

From Underground to End-Users: Global Monetary History in Scientific Context
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Summary

The final meeting of the DAMIN program on “Depreciation of Silver: Monetary and International Relations” (www.anr-damin.net) is scheduled for San Francisco, California and connected regions during May 2016.

After meetings and symposia held in Paris (opening ANR), Madrid (comparisons among arrivals of metals during the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries), Osaka (relations Europe/Asia), and Copenhagen (technology and monetization), the Northern California meeting is organized in cooperation with University of the Pacific. The goal of the 2016 meeting is to continue traditional monetary history under DAMIN, while at the same time encouraging dialogue among monetary historians, numismatists, mining historians, geologists, and other scientists (see, for example, interdisciplinary linkages encouraged by the International Big History Association (<http://www.ibhanet.org>)).

The object is to encourage broad historical analysis of diverse trade objects in relation to means of exchange, including geological concentrations of raw materials across the globe, exploration, mining (in the case of metals), monetary production (including minting), and distribution of final products to end-markets throughout the world. Envisioning monetary history broadly is important because control of raw materials conferred economic power, as did fabrication of monies, exchange of monies for other monies, and exchange of monies for non-monetary items. Equivalent linkages existed for non-metallic payment devices documented throughout history. In some cases, uneven distribution of mines across the globe induced authorities to adopt alternative means of payment, such as chocolate, cowries, rice, beans, textiles, and numerous other monetized objects. These choices influenced social, political, and trade relations, leading to diverse monetary arrangements and various paths of economic development around the world. Despite wide diversity in substances and historical circumstances, the question remains whether common mechanisms provide useful explanations for (a) worldwide distributions of ores and other raw materials, (b) extraction and transformation of such materials into usable inputs (e.g. mining and processing), (c) production of monies (e.g. minting), and (d) relocation and accumulation of each money in specific end-markets throughout history. This final meeting seeks to extend a DAMIN tradition of cross-disciplinary fertilization through broadening of communication about monies among scholars from the humanities, social sciences, and physical sciences.

Ongoing project

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