



CENTRE FOR ASIAN AND  
TRANSCULTURAL STUDIES

SOUTH ASIA INSTITUTE



UNIVERSITÄT  
HEIDELBERG  
ZUKUNFT  
SEIT 1386

Department of Modern South Asian History

# Colloquium

Winter Semester, 2020-21

Tuesdays, 4pm, CET, on zoom

Zoom Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86795299661>

Please register at [history@sai.uni-heidelberg.de](mailto:history@sai.uni-heidelberg.de)

## Asian Industrialism, Labour Movements and Cultural Nationalism: Interwar contexts of German trade-union writings on “Working India”

by



**Prof. Dr. Ravi Ahuja**

Centre for Modern Indian Studies, University of Göttingen

Date: January 19, 2021

The 1920s saw a flurry of European trade-union delegations heading towards Asia. Among them was a joint delegation of British and German textile workers' unions that visited India's industrial districts in the winter months of 1926/27. This British-German delegation could not agree on a joint report being split over the issue of colonialism. The German book-length report, published in 1928 as *Das werktätige Indien* ('Toiling India') had a most curious reception in Germany. A unique documentation of the Indian labour landscape and a passionate defense of Indian nationalism, the book also displayed disturbing ideological ambivalences. It even helped to establish lines of communication, in 1932, between sections of the social democratic German trade union leadership and certain sections of the anti-republican and ultra-nationalist extreme Right. This talk, then, explores how the 'Indian question' could be construed as an area of friendly communication between apparently irreconcilable political currents.