

March 2021 Entry (on Proficiencies, Capital Colonies and Money in GGDM)

“The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn.” – [Alvin Toffler](#).

“There are some things that every team has to relearn every year.” – popular sports quote.

There are two possible ways to view [Proficiencies](#) in GGDM that relate to the timeless debates of philosophy. One way is to determine the proficiency of a civilization in an area by comparing it to some mythical standard of perfection; sort of a [Platonic Essentialism](#). Thus, each Proficiency placed on the Public Space will move the position toward that level of perfection by small percentages (sort of like approaching the speed of light), and the level is judged by the number of each Proficiency currently on the Public Space. I don't think this is a winner because how many of a particular Proficiency is required to reach the mythical standard of perfection? An infinite number? This is not dissimilar to the criticisms of Platonic Essentialism and modern variants.

Rather, I view the placement of Proficiencies as being relative to the immediately-prior condition. Not relative to nothing, and not relative to the baseline of pre-interstellar civilization at the beginning of the game, both because it is meaningless and because it is equally mythical and problematic. Placing Proficiencies is a form of 'looking' in the sense that civilization has chosen to 'solve' that problem or some related set of problems resulting in placing the Proficiency Piece on the Public Space (see Whac-a-Mole discussions in [4 Culture](#), p. 404 and Bottle Spin Whac-a-Mole, [2 Eras](#), pp. 768-769).

(on Capital Colonies)

“Alarmed at the news, Xuansong and his heir, Suzong, fled the grandeur of the Imperial Capital. Two weeks later as they reached a relay station, the Royal Entourage was turned on by their soldier escort and Xuanzong was forced to execute many of the bureaucrats who the soldiers blamed, probably correctly, for the disaster at Tong Pass. After placating his warriors, Xuanzong fled south and eventually reached the city of modern Chengdu in Sichuan Providence, while his heir advanced north and approached Lingzhou in the autumn of 756. Three days after his arrival, Suzong was persuaded to usurp the throne from his exiled father, who was granted the title shang-huang, or 'retired emperor.' The Tang's longest and most glorious reign was at an end. Meanwhile, An Lushan's main rebel army entered and occupied the capital at Chang-an, reportedly massively depopulating the city in the process. It is not known if he massacred a great portion of the city's population or if the disruption simply caused many to flee, but the formerly great city was diminished by this part of the war.” – Narrator, “An Lushan Rebellion – One of the Bloodiest Conflicts in History,” Kings & Generals YouTube Channel, January 18, 2019 (written by Matt Hollis) (“The Wars of the Diadochi series is

the only series which is not narrated by OfficiallyDevin.” – Wikitubia article, “Kings and Generals,” December 10, 2020).

The rules for [Capital Colonies](#) in GGDM straddle the line between the idea of an officially-declared *de jure* capital and the idea that of the *de facto* capital, as in times and places where a monarch ruled (see [Moving the Swamp](#), [2 Order](#), p. 536). However, on the *de facto* side of the argument, [2 Order](#) cites the example of the [Avignon Papacy](#) where seven French Popes refused to move to Rome and ruled from the Avignon Papal Enclave in southern France. Further, it is mentioned in [4 Combat](#), p. 989 that the Roman Emperor resided in the frontier colony of [Carnuntum](#) for three years making it the *de facto* capital of the Roman Empire (consistent with the statements in [2 Order](#)) while also being the *de jure* capital of [Pannonia Superior](#). During this time, roads to Carnuntum would have been more travelled, [Vinobona](#) (modern day Vienna) would have taken on expanded importance and political prestige, and while this may have receded slightly after the departure of the Emperor from Carnuntum, some of it would have remained permanently (thus Vinobona become Vienna).

Finally, in the fifth century, while Rome may have remained the *de jure* capital of the [Western Roman Empire](#), the fact is that [Milan](#) and then [Ravenna](#) were the actual capitals of the Roman Empire, and the latter is in fact where [the last Roman Emperor](#) abdicated the throne after being defeated by [Odoacer](#) at the [Battle of Ravenna](#) in 476 A.D., who was then declared by the [post-classical Roman Senate](#) to be King of Italy (see discussion, [Inside the Hyperspace Bypass](#), [2 Order](#), pp. 533-534).

Thus, moving and establishing capitals is treated in a ‘fuzzy’ way in GGDM and is a point of potential for drama and storytelling. The Concierge may need to make judgments about, for example, access to the Diplomatic Spaces between potentially competing *de jure* and *de facto* capitals, while on the other hand, the default is the declared capital (see [Capitol Declaration](#), [2 Order](#), p. 533) per the game rules if players want to keep it simple and clear.

Many of those who would criticize GGDM’s interpretation mechanics and the ‘looking laws’ discussion as ‘unrealistic’ casually accept that “God said let there be light, and there was light.”

(on Money)

“The Federal Treasury was nearly out of gold in 1895, at the depths of the Panic of 1893. [J.P.] Morgan had put forward a plan for the federal government to buy gold from his and European banks but it was declined in favor of a plan to sell bonds directly to the general public to overcome the crisis. Morgan, sure there was not enough time to implement such a plan, demanded and eventually obtained a meeting with Grover Cleveland where he claimed the government could default that day if they didn’t do something. Morgan came up with a plan to use an old civil war statute that allowed

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Morgan and the Rothschilds to sell gold directly to the U.S. Treasury, 3.5 million ounces, to restore the treasury surplus, in exchange for a 30-year bond issue. The episode saved the Treasury but hurt Cleveland's standing with the agrarian wing of the Democratic Party, and became an issue in the election of 1896 when banks came under a withering attack from William Jennings Bryan. Morgan and Wall Street bankers donated heavily to Republican William McKinley, who was elected in 1896 and re-elected in 1900." – from Wikipedia article, "J.P. Morgan," captured November 29, 2020.

On Thanksgiving Day 2020, I watched a 46-minute 2017 documentary titled "Pizzaro: The Blood of the Sun God" which discussed in some detail how the [Incas](#) who called their state *Tawantinsuyu*, considered gold to be 'the blood of the sun god' and used it only for religious purposes, with the [Sapa Inca](#) being the only one who could wear gold ornaments because of his status as a god (his throne was also gold). The Inca did not use gold as a form of currency. This seemed to be somewhat similar to [ancient Egyptian beliefs](#) about gold which they also associated with the sun and eternity, and their [Pharaoh](#) was considered a god on Earth like the Sapa Inca:

"White-gold was valued highly in Egyptian times. It was used as a symbol, close to the symbolic nature of yellow or white. White was symbolic of omnipotence and purity to the Egyptians – a symbol that is still valid today. Often used to represent the simple but sacred part of the Egyptian life ... Yellow for the Egyptians linked to the sun and gold, which were symbolic of their imperishable, eternal and indestructible nature. The Egyptians regularly used yellow in their art work to portray the gods, which they believed had gold bones. ... Tie white and gold together in a wedding ring and you have a symbol of purity, sacredness, eternity and an indestructible nature – all of which are the substance at the very heart of a marriage." – Marie Coles, "Traditional Connotations of White-Gold From the Ancient Egyptian Civilization," ezinearticles.com, June 18, 2010.

So I wondered at what point and by what process did gold become a currency? According to what I could find, the first gold coins were minted [about 600 BC in Lydia, Anatolia](#). Then I remembered the tomb robbers of Ancient Egypt who were caught and executed by impaling ([The Amherst Papyrus](#), 1100 BC) and that tomb robbing was a huge problem for ancient Egypt (literally a policing and maintenance nightmare); obviously the robbers were not impressed with the divinity claims of deceased (or living) Pharaohs and thus to them, the unused, unguarded gold laying around was simply a precious item to be bartered for food, goods, wives, animals, weapons, services and land. It is thus surprising that it may have taken another half millennia for gold to be minted into coins and become money, functioning as an exchangeable storage unit of economic value:

"Economists, however, have a language all their own when it comes to money. They define it as something that serves as a medium of exchange, a unit of accounting, and a store of value.... In other words, economists largely define money by the functions that it serves. It need not be green and made of paper, and it need not be little metallic discs – money is anything that fills those three essential functions. Now, the best money is

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also highly convenient – it is light, easy to carry, and can be broken into smaller units for easy exchange.... But most important, it must serve as a medium of exchange, a unit of accounting, and a store of value.” – from “Money: The Economic Definition,” retrieved from shmoop.com, November 24, 2017.

Through subsequent history, there has been an intertwining of competing concepts of gold as a form of currency (until the triumph of [paper money](#) in the late 19th Century) – gold still serves as a stable storage of economic value – and gold as religious meaning, in the form of crowns worn by personal sovereigns (and thrones, e.g., the [Golden Stool of the Ashanti of Africa](#), cause of a [silly war with the British](#) in 1900) and gold crosses, cups (e.g., the [Holy Grail](#), [Vaphio Cups](#)), plates and utensils (e.g., the Mormon [Golden Plates](#)), privilege, championship and ultimate standards, death masks, and other religious artifacts, as well as for personal ornamentation and religious expression (e.g., gold cross necklaces, wedding rings). But generally the secular side of gold has been slowly winning over the centuries (in parallel with decline of religion to which it is tied).

Now, from the point of view of social selection forces the story of gold creates a sort of historical hierarchy of needs if we assume that gold was adapted to uses as part of the social selection process. Perhaps this could be characterized as somewhat like [Abraham Maslow’s ‘hierarchy of needs’](#) in which case, historically, society first adapted gold to fulfill mystical needs (the need to connect the heavens to Earth in an understandable way; the Incas recognized also its personal ornamentation value, but restricted it for political-religious reasons) and thereafter, as commerce and population pressure overwhelmed barter systems, gold became the solution as a form of portable wealth and storage of economic value, followed by coins of lesser metals. But at the very same instant, they became also a matter of sovereignty, most coins, from the oldest we have found, being stamped on at least one side with sovereign symbols, suggesting that the two were intertwined from the beginning, perhaps coins were invented because the king needed a way to pay debts (sovereignty, especially personal sovereignty, has always been associated with wealth, which in the extreme was the downfall of the Western Roman Empire).

The spread of gold to a wide range of symbolic meanings and secular applications, while retaining its original [mystical](#) element, suggests the migration of the hierarchy of needs. This inconstancy is not inconsistent, even Maslow’s hierarchy of needs changes situationally, for example, if you are freezing, warmth becomes more important at that moment than food or water or even [morality](#). Continuing the analogy, the migration of meanings from original mystical to symbolic and secular (partly through social selection forces) is a [‘self-actualization’](#) or better, ‘social actualization’ of a social object.

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