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## An Italian Bank Caught in the Vortex of Election Politics

*By Elisabetta Povoledo and Jack Ewing, The New York Times, January 29, 2013*

Milan – The chief executive of a regional Italian bank embroiled in a scandal with political and even Europe-wide implications said Monday that recent revelations of past mismanagement and questionable deals would not impede efforts to turn around the beleaguered institution.

“This is still a solid bank,” Fabrizio Viola, chief executive of Monte dei Paschi di Siena, said Monday at a news conference in Milan.

In the past week revelations of transactions that may have disguised the extent of the bank's losses during the global financial crisis have become political fodder ahead of Italy's national elections next month.

And the disclosures have raised questions about the degree of scrutiny given Monte dei Paschi di Siena by Mario Draghi, who was still head of Italy's central bank when the problems developed. Mr. Draghi, of course, is now president of the European Central Bank.

At issue is whether Monte dei Paschi di Siena, or MPS as it is known, hid losses it incurred after acquiring the Italian bank Antonveneta in 2008, for €9 billion – a price that even at the time was widely derided as far too high. Now under scrutiny are two complex transactions MPS conducted with Deutsche Bank and Nomura that critics say enabled MPS to mask some of its losses.

Mr. Viola, part of the new management that came to the bank last year, said Monday that an investigation now under way would produce findings by mid-February, ahead of national elections scheduled for February 24 and 25.

With MPS based in Siena, in a part of northern Italy that is a stronghold of the

leftist Democratic Party, the conservative former prime minister Silvio Berlusconi, who is trying to be a spoiler in next month's elections, has been trying to lay blame for the scandal at the Democratic Party's doorstep. Meanwhile, the current prime minister, Mario Monti, has had to defend his government's decision to bail out the banks with loans granted last year.

More broadly, though, the problems at MPS provide an extreme example of an old-line banking pattern that analysts say is still disturbingly commonplace in Europe. As with most Italian banks, MPS's primary shareholder is a local foundation, which receives dividends that are to be used to pay for social projects as well as cultural and charitable enterprises. That gives MPS an extensive veil of political relationships that can be hard for any national overseer to peer through.

The same combination of local political influence and lax control has also afflicted many banks in Germany and Spain, with taxpayers left suffering the consequences. Indeed, grave lapses by national regulators are among the main reasons European leaders have decided to put the European Cen-

*Continued on page 2*



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Italian Bank from page 1

tral Bank in charge of bank regulation.

But now there is a possible snag in the plan: Mr. Draghi, who is expected to lead that overhaul, was at least nominally the overseer of MPS while it was digging itself into a deep hole.

Many analysts, though, question whether Mr. Draghi – or any Italian regulators – would have had enough information to recognize the bank’s problems, since there appears to have been a deliberate attempt to conceal losses. And in any case, the Bank of Italy may not have had legal power to prevent MPS from making bad decisions.

But at the very least Mr. Draghi’s proximity to the scandal is untimely as the ECB and euro zone leaders finally seemed to be rebuilding credibility in the common currency. The decision to create a centralized banking supervisor at the ECB is a big part of the effort to restore confidence in the euro zone.

“Italy is a country where even national regulators can have a trouble getting a grip on what is happening at the local level,” said Nicolas Véron, a senior fellow at Bruegel, a research organization in Brussels. Mr. Véron stressed that there was no evidence Mr. Draghi deserved any blame for the Monti dei Paschi scandal.

But Mr. Véron said, “It clearly does create perception problems, because there’s a question mark about the appropriateness of the Bank of Italy’s response at the time.”

“At this point it’s only a question mark,” Mr. Véron said. “We don’t have any facts.”

A spokesman for the ECB declined to comment Monday.

Several of Germany’s landesbanks, regional institutions typically owned jointly by state governments and local savings banks, have also gotten into serious trouble in recent years and required bailouts which cost taxpayers billions of euros. Like MPS, many landesbanks got in over their heads when they tried to respond to the increasing dominance of big investment banks by getting into investment banking themselves.

MPS’s problems stem partly from its attempts, starting in the 1990s, to avoid being acquired by larger rivals, said Filippo Ippolito, an assistant professor in finance at Pompeu Fabra University in Barcelona. Mr. Ippolito is from Siena and worked for several years at Monti dei Paschi more than a decade ago.

The city foundation that owned a majority of the bank wanted to keep its headquarters in Siena. But attempts by bank

management to join the major leagues turned out badly, including an abortive attempt to get into investment banking and, in 2007, the ill-fated €9 billion acquisition of Antonveneta.

In retrospect, Mr. Ippolito said, Siena would be much better off if it had allowed MPS to be acquired years ago.

“The great fear of the Siense in the 90s was in losing control of the bank,” Mr. Ippolito said. “Now they are losing control anyway and it’s not worth anything. The worst outcome is coming true.”

The scandal may also have implications for two of the largest banks operating in Europe. Deutsche Bank in Frankfurt and Nomura, a Japanese bank which has a large presence in London, were involved in transactions that may have allowed Monti dei Paschi to conceal losses.

A spokesman for Nomura said the bank would not comment. Deutsche Bank issued a statement Monday saying said the financing transaction with Monti dei Paschi in 2008 “was subject to our rigorous internal approval processes and also received the requisite approvals of the client who was independently advised.”

“There will be polemics and rhetoric about evil foreign bankers,” said Federico Fubini, an economics reporter at the Milan daily *Corriere della Sera*. “But upon closer look, the MPS affair reflects the Italian way of doing things, one that has contributed to the current crisis of competitiveness.”

Bank board members appointed by foundations have more political than financial competence, said Tito Boeri, who teaches economics at Bocconi University in Milan, which can lead to bad judgment, like the “crazy idea to buy Antonveneta to maximize power,” he said.

Italian newspapers on Monday said that investigators were looking into the possibility that a bribe had been paid as part of the acquisition of Antonveneta, which was bought from the Spanish bank Santander. But Mr. Viola, the MPS chief executive, said Monday that no evidence had emerged that illicit money had passed hands. Should any evidence emerge, he said, the bank would present itself as an injured party in court.

Though Mr. Berlusconi, of the People of Liberty Party, and Mr. Monti, who leads a centrist coalition, have not failed to underscore the links between MPS and the Democratic Party, political analysts say it is unlikely that the revelations will have much effect on national elections next month. Opinion polls in the past week tend to sup-

port that view.

But the murkiness may have thwarted the Democratic Party's ability to lure fresh voters, said Stefano Folli, a political analyst for economic daily *Il Sole 24 Ore*, limiting their overall numbers and making it more difficult for the party to control both houses of Parliament.

"Right now the Democratic Party hovers between 29 and 32 percent, after Monte dei Paschi, I doubt it will go any higher," but it will not go any lower either, he said, as long as "no further scandals emerge." Current polls show that because of the way the

Italian parliamentary seats are allotted, the center-left will win the lower house but may not have control of the senate.

Mr. Viola said Monday that the political brouhaha over the bank was distorting the issue at stake, "out of line with respect to the problem."

Speaking on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum in Davos last week, the current Bank of Italy governor, Ignazio Visco, said: "MPS is a sound bank. The Bank of Italy does not act as a police force, but promotes sound and prudent management."

Others say that any responsibility, or

blame for lapses, should be shared by the Finance Ministry, which oversees banking foundations.

New revelations are expected to emerge Tuesday when Italy's financial stability committee – which includes representatives of the Finance Ministry, the Bank of Italy and other regulars – will meet in Rome to discuss the MPS affair.



**Our Comment.** Politics runs dark and black and blue, like haunted blood banks. *W.K.*

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## Criticisms of a Classic Abound

By Jennifer Schuessler, *The New York Times*, February 19, 2013

When the proposal for a book about the plight of the American housewife by a little-known journalist named Betty Friedan began circulating at the publishing house W.W. Norton in early 1959, not everyone was convinced that it was a world-changing blockbuster.

True, George Brockway, Norton's president (and a suburban father of six), was enthusiastic, writing on the official evaluation form, "Overstated at almost every point, yet entirely stimulating and provocative," to which two other employees added, "I'm for it!"

But in a two-page memo to Brockway, preserved in the Norton archives at Columbia University, another employee identified only as "L M" laid out a withering dissent.

Friedan's theories were "too obvious and feminine," L M wrote, her approach was "unscientific," her remarks on Freud were "snide," her depiction of suburban life was selectively self-serving, and her excoriating portrait of women's magazines was motivated by "guilt" over her own contributions to them. Besides, L M concluded, "I got very tired of phrases like 'feminine mystique.'"

That phrase, of course, became famous when *The Feminine Mystique* was published, 50 years ago on Tuesday, to wide acclaim and huge sales, and it remains enduring shorthand for the suffocating vision of domestic goddess-hood Friedan is credited with helping demolish. But her book has been shadowed by its share of critics ever since, including many otherwise sympathetic scholars who have doggedly chipped away at its own mystique.

Friedan, who died in 2006, was not just

the frustrated "housewife" of her official biography, they point out, but a former left-wing journalist and activist whose jeremiad appeared in a climate that was more primed to receive it than she might have admitted.

*The Feminine Mystique* tends to be hailed simply as "the book that started second-wave feminism," said Lisa M. Fine, a historian at Michigan State University and a co-editor of the first annotated scholarly edition, just published by Norton. "But it's a much more complicated text."

Indeed, some cracking its spine for the first time – as more than one commentator on the 50th anniversary has sheepishly confessed to doing – may be surprised at just how scholarly the book is. Friedan, who claimed she gave up a prestigious PhD fellowship in psychology after a boyfriend said it would threaten their relationship, spent years in the New York Public Library, digging as deeply into the theories of Freud, Margaret Mead, A.H. Maslow and David Riesman as into the women's magazines she blasted for perpetuating the mythology of the "happy housewife."

Today that immersion in mid-century social science may make the book feel dated and more of a symbolic totem than a direct inspiration to current feminists. But to historians *The Feminine Mystique* remains a rich keyhole into the popular culture of the 1950s – even if, as scholars increasingly argue, that decade was far less monolithic in its stultifying conformism than Friedan's best seller suggested. In an influential 1993 paper on postwar popular culture, the historian Joanne Meyerowitz argued that mass-circulation magazines of the 1950s frequently profiled women with careers, although the articles emphasized

the importance of maintaining a traditional feminine identity.

More recently, other scholars have pointed out that readers encountering *The Feminine Mystique* through the excerpts that appeared in women's magazines might not have heard an entirely empowering message. In *Mom: The Transformation of Motherhood in Modern America* (2010), the historian Rebecca Jo Plant argued that to many readers, the book seemed less like a progressive rallying cry than a continuation of the housewife-bashing of books like Philip Wylie's 1942 best seller, *Generation of Vipers*, which blamed over-involved mothers for all manner of social ills.

For all she got right, Ms. Plant wrote, "Friedan missed – indeed, she contributed to – the frustrations many women felt due to a cultural climate that constantly denigrated mothers and homemakers."

Still, few historians quarrel with the idea that the book galvanized women, including some who would hardly seem like natural political allies of a writer who (as the historian Daniel Horowitz revealed in his 1998 biography, to Friedan's displeasure) cut her teeth as a reporter for radical newspapers and had a file with the FBI.

Stephanie Coontz, a historian at Evergreen State College and the author of *A Strange Stirring*, a 2011 study of the impact of *The Feminine Mystique*, describes finding some surprising testimonials from readers preserved in the Friedan papers at Harvard.

"I found letters from Mormon women, Baptists – the kind of women who wouldn't agree with Friedan on lots of political issues, but knew they had been relegated to second-class citizenship," Ms. Coontz said in an interview.

Some women, however, may have been mobilized in directions that ran counter to Friedan's intentions. The historian Jessica Weiss, in a 2012 paper called "Fraud of Femininity" (a reference to the title of an excerpt from *The Feminine Mystique* published in *McCall's*), traced the book's impact on conservative women, who saw the embrace of domesticity not as a backward-looking defense of tradition but "a positive, proactive means of countering social disintegration" and national decline. (Ms. Weiss noted that nearly 90 percent of the women who wrote to *McCall's* in response to a second excerpt from the book were critical of Friedan.)

In a new round table in the journal *Gender and Society*, Ms. Coontz acknowledges that it is not known how many readers of *The Feminine Mystique* became politically active, or how many second-wave feminist leaders had even read the book. Indeed, Friedan was hardly without her critics in the movement, who blasted what they saw as her myopic focus on educated white women or her sometimes over-the-top language, whether she was comparing suburbia to "a comfortable concentration camp" or warning the National Organization for Women, which she helped found in 1966, against an encroaching lesbian "menace."

Some scholars, however, have defended aspects of Friedan's work that sound most outlandish to contemporary ears. In an essay excerpted in the new Norton critical edition, Kirsten Fermaglich, a historian at Michigan State and the volume's co-editor, argued that Friedan was hardly the only Jewish thinker of the period to make use of extended Nazi metaphors while saying nothing about Jews. The historian Stanley Elkins, the psychiatrist Robert Jay Lifton and the psychologist Stanley Milgram, she wrote, all used Nazi concentration camps, much as Friedan did, as a metaphor for mass society's destruction of the individual.

To some scholars, however, the epochal impact of Friedan's book derived less from its complex intellectual origins than from her simple rhetorical masterstrokes, starting with the phrase that Norton's "L M" was so irked by.

"Friedan's genius," Ms. Coontz said, "was to provide, with 'feminine mystique,' the first phrase you could use to explain that you thought there was something wrong, and that it was a lie."



**Our Comment.** What we achieve is a legitimizing of the "feminizing" of all other techniques. *W.K.*

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# The Acropolis: The Prehistoric and Geometric Epochs

*An excerpt from The Acropolis by Kat-  
erina Servi, published by Ekdotike Athenon.  
In French, translated by William Krehm.*

A little sun-bathed plain pretty well in the very midst worn down to a platform that has its base precious springs of drinking water. The folk of our prehistory could not possibly overlook so privileged a site. And in fact the explorations practised at the top and on the various slopes of the Acropolis have turned up traces of occupation dating from the late Neolithic (about 3500-3200 BC). This site will continue to be inhabited, in the ancient Bronze age (3200/3000 to 2200/2000 BC) and during the Middle Bronze Age (2200/2000 to 1600 BC).

During the second millennium BC, the population of Attica underwent a thorough renewal with tribes come down from the north, new tribes such as the Ionians (Babylonians) to mingle and who mixed with the local population to which tradition lends the name of Pelasgians. Towards the middle of the same millennium we witnessed in mainland Greece the emergence of a brilliant prehistoric civilization Mycenaean civilization, named after the largest of its centers, the Mycenaean. During the Mycenaean Period (1600-1100 BC, the inhabitants lived in groups on the various slopes of the Acropolis and from its top where the inhabitants venerated their goddess Athena from time immemorial, and where their local sovereign had his palace. In the course of the 13th century BC, the Acropolis was fortified at its very summit, following the examples of other Mycenaean cities, by impressive walls. This surrounding wall also protected the entrance of a deep natural fault in the rock which sheltered a source of water, the Mycenaean well. Later, the wall of the Athenian Acropolis, as other Mycenaean walls came to be called *Cyclopean walls*, impressed by their size, people thought they were built by the Cyclopes, giants of supernatural force. The Mycenaean fortification of the Acropolis was then supplemented by a second enclosure at the foot of the hill, named from the beginning as the "pelargic" or the "pelasgique" and baptized "Enneapyllo" referring to its nine gates, one of the objectives of that work being the protection of the sources of the North and Southern slopes of the rocks.

It is also in the 13th century BC that dates back to the creation of the synoecismes, or grouping of small urban areas, scattered in all Attica, in a single city, with Athens as its joint political centre. The Athenians of the classical period attributed this initiative to the legendary King Theseus.

Then came the late 12th century BC, called the *Dorian descent*, which caused the disappearance of the Mycenaean world. The tradition is that these Dorians have also attempted to invade Attica, but without success. Later, during the Geometric period, so called because of geometric shapes adorning vases of the time, 1100-700 BC to Christ's birth, the city became an important cultural and commercial center. The knowledge we have about the Acropolis at this distant time is restricted. Researches nevertheless revealed existence, from 8th century before Christ, in site of the Mycenaean palace, a small temple devoted to Athena Polias, divine prophetess of the city, to which even Homer refers to by qualifying it as "opulent temple" and as solid "resting place of Erechtheion."

## Archaic Epoch

The following centuries will be the foundations of the great political and cultural development of the city. In the 7th century BC, the monarchy in full decadence gave way to the aristocracy. This change in status was in part because of Dracon who, towards the end of the century, gave political rights to a wider layer of Athenian society. He codified the law establishing penalties deemed heavy against lawbreakers. A period of social disturbances resulting from unbearable debts followed the farmers of which were taxed. But at the beginning of the 6th century BC, Solon appeared on the political scene, offering constitutional and legislative reforms of paramount importance that not only will restore the situation, but also pave the way for what was one of the greatest creations of the Greek spirit: the Athenian democracy.

From the middle of the 6th century BC, the history of Athens was closely linked to the name of Pisistratus, an ingenious and very ambitious aristocrat. Although having seized power as a tyrant, he practiced in moderation while contributing significantly to the economic and spiritual progress of the

city. In addition to his passion for letters – it is within his time, that the first transcription of the epics of Homer appear – Pisistratus also had at heart to encourage the arts. It should also be the reorganization of the Panathenaic games, an annual ancestral festival, in honour of the goddess Athena. This event was in 566 BC, referred to as Great Panathenaic Games and these festivals would now take place every four years in the greatest magnificence. According to experts, it is precisely this initiative of Pisistratus that they owe the property effervescence determined in this time on the Acropolis. It is then, in effect, that first big temple of the goddess, the *Hecatompedos neos*, with a length of one hundred feet, at the place even where one century later the Parthenon will be set up. Next to the new temple, ruling with its pediments that the polychromic underlines, a series of small buildings as well as innumerable offerings devoted by the faithful to their beloved goddess. Among dedicants included not only Athenian aristocrats, but also artisans, men and women, the testimony of the inscriptions on the bases that have been preserved, wanted to offer either the beginnings of a crop or activity (*aparche*), or a tenth of their income (*dekate*). On the death of Pisistratus in 527 BC, his sons Hippias and Hipparchus succeeded him. But the reign of the Pisistratus in 514 BC will be shaken after the assassination of Hipparchus by Harmodius and Aristogiton, known under the name of *Tyrannoctones* (in old Greek tyrant and assassins). A few years later, in 510 BC, the tyranny collapsed.

The end of this century will be marked by the reforms introduced by another legislator Emeritus, Cleisthenes (508-507 BC), Laying the foundations for radical reform of the Athenian democracy. It is likely that during his reign was built the Old Temple of Athena, north of Hecatompedon.

The 5th century BC, inaugurated the era of the Greco-Persian wars. The Greeks came out victorious in the first confrontations, thanks to the genius of the general Miltiades in 490 BC, in Marathon. To show their gratitude to their Patron Goddess, the Athenians immediately undertook the construction of a large marble temple on the Acropolis. But this work was never completed during a second Persian invasion in 480 BC, the Persians succeeded until Attica, igniting and bloodying Athens and the Acropolis. Shortly before, on the urge of the farsighted general Themistocles; the Athenians had deserted the city and found refuge on the nearby island of Salamis. The

advance of the enemy could however be confined: during the naval battle of Salamine, the Athenian war fleet – major element of the maritime policy of Themistocle – broke the Persian fleet to pieces. Shortly after, the win of Greces in Plataea, in 479 BC, forced the Persians to retreat, this final time. Back in their city, the Athenians hastened to bury in natural holes of the rock the relics of temples and other burned down buildings. Some elements of the buildings in ruins were employed again in the northern wall of the Acropolis where they are still visible today.

### Classical Period

The victorious wars against the Persians marked the end of an era and the beginning of another, the most glorious in this case, the history of Athens and the Acropolis.

In 478-7 BC the Athenian general Aristide formed an alliance with the island and costal cities of the Aegean, the first Athenian League (also known as the Delian League), whose objective was to continue the fight against the Persians. It is the sacred island of Delos, which was chosen to head the new maritime alliance, but it is Athens, his strong powerful fleet, which took the lead. And, in fact, allied military successes multiplied thanks to the exceptional craftsmanship of General Cimon, son of Miltiades. The Greek cities of Asia were thus delivered the Persian ones in a few years and Athens acquired considerable power, prestige and wealth.

After the sudden death of Cimon in 450 BC, Pericles, one of the most charismatic Athenian leaders, took the intermediary at the head of the city. After the sudden death of Cimon in 450 BC, Pericles, one of the most charismatic Athenian leaders, took the intermediary at the head of the city. It is under its auspices that Athens was to reach the peak of its glory. The signing of the peace treat of Callias (449 BC) came to put an end to the Greco-Persian wars and the truce with Sparta, the other great power of the time, removed, at least temporarily, the risk of armed conflict between the two cities. With respect to the Athenian League, she devoted little by little the hegemony of Athens on all its allies. The democratic regime was strongly supported by the reforms of Ephialtes and Pericles. And thanks to the admirable balance thus ensured, they saw a plethora of philosophers arriving in the city, come from all corners of the Hellenic world. Athens opened new radical ways in every field of art and thought. It is in

this context of peace and prosperity that Pericles undertook imposing construction projects that was extending to all Attica, and mainly the Acropolis. The Propylaea, entrance of the sanctuary of the Acropolis, date from this period and the Parthenon, sumptuous marble temple, symbol of the city in the classical era. To face the enormous expenditure implied by this work, and after having received the agreement of its fellow-citizens, Pericles drew the funds of the League, meanwhile transferred from Delos to Athens (454 BC).

Alas, the unprecedented growth experienced by the city will be rudely interrupted with the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War between Athens and Sparta. More fierce than all the previous confrontations, this war will last 27 years (431 to 404 BC) and will result in the victory of Sparta, a “pyrrhic” victory as one and other adversaries leave there substantially ruined. Despite the horrors of the war, however, the Athenians have in heart of advancing the work of the Acropolis, including building the Erechtheum and the small temple of Athena Nike.

The new century sees Athens trying to be raised from the ashes. The fact is that throughout the 4th century BC, the city will enjoy a cultural and artistic radiation unaltered. The Acropolis is enriched with new offerings, works of renowned artists of reputation like Praxiteles or Leochares. At the same time however, a new military power, Macedonia, prepares to conquer the first place on the Greek scene. The defeat of the Athenians, losers by Philippe II of Macedonia at Chaeronea, in 338 BC, will mark the beginning of the political decline of Athens. Alexander the Great, son of Philippe II, who succeeded his father in 336 BC, continued the political dynamics of Macedonia. Two years after its introduction, the new King declared himself ready to take the legendary campaign which would lead him to the far reaches of Asia and give birth to a huge empire. After his great victory at the Battle of Granicus (334 BC), Alexander was sent to Athens, Persian shields were attached to the eastern facade of the Parthenon, as trophies of war.

### Hellenistic and Roman Period

After the death of Alexander the Great in 323 BC, Athens was the scene of rivalries between pretenders to the succession. Despite this, throughout the Hellenistic period, an intense real estate activity grew, the result of generous donations from King Epigones of Alexander: Antiochus IV Epiphanes, Attalus

II, Eumenes II and populated city gates and gyms and the Acropolis offerings.

After this period of prosperity, the Hellenistic kingdoms are somewhat weakened, conquered by the Romans. The annexation of Ptolemaic Egypt in 30 BC definitely devotes Roman rule. In 86 BC, wanting to punish the Athenians for having supported Mithridates, King of Pontus and enemy of Rome, the Roman general Sulla attacked and destroyed their city.

But despite the Roman sovereignty, Athens will continue to develop, in particular during the second century AD. Its territory stretched and saw new lavish construction take place there, such as the library of Hadrian or the Odeon of Herodes Atticus. At the same time, strong admiration and support of notable Romans, schools of philosophy continued to provide their lights to their many followers. The next chronological stage in the history of the city is the year 267, on this date which the Heruli, a true human tidal wave, who came from the North, ransacked it completely. According to some, the Parthenon would have been the victim of a fire resulting in the destruction of the roof and causing damage to the inside of the building. It seems that restoration works were carried out one century later, under the reign of the emperor Julian.

### **Byzantine and Frankish Period**

The advent of the Byzantine Empire in 4th century AD and the expansion of Christianity had to relegate most of the Greek cities to the rank of provincial towns without importance. Athens suffered the same fate. In 529, Emperor Justinian decreed the closing of the philosophical schools, the same time erasing at once the last memory of its past glory. Meanwhile, in the early years of Christianity, the ancient temples were gradually transformed into churches. Such as the Parthenon, firstly dedicated to Divine Wisdom (Sofia tou Theou), then to the Virgin Mary (Panagia Athinotissa).

Around the year 1000 AD, the city lived a brief resurgence of prosperity. At that time, in fact, the emperor Basil II restored the Parthenon and decorated the interior with frescoes. But in the 12th century the city was ransacked again, this time by hordes of Saracens. Metropolitan and scholar Michel Acominatos the Choniate sent us in his writings, the picture presented by this city, once so brilliant and now almost deserted.

April 12, 1204, Constantinople, capital of Byzantine Empire was conquered by the armies of the Fourth Crusade. Then the

Crusaders shared the spoils of the Empire, Athens was given to Othon de La Roche, son of a Burgundian Lord. Then it passed successively into the hands of various conquerors. Catalan, Florentines (the Acciaiuoli Dukes) and Venetians. The Acropolis was then a powerful fortress, the Propylaea were transformed into the Palace of its different Lords, the Erechtheion in housing and the Parthenon in Church, no longer Orthodox but Roman Catholic.

In 1261, the Byzantines succeeded in reconquering Constantinople. Athens however failed to break free of the Frankish domination.

### **Ottoman Domination — Greek Revolution**

The millennial history of the Byzantine empire finally ended in May 1453, when besieged Constantinople fell into the hands of the Turkish troops of Mehmet II. Three years later, in 1456, the Ottoman also captured Athens. Throughout some four centuries of Turkish occupation, the city underwent new transformations. The Acropolis was covered with houses, the Parthenon was converted into a mosque and equipped with a minaret to its South-East corner. They installed in the Erechtheion the harem of the military commander of the place while in the city's base, on the premises of the Roman Agora and Hadrian's Library, were the administrative buildings and the Bazaar.

Despite the passage of time, the Parthenon, however, had hardly changed in appearance, at least externally. That's how in 1674, when the Marquis de Nointel ambassador of King Louis XIV at the Sublime Porte, went to Athens, one of the members of his suite, the young painter J. Carrey had time to draw in great detail most of the carved ornaments of the temples. His work proved invaluable. Thirteen years later, in fact, during the war led by Venice against the Turks, Venetians, under the orders of their Commander in Chief Francesco Morosini, laid siege to the Acropolis: the disaster was near. On September 26, 1687, a Venetian bomb fell on the Parthenon that the Turks had made a powder keg. The explosion which followed ensued caused the decline of a large part of the monument. At their departure, in 1688, the Venetians, in addition, wanted to seize the horses that adorned the west front of the temple, not succeeding, the precious sculptures fell on the ground and broke there. In the following century, particularly from its second half, the Greece became a pole of attraction

for wealthy European collectors of Antique art. The Acropolis did not escape their rapacity. Its greatest depredation was inflicted by the British Thomas Bruce, seventh count d' Elgin, who tore off most of the carved marbles of the Parthenon (56 of 97 plates stored in the frieze, 19 figures in the round two pediments and 15 metopes of the south facade) not counting a number of pieces of other monuments (including one of the Caryatids of the Erechtheum). Moreover, in the course of depredation, the architectural members was subjected to damage beyond repair. Finally, during the crossing, two of the ships transporting the precious load were wrecked – one of them, the Mentor which had sunk off the island of Kythera, with 17 cases of sculptures on board, was nevertheless able to be recovered by divers from the islands of Kalymnos and Samos. The collection of Elgin was sold in 1816 to the British government which offered it to the British Museum, where it remains on display to this day.

It was in March 1821 the Greek Revolution broke out, founding event in the history of modern Hellenism. From the beginning, or almost, Athens, and particularly the Acropolis, were turned into battlefields where Greeks and Turks clashed. 10. June 1822, after a difficult siege, the Greeks captured the sacred rock and liberated the city. But a few years later, the situation is reversed. During the summer 1826, the Turkish army, under the orders of general Mehmet Rashid Kioutachi, again made the seat of the Acropolis. The Greeks who were defending the sacred rock rejoiced at the enemy, in May 1827.

### **Modern Time**

In spite of all these set-backs, the revolution was going to end up crowning the efforts of the Greeks. The new independent Greek State was established in February 1830. Chosen by the Powers to fulfill the role of sovereign, this was Prince Otto, son of Louis of Bavaria. He entered Greece in 1833, and by the end of 1834, his choice fell on Athens to become the capital of the new State. A true architectural revolution is so committed, over the years, providing the city's public and private buildings, inspired by the two great currents that cross European architecture of the 19th century Neoclassicism and Romanticism. At the same time are put into work the efforts of rescue and development of the monuments of the Acropolis. In the years between 1885-1890 excavations uncovered, among other find-

ings, the remains of the temples and statues of archaic time buried in pits, showcasing some of its most prestigious pieces at the Museum of the Acropolis. Also at the end of the 19th century large-scale restorations began, almost uninterrupted until the Second World War.

However, the Acropolis was confronted with new threats: the atmospheric pollution first, which attacked the texture of marble, and the oxidation of the iron fixings used in the course of the ancient restorations. This is why in 1975 the interdisciplinary Committee for the Conservation of Monuments of the Acropolis (CCMA) was made up, in charge with the study and the implementation on a large scale of work deconsolidation and restoration. Work which does not cease being currently carried out by the competent authorities. Moreover, thanks to the reunification of the archeological sites of Athens, accomplished these last years, and gradually as the work is progressing, it is a much more complete picture, of the ancient city, which takes form in the eyes of the visitor. As for the masterpieces of the sacred rock, they are consequently displayed after a long wait, in a museum worthy of their splendour, an imposing building, which comes as a modern window opened on the intriguing world of the ancient Acropolis.

### The Epoch of Myth

This is Athena, daughter of Zeus, the King of the gods and men, and Metis, Goddess of intelligence, which is honoured on the rock of the Acropolis revered. Elders told that when Metis was pregnant with Athena, an oracle had warned Zeus that his wife would give birth to a daughter first, and then a son who would dethrone him. To avoid the oracle being fulfilled, he decided to swallow Metis. But she was already pregnant with Athena, and it grows in the head of his father. When the time came for the birth, Zeus called to rescue the Titan Prometheus, or according to another version, Hephaestus, the blacksmith god, to open the head suddenly with an axe. And that is why, in front of the other astounded Gods, the young Goddess springs while her father's head into his arms. Athena, Goddess of wisdom, Goddess of peace, certainly, protective of the artisans, was not least eminently Warrior. One of its principal attributes was the owl, which was reproduced on the Athenian currencies.

For the Athenians, Athena was also *polias*, i.e., protective of the city. To conquer this title it had entered in conflict with the

god of the sea, Poseidon, who wanted to also endorse the beautiful city. To put an end to the feud, the two rivals proposed to offer everyone a present. The winner would be the one who, according to the judgment of the other gods, would have offered the best solution. The contest took place on the rock of the Acropolis. Poseidon, the first, struck the ground with his trident, and immediately salt water started to flow. Athena, however, planted an olive tree, the first in the world. Gods who refereed immediately gave the victory to the daughter of Zeus and therefore, the city was given the name of his patroness Athena.

Another character linked to the dispute between Athena and Poseidon, the king Cecrops, legendary ancestral figure of Attica, was believed to be *indigenous*, in the most concrete sense of the word, meaning born of the earth itself, and it had a mythical double nature, half man (above the waist)

half snake. According to antique tradition, Cecrops erected walls around the Acropolis, he made up laws, put in order the relations between humans, teaching monogamy among others, and introduced the alphabet in Athens. Present on the rock during the fight between the two gods, he might have even been the referee.

Myths of the antique are particularly rich and have many stories related to the creation of the agglomeration of Athens, the composition of the population, social and political institutions, various forms of worship and the relations of Athens with neighbouring States. The protagonists of this story are of gods and kings, such as Erichthonis, Pandion, Erechtheus and Theseus, the greatest of the Athenian heroes, the one who managed to kill in Crete, the terrible Minotaur eater of men and who gathered all inhabitants of the Attique in the city of Athena, Athens.■

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## Obama Seeking to Boost Study of Human Brain

*By John Markoff, The New York Times, February 18, 2013*

The Obama administration is planning a decade-long scientific effort to examine the workings of the human brain and build a comprehensive map of its activity, seeking to do for the brain what the Human Genome Project did for genetics.

The project, which the administration has been looking to unveil as early as March, will include federal agencies, private foundations and teams of neuroscientists and nanoscientists in a concerted effort to advance the knowledge of the brain's billions of neurons and gain greater insights into perception, actions and, ultimately, consciousness.

Scientists with the highest hopes for the project also see it as a way to develop the technology essential to understanding diseases like Alzheimer's and Parkinson's, as well as to find new therapies for a variety of mental illnesses.

Moreover, the project holds the potential of paving the way for advances in artificial intelligence.

The project, which could ultimately cost billions of dollars, is expected to be part of the president's budget proposal next month. And, four scientists and representatives of research institutions said they had participated in planning for what is being called

the Brain Activity Map project.

The details are not final, and it is not clear how much federal money would be proposed or approved for the project in a time of fiscal constraint or how far the research would be able to get without significant federal financing.

In his State of the Union address, President Obama cited brain research as an example of how the government should "invest in the best ideas."

"Every dollar we invested to map the human genome returned \$140 to our economy — every dollar," he said. "Today our scientists are mapping the human brain to unlock the answers to Alzheimer's. They're developing drugs to regenerate damaged organs, devising new materials to make batteries 10 times more powerful. Now is not the time to gut these job-creating investments in science and innovation."

Story C. Landis, the director of the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, said that when she heard Mr. Obama's speech, she thought he was referring to an existing National Institutes of Health project to map the static human brain. "But he wasn't," she said. "He was referring to a new project to map the active human brain that the NIH hopes to fund next year."

Indeed, after the speech, Francis S. Col-

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lins, the director of the National Institutes of Health, may have inadvertently confirmed the plan when he wrote in a Twitter message: “Obama mentions the #NIH Brain Activity Map in #SOTU.”

A spokesman for the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy declined to comment about the project.

The initiative, if successful, could provide a lift for the economy. “The Human Genome Project was on the order of about \$300 million a year for a decade,” said George M. Church, a Harvard University molecular biologist who helped create that project and said he was helping to plan the Brain Activity Map project. “If you look at the total spending in neuroscience and nanoscience that might be relative to this today, we are already spending more than that. We probably won't spend less money, but we will probably get a lot more bang for the buck.”

Scientists involved in the planning said they hoped that federal financing for the project would be more than \$300 million a year, which if approved by Congress would amount to at least \$3 billion over the 10 years.

The Human Genome Project cost \$3.8 billion. It was begun in 1990 and its goal, the mapping of the complete human genome, or all the genes in human DNA, was achieved ahead of schedule, in April 2003. A federal government study of the impact of the project indicated that it returned \$800 billion by 2010.

The advent of new technology that allows scientists to identify firing neurons in the brain has led to numerous brain research projects around the world. Yet the brain remains one of the greatest scientific mysteries.

Composed of roughly 100 billion neurons that each electrically “spike” in response to outside stimuli, as well as in vast ensembles based on conscious and unconscious activity, the human brain is so complex that scientists have not yet found a way to record the activity of more than a small number of neurons at once, and in most cases that is done invasively with physical probes.

But a group of nanotechnologists and neuroscientists say they believe that technologies are at hand to make it possible to observe and gain a more complete understanding of the brain, and to do it less intrusively.

In June in the journal *Neuron*, six leading scientists proposed pursuing a number of new approaches for mapping the brain.

One possibility is to build a complete

model map of brain activity by creating fleets of molecule-size machines to non-invasively act as sensors to measure and store brain activity at the cellular level. The proposal envisions using synthetic DNA as a storage mechanism for brain activity.

“Not least, we might expect novel understanding and therapies for diseases such as schizophrenia and autism,” wrote the scientists, who include Dr. Church; Ralph J. Greenspan, the associate director of the Kavli Institute for Brain and Mind at the University of California, San Diego; A. Paul Alivisatos, the director of the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory; Miyoung Chun, a molecular geneticist who is the vice president for science programs at the Kavli Foundation; Michael L. Roukes, a physicist at the California Institute of Technology; and Rafael Yuste, a neuroscientist at Columbia University.

The Obama initiative is markedly different from a recently announced European project that will invest 1 billion euros in a Swiss-led effort to build a silicon-based “brain.” The project seeks to construct a supercomputer simulation using the best research about the inner workings of the brain.

Critics, however, say the simulation will be built on knowledge that is still theoretical, incomplete or inaccurate.

The Obama proposal seems to have evolved in a manner similar to the Human Genome Project, scientists said. “The genome project arguably began in 1984, where there were a dozen of us who were kind of independently moving in that direction but didn't really realize there were other people who were as weird as we were,” Dr. Church said.

However, a number of scientists said that mapping and understanding the human brain presented a drastically more significant challenge than mapping the genome.

“It's different in that the nature of the question is a much more intricate question,” said Dr. Greenspan, who said he is involved in the brain project. “It was very easy to define what the genome project's goal was. In this case, we have a more difficult and fascinating question of what are brainwide activity patterns and ultimately how do they make things happen?”

The initiative will be organized by the Office of Science and Technology Policy, according to scientists who have participated in planning meetings.

The National Institutes of Health, the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency and the National Science Foundation will



also participate in the project, the scientists said, as will private foundations like the Howard Hughes Medical Institute in Chevy Chase, MD, and the Allen Institute for Brain Science in Seattle.

A meeting held on January 17 at the California Institute of Technology was attended by the three government agencies, as well as neuroscientists, nanoscientists and representatives from Google, Microsoft and

Qualcomm. According to a summary of the meeting, it was held to determine whether computing facilities existed to capture and analyze the vast amounts of data that would come from the project. The scientists and technologists concluded that they did.

They also said that a series of national brain “observatories” should be created as part of the project, like astronomical observatories.



**Our Comment.** Astronomical observatories come in a great variety of forms and pacemakers. In our growing intimacy with the problem, we have the pacemakers that can take you for a complete ride, but may lay unhatchable eggs because they will not perform when performance is desired and those that perform when desired. *W.K.*

## Why Lobster Size Matters: PEI, New Brunswick Argue Over Millimetres in Market Worth Millions

*By Jane Taber, The Globe and Mail, January 23, 2013*

It's a tiny difference – just one millimetre or about 1/25th of an inch – but it is prompting a large battle between PEI and New Brunswick fishermen over the size of the lobster they can catch in the shared waters of the Northumberland Strait.

Right now, fishermen there can catch lobsters whose carapace – the armour-like abdomen of the crustacean, minus its tail – is a minimum of 72 mm.

PEI fishermen, who have built a market exporting smaller lobsters to Europe and Asia, want that minimum to stay where it is.

New Brunswick, on the other hand, hopes the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans will raise that minimum to 73 mm, and keep increasing it until it reaches 77 mm. Fishermen there argue that for their market, bigger is better. Last year, for example, Red Lobster announced it would not buy lobster tails under four ounces. To be competitive, New Brunswick fishermen argue, they need to have access to larger lobsters – and they fear that PEI will catch the smaller ones before they have a chance to grow.

There is a lot at stake financially for both provinces, and lobster size has become a political battle – with fisheries ministers on both sides saying they won't back down from their positions.

PEI Fisheries Minister Ron MacKinley says his New Brunswick counterpart is in for one “h” of a fight if he tries to push for a further increase. And New Brunswick intends to do just that – pushing for a higher minimum for 2014.

In Moncton on Wednesday, fishermen and fisheries officials will gather to thrash out the issue and the meeting is expected to be tense. “It will be debated to its max,”

promises Christian Brun, the executive director of the Maritime Fishermen's Union in New Brunswick.

### Lobster Sizes

The federal DFO sets minimum legal sizes to sustain the size of the lobster fishery and fines fishermen caught with smaller lobsters on their boats. This year's minimum size for lobster in the Northumberland Strait is 72 mm.

Smaller lobsters, like the ones PEI wants to catch, are called “canners.”

Canners weigh between 250 and 375 grams and get their name because in the past they were used for canning. The smaller lobsters are unique to the Northumberland Strait, where the warmer temperatures cause the lobsters to mature more quickly. When they reach 72 mm, the lobsters are fully mature, just smaller than lobsters caught in other parts of the Atlantic.

In other regions, like the lobster-fishing area along the west coast of Cape Breton, the minimum legal carapace size is 81 mm. The waters are colder and it takes longer for the lobsters to mature – when they do, they are much bigger.

“Market” lobsters have carapaces of about 81 mm and weigh more than a pound. They are used in a lot of restaurants – and are exported live to the United States.

### The Markets

PEI's 1,200 lobster fishermen export most of their smaller “canner” lobsters to Europe and Asia, and to cruise ships and casinos for their buffets. The province's fishermen landed 27 million pounds of lobster last year, of which 57 per cent were canners. In the past five years, canners have brought in an average of \$54.2 million each year.

“Our processors are having success in the

71- and 72-mm range,” says Ian MacPherson, the executive director of the PEI Fishermen's Association. “Above that, the demand decreases. I know we are talking millimetres but the market is consumer-driven.”

For New Brunswick, it's the opposite story. Catching and processing larger lobsters would help to make New Brunswick more competitive, especially because of recent changes in demand, says Mr. Brun of the Maritime Fishermen's Union. Take Red Lobster's requirement for lobster tails of over four ounces: a 72-mm lobster, Mr. Brun says, produces a tail of only two to three ounces.

New Brunswick Fisheries Minister Mike Olscamp says the province's canner lobster market is in decline. “Although we still have markets for [canners], they're more of a niche market product and so that is what is putting pressure on our processing industry to retool and look at larger-size lobster,” he says. “The size becomes an issue.”

### The Fight

New Brunswick wants the sizes increased further; PEI does not. Adding to this tension is the glut in the market caused by an overabundance of lobster, which is forcing prices to historic lows and prompted protests last summer at processing plants in New Brunswick. Some fishermen packed up their gear early this year because it was not worth it for them to continue fishing with prices at 20-year lows and in some places as low as \$3 a pound; a processing plant in Cape Breton dumped thousands of pounds of lobster.

In New Brunswick, lobsters are still the biggest cash crop, with the province exporting \$455 million worth of lobster products a year, 44 per cent of the Canadian total.

For PEI, the lobster fishery is the prov-

ince's second most important industry after farming, says Mike McGeoghegan, president of the Prince Edward Island Fishermen's Association.

PEI Fisheries Minister Ron MacKinley is ready for battle over lobster size. "I don't get upset," he says. "I played hockey years ago and I can fight and smile at the same time. I used to grin when I was fist fighting."

New Brunswick Fisheries Minister Mike Olscamp says he doesn't want a "shouting match" with his colleague: "We have enough problems in the lobster industry to go to war with a neighbour."

But, if it comes down to a battle, he's picked sides. New Brunswick fishermen expect to meet soon with the federal minister, Keith Ashfield, a New Brunswicker, and will push for a larger minimum for 2014.

Mr. MacKinley received unanimous consent from the 27-member PEI Legislature for a motion urging the federal minister to "support the Prince Edward Island position of no changes to carapace size beyond the agreed-upon 72 mm mark." He sent the motion to Ottawa but has not heard back.

He is also hoping to rename canners, saying the name has a negative connotation. He'd prefer something like "Skippers' Choice."

### What about taste?

For Renée Lavallée, a veteran freelance chef, the smaller, canner lobsters have always been her favourite for cooking and serving. "I do love the canners. I do," says the former chef at Halifax's Five Fishermen. "The smaller lobster to me has always been the sweeter lobster."

The market lobsters usually found on restaurant menus are about 1.25 pounds or larger. Their larger size means they are older, which Ms. Lavallée says means they take longer to cook. She also thinks they are less flavourful.

"Would you eat a chubby baby or would you eat a stringy older person?" she asks. "I would rather eat a chubby baby myself. That's the way I feel about lobster, too."

But for many consumers, especially those in the United States, bigger is better. And with a little butter, the larger lobster is juicy and packed with flavour.



**Our Comment.** The answer to this puzzle must certainly depend on the return for marketers. It would be a good bet that placing the answer with the prevailing market and gambling potential is involved. *W.K.*

# Hiding, Praying, Tied to Bombs: Captives Detail Algerian Ordeal

*By Lydia Polgreen and Scott Sayare, The New York Times, January 19, 2013*

The gunmen, dressed in fatigues and wearing turbans, stormed in well before dawn aboard pickup trucks, announcing their arrival with a burst of gunfire.

Dozens of employees were eating breakfast at the time before heading off to the vast network of tubes and silos of the In Amenas gas field, where hundreds of Algerians and foreigners work to extract natural gas from the arid sands of the Sahara.

"God is great," the gunmen cried as they arrived.

It was the beginning of a terrifying ordeal – one in which foreign hostages would come under fire from both the gunmen holding them and the Algerian government soldiers trying to free them. For many of the captives, it is an ordeal that has yet to end.

Some hostages were forced to wear explosives on their bodies. Others hid under beds and on rooftops, praying to survive but expecting death. One was shot in the back while his fellow captives looked on. Left by their captors with their cell phones, some phoned home with terrifying accounts of the horrors unfolding all around.

These were among the chilling tales recounted Friday by some of the hundreds of workers who managed to escape the national gas field on the eastern edge of Algeria that had been stormed by Islamist militants two days before.

The gunmen, fighters with a group called Al Mulathameen, said they were acting to avenge the French intervention in nearby Mali, Algerian officials said. But there were indications that the attack had been planned long before the French military began its offensive to recapture the northern half of that country from Islamist insurgents.

The attackers appeared to know the site well, even the fact that disgruntled Algerian catering workers were planning a strike.

"We know you're oppressed; we've come here so that you can have your rights," the militants told Algerians at the facility, according to one Algerian former hostage. Another hostage said the fighters had asked about the plans for a strike.

"The terrorists were covered with explosives, and they had detonators," said a senior Algerian government official who was

briefed on the crisis. He said the situation remained a standoff on Friday, with "a few terrorists holding a few hostages."

Former captives said that several of the fighters appeared to be foreign, with non-Algerian accents. One Algerian worker said that some of them may have been Libyan and Syrian, and that one might have been French. Another gunman who spoke impeccable English was assigned to speak to the many foreigners.

When the Algerian military eventually intervened, the situation grew even more chaotic. According to one witness, Algerian helicopters attacked several jeeps that were carrying hostages. The fate of at least some of those hostages remains unknown. The Algerian state news agency reported that 12 Algerian and foreign workers had been killed since the start of the military operation and that dozens remained unaccounted for.

From the start, it was clear that the gunmen only wished to harm foreigners. Algerian workers, along with other Muslims who could prove their faith by reciting from the Koran, were herded into one area, workers said.

"They told us, 'We are your brothers. You have telephones; call your families to reassure them,'" said Moussa, an Algerian worker who asked to be identified only by his first name.

Algerian women in the group of hostages were released right away on Wednesday morning, Moussa said, but the militants initially declined to release the Algerian men, saying it was for their own good. "We're afraid that if we free you, the army will shoot at you," he quoted them as saying.

Foreigners, meanwhile, were taken away, their hands bound with rubber, both Algerian witnesses said. Some of the employees resisted. Several Filipino workers who had refused to leave their rooms were beaten, Moussa said. At one point, the fighters shot a European as he tried to flee, he said. The other Algerian described seeing a middle-aged European man, perhaps a security official, shot in the back in the cafeteria, where the lights had been switched off. He believed the man had died.

Before being captured, Stephen McFaul, 36, an electrical engineer from Belfast, Northern Ireland, barricaded himself in a

room with a colleague at the first sound of gunfire, quietly using his cell phone to assure his family that he was all right.

"I joked that I was from Northern Ireland and that I had been through better riots," he told the colleague, according to John Morrissey, a representative for his family in Belfast who was responding to reporters for media organizations around the world.

Mr. McFaul, who had been sent to work in Algeria only three weeks ago, was seized a few hours later, Mr. Morrissey said, and ultimately placed in the last jeep of a five-jeep convoy that came under heavy air attack from Algerian forces.

The first four jeeps were destroyed, and when Mr. McFaul's vehicle veered off the road, he and a fellow worker managed to climb out of the back window, which had been broken. Their hands had been tied, their mouths taped and they had been forced to wear vests loaded with explosives, Mr. Morrissey said.

The two made a run for it, reaching the security forces, who disarmed the explosives. The spokesman said Mr. McFaul was "bright and together and nervously excited" about returning home.

At least one American, identified by a Corpus Christi, Tex., television station as Mark Cobb, also escaped. Mr. Cobb, who is from the Corpus Christi area, is said to have taken cover in an unused room and then made his way out of the plant unharmed, according to the station, KRIS-TV. On Friday, the station said, Mr. Cobb sent a text message to a friend that said, "I'm alive."

Other foreigners, like Alexandre Berceaux, a French employee of a catering company working at the site, hid themselves as best they could.

"I stayed hidden for nearly 40 hours in my bedroom," Mr. Berceaux told Europe 1 Radio. "I was under the bed, and I put boards everywhere just in case. I had food, water; I didn't know how long I would be there."

He said he was certain he would be killed. "When the Algerian soldiers, whom I thank, came to get me, I didn't even know it was over," he said. The soldiers came with his colleagues, he said, "otherwise I would never have opened the door."

Mr. Berceaux said Algerian soldiers found some British hostages hiding on the roof and were still searching the site for others when he was escorted to a nearby military base, from which he expected to be transferred to France. Others might still be hidden, he said.

Among the casualties was a French citizen identified as Yann Desjeux, the French foreign minister, Laurent Fabius, said in a statement on Friday evening. Mr. Desjeux had contacted his family by telephone midday on Thursday and died sometime later, according to the French newspaper *Sud Ouest*, which also had spoken to Mr. Desjeux on Thursday.

The newspaper said a freelance journalist had dialed up a militant he had been in contact with previously and discovered that the man was involved in the raid on the factory. The journalist asked if any Frenchmen

were captives, and the militant then passed the phone to Mr. Desjeux, 52, who said he was being well treated and that the captors wanted the French government to warn Algeria not to raid the factory.

The circumstances of his death were not clear.



**Our Comment.** These are times when suppression and oppression gets dished out in ongoing dosages. Let us make sure that security gets a good shot at saving society. *W.K.*

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## Let's Gang Up on Killer Bugs

*By Carl F. Nathan, The New York Times, December 10, 2012*

I hope you never have this experience: a loved one is hospitalized. Her doctors tell you her infection is resistant to antibiotics. She dies. More than 60,000 American families go through that experience each year – and the number is almost certain to rise.

Multi-drug-resistant organisms are showing up in top-flight hospitals – like the *klebsiella* found in the National Institutes of Health's Clinical Center this year, which may have led to the deaths of seven patients. Even infections that used to be a breeze to treat, like gonorrhea, are becoming incurable.

In much of the world, of course, bacterial disease is a routine cause of tragedy. Tuberculosis alone kills 1.4 million people a year. One reason for this staggeringly high figure is that most people in the world are too poor to pay for most medicines. But another reason is that some strains of tuberculosis bacteria have become resistant to most of the drugs we have. Even after two years of toxic treatment, drug-resistant tuberculosis has a fatality rate of about 50 percent.

What makes the rapid loss of antibiotics to drug resistance particularly alarming is that we are failing to make new ones. We are emptying our medicine chest of the most important class of medicines we ever had. And the cause can be traced, for the most part, to two profound problems.

The first is economic. Historically, the drug industry thrived on antibiotics. But if an antibiotic is useful against only one type of bacterium, relatively few people need it during its patent life. And if an antibiotic is "broad spectrum," meaning it works on many different types of bacteria,

wider use shortens its commercial life because it quickens the pace at which bacteria develop resistance. Moreover, antibiotics are designed to *cure* an acute disease – not to palliate a chronic one – so people need them only for a limited time. Compared with drugs that are used for years to treat widespread conditions like high cholesterol or asthma, antibiotics pale as a corporate investment.

The second challenge stems from the nature of bacteria. Though brainless, they are brainy, enjoying a highly effective collective intelligence. Large numbers of independently mutating bacteria test adaptations to group problems, like how to survive antibiotics. What works – like modifying the bacterial proteins to which antibiotics would otherwise bind – wins. As bacteria become more adept at evading antibiotics, it has become much harder to find drugs that can beat them back.

Merge these two problems – scientific and economic – and the result is a drug-development disaster: the prospects are so discouraging that few companies bother to try anymore.

How can we confront the critical shortage of new antibiotics when both the scientific approach and the economic model are letting us down? We can change both paradigms.

Drug makers survive by selling what people or governments buy in amounts and at prices that maximize profit. Monopoly protects the ability to set price for profit. Patents allow monopoly. Secrecy protects intellectual property until it is patented.

But what if we take a page out of the pathogen playbook? Many pathogens exchange DNA, sharing what they learn.

Drug makers can operate in the same way: they can do science “open lab”-style, working in teams with academic and government scientists and other drug companies to share what they learn and to bring fresh scientific ideas and technological tools to bear. Relaxing the traditional insistence on secrecy allows collaboration, and with it, innovation.

Did I hear you say, “It’ll never happen”? It already has. GlaxoSmithKline opened its campus at Tres Cantos, Spain, to outside academic, government and biotech scientists in order to collaborate on finding antibiotics for neglected infectious diseases. The independent Tres Cantos Open Lab Foundation selects the projects and helps cover visiting researchers’ expenses.

In another version of the open lab concept, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation organized a TB Drug Accelerator program that brings together research teams from seven major companies (Abbott Laboratories, AstraZeneca, Bayer, Eli Lilly, GlaxoSmithKline, Merck and Sanofi) with scientists from four academic and government institutions. The companies have exchanged more than a thousand compounds and provided the academic and government scientists with access to millions.

These experiments show that even competing research teams can share knowledge, risk and reward in anti-infective drug development, test diverse approaches and avoid redundant efforts. (I’m involved in both of these projects.)

Philanthropic efforts have financed these open labs, but they can’t substitute for market forces. Nor can the current economic model give antibiotic development a permanent, prominent place in drug company portfolios.

There are, however, other ways for drug makers to profit beyond using monopoly to protect prices. As Thomas Pogge of Yale and Aidan Hollis of the University of Calgary have pointed out, an intergovernmental fund for drug discovery could reward drug makers for products in proportion to their impact in reducing the loss of healthy years of life. The lower the cost of a lifesaving drug, the greater the number of people who could use it; the more lives protected, then, the greater the monetary reward. An investment of \$20 billion a year could encourage

*Continued on page 14*

## Updating Mann’s Status from Stuffy to Chatty

*By Nicholas Kulish, The New York Times, December 26, 2012*

Lübeck, Germany – The latest sensation from the literary lion Thomas Mann is more than a century old and runs over 500 characters, not pages long.

In one of a trove of 81 recently discovered postcards, Mr. Mann rhapsodized to his older brother, Heinrich, about yogurt, “tasty and lightly laxative,” and fretted over the healthiness of decaffeinated coffee. Zippy, chatty and refreshingly accessible, the messages soften the image of a titan of letters known for lengthy and difficult masterpieces like *The Magic Mountain* and the family saga *Buddenbrooks*.

A batch of the postcards, written between 1901 and 1928 and found by Heinrich’s grandchildren among his daughter’s effects, scroll down a giant flat-screen monitor where at the Buddenbrookhaus museum, set in the speech-bubble shape familiar from text messages. As officials prepare to expand the museum next year, they are wrestling with the question of how to make this Nobel-winning author of weighty tomes approachable to coming generations weaned on Twitter messages and status updates.

The prototype is just a brisk stroll away, past the brick Gothic marvels of this Hanseatic city at the Günter Grass-Haus, spotlighting another Nobel laureate. There, visitors vote on a touch-screen for possible coming exhibitions about Mr. Grass, author of *The Tin Drum* and at 85 still a magnet for controversy. “Sexuality” and “Grass as soldier” tied for the top spot on a recent afternoon. “The Poet Grass” was last.

“In Germany, people experience museums passively,” said Jörg-Philipp Thomsa, head of the Grass museum, while demonstrating how to operate a giant tablet computer the size of a kitchen table.

Pictures of Mr. Grass grew, shrank and swiveled beneath Mr. Thomsa’s fingers as he searched for the Smurfs, the cartoon characters. The little blue fellows, he explained, were there because they represented the Polish labor movement Solidarity in Mr. Grass’s novel *The Rat*. Also, children like them.

“The goal is to awaken interest in Grass’s work, which is often seen as difficult,” Mr. Thomsa said.

But the latest gadgets are only one piece

of the puzzle. For many readers, the sense of connection to the work and the author is the ultimate draw, like taking a walking tour of Dublin locations that Joyce featured in *Ulysses*.

“There has to be something about the place, something extraordinary you can’t find on the Internet,” said Holger Pils, head of the Buddenbrookhaus. “The need for the experience of the place is growing because everything else is two-dimensional.”

In some ways the Manns are perfect for a gossipy, confessional era. The brothers are like a German version of the Brontë sisters with a dash of Cain and Abel, nonviolent but still rivalrous. The family history includes prosperity and power, a fall from grace, sibling strife, suicide and scandal. *The Blue Angel*, adapted from Heinrich Mann’s novel *Small Town Tyrant*, is a cinema classic that made Marlene Dietrich a star.

Germans remain particularly fascinated by *Buddenbrooks*, a goliath of German literature, like *Middlemarch* in Britain or *War and Peace* in Russia. The novel chronicles the decline of a merchant family based on the Manns. Most of the action in the book plays out in a fictional version of the house on Mengstrasse where the author’s grandparents lived, now home to the museum.

The baroque façade of the old patrician house still faces St. Mary’s Church, where, in the book’s opening pages, “the wind whistled in the nooks around its massive Gothic corners.” On a recent winter evening, guests gathered in the vaulted cellar, nibbling on red and white meringues like ones described in the novel, to listen as an actor with a deep, soothing voice read the book’s famous Christmas scene.

They paid 65 euros, or about \$84, for dinner and a tour of landmarks from the lives and works of the brothers.

“The characters in the novel are strongly bound to the real people, the reality of this great literature,” said Thomas Katschewitz, 52, as the tour stopped to drink mulled wine and listen to an organ grinder play in front of the brothers’ old school.

For a city of 212,000, Lübeck has an exceptional literary tradition. The main public library is nearly 400 years old, Bernd Hatscher, the library’s director, showed off a copy of the *Rudimentum Novitiorum*, a his-

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tory of the world with vividly colored maps printed in Lübeck in 1475.

Lübeck was home to the 19th century poet Emanuel Geibel, whose poetry volume ran through 100 editions just during his lifetime; the novelist Ida Boy-Ed, an early supporter of the young Thomas Mann; and the radical Jewish writer Erich Mühsam, killed by the SS at the Oranienburg concentration camp. Lübeck suffered significant damage in World War II bombing raids, including to the Buddenbrookhaus, but its literary reputation has not ebbed.

On a recent afternoon, Hans Wisskirchen, an expert on Thomas Mann and the director of all Lübeck museums, was wearing white gloves as he handled a postcard bearing a 5-cent German Reich stamp from 1904. "Send my greetings to Dr. von Hartungen," Thomas wrote to his brother at the Riva sanatorium, in what was then the Austro-Hungarian Empire. To Mann fanatics, the reference conjures scenes from *The Magic Mountain*, a work inspired in part by the doctor and his healing refugee.

Educated Germans are familiar with the works of the brothers; their disagreement over World War I, which Heinrich opposed; and their generally chilly relationship. The unveiling of the postcards made the evening news and the newspapers, in part because it came as rather a surprise to see the supposedly stuffy Thomas going on about slippers and dentists. Some of the bad blood between Thomas and Heinrich ("The myth of the eternal, fraternal strife," as the daily *Stuttgarter Zeitung* put it) might need a bit of revision as well.

The postcards are one of the cornerstones of plans to revamp the museum and attract more visitors; 55,000 to 60,000 currently arrive each year. With the help of \$400,000 from the federal government, the city of Lübeck bought the house next door to expand the museum. A conference is planned for February that will include people from the worlds of culture and architecture but also new media.

"The question is how do I combine the place with the digital reading world?" Mr. Wisskirchen asked. "Literature is different from reality, but great art, great authors and a great location come together here. You ought to be able to experience this in a completely different manner."

Compared with the interactive computers at the Günter Grass-Haus, the biographical texts on the ground floor of the Buddenbrookhaus seem static. Upstairs, silver tinsel and white lilies decorated the

Christmas tree, and a puppet theater on the table was set for the final act of Beethoven's opera *Fidelio*, exactly as Thomas Mann described it in the novel.

Bettina Fenner, 45, a teacher in Lübeck who took part in the recent tour and dinner, said that despite all the changes since the Manns were growing up in Lübeck, her teenage students still found the book relevant. "After all," she said, "everyone has

a family history."



**Our Comment.** And what can possibly be as ambiguous as family relationships seemingly good or bad? As though a blood relationship is loaded with surprises where we least of all expect them to. The very laws of genes and inheritance what in less earnest moments may have seemed a hopeless game. *W.K.*

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## Odd Trans-Pacific Scandal Plagues Prince Rupert's Best Hope

*By Andy Hoffman, The Globe and Mail, January 23, 2013*

Prince Rupert, BC – It sits like a time capsule, once a massive industrial operation, now frozen in a moment, taunting area residents as a constant reminder of better days.

In the cafeteria pantry, unopened cans of vegetables line the shelves. At the end of one of the production lines, bales of craft paper are bundled in stacks while the plant and its equipment quietly rusts. Tanks full of toxic chemicals form a precarious sentry ring around the buildings. The "hog fuel pile" – a 2.3-million cubic meter mound of wood chips once destined to be turned into pulp, stretches for more than an acre, saturated with the constant precipitation of one of the rainiest places in Canada.

The Skeena Cellulose pulp mill on Watson Island in Prince Rupert, once the economic lifeblood of the city, stopped production more than a decade ago, in 2001.

But the people here haven't been able to close the sad chapter in their history.

The mill exists in a state of suspended animation because of a protracted legal dispute with its former owner, a Chinese businessman named Ni Ritao.

And a bizarre scandal stretches from the Northern BC coast to the provincial legislature in Victoria and across the Pacific to the very top of China's energy ministry in Beijing.

In addition to Mr. Ni, the curse of the Skeena mill has, so far, ensnared a former provincial MLA, a current BC cabinet minister, and the head of China's National Energy Administration.

"It's been far from what anybody ever imagined," Prince Rupert mayor Jack Musallem said in an interview. "To this day, it continues on, with the municipality spending hundreds of thousands of dollars on legal expenses. To this day, we still have se-

curity people there. In the winter, you need to keep the heat on."

The city of Prince Rupert has been spending as much as \$100,000 per month maintaining the site and tens of thousands more in legal bills. Until litigation with Mr. Ni and his title claims are resolved, the city can't sell the land to a consortium of buyers offering \$5.5 million. The buyers are willing to assume the environmental cleanup costs, estimated at \$47 million to \$200 million. The group, which includes two coal companies and a pair of local Fir ground to Nations bands, wants to redevelop the island as a private right to serve as a staging re-equipment used by coal companies in the area.

"The people of Prince Rupert have to understand that the mill is never coming back," said Tanner Elton, a Vancouver lawyer who is part of the consortium.

For more than half a century, the Skeena mill was the cornerstone of Prince Rupert's economy, providing jobs for 700 workers and paying about \$3 million in annual taxes, the largest source of corporate revenue for the city.

To some residents, the Skeena mill, which opened in 1951, is now a cursed symbol of the promise that Prince Rupert has never achieved. The plant had to be rescued by the provincial NDP government during the 1970s. When the BC Liberals came to power in 2001, the bailouts stopped and the mill closed. The 13,000 people of this city, where unemployment is well above 10 per cent, want to move on.

That's being prevented by a deal struck in 2005, in which Mr. Ni, a Chinese businessman from Zhejiang province, bought the Skeena mill for about \$9 million.

Many expected Mr. Ni to restart the mill and bring back lost jobs. But he never did, and the city took most of the property back

from Mr. Ni and his company, Sun Wave Forest Products, in 2010 for unpaid taxes. Sun Wave has disputed the tax sale and sued the city.

Once a potential saviour, Mr. Ni is now seen as a villain to many.

“There are people of the opinion that Mr. Ni and Sun Wave Forest Products have been very irresponsible in how they’ve handled their ownership of that property,” the mayor said.

In late December, a judge ruled that the city can proceed with the sale of Watson Island despite the litigation. However, Sun Wave is appealing the order and still controls a small tract of land on the island, an issue that must be resolved before a sale can proceed. The city may also have to pay damages to Sun Wave.

In addition to the legal dispute, the purchase of the mill has been linked to fraud allegations in China against Mr. Ni that also involve Liu Tienan, the director of China’s National Energy Administration and deputy director of the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), one of China’s most powerful ministries.

An editor of *Caijing Magazine* in China recently published accusations against Mr. Liu on the internet. He alleged that family members of Mr. Liu’s were shareholders in one of Mr. Ni’s holding companies that was used in the purchase of the Skeena mill. The *Caijing* editor also alleged Mr. Liu forged his résumé and threatened to kill his mistress.

*The Globe and Mail* has obtained and viewed documents that appear to verify some of these claims.

Officials in China’s energy administration denied the *Caijing* editor’s allegations as “pure rumours.” However, the fact that the story was not censored or removed from Chinese websites and has been picked up by state-linked media outlets suggests the Chinese government is giving the allegations credence.

*Caijing* published a report last year claiming Mr. Ni attempted to use the mill to secure more than \$100 million (US) in loans from state-controlled banks in China. The *Caijing* report said that in June, 2006, after Mr. Ni had already bought the mill, he applied for the loans, \$60 million of which was earmarked for buying a majority stake in Sun Wave, a company he already controlled. Mr. Ni allegedly used forged appraisal documents in the loan application valuing the mill at \$202 million. The appraisal firm named in the documents, American Appraisal Canada Inc., when

contacted by *The Globe and Mail*, denied ever issuing the report.

Mr. Ni’s representatives in Canada have said the allegations are untrue and that the loans, which were never approved, were for the cost of restarting the mill. Wei Shao, a lawyer in Vancouver representing Mr. Ni in several lawsuits, said the *Caijing* story was planted by disgruntled former Sun Wave employees in Canada.

The Skeena saga has also enmeshed a British Columbia cabinet minister. Documents obtained by *The Globe and Mail* show that BC jobs minister Pat Bell forwarded an internal government email discussing a potential settlement with Mr. Ni and detailing the fraud allegations against him to an employee of the Chinese businessman who is also a BC Liberal Party insider and a former MLA.

The explosive *Caijing* report was discussed at length by BC government employees, including Mr. Bell, the jobs minister, in an e-mail chain. Kevin Tsui, a BC government worker in Beijing, sent the article and a summary of the allegations against Mr. Ni to staff in BC in late November, 2011. “I understand there will be a cross-ministry meeting this week regarding Mr. Ni, Sunwave and developing a settlement framework. Below provides some additional context...,” Mr. Tsui wrote, before describing what he called “fraudulent activities,” including “inappropriate influence of a former NDRC official,” a “dubious loan scheme,” a “fraudulent financial document” and “missing approvals of Chinese regulators.”

The internal ministry correspondence was released under a provincial freedom of information request. Parts of the e-mail chain obtained by the *Globe* were redacted to comply with government policy to withhold any information containing “policy advice, recommendations or draft regulations” and “disclosure harmful to personal privacy.”

The documents show, however, that Mr. Bell, the cabinet minister, forwarded the entire un-redacted e-mail chain to a man named Bill Belsey. Mr. Belsey is a former BC MLA for the Prince Rupert area who is an employee of Sun Wave and has served as a representative of Mr. Ni in Canada. In 2005, a company controlled by Mr. Ni donated \$10,000 to Mr. Belsey’s election campaign. Mr. Belsey is also currently the vice-president of the BC Liberal Party.

Mr. Bell, in interviews, denied wrongdoing. He said the fact that the province was

trying to broker a settlement between Mr. Ni and Prince Rupert was “well known in the community.” When asked to show how Mr. Tsui’s mention of the “cross-ministry meeting regarding Mr. Ni” was well known in the community, Mr. Bell refused further comment.

In an interview, Mr. Belsey appeared to suggest he did not know about the government meeting regarding Mr. Ni before he received the email from Mr. Bell. “I don’t know what they do. I don’t know what they were doing,” he said. When asked to clarify whether he knew of the meeting, he said, “How would I know that?... Before I got an email I would know about a meeting? You have to be kidding me.”

The opposition NDP is calling on the Premier to investigate.

As another rainy winter descends on Prince Rupert, the shuttered mill and Watson Island are still in limbo. The hulking buildings remind former workers of what once was and what might have been.

“That was our bread and butter,” said Ely Abecia, who worked at the mill for two decades and now runs a driving school. “It’s frustrating.”



**Our Comment.** A driving school in these hazardous times has its own pillar of chartered risks. For example, what is away high-up on the gamble tree is the gamble (could be spelled gambol in this instance) that involves a murderous interest that has been gambled to a useless mess. *W.K.*

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Killer Bugs *from page 12*

more open-lab collaborations to find new medicines in challenging settings like antibiotic discovery and make them accessible to all who need them.

If we don’t make new antibiotics, we will lose the ability to practice modern medicine. A new collaborative model for drug discovery can help make sure this doesn’t happen.



**Our Comment.** Unless the market-reward system emphasizes the savings in all human capital, we will be minimizing the key importance of all human life and not only what can be marketed at an ever-greater profit. This, of course, means bringing back the crucial heritage from the philosophers of classical Greece – without it our society will continue ever-more-deeply astray in illiterate greed. *W.K.*

# Massacre at School Sways Public in Way Earlier Shootings Didn't

By Michael Cooper and Dalia Sussman,  
*The New York Times*, January 18, 2013

The massacre of children at an elementary school in Newtown, Conn., appears to be profoundly swaying Americans' views on guns, galvanizing the broadest support for stricter gun laws in about a decade, according to a New York Times/CBS News poll.

As President Obama tries to persuade a reluctant Congress to pass new gun laws, the poll found that a majority of Americans – 54 percent – think gun control laws should be tightened, up markedly from a CBS News poll last April that found that only 39 percent backed stricter laws.

The rise in support for stricter gun laws stretched across political lines, including an 18-point increase among Republicans. A majority of independents now back stricter gun laws.

Whether the Newtown shooting – in which 20 first graders and 6 adults were killed – will have a long-term effect on public opinion of gun laws is hard to assess just a month after the rampage. But unlike the smaller increases in support for gun control immediately after other mass shootings, including after the 2011 shooting in Tucson that severely wounded Representative Gabrielle Giffords, the latest polling results suggest a deeper, and possibly more resonating, shift.

In terms of specific gun proposals being considered, the poll found even wider support, including among gun owners.

The idea of requiring background checks on all gun purchases, which would eliminate a provision that allows about 40 percent of guns to be sold by unlicensed sellers without checks, was overwhelmingly popular. Nine in 10 Americans would favor such a law, the poll found – including 9 in 10 of the respondents who said that there was a gun in their household, and 85 percent whose households include National Rifle Association members.

A ban on high-capacity magazines, like the 15- and 30-round magazines that have been used in several recent mass shootings, was supported by more than 6 in 10, and by a majority of those who live in households with guns. And just over half of all respondents, 53 percent, said they would support a ban on some semiautomatic weapons.

After the mass shootings at Virginia Tech in 2007 and Tucson in 2011, polls found that 47 percent of Americans favored stricter gun laws.

"I'm from a rural area in the South, I grew up in a gun culture, my father hunted," Leslie Hodges, a 64-year-old graphic artist who lives in Atlanta and has a gun, said in a follow-up interview. "However, I don't believe being able to have a gun keeps you from thinking reasonably about changes that would keep someone from walking into a school and being able to kill 20 children in 20 seconds. I think that we can say, OK, we want the freedom to have guns in this country, but there are rules we can all agree to that will make us all safer."

The poll also gave an indication of the state of play in Washington at the outset of what is expected to be a fierce debate over the nation's gun laws, as the National Rifle Association and several members of Congress, particularly Republicans in the House, have criticized the gun control measures that Mr. Obama proposed Wednesday and have vowed to block them.

Americans said that they trusted the president over Republicans in Congress to make the right decisions about gun laws by a margin of 47 percent to 39 percent, the poll found.

The National Rifle Association, the powerful gun lobby, is viewed favorably by nearly 4 in 10 Americans, the poll found. All told, 38 percent said that they had a favorable opinion of the group, while 29 percent had a negative view and the rest had no opinion. The NRA was viewed positively by 54 percent of those with guns in their homes.

But the group is deeply unpopular with people in households without guns, who were twice as likely to have a negative view of the NRA as a positive one: 41 percent of them expressed a negative view of it, while only 20 percent expressed a positive one.

The survey underscored how common guns in America are: 47 percent of those surveyed said that they or someone in their household owned a gun, and 31 percent had close friends or relatives who did. The top reasons cited for owning guns were protection and hunting.

The national poll was conducted by land lines and cell phones from January

11 to January 15, before the president announced his proposals to curb gun violence. It surveyed 1,110 adults and has a margin of sampling error of plus or minus three percentage points.

Some gun owners, like Sally Brady, a 69-year-old retired teacher who lives in Amissville, VA, explained in follow-up interviews why they would support some restrictions on ammunition or more thorough background checks of all gun buyers.

"I see no reason for high-capacity magazines if you want to go hunting," said Mrs. Brady, an independent who owns a hunting rifle. "The purpose of hunting is sport, and you don't need a whole big bunch of bullets to shoot a deer or a squirrel. If you're that poor of a shot, stay out of the woods."

Despite the higher support for stricter gun laws, many Americans do not think the changes would be very effective at deterring violence. While most Americans, 53 percent, said stricter gun laws would help prevent gun violence, about a quarter said they would help a lot.

Other steps were seen as being potentially more effective. About three-quarters of those surveyed said that having more police officers or armed security guards would help prevent mass shootings in public places. And more than 8 in 10 said better mental health screening and treatment would help prevent gun violence.

Violence in popular culture is seen by a large majority of Americans, 75 percent, as contributing to gun violence in the United States, including about 4 in 10 who say it contributes a lot.

*Marjorie Connelly, Megan Thee-Brenan and Marina Stefan contributed reporting.*



**Our Comment.** If the notion of controlling guns can be put across to the public as a common good we will be making progress, as part of a big ongoing process it would be easier to deal with, rather than a smaller tinier initiative. *W.K.*

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# Heinz Case May Involve a Side Bet in London

*By Ben Protess and Susanne Craig, The New York Times, February 28, 2013*

Regulators have escalated an investigation into suspicious trades placed ahead of the \$23 billion takeover of H.J. Heinz, focusing on a complex derivative bet routed through London, according to two people briefed on the matter.

The development builds on a recent regulatory action mounted against a Goldman Sachs account in Switzerland that bought Heinz options contracts. It also comes a week after the Federal Bureau of Investigation said it opened a criminal inquiry.

An unusual spike in trading volume in Heinz options a day before the deal was announced first attracted investigators. The Securities and Exchange Commission is also examining fluctuations in ordinary stock trades. The Financial Industry Regulatory Authority, Wall Street's self-regulatory group, recently referred suspicious stock trades to the SEC, a person briefed on the matter said.

Now the SEC is looking into a more opaque corner of the investing world, examining a product known as a contract-for-difference, a derivative that allows investors to bet on changes in the price of stocks without owning the shares. Such contracts are not regulated in the United States, but are popular in Britain. Regulators there recently opened an inquiry into the Heinz trades, one of the people briefed on the matter said.

The expansion of the Heinz investigation illustrates the growing challenges facing American regulators. Charged with policing the American exchanges, authorities increasingly find themselves having to hunt through a dizzyingly complex global marketplace.

After a number of prominent crack-downs on insider stock trading, a campaign that scared the markets, investors are seeking subtler and more sophisticated tools to seize on confidential tidbits. Trading operations also flocked overseas, a careful move that forces the SEC to navigate a maze of international regulations before identifying suspect traders.

The Heinz case illustrates the shift, as the SEC relies on Swiss authorities to expose the trader behind the Heinz options bets.

The suspicious options trades were routed through a Goldman Sachs account in Zurich, where laws prevent the firm from sharing details of the account holder's identity. In a complaint filed two weeks ago, the SEC froze the account of "one or more unknown traders." A federal judge upheld that freeze last week, a move that will prevent the traders from spending their winnings or moving the money.

The series of well-timed options trades, bets that produced \$1.7 million in potential profits, came just a day before Berkshire Hathaway and the investment firm 3G Capital announced that they had agreed to buy the ketchup maker. News of the deal sent the company's shares, and the value of the options contracts, soaring.

## "Highly Suspicious"

The SEC called the trading "highly suspicious," given that there was scant options trading in Heinz in previous months.

"Irregular and highly suspicious options trading immediately in front of a merger or acquisition announcement is a serious red flag," Daniel M. Hawke, head of the commission's market abuse unit, said recently.

While the identity remains a secret, the account holder is a Goldman private wealth management client, according to a person briefed on the matter who was not authorized to speak on the record. Goldman executives in Zurich know the identity of the person, but laws prohibit those executives from sharing the name with American regulators and even Goldman executives outside of Switzerland.

Finma, the Swiss regulator, is the gatekeeper for American regulators. The SEC contacted Finma in an effort to learn more about the trading, and the Swiss regulator has promised to help. It could take weeks to identify the traders.

Goldman has hired outside counsel to advise it on the situation, according to people briefed on the situation who were not authorized to speak on the record. The bank, which is not accused of wrongdoing, is cooperating with the investigation.

An SEC spokesman declined to comment.

The agency's inquiry may cast a cloud over the Heinz deal. After the traders are

identified, the focus will turn to the insiders who had information on the deal and could have leaked details. Dozens of people had confidential information about the deal, including bankers, lawyers and executives for both the buyers and the seller.

As the agency continues to build its case against the options trades, it also is examining suspicious contracts-for-difference.

Investors increasingly favor the contracts because they require little capital investment and can be traded on margin. They are popular on the London Stock Exchange, where regulators are now focusing some attention.

In essence, the derivatives contracts are a side bet on the price of a stock. They have drawn criticism for being opaque, in part because users are not actually trading the shares of a company, but rather a contract linked to those shares.

Regulators have examined the use of the contracts before when accusations of insider trading have arisen. In 2008, the British Financial Services Authority fined an investor for market abuse, saying the investor had used a contract-for-difference to profit from inside information on the Body Shop, a retailer. The person was making a bet in this case that the shares would fall in value.

Despite the focus on such complex products in the Heinz case, the SEC is also examining more mundane activity in equity trades ahead of the deal.

Finra is helping the agency build its investigation. The group's Office of Fraud Detection and Market Intelligence is coordinating with the SEC.

A Finra official declined to comment on Wednesday.

## Our Comment

The key to the issue is that the fraud detection, as it is opening up, avoids the live issues at stake. These deal with the gambling on the state's market where heavy betting had been made on the take-over of gambling.

François Perroux and others have reused urgent third-world demands for a more scientific economy, far removed from the more scientific one outlived in which the appropriate mathematics preference for collective preference being sought by those who analogy of hunger and misery. In fact, today we have the scientific means to reply to the appeal of Salvador de Ladariaga.

Let all arise and make of the world a place in which every living body will be at home.

W.K.



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# Part 2: Society in the Age of the Maya: The Mayan Cosmovision

By Alfredo Barrera Rubio, Centro INAH Yucatán, Mexico. Part 1 of this series appeared in the December 2012 issue of ER.

The Mayas, like other civilizations of antiquity held views on the cosmos that formed part of their religious outlook. These conceptions were not exclusive to any particular group. The fact that all these groups had an agrarian base established an important link in their calendar. This served to establish a link between the various dates for the preparation of the harvest.

The Mesoamerican calendar had as a starting point the observation of the firmament, in particular the movement of the sun, moon and some planets like Venus. The apparent movement of the sun in the horizon allowed the establishment of significant dates linked with the different stages of the agricultural process (between them the equinoxes and the solstices), like the preparing of the field, the sowing with the fall of the rain, the development of the cornfield and the raising of the harvest.

From this state of affairs arose the holy calendar, known as *Tzolk'in* of 260 days and the *Haab* or solar calendar of 365 days. The first with 13 numbers and 20 days, and the second 18 months of 20 days and with five or so difficult or dark days to put up with.

The chronological records of the Mayan not only were calendrical, but also linked to the dates of dynastic and genealogical succession of rulers, conquests, wars etc. As starting point of its era the date 13.0.0.0 was established. 4-Ahau 8-Cumku, which corresponds to August 13, 3114 BC, according to the Gregorian calendar. Mayan astronomers made records calendrical known as the long count for the aspects above, mainly during the Classic period (300 AD to 1000 AD).

The link between agricultural activity and the calendar was strongly entrenched during the development of the Mayan civilization, not only among the ruling class, but also in the peasant community, so that even after the Spanish conquest there were generated practices and cosmogonic beliefs linked with this activity, which have suffered symbolic reprocessing, but which are a common thread among the pre-Hispanic past and present.

The hypothesis of the importance of

agricultural labour around the corn as a production base, in general terms, for the Mesoamerican societies (Medina 1990: 449) has arisen. In the daily work the corn grower was covering the annual cycle that the corn cultivation needed, and establishing a classification of the time and a historical form of appropriation of the space. In this way the limitations of the individual existence and family were transcended, in creating the conditions for the emergence of multiple social processes that generate a historical memory and a social conscience (Medina 1990: 457) that are the basis of their worldview.

Agricultural rituals are the main context of the Mesoamerican cosmovision. The study of relations between the agricultural cycles and schedules has allowed the development of scientific fields such as Archaeoastronomy among other lines of reflection. Our starting point is the worldview and pre-Hispanic indigenous ideology related current data, that the explanation given by the members of the culture is contrasted with the studies of religion, ethnohistory and archaeology.

The cosmovision is the structured overview of the members of a community in which are combined in a coherent manner their notions about the environment in which they live and the cosmos in which the life of the man lies (Broda 1991: 16 and 18). In the same sense the world view explores the multiple dimensions of nature and culture and how they are perceived (Broda 2001: 16). The term refers to a part of the religious sphere and is linked to explanations of the world and the place of man in relation to the universe, yet in no way can it replace the broader concept of religion.

Ideology provides the link between the system of symbolic representation, that is the worldview, and the social and economic structures of society. Ideology defines specifically systematized forms of consciousness; ideologies must be understood as particular manifestations of social being in the consciences of men. This is socially conditioned (Baez-Jorge 1988: 31).

Attempting to establish causal relationships between the patterns of cultural traits and materials, the concepts of worldview and ideology serve as theoretical and meth-

odological tools (Baez-Jorge 1988). The relationship between society and nature, should not be confused with a position or ecological cultural environmentalist.

In pre-Hispanic times life of the communities was extremely ritualized. The European conquest imploded the structure of the indigenous culture, although it also had articulated some of its elements. Compliantly, bringing a different religion with new rituals, give place to a syncretism that mixes the pre-Hispanic past, the colonial and the present. The elimination of the indigenous elite resulted in a profound change, and that regional integration was lost and it became local cult.

Indigenous peoples have not been passive in the processes of acculturation. They articulate their beliefs to the new religion and adopt a resistance which manifests itself in agricultural rites. These were moved to the hills, caverns, caves and milpas without the presence of priests, creating a collective identity against the colonizing process. Spaniards introducing stewardships reinforced this identity. Popular cults emerged as symbolic mediators, from which we can speak of syncretism. Old items are articulated with modern elements of the cult of Saints.

Of all these aspects can be obtain information from an archaeological society through the traditions in music, the worldview and even in the modern language of the descendants of the communities. In this way a narrow link is established between the pre-Hispanic, archaeological past, and its continuity with the present of the Mayan. We will begin by analyzing some of these conceptions of the pre-Columbian Maya, which establishes beliefs linked to the above-mentioned aspects.

## Myths and Conceptions About the Creation of Man

*Popol Vuh*, the sacred book of the Quichés (Recinos 1973: 23-30, 104-105), recounts a series of successive creations of the gods: first only heaven and the calm sea existed, then land and animals and eventually humans were made of earth, mud. As they were soft and had no movement, they were destroyed by the gods. Then humans were made of wood, but as they had no heart nor served the gods, they were swept away by a flood. New human beings were made of yellow and white maize. Only more corn entered in the flesh of the first four men created; these goods were offered to the gods, they were praying and they survived (Recinos 1973:

104-105).

In this way we can observe how the Maya established mythical links between the creation of man and the corn plant, for them it was also a deity. In the Mayan codices, in the Dresden examples, the maize god is represented by a young male deity who wears a headdress of ears, corn leaves and sometimes a sign of *kan* (corn) usually embedded in his headdress (Thompson 1975: 349). He also is depicted with a line in the middle of the face that goes from the front of the headdress of corn, through the eye, to the Chin, which seems to indicate that the God wears a mask, as shown in the codex of Madrid. Given the importance of the corn for the Mayans, it appears regularly represented in sculptural monuments and associated with representations of the main Mayan leaders. On the other hand, the peasant Mayan also had and still has a paramount importance.

Corn was the basis for the livelihood of the Mayas and their development, growth and maturity, and was associated with the adequate preparation of the ground for sowing, timely rains arriving and the absence of pests among other factors that jointly played an essential role in the cosmogonic thinking of the Mayans.

### The Dimension of Time in Mayan Thinking

We have already pointed out that the Maya had two calendars, the sacred and civil. The first 260 days which combines 13 numbers and 20 days and the civil, or solar year of 365 days divided into 18 months of 20 days and one of five considered as dark days. The first calendar had a divinatory character and we can observe how they were used recurrently in the three Maya códices: the Dresden, the Paris and Madrid and Trocortesiano.

The combination of these two calendars comes from what is known as the date of the calendar wheel which does not return again for 52 years, i.e., after 18,980 days. The Mayans, as other peoples of antiquity, had a start date of their era, which according to the most widely accepted correlation at present, corresponds to August 13, 3114 BC. This date does not return for another 5,125.36 years. This must occur on December 22, 2012, during the winter solstice.

This has raised many expectations worldwide, which have been expressed through commercial literature, cinema, conferences, internet, etc., where it explodes the idea that the Mayans predicted disasters for that date, unusual astronomical events, etc. Govern-

ment agencies have promoted this event for touristic and commercial purposes. For example, in the case of Mexico, the Federal Secretariat of Tourism has made a program around this date and in the state of Yucatán, the local congress has declared the year 2012 as the year of the Mayan culture, in addition to these global expectations.

However, if you look at the epigraphic evidence in the archaeological monuments, the Mayan códices, the colonial documents indigenous and ethnographic data of the contemporary Maya, there is no evidence and scientific objective viewpoints that endorse the claims of catastrophic events.

In códices usually used the sacred calendar of 260 days as a divinatory almanac, in many cases linked to the prognosis of events related with the agricultural cycle, such as drought, rain, calamities. In the Dresden Codex (p. 74) the celestial crocodile can be observed in what appears to be a flood scene, since it pours water through its mouth and in her womb depicts celestial symbols. Likewise Ixchel, female deity of childbirth and medicine, pouring water from a vase flooding the Earth. This is one of the few allusions to a disaster caused by this element.

In sculpted Mayan monuments there is a single inscription that reflected the end of the era of the Maya, which is the monument number six of Totuguero, archaeological site located in the municipality of Macuspana, Tabasco State, Mexico. The original piece is a sculpted panel which is fragmented into seven parts of which four are preserved at the Carlos Pellicer Museum in the city of Villahermosa in Tabasco, Mexico, one is in the possession of the Museum of Primitive Art in New York and the other two in a private collection in Boston, United States.

The monument mentioned, among other things, dates of initial series, supplementary series, the mention of the birth of Bahlam Ajau and his ascension to the throne (Gronemeyer 2006: 137), events such as the war against several places, particularly between Tortuguero and Comacalco, and the cyclic history from a retrospective perspective. Also the date 13.0.0.0.0 is contained 4-Ahau 3 – Kanki, after which there is only a brief text that the epigraphist Gronemeyer has been interpreted as follows:

“The 13th Baktun will end in 4-Ajaw 3-Kankin. ¿? It will happen. It will be the decline? Of (quarry stone) Bolon Yocte” (Grönemeyer 2006: 158-9).

This is information that the Mayans have bequeathed to us on the date of the end

of their era. This monument speaks to us about the descent of the god Bolon Yookte Kuh, a present deity in wooden palisade that is associated with the underworld, death, conflicts and war. Moreover, the Stela C from Quirigua, Guatemala, records the start date of the Mayan era where the descent of the deities is mentioned after that date (Aveni 2010: 56).

As you will see in any related inscriptions there are catastrophic predictions that could give cause and sustenance to all assertions, that the media have generated such expectations for the year 2012.

Colonial and historic indigenous texts, such as the books of *Chilam Balam*, recounts events and events linked to what is known as *katun*, i.e., periods of 20 years of 360 days that were the name of the numeral from one to thirteen and the day you begin that it was always *Ahau*. This combination of thirteen katuns (7200 days by 13) amounted to approximately 256 solar years. Referred to as wheel of katuns, or short account because they are abbreviated calendar round dates that, referred to explicitly, do not have a date of origin or departure.

This system implied the fragmentation of the geographical space into thirteen segments that were constituted as seats of the Katún and there is evidence that it was already used from the early Classic period on, at the same time the Long Account was substituted in the northwest of the peninsula of Yucatan in 633 AD (Valásquez García 2010: 59).

In the ethnographic aspect, the current Mayan from the highlands have a 260-day calendar of a divinatory nature, which still has importance in the highlands of Guatemala, specifically in the Quiché area, Ixil, Mam, Kaqchikel and Achi, among others (Craveri 2010: 64). The current Mayan also harbors notions of the agricultural calendar.

Paradoxically the descendants of ancient pre-Hispanic Mayan society are those who don't have any notion about the end of the era of their predecessors. This is understandable by virtue of which the knowledge of the calendar, the Long Account usually was associated with elite events, such as dates of ascension to the throne, marriage alliances, wars, etc.

The sophistication of the Maya-religion, hinged to the old status, was destroyed by the Spanish conquest and began a process of resistance and symbolic reprocessing that manifested itself in a clandestine worship and the permanence of their cosmovision

rooted in the agricultural process that we have referred to earlier.

### The Cyclical Concept of History

The regulativity of the seasonal established by nature, the cultivation of the field group in relation to the solar annual movement, led to the cosmologic Maya established similar to the communal social life. The repetition of the stars in the firmament, made possible predicting future astronomic events. What parallel in our social life since for the Mayas the successes the dust could be seen as a constant trend in time.

Thus, when the Spaniards tried to submit the last Mayan stronghold of Peten, of the Itzá of Tayasal in the year 1696, the father commissioner Andrés de Avendaño, connoisseur of the Mayan calendar, noted him to Canek and Coboxh, Mayan leaders, that according to the reading of his sacred books, should abandon their homes, for there had arrived the time of Christianity and now they had to submit to the Spaniards.

The chronicler of these events, Alfonso de Villagutierre Sotomayor, recounts how the leaders of the Itzaes, and in particular Coboxh, remained satisfied by the account of the years that the Franciscan Brother Andrés de Avendaño indicated to them, in that there was fitting its predictions and the dates in which they would be fulfilled being based on the codices, folding books in Maya hieroglyphic script, what gave place to the subjection of the last Mayan stronghold in the year 1697.

### The Underworld

For the Mesoamerican peoples, and in particular for the Mayan, the underworld had a special significance, and that was considered as a place where the deities of water lived, the precious liquid flowed and generated the fertility and well-being of the community. In the central highlands and in the Highlands of the Maya, this is symbolized by the sacred or ritual mountain and among the Mayans of the lowlands with the natural wells and the caverns, which were considered to be places of entry to the underworld where the rain God Chaak or God B and associated deities resided.

Some of the natural wells were even important oracles where pilgrimages flocked throughout the Maya area, as it is the case of the sacred cenote of Chichén Itzá. This Mayan Center was a political center of the first importance with an influence that arrived from very distant regions due, in large measure, to this reservoir of water linked to

religious and cosmogonic thought of culture in the lowlands of the North.

The famous Bishop Fray Diego de Landa, in his well-known work "Relationship of the things of Yucatan" written in the sixteenth century, referred to the old settlers having "...the Chichenizá well in so many worship like us the pilgrimages of Jerusalem and Rome..." (1973: 48).

The sacred natural well was working like an oracle to know relevant events that provided occurring constant, like the prediction of the year, if there would be good harvests or not, abundant rains or long droughts. The person thrown into its midst could deliver the message from the gods, awaited anxiously by the community.

To the deity of the water that resided in the sacred natural well, the Mayans not only offered their human beings but also other elements of great value, as noted by Landa:

"...they threw living people and other precious things as sacrifices" (1973: 12).

The cosmogonic, symbolic and sacred aspect is represented physically in great part in the caves of the Mayan area, which have served since bygone times and up to the present as a space of worship. Events of ritual nature whose objective was to establish a link between the Mayans and the gods of the underworld, this relationship with the universe and the role they played in it since his birth took place in its interior. In the Mayan peninsula of the Yucatan area there still remains an ancient tradition of respect for these spaces.

The caves or caverns are the entrances to the residence of the god of rain, and in the Mayan codices god Chaak, or god B, appears commonly in a cave, the cave is also the materialization of the underworld and the underworld is Xibalba or Metnal, according to the worldview of the pre-Hispanic Mayan.

Infants, frogs, toads, turtles and generally animals and waterfowl have a direct association with the god of rain. Suffice it to recall that in the contemporary ceremonies to request rain, the Mayan shaman uses children to attract water, which in one part of the swearing-in begins to croak and emit sounds like frogs or toads, in an attempt of sympathetic magic to attract rain.

### The Quadripartite Concept

The sun was one of the stars that was closely linked to daily life of the Mayans and therefore its movement and displacement, as noted, was of great importance for this indigenous group. The extreme

positions of the sun on the horizon, at dawn and dusk, during solstices and equinoxes, pointed to the notable points of the quadripartite conception of the universe. Hence the division of land in four directions, each of which associated with a color: white for north, red for east, black for west and the yellow for south. A fifth color, green, could be for the Centre (Thompson 1985: 308), which can be considered as a fifth cardinal point that was important in its cosmological conception.

In a vertical direction, are the Zenith, at the highest point of heaven, and the nadir, at the lowest point of the underworld, which are the two poles of the cosmic axis, the *axis mundi*, as the central point of the whole universe is the center of the Earth where man resides (De la Garza 2010: 43). According to their cosmovision, the sky had 13 divisions or levels and was sustained by four deities who called Bacab, located in each of the regions of the world with the corresponding color (Thompson 1985: 308-309). In a similar way, elements of the flora and the fauna linked with the cardinal points and their corresponding colors, such as la ceiba, sacred tree of the Maya, birds such as the quetzal and grains of corn.

Also the Maya, like other Mesoamerican peoples, believed that there were nine levels of the underworld, which is associated with the nine Lords of the night (Thompson 1985: 309).

All of these conceptions of directionality and handling of the space were reflected in the Mayan architecture and in its settlement pattern, where notable archaeoastronomical character points can be observed and of town planning concerning these conceptions.

This Mayan concept of directionality, cardinal points, the Center and sometimes the intermediates, are potential sources for the organization of the space (Ashmore and Sabloff 2000: 17-18). In this regard, cited authors have drawn attention to the political affiliation of the Mayan communities as a factor in the same organization.

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### Final Considerations

The worldview of the Maya is very large and we have not tried to cover all aspects of social and cultural perception of nature and the cosmos of this indigenous group, but to highlight some notable aspects of this thought, such as the creation of man, the cyclical conception of history.

A very close relationship between the observation of the stars, the calendar, the agricultural cycle and the decisive character of maize, together with preparation of the corn for cultivation processes and the time involved. The above explains the fundamental role of corn around the creation myths and the everyday lives of the Maya past and present.

It is also through the solar deity Kin which establishes the link with the seasonal cycles of preparation of the cornfield. Hence the importance the solstices, equinoxes and other significant dates in the constant evolution of time.

The time and the Mayan thought were expressed in their ability to predict eclipses of the sun, the movements of the moon, the synodical revolution of Venus and its appearance as the morning star. This cyclical repetition of the astronomical events linked to the gods had its expression in the cyclic conception of the history of the Maya.

The nexus between the cosmos and the social life of the Mayan arises the quadripartite concept of the universe and the center

as the *axis mundi*, we see expressed in its architecture and planning of their big cities and events recurring arqueoastronomicos in various building complexes.

The Mayan underworld, associated with the deities and as a place of fertility where the water flows, had a special significance for the Maya. The mountains, caves and natural wells were sacred places where the monster of the ground resides and where they were carrying out rituals of propitiation. It should not be forgotten that in Mayan and Mesoamerican mythology the sun is transformed during sunset into a jaguar roaming the underworld during his nightly journey.

The sophistication of the Mayan religion articulated by the ancient state, was destroyed by the Spanish conquest and a process of resistance to a symbolic relation that expressed itself in the agricultural process that we described earlier.

In this way the Mayas sought a cosmic and social equilibrium propitiating through rituals and sacrifices, rather than with a fatalist, catastrophic view as Western thinking had to induce medically, but rather through a proprietary perception of the cosmos. This persists through the processes of resistance, syncretism and the re-elaboration synthetic that persists at the root of the ancient Mayan thinking.

*To be continued.*

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