

Archaic means of payment

ARCHAIC MEANS OF PAYMENT

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GIVING IN TRADITIONAL SOCIETIES

Traditional societies are organized hierarchically. A person's position and therefore their prestige does not depend on how much they own, but on how many gifts they have given to other members of society.

Important to know: Gifts in traditional societies are neither money in our sense nor voluntary gifts. The recipient of a gift is obliged to pass it on or give something in return. If they repeatedly disregard this rule, they are ostracized or even excluded from society.

In traditional societies, gifts fulfill an essential function in social events - for example, marriage, the death of a member and transgressions such as adultery, theft or robbery. They require knowledge of the social rules and a sense of how to handle them. Gifts are often integrated into ritual acts and are essential for the cohesion of a community.

The short stories you read in this brochure are neither historically documented nor ethnographically recorded, but serve solely as an aid to understanding and an introduction for visitors who want to explore the fascinating subject of archaic means of payment.



Feather
money

BRIDAL PAYMENT ON SANTA CRUZ, SALAMONS

Nelua sat quietly in his hiding place in the rainforest and listened. A soft rustling could be heard. "At last! The red nectar bird!" it flashed through his mind. He gently brought his blowpipe to his mouth and took aim. It hissed briefly and then a "Plop" could be heard. It had hit its target. Nelua went to the prey and smiled proudly as the bird's plumage glowed an intense red. Nelua brought the bird to Gala and Toba. They were already waiting impatiently for the supplies so that they could continue with their work of making feather money rolls.

Context No one could marry on Santa Cruz, on the Salamones, without handing over feather money rolls of a certain quality. The rolls were made from the back and breast feathers of the red honeyeater bird. Hundreds of birds gave their lives to make a feather money roll. The production process required the knowledge and skills of three specialists and could take months. The prestige of a roll was measured by the color intensity of the feathers. Until the middle of the last century, 20 feather money rolls had to be paid for one bride.



Boar Tooth

HAD A PIG: BOAR TOOTH MONEY ON PAPUA NEW GUINEA

"What a great moment we will celebrate today!" thought Tok, the leader of the clan, smiling contentedly to himself. Not only would the peace treaty with the powerful neighboring tribe be celebrated for the umpteenth time, but the feast with mountains of delicacies would also amaze the participants. But perhaps he himself would be the center of the greatest admiration. Because as the highlight of the festivities, he would present his seven boars, richly decorated with flowers, to the entire congregation. Each of them had two circular tusks. Each of the animals had a special name, as he had painstakingly nurtured each one for seven years. It had taken that long for the boars' tusks to develop their circular shape.

Context The wealth and prestige of a clan on Papua New Guinea is measured by the number of pigs it owns. So it may come as no surprise that boar tusks are also considered true gems. However, circular boar tusks are rare in nature: Only if a boar loses or damages its upper tusks, for example in a fight with a conspecific, can the lower teeth grow back unhindered. To get their hands on such rarities, boar owners break out their animals' upper tusks so that the lower ones can grow back in a circle. It takes around seven years for the tusks to become fully rounded. This means that the owners have to feed their animals by hand for years, as the boars cannot find enough food if their teeth are too long.



Iron bars

IRON BARS WITH A SOUL IN WEST AFRICA

Amadu was inconsolable. He looked at the iron bars he kept as head of the family. Two of them were broken. He knew only too well that one of the children had been playing with them, secretly, forbiddenly. Amadu also knew exactly what to do now. He had to take the broken sticks to the medicine man so that he could make them whole again, heal them. This would take a day, he thought, because the medicine man was not in the village these days, but on the road, somewhere near the border with Sierra Leone. He would take his boys with him on the day's journey to the medicine man in the border country.

Context Iron bars or kissipennys owe their name to the fact that they were used especially by the Kissi tribe in the border region of Sierra Leone and Liberia. Kissipennys were originally gifts and played an important role in customs. And according to the tribes who used them, they possessed a soul. Only a medicine man could make a broken kissipenny whole again and give it back its soul.



Beetle leg chain

A GLOWING GREEN WEDDING GIFT MADE FROM BEETLE LEGS

Tanga blushed with pride when her groom handed her father the sparkling green necklace. Her grandmother had prepared her well for this important moment in her life. She had explained everything to her granddaughter about the meaning and the hardships involved in making such a wonderful necklace from beetle legs and finally handing it over to the bride's father as ritual compensation for the loss of her daughter on her wedding day. Tanga smiled and thought: "Everything will be fine! For my family, for my husband, his family and me".

Context Chains made of beetle legs are valuable and serve as social cement in traditional societies in parts of Africa. They are gifts that are presented at important interpersonal events (atonement, bride price, theft, manslaughter, adultery, burial).



Katanga cross

GIFTS AT FUNERALS: COPPER CROSSES FROM KATANGA

Tenge gazed silently and enraptured in front of him. He was a handsome man of 50 and did not let on how difficult it was for him to endure the ceremony. His wife Bebele had died suddenly. "Much too soon! Much too soon!" he kept thinking as the mourners, the whole village, filed past him and presented him with gifts. Most of the crosses he received were made of copper in different sizes, depending on how rich or poor, powerful or in need of protection the giver was.

Context Copper ore has been mined and smelted in the province of Katanga in the Democratic Republic of the Congo since time immemorial and continues to be so today. Crosses were cast from this material long before the arrival of the Europeans. The Katanga crosses came in various sizes, some of them in an H shape. However, they were not used as a means of payment in our sense. They were part of the bride's payment or at funerals, where they served to document the social status of the donor and the recipient.



Kauri

PEOPLE CAME, AND WITH THEM THE KAURIS - this or something similar happened

Karok sat on the ground in front of the row of elders. He was nervous, rocking back and forth, awaiting the judgment of the men in front of him. Kelind, the wisest, pronounced the verdict: "Karok killed Urok by mistake while hunting. As atonement and as compensation for Urok's wife and offspring, Karok must pay four kauri: Arak, Borak, Gerak and Melak." Karok turned pale and collapsed as if struck by lightning. "Four kauri!" it flashed through his mind. One from each of the four most important classes. He regained his composure and looked around him. Behind him sat Uroks' widow with her daughter and two sons. "Yes, the judgment is harsh but fair!" thought Karok and thought about how he would get the four kauri.

Context The Wodani of West Papua have always used the kauri as a bride payment, as compensation for help in everyday life or as a means of atonement. Kauris have always been associated with humans in their imagination. They say: "The people came and the kauris came together". For the Wodani, the kauri is the means of payment par excellence. In their imagination, every kauri is something very special, just as every human being is, with its own history and personality.

The Wodani divided the Kauris into 20 different classes according to morphological aspects. Each class was assigned a specific meaning and this is naturally reflected in the transaction history of the kauri. The most sought-after cowries have their own name and made up a large proportion of the shells in circulation.



Manilla

"12 MANILLAS FOR ONE SLAVE AND NOT A SINGLE MORE!"

"Men! After weeks on the high seas, we're going ashore here! Get the boats ready!" Captain Duarte Pereira's voice sounded sharp, as always. In a flash, the sailors readied the landing craft and quickly loaded the barter goods. As if on command, the four boats set off towards the coast, somewhere off West Africa, sometime in the year 1495.

The news that white people had landed in boats quickly made the rounds. That evening, the Portuguese and their translators sat opposite a delegation of locals and began negotiations. As almost always in such cases, it was all about trade. The Portuguese were interested in anything that promised a profit on the markets at home, but above all they wanted labor or slaves. And the negotiations, which dragged on for hours, revolved around this topic.

"You want 15 copper bangles for a slave," the translator spoke in Portuguese next to Duarte Pereira. He thought about it for a moment and told the translator: "Twelve! And not a single one more!" It is not known why he came up with the number twelve. Perhaps he was thinking of the twelve apostles or maybe that the number twelve had struck for these people? Perhaps the twelve was simply due to chance. Whatever the case, the shrewd merchant knew that in negotiations, the first commandment is never the last.

Context Manillas are hoof-iron bracelets made of mesh or copper. They were made at the end of the 15th century by the

Portuguese used them as a means of payment in large parts of West Africa, mainly in the slave trade. We know their value from sources of Portuguese traders. Around 1505, for example, between 12 and 15 copper manillas were paid for a slave.

Their use in western Nigeria by the British colonial administration is particularly well documented. Nine different types of manillas have come down to us. The most common and most valuable was the okpoho. Manillas were widely used as a traditional means of payment in western Nigeria until the middle of the 20th century.



Manilla



Moka-Kina

A PRESTIGIOUS PROPERTY OF THE FIRST ORDER: MOKA-KINA IN MELANESIA

Tooh listened attentively to the request of the young man from his tribe. When he finished, he said: "You will need Moka-Kina for your wedding, as you know!" The young man remained silent and looked down at the ground, embarrassed. Tooh briefly considered how he felt about the young man's family. "Yes, they behaved with dignity when I put my trust in them and helped them," he reflected. Tooh cleared his throat and finally spoke the redemptive words: "I will give you the Moka-Kina. May your marriage be a happy one and may you prove yourself worthy of your wife, family and tribe." The young man looked up. Tooh saw relief in his eyes.

Context Moka-Kina were prestigious objects in the societies of Melanesia, a group of South Sea islands north of Australia. These societies were organized hierarchically. An important yardstick within a local hierarchy was the ability to bestow moka kina and other traditional gifts. It was therefore not the possession of such gifts that determined a person's status, but rather how much one had given. The crescent-shaped pearl shell was inserted into a resin plate colored with red chalk and was given as a bride's payment, especially at the wedding.



above: Wooden pig / below: Moka ceremony

THE OBLIGATORY GIFT OR PRESENT: THE MOKA CEREMONY IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Ongka is the leader of the Kawelka tribe in Papua New Guinea. He wants to hold a moka ceremony with the new leader of a neighboring tribe. Many years ago, the then leader of the neighboring tribe had never given the Kawelka 400 pigs as part of a moka ceremony. Now Ongka wants to give the new leader of the neighboring tribe 600 pigs as part of the ceremony.

Context The Moka ceremony involves a highly ritualized sequence of actions between a giver and a recipient in the Mount Hagen region of Papua New Guinea. In this ceremony, a tribal leader originally gives pigs and later other valuable items to members of his clan.

The highly ritualized gift-giving practice naturally binds the recipients to the clan or tribal leader. It is therefore an eminently important social phenomenon that reinforces the hierarchy in a traditional society and supports the system. Pigs are considered extremely valuable by traditional societies in Papua New Guinea and form the basis of their highly ritualized payment systems.

However, as history shows, the Moka ceremony is not only limited to one's own clan, but also served as a ritual to organize the relationships between the various clans and make them binding.



Mokko

MOKKOS, BRONZE KETTLE DRUMS: THE OLDER THE BETTER!

Frederik Nieuwendiek frowned. He looked at his companion, who was acting as translator, in disbelief. "I'm supposed to pay 3,000 guilders for this old, battered drum?" he murmured in Dutch. Nieuwendiek took a closer look at the bronze drum. "Yes, it is quite impressive," he thought. It was almost 60 centimetres high and about 30 centimetres in diameter, estimated the massive Dutchman, who was visibly struggling in the tropical heat. But one thing was clear to him: the condition of the drum was pathetic! Nieuwendiek whispered something in his translator's ear. He nodded and told the local seller that they would pay 50 guilders for the mocha. He just smiled and casually waved them off. The local vendor kept his history-making specimen.

Context Originally, the kettle drums, known as mokkos, were used as musical or signaling instruments. They were used to "drum up" people during festivities but also during hostilities. The oldest examples are over 2500 years old and come from northern Vietnam. Mokkos consist of two parts and are made of valuable material, usually bronze. Their importance was measured primarily by their history and age, and secondarily by their size, shape and decoration. Their state of preservation was completely irrelevant to the locals.



Aes Rude

AES RUDE OR THE IMPORTANCE OF BRONZE AS A RAW MATERIAL FOR THE ROMANS

Clio the Elder is tired and his stomach growls as he sets off home from the field. He has been tilling his field all day, helped by his two sons Primus and Secundus. As he passes his neighbor's property, he sees his plot of land with fruit trees with huge, shiny red apples. He wants to buy this plot. He spies his neighbor Agricola on his property and calls him over. Clio offers bronze for the plot. Agricola happily accepts. Step by step, the neighbors complete the swap: parcel of land for bronze. Both are happy. Agricola needs some of the valuable metal to make a ring, which he wants to give to his daughter Aelia as a dowry for her marriage, and the other part as a reserve in times of need.

Context Bronze was a very valuable raw material in the early days of Rome, in the 8th century BC, as all agricultural tools and weapons were made from this material. In short, bronze was the raw material. And what is considered valuable is used sparingly and carefully. When paying with bronze, it was carefully weighed before the transaction was completed. The first Roman coins of the 4th century BC were made of bronze and had a fixed weight.



Salt ingots

SALT INGOTS AS PRECIOUS AS GOLD IN ETHIOPIA AND ERITREA

Yohannes had become a little pensive. The 15 goats had licked away the last bit of salt. He would soon have to provide more, as salt was vital for the cheeky four-legged friends. Fortunately, his older brother Tedros had told him where he could find the precious mineral in the highlands. Yohannes thought for a moment and began to smile. With a yellow whistle, he signaled to his goats that it was time to set off. He drove the herd towards Mount Maluk - that was where the white gold was to be found.

Context In north-east Africa, salt is as valuable as gold. Salt is indispensable for livestock farming. In the pastoral societies of Ethiopia and Eritrea, salt bars known as amoli have been used as a means of exchange since ancient times, as Greek traders tell us. Amoli were still in use and accepted as a means of payment well into the 20th century. According to records kept by the Ethiopian imperial tax authorities, a third of the population's tax debts were paid in amoli until around 1920.

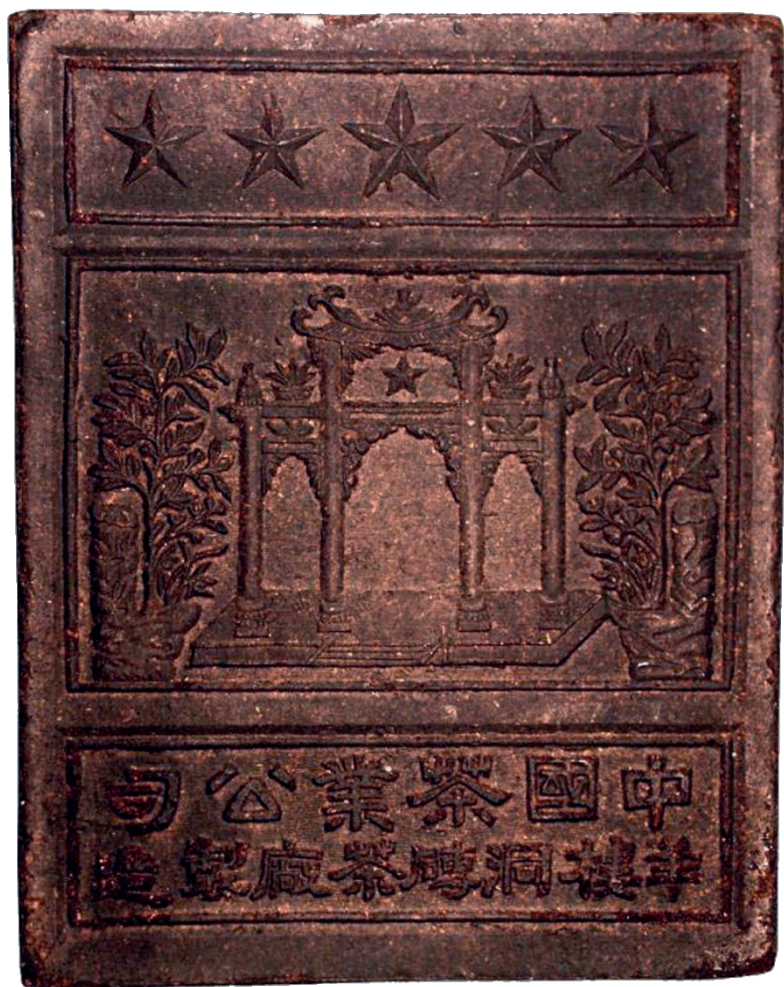


Wale Tooth

THE MOST VALUABLE GIFT IN FIJI: THE TEETH OF THE SPERM WHALE

Vishal goes to the beach as he always does after the morning meal that his mother prepares for him and his two younger sisters. Shortly after sunrise, the temperature is still pleasant. He strolls to his favorite spot by the sea. His eyes scan the endless beach. Suddenly he notices something large and black lying motionless on the beach. He walks faster, straight towards the strange flotsam. When he gets there, he recognizes it immediately: "A dead sperm whale!" Vishal knows that it is not yet a full-grown animal lying dead in front of him. But he also knows that the teeth of the young sperm whale are very, very valuable. He smiles and starts to run back to the hut where he lives with his mother and sisters. "Yes, today is our lucky day!" he thinks.

Context Tambua, the teeth of the sperm whale, are the most valuable currency in Fiji. However, the Fijians were not in a position to capture these huge animals. Through contact with whalers in the 19th century, more and more whale teeth came into the possession of the Fijians. Whale teeth are presented as valuable gifts at births and deaths, for example. For a large, red whale tooth, a canoe is given, while the most that can be exchanged for smaller, white whale teeth is a few fish. Over time, whale teeth acquired the character of a means of payment. But they always remain gifts.



Tea brick

TEA BRICKS: VALUABLE SOCIAL CEMENT

Master Yi carefully examined the quality of the tea that Farmer Yan had brought him. "Yes, this pu-erh tea is top quality!" he thought. He looked up and said curtly, "Agreed!" Farmer Yan bowed and quickly left the store. Master Yi will have the tea made into bricks. He would later give two of these valuable bricks to Han, his cousin Qi's husband. "The cohesion of the people is based on tea bricks," he said. After all, handing over the tea bricks to Han would tighten the family bond.

Context Tea bricks were widely used in China, Burma, Tibet, Mongolia and southern Siberia as gifts and later also as a means of exchange. To make them, the tea leaves were dried, ground, soaked in steam and pressed into a specific shape. However, only very specific types of tea were used, such as the fine Pu-erh tea. This type of tea owes its name to the city of Pu'er in Yunnan province, where it originally came from.

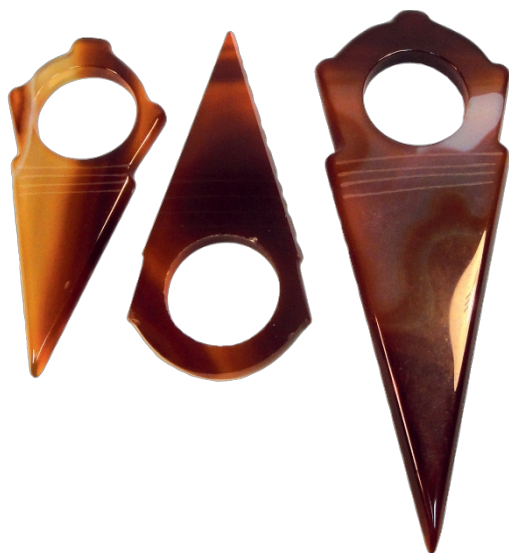


Tukla bars

TUKLA BARS: COSMETICS MADE FROM RED OIL CORE OF THE PRIMEVAL FOREST

Ndombe could hardly believe his luck. He stood on a hill in the middle of the jungle and looked down into a hollow. There, a mighty redwood tree lay across the undergrowth. The storm the night before had felled this giant. Ndombe was pleased because he would be able to start making Tukla ingots from its rotting wood in a few weeks' time. These were in great demand as a dye for all kinds of practical and beautiful things. Ndombe smiled to himself and thought of his wife Lele's hair.

Context Various types of redwood trees grow in the north of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Their wood, especially when it was rotten, was ground up by the locals and mixed with water to form a thick paste. Brick-shaped slabs were formed from this paste and dried. These pieces of tukla were sought after because of their red color. In large parts of Africa, the color red is considered very valuable. It is very popular for body painting or for dyeing fabrics or woodwork. Tukla ingots were considered valuable means of exchange or goods.



Tower rings

THE FIRST AGATE TOWER RINGS IN THE SAHARA REGION

Tsenge had never seen or held anything like it. A ring made of this bright red material. "What is that? A stone?" he asked himself. He looked at the boy who had brought him this piece and asked him: "Where did you get this ring?" "From the market!" the boy replied. "From a trader who does business with the whites," he added. "Come on, let's go. I have to talk to this trader!" Tsenge's mouth shot out. The boy began to beam, feeling proud. Tsenge smiled at the boy and said: "This tower ring is different from ours made of metal or gray, black stone. Look how wonderfully it shines, sparkling in magical red!"

Context The origin of the tower rings is not entirely clear. Various peoples in and around the Sahara used rings of this type made of different materials (stone, silver and other metals). Originally, the rings may have been used as jewelry and served as gifts. In the case of tower rings made of stone and crystals (agate), the intensity of the color and workmanship determined how valuable they were considered. In the 19th century, European colonialists began to use tower rings made of dyed agate (quartz) as a medium of exchange in African trade.



“Money snails”

THE "MONEY SNAIL" OF TOLAJ

Money snails that you can collect yourself on the beach as money? And when you learn that you can even pay taxes with them, Tolaj's taboos become completely confusing.

Professor Heinzpeter Znoj from the University of Bern has developed a model that puts these archaic means of payment into an understandable perspective. The model of Prof. Hp. Znoj's model is based on three pillars:

1. There are two different forms of exchange: Znoj speaks of liquidating and non-liquidating modes.
2. There are different interpretations of guilt. Znoj speaks of guilt as an obligation and guilt as a burden.
3. The concept of social time: according to Znoj, the type of exchange mode determines the rhythm of social time, i.e. the time that the members of a community or society spend together.

The distinction between liquidating and non-liquidating forms of exchange is based on the qualitative examination of exchange relationships. This contrasts with the view of classical and neoclassical economics, which reduces the concept of the economy to quantifiable factors.

A *liquidating* exchange is the detachment of the exchange from the personal relationship of the exchangers. The goods are assigned a value in the form of a price, regardless of who exchanges them. Neither party has any further obligation arising from the exchange. After payment, the two are receipt.

Such liquidating transactions are routinely only possible under monetary conditions. We understand today's exchange as liquidating. Once payment has been made, the parties involved no longer owe each other anything. They do not have to know each other.

Non-liquidating exchange is possible if the exchange partners jointly assess what is appropriate, because the gift is always equated differently depending on the situation. A retaliation is a retaliation because the exchange partners declare it to be a retaliation. There is no objective value. The non-liquidating exchange is still known today among friends, for example.

The perception of guilt changes depending on which mode of exchange prevails. Debt whose continuation is desired by all and which should therefore not be liquidated is perceived as an obligation in a positive sense. Debt that is burdensome for at least one party and should therefore be liquidated is perceived as a burden. In the monetary economy, this type of debt predominates in the form of credit.

The greater the proportion of the non-liquidating mode, the slower the rhythm of social time. The greater the proportion of the liquidating mode, the faster the rhythm of social time. Debts are paid as quickly as possible.

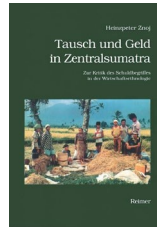
Taboo – the Tolaj shell money is an example of non-liquidating exchange

To produce Tabu, nassa snails living in the sea must first be collected or pulled out of the sea with nets. The snails are dried in the sun and their shells are cut into slices about the size of a fingernail and finally threaded onto rattan strips.



Heinzpeter Znoj, Professor of Social Anthropology at the University of Bern, conducts field research on kinship and gender anthropology, mainly in Central Sumatra and West Papua.

Prof. Znoj developed a model to identify and address conflicts arising from the coexistence of paid and unpaid work in projects at an early stage.



A chain extending from fingertip to fingertip between two outstretched arms is called a pokono and consists of 300 to 400 snails.

Today, around 100,000 people who identify themselves as Tolai still live on the island of New Britain, which is now part of Papua New Guinea. Global interest in Tabu is strong. The Kultur- und Stadthistorisches Museum Duisburg has organized an exhibition on the subject and several books have been published.

A small space should be left between the snail shells to make it easier to count them later.

The fact that tabu is considered valuable is mainly due to the fact that its production is laborious and time-consuming. In addition, production used to have to be authorized by a local leader – this prevented overproduction and the associated inflation.

It was estimated that it would take two to three months to make a two-metre-long shell necklace. Between 2000 and 3000 po- konos, i.e. 20 to 30 gogo, had to be presented to the woman's family as a bridal gift.

While smaller sections of the money were used for everyday transactions, the Tolai saved their pokonos by tying between 50 and 200 of these "threads" into hoops with a diameter of around one meter and wrapping them with leaves. These hoops are known as loloi.

Since 2002, Tabu has been promoted as a regional complementary currency in the province of East New Britain; income tax can be paid in Tabu there.

As the natural supply of Nassa snails in the region is almost exhausted due to the high demand in the past, most of the modern tabu is imported from the Salomon Islands. At the "Tolai Exchange Bank", the world's first snail money bank, the local currency, kina, can be exchanged for tabu. Relationships are established and strengthened through the distribution of tabu at rituals and in exchange. For the Tolai, tabu are essential for maintaining social order and community.

There are services for rituals that can be exchanged exclusively for taboo. Meanwhile, in everyday life almost every



To produce Tabu, Nassa snails living in the sea have to be collected or pulled out of the sea with nets.



Pokono – A small space in between remain between the slice disks to facilitate counting later.



10 kina bill: The shell money is depicted on the modern banknotes.



New Guinea

good and every service can be bought for kina and tabu. In this respect, tabu is now real money (in our sense) and competes in some areas with kina, the official national currency.

In 1884, this part of New Britain was "taken possession of" by the German Empire and renamed Neupommern. In 1902, Tabu was banned from trading with Europeans by the German colonial government "in order to make the natives earn money through proper work if they wanted to buy something from Europeans."

Villagers refer to the new big men, who are characterized by money potency, as Big Shots. The term is a reference to big men who used to be characterized by traditional knowledge and the distribution of taboo. They had invested time and effort to gain prestige at village level. The purchase of taboo alone was not enough.

Today, many move away from their village to escape the gift and barter transactions. Young men buy

Today, they keep nets in the store and lay them out on their own instead of managing the nets and catch together. They evade the obligations of the older men by raising the bridewealth for their marriage themselves and exchanging kina for taboo.

Here we see the liberating effect of our modern money, which is particularly attractive to young people. At the same time, we see what it means for the community when traditional means of payment become money in the modern sense. When we lament the isolation of the individual in our Western societies today, it is worth taking a closer look at the use of traditional money.

Swiss photographer Claudio Sieber has traveled the area and now lives in the Philippines. In his own words:

"For many youngsters, these circumstances make for a challenging choice. Labor as a self-taught artisan aka huntsman or an educated clerk? Participate in a barter or a cash economy? Believe in the ancestral tales or the ones broadcasted on TV and social media? Eventually, the sum of decisions of the remaining indigenous peoples will determine if humanity will evolve into an industrial monoculture, or (less likely) sustain individual traditions."



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Claudio Sieber's website shows many photographic impressions of the people in Tolai and how they deal with the taboo money.

