

**THE EVOLUTION OF THE MONEY STANDARD  
IN MEDIEVAL FRISIA**

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**THE EVOLUTION OF THE MONEY STANDARD  
IN MEDIEVAL FRISIA**

**A treatise on the history of  
the systems of money of account  
in the former Frisia (c.600 - c.1500)**

door

DIRK JAN HENSTRA

Groningen, 2000



To Professor dr B.H. Slicher van Bath



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As a graduate student in Economics at the University of Groningen during the 1950s, I chose monetary problems as the central theme of my study. The paper which I delivered for my examination in Economic History concerned the history of central banking in a few selected countries. At the same time, lectures given by the then Professor of Economic History, Dr B.H. Slicher van Bath, taught me theories of cultural history by such authors as Oswald Spengler, Jacob Burckhardt and Alfred Weber; but the lines of thought generated by these two distinct areas of activity did not seem to harmonise at all. Although I felt that my history of central banking should bear some relation to cultural history, the gap between economic theories and theories of culture appeared too wide.

During the forty years that followed, my career was not an academic one – it was spent first on corporate financial control and then on university governance – but the matter challenged me incessantly. It was in the anthropologist Dr Ruth Benedict's *Patterns of Culture*, concerning the cultural selection of segments of the great arc of possible human interests, and the economist Professor Lex Hoogduin's inaugural lecture concerning the institutional view on monetary and financial phenomena, that I found the piers to bridge the gap. I realised that cultural history is concerned with the evolution of social institutions, and that economic processes are moulded by evolving institutions. It is this idea that forms the basis of the present thesis. Since it germinated from the seeds sown by Professor Slicher van Bath almost half a century ago, I am both honoured and happy to dedicate this study to him with deepest gratitude.

Countless other scholars, including historians, economists, jurists, numismatists and archaeologists, have contributed to the knowledge needed to bring the germs of this study to fruition. I should like to make special mention of Peter Spufford's *Money and its use in medieval Europe*, Stéphane Lebecq's *Marchands et navigateurs Frisons du haut moyen âge*, Harold Siems' *Studien zur Lex Frisionum*, and the edition of the *Altfriesische Rechtsquellen* by Wybren Jan Buma and Wilhelm Ebel. Without these works, mine simply would not exist. This would be equally true if Dr F.J. Bakker, who was then assistant professor in the Department of Medieval History at the University of Groningen, had not induced me, a few years after my retirement, to put my affinity with history, and economic history in particular, to some use. It was on his initiative that I took up what became the present study.

To me, this would never have been an obvious course. As I had not been involved in academic pursuits during the forty years after finishing my studies in Economics, and as I had (and have) no knowledge of Latin – the language of many medieval sources – I did not consider myself sufficiently equipped to make an entry into the scholarly world of medieval history. However, I am fortunate to have had the help and support of a large number of people.

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As English is not my mother tongue, the decision to write my thesis in that language was not taken lightly. Before I began, I received initial advice from Mrs Janet Huffstadt of Haren and Professor Helen Wilcox of the Department of English Language and Literature at the University of Groningen. The language of my final draft was critically corrected by Mr Allan Wilcox of Maartenscollege International School, Groningen, who also kindly helped me to sharpen up several arguments.

Finally I am grateful to my wife Lineke and my eldest son Greald, who patiently listened to and commented upon my expositions whenever I was struggling with problems that had to be cleared.

As my final draft was completed at the end of February 1999, it follows that I have not been able to take into account relevant publications that might have appeared since then.

Noordlaren,  
September 1999.



## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- æ equivalent to (shorthand in expressions like: A æ 0.75 B *i.e.* A is equivalent to 0.75 B, *i.e.* the value of A = 0.75 times the value of B)  
d. penny/pennies of account  
ms. manuscript

- AAGB *Afdeling Agrarische Geschiedenis Bijdragen*  
ADU Archive of the Aduard water board  
AHS Archive of *Arme Huis sitten* in Groningen  
ASSEN Archive of the abbey of Assen  
BAM Archive of the bishopric of Münster  
BAU Archive of the bishopric of Utrecht  
Chbk Schwartzenberg, *Charterboek*  
DLFZ Archive of the water board of *De Drie Delfzijlen*  
DMK Archive of the chapter of the Utrecht cathedral (*Domkapittel*)  
DWK Heringa, *Drentse Willekeuren*  
EJB *Jahrbuch der Gesellschaft für bildende Kunst und vaterländische Altertümer zu Emden, seit 1950 hrsg. von der Ostfriesischen Landschaft*  
FAR Archive of the House of Farmsum  
FRH Archive of the friars' house of Münster  
GAA Municipal archive of Assen  
GAD Municipal archive of Deventer  
GAG Municipal archive of Groningen  
GAK Municipal archive of Kampen  
GRK Archive of the Gerkesklooster monastery  
HBN *Hamburger Beiträge zur Numismatik*  
HGG Archive of the *Heilige Geest Gasthuis* in Groningen  
HJK Archive of the *Hoge Justitie Kamer* in Groningen  
JAG Archive of the *Jacoba- en Anna Gasthuis* in Groningen  
JMP *Tijdschrift voor Munt- en Penningkunde / Jaarboek voor Munt- en Penningkunde*  
KFH Archive of the clerks' or friars' house of Groningen  
LF *Lex Frisionum*

- LK Archive of various monastic documents
- MGH *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, subdivided in a.o.:
- LLnG *Leges nationum Germanicarum (Leges Sectio I)*
- Cap. *Capitularia regum Francorum (Leges Sectio II)*
- Conc. *Concilia (Leges Sectio III)*
- Const. *Constitutiones et acta publica impertorum et regnum (Leges Sectio IV)*
- SSrG *Scriptores rerum Germanicarum*
- MGron Driessen, *Monumenta Groningana*
- OCCG Archive of the *Olde Convent* in Groningen
- OFO Sipma, *Oudfriesche oorkonden* (3 volumes)
- Vries, *Oudfriesche oorkonden*, (4th volume)
- OFU Friedlaender, *Ostfriesisches Urkundenbuch* (2 volumes)
- Möhlmann, *Ostfriesisches Urkundenbuch* (3rd volume)
- OGD Blok *et al.*, *Oorkondenboek van Groningen en Drente* (2 volumes)
- OHZ Koch, *Oorkondenboek van Holland en Zeeland* (1st volume)
- Kruisheer, *Oorkondenboek van Holland en Zeeland* (2 volumes)
- OLA State archive of Oldenburg
- OUB Rütthning, *Oldenburgisches Urkundenbuch* (8 volumes)
- PEIP Treatises edited by the society *Pro Excolendo Iure Patria* in Groningen
- PG Oosterhout, *et al.*, *Pax Groningana*
- PK Archive of the *Parochiekerken* (churches of the parishes) in Groningen
- PO Archive of *Particuliere oorkonden* (private charters) in Groningen
- RAD State archive for the province of Drenthe
- RAF State archive for the province of Friesland
- RAG State archive for the province of Groningen
- RAO State archive for the province of Overijssel
- RAU State archive for the province of Utrecht
- RQ Richthofen, *Friesische Rechtsquellen*
- RuG University of Groningen
- SAM State archive of Münster
- SCHW Archive of the Schwartzenberg family
- SEL Archive of the monastery of Selwerd
- SRB Oosterhout, *Snitser recesboeken*
- UB Library of the University of Groningen
- VMC Archive of *Vrouw Menoldis en Vrouw Siwen Convent*
- VNW *Veröffentlichungen der staatlichen Archive des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen*
- WAH Archive of the water boards in Hunsingo
- WARVEN Feith, *Warfsconstituties*



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## GENERAL REMARK ON FINENESS OF SILVER

In this study the term ‘silver’ is used to denote ‘pure silver’ = ‘fine silver’. Alongside fine silver we find in the documents ‘sterling silver’ (fineness 0.9250<sup>2</sup>), or *15lotiges Silber* (fineness  $15/16 = 0.9375^3$ ) or *argent-le-roi* (fineness 0.9583<sup>4</sup>), or various lower degrees of fineness, sometimes defined. But it should be noted that medieval terminology is not always very clear concerning the fineness of silver. Pure silver could technically hardly be achieved. The expression *fijn gebranden suluer* (‘fine purified silver’) for instance appears to mean 15/16th pure silver.

## GENERAL REMARK ON THE ACCURACY OF WEIGHT QUOTATIONS

In this study weights are given in grams (g). As a rule the weights of money are rounded to 1 decimal place because more decimals may suggest a degree of accuracy which is unrealistic. However, if more accurate figures are known (or assumed) and are to be multiplied, the rounded result may differ from the result of the multiplication of the figure as rounded to 1 decimal.

## GENERAL REMARK ON TEXT QUOTATIONS

Except where otherwise stated all quotations which are not originally in English, have been translated.

<sup>2</sup> Brooke, *English Coins*, 107: 11 oz. 2 dwt. fine (= 0.925).

<sup>3</sup> Spufford, *Money*, 219.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*, 323.

Map 1: Frisia and its international trade routes

