

The third characteristic of 'Asiatic' societies, according to the AMP model, is the "self-sufficient village/commune". Rights of land ownership in 'Asiatic' societies are vested in the village/commune as a whole. Individual members of the village/commune can hold land only by virtue of their membership in the village/commune. The individual, according to Marx, is not an owner in separation from the community, he is only the possessor of a particular part of it, hereditary or not. What exists is only "communal property" and "private possession." (Marx, 1965: 72,75 in Hobsbawm (ed.))

Marx uses the expression "Lower Commune" to describe the village/commune. These villages, he maintains, are always subjugated to, and live under the direct control of, the state. In fact, in one place Marx refers to these communities as the "...general slavery of the Orient..." (Marx, 1965: 95). Characteristic of these villages is their isolation from each other and from the society as a whole. Each of these villages, according to Marx, is self-sufficient and forms a little world in itself (Marx and Engels, 1972:102).

The AMP model distinguishes between the forms of exploitation in western feudalism and those in 'Asiatic' societies. Unlike feudal relations of exploitation which are class based, relations of exploitation in 'Asiatic' societies are located between the state, described as a class, and the peasantry, which is seen as one homogeneous entity. Rent and taxes, in the "Asiatic mode of production," it is maintained, coincide and are not extracted as two separate forms of surplus. The absence of a feudal class or a class of private land owners makes the state the only appropriator of surplus from the direct agricultural producers. In Capital III, Marx