

ORCHHA, THE MARKET WITHIN BLANK SPACE OF ABUJMARH

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Cock fighting display in Orcha market

ABSTRACT

The market in Narayanpur (Bastar) District, Chhattisgarh, India, is analysed from the point of view of its cultural and economic significance as a reflection of social relations in the area. The groups present in Bastar interact in the market more regularly than they do in any other context. The market system shows their hierarchical relationships clearly, and this message is underscored by the hierarchical values attached to the goods traded. It is argued that this symbolic interaction perpetuates an ideological representation of Tribal/non-tribal relations which confers certain practical advantages on the Tribals at the expense of their being made the cultural landscape.

Keyword: Market, readymade clothes, Maria tribe, ritual ethnographic, intra-village economy, debtor-creditor, vertical integration, nontribals, middlemen, market economy,

I usually think of Market as the place where things are bought and sold. In this common everyday usage, the word 'market' may refer to particular markets that we may know of, such as the market next to the railway station, the fruit market, or the wholesale market. Sometimes we refer not to the physical place, but to the gathering of people buyers and sellers who constitute the market. Thus, for example, a weekly vegetable market may be found in different places on different days of the week in neighbouring villages or urban neighbor hoods. In yet another sense, 'market' refers to an area or category of trade or

business, such as the market for forest product or the market for readymade clothes. A related sense refers to the demand for a particular product or service.

What all of these meanings have in common is that they refer to a specific market, whose meaning is readily understandable from the context. But what does it mean to speak of 'the market' in a general way without referring to any particular place, gathering of people, or field of commercial activity. This usage includes not only all of the specific senses, but also the entire spectrum of economic activities and institutions. In this very broad sense, then, 'the market' is almost equivalent to 'the economy'. We are used to thinking of the market as an economic institution, but this paper will show you that the market is also a social institution. In its own way, the market is comparable to more obviously social institutions like caste, tribe or family.



Tribal women selling Jamun fruits.

Socioeconomic Landscape Of Orchha Market

The dense forests of Abujmarh have long been isolated from the outside world, inhabited largely by the indigenous people, and accessible only via forest pathways starting from Narayanpur, Bijapur and Barsoor. Geographically, the Indravati River segregates it from the Bastar region, adding to its isolation. Recently, the access to the area has been further marred by heavy use of landmines by the insurgents at entry points. During the British rule in India, Abujmarh remained in isolation and constitutionally "excluded". The tribals remained backward and exploited by prevalent feudalism in India, with a majority of them starting cultivation only recently, and education was undertaken only at small schools run either by NGOs and missionaries. All these conditions, after 1967, gave rise to the Naxalite movement, which grew and spread over the coming decades. Abujmarh has been termed as "liberated zone", as due to its inaccessibility it remained untouched by any government presence and civil administration for the past 60 years and has developed a stronghold of Naxal-Maoist insurgents of the banned Communist Party of India (Maoist), which ran a parallel government, known as Janta Sarkar (People's government). The state government had no records about the Maria tribes living in the region or land ownership or revenue records, and the Abujmarh is usually called as an unsurveyed area.

Majority of the tribals live under dire poverty, and survive of the traditional shifting cultivation or slash-and-burn known locally as "Penda kheti" for six months in a year, they cultivate a small grained rice korsa and for the rest of the period survive by selling the rice along with forest products' like the Chironji, Tendu leaves, and occasionally come out to the weekly markets, haat bazaar of nearby towns to sell their produce.



woman is selling rice wine [landa]in the market

Orchha (Abujmarh) is the name of a market village located deep in the hinterland of Narayanpur district, Chhattisgarh (central India). The Abujmarh situated in the 4,400 square Km area in bastar surrounded by hills and covered with dense forest, which is still a puzzle for the outer world. These jungles

are the habitat of the scheduled Maria tribe. Marias lives in 237 villages in the area and depends primarily on Orchha weekly market for supply. On non-market days Orchha (Abujmarh) is a sleepy, tree-shaded hamlet straddling an unsealed road which winds its way through the forest. Occasionally its rural peace is shattered by the roar of a passing truck laden with massive logs of teak or loud blasts from the horn of the local bus; but these interruptions are not frequent. Social life in Orchha (Abujmarh) revolves around primitive tea-shops with a clientele of low-ranking employees of the State service, whose misfortune it has been to be stationed in such a distant and insignificant spot. Orchha (Abujmarh) boasts a tumbledown school, which doubles as a post-office, an imposing Forest Rest House, Police Station, Block Head Quarters, Tehsil Office and other Tehsil level Offices, a few substantial homesteads belonging to nontribal, a penumbra of rather less substantial huts inhabited by tribal Maria Gonds, and not much else. Orchha (Abujmarh) on non-market days—every day except Tuesday, that is—hardly exists at all; but Orchha (Abujmarh) on a market day might be a totally different place. Parked trucks jam the road, in charge of their drivers.



Vendor selling Mahua, which is also used for making local alcohol.

The market place is a roughly quadrangular patch of ground, about 1000 meter square, at the centre of which there grows a magnificent Sal tree. The thatched market stalls are arranged in a concentric pattern, and are divided by narrow streets or defiles, along which customers manoeuvre themselves as best they can in the crush, trying to avoid treading on the goods of less established traders, who make use of every nook and cranny between the permanent stalls to display their wares.

Beggary and sadness are not to be seen at the Orchha (Abujmarh) market: the young are all dressed smartly, and their elders contrive to convey, at the very least, an impression of respectable solidity. The dressiness, the showiness of the market scene—the oiled hair, the ornaments, the brilliant-hued saris, the immaculate shirts and turbans—is not, indeed, an aspect of the market to be ignored: for it reveals, as clearly as anything, the fact that the market is a ceremonial as well as a commercial occasion.

Participants adopt modes of heightened and stereotyped role-playing, appropriate for a ceremonial occasion, and the obligatory 'dressing up' is an aspect of this. Indeed, on closer examination, it is possible to perceive in the design of the market occasion an enactment of the social order in the widest sense, as it impinges on the people in the locality. For distinctiveness is at a premium, and the market provides an occasion par excellence for the differentiation of groups and for the articulation of inter-group relations, in ways not possible in the context of the daily routine of village life where these diverse groups come into contact only spasmodically. The market gives tangible expression to principles of social structure which transcend the village context. It locates the villagers in a holistic system of sociological categories, and binds them to this system by means of market relations. They always enjoy with their available resources and take their life very easy and self-concentrated. They lead a honest life. They celebrate the birth of a child as well as the death of old people. On both these occasions they sacrifice their dear animal cow or goat and distribute it to all and enjoy it as a social function. They are very attached to the dead body of the deceased. After burying, their dead body is covered with mud and fire is lit above it. The dead body is provided with all items purchased from the Orchha market as required by a living person including beedis (Indian Cigars) and salt. They are so sincere that no items can ever be stolen from the place. They do not bother about warm clothes. They depend on the wood fire in cold days. The Landa (toxicated drinks from rice) is their favourite drink. Their purchasing power is too less and never think to enhance it. Salt is considered to be very dearer necessity for them. The name Abujmarh means nobody knows about anything. It means the area which is unknown, deserted and blank in modern era, inspite of Orchha is their center point and place of economical, cultural and emotional place of gathering. The Maria has their own philosophy of life. They don't think more about the future and past. They don't believe in any religion or cast and appears with smiling face. They live in dense forest without seeing sun rays. They always believe to live in present and enjoy it; as such the Orcha is the unique and rarest. They appear with good physique, whitish colour and golden and curly hairs. Maria is the rarest race in the world. The space of life and time of Orchha is blank. The intention of this article is thus to explore the Orchha (Abujmarh) market from the point of view of its symbolic importance as an indigenous model of social relations.

'Markets which meet periodically in India have been neglected by geographers', writes Harriss (1976; Bromley 1974) and despite some additions (Wanmali 1976; 1977; Agrawal 1978) this remains true. The anthropological literature on rural markets in India is no less sparse, though the monographs by S. Sinha et al. (1961) and D. Sinha (1968) are interesting exceptions. This neglect is curious, especially in the light of the copiousness of 'market' studies carried out in India's congener-societies in the developing world, a genre inspired by the example of Trade and market in the early empires (Polanyi et al. 1957) and culminating in such major syntheses as Bohannan and Dalton's Markets in Africa (1962) and Skinner's Marketing and social structure in rural China (1964-65). In many non-industrialised societies markets are arguably central in the understanding of the social system as a whole. But this view would be completely heterodox in the Indian context, and for perfectly good reasons, no doubt, stemming from the self-sufficient nature of the traditional village economy and the prevalence of the jajmani system (Mandelbaum 1970). Nonetheless, periodic marketing systems are a common feature of rural India and are worthy of more attention from sociological observers than they have received. The question is, what kind of attention should they attract? Hitherto, they have been mainly the concern of economic geographers, interested in locational questions, periodicities, catchment areas and administrative problems (Wanmali 1976) and with problems of the general efficiency of rural marketing arrangements as means of distributing food cheaply and fairly (Harriss 1976). My concerns are quite different, which does not of course imply that I mean to deprecate the geographers' approach to applied social research. What follows can best be described as a 'thick description' of a rural market, undertaken in order to demonstrate the structural parallels which exist between the microcosmic system of the local market and the macrocosmic system of North Bastar society. The method is the one adopted in Geertz's famous account of the Balinese cockfight (1975; cf. Geertz et al. 1979).

Following Geertz, I take the market at Orchha (Abujmarh) as an enacted 'text', whose meaning can be construed by providing the appropriate specification of context. My argument is that, for the participants, the market gives concrete representation of the ground-plan of their society, its hierarchical

organisation and the scheme of values which sustains it. The market is a secular event, but it is also part of the ritual of social relations. Critics of this 'interpretative' approach may consider that it leaves untouched crucial questions having to do with 'why' things are as they are in Orchha (Abujmarh) market and in tribal society generally, and I am willing to concede this. However, it is heuristically practical to maintain a methodological separation between problems of cultural interpretation on the one hand and problems of causal/historical explanation on the other. It is all the more likely that I might arouse unfulfilled expectations with respect to the latter class of problems, in that my topic is the market, and 'market' studies have most frequently been undertaken with causal/historical analytical goals in mind;



Vendors with make shift vegetable stalls.

were I describing a festival or a *rite de passage* my interpretative intention would be more understandable, though still, no doubt, objectionable to certain points of view. The present choice of problem-definition is dictated not as a consequence of a theoretical prejudice against causal analysis, but arises from data at my disposal which seem sufficiently suggestive to warrant analysis within a narrowly structural framework. My theme happens to be the market, but this article is not intended as a contribution to the theory of markets, nor more generally to exchange relations. I am more preoccupied with the elucidation of a secular ceremonial, following the proposal made by Leach in a famous passage in which he advises anthropologists to make themselves aware of the 'ritual' component in normal everyday actions (Leach 1954: 13). Orchha (Abujmarh) market has a significant ceremonial component in that it provides a space, time and in the form of market interactions, for the gamut of social relations found in the wider society in the Abujmarh where Orchha market is located. There is spatial layout of the market, and here I am extending the range of spatial representations of social relations already exemplified in such familiar instances as the layout of the village of Omarakana in the Trobriands (Levi-Strauss 1964) or the arrangement of the negotiating table at the 1971 Paris peace talks over Vietnam (Douglas 1973).



Fresh Vegetable Market of Orcha



Modern jewelry has replaced traditional tribal jewelry from the local market.

This approach is familiar enough and only the context, perhaps, is novel. But in the Indian ethnographic milieu it would be strikingly aberrant were I do not centrally concerned with the symbolic

representation of hierarchy in social relations, since the egalitarian premise is so rooted in India, even in Maria Tribes. Here I am perhaps entering an uncharted area, in that discussions of hierarchy in India have not taken into account the hierarchical aspect of market relations. I would acknowledge the impetus provided by the work of Carol Smith (1975; 1976) towards the germination of the ideas presented here. Smith has summarised her arguments in the following terms:

Regional central-place organisation 111 Guatemala acts as a 'negative' or deviation-amplifying feedback loop between the irregular organisation of many local central-place systems, the ethnic divisions of the region, uneven rural development and underdevelopment and political inequality in the region (1976: 293).

While it should be apparent that Smith is dealing with questions of the most ambitious causal/explanatory kind, whereas I am not, the causal processes of hierarchy-accentuation via marketing organisation adverted to by Smith can be accompanied by processes of symbolic reinforcement of hierarchical relations of the kind I do discuss. This seems to be particularly a feature of those parts of India most distant from major centres of power, where state administration and Brahminical ritual dominance are weakly developed. Work on tribal Bihar (Sinha et al. 1961; Sinha 1968) supports this view: markets are most sociologically salient in areas which are 'backwaters' according to the historic geographic regional typology of Schwartzberg (1967)-I must defer, to a later occasion, the provision of the kind of regional geographical economic analysis provided by Smith, which leaves as an open question the applicability of Guatemalan model to the very different circumstances, and very different cultural premises, of Abujmarh. But there seems to be scope for suggesting some degree of convergence between the microcosmic perspective adopted here the world as seen from Orchha (Abujmarh) and the macrocosmic perspective so elegantly presented in Smith's work.



Live red ants being sold

Sociological prospective on market and the economy

If we are to see the Orchha (Abujmarh) market as, in some sense, of social relations, it is necessary to enumerate the major categories of people to be found in the market area. I propose to list these groups, simply for the sake of quick exposition, but must forestall a reasonable objection to this admittedly rather old-fashioned procedure. It may be felt that to list separate 'groups' in this way is to obscure the very point that I am seeking to demonstrate, namely, that the market reflects patterns of intergroup relations in the wider social field, since by simply enumerating groups as separate entities I leave unclarified the nature of the inter-group relationships supposedly reflected in the market arena; I would, by implication, be imputing to the market itself causal priority in the structuring of inter-group

relations inasmuch as it is in the market alone that such inter-relationships can be concretely shown to exist. It would be more appropriate, such a critic might insist, to depict the different groups as organically related outside the market context - in a manner well known from the vast bulk of studies of multi-caste village societies in India - before turning to the market place where such a given disposition of relationships between socially and ritually ranked and economically differentiated groups could be seen as 'reflected' rather than as in any sense primarily constituted or established. This objection is perfectly in order, and it is not indeed my intention to argue that the market has causal priority in bringing about the pattern of existing inter-group relations. However, the objection loses a great deal of its force as a result of certain considerations peculiar to low-density, dispersed-settlement societies, such as characterise the Orchha (Abujmarh) hinterland. It is simply a fact that there is very little sustained daily interaction between the major groups here discussed, a situation quite unlike that normally encountered in densely-packed, nucleated, multi-caste villages where a complex web of inter-caste relations is daily mobilised and continuously elaborated. If communal relations in the Indian village are usually, in Srinivas's famous phrase, 'back to back', it would be truer to say of the villages in the Orchha (Abujmarh) area that they are out of sight, out of mind. But this is not to say that these intergroup relations are not clearly articulated, though they are expressed, outside the market context, by the absence, rather than the presence, of association. For this reason it is not misleading to give an initial account of 'groups' in the Orchha (Abujmarh) area in the form of a listing of discrete social categories, rather than in the form of an account of dynamic interactions between them. The major groups of people assembled at the market, I will now provide a brief the pattern of market relation they enter into. There are five main kinds of goods transacted:

- 1 Imported manufactured items originating outside Orchha (which has no manufacturing industry), including jewelry (silver and gold) machine cloth, beads, trinkets, and more mundane items such as lamps, brass pots, knives, plates.
- 2 Non-locally-produced food, notably salt, rice, pulse, turmeric, dried chillies, refined sugar, flour (and other consumables such as bidi cigarettes, perfumed hair oil, face-cream, talc).
- 3 Locally produced food, fresh vegetables such as tomatoes, muli, onions, and luxury foods such as gur (locally made sugar) and parched rice, to which should be added locally cured tobacco.
- 4 Items such as bamboo baskets and grain-bins, sleeping mats of woven rushes, the complete range of earthenware pots, locally made ironware, axes, knives and arrowheads.
- 5 Forest products and cash crops collected in bulk at the market and despatched to metropolitan centres, mainly tamarind, oil-seeds, silk-cocoons, leaves for use as wrapping, chiroji, ful bahari and teak-seeds.

Corresponding to these major categories of goods are market roles which can be listed as follows:

(1) **Stallholders.** These are without exception non tribals, not from the immediate locality, trading goods in categories 1 and 2. They can be subdivided into (a) jeweller/moneylender; (b) trinket sellers; (c) machine-cloth sellers; (d) hardware/dry goods (manufactured items and imported foods); (e) teashops (local Non-tribal).

(2) **Open market produce traders.** These consist of Maria and local non-tribals (Maraars). They are divided into (a) parched rice/gur sellers (Chhota Dongar Maraars); (b) fresh vegetable sellers (other Maraars); (c) tobacco sellers (Maraar men and one tribal); (d) tribal vegetable sellers; (e) milk sellers (Rawats).

(3) **Open market non-produce traders.** These include (a) traders in baskets/ mats/bamboo-work (Tribals from the Abujhmar); (b) potters; (c) blacksmiths; (d) weavers.

(4) **Middlemen.** Non-tribals, who buy up tribal forest products and cash crops, paying with salt or money.

To this list I can add the three major categories of customers, who tend to be in the market for rather different things: (a) non-local tribals (e.g. forest officers, officials); (b) local non-tribals; (c) tribals; and the non-customer roles Policeman (Kotwal), Beggar (Non-tribal Sadhu) and spectator.

The structure of market relations reposes ultimately on the purchasing power of the Tribals, who are the main customers for all categories of goods. The tribals' cash is derived from the exploitation of their relatively rich resource base. Wealth derived from the sale of cash crops, forest products and from wages also circulates inside the village, where there is a thriving cash economy. The intra-village economy is rather different in character from the marketplace Economy, since it is largely bound up with the buying and selling of livestock, both as draught-animals and for slaughter at ceremonies and feasts. The sale of livestock plays no part in the market at all. The intra-village economy is the arena for competition between tribal men of power and influence (sian) who finance feasts and marriages, which involve copious expenditures and long-term debtor-creditor relations. Institutionalised credit is absent from the general run of marketplace relations, and is confined to the intra-village context. There are, in effect, two distinct frameworks for economic relationships, the village, and the market, with somewhat different economic ground rules in each case. The 'village' economy is embedded, 'personalistic', geared to the struggle for internal prestige between individuals who are equals in terms of the value system of the wider society, while the 'market economy is hierarchical, anonymous, and geared to the values implicit in the state, the widest framework of social relations.



Orchha Tribal market

Structure Space and Time

The Orchha (Abujmarh) market is primarily an institution of 'vertical integration' (in the sense of Mintz 1959). It integrates three levels of Abujmarh society: (i) the village, (ii) the market area and (iii) the district as a whole, including its articulation to metropolitan centres. Market relations, seen from this point of view, are relations of encompassing and encompassed, macrocosm and microcosm. The ranking of market places by size and distance from a centre, first established as a theoretical scheme by Losch (1954) and Christaller (1964) and since that time extensively studied by geographers (Berry 1965; Smith 1976), is significant not merely to locational problems *per se*, but also to any kind of sociological

analysis of communities which takes regional factors into account. The view of the world that members of a particular community maintain is determined by the nature of the access that they have to it, and this in turn is crucially modified by the hierarchialisation intrinsic to any regional system of communication, transport, exchange and distribution. It is outside the scope of this article to discuss market hierarchy theory in detail (Smith 1977; Skinner 1964-5). Here it is sufficient to identify three levels only: viz. tehsil' markets (the highest level of weekly markets), 'intermediate' markets which provide a full range of goods and marketing services in areas, away from district towns, not served by permanent bazaar areas, and finally, 'minor' markets which provide less than the full range of market facilities. In the hierarchical order of the market system of Bastar as a whole, the Orchha (Abujmarh) market occupies an intermediate place; it is superordinate in relation to the village economy, definitive in relation to the Orchha (Abujmarh)-market-area economy, and subordinate in relation to the tehsil economy.



Ladies are selling tree leaves in Orchha market

People in the Orchha (Abujmarh) market area are of course aware of the existence of other market centres, of various hierarchical orders, beyond the Orchha (Abujmarh) market itself, and from time to time— especially when the market in question is combined with ceremonies connected with the Goddess cult—they participate in these markets. In other words, it is through the regional articulation of the market system, that people in the Orchha (Abujmarh) market area conceptualise the structure of what can be called, in general terms, the state.

The market system of co-ordinates structure time (Bohannan 1967). The week, of seven days, is the cycle between successive markets in any one market area, and the days of the week are distinguished, and hierarchialised, according to the markets which occur on given days at given places. The fundamental rhythm of the market-day cycle is established at Jagdalpur(Division Headquarter), the state and previously royal capital, over 250 km away. The Jagdalpur market is held on Sundays, which becomes, so to speak, the highest ranking day. However, Bastar commissionerary (whose total area is greater than that of Kerala) is much too large to function as a single market system, so each tehsil has its own Sunday market, in imitation of the one at Jagdalpur, at the tehsil headquarters. Orchha (Abujmarh) is in Narayanpur District, so Sunday is Narayanpur market day, a day consecrated to the centre and the state. Time and space coincide in expressing political hierarchy. Ranked beneath the Sunday markets, are the

second order market centres such as Orchha (Abujmarh). The market traders of a tehsil concentrate in the tehsil headquarters on Sunday, and visit other smaller market centres on other days. Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, Friday and Saturday as second-order market days. Second order markets are arranged along routes of communication fanning out from the tehsil headquarters.

Pharasaon and Chhota Dongar markets are thus third order markets. The spatiotemporal hierarchy of market centres articulates between village-level society and the state: the tehsil-wide market system of Narayanpur recapitulates the organisation of the state (centering on Jagdalpur and divided into subordinate district) while the pattern obtaining within the district as a whole is itself recapitulated, on a microcosmic scale, by the order of events within a single second-order or third-order market area; thus, we can see that tehsil-wide market organisation consists of an alternation of market concentration and dispersion (systole/diastole) which is mirrored within the single market area—the Orchha (Abujmarh)



Ladies fascinated in the Bangles market

market area let us say—by the concentration of people in the market (on market day) and their dispersion back to the villages on non-market days. In other words, Orchha (Abujmarh) (and the other second-order centres) are to Narayanpur, as the component villages of the Orchha (Abujmarh) Market area are to Orchha (Abujmarh); and as Orchha (Abujmarh) is to Narayanpur, so Narayanpur is to Jagdalpur.

Markets are symbols of the social order because they are its product. Along with battles, ceremonies and political assemblies, they fall into the class of necessarily rather than contingently public occasions. They demand the renunciation of individual autonomy for the sake of ends (the exchange of goods and information) which can only be achieved collectively. Because of their logistic, co-ordinating, functions markets exert a profound influence over concepts of time and space in peasant societies and peasant states. The rhythm of market systole and diastole, emanating from Jagdalpur, is indeed nothing less than the pulse of the state itself.

The market Pattern

I turn now to the implications layout of the Orchha (Abujmarh) marketplace. The Orchha (Abujmarh) marketplace is nothing less than a compendium of social relations in the Orchha (Abujmarh) market area. These can be classified as relations between co-ordinate groups of approximately equal social rank, and relations between groups of different rank. These relations are expressed in two ways: (1) in the traditional layout which regulates where each group sits and transacts its business in the marketplace, and (2) by means of an implied hierarchy of goods, which ranks any kind of goods in the market as higher/lower/equivalent in relation to others, and accords them a more central or more peripheral place as the case may be.

The terms market can be imagined as a circle; at the central Sal tree, where sits the 'Rajput' jeweler, and on the outermost rim of the wheel are the basket-makers, potters and smiths. On the basis of this analogy, I can define two axes of market relations (i) the 'radial axis along which participants are asymmetrically related as more/less central and along which different kinds of goods are arranged as more/less prestigious; and (2) the 'circumferential' axis along which participants are linked by relations that are symmetric, equal and competitive, and along which goods of equivalent symbolic value are ranged. Let us examine these propositions in more detail.

The market is divisible into five concentric zones. The central zone is occupied by the jeweller, the richest, most sophisticated and best educated trader in the market. The stock he carries, only a portion of the stock-in-trade of his family, jewelers with a permanent shop in Jagdalpur, must be worth something in the region of 100000 rupees, and he has large sums of cash as well. He mainly sells relatively inexpensive trinkets in silver (such as hair-clips at 25 rupees each) but every so often he sells a more valuable object, such as the heavy silver neck ornaments favoured by tribal women (700-1000 rupees), and more rarely a gold necklace, prices for which range up to 10,000 rupees depending on the number of gold beads used. Just for comparison, land is sold between Tribals (non-Tribals not being permitted to acquire land from Tribals) at little more than 1000 rupees a hectare, and a team of ploughing cattle is worth about 500 rupees. These gold necklaces can be worn by either sex but are most often worn by wealthy and influential tribal men.

The main jeweler's stock-in-trade are the symbols of rank and prestige in tribal society: and he himself is the most prestigious market trader on both cultural and economic grounds. Surrounded by his Ghassiya henchmen, he dominates the centre of the market, overseeing what may be, at times, quite enormous transactions by local standards. But at the same time he is a familiar and perfectly accessible, indeed genial, man: when more important transactions do not claim his attention he will occupy himself in extolling the virtues of his cheaper hairclips for the benefit of vacillating tribal girls with every appearance of complacency. And this is an important point, for in the market the jeweler is the symbolic exponent of ideas of pre-eminent value—power, superiority— but, like all symbols, he remains within the ordinary, everyday world, while the values he represents lie outside it and transcend the villagers' ordinary experience.

Facing the main jeweler's stall there is a second, smaller, jeweler, also from Rajasthan. This second jeweler depends more on the sale of cheaper items, and is intermediate in position between Zone 1 and Zone 2.

Zone 2 is interesting because it is so seemingly heterogeneous. On the basis of the hypothesis of symbolic equivalence between items transacted in a zone of market space. Parched rice and gur are the local high-status luxury foods, and are produced by the 'aristocratic' group—the Chhota Dongar Maraars, the wealthiest, most ancient, and the largest landowners among local Nontribals.



The owner of a Jewellery shop in the Orchha Tribal market going through the credit/debit status of his customers

Women from this group are the main local traders and they dominate the trade in luxury food. Their traditional role in the market as 'adders of value' is interestingly brought out in the convention by which they exchange parched rice with Tribals for its equivalent volume in dehusked paddy.

Thus Tribals, who are prevented by a taboo from selling paddy for money of paddy for the parched rice equivalent of perhaps half that amount, since in the processing of parched rice the grains swell up considerably. The Tribal has not offended the rice by 'selling' it: he (or more likely she) has 'valorised' it in the interchange with a high-status group. Similar considerations apply to gur and tobacco, both of which have been elaborately processed. Zone 2 then, is shared by luxuries: down-graded jewellery and up-graded consumables. Sociologically speaking, it is the zone of the locally dominant Nontribals.

Zone 3 is also a 'Maraar' zone of vegetable sellers, mostly from Maraar communities which are offshoots from the ancient Chhota Dongar settlement, or more recent immigrants from elsewhere in Bastar. Maraars cultivate vegetables in irrigated gardens, specialising in items which cannot be produced, or not in quantity or not of such good quality, in the Tribals' own gardens. These vegetables (such as onions, chillies, tomatoes, muli, squashes, aubergines), are semi-luxury items, appreciated by Tribals as additions to their basic diet of rice, pulses and millet. It is noteworthy that the Maraar traders in zones 2 and 3 (mostly women, except for tobacco sellers who are all male) while they do not avail themselves of stalls, do always carry to market a stool to sit on, so as not to sit on the ground in the fashion of the Tribals. On the other hand no Tribal would presume to make use of a stool, so the Maraars are not only figuratively but actually 'higher' than the Tribals. Zone 4 consists of the stalls of Nontribal traders in non-luxury items. One half of this zone is comprised by the street of cloth sellers who deal in cheap machine-made sarees, blankets and such, the other half by the stalls of the dry-goods merchants.



Tribal market of Earthern Pots



Sun dried fishes are displayed for tribal buyers

Cloth is not a luxury item, and the sale of cloth is not a prestige occupation as is the sale of jewellery or luxury foods. Cloth sellers behave in an unrestrained, vociferous, bumptious manner, quite

different from the civilised standards of other Nontribal traders. The dry-goods stalls also mainly sell non-luxury items, viz. small utilitarian objects or staple foods. They do carry some luxury items such as bidi cigarettes or biscuits, but these are not such as to appeal much to the Tribals, and are mainly sold to local Nontribals, for whom they are not perhaps luxuries anyway. One form of local produce is sold in the fourth zone, namely milk. Milk is not a luxury food, and is indeed generally disliked as a food by the Tribals, so that the Rawat traders' output is purchased exclusively by Nontribals. The intermediate status of the Rawats—lowers than Maraars but higher than Tribals—is clearly expressed in the confinement of Rawats to zone 4.

The fifth zone consists of tribal sellers of vegetables. Here we find the mass of tribal women selling small quantities of vegetables in season, seated on the ground in lengthy rows, each according to their villages of origin. Tribal men also sit in these areas, sometimes selling, sometimes merely sitting. Men are more mobile though, and spend much of the time in more exclusive huddles off in the bushes at some distance, conducting meetings relating to intervillage affairs and drinking.

The sixth zone, finally, includes the low-ranking sellers of non-prestige craft items: smiths, basket makers from the Abujhmar and potters. Also located in this zone are the middlemen who buy up forest produce as it is brought into the market by Tribals. These middlemen (seth) are not really 'in' the market at all (they are there to buy rather than sell). The zonal arrangement of market space provides—with certain exceptions—a clear articulation of hierarchical relations, and serves very much as a ground plan of intergroup relations, both within the single market area and beyond it.⁶ There is nothing immediately problematic about the hierarchy of people expressed therein ('Rajput' in the middle, the Maraars, local caste Nontribals, then Tribal, then other Abujhmaria low-ranking Gonds and polluting castes); what is perhaps more subtle is the way in which this hierarchy of people is correlated with a hierarchy of goods. Here the opposition seems to be between jewelry and luxuries versus consumer goods and craft items of a utilitarian nature.

Marias are very fond of traditional game Cock Fighting. In the Orcha Market Cock Fighting is very essential and centre of attraction. This game is conducted at the left corner of the market end. The rice liquor is part of their daily life and it is also a part of the market. Maria men and women take it for increasing the enjoyment in the market. Their sales are conducted at the right corner of the outer portion of the market. The two axes mentioned earlier—the radial and the circumferential—may also be said to define two axes of economic choice for participants (buyers) in the market. Choices within a zone (circumferential choices) are selections made, on the basis of value-for-money, between objects whose symbolic value is equal, while choices between zones (radial choices) are of a more fundamental kind, between different types of value. The zones are hierarchically ranked in that implicitly a buyer of an item in a higher order zone (1 or 2 say) must already have a sufficiency of the gamut of utilitarian goods sold in lower order zones (2, 4, 5), or in other words higher order zones encompass lower order zones, just as according to Dumont (1966), Brahminical religious values encompass secular-political and economic values in the caste system generally. Lacking grass-roots expression, the concept of hierarchy becomes attached to the market, and is communicated via the symbolic oppositions between goods of various orders. Higher-order goods communicate messages which mediate between individuals—themselves confined to the village/subsistence sphere—and the higher reaches of society. Here we encounter a profound paradox in tribal consciousness. The paraphernalia of 'tribal' body ornamentation, the heavy silver bangles, the golden earrings and necklaces, the mirrors, the bells, the pompoms, the whole panoply of exotic finery, is wholly manufactured by Nontribals, largely outside Abujmarh, to supply the tribal market—since Nontribals themselves have mostly abandoned these particular ornaments. These symbols which so strongly bespeak 'tribal culture'—particularly to the metropolitan Nontribal—mean precisely non tribals in the estimations of the Tribals who adopt them. They are glittering fragments of the Nontribal world, for which the Tribals readily surrender their spare cash, as would an orthodox Nontribal to secure a Brahmin's blessing.

The radial axis of market space, and the sequence of choices which lie along the radial axis, relates the world of subsistence production, the domestic unit, the fragmented village, to the unifying core of the state and to the symbols of value which emanate from the state. But what of the circumferential

axis? In the market people are 'put in their place' in a sense rather stronger than is usually implied by that idiom and this applies equally to circumferential relations. These relations are symmetrical and competitive, as opposed to hierarchical (encompassing/encompassed by), and competition does not lie between unequal groups. In effect, circumferential relations in the outer zones are territorial and segmentary. It is an unspoken, but almost universally observed rule that sellers and spectators from a given locality will be seated together, and that their customary position will reflect the disposition of their village of origin vis-a-vis other villages in the area. Thus Tribals from Chotedongar (, due west of Orchha (Abujmarh)) sit on the western side, the Maraars sit more centrally (reflecting their different position in the state hierarchy) but within their zone they, likewise, occupy positions which correspond to the geographical disposition of the settlements they come from.

If one takes a tour round the periphery of the market place one is, in effect, traversing a small-scale model of a spatial/territorial relation in the Orchha (Abujmarh) market area. One can readily see the significance of this for the hypothesis that the market provides a cognitive model of society at large. The next section, which is concerned with symbolic aspects of interaction in the marketplace, says a little more about the content of these circumferential relations.

Paradigm of Interaction in the market

The market is a paradigm of social relations; interaction in the marketplace is coloured by factors external to the marketplace, so that a Tribal interacting with a market trader does not see him simply as the purveyor of some good that he has in mind to buy, but as a representative of a category, relatively ranked in accordance with a sociological scheme of values. It is necessary to distinguish this categorical aspect of market relations (the replacement of the purely economic relation buyer/seller with the sociologically determined relation Tribal/non-tribal) from the economic personalism often found in peasant markets elsewhere (Davis 1973). Relations of a personal nature are precisely what these categorical relations rule out. One looks in vain for any analogue to Haitian pratik or similar kinds of clientele-formation through the institutionalised extension of credit by traders in the Orchha (Abujmarh) market. It would be going too far, though, to deny that credit is ever extended, by any class of trader in the market, towards individuals whose places of origin and degree of wealth happen to be known to the trader. The concept of extending credit (*laga arihana*) is familiar enough from the intra-village economy, and Tribals are not too shy to ask for credit if they consider they have some chance of obtaining it. But it remains the case that the great majority of transactions in all categories are for cash, with the possible exception of purchases from cloth-sellers. More importantly, price levels are set on the assumption of immediate cash payment: traders do not quote asking prices which are implicitly assumed to contain the costs they incur in carrying their customers' long term debts, carried over from week to week, as the price of clientage. The dearth of higgling-haggling, which so sharply differentiates Orchha (Abujmarh) from others described in the ethnography of markets, derives, I think, from the prevailing notion that an asking price is an 'objective' price associated uniquely with the goods transacted, to the exclusion of factors deriving from the nature of the social relationship between buyer and seller.

Where credit is extended, this is not indicative of a 'personalistic' element in the economic relation between the parties to the transaction, but reflects a straightforward commercial judgement, on the part of the seller, of the purchaser's ability to clear the debt in the reasonably near future. There is no expectation, on either side, of a continuing or exclusive relationship thereafter.

In spite of the absence of bargaining, either over the price asked for goods, or the quantities offered at a given price, in the general run of market transactions (again with the exception of purchases from cloth-sellers) it remains the case that there is an obvious advantage to the trader in increasing sales by offering marginally more attractive terms than competitors customers' goodwill is not won through leniency in the bargaining process or offers of attractive credit terms, since these mechanisms remain undeveloped, but is nonetheless sought through a device which is much more in tune with the anonymous and hierarchical ethos characteristic of this particular market. This is the device of *pura kiana* ('completing'), which, characteristically, places the buyer in the position of the recipient of the trader's largesse.



Tribal customers in the Orcha market



Social interaction in Tribal market

This is seen particularly in the practice of the Maraar sellers of foodstuffs, who will invariably—but only when the sale has been agreed on—add a 'sweetener', in the form of an extra handful of rice or a couple of additional tomatoes, to the amount paid for. The buyer usually remonstrates at the inadequacy of this extra quantity, and may be successful in extracting a little bit more. This could be mistaken for bargaining over the quantity of goods offered at a fixed price, but it is important to stress that the sale is in no way dependent on the size of the 'extra' amount, having been concluded before anything additional is offered. What is bought and sold is a straightforward commodity, paid for at a given price; what is given as 'extra' is a gift, supplicated for as traditional largesse, which reinforces hierarchical relations between social categories.

Category relations laid down in the market are the co-ordinates of social distance: where transactions mutually involve persons who belong to different orders, this distance is not lessened as a consequence—on the contrary it finds tangible expression. When a Tribal seeks to buy something from (say) a dry goods merchant, there is a notable absence of sustained interaction; the Tribal indicates his wishes (often by pointing to or holding the object); the merchant, as curtly as possible, states a price. If the Tribal considers the amount excessive he puts the item back and takes himself off, and if he is satisfied he pays cash on the nail. None but the minimum of words are exchanged, eye contact is restricted, and no extraneous social signals pass between buyer and seller.



Brooms displayed in the Orchha 'haat'

Radial relations are between socially distant persons; the reverse is true of circumferential relations. The circumferential axis of market interaction corresponds to the major channel of inter-village communication and is intensely sociable. In particular it is at the marketplace that marriages are arranged and meetings which have to do with intra-village affairs (performances of ritual, apprehension of runaway couples, negotiations about bride price and the return thereof in the case of divorce and so on) are conducted. Individuals seeking spouses visit the marketplace, so that a man who says 'I got my wife at the market' does not mean that she was purchased, but simply that he sought her out there. For Tribals, most of whom in any given week have little enough to sell and no inclination (if they have the money) to buy, the most important aspect of the market is its circumferential aspect. This gives rise to a great deal of

what can only be called pseudo-marketing, particularly by tribal women whose strongly engrained work ethic prevents them from simply attending for pleasure and social enjoyment. A tribal women, desirous of visiting the market for purely 'social' reasons, will nevertheless provide herself with a 'stock-in-trade' (and hence an excuse) in the form of, say, a handful of microscopic and mostly rotten tomatoes, and will proceed to sell this unsaleable item for the entire morning. In this way she manages to see her neighbours, friends and relatives, opportunities for social contacts outside the immediate family or hamlet being uncommon at other times because of the dispersed pattern of settlement in tribal villages.

One can therefore generalise by saying that interactions on the radial axis are characterised by distance and anonymity, while interactions on the circumferential axis are personal and specific. Social distance on the circumferential axis corresponds to segmentary and territorial oppositions, while on the radial axis it corresponds to category oppositions between ranked groups. However, there are certain anomalies, which may be discussed at this point.

The middlemen who station themselves around the paths leading into the marketplace, but outside the main area, are an exception to the normal rules first in that they are Nontribals, but are peripheral, and secondly in that they solicit trade directly, sometimes using what appears to be physical coercion (grasping a tribal woman's basket of tamarind and attempting to prevent her going to another buyer); they often speak Gondi, and have Gonds as assistants. The aggressive, vociferous means they employ is deceptive to the extent that tribals are not genuinely coerced into selling forest products to a buyer not of their choice, and investigations did not turn up any significant differences in the prices being offered by different middlemen. Their profits are proportional to the volume of trade, and each is in competition with his colleagues to maximise volume short of actually offering an increased price over the consensual one, which does not fluctuate over a short-term period. They are consequently obliged to concentrate on building up a clientele of regular suppliers, by developing social relationships with Tribals. Each one has a stall which adjoins one particular path leading to the market, and they concentrate on forming relationships with people from particular villages which lie along that path. They employ as assistants men drawn from the selected village or villages, who in turn influence the choice of middleman for their co-villagers. Their stall becomes a kind of meeting place where tribals like to relax and exchange gossip. They also advance money to individuals known to them, against future contributions of produce (not for interest, which is illegal). In short, they really operate in terms of the 'village' credit/debit economy—the personalised, embedded economy, in contradistinction to the anonymous 'market' economy. Hence their peripheral position, and the lack of social distance between them and their clientele, confirms, rather than upsets, our general hypothesis.

A second slightly exceptional group is the cloth sellers. Bargaining is not normally a feature of interactions between socially differentiated participants in the market, but this is not so where the cloth sellers are concerned. Tribals do usually contest the asking price for cloth, and cloth sellers engage in patter routines to try to convince passers-by that their prices really are rock bottom. Cloth sellers extend credit to individuals known to them, but do not depend on a regular clientele. The explanation for the rather more egalitarian interaction between cloth sellers and Tribals may be due to a conceptual identification between them and weavers (Gandas) who have low social status. It would of course be normal to haggle with a Ganda the price of a handloom cloth (Gandas visit the market but do not sit in any special place, wandering around the periphery hawking their wares).

Conclusion

The present account is intentionally limited in scope; it would be necessary to conduct more extensive researches into markets in Bastar, and in other parts of India, to explore the full ramifications of the relationships between village society, the market, hierarchy and the state. I hope that I have said enough at least to justify the idea that the Orchha (Abujmarh) market provides, for those who come within its ambit, a ground plan of group relations, and in the hierarchy of goods, a scheme of values through which village dwellers encounter, on the level of praxis, superior values emanating from the state. All of which is only to say that the market has an ideological significance, very much as a ceremony, the performance of a religious rite, or the installation of an office holder has significance. The problem that I wish to raise, by way of a conclusion, is one common to all such value-laden performances: viz. the issue

of truth versus mystification. I have become accustomed not only to tease out the implicit meanings of ceremonies but also to subject them to criticism, finding in them labyrinths of semantic manipulation, the net effect of which is to represent reality under such a guise as favours the interests of certain elements in the social whole, to the detriment of others. If it is true that the market occasion is ideologically significant, as I have claimed, is it also true that it is manipulative in this sense, depicting the forms of social reality so as to favour sectional interests, by mystifying the real basis of social relations.

The Orchha (Abujmarh) market is not overtly a ceremony at all, but a straightforwardly instrumental institution, geared to the economic needs of people in the area. There is no element of make-believe, no communicative intent, behind the purchase of a packet of nails for eight annas, then, or the myriad of other, equally matter-of-fact transactions which collectively make up the market. The market cannot distort reality because it is reality. The money medium of the market accurately reflects relative economic strengths and weaknesses (in a way that the credit/debit economy within the village may not). Markets are information exchanges, but they differ from ceremonies in that the information exchanged is verifiable and overwhelmingly true—the market price of tomatoes is only in dispute until a sale is made; once made, the price is indisputable—while symbolic statements made in the course of a ceremony are always, and only, claims, for which no validation can ever be finally found. There is thus no element of mystification in the instrumental aspect of the market as an exchange of (price, demand) information and goods. But at another level I believe that the Orchha (Abujmarh) market is profoundly mystifying, yet not in a way which benefits a dominant sectional interest only, but in a way which reinforces the position of the very group who come off worse in the symbolic exchange. I have indicated the extent to which the market defines Tribals as peripheral and low, by contrast to Non-tribal, who are central and high. Moreover, the pattern of tribal purchases, their focus on obsolete jewels, trinkets, finery and traditional luxury foods (as opposed to the Nontribal trend towards symbols of modernity such as biscuits and filter-tipped cigarettes) categorises them as childish and weak, easily seduced by baubles.' In other words, tribal market participation, both in terms of the spatial organisation of the market and the image projected by their evaluations of goods, perpetuates and reinforces the stereotype of cultural backwardness and political inferiority. This stereotype, however, has historically had certain advantages, and conceals a rather different reality. The effect of the market is to establish a stereotype of Tribals, and tribal-Nontribal relations, in which Tribals retain actual control of their resource base, at the expense of becoming symbolically peripheral to Nontribal society, wards of the state. For Non-tribal it is the establishment of symbolic hegemony, for Tribals, real security.

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