>16</sup> he too does not refer at all to Weber. And in his *Homo Hierarchicus* (1980) he hints only occasionally and very briefly to Weber's study on the Hindu social system. However, the subsection 'The Period 1900-1945' of its first chapter 'History of Ideas' contains most likely the most favourable general acceptance of Max Weber of its time in Europe by a social scientist:

Finally, Max Weber, apart from contributions to general sociology (distinction between economic class and status group, nature of the division of labour) achieved in his vast fresco of comparative religion the richest and the most fine-drawn comparison between the Western and the Hindu universe. Given that the work drew only on secondary sources and that its central viewpoint was taken from European developments, it is a miracle of sympathy and sociological imagination (Dumont 1980: 30).<sup>17</sup>

16. 'Inaugural address, Chair of Sociology of India in the 'Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes (6th Section, Paris, 8.1.1955)' (Dumont 1970: 2).

17. It is noteworthy in this context that Dumont refers in his article 'World

Max Weber's studies suffered a similar fate as in the United States despite Johannes Winckelmann's very successful editorial activity of Weber's writings since 1951. In the following year he published a monograph on Weber's *Herrschaftssoziologie* (Winckelmann 1952) and became the chief editor of *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* since its fourth edition in 1956. But as a professional lawyer, India and in particular Hinduism played only a tangential role in his publications.

As already mentioned, in Germany the academic interpretation of Hinduism was a prerogative of the philologically and philosophically oriented Indology, characterised by its discomfort with sociology and Weber's Indian studies in particular. In a kind of war on two fronts, J. Rösel challenged this prerogative in 1971 in his M.A. thesis (published in 1982) and criticised in his further publications Weber's colonial 'Indienbild', which had been Sanskritized by German Indology (Rösel 1975). His critique of Weber's selection of the sources used for his studies and interpretation of Hinduism was taken up again in a comprehensive way by Golzio (1984: 370). He noticed that 'Webers Arbeit bei eher soziologischen Passagen präziser wirkt als bei Darstellungen indischer Religionen, wo sich doch Mißverständnisse und Überbetonungen bestimmter Strömungen eingeschlichen haben'. Rösel's critique of Weber's exegesis of his Indian sources in the early seventies and Kantowsky's critical dispute with the alleged 'Americanization' of Weber's Indian studies in the early eighties were reasonable. But ultimately in Germany, too, they did not initiate an evaluation and critical appraisal of the relevance of Weber's religious-sociological studies of Hinduism.

This desideratum was taken up by Wolfgang Schluchter in 1981 in an international conference at Bad Homburg on *Max Webers Studie über Hinduismus und Buddhismus* (Schluchter 1984) after having organized in previous years conferences on Weber's studies on Antique Judaism and Confucianism and Taoism. Schluchter's key concern of his comprehensive Weberian studies is well indicated by three titles of his early publications 'Die Entwicklung des okzidentalen Rationalismus' (1979), 'The Paradox of Rationalization' (1979) and 'Rationalismus der Weltbeherrschung' (1980). It is significant and consistent for his assessment of Weber's RI that, in contrast to these previous themes, his contribution to the Hinduismus and Buddhismus conference in 1981 is entitled 'Weltflüchtiges Erlösungsstreben und

Renunciation in Indian Religions' extensively to Weber's *Hinduismus und Buddhismus* (Tübingen 1920 [Dumont 1970b]). See also Fuchs 1987.

organische Sozialethik. Überlegungen zu Max Webers Analysen der indischen Kultureligionen' (Schluchter 1984).<sup>18</sup> It is also indicative of the international assessment of Weber's RI that all the five contributions to Hinduism of this conference dealt nearly exclusively with religious and ethical aspects of Hinduism, even Heesterman's article on caste and Karma (Heesterman 1984). Weber's analysis of the social system of Hinduism found no buyers at this conference. The only exception is in fact Schluchter himself, whose article contains a short presentation 'Das hinduistische soziale System' (Schluchter 1984: 45-50, 1988: 108-114). Even this author analysed critically Weber's (mis)interpretation of the late medieval *bhakti* movement (Kulke 1984a).

*'Sanskritization' and 'Rajputization' and Weber's concepts  
of intensive and extensive propaganda of Hinduism*

But already in the fifties and early sixties, two famous Indian sociologists and anthropologists had come forward with their seminal concepts of 'Sanskritization', formulated in 1952 by M.N. Srinivas, and 'Rajputization' by Surajit Sinha ten years later in 1962 (Kulke 1976). Although without any reference to Max Weber, their concepts display remarkable similarities to his concepts of internal and external Hinduization. This is particularly significant with Srinivas' concept of Sanskritization that he developed during his sociological studies on the Coorgs of South India (Srinivas 1952, 1955/56). According to Srinivas 'a low caste was able, in a generation or two, to rise to a higher position in the hierarchy by adopting vegetarianism and teetotalism and by Sanskritizing its rituals and pantheon. In short, it took over, as far as possible, the customs and beliefs of the Brahmins'. (Srinivas 1952: 32). Srinivas' concept of Sanskritization emerged for several decades as one of the most influential but also controversial concepts in debates on the caste system and social change. A major critique was that 'Sanskritization' denotes *pars pro toto* a complex process of only one of its aspects, i.e., the language. It was therefore bound to become as controversial as similar terms like Brahmanization. Sanskrit had never been the only language through which 'Sanskritization' developed. In many parts of India local languages were far more important than Sanskrit in promoting such processes of social change (Staal 1962). The agents of Brahmanization likewise were not

18. See also Eisenstadt 1984.

always Brahmins. Despite such difficulties with the term Sanskritization, which Srinivas himself admitted (Srinivas 1955/56), the relevance of the process itself (whether medieval or contemporary) has never been seriously challenged.<sup>19</sup> Srinivas' high estimation becomes obvious from Singer's and Cohn's Preface of their just mentioned conference volume which contains also a paper of Srinivas (1968): 'In the 1950s and 1960s, field work in Africa, which was of very high quality, was practically identified with the main stream. So in the 1950' and 1960's, beginning with M.N. Srinivas' Religion and Society among the Coorgs of South India, a vigorous flow comes into the mainstream from Southern Asia' (Singer/Cohn 1968:VII).<sup>20</sup> But Srinivas' paper in this volume as also, to my knowledge, none of his many other publications ever refer to Weber (Srinivas 1955/56; Kulke 1976).

In his seminal article 'State Formation and Rajput Myth in Tribal Central India' Surajit Sinha (1962) comes very near to Weber's concept of 'external propoganda' or Hinduization. In view of the strong influence of Rajput concepts of state formation and kingship ideology in late medieval eastern India, particularly in Chota Nagpur and Orissa, Srinivas termed the processes 'Rajputization'.

Equalitarian primitive clan-based tribal organization adjusted itself to the centralized hierarchic, territorial oriented political development. [...] In other words, state formation in the tribal belt of Central India was largely a story of the Rajputization. [...] These taraf sardars [chiefs] unable to dissociate themselves from the main body of the tribe, took the initiative for the tribe as a whole to be regarded as Rajput Kshatriyas. [...] Judging from parallels elsewhere in tribal middle India, one would naturally suspect that the myth is a rationalization, in terms of later Brahmanical elaborations connected with the Rajput myth, [...] leading to the emergence of kingship (Sinha 1962: 37ff).

Under the influence of Srinivas' and Sinha's concepts of social change a 'Kshatriya model' and the term 'Kshatriyaization' were proposed. It 'describes social change "from above" which was initiated in tribal areas by Kshatriyas, i.e., zamindars, chiefs or rajas in order to strengthen their legitimation as Hindu rajas in their own society and to broaden the basis of their economic and political power' (Kulke 1976/1993: 85; 2017b). Furthermore, in line with Weber's

19. For Sanskritization in the context of the 'Hindu/tribal model' in Nepal see Gellner (2001: 251-55).

20. Dumont (1970b), too, refers several times to Srinivas in his 'For a Sociology of India' which had already been published in 1957 in the first volume of *Contributions to Indian Sociology*.

differentiation of extensive and intensive processes of Hinduization and legitimation, a distinction between 'horizontal- (external)' and 'vertical (internal) legitimation' has been suggested. Vertical legitimation aimed at the achievement of the loyalty of the internal population whereas horizontal legitimation served the purpose of gaining the recognition of neighbouring polities (Kulke 1979: 54; 1980, 1993a).

Srinivas's and Sinha's concepts exhibit a high degree of correspondence with Weber's concepts of intensive and extensive modes of Hinduization, however, without referring to Weber's theses. They seem to have remained unknown or irrelevant to them, even years after the publication of Weber's *The Religion of India*. This may be explicable by the 'Chicago School' and Kantowsky's explanations of India's reluctance to accept Max Weber's Hinduism studies. But nevertheless, it is obvious that Max Weber was ahead of his times for about one generation with his short outline of intensive and extensive processes of Hinduization. The fact that Srinivas and Sinha confirmed to a large extent Weber in their detailed sociological and anthropological studies on Sanskritization and Rajputization, testifies the seminal significance of Weber's theses and hypotheses. Obviously Weber was already on the right track.

*A case study: Legitimation and early state formation in Orissa*

The enduring significance and legacy of Weber's 'track' became evident during the two Orissa Research Projects of the German Research Council on the cult of Jagannath and on regional and sub-regional traditions and identities of Orissa during the years 1970-1975 and 1999-2005.<sup>21</sup> Even though legitimation was not the main paradigm of the two ORPs (Kulke 1978a; 1979: 1-5),<sup>22</sup> several individual projects recognized its relevance in the course of their studies and brought forth results that confirmed and complemented directly and indirectly Weber's ideas about legitimation.

Orissa is an ideal arena for the study of various aspects of Hinduization and the role of legitimation in processes of early state formation (Schnepel 2002; Sahu 2003b, 2013; Berkemer and Frenz 2003; Kulke and Berkemer 2011a). In its mountainous tribal hinterland on

21. 'To date the only significant work on a regional tradition in India, which is based on the crystallization of a religious complex, has been a volume on Jagannātha' (Chakrabarti 2001: 1f. Chakrabarti refers to Eschmann, Kulke and Tripathi 1978.

22. For the 'ingredients of subregional identities' see particularly Chattopadhyaya 2011, and Sahu 2011.

the one hand and in the fertile deltaic coastal regions on the other, it comprises two socio-economic zones with distinct cultural-political identities. In the tribal hinterland nearly two dozen so-called 'Feudatory States'<sup>23</sup> had emerged from processes of tribal and post-tribal state formation since the early Middle Ages until the British conquest of Orissa in 1803 (Sahu 2011; Kulke 2011b). In the coastal regions powerful regional kingdoms flourished under Buddhist and dominant Brahmanical influence and their unique temple cities (Eschmann, Kulke and Tripathi 1978). The cross-cultural encounter and convergence of these two areas is an essential feature of Orissan culture and history (Sahu 2003b, 2016).

### *Legitimation in the tribal Hinterland*

In Orissa's hinterland, detailed studies of the integration of tribal deities and priests into the courtly rituals of emerging post-tribal early kingdoms since the early Middle Ages were particularly revealing (Kulke 1984c; Sontheimer 1987; Schnepel 1993; Mallebrein 2011a). These processes have been defined as 'Hinduization' and thoroughly analysed by Anncharlott Eschmann. 'Hinduization may be defined as a continuum operating in both ways between the two poles of tribal religion and codified or "High" Hinduism' (Eschmann 1978b: 82). And as Burkhard Schnepel observed,

royally patronized tribal goddesses developed into liminal beings: originating from a tribal background, they moved into the fold of Hindu culture—without, however, becoming completely alienated from the former and totally absorbed by the latter. In this intermediate state, they were well qualified to bridge the differences between tribal culture and Hindu culture, between the indigenous population and Hindu kings. They therefore became an important part of royal ritual policy (Schnepel 2002: 255).

As already pointed out by Weber, the participation of tribal priests and Brahmins in these rituals was a main concern of royal ritual policy as it legitimized likewise the social rise of the tribal priests and of their already partially Hinduized rulers (Kulke 1977b, 1984b; Schnepel 1993, 1994). Weber's theoretical considerations were directly confirmed by Schnepel's intensive anthropological studies of the South

23. The terms 'Feudatory States' and 'Princely States' were introduced in the 19th century by the East India Company. Their original name was significantly *Garhjat Mahal* ('born', originating from a fort). Schnepel introduced the term 'Jungle Kings' for the formerly tribal 'little kingdoms' (Schnepel 2002).

Orissan 'Jungle Kingdom' Jeypore in years 1990–1995. 'The jungle kings of Orissa sought to acquire legitimacy in the eyes of their tribal subjects and they attempted to integrate these into their own, the Hindu fold of culture and power' (Schnepel 1996: 129).

But Beatrix Hauser voiced her concern. In her study on tribal and tantric goddesses in southern Orissa she observed an amalgamation of tribal, village Hindu and tantric rituals. But their classification in a linear development on the tribal-Hindu axis with an emphasis on 'tribal heritage as well as royal patronage—the two prominent topics in the academic discourse on Orissan goddesses—do not meet the empirical variety of goddess worship (at least) in southern Orissa' (Hauser 2007: 145).

### *Royal rituals and legitimation*

Bearing in mind Hauser's concerns, we will have a short look at two goddesses belonging to the group of the 'Eight Mothers' (*ashta matrika*) of the Hindu-tribal borderland of Orissa (Kulke 1992; Schnepel 2002; Mallebrein 2011). The eight mother goddesses are well attested in Puranic literature and early medieval sculptures and comprise the great Hindu goddesses like Vaishnavi, Mahesvari, Chamunda etc. But all those goddesses who are included in Orissa's 'Eight Mothers' are powerful tribal goddesses and for the most part tutelary deities of former feudatory states. A significant example is Stambhesvari ('Lady of the Pillar'), worshipped by a long bamboo stick. From the fifth to the thirteenth century she is often referred to in inscriptions as the 'family deity' (*kula devata*) of several small dynasties. Already in the earliest epigraphical reference to this goddess in about 500 CE, a raja is even praised as 'Devotee of Stambhesvari's Feet' (*stambhesvari-pada-bhakta*) (Kulke 1977b, 1978b, Sahu 2017). Another instructive example is the still very powerful tribal goddess Maninagesvari ('Lady of the Serpent Jewel'). She is worshipped in a round flat stone (*chata pathara*) on top of a steep mountain above Ranpur, the capital town of a small but important subregional kingdom.<sup>24</sup> Since 600 CE its chieftains and later rajas worshipped her together with her tribal priests as tutelary deities during the great annual Durga puja (Kulke 1992).<sup>25</sup> But we also

24. In the small temple on the hill two late medieval purely Hindu images of the fierce goddess Chamunda have been set up behind her aniconic tribal flat stone icon. In Ranpur itself exist several Hindu temples, particularly a Jagannath temple, one of the oldest in the Feudatory States.

25. The article 'Kings, Cults and Legitimation of Autochthonous Communities:

have to keep in mind that Ranpur was a seat of Brahmanical learning until early twentieth century and it is still proud of its excellent late medieval Jagannath temple next to a large palace complex of the nineteenth and early twentieth century (Gutschow 2004, 2011).

Two more examples of converging tribal and royal rituals in Orissa may be mentioned. A fascinating topic in this regard is the coronation ritual in Keonjhar and neighbouring Feudatory States in north Orissa (Nanda 2010, Mallebrein 2011b). During the coronation, the raja rides into the hall on the back of a tribal chief. While the king sits on his lap, the chief continues to perform the allegorical tribal coronation rituals that are then sanctified by Hindu rituals by the court Brahmans. This peculiar coronation tradition attracted the attention of British colonial officers in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They interpreted this ritual as a visible demonstration of the power of the dominant tribes as the real owners of the land or as an indication of the possible tribal origin of the kings themselves. Most likely both interpretations are correct. 'The intimate association of the Bhuiyans [the dominant tribe of Keonjhar] in the royal coronation process as well as the complexities of the Bhuyan rituals in this regard clearly focus on the demonstration of power and the primordial right of the tribe as the original owners of the land, along with the mutual dependence between the king and the tribe. This also indicates the transformation of the tribal societies into "little kingdoms" and possibly the tribal origin of kings' (Nanda 2010: 731). It is therefore hardly surprising that Keonjhar's tutelary deity, the purely tribal goddess Danda ('stick'), occupies a prominent place in the royal palace. But it is likewise not surprising that Keonjhar's chronicles contain several 'origin myths' about its descent from a neighbouring allegedly 'purely Hindu' dynasty or of vague Rajput origin. As pointed out by G.C. Tripathi in his comprehensive article 'The Transformation of a Tribal State into a Centre of Regional Culture', Keonjhar emerged since the fifteenth century as an important centre of Brahmanical learning (Tripathi 2011).

Tribal chieftaincies and kingdoms were receptive also for the influence of royal rituals of the great regional kingdoms. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the annual ten-day Durga Puja at Vijayanagara was the royal ritual *par excellence* in South and central India. Through its detailed description by Domingo Paes,<sup>26</sup> a

A Case Study of a South Indian Temple' by Durga and Reddy (1992) exhibits a high degree of correspondence with the Orissa.

26. R. Sewell, *A Forgotten Empire* (New Delhi: National Book Trust, 1962): 253-68.

Portuguese visitor of Vijayanagara in the early sixteenth century, it is in fact the best-documented Hindu festival in pre-modern times. Religiously the great goddess Durga took the centre stage but ritually she had to share it with the king of Vijayanagara.

What was viewed [by Paes] was a combination of a great *darbar* with its offerings of homage and wealth to the king and the return gifts from the king – honours, exchanges; reconsecration of the king's arms, his soldiers, horses and elephants; *darsana* (viewing) and *puja* (worship) of the king's tutelary deity [Durga was placed on the multistoried royal platform] and a variety of athletics contests, dancing and singing procession [etc]. The center of these diverse and magnificent entertainments was always the king as a glorious and conquering warrior (Stein 1984: 313f).<sup>27</sup>

But after downfall of Vijayanagara and the destruction of its capital by the central Indian Sultanats in 1565, the rituo-political function of its royal Durga festival was copied by successor states in South India<sup>28</sup> and even by Feudatory States in South Orissa. In the just mentioned jungle kingdom of Jeypore 'legitimizing and incorporating policies could be pursued [only] in the indigenous inhabitants' very own ritual beliefs and practices. And among these, the region's much respected earth and mother goddess, who were originally worshipped in the form of aniconical symbols such as a stone or earthen mounds, constituted a primary focus of royal patronage'. But under the impact of the imperial model of Vijayanagara's Durga Puja, the aniconical tribal mother goddess assumed in Jeypore the shape of Durga Mahisasuramardini, the victorious vanquisher of the demon Mahisa. Like in Vijayanagara, her imposing brass statue occupied the centre stage of the local Durga Puja.

Looking at the various legends which the royal dynasties of South Orissa keep alive in their family chronicles (*vamsavalis*) about their own statue of Durga, one realizes how greatly valued these *murtis* were in political terms. For the sub-region's royal ideology, the possession of a Durga *murti* is represented not only as being important for, but even being constitutive of the establishment and consequent exertion of royal authority (Schnepel 1995, 1996: 129, 2003b).<sup>29</sup>

27. Since the sixteenth/seventeenth centuries Durga Puja became an all-India annual festival. Most famous is, of course, Durga Puja in Bengal and in particular in Kolkata with its thousands annually reproduced colourful clay figures of Durga-Kali.

28. The most prominent present-day Durga Puja is the South Indian Mysore Dasara (named after its most auspicious tenth *dasara* day). After the fall of Vijayanagara it had initially been revived by the Wodeyar dynasty at Srirangapatnam.

29. The influence of these studies is meanwhile also evident outside Orissa as

These examples could easily be multiplied by still existing 'ancient' cults of various former Feudatory States of Orissa. They all confirm Weber's concept of 'extensive propaganda' or Hinduization. They illustrate the rituo-political importance of likewise Hinduized tribal and tribalized Hindu deities in processes of state formation in tribally populated regions of India since the early Middle Ages (Kulke 2017b). They 'bridge the differences between tribal culture and Hindu culture, between the indigenous population and Hindu kings' (Schnepel, op.cit.). These deities and their cults legitimize the royal dominion and reconfirm the divine authority again and again by royally sponsored festivals. They are directed by courtly Brahmins and supported by ritual participation of tribal priests.

### *Royal chronicles and legitimation*

We may now come to an issue with an even more direct relation to Weber. As has already been pointed out, he regarded 'pedigree and the required origin-myth [für die Herrengeschlechter], possibly reaching back to epic and pre-epic times' (RI: 10; MWG 1/20: 61) as an essential means of 'Hindu Propaganda' or Hinduization. Romila Thapar, too, regards genealogical pattern and origin myth as essential features of regional and orthodox Hindu perception of the past (Thapar 2000a and 2000b). Orissa's rich material of chronicles of the 'little kings' and their invented dynastic origin myths confirm both, Weber and Thapar. Orissa's tribally substantiated dynastic origin myths had to coincide in their structure and religious meaning with the epic perception of the past in order to serve their ideological function as means of legitimation of the ruling Hinduized tribal elites (Tripathi 1986; Pramanik/Skoda 2013; Kulke 2004, 2010b).

An excellent example is the great Sanskrit poem *Kosalananda Kavyam* ('The Poem of Kosala's Bliss') composed in 1663 (Panda 2011). Gangadhar Mishra, its author, was a learned Sanskrit scholar from a Brahmin village near Puri. As he was well versed with Puris temple chronicles (Tripathi 1986; Dash 2010) he was invited to Sambalpur, the capital of Kosala in western Orissa. In his poem (*kavya*) he associates Kosalam's history with twenty-four invented kings of

highlighted for instance by U. Teuscher in her study 'Königtum in Rajasthan. Legitimation im Mewar des 7. bis 15. Jahrhundert'. It attests distinctly similar aspects of legitimation as in Orissa, e.g. in regard to its integration of indigenous tribal rituals and the creation of royal origin myths (Teuscher 2001, 2010; for South India see also Veluthat 1993, 2017).

the epic Suryavamsa dynasty. This imagined myth-making section of the chronicle is followed by its most important, poetically elaborated 'constructed' legendary semi-historical section. It traces back the early history of the rulers of Sambalpur to an imagined legendary fugitive princely descendant of the famous historical Chauhan Rajput dynasty of Rajasthan which had been defeated by Muslim invaders in the late 12th century. Weber referred to British sources which report that as a rule such stories 'initially did not succeed. A true, or today presumably true, Brahman or Rajput will listen sympathetically and with good humour ('mit verständnisvoller stiller Heiterkeit', MWGI/20: 62) to the origin legend of such an upstart Rajput stratum, if an interested European relates it. [But] no true Brahman or Rajput would dream of treating the new fellows as his peers' (RI: 10f).<sup>30</sup> Such a noble reserve against invented Rajput legends might have been the rule in Rajasthan. However, in far-off tribal regions in eastern India Gangadhar's 'genuine invention' of an alleged Chauhan Rajput origin of the doubtlessly indigenous rulers of Kosala was a great success.<sup>31</sup> It worked as a legitimation of Sambalpur's rise to the politically and culturally dominant kingdom of western Orissa since the second half of the 17th century. And, most significantly, it became a blueprint for similar 'invented histories' of Rajput origin of the several chieftains and little kings in then tribal belt of Eastern India and their Rajputization (Sinha 1962).

The dynastic chronicles of the Feudatory States in coastal Orissa and its riverside landscape only rarely refer to some Rajput traditions.<sup>32</sup> They associate their mythical and legendary origins instead with the history of the great regional kingdoms and with Orissa's dominant cult of Jagannath.<sup>33</sup> 'The History of the Royal Dynasty of

30. 'Dies bezieht sich auf eine von Rislely in Census 1901, I, P. 1, S. 519-520, referierte Mythe, zu der er auf S.520 bemerkt: "It was received with derisive merriment by a number of genuine Rajputs who attended a conference which I held at Mount Abu in 1900 for the purpose of organizing the Census of Rajputana"' (MWG I/20: 62 n. 57).

31. As pointed out by S.K. Panda, Gangadhar was acquainted with north Indian, particularly Rajput bardic literature and Puri's famous temple chronicle (Panda 2011: 134ff.).

32. See also Pramanik/Skoda 2013 and Nanda/Kulke 2015.

33. A favourite origin myth is the late medieval Kanchi Kaberi legend about the finally successful war of Orissa's great Gajapati king against Kanchipuram in South India. The chronicles of more than a dozen Feudatory States report about their kings to have participated in it, two even as their commanders. For its history see Dash 1978.

Ranpur' depicts these origin myths in an exemplary way (Kulke 2004). It conflates the tribal origin of its dynasty and of the family deity Maninagesvari in an imposing way directly with the origin of Orissa's state deity (*rastra devata*) Jagannath. From Ranpur's chronicles we learn that its mythological forefathers worshipped the wooden image (*daru devata*) of Jagannath in a nearby forest until the great epic king Indradyumna came in search of Vishnu as 'Lord of the World' (Jagannath) to Orissa. When he discovered Jagannath's divine wooden image in the forest, he removed it and constructed for it the first Jagannath temple at Puri and thus became the mythological founder of its cult.<sup>34</sup> But the two brothers Bisvabasu and Bisvabasaba who had been worshipping Jagannath in the forest were grieved about the loss of their deity. Therefore, Jagannath appeared to Bisvabasu in a dream. He directed him to come to him at Puri and to join Indradyumna as his priest. He became the ancestor of Puri's still existing tribal *daitapati* temple priests who play an important role in peculiar temple rituals. His brother Biswabasaba was ordered to take the flat round stone, Jagannath's original pedestal in the forest, and to worship it as goddess Maninagesvari on the top of the hill near Ranpur.

*Royal rituals and monumental temple architecture:  
Legitimation of the great medieval kingdoms*

Weber's concept of legitimation referred nearly exclusively to processes of post-tribal state formation in the first millennium CE and partly to early modern sub-regional Rajput states. The great medieval regional kingdoms or 'empires' from the eighth/ninth to sixteenth centuries lay outside Weber's focus of his study of processes of Hinduization and early state formation. Therefore, unfortunately, this important period of Indian history of the regional kingdoms and the emergence their great regional cultures cannot be considered in detail in this paper. But at least a short note is appropriate in order to demonstrate and vindicate the applicability of Weber's concept of legitimation even beyond the sphere of his studies on Hinduism.

Legitimation of these 'imperial' Hindu kingdoms found its strongest expression in royal rituals and by their monumental temple architecture.<sup>35</sup> A significant example of these rituals has already

34. See the two articles on Indradyumna by G.C. Tripathi, R. Geib in the revised edition of Eschmann, Kulke and Tripathi 1978 (2014: 3-44).

35. Kulke 1977a, 1978b, 1981, Rösel 1978, Appadurai 1978, Galley 1985/1986, Heitzman 1991, Champakalakshmi 2011, Veluthat 2017.

referred to by the Durga Puja of Vijayanagara. Legitimation by monumental temple architecture became literally most visible under Rajaraja (988–1014), the founder of the 'Imperial Cholas' of South India. He constructed the monumental Rajarajesvara Temple at his new capital Tanjore (Thanjavur) only decades after his dynasty had nearly been extinguished by the Rastrakutas, the then dominant dynasty of Central India. The temple nearly doubled the height of all previous Hindu temples of India and is dedicated to Siva under the name Rajarajesvara ('The Lord of Rajaraja'). J. Heitzman denoted it as an 'imperial temple' (1991) whereas G.W. Spencer (1969: 45) pointed out in a seminal article: 'In order to understand the importance to Rajaraja of patronage to the Tanjore temple, we must recognize that such patronage, far from representing the self-glorification of a despotic ruler, was in fact a method adopted by an ambitious ruler to enhance [and legitimize] his very uncertain power'. The Cholas continued their monumental temple architecture throughout the 11th and 12th centuries.

This ritual policy of 'architectural legitimation' of the Cholas was imitated by several dynasties. It was even surpassed by their north-eastern neighbours, the Eastern Gangas of Orissa. After having fought several futile wars against Kulottunga, his relative on the Chola throne, Anantavarman Chodaganga, the ruler of the Eastern Gangas of Kalinga in South Orissa (1077–1147), conquered central Orissa in about 1112 and began the construction of Puri's monumental temple in 1135. It was dedicated to Jagannatha, the 'Lord of the World'. Architecturally and politically it is significant that with its 65 metres it surpasses Tanjore's height of 63.41m by 1.60 m and thus became India's greatest temple. Obviously its height legitimized Chodaganga's 'eye to eye' competition with the so-called Imperial Cholas. In 1230 Anangabhima, a later successor of Anantavarman strove for an even higher legitimation and dedicated the dominion (*samrajya*) of his kingdom to Jagannatha, and claimed to rule under his divine order (*adesa*) as his son (*putra*) and vassal (*rauta*). Anangabhima's proclamation created and constituted Orissa's impressive kingship ideology (Kulke 1979, 1981). Anangabhima's son and successor Narasimha (1238/39–1264) constructed the magnificent temple at Konark, dedicated to the sun god Surya. Its main temple (*vimana*) excelled clearly Tanjore and Puri.<sup>36</sup> Although

36. Unfortunately we don't know its exact height as it collapsed over the centuries under thousands of tons of its khondalite building stones. But British drawings

our sources are silent, it is likely that Konarak has to be interpreted as a victory monument of Narasimha's formidable victories, particularly in the years 1244/45, against the attempts of the Delhi Sultanate to conquer Orissa. Narasimha was indeed one of the very few Hindu kings of his time who fought successfully against the military expansion of the recently established Delhi Sultanate. Keeping in mind Chodaganga's successful competition with the imperial temple architecture of the Cholas, a conjecture to relate Konarak with the Qutb Minar at Delhi may not to be completely wrong. It was constructed as the impressive victory monument of the Delhi Sultanate by its first two sultans Aibak and Iltutmish (1206-1235). With its present height of 72 metres the Qutb Minar surpassed Puri's Jagannatha temple considerably and had become India's highest building. Just as Chodaganga outdid the Cholas and their Tanjore temple, Narasimha might have intended to trump (what a nice word in these days!) the victory monument of the Delhi Sultanate with his own, the Konarak temple.

#### *Sheldon Pollock's critique of legitimation*

As initially already mentioned, Sheldon Pollock came forward in 1996 with a strong criticism of Max Weber's concept of legitimation in his article 'The Sanskrit Cosmopolis, 300-1300: Transculturation, Vernacularization, and the Question of Ideology' (1996). It was followed in 2006 by *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men. Sanskrit, Culture, and Premodern India* (2006). Whereas the article focuses largely on Southeast Asia as the second mainstay of the Sanskrit cosmopolis, his magnum opus deals with various aspects of transculturation in the Eurasian context, but focuses on India. As David Gellner's paper in the previous issue of this journal with the auspicious title 'Pollock and Weber: Poles Apart?' and his article 'The Uses of Max Weber' (Gellner 2009) are taking up the Pollock-Weber controversy in some detail, I shall try to avoid elaborateness as far as possible. I am encouraged in this intention by two more recent critical articles on Pollock's Sanskrit cosmopolis (Ali 2011: 277-282 and Bronkhorst 2011: 264-66) and my previous deliberations in this matter (Kulke 2014: 12-15).

of the early nineteenth century depict the then still existing ruins of its outer wall which allow to calculate the original height of 68 to 72 metres (Behera 2013: 422-27).

One major reason of Pollock's antagonism against Weber and his legitimation theory becomes evident by a short statement. 'Whatever the prehistory of legitimation theory (it arguably derives from the crisis of post-Napoleonic constitutional monarchies), in the sphere of social theory it was made into a core element of the analysis of power by Weber' (Pollock 2006: 517).<sup>37</sup> It is therefore not surprising that Pollock regards Weber as a protagonist of 'unwarranted generalizations based on European particulars [which] pertain not only to the sociality of language but also to the place of culture as such in relation to power. In fact, social theory on this subject presents problems that are perhaps even more insuperable. Not the least of these is that the dominant explanations offered for transculturation of polity and politicization of culture in premodern South Asia are shot through with functionalism that is both anachronistic and conceptually flawed' (2006: 511f, the same statement in 1996: 235). But Pollock must ask himself whether his assessment of legitimation as 'absolute dogma [which] is not only anachronistic but intellectually mechanical, culturally homogenizing, theoretically naïve, empirically false and tediously predictable' (2006: 18)<sup>38</sup> is also an 'unwarranted generalization, shot through with functionalism'.<sup>39</sup>

My lack of understanding or perhaps my misunderstanding of Pollock's 'devastating critic of Weber' (Gellner in the previous issue of this journal) and in particular of the concept(s) of legitimation is also caused by a peculiar idiosyncrasy or even inconsistency of his cosmopolis concept. On the one hand he denotes again and again, to my mind correctly, 'Sanskrit as a *language of politics*' and defines 'the spread of Sanskrit in the first millennium as a striking homogeneous expressive mode of *political power*' or he asks 'when and how ... does Sanskrit enter the domain of "public" *political discourse* in

37. A similar, but partly self-critical, statement is known from Louis Dumont about his anthropological colleagues working on Indian villages and little kingdoms. They define them as 'a social whole of a limited extent, established within a definite territory, and self-sufficient; a small territory not too unlike the tribe, the usual object of their study, and which did not belie the territorial conceptions which are bred in us by the existence of nations' (Dumont 1970a: 154).

38. See Gellner in the previous issue of this journal for a more complete quotation of this passage.

39. As a tit-for-tat response ('Retourkutsche') one could ask whether several, if not most, of these alleged characteristics of the imagined 'absolute dogma' of legitimation could also be assigned to the Sanskrit Cosmopolis. However, there is one feature I would immediately deny both concepts. Neither Sanskrit Cosmopolism nor legitimation are naïve.

South Asia?' (1996: 198-201). Furthermore, he argues that 'the unique expressive capabilities of Sanskrit poetry allow the poet to make *statements about political power* that could be made in no other way' (2006: 139). And he is certainly also right to point out that 'the Śakas, Kuśānas and the Buddhist poets and intellectuals they patronized begin to turn Sanskrit into an *instrument of polity*' (p. 206) and that 'the Khmer inscriptions have got some ... *political-cultural work* to do. They make claims about *political power* of particular kings' (p. 224). And everyone working on problems of 'Indianization' of Southeast Asia will gladly adopt Pollock's idea of '*aestheticization of the political*' (p. 216) by Sanskrit as '*political poetry*' (p. 224, italics Kulke). But, on the other hand, Pollock stigmatises seemingly contradictory interpretations without asking himself whether his just quoted statements are really free of functionalism.<sup>40</sup> And as will be pointed out again below, most of Pollock's just quoted statements have a lot to do, directly or indirectly, with legitimation of political power.

Gellner's question whether Pollock and Weber are poles apart is justified by these statements and even may entitle him to suggest that Pollock is 'unbeknown to himself, a follower of Weber'. After all, Pollock's ideas about the 'politicization of literary culture' during the emergence of the Sanskrit cosmopolis in India and Southeast Asia since the fourth century CE reminds us of Weber's concept of the political dimension of Hinduization. But why then does Pollock use Weber as a 'whipping boy' (Gellner) for allegedly wrong functionalist misinterpretation of transculturalism and of legitimation in particular? An easy but certainly not satisfactory answer would be that Pollock seems to have refused to take any note of Weber's study of Hinduism and Buddhism (RI), and thus certainly also of its above quoted relevant passages of the subchapter on 'Diffusion Patterns of Hinduism' (RI: 9-21). After all, his very comprehensive bibliography contains no reference at all of Weber's RI but only of his E&S (Pollock 2006: 646). 'The important point is that Pollock ignores Weber on South Asia and South Asian religion completely. It goes without saying that nothing in RI is worth discussing' (Gellner 2009: 53).

40. For functionalistic tendencies in Pollock's writing see for example: 'Whereas Prakrit continues to execute documentary functions, Sanskrit emerged from the sacral domain with a very different kind of public work to do' (1996: 209). 'Sanskrit performed the imperial function of spanning space and time, and thus enabled one to say things with lasting and pervasive power' (1996: 240). I agree fully with the contents of these passages. But I am quoting them with a kind of gratification to detect in them exemplary traces of functionalism in Pollock's writing, too.

Johannes Bronkhorst hints at another peculiarity of Pollock's Sanskrit cosmopolis and his problem with legitimation. He discerns that Pollock rarely makes mention of Brahmans and asks:

Isn't there an old and well-established link between Sanskrit and Brahmans? Can one speak about the spread of Sanskrit without speaking about Brahmans that presumably travelled with the language? Pollock speaks very little about Brahmans in these publications. Where he does so, his aim appears to be to weaken or even deny the link between the two. He does so for example, where he criticises the notion of 'legitimation'. He cites in this connection the following passage from an article by Hermann Kulke (1990: 20ff.): 'At a certain stage of this development Brahmins "came hither" in order to legitimize the new status and wealth of these chiefs. Obviously there existed a tremendous need of additional legitimation which obviously no other institution was able to provide fully... Brahmins appear to have been invited as a sort of "extra legitimators" of a new and more advanced type of authority which was not sanctioned by traditional societies of South-East Asia.... Obviously in both [South India and Southeast Asia] there had existed the same or at least similar socio-political need for a new type of legitimation' (Bronkhorst 2011: 265).<sup>41</sup>

Bronkhorst then draws an interesting conclusion about Pollock's neglect of the Brahmans and his aversion to legitimation: 'Pollock is very critical about the notion of "legitimation", and he argues that "there is no reason to accept legitimation theory"'. However, he seems to think that the rejection of "legitimation theory" also does away with the question of the connection between Brahmans and Sanskrit in south India and Southeast Asia, for he does not return to it' (Bronkhorst *ibid.*).<sup>42</sup> Gellner, too, detects in his contribution to the previous issue of this journal in Pollock's determination to avoid detailed discussions of religious developments, another 'surprising gap'. His assumption that 'this aversion to religion may be of a piece with his [Pollock's] allergy to "legitimation"' is revealing in our context.

Just two short more general remarks before taking up finally Southeast Asia as a peculiar case of the Sanskrit cosmopolis. Pollock

41. In this context Daud Ali's comment is instructive: 'It is notable, and in fact the premise for my discussion so far, that Kulke's theory of social circulation, networks and convergence clearly in some ways provides a sociological complement to Pollock's Sanskrit cosmopolis' (Ali 2011: 282).

42. 'By disconnecting Sanskrit from Brahmanism and from Brahmans, Pollock can formulate the questions relating to the spread of Sanskrit in terms of the language itself rather than in terms of its users. This allows him to propose his hypothesis of "politics as aesthetic power"' (Bronkhorst 2011: 265).

points out 'the elements of the Sanskrit cosmopolis as a political-cultural idiom are put in place in southern India in a matter of decades. Again, no 'Sanskrit' political formation had conquered the Deccan and peninsula India during this period; no religious revolution had occurred, no new revelation was produced in Sanskrit. The creation of a linguistically homogenous, and conceptually almost standardized form of discourse *seems to have just happened*. And in a form of premodern globalization – or shall we say, early Westernization – much of the world to the east experienced a similar transculturation' (Pollock 1996: 217, italics Kulke). His assessment that the transculturation in the world to the east (Southeast Asia?) 'seems to have just happened' also in the age of European colonialism may be called 'theoretically naïve, empirically false', to quote Pollock's estimation of legitimation.

But this is not the point that matters at the moment. I wonder whether Pollock really believes that 'the spread of Sanskrit in the first millennium as a striking homogenous expressive mode of *political power*' has *just happened*. To all my knowledge of history, political power never 'just happens', and certainly also not in South and Southeast Asia. 'Political power' is always based on domination (Herrschaft). However, particularly in traditional societies, the use of force is only the last means of the foundation and preservation of domination. The implementation of new claims, whether economic, social or cultural requires also affirmation and finally consent and, whenever possible or necessary, legitimation. But legitimation can neither be enforced nor is it mechanical and 'tediously predictable'. It has to be negotiated again and again and follows the principle *do ut des*, signifying that you will receive something only if you offer a reward. This socio-political and cultural function of legitimation applies to my mind in no uncertain terms alike to the Weber's examples of legitimation in early South India and to similar tribal and post-tribal developments in Orissa.

The other remark pertains to Pollock's references to Giddens, Ricoeur and Gramsci as key witnesses against the explanatory structure of the legitimation discourse (Pollock 1996: 236f. and 2006: 518-22, see also Gellner in this volume). Without going into any detail of the work of these authors, I am taking up this point only shortly with reference to Pollock's above quoted statement about Weber's Wilhelmine late nineteenth century background of his legitimation theory. It insinuates that Germany's post-Napoleonic need for legitimation not only influenced Weber's concept of legitimation,

but, even worse, was particularly inappropriate for an analysis of premodern non-European societies. But by calling these three authors with their strong commitment to contemporary discourses as witnesses against Weber's prejudice in his Wilhelmine age, Pollock commits the same alleged mistake as Weber. And one may even argue that Weber's references to contemporary British reports on India and to genuine Indological studies to support his legitimation concept is more appropriate than its rejection by Pollock on the basis of contemporary theoretical studies of the above authors without any direct Indian relatedness.

Southeast Asia is particularly significant for our debate with Pollock. It has become a major arena (or should we say battlefield?) for his struggle against legitimation. Because, as Pollock rightly points out, with the 'almost breath-taking simultaneity' of the spread of Sanskrit in South and Southeast Asia, the Sanskrit cosmopolis experienced its realisation 'as a striking homogenous expressive mode of political power'. The detailed verification and conceptualization of the emergence of the Sanskrit cosmopolis and of the chronological and locally differentiated processes of its vernacularization in South and Southeast Asia is doubtlessly Pollock's persistent and seminal merit. However, in regard to Southeast Asia Pollock's rigid dispute with scholar's especially historians is problematic. Using again and again the generalising and ultimately meaningless 'combat terms' like 'autochthonism', 'indigenism', 'defensive indigenism' and 'indigenist revisionism' (Pollock 1996: 232-37) he virtually challenges criticism (Kulke 2014: 12ff.). After having shortly hinted at the (already mentioned) Hindu-nationalistic and colonial-ideological overemphasis of dominant Indian influence in Southeast Asia, he certainly rightly points out: 'The second phase of research was inaugurated by decolonization in the region after WW II, which, predictably, stimulated a quest for the local, the indigenous, the autochthonous' (Pollock 1996: 233). But obviously he dislikes the results of this new phase of Southeast Asian historiography and chooses as his main target O.W. Wolters 'who has written the most interesting account of Southeast Asia as a region. [But his] sustained argument, echoed by many writers since, is that "Indianization" did not introduce "an entirely new chapter in the region's history [but] brought ancient and persistent indigenous beliefs into sharper focus". Much of this (often masterful) analysis is open to criticism, not least for what strikes the non-Southeast Asianist as its defensive indigenism. Indeed the very concept of "indigenism" and "autochthonism"

are empty ones' (Pollock 1996: 233f.; Pollock refers to Wolters 1982: 11-12). It is strange, to say the least, that Pollock blames Wolters for concepts, he never used himself!

Pollock then detects 'a stronger and more refined functionalism coupled with a kind of post-Independence indigenist revisionism [another nice creation of Pollock] in Paul Wheatley's assessment a generation ago: "Southeast Asians were 'relatively advanced' at the beginning of the common era and came to realize the value of Indian concepts as a means of legitimizing their political status, and possibly, of stratifying their subjects. To achieve this end they summoned to their courts brahmans skilled in protocol and ritual'" (Pollock 1996: 236).<sup>43</sup> Pollock quotes here Wheatley's references to Van Leur but does not mention van Leur's relation with Weber.

Pollock continues with the certainly correct statement: 'This explanatory framework remains intact in Hermann Kulke's recent analysis'. After having quoted the above just cited passage of my convergence lecture (Kulke 1990), he concludes: 'There is nothing obvious for me about this statement at all, for there is no reason to accept legitimation theory in the first place, though it is ubiquitous in the literature especially on the question of the transculturation of the Sanskrit cosmopolis. The fact is that the theoretical basis for the entire explanatory structure has been exploded by contemporary social theory. A serious critique of functionalism is offered perhaps most effectively by the sociologist Anthony Giddens who argues with far greater subtlety than selective quotations can suggest that "Social systems .... have no needs" '(Pollock 1996: 237). I am certainly not entitled to enter into a debate with the theories of an eminent sociologist of modernity and globalization like Anthony Giddens. What matters here is the likelihood that Weber's concepts and the sources used by him, may be nearer to matters of Hinduization and early medieval state formation in India and South East Asia than Giddens.

It is strange how critically Pollock assesses as a 'non-Southeast Asianist' his colleagues who had worked during their lifetime in Southeast Asia and produced enduring results like Wolters and Wheatley. Daud Ali is certainly right when he comments: 'Wolters' perspectives have drawn various criticism from Southeast Asianists over the years. But more recently the Sanskritist Sheldon Pollock

43. Pollock refers to Wheatley 1961, however not to his more recent 1983 publication and in particular not to Wheatley's excellent Presidential Address of the (American) Asian Society in the year 1982 (Wheatley 1961, 1982 and 1983).

has launched an apparently more withering and polemic critique against what he labels the “civilinationalist indigenism” of Wolters and others. Pollock argues, like Craig Reynolds and Victor Lieberman, that “indigenist historiography is deeply flawed in its projection of some ahistorical and unitary essence back into history”. But more pointedly, he suggests that Wolters’ theory of the persistence of indigenous ideas through the process of Indianization is both empirically and theoretically misguided’ (Ali 2011: 279).

Ali’s comment on Pollock’s rejection to comprehend any kind of indigenous prerequisites of ‘Indianization’ of Southeast Asia is, particular in the case of Wolters and Wheatley, valid and necessary.<sup>44</sup> Assessing ‘Indianization’ and the emergence of Sanskrit cosmopolis exclusively as a process of Sanskritization without any active participation of already existing indigenous social and cultural institutions in Southeast Asia brings Pollock accidentally close to still existing Hindu nationalistic concepts of ‘Hindu Colonies in the Far East’. Beyond any doubt, this happened unintentionally. After all, we owe Pollock the first comprehensive analysis of the involvement of German Indologists in the racist ideology of Nationalsozialismus (Pollock 2002). And Gellner reports in the previous issue of this journal about Pollock’s recent denunciation by Hindutva agitation. The question about the causes of Pollock’s rigid refusal of indigenous elements in Southeast Asia’s culture and Sanskrit cosmopolis remains therefore unanswered.

*Concluding discussion: Retrospect and prospect  
The relevance of Max Weber’s concept of legitimation  
in the context of Indian history*

I am thankful to the organizers of this conference for giving me not only the opportunity to revisit Max Weber’s concept of legitimation but also to realize Weber’s impact on my own and my colleagues’ research on processes of legitimation and state formation in India and Orissa in particular. This has been demonstrated in the timeframe of Weber’s study on early Hinduism, e.g., by the ritual and ideological implications of Hinduization and myth making and their significance for early state formation. And beyond Weber’s range, it has been at least been shortly hinted at the relevance and

44. Another justifiable criticism of Pollock is that he is unaware or avoiding the significant results of archaeological research of the pre-indianized indigenous cultures of Southeast Asia during recent decades.

applicability of Weber's concept of legitimation in the late Middle Ages by the example of the ideology of the monumental temples and their 'imperial' rituals.

Meanwhile the topic of 'legitimation' has found its way also into two Presidential Addresses of the Indian History Congress. But in the year 1983, B.D. Chattopadhyaya appears to have been still rather reluctant in his Address 'Political Processes and the Structure of Polity in Early Medieval India: Problems of Perspective', when he writes:

Emphasis on legitimation alone obfuscates crucial aspects of the exercise of force and of secular compulsions of state power. [But he also admits that] as part of the overall political process it [legitimation] nevertheless offers us a convenient vantage point from which to view the ideological dimension of the state.

Discussing the ways that the king could seek to approximate the sacred domain of the temple, Chattopadhyaya, too, refers to Orissa.

[One] way was to surrender temporal power to the divinity, the cult of which was raised to the status of the central cult and to act as its agent. This process is illustrated by the stages through which the cult of Jagannātha emerged as the central cult in Orissa and the ritual surrender of temporal power to the divinity by King Anangabhīma. The centrality of the cult in relation to others in this process implied the centrality of its agents as well (Chattopadhyaya 1983/1994: 197-99).<sup>45</sup>

However, in 2003, B.P. Sahu focused directly on legitimation in his Presidential Address 'Legitimation, Ideology, and the State in Early India'.

The question of legitimation, like state formation, was not much of a concern until recently, largely owing to the assumption that ruling elites were too immersed in administration, warfare and the mobilization of resources to invest anything in seeking social/moral validation for their rule... Legitimation studies emerged from historians' recent concern for and engagement with the origin, evolution and typology of states (Sahu 2003a/2013: 181f).

Sahu's significant contribution to the legitimation complexity is his insistence 'to understand the structure of states from the perspective of the regions, in relation to their genesis and political processes in operation, rather than vice versa' (ibid: 184). As illustrated by his Presidential Address and several publications, legitimation studies are an additional and significant device to analyse the kingship of

45. For a detailed annotated bibliography on legitimation see his long footnote (Chattopadhyaya 1994: 196-197, fn. 31).

early medieval regional kingdoms, their ideology of dominion and royal rituals (Sahu 2001, 2003b, 2011, 2013, 2016 and 2017).

U. Singh, too, ascribes in her article on early medieval Orissa a high level of significance to legitimation. 'The importance of land grants in the legitimation of political power has been highlighted by many historians. Political power is mercurial, something that waxes and wanes that has to be grasped, cemented, claimed, and proclaimed. Legitimation is therefore a constant need, an on-going process involving repeated reiteration and display. And moreover she underlines the 'reciprocal element of legitimation strategies, enhancing not only the prestige and position of the legitimized but also the legitimizers'. But she also expresses a reservation. 'In the emphasis that is placed on the importance of legitimation strategies, we should not lose the sight of the fact that they were part of a political process in which force was ultimately the most important ingredient' (Singh 2006: 204).

#### *Max Weber and the Processual Model of Integrative State Formation*

Finally it may be mentioned that the fruitful dialogue with Weber's concept of legitimation and its meaning for integrative processes of post-tribal and early royal state formation strongly influenced the 'Processual Model of Integrative State Formation' (Chattopadhyaya 1983; Kulke 1982,1995, 2006; Sahu/Kulke 2015). It is meanwhile regarded as the third model of early medieval state formation, besides Indian Feudalism and the Segmentary State.<sup>46</sup>

Of the three theoretical frameworks for early medieval India, Kulke and Chattopadhyaya's model brings out the relationship between the socio-political, religious and cultural domains most successfully. Kulke talks of changes in the ideology of kingship, the influence of the *bhakti* cult on politics, the importance of king-Brahmana relationship, and the integrative role of royal patronage of temples and *tirthas*. Tribes—often mentioned fleetingly in other discussions of the state—have an important place here. They interface with kingdoms, which were dependent on forest resources and recruited forest people in the armies. Kulke highlights the transformation of tribal chieftains into Hindu rajas and the interactions between states and tribal communities, which were reflected in the autochthonous cults by upwardly mobile rulers (Singh 2011: 11).

46. For the Indian feudalism and the segmentary state see Kulke 1982, 1995a: 6-31)

It is easy to detect in these aspects of integration in the Processual Model of Integrative State Formation their obvious contiguity with Weber's concepts of Hinduization and legitimation.

In addition to its focus on modes of integration, the emphasis on the processual character of the state is the other essential peculiarity of this model. It looks at the state as a flexible product of multifarious interrelated and contesting processes, rather than as a stagnant given entity as perceived by the models of Indian Feudalism and the Segmentary State. Its hitherto uncommon concept of a three-step development of state formation in pre-modern India from chieftaincy to early and to imperial kingdom echoes Weber's concepts of patriarchal, patrimonial and extra-patrimonial domination.<sup>47</sup> Its application to Indian and Southeast Asian history, too, emerged in the course of the research in Orissa and the debates in the following years with Indian colleagues (Chattopadhyaya 1983; Kulke 1982, 1986a, 1995b; Panda 1990; Sahu and Kulke 2015).

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47. For a taking into account Weber's concept of patrimonialism into the Indian context see Whimster in the next issue of this journal. Referring to Kulke (1984), Schluchter points out that Weber's concept of Hinduization is still of value for a sociologically oriented Indology (Schluchter 1984a: 69 n. 85).

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## **The Two Great Heterodoxies in Ancient India: An Example of Max Weber's Anti-Hegelian Approach**

Wolfgang Schluchter

### **Abstract**

Max Weber's studies on the economic ethic of the world religions are considered very often as being Eurocentric. However, it is not always specified in which regard this is the case. In this essay, I distinguish between normative, heuristic and conceptual Eurocentrism. Weber's Eurocentrism is heuristic and conceptual, but not normative. He adhered to a one-sided analysis of the history of religion from a European viewpoint and with European concepts, but never claimed that the West is superior to the East, contrary to those authors who subscribe to a truly evolutionary model. One case in point here is Hegel's philosophy of religion, from which Weber's approach deviated not only in the theory of concept formation, but also in the interpretation of what could be termed with Hegel a consummate religion. Weber's decisive term here is salvation religion, and for him religions of this type appeared in the West as well as in the East. For the East, early Buddhism and Jainism are cases in point. Weber considered all salvation religions normatively speaking on equal footing, but with different consequences for life conduct, originating from different worldviews and tied to different developmental histories. To demonstrate this is the purpose of his multiple comparisons between the West and the East as well as within the West and the East.

Keywords: Normative, heuristic and conceptual Eurocentrism, salvation religion, evolutionism and developmental history, multiple comparisons, Confucianism, Hinduism, early Buddhism, Jainism.

### *1. Introduction*

I shall begin my inquiry with three quotations. They should lead to the core of Max Weber's sociology of religion and should allow a rough comparison with Hegel's philosophy of religion in order to exemplify the distinctiveness of Max Weber's approach. In my view, Weber's study on Hinduism and Buddhism is especially well suited to illustrate his anti-Hegelian thrust.

Let me start with a brief review of Max Weber's texts on the sociology of religion, related to my endeavor. These texts are handed down

in two groups, partly published, partly unpublished during his lifetime, each of them the kernel of an incomplete project. The first group is made up of a series of essays, conceived in 1913. The initial part of this series, on Confucianism (and Taoism), was first published in October and December 1915 under the general title 'The Economic Ethic of the World Religions' ('Die Wirtschaftsethik der Weltreligionen'), the follow-ups on Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism and ancient Judaism, already revised and expanded, were published successively during the period from 1916 to 1920, all of them in the *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik*. These essays were eventually assembled as *Collected Essays in the Sociology of Religion* (*Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie*), of which, at the time of Weber's death, only volume 1 was ready for publication. The rest had either still to be revised or additional parts to be written. Therefore, the two additional volumes of this collection, published by Marianne Weber in 1921, on Hinduism and Buddhism and on Ancient Judaism respectively, were put together on the basis of those texts published from 1916 to 1920.<sup>1</sup> They remained unchanged. Weber had anticipated four volumes for such a collection, but at the time of his death he had still to write almost half of it. The second group of texts consists of manuscripts that came into being before World War I and were part of the early version of 'Economy and Society' ('Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft'), which Weber retitled in 1914 'The Economy and the Societal Orders and Powers' ('Die Wirtschaft und die gesellschaftlichen Ordnungen und Mächte').<sup>2</sup> These manuscripts remained in his drawer during the war and waited also to be revised. Weber himself regarded one of these manuscripts as his systematic sociology of religion ('meine Religionssystematik').

1. See Max Weber, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie I* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1920); *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie II* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1921); *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie III* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1921). Volume I has never been translated in its entirety into English, only in piecemeal fashion, so to speak; Volume II and III as *The Religion of India* and *Ancient Judaism* respectively, both in splendid isolation and as if they represented separate books. The same holds for the translation of 'Konfuzianismus und Taoismus' as *The Religion of China*, although the 'Prefatory Note' by Hans Gerth alerts the reader to keep the context in mind. However, the English title of this 'book' is especially misleading, since Weber didn't regard Confucianism as a religion. The whole series is now available in the correct order in the *Max Weber-Gesamtausgabe* (MWG I, 18, 19, 20, 21).

2. Also changed in 1914 was the title of the entire project, which Weber had been responsible for since 1909 and in which his main contribution was about to appear *Handbuch der politischen Ökonomie* became *Grundriß der Sozialökonomie*.

This manuscript, which Marianne Weber published after Max Weber's death as part of her version of *Economy and Society*, was translated as *The Sociology of Religion* by Ephraim Fischoff. The original text is now available in a reliable edition in the *Max Weber-Gesamtausgabe* under the title 'Religiöse Gemeinschaften' ('Religious Communities').<sup>3</sup> It is important to realize that Weber most likely did not touch this manuscript after 1914. However, shortly before his death he underlined his intention to go over it again.<sup>4</sup>

In retrospect, we recognize a considerable overlap between these two bodies of texts. This is not surprising since both are based on the same sources and are considered by Weber as complementary. Furthermore, since the systematic sociology of religion remained unpublished and was therefore not available when Weber started his series of articles in the *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik*, he had to supply his readership with some systematic considerations. These were provided in the 'Introduction' ('Einleitung') to this series and in the 'Intermediate Reflection' ('Zwischenbetrachtung'), the latter linking the study on Confucianism with the study on Hinduism. These texts appeared together with the study on Confucianism in 1915. Both were also republished, slightly expanded, in 1920 as part of volume 1 of the *Collected Essays in the Sociology of Religion (Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie I)*. They can be regarded as the systematic part of the comparative studies on the economic ethics of the world religions, which were planned to include, beyond those studies already mentioned, essays on Early Christianity, Talmudic Judaism, Oriental Christianity, Islam and Western Christianity.<sup>5</sup>

My first quotation is taken from the 'Introduction' ('Einleitung') to 'The Economic Ethic of the World Religions', rendered in English under the misleading title 'The Social Psychology of the World

3. Max Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft. Die Wirtschaft und die gesellschaftlichen Ordnungen und Mächte. Nachlaß. Teilband 2: Religiöse Gemeinschaften*, MWG I/22-2, edited by Hans. G. Kippenberg, Petra Schilm and Jutta Niemeier (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 2001). *The Sociology of Religion* by Max Weber, translated by Ephraim Fischoff, Introduction by Talcott Parsons (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963).

4. Max Weber, *Die protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus/Die protestantischen Sekten und der Geist des Kapitalismus. Schriften 1904–1920*, MWG I/18, edited by Wolfgang Schluchter and Ursula Bube (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 2016), p. 120.

5. See Weber's anticipated table of contents in: MWG I/19, pp. 28-29 and Wolfgang Schluchter, *Max Webers späte Soziologie* (Tübingen: [Mohr Siebeck], 2016), pp. 206-208.

Religions'. In the second version of this text, Weber inserted an important addition, which reads as follows:

Not ideas, but material and ideal interests directly govern men's conduct. Yet very frequently the 'world images' (Weltbilder) that have been created by 'ideas' determined like switches the tracks along which action has been pushed by the dynamics of interests. 'From what' and 'for what' one wished to be redeemed and, let us not forget, 'could be' redeemed, depended upon one's image of the world.<sup>6</sup>

What does this insertion tell us? Weber emphasizes not only the importance of ideas and how they operate in cultural history, which he had already demonstrated in 'The Protestant Ethic and the "Spirit" of Capitalism' of 1904 and 1905—how ideas can operate in history—,<sup>7</sup> he also points to the centrality of the search for salvation, at least among the religious virtuosi, not as a temporal event, but as a permanent state. It is related to the question: from what can I be saved, for what can I be saved, and, last but not least, how can I be saved?

The second quotation comes from the second edition of the essay 'The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism', which was incorporated in volume 1 of the *Collected Essays in the Sociology of Religions*. This volume also contains the revised essays on the Protestant sects, the 'Introduction', the study on 'Confucianism and Taoism' and the 'Intermediate Reflection'. Here we read:

The question of the *certitudo salutis itself* has, however, for every non-sacramental religion of salvation—be it Buddhism, Jainism, or anything else—been absolutely fundamental, that must not be forgotten. *Here* is the root of all psychological drives of a purely religious character.<sup>8</sup>

6. Max Weber, *Die Wirtschaftsethik der Weltreligionen. Konfuzianismus und Taoismus, Schriften und Reden 1915–1920*, MWG I/19, edited by Helwig Schmidt-Glintzer and Petra Kolonko (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1989), p. 101. English translation in: *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, translated, edited and with an introduction by H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), p. 280 (translation slightly changed).

7. Max Weber, *Asketischer Protestantismus und Kapitalismus. Schriften und Reden 1904–1911*, MWG I/9, edited by Wolfgang Schluchter together with Ursula Bube (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 2014), p. 214.

88 MWG I/18, p. 298f., n. 124. Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, translated by Talcott Parsons, with a Foreword by R.H. Tawney (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), p. 228 (translation slightly changed). It is worth mentioning that Parsons in his 'Translator's Preface' of 1930 spelled out the locus of this text within Max Weber's oeuvre quite clearly, including the role of the 'Vorbermerkung' which he included as 'Author's Introduction' in his translation. This preface was unfortunately omitted in later editions.

We may say that this supplements the first quotation. In Weber's view, the question of the *certitudo salutis* is not confined to his analysis of ascetic Protestantism where it looms large, rather it is extended unambiguously to all religions of salvation, including those in Asia. This indicates the thrust of Weber's comparative studies on religion. In his view the true believer of a salvation religion always faces the daunting question: How can I be sure that I belong to those who are saved?

The third quotation is taken from Weber's study on Hinduism and Buddhism, which he also uses as a backdrop to depict the peculiar features of the occidental development. In this context we should always remember that the studies on the economic ethics of the Asian world religions were designed to uncover, 'in the form of a survey', the impact of a religion on economic life and, vice versa, the impact of social stratification on religion only 'so far as it is necessary in order to find points of *comparison* with the Occidental development, which has furthermore to be analyzed',<sup>9</sup> as Weber put it in the 'Preliminary Remarks' to volume 1 of the *Collected Essays*, not to be confused with the 'Introduction' mentioned above. These studies are obviously not meant as 'complete analyses of culture'.<sup>10</sup> They pursue a much more limited purpose. They are, as Weber emphasized, 'definitely oriented to the problems which seem important for the understanding of Western culture from *this* point of view'.<sup>11</sup> It comes, therefore, not as a surprise that in the study on Hinduism in conjunction with the analysis of the caste system, we find the following remark on the Occident:

The elimination of all ritual barriers of birth for the community of the Eucharist, as realized in Antioch, was, in connection with the religious preconditions, the hour of conception of the occidental 'citizenry', although its birth materialized only more than a thousand years later in the revolutionary 'conjurations' of the medieval cities.<sup>12</sup>

9. MWG I/18, p. 117. The 'Preliminary Remark' to volume 1 of the *Collected Essays* is translated in Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* by Talcott Parson under the title 'Author's Introduction'. This translation is used here. The quotation can be found on p. 27 (translation amended).

10. MWG I/18, p. 117, 'Author's Introduction', p. 27.

11. MWG I/18, pp. 117-18, 'Author's Introduction', pp. 27-28.

12. Max Weber, *Die Wirtschaftsethik der Weltreligionen. Hinduismus und Buddhismus 1916-1920*, edited by Helwig Schmidt-Glintzer and Karl-Heinz Golzio (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1996), pp. 96-97; Max Weber, *The Religion of India: The Sociology of Hinduism and Buddhism*, translated and edited by Hans H. Gerth and Don Martindale (London: Free Press, 1958), pp. 37-38 (translation slightly changed).

What does this quotation tell us? It does not only point to a crucial difference between the salvation religions in Asia and in the West, but also draws attention to the concept of historical legacies and path dependencies. They are the result of those switches encountered in the first quotation and which influence human action as described in the second.

## 2. Basic concepts

We have now established an entry into Max Weber's sociology of religion. The next step will be to develop some of the basic concepts to characterize his approach in the sociology of religion in general. In chapter 1 of his systematic sociology of religion Weber deals with the rise of religion out of magic. In chapter 11 he elucidates how a religious belief can become internalized.<sup>13</sup> It is the transition from a ritualistic or law-like religion to a religion of conviction (*Gesinnungsreligion*). With the emergence of this attitude of conviction, tensions with the requirements of everyday life will increase. This idea is worked out in a stringent manner in the 'Intermediate Reflection', where Weber attributes to some religions a potential for world rejection or abnegation. This requires a differentiation of the concept of religion itself.

Weber uses the terms magical religion, cultural religion, salvation religion and world religion. The important analytical distinction is not between magic and religion, but between cultural religion and salvation religion. The concept of world religion refers only to the dissemination of a religion, to the number of its adherents. A salvation religion as well as a cultural religion can become a world religion, depending on their success. Therefore, this concept is analytically unimportant, contrary to the distinction between cultural religion and salvation religion, which is crucial for Weber's approach. We can say: A salvation religion is always a cultural religion, but not each cultural religion is a salvation religion. In chapter 11 of the *Sociology of Religion* Weber provides us with an important hint in this regard. Here we read: 'The more a religiosity of salvation (*Erlösungsreligiosität*) has been systematized and internalized, the deeper the tension with the realities of the world. This tension will be less pronounced, as long as it remains ritualistic or law-like. In this case the outcome is similar to that of a magical ethic'.<sup>14</sup> Put

13. The table of contents in the *Gesamtausgabe* deviates from that in *The Sociology of Religion*.

14. MWG I/22-2, p. 367, *Sociology of Religion*, p. 207 (translation changed).

differently: where internalization is lacking, the degree of world abnegation will be minimized. However, contrary to magical or cultural religion a religion of salvation carries the potential to reject the world and to devalue the sanctity of traditional religious convention. It has the potential for the axiological turn.

In the passage just quoted, Weber's emphasis is on the subjective side of religious life, the degree of internalization on the part of the believer. However, there is also an objective side to it. He mentions systematization. And this refers to ideas and ideals, to worldviews with their theoretical and practical side. In theoretical terms, the worldview of a religion of salvation must be based on the dualism between the transcendent and the immanent world, with the transcendent world having precedence over the immanent world. This dualism has to be justified metaphysically. In practical terms, a religious world view of a salvation religion requires the integration of the major religious obligations into a religious ethic of conviction (*Gesinnungsethik*), which produces revolutionary consequences insofar as the religious faith 'does not recognize any "sacred law", but only a "sacred conviction" ("heilige Gesinnung") that may, depending on the situation, sanction different maxims of conduct, and can therefore be regarded as elastic and adjustable'.<sup>15</sup> This liberates the believer from mundane bondage in exchange for his total dependency on the transcendent order. Although Weber draws a developmental line from magic over the cultural religion to the salvation religion, he acknowledges a plurality of salvation religions. Neither can be regarded as the consummate religion as in Hegel's philosophy of religion as we will see. Their number is limited, of course, but they do not form an evolutionary sequence. They represent alternatives.

Weber distinguished three of these alternatives in an ideal-typical fashion. The dualism between the transcendent and immanent world, which is the most pronounced feature of a religion of salvation, can be interpreted either in ontological, in ethical or in spiritual terms.<sup>16</sup> Likewise, the deficiencies of the immanent world, the world of the believer, can be interpreted as being pervaded by suffering, by sin or by falsehood and darkness. And depending on the character of this prime deficiency, different remedies will be proposed. The religious believer will strive either for eternal tranquillity, paradise,

15. MWG I/22-2, p. 369, *Sociology of Religion*, p. 209 (translation changed).

16. See MWG I/22-2, pp. 298-301, *Sociology of Religion*, pp. 145-47.

or for a world of light to overcome the world of darkness. Only then can salvation as a permanent state be achieved.

We can summarize these considerations in the following chart:

Worldviews of Religions of Salvation: Basic Alternatives

Type	Ontological	Ethical	Spiritual
Cleavage	Eternal/Transient	Good/Evil	Light/Darkness
Challenge	Overcoming Rebirth	Overcoming Sinfulness	Winning Fight against Devils
Goal	Nirvana	Paradise	World of Light

The last point mentioned above requires further elaboration. In the ‘Introduction’ and the ‘Intermediate Reflection’ Weber dealt with the believer’s religious orientations toward the world. Those passages, relevant here, were first published in 1915 and in 1920 remained unchanged. Weber distinguishes between asceticism and mysticism as means to achieve salvation. These means have an elective affinity to the interpretation of the believer as either the tool or the vessel of God. In the first case, an active religious life is likely (*vita activa*), in the second case a contemplative religious life will ensue (*vita contemplativa*). To prove the soundness of his religious commitment, the believer can turn either toward this world or away from it. In the first case, the believer will make every effort to change this world in God’s name, in the second he will strive for a life of solitude and seclusion. Weber therefore also distinguishes between innerworldliness and otherworldliness. As stated in the ‘Intermediate Reflection’, the distinctions asceticism/mysticism on the one hand and innerworldly/otherworldly on the other can be treated as two independent dimensions. This yields a four-fold scheme.<sup>17</sup>

This four-fold scheme can be used to classify religiously motivated orientations toward the world. The outcome is depicted in the following chart:

Orientations toward the world

	Asceticism/Action	Mysticism/Contemplation
innerworldly	Dominating the world	Indifference toward the world
otherworldly	Overcoming the world	Fleeing the world

17. See MWG I/19, pp. 482-83, *From Max Weber*, pp. 324-26.

There is a third consideration, with which we can round up our analysis of Weber's basic concepts in his sociology of religion, as far as it is necessary for our further discussion. It pertains to the concept of theodicy. Related to the three basic religious world views mentioned above, Weber distinguishes three consistent responses to the believer's experience of the incongruity between destiny and merit: 'the Indian doctrine of Karma, Zoroastrian dualism, and the predestination decree of the *Deus absconditus*'.<sup>18</sup> Weber argues that these theoretical constructs are based on the metaphysical conception of the two worlds and the relationship between them. Every salvation religion produces a 'rational need for a theodicy', but only in these three cases does this need become satisfied 'in pure form'. Therefore, they can be regarded as 'rationally closed'.<sup>19</sup>

At this point, however, we encounter a conceptual problem. Dualism has a double meaning: on the one hand this concept relates to the structure of the worldview common to all salvation religions, on the other to one type of theodicy. One should not confuse these different uses of the same concept. Zoroastrianism remains a special case that does not play a central role in Weber's comparative studies anyway.<sup>20</sup> More importantly, theodicy is a concept drawn from the Western religious traditions. It requires the idea of a supra-mundane and personal creator God. This is not, as Weber himself points out, an idea that informs the Asian traditions. Here the idea of an immanent and uncreated eternal order is to the fore. This is not to say that the problem of justification would not exist in Asian traditions. But, strictly speaking, the solution to this problem is to be found in a cosmodycy rather than in a theodicy. With this reservation, we can summarize these considerations in a third chart:

Theories of justification

Karma	Predestination	Dualism of light and darkness
Self-redemption	God's grace	Victory over darkness and falsehood, impurity and evil
Early Buddhism	Ascetic Protestantism	Zoroastrianism

To the tensions within a salvation religion we have to add the tensions between a salvation religion and the different life spheres. These

18. MWG I/19, p. 95, also pp. 520-22; *From Max Weber*, p. 275 and pp. 358-59.

19. See MWG I/19, S. 95; *From Max Weber*, p. 275.

20. See MWG I/19, p. 522, *From Max Weber*, p. 359.

tensions are especially pronounced when these life spheres follow their own internal laws (*Eigengesetzlichkeit*). Weber illustrates these tensions with regard to the worldview of ethical dualism. The Christian ethic of brotherliness is juxtaposed to the economic, political, aesthetic, erotic and intellectual spheres. The religious strategies to overcome these tensions are twofold: ethical absolutism or emotional absolutism, either the realization of God's commandments in all spheres of life regardless of their inner logic, or acosmistic love. A more convenient way to solve the problem would be ethical relativism, an organic social ethic. But Weber objected to this solution vigorously from his own normative standpoint, although he admired the Bhagavad-Gita as one of the great texts of mankind, in which such a solution is proposed.

One further point deserves mention. Weber uses the distinction between orthodoxy and heterodoxy (or orthopraxis and heteropraxis) in his published writings from 1915 onward. As soon as a salvation religion becomes consolidated, Weber seems to surmise, it produces counter movements. These are, according to him, movements from within. Interestingly enough, he confines this distinction strictly to developments within a salvation religion. He does not apply it to processes of dissemination or to conquest from the outside. In the case of China, he regards Confucianism as orthodox, Taoism as heterodox, but not Buddhism, which was introduced as a foreign religion to China, in India he regards Hinduism as orthodox, Jainism and Buddhism as heterodox, but not Islam, which came to India via conquest. This might explain the titles of his studies: Confucianism and Taoism on the one hand, Hinduism and Buddhism on the other. The respective translations of these titles as *The Religion of China* and *The Religion of India* therefore totally miss the point.

### 3. Max Weber's multiple comparisons

As we have seen in his comparative studies of the economic ethic of the world religions, Weber starts with Confucianism and Taoism, followed by Hinduism and Buddhism. Then he shifts to ancient Judaism and from there to Christianity and Islam. He strolls from East to West, so to speak, but this does not imply an evolutionary scheme. The emphasis is on comparison, although in a conceptually organized way. He starts with Confucianism because this is not a salvation religion—whereby it is problematic to even call it a religion at all. If one wants to label it such, it would be a cultural

religion, a religion with no potential for world abnegation. Therefore, for Weber it is the proper point of departure to demonstrate which revolutionary force a salvation religion brings with it.

The potential for religiously motivated world abnegation or world rejection can be worked out in two very different directions. As we have seen in connection with second table above (Orientations toward the world), it can either mean turning away from the world or turning toward it (*Weltabwendung* oder *Weltzuwendung*). In each of these cases the means of salvation can be either mysticism/contemplation or asceticism/action. Hinduism/Jainism/ Buddhism represent the first, Judaism/Christianity/ Islam the second alternative.

Weber's study on Hinduism and Buddhism is placed in this comparative framework: East and West differ in regard to their basic premises in deciphering the meaning of salvation. Hinduism and Buddhism, but also Jainism are examples of Asian salvation religions whose religious virtuosi, in striving for salvation, tend to turn away from the world (*Weltabwendung*). The turning toward the world (*Weltzuwendung*) is performed primarily by virtuosi of ancient Judaism and followed up by those in Christianity and Islam. But this is a shift within salvation religions, not a shift between a salvation religion and a cultural religion or a mundane ethical teaching. The latter does not have the potential to perform the axiological turn.

Weber starts his multiple comparisons with the juxtaposition of Confucianism and Puritanism. It is a comparison highlighting difference between a rationalism of world adjustment or world affirmation and a rationalism of world rejection or world abnegation. This is a comparison between East and West, of course, but that is not the decisive point here. Rather, it is the structural difference between an ethic 'which reduced the tension with the world to an absolute minimum', and an ethic with which this tension is maximized.<sup>21</sup> This structural difference exists not only between Confucianism and Puritanism, but also between Confucianism and the salvation religions in India. It is a difference not only developed between East and West but also within the East. It would therefore be a mistake to surmise that with this comparison, worked out by Weber at the end of his study on Confucianism, that he wanted to demonstrate the superiority of the West over the East. As far as salvation religions are concerned, no structural difference exists between West and East. This does not rule out differences in their basic presuppositions. Quite

21. MWG I/19, pp. 450-78; *The Religion of China*, pp. 226-49 (227).

to the contrary, they are of utmost importance in comprehending the different trajectories which salvation religions have taken in Asia and the Occident.

We can summarize these differences between East and West on the level of salvation religions as follows:

West	East
Personal creator God	Impersonal uncreated order
Man, a tool	Man, a vessel
Asceticism/action	Mysticism/contemplation
Salvation through God's mercy	Salvation through oneself
Ethical prophecy	Exemplary prophecy
Virtuosi from bourgeois strata	Virtuosi from aristocratic strata

In the study on Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism, first published in 1916 as a sequel to the study on Confucianism, Weber focusses not on the East-West comparison, but on the East-East comparison. It is a comparison between Confucianism and Hinduism with a side view to Hellenism, followed by the comparison between orthodox Hinduism and heterodox Jainism and early Buddhism and then between these two heterodox movements themselves. These multiple comparisons provide the reader with an intricate picture of the different sources from which Indian religiosity draws. To illustrate the to and fro between these orthodox and heterodox movements, Weber applies a vague time-frame. He starts with Hinduism, introduces Jainism and Buddhism as counter movements and ends up with the orthodox restoration. The social-structural backbone of this development to him is the caste system that was contested by the heterodox movements, but survived and in the long run played a similar role for India as the burgher city for the religious development in the Occident.

Let us elaborate a little on the three comparisons between the main Asian religions. As already pointed out, Weber starts with the comparison between Confucianism and Hinduism. Compared to Confucianism, Hinduism has increased the tensions with the world. However, although Hinduism is already a salvation religion, it still has a ritualistic and law-like form. Nevertheless, the difference to Confucianism is remarkable. Whereas Confucianism operates as a cultural underpinning for a theocratic type of patrimonialism with educated literati as bureaucrats under the rule of an emperor, Hinduism supports the dualism between the Brahmins as a priesthood

of educated ritual experts and the political aristocracy in an often highly fragmented polity. Whereas in Confucianism sib-bondage is strengthened with an emphasis on piety, in Hinduism salvation must be regarded as earned and as a personal achievement which could shatter sib-bonds due to one's spiritual destiny. However, as soon as we turn to the heterodox movements in India, we get an entirely different picture. Only with these movements salvation religion in Asia comes into its own. In Hinduism ritualism remains strong and the connection to the caste system essential, membership is ascribed – Weber calls it 'churchlike' – and assigned to collectivities rather than to individuals. In contrast, the heterodox movements are antiritualistic and detached from the caste system, membership is achieved – Weber calls it 'sectlike' – and admission granted to individuals regardless of caste. The ritualistic and law-like religiosity is surpassed by a religiosity founded on conviction. Hinduism and the heterodox movements are incompatible, and it seems to be no accident that Buddhism was eventually driven out of India, whereas Jainism managed to remain after undergoing to a certain degree of Hinduization.

Although Jainism and Buddhism, the two heterodox movements, have much in common, Weber also underscores their differences. In both cases the religious virtuosi are monks, but their relationships to the laity are different. In Jainism, the monks connect with the laity and develop a kind of congregation, whereas in early Buddhism there is a wide gulf between the holy man and the layman: the monk is instead detached from the layman and his itinerary directed toward self-redemption. The layman fulfills his modest religious duties by supporting the itinerant monk on his way to eternity.<sup>22</sup> However, this situation changed radically with the transformation of early Buddhism into a world religion. It became a world religion outside India and within split into the Hinayana and Mahayana wings.

22. In his comparison between Jainism and early Buddhism, Weber overstates the difference between the two salvation religions with regard to the relationship between monkdom and laity. Buddhism for instance developed the institution of temporary monkhood that, within the life course of a person, facilitated the transition from laity to monkdom (temporary monkdom). In addition, the layman was from the very beginning part of a moral community. See Gananath Obeyesekere, 'Exemplarische Prophetie oder ethisch geleitete Askese? Überlegungen zur frühbuddhistischen Reform', in *Max Webers Studie über Hinduismus und Buddhismus. Interpretation und Kritik*, edited by Wolfgang Schluchter (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1984), pp. 247ff. (esp. 266f.).

Weber does not end his comparisons here. He goes on to juxtapose Buddhism and Confucianism, and, interestingly enough, Jainism and ascetic Protestantism, where amazing parallels between East and West are revealed. Last but not least, at the end of his essay on Hinduism and Buddhism he looks back on what he calls the unprecedented richness of the Asiatic culture, which he had scrutinized only superficially, and comes up with an overall comparison between Asia and the Occident. Comparison seems to be everywhere, and comparison overshadows narration. The question is: What for?

If we want to find an answer, we have to return to the very beginning of Max Weber's scientific interest in religion, which emerge for the first time in 1904/1905. In his two world-famous articles on the 'Protestant Ethic and the "Spirit" of Capitalism' he discovered that the idea of a calling in one's mundane occupation was an offshoot of Christian asceticism, and that this idea informed upwardly mobile bourgeois strata who became instrumental in establishing a new capitalist mode of production, deviating from all previous modes that one finds all over the world and at all times. Weber called it later 'a bourgeois capitalism of *production* with its rational organization of *free labour*'.<sup>23</sup> And he realized that this was not the only cultural feature that was peculiar to the modern West. In the 'Preliminary Remarks' to volume 1 of the *Collected Essays in the Sociology of Religion*, written in September 1919, he presents several of these cultural features, running from modern science via art, architecture and music to the modern state with its bureaucracy. However, most important of them all: capitalism, 'the most fateful force in our modern life'.<sup>24</sup>

Weber's comparative studies are guided by the question: Why only in the West and why not elsewhere? Why did the capitalist interests not bring about similar results in China and in India as they did in the West? Or more general: 'Why did the scientific, the artistic, the political, or the economic development not go down the path of *rationalization* which is peculiar to the Occident?'<sup>25</sup> And we may add: Even though around 1000 AD the West was way behind these other civilizations, including those influenced by Islam? This was to become Weber's main research question in his comparative

23. MWG I/18, p. 114; 'Author's Introduction', p. 24 (translation slightly changed).

24. MWG I/18, p. 105; 'Author's Introduction', p. 17.

25. MWG I/18, p. 116; 'Author's Introduction', p. 25.

studies: Which switches directed these other civilizations onto different tracks?

One switch pertains to religion but it is not the only one. With regard to Indian religion, it is Max Weber's contention that support of those capitalist interests favorable to the rise of modern capitalism could not be expected. This is the result of his multiple comparisons. In the period during and after orthodox restoration neo-Brahmanism with its guru-conception emerged and became the dominant religious force lacking the moral rigor Weber attributes to ascetic Protestantism and also a kind of embeddedness like the burgher city in the West. We may take the following passage as a summary statement on India with regard to his research question: 'In addition to the ritualistic and traditional inner attachment to the caste order and its foundation in the teaching of samsara and karma – which no relevant sect has ever shattered -, there existed also the religious anthropolatry of the Hindu laity against the naturally strict traditionalistic, charismatic clergy of the guru to hinder the rationalization of life conduct from within. It is quite evident that no community dominated by such inner powers could unleash something that we define as the "spirit of capitalism"'.<sup>26</sup>

#### 4. *Comparison versus evolution: Should Weber have learned from Hegel?*

Weber's approach in his sociology of religion is comprehensive. It almost provides a universal history. There are not many positions around on equal footing. One is Hegel's philosophy of religion written roughly one hundred years before. However, why should we turn to Hegel? After all, he is a philosopher, not a sociologist, in any case, Weber did not use him as a reference point.<sup>27</sup>

26. MWG I/20, p. 519f.; *Religion of India*, p. 325 (translation altered).

27. There is almost no reference to Hegel in Weber's entire oeuvre. Only in the Roscher-essay, Weber contrasts Hegel's emanationism with the critical rationalism of the Neokantians and their distinction between generalizing and individualizing concept formation. However, even here he refers to Hegel's philosophy only indirectly, by way of the dissertation of Emil Lask. See Max Weber, *Collected Methodological Writings*, edited by Hans Henrik Bruun and Sam Whimster, translated by Hans Henrik Bruun (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), p. 12. In a letter to Franz Eulenburg, dated 12 July, 1909, Weber made his standpoint vis-à-vis Hegel very clear: 'Zwei Wege stehen offen: Hegel oder – unsere Art die Dinge zu behandeln' ('Two ways are open: Hegel or – our way to deal with things'), Max Weber, *Briefe 1909–1910*, MWG II/6, edited by M. Rainer Lepsius, Wolfgang J. Mommsen, Birgit Rudhard and Manfred Schön (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1994, p. 173.

My interest in comparing both is systematic, not genetic. I want to demonstrate how Weber overcame a normative evolutionary scheme. Although he emphasized the distinctiveness of the Western trajectory and the importance of Western achievements for mankind, he never claimed Western superiority over other civilizations. Quite the contrary, as the final passage of the study on ascetic Protestantism indicates, he regards it as likely that the Western trajectory has a dead end.

Hegel is a suitable contrast to Weber, because he develops a concept of religious evolution with magic as the beginning and Christianity as the completion. As in Weber's case, the historical material which is taken from the history of religion is conceptually organized, but, compared with Weber, in a different way.

Hegel's philosophy of religion was handed down in lecture courses he delivered in 1821, 1824, 1827 and 1831. The edition of these lectures is usually presented in three parts: the concept of religion (Part 1), the determinate religion (Part 2) and the consummate religion (Part 3).<sup>28</sup> We are interested in the second part because here Hegel deals with the whole spectrum of historical religions from his own conceptual viewpoint. Each time he lectured on this material, he arranged this spectrum somewhat differently. But that is not our concern here.

For Hegel, only humans as spiritual beings have religion, and the object of religion is the spirit. The material is conceptually organized in stages to show 'the elevation of the spirit from finite to infinite'.<sup>29</sup> The first stage comprises the finite spirit in its relation to the eternal substance as nature (natural religion or immediate religion); the second the finite spirit in its relation to the eternal spirit, but unmediated (religion of separation, also spiritual religion or religion of spiritual individuality); and the third the finite spirit mediated with the eternal spirit (consummate religion). The religious evolution depicted in this stage model is characterized by directionality, continuity, necessity, increasing comprehensiveness and internal differentiation. What is surpassed is not left behind but incorporated in the higher stage. In Hegel's case the criterion of directionality is freedom. The religion of coercion is magic, the religion of freedom Christianity.

The three-stage-model also includes forms. Each stage can be subdivided into three consecutive forms, although it turns out that he

28. G.W.F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion. Teil 1: Der Begriff der Religion. Teil 2: Die bestimmte Religion. Teil 3: Die vollendete Religion*, newly edited by Walter Jeschke (Hamburg: Meiner, 1993–1995).

29. Hegel, *Teil 3*, p. 149.

had some difficulty to confining the richness of the empirical world to three every time. However, it seems to work, at least for the first two stages, in which the religions in Asia and in the Mediterranean basin are conceptually organized. It is not quite so clear what the three forms look like in the third stage.

Based on some suggestions in the secondary literature, I propose the following evolutionary scheme for our purpose:

- A. The immediate religion (nature religion)
  1. Religion of magic (China)
  2. Religion of phantasy (India)
  3. Religion of light (Persia)
- B. The religion of separation (religion of spiritual individuality)
  1. Religion of sublimity (Israel)
  2. Religion of beauty (Greece)
  3. Religion of expediency (Rome)
- C. The religion of reconciliation (religion of freedom)
  1. Christianity

At a quick look the similarity between Hegel and Weber seems to be stunning: both deal with almost the same religions. Even the order in which they are arranged seem to be the same. However, we should not be misled by this outer appearance. In substance, the difference is profound.

For Hegel, the decisive rift among these determinate religions runs between Asia and the Mediterranean basin. Hegel's conviction reads: 'The Oriental way of viewing things is opposed to that of the Occident: just as the sun sets in the West, so it is in the West that the human being descends into itself, into its own subjectivity'.<sup>30</sup> Only in the West, strictly speaking in Christianity, does religion come into its own.<sup>31</sup> For Weber, the decisive rift runs not between Asia and the Mediterranean basin. Rather, it runs within Asia itself. Jainism and Buddhism are high-powered salvation religions, as are Judaism, Christianity and Islam. There is a difference between East and West, but not in the evolutionary sense of lower and higher. In the 'Author's Introduction' Weber is quite explicit in this regard: 'The

30. Hegel, *Teil 2*, p. 469.

31. Crucial is the theory of trinity: Father, son and the holy spirit institutionalized in the community. Interestingly enough, Islam does play a significant role in Hegel's considerations.

question of the relative value of the cultures which are compared here will not receive a single word'.<sup>32</sup>

This claim of Max Weber was often challenged, due to the first paragraph of the 'Preliminary Remarks', and meant as an overall introduction to his *Collected Essays on the Sociology of Religion*. It reads as follows:

The son of modern European culture, confronted with problems of universal history, is unavoidably and justifiably bound to ask: what combination of circumstances has brought about the fact that in the Occident, and only here, cultural phenomena emerged which—as we like to think—lie in a line of development having *universal* significance and validity.<sup>33</sup>

At a glance the similarity between Hegel and Weber seems to be stunning: both deal with almost the same religions. Even the order in which they are arranged seem to be the same. However, we should not be misled by this outer appearance. In substance, the difference is profound.

And in the subsequent paragraphs, Weber names these cultural phenomena, beginning with modern science and ending with modern capitalism, as already pointed out.

Reading this paragraph carefully, one should first of all acknowledge the proviso 'as we like to think'. Whether these cultural phenomena are indeed of universal significance and validity for everyone, Weber does not say. Furthermore, he points to a hermeneutical problem: we as members of the modern European culture, brought up with its values, are 'unavoidably and justifiably' bound to ask these questions. If we had been brought up in a different culture, we would ask different questions, but the cultural boundedness of our scientific interest would be alike.

We can therefore rule out that Weber used an evolutionary model justifying normative eurocentrism, as is true for Hegel and others. However, his heuristic eurocentrism is undeniable. He observes problems of universal history from a European standpoint. His analysis is one-sided, but he regards this as a methodological necessity.

The heuristic eurocentrism is joined by a conceptual eurocentrism. The concepts applied in his comparative studies on the sociology of religion are drawn from European religious history. We

32. MWG I/18, p. 19; 'Author's Introduction', p. 29. The German word, here translated as value, is 'wertverhältnis'.

33. MWG I/18, S. 101, 'Author's Introduction', p. 13 (translation altered).

mentioned the concept of theodicy already, but this is not the only case where a Western concept does not grasp the indigenous meaning of a phenomenon in a non-Western culture.<sup>34</sup> It is true that Weber made a considerable attempt, especially in his study on Hinduism and Buddhism, to likewise supply the reader with many indigenous concepts. But this does not sweep away a possible distortion of the original meaning as is true for any translation between languages.

Normative eurocentrism, no, heuristic and conceptual eurocentrism, yes: that is our conclusion. By the same token, this demonstrates Weber's anti-evolutionary approach, as being not only the difference between the philosophy and the sociology of religion or the difference in concept formation (essential concepts versus ideal types) separating him from Hegel but also underlining their different stance toward evolution. I therefore regard Weber's comparative studies as an example of an anti-Hegelian approach.

There remains a serious problem, however: if not evolution, what then? This leads us back to our third quotation which we associated with the catch words 'historical legacy' and 'path dependency'.

A comparative approach serves two purposes: to identify the peculiarity of a subject matter and to explain its occurrence with the help of the logic of differences as pointed out by John Stuart Mill. In addition, we have to account for long-range processes without sliding back into evolutionism. How can this be achieved? Very early on, in his seminal *The Limits of Concept Formation in Natural Science*, Heinrich Rickert suggested seven possibilities for conceptualizing sequences in history, three of them too weak, however, and three of them too strong. He wanted to find a way between these alternatives, between mere change (too weak) and evolution (too strong). His way out is called developmental history.<sup>35</sup> There is not only one developmental history, there are many, depending on the value relationship (Wertbeziehung), which a researcher pursues. But value

34. A case often discussed is Weber's interpretation of Chinese family relationships as an example of piety in the sense of the Roman law (*patria potestas*). This leads to a distortion of the five lines.

35. Heinrich Rickert, *Die Grenzen der naturwissenschaftlichen Begriffsbildung. Eine logische Einleitung in die historischen Wissenschaften* (Tübingen and Leipzig: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1902), pp. 436-80, 472-473. Rickert distinguishes seven different meanings of change, but it suffices to distinguish the three mentioned for our debate. A summary of the seven meanings can be found on pp. 472-73. He examines also Hegel's concept of development on p. 455. See also Wolfgang Schluchter, *Religion und Lebensführung, Band 1* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1988), pp. 93-102 (Development without progress).

relationship is not identical with evaluation, according to Rickert. And Weber never abandoned this distinction between evaluation and value-relationship. Such a developmental history cannot be narrated like a tale. It requires a time frame, of course, and intermediate steps to reach the explanandum, so to speak. But to bridge the many gaps in between, one might refer to the notion of historical legacy and path dependency, not Rickert's terms, of course.

The problem one encounters with Max Weber's developmental histories has to do with his shifting time frames and with his partly unbridgeable gaps. To connect the struggle of early Buddhism against Hinduism with modern rational capitalism yields no meaningful time frame in which a developmental history could be construed. But the fact that Weber's time frames are partly such so that we cannot come up with meaningful sequential steps, should not drive us back to evolutionism. Instead we should come up with more realistic time frames and try to close some of the gaps Weber left in his comparative studies.

**Asia in general and India in particular:  
Max Weber's conclusions on the Role of  
the Literati in Hinduism and Buddhism**

Helwig Schmidt-Glintzer

**Abstract**

Weber's argument about India as the spiritual pivot of Asian religiosity is critically considered as typical of the approach of European intellectuals at the beginning of the twentieth century. This can no longer be held to be valid in the light of present academic knowledge. That approach still influences western attitudes to how Asia and its religions are conceptualised. The relation of literati to the masses in China and India are compared as well as the role of the saviour figure in Asia and the Christian West.

Keywords: generalizing Asia, miracles versus magic, Asian mystics and Christian ascetics, aliterate middle classes.

*Prelude*

While Europe itself was still conquering societies and cultures around the world under the auspices of imperialism and while the European powers were fighting each other overseas Max Weber was contrasting Asian and Near Eastern cultures and their religions with the Occident in order to better understand the specificity of the West and its success. This scholarly pursuit was in itself in several respects a case of – to take up Ernst Bloch's dictum in his *Erbschaft dieser Zeit* – 'simultaneity of the non-simultaneous' ('Gleichzeitigkeit des Ungleichzeitigen').

On the other side, the new emerging elites of these cultures outside Europe as well as those in its margins like Hungary and others<sup>1</sup> had already started to leave the past. It is noteworthy and not at

1. On the historical context of ideas and their interrelation see Holm Sundhaußen, *Der Einfluß der Herderschen Ideen auf die Nationsbildung bei den Völkern der Habsburger Monarchie* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1973).

odds that Max Weber reflected upon the reasons for the backwardness of non-European societies in Germany while Germany itself was in several spheres lying behind international developments at least compared to its European rivals.

In this context we discuss Weber's concept of Asia used in his writings on the 'Economic Ethics of World Religions'. This concept was an imagined construct – and although Germany was in many ways involved overseas<sup>2</sup> Weber confined himself to the history of religions and ideas rather than delving into colonial politics.

Hundred years later, we not only have a broader knowledge of the history of India and China than Max Weber did, but we also realize that many of the concepts he used, e.g., Asia, Buddhism and Hinduism, were – similar to the case of Africa – themselves shaped by imperialism and the attempts 'to subject the non-West to a Western-dominated world system'.<sup>3</sup> From this viewpoint I attempt to venture a new look on Weber's concept of 'Asia' of which he regarded India its 'spiritual pivot'.<sup>4</sup> In the second part of my paper I will delve again into Weber's concept of 'literati' and the role they played in Ancient India. What will remain an open question, however, is whether Max Weber really understood the fundamentals of the Occident. Not only in the field of Asian Studies have we learnt more about Asia and got a deeper understanding during the last century, but we also now know more – or at least gained a different view – on the Early Modern Period (the German 'Frühe Neuzeit') and on the European Renaissance. This scholarly pursuit let us understand better how *capitalism* was – among others – bred by *colonialism*.

### 1. Generalizing Asia

With his studies on the 'Economic Ethics of the World Religions' (German: *Wirtschaftsethik der Weltreligionen*) Max Weber wanted to explain the differences in the status of the distinct parts of the world. In this respect he must be seen in a tradition which started with the

2. As can be seen in architectural representations. See Michael Hofmann, *Deutsche Kolonialarchitektur in China und der Südsee* (Petersberg: Michael Imhof, 2016).

3. Hui Wang, *The Politics of Imagining Asia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), pp. 10-62.

4. On this concept see *Die Wirtschaftsethik der Weltreligionen Hinduismus und Buddhismus*, ed. Helwig Schmidt-Glintzer together with Karl-Heinz Golzio, MWG I/20 (Tübingen, Mohr [Siebeck], 1996), p. 528.

world encyclopedias in the 17th century<sup>5</sup> and which lasts until the present day. Because of this Max Weber's studies, although based on other information than nowadays at hand for us, are still of relevance for today. In addition there is no doubt that Max Weber's approach was tinged by the denominational traditions which played a great role in German regionalism. Since its early modernization Germany's cultural and political history was in the post-reformation era in many respects intertwined with questions of confession. This is one of the reasons for Max Weber being especially interested in denomination as a factor shaping modern personalities.

One of the challenges imposed on us by Weber is that on the one hand he differentiated between several intellectual and religious currents in the past, whereas on the other he was addressing Asia as a whole and contrasting it with the Occident. In this context he wanted to prove the singularity of the Occident. The clue to understanding Asia adequately was when he referred to India, stating: '[...] all orthodox and heterodox salvation religions that could claim a role in Asia similar to that of Christianity are Indian'.<sup>6</sup> Characterizing Asia, he concluded:

Asia was, and remains, in principle, the land of the free competition of religions, 'tolerant' somewhat in the sense of late antiquity. That is to say, tolerant except for restrictions for reason of state, which, finally, also for us today remain the boundary of all religious toleration only with other consequences.<sup>7</sup>

This characterization should be modified in many ways since we by now are much better informed on the diversity and historical change in Asia in general and in East and South Asia in particular. Thus a fresh look at Asia and its different parts and a new research agenda would, for example, provide us with new information on the flourishing of educational institutions and allow us a new approach, for instance, to a new conception of the world in the Confucian revival in the 11th century which is now regarded as the beginning of the early modern period in Chinese history with substantial influence on politics in the Sinitic world. Thereby we would also substantiate what Weber alluded to when he described certain peculiarities in India 'in sharp contrast to China'.

5. See e.g. Georg Lehner, *China in European Encyclopaedias, 1700–1850*, Vol 9 of *European Expansion and Indigenous Response* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2011).

6. MWG I/20, p. 527.

7. MWG I/20, p. 527.

*Miracle (Wunder) vs. Magical Spell (Zauber)*

To give just another example how Weber was generalizing Asia, I refer to his contrasting *miracle* and *magical spell*. Here Weber comes to the conclusion:

This most highly anti-rational world of universal magic also affected everyday economics. There is no way from it to rational, inner-worldly life conduct.<sup>8</sup>

Therefore, according to Weber, there was no way by which the singularity of the Occident could be challenged by Asia. One of the prerequisites in coming to this conclusion Weber distinguishes ‘the aliterate “middle classes” in Asia, the merchants, and those belonging to the middle-class segments of craftwork’, from ‘occidental equivalents’.<sup>9</sup> This was due to the ‘ultimately gnostic and mystical character’ of their soteriologies which ‘offered no foundation for the development of an adequate, rational methodology for inner-worldly life conduct’.

Weber:

Here also there worked the penetration of the gnostic and mystical character of all Asiatic intellectual soteriology and the inner relationship of God intoxication, the possession of God and Godly possession so decisive for mysticism and magicians. Everywhere in Asia where it was not, as in China and Japan, politically suppressed, savior religiosity (*Heilandsreligiosität*) assumed the form of hagiolatry and indeed a hagiolatry of living saviors: the gurus and their equivalents, be it as mystagogues or as magical dispensers of grace. This gave the religiosity of the aliterary middle classes its decisive stamp.<sup>10</sup>

With the exemption of China and Japan, so Weber:

In Asia generally the power of a charismatic stratum grew. It was a stratum which established the practical life conduct of the masses and dispensed magical salvation for them. The gift of the ‘living savior’ (‘lebenden Heiland’) was the characteristic type of Asiatic piety. Beside the unbroken character of magic in general and the power of

8. MWG I/20, pp. 534-35; RI, p. 336.

9. MWG I/20, p. 532f.; RI p. 334.

10. RI, p. 334-335; cf. MWG I/20, p. 533:

‘Auch hier wirkte aber /533/der penetrant gnostische und mystische Charakter aller asiatischen Intellektuellensoteriologie und die innere Verwandtschaft von Gottinnigkeit, Gottesbesitz und Gottesbesessenheit, von Mystiker und *Magier* entscheidend ein. Überall in Asien, wo sie nicht, wie in China und Japan, gewaltsam niedergehalten wurde, nahm die Heilandsreligiosität die Form der Hagiolatrie an und zwar der Hagiolatrie *lebender Heilande*: der Gurus und der ihnen gleichartigen, sei es mehr mystagogischen, sei es mehr magischen Gnadenspender. Dies gab der Religiosität des aliterarischen Mittelstandes das entscheidende Gepräge’.

the sib appears the impregnability of charisma in its oldest form: as a pure magical power. These determined the typical course of the Asiatic social order.<sup>11</sup>

Weber then again mentions the 'literary strata' ('Literatenschichten'):

In general, in circles of distinguished political or hierocratic literary strata, the massive orgiasticism and saviour belief was denied along with adoration or hagiolatristic formalism and ritualism. The attempt was made to sublimate them or denature them, in general with very differential success. It was most successful in China, Japan, and Tibet and in the Buddhistic outlying Indian territories, and least successful in India proper. However, these strata succeeded in breaking the domination of magic only occasionally and only with very temporary success.<sup>12</sup>

Then Weber introduces his distinction of miracle (*Wunder*) on the one side and 'magical spell' (*Zauber*) on the other:

Not the 'miracle' but the 'magical spell' remained, therefore, the core substance of mass religiosity. This was true above all for peasants and laborers, but also for the middle classes. This concerns both miracle and spell in a two-fold sense. One can easily determine this by comparison of occidental and Asiatic legends. Both can be seen as very similar to each other and, the old, reworked, Buddhistic and Chinese legends stand at times inwardly near to the occidental. However, the two-sided division shows the contrast. The 'miracle' in terms of its meaning always appears as the act of some sort of rational, world-linked, godly gift of grace, seen and practiced, thus inwardly motivated as a 'spell'; in terms of its sense it stands as a manifestation of magical potencies manipulated by irrational opera-(336)tional arts and by charismatically qualified beings. However, such manipulation occurs in terms of the particular free will behind nature, human or super-human, stored up through asceticism or contemplative performances.<sup>13</sup>

11. RI, p. 335; cf. MWG I/20, p. 533: 'Sonst ist es in Asien überall jene charismatische Schicht gewesen, welche die praktische Lebensführung der Massen bestimmte und ihnen magisches Heil spendete: die Hingabe an den "lebenden Heiland" war der charakteristische Typus der asiatischen Frömmigkeit. Neben der Ungebrochenheit der Magie überhaupt und der Gewalt der Sippe war diese Ungebrochenheit des Charisma in seiner ältesten Auffassung: als einer rein magischen Gewalt, der typische Zug der asiatischen sozialen Ordnung'.

12. Ibid.: 'Es ist den vornehmen politischen oder hierokratischen Literatenschichten zwar im allgemeinen gelungen, die massive Orgiastik zur Heilandsminne, Andacht oder zur hagiolatristischen Formalistik und Ritualistik zu sublimieren oder zu denaturieren, – übrigens mit verschieden vollständigem Erfolg, am meisten in China, Japan, Tibet, dem buddhistischen Hinterindien, am wenigsten in Vorderindien. Aber die Herrschaft der Magie zu brechen hat sie nur gelegentlich und nur mit kurzfristigem Erfolg überhaupt beabsichtigt und versucht'.

13. RI, pp. 335-36; cf. MWG I/20, pp. 533-34: 'Nicht das "Wunder", sondern der

## Weber continuous:

The rose miracle of holy Elizabeth appears meaningful to us. The universality of the spell breaks through every meaningful interrelation of events. One can in the typical, average Asiatic legend, such as the Mahayanistic, determine the presence of this inner-worldly *Deus ex machina* in clearly most enigmatic form. It often appears in connection with the complete opposite, with deep, unartistic though rationalistic needs; to some extent equivalent details of legendary events are tempered by historical motives. So it is for the old treasure of Indian fairy tales, fables, and legends, the historical source of the literary fables of the entire world, produced through this religiosity of the spellcasting savior. Later it took the form of a literature constructed in an absolutely unartistic character whose significance for its reading public corresponded somewhat to the emotional and popular romance of chivalry against which Cervantes took the field.<sup>14</sup>

From all we know about literacy and Buddhist practices in different parts of Asia there is good reason not to rely very much on the characterization of Buddhism Max Weber presents to us in his Study on Hinduism and Buddhism dating from 1916 or 1919; this also holds true

“Zauber” blieb daher die Kernsubstanz der Massenreligiosität, vor allem der Bauern und der Arbeiterschaft, aber auch des Mittelstands. Beides – Wunder und Zauber – ist dem Sinn nach zweierlei. Man kann sich davon leicht beim Vergleich etwa occidentalener und asiatischer Legenden überzeugen. Beide können einander sehr ähnlich sehen, und na/534/mentlich die altbuddhistischen und die chinesisch überarbeiteten Legenden stehen den occidentalenern zuweilen auch innerlich nahe. Aber der beiderseitige Durchschnitt zeigt den Gegensatz. Das “Wunder” wird seinem Sinn nach stets als Akt einer irgendwie rationalen Weltlenkung, einer göttlichen Gnadenspendung, angesehen werden und pflegt daher innerlich motivierter zu sein als der, “Zauber”, der seinem Sinn nach dadurch entsteht, daß die ganze Welt von magischen Potenzen irrationaler Wirkungsart erfüllt ist und daß diese in charismatisch qualifizierten, aber nach ihrer eigenen freien Willkür handelnden Wesen, Menschen oder Übermenschen, durch asketische oder kontemplative Leistungen aufgespeichert sind’.

14. RI, p. 336; cf. MWG I/20, p. 534: ‘Das Rosenwunder der heiligen Elisabeth erscheint uns sinnvoll. Die Universalität des Zaubers dagegen durchbricht jeden Sinnzusammenhang der Geschehnisse. Man kann gerade in den typischen durchschnittlichen asiatischen Legenden, etwa der Mahayanisten, diesen innerweltlichen *Deus ex machina* in der scheinbar unverständlichsten Art mit dem ganz entgegengesetzten, ebenso tief unkünstlerischen, weil rationalistischen Bedürfnis, irgendwelche ganz gleichgültigen Einzelheiten des legendenhaften Geschehnisses möglichst nüchtern historisch zu motivieren, ineinandergreifen sehen. So ist denn der alte Schatz der indischen Märchen, Fabeln und Legenden, die geschichtliche Quelle der Fabelliteratur der ganzen Welt, durch diese Religiosität der zaubernden Heilande später in eine Art von Kunstliteratur absolut unkünstlerischen Charakters umgestaltet worden, deren Bedeutung für ihr Lesepublikum etwa der Emotion durch die populären Ritterromane, gegen welche Cervantes zu Felde zog, entspricht’.

to the passages on Buddhism in his study on China (*Confucianism and Daoism*) where he also deals with Buddhism at some length. Furthermore, although I will not totally reject the role of the impact of Indian culture (legends, performing arts, religiosity) on the rest of Asia, there is more to say about 'indigenous' trends towards rationalization and a kind of early modernity in other parts of Asia, especially in China.<sup>15</sup>

On the other hand, Weber's systematic approach mainly brought forward in the 'Introduction' and the 'Intermediate Reflection' to the 'Economic Ethics of the World Religions' provides us with special tools to better understand different attitudes to conceive human life as something meaningful. In this respect his approach towards religiosity remains meaningful for the study of religion in general as well as for the study of religions in Asia in particular.

Thus it still makes sense to have a look at Max Weber's writings on religions in India published one hundred years ago, for mainly two reasons. *First*, as soon as we realize the present role of religion and of intellectual traditions in India as well as in many other Asian countries Max Weber's dealing with these societies and cultures could play a key role in understanding the present day flourishing of Hinduism in India as well as of Buddhism in other parts of Asia, e.g., in Sri Lanka. *Secondly*, the self-conception as well as the western understanding of Asia today is in many ways derivative from historical notions brought forward one hundred years ago. Thus a thorough study of Max Weber's essay on India is in many respects useful. This holds even more true if we also take into regard his thoughts and notions and utterances in other works and writings, including his correspondence, which has become more accessible through the Max Weber Gesamtausgabe (MWG).

## 2. *Asia in general and 'rejection of the world' vs. 'domination of the world'*

After his comparing China and Confucianism with the occident and particularly comparing the Puritan and the Confucian in the summary to his study on China, Weber turns with his 'Intermediate Reflection' ('Zwischenbetrachtung') to India. Since this 'turn' is left out in the English edition of Weber's studies on India and China by Hans H. Gerth it is particularly crucial to have a closer look on this turning point. Before Weber turns to India he sums up his insight with the key sentences:

15. See Léon Vandermeersch, *Le deux raisons de la pensée chinoise. Divination et idéographie* (Paris: 2013).

Confucian rationalism meant rational adjustment to the world; Puritan Rationalism meant rational mastery of the world. [...] The 'princely' man was an aesthetic value; he was not a tool of a god. But the true Christian, the other-worldly and inner-worldly asceticist, wished to be nothing more than a tool of his God; in this he sought his dignity. Since this is what he wished to be he was a useful instrument for rationally transforming and mastering the world.<sup>16</sup>

Then Weber states that whereas China would have been well prepared to adopt or assimilate capitalism and had even less obstacles for developing capitalism he concentrates on the 'basic characteristics of the "mentality"' ('Eigentümlichkeiten der "Gesinnung"') and the 'practical attitudes toward the world' ('praktische Stellungnahme zur Welt') before focusing on the 'autonomous laws' ('Eigengesetzlichkeiten') of the particular 'mentality' and their 'effects strongly counteractive to capitalist development'.<sup>17</sup> To elaborate on these effects he turns with his 'Zwischenbetrachtung' to India, a text we do not find in the English translations of his studies on India and China, neither in *The Religion of China* nor in *The Religion of India* but only in the reader provided by Sam Whimster entitled: 'Intermediate reflection on the Economic Ethics of the World Religions. Theory of the stages and directions of religious rejection of the world'.<sup>18</sup>

Here we must keep Weber's notion concerning the mechanism between 'rejection of the world' and 'domination of the world' in mind as we find it among monks of the Occident:

The rejection of the world by occidental asceticism was insolubly linked to its opposite, namely its eagerness to dominate the world. In the name of the supra-mundane God the imperatives of asceticism were issued to the monk and, in variant and softened form, to the world.<sup>19</sup>

16. RoCh, p. 248 cf. WEWR I, pp. 534-35 and MWG I/19, p. 476: 'Der konfuzianische Rationalismus bedeutete rationale Anpassung an die Welt. Der puritanische Rationalismus: rationale *Beherrschung* (im Orig. gesperrt) der Welt. [...] Der "fürstliche" Mann war ästhetischer Wert und daher *auch nicht* "Werkzeug" eines Gottes. Der echte Christ, der – außer- oder innerweltliche – Asket vollends, wollte gar nichts anderes sein als eben dies. Denn gerade nur darin suchte er seine Würde. Und weil er dies sein wollte, war er ein brauchbares Instrument, die Welt rational umzuwälzen und zu beherrschen'.

17. RoC, pp. 248-49; cf. MWG I/19, pp. 477-78.

18. 'Intermediate reflection on the Economic Ethics of the World Religions. Theory of the stages and directions of religious rejection of the world', in *The Essential Weber. A Reader*, edited S. Whimster, (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 215-44.

19. RoC, p. 248; cf. MWG I/19, p.476; GAWR I, p. 534: 'Denn die Weltablehnung

Here the terms 'enthusiasm' ('Pathos') and 'asceticism' ('Askese') are crucial since Weber regards this *pathos* as a basis and a tool linking world-renouncement or rejection of the world by occidental asceticism with the 'eagerness to dominate the world' ('Verlangen nach Weltbeherrschung'). Starting from this linkage he then turns to the case of India.

The next step he takes in his 'Zwischenbetrachtung' ('Intermediate Reflection') is to establish a 'Theory of the stages and directions of religious rejection of the world' (German: 'Theorie der Stufen und Richtingen religiöser Weltablehnung').

Weber commences with the often cited words:

Indian religiosity, which we wish to explore, was the cradle of theoretically and practically the most world-denying form of religious ethic that the world has ever known – in the strongest contrast to China.<sup>20</sup>

This theoretical and at the same time comparative text is in many ways crucial for the understanding of Weber's study on India. This text written as a kind of outset for the following parts on India is a text which can only be fully understood if we bring him in the context of intellectual religiosity as we find it at the turn from the 19th to the 20th century in Europe when composers like Gustav Mahler were taking up the tradition of monumental symphonies of confession and world-conception, following Beethoven's Ninth Symphony.<sup>21</sup> We could have a look on Gustav Mahler's Symphony No. 3 or his 'Song of the Earth' (Lied von der Erde), to mention just one instance. Although personally ambivalent towards the aesthetic and the erotic spheres, concerning the aesthetic sphere Weber states a relationship between the growth of the rationalization of life and of intellectualism, on the one side, and art on the other:

Art now constitutes itself as a cosmos of ever more consciously grasped, free-standing autonomous values (*Eigenwert*). It takes over the function of an innerworldly *redemption* (no matter how this is con-

der okzidentalen Askese war bei ihm [sc.: Mönchtum des Okzidents] mit dem Verlangen nach Weltbeherrschung als ihrer Kehrseite unauflöslich verbunden, weil ihre Forderungen im Namen eines überweltlichen Gottes an den Mönch und, in abgewandelter und gemilderter Form, an die Welt ergingen'.

20. *Essential Weber*, p. 215; cf. MWG I/19, p. 479: 'Das Gebiet der *indischen* Religiosität, in welches wir eintreten wollen, ist in stärkstem Kontrast gegen China die Wiege der theoretisch und praktisch weltverneinendsten Formen von religiöser Ethik, welche die Erde hervorgebracht hat'.

21. Cf. Christoph Braun and Ludwig Finscher, 'Einleitung' to *Max Weber. Zur Musiksoziologie*, MWG I/14, p. 35.

ceived) in the face of the everyday and above all the increasing pressure of theoretical and practical rationalism. But in making this claim it comes into direct competition with redemptory religion. In contrast to this irrational innerworldly redemption, every rational religious ethic must turn against what it sees as a realm of irresponsible enjoyment and a concealed lovelessness (*geheime Lieblosigkeit*).<sup>22</sup>

The aesthetic-intellectual currents of this time appear prominently in the passage on three types of theodicy at the end of the ‘Zwischenbetrachtung’<sup>23</sup> (a passage not translated by Sam Whimster!), where Weber refers to his concepts of ‘Erlösungshoffnungen’ and ‘Theodicee’ already dealt with in the ‘Introduction’ to ‘The Economic Ethic of World Religions’. Here, Weber’s text – apparently revised in 1919/1920 – focuses on the last one of his three types of theodicy, represented by the ‘religiosity of the Indian literati’:

*The third form of theodicy was the Indian intellectual religiosity, preeminent in particular because of its consistency and its extraordinary metaphysical accomplishment: the unification of a virtuoso self-salvation through one’s own efforts together with universal accessibility of salvation, the strictest rejection of the world together with an organic social ethic, contemplation as the highest path to salvation together with an innerworldly vocational ethic. It is to this we now turn (emphasis, HSG; trans. S. Whimster!).<sup>24</sup>*

The ‘Intermediate Reflection’ thus is not only to be regarded as a kind of overture and startingpoint to Weber’s further study on Asian religions, but it is at the same time the central theoretical approach of an European intellectual in the beginning of the twentieth century towards Asian religiosity in general.

22. *Essential Weber*, p. 231; cf. MWG I/19, p. 500: ‘Die Kunst konstituiert sich nun als ein Kosmos immer bewußter erfaßter selbständiger Eigenwerte. Sie übernimmt die Funktion einer, gleichviel wie gedeuteten, innerweltlichen *Erlösung*: vom Alltag und, vor allem, auch von dem zunehmenden Druck des theoretischen und praktischen Rationalismus. Mit diesem Anspruch aber tritt sie in direkte Konkurrenz zur Erlösungsreligion. Gegen diese innerweltliche irrationale Erlösung muß sich jede rationale religiöse Ethik wenden als gegen ein Reich des, von ihr aus gesehen, verantwortungslosen Genießens und: geheimer Lieblosigkeit’.

23. MWG I/19, pp. 520-22.

24. MWG I/19, p. 95: ‘Die dritte, durch ihre Konsequenz sowohl wie durch die außerordentliche metaphysische Leistung: Die Vereinigung virtuosenhafter Selbsterlösung aus eigener Kraft mit universeller Zugänglichkeit des Heils, strengster Weltablehnung mit organischer Sozialethik, Kontemplation als höchsten Heilswegs mit innerweltlicher Berufsethik, hervorragende Form der Theodicee war der *indischen* Intellektuellen-Religiosität eigentümlich, welcher wir uns nunmehr zuwenden’.

Instead of continuing with this topic Weber inserts in his study on Hinduism and Buddhism—thus reiterating his approach and method of presentation in his study on China—an extensive description of the ‘Social System of the Hindus’. This became the first part of ‘Hinduism and Buddhism’ which with the second and the third part of the study were posthumously published as the second volume of the *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie*. The second part deals with the ‘orthodox and heterodox salvation doctrines of Indian intellectuals’ (II) and the third with ‘Asiatische sects and salvation religiosity’ (III), respectively. At the end of this last part Weber contrasts the present situation in India with that in historical times.<sup>25</sup> Then he summarizes his ‘superficial tour of Asian culture’ (‘überaus oberflächlichen Rundgang durch die asiatische Kulturwelt’):

For Asia as a whole China played somewhat the role of France in the modern Occident. [...] Against this India has a significance comparable to that of antique Hellenism. There are few conceptions transcending practical interests in Asia whose source would not finally have to be sought there. Particularly, all orthodox and heterodox salvation religions that could claim a role in Asia similar to that of Christianity are Indian. There is only one great difference, apart from local and pre-eminent exceptions—none of them succeeded in becoming the single dominating confession, as was the case for us in the Middle Ages after the peace of Westphalia.

And the, already quoted above:

Asia was, and remains, in principle, the land of the free competition of religions, ‘tolerant’ somewhat in the sense of late antiquity. That is to say, tolerant except for restrictions for reason of state, which, finally, also for us today remain the boundary of all religious toleration only with other consequences.<sup>26</sup>

25. MWG I/20, p. 526.

26. RI, p. 329; cf. MWG I/20, pp. 526-527: ‘Für Asien als Ganzes hat China etwa die Rolle Frankreichs im modernen Occident gespielt. [...] Dagegen ist Indien etwa die Bedeutung des antiken Hellenentums zugefallen. Es gibt wenig über praktische Interessen hinausgehendes Denken in Asien, dessen Quelle nicht letztlich dort zu suchen wäre. Vor allem haben für ganz Asien die indischen, orthodoxen und heterodoxen, Erlösungsreligionen annähernd die Rolle des Christentums in Anspruch genommen. Mit dem einen großen Unterschied: daß abgesehen von lokalen und meist auch vorübergehenden Ausnahmen keine von ihnen dauernd zur allein herrschenden Konfession in dem Sinne erhoben worden ist, wie dies bei uns im Mittelalter und bis nach dem Westfälischen Frieden der Fall war. Asien war und blieb, im Prinzip, das Land der freien Konkurrenz der Religionen, der “Toleranz” im Sinne etwa der Spätantike. Das heißt also: unter Vorbehalt der Schranken der Staatsrä-

While Weber was explicitly neither interested in contemporary 'Reform'-movements<sup>27</sup> nor in the emerging 'Indian Nationalism'<sup>28</sup> but only in the native (or long-established) 'Indertum',<sup>29</sup> he was on the other hand simultaneously talking about 'Asia' in general.

This took place in a period when a new intelligentsia from Asia gave up former engagements in an All-Asia movement.<sup>30</sup> In contrast to the apparently disintegrating polities in Asia and on the eve of a new recovery of these regions as post-colonial states or 'nations' Max Weber made the attempt to understand what had been the peculiar constituencies of the past.

After hundred years of several attempts to leave the past and to regard the polity as an empty frame to be fundamentally reorganized the question concerning the role of the elites, however, is still on the agenda. In search for a modern world most traditional societies are still confronted with the dramatization of the conflict between inner-worldly rationality and ethical postulates, as Weber states in the 'Intermediate Reflection':

But where rational empirical knowledge has consistently carried through the disenchantment (*Entzauberung*) of the world and its transformation into a causal mechanism, there emerges a tension with the claims of ethical postulates – that the world, for religion, is ultimately willed and ordained by God and is therefore, in whatever way oriented, an ethically *meaningful* cosmos. For where the world is considered through the empirical and – most completely – the mathematical, there develops in principle the rejection of every form of consideration that searches out the 'meaning' of innerworldly occurrences. With each acceptance of the rationalism of empirical science, religion is thereby forced increasingly out of the realm of the rational and into the irrational, so that now it is simply *the* irrational or anti-rational transcendental force.<sup>31</sup>

Weber finds that 'world-indifference precisely to inner-worldly conduct' represents 'the crown of classical ethics of Indian intellectuals'.<sup>32</sup>

son, – die schließlich ja, nicht zu vergessen, auch bei uns heute als Grenzen aller religiösen Duldung fortbestehen, nur mit anderer Wirkungsrichtung'.

27. MWG I/20, p. 526.

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid.

30. Rebecca E. Karl, 'Creating Asia: China in the World at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century', in *American Historical Review* (October 1998), pp. 1096-1118.

31. *Essential Weber* p. 238f.; cf. MWG I/19, p. 512.

32. RI, p. 185; MWG I/20, p. 296.

3. *Asianism – Elite vs. the ‘masses’*

As I pointed out at the outset Weber regarded India as the ‘spiritual pivot’ of Asia:

Asia, and that is to say, again, India is the typical land of intellectual struggle singly and alone for a *Weltanschauung*, in the particular sense of the word, for the ‘significance’ of life and the world.<sup>33</sup>

and characterizes Asia by taking India as its pivot or cradle of religiosity.<sup>34</sup> He includes many different religious and intellectual traditions when he talks about ‘genuine Asian thought’:

the idea that for transitory deeds of transient beings on this earth ‘eternal’ punishment or rewards in the future could be assigned, and, indeed, by power of the arrangement of a simultaneously all-powerful and good God, is for all genuine Asiatic thought absurd, appearing spiritually subaltern and so it will always appear.<sup>35</sup>

The characterization of the ‘*Literatenschicht*’ as ‘carriers of soteriology’ and the juxtaposing of the *Literatenschicht* to the the ‘strata of Asia involved in practical life’<sup>36</sup> is rather an idiosyncrasy than a helpful generalization.

For the sake of constructing his ideal type, however, Max Weber relied on this juxtaposing of the *literati* on the one side and the *masses* on the other, a notion which moulded Chinese political and sociological thinking throughout the twentieth century as can be found in the works of Mao Zedong and Fei Xiaotong respectively:

With very few exceptions Asiatic soteriology knew only an exemplary promise. Most of these were only accessible to those living monastically but some were valid for the laity. Almost without exception all

33. RI, p. 331; MWG I/20, p. 528: ‘Asien, und das heißt wiederum: Indien, ist das typische Land des intellektuellen Ringens einzig und allein nach “Weltanschauung” [...]’.

34. This notion resembles in a way the much older rhetoric of the origin of the divine with the barbarians. Cf Rita Widmaier, G.W. Leibniz, *Der Briefwechsel mit den Jesuiten in China*, p. CXXVI, citing Leibniz’ words from July 1st, 1714: ‘[...] Den Barbaren verdanken wir größte Wahrheiten über das Göttliche, den Griechen aber eine heilige Philosophie, kraft welcher die Natur göttlicher und geistlicher Dinge mit deutlicheren und klareren Gründen erklärt wird’.

35. RI, p. 332; cf. MWG I/20, p. 530: ‘Die Vorstellung jedenfalls, daß vergängliche Taten eines vergänglichen Wesens auf dieser Erde “ewige” Strafen oder Belohnungen im “Jenseits” zur Folge haben könnten, und zwar kraft Verfügung eines zugleich allmächtigen und gütigen Gottes, ist allem genuine asiatischen Denken absurd und geistig subaltern erschienen und wird ihm immer so erscheinen’.

36. MWG I/20, p. 531.

Indian soteriologies were originally of this type. The bases of both phenomena were equivalent. Above all, both were closely interrelated. Once and for all, the cleft between the literary 'cultivated' and the aliterary masses of philistines rested on this. Hanging together with this was the fact that all philosophies and soteriologies of Asia finally had a common presupposition: that knowledge, be it literary knowledge or mystical gnosis is finally the single absolute path to the highest holiness here and in the world beyond.

This is a knowledge, it may be noted, not of the things of this world or of the everyday events of nature and social life and the laws that they hold for both. Rather, it is a philosophical knowledge of the 'significance' of the world and life. Such a knowledge can evidently never be established by means of empirical occidental science, and in terms of its particular purpose should by no means be confused with it. It lies beyond science.

Asia, and that is to say, again, India is the typical land of intellectual struggle singly and alone for a *Weltanschauung*, in the particular sense of the word, for the 'significance' of life and the world. It can here be certified—and in face of the incompleteness of the representation this is to ask acquiescence in an incomplete certification—that in the area of thought concerning the 'significance' of the world and life there is throughout nothing which has not in some form already been conceived in Asia (RI, pp. 330-31; cf. MWG I/20, p. 528).

### Conclusion

This most highly anti-rational world of universal magic also affected everyday economics. There is no way from it to rational, inner-worldly life conduct.<sup>37</sup>

In order to critically evaluate Weber's proposition, such as the quote reiterated above, we should reconsider with the new materials and insights at hand the intellectual currents of the past that might challenge Weber's conclusions. There we have to concentrate on political and economic discourses as we find them in China, and should find them in other parts of Asia. In addition, we should also confine ourselves to a thorough study of the institutions of the past and their functioning as well as their intercourse with intellectual currents of their time. Furthermore we should take regional peculiarities as well as cultural changes into account. At the same time we need to put Weber's concept of India in the context of the concept of India brought forward by his Western (e.g., Hermann Oldenberg) as

37. MWG I/20, pp. 534-35; RI, p. 336.

well as Indian contemporaries like Rabindranath Tagore and others who were dominating the image of Indian culture and religiosity at the time when Weber was writing on India.

There is an additional aspect. It needs to be kept in mind that Weber himself conceived his essay in the context of the preparation of his 'Outline of Social Economy'. At the beginning of his 'Introduction' to the 'Collected Essays on the Economic Ethic of World Religions' he points out that originally

these essays were *en passant* also meant to be published alongside with the treatise on 'Economy and Society', which was meant to be a part of the 'Outline of Social Economy' [original: 'Grundriß der Sozialökonomik'], to interpret and complement the section on the Sociology of Religion therein (MWG I/19: 83-84).

This remark leads us to ask what did Max Weber address as 'Economy and Society'? On the one hand it was part of a much larger project labeled 'Grundriß der Sozialökonomik' and on the other it was accompanied by Weber's intensive studies on religious systems as represented in his studies on those religions that in his perception shaped the main cultures of mankind. Thus, in dealing with Weber's essays on the economic ethic of world religions it should be realized that these studies have to be contextualized. The status of *Economy and Society* has been subject to long debates, stemming from the facts that Weber's conceptualization of this work took years and that it was never finished as a whole. But after years of speculation, discussion and research and thanks to the critical edition we now have a clearer understanding of how Weber's *opus magnum* took shape.<sup>38</sup> Thus we have a much more solid basis for a deeper understanding of his essays on the economic ethic of world religions.

38. Therefore the sections 'The Planning of Economy and Society' and 'The Structure of Economy and Society', in Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, edited by Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), vol. 1, pp. lxii-civ, have to be revised in the light of subsequent editions: Johannes Winckelmann, *Max Webers hinterlassenes Hauptwerk: Die Wirtschaft und die gesellschaftlichen Ordnungen und Mächte. Entstehung und gedanklicher Aufbau* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1986) and Wolfgang Schluchter, in *Max Weber. Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft. Entstehungsgeschichte und Dokumente*, MWG I/24 (Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2009).

## Revisiting Max Weber's Religion of India

Romila Thapar

### Abstract

Weber's study of the religion of India, includes his views on the state in India and caste. The discussion is based as expected, on the information and readings of these themes by colonial administrators of the nineteenth century and by scholars, largely European, who had worked on India during the same period. Using these writings as sources, Weber attempted to apply his thesis from European history on the link between the Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism, which he found absent in the Indian material. The historical and sociological premises from which he drew his conclusions have been questioned in the last century. The relations between a variety of state systems and caste and religious sects in the history of India have taken forms different from those that were suggested a century ago.

Keywords: colonial, capitalism, patrimonial state, commerce, castes, religious sects.

Forty years ago I read the commonly quoted writings of Max Weber and more particularly what he had to say about Indian religions. Having written my reaction to his views in a paper for a conference, I left it at that. I have never regarded myself as knowledgeable on Max Weber, nor am I a specialist in Indian religions, nor a sociologist. I was surprised therefore at being invited a few months back to participate in a seminar that was proposing to assess his views on Indian religions. Thank you for the invitation.

My present thoughts have been culled from recent re-readings of Weber on India, and from a more firmly historical perspective. I recognize that Weber was not a historian but he does examine the origins of the present, as in his historical perspective on capitalism. Questioning some of his assertions about India has made me think further about why I agree or disagree with what he writes - always a useful exercise. My approach is essentially that of an historian.

Given the constraint of time I shall restrict myself to Weber's comments on Hinduism and leave those on Buddhism to the conference. I am assuming a familiarity with his arguments so I do not have to

repeat them. I shall merely draw attention to some current views that have a bearing on what he wrote.

Weber's idea of India—especially of the past - was largely the one that was prevalent in Europe a century ago. This was to be expected. But these ideas have since altered substantially. This naturally would affect the amount and the quality of information now available and the theories of explanation, then and now. Whereas his studies of Europe are analytical, and present new ways of examining the subject, his study of India by contrast, conforms to much of colonial writing, possibly because he relied on colonial sources. This has inbuilt limitations and an element of asymmetry. The Indian material was viewed not directly but largely through colonial and Orientalist readings of the texts.

A historian's perspective inevitably begins by placing the book in historiographical context with enquires about its sources. Weber's sources were in the main, documents that the British colonial government put together such as the Census Reports, the Imperial Gazetteers, H. Risley's Reports, and such like.<sup>1</sup> Added to this were the historical writings of Vincent Smith and Grant Duff, and the views of Baden-Powell. Weber also had recourse to various European Orientalists especially on Indian religions.<sup>2</sup> His range of reading for his purpose remains impressive. Our access today to a greater range of sources and to their analytical readings, provide rather different interpretations. The element of asymmetry is that in his study of European religions he worked with primary sources, whereas for Indian religions he drew largely on contemporary European writings on India and the Indian past.

A frequent assumption in much of the earlier writing was that the Orient was the 'Other' of Europe. It was legitimate to presume that India was fundamentally different, and to ask why this was so. But the answers to this question were limited as were the initial sources consulted by scholars at the time. Many theories of explanation have since been discussed but two emerged as pre-eminent, those of Karl Marx and Max Weber. Up to a point there was a similarity since both drew attention to the absence of capitalism in India, but their explanations for this differed. Weber's question emerged from his theory that the Protestant ethic with its rationality was an

1. H.H. Risley, *The People of India* (Calcutta: W. Thacker and Co., 1908).

2. Such as E.W. Hopkins, *The Religions of India* (Boston: Ginn and Co., 1895).

important reason for the rise of capitalism in Europe.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, the absence of this ethic in Indian religion would account for the absence of capitalism in India. Marx's explanation had to do with the internal contradictions in European society, subsequent to the decline of feudalism and the transition to capitalism.<sup>4</sup> For both Marx and Weber the pre-capitalist histories of Europe and India were dissimilar, but differently so. Yet neither used the same analytical methods in investigating Europe and investigating India. The reading of Indian history tended to be more cursory. Marx however did speak of colonialism in India and Ireland, and drew attention to it in the making of British industrialization and capitalism. Weber gives little space to colonialism.

Asia as 'the Other' was characterized by what was described essentially as Oriental Despotism. Oriental societies were static, their system of government had always been despotic therefore to search for historical change seemed pointless. The past of India did not need to be investigated with searching questions as had been the European past. For understanding Europe, economic patterns, social structure, belief systems, and internal contradictions were correlated. This suggested well-demarcated stages of historical change. But not so for India. Weber's patrimonial state, that he thought had characterized Indian history, was not uninfluenced by these notions of the Orient.

The non-European past was used largely to sharpen, through contrast, the contours of the argument for Europe. In arguing that capitalism could not have developed in India, Weber shows relatively less focused interest in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Viewing it as a civilizational unit he had to survey it in its entirety. Nor was there a questioning of the role of colonialism, as intervening both in the economy of the colony and the colonizer.

What could now be argued is that it is not perhaps so much the absence of capitalism, but the absence of a type of capitalism in some otherwise wealthy Asian societies. Economic historians of recent times, as well as those participating in the debate on the World

3. Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. T. Parsons (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1930).

4. Karl Marx, *Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations*, edited by E.J. Hobsbawm (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1964); B. Hindess and P.Q. Hirst, *Pre-Capitalist Modes of Production* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975). B. O'Leary, *The Asiatic Mode of Production: Oriental Despotism, Historical Materialism and Indian History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989).

System theory, maintain that India and China were the pre-eminent economies in Eurasia, in the immediately pre-colonial centuries.<sup>5</sup> Their wealth came largely from mercantile capitalism with its extensive trading network. This would explain the power and the patronage of merchant businesses located in various parts of the country, from the Jainas in Gujarat to the Chettiars in Tamil Nadu. What was lacking was the change to industrial capitalism that took place in north-western Europe. Not surprisingly, industrialization in Europe that used its colonial enterprises, coincided with the lack of industrialization in Asia, and the colonial link over-shadowed the commercial links of previous centuries. In this, many factors played a role, not least that many of the colonies in southern Asia governed by various European colonial powers, had been drawn into European colonialism during these centuries.

Apart from this, Weber's approach to Hinduism and Buddhism also drew in part from the prevailing concept of the world being divided into civilizations. These were viewed as distinct, segregated, defined by a specific territory, language and religion among other characteristics. For Indian civilization the territory of British India was its location, it was articulated in Sanskrit and associated with Hinduism. Buddhism was less important having been discovered later in the nineteenth century by European scholars, and not having survived in a noticeable way from the second millennium AD in India. Civilizations were seen as self-contained. The porosity that we associate with them now had not been recognized. The definition of civilization also excluded the larger part of society. This may have fueled Weber's distinction between the wise and educated, and what he calls the uncultured masses or for that matter the a-literate middle-classes.

Keeping all this in mind I would now like to turn to *The Religion of India*. Written a century ago, it is of much historiographical interest. Some concepts of that time are now being questioned or are providing variant meanings. This applies as much to European history as any other, as for instance, in the current debates on the validity of the concept of feudalism. The key questions in a reading of *The Religion*

5. Angus Maddison, 'A Comparison of Levels of GDP per capita in Developed and Developing Countries, 1700-1980', *Journal of Economic History* 43 (1983): 27-41; I. Wallerstein, *The Modern World System, Vols. I, II, III* (New York: Academic Press, 1974-88); A.G. Frank and B.K. Gills (eds.), *The World System* (New York: Routledge, 1993); R. Findlay and K. O'Rourke, *Power and Plenty: Trade, War and the World Economy in the Second Millennium* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007).

of India are whether the descriptions of Indian religion and society as projected by Weber are still largely valid; and what are some of his ideas that might be illuminating?

The essential problem that I have as a historian with Weber's view of India, as indeed with that of Marx as well, is that they tend to be context-free and chronos-free. What I mean by this is that there isn't enough awareness of the why, the how and the when, of the particular institutions being discussed. Some of these underwent substantial change over three millennia and virtually gave way to new ones. Some continued in a new garb. Weber argues for a nexus in Europe between the political economy of emergent capitalism and the religious form of the protestant ethic. If this nexus is to be sought in India then there has to be a comparable investigation of the political economy and its connection to the required religious ideas, in order to determine the presence or absence of the nexus. The religions of India are described more often without much reference to the political economy with which they would have been linked. Is this thought to be unnecessary because the Indian state is said to have been a patrimonial state and registered little change?

I would therefore, like to consider a few aspects among those that Weber regards as distinctively different in India. These are the patrimonial state, caste and religion.<sup>6</sup> I would also like to see how the notion of legitimation is apparent in relation to these.

Weber's view of the patrimonial state reflects in part discussions on the state among European philosophers of his time. The patrimonial state assumed a despotic ruler to whom flowed all the revenues produced by an oppressed peasantry. Ensuring the flow was the responsibility of the intermediary bureaucracy. The producers of the wealth had no right of refusing to do so. Elements of such a condition may have been occasional in Europe, but in Asia it was thought of as permanent. This static condition implied an absence of historical change. Sources that were many centuries apart could be used to support the same argument for both earlier and later times, the precise historical context of the statement being largely irrelevant. The patriarchal family and caste were linked to the patrimonial state. The nature of the state was the cause of the endemic poverty of the Indian peasant at all times. It was permanent because the functionaries of the state did not wish to change it.

6. *RI*, pp. 21ff; 55ff; 118ff; 123ff.

Today this argument of an unchanging patrimonial state characterizing much of pre-colonial history would be regarded as historically inaccurate. The analysis of available data, as for instance for the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, points to demography, the function of institutions, and technology in India and Europe, being roughly comparable. Even prior to that, systems of governance do not suggest a patrimonial state.

Studies of state formation have shown that the state in India changed substantially in form and function over the centuries.<sup>7</sup> Its roots lay in the *gana-sangha* system of rudimentary kingship and chiefships that gradually mutated into kingdoms. In some areas they continued in pockets until the time of Samudragupta. This implies varied relationships between different types of state systems. The Mauryan state although different would still be seen as a differentiated imperial system. Its administration was complex with some centrally administered areas and others less so in varying degrees. This is often the pattern in the administration of large territorial empires. The break up of the short-lived Mauryan Empire, was followed by a scatter of kingdoms based on direct revenue collection from both privately owned and state-owned lands, cultivated by tenants observing diverse kinds of tenancies.

Subsequent to this in the post-Gupta period there were kingdoms, some large and some small, where the major states negotiated their authority with a hierarchy of feudatories – *samantas* – and later from *iqtadars*, *jagirdars*, and such like. Their powers and rights varied according to dynasty and time. New dynasties also emerged from their ranks. At any point in time the picture was not identical for the entire sub-continent and the variations depended on a range of factors.

The state in India, patrimonial or despotic, was described in the nineteenth century as having had an essentially agrarian economy, other activities being more marginal. Weber refers to India as a land of villages. This is surprising given the obvious centrality of urban life in a range of texts, some focusing on the political economy, such as the Kautilya *Arthashastra*, which Weber knew. The impression of India having been virtually rural has been corrected in recent studies of economic history. Income at different levels of the economic

7. R. Thapar, *From Lineage to State* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1984); H. Kulke (ed.), *The State in India, 1000–1700* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995); I. Habib, *The Agrarian System of Mughal India, 1556–1707* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999, rev. edn).

hierarchy also came from an extensive commerce both overland and maritime that increased noticeably from the early second millennium AD, with a spurt in urbanization. The administration of cities hosting artisanal production, markets and commerce, obviously differed from the administration of areas where land revenue was primary. There was an expansion in the number and size of guilds handling this change. This also affected their relationship to urban centres and political power.

The functioning of the patrimonial state was said to rely on the army and the administration, both closely controlled. The figures for the size of the Nanda-Maurya army came from Greek sources. They are almost certainly exaggerated figures doubtless to justify Alexander's decision to discontinue the campaign. The numbers vary from text to text making them doubtful. More to the point, the economy even of the Mauryan state could not have financed such a large force.<sup>8</sup> Mauryan sources mention that apart from the regular army, contingents were also recruited from other sources such as mercenaries and the soldiers maintained by guilds, or by those who had received large grants of land from the rulers. The peasants it is said were kept unarmed. But the local village heroes of post-Mauryan times, were well equipped. They defended their villages against cattle raiders and in battle, without the assistance of the king's army. These events are memorialized in a multitude of hero-stones in many parts of the sub-continent.

The patrimonial state assumes a small elite as recipients of the income produced by lower castes. However, we know that the wealth was not siphoned off by the few, but financed the hierarchies in the system as well. Those who labored to produce wealth consisted of a range of lower castes in inter-locked occupations. The culture of *jatis* rather than of *varnas*, conditioned by occupation and customary law, more often than not determined their religious identity. Some sociologists view *varna* as a category of status, and *jati* as based on occupation and rules of marriage making it the more realistic unit of society. Colonial scholarship tended to give weight to *varna* rather than to *jati* and thus missed out on some facets of how Indian society functioned especially in relation to religion. The multiple religious sects tended to identify more with *jatis* than with *varnas*.

8. R. Thapar, 'The Role of the Army in the Exercise of Power in Early India', in A. Chaniotis and P. Ducrey (eds.), *Army and Power in the Ancient World* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2002).

The noticeably rational *Arthashastra* refers to the seven limbs of the state.<sup>9</sup> The army and the administration were only two among them. The other five were the ruler, the territory, the capital, the treasury and allies. The ruler was required to integrate these functions and that gave him central importance. But the integration in itself was a curb on his power. There is also much evidence on the functioning of the administration from detailed inscriptions of pre-modern times. Issued by local administrators they were inscribed in public places. Among other aspects of local activity, these record major decisions regarding the powers and activities of civic office-bearers and of taxes at different levels. The decisions involve local communities, temple administrators, and officers of the state. The communities can be upper caste *brahmana* communities with their own privileges, or else wider communities of occupational castes. The concerns refer to a number of activities including rights of representation and decisions on specific taxes. At least for the castes above the level of artisans and peasants the system was not consistently oppressive.

Nevertheless there are occasional complaints in sources of the early period against oppressive rulers.<sup>10</sup> This led peasants to migrate to a neighbouring kingdom – a reaction much dreaded by rulers we are told, since it resulted in a decline of revenue. The Indian peasantry, unlike the Chinese peasantry, did not revolt when disgruntled but instead tended to migrate from its home state to neighbouring areas, possibly because land was available.

Evidence of rebellion generally refers to *samantas*, or intermediary groups – the feudatories and land-owners. In the Kaivarta revolt in Bengal in the early second millennium AD, the *samantas* led the buffalo-riding peasants against the king's force.<sup>11</sup> The intention of the revolt was to divert taxes and to claim new lands for cultivation. Historians are now discussing whether the genesis of the revolt lay with the peasants or the feudatories. Another situation occurred in Kashmir and is described at length by Kalhana in his *Rajatarangini*.<sup>12</sup> Among the military organizations that were powerful in the

9. *Arthashastra*, VI. 1. Edited by R.P. Kangle, *The Kautiliya Arthashastra*, Parts I. II. III. A Study (Bombay: University of Bombay, 1965).

10. *Op.cit.*, XIII. 1. 20-21; II. 17.

11. Sandhyakara Nandin, *Ramacharita*, 2.42 in Sylvain Brocquet, *La Geste de Rama: poeme a double sens de Sandhyakaranandin* (Pondichery: Institut Francais de Pondichery, 2010).

12. Kalhana, *Rajatarangini*, 5. 51-52; 306; 400-13. Edited by M.A. Stein (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1960 rpt.).

area were the Tantrins and Ekangas who were a serious threat to the power of the Damara feudatories and the rulers over a period of time. Such instances point to each of the three levels - the producers, the intermediaries, and the state, having to negotiate their power viz-a-vis the other. I am not arguing that there was no exploitation. This was a given in most pre-modern societies. What is debatable is whether it was so severe as to support sustained despotism, as was the predominant colonial view. We have to remember that the colonial perspective also had a political agenda.

Caste had a regional identity but this did not restrict migrations. Learned *brahmanas* were in demand and invited to settle in various parts of the sub-continent legitimizing newly created kingdoms. Stone carvers and temple builders were mobile judging by stylistic similarities in distant places. Occupational castes such as weavers migrated from Gujarat to Tamil Nadu attracted by the expanding textile trade in south India.

Far from being only a land of villages Indian traders were found in commercial centres across Asia and associated with a monetary economy.<sup>13</sup> Among the more wealthy traders were the *brahmanas*: some making large profits in the horse trade of the north-west,<sup>14</sup> and many in the south Indian Ayyavole guilds trading with south-east Asia.<sup>15</sup> These guilds were not crippled by caste. They were political and economic pressure groups maintaining their own relations with royalty. In the Panjab it was not the *brahmanas* but the *khatri* traders who were the dominant caste for many centuries. The most prestigious religious sect in this region was founded by the *khatri* Guru Nanak who had distanced himself from Brahmanical Hinduism, as also had the followers of the other popular *sant*, Bulleh Shah. Trade and commerce was not treated with odium since many upper castes were traders.

Artisanal castes tended to be assertive, perhaps because of the urban ambience. Production was central to the activities of such groups since it was not limited to local exchange but was frequently

13. A. Das Gupta, 'Indian Merchants and the trade in the Indian Ocean, c. 1500-1750', *Cambridge Economic History of India*, Vol. I (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); P. Parthasarathy, *The Transition to a Colonial Econom: Weavers, Merchants and Kings in South India 1720-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

14. Peheva Inscription from the temple of Garibnath, in *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. I, 184ff. (Delhi: ASI, 1983 rpt.).

15. R. Champakalakshmi, *Trade, Ideology and Urbanisation* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996).

geared to distant markets. The bonds of belonging to a guild provided a firm identity that often held even when the guild dispersed and its members took to other occupations, as happened with the silk weavers of Mandasor.<sup>16</sup> The bonding was a useful support when demands were made on the state.

There are many records, as for instance from the states of Rajasthan, which refer to decisions taken by the *jati-panchayats* – the caste councils similar to guilds – and conveyed to both the administration and the rulers.<sup>17</sup> These could be for a remission of tax, or a firm refusal to pay a newly imposed tax, or to adjudicate over disputes involving money and land transfers. Civil law virtually required the state to accept the decision and advice of the *panchayat*. In 1788 artisans in Jodhpur went on strike objecting to certain taxes. The state had to agree to their terms as artisanal production controlled by merchants and guilds, was crucial to maintaining an on-going economy, especially in the period just preceding colonialism.

The politics of patronage was not just a simple matter of the ruler bestowing wealth on a recipient. It involved a careful assessment of the authority of the community, its economic potential, and its religious affiliations. This in part accounts for the fact that unlike as in Europe, individual rulers patronized more than one religion. This patronage could change from king to king in a dynasty. The recipients of patronage could be a single *brahmana* or a cluster of them, a Buddhist or Jaina monastery, *samantas*, intermediaries of various kinds, artisanal or mercantile guilds or religious sects. It is probably more meaningful to think in terms of the possible prevalence of the moral economy in such systems checking the powerful.

Not unexpectedly, state forms in India varied over the millennia. A static patrimonial state was not the usual pattern in this history. Changes refer to social and economic activities and are frequently linked to caste and these in turn can be connected to religious sects.

Weber's study of the religion of India rightly discusses both caste and religion.<sup>18</sup> But the significant link between the two remains somewhat illusive or fails to get fully connected. Colonial definitions of caste tended to give more space to *varna* than to *jati*. Given

16. A.L. Basham, 'The Mandasor Inscription of the Silk Weavers', in B.L. Smith (ed.), *Essays of Gupta Culture* (Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass, 1983), pp. 93-106.

17. Nandita Sahai, 'Some Were larger than their Communities: A Potter's Family, Community, and Justice in early Modern Rajasthan', *Studies in History* Vol. XXV, No.1 (Jan-June 2009): 39-68 (Delhi: Sage Publications).

18. *RI*, p. 21ff; p. 55ff.

the origin of *varna*, it was assumed that the caste Hindu would take it as divinely sanctioned and unalterable. Besides, where a largely unchanging society is assumed, there was little need to recognize change in the functioning of castes.

The conversion of non-caste to caste, registering its recruitment into a *varna*, is discussed. As has been noted, this process hints at some similarity with what was more recently called Sanskritization. It involved lower castes imitating the life-style of the upper castes, except of course that the former had to have the income to do so. But the negotiations that took place behind the scenes, as it were, in the *varna* ordering, or the shifting in the hierarchies of *jatis*, over a period of time, were less noticed than they should have been.

Did the method of conversion to caste suggest a possible form of social mobility? Could a lower caste where it had the income to change its occupation, rituals and life-style claim the status of a higher caste? There was no need to wait until one's next birth. Or, could some occupations, that were earlier unacceptable among upper castes, become acceptable, such as *brahmanas* becoming land-owners and taking to agriculture, or becoming wealthy traders, or administrators, all of which frequently happened, and without their losing caste? If the model as given in the *Dharmashastras* was subverted, but leaving the façade intact, then the process of subversion has to be studied. Were the Dalits, the only permanent, unchanging social category?

A century ago, statements of the *Dharmashastras* were taken by historians not only as norms, but on occasion as suggestive of how Hindu society actually functioned. Although some were questioned much from them was quoted as evidence. The discussion on Indian society therefore came to be centered largely on the ideas and practices of the upper castes. The religious practices of the lower castes, the sources for which were different, were often treated as the subject matter of ethnography. These aspects did not feature in most definitions of Hinduism until recent years.

The *varna-ashrama-dharma* of the *Dharmashastras* was the norm for caste conservatism. The phrase referred to a society that observed the four categories of *varna* status—*brahmana*, *kshatriya*, *vaishya* and *shudra*; and the four stages in the life-cycle of those that had a *varna* status—being a student, then becoming a householder, subsequently retiring from this stage, in order to prepare for the final stage of asceticism. In this scheme *varna* and *ashrama* were integrated. Yet new observances needed to be incorporated as and when required,

although maintaining that the format was still being observed. The *brahmanas* in performing rituals and in the pursuit of learning, claimed the highest status with maximum purity. This they stated required them to be distanced from other castes; and also to designate a segregated group, lowest in the hierarchy or even outside the hierarchy, as permanently excluded and treated as maximally impure, therefore untouchable. The purity of the *brahmana* had its counter-weight in the impurity of the Dalit. Yet the same Vedic society that discriminated against the *dasas* as the inferior Other, did on occasion recruit the *dasi-putrah-brahmanas*, the sons of the low caste *dasi* women, into the *brahmana varna* and treat them with respect.<sup>19</sup> It is vaguely suggested that they had some supernatural power.

Caste as classified in the codes of the *Dharmashastras*, gave weight to the highest caste of *brahmana*. But *brahmanas* did not necessarily conform to the *Dharmashastras*. They claimed a right to other occupations. Pushyamitra was the *brahmana* commander of the Mauryan army who assassinated the Mauryan king and usurped the throne.<sup>20</sup> Sanskrit texts refer to this, but interestingly not as contradicting the caste code but as an example of how some kings were done away with. *Brahmana* political advisors dominated courts and administration in the latter part of the first millennium AD. A fair number were employed as high status scribes in the Mughal courts together with the scribal castes of *kayasthas*. The label of *brahmana* had often to be qualified by reference to the precise occupation of the *brahmana* concerned.

From the late first millennium AD, the power of the *brahmanas* increased through the large numbers who received sizeable donations of land as fees for performing rituals of legitimation or averting the evil effects of an eclipse. In newly opened up areas such donees became land-owners.<sup>21</sup> A new *brahma-ksatra* caste became prominent largely in association with these donees. The logic of such a caste is self-evident. The *kayastha* scribes, who virtually monopolized administration in northern India, were given a *brahmana-shudra* origin, perhaps to concede that some were as learned as the *shrotriya brahmanas* but were not permitted to perform rituals.<sup>22</sup>

19. D.D. Kosambi, *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History* (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1956), pp. 97ff.

20. *The Harshacharita of Banabhatta*, VI. 222, ed. P.V. Kane (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1918/1997).

21. R.S. Sharma, *Early Medieval Indian Society* (Delhi: Orient Longman, 2001).

22. K.I. Leonard, *Social History of an Indian Caste: the Kayasthas of Hyderabad* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1978).

Caste identities could be linked to religious sects, thus supporting diversity. For Weber the unifying feature of Hinduism was the theodicy of *karma* and *samsara*.<sup>23</sup> How central this was to all Hindus of every caste remains debatable. Heroes for instance, aspire to go to heaven taken there by *apsaras*.<sup>24</sup> The Shramana theodicies were not identical. A study of the theodicies of sect and caste might be quite revealing.

A frequently discussed subject was renunciation. Some have argued that renunciation among both Hindus and Buddhists was life-denying. However, unlike asceticism, renunciation does not remove the person from society. It sets up an alternate society that the renouncer can join.<sup>25</sup> The Shramanic religions were not attempting a major reform of society but were providing an alternate way of life.

Hinduism as a religion had a history of change with perhaps a wider range of new forms than in other religions. Vedic Brahmanism is taken as a start subsequent to the Harappan. Its imprint has been viewed as continuous. Its authority was challenged by the Shramana religions such as Buddhism, Jainism, and the Ajivikas. *Dharma* came to be described as consisting of two streams: the Brahmana and the Shramana. The former was largely Vedic Brahmanism based on the sanctity of the *Vedas*, belief in deities, the immortality of the soul and the performance of *yajnas*. The *shramanas* denied this, drawing upon reason and causation. They were dismissed as *nastikas*-non-believers, by the *brahmanas*. The relationship between the two is said to be comparable to that of the snake and the mongoose.<sup>26</sup> This duality and its inter-action is continuously referred to, its juxtaposition being central to *dharma*, yet few historians of Hinduism have investigated it as a duality. The link with caste would be clearer if the caste differentiation of each could be worked out. It would also force us not to see Hinduism as a single monolithic religion. The inter-face between *brahmanas* and *shramanas* would prove insightful.

Vedic Brahmanism as a religion was observed mainly by that caste and those upper castes permitted to perform the rituals.

23. *RI*, p. 120ff.

24. R. Thapar, 'Death and the Hero', in R. Thapar, *Cultural Past* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 680-95.

25. R. Thapar, 'Renunciation: The Making of a Counter-Culture?', *ibid*, pp. 876-914.

26. *Patanjali's Vyakarana Mahabhashya*, 2.4.1. ed. with trans. S.D. Joshi (Poona: University of Poona, 1968).

The majority followed variant forms of Hinduism, in what is now referred to as Puranic Hinduism. From the first millennium AD the worship of Shiva and Vishnu superseded the earlier deities. The major innovations were that they were iconized, placed in temples, and worship took the form of *puja*. Temple worship replaced the elaborate Vedic sacrificial rituals except at the occasional consecration. These innovations gave rise to multiple new sects that negated the notion of a monolithic religion. New deities regularly entered the pantheon and the sects worshipping them had to be accommodated in the caste hierarchy. This continued apace through the centuries. The most recent of these was Santoshi Ma, who emerged half a century ago. The commentaries on the *Dharmashastras* written in medieval times had to then discuss burning questions such as evaluating the status of the temple priest viz-a-vis that of the learned *shrotriya brahmana*.

Together with this was the parallel phenomenon of Bhakti and Shakta teachers founding still more sects, spanning a range of variant beliefs. Communities could choose whom to worship and how. With the coming of Islam the number of sects increased further as did the range of religious ideas. Some sects disapproved of caste such as the Kabirpanthis, whereas others such as the Lingayats, evolved into a new caste. Many of these sects conformed neither to formal Islam nor formal Hinduism. They tended to have blurred edges and some over-laps were recognized. A few drew close to the remaining Shramanic tradition, now surviving largely in the Jaina communities.

The next mutation came in the nineteenth century in various Samajs of the upper caste middle-class.<sup>27</sup> They accepted the colonial interpretations of caste and religion in India. They adopted ways of adjusting Hindu belief and practice to the processes of modernization as well as asserting the identity of the emerging middle-class. This saw itself as a new social category anxious to assert authority. Reforms were introduced in an effort to standardize the religion, but each Samaj had its own identity and authority with the upper castes remaining the dominant groups. It was a concession to the colonial definition of Hinduism as a monolithic religion rather than a range of religious sects. The term Hinduism was applied to all non-Muslim, non-Christian, non-Parsi sects, and these were collectively treated as manifestations of Hinduism, irrespective of their

27. J.H. Broomfield, *Elite Conflict in a Plural Society: Twentieth Century Bengal* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968).

often fundamental differences with brahmana-dominated sects, or for that matter with each other.

This standardized religion took an extreme form in twentieth century Hindutva.<sup>28</sup> The projection of a uniform Hinduism also serves the cause of political mobilization. However, the new authority of the upper castes had its counter-point in the surfacing of anti-brahmana movements in western and southern India. These were in part a continuation of earlier movements questioning social inequality and also in part movements in a modern mould demanding education, human rights, and rights of representation.<sup>29</sup>

Historically, the parallel streams of Brahmana and Shramana *dharmas* continued for fifteen hundred years. Perhaps the inter-face between caste and religion underlined Brahmanical orthodoxy whilst the parallel stream captured diverse religious forms, some quite controversial. The articulation of the sects was the primary religious form. This gets negated when Hinduism is projected as a monolithic religion. The ethic differed not according to the formal religions but according to the sects. Attempts were occasionally made by some sects to conform to the format of formal religions. These often ended up in the creation of fresh sects and sometimes required legitimizing the change. Weber's study of legitimacy has been helpful in understanding this process. We have begun to recognize the forms it took and why.

Social conformity was important to establishing relations with patrons particularly if large grants were expected from them. One form of claiming status was through genealogies. Birth established caste identity and some genealogical evidence was required for claims to status. As with rituals, the form was retained although the meaning changed. The late first millennium AD saw what the *Puranas* call the making of a new *kshatriya* caste.<sup>30</sup> The *brahmana* authors of the *Puranas* maintained that most dynasties were of *shudra* or *mleccha* origin. The social codes preferred that rulers be *kshatriyas*, so many post-Gupta rulers claimed *kshatriya* status, irrespective of what their original caste

28. R. Thapar, 'Syndicated Hinduism', in *The Past As Present* (Delhi: Aleph. 2014), pp. 138-64.

29. M.S.S. Pandian, 'Denationalizing the Past; 'nation' in E.V. Ramaswamy's Political Discourse', *Economic and Political Weekly*, October 1993, 28, pp. 2282-89; M.Ram, 'Ramaswami Naicker and the Dravidian Movement', *Economic and Political Weekly*, February 1974, 9, 6-8, pp. 217-24.

30. F.E. Pargiter, *The Purana Texts of the Dynasties of the Kali Age* (Delhi: Deep Publications, 1975 rpt.), pp. 52-53.

may have been. Vedic rituals became increasingly symbolic, replaced with new rituals such as the *hiranyagarbha* – the *kshatriya* being reborn from a golden womb, to be able to claim status. Elaborate genealogies had to be fabricated linking these families through a myth with the *kshatriya* clans of the epics. A section in the inscriptions called *prashastis* – eulogies of the dynasty and king - provided the approved caste origin and are an indication of one process of legitimation.<sup>31</sup> Controlling this process gave the *brahmanas* fresh power.

Were the social codes treated as the blue-print for the entire society and recommended for all times?<sup>32</sup> Were they consciously put into practice or were they referred to only when occasion demanded it? This seems to have depended on which castes were being legitimized. This becomes rather complicated given that caste was not irrelevant to the other religions of the sub-continent.

Islam and Christianity do not observe anything like caste in west Asia and Europe. But in India caste was recognized among conversions to Islam and Christianity. Catholic *brahmanas* are particular about their status in Goa, and *sayyad* Muslims keep their distance from *pasmandas*. Claims to purity were replaced by claims to origins. Since many of the conversions were by caste, the more crucial question is why did a particular caste, convert? The caste status, especially if low, was carried over into the new religion.<sup>33</sup>

For the Dalits there was virtually no change given that Islam, Christianity and Sikhism all maintain the exclusion of Dalit converts. This indicates the nature of conversion, and is a telling comment on caste and religion in the Indian context. The genealogical fantasy of caste in one situation contrasts with its continuing reality in the other.

I would like to conclude by suggesting that Weber's arguments may have been more purposefully comparative, had he worked on a detailed study of the same approximate time period in India as in Europe. Capitalism is a modern phenomenon and the focus should perhaps have been on the second half of the second millennium AD.

31. R. Thapar, *The Past Before Us* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), pp. 547ff.

32. N. Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001); D. Quigley, *The Interpretation of Caste* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).

33. M. Gallanter, *Competing Equalities – Law and the Backward Castes in India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); S.M. Michael (ed.), *Untouchable: Dalits in Modern India* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1999).

This would have been prior to what preceded the enforced link to industrial capitalism through the colonial and imperial connection. Was there a possible link to a Protestant-type ethic? If the link is to be investigated elsewhere than in Europe, then both the type of economy and the religious ethic and their causal relationship, would have to be interrogated. An alternative question would be that if both conditions were present, then would such a change be inevitable. If so, then a further question becomes relevant as to whether the economic change to capitalism in India was diverted by the intervention of colonialism?<sup>34</sup>

I am also a little mystified that in his search for rationality in the Indian tradition Weber mentions only in passing, the more rational schools of Indian thought such as in logic, grammar, mathematics and astronomy, and some discussion of rational argument in medicine. These were areas of Brahmanical, Buddhist and Islamic interaction. The leading centres were in Asia with much exchange between Arab and Indian scholars. This continued until the fifteenth century or so. Given the similarity of investigations in Europe and Asia, what prevented Asia from taking the particular leap in knowledge taken by Europe at that time? Surely more was required than the Protestant ethic?

A focus on investigating the immediately pre-colonial period, would perhaps have enabled Weber to study more precisely the facets that he was drawing upon, such as, whether there had been only a patrimonial state of the kind he describes, or were there elements of capitalism that might have been present — a subject also central to other debates on the transition to capitalism; did colonialism obstruct the emergence of industrial capitalism; what held back the strands of a Protestant-type ethic from becoming more visible and active? This may have provided a more precise background to ascertaining the degree to which there could have been a Protestant ethic, as for instance among the Jainas, who according to Weber, possibly had a greater potential for this. Or, it might also have revealed significant variants in the Indian situation pointing to alternate ways to the capitalist path. Every society does not think and act in an identical way.

34. Interestingly, Weber read S.V. Ketkar, *The History of Caste in India* (Ithaca, NY: Taylor and Carpenter, 1909), but not Dadabhai Naoroji, *Poverty and UnBritish Rule in India* (London: S. Sonnenschein, 1901), which would have been more pertinent to his argument.

The problem with theories of explanation in the social sciences, is that they are shaped by the times in which they are formulated. As more data flows in, the formulations change. But the significant ones do provide leads to analyzing the new data, even sometimes in the light of the old. Some of Weber's theories may now be set aside. However whilst assessing them new ideas have surfaced. And the leads that he provided us with, can be useful as initial questions in current research. It still makes sense to read Weber and to argue with him. By way of speculation one could also ask, that if Weber was writing in 2016 instead of 1916, how would he have seen the religion of India?

## Book Reviews

M. Rainer Lepsius, *Soziale Schichtung in der industriellen Gesellschaft*, with a foreword by Oliver Lepsius and an introduction by Wolfgang Schluchter (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2015).

It is tempting to ask what would have happened if Rainer Lepsius had published his Habilitation on *Social Stratification in Industrial Society* back then in 1963. As his son Oliver reports in the foreword, and as I can testify having passed my own Habilitation on *Social Structure and Styles of Life*<sup>1</sup> under his and Wolfgang Schluchter's supervision in Heidelberg, he mentioned time and again that he should have done so. What a mistake. But the last chapter was missing and some finishing touches on the whole corpus of the text would have been necessary. Since his academic career took off so rapidly – he was quickly put in charge of establishing the social sciences at the University of Mannheim, and then had to step in after Ralf Dahrendorf's demise as President of the German Sociological Association in the wake of 1968 to 'save' this society from the fate of dissolution – he basically had no time to get back to his Habilitation. In the early 1970s Marxism had captured the attention in class analysis and Lepsius would have been forced to acknowledge these new theoretical developments by adding a chapter on Marxist class analysis. This, however, he never did. Therefore, this analytically rich and important text did not see the light of the day until after his death on October 2, 2014. *Habent sua fata libelli*.

Books have their own fate, indeed, particularly in the case of Lepsius. Without doubt, the publication would have made him one of the preeminent scholars in the field of social inequality. Instead, if he is known in the social scientific world outside of Germany at all, he counts as an institutional thinker, but not as a student of social stratification. Interestingly enough, he is both: a class analyst *and* an institutionalist. How is this possible? Lepsius dealt with questions of class, inequality, and stratification in a couple of articles, and a superficial reading might regard them as casual papers about

1. See Hans-Peter Müller, *Sozialstruktur und Lebensstile. Der neuere theoretische Diskurs über soziale Ungleichheit*, 3rd ed. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1997).

different aspects of this field of studies. But upon closer look, it turns out that Lepsius had an underlying research agenda. Since he followed in the footsteps of Max Weber's multidimensional approach of 'Class, Status, and Party', he set out to explore how these different dimensions interrelate. What Weber had separated analytically, he wanted to study theoretically and empirically, to discover the intricate relationships between economic differentiation, political interest formation, and cultural value orientations. Lepsius was looking for mechanisms: how economy, politics, and culture operate together with respect to social structure and social inequality. Weber never solved these relationships between life chances and styles of life. Lepsius, however, took Weber's missing links and interfaces as the construction sites for his own approach.

His Habilitation formed the backdrop for his analytical reflections. In seven short but clear-cut chapters, Lepsius put forward a critical analysis of the theory of stratification in order to develop his own approach for the study of social inequality. Between the 1940s and 1960s this topic attracted a lot of attention in international sociology. The crucial vantage point was the question of how and in which way the postwar boom and the long period of growth and prosperity would affect class structure and social stratification in Western societies. Lepsius encountered three different positions (p. 2) in German postwar sociology: 1. The class society of the 19th century has been replaced by growing social differentiation, as Theodor Geiger and René König held; 2. The distinctions between classes have vanished due to enormous growth and prosperity, and a 'nivellierte Mittelstandsgesellschaft' ('a levelled middle class society', per Helmut Schelsky) has emerged displaying a comparable standard of living as well as similar styles of life; (3) Social classes still persist and represent the main drivers of social conflicts, as Ralf Dahrendorf and Heinrich Popitz maintained. According to Lepsius, these very different pictures of society have *one* mistake in common—the futile attempt to decipher the totality of stratification with one concept (differentiation, levelling, class) instead of looking at different spheres of society, the underlying logic of their inner dynamic, and the interrelationship between those processes.

Lepsius poses three sets of questions to guide his complex analysis (p. 18): (1) What kind of a social position typically leads to the formation of strata? What are the criteria for their formation? (2) How does the differential evaluation of social positions take place? How is the horizontal differentiation of positions due to the division of

labor transformed into a hierarchy of vertical positions with unequal privileges and prestige? 3. What kind of collectivities arise from a similar social position and comparable ranking? As this set of questions shows, Lepsius is interested in social structure and culture, or in Marxian parlance, in class and ideology. In the language of Bourdieu, one would speak of position and positioning ('position' and 'prise de position').

In accordance with these three questions, Lepsius sets out to deal with the problem of social position (chapter 3), the problem of evaluation (chapter 4), the problem of the realization of collectivities (strata and classes, chapter 5), and the general relationship between social inequality and social stratification (chapter 6). With the help of a frame of reference that he develops step by step, he presents an empirical outline of a picture of West German social stratification in his last chapter.

The problem of social position reconstructs systematically the different approaches ranging from Rousseau and Marx to Weber and the American discourse on status, status groups and status crystallization. The multidimensionality of social inequality requires hypotheses about the underlying logic and dynamic as well as the mechanisms which relate class (economic order), party (political order) and status or estate (the social and cultural order). Lepsius' own proposal translates Merton's distinction between status and status-set into positions and positional constellations or configurations. 'The object of a sociology of stratification is the question of positional differentiation in a particular frame of reference. The structural conditions of social inequality have to be found in the kind of positional differentiation and the mechanisms involved' (p. 45, my translation). A second mechanism is to be discovered in positional allocation, that is the recruitment of persons (people or elites) and the accessibility of positions (openness or closure).

The problem of evaluation is my favorite chapter since it anticipates so much of valuation and evaluation research today. Lepsius offers what is probably the best systematic presentation and critique of the functional theory of stratification developed by Parsons and Davis and Moore. As is well known, these American sociologists established the meritocratic ideology of an achievement society. According to their view, a complex society requires a complex system of stratification in which the most important positions are filled by the best persons available, as measured by the level of skills and the effort it takes to gain these qualifications. Since talent is said to be scarce, people

need to be motivated for long-lasting education processes, and the best motivation is high rewards. Thus people in elite positions earn more and deserve these privileges and high prestige. Lepsius turns this 'theory' upside down, noting the scarcity of elite positions and the abundance of talent and skills. What must be explained, he argues, is the disciplining mechanism that makes people adapt to the necessity of taking badly remunerated, 'unimportant positions'. It is not so much incentives for achievement but rather the disciplining constraint to keep up with low positions and positionings among the majority of the population that makes modern hierarchical stratification systems work. For Lepsius, this raises the question of the legitimation of social inequality. 'Positional differences have to be acknowledged, recruitment mechanisms need a justification for their mode of selection, and even the underprivileged must have the chance for a residual sense of positive self-evaluation' (p. 65, my translation).

In the following two chapters he returns to this problem and discusses the relationship between the structure of positional configurations and the cultural order of stratification. His solution for the strain between high structural inequality and the modern cultural sense of equality is T.H. Marshall's concept of citizenship. In modern societies, people enjoy legal, political, and social citizenship rights. According to Lepsius, citizenship holds the key for reconciliation between the holders of underprivileged positions in a society and their entitlement to full membership. 'The specific interpretation of inequality offers the possibility of maintaining the principal claim to be a full member though this claim cannot be realized' (p. 124, my translation). Lepsius discusses a number of coping mechanisms: (1) A generalized sense of upward mobility in the wake of the prosperity of the postwar boom, which is adapted to the aspiration level of different strata; (2) The distinction between white and blue collar work and the sense among the working class that only they contribute 'hard work'; 3. Illusionary assumptions about the operation of stratification processes — 'this outline of the inequality order based upon the syndrome of luck, chance, personal connections, and conspiracy offers no realistic self-orientation, which is why it implies a passive mentality but enables the underprivileged to possess a positive self-evaluation, since one's own failure cannot be one's own fault' (p. 125, my translation). Blaming the system rather than oneself is probably among the most important coping mechanisms of the underprivileged. Yet Lepsius also discusses the illusions of the overprivileged, who assume that their success in life is their

own achievement and not due to their upper position and their life chances to monopolize goods, power, and values. ‘The hypertrophy of self-esteem that managers exhibit and the “spiritual” vanity of the educated form an evocative testimony’ (p. 127, my translation). Since citizenship provided the key for Lepsius’s theoretical account, Schluchter (p. xv) reports in his introduction that Lepsius intended to publish the volume under a new title: ‘Inequality and citizenship: Towards a Theory of stratification’.

The last chapter gives a tentative picture of the stratification system of West Germany. Lepsius gathers all the data available at the time and orders their results within his framework. It seems as if the middle class circumscribes the ‘normality’ of society. ‘The complex “middle class” (*Mittelschicht*) is related to the societal norm of equality on the one hand, and a specific image of a social stratum to face the working class (*Arbeiterschicht*) on the other hand’ (p. 135, my translation). Lepsius goes so far as to imagine a kind of ‘Übermittelschicht’ (‘over middle class’) of academic occupations that typically represent professionalized functional elites. Yet, he admits at the same time that his empirical account bears an ‘impressionistic character’ (p. 143, my translation) given the available data.

Reading Lepsius’ Habilitation more than fifty years after he submitted it at the University of Mannheim is an exciting experience for three reasons. First and foremost, he gives a detailed and systematically ordered account of the state of the art of inequality studies at that time. The knowledge we once had is impressive even today. Second, while he presents a rich account of the contemporary discourse, including theories and empirical analyses, he underlines the importance of studying the relationship between the structure and culture of inequality in a differentiated way. In many parts of his book one is reminded of Bourdieu. Third, the main theoretical impetus for Lepsius’s study comes from Weber’s multidimensional approach. In subsequent articles Lepsius set out to analyze the interrelationships between economic life chances, political interest formation, and cultural value orientations. In this sense he combined class analysis with the analysis of institutions.<sup>2</sup> Maybe it is time for us to follow in his footsteps.

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2. See M. Rainer Lepsius, *Max Weber and Institutional Theory*, ed. Claus Wendt (Switzerland: Springer Nature, 2017).

Sara R. Farris, *Max Weber's theory of personality: individuation, politics and orientalism in the sociology of religion*. Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books, xii + 228pp.

Asked by Karl Jaspers why he put himself through so much as a scholar, Weber is said to have replied, 'to see how much I can take'. We can have a debate about where he is most obviously trying to see this: in writing *Economy and Society* all by himself? In the long essays on the stock exchange? In the study of music? The chances are that we wouldn't put the studies of the world religions that occupied him for much of his final fifteen years in that category, for having given the world the two long essays on the Protestant ethic in 1904/5 and replied constantly to critics, he was perhaps bound to pursue more systematically the comparative study the thesis itself demanded. The Protestant ethic was also a kind of autobiography, or the genealogy of a sensibility Weber recognized as his own. Not all scholars have seen an intimate link between the confessional and the comparative project. Sara Farris does so. The sociology of religion as a whole may be read as a comparative study not so much of the conditions for the emergence of industrial capitalism, as of the idea of personality. In this, Weber concluded that only in the West, and in the Christian West, did there emerge an idea of the personality that we associate with autonomy and the rational mastery of the external world. That personality, Farris claims, was a normative ideal for Weber, and was embodied most starkly and significantly in the member of the voluntary Puritan sect and in the figure of the 'charismatic' political leader. We have been here before but what is distinctive about Farris is that she frames the discussion around the idea of orientalism, in which Weber works out the world historical significance of his own ideal of personality through highly stylized and overgeneralized contrasting accounts of 'the' Hindu and 'the' Confucian mentality, or even 'Asiatic religiosity', as in the last chapter of the *Religion of India*. Or rather, she does not so much frame it this way as book-end it; for while the reader's heart - or this reader's heart - sinks rather at the opening gambit, which suggests a series of rather predictable postcolonial 'readings', in which the Western scholar is traduced for his ignorance, the bulk of the book is made up of very careful summaries of the each of the separate studies without much reference to the specialist literature on Ancient Judaism, Hinduism, or Confucianism. As with many before her, whatever her initial assumptions may have

been, indeed, whatever thesis she wants to push, Farris finds herself entering into the richness, and surprising materialism, of his historical sociology, and doing so with considerable skill and care. Only in the final chapter is the orientalism theme emphasized at any length. The result is a slightly uneasy combination of Reinhard Bendix and Edward Said, but a very readable one. There is so much after all to try to understand, and this book will provide an admirable guide for the advanced student. But it doesn't give us the sort of sustained encounter with what Weber got right and what he got wrong, and of where his studies fall short of today's standards, that we find in, say, Stefan Breuer's *Max Weber's Herrschaftssoziologie*. And where criticisms are offered (190) they don't owe much in particular to the orientalism thesis.

A number of questions arise. One is that, given her emphasis on the normative aspects of the Protestant personality, it is odd that Farris downplays the role of Catholicism in the list of non-Protestant confessions with which Weber compared his own commitment (90, 95). It is of course true that, with Troeltsch's *Social Teachings* appearing at the same time, Weber never studied Catholicism as he did Judaism, Hinduism, and Confucianism, and also that ascetic Protestantism is unthinkable without the ascetic traditions already developed in the West. But it is also true that his most overtly hostile remarks about a non-Protestant confession are about Catholicism. There may be something patronizingly orientalist about his account of the 'organicist social ethics' of Hinduism, or his remark that the Confucian saw the world as an enchanted garden and life as a series of distinct occurrences, but nothing in the studies of Hinduism and Confucianism compares with the dismissive claim that the Catholic 'lived ethically from hand-to-mouth'.

A second question concerns her claim that Weber's ideal Protestant personality was embodied in the charismatic political leader (5) as much as in the member of the Puritan sect, with the typical bureaucrat coming off a poor second. I don't think this is quite right: firstly, 'charisma' was a relational concept, or supposed to be, a term that suggested a relationship between ruler and follower, not an intrinsic quality of the ruler; secondly, when Weber did break his own rules and used the concept substantively, he used charisma to cover all manner of characters who had nothing to do with ascetic Protestantism; thirdly the bureaucrat was not a type Weber did not admire, indeed the modern bureaucrat's capacity for sober, sustained daily work and devotion to a task was a notable feature of

an ascetic Protestant personality, and something the political leader needed too. The latter was distinguished by his or her ability to set goals and define visions.

A third question is what Weber thought he was doing in these comparative inquiries. Part of Farris's answer is that he was providing confirmation of the unique achievement of Western Christian, or rather Protestant, 'personality'. I would modify that: there was already a well-known and well-worn account of non-Western religions that privileged Protestantism, namely Hegel's philosophy of history. It is arguable that Weber conducted his comparative inquiries precisely in order not to see other world religions as stages along the road to the realization of Protestant freedom, to see them instead as the defining framework of radically distinct civilizations. In other words, there was an anthropological dimension to these studies. One encounters here of course the ambivalence at the heart of the orientalist thesis: western scholars may be accused of seeing other cultures as merely earlier stages along the road to modernity, yet when they refuse to do so and see them as cultures in their own right, they are accused of seeing them as radically other. The most spectacular illustration of this was the spat between Marshall Sahlins and Gananath Obeyesekere over the death of Captain James Cook. Either way, scholarship seems vitiated by the existence of one's own point of view or cultural baggage. Yet in an important sense our own point of view is all that we have, especially when we are not going native. I have always thought that Weber knew exactly what he was doing when he littered his accounts of ancient Judaism, Hinduism, and Confucianism with terms that would be familiar to his German readers: he was trying to help those readers understand a genuinely alien set of beliefs by using terminology that would give them something to hold on to and by contrasting something unfamiliar with something that would be familiar to them. Thus the repression launched in China against Buddhism in the 9<sup>th</sup> century AD is described as analogous to the 'Prussian *Kulturkampf*' (175), while we are helped to understand Hindu religious ethics through appreciating the lack of a doctrine of natural law, or the Confucian well-adjusted man by comparison with the Western idea of Renaissance man. Some of these moves may have been a bit rough and ready, but at every stage Weber was trying to develop a terminology that was formal enough to serve the study of all cultures and societies at all periods in history, but substantive enough to do so without resorting to abstractly universalist formulas. By

and large, I think his work is a reminder that there is a benign interpretation of Gadamer's phrase, 'prejudice is the bias of our openness to the world'.

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### Notes for Contributors

*Max Weber Studies* is an international journal which is published twice a year. It concerns itself with the interpretation, reception and application of Max Weber's writings and ideas and celebrates his polysemic legacy. The journal publishes new academic work on Max Weber and includes among its aims:

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