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A Rhinoceros in the Library: Marx Reading India Sources.

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‘The English East India Company, as is well known, obtained, besides the political rule in India, the exclusive monopoly of the tea-trade, as well as of the Chinese trade in general, and of the transport of goods to and from Europe. But the coasting trade of India and between the islands, as well as the internal trade of India, were the monopoly of the higher employees. The monopolies of salt, opium, betel and other commodities, were inexhaustible mines of wealth. The employ themselves fixed the price and plundered at will the unhappy Hindus’²

The animal story.

Maybe it is plausible to begin with a raw hide. This will invoke the image or allegory of a coat that seemed something like a rhinoceros, and concern for this rhinoceros would in turn be evoked by Marx at the end of his life in a way that, I think, can be speculatively, and as ‘postulation’, fictively read as a key to uncover a renewed appreciation of Marx’s textual appropriations of India. This reading presents a gift to the present, by rereading the gifts of the past, even as it has long been acknowledged that the gift is never just a gift. I want to argue that colonial era traffic in gifts to smooth political manoeuvres starts with animals.

The gift of a rhinoceros for example. In 1506 Alfonso de Albuquerque, the Portuguese second viceroy of India, arrives, and with superior ships, secures control of the Indian Ocean over-against the Ottomans for the next 100 years. It was not an insignificant moment in a vast body of water and coastline that might be thought of as the site of the first globalisations, with Asian and Arabic trade running back millennia. Portugal then extends their trade, as the Ottomans and others had done before, as far as Malacca on the Malay Peninsula and through the Indonesian Archipelago, seeking the fabled spice islands in the Moluccas. In India, Albuquerque wanted to build a fort at Diu, Gujarat, and to negotiate this in 1514 sent envoys with gifts to Sultan Muzafar II, ruler of Cambay. Muzafar refuses the request, in turn sending, as is the way, gifts for Albuquerque to take to the Portuguese King. This return gift included a Gujarati Rhinoceros named Ganda, and his keeper Ocem. While not the only rhinoceros story I want to tell, this one circumnavigates Africa, being shipped back to Portugal via Madagascar, St Helena and then stops in Marseilles when the Portuguese King decides, in 1516, to send it on to the Pope in the Vatican City. This Pope had,

apparently, been thrilled at a gift the previous year of a white elephant (the term ‘white elephant’ as a gift has connotations of respect or insult, was known by Thai kings as a way to keep a rival for the throne busy looking after a difficult but treasured animal). The Pope’s rhinoceros however, does not make it. Exhibited for a time at the Château d’If, outside Marseilles, the Island prison fort made famous in Alexandre Dumas in his novel *The Count of Monte Christo*, the onwards ship to Rome floundered near Porto Venere, and the much travelled Ganda, shackled to the deck, sadly drowned. Ocem is also missing from the record.

An opportunity to link this relatively obscure historical side-story to Marx presents itself because, somewhat notoriously, in 1515 a German printmaker Albrecht Dürer made a woodcut of this Rhino without having seen the animal, working from sketches. A print from this woodcut is exhibited, alongside paraphernalia from Dumas’s fiction, in the present day prison museum on d’If. The further curious possibility exists that Marx, in the last year of his life, heard about this animal and the Dürer print when he visited Marseilles for a few days en route to Algeria seeking warmer climes and a cure for his bronchial condition. We have a letter Marx sent to Engels on the 1st of March 1882 from Algeria where, mentioning both Don Quixote and the ‘quid pro quo’ of Shakespeare, he relates that he has exchanged his ‘rhinoceros greatcoat with a lighter coat’³. This is the only time I can find any reference to such an animal in Marx, though of course references to coats, hide, skin, tanning, and animals of other types, are many and varied.⁴ The significance of the coat as example for Marx cannot be underplayed⁵ and especially the importance of shedding this skin within which he had been ill, having to paint it each day with a *cantharidin collodion* treatment. Marx also mentions that he is advised by his doctor to take tincture of codeine and arsenic and that he must leave off intellectual work, except for distraction. How important then was it to be able to break out of the shell of that greatcoat? *Die Hülle wird gesprengt*.

I am anticipating my argument below with the German line, *Die Hülle wird gesprengt*, since it presents some particular translation difficulties. It is taken from the dénouement of Marx’s *Das Kapital* vol 1, where the expropriators are to be expropriated and the death knell of capitalism sounds. It is translated somewhat incomprehensibly in English editions as ‘the integument bursts asunder’.⁶ *Die Hülle* is a furry, husk-like shell, sharing similar reference to *enthüllen*, to force open the envelope, i.e., in Marx to force the secret of value production, or, in Schiller’s poetry, to reveal as if from behind the veil.

In a separate letter to his daughter Jenny, we see Marx in the penultimate year of his life, enthusiastic for Africa and ‘the East’, pursuing texts on Algerian land and cultivation patterns. He writes to her ‘Nothing could be more magical than the city of Algiers; ...it would be like the Arabian Nights, particularly – given good health – with all my dear ones, in particular not forgetting my grandsons, about me.’ (Marx to Jenny Longuet, 16 March 1882). To Engels he enthuses: ‘At 8 o'clock in the morning there is nothing more magical than the panorama, the air, the vegetation, a wonderful

mélange of Europe and Africa’, yet ‘with all that, one lives on nothing but dust’ (Marx to Engels, 1 March 1882). Planning to leave Algeria in April, Marx is recovered sufficiently, and the weather so improved, that he takes the almost incomprehensible step of having an Algerian barber cut off his hair and shave his beard (Marx to Engels 28 April 1882).

The rhinoceros fared worse by far. Unshackled, it might have swam ashore, perhaps to terrorise the Italians, who refused Marx entry to the country. The Mediterranean takes many lives, and Marx was right to be concerned about the seaworthiness of his ferry. But it is the fact of Ganda used as a gift to smooth the refusal of permission to build a fort that marks the beginning of a more insistent colonial drive on the part of Europe, coming with a whole other conception of the shackled economy. Rhinos will feature again, whether it be Clara, sent to the Netherlands by the Dutch East India Company from Chinsura 100 years later, also circling Africa and spending 15 years entertaining the crowned heads of Europe, eventually dying in Lambeth, South London, through to the present day use of the rhinoceros as emblem of the Assam Regiment counter-terrorist unit fighting to suppress agitations in Kashmir. Consider also rhino horns as aphrodisiacs and as mistaken for unicorns – and entire mythology surrounds them and even ‘rhino mania’ with Clara from Chinsura becoming a much sought after celebrity, painted by Jean Baptiste Oudry, Pietro Longhi, and others. As it is with iconic story-telling tropes, to illustrate this I would love to also retell the tales of the Giraffe of Bengal, brought by Malindi traders, and others embossed on the Konark temple, sighted in Jaisalmer and Mangalore, gifted to a Chinese emperor, subject of devotional poetry, and more – but all that is kept back for another chapter.⁷ Here, we are on the path of Marx reading on India. So I will move past these early exoticisms to swiftly note some economic political violent markers: my focus here is on opium in the Bengal trade after Clive, with bribes to Mir Jaffar, ‘defeat’ of Siraj ud-Daulah, and the French, in 1757, the East India Company turns to cultivation, or rather turns Indian cultivation towards the cash crops of opium, indigo and jute. These three crops do not have the same importance, though their fortunes in subsequent commentary vary – it is to Marx’s credit that he identifies the importance of opium over others. Yet to list crops like this implies an equivalence, so it should be noted that Chaudhuri’s extensive research confirms the importance of opium over other products for EIC trade, with opium export compared to indigo exceeded by 50%, cotton by three times, raw silk by five times in the early 1800s⁸. Subramanian confirms ‘the export of opium and cotton into China for Chinese tea consignments into Britain ... characterised India’s trade after 1793’.⁹ Opium volume alone is insufficient basis on which to argue a case, but there are justifications for keeping back another separate work reading the Royal Commission on Opium 1893-1895 and much else in the history of the trade indicates that Opium had long been the paste that held the colonial project together, ‘without opium, there would be no empire’.¹⁰ The deceptions and alibi-making of operatives of the East India Company ran deep, so that the Royal Commission was stacked with EIC employees and agents as witnesses, against which the shrill Missionary opposition was increasingly ineffective.

From the outset the Commission had refused to consider the impact of the trade on China, making the focus the health of Indian finances. Even though opium use was well known early in Asia, since 1708 had been an EIC product of Bengal. It was though the extension of opium cultivation under the EIC monopoly from 1773, primarily in Bihar, alongside inferior Malwa, which enabled the increasingly massive export to China which in turn made the EIC finances work. It is opium as trade and poison gift, acknowledged by Marx, that I really want to talk about, and so from rhinos as an emblem of tribute and circumnavigation, with the white elephant as something more, and less, than an icon of prestige and war, we will chase the dragon, so to speak, in the gilded menagerie in which the opium story that founds the trade is, as usual, dangerously obscured.

Compared with Albuquerque, a far more aggressive kind of fort negotiation arrives in Bengal with the British. Many examples are possible, but it is almost by convention that the story starts with Clive and the alleged atrocity of the ‘Black Hole of Calcutta’. I have also retold this story elsewhere, but as there are several angles on this particular dank prison,¹¹ it is worth visiting again all the more because of the animals and the suspect gift exchange involved. In the version I will tell, it is Marx who summarises the history, excerpted from the work of Madras Records Office historian Robert Sewell in his *Analytic History of India, from the Earliest Times to the Abolition of the Honourable East India Company* in 1870:

Suraj came down on Calcutta in force ... fort stormed, garrison taken prisoners, Suraj gave orders that all the captives should be kept in safety till the morning; but the 146 men (*accidentally, it seems*) were crushed into a room 20 feet square and with but one small window; next morning (*as Holwell himself tells the story*), only 23 were still alive; they were allowed to sail down the Hooghly. It was ‘the Black Hole of Calcutta’, *over which the English hypocrites have been making so much sham scandal to this day*. Suraj-ud-daula returned to Murshidabad.

Bengal now completely and effectually cleared of the English intruders. January 2, 1757. Fort William recaptured by Clive, sent up from Madras with fleet under Admiral Watson. Subahdar marched on Calcutta, attacked by Clive, in decisive action of many hours. On January 3, *Suraj-ud-daula restored the Company to their old privileges and [paid them] compensation*. Clive destroyed French settlement at Chandernagor (my italics indicate Marx’s revealing annotations)¹²

Clive’s colonial manipulations are regarded as more treacherous than most. Basically, the East India Company was as warlike a corporation as no other before, and Clive bribes Mir Jaffar to deceive and kill Siraj ud-Daulah (on the Nawab’s name, I follow Pradip Baksi and use Siraj ud-Daulah, Sewell has ‘Suraj-u-dowla’ and Marx ‘Suraj-ud-daula’ – personal). Treacherous stories could also be told with animals – war horses and war elephants. An elephant is depicted at Palashi in a famous painting with Clive’s horse and Mir Jaffar. The generals are accepting their bribes, and will betray

the Nawab who is already the hapless quarry in a hunt. Mir Jaffar later becomes a puppet Nawab and supplies many lakhs of tribute to Clive, as well as granting the diwani – the right to raise taxes in West Bengal. This, not trade, is the vastly profitable consequence of building forts and prisons, and fabricating tales of humans caged and corralled in Black Holes and bribes on battlefields smoothes the way. Key to the mythology here is how the conflict started, the British had built a fortress against the express wish of Siraj ud-Daulah and the Nawab promptly sacked the town. Clive was called for retribution, and was merciless. Subsequently Holwell raises an atrocity narrative and monument, which in turn – through the writings of Mark Twain, John Stuart Mill, and others – becomes fictional ‘fact’.¹³ I also wish we could talk here of Tipu’s Tiger, and Clive’s role in the fabrication of the image of Tipu as enemy, Clive helping to destroy the French connection all the more to the benefit of the Raj by sacking Chandernagore and later sending his wife on collecting expeditions to gather Tipu paraphernalia. The collection of peacock or tiger thrones, ornate swords, slippers and such like is the booty of empire alongside taxes and bribery. EIC officials and associates become very well versed in the ‘extra-economic’ practice of plunder and extraction deals resulting in huge wealth even beyond mercantile trade at the time. Marx writing on India in *Capital* and in the *New York Daily Tribune* notices this ‘country trade’, and especially notes that while the EIC commanded the global trade, its employees were engaged with ‘inland’ opportunities.¹⁴ The looted treasures from the East Indies ‘floated back’ to Europe¹⁵ as a part of the ‘dawn of the era of capitalist production’.¹⁶ Marx’s articles in the *Tribune* on EIC opium are where he most clearly expresses his fascination with and condemnation of Clive, ‘the robber baron’ (Marx *NYDT* 8 August 1853). Clive’s encouragement of EIC involvement in Bengal opium can be dated from his first activities alongside EIC employees, with EIC opium growing in the second half of the 1700s still further again with Warren Hastings as key dealer introducing a company monopoly in 1773.¹⁷ This British drug trade then expands exponentially and Marx himself will note the stunning increase in volume over the years – the trade would last, despite denials, until well after the end of the Opium wars, by which time Opium production and taxes – transit and pass duties, taxation on domestic use, according to Richards – were the second largest revenue earners for the empire.¹⁸ In Marx’s journalistic commentary he exposed ‘flagrant self-contradiction of the Christianity-canting and civilization-mongering British’ in their efforts to ‘affect to be a thorough stranger to the contraband opium trade, and even to enter into treaties proscribing it’. This hypocrisy despite also forcing ‘opium cultivation upon Bengal’ (Marx *NYDT* Set 25 1858 v16) and arranging ‘for private ships trading to China’ though even these carried a ‘provision which attached a penalty to them if freighted with opium of other than the Company’s own make’ (Marx *NYDT* 30 Sept 1858).

All this is well known, but what deserves further attention is where Amar Farooqui points out that ‘country trade’ and smuggling of opium was a significant parallel economy and an important form of subversive resistance to ‘colonial domination’.¹⁹ Revenues from smuggling helped fund military mobilisations on behalf of the ruling

state elites ‘since many of the big sahuks were simultaneously contractors for recruitment of troops’.²⁰ The rest of the subcontinent was colonised on the back of opium profits, and Marx saw these as central to the game of control and resistance. That initial plunder opens up the possibility of subsequent commercial gain, even if this is not itself without exploitation, is of course the crux of the argument Marx presents in the originary accumulation section of capital volume 1, stolen booty was sunk into the circuits of industrial production in a kind of colonial money-laundering enterprise of hitherto not seen at such a scale except, also significantly, in the Atlantic slave trade.

Marx’s India tick.

A market generates a hinterland of informal and illicit trade that fortifications may or may not repel. A fortified and regulated market would be opposed, in the regular transition model, to one informed by relations of prestige and tribute. It is a ‘tributary mode of production’ that Samir Amin posits in *Unequal Development*²¹ and which Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak brilliantly deconstructs in *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*.²² Without going into all the details of this debate, the tribute mode implies elaborate codification of the economy into which Europeans sailed. Arriving with varied individual intent, the underlying extractive alibi was a political economy of free trade, and an actual practice of plunder, which then funds European industrialisation as described by Marx in *Capital*. Arriving with gifts, perhaps the question to ask is if the kind of market practices introduced by the European colonial powers were fundamentally at odds with the open festive or mela style markets of India, as well perhaps as those in China and the Malay Peninsula and the Indonesian archipelago? Did the different character of market styles, exchange styles, even tribute through gifts, for example of animals, have a discernable global significance over time? It took Marx to notice, but did he make this the foundation of his analysis of accumulation and capital, more or less explicitly? How important is transition?

This section will not be a discussion of the ‘Asiatic mode of production’. That ship has sailed, as we will see below when Spivak shows this and suggests ways to rewrite and extend even as she overwrites her Marx essay and leaves the traces, like a palimpsest, in a vanishing present that she still wants to rewrite again. The foreground of gendered financialisation of the globe is not one I have the presumption, nor scholarship, to attempt and what I offer is not much more than an obscure footnote to her chapter. It is also misreading perhaps, to say there is much in Marx’s conception of the market that owes *everything* to Asia. I will risk the strong thesis that *Capital* is a book marked by a conception wholly oriented towards the importance of Asia, and the activities of the East India Company especially in its introduction of massive plunder, as that which fuelled the originary accumulation of capital. A weaker version of this thesis would note colonial profits in Asia as a part of an emergent mercantilist redirection that meant inevitably incidental references to global economy included

several ad hoc, as it were, Marxian citation of Indian examples or writers from the EIC.

All through his life Marx seems to have a tick that draws him to India.²³ From his early reading of Hegel and others he picks up an interest in ‘ancient’ Hindu land use patterns and caste structure. He reads Françoise Bernier (1891), George Campbell (1865), John Dickenson (1853) and James Mill’s *History of India* (1818). His journalism for the *NYDT* has him interested in colonial impact of British rule in 1852 and the uprising against that rule in 1857. His political solidarity with workers most impacted by the transition from feudalism to capitalism is formed through his support for the Silesian weavers in 1844, but it is as often as not extended in admiration to the weavers of Dacca, with their fine muslins, and ‘proficiency of a spider’²⁴ as well as those of Coromandel, Bengal and Bihar, whose bones are left to bleach on the plains.²⁵ His solidarity is expressed in abstract examples in *Das Kapital* too, when ‘friend weaver’ exchanges linen for a bible at the market, before the bible-seller, who prefers a warming brandy (*kornbrantewein*, made from rye or barley, not grapes), exchanges ‘the water of everlasting life for the distillers eau-de-vie’.²⁶ Marx’s interest in Bihar extends to the crops the peasants were compelled to sew: cotton, wool, hemp, jute²⁷; and opium cultivation with its baneful impact upon China, both through the poison of the drug and the wars the British conduct to protect the trade, right through to the irreligious mass doping of workers’ children in the UK with ‘Godfrey’s Cordial’ as reported in the Government’s own Blue Books.²⁸ He even comes out in favour of legalisation of opium by the Chinese to undermine the profiteering of the drug dealing EIC, knowing full well that class politics must also be international, and that British support for the Qing in the Taiping Civil War was implicated with the US cotton blockade and depressed conditions in the Lancashire mills.²⁹ On a theoretical level, his *Critique of Political Economy*, the subtitle of the book, can be read as a sustained commentary on apologists for this EIC extortion. His targets are EIC employees, James Mill, John Stuart Mill, and that ‘sycophant and fine talker’ Macauley, or immediate bourgeois critics of the EIC, Adam Smith, Edmund Burke. Then the *Critique of Political Economy* takes as prime targets the apologist ‘learned professors’, those abstemious ‘penitents of Vishnu’,³⁰ who train the East India Company officer corps at Haileybury College,³¹ ‘population’ Malthus³² and Sir Richard Jones. Both professors of political economy at the East India Company training school.³³ Alongside some anonymous – to Marx – texts on the benefits of the East Asia trade to Britain and the like, these are the majority representatives of the political economy he critiques. Of course Ricardo, Fourier and Owen also feature, but more often in a kind of agreement. Finally, if this were the final thought, the metaphors that challenges capitalism as such with its eventual overthrow is one that secretly revolves around the bursting of a shell, the throwing off of shackles, of a husk, of a dubious cloak that must be forced to reveal its secret, that behind this veil, which must be torn asunder – *enthüllen* – truth will out. There is a sense in which all this comes from a Schiller poem about a certain oriental lady, covered by a veil, but through all sorts of exercise of metaphors of skin, tanning, hide³⁴ and coats, the juggernaut of capital that comes into

the world dripping blood and dirt,³⁵ having sacrificed so many of the vulnerable under its grotesque wheels, and having covered itself in the alibi's of the very political economists Marx critiques, is subject then to the organised resistance of the workers, who follow the logic of collective action to throw off the fetters and limits, to expropriate the expropriators – the knell of capitalism sounds, *Die Hülle wird gesprengt*.

In the strong version of this argument we should recall that at each key moment of the critique of political economy, Marx reaches for his examples, to either India – the ancient Hindu communities, the weavers, the abstemious penitents of Vishnu, the apocryphal story of sacrifices under the wheels of Lord Jagannath's car³⁶ – or the American Civil War, and even then his civil war and slavery examples link the cotton trade to Indian production, and global capital is world capital – 'labour in the white skin cannot emancipate itself while in the black it is branded'.³⁷ Is it too wild to suggest this Asia focus is a conscious effort by Marx, that everything from Engels' father's early advice to his son to take up business opportunities in Calcutta to the incidental recognition of a Gujarati rhinoceros off the coast of Marseilles, is more than coincidence, that this is all the consequence of targeting the number one largest global corporate entity of the time. To suggest this is to say that Marx's interest in capital where it is most decisive is of course legitimate. To Engels he says that land use and slavery are the two big issues of the day (Marx to Engels, 11 October 1860³⁸). 150 years later, what is important today might be that readers not miss these markers, at a time when a global pivot to Asia makes the politics of asserting the primacy of Asian trade, and the significance of that trade and what kinds of trade, all absorbing. From the first global ocean of Arab-African-Asian trade to the present, never neutral topics.

The protocols and obligations of older trade relationships deserve attention in any contemporary critique of political economy. In the Indian Ocean – Kala Pani, black water; Ratnakara, the Sanskrit name for ocean; or Yin-thu-Yong, to seek its Hakka name – long voyages more marvelous than the stories of Sinbad predate the arrival of Vasco de Gama, Alfonso de Albuquerque, William Dampier, Clive or Dupleix. This is not to say the exchanges they made were unimportant – indeed, we can see the receipts of transition in their stories – but the motivations of pecuniary gain over those of tribute or honour and due regard, also play their part. Perhaps the early trader-explorers were also not strong advocates of an intentional transition, acting as emissaries of European kings and queens just to fit out their adventure ships, their impulses on arrival might include relief or speculation, fear, bribes, ego, pride. Initial exchange is not so much at the boundaries, as Marx proposed for the primordial transactions of the 'ancient Indian community',³⁹ but here with plenipotentiaries confronting unknown new powers, seeking to ensure their passage, survival and return, which perhaps depended upon observing protocols of exchange that only later would be reoriented, routinised and regulated.

Marx's commentary on India is much discussed, but perhaps no-one has been rash enough to say that without his thinking on India there could be no critique of political

economy. As noted above, already Spivak dealt with the Asiatic Mode of Production in *Critique of Postcolonial Reason* and there brilliantly described it as the necessary fiction required to lever the modes of production model,⁴⁰ and where the ‘ruse of declaring the dangerous supplement a stasis that must be interrupted in its own interest’⁴¹ is still, despite the well-known critiques, important. While not at all repeating that transformative rereading that was so crucial – if strangely not as taken up as fully by Western Marx criticism as might be wished – reading Spivak’s Marx opens up many further possibilities.

Mine is not an argument that just tries to Asianise Marx – a vegetarian or saffron Marx is not on the agenda – and yes, there are gaps and eurocentrisms no doubt, and of course. But the Asian underpinnings of Marx’s argument are significant and I think it is above all necessary to see that it was the largest corporation in the world, and its apologists and agents, who Marx had in his sights. Big game hunter. The errors Marx makes in an imaginary ancient Hindu polity, repeating apocryphal horrors of Jagannath, lack of specificity in how land-use, cultivation, transportation, communication work, are all significant, but nevertheless, Marx is reading the then equivalent of a contemporary multinational like BHP, Riotinto, or Apple Corp; Mill, Malthus, Jones et al., were the ideologues of the leading edge of industrial capitalism. Writing this for German readers of course makes the EIC element somewhat decontextualised, the book is perhaps closer to home (*de te fabula narratur*) for English readers or Indian readers, perhaps also African-Americans, given the whole commentary on slavery, civil war and Lincoln, but on the whole India, and China, because of the newsworthy ‘pivot’ of global capitalism towards Asia, again. Yet not to claim anything so grand, the current pivot makes Marx topical and it is worth, at least, the thought experiment of trying to see who it is that all these footnotes refer to in Marx’s big well-known often re-read book.

That said, the suggestions Spivak makes can release numerous other studies that one person alone cannot pursue. An example she offers for those who see ‘the Bengal case as a laboratory experiment’ where colonialism brings ‘free trade’ into the scene of transition from Feudal to Capitalist economy⁴² gives the context for what I want to do. Her ecological suggestions and her agricultural suggestions would also repay exploration, but putting the story together is left as a choice and for me, this story then is one of the clash of styles of market transition. This can be explored by way of a small footnote taking up the challenge in Spivak’s suggestion that ‘Marx’s sources were, of course, documents written by people who were less directly related to the hands on work of the transition’.⁴³ This is really interesting and may be true in the main, with a great risk for any gainsaying of even this tiny aside in a magnificent book. Also, to focus on the responsibility and concern of hands-on colonial traders themselves would perhaps inevitably keep things at the level of merchants capital, even if there are some slippages into production, with significant deals that enforce opium cultivation, it is really fast profits, plunder and shipping that are most prominent in the vast accumulation of EIC operatives’ wealth. The issue of land use

of course should also be developed. In Volume three of *Kapital*, Marx, as assembled by Engels, extends the laboratory metaphor: 'If any nation's history is a string of futile and really absurd (in practice infamous) economic experiments, then it is the history of the English management in India'.⁴⁴ But at the level of experiment what is evident is that gifts also helped pave the path into those 'tribute-paying economic formations'.⁴⁵ What it is not necessary to concede here is the historical stasis Marx ascribes to India coming from sources as remote as Hegel, nor that his conception of the land ownership that pre-existed the imposed taxation regimes of the Raj were derived from secondary sources in a very early stage of anthropological veracity, filtered often through missionary commentary, at best *The Friend of India*. Marx is reading the Mission Press sent from Serampore to the London Museum, also the numerous Parliamentary Reports, Blue Books, the speeches of Disraeli, Campbell's *Modern India*, Wilk's *Historical Sketches of South India*, and even personal conversations with EIC agent John Stuart Mill in the Dean Street flat.⁴⁶ For sure the scholarship to specify all this would be welcome. But what a reader of *Das Kapital* who has learned at least a little from Spivak and from the reading of a great number of excellent historians of Bengal can say perhaps is that it is possible to posit evidence for a difference in character between the market under the Moghul sovereignty and that brought into its newly developing forms by Clive, Hastings, Wellesley, the Portuguese, Dutch, French and Danes et al., and that the documents for determining this difference were, indeed, written in some part first hand by those Marx was reading, missionaries, politicians and traders on the spot.

It is not at all that the Bengali historians working today read only what Marx read. They go far beyond that of course, but it is not my primary topic here. The point is rather that the strong version of the Critique of Political Economy Marx proffered is one where he has as his main target the EIC operatives trained by the 'learned' Vishnu penitent Haileybury professors, the EIC operatives Mill and Macaulay, the parliamentary critics like Burke, and even Disraeli for a later era. These were targets for a conception not generally incompatible with what subsequent schools of Bengali historiography have found, but Marx was already on target. What the differences amongst the works of Bengal scholarship then provide becomes more interesting in terms of the fortunes of that political economy subject to critique. If the time were available would be inclined to explore how some gleaned little from rather perfunctory readings of Marx, and others a very great deal.

What first? A survey of who Marx was reading? I think I have broached that already above. Or a survey of the different schools of Bengali historiography? I am not yet scholar enough to complete this second task, but believe it all the more important given Spivak's other injunctions to: a) fit the story together yourself, perhaps since Marx too wants a reader who is willing to learn something; and b) seek the dangerous supplement that gathers the recognition of difference, seen as a persistent critical practice within a program of change that would then not need to take those differences into account, having sublated them into a new mode of production aka

revolution. It is of course also highly possible that when Spivak warns against 'appropriation or hostility based on the sanctioned ignorance of both elite theorist and self-styled activist',⁴⁷ this, despite my conscious disavowal of either trite identity, may be me doing just what she fears.

Friends of India.

Does it matter that Marx goofed or gaffed a bit when it came to ancient India, when his entire Critique of Political Economy spawned such impressive works? D.D. Kosambi, Ranajit Guha, Irfan Habib, Lakshmi Subramanian... there could be endless number of names cited here, not even all need be Bengalis, but for sure the very idea of classifying them into schools according to this or that criteria is terrifying, and could readily be derailed by the new Saffronisation ideology revamping history as a discipline more than any delineation of truth and influence. What the disciplinary politics of India looks like from outside the discipline is no doubt as distorted as any, given the poles of attraction of centres and institutes local and international publishing houses, the power of the US academy, the stodge of Oxbridge, and the intermediate naivety of diasporic ne'er do wells and grant carrying endowment fund activista elites as previously warned.

The idea that India was static⁴⁸ has been substantially washed away by a body of maritime work exemplified perhaps by Lakshmi Subramanian and Rila Mukherjee, taking account the trade in the Bay of Bengal or Indian Ocean littoral and so on... Apropos the many moves that can be documented in the economy and culture of this zone, it is, as Subramanian notes, difficult to understand how the 'agrarian bias' of immobility and stasis⁴⁹ had prevailed at all – exchanges, communication, waterways, trade links, silk roads, urbanisation, diasporas. Such that it is worth questioning how the sedentary bias continues in ideas that locate the colonial market as a single site. While the colonial powers built walls around their compounds, these were, ostensibly, to prevent movement. The fortress or the compound, even the locked doors of a godown are all about the effort needed to keep things in place, on the part of colonial powers in the business of shifting things, treasures, produce, cargo, indentured labour, river and shipping routes, later with railroads, the historical record is surely always intrinsically one of movement. In Serampore the shift of the preferred gate from the river to the railway side was clearly not about the sedentary character of the market, a more complicated model is required.

It would be too easy to oppose a simplistic open network model with one preferring an extraction point, itself always fortified and marking power. Yang prefers a dynamic 'enmeshed' model where the imagined village is linked to 'larger units of rural society organized around the marketing system'.⁵⁰ The wandering merchant through to the silk road, even conceived as a series of spatial nodes, posits horizontal versus vertical models, with all manner of ecological, political, social and cultural conditions (Yang 1998:13). Subramanian suggests 'a steady gravitation of merchants towards a new

dispensation, including the European trading companies where settlements seemed to offer a safe asylum'.⁵¹ Temporal, cyclical and comprador concerns might be worth taking into account,⁵² the parallel with law does not remain static if the function of security is a question of interrupting flow, and that a wall with a gate suggests that enmeshed models offer a more adequate conception with to and fro options.

That said, the function of the market as site for communication and exchange hardly needs to be reasserted: 'Markets have long been a familiar and essential feature of the historical landscape, central places of exchange at which peasants, townspeople, landholders, and rulers have historically converged'.⁵³ The convergence however does not, in turn, confirm stasis – it never does. People came 'to conduct wholesale and retail trade, to gather news and information, and to engage in various social, cultural, religious, and political activities'.⁵⁴ Sen notes 'a vast number of people were engaged in river traffic, marketing, pilgrimages and fairs'⁵⁵ and that 'a host of European companies had been buying and selling, vying with one another and resisting the reach of local rulers in the lower part of the river Ganges for more than a century before the British conquest'.⁵⁶

Yang's study foregrounds pilgrimage, movement, and women's 70% participation in melas, fairs and markets as important cultural factors alongside trade. Melas are 'notorious' for prostitution, jugglers, nautches, puppet shows and 'roundabouts'.⁵⁷ Rila Mukherjee identifies bazaars in pre-colonial South Asia as sites where 'economic relations could be observed at play' not only for 'the demonstration of social power'⁵⁸ but also as part of 'larger network[s] of religio-political compulsions ... towards Buddhist lands to the East' and 'Islamic lands to the west'.⁵⁹ Sen's focus is on markets as sites of conflict where European and indigenous resistance is occluded in the record under criminality.⁶⁰ Murari Jha takes the river as an organising frame⁶¹ and Irfan Habib makes the point that the British took over, at least initially, 'the administrative apparatus they found in place'.⁶² In all these cases, the problem of veracity is complicated by there being so many roles, by so much undocumented allegedly non-economic behaviour, by travel and movement that is never easily recorded, and by, most importantly, a logic of little importance to the categories of conventional European reportage, whether missionary, government or academic. So much might never 'float back' to the notice of those waiting expectantly for news in London. Marx reading the *Friend of India* or the bi-monthly *Bengal Harkuru* in the British Museum was never going to hear much about pilgrimage patterns. Nor of the huge importance the Company set on interrupting these flows, intervening to eradicate the many and varied brokerage roles, tolls and commissions, introducing a more simplified tribute in the *diwani*, or tax system, by way of fortification and law.⁶³

The *Friend of India* did however include a diverse amount of material of interest. For example, the report from the 1820 edition, published by the Mission Press, seems to confirm Yang's earlier citation of the Resident of Revelganj when it complains of market festivals as scenes of 'immorality and debauchery, where 'displays of magnificence and wealth' have come to displace good behaviours within the 'vicious

tastes of the rabble'. According to the author, presumably one of the Serampore Baptists, perhaps Carey himself, in less than five decades, 'the original design of these poojas is completely subverted, and that which originally was only an insignificant appendage to the festival, has usurped the status of the idol'. I will note, as neutrally as possible, that just 50 years before this observation that the festival had become an unseemly marketplace, there had been the terrible Bengal Famine of 1770, with ten million deaths over four years. The famine is now largely blamed upon the EIC land tax and forced poppy cultivation, as was documented in the impeachment trial of Warren Hastings in the British parliament, the charges read out by Burke. Marx often quotes Burke in *Das Kapital*, admittedly calling him 'that celebrated sophist and sycophant'.⁶⁴ Jane Austin closely followed the trial as well, though it is not certain that Marx read all seven years of transcripts, he does express his outrage that the Company received some £6 Million in gifts from India in the years preceding the famine, and had indeed 'manufactured the famine by buying up all the rice and refusing to sell it again, except at fabulous prices'.⁶⁵ Nevertheless, for the missionaries, a mere 30 years later, the Durga puja is said to have become an 'exhibition of opulence' because, it seems, the Government no longer extracts the taxes, so 'the natives give themselves up to unlimited extravagance in all that relates to their public festivals' and 'almost every year brings some fresh innovation in Hindoo worship' (*Friend of India* 1820, 125-7). The festivals are put on not only for worship, but for 'luxuries' and 'gratification' (*Friend of India* 1820, 130). Marx did read this volume, but did he conclude that it was no surprise how petrified and prejudiced Europeans built walls behind which to hide. The same *Friend of India* author notes that 'in former times the wealth of India was scattered over the country, and its influence was broken into separate divisions' whereas now it comes to 'the city, the emporium of trade' (*Friend of India* 1820, 127).

What was the material that might have reached the ears of Marx as he wrote his journalism for the *NYDT*? One of the sources we know was the Parliamentary Hansard. Here we can read of the 1840 Select Committee on the Affairs of the East India Company, where a certain John Horsey Palmer, not insignificantly the Governor of the Bank of England and partner of the East India Company trading house of Palmers, Mackillop and Co., appeared before the commissioner. Palmer was asked if he were aware, in the context of the massive increase in the smuggling of opium, if he knew that it was 'an article which becomes so necessary for those who consume it, that when once they begin they cannot leave off?'. His measured response: 'I believe that to be the case'.⁶⁶ Asked if he knew that at the same time the price of opium had fallen that there had been a great increase in consumption of the drug, Palmers diplomatic answer: 'I did not know that the price had fallen. I believe there has been a great increase in the export from India'.⁶⁷ Because India needed bullion to pay 'home charges' to Britain, it could not accept any reduction in its favourable opium trade, nor replace sale for bullion with exchange for tea because tea consumption in Europe was unfavourable compared to coffee.

Contrast Palmer's off-hand way with the Select Commission's questions to the response of one of Siraj ud-Daula's wives when she had inherited control of the Mudafatganj marketplace. She intervened with petitions to Governor Cornwallis to try to gain exemption for shopkeepers from paying revenue to the police if they contributed to the upkeep of the adjacent mosque.⁶⁸ Is this special pleading for architectural restoration work? Is it a conflict between moral and ethical favouritism and universalising but brutal commercialism? It is not clear that Marx heard of this petition to Cornwallis, but he certainly did notice the deadly duel between the ethical Chinese, who would not impose a tax upon its citizens to return profit from degradation, and the 'representatives of the overwhelming modern society [who] fights for the privilege of buying in the cheapest and selling in the dearest markets ... a tragic couplet, stronger than any poet would have ever dared to fancy' (Marx in the *NYDT*, Sept 20, 1858).

The social historian Sumanta Banerjee reports on the Bengali Sadhara Brahmo Samaj, usually moralistic on drug addiction,⁶⁹ but willing to lend 'their support to Government continuation of the opium trade at the expense of the Chinese drug addicts'.⁷⁰ That such comprador double dealing was not unusual of course meant that opium's devastating effects were overlooked for financial reasons such that some historians – specifically *not* the Bengali historians I noted above – get to make some no doubt well supported and citation-replete points along the way of an otherwise verbose but not obviously promising approach. Dirks for example takes up the question of the evangelical commentary on Sati, after Lata Mani,⁷¹ and feeds this into a discussion of European anxieties. Curiously his commentary on thuggee seems to confirm the displacement of the opium trade from discussion:

'British concern about the lack of safety and stability on the roads of the subcontinent was not unrelated to the expansion of its country trade to the interior of India, and in particular the transport of opium to Calcutta for its use in the China tea trade'⁷²

The Thuggee Act of 1836 became a major disciplinary effort, and 'important symbol of the civilizing mission of British rule'.⁷³ By a focus on security, opium is displaced at the moment when civilising legal and political logic smoothes the path for the country trade, and this logic was once again laid out by the Mission Press, in particular the works of William Ward and Henry Sleeman.⁷⁴ A logic familiar to critics of the Afghan War, Dirks notes 'the commitment to free women from the curse of Sati and protect citizens from the threat of highway robbery'⁷⁵ although with this somewhat supplementary afterthought he does not make the additional necessary point that then as now: in 2014 opium production from Afghanistan is up 7% on the previous year. Ostensibly the reason for the invasion yet again – on the lessons to be learned from Afghan wars.⁷⁶

A focus upon local anxieties as a justification for not looking at greater, and perhaps causal, atrocities elsewhere is a pattern we might recognise. Marx is reading the same

sort of sources, and comes to certain conclusions and allegiances regarding value, trade and revolution as those who write histories of thuggee and law. But does the extensive use of colonial market regulation and criminal incarceration at the very same time that EIC officials wildly flouted the same regulations not make it obvious that colonial extraction was never going to endear a population to the legal apparatus? Recognition in practice of one law for white, another for brown was behind the hostility and contempt with which the Bengali population looked upon EIC institutional structures. This lines up neatly with the fact that the English hypocrisy and deception behind the story of the Black Hole was widely known, despite the regular efforts of various British, including many British historians, to have it remembered otherwise – the retribution meted out by the ‘robber baron’ Clive was not mitigated by his later suicide, by opium, quid pro quo.

It is Marx on the correct track when he notes that production for exchange is fatal for value in use. Ever greater effort is dedicated to high profit yield crops which displace crops in use – opium over rice – even where the rate of value production remains the same: an exchange value component in terms of commodity available for extraction offers more to the colonial power and so prevails over a commodity that offers value in use – to those who do the work. Within this context, there is more to discuss when Marx makes the following summary of his discussion of value:

‘An increase in the quantity of use values is an increase of material wealth. With two coats two men can be clothed, with one coat only one man. Nevertheless, an increased quantity of material wealth may correspond to a simultaneous fall in the magnitude of its value ... the same labour, exercised during equal periods of time, always yields equal amounts of value. But it will yield, during equal periods of time, different quantities of values in use; more, if the productive power rise, fewer, if it fall. The same change in productive power, which increases the fruitfulness of labour, and, in consequence, the quantity of use values produced by that labour, will diminish the total value of this increased quantity of use values, provided such change shorten the total labour time necessary for their production; and *vice versa*’⁷⁷

This long quote I leave here with the intention of coming back to it to work out its place within the unfolding argument that Marx is presenting in *Capital*. It appears near the beginning and my reading has always been to try to see this book as a planned whole – after all, it took some time to write. In any case, I have been provoked to do this by a friend, Amitava Ganguly, who offers the following thoughts which I would like to assimilate soon:

‘We have never tried to link the degree of the effectiveness of the productive activity of opium directed towards a given purpose within a given period of time. We never try to abstract what is the possible "concrete useful form" opium contra rice as productive activity gives rise to. To say that this contrast

may only record how different quantities of use-values during equal period of time – cultivation time to produce opium and rice when compared - contributing increase in material wealth – one kg opium vs one kg rice will fetch less material wealth than two kg of opium vs two kg of rice – is the simplest part of the whole matter. What Marx is on is some thing very interesting: "an increase in the amount in the material wealth may correspond to a simultaneous fall in the magnitude of value" and with it arises the "contradictory movement of the two fold character", viz. productivity i.e. useful labor and reduction in the value of productivity. In other words what makes opium production dangerous is not only because of its bad properties, but it cuts down the value of rice production simultaneously with the fruitfulness of labor. So the amount of exchange value produced by opium in no way can cross subsidize exchange value of rice produced. It is finally the quality of concrete useful labor that suffers. This is how I would like to see the opium story of labor relying on Marx's *Capital*. For me money as wealth is a secondary aspect, as I think its the story of labor, particularly use-value of what kind is as "orthodox" marxist interests me more....'

Whether this can be immediately resolved or must become another paper will be shown in the presentation. What is certain is that these aspects of the opium story have been ignored, and instead the history passed off in establishment truth. A useful test is to seek the extent to which the opium trade is represented in historical accounts and museum displays. As my final point of notice, the 'Traders' wing of the Royal Maritime Museum in Greenwich was inaugurated in 2012. It has numerous splendid model sailing ships, mannequins in Captains' ceremonial dress, swords, tea chests, navigation equipment and only one small vitrine admitting the opium trade existed. Correspondingly, in the nearby slavery wing, there is no significant display of shackles either – one set – with reportedly (personal communication) significant debates within the Maritime Museum board as to whether such instruments should be shown at all. In the Cutty Sark across the park, the clipper is shown to have exported wool and tea, though clearly it also had some role in a darker trade, and certainly similar ships of the line did, as is almost grudgingly acknowledged. We do not, for example, hear of the Indian merchant Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy sending 'most of his opium to Jardine Matheson, the infamous firm at the end of the supply chain in China'.⁷⁸ In *The Jade Empire*, a glossy historical self-published coffee table book on the Jardine Matheson company, the opiate smuggling profits are relegated to the glamorous past and subsequent legitimate business emphasised, Peninsula and Orient Cruises, HSBC banking, etc. Matheson, it should be noted, had been the Danish Consul in Canton in 1820, but the glossy renovation of the company's reputation was not sufficient to allay fears that it would suffer for its smuggling history when, in a repeat of Jardine's departure from Canton when he heard about Commissioner Lin's appointment,⁷⁹ the 1990s brought the prospect of Hong Kong's return to China. The company relocated to Bermuda. Side note: its share price as almost tripled in the years since the 2008 economic crisis, trading at the time of writing at \$49.60 a share.

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¹ For almost thirty years I have had two teachers to whom I can never repay the gifts. Michael Taussig's *My Cocaine Museum* provides the first overall conception lying behind this paper. His brilliant book is recommended for those who want to write something new. The major influence throughout is Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, in all her works an inexhaustible critical thinker, taking more time than justified to explain things patiently to this erring 'penitent'.

² Marx, Karl, 'Capital: A Critique of Political Economy Vol 1', *Collected Works, Volume 35* (London, Lawrence and Wishart 1867 [1996]), 740.

³ Karl Marx to Frederick Engels 1st March 1882 in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels *Collected Works Volume 45*, (London, Lawrence and Wishart 2010), 213.

⁴ See Dinesh Wadiwel, “‘Like One Who is Bringing His Own Hide to Market’: Marx, Irigaray, Derrida and Animal Commodification”, Paper presented at a philosophy seminar University of Western Sydney 2014, unpublished manuscript sent by author.

⁵ Peter Stallybrass, 'Marx's Coat' in *Border Fetishisms*, ed P. Spyer, (London: Routledge 1998), pp183-207

⁶ Karl Marx *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, Marx-Engels-Gesamtausgabe Vol II (9), (1867, trans. E. Aveling 1883, [1990]), 662; see also Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Vol 1*, trans. Ben Fine (Harmondsworth: Penguin 1867 [1976]), 929

⁷ My chapter on giraffes will in time appear alongside this one, where, among the sources, it is possible to document a good many versions because of the work of Pieter Derideaux borrowing from the French for the 12th century Jaisalmer giraffe and the Italian Teobaldi Filesi's book *China and Africa in the*

Middle Ages, he translates: Duyvendak : China's discovery of Africa, a tablet from 1431 from Zheng He, the inscription in part reads: 'V. In the fifteenth year of Yung-lo (1417) commanding the fleet we visited the western regions. The country of Hu-lu-mo-ssu (Ormuz) presented lions, leopards with gold spots and large western horses. The country of A-tan (Aden) presented ch'i-lin of which the native name is Tsu-la-fa (giraffe), as well as the long horned animal ma-ha (oryx). The country of Mu-ku-tu-shu (Mogadishu) presented hua-fu-lu (zebras) as well as lions. The country of Pu-la-wa (Brawa) presented camels which run one thousand li as well as camel birds (ostriches). The countries of Chao-wa (Java) and Ku-li (Calicut) presented the animal mi-li-kao. They all viewed in presenting the marvelous objects preserved in the mountains or hidden in the seas and the beautiful treasures buried in the sand or deposited on the shores. Some send a maternal uncle of the king, others a paternal uncle or a younger brother of the king in order to present a letter of homage written on gold leaf as well as tribute.' Filesi adds: 'The inscription was discovered in Ch'ang-lo in Fukien province in 1937. Where it was erected in November 1431 before the 7th voyage. It measures 162 cm high and 76 wide. On the top there is the design of the sun flanked by sea wave designs' Pieter Derideaux 4 September 2009 blog entry, <http://history-of-east-africa.blogspot.in/> accessed 16 January 2016

⁸ Kriti N Chaudhuri, *The Economic Development of India under the East India Company 1814–58; a Selection of Contemporary Writings*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 26.

⁹ Lakshmi Subramanian, *History of India 1707-1857*, (Hyderabad: Orient BlackSwan, 2010), 131.

¹⁰ Carl Trocki, *Opium, Empire and the Global Political Economy of the Asian Opium Trade 1750-1950*, (London, Routledge, 1999), 59.

¹¹ See Partha Chatterjee, *The Black Hole of Empire: History of a Global Practice of Power*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012).

¹² Karl Marx, *Notes on Indian History*, (Moscow: Progress Publishers 1947 [1960]), 81.

¹³ see my reiterations in my *The Rumour of Calcutta: Tourism, Charity and the Poverty of Representation*, (London, Zed books, 1996); 'Capital Calcutta' in *City Visions*, eds., David Bell and Azzedine Haddour, (New jersey, Prentice Hall, 2000), 27-43; and 'The Black Hole?' in *Strangely Beloved: Writings on Calcutta*, ed Nilanjana. Gupta, (New Delhi: Rupa and Co. 2014), 27-36.

¹⁴ Marx 1867 v35, 740

¹⁵ Marx 1867 v35, 741

¹⁶ Marx 1867 v35, 739

¹⁷ Amar Farooqui, *Smuggling as Subversion: Colonialism, Indian Merchants, and the Politics of Opium, 1790-1843*, (Oxford: Lexington Books, 2005), 13.

¹⁸ John F Richards, 'The Opium Industry in British India', *Indian Economic & Social History Review*, v39. 2002, 152.

¹⁹ Farooqui 2005, 57

²⁰ Farooqui 2005, 57.

²¹ Samir Amin, *Unequal Development: An Essay on the Social Forations of peripheral Capitalism*, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1973 [1976]

²² Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Towards a History of the Vanishing Present*, (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 89.

²³ I found the work of Padip Baksi after having already completed and presented this essay, but his informally published work on 'Indian responses to Marx and Engels on India' is quite brilliant, digging out at least three schematic versions of Marx on India to add here. His own, and ones from Susobhan Sarkar and G. R. Madan. Sarker had 'grouped Marx's remarks on India under the following five heads: "... the nature of India's ancient society; the general framework and chronology of the history of India; the role of the [British] East India company; the character of the [Indian] Revolt of 1857; and the consequences of the British rule in India.'" in Pradip Baksi, 'Indians on Marx and Engels on India' formally unpublished paper from *academia.edu*, 1997, accessed 12 July 2016, <https://independent.academia.edu/PradipBaksi>, 13). Madan was more systematic may be viewed as 'representative of the empiricist reading of Marx' ... "1) India's woes more under British rule than in the past, 2) Principles of laissez faire and neglect of irrigation, 3) No responsible authority to look after people's welfare, 4) Undue burden of Indian princes. 5) Destruction of hand industries, 6) Village communities and their role in historic development, 7) Property rights in arable land, 8) Indian land tenure, 9) Indian revenue and taxation, 10) Dual role of England — destructive and regenerative, 11) Indian social structure and human progress.'" in Baksi, 18. While Baksi's own schematisation is chronological: 'India appeared in the writings of Marx and Engels over a period of about four decades: from the 1840s to the 1880s. The first reference to India — to the Indian gymnosophists, to be specific — appeared in Marx's doctoral dissertation. The Indian caste system is mentioned in *The German Ideology*. The division of labour under the caste system is distinguished from division of labour

in the modern workshop, in *The Poverty of Philosophy*. Then came the famous India-related despatches to the *NYDT*. India figures in the rough drafts and clean copies of the various volumes of the *Capital*, in various letters of Marx and Engels, in *The Origin of the Family Private Property and the State*, in Marx's notes on ethnology, history of land relations, and Indian history. The possibility of some more references to India in the remaining volumes of the Marx-Engels-Gesamtausgabe (*MEGA2*) cannot be ruled out, in view of such long drawn out interest of Marx and Engels in India' Baksi, p1. What Baksi adds that I find really significant is not only the importance of Marx's excerpts on communal landownership from 'Maksim Maksimovich Kovalevskij's *Obshinnoe Zemlevladienie* i.t.d. (Moskva, 1879)' but that these are linked directly to his readings from Indian sources, specifically the Bengal Social Science Association: 'The proceedings of this Association contain some papers pertaining to the conditions and interests of the toiling people of India. Marx's excerpts from Kovalevskij ... contain a reference to a paper read at one of the sessions of this Association. Marx also took notes from a book by a member of the same Association. These notes contain a reference to another paper read at another session of the Association, as mentioned in Baksi p2.

²⁴ Marx 1867 v35, 345

²⁵ Marx 1867 v35, 435, citing Governor General Bentinck from a report in *The Times* 28 April 1863

²⁶ Marx 1867 v35, 122. That the abstract and ahistorical presentation of the market in volume one of *Capital* is taken by some readers as a description of some really existing scenario is perhaps the major flaw in hasty reading that Marxist scholarship can expose, and thereby justify itself. To the extent that so much of Marxziantine clericism does not do this, we are the poorer. The tailor swapping linen for a bible and the bible-seller swapping bibles for brandy is funny, but not real life. It is an abstract example Marx uses to introduce concepts to comprehend the component complexities of capitalist production – only a learned professor of political science, the target of Marx's critique, would think otherwise and ignore the many many times Marx points out that all other factors are being held in abeyance.

²⁷ Marx, 1867 v35, 454

²⁸ Marx 1867 v35, 398. Marx reads the 'Sixth Report on Public Health' and writes 'In the agricultural as well as in the factory districts the consumption of opium among the grown-up labourers, both male and female, is extending daily. "To push the sale of opiate ... is the great aim of some enterprising wholesale merchants. By druggists it is considered the leading article" [1864:459]. Infants that take opiates "shrank up into little old men", or "wizened like little monkeys" [1864:460]' and adds, acerbically 'We see here how India and China avenged themselves on England' in Marx 1867 v35, 402.

²⁹ See Stephen R Platt, *Autumn in the Heavenly Kingdom: China, the West, and the Epic Story of the Taiping Civil War*, (New York: Knopf, 2012), 234.

³⁰ Marx 1867 v35, 593

³¹ Charles Grant, who had encouraged protestant missionaries in Danish India, returned to England in 1790 as an EIC director and in 1802 entertained Leonard Horner, future factory inspector and 'warden', effectively vice chancellor, of the University of London, and invited him, in 1804, to join the first meeting of the committee for a proposed college in Britain to train India's civil servants (James 1979:171).

³² Marx continually derides Malthus particularly, as a 'master of plagiarism' in Marx v35, 508, stealing from Steuart, Wallace and Townsend, in Marx v35, 357, and in a huge 2 page footnote in chapter 25 adding De Foe, with 'not a single sentence thought out by himself' all 'superficially compiled', the celibate Malthus, in Marx v35, 611-2, one among a host of protestant parsons who ruined political economy as once studied by philosophers like Hobbes, Locke and Hume, statesmen like Thomas Moore, and medical men like Mandeville, among others. Instead, the 'bungling interference' of the Protestant priests, Marx v35, 612.

³³ It is in Marx's commentaries on Richard Jones' work in the notebooks gathered by Kautsky into *Theories of Surplus Value* that we can find comments on the 'Asiatic communal system (primitive communism)', in Marx v33, 340, and tribute to the state, in Marx v33, 338. Marx is generally more approving of Jones than, for example, Adam Smith, Ricardo or Malthus, yet the critique of political economy is nevertheless directed also at the way Jones is still rooted in economic prejudice', in Marx v33, 344. He writes: 'Jones was a professor of political economy at Haileybury and the successor to Malthus. One can see here how the real science of political economy ends by regarding the bourgeois production relations as merely historical ones', in Marx v33, 345. Marx targets Jones' 'transfer', what Marx calls 'originary accumulations' in Marx v33, 336 (trans modified JH) and on wages, different in India because of soil fertility, Marx v33, 348. Jones' contribution is to show that accumulation need not rely upon the rate of profit, see Marx v33, 367, and comes 'very near' to advancing beyond Ricardo in the discussion of the declining rate of profit, which inspires 'terror' in the economists, in Marx v33, 368.

³⁴ Dinesh Wadiwel has a forthcoming article which dissects the metaphors of animals and tanning in Marx, Wadiwel 2014. On the importance of Schiller, recall that Marx's family nickname was Mohr, probably taken from the Robin Hood-like character Karl Mohr in the Schiller play 'The Robbers'.

³⁵ Camille Barbagallo's PhD thesis from UEL brilliantly reads *Capital* through social reproduction, care and childbirth, Camille Barbagallo, *The Political Economy of Reproduction: Motherhood, Work and the Home in NeoLiberal Britain*, PhD thesis (University of East London, 2016).

³⁶ Marx 1867 v35, 639.

³⁷ Marx, 1867 v35, 329.

³⁸ Robin Blackburn, *An Unfinished Revolution: Karl Marx and Abraham Lincoln*, (London: Verso, 2011) 189.

³⁹ Marx, 1867 v35, 98.

⁴⁰ Spivak, *Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, 92.

⁴¹ Spivak, *Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, 97.

⁴² Spivak, *Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, 87.

⁴³ Spivak, *Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, 87

⁴⁴ Karl Marx, 'Capital, volume 3' *Collected Works*, v37, (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1998), 332

⁴⁵ Amin paraphrased by Spivak, *Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, 89.

⁴⁶ The list could be extended from Marx's library collection to include besides those not already mentioned: Thomas Mun *A Discourse on Trade from England to the East Indies* 1861; David Urquhart *The Rebellion in India*, 1857, including 'the wondrous tale of the greased cartridges'; Robert Grant, *A Sketch of the History of the East India Company From its First Formation to the Passing of the Regulatory Act of 1733*, 1813; the India Reform Act of 1853; the work of Joshua Child, EIC Company Director, studied by Marx in a 1754 French edition, *Fraites sur le Commerce*, bought in Paris in 1844, and more; including, after *Das Kapital* had been published in its first edition: Henry Seymour, *Waste Lands of India*, 1870; and Henry Irwin, *The Garden of India, Or, Chapters on Oudh History and Affairs*, 1880, and with extensive notes, Robert Sewell, *The Analytic History of India: From the Earliest Times to the Abolition of the Honourable East India Company in 1858*, 1870.

⁴⁷ Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, 86.

⁴⁸ In many works the idea that India was static, as critiqued by Said in the polemic against Marx demolished by Aijaz Ahmad in his book *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures* (London: Verso, 1992) need not detain us long. In his book Ahmad sets out a powerful reading of much more than the first two 'infamous' pieces Marx wrote for the *NYDT*, showing not only that Marx's interest and knowledge of India increased exponentially over time, but also that his arguments in 'The British Rule in India' were more justified than Said credits. My track will not be the same as Ahmad's but should note that this is a required reference point, indeed a 'corrective' that was welcomed like the splash of a brick in a stagnant pond when we were postgraduates in the 1990s.

⁴⁹ Lakshmi Subramanian, *Ports, Towns and Cities: A Historical Tour of the Indian Littoral*, (Mumbai: Marg Publications, 2008), 8.

⁵⁰ Anand Yang, *Bazaar India: Markets, Society, and the Colonial State in Gangetic Bihar*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 14.

⁵¹ Subramanian, *History of India*, 19.

⁵² At both ends a para-legal logic of policing in exchange inaugurates a legal power. Fortification and policing testify to discipline in the face of theft, Bentham helps found the first London Docklands Police. Yet the protective wall around the East India Docks was shifted to make way for the Blackwall tunnel, including moving the substantial plaque erected to mark the site. EIC shipping lost half a million per year in the 18th Century, the protective wall is some 15 foot high, and still stands despite redevelopment of the site for financial capital.

⁵³ Yang, *Bazaar India*, 1.

⁵⁴ Yang, *Bazaar India*, 1-2.

⁵⁵ Sudipta Sen, *Empire of Free Trade: The East India Company and the Making of the Colonial Marketplace*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), 20.

⁵⁶ Sen, *Empire*, 21.

⁵⁷ Yang, *Bazaar India*, 152, quoting the resident of Revelganj.

⁵⁸ Rila Mukherjee, *Strange Riches: Bengal in the Mercantile Map of South Asia*, (Delhi: Foundation Books, 2006), 184.

⁵⁹ Mukherjee, *Strange Riches*, 205.

⁶⁰ Sen, *Empire*, 1998.

⁶¹ Murari Jha *The Political Economy of the Ganga River: Highway of State Formation in Mughal India, c. 1600-1800*, (Leiden University: Institute for History, Faculty of Humanities, 2013)

- ⁶² Irfan Habib, *Indian Economy Under Early British Rule: 1757-1857*, (New Delhi: Tulika Books, 2013), 22.
- ⁶³ Sen sets out to show ‘how marketplaces become the site of conflict between the Company and the traditional rulers of Bengal and Benares, and how extensive reorganization in revenue and customs affected the substance and hierarchy of long-established rights to market exchange’, in Sen *Empire*, 2-3. Alongside Sen’s book, Yang’s 1998 work gives an immense amount of detail on market places in India, where it was possible to purchase ‘horses, bullocks, cows, buffaloes, palanquins, rugs, carpets, utensils, cloths, boxes, musical instruments, shoes, spices, toys, umbrellas, books and other necessary articles’ *Bazaar India*, 148. Such studies of course develop the earlier unavoidable contribution of Christopher Bayly’s *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), or extend the field as two parallel volumes from 2013 do: the PhD study by Jha on the Ganga trade, and Habib’s more general introduction to the more macro conditions. See Murari Jha, *Ganga River*, and Habib, *Indian Economy*. Several of the books mentioned here, Bayly, Sen and Habib, offer extensive and intricate glossaries of roles in the networked market systems of Mughal and transition times. So many of these roles we would have to consider as there either to restrict or facilitate trade, not only Zamindars and Gomāshātas, but also the Kotvāl (police), Chaukidārs (toll keeper), Dīvān (deputy collector), Pāik (armed guard), Rāhdār (guardian of highways/can also mean robber), Poddār (money lender), in Sen, *Empire*, 23; Sarrāfs (bankers, money changers), Dalāls (brokers), Baqqāls (grain merchants), in Habib, *Indian Economy*, 10; and Bazazas (cloth dealer) Banian (grocer) Jouhuris (jeweller), Mahajan (merchant), in Bayly, *Rulers*, 32. Habib also includes sometimes amusingly prejudicial commentaries by nineteenth century figures like Mill, who, as mentioned elsewhere, had been a visitor to Marx’s Dean Street rooms, though in *Das Kapital* is mocked because while on level plains he sees simple mounds and calls them hills, ‘the imbecile flatness of the present bourgeoisie is to be measured by the altitude of its great intellects’, in Marx v35, 519.
- ⁶⁴ Marx, 1867 v35, 327.
- ⁶⁵ Marx, 1867 v35, 741.
- ⁶⁶ Palmer, cited in Chaudhuri, *Economic Development of India*, 208.
- ⁶⁷ Palmer, cited in Chaudhuri, *Economic Development of India*, 208.
- ⁶⁸ Sen, *Empire*, 149.
- ⁶⁹ Bhrahmo Samaj would testify against the opium trade in the Royal Commission, ROC [Royal Commission on Opium] *Royal Commission on Opium 1893-1895*, in 7 volumes, (London: Ganesha Publishing 1896-1896 [2003]) Volume 4, 93-94.
- ⁷⁰ Sumanta Banerjee, *The Wicked City: Crime and Punishment in Colonial Calcutta*, (Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2009), 255.
- ⁷¹ Nicholas Dirks, *The Scandal of Empire: India and the Creation of Imperial Britain*, (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 303.
- ⁷² Dirks, *Scandal*, 308.
- ⁷³ Dirks, *Scandal*, 309.
- ⁷⁴ Dirks, *Scandal*, 303.
- ⁷⁵ Dirks *Scandal*, 310.
- ⁷⁶ see William Dalrymple, *Return of A King*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2012) and Vijay Prashad, *War Against the Planet: The Fifth Afghan War, Imperialism and Other Assorted Fundamentalism*, (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 2002).
- ⁷⁷ Marx, 1867 [1976] *Capital*, Penguin edition, 137
- ⁷⁸ Habib, *Indian Economy*, 96.
- ⁷⁹ Waley reports this, but adds that Jardine also planned to speak with Palmerston to encourage the military intervention we have come to know as the First Opium War, Arthur Waley, *The Opium War Through Chinese Eyes*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1958), 22-3.