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978-0-521-85532-7 - The Roman Bazaar: A Comparative Study of Trade and Markets in a Tributary Empire

Peter Fibiger Bang

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The Roman Bazaar

It has long been held by historians that trade and markets in the Roman Empire resembled those found later in early modern Europe. Using the concept of the bazaar, however, Peter Bang argues that the development spawned by Roman hegemony proves clear similarities with large, pre-colonial or tributary empires such as the Ottoman, the Mughal in India and the Ming/Ch'ing in China. By comparing Roman market formation particularly with conditions in the Mughal Empire, Bang changes our comparative horizons and situates the ongoing debate over the Roman economy firmly within wider discussions about world history and the 'great divergence' between East and West. The broad scope of this book takes in a wide range of topics, from communal networks and family connections to imperial cultures of consumption, and will therefore be of great interest to scholars and students of ancient history and pre-industrial economics.

PETER FIBIGER BANG is an Associate Professor at the University of Copenhagen.

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CONIUGI OPTIMAE AC FILIIS CARISSIMIS

Some valuing those of their own side or mind,
Still make themselves the measure of mankind:
Fondly we think we honour merit then,
When we but praise ourselves in other men.

Alexander Pope, *An Essay on Criticism*

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A NOTE ABOUT ABBREVIATIONS

A few minor and unproblematic deviations apart, in referring to ancient sources I use the standard abbreviations of the *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, Liddell and Scott's *Greek–English Lexicon*, 9th edn. and J. Oates *et al.*, *Checklist of Greek, Latin, Demotic and Coptic Papyri, Ostraca and Tablets*.

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PREFACE

“Habent sua fata libelli” the Roman writer remarked in days of old. This is just as true of scholarship as of literature. Over the years I have been met with extensive generosity, support, patience and liberal-minded curiosity from many people and institutions. I am delighted to offer my heartfelt thanks to all of these at the completion of this study. It originated as a PhD submitted at the Faculty of Classics in Cambridge in 2003. The Danish Research Agency financed the three preceding years of work in Cambridge, for which Corpus Christi College provided a wonderful setting, both for me and my family. Fondation Idella, Knud Højgaard's Fond, Corpus Christi College and the Faculty of Classics generously gave supplementary funding. In Denmark, Erik Christiansen and Uffe Østergård helped me lay the foundations to the research I conducted in Cambridge and have been unwavering in their support. In Leicester, David Mattingly tolerated a polemical visitor and provoked me to conceive the first ideas for a comparative study of the Roman Empire. Sarah Scott encouraged me to think of Cambridge. In 2001, The Danish Institute in Damascus and its then director, Peder Mortensen, made a research trip to Syria and the ruins of Palmyra an unforgettable experience. I owe particular thanks to Joyce Reynolds, who has been such a kind friend, as well as Dorothy Thompson and Michael Sharp for discussing matters of epigraphy and papyrology with me. Richard Duncan-Jones and Muzaffar Alam gave me kind advice on different occasions. Michael Crawford kindly let me have a preview of the new edition of the text for the *Asian Customs Law*, still in preparation.

Richard Saller generously invited me to Chicago, supervised my research for a term, did much more than one could reasonably expect and introduced me to Walter Scheidel, who has continued to offer friendship and inspirational discussions over the years. Keith Hopkins volunteered to supervise my second year and made it one

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PREFACE

of intellectual play and expanding horizons. Chris Bayly took a kind interest in the project from very early on, gave me invaluable guidance on Indian history and has grown into a trusted colleague and collaborator. Vincent Gabrielsen and my other colleagues in the Saxo Institute at the University of Copenhagen had faith in me, took me on as lecturer before the completion of my research and encouraged my work in every aspect. However, with that also came new obligations and new projects. Karl Erik Frandsen, the former director of the Institute, gave me the period of peace and quiet which enabled me to return to Cambridge for a second round in the first half of 2007 and to start turning the thesis into a book. This time Robin Osborne kindly extended hospitality as well as stimulating discussions at King's, while the Danish Research Council gave financial support. Dick Whittaker and Greg Woolf originally examined the thesis, offered penetrating observations and made the defence an occasion which I remember with joy. The comments of two anonymous readers, as well as my lecturership committee, further helped me to improve the manuscript and the argument.

Above all, however, my thanks go to Peter Garnsey who first took me on at Cambridge. I can hardly believe almost ten years have passed. Enjoying the privilege of his inspirational guidance, firm support, loyal friendship, tolerant patience and incisive comments has not only benefited my work immensely, it has also set an example to which I can only ever aspire in my own teaching.

On the domestic front, I owe an enormous debt of gratitude to my parents, who taught me to go my own ways, and to my in-laws; they have supported me in every way possible over the years. Ultimately, however, it was my family, Helena, Julian and Mette, who made it all possible by agreeing to follow me out on "foreign adventures", by tolerating my whims and by giving loving support in times of agonising doubts. It is to them that I dedicate this work. I wish it were perfect, they would deserve nothing less, but this is the best I could do.

Copenhagen, autumn 2007

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KEY DATES AND TERMS IN MUGHAL HISTORY

- 1526: Battle of Panipat, foundation of Mughal rule in northern India.
- 1526–30: Babur, first Mughal emperor.
- 1530–56: Humayum, reign interrupted by exile from 1540 until victorious return shortly before his death.
- 1556–1605: Akbar.
- Conquest and cooptation of the Rajputs, conquest of Gujarat and Bengal.
- 1571–85: seat of government transferred from Agra to Fatehpur Sikri, a newly erected capital and palace complex, which was again abandoned after only a few years of use.
- 1605–27: Jahangir.
- 1627–57: Shah Jahan.
- Expansion into the Deccan.
- c. 1632–43 Taj Mahal: construction of the mausoleum to the favourite wife of Shah Jahan, Mumtaz Mahal.
- 1639–48: construction of the Red Fort of Delhi which was henceforth elevated to serve as the imperial capital under the name: Shajahanabad.
- 1650–56: construction of the Jami' Masjid mosque in Shajahanabad/Delhi.
- 1658–1707: Aurangzeb (Alamgir).
- 1685–87: Annexation of the tributary sultanates of Bijapur and Golconda in the Deccan.

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KEY DATES AND TERMS IN MUGHAL HISTORY

Last third of the century: insurgency of the Hindu Marathas drags down the Mughals in a fruitless war of attrition.

Gradual weakening and disintegration of Mughal rule follows in the decades after the death of Aurangzeb.

1707–12:	Bahadur Shah.
1712–13:	Jahandar Shah.
1713–19:	Farrukhsiyar.
1719–48:	Muhammed Shah.
1739:	occupation of Shajahanabad (Delhi) by the Persian ruler Nadir Shah. The Mughal capital is plundered and the famous Peacock Throne carried away to Persia. End of effective Mughal power.
1837–57:	Bahadur Shah 2 (deposed after the Great Indian Mutiny).

Mansabdar is the Mughal term for the individual members of the imperial aristocracy. The *mansab* refer to the ranks which the nobles were awarded by the emperor.

Jagirdar is occasionally used instead of *Mansabdar*. However, here the emphasis is on the revenue assignments, *jagirs*, which the nobles received in return for serving the emperor.

Zamindar is used to denote local landowning elites across the Mughal Empire and as such covers a broad spectrum of wealth, statuses and influence.

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ROMAN WEIGHTS, MEASURES AND COINS

The principal grain measures

1 modius = c. 6.55 kg or c. 8.62 l

1 medimnos = c. 40 kg or 52.53 l

1 artaba = c. 30.2 kg or c. 39 l; in late antiquity 21.5 kg or 29 l

Liquid measures

1 metrete 39.39 l

1 kotyle c. 0.25 l

1 monochoron c. 7 l

1 sextarius = c. 1 pint (16 sextarii to a modius)

Square measures

1 iugerum = c. 2,500 m square

1 aroura = c. 2,760 m square

Coins

1 denarius (silver) = 4 sesterces (HS, bronze) = 16 asses

1 aureus (gold coin) = 25 denarii = 100 sesterces

myriad denarii: in late antiquity, the silver contents of the denarii dwindled to almost nothing and its value correspondingly collapsed. Hence we now find the notion of myriad denarii (10,000 denarii)

solidus: in the same period a new gold coin, the solidus, from the time of Constantine struck at 72 to the pound, became the new backbone of the Roman imperial coinage.

1 drachma = 6 obols (in Egypt 7 obols)

1 mina = 100 drachmai

1 talent = 60 minai = 6,000 drachmai

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Frontispiece: The bazaar in the old town of Damascus one day in spring, 2001. Between the old Roman Via Recta and the Umayyad Mosque, itself built on the site of the former Temple of Jove, it is occasionally possible to catch a glimpse of how the bazaar has emerged from the ruins of the Greco-Roman city.