

5 The price of justice and administration of coinage

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The *thing* is the oldest known communal organization in Northern Europe. The term *þing* or *thing* existed in all Germanic languages of Northern Europe. It is derived from the Gothic term for time, *þeihs*, and another word meaning ‘to congregate’. The meaning of *thing* is therefore ‘to meet at a certain place at a certain time’ (Iversen 2013), and the *thing* participants had to travel to these meetings.

In its early phase, the *thing* was the highest authority in all areas of society. The highest judicial power sat at shire level. During the Viking Age, *lawthings* were established for even bigger judicial areas in Norway, such as the Gulathing, Frostathing, Eidsivathing, Borgarthing and Hålogaland (Iversen 2014, 2015a, 2015b). These were representative *things*, which attracted delegates from vast areas.

Expenses and travel routes

This chapter will investigate the cost of arranging *lawthings* in the thirteenth century. The calculations are based on the so-called *tingfareoret* (economic compensation for attending the *thing*) in the Rural Law of Magnus the Lawmender from 1274 (L I, 2). The guiding principle of the compensation scheme was simple: the longer the distance, the higher the compensation. The Faroe Islands can be used to illustrate how the travel compensation was calculated. According to Faroese law, the island group was divided into no fewer than 21 tariff zones (NgL IV: 666). Representatives living closest to the assembly site, from Kollafjørður, Ragtangi and Nólsoy, received five ells of woollen cloth (*vaðmál*), while those furthest away, from the southern part of Suðuroy, received as much as 20 ells of cloth (Taranger 1915: 8). Norway differed significantly from the Faroe Islands both administratively and geographically. As an extension of the *thing* compensation scheme (*tingfareoret*), it will also be investigated how the king and the state used the *thing* to administrate the monetary system, namely to exchange old coins for new ones – so-called recoinage or *renovatio monetae*. A recoinage meant that all old coins were replaced with new ones issued by the king. This was a widespread European phenomenon, described in detail for the first time in Carolingian sources: in the Edict of Pitres from AD 864. In Norway, this phenomenon can be traced from the reign of Olav Kyrre (1067–93) to the middle of the fourteenth century.

What kinds of sums or values were in circulation at the Norwegian *lawthings*? According to the sections attributed to King Olav in the Gulathing Law, each *thingman* was entitled to half a month's worth of food as travel compensation, unless he had even further to travel. In addition, he should also receive a *sold* of malt and an *øre* in silver. This custom existed in the eleventh century but it may be even older. In the slightly later text of King Magnus the travel compensation was specified according to region (G 3).

According to Christian IV's Norwegian Law of 1604, *thingmen* were to receive four Danish shillings for every *mil* (c. 11.3 kilometres) as travel compensation (C IV, 2). By this time, the system had been changed, as both the Gulathing Law Code and the Rural Law of Magnus the Lawmender calculated the compensation on the basis of provinces and *thing* districts. In addition, from 1604 there was no longer a set number of representatives. The royal ombudsman or bailiff (*fogd*) appointed as many *thingmen* as he saw fit. The Rural Law of Magnus the Lawmender, on the other hand, specified both the number of representatives and the travel compensation paid out to the different districts. These regulations form the basis of our calculations. The additional expenditure for priests and high-ranking royal officials (*lendmaðr* and *sysselfmaðr*) has not been included in this study.

The Rural Law of Magnus the Lawmender mentions 31 areas in total, spread over three law-districts, namely the Gulathing, Frostathing and Eidsvathing, and it is clear which areas belonged to the different *lawthings*. In accordance with customary law, the *thingmen* of the Borgarthing district were also to be compensated, but unfortunately these areas are not specified in the law. There is, however, a law from the fifteenth century which provides information on this for the law-district of Skien (NgL IV: 478). This means we have information regarding travel compensation for four *lawthings* in medieval Norway. The available sources contain information on how much *bóndafé* (payment from farmers) was required for holding the *lawthings* in 1274, while the information for the Skien *lawthing* is somewhat later. The funds were collected under the auspices of the lawman, who, according to the Rural Law of Magnus the Lawmender, should later present his accounts to the *thing* (L III, 1, 6; KLN II, 83).

The overwhelming majority of the tariffs for travel compensations in the Rural Law of Magnus the Lawmender are based on silver, namely on the following units: 1 mark silver = 8 *øre* = 216 grams of silver. On two occasions (for Namdalen and Nordmøre) it is clear that the law refers to weighed silver. This particular measurement often formed the basis for the payments set out in the laws. Tariffs based on coins were more unstable and more difficult to use, since they varied with the royal minting strategy. Weighed silver was also closer to a burnt mark, the most common unit of value in the time of the Rural Law of Magnus the Lawmender. Indeed, silver marks constituted the most common measurement for official purposes in Norway in the High Middle Ages. For the mountainous areas of the Gulathing law-district, on the other hand, the tariffs were calculated in monthly allowances of butter.

This was a traditional measurement used in areas where the economy was largely based on animal husbandry. In 1274, nine units of butter (*mmb*) were equal to one burnt mark silver. The tariff zones of the Gulathing Law are defined in more exact terms than the areas from which the representatives were to be selected. For example, 30 *thingmen* were to be appointed in Rogaland, an area divided into two tariff zones with an estimated 15 representatives per zone. Corresponding regulations applied to the whole Gulathing district, with the exception of Agder, Sogn and the mountainous areas.

Tariffs are provided for six geographical areas of the Frostathing district: Namdalen, Nordmøre, Inntrøndelag, Utrøndelag, Oppdal and Romsdalen (Table 5.2; Figure 5.2). The tariffs varied from 6 *øre* silver for each representative from the most outlying areas (Namdalen and Romsdalen) to 2 *øre* silver for the representatives closest to the *thing* site (Inntrøndelag and Utrøndelag). Representatives from the areas at an intermediate distance were compensated with 4 *øre* silver (Oppdal and Nordmøre). The total sum for the 485 *thingmen* of the Frostathing district was 1208 *øre* silver, which amounted to 32.6 kilograms of silver.

The coastal area of the Gulathing law-district was divided into ten different tariff zones (Table 5.1; Figure 5.1). There were also four valleys in the interior

Tables 5.1–5.4 Travel compensation and geographical zones stipulated in the Rural Law of Magnus the Lawmender (1274), and the regulations for the Skien *lawthing* (fifteenth century)

<i>The Gulathing</i>	<i>Representatives</i>	<i>Tariff</i>	<i>Sum</i>
Agder	12	10	120
Ryfylke, South	15	8	120
Ryfylke, North	15	7	105
Sunnhordland	20	5	100
Nordhordland	20	3	60
Sogn	20	5	100
Firda, South	10	6	60
Firda, North	10	7	70
Sunnmøre, South	6	8	48
Sunnmøre, North	6	10	60
Sum	134		843
Silver (kilogram)			22,761
Valdres	4	5	20
Hallingdal	4	5	20
Setesdal	2	5	10
Otredal	4	5	20
Mmb butter	14	20	70
Silver (kilogram)			5,04
In total, silver (kilogram)			27,81

(continued)

Tables 5.1–5.4 (continued)

<i>The Frostathing</i>	<i>Representatives</i>	<i>Tariff</i>	<i>Sum</i>
Namdalen	18	6	108
Nordmøre	48	4	192
Inntrøndelag	160	2	320
Uttrøndelag	240	2	480
Oppdal	3	4	12
Romsdalen	16	6	96
Sum	485		1208
Silver (kilogram)			32,616

<i>The Eidsivathing</i>	<i>Representatives</i>	<i>Tariff</i>	<i>Sum</i>
Gudbrandsdalen, North	4	6	24
Gudbrandsdalen, South	8	4	32
Hedmark	24	3	72
Romerike	24	2	48
Hadeland	24	3	72
Østerdalen, South	4	4	16
Østerdalen, North	2	6	12
Sum	90		276
Silver (kilogram)			7,452

<i>The Skien lawthing</i>	<i>Representatives</i>	<i>Tariff</i>	<i>Sum</i>
Hovin (Gjerpen)	2	6	12
Grenland	4	6	24
Bamble	2	6	12
Numedal	2	6	12
Sum	10		60
Silver (kilogram)			162
<i>Skattlandet</i>			
Hjartdal	2	6	12
Tinn	2	6	12
Vinje	2	6	12
Lårdal	2	6	12
Seljord	2	6	12
Fyresdal	2	6	12
Kviteseid	2	6	12
Tørdal	2	6	12
Sum	16		96
Silver (kilogram)			2,592

to which the same tariff was applied: Valdres, Hallingdal, Setedal and Otredal (5 *mmb* butter). The tariffs applied to the coastal zones varied from 3 *øre* in Nordhordland to 10 *øre* in Agder and Sunnmøre, which lay furthest from the

assembly site. The total compensation for the 134 *thingmen* from the coastal area was 843 *øre* silver (22.8 kilograms of silver), and from the 14 mountain districts 70 monthly rations of butter (5 kilograms of silver) were to be paid out. In total this amounted to 27.8 kilograms silver, which is slightly less than for the *lawthing* at Frosta.

The Eidsvathing district was divided into seven tariff zones: Gudbrandsdalen north of Rosten, Gudbrandsdalen south of Rosten to Humlen, Hedmark, Romerike, Hadeland and Østerdalen south of Åmot and Østerdalen north of Åmot (Table 5.3). Here, too, the principle of ‘the longer the journey, the higher the compensation’ was applied. Furthest away were northern Gudbrandsdalen and northern Østerdalen (6 *øre*). The tariff for Romerike, where the assembly site was situated, was only two *øre* per *thingman*. The total for the 90 representatives was 276 *øre* or 7.5 kilograms of silver.

According to the fifteenth-century law for the area of Skien, two men were to ride from Hovin (Gjerpen) to the Skien *lawthing* (Table 5.4). There were also to be four *thingmen* from Grenland (Lindheim and Ulefoss) and two from Bamble (NgL IV: 478; Taranger 1915: 7f.). Finally, there were to be two representatives from Numedal. In addition, there were two representatives from every parish in *Skattlandet*, considered to be synonymous with upper Telemark County. The tariff for these areas was set at 6 *øre* silver. In 1647 there were eight parishes in upper Telemark: Hjartdal, Tinn, Vinje, Lårdal, Seljord, Fyresdal, Kvitseid and Tørdal. If only these 18 *thingmen* were compensated, the total sum would have come to 96 *øre* silver; that is, 2.6 kilograms of silver. If all the *thingmen* were paid compensation, this would have meant an extra 1.6 kilograms of silver.

In total, the cost of full attendance of the Frostathing was 32.6 kilograms of silver. The equivalent for the Gulathing was 27.8 kilograms. The Eidsivathing had fewer representatives, most of whom had a shorter journey, and the cost of holding this assembly therefore came to about 7.5 kilograms of silver. Some uncertainty surrounds the Skien *lawthing*, but the likely cost for *Skattlandet* alone was 2.6 kilograms of silver. There is no information for the law-areas of Hålogaland and Jämtland or for the Borgarthing district. It is also uncertain whether Voss, Hardanger, Mandal and Nedenes were included in the tariffs for the Gulathing district (Iversen 2015a). These areas were home to just over 30 per cent of the population of Norway, Bohuslän and Jämtland in 1769.¹

An overview of the compensation scheme

The holding of the *thing* meetings for the four known *lawthings* came to a total of 70.5 kilograms of silver in *bóndafé*. To this must be added the cost for the areas for which the compensation rates are unknown. An estimate suggests that holding the *lawthings* in the late thirteenth century cost approximately 100 kilograms of silver a year. This sum, if converted to coins, corresponded to about 500,000 bracteates (0.2 grams), which were minted in large quantities

during Magnus the Lawmender's reign until the 1270s, when a major coin reform took place. At this time the bracteates were replaced by the more solid *penninger* (1.2 grams). About 80,000 of these would have covered the cost of travel to the *things* at the end of the reign of Magnus the Lawmender (Gullbekk 2005).

It is reasonable to assume that the costs of holding the *thing* meetings were much lower in the High Middle Ages than before. The number of *thingmen* in the Law of the Gulathing had been severely reduced from the eleventh century onwards. According to the text attributed to king Olav the Saint (1015–28, 1030), there were to be 375 *thingmen* in Firda, Sogn, Hordaland, Rogaland and Agder. The circumstances stipulated here for the year 1274 applied to 122 representatives in this area and to 148 for the whole Gulathing district, which by this time had been expanded in geographical terms. In total, this is still only close to 40 per cent of the number of representatives in the eleventh century. A similar development is plausible for the other law-districts, and – assuming that the level of compensation in the eleventh century was similar to that of the thirteenth century – the costs would have been correspondingly higher.

The economic system of the thing site

When it comes to the question of the economic reality faced by the *thingmen* and the organizers of the *thing* system in thirteenth-century Norway, it seems clear that the compensation mirrors the willingness and ability to use economic tools to sustain the social order. In this context, it is interesting to examine what types of economic values and money were used at Norwegian *thing* sites.

The provincial laws contain many references to economic value and money, the majority referring to marks and *øre*. It can be hard to determine whether these terms refer to mark silver, in terms of monetary value, or to the mark as a common denominator for other values. The laws had to be generally applicable, and it is therefore likely that they refer to the latter form of mark and *øre*, in which case it would have been up to the parties involved to agree on an acceptable payment. One article in the Law of the Gulathing provides an insight into valid commodities used for payments of wergild (*mannebøter*). This concerns the fine for manslaughter, regulated according to social status (G 223).

The provincial laws are preserved in documents dating from the second half of the twelfth and the beginning of the thirteenth century. There is an abundance of scholarly works dealing with the provincial laws: cf. Sandvik 1997.

Now payments can be made in grain, bulls, and cows of calf-bearing age, fines and *baugar*. The *wergeld* shall be paid in gold or burned silver, if these are available. Pay in horses, but not mares; stallions, but not geldings; and no horse that has a protruding rectum or a whitish sheath or weak urinary organs or is wall-eyed or suffers from some other defect. Sheep may be given in payment, but not goats; *odal* land may be given in payment, but not land acquired by purchase. A ship may be given in payment, but not

one that has been rebuilt or is so old that the original rowlocks have rotted away; nor shall one give a ship with a broken prow or one that is patched with boards, unless they were laid when the ship was raised on supports (was built). Nothing that is worth less than an *øre* shall be given in payment, unless someone has a fine of smaller amount coming to him; then he shall take the payment [in things of less value]; but the one who pays may increase the fine to one *øre* . . .

Weapons may be given in payment, if they have been tested by use [and are] whole and hard and without defect; those that the man was slain with shall not be offered. Let no one pay *wergild* with a sword, except it be fretted with gold or silver. *Wadmál* or linen cloth may be offered in payment, [if it is] entirely new, or any other cloth that is new and uncut, or even cut cloth, if it is new and the payee is willing to accept it. One may pay with cloth; for men, but not for women; new cloth, and not old. Black sheep pelts may be given in payment, [if they are] new and not worn, and finer cloth, [if it is] new and uncut. Slaves may be given in payment, if they have all been brought up at home and are not younger than 15 winters, unless the payee is willing to take them younger. Bondwomen shall not be given to pay the *wergild*. Now the [classes of] property that may be used to pay the *wergild* have been enumerated (G 233).

(Larson 1935)

These are the most detailed regulations concerning valid forms of payment that have been preserved from medieval Norway. The guidelines are so detailed that they seem to be based on a long tradition of actual experiences in old Norwegian society, in which various forms of payment were defined in detail. These regulations refer to high-quality goods. A horse was not accepted as payment unless it was in perfect health. Similarly, a ship that had been repaired and patched with new strakes was not considered adequate payment. Slaves are mentioned along the same lines as other forms of payment. This does not mean that ships and slaves were common payment types. Slavery was abolished in Norway in the thirteenth century, and Viking ships or other ships are not mentioned as payment in contracts for land transactions from the end of the thirteenth or the fourteenth century, a time when prices and the means of payments used are often described in detail. The regulations quoted above provide an intriguing insight into the system of payments in kind in a particular context, but cannot be applied as a basis for ascertaining what types of money were accepted or commonly used in medieval Norway as a whole.

The lack of regulations regarding minting in the provincial laws is in stark contrast to our current knowledge of minting and the organized monetary system of Norway in the second half of the eleventh century, the last quarter of the twelfth century and the thirteenth century. One possible explanation could be that it was not the issuer of coins – the king – who formulated the laws. The older sections of the provincial laws were discussed and agreed on by the *things*, partly as agreements between the farmers and partly as agreements

between the farmers and the official powers, i.e. the king and the Church. The earliest examples of regulations for the whole kingdom date from the 1150s and 1160s, but these still had to be accepted by the *lawthings* to become valid law. This is despite the fact that the role of the *things* in the issuing of law had been reduced. It was not the royal coinage, but the types of money used by the farming community that was the most important to the men who issued law at the *lawthings*.

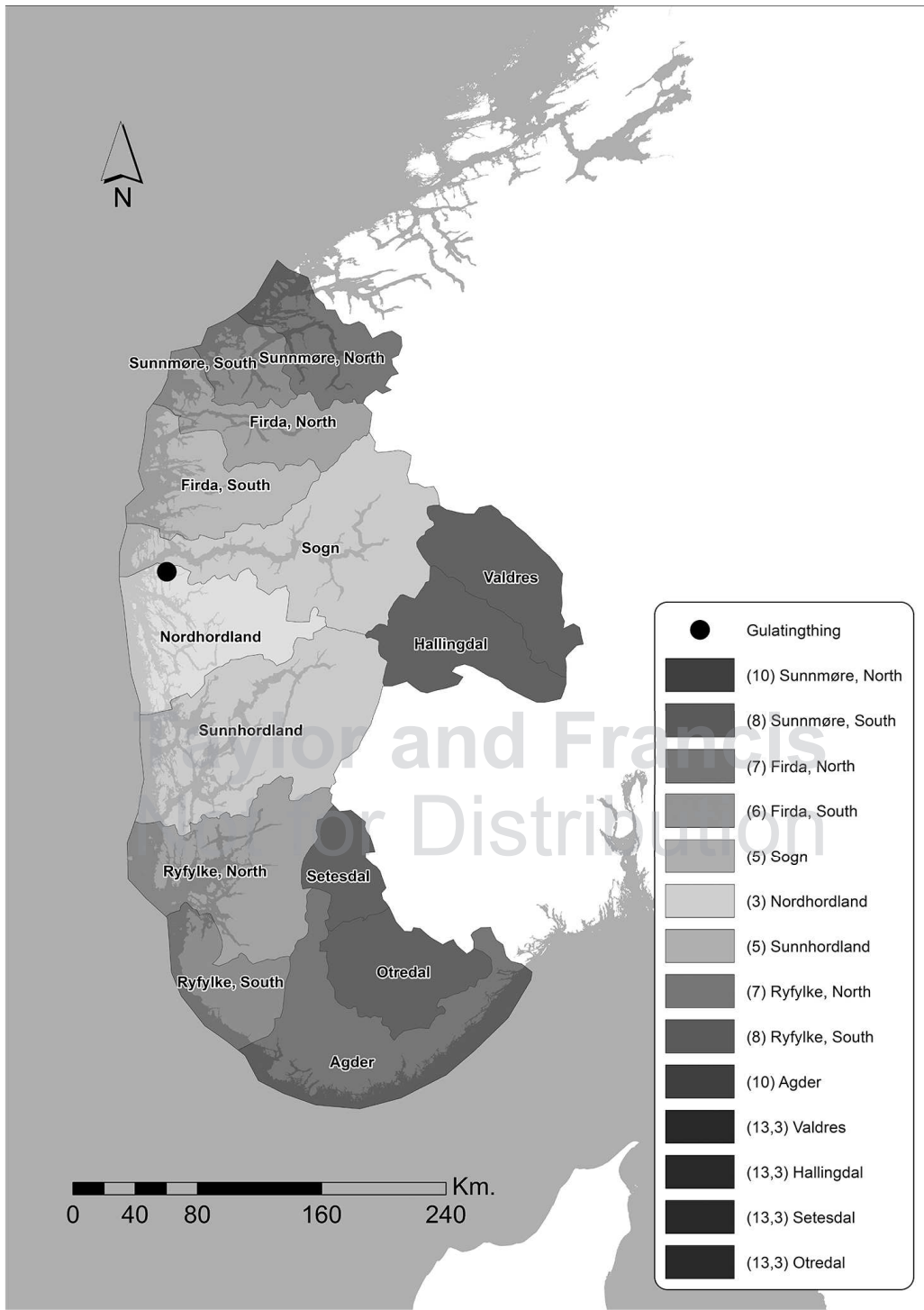
Money and its use at the thing

In the economic system of the Middle Ages the use of goods as a form of payment was based on tradition, while the monetary system was organized by the kings. To organize this for the kingdom as a whole, it seems likely that the kings made use of the *lawthings*. Here, changes could be announced and practical measures introduced to the most important men within each law-district. These men then returned home and announced the royal decrees at the *things* at shire and local levels. The distances separating the central power and the Norwegian farmers could be measured by the organization of the *thing* system. In this context it is reasonable to assume that the kings used the *thing* meetings on various occasions when coinage was on the political agenda, for instance in the implementation of monetary measures, such as *renovatio monetae*, or recoinage.

Recoinages can be identified on the basis of numismatic, archaeological and written sources, and were carried out especially after the accession of new kings. New rulers asserted themselves through the monetary system; this was one of their time-honoured royal regalia. A supply of silver was essential for this custom, and since Norway did not have any substantial natural silver resources in the Middle Ages, it was through recoinages that the new kings obtained silver for their new coins. This was also an opportunity for the king to rid the monetary system of foreign coins. Medieval Norwegian recoinages seem to have been carried out with great efficiency, as the great majority of coin hoards dating from about 1070 to 1320 only contain coins issued by one king or of a singular type, rather than many different ones (Gullbekk 2009: 33).

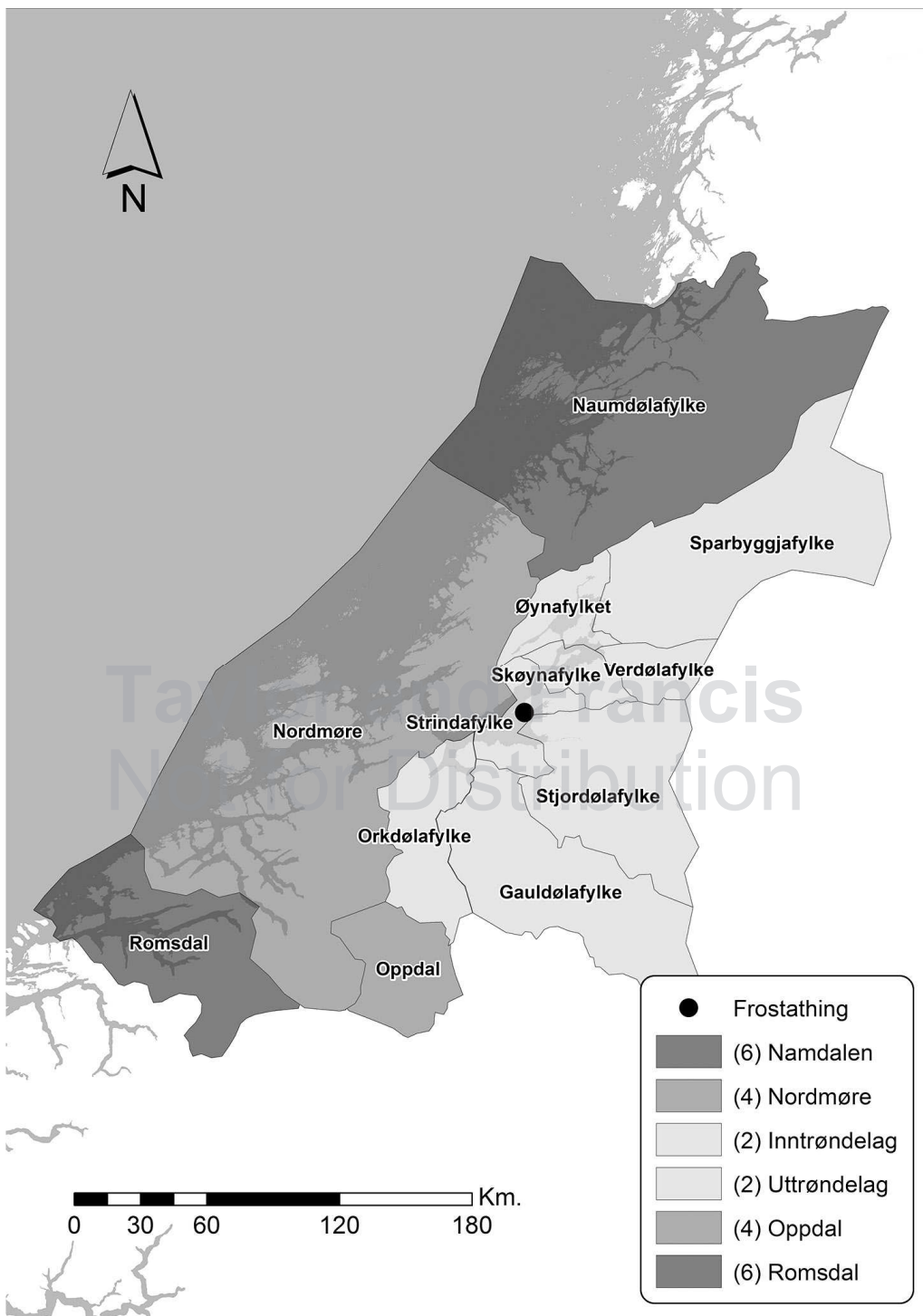
During such recoinages the *thingmen* would bring their own coins as well as those of others, and exchange them for new coins in accordance with the royal decree. At the same time, royal representatives would have had an opportunity to travel to the *thing* meetings where new coins were to be introduced. There are no written sources stating that such procedures took place at the assemblies, but from what we know of the *thing* site as a venue for trade and exchange it is difficult to imagine that processes of national character, such as recoinages, took place without the use of the *thing* as a well-established forum of society. In this way, the use of coins quickly became part of the economics of the *thing* site.

The text of the laws suggests that the *thingmen* brought coins to the assemblies. That coins were part of the world of the lawmakers is reflected in the



Figures 5.1–5.2 (continued)

(continued)



Figures 5.1–5.2 Travel compensation and geographical zones in the Gulathing and Frostathing law-areas stipulated in the Rural Law of Magnus the Lawmender (1274) © Frode Iversen/Svein Gullbekk.

Law of the Gulathing, where it is stated that all *thingmen* should pay their fines at the assembly (G 3: 22), irrespective of whether the guilty party or his relatives intended to pay. If he did not accept his obligation to pay the fine, the king or barons (*lendmaðr*) should pay and then claim twice the amount from the guilty party after his return home (G 3: 23).

Until he shall offer atonement at the *thing* or in the presence of assembled men and have the money there to pay over. (G 34: 4) . . . [T]hen he shall proceed to the *thing* and shall show by witness what their agreement was; then he shall offer [redemption] money. But if the other man has authorised no one to receive the money, let the suitor have it and keep it until the other man comes to get it.

(G 286: 6–7)

It is difficult to imagine how the *thingmen* could have brought other forms of payment than silver and coins to meet the demands of compensation at the *thing*. Unfortunately, there are no extant accounts of how fines were paid at the *lawthings* in the High Middle Ages (Gullbekk 1998; Lunden 1999). For such descriptions we need to look to the Faroe Islands and Iceland. The Faroe Islanders' Saga describes how Thorir paid his compensation for manslaughter:

Finn shouted to him to bring out the money. Thorir told him to go ashore and then he would bring it. Then Finn and his men went ashore and Thorir came to him and paid out silver. Out of one bag he produced ten marks by weight, and then took out a number of purses. Some held a mark by weight, others half a mark or perhaps several öre.

(Faroe Islanders' Saga 1975: ch. 45)

There is no doubt that Thorir paid his fine in silver. Several accounts in the Icelandic sagas confirm that silver and coins were used at the assemblies (Gullbekk 2011), among them Egil's Saga, where we are told that the old Egil planned to scatter English silver coins from the law rock to create chaos among the *thingmen*. Egil was, however, persuaded to stay at home with his chests full of English silver, which had been given to him by King Aethelstan after the Battle at Brunanburh in 937 (Egs: 85).

The Norwegian provincial laws contain numerous references to silver and coins. One such regulation, which illustrates the economics of the *thing*, is found in the Law of the Frostathing (F I: 2), 'Concerning the holy bands that the royal steward (*ármaðr*) set up', which states that:

All men who are appointed to the law court shall sit in it as long as men wish the thing to remain [in session], except that one may leave for private needs. But if a man leaves the law court and goes elsewhere outside the enclosure, he shall be fined a mark in current coin (*tald mark*).

(F I: 2)

The term *tald mark* means marks by the tale and refers to Norwegian coins or royal coins that had been minted in one of the king's workshops and were valid currency. Foreign coins were, on the whole, not seen as valid unless they contained burnt silver. In Norway it was above all English sterling that was in wide circulation. As everywhere, counterfeiting coins was considered a severe offence. The Rural Law of Magnus the Lawmender explicitly stated that 'If someone counterfeits the coins of our king, he shall be punished by permanent outlawry (*ubotamål*)' (L IV: 4.2).

As mentioned above, the assembly regulations stated that the representatives of Namdalen and Romsdalen were entitled to 6 *øre* silver in travel compensation, while the representatives from Nordmøre and Oppdal were entitled to 4 *øre* and those from the interior to 2 *øre*. The money was to be paid to the 'farmers' fund' of Nidaros, a joint fund for the levy fleet (*leiðang*) and the *law-thing* managed by the lawman, who was a royal henchman as well as a trusted farmer (Taranger 1929: 17).

A similar 'levy-fleet fund' is mentioned in Bergen, too (Helle 1995: 542). If a levy-fleet man travelled home without access to food, he was allowed to slaughter two bulls equivalent in value to that of one cow without incurring a fine, as long as he left the hide and head along with 2 *øre* silver in current coin. Everyone in the Gulathing district should pay half a weighed *øre* in lawman's toll (NgL III, no. 60). Those responsible for these law texts must have been living in a time when it was common for those on levy-fleet missions to carry coins. This most likely meant that others who travelled in Norway likewise brought money, thus forming part of the economic sphere of the *thing* and the *thingmen*.

Ecclesiastical law and money

In terms of the Church and church law, the monetary fine system was already established in the earliest ecclesiastical laws (Kolsrud 1937–9: 472). In 1162 Archbishop Øystein made a deal with the farmers in the bishopric that fines should be paid in weight rather than coins by tale, i.e. twice the value of the royal fines, which would be paid in coins of burnt silver, but with reduced weight (Hkr., Magnus Erlingssons saga: chs 16, 21). This led to a dispute between Erling Skakke and the archbishop. Erling argued that such an increase in the ecclesiastical fines contradicted the laws of king Olav the Saint. The archbishop responded that there was nothing in Olav's laws prohibiting an increase of God's share (Kolsrud 1937–9: 474–5). This continued to be a source of conflict during the reign of Sverre Sigurdsson, who again brought it up for discussion. A letter of privilege issued by Pope Celestine III for the Norwegian Church on 15 June 1194 reads:

No king or chieftain should be allowed to change the accepted regulations and laws of the kingdom without the consent of the bishops and wise men, nor the monetary fines for clerics and lay people, contradicting old custom, to the detriment of the Church or the clerics.

As sagas mention this dispute on several occasions, in addition to which it is confirmed by a papal letter, it seems reasonable to assume that the Church had established a functioning monetary fine system already in the middle of the twelfth century or perhaps even earlier.

Conclusions

The *lawthing* served as a hub for spreading news, decisions and proclamations, which delegates brought back to the *things* at shire and local levels across the kingdom. With regard to recoinages, the exchange of coins was announced at the *thing*, and it is argued that gatherings at various levels of society were used as venues for the exchange of old coins for new ones. The economy of the *thing* was, just as other parts of the economy, multi-faceted. As coins gained a wider distribution in society during the High Middle Ages, the royal coins became more and more important for the *thing* economy.

The size of the compensation for the *thingmen* who met at assemblies during the course of a year added up to 100 kilograms of silver or 467 marks of burnt silver, which would have been the equivalent of several hundred thousand bracteates in the middle of the thirteenth century, or close to a hundred thousand *penninger* around 1300. Despite the fact that the economic system of medieval Norway was to a large extent dependent on goods and money, it seems that silver and coins were practical forms of payment at the *thing*. People travelled great distances, and it was expected that settlements would be reached during the *thing* meetings. The coins constituted the royal means of payment and were easy to bring on journeys. In this sense they were well suited as payment for the *thingmen* across the realm. Compared to the tax collected by the king at around 1300 – estimated at 3,500 marks of burnt silver annually – the compensation paid for the *thingmen*'s travel in the time of Magnus the Lawmender constituted about 15 per cent. In reality, the costs of implementing the *thing* system were significantly higher, and were to a large extent covered by Norwegian farmers.

Note

- 1 This constituted 217,000 out of 691,000 (31.4 per cent). The Norwegian figures are taken from the census of 1769. There were then 90,000 inhabitants in the areas corresponding to Borgarthing district (apart from Grenland, which is included in the Skien law-district) in the Middle Ages (an estimated 22,000 for Bohuslän). Altogether, there were c. 60,000 inhabitants in Hålogaland and Finnmark (c. 6,000), and c. 52,000 in Nedenes, Voss and Hardanger. The estimate for Jämtland is c. 15,000.

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