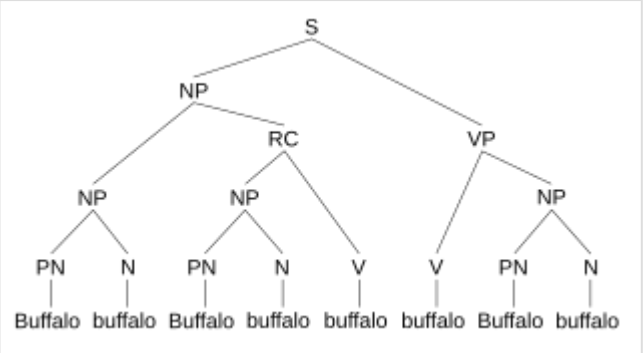
Buffalo buffalo Buffalo buffalo buffalo buffalo Buffalo buffalo

"**Buffalo buffalo Buffalo buffalo buffalo buffalo Buffalo buffalo**" is a grammatically correct sentence in English that is often presented as an example of how homonyms and homophones can be used to create complicated linguistic constructs through lexical ambiguity. It has been discussed in literature in various forms since 1967, when it appeared in Dmitri Borgmann's *Beyond Language: Adventures in Word and Thought*.



Simplified parse tree:
S = sentence
NP = noun phrase
RC = relative clause
VP = verb phrase
PN = proper noun
N = noun
V = verb

The sentence employs three distinct meanings of the word *buffalo*:

- As an attributive noun (acting as an adjective) to refer to a specific place named Buffalo, such as the city of Buffalo, New York;
- As the verb *to buffalo*, meaning (in American English[1][2]) "to bully, harass, or intimidate" or "to baffle"; and
- As a noun to refer to the animal (either the true buffalo or the bison). The plural is also *buffalo*.

A semantically equivalent form preserving the original word order is: "Buffalonian bison that other Buffalonian bison bully also bully Buffalonian bison."

City of Buffalo, New York

Sentence construction

The sentence is unpunctuated and uses three different readings of the word "buffalo". In order of their first use, these are:

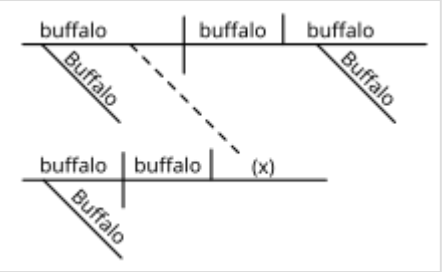
- **a.** a city named Buffalo. This is used as a noun adjunct in the sentence;
- **n.** the noun *buffalo*, an animal, in the plural (equivalent to "buffaloes" or "buffalos"), in order to avoid articles.
- **v.** the verb "buffalo" meaning to outwit, confuse, deceive, intimidate, or baffle.

American bison, colloquially referred to as buffalo

The sentence is syntactically ambiguous; one possible parse (marking each "buffalo" with its part of speech as shown above) is as follows:

Buffalo[a] buffalo[n] Buffalo[a] buffalo[n] buffalo[v] buffalo[v] Buffalo[a] buffalo[n].

When grouped syntactically, this is equivalent to: [(Buffalonian bison) (Buffalonian bison intimidate)] intimidate (Buffalonian bison).



Reed–Kellogg diagram of the sentence

Because the sentence has a restrictive clause, there can be no commas. The relative pronouns "which" or "that" could appear between the second and third words of the sentence, as in *Buffalo buffalo that Buffalo buffalo buffalo buffalo Buffalo buffalo*; when this pronoun is omitted, the relative clause becomes a reduced relative clause.

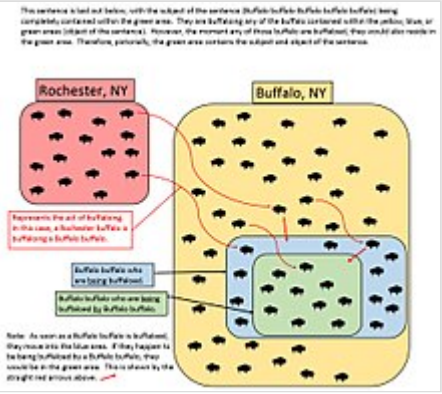
An expanded form of the sentence that preserves the original word order is: "Buffalo bison that other Buffalo bison bully also bully Buffalo bison."

Thus, the parsed sentence claims that bison who *are intimidated or bullied by bison* do themselves *intimidate or bully bison* (at least in the city of Buffalo – implicitly, Buffalo, New York):

1. Buffalo buffalo (animals called "buffalo" from the city of Buffalo) [that] Buffalo buffalo buffalo (that the same kind of animals from the city bully) buffalo Buffalo buffalo (bully these animals from that city).
2. [Those] buffalo(es) from Buffalo [that are intimidated by] buffalo(es) from Buffalo intimidate buffalo(es) from Buffalo.
3. Bison from Buffalo, New York, who are intimidated by other bison in their community in turn intimidate other bison in their community.
4. *The* buffalo *from* Buffalo *who are* buffalo*ed by* buffalo *from* Buffalo buffalo (verb) *other* buffalo *from* Buffalo.
5. Buffalo buffalo (main clause subject) [that] Buffalo buffalo (subordinate clause subject) buffalo (subordinate clause verb) in turn buffalo (main clause verb) Buffalo buffalo (main clause direct object).
6. Buffalo from Buffalo [that] buffalo [from] Buffalo buffalo [in turn] buffalo buffalo [from] Buffalo.

Usage

Thomas Tymoczko has pointed out that there is nothing special about eight "buffalos";[3] any sentence consisting solely of the word "buffalo" repeated any number of times is grammatically correct. The shortest is "Buffalo!", which can be taken as a verbal imperative instruction to bully someone ("[You,] buffalo!") with the implied subject "you" removed,[4]:99–100,104 or, as a noun exclamation, expressing e.g. that a buffalo has been sighted, or as



A diagram explaining the sentence

an adjectival exclamation, e.g. as a response to the question, "where are you from?" Tymoczko uses the sentence as an example illustrating rewrite rules in linguistics.[4]:104–105

Diagram using a comparison to explain the buffalo sentence

Origin

The idea that one can construct a grammatically correct sentence consisting of nothing but repetitions of "buffalo" was independently discovered several times in the 20th century. The earliest known written example, "Buffalo buffalo buffalo buffalo", appears in the original manuscript for Dmitri Borgmann's 1965 book *Language on Vacation*, though the chapter containing it was omitted from the published version.[5] Borgmann recycled some of the material from this chapter, including the "buffalo" sentence, in his 1967 book, *Beyond Language: Adventures in Word and Thought*.[6]:290 In 1972, William J. Rapaport, then a graduate student at Indiana University, came up with versions containing five and ten instances of "buffalo".[7] He later used both versions in his teaching, and in 1992 posted them to the LINGUIST List.[7][8] A sentence with eight consecutive buffalos is featured in Steven Pinker's 1994 book *The Language Instinct* as an example of a sentence that is "seemingly nonsensical" but grammatical. Pinker names his student, Annie Senghas, as the inventor of the sentence.[9]:210

Neither Rapaport, Pinker, nor Senghas were initially aware of the earlier coinages.[7] Pinker learned of Rapaport's earlier example only in 1994, and Rapaport was not informed of Borgmann's sentence until 2006.[7]

Versions of this linguistic oddity can be constructed with other words which similarly simultaneously serve as collective noun, adjective, and verb, some of which need no capitalization (such as "police").[10]

See also

General:

- Antanaclasis
- *Eats, Shoots & Leaves*
- List of linguistic example sentences
- Polyptoton
- Semantic satiation

Other linguistically complex sentences:

- James while John had had had had had had had had had had had a better effect on the teacher
- Lion-Eating Poet in the Stone Den (a Classical Chinese poem in which every syllable is pronounced as *shi*, though with varying tones).
- That that is is that that is not is not is that it it is

Dancing plague of 1518

The **dancing plague of 1518**, or **dance epidemic of 1518** (French: *Épidémie dansante de 1518*), was a case of dancing mania that occurred in Strasbourg, Alsace (modern-day France), in the Holy Roman Empire from July 1518 to September 1518. Somewhere between 50 and 400 people took to dancing for weeks. There are many theories behind the phenomenon, the most popular being stress-induced mass hysteria, suggested by John Waller.[1][2] Other theories include ergot and religious explanations. There is controversy concerning the number of deaths.[3]

Engraving by Hendrik Hondius portraying three people affected by the plague. Work based on original drawing by Pieter Brueghel.

History

Events

The outbreak began in July 1518 when a woman called Frau Troffea began to dance fervently and uncontrollably in a street in Strasbourg. According to Ned Pennant-Rea, "Frau Troffea had started dancing on July 14th on the narrow cobbled street outside her half-timbered home. As far as we can tell she had no musical accompaniment but simply 'began to dance'... some of those who had witnessed her strange performance had begun to mimic her, and within days more than thirty choreomaniacs were in motion, some so monomaniacally that only death would have the power to intervene."[3]

[1] Troffea kept up the constant dancing for a week. Soon, three dozen others joined in.[4] By August, the "dancing plague" had claimed 400 victims.[4] Dancers were beginning to collapse. It is said some even died from a stroke or heart attack.[4] The victim's movements were described as spasmatic with many convulsions and their bodies were left drenched in sweat. Their arms would thrash violently and some noted that their eyes were vacant and expressionless. Blood would pool into their swollen feet and they would eventually bleed into their shoes. Often, there would also be cries for help from the affected. If the victims did not succumb to a heart attack, they would collapse from extreme exhaustion, hunger, and thirst. There were as many as 15 deaths per day during the outbreak's peak, but the final number of fatalities is unknown today.[5] No one knew what caused this reaction, which meant no one understood how to remedy it. By early September, the outbreak began to subside,[6] when the dancers were sent to a mountain shrine to pray for absolution.[4]

Historical documents, including "physician notes, cathedral sermons, local and regional chronicles, and even notes issued by the Strasbourg city council" are clear that the victims danced;[1] it is not known why. Historical sources agree that there was an outbreak of dancing after a single woman started dancing,[7] and the dancing did not seem to die down. It lasted for such a long time that it even attracted the attention

of the authorities; until the council gave up authority to the physicians, who prescribed the afflicted to "dance themselves free of it."[3] There are claims that guild halls were refurbished to accommodate the dancing, as well as musicians and strong people to help keep those dealing with the dancing mania to stay upright.[3] This backfired, and the council was forced to ban public dancing as people danced in fear it was a punishment from Saint Vitus; and to be "free of sin" many joined in on the dancing epidemic.[3] The council went as far as to ban music, as well.[3] Those who danced were then ordered to go to the shrine of Saint Vitus, wore red shoes that were sprinkled with holy water and had painted crosses on the tops and soles.[3] They also had to hold small crosses in their hands; and incense and Latin incantations were part of this "ritual."[3] Apparently "forgiven by Vitus," word was spread of a successful ritual and the Dancing Plague had ended.[3]

Events similar to this are said to have occurred throughout the medieval age including 11th century in Kölbigk, Saxony, where it was believed to be the result of divine judgment.[8] In 15th century Apulia, Italy,[9] a woman was bitten by a tarantula, the venom making her dance convulsively. The only way to cure the bite was to "shimmy" and to have the right sort of music available, which was an accepted remedy by scholars like Athanasius Kircher.[10]

Contemporaneous explanations included demonic possession and overheated blood.[6]

Veracity of deaths

Controversy exists over whether people ultimately danced to death. Some sources claim that for a period the plague killed around fifteen people per day,[2] but the sources of the city of Strasbourg at the time of the events did not mention the number of deaths, or even if there were fatalities. There do not appear to be any sources related to the events that make note of any fatalities.[11] Ned Pennant-Rea also claims that the final death toll is not known, but if the claims of fifteen people dying per day were true then the toll could be "into the hundreds".[3]

The main source for the claim is John Waller, who has written several journal articles on the subject and the book *A Time to Dance, a Time to Die: The Extraordinary Story of the Dancing Plague of 1518*. The sources cited by Waller that mention deaths were all from later accounts of the events. There is also uncertainty around the identity of the initial dancer (either an unnamed woman or "Frau Troffea") and the number of dancers involved (somewhere between 50 and 400). Of the six chronicle accounts, four support Lady Troffea as the first dancer.[8]

Modern theories

Food poisoning

Some believe[6] the dancing could have been brought on by food poisoning caused by the toxic and psychoactive chemical products of ergot fungi (ergotism), which grows commonly on grains (such as rye) used for baking bread. Ergotamine is the main psychoactive product of ergot fungi; it is structurally related to the drug lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD-25) and is the substance from which LSD-25 was originally synthesized. The same fungus has also been implicated in other major historical anomalies, including the Salem witch trials.[12][13]

In *The Lancet*, John Waller argues that "this theory does not seem tenable, since it is unlikely that those poisoned by ergot could have danced for days at a time. Nor would so many people have reacted to its psychotropic chemicals in the same way. The ergotism theory also fails to explain why almost every outbreak occurred somewhere along the Rhine and Moselle rivers, areas linked by water but with quite different climates and crops."[2]

Stress-induced mass hysteria

This could have been an example of fully developed cases of psychogenic movement disorder happening in mass hysteria or mass psychogenic illness, which involves many individuals suddenly exhibiting the same bizarre behavior. The behavior spreads rapidly and broadly in an epidemic pattern.[14] This kind of comportment could have been caused by elevated levels of psychological stress, caused by the ruthless years (even by the rough standards of the early modern period) the people of Alsace were suffering.[2]

Waller speculates that the dancing was "stress-induced psychosis" on a mass level, since the region where the people danced was riddled with starvation and disease, and the inhabitants tended to be superstitious. Seven other cases of dancing plague were reported in the same region during the medieval era.[1]

This psychogenic illness could have created a chorea (from the Greek *khoreia* meaning "to dance"), a situation comprising random and intricate unintentional movements that flit from body part to body part. Diverse choreas (St. Vitus' dance, St. John's dance, and tarantism) were labeled in the Middle Ages referring to the independent epidemics of "dancing mania" that happened in central Europe, particularly at the time of the plague.[15][16][17]

Pop culture and media

The event inspired Jonathan Glazer's 2020 short film *Strasbourg 1518*.[18]

It was the inspiration behind the 2022 choral song "Choreomania" by Florence and the Machine. It was the third track on the album *Dance Fever*, which took its title from the song.[19][20]

The book series *A Collection of Utter Speculation* released a title *The Dancing Plague: A Collection of Utter Speculation* in 2022. It is a fictional account of the events that happened in Strasbourg.[21]

The event is referenced in the 2011 BBC Drama on 4 Radio Play "A Time to Dance", written by Julian Simpson, based on an original idea by Anita Simpson.

The event is referenced in the 2024 song “RATKING 1518”, in both title and lyrics, created by rap duo Grim Salvo.[22][23]

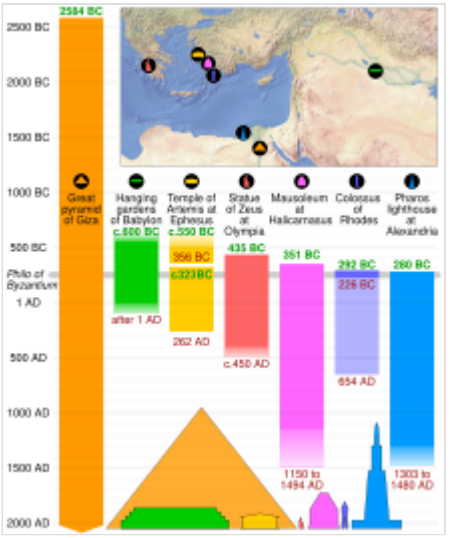
The event is the subject of the song "Days of the Dance" by the folk band 3 Daft Monkeys.

Hanging Gardens of Babylon

The **Hanging Gardens of Babylon** were one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World listed by Hellenic culture. They were described as a remarkable feat of engineering with an ascending series of tiered gardens containing a wide variety of trees, shrubs, and vines, resembling a large green mountain constructed of mud bricks. It was said to have been built in the ancient city of Babylon, near present-day Hillah, Babil province, in Iraq. The Hanging Gardens' name is derived from the Greek word κρεμαστός (*kremastós*, lit. 'overhanging'), which has a broader meaning than the modern English word "hanging" and refers to trees being planted on a raised structure such as a terrace.[1][2][3]

This hand-coloured engraving, probably made in the 19th century after the first excavations in the Assyrian capitals, depicts the fabled Hanging Gardens, with the Tower of Babel in the background.

According to one legend, the Hanging Gardens were built alongside a grand palace known as *The Marvel of Mankind*, by the Neo-Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar II (who ruled between 605 and 562 BC), for his Median wife, Queen Amytis, because she missed the green hills and valleys of her homeland. This was attested to by the Babylonian priest Berossus, writing in about 290 BC, a description that was later quoted by Josephus. The construction of the Hanging Gardens has also been attributed to the legendary queen Semiramis[4] and they have been called the *Hanging Gardens of Semiramis* as an alternative name.[5]



Timeline and map of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, including the Hanging Gardens of Babylon

The Hanging Gardens are the only one of the Seven Wonders for which the location has not been definitively established.[6] There are no extant Babylonian texts that mention the gardens, and no definitive archaeological evidence has been found in Babylon.[7][8] Three theories have been suggested to account for this: first, that they were purely mythical, and the descriptions found in ancient Greek and Roman writings (including those of Strabo, Diodorus Siculus and Quintus Curtius Rufus) represented a romantic ideal of an eastern garden;[9]

second, that they existed in Babylon, but were destroyed sometime around the first century AD;[10][4] and third, that the legend refers to a well-documented garden that the Assyrian King Sennacherib (704–681 BC) built in his capital city of Nineveh on the River Tigris, near the modern city of Mosul.[11][1]

Descriptions in classical literature

There are five principal writers whose descriptions of Babylon exist in some form today. These writers concern themselves with the size of the Hanging Gardens, their overall design and means of irrigation, and why they were built.

Josephus (c. 37–100 AD) quotes a description of the gardens by Berossus, a Babylonian priest of Marduk,[6] whose writing c. 290 BC is the earliest known mention of the gardens.[5] Berossus described the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II and is the only source to credit that king with the construction of the Hanging Gardens.[12][13]

> In this palace he erected very high walls, supported by stone pillars; and by planting what was called a pensile paradise, and replenishing it with all sorts of trees, he rendered the prospect an exact resemblance of a mountainous country. This he did to gratify his queen, because she had been brought up in Media, and was fond of a mountainous situation.[14]

Diodorus Siculus (active c. 60–30 BC) seems to have consulted the 4th century BC texts of both Cleitarchus (a historian of Alexander the Great) and Ctesias of Cnidus. Diodorus ascribes the construction to a "Syrian king". He states that the garden was in the shape of a square, with each side approximately four plethra long. The garden was tiered, with the uppermost gallery being 50 cubits high. The walls, 22 feet thick, were made of brick. The bases of the tiered sections were sufficiently deep to provide root growth for the largest trees, and the gardens were irrigated from the nearby Euphrates.[15]

Hanging gardens of Semiramis, by H. Waldeck

Quintus Curtius Rufus (fl. 1st century AD) probably drew on the same sources as Diodorus.[16] He states that the gardens were located on top of a citadel, which was 20 stadia in circumference. He attributes the building of the gardens to a "Syrian king", again for the reason that his queen missed her homeland.

The account of Strabo (c. 64 BC – 21 AD) possibly based his description on the lost account of Onesicritus from the 4th century BC.[17] He states that the gardens were watered by means of an Archimedes' screw leading to the gardens from the Euphrates river.

The last of the classical sources thought to be independent of the others is *A Handbook to the Seven Wonders of the World* by the paradoxographer Philo of Byzantium, writing in the 4th to 5th century AD (not to be confused with the earlier engineer of the same name).[18] The method of raising water by screw

matches that described by Strabo.[19] Philo praises the engineering and ingenuity of building vast areas of deep soil, which had a tremendous mass, so far above the natural grade of the surrounding land, as well as the irrigation techniques.

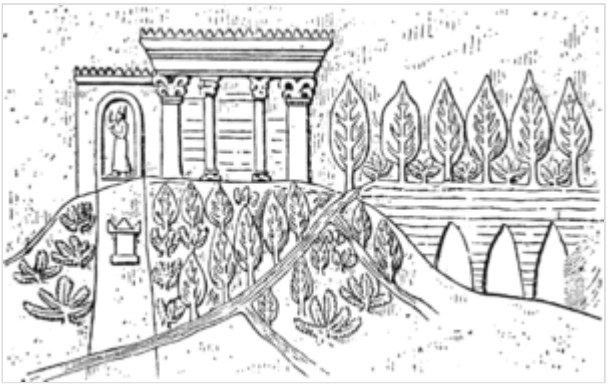
Historical existence

It is unclear whether the Hanging Gardens were an actual construction or a poetic creation, owing to the lack of documentation in contemporaneous Babylonian sources. There is also no mention of Nebuchadnezzar's wife Amyitis (or any other wives), although a political marriage to a Median or Persian would not have been unusual.[20] Many records exist of Nebuchadnezzar's works, yet his long and complete inscriptions do not mention any garden.[21] However, the gardens were said to still exist at the time that later writers described them, and some of these accounts are regarded as deriving from people who had visited Babylon.[2] Herodotus, who describes Babylon in his *Histories*, does not mention the Hanging Gardens,[22] although it could be that the gardens were not yet well known to the Greeks at the time of his visit.[2]

To date, no archaeological evidence has been found at Babylon for the Hanging Gardens.[6] It is possible that evidence exists beneath the Euphrates, which cannot be excavated safely at present. The river flowed east of its current position during the time of Nebuchadnezzar II, and little is known about the western portion of Babylon.[23] Rollinger has suggested that Berossus attributed the Gardens to Nebuchadnezzar for political reasons, and that he had adopted the legend from elsewhere.[24]

Identification with Sennacherib's gardens at Nineveh

Oxford scholar Stephanie Dalley has proposed that the Hanging Gardens of Babylon were actually the well-documented gardens constructed by the Assyrian king Sennacherib (reigned 704 – 681 BC) for his palace at Nineveh; Dalley posits that during the intervening centuries the two sites became confused, and the extensive gardens at Sennacherib's palace were attributed to Nebuchadnezzar II's Babylon.[1] Archaeological excavations have found traces of a vast system of aqueducts attributed to Sennacherib by an inscription on its remains, which Dalley proposes were part of an 80-kilometre (50 mi) series of canals, dams, and aqueducts used to carry water to Nineveh with water-raising screws used to raise it to the upper levels of the gardens.[25]



This copy of a bas relief from the North Palace of Ashurbanipal (669–631 BC) at Nineveh shows a luxurious garden watered by an aqueduct.

Dalley bases her arguments on recent developments in the analysis of contemporary Akkadian inscriptions. Her main points are:[26]

- The name *Babylon*, meaning "Gate of the Gods",[27] was the name given to several Mesopotamian cities.[28] Sennacherib renamed the city gates of Nineveh after gods,[29]

which suggests that he wished his city to be considered "a Babylon".

- Only Josephus names Nebuchadnezzar as the king who built the gardens; although Nebuchadnezzar left many inscriptions, none mentions any garden or engineering works.[30] Diodorus Siculus and Quintus Curtius Rufus specify a "Syrian" king. By contrast, Sennacherib left written descriptions,[31] and there is archaeological evidence of his water engineering.[32] His grandson Assurbanipal pictured the mature garden on a sculptured wall panel in his palace.[33]
- Sennacherib called his new palace and garden "a wonder for all peoples". He describes the making and operation of screws to raise water in his garden.[34]
- The descriptions of the classical authors fit closely to these contemporary records. Before the Battle of Gaugamela in 331 BC Alexander the Great camped for four days near the aqueduct at Jerwan.[35] The historians who travelled with him would have had ample time to investigate the enormous works around them, recording them in Greek. These first-hand accounts have not survived into modern times, but were quoted by later Greek writers.

King Sennacherib's garden was well-known not just for its beauty – a year-round oasis of lush green in a dusty summer landscape – but also for the marvelous feats of water engineering that maintained the garden.[36] There was a tradition of Assyrian royal garden building. King Ashurnasirpal II (883–859 BC) had created a canal, which cut through the mountains. Fruit tree orchards were planted. Also mentioned were pines, cypresses and junipers; almond trees, date trees, ebony, rosewood, olive, oak, tamarisk, walnut, terebinth, ash, fir, pomegranate, pear, quince, fig, and grapes. A sculptured wall panel of Assurbanipal shows the garden in its maturity. One original panel[37] and the drawing of another[38] are held by the British Museum, although neither is on public display. Several features mentioned by the classical authors are discernible on these contemporary images.

Of Sennacherib's palace, he mentions the massive limestone blocks that reinforce the flood defences. Parts of the palace were excavated by Austin Henry Layard in the mid-19th century. His citadel plan shows contours which would be consistent with Sennacherib's garden, but its position has not been confirmed. The area has been used as a military base in recent times, making it difficult to investigate further.

Assyrian wall relief showing gardens in Nineveh

The irrigation of such a garden demanded an upgraded water supply to the city of Nineveh. The canals stretched over 50 kilometres (31 mi) into the mountains. Sennacherib was proud of the technologies he had employed and describes them in some detail on his inscriptions. At the headwater of Bavian (Khinnis)[39] his inscription mentions automatic sluice gates. An enormous aqueduct crossing the valley at Jerwan was constructed of over two million dressed stones. It used stone arches and waterproof cement.[40] On it is written:

> Sennacherib king of the world king of Assyria. Over a great distance I had a watercourse directed to the environs of Nineveh, joining together the waters.... Over steep-sided valleys I spanned an aqueduct of white limestone blocks, I made those waters flow over it.

Sennacherib claimed that he had built a "Wonder for all Peoples", and said he was the first to deploy a new casting technique in place of the "lost-wax" process for his monumental (30 tonne) bronze castings. He was able to bring the water into his garden at a high level because it was sourced from further up in

the mountains, and he then raised the water even higher by deploying his new water screws. This meant he could build a garden that towered above the landscape with large trees on the top of the terraces – a stunning artistic effect that surpassed those of his predecessors.

Plants

The gardens, as depicted in artworks, featured blossoming flowers, ripe fruit, burbling waterfalls and terraces exuberant with rich foliage. Based on Babylonian literature, tradition, and the environmental characteristics of the area, some of the following plants may have been found in the gardens:[41]

Date palms are a common tree species in Babylon.

- Olive (*Olea europaea*)
- Quince (*Cydonia oblonga*)
- Common pear (*Pyrus communis*)
- Fig (*Ficus carica*)
- Almond (*Prunus dulcis*)
- Common grape vine (*Vitis vinifera*)
- Date palm (*Phoenix dactylifera*)
- Athel tamarisk (*Tamarix aphylla*)
- Mt. Atlas mastic tree (*Pistacia atlantica*)

Imported plant varieties that may have been present in the gardens include the cedar, cypress, ebony, pomegranate, plum, rosewood, terebinth, juniper, oak, ash tree, fir, myrrh, walnut, and willow.[42] Some of these plants were suspended over the terraces and draped over its walls with arches underneath.

The "Garden Party" relief depicting Ashurbanipal with his wife seated under a pergola of climbing grapevines with hanging grapes, also small birds, surrounded with fruiting date palms and pine trees. The head of a defeated king hangs between the 1st and 2nd figures at left. North Palace, Nineveh, c. 645 BC.

See also

- Folkewall
- Green wall

London Beer Flood

The **London Beer Flood** was an accident at Meux & Co's Horse Shoe Brewery, London, on 17 October 1814. It took place when one of the 22-foot-tall (6.7 m) wooden vats of fermenting porter burst. The escaping liquid dislodged the valve of another vessel and destroyed several large barrels: between 128,000 and 323,000 imperial gallons (580,000–1,470,000 L; 154,000–388,000 US gal) of beer were released in total.

Horse Shoe Brewery, London, c. 1800

The resulting wave of porter destroyed the back wall of the brewery and swept into an area of slum dwellings known as the St Giles rookery. Eight people were killed, five of them mourners at the wake being held by an Irish family for a two-year-old boy. The coroner's inquest returned a verdict that the eight had lost their lives "casually, accidentally and by misfortune".[1] The brewery was nearly bankrupted by the event; it avoided collapse after a rebate from HM Excise on the lost beer. The brewing industry gradually stopped using large wooden vats after the accident. The brewery moved in 1921, and the Dominion Theatre is now where the brewery used to stand. Meux & Co went into liquidation in 1961.

Background

In the early nineteenth century the Meux Brewery was one of the two largest in London, along with Whitbread.[2] In 1809 Sir Henry Meux purchased the Horse Shoe Brewery, at the junction of Tottenham Court Road and Oxford Street.[3] Meux's father, Sir Richard Meux, had previously co-owned the Griffin Brewery in Liquor-Pond Street (now Clerkenwell Road), in which he had constructed the largest vat in London, capable of holding 20,000 imperial barrels.[4][a]

"A Scene in St Giles's" – the St Giles rookery, c. 1850

Henry Meux emulated his father's large vat,[4] and constructed a wooden vessel 22 feet (6.7 m) tall and capable of holding 18,000 imperial barrels.[b] Eighty long tons (eighty-one metric tons) of iron hoops were used to strengthen the vat.[5][6] Meux brewed only porter, a dark beer that was first brewed in London and was the most popular alcoholic drink in the capital.[7][8] Meux & Co brewed 102,493 imperial barrels in the twelve months up to July 1812.[9][c] Porter was left in the large vessels to mature for several months, or up to a year for the best quality versions.[8]

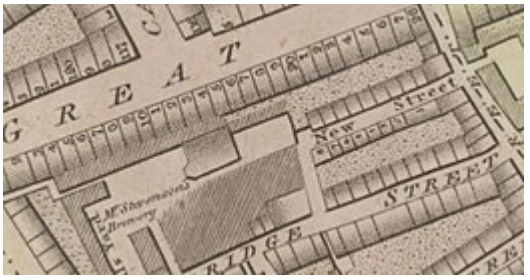
At the rear of the brewery ran New Street, a small cul-de-sac that joined on to Dyott Street;[d] this was within the St Giles rookery.[10][11][12] The rookery, which covered an area of eight acres (3.2 ha), "was a perpetually decaying slum seemingly always on the verge of social and economic collapse", according to Richard Kirkland, the professor of Irish literature.[13] Thomas Beames, the preacher of Westminster St James, and author of the 1852 work *The Rookeries of London: Past, Present and Prospective*, described the St Giles rookery as "a rendezvous of the scum of society";[14] the area had been the inspiration for William Hogarth's 1751 print *Gin Lane*.[15]

17 October 1814

At around 4:30 in the afternoon of 17 October 1814, George Crick, Meux's storehouse clerk, saw that one of the 700-pound (320 kg) iron bands around a vat had slipped. The 22-foot (6.7 m) tall vessel was filled to within four inches (ten centimetres) of the top with 3,555 imperial barrels of ten-month-old porter.[16][17][e] As the bands slipped off the vats two or three times a year, Crick was unconcerned. He told his supervisor about the problem, but was told "that no harm whatever would ensue".[18] Crick was told to write a note to Mr Young, one of the partners of the brewery, to have it fixed later.[19]

Location of the Horse Shoe brewhouse

The Horse Shoe Brewery (centre), at the junction of Tottenham Court Road and Oxford Street



Close-up, showing the location of New Street, which was a cul-de-sac by 1814

An hour after the hoop fell off, Crick was standing on a platform thirty feet (9.1 m) from the vat, holding the note to Mr Young, when the vessel, with no indication, burst.[20] The force of the liquid's release knocked the stopcock from a neighbouring vat, which also began discharging its contents; several hogsheads of porter were destroyed, and their contents added to the flood.[1][f] Between 128,000 and 323,000 imperial gallons[g] were released.[16][h] The force of the liquid destroyed the rear wall of the brewery; it was 25 feet (7.6 m) high and two and a half bricks thick.[20] Some of the bricks from the back wall were knocked upwards, and fell onto the roofs of the houses in the nearby Great Russell Street.[17]

A wave of porter some 15 feet (4.6 m) high swept into New Street, where it destroyed two houses[6][17] and badly damaged two others.[27][28] In one of the houses a four-year-old girl, Hannah Bamfield, was having tea with her mother and another child. The wave of beer swept the mother and the second child into the street; Hannah was killed.[i] In the second destroyed house, a wake was being held by an Irish family for a two-year-old boy; Anne Saville, the boy's mother, and four other mourners (Mary Mulvey and her three-year-old son, Elizabeth Smith and Catherine Butler) were killed.[29] Eleanor Cooper, a 14-year-old servant of the publican of the Tavistock Arms in Great Russell Street, died when she was buried under the brewery's collapsed wall while washing pots in the pub's yard.[1] Another child, Sarah Bates,

was found dead in another house in New Street.[30] The land around the building was low-lying and flat. With insufficient drainage, the beer flowed into cellars, many of which were inhabited, and people were forced to climb on furniture to avoid drowning.[17][31]

All those in the brewery survived, although three workmen had to be rescued from the rubble;[1][16] the superintendent and one of the workers were taken to Middlesex Hospital, along with three others.[19][22]

17 to 19 October

Stories later arose of hundreds of people collecting the beer, mass drunkenness and a death from alcohol poisoning a few days later.[32] The brewing historian Martyn Cornell states that newspapers of the time made no reference to the revelry, or of the later death; instead, the newspapers reported that the crowds were well-behaved.[23] Cornell points out that the popular press of the time did not like the immigrant Irish population that lived in St Giles, so if there had been any misbehaviour, it would have been reported.[6]

The area surrounding the rear of the brewery showed a "scene of desolation [that] presents a most awful and terrific appearance, equal to that which fire or earthquake may be supposed to occasion".[33] Watchmen at the brewery charged people to view the remains of the destroyed beer vats, and several hundred spectators came to view the scene.[23] The mourners killed in the cellar were given their own wake at The Ship public house in Bainbridge Street. The other bodies were laid out in a nearby yard by their families; the public came to see them and donated money for their funerals.[17] Collections were taken up more widely for the families.[34]

Coroner's inquest

The coroner's inquest was held at the Workhouse of the St Giles parish on 19 October 1814; George Hodgson, the coroner for Middlesex, oversaw proceedings.[35] The details of the victims were read out as:

- Eleanor Cooper, age 14
- Mary Mulvey, age 30
- Thomas Murry, age 3 (Mary Mulvey's son)
- Hannah Bamfield, age 4 years 4 months
- Sarah Bates, age 3 years 5 months
- Ann Saville, age 60
- Elizabeth Smith, age 27
- Catherine Butler, age 65.[1]

Hodgson took the jurors to the scene of the events, and they viewed the brewery and bodies before evidence was taken from witnesses.[35] The first witness was George Crick, who had seen the event happen in full; his brother was one of the men who had been injured at the brewery. Crick said that hoops on the vats failed three or four times a year, but without any previous problems. Accounts were also heard

from Richard Hawse—the landlord of the Tavistock Arms, whose barmaid had been killed in the accident—and several others. The jury returned a verdict that the eight had lost their lives "casually, accidentally and by misfortune".[1][35]

Later

As the coroner's inquest reached a verdict of an act of God, Meux & Co did not have to pay compensation.[17] Nevertheless, the disaster—the lost porter, the damage to the buildings and the replacement of the vat—cost the company £23,000. After a private petition to Parliament they recovered about £7,250 from HM Excise, saving them from bankruptcy.[3][j]

The Horse Shoe Brewery went back into business soon afterwards,[23] but closed in 1921 when Meux moved their production to the Nine Elms brewery in Wandsworth, which they had purchased in 1914.[37] At the time of its closure the site covered 103,000 square feet (9,600 m^2).[38] The brewery was demolished the following year and the Dominion Theatre was later built on the site.[16][39] Meux & Co went into liquidation in 1961.[37] As a result of the accident, large wooden tanks were phased out across the brewing industry and replaced with lined concrete vessels.[16][25]

See also

- List of non-water floods

Notes and references

Notes

a. 20,000 imperial barrels equates to 3,300,000 L; 720,000 imp gal; 860,000 US gal.
b. 18,000 imperial barrels equates to 2,900,000 L; 650,000 imp gal; 780,000 US gal
c. 102,493 imperial barrels equates to 16,774,000 L; 3,690,000 imp gal; 4,431,000 US gal.
d. New Street was demolished as part of redevelopment in the twentieth century; Dyott Street still runs along approximately the same course.[10][11]
e. 3,555 imperial barrels equates to 581,800 L; 128,000 imp gal; 153,700 US gal.
f. A hogshead equates to 54 imperial gallons.[21]
g. 128,000 to 323,000 imperial gallons equates to 580,000–1,470,000 L; 1,020,000–2,580,000 imp pt; 154,000–388,000 US gal.
h. Sources disagree on the amount of beer released. Figures include:
    - 128,000 imp gal;[22]

Micronation

The Principality of Sealand is a micronation located on a seafort off the coast of the United Kingdom.

A **micronation** is a political entity whose representatives claim that they belong to an independent nation or sovereign state, but which lacks legal recognition by any sovereign state. Micronations are classified separately from de facto states and quasi-states; they are also not considered to be autonomous or self-governing as they lack the legal basis in international law for their existence. The activities of micronations are almost always trivial enough to be ignored rather than disputed by the established nations whose territory they claim—referred to in micronationalism as *macronations*. Several micronations have issued coins, flags, postage stamps, passports, medals and other state-related items, some as a source of revenue. Motivations for the creation of micronations include theoretical experimentation, political protest, artistic expression, personal entertainment and the conduct of criminal activity. The study of micronationalism is known as **micropatriology**[1] or **micropatrology**.[2][a]

Although several historical states have been retroactively called micronations, the concept was formulated in the 1970s, with a particular influence from the International Micropatrological Society. Micronationalism saw several developments thereafter, with several micronations being founded in Australia in the 1970s and Japan in the 1980s. As a result of the emergence of the World Wide Web in the mid-1990s, micronationalism lost much of its traditionally eccentric anti-establishment sentiment in favour of more hobbyist perspectives, and the number of exclusively online or merely simulation-based micronations expanded dramatically. This has allowed several intermicronational organisations to form, as well as allowing for many diplomatic summits to take place between micronations since the 2000s, including the biennial MicroCon convention.

Definition

Micronations are aspirant states that claim independence but lack legal recognition by world governments or major international organisations.[5][6] Micronations are classified separately from states with limited recognition and quasi-states, nor are they considered to be autonomous or self-governing as they lack the legal basis in international law for their existence.[7] While some are secessionist in nature, most micronations are widely regarded as sovereignty projects that instead seek to mimic a sovereign state rather than to achieve international recognition, and their activities are almost always trivial enough to be ignored rather than challenged by the established nations whose territory they claim[8][9]—referred to as a *macronation* in micronationalism.[10] Some micronations admit to having no intention of actually becoming internationally recognised as sovereign.[11] Geographically, most micronations are very small, are often the outgrowth of a single individual, rely on their sovereign state to some extent, and mimic sovereign states by creating their own government, legislation, proclaiming national symbols, holding national elections and engaging in diplomacy with other micronations.[12][13] While most micronations

claim sovereignty over physical territory, others are based solely around the Internet or do not claim sovereignty at all, a hobbyist paradigm of micronationalism that arose with the rise of the Internet from the mid-1990s onwards.[14][15][16]

In 2021, legal academics Harry Hobbs and George Williams, in their *Micronations and the Search for Sovereignty*, defined micronations as "self-declared nations that perform and mimic acts of sovereignty, and adopt many of the protocols of nations, but lack a foundation in domestic and international law for their existence and are not recognised as nations in domestic or international forums".[17]

Online dictionary *Collins English Dictionary*, published by HarperCollins, gives a similar definition: "An entity, typically existing only on the internet or within the private property of its members, that lays claim to sovereign status as an independent nation, but which is unrecognized by real nations."[18]

History

Retrospective micronations

Several historical political entities have been retroactively described as micronations in academic and journalistic works, including the Islands of Refreshment (existed 1811–16),[19] Kingdom of Araucanía and Patagonia (since 1860),[20] State of Scott (1861–1986),[21] Republic of Parva Domus Magna Quies (since 1878),[22] and the more contemporary Kingdom of Elleore (since 1944),[22] Republic of Saugeais (since 1947),[23] Principality of Outer Baldonia (1949–1973)[24] and Sultanate of M'Simbati (1959–fl. 1964).[25]

Libertarian micronations and seasteading projects: 1964–1972

Several entities that can be considered micronations by contemporary standards were established throughout the 1960s and early 1970s and based on ideals of libertarianism and many of them created via seasteading.

Republic of Rose Island, before its destruction

New Atlantis was founded in 1964 by writer Leicester Hemingway, claiming a bamboo raft that he had constructed with steel, iron piping and rock. Hemingway had it towed 9.7 kilometres (6.0 mi) off the coast of Jamaica and argued that it was technically an island and fully sovereign based on the Guano Islands Act of 1856. Although Hemingway had plans to expand the raft, it was destroyed within a few years by a cyclone, and the project was completely abandoned in 1973.[26][27][28] In 1967, Paddy Roy Bates squatted on HM Fort Roughs, an offshore platform in the North Sea used during World War II approximately 12 kilometres (7.5 mi) off the coast of the United Kingdom.[29] Bates had intended to broadcast a pirate radio station from the platform, however ultimately never did so.[30] He instead declared the independence of Fort Roughs and declared it the Principality of Sealand.[29][30] Bates died in 2012, and Michael Bates has since succeeded him as Prince of Sealand.[31]

Operation Atlantis was a project started in 1968 by Werner Stiefel, aiming to establish a new, libertarian nation in international waters via seasteading.[32] The operation launched a ferrocement boat on the Hudson River in December 1971, piloting it to an area near the Bahamas with the intent to permanently anchor it as their territory.[33] Upon reaching its destination, however, it sank in a hurricane.[34] After a number of subsequent failed attempts to construct a habitable sea platform and achieve sovereign status, the project was abandoned in 1976.[35] The Republic of Rose Island was an artificial platform originally constructed as a tourist attraction in the Adriatic Sea in 1968. However, Italian architect Giorgio Rosa soon declared it sovereign.[36] The micronation had its own currency, a post office and commercial establishments. In 1969, the Italian Navy used explosives to destroy the facility, claiming it was a ploy to raise money from tourists while avoiding national taxation.[37] The Republic of Minerva was a libertarian project that succeeded in building a small artificial island on the Minerva Reefs in 1972 by importing sand.[38] It was invaded by troops from Tonga that same year, who annexed it before destroying the island.[36] During its brief existence, Minerva was a media sensation.[39]

The Republic of Minerva was a libertarian project that succeeded in building an artificial island in 1972 by importing sand

Conceptualisation

As of January 1973, the Office of the Geographer of the United States Department of State had a file cabinet for "countries which are only partially real", which included the Kingdom of Humanity, Outer Baldonia, Minerva and the Sovereign Military Order of Malta—not a micronation[40]—among others. Writer Philip J. Hilts added, "We know the Eastern bloc, the Western bloc, and the Third World nations. But there is another universe of nations which exist apart from the familiar countries."[41] The International Micropatrological Society (IMS), an American learned society and research institute, was founded in 1973 and dedicated to the study of micronations, a discipline it named *micropatrology*.[42][43][44] By 1976, it had documents pertaining to 128 micronations and similar political entities.[45] The earliest attested use of *micronation* in its current meaning appeared on 28 March 1976 in an article by *the New York Times* about the IMS.[45] The first use of *micronation* in a book was in an eponymous dedicated section of the 1978 *The People's Almanac#2* by David Wallechinsky and Irving Wallace.[46] In 1979, the first book about micronations, *How to Start Your Own Country*, was published by Erwin S. Strauss.[47] The IMS contributed considerably to the work.[48] However, the word *micronation* is notably absent from the book. A second edition of the work was published in 1984 by Loompanics, followed in 1999 by a third edition published by Paladin Press.[47] According to the Yearbook of International Organizations, the IMS was disestablished in 1988.[49]

Initial developments in Australia: 1970–1981

Australia has a disproportionate number of micronations compared to other countries.[50][51] The first micronation founded within Australia was the Principality of Hutt River in 1970. It was declared independent by farmer Leonard Casley over a dispute concerning wheat production quotas.[52] In 2017, the Supreme Court of Western Australia ordered that Casley pay $2.7 million in unpaid tax, and that his son Arthur Casley pay $242,000 in unpaid tax.[53] Casley abdicated in 2017 in favour of his son Graeme.[52] Leonard died in 2019, and Hutt River dissolved the following year amidst continued disputes with the Australian Taxation Office as well as the financial impact caused by the COVID-19

Entrance to the Principality of Hutt River (formerly Hutt River Province), a micronation founded in Australia

pandemic.[54] In 1976, the Province of Bumbunga was declared by Alec Brackstone in response to the 1975 Australian constitutional crisis. Brackstone, an ardent British monarchist, became alarmed by what he saw as a drift away from the Australian system of constitutional monarchy toward outright republicanism. Thus, to ensure that at least one portion of Australia would remain loyal to the British Crown, Bumbunga was declared.[55][56]

The Sovereign State of Aeterna Lucina was proclaimed in 1978 by German migrant Paul Neuman. Aeterna Lucina came to public attention in 1990 when Neuman faced fraud charges in the New South Wales court system relating to land sale offences; the case was abandoned in 1992.[57] In 1979, the Independent State of Rainbow Creek was declared by Thomas Barnes in protest of alleged incompetence by the Government of Victoria in regards to the flooding of his and others' properties.[58] He was inspired by Hutt River.[59] The Grand Duchy of Avram was established in Tasmania in the early 1980s by politician John Charlton Rudge, and issues its own banknotes.[50] In recognition of his status, Rudge legally changed his name to John the Duke of Avram.[60] In 1981, the Empire of Atlantium was founded in Sydney as a non-territorial global government based on the ideals of secularism, progressivism and liberalism. Among the causes Atlantium supports are the right to unrestricted international freedom of movement, the right to abortion, and the right to assisted suicide.[61][62]

Micronational community in Japan: 1981–1991

In 1981, drawing on a news story about Hemingway's New Atlantis, novelist Hisashi Inoue wrote a 700-page work of magic realism, *Kirikirijin*, about a village that secedes from Japan and proclaims its bumpkinish, marginalized dialect its national language, and its subsequent war of independence. This single-handedly inspired a large number of real-world Japanese villages, mostly in the northern regions, to declare independence, generally as a move to raise awareness of their unique culture and crafts for urban Japanese who saw village life as backwards and uncultured. These micronations, known as mini-independent countries (Japanese: ミニ独立国, romanized: *mini dokuritsu koku*),[63][64] held intermicronational summits, and some of them formed confederations and intermicronational organisations. The Ginko Federation held an intermicronational Olympic games in 1986. However, the economic impact of the Japanese asset price bubble in 1991 ended the boom. Many of the villages were forced to merge with larger cities, and the micronations and confederations were generally dissolved.[65][66][67]

Protest micronations: 1980s

The 1980s saw the establishment of several micronational entities in protest.

The Free Republic of Wendland was a protest camp established in Gorleben, West Germany, in 1980 in order to protest against the establishment of a nuclear waste dump at the site. The residents created a border checkpoint and built a temporary village with more than 100 huts, ranging from elaborate round houses to tents. After 33 days, the local police moved in and evicted the camp.[68][69] Also in 1980, the Independent State of Aramoana was declared by residents of the eponymous settlement during the Save Aramoana Campaign, which was opposed to the proposed construction of an aluminium smelter at

Aramoana in New Zealand.[70] This was because the project called for the destruction of the villages of Aramoana and Te Ngaru, and also threatened a local wildlife reserve. The project was ultimately abandoned in the early 1980s, and the micronation of Aramoana peacefully reintegrated into New Zealand.[71]

The Conch Republic was founded by local residents of the Florida Keys in 1982 after the United States Border Patrol set up a roadblock and inspection point on one of the only two roads connecting the Florida Keys with the mainland. The Key West City Council complained repeatedly about the inconvenience, claiming that it hurt the Keys' tourism industry. Though the roadblock was soon removed, the claim to sovereignty of the Conch Republic has persisted as a tongue-in-cheek venture meant to bolster tourism.[72]

In 1986, the Kingdom of North Dumpling was declared by inventor Dean Kamen after a denial from local officials to build his own wind turbine on North Dumpling Island in Long Island Sound, which Kamen privately owns. Kamen wrote his own constitution and created a flag, currency and national anthem for the micronation.[73] In 1992, despite still being recognised as part of New York State in the United States, Kamen was able to leverage his personal relationship with then-president George H. W. Bush to sign an unofficial non-aggression pact.[74]

Artistic micronations: 1990s

Several conceptual art projects with micronational claims arose in the 1990s, usually as a means to challenge the idea of statehood.[75]

In 1991, Neue Slowenische Kunst (NSK), a Slovenian political art collective, declared independence. NSK describes itself as a "State in Time", claiming no territory in order to be a "stateless state".[75] Elgaland-Vargaland is a conceptual art project founded in 1992 by Swedish artists Carl Michael von Hausswolff and Leif Elggren. According to them, everyone who dies is automatically granted citizenship. Among Elgaland-Vargaland's territorial claims include graveyards, people's mental states and "the distance between high tide and low tide" of France.[76][77] They also claim to operate embassies around the world.[78] In 1996, Swedish artist Lars Vilks proclaimed the Royal Republic of Ladonia as a result of a court battle between local authorities over Vilks's illegal construction of two sculptures in the natural reserve of Kullaberg in southern Sweden. Ladonia's claim of independence has since persisted following Vilks's death in 2021, with Carolyn Shelby serving as Queen since 2011.[79] In 1997, the neighbourhood of Užupis in Vilnius, Lithuania declared tongue-in-cheek independence as a republic consisting of laidback artists.[80]

Effects of the Internet and media attention

In the mid-1990s, the emerging popularity of the World Wide Web made it possible for anyone to create their own virtual state-like entity with relative ease,[15][81] and many micronations launched their own websites.[14] As a result, micronationalism lost much of its traditionally eccentric anti-establishment sentiment in favour of more hobbyist perspectives, and the number of exclusively online or merely simulation-based micronations expanded dramatically.[82] Several intermicronational organisations were also established,[83] with the League of Secessionist States, originally founded in 1980 by the Kingdom of Talossa,[84] and the United Micronations being at the forefront.[15] The French Institute of Micropatrology (French: *l'Institut français de micropatrologie*) was founded in 1996 by Swiss academic

Fabrice O'Driscoll to study this phenomenon.[14][85] Other online micronational services during the 1990s included MicroWorld, a monthly micronational magazine,[14] and alt.politics.micronations, a Usenet newsgroup dedicated to discussions regarding micronationalism.[86] In 2000, O'Driscoll authored *Ils ne siègent pas à l'ONU: revue de quelques micro-Etats, micro-nations et autres entités éphémères* (They do not sit at the UN: a review of some micro-states, micro-nations and other ephemeral entities), which details over 600 micronations.[3]

A marker along the Republic of Molossia's claimed border with Nevada

In 2000, the Republic of Molossia and the erstwhile Kingdom of TorHavn hosted an Intermicronational Olympic Games online to coincide with the 2000 Summer Olympics.[87] Six micronations competed and were asked to record their performances then report it to a Molossian message board.[88] In 2003, the *First Summit of Micronations* summit commenced in Helsinki, Finland, coinciding with a performance art festival called Amorph!03. Six micronations were represented.[89] An art exhibition exhibiting various micronational miscellanea, *We Could Have Invited Everyone*, occurred in 2004 and 2005 at the Reg Vardy Gallery, University of Sunderland, England and Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York City, United States respectively.[90][91] The items were featured alongside artwork by artists including Yoko Ono and Nina Katchadourian.[91][92] Both exhibitions coincided with an intermicronational summit.[93] In 2005, the six-part BBC comedy-documentary series *How to Start Your Own Country* aired on BBC Two, in which comedian Danny Wallace attempts to create his own country in his apartment in Bow, London. The micronation he created was eventually named the Kingdom of Lovely.[94] The following year, the travel guide company Lonely Planet published a light-hearted guide to numerous micronations titled *Micronations: The Lonely Planet Guide to Home-Made Nations*.[95][96]

In 2007, two self-proclaimed princesses of the Sunda Democratic Empire, sisters Puteri Lamia Roro Wiranata and Puteri Fathia Reza, were detained by Malaysian immigration authorities for attempting to enter from Brunei using diplomatic passports from the Sunda Empire. They claimed to be the princesses of the historical Sunda Kingdom and that their parents were in exile.[97][98] In early 2008, they were freed by the Sessions Court, but maintained their claim of Sundan citizenship, thus making them ineligible for deportation to Indonesia. The Malaysian authorities subsequently deemed them stateless individuals, and they were interned at an immigration depot under supervision of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.[99][100]

2010s

In 2010, the documentary film *How to Start Your Own Country*, directed by Jody Shapiro, was screened as part of the 35th Toronto International Film Festival.[101] The documentary explored various micronations around the world and included an analysis of the concept of statehood, seasteading and citizenship.[101][102] The film was inspired by Erwin Strauss' eponymous book.[103] Also that same year, an intermicronational summit, PoliNation 2010, was held at Dangar Island in Sydney, Australia. It was organised by Judy Lattas of Macquarie University, Princess Paula of the Principality of Snake Hill and George Cruickshank of the Empire of Atlantium.[104][105] Between 2013 and 2014, two Aboriginal

Australian nations declared independence from Australia as part of the concept of Australian Aboriginal sovereignty—first the Murrawarri Republic, comprising the Muruwari, in 2013, and the Sovereign Yidindji Government, comprising the Yidindji, in 2014.[106][107][108] In both cases, the declarations of independence went wholly unrecognised by the Government of Australia.[109][110]

In 2015, the first convention of the biannual MicroCon was held in Anaheim, California, United States. Hosted by the Republic of Molossia, several presentations were held by micronationalists regarding various topics in micronationalism.[111][112][113] The *Organisation de la microfrancophonie*, a French intermicronational organisation, was founded in 2015.[114] The organisation organised its first summit in 2016, hosted by the Principality of Aigues-Mortes.[115] In 2018, the Principality of Islandia was established by two individuals aiming to build a crowdfunded micronation.[116] Successfully purchasing the uninhabited Coffee Caye in the Caribbean Sea off the coast of Belize in 2019, Prime Minister of Belize John Briceño dismissed the project in 2022, calling them "stupid" and stating "We will never allow anybody to have their own country within this country [Belize] - what a stupid thing. If you stupid enough to pay a lot of money to buy [a] piece of land, good for you."[117]

2020s

During the COVID-19 pandemic that began in 2020, several micronations imposed their own restrictions, mimicking countries.[118] Some inactive Internet-based micronations also returned to activity as people were commanded to stay home and quarantine.[119] In 2020, Netflix released the film *Rose Island*, based on the story of engineer Giorgio Rosa and the Republic of Rose Island.[120] In 2021, academics Harry Hobbs and George Williams published *Micronations and the Search for Sovereignty*, a book exploring various aspects of micronationalism.[121] It was published by Cambridge University Press.[122] A follow-up book on micronations by Hobbs and Williams, entitled *How to Rule Your Own Country: The Weird and Wonderful World of Micronations*, was published in 2022 by the University of New South Wales Press.[123] Also in 2022, illusionist Uri Geller purchased Lamb, an uninhabited island off the coast of Scotland and declared it independent as the Republic of Lamb. Geller offers citizenship, with proceeds going to Save a Child's Heart, an Israeli charity.[124]

Territorial claims

While most micronations claim land they can administer, often private property, some have made claims to uninhabitable tracts of land. For instance, some micronations have claimed Bir Tawil in Africa and Marie Byrd Land in West Antarctica, lands which are *terra nullius*—unclaimed by any other sovereign state.[127][128] Several others have also made claims to other portions of Antarctica. Examples are the Grand Duchy of Westarctica and Grand Duchy of Flandrensis.[129] However, due to Antartica's remoteness, no micronation has yet to establish a permanent residence on the continent.[130] On the other hand, at least one micronationalist has physically reached Bir Tawil;[131] in June 2014, Virginian farmer Jeremiah Heaton travelled to the area and proclaimed the Kingdom of North Sudan. Heaton stated that he claimed the territory in order to fulfil a promise to his daughter to make her a princess, however Heaton has appeared to have other motivations, offering several initiatives—such as the implementation of a national currency and the construction of an international airport and capital city—via crowdfunding.[132][133]

Other micronational claims have been made to small pockets on the west bank of the Danube between Serbia and Croatia. Some micronationalists argue that the land is *terra nullius* because Croatia states the pockets are Serbian, whilst Serbia makes no claims on the land.[134] However, the Croatian Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs has rejected these claims, stating that the differing border claims between Serbia and Croatia do not involve *terra nullius* and are not subject to occupation by a third party.[135] The most prominent example is the Free Republic of Liberland, which was proclaimed in April 2015 by Czech right-libertarian politician and activist Vít Jedlička, and claims the largest pocket, Gornja Siga.[136][126] The land lacks infrastructure and lies on the floodplain of the Danube.[137]

Many micronations claim private property. Wrythe, the capital of the Empire of Austenasia, is a house in Carshalton, London[125]

The micronation project Liberland has claimed a piece of land it considers *terra nullius* due to technicalities in a border dispute between Croatia and Serbia.[126]

Other claims

Some micronations have attempted to establish themselves in international waters—parts of the sea that cannot be claimed by any sovereign state—by seasteading. This involves the creation of permanent dwellings at sea. Some micronations are associated with the Seasteading Institute, a non-profit organisation formed to facilitate the establishment of these seasteads.[102][138][139]

The Space Kingdom of Asgardia, founded in October 2016, claims an artificial satellite that orbited the Earth.[140][141] Named Asgardia-1, the two-unit CubeSat was successfully launched by Orbital ATK in November 2017 as part of an International Space Station resupply mission.[142] Asgardia-1 reportedly re-entered the atmosphere in September 2022.[143] The Nation of Celestial Space claims all of outer space,[144] whilst the Empire of Angyalistan lays claim to garbage patches around the world's oceans in protest against their existence.[145]

Other claimed micronations may fit more into a cultural category were territorial claims are not as easily defined such as Aynvaul, what appears to be an Irish-American and Irish language revival micronation based in or around Long Island, New York[146] and the Atlanta, Georgia based Kingdom of Ruritania[147][148] based on the fictional country of Ruritania from Anthony Hope's Prisoner of Zenda[149], the latter of which hosted MicroCon 2017 in Atlanta, Georgia.[150]

Functions as a sovereign state

Micronations function in the same way as sovereign states in that they have their own government, constitution, legislation, and (if a democracy) hold national elections. Micronations often have national symbols such as a flag, coat of arms or seal, motto and anthem, and many micronations also issue coins, banknotes, stamps, passports, passport stamps, orders of merit and bestow honours and titles of nobility,

Coins minted by the Principality of Sealand

although these are not recognised internationally.[6][13][140][151] Some micronations have made profits by selling these items as souvenirs and memorabilia to tourists and via their national websites, and others have even sold citizenship and titles of nobility.[29][152] Some micronational coinage and stamps, if professionally made, have become valued as collector's items by numismatists and philatelists (stamp collectors) alike.[153] In addition, both Sealand and Seborga have their own national association football teams. The Sealand national football team was founded in 2004[154] and became an associate member of the N.F.-Board, a federation made up of unrecognised states, stateless peoples, regions and micronations that are not allowed to join FIFA, in 2006.[155] The Seborga national football team was founded in 2014 and is run by the Football Federation of the Principality of Seborga.[156]

Community

Diplomacy

Like countries, micronations engage in intermicronational diplomacy with one another. This includes the signing of treaties, non-aggression pacts and intermicronational conventions, diplomatic missions and declarations of war.[157] Several intermicronational organisations also exist, with some having as many as 80 member states. Most of these organisations generally work to maintain peace, strengthen micronational cooperation and to improve diplomatic relations between member states.[158][159]

Micronationalists after signing a treaty at PoliNation 2012

Intermicronational summits

Intermicronational summits are also commonplace within the micronational community,[160] and several reoccurring summits have taken place. These include the sporadically-held PoliNation,[161] biennial MicroCon;[111] and the *Organisation de la microfrancophonie* has hosted three intermicronational summits between its member states.[162] PoliNation 2010 was held at Dangar Island, Sydney, Australia and was organised by Judy Lattas of Macquarie University, Princess Paula of the Principality of Snake Hill and George Cruickshank of the Empire of Atlantium.[104][105] PoliNation 2012 was held in London, United Kingdom, and PoliNation 2015 commenced at Umbria, Italy.[163][164] MicroCon 2015 was held in Anaheim, California and hosted by Molossia;[112] MicroCon 2017 in Tucker, Georgia by the Kingdom of Ruritania;[165] MicroCon 2019 in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, by the Kingdom of Slabovia;[160][166] and MicroCon 2022 in Las Vegas, Nevada by Westarctica, having been delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.[167] The first summit hosted by the *Microfrancophonie* was held in 2016 in Aigues-Mortes, Occitania, and hosted by the Principality of

Aigues-Mortes;[115] the second summit took place in 2018 in Vincennes, Paris, and was hosted by Angyalistan;[168] the third summit took place in 2022 in Blaye, Nouvelle-Aquitaine, organised by the Principality of Hélianthis.[162]

Websites and online communities

There are thousands of micronations which exist and operate solely online.[169] Micronationalists convene and engage with one another through several online platforms, especially social media and historically forums (message boards), where micronationalists can share lessons and ideas as well as gain inspiration for establishing their own micronation.[170] MicroWiki, the largest micronational wiki and encyclopaedia, has thousands of articles on various topics related to micronationalism "with many country pages [on MicroWiki] longer than those of real nations [on Wikipedia]",[171] and a number of micronations exist and conduct diplomacy solely on the wiki, utilising it as an online community.[172][173] As of October 2023, the largest micronational group on Facebook, *Micronations and Alternative Polities*, had 3,400 members,[174] and the subreddit forum r/micronations on Reddit had another 8,000.[160][175]

Legality

Arguments for sovereignty

Micronation as a word has no basis in international law.[176][177] Despite this, several micronations have attempted to justify their claims to sovereignty by citing loopholes in local laws. A commonly attempted tactic used by micronationalists to legitimise their claims is the declarative theory of statehood as defined by the Montevideo Convention, which defines a *state* as: "a person of international law [that] possess the following qualifications: (a) a permanent population; (b) a defined territory; (c) government; and (d) capacity to enter into relations with the other states."[177][178]

In 2019, a couple seasteading off the coast of Thailand went into hiding after being accused by the Royal Thai Navy of violating Thailand's sovereignty. If found guilty, they could face life in prison or the death penalty.[179][180] As of 2020, they relocated to Panama.[181]

Based on historical claims

Some micronations are founded on the basis of historical anomalies. The Principality of Seborga was founded in 1963 by Giorgio Carbone, who claimed to have found documents from the Vatican archives which, according to Carbone, indicated that Seborga had never been a possession of the House of Savoy and was thus not legally included in the Kingdom of Italy when it was formed in 1861, meaning that Seborga had remained sovereign.[182][183][184] The Romanov Empire, created by chairman of the Monarchist Party of Russia Anton Bakov, claims to be a re-creation of the Russian Empire that holds Prince Karl Emich of Leiningen as the rightful heir to the imperial throne.[185]

See also

- Fictional country