

## CHAPTER 9

### THE SECOND PERIOD OF THE ENGLISH PENNY IN THE OMMELANDEN (c.1350-c.1500)

This chapter is devoted to the development of the money of account in the Ommelanden during the late Middle Ages. We shall find two systems working alongside each other. This chapter will mainly be confined to one of these, a system originally based on the English penny as the standard and hence a case of continuation (though with adaptations) of the system existing since the middle of the 13th century. The other system was the Groningen system, dealt with in Chapter 12. Moreover we shall find in the present chapter examples of the old *schild* as a new element in the money of account in Frisia.

#### The historical context

The dyke building and internal colonisation of the peat lands had changed the economic structure of previous centuries of Frisia, including the Ommelanden.<sup>1</sup> After the decline of the international trade, which had involved among others the town of Appingedam,<sup>2</sup> it remained agrarian, mainly breeding and trading cattle and dairy products, barley and oats.<sup>3</sup> But the wind of change in western Europe, briefly described in Chapter 7, did not pass imperceptibly over the Ommelanden; a shortage of tenants and pressure on land-revenues were keenly felt. The unfavourable consequences of these economic and social changes for landowners were illustrated in the Ommelanden by a peculiar treaty between *hovetlingen* and abbots in 1371, part of which prohibited the leasing of farms to tenants of other signatories without their consent and, moreover, regulated the value of particular farm products and usual money according to a common tariff.<sup>4</sup>

The condition of dykes and drains was of major importance for agrarian prosperity. The maritime transgression, already mentioned in the previous chapter, was also a serious threat for the Ommelanden. One of the unhappy consequences of this was the widening of the mouth of the Ems, giving rise to the Dollart bay and the loss of large parts of the districts of Reiderland and Oldambt to the sea.<sup>5</sup> More than ever, the dykes and sluices

<sup>1</sup> Jansen, "Sociaal-economische geschiedenis", 126-133.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*, 136.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*, 130-131.

<sup>4</sup> OGD1: 593.

<sup>5</sup> De Cock, "De middeleeuwen", 610-612.

required attention.<sup>6</sup> In the Ommelanden we find a relatively large number of documents concerning this subject. In te Ommelanden, unlike Mid-Frisia, the water boards developed into official bodies with real territorial jurisdiction and executive power.<sup>7</sup> Although the town of Groningen was often involved in sluice treaties, the water boards remained in the hands of the local elite - mostly *hovetlingen* and abbots.<sup>8</sup>

Notwithstanding these examples of co-operation among the *hovetlingen*, the Ommelanden were also a seat of rivalry between the Vetkoper and the Schieringer factions, sometimes resulting in local hostilities as they did elsewhere in Frisia.<sup>9</sup> This created an opportunity for the powerful town of Groningen to intervene and make treaties, offering the districts the support of executive power to keep order where necessary. There are several examples of these treaties during the whole of the period under consideration.

This period, then, is characterised by the growing political and economic influence of the town of Groningen in the Ommelanden. After the decline of its international trade,<sup>10</sup> the town directed its mercantile aspirations towards the surrounding agrarian districts. Although there was no formal basis for the staple-right of the town in the 14th century, there is no doubt that it did exist *de facto* for the Ommelanden; only Appingedam was able to distance itself from it.<sup>11</sup> In the 15th century the central market position of Groningen was strengthened; in a treaty of mutual support in 1473 the districts had to accept prohibitions on the export of corn and the brewing of beer for sale.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, the treaties with the surrounding districts gave rise to the establishment of a central high court in Groningen and, in 1448, of common statutes for Hunsingo and Fivelingo.<sup>13</sup> Finally, the town even acquired jurisdiction over the districts of Oldambt (1433/1440) and Westerwolde (1482).<sup>14</sup> This policy, aimed at achieving total domination, caused a lasting controversy with the Ommelanden. Nevertheless, between the all-Frisian reconciliation treaty in 1422 and the introduction of the Saxon *gubernator* in 1498, the situation in the Ommelanden was relatively peaceful.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*, 603-609.

<sup>7</sup> Fockema Andreae, "Dijken of wijken", 187.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*, 192: In its own region of influence, Leeuwarden could acquire the upkeep and the power to control the inland sluices and waterways.

<sup>9</sup> Formsma, "De middeleeuwse vrijheid", 89.

<sup>10</sup> Chapter 7, 'The historic context'; Chapter 12, 'The historic context'.

<sup>11</sup> Jansen, "Sociaal-economische geschiedenis", 143.

<sup>12</sup> GAG STAD: O 25 (RF 1473.10).

<sup>13</sup> RQ, 315-324.

<sup>14</sup> Formsma, "De middeleeuwse vrijheid", 98; 104.

<sup>15</sup> Chapter 7, 'The historic context'.

## The history of the means of payment

As we saw in Chapter 6, a peace treaty was made in 1338 between most of the districts of the Ommelanden and the town of Groningen. In this treaty it was agreed that the participants would meet yearly at the town hall in Groningen in order to examine the state of the money and to take measures if needed.<sup>16</sup> That is all we know about this monetary agreement; the treaty itself does not specify what money would be examined or how, and there are no other surviving indications as to whether those meetings were ever held at all or, if they were, what measures were taken. We must assume that the parties involved discussed money they had in common, or at least money that was interchangeable at legal rates. As far as we know, the standard money in circulation at that time was the imitative sterling. The coins admitted are known from the treaty of the Upstallisbam in 1323, which had not yet included the town of Groningen.<sup>17</sup>

We do not know whether minting took place in Groningen during those years, as it had in the previous centuries, but if not the town resumed minting indigenous money about 1360. This will be dealt with in Chapter 12. Groningen money would also have circulated in the Ommelanden, as we learn from several documents, but genuine English pennies are also mentioned in the Ommelanden documents, and the *stoter* - the local name for an English groat which, after its introduction in England in 1351, had become the key-coin of the English money system<sup>18</sup> - was even a candidate for the standard of the unit of account; see below. However, as far as I know, these *stoters* (worth 4 pennies) have not been discovered in the Ommelanden.<sup>19</sup> Imitative continental sterling pennies must have been used in the second half of the 14th century; *tornoyse groten* (worth 3 pennies),<sup>20</sup> cavaliers (worth 2 pennies),<sup>21</sup> Flemish half *groten*,<sup>22</sup> (old) *vleemse groten*<sup>23</sup> and double *groten*<sup>24</sup> were among the larger silver coins circulating during this period, though they are scarcely found in the documents or in numismatic reports. Moreover, imitative *tornoyse groten* have been discovered that were struck in the

<sup>16</sup> Chapter 6, ‘The history of the means of payment’.

<sup>17</sup> Ditto.

<sup>18</sup> Spufford, *Money*, 234.

<sup>19</sup> Even at the beginning of the 20th century, the name ‘*stoter*’ for a coin was remembered by senior citizens in the Ommelanden. By then it was a (regional) multiple unit of account of  $2\frac{1}{2}$  *stuvers*, hence just a little over the value of 2 *stuvers* in the 15th century (information kindly supplied by Mr R.H. Alma of Baflo).

<sup>20</sup> For instance: OGD1: 593 (1371); OGD2: 704 (1382).

<sup>21</sup> Feith, “Rijder- en leeuwengroten”, 142-159, reports a cavalier discovered in Holwierde that had been struck in Coevorden.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*, reports half *groten*, struck in Coevorden and in Selwerd (near Groningen), discovered in Holwierde.

<sup>23</sup> OGD2: 948 (1397).

<sup>24</sup> OGD2: 966 (1397).

Ommelanden themselves.<sup>25</sup> They may have been used as denominations of the ‘new-Frisian’ local money (= usual money or ‘everyday coins’ or *nummis usualibus*; see below) mentioned in the documents. These everyday coins have not been identified numismatically. *Blancs* are mentioned occasionally; apparently these were imported French silver coins, struck between 1385 and 1413.<sup>26</sup>

In the first half of the 15th century, *butkens* and *butdraggers*, and later on *kromsterten* and possibly *braspennigen*, may have formed the bulk of the silver coins.<sup>27</sup> Gradually, in the second half of the century, these coins in their turn were replaced by *stuvers* and their derivations.<sup>28</sup>

The French (old) *schilden* (*écus d’or*)<sup>29</sup> and *rinsguldiers*<sup>30</sup> (from c.130) and the Guelders/Arnhem guilders (after c.1400)<sup>31</sup> were the most significant gold coins in the currency of the Ommelanden during the late Middle Ages.

### **The history of the measure of value**

In the Ommelanden we meet the curious phenomenon of two systems of money of account working alongside each other: the English and ‘new-Frisian’ money of account systems. At least during the second half of the 14th century, the ‘new-Frisian’ system is found as ‘usual’ (or *dagelike* = everyday<sup>32</sup>) money. It was probably identical to the Groningen money system. The Groningen money was certainly at work in the Ommelanden during the 15th century.

Whereas the 1361 treaty of the Upstallisbam, made in Groningen, still used English money of account as we have seen,<sup>33</sup> the treaty between Groningen and Ommelanden in 1368 uses ‘new-Frisian’ money. In this treaty the mark is reckoned at 24 old *groten*, which must have been old *tornoyse groten*.<sup>34</sup> The genuine *tornoyse grote* had been conventionally equivalent to 3 genuine English pennies. Because a mark of 72 English pennies has never existed, this mark must have been a mark of 144 pennies, each penny

<sup>25</sup> Puister, “Groningse stedelijke munten”, 8, describes *tornoyse groten* struck in Fivelingo (in Appingedam); Van der Chijs, *De munten van Friesland, Groningen and Drenthe*, 527: weight of the coin found 1.45g; Engel, *Traité*, 1161, mentions a *tornoyse grote* struck in Hunsingo (in Dorkwerd, situated at the border of two districts: Westerkwartier and Hunsingo).

<sup>26</sup> Spufford, *Money*, 323; 409: silver content c.1.6g originally, declining to c.1.2g.

<sup>27</sup> For instance: RQ, 312-315 (1424); RQ, 315-324 (1448).

<sup>28</sup> For instance: RAG ADU: 33, 58-65 (1457).

<sup>29</sup> First mention found in RAG DLFZ: 59, f.50-70 (1370).

<sup>30</sup> OGD1: 593 (1371).

<sup>31</sup> For instance OGD2: 1166 (1403).

<sup>32</sup> OGD2: 754 (1387, Vredewold).

<sup>33</sup> Chapter 7, ‘The history of the measure of value’.

<sup>34</sup> Emmius/Reeken, *Friesische Geschiede II*, 209-210. The original document is now lost, but we must assume that Emmius knew it.

initially worth half an English penny. As Groningen was the central party in this treaty, it seems obvious that these were marks Groningen *payment*. It also seems obvious that this money was known and accepted in the Ommelanden; otherwise it would have been more natural to use English money in this treaty since it was in use in Groningen and the Ommelanden, and had been so for a long time.

There are other reasons for believing that the usual money found in the Ommelanden would in fact have been Groningen *payment*. The 1387 statutes of the district of Vredewold have amounts quoted in usual money alongside amounts in English money of account.<sup>35</sup> The 1425 statutes of the water board of the same district have amounts in Groningen *payment*, also alongside English money of account.<sup>36</sup> In this case, the money of account in 1425 seems to be a continuation of the money of account in 1387. However, light imitative *tornoyse groten*, thought to have been a denomination of the Groningen *payment* (old *groten*, see above) were not only struck in Groningen but also in Fivelingo and Hunsingo. Therefore this could be indigenous Ommelanden ‘new-Frisian’ money without relation to Groningen money at all, but it could also be money from mints in the Ommelanden, directly competing with the Groningen mint. This last possibility seems most likely, since at some time between 1360 and 1390 the Groningen government felt obliged to prohibit the practice of changing coins in Groningen for the purpose of having them recoined outside the town in Frisia; the conveyance of coins to moneyers there was also prohibited.<sup>37</sup> The terms ‘usual money’ or ‘everyday money’ seem to suggest a kind of money that was different from the *payment* of Groningen, but this is almost certainly incorrect because, even in Groningen itself, the money struck in or near Groningen<sup>38</sup> was not yet called ‘Groningen money’. In 1370 it was still simply called just *pagiment*.<sup>39</sup> In 1372 the expression ‘pennies as current and accepted in Groningen’ is found.<sup>40</sup> In 1394 the term ‘Groningen *schild*’ is used in Groningen for the first time,<sup>41</sup> providing evidence of the existence of a Groningen system of money of account. It is likely that usual money in the Ommelanden would have been the *payment* as usual also in Groningen. According to my research, the last time usual money had been mentioned *expressis verbis* in the Ommelanden was in 1397.<sup>42</sup> Subsequently, from 1403 onwards, the use of Groningen pennies as unit of account in the Ommelanden is documented.<sup>43</sup> This is not dealt with in this chapter but in Chapter 12, which is devoted to the Groningen money of account.

<sup>35</sup> OGD2: 768. See below.

<sup>36</sup> RAG MANUSCRIPTS: 13b (Convolutum Wittewierum). See below.

<sup>37</sup> Telting, *Stadboek*, 71 (§205); Chapter 12, ‘The history of the means of payment’.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibidem*; in Selwerd.

<sup>39</sup> OGD1: 574.

<sup>40</sup> OGD1: 602.

<sup>41</sup> Telting, *Stadboek*, 81.

<sup>42</sup> OGD2: 945.

<sup>43</sup> OGD2: 1166 (1403, Zuidwolde).

We can only guess at the precise relationship between the English system of money of account and the usual money of account in the Ommelanden. My guess is that usual money served for small everyday transactions, while English money was the capital money of account. This was not a fixed relationship. While the silver equivalence of the English money system was fairly stable, the silver value of the usual money/Groningen *payment* was not. We have various pieces of evidence for this.

As mentioned before, in 1371 the abbots of four Ommelanden monasteries and a number of notabilities, worrying about the ongoing depreciation of the currency (possibly induced by their worsening position as landowners<sup>44</sup>) made a treaty determining the values at which various coins were to be set. The coins involved were apparently those used in payment for rents by their tenant farmers and for the prices of their farm products.<sup>45</sup> From then on, the treaty states, a genuine antique *tornoyse grote* would be equivalent to 10 *nummis usualibus*; a genuine antique crowned English penny<sup>46</sup> would be equivalent to 3 *nummis usualibus*; an antique French *écu* of good gold and weight would be equivalent to 13 *tornoyse groten*, and a guilder of good gold and value would be equivalent to 9 *tornoyse groten*. A penalty in the treaty was quoted in marks of ‘old’ money. This confirms that ‘old’ money and ‘usual’ money were used alongside each other in the Ommelanden at that time. In this context old money could only have been English money. The usual money concerned the tenants, while the old money concerned the participating landowners themselves. From this regulation it follows that the silver equivalencies of the ‘usual’ penny and the genuine English penny must have been set at c.0.4g and c.1.2g respectively.<sup>47</sup> As far as the English penny is concerned, this is still the same silver equivalence that, in the law in Frisia, the penny of account had represented for over a century.<sup>48</sup> For the usual pennies, however, this regulation seems to provide evidence of a change. Although the usual pennies in the Ommelanden had been used for paying rents as if they were worth half an old English penny (like the *hallingen* in the 1323 treaty of the Upstallisbam), their silver equivalence, initially  $\frac{1}{2}$  sterling, must by now have been reduced to about  $\frac{1}{3}$  rd of that penny.<sup>49</sup> The treaty

<sup>44</sup> See in this Chapter, ‘The historic context’.

<sup>45</sup> OGD1: 593.

<sup>46</sup> Berghaus, *Die Perioden*, 42: English pennies of Edwardian type were called ‘crowned sterlings’.

<sup>47</sup> Spufford, *Money*, 405: weight 1 genuine antique *tornoyse grote* 4.22g, 0.96 fine, hence silver content  $0.96 \times 4.22g = 4.05g$ . 1 penny usual money  $\approx 4.05g : 10 = 0.405g$ ; 1 English penny  $\approx 3 \times 0.405g = 1.21g$ .

<sup>48</sup> In the treaty of the Upstallisbam the *tornoyse grote* was equivalent to 3 genuine ‘new’ English pennies (Edwardian), which would be equivalent to  $3 \frac{1}{5}$  ‘old’ English pennies (long-cross type). In the treaty of abbots and *hovetlingen* in 1371 the *tornoyse grote* was equivalent to  $3 \frac{1}{3}$  English pennies. So this may have been the ‘old’ one.

<sup>49</sup> This might be confirmed by two copies of the treaty of 1323 (in the ms. ‘Furmerius’ and the incunabulum ‘Druk’). These copies have 6 *hallingen* for a cavalier, whereas the presumably older Latin versions and the ‘old-Frisian’ version Roorda have 4 *hallingen*. In other words, the rate as used in the initial version might have been adapted later on, during the copying process. See: Meijering, *De willekeuren*, 61; 155-156).

implied that the participants were unwilling to accept these pennies at their initial value; they were only accepted at the new, lower value that apparently reflected an actual depreciation. This depreciation would have provided a perfectly understandable motive for the Ommelanden notabilities to come to this agreement, their rents having regularly been paid with usual money.

The English money is mostly found in statutes. It was the unit of account in the dyke statutes of three polders in Westerkwartier in 1360,<sup>50</sup> the synodal statutes of Langewold in 1406<sup>51</sup> and the synodal statutes of Vredewold in 1429.<sup>52</sup> I have already mentioned the use of usual money of account in the statutes of the district of Vredewold of 1387. However, it was not only usual money of account that was used in these statutes but also English money. The wergeld is quoted in marks (presumably English marks) as well as in marks 'usual' money, the first amount being 20 marks and the second being 5 score (*stige*) marks.<sup>53</sup> It follows that by then the penny usual money was already reckoned at only  $\frac{1}{5}$ th of the English penny (c.0.24g silver equivalence<sup>54</sup>), which is approximately the silver equivalence of the Groningen penny found at that time.<sup>55</sup> The use, in this district, of English money and Groningen money simultaneously is demonstrated again in the 1425 statutes of the eastern water board of Vredewold<sup>56</sup> and in the statutes of the western water board of the same year:<sup>57</sup> the wergeld in the jurisdiction of these boards was 15 score marks, 'payment as current in Groningen'. These statutes also mention fines explicitly in 'old' marks English money.

Moreover, the English mark is defined here: a penny will be 1 *butken*, 12 *butkens* will be a shilling and 12 shillings will be an English mark.<sup>58</sup> The same definition is found in an addition to the synodal statutes of Loppersum one year before, in 1424.<sup>59</sup> The amounts in these synodal statutes are in English money but occasionally also in Münster money. The deanery of Loppersum belonged to the bishopric of Münster, and it appears that the

<sup>50</sup> OGD2: 1234 (490).

<sup>51</sup> Boeles, "De hoofdbronnen", 160-161.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibidem*, 161-163.

<sup>53</sup> OGD2: 768.

<sup>54</sup> The wergeld amount is apparently the fossilised amount known before the weight reduction of the English penny in 1351, hence based on an English penny  $\approx 1.2$ g of silver. Consequently 1 penny usual money  $\approx \frac{1}{5} \times 1.2\text{g} = 0.24\text{g}$ .

<sup>55</sup> Chapter 12, 'The history of the measure of value'.

<sup>56</sup> RAG MANUSCRIPTS: ms. 13b (Convolutum 'Wittewierum'), 1029-1032.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibidem*, 1035-1038.

<sup>58</sup> This definition will be an addition of a somewhat later time; the text continues by valuing the English mark  $\approx 1$  guilder less 6 *kromsterten*. These units of account were not in use in the Ommelanden, but they were used in Groningen from about 1430 onwards. As I see it, this valuation was added for the convenience of the court of appeal. This was situated in Groningen at that time, using Groningen lawyers and judges.

<sup>59</sup> RQ, 312-315.



Bishop of Münster accepted the use of ‘old’ (= English) money as standard in his Friisian deaneries; a few decades earlier, in 1392, he had permitted the deanery of Humsterland to quote the fines in Achtkarspelen in ‘old’ marks instead of Münster marks,<sup>60</sup> on the grounds that this was the money of account in Achtkarspelen and other bordering deaneries in Frisia. (Achtkarspelen, it is known, belonged politically to the sealand of Oostergo and ecclesiastically to the bishopric of Münster, but it belonged monetarily to the Ommelanden.)

Without real English pennies in the currency, and with the use of *butkens* instead, how was the relationship with the standard for the genuine English money of account kept alive? Fortunately, the answer to this is revealed by some documents. In 1428, a resolution of the Schouwen water board<sup>61</sup> defines an old mark as an English mark, this being 12 shillings, a shilling being 12 pennies and a penny being equivalent to  $\frac{1}{4}$ th of a *stoter* (the English groat). This definition was confirmed nearly 4 decades later; as the statutes of the Winsum water board of 1464 (dated just before the devaluation in England<sup>62</sup>) still used the same definition of an old English mark, based on the *stoter*. Hence we may assume that the English money unit of account in the Ommelanden had the silver equivalence of  $\frac{1}{4}$ th groat = 1 English penny of England. After the devaluation in 1411 it went down to c.0.9g,<sup>63</sup> and after the devaluation of 1464 it was further reduced to c.0.7g.<sup>64</sup>

So, whilst the English penny coin may have been non-existent in the Ommelanden currency during the 15th century, it remained implicitly the standard for the unit of the English money of account. The reason why the standard was only implicit is that it was represented by another coin, the *butken* - as in Westergo. *Butkens* (silver equivalence initially c.1.0g<sup>65</sup>) did indeed attain almost the same silver equivalence as the English penny (c.0.9g) after a certain amount of wear, and we have documentary evidence of this. In the statutes of 1448 (‘Ommelander Landrecht’) for Hunsingo and Fivelingo, made in agreement with the government of Groningen,<sup>66</sup> a *butdrager* (= 2 *butkens*) was

<sup>60</sup> Boeles, “De hoofdbronnen”, 155-156.

<sup>61</sup> WAH SCHOUWER ZIJLVEST: 1, f.1.

<sup>62</sup> Brooke, *English Coins*, 148: the new coin was proclaimed in September 1464. The statutes of the Winsum water board (see foregoing note) are dated in May 1464.

<sup>63</sup> Brooke, *English Coins*, 137: 15 grs of standard silver  $\approx 15 \times 0.065\text{g} \times 0.925 = 0.90\text{g}$ .

<sup>64</sup> Brooke, *English Coins*, 148: 12 grs of standard silver =  $12 \times 0.065\text{g} \times 0.925 = 0.72\text{g}$ .

<sup>65</sup> 1 *Butken* =  $\frac{1}{2}$  *butdrager*. These coins were originally struck in Flanders from 1390 until 1404 (Van Gelder, *Botdragers*, 117) with a silver content of c.1.0g and c.2.0g respectively (Van der Wee, *Vlaams-brabantse muntstatistieken*, 45; 57). Apparently, because of wear and tear, this silver content was decreasing. In 1426-1427 in Rotterdam: 1 *butken*  $\approx 19 \frac{1}{8}$  deniers of Holland =  $19 \frac{1}{8} \times \frac{1}{24}$  *tuin* =  $19 \frac{1}{8} \times \frac{1}{24} \times \text{c.}1.2\text{g} = \text{c.}0.96\text{g}$  of silver (Sassen, “Muntwaarde in Rotterdam”, 76).

<sup>66</sup> According to the text of the statutes in RQ, 315, they were established in an agreement between the town and the districts Hunsingo and Fivelingo as a product of law-making by the Easter High Court (De Blécourt, “Het ontwerp-1550”, 325, citing Frima, “Het strafproces”, 3).



defined explicitly as equivalent to 1.6g of silver.<sup>67</sup> Thus, by then, a *butken* would have been equivalent to c.0.8g of silver. The *butkens* lost their silver equivalence gradually, but the English penny lost it suddenly in the official devaluation in 1464. From then on the English penny was valued at c.0.7g of silver, as we have seen.

The statutes of the Winsum water board were made a few months before the 1464 devaluation of the English penny. This new change apparently had no immediate effects on the system of money of account in the Ommelanden. This would be conceivable if the English penny coin, like the *butken*, had lost silver equivalence by wear and tear, and the devaluation in England was designed to adapt the legal value to the commercial value of the penny. This indeed seems to have been what happened.<sup>68</sup> The implicit continuation of the English system of money of account until the end of Frisian independence is also confirmed by documentary evidence. In or before 1494 the statutes of the Aduard water board,<sup>69</sup> and even as late as 1503 the dyke statutes of Oterdum, still have their rates expressed in English marks, shillings and pennies.<sup>70</sup>

So far I have not mentioned a new element in the system of account in the Ommelanden. As early as the second half of the 14th century, and frequently in the 15th century, another measure of value was inserted: the old *schild*. The real gold coin that it refers to was circulating during the late Middle Ages, mostly denoted as (old) gold *schild* or (old) French *schild*, at varying rates. In 1371 it was valued by the Ommelanden abbots at 13 genuine old *tornoyse groten*, as we have seen. This was equivalent to  $43\frac{1}{3}$  old English pennies.<sup>71</sup> These various antiquated coins cannot have been current at that time; otherwise they would have been mentioned in old contracts and had to be valued by the abbots in terms of current money, *in casu* the *nummis usualibus*. Apart from its mention in this regulation, the *schild* is documented for the first time in the Ommelanden in a will in 1375, still probably referring to a coin,<sup>72</sup> but a will dated 1376 has an amount expressed in *schilden* which was to be paid in ‘current money’.<sup>73</sup> The real old French *schild* is unlikely to have been ‘current money’ since it seems only to have been sparsely-circulated in Frisia.<sup>74</sup> The amount in ‘current money’ quoted in this will, probably refers to an amount in usual money or English money - worth an old French *schild* at the time

<sup>67</sup> Excursus 12.2: ‘On the meaning of a lot of silver in Groningen’.

<sup>68</sup> Brooke, *English Coins*, 149: “The object of the 1464 reform was to draw bullion to the mint by offering a price at which the Tower could compete with foreign mints. In this it succeeded, ...”.

<sup>69</sup> Gerbenzon, *Enige Ommelander dijk- en zijlrechten*, 26; 43-51.

<sup>70</sup> RuG PEIP: 37, 44 ff.

<sup>71</sup> 1 genuine old French *schild*  $\approx$  13 genuine *tornoyse grote*  $\approx$   $13 \times 10 = 130$  *nummis usualibus*  $\approx$   $130 : 3 = 43\frac{1}{3}$  genuine old English pennies.

<sup>72</sup> OGD2: 630.

<sup>73</sup> OGD2: 647.

<sup>74</sup> According to information kindly supplied by Mr J.C. van der Wis, numismatist in Groningen, no *écus à la chaise* have been discovered in Frisia so far (1997).

of payment. Thus ‘an old French *schild* in current money’ is what I have called ‘a future silver based money of account’.<sup>75</sup> The 1382 statutes of the Aduard water board also use the old *schilden* as a measure of value; the wergeld and some fines are quoted in old *schilden*,<sup>76</sup> but unfortunately its silver equivalence is not defined. Again as a measure of value it appears in the synodal statutes of both Fivelingo (1406),<sup>77</sup> where old marks and old *schilden* occur together in one system of account, and Loppersum (1424),<sup>78</sup> where English marks are quoted alongside old *schilden*. Old *schilden*, as unit of account, were frequently used in the Ommelanden during the 15th century. It is not always clear whether the genuine French gold coins (‘a gold based unit of account’) or a multiple unit of the existent money of account system (‘a silver money based multiple unit of account’) were being referred to. Both did occur.

The first definition of the silver equivalence of the old *schild* in the Ommelanden is found in an inventory in Uskwerd from 1397, where the old *schild* is valued at 30 *vleemsen*.<sup>79</sup> In a sales contract of a house in Kantens in the same year, it is valued at 15 *placken*.<sup>80</sup> Provided that ‘*vleemsen*’ are to be understood as old *vleemse groten*, and *placken* as their double,<sup>81</sup> these valuations can be linked to the measures of the Groningen town government in 1394 which defined the old *vleemse grote* as a shilling Groningen *payement*.<sup>82</sup> These valuations may have proceeded from the fact that an old *schild* had habitually been equivalent to 30 old *korte groten*, and the Groningen town government had proclaimed the old *vleemse grote* to be designated a *korte grote*.<sup>83</sup> However, the resulting silver equivalence of the old *schild* of 30 old *vleemse groten/korte groten* (c.41.1g<sup>84</sup>) was substantially below that of the genuine French *schild* in 1371 (c.52.0g<sup>85</sup>).

Apparently it had become a habit to use the old *schild* as a convenient multiple unit of account. It was granted an all-Frisian legal basis in the all-Frisian peace treaty of 1422: 30 old *vleemse groten* for an old *schild*. What, then, was its place in the systems of account valid in the Ommelanden? At first sight, since it was based on the Groningen money standard at that time - the old *vleemse grote* - it might appear to have belonged

<sup>75</sup> See Chapter 7, ‘The history of the measure of value’.

<sup>76</sup> OGD2: 704.

<sup>77</sup> RQ, 309-312.

<sup>78</sup> RQ, 312-315.

<sup>79</sup> OGD2: 948.

<sup>80</sup> OGD2: 966.

<sup>81</sup> Van der Wee, *Vlaams-brabantse muntstatistieken*, 55: the best *placken* issued in Flanders, in 1365, had a silver equivalence of 2.74g, which is the silver equivalence of two old *vleemse groten* in Groningen (1.37g. apiece).

<sup>82</sup> Chapter 12, ‘The history of the measure of value’; Extension 12.2: ‘On the meaning of a lot of silver in Groningen’.

<sup>83</sup> Chapter 7, ‘The history of the measure of value’.

<sup>84</sup> 30 x c.1.37g = c.41.1g.

<sup>85</sup> 1 French *schild* æ 13 *gros tournois* æ 13 x c.4.0g = c.52.0g of silver.

to the Groningen system of money of account. No doubt it was linked to this system by means of the old *vleemse grote*. In the 1420s 30 old *vleemse groten* would be equivalent to 3 Groningen *schilden* or  $2\frac{1}{2}$  marks Groningen *payement*.<sup>86</sup> However, within Groningen, the old *schild* at 30 old *vleemse groten* is not found as a multiple unit of the Groningen system.<sup>87</sup> Groningen used it mainly in treaties with surrounding districts. Moreover, the old *schild* was not redefined when the Groningen *payement* was revalued between 1427 and 1434. Finally, the old *schild* also did not follow the reduction of the legal silver equivalence of the old *vleemse grote* in Groningen in 1435 (from c.1.4g to c.1.1g<sup>88</sup>). Its silver equivalence was apparently fossilised until the end of the century since the wergeld amounts, which are quoted in old *schilden*, remained unchanged.<sup>89</sup>

So, because the old *schild*, as a multiple unit of account, was linked but did not belong to the Groningen money of account system, the alternative is that it had a place in the English money system. Consequently there must have been a conventional rate between the old *vleemse grote* and the English penny/*butken*. Unfortunately, that rate is not specified in the sources of the Ommelanden, but the key is found in the money system of adjacent Mid-Frisia - not in connection with the old *schild*, it is true, but with the *clinckert*; that is, the Holland *schild*. Since the middle of the 15th century the *clinckert* had become a multiple unit of account in Westergo, worth 24 *butkens* or 16 old *vleemse groten*.<sup>90</sup> In other words the old *vleemse grote* was worth  $1\frac{1}{2}$  *butkens*/English pennies. Hence an old *schild* of 30 old *vleemse groten* was worth 45 *butkens*/English pennies. This perfectly matches the proportion between the silver equivalencies of the old *vleemse grote*, as defined in Groningen, and the English penny between 1411 and 1435.<sup>91</sup> The 1435 reduction of the silver equivalence of the old *vleemse grote* in Groningen did not touch that rate, as we have seen. Moreover, after the devaluation of the English penny in 1464, the proportion between the legal rate of the old *vleemse grote* in Groningen and the English penny was virtually restored.<sup>92</sup>

<sup>86</sup> Chapter 12: ‘The history of the measure of value’: 1 Groningen *schild* = 10 old *vleemse groten*, hence 30 old *vleemse groten* = 3 Groningen *schilden*; and 1 mark Groningen *payement* = 12 old *vleemse groten*, hence 30 old *vleemse groten* = 30 : 12 =  $2\frac{1}{2}$  marks Groningen *payement*.

<sup>87</sup> The old French *schild* is mentioned regularly in Groningen, though probably with reference to the gold coin.

<sup>88</sup> Chapter 12, ‘The history of the measure of value’.

<sup>89</sup> Excursus 9.1: ‘On the fossilisation of the silver equivalence of the old *schild* in the Ommelanden.’

<sup>90</sup> Chapter 8, ‘The history of the measure of value’.

<sup>91</sup> In 1411 the English penny was reduced to a silver equivalence of c.0.90g (see this section above), whereas since 1394 the old *vleemse grote* was valued in Groningen at 1.37g of silver (Chapter 12, ‘The history of the measure of value’);  $1.5 \times 0.9g = 1.35g$ .

<sup>92</sup> In Groningen the legal rate of 1 old *vleemse grote* was since 1435 æ 1.14g of silver (Chapter 12, ‘The history of the measure of value’). The English penny was reduced in 1464 to 0.72g (see above). Now,  $1.5 \times 0.72g = 1.08g$ . The small difference from the silver equivalence of that old *vleemse grote* may be attributed to ongoing wear.

Survey of the evolution of the money of account system in the Ommelanden  
c.1350-c.1500

Period	Standard coin	Equivalence	Unit of acc./multiple units
c.1350- c.1500		For usual or Groningen money: see chapter 12	
c.1350- c.1411?	English penny	c.1.2g/c.0.9g of silver	1 penny = 1 standard 1 sh = 12 d. 1 mk = 12 sh
c.1411?- c.1465	English groat	c.3.6g of silver	1 penny = $\frac{1}{4}$ th standard (= 1 <i>butken</i> )
c.1465- c.1500	ditto	c.2.9g of silver	1 sh = 12 d. 1 old <i>schild</i> = 45 d.= 30 old <i>vleemse groten</i> 1 mk = 12 sh

**Economic analysis**

Although the money of account system in the late medieval Ommelanden, as in Westergo, was a continuation of the existing money of account system based on the English penny, the evolution of the system differed in some respects from the system in Westergo. From the survey above, the following changes in the history of the system of money of account in the Ommelanden between c.1350 and c.1500 need to be explained:

- The use of Groningen money of account alongside the continuation of the English system of money of account.
- The emergence of the *stoter* (English groat) as standard and the *butken* as representative coin for the unit of account.
- The decrease in the silver equivalence of the unit of account from c.1.2g in c.1350 to c. 0.7g at the end of the 15th century.
- The emergence of the old *schild* as a multiple unit of account in the English system of money of account.

The use of the Groningen money system of account as an alternative system of account is the obvious consequence of the substantial interdependence between the economies of the town of Groningen and its rural surroundings, particularly activated by the policy of the town since the middle of the 14th century. In this respect there was a difference between the Ommelanden and Westergo. The Groningen money of account in the Ommelanden was 'everyday money'. In other words, it was part of the daily language of the trade resulting from the division of labour between town and countryside. Being small money, it was convenient for daily payments and, hence, for pricing the goods

and services concerned. It was the common man's money. Its trustworthiness with regard to future prices was of minor importance. That would have been the crucial difference between this and the English money of account system. Not only was the English system more convenient for the larger transactions made by landowners, rich merchants and public authorities; it was also more trustworthy with regard to future values. The differences between the social spheres that used one or other of these systems are nicely illustrated in the 1371 agreement among Ommelanden notabilities, as we have seen.

However, a problem with the English money system of account must have been the fact of its being based on a coin that was still being produced in England but was no longer current in the Ommelanden, as was also the case in Westergo. The use of the *stoter* (English groat) as standard - worth 4 English pennies and probably current, unlike the English penny itself - seems an obvious solution to that problem. At the same time, the *butken*, struck from 1390, could be used as a coin to represent the English penny, it having approximately the same silver content<sup>93</sup>. In the Ommelanden, however, the *butken* was not the standard coin as it was in Westergo. The difference between the solutions of Westergo and the Ommelanden is only slight. Entrepreneurial creativity allows for various solutions to a problem. Both options have advantages and disadvantages: the *butken* would have been more generally known and easier for communication in trade, while the *stoter* was probably more trustworthy with regard to future prices. The final selection might have been just a matter of chance, or it might have been a consequence of the use of Groningen money in the Ommelanden but not in Westergo. The users of the English money system of account in the Ommelanden would have given priority to the trustworthiness of the standard since Groningen money served the common man, while the users of the English money system in Westergo, lacking that option, had to weigh trustworthiness on the one hand and ease of communication on the other; the *butken* might simply have been the better choice.

The decrease of the silver equivalence of the unit of account between c.1350 and c.1500 can, of course, be explained by the same forces as were found in Westergo in the previous chapter.

The emergence of the old *schild* as a multiple unit of account in the English money of account system - worth 30 old *vleemse groten*, which we assume to have been equivalent to 45 English pennies - must have been the result of entrepreneurial creativity aiming to improve communication in calculations by linking the English money system of account to the Groningen money system of account. It was used from at least the 1390s, when the Groningen money system was based on the old *vleemse grote* as stand-

<sup>93</sup> The silver content of the genuine English penny was set at 1.08g in 1351, but after that it gradually decreased because of wear and tear.

ard coin (see Chapter 12). It could work for as long as the old *vleemse grote* was supposed to be equivalent to  $1\frac{1}{2}$  English pennies. When this rate became unrealistic in about 1430 (as will be shown in Chapter 12), the new multiple unit had already settled within the system for a generation. Hence, because of social inertia, it remained, even though it was based on a fictitious legal rate. It would not have been convenient for calculations within the English system, however, and as such it was indeed an adaptive compromise. It was frequently used in the law, but whether it was also used in trade is open to doubt.