



## The Sublime Perversion of Capital: Marxist Theory and the Politics of History in Modern Japan (Asia-Pacific: Culture, Politics, and Society)

By Gavin Walker



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In *The Sublime Perversion of Capital* Gavin Walker examines the Japanese debate about capitalism between the 1920s and 1950s, using it as a "prehistory" to consider current discussions of uneven development and contemporary topics in Marxist theory and historiography. Walker locates the debate's culmination in the work of Uno Kozo, whose investigations into the development of capitalism and the commodification of labor power are essential for rethinking the national question in Marxist theory. Walker's analysis of Uno and the Japanese debate strips Marxist historiography of its Eurocentric focus, showing how Marxist thought was globalized from the start. In analyzing the little-heralded tradition of Japanese Marxist theory alongside Marx himself, Walker not only offers new insights into the transition to capitalism, the rise of globalization, and the relation between capital and the formation of the nation-state; he provides new ways to break Marxist theory's impasse with postcolonial studies and critical theory.

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**The Sublime Perversion of Capital: Marxist Theory and the Politics of History in Modern Japan (Asia-Pacific: Culture, Politics, and Society) By Gavin Walker Bibliography**

- Sales Rank: #1243624 in eBooks
- Published on: 2016-03-25
- Released on: 2016-03-25
- Format: Kindle eBook

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#### Review

"What is capital? What is its relation with the 'world' and with the nation? What is its origin, its limit, and its 'other'? Reading the 'debate on Japanese capitalism' in the 1920s and 1930s against the grain of contemporary concerns, Gavin Walker invites us to a breathtaking intellectual journey. He provides a masterful interpretation of a crucial historical debate and makes a landmark contribution to our understanding of global capitalism and to the forging of a new project of liberation."

(Sandro Mezzadra, coauthor of *Border as Method, or, The Multiplication of Labor*)

"Gavin Walker's superb *The Sublime Perversion of Capital* is a brilliantly imaginative recovery of Marx's worldly vocation and the original premises of historical materialism dedicated to combining the immediacy of local contemporary circumstances with the global reach of capital. He realizes this singularly vital program by reflecting on the writings of the economist Uno Kozo, especially his thinking on logic and history, as they intervened and culminated in the famous Marxian debate on capitalism in Japan's 1920s and 1930s in a context sparked by a rapidly uneven passage into capitalist modernity and its spillover into imperialism."

(Harry Harootunian, author of *Marx After Marx: History and Time in the Expansion of Capitalism*)

#### About the Author

Gavin Walker is Assistant Professor of History and East Asian Studies at McGill University.

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