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Funding is a Function of Meaning: Reform the Humanities by Recapturing their Utility

Editorial by Ersin Y. Akinci, Editor-in-Chief

Pray tell: what is the future of the university system and the departments in which the humanities are studied and taught?

An endless stream of professors and pundits has debated this question in our national publications with dramatic articles bearing quasi-apocalyptic titles such as “The Last Professor” and “End the University as We Know It”. At times, the fracas seems like a night at the theater. From stage left comes in the raucous protagonists brimming with ideas of how to extend benefits to adjuncts, establish long-term non-tenured contracts, and even abolish the departments. From stage right enter the antagonists under a sundry collection of banners, often contradictory but mostly opposed to changing the status quo, and embroidered on their flags are slogans: “Scholarship is for its Own Sake”, “Professors Against Academia, Inc.”, and my personal favorite, “Problems? What Problems?”

As engrossing as the scene is, the pundits never resolve the central dramatic tension, namely the inability of humanities departments to prevent their budgets and thus their ability to hire young scholars from shrinking. Yet the funding crisis is in fact a twofold problem that encompasses not only the aforementioned logistical and labor issues, but also the less discussed deep and ongoing doubt among scholars and intellectuals over the humanities’ worth and meaning. Ultimately, the fate of humanities departments will be determined by the market’s demand for their scholarship and teaching, and unless scholars themselves can convincingly address the worth of their academic pursuits, the public and those who allocate the budgets will not see the critical need for their services.

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The connection between the logistics and the meaning of scholarship more generally reflects the debate between *how* to study and teach the humanities and *why* we do so. That discussion goes back at least to the great eighteenth-century Italian humanist scholar and professor Giambattista Vico (1668-1744), who was one of the first to argue that the study of human nature and institutions could not be performed with the same Cartesian method at the heart of modern experimentalist science. Yet when Vico wrote in his *On the Ancient Wisdom of the Italians* (1710) that “to introduce geometrical method into practical life is ‘like trying to go mad with the rules of reason,’” he was not merely criticizing the improper application of any specific method. It was his aim to establish the main condition for any future method that sought to attain certain knowledge of humans and society, which was that the study of human nature must be in line with its variability and must not “[attempt] to proceed by a straight line among the tortuosities of life”. He formulated such a method in his *New Science* (1725), in which he advocated an eclectic and humanistic mixture of practical wisdom with erudition, especially the study of history, myths, symbols, art, music, language, and rhetoric.

The fact that today’s scholars can hardly claim to know anything about human nature means that, in an absolute sense, Vico’s optimistic project failed. Nevertheless, his ethical argument that any method should deal with the “capriciousness, temerity, opportunity, and chance” by which human affairs are ruled, and thereby help us progress, still rings true today. This Enlightenment goal of improving the human condition through scholarship was a central part of the culture wars of the 1980’s and 1990’s with intellectual “conservatives” as the most visible defenders of the progressive ideal. However, their defense had a critical weakness in their rejection not only of the principles of postmodern criticism and its offshoots, but also in refusing to accept the postmodernists’ conclusions. It is one thing to reject, for example, the principle that the self is a fictional construct, but it is quite another to continue defending history as useful for edifying the self with exemplary values for personal conduct. If the latter were true, then the West, which propagated those exemplary values through the *studia humanitatis* it invented, would not have

spawned two World Wars and the horrors of the Holocaust and Stalin's purges. To ignore this reality is simply reactionary.

Nonetheless, although previous modes of scholarship and sets of values have failed to make us "better", this does not necessarily mean that the project is flawed in principle. There may be no "better" in the traditional universal and absolute sense, but the utility of knowledge does not always depend on universality or absoluteness. For instance, Heisenberg's uncertainty principle, which establishes that we can never know certain pairs of attributes (e.g., momentum and position) of any given particle at the same time with perfect precision, has rendered the physical world, in the most absolute sense, unknowable. Yet that unknowability has not prevented us from using physics to explain physical phenomena, building bridges, and making cell phones. Why can't the humanities be similarly useful and reliable in the face of relativizing events? By using the example of Heisenberg, I do not mean to imply that modern physics can necessarily be equated with "progress" (although perhaps there is a strong case for it), but at least the concreteness of that field's utility is virtually beyond question, which is more than can be said for the humanities at this point.

Ultimately, however, if we tie the debate over the worth of the humanities to the manifold of senses in which words like "wisdom", "progress", and "better" can be used, then today's professors are committing the same error as their scholastic counterparts. Medieval scholars, too, debated how words have multiple or "equivocal" meanings and senses depending on context, such as how "bark" might refer to a tree's skin, a dog's sound, or the verb "to bark". By reconciling these definitions they hoped to uncover the *quiditas* (literally the "whatness") of things, or the universal essence of bark as it were. The postmodern apprehension to declare any insight into human nature assumes that in order to become wise, first one must claim to have found an immutable *quiditas* of man, or the soul in the traditional Western sense. I do not contest the impossibility of doing so. However, it may still be possible to gain insight and wisdom into ourselves through scholarship without perfectly knowing a universal and absolute soul just as science has illuminated the world around us

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despite our inability to know the physical world with arbitrary precision. Perhaps we have been asking the wrong questions. Wisdom, for instance, might not be the answer to “What is happiness?”, but rather “How am I happy?” or “How does happiness occur?” Progress might also be possible even though we do not really know what progress means, just as we make most of our decisions without consciously thinking of what they are, yet we still say that they affect us for better or for worse. These considerations leave us open to the Vichian hope that the humanities could improve our world and ourselves.

If all this sounds suspiciously pragmatist, it's because it is, or at least in part. While reflecting on a lecture that he had given at Johns Hopkins in a letter to his eldest brother James Mills dated October 4th, 1882, Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914) wrote that he “spoke of our time as an age of method and said that the highest honors could no longer be paid to the scientific specialist but to those who adapted the methods of one science to the uses of another.” This father of American pragmatism was then engaged in finding a *principia methodorum*, or “method of methods”, that would help find the right path to knowledge for each field, which is a far cry from Vico's deliberately unscientific and exclusively humanistic and historiographical ideas. What they did share in common, however, was that they both worked from the example of modern science, and indeed this commonality cannot be boiled down to ideology or coincidence. As the English philosopher Francis Bacon (1561-1626) argued in his *Novum Organum* (1620), it is the utility of our concepts that establish the truth of their definitions, and by setting the gold standard for utility the modern scientific method which Bacon helped to seed has set and continues to set our standards for truth. Yet humanities scholarship has frequently inverted the relationship between utility and definition by first mandating structures and then expecting the world and its texts to follow. As long as we continue to follow such an approach, truth and wisdom will remain elusive and the world will have cause to ask what the humanities are really worth.

Now if only we could find the right method!

As scholars have been unable to do so, they have taken to self-criticisms in our public sphere that reflect the personal crisis

each scholar faces: What is the value of my work? Accordingly, the answer to the question stated at the beginning regarding the future of the humanities in academia cannot just be an impersonal set of stage directions for a new *mise en scène* festooned with pension plans and pedagogies. It must be a scholar's vision, probably a method, of what their work should be, not as a fixed and essential definition but rather as a thought of how we should engage in scholarship in order to achieve our abandoned goal, even if that goal defies precise (or any) definition. Critically, the vision must actually work, either superseding or supplanting the failed models of the past. If it does and if it is nurtured and marketed well, then the world will recognize its concrete worth and funding will surely be more forthcoming from alumni, institutions, governments, and other patrons of research. *F*

Power and Money: Money Exchangers and Japanese Monetary Reform, 1858-1879

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ABSTRACT

Japanese currency reform from 1858 to 1879 was a highly involved process executed by multiple agents. During this period, new currencies were introduced as national currencies, or legal tenders, by foreign traders and Japanese governments (Tokugawa and Meiji). Through examining the cases in which people refused to accept these legal tenders, it becomes apparent that the cooperation of private money exchangers was imperative in circulating monies, whatever currencies they were. Exploring such historical contingencies in accepting money also reveals the function of the early modern decentralized exchange system in Japan maintained by those private money exchangers.

INTRODUCTION

“On the matter of currency, from its origin, it will not be perfected until currencies are universally accepted in the remote corners and shadows of society.”

—October 23, 1868, Meiji Government’s edict¹

Hayek wrote that the government monopoly of money must be replaced by concurrent currencies.² For us today, however, it is not so easy to imagine what “concurrent” monies mean. For instance, if one were to give a waiter twenty fifty cent coins for a ten-dollar drink, one would naturally expect him to accept the payment. One would be stunned if the waiter specifically demanded five two-dollar bills, or likewise if he insisted on thirty fifty cent coins rather than twenty because he valued coins less than paper bills.³ Apart from practicality, bills and coins, and moreover dollars and cents, are equally received as money as they share the same standardized measurement in common. Where the stable relationship among

1 Okurasho and Zenki Zaisei Keizai Shiryo Shusei, ed., *A Compiler of Currency Policy* (貨政考要, *Kasei Koyo*) (Tokyo: Meiji Bunken Shiryo Kankokai, 1964), 1:3.

2 F. A. Hayek, *Denationalisation of Money: The Argument Refined (an analysis of the theory and practice of concurrent currencies)* (London: The Institute of Economic Affairs, 1978).

3 Akinobu Kuroda, a pioneer in concurrent monetary use before the 20th century, terms this phenomenon an “asymmetric use of money.” Akinobu Kuroda, *Kahei Sisutemu no Sekaishi* (貨幣システムの世界史—非対称性をよむ, *A World History of the Monetary Systems*) (Tokyo: Iwanami Press, 2002), 3. While I am much indebted to his conceptualization of concurrent currencies, his works are mainly directed at analyzing the actual mechanism of early modern monetary systems. In contrast, my paper focuses on the transitional process between the monetary systems.

multiple units is maintained under a single (dollar in this case) standard, there is no particular preference of one currency to another within a country or a society. Not until recently, however, had Japan established this single monetary standard of valuation, which we have come to call the modern monetary system.⁴ Before then, Japan had used gold, silver, copper coins and regional paper monies since the fifteenth century, as represented by the Three-Currency Policy (*sankasei*, 三貨制). All these had different units and prices were measured by each independently of the others. Payment through these traditional currencies remained preferred until the late nineteenth century even over the yen and new monies issued under successive Japanese currency reforms. Japan's transition to the modern monetary system was not completed until 1898, thirty years after its inception.

The focus of this article is what changed in the traditional Japanese monetary system precisely when these concurrent currencies came to be unified and standardized during the late nineteenth century and what factors stimulated or inhibited this monetary change. We might be tempted to accept the change *ex*

4 By "the modern monetary system", I refer to the establishment of a single monetary system shared by most countries from the late nineteenth century onward, rather than the country-specific systems of the contemporary world. It includes successive monetary systems backed by the gold standard, such as British gold standard in 1844, as well as the dollar standard during the early twentieth century and the more recent IMF systems after the Bretton Woods Agreements in 1944. Despite their ambiguous and contentious concepts of "early-modernity" and "modernity," I still employ these phrases in order to engage in a comparative study, as will be discussed more fully later. Rather than assigning some specific time boundaries to these phrases, however, I use them as a way to share Japan's historical trajectory with scholars in other fields and to encourage us to contemplate on economic modernity altogether through comparing multiple society-derived models of development. Wigen Karen also encourages us to put Japanese history in the same time-frame as the rest of the world. According to her, the formulation 'Early Modern Japan,' as opposed to calling Tokugawa Japan 'feudal,' leads to "the possibility of transcending parochial boundaries in a different way, opening up vistas on transnational linkage." Wigen Karen, "Japanese Perspectives on the Time/Space of 'Early Modernity'" (paper presented at the XIX *International Congress of Historical Sciences*, Oslo, Norway, August 7, 2000).

post facto, because we now know that most countries eventually did achieve the modern monetary system, which has now become a seemingly global standard.⁵ The traditional top-down approach to the question of Japan's transition to a unified currency system thus traces how two governments (late Tokugawa 1603-1868 and early Meiji 1868-1912) developed their official monetary policies on a single monetary standard during the Meiji Restoration.⁶ It teleologically focuses on the formal creation of that standard and the agents within early modern Japan "that helped invent the modern yen"⁷. Instead of judging the nature of currency change from the point of view of where we see it ultimately heading, however, we should assess it in the light of its original environment and in the contexts of contemporary problems. Only by tracing what changed as well as how and why it changed from the preexisting equilibrium can we begin to understand the context of the Japanese monetary transformation, and by extension, how economic modernity came

5 Since 1873, the world faced a long-term and rapid decline in the silver price. Its direct cause can be attributed partly to the increase in world silver production, but mainly to the adoption of the gold standard in European countries, starting in Germany in 1871. To cope with silver's liability to fluctuate, countries in Asia, which had maintained the use of silver both for maritime trade and domestic currency since the fifteenth century, sought more stable metals and also shifted to the gold standard: Japan in 1898, India in 1899, the Straits Settlements in 1906, and China in 1931.

6 Among these traditional studies are Masaru Iwahashi, "Kinsei Sankaseido no Seiritsu to Hokai," (近世三貨制度の成立と崩壊, *The Formation and Collapse of the Three-Currency Policy*) Matsuyama Daigaku Ronshu 11:4 (1999): 171-204. Yasukazu Takenaka, "Endogenous Formation and Development of Capitalism in Japan," *The Journal of Economic History* 29:1 (1969): 141-162. Yuzo Yamamoto, *Ryo kara Yen e* (両から円へ, *From Ryo to Yen*) (Tokyo: Minerva Press, 1994). Ryuzo Mikami, *Yen no Tanjo* (円の誕生, *Birth of Yen*) (Tokyo: Toyo Keizai Shinposha, 1975). They argue, for example, that because the government started to mint silver coins, which adopted the same unit as gold coins from 1772, in addition to the old units of measured-by-weight silver bullion, it had intended to unify the currency system under the gold standard from then on. Thus, "the preparation of the modern monetary system had already started in the eighteenth century." Maszaru Iwahashi, "Kinsei Sankaseido," 194.

7 Masaru Iwahashi, "Kinsei Sankaseido," 194.

into being.

Recognizing the need to narrate historical changes in the light of their own contexts, this article demonstrates that Japanese monetary reform in the late nineteenth century was a very involved process. It focuses on the initial stage of the transitional period between the early-modern and modern monetary systems during the 1850's to the 1870's, when Japanese governments and foreign traders attempted to circulate new currencies as national currencies, or legal tenders, to implement successive single standards: Mexican dollars from 1858, the Meiji government's paper money from 1868, and the silver yen from 1871 onward. By examining the cases in which people refused to accept these legal tenders, I will first argue that the cooperation of private money exchangers was imperative in circulating monies, whatever currencies they were. After illuminating longstanding contestations between the Japanese government, foreign traders, and private money exchangers, I will show that such a decentralized exchange system maintained by these entrenched money exchangers functioned in its own coherent manner. By juxtaposing peoples' demands for currencies and their actual circulations, I will explain how the multi-standard system maintained a stable supply of currencies for daily use despite seasonal disruptions in currency circulation.

Yet currency reform was not hindered only because the status quo was functional. By vigorously defending the multi-standard system based on several currencies, money exchangers were able to skillfully exploit the turbulent monetary situation to their advantage, further entrenching their power and increasing the demand for the exchange of coins with small denominations.⁸

8 For my approach, I have consulted the government compiled *Meiji Zaisei Shi* (明治財政史, *Meiji Financial History*, hereafter "*Financial History*") and the *Report on the Adoption of the Gold Standard in Japan*, which include discussion records within the Finance Ministry. Successive edicts are taken from *Kasei Koyo* (貨政考要, *A Compiler of Currency Policy*). In order to gauge the local market's responses, I have examined the government's reports on the conditions of currencies in different rural towns in 1870, recorded in *Okuma Bunsho* (大隈文書, *Okuma's Documents*). I have also used *Tokaidochu Hizakurige* (東海道中膝栗毛, *Strolling Along the Tokaido Road*) and *Capital*

In discovering such historical contingencies in accepting money, hopefully this research will open up a new vista for investigating the emergence of the modern monetary system. As stated above, almost every country replaced its concurrent currencies with standardized monies between the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. In order to construct this complex and simultaneous process of worldwide monetary transformations everywhere, I would suggest the need for a wider comparative approach in this field, for several reasons.⁹ First we Scholars need to critique assumptions that the experience of any one society provides a pattern true for all other societies, let alone that there was any inevitability about including the assumption

of the Tycoon, travelogues of ordinary Japanese during the early nineteenth century and of a British vice-counsel in 1855, to provide a ground-level perspective. In addition, I have consulted detailed records of the exchange rates and tax payment housed at merchant family archives in rural villages. To give a better picture of money exchangers, I have also used a collection of interviews with Japanese merchants who used Mexican dollars: *Yokohama Kaiko Toji no Boeki Jotai Narabi Yugin Soba Torihiki no Enkaku* (横浜開港当時之貿易状態並洋銀相場取引之沿革, *A Situation of Initial Trade and the Mexican Silver Exchange Market at the Time of Opening the Port of Yokohama*, hereafter “Trade Interview”). To examine the attitude of the Western traders, I have also consulted *British Embassy and Consular Commercial Reports* (hereafter “Commercial Reports”) that the British consular officials prepared from 1858 to 1880. I also complemented the aforementioned sources with contemporary news reports regarding currency issues appearing in various treaty-port journals: *The Japan Times’ Overland Mail*, circulated among the foreigners in Yokohama, and *The North-China Herald*, read by foreigners in Shanghai, China.

- 9 Recent studies have increasingly analyzed the roles that concurrent currencies had played in each country in their early-modern times. To note some of them: Man-houng Lin’s *China Upside Down*, Akinobu Kuroda, *Chuka Teikoku no Kozo to Sekai Keizai*. (中華帝国の構造と世界経済, *Structure of the Chinese Empire and the World Economy*) (Tokyo: Nagoya Univ. Press, 1994). Prakash Om, “Co-existence of Standardized and Humble Money: The Case of Mughal India” (paper presented at the XIV Economic History Congress, Helsinki, Finland, August 21-25, 2006). Richard Von Glahn, *Fountain of Fortune: Money and Monetary Policy in China, 1000-1700*, (London: Univ. of California Press, 1996).

that the pattern according to which the modern monetary system developed was inevitable. Yet at the same time, we need to identify which features of monetary transformations are general and which society-specific. Traditional studies have narrated the monetary transformations toward the modern system with a one-dimensional Western-biased orientation, accepting them as rather uniform and universal changes brought by a capitalist system of European origins. As our understanding of these global changes deepens, however, we will be able to show that the each country in East Asia experienced more complex processes in revising their monetary systems toward today's standardized currencies than has previously been assumed.¹⁰

Yet the present historical inquiry regarding Japanese monetary transformations also touches on a more basic and recurrent theme of the larger historiography of economic development in East Asia. Economic historians writing about the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have asked how modern economic development in East Asia became possible and, more fundamentally, which "modern developments" are to be discussed when looking for the origins of the contemporary world. One vector for these developments that has been cited by scholars is the large number of merchants, mostly from Europe and China, who traveled to newly established port cities on East Asia's waterways in the nineteenth century, bringing with them a new flow of ideas and goods and contributing to

10 Notice that this statement is not meant to be a misleading carrier of a Europe and non-Europe dichotomy, but rather to construct a more dynamic history of internal changes in the political economy of East Asia. Against the common misunderstanding and simple conceptualization among scholarship, Bin Wong recently commented, "Making a choice between 'Sinocentrism' and 'Eurocentrism'...fail[s] to encourage us to transcend simplistic, loose and holistic comparisons." To him, in fact, "what scholars concerned with early modern political economy and economic history are seeking to achieve," is a "more careful comparison of particular features of different economies as well as grasp of the connections between them." R Bin Wong, "Eurocentrism, Sinocentrism and World History: A Symposium." *Science & Society* 67:2 (2003), 173. For the orientation of my work, I am much indebted to his understanding of historical changes.

institutional changes in each country.¹¹ Another strand has taken commercial activities in the East Asian Sea as their central theme and examined transformations and national economic growth in relation to a regional economic framework.¹² Other strands adopt more totalistic approaches, and focus on the interdependency of economic developments in terms of access to natural resources in each country.¹³ Their methodologies have provided avenues to

11 Most notably, Bin Wong reminds us that the globalization in the twenty-first century is nothing new. Bin Wong, "East Asia as a World Region in the 21st century," originally posted on September 2004, last accessed on 2008 Feb, <http://www.international.ucla.edu/asia/article.asp?parentid=14604>. With such a world of complex connections, the effect of transformations in East Asia even extended to the countries in Southeast Asia. Leonard Blussé, "Changes of Regime and Colonial Formation in the Malay Archipelago, 1730-1830 – an invitation to an international research project," *ARI Working Paper No.41*, May 2005, courtesy of Professor Leonard Blussé.

12 This school's main thesis is that trade in East Asia was conducted through the prevailing Chinese Tributary system and that Western countries could only participate in the regional trade through this existing network. Thus, their focus is to trace Western interactions with Chinese merchants, and show how Japan and other Asian countries escaped from Chinese influence to become economically independent. Takeshi Hamashita, *Kindai Chugoku no Kokusaiteki Keiki: choko sisutemu to kindai ajia* (近代中国の国際的契機—, 朝貢貿易システムと近代アジア, *Opportunities in Early Modern China – the Chinese Tributary System and Modern Asia*) (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1990). Their basic thesis has more or less remained stable for the last ten years, including their recent work: Heita Kawakatsu and Takeshi Hamashita, *Umi to Shihon Shugi* (海と資本主義, *Sea and Capitalism*) (Tokyo: Toyo Keizai Press, 2003). For a summary of their works, see Satoshi Ikeda, "The History of the Capitalist World-System vs. the History of East-Southeast Asia," *Review - Fernand Braudel Center for the Study of Economies, Historical Systems, and Civilizations* 19:1 (1996), 49-78. Recently the second generation of this strand has sought for a more balanced perspective. For example, Furuta Kazuko argues that the increasing interaction during this period was the cross-product of the intra-Asia network and the Western technology. Kazuko Furuta, *Shanghai nettowa-ku to Kindai Higashi Ajia* (上海ネットワークと近代東アジア, *Shanghai Network and Modern East Asia*). (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 2000).

13 Known as the Californian School, their representative works include: Andre Gunder Frank, *ReOrient: Global Economy in the Asian Age* (California:

look at economic history from a global and more comprehensive perspective.¹⁴ Moreover, they have challenged us to become more aware of the complexity of internal changes in the political economy of East Asia, and to understand them in their own terms and contexts.¹⁵

As part of this new trend of East Asian economic scholarship, this article seeks to establish a foundational understanding of how Japanese currency reform was formally effected by multiple Japanese and foreign agents in the nineteenth century and to serve as a springboard for further inquiries.¹⁶ Among the questions regarding

University of California Press, 1998). Bin Wong, *China Transformed: Historical Change and the Limits of European Experiences* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997).

- 14 As commenting on Bin Wong's article, Kishimoto also encourages a more balanced study of a state-building process against the trend of contemporary Japanese scholars, which uncritically follow a global history without focusing on each state's roles. (Mio Kishimoto, "Gedai," *Shiso* 2002 5:937 (2002): 5-6.) For Bin Wong, "Between Nation and World: Braudelian Regions in Asia," *T Review - Fernand Braudel Center for the Study of Economies, Historical Systems, and Civilizations* 26:1 (2003): 1-45.
- 15 This complexity and its concomitant details have often eluded scholars. For example, although Hamashita observes the regional preferences of silver coins in late nineteenth-century Asia, he lacks a micro perspective on each country as well as quantitative data. In an article, for example, he argues that "the financial structure of Asia [during the late nineteenth century] was thus composed three different levels – gold, silver, and copper – reflecting the relationships between Western market, intra-Asian inter-regional market, and local market respectively." Takeshi Hamashita, "Overseas Chinese Remittance and Asian Banking History," in *Pacific Banking, 1859-1959: East Meets West* ed. Olive Checkland, Shizuya Nishimura and Norio Tamaki, 57 (London: St. Martin's Press, 1994). Yet in the same article he does not provide sufficient sources for the domestic flow of gold and copper coins as much as the flow of silver coins and remittances across the East Asia Sea. He is also silent on the intra-market's changing relationship to the currency transformations in each country. In fact, his claim has remained unsubstantiated since his initial work, see Takeshi Hamashita, "Kindai Ajia Boekiken ni okeru Gin Ryutsu," (近代アジア貿易圏における銀流通, *Silver Circulation in the Modern Asian Trade Network*) *Shakai Keizai Shi* 51:1 (1985): 54-90.
- 16 In fact, while emphasizing the multiplicity of modernity in East Asia's political transformation from their economic backgrounds, scholars have not

the Japanese monetary reforms that we can ask are: why did the establishment of the single standard take so long, indeed more than 30 years until Japan's complete establishment of the gold standard in 1898; why did Japan eventually choose gold and not silver as its standard¹⁷; how did the government's fiscal policies affect the circulation of legal tenders; how are monetary reforms in each country in East Asia related, and how did they affect the regional development as a whole; or, how did regional development affect the development of individual countries? My current research cannot provide satisfying answers to all these questions, and future studies are strongly encouraged. Given the scarcity of secondary literature dealing with Japanese monetary transformations from the abovementioned standpoints, however, it is only after reconstructing a basic narrative of who the main agents were and how they interacted with each other and with their currencies that we can embark on more involved discussions of the emergence of the modern monetary system.

extended their inquiries to the monetary transformation itself. Only seen as the cause of the accompanying political reformations and institutional arrangements of banking system, it remains a largely unexplored subject. See Kanji Ishii, "Igirisu Shokuminchi Ginko Gun No Saihen," (イギリス植民地銀行群の再編-1870, 80年代の日本・中国を中心に, *Reformation of the Colonial British Banks – With a focus on Japan and China in the 1870's and 1880's*) *Keizaigaku Ronshu* 45:1 and 45:3 (1979): 19-60. Also, Takeshi Hamashita, "International Financial Relations Behind the 1911 Revolution: The Fall in the Value of Silver and Reform of the Monetary System," in *the 1911 Revolution in China*, ed. Eto Shinkichi and Harold Z. Schiffrin, 227-256 (Tokyo: Univ. of Tokyo Press, 1981).

- 17 Yet because of the popularity of silver coins, the government also had to accept silver coins as a standard currency. To this question of why it had to withdraw the gold standard and adopt the silver standard instead, one prominent scholar of Japanese monetary history called for the necessity of further studies elucidating such a mystery, which a "prevailing grand quantity of monetary history has never discussed." Masaru Iwahashi, "Kinsei Sankaseido," 203. Indeed, the adoption of the gold standard took almost thirty years before the present monetary system was established by the Currency Act (*kaheiho*, 貨幣法) in 1898.

THE DECENTRALIZED EXCHANGE SYSTEM — MONEY EXCHANGERS
AND THREE CURRENCIES BEFORE THE MID-NINETEENTH CENTURY

Prior to the middle of the nineteenth century, the demand for small denominated currencies rapidly increased. Official statistics show that the Tokugawa government minted and widely circulated various types of coins under the rubric of the Three-Currency Policy, including copper coins (1000 copper *mon* = 1 copper *kan*), silver bullion (10 silver *bu* = 1 silver *momme*), as well as silver and gold coins (16 *shu* = 4 *bu* = 1 *ryo*). The central government also made sure that the coins of different metals could be exchanged at fluctuating rates.¹⁸ Also, different *shogun* issued different coins which bore their names, and the old and new coins were used concurrently.¹⁹ In this system of multiple currencies, everyday transactions relied almost exclusively on currencies with small denominations, such as coins expressed in units of *mon* or *shu*.²⁰ With the intention of making these transactions more convenient, the shogunal government introduced more small token coins, and according to Iwahashi the proportion

18 The traditional silver currencies were uncoined bullions, whose units were expressed in *bu* (分) and *momme* (匁). In addition to these units, from 1772 the Tokugawa government started to issue the token silver coins, which were expressed in gold coins' units, *shu* (朱) and *bu* (分). So there existed different *bu* according to which system coins belonged to.

19 Because of the demand for more currency circulation and because of its own purpose to acquire the seignorage to meet its financial shortage, the government kept debasing coins. This sometimes caused the hoarding of old coins, leading to further shortages of currencies in circulation. *Financial History*, 147.

20 Among copper coins with large denominations there were: a *kanei* 4-cash coin (4 文真鍮錢寛永通宝) from 1767, a *tempo* 100-cash coin (100 銅錢天保通宝) from 1835, a *monkyu* 4-cash coin (4 文銅錢文久通宝) from 1862 and a paper-money exchangeable with copper coins (錢札). (*Financial History*, 307.) Silver and gold coins with small denominations included: one eighth of a unit silver (*nishugin* of the Nanryo era, 南瞭二朱銀) in 1772, one sixteenth of a unit gold (金一朱, *kinisshu*), one eighth of a unit gold (金二朱, *kinnishu*) in 1830.

of money with smaller denominations greatly increased from 15% in the 1770's to 33.5% in 1860's.²¹ Accordingly, payments were made in all sorts of combinations of metal coins.²² In contemporary literature, we encounter vivid examples of this flexible convertibility. *Strolling Along the Tokaido Highway*, a fictional travel novel published between 1802 and 1822, illuminates the experience of two casual travelers, Kitahachi and Yajirobe, who journey between Edo and Osaka. One day they come across a landlady at an inn in Kyoto, who offers a room for 400 *mons* per night. Because Kitahachi and Yajirobe incorrectly assume that the charge includes both room and board, they are at a loss when they receive the bill:

“Yajirobe: (reading the receipt) What? I heard that room and board per night would cost 4 *mommes* per person, or 8 *mommes* [of silver coins, equivalent to 860 *mons* of copper coins.²³] in total for two of us. And what is this charge? 4 *mommes* for fish, 2 *mommes* for sushi, 1 *momme* and 8 *bus* for alcohol, 5 *bus* for candles, then 16 *mommes* and 3 *bus* for...in total?...I thought alcohol and fish were included in the lodging charge. Kitahachi, Look!

Kitahachi: What? (confronting the landlady)...Kyoto people are so [money-conscious]. You even charge us for the candles?

21 Masaru Iwahashi, “Shogaku Kahei to Keizai Hatten,” 139.

22 In the common understanding, the distribution of each coin was considered as follows: silver coins were mainly used in the Western part of Japan (*kamigata*, 上方), and gold coins in the eastern part. Copper coins were subsidiary, only supporting the large payments by the other two precious metal coins. In examining primary sources such as fiscal records of people carefully, however, recent studies show that the use of copper coins was more pervasive than has been thought. Masaru Iwahashi, “Shogaku Kahei to Keizai Hatten,” (小額貨幣と経済発展, *Coins with Small Denominations and Economic Development*) *Shakai Keizai Shigaku* 57:2 (1991), 130-149.

23 Calculated by the author, according to the exchange rate at the Osaka Exchange Market of January 3, 1810.

Power and Money

Lady: How dare you accuse us Kyotoites of being stingy! You whine about the price after finishing all the meals? What nonsense!

Yajirobe: (giving up reluctantly) Okay, I'll give you 1 *bu* [of gold coin, equivalent to 15.8 *momes*²⁴], but forget about the small denominations!"²⁵

What we find interesting here is as follows: The landlady charges the room in terms of copper coins, even though they were denoted in silver ingots. Yajirobe, however, pays the bill in gold pieces. The people do not bother to calculate the exchange rates in meticulous detail. Instead, they use different types of metals indiscriminately, moving between them with ease.²⁶ This story testifies to the convertibility between various metals nationwide and to the acceptance and coherence of the exchange system despite its apparent complexity.

In order to maintain the convertibility of the diverse currencies, however, carriers of these currencies had to assume that they would be accepted by others. Another episode in *Strolling Along the Tokaido Highway* clearly reflects this tacit consent. One day, while traveling in Kyoto, Yajirobe and Kitahachi are approached by local female peddlers carrying huge billets of firewood on their heads. One of them, offering a ladder for sale, begins the following conversation:²⁷

24 Calculated by the author, according to the exchange rate at the Osaka Exchange Market of Jan.3, 1810.

25 Juppensha, 363. This and subsequent translations made by the author.

26 This indeed testifies to Kuroda's arguments on early nineteenth century Japan. Akinobu Kuroda, "Too Commercialised to Synchronize Currencies: Monetary Peasant Economy in Late Imperial China in Comparison with Contemporary Japan" (paper presented at the XIV *International Economic History Congress*, Helsinki, Finland, 2006).

27 Juppensha, 391.

Yotaro Komatsu

Lady: I can give you a discount. Give me just six *mommies* [of silver coins for the ladder].

Yajirobe: I can buy it if it's 200 [*mons* of copper coins, equivalent to about 1.8 *mommies*].

Lady: Eh, you're talking about the [coin] that clinks, aren't you? This ladder is worth more than that.

Yajirobe: No way.

Lady: Hey, this ladder is made of really fine wood. How about five *mommies*?"

The peddler eventually steps back and accepts 200 *mons*. The reason why the local lady prefers the silver to the copper coin is not clear from the above description alone. It may be due to a discrepancy between the official and local rates that favors silver, or perhaps she prefers the silver coin simply because the area is accustomed to silver. Either way, it is worthwhile to notice that the peddler accepts copper for the payment, even though she does not seem to be very familiar with the metal she describes as "the thing that clinks." She must believe that other people, to whom she may offer the copper coin in a future deal, will accept it.

This conviction of hers seems to be sustained by the presence of money changers. It did not matter whether people actually brought coins to a money changer in town to make a deal. Rather, there existed a tacit understanding among carriers that currencies would be readily convertible at a neighborhood exchange house. Indeed, *Strolling Along the Tokaido Highway* describes a variety of money changers on the road. The narrator comments that, "money exchangers ring their scales, their eyes open as wide as plates," always asking, "do you need to exchange money?"²⁸ *Hizakurige*, along with

28 Juppensha, 453, 170. Here, the word "plates" has a double meaning, one for the plates on the scales to measure currencies, and the other, for the size of the eyes.

other early nineteenth-century materials, does not provide us with a direct and detailed account of the daily activities of the money changers or of their legal status, but in it their matter-of-fact activities are unmistakably reflected. The ubiquitous operations of the money exchangers throughout Japan made the smooth circulation of a variety of metal pieces possible.

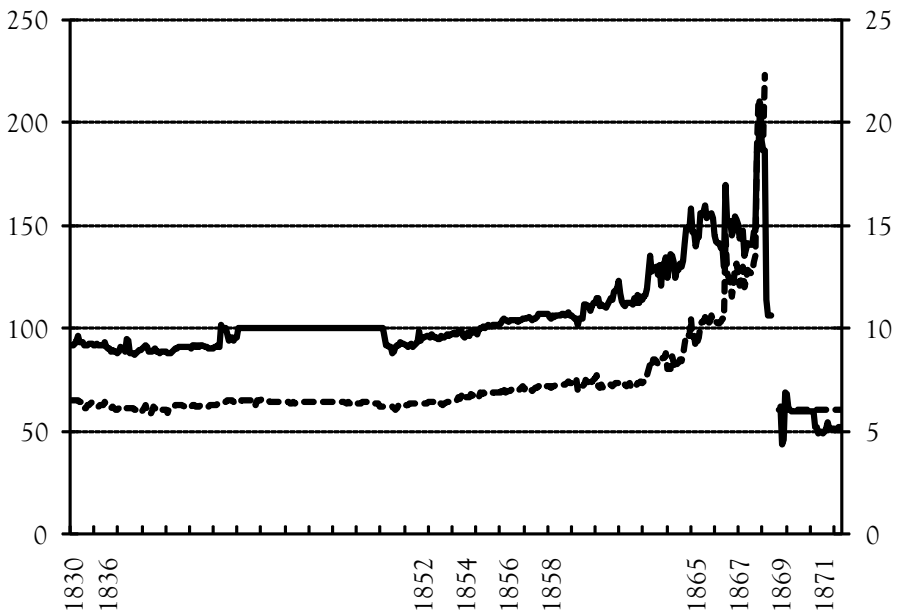
At first glance, the increasing convertibility among the traditional currencies during the early nineteenth century seems like a perfect preparation for the coming modern monetary system in terms of the transition to the single standard. Existing studies, in fact, have hastily concluded that Japan's early-modern monetary system paved the way for the transition to the modern monetary system without any difficulties.²⁹ Accordingly, the role of the money changers has been considered a necessary evil in Japan's backward currency system, destined to fade away as the (modern) single standard was implemented. However, as will be shown in the next section, there was a breakdown of the convertibility between currencies as traders and the Japanese government attempted to implement new currencies under the formation of the single standard after the late 1850's. Although the Tokugawa government repeatedly ordered the Osaka money-changing houses to fix their rates along the official scale, the rate continued to be unstable after the late 1850's (Graph 1).³⁰ This suggests that the money changers

29 The government strictly controlled the outflow of currencies during the so-called closed country policy (*sakoku*, 鎖国), leading to a stable situation in domestic markets in terms of monetary system. Ronald Toby, *State and Diplomacy in early modern Japan: Asia in the development of the Tokugawa Bakufu*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984. While the government seemed to control the outflow of domestic currencies effectively compared to China, it should be noted that Japan's commercial activities themselves were not so carefully controlled. It has been illustrated that, in addition to the contacts with Holland and China via Nagasaki, Japan also had formal relations with Korea and the Ryukyus via other entries, such as *Tsushima* and *Ezo*. (Kazui Tashiro, "Foreign Relations During the Edo Period: *Sakoku* Reexamined," *Journal of Japanese Studies* 8, no. 2 (1982):284.)

30 Data was taken from Mitsui-ke Hensanshitsu, ed. *Osaka Ryogaeten Nikkikroku Shoshutsu* (大阪両替店日記録抄出: 大阪金銀米銭並為替日々相場表,

were not exchanging currencies at officially mandated rates and that “concurrent currencies” came to appear again, hindering the monetary reforms aimed at effecting a transition to the single standard.

Graph 1: Silver vs. Gold &
Silver vs. Copper



X-Axis: Year

Left Y-Axis: Price of 1 ryo (gold) in terms of momme (silver)

Right Y-Axis: Price of 1000 mons (copper) in terms of momme (silver)

--- Silver per Gold

— Silver per Copper

Excerpts of the Osaka Money Exchange Market's Records: Exchange Rates of Gold, Silver, Rice and Copper (1916).

Power and Money

It was in this context that the power of money changers became even more conspicuous in the late nineteenth century, as new currencies significantly different from traditional monies were issued. One of the new currencies was the Mexican dollar, which had been used in Japan since 1858, when full-scale trade with the West had resumed. While foreign traders exerted pressure on the shogunal government to create a legal tender pegged to the Mexican dollar, local merchants resisted the adoption of this form of legal tender in spite of mounting pressures from both the traders and the Japanese government. This situation continued until the money changers accepted Mexican dollars as a legitimate means of payment and consequently cooperated with the government's and the traders' initial efforts at currency reform in Japan. As will be seen, similar longstanding contestations between traders, the government, and money changers were at the root of both the continuing power of the money changers and subsequent efforts to make other currencies new legal tenders.

POWER CONTESTATIONS BETWEEN THREE AGENTS — THE DECENTRALIZED EXCHANGE REGIME VS. THE CENTRALIZED EXCHANGE REGIME

MONEY EXCHANGERS AND MEXICAN DOLLARS: 1858-1861

The process of circulating Mexican dollars started with the intricate interplay between Western traders and the shogunal government. Upon the “opening” of the trading ports in Japan, Western traders first demanded that the Japanese government issue a legal tender for their commerce.³¹ Given that Japan maintained an irregular and often confusing currency system, it was natural for the Westerners to negotiate with the shogunal government over the proper medium of exchange for international trade. Thus,

31 The trading ports were Hakodate, Hyogo (Kobe), Nagasaki, Niigata and Yokohama.

in the *Treaty of Amity and Commerce* of 1854, American delegates demanded that their Japanese counterparts implement the following conditions:

1. All foreign coin shall be in circulation in Japan, and pass for its corresponding weight of Japanese coin of the same description.
2. Americans and Japanese may freely use foreign or Japanese coins in making payments to each other.
3. As some time will elapse before the Japanese will be acquainted with the value of foreign coin, the Japanese Government will, for the period of one year after the opening of each harbor, furnish the Americans with Japanese coins in exchange for theirs, equal weights being given, and no discount taken for re-coinage.³²

Subsequently, the Japanese government made the same arrangements with other countries, including Britain, Holland, Russia and France under the rubric of the most-favored nation clause.³³ The reasons

32 *Commercial Reports 1859-1871*, 4:257. The stipulation also includes: “4, Coins of all descriptions (with the exception of Japanese copper coin) may be exported from Japan, and foreign gold and silver uncoined.”

33 Without any consideration of traditional monetary customs, the treaty unilaterally forced Japan to comply with Western standards, causing many problems in the domestic market and politics. Rutherford Alcock, the first British diplomatic representative in Japan, went on to comment that such an imposition was “anomalous as regards international principles of intercourse between European Powers, and in its essence erroneous and vicious.” Historians have extensively discussed the resulting impacts of these unequal treaties elsewhere, assuming that foreign coins would eventually be circulated in domestic Japanese markets. Among the works that discussed the relationship between the imposition of the Mexican dollars and the following Japanese monetary revision include: Ichijiro Ono, *Ono Ichijiro Sensei Chosakushu: Kindai Nihon Heisei to Higasi Ajia Ginka Ken* (小野一郎先生著作集第一巻:近代日本幣制と東アジア銀貨圈, *Collection of Ono*

behind resistance to the new currencies from within the domestic market, however, require further analysis. Indeed, as the third article stipulated, both Western traders and the Japanese government knew that some time had to elapse before foreign coins could become widely circulated in Japan.

Although the treaty's stipulations attempted to force the circulation of foreign coins in the interior market, those coins were barely used by native merchants. Reflecting the major trends in the contemporary intra-Asian trade, merchants initially desired silver coins as their trade medium.³⁴ Thus, while Western traders brought Mexican silver (Mexican dollars), Japanese merchants demanded payment in 1-*bu* silver coins (*ichi-bu gin*, 一分銀).³⁵ According to the treaties, 1-*bu* silver coins were officially agreed to be exchanged for Mexican dollars at the rate of 311 for 100. In actuality, however, the "native dealers demanded payment for their goods in *itiziboos* [sic], or, when none were to be had, in dollars, at a greater or less

Ichiro: Modern Japanese Monetary System and the Realm of Silver in East Asia (Tokyo: Minerva Press, 1958). Also, Takashi Ishii, "Bakumatu Kaikogo ni okeru Kahei Mondai no Shuppatsuten," (幕末開港後における貨幣問題の出発点, *The Beginning of the Currency Issue After the Opening Ports in the late-Tokugawa Era*), *Shakai Keizai Shigaku* 18:4 (1958). While Ono argues that the influx of the Mexican dollars incited the endogenous process of the successive monetary revision under the silver standard by the government, Ishii contends that Japan became financially subjugated to the West by its adoption of the silver standard. Their discrepancy is fascinating regarding the definition of modern monetary policy, and begs further research. The troubles caused by the treaties are discussed in detail by Peter K. Frost in *The Bakumatsu Currency Crisis* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard Univ. Press, 1970). Frost concludes that the influx of Western capital automatically forced the Tokugawa government to revise its entire coinage system and ultimately contributed to the demise of its authority. More importantly, he asserts that failures in the negotiations between the Tokugawa governments and Western traders had a deleterious effect on Japan's adjustment to international monetary standards.

34 The silver coins became the common currency by the eighteenth century. Hamashita, "Kindai Boekiken ni okeru Gin Ryutu," *Shakai Keizai Shi* 51:1 (1985): 54-90.

35 For a detailed history of the Mexican dollar, see A.P. Andrew, "The End of the Mexican Dollar," *Quarterly Journal of Economics* (1904), 356.

discount.”³⁶ In order to avoid a loss from using Mexican dollars, the Western traders rushed to government-designated money-changing houses. They did this with the expectation of acquiring the 1-*bu* silver coins at the clearing houses, as guaranteed in the treaties. Their demand soon turned out to be enormous; a Chinese newspaper reported, the “Government at Yeddo [sic], availing themselves of an offer of Mr. Consul-General Alcock, sent to Hakodadi [sic]...treasure amounting to 40,000 Izebues [sic].”³⁷ Of course there were limits to the supply, and it was decided, in Yokohama for example, that “only 10,000 itzebous [sic] will be exchanged” per day.³⁸ Because of such inconveniences, the Western traders began to file complaints, and the Japanese central government acquiesced to “keep sending 10,000 pieces of 1-*bu* silver monthly from Edo to Kanagawa.”³⁹ Yet this promise stood on hollow ground, because the Japanese government could guarantee such an official arrangement for only one year according to the original treaty.

After the first year, predictably, the domestic merchants still refused to use Mexican dollars. In response to this “trouble,” Western traders felt that they needed to put more pressure on the Japanese government. Reflecting their dire anxiety, the *North-China Herald*, an English newspaper published in the treaty-port city of Shanghai in China, carried minutes of the meeting that a British consul at Yokohama had held with foreign residents on February 19, 1861. The representative of Western residents contended that the framers of the treaties had undoubtedly “thought such a period [one year] ample, but unfortunately the contrary is the fact – twelve months has not been *enough* – and such being the case, I humbly think, Mr. Chairman, that *we have a right* to fall back on the meaning and intention of Article X of the Treaty,” and to “obtain from the Japanese governments a fresh grant of time for the exchange of

36 “1860 December, Yokohama” in *Commercial Reports 1859-71*, 25.

37 *The North-China Herald*, No.484, November 5, 1859.

38 *The North-China Herald*, No.493, January 7, 1860.

39 Tokyo Koto Shogyo, 100.

Japanese foreign coins.”⁴⁰ On the other hand, he also admitted, “there is a question, and a difficult one, as to how far it is in the power of this [the Japanese government], or any other government, to force a foreign coinage into general circulation, and at a fixed rate or valuation!”

The reluctance to accept Mexican dollars was due to the lack of incentive among domestic Japanese traders, unlike the situation in China at the time. Contrasting the Chinese and Japanese cases, the aforementioned representative argued that China was a place “where they have no coinage to displace, where a coinage of any kind is a great desideratum, and where dollars of Spain and of American States...have for the last twenty years been in circulation at five ports on the coast...this free circulation throughout the country.”⁴¹ Indeed, China suffered from a shortage in currencies due to the silver crisis during the same period, and as a result, Mexican dollars were in circulation in the interior market from Shanghai to Chongqing.⁴² By contrast, the Japanese monetary situation at this point was relatively stable.⁴³ The same representative described the Japanese as “possess[ing] a coinage *superior*...to wit, the admirable bronze coin of one tempo.”⁴⁴ A contemporary Japanese merchant also recalled that, at the time, “Japanese exporters were mostly manufacturers or merchants from local countryside, where Mexican dollars were rejected. So they refused to receive Mexican dollars.”⁴⁵ The Japanese merchants did not receive Mexican dollars because

40 *The North-China Herald*, “Japan,” No. 555, March 16, 1861.

41 *Ibid.*

42 Kuroda, *Chuka Teikoku no Kozo*, 110. Mexican dollars followed a route from Shanghai to Hankow, then on to Yichang, and then finally arriving at Chongqing.

43 One historian even traces the reason why Japan was financially not colonized to this failure of penetration of the Mexican dollars in the interior market. Yamamoto, 191.

44 “Tempo” was a coin issued during the regnal period between 1830 and 1843.

45 Tokyo Koto Shogyo Gakko, ed., *Yokohama Kaiko Toji no Boeki Jotai Narabini Yugin Soba Torihiki no Enkaku* (横浜開港当時之貿易状態並洋銀相場取引之沿革) (1914) in *Keizai to Boeki* 101 (1970): 100.

they did not expect others to accept it as a currency in the future since their daily customers were the same domestic merchants who used native coins, and in such a situation, Mexican dollars could not be a store of value. Therefore, there was no compelling incentive for native merchants to observe the government's enforced use of Mexican dollars.

Although it was fleeting, governments and foreign traders found an 'improvement' in terms of a single standard creation when the private money changers started to accept Mexican dollars. A seasoned former money changer in Yokohama provides us with a collection of interviews with Japanese merchants, whose oral testimonies furnish descriptions of how the Mexican dollar changed over time as the medium of exchange. One of them recalled:

"Initially, the medium for the trade was 1-*bu* silver. Yet in 1861, there was a merchant in Maebashi, called *Miyoshi Zenemon*, who came to know that money changers in Edo, particularly those in Nihonbashi and Muromachi, began to exchange a Mexican dollar with 46.7 *momme* of silver coins. Now he sold foreigners some of his raw silk, and received Mexican dollars in their payments. Since then...Mexican dollars started to be used in payments, and became the medium for the trade, replacing 1-*bu* silver."⁴⁶

With the appearance of money changers who dealt with Mexican dollars, people finally began to accept the currency.⁴⁷

However, the circulation of Mexican dollars was only the beginning of a series of contestations over proper exchange rates. Triggered by the exposure to the single standard that came to be adopted in other parts of the world through Western merchants,

46 Tokyo Koto Shogyo Gakko, 100. The merchant's name was not mentioned in the original source.

47 However, a larger question remains: why was the use of Mexican dollars limited to the port cities and did not penetrate the entire interior market like China?

successive central governments in Japan increasingly oriented themselves towards a constant exchange rate.

Upon the opening of the port of Yokohama in 1858, the shogunal government had granted a monopolistic charter to *Mitsui*, one of the most influential merchant groups, to conduct money exchange services on the government's behalf. The licensed guild merchants at *Mitsui* were thus given an exclusive privilege to exchange the *1-bu* silver coin for Mexican dollars that foreign traders would bring to the market.⁴⁸ Capitalizing on their monopoly, the *Mitsui* money changers soon requested extended exchange services to buy Mexican dollars which had by then become accepted among domestic merchants in port cities as a means of payment. As a result, in 1861, the government chartered *Mitsui* to set up a dollar purchasing house for domestic merchants.⁴⁹

Yet the influence of the private money changers' network was much greater than that of the government-sanctioned exchange houses in deciding the exchange rate, and they quickly ran their rivals out of business. As a Japanese merchant said in an interview, "as the [*Mitsui*] purchasing house was chartered and well-organized, at the expense of the [private] money changers who were losing their margins, the private money exchangers came to concert with one another to boycott the exchange [at the government-designated exchange house]. As a result, the *Mitsui* house had to close less than a year."⁵⁰ In defiance of the government's attempt to set the official exchange rate between Mexican dollars and Japanese coins, the local money changers made a series of collective actions of obstruction.

48 Yokohama City, *Yokohama-shi Shi* (横浜市史, *History of Yokohama City*) (Yokohama: Yokohama City, 1958): 678. According to the municipal descriptions of Yokohama City, *Mitsui* participated in the exchange service out of its own volition. Initially, the government asked *Mitsui* to start the first dealing business in fabric for clothes to entice other native dealers. *Mitsui* was hesitant and eventually closed its fabric business in 1863. Rather than entering into a market without knowing Westerns' tastes, *Mitsui* was eager to participate in financing, where they were more likely to succeed.

49 Tokyo Koto Shogyo Gakko, 100.

50 Ibid.

It was not only the government but also foreign traders who saw the continuation of this decentralized exchange system with an increasing sense of frustration. One trader reported that the “exchange between dollars and Japanese coins has formed a subject of more or less complaint” in every port city throughout the years.⁵¹ A trader in Hakodate also remarked in 1864 that the “greatest obstruction to our trade is...the exchange, which is ruinous to the foreign merchant.”⁵² In 1868, when the new Meiji government declared the fixed exchange rate once again, a newspaper for foreign residents in Yokohama responded with enthusiasm: a “great moment to foreign merchants is announced...the exchange of Boos against Dollars at the rate of 293 per Hundred.”⁵³ Yet Japanese merchants continued to use the fluctuating rates in domestic transactions and foreign traders continued to lodge their complaints, requesting that the Japanese government overhaul the decentralized exchange system.

It is easy for scholars to narrate the Meiji reformers’ difficulty in transforming the traditional monetary system by emphasizing the Japanese government’s struggle to respond to mounting Western pressures. When we assume that the aforementioned orthodox path every country could follow in its adoption of the single standard is a necessary contingency, we are tempted to see any deviation as an unfortunate historical aberration. Accordingly, scholars have overlooked the reasons behind resistance to the new currencies from within Japanese society and statements from the contemporary Western traders have been overemphasized in existing studies. As firm believers in the intrinsic value of metals, those traders observed that the “relative values of gold and silver in Japan are grossly different from the standards universally accepted in all other civilized countries.”⁵⁴ In Japan, they contended, the rate was “maintained by the arbitrary action of a powerful despotism” of the

51 “Nagasaki 1863,” *Commercial Reports 1859-1871*, 4:65.

52 “Hakodate 1864,” *Commercial Reports 1859-1871*, 4:74.

53 *The Japan Times’ Overland Mail*, “Summary,” August 8, 1868.

54 *The Japan Times’ Overland Mail*, “The Currency Question,” January 4, 1868.

government.⁵⁵ Labeling the new government as “these half-informed gentry,” dissatisfied Western traders went as far as to say “if any Japanese ever deserved the honors of *hara-kiri*, it is this ingenious dabbler [the government] in banking.”⁵⁶ A contemporary foreign news report also stated that a “new Government, centralized, but with yet many obstacles to its permanence...rush[ed] to action upon principles of finance imperfectly understood and [did] what France and America have both done in similar circumstances.”⁵⁷ As has been demonstrated, however, it was not really the government’s incapability, but rather the power of the money exchangers that prevented the creation of the single standard. The Meiji government began to carry out a second wave of monetary reforms by introducing paper money, but once again the government’s initiative to create the single standard with fixed exchanged rates faced resistance from the money changers.

THE DECENTRALIZED EXCHANGE SYSTEM CONTINUES: THE MEIJI
GOVERNMENT’S PAPER MONEY, KINSATSU

The Meiji government embarked on a new monetary reform in 1868 by issuing a convertible paper money called *kinsatsu* (金札). The economic rationale behind this pivotal move was to withdraw all the old and “bad” coins in circulation and to reissue them in accordance with the new legal tender.⁵⁸ The Meiji oligarchs once

55 Ibid. Western traders believed that the reason that the money changers could liberally attach different values to various coins, nominally with the same denominations, was mainly because of the continuing circulation of token coins. (As noted in footnotes 36 and 37, token coins are the coined currencies which values are decided not by their weights and qualities, but according to their stamped denominations.) Therefore, they objected to the government’s efforts to debase coins, which, in their eyes, only exacerbated the situation by ushering in further influxes of token currencies into the monetary market.

56 *The Japan Times’ Overland Mail*, “The Results of the Revolution,” December 16, 1868.

57 *The Japan Times’ Overland Mail*, “The Paper Panic,” December 16, 1868

58 The practical reason for this issuance was to supply the large deficit in the

again relied on the Mitsui house to issue an enormous amount of notes with the intention of “ameliorat[ing] the current money market situation which was extremely tightened.”⁵⁹ An imperial ordinance supported the young government’s decision by declaring in 1868 that the “notes shall circulate throughout the realm for the following thirteen years.”⁶⁰ Consisting of 10-ryo, 5-ryo, 1-ryo, 1-bu, and 1-shu denominations, the ordinance continued, the new notes were to “be used equally as other metallic species.”⁶¹ With the issuance of these bills, the reformers attempted to convert all the old coins into convertible notes.

Nevertheless, people refused to receive these notes at their face values. The reformers dispatched junior officials to the countryside with the mission of investigating *kinsatsu* circulation locally. Following the broad investigation, the commissioners released a disheartening report: “within each domain, only few people use *kinsatsu*; local market situations have now turned very confusing...the values of gold coins in *kinsatsu* terms shot up; thus everyone is storing metal coins...; the price of rice and other goods is also going up in *kinsatsu* terms.”⁶² Interestingly enough, the report points out that the distrust towards the legal tender also resulted in the hoarding of old coins. Another commissioner reported, “reacting to the anxious feeling towards *kinsatsu*, I find people hoarding the 1-shu and 1-bu gold coins in particular.”⁶³ In the other area, “people pay with 1 ryo of *kinsatsu* to purchase a bale of rice

government revenue. The Meiji government, hurriedly formed in 1868, found itself extremely burdened by the expenses of the Revolutionary Wars. Masayoshi Matsukata, *Report on the Adoption of the Gold Standard in Japan* (New York: Arno Press, 1978), 19.

59 Matsukata, 20.

60 Ibid., 17.

61 Ibid., 17.

62 Morinosuke Sanwa, A3305 “Nakasendo Koshu Kaidosuji Kinsatsu Ryutsu Jokyo Tansakusho” (中仙道甲州街道筋金札流通状況探索書) in *Okuma Bunsho* (Tokyo: Wasedaigaku Shakaigaku Kenkyujo 1958), 1:1.

63 Ibid, 1.

but they keep using gold coins for the remainder.”⁶⁴ Because of their failure to achieve fixed conversion rates between paper money and metal specie – a failure caused in large part by the Japanese people’s conservative attitudes towards *kinsatsu* – the reformers had to postpone their initial plan to withdraw all the old coins.⁶⁵

It was the local money exchangers who fanned the widespread monetary conservatism. The money exchangers set fluctuating values to the currencies in circulation which nominally had the same face values. The Meiji government issued successive edicts to prohibit the floating exchange rates in terms of *kinsatsu* every month in 1870, which suggests that these bans were not effective at all.⁶⁶ The failure to legally enforce the edicts was derived from the fact that people conducted their business about “15% higher in *kinsatsu* terms” than the usual market prices.⁶⁷ In such circumstances, one did not need to be a professional money exchanger to manipulate the differences in rates. According to the same report, “taking this loophole, clever traders are mixing up the metal species with paper bills [to skim off the margins], leaving with detrimental effects [on the further circulation of paper notes].”⁶⁸ These profiteers even went on to “spread groundless rumors; confused farmers; consequently, people in Yokohama never accept *kinsatsu*. Taking advantage of this odd situation, however, these profiteers hoarded various coins and *kinsatsu* [for future speculation], pushing our government to currency imbalance.”⁶⁹ A few radical reformers within the government proposed to “execute those who gorged the margins in the middle out of the rate differences” that floated between paper and metallic currencies. Although this particularly extreme proposal does not

64 Ibid, 3.

65 Matsutaka, 15.

66 Okurasho, *A Compiler of Currency Policy*, 2:188-189.

67 Inosuke Nakanomura, A3316 “Koshu Kaido Nakasendosuji Kinsatsu Ryutu Jokyo Tansakusho” (甲州街道中仙道筋金札流通状況探索書) in *Okuma Bunsho* (Tokyo: Wasedadaigaku Shakaikagaku Kenkyujo 1958), 4:9.

68 Morinosuke Sanwa, 1.

69 Shozo Yoshida, A3306 “Nakasendosuji Kinsatsu Ryutu Jokyo Tansakusho” in *Okuma Bunsho* (Tokyo: Wasedadaigaku Shakaikagaku Kenkyujo 1958), 4:3.

seem to have been enacted, it is safe to conclude that an ongoing tension existed between the decentralized and centralized monetary visions.⁷⁰

The actual situation in local monetary markets remained too convoluted to be fixed with a single stroke; once-stable coins also became subject to the increasingly fluctuating exchange rates. Again, the investigators whom the Finance Minister Okuma Shigenobu (1838-1922) had dispatched to different parts of Japan in the early 1870's came up with depressing reports. They echoed one another in pointing out that different values were attached to the existing coins - a phenomenon we do not find in the description of the *Hizakurige* tale of the early nineteenth century. For example, "a 4-cash copper coin (*bunkyu-sen*, 文久錢) of the Bunkyu era (1861-63) came to be taken as worth an eight-dollar note of the Meiji era; a 4-cash copper coin (*kan'ei-sen*, 寛永錢) of the Kan'ei era (1624-1643) was taken as worth a twelve-dollar note of the Meiji era."⁷¹ The Meiji government had proscribed the circulation of these old copper coins more than four times. Such bans, however, were ineffectual except within the first two years, between 1868 and 1870.⁷² One of these proclamations, issued in September 1869, specifically targeted money changers: "As for a 12-cash copper coin (*shinchu-sen* 眞鑄錢)... in the private exchange market, the [profiteers] secretly conducted monetary transactions...From now on, money changers as well as traders should faithfully observe the stipulations governing the rate of this particular coin."⁷³ It was money changers who were cited as responsible for the tensions between the traditional currency system and the reformed system with the single standard the government wanted to implement. Clearly, then, recognizing the entrenched power of the money exchangers contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the Meiji reformers' subsequent

70 Tokyo Koto Shogyo Gakko, 104.

71 Yasutaro Ogawa, A3307 "Daisando Kamakurado suji Kinsatsu Ryutu Jokyo Tansakusho" (大山道鎌倉道筋金札流通状況探索書) in *Okuma Bunsho* (Tokyo: Wasedaigaku Shakaikagaku Kenkyujo 1958), 4:4.

72 Okurasho, *A Compiler of Currency Policy*, 1:42-46.

73 Ibid, 46.

difficulties in leaving the early-modern monetary system that had lasted for more than four hundreds years.

TOWARDS THE END OF THE DECENTRALIZED EXCHANGE: FROM SINGLE STANDARD TO DOUBLE STANDARD, THE SILVER YEN

The promulgation of the New Currency Ordinance (*shinka jorei*) in 1871 was the most important and comprehensive attempt by the Meiji government in establishing a single currency system in Japan. The new law stipulated the introduction of new monetary units of *yen*, the gradual termination of the old coins, and basing “all the coins on the gold standard.”⁷⁴ Accordingly, the reformers also introduced 50, 20, and 10 *sen* silver coins as well as 1 *sen* and 1 *rin* copper coins as legally convertible currencies against the standard unit of the gold 1 *yen*. Based on the decimal system, the exchange rates between these newly minted coins were ordered to be fixed. Matsukata Masayoshi (1835-1924), the new finance minister who replaced Okuma Shigenobu in the 1880's, recalled in his memoirs that the promulgation of the new law was one of the “most successful steps taken in the development of the coinage system since the early years of Meiji.”⁷⁵

The New Currency Ordinance, however, did not establish a modern single standard overnight, although it was certainly a first step in its formation. This paper does not claim that the power of the Japanese money exchangers had completely hindered the development of the modern monetary system nor does it attempt to provide local instances of money exchangers' activities. Instead, I will demonstrate that the government's difficulty in implementing the single standard was due to the continuing reliance on multiple standards. Presumably, this would have created an economic environment where the money exchangers could have continued to operate. Yet this is not to assert that money exchangers did in fact have a role before the complete adoption of the single standard,

74 Matsukata, 8.

75 Ibid., 1.

and how they would have continued to operate through this period is a question that merits further research. Nevertheless, before scholars can embark on that line of inquiry, the problematic and delayed implementation of the New Currency Ordinance must be explored. Of primary importance in investigating this change is to observe that while the government's objective was to create a single standard, it undermined its goal by in fact allowing for multiple standards to operate. The New Currency Ordinance added that the gold standard principle should be complemented with the silver standard system: "The 1-yen silver piece is to be coined...in response to the demands of both Japanese and foreign traders," and this new silver coin "shall be circulated as legal tender in the treaty ports."⁷⁶ Although the Ordinance made sure that the silver coins would "not be legal tender outside of the treaty ports limits," it also included the exception that they "may be freely used in transactions where parties concerned mutually consent to its use." As a result, the system of coinage slipped from the single gold standard to a gold and silver bi-metallic system.

The continuing early modern monetary system with double standards implies that there was still an opportunity to profiteer from the discrepancies between the gold and silver standards during transactions. The Ordinance had fixed the legal exchange rate between the gold and silver currencies with "100 silver yen worth of 101 gold yen."⁷⁷ Yet the graph below (Graph 2) shows that fluctuating exchange rates between the bi-metallic standard coins and paper money existed, even though the fluctuations were not as great as the old coins.⁷⁸ Thus, there was still a discrepancy between the intrinsic values of new gold and silver coins in relative terms, a situation on which many Japanese money changers must have capitalized. A

⁷⁶ Ibid.

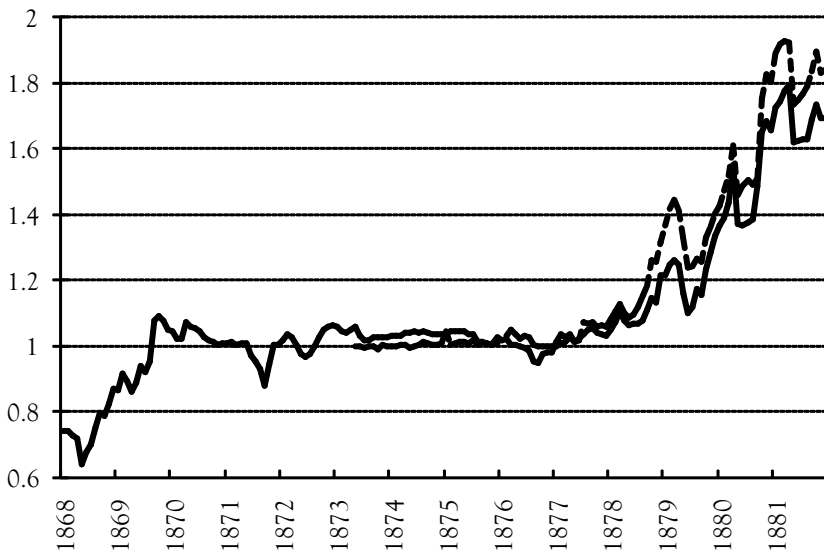
⁷⁷ Ibid., 9.

⁷⁸ The original data was taken from Yamamoto, 201. Although the data regarding the direct transaction between gold and silver coins is not available, their fluctuating exchange rates against paper money is sufficient in emphasizing the opportunity that Japanese money changers had in exploiting the discrepancies between the gold and silver standards.

Power and Money

warning from a contemporary foreign trader also testifies to this turbulent situation that money exchangers could have exploited: “The Government, making the new silver money legal tender at the ports only, and gold for circulation in the interior, may cause some difficulty. The practical result will be to cause fluctuations in the value of gold and silver, which will be very inconvenient to merchants, and only play into the hands of the small bankers and money-changers.”⁷⁹

Graph 2: Paper Money per Gold & Silver Yen



XAxis: Year

YAxis: Average Monthly Exchange Rate of Paper Money
for 1 Gold yen and 1 Silver yen

— Units of paper money per silver yen
--- Units of paper money per gold yen

⁷⁹ *Commercial Reports*, 37. Furthermore, the same observer continued, “When goods come down from the country for sale, there will be a premium on gold, the returns having to be made in that money, but if gold is sent down from the country to buy European goods, in quantity, silver will rise in value.”

The creation of the double standard system was not the scenario that the planners of the centralized monetary system had envisioned. In April 1870, not long before the Meiji government announced the New Currency Ordinance, John Robertson, a British manager of the Oriental Bank in Yokohama, sent a letter warning the Finance Ministry: "Many countries in Europe have recognized the failure of the gold silver bimetallism from their experiences. Thus, if Japan mistakenly adopts the bimetallism, the minting office will have less profits and harm public good."⁸⁰ The Meiji government did not follow his advice, not because it was ignorant of the international trend of adopting a single standard, but because it *could not* maintain the single standard, due to the increasing demands of profiteers who needed continued discrepancies *between* the two standards.

THE DECENTRALIZED SYSTEM AS AN ALTERNATIVE MONETARY MODEL:
ELASTIC SUPPLY OF SMALL CURRENCIES

While exploring the importance of neglected contestations between Meiji governments, foreign traders, and money exchangers in Japan's early modern monetary transformations, this paper has largely focused on the powerful resistance of the latter group to the creation of a single standard. More generally, the argument presented so far has been a narrative of vested groups and human agents, which often prompts questions of volition and intention. This paper has largely avoided those questions for a lack of sufficient scholarship, although some motive may be implied when we say that the Japanese government responded to foreign *pressure* or that money exchangers *profiteered*. Yet these should be read as statements of fact, and even if any assumed motivations were true it is unclear whether they would be the only ones or if, in fact, we can ascribe different motivations and in general different reasons to these changes.

Some of these reasons may lie not among the intentions or desires of the agents discussed above but rather at a systemic level.

80 *Financial History*, 331.

The fact that some denominations were accepted and others were not during each phase of Japan's early modern monetary reforms suggests that some structural explanation may be useful to the present inquiry. In that regard, it is important to note that the use of different currencies maintained the flexible circulation of money in the market by partially decoupling one currency from another through seasonally periodic exchange rates. Viewed from this perspective, the multi-standard system functioned in its own coherent way, whereby an elastic monetary circulation was effectively maintained in proportion to people's seasonal activities and a dislocation in one market became less conducive to the other.

This new inquiry must start with Japan's difficulty in controlling its gold and silver currencies. For one, Japan was under constant pressure due to a shortage in gold and silver currencies. There was too much exchange of Japanese currencies with Mexican dollars, an outflow of gold and silver due to international speculation, and trade of metals themselves as material.⁸¹ These factors combined contributed to a net outflow of the metals overseas. As a result, the market was "being drained of its currency, which is shipped to India and China as bullion," according to a consul's observation.⁸² Sometimes the market also faced "a great scarcity of [silver] money in the hand of the native... merchants."⁸³

To make the situation even more complicated, there also existed seasonal activities that influenced the circulation of each metal. For instance, the summer season often saw comparatively more circulation of silver coins than in the winter season. This was because foreign traders "send money [silver coins] to Yeddo [*sic*], and

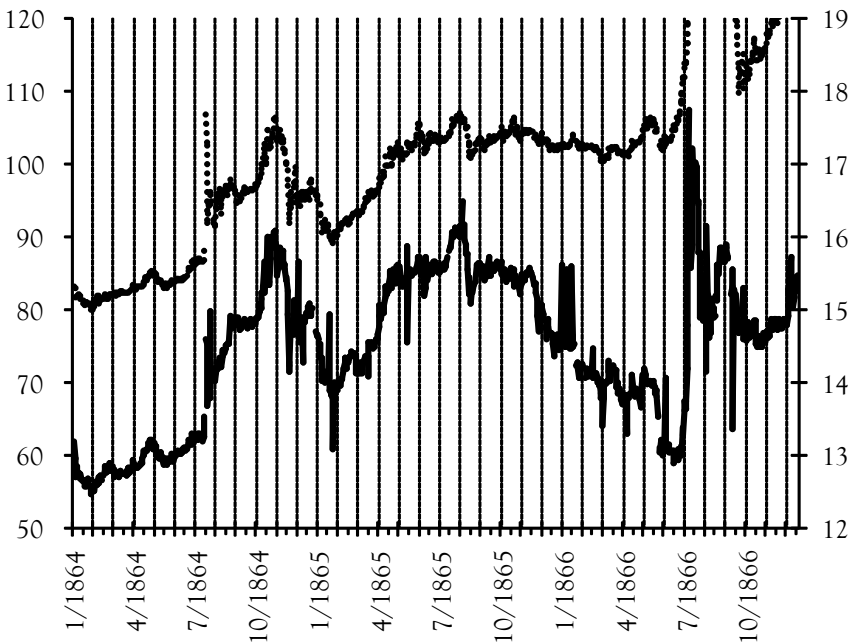
81 The relative values of gold and silver in Japan widely differed from those accepted in other countries. Because of this factor, we witness a massive outflow of silver and gold coins throughout the 1850's. Many coins and currencies were debased by the public and exported as bullion, although the destruction of currency was banned by the government, which attempted to monopoly the debasement right.

82 "1869 Yokohama," *Commercial Reports 1859-71*, 348.

83 *Ibid.*, 136.

purchase” silk in the summer.⁸⁴ The payment for purchase was made through silver coins, and as a result there were relatively more silver coins in the hands of Japanese merchants in the summer. A surplus of the silver coins in summer in turn led to silver’s depreciation when they were not used in less active seasons.⁸⁵

Graph 3: Silver vs. Gold &
Silver vs. Copper (Seasonal)



XAxis: Date (month/year)

Left YAxis: Price of 1 ryo (gold) in terms of momme (silver)

Right YAxis: Price of 1000 mons (copper) in terms of momme (silver)

..... Silver per Gold

———— Silver per Copper

84 Ibid., 136.

85 *Financial History*, 174.

The exchange rates for three years from 1864 to 1866 show this periodic fluctuation of circulation (Graph III).⁸⁶ While gold and copper were on appreciated relative to silver throughout the period, we find that silver coins periodically depreciated towards the summer and appreciated in the winter. In their complaints about fluctuating prices of silver *bu*, many Western traders accurately captured this periodic relationship. According to them, due to the “depreciations [of the new silver *bu*], as is usual at the commencement of the silk season, July and August,” making business predictions was quite difficult.⁸⁷ Thus, silver coins seemed to experience an unpredictable fluctuation in its circulation, and its relationship between copper and gold coins were constantly adjusted and balanced through the changing exchange rates.⁸⁸

Yet despite the unstable circulation of silver and gold currencies, the price of items was surprisingly stable. Graph IV shows that, for example, the price of rice in terms of copper coins during the first half of the 1860's remained relatively steady given

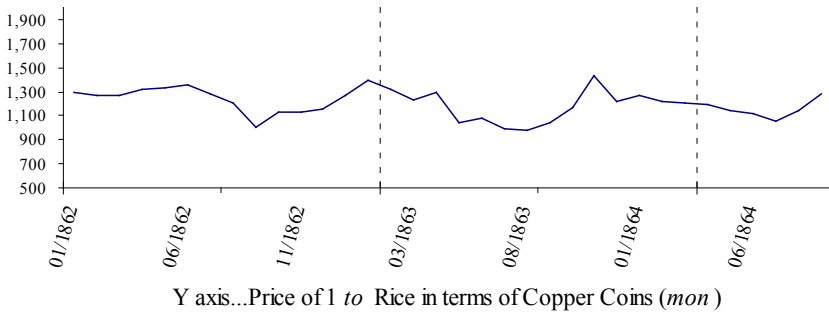
86 Original data was taken from: Mitsui-ke Hensanshitsu, *Osaka Ryogaeten Nikkiroku Shoshutsu*. Graph made by the author.

87 “1868 Osaka,” *Commercial Reports 1859-71*, 358.

88 Also, it is quite plausible that a greater demand existed in the market for copper and gold currencies in the summer for seasonal activities such as harvest preparations and their transactions. Kuroda, “Too Commercialised to Synchronize Currencies: Monetary Peasant Economy in Late Imperial China in Comparison with Contemporary Japan.” I must note that Kuroda only gives a general observation that people in the interior market during this period preferred specific kinds of currencies in payment for grains. To see what currencies were exactly used among local farmers in general, as well as specific currency use in different regions, more investigation of new primary sources should be encouraged. For example, more inquiries should be made on how the payments in taxation changed over time and place. After the Japanese Land Tax Reform (*Chisokaisei*, 地租改正) of 1873, successive measurements were taken to restructure the previous land taxation system. The medium of tax payments too, accordingly, changed from rice crops to the gold *yen*. Kunio Tanba, *Chisokaiseiho no Kigen* (地租改正法の起源- 開明官僚の形成, *The Origins of Chisokaisei Laws*) (Tokyo: Minerva Press, 1995).

the capricious circulation of gold and silver coins.⁸⁹

Graph IV: Copper per Rice



The relative stability in the rice price was remarkable because, as most modern economists would agree, deflation is likely to happen when currencies became scarce and inflation should happen when currencies are in excess.⁹⁰ In the early modern and multi-standard monetary system, however, Japanese people prevented a big fluctuation in the prices of necessities by using those currencies which were in stable and predictable circulation during any particular season. As we have seen in the *Hizakurige* tale, it was more common for the people to buy rice with the copper coins. They did not choose to receive the monies whose circulation was vulnerable to seasonal and unstable activities.⁹¹

The multi-standard monetary system gave people the option to prefer one currency over another, thus allowing for a decentralized mechanism for controlling accessibility to specific currencies by adjusting the exchange rates between them during the transactions themselves rather than by controlling the official circulation. According to the observation made by a Western

89 The actual data was the price of rice in terms of silver and gold. I have calculated the rice price in terms of copper by using the daily exchange rates of each metal. The original idea of this converting the unit is drawn from Shimada, “Kinsei Nihon no Do Yushutsu,” 40.

90 U. Pagano and A. Nicita, *The Evolution of Economic Diversity*.

91 Shimada also comments that the payments in rice were made in copper coins. Shimada, “Kinsei Nihon no Do Yushutsu,” 40.

trader during the same period, for instance, “Tempoes [100-cash copper coins] have also varied considerably in value throughout the year.”⁹² Japanese merchants exchanged copper coins and gold coins, he continued, “during the spring...at 123 per *ryo* [sic],” while “in August, when a combination amongst the rice shopkeepers took place, and they agreed to take nothing but tempoes [copper coins] in payment for rice...[and exchanged the two metal coins] at 84 per *ryo*.”⁹³ In this statement we see that the periodic fluctuation of the price of copper coins relative to that of gold coins functioned as a barrier separating copper coins for rice payments from gold coins that were more easily subject to the other factors. By attaching flexible exchange rates to the diverse coins apart from the official rate, depending on the preference of each currency at the time, the multi-standard monetary system effectively maintained an elastic monetary circulation in proportion to people’s demands in one market, even when there was shortage of currency in the next.

Yet the extreme form of this multi-standard monetary system was the total rejection of any exchange between national and local currencies. According to a foreign observer’s report in 1871, “In the territories of some of the Han [domains] in this part of the country, local paper still continues to circulate; in Yonezawa, for example, and, to a small extent in Shibata. As such paper does not find acceptance beyond the limits of the territory where it is issued, it naturally acts as a barrier, effective in proportion to the amount in circulation, to transactions between that territory and the rest of the country.”⁹⁴ The word “barrier” clearly had a negative connotation to this foreign trader, as the use of local currencies must have prevented Western traders from conducting commercial activities with other domains in Meiji Japan. Yet this is a critique from the perspective of the modern single-standard monetary system, where anyone can use one’s own currency anywhere at any time. Before

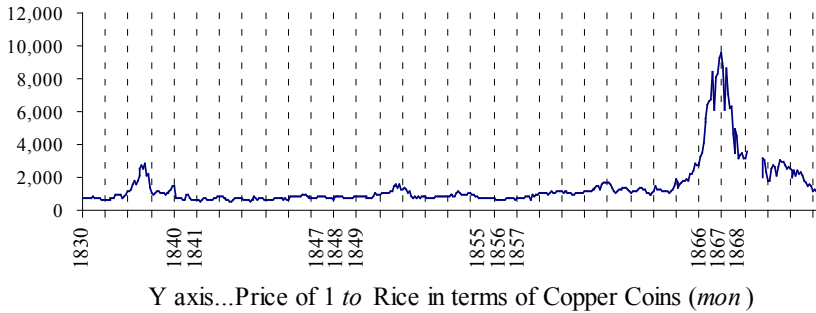
92 “1864 Yokohama,” *Commercial Reports 1859-71*, 443.

93 *Ibid.*, 443. Italicized by the author. As explained above, *ryo* was also a unit for gold and silver coins.

94 “1871 Niigata,” *Commercial Reports 1859-1871*, 606.

this very recent invention, however, such an assumption was not necessarily the norm. In the early-modern multi-standard monetary system, the monetary barrier generally protected the market from the messes that may have occurred in other regions.

Graph V: Copper per Rice



⁹⁵At the same time, while some barriers could help protect certain internal markets from one another, maintaining overall exchangeability between currencies remained crucial for the system as a whole. For example, the scarcity of diverse coins in the 1860's disrupted the stability of the price of rice when the exchange mechanism stopped functioning (Graph IV above).⁹⁶ The rise was often attributed to the shortage caused by bad harvests and frequent debasement of silver coins, but these could not have been major factors. For example, when a famine struck in the late 1830's, the price of rice only increased three times at most, from

⁹⁵ To is the traditional unit for measuring volume in Japan, roughly equal to 18 liters.

⁹⁶ Data range itself is only available until 1871, when all the traditional coins with old units were completely banned to use in the official transaction at the Osaka exchange market. Instead the Meiji government forced to use the new coins with new unit, Yen. Yet we know that the use of the old coins among people continued at least until 1874, when the price in terms of old coins were still observed in the account book of one family, the Ishii House (Ishii Ke, 石井家). Michio Aoki, ed. *Tokaido Kanagawa Shukuhonjin Ishii Junko Nikki* (東海道神奈川宿本陣石井順考日記, Headquarter of the Tokaido Highway: Diaries of Ishii Junko) (Tokyo: Yumani Shobo, 2001).

963 to 2800 *mon*. Comparing the two the rises in the late-1830's and late 1860's, however, the unusual inflation during the latter, almost ten times higher than 1865's price at most, must have been due to factors besides natural disasters. Frequent debasement was also not behind the inflation. Contemporary foreigners blamed the government's debasement for the inflation. Foreign merchants in the Yokohama settlement criticized the government's debasement policy, the "gradual rise of prices all over the country, ignorantly attributed...solely to our intrusion, which did nothing, in fact, but compel their rulers to abandon a wholesale system of robbery."⁹⁷ In contemporary foreigners' eyes, inflation rose because the "Government revenged itself, in its last assault upon the currency, by robbing us as well as its own people; the latest depreciation of the coin."⁹⁸ Yet the debasement itself had been continuously carried out by the government throughout the nineteenth century, and it worked. As previously mentioned, the increasing issuance of token coins functioned as an effective and expedient solution for the shortage of small currencies to meet people's immediate demands. More importantly, for the debasement to affect the price of items, the debased coins needed to be *accepted* at their face values. As this paper has argued, however, the par acceptance did not happen in the late nineteenth century.

Therefore, inflation during the late 1860's should be attributed to another factor, the most probable culprit being the shortage of diverse coins. The year 1867 saw a huge excess of imports over exports. "To meet with this emergency it was necessary [for the Japanese merchants] to have recourse to the old coins of the country, and large quantities of *nishus* and *niboos* (in which there is a large per-centage of gold), likewise old silver boos, were shipped to Shanghae [*sic*] and Hong Kong, where they met with a ready sale, and realized a profit. These old coins soon became scarce, and the

97 *The Japan Times' Overland Mail*, "The Currency Question No.II," January 4, 1868.

98 *Ibid*.

natural consequence was that they rose in value.”⁹⁹ As indicated in Graph I, the value of the copper coin rose from 9 *mommes* to 21 *mommes*, and the gold coin, from 61 *mommes* to 223 *mommes* over the course of the 1860’s. In addition, in 1868, the government withdrew earlier edicts that had prohibited the use of old coins.¹⁰⁰ This move confirms the sustained demands for the old coins. Another source corroborates the point that different domains throughout the country from 1867 onward kept minting copper coins to ameliorate the problems associated with the shortage of coins: “many of the Princes...are now evincing a desire to work [the copper mines], so that in a short time it may be expected to see a large quantity of copper.”¹⁰¹ Thus, the normalization of the price of rice after 1868 interestingly coincided with local efforts to increase the supply of copper currency as the multi-standard exchange regime allowed people to issue currencies whenever there was a demand for them.

To conclude, even during the late nineteenth century, the official supply of currencies by the government did not necessarily meet the demands of the actual currency users; a mismatch between demand and supply quite often resulted in the rejection of government’s monies. As seen in an example of Niigata, local agents continued to make their own currencies autonomously during the 1870’s, despite the government’s bans.¹⁰² Seen in this light, however,

99 “1868 Nagasaki,” *Commercial Reports 1859-71*, 310.

100 Okurasho and Zenki Zaisei Keizai Shiryo Shusei, ed., *A Compiler of Currency Policy*, 1:3.

101 “1867 Nagasaki,” *Commercial Reports 1859-71*, 228.

102 I concur with the historian Kuroda Akinobu that “the rate of the Osaka exchange market no longer specified the currency demand of each region after the nineteenth century,” if he meant that the Osaka exchange rates were no longer useful to historians as an indicator of different demands for currencies in multiple regions. Nevertheless, I do not share his method to measure the demands for currencies in Niigata in western Japan from the exchange rate of the Osaka market in eastern Japan. Even though his rationale was that the rate in Niigata was following the Osaka market’s rate, our analysis thus far does not expunge the possibility that the idiosyncratic demands for different currencies at different regions continued to exist well into the late nineteenth-century Japan. Kuroda, “Too Commercialised to

it is too hasty to attribute local governments' issuance of their own currencies to the local authorities' efforts to cope momentarily with their financial shortages. The fact that people actually *accepted* the local currencies tells us that they demanded vernacular currencies, apart from the official currencies for their own reasons.¹⁰³ It is this selection of monies that shaped the contours of the late Tokugawa and earlier Meiji multi-standard system. Our discussion thus far has shown that the multi-standard system was a viable economic system in which the various currencies were able to provide the Japanese society with a stable economy.

CONCLUSION

Building on the current historiographical trends that seek to validate alternative development paths to a modern economy, this paper has shown that the Japanese monetary system involved multiple agents and its own functions of currency between 1858 and 1879. Indeed, money exchangers were vital in circulating both old and new currencies at the turn of the last century in Japan. In the process, longstanding contestations between the tripartite agents – the central governments, foreign traders and indigenous money exchangers – were brought out. By analyzing the functions of this decentralized monetary regime, I have also explained the intricate mechanisms used to supply sufficient currencies to multiple layers of differentiated markets. In doing so, our discussion has surpassed the conventional and unnecessary boundaries set up between the “old” Tokugawa government and “new” Meiji government, and those between “deviant” diverse Tokugawa currencies under the Three-Currency Policy and “scientific” Meiji currencies from the New Currency Act onward.

Synchronize Currencies: Monetary Peasant Economy in Late Imperial China in Comparison with Contemporary Japan.”

103 Unfortunately, this paper cannot provide a further analysis of such a demand for currency in Niigata due to a lack of sources.

By the 1880's, however, Japanese money exchangers no longer saw arbitrage opportunities in the domestic currencies market. As one contemporary Japanese observer said, "these days, money exchangers make big profits through the exchange between Mexican dollars and Japanese currencies."¹⁰⁴ This report reflects that the potential margins between the domestic currencies had become less profitable than those between Mexican dollars and Japanese currencies by then. An analysis of the causes that precipitated this transition remains out of the scope of the present research, yet these findings generate many related and intriguing questions: Was it the money exchangers who capitalized on new opportunities in the foreign currency exchange market? Or was this transition an indication that the Meiji government finally began to hold a firm grip on the domestic monetary market? Whatever the answer might be, the Meiji government eventually managed to change its bimetallic system to the mono-metallic system of silver in 1887 and of gold in 1897. These transitions were smooth at this time, and the extant records do not show any serious resistance to the government's redoubled attempts at monetary centralization. A comprehensive discussion of these transitions, however, awaits further inquiry.

Finally, through investigating the complex and organic process of nineteenth-century monetary reforms in Japan, this paper has also examined one way of conducting a global history. With the recent popularity of global historiography among historians, the topic of the physical interconnectedness of money, economy and people during the early-modern period in East Asia has been repeatedly emphasized.¹⁰⁵ However, it is also useful to focus on the comparable elements in other societies in East Asia. By examining multiple agents, such as money exchangers, governments, and commercial traders, similar studies are encouraged to explain the dynamics of

104 Kando Kawaji, A3415 "Genka Ranshutu Ron," (現貨濫出論 Discussion of Rampant Outflow of Coins) in *Okuma Bunsho* (Tokyo: Wasedaigaku Shakaikagaku Kenkyujo 1958), 4:115.

105 William H. McNeill, "The Changing Shape of World History," *History and Theory* 34:2 (1995): 8-26.

change in East Asia, analyzing how each country moved towards a modern monetary system.¹⁰⁶ Only after doing so can we move to “establish measurement principles that don’t privilege one set of institutions over another set as necessary norms.”¹⁰⁷ More recent studies in monetary transformation in other East Asian countries have more or less shared such an approach.¹⁰⁸ With much fertile

106 Kaoru Sugihara, “Guro-baru na Guzen” (グローバルな「偶然」 Contingencies are Global) *Shiso* 937:5 (2002): 4. In directing at a special issue for a global history, he also says “one of the zests of global history is, to discover ‘global contingencies’ [that could happen elsewhere], and then to historically interpret them.”

107 Wong, “Beyond sinocentrism and eurocentrism,” 183.

108 For example, Kuroda even explained the circulation of Maria Theresa silver coins over the continents of Africa and the Middle East, where “Austrian sovereignty never reached,” after the Habsburg Empire collapsed and the British colonial government issued their own silver coins during the World War II. Von Glahn further developed Kuroda’s finding in Chinese monetary system and related it to the international bullion flows. Om Prakash argued that, in Mughal India, the public minting of coinage by the citizen played a crucial role in supplying sufficient currencies in the petty market. Shimada Ryuto pointed out the interconnectedness of the copper and money across East Asia, and argued that the banning of copper export from Japan precipitated the devastating shortage of coins in Korea. Akinobu Kuroda, “The Maria Theresa dollar in the early twentieth-century Red Sea region: a complementary interface between multiple markets,” *Financial History Review* 14:1 (2007): 89-110. Also, *Kahei Sisutemu no Sekaishi*; Richard Von Glahn, *Fountain of Fortune: money and monetary policy in China, 1000-1700* (London: Univ. of California Press, 1996); Prakash Om, “Co-existence of Standardized and Humble Money: The Case of Mughal India”; Ryuto Shimada, “Kinsei Nihon no Do Yushutu Sakugen to Chosen no Zeniare.” After all, all knowledge seems to exude the invisible power of times, as one postmodernist once implied. Scholars studying East Asian history are seeing a genesis of the recurring themes: the popularity of a global socioeconomic history, the emerging attention given to the dynamics of frontiers and regionalism in old empires, and the integration of overseas Chinese activities into the narration of East Asia’s history. All of these trends in the recent scholarship, I believe, seem to reflect the demands of contemporary society, which is looking for an alternative community model in turbulent times of globalization. Just as the field of international relations became popular during the Cold War, recent scholarship has been keen to restore the role of ‘marginal’ actors in ‘peripheries’ as opposed to the center and the traditional narratives of

ground for historical interpretations of different contingencies in East Asian monetary transformations, the framework and methods used here and elsewhere may prove to be fruitful avenues for the future of monetary historiography. *T*

national history. While it is natural that new historical questions will always tend toward one disciplinary end or another, nonetheless these new paths arise not only from biases but also from critical inquiry. To that effect, we must continue to interrogate their subjects thoroughly, constantly seeking for more valid perspectives. Accordingly, this paper has called for investigating idiosyncratic power relations during the nineteenth century in East Asia, yet even more importantly it has sought to stimulate debate over the trajectory of our scholarship.

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Poison Ivy: The Problem of Tax Exemption in a Deindustrializing City, Yale and New Haven, 1967-1973

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ABSTRACT

This paper addresses the question of what the role of a tax-exempt university has been in a deindustrializing city, and how the university has conceived of its responsibilities as an “institutional/corporate citizen” when confronting the need to expand. In 1973, Yale University attempted to build two new residential colleges, but the New Haven city council vetoed construction on the grounds that such expansion would deprive the city of needed tax revenue. This fight was well recorded in Yale president Kingman Brewster’s archives, which also reveal how Yale saw its conflicting responsibilities towards the nation and towards the city.

On a brisk, November afternoon in 1968, John Ecklund, treasurer of Yale University, walked into New Haven Alderman Bartholomew Guida's office to meet the upstart legislator for the first time. Ecklund, one of the many self-described Protestant "patricians" on Yale President Kingman Brewster's staff, was already close to many of the Ivy-educated administrators working for the city. Indeed, Yale's Office of the Treasury had formed an intimate working relationship with Mayor Richard Lee's Redevelopment Agency, and in 1961, both had partnered to seek several million dollars in federal funds to assist Yale's construction of two new residential colleges on the site of several old high schools.¹ But Ecklund was not friends with Guida, who himself was anything but a patrician. A lower-middle class Italian-American Catholic who had lived in New Haven all of his life, Guida's political rhetoric had centered around "sticking it" to Yale, the tax-exempt university whose history in New Haven was as well-established as its trustees' bloodlines. In 1967, Guida had gone so far as to propose an amendment to New Haven's zoning ordinance to ensure that New Haven's institutions of higher education would "not gobble up taxable property and convert it to a nontaxable use."² So in 1968, as the university was again considering further expansion to prepare for the possible admission of women, President Brewster dispatched Ecklund to meet with Guida, the Board of Alderman's most visible critic of Yale.

This meeting was succinct. "If the University decided to 'take' twenty acres for a girls' college between Temple and Church Streets," Guida said, "this would be a very serious matter for the City of New

1 Douglas Rae, *City: Urbanism and Its End* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005), 322.

2 Representatives of Albertus Magnus, Berkeley Divinity School, Southern Connecticut State College, and Yale University to City Plan Commission, City of New Haven, memorandum, 17 Nov 1967 in the Kingman Brewster Jr. Presidential Papers, Series III, Box 107, Folder 19: "Guida Ordinance Regarding City of New Haven Planning, 1967," Yale University Manuscripts and Archives, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University.

Haven. It would be entirely fair for the Board of Aldermen to see the plans for this and consider the question.” And while Guida spoke highly of “the bright young men with planning training employed by the Redevelopment Agency,” Ecklund reported, “their ideas, although possibly very good for planning a new city on vacant land in Arizona, were not good for a city which is 300 years old and doesn’t want to be torn apart.”³

That 1968 exchange was one of the first in a series of engagements between Yale and the City of New Haven that culminated in outright political war. Yale would indeed seek land for new residential colleges, but in 1973, the Board of Aldermen would reject Yale’s proposal. The Board’s motive was fixing New Haven’s tax structure. Throughout its history, the state of Connecticut had allowed its municipalities to collect only property taxes for revenue. As New Haven’s industrial base moved to the suburbs in the late 1960s to escape the city’s high tax rates, however, the city government increasingly looked towards Yale’s tax-exempt endowment and property for remedies. Yale’s administration even agreed that the state’s property tax system was inherently inequitable, but the university left New Haven’s taxpayers to subsidize an institution whose exemption was granted by suburban state legislators.

As the largest property owner in the city after the municipal government, the University acknowledged that it had a civic responsibility as an “institutional citizen” to contribute to the welfare of its host city. But a confluence of detrimental economic conditions in the late 1960s pressured Yale to increase its revenue and compelled the state of Connecticut to recruit capital investment in its suburbs. Yale and the state therefore pursued their respective interests at New Haven’s expense: Yale wanted to earn the revenue it needed by expanding, while the resulting increase in municipal taxes and services—paid for by the urban residents who could not

3 John Ecklund to Kingman Brewster, memorandum regarding “Conference of JEE and Mr. Guida,” 12 Nov 1968 in the Kingman Brewster Jr. Presidential Papers, Series I, Box 199, Folder 6: “Treasurer’s Office: Guida Ordinance (1968),” Yale University Manuscripts and Archives, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University.

afford to move—would push urban industries towards Connecticut’s suburbs. The city would be left with no recourse but to subsidize its own deindustrialization. So in 1969, when the New Haven Board of Aldermen passed the so-called Guida Amendment that prevented Yale from expanding without aldermanic approval, and in 1973, when the Board followed by voting to reject Yale’s proposal to construct two new residential colleges near New Haven’s Whitney-Grove Business District, the city was not simply responding to concerns over the specifics of the two colleges. More generally, the city was reasserting its authority over its own capital controls to slow a process of suburbanization that the state was already facilitating.



The history of Yale’s engagement with the city of New Haven stretches back two hundred years before Bart Guida met with John Ecklund, as Yale’s unique position as a nationally oriented, publicly subsidized institution had long created a disjuncture between its international reputation and its civic responsibility of contributing to the welfare of its local environment. Despite its private management, Yale was born a public university. From the date of its incorporation in 1745, Yale enjoyed special tax exemptions, and until the twentieth century its most important source of revenue for the school was state legislative grants.⁴ Before the nineteenth century, in fact, many New Haven residents regarded Yale as a blessing. Unlike Harvard, many of Yale’s students were the children of farmers who could not expect to inherit family farms, and for the first century of Yale’s existence, between 74 and 94 percent of each year’s class came from

4 Peter Dobkin Hall, “Is Tax Exemption Intrinsic or Contingent?” in *Property-Tax Exemption for Charities: Mapping the Battlefield*, ed. Evelyn Brody (Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute Press, 2002), 257. In the 1792 Act of Union, for example, the state made a \$40,000 donation in exchange for Yale’s agreement to sit the Governor and Lieutenant Governor on its board of trustees as ex officio members.

the surrounding area and other parts of Connecticut.⁵ Even the students who were not from New Haven contributed to the benefits Yale provided the town, as many undergraduates obtained room and board in private rented quarters. Yale was the only non-municipal and non-ecclesiastical corporation in the entire colony, and the colonial legislature singled it out with special privileges, including tax exemption, for its public service.⁶ Although this cost Connecticut several thousand dollars in revenue, state and municipal governments in the eighteenth century were not expected to provide many public services anyway, so the loss did not affect many of the colony's citizens.

Through the nineteenth century, however, the benefits Yale provided New Haven became less easily discernable. Despite the rapid growth of New Haven's population during the Industrial Revolution, by 1820, less than 60 percent of Yale's students came from Connecticut, and by 1850 this figure dropped to 30 percent. As historian Peter Dobkin Hall writes, "Over the course of the 19th century, as more students came from out of town and out of state, and were steadily less willing to stay in the state, the public extending the tax subsidy was increasingly less likely to be the public benefiting from it."⁷

During this time, Yale remained physically small; most of the faculty lived in the city limits, and Yale's students still patronized boarding houses and restaurants. But in 1898, in an action that inaugurated many of the thematic disagreements that would reemerge in 1967, the University decided to use alumni donations to expand its dormitory and dining hall operations, threatening one of the main benefits Yale still provided the city. To preempt this expansion, New Haven's tax assessor challenged Yale's exemption on its already existing dining halls and dormitories in a case that went to the Connecticut Supreme Court in 1899.⁸

5 Hall, "Is Tax Exemption Intrinsic or Contingent?" 256-258.

6 Arnold Dana, *New Haven's Problems: Whither the City? All Cities?* (New Haven, CT: Tuttle, Morehouse & Taylor Co., 1937), 56.

7 Hall, "Is Tax Exemption Intrinsic or Contingent?" 261.

8 Ibid, 264-266. See *Yale University v. New Haven*, 71 Conn. 316, 332 (1899).

Attorneys for the city argued that Yale's dining halls and dormitories competed with local businesses and earned revenue for the university. They also contended that the operations raised the cost of attending the university, excluding the relatively poor New Haven residents from attending. Yale, in turn, argued that once land was used for the public good, any income it provided was simply an ancillary investment in the public service Yale offered.⁹ "The reason for treating this institution in an exceptional manner is that it contributes to the welfare of the State," Yale's lawyers argued. "Its function is largely a public function. Its work is done primarily, indeed, for individuals, but ultimately for the public good."¹⁰ Furthermore, the lawyers said, even if Yale provided no direct public service to its neighbors, Yale's presence alone brought business and investment to New Haven that would not otherwise exist. Such an argument was repeated often over the course of the next century, such as when one 1972 Yale student asked, "What would New Haven be without Yale, another Bridgeport?"¹¹

Echoing another theme that would become familiar, in 1899 the Connecticut Supreme Court adopted Yale's argument wholesale.¹² After the decision, Yale began a massive capital campaign

9 Thomas Krattenmaker, et al. *Report of the Mayor's Tax Exempt Property Study Commission, 1970*, (Hartford, CT: University of Connecticut School of Law, 1970), 10. See *Yale University v. New Haven*, 71 Conn. 316, 332 (1899): "The mere stuff of land and buildings is not subject of taxation, except as it may be the source of profit, present or prospective, to some person bound to contribute to the charges of government."

10 Quoted in Hall, "Is Tax Exemption Intrinsic or Contingent?" 266.

11 Bradley Graham, "Answer to the Tax Dilemma: Ask Uncle Sam to Pay," *Yale Daily News*, 9 October, 1972, 1.

12 See *Yale University v. New Haven*, 71 Conn. 316, 332 (1899). The 1899 Connecticut Supreme Court reaffirmed Yale's comprehensive tax exemption because "students' fees, whether apportioned from room rent or tuition, cannot be treated as income of real estate," and "land occupied and reasonably necessary for the plant of the College" was not "productive real estate within the meaning of the *proviso* in the Act of 1834." Also see *Corbin v. Baldwin*, 92 Conn. 99, 107 (1917): "[Tax exemptions] are not bestowed...as a matter of grace or favor....They are granted in aid of the accomplishment of a public benefit and for the advancement of the public interest." Also see

and expansionary binge that continued through the Depression. Yale quickly grew from its 1834-era eight acres with endowment funds aggregating less than \$100,000 to property worth more than \$10.4 million by 1911.¹³ In 1915, this figure climbed to \$12.2 million, and by 1936, Yale's property values ballooned to \$67.1 million, representing almost eight percent of New Haven's total area.¹⁴ Much of Yale's expansion, especially after it inaugurated its residential college system in 1933, was in New Haven's downtown business district, which actually began to shift southeast to accommodate Yale's purchases.¹⁵ Yet with an endowment growing towards \$100 million by 1937, Yale's expansion was not close to finished—even in the middle of the Depression. In one contemporary joke, which referenced the inscription on New Haven's Grove Street Cemetery that read, "The Dead Shall Be Raised," a Yale dean supposedly looked at the sign and remarked, "They certainly will be 'raised' whenever Yale needs the space for new buildings."¹⁶

As early as the 1930s, therefore, it was clear to many New Haven residents that Yale's expansion would threaten the future of New Haven's tax base, especially if the city remained tied to property taxes. Anticipating Bart Guida's campaign, in 1937 the mayor, city tax assessor and aldermanic president wrote a public letter to Yale, admitting "that the value of university buildings is far greater than

Yale v. New Haven, 17 Conn. Supp. 163, 176 (1951): "In our state, it has been held that the governing authorities of Yale University have a broad power in determining the use of the property for charter purposes."

13 Hall, "Is Tax Exemption Intrinsic or Contingent?" 268.

14 Dana, *New Haven's Problems*, 54, 7b

15 See Anson Phelps Stokes, *Yale and New Haven: A Study of the Taxation Question and of the Benefits Derived Locally from an Endowed University* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1920), 16. Stokes, a Yale alum, rationalized Yale's downtown purchases: "It should not be forgotten that Yale's location in what is now the heart of a large business community is an historical accident. The University did not come to the city and buy up property and then ask for tax exemption, but it grew up naturally at the center of a New England village and is as much responsible for the growth of that village into a city as is any other factor."

16 Dana, *New Haven's Problems*, 56.

the value of any that they may have replaced and in excess of the value of any that might have been erected there if Yale were not there,” and that a few residents did benefit from Yale’s services that were open to the public, such as Woolsey Hall and Sterling Memorial Library. But, the officials argued, “We submit that if Yale were not here, this land would probably be occupied by taxable buildings and the land would be taxable.” They concluded by pointing out that the number of residents who patronized Yale’s services “represent but a very small proportion of the people of this city who feel that their tax bill is increased by the presence of the university in this city. They are continually requesting city officials to obtain relief from the burden which they claim the Yale tax exemption places upon them.”¹⁷

This search for relief took many forms over the next forty years, but never came. It was largely abandoned in the 1940s and 1950s, when New Haven boomed thanks to its large weapons manufacturing sector. After the Korean War ended, however, these large manufacturers began relocating their operations to Connecticut’s suburbs, where tax rates were much lower. Between 1964 and 1974, manufacturers razed 44 buildings in downtown New Haven. Despite an influx of immigrants from Europe and black migrants from the South during World War II, the proportion of New Haven residents employed in manufacturing declined from 50 percent in 1950 to 31 percent in 1960 and to only 25 percent in 1971.¹⁸ The city was dealt its most devastating blow in 1965 when Winchester Repeating Arms Co., the largest employer in New Haven, decided to move its main production lines to its secondary plant in East Alton, Illinois.¹⁹

Even though the city and state subsidized Yale during its critical formative years, in the twentieth century Yale began to think of itself as a private institution meant to serve the entire nation—independent of its geographic commitments. Yale continued to expand as New Haven deindustrialized, and some city officials even helped secure the

17 “New Haven Presents Five Requests to Yale,” *New Haven Journal-Courier*, 8 May, 1937, 1.

18 Robert J. Leeney, *Elms, Arms & Ivy: New Haven in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven, CT: New Haven Colony Historical Society, 2000), 65-66.

19 *Ibid.*

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university with federal and municipal aid. Beginning in 1955, newly elected Mayor Richard Lee authorized the creation of a Redevelopment Agency, which solicited federal monies for highway construction, urban renewal and slum clearance projects that often took the form of new Yale property. Yale's art gallery (1957), ice rink (1957), Morse and Stiles colleges (1962), Art and Architecture Building (1963), and Beinecke Rare Book Library (1963) were all constructed with aid from New Haven and the federal government. Mayor Lee believed the side effects of Yale's growth and the transition of New Haven's industry to a service economy would save his "dying" city, and after Lyndon Johnson became president in 1963, Johnson even designated New Haven as the prototype for his new "Model Cities Program" to receive federal grants and subsidies.²⁰

Yet when Richard Nixon was elected president in 1968, these subsidies dramatically declined, and the state of Connecticut refused to compensate New Haven for the tax revenue it lost to Yale's expansion. In fact, Republican Governor Thomas Meskill actively wooed industry and capital to Connecticut's tax-friendly suburbs.²¹ The exempt portion of New Haven's grand list of taxable property increased from 27 percent in 1950 to 44 percent in 1970.²² Moreover, race riots plagued the city in the summers of 1967 and 1969, and unemployment due to manufacturing job cuts remained high. Many New Haven residents blamed the city's financial problems on the university's unrelenting tax-exempt expansion. In this context, in 1967, Alderman Bartholomew Guida proposed an amendment to New Haven's zoning ordinance to restrict any future expansion by Yale or any other tax-exempt university.



Bart Guida was a quiet but influential politician. A New

20 Ibid, 58-59.

21 Ibid, 74.

22 Hall, "Is Tax Exemption Intrinsic or Contingent?" 275.

Haven native and son of a career Democratic Party worker, Guida was elected alderman seven times,²³ and by November 1968 he had positioned himself to become president of the Board of Alderman.²⁴ Guida also was very close with Arthur T. Barbieri, the Democratic Town Committee chairman who dominated the coalition of Italian, Irish, Jewish, and “patrician” politicians that composed New Haven’s one-party government. Barbieri had worked closely with Lee in the 1950s to assemble this broad ethnic and working-class coalition that broke the longstanding feud between New Haven’s Democratic-leaning Irish and Republican-leaning Italian populations.²⁵ According to historian Douglas Rae, Barbieri was so successful that when his chosen candidate Guida successfully ran for mayor in 1969, “A half-serious joke from the period held that Barbieri had bragged of his own power to make *anyone* mayor, and set out to prove the point with Guida’s candidacy.”²⁶

On October 2, 1967, Guida proposed an ordinance to repeal the parts of New Haven’s 1963 zoning ordinances that permitted all uses of land by public and private colleges and universities. Guida hoped to replace these clauses with amendments that required “A Special Permit...subject to the approval of a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the Board of Alderman...for the expansion of any such institutions and/or connected uses in existence at the effective date hereof.”²⁷ His intent was to apply aldermanic oversight to Yale’s rapid expansion; even though Yale had cooperated with New Haven’s Redevelopment Agency and City Plan Commission for years, Guida and many of his colleagues saw these agencies as Yale-controlled. As Barbieri told Yale’s treasurer in a meeting, “the simple truth is that the Board of Aldermen do not trust the City Plan Commission...the City Plan

23 Leeney, *Elms, Arms & Ivy*, 74.

24 Ecklund to Brewster, memorandum regarding “Conference of JEE and Mr. Guida,” 12 Nov 1968.

25 Rae, *City: Urbanism and Its End*, 294.

26 *Ibid.*, 407.

27 Representatives of Albertus Magnus, Berkeley Divinity School, Southern Connecticut State College, and Yale University to City Plan Commission, City of New Haven, memorandum, 17 Nov 1967.

Poison Ivy

Commission on too many occasions has lied...to the Board of the Alderman.”²⁸ Guida wanted to reassert control over the institutions he believed were “gobbling up” taxable property.²⁹

Representatives of Yale University, along with three other New Haven schools, vociferously attacked the proposed amendments as “standardless,” contrary to “good zoning practice,” and most importantly, “illegal.” In a letter to the City Plan Commission, the representatives argued that “The purpose of the Amendments is to enable such growth [of New Haven’s four colleges] to be blocked altogether by political means when desired for political purposes,” in contrast with the fair zoning practices that existed already. Not only did the amendments violate fundamental state policy, the representatives argued, but they were unconstitutional as well. “The ‘equal protection of the laws’ is guaranteed to New Haven’s Four Colleges, as it is to all citizens, by the Fourteenth Amendment of the United States Constitution...The Amendments would violate these Constitution[al] guarantees,” they wrote. Referencing relevant Connecticut Supreme Court cases, the representatives wrote that New Haven had no right to treat institutions of higher education differently than any other public service:

“The amendments classify New Haven’s Four Colleges separately from elementary and secondary schools, private and public, although there is no fair basis whatever for such discrimination. Beyond this, they classify New Haven’s Four Colleges separately from churches, synagogues, hospitals, community centers, and other beneficial nonprofit activities to which the

28 John Ecklund to Kingman Brewster, memorandum regarding “Conference of JEE and Mr. Barbieri,” 12 Nov 1968 in the Kingman Brewster Jr. Presidential Papers, Series I, Box 199, Folder 6: “Treasurer’s Office: Guida Ordinance (1968),” Yale University Manuscripts and Archives, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University.

29 Representatives of Albertus Magnus, Berkeley Divinity School, Southern Connecticut State College, and Yale University to City Plan Commission, City of New Haven, memorandum, 17 Nov 1967.

policy of nontaxation extends. This discrimination, proposed by the Amendments, is arbitrary and unreasonable, and is therefore unconstitutional.”³⁰

This argument presumed that Yale and New Haven’s colleges were “institutional citizens” who provided a similar public service to the city of New Haven as hospitals or churches—a presumption with which Guida and his allies explicitly disagreed.

In a public hearing before the City Plan Commission on February 19, 1968, Guida defended his proposed “Guida Amendment,” arguing that there seemed “to be little reason why the citizens of New Haven should be obliged to support Yale University through additional tax payments.” He acknowledged “the great public interest in quality education,” but contended there was “a greater public interest in community financial stability.”³¹ Nevertheless, the City Plan Commission advised the Board of Aldermen to table the amendment, citing “critical legal defects”: “Nowhere in the proposed ordinance are any standards set up to guide the Board of Aldermen in these matters so that it operates under uniform rules....the absence of standards is alone sufficient to settle the question of legality or illegality.”³² The Commission did, however, encourage the city to further investigate the fiscal relationship between Yale and the city of New Haven, noting, “While colleges and universities make many contributions to the life of the community, their development

30 Representatives of Albertus Magnus, Berkeley Divinity School, Southern Connecticut State College, and Yale University to City Plan Commission, City of New Haven, memorandum, 17 Nov 1967.

31 “Hearing of Aldermanic Committee on Legislation, February 19, 1968 – Alderman Guida’s Proposal to Create Special Permit Procedure for Colleges and Universities,” memorandum, 19 February, 1968 in the Kingman Brewster Jr. Presidential Papers, Series I, Box 199, Folder 6: “Treasurer’s Office: Guida Ordinance (1968),” Yale University Manuscripts and Archives, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University.

32 “Report No. 628-2” (report, New Haven City Plan Commission, New Haven, CT, 25 January, 1968) in the Kingman Brewster Jr. Presidential Papers, Series I, Box 108, Folder 1: “Guida Petition – Zoning 1968,” Yale University Manuscripts and Archives, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University.

programs can create difficult problems for the City, such as the impact upon residential neighborhoods, commercial districts, transportation, and the City's tax base."³³ Accordingly, on June 3, the ordinance was tabled and revised, and on October 9, one month before Guida met with Yale's treasurer for the first time, the revised ordinance was referred back to the Committee on Legislation.³⁴

The contest between Guida and Yale became increasingly urgent as Yale faced a "financial crisis" of its own: one of its first budget deficits in the university's history. Yale had prospered even during the Great Depression, building its first nine residential colleges in the 1930s, but by 1968, the University was spending almost one million dollars more than it earned. Even though Yale's 1968 endowment of \$545.7 million was the highest in its history, as a service institution whose costs primarily came in the form of wages and services, the University was particularly vulnerable to inflation. Increasing expenses during the late 1960s dramatically outpaced Yale's revenue, which actually declined in 1969 and 1970 because of fewer alumni contributions. Alumni "recoiled" in reaction to Kingman Brewster's controversial proposals to reduce legacy admissions and admit women to increase revenue and compete with its archrival, the co-educational Harvard.³⁵ Then, in April 1970, "alumni outrage exploded" in reaction to Brewster's statements perceived as sympathetic to the Black Panthers then on trial in New Haven.³⁶ To compensate, Yale cut back on costs, dropping almost two hundred faculty positions. The university also experimented with new forms of revenue, preparing to

33 Ibid.

34 "JIL" to Charles Schenck III, legal representative of Yale University, memorandum, 16 October, 1968, in the Kingman Brewster Jr. Presidential Papers, Series I, Box 108, Folder 1: "Guida Petition - Zoning 1968," Yale University Manuscripts and Archives, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University.

35 Jerome Karabel, *The Chosen: The Hidden History of Admission and Exclusion at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 2005) 416 -20. According to Karabel, Yale's all male character was seen as a serious setback in competition for students with Harvard and in light of the nascent feminist movement.

36 Ibid., 453, 456.

increase its student body by admitting women.³⁷ With fewer professors and more students, however, complaints of overcrowding and too few resources plagued the university.

A potential solution for this crisis came in the form of two new residential colleges that could relieve overcrowding and allow Yale to generate more revenue through tuition. Many male students and alumni worried that proposals of coeducation without increasing the size of Yale's campus would lead to the annual admission of fewer than the "magic number" of 1000 male leaders "required" for Yale to function. "More girls means fewer boys," one *Yale Daily News* reporter wrote, "which in turn puts pressure on a few documented male strongholds, such as the football field and the fields of science and engineering. But the addition of two new colleges could take care of this problem quite nicely. With enough girls and boys to go around, everyone would be happy."³⁸ Indeed, as another YDN article reported in 1973, the idea of using two additional residential colleges to house more students "must be viewed as [an effort] to generate new sources of income."³⁹

Unfortunately for Yale, New Haven was also looking for new sources of income. Facing a severe budget deficit in November 1968, five months after the Commission meeting, Alderman Guida met with John Ecklund, Yale's treasurer, to discuss how the Board of Aldermen could cooperate with Yale to address both institutions' financial problems. "Yale need have no fear of the Board of Aldermen," Guida told Ecklund. "In exercising the powers under the Ordinance, [we] wished only to be entirely reasonable...anything reasonable that Yale wanted to do would be approved." Ecklund, meanwhile, argued that New Haven's financial well being depended on the continued eminence of Yale. Without a "very large" financial gift or cooperation from the city, Yale could not afford to purchase any new taxable property to house women, which in turn would decrease Yale's ability

37 Hunt Williams, "History of Yale's Financial Crisis," *Yale Daily News*, 13 April, 1973, 4.

38 Dave Lichten, "City Balks at Colleges; Yale Faces Design Fight," *Yale Daily News*, 31 January, 1973, 5.

39 Hunt Williams, "History of Yale's Financial Crisis," 4.

to contribute to the city. "Yale is a great help to New Haven now, but if the general opinion of the country were that 'Yale is slipping,'" Ecklund reported, "this would not at all be the case."⁴⁰

In the meeting, Ecklund tried to mollify Guida's worry that Yale would expand at the city's expense, telling the alderman, "Yale cannot 'take' land...Yale has to buy it, and [you] would be familiar with the fact that people [are] not averse to asking high prices of Yale."⁴¹ As Ecklund spoke, however, Yale was, in fact, furtively preparing to receive a "very large" gift to expand its student body and compensate for declining revenue. To avoid paying the artificially inflated prices developers expected of Yale, the treasury office had set up a front company, WTG Inc., to purchase land near New Haven's rundown Whitney-Grove Business District. "When dealing with high-priced property, it is wise to keep your activities private," explained Spencer Miller, associate treasurer of the University, to the *Yale Daily News* in 1972. "Yale is especially vulnerable when the seller knows we need a particular piece of land."⁴² Later that year, a wealthy benefactor, John Hay Whitney, donated \$15 million for the express purpose of housing women. "With the aftermath of the admission of women and the subsequent overcrowding," President Kingman Brewster later explained, "Mr. Whitney wanted to ensure that Yale could still count on the college system."⁴³ When John Hay Whitney's gift to the University was made public in the fall of 1970, Yale recognized that it faced an uphill battle in convincing the city legislature to approve the construction of its two new residential colleges. Indeed, members the Board of Aldermen passed a revised version of the Guida Amendment that gave the aldermen authority to reject new construction by New Haven's universities,⁴⁴ and bluntly told Yale representatives that they

40 Ecklund to Brewster, memorandum regarding "Conference of JEE and Mr. Guida," 12 Nov 1968.

41 Ibid.

42 Quoted in Robert Sullwold, "Yale Landholding Up \$7.5M in 10 Years," *Yale Daily News*, 5 December, 1972, 1.

43 Quoted in Stephen Hagan, "Yale Officials Unveil New College Designs," *Yale Daily News*, 15 September, 1972, 1.

44 John Ecklund to Kingman Brewster, memorandum regarding "Guida

would reject all expansion proposals until Yale was willing to pay the city payments in lieu of taxes.⁴⁵ Even worse for Yale, Bartholomew Guida was also elected New Haven's mayor that fall.⁴⁶ In one of the final acts of his administration, Mayor Richard Lee created the Tax Exempt Property Study Commission to research the effects of Yale's tax exemption on New Haven's budget.⁴⁷ Kingman Brewster responded by authorizing Yale's own committee to study the effect of Yale's tax exemption on the city of New Haven.



"Predictably," Yale's secretary of town-gown relations, Henry "Sam" Chauncey, wrote in 1976, "the [studies] resulted in Yale calculating that it did more for New Haven than New Haven provided for Yale, and the City feeling that the reverse was true."⁴⁸ In its own study, Yale's economists used three arguments to justify both Yale's tax exemption and its refusal to pay the city payments in lieu of taxes for the residential colleges. First, they argued, Yale and other tax exempt institutions provided services that would otherwise be provided publicly and financed through taxation. Thanks to Yale, all New Haven residents had free access to world-class libraries, museums, and art galleries, and Yale's post-secondary educational programs, mental

Ordinance," 5 May, 1969, in the Kingman Brewster Jr. Presidential Papers, Series I, Box 199, Folder 7: "Treasurer's Office - Guida Ordinance," Yale University Manuscripts and Archives, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University.

45 Sam Chauncey, "Yale and New Haven - 1976," memorandum, 10 March, 1976 in the Kingman Brewster Jr. Presidential Papers, Series III, Box 365, Folder 16: "Town Gown, 1975-1976," Yale University Manuscripts and Archives, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University.

46 Rae, City: *Urbanism and Its End*, 410.

47 Steven A. Wareck, "Consultant's Conclusions, Comments, and Recommendations" (unpublished manuscript: New Haven Revenue Commission: 1985), 16.

48 Ibid.

health programs, and day care centers constituted direct public services often provided by state governments. "It could certainly be argued that in Yale's absence the city would not necessarily provide all the services Yale currently provides," the authors wrote. But "at a minimum, it seems highly probable that if Yale were not in the community, the city of New Haven would have to spend a good deal more than it now does on health, education, and day care services."⁴⁹

Second, these public services, which the economists accounted at a value of \$4.5 million annually, came at "a total cost in excess of any seemingly defensible tax assessment that might be placed on the university." While Yale did consume city services such as fire protection and sewage, these represented a very low cost for the city: slightly over 1 percent of the city's total budget and less than 6 percent of the cost to the city of all identifiable direct services.⁵⁰

Third, and most important, the economists argued, the problems caused by Yale's tax exemption had less to do with Yale itself than with Connecticut's tax policies. "The state government, and not the city government, is the prime beneficiary" of Yale's public services, yet the state did not pay New Haven anything for the municipality's subsidization of Yale's exemption. Instead, *government* immunity from property taxation had actually led to an oversupply of public capital facilities in New Haven, meaning that the numerous state agencies with buildings in New Haven represented an even bigger threat to the city's tax base than Yale. So not only were New Haven residents footing the bill for Yale's exemption, they argued, but, more generally, they were subsidizing state activities that Connecticut's suburban residents did not have to pay for.

New Haven's Tax Exempt Property Student Commission,

49 Robert A. Leone and John R. Meyer, "Tax Exemption and the Local Property Tax," in *Local Public Finance and the Fiscal Squeeze: A Case Study*, eds. John R. Meyer and John M. Quigley (New Haven, CT: Ballinger Publishing Company, 1977), 50-51. This book comprises a collection of papers from a seminar sponsored by the Institution for Social and Policy Studies at Yale University and the Yale Law School, held during the academic years 1971-72 and 1972-73.

50 Ibid, 48, 50.

led by a team of University of Connecticut law professors, in some respects agreed with this conclusion, noting that “The failure of the city’s revenue system to generate adequate funds is due, in part, to the availability of only one substantially productive tax—the property tax. In addition, the base on which that tax is levied is substantially diminished by the exemption of large amounts of property by state statute.”⁵¹ But even if one assumed that Yale did provide direct public services to the residents of New Haven, they wrote, the city’s fiscal load was unfair. “While it may be true that certain activities should be tax-exempt because they provide public benefits, this does not justify the current Connecticut practice of placing the entire burden of those exemptions on only one of the localities they serve.”⁵² Residents of New Haven’s suburbs who benefitted from Yale’s presence without subsidizing Yale’s tax exemption were essentially throwing “the burden of its public protection and the support of its employees wholly on the citizens who happen[ed] to reside nearest to it.”⁵³ Yale’s tax exemption was unjust, the commission concluded, but “rather than attempting to use the coercive force of the law to exact taxes from tax-exempt organizations in the city,” the mayor and others should petition Yale and Connecticut to make payments in lieu of taxes to municipalities to compensate them for their lost revenue.⁵⁴ “We do urge the City to the extent it suggests legislative reform of the exemption system, to seek the most equitable system possible. That goal is not inconsistent with, and in some cases it is coterminous with, the goal of higher revenue.”⁵⁵

Accordingly, Guida, Barbieri, and other New Haven representatives petitioned the state for comprehensive tax reform, but met stiff resistance from suburban legislators. In 1969, for example, when House Democrats proposed a state personal income and

51 Thomas Krattenmaker, et al. *Report of the Mayor’s Tax Exempt Property Study Commission*, 1970, (Hartford, CT: University of Connecticut School of Law, 1970), 1.

52 Ibid, 183.

53 Ibid, 181.

54 Ibid, 181, 143.

55 Ibid, 174.

payroll tax to mitigate cities' dependence on property taxation, the state's manufacturing interests brought "unconscionable pressure" on House leaders to have the proposals killed.⁵⁶ In 1971, Guida coauthored six different bills to be introduced to the State Committee on Finance, ranging from reimbursing municipalities for tax exempt organizations to allowing municipalities to tax nonresident users of exempt institutions.⁵⁷ Guida also kept his gaze turned toward Yale, writing in a letter to New Haven's Democratic residents, "I have started the battle and will continue this fight to make Yale pay their fair share for the services we render them. This can and will be accomplished through my personal perseverance."⁵⁸ In a 1971 letter to Kingman Brewster, Guida explicitly charged the University with benefiting nonresidents of New Haven more than the people who were subsidizing the school and asked the President to join his "broad base support" for a program "to accomplish a more equitable distribution of the tax burden."⁵⁹ After a meeting with the President and other members of the Yale Corporation that October, Guida and the University even agreed to cooperate to petition for legislative tax reform. "With your help," Guida wrote, "this can be a landmark in achieving a more equitable society."⁶⁰

56 James Mutrie, Jr., "Assembly Democrats Split Wide on Taxes," *New Haven Journal-Courier*, 24 May, 1969, 1-2.

57 "Bills No. 7122 and 7110, Introduced by Rep 110th, Ref. to Committee on Finance (January Session, 1971)," in the Kingman Brewster Jr. Presidential Papers, Series II, Box 303, Folder 5: "Mayor Bartholomew Guida (1971)," Yale University Manuscripts and Archives, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University.

58 Bartholomew Guida, "Dear Fellow Democrat..." memorandum, in the Kingman Brewster Jr. Presidential Papers, Series II, Box 303, Folder 5: "Mayor Bartholomew Guida (1971)," Yale University Manuscripts and Archives, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University.

59 Bartholomew Guida to Kingman Brewster, memorandum, 19 March, 1971, in the Kingman Brewster Jr. Presidential Papers, Series II, Box 303, Folder 5: "Mayor Bartholomew Guida (1971)," Yale University Manuscripts and Archives, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University.

60 Bartholomew Guida, "Press Release for 11:55 AM, Saturday, October 9, 1971, by the Office of the Mayor of New Haven," memorandum, 9 October, 1971,

Despite these agreements, however, Guida was not supportive of Yale's attempt to build two new residential colleges in the fall of 1972. Yale had purchased the land for the colleges in the late 1960s on the corner of Whitney Ave and Grove Street, a relatively rundown neighborhood between Yale's Timothy Dwight College and one of New Haven's business districts. In September 1972, Yale announced its planned designs for the colleges: two massive brick towers with wall-length glass windows and elevated Astroturf courtyards.⁶¹ In planning the colleges, Yale had worked closely with the City Plan Commission, making several key concessions, including a taxable commercial arcade on the colleges' street side.⁶² Yet at a December meeting with the commission to discuss the final design, the commission complained that the proposed amount of commercial space, parking places, and delivery room were inadequate to maintain the taxable base over the entire site.⁶³ The commission therefore recommended to the Board of Aldermen that they reject Yale's proposals if they did not change before the scheduled hearing in March.

Yale went forward with its proposal in 1973 knowing that the tax issue alone did not constitute sufficient legal grounds for a denial of a zoning charge.⁶⁴ Yet the Board of Aldermen, in a crafty strategic maneuver, subverted this legal obstacle by publically objecting not to Yale's tax exemptions, but to superficial issues concerning the colleges' layout and aesthetics. "The only indication I have [about the aldermen's position] is that parking is a major problem," the special

in the Kingman Brewster Jr. Presidential Papers, Series II, Box 303, Folder 5: "Mayor Bartholomew Guida (1971)," Yale University Manuscripts and Archives, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University.

- 61 Many Yale students were thrilled by the design, even though a small coalition of professors and residents were determined to make Yale preserve a Civil War-era house on the site of the proposed colleges. See Stephen Hagan, "Proposed College Design Meets Mounting Protest," *Yale Daily News*, 4 October, 1972, 1.
- 62 Dave Lichten, "Misunderstanding on Taxes Could Stall New Colleges," *Yale Daily News*, 6 December, 1972, 1.
- 63 Dave Lichten, "New Colleges Get Icy City Response," *Yale Daily News*, 8 December, 1972, 1.
- 64 Dave Lichten, "City Balks at Colleges; Yale Faces Design Fight," 5.

assistant to Yale's president told reporters in February.⁶⁵

Yet at the last minute, days before the scheduled March 5 vote, Yale agreed to allow the city to tax the land under the proposed residential colleges—but not the buildings themselves—demonstrating the hidden relevance of the tax problem. This was a precedent-shattering agreement, but also one in a series of concessions by Yale since Guida had been elected mayor. From March 1970 to 1972, the city had added more than \$4 million in Yale properties to its grand list of taxable property, including the Yale University Press, the Yale Golf Course, and the Ingalls ice rink.⁶⁶ Yale also claimed the Whitney-Grove area, once developed, would provide an increase in tax yield of over 50 percent its present value and generate over \$500,000 annually from the new students in the area.⁶⁷

Nevertheless, at the March 5 vote, the New Haven Board of Alderman rejected Yale's plan by a vote of 15-10. Many aldermen took the vote as an opportunity to air their grievances about Yale's policy towards the city. One city official afterwards told reporters, "There was an air of the battle. Even if Yale had made major concessions along the way, the sentiment to 'get Yale' was very strong at the highest levels of the city administration."⁶⁸ Edward Piazza, an alderman who rejected the plan, rejoiced, "We will no longer be subservient to Yale's high-handed methods and pressure,"⁶⁹ and asserted that Yale's concession on the tax issue was inadequate so long as Yale did not also pay for property taxes and city services on its existing property.⁷⁰ Fred Wilson, a black alderman, argued in defense of his negative vote that "the question is whether poor working people will continue to

65 Dave Lichten, "Aldermen Review Colleges; Report Is Still Unfavorable," *Yale Daily News*, 6 February, 1973, 4.

66 "Yale Concedes on Land Tax, Says Won't Build Colleges if City Rejects Current Plan," *Yale Daily News*, 2 March, 1973, 1.

67 Ibid, 5.

68 Stephen Hagan, "Yale vs. the City: Who Won?" *Yale Daily News*, 6 March, 1973, 1.

69 Bruce Howard, "Who's To Blame?" *Yale Daily News*, 12 March, 1973, 2.

70 Dave Lichten, "Aldermen Turn Down Two New Colleges Citing Unresolved Design, Tax Problem," *Yale Daily News*, 6 March, 1973.

subsidize rich kids for their education.”⁷¹ And even some Yale students agreed that the aldermen’s rejection of Yale’s expansion on principle was honorable. “Well, the unthinkable has finally happened,” one student editorialized in the YDN. “Yale has been brought to an abrupt halt in its seemingly inexorable campaign to bury New Haven in ivy.”⁷²

Many aldermen encouraged Yale to amend and resubmit its proposal before the final deadline of mid-April, but it was clear that the city wanted more from Yale than just better-looking colleges. Alderman Edward Rubino, who had cited design problems in his opposition to the colleges, told reporters that he and many of his fellow aldermen were not satisfied with Yale’s position on paying for the cost of city services. “I personally would look much more kindly on the whole situation if they (Yale) made an offer to the city to pay their fair share on sewerage,” he said.⁷³ LeRoy Jones, Mayor Guida’s top aide, even suggested that an arbitrarily computed annual donation of \$500,000 for city services would lead to a quick resolution. But while Yale President Kingman Brewster agreed to support state legislation that would provide a formula whereby cities could levy such service charges on tax-exempt institutions, he worried about the dangerous precedent of making “an extra-legal lump sum payment to the city in order to gain aldermanic approval.”⁷⁴ Brewster argued Yale would be happy to pay for city services, but only after a state mandate provided standards. As Alderman Stuart Miller, an ally of the University, told reporters, “I don’t think there are any aldermen opposed to the two colleges; they just want to shake Yale down for more money.”⁷⁵

So when Yale resubmitted its unchanged proposal in April, the aldermen again rejected it, this time by a vote of 17-12. Yale’s allies thought it was “blatantly obvious” that the city was holding out

71 Ibid, 4.

72 Peter Heap, “The Aldermen As Saviors?” *Yale Daily News*, 9 March, 1973, 2.

73 Dave Lichten, “Yale Gets Second Try on Colleges; Rules Fight May Prevent Approval,” *Yale Daily News*, 2 April, 1973, 1.

74 John Yandell, “Brewster Names Group to Study Other Housing,” *Yale Daily News*, 4 April, 1973, 1.

75 Dave Lichten, “Aldermen Say No Again to Yale’s New Colleges,” *Yale Daily News*, 3 April, 1973, 1.

for more money, “whether Yale wants to call it taxes or something else.”⁷⁶ Yet Yale also began to publicly recognize the role it had to play in New Haven politics if it ever wanted the support of its aldermen in the future. New Haven “depends not only on its citizens, but also upon the regard with which it is held by its privileged University citizens,” Kingman Brewster told listeners at the Park Plaza Hotel, days after the vote.⁷⁷ Yale began looking to house its growing student body with private boarders, such as the Holiday Inn and the Taft Hotel, which would benefit local businesses.⁷⁸ And even though the University continued to oppose state bills proposed by Mayor Guida that would force it to pay property taxes or for “standby services” such as fire protection, Yale officials developed a new attitude towards New Haven in the years after the residential college controversy.⁷⁹ As Sam Chauncey reflected in 1976, “Yale has not been as good an institutional citizen of New Haven as it might be,” but “it is in Yale’s self-interest to be a good institutional citizen.” Otherwise, Yale might “be surrounded by a ghetto.”⁸⁰

Yale’s shifting institutional stance towards New Haven effectively undermined the “stick it to Yale” posturing of Bart Guida and his allies, and Yale finally began to cooperate with the city to petition the state for redress. In 1975, Guida was handed a series of political defeats when the Connecticut Superior Court declared the Guida Amendment illegal,⁸¹ the owner of the Winchester Arms company moved its remaining gun plant out of New Haven,⁸² and

76 Yandell, “Brewster Names Group to Study Other Housing,” 1-4.

77 Robert Sullwold, “Chafee: Yale, City Symbiotic,” *Yale Daily News*, 5 April, 1973, 1.

78 “Rooms: The Hunt Is On,” *Yale Daily News*, 10 April, 1973, 1.

79 Robert Sullwold, “The Colleges Proposal: Returning to Life?” *Yale Daily News*, 18 April, 1973, 1.

80 Sam Chauncey, “Yale and New Haven – 1976,” memorandum, 10 March, 1976.

81 Bruce Landis, “Court Invalidates ‘Guida Amendment,’” *New Haven Journal-Courier*, 19 March, 1975, 1.

82 Bruce Landis, “Guida’s Future May Hinge on Olin Proposal,” *New Haven Journal-Courier*, 24 March, 1975, 1.

Guida lost a narrow primary to the pro-Yale alderman Frank Logue. Logue, who had run on a platform of establishing free trade zones in the land around the New Haven harbor,⁸³ was much less hostile to Yale than Guida had been, and his administration worked with Yale officials to petition the state for PILOTs to reimburse cities for university tax exemptions. Sam Chauncey also hoped to enlist the business community in Yale's cooperation with the city, privately writing that "if Yale can find a way to be a partner in economic development, it could channel its own resources into a program over which it would have some supervision, rather than just putting dollars into a City exchequer where the decisions as to how it might be used could be disputed."⁸⁴ For the next three years, Logue led a series of meetings with representatives of tax-exempt institutions from around the state to generate support for his bill. Kingman Brewster, for his part, met with legislators in the state finance committee such as Yale alum and state senator Joseph Lieberman.⁸⁵ In 1978, under intense pressure by urban legislators, labor groups, and nonprofit officials, the state legislature finally passed the College and Hospital PILOT Program, which planned to reimburse cities for 25 percent of the value of their nonprofit tax exemptions.⁸⁶ Unfortunately, however, the legislature did not make the necessary appropriations to cover this commitment, and in 1982, when New Haven was due to receive \$5.2 million from the state, it actually received only \$3.2 million.⁸⁷

83 Frank Logue, "Logue Outlines Goals for City," *New Haven Journal-Courier*, 28 January, 1976, 1.

84 Sam Chauncey, "Yale and New Haven - 1976," memorandum, 10 March, 1976.

85 Jose Cabranes to Kingman Brewster, memorandum regarding "Legislation Proposed by the City of New Haven," 10 March, 1977, in the Kingman Brewster Jr. Presidential Papers, Series III, Box 365, Folder 16: "Town Gown, 1975-1976," Yale University Manuscripts and Archives, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University.

86 Nicholas R. Carbone and Evelyn Brody, "PILOTs: Hartford and Connecticut," in *Property-Tax Exemption for Charities: Mapping the Battlefield*, ed. Evelyn Brody (Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute Press, 2002), 242.

87 Hall, "Is Tax Exemption Intrinsic or Contingent?" 282.



Connecticut's 1978 legislation demonstrated that the state of Connecticut, once pressured, was willing to take at least some responsibility for the problems of its citizens. It also demonstrated that Yale and New Haven could work together around a common issue—fixing Connecticut's inequitable tax structure—when it became necessary to cooperate. But the legislation also brings to question why Yale and New Haven did not cooperate in 1971 when Bart Guida first proposed such legislation, and why instead the city and university scrapped for two years as Yale tried to construct two new residential colleges.

As a university in an imagined landscape of virtual seclusion from its immediate municipal responsibilities, Yale considered itself part of both New Haven and a larger, more important Ivy-League neighborhood, in which it constantly competed for students and revenue. More than anything, Yale did not want to be caught “slipping,” and the university was determined to ensure that its quest for glory would continue to be publicly subsidized. So when presented with a dilemma with its residential colleges in 1972—fight the city, or set a precedent for paying the city “extra-legal” lump sums for redevelopment projects that would be out of Yale's control—Yale took the former option, arguing that it needed to expand to fulfill its role as a national educational leader and would not be extorted by city leaders.

From New Haven's perspective, however, Yale's national preeminence came at the cost of its civic responsibilities. Bart Guida truly believed that the massive fiscal problems faced by his city government and the taxpayers of New Haven “must be laid at the conscience of the governing body of Yale University,” and he demanded that someone, be it Yale or Connecticut's legislature, take responsibility for the state's inequitable tax system.⁸⁸ Guida's forcefulness put Yale in a

88 Guida, “Press Release for 11:55 AM, Saturday, October 9, 1971, by the Office of the Mayor of New Haven,” memorandum, 9 October, 1971.

position where it had to argue that its public responsibility to the state was more important than its civic responsibilities to New Haven, even though these two responsibilities were never irreconcilable. Indeed, throughout the fight, both Yale and New Haven recognized that the city was subsidizing a state institution that primarily benefitted nonresidents of New Haven, so if Yale could not afford to pay taxes, the state was the real source of the town-gown conflict.

The conflict over the residential colleges thereby showed that despite the fact that Yale and New Haven were natural allies in favor of a more equitable tax system, Yale and Connecticut were more effective allies in fulfilling the direct needs of the university and the state. To meet its own financial crisis, Yale needed to expand to appeal to its alumni and male student body, while legislators in the state of Connecticut wanted to appease their own manufacturing patrons who favored low suburban taxes. So long as the city government lacked the power to control its own tax rates, therefore, the state and university could force the city to subsidize their own capital gains. The residential college conflict must therefore be looked at as an attempt by New Haven to reassert its authority over its own economy, rather than a simple fight over the residential colleges' architectural designs.

The solution that Yale and New Haven came up with—state PILOTs—thus did not represent a shift in the balance of university, state, and municipal power as much as a continued assertion of state and university power over cities, relaxed to provide cities with a minimum standard of revenue. Yale never planned to give the city free reign to plan its own redevelopment. Nor was it interested in partnering with the city to promote both municipal prosperity and university growth. Throughout the history of redevelopment in New Haven, Yale administrators insisted on playing a controlling rather than collaborative role. As Sam Chauncey wrote in 1976, Yale wanted to maintain its supervision over the course of future urban renewal. Indeed, once Yale began its own PILOT program to the city in the early 1990s, Yale sponsored redevelopment programs that directly benefited the university, turning the Whitney-Grove site, for example, into a strip of arts and food establishments that could be patronized by students and Yale administrators. The state of Connecticut,

meanwhile, used its PILOT legislation as a mere guideline to decide how much money it would grant cities every year. As demonstrated in 1982, the state paid its cities far less than the amount of money cities lose by subsidizing the state's tax exempt institutions.

So while Yale and the state may not have actively colluded to render the city's tax collecting abilities ineffective, they did both condone a regressive tax structure that punished the urban residents who lived within New Haven's borders. And even though the Board of Aldermen won a "victory" by preventing Yale from expanding, the municipal legislators were unable to leverage their power to persuade Yale to pay for property taxes or city services. When Yale wanted to influence state policy, as when Kingman Brewster got involved lobbying state legislators and U.S. senators, Yale was very effective. But, consistent with the trajectory of an institutional citizen that increasingly located its "residence" in a national or even international sphere, Yale chose to fulfill its civic responsibilities very selectively. This reflected a pattern of retreat from Yale's historic sense of civic responsibility on which New Haven had depended, and helps explain the conflict between Yale and New Haven in the 1970s.

Yale's limited sense of obligation to its physical home was set in motion by the late nineteenth century. Yale's decisions—whether to expand its own dormitories and dining facilities, to recruit students from outside of Connecticut, or to lobby against payment of property taxes—consistently blocked revenue streams on which local entrepreneurs had depended and created an asymmetry between the local community whose residents increasingly subsidized the school and the national and international community whose children increasingly benefited from it. Yale was determined to "bury New Haven in ivy" in order to keep its Ivy-League reputation. But the state also failed to use its resources to promote comprehensive reform towards a fair tax system, such as a statewide income or payroll tax, so Yale and Connecticut suburbanites continued to prosper at the expense of Connecticut's cities. Unfortunately, Yale's claim of institutional citizenship fell flat when its most immediate neighbors saw its ivy-covered walls as a site of municipal poison rather than shared promise. *T*

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Museums and Memory: “Remembering Slavery” at the Slave Lodge

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ABSTRACT

Museums presenting a complex history to the public are challenged to satisfy a multitude of voices in shaping exhibits to represent a collective identity of a community. This paper explores the historical and political significance of the Slave Lodge, a museum in Cape Town, South Africa by focusing on its exhibition “Remembering Slavery.” The paper reveals South Africa’s difficulties in translating the desired “rainbow nation” image into reality and its struggles to represent contested histories and identities. While creating an exhibit representing a community’s identity is possible, the process is slow and hampered by constraints out of the museum’s control.

INTRODUCTION¹

In South Africa, projects in nation-building have struggled with the burdens of race and history since the end of apartheid in 1994.² In particular, South African museums have sometimes faced difficult historical questions of how the past should be interpreted. These questions took on a distinctive urgency in South Africa after the fall of apartheid in 1994 and raised issues about how to reunite the nation. The South African government and the people of South Africa have challenged cultural institutions to permit contradicting stories to be heard, putting extra pressure on public institutions. Museums now contribute to the process of nation building by incorporating exhibits that give a voice to peoples previously excluded from the national discourse. The change in government has caused museums to drastically change their visual and material exhibits to more accurately represent the past, contributing to the process of social transformation undertaken in the adoption of a truly democratic state.³

Museums have great power to influence the identity of a people. Not surprisingly, a debate has arisen concerning the portrayal of previously disadvantaged groups, such as South Africans with slave heritage. To that effect, history must recognize the complexity of the past, and public historians – in this case museum staff – are wary of oversimplification. Yet the struggle over how the history of slavery should be portrayed in South African museums goes beyond the

1 I would like to thank Megan Ward, Peter Grassman, Professor Jamie Monson, and Professor Clifford Clark for their guidance and support throughout the writing of this paper.

2 Colin Bundy, "New Nation, New History?" in *History Making and Present Day Politics: The Meaning of Collective Memory in South Africa*, ed. Hans Erik Stolten (Stockholm: Elanders Gotab AB, 2007), 80.

3 Annie E. Coombes, *Visual Culture and Public Memory in a Democratic South Africa* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).

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statement of facts. During the creation of exhibitions, questions have arisen concerning how Cape Town slaves should be characterized and curators face the task of reconciling contradictory views. Part of the dilemma is deciding whether to portray slaves as helpless victims of a brutal and inhumane system, or to complicate that image and give the slaves agency without undermining the brutality of the system.

Museum staff also must create a history that best represents the people of Cape Town and take into account how the residents wish their heritage and history to be remembered. The controversy over these views becomes even more complex when considering the demands of the South African government, which provides the museum's main source of funding and wants minority groups positively portrayed to facilitate the creation of a new post-apartheid national identity. These differences in vision have caused a battle over both the content of museum exhibits and the final resting place of creative control over these exhibits. Analyzing the changes that the Slave Lodge, a museum in Cape Town focusing on slave history, has undergone and examining its new exhibitions will identify how South Africa's public institutions have chosen to remember and conceptualize their slave past. Looking at the Slave Lodge as a case study and examining the exhibition "Remembering Slavery," this paper will argue that the real challenge for museums presenting a complex history to the public is satisfying a multitude of voices by shaping an exhibit that will represent a collective identity of a community. Though possible, the process is slow and hampered by constraints that the museum often cannot control.

In order to understand current debates surrounding museum exhibitions, an overview of the museums' evolving role in the public sphere and their interpretive power will be presented, followed by an explanation of why the South African government and the people of South Africa contest the slavery discourse in South Africa. Then, to appreciate the complexity and difficulty museum staff encounter when creating an exhibition on slavery in Cape Town, an account of the historiography of slavery as well as a summary of the complicated history of slavery and settlement at the Cape will be presented. Additionally, an examination of the legislation passed by the South

African government during and after the 1994 political transition will identify the administrative changes made to the Heritage Sector of South Africa and the Cape Town Iziko museum system (which the Slave Lodge is a part of) over time. Having a background in these areas is crucial to understanding Cape Town's struggle to rebuild and rethink how they see themselves as a people living with the legacy of slavery and institutionalized racial discrimination.

The absence of a prior official narrative means that South Africa's Slave Lodge is the synthesis of a story that has never been told before, one that both draws on preexisting narratives as well as presents its own unique case.. Additionally, looking at the Slave Lodge as a case study will inform museum studies about the complex controversies involving various stakeholders that precede the presentation of an exhibit. Finally, examining the controversy over museum exhibits at the Slave Lodge will reveal South Africa's difficulties in translating the desired "rainbow nation" image into reality and the struggles to represent such widely contested past histories and identities.⁴

SLAVERY AND PUBLIC HISTORY IN CAPE TOWN

The inhabitants of Cape Town, South Africa have had a turbulent and complex history of violence and discrimination. Beginning in 1652, the significant influx of slaves and settlers from the Indian Ocean and Europe extensively altered the culture and structure of the native Khoikhoi society. This paper specifically focuses on the legacy of the Muslim slave population brought to Cape Town, South Africa, and how that legacy has been displayed and presented to the public at the Slave Lodge museum, a building in Cape Town that formerly acted as the home of the majority of slaves imported

4 Nelson Mandela, "Statement of the President of the African National Congress, Mr. Nelson Mandela, at his inauguration as President of the Democratic Republic of South Africa, May 10, 1994." South African Government Information website. <http://www.info.gov.za/speeches/1994/170595003.htm> (accessed February 5, 2008).

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from Indonesia, India-Ceylon, Madagascar, and Mozambique from the late seventeenth to the early nineteenth century.

What is unique about slavery at the Cape is that, unlike slavery in the United States, the majority of slaves were not African. Instead, the VOC (the *Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie*, also known as the Dutch East Indian Company) imported slaves from various countries in the East Indies. Cape Town’s cosmopolitan composition complicated the racially stratified society that developed. Instead of having a hierarchy with the colonists at the top and the subjugated natives at the bottom, the presence of a myriad of other groups whose religions and skin tones varied presented an obstacle for the creation of a classificatory system.⁵ The majority of these people later came to be classified as Coloured under the apartheid government, as they neither fit into the category of Black nor White. The subsequent racism and segregation of these peoples became increasingly institutionalized with the development of apartheid in the second half of the twentieth century, a legacy that has continued to play a defining role for the people of South Africa and Cape Town well into the nation’s new era of equality and inclusion in 1994.

This complicated categorical history is reflected in the current debate over what is to be done with the Slave Lodge today, and to better understand this struggle, it is necessary to recount a brief history of the building itself. Colonists constructed the Slave Lodge in 1679 to house slaves, but through the years the building has been known as the Slave Lodge, Government Offices Building, and Old Supreme Court. Designated as the South Africa Cultural History Museum in 1966, the South African government renamed it the Slave Lodge in 1998 and transformed into a cultural history museum of slavery with exhibitions that focus on “family roots, ancestry and the peopling of South Africa.”⁶ The complicated history of Cape Town and its inhabitants has been portrayed to the public through exhibitions held

5 Naledi Pandor, “SA: Pandor: Exhibition on abolition of slave trade.” Speech given on July 30, 2007 at the Slave Lodge in Cape Town. http://www.polity.org.za/article.php?a_id=114104 (Accessed October 7, 2007).

6 Iziko Museums of Cape Town website. http://www.iziko.org.za/slavelodge/over_ex.html (Accessed October 7, 2007).

in the Slave Lodge, and the recent transformation of the museum (that is, how the exhibitions have evolved in their depiction of Cape Town and its inhabitants) reflects the post-apartheid attempt of the South African government to create a national consciousness that incorporates its citizens in an all-inclusive “rainbow nation.”

The literature on the Slave Lodge itself is scarce, as few scholars wrote about the Lodge until fairly recently. With the end of apartheid, however, scholars freely delved into the personal histories of slaves in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. South Africans published few books concerning the history and restoration of the Slave Lodge as a building, among them Helene Vollgraaff’s *The Dutch East India Company’s Slave Lodge at the Cape*, and even fewer items have been published dealing with the Slave Lodge as a museum.⁷ A majority of this literature is written about the exhibition entitled “Remembering Slavery” designed to commemorate the bicentennial of the abolition of slavery in 2007.

MUSEUMS AND MEMORY

An understanding of the changing role of museums and their interpretive power is needed to fully appreciate the debate surrounding the museum exhibitions at the Slave Lodge. Gary Baines defined public memory as a “body of beliefs and ideas about the past that help a public or society understand both its past, present, and by implication, its future.”⁸ According to Benedict Anderson, a shared public history serves as the crucial element in the construction of an “imagined community,”⁹ which facilitates identity formation and enables individuals to see themselves as members of a group with a

7 Helene Vollgraaff, *The Dutch East India Company’s Slave Lodge at the Cape* (Cape Town: South Africa’s Cultural History Museum, 1997),

8 Gary Baines, “The Politics of Public History,” in *History Making and Present Day Politics: The Meaning of Collective Memory in South Africa*, ed. Hans Erik Stolten (Stockholm: Elanders Gotab AB, 2007), 168.

9 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1991), 15.

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common past, present, and future. The political questions of whose history gets disseminated and institutionalized frame the shaping of a common past. Accordingly, historiography is an important part of a nation's collective memory and historian Hans Erik Stolten argues that history is not simply a product of the past, but often an answer to the demands of the present.¹⁰ Baines further writes that

"whenever national identity is contested, collective memory is the key to legitimating the status quo in terms of the past...The past becomes an excuse for the present, justifying the social or political order on the grounds that it was ordained by history. Accordingly, historical memories are constantly refashioned to suit present purposes."¹¹

By undertaking to represent public memory, museums become one of the most controversial agents for shaping national identity.¹² Historians Patricia Davidson and Ingrid de Kok argue that museums often shape national identity and can be tools to further the national interest because of the pivotal role museums play in the way a community remembers and thinks about their past and their identity in the present.¹³ The artifacts and exhibitions displayed by museums

10 Hans Erik Stolten, "History in the new South Africa: An Introduction," in *History Making and Present Day Politics: The Meaning of Collective Memory in South Africa*, ed. Hans Erik Stolten (Stockholm: Elanders Gotab AB, 2007), 7.

11 Baines, "The Politics of Public History," 168-9, 171.

12 For another discussion on the complexity of designing an exhibition containing contested knowledge, see articles regarding the *Enola Gay* exhibition at the Smithsonian Institution's National Air and Space Museum in Washington D.C. The *Enola Gay* controversy also highlights the struggle for museums to make an exhibition that aligns with the aims of a variety of stakeholders..

13 Patricia Davidson, "Museums, Memorials, and Public Memory," *Negotiating the Past: The Making of Memory on South Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 143; Ingrid de Kok, "Cracked Heirlooms: Memory on Exhibition," *Negotiating the Past: The Making of Memory on South Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 61.

can shape individual memory by triggering experiences the viewer has undergone, but the displays can also shape collective memories through the collections museums choose to preserve and how these collections are interpreted and presented. Choices of what and who is represented and forgotten are crucial because through the memory-making process these displays acquire validation as they become widely accepted versions of the past.

As an identity of a people evolves, museums and other heritage institutions play a central role in re-shaping and re-interpreting history. The debate surrounding public memory is especially contentious in South Africa because of the recent political transition with the fall of apartheid in 1994. As state-funded institutions, museums in South Africa give material form to authorized versions of the past, which in time become institutionalized as public memory. Since 1994, South Africans have been transforming their national identity to reinvent themselves by means of showcasing the country's historical narrative. Stakeholders and cultural brokers from a variety of political persuasions and communities currently try to realign collective memory with a new national identity, and thereby redefine what it means to be "South African." New sites of memory, such as the Slave Lodge, have been formed by the post-apartheid government to forge national consciousness and anchor official memory.¹⁴ Analyzing how Cape Town's slave legacy has been portrayed in the Slave Lodge both during and after the apartheid era reveals the ways in which the Slave Lodge reflects the inclusion and portrayal of multiple histories and the changing agenda of the national government.

THE DISCOURSE ON SLAVERY AT THE SLAVE LODGE

To understand why the multifaceted debate over why so many diverse groups of people contest the ways in which people remember slavery in Cape Town, one needs to have an understanding of why the South African slavery discourse is so hotly debated. This unique story

¹⁴ Baines, *Public History*, 4.

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of suffering and dispossession framed an identity for a whole section of society. The slavery discourse became the central device in explaining and restoring an identity for people classified as Coloured under apartheid. Coloured developed as a term for a person neither black nor white, thereby creating a system that allowed colonial immigrants “dealing with a new and uncertain colonial social universe” to make the world seem a much more predictable and therefore comfortable place.¹⁵ The apartheid government combined all mixed-race peoples, who often had substantial ancestry from Europe, Indonesia, India, Madagascar, Malaya, Mozambique, Mauritius, Southern Africa, and more, into the Coloured category. Discussing slavery gives these people a right to claim victimhood, trauma, and the post-apartheid need to heal. Without discussion of their story, “Africans generally believe that coloured people never really suffered and coloured people in turn internalize that myth.”¹⁶

Additionally, claiming slavery as part of the Coloured people’s history gave them an identity not defined on negative terms – that is, they could claim a concrete history accepted by society. Because Coloured historically often did not classify as a category in its own right¹⁷, the trend of thinking of Coloureds as having a mixed identity continues into the post-apartheid era. Presenting slavery in identity terms attempts to find a positive place for the Coloured people in the discourse about South Africa. Rediscovering slavery as the cornerstone of the history of a whole community allows for the discovery of an identity of a people, however scarred their past might be. However, the complexity of South Africa’s history causes some to oppose the discussion of slavery as a means of identity. Critics claim

15 Robert Shell, *Children of Bondage: A Social History of the Slave Society at the Cape of Good Hope, 1652-1838* (Hanover, New Hampshire: University Press of New England for Wesleyan University Press, 1994) 54.

16 Anne Eichmann, “Representing Slavery in South Africa: A Critical Reading of the Exhibition ‘Remembering Slavery’ at Iziko’s Slave Lodge,” in *From Diaspora to Diorama: The Old Slave Lodge in Cape Town*, ed. Robert Shell (Cape Town: Ancestry, 2006), 26.

17 Under apartheid the government classified Coloureds as “not a white person or a native.”

that it repeats colonial and apartheid discussions of racial categories, which is exactly what the state wants to avoid while moving towards its vision of a “rainbow nation.” Additionally, constructing a single narrative undermines the complexity with which Cape Town residents conceptualize themselves. The slave narrative “ignored the manifold ways people make sense of their present and past [by] pressing diverse patterns of identity formation into a single narrative.”¹⁸

Capetonians and scholars discussed slavery mostly in terms of identity politics, but proponents teaching and researching Cape slavery also argued that all Capetonians would benefit from learning about slavery because it would enable them to better understand the city’s collective identity. Historian Nigel Worden, advocating for a broader definition of slavery, asked, “And who has the right to speak for slaves? Who has the right to claim purity of slave ancestry in a society which has been characterized by so much intermixture?”¹⁹ Discussing slavery in this framework unifies all Capetonians in accordance with the national agenda of creating an inclusive nation where all people are represented regardless of racial or ethnic background. Moreover, discussions regarding slavery also led to broader considerations of human rights in South Africa. Proponents argued the discussion and depiction of slavery necessary because of the importance of its history to “South Africans today who place great value on the concepts of freedom and human rights.”²⁰ Therefore, slavery becomes relevant to the lives of all Capetonians and humanity in general.

Because the memory of slavery is linked so closely with the discourse on Coloured identity, creating an exhibit on slavery became a difficult task, “deeply entangled in controversial identity politics.”²¹ Other voices complicated the mission further, claiming that the Cape’s slave history played a central role in the discovering and exploring the identity and legacy of South Africa. To have a Cape Town museum create an exhibition that would satisfy all of these

18 Eichmann, “Representing Slavery in South Africa,” 26, 27-8

19 Ibid., 29.

20 Ibid., 30.

21 Ibid. 28.

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voices would be intensely challenging. When the Slave Lodge took on the task of representing the history of Cape Town slavery, it also took on the difficult task of considering all sides of the debates and attempting to represent slavery in a manner acceptable and relevant to all South Africans.

THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF SOUTH AFRICAN SLAVERY

An important vector for the ongoing development of the complex debate over slavery and race in South Africa has been historiography, which has fed into the debate over how history should be portrayed within museums. Earlier generations of historians argued that the Cape Town slave experience should receive little attention because the physical abuse of slaves in South Africa paled in comparison to the brutal forms of slavery in the New World, and as a result, historians attached relatively little importance to slavery in the explaining the making of South Africa.

In the 1980s, however, this interpretation came under attack as academics began researching slavery at the Cape and complicating the notions of the slave experience.²² Revisionist historians Nigel Worden’s *Slavery in Dutch South Africa* and Robert Ross’ *Cape of Torments* argued that racism did not originate at the frontier, as well as for the brutality of the system.²³ In contrast, Andrew Bank’s *The Decline of Urban Slavery* drew attention to the differences and similarities of South African slavery throughout the regions as the system developed..²⁴ In addition to these studies, Robert Shell’s *Children of Bondage*, analyzed the linguistic, cultural, economic,

22 Robert Shell, *From Diaspora to Diorama: the Old Slave Lodge in Cape Town* (Cape Town: Ancestry, 2006), 711.

23 Nigel Worden, *Slavery in Dutch South Africa* (London, Cambridge University Press, 1985); Robert Ross, *Cape of Torments: Slavery and Resistance in South Africa* (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983).

24 Andrew Bank, *The Decline of Urban Slavery at the Cape, 1806 to 1843* (Rondebosch, South Africa: Center for South African Studies, 1991); Shell, *From Diaspora to Diorama*, 712.

and psychological impact of slavery at the Cape. He recognizes the importance of the Slave Lodge as the space where the former slaves of Cape Town lived their daily lives.²⁵ A renewed interest in the Dutch period at the Cape coincided with the dismantling of apartheid in the 1990s. Nigel Worden, Elizabeth van Heyningen, and Vivian Bickford-Smith's *Cape Town: The Making of a City, an Illustrated Social History* identified Cape Town's pre-indigenous communities that the Dutch forcibly displaced, and critiqued the Eurocentric vision of Cape Town as a benevolent society.²⁶

As apartheid ended, these developments led to the eventual reinterpretation of major national monuments and spurred a revitalized interest in the history of the Cape in the imperial context of the VOC.

²⁷ "Since the late 1990s a range of public projects around slavery as well as the publication of historical accounts and novels on slavery indicate increased public interest and awareness."²⁸ Though increasing in quantity and quality in recent years, the resources available only begin to account for over 350 years worth of the experience of slaves and slave descendants at the Cape. The challenge for the museum staff of the Slave Lodge was ensuring that they could find the necessary information for their exhibit and to fill in the holes of that history. The scarcity of resources meant that museum staff had to attempt to track down the missing pieces of slave history, resulting in less time to work on other aspects of "Remembering Slavery."

25 Robert Shell, *Children of Bondage*.

26 Nigel Worden, Elizabeth Van Heyningen, and Vivian Bickford-Smith, *Cape Town: The Making of a City, an Illustrated Social History* (BS Hilversum, The Netherlands: Verloren Publishers, 1998).

27 Kerry Ward. "Tavern of the Seas? The Cape of Good Hope as an Oceanic Crossroads during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries" Paper presented at Seascapes, Littoral Cultures, and Trans-Oceanic Exchanges, Library of Congress, Washington D.C., February 12-15, 2003. <http://historycooperative.press.uiuc.edu/proceedings/seascapes/ward.html> (Accessed October 14, 2007).

28 Shell, *From Diaspora to Diorama*, 712.

A HISTORY OF SLAVERY IN CAPE TOWN

An examination of the history of slavery in Cape Town delves into a turbulent world of violence and discrimination encompassing a variety of skin tones, ethnicities, and cultures. The Slave Lodge wrestles with these themes in presenting the history of slavery to the public and engages in debates about how exhibitions should portray this diverse history to contribute to an understanding of a unified national identity. Comprehension of this previously obscured and complex history is crucial to fully appreciate the constant struggle the Slave Lodge endures when creating an exhibit responsible for representing the contentious history of a diverse segment of society.

The VOC instituted the practice of slavery in Cape Town immediately after its arrival in 1652. Establishing itself as the world's largest trading corporation in the seventeenth century, the VOC quickly became the dominant European maritime power in Southeast Asia. The VOC saw that the Cape of Good Hope provided the perfect location for ships to restock supplies and for their crews to rest on journeys between Europe and the East Indies. The landing provides a context for a moment that some consider the beginning of South Africa's history because it represents the beginning of segregation and racial discrimination, the beginning of colonialism, and the beginning of significant European influence in South Africa.²⁹ VOC members, and later colonists, began to settle on the land and raise cattle, grow vegetables, and collect the fresh water the Cape settlement and passing ships needed. They also bartered for other goods with the local Khoikhoi, a herding group of Africans. Jan van Riebeeck, the merchant who put up the initial fort to secure the refreshment station, later requested slave labor to build the basic infrastructure of the colony. The VOC imported slaves and initially discouraged the use of Khoikhoi as slave laborers because they depended on them as trade partners.³⁰

29 Leslie Witz, *Apartheid's Festival: Contesting South Africa's National Past* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2003), 30.

30 Markus Vink, "'The World's Oldest Trade': Dutch Slavery and the Slave Trade

From the beginning of the VOC's involvement in Indian Ocean, slavery played an important role, especially since the VOC consistently lacked adequate manpower. By the time slavery arrived at the Cape it was a fully developed system, overseen by the VOC through the laws and experiences they had elsewhere in the East Indies. Between 1652 and 1808, the VOC imported 63,000 slaves to the Cape, and the colony's dependence on slavery only increased until the British abolished its practice in 1834. Before the landing of van Riebeeck in 1652, no indigenous forms of slavery developed at the Cape, while 36,169 slaves lived there at the abolition of slavery in 1834. In 1732, 3,157 people occupied Cape Town, and 44.22% of them were slaves.³¹ Slavery acted as a defining component in Dutch colonial settlements throughout the Indian Ocean, partly due to the fact that the native societies in Southeast Asia already had an open system of slavery with an established hierarchy placing slaves at the bottom of the social order. Slaves came to the Cape from places such as Mozambique, the East African coast, Zanzibar, the West African kingdom of Dahomey, India, and the East Indies, but the majority came from Madagascar. Later under apartheid, the South African government would classify the descendants from these immigrants as Coloured. These slaves brought with them an eclectic mix of cultures and languages and soon the colonists developed ethnic stereotypes of their slaves, distinguishing between those of Indonesian, Indian, Malagasy, and African origin.³² These developments signify the beginning of a classification system based on origin, and over time Europeans established racial hierarchies that would persist into the twenty-first century.

in the Indian Ocean in the Seventeenth Century," *Journal of World History* 14:2 (June 2003): 149; Worden, *Cape Town: The Making of a City*, 61.

31 Vink, "The World's Oldest Trade," 149.

32 Gerrit Schutte, "Company and Colonists at the Cape, 1652-1795," *The Shaping of South African Society* ed. Richard Elphick and Hermann Giliomee (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1989) 284-5, 287-8; Emile Boonzaier et al, *The Cape Herders: A History of the Khoikhoi of Southern Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1996), 66.

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Places of origin of Cape Slaves. Image taken from An Unsung Heritage, p. 22.

The slaves proved valuable to the VOC in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries since the small number of convicts normally employed for slave labor could not supply an adequate source of labor and in most cases the Dutch could not force the Khoikhoi to work since they were much too small and weak to crush any of the Khoikhoi tribes. By the late 1780s the impoverished Khoikhoi began to appear as laborers on *freeburgher* farms. But later as the Khoikhoi became indentured farm laborers to farmers, their conditions paralleled slavery as they worked and lived under extremely brutal conditions and lost all bargaining power.³³

As in a true slave society, Cape Town slaves played an important part in both luxury and productive capacities. They empowered white elites, influenced cultural development, and comprised a high proportion of the total population.³⁴ Such a high enslaved population contributed to the diversity of the slave experience in Cape Town.

33 Richard Elphick and V.C. Malherbe, “The Khoisan to 1828,” *The Shaping of South African Society* ed. Richard Elphick and Hermann Giliomee (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1989), 18, 28.

34 Vink, “The World’s Oldest Trade,” 148.

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, slaves worked in a number of industries at the Cape including laboring in town as artisans or domestic servants, or as field laborers on wheat and wine farms in the region. The vast majority of slaves tilled the forty-acre urban vegetable garden in Cape Town.³⁵

Over time, Cape Town slave society became increasingly multicultural. Since the mortality rate was higher than the fertility rate, the VOC continued to import the majority of the slaves, bringing even greater diversity to Cape Town.³⁶ For example, in the seventeenth century an Islamic slave community appeared, growing slowly in the eighteenth century, and expanding rapidly in the nineteenth. While this growth was partly due to the importation of Muslim slaves from Indonesia, many slaves turned to Islam after explicit exclusion from the mostly white Christian community.³⁷

The VOC owned the largest group of slaves and housed them in the Slave Lodge, and women and children who inherited their mother's status accounted for almost half of them. VOC slaves worked in all VOC facilities, performing domestic and clerical duties in the offices and hospitals and manual labor at the workshops, building sites, and outposts. In the hospital, slaves attended the sick, prepared food, and even dug graves for those who had died. Some slaves, usually those born in the Lodge, learned a trade and worked with the VOC carpenters, coopers, smiths, and potters. A *mandoor*, a slave who had risen to a position of trust, usually served as an overseer. Each night the VOC locked the slaves into the Slave Lodge, where there they slept in crammed rooms with few hammocks. The Lodge also housed lunatics in special rooms, and occasionally patients of the neighboring hospital, as well as criminals sentenced to hard labor for periods ranging from six months to life. In addition to the VOC,

35 Armstrong, James C. and Nigel A. Worden, "The Slaves, 1652-1834," *The Shaping of South African Society* ed. Richard Elphick and Hermann Giliomee (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1989), 110-111.

36 Worden, *Cape Town: The Making of a City*, 60.

37 Kerry Ward, "The '300 Years: The Making of Cape Muslim Culture' Exhibition, Cape Town, April, 1994: Liberating the Castle?" *Social Dynamics* 21:1 (April 1995): 101.

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private households owned other slaves, and by 1731, 66% of the free-burgher households included slaves.³⁸



Slaves at the Slave Lodge. Image from Diaspora to Diorama, 550.

As the colony expanded, slaves were not the only group to face subjugation, and the native Khoikhoi population witnessed their power wane and their status decline to that of the slaves. Despite being officially recognized as free, the Khoikhoi lacked burgher rights, including the right to private ownership of land because the newly established South African government feared that land ownership would offer the Khoikhoi an escape from laboring on farms. While the Khoikhoi's liberties eroded, the small privileges slaves enjoyed had become increasingly limited as well. Aware of the dangers a large crowd of slaves could pose to the security of the town, the authorities passed resolutions to control them which cumulated in a major 'slave code' in 1754. This code required slaves found in town or on Table Mountain to show passes signed by their masters, and forbade slaves from carrying arms, among other restrictions. Yet despite the increasing limitations on the freedoms of non-whites, owners

38 Worden, *Cape Town: The Making of a City*, 60-61.

manumitted a small number of slaves and those who had been freed in the wills of dead masters bought family members still in slavery.³⁹

By the 1820s when abolition movements began to gather momentum, slave classification had changed from that of origin to one based on descent and race. New ideological forces, both from Britain and the Cape, led to the general emancipation of slaves in all the British colonies in 1834 and the British government advocated assimilation through education and Christianization. Colonists created a new racial order through discriminatory laws and practices wherein the newly freed slaves alongside the Khoikhoi occupied the lowest level of a society dominated by whites. The abolition of the slave trade coincided with the word “Coloured” being introduced into the South African vocabulary as a category encompassing people of a wide range of skin tones, origins, ethnic traditions, and slave experiences. Historian Robert Shell argues that in this process of positive and negative stereotyping, “the identities of all people not from Europe were greatly diminished and hierarchies were established. This way of thinking was more pronounced at the Cape than anywhere in the New World.”⁴⁰

As a new social order took root, the country itself underwent substantial transformation, resulting in even more change for the Coloured segment of society. The mineral discoveries in South Africa beginning in the 1860s coincided with a new era of imperialism and the European scramble for African land. Due to the emergence of an urban and industrial society at the Cape in the nineteenth century, the number of slaves steadily declined, and opportunities for wage labor materialized. Capetonians hired both Africans and ex-slaves to perform domestic or trade work. Furthermore, conquest, land dispossession, and taxation, when combined with demand for labor in the mines and increasing white demand for land, were all impetuses that forced non-White men off the land and into labor

39 Richard Elphick and Herman Giliomee, “The Origins and Entrenchment of European Dominance at the Cape, 1652-c.1840,” *The Shaping of South African Society* ed. Richard Elphick and Herman Giliomee (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1989) 528.

40 Shell, *Children of Bondage*, 54.

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markets.⁴¹ Meanwhile, political developments built upon economic developments to continue to deprive Cape Town Coloureds of liberties and bring South Africa closer toward an officially sanctioned racial caste system. Perhaps more than any other factor, the Anglo-Boer War led to the development of Afrikaner nationalist policies, which played a dominant role in the country's politics for the next half century.⁴² In 1909, the Act of the Union established South African independence from Britain and instituted an all-white government. The notion of being an Afrikaner became "more exclusive, incorporating a racial element of European ancestry and barring 'non-Europeans.'"⁴³

When the National Party came to power in the 1948 elections, apartheid became the governing political policy for South Africa and remained so until the early 1990s. Political architects built apartheid on a long history of racial segregation and discriminatory laws intended to secure white supremacy. The South African government passed an apartheid policy that classified "Blacks," "Whites," "Indians," and "Coloreds" into racial groups. Both the colonial governments and the white minority government in South Africa used their power to create "official" versions of the country's past to justify their positions of power, which effectively minimized the Khoikhoi's role in the country's founding and ignored any mention of slave heritage altogether. Rather than uniting the people of South Africa, the apartheid system accentuated the differences between the racial groupings, including among Capetonians.⁴⁴

During the apartheid era, the limitations imposed by discriminatory laws continually increased, and people of slave descent experienced extreme prejudice and inequality in their everyday lives. Legislative actions, such as the Group Areas Act of 1950, divided the country into racial zones. As capitalism developed in South Africa, the structures of racial domination in the political sphere made the

41 Worden, *Cape Town: The Making of a City*, 103-104.

42 South Africa.org website. <http://www.south-africa.org.za/history/anglo-boer-war.php> (accessed June 4, 2007).

43 Witz, *Apartheid's Festival*, 47.

44 Emile Boonzaier et al., *The Cape Herders* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1996), 108; Elphick, "The Khoisan to 1828," 53.

discriminatory practices in the workplace that had occurred during the colonial period legal under apartheid regulations. The policies of the apartheid state also gave incentive for people of slave ancestry to claim descent from original inhabitants rather than as imported slaves. For example, land claims on the basis of original ownership became a possibility in the 1990s for descendants of original inhabitants rather descendants of imported slaves.⁴⁵ Crucially, by neglecting their slave heritage, the slave descendants could distance themselves from the ‘Cape Coloureds’ whom the South African government quickly excluded from political and social status during the apartheid era. It became advantageous for people classified as Coloured to ‘forget’ their slave ancestry and claim European heritage to reap the benefits of rights granted to White citizens.

At the time of the initial abolition of the slave trade in 1834, remembering the experience of slavery and emancipation became an important annual activity for members of the Coloured class, a tradition which lasted for several generations into the 1900s. Every year, slave descendants celebrated both their heritage and the anniversary of the Act with lively parties, sometimes lasting an entire week. In the first half of the twentieth century these celebrations began to disappear, as the South African government’s segregation policies forcibly removed African Capetonians from the city center. To avoid a similar eviction, Colored people struggled to identify themselves with the advantaged whites rather than the black South Africans who experienced increasing discrimination. For example, in the mid-1930s, the African People’s Organization (APO) strove to identify itself with the white rulers of South Africa in order to share their privileges. Additionally, in the 1952 pageant celebrating van Riebeeck and the VOC’s landing, planners completely excluded the emancipation of slaves from the celebration—a choice that intentionally ignored the significant role slaves and their descendants played in the settlement of Cape Town. Although both of these events generated negative feedback from a few members of the Indian community in Cape

45 Ward and Worden, “Commemorating, Suppressing, and Invoking Cape Slavery,” *Negotiating the Past: The Making of Memory in South Africa* ed. Sarah Nuttall and Carli Coetzee (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999), 202-209.

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Town, the majority of the population, including the descendants of slaves, remained publicly uninterested in these conscious choices to ignore the legacy of slavery at the Cape.⁴⁶ The pageant is one of many examples demonstrating the manipulation of public memory by the South African government, as well as by the Cape Town residents themselves, in order to obscure the authentic slave experience and bolster Afrikaner nationalist policies. The apartheid state took measures to suppress the memory of slavery, but the descendants of slaves themselves also 'forgot' slavery.

Similarly, the resistance and struggle against apartheid took place largely without the story and historical experience of slavery. This was true for two main reasons. First, most people saw slavery as an issue specifically confined to the Cape, and they believed focusing on slavery would divide those claiming slave heritage from their "Black" fellow sufferers across the country. Secondly, being a slave descendant could undermine the notions of belonging to the Cape and its community and holding historical rights to the land. "The state, the slave descendants themselves, and most liberation movements...were complicit in the submergence of the slave-memory during colonialism and apartheid."⁴⁷ Slave descendants and the state disowned the history of slavery as the Coloured community became increasingly victimized based on heritage and race. In the struggle to redress issues of inequality and institutionalized discrimination, society ignored the history and memory of a whole segment of society because of the absence of the slavery narrative. The denial and forced forgetfulness of slavery did not end with the end of apartheid, and notions of shame associated with slave ancestry lingered on long after the policy was dismantled.⁴⁸

The South African government continued to ignore the history of slavery until the close of the century. Those eligible to vote elected F.W. de Klerk President in 1990 amidst an atmosphere of

46 Witz, *Apartheid's Festival*, 47.

47 Robert Shell, *From Diaspora to Diorama: the Old Slave Lodge in Cape Town* (Cape Town: Ancestry, 2006), 720.

48 Robert Shell, *From Diaspora to Diorama*, 721.

continued discrimination, lawlessness, violence, and polarization. Due to internal and external pressures, de Klerk reinstated the African National Congress and released Nelson Mandela after twenty-seven years of imprisonment. For the first time in the country's history all races participated equally in the political sphere. With fair and free elections, the people of South Africa voted Mandela President in 1994.⁴⁹

During this period of political transition the new government set out to eradicate apartheid policies and for the first time experienced consensual decision-making. The country aimed for national unity by including all of its citizens fairly in the political process and giving all minorities, including those of slave descent, equal opportunities for success. The South African government employed a variety of programs, such as the Reconstruction and Development Programme and the Truth and Reconciliation Committee, to achieve socio-economic transformation and help the people of South Africa heal and peacefully adjust to the new democratic government from the apartheid policies of the previous regime.⁵⁰

RESTRUCTURING AND THE HERITAGE SECTOR IN SOUTH AFRICA

Today, the South African government strives to move forward towards healing and racial understanding, and post-apartheid legislation transformed the heritage sector and the museums of South Africa to reach this goal. Thus, the state played an important role in the transformation of the Slave Lodge because the post-apartheid national agenda called for the representation of all people in South Africa, regardless of ethnic background or skin color, to be portrayed in its institutions of public memory. The South African government dictated not only the funding and structure of the museum, but also, in part, what the museum memorialized. As South Africa's

49 Heather Deegan, *The Politics of the New South Africa: Apartheid and After* (Harlow, England: Person Education Limited, 2001), 23, 42, 112.

50 Deegan, *The Politics of the New South Africa*, 115, 137.

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government transitioned from an apartheid regime to a participatory democracy, the face of public history and public institutions changed as well. Public institutions, such as museums, had been absorbed into the apartheid system, and the restructuring of museums shortly before 1994 "reflected the last phase of apartheid's own struggle for survival."⁵¹ The apartheid regime used museums and public institutions to display the memory that the South African government's agenda supported. As one scholar put it, the official version of South African history during the apartheid era was:

"that white and black reached South Africa at the same time, little more than three centuries ago, prior to which South Africa was largely or totally uninhabited; that black and white first met 500 miles east of Cape Town in 1770 as both groups were expanding; that they somehow settled quite different areas without conflict and without the whites taking any land that was originally black; that 87 percent of South Africa is therefore historically white because the whites were the first to settle it; and that the whites now generously allow the blacks to leave their homelands and work in more prosperous areas – 'white' South Africa."⁵²

This account excludes the Coloured segment of society completely and presents an inaccurate and reductionist history of South Africa to the public. As material forms of the collective consciousness, museums are heavily influenced by the curators who choose which memories get authorized and institutionalized as public memory. During the apartheid era, all museums at Cape Town limited the meaning and interpretation of the objects in its collections to those imposed by the curators. Apartheid-era museums focused on bringing order to the collections through systems of classification often based on ethnic

51 Andrew Hall and Cynthia Kros, "New Premises for Public History in South Africa," *The Public Historian* 16:2 (Spring 1994): 15.

52 John Laurence, *Race, Propaganda, and South Africa* (London, Victor Gollancz, 1979), 81.

groupings or “on definitions devised by outsiders of what constituted ethnic or cultural groups.”⁵³ Through the classification process, staff and visitors lost many intangible aspects of meaning. Visitors of museums during the apartheid era perceived history in Euro-centric terms and related to imperial and colonial history. Museum staff had reduced African history to tradition, and usually ignored Coloured history all together.⁵⁴ For that matter, visitors considered museums uninviting, privileged spaces that did little to cater to or attract Black, Coloured, or poor audiences.

After the political transition of 1994, the government took began a general reallocation of skills, resources, and infrastructure in the country. These changes extended to areas of arts, culture, and heritage, and thus significantly impacted museums, including the Slave Lodge. Scholars, concerned citizens, and government officials raised critical questions concerning whose heritage museums should preserve and who had the right to decide what should be on display. In response, the South African government created the “heritage sector” to address these questions. It includes institutions such as museums, archives, and heritage resource agencies set up to manage what has been termed as “cultural capital,” which consists of historical places, objects, and practices that have heritage value and are preserved in the public interest.⁵⁵

In 1996, the South African government passed the White Paper on Arts, Culture, and Heritage, significantly endorsed by and written with the help of the Arts and Culture Task Group, which represents the views of the major part of the arts and culture community, which includes practitioners, educators, and

53 Henry C. Jattie Bredekamp, “Transforming Representations of Intangible Heritage at Iziko Museums, SA,” Paper presented at the Concurrent Session *Museums and Living Heritage* (October 2-8, 2004). <http://biblioteknett.no/alias/HJEMMESIDE/icme/icme2004/bredekamp.html>.

54 Jattie Bredekamp, “Transforming Representations,” <http://biblioteknett.no/alias/HJEMMESIDE/icme/icme2004/bredekamp.html>.

55 Department of Arts, Culture, Science, and Technology. “The White Paper on Arts, Culture, and Heritage,” Pretoria, 4 June, 1996. http://www.dac.gov.za/white_paper.htm (accessed April 3, 2007).

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administrators. The White Paper preceded a number of heritage-related Acts of Parliament towards the end of the decade. This critical piece of legislation acknowledged, among other issues, that means must be found to "enable song, dance, story-telling and oral history to be permanently recorded and conserved in the formal heritage structure," allowing new methods for museums to utilize when creating exhibits.⁵⁶ The heritage sector of the of post-apartheid South African government encompasses, among other things, physical sites important to the history of South Africa, such as the Slave Lodge. Still in its transitional phase, the sector helps the government formulate policies and re-imagine institutions to house and explore the history of South Africa. Since the political transition in South Africa, the White Paper and other Acts of Parliament have demonstrated the changing policy of the government. The South African government now recognizes stories of significance to the history and memory of all the people of South Africa, not just those of European descent.

Accordingly, in July of 2001, the South African government amended the Cultural Institutions Act to cluster all of the museums of Cape Town, including the Slave Lodge, under the management of Iziko Museums of Cape Town, an organization created to "manage and promote Iziko's unique combination of South Africa's heritage collections, sites and services for the benefit of present and future generations."⁵⁷ "Iziko" itself translates from iXhosa to "hearth," the

56 Oral histories refer to the narratives passed down by word of mouth, and the oral tradition has been strong among Africans for generations. Through preserving stories, dances, and songs, the histories contained within them become not only accessible, but they also are legitimized for a Western population that, for the most part, accepts only written forms of history as authentic and valid. By acknowledging these records of the past, the government is recognizing the importance of these histories to the people and heritage of the country and by including them in this historic document, the government is creating new methods by which museums can design their exhibits; Department of Arts, Culture, Science, and Technology. "The White Paper on Arts, Culture, and Heritage," Pretoria, 4 June, 1996. http://www.dac.gov.za/white_paper.htm.

57 Iziko Museums of Cape Town, <http://www.iziko.org.za/iziko/izihome.html#> (accessed Oct. 7, 2007).

traditional center of the African hut. The name alone signifies a shift away from a Eurocentric ideology as it is in a native language. Before becoming a part of Iziko, each of the institutions functioned as independent entities and each had their own council, director, and staff. The Act “dissolved [the councils] and appointed a new council in April of 1999 to oversee the amalgamation and transformation of the institutions.”⁵⁸ Besides creating new, diverse councils, the Slave Lodge and other museums under Iziko have begun to undergo a transformation process by which the meanings of exhibitions and an interpretation of the meanings of heritage objects are reinterpreted within the context of Iziko’s vision to be “African museums of excellence that empower and inspire all people to celebrate and respect our diverse heritage.”

TRANSFORMING THE SLAVE LODGE

After 1994 museums began to transform how they portrayed South Africans. The late 1990s saw an increased output of books, movies, and scholarly works regarding slavery at the Cape. As a result of their media coverage, the South African government put pressure on museums to address the imbalance of slave information in the heritage sector.⁵⁹ During the political transition in 1994, the Slave Lodge, known then as the South African Cultural History Museum (SACHM), only displayed artifacts that related to White culture. The South Africa Museum (SAM) in Cape Town displayed anything relating to indigenous cultures in the anthropological section. These displays were “clearly a reflection of racist colonial thinking, disassociating history and cultural development from indigenous societies, who were seen as ‘primitives’ living in a timeless past, devoid of change.”⁶⁰ That the Slave Lodge did not represent slavery anywhere

58 Jattie Bredekamp, “Transforming Representations,” <http://biblioteknett.no/alias/HJEMMESIDE/icme/icme2004/bredekamp.html>.

59 Shell, *Diaspora to Diorama*, 723.

60 *Ibid.*, 726.

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in the museum even though the building once housed the largest amount of slaves in Cape Town triggered controversy and debate after 1994. SACHM established a planning committee to redress these issues and to rethink the history of the country the museums reflected.⁶¹

Though moving in the right direction, change came slowly. Museum staff attempted small changes, such as exhibitions in 1996 and 1997 which sought to give previously disadvantaged peoples a voice (on land struggles and Khoikhoi culture respectively), but by 1997 advertisements in the papers still encouraged visits to the SACHM to "see collections of ceramics, silver, toys and textiles as well as artifacts from ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome and the Near and Far East."⁶² Besides a booklet published in 1997 on the early history of the Slave Lodge, few traces of the slave past of the building existed. The museum had no permanent displays or temporary exhibitions directly addressing slavery until 1998, and historian Robert Shell called the SACHM "the worst museum in South Africa." Finally, in 1998 the South African government renamed the museum the Slave Lodge to recall the history of the building and by 2000 Iziko historical archeologist Dr. Gabeba Abrahams began excavating the Slave Lodge to discover material evidence of the slaves. Still, the exhibitions at the Slave Lodge did not prominently display information about slavery and many Capetonians advocated putting slavery at the center of the museum.

Why, after six years, did the Slave Lodge manifest so few changes? The museum still had its old collections related to the European settlers and it took time to re-construct a new history without artifacts relating to slavery. As an Iziko social history museum, the Slave Lodge had to collect new artifacts as well as oral narratives. Additionally, it took time for Iziko's relations with the public to change. Instead of producing exhibitions that would inform, educate and perhaps instruct, Iziko and the Slave Lodge now had to "re-imagine the museum as a space of interaction and dialogue—as a place where

61 Ibid.

62 Eichmann, "Representing Slavery in South Africa," 21.

history is produced through the exchange among many agents, including the public.”⁶³ As discussed earlier, slavery represents a sensitive and contentious subject in Cape Town partly because its history has been masked for so long. Given the recent apartheid past and the arduous efforts that have gone into ‘forgetting’ slave heritage, the Capetonians’ reluctance to fully engage in a dialogue with the “Remembering Slavery” exhibit is understandable. A third reason for why the transformation of the Slave Lodge took so long lies with the curators and the staff of the museum, who had educational backgrounds qualifying them as specialists in the old collections (such as textiles, weapons, coins, etc.) and lacked an academic knowledge and research expertise on the history of slavery at the Cape. Though some changes occurred, the staff and curators remained largely in place, complicating the transformation process. On a bureaucratic level, change took place in 2000 when Iziko appointed Jack Lohman as its CEO. He streamlined the institutions and rearranged personnel structures and downsized the staff. All of these factors finally resulted in formalized structures to plan and implement permanent change in 2001.⁶⁴

CREATING AN EXHIBITION ON SLAVERY AT THE SLAVE LODGE

In 2006, the Slave Lodge put its first permanent exhibition on display entitled “Remembering Slavery”. The exhibit intended to reflect the slave past of the building; an important milestone for both Iziko and for the country. For Iziko it represents a visible attempt to overcome its formerly classificatory system and give a voice to the non-white population of Cape Town. In South Africa the history of slavery has been silenced, denied, and submerged both in academic and public history, but “Remembering Slavery” proposed to change all that.

In 2002, Jattie Bredekamp, the new CEO of Iziko, appointed

⁶³ Ibid., 35.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 33-34, 37.

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Gabeba Abrahams as project coordinator for the redevelopment process. She had been involved in the excavations at the Lodge, and as a person of color she signaled Iziko's willingness to transform. In 2005 the actual planning of the exhibition began, but numerous logistical obstacles rapidly surfaced. Museum staff quickly discovered that they lacked sufficient time to design all of the galleries, to do adequate research or to collect the images and information needed, or enough money to finish all six galleries, and ultimately only four actually opened.⁶⁵

Given that museums interpret material through the visual placement and framing of the artifacts, it was no surprise that members of the museum staff contested the script of the exhibition from the beginning. Lalou Meltzer and Robert Shell, two social historians, criticized Abrahams for her lack of analysis in the text and argued that emphasizing the brutality and cruelty of slavery was not only inadequate, but also represented and remembered slaves in their roles as victims, thereby stripping slaves of any agency. Abrahams responded to this challenge for a higher level of analysis by opposing a story that "evaded abolitionist rhetoric and drew more attention to achievements, creativity and negotiating powers of slaves as attempts to create a sanitized version of the past."⁶⁶ However, before the argument could be resolved Abrahams became sick and Lalou Meltzer took Abrahams' role in heading the project and rewrote the script, assisted by Robert Shell and Susan Newton-King, a UWC historian. The main changes included de-emphasizing the brutality towards slaves and not presenting them as helpless victims. For example, using the words "miserable" and "unbearable," and so on instead of "horror" or "cruel," resulted in a script that had a more neutral and academically detached tone.

Perhaps due to time pressures, further discussions among museum staff or among members of the Cape Town community never took place before the opening of the exhibition.⁶⁷ As Iziko

65 Ibid., 5, 39.

66 Ibid., 40-41.

67 The Slave Lodge hosted two forums open to the public in 1994, but both

evolves, hopefully museum staff will engage the public in a meaningful way as their exhibits change from being a set of facts laid down by a committee to a malleable history that is constantly challenged and reassessed. Museum staff intended “Remembering Slavery” to present a meaningful and interactive history to the public, and the next section will illustrate how museum staff physically laid out the exhibition.

**A NEW PAST ON DISPLAY:
“REMEMBERING SLAVERY” AT THE SLAVE LODGE**

“Remembering Slavery” evolved into an exhibition that relies on spatial and audio-visual installations, rather than artifacts. Because relatively few artifacts have been found, the exhibit centers on the reconstructions of places, events, and scenes to tell its story. In addition, because museums have to compete against “a growing variety of other leisure activities and a tourism industry that privileges adventure and immediacy for visitors,” the Slave Lodge felt that object-centered exhibitions would not attract a large audience. As a result, the experiential design acts as the central feature of the exhibit and constructs and conveys its meanings.

The exhibition includes four galleries and an auditorium, which features a sixteen minute film introducing the visitors to slavery. Visitors waiting to see this film wait in the first gallery, which further introduces slavery and outlines the history of the Slave Lodge as a building (both in terms of function and in architectural changes). The gallery places the four galleries in the context of the overall transformation of the Lodge and announces future exhibits. The second gallery explains the slave ship voyages to the Cape, both from South and South East Asia and East Africa, by reconstructing the *Meermin*, a ship specially built for slave service to the Cape. It

yielded few results. Since then, there has been no attempt to involve the Cape Town community in the creation of exhibitions at the Slave Lodge. *Ibid.*, 42-45, 47.

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also features a “column of light” with names of slaves engraved upon it, along with information on the practice of renaming the newly-arrived slaves. An audio poem entitled “Slave Dream” plays in the background.

The third gallery, entitled “Origins and Arrival”, illustrates the practices of slave auctions at the Cape, linguistic traditions (with an emphasis on Afrikaans), and biographical sketches of seven Cape slaves. It also focuses on where the slaves came from with maps and a small plasma screen displaying images relating to the regions of origin. The fourth gallery reconstructs “Life at the Lodge.” Audio supplies information on conditions and events at the Lodge, and glass panels set up on the wall reflect images supporting the audio. The room is dark except for the middle, where a spotlight shines down on a physical model of the Lodge. Museum staff never completed the fifth and six galleries, but the fifth gallery, originally intended to display the findings of Abrahams’ excavations, displays the “certificates of the fourteen slaves who were posthumously honored with Western Cape Provincial Honours ‘Order of Disa: Officer’ in a ceremony held in 2005.”⁶⁸

“REMEMBERING SLAVERY”: A BALANCED NARRATIVE?

As discussed earlier, the exhibition underwent fundamental changes in the script when Meltzer took over the project. Meltzer veered away from telling a story of victimization, but understood the need to acknowledge the brutality and cruelty of slavery. Her script “takes on a rather detached and academic style, and clearly avoids abolitionist rhetoric and any sensationalist, emotional language.”⁶⁹ The problem with this approach is that most visitors view slavery as an emotional topic. The failure to stress the brutality of the system causes some visitors to echo Abrahams’ claim that the exhibition presents a sanitized version of the past.

68 Ibid., 48-50.

69 Ibid., 57.

The designers faced a challenge in dealing with the dilemma in the script. Of the four galleries in the exhibit, gallery one functions primarily as a waiting room and gallery four concentrates more specifically on the artifacts found while excavating the Lodge. Therefore, these galleries do not provide as many opportunities for presenting a balanced narrative. The following evaluation is based off of the observations and assessment of Historian Anne Eichmann who spent a significant amount of time interning at the Slave Lodge during the construction and completion of “Remembering Slavery.”

Gallery two provides an example of the deftness with which the designers attempted to portray both the brutality and agency of the slaves. The room depicts the voyages of the slave ships, and upon entering one’s attention is directed towards two images on the right. The first illustrates a group of Prize Slaves from East Africa. “The postures and facial expressions of the captured slaves, among them many children, convey feelings of exhaustion and hopelessness as well as of fear regarding their unknown fate,” and conveys the cruelty of the slave trade. While the first image conveys a sense of the slaves’ humanity, the second does the exact opposite. Depicting an unnamed ship bringing slaves to Mauritius and to the Cape with slaves packed together tightly for the voyage, the second image suggests the commoditization and inhumane aspects of the slave trade.⁷⁰

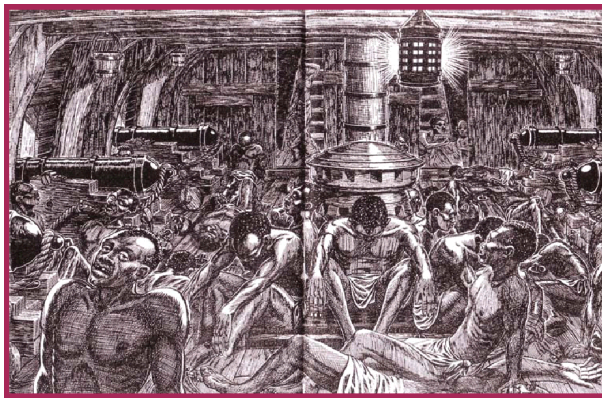


Image from gallery two. Taken from Diaspora to Diorama, 45.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 58.

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The section of gallery two which displays the partly reconstructed slave ship continues to incorporate both viewpoints. Covering the entire upper half of the wall to the left of the ship, a drawing depicts life below deck on a slave vessel. The slaves are presented as powerless, helpless, and passive victims. Emotions of fatigue, exhaustion, hopelessness, and despair are evoked by the drawing. Historian Anne Eichmann writes,

"The space of the partly reconstructed ship is envisioned to engage visitors strongly on an emotional level by placing them into a participatory performance role. The darkened and closed space has been designed to evoke the cramped conditions on a slaver, so as to convey the slaves' experience of physical confinement on the long journey towards a destination unknown. So, the spatial design of the gallery too complements the images in attempting to highlight and convey the cruelty and dehumanizing character of the slave trade and in prioritizing the slaves' suffering and their role as victims."⁷¹

Despite this imagery depicting the cruelty of slavery, the designers also attempted to avoid painting the slaves as victims. The poem "Slave Dream," played in the background, "recounts the thoughts and feelings from the perspective of the slaves."⁷² The poem not only contradicts the commoditization process, but also draws attention to the strength of the slaves that survived the journey; in recognizing their "refusal to give up hope and dreaming—it acknowledges and celebrates the 'triumph of the human spirit.'" Themes of strength and identity continue with the column of light. A luminous pillar placed inside contrasts with the dark room because it literally lights up, and could signify the hopes and dreams of the slaves. The names engraved

71 Ibid., 59.

72 Ibid.

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on the pillar humanize the slaves, as well as show the various identities they came with. Both the poem and the column deny “notions of a cultural and social death” for the slaves.⁷³



Pillar of Light. Image taken from Diaspora to Diorama, p. 773.

The screen shows an eight minute long video clip intended to discover the layered histories of the slaves brought to the Cape. The first two minutes of the video clip focus on the VOC in the Netherlands and at the Cape, and are followed by maps, pictures of plants and spices, and colonial drawings which do little to emphasize the cultural backgrounds of the slaves. Eichmann writes,

⁷³ Ibid., 62.

"Having a gallery that conveys culture of regions slaves came from is important. A failure to do so only allows those brought to the Cape 'into history' as they become slaves – wiping out their past and previous inheritances, traditions and customs. Eventually the opposite of the declared aim is achieved: slaves are again dehumanized and stripped off any identity."⁷⁴

While the map and video fail to adequately portray the cultural traditions and origins of the slaves, a smaller map in the gallery illustrates all of the known places of origin of the slaves (towns, ports, and villages). This map provides a far better sense of the multitude of cultures the slaves came from than anything else in the gallery. While gallery three began with good intentions, the final result fails to display concrete information on the regions. However, the question of how a gallery can be designed to represent all the cultural and historical background to slavery without succumbing to reductionism is a challenge to museum staff. Overall, the design team has found a "thoughtful and balanced way to address the debate around brutality and victimization."⁷⁵ Despite the shortcomings of gallery three, "Remembering Slavery" resolves the disagreement concerning the history of slavery, as it balances narratives of victimization and agency.

CONCLUSION

"Remembering Slavery" demonstrates that memory in South Africa today remains a fiercely contested issue. Museums play an instrumental role in displaying the newly interpreted history of South Africa, and while the museum staff attempts to create historically neutral exhibits, the final products cannot avoid a degree of political bias. South African museums are caught between two goals: that of

⁷⁴ Ibid., 62-63.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 64.

being factually accurate and at the same time meeting the political needs of the “rainbow nation.” Museum politics operate in every country, but perhaps most visibly in a country such as South Africa, where the heritage sector and museums are undergoing a complete transformation. As the nation begins to redefine its history, arguments have focused on the role of slavery in the formation of modern South African identity. The Slave Lodge promotes nation-building today by showing exhibitions featuring previously-marginalized peoples. By bringing their stories to light, museum staff and the South African government hope to include them in the history of the nation and acknowledge their role in the formation of South Africa. Yet the making of “Remembering Slavery” illustrates the difficulties of representing the contested history in Cape Town. It is essential that South Africans explore, debate, and discuss their slave past because it is an integral part of their present identity and will play a defining role in the ongoing reformulation of their national values.

South Africa’s unique legacy of conquest, slavery, racial segregation, and conflict make for a case study on the difficulties of incorporating a multitude of voices to create a collective identity within the confines of a museum exhibition. Museums wield great interpretive power as they strive to create meaningful histories and shape a collective consciousness. As such, museums play an important role as makers of memory and must welcome conflicting and competing narratives, as well as engage the public in a meaningful way to make their exhibitions reflect an accurate and agreed-upon interpretation of the people they represent. As museums around the world continue to create exhibitions that allow different points of views to coexist, “Remembering Slavery” demonstrates the possibility of creating displays that recognize competing narrative voices, even when the history on display has many stakeholders and contains examples of turbulence and controversy. Despite some shortcomings, the museum staff created an exhibition that attempted to balance depictions of slavery as a brutal system while at the same time giving slaves agency. “Remembering Slavery” reveals the possibility for museums to balance these two narratives, but their success often depends on factors often out of their control, such as funding, time available for exhibition devel-

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opment, the message the national government would like the exhibition to send. Although people must remain wary of political agendas manifesting themselves through museum exhibitions, these findings demonstrate the enormous opportunities for museums to function as forums where competing narratives coexist, challenging visitors to re-imagine their own histories and memories. *F*

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Anthony Grafton –
*Worlds Made by Words: Scholarship and
Community in the Modern West*
Harvard University Press: Cambridge, 2009

Staff Book Review by Mark Cramer, Assistant Editor

Throughout *Worlds Made by Words*, Professor Anthony Grafton – in the tradition of the thinkers and the works in which he immerses his audience – presents a volume that would make a valued addition to any library, from a colossal metropolitan institution to a scholar’s private collection. It is libraries, in fact, that inhabit a central role in all of Grafton’s essays; he continually reexamines the importance of libraries both in their ability to serve the lofty and erudite ideals of the Republic of Letters and in their continuing need to foster scholarship founded on traditional texts. *Worlds Made by Words* is also, in many ways, an autobiographical frame story. Scholarship and writing – be it classical, medieval, Renaissance, or modern – and the intellectual progress [or is it “progress”] of mankind form the portraiture around which Grafton creates the frame composed of vivid personal reminiscences and insights into such varied concerns as standards for modern journalists, shifts in historiographical methods, and the endangered existence of public intellectuals.

Worlds Made by Words reveals itself to be a careful collection of essays about the people behind the words – the philologists, the historiographers, the long-extinct chronologers, the interdisciplinary scholars and the public intellectuals. These men and women forged connections and founded communities across the schisms of religious belief, the disparity of geographical locations, and the disunity of entrenched academic disciplines. Their correspondences, many of which have deteriorated into frail manuscripts after centuries of close study, reveal the intimate relationships between scholars struggling

to solve the most significant intellectual challenges of their respective eras. Grafton's paean to these scholars and their communities, however, is also a lament for the decline of the forms and conventions that governed their intellectual pursuits and interpersonal relationships.

At times, *Worlds Made by Words* is the plea of a celebrated historian intimately familiar with the dusty, overflowing stacks of the world's most revered libraries to assert the continued relevance of libraries to modern society. Although books are "dematerializing" through efforts at digitization, Grafton rightfully declares that the creation of a universal electronic library is unattainable. He never demonizes the work of institutions such as Google Books, JSTOR, or Project Muse; rather, he celebrates their ability to expose millions of new readers to spectacular sources, scholarly commentaries, and innovative research articles. Nevertheless, libraries should remain central to any historical research. To create "the richest possible mosaic" of historical sources, scholars will continue to inhabit the reading rooms of libraries "where sunlight gleams on varnished tables, as it has for more than a century, and knowledge is still embodied in millions of dusty, crumbling, smelly, irreplaceable manuscripts and books".

Libraries will not only continue to be relevant – indeed, essential – for scholars; they will also serve as loci connecting the modern historian with their Western progenitors, the members of the Republic of Letters. The scholarly virtues and values of the Republic of Letters, constantly reshaped by technologies such as the printing press, will continue to encounter obstacles as they evolve and adapt to future academic and social environments. Changes in material context or the creation of a virtual academic community present challenges to the scholarly communities that Grafton studies. Or, we might fear, such changes may lead to the complete demise of the erudite principles of the Republic: Professor Grafton remarks on the rise of e-scholarship complete with its reliance on "a particular postmodern way of approaching texts: rapid, superficial, appropriative, and individualistic". Mastering sources and developing firsthand knowledge has occasionally become secondary to creating polemics from manipulated texts. It is enough to drive true scholars into hiding.

Worlds Made by Words

And yet, Grafton insists, the Republic provides the model for our generation to escape its miasma. Communities built around knowledge and dedicated to truth, regardless of its implications, can counter the increasingly hyperlinked world. Even the scholar Joseph Scaliger, often presented in biographies as being disengaged from academic communities and public life alike, emerges in one of Grafton's essays as both a participant in and an active defender of the Republic of Letters and its values. Exchange between scholars – likeminded or not – was marked by civility. Scaliger, though a devout Calvinist in a time of general intolerance, nevertheless supported the work of Catholic historians and chronologers on the strength of their methods. Indeed, discourse flowed freely throughout Europe between diverse sets of scholars, a pattern of mutual academic engagement that persisted through the Enlightenment.

With our present dependence on and use of the Internet, academics have endless possibilities for interdisciplinary work. Because we are many generations removed from the age of generalists, Grafton asserts that such academic cross-pollination is not only desired but also necessary for modern scholarship to thrive. Today's specialists must continue to engage each other across all borders real and imagined. They, like their Republican predecessors, will shape intellectual communities into new forms and in turn be shaped by these new associations. An environment of courteous exchange between professional academics, whether in the form of encouragement or raw competition, spawns new knowledge in the continuing pursuit of the same truths sought by the members of the Republic of Letters. Technological advancement, then, has limited effects on individual understanding, for "even in the age of mass media, electronic databases, and search engines, local conditions still enable us to know certain things – and prevent us from knowing others." Though our material context bears no semblance to that of the Republic of Letters, scholarly engagement within intellectual communities need not be so different from the example set by our humanist predecessors. Professor Grafton's diagnosis of modern academia is grim, but his optimism for the future of scholarship remains: "Times have been, and are, dark. But even in dark times, the social worlds of scholar-

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ship provide room for human warmth and the desire and pursuit of the truth and promote deep scholarship and intelligent writing. And these abide.”

A new Republic may yet be looming. *F*

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