

Yap stones: “more truly philosophical than any other [idea on currency] that we have come across”

(Keynes) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O97egFtA4eE>

This video is based on Felix Martin’s book *The Unauthorised Biography* (2013) and discusses a truly remarkable form of money.

Listen to the text and fill in the blanks (answers at bottom of page). The match words in bold with definitions in the table.

Well, here it was. Yap was this typical **balmy**, _____-**scattered** Pacific Island, just north of the Equator.

When the young, American _____, William Henry Furness III visited, he was expecting to find an economy so _____ that simple **barter** would _____.

In fact, they had a sophisticated monetary _____. The **coinage** that they used was enormous **limestone** _____ called *fei*, up to twelve feet in diameter. In fact, you could hardly move these things around the island.

But the way the system worked was that when a _____ was completed, they were simply agreed to have _____ hands, without so much as a mark being made on them.

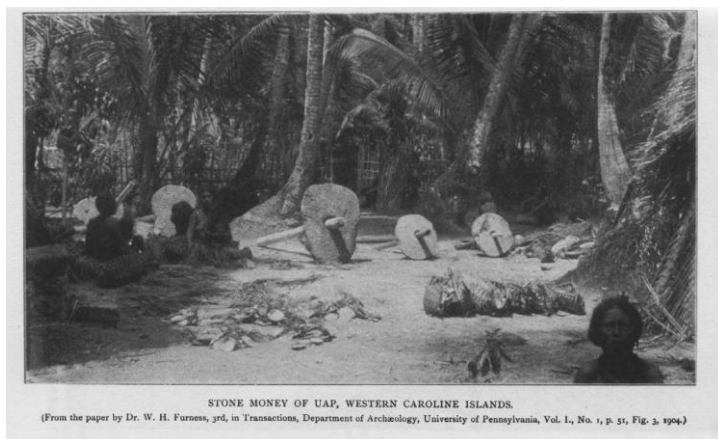
There was one *fei* which had been lying at the _____ of the sea for the last several generations, and yet nobody disputed the _____ of the family that owned it.

Keynes, when he read this account of Yap, he was _____, and he said, “these are people whose ideas on currency are more truly philosophical than any other that we have come _____.”

The people of Yap understood that stone _____ and gold coins, and pound notes, and even the numbers on your online bank account – these things are not money. It’s what they represent which is money.

And what they represent is this _____ system of **billions** upon billions of credit and debt _____.

1. Balmy	a) A rock made mainly of calcium carbonate, used in building
2. Scattered	b) A thousand million
3. Barter	c) Mild and refreshing, soft, producing balm
4. Coinage	d) Loosely distributed, in a disorganised manner
5. Limestone	e) The trade of goods or services without the exchange of money
6. Billion	f) The right or process of making coins



For more on money, bitcoin and what finances economic activity, see Felix Martin’s lecture here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GoF7BizBDRw>

You may find the location of this presentation and the other speakers unusual – but very English in some ways, I guess.

Answers: palm, adventurer, primitive, suffice, system, disks, payment, changed, bottom, wealth, astonished, across, wheels, vast, relationships. Vocabulary: 1c; 2d; 3e; 4f; 5a; 6b.