

The Breadth and Depth of “the Asiatic Form” in *Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations*

A Study from the *London Notebooks*
and the Manuscript of *Capital*, Volume 3

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This paper examines “the Asiatic form” in Marx’s *Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations* by reviewing the excerpt notebooks from the fourth section of MEGA[®] and the manuscript of *Capital*, Volume 3. Over the past few years, many researchers have shown an interest in “The Asiatic Mode of Production”. Debates on this concept have often focused on the Asiatic form in the *Grundrisse* as seen from the perspective of “the formulation of historical materialism” in the 1859 Preface to Marx’s *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*. However, positivist historians have criticized the concept of the Asiatic form and Marx’s 1853 articles on India in particular for their erroneous assumptions. A major issue that remains to be resolved is finding consensus on the internal logic of the Asiatic form and its concrete definition.

In the 1970s, late Marx researcher Lawrence Krader discussed the Asiatic form in detail and related it not only to influential, philosophical writings on the Orient (e.g., Montesquieu, Leibnitz, Bernier, Smith, and Hegel), but also to the books and reports by English writers (e.g., Thomas Stamford Raffles, George Campbell, and Mark Wilks).¹ However, he did not directly address Marx’s London excerpt notebooks of the 1850s because they were not published until the 1980s. Moreover, his main purpose was not to explain the internal logic of the Asiatic form but to examine “The Asiatic Mode of Production” as a whole by taking into account Marx’s 1879–82 excerpt notebooks.²

¹ See Lawrence Krader: *The Asiatic Mode of Production: Sources, Development and Critique in the Writings of Karl Marx*. Assen 1975.

² Lindner recently examined Marx’s perspective on Asia by comparing it with Bernier’s, but he did not directly address the *London Notebooks* either. See Kolja Lindner: *Eurozentrismus bei Marx. Marx-Debatte und Postcolonial Studies im Dialog*. In: *Kapital & Kritik*. Ed. by Werner Bonefeld and Michael Heinrich. Hamburg 2011, pp. 93–129.

Kevin Anderson criticized the Continental European scholars for neglecting Marx's *New-York Daily Tribune* (*Tribune*) articles even though they "contained significant theoretical analysis of non-Western societies, ethnicity, race, and nationalism, often in greater detail and depth than in *Capital* and his other writings on political economy."³ For instance, the *Tribune* articles offer many suggestions about China and India, and the articles of the late 1850s in particular show a strongly anti-colonialist perspective. Several Japanese studies also argue this point with reference to the panic of 1857.⁴ However, Anderson's discussion goes further by also focusing on Marx's 1853 notes on Indonesia concerning "land tenure, village self-government, and gender relations".⁵ Anderson insists that these notes allowed Marx to develop the idea of "the village community", an idea that expanded from the 1860s in Marx's multilinear theory into "the locus against Capital". More importantly, Anderson links the concept of the village community to the idea of "the rural commune" in Marx's late writings on Russia.

This study concurs with Anderson's views and methodology. Furthermore, this examination contributes to the understanding of the Asiatic form by focusing on the theoretical concepts in the *Grundrisse* (e.g., "original [ursprünglich] property"⁶ and "reification [Versachlichung]"). However, it is not possible to cover all the relevant works (i.e., excerpt notebooks, letters, articles, and manuscripts), since Marx published many articles on India and China during the 1850s, and the *London Notebooks* in MEGA[®] IV/10 and IV/11 (relevant to our discussion of the Asiatic form) have not yet been published. Therefore, we will pay special attention to the *London Notebook 9* and the manuscript of *Capital*, Volume 3.

³ Kevin B. Anderson: *Marx at the Margins. On Nationalism, Ethnicity, and non-Western Societies*. Chicago 2010, p. 5.

⁴ See Yasuchi Yamanouchi: *Marx' and Engels' image of the world history* [in Japanese]. Tokyo 1969.

⁵ Anderson: *Marx at the Margins* (Fn. 3), p. 28.

⁶ What "original property" in pre-capitalist modes of production means is that "the worker relates [verhält sich] to the objective conditions of his labor as to his property" (Karl Marx: *Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Ökonomie*. In: MECW. Vol. 28, p. 399 [MEGA[®] II/1, p. 379]; all modifications in the translations from MECW. Vol. 28 by S. S.). Original property also enables the individual to belong to his community, to be guaranteed as a proprietor. Marx's theory of original property shows that a specific form of community not only binds the individual but guarantees his original property in a non-capitalistic or pre-capitalistic society.

Marx on the Sovereign Property of Land in Asia

In his *Economic Manuscript of 1861–63*, Marx carefully examines three books by Richard Jones, a critic of Ricardo’s theory of rent, *An essay on the distribution of wealth, and on the sources of taxation* (1831), *An introductory lecture on political economy delivered at King’s College* (1833) and *Textbook of lectures on the political economy of nations* (1852). Criticizing Jones’s “peasant rents” in his economic study, Marx theorized “the petty industry mode of production”, which was later formulated in *Capital*. Hobsbawm notes that after his exile to London in 1849, Marx rapidly developed his economic studies and in 1851, acquired knowledge about India and the history of the Orient by reading the work of John Stuart Mill, Adam Smith, and Richard Jones.⁷ Specifically, in 1851, Marx had already excerpted material from Jones’s books for his 1861–63 manuscript. This *London Notebook 9* appears in MEGA[®] IV/8 and runs over 30 pages. If we follow up the content of his excerpts, it is apparent that the *London Notebooks* provided much of the material for the *Tribune* articles on India or China and for the concept of the Asiatic form. Yet, because of the lack of direct reference to Jones in his work, few studies have attempted to relate his writings on Asian societies to excerpts from Jones.

However, as many studies have noted, Marx cited a very important sentence from François Bernier’s *Voyage dans les États du Grand Mogol* (1671) in his letter to Engels dated June 2, 1853: “l’état et gouvernement particulier du pays, à savoir que le roi est le seul et unique propriétaire de toutes les terres du royaume”⁸. He thus concluded: “Bernier rightly sees all the manifestations of the East—he mentions Turkey, Persia, and Hindustan—as having a common basis, namely the *absence of private landed property*. This is the real key, even to the eastern heaven.”⁹

Only a month earlier, Marx excerpted some passages from Bernier’s *Voyages*. Kotani, a Japanese historian on India, argues that Bernier’s concept of “the sovereign property of land” was highly influential among Western intellectuals (Montesquieu, Smith, and Hegel, among others).¹⁰ But this concept was politically ideological in nature because Bernier’s aim was to defend landed property for the nobles, which was endangered by Louis XIV’s absolute monarchy. While in Asia, Bernier argued that the soil and agriculture there had

⁷ See Eric J. Hobsbawm: Introduction. In: Karl Marx: Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations. Ed. by id., transl. by Jack Cohen. New York 1965, p. 21.

⁸ Marx to Engels, 2 June 1853. In: MEGA[®] III/6, p. 183 (MECW. Vol. 39, p. 333).

⁹ Marx to Engels, 2 June 1853. In: MECW. Vol. 39, pp. 333/334 (MEGA[®] III/6, p. 183/184).

¹⁰ See Hiroyuki Kotani: Marx to Asia [in Japanese]. Tokyo 1979.

been ruined by the absence of private landed property, while in Europe, private landed property enabled the city to develop and the land to be improved.

“From what I have said, a question will naturally arise, whether it would not be more advantageous for the King as well as for the people, if the former ceased to be sole possessor of the land, and the right of private property were recognized in the Indies as it is with us. I have carefully compared the condition of European states, where that right is acknowledged, with the condition of those countries where it is not known, and am persuaded that the absence of it among the people is injurious to the best interests of the Sovereign himself.”¹¹

Marx did not excerpt this orientalist passage, but quoted the following sentence: “Aussi est ce pour cela (weil kein Privateigentum) que nous voyons ces états asiatiques s’aller ainsi ruinant à vue d’œil si misérablement”.¹² Thus, he summed it up by adding “because of no private property” in German.

As Marx editor Werther insisted in her commentary,¹³ it is remarkable that the excerpts from Jones in 1851 triggered Marx to read Bernier’s book for his study of India. In effect, Marx excerpted Jones’s passage: “Bernier distinctly denies that such a thing as private property in land was known in Persia.”¹⁴ In addition, like Bernier, Jones also focused on the concept of the sovereign property of land by noting that “throughout Asia, the sovereigns have ever been in the possession of an exclusive title to the soil of their dominions, and they have preserved that title in a state of singular and inauspicious integrity, undivided, as well as unimpaired”.¹⁵ According to Kontani, this concept was closely related to the arrangement developed by English rulers, i.e., “Raīyat-warī Settlement”, a double arrangement comprising the sovereign ownership of land and peasants’ hereditary possession of that land. In this context, Marx extracted some passages from Chapter IV of Jones’ *An essay on Ryot Rents*, writing in a mixture of German and English:

“Die ryots besaßen meistens ihre lands in common und were collected into villages under officers of their own, who distributed to the cultivators und tradesmen ihre respective shares des produce. Die village offices und various trades became hereditary. Der Ryot selbst, der actual cultivator, noch weniger als die superior officers

¹¹ François Bernier: *Travels in the Mogul Empire*. A.D. 1656–1668. Transl. by Irving Brock. Westminster 1891, p. 226.

¹² Ute Werther: *Die französischsprachigen Exzerpte in den „Londoner Heften 1850–53“ von Karl Marx (Heft XVI–XXI) (Vorschläge für die Edition)*. Halle 1988, p. 85.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

¹⁴ Karl Marx: Excerpts from Richard Jones: *An essay on the distribution of wealth*. In: MEGA[®] IV/8, p. 629.

¹⁵ Richard Jones: *An essay on the distribution of wealth, and on the sources of taxation*. London 1831, p. 7.

ausgesetzt to be disturbed in the possession of his land. Provided the sovereign’s share des produce was paid, er kein Interesse in disturbing the humble agents of production und sehr grosses Interesse in retaining them.”¹⁶

These passages may help us examine the Asiatic form as it relates to the sovereign property of land and peasants’ possession of that land.

Marx’s Excerpts from Richard Jones and the Asiatic Form

The Asiatic form has two basic features. First, many small communities exist only as hereditary possessors; second, the comprehensive unity (i.e., an autocrat) who stands above these communities is its unique and actual proprietor. If we assume small communities to be “villages under officers” whose members are the *ryots* in Jones’ passage cited above, it must be evident that the notion of the Asiatic form reflects the idea of Raīyatwarī Settlement (sovereign ownership of land and peasants’ possession). In “the many real particular communities,” therefore, “the individual is then in fact property-less”,¹⁷ and “the individual never becomes a proprietor, but only a possessor, he is *au fond* himself the property, the slave of that in which the unity of the commune exists.”¹⁸ The sovereign property of land in the Asiatic form is characterized by this unique concept of slavery, but this idea is derived from Jones’ *An essay*. As Marx noted below, in a mixture of German and English:

“The peasant must have land to till or must starve. The body der nation is therefore in every case dependent upon the great sovereign proprietor for the means of obtaining food. Von dem remainder des people der wichtigste Theil davon, noch abhängiger: they live in the character of soldiers or civilians, on a portion of the revenue collected from the peasants, assigned to them by the bounty of their chief: intermediate and independent classes there are none ...”¹⁹

Pointing out the importance of the *London Notebooks*, Japanese Marx scholar Kokubun²⁰ cited the following sentence (uncited by Marx) that “great and little are literally what they describe themselves to be, the slaves of that master on whose pleasure the means of their subsistence wholly depends”.²¹ This links to a polemic notion of “the general slavery of the Orient” in the Asiatic form.²²

¹⁶ Marx: Excerpts from Richard Jones. MEGA[®] IV/8, p. 627.

¹⁷ Marx: Grundrisse. MECW. Vol. 28, p. 400 (MEGA[®] II/1, p. 380).

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 417 (MEGA[®] II/1, p. 397).

¹⁹ Marx: Excerpts from Richard Jones. MEGA[®] IV/8, pp. 626/627.

²⁰ See Kou Kokubun: Despotism and the conception of Association [in Japanese]. Tokyo 1998.

²¹ Jones: An essay on the distribution of wealth (Fn. 15), p. 113.

²² Marx: Grundrisse. MECW. Vol. 28, p. 419 (MEGA[®] II/1, p. 399).

Note that we must not identify propertyless individuals owned by the autocrat with propertyless wage-labor in modern capitalist society, with its loss of all objective conditions (i.e., means of production, land, and instruments etc.) and its exclusion from the community. This is because, as Marx stated, “slavery here [in the Asiatic form] neither suspends the conditions of labor nor modifies the essential relation,” which refers to “original property”.²³ In sum, individuals in the Asiatic form relate to each other as possessors as long as they belong to their community. Moreover, the “property”, which is apparently distinguished from the “possession”, ended up being transferred to the propertyless individuals by the autocrat (the unique actual proprietor) through their community.

While in the Asiatic form the individual “relates to the others as co-proprietors, as so many incarnations of the common property,” in modern bourgeois society, the thing [die Sache] becomes “the true community”, and for the individual “the making of his generality and commonness” through exchanges of things (i.e., commodity and money) “has become the means with which he posits himself as individual”.²⁴ Although in the Asiatic form the autocrat is the sole proprietor, in particular communities under such an autocrat, the individuals relate to each other as possessors. Thus, through property transfer from the autocrat, they relate to each other as common proprietors. In other words, this common property (i.e., original property) underlies the Asiatic form in contrast to the real propertylessness of modern society. In fact, Marx summarized this basic feature of Oriental society to emphasize original property in the Asiatic form:

“Amidst oriental despotism and the propertylessness which seems juridically to exist there, this clan or communal property exists in fact as the foundation, created mostly by a combination of manufacture and agriculture within the small commune, which thus becomes altogether self-sustaining, and contains all the conditions of reproduction and surplus production within itself.”²⁵

Since, in the Asiatic form, surplus products in particular communities are legally reverted to the autocrat, individuals appear to be propertyless. However, in fact an individual, i.e., “the commune member is [...] as such, a co-possessor of the communal property.”²⁶ Particular communities enable individuals to act as “original proprietors.” Therefore, there is a crucial difference

²³ Ibid., p. 417 (MEGA[®] II/1, p. 397).

²⁴ Ibid., p. 420 (MEGA[®] II/1, p. 400).

²⁵ Ibid., p. 400 (MEGA[®] II/1, p. 380).

²⁶ Ibid., p. 404 (MEGA[®] II/1, p. 383).

between real propertylessness in modern society and the apparent propertylessness in the Asiatic form.

In addition, it is important to note that original property under the sovereign property of land in the Asiatic form presupposes the unity of manufacture and agriculture inside communities. Due to the perfect self-sustaining circle of production and reproduction in Asiatic communities, there is no private property in the Roman or Germanic sense. “What exists is only communal property, and only private possession”²⁷. Also in his article *The British Rule in India* (*Tribune*, 25 June 1853) and in his letter to Engels dated June 14, 1853, Marx described the concept of village community as a self-sustaining system of the unified manufacture and agriculture within communities.

“The Hindoo, on the one hand, leaving, like all Oriental peoples, to the central government the care of the great public works, the prime condition of his agriculture and commerce, dispersed, on the other hand, over the surface of the country, and agglomerated in small centers by the domestic union of agricultural and manufacturing pursuits [...] the so-called village-system, which gave to each of these small unions their independent organization and distinct life [...] Those family-communities were based on domestic industry, in that peculiar combination of hand-weaving, hand-spinning and hand-tilling agriculture which gave them self-supporting power.”²⁸

“In some of these communities the lands of the village cultivated in common, in most of them each occupant tills his own field. Within the same, slavery and the caste system. Waste lands for common pasture. [...] No more solid basis for Asiatic despotism and stagnation is, I think, conceivable. And however much the English may have Irelandised the country, the breaking up of the archetypal forms was the *conditio sine qua non* for Europeanisation. The tax-gatherer alone could not have brought this about. Another essential factor was the destruction of the ancient industries, which robbed these villages of their self-supporting character.”²⁹

Of course, many studies have claimed that Jones did not adopt the concept of village community. However, *London Notebook 22* with excerpts from Robert Patton’s *The principles of Asiatic monarchies* (1801), Mark Wilks’s *Historical Sketches of the South of India etc.* (1810–17), Thomas Stamford Raffles’s *History of Java* (1817), and George Campbell’s *Modern India* (1852) led Marx to his conception of the village community. MEGA[®] researchers in the 1980s have examined many of the relevant materials in this area, such as *Tribune* articles, letters, and source books, including *Notebooks 21–23*.³⁰

²⁷ Ibid., p. 404 (MEGA[®] II/1, p. 384).

²⁸ Marx: *The British Rule in India*. In: MEGA[®] I/12, pp. 171/172.

²⁹ Marx to Engels, 14 June 1853. In: MECW. Vol. 39, p. 347 (MEGA[®] III/6, p. 199).

The Deepening of Marx's Critique of Capitalism after *Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations*

As noted in the previous section, the Asiatic form comprises a complete self-sustaining production and reproduction system within communities. Because “the oriental supplementation of agriculture with manufactures”³¹ remains in the Asiatic form, the loss of an “objective and economic bond with the community” is hardly possible “except by means of altogether external influences”³². In stark contrast to Roman or Germanic forms of community, Marx emphasized that this bond “is rooted to the spot, ingrown” in the Asiatic form, and “the Asiatic form has necessarily persisted most tenaciously and for the longest time”.³³

In order to consider the meaning of “external influences” and “the necessity of persistence”, the *Tribune* articles of the 1850s should be examined. In late 1850s (in particular, during the economic crisis of 1857), Marx was confronted with the resistance of village communities in India and China (e.g., the Arrow War and the Indian Rebellion), which allowed him to develop the perspective for a critique of modern capitalism. Most crucially, Marx changed his model from the simple notion of “village communities” in his 1853 articles on India to that of “original property” in *Grundrisse*.

It is true that both notions have much in common, in that there is no private property in self-supporting Asiatic communities based on unified manufacture and agriculture. However, the *Grundrisse* makes no mention of “semi-barbarian, semi-civilized communities” in Asiatic societies being “contaminated by distinctions of caste and by slavery”.³⁴ Furthermore, Marx understood “oriental despotism” not as historical “stagnation” but as the most logically distant “necessity” from capitalism. With respect to his concrete recognition of the facts, Marx in 1853 said that in India “the municipal organization and the economical basis of village communities has been broken up”,³⁵ but in the articles *The Anglo-Chinese Treaty* (*Tribune*, 5 October 1858) and *Trade with China*

³⁰ See Wolfgang Rein. Die Indienexzerpte im Heft XXII der „Londoner Hefte 1850–53“ von Karl Marx. PhD Thesis, University of Halle-Wittenberg 1988; Werther: Die französischsprachigen Exzerpte in den „Londoner Heften 1850–53“ (Fn. 12); and more recently Lucia Pradella: Globalization and the Critique of Political Economy: New Insights from Marx's Writings. London 2015, p. 116.

³¹ Marx: Grundrisse. MECW. Vol. 28, p. 418 (MEGA[®] II/1, p. 398).

³² Ibid. (MEGA[®] II/1, p. 398.)

³³ Ibid., p. 410 (MEGA[®] II/1, p. 391).

³⁴ Marx: The British Rule in India. MEGA[®] I/12, pp. 172/173.

³⁵ Karl Marx: The Future Results of British Rule in India. In: MEGA[®] I/12, p. 250.

(*Tribune*, 3 December 1859) after *Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations*, he noted the following:

“With the present economical framework of Chinese society, which turns upon diminutive agriculture and domestic manufactures as its pivots, any large import of foreign produce is out of the question.”³⁶

“we found the main obstacle to any sudden expansion of the import trade to China in the economical structure of Chinese society, depending upon the combination of minute agriculture with domestic industry [...] It is this same combination of husbandry with manufacturing industry, which, for a long time, withstood, and still checks, the export of British wares to East India; but there that combination was based upon a peculiar constitution of the landed property which the British, in their position as the supreme landlords of the country, had it in their power to undermine, and thus forcibly convert part of the Hindoo self-sustaining communities into mere farms, producing opium, cotton, indigo, hemp, and other raw materials, in exchange for British stuffs. In China the English have not yet wielded this power, nor are they likely ever to do so.”³⁷

As Marx notes in the second quote, the self-sustaining communities still remained in part in East India, although the British undermined Indian landed property and transformed the organization of production in India into mere farming subsumed under English large-scale industry. Because of this, Marx withdrew his recognition in 1853 and emphasized the possibility of resistance by Indian communities. Moreover, Chinese communities, Marx claims, were more firmly based on the unification of minute agriculture with domestic industry than Indian ones, thereby the English were not likely ever to destroy this arrangement. This meant that Marx considered the self-supporting production of Asiatic communities as the antithesis of “reification” (i.e., commodity or money) by focusing on practical relationships in India and China as well as on differences of the impact of British rule on both.

The Manuscript of *Capital*, Volume 3 on Chinese Communities

Kevin Anderson also suggests that Marx deepened his critique of capitalism in *Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations*, but he didn’t refer to the 1858/59 *Tribune* articles on China, where Marx emphasized the vitality of village communities. Above all, *Correspondence Relative to Lord Elgin’s Special Missions to China and Japan* (1857–1859) including *Mr. Mitchell to Sir G. Bon-*

³⁶ Karl Marx: The Anglo-Chinese Treaty. In: MECW. Vol. 16, p. 28.

³⁷ Karl Marx: Trade with China. In: MEGA[®] I/18, pp. 18–21.

ham (1852), cited in *Trade with China*, concretely illustrated Marx's conception of "diminutive agriculture and domestic manufactures" in China. In this *Blue Book*, Elgin paraphrased Mitchell, noting "The Fuh-kien farmer is thus not merely a farmer, but an agriculturist and a manufacturer in one", and thus concluded that "for the most part, they [farmers] hold their lands, which are of very limited extent, in full property from the Crown, subject to certain annual charges of no very exorbitant amount, and that these advantages, improved by assiduous industry, supply abundantly their simple wants, whether in respect of food or clothing."³⁸ Thus, again in the manuscript of *Capital*, Volume 3 Marx referred to the *Blue Book* and attached the following newspaper cutting as a footnote, which he cited and summarized in *Trade with China*:

"*Mitchell (Elgin Blue Book)* [...] Mr. Mitchell says:—'A coat (to suit a working Chinaman) must contain at least three times the weight of raw cotton which we put into the heaviest goods we export to China: that is to say it would be three times as heavy as the heaviest drills and domestics we can afford to send out here: no doubt we could supply this country with goods as heavy and durable as their own, or as they require them, but whether we could do so as cheaply as they produce them for themselves, will presently appear. The best mode of illustrating the question will be by a single example taken from the province with which I am best acquainted, that of Fuh-Kien, and I would beg to direct the particular attention of the Board of Trade to the beautiful and simple economy of it, an economy which renders the system literally impregnable against all the assaults of foreign competition.'"³⁹

However, in his editing, Engels omitted this passage and another footnote stating, "It can be seen from Abel, etc., that in China too this was the original form, based on a communism that arose spontaneously (although this was itself formed over the course of a long historical process)."⁴⁰ Thus, few studies note the direct connection between *Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations*, including the 1858/59 *Tribune* articles on China, and the manuscript of *Capital*, Volume 3.⁴¹ In the footnotes to *Capital*, Book 3, Part IV, Chapter XX, "Historical Sketches About Merchant's Capital", Marx argues that "the obstacles that the internal solidity and articulation of earlier national modes of production oppose

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

³⁹ Karl Marx: Economic Manuscript of 1864–1865. Transl. by Ben Fowkes, ed. by Fred Moseley. Leiden, Boston 2015, p. 440 (MEGA[®] II/4.2, pp. 407/408). All modifications in the translation from Fowkes by S. S.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 439 (MEGA[®] II/4.2, p. 407).

⁴¹ Japanese historian Tanaka focused on this connection, while emphasizing "simple commodity production" in China from a different theoretical perspective from that assumed in this paper. See Masatoshi Tanaka: An introduction to the study of modern economic history of China [in Japanese]. Tokyo 1973, p. 187.

to the solvent effect of trade are strikingly apparent in England’s commercial relationships with India and China, etc.”⁴² In short, as in *Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations*, he emphasizes that “the combination of minute agriculture with domestic industry” in Asiatic communities was an obstacle to foreign products. In fact, he added these footnotes to the following passage:

“In India, the English applied their direct political and economic power, as masters and landlords, to destroying these small economic communities. In so far as English trade has had a revolutionary effect on the mode of production in India, this is simply to the extent that it has destroyed spinning and weaving, which form an age-old integral part of this unity of industrial and agricultural production, through the cheapness (and the underselling) of English commodities. In this way it has turn the community to pieces. Even here, their work of dissolution is succeeding only very gradually. These effects are felt still less in China, where no assistance is provided by direct political power. The great economy and saving of time that results from the direct connection of agriculture to manufacture presents a very stubborn resistance here to the products of large-scale industry [...] In contrast to English trade, Russian trade leaves the economic basis of Asiatic production quite untouched.”⁴³

In the 1859 *Tribune* articles on China and also in the manuscript of *Capital*, Volume 3, Marx argued that English colonialism hadn’t yet succeeded in destroying Indian self-supporting communities; he also argued that the unity of agriculture and manufacture remained firmly entrenched in China, which the British could not directly rule. In the so-called “Transition Debate”, which disputed *Capital*, Volume 3, Chapter XX, Dobb and Brenner also insisted that unlike Western Europe, India and China were not amenable to the capitalist mode of production at the time because the solvent effect of trade alone was not sufficient for the formal and real subsumption of the production process under capital.⁴⁴ So, it seems natural to conclude that the notion of the Asiatic form and the development of Marx’s critique of capitalism after *Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations* played a critical role in his critique of political economy in *Capital*.

⁴² Marx: Economic Manuscript of 1864–1865 (Fn. 39), p. 439 (MEGA[®] II/4.2, p. 407).

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 439/440 (MEGA[®] II/4.2, p. 407).

⁴⁴ See Maurice Dobb: *Studies in the Development of Capitalism*. London 1946; Robert Brenner: *The Agrarian Roots of European Capitalism*. In: *The Brenner Debate*. Ed. by T. H. Aston and C. H. E. Philpin. London 1985.

Conclusion

The first half of this paper described the relationship between the Asiatic form and the London Excerpts from Jones by illuminating Marx's acceptance of sovereign landed property. However, further examination of all materials on Asiatic communities remains to be conducted. The latter half of this paper highlighted the growing importance of the concepts of village community and original property to Marx after 1857, when he deepened his critique of colonialism in *Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations*. Anderson also notes that Marx developed a new model for social revolution in pre-capitalist social formation through "the multilinear theory of history", which was carved out in the *Grundrisse*. As noted by Anderson, "His hopes centered on the communal social forms of the villages of India and Russia, which he saw as possible new loci of resistance to capital."⁴⁵

Linder, however, criticized this perspective for undervaluing Marx's articles on India in late 1850s, which still absolutized the development model of the West. Lindner argued that it is not until Marx studied Ireland in the 1860s that he broke from Eurocentrism.⁴⁶ However, if we take into account Marx's theoretical evolution after *Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations* and his 1858/59 *Tribune* articles on China in particular, we can easily disprove Linder's argument. It is true that from the positivist perspective, Marx's 1850s articles on India and China were very far from a precise analysis of Asian societies. This is because Marx only projected on the Asian societies the self-supposing communities that had already been dissolved in Western Europe. Yet, it should be noted that Marx in *Grundrisse* not only transformed his development model of social formation from unilinearism into multilinearism, but also focused on the self-sustaining system of production and reproduction within "village communities" against "reification" (i.e., commodity or money), thus redefining so-called "Asiatic stagnation" as "structurally at the furthest remove from modern capitalism".⁴⁷ Furthermore, in the manuscript of *Capital*, Volume 3, the portrayals of Asiatic communities (especially Chinese ones) was central to Marx's critique of political economy because these self-supporting communities posed a very strong resistance to capitalist production.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Anderson: Marx at the Margins (Fn. 3), p. 3.

⁴⁶ Lindner: Eurozentrismus bei Marx (Fn. 2), pp. 106/107.

⁴⁷ Anderson: Marx at the Margins (Fn. 3), p. 159.

⁴⁸ This paper is a part of the outcome of research performed under a Hitotsubashi University Grant for proofreading.