

Money in Other Societies

**Traditional Means of Payment
from the Kuhn Collection**

By Ursula Kampmann

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What Is Money?

It is incredible what has served other peoples as a means of payment at different times! Beetles' legs and snails, shells and bars of salt, stone axes and glass pearls, all of which are really exotic. It is hard to imagine how people on the market could buy their daily food—and indeed traditional means of payment are quite different from our money in the West. In order to understand where the difference lies you first have to consider what characterises our money.

Our money, the economists determine, has four purposes. It serves as a means of exchange to make trading easier. We use it to measure the value of goods and services. Thus we deposit assets which we do not need for the time being. And with money we can make up for misdemeanours.

Actually anything can be used as money. That in our case metal discs and pieces of paper have become accepted was not compelling. Any object can be used to function as money temporarily as soon as a society agrees to it. If a group of participants in the market today laid down that a red crayon is worth 10, a yellow one 5 and a blue one 100 units, then within this group coloured crayons would function in the same way as money like dollars or euros. A good example of such an unwritten agreement is known from Germany in the time after the Second World War, when the entire black market was founded on the “cigarette currency.”

Today our life is based on money. We have to buy everything necessary for life by means of money. Money guarantees us independence from other people. Whoever has only a little money is poor in our world, whoever has none cannot survive.

Are Traditional Means of Payment Money in This Sense?

Means of exchange, standards of value, means of safekeeping and penalties for wrong doing: do all these four characteristic features hold true for every traditional means of payment? Certainly not.

Money in various societies is not the same as money. Not all traditional means of payment were used in the same way. They are closely connected to the society in which they served as a means of payment. Their use was usually connected to quite definite ceremonies and frequently served to strengthen the ties within a community.

The forms of money brought together in the Kuhn Collection come from all parts of the world. It is almost impossible to say anything universally valid about objects which come from such different connections. At most it could be stressed that the societies which had closer trading contacts with the West developed forms of money which are closer to our understanding of money than the traditional means of payment which came from societies that used them only among themselves.

So let us therefore look at how the different forms of money functioned with the help of concrete examples.

The Kuhn Collection

For this purpose the MoneyMuseum was able to acquire part of the collection of Günter Kuhn of Munich. Mr. Kuhn, who was also involved professionally in money, collected in the second generation. He was able to take over part of the collection from his father. The objects had been brought together since the 1950s and represent a rather impressive ensemble.

Two especially spectacular objects—the feather money and the Ethiopian ammunition pouch—come from the Thomas Lutz Collection in Cologne. This collector was at the same time involved in field research. The enthusiastic cosmopolitan died in 2009 while on a journey into the interior of China.

A Rough Division

There are many possible ways of making a rough division of the various traditional forms of money. In this brochure we have chosen the original purpose of the objects and divided them into the following groups:

- Forms of money which also served as commodities
(see “Money to Spend,” page 8)
- Forms of money which developed from bars of money
(see “Bars of Money,” page 11)
- Forms of money that could be used as jewellery
(see “Jewellery as Money,” page 15)
- Forms of money for no visible purpose
(see “Senseless Money?” page 21)

Many of the pieces on display cannot be assigned to just one category. This is not surprising: the societies which once produced or used these traditional means of money did not adhere to definitions, but, for purposes of barter, used whatever had turned out to be valuable for generations. At the same time such items could change their function and thus their category. Let us take, for example, the manillas, bronze bangles that were used by the European traders in African transactions. While they were first regarded as decoration, they developed into bars of money of a standardised size. These bars still had the form of bracelets, but they were usually so small or so large that nobody could wear them as bracelets any longer.

Almost a Coin: The Cowrie

Exhibit no. 3¹: China, cowrie (*Cypraea annulus*)

The most important traditional means of payment was and still is the shell of the *Cypraea moneta* or the *Cypraea annulus*, which in time and geography has made a career for itself that can certainly compete with the European coin.



Exhibit no. 3 : China, cowrie
(*Cypraea annulus*)

Cowries were in use as long ago as 3,500 years in China, from where they spread out to India, Thailand and other eastern Asiatic regions. In the South Sea, cowries were a popular means of payment that was partly used in some areas up into the 20th century. Cowries were also used as money in Africa into the last century. There, through the intervention of the Europeans, they experienced inflation, such as we otherwise experience from currencies that are based on paper money. In 1810 the price of a bride in Uganda was 30 cowries, in 1857 a would-be husband had to pay 10,000 cowries. It was the imports by European dealers that were responsible for this inflation, so that they could use the money to pay for the much sought-after ivory and the necessary slaves.

Nevertheless, cowries were still being used up into the 20th century as a popular form of small change. Thus in 1960

¹ The number refers in each case to the exhibit displayed in the MoneyMuseum's exhibition *Traditional Currencies from Africa, Asia and Oceania*.

Dutch scientists had to interrupt their expedition into inner New Guinea to fetch cowries from East Africa to pay their porters.

Money to Spend

There are many materials which everyone needs, which are in short supply and which, if they are durable, can thus take over the function of money. The cigarette currency, mentioned above, is linked up with this. At the same time, however, we know many other materials that have achieved the character of money now and then.

Exhibit no. 8: Central America, cocoa beans

The Aztec elite used cocoa beans to pay wages. They controlled this currency, which also served as small change at the market, for the cocoa bean did not thrive in Mexico's central highlands, but grew only in tropical areas, where it was cultivated in small plantations like gardens under the control of the Aztec upper class.

We know little about the use of cocoa beans in pre-Spanish times; and when Spanish chroniclers did indicate exact prices for individual cocoa beans, they automatically passed on



Exhibit no. 8:
Central America, cocoa beans

their own ideas of money to the Aztec means of payment. Actually these beans were mainly used to serve as a means of balancing in exchange deals. Wage earners such as porters and house employees also received cocoa beans in addition to their income paid in kind. Large quantities of cocoa beans played a part as tributes or as part of a politically motivated exchange of gifts.

Exhibit no. 11: China, tea brick

The Chinese Pu-erh tea is also known in Europe. This kind of tea bears this name from the plants which originally came from the town of Pu'er in the province of Yunnan. To transport the tea more easily it is pressed into bricks, which can be formed in different shapes: they look like balls, mushrooms or melons, are round like loaves of bread or flat like bricks.



Exhibit no. 11: China, tea brick

Few people in Europe know that the gourmets among the Chinese—similar to the Europeans in the case of wine—differentiate between the vintages of Pu-erh. The older the tea, the better it is supposed to be. Thus the purchase and the maturing of the Pu-erh bricks makes sense. The tea goes up in price; the money invested in tea yields “interest,” so to speak.

Actually numerous Chinese invested in Pu-erh tea up to our times. From 1999 until 2007 its price increased tenfold. In the spring of 2008 the market suddenly collapsed without any warning in advance. Many small investors, but also speculators, lost what they had gained in the previous years.

Today the tea market has recovered and in China a large range of different forms of tea barrels—to drink and to invest in—are being acquired.

By the way, the piece illustrated here is considerably older. It probably originated from the first half of the 20th century, although we are not able to determine the exact point in time when it emerged.

Exhibit no. 7: Congo, bars made of tukula paste

Even cosmetics can be used as a means of payment. In the Congo a paste was made from the powdered wood of dead and rotten redwood trees which, when mixed with oil, was used as a pomade for skin and hair. To make it easier to transport the producer mixed the wood powder with water, pressed it into a shape and let it dry out. The result was a brick of a standardised size which could be wonderfully used as a means of payment. However, this bar had an expiry date. The longer it circulated as a means of payment, the more red colour faded and lost all the more of its usefulness for personal hygiene.



Exhibit no. 7: Congo, bars made of tukula paste

Bars of Money—the Nearest Relative to Our Coins

Since the Bronze Age metal had been traded in standardised bars in a precisely fixed form. It was quite simply practical when the form indicated what weight of valuable metal an object contained. Such standardised bars could be turned into money as they fulfilled many conditions that we expect of a means of payment. They served as an exchange medium for the safekeeping of values, as a measure of values and it was even possible to use them to atone for one's crimes: the first written records to mention an early form of money at all are legal tablets from Mesopotamia which prescribe how much silver a debtor should pay for which misdemeanour.

The first standardised mini-bars made of electrum became perhaps the forerunners of our coins. So nobody needs to be surprised that other cultures had the idea to use metal bars as money.

Exhibit no. 119: China, silver bars at 50 taels

Up into the 20th century the Chinese money system was based on small change made of bronze. For daily purchases these coins were quite useful. But when it was a matter of paying larger sums or preserving assets other, more valuable objects were needed. For this the Chinese used silver bars. The West gave them poetic names, such as shoe money (because of their shape), silk shoe (standardised bales of silk were also used in China as a means of payment) or boot money.

These silver bars were produced privately, but were not allowed to deviate from the weight according to the local norms, which were also supervised by the authorities.

Silver bars, too, played a part in the cult of the dead. They were placed in the deceased's grave. The last emperor of China, Pu Yi, records in his memoirs that the grave of his mother, the empress Ci Xi, was plundered and the gold and silver bars were stolen.



Exhibit no. 119: China,
silver bars at 50 taels

Even today silver shoes stand for wealth in Chinese superstition. And in many Chinese restaurants you can detect Budai, in Japanese called Hotei. In Far East superstition the fat-bellied Buddha is the one who gives satisfaction and one of the seven gods of good luck. Budai is depicted with a fat belly and a large beggar's sack frequently bulging with silver shoe money in the Chinese variant.



Fat-bellied Buddha

Exhibit no. 67: West Africa, bundles of Kissi pennies

The Kissi pennies owe their name to the fact that they were used especially by the tribe of the Kissi in the border area of Sierra Leone and Liberia. They functioned on the market as a means of exchange and we know the exact prices for the time

around 1920. Thus 2 Kissi pennies were paid for several colanuts, a bundle of bananas or 20 oranges. Bundles of 20 Kissi pennies were used for larger payments. Thus a cow cost 30 to 40 such bundles, a male slave 100 to 200 bundles.

However, Kissi pennies were more than just money. They had a soul. Only a medicine man could turn a broken Kissi penny into a complete one and give it back its soul.



Exhibit no. 67: West Africa,
bundles of Kissi pennies

Even though there were money changers on the local markets who would change coins into Kissy pennies, a Kissy penny was worth more than its equivalent. He played an important role in customs. If an important person died his or her broken Kissi pennies were placed in the grave. And in the case of the Gbnade in Liberia it was customary for the bridegroom to seal the marriage by placing a Kissi penny on the bride's head and saying "This is my wife."

Exhibit no. 70: central Africa, Katanga cross

Katanga is today still an existent province of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Here copper was mined that was made into cross-shaped bars. There are Katanga crosses in many sizes, mostly cross-shaped and occasionally H-shaped, and in their function very similar to our money.

It seems only logical that Moïse Tshombé, who in 1960 tried to establish Katanga as an independent state, chose to depict the Katanga cross as the coin design for his one- and five-franc coins.



Exhibit no. 70: central Africa,
Katanga cross

Katanga crosses, too, were not only used as a means of payment as we understand it. We find them as part of a bride's price or in burials, where they served to document the social standing of the donor and the receiver.

Exhibit no. 76: West Africa, large Mondua copper manilla

Manillas, alloyed copper in the shape of a bangle, are among the oldest forms of African gold ingots. Our piece is a Mondua manilla, a copper ring ingot from the province of Sokoto in Nigeria.

The first European manillas were transported by Portuguese boats to Africa, where traders exchanged them mainly for slaves and African pepper. The first written sources on this actually exist from the 14th/15th centuries. We know from one boat which put into Benin in 1515 and had unloaded 13,000 manillas. No less interesting is the fact that in 1548 the agent of the king of Portugal entered into a contract for the delivery of brass manillas according to the instructions drawn up with the Fugger company.

We have, mainly from the kingdom of Benin, informative sources on how the exchange of goods between the Portuguese and the king's house was handled. The trade was a monopoly of the Oba, the ruler. The king decided to whom the market was to be opened and granted to deserving members



Exhibit no. 76: West Africa, large
Mondua copper manilla

of the king's house the privilege of trading with the Europeans. According to the king's instructions the copper that was bought was mostly turned into splendid works of art which we know nowadays as Benin bronzes.

As so often happens, the competition among the importers undermined the value of the imported goods. It came to a kind of inflation: the price of a slave rose from 12 to 15 manillas at the beginning of the 16th century in 1517.

At the beginning of the 18th century this currency had outstripped itself in Benin. Nobody there was interested in it any longer, so that a whole load of manillas had to be sent away as unsaleable.

Jewellery as Money—Decorative Money

“Manilla,” what this Portuguese word actually meant is something that we are still not agreed upon, but the form of the manillas suggests that the ingots were originally bracelets made of bronze. When they originated it was their function to be ornamental, and in fact many forms of traditional means of payment go back to objects that were used as jewellery.

Exhibit no. 91: East and central Africa, Venetian glass beads

When Henry Morton Stanley was preparing his expedition into central Africa in 1871 he was faced with the problem of which glass beads he should buy on the coast to have suitable beads for payments in the interior of the country. In 1857 the explorer Richard Francis Burton had the same problem: he describes how he had to choose from about 400 different kinds of beads.

In the 19th century in central Africa beads served as a kind of small change which was mainly used to buy foodstuffs, to pay the porters and as part of the tribute to the relevant tribal chief. However, every foreign explorer was faced with the virtually insoluble question as to which beads were accepted as a means of payment and which were not.

The 19th century travellers explained this phenomenon—completely in the style of the fashion whims of Western ladies—as the consequences of a constantly changing taste. Present-day explorers see that differently.



Exhibit no. 91: East and central Africa, Venetian glass beads

In the 19th century in central Africa a sophisticated system of payment is said to have arisen through the influence of Western and Indian traders. The demand for East African ivory had increased considerably and the slave trade had become far more significant. The local traders had learnt not to be satisfied with worthless civilisation goods. They had very precise ideas of what they wanted to exchange. European traders, on the

other hand, who tried to stock up with desirable goods, failed because of the inscrutable circumstances of the various markets which, by the way, reserved the lucrative intermediate trade for local traders.

Glass beads are said to have served as local small change. Besides, every market place had its own glass bead currency, and every trader naturally wanted to be paid in glass beads that he could use himself—perhaps not only on his own market place but also on the one at which he was used to buying his seasonally varying goods. This system could only be understood by anyone who visited a certain market place regularly and frequently. The foreigner had no chance!

However, the famous glass production of Venice owed its survival to the African market. For while glass production almost completely collapsed in the 19th century, the production of beads remained unchanged and even increased on account of the growing demand for East African goods. In 1874 glass beads were worth almost 4 million Italian lire—at that time an enormous sum. The largest part valued at 1,860,000 lire went to India, which is located opposite the East African coast, England imported beads for 1,470,000 lire and East Africa with Zanzibar purchased glass goods worth at least 650,000 lire.

Exhibit no. 94: Africa, talhakimt pendants

When in 1980 an adventurer travelled into the south of Nigeria his guide bought especially beautiful talhakimt pendants at the market in Kano. For centuries this kind of ornamentation served as a means of exchange and is a good example of how the Western market adapted to the demands of its African trading partners.

Talhakimt pendants have a very characteristic shape. They consist of a ring with a longer or shorter point. They are worn today on a ribbon round the neck with the point turned down. The original form of these rings is likely to have been of local

origin, but soon Indian traders imitated them as objects in exchange for desirable pieces of jewellery. Very popular were the talhakimt pendants made of red agate which were produced in the Indian seaport of Khambat exclusively for export. In the 19th century Idar-Oberstein in Germany ousted Khambat as a supplier of talhakimt pendants.

When the local quarries were exhausted it was possible to open up new supplies in Brazil. The raw material was shipped from Brazil to Germany, milled in Idar-Oberstein into jewellery and most of it was delivered to Africa. Orders came for the most part from merchants in Paris and Birmingham, who



Exhibit no. 94: Africa,
talhakimt pendants

shipped these goods to Dakar and Cairo to exchange them for desirable export goods. The inland trade with talhakimt pendants remained completely in the hands of African middlemen.

Of course, resourceful traders replaced the expensive agate that was difficult to treat with other cheaper materials: with porcelain, glass and in the end with plastic.

What was such a talhakimt pendant worth? Difficult to say. In 1936 A. J. Arkell wrote that in earlier times a camel or a slave could be exchanged for a talhakimt pendant. But in his time a talhakimt pendant in Sudan was only worth one British pound. In 1980 the above mentioned caravaners paid only 5 naira each, then about 8 Swiss francs.

However that may be, stone from Brazil, treated in Germany, delivered to Africa by French or British traders! Globalisation set in long before the last third of the 20th century.

Exhibit no. 14: Papua New Guinea, kina moka

Kina moka is a kind of shell money that originates from Melanesia, a group of South Sea islands north of Australia. In this part of the world smaller and larger communities lived where the individual could acquire a higher social status within a local hierarchy by means of his achievements. The criterion for the status within a local hierarchy was the possession of traditional means of payment, or rather, the ability to give them or exchange them, as so-called “primitive money”: it is not the hoarded treasures that are the status symbol, but the treasures that one has given to others. This is, by the way, an attitude which the Melanesians share with the upper class of the Roman Empire.



Exhibit no. 14: Papua New Guinea,
kina moka

The probably most important status object in the highlands of New Guinea, which could sometimes also be used as a means of payment when there was an opportunity, was the kina, which even gave its name to the country's present-day currency. It consisted of a crescent-shaped polished oyster pearl which was worn on a ribbon round the neck. Before the

exploration of the highlands of Papua New Guinea in the 30s of the last century a man who possessed only a single oyster was regarded as rich. Fitted into a resin plate coloured with red chalk, these shells were valuable objects which played an important part in the bride price and in the ritual exchange of gifts.

Bride Price

How barbaric to buy yourself a wife! You might think so when you hear the word “bride price” for the first time. And yet it makes sense if you consider against which social background this ritual finds its application.

First we have to forget our idea of the small family. It is by no means obvious, just as the idea that people can live on their own as individuals. In many societies the clan or the extended family is the centre of attention. And when a woman marries the community loses a member who was nourished, brought up and educated for years. Now that the woman has reached the climax of her productivity, she is no longer available to work for the family. In such a case does it not stand to reason to remunerate a community for investing in the woman who is now to be added to another community?

How inadequate our word “price” is in this context is shown by the fact that it was in the interest of all those involved to fix the “price” as high as possible. For it showed the social status of the family into which a bride married. Thomas Lutz describes in his brochure *Federgeld und Muschelketten* (Feather Money and Shell Chains) the payment of a bride price in the following way: “If in Malaita, another island in the Solomons, a bride price is to be paid the bride’s father goes through the village to the parents’ house of his future daughter-in-law and as all the villagers are calling out to show their appreciation hangs the previously agreed number of shell money strings on the stakes in front of the house.

Then as a voluntary and much appreciated extra payment of further money chains are hung up for the bride's mother and those relatives who were especially involved in the education of the bride. Anyone wanting to receive even greater esteem adds the last chain of double length—a luxury that only 'big men,' influential and powerful men, can afford."

Senseless Money?

A large part of the traditional forms of money appears to us today to be unbelievably decorative and rather absurd. What should you do with a cannon with which you can no longer shoot? What do you do with a role of feathers, a bent boar's tooth, a chain of beetles' legs? All these objects seem hardly suitable for buying the daily food.

And indeed these objects belong to another context. They are status symbols without any practical function that are used in important interpersonal transactions as a "means of payment." The bride money was paid by them, but also to atone for theft, manslaughter or adultery. Another ritual payment was connected with the funeral ceremony. The relatives among the mourners helped those affected to bear the enormously high costs by contributing traditional means of payment. Here, too, the size of the sum that was donated was decisive for the donor's prestige.

Of course, all these objects could also be used for regular trade. And here the price did not depend only on supply and demand, but also on who bought from whom.

Exhibit no. 1: Santa Cruz Islands, feather money

The feather money of the Melanesian population is especially spectacular. It is a metre long bulging roll of raffia arranged like roof tiles and with scales of glued pigeon feathers whose front edges are glued with ten thousands of small feathers of

the red sugarbird. Innumerable hours must have been spent for the production of such feather money. It was a high-ranking prestige object which could also be given as payment for larger acquisitions. So it was used to purchase turtles, canoes or pigs.

Feather money played an especially important role up to about 1980 to pay the bride money which was paid in this currency in most cases. How devastating the displacement of traditional means of payment by cash for the social cohesion was can be understood by this example.



Exhibit no. 1: Santa Cruz
Islands, feather money

The number of feather money rolls remained relatively constant on Santa Cruz for decades: some were lost or were destroyed by insects, others were newly produced. In any case, enough feather money was always available when a young man wanted to marry. If he did not have it himself he borrowed it from relatives. The bride's parents used the feather money they received to marry a son or to grant male relatives a feather money credit. Thus the feather money united the population of the entire island. Every family was made up of lenders and borrowers.

Round about 1980, the feather money was abolished and its use was forbidden. What could not be sold rotted away on the beach as worthless. Today a man who wants to marry

has to provide the bride price in cash. In 1990 it amounted to about 800 Swiss francs. That kind of money is difficult to get hold of on an island where there is hardly any paid work. And the money no longer flows in a closed circuit, but is often spent by the bride's parents on foreign luxury articles. That means that their son is faced with the problem of how he is to find the money for a wedding.

It is a vicious circle that turns people who were connected by their money into the victims of the modern monetary system.

Exhibit no. 20: Papua New Guinea, talipun

The treated and expensively decorated shell of the green turban snail (*Turbo marmoratus*) also served in the interior of New Guinea as a means of payment that was chiefly used for ritual payments.



Exhibit no. 20: Papua
New Guinea, talipun

The shells of the snails came from the north coast of New Guinea, where the flesh of marine animals was a much sought-after food. The empty shells were sold to the Yangoru Boiken, who lived further inland, where they were treated and to which a mesh of rattan was fastened. In the case of our piece this mesh shows a spectacular mask which almost deprives us of our attention to the actual means of payment, the snail's shell. Only after this treatment could the talipun circulate as a means of payment.

Exhibit no. 31: Papua New Guinea/Vanuatu, bent boar tusk

The true wealth of a family in Melanesia are their pigs. A clan's esteem today is still measured—quite independently of a bank account and Western status symbols—by its swine herd and the number of swine that a family can afford to slaughter when there is a major festival.



Exhibit no. 31: Papua New Guinea/
Vanuatu, bent boar tusk

It is therefore not surprising that the boar tusks developed into valuable objects. The tusks are bent round and are especially appreciated and hardly ever found like this in the wild. They only grow when a boar has lost its upper tusks. To preserve such valuable boar tusks the male's upper tusks were broken out. That meant that the animal had to be fed for years, which was expensive, and it involved considerable work to maintain a boar's round tooth. These articles of value are today still greatly appreciated in Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu. A tooth with allegedly three rotations is said to have been presented to Queen Elizabeth as a state gift on the occasion of her visit in the 80s of the last century.

How important the boar's tooth rings are for the image of the local population can be seen from the fact that the coat of arms and state flag of Vanuatu display a boar's bent tooth.

Exhibit no. 2: Indonesia, moko

On the island of Alor it is said that long ago hourglass-shaped kettle gongs were found which rapidly developed into valuable prestigious objects. As a result modern research wants to connect the mokos which above all were used in the bride price. What determined the price of a moko were its history and its age. The size, the craftsmanship and condition, on the other hand, were completely unimportant. From the time of the monetising of the island of Alor in 1913 to 1915 we have data as to which equivalent value was offered for these mokos in Dutch guilders. The difference in prices was enormous. Whereas you could exchange one new moko for one to 50 guilders, pieces of historical importance fetched up to 3,000 guilders.



Exhibit no. 2: Indonesia, moko

Mokos were used to pay a bride price, to finance the construction of a family house or a funeral. A family usually did not have enough mokos and so for this purpose borrowed the large metal objects from their relatives and friends. To do this a kind of interest was paid: the debtors found themselves obliged to pay back higher quality mokos than those they had borrowed. For this purpose festivals were held at regular intervals. Only in this connection were mokos used as musical instruments.

Exhibit no. 51: Borneo, cannon money

Models of bronze cannons were used in Indonesia as prestigious objects and a means of payment for the bride price. Apparently only the weight of the cannon was decisive, not whether it was still in a position to fire. The bride price is estimated by



Exhibit no. 51: Borneo, cannon money

explorers to have been between 3 and 5 pikuls (1 pikul = 60 kilograms in bronze), so that it was certainly wise to have a heavy cannon available.

Exhibit no. 105: Sumba Island, mamuli

Mamuli are nothing more than ritual representatives of one or several horses. Originally they consisted of the gold of the coins that an inhabitant of Sumba Island received when he sold horses to the Dutch. As he had no idea of what to do with it he had it changed into mamuli and woven chains by a goldsmith.



Exhibit no. 105: Sumba Island, mamuli

Mamuli played an outstanding role in the bride price that was paid on Sumba Island. This ceremony is an outstanding example of how closely this exchange of gifts brought the two tribes together. The gifts were given by both sides. While the groom's family gave mainly horses, buffalos and such mamuli, the bride's family donated sarongs, sheets and pigs.

Nowadays coins and paper money supplement the bride price. But mamuli are still handed over today made of silver or base metals which fulfils the ritual purpose in the same way.

And in Europe?

All that is not to be compared, we might think, forgetting at the same time that a couple of hundred years ago quite similar circumstances existed in Switzerland.

Up into the early modern age families, circles of friends, superiors and subordinates were kept together by a close-meshed network of gifts which in commercial connections was far more important than the mass of cash that was available in only insufficient amounts.

And up into the 20th century the trousseau, dowry and morning gift played a decisive role for the marriage. It was not until the disintegration of the old social order as a result of industrialisation that we were prepared to let bygones be bygones.

Further Reading

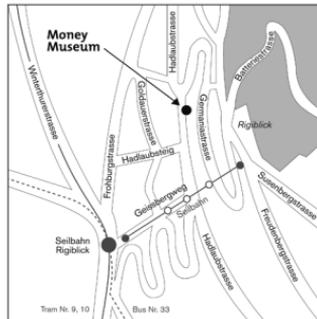
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On the Power and Changes of Money— yesterday, today, tomorrow

The MoneyMuseum—more than a museum

The MoneyMuseum as a museum for currency and money revolves around power and changes. For every story about money is characterised by the dynamic relationship between money, power and changes. The MoneyMuseum investigates this relationship in its exhibitions and the multimedia facilities at Hadlaubstrasse. In doing so, it places its emphasis above all on the Western history of currency, but also provides an insight into the development of money in other regions of the world. And it also considers not only past but also present and future tendencies on the currency and financial markets.

How to get there



Opening hours: Tue and Fri 1 to 5:30 pm
(Closed on public holidays) · Entrance fee: none

MoneyMuseum · Hadlaubstrasse 106 · CH-8006 Zürich
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Natascha Schleich

The Trillion Dollar Crisis



Online video and DVD
in German / English
Duration: around 31 minutes
DVD price: CHF 10.00 / EUR 7.00

The financial crisis that erupted throughout the world in autumn 2008 and since then has developed into a global economic crisis with an uncertain outcome did not come out of thin air and it is not the first of its kind. However the magnitude of it is utterly unique.

This presentation tells the chronicle of how it happened. It is the story of a house of cards, based on the real housing market in the USA, that was built higher and higher until it finally collapsed, wiping out money, security and confidence on an unprecedented scale.

You can watch the video in the Sunflower Mediatheque on:
www.sunflower.ch

Or you can get the DVD at MoneyMuseum Hadlaubstrasse,
Hadlaubstrasse 106, CH-8006 Zürich.