Max Weber’s *Economic Ethic of the World Religions*

This book brings together for the first time in English internationally recognized area specialists who seek to identify what is “living” and what is “dead” in the great German social scientist Max Weber’s analyses of China, India and ancient Israel found in his massive, unfinished *Economic Ethic of the World Religions*. In so doing, the volume offers a powerful new perspective in the current debate concerning the timing of and deeper roots of the “Great Divergence” – and more recent convergence – in the economic and political development of the West on the one hand and the great civilizations of Asia on the other. At the same time, this volume also rebalances our understanding of Weber’s entire intellectual output by returning *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* to its proper place alongside *The Economic Ethic of the World Religions* and establishing that work as the equal of the similarly unfinished *Economy and Society*.

Thomas C. Ertman is Associate Professor of Sociology and Director of the College Core Curriculum at New York University. He is the author of the award-winning *Birth of the Leviathan: Building States and Regimes in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* and is working on a successor volume entitled *Taming the Leviathan: Liberalization and Democratization in Western Europe since the French Revolution*. 
Max Weber’s Economic Ethic of the World Religions

An Analysis

THOMAS C. ERTMAN

New York University
# Contents

List of Contributors  

Acknowledgments  

Abbreviations of Weber’s Works  

### PART I  INTRODUCTION  

1. Max Weber’s The Economic Ethic of the World Religions:  
   A Neglected Social Science Classic?  
   Thomas Ertman  
   3  

### PART II  WEBER’S THE ECONOMIC ETHIC OF THE WORLD RELIGIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF HIS OVERALL INTELLECTUAL PROJECT  

2. Max Weber’s Sociology of Religion: A Project in  
   Comparison and Developmental History  
   Wolfgang Schluchter  
   39  

3. Introductory Remarks on Max Weber’s The Economic  
   Ethic of the World Religions  
   Hartmann Tyrell  
   61  

### PART III  REASSESSING WEBER ON CHINA  

4. Weber’s Religion of China  
   Timothy Brook  
   87  

5. The Chinese State, Social Order and Economic Change  
   R. Bin Wong  
   109
Contents

vi

6 Max Weber and Patterns of Chinese History
   Dingxin Zhao

137

PART IV REASSESSING MAX WEBER ON INDIA

7 Max Weber and Indian Religions
   David N. Lorenzen

175

8 Politics, State, and Empire in Weber’s The Religion of India
   Philip J. Stern

199

9 India in Comparison: Max Weber’s Analytical Agenda
   Martin Fuchs

223

PART V REASSESSING MAX WEBER ON ANCIENT ISRAEL

10 Max Weber’s Sociological Approach and Ancient Israel: An
    Archaeological Critique
    William G. Dever

269

11 Weber’s Ancient Judaism: How Well Has It Worn?
    Ziony Zevit

283

12 Max Weber’s Sociology of Ancient Judaism as Part of His
    Project on the Economic Ethic of the World Religions
    Eckart Otto

307

PART VI CONCLUSION

13 Living and Dead in Max Weber’s Economic Ethic of the
    World Religions
    Thomas Ertman

349

Index

357
Contributors

Timothy Brook (University of British Columbia)
William G. Dever (Lycoming College, Pennsylvania)
Thomas Ertman (New York University)
Martin Fuchs (Max Weber Kolleg, Erfurt)
David N. Lorenzen (El Colegio de México)
Eckart Otto (University of Munich)
Wolfgang Schluchter (University of Heidelberg)
Philip J. Stern (Duke University)
Hartmann Tyrell (University of Bielefeld)
R. Bin Wong (University of California, Los Angeles)
Ziony Zevit (American Jewish University, Los Angeles)
Dingxin Zhao (University of Chicago)
Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the Max Weber Chair and Deutsches Haus at New York University for supporting financially the conference at which this book began. I am also indebted to Dr. Jeremiah M. Riemer for the care with which he translated the contributions of Wolfgang Schluchter and Eckart Otto. My deep gratitude goes to Detlef Pollack for organizing and hosting the initial conference and supporting this project over many years. Finally, I would like to praise the extraordinary patience of the contributors, who kept the faith during this volume’s long gestation period.
### Abbreviations of Weber’s Works

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AJ</td>
<td>Ancient Judaism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E&amp;S</td>
<td>Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EW</td>
<td>The Essential Weber: A Reader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EEWR</td>
<td>The Economic Ethic of the World Religions: Comparative Experiments in the Sociology of Religion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FMW</td>
<td>From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GARS I</td>
<td>Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GARS II</td>
<td>Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie II: Hinduismus und Buddhismus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GARS III</td>
<td>Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie III: Das antike Judentum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MWG I/19</td>
<td>Die Wirtschaftsethik der Weltreligionen. Konfuzianismus und Taoismus 1915–1920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MWG I/20</td>
<td>Die Wirtschaftsethik der Weltreligionen. Hinduismus und Buddhismus 1916–1920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MWG I/21</td>
<td>Die Wirtschaftsethik der Weltreligionen. Das antike Judentum 1911–1920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MWG I/22–2</td>
<td>Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft. Die Wirtschaft und die gesellschaftlichen Ordnungen und Mächte</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MWG I/22–4</td>
<td>Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft. Die Wirtschaft und die gesellschaftlichen Ordnungen und Mächte</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MWG II/8</td>
<td>Briefe 1913–1914</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PESC</td>
<td>The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RC</td>
<td>The Religion of China: Confucianism and Taoismus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Abbreviations of Weber's Works

RI  The Religion of India: The Sociology of Hinduism and Buddhism
SR  The Sociology of Religion