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## Unruly and Submissive Marketgoers: Peasants Practicing Trade and Forming Markets

*Ann-Catrin Östman*

In mid-nineteenth-century Finland, quarterly markets were held in towns around the country. On these occasions, various groups of traders met customers from different social strata. In the coastal towns of Ostrobothnia in western Finland, peasant households sold agricultural produce and handicrafts (see Fig. 5.1). Town dwellers purchased food and other agricultural produce from farms in the surroundings as well as from peasant households in the interior parts of the region. Moreover, town burghers retailed their commodities and poorer sellers traded clothing, food, or beverages. For instance, commoners could buy clothes and clothing, minor manufactured goods, pottery, and metalware.<sup>1</sup>

At that time, the marketplace represented an established and traditional trading space, where dealers sold goods from simple stalls according to customary rules and regulations. As economic regulations were liberalized, market trade—a vernacular form of trade—was regarded as

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**Fig. 5.1** At the turn of the twentieth century, market days were arranged three times a year in the Finnish coastal town of Kristinestad/Kristiinankaupunki. (Photo by Matti Poutavaara. The Finnish Heritage Agency)

old-fashioned and unnecessary, as well as disorderly and degenerate. In previous decades, the county governor had annulled some of the quarterly markets in this region. In 1866, the Finnish diet withdrew all the licenses of the markets in these towns on the Bothnian coast.<sup>2</sup>

Despite the regulations, peasants, other traders, and marketgoers continued their practice of gathering at markets in several locations, despite their informal and illegal nature. In this chapter, I will explore these types of markets mainly by using newspaper material. When and where did individuals and groups meet for unlicensed markets? Who visited these markets as traders, consumers, or visitors? How can we understand these informal practices and trading activities?

The elements that made up these markets were often the same as those of sanctioned ones: trading goods, making contacts, exchanging ideas, and enjoying entertainment. Anthropologist Börje Hanssen defined the market as a disorderly gathering of persons from different regions. In general, these markets had fixed end and start dates.<sup>3</sup> However, earlier studies show that commoners have used the very concept of “market” in various

ways. For example, women who sold food and beer used the term more broadly when accused of illegal transactions. Moreover, in summertime, trading on boats or in the harbor was common. Thus, there was no sharp, unambiguous boundary between everyday trading encounters and publicly organized market trade. Also in other places, various groups gathered informally at markets.<sup>4</sup>

Sociologist Patrik Aspers defines the broad concept of the market as a social structure for exchange. Hence, we can interpret the market as an institution as well as an event. In both meanings, the market is formed by common understandings of social practices and of shared cognitive frameworks. Differentiating between trade and the market, Aspers emphasizes that the latter is public, and that the principle of competition is essential to its function. However, power relations as well as networks can circumscribe trade and trading activities.<sup>5</sup> The distinction made by Aspers can shed light on informal markets and trading encounters shaped by hierarchical as well as reciprocal relations.

Social hierarchies were embedded in the trading encounters at the marketplace. For instance, cultural distance characterized the relations between the urban middle and upper classes, on the one hand, and commoners, on the other. Regardless of the legacy of the relatively free peasants, the cultural representations of the peasantry were also contradictory and ambiguous in a Nordic context.<sup>6</sup>

According to Michel de Certeau, “ordinary people” can manipulate their environments through everyday actions. In discussing trajectories in studies of marginalized groups, de Certeau stresses that the aim of this project is not to give voice to the silent or collective masses. Instead, the goal is to make visible the uncountable practices by means of which people make use of specific regulations and places.<sup>7</sup> For instance, he is interested in how commoners or marginal groups used traditions.<sup>8</sup> De Certeau defines space as “a practiced place,” thus opening up questions about how informal practices can be interpreted. These regular activities in the towns are part of a process of appropriation of space.<sup>9</sup>

Influenced by de Certeau’s understandings of practices and re-employments, I will focus on the complex relationships between regulations, practices, social hierarchies, and economic development. Divided into three sections, the analysis observes the uses of former regulations, the utilization of urban space, and the trading activities of rural persons at informal markets. By using newspaper materials as well as questionnaires and studies on local history, I examine the maintenance of market traditions.

## REGULATIONS AND ELITE UNDERSTANDINGS OF MARKET TRADE

In the middle of the nineteenth century, new laws and regulations accompanied the growth of trade. According to newspaper commentators, the markets had turned into fan fairs, as the events were characterized as a general opportunity for people to hang around. For those in power, some marketgoers proved to be troublesome: the markets were seen as degenerate and potentially dangerous places in the eyes of officials and the elite. In addition to this, some newspapers presented a critical view of the commodities offered for sale in market squares (see also Kuismin in this volume).<sup>10</sup>

In 1859, trade in the countryside was legalized, and subsequently rural stores were opened. In 1865, when the Finnish Parliament carried out an investigation on the importance and future of traditional markets, the issue was referred to counties, magistrates, and other authorities for consideration.<sup>11</sup> Magistrates in Ostrobothnia regarded traditional market trade as unnecessary. When towns in this region considered the matter, merchants and artisans could take part in the meetings. Most likely, the local merchants wanted to keep competitive outsiders away, while municipal officials simultaneously wanted to control and tax local trading. In these discussions, the practices and habits of the lower classes were heavily criticized.<sup>12</sup>

As a result, the government decided to close all the regular markets in the coastal towns of Swedish-speaking Ostrobothnia. In other parts of the country, the regional and local authorities conversely suggested that some of the traditional markets still be licensed. Thus, societal progress, economic development, and moral arguments were key aspects that framed the discussions.<sup>13</sup>

Commenting on this question, the clergy—who interfaced with the commoners daily and knew their ways of life—foresaw that withdrawing the licenses would only make matters worse, as prohibitions did not stop commoners from holding a market.<sup>14</sup> Interestingly, to defend markets, some members of the Diet underlined the charitable nature of petty trade.<sup>15</sup> Traditionally, town authorities had allowed vending as a form of social welfare and permitted poor individuals, such as widows, the elderly, and disabled people, to engage in street vending.<sup>16</sup>

However, the arguments for licensing markets were mainly economic: the commentators regarded markets as necessary in an undeveloped

country. In a sparsely populated area, regular markets would make it easier to define fair prices. The authorities considered it important to bring sellers and consumers together at the same time, as this would inspire competition among sellers. In addition, several persons stressed the value of interregional exchanges and depicted how special products of various regions were continually exchanged with those of others. Therefore, arranging markets was a way to protect the common good, as often interpreted from an urban bourgeoisie perspective.<sup>17</sup> In the end, however, fewer markets per annum were allowed, and thereafter the markets would be arranged in the middle of the week, not during weekends.<sup>18</sup>

### DEPICTIONS OF MARKETS AND SOME REMARKS ON THE SOURCES

There is a limited amount of archive materials, such as fiscal and legal sources, concerning these informal forms of exchange. As the historical records are relatively sparse, I mainly, although not only, make use of newspapers for this study. The digitalized Finnish Historical Newspaper Library offers opportunities to search for writings about informal market gatherings. When utilizing this database, I searched for *qwasimarknader/kwasimarknad*, the contemporary Swedish term used for these markets.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, I also studied early ethnological questionnaires focusing on trade. The tradition of local history-writing can also shed light on market gatherings; for instance, scholarly work has been done on the history of Vasa (Finnish: Vaasa), Nykarleby (Finnish: Uusikaarlepyy), and Gamlakarleby (Finnish: Kokkola).<sup>20</sup>

The towns under study were small. In the middle of the nineteenth century, the biggest one, Vasa, had 15,000 inhabitants. This region of Finland was primarily populated by Swedish speakers (see map in Fig. 5.2). Nevertheless, these markets attracted both Swedish- and Finnish-speaking peasants from wider regions. During the market days, Finnish-speaking people from other towns or nearby rural areas in the interior parts of the region traveled there. In contemporary sources, the Finnish speakers were often depicted as peasants from the interior parts of the country (*upplandet, inlandet*).<sup>21</sup>

I analyze newspapers published in Swedish in Finland between 1850 and 1900. With great frequency, mention of markets—that is, *qwasimarknad/kwasimarknad*—appeared in newspapers. Articles repeatedly depicted market gatherings and market trade in derogatory terms, and



**Fig. 5.2** The southern and central parts of Finland with coastal towns. (Map by Niklas Huldén)

moralistic attitudes toward vernacular consumption and lower-class behavior were articulated. Newspapers often focused on disorder, unrest, and idleness, and usually they offered pejorative views of the laboring classes.<sup>22</sup> Thus, when it comes to gaining an understanding of trade in the marketplace, these writings—and other texts that circulated during this period—can be misleading.

I contrast these texts against ethnographical material collected much later, in the 1960s and 1970s, when two institutions circulated questionnaires to collect information about traditional forms of trade and

encounters between country folk and urban dwellers. These were directed at both Swedish- and Finnish-speaking respondents who regularly answered questionnaires with different themes. This empirical material consists of over fifty answers to two questionnaires: “Travels for trade” (“Handelsresorna” MV/K12) and “Countryside and town” (SLS 1185 “Stad och land”). In their responses, persons with rural backgrounds depict customary practices and oral traditions. Occasionally, the respondents also refer to oft-told narratives concerning markets. To some extent, these descriptions are experience-based.<sup>23</sup> Thus, the texts show us how different writers perceived, named, and described a shared tradition.<sup>24</sup>

### MARKETS ON THE CYCLES OF THE YEAR: RE-EMPLOYMENTS OF TRADITIONS

In 1863, a newspaper wrote about the summer market in Vasa. In depicting fish cargoes, the author underlined the importance of the exchange between the fishing areas on the coast and the peasantry in the interior. In summertime, the fishermen in the archipelago delivered fish (in this case, Baltic herring). Even if the peasant households suffered from a lack of money during this time of year, they could still purchase herring. As these persons built their exchange on trust and traditions, the customers from parishes further from the sea would pay these suppliers at the market in December, which usually took place before Christmas. The peasants in the farmlands would then deliver cereals in exchange. In passing, the writer revealed that the latter market was not formally licensed. Although the authorities had withdrawn the licenses for the December market, people still came together to trade on the old St. Thomas’ Day (December 21).<sup>25</sup>

Newspapers reveal that buyers and traders effectively continued to carry on trade after 1866. For instance, there is an entry on a market that took place in 1867 in Vasa.<sup>26</sup> In the 1870s, after the great famine in 1868, markets were regularly held in this town.<sup>27</sup>

Newspaper articles reported when and where bigger markets took place. In the years to come, old-fashioned small-town markets were arranged on a semi-regular basis in several of the coastal towns in Ostrobothnia: Gamlakarleby,<sup>28</sup> Nykarleby,<sup>29</sup> and Kristinestad (Finnish: Kristiinankaupunki).<sup>30</sup> Generally, events seem to have taken place twice a year in each town. However, the coverage is far from even, and these texts are but examples of when people took part in markets.<sup>31</sup>



The great number of notices about “informal markets” (Swedish: *gvasimarknad/kwasimarknad*) in the searchable database containing digitalized newspapers reveals the importance of occasions when individuals and groups held markets without permission. The term used to depict these gatherings is itself first found in newspapers from 1867, and it seems to have been coined around that time. To an increasing degree, the term *kwasimarknad* was used in the 1880s and 1890s. Initially, the newspapers applied it to depict market trade in Ostrobothnia, but later they also alluded to informal market gatherings in other areas of the country.

In the questionnaires, writers who usually had a rural background often used the traditional names of these markets. The terms related to old church holidays, such as St. Thomas’ Day mentioned earlier. Michaelmas (*Mikaelsmässan*)—that is, the Feast of Saint Michael—is mentioned in newspapers as well as questionnaires.<sup>32</sup> Apparently, the autumn markets in the beginning of October were still characterized by the free week traditionally given to the servants. Moreover, respondents to questionnaires also mentioned markets called Candlemas (*Kyndelsmäss*) in the beginning of February.<sup>33</sup>

Earlier market laws stipulated physical and temporal boundaries for trading encounters. Among other regulations, there were prohibitions against forestalling and engrossing (i.e., buying up goods in advance to sell later at a higher profit). Interestingly, people often gathered at these informal markets on Fridays and Saturdays. But according to the ordinance of 1866, the markets would be held on Wednesday and Thursday, which would protect the towns from markets during the weekend. In the Diet, the clergy had been suggesting this solution.<sup>34</sup>

It was not always easy to know when these informal gatherings took place, as an ironic short paragraph shows in a paper published for a broad audience, depicting a market in Nykarleby. Since marketgoers entered the town on separate days, the informal market lasted a week. In the beginning of the week, visitors from the neighboring parishes north of the town are said to have arrived. According to this slightly paternalistic author, rural groups from the villages south of town entered the marketplace on the second day. On the following days, Finnish speakers from other parts of the region made their way to this tiny coastal town inhabited by about 1500 persons.<sup>35</sup>

According to the questionnaires, some of the visitors stayed the night in town. Burghers and merchants commonly offered simple lodging to their rural customers during markets. These guests were expected to buy

commodities from their stalls and shops, or to exchange their own goods with the merchant. The peasants could buy commodities in springtime and pay with agricultural produce in the autumn. Another alternative was to pay for rooms provided by urban house owners, often widows trying to eke out a living.<sup>36</sup>

While varying in size and duration, the markets largely followed patterns and rules that had been in existence earlier. Re-employing traditions and bending earlier regulations,<sup>37</sup> various groups visited the coastal towns at certain times. Moreover, newspapers played a central role in shaping and maintaining these traditions. The very fact that newspapers reported about these markets undoubtedly increased their popularity. In some cases, the newspapers referred to them as customary.<sup>38</sup>

To a certain extent, the authorities of these towns tried to control the markets. A short text notes the attempts to empty the small town of Kristinestad after five days of market celebrations in 1876: “the marketgoers were literally drummed out by our skillful fingerless extra fireman, on an old cracked drum, with the consequence that peace and quiet was brought back.”<sup>39</sup> The magistrates in several towns attempted to gain control of the attendees by forbidding the sale of alcohol during these markets. Moreover, police and other guards patrolled the towns. Interestingly, these informal gatherings were made formal by means of restrictions and the mechanisms created for controlling the masses.

### THE USE OF URBAN SPACE

From time to time, the commentators stressed the influx of people from the countryside and complained about commercialized amusements and drunkards invading the streets and alleys. Local newspapers regularly described how the laboring classes—that is, farm masters, farm hands, urban servants, and low-status workers—gathered in the streets. In some papers, the term “a motley mass” is used.<sup>40</sup> The newspapers often underlined the rural character of the market. However, when commoners from remote communities visited a market in Gamlakarleby, they behaved well:

Horse trading was probably the main concern for most market visitors. Sober and decent, however, these market visitors came along. I met long transports of market people, both at my arrival and on the return journey, without seeing a drinker among them.<sup>41</sup>

In this case, it happened that newspaper stressed the calmness of the markets. However, newspapers often circulated negative depictions. In these portrayals of market life, drunken persons played pivotal roles. As underlined in newspaper portrayals, these markets—or fairs—included popular recreation (see Kuusmin in this volume). Besides entertainment and consumerism regarded as unnecessary, the newspapers complained about violence, murders, thefts, and pickpockets.

The portrayals of country folk were contradictory. On one hand, the editors often depicted the misbehaviors of rural youth and laboring classes as well as of farmers. The upper classes may have expected subordination from these groups. On the other hand, in some of the texts small-scale consumers were depicted as passive and stupid. In some of the newspaper articles, the peasants and other rural visitors were depicted as uneducated victims easily cheated by dishonest traders or artists.<sup>42</sup> This reveals a paternalistic attitude toward the rural commoner, often depicted collectively, without any reference to class differences.

Even the term “orgy” was used in a portrayal of fairs in Vaasa in 1871. Similar concerns about noisy masses were often voiced. For instance, young people were said to have celebrated on the streets of Gamlakarleby in 1889. In this regard, the newspapers seldom made distinctions between Swedish- and Finnish-speaking commoners. The common denominator was thus class, not language. In several towns, the court records were full of cases concerning drunkenness and violation of the peace in the city. However, a newspaper commentator later depicted these men as obedient to the law, who always showed up at court when prosecuted.<sup>43</sup>

Several observations can be made from the questionnaire responses. There was a shared view among older informants (born in the countryside) that “in the past” it was common to go to the market.<sup>44</sup> There are some depictions of what it was like to be part of a mass of people walking, talking, laughing, and having fun. Some of these narratives give us insight into the feelings and practices of marketgoers, albeit in a nostalgic way.

There were vendors in abundance with useful goods, but others with a lot of knick-knacks. People crowded between the market stalls—you would see if you could afford to buy something. The girls saw the beautiful hair combs, hair nets, brooches and fragrant soaps and of course they bought something from the market. The family back home and acquaintances wanted to hear news from the market and what we bought and if we met some acquaintances people.<sup>45</sup>

The respondents recount the journeys made by their parents and tell stories about how they first visited towns during markets. Questionnaires representing the voices of the lower classes that once regularly went to markets thus differ greatly from the newspaper depictions. Following tradition, the fairgoers from different households often continued to travel together from distant villages in rows of carriages.

In the past, it has been said how horse-drawn carriages in long trains went to the market. It was farmers, crofters, cottars, and servants who, after the hard-working term, had finally hoarded everything.<sup>46</sup>

Various groups of itinerant traders and artists wandering around the country visited these informal markets. Newspapers indicate that the sellers had different social, linguistic, and ethnic backgrounds. It was regularly mentioned that peddlers from Russian Karelia were trading their goods at these informal markets. These small-scale dealers were often peasants. While trade in rural areas was forbidden in Finland and Sweden until the middle of the nineteenth century, the traditions and opportunities of rural traders were stronger in Russia proper. Traders from Russia proper had the right to take part in the licensed markets.<sup>47</sup>

Other mobile traders or persons for whom the entertainment provided an income were also aware of these informal market traditions. From time to time, the newspapers turned their attention to Roma market visitors, almost constantly in a negative way.<sup>48</sup> Occasionally, the newspapers also focused on Jewish peddlers. In addition, persons who offered various forms of entertainment were mentioned.<sup>49</sup> Following traditional regulations, various groups visited towns at certain times of the year, and the marketplace was frequented by peddlers and sojourners. Thus, a well-known periodicity seems to have facilitated these encounters and informal gatherings.

Looking for popular procedures that manipulated the mechanisms of discipline and cultural order, Michel de Certeau underlines that marginal groups turned the actual order of things to their own end—however, without any illusion that this hierarchical system would be changed.<sup>50</sup> Re-employing older regulations, rural dealers, consumers, and itinerant petty traders visited these coastal towns at certain times. In an informal manner, numerous groups of marketgoers continued to use urban space for trade and gatherings during traditional market days. These traders

probably knew that these informal market gatherings offered large numbers of consumers.

Temporarily, various groups used the market squares as a common ground. When simple stalls were set up in the marketplace, older cultures of retail seem to have been followed there. Even if the commerce was unregulated, older traditions of assigning spaces and stalls were re-employed: some depictions show that the marketplace in the town square was divided: rural sellers used one part of the square, while merchants and artisans had their places in other rows.<sup>51</sup>

According to previous regulations, horse trading was not allowed in the marketplace.<sup>52</sup> Typically, horse trading was done on the outskirts of the small towns, and during the winter on the ice. These places were called *plassi* (in both Swedish and Finnish texts), and according to the newspapers' depictions, they were noisy, full of drunks, and where fraud and animal cruelty took place.<sup>53</sup> Roma vendors, in particular, became a target of blame. As men were responsible for horse trading, they were the ones mostly found at the *plassis*.<sup>54</sup>

Trading women appeared in the newspaper material, but only to a lesser extent (see Fig. 5.3).<sup>55</sup> Women were defamed if they were drunk, which was noticed a couple of times. According to the questionnaires, it was usually the master of the house and young adults who traveled to the markets. However, these texts reveal that married women also attended the markets.<sup>56</sup> There was female attendance at the fairs, and women were involved in trading activities, too:

Many women also traveled to the market and in the square, they offered what they had worked on for many months of the year. There was home-spun woolen yarn, knitted socks and mittens, linen cloths, and other women's handicrafts. There were no fixed prices on what was then marketed, but those who had good goods also got a better price for their products.<sup>57</sup>

The order of the market space was more likely to be associated with status and poverty than gender. Many individuals had a need for extra income. In the questionnaires and in other historical descriptions, we can find depictions of the poor who lived in the surrounding countryside offering goods on the fringe of the marketplace.<sup>58</sup> Making use of the market space and taking advantage of understandings of informal rights, persons with little or no means traded wooden dishes, spoons, or simple brooms. The poor, especially women, sought to earn a meager living by



**Fig. 5.3** A vending woman in Ostrobothnia in 1923. Many commoners, especially women, needed an extra income, and selling wheat bread in the marketplace, food coveted by many, was one way of securing a living. (Photo by Samuli Paulaharju 1923. The Finnish Heritage Agency)

selling simpler items, handcrafted goods, or beer during these informal market periods. In part, this can be seen as a replacement for begging. Yet, poverty-stricken individuals made use of older traditions that granted the poor—especially the “deserving poor”—the right to sell.

Traveling to fairs, peasants could sell their goods before reaching the marketplace, even if the sale of food was forbidden beyond the legal boundaries of the market, according to the regulations on weekly

markets.<sup>59</sup> Whereas some persons sold directly to customers in the homes of the buyers and outside the marketplaces, others chose to retail their commodities on the outskirts of town.<sup>60</sup>

### PEASANTS AS CONSUMERS AND SELLERS

In an informal manner, various groups of marketgoers continued to use urban space for trade and gatherings during traditional market periods. Being located by the coast, these towns were connected by seaways. In the late nineteenth century, the railways in Finland made both long- and short-distance travel more feasible, and the questionnaires show that marketgoers did use trains for short journeys. At that time, visitors could travel by train and also ship their goods by rail.<sup>61</sup>

The interests of traders and consumers seem to have coincided. Even if the markets were associated with rural groups, various groups of traders made use of the public spaces of the towns. At the same time that merchants offered goods and bought rural produce, peddlers and other petty traders used these markets for trading. For instance, newspaper articles depict a variety of artisans and craftsmen, including bookbinders, tin-smiths, hat makers, and goldsmiths. Shoes were offered by so-called *markētents* (i.e., contractors of the Russian army).<sup>62</sup>

Women and men from peasant households acted as both consumers and traders. To a growing degree, rural households acquired goods, as they now had the income to consume goods above the subsistence level. Commoners could acquire products in urban rural shops, from peddlers and from stalls in the marketplace. The number of available commodities increased, among them fabrics and clothing, porcelain, agricultural implements, lighting, and various foodstuffs such as sugar, coffee, and wheat bread.<sup>63</sup> The consumers at the marketplace belonged to non-elite groups, rural as well as urban.<sup>64</sup> However, the consumption patterns of the commoners were, as the above discussion reflects, often depicted in negative ways.

In contrast to the ambivalence or even hostility toward market commodities found in newspapers, one finds a much more positive attitude toward such goods in the answers to the questionnaires. The respondents mentioned a range of utilities bought at the markets, comprising hand-made products from various regions as well as factory-made goods. In these depictions, there is a consensus about the importance of the markets held in this region in the past. Besides clothing, respondents mentioned

purchases of leather items, furniture, dishes, and tableware. Also within the range of possibility were sleighs and saddles, and some of the respondents underlined that utilities were obtained:

Craftsmen of various kinds came to the market with their products. There were tinsmiths from Lillkyrö, who marketed milk kegs, jugs, mugs, toy spinners, petroleum cannisters and liquor bottles. There were potters selling stone dishes, pots and clay cuckoos, and tanners and saddlers selling slings, straps, and bridles.<sup>65</sup>

This example is typical, and most of these commodities can be considered useful in daily life. In several cases, the respondents of the questionnaires present long lists of commodities, reflecting their ambition to depict the past in a thorough way. One respondent reported that her mother, born in 1866, underlined that purchases were accompanied with laughter and conversation.<sup>66</sup>

Mostly, the respondents portray wares of domestic origin, such as leather items and clothes offered by commissioners from factories. However, foreign-made fabrics, clocks, and guns are also mentioned. Recalling the markets, the respondents also mention that men and youngsters bought suits—one elderly man wrote that his mother used to buy factory-made cloth from Karelian peddlers. Out of these she made dresses, which she, for her part, offered at the markets. This woman used older traditions of trading and developed new selling practices.<sup>67</sup> This example shows that a variety of traders made use of informal patterns of trade.

Wheat bread was another oft-mentioned item of market consumption. Petty traders from the southern part of Karelia were known for selling pastries called *viborgskringlor* (“pretzels from Viipuri”).<sup>68</sup> In the nineteenth century, due to undeveloped agricultural techniques and the long winter, wheat was seldom cultivated in these regions of Finland.

Some observations can be made from the responses to the questionnaires. Persons from rural households seemed to have become, by a large majority, the main buyers. Markets offered an opportunity for consumer goods to be purchased and for forms of consumption regarded as important. At the turn of the century, commoners bought a considerable portion of commodities in the market square. In fact, this old form of petty trade was probably strengthened during a period of modernization and economic growth.



Besides enabling purchases, the markets also provided income for the rural population. Several respondents in the aforementioned questionnaires, born in the late nineteenth century, pointed out how important and “normal” it was to sell at markets. Peasant households traded food, hay and firewood, animals, and handcrafted goods:

Of many kinds were the goods and products that were to be sold in the market square, where there was both meat and butter, homemade cheeses and much else that belonged to life’s necessities and nourishment. Of the handicraft products there was also much and many different kinds—there were vessels, both buckets and milk pails with carved wooden ladles and spoons, and boxes of wood.<sup>69</sup>

When it came to food, the consumers also belonged to well-off groups. Sellers implicitly knew their repertoires. In the questionnaires one finds depictions of how rural small-scale traders circulated information about the prices that might be accepted that day. More experienced sellers helped a novice when it came to trading.<sup>70</sup> Early on, the newspaper started to publish information about the prices of foodstuffs and other commodities offered by peasants. As result, the settings of trade at the markets changed.

The local newspapers seldom depicted patterns of ordinary trading encounters. Nevertheless, newspaper reports on the markets frequently described commodities from various parishes: for instance, metalware from one Finnish community and smoked ham from another. A coastal community was associated with furniture.<sup>71</sup> In some questionnaires, the Finnish speakers note the traditional costumes worn by Swedish-speaking women in the coastal areas.<sup>72</sup> In a similar vein, the newspapers occasionally described the traditional or old-fashioned clothing of peasant women, or the clothes worn by peasant men.<sup>73</sup> Thus, social groups could be identified by their clothing, their marketed goods, and regional specialties.

## CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has offered an exploration of practices of traditional and informal markets during an era of modernization. Although local and governmental authorities completely withdrew permissions for market trade in towns in western Finland, peasants and other traders defied laws and continued selling and bartering various commodities at annual or quarterly markets. The activities of the peasant groups did not change in

reaction to the new formal rules. In Ostrobothnia, new regulations and restrictions, enacted during a period of rapid change, were ineffectual. At the end of the nineteenth century, these markets still had important commercial functions. Undoubtedly, newspapers played a central role in maintaining these traditions.

Re-employing traditions and regulations, various groups continued to meet during the markets, imitating earlier practices. Constructed through these practices, these informal markets can be interpreted as conscious uses of space; such regular activities in the towns were part of a process of appropriation. Transgressing limits imposed by regional and governmental authorities, commoners and petty traders collectively and regularly appropriated urban environs. Newspapers shed light on the market practices very differently than ethnographic questionnaires, which reflect the commoners' and marketgoers' own voices.

These customary and vernacular forms of trade continued to meet the basic needs of various groups, and the markets seem to have been important for the rural producers as well as urban residents and itinerant traders. It is obvious that shared assumptions about trade laid the foundation for these market encounters, enabling rural groups in particular to draw on, re-employ, and practice earlier traditions. As a result, these groups collectively created and upheld economic and cultural spaces by following and bending customary rules and regulations.

## NOTES

1. Jouko Heinonen. 2003. *Markkinat ja toripäivät. Pääjt-Hämeen markkinat ja torikauppa*; Martti Varsta. 1946. *Mikkelin kaupungin markkinat loistokautenaan 1838-1867*. Birgitta Skarin Frykman. 1993. *Larsmässemärknaden. En folklig karneval i 1800-talets Göteborg*.
2. Heinonen 2003, pp. 55-60. This goes for the following towns in the region inhabited by Swedish speakers: Kristinestad, Kaskö, Vasa, Nykarleby, Jakobstad, and Gamlakarleby (Finnish: Kristiinankapupunki, Kaskinen, Vaasa, Uusikaarleby, Pietarsaari, Kokkola).
3. Hanssen 1952, p. 272; Storå 1997, pp. 5-8; Heinonen 2003, pp. 19-22.
4. See, for example, Levander 1935, p. 140; Luukko 1981, p. 275; Skarin Frykman 1993, pp. 16-17.
5. Aspers 2011, pp. 20-27. See also Kortekangas in this volume.
6. Högnäs 1995, pp. 7-11; Östman 2010, pp. 250-252; 2012, pp. 126-128.
7. De Certeau 1984, pp. xxiii, 29-42; Stark 2011, pp. 31-34; Koivunen and Syrjämaa 2011, pp. 47-51; Skarin Frykman 1993, pp. 14-17.

8. De Certeau 1984, p. xv.
9. De Certeau 1984, pp. xii–xiii; Skarin Frykman 1993, pp. 14–17; Tooftgard 2015, pp. 1–6; van den Heuvel 2018, pp. 693–965.
10. Varsta 1946, pp. 119–124; Heinonen 2003, pp. 13–15, 53–54; Mats Berglund. 2009. *Massans röst. Upplopp och gatubråk i Stockholm 1719–1848*. Aino Suomaa. 2018. *Lantdagsdebatt om marknader 1863–1864*.
11. Heinonen 2003, pp. 55–57. See also Varsta 1946, pp. 138–144.
12. Ea:2791 Register of Correspondence, Economic Division, Senate of Finland; Möller 1973, pp. 189–190.
13. Varsta 1946, pp. 145–147; Heinonen 2003, pp. 55–58; Suomaa 2018, pp. 27–28.
14. Ea:2791 Register of Correspondence, Economic Division, Senate of Finland.
15. Suomaa 2018, p. 18.
16. Bladh 1991, pp. 190–192.
17. Ea:2791 Register of Correspondence, Economic Division, Senate of Finland.
18. Heinonen 2003, pp. 58.
19. Also *qvasimarknad/qvasimarknader/kvasimarknader*.
20. Anneli Mäkelä. 1987. *Vasa stads historia III*; Erik Birck. 1980. *Nykarleby stads historia del II*. Sylvi Möller. 1973. *Gamlakarleby stads historia I*.
21. Högnäs 1995, pp. 8–9.
22. Heinonen 2003, pp. 12–15; Östman 2020, pp. 82–83; Stark 2011, pp. 80–84.
23. In 1968, Hanna Granskog-Ekman sent a text about the history of trade in the parish of Närpes to the Society of Swedish Literature in Finland (SLS 906 Anteckningar om folklivet i Närpes, Hanna Granskog-Ekman).
24. Lönnqvist 2016, pp. 52–53; Pia Olsson. 2014. “Good Factual Knowledge for Future Generations. Questionnaire Activity Defining Traditional Culture.” See also Nils Storå. 1997. “Kommers och karneval. Fiskmarknaden som mötesplats”; Anna-Maria Åström, 2001. “Strömmingsmarknaden som identitetssymbol.”
25. *Wasabladet* 7/4/1863.
26. *Wasabladet* 2/2/1867, 7/71867.
27. *Wasabladet* 1/30/1878, 7/1/1871; *Åbo Underrättelser* 2/15/1870, 7/6/1871; *Hufvudstadsbladet* 2/20/1872.
28. Möller 1973, p. 190. *Hufvudstadsbladet* 11/19/1879; *Åbo Posten* 11/20/1897.
29. *Dagens Nyheter* 1/13/1877; *Åbo Underrättelser* 1/11/1877.
30. *Finlands Allmänna Tidning* 2/20/1879.
31. In the towns of Kaskö (Kaskinen) and Jakobstad (Pietarsaari), however, no markets seem to have been arranged during this period.

32. SLS 1185, pp. 273, 425.
33. See, for example, *Wasa Nyheter* 11/26/1897; *Dagens Nyheter* 1/13/1877. SLS 11985, pp. 276, 371, 420, 426, 432, 439, 443.
34. Heinonen 2003, p. 58.
35. *Folkvännen* 11/14/1890.
36. Möller 1973, p. 189.
37. See de Certeau 1984, p. xiv.
38. *Åbo Posten* 11/20/1889; *Österbottningen* 3/23/1902; *Wasa Posten* 3/12/1901.
39. *Wasabladet* 2/23/1876.
40. *Westra Finland* 9/3/1898.
41. See *Hufvudstadsbladet* 11/19/1879; *Åbo Posten* 11/20/1897.
42. For instance, see *Wasabladet* 4/16/1881; *Wasa Tidning* 2/20/1885; *Wasa Nyheter* 7/12/1897; *Wasa Posten* 3/12/1897.
43. Mäkelä 1987, pp. 163–165; Birck 1980, pp. 308–316.
44. SLS 1185, pp. 64, 189, 284.
45. SLS 1185, p. 151.
46. SLS 906, pp. 45–46.
47. Wassholm 2017, pp. 666–667; Björkman 1980, pp. 61–62.
48. For instance, see *Nya Pressen* 1/24/1883; *Westra Finland* 10/15/1892; *Wasabladet* 2/12/1887.
49. *Wasa Framåt* 10/25/1881; *Wasabladet* 2/16/1878. See Jonasson in this volume.
50. De Certeau 1984, p. 26.
51. *Jakobstad* 5/22/1907.
52. Birck 1980, pp. 313–316.
53. Cannelin 1855, pp. 17–19. *Åbo Posten* 10/13/1877, 2/10/1880.
54. *Westra Finland* 3/9/1898.
55. Skarin Frykman 1993, pp. 20–22.
56. SLS 1185, pp. 134, 155, 439. MV K12/109 and K12/455.
57. SLS 1185, pp. 7–8.
58. SLS 1185, p. 329; MV K12/455.
59. Birck 1980, pp. 653–656.
60. MV/K12/15; Östman 2020b, pp. 202–206.
61. Storå 1979, pp. 421–422; SLS 1185, pp. 152–153, 273.
62. *Jakobstad* 5/22/1907; Björkman 1980, pp. 61–62.
63. Ulväng 2012, pp. 63–64. See also Sundelin in this volume.
64. Heinonen 2003, pp. 127–129.
65. SLS 1185, p. 457. See also SLS 1185, p. 284.
66. SLS 1185, p. 458.
67. SLS 1185, p. 177.
68. SLS 1185, pp. 164, 444.

69. SLS, 1185, p. 7.
70. SLS 1185, pp. 7–8.
71. *Wasa Nyheter* 11/26/1897, 3/30/1899; *Österbottningen* 3/23/1902.
72. MV K12/466 and K12/257.
73. *Jakobstad* 5/22/1907.

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*Hufvudstadsbladet*, 1872, 1879.  
*Wasa Nyheter*, 1897.  
*Wasa Posten*, 1897, 1901.  
*Wasabladet*, 1863, 1867, 1871, 1876, 1878, 1881, 1887.  
*Westra Finland*, 1892, 1898.  
*Åbo Posten*, 1877, 1880, 1897, 1901.  
*Åbo Underrättelser*, 1870, 1871, 1877.  
*Österbottningen*, 1902.

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