A Preliminary Examination of the *Leeuwengroot* as Mentioned in Medieval Accounts Part One: Jan Meester Lams Zoon

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Part of our ongoing investigation into the *leeuwengroot* (*gros au lion*, *gros compagnon*, *gezel*, *socius*) of all regions involves studying the accounting records made in the Middle Ages that pertain to this coin type. This is the first in a series of reports on that subject.

The *leeuwengroot* (*gros au lion, gros compagnon, socius, gezel*) was a (nominally) silver coin, struck in the 14th century in Western Europe, in particular, in the Low Countries. The type was first minted in Flanders (or perhaps in Brabant) in 1337, in response to the devaluation of silver coins in France earlier that same year. The type was quickly imitated in the regions around Flanders, sometimes as a "coin of convention" mandated by agreements between these regions.



leeuwengroot of Flanders Louis of Nevers (1322-1346) Elsen 132-523 / 3.46 g. shown actual size

Minting of this type ended in Flanders in 1364, and the imitations in other regions ceased as well. Minting of the *plak* series of lion-with-helm coins began in 1365 in Flanders, and was widely imitated in other places as the *leeuwengroot* had been before it. A short resurgence of *leeuwengroten* occurred in Brabant 1381-1383, with a few imitations in small regions such as Megen and Batenburg.

Our interest therefore lies in medieval records dating c. 1337 - c. 1364, while also keeping an eye out for records from c. 1381-1383 (especially those from Brabant).

Pounds, Shillings and Pence (Deniers)

Many people are familiar with the age-old calculating system that was still in use in the 14th century, which was made up of **pounds** (*libra*), **shillings** (*solidi*) and **pennies** (*deniers*). *Shillings* were also known as *schellingen* or by other similar names (in France as *sols* or *sou*). In the Low Lands, where most of the *leeuwengroten* were minted, a pound was a *pond*.

Pound	£ 115 H #	1.	240 đ
Shilling	β	S.	12 đ
Denier	đ	d.	1 đ

(While we are personally rather fond of this pound sign: \mathcal{B} and would like to use it in these reports, we assume most readers are more familiar with this: \mathfrak{t} .)

The basic relationship of these terms is: $1 \text{ \pounds} = 20 \beta = 240 \text{ d}$.

This system was originally based upon actual (silver) coins, but as time went on, the money in circulation became more and more distanced from the pound/shilling/pence values, which in turn meant that various calculations and conversions were necessary in order to record monetary transactions using the old system (and new money).

Real Coins, or "Money of Account"?

Because of the numerous different **types** of coins in circulation, minted in numerous different realms, and containing different amounts of silver (or gold), medieval accounts were almost always recorded in terms of the **value** of the money received or paid out, not necessarily in terms of how many of this or that **type of coin** were received or paid, even when the records do relay what type(s) of coins were physically received/paid (and/or how many coins). In such cases, the entries usually say something like: "so many coins of this or that type were paid/received, with a value of so much $\pounds \beta d$ ". (See **Reckoning Pounds** below.)

The money recorded in the standard methods of accounting was itself expressed in terms of denominations of much older types of coins that no longer existed as physical coins: the *solidus* (s) and the *denier* (d), as well as a physical pound of silver from Carolingian times (L or lb). By the 14th century, $\pounds \beta d$ no longer represented physical coins, but had become accounting terms used to express 1 pound, $1/20^{th}$ of a pound, and $1/240^{th}$ of a pound, respectively.

In theory, this "accounting pound" worth "240 đ" maintained a stable "value", against which circulating coins were compared. It would be understood that this or that type of coin was "worth" so many đ, based upon the actual silver content of the coin type. The "value" of circulating money may go up or down, but the "value" of "money of accounting" stayed the same (in theory at least).

In practice, it was often difficult for medieval bookkeepers to express the "values" of the various circulating coins, and they often made comparisons to older, well-known types of coins, often "better" coins (i.e. containing a higher percentage of silver), in order to try and make clear how much a current coin was "worth. The "old" *gros tournois* of Louis IX of France was one such coin that was often used as the standard against which other large, silver coins were compared in value. Quite often, the money used in the transaction was compared to a common, current gold coin, such as the *écu* or the *mouton*.

Reckoning Pounds

Although the use of an accounting pound where $1 \pm 20 \beta = 240 d$ was basically universal, exactly which "pound" was being used in the bookkeeping varied from place to place and from time to time, and depended on several variable factors, such as the current price ratio of gold to silver, and what types of coins were in circulation at the time. The fact that there are different "pounds" has to do with the fact that the "monies of account" had to be linked to the actual, circulating money of the time in some way. Since we are concerned with the Low Lands, we will be dealing with the *rekenponden*.

In the Low Lands in the mid-14th century, the two accounting pounds usually used were the *pond parisis*, and the *pond tournois*, which were based upon the French monetary systems of the *denier parisis* (Paris) and the *denier tournois* (Tours). In Holland, the *pond holland* was often employed.

By the period under discussion (1337-1364), the actual money (coinage) of Flanders was no longer tied to that of France in any way, but the accounting entries still usually involve conversions to or from some quantity expressed in *pond parisis* (or sometimes in *pond tournois*), because that had always been the way of doing things. As always, 1 £ (*livre*) = 20 β (*sols*) = 240 d (*deniers*), but in this case, the *deniers* are *deniers parisis* (or *deniers tournois* as the case may be).

In a great many cases, the beginning of a given account entry will be expressed one type of money, or perhaps in one *rekenpond*, while the end of the entry will be expressed in the "standard" *rekenpond* in use by the bookkeeper. An average entry might read something like: "X number of gold coins received, worth Y in *denier parisis*, makes Z in *denier tournois*".

It is important to know which pound was being used in a particular accounting, in the same way that it would be important to know whether "\$5.00" was five dollars American, Canadian or Australian. A modern bookkeeper, working in Australia, would note \$5.00, and everyone would know what he or she meant because they were in Australia. Only a transaction in foreign currency would have to be recorded as something like "\$5.00 USD".

It was exactly the same in the Middle Ages. If no conversion from one type of currency (real or "money of account") was necessary, the clerks might not indicate which *rekenpond* was being used, because everyone reading the accounts would already know (*parisis*, *tournois*, or whatever). But to anyone trying to read the accounts over 600 years later, it might not be so obvious which type of *rekenpond / denier* were being used in the accounting.

In actual fact, it is more likely that the example given above would read : "X number of gold coins received, worth Y, makes Z in *denier tournois*". We are not directly informed, and are left to determine ourselves, that Y is expressed in *denier parisis*. Sometimes the entry might even read simply: "X number of gold coins received, worth Y, makes Z".

Conversions

Much of the study of these medieval accounts involves various conversions; in fact, many of the account entries themselves contain their own conversions. The conversion might involve going from one coin type to another, or from a real coin type to a "money of account" (or *vice versa*), or from one *rekenpond* to another.

In the case of the accounts of Jan, meester Lams zoon, and specifically those account entries involving the *socius* coin, the only conversion made in the entries themselves is from *socius* coins to the *denier holland* "money of account" used by the clerk keeping the accounts.

The only additional conversion necessary is converting to the common denominator of *deniers tournois*, which will enable us to double-check the "invisible" calculation involved in going from *socius* coins to *denier holland*.

There is very little detective work to be done in the case of the Jan, meester Lams zoon entries. They are the "easiest" account entries we have yet found involving *leeuwengroot* coins (which is why we chose them to be the first report on this subject).

Sociable Companions and Associates

The *leeuwengroot* (a modern term) was intended to be a "friendly" coin that would be used in several regions as currency. This idea is reflected in the names given to the coin at the time: *compagnon* (French), *socius* (Latin), and *gezel* (Diets). One of our goals is to find references to the coin, using these names, in the medieval documents.

It is of the utmost importance, however, to ensure that we are looking at references to **coins**, and not to **people**. Because these very same words were used in the medieval accounts to mean human associates or companions (*compagnons*, *socios / sociis*, *gezellen / ghesellen / gesellen*).

Item ghecoft jeghens Jan Aernds 14 plancken, tstic om 3 ghesellen, ende 1 plancke om 2 ghesellen, maken 44 ghesellen, dat comt in holl., den gheselle voer 71 d. holl., 27 sc. 6 d.

ghesellen coins

Item ghegheven Jan Waes ende sinen ghesellen, alse van den houte, dat ghecoft was in die weke voer sinzen, uten houttunen tot upt werc te bringhen ende te leveren, 15 sc.

ghesellen humans

The first account entry records a payment made with 44 *gezel* coins, for wooden planks that cost 3 *gezellen* each (plus one that cost 2 *gezellen*), while the second reads: "Item: given [to] Jan Waes and his companions..."

This might be a good time to point out that the number of *leeuwengroot* coins involved in a transaction is almost never expressly stated in a medieval account entry; the accounts of Jan, Meester Lams Zoon, are exceptional in this regard.

THE ACCOUNTS OF JAN, MEESTER LAMS ZOON

We are going to begin our investigation into 14th century documents with an "easy" one: the accounts of John, the son of master Lam, which include 4 entries recording transactions involving clear indications of *leeuwengroot* coins, and very few calculations for clarification necessary on our part.

We have taken these accounts from Hamaker, whose transcriptions are the only version available (as far as we know), without tracking down and inspecting the original, medieval documents. We are therefore relying on Hamaker's transcriptions to be accurate. We are unaware of any subsequent literature having been published regarding these particular accounts.

The accounts of Jan, Meester Lams Zoon, (May 1 - August 1, 1345) can be found on pp. 455-482 of the third volume of Hamaker's transcription (ref. 3).

REKENING

VAN

JAN MEESTER LAMS ZOON

WEGENS KRIJGSBEHOEFTEN .

IN DEN STICHTSCHEN OORLOG.

1345, Mei 1 tot Augustus 1.

ONTVANGSTEN.

Dit es ontfanc Jan meester Lams zoens bi beveelnessen mijns liefs heren tsgraven van Heyneghouwen ende van Hollant, alse tot alrehande provanchy behoef jeghens den orloghe voer Utrecht, in paymente den gouden scilt voer 20 grote gherekent. Omtrent Meyedach int jaer ons heren 1345.

In den eersten ontfaen bi Sarijs Meynen zoens hant, alse van den rentemeester van Zwthollant, 20 ff grote tornoys, maken in holl. 160 ff. Item ontfaen bi Kerstiaens Backers hant, des rentemeesters clerc van Zwthollant, alse van den voernoemden rentemeester, 25 ff grote tornoys, maken in holl. 200 ff. Summa van desen, 360 ff.

Hamaker 3, p. 455 ^[3]

20 fgr. tournois = 160 fghand

57,600 *d tournois* = 38,400 *d holland*

1.5 d holland = 1 d tournois ²/₃ d tournois = 1 d holland There will be a much longer discussion of the *pond groot* in an upcoming report, but it has little bearing on the Jan, Meester Lams Zoon account entries involving *leeuwengroot* coins, so for the time being, we are simply going to gloss over the *pond groot* and move on. Basically, $1 \pm groot = 12 \pm 12$.

The Jan, Meester Lams Zoon accounts record the costs incurred by William IV, count of Holland (and of Zeeland, also William II of Hainaut), during his preparations for war with Utrecht in 1345. It is actually a fascinating look behind the scenes of medieval warfare. There are payments for wood, for labor, for iron. There are payments for planks, boards, beams, and the like, to be used for the construction of shelters for archers and for a siege engine. There are transportation costs. There are payments for various iron pieces, and for thousands and thousands of nails (one page of the transcription alone records over 40,000 nails being purchased). There is even one payment that was made to a woman: Gheertruud, the daughter of Jans Wilden (Hamaker 3, p. 462).

Ghesellen

After a long list of payments made for lumber, all of which are simply recorded in d *holland*, there appear 4 transactions that were apparently paid out in *leeuwengroten* (*gezellen*). All four are found on p. 463 of Hamaker's transcription (ref. 3). The price paid for wooden planks is given in *ghesellen*, we are told that 1 *gheselle* = 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ d *holland*, and we are given the transaction total (expressed in d *holland*). We are even told exactly how many *gheselle* coins were involved (!), which is not the norm for medieval accounting.

Item ghecoft jeghens Jan Aernds 14 plancken, tstic om 3 ghesellen, ende 1 plancke om 2 ghesellen, maken 44 ghesellen, dat comt in holl., den gheselle voer 7¹/₄ d. holl., 27 sc. 6 d.

Hamaker 3, p. 463^[3]

Jan Aernds:

den gheselle voer 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ d holl.

14 planks x 3 gezel = 42 gezel 1 plank x 2 gezel = 2 gezel 44 gezel x 7.5 d holl. = 330 d holl. = 27 β 6 d holl. Item ghecoft jeghens Pieter Poppelijn 48 plancken, daer elc 2 plancken of costen 3 ghesellen, maken in holl. 45 sc. Item jeghens den zelven Pieter vors. 21 plancken, costen tstic 3 ghesellen, maken 39 sc. 41 d. Item jeghens Jan Aernds zone ghecoft 2 plancken, tstic om 4 d. gr., maken 5 sc. 4 d. Item jeghens den vors. Jan 95 plancken, tstic 21 d. holl., maken 8 ff 6 sc. 3 d. Item jeghens Heyn den Monec ghecoft 37 plancken, tstic om 3 ghesellen, maken in holl., den gheselle voer 71 d. holl. gherekent, 3 ff 9 sc. 41 d.

Hamaker 3, p. 463 ^[3]

den gheselle voer 7 ¹/₂ d holl. gherekent

Pieter Poppelijn:

48 planks x 1.5 gezel = 72 gezel 72 gezel x 7.5 \mathfrak{d} holl. = 540 \mathfrak{d} holl. = 45 β holl. (= 2 £ 5 β holl.)

21 planks x 3 gezel = 63 gezel 63 gezel x 7.5 d holl. = 472.5 d holl. = 39 β 4.5 d holl. (= 1 \pounds 19 β 4.5 d holl.)

Heyn den Monec:

37 planks x 3 gezel = 111 gezel 111 gezel x 7.5 d holl. = 832.5 d holl. = 3 £ 9 β 4.5 d holl.

Here the total number of *gezel* coins is not given, which is more typical of medieval accounts.

The only other appearances of "ghesellen" (or similar words) in these accounts are references to associates (humans) and not to gezel coins.

Item ghegheven Jan Waes ende sinen ghesellen, alse van den houte, dat ghecoft was in die weke voer sinzen, uten houttunen tot upt werc te bringhen ende te leveren, 15 sc.

Item ghegheven den voern. Jan ende sinen ghesellen, alse van den houte, dat ghecoft was in die weke na sinxen, uten houttunen tot upt werc te bringhen ende te leveren, 12 sc.

Item ghegheven Pieter Bast ende sinen ghesellen, alse van den houte, dat ghecoft was in die weke daer des helichs sacraments dach in lach, uten houttunen tot upt werc te bringhen ende te leveren, 15 sc.

Item ghegheven 1 man van Zierixee, alse van 1035 sparren van Zierixee tot Dordrecht te bringhen ende te voeren, 10 sc.

Item Vryesen ende sinen ghesellen ghegheven, alse van den houte, dat ghecoft was in die weke na des helichs sacraments dach, uten houttunen upt werc te bringhen, 18 sc.

> "...ende sinen ghesellen..." Hamaker 3, p. 465^[3]

"...and his associates"...

Item ghegheven Jan, den drayer, ende sinen ghesellen, alse van den wylghen te houwen, daer men die taergyen of makede, ende van Crayensteyne tot up den werke te leveren, 26 sc.

Item Coenraed, den zadelmaker, ghegeven van 4 blideborsen te maken ende van 25 spanghordelen te nayen, 12 sc.

Item van smere, daer die blideborsen mede ghesmeert worden ende van ghaerne, daer si mede ghenayt worden, ghegeven 5 sc.

Item ghegeven Didderic, den scutemaker, ende sinen gheselle, alse van den scepen te maken ¹), daer men een deel van den engienen van Dordrecht tot voer Utrecht mede voerde, van mos ende van sintelen, 3 ff.

> "...ende sinen gheselle(n)..." Hamaker 3, p. 476^[3]

[&]quot;...and his associates"...

CONCLUSION

These account entries clearly show that in Holland, during the middle four months of 1345, 1 *gezel* coin was worth 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ đ *holland* "on the books". Entries from other accounts show values for a *gezel* at 7 or 8 đ *holland*, but the accounts of Jan, meester Lams zoon, clearly show that at times, the *gezel* was valued right in between these two amounts.

Minting of *gezellen* had ceased in Flanders (and everywhere else) in October, 1343. If the *gezel* coins recorded in the JMLZ accounts were from Holland, then they would have been the **₩** MONETA MS GERT and/or **₩** MONETA HOLANDIE types. Any coins from Flanders would have been those struck for Louis of Nevers (1322-1346), with **₩** MONETA FLAND obverse legends (i.e. not **¥** MONETA FLAND). Coins from Brabant would have been struck for John III (1312-1355); these coins may have had **₩** MONETA BRVXELL(EN) legends, or **₩** MONETA BRABAN legends with either a leaf **+** or two stars ***** after MONETA. Other coins from Hainaut, Namur, etc. may also have been present.

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