Preface

This book arises out of my doctoral dissertation, entitled *Marx's Views on India : Sociological Appraisal of the 'Asiatic' Mode of Production,* which was submitted in June 1986 to the Department of Sociology at McMaster University in Canada. Although the current literature on the theory of the 'Asiatic' mode of production (AMP) is quite vast, to date there is no systematic study which focuses *simultaneously* on the methodological and theoretical aspects of Marx's theory of the Asiatic mode, and on its empirical validity within the historical context of the Indian social experience. The latter aspect is crucial because Marx's theory was based mostly on India. From this standpoint, the sole aim of this work is to fill in this characteristic void in the contemporary literature.

In this connection it is necessary to clarify my own position as a Marxist. Throughout this work my position remains that of an independent Marxist thinker who espouses this motto : *De omnibus dubitandum* (*Doubt everything*). True to its spirit, I never willfully ignored or suppressed the error's of Marx's writings but identified and criticized them when necessary. I did this from within the methodological and theoretical framework of dialectical and historical materialism. It will be clear to the readers that my position vastly differs from the conventional one that invariably centres around revising the 'Asiatic' mode in such a way as to make it more acceptable than that would be the case in its original Marxian form. I start from the premise that there is no place for fideism or idolatry in 'rational' knowledge which is always cumulative. By critically evaluating Marx's theory of the AMP I believe, I have only taken that liberty which scientific Marxism promises and guarantees. To do this, is to pay real tribute to the work of Karl Marx.

No endeavour such as the present one is possible without the assistance of many other individuals. Therefore, I like to thank, first of all, my supervisor, Prof. Cyril Levitt of the Department of Sociology at McMaster University, for granting me the

necessary intellectual freedom, although we disagreed virtually on every point as far as the dissertation was concerned. I acknowledge respectfully my debt to Prof. Krishna Sivaraman of Religious Studies Department at the same University. It was indeed by good fortune to have had the benefit of his material help and wise and subtle counsel. I am especially appreciative of the fact that he not only tolerated my Marxist arguments but also stood by me when I needed his help most. I should especially name Michael Anthony Gismondi, to whom I owe the most sincere debt. He has given me all sorts of material and intellectual support that a person frantically needs while doing an anti-establishment work within the milieu of "neo-materialist Orientalism". He was the only person among my so many friends who rose above what I have called "materialist Orientalism" in this book. I would like to express my sincere appreciation and gratitude to two of my teachers, Dr. Buddhadev Bhattacharyya (Surendranath Banerjee Professor of Political Science, Calcutta University) and Dr. Bela Dutt Gupta (formerly Shyamaprasad Mukherjee, Professor of Sociology, Calcutta University) for their valuable suggestions, support and encourgement. I am grateful to my parents for their abiding faith in my ability to bring this to a successful conclusion. I sincerety thank Sri S. K. Bhattacharya of Punthi Pustak for publishing my manuscript. I dedicate this book to my loving husband and best friend Bipul, without whose love, sacrifice, patience and unfailing support for all my unconventional ways this work would never have seen the daylight.

Finally, in spite of every careful efforts, some mistakes still remain in the book, although I have provided an errata list. I sincerely request my readers to excuse me for them.

Calcutta
April 1989

Bula Bhadra

Abbreviations

AA	*Acta Asiatica*
ABORI	*Annals of Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*
AH	*Agricultural History*
AO	*Archiv Orientālni*
AQ	*Australian Quarterly*
ATS	*Asian Thought and Society*
BCAS	*Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*
CA	*Critique of Anthropology*
CIS	*Contributions to Indian Sociology*
CSSH	*Comparative Studies in Society and History*
DA	*Dialectical Anthropology*
EPW	*Economic and Political Weekly*
ES	*Economy and Society*
EW	*Economic Weekly*
HIST	*History Today*
HT	*History and Theory*
IC	*Indian Culture*
IEJ	*Indian Economic Journal*
IESHR	*Indian Economic and Social History Review*
IHCP	*Indian History Congress Proceedings*
IHQ	*Indian Historical Quarterly*
IHR	*Indian Historical Review*
IS	*Insurgent Sociologist*
ISSJ	*International Social Science Journal*
JAAS	*Journal of Asian and African Studies*
JAHRS	*Journal of Andhra Historical Research Society*
JASB	*Journal of the Asiatic Society,* Bombay

JASC	*Journal of the Asiatic Society,* Calcutta
JBRS	*Journal of Bihar Research Society*
JCA	*Journal of Contemporary Asia*
JDS	*Journal of Development Studies*
JEH	*Journal of Economic History*
JESHO	*Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*
JHI	*Journal of the History of Ideas*
JIH	*Journal of the Indian History*
JISCS	*Journal of Indo-Soviet Cultural Society*
JKU	*Journal of the Karnataka University*
JMH	*Journal of Modern History*
JPS	*Journal of Peasant Studies*
JRASGI	*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society,* Great Britain and Ireland
JUH	*Journal of Urban History*
JWCI	*Journal of the Warburg and Courtald Institute*
MAS	*Modern Asian Studies*
MR	*Monthly Review*
NLR	*New Left Review*
PA	*Pacific Affairs*
PP	*Past & Present*
PS	*Political Studies*
RMES	*Review of Middle East Studies*
RP	*Review of Politics*
RRPE	*Review of Radical Political Economics*
SA	*Sociological Analysis*
SAA	*Soviet Anthropology and Archaeology*
SC	*Society and Change*
SCO	*Social Compass*
SR	*Sociological Review*
SS	*Science and Societya*

SSH	*Soviet Studies in History*
SSP	*Social Science Probings*
TLS	*Times Literary Supplement*
TS	*Theory and Society*

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1 INTRODUCTION

We attempt to categorise world history in Marxist terms, let us remember, not for the gratuitous acquisition of knowledge, and not, one hopes, in blind obedience to 'the devotional element in such categorisations', but, as Marx himself did, because 'we understand the world better by so doing, so that we can change it'. That, surely, is the bedrock upon which our analysis must rest.[1]

I. Purpose of the Study

For more than two thousand years India, along with a constellation of ideas pertaining to it, has been part of what Embree calls "the intellectual tradition of the Western World."[2] Karl Marx (1818-1883), one of the grandmasters of Sociology, is certainly one of those who contributed to the growth of this intellectual tradition. From the 1850s he started writing on India with two objectives in mind : one, the assessment of the role of British imperialism in colonial India ; second, and more importantly, the construction of an empirical and logical antecedent and direct opposite in India or, for that matter, the Orient/Asia of any or all of the modes of production (e.g. ancient, Germanic, feudal and capitalist) that originated in Europe (or synonymously the Occident/West). Thus, Marx compares and contrasts his "Asiatic" mode of production (hereafter AMP), which is based mainly on his views on India, not only with the capitalist mode of production, which was the chief object of his analysis, but also with the ancient and feudal modes of production inasmuch as they were the empirical and logical antecedents of the capitalist mode of production (hereafter CMP).[3]

In any case, Marx's interest in the Indian social formation did not disappear later and this was evident in his continual discussions of and references to India in such works as the

Grundrisse (1857-8) and *Capital* (1867) in particular. In the last few years of his life, mainly between 1879 and 1882, India and the AMP figured prominently again in his studies on Ethnology.[4] As Levitt correctly points out : "The fact that he spent so much time during his last years researching matters related to the AMP is a good indication, however, that this topic continued to occupy his thoughts."[5] Tokei goes so far as to say that without the theory of the AMP "it is difficult to imagine how *Capital* could have been written at all, particularly if we bear in mind Marx's scholarly care, which, it is well known, did not rest until all important loose ends were pursued to the end. The concept of the Asiatic mode of production is an organic part of the theory of *Capital*."[6] That is as it may be, but it is worthwhile to explore the different dimensions of, and investigate manifold issues involved in, Marx's views on India—views on the basis of which in the main Marx formulated his theory of the AMP. Accordingly, the primary objective of this work is to attempt a critical assessment as much of his views on India as of his theory of the AMP *per se* from his own methodological and theoretical point of view. What is at stake here is thus a judicious evaluation of the methodological, theoretical, and empirical validity of the AMP. Stated in the terms of a problematic, the present work seeks to resolve this following central issue : *How far and to what extent can Marx's theory of the AMP be justified and upheld methodologically and theoretically, on the one hand, and empirically, on the other, on the basis of the concrete experience of the Indian social formation from about the rise of the Indus civilization (2500/2300 B.C.—1750/1500 B.C.) to the first consolidation of the Muslim rule in 1206 A.D.?*[7] Before elaborating any further the objectives of this work, let me briefly review the intellectual origins of Marx's theory of the AMP as well as the contemporary assessments thereon.[8]

II. The Genealogy of Marx's Theory of the AMP : A Review of the Different Aspects of the Indian Social Formation and its Peoples

The origins of the theory of AMP can be traced to what was known as Oriental despotism in the West since the time of Herodotus (c. 480 B.C.-425 B.C.). The three interrelated components comprising Oriental despotism and eventually Marx's

AMP were these : the despotic character of the monarchy, the absence of private property in land, and the stationary nature of the social formations in the East. Of these the first one is the oldest, going back to the days of Herodotus, who saw "the struggle between Persia and Greece as a confrontation between East and West, between despotism and freedom, between the Asian spirit and the European spirit."[9] Whether fortuitous or not, it is important to note that the concept of despotism, as opposed to liberty, was associated *ab origine* with the East or Orient.[10] But it was Aristotle (384 B.C.-322 B.C.) who first systematized the distinction between the political institutions of the Occident and Orient.

> Barbarians, being more servile in character than Hellenes, and Asiatics than Europeans, do not rebel against a despotic government. Such royalties have the nature of tyrannies because the people are by nature slaves ; but there is no danger of their being overthrown, for they are hereditary and legal.[11]

This concept of a servile populace being ruled over by an arbitrary government became subsequently a commonplace category for characterizing the nature of both politics and the peoples in the Eastern social formations. Marx was doubtlessly one who uncritically accepted this primary Aristotelian characterization.[12]

Megasthenes, a Greek ambassador, came to the royal court of Chandragupta Maurya (c. 320 B.C.-297 B.C.) at Pāṭaliputra in about 302 B.C. He directly questioned the thesis of despotism of the Indian king and the accompanying servility of the (Indian) masses. In particular, he asserted that "no Indian was a slave."[13] What is, however, more important is that Megasthenes was the first to suggest the absence of private property in India—an assertion that became the *conditio sine qua non* of Marx's AMP. But Megasthenes made this assertion "in an almost casual way", and he also claimed that in India "there was no private ownership of such royal beasts as elephants and horses."[14] At any rate, these twin assumptions—Oriental despotism and the absence of private ownership of land—became an integral component of the first principles among successive generations of European scholars, who sought to specify and illustrate in one way or another the differential character of the Oriental social formations and their peoples.[15] When Aristotle's *Politics*

was translated into Latin in the 13th century, it provided a necessary intellectual, if not ideological, support and incentive. Further in the 14th century, the idea of Oriental despotism became linked to the idea of the absence of private landed property in the Orient.[16] Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527), while not directly dealing with the Aristotelian concept of Oriental despotism, developed a distinction between principalities with hereditary nobility and those with service nobility. The later category, where the Prince was the absolute master, was exemplified by the kingdoms in Persia and Turkey.[17] Jean Bodin (1529/1530-1596) classified monarchies into three categories : royal, tyrannical, and despotic. The last one, which he then found existing in Asia, Ethiopia and such parts of Europe as ruled by the kings of Tartary and Muscovy, is characterized as follows :

> Despotic monarchy is one in which the prince is lord and master of both the possessions and the persons of his subjects by right of conquest in a just war ; he governs his subjects as absolutely as the head of a household governs his slaves. . . . The reason why despotic monarchy is more lasting than the others is that it is the most authoritative. The lives, the goods, and the liberty of the subjects are at the absolute disposal of the prince who has conquered them in a just war. This greatly discourages unruliness in the subject. As with slaves, awareness of their condition makes them humble, timid, 'servile' as they say.[18]

The unrealistic derivation of despotism following from conquest, or resulting in the propertylessness of the subjects, was an idea to be echoed later by many of Bodin's successors including Marx. The tenets of Oriental despotism came to be almost uniformly confirmed and strengthened as various accounts, reports, memoirs, dispatches, etc. from the colonial officials travellers, merchants, or missionaries began to accumulate from the 17th century onwards in the wake of the rise, expansion and consolidation of European imperialism in the non-European regions of the world.

Sir Thomas Roe, an English ambassador to the court of the Mughal King Jahangir (1605-1627), stayed in India between 1615 and 1619. He claimed that all land within his realm belonged to the Mughal king.[19] Niccolao Mannucci, a Venetian traveller who came to India in the 1650s, asserted the following in no uncertain terms :

> The Hindu government is the most tyrannical and barbarous imaginable because, all the rajahs or kings being foreigners, they treat their subjects worse than if they were slaves. All land belongs to the Crown ; no individual has as his own a field, or estate, or any property whatever, that he can bequeath to his children.[20]

Jean Tavernier (1605-1689), a French merchant who visited India between the 1640s and 1660s, parrotted the same theme. "The Great Mogul is certainly the most powerful and the richest monarch in Asia ; all the kingdoms which he possesses are his domain, he being the absolute master of all the country, of which he receives the whole revenue."[21] Francois Bernier (1620-1688), a French physician who served for eight years in the 1660s as a physician in Mughal India, was the most influential of all who directly influenced Marx in the formulation of his AMP. While more will be said later, suffice it to say here that Bernier basically stressed two points : the absolute ownership of the Mughal king over all lands within his kingdom, and the basically unstable character of Indian cities and towns.[22]

All these ideas reappeared in the 18th century, as they did also in the 19th century. However, they did not reappear in the same fashion. The new development in their further popularization and publicity was that those ideas were now given a methodological and theoretical rigor that was absent earlier. Correspondingly they were methodologically and theoretically so elaborated as to constitute, and to pass off, what was conceived directly or indirectly as "scientific knowledge" concerning the Orient and its peoples. In the forefront of this intellectual movement was, among others, Montesquieu (1689-1755). He inherited, as Anderson aptly remarks, "from his predecessors the basic axioms that Asiatic states lacked stable private property or a hereditary nobility and were therefore arbitrary and tyrannical in character—views which he repeated with all the lapidary force peculiar to him."[23] Leaving details for treatment elsewhere, let me state here that it was Montesquieu who, for the first time, systematically utilized the geographical divide between the Occident and Orient to account for their differential sociopolitical developments. The role assigned to geographical determinism in Montesquieu was such that he practically heralded the tendency to transform the geographical entities (the Orient or Occi-

dent), as it were, into epistemological and ontological categories for purposes of their differential political characterization. Thus, Montesquieu asserted with overtones of definitiveness that "there reigns in Asia a servile spirit, which they have never been able to shake off."[24] Another point he drew attention to was the essential stability of Oriental social formations. This theme of social stationariness became repeated and expanded, sometimes *ad absurdum,* by many others, including especially Hegel and Marx. All in all the enormous importance of Montesquieu consists in the fact that his viewpoint, although contested by a few, was "generally accepted by the age, and became a central legacy for political economy and philosophy thereafter."[25]

Of the political economists who especially contributed to situating Oriental despotism on the solid foundations of economy and ultimately added distinctive economic dimensions to the developing geographical hiatus between the East and West, the three most important were Adam Smith (1723-1790), James Mill (1773-1836), and Richard Jones (1790-1885)—all of whom exercised varying degrees of influence in the making of Marx's AMP. Smith not only gave classical political economy its "distinct form" but also exercised a "formidable impact" on the analysis of Indian colonial economy and on the enforcement of particular economic policies in regard to it.[26] For him "there existed a distinctive Asiatic political economy."[27] Its differentiating feature consisted of the facts that the Oriental state was the owner of landed property, that it was the recipient of land tax or rent, and that it was obliged, as a natural corollary, to undertake hydraulic works for the development of agriculture in the Asiatic social formations.[28] Likewise, many of the basic postulates of Marx's AMP (e.g. the absence of private property in land, the despotic nature of the indigenous administration, etc.) may be discovered in James Mill's *History of British India* (1818) (hereafter *History*). What is characteristic in Mill is that he displayed the most virulent form of aggressive intolerance toward anything Indian, especially Hindu. "Wherever he turned his eye, Mill found Hindu society to be wanting."[29] Although the organizing categories of his economic analysis were claimed to have universal applicability, yet he began "from the premise that the civilization of India was radically different from (and indeed inferior to) that of Western Europe."[30]

To Mill, the nature of the government of the Hindus was indisputably despotic. Their manners, institutions, and attainments remained stationary for ages.[31] For him, obviously this subsumed the lack of development of feudal political institutions.

> Among the Hindus, according to the Asiatic model, the government was monarchical, and with the usual exception of religion and its ministers, absolute. No idea of any system of rule, different from the will of a single person, appears to have entered the minds of them, or their legislators. . . . Should we say that the civilization of the people of Hindustan, and that of the people of Europe, during the feudal ages, are not far from equal, we shall find upon a close inspection, that the Europeans were superior, in the first place, notwithstanding the vices of the papacy, in religion ; and, notwithstanding the defects of the schoolmen, in philosophy. They were greatly superior, notwithstanding the defects in the feudal system, in the institutions of government and in laws.[32]

Mill also incorporated in his *History* the same passage from the *Fifth Report* (1812) which was time and again quoted by others, including Marx. The passage concerned identifies India with only politically and economically self-sufficient villages that were at the same time alleged to have remained unchanged for all time.[33] However, it was Jones who advanced the argument of the unity of agriculture and industry in the village economy—an argument which Marx supported in his *Capital.*[34] This concept of the unity of agriculture and industry was regarded by Marx as the *causa sine qua non* of the absence of private landed property or of the continued socioeconomic intertia in India. Jones's assertion that "the peasantry in India lived in a state of natural communism in small communities" bears striking resemblance to Marx's depiction of the AMP as reflecting "primitive communism" in his scheme of the stages of human social development.[35]

In other essentials as well there remained a fundamental likeness in the views of Marx and Jones. Montesquieu drew on the data provided by, among others, Bernier. Jones, on his part, depended on both of them.[36] It was thus no surprise that Jones came to subscribe to the same age-old postulates of the absence of private property in land, the presence of despotism, or the instability of the cities and towns in India or, for that matter, Asia.[37]

> 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. *The people are there universally the tenants of the sovereign, who is the sole proprietor ;* usurpations of his offices alone occasionally break the links of the chain of dependence for a time. It is this universal dependence on the throne for the means of supporting life, which is the real foundation of *the unbroken despotism of the Eastern world,* as it is of the revenue of the sovereigns, and of the form which society assumes beneath their feet.[38]

Finally, I should refer to G. W. F. Hegel (1770-1831) whose influence on Marx needs no emphasis.[39] While more will be said in this regard in chapters 6 and 8, it suffices here to mention that Hegel regarded India's despotism as "the most arbitrary, wicked, degrading despotism."[40] At the same time, according to him, India lacked any mechanism of internal change and development. In such circumstances India remained "stationary" and perpetuated "a natural vegetative existence", at least up to the time of the rise of British colonial rule.[41]

It goes without saying that, besides those briefly reviewed here, there are many others, including a good number of British colonial officials, who contributed to the development of the literature on Oriental despotism and who also simultaneously influenced the Marxian formulation of the AMP. When necessary, a number of them will be recalled in relevant places of this book in further illustration of the intellectual antecedents of the AMP.

III. From Oriental Despotism to the Asiatic Mode of Production : A Review of Contemporary Findings

The propositions that developed over the years as ingredients of Oriental despotism were conceptualized by Marx into what is known in the relevant literature as the Asiatic Mode of Production. This term (i.e. the "Asiatic Mode of Production") was used by Marx at least on two occasions, first in the 'Preface' to his *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859) and then in his *Capital* (1867). In the latter he speaks of "the ancient Asiatic ... mode of production."[42] In Marx's conceptualization the notions of the absence of private ownership

of land, the stationary character of the socioeconomic formation, and the class-transcending despotic state were conjoined to, integrated with, or grounded on, a number of other elements such as the communal/state ownership of land, the unity of handicrafts industry and agriculture within a nature-determined division of labour, the absence of commodity production and trade, the lack of antagonism between town and country, and so forth. Marx's theory of the AMP, whose major components are described below, took its form over "a period of thirty years, beginning with his newspaper articles of the 1850s, extending through his critiques of political economy, and culminating in his correspondence and ethnological research of the last years of his life."[43] Even then, it has been asserted by many that Marx never systematically expounded his theory of the AMP.[44] Taylor writes : "As opposed to his analysis of the capitalist mode of production and his brief formulations on the feudal mode, Marx nowhere constructs the concept of the Asiatic mode in terms of the theory of modes of production he develops in *Capital.*"[45] However, this may not be considered in absolute terms. Tokei powerfully argues that "Marx's views on the Asiatic mode of production were not based on superficial hunches or occasional and unrelated attempts at formulations. *These views were on the contrary well formulated and disgusted.* They found their organic place within the Marxian political economy and theory of history."[46] Since the major constituents of the theory of the AMP continued to be espoused, or were not implicitly abandoned by him, Marx's "theory" remained complete and, as such, was not modified or changed even towards the end of his life.[47]

As evident from the above, the researches and debates around the AMP in general or around its methodological and theoretical validity and empirical relevance in particular have fortunately shown no signs of abatement.[48] The AMP has caused and is still continuing to cause lively and productive discussions in all major areas of social science, such as in Anthropology, Sociology, History, and Political Science. The debate on the AMP received special attention in view of the Russian (1917) and the Chinese (1949) Revolutions, on the one hand, and the rise of independent nation states especially in Asia and Africa after they gained independence from European colonial powers, on the other. Even in the Soviet Union, where the theory

of the AMP was "authoritatively removed from the Soviet-Marxist theoretical cannon", the debates and discussions on it became quite considerable in the late 1960s and early 1970s.[49] In the same way Marx's AMP has continued to remain a focal point in the debates and discussions on socioeconomic development in the newly arisen nation states, constituting what is popularly known as the Third World. Specifically speaking, in the area of Sociology of Development the contemporary endeavours to understand and pinpoint the causes of underdevelopment of the Third World social formations at their economic, political, and other institutional levels have necessitated fresh reapprisals of Marx's own views on the over-all social conditions which existed in these social formations prior to their colonization.[50] Needless to point out, Marx's theory of the AMP has continued to provoke disagreements among the concerned scholars and is in fact, as Hindess and Hirst correctly point out, "the most controversial and contested of all the possible modes" outlined by "Marx (and Engels)."[51] Bailey and Llobera recently observe the following :

> The theoretical status of the concept of the AMP has never been too secure for three main reasons. First, the formulation of the concept was precarious in the work of Marx. Second, within the Marxist scheme of evolution, the AMP was an anomaly and, as such, has been and still is considered anathema for those nostalgic for orthodoxy and eager to embrace a unilineal and mechanical conception of history. Third, the tremendous political potential of the concept has triggered off all sorts of ideological manipulations destined to suit short- or long-term national and/or party interests ; this is especially clear in the characterization of certain societies as 'Asiatic' in different historical moments. From an 'orthodox' Marxist perspective, a society defined as 'Asiatic' (or 'feudal' for that matter) can not be transformed into a 'socialist' one before going through the purgatory of a 'capitalist' period.[52]

Be that as it may, a remarkable feature of the new proliferation of the literature under review is the growing opposition to the AMP, as was originally proposed by Marx. A parallel tendency is one that suggests such convenient amendments to Marx's AMP as comply with the general Marxist methodological and theoretical requirements, on the one hand, and fit in with the empirical facts of the non-European social formations and their peoples,

on the other. The ulterior motivation for this is, of course, to make the AMP more acceptable than what it is in Marx's original formulation. Only a few, finally, accept Marx's AMP without any modifications whatsoever. Generally speaking, the findings of the contemporary controversies and researches on the AMP vary between its total rejection and much qualified acceptance. Let me provide some illustrations.

Tokei belongs to the group of a few who adhere to the AMP as it was originally formulated by Marx. Tokei further argues that Marx did not modify his theory and, hence, counters the "allegation that Marx's theory on the Asiatic mode of production, which is claimed to have evolved in the 1850s, underwent some modification in the wake of the 'discovery' of the Russian and German village communities, and was substantially changed under the influence of *Ancient Society* by L. H. Morgan (1877)."[53] Elsewhere he argues that presumably Marx "had *not* dropped the concept of the Asiatic mode of production, and had *not* changed his views about it after becoming familiar with the ethnographic work of Lewis Morgan."[54] At the other extreme there are those who reject Marx's AMP in toto on grounds that are mainly theoretical in character. To Hindess and Hirst the theory of the AMP is ideological to begin with. Among other things, they rightly argue : "If a concept of a mode of production is formable which corresponds to any of the elements of the notion of an AMP, it cannot retain the ideological category of 'Asiaticness'. The very conception of an *Asiatic* mode of production is ideological in that it supposes a definite correspondence with certain real conditions which cannot be abstract and general."[55] Anderson argues to give the AMP "the decent burial that it deserves."[56] He calls for the total burial of the AMP on the ground that it is theoretically contradictory (e.g. the existence of a powerful state in face of Marx's assertion of pre-class or classless social structure) and empirically false (e.g. assumed stationariness or mythical self-sufficiency of the Indian villages).[57] Lubasz rejects the AMP by focussing on certain theoretical problems of the AMP, e.g. the inexplicable existence of the state in the condition of primitive communism, the representation of the state as a component of both structure and superstructure, the ideological motivation to counterpose the AMP as the antecedent

of the CMP etc.[58] He calls the AMP "a pseudo-concept", which is "empirically untenable and theoretically indefensible."[59]

In between the two polar extremes there stand a good many scholars who neither accept nor reject the AMP completely. By suitably interpreting passages more or less arbitrarily selected from Marx's own writings they substantially modify Marx's AMP, the range of modifications varying from one particular scholar to another. The end product of their modification, while not without confounding problems, is often such that it bears little resemblance to the AMP which Marx had originally in mind. Let me cite some examples. Lawrence Krader, for one, belongs to those who neither totally reject nor quite accept in its entirety Marx's AMP but bring out its general relevance in the study of the stages of social evolution. He excludes from the AMP the element of Oriental despotism by treating it as "characteristic of a Europocentric historiography that is as outmoded as it is false."[60] Neither "civil society" nor "political economy" of the AMP was stagnant.[61] Krader suggests that the AMP was the earliest mode of production of society divided into opposed social classes, a class of immediate producers and a class of those maintained by the surplus labor and product of the immediate producers."[62] A natural corollary of this approach is that the AMP, then, emerges not as a regional phenomenon but as a universal stage in the social development of mankind.

> In the light of modern research into world history, we observe that the transition from a primitive-communal mode of production to the Asiatic mode of production has taken place not only in the countries of Asia, but also in the history of ancient Greece and Rome, during the Minoan Mycenean age of the former, and during the Etruscan age of the latter. It is a world-wide economic formation of society. . . . Perhaps the term Asiatic is a misnomer, and will one day be changed.[63]

Elsewhere Krader argues that Marx did not use the term "Asiatic" in his later writings and, hence, the term should be treated as "a figure of speech in reference to the place of the ancient and traditional societies and economies of India, Egypt, China, Peru, Greece, Rome, in the development of civilization, political society, the State, capitalism, colonialism."[64]

Krader's views bear a striking resemblance to those of the

French Marxists such as Maurice Godelier, Jean Suret-Canale and others, who treat the AMP as marking a universal stage of social transition from classless to class-divided social formation. They too exclude the elements of stagnation and despotism from the AMP.[65] A detailed critical evaluation of this approach is obviously outside the scope of this work. Suffice it to say here that the theory of the AMP, as it was originally formulated by Marx, suffers inevitable devaluation when diverse social formations, separated by different levels of development of their productive forces or relations across intervening millennia, are artificially brought together under the same rubric (of the AMP).[66] No less important is the fact that those scholars (e.g. Godelier and others) come back again to the same unilinear schema of social development—a schema which they in the first place apparently eschewed by extending the AMP to the non-European social formations. As Mandel correctly points out :

> By making the Asiatic mode of production a society that comes between clan communism and slave owning or feudal society, one which 'breaks up' into either slave owning or feudal society these critics once again suppress all that is specific in the history of the East, and return, after a short detour, to the good old rut of universal 'slavery' or 'feudalism'—after having previously deplored the excessive expansion of these ideas.[67]

No wonder, Melotti regards the approach adopted by those French Marxists as an example of "muddled thinking."[68]

On his part Melotti, while formally acknowledging the relevance of the AMP as an explanatory category for explaining the differential development only of the East, attempts to reconstruct Marx's AMP.[69] Among other things, Melotti speaks of "Asiatic society" as a "class society", divided between the "exploited class" consisting of almost all of the inhabitants of the village community, on the one hand, and the "privileged class" comprising state officials, mandarins, bureaucrats, and the military, on the other. He does not regard the AMP as a transitional social form between "primitive classless society and the first class-based society", as Godelier and others suggest.[70] Furthermore, Melotti is mindful of the variations among different "Asiatic" social formations.

> Clearly, not all those countries came equally close to the Marxian generic model of Asiatic society. For our present purposes it is sufficient to stress that India differ from it chiefly on the political side, in its comparative lack of strongly centralized bureaucratic government, China in economic and legal aspects, it having been shown that at least in certain periods some private property existed, and Russia in its lack of hydraulic features, other factors having been responsible for its economic and political centralization.[71]

Like Melotti, Sawer accepts the AMP as delineating the differential development of the East. For Sawer, the AMP serves "to stimulate a new heuristic approach to Marxism as a theory of world history, and to strengthen the view that history is to be regarded as *prima facie* open, and not as a closed and unitary process governed by immutable general laws determining its movement towards a simple goal."[72] Apparently this multilinearity is championed in the form of differential developments *only* between the East and West, *but not* between different Western social formations. This is also the position of many others who, in one way or another, adhere to the AMP as if they were the greatest champions of multilinearity. Basically this position rests on what may be called neo-materialist Orientalism. In any case, Sawer's acceptance of the AMP or, for that matter, of the multilinearity of societal development "*does* mean a rejection of Marx's Western European perspective, and a recognition that non-European forms of historical development may have their own dynamics."[73]

Currie draws attention to certain built-in theoretical problems of the AMP. Among other things, she argues :

> Essentially, the problematic status of the AMP in Marx results from his failure to : a) distinguish between the various descriptive categories, b) provide an adequate conceptualization, c) analytically explore the nature of relationship (if any) between the concept of the AMP and the descriptive categories, and d) analyse the conditions of genesis, existence, re-production and transition of the mode, i.e. consider the issue of the dialectic.[74]

Accordingly she suggests the dropping of the nomenclature of the AMP and calls for its substitution by 'tributary' mode of production. In this mode "the tribute-raising state" appropriates the surplus product from the direct producer and stands in "the same objectively antagonistic relationship to that producer as does the slave-owner to the slave, the feudal lord to the serf, and the capitalist to the wage labourer."[75] However, the most extreme adaptation of Marx's AMP or, to put it alternatively, the most sophisticated reformulation of the old principles of Oriental despotism on the basis of certain aspects of Marx's AMP can be found in Karl A. Wittfogel's work *Oriental Despotism : A Comparative Study of Total Power* (1957). Two central aspects of his work are "the attempt to establish the peculiarity of a non-Western semi-managerial system of despotic power and the interpretation of communist totalitarianism as a total, managerial, and much more despotic, variant of that system."[76] Though claiming a Marxist heritage, Wittfogel alleges that Marx mystifies, rather than clarifies, the character of the ruling class in the Orient. He further criticizes Marx for the latter's failure to illumine adequately the general role of the Oriental state as provider of large-scale agro hydraulic works.[77] On his part Wittfogel claims to have explained both. On the one hand, he draws attention to the presence of centralized bureaucracy as the ruling class that benefitted by the appropriation of the social surplus produced by the direct producers. On the other, this class arose and ruled not only because of the functional necessity of providing large-scale irrigation works, but also because of their control over the major means of production, land and water, in the Oriental social formations.[78] In the literature on the AMP the importance of Wittfogel's theory can hardly be under-rated. Indeed Bailey and Llobera go so far as to assert that "any reappraisal of the AMP controversy which does not critically assess the relevance and impact of the work of Karl A. Wittfogel is not a serious enterprise."[79] Not unexpectedly, Wittfogel's work has been subjected to searching, and most often unfavourable, theoretical and empirical scrutinies.[80] His work has been branded as "politically oriented fact defying dogma"[81] or as "vulgar charivari" which, "devoid of any historical sense, jumbles together pell-mell Imperial Rome, Tsarist Russia, Hopi Arizona, Sung China, Chaggan East Africa, Mamluck Egypt, Inca Peru, Ottoman Turkey, and Sumerian Mesopotamia—not to speak of Byzantium or Babylonia, Persia or Hawaii."[82] Wittfogel himself has been called a "renegade Marxist whose axe-grinding can be heard afar."[83]

Before pointing out the general limitations of the works

reviewed here and providing the *raison d'etre* that prompted me to undertake the present work, let me pass on to a recapitulation of the main trends of the studies on the Indian social formation inasmuch as they, more than less, bear on or concern the AMP.[84]

IV. Interpretations of the Pre-British Indian Social Formation : A Review of the Main Trends

If the modern search for the understanding and discovery of ancient India was in the main due to the efforts in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries of British imperial and colonial officials, then it was also they who set the contours of the dominant themes and questions to be raised and answered. In other words, while British officials deserve credit for having provided the initial historiographical base for the modern quest of ancient India, this does not mean that their methodology of dealing with the concrete data or their modes of analysis and interpretation, were free from overt and covert biases of different types. Indeed, the dominant interpretations put on the ancient Indian historical facts, as Romila Thapar rightly suggests, "reflected, whether consciously or not, the political and ideological interests of Europe. The history of India became one of the means of propagating those interests."[85] More specifically, the pervasive ideological doctrine which was accepted as gospel truth by British writers was their abiding faith "in the unique superiority of the English and European cultural heritage and/or a belief in the inferiority of the Indian heritage."[86] The seriousness of the one-sidedness of the interpretations of Indian history and of how it continued to be propagated can aptly be illustrated here by pointing out that James Mill's *History of British India* remained a basic textbook for British Indian civil servants for more than a century after its publication in 1818.[87] In different places of this book I show that Mill's work contains numerous factual errors and suffers from serious biases in the interpretation of Indian historical facts. In any case it was the Indian scholars who provided the main challenge to the "historical models" built by British writers.[88] The findings of many of the indigenous researchers were directly opposed to those of British authors. The first beginnings of such indigenous intellectual rebellion were evident in the works of Dadabhai Naoroji, R. C. Dutt, K. P. Jayaswal, R. C. Majumdar, R. K. Mookerji, H. C. Raychaudhuri, U. N. Ghosal, B. K. Sarkar, and many others. They strongly contested various notions (e.g. the absence of private landed property, social stationariness, etc.) that were associated with the theory of Oriental despotism or with Marx's AMP. They took a fresh look at the various types of indigenous data, questioned many of the notions concerning Oriental despotism, and attempted to reconstruct ancient Indian history in the light of their own reappraisals.[89] Even though many of them have been dubbed as "nationalist" historians,[90] most of their findings were based on meticulous research of concrete data and, as such, still retain validity.

For instance, a thorough investigation into different data sources pertaining to the Hindus led the researchers to conclude that the concept of despotic monarchy did not conform to and picture the actual state of affairs obtaining in ancient India. To put this finding in the words of Sarkar :

> It is already clear, at any rate, that the *nineteenth century generalization about the Orient as the land exclusively of despotism, and as the only home of despotism, must be abandoned by students of political science and sociology*. It is high time, therefore, that comparative politics, so far as the parallel study of Asian and Eur.-American institutions and theories is considered, should be rescued from the elementary and, in many instances, unfair notions prevalent since the days of Maine and Max Muller, first, by a more intensive study of the Orient, and secondly, by a more honest presentation of occidental laws and constitutions, from Lycurgus and Solon to Fredrick the Great and the successors of Louis XIV, that is, by a reform in the comparative method itself.[91]

Insofar as the issue of the existence of private property in land is concerned, many indigenous scholars (e.g. U. N. Ghosal, K. P. Jayaswal, B. K. Sarkar, N. C. Bandyopadhyaya, and a number of others), along with a minority group of British officials (e.g. Mark Wilks etc.), proved on the basis of concrete data from indigenous source materials that private property in land was very much in existence before the advent of British colonial rule in the 1750s.[92] These same conclusions were later echoed by subsequent scholars. Thus, Thapar argues :

> In the case of India the primary reason given for the rise of

> Marx's formulations, is based upon a profound perception which ought not to be lost, or consigned to the dustbin of historiography. . . .And yet a profound idea remains. Ancient Eurasian peoples (i.e. those of the fertile crescent, India and China—BB) cannot but have developed social formations very different from those of Europe, not a single, unchanging formation as presumed in the Asiatic mode, but perhaps a great number of different formations. . . .*Are we not entitled—indeed do we not have the responsibility—to attempt to transform Marx's grossly erroneous formulation of what was a profound insight into a useful concept ?*[107]

It is interesting to note that many Marxist analysis of AMP (e.g. Godelier, Krader etc.) argue for it existence also in Europe, in which case, obviously, Eurasian peoples could not be different from Europeans. It appears that Stein implicitly accepts the geographical divide between Europe and non-Europe—the ideology of Orientalism which characterizes Marx's AMP *a capite ad calcem* and about which I shall say more later. In any event Stein's own analysis, which excludes the elements of despotism and hydraulic role of the state, confirms the presence in India of such elements (e.g. commodity production, trade etc.) which Marx, for his part, excluded from his AMP.[108] What Stein apparently shares with Marx is the latter's opposition to accepting the presence of feudalism in India. But Marx's list of criteria (e.g. feudal landed property, serfdom, soil as prized object, and patrimonial jurisdiction)[109] for asserting so is different from that of Stein, who enumerates three criteria : fief as the resource base for warrior power, personally loyalty or fealty, and a moral order supporting personal loyalty through oaths and estate honour.[110] Stein's theory which focuses exclusively on south India, has been subjected to severe criticisms in recent years. Without repeating them let me state here that Stein's elements of feudalism have also been specifically traced by a number of scholars working on south India.[111]

Stein's contradictions and problems become visible when one analyses his concept of "segmentary state"—the "peasant state" that is visualized as an anthropological congeries of "local chieftainships" which, while ruling over small polities, were bound together "as a state through ritual forms."[112] The very appellation "peasant state" is ideologically motivated inasmuch as it implies that only south India had "peasant" states. Besides, the

concept of peasant state implies inherent stagnation in the social formation, for it rests on the people who continue to remain perennially as "peasants". Stein's concept of this segmentary state is certainly not the AMP's state because it lacks, among other things, hydraulic and despotic role and functions :

> They (i.e. segmentary states—BB) were monarchies which incorporated the chiefly polities of their realm without dissolving such polities ; these states were primarily ideological manifestations of pervasive and ambiguous conception of kingship which could be vested simultaneously in a large number of chieftains, as well as in a single ruling house whose hegemonic claims were conceded by all. The prevailing conception of rajadharma permitted chieftains to assume the responsibilities and dignities of supporting brahmanas and gods and protecting them as well as the constituencies of peasant and non-peasant peoples of a chiefdom, just as kings did for the realm as a whole. To king and chief alike was conceded the right to deploy resources which they—as kings and chiefs everywhere—massed and redistributed and thereby gave expression to the idea of a moral unity.[113]

If anything, the above passage depicts a state which resembles, the feudal, rather than "Asiatic", state. In fact, Perlin has rightly argued that "early European feudalism, in which kingship was weak, was notably segmentary, tending to political fission along multiple, vertical pyramids adjacent to one another. In this sense, feudal and segmentary may be thought of as synonymous, the former however infused with social, political and ideological meaning. In spite of the development of medieval kingship and of a ramifying state, feudal polity never lost this segmentary character."[114]

The other aspect of post-independence studies and researches with regard to ancient and (early) medieval India concerns those works which directly or indirectly bear on Marx's AMP. It should, however, be remembered that the genesis of the analysis of the Indian social formation in its differential aspects from a Marxist point of view can be traced to the pre-Independence era, and it was in fact an integral part of the struggle to liberate India by overturning British imperialism and colonialism. M. N. Roy, who wrote *India in Transition* during 1921-22, provided "the first comprehensive analysis of Indian society from a Marxist point of view."[115] But he did not espouse Marx's AMP. On the contrary,

he emphasized that "India was not an exception to the general laws of social evolution, though he recognizes certain modifications."[116] In 1940 R. P. Dutt, in his *India Today* and in an *Introduction to Karl Marx : Articles on India,* "enthusiastically reproduced Marx's ideas on Asiatic society in general and Indian society in particular."[117] After the end of the Second World War Dutt changed his position, apparently disapproving of Marx's AMP.[118] In his book entitled *Studies in Indian Social Polity* (1944) B. N. Datta also indirectly rejects the AMP by suggesting the presence of class struggle in ancient India and by showing the development of feudalism in medieval India.[119] But the most vigorous indirect renunciation of the AMP came from S. A. Dange in his *India : From Primitive Communism to Slavery* (1949). His abjuration, however, took the form of showing the rise of slavery, though not necessarily in Graeco-Roman classical form, out of the stage of primitive communism in India. Among other things, he stated that "it would be a denial of Marxism itself if one were to say that during these two thousand years these (i.e. Indian village—BB) communities developed no inner contradictions, developed no antagonism and struggles within themselves or had no struggle with the feudal State that ruled over them."[120]

The first systematic study of the Indian social formation from a class theoretical standpoint was provided by D. D. Kosambi. The importance of Kosambi's contribution prompted Dale Riepe to call him "the father of scientific Indian history."[121] To be sure, "he raised a number of new ideas and revealed new questions."[122] By providing a historical materialist paradigm for analyzing and explaining the facts of the Indian social formation and its history, Kosambi gave a direction to the study and research on ancient and (early) medieval India. This, in turn, provided necessary and much needed impetus to the growth of scientific studies and researches on ancient and medieval India. In so much as the AMP is concerned, Kosambi says the following in his *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History* :

> The really vexed question is what is meant by the Asiatic mode of production, never clearly defined by Marx. . . . *What Marx himself said about India cannot be taken as it stands.*[123]

While Kosambi himself neither defines AMP in terms of [illegible], the

constituents nor directly confronts them for explicit purpose of repudiation, he nevertheless analyses and interprets historical facts of the Indian social formation in such a way as to negate Marx's AMP to all intents and purposes. For example, he challenges Marx's statement that "Indian society has no history at all, at least no known history."[124] On his part, he defines history as "*the presentation, in chronological order, of successive developments in the means and relations of production,*"[125] and applies it to India, thus negating Marx's assumptions of the lack of history or of socio-economic stupor in the AMP. Furthermore, Kosambi discovers the growth and prevalence of commodity production, trade, private landed property, and feudalism in India—elements that certainly negate Marx's thesis.[126]

One of the earliest systematic attempts to test the empirical validity of Marx's AMP in the context of the Indian historical experience was made by Daniel Thorner in his article entitled "Marx on India and the Asiatic Mode of Production" (1966). Thorner does not focus specifically on the ancient and early medieval phases of Indian history. He is rather concerned with the state of affairs immediately preceding the rise of British imperialism in India. At any rate, Thorner found little in the AMP that he could approve of.

> In point of fact, Marx's central thesis that the self-sufficient nature of the villages together with the need for large-scale centrally administered waterworks provided a basis for Asiatic despotism does not find much support in what we know today of Indian history. In India strong central governments have been rare and have not lasted long. Before the coming of the British there were only three great empires, the Mauryan, the Gupta and the Mughal. None of these was powerful for more than 150 years. . . .The descriptions of Indian villages sent home by British military men and administrators in the 18th and 19th centuries provide little evidence for Marx's picture of landholding by the entire village and even less for tilling in common.[127]

Like Thorner, Naqvi and Chandra confront the AMP more or less directly and they reach the same conclusion, namely, the empirical invalidity of the AMP. Naqvi focuses strictly on the Mughal society formation and mentions the presence therein of many elements which directly contradict Marx's theory. They include the occurrence of private property in land, the rise and growth of

numerous marketing towns or cities that were "economically active and viable", the presence of an affluent class of "merchants, shippers and moneylenders", the general absence of "centralized empires", and so on and so forth.[128] An important drawback of Marx and Engels, to which Naqvi points, is that they failed to utilize the available source materials that existed in plenty. "If Marx and Engels had only read the travel accounts of even a few of the scores of European travellers and merchants who had recorded their experiences, often ranging over several decades and covering large parts of the country, published in the early years of the 19th century by Purchas and others in England, *they would have been able to roughly and more realistically reconstruct Indian social and economic conditions in different periods, from the 14th to the 18th centuries.*"[129]

Chandra does not examine systematically the empirical validity of the AMP *vis a vis* "the development of Indian society and its different stages throughout the centuries", as I have done in this book so far as the ancient and early medieval periods are concerned. His general discussion, while alluding at times to the ancient and early medieval periods particularly focuses on "the immediately precolonial society of the Mughal period."[130] Chandra brings to the fore a number of factors that negate Marx's AMP. They are the absence of the hydraulic role of the state, the emergence of private ownership of land since the sixth century B.C. and its further extension through the fresh expansion of agriculture and village settlements over waste lands, and the presence of commodity production, trade, and market towns and cities.[131] His conclusion is quite unambiguous :

> Historical research over the last 100 years or so, including the recent work of Marxist scholars, has shown that Marx's basic notions regarding Indian society were *essentially incorrect*. In particular, his view that Indian society had stagnated for millenia ever since *its transition from primitive communism to class society* and was therefore incapable of change from within is completely untenable and can no longer be maintained. . . .*Different modes of production arose and disintegrated. Only it did not develop (industrial—BB) capitalism on its own—but why should that be considered the inherent and inevitable hallmark of a changing and developing society in the precapitalist period ?*[132]

It should, however, be noted here that Chandra is completely wrong to suppose that Marx spoke about or implied India's "transition from primitive communism to class society". I will show especially in chapters 3, 6 and 8 that Marx neither spelled out nor even meant any such thing. Actually Chandra does not undertake any methodological and theoretical critique of the AMP. On his part, Irfan Habib asserts, rather than systematically demonstrates, the empirical invalidity of Marx's AMP.

> During the sixties we have witnessed the curious phenomenon that in spite of the general inability of Asian Marxist scholars to recognise the existence of Oriental despotism, the Asiatic Mode of Production, etc., certain Marxists of West European countries have been insisting that they know better and have 'reopened' the debate on the subject among themselves. . . .The essential purpose in the attempted restoration of the Asiatic Mode is to deny the role of class contradictions and class struggles in Asian societies and to emphasize the existence of the authoritorian and anti-individualistic traditions in Asia, so as to establish that the entire past history of social progress belongs to Europe alone, and thereby to belittle the revolutionary lessons to be drawn from the recent history of Asia.[133]

Some of the elements, which abrogate Marx's AMP but mentioned by Habib in the course of his analysis of Mughal India and its potentialities for the transition to capitalism, are the existence of private ownership of land, the production of commodities for the market, the rise and development of cities and towns, the non-existence of communal ownership of land, the existence of "class" struggle in terms of "armed resistance" of the peasantry or of the Zamindars (i.e. landed interests) or of both *vis a vis* the Mughal ruling class of officials including the king.[134]

While the overwhelming majority of scholars working on ancient and medieval India reject Marx's theory of the AMP in one form or another, there are a few who indeed accept it. But they vary in regard to their acceptance of and support for it. Some examples of this tendency as well as the insurmountable problems associated with this may be advantageously highlighted here. In his "theoretical exercise" Tapan Raychaudhuri proposes that Marx's AMP "strikes one as a valid label for India's precolonial economy,"[135] although he himself neither systematically defines the AMP in Marx's own terms nor applies it systematically to any specific period of pre-colonial India. He espouses Godelier's

version of the AMP by saying that it "has considerable explanatory value for the dynamics of social change in India in the long period."[136] But, apparently, he does not realize, or fails to understand, the differences between Godelier's own version and Marx's AMP, which, as I will show in chapter 6, is totally incapable of experiencing any sort of social change in terms of developing any other mode of production beyond one that is based on quiescent primitive communism. The absence of any "internal mechanisms of change" is one of the most vital components of Marx's AMP.[137] Without providing any evidence Raychaudhuri asserts that Marx later recognized the emergence of "property rights", presumably in land.[138] He erroneously identifies feudalism with serfdom.[139] He does not define ownership, nor does he seem to be aware of the historical specificities of ownership rights *vis a vis* the particular mode of production dominant in a given social formation.[140] Finally, he locates the AMP in India by asserting, for instance, the state's expropriation of the bulk of the surplus.[141] This is an absolutely wrong approach, for any state (e.g. ancient, feudal, capitalist) expropriates a certain amount of surplus, whether bulk or not, produced in a given social formation. D. Banerjee, another analyst, seeks to trace, though in vain, the internal mechanisms of social change and development. He argues that Marx allowed private possession of land, which is assumed to be an improvement over common ownership of land.[142] This is basically a misinterpretation of Marx. As I show in chapter 3, Marx's reference to private possession is not so much an indicator of the internal mechanism of change and development in the AMP as it was a definite product of his imprecision and confusion with regard to the location of ownership and/or possession in the AMP.[143] Moreover, of one thing Marx was absolutely certain, which is the absence of individual ownership of land. For him, this was cause enough to make the AMP stand dead still *in aeternum*. That socioeconomic torpidity is built into the very structure of the AMP can be illustrated by mentioning that, while the AMP failed to evolve private landed property, all the other modes (e.g. ancient, feudal and capitalist) of production originating in Europe developed not only private landed property but also its different forms. There is no blinking the fact that the AMP is a dead end, which is precisely proved by Marx's own assertion

that the individual in the Orient "does not become independent *vis a vis* the commune."[144]

A. Guha, D. Gupta and K. Gough represent those who espouse both the AMP and the FMP in terms of India's empirical experience at different points of historical time. Guha's analysis is bedevilled by numerous methodological and conceptual difficulties. A few of them may be elucidated here. He grossly misunderstands Marx's AMP when he says that "the main characteristic of it was not absence of private property, but 'the self-sustaining unity of manufacture and agriculture' within the village."[145] Quite to the contrary, if anything strictly separates the AMP from any other modes of production in Marx's schema, it is most assuredly the absence of private landed property in the former.[146] As I shall show in chapters 6 and 8, the absence of private property in land is both the cause and effect of many other things that characterize the AMP. They include the non-development of the social division of labour (beyond natural division of labour), of cities or towns (and commodity production and trade), and of class stratification as based on ownership or non-ownership of the means of production. Perhaps Guha is ideologically motivated in his exclusion of private landed property, because he himself traces its existence in India. At one and the same time he does not understand that the so-called unity of agriculture and manufacture is characteristic of all modes of production in Marx's schema, let alone the AMP. Again, his assertion that "from the 7th-8th century onwards, the Asiatic Mode of Production in India was undoubtedly exhibiting feudalistic tendencies"[147] is an example of his serious confusion of the methodological and theoretical (i.e. logical) with the empirical (i.e. concrete). The reason is that there is no, and could not be any, mechanism of internal change and development in the AMP in the form Marx formulated, with the result that the empirical feudal tendencies in India can not be stated to have emerged from the AMP in India. Again, it is hard to explain why Guha calls India feudal especially between 700 A.D. and 1700 A.D., when he argues simultaneously that "Marx's objections to Kovelevsky's view of Indian feudalism still remain *basically* valid."[148] Like others, he also commits the same mistake of identifying feudalism with serfdom.[149]

Gupta suggests that "Marx's Asiatic Mode of Production" prevailed in India from the beginning of the Yajurvedic age

(c. 500 B.C.) to the fall of the Maurya empire (c. 185 B.C.).[150] However, several serious conceptual and empirical problems mar Gupta's analysis. For instance, he thinks that "*general exploitation* of the people directly by the superior community or the state is the crucial feature of the Asiatic mode of production."[151] The truth of the matter is that any state, being the product of a class-divided social formation, is an organization of general exploitation of "the people". The latter is a useless category that is devoid of any class implications. Gupta does not discuss how such a state arises in the first place, nor does he deal with the methodological and theoretical problems in Marx's AMP. I will draw attention to all these aspects in chapter 8. Moreover, Gupta is completely wrong to suggest that after 1858 Marx "no longer considered despotism and stagnation to be the essential features of societies characterized by the Asiatic mode of production."[152] The element of stagnation is built into the very conceptual structure of the AMP, which was unable to beget any other mode of production as such or any components (e.g. private ownership of land) thereof, that characterized the different modes of production originating in Europe. Inasmuch as despotism is concerned, Marx indeed held on to the concept to the very end of his life.[153] Finally, it is wrong to assume, as Gupta does, that "ownership and authority over land" remained with the Indian state in the period in which he thinks the AMP prevailed in India. As I show in chapters 4 and 5, there is enough historical evidence that bears testimony to the presence of private ownership of land in the period concerned.

Like Guha and Gupta, Kathleen Gough traces the existence of both the AMP and the FMP at different points of historical time. Unlike the former two, Gough centers especially on the south Indian social formation.[154] She asserts that the AMP prevailed at Thanjavur (Tanjore) in Madras from the first to the fourteenth century, whereas a FMP existed in a number of small states in Kerala between the ninth and mid-nineteenth century.

> Although conforming to Marx's model in fundamental respects, the *AMP in Thanjavur permitted greater social change, social stratification, development of the productive forces, urbanization and commodity production than Marx's model allows for.* In particular, it gave rise to varying grades of communal serfdom and slavery that are distinguishable both from the private slavery of classical Western Europe and the serfdom of feudal Europe, and also from the 'general slavery of the Orient' to which Marx refers as characteristic of the AMP. . . .On the west coast periphery of the south Indian formations characterized by the AMP, namely in Kerala, a form of the feudal mode of production developed, independently of but in crucial respects comparable to Western Europe and Japan.[155]

It is apparent in the above that Gough attempts to present and apply the AMP in ways that were completely far from Marx's mind. To illustrate, as I shall show in different places in this work, Marx's AMP, once in existence, does not contain any internal mechanism of social change and development. Therefore, the question of "greater" social change or, for that matter, any other such thing does not arise at all. Accordingly, Marx's AMP precludes any class stratification based on ownership or non-ownership of the means of produciton (land) since the AMP represents a stationary primitive communism. In Marx's AMP the nature-determined primordial division of labour never grows into social division of labour. The outcome of such non-development presupposes, generally speaking, the non-development of commodity production and trade, individuation, individual private property in land, and cities and towns. I draw attention to all these in chapters 6 and 8. Recently Guha has squarely challenged the findings of Gough and questioned the validity of the AMP as a category for explaining south Indian, especially Tamil, history. He regards Gough's modifications of Marx's AMP as "a myth."[156] More importantly, Gough's modifications of Marx's AMP are unwarranted because, in the final instance, Gough's version of the AMP turns out to be something which Marx's AMP was not. Marx's AMP is in itself an organic totality or whole of interdependent constituents (e.g. the absence of private property in land etc.). In this light the suggested modifications, whether of Gough or of others, inflict violence to the unity of the AMP as an organic whole, just as ancient, feudal, or capitalist modes of production are each individually an organic whole. What Gough and others, who suggest modifications or reformulate Marx's AMP, are trying to do can hardly be missed. The modifications or reformulations only signify that Marx's AMP, which cannot be defended in its original form as a totality, is "being sneaked in through the back door."[157] Then again, there

is an exception to this. Anupam Sen, for one, accepts Marx's AMP in its entirety, including even Oriental despotism—a component which has been denounced and discarded by almost all scholars with the most prominent exception of Wittfogel.[158] Sen's acceptance is based on faith rather than on logic and/or evidence, for he is characteristically and bluntly insensitive to all criticisms that have so far been levelled by numerous scholars in respect of the methodological lapses and theoretical inconsistencies immanent in Marx's AMP. Apparently, he applies the AMP to the entire period of "pre-British India" without ever considering the substantial ancient and medieval phases of the Indian social formation. What is worse, he totally ignores an enormous volume of source materials including historical and legal data that ; without any shade of doubt, rule out the applicability of Marx's AMP to the ancient and early medieval Indian social formation. Indeed, his distortion of the empirical reality of India is such that his *Weltansicht* is scarcely distinguishable from that of the European imperialists and colonialists in the 18th and 19th centuries.[159]

In light of works reviewed in the earlier section as well as in the present one, the rationale of my own undertaking hardly requires any extraordinary vindication. Western scholars, who conduct and carry on researches, debates and discussions predominantly of a theoretical nature, do not invariably test them against the empirical reality of the Indian social formation, even though the latter was the main basis on which Marx actually formulated his theory of the AMP.[160] Neither do they systematically confront and bring out the different methodological and theoretical problems and their consequences inherent in Marx's AMP. As noted earlier, most of them mainly concentrate on modifying the AMP plainly in order to make it generally acceptable to those who are reluctant to accept Marx's AMP in all its original essentials. It goes without saying that the range of modifications they suggest in regard to the AMP vary from one researcher to the other, depending on his own predilections or his reading of Marx. At the same time, the existing (mainly fragmentary) empirical studies especially on ancient and early medieval India, produced invariably by Indian scholars, do not systematically and directly address themselves to the issue of Marx's AMP in terms of its essential constituents and thereby evaluate its empirical validity. In fact there exists, so far as my

knowledge goes, no serious or full-scale study that has attempted to evaluate the validity (or invalidity) of Marx's theory within the context of the Indian social formation up to the 13th century. The existing piecemeal empirical studies bearing on the AMP, which I have discussed earlier, do not also systematically take into account and analyse different methodological and theoretical problems of the AMP and the consequences that follow from them.

In view of the limitations of the reviewed works, which deal with the AMP either theoretically or empirically in the context of India, my work seeks to remedy the current deficiency, and simultaneously endeavours to fill out a longstanding void, in the relevant literature. From this point of view, the primary purpose of this work is to present an assessment of the methodological, theoretical, and empirical validity of Marx's theory of the AMP. To reiterate, the central issue that my study seeks to resolve is this : *How far or to what extent can Marx's theory of the AMP be justified and upheld methodologically and theoretically, on the one hand, and empirically, on the other, on the basis of the concrete experience of the Indian social formation from about the rise of the Indus civilization to the first consolidation of the Muslim rule ?* There is another purpose of my work. It concerns the Orientalist dimensions of Marx's theory of the AMP in all its essential constituents. While more will be said later, suffice it to say here that the concept of Orientalism, as used here, implies a style of thought, a set of assumptions, or a system of representations which is based upon, and is expressive of, an essential epistemological and ontological distinction made between the Oriental (Eastern/Asian) social formations and their peoples, on the one hand, and the Occidental (Western/European) social formations and their peoples, on the other.[161] It is important to note that Marx did not use the label "Asiatic" in the AMP frivolously or casually. This label is not a "type-label" or "generic designation" for primitive communism in any form occurring at any place, as Draper suggests. Neither was it "primarily an analytic model" applied indiscriminately by Marx to European social formations, as Melotti seems to imply at one point in his discussion.[162] True, one may discover an isolated feature or two of the AMP in the primitive communism(s) originating in Europe. For instance, Marx himself stated in his letter of February 17,

1870 that all nations, whether of Europe or not, started from "communal property", a form which he identified as of Indian origin.[163] But this does not mean that the primitive communism of the AMP led to the development from within either of private property in land or of any other mode(s) of production in the Orient. In contrast, the primitive communism(s) of the Occident not only generated private property in land, but it did so in different forms in different modes (e.g. ancient, feudal and capitalist) of production. One can hardly dare to identify, without misrepresenting Marx, Oriental despotism or stagnation with any of those modes of production originating in Europe. What this boils down to is that Marx, while consciously using the label "Asiatic", limited the applicability of the AMP only to the geographical configurations outside of Europe and, hence, maintained the essentiality of the geographical hiatus between the East and West.

This is, however, not any new revelation. A number of writers have already pointed out that Marx's AMP is, in a manner of speaking, an embodiment of the uniqueness of a particular development, or rather of social un- or non-development, concerning only the East. This includes identification of the East with communal property, collectivism, ruralism, and so forth.[164] Thus, in the course of his argument against the improper and unwarranted tendency of certain scholars (e.g. Godelier, Chesneaux, Suret-Canale etc.) to extend Marx's AMP to all social formations, Mandel says the following, which amply bears out the Orientalist character of the AMP :

> If the idea of the Asiatic Mode of Production is stripped of its specific meaning, it can no longer explain the *special* development of the East in comparison with Western and mediterranean Europe. It loses its chief usefulness as a tool for analyzing the societies for which Marx and Engels explicitly intended it. It can recover this usefulness only if we go back to the original formulations, and to the function originally intended for it by Marx and Engels—that of explaining the peculiarities of the historical development of India, China, Egypt and the Islamic world, as compared with the historical development of Western Europe.[165]

Gellner stresses Marx's Orientalism in this way.

> The idea of the AMP, if pushed further, as can be done most naturally, breaks up the unity of mankind and of human history ; it suggests that the East or some parts of it are prone to a quite distinctive mode of social organization, one absent from the West and one that is particularly tyrannical and inimical to human dignity, liberty, and progress, and that is specially prone to indefinite self-perpetuation and stagnation. . . .*East is East and West is West. The AMP fuses Marx and Kipling*—and there was indeed a distinct streak of Kipling in Marx, with his firmly-stated view of the beneficial effect of the British drill sergeant on India. It is as if there were one sociological law for the West and another for the East. On one hand, such a view is uncomfortably close to racism, or at best to Western ethnocentric self-congratulations ; and at another level, such a view undermines the faith in progress as a universal expectation as of right—as a salvation that may at worst be delayed, but that is present at least as a germ in *every* (author's emphasis—BB) society.[166]

Finally, I may refer to Avineri, who draws our attention to the same theme of Marx's Orientalism yet from another point of view : "With all his understanding of the non-European world, Marx remained a Europe-oriented thinker, and his insights into Indian and Chinese society could never be reconciled with his general philosophy of history, which remained—like Hegel's—determined by the European experience and the Western historical consciousness."[167]

In light of the foregoing discussion the secondary purpose of this study is to demonstrate that *not only is Marx's AMP grounded upon Orientalism, but, what is even more important, it stands for and indeed represents what I call materialist Orientalism—the doctrine that rationalizes and sanctifies the geographical divide between the East and West, and hence, separates Them from Us by resorting to material (or concrete) explanatory factors* (e.g. the absence or presence of private property in land, the absence or presence of urbanism, etc.). To put it otherwise, I show that materialist Orientalism is written into the left, right and centre of Marx's AMP in terms of all its constituent essentials.[168] This critical assessment will also fill in a characteristic void in the contemporary literature on the AMP since, so far as my knowledge goes, this has not been done by anyone to date.

Having reviewed the relevant literature and discussed my

major objectives, let me outline briefly the scope and organization of the book.

V. The Scope and Organization of the Book

In the next chapter, i.e. chapter 2, I summarize the essential ingredients of Marx's theory of the AMP. It is asserted that it consists of three logically inter-connected ingredients. First, by far the most notable feature of the AMP is the absence of private property in land and, correspondingly, the lack of any fundamental class division and antagonism between the landowners or landlords who own (and control) the means of production (i.e. land), on the one hand, and the landless who do not own (and control) such means of production, on the other. Second, the Oriental social formations are conceptualized and concretized in terms of numerous spatially isolated village communities. Their economic self-sufficiency and, ultimately, stagnation was brought about as much by the absence of class struggle as by a particular unity of agriculture and manufacture which, in turn, blocked the emergence of commodity production, trade, market, and cities and towns. Finally, the AMP is characterized by the presence of a class-transcending omnipotent state, which exercises despotic power by holding down the undifferentiated mass in general slavery as well as by extracting surplus labour from them. Neither limited by constraints of the social classes in mutual antagonism and struggle nor tied to the mosaic of self-reproducing villages, this hypertrophied state originates in and rests upon hydraulic functions and/or force. In this rundown consideration of the AMP's essential ingredients, I propose to deal with Marx's writings more or less chronologically. In the formulation of the AMP Marx starts with concrete investigations (e.g. the articles on India published in the 1850s), then moves to a rather "more abstract logico-formal level" (e.g. the *Grundrisse* or *Capital*), and, finally, returns back again to "the concrete" in his ethnological researches. Attention will also be focused on the relevant European source materials on which Marx drew in his specification of the different ingredients of the AMP. In other words, an auxiliary purpose of this chapter is to show that Marx, while formulating the AMP, "remained substantially faithful to the classical European image of Asia which he had inherited from a long file of predecessors."[169]

The methodological and theoretical assessment of the AMP is taken up in chapters 3, 6 and 8 on the basis of Marx's own (general) methodological standpoint. A common underlying theme that becomes clear in the assessment is that innumerable methodological and theoretical absurdities, flaws, and contradictions are built into the very structure of the AMP in such a way that they metamorphose it into a sterile concept. The problems bedevilling the AMP are both complex and interrelated, and are in point of fact extremely serious, so much so that any attempt to reconstitute and revitalize Marx's AMP by modifying or removing one or a few of its components would in all likelihood go up in smoke.[170] In any event the *raison d'etre* of Marx's methodological and theoretical lapses in the AMP can hardly be accounted for unless one does so in accordance with what I have called materialist Orientalism. That is, in the course of his search for the direct antecedent and opposite of the ancient, Germanic, feudal, and capitalist modes of production, all of which originated in the Occident, Marx was inescapably led to transform the AMP into a conceptual scapegoat. Simultaneously he was also led to justify and accentuate the geographical divide between the Orient and Occident by means of concrete or material causative factors in such a way that either of the stated geographical categories (i.e. East or West) was mindlessly turned into an autonomous, coherent, homogeneous, and global entity. To all intents and purposes the geographical divide in the AMP became an epistemological and ontological point of departure for the production of "knowledge" of the social development of the East, as opposed to that of the West.

The methodological and theoretical questions that eat into the productive usefulness of the AMP as a theoretical category are without doubt of wide scope. They range from Marx's arbitrary selection or even suppression of the available data to the lack of causality, or from his particular mode of handling and interpretation of the subjectively chosen data to the lack of internal logical consistency in the substantiation of the AMP. In chapter 3, wherein I take stock of Marx's allegation of the absence of private landownership especially in India, all these become quite evident. Marx ignored, for instance, the data in the *Fifth Report* (1812) which in several places affirms the existence of private landed property. He tended to interpret the

private landed property of the members of the joint family (as portrayed in Mitākṣarā) in such a way as though it were village communal property. At bottom he was plainly unable to explain why the process of individuation does not take place and, for that matter, why private property in land does not develop in the Orient. In chapter 6 I evaluate the methodological and theoretical validity of Marx's thesis of a non-dialectical Orient in all its ramifications. As in the case of his dogmatic assertion of the absence of private landed property, Marx was unable to provide any realistic rationale for his claim of the non-existence of an internal mechanism of social change and development in the Orient. The causative factors which he advanced *ex facie* were at bottom pseudo factors insomuch as they were neither specific nor essential to any exclusive geographical configuration, whether Orient or not. And what is more, instead of being a productive scientific theory explaining the historical specificities of social change and development in the East, the AMP turned out to be an ideological, if not Marxist, apology legitimating imperialist interventions of the *Abendland* in order for liberating what Marx regarded basically as the vegetative East. One can hardly avoid reaching the same conclusion inasmuch as force and conquest appear to be championed by Marx in the course of his analysis of the rise, nature, and functions of the state and politics in the AMP. This aspect, along with many others, is taken up in chapter 8. I demonstrate that Marx's analysis of the state and politics in the AMP also lacked causation. Once he denied the existence of private ownership of land in the Orient, Marx was unable to situate the state and politics within the terrain of class antagonism and struggle. Politics in Marx's AMP does not derive from, and rest upon, class antagonism and struggle, but merely stands for the linear relationship of despotism from above to the subjection of the mass below. Neither does the state derive from, and live on, class antagonism and struggle. Marx's causative factors (e.g. hydraulic functions and/or force) in this regard are ideological, rather than scientific. Sometimes Marx treats the state as part of the infrastructure/economy, but on other occasions he considers it a superstructure that is completely divorced from the infrastructure. What is even worse is that the AMP is pregnant with ominous implications. For instance, if the state can show up in the (classless) primitive

communism of the AMP, what guarantee, if any, is there that it would expire or fade away in the future (classless) socialist or communist social formation ?

All things considered, there is not any question that Marx's AMP is full of copious methodological and theoretical absurdities, flaws, and contradictions. But there is more to it than that. The AMP is also empirically invalid well and truly if it is weighed against the empirical reality of the ancient and early medieval (i.e. pre-Muslim) Indian social formation. This is shown in chapters 4, 5, 7 and 9. Chapters 4 and 5 are devoted to showing that Marx's repeated assertions of the absence of private property in land in India have no empirical validity whatsoever. There exist abundant hard facts, corroborated by an overpowering mass of different types of data, which prove beyond any shadow of doubt not only the existence of such property but also its development in different forms, e.g. allodial (peasant proprietary) and feudal (hierarchical). Marx's refusal to integrate into his AMP such data (e.g. *The Fifth Report* 1812, and works of certain colonial officials) as confirmed the existence of private ownership of land, strengthens the presumption of Marx's materialist Orientalism in regard to his treatment of the non-European social formations.

The same presupposition also arises in chapter 7 where I exemplify the empirical irrelevance of the AMP insofar as it alleges socioeconomic dormancy in the Indian social formation. The relevant data for the period under review make it crystal clear that Marx's AMP, when empirically checked up on, is thoroughly misrepresentative of the Indian social economy. As my inquiry exhibits, almost all of the generalizations—viz. the persistence *ad infinitum* of the simple or natural division of labour, the lack of commodity production and exchange, the absence of the class of traders and merchants, the lack of cities and towns, and so on—giving substance to the AMP are nullified by the empirical data at our disposal. The development of the productive forces and relations as well as interaction between them was such that the Indian social formation was never at any historical point in time totally based on the self-sufficiency of a peasant-dominated village economy, as Marx's AMP wants us to believe. And what is more, from about the 6th century A.D. the Indian social formation came to be dominated by a class

of feudal lords (*sāmantas*) who exercised varying degrees of state power and simultaneously controlled the use of the major means of production (land). If anything, this class-directed socioeconomic change and development is certainly an additional dimension that negates Marx's projection of the stagnant variant of primitive communism in his AMP. Put otherwise, the different facets of dynamism in the Indian social formation are best revealed when one locates them within the context of social classes, class practices (politics), and the state.

In chapter 9 I examine the origin, development, and functions of these contextual components of the Indian social formation in the course of my evaluation of the empirical validity of the (non-) class and political constituents of the AMP. It is needless to point out that the AMP, when empirically tested, falls to pieces. As my findings bespeak, India never experienced the primitive communism of the kind Marx had conceptualized in his AMP. Instead of being primarily composed of, and dominated by, occupant peasants since time immemorial, as Marx suggests, the Indian social formation displays the rise and development of a number of social classes or fractions thereof, such as peasant proprietors, landowners, slaves, traders and merchants, independent artisans, feudal landlords, forced labourers, serfs, etc. Neither is there any lack of evidence concerning the presence and persistence of antagonisms and struggles between relevant social classes (e.g. slaves and slaveowners, or feudal landowners and their dependent peasantry). Likewise, the empirical data do not corroborate Marx's supposition of the origin of the state either in conquest and force or in hydraulic functions. In India the state arose only when the social formation became internally divided into opposed social classes at a certain point in its historical development. No less significant is the fact that the state in India can not be reduced to the person of the despot (and his aides). On the contrary, it was an organizational aggregate of different institutional structures of which the king was only one, even though he was an important one. And last, but by no means least, the state structure did not remain the same evermore, because it was fundamentally affected by feudal political relations in the wake of the development of feudalism from about the 6th century A.D. All in all, the AMP is not a productive theoretical category that reflects and

reproduces in thought the real concrete either of the Indian social classes or of the Indian state in the period under investigation here.

Finally, I summarize the main findings of this study in chapter 10. In this connection I emphasize the futility of the recent attempts at the restoration of Marx's AMP in a new guise and, hence, at its reintroduction through the back-door.

VI. Methodology, Types and Sources of Data and Limitations of the Study

Before I comment on the types and sources of data and on the limitations of the study, let me briefly outline the (Marxist) methodology, of which I make use in my assay of the methodological, theoretical, and empirical validity of Marx's AMP.

Methodology, as conceived here, is "the systematic and logical study of the principles guiding scientific investigation."[171] Put otherwise, it is the study of "the research process itself—the principles, procedures, and strategies for gathering information, analyzing it, and interpreting it."[172] Methodology as such is different from and not identical with the construction of research techniques (e.g. participant observation etc.), the scope of the latter being considerably narrower than the former.[173] Likewise, methodology should be distinguished from theory even though both are organically connected with each other. Broadly speaking, theory designates a set of logically interconnected concepts that produce knowledge through the process of exploration, description, and explanation of a variety of facts (e.g. events, phenomena, relations etc.) pertaining to social reality. Williamson and others define social scientific "theory" as "a general explanation", while Shaw and Costanzo regard it as "a set of *interrelated hypotheses* or propositions concerning a phenomenon or a set of phenomena."[174] The meaning of the word "science" in this connection can be understood as "the active search for, and presentation of, truths and evidence for them, using arguments and data which related not simply to what could be touched or counted, but to what could be stated, in more general terms (including moral terms), to be the case with man and his world."[175] Since I use the Marxist methodo-

logy in all my analyses in the chapters to follow, it is necessary to highlight the main principles of this methodology.

The core of the Marxist methodology consists in the principle of historical materialism which defines man "as a practical subject to be explained by his process of real life" or which explains man "rationally, by the necessity in which he is practically placed, to produce and reproduce his material conditions of existence in order to satisfy his needs."[176] That is to say, men as "real individuals" must, above all other things, produce and reproduce conditions of both their physical and social existence.[177] Production, entailing reproduction of life as well as social relations between persons, is "the first premise of all human existence and, therefore, of all history."[178] To emphasize the importance of production, either in sustaining the living individuals or in involving them in a complex network of social relations, is to emphasize the importance of a mode of production, i.e. "the way in which men produce their means of subsistence"[179] in a given social formation (i.e. society).

The importance of the mode of production in a scientific study can be clarified in the sense that objects (i.e. facts, phenomena, events, relations, etc.) of investigation can be analysed and explained in terms of the mode of production in any given society. This is so because what men are, i.e. their nature, ideas, consciousness etc., is directly related to the mode of production in the social formation.[180] This means that the Marxist methodology emphasizes scientific investigation of facts not in terms of subjective (i.e. postulated or arbitrary) meanings individuals put on them but in terms of the objective (i.e. actual or real) conditions in the mode of production in a society. This observation should not be so interpreted as to imply crude economic determinism. This is, for example, the emphasis on the mode of production as the methodological point of departure should not be so understood as to mean that ideas, once born on the basis of a mode of production, would not exercise "influence on human action and, in general, on the course of human affairs."[181] What this implies is that the superstructure (viz. law, politics, religion etc.) are not "just reducible" to the base (i.e. infrastructure or economy) and that the latter "ultimately" determines the former and the totality as a whole.[182] Levitt explains :

> The motor of history is within the economic structure, even if the mode of appearance is characterized by religion or politics. In fact, the very appearance of one or the other of these superstructural spheres as dominant is itself to be explained by the existing relations of production. . . On the other hand, we must avoid a simple economic reductionism—reductionism which would relegate the superstructure to 'mere' ideology.[183]

In other words, one should consider the appropriateness of political, religious, legal and other institutions as important forces in the concrete situations of the social formation.[184]

Analytically, the concept of mode of production refers to a combination of the productive forces with the relations of production. There are three elements in any system of productive forces : a) the personal activity of man, i.e. the work itself ; b) the subject of that work ; and c) instruments of work. The subject of work and instruments necessary for work constitute the means of production.[185] These three elements (i.e. a, b and c) combine in what Marx calls the labour process. In the labour process "man's activity, with the help of the instruments of labour, effects an alteration, designed from the commencement, in the material worked upon. The process disappears in the product ; the latter is use-value."[186] In other words, the concept of productive forces or labour process, so to say, points to a relation of man to, and a manner of his appropriation of, nature.

In contrast, the concept of the relations of production refers not only to man's relation to other men in a particular way but also the manner in which (the economic) surplus is extracted. That is, the relations of production are relations that bind both workers and non-workers. In these relations non-workers, as proprietors or owners of the means of production (i.e. land in the case of feudal lords or factory establishment in the case of industrial capitalists), appropriate the surplus produced by the workers (i.e. serfs or bonded labourers in feudalism or wage labourers in industrial capitalism). The relations of production are thus basically class relations. More specifically, the concept of class will be understood here as designating a group of individuals in terms of whether or not they own (and control) the means of production.[187]

With the emergence of the antagonistic classes (i.e. classes

opposed to each other in terms of ownership or non-ownership of the means of production) comes also the state—an organization that not only maintains the conditions for the existence of the mode of production but also holds, while allowing appropriation of surplus by one class from another, the antagonistic classes in unison. It maintains and reproduces antagonistic class relations and, thus, secures the existence of a class divided social formation. There were, however, societies without the state because those were without classes. The state is, in an important sense, "the excrescence of society."[188] The state is not an universal institution because of opposition of interests between classes. It is, says Krader, "the product of that society which is divided into social classes whose interests are opposed to each other by virtue of their different relations in and to social production."[189]

Another postulate of the Marxist methodology is that concepts indispensable in any scientific investigation should be so formulated as to be historically specific. That is, concepts must reproduce reality in its appropriate historical contexts. If they do not, they are mere abstractions (i.e. contextless). Because of the changefulness of the social formation, i.e. "continual movement of growth in productive forces, of destruction in social relations, of formation in ideas", concpets are only "historical and transitory products" but not something "fixed, immutable, eternal."[190] Take, for instance, the concepts of class and property. To define class by its relation to the means of production is an abstraction. The concept of class, to be a useful analytical and explanatory tool, must reflect the reality of a historically specific society such as, for example, feudal or capitalist society.[191] The concept of property can be defined as

> a right in the sense of an enforceable claim to some use or benefit of something, whether it is a right to a share in some common resource or an individual right in some particular things. *What distinguishes property from mere momentary possession is that property is a claim that will be enforced by society or the state, by custom or convention or law.* If there were not this distinction there would be no need for a concept of property : no other concept than mere occupancy or momentary physical possession would be needed.[192]

In any case, the concept of property or, synonymously, the right of ownership implies a relation between the proprietor, on the one hand, and other persons (i.e. non-proprietors or non-owners), on the other, with regard to certain things or objects (viz. lands, buildings, etc.). Defined in this way, the concept of property contains only a *general* but not a *historically specific* meaning. That is, the concept of property has not retained the same meaning in all stages of historical development of human society. As Marx says :

> In each historical epoch, property has developed differently and with a set of entirely different social relations. Thus to define bourgeois property is nothing else than to give an exposition of all the social relations of bourgeois production. To try to give a definition of property as of an independent relation, a category apart, an abstract and eternal idea, can be nothing but an illusion of metaphysics or jurisprudence.[193]

In brief, the meanings of the term property have changed over time in relation to changes in the mode(s) of production in the social formation. While more will be said later, it suffices to state here that I shall utilize the above-mentioned concept of property in my discussion of the existence of private property in land in India.[194]

Another important postulate of the Marxist methodology is this. Insofar as scientific investigation of facts is concerned, the Marxist methodology is also based on the principle that facts that are to be investigated are not to be treated as independent in themselves as if they were a "collection of dead facts."[195] That is, they should not be treated in isolation from each other. Rather, they should be regarded as mutually interlinked and also as interlinked aspects of a whole or totality. They exist in their contextual interdependence on each other, and on the whole itself. One aspect of the whole cannot be reduced to the other(s). In brief, the Marxist methodology emphasizes both the holistic conception of reality and mutual interaction between different aspects of that reality.

> The conclusion we reach is not that production, distribution, exchange and consumption are identical, but that they all form the members of a totality, distinctions within a unity. Production predominates not only over

> itself, in the antithetical definition of production, but over the other moments as well. The process always returns to production to begin anew. . . A definite production thus determines a definite consumption, distribution and exchange as well as *definite relations between these different moments.* Admittedly, however, *in its one-sided form,* production is itself determined by the other moments. . . Mutual interaction takes place between the different moments. This is the case with every organic whole.[196]

Having roughed out the major premises of the Marxist methodology, let me now turn to a brief discussion of the types and sources of data as well as the limitations of the present work.

It is almost entirely based on published materials collected from different library sources. These materials are of diverse types and include the following : British Parliamentary Papers, official publications, writings of the British colonial officials, accounts of European travellers in Mughal India, original digests and commentaries on Hindu Law, historical and contemporary monographs upon different aspects of the ancient and early medieval Indian social formation, unpublished dissertations, and manuscripts, and publications in the periodicals. At the same time I should point out two limitations of the present work. First, it does not cover the entire pre-capitalist (or pre-British) historical period, but is only limited to what is traditionally known in ordinary parlance as the Hindu period. I stop at 1206 A.D. when Muslim political power became consolidated, even though the Arabs conquered Sind in the 8th century and the Turks and Afghans subjugated Panjab towards the end of the 10th century. In any event, after the rise of the Muslims to political power there began a transition and transformation of the Indian social formation dominated till then by the Hindus. But from the 13th century, the Indian social formation gradually emerged as an ethnic mosaic of two dominant ethnic groups and their cultures : Hindus and Muslims. This evolving pluralism was indeed expressed in innumerable ways at different levels (e.g. economic, political, ideological, etc.) of the social formation. What all this boils down to is that from the 13th century onward the Indian social formation takes on altogether new dimensions that are in themselves worthy of separate and independent research. This warrants, therefore, the exclusion

from the scope of my study of any focus on all changes and developments in the Indian social formation subsequent to 1206 A.D. *Considered in that light, the "Hindu" period, the period of my own study, does not mean apparently anything more than chronological space and time. In terms of the development of the productive forces and relations, however, the Hindu period can roughly be divided into two phases. The first one commences from about the rise of the Indus civilization (c. 2500/2300 B.C.) and continues to about the 6th century A.D. This is the ancient phase, at the end of which commences the second phase. It is called the early medieval phase (c. 550 A.D.-1200 A.D.), which is marked by the rise and development of a number of feudal features in the Indian social formation.*[197]

A final limitation of the present work consists in the fact that it focuses on the AMP as formulated, not by both Marx and Engels, but only by Marx. Needless to explain, this limitation is a "limitation" only to those who are accustomed to accord the same epistemological status to the works of both Marx and Engels. In contrast to this approach, my exclusion of the views of Engels is an act of deliberate choice. In this I have been motivated as much by an urge to focus simply on Marx as the original formulator of the AMP as by the *raison d' etre* to maintain the originality of the views of each, even though both Marx and Engels saw, more often than not, eye to eye about the matters we are concerned with here.

Footnotes

1. T. J. Byres, "Modes of Production and Non-European, Pre-Colonial Societies : The Nature and Significance of the Debate", *JPS,* 12 (January/April 1985), p. 9.
2. A. T. Embree, "Oriental Despotism : A note on the History of the Idea", *Societas,* 1 (1971), p. 255.
3. See S. Avineri, "Introduction", in K. Marx, *On Colonialism & Modernization* (New York : Doubleday, 1969), pp. 5-6 ; U. Melotti, *Marx and the Third World* (London : Macmillan, 1977), pp. 63-72 ; and F. *Tokei, Essays on the Asiatic Mode of Production* (Budapest : Akademiai Kiado, 1979), p. 21.
4. See L. Krader, *The Ethnological Notebooks of Karl Marx* (Assen : Van Gorcum, 1972), *passim.*

5. C. Levitt, "Karl Marx and Henry Sumner Maine : India and the Asiatic Mode of Production", *SC*, 3 (April-June 1983), p. 1.
6. Tokei, *Essays on the Asiatic Mode of Production*, pp. 20-1.
7. In 1206 A.D. Qutb-ud-din Aybak proclaimed himself as the Sultan (1206 A.D.-1210 A.D.) of Delhi, thus, initiating altogether a new and stable phase of Muslim rule in India. See S. Wolpert, *A New History of India* (New York : Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 109 ; and S. Bhattacharya, *A Dictionary of Indian History* (Calcutta : University of Calcutta, 1967), p. 701.
8. For a detailed and excellent review of the AMP, see P. Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State* (London : Verso, 1980), pp. 462-72 ; M. Sawer, *Marxism and the Question of the Asiatic Mode of Production* (The Hague : Martinus Nijhoff, 1977), pp. 4-39 ; and L. Krader, *The Asiatic Mode of Production* (Assen : Van Gorcum, 1975), *passim*.
9. Embree, *op. cit.*, pp. 256-7.
10. F. Venturi, "Oriental Despotism", *JHI*, 24 (1963), p. 136.
11. Aristotle, *The Works of Aristotle* (Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1908), p. 133.
12. H. Lubasz, "Marx's Concept of the Asiatic Mode of Production : A Genetic Analysis", *ES*, 13 (November 1984), pp. 461-2.
13. Embree, *op. cit.*, p. 261.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 262.
15. For details, see R. Koebner, "Despot and Despotism : Vicissitudes of a Political Term", *JWCI*, 14 (1951), pp. 275-302 ; and Venturi, *op. cit.*, pp. 133-42.
16. Sawer, *op. cit.*, pp. 5-6.
17. N. Machiavelli, *The Prince* (New York : St. Martin's Press, 1964), pp. 29-63.
18. J. Bodin, *Six Books of the Commonwealth* (Oxford : Basil Blackwell, 1955), pp. 56-7 and 59.
19. Krader, *The Asiatic Mode of Production*, p. 24.
20. Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 25.
21. J. B. Tavernier, *Travels in India* (London : Macmillan, 1925), vol. 1, p. 260.
22. F. Bernier, *Travels in the Mogul Empire : A.D. 1656-1668* (London : Constable, 1891), pp. 224-5 and 255-6.
23. Anderson, *op. cit.*, pp. 463-4.
24. Montesquieu, *The Spirit of Laws* (Berkeley : University of California Press, 1977), Bk. XVII, chap. 6(5), p. 279.
25. Anderson, *op. cit.*, pp. 465-6.
26. See S. Ambirajan, *Classical Political Economy and British Policy in India* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1978), p. 9 ; and W. J. Barber, *British Economic Thought and India 1600-18* (Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1975), p. 98.
27. Sawer, *op. cit.*, p. 29.
28. A. Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (London : Routledge, 1898), pp. 535-7 and 572-3.

29. Barber, *op. cit.*, p. 129.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 175.
31. J. Mill, *The History of India* (New York : Chelsea House Publishers, 1968), vol. 1, p. 118 ; and vol. 2, pp. 133 and 151.
32. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 141 ; and vol. 2, p. 148.
33. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 218-9.
34. Krader, *The Asiatic Mode of Production*, p. 54.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 55 ; and K. Marx, *Theories of Surplus-Value* (Moscow : Progress Publishers, 1975), part III, p. 422.
36. See Sawer, op. cit., pp. 11 and 38 ; and Krader, *The Asiatic Mode of Production*, n. 19, p. 31.
37. R. Jones, *An Essay on the Distribution of Wealth and on the Sources of Taxation* (New York : A. M. Kelley, 1964), pp. 109-42.
38. *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8. Emphases added.
39. For a brief discussion, see H. Draper, *Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution* (New York : Monthly Review Press, 1977), vol. 1, pp. 646-52.
40. G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* (London : George Bell and Sons, 1890), p. 168.
41. *Ibid.*, pp. 180 and 475.
42. See K. Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (New York : International Publishers, 1970), p. 21 ; and *Capital* (New York : International Publishers, 1970), vol. 1, p. 79.
43. A. M. Bailey and J. R. Llobera, "The AMP : Sources and Formations of the Concept", in A. M. Bailey and J. R. Llobera, eds., *The Asiatic Mode of Production : Science and Politics* (London : Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), p. 23.
44. *Ibid.* : and L. Krader, "Reflections on the Asiatic Mode of Production", *Unpublished Manuscript*, p. 1.
45. J. G. Taylor, *From Modernization to Modes of Production* (New Jersey : Humanities Press, 1979), p. 172.
46. Tokei, *Essays on the Asiatic Mode of Production*, p. 20. Emphases added.
47. Cf. F. Tokei, "Some Contentious Issues in the Interpretation of the Asiatic Mode of Production", *JCA*, 12 (1982), pp. 294-303.
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49. S. P. Dunn, *The Fall and Rise of the Asiatic Mode of Production* (London : Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982), pp. 7 and 79.
50. See B. Turner, *Marx and the End of Orientalism* (London : George Allen and Unwin, 1978), *passim* ; and "Orientalism, Islam and Capitalism", *SCO*, 25 (1978), pp. 371-94 ; A. G. Frank, *World*

Accumulation : 1492-1789 (New York : Monthly Review Press, 1978), esp. pp. 135-66 ; and K. Mohri, "Marx and Underdevelopment", *MR*, 30 (April 1979), pp. 32-42.

51. B. Hindess and P. Q. Hirst, *Pre-Capitalist Modes of Production* (London : Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977), p. 178. See also E. Hobsbawm, "From Feudalism to Capitalism", in P. Sweezy et. al., *The Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism* (London : Verso, 1978), p. 159.
52. A. M. Bailey and J. R. Llobera, "General Introduction", in Bailey and Llobera, eds., *op. cit.*, p. 1.
53. Tokei, "Some Contentious Issues in the Interpretation of the Asiatic Mode of Production", p. 294.
54. Tokei, *Essays on the Asiatic Mode of Production,* pp. 22. Emphases in original.
55. Hindess and Hirst, *Pre-Capitalist Modes of Production*, p. 180. Emphasis in original. For some changes in their position, not necessarily in connection with the AMP, see also B. Hindess and P. Q. Hirst, *Mode of Production and Social Formation : An Auto-Critique of Pre-Capitalist Modes of Production* (London : Macmillan, 1977).
56. Anderson, *op. cit.*, p. 548.
57. *Ibid.*, pp. 489-90 and 494.
58. See Lubasz, *op. cit., passim.*
59. *Ibid.*, p. 457.
60. L. Krader, *A Treatise of Social Labour* (Assen : Van Gorcum, 1974), p. 319.
61. Krader, *The Asiatic Mode of Production,* pp. 337-8.
62. Krader, *A Treatise of Social Labor,* p. 318.
63. Krader, "Reflections on the Asiatic Mode of Production", p. 3.
64. Krader, *The Asiatic Mode of Production,* p. 310. See also Draper, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, pp. 537-42.
65. See M. Godelier, "The Concept of the 'Asiatic Mode of Production' and Marxist Models of Social Evolution", in D. Seddon, ed., *Relations of Production : Marxist Approaches to Economic Anthropology* (London : Frank Cass, 1978), pp. 209-57 ; and J. Suret-Canale, "Traditional Societies in Tropical Africa and the Marxist Concept of the 'Asian Mode of Production' ", *SAA*, 4 (Fall 1965), pp. 38-9.
66. For details, see Anderson, *op. cit.*, pp. 485-7.
67. E. Mandel, "The Asiatic Mode of Production and the Historical Pre-Conditions for the Rise of Capital", in his *The Formation of the Economic Thought of Karl Marx* (New York : MR Press, 1971), pp. 126-7.
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69. *Ibid.*, p. 49.
70. For details see *Ibid.*, pp. 59-62.
71. *Ibid.*, p. 77.

72. Sawer, *op. cit.*, p. 226.
73. *Ibid.*, p. 227. Emphasis in original.
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75. *Ibid.*, pp. 263-4. See also her "Problematic Modes and the Mughal Social Formation", *IS*, 9 (1980), pp. 9-21 ; and "The Development of Petty Commodity Production in Mughal India", *BCAS*, 14 (1982), pp. 16-24.
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77. See *ibid.*, pp. 380-2 ; and K. A. Wittfogel, "The Ruling Bureaucracy of Oriental Despotism : A Phenomenon that Paralysed Marx", *RP*, 15 (1953), pp. 350-9.
78. See A. M. Bailey and J. R. Llobera, "Karl A. Wittfogel and the Asiatic Mode of Production : A Reappraisal", *SR*, 27 (1979), pp. 541-49.
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81. J. Needham, "Review of Oriental Despotism : A Comparative Study of Total Power", *SS*, 23 (1959), p. 65.
82. Anderson, *op. cit.*, n. 4, p. 487.
83. S. Cooper and B. McFarlane, "The Asiatic Mode of Production —An Economic Phoenix ?", *AQ*, 38 (1966), p. 29.
84. For general historiographical reviews of Indian historical works, see D. Lorenzen, "Imperialism and the Historiography of Ancient India", in S. N. Mukherjee, ed., *India : History and Thought Essays in Honour of A. L. Basham* (Calcutta : Subarnarekha, 1982), pp. 84-101 ; R. Thapar, "Interpretations of Ancient Indian History", HT, 7 (1968), pp. 318-35 ; *The Past and Prejudice* (New Delhi : Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Govt. of India, 1973), *passim* ; and "Ideology and the Interpretation of Early Indian History", *Review*, 5 (Winter 1982), pp. 389-411 ; S. Jaiswal, "Sutdies in Early Indian Social History : Trends and Possibilities", *IHR*, 6 (1979-80), pp. 1-64 ; R. S. Sharma and D. N. Jha, "The Economic History of India upto 1200 A.D. : Trends and Prospects", *JESHO*, 17 (1974), pp. 48-80 ; and M. L. Handa, "Indian Historiography : Writing and Rewriting Indian History", *JAAS*, 17 (1982), pp. 218-34.
85. Thapar, "Ideology and the Interpretation of Early Indian History", p. 390.

86. Lorenzen, *op. cit.*, p. 84.
87. *Ibid.*, p. 86.
88. Sharma and Jha, *op. cit.*, p. 51.
89. See D. Naoroji, *Poverty and Un-British Rule in India* (New Delhi : Publications Division, Govt. of India, 1962) ; R. C. Dutt, *Early Hindu Civilization B.C. 2000 to 320* (Calcutta : R. P. Mitra, 1927) ; K. P. Jayaswal, *Hindu Polity* (Bangalore City : Bangalore Printing and Publishing, 1967) ; R. C. Majumdar, *Ancient India* (Delhi : Motilal Banarsidass, 1964) ; and *Corporate Life in Ancient India* (Calcutta : Calcutta University, 1922), R. K. Mookerji, *Indian Shipbuilding* (Allahabad : Kitab Mahal, 1962) ; H. C. Raychaudhuri, *Political History of Ancient India* (Calcutta : University of Calcutta, 1950) ; U. N. Ghosal, *The Agrarian System of Ancient India* (Calcutta : University of Calcutta, 1930) ; and *Contributions to the Hindu Revenue System* (Calcutta : Saraswat Library, 1972) ; B. K. Sarkar, *The Positive Background of Hindu Sociology : Introduction to Hindu Positivism* (New York : AMS Press, 1974) ; and *The Positive Background of Hindu Sociology : Book II Political* (New York : AMS Press, 1974).
90. See Thapar, "Interpretations of Ancient Indian History", p. 326.
91. Sarkar, *The Positive Background of Hindu Sociology : Book II, Political*, p. 62. Emphases added.
92. See *ibid.*, p. 83 ; Ghosal, *The Agrarian System of Ancient India*, pp. 81-123 ; Jayaswal, *op. cit.*, p. 330 ; and N. Bandyopadhyaya, *Economic Life and Progress in Ancient India*, vol. 1 (Calcutta : University of Calcutta, 1945), pp. 110-21, 204-6, and 291-3 ; and P. Nath, *A Study of the Economic Condition of Ancient India* (London : Royal Asiatic Society, 1929), pp. 127-38.
93. Thapar, "Interpretations of Ancient Indian History", pp. 322 and 333. Emphases added.
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95. Lorenzen, *op. cit.*, p. 87.
96. D. D. Kosambi, *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History* (Bombay : Popular Prakashan, 1975) ; and *Ancient India* (New York : Pantheon Books, 1965) ; A. R. Desai, *Social Background of Indian Nationalism* (Bombay : Popular Book Depot, 1959) ; *Rural Sociology in India* (Bombay : Popular Prakashan, 1969) ; *Essays on Modernization of Underdeveloped Societies* (Bombay : Thacker, 1971), 2 vols. ; *State and Society in India* (Bombay : Popular Prakashan, 1975) ; and *Peasant Struggles in India* (Bombay : Oxford University Press, 1979) ; I. Habib, "An Examination of Wittfogel's Theory of Oriental Despotism", pp. 378-92 ; "Problems of Marxist Historical Analysis", in K. M. Kurian, ed., *India-State and Society* (Bombay : Orient Longman, 1975), pp. 20-32 ; "Potentialities of Capitalistic Development in the Economy of Mughal India", *JEH*, 29 (1969), pp. 32-78 ; "The Social Distribution of Landed Property in Pre-British India", *Enquiry*, 2 (1965), pp. 21-75 ; and *The Agrarian System of Mughal India* (London : Asia Publishing House, 1963) ; B. Chandra, *The Rise and Growth of Economic Nationalism in India* (New Delhi : People's Publishing House, 1966) ; "Colonialism, Stages of Colonialism and the Colonial State", *JCA*, 10 (1980), pp. 272-85 ; and "Karl Marx, His Theories of Asian Societies, and Colonial Rule", *Review*, 5 (Summer 1981), pp. 13-91 ; and S. N. Hasan, "Zamindars and the Mughals", in R. E. Frykenberg, ed., *Land Control and Social Structure in Indian History* (Madison : The University of Wisconsin, 1969), pp. 17-31 ; and *Thoughts on Agrarian Relations* (New Delhi : People's Publishing House, 1973).

97. See R. S. Sharma, *Indian Feudalism : c. 300-1200 A.D.* (Calcutta : University of Calcutta, 1965) ; *Social Changes in Early Medieval India : circa A.D. 500-1200* (New Delhi : People's Publishing House, 1969) ; "Feudalism Retouched", *IHR*, 1 (1974), pp. 320-30 ; "The Problem of Transition from Ancient to Medieval in Ancient Indian History", *IHR*, 1 (1974), pp. 1-9 ; and "How Feudal was Indian Feudalism", *JPS*, 12 (1985), pp. 19-43 ; B. N. S. Yadava, "Some Aspects of the Changing Order in India During the Śaka-Kusāṇa Age", in G. R. Sharma, ed., *Kuṣāṇa Studies* (Allahabad : University of Allahabad, 1968), pp. 75-97 ; *Society and Culture in Northern India in the Twelfth Century* (Allahabad : Central Book Depot, 1973). This book is hereafter abbreviated as *Society and Culture In Northern India* ; "Immobility and Subjection of Indian Peasantry in Early Medieval Complex", *IHR*, 1 (1974), pp. 18-27 ; "Problem of Interaction Between Socio-Economic Classes in Early Medieval Complex", *IHR*, 3 (1976), pp. 43-58 ; "The Accounts of the Kali Age and the Social Transition from Antiquity to the Middle Ages", *IHR*, 5 (1978-79), pp. 31-63 ; and "Presidential Address", *IHCP*, 41st session (Bombay : Bombay University, 1980), pp. 19-78 ; Kosambi, An *Introduction to the Study of Indian History*, pp. 295-405 ; "On the Development of Feudalism in India", *ABORI*, 26 (1952), pp. 258-69 ; "Indian Feudal Trade Charters", *JESHO*, 2 (1959), pp. 281-93 ; and "Origins of Feudalism in Kashmir", *JASB*, 31-2 (1959), pp. 108-20 ; R. Choudhary, "Some Aspects of Feudalism in South India", *JIH*, 53 (1975), pp. 63-104 ; D. C. Sircar, ed., *Land System and Feudalism in Ancient India* (Calcutta : University of Calcutta, 1966) ; R. N. Nandi, "Feudalization of the State in Medieval South India", *SSP*, 1 (March 1984), pp. 33-59 ; D. N. Jha, "Presidential Address", *IHCP*, 40th session (Waltair: Andhra Pradesh University, 1979), pp. 15-45 ; and "Validity of the Brahmana Peasant Alliance' and the 'Segmentary State' in Early Medieval South India", *SSP*, 2 (June 1984), pp. 270-96 ; K. K. Gopal,

"Feudal Composition of Army in Early Medieval India", *JAHRS* 28 (1962-3), pp. 30-99 ; and "The Assembly of the Sāmantas in Early Medieval India", *JIH*, 42 (1964), pp. 241-50 ; L. Gopal, "On Feudal Polity in Ancient India", *JIH* 41 (1963), pp. 405-13 ; and "Quasi-Manorial Rights in Ancient India", *JESHO*, 6 (1963), pp. 296-308 ; and D. Rothermund, *The Phases of Indian Nationalism and other Essays* (Bombay : Nachiketa Publications Limited, 1970), pp. 165-78.

98. Jaiswal, *op. cit.*, pp. 19-20.
99. D. C. Sircar, *Landlordism and Tenancy in Ancient and Medieval India as Revealed by Epigraphic Records* (Lucknow : University of Lucknow, 1969) ; H. Mukhia, "Was There Feudalism in Indian History ?" *JPS*, 8 (April 1981), pp. 273-310 ; and "Peasant Production and Medieval Indian Society", *JPS*, 12 (January-April 1985), pp. 228-51 ; A. Rudra, "Against Feudalism", *EPW*, 16 (December 26, 1981), pp. 2133-46 ; D. Thorner, "Feudalism in India", in R. Coulbourn, ed., *Feudalism in History* (Princeton : Princeton University Press, 1956), pp. 133-50 ; and B. Stein, "The State and the Agrarian Order in Medieval South India · A Historiographical Critique", in B. Stein, ed., *Essays on South India* (Hawaii : University of Hawaii, 1975), pp. 64-91 ; *Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India* (Delhi : Oxford University Press, 1980), *passim* ; and "Politics, Peasants and the Deconstruction of Feudalism in Medieval India", *JPS*, 12 (January-April 1985), pp. 54-86.
100. See chapter 5, pp. 248-50 ; chapter 7, pp. 394-8 ; and chapter 9, pp. 495-500.
101. Sircar, *Landlordism and Tenancy in Ancient and Medieval India as Revealed by Epigraphic Records*, pp. 32-48 ; and Sharma, "Indian Feudalism Retouched", p. 327.
102. See chapter 5, p. 254 ; and chapter 9, p. 503.
103. Chapter 5, pp. 248-50.
104. F. Perlin, "Concepts of Order and Comparison, with a Diversion on Concrete Ideologies and Corporate Institutions in Late Pre-Colonial India", *JPS*, 12 (January/April 1985), pp. 109-10.
105. For details, see chapter 9, pp. 499-500.
106. Stein, "Politics, Peasants and the Deconstruction of Feudalism in Medieval India", p. 83.
107. *Ibid.*
108. See Byres, *op. cit.*, p. 12.
109. Krader, *The Asiatic Mode of Production*, p. 202.
110. Stein, "The State and the Agrarian Order in the Medieval South India : A Historiographical Critique", p. 87.
111. See Nandi, *op. cit.*, pp. 33-59 ; Jha, "Validity of the 'Brahmana Peasant Alliance' and the 'Segmentary State' in Early Medieval South India", pp. 270-96 ; and Guna, *op. cit.*, pp. 142-96.

112. Stein, "Politics, Peasants and the Deconstruction of Feudalism in Medieval India", pp. 74 and 82.
113. *Ibid.*, p. 80.
114. Perlin, *op. cit.*, p. 126.
115. B. Wielenga, *Marxist Views in Historical Perspective* (Madras : The Christian Literature Society, 1976), p. 65.
116. *Ibid.*
117. Wittfogel, *Oriental Despotism*, p. 409.
118. *Ibid.*, footnote g, p. 409.
119. B. N. Datta, *Studies in Indian Polity* (Calcutta : Purabi Publishers, 1944), pp. 9-28 and 426-41.
120. S. A. Dange, *India : From Primitive Communism to Slavery* (New Delhi : People's Publishing House, 1961), p. XIX.
121. See D. Riepe, "D. D. Kosambi : Father of Scientific History", in R. S. Sharma, ed., *Indian Society : Historical Probings in Memory of D. D. Kosambi* (New Delhi : People's Publishing House, 1974), pp. 34-44.
122. Thapar, "Interpretations of Ancient Indian History", p. 331.
123. Kosambi, *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History*, p. 10. Emphases added. Elsewhere, he accepts Marx's AMP in a qualified form. See his "Stages of Indian History", *JISCS*, 1 (1954), pp. 40-55.
124. Kosambi, *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History*, pp. 11-2.
125. *Ibid.*, p. 1. Emphases in original.
126. *Ibid.*, pp. 139, 153, 159, 216, 257, 272, and pp. 295-405.
127. D. Thorner, "Marx on India and the Asiatic Mode of Production", *CIS*, 9 (December, 1966), pp. 44 and 57.
128. See S. Naqvi, "Marx on India's Pre-Asiatic Society", in K. M. Kurian, ed., *op. cit.*, pp. 75 and 78-9.
129. S. Naqvi, "Marx on Pre-British Indian Society and Economy", *IESHR*, 9 (1972), p. 407. Emphases added.
130. Chandra, "Karl Marx, His Theories of Asian Societies, and Colonial Rule", p. 47. An example of the repudiation of the AMP in very general terms can be found in K. C. Raychaudhury, "Marx's Asiatic Mode of Production and the Evolution of the Indian Economy", *IEJ*, 22 (July-September 1974), pp. 20-35.
131. See Chandra, "Karl Marx, his Theories of Asian Societies, and Colonial Rule", pp. 47-55.
132. *Ibid.*, pp. 47 and 55. Emphases added.
133. Habib, "Problems of Marxist Historical Analysis", pp. 23-4. The same dissatisfaction is also expressed by Thapar in view of the recent attempts to support the AMP in spite of its empirical invalidity in the Indian context. See R. Thapar, *From Lineage to State* (Bombay : Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 1.
134. Habib, *The Agrarian System of Mughal India*, pp. 111-2, 75-81, 123, 154, 179 and 330-51. See also his "Potentialities of Capitalistic Development in the Economy of Mughal India", *passim*.

The existence of private ownership of land in Mughal India has now been clearly and precisely established. See B. R. Grover, "Nature of Land-Rights in Mughal India", *IESHR*, 1 (1963), pp. 1-23 ; and "Nature of Dehat-*Taaluqa* (Zamindari villages) and the Evolution of the *Taaluqdari* system during the Mughal Age", *IESHR*, 2 (1965), pp. 166-77 and 259-88 ; and Hasan, "Zamindars under the Mughals", *passim* ; and *Thoughts on Agrarian Relations in Mughal India, passim.*

135. T. Raychaudhuri, "The Asiatic Mode of Production and India's Foreign Trade in the 17th century : A Theoretical Exercise", in B. De, ed., *Essays in Honour of Prof. S. C. Sarkar* (New Delhi : People's Publishing House, 1976), pp. 839 and 843.
136. *Ibid.*, p. 839.
137. Avineri, *op. cit.*, p. 13.
138. Raychaudhuri, *op. cit.*, p. 840.
139. *Ibid.*, p. 843. For my own elaboration of the problems of identification of feudalism with serfdom or of defining serfdom, see chapter 5, p. 254 and chapter 9, pp. 503-6 and (n. 88) 564-5.
140. Raychaudhuri, *op. cit.*, p. 843. For my own discussion, see this chapter, and chapters 3, 4 and 9.
141. Raychaudhuri, *op. cit.*, p. 843.
142. See D. Banerjee, "Marx and the Transformability of 'Asiatic' Societies", in De, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 861. Banerjee recently attempts to reconstruct the theory of the AMP solely from Marx's notes on Kovalevsky's writings on India, emphasizing particularly that such a reconstruction will show the absence of stagnation in the Indian village communities. For details, see his, "Marx and the 'Original' Form of India's Village Community", in D. Banerjee, (ed.), *Marxian Theory and the Third World* (New Delhi : Sage, 1985), pp. 133-71, and "Marx, Kovalevsky and Precolonial India", *SSP*, 3 (September 1986), pp. 321-78. Apart from many other theoretical, methodological and empirical problems, the absurdity of this frenzied attempt can be best stated in Thorner's words : "From the materials currently available to us *we cannot tell* (my emphasis—BB) whether Marx was simply summarising Kovalevsky or simultaneously expressing agreement with him that the Indian village community had undergone a series of transformations". See Thorner, "Marx on India and the Asiatic Mode of Production", p. 62. Even Krader, on whose work Banerjee's theory *completely* depends never proposes that Marx abandoned his thesis of eternal Oriental stagnation in his (Marx's) notes on Kovalevsky's writings. For details, see Krader, *The Asiatic Mode of Production*, pp. 190-213.
143. Chapter 3, pp. 166-8.
144. K. Marx, *Grundrisse* (New York : Vintage Books, 1973), p. 486.
145. A. Guha, "Marxist Approach to Indian History : A Framework", in Kurian, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 49.

146. Anderson, *op. cit.*, p. 482 ; Melotti, *op. cit.*, p. 72.
147. Guha, *op. cit.*, p. 51.
148. *Ibid.*, p. 48. Emphasis added.
149. *Ibid.*
150. D. Gupta, "From Varna to Jati : The Indian Caste System from the Asiatic to the Feudal Mode of Production", *JCA*, 10 (1980), p. 258.
151. *Ibid.*, p. 250. Emphases in original.
152. *Ibid.*, p. 251.
153. Anderson, *op. cit.*, pp. 481-2. See also chapter 10. pp. 591-2.
154. See K. Gough, "Class and Agrarian Change : Some Comments on Peasant Resistance and Revolution in India", *PA*, 42 (Fall 1969), pp. 360-8 ; "Dravidian Kinship and Modes of Production", *CIS*, 13 (1979), pp. 265-91 ; and "Modes of Production in Southern India", *EPW*, 15 (February 1980), pp. 337-64.
155. Gough, "Modes of Production in Southern India", p. 337.
156. Guha, *op. cit.*, pp. 119-21.
157. Cf. Byres, *op. cit.*, p. 14.
158. A. Sen, *The State, Industrialization and Class Formations in India* (London : Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982), pp. 14-45.
159. Sen's attempt to justify the prevalence of the AMP in Mughal India is also completely misguided and ideologically motivated. The relevant source materials rule out *sans doute* the applicability of the AMP to the Mughal social formation. For bibliographical references on this point, see footnotes 96 and 134.
160. Bailey and Llobera, "The AMP : Sources and the Formation of the Concept", p. 23.
161. This definition is based on E. W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York : Vintage Books, 1979), pp. 2-3 and 202-3. For different usages and details of Orientalism, see also A. Abdel-Malek, "Orientalism in Crisis", *Diogenes*, 44 (Winter 1963), pp. 103-40 ; A. Laroui, "For a Methodology of Islamic Studies", *Diogenes*, 83 (1973), pp. 12-39 ; R. Coury, "Why Can't They Be Like Us", *RMES*, 1 (1975), pp. 113-33 ; and Turner, *Marx and the End of Orientalism, passim ;* and "Orientalism, Islam and Capitalism", *passim.*
162. See Draper, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 541 ; and Melotti, *op. cit.*, p. 77.
163. K. Marx, *The Letters of Karl Marx* (New Jersey : Prentice Hall, 1979), p. 268.
164. See G. Lichtheim, "Marx and the Asiatic Mode of Production", in T. Bottomore, ed. *Karl Marx* (New Jersey : Prentice-Hall, 1973), p. 171 ; and Melotti, *op. cit.*, pp. 49 and 72.
165. Mandel, *op. cit.*, p. 128. Emphasis in original.
166. E. Gellner, "Soviets Against Wittfogel : Or, The Anthropological Preconditions of Mature Marxism", *TS*, 14 (May 1985), pp. 343-4. Emphases added.
167. Avineri, *op. cit.*, p. 30. It may be noted here that at least one Indian scholar draws attention to problems consequent upon the

use of the East-West dichotomy. Thus, Benoy K. Sarkar argues : "Western terminology for the newly unearthed Oriental phenomena, without specification as to which *periods* and *phases* of the institution or theory are being disucssed, is a considerable handicap to the advance of scientific inquiry. In this regard, the tendency in Asia to sum up the 'West' of all the ages in single shibboleths or catchwords, is only a natural nemesis to the corresponding fallacy of Europe and America consisting in the attempt to discover the entire 'East' in isolated phrases or items of civic experience". See Sarkar, *The Positive Background of Hindu Sociology : Book II Political*, pp. 7-8. Emphases in original. Elsewhere he warns the "Asian" scholars : "The social thinkers of Asia also have fallen victim to the fallacious sociological methods and messages of the modern West, to which the postulate of an alleged distinction between the Orient and the Occident is the first principle of science". Sarkar, *The Positive Background of Hindu Sociology : Introduction to Hindu Positivism*, p. 19.

168. This is demonstrated in chapters 3, 6 and 8.
169. Anderson, *op. cit.*, p. 481.
170. For such examples, see my conclusion in chapter 10.
171. B. Holzner, "Methodology", in J. Gould and W. L. Kolb, eds., *A Dictionary of Social Sciences* (London, Tavistock, 1964), p. 425.
172. J. B. Williamson, et. al., *The Research Craft : An Introduction to Social Research Methods* (Boston : Little Brown and Company, 1982), p. 32.
173. D. Willer and J. Willer, *Systematic Empiricism* (New Jersey : Prentice Hall, 1973), pp. 13-4 ; and G. Therborn, *Science, Class and Society* (London : NLB, 1977), p. 42.
174. Williamson et. al., *op. cit.*, p. 6 ; and quoted in H. W. Smith, *Strategies of Social Research : The Methodological Imagination* (New Jersey : Prentice-Hall, 1981), p. 53. Emphases in original.
175. T. Carver, "Editor's Preface to *Grundrisse* Introduction", in K. Marx, *Texts on Method* (Oxford : Basil Blackwell, 1975), p. 40.
176. M. Godelier, *Rationality and Irrationality in Economics* (London : NLB, 1972), p. 197.
177. K. Marx and F. Engels, *The German Ideology* (New York : International Publishers, 1970), pp. 41 and 50.
178. *Ibid.*, p. 48.
179. *Ibid.*, p. 42, "Society does not consist of individuals but it represents the sum of relations, in which individuals stand to each other". K. Marx, *Economy, Class and Social Revolution* (New York : Charles Scribners, 1971), p. 103.
180. Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*, p. 42.
181. Z. A. Jordon, "Introductory Essay", in Marx, *Economy, Class and Social Revolution*, p. 38.

182. Therborn, *op. cit.*, pp. 399-400.
183. C. Levitt, *Anthropology and Historical Jurisprudence : An Examination of the Major Issues Raised in Marx's Excerpts from Henry Maine's Lectures on the Early History of Institutions', Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation* (Berlin : Free University, 1975), p. 95. Hereafter this is abbreviated as *Anthropology and Historical Jurisprudence*.
184. *Ibid.*, pp. 95-6.
185. Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, pp. 178 and 181.
186. *Ibid.*, p. 180.
187. I must add that by adopting an economic definition of class, I do not mean that class cannot be defined by any other criteria in different contexts.
188. Quoted in Krader, *A Treatise of Social Labor*, p. 273.
189. *Ibid.*, p. 244.
190. K. Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy* (New York : International Publishers, 1963), pp. 104 and 110.
191. Since I pursue strictly class analysis in conformity to the requirements of the Marxist methodology my point of departure, accordingly, is not *varṇa* or, for that matter, caste category. From the standpoint adopted here, class may comprise members of any varṇa proviedd they comply with the definitional requirements of the concept of class. For instance, the propertied class may consist of anybody, regardless of his varṇa affiliation, who owns property, such as property in land or capital. However, as will be shown in different places and especially in chapters 7 and 9, class and varṇa categories intersect, indicating the uniqueness of the Indian social formation. Besides, the so-called varṇa system was never completely operational, nor could it ever be. The so-called four *varṇa* model is completely inapplicable to the south Indian social formation. It was subject to the overdetermining material or concrete circumstances of everyday life. Thus, to exemplify, there are numerous references to the fact that the Brāhmaṇas pursued cultivation and trading in the ancient and medieval periods. See D. Gupta, "Caste, Infrastructure and Superstructure : A Critique", *EPW*, 16 (December 19, 1981), pp. 2093-2104 ; P. C. Jain, *Labour in Ancient India* (New Delhi : Sterling Publishers, 1971), p. 39 ; H. S. Kotiyal, "Śūdra Rulers and Officials in Early Medieval Times", *IHCP*, 34th session (Chandigarh, 1973), pp. 80-7 ; and Yadava, *Society and Culture in Northern India, passim*.
192. C. B. Macpherson, "Introduction", in C. B. Macpherson, ed., *Property : Mainstream and Critical Positions* (Toronto : University of Toronto, 1978), p. 3. Emphases added. For more about the distinction between property and possession, see G. W. Paton, *A Text-Book of Jurisprudence* (Oxford : Clarendon, 1964), pp. 466-72.

193. Quoted in Levitt, *Anthropology and Historical Jurisprudence*, p. 94.
194. See especially chapter 3, chapter 4, and chapter 5.
195. Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*, p. 48.
196. Marx, *Grundrisse*, pp. 99-100. Emphases in original.
197. On the problems concerning the historical change to the early medieval period (or feudalism) in India, see Sharma, "Problem of Transition from Ancient to Medieval in Indian History", *passim ;* and *Social Changes in Early Medieval India, passim.*

2

Marx and the Asiatic Mode of Production

I. Introduction

The primary objective of this chapter is to explore the different dimensions, and analyse the main features, of Marx's theory of the "Asiatic" Mode of Production. Most of Marx's writings on the Indian and other Oriental social formations are scattered throughout his works.[1] Since Marx never expounded the theory systematically or explored it in one place, what he meant by the AMP is generally put together from a wide range of his writings. In this chapter, an attempt is made to focus on those ideas of Marx about India in particular. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the development of the theory of the AMP took place mainly on the basis of his understanding of Indian society although Marx did concern himself with other Oriental societies, viz. China, Persia, Turkey etc.[2] Another task of this chapter consists in demonstrating the point that Marx, in his formulation of the AMP, exclusively depended on 17th century European merchants/travellers and 18th and 19th century European writers and colonial administrators. At bottom the theory of the AMP, which received the most articulate crystallization in the hands of Marx, is a sophisticated version of the age-old classical European image of the Orient. Accordingly, I would particularly draw on those European writings that Marx specifically used or referred to in his formulation of the theory of the AMP.[3]

Marx's characterization of the Oriental social formations centered mainly around three distinct components. These components, more than less connected with each other, are as follows. First, all the Oriental societies are characterized by the absence of private property in land and, consequently, there was never any class of landowners or landlords. Second, the foundation of