

**THE PERIOD OF THE CAROLINGIAN-FRISIAN SILVER PENNY
(c.750-c.1000)**

4.1 On the *solidi* and the *siclos* in the revenue registers of landed property in Frisia of the abbey of Fulda

In this Excursus, an attempt is made, using surviving early medieval sources, to establish whether gold *solidi* were used as money of account in Frisia. The sources in question are the registers of the abbey of Fulda (at the river Fulda in Hessen, Germany). The abbey was founded in 744 by Sturm, a disciple of Boniface - the well-known Anglo Saxon missionary in Frisia. Boniface was murdered in Frisia in 754 during a missionary activity. As a result, the abbey was often presented with gifts by Frisians in respect of this martyrdom. In a few cases *solidi* are mentioned as units of account, and these may have been gold *solidi*.

(a) A list of revenues of the properties of this abbey, dated at about 830¹

The list begins with a statement of taxes on the property in Wieringen (West Frisia) that had been given by a certain Gebe. This statement declares that, by order of the count of the area, the *villa* Lanthurst, part of this property, has to pay 4 kinds of taxes. The first (without a specified name) amounted to 12 *deniers* and 20 *solidi*; the second, destined for the purchase of beer, was 10 *denarii*; the third, a retribution for the use of common meadows to graze horses and called *rosban*, was 30 *denarii*, and the fourth, called *rutforst*, was 10 *denarii*.

The question is as to whether the *solidi* were Frisian gold *solidi* or Carolingian *solidi*/shillings. As 12 *denarii* constitute a *solidus*/shilling, it is noteworthy that this amount, in the first sentence, is not quoted that way. In other words, 12 *deniers* + 20 *solidi* should have been quoted as 21 *solidi*. The way it is quoted suggests that a *solidus*, in this context, was not a *solidus*/shilling. Of course, if it was a gold *solidus*, the amount of the tax would be considerably higher. If the *solidus* was to be read as a *solidus*/shilling, the amount would be equal to 21 shillings or 252 *denarii* (= 1 pound + 1 shilling). If it was to be read as a gold-based *solidus*, the amount would depend on the value of the gold *solidus* in terms of silver *denarii*. This rate is not certain. If we assume that the *solidus* was worth 3 shillings, as in the *Lex Frisionum*, the tax would be 732 *denarii* (= 3 pounds + 1 shilling).²

¹ Koch, *Oorkondenboek van Holland en Zeeland tot 1299*, Vol.1 (The Hague 1970) 17.

² (20 x 36) + 12 = 732.

A step closer to answering the question may result from comparison with the next *villa* in the property of Gebe.

Alongside the taxes to be paid by the *villa* Lanthurst, there were taxes to be paid by the *villa* Naschfelden, part of the same property. Here, two taxes were combined into one, so according to the text this *villa* had to pay 30 and two times 10. We are left to guess whether the '30' were *denarii* or *solidi* and also whether the '10' were *denarii*, as in the case of the previous *villa*. As I read it, this *villa* had to pay 30 *denarii rosban*, 10 *denarii* for the purchase of beer and 10 *denarii rutforst*, as did Lanthurst and also the property of a certain Gerwihi - the subject of the next item in the register.

After the two statements of taxes, there follows an enumeration of the revenues of various properties of Fulda in Frisia. It is stated that the yearly revenue (cereal crop) from Gebe's former property is valued at 16 pounds and 15 ounces. This revenue amounts to 4,140 *denarii* - an amount which is at least sufficient to pay the above-mentioned taxes to the count by the *villas* Lanthurst and Naschfelden; at the most they amounted to 832 *denarii*³ if the *solidi* mentioned were gold *solidi*. If they were the *solidi*/shillings, the taxes only amounted to 352 *denarii*.⁴ The first alternative results in a tax of about $\frac{1}{5}$ th of the income of the properties. This corresponds to the usual size of the rents on benefices leased by the king to the church, as instituted by Pepin the Short.⁵ If this was indeed an example of such a rent, the first alternative is the true one, and the *solidi* were gold-based units of account.

So, to the question of what kind of *solidus* was meant, this analysis does not give a firm answer, but it is possible that gold *solidi* were used as units of account in West Frisia in around 830.

(b) A register of income from property in Frisia dated 945.⁶

This register has *solidi* mentioned alongside *siclos*:⁷

' *Ubi s. Bonifacius passus est, id est Tochingen (= Dokkum), 30 et dimidia libra. In Maggenheim 8 uncie, in Osterhusen 4 uncie, in Belinge similiter. In Franiglande 10 siclos, in Sotrenheim 4 uncias, in Gutinge tres libras, in Werflante 10 siclos, in Culheim similiter, in Esgenfurt similiter, in Hanwurf 5 siclos, in Lobheim 10 siclos, in Weklivane 1 libr. et 18 sol., In Lihdanfurt 4 sol et 9 den. In Hurim 10 sol. In Vurti 20 sol., in Westerbintheim 2 sol., Nithart de Atesheim et frater eius 6 den., Fadevurt 2 sol., in Marisfliete dim. unciam. In Saxenheim*

³ (732 + 30 + 10 + 10) + (30 + 10 + 10) = 832.

⁴ (252 + 30 + 10 + 10) + (30 + 10 + 10) = 352.

⁵ Prévité-Orton, *The Shorter Cambridge Medieval History*, 300 (*precariae verbo regis*).

⁶ OGD1: 7.

⁷ OFU2, 792-794 (Appendix, no 10).

(= Saaxum) 7 *unc. et 15 den. In Bestlon* (read Beflton = Baflo) 3 *uncias. In Werfheim* (= Warfum) 4 *uncias. In Kukenwert* 5 *sol. In Midisheim* 7 *sol., in Husdingun* (= Huizinge) 6 *sicl. In Emedun* (= Westeremden?) 4 *sicl. et 6 den. In Loppesheim* (= Loppersum) 30 *den.*'. And so on.

This also suggests that *solidi* were different from *siclos*, although no item has *solidi* and *siclos* in one amount.

4.2 On the *solidi* and the *siclos* in the revenue registers of landed property in Frisia of the abbey of Werden

This Excursus has the same purpose as the foregoing. The abbey of Werden (on the river Ruhr, in Westphalia, Germany) was founded in 793 by Liudger, a Frisian missionary in his homeland.⁸ This abbey also often received gifts from Frisians, in honour of this missionary. Registers of its landed property have been found. The oldest of these, probably dating from the end of the 9th or the beginning of the 10th century, contains a section dealing with the properties in East Frisia.⁹ The amounts in this part are expressed in pounds, ounces, *siclos* and pennies. Only in a few cases is a *solidus* mentioned in these registers:

(a) Register of property in East Frisia to be dated about 890¹⁰.

In this register an amount of 13 *solidi* is mentioned. It concerns a ransom. The person in question, one Reginhard, conveyed all his possessions in Weener before entering the monastery. Moreover he conveyed a rent of 8 ounces (= 160 pennies) in Mark and in Bedum to his father-in-law, who had ransomed him from a gang of Northmen for 13 *solidi*. His sister Eva also contributed some silver to the ransom.¹¹ We do not know whether these *solidi* were gold *solidi* or shillings in silver. For a ransom, the amount of 13 shillings in silver seems low. 13 Gold *solidi* would be equivalent to 39 shillings in silver (36 pennies reckoned to 1 *solidus*) or 2 pounds less 1 shilling in silver; the wergeld for a free Frisian in East Frisia, according to the *Lex Frisionum*, was $5\frac{1}{3}$ pounds; see Excursus 3.3.

The person in question may have been the same person who, some time later (c.920?), inherited real property from his father and from his mother, because the will of the father again mentions rents in Mark and in Bedum.¹² What happened in the first

⁸ Kötzschke. *Rheinische Urbare II*, I-CCI.

⁹ *Ibidem*, CIX-CXXII.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, XCV.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, 49-51. *Reginhard tradidit pro ingressu suo in monasterium quicquid habuit in Uuianheri. Ceterum octo unciarum censum in Marc[berga] et in Badunathasem tradidit socero suo Uide qui cum redemit XIII solidis de manu Nortmannorum. Soror quoque eius Eua nomine dedit in eius precium aliquantum argenti.*

¹² *Ibidem*, 53-54.

case? It seems to me that Reginhard had lost his wife (by the Northmen raid?), decided to enter a monastery and transferred the possessions he then owned to the monastery, with the exception of certain rents in Mark and in Bedum which he transferred to his father-in-law to redeem the ransom paid for him. If the 13 *solidi* were shillings silver, this would amount to $13 \times 12 = 156$ silver pennies. If the 13 *solidi* were gold-based units of account, this would probably be equivalent to $13 \times 36 = 468$ silver pennies. The rents in Mark and Bedum would amount to 160 pennies; see above. Rents used to be a yearly return, and it seems unlikely that a *yearly* rent of 160 silver pennies was paid to redeem an obligation of only 156 pennies capital. Though still high, a redemption of 468 pennies capital would be more appropriate. This argument, then, lends support to the possibility that the ransom was paid in gold *solidi*, but it must be admitted that an alternative is possible. If a rent of 8 ounces a year was transferred to the monastery on the understanding that, once only, it would be paid to the father-in-law - to redeem the ransom - the monastery would have had to renounce the rent for 1 year. This explanation would suggest that the *solidi* mentioned were shillings in silver: the 160 pennies of 1 year rent being approximately equal the 156 pennies of 13 silver shillings.

(b) Register of rents of Gibus and Eniko in Frisia¹³ dating from the 10th/11th century¹⁴

Siclos are often mentioned in this part of the Werden register, but the precise meaning of a *siclus* is not explicitly given. One might suppose that 12 (light) Frisian silver pennies (c.1.3g of silver) were named *siclos* to distinguish these from 12 (heavy) Carolingian pennies (c.1.7g of silver), these constituting a *solidus*/shilling; a *siclus*, then, might be equivalent to $c.1.3g/c.1.7g \times 12 = c.9$ Carolingian pennies.

There is one case from which it seems possible to calculate this value. This case is not found in the oldest part of the Werden register but in a second part, dating from the 10th/11th century. Here the total sum of rents quoted in pounds, ounces, *siclos* and pennies in the regions of the offices of Gibus, in East Frisia west of the Ems (later called Ommelanden), and of Eniko, in Mid-Frisia, is calculated at 81 pounds + 5 *solidi*. Kötzsche has checked the calculation and found a total of 12 pounds + $425\frac{1}{2}$ ounces + $588\frac{1}{2}$ *siclos* + 1,737 $\frac{5}{6}$ pennies. If 1 *solidus* is reckoned at 36 pennies, this implies that 1 *siclus* would be equal to over 11.0 pennies; if 1 *solidus* is reckoned at 12 pennies, this implies that 1 *siclus* would be equal to about 10.8 pennies. These results are not consistent with any known system of money of account, but accounting was often weak in the Middle Ages, and so the amount of 81 pounds and 5 *solidi* might be erroneous. This weakness is demonstrated by closer inspection of the regis-

¹³ *Ibidem*, 125-131.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, CXXVI.

ter. The register begins by mentioning what seem to be subtotals at intervals. The first subtotal is 'LXXV', and this corresponds to the total of 75 *siclos* of the previous items, but the following 'subtotals' do not match the virtual subtotals of the items in the corresponding intervals, even though they are sometimes close. In short, we cannot rely on the accounting ability of the compiler of the register itself, and hence we cannot derive definite conclusions as to the number of pennies of account in a *siclus* or in a *solidus*.

So far, there is no other evidence of the continued use of gold *solidi* in Frisia apart from this. Although it seems peculiar that the compiler of this register used the term *solidi* in his sum total instead of *siclos*, as in the underlying items, this case does not provide convincing evidence that gold *solidi* were still used as money of account. If they were not, however, the author must have identified *siclos* and *solidi*/shillings, which seems inconsistent.

(c) Register of rents of the court of Loga in East Frisia ¹⁵ dating from the 11th/12th century ¹⁶

An 11th/12th century register of the court of Loga (near Leer) has a list of rents partly quoted in *bults*, followed by a sum total. The sum total is 6 marks less 2 *bults*¹⁷ and 9 *denarios* (= 931 *denarios*). If we calculate the total of the rents ourselves, the most likely result is: 1 mark + 59 *bults* + 15 *siclos* + 47 *denarios*. This amounts either to a. 977 *denarios* if 1 mark = 160 *denarios*, 1 *bult* = 10 *denarios* and 1 *siclus* = 12 *denarios*; b. 932 *denarios* if 1 mark = 160 *denarios*, 1 *bult* = 10 *denarios* and 1 *siclus* = 9 *denarios*; or c. 902 *denarios* if 1 mark = 144 *denarios*, 1 *bult* = 9 *denarios* and 1 *siclus* = 12 *denarios*. Result b is closest to the amount in the register itself. The quotation of rents in *siclos* in the 11th/12th-century may, of course, have been antiquated 9th century tariffs, but in any event this finding is not sufficient for us to conclude that a *siclos* may indeed be defined as a unit of account of 9 *denarios*.

4.3. On the text of the clause regarding sacrilege in the Mid-Frisian synodal statutes.

The Mid-Frisian synodal statutes are dated in the 10th century.¹⁸ At the point in these statutes where the part containing money amounts for penalties begins,¹⁹ the first clause²⁰ has a peculiar addition. It tells us:²¹

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, 123-124.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, CXXIX.

¹⁷ Van Helten, *Zur Lexicologie*, sv *buld*.

¹⁸ Buma, *Westerlauwersches Recht I*, 19.

¹⁹ Van Buijtenen, *De grondslag*, 158 concludes that in the original text of the statutes the first part regarded the organisation of the court and this was followed by the part regarding the penalties.

.... *Dech schelleth dae Fresen der nedena niata, deer Widekin, di forma aesga, deelde ende Herderic efter biscreef bi dis paeus hengnese, dat deer emmer sculde gaen wr hals ende wr haud di pannyng, deer etta monte nia is.*

[i.e. But the Frisians will enjoy the favour, stated by Widekin the first *asega*²² and after then recorded by Herderic²³ with approval of the Pope, that always in cases regarding neck and head [capital crimes] the penny that new is at the mint [will be valid].]

The text itself is enigmatic at first sight, but it seems comprehensible to me if we view it as we would a legend with an historic nucleus - as something that has been garbled and corrupted by verbal transmission over several centuries. Here is a possible interpretation:

In the *Lex Frisionum* the sacrilege of a (still pagan) temple was punished by mutilation and death by drowning.²⁴ Obviously, this penalty had to be abolished in the Frisian law after the Christianisation of the Frisians, and would have been substituted by a high fine. The text of the synodal statutes deals with this event. The Christianisation of the Frisians is stressed as a favour towards them; the substitution of mutilation and drowning by high fines would have had the approval of the Pope (although he probably would not have expressed it explicitly in response to this particular case), and, of course, the high fines would have had to be paid with good money; that is, money 'new from the mint'.

However, there is even more to be gleaned from this curious text. 1. The privilege of the Frisians was stated by Widekin; 2. he was the first *asega*; 3. it was recorded by Herderic. Finding the names of Widekin and Herderic together is surprising. Widukind was the name of the leader of the revolt of the Saxons and Frisians in 782.²⁵ This revolt ended in 785 when Charlemagne negotiated peace with Widukind. He was baptised, and Charlemagne was his godfather. This baptism might be considered as the formal end of paganism among the Saxons and Frisians.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, viii (§32). This clause concerns fighting in church on a holy day resulting in sacrilege - a crime which requires the highest penalty, namely 72 pounds money of Cologne (*agrippischere pannenga* = pennies of Colonia Agrippina).

²¹ Buma, *Westerlauwersches Recht I*, 182-183 (§31).

²² Algra, "Rechtshistorische aspecten", 162-167: An *asega* was a functionary in the Frisian tribunals; he was 'a wise man' who had learned from his predecessors what was right, and he advised the tribunal (i.e. the judging community) on the judicial procedures.

²³ Van Buijtenen, *De grondslag*, viii, has translated from the ms. *Jus*: 'her Deric' instead of 'Herderic'

²⁴ LF, 148 (*Additio*, Title XI §1).

²⁵ Hartwig, *Widukind*, 12-13.

Though the other name survives as ‘Herderic’, this may be a corrupted spelling. Herderic may also be read as Her Deric (‘Sir Derrick’ in English). If so, it could be a count in Mid-Frisia in that period. A Count Deodredus/Ditericus is known to have had possessions in Frisia, possibly during the second half of the 8th century.²⁶ Furthermore, Theodoricus was the name of a successful general of Charlemagne against Widukind²⁷ and moreover the name of a Frisian count and commander of the Frisian contingent in Charlemagne’s war against the Avars in 793, who is supposed to have been killed in that year by Saxons, though these were not led by Widukind this time.²⁸ Jaekel considers these three persons to be one and the same.²⁹ Widekin, as I have already implied, might be identified as Widukind, the 8th century leader of the revolt of the Saxons and the Frisians, that ended with his christening; hence he would have been remembered as a wise man.³⁰ As the leader of the Saxons and Frisians in the revolt against Charlemagne, he no doubt had authority in Frisia. Although he would not in reality have been the first Frisan *asega*, he may have been exalted to that position by tradition because he was an indigenous authority who had accepted Christian laws. As the vernacular name Deric is synonymous with Dideric(us) or Theoderic(us), Herderic might be identified as Her Deric, the Frisian count who was responsible for the formulation of the Frisian law and hence for the adaptation of the *Lex Frisionum*. He might have intended to record the abolition of the pagan death penalty in cases of sacrilege of temples and to substitute it by payment of a fine - of course in *nova moneta*;³¹ but if he did, his intention was not fulfilled, perhaps as a consequence of his sudden death in 793. The *Lex Frisionum*, as we know it, was not adapted, was probably not finished³² and is unlikely to have been legalised. The *Lex*, in fact, ends abruptly after the clause concerning the sacrilege of the pagan temple. It may well be that all that has survived of his intention to write it down is the memory, recorded in the peculiar text of the synodal statutes. However, another echo of this event may also be found in the 16th of the *XVII Kesten*:³³

All Frisians have the privilege [*i.e* from Charlemagne] to pay their blood-debts [*i.e* debts for breaching the peace] with [their] money. Consequently, [there be] also no corporal punishment within Saxon borders.³⁴

²⁶ OGD1: 1; Jaekel, *Die Grafen*, 12-13.

²⁷ MGH SSrG I, 163 (*Einhardi Annales*).

²⁸ *Ibidem*, 177.

²⁹ Jaekel, *Die Grafen*, 9-25.

³⁰ Hartwig, *Widukind*, 14.

³¹ Excursus 3.2: ‘On the different kinds of money in the *Lex Frisionum*’.

³² Siems, *Studien*, 350-353.

³³ For information about the various versions of this *Kest*: see Sjölin *Die ‘Fivelgoer’ Handschrift*, 39; Algra, *Zeventien keuren*, 341-343.

³⁴ A few crimes, such as false coinage, are excluded.

According to the law historian Algra, this text is inherently very old and must date from Charlemagne's times since Charlemagne did indeed make efforts to replace the feud tradition by pecuniary atonement.³⁵ Apart from that, however, the text has another point of interest. At first sight the mention of the Saxon borders seems rather odd.³⁶ This apparently also puzzled later copyists, who sometimes gave their own interpretation by amending the text a little.³⁷ But the connection with Saxony would be comprehensible in the light of the history of the resistance of Saxons and Frisians and the role of Widukind if my hypothetical interpretation of the clause in the Mid-Frisian synodal statutes was correct.

This interpretation would also support the finding that the *Lex Frisionum*, as we know it, was drafted before 794.³⁸

³⁵ Algra, "Rechtshistorische aspecten", 182.

³⁶ Algra, *Zeventien Keuren*, 253, following Richthofen, suggests that the mention of the Saxon borders might be ascribed to the Saxon Landpeace of 1156, because this explicitly admitted corporal punishment within Saxony and so Frisians within Saxon territory would need to be excluded from this penalty.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, 341-343.

³⁸ See Chapter 4, 'The history of the measure of value'.