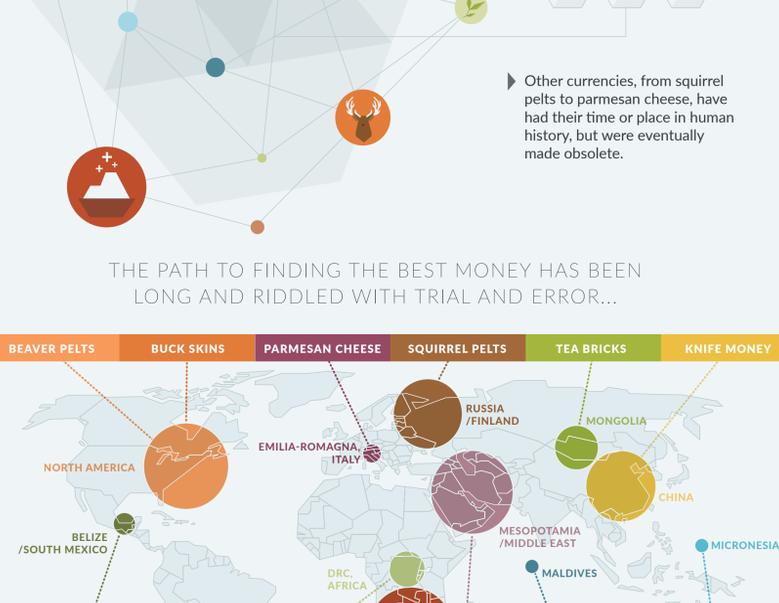


THE WORLD'S STRANGEST CURRENCIES

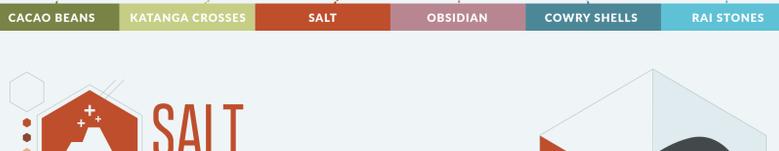
FOR CENTURIES, HUMANS FROM ALL AROUND THE WORLD HAVE TRIED TO USE DIFFERENT THINGS AS MONEY.



Some forms, which most people are familiar with today, have been effective catalysts for trade over thousands of years.

Other currencies, from squirrel pelts to parmesan cheese, have had their time or place in human history, but were eventually made obsolete.

THE PATH TO FINDING THE BEST MONEY HAS BEEN LONG AND RIDDLED WITH TRIAL AND ERROR...



SALT

WORTH ITS WEIGHT

CHINA
The importance of salt to ancient civilizations cannot be understated. The first written record on salt appears in 2700 BCE in China. Salt was highly valued for food preservation, but its production was very limited. As a result, in many places of the world, salt was used as currency.

AFRICA
As early as the 6th century, Moorish merchants in sub-Saharan Africa routinely traded salt and gold at the same value per ounce.

ETHIOPIA
In what is now modern-day Ethiopia, slabs of rock salt were used as coins. Each coin is 10 inches long and two inches thick.

ANCIENT ROME
Salt was also used to pay soldiers in Ancient Rome. This became known as "salarium argentum", from which we now derive the word "salary". A soldier's salary was cut if he was "Not worth his salt", a phrase that still exists today.

TEA BRICKS

JUST ADD WATER

MONGOLIA / SIBERIA
Bricks of tea leaves were used for currency in many places in Asia. However, it was the nomads in Mongolia and Siberia that actually preferred tea bricks to metallic coins.

Tea leaves, either whole or ground, would be dried and compressed into bricks using flour, manure, or blood.

The bricks could be used as a means of exchange, or they could be eaten, used to make tea, or brewed for medicine.

ANIMAL SKINS

PASS THE BUCK

RUSSIA / FINLAND
In Russia and Finland, squirrel pelts were a key medium of exchange during medieval times. Even today, the Finnish word "RAHA", which now refers to money, originally meant "fur of squirrel".

NORTH AMERICA
The European settlers and First Nations tribes found skins to be one commodity they both agreed had value. In 1748, Beaver pelts became the "standard of trade" in the north. One pelt could buy two pounds of sugar.

Lastly, the use of buck skins in trade gave rise to "BUCK" as a slang word for currency, which we still use to describe dollars today.

RAI STONES

SET IN STONE

SOLOMON ISLANDS
In the Solomon Islands, one of the world's strangest currencies was born: the rai stone. These limestone discs with a hole in the center were up to 12 feet in diameter and weighed up to eight tons. It was not unusual for buyers and sellers of this currency to capsize their boats due to the weight.

PARMESAN CHEESE

SAY CHEESE!

ITALY
In Italy, the hard, dry cheese made from skim milk is not just for pasta. It was also used as a currency. As early as the year 1200, wheels of parmesan were used as a medium of exchange for other goods. Even as recently as 2009, the New York Times reported some banks in the region using parmesan wheels as collateral for farmers' loans.

Each compact wheel holds the equivalent of 500 liters of milk.

KNIFE MONEY

MONEY AS A WEAPON

CHINESE ZHOU DYNASTY
Merging the ideas of weapons and currency is not new. Many cultures around the world have used weapons, such as arrowheads, as currency. However, Chinese "knife money" is fairly unique: around 600 BCE, at the time of the Zhou dynasty, these knives were inscribed with numbers or single words such as "sheep" or "fish" to determine their value. These were used for hundreds of years, but eventually, the emperor declared that only circular coins with square holes could be used as Chinese currency.

BELIEF CAN FADE

Currencies come and go. The history books are filled with currencies that experienced hyperinflation and ultimately became worthless.

