

Chapter 2

Intercontinental Flows of Desire: Brass Kettles in Lapland and in the Colony of New Sweden

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Colonialism establishes particular and sometimes surprising networks of desire between territories, things, and people. Their basis is in materials, material cultures, and their movements across regions and continents. One such a network connected the native populations of Lapland in the northernmost region of Europe and the Swedish colony in North America. The colony of New Sweden was founded in 1638 in the Delaware Valley, which encompassed the area of northern Delaware, southwestern New Jersey, and southeastern Pennsylvania. Here I analyze the establishment and effects of this network through the seventeenth-century trade in brass kettles in the two distant areas.

I will begin by articulating the relationship between colonialism, desire, and material culture. The archaeology of colonial identity can be defined, following Lucas (2004: 186), as the study of how subjectivities are constituted in the context of colonialism in terms of everyday material culture. Desire, in turn, glues together everyday life with macroscale politics and global networks of exchange. The concept of desire therefore helps us to understand how colonialism functions as a force that establishes new ways of life and interaction. The differing conceptions of desire, however, provide for this field of research very dissimilar ways of tracing the emergence of identities. After specifying these differences, I will present the distribution and consumption of brass kettles in North America, North Scandinavia, and Finland as a case study. Lastly, I will discuss how brass kettles constituted an element in the colonial and intercontinental movements of desire.

The concepts of desire and colonialism surface, though obliquely, as the main theme in two recent historical studies on the relations between the settlers and the Native Americans in the Swedish colony. The first is Gunlög Fur's book *Colonialism in the Margins* (2006). The earlier historical tradition argued that the relations

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between the Nordic colonizers and the native populations of the region, mainly the Lenni Lenape, were unusually friendly and peaceful. This was a symptom of the civilized attitudes of the Swedes. Fur argues, however, that peacefulness was more a consequence of the settlers having no options. The survival of the colony depended on the goodwill of the natives and their readiness to participate in trade. In a similarly critical vein, Amy Schutt examines interaction between the native populations of Delaware and European colonists in her book *Peoples of the River Valleys* (2007). Schutt's focus is on the native side of the colonial encounter, but she also emphasizes the Indian–Indian relations. These relations were heterogeneous and affected also the native attitudes and policies towards the Europeans.

These two studies try to create accounts that operate outside of the paradigm of Western universalizing history. They do this by approaching the colonized as an active force, emphasizing, for example, the role of the Lenape in defining the conditions in which the early trade with the Swedes was conducted and later in adopting the strategy of building alliances with an array of peoples. This enabled their survival as a people during the advancement of the European settlers. Both works have been criticized, however. First, Fur is accused of failing to concretize her claims by explicitly comparing American and Nordic colonialisms (Smolenski, 2007). Schutt's work, in turn, has been criticized as implying that the natives were merely reacting to European prompts, not defining various situations of encounter in their own terms (Snyder, 2007).

These minor criticisms directed at Fur and Schutt arise in reaction to a particular conception of colonialism and desire present in both works. The authors appear to approach colonialism as an ideological device, a particular way in which colonial social practices produce various subjects and define their relations. In this way, the colonial system of power carves out the contours of colonizers and the colonized and their experiences. Desire is understood through the concept of acquisition: colonial desire seeks to acquire something that it lacks. In the case of brass kettles, the natives craved European things, reacting to their presence as material signifiers of colonial power and European values, and wanted to satisfy their desire by engaging in trade. In this framework, the traded items as actual material objects are secondary to the workings of colonial economies and power.

Desire as an Active Force

The relation between colonialism, the emergence of colonial subjects, and the profusion of European products introduced into the Native American cultures can be seen in a different light. This perspective rests on another kind of conception of desire that, rather than confining analysis to the rigidly predefined dualism between the colonizer and the colonized, shifts the emphasis to the materiality and performative force of the products. In this view, desire is not a representation of colonial politics or ideologies, but a productive force that allows the emergence of the colonial setting and the flows of people and objects. Such an inquiry into material culture

requires the analysis of artifacts in relation to fundamental networks of desire. The exploration of relations between bodies and objects, their microscale movements and transformations, is given priority. The goal is to reveal the complex dependences between objects and humans, in which the former are not simply vehicles for meanings given by the latter. Things and material processes should not be considered in isolation from the performative emergence of both subjectivity and colonialism.

Gosden (2004) favors such an alternative view on the relations between desire, material culture, and colonialism. He argues that colonialism is a particular effect that material culture has on bodies and minds, and concludes that “colonialism is a relationship of desire, which creates a network of people and things, but the exact shape of desire and the ensuing network will vary” (Gosden, 2004: 153). Colonialism is thus established as an elementary relationship to material culture. Gosden’s definition of colonialism is based on the conception of desire as a positive production of reality (Deleuze & Guattari, 1985). Desire is a machine, and the object of desire is another machine connected to it. Consequently all social production is desiring-production, not something that precedes desire.

This framework does not bring about the easy amalgamation of the colonizer and the colonized into some uniform coherence. Instead, desire is established and based on differences, differences between the two and within the two. Desire in this sense is not a desire for an object, for a traded product as such, but it is desire to be drawn into another world expressed by that object. At the same time, as a difference, desire establishes moments in which the authoritarian discourses lose their grip on meaning and become open to the trace of the language of the other: objects can express various worlds and their values, and as objects, brass kettles participate in these fluctuations of meaning.

Kettles in the History of the Swedish Colony

The flow of kettles from Europe into colonial setting gave a rise to various formations of desire and subsequent experiences that I set to trace. These new experiences were highly differing, but at the same time, part of the same colonial process. First, the outlines of this process and the role of copper kettles are sketched focusing on the Swedish colony and its history. Although in terms of archaeology New Sweden remains poorly studied (Fig. 2.1) (Immonen, 2011), written documents related to it are known relatively well and published (Waldron, 1995). Consequently, the outline of the colony’s history is soundly established. After that, I will continue to the microscale movements of kettles in the everyday colonial life, giving new insight into the global mechanisms.

An important motivation for the Kingdom of Sweden to become engaged in the colonial venture was its economy which in the seventeenth century was weak—in stark contrast to the nation’s increased political importance in Europe (Johnson, 1911). At the same time, with the rapid expansion of military industry



Fig. 2.1 Among the few thoroughly excavated sites of New Sweden are the remains of the governor's residence or Printzhof at present Governor Printz Park in Essington, Pennsylvania (Becker, 2011). The residence was built by the third colonial governor Johan Björnsson Printz (1592–1663) in 1643 (Photo by Visa Immonen)

and the constant need for muskets and cannons, the European copper markets were developing at a quick pace. Accordingly, copper mining became one of the most important industries for the kingdom and a major source of income for the government. The Great Copper Mountain in Falun functioned as the nation's treasury and funded the heavy war efforts in Central Europe.

Although copper was a relatively valuable metal in Europe, it was not used for making social distinctions, but rather manufactured into weapons and domestic objects and distributed to a wide and varied consumer base (Turgeon, 1997: 5). In their continuous search for new markets for these products, Swedish statesmen merged their interests with the commercial aims of Dutch merchants and set to establish an overseas colony (Johnson, 1911: 87–92, 95, 102). The developing markets of America and Africa had a huge potential, but despite the great financial and political ambitions, after its founding in 1638, New Sweden had a short history. The Dutch seized the colony in 1655, and finally, in 1664, it was taken over by the English (Dahlgren & Norman, 1988: 9, 64–65). The colony's autonomous position ended in 1682.

Because of the pathetic fate of the colony, the number of colonists who had come from Europe to New Sweden by the mid-seventeenth century remained less than 700. They did not, however, come to an uninhabited terrain, but a region settled mostly by the Lenape, whose number in the region approached 5,000 (Becker, 1976: 25). The Lenape were not purely hunter-gatherers, but also engaged in small-scale horticulture during the Late Woodland Period (cf. AD 1000–1600). A slash-and-burn technique was used to grow corn, beans, and a variety of squash (Kraft, 1986: 115–118), and in fact two-thirds or even more of their caloric intake was obtained through corn cultivation (Fur, 2006: 106).

New Sweden never became a major market for Swedish copper, but artifacts made of the metal nevertheless appear among the imported products. When the first voyage to North America was planned, the products to be traded with the aborigines included “adzes, hatchets, kettles, duffels and other merchandise” (Johnson, 1911: 97; cf. 112). Upon his arrival at Delaware Bay in 1638, the first governor Peter Minuit (1580–1638) presented a *sachem*, or as the colonizers conceived, chief of the Lenape, with a kettle and other trifles in exchange for land (Johnson, 1911: 437; Weslager, 1972: 125).

After the first voyage, brass kettles appear frequently in cargo lists and documents related to trade. The seventh expedition brought 302 kettles (Johnson, 1911: 255–256). The preparations for the eighth voyage also mention kettles (Johnson, 1911: 258–259), while the ninth expedition bought 224 brass kettles from Holland to bring them to New Sweden (Johnson, 1911: 268). When there was a shortage of trade goods in 1643, Governor Printz had to buy cloth and other merchandise from the English and the Dutch. John Willcox of Virginia sold him a variety of products including three kettles (Johnson, 1911: 310). In 1644, the ship *Fama* arrived along with 250 kettles (Johnson, 1911: 316–317), and in 1646 the *Haj* came also with kettles in its hold (Johnson, 1911: 329). In 1647, Printz discussed with the Minquas the sale of land for which he paid, among other items, four kettles (Johnson, 1911: 332). In 1654, the last Governor Johan Risingh (1617–1672) gathered 12 sachems and gave each of them “one yard of frieze, one kettle [?], one axe, one hoe, one knife, one pound of powder, one stick of lead and six awl-points” (Johnson, 1911: 563–565).

Brass Kettles in Native Lives

The transportation of kettles from Sweden to New Sweden appears as a macroscale manifestation of the colonial effort, but the much more subtle movements of the objects in the colony are of equal importance. These smaller flows and accumulations of kettles did not remain unnoticed by the contemporary Swedes. In the mid-seventeenth century, military engineer Peter Lindeström (1632–1691) (1923: 173) observed how local Indian households were full of brass and brass kettles small and large, which they had bought from the colonists. Indeed, in addition to various tools and cloths, brass kettles were among the things that the Indians asked for most often when trading with the Swedes or other Europeans [Fur, 2006: 164; Johnson, 1911: 191; Schutt, 2007: 2; Weslager, 1972: 125–126, 148, 149, 162, 170, 185, 216, 346; see also Martin (1975: 133)]. Eventually brass kettles and imported ceramics replaced local pottery, and the Lenape pot-making skills declined. By the time of the Swedish explorer and botanist Pehr Kalm’s (1716–1779) voyage in the mid-eighteenth century, the Lenape skills of making ceramics had almost vanished (Fur, 2006: 204–205; Kalm, 1970: 240; Nassaney, 2004: 346).

In spite of the references to objects made from copper or brass being relatively frequent, as actual objects they are quite rarely found in early colonial Lenape sites.

Besides various copper objects, like bangles, bracelets, buckles, buttons, crosses, earrings, finger rings, hawk's bells, Jew's harps, religious medals, spoons, thimbles, and tubular beads (Veit & Bello, 2001), only a few brass kettles are known. They were discovered at the Bell-Browning-Blair and Minisink burial sites in the Upper Delaware River Valley (Heye & Pepper, 1915; Marchiando, 1972: 143).

The adoption of kettles by the Lenape is usually explained in functional terms (e.g., Fitzgerald, Turgeon, Whitehead, & Bradley, 1993: 54; Kraft, 1986: 207–208; Weslager, 1972: 107). For populations living mainly on hunting, gathering, and semi-agrarian activities, they had significant advantages compared with the local pottery. Kettles were more portable and more durable than ceramics, they were easy to hang over a fire by the handles, and a hole in a kettle was relatively easy to mend. Moreover, kettles were also turned into various other objects, such as ornaments and arrowheads (Mounier, 2003: 121). All these features greatly enhanced aboriginal ways of living.

Turgeon (1997: 2) criticizes technological determinism implicit in the comparisons between native ceramics and imported kettles. Kettles materialized more than merely utilitarian values. The use of kettles, he suggests, was an act of appropriation and transformation of the meanings that adhered to the objects. Unlike functional explanations, interpretations of these meanings emphasize more the temporal change and fluctuations in the uses the kettles were put to.

Witthoft (1966) divides the Indian–European trade into phases, the first of which covers the era from the first contact to the 1590s. During this early period, brass kettles were already among the products exchanged, but they seem to have been cut up into ornaments and knives rather than used as cooking utensils. It was not until the second phase and increased European contacts in the seventeenth century that brass kettles started to appear in graves as whole objects (Kraft, 1986: 206–209, 214; Witthoft, 1966: 204–207). The change in the use of kettles can be associated with the meaning of copper in the network of native social relations. Prior to the European contact, rare native copper objects are primarily known from burial contexts, and the earliest contact period artifacts were primarily of copper, because Native Americans appreciated the metal for its scarcity and religious significance (Galke, 2004). Hence, values of native objects were extended to the European imports, and Europeans were assimilated to the local social networks through these objects—materiality was the basis for certain forms of social behavior (Miller & Hamell, 1986: 318). When the availability of copper products increased as a result of intensified European contacts, copper objects became “a kind of currency, available to and used by the elite and common people alike” (Galke, 2004: 94–95). European brass kettles, or their fragments, appeared throughout the native sites of the northeast seaboard once the fur trade began in the last quarter of the sixteenth century, and they had a more or less similar impact on all native populations as well (Fitzgerald et al., 1993: 44).

When the objects appear in written sources related to New Sweden, they are usually among the payments or gifts given to the natives. In that way, kettles participated in the ongoing gift-giving process and were a means of building and maintaining social relations. They were used in a similar manner, when, for instance, land

agreements were settled among the native residents themselves (Schutt, 2007: 34–36). As kettles gradually became part of the everyday gear (Weslager, 1972: 377, 483), they were incorporated into other social rituals as well. According to Weslager (1972: 490), a Lenape bride was given a kettle for cooking in her wedding ceremonies, and after death, she could be buried with such an implement (Nassaney, 2004: 335, 343; Weslager, 1972: 100, 133–134, 174, 488). The movement of kettles from use and exchange into the immobile grave context might seem minor, but it in fact implies a fundamental change. The network of desire set by colonialism had become part of the native way of life and was integrated into the burial rites.

Eventually kettles were adapted to the prevailing ways of gendering material culture and social practices, but at the same time, their flow from Europe transformed the objects and their micro-movements. As such these Lenape practices and contexts of using brass kettles do not seem to differ significantly from what occurred in other colonies in North America. Nevertheless, New Sweden is of particular interest, because similar developments occurred in the material culture of the Sámi in Fennoscandia.

Brass Kettles and the Sámi

As in North America, the Swedish administration faced seminomadic indigenous populations, the Sámi, in the northern parts of the kingdom. With the progressing centralization and tightening of the state control from the seventeenth century onwards, the Sámi people experienced increased pressures to integrate with the Swedish state. The colonialist framework in which brass kettles were imported and consumed was thus more or less similar on the two continents, but the timescale was very different.

The contact between the Sámi and the southern farmer communities had a much longer history than the relationship between the colonizers and the colonized in the New World. In Lapland, the cessation of the Sámi pottery tradition is, as in New Sweden, associated with the adoption of brass kettles. The use of ceramics among the native populations, however, seems to have ended already by around AD 400 (Bergman, 2007). Not surprisingly, the subsequent archaeological material reflects the popularity of kettles among the Sámi.

In Finland, the majority of medieval and early modern kettles, numbering several dozens, are stray finds from the wilderness areas of central, east, and north Finland (Fig. 2.2) (Anttila, 2002: 25). On the basis of their distribution, Taavitsainen (1986: 38–39) suggests that the stray finds should be associated with the utilization of the inland wilderness, and moreover, instead of seeing them as hoards deposited by western and southern farmer–merchants, they might just as well have been deposited by the “the Lapp” population, or nomadic hunter-gatherers, who later became the ethnic group of “the Sámi” (cf. Anttila, 2002: 16–36; Siiripää & Luoto, 1999).

In addition to surviving intact kettles, however, sheets from brass kettles, some with rivets or holes for rivets, have been found in various sacrificial and settlement



Fig. 2.2 Two brass kettles from a hoard of four kettles found in a peatland meadow at Käärmelahti, Maaninka, Northern Savonia. The kettles were made in the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries. They have been interpreted as a hoard for depositing capital, or a sacrificial deposition (Kivikoski, 1934; Taavitsainen, 1986). The diameter of the first one is 39 cm and the second 28 cm (National Museum of Finland, inv. no. 9769:1, 4) (Photo by Visa Immonen)

sites throughout Lapland in Finland, Norway, and Sweden. Their dating covers a period from the eleventh to the seventeenth century (Carpelan, 1987, 1991, 1992, 2003; Hedman, 2003: 186; Odner, 1992: 131; Okkonen, 2007: 35–37; Serning, 1956: 91–93; Zachrisson, 1976: 47–50, 62). For instance, in Finnish Lapland, the excavations of the Juikenttä settlement site in Sodankylä, dated from the twelfth to the seventeenth century, revealed fragments of several brass kettles (Carpelan, 1966: 68–69, 74). Further pieces of kettles were discovered at the Nukkumajoki 2 site in Inari, which was settled from the fifteenth to the late seventeenth century (Carpelan, 1992: 41–42, 2003: 73).

References to kettles in connection with the Sámi are equally common in written sources. The oldest one is a document of the Piteå court dated to as early as 1424. The text states that any coastal farmer who had the right to trade with the Sámi and who provided items that the Sámi required for their survival, among others a kettle or a pot, was given the right to trade with and claim taxes from that particular Sámi for three years without interference (*Handlingar rörande Skandinaviens historia*, 1848: 27; Voionmaa, 1912: 61). In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when southern burghers arrived at the Sámi markets of Normark in Norway, they brought brass kettles along as sales items (Fur, 1992: 45; Itkonen, 1948b: 206). In eighteenth-century Finland, the burghers of the town of Tornio transported kettles to Lapland in order to sell them to the Sámi (Itkonen, 1948b: 198). Moreover, the brass kettles are common items in the probate inventories of Sámi families in the nineteenth century with the wealthiest ones owning as many as six or seven (Itkonen, 1948b: 307–308).

In many cases, fragments of brass kettles appear to have been purposefully severed. For this reason, Christian Carpelan (1992: 41–42, 2003: 73) associates the finds with Sámi sacrifices. When copper fragments are known from farm settlements not inhabited by the Sámi, they are, in contrast, interpreted as residue from mending. For instance, fragments of brass sheets were found in the fourteenth-century site of Kello

in Haukipudas, North Ostrobothnia, Finland. The settlement belonged to Finnish farmers, and accordingly the finds are seen as leftovers from repairs (Koivunen & Sarkkinen, 1994: 18–19, 21). The Kello site is not an exception. Although larger objects of copper alloys are absent in the archaeological assemblages of northern towns, pieces of scrap metal are relatively common (Nurmi, 2011: 64, 145). The explanation for this situation appears simple: brass kettles were valuable items also for European colonizers, and they were not lightheartedly discarded (Soo, 1963). Following this reasoning, however, Zachrisson (1976: 47) poses the question of whether the fragments found in indigenous sites are raw material just like the scatter from non-Sámi settlements. At least some of the sheets have clearly been cut into pendants and ornaments.

Kettles in Colonial Networks of Desire

Similarities in the adoption of brass kettles and the ways in which they changed the local material cultures in North America and Lapland are notable and denote the global mechanisms of European colonialism. On a macroscale, the copper created a geographical and cultural tie between the two continents and between the worlds of the colonist and the native. Various networks of desire partly clashed, but partly they also amplified and transformed each other. As in North America, the decline of the local pottery tradition in Lapland is associated with the substantive adoption of imported ceramics and brass kettles. Another striking commonality is the cutting of kettles into smaller pieces and making them into other artifacts found in both indigenous sites and sites belonging to the Swedish colonizers.

Having said that, however, in flows of desire, there are no hierarchies between macro and micro, or global and local. Desire is independent of the mobility of people and things, but constantly establishing their transformations and relations. Hence, it is also important to trace small shifts and consider their impact on larger trends. With undeniable force, colonialism drew two worlds and continents together, concretized by brass kettles, but this apparent uniformity was full of differences: differences between the administrative strata and the other settlers, between European and native customs, and between a range of native populations with their respective histories and ways of life. The social and economic trajectories of the Lenape and the Sámi groups were quite distinct.

During the seventeenth century, both the Sámi and the Lenape were able to some extent control the European colonizing power and the flows of trade goods (Fig. 2.3). The Sámi communities experienced increasing pressures from the Swedish state that constantly enhanced its control over its subjects and regions, and as a consequence, their subsistence strategies took drastically new shapes. Many communities experienced a transition from hunter-gatherer subsistence to reindeer pastoralism (Bergman, 2007; Itkonen, 1948a: 302). Unlike the Lenape, however, the Sámi were more aware of their possibilities as part of the kingdom and were able to employ their position as royal subjects and appeal directly to the sovereign (Fur, 1992).



Fig. 2.3 The frontispiece of Thomas Campanius Holm's book *Description of the Province of New Sweden* (1702) depicts a friendly encounter between the local Indians and Swedish traders in New Sweden. Holm never visited the colony and based the image on stories told by his grandfather, who lived in New Sweden in the 1640s

Under colonial pressure, Lenape social organization also readjusted from subsistence economy to hunting for skins, as furs were the currency of European trade. In contrast to the Sámi, the Lenape initially had an upper hand in terms of subsistence and could set the availability of the European goods as the condition for the colonizers' survival (see Fig. 2.3). Lenape participation in European trade, however, never reached the extent of neighboring groups like the Susquehannock (Custer, 1996: 314). The situation changed fatally around 1675, when the European taste for furs plummeted and the fur trade stagnated. The basis of the native wealth and indigenous means for control crumpled (Fur, 1992; Newcomb, 1956: 83).

In the trade networks established by colonialism, brass kettles were commodities in the fullest meaning of the term. Partly alienated from their prior context of the colonizer, but still having their beneficial material qualities, they became part of the desiring machine of the indigenous life, extending its possibilities. The meaning of brass kettles shifted and their movements differed from those in the homeland, and this affected even the lives of the colonizer. In Lindeström's description of the

accumulation of kettles in native houses, one can sense a surprise or amusement. In Europe, a kettle of brass was an everyday object of no particular interest beyond its material and utilitarian value, but in the New World, it became more articulately a trace of homeland, of the familiar domestic sphere and comfort. Lindeström saw how these ordinary objects, kettles, appeared in excessive numbers, creating a disturbing colonial experience in which a familiar object strangely metamorphosed.

In Lindeström's observation, potential feeling of nostalgic everydayness has been severed, and this surprise continues in the contemporary scholarly need to provide explanations for the strange movements of kettles in native lives. Why was a European object not used in the same way by the Lenape as it was by colonists? What was the function of kettle fragments in indigenous sites?

In North America, the fragments of brass have mainly been conceived as a sign of the high social esteem given to copper instead of utilitarian concerns. The appreciation of copper as raw material declined, however, as objects made of the metal became common through intensifying European contact. In Lapland, the phenomenon of brass sheets is often interpreted as cultic behavior, although also more functional views, related to using brass as raw material, have been presented. The two interpretative traditions seem to imply that discovering kettle fragments excludes the possibility that they had other uses prior to breaking them, or simultaneously, when used in sacrificial or cultic contexts. Objects and their fragments are mobile, taking new shapes and meanings, and taking into account these miniscule histories is crucial when the range of possible interpretations is considered. Therefore, if brass objects were so popular and scrap metal could be used to mend broken kettles, one might ask, why should brass fragments be considered as signs of exotic and cultic behavior? Might it have been also an efficient way of utilizing materials?

Brass kettles, their use, and raw material were already familiar to the indigenous groups. As Marshall Sahlins (1993: 17) concludes: "The first commercial impulse of the people is not to become just like us but more like themselves." Brass kettles were adapted to the native material culture and attached to different environments, practices, and values through the process of commodification (Galke, 2004: 94; cf. Herva & Ylimaunu, 2006). Their colonial and European macro-movements were met with conflicting micro-movements in the native lives. Kettles were invested with distinct social values and employed as currency, but they were also used in cooking and buried with certain members of the Lenape community. These various ways in which kettles circulated among the native groups show how the colonial desire instituted shifting formations of value. In effect, brass kettles gave form to the desires of hunter-gathering cultures, made their subsistence strategies more efficient, and contributed to their social change (Fitzgerald et al., 1993: 54), and thus, as artifacts, they bore transformative possibilities not actualized in European contexts (Rubertone, 2000: 431–432). The expanding colonial desire produced new differences and created novel affective attachments and investments involving time and labor.

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