CHAPTER FOUR

Money and the Everyday

Whose Currency?¹

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During the Middle Ages coins, stamped with the images and inscriptions conceived by the authorities that issued them, became an important medium in the broader cultures of exchange of which they were a part. It is recognized that cultural meaning is deeply embedded in ideas of money and monetary transactions (Bloch and Parry 1989: 1) and thus, while we might explore the different ways that money was used during a person’s life, it is equally valid to look at the life-cycle of the coinage as object. In the midst of everyday—ordinary and commonplace—experience, we find a spectrum of variation along cultural, temporal and spatial longitudes and latitudes, dictated by the individual’s occupation and gender, social status and age, thus the “everyday” experience is something multifaceted and diverse. Medieval coinage was, more than any other common artifact type, consumed by a broad cross-section of society, and therefore provides a wide range of contrasting economic and social experiences from the great magnate down to the rural villein (Kelleher in press).

This chapter surveys the broad European trends seen in the production and use of money across the period, highlighting key developments in the monetization of society and questioning the nature of an “everyday” experience of money. The evidence at our disposal comprises documentary, archaeological and material, mediated through written texts (including legal, religious and literary sources); hoards, single finds and coin finds in other contexts; and numismatic sources. All these find categories are, by their nature, interdisciplinary and available in varying degrees of abundance and detail across the Middle
A Cultural History of Money in the Medieval Age

This chapter emphasizes the numismatic and archaeological evidence, discussing its nature and adaptability for use in everyday life in medieval Europe. The hallmark of money in daily affairs was availability (ability to meet prices for daily transactions in the market place, small or large) and universal acceptability within the context of prevailing economic conditions.

Numismatists have avoided offering explicit definitions of “monetization,” instead drawing on the work of economic historians. The concept of monetization, insofar as coin finds can be used as evidence, is a broad and often complex one and is bound up with arguments about the emergence of a money economy and the commercialization of society (Bolton 2004; Britnell 1995; 2004). According to Britnell, monetization, evident in the increase in coins in circulation in England between 1158 and 1319, is one of the three indices of commercialization (1995: 7; 2004: 76). Does the use of coins, evidenced by the spread of single finds, constitute what we can term a money economy? Jim Bolton has warned of the dangers of assuming that a “money economy” emerged in tandem with the use of coins, and argued that a convergence of circumstances was required for this to occur. For example, he cites the need for a steadily growing population which stimulated demand for land, goods and services as essential components in this development alongside other stimuli such as advancements in law and legislation, the emergence of markets and fairs, and the growth of the urban population. Also vital was an increase in the availability and use of money (Bolton 2004: 4–5; 2012: 22–3). Textual evidence for the use of money is found in a number of sources across the Middle Ages; be they charters, polyptychs, or saints’ lives in the early period or, in increasing quantity from the thirteenth century, official mint documents (Naismith 2014: 4; Mayhew 1992; chapters in this volume). These sources can prove problematic for appreciating the everyday use of money in society; the early documents provide an elite or church perspective, while later mint records tell us only about production, rather than consumption.

Coin-find evidence is a legitimate source for providing a different perspective to the documentary record, and one which has the capacity to offer insights into matters of both economy and the agency of humans and objects (Kemmers and Myrberg 2011: 87). In the past thirty years the growth in metal-detecting has led to the creation of large, publicly-accessible databases of coin finds in Britain and the Netherlands.² A strength of this data is that each coin represents a single “loss event,” and the nature of accidental loss is such that, with some important caveats, it can provide a non-biased sample that should represent a given coin “population.” A site of particular importance for the interpretation of single finds is Rendlesham in Suffolk. Here, a systematic program of metal-detecting and targeted excavation has recovered an exceptionally large assemblage of sixth- to eighth-century coins identifying an economically complex and socially diverse royal central place (Scull et al. 2016).
Hoard evidence has been central to the numismatic discipline from its earliest days and has shaped the conceptual development of numismatic seriation and methodology. Like the single finds each hoard is representative of an event; however, unlike the single finds, these events were often structured and intentional, and thus provide a different kind of window into everyday monetary affairs.

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category, “abandoned hoards,” was an unsatisfactory term for those hoards that were buried with no intention of recovery. Mark Blackburn was critical of Grierson’s categorization and presented an alternative approach which focused on how the elements of the hoard were originally assembled (Blackburn 2005a: 13). In some cases, hoard patterns show clear connectivity with historically attested periods of unrest and upheaval, although such functionalist interpretations are now unfashionable and beset with problems (Rovelli 2004: 242). The hoard record is defined by the complex interplay between levels of hoarding events in a given period, and the circumstances that might have affected their non-recovery. Like single finds hoards have the potential to cast light on the monetary realities at different levels of society; the huge Tutbury hoard found in 1831 near the English castle that shares its name was clearly the war chest of the great fourteenth-century magnate Thomas of Lancaster who was in open rebellion against his cousin king Edward II (1307–27). The find, of up to 360,000 silver pennies, was lost or buried as Thomas fled Tutbury following the Battle of Burton Bridge in 1321 (Kelleher and Williams 2011). Other hoards are linked to more humble individuals; excavations at the deserted settlement of West Whelpington in Northumberland yielded a small hoard of five silver coins (Evans and Jarrett 1987). In recent years, scholars have drawn on prehistoric archaeology and evolved more interpretive theoretical approaches to hoarding (van Vilsteren 2000; Myrberg 2007; 2009).

“EVERYDAY” MONEY IN MEDIEVAL EUROPE, SIXTH–ELEVENTH CENTURIES

The landscape of coinage and currency in medieval Europe in the period under discussion owed its origins to the Roman tradition. The monetary systems which emerged as the faltering imperial administration in the West contracted, and then collapsed, were modeled on, and inspired by, the fifth-century Roman template. At the top was the *solidus*, a gold coin which had been introduced by Constantine in 309. The *solidus* was the economic workhorse of the imperial administration. Generated by the vast agricultural estates of the elite, and used by the state to maintain the army and civic and public services, it was vital to the functioning of the empire (Spufford 1988: 7–8). If you were rich, *solidi* paid your land tax and allowed you to purchase luxury goods, but it was by no means an everyday coin for the vast majority of the Empire’s inhabitants. At the opposite end of the scale were low-value denominations in copper known as *nummi*. The ratio of *nummi* to *solidi* fluctuated across the sixth century, rising from 7,200 in 539 to 12,000 in 565 (Spufford 1988: 8). The virtual absence of any denomination between these two extremes was problematic and stemmed from a shortage of silver which led to the virtual disappearance of silver coins during the sixth century.
It was into the void left by the collapse of the Roman administrative machinery that the barbarian “successor states” emerged in the late fifth and sixth centuries. In Britain, uniquely, coin supply ceased altogether, but hoard and single find evidence shows that clipped silver *siliquaes* circulated in significant numbers in the first half of the fifth century, extending coin use beyond the period of official supplies from Roman mints (Abdy 2006: 94–5; Naismith in press: 56–8). Away from Britain mints in the Western part of the Empire fell into the hands of barbarian kings who struck their own pseudo-imperial coins, and followed these with national coinages intended to reflect the new states’ independence (Blackburn 2005b: 661). This process saw the virtual extinction of the minting of copper coins (apart from issues in North Africa and Italy), while gold output was largely limited to the smallest denomination, the *tremissis* (Grierson 1991: 9). Thus, the barbarian kingdoms of Western Europe produced mono-metallic coinage systems based on the solidus and *tremissis* (Blackburn 1995: 539). The Byzantine empire of the sixth century enjoyed a relatively flourishing monetary economy underpinned by a coinage of gold (in three denominations), and a system of five bronze denominations introduced by Anastasius (491–518) in 498 (Grierson 1999). A peak in the volume of sixth-century coin finds from excavated cities in the lower Danube and eastern Mediterranean, particularly at Athens, Sardis, Caesarea, Carthage, Sadovec and Histria, seems to support this analysis, although the contrasting average value of losses across the sites, and the source mints represented in the assemblages, suggest fluctuating levels of supply and use (Guest 2012: 112–19). Only in CE 615 was a silver coin (the hexagram) added to bridge the gap between the high and low value coins.

Anglo-Saxon gold coinage of the seventh century was limited in scope, but large numbers of Merovingian gold coins survive today. These were struck at hundreds of mints and suggest a “very substantial and active currency” (Blackburn 2005b: 672). As the seventh century progressed, bullion shortages led to a significant reduction in the fineness of Anglo-Saxon and Frankish gold coins, down to 25 percent or less (Blackburn 1995: 539). The earliest dateable silver coins from Francia are those of Childeric II of Neustria (662–75) which were struck 673–5. Naismith suggests that the transition from gold to silver in England began at, or perhaps even before, this date (Naismith in press: 139–40). The small, thick silver pennies (often erroneously called “sceats” or “sceattas”) were produced at a multitude of commercial hubs across southern and eastern England, and on the continent. Together these formed a “tightly integrated monetary continuum” spanning the North Sea (Naismith in press: 143). Understanding the extent to which this coinage circulated within, and penetrated through, different levels of the social strata of the North Sea region has occupied and often exasperated scholars. That they were an important part of everyday life is hinted at by the many metal-detector finds from English “productive
Excavation has provided a valuable perspective on the provision, chronology and use of the early pennies. During excavations of the thriving eighth- and ninth-century trading center at Ribe archaeologists recovered an unusually well-stratified sequence of finds, including more than 200 early pennies (Feveile 2008). Of these 85 percent were of the Wodan/monster type (Series X), which has led to Ribe being identified as their minting place. Furthermore, the phasing of the finds suggests that they grew to dominate the currency pool in the town as the eighth century progressed and they were still being lost in the early ninth century, well beyond the traditional timeframe for the use of such coins in England and Frisia.

If the coinages of the sixth and seventh centuries had their origins in late antiquity, the currencies of Latin Christendom that would emerge in the tenth and eleventh centuries were conceived in the fundamental remodeling of the currency brought about under the Carolingians. In 754/5, shortly after he deposed the last Merovingian king, Pepin reformed the coinage. The small, thick Merovingian-style deniers were replaced by coins on a broader, thinner flan restored in weight. Following the precedent set by Visigothic and Lombard coinages, the reformed issues identified the royal authority and usually the mint of issue (Blackburn 1995: 548). Charlemagne’s important reform of the 790s increased the weight of the denier to 1.7g, while also standardizing the design with the Karolus monogram (Figure 4.2). The number of mints was reduced from more than 100 to 40. The most productive site for Carolingian coins finds anywhere in Europe is Dorestad, close to the northernmost branch of the Rhine in the province of Utrecht. The abundant site finds of Charlemagne’s monogram type and the Christiana Religio type of Louis the Pious suggest a prolonged and steady rise in economic activity there from the 790s to the 830s, and Dorestad as a significant location in empire-wide trade networks (Coupland 2010: 98–100). Charlemagne’s influence can be seen beyond the boundaries of the empire in Anglo-Saxon England, in the coinage reform of Offa of Mercia. This reform introduced a full silver broad flan penny (c. 96 percent; 1.3 grams), which included the king’s name and title, and the name of the moneyer for the first time. In Italy, Byzantine influence gave way to Carolingian, with the replacement of the Lombard, Papal and Beneventan coinages of debased gold by silver. Despite increases in coin production in the eighth century its use was limited to a largely urban and elite minority.

Charlemagne was crowned emperor by Pope Leo III on Christmas Day 800, and this auspicious occasion cemented Carolingian political supremacy in much of northern and western Europe. An empire-wide reform of weights and measures ensured uniformity of currency throughout the empire (Blackburn 1995: 543). The silver penny dominated the monetary system but whether it was an object of everyday experience is contested, as is the extent of monetization
in the Empire. Coupland’s recent survey shows a monetary landscape dictated by geographical and temporal factors, with clear regional differences. Single-find, hoard and documentary evidence show that coinage was more common in the West Frankish kingdom, a pattern reinforced by the establishment of new mints between the Seine and the Rhine. By contrast, Brittany, and areas east of the Rhine show fewer finds and mints (Coupland 2014). A similar picture emerges south of the Alps, where Carolingian hegemony failed to bring the region into the mainstream economic dynamic of the imperial center (Rovelli 2009: 75–6). However, the introduction of obols (halfpence), which account for 16 percent of the Carolingian single finds, is an indicator of the diversifying uses of coinage among the general population. In the west, gold coin was virtually non-existent beyond the minting of pieces meant for presentation or ceremonial use. However, to the south and southeast of Charlemagne’s polity monometallism was not the norm. In the Byzantine lands and the Abbasid Caliphate, gold and base metal coins were struck in some quantity. In central and southern Italy, the currency zones were more nuanced, reflecting the region’s position at the confluence of western European, Byzantine and Muslim cultures. In the south the principal coinages were those of Benevento, which declined in fineness over the century, and the Byzantine outposts at Naples and Sicily (to 878). Money use in England in the ninth century was divided on a north/south axis. In the north, the coinage of small thick silver pennies (known falsely as “stycas”) became increasingly debased to the point at which they contained no silver at all. The Danish capture of York in 867 ended this Northumbrian coinage for good. The English currency that replaced the “stycas” in the ninth century was less suitable for the use in daily transactions due to their greater value; each penny was priced well beyond most of the
commodities and services offered in ninth century England. The coinage in the southern English kingdoms of Wessex and Mercia was of quite different character, and had been based on large silver pennies—after the Carolingian fashion—since c. 760. Two reforms under Alfred in the third quarter of the century improved the debased silver pennies from barely a quarter fine to a standard weight of 1.6g. In the Danelaw, the currency was of a more diverse character, exemplified by the mixed content of hoards such as the Ashdon, Essex find of Anglo-Saxon, Viking and Carolingian coins (Blackburn 1989). In the ninth century, relative levels of coin use remained constrained by factors of supply in northern Europe.

In the tenth century coinage in the west continued to be dominated by silver. However, the quantity of coinage available and levels of use greatly declined. Spufford attributes this to three factors: a deteriorating balance of payments with the east caused by a reduction in the slave trade; the diversion of silver into church treasuries; and the Scandinavian invasions (Spufford 1988: 60). Only in those regions under Islamic rule, such as Spain and Sicily, or within the Byzantine Empire, did gold coin circulate in any meaningful sense. Western European gold coins were produced only in exceptional circumstances. The Carolingian model of coin production continued into the tenth century, but developed in different ways in France and Germany. The breakdown of imperial political authority was accompanied by decentralization of minting rights, either by usurpation or grant. In France, the legacy of the Carolingian system can be seen in a continuation in coin types and over the century comital usurpation of minting rights led to the emergence of immobilized coins which, frequently and frustratingly, defy dating and seriation. In Germany, the axis of power shifted from the Rhineland and Bavaria to the east and north, following Henry the Fowler’s assumption of the throne in 918. The rich silver mines of the Rammelsberg at Goslar in the Harz Mountains encouraged the establishment of a prolific mint there, which boomed from the 990s with the striking of considerable quantities of Otto-Adelaide Pfennige (Spufford 1988: 74). In addition to the establishment of new imperial mints, minting rights were granted to others, most often bishops and abbeys. In Bohemia minting increased substantially, with issues drawing inspiration from the Bavarian, Papal, and English prototypes which must have been encountered through trade in the principal towns of the kingdom.

The decentralization of coin production seen in France and Germany was in direct contrast to the English experience of ever closer centralization. At the start of the century coinage was produced under the authority of the kings of Wessex and Mercia, and in the southern Danelaw and Scandinavian Northumbria. In about 973 King Eadgar was able to reform the coinage, bringing uniformity in design to the issues of all the English mints. Viking expansion had begun to impact coastal western Europe in the ninth century in
different ways: in the North Sea zone the Dorestad mint had closed after several Viking attacks, while settlement in parts of Britain and Ireland resulted in the introduction of Viking coinages at York and Dublin. The “bullion economy” that emerged in ninth-century Scandinavia, in which coins and precious metal objects were used for exchange and to store wealth, was also found in those areas of Britain and Ireland under Scandinavian influence in the early part of the century, and famously exemplified by the hoards from Cuerdale in Lancashire and the Vale of York (Williams 2011). Likewise, the expansionist northmen brought a new monetary reality to the northern lands with the mass-importation of Islamic silver. Their eastern trade networks attracted large numbers of central Asian dirhams from Transoxiana via the Bulgars and Khazars. These constitute the majority of coin finds from Scandinavian trading sites such as Kaupang in Norway, Birka and Uppåkra in Sweden, and Paviken in Gotland, where they succeeded European coins from the third quarter of the ninth century (Blackburn 2007: 53); in the tenth century, the composition changed radically as Samanid and Volga Bulgar imitations took precedence (Blackburn 2007: 39–40). At the newly discovered urban Viking site in the vicinity of the famous Gokstad ship burial in Vestfold in Norway the ninth- and tenth-century silver dirhams were all fragments, mostly weighing 0.5g or less (Gullbekk 2014). The nature of fragmentation suggests that the silver employed as means of payment would be adapted to everyday demands in the market place. Within the Viking world small fragments of silver dirhams were used intensively everywhere, including Viking campsites such as Torksey and Repton in England. In the Slavic lands silver was the preserve of elites and merchants involved in long-distance trade. Two trade routes have been identified; hacksilver and coins went from the Baltic to Pomerania and from Kiev to Eastern Poland, Mazovia and Great Poland. In the late tenth century, the use of ever smaller fragments of coins intensified (Bogucki 2011: 146). Despite the extension of minting to eastern Europe, the widespread adoption of coin was limited. Perhaps the most dynamic aspect of the century was the hacksilver economy of the Vikings, which drew huge numbers of silver dirhams into northern Europe, and exported them across Scandinavia, the Baltic, northern Britain and Ireland.

Coinage in the eleventh century was affected to varying degrees by the great events of the time. The silver penny was adopted by states newly won for Christendom in northern Spain, Scandinavia and Hungary. There was an unsatisfied increase in demand for coined money over much of Europe, during the second half of the century in particular (Grierson 1991: 65). While the penny remained pre-eminent, other denominations did begin to appear, suggesting a demand for flexibility in the values of coins issued by the mints. In the north-west gold coins were limited to ceremonial issues, such as Anglo-Saxon pieces struck using penny dies under Æthelred II (978–1016) and Edward
the Confessor (1042–66). However, the influence of Islamic gold on those states bordering the Caliphate led to the minting of imitative dinars in Barcelona, Salerno and Amalfi. Coins valued at less than a penny, which had been struck intermittently in Francia from 700 and in England and Italy from the ninth century, were increasingly experimented with. These were mostly in the form of round obols or halfpennies, but pennies cut into halves and quarters were known in England, with even smaller fragmentary pieces in eastern Europe. In Germany in the eleventh century there was diminishing royal control of the coinage and many mints were in the hands of the church. The hoards reveal a general trend for the currency to be dominated by issues from local mints, with a compact age-structure, showing evidence of a requirement for incoming coins to be exchanged at the mints for local types. Silver extracted from the Harz Mountains peaked in c. 1025 and diminished rapidly after 1040, leading to a dearth in minting in Saxony, Bavaria and Poland, in Scandinavia and the Baltic, and west in the Rhineland and Frisia (Spufford 1988: 95–6). The coinage of France was dominated by large powerful fiefdoms that continued to produce coinage of poor fabric, workmanship and aesthetic appeal (Grierson 1990: 68–70). With diminished central control mints were free to debase their issues to such an extent that by the end of the eleventh century the denier of Toulouse was equivalent to two deniers of Melgueil, and four of Le Puy (Spufford 1988: 103).

In stark contrast to Germany and France, England evolved a closely controlled national coinage of uniform design struck at some seventy mints. A high level of control is visible in the frequent changes of type that were made, to the profit of the king, at about three- to six-year intervals. Under the Norman kings of England the Anglo-Saxon monetary system and coinage was little altered at first, mirroring the Norman preference for flexibility seen in its success in establishing the Norman Regno in Sicily and southern Italy. Coin use, as revealed by metal detector finds, was still limited to the principal towns of the kingdom and selected rural areas in eastern and southern England (Kelleher 2015: 59–60).

The Viking Age brought coin production to Ireland for the first time. In c. 995 Sihtric Silkenbeard (c. 989/95–1036) struck coins at Dublin in his name, and it would be Dublin that was the principal focus for coin use. Beyond the kingdom of Dublin hoards and single-finds show that coinage was uncommon and, like many states on Europe’s periphery, was effectively the preserve of a small and urban minority (Woods 2014: 296–312). Likewise, coin-use in Viking-Age Scotland was of mixed pedigree and comprised Anglo-Saxon, Norwegian and Islamic imports. These were limited to the Norse settlements (Williams 2006: 171). It was only after 1000 that Scandinavian minting took root, most effectively in Denmark, where Anglo-Saxon pennies of Æthelred II were used as a prototype.

Italy was foremost in the use of money, but the picture is unclear, with contradictory evidence for patterns of growth and recession (Spufford 1988:
Two systems were in place there: in the north was the German imperial system of silver pennies; while in the south there was a mixture of Byzantine and independent issues with a circulating currency of Arab Sicilian gold and Byzantine copper. The Normans established settlements in southern Italy by the 1050s, which were later legitimized by papal patronage, and conquered Sicily by the end of the century. The mints they inherited continued to strike the same coins as before; copper folles in Capua and Salerno, gold tareni at Salerno, Amalfi and Sicily, and tiny silver kharubba in Sicily (Grierson and Travaini 1998: 76–8).

In Eastern Europe coinage became better established. In Hungary, crudely engraved pennies were struck, while in Bohemia coins were produced in great quantity, although they became lighter in the second half of the century. At the start of the century monetization in Poland was limited to the emporia and ducal and royal courts, but in the second half of the century local markets were more frequent users of coin, in particular imports—principally German—of which at least 50,000 are known as single finds (Bogucki 2011: 147). The drying up of silver in Germany after 1040 was mirrored in the Islamic lands with the decline in the mines of Central Asia. This had the knock-on effect of sharply reducing the Byzantine silver coinage after 1000, which was abandoned altogether in the 1092 reform of Alexius I (1081–1118). One’s experience of money in the eleventh century was contingent on geographical and social factors. The fragmentation of coins into smaller sums and the import of foreign coins suggest a shifting dynamic of use, but as yet supply and demand were not in equilibrium.

**COINAGE AND CURRENCY IN THE TWELFTH–FOURTEENTH CENTURIES**

Paradoxically, twelfth-century Europe experienced an increase in trade activity and greater demand for coin, while at the same time suffering a continuing shortage of bullion (Grierson 1991: 81). In the three major coinage areas (Germany, France and England) this dynamic was felt in different ways, often, but not exclusively, resulting in debasement and weight reductions. Gold coins remained largely the preserve of Byzantium or those states bordering, or reconquered from, the Islamic World. Germany remained the most powerful European state despite the setbacks of the previous century, particularly under Frederick I Barbarossa (1152–90) and Henry VI (1190–7). However, minting was in the hands of bishops and archbishops, as well as the emperor, and although Frederick revived or established new mints, there was by no means a standard imperial coinage throughout the empire. In fact, the coinage generally diverged significantly along geographical lines; smaller flan silver pennies were the norm in some areas, but large flan bracteates, became common in others. In
France, the coinages of the great feudatories, such as Champagne and Melgueil, circulated widely, and eclipsed those of the crown in quality. However, the resurgent monarchy, under Phillip II Augustus (1180–1223), would begin the process of reclaiming royal control of the coinage. In the twelfth century, the patchwork of local princely coinages in the Angevin territories of Henry of Anjou was brought together in a more closely integrated system, which after 1180 was fixed to the English sterling (Cook 2006: 671).

In England, royal control was maintained and debasement generally avoided, although during the civil war of Stephen’s reign a number of magnates, as well as Matilda and her Angevin allies (Blackburn 1994; Allen 2016). The currency circulating when Henry II (1154–89) assumed the throne was soon replaced by a wholesale recoinage in 1158 which abandoned the centuries-old renovatio system. A second recoinage in 1180 replaced the Cross and Crosslets coins with the Short Cross type, which would endure in immobilized form across four reigns and 80 years (Figure 4.3). The 1180 recoinage significantly increased the productivity of the mints and the size of the currency (Allen 2007: 273).

The minting of Scotland’s first coins was made possible when David I invaded Cumbria and took the English mint of Carlisle. Pennies of English-style were struck in small numbers in Carlisle and Edinburgh but these are rare as finds. As in much of northern and western England, regular engagement with money was still some way off. What, then, of Ireland? Prince John’s investment as lord of Ireland in 1185 saw the resumption of minting at Dublin, and the production of halfpence. In the 1190s a second coinage of halfpence and farthings was issued. Halfpence and farthings were also struck by the Ulster baron John de Courcy.

FIGURE 4.3: Silver Short Cross penny, struck at York by the moneyer Isaac © Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.
The two most commercially advanced areas were the Low Countries and Italy. In northern Italy, new mints were opened but the three main monetary areas of Pavia, Verona and Lucca that had emerged following the Carolingian collapse continued to be dominant (Day et al. 2016; Saccocci 1999: 41–2). In the south the Norman mix of coins was replaced in 1140 by a new monetary system. Byzantine and Islamic elements were still visible in the four coins (one of copper, two of silver and one of gold and two monies of account) while still allowing local traditions on the mainland (Travaini 2001: 184). The coins of the Low Countries assumed a distinctive character, diverging from the imperial or French types of previous centuries. Small petit deniers were struck widely under municipal and comital authority. Danish coins were the most important in Scandinavia. The Danish hoards are dominated by local coins, except at the edges of the kingdom, where German influence is seen. The Kampinge hoard of small bracteates, for example, is linked to the Scanian fairs (Steen Jensen 1999: 314).

The First Crusade of 1096–9 saw the establishment of four new states in the Levant. Like Norman Sicily they were at the center of a complex mix of cultural influences from the Frankish homeland, the Byzantine Empire and local Islamic traditions. In the Latin East, the northern states of Edessa and Antioch adopted coinages that drew heavily on the Byzantine model. However, the extent to which such coins were adopted by local populations is debatable, at least for Edessa. The few excavated sites of the period have produced few Edessene coins. At frontier settlements like Gritille in the Upper Euphrates, coin finds are scarce, and those recovered are typically Frankish silver deniers or local Islamic copper fulus (Redford 1998). Antioch was richer, more powerful, and much longer-lived than Edessa and developed a large coinage of billon deniers beyond the initial phase of copper folles (Metcalf 1995). The proliferation of the billon coins of Antioch, particularly those of Bohemond III (1163–1201) suggests a coinage used extensively in the major towns, but how far they penetrated beyond the hinterland awaits further excavation and synthesis. This is not the case for the Kingdom of Jerusalem, where the planned villeneuve settlements, for Frankish colonists at Parva Mahumeria and Bethgibelin, have provided a fascinating insight into the use of money in the rural communities servicing Jerusalem, Tyre, and Acre (Kool 2007). Excavations at Parva found a total of nearly 100 coins in 50 percent of the dwellings excavated, including a small gold hoard. The single finds were a mixture of coins of Jerusalem, Antioch, Tripoli, feudal France, and Byzantium. The everyday use of money at this site was diverse, and charter evidence from Castellum Regis (a town north of Acre) shows that low-value coins (half a denier) were required for the use of the communal bath (Kool 2007: 139–47). The local coinage would meet the demand for low-value denominations needed for transactions involving most everyday services. Developments in the twelfth century laid the foundations for
the fundamental shifts of the thirteenth. Already by the 1170s the use of coin was extending downward socially, but a dramatic increase in Europe’s silver supply would be required to make money an everyday object.

The thirteenth century was one of significant advancement in the “ordinary” use of money, particularly in the second half of the century. Pennies were minted in increasing quantities, while the introduction of large silver coins, and the return of the minting of gold, facilitated large-scale trade and fuelled the commercial revolution. Growth would not have been possible without a surge in newly mined silver, which came early in the century from the prolific areas of Friesach in Meissen. Gold was largely derived from the Islamic world; but mines in Silesia, Hungary and Transylvania were locally important (Grierson 1991: 105). In France, royal control was extended against the feudatories throughout the century, limiting the circulation of non-royal deniers to their areas of issue, and placing royal deniers tournois and parisis (and their fractions) at the forefront of the currency (Grierson 1991: 113–14). In 1266 Louis IX established the gros tournois of 12 deniers, which proved immediately successful and was widely imitated (Figure 4.4). The monetary innovations seen elsewhere in Europe failed to materialize in Germany, where silver Pfennige continued to be used in eastern and southern areas.

England’s sterling coinage became one of the most important in Europe in this century. A huge increase in mint output, coupled with the recoinages of 1247 and 1279, cemented royal control over the profits of coin production and the centralized activity of ever fewer mints (Allen 2012, especially Chapter 2). A gold penny was introduced and quickly abandoned in the 1250s, and new silver denominations appeared at the close of the century, successfully in the case of penny fractions, but not so with the groat. The lack of low-value
denominations in England before the last quarter of the thirteenth century provides a puzzle for our understanding of the English economy. In recent years, metal detectorists have partly provided an answer to this through finds of thousands of pennies deliberately cut into halfpennies and farthings. Their distribution provides strong evidence for money being used in day-to-day business by those engaged in commercial activities, with many finds coming from rural locations (Kelleher forthcoming). The quality and relative abundance of the sterlings led to their use on the continent, where they occur in many hoards, particularly in France and Germany, but also in the distant Balkans and eastern Mediterranean (Allen 2001: 114–18). An unwelcome consequence of their popularity was their imitation at mints in the Low Countries and northwest Germany, often at a fineness below that of the English standard. This at least was a reason given for the 1299–1300 English recoinage and prohibition against their use (Kent 2005: 18). Hoards and single finds show how widespread these issues became in circulation in England (Mayhew 1983; Kelleher forthcoming). The Scottish and Irish coinages were deeply influenced by the English, through imitation in the former, and by tradition in the latter. Large Scottish hoards from Tom A’bhraich (Aberdeenshire), Dun Lagaidh (Ross), and Keith (Banffshire) indicate that circulation was dominated by English coins (Bateson 1997: 45), a picture supported by single-find evidence (Holmes 2004: 247). Coining in Ireland was sporadic and limited to three periods of activity in c. 1207–11, 1251–4 and 1275–1302. These issues were more for the enrichment of the Anglo-Irish state than for local use, with the great majority of coins pressed into servicing Edward I’s military campaigns (Colgan 2003: 27). They are found, and indeed imitated, on the continent in some numbers.

Italian coinage was influential over much of Europe but continued to be defined by the differences between the northern and central states and those of the Regno in the south. It was advanced in the commercial city-states of Venice, Florence, Genoa and Pisa that would be most influential, as large grossei of good silver, which contrasted starkly with the increasingly debased local denari, found use, and became essential for international trade (Grierson 1991: 105). Venice created denominations for specific purposes; piccoli for everyday use and grossei for long-distance trade (Stahl 2000: 202–12). Gold coins appeared in Genoa and Florence in 1252 and Venice in 1289 and soon came to dominate international trade: florins north of the Alps and ducats in the eastern Mediterranean (Grierson 1991: 110). In the south gold tari continued to be struck alongside billon denari but the reforms of the Angevin Charles I more closely aligned southern Italy with the rest of Europe (Grierson 1991: 112).

The Low Countries also came to commercial prominence in this century, although its coins were influenced by those of its neighbors, and they were in no way consistent across coin issuing authorities. The petit denier gave way to penny coinages in the north Netherlands, and double pennies and petit gros in
English sterlings played a significant role, and they were tariffed at four Flemish pennies. The *gros tournois* appeared towards the end of the century. In politically unstable Denmark the coinage degenerated spectacularly, and sterlings were used as groat equivalents, as shown by their presence in hoards from Skafatarup and Bornholm (Steen Jensen 1999: 315–16). While the coins might have degenerated in fabric their extensive use is revealed by the more than 4,400 single-finds found at Tårnborg in Jutland (dated c. 1240–c. 1341), and more than 170,000 from Denmark (Grinder-Hansen 2000; Gullbekk 2011). In Norway, small groats and sterlings replaced the tiny, inadequate bracteates. This coincided with an increase in monetization, although there was a distinction between the towns, where coins were used, and rural areas, where commodities were more common (Gullbekk 2003). In Sweden bracteates continued to be used. A study of finds from Swedish churches reveals significant monetization in the second half of the century (Klackenberg 1992).

The coinage of the Iberian Peninsula began to improve; Barcelona was already an important locus in western Mediterranean trade and its *grosi* an important currency. Leon and Castile produced gold *doblas* based on the Almohad double dinar and an abundant billon coinage. In Portugal, there was some gold and poor billon *dinhieros*. States in Eastern Europe experienced differing fortunes; Bohemian coinage declined in fineness, adopting bracteates on the Saxon model, despite the opening of the Jihlava mines in the 1220s (Grierson 1991: 131; Spufford 1988: 119). In Silesia and Poland bracteates of varying weight were struck. Hungarian coinage was dominated by Friesacher Pfennige, which appear to have increased the use of coins in the countryside (Spufford 1988: 134–6). In Serbia, the Balkans and Cyprus the currency of copper trachy (in Serbia) and base gold *hyperpyra* (in Cyprus), inspired by Byzantine models, gave way to Venetian *grosi* and their imitations. The Fourth Crusade and the establishment of the Latin Empire stimulated the flow of deniers from France and led to their imitation, and rise to dominance, by the mid-century. The remnants of the crusader states of the Levant at Acre and Tripoli continued to issue gold bezants and silver until their destruction in 1291. The thirteenth century began a new period of the widespread use of coin. Elites and merchants had new gold and silver coins to facilitate business, while coin, emanating from the towns, began to replace customary systems in rural areas. Barter and commodity exchange remained part of the everyday experience, but coinage was now a familiar fixture in rural economies.

The fourteenth century saw the extension of the monetary innovations and trends of the thirteenth. The extension of gold coinage was a principal development, thanks in part to gold available in the Mediterranean through Italian cities trading with Africa, and the discovery of new European sources such as Kremnica (Spufford 1988: 267–8). The mines at Kutná Hora in Bohemia
produced an abundance of silver beginning at the start of the century. Gold coinage spread from Italy and France to Spain, the Low Countries, Hungary, and England by the end of the century. But, like the silver coins, weights and finenesses diverged from state to state (Grierson 1991: 139). The century also witnessed the social upheaval and demographic change wrought by the Black Death, which had a keen impact on coin supply and demand. France was the most powerful state in Europe, with a royal coinage that had become the most important in the kingdom with the reforms of St Louis. The scourge of debasement continued to dog the currency in the mid-century as a source of finance in the Hundred Years War, although Charles V temporarily remedied the problem in the 1360s (Grierson 1991: 142–3). The great period of Gascon coinage came under Edward III and Edward the Black Prince during the Hundred Years’ War. The coins, in gold, silver and base silver, were modeled on the French feudal pieces in circulation in those lands.

England caught up with the rest of Europe with the permanent addition of gold nobles and their fractions, and large silver groats and halfgroats. Sterling was imitated extensively on the continent, with the most common English single-finds of these coins being those of Gaucher of Châtillon (1313–22) and John the Blind (1309–46) (Kelleher forthcoming). A mint at Calais was established to convert the profit of the Staple’s wool trade into English coins; first in gold and later silver (Allen 2010: 131) with output sometimes equaling that of London (Mayhew 1992: 150). The circulating medium in Scotland, as shown by finds and hoards, was mostly English (Holmes 2004: 158) and the Scottish coinage closely mirrored that of England until the mid-century. After David II (1329–71) was released from English captivity in 1357 he inaugurated a new coinage which added gold nobles and silver groats and their halves to the mix. The silver pieces were underweight, and a further reduction in 1367, and debasement in 1393, led to their prohibition in England. As a result, English coins became less common in Scotland and by the end of the century the silver coinage was dominated by Scottish coins of Robert III (1390–1406) (Bateson 1997: 59). Ireland’s coinage followed the reforms seen in England under Edward I, with pennies, halfpennies and farthings being struck. However, the economic growth of the Anglo-Irish colony in the early century was undermined by the systematic draining out of good silver coin, and by its replacement with sterling imitations, debased continental pieces, deniers tournois and lightweight Scottish groats (Colgan 2003: 27–33). Apart from a tiny issue of halfpennies and farthings of Edward III no coins would be produced in Ireland until the fifteenth century.

North and central Italy made extensive use of gold, particularly Florence, Venice, Genoa, Rome, Bologna, and Milan (Figure 4.5). The silver coinages are very complex and fall within six main monetary zones: Asti and Savoy, Genoa, Milanese currency, Venice and Verona, Aquileia, and Bologna and Ancona.
What is striking is the fact that coin use in these areas was overwhelmingly dominated by the issues of the dominant mints, sometimes with less than 1 percent coming in from neighboring areas (Saccocci 1999: 43). In the fourteenth century Venice began producing silver soldini as a coin for everyday use, with the tornosello (three-penny piece) made for export to Greece where it drove out all other coinage (Stahl 2000: 217–25). In the south gold was replaced by large silver coins, supplemented with poor quality billon denari. In the Low Countries, large silver gros were struck, alongside coins based on the sterling and black billon. From the 1330s gold coins, based on florins or French gold, formed an important part of the currency of this commercially important region (Grierson 1991: 158). Germany lagged behind its neighbors, and was late in introducing any large silver or gold coins. Minting was largely now the preserve of cities which formed some of the earliest monetary unions. In the north, a convention agreed between the Hanseatic towns of Lübeck, Wismar, Hamburg, Lüneburg, and others, saw them strike a silver witten of related type and weight (Grierson 1991: 164).

The poor native coinage of Denmark led to the import of gros tournois, sterlings, and German bracteates. A hoard from Kirial comprised 80,000 of the latter. The witten coinages of the Hanseatic towns would replace these after 1365 (Steen Jensen 1999: 316–17; Grierson 1991: 166). The first silver multiples appeared in Sweden and the Baltic towns of Riga, Dorpat and Reval all began striking coins for the use of the town and its trade. In Bohemia, the rich Kutna Horá mines made the pragergroschen the most important currency in central Europe. These were complemented by Hungarian gold coins of Charles Robert. In the eastern Mediterranean, the grossi of Cyprus oiled the wheels of trade, as did the gigliati of Rhodes and Chios in Asia Minor (Grierson 1991: 174–5).
AN EVERYDAY EXPERIENCE?

This chapter has surveyed the coin production and monetization across a broad chronology in search of evidence of the everyday use of money. The traditional view is that between the seventh and twelfth centuries European coinage was based everywhere on the silver penny and was of limited use to most people. But, from the thirteenth century (or more probably the late twelfth century) increased silver supplies, the minting of large silver coins and gold coins, and the use of bills of exchange and credit transfers, helped to extend the use of money to all levels of society (Spufford 1988: 378–79). This process was linked to quickening urbanization from the twelfth century, rising populations and, essential for rural communities, the commutation of customary services into cash rents.

Away from Byzantium, where monetization was fundamental to the workings of the empire, coinage was rare in the early Middle Ages, but for those at the very top of society coin became an object of the exercise of kingship. It carried prestige and projected identity, allowed access to luxury goods, and played a role in symbolic and religious rituals. This began with the gold of the Merovingians, and later the silver of Francia and England. Weak rulers lost mints, while strong ones controlled minting as a source of revenue and power. As coin became more common from the eleventh century its uses multiplied. For the elite coins paid for war, diplomacy and ecclesiastical gifts; funded the foundation of new monasteries and programs of castle building; and maintained the household. One of the most dynamic and active players in stimulating the demand for coin was the merchant (Spufford 2002). Monetary innovations began in the commercially important towns and ports of Europe, first in northern Italy, and then in the Low Countries. Experiences of money in the towns differed from those in the countryside, but the differences became more nuanced and subtle from the thirteenth century (see papers in Wilkin et al. 2015). Long-distance flows of silver were inter-urban but percolated out to the countryside so that a radical change in the rural as well as urban use of coin took place between the late-twelfth and early-fourteenth century (Spufford 1988: 143). The medieval town was a large settlement in which most inhabitants made their living from non-agricultural pursuits such as trade, industry, and services. Towns had occupational diversity and multiple economic functions, which coinage was vital in maintaining. The body of a woman excavated from a Black Death cemetery in London provides a tantalizing glimpse of the everyday use of money in an urban context. Two purses totaling 181 coins were recovered, one from the armpit, which contained most of the larger coins, and one from the waist, which held most of the small coins; a clear example of money readily available for daily use (Kelleher et al., 2008). Towns were where mints were located. In some cases, the towns operated the mints and could
form monetary unions, which formalized and streamlined the use of coin between them. Finally, we turn to the rural population. Peasants were an individually insignificant but collectively vital part of the economy who lived in villages within diverse and complex economic systems varying from place to place. The majority were self-sufficient, relying on seasonal, small-scale barter. But as the provision of coinage grew so did rural engagement with money, which was accrued through sales of surplus and paid as taxes, rents and fines, and for specialist goods and services. The volume of currency that passed through the English countryside is remarkable (Mayhew 2002) and finds are beginning to flesh out the bones of the documentary record for the period after c.1200 (Kelleher forthcoming). The question posed at the start of this chapter about the everyday monetary experience has a multiplicity of answers. Everyday contact with coin depended on the sophistication of the economy and level of society, and when and where one lived.