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Local food markets and market trade in the Old World

The origin of market institutions is an intricate and obscure subject. Not as if markets were as old as mankind and lacked therefore proper origins of their own. More justly this might be said of that trickle of trade and sodicum of money uses that is found in human communities even of the simplest kind. Some two ways acquisition of goods from a distance, i.e., trade, is inseparable from wooing gifts and dowry goods, those accompaniments of a universal exogamy. ³ Blood money and fines, a gain, involve the employment of quantifiable objects, i.e., money units either in payment or as a standard. Trade and money, we may say, were always with us. Not so the market. It is a much later development. Nevertheless, as we will see, it is hard to trace its beginnings.

This holds good of the market in both its current meanings, ~~two~~ different though they are. The one is that of a place or site -- typically an open space -- in which the necessaries of life, mainly food stuffs or prepared food can be bought, as a rule, at set prices; the other is that of a supply-demand-price mechanism, through the instrumentality of which trade is carried on, though it ~~is not~~ ^{need} ^{be} necessarily bound up with any definite ~~location~~ ^{place}.

¶ For the historian these two sets of facts are far apart.

In the one case ~~the empirical fact of what which mechanism can~~ ^{he is looking for} he can hold ~~onto~~ ^{on to} a geographical location where crowds meet; in the other, ~~it is~~ ^{this} ~~the~~ mechanism ^{of trade} worked through a specific mechanism. Though ~~the~~ ^{this} latter mechanism also is ^{an} empirical fact, it is too little tangible, too much in the nature of a mere statistical event to lend itself ~~readily~~ to historical research.

While it may be comparatively easy to ~~find~~ ^{locate} a definite spot where crowds were

went to
~~actually~~ meet ~~and~~ bartered goods, it is much less easy to ascertain whether
 as a result of the ^{competitive} behavior of the individuals who ^{made} ~~make~~ up the crowd ^{fluctuating} exchange
^{established} rates were ~~fluctuating~~ and, if so, the supply of goods offered was growing
 in response to a relative upward movement of those rates. Yet otherwise
 there can be strictly speaking no question of market trade.

~~Historically~~, markets in either sense ^{are} a comparatively
 recent institution, when contrasted with trade ~~uses~~ and ~~the~~ some money
 uses. ^{One of the} earliest authentic food market^s in Western antiquity, we have reason
 to believe, was the commercial agora in Athens. Of its antecedents we still
 know almost nothing prior to the fifth century, when in Greece itself the
 market appears to have ^{still} been somewhat of a novelty. Herodotus ^{may} deserve
 credence in suggesting Sardis, the capital city of Lydia, as the known pre-
 cursor. This would take the market-place a little further back in time, to
 about the seventh century.

As to an effective supply-demand-price mechanism, its functioning
 was probably first noticeable in regard to grain, and somewhat later in
 regard to slaves, in the Eastern Mediterranean, centering on the isle of Delos
 in the third century B.C. It appears to have originated from a large scale
 effort of the Ptolemies to market Egypt's grain, initiated by Alexander the
 Great's personal appointee, Glaucenez of Naucratis, in the third decade of

the fourth century B.C. This founding ^{as a} ~~port city~~ of trade of Alexandria
 with the possibilities of a market
 was perhaps the most consequential single event in the organizational field
 in the history of the human economy. ^{still had to be} administered trade,
 it still ~~possessed~~ no market place, ^{type A} nor was there ^{even} room for one.

Obviously, the market as a place preceded any competitive
mechanism of the supply-demand ^{price} type. Eventually, some 2000 years after, the
 market mechanism transcended the market-place altogether in that self-regulating
 system of price making markets which evolved in Western Europe, and spread
 over a great part of the globe.

Of However, the self-regulating of price making markets

It must be strongly emphasized that such a system — the term we are using here for liberal capitalism — goes way beyond being a mere variant of trading. The principle of exchange implied in trade is here put to use ^{entirely} ~~quite~~ different from that of ^{a mere} ~~the~~ acquisition of goods from a distance. It encompasses a type of society where land and labour are allocated through the supply-demand-price mechanism; risk bearing is organized as a market function; the supplying of money and credit, as well as ^{the} ~~an~~ complex services summed up under banking are provided through different markets. Eventually the market becomes, at least for a time, the fundamental institution of society.

Naturally, interest today turns towards this self-regulating system of markets which dominated the nineteenth century. Yet our present inquiry stops far short of the problem of a market economy; at the best we reach a point of vantage from which a vista opens up on it. For ^{a market} ~~the~~ economy is as far ahead of mere market trade as market trade itself was ahead of ~~its~~ ^{its} earlier forms of trading.

no talking as was

A warning as to method is imperative. The temptation ^{for us} ~~is~~ ^{is} overwhelming ~~to~~ ^{to} regard the market economy as the natural goal of these three thousand years of development. ~~Western thought is almost incapable of conceiving of such institutions as~~ ^{local food markets or market trade, in any other form than} the small beginnings that eventually grew into the world encompassing economy of ~~the~~ ^{modern time}. ^{Yet} ~~nothing~~ ^{nothing} could be more mistaken. ~~Market trade creates, and eventually~~ The modern economy ~~was~~ ^{was} the result ~~not~~ ^{not} of a process of growth from small beginnings, but ~~rather~~ of the convergences of originally separate and independent developments that can not be understood apart from an analysis of the institutional elements that went into their making.

And this holds good even of the relatively simple institution of market trade.

To avoid the teleological pitfall an operational approach commends itself. The market place will, then, be regarded here as a device through which the distribution of food ^{may be} organized.

A. Local food markets.

Historically, ^{there} a local food market was the means by which a retailing of food -- whether food stuffs or pre-cooked food -- ^{were} found to have been practiced in the ^{small} societies of ancient Greece and Rome.

We will briefly call this site the commercial agora, and contrast it with the ~~the~~ ^{related and yet sharply distinguished} institutions of the gates, the bazaar, and the port of trade.

the gateway!

In some irrigational empires of antiquity central government and grain growing on a large scale made for an elaborate system of storage at the gates, whether of temple, palace or city. The concern that caused the storage of grain was fear of famine as well as the ^{need} ~~possessure~~ of ~~the~~ food ^{at short notice} ~~requirements~~ for work parties to be organized ~~by palace or temple~~ to deal with flood water, irrigation or drainage. Gates consist of tall towers for protection of entrance and exit; ~~insulated~~ ^{for} cellars ~~for~~ dry storage, ~~sometimes insulated by a coat of asphalt~~; an open space in front of the outer gates for ceremonial meetings and court sessions; ~~sometimes there was~~ a regular gate-way situated behind the outer gates, that is, a narrow passage with gates at both ends connecting two walls. In the gates a few main staples ^{in Aristotle's terms =} ~~series~~ ^{are} that keep -- are both received and handed out, ~~often against~~ ^{recorded} ~~ware~~ in fixed equivalent ^{of} which accounts ~~are~~ kept in silver or in kind, as one ^{grm of} ~~one~~ ^{silver} gur of grain equal ten ka of oil. Simple quantitative equivalencies for grain, oil, wine and wool allow the staples, whether outgoing or ingoing, to be substituted for each other. (Tax and rent payments in the one direction;

in all vital reports).

rations to labourers or soldiers in the other, were thus taken care of.

Although food is distributed, this is not a food market, since there is no

"meeting of supply and demand crowds." *The gateway may have*

been an elaboration of the gates in none protected areas where exit and entry was insignificant, while transactions were not recorded on clay tablets, but were oral and witnessed by the citizens in the gateway. Again, there is no meeting of craftsmen. It is also different from any modern market in as much as there is no one price for any type of object, and competition is excluded by its

very organization. Sale takes place not "in the open" but in the shop, the head of the craftsman's family acting as a broker. The craftsmen were, as a rule, strangers -- either transplanted as part of a conquered people, or settled under treaty. Physically, the bazaar was a covered place, ~~always~~ guarded, and ~~often~~ locked at night. Lacking other accommodation, such as a market place, alleys of the walled city were roofed over from one side to the other, thus forming the bazaar. After the gates system had dissolved, food markets were settled around the bazaar in the side streets, the food, in contrast to the manufactures, being sold at controlled prices.

The port of trade is an altogether different proposition.

It is a specific organ of foreign trade in non-market economies usually situated on the coast; on the desert border; at a river head; or where plain and mountains meet. The diplomatic and administrative methods employed in the contacts between the representatives of the parties -- mostly chartered companies and governments -- is such as to exclude competition. It is in no way a device for the retailing of food; ~~as the ordinary~~ *rather,* ports of trade usually possess food markets of their own.

As I've said,

earned as the nucleus of
The oriental market developed out of the bazaar. ~~It was~~
~~not a food market only after the decay of the gates system,~~
which in its turn had resulted from the "feudalisation" of the empires.

Eventually, the bazaar absorbed the sale of foreign goods, when ports of trade were outmoded as a result of world market development.

But history is not all institutional analysis. 2

The battle for and against food distribution through a market was waged in Athens largely on party political grounds. The democratic machine was handicapped, since owners of manorial households made it a practice of inviting their neighbors and hangers-on to free meals. Cimon, the aristocratic leader, was famous for this type of political hospitality.

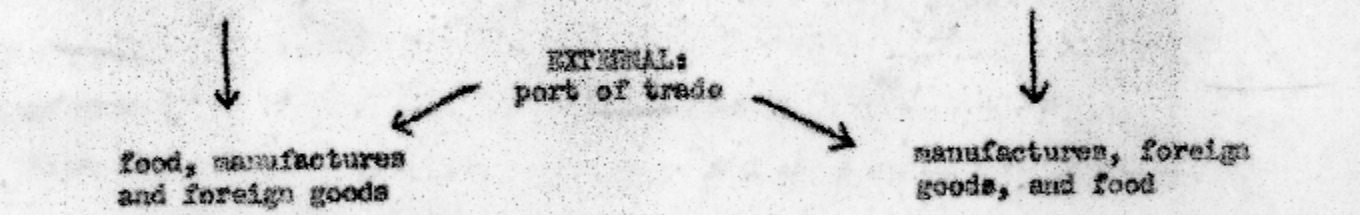
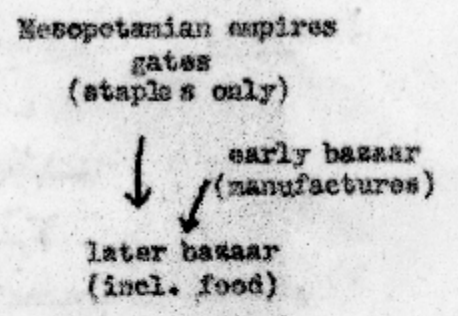
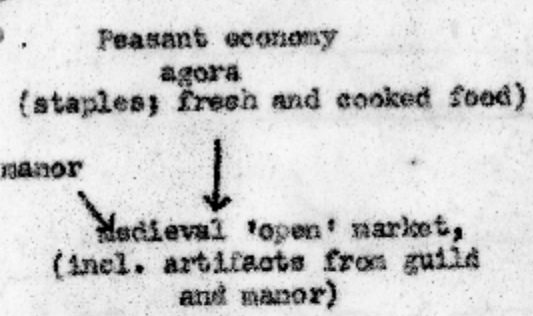
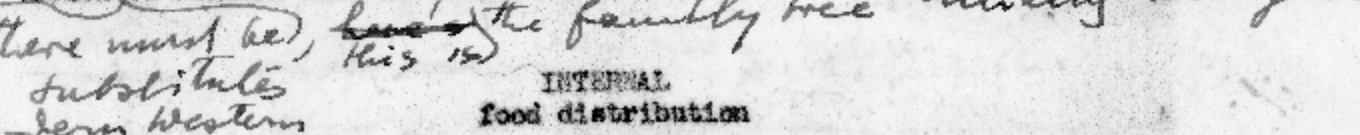
Pericles, his democratic opponent, to right the balance, fostered the market habit, ^{Essentially, he} had all citizens provided with a small daily allowance for public services, ^{This} that would keep them going through the day as long as it bought them

a meal in the market place. We have no knowledge from other poleis of ^{split} similar caucus maneuvering ^{to involve in} that ~~involved~~ the food market; for Athens it is well authenticated.

¹ The immortal "Funeral Oration" was spoken in ^{the atmosphere of Periclean municipal administration} ^{food market}

¹ The map contrasts with this in rough approximation the derivation of Western markets from the agora.

Footnote: ¹ There must be, ^{this is} ~~hand~~ the family tree linking the agora and its substitutes with modern Western markets.



Outside of Attica, ~~located in~~ the Greek speaking regions of Asia Minor, the chief promoters of markets were the Greek armies, ~~notably~~ ^{mercenary} troops, ^{which} now more and more frequently employed as a business ventures. ~~By the time of the fifth century,~~ ^{Towards the end of, and just following} upon the Paloponnesian War, the self-equipping hoplite army traditionally engaged only in brief campaigns on a sack of barley meal brought along from home, was ~~gradually~~ changing into an expeditionary force, only the cadres of which consisted of Spartans or Athenians proper while the bulk was recruited from peripheral Greeks. The employment of such a professional force, ^{notably} especially if it was supposed to cross friendly territory, raised novel

when

logistic problems. To ^{push} ^{neutral} other people's markets to carry on war against third parties was a character ^{on a business basis}

Xenophon's tracts show the actual and the ideal role assigned to the market in the new ^{logistics} ~~strategies~~. ~~Accordingly, the foot marches~~ ^{may have had to} the troops ~~provision~~ ^{provision} themselves from the ⁱⁿ ~~land~~ ^{own} money. ^{Due to them from}

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~~their own~~ ^{forming} unless local ^{provisioning} was practicable, ~~foreign part of~~ ^{comprised also} ~~broader question involving~~ the sale of booty, slaves and cattle on the one ~~hand,~~ ^{the} provisioning from sutlers who followed the army in the hope of profit,

on the other. ~~It all boiled down~~ ^{To this effect} to so many market problems. ~~Some~~ ^{were} ~~concerning such as~~ ^{organizational} and financial activities ^{initiated} by the kings, generals or governments responsible for the military undertaking. The campaign itself was quite often

an expeditionary force

no more than a ^{glorified} ~~rationalized~~ ^{or rationalized as} booty raid, if not of a renting out of ~~an army~~ ^{to} serve a foreign government for the ~~military~~ ^{benefit} of the home

country that financed the venture on business grounds. Military efficiency of course, was the paramount requirement. And ^{a speedy} ~~an~~ ^{expeditious} sale of booty, if only for tactical reasons, forced as much part of efficiency as did the regular provisioning of the troops while avoiding, as far as could be, ~~the~~ ^{to}

steroidically Greek idea ^{erupted} to how weakners in an advanced world ^{much} ^{as the} ^{drive} of coins had been to compete with the superior trade of Tyre & Sidon ^{two centuries before.}

antagonizing ^e ~~of central~~ ^{the peaceful} populations. ~~The evidence shows that it was~~ ^{In} this
 endeavour ~~the~~ ^{ago}-ahead generals devised new methods of stimulating local market
 activities, financing the sutlers to wait upon the troops, employing local
 craftsmen in improvised market^s for armaments, and boosting ~~market~~ ^{of goods} supply and
~~market~~ services by all means at their disposal, however tentative and hesitant

the evidence reveals local initiative to have been. There was ^{certainly} no reliance
 on the business spirit of the inhabitants. ^{Only} ~~from the port towns~~ ^{seem} sutlers to have been ^{selling} ~~forth~~,
 civilian commission of "booty sellers" along with the king who commanded the
 army in the field. Their task was to have the slaves and cattle auctioned
 on the spot. King Agesilaos busied himself to have markets "prepared,"

"set up," "offered" to his troops by the friendly cities along his prospective
 itinerary. In the ^{utopian} ~~local~~ ^{fish} army of the Cyropaedia ~~the~~, Xenophon described
 how any trader who wished to accompany the army and needed money for supplies,
 goes to the commander and, after giving references as to his reliability, is
 advanced money out of a fund kept for that purpose. (Cyr. VI ii 38f) Not
 much later Timotheus the Athenian general ^was to shape his practice on

similar lines. In the Olympian war (361 B.C.) having substituted copper for
 silver in paying his soldiers, he persuaded the traders to accept it from the
 soldiers at that value, promising them that it ^{would} ~~was~~ be accepted from them at
 that rate for the purchase of booty, and that anything that they had left
 over after purchasing booty ^{was to} ~~was~~ be redeemed in silver. (Ps. Arist. Econ. II, 23a,
 1356a)

Not for nothing had Xenophon as a commander of the Tenthousand ^{admired} the
 "Lydian market," that mobile camp of sutlers that ^{the} ~~the~~ Persian commander har-
 boured within his own army, so as to ease the hardships of ^{the} ~~his~~ troops on
 the march/ (Xen, Anabasis I.V.6). ^{held} ~~was~~ ~~constant~~ ~~travelling~~ that the
 vast "baggage" (skeuē) of many thousands of persons that Hellenistic armies
 carried along in their swollen bellies were of enormous economic significance.
 In effect, they ^{were probably} represented the first all-round supply market for mass con-
 sumption known in history.

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Such were some of the ~~most~~ ^{forced} factors that ~~shaped~~ the development of markets in the Hellenic world. ~~The forces~~ ^{the crises and governments} that set up and organized the agora expressed themselves through political action and would naturally regard the price of consumption goods as a matter of public interest. An uncontrolled food market could never have existed in the Hellenic world.

Freedom is not an inborn quality of the market. It does not stem from the bush and the jungle, from the desert or the highlands. Free markets were a deliberate achievement of modern trade organization.

B. Market trade

A supply-demand-price system implies fluctuating prices that control supply, if not production itself. Where did such a system originate? And when ~~and~~ did trade link up with it -- a millennial institution ~~of~~ ^{of} ~~great scope and power~~ which had developed entirely on expeditionary, gift-counter-gift and administrative foundations? ~~How~~ ^{eventually} did trade come to base itself on methods so foreign to its whole history?

In ~~locating~~ ^{pin pointing} the ~~first~~ beginnings of a supply-demand-price mechanism, the only practicable way for an historian of antiquity is to follow the tracks of trade. ~~Traces of the market mechanisms of the past~~ ^{all too} elude us. Literary documents are ~~scattered~~ ^{few and} far between and lack ~~the necessary~~ precision. Even in our own days the presence or absence of a market for a definite ~~good~~ ^{commodity} is ~~sometimes~~ difficult to ascertain as business men know all too well; for the distant past it would be ~~an~~ ^{an} almost ~~hopeless~~ endeavour.

Trade is ~~an~~ ^a ~~altogether~~ different matter: Personnel, goods, routes and vehicles are manifest. Wherever trade was seen to take its course we might expect to ~~find~~ ^{find} pools of goods -- the source ^S and sink ^S, as it were, of the flow. If we then find ~~that flow~~ ^{the} its volume and direction ^{of the flow to} ~~depend~~ ^{they} upon competitive prices of the goods, we can speak of market trade.