


An Extremely Rare, Previously Unknown and Unpublished *Leeuwengroot* Type Struck for Louis of Nevers, Count of Flanders (1322-1346)

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Louis of Nevers was the Count of Flanders from late 1322 until August 26, 1346, when he was killed fighting for the French at the Battle of Crécy. It is thought that the silver *leeuwengroot* (*gros au lion*, *gros compaignon*, *gezel*) was first struck in Flanders c. late May or early June 1337, in response to the devaluation of the coinage in France earlier that same year. Within a few short weeks, these coins were being imitated in Brabant and Namur, and possibly in Holland and Hainaut as well. Eventually, the coins were copied in many other regions as well.

The first issues of Flemish *leeuwengroot* featured an obverse border of 12 leaves, and a reverse, outer legend containing the word DEI. Later issues did not include the word DEI, and had an obverse border of 11 leaves and a lion. The most common sub-type of Louis of Nevers *leeuwengroot* seen today has the following characteristics:

A's with straight crossbars: 

Long **O** in COMES

Border of 1 lion and 11 leaves, 3 lobes, type: 

Leaf mark after MONETA, type: 

References:

Martiny 29-2 and 29-3 ^[3]

Torongo 1.10 / Sub-type E (II-E) ^[5]

Martiny-Torongo GE 23/5 ^[4]

(Illustration on the following page.)



*The “common type” of Louis of Nevers leeuwengroot.
Elsen 107-875 / 3.68 g.*

✠ MONETA ✠ FLAND'

LVD OVI C^o MES

✠ BNDICTV : SIT : NOME : DNI : NRI : IHV : XPI

Consider the following coin, which is a medieval counterfeit:



private collection / 3.81 g

✠ MONETA ✠ FLAND'

LVD OVI C^o MES

✠ BNDICTV : SIT [: NOME : DNI : NRI :] IHV : XPI

References:

Torongo 1.25 ^[5]

Martiny-Torongo GE 27/5 ^[4]

This counterfeit type, known from 5 specimens, seems to be copying the “common type” *leeuwengroot* of Louis of Nevers **except for one important point: the round O in COMES.**

To quote my previous paper on the *leeuwengroot* coins of Louis of Nevers (ref. 5):

“There is a fairly large group of medieval counterfeits that were all made by the same forger or workshop of forgers. These coins are immediately recognizable by the round **O** in COMES – something that is not seen on official Flemish issues of Louis of Nevers. That is to say: if these counterfeits are copies of official coins, no original has ever been found. We are at a loss to explain why counterfeiters should use a round **O** when this was not the case on the official issues of Louis of Nevers.” ^[5]

The only “round **O**” coins from Flanders that have been seen are those of Issue II of Louis of Mâle, which are fairly common:



*Louis of Mâle, Issue II
private collection / 3.57 g.*

✠ • MONETA • FLANDR' •

LVD OVI **Q**•**D**•**O** MES

To date, not a single official Louis of Nevers *leeuwengroot* has been reported with a round **O** in COMES.



private collection / 3.26 g.

✠ MONET ✠ FLAND'

LVD OVI COMES

✠ B[EN]DICTV[S] I[T] N[ON] O[mn]i D[omi]n[i] R[eg]i I[esu] Xpi

Here, at last, we have the official, Flemish issue struck for Louis of Nevers with a round **O** in COMES. It is almost identical to the “common type” for Louis of Nevers, except for the chevron **A**’s on the obverse and the second round **O** on the reverse.

This type of *leeuwengroot* has never been reported before. At the moment, this is a unique specimen and the only known example of a Louis of Nevers *leeuwengroot* with a round **O in COMES.**

Presumably, this type would come just after {or just before?} the “common type”, making it the last type of *leeuwengroot* struck before the pause in minting of this type in Flanders c. 1343-1344. Minting of *leeuwengroten* started up again c. January, 1346, with an initial cross instead of an eagle on the obverse (also known as Issue I under Louis of Mâle; Torongo 1.11 – 1.14 ^[5]; Martiny-Torongo GE 27/1 – GE 27/4 ^[4]).

References:

Gaillard — ^[1]

Vanhoudt — ^[6]

Haeck — ^[2]

Martiny — ^[3]

Torongo-van Oosterhout — ^[5]

Martiny-Torongo — {GE 23/6} ^[4]

CONCLUSION

Everything about the coin looks genuine – there is no particular reason to suspect it is a counterfeit. In fact, the existence of known counterfeits with similar characteristics (i.e. the second round **O**) implies that genuine originals must have existed, and this piece seems to be such an original. Since such pieces are all but unknown, it would seem that only a small number of this type were ever minted in the first place.

The chevron **A**'s are unusual as well; they are otherwise only seen on the very first issues of Louis of Nevers *leeuwengroten*, coins which have an obverse border of 12 leaves (Torongo 1.1 – 1.3 ^[5]; Martiny-Torongo GE 12/1 – GE 12/3 ^[4]). The chevron **A**'s do not seem to appear on the counterfeits, although most of the counterfeit **A**'s are unclear.

It seems undeniable that this coin represents a new and previously unknown (sub-)type of Flemish *leeuwengroot* (*gros compaignon*, *gros au lion*). The type is so rare that it has escaped the attention of all previous researchers and has never been included in any attempted classification of the Flemish *leeuwengroten*. At this point in time, the known counterfeits far outnumber the known official coins for this type.

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