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Exercise Haat Bazaar as Innovative Strategy of Economic Growth

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Abstract: *The Haat bazaar in the title of this Research Paper resonates on two levels: it identifies the site of investigation and it situates the scene of interrogation. Indeed, the very choice of the bazaar as the site of this study is designed to lead to a distinctive scene of interrogation, a stage for posing fundamental questions regarding Indian society under colonialism and for posing questions about narrative history. Certainly the search for a colonial history through the venue of the bazaar highlights a past less familiar than the ones built around those other sites that have come to embody colonial India. The narrative constructed around the bazaar thus draws us to a different reality because the market itself occupies a different place in the Indian landscape. This Paper entails that the 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 in South Asia to conduct wholesale and retail trade, to gather news and information, and to engage in various social, cultural, religious, and political activities. Thus, like their counterparts in other societies, markets "can be viewed as microcosms containing a representative array of the elements comprising a regional environment. Markets provide a compressed display of an area's economy, technology, and society in brief, of the local way of life."*

Key Words: : Innovative Strategy, Problemizing, Textualized Advantage, Challenges, Orientalism, Haat Bazaar.

To understand markets of the colonial era as historical texts of exchange relations emblematic of the "local way of life," however, requires journeying through the "Oriental market," that eroticized other place of Western imagination. No mere figment of Orientalism, the discourse relating to the bazaar in colonial India comes wrapped in layers of Orientalism. To represent it therefore requires an act of deconstruction, detaching that place from its Orientalist moorings. Such unpacking, although standard practice for historians who are trained to sift through source materials, now demands the added rigor of sorting out the workings of power and knowledge that Foucault has shown us is implicated in all textual productions: "power produces knowledge and there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations." Orientalism, in other words, "is not just a way of thinking. It is a way of conceptualizing the landscape of the colonial world that makes it susceptible to certain kinds of management." For historians of modern India, so dependent on working through the documentary project of the colonial state, such sifting is even more critical. It requires what Bernard S. Cohn has termed "exegetical and hermeneutical skill," for the legacy of the elitist historiography that hitherto dominated South Asian studies does not ease the task of reconstruction and representation. Nevertheless, neither the biases of the historical record nor those of the historiography have prevented scholars Ranajit Guha and the Subaltern Studies collective, for example from pursuing the voices of subjects and subjectivity submerged in but not completely silenced by the historical record and the received historiography.

To begin by problematizing the interrelationship between reading bazaars as historical texts of social, political, economic, and cultural worlds and recovering markets textualized in the historical records is to draw attention to the problems of representation and evocation. For in trying to extract history from such texts, I face several questions not only how to represent the bazaar in history but also how to construct its narrative history and in what voice to present it. Such questions turn on the implicit notion that the writing of history involves textual construction, that the act of writing itself, regardless of the discipline, necessarily entails poetics and involves artifice. That is, the rhetorical strategies deployed here to unravel the history of the bazaar in colonial India and the authorial and authoritative conventions used to present this history are problematics of this investigation.

Condition of Truth and Reality- To appreciate the literary or even the aesthetic quality of historical writing does not mean that I accept all the premises of postmodernism. Certainly, one cannot share in the postmodernist enterprise of aestheticizing history and severing "it from its formerly accepted grounding in conditions of truth and reality." I do not take this as an opportunity to rehearse and demonstrate the predominantly rhetorical character of history. Rather, one can seek to write about relations of power in the colonial period from a specific point of view: that of a postcolonial historian writing about the past with a conscious nod to present-day issues the lived experiences of people in a world increasingly dominated by a market economy, by a capitalist world-system, to use a term and concept coined by Immanuel Wallerstein; the interplay

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of the market with modes of power and relations of production; the project of the colonial state and its effects on peasant society; and the interrelationship between the projects of the colonial and the postcolonial state.

The intention in foregrounding the texts of this historical investigation is not to follow the "Descent into Discourse," to use the title of a spirited attack on the "reification of language" in recent social historical writing. The so-called linguistic turn in history, a direction advocated by the postmodern project, has currency here only insofar as it emphasizes a critical scrutiny of the hegemonic texts produced by colonial power and knowledge (the bulk of our standard historical sources), a scrutiny necessitated further by the recognition that ordinary men and women in history (mostly peasants in this case) occupied ideological and power positions that were subordinated to, but that also resisted, the articulations of this hegemony. Nor does the postmodernist belief in the death of the subject have much play in this work: its central concern is to rescue subjects and their subjectivity from the hegemonic systems of power and knowledge that subordinated them and not to privilege textual attitudes and discursive practices. Postmodernism and the new turn in history figure here in the sense that this study shares the rising interest in the cultural context of relationships between state and society and between the groups comprising indigenous society, as well as in their representations in history.

To investigate the historiographical rupture provided by the bazaar, let us begin by contextualizing, by drawing its spatial and textual coordinates in relation to the more scrutinized sites in the historiographical landscape those of caste and village. Like caste, the village was isolated by the colonial discourse as one of the major sites at which the "real India" was knowable. And like caste, the village cast in the role of the "Indian village republic" attained paradigmatic status as a representation of rural society and as a template of the structure and organization of indigenous society and economy.

The Formal Ways of Production Over Special Period of Time- A classic formulation is the description of village India limned by Sir Charles Metcalfe in 1830: Hindoo, Patan, Mogul, Marahta, Sikh, English, are all masters in turn; but the village community remains the same. The sons will take the places of their fathers; the same site for the village, the same positions for the houses; the same lands will be re-occupied by the descendants of those who were driven out when the village was depopulated. This union of the village communities, each one forming a separate little state in itself, has contributed more than any other cause to the preservation of the people of India through all the revolutions and changes which they have suffered, and is in a high degree conducive to their happiness, and to the enjoyment of a great portion of freedom and independence. From such stirrings in the pages of early-nineteenth-century administrative reports, where the idea of the "village republic" or "village community" was "primarily as a political society," there emerged a second notion of it as "a body of co-owners of the soil." Subsequently, it developed into the "emblem of traditional economy and polity, a watchword of Indian patriotism."

The political version of village India issued from the pens of Sir Henry Maine and Karl Marx who, although "poles apart in other respects came together retrospectively as the two foremost writers who have drawn the Indian Village Community into the circle of world history. In keeping with contemporary Victorian evolutionary ideas and preoccupations, both saw in it a remnant or survival from what Maine called 'the infancy of society.'" For both men the village denoted a community of interests forged by collective economic and political interests: economic in that the "organized society" of the village tied together by real or fictive kinship held land and cultivated it jointly, political in that authority was wielded by the village council of five, the panchayat. Such a view of village India as self-sufficient economically and politically meshed commodiously with the rising nationalist sentiment of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Romesh Dutt, for one, deployed these images in attacking the colonial condition whereby such "ancient and self-governing institutions" had passed away "under the too centralised administration of British rulers," their destruction construed as proof that "an alien Government lacks that popular basis, that touch with the people, which Hindu and Mugal Governments wisely maintained through centuries." Periodically transformed but never completely transfigured by shifting intellectual currents, the representations of this imagined village persisted well into the twentieth century, the village's many-layered images accommodating the projections of colonial administrators and scholars (e.g., Metcalf and B. H. Baden Powell), theoreticians (e.g., Marx and Maine), and nationalist leaders and scholars like Gandhi, Nehru, Dutt. Although scholars since the 1950s have been steadily dismantling the village that the Raj built some argue that this edifice has by now not only been condemned but also razed the mythologized village, like caste, has not entirely relinquished the considerable analytical and theoretical domains it annexed and possessed for more than a century and a half. Indeed, it has persisted, although with less vigor than has caste, as one of the "few simple theoretical handles that had become metonyms and surrogates for the civilization or society as a whole."



The concept of the village republic has its roots as much in "European ideas" as in "Indian prejudice." "Like the Mughals, the Nizam of Hyderabad, Sultans of Mysore, and Nawabs of Dacca and Arcot worked revenue systems in which ruling elites knew the countryside only as a set of points for revenue collection. At every point, settled agriculture and trade generated state revenue." In other words, the colonial state settled on the village as the core of the Indian social, economic, and political body because of its primary interests in maintaining law and order and in extracting taxes from the subject population. Fiscal concerns demanded that the countryside be conceived of as a fixed set of points.

An instrumental space for the project of the colonial state, the Indian village, as constructed in the colonial discourse, did not, however, fit squarely with British revenue arrangements. In north India the unit of revenue management was the mahal (estate, parcel of land), which increasingly did not coincide with the mauza, the revenue village; most settlements, moreover, were made with specific individuals (landholders, or zamindars) and not the village community. The idea of the village republic also ran counter to the raiyatwari settlement of south India, which sought to engage the cultivator directly. "For, if the village was the basic unit of agrarian organization," as Burton Stein has noted, the "proposal for revenue [in south India to be] paid by individual cultivators on specific fields appears misconceived." Explaining away this contradiction required a rhetorical incorporation that "altered the idea of 'raiyat,' who is changed from being a part of a corporate village body into an equivalent of 'tenant,' thereby generating the transcultural metaphor or analogy Indian sovereign or East India Company to landlord, raiyat to individualized tenant. In this way both the corporate village and the individual peasant cultivator were preserved while at the same time maintaining the purportedly-direct historical relationship between cultivator 'tenant' and government 'landlord.'" Contradictions between revenue theory and revenue practice notwithstanding, village India remained at the core of the colonial ideology precisely because it was more valuable as an invented tradition. And in this capacity it serviced colonial power and knowledge, which, to follow the lead of Foucault and others, focused on the manipulation of the body, relying on techniques of discipline and technologies of power to fix people in space by restricting or encouraging their movements and actions and their development and reproduction.

Colonized as a Fixed Reality- Furthermore, the historically constituted and constructed notion of village India illustrates not only how the technology of colonial power conceptualized one key site categorizing, classifying, rationalizing, and delimiting in space indigenous society but also how such ideas expressed the imaginative geography of Orientalism. The village, in other words, comprised one of the many sites or units (others being criminal tribes, urban spaces, forests, women, and communities of one sort or another) appropriated by colonialism. It therefore speaks to us about the workings of colonial power, not only in exercising political, social, and economic control and domination but also in inscribing itself into the domain of culture and consciousness.

A site at which colonial power could produce the "colonized as a fixed reality," the village also qualified as a worthy object of colonial knowledge and power because it was "at once an 'other' and yet entirely knowable and visible." As an other, it belonged to a different time; it embodied tradition. The village as tradition, moreover, strengthened the colonial ideology because it represented the backwardness of the subject peoples, it legitimated the right of the rule of modernity, of the Raj. Thus the notion of a conservative rustic population glued to its villages reflected the penchant of disciplinary power for fixing people in space and time, a penchant whose preferred category was naturally a sedentary population. How closely this tied in as cause or effect or both-with the changes sweeping the subcontinent over the first century of colonial rule remains to be worked out fully. (So do the many applications of this process, whether targeting other sites or units, e.g., caste, or other I groups in the population, e.g., women.) But initial findings suggest that changes in ecology (e.g., extensive deforestation, the advance of the plow) and in modes of agricultural production and exchange, and the shifting fortunes of the once prominent nomadic and pastoral sector, all converged on advancing settled agriculture and peasant petty commodity production. Did such villages ever exist? Stratification within the village community may have occurred as early as the first millennium B.C. The "self-sufficient village," as Romila Thapar states, may have been undermined by the integration of villages via "horizontal links" with "local markets and fairs, networks of religious centres playing an economic role as well[,] and trade in essential items by itinerant herders, artisans and traders." Similarly, Cohn and Marriott note the many connections linking villages to the wider world, ranging from "trading networks" to "networks of marriage ties" to "political networks" consisting "primarily of ties of clan and kinship among rulers and the dominant landlord groups of the countryside." Morris E. Opler's classic 1956 article identified various "extensions" of the Indian village, fashioned by common origin and descent, with a cluster of villages encompassing an area of seventy square miles; village exogamy, which established ties to other villages; ties of caste to people of similar castes residing in other villages; customary work obligations involving artisans or workers from other villages;



supravillage religious or political movements; pilgrimages to sacred sites and visits to the village by religious specialists; the pull of the market town, which offered goods and services not available in the village; and migration to take advantage of education facilities available elsewhere. "Networks of trade, worship, royal authority, kinship, and caste," as David Ludden has observed recently, "enmeshed a characteristic South Asian village in 1750 within a web of social relations that was essential to agricultural production." In part this oversight reflects a historiographical orientation that "has often been peculiarly antagonistic to the rural market; on the basis of rural-romantic or primitive-communistic views of rural self-sufficiency, it has viewed the market as a specifically alien institution. In particular it has often portrayed the denizens of the market as low types who were able to steal the major part of the peasant's produce." In part the historiographical blinders stem from the "obsessive British concern with Indian Land Revenue." In part the bazaar has remained largely occulted in a historiographical terrain over which the dominant monuments of village and caste have cast their giant shadows. The biases of the historiography, that is, reflect the biases of the colonial record in which village and caste were tropes of an unchanging India.

Indeed, relatively little scholarly research has been conducted on the crucial role of markets in articulating the economy and society of an area. Nor have they been systematically analyzed as parts of a wider network of markets. Instead, studies of marketing in India, as for other areas of the world (Africa, Asia, and Latin America), are predominantly ethnographies of individual marketplaces and their settings and about certain aspects of market exchange. A few works, primarily by economists, have looked at the efficiency of food grain marketing but only to evaluate their functioning as measured against the models of competitive markets. There are, however, some significant exceptions: Hagen's scrutiny of the system of colonial education in Patna district in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries within the context of the local society's marketing system; Bayly's examination of the roles of "urban, mercantile and service people" in the towns and bazaars of north India in the period from 1770 to 1870; and Wanmali's synchronic analysis of the lowest level of marketing, periodic markets, in Singhbhum district. Notable also-although largely synchronic in their focus-are the recent studies of local and regional markets and fairs by geographers and anthropologists that concentrate on the spatial, economic, and anthropological dimensions of patterns of exchange.

Studies of markets in India as well as in other parts of the world, while continuing to draw their conceptual sustenance from the central-place theory developed initially in the 1930s by the German economic geographer Walter Christaller, offer a diversity of models of market organization. But they share a common interest in highlighting markets as nodes in a complex pattern of economic and social exchanges organized hierarchically as well as by such factors as economy, geography, transportation, politics, and administration. However, the tendency in the literature until recently largely the product of geographers and economists has been to follow the classical idea of central place to see either how markets organize the geography of retailing or how they serve as collection points for the available goods and services of an area. An underlying theoretical construct in this literature is the notion of a central place as "a settlement or an aggregation of economic functions that is the hub of a hierarchical system which includes other settlements or communities relating to it on a regular basis; the hub of a region because goods, people, and information flow primarily between it and its less differentiated hinterland." Increasingly, locational and economic analyses of markets-with their emphasis on such geographical and economic variables as population, ecology, transportation, and a competitive market economy-have been enriched by studies (many by anthropologists) recognizing other factors relating to social, political, and cultural conditions and circumstances also involved in structuring marketing systems. This body of scholarship, much of it largely synchronic in focus, relies on and reinterprets and modifies central-place theory.

Structure and Function of Marketing System- Although the central-place theory of the structure and function of marketing systems is critical to this analysis, it is not applied indiscriminately. On the contrary, in seeking to fashion a narrative history around the bazaar, this study takes its inspiration from Karl Polanyi's "substantivist" insistence on recognizing the social parameters of economic action and economizing behavior. Indeed, this study is very much grounded in its local contexts defined by the society and culture of the northeastern Indian region of Bihar. Although I do not seek to revive the well-known substantivist-formalist polemics of the 1960s, I consider the Polanyi contribution valuable for directing "us away from narrow tautological functionalist arguments and from Parsonian conceptualizations of societies as functionally interlinked subsystems, to the significance of institutional control of distributive systems and its consequent effect on production."

This study aimed to reconstruct the dynamics of the regional and local (district-level) marketing systems of this area, down to the lowest level, the haat, or periodic market of interest here are the organization and interrelationships of markets spatially (in terms of the taxonomy of sites as well as their hierarchical relationships) as well as temporally (including their



relation to the local agricultural and religious calendar). The structure of the marketing systems will also be considered within the framework of the pattern of horizontal and vertical trade: the movement of local agricultural and craft commodities and of nonlocal products from higher-level markets.

In contrast to many other studies of marketing, however, the emphasis here is not exclusively on mapping the spatial aspects of the human landscape as patterned by markets or looking at markets as economic phenomena. Rather, the focus is on reconstructing and narrating the lived experiences of people as played out in the arena of, and against the backdrop of, markets. I also look at the role of marketing systems as units of social, cultural, and political organization—units within which power and influence were dispersed and exercised and within which people increasingly developed and acquired notions of identity and community. And throughout I am interested in the evolving relationships between the colonial state and indigenous society as mediated through the local marketing systems. Finally, this book also considers rural society against the template of the local marketing system.

On the one hand, such concerns are intended to reveal the organization and interrelationships of markets spatially and temporally; on the other, they can bring out the fit of the locality and the region in the larger national and world systems. In part, the lens of the market reveals the changing relations of power and dominance between and among the different categories on the land. However, because the emphasis is on viewing local society and culture through the lens of the marketplace, not much attention is directed at highlighting the incorporation of the region into the capitalist world system. It is permeated by a sense of the market as the "epitome of a spatial boundary," a "space where local society materially and culturally reproduced itself." Against this vernacular space are featured events and people that foreground the market as a "social nexus," as a "typical site of collective discourse," as a container and crucible of solidarities as well as of antagonisms and contradictions of a particular locality.

Bazaars realign our imaginative geography by insisting on a more dynamic view of agrarian society than has hitherto been emphasized in a historiography that has defined colonial society largely in structural and legal categories. Both as an analytical unit and at a metaphoric level, bazaars speak the language of exchange and negotiation, of movement and flow, of circulation and redistribution in short, of extra community or supracommunity connections and institutions. The India of Bazaar is therefore not confined to a particular site at the expense of wider ties. Such linkages, after all, did exist, and the village never suffered from that rather artificial quality of isolation that had been constructed for it in the colonial imagination. The shift from the city to the fair to the village market and from the late eighteenth to the twentieth century is by design. Such movement across space and time mirrors the emergence and development of colonialism and capitalism in South Asia. The colonial state was initially anchored in the coastal cities, the port cities of Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras, from which it branched out into the interior. By the mid-nineteenth century, at the conclusion of the first century of colonial rule, the regime had reached into the countryside, setting up its apparatus of control in towns and larger settlements that were typically also the sites of fairs. In the late of nineteenth century, prior to the rise of large-scale elite and subaltern anti-colonial movements, the colonial state sought to tighten its administrative grip over the countryside by forging links particularly to those nodal points that were the settings of small town and periodic village markets. It was these markets at the grassroots level that became the locus in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries for the great contest between rulers and ruled. The colonial state is a presence throughout the work, but it is not portrayed as a static dominating force from the very outset or an architect of such power that it did not have its own contradictions or did not have to reproduce itself continually to maintain its control.

Conclusion- The movement from city to towns (and fairs) to village is also aimed at foregrounding in situ the principal actors of this historical drama: urban elites, rural magnates, merchants and traders, and peasants. The emphasis is as much on their prominent roles at particular sites in the system of exchange as it is on their interrelationships with one another and to the colonial state. Each of these settings is further intended to be a period piece evoking a particular milieu: from the city of discontent in the late eighteenth century to the fairs with their *communitas* and carnival dimensions in the nineteenth to the countryside that resounded with the voices of resistance in the twentieth. Each shows the extent to which any system of exchange is shaped by social and cultural forces as it is by economic and political conditions.

In part an epilogue because it has less of the limiting and restricting quality that the very word conclusion connotes on the one hand and the finality of outcome that it implies on the other hand reaches its own end by connecting the multiple stories in Haat Bazaar India. Thus, the bazaar as a site and scene of colonial history is the setting for a narrative history of the lived experiences of subjects whose lives and livelihood were played out in the larger contexts defined increasingly by the market and the colonial state in Bihar between the late eighteenth and early twentieth century. These stories rest on the



reconstructions we as historians build from the textual materials of their experiences.

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