

CHAPTER 12

THE PERIOD OF THE ‘NEW-FRISIAN’ PENNY IN GRONINGEN AND DRENTHE (c.1350 - c.1500)

We have seen in chapter 6 that, although Drenthe was named the 4th sealand, I have joined it with the town of Groningen for the purpose of this study. The money history of Groningen in the late Middle Ages has more than a mere regional or even Frisian significance. Drenthe only belonged to its area of influence,¹ but the money history of Drenthe reflects the money history of Groningen.² For that reason, this chapter deals primarily with the late medieval money history of the town of Groningen.

The historical context

After c.1350 the international trade of Groningen languished,³ as elsewhere in Frisia, but, to offset that, regional trade could be enhanced. Thanks to the geographic position of Groningen in relation to its area, a period of economic restructuring began, changing the commercial interests of the town from foreign markets to those of the region. The important trade in oxen and horses, imported from Denmark and northern Germany and grazed all over the Ommelanden before being exported to Holland, Brabant and Flanders,⁴ provides an example of the way in which commercial business evolved. During the late Middle Ages, it became the most important market town⁵ and consequently the most powerful economic power in Frisia. Its endeavours to contain and enlarge this position are expressed in its political history.

They are reflected in external as well as internal political actions. Examples of external political action occurred in 1361,⁶ in Groningen's unsuccessful attempt to play a role in the Frisian league of the Upstallisbam and in later separate treaties with neighbouring

¹ Formsma, “De middeleeuwse vrijheid”, 100.

² Obviously, in the relations to the bishopric or the seignory, the money of Het Sticht (or of the towns of Het Oversticht) was dominant. So the money of accounting in the surviving account over 1489-1490 of the *drost* (= governor) of Drenthe and Coevorden to his lord, the Bishop of Utrecht, is not derived from Groningen money of account (RAD DROSTEN: 050).

³ Jansen, “Sociaal-economische geschiedenis”, 145. The relation of Groningen to the Hanse was already unimportant at that time. In 1358 the town government was indignant at being neglected by Lübeck when this town induced the other Hanseatic towns to boycott trade with Flanders.

⁴ Benders, “Over ossen”, 61-86.

⁵ Jansen, “Sociaal-economische geschiedenis”, 143.

⁶ OGD1: 509.

Frisian districts: in 1366⁷ with Humsterland, in 1368⁸ with most of the Ommelanden and in 1378⁹ with Hunsingo and Humsterland together - joined in the same year by the monastery of Aduard and the district Middag, and in 1382¹⁰ also joined by Fivelingo. These treaties were focused on protection of life and goods. Groningen could offer what the rural districts in Frisia lacked: an organised police force to execute judicial verdicts if necessary, and a high court in the town. The interest of Groningen, of course, was primarily in the protection of market visitors on their way to and from the town.

Internal political change may have occurred in the town's governmental structure. The bishop of Utrecht had been formally lord of Drenthe, which included Groningen, since the imperial charter of 1046.¹¹ A few years before that, in 1040, the Emperor had granted a manor (*predium*) and its rights in Groningen to the chapter of the cathedral of Utrecht.¹² The chapter entrusted the administration of these rights in the following centuries to the Bishop of Utrecht in office, though they in fact fell to his secular representative, the burgrave (prefect) in Groningen. However, because in the middle of the 12th century the ruling bishop enfeoffed the prefecture to his brother and his heirs, his successors lost their grip on Groningen and even fell into conflict with it. By the 14th century the prefecture had become hereditary in 3 lineages of the Van Selwerd dynasty.¹³ Although the power of the Van Selwerds was seriously curtailed by the town government in a series of conflicts, they would have retained the rewards of the administration. These rewards were taken over by the dynasty of the burgraves of Coevorden in 1361 when a member of that dynasty married the last female heir of one of the Van Selwerd lineages. The income from this source would have been welcomed by the Van Coevordens because it could support their dynastic expansionist policy which aimed to gain power over Drenthe.¹⁴ We will meet some of the consequences of this development below.

As I have just mentioned, for a century the power of the Van Selwerds had been severely curtailed in a protracted struggle with the community of Groningen.¹⁵ Before 1356 the town's government had actually fallen into the hands of the merchants. It seems to have been incorporated in the old merchants' guild.¹⁶ One of the main tasks of this guild was mutual protection of the merchants outside the town.¹⁷ In 1362, however,

⁷ OGD1: 543.

⁸ Emmius/Reeken, *Friesische Geschichte*, 209-210.

⁹ OGD2: 661.

¹⁰ OGD2: 710.

¹¹ OGD1: 21; Blok, "De vroege middeleeuwen", 150-151.

¹² OGD1: 17; Nip, "De giftbrief", 69-76.

¹³ *Ibidem*, 77.

¹⁴ Tromp, "Drenthe", 190-196.

¹⁵ Van der Werff, "De opkomst", 193-208.

¹⁶ Dijkstra, "Magistraatsbestel", 66.

¹⁷ Bos, *Het Groningse gild- en stapelrecht*, 75-94.

the old organisation of merchants had lost its *raison d'être* with the establishment of a new Groningen merchant guild.¹⁸ Its membership now required citizenship - which only the town's government could grant.¹⁹ It demonstrated that public protection could and should be taken over by a body with a larger scope. This was realised after 1363 when the old rotating system with a board of 6 burgomasters was replaced by a *de facto* oligarchic regime.²⁰

Obviously the policy of strengthening the economic position of the town within the surrounding districts came up against the growing power of the *hovetlingen* in the Ommelanden. Many of them belonged to the Vetkoper faction, so, if members of the Schieringer faction were driven out of their properties, they took refuge in Groningen. At the end of the 14th century the Vetkopers were supported by the Count of Holland. It happened that the Count was also involved in a struggle for power with the Bishop of Utrecht. Consequently the Bishop and Groningen found themselves on the same side in the internal conflict in Frisia, but Groningen did not welcome this alliance. Formally the Bishop was still the sovereign over Groningen and Drenthe, and so he could easily exploit the faction conflict to regain his power in the area; and indeed the Bishop was very active to that end. He soon succeeded in regaining his castle in Coevorden and chasing out his disloyal burgrave there. Once the Count of Holland and the Bishop made peace, the danger became acute for Groningen and Drenthe.²¹ In 1402 Drenthe was subjected. Formally it was joined with Het Oversticht, but it was allowed to keep its own institutions.²² The Bishop's troops had also besieged Groningen in 1401, but here he was unsuccessful because the town received support from the Schieringer faction in the Ommelanden. The bishop had to retire and the conflict ended with a peace treaty in 1405.²³

A new danger emerged a few years later. In East Frisia, the Tom Broke's had come to power, as we have seen in previous chapters. In 1413 Keno tom Broke, ally of the Vetkoper faction, conquered Emden. Groningen tried, with the support of the Schieringer faction in the Ommelanden, to organise a defence against this new threat, but this was a vain attempt. In 1415 Keno succeeded, with the help of some allies in Drenthe, in conquering the town by surprise. This event turned the tide. From then on the war between the Schieringer and Vetkoper factions was waged in Mid-Frisia. The fighting came to an end after the death of Keno in 1417, and the conflict was then conducted by diplomacy. First there was an unsuccessful intervention by the Emperor. This was fol-

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, 101-105.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, 10-41.

²⁰ Dijkstra, "Magistraatsbestel", 68-70.

²¹ Formsma, "De middeleeuwse vrijheid", 94-95.

²² Tromp, "Drenthe", 196.

²³ Formsma, "De middeleeuwse vrijheid", 94-95.

lowed by an attempt by the Count of Holland, but he was mainly serving his own interests. The end (for the time being) came in 1422 with the ‘reconciliation treaty of Groningen’ between the Schieringer and Vetkoper factions themselves. Neither the Emperor nor the Count was involved in this treaty.²⁴

In the following years a power struggle arose in East Frisia between the general of Keno tom Broke, Fokko Ukena, and Ocko II tom Broke, Keno’s son. Groningen took the side of Ocko, but Fokko was the victor. Ocko II and his allies - among others the Bishop of Bremen, the Count of Oldenburg and quite a number of German nobles - were completely defeated in battles near Detern (1426) and Upgant (1427), and the power of Groningen was also finally broken in the battle of Oterdum (1427). Fokko took power in the Ommelanden for a couple of years between 1427 and 1433, and during that time he cancelled the treaties of the districts with Groningen and established new statutes for an alternative judicial organisation to replace the high courts in the town (*Focka Ukana wilkeran*²⁵). But Groningen soon regained its power. In 1437 Fokko was defeated in his turn by an East Frisian alliance of *hovetlingen*, supported by Hamburg; see previous chapter. From then onwards Groningen succeeded in enhancing its influence by diplomacy in the districts of the Ommelanden and, in the second half of the 15th century, of Oostergo. Treaties of co-operation were made to maintain peace and order within the districts, which were still being terrorised by internal conflicts. Peace, of course, was still an important condition for the maintenance of safety on the roads to the Groningen markets.²⁶

The growing power of Groningen in Mid-Frisia now provoked a new resistance by the Schieringer *hovetlingen*, particularly in Westergo, and a new conflict arose. In 1495 Groningen apparently considered itself strong enough to achieve its objectives by means of military power, but, as we have seen, the other faction turned to the Emperor. The consequences of this were fatal for the town. As we know, in 1498 the Duke of Saxony was appointed by the Emperor to the hereditary position of *gubernator* over all of Frisia. Although Groningen tried vehemently to resist the new ruler, its road to sovereignty was cut off forever.²⁷

The history of the means of payment

Although the circulation of silver and gold coins imported from England, France, Hainaut, Flanders, Burgundy and the Rhineland was substantial in Groningen, its own coinage

²⁴ *Ibidem*, 95-97.

²⁵ OFU1: 367.

²⁶ Formsma, “De middeleeuwse vrijheid”, 97-104.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, 104-105.

became important too. During the 15th century coins from Groningen circulated not only in Frisia but also in the Low Countries and large parts of western Germany.²⁸

After 1040, the right to operate a mint in Groningen belonged to the manor (*predium*) granted by the Emperor to the chapter of the cathedral of Utrecht, though not to the Bishop himself. The chapter entrusted the administration of the rights of this manor, including the mintage, to the Bishop, but they were actually executed by the Bishop's prefect in Groningen.²⁹ We must assume that from the 11th century the 'old-Frisian' pennies of Groningen (the *grenskin*) were struck in his mint. We do not know whether, after the final hour of these pennies in the 13th century, the imitation of English pennies was undertaken, but this is suggested by the treaty of 1338.³⁰ In this treaty the representatives of a number of Frisian districts, Drenthe and the town of Groningen agreed to examine annually the state of the currency in order to take measures for the maintenance of its soundness where necessary. At that time the currency in Frisia was still dominated by (imitative) English pennies. It is not known whether imitative English pennies were struck in Groningen, or whether light or brown sterlings, documented in Groningen and Drenthe in the first half of the century, were produced there, but it is likely. Measures for maintaining the soundness of the money would have been very difficult to execute if the town and its neighbours had not been able to influence the minting, though neither the town nor any of the other districts had obtained a feudal right to operate a mint. No doubt the town was interested in the mintage; its own currency system would be helpful in developing Groningen into a regional centre. It is sometimes suggested that at that time the town government usurped the mintage rights from the chapter,³¹ but this is unlikely because such an important event could not have been ignored in the documents. In these there are no traces of fierce protests or persistent complaints; but it does seem likely that the town government wanted to interfere. It found its opportunity about 1350.

At that time the chapter of the cathedral of Utrecht was no longer content with the income from its possession in Groningen,³² and so it took the leasing into its own hands. In 1352 it entrusted the administration of the rights not to the Bishop but directly to the dynasty of the Bishop's prefects, the Van Selwerds.³³ As the power of the Van Selwerds was by now limited, the execution of the mintage right would have been difficult, if not impossible, without the support of the town government. The town government certainly had the power to control the acceptance of money in Groningen. An example

²⁸ Van Gelder, "Laat-middeleeuwse munten", 22.

²⁹ Gosses, "De bisschop", 197.

³⁰ OGD1: 354.

³¹ Gratama, "Het ontstaan", 230.

³² OGD2: 1233.

³³ OGD1: 420; see also: Gosses, "De Groninger prefect", 197-201; Nip, "De giftbrief", 80-82.

occurred in 1350 when the burgrave of Coevorden requested support from the town government for his Coevorden money³⁴ to be accepted in Groningen.³⁵ The coins struck in Coevorden at that time consisted of shield sterling imitations,³⁶ imitative Holland pennies³⁷ and Flemish half *groten*,³⁸ and perhaps also imitative cavaliers and eagles.³⁹ It is not known whether the Groningen government complied. (Ten years later the Van Coevordens tried another way to gain a foothold in the Groningen currency, as we shall see.) It follows that the town could determine what money was legal payment and what was not. In doing so it had to respect the monetary clause in the 1323 treaty of the Upstallisbam because this was reconfirmed in Groningen in 1361.⁴⁰ It appears that, some time later (but before c.1390⁴¹), the town aimed to promote minting in Groningen; we learn this from an undated law in the old town-book⁴² to the effect that it was not allowed to change money within Groningen in order to have it minted outside the town in Frisia, or to carry money to the moneyers there.

In 1362 the administration of the manorial rights of the chapter of the cathedral of Utrecht had to be renegotiated.⁴³ This may have been simply because the old ten-year contract with the Van Selwerds was terminated, or it might have been due to new circumstances. The authorisation charter of the cathedral's negotiators mentions 'certain reasons' without specifying them. Since the marriage in 1360 of the heiress of the Van Selwerds, the leasing of the rights had probably *de facto* fallen into the hands of her husband, a Van Coevorden.⁴⁴ Again we can assume that the new town government interfered in this contract, but there is no evidence. Apparently the old parties involved

³⁴ Although it is unlikely that the Van Coevordens had acquired mintage rights here (Van der Chijs, *Munten van Friesland, Groningen en Drenthe*, 592), it is suggested that the minting was legalised on the basis of the mintage right in Borculo, which they had acquired (Tromp, "Drenthe", 188).

³⁵ OGD1: 415.

³⁶ Puister, "Munten der Oost-Nederlandse heerlijkheden I", 17; the author denotes the (shield) sterlings as '*kwart groten*'.

³⁷ Ditto; the author calls these coins '*kopjes*', as they are imitations of the coins of that name struck in Holland by the counts Florens V (1266-1296) and his successor William III (1304-1337), but Van Gelder (*Encyclopedie*, sv. *kopken*) is of the opinion that the coins of the 13th century Counts of Holland are mistakenly called *kopjes* (*kopkens*). Grolle, "De muntslag", (page numbers are lacking) sub 11, also assigns these coins as imitations of Holland pennies; weights vary from 0.46 to 0.31g.

³⁸ This coin was given various other names: *double tiers* or *petit gros* (Engel, *Traité*, 1090), *gans* (Van Gelder, "De munten", 123-124), *grote witte* or *grant denier* (Grolle, "De Heren", 14), half *leeuwengrote* or *leeuwke*.

³⁹ Puister, "De munten der Oost-Nederlandse heerlijkheden", 17; however, the author ascribes these coins only to burgrave Reinald I (1284/8-1315/24), not admitting the possibility of their being ascribed to his successor Reinald II (1315/24-1370).

⁴⁰ OGD1: 509.

⁴¹ Gosses, "De bisschop", 156-157.

⁴² Telting, *Stadboek van Groningen*, 71 (§205).

⁴³ OGD1: 512.

⁴⁴ OGD1: 475.

in the leasing contract remained, for the three lineages of the same dynasty were still involved in 1371 when the contract was renewed for the second time.⁴⁵ So far, there is no indication of minting under the town's authority before then.⁴⁶ Even after 1371 an infringement on the manorial rights by the town government would have been unlikely for a decade and a half. Several leading Groningen families personally leased tithes from the Van Coevordens⁴⁷ or premises from the Bishop or the chapter⁴⁸ during the following years. This hardly seems compatible with such a hostile encroachment. Moreover, in 1386 the ruling burgrave of Coevorden confirmed that he would meet the obligations of his ancestors towards Groningen,⁴⁹ this declaration would also hardly be conceivable if the Groningen government had taken away his rights. Only when the burgrave came into conflict with the Bishop, after 1386,⁵⁰ does it seem possible that the Groningen government usurped the rights, perhaps with the silent consent of the Bishop or the chapter.

This history of the right to operate a mint in Groningen is supported by the 14th century coins that have been found.⁵¹ Some were minted in Selwerd and others in Groningen. They are imitations of various types: shield-sterlings,⁵² cavaliers, *vleemse groten* (= *leeuwengroten*), *placken* (= double *vleemse groten*) and a few *tornoyse groten*. There is a striking resemblance between the shield-sterling types of Groningen and the coins struck in the Yade and Emden areas at the same time.

These 14th century Groningen coins can be divided into three groups. The coins of the first group bear the names MONETA ZELWORDENS(IS), so they were struck by the Van Selwerds at least as early as the 1350s.⁵³ The coins of the second group bear the names MONETA GRONING(E) (GRONIEN(SIS)). One of the coins in this group has a shield bearing the arms of the Van Coevordens,⁵⁴ but other shield-sterling types of this group show the arms of Groningen. These arms, by the way, need not have been a symbol of the town's authority; they probably originate from a dynasty preceding the

⁴⁵ OGD1: 590; 591.

⁴⁶ See also Nip, "De Giftbrief", 83.

⁴⁷ OGD2: 642 (1376, Lubbert Sickinge, burgomaster); OGD2: 654 (1377, Egbert Verhouwens, sheriff); OGD2: 735 (1384, Johan Sickinge, son of Lubbert); Dijkstra, "Magistraatsbestel", 85.

⁴⁸ Noomen, "Koningsgoed", 140.

⁴⁹ OGD2: 757.

⁵⁰ Tromp, "Drenthe", 192-193.

⁵¹ Puister, "Groningse stedelijke munten", 10-14.

⁵² *Ibidem*, nos. 1.105 to 1.109; Puister calls these coins $\frac{1}{8}$ th *groten*, $\frac{1}{4}$ th *groten* and $\frac{1}{2}$ *groten*. Chautard, *Imitations*, 314-315, refers to Van der Chijs, *Munten van Friesland, Groningen en Drenthe*, pl. XVIII, who calls one of these coins a half sterling (*ibidem*, 449).

⁵³ One of the coins was struck on behalf of Adolphus van Selwerd (Feith, "Rijder- en leeuwengroten", 151-157). Adolphus probably had the tutelage to the heiress of the Van Selwerds until she married in 1360.

⁵⁴ Van der Chijs, *Munten van Friesland, Groningen en Drenthe*, 449.

Van Selwerds as prefects of the Bishop of Utrecht in Groningen⁵⁵ and may therefore still have been struck on the authority of the same dynasty. The coins of the third group have GRONIENSIS CIVITATI^S or CIVITAS GRONIEN,⁵⁶ and these show the arms of Groningen again. The Groningen *placke* also belongs to this group.⁵⁷ The imprint ‘civitas’ increases the probability that these coins were struck on the authority of the town’s government. This group, therefore, is the youngest.⁵⁸

How could this have happened? Some time in the second half of the century the town government apparently took the right to operate a mint into its own hands. The conflict that arose after 1386 between the Bishop of Utrecht and his burgrave in Coevorden may have provided the opportunity. It may have coincided with the contrasting positions of Groningen and the Van Coevordens with regard to the conflict between the Schieringer and Vetkoper factions in Frisia. The town was a stronghold for the first faction, and the Van Coevordens took sides with the second one.⁵⁹ If the town did in fact usurp the right to operate a mint at that time, this was formalised a few years later in 1392. In that year the town government leased a $\frac{2}{3}$ rd part of the manorial rights from the chapter of Utrecht cathedral, replacing the Van Coevordens.⁶⁰ According to the contract, the Van Coevordens had not met their obligations, but it may be that they were unable to execute their rights because of the conflict with the town. The remaining $\frac{1}{3}$ rd part belonged to the Van den Hoves, who, although they were relatives of the Van Coevordens, had managed to meet their obligations; they had taken the side of the Schieringer faction.⁶¹ In 1393 the new Bishop of Utrecht confirmed the town’s rights; he recognised the lease of the manorial rights but only with the provision that the chapter had acted lawfully in allowing Groningen to lease them.⁶² He later entered into dispute with the chapter over the legality of this lease. In 1400 he acquired the ownership of these rights from the chapter in exchange for other rights, but the town refused to renegotiate the contract. For this reason and also because Groningen refused to recognise his sovereignty,

⁵⁵ Schuitema, *Zegel*, 27f.

⁵⁶ According to Van Gelder, “Nogmaals Roermond”, 141, the Groningen *placke* has MONE-TA:DEI:GRACIA:IN:GRONIENSIS at the obverse, but Puister, “Groningse stedelijke munten”, 12, reads instead CIVITATIS:DEI:GRACIA:GRONIENSIS. Mr J.C. van der Wis, numismatist in Groningen, kindly informed me that this last reading is the most likely. So I class this coin with the third group.

⁵⁷ Van Gelder, “Nogmaals Roermond”, 141; Van Gelder, “Muntvondst Roermond”, 63, dates this coin between 1369 and 1381, the last date being based on the absence of younger coins in the hoard as far as is known, especially Guelders guilders of 1381. Puister, “Groningse stedelijke munten”, 11, narrowed this dating, on numismatic grounds, to the period between 1371 and 1381. However, according to the documents, it is unlikely that coins were struck on the authority of the town before 1387.

⁵⁸ This dating is contrary to Puister’s, who partly dates the coins according to the development in the way the word Groningen is spelled.

⁵⁹ Tromp, “Drenthe”, 194.

⁶⁰ GAG STAD: RvR97.

⁶¹ Feith, *De kroniek*, 58-65.

⁶² OGD2: 858; see also Nip, “De giftbrief”, 83.

the Bishop laid siege to the town in 1401. However, Groningen received the support of the neighbouring Frisians, and the Bishop quickly gave in. He accepted the existing lease contract for 1 year, but the question of the legality of the original contract remained unsolved until a peace treaty was made in 1405,⁶³ under the terms of which the Bishop leased the manorial rights to the town for a century.⁶⁴

The right to operate a mint, finally achieved, was extensively used by the town.⁶⁵ From 1390 onwards, a new single *vleemse grote* or *butken* - successor of the old *vleemse grote* - and a new double *vleemse grote* or old *butdrager*⁶⁶ - successor of the old *vleemse placke* - were struck in Flanders and elsewhere in the Low Countries. A Groningen variant of the new *vleemse grote* has been identified.⁶⁷ In the 1420s the Flemish *kromstert* also penetrated the Groningen currency.

The next stage in the development of the currency in Groningen was influenced by a decision of the town government to revalue the unit of account in 1427/1434. This will be dealt with in the next section. A few years after this change the town followed in the footsteps of the coinage in the Low Countries by issuing *kromsterten*.⁶⁸ The Groningen *kromstert* resembles the Guelders *kromstert*,⁶⁹ which initially had a silver equivalence of approximately 1.0g.⁷⁰ In 1437 Groningen began minting a *braspenning* (silver equivalence 2.0g).⁷¹

⁶³ OGD2: 1221.

⁶⁴ Gosses, “De Groninger prefect”, 202-207; Nip, “De giftbrief”, 82-85: Groningen at first refused to pay homage to the bishop, but the town was compelled to do so in 1419, and the bishop then confirmed the town’s old rights.

⁶⁵ Extensive numismatic publications on the currency of Groningen in the Late Middle Ages: Van Gelder, “Laat-middeleeuwse munten”, 21-46; Puister: “Groningse stedelijke munten”, 5-36.

⁶⁶ Van Gelder, “Botdraggers”, 117-118.

⁶⁷ Puister, “Groningse stedelijke munten”, 12 (1.104).

⁶⁸ Van Gelder, “Laat-middeleeuwse munten”, 25-26.

⁶⁹ Puister, “Groningse stedelijke munten”, 14.

⁷⁰ Van Gelder, “Oostnederlands geld”, 54. The Guelders *kromstert* had a silver weight of about $\frac{2}{3}$ rd its Flemish model. This had a silver weight of 1.7g at its first issue in 1418 (Van der Wee, *Vlaams-brabantse muntstatistieken*, 58). In 1438 the *stadkromstert* was valued half a Groningen *braspenning* (see Appendix II), which in its turn was initially valued at 1/7th Arnhem guilder; that, is c.2.0g (see next footnote).

⁷¹ GAG COLLECTIONS: RF ms. in folio 21, 300^v: 16th century copy of a money ordinance of the town government in 1438, in which it is announced that the town will mint a new coin, seven of which will be worth one Arnhem guilder. The coins are dated; they were struck as early as 1437 (Van Gelder, “Laat-middeleeuwse munten”, 22-23). As an Arnhem guilder in a charter concerning a lease of goods in Groningen in June 1437, *nu twelff vleemse grote maket* (RAG FARMSUM: 845) and as 12 old *vleemse groten* since October 1435 were valued in Groningen legally at 1 lot of fine silver (GAG COLLECTIONS: RF ms. in folio 21, 301^v-302 (r.28-13)), it follows that a Groningen *braspenning* contained c.13.7g : 7 = 1.96g of fine silver. See also: Excursus 12.2: ‘On the meaning of a lot of silver in Groningen’.

In the meantime an important monetary change had taken place in the Burgundian realm: in 1433 a coin valid in Flanders, Hainaut, Brabant, Holland and Zeeland was introduced, the *vierlander*, known in Frisia as the white *stuver* (1.6g from 1433 to 1466⁷²). This coin would become a key coin in the currency of the Low Countries for centuries. In addition to this white *stuver*, there was also a black *stuver*.⁷³ This was identified in 1454 as the *philippus braspenning* (c.1.4g of silver).⁷⁴ In the same year, in Groningen, a coin was introduced that was officially named a (*stad*)*vlieger*⁷⁵ but also known as *philippus*⁷⁶ or black *stuver*.⁷⁷ Its double was officially called a *jager*. Its silver equivalence was somewhat lighter than the Burgundian white *stuver*.⁷⁸ It can be calculated at c.1.4g,⁷⁹ which corresponds to the silver equivalence of the *philippus braspenning* just mentioned. The Groningen *vliegers* were produced in appreciable quantities, used all over the Low Countries and in the Rhineland, and imitated elsewhere in Frisia. Their popularity might have been caused by their slightly decreasing silver content, which was finally recognised by the town government in 1474.⁸⁰

As new silver mines were opened after a period of serious shortage of silver in the 1460s, coin production in eastern Europe increased, but so too did the competition among the mints for a share in this production.⁸¹ The fiscal needs of the Burgundian state after the defeat of Nancy in 1477 caused debasements, which in turn caused an international monetary crisis.⁸² The mints of the Burgundian Netherlands were in heavy competition with those of the bishoprics of Cologne and Utrecht, and, in Frisia, with the towns of Groningen, Emden, Leeuwarden, Bolsward and Sneek. A rapid depreciation of the coins was the inevitable result.

⁷² Van der Wee, *Vlaams-brabantse muntstatistieken*, 97.

⁷³ GAG AHS: prov. 188 r80. See also Appendix II.

⁷⁴ The *Philippus braspenning* was a silver coin, struck in 1421-1433 by Philippus, Count of Flanders, initially with a gross weight of 4.92g, 0.4 fine and finally with a gross weight of 4.56g and 0.3 fine, thus a silver equivalence of 1.37g (*Encyclopaedie*, sv. Philippus van Namen).

⁷⁵ GAG MANUSCRIPTS: RF ms. in folio 21, 301.

⁷⁶ *Encyclopaedie*, sv. philippus.

⁷⁷ Van der Chijs, *Overijssel*, 488; GAG AHS: prov.209 r94.

⁷⁸ Van Gelder, "Laat-middeleeuwse munten", 21-46.

⁷⁹ GAG COLLECTIONS: RF ms. in folio 21, 301 (r.2-9): *Inden ieare ons heren dusent veerhondert veerunde vijftich Doe leet die stad slaen unde munten twalff olde iagers up enen golden gulden van gewichte* [i.e. In the year of our Lord one thousand four hundred fifty and four the town let strike and mint twelve old *jagers* for one gold guilder of [good] weight]. The silver equivalence of 1 Rhine guilder was, in 1454 in Lübeck, 33.712g; it had been approximately the same since 1451 (Jesse, *Der wendische Münzverein*, 217). A *jager* \approx 2 (*stad*)*vliegers*, so 1 *vlieger* \approx 1/24th of 1 Rhine guilder \approx 1/24 x 33.712g = 1.40g of silver. Since the first *vliegers* were struck: 10 *vliegers* \approx 1 *arnseguilder* = 10 x 1.40 = 14.0g (GAG PK:16). This result is practically in accordance with the finding that 1 *arnseguilder* \approx 13.8g of silver, not only in 1450 and 1452 (Excursus 12.2: 'On the meaning of a lot of silver in Groningen'), but still in 1456 1 *arnseguilder* \approx 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ white *stuver* \approx 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 1.63g = 13.8g (GAG SELWERD: 1 f.61^v r152).

⁸⁰ Van Gelder, "Laat-middeleeuwse munten", 35-36.

⁸¹ Spufford, *Monetary problems*, 124 ff.

⁸² Van Gelder, "Laat-middeleeuwse munten", 34.

In the ordinance of 1474⁸³ the Groningen town government determined to mint new *vliegers* (from ‘Mattheus’ mint’), 32 of which would be equivalent to 1 gold guilder, ‘though that guilder was not of full weight’. This implies a silver content reduced to c.0.9g.⁸⁴ But this was not the end of the decrease in silver content. In 1479 a monetary treaty was made among the towns of Deventer, Kampen and Groningen⁸⁵ in order to stabilise the ongoing depreciation, stimulated - no doubt - by mutual competition. The treaty determined the mint standards for coins struck by the three towns. Alongside the *Stichtse stuver* (and its derivations) that was to be struck in Deventer and Kampen, a *vlieger* or *swarte stuver* (and its derivations) would be struck in Groningen. The *Stichtse stuver* had to be equivalent to $\frac{1}{20}$ th of a Rhine guilder, and the *vlieger* would be worth 1/24th of a Rhine guilder; 12 of these *vliegers* would be equivalent to 10 *Stichtse stuvers*. According to this treaty the *vlieger* would contain 1.13g of silver,⁸⁶ nearly 25% more than in 1474. These standards seem to have given the mintmaster no work; according to Van Gelder, such *vliegers* were never struck.⁸⁷ The import of lighter imitations went on, however, and their production in Groningen was resumed in 1485 to compete with imitations of the Groningen money in Mid-Frisia and Oistvriesland that had a lower silver content.⁸⁸ Rather than *vliegers*, they were called *vleemsen*.⁸⁹ Their appearance had changed a little.⁹⁰ They had to be struck at the value of 1/48th of a gold guilder ‘and that gold guilder was very small’.⁹¹ Had it been the genuine Rhine guilder, the silver content of this *vleemse* would have been 0.63g.⁹² Van Gelder estimates its silver content at approximately 0.50g.⁹³ This process was halted again in 1488, probably as a consequence of a new treaty among Groningen, Deventer and Kampen in

⁸³ GAG COLLECTIONS: RF ms. *in folio* 21, 301.

⁸⁴ In 1474 1 (genuine) Rhine guider æ 29.187g of silver (Jesse, *Der Wendische Münzverein*, 219); as 29.187g : 32 = 0.91g of silver it follows that 1 *vlieger* æ less than 0.91g. Van Gelder, “Laat-middeleeuwse muntvondsten”, 37 has a silver equivalence of 0.95g at maximum, derived from comparable Utrecht money.

⁸⁵ GAD: 872 ch. 233; GAG STAD: D65 RvR230; GAK: 325 I.2161.

⁸⁶ The *Stichtse stuver* would contain 1/90th of a mark troy of 6 den. = (244.75g of silver : 90) x 6/12 = 1.36g, so a *vlieger* would contain 10/12 x 1.36g = 1.13g of silver. If calculated on the basis of the silver equivalence of 1 Rhine guilder in Lübeck in 1479 - 30.456g (Jesse, *Der Wendische Münzverein*, 219) - the result would be 1/24 x 30.456g = 1.27g of silver.

⁸⁷ Van Gelder, “Laat-middeleeuwse munten”, 37.

⁸⁸ Ditto.

⁸⁹ GAG COLLECTIONS: RF ms. *in folio* 21, 301 (r.21-30). This appellation seems not to be obvious. However, the public might have considered the Groningen *stadvliegers* as the successors, since 1454, of the old *vleemse grotten*, and the new name for the Groningen standard coin might refer to what was already habitual among the general public.

⁹⁰ Van Gelder, “Laat-middeleeuwse munten”, 37-38.

⁹¹ According to a statement in the 16th century manuscript mentioned before, possibly based on original documents (GAG COLLECTIONS: RF ms. *in folio* 21, 301).

⁹² Jesse, *Der Wendische Münzverein*, 219: in 1485 1 Rhine guilder æ 30.456g of silver, hence 1 *vleemse* æ 30.456 : 48 = 0.63g of silver.

⁹³ Van Gelder, “Laat-middeleeuwse munten”, 33.

which a revaluation of the Groningen money was agreed.⁹⁴ But, as far as Groningen was concerned, it did not work. The depreciation of the currency in the surrounding world went on.⁹⁵ The general inflation in north-western Europe did not come to an end until 1489.⁹⁶

Shortly after, in 1491, a new money ordinance was made in Groningen⁹⁷ in order to restore the value of the Groningen *vliegers* and related coins. The name *vlieger* disappeared, however, and was replaced by the Groningen *stuver* (from ‘Geert Hessels mint’).⁹⁸ Again it was valued at 1/24th of a Rhine guilder, and again it is recorded that ‘that guilder was very small and the Emden guilder was also passed for high-grade’.⁹⁹ This monetary reform accorded with the monetary reform in Oistvriesland. In both areas the new *stuver* became the basis of the silver coin system. The new *stuver* of 1491 was

⁹⁴ GAG STAD: RvR250.

⁹⁵ GAG STAD: RvR1104: An effort to stop the inflation was made by the prince-bishop of Munster. In a 1488 treaty between representatives of the princes of Cologne, Münster and Cleve, the Bishop of Osnabrück and some towns in their territories, exchange rates of currency were determined. The Rhine guilder was the standard money, equivalent to 30 *stuvers*; this is also the rate of the ‘golden guilder’. Among others in this agreement, the Groningen *vlieger* - called ‘*albe*’ = *Weißpfennig* - was valued at 1 *stuver* = 1/30th of 1 golden guilder. Because 1 Rhine guilder (1488 in Lübeck) \approx 30,456g of silver (Jesse, *Der Wendische Münzverein*, 219), it follows that 1 Groningen *stuver* \approx 30,456g : 30 = 1.02g of silver. Van Gelder, “Laat-middeleeuwse munten”, 31: In the same year this Groningen ‘*witpenning*’ was valued in Deventer at 1.10g of silver. This Groningen *witpenning* at 1.10g of silver, was valued at 5 Deventer *plakken*, whereas its double, - the ‘new’ Groningen *jager* - was valued at 10 Deventer *plakken*. The *witpenning* mentioned must have been struck in the 1470s.

⁹⁶ Van Gelder, “Laat-middeleeuwse munten”, 39.

⁹⁷ The original text of this decree is lost. Its existence is established by the agreement between the town government and the representatives of local industry in 1492 (De Roehr, *Het Stadboek*, 212-216), which refers to the decree of 1491.

⁹⁸ According to a text in the 16th century manuscript mentioned before, possibly based on original documents (GAG COLLECTIONS: RF ms. *in folio* 21, 301 (r.21-30)).

⁹⁹ GAG COLLECTIONS: RF ms. *in folio* 21, 301.

¹⁰⁰ (a) Jesse, *Der Wendische Münzverein*, 219: in 1491 1 Rhine guilder \approx 30.456g of silver, hence according to the official valuation 1 Groningen *stuver* \approx 30.456g : 24 = 1.269g of silver. See also Chapter 11, ‘The history of the measure of value’.

(b) The silver equivalence of the *stuver* can also be approximated another way. GAG STAD: RvR 287 (a valuation by the town Groningen in February 1492): this valuation implies that 1 Groningen *braspenning* \approx 9 *plakken*, 1 Groningen *stuver* \approx 6 *plakken*, hence 1 Groningen *stuver* \approx $\frac{2}{3}$ Groningen *braspenning*. This coin was struck until 1454, as we have seen. At that time, in 1450, 7 Groningen *braspenningen* \approx 1 lot of fine silver (GAG PK: 517), hence 1 *braspenning* in 1450 \approx 13.7g : 7 = 1.96g of silver (Excursus 12.2: ‘On the meaning of a lot of silver in Groningen’). It follows that 1 Groningen *stuver* A° 1492 \approx $\frac{2}{3}$ x 1.96g = 1.31g of fine silver, apart from loss of value by wear of the *braspenning*.

(c) Van Gelder, “Laat-middeleeuwse munten”, 33, estimates the silver equivalence of the Groningen *stuver* in 1491 at c.1.00g. His starting point is the 1498 mintage instruction in Groningen, which requires a *stuver* to be struck at 0.84g of silver (*ibidem*, 24). A depreciation between 1491 and 1498 of at least 16% would be ‘reasonable’, he argues. My calculation (1491: 1.31g or somewhat less, 1498: 0.84g), based on the silver equivalence of the antique *braspenning*, results in a depreciation of c. $\frac{1}{3}$ rd.

officially restored to a silver content of approximately c.1.3g fine,¹⁰⁰ but it was probably somewhat less.¹⁰¹

The new coin system did not last for long. In August 1498 Groningen and the Ommelanden were threatened with plunder by the Saxon band of *ioncker* Ffox, who thought that terror would bring this part of Frisia under obedience to the new Saxon *gubernator*. The menace was avoided at the cost of a tribute,¹⁰² but in order to afford this the town and the surrounding districts had to reduce the silver content of their coin stock drastically, resulting in a c.35% reduction of the *stuver* to 0.84g.¹⁰³

Here ends the story of the medieval silver minting of Groningen. The next development of the means of payment in Groningen began in 1507, when the town accepted the Count of Oistvriesland as its lord, and a new monetary reform was undertaken using the monetary system of the Burgundian Netherlands as its model.¹⁰⁴

In addition to silver coins, Groningen was granted the imperial right to mint gold coins in 1487. As a consequence Groningen guilders were struck; these were somewhat lighter (gold equivalence c.2.26g) than their Rhineland model.¹⁰⁵ Apart from this minting of gold coins at the end of the period under discussion, various foreign types of gold coins were imported to supplement the currency. These included French *écus* (called French *schilden* or gold *schilden*) from c.1350, Arnhem guilders (from Guelders) and *beyers*-guilders (from Holland) after 1400, and Rhine guilders or *rins*guilders (from the Rhineland electors) and *postulatus*guilders (from Het Sticht) after c.1450.¹⁰⁶

The history of the measure of value.

As elsewhere in Frisia, the English penny was the measure of value in Groningen in the second half of the 13th and the first half of the 14th century. We find it, for example, in the statutes of the so-called ‘morning meeting’ (*moergensprake*) of the guild in Groningen, dating from the last half of the 13th century, where amounts are quoted in English money.¹⁰⁷ English money continued as money of account in Groningen until

¹⁰¹ Probably the Groningen guilder, rather than the genuine Rhine guilder, had been the standard. According to GAG COLLECTIONS: RF ms. *in folio* 21, 301v (*Van Geert Hessels munte*), this guilder was lighter than the genuine Rhineguilder, so the silver content of the Groningen *stuver* should be even less.

¹⁰² GAG COLLECTIONS: RF ms. *in folio* no.21, 301v; Formsma, “De landsheerlijke periode”, 174.

¹⁰³ GAG STAD: RvR400.

¹⁰⁴ Van Gelder, “Laat-middeleeuwse munten”, 22.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibidem*, 42.

¹⁰⁶ Appendix II.

¹⁰⁷ Bos, *Het Groningse gild- en stapelrecht*, 60-65. Clause (1) defines the money: a mark gold is 10 mark English, each mark at 12 shillings, each shilling at 12 English crowned pennies (*ibidem*, 374-375). In clause (9) the sterling is defined as a crowned English penny (*ibidem*, 378).

about 1365;¹⁰⁸ in Drenthe it is even found as late as the 1380s.¹⁰⁹ We have no direct information as to its value, but this can be inferred from other data, to be dealt with in the sequel. Alongside English money, we also find the old *schilden* as measure of value, particularly in Drenthe.

The first renovation of the money of account occurred in the statutes of the merchant's guild in 1362.¹¹⁰ As we have seen, the establishment of this guild also marked a change in the governmental structure of Groningen. In these statutes, amounts are quoted in, among others, old *schilden* (= *écus*) and old *korte groten*. An old *schild* is reckoned at 30 old *korte groten*. As far as we know, these units were new in the system of account. They reflect the emergence of a new system between c.1360 and c.1370, and (Groningen) *payement* is indeed documented from 1370.¹¹¹ In this system, a Groningen *schild* also appears,¹¹² reckoned at 10 shillings Groningen *payement*. It was apparently a multiple unit of account; no coins called *schilden* were ever struck in Groningen. The unit, in fact, was a mark of 120 pennies - the Flemish style. The Flemish mark sterling was worth half a Flemish pound sterling; it was employed in Flanders and Artois (from the 1150s), and elsewhere, as money of account.¹¹³ Its name no doubt refers to the gold French *schild* (*écu*), and its rate in current silver money must have been derived from a real rate between the French old *schild* and the Groningen *payement*, which in due course became conventional. This implies that there was also a relation between the old *korte grote* and the Groningen *payement*. How are these various data connected?

The initial system of the Groningen *payement* can be traced to the treaty of Groningen with the Ommelanden of 1368.¹¹⁴ This treaty includes marks of 24 old *groten*. As Groningen was the most dominant party in this treaty, it is likely that these marks were marks Groningen *payement*. If so, 24 old *groten* were equivalent to 144 pennies of Groningen *payement*; therefore 1 old *grote* was equivalent to 6 of these pennies.¹¹⁵ In Oistringen, half a century before, 24 *tornoyse groten* had also been equivalent to 1 Oistringen mark. In other words, we find in Groningen in 1368 the same local penny as we found in Jever in 1317: a penny worth $\frac{1}{6}$ th of a *tornoyse grote*.¹¹⁶ In the first decades

¹⁰⁸ OGD1: 540.

¹⁰⁹ OGD2: 717 (1383, Anderen)

¹¹⁰ OGD1: 514.

¹¹¹ OGD1: 574.

¹¹² GAG PK: 63 (first time found: 1374, sale of a house).

¹¹³ Spufford, *Handbook*, 213.

¹¹⁴ Chapter 9, 'The history of the measure of value'.

¹¹⁵ RAG COLLECTIONS: RF ms. in q^o no.6 (Low Saxon Ommelanden judge's book of Haro Wineken then Damme), 372, has the following note '*ex antiquo codice*': 'the old mark - xij old shillings two old *grote* for a shilling - six pennies for one *grote*'. The note is not dated; the manuscript was made after 1596. It contains copies of documents from the 11th to the 16th century.

¹¹⁶ Chapter 10, 'The history of the measure of value'.

of the century the *tornoyse grote* had been conventionally valued at 3 genuine English pennies, so the local penny (a 'light' or 'brown' sterling?) was valued at half an English penny; that is, at c.0.65g of silver. In 1323, in the treaty of the Upstallisbam, the old *grote* was still equivalent to c.4.0g of silver, as we have seen, but after 1329 its weight declined in France.¹¹⁷ It may be assumed that the weight of the genuine coins circulating in Frisia, as well as that of their Frisian imitations, was also declining. In 1364 the silver content of the *gros tournois* in France was c.2.4g.¹¹⁸ Taking the rate of 1368 into account - a mark equivalent to 24 old *groten* - the penny in Groningen *payment* would have been equivalent to $\frac{1}{6} \times c.2.4g = c.0.4g$ of silver. The Groningen rate of an old *schild* at 30 old *korte groten* had been formulated only a few years before - in 1362. Assuming that at that time, as later on, an old *schild* was equivalent to 10 shillings Groningen *payment*, it follows that an old *schild* would have been equivalent to $120 \times c.0.4g = c.48g$ of silver and that an old *korte grote* would have been equivalent to $c.48g : 30 = c.1.6g$ of silver. These results are, of course, approximate reconstructions,¹¹⁹ but to the extent that they are true they enable us to reproduce the new Groningen system of account as it must have been between c.1360 and c.1370:

1 mark Gron. <i>payment</i>	= 144 pennies	æ 24 old <i>groten</i>
1 Gron. <i>schild</i>	= 120 pennies	æ 20 old <i>groten</i> æ 30 old <i>korte groten</i>
1 shilling <i>payment</i>	= 12 pennies	æ 2 old <i>groten</i>
1 penny <i>payment</i>	= 1 penny	æ 1/6th old <i>grote</i>

Although this system of account had been linked to the English system of money of account - being a penny equivalent to half an English penny, as the conventional rate of the mark in the treaty of 1368 implies - this link had come under severe pressure. This was recognised in 1371, when the abbots and *hovetlingen* in the Ommelanden, complaining about the deterioration of the currency, proclaimed a (new) valuation of coins.¹²⁰ Until then the genuine *gros Tournois* was apparently held to be worth 6 *nummis usualibus*, as this had been the initial rate of the genuine *gros Tournois*, but this had become a misleading convention. The new valuation set a genuine old *gros Tournois* as equivalent to 10 *nummis usualibus*.¹²¹ As the genuine old *gros Tournois* had a silver content of c.4.0g, this *nummis* must have been equivalent to c.0.4g. This silver equivalence matches

¹¹⁷ Spufford, *Money*, 405.

¹¹⁸ Ditto.

¹¹⁹ A check might be the following calculation. Although an old *schild* was a silver money based multiple unit of account, its silver equivalence - at that time - could not diverge very much from the silver equivalence of the genuine *écu*; if this contained 4.5g of gold, the silver:gold ratio would be $48g : 4.5g = 10.7$ (Watson, "Back to Gold", 25, has a silver : gold ratio in 1365 of 10.5 in France and of 11.4 in Germany). As far as the old *korte grote* is concerned, see Excursus 12.1: 'On the old *korte grote* in Groningen'.

¹²⁰ Chapter 9, 'The history of the measure of value'.

¹²¹ OGD1: 593.

the silver equivalence of the penny Groningen *payement* in my reconstruction. It is therefore assumed that in this Ommelanden treaty the ‘usual penny’ was in fact the penny Groningen *payement*.

A few years later, in the 1378 treaty between Groningen, Hunsingo and Humsterland,¹²² the wergeld was 60 marks in Groningen money; so the silver equivalence of 1 penny Groningen *payement* was legally still considered to be c.0.4g (if the wergeld hypothesis holds¹²³) and this remained so in 1382 when Fivelingo joined the treaty.¹²⁴ The same wergeld, and hence the same value of the legal unit of account, is found in the original part of the corpus of the old town-book of Groningen,¹²⁵ which can probably be dated between 1388 and 1394.¹²⁶ But these are all figures from official documents. There are hardly any figures representing the value of the unit of account in commerce. We assume that its value must have been going down continuously. In 1386,¹²⁷ a Groningen shilling appears to have been worth a *placke*. We do not know the silver-content of a Groningen *placke* at that time, but it may be approximated. The Flemish model initially had a silver content of 2.7g.¹²⁸ If its Groningen imitation had the same content, or somewhat less, the silver equivalence of a penny Groningen *payement* would have been 1/12th of it, that is only c.0.22g, about half the legal value it still had in 1382. The lower silver equivalence also matches the value of a penny usual money that is found in the statutes of Vredewold in 1387.¹²⁹

The debasement of the Groningen money standard was recognised, at last, in a money ordinance of midwinter 1394.¹³⁰ In this ordinance, it was determined that 1 old *vleemse grote* ‘that is designated *korte grote*’ was equivalent to 1 shilling (Groningen *payement*). Furthermore, it was stated that, if this coin depreciated, 10 of them would have a legally

¹²² OGD2: 666.

¹²³ The treaty between Groningen and Humsterland in 1366 (OGD1: 543) still runs in sterling, judging by its wergild amount of 20 marks (= assumedly 20 mark English). But the 1378 treaty between Groningen, Hunsingo and Humsterland already runs in money of Groningen. Wergeld here was 60 marks Groningen money. Consequently, in 1378, 60 Groningen marks must have been equivalent to 20 English marks, so 1 Groningen penny æ 3 sterlings æ c.1.2g : 3 = c.0.4g of silver (see Appendix I).

¹²⁴ OGD2: 710. As it seems, Westergo and Oostergo also made a similar treaty with Groningen in 1381 (Emmius/Reeken, *Friesische Geschichte II*, 217-218), but the charter is lost and copies are no longer available.

¹²⁵ Telting, *Stadboek van Groningen*, 27, §61. The compensation for cutting off someone’s hand or foot, or blowing out someone’s eye, was half a wergeld all over Frisia (Groningen included, see: De Rhoer, *Het stadboek*, 48, §21). At that time half a wergeld was 30 Groningen marks; hence a wergeld was 60 Groningen marks.

¹²⁶ Gosses, *De Groninger prefect*, 156-157.

¹²⁷ OGD2: 759.

¹²⁸ Van der Wee, *Vlaams-Brabantse muntstatistieken*, 56.

¹²⁹ Chapter 9, ‘The history of the measure of value’.

¹³⁰ Telting, *Stadboek van Groningen*, 81 (§227).

fixed silver equivalence of 1 lot of silver.¹³¹ These 10 shillings, worth a lot of silver, would be called a Groningen *schild*. Consequently 1 penny Groningen *payment* in 1394 was approximately equivalent to only 0.11g of silver.¹³² The new legal standard was valid in Groningen, of course, but it was also followed as legal standard in Drenthe, as appears from the 1405 Landrecht of Drenthe (fines in old marks as well as in *nye Gronnyger marcks*), notwithstanding the fact that Drenthe at that time was again controlled by the Bishop of Utrecht, who had his own money of account.¹³³

The new legal standard of the Groningen money since 1394 aimed to stabilise the value of the unit of account. The value of the shilling was legally fixed at a certain silver equivalence; no matter what happened to the coin, that would be the standard representing a shilling in the system of account. The coin was ‘old’ - in the sense of ‘out of production’ - so it could not be debased, but it could of course depreciate by wear and tear. This coin did in fact become gradually lighter. There are no direct data concerning its depreciation, but it seems to have become noticeable in c.1425, after which the rates of the (Arnhem) guilders mentioned in private contracts are sometimes expressed not only in the legal unit of account but also in new units. In a will dated June 1428,¹³⁴ a rent was specified in which 1 guilder was equivalent to 9 old *vleemse korte groten*, 6½ Flemish *kromsterten* (æ c.1.7g of silver apiece¹³⁵), 12 old *butkens* (æ c.0.95g apiece¹³⁶) or 5 old ‘John of Burgundy’ *braspenningen*. On this basis the old *vleemse korte grote* must have been valued at approximately 1.2g or 1.3g instead of 1.4g of silver, the legal equivalence.¹³⁷ It follows that, by this time, it was not 10 but about 11 old *vleemse groten* that were equivalent to 1 lot of silver or a Groningen *schild*.¹³⁸ Although the silver equivalence of a Groningen *schild* had been well defined in 1394, this development must have been confusing. It would have placed a strain on the relationship between the legal and the commercial money of account, and may even have led to open discrepancy.

¹³¹ Excursus 12.2: ‘On the meaning of a lot of silver in Groningen’.

¹³² 10 *korte groten* æ 1 lot of silver = 13.7g of silver æ 10 shilling = 120 pennies; hence 1 penny æ 13.7g : 120 = 0.11g of silver.

¹³³ RQ, 522-530. In this ‘Landrecht’ in §29 a fine of 3 pounds (= 3 x 240 = 720 pennies) is mentioned, which might be equivalent to 5 marks Groningen *payment* (= 5 x 144 = 720 pennies). This fine is found in a series to be imposed in case of refusal to give legal security: 3 pounds for the first refusal, double the second day and 15 new Groningen marks the third time.

¹³⁴ GAG VMSC: 16.

¹³⁵ The document is dated 5-6-1428. Before 7-11-1428 was 1 *kromstert* æ 1.72g of silver (Van de Wee, *Vlaams-brabantse muntstatistieken*, 59).

¹³⁶ ½ x silver equivalence *butdrager* = ½ x c.1.9g; see below.

¹³⁷ From the foregoing it follows that 6 ½ *kromstert* æ 6 ½ x c.1.72g = c.11.2g and that 12 *butkens* æ 12 x c.0.95g = c.11.4g of silver. Hence 9 old *korte groten* æ 11.2g or 11.4g of silver or 1 old *korte grote* ⅓ x 11.2g or 11.4g = 1.24g or 1.27g. The legal silver equivalence was 1.37g since 1394.

¹³⁸ 1 Groningen *schild* æ 10 x c.1.37g = c.13.7g of silver æ c.13.7g : c.1.25g = c.11.0 old *vleemse groten*.

The town government would have recognised the symptoms of obsolescence in its system of account and begun looking for an answer. The answer was provided by a remarkable decision made between December 1427 and August 1434. Instead of the old *vleemse grote*, another coin, with a higher silver content, would be the standard for the shilling of account. This decision boils down to a revaluation of the Groningen money of account. It may be that the decision was influenced by political circumstances. To determine what these may have been, we must try to look at the problem and its solution through the eyes of the time itself, not knowing the future. Internal political rule had been renovated in Groningen after the reconciliation of 1422: both the old factions were now represented in the town government.¹³⁹ Furthermore, it had been decided, in 1425, to revise the old town-book.¹⁴⁰ A new future, in close relation to the surrounding Frisian areas, seemed to lie ahead. Then a new political change took place east of the Ems. Groningen was allied to the ruling *hovetling*, Ocko II tom Broke, who was defeated in 1426 by his rival, Fokko Ukena. In 1427 Groningen was also defeated and Ukena conquered the Ommelanden. The laboriously-acquired influence in the surrounding areas, built over preceding decades, seemed to have been lost. The decision to revalue the unit of account was taken after that lost battle, so it might be seen as an element in a general policy to regain the lost influence. The measure is formulated in an addition to the old town book.¹⁴¹ This states that the compensations and fines in the town-book should be paid by an old *vleemse placke* or an old *butdrager* or a *jangler* for each shilling, whereas a mark would be twelve of these shillings, and a shilling would be 12 pennies.¹⁴² However, unlike the decree of 1394, the silver equivalence of the new standard coin was not stated. From other contemporary data it can be derived that a shilling had now become equivalent to c.1.9g of silver.¹⁴³ Hence, it seems that the silver equivalence of the unit of account was revalued from legally c.0.11g since 1394

¹³⁹ Alma, "Hekerens", 24-25.

¹⁴⁰ De Rhoer, *Stadboek*, 1.

¹⁴¹ Telting, *Stadboek van Groningen*, 16 (Liber II, addition 9). We do not know when this addition was made. If the additions in the old townbook were written chronologically in the order mentioned at the end of the manuscript, it was made after December 1427 but before August 1434. In that case the sequence of the relevant additions would be:

- add. no.2: December 1427, revaluation of the wergeld;

- add. no.3/13: undated

- add. no.8: undated, first addition with *sware mark*; [sequel of footnote: see next page]

- add. no.9: undated, revaluation of the shilling Groningen *payement*;

- add. no.14: August 1434

¹⁴² The statement in the town-book concerns the legal tariffs of the town government. It did not and could not prescribe the rates of Groningen money in civil affairs. But the statement concerned civilians as well, as it had to be assumed that, in lawsuits, the town government would judge money at the legal value it had decreed for its own tariffs (unless, of course, other rates were explicitly agreed by the parties concerned).

¹⁴³ (a) Van der Wee, *Vlaams-brabantse muntstatistieken*, 57: silver equivalence last issue of *butdragere* (in 1402) c.2.06g; the silver equivalence of the coin around 1430 would have declined because of wear and tear.

to c.0.16g¹⁴⁴ about 1430. As an old *butdrager* was a coin worth 2 *butkens*, this *butken* had become the sixpence or half shilling of the money system. From the money history of Westergo and the Ommelanden, we know that the *butken* had become the substitute for the penny in the English systems of money of account in these areas, and from the money history east of the Ems, we also know that an Ocko shilling was equivalent to an old *butdrager*. Hence, it seems that Groningen created a new link with these systems.

A revaluation of the unit of account favours owners of money and creditors, and damages debtors. Whether measures were taken to mitigate these consequences we do not know. The change is reflected in a few places in the documents, not least in the town statutes themselves. The tariffs in the old town-book were still based on the Groningen money of account that was valid in the 1360s. In 1425, before the revaluation, the town government had decided to draft a new codification of the town's statutes.¹⁴⁵ However, this new codification (the 'new town-book') was not released until 1446. The revaluation is also reflected in the treaties that were made with districts of the Ommelanden in 1428, 1434, 1435 and 1436, in which Groningen opens high court facilities for appeal against district court verdicts; the bail for an appeal was 5 old marks¹⁴⁶. In the 1434, 1435 and 1436 treaties - in any case drafted after the revaluation¹⁴⁷ - it was added that 1 old mark was equivalent to 3 Groningen marks; this is not found in the 1428 treaty, so possibly the revaluation had not yet occurred in 1428. The proportion of 3 (new) Groningen marks to 1 old mark would correspond to 6 (new) Groningen pennies and 2 (old) Groningen pennies for an English penny/*butken* - the original value of a penny Groningen *payment* in the 1360s. In other words, 1 old mark in the tariff for appeal apparently refers to the archaic tariffs of the previous century. The multiplication by 3, of course, reflects the legal proportion. This was only an approximation of the real rate. The old mark in the tariffs was still based on the penny Groningen *payment* (c.0.4g silver equivalence in the 1360s), which was in fact only just over 2½ times the penny

(b) In Rotterdam was in 1426/1427 1 *butken* æ (19 ⅓ : 24) *tuun* = 43/54 *tuun*; as also 1 'noble of 60 *tunen*' æ 60 *tunen*, it follows that 1 *tuun* æ 43/54 x 1/60 noble 'of 60 *tunen*' = 43 : 3,240 noble 'of 60 *tunen*' (Sassen, "Muntwaarde in Rotterdam", 75-76); as 1 noble æ 80 English pennies (Spufford, *Money*, 409) and between 1411 and 1464 an English penny æ c.0.9g of silver (see Chapter 8, 'The history of the measure of value'), it follows that 1 *butken* æ 43/54 x 1/60 x 80 x c.0.9g = c.0.95g, hence 1 *butdrager* æ 2 *butkens* = 2 x c.0.95g = c.1.9g of silver.

¹⁴⁴ c.1.9g : 12 = c.0.16g.

¹⁴⁵ De Rhoer, *Het stadboek*, 1.

¹⁴⁶ GAG STAD: RvR161.1 (1428, treaty with Westerkwartier, clearly a counter-offensive of Groningen against the *Focka Ukana wilkeran* of 1428); *ibidem*: RvR161.4 (1434 treaty with district Halfambt in Hunsingo and with Fivelingo); *ibidem*: RvR161.2 (1436, treaty with district Oosterambt in Hunsingo); *ibidem* : RvR161.2 (1436, treaty with district De Marne in Hunsingo); GAG STAD: RvR155 (1435, treaty with Winschoten).

¹⁴⁷ The revaluation in Groningen is not dated but must have been stated before August 1434 (next date of addition in Groningen town-book mentioned after the addition about the revaluation), whereas the treaty of 1434 was dated in September 1434.

Groningen *payement* after the revaluation of 1427/1434. From rates in contracts, and also in wills, we find that, in the second quarter of the century, references to the old *vleemse grote* were gradually disappearing.¹⁴⁸ Furthermore, the name ‘*sware mark*’ (= heavy mark) appeared a few times in the additions to the town-book and other official documents that were made during that period.¹⁴⁹ This may be part of the same gradual process. It is obvious that a distinction had to be made between light marks (12 shillings of c.1.4g silver equivalence each) and heavy marks (12 shillings of c.1.9g silver equivalence each).

However, the existence of two kinds of shillings and marks obviously caused confusion, and this had to be removed by the town government. Hence ‘because of the many disputes that had risen and probably would rise about this money’,¹⁵⁰ it decided in 1435 to redefine the value of the old *vleemse grote*. It was decided that ‘for now and forever’ 12 old *vleemse groten* could be paid with 1 lot of fine silver or with other means of payment equivalent to 1 lot of fine silver.¹⁵¹ This implied a new legal silver equivalence of the old *vleemse grote* of 1.1g (fine).¹⁵² There was no longer a convenient place for this coin in the system of account.¹⁵³

This process is reflected in a decision of the Drost and his judges in Drenthe in 1445.¹⁵⁴ The statutes of Drenthe apparently still used Groningen money as it had been defined in 1394 (‘*Groninger schilde, nha denn oldenn paije*’). When this ‘*paije*’ was changed in 1427/1434, the reaction in Drenthe was that, from 1445 onwards, 3 of these (old) Groningen *schilden* would be paid by 1 *rins*guilder + 2 old *butkens*. This means that in 1445 an old Groningen shilling (as a multiple unit of account of the kind used before the revaluation of 1427/1434) was considered to be equivalent to only c.1.1g of silver.¹⁵⁵ This was indeed equal to the new legal silver equivalence of the old *vleemse grote* after 1435.

¹⁴⁸ See Appendix II.

¹⁴⁹ Telting, *Stadboek*, 9 (§8); 48 (§17); 62 (§20); GAG STAD: I 2 RvR917 copy (1434, statutes merchants guild); GAG STAD: RvR162 (1436, ordinance on the guilds); De Rhoer, *Het Stadboek*, 54 (Liber III § 28); 128 (Liber IV §26).

¹⁵⁰ GAG COLLECTIONS: charter RF 1435.14. See full text in Excursus 12.2: ‘On the meaning of a lot of silver in Groningen’.

¹⁵¹ Excursus 12.2: ‘On the meaning of a lot of silver in Groningen’.

¹⁵² c.13.7g : 12 = c.1.14g.

¹⁵³ If an old *butdrager* was reckoned at c.1.9g or c.2.0g of silver, hence 1 penny at c.0.16g or c.0.17g, it follows that an old *vleemse grote* at the new silver equivalence of c.13.7g : 12 = c.1.14g would be equivalent to c.1.14g : c.0.16g = c.7.2 or c.1.14g : c.0.17g = c.6.8, rounded 7 pennies.

¹⁵⁴ Feith, *Ordelboek*, part 2, 34.

¹⁵⁵ 1 Rhine guilder in 1445 æ c.33.0g of silver (Jesse, *Der wendische Münzverein*, 215) and 2 old *butkens* æ c.1.6g of silver (see below), so 3 Groningen *schilden* æ c.34.6g of silver; as 1 Groningen *schild* was equivalent to 10 ‘old’ Groningen shillings, it follows that 1 ‘old’ Groningen shilling æ 1/10 x 1/3 x c.34.6g = c.1.15g of silver. Compare this result with the legal rate in 1435, c.13.7g : 12 = c.1.14g of silver.

It may be that what the Groningen town governors had in mind was a return to strong money. This would be difficult to realise if the money standard remained a foreign coin, even though it was out of production. They had learned this from the experience of 1394. It therefore seems obvious that the town would strike coins of its own design to support its monetary policy. From 1437 onwards *braspenningen* were struck, officially at the rate of 7 to 1 Arnhem guilder. Its initial silver weight may have been c.2.0g,¹⁵⁶ which is slightly over that of the old *butdrager*. Moreover, and perhaps simultaneously, Groningen *stadkromsterten* were also struck. These may have been intended to replace the *butkens*.¹⁵⁷ Hence, in the new coin system the *braspenning* was to be equivalent to 2 *stadkromsterten*.¹⁵⁸ This *kromstert* in particular must have become a popular means of payment. Both coins would have served for payments quoted in the new money system.¹⁵⁹ But this lasted for a short time only; the market took its own course, and two phenomena in the 1440s disturbed the scheme.

First, the *butken* and the old *butdrager* gradually lost value in the exchange markets, probably owing to wear and tear. In 1427, at the time of the revaluation, a *butken* had a silver equivalence of c.0.95g, as we have seen. Between 1445 and 1455, 17 of them were rated at 1 guilder, and several times in the 1450s 1 guilder was also rated at 8½ white *stuvers*.¹⁶⁰ The white *stuver* had been the name of the key coin of the Burgundian Netherlands since 1433, with a silver equivalence of c.1.6g, as we have already seen in Westergo.¹⁶¹ Hence, after 2 decades a *butken* had a silver equivalence of half a *stuver*; that is, only c.0.8g.

¹⁵⁶ In 1438, according to a note in GAG COLLECTIONS: RF ms. *in folio* 21, p.300^v. The Arnhem guilder in 1437 was equivalent 12 old *vleemse groten* (RAG FARMSUM: 845), in other words to 1 lot of fine silver (money ordinance of 1435 regarding the old *vleemse grote*; see Excursus 12.2: ‘On the meaning of a lot of silver in Groningen’). It follows, that 1 *braspenning* æ c.13.7g : 7 = c.1.95g of fine silver. This silver equivalence was only a little over the *butdrager*’s of c.1.9g found around 1427.

¹⁵⁷ See Appendix II. In 1429 an (Arnhem) guilder was still rated at 13 *butkens*, whereas it was rated at 17 *butkens* in 1446. So in between it may have had a rate of 15 *butkens*. In 1438 1 Arnoldus Arnhem guilder was rated at 15 *stadkromsterten* and at 7½ ‘*nye penninge*’ (GAG PK: 295), no doubt *braspenningen*. In 1444 a guilder was still rated at 15 *kromsterten*. In undated additions to the synodal statutes of Loppersum of 1424 (RQ, 312-315) and the statutes of the Vredewold eastern water board of 1425 (RAG MANUSCRIPTS: ms.13b (Convolutum Wittewierum, 1032), but apparently added some time after these statutes were formulated, rates of 1 *butken* at 1 *kromstert* are also found.

¹⁵⁸ The official rate of 7 *braspenningen* for 1 guilder is also found many times in private contracts. Yet these coins are numismatically considered to be equivalent to 2 *kromsterten* (Van Gelder, ‘Laat-middel-eeuwse munten’, 34), 15 of which were valued as equivalent to 1 guilder from 1438 onwards during the 15th century (GAG PK: 382 r79). In 1438/1446 a rate of 7½ *braspenningen* to 1 Arnhem guilder is also found a few times in private contracts. See Appendix II.

¹⁵⁹ The compensation register of Westerwolde of 1470, running in Groningen *payement*, has a clause stating that a shilling will be paid with a *braspenning* and a mark counts as 24 *kromsterten* (RQ, 258-282, Chapter XIV §8).

¹⁶⁰ See Appendix II.

¹⁶¹ 1.63g; see Chapter 8, ‘The history of the means of payment’.

Second, a new multiple unit of account arose - the guilder. This was initially a real gold coin, imported from Guelders. In or before 1450¹⁶² that became, in Groningen and elsewhere, a silver-based multiple unit, reckoned at a given number of silver coins. In 1437 it had been rated at 12 old *vleemse groten*,¹⁶³ which had been equivalent to 1 lot of fine silver since 1435, as we have seen. In 1450 the guilder was still equivalent to 7 *braspenningen* or 1 lot of 'fine' silver¹⁶⁴ (which was probably not really 'fine' but '15lodig' i.e. 15/16 fine, equivalent to 13.7g of silver¹⁶⁵). In between, on a number of occasions, the guilder was also rated at 15 Groningen *kromsterten*. These seem not to have been market rates but rather conventional formulae. Hence, the guilder in the quotations was not a gold coin but a quantity of silver, probably 1 lot of silver 15lodig fine. This must have been a convenient multiple unit. It seems to me that its equivalence to the former Groningen *schild* - the multiple unit of 10 shillings Groningen *payment* in the abolished money system¹⁶⁶ - may account for its popularity. Although the *kromstert* was designated to be half a shilling (6 pennies) new Groningen *payment*, it may have been used in practice as a multiple unit of account of 8 old pennies Groningen *payment*.¹⁶⁷ Consequently, the old Groningen *schild* (120 old pennies Groningen *payment*) was equivalent to $120 : 8 = 15$ *kromsterten*. This element of the old system could easily be continued by the guilder. Moreover, it was a popular multiple unit in the Emden area too, as we have seen. But there was a disadvantage: it did not fit very well into the new penny-shilling-mark system of account: a multiple unit of 7 or $7\frac{1}{2}$ shillings represented by *braspenningen*, or a multiple unit of $8\frac{1}{2}$ shillings represented by white *stuvers*, would not have been very convenient for making calculations.

The town government apparently assumed an attitude of uncertainty towards these new developments, for the *braspenning* was not legalised as the new shilling of account. When the new town-book was released in 1446, the resolution made in 1427/1434 was still maintained: 'for compensations and fines in the Book, expressed in shillings and marks, a shilling will be paid with 1 old *vleemse placke* or 1 old *butdrager* and a mark with 12 old *vleemse placken* or 12 old *butdragere*, or with equivalent money'.¹⁶⁸ Again it did not state the silver equivalence of this shilling. Two years later, however, in the 1448 treaty between Groningen and the Ommelanden,¹⁶⁹ the statement of the town-book was repeated, but this time the silver equivalence of the shilling was defined. It

¹⁶² GAG PK: 122 (1450). Contract regarding a rent, from a house in Groningen, of 12 *arnseguilders als in Groningen ganck ande gauē is* [i.e. as current in Groningen].

¹⁶³ RAG FARMSUM: 845.

¹⁶⁴ GAG PK: 517 r131.

¹⁶⁵ Excursus 12.2: 'On the meaning of a lot of silver in Groningen'.

¹⁶⁶ In 1394 the Groningen *schild* was also defined as a multiple unit æ 1 lot silver. See above.

¹⁶⁷ 8 old pennies æ $8/12 \times c.1.37g = c.0.91g$ silver.

¹⁶⁸ A third kind of coin is mentioned in this statement: the *iangheler*; this was just another name for the old Flemish double *grote*.

¹⁶⁹ RQ, 315-324.

states that ‘for compensations and fines in the treaty, a shilling will be paid with 1 *butdrager* and a mark with 12 *butdragers*; and if the *butdragers* might depreciate or be abolished in the future, a mark will be equivalent to ‘1 $\frac{1}{2}$ lot of good white silver, Cologne weight or other equivalent means of payment, current in Groningen, Hunsingo or Fivelingo’. It is true that the treaty of 1448 is concerned with compensations and fines for crimes in Hunsingo and Fivelingo, but it seems unthinkable that the old *butdrager* for compensations and fines in the Ommelanden in 1448 - to be tried at the high courts in Groningen - would differ from the old *butdrager* for compensations and fines in Groningen itself in 1446. So we must conclude that the *butdrager* in the town-book of 1446 had fallen to an equivalence of c.1.7g of silver.¹⁷⁰ This is considerably below the equivalence of c.1.9g in 1427/1434. The way the law is formulated suggests that the old *butdrager*, which had been out of production since 1402,¹⁷¹ had only a short future in circulation if it was still current at all.¹⁷²

The supposed ‘wait and see’ attitude of the town government had a curious consequence. The relationship between the *braspennig* and the *kromstert* on the one hand and the legal Groningen money of account system on the other hand was lost. Instead, these coins became the germs of a new system of money of account. This development was probably effected by the new multiple unit: the (light) guilder. As shown above, the old and the new system could be simply linked by interpreting ‘a Groningen *schild*’ as ‘a guilder’. However, 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ *kromstert* was now equivalent to 1 old shilling.¹⁷³ The need for a coin worth 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ *kromstert* was the logical consequence. The popularity of the guilder as a multiple unit of account may be ascribed to the reluctance of commercial behaviour to accept the new legal system of money of account. Its gaining popularity seems to have been confirmed by the town government in the 1450s. In 1454 it was decided to strike (*stad*)*vliegers* (silver content c.1.4g; see previous section) worth 1/10th of a guilder or 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ *kromstert*. Hence, the (*stad*)*vlieger* could be used for the antiquated shilling of account. The system of 1394 had returned again, the only difference being that the (*stad*)*vlieger* had replaced the old *vleemse grote* at the same silver equivalence, and the guilder had replaced the Groningen *schild*. So, 10 *vliegers* or 5 *jagers* were considered equivalent to 1 guilder, and this remained so until the end of the century. The rate of 15 *kromsterten* (hence c.0.9g of silver apiece¹⁷⁴) for a guilder had already become conventional. From that time onwards, the *vlieger* became the key

¹⁷⁰ Excursus 12.2: ‘On the meaning of a lot of silver in Groningen’.

¹⁷¹ Van der Wee, *Vlaams-brabantse muntstatistieken*, 58.

¹⁷² Van Gelder, “Botdragers”, 119. Last *butdragers* discovered in Frisia in a hoard in Sneek dated 1434. But the use of *butkens* lasted a century more: the last one was found in a hoard in Heerde dated 1523.

¹⁷³ 1 guilder = 1 Groningen *schild* = 10 shillings of 1394 \approx 15 *kromsterten*, hence 1 shilling of 1394 \approx 1.5 *kromstert*.

¹⁷⁴ 1 guilder \approx 1 lot of fine (15*lodiges*) silver \approx 15/16 \times c.14.6g = c.13.7g; 1 *stadkromstert* \approx c.13.7g : 15 = c.0.91g.

coin in the Groningen currency system. It gradually evolved to become the standard for the Groningen unit of account in trade. It was reckoned at 12 *grootkens*. Two *grootkens* would be 1 *plak* and 8 *grootkens* would be a *kromstert*.¹⁷⁵ As long as the shilling Groningen *payment* continued to be defined at a silver equivalence of c.1.7g (see above), there would have been a discrepancy between the legal and the commercial money of account systems.

This discrepancy became somewhat smaller after some time. In 1464 the standard for the English system of money of account, the sterling, was devalued to 0.72g.¹⁷⁶ A few years later, in 1466, the Burgundian white *stuver* - the assumed substitute for the old *butdrager* - was debased to 1.43g of silver.¹⁷⁷ That was almost the silver equivalence of the Groningen *vlieger* in 1454. In the ‘English’ system of money of account, as still used in the Ommelanden, we have found that an old *schild*, probably a multiple unit of account of 45 English pennies/*butkens*,¹⁷⁸ was valued at $2\frac{1}{2}$ guilder æ 25 Groningen *vliegers* after 1464.¹⁷⁹ It follows that 1 Groningen *vlieger* æ $45 : 25 = 1.8$ English pennies æ $1.8 \times 0.72\text{g} = \text{c.}1.3\text{g}$ of silver at that time. In other words, it too had lost some silver equivalence. No town resolution to redefine the Groningen mark-shilling-penny system of account after 1446 has been found.

We do not know, but it seems possible that after 1464 the shilling Groningen *payment* followed *de facto* the silver equivalence of the *vlieger*, without further regard to the silver equivalence of the Ommelanden unit of account - the English penny. If that is the case, the penny *payment* was represented by the *grootke*. A similar system of money of account was found during this period in the Emden area, as we have seen, where the *arnseguilder* was reckoned at 10 Emden *groten*. The guilder is also found in Drenthe during this period, as a multiple unit not of 10 *vliegers* but of 10 old *vleemse groten* (æ 15 *kromsterten*).¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁵ GAG PK: 173 (1452); GAG HGG: 106 (1484). The names *grootkens* and *plakken* appear in the documents only in the second half of the 15th century. Around 1430 (see above) the *butdrager* was reckoned at 12 Groningen pennies (c.1.9g silver equivalence), the old *vleemse grote* probably at 7 or 8 pennies (c.1.2g of silver) and a *grote* at 4 pennies (c.0.6g of silver) (De Rhoer, *Het stadboek*, 107, Liber V §33). It is difficult to imagine that the *grootke* (c.0.12g of silver) and the *plak* (c.0.24g of silver) in the 1450s have their origin in some of these coins, as is sometimes suggested (Van Gelder, “Laat-middeleeuwse munten”, 41).

¹⁷⁶ Chapter 8, ‘The history of the measure of value’.

¹⁷⁷ Van der Wee, *Vlaams-brabantse muntstatistieken*, 97; 106.

¹⁷⁸ Chapter 9, ‘The history of the measure of value’.

¹⁷⁹ PG: 19 (1467); PG: 29 (1477).

¹⁸⁰ For instance: DWK I, 234 (no 185, 1471, Weerdinge). It seems that in Drenthe the name ‘old’ *vleemse grote* was even mistakenly used to denote the Groningen *vlieger*. Van Gelder, “Laat-middeleeuwse munten”, 28: from other sources it is known that the name *vleemse* is used for the Groningen *stuver* or *vlieger*.

Gradually the condition had evolved whereby a guilder - as a silver money based multiple unit of account - was not valued as a lot of 15*lodiges* silver but as a sum of 10 Groningen (*stad*)*vliegers*. In 1474, when a light depreciation of the *vlieger* was admitted by the town government¹⁸¹ (in fact to c.0.9g silver equivalence; see previous section), the guilder remained equivalent to 10 *vliegers*, which demonstrates its dependency on that coin rather than *vice versa*. As we have seen, the silver equivalence of the *vlieger* was determined by maintaining a certain rate in relation to the golden *rins*-guilder. If this rate had really been maintained, it would have meant that a rise in the silver:gold ratio resulted in a higher silver equivalence of the *rins*guilder, creating a need to strike *vliegers* with a higher silver content in order to keep the rate stable. This, of course, did not happen. As I see it, the actual silver content of the *vlieger* was at best determined by the silver equivalence of the golden *rins*guilder at the time when the mint instructions were made. Moreover, after 1487,¹⁸² when Groningen was permitted to strike guilders on its own authority, in all likelihood the standard would not have been the real *rins*guilder but its own Groningen guilder, which was *de facto* somewhat lighter.¹⁸³

So, at last, the *vlieger* became the standard for the commercial money of account system in Groningen. However, it is not mentioned in the new town-book of Groningen. The guilder is mentioned only once. By then it was a multiple unit of 10 old *vleemse groten*; that is, it was in accordance with the 1394 definition of a Groningen *schild*.¹⁸⁴ The tariffs for compensations and fines continued to be quoted in marks-shillings-pennies until the end of the century. Outside this legal context, however, the mark-shilling-penny system of account - and with it, maybe, the discrepancy - was fading away.

¹⁸¹ GAG COLLECTIONS: ms. RF *in folio* 21, 301.

¹⁸² GAG STAD: RvR243.

¹⁸³ Van Gelder, “Laat-middeleeuwse munten”, 42.

¹⁸⁴ De Rhoer, *Het stadboek*, 139 (Liber VII §13).

Survey of the evolution of the money of account system in Groningen
(c.1360-c.1500)

Period	Standard coin	Equivalence	Unit of acc./multiple units
c.1360 - 1394	penny Gronin- gen <i>payement</i> ?	c.0.4g/c.0.11g of silver	1 d. = 1 standard 1 sh = 12 d. 1 Gron. <i>schild</i> = 10 sh 1 mk = 12 sh
1394- c.1430	old <i>vleemse</i> <i>grote</i>	1.37g/c.1.2g of silver	1 d. = 1/10th standard 1 sh = 12 d. 1 Gron. <i>schild</i> = 10 sh 1 mk = 12 sh
c.1430- 1500 (legally)	<i>butdrager</i>	c.1.9g/c.1.4g? of silver	1 d. = 1/12th standard 1 sh = 12 d. 1 mk = 12 sh
1454-1491 (commercially)	<i>stadvlieger</i>	c.1.4g/c.0.5g of silver	1 <i>grootke</i> = 1/12th stdrd 1 <i>plak</i> = 2 <i>grootkens</i> 1 <i>stadkromstert</i> = 8 <i>grootkens</i> 1 <i>stadvlieger</i> = 12 <i>grootkens</i> 1 guilder = 10 <i>vliegers</i>
1491- c.1500	Gron. <i>stuver</i>	c.1.3g/c.0.8g of silver	1 <i>grootke</i> = 1/12th stdrd 1 <i>plak</i> = 2 <i>grootkens</i> 1 <i>kromstert</i> = 8 <i>grootkens</i> 1 Gron. <i>stuver</i> = 12 <i>grootkens</i> 1 guilder = 10 <i>stuffers</i>

The rest of the story of the Groningen (commercial) measure of value was determined by the fate of the *vlieger*. This fate has already been described in the previous section. It was dominated by the ‘monetary war’ in north-western Europe after 1466, the restoration after this war in 1491 and the new devaluation in 1498 caused by the resistance of Groningen to the inevitable course of history: the final surrender of the powers in Frisia to one imperial governor, the Duke of Saxony. During these stormy decades the silver content of the *vlieger* declined from its original c.1.4g to c.0.9g in 1474, and then fell fast to c.0.5g in 1485 and thereafter. It was restored to 1.3g and renamed the Groningen *stuver* in 1491 - together with the *stuver* of the Count of Oistvriesland.¹⁸⁵ In the 1492

¹⁸⁵ For the development of the silver content of the *vlieger*, see the previous paragraph.

agreement between the town government and the guilds, the value of the new coins was specified. It was added that, if the coins became lighter, the rents would follow.¹⁸⁶ If this clause was a sign of self-confidence, it was misplaced; the *stuver* had to be devalued again to c.0.8g to afford the silver for a tribute to one of the plundering bands of the Saxon duke in 1498.¹⁸⁷ After that, the history took a new course.

Economic analysis

From the survey above, the following changes in the history of the system of money of account in Groningen between c.1350 and c.1500 must be explained:

- The emergence of the Groningen *payment* as system of ‘new-Frisian’ money of account.
- The cause of the existence of a multiple unit of account, the Groningen *schild*, of 10 shillings.
- The decline of the silver equivalence of the penny Groningen *payment* between c.1360 and 1394.
- The emergence of the old *vleemse grote* as new standard for the Groningen money of account system in 1394.
- The replacement of the old *vleemse grote* by the *butdrager* as standard for the legal Groningen money of account system between 1427 and 1434.
- The decline of the silver equivalence of the *butdrager* between 1427/1434 and c.1500.
- The emergence of the *stadkromstert* and the (*arnse*)guilder as multiple units of the commercial money of account system.
- The emergence of the *stadvlieger* as standard for the commercial money of account system after 1454.
- The decline of the silver equivalence of the *stadvlieger* as standard of the commercial money of account system between 1454 and 1491.
- The decline of the Groningen *stuver* - in fact the continuation of the *stadvlieger* - as standard of the commercial system of money of account from 1491 until the end of the century.

The reason for the emergence of the Groningen *payment* as system of money of account, as in the case of the Emden ‘new-Frisian’ money of account system, is obscure. But here too, as elsewhere in Frisia - and in western Europe, the need for a smaller unit of account in everyday affairs would have been the critical force behind it; see Chapter 7. The system may have come into existence already in the first half of the 14th century, alongside the initially dominant system of English money of account. Perhaps the mention of light or brown sterlings as money of account in that period was in fact a fore-

¹⁸⁶ GAG STAD: RvR287.

¹⁸⁷ GAG STAD: RvR400; GAG COLLECTIONS: RF ms. *in folio* 21, 301v.

shadowing of the Groningen *payement*, since the coins representing Groningen *payement* were apparently sterling derivations. The preference for a system of account based on a current coin still being produced reveals the interest of the small urban merchants and artisans in easy communication about everyday affairs rather than in reduction of uncertainty in future pricing, a topic of greater interest for investors and renters.

In this 'new-Frisian' system, a new element did appear: the Groningen *schild*, a multiple unit of 10 shillings. Essentially, this unit was a minor mark or half a pound. The minor mark was the usual mark in Mid-Frisia and in the Emden and Yade areas during the 15th century, and perhaps was in use as early as the 14th century. It may have a Flemish origin and have been 'imported' by trade relations with Flanders and other Low Countries. We have found the old *schild* as a multiple unit in the sterling-based money of account system of the Ommelanden, but that was mainly in the 15th century. However, by then the resemblance of the names of the multiple units did not represent any resemblance between their places in the systems of account concerned. As I see it, the rate of exchange of the genuine *écu* just happened to be equivalent to 10 shillings Groningen *payement* at some time during the 1350s/1360s. So the coin could be viewed as a minor mark *payement*. This casual rate would have been unstable and, moreover, temporary. Yet its duration was sufficient to correct the name of the coin to the notion of a minor mark among the general public. After that, of course, the 'French *schild*' or 'gold *schild*,' as real coin, had to be distinguished from the (Groningen) *schild* as a multiple unit of account. This followed its own course.

The assumed urban preference for the penny *payement*, a current coin still in production, as standard was soon confronted with its potential disadvantage: a decline in its silver equivalence in the decades to come. This decline far exceeded the normal decrease. Hence special causes must have been at work. Although money depreciation was a vice of the period all over western Europe - caused by a dearth of precious metals - there was also, I have suggested, fiscally motivated misuse by the leaseholders of the Groningen mint, particularly the Van Coevorden dynasty. From the point of view of the town of Groningen, however, these motives had nothing to do with the interest of Groningen and the policy of the Groningen town government. That being the case, it was fraud, perpetrated by a moneyer outside the town's jurisdiction, only to be stopped by seizing the mint and usurping the mintage rights.

It was also a political intervention, as the town government of Groningen acquired the rights of the mint and decreed that the money system in Groningen should be reformed. It decided - apparently in reaction to previous experience - upon a new standard, a current coin, widely accepted but no longer in production - the old *vleemse grote* - as the shilling. Moreover, it tried to fix the silver equivalence of the shilling to a given quantity of fine silver. This, however, was a step too far as, after some time of normal

wear and tear, the intrinsic value of the standard coin could not match the fixed quantity of fine silver of the shilling. Inevitably, a generation later, it aroused confusion as to what a shilling really was.

A new political act aimed to end this confusion; between 1427 and 1434 the town government of Groningen replaced the old *vleemse grote* by the *butdrager* as a shilling and loosened its tie with a given quantity of fine silver. Whether the *butdrager* was also a current coin I do not know, but its half, the *butken*, certainly was;¹⁸⁸ neither coin was any longer in production, and hence their future value could only be reduced by normal wear and tear. The choice of the new standard was again the result of governmental interference. It may have been induced by an effort to restore monetary ties with the Ommelanden, where the *butken* represented the penny of account. Such a choice would serve communication in trade with the surrounding districts. Strong money, apparently preferred in the Ommelanden as we have seen, might appeal. However, as we have also seen, this did not work very well. It seems that the implicit revaluation of the unit of account was unable to break through the social inertia that preferred the pre-revaluation system of account. New coins, launched by the town government in the 1430s to support the revaluation, did not help. Soon, about the 1440s, the values of the *butken*, out of production, and the *stadkromstert*, just in production, began to diverge - possibly because of wear and tear in the *butken*. However, both were probably assumed to represent half a revalued Groningen shilling. It was not the *butken* (thus representing 6 revalued pennies of account) that was favoured in commercial communication but the *stadkromstert* - not as half a revalued shilling of account but representing 8 pre-revaluation pennies of account. Also becoming popular was the notion of 15 *stadkromsterten*, representing an *arnseguilder* as well as the pre-revaluation Groningen *schild*. It is true that the social inertia was not only reluctance. It was strengthened by a new motive: the *kromstert-arnseguilder* notion was well-known abroad, in Het Oversticht, in Guelders¹⁸⁹ and in Frisia east of the Ems, so the public may have experienced the fact that it facilitated trade communication with the south and east. As a consequence, the use of the penny-shilling-mark system, based on the new legal standard, was hardly found outside the law. This demonstrates that novelties introduced by political interference may fail in their contest with social inertia.

Tacitly this development must have been recognised by the town government when, in 1454, it launched another new coin, the *stadvlieger*, worth $1\frac{1}{2}$ *stadkromstert* and hence worth a shilling in pre-revaluation money. The *stadvlieger*, also known elsewhere as the black *stuver* and worth a shilling *grootkens*, met the currency demand. It became the actual standard for the unit of account in Groningen, Drenthe, Oistvriesland, the

¹⁸⁸ See Appendix II.

¹⁸⁹ Van Gelder, "Coins", 209; 212.

Yade area and even Oostergo - as we will see - for the rest of the century. So, after all, by adapting its monetary policy to public preferences, the town government gradually realised its initial aims the other way round. The legal system of account of 1427/1434 was not abolished ,but, as it seems, it simply faded away.

Looking back on the experiences of both the previous periods, the public preferred a current coin still in production as standard for the money of account, notwithstanding the uncertainty of its future value. This future, indeed, turned out not to warrant a stable development during the European monetary crisis, but at that time the *stadvlieger* was firmly established in the habits of a wide area, and so its role as standard for the Groningen system of money of account was not really shaken. The decline of its silver content in the last quarter of the 15th century was, no doubt, caused by forces from the economic sphere, primarily the prices of foreign currency on the exchange markets. These forces were generated by the debasements in Burgundy and elsewhere and by the reaction to these debasements by mint entrepreneurs in Groningen who were trying to hold their market share as means of payment abroad in competition with comparable foreign coins. The restoration of the standard in 1491/1492, and its subsequent further decline, resulted from political interference by the town government. This time the public followed the policy, probably for want of better alternatives.