

Exploration and Practice of Inter-bank Application Based on Blockchain

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Abstract—Blockchain is considered as the important technological innovation behind Bitcoin system. It facilitates the transaction payment process by creating a decentralized, general ledger to improve regulatory capacity and remove unnecessary intermediaries. At present, the blockchain technology has been employed in the financial industry for a wide range of experimental application and exploration. In this paper, we firstly analyze the principle architecture and the technical characteristics of blockchain. Then its current research achievements and application scenarios are introduced. Finally, the application of blockchain in China Foreign Exchange Trade System is designed and explored. Combining with the credit matching trading system X-Swap, an inter-bank application based on the blockchain technology is implemented.

Index Terms—Blockchain, Digital currency, Inter-bank application, Transaction clearing.

I. INTRODUCTION

Blockchain, as the term suggests, is the chain linked by blocks. It is a decentralized, general ledger. The blockchain holds a complete, all-agreed transaction records. Thanks to the information stored in the block header, the records can not be modified (Any modification will cause the hash value of the information in the block to be inconsistent with that recorded in the block header). This creates an open distributed general ledger system.

The most significant difference between the transaction structure based on block chain and the traditional transaction structure is that all participants share a common ledger, and all participants have a complete general ledger (even if some transactions are not relevant to it). Then the two nodes will no longer carry out transactions by a central institution, but by means of public ledger. Because there are no central institutions, the blockchain technology firstly need to solve the problem of data accuracy and reliability in the process of transaction. The POW, POS, DPOS and other consensus mechanisms can be employed to achieve node consistency in a decentralized distributed system. That is to solve the problem of the Byzantine General, thus ensuring the transactions can be completed correctly, quickly and safely without supervision.

The payment and transfer behavior of digital currency (such as Bitcoin) is supported by blockchain and can be used

for a number of payment scenarios. Among these scenarios, the blockchain has a greater significance in the public financing and charitable donation. The characteristics of blockchain make the information (e.g. fund source and flow) open and transparent, which can reduce the regulatory costs and improve the regulatory efficiency. Meanwhile, using blockchain in the field of finance and securities can reduce the settlement and clearing costs of the exchange. For some products, it can provide 24-hour trading and real-time settlement. Blockchains can also be used for the registration and certification of various tangible or intangible assets, including text, pictures and other intellectual property rights and even proof of property, vote statistics and so on. As the record cannot be changed once it is written in blockchain, the blockchain technology has inherent advantages in the field of data protection and notarization.

II. RELATED WORK

The blockchain technology is derived from Satoshi Nakamoto's foundational paper "Bitcoin: a peer-to-peer electronic cash system", which describes in detail how to build a new, decentralized and point-point trading system. It has been proven by Bitcoin in 2009 [1]. As Bitcoin become increasingly popular, various research and applications of the underlying blockchain technology has shown a blowout trend [2].

The original Bitcoin is programming limit, numerous previous endeavors make great efforts on building applications on the Bitcoin. However, lottery, micropayments, verifiable computation have been proven to implement difficultly by using Bitcoin's scripting language [3]. Ethereum is the first Turing-complete decentralized trading system [4]. Numbers of companies and enthusiasts created a wide range of smart contract applications on Ethereum. Such as supply chain provenance, crowd-based fundraising, derivatives trading and prediction markets [5].

The consensus mechanism is one of the most important part of blockchain technology. How to reach a consensus efficiently in the distributed system is a significant research problem in the field of distributed computation. Bitcoin has achieved the consistency of distributed account books through POW (Proof

of work) mechanism, which is highly dependent on node computing power [1]. Along with the development of blockchain technique, the researchers have proposed a variety of protocols which can reach a consensus mechanism independent of calculation. For instance, POS (Proof of stake) [6] and DPOS (Delegated Proof of Stake) [7] is currently the two most popular protocols. IBM HyperLedger used the PBFT (Practical Byzantine Fault Tolerant) mechanism to reach a consensus [8], which is the first application of the BFT protocol [9]. Vukolic compared the two mechanisms of POW and BFT, and focused on their scalability limits in a detailed analysis, and then he made some improved recommendations [10]. Eval proposed new measures to quantify the security and efficiency of blockchain protocol, and designed a new BFT protocol named Bitcoin-NG, which does not exist the scalability limits in Bitcoin [11]. The Luu team, has proposed a new consensus protocol named SCP, which has a mechanism that allows reaching consensus without broadcasting actual block data that still enabling valid blocks verification [12]. Additionally, they recently proposed a new distributed agreement protocol for permission-less blockchains named ELASTICO, which is deemed to the first candidate for a secure sharding protocol with presence of byzantine adversaries [13].

At present, the security of the blockchain also attach the focus of attention of the researchers. What the most important problem POW mechanism facing is 51% attack problem [1]. The POS mechanism solve the 51% attack problem restricted to a certain extent, but also led in N@S (Nothing at stake) attack problem [14]. Bissias builds a mathematical model quantifies the importance of several factors that determine the attack's success, including confirmation depth, attacker mining power, and any confirmation deadline set by the merchant [15]. However, there is still no ideal solution for the attacks, which requires further research breakthroughs.

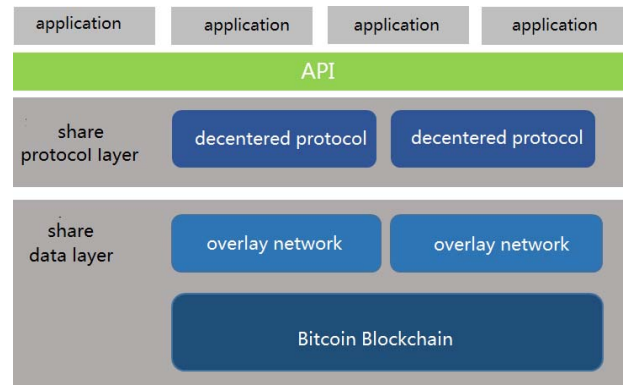
The world's leading financial institutions are stepping up to explore the blockchain of landing applications. UBS is exploring a blockchain-based "utility settlement coins" to solve the efficiency of settlement [16]. Citibank is a global banking network and is exploring ways to use blockchain technology for cross-border flows of funds across their banking networks, which will help simplify cross-border transfers and reduce transfer costs [17]. The Australian Stock Exchange believes that the distributed general ledger technology can greatly simplify and accelerate the post-transaction processes, reduce risk, reduce management and compliance expenditures, and allow investors to access almost real-time settlement and securities trading speed [18]. Nasdaq Private Equity Market recently launches a blockchain-based financial service platform Linq. As a complement of its private equity trading platform, Linq expands and enhances its stock management capabilities [19].

III. TYPICAL ARCHITECTURE AND MAIN FEATURES OF BLOCKCHAIN APPLICATIONS

The typical architecture of blockchain application consists of the application layer, the interface layer, the shared protocol layer, and the shared data layer (see Figure 1). The hierarchical

characteristics of the blockchain application and the traditional application are very different.

FIGURE 1 APPLICATION ARCHITECTURE BASED ON BLOCKCHAIN



Take the bitcoin as an example, the blockchain is the shared data layer, and the de-centralized protocol is located in the shared protocol layer. These two parts are in the gray rectangles in the figure, which are decentralized, open source, and uncontrolled by any organizations or individuals. The shared protocol layer and shared data layer account for 80% of the proportion in the entire architecture. The higher the level, the lower the proportion. While in the typical network applications based TCP/IP and HTTP, the decentralized and open source parts usually account for about 15%.

It now appears that the blockchain has the potential to make the current transaction process more efficient, and can improve the regulatory capacity and remove unnecessary intermediaries. Blockchain has the following advantages which make it possible to subvert the current business transaction model:

A. Distributed database

Blockchain technology make each node has a complete transaction records by synchronizing transaction data between all nodes. Even if one or several nodes fail, it will not affect the transactions stored on other nodes. Therefore, the transaction records will not be lost. If the blockchain is applied to the financial system, the central authority of the trading system is no longer responsible for the storage of transactions, which will reduce and even eliminate the risk of server downtime. This is the main embodiment of blockchain's advantages.

B. Smart contract

Smart contract is the programming script which puts a set of contract terms into an agreement. The contract codes will be executed automatically by the computer when the conditions are stratified. Take bitcoin as an example (see Figure 2). At first, user A creates and publishes a smart contract to raise bitcoins. The content of this contract is that it will divide 10% of the profits to his investors. Then there are three investors bought the contract, the amount is 35, 50 and 80 bitcoins (or the equivalent currency). When user A obtain 100 dollars in profits in a transaction, the 10% of the profits, 10 US dollars,

will be dividends to the three investors in accordance with the proportion of investment. This is a regular dividend process, but the dividend process can be automatically executed by the computer under the smart contract support.

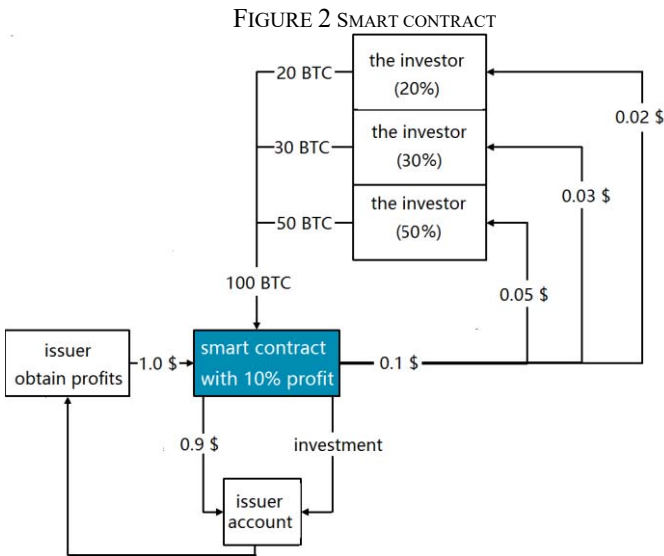


FIGURE 2 SMART CONTRACT

IV. APPLICATION OF THE BLOCKCHAIN TECHNOLOGY IN INTER-BANK MARKET

A. Payment area

The original application of the blockchain was to build a system for payment. The issuer and receiver do not need the central transaction party during the payment process. It is necessary to firstly explain how the current payment system works to demonstrate the potential value of blockchain for financial institutions.

In a standard inter-bank fund transfer process, if the issuing bank and the receiving bank do not open an account with each other, they will must rely on a central clearinghouse or associated bank (see Figure 3). Workflow takes several days from the implementation of the settlement, and in the meanwhile we should pay the middle party a fee.

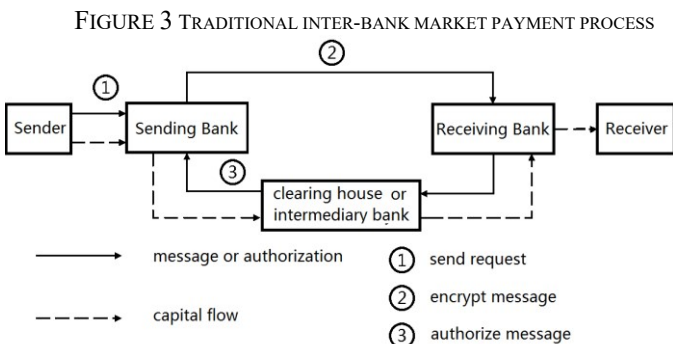


FIGURE 3 TRADITIONAL INTER-BANK MARKET PAYMENT PROCESS

For the payment system of legal entities belonging to the same banking group, inter-bank payments are often done by central counterparties, each bank have a local database (see

Figure 4). This database records all account balances and transaction flows as an authoritative general ledger. But this payment structure has two drawbacks: First, the local database must be reconciled and synchronized. Second, the central counterparties are required to make payments after offsetting the borrowings of different accounts.

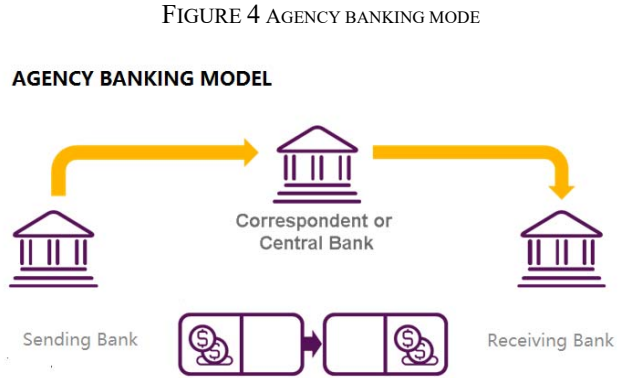
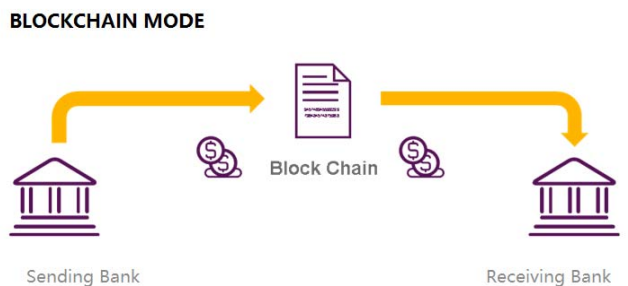


FIGURE 4 AGENCY BANKING MODE

For the same group of banks, the initial solution is to use blockchain to generate a general ledger for the payment behavior. Each bank can be a participant in a private blockchain network, take part in the consensus process and complete the transaction (see Figure 5).

Figure 5 BLOCKCHAIN MODE

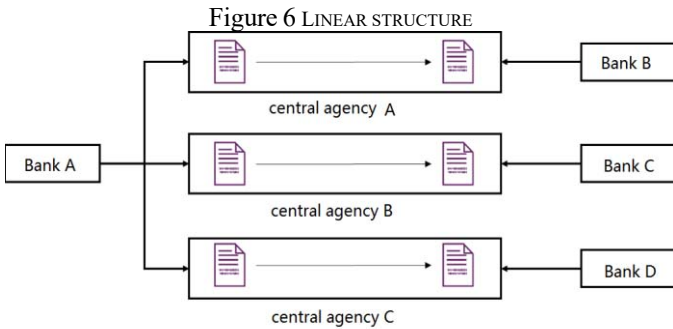


With this solution, the inter-bank payments no longer require reconciliation between the different databases since the blockchain consensus algorithm has become a single, authoritative general ledger. In addition, the payment can be carried out between banks without the intermediate party, which reduce effectively the cost. Such transactions are almost real-time and peer-to-peer, which reduce counterparty risk and settlement time in milliseconds. In the view of regulators, a blockchain is an invariable general ledger which shared by all transactions which can be accessed by all regulators and auditors.

The transaction privacy of different legal entities could be a serious problem. Because in the traditional blockchain, each legal entity's node can access the records of other participants. This may be inconsistent with the privacy-related legal framework. Using a key (public key, private key) to encrypt a transaction could be a way to solve this problem. A legal

entity can only view transactions of its own, while the supervisor have sufficient authority to view all the information.

The initial solution can extend to banks or cross-border payment networks that belong to different groups. Inter-bank payments are settled by multiple central counter parties which active in specific network for clearing between debtor and creditor. In order to minimize counterparty risk, each bank must set up a reserve account for each payment network, which is shown in Figure 6.



In this case, the private blockchain can be implemented among banks belonging to different groups. The key advantage is that cross-border payments can get rid of the involvement of related banks. Through this structure, we can save the funds of the original payment transaction intermediaries. Then the resources which can be allocated to their own banking business will increase greatly, and it also simplifies the management of the bank at same time.

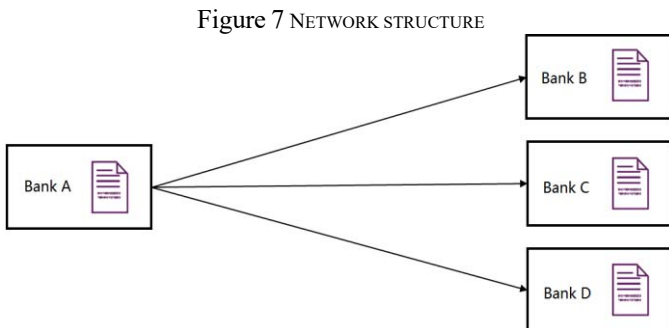


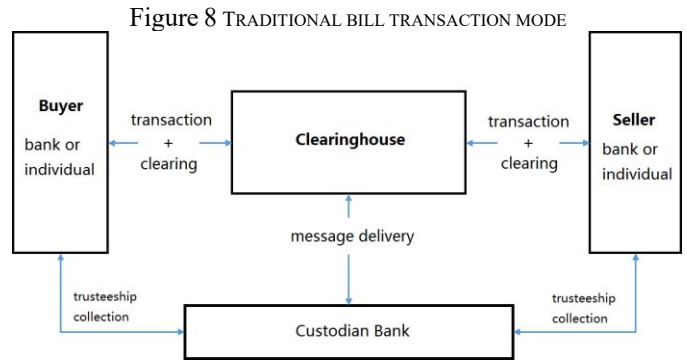
Figure 7 shows a whole network blockchain platform structure, we can carry on transactions with only one reserve account. When a large number of banks participate in this network, this solution will be more attractive than the previous one. Ripple is an example of a blockchain-based cross-border payment system. In Ripple, the node verification is operated by a recognized financial institution which observe consistency. Ripple can also integrate currency exchange capabilities to provide liquidity for cross-border payments.

B. Inte-bank bill transactions

At present, the inter-bank bill transaction has not formed an independent trading center, and there is also no authoritative trading platform. Therefore, some scholars believe that it is the time to establish a clearinghouse. This

clearinghouse should be dominated by the central bank and attract many financial institutions to participate in. In addition, this clearinghouse should contain the whole process of business products except the acceptance business, which involves paper and electronic commercial bills. And this clearinghouse should take the business transactions and integration of information as the ultimate goal.

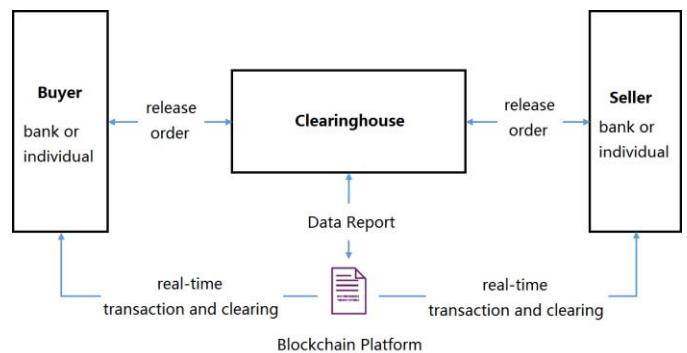
The participants of the conventional bill transaction and their relationships are shown in figure 8:



The bills of the buyers and sellers are entrusted in the custodian bank when the clearinghouse provides trading (including matching) and clearing services. And then the custodian bank will conduct clearing with the clearing house. In transactions, both the clearinghouse and the custodian bank are trusted third-party institutions, which indicate that this is a typical centralized transaction structure like the current securities transaction structure. Such a transaction structure is a reasonable solution, but also a conservative solution.

At present, the trading structure of almost all financial institutions are similar. There are central institutions leading the transaction clearing and settlement. Of course, people have not found a significant flaw in such transaction structure. However, the central body downtime and data loss problem is inevitable, which is also the reason that financial magnates actively looking for a decentralized trading structure. The emergence of blockchain is to meet such a demand.

Figure 9 TRANSACTION MODE COMBINED WITH BLOCKCHAIN



Combining with the blockchain technology, we can transform the bill trading structure (see Figure 9). The

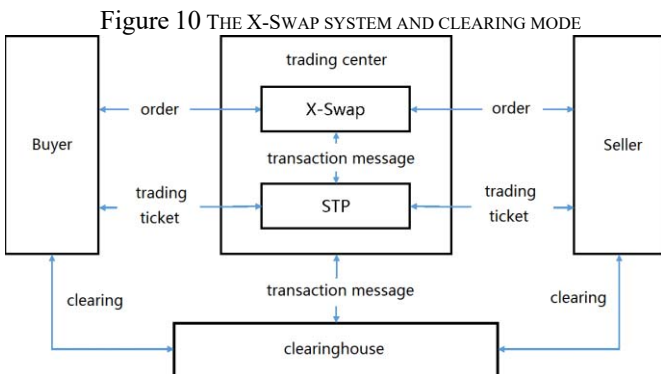
clearinghouse only provides matching services, the actual transaction and clearing takes place on a decentralized blockchain platform. As is already mentioned in the previous, the blockchain technology can greatly speed up the payment and clearing process between transactions, which make the payment and clearing almost become real time.

It is recommended that using the private blockchain platform to limit the participants to the participating banks or giving the full responsible management to the clearinghouse. From the trader's point of view, the most intuitive change is the speeding up of the clearing service and the eliminating of the custodian fees charged by the custodian bank. In addition, the tamper-resistant feature of the blockchain also ensures the security of the bills, which is more reliable than the current physical bill transactions. Banks participating in the blockchain maintenance will receive a corresponding "reward" as the compensation for the construction of the associated system. Meanwhile, the clearinghouse can still guarantee revenue by charging a matching service fee. The blockchain makes the whole transaction process decentralization, faster and safer while excluding centralized custodian bank from this structure.

V. PRACTICE OF INTER-BANK INNOVATION BASED ON BLOCKCHAIN

A. X-Swap Credit Matching Trading System

X-Swap is a fully self-developed and order-driven credit matching trading system which is launched by the China Foreign Exchange Trade System (CFETS). The system can support two matching trading patterns of the bilateral credit and centralized credit, which achieve the function of artificial intelligence broker. The system can automatically refresh the hidden orders and bypass orders, it even provide each participating institution with real-time, optimum and tradeable market quotations.

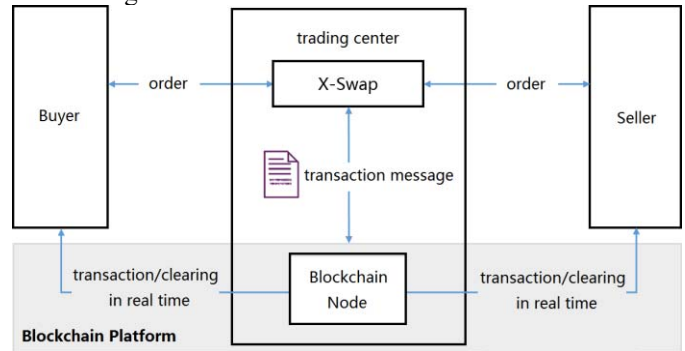


In the existing CFETS's business scenario, the transaction information generated by members in the X-Swap system can be stored in data center of the transaction center. The members need to confirm the transaction in the transaction center and finish subsequent liquidation. This is a centralized business process, the transaction center needs to invest a lot of

manpower and cost to ensure that transaction records will not be lost. The market members need to spend a long time for post-transaction operations. Considering blockchain's feature of decentralization, if the transactions can be stored in the blockchain network in real time, CFETS could greatly reduce the cost of operation and maintenance. Meanwhile, the transaction process of market members will be simpler, even could be able to liquidate automatically in the blockchain network. Figure 10 shows the relationship among X-Swap system, CFETS and the market members.

Member institutions carry out matching transactions in the X-Swap system, and then download the transaction order in the STP service procedures. Finally they complete the bilateral liquidation themselves or in the centralized clearing institutions such as the Shanghai Clearing House or Central Bond Registration Corporation according to the transaction order. The whole process contains multiple links, a lot of work needs to be done manually. If one link fails, the entire transaction process will be blocked. The transaction process could be greatly simplified if the blockchain technology is introduced (see Figure11).

Figure 11 THE DECENTRALIZED TRANSACTION LEDGER



The transactions will be stored in the blockchain network in real time. Each block has a complete transaction records by the synchronization of transaction data between all blocks. Even if one or several blocks fail, it will not affect the transactions between other blocks, and no transaction records will lose. Market members can query the completed transactions in the blockchain network in real time, even it will automatically complete the bilateral clearing or centralized clearing.

B. NarrowBook platform

We build a distributed ledger prototype system named "NarrowBook" based on the X-Swap system. From the demonstration shown in Figures 12 and 13, we can see that ICBC (Industrial and Commercial Bank of China) and Bank of Communications completed a transaction of standardized interest rate swap FR007 with a transaction volume of 100 million and a transaction price of 3.01%. The transaction is stored in the blockchain network in real time. Both sides can query the transaction record in each node of the blockchain. Based on this mechanism, the capital accounts of the two sides

will be able to automatically initiate the subsequent bilateral clearing or centralized clearing operation.

Figure 12 TRANSACTION RECORDING OF X-SWAP (CENTRALIZED)

品种名称	交易类型	订单数量	买卖总金额(人民币)	卖出(人民币)	买入(人民币)	买卖总金额(人民币)	订单数量	交易类型
FR007_3M	0	0					0	
FR007_6M	0	0					0	
FR007_9M	0	0			3.2434	5000	1	
FR007_1Y	1	10000	3.0100	3.2300	5000		0	
FR007_2Y	0	0					0	
FR007_3Y	0	0					0	
FR007_4Y	0	0					0	
FR007_5Y	0	0					0	
FR007_5M1Y	0	0					0	
FR007_5M1Y	OCO	1	15000	-1.34			0	
FR007_1Y2Y	OCO	1	5000	11.30			0	
FR007_1Y3Y	0	0					0	
FR007_2Y3Y	0	0					0	
Shibor3M_3M	0	0					0	
Shibor3M_6M	0	0					0	
Shibor3M_9M	0	0					0	
Shibor3M_1Y	0	0					0	

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Figure 13 TRANSACTION RECORDING OF NARROWBOOK (DECENTRALIZED)

成交编号	品种	合约	成交价	成交量	成交日期	成交地点	交易对手	Ripple 交易编号
20160531 15:00:00	IRS	FR007	3.01	10000.0000	工商银行	工商银行	100101	308F4102997BC1680FC790754611 3024B0246542A209102024982C40 98C725

VI. CONCLUSION

The core issue of the blockchain is how to reach a consensus and build trust. Blockchain technology solves the consensus problem with cryptography. Even if without the participation of the central authority, there is also a way to ensure that financial behavior and transaction behavior are all stored in a common database. Owing to the mechanism that the data cannot be tampered in blockchain, which makes it possible to establish a low-cost global credit system. In the blockchain, we don't need a center authority, all the assets and capital flows are transparent. Therefore, a credit system based on blockchain could break the credit monopolization of a country or large financial institutions.

At present, if you want to set up an "organization", it required to pass national audit and get a license to demonstrate compliance. Imagine if there is a perfect blockchain-based credit system, we can make a self-verification. Such a process is not only more transparent and efficient, but also reduces the cost of national regulation. The blockchain technology also has a wide range of applications in other fields, such as asset registration, asset securitization and even intellectual property protection.