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UTOPIAN MOVEMENTS IN THE UNITED STATES

A general discourse

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PREFACE

Because of the social problems and moral dilemmas of societies, whether it is wage slavery, bigotry living conditions, or religious ferment, there have been and probably always will be efforts to achieve the perfection of lives as proven by our history.

The dream of obtaining universal peace, harmony, and tranquility is a dream of vast hope, yet constant disagreements and hatred will probably continue into the future. As bizarre and strange as these past and present attempts for a better life seem the hopes were and are there for new beginnings and thought, be it social or religious idealism.

The attempts to categorize all the known utopian movements was a difficult challenge mainly due to the unavailability of reference sources at the local libraries. The information gleaned has been drawn from reference material lists that could be procured. A few of the sources are in possession and owned by the writer of this synopsis.

Utopian Movements in the United States and the beginnings.

427 b.c. to-----

Utopia is the name commonly given to an imaginary land where everything is supposed to be perfect. The name utopia is from the Greek words ou and topos meaning -no place-. Commonly utopia is a type of society with ideal economic and social conditions. It is a reform movement of sorts. It is also visionary.

The word utopia was used as the title of a famous book by Saint Thomas More. Utopia was first published in Latin in 1516. It was then translated into English in 1551. It is in the form of a dialogue. It gives More's views on the ideal government. But it also criticises social and economic conditions of his time.

The writing is the report of a Portugese sailor Raplael Hythlodaye who had made three voyages to America with the explorer Amerigo Vespucci and tells of his travels in this new land which became America from his first name, His greatest find was the island of Utopia, where all men were equal, prosperous, educated, and wise.

Several other books have presented an imaginary ideal sociological structure. One of the first books however was Plato's Republic in 375 b.c.

Plato's Republic-427?--347?bc

Plato was born in Athens of a distinguished family. As a young man he hoped to become a politician like his uncle Pyrilampes. But because of cruel and unethical practices Plato backed off. The group having dictatorial rule was deposed in 403 b.c. and a democracy was installed. Once again he thought of reentering politics but was repelled once again when his friend Socrates was brought to trial and sentenced to death. After extensive traveling Plato returned to Athens and founded a school of philosophy and science called the Academy. He then began to write his dialogues of which this work is interested in his Republic. From this he queried the questions of justice ethics, politics, and psychology. He also wrote on the soul and immortality. He believed that after death the soul migrates to the realm of the "pure forms." It then exists there bodyless contemplating the forms. After a time the soul is reincarnated in another body and returns to the world. Plato faintly remembered his preceding form and yearns for it and falls in love because he recognises in the beauty of his ~~own~~ beloved the ideal form of beauty that he dimly remembered.

Plato also loved the arts because of the great influence on man's character. He believed for some reason that they should be censored.

His ideas were used for several years after his death and although his search for a utopian existence never bore any centralized cults.

Ideas of Plato's search for perfection in the world continued for many years and spurred others who hoped to establish a perfect society. Later many of these were correlated with Christian fervor.

--The passage of time-- (INDIANA)
NEW HARMONY

New Harmony was founded by George Rapp (1757-1847). The cult settled in Butler County, Pennsylvania. This group came from Wurrenburg in Germany because of religious persecution. As you study this and the following histories you will notice several Germanic movements and founders to the United States. After ten years they migrated to Posey County in Indiana in the Wabash Valley in 1814. The group practiced celibacy and members could not own property. In 1825 Rapp sold the town to Robert Owen from Scotland. The Harmonists returned to Pennsylvania and then founded the new society village of Economy- (now Ambridge) where the society died out toward the end of the 1800's. Owen renamed his town New Harmony. He established a social order based on community ownership and equality of work and profit. The experiment became famous and scientists and scholars flocked to the town. Few of the one thousand or more Owenites understood the principles of the experiment and they began to split into several factions. By 1827 it was apparent that Owen's plan was a failure. New Harmony remained an educational, scientific, and cultural center though till the Civil War. The Minerva Club, the first womens club to have a constitution and by laws was organized in 1859.

Presently in Indiana New Harmony is a historic site.

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Oneida (N.Y.)

The Oneida Community, a cooperative settlement in Oneida, New York was founded by John Humphrey Noyes in 1848. It was probably the most extreme form of communistic experiment ever established in the United States. It began in Putney, Vermont in 1848. Its members believed that perfection in life is possible through personal communion with God and that people should share all personal possessions and live as one family. They believed in complex marriage, therefore everyone in the community was considered married to everyone else. It was a free love community. Orthodox church leaders strongly objected to this practice, of course and this caused the community to leave Putney. After relocating to Oneida a system was set up by Noyes of "mutual criticism." Each individual was judged by the other members of the group for the sake of personal improvement. All types of work were considered dignified and women had equal rights with men. The community raised the children. The community flourished financially partly due to a member inventing a steel game trap which was sold in the community factories. Also types of steel chains were produced. They became financially successful. The profits were used to build factories for making silk thread and for canning.

In 1879 because of outside opposition to their practice of complex marriage, Noyes advised the community to stop this practice. The Oneida Community was reorganized however and incorporated as a joint stock company that remains today and has been known for their fine silverware.

Zoars (1817-?) (OHIO)

The Zoar village near Philadelphia was founded by a group of Germans seeking freedom from religious persecution. Located finally in Centralis the remains of the home of their leader, Joseph Bimeler and the Zoar garden. Because of the communal ownership of children (a process called stripiculture) it was seen as another free love community and because of the persecution of their beliefs they were forced to disband their operations and mode of lifestyle.

Nashoba (1826-1860s) (TENNESSEE)

Prior to the outbreak of the Civil War, an integrated community (both blacks and whites) was started in Tennessee in 1826. It was an experiment for both races for a new life but with the death of their leader and outside influence (racism) the movement was destroyed. That it would happen in Tennessee is very unusual as the state had a good slave population.

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Mormons (1830's-present) (UTAH)

Although the Mormon's doctrine can be loosely thought of as a utopian movement it is interesting as to their beliefs and sociological interpretations and should be noted. During the 1800s Joseph Smith, a New England farmer's son received a series of divine revelations as taken into account as the Book of Mormon. According to Smith, God the Father and Jesus Christ appeared to him near Palmyra, New York. Smith was advised not to join any existing church and to prepare for an important task. Three years later Smith said he was visited by an angel named Moroni.

Smith was told about golden plates on which the history of early peoples of the Western Hemisphere was engraved in an ancient language. In 1827 Smith found the plates near Palmyra, N.Y. After translating the plates by the use of a "golden thumb" they were made into the Book of Mormon. The church was then founded on April 6. It grew rapidly and had one thousand members by the end of their first year. Mormon communities were started at Kirtland, Ohio and Independence, Missouri at this time. Smith moved the church headquarters to Kirtland in 1831 and for the next ten years it was the church center.

The church claimed that the church established by Christ did not survive in its original form and was only restored in modern times by divine means. They believe their church is the true and complete church of Jesus Christ restored to earth. Mormons regard the Bible as the word of God, but they believe that it is not a complete record of all that God said and did. They believe that God the Father and Jesus Christ were/are two separate beings. They also believe in the laying on of hands, life after death, and the physical resurrection of the body. After death the spirit continues in an intelligent existence, therefore they believe that family life continues after death. Thus marriages are performed for eternity. Some Mormons practiced polygamy but was outlawed by the church in 1890 after the supreme court had ruled it illegal.

In the 1830's they grew yet disputes and collapse of the Mormon bank and conflicts with non Mormon Neighbors broke up the Kirtland community.

Moving to Missouri Smith and his members joined other members already there. Yet trouble again arose. Mormon groups in Missouri areas were attacked. The massacre of Haun's Mill was the best known problem as twenty members including some children were murdered.

After being arrested Smith and his groups were forced out of Missouri and resettled in Nauvoo, Illinois making it at the time the states largest city. When they became active in politics the non-Mormons became hostile there. After Smith became a candidate for U.S. President their news paper building was destroyed and Smith and his brother, Hyrum were arrested and jailed with other members. On June 27, 1844 a mob attacked the jail and both Smith and his brother were slain.

Brigham Young became the next church leader. Yet again mobs forced the Mormons out of Illinois in 1846. Young put together Smith's plan to move the group to the far west. They then went to the Great Salt Lake Valley and by 1849 they had a government. They applied for admission as the State of Deseret, but congress created the territory to be called Utah in 1850. Young however was appointed the governor.

Another group settled in Michigan in 1847. These were the followers of James J. Strang who had attempted to become Smith's successor after his murder. Strang first founded Noree in Wisconsin in 1847 and then moved to Beaver Island in northern Lake Michigan having been directed he said by a revelation from God. As with Young, Strang also claimed he was told to practice Polygamy. Eventually he had five wives. God also, according to Strang, told him to rule on earth as God's viceroy. On July 8, 1850, with great ceremony, Strang, searing a red robe, was crowned king of his capital of St. James. Strang also served two terms in the Michigan legislature from 1852 until 1856.

Trouble had begun with the Irish fishermen on the mainland opposite Beaver Island and led to charges that he was guilty of counterfeiting, trespassing on federal lands, treason, and robbery of the mails. Strang suffered the same problems the other group had by being arrested with some members. Serving as his own attorney he was acquitted in Detroit. Because of his autocratic rule he aroused even the hatred of some of his followers who plotted his death and used a United States Naval officer to perform the deadly deed. Strang died in 1856. Next mainland gangs raided the island felling many trees and preparing the land for crops. The remaining members then also headed west.

In the west the Mormons began to have problems with the U.S. government. This caused President Buchanan to replace Young with a non-Mormon governor and also sent troops in 1857. The Utah War evolved and ended in 1858 when Young accepted the new governor and causing Buchanan to pardon all involved. It still exists today with about three million members.

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Shakers (1706-present in Maine) (KY & MAINE)

The Shakers were members of the religious sect called the United Society of Believers. The sect was started in England about 1706 as an offshoot of the Quakers. In 1758 Ann Lee (1736-1784) joined the society and was recognized as the leader by the members in 1770. She was leader of the Church of God on earth. She was thereafter known as Mother Ann and became the head of the society.

In 1774 Mother Ann led a group of Shakers to America and organized a society at Watervliet, New York. This was the first communistic organization in the United States. All their property belonged to the community as a whole.

They are called Shakers because during religious exercises their intense emotions caused them to quiver and shake. Members do not marry and they bear no children.

As I recall from a past history course Ann Lee who was married gave birth to several children all of them died quickly. She began to blame her husband and men in general for her problems. Thus the practice of celibacy was enacted.

The Shakers were the first producers of commercial seed in the United States. They invented the circular saw, cut nails, a washing machine, flat brooms, and the first metal pen points. They are also known for the fine furniture the early communities produced and highly prized today.

Today there are Shaker community buildings in Kentucky and Sabath Day Lake, Maine with just a few members still remaining in the latter area.

Amanites (1714-1932) (IOWA)

This religious group was called the Amana Church Society. The word Amana comes from the Song of Solomon 4:8. It is the name of a mountain and means true or fixed.

The society, originally called the Amana Society was founded in Germany by Eberhard Gruber and Johann Rock in 1714. They led simple lives and believed in the revealed Word of God. Christian Metz brought the group to the United States in 1843. It settled near Buffalo and was then called the Ebenezer Society. Members owned villages and lands in common.

Having re-taken the Amana name they moved near Iowa City, Iowa in 1855 and purchased twenty six thousand acres of land and established seven villages, -Amana, East Amana, High Amana, Homestead, Middle Amana, South Amana, and West Amana. They are located in good farm country not far from Herbert Hoover's birthplace. They became farmers and made woolen goods and drugs. The society incorporated in 1859.

The Amana Society gave up its communal life in 1932 and became a cooperative stock company, managed by a board of thirteen directors. Also thirteen members organized the Amana Church Society. It has a board of elders in each village. They are well known today for their refrigeration products that they started.

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Ephrata (1732--?) (PENNSYLVANIA)

Ephrata was the site of the Cloister, a religious community in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. Conrad Beissel and the Seventh Day German Baptists established the Cloister in 1732. One of the earliest printing presses began operations there. They were strict Bible defenders. Today the State of Pennsylvania has preserved the buildings for the public in the rolling and beautiful farm country.

House of David (1903-present) (MICHIGAN)

The House of David is a religious organization founded by Benjamin F. Purnell at Benton Harbor, Michigan. Members call it the Ingathering of Israel. It has a branch colony in North Ryde, Sidney, Australia. All members are vegetarians and they give their worldly possessions to a common treasury which provides for the needs of all. The men wear long hair and beards and live according to the apolistic plan. Members contribute their services and labor to the association. A board of directors conduct its spiritual and temporal affairs. They operate a famous summer resort built entirely by the members. It also owns and operates a cold storage plant, a printing establishment, machine shops, greenhouses, and farms. Today miniture trains on tracks carry visitors on tours around the park.

Hutterites (1529--present) (DAKOTAS)

This sect, called the Hutterian Brethren believe in the common ownership of goods. They follow the example of the early Christians who "had all things in common." (Acts 2:44) They do not believe in war or violence. They live in Bruderhofs (colonies) of about one hundred persons each. Approxamately one hundred and thirty Bruderhofs are in South Dakota, Montana, and northward into the prarie provinces of Canada. They are farmers and lead simple lives. They meet daily for worship. A preacher and a Wirt (boss) who is the financial manager head each colony. The group maintains its own kindergarten and school. The Hutterites originated in 1529 in Moravia as a branch of the Anabaptists. They were named for Jacob Hutter, their leader from 1533 until 1536 when he was burned at the stake. They were severly persecuted for their faith. After 1564 they prospered in Moravia but in 1595 they were driven to nearby countries and also the Ukraine in Russia. They settled in the United States in 1874. Many migrated to Canada in 1918. The sect has ten thousand members in Canada and about $\frac{1}{4}$ that number in the United States. They are a close relation of the Mennonites.

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The utopias of Colorado (Colorado)

In Colorado prior to 1900 some communities owed their existence to gold and silver fields and advantageous sites providing access to the mining areas. But in the 1870s yet another type of town construction came to the territory—cooperative and semi-cooperative ventures in wilderness planning.

The colony plans of settlement in many ways was well adapted to the Colorado conditions. Mostly they were designed for agricultural use. This method of grouping in areas did away with the loneliness of frontier life and better safety against indian attacks.

The disadvantages were that any person who partook of the colony's benefits would have to pay a price in the loss of part of his individual freedom. Group interests took precedence over those of the single farmer. Because of the failures of similar schemes in the states farther east, members were hard to coerce to enter.

The first colony to take uplands in the Colorado territory were followers of Carl Wulsten, a Prussian. He, an ex-union army soldier had settled in Chicago where he edited a German language newspaper. In Chicago he saw nothing but misery and dirt around himself and his fellow Germans and long hours of back-breaking factory work. In 1869 Wulsten organized the German Colonization Society to take advantage of land grants which were quickly denied by the United States government. Wulsten took some members to the territory anyway. They took the train to the end of the line, Fort Wallace, Kansas. From there wagons were provided for the westward journey, only by the army.

In March, 1870 they arrived on their lands in the Wet Mountain Valley, being led by their president, Carl Wulsten. They built homes, plowed their lands, and sowed their crops. They named their town Colfax, in honor of the current vice-president of the United States. Capital, labor, and profits if any were to be pooled for five years in a communistic arrangement. However, as in prior groups in this country dissensions began to erupt immediately within the group. The numerous difficulties proved insurmountable. There was no common religious or social principle to bind the members together. The members did not like Wulsten or his successor, James Judd, both hot tempered, arbitrary, and impracticable. Then the crops failed and outside hostility came upon the group because of the alien character of the settlement.

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The colony then diminished to nothingness.

The next experiment was by the agricultural editor of the New York Tribune, Nathan C. Meeker. From 1844 to 1857 he had been a member at the Trumbull Phalanx at Braceville, Ohio. His editor, the "go west young man" famous wordage was Horace Greeley, his mentor and in 1869 at Cooper Institute in New York City Meeker called a public meeting and there the Union Colony began. Fees were collected for selection of a site and each member would receive one town lot and a parcel of land for farming from the investment. Land was purchased near Denver and the town was named Greeley. It wasn't much of a town. They purchased a large building in Cheyenne, Wyoming and moved the structure by rail to Greeley. It became a lodging house. Streets were laid out and trees planted. Some of the members began to leave due to the intense labor of building the area. However, agriculture, their economic livelihood led them to prosperity. To keep the open-range cattle from their crops wire fences were erected. The outsiders began to ridicule the members as "saints." Diversification of their economy was attempted by a tanning plant for buffalo hides, a lucrative business around that part of the country later on. The town became known as a cultured society with a library, ^{with a} lyceum, farmer's club, and a dramatic association. Theatricals and dancing were allowed but intoxicating liquors were forbidden. By 1880, when the colony ended its corporate status by the expiration of its charter, the town of Greeley remained established and influenced other groups and another Chicago group tried their luck on another venture naming their new town Longmont. Mrs. Elizabeth Thompson of New York purchased memberships for poor settlers. Then the town of Evans became another colony. The Reverend Andrew C. Todd and his group settled near Greeley and opened grog houses and taverns. This attracted many of the members from Greeley.

Another interesting colony was in Freemont County in 1882 by Emanuel H Saltiel, a silver mine owner. The Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society arranged for sixteen families of Russian and Polish Jews to settle in the Wet Mountain Valley.

Most of these colonies were helped by immigrant societies and many of Colorado's present towns were formed by such groups.

For the most part these land working societies did not seem to have the ideas of great changes for a completely changing idealism for a new world.

Amish and Mennonites (to present) (PENNSYLVANIA - OHIO)

Although these next two societies were not exactly trying to form new utopias they deserve mention for their desire and beliefs in keeping their socio-religious tenets and mores. They are Protestant groups that originated in Switzerland and became eventually centered in the United States after 1728.

The Amish teach separation from the world. They cannot engage in war, swear office, or hold public offices. Their doctrine requires farming and personal simplicity as a way of life. The men wear beards and the women bonnets. They meet in their homes every two weeks for worship. They use horses for everything and do not use electricity or telephones. Education is limited to the eight grade. Having known some Amish, this writer feels that a nicer and very hard working people cannot be found today. Amish are located in twenty state settlements and in Ontario, Canada. When some break with the old order they are known then as Mennonites, a more modern thinking group. Having played basketball against an Amish group in Indiana, the author recalls one member explaining that he and some of the boys were whipped for playing sports against outsiders. Yet, if one desires an incredible meal, an Amish restaurant is the apex of food preparation and dining.

Dunkers (to present) (1708 - MARYLAND - PENNSYLVANIA)

Another similar group founded yet again by members from Germany was organized in 1708 by Alexander Mack. Persecution in Germany caused the Dunkers or the Church of the Bretheren to reorganize in 1719 st Germantown, Pennsylvania. From there it spread around America. The beliefs of the group is baptism by time or triple immersion. From there is the use of the name Dunker (from the German word tunken, -to immerse). Bretheren believe in peace, brotherhood, and simple living. They teach the way of alternative service in lieu of military aervice or conscription. Their name was discovered as the name of a church structure at the Antietam National Battlefield site in Maryland. The battle had raged around the church.

the Koreshan Unity (1869-1981) (FLORIDA)

The Koreshan Unity came into being in 1869 founded by Doctor Cyrus R Teed, a physician in New York State. At the age of 39 Teed claimed to have had a strange experience or dream in which he claimed to have been visited by a divine deity. He was told by the deity to found a new society for the start of a new world. After some study Teed found that all life was cellular and constatly reparing and recreating. Thus, he felt that the earth was a giant cell with the inner parts recreating constantly and thus the planets, moon, and stars like the nucleus of cells were regenerating and the surface of our earth was on the inside of the hollow world.

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Teed began to preach to anyone who would listen, Although raised as a Baptist he felt he had been picked by this deity who was "both Mother and Son (God) to bring to this world a reconstitution of the true nature of the universe. His medical practice suffered and people around Utica, New York began to refer to him as the crazy doctor. In the late 1880s Teed was asked to speak in Chicago, Illinois to a mind-healing group. Teed leaped into this challenge and because of his gifted oration elected president of the group. Chicago then became the new headquarters for the Unity. Because of persecution especially by the husbands of wives that left home to join the society now called the Koreshan Unity (a Hebrew translation of Teed's first name Cyrus, He began to look elsewhere in search of a new headquarters.

His search around America found nothing in San Francisco but he was attracted to the warm climate in south Florida and he made a journey there in 1893. Fortunately after meeting with an aged, lonely man Teed was invited to the property which was on the Estero River a few miles south of Fort Myers, Florida. Teed related his new discoveries to the homesteader and his dream of establishing the New Jerusalem, a magnificent city to hold up to ten million members and that his cabin would be located near the center of the city. Thus the homesteader deeded over three hundred acres of his property to Teed.

In 1894 beginning members began to arrive and construction of the new city was begun. Eventually there was to be a fire and police department ~~were~~ to be started and the city was to have underground waste clearance systems.

The members were to be celibate, no sex, alcohol and all profits went for the general use of the members as a group.

The height of the Koreshan Unity was around 1906 constituting two hundred and fifty or so members. Teed often traveled seeking new members. There was however an order in the society for married couples but in the beginning it contained only the celibate order. Teed, after being beaten in a fight in Fort Myers sickened and died in 1908. Unfortunately he had become involved in politics which did not set well with the Lee County Democrats. Upon the death of Teed, the doctor, civil war veteran, reformer, the remaining members began to lose interest and began to leave. By 1958 only four members remained. The president of the group, a lady from Frankfurt, Germany deeded three hundred and five acres in 1961 to the state of Florida in memory of Teed. Ms. Michael, the last president died in 1982 and was buried on the grounds of the Koreshan gardens. The site remains as a State Historic Site.

Paradise Valley (present) (MONTANA)

The movements continue. Having seen news reports on television and happening across a magazine on this group and it titilated my mind. So it was to be included in this paper. This particular group resides in Paradise Valley in Montana. It is the Church Universal and Triumphant. At first glance it is reported to be too beautiful to be true. It is a thirty thousand acre ranch with trout streams and apple orchards plus fourty ~~5x~~ fallout shelters and a gun tower. The members have stockpiled food and water in the largest shelter for safety against neucular fallout, They believe the end is near. The leader, Elizabeth Clare Prophet, has forecasted the end of the world. The commune has presently three thousand gun toting faithful. The people around the so calped interlopers wish they would go away. Mrs. Prophet claims that Jesus, Pope John XXIII, Confucius, the saints, and all of heaven's angels speak to the world through her. She claims to take spiritual dictation from Buddah, Shakesphere, Christopher Columbus, and Merlin the magician as well as someone named Cosmic Master Ray-o-Light. She believes in reincarnation. Also she claims that as a child she walked and talked with Jesus Christ. Her mother was a spiritualist also. She, because of being reincarnated, refers to herself as Mistress of the Universe. She is an ardent anticommunist. She met her husband Mark Prophet who was a vacuum cleaner salesman in Washington, DC. while she was attending Boston University. Mark had claimed to have had a conversation with Sir Lancelot of King Arthur fame. After marriage and Mark's death, Elizabeth carried on the work. The community allows no drugs, alcohol, or sex except only by married couples. Although this may not exactly be labled as a utopian movementit, in a fashion, is an attempt for a new life in the world after the hollicost.

Jim Jones and Guiana

Another group who moved to South America to start a better life completely committed suicide due to the fact that one of the members had shot a public official who had come to check upon the cult. Afraid of being disbanded the/all took poison and some were found shot to death, possibly those who did not want to sacrifice their lives with the rest.

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[mini mentioned] Oakland College and Edison Community
College (1960's to 1970's)

Discussions with members of - -

Amish

Mennonites

House of Davidites

Koreshan member

Latter Day Saints (Mormons)

Reformed Church of latter day Saints (Mormons)

Jewish Sects

Quakers

Shakers

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Communal societies

Shakers

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