

A Preliminary Look at the *Leeuwengroten* of the Lordship of Serain

by Paul A. Torongo with Raymond van Oosterhout
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The *leeuwengroot* (*gros au lion*, *gros compagnon*, *gezel*, *socius*) was a (nominally) silver coin, struck in the 14th century in Western Europe, and in particular, in the Low Countries. The type was first minted in Flanders (or perhaps in Brabant) in June 1337, in response to the devaluation of silver coins in France earlier that same year. The type was quickly imitated in the neighboring regions, on occasion as a “coin of convention” mandated by agreements between multiple realms.

The earliest *leeuwengroten* of 1337 were minted in Flanders and Brabant, and probably in Holland and Namur as well. Later imitations in Hainaut, Guelders, Cambrai and other places made an appearance. The type was abandoned around October, 1343, but minting restarted in Flanders in January, 1346, and the imitations soon followed once again. Minting continued until 1364, when the type was replaced by the *plak* series of lion-with-helm coins (also widely imitated).



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

Literature regarding the Lordship of Serain is all but non-existent. It was apparently a fief of Cambrai, held by the Lords of Crèvecoeur, but that is about all we know. Imitation *grand blanc* and lion-with-helm coins from Serain are known, i.e. the widely imitated coins struck in Flanders before and after the *leeuwengroot*, respectively. But the most common of all Serain coins are the imitation *sterlings*, or *esterlins*.

There are two basic types of Serain *leeuwengroot*, one with an initial eagle on the obverse and a single-tailed central lion, the other with an initial cross and a double-tailed central lion.



*Bibliothèque Nationale FRBNF449904596 / 1.41 g.
btv1b11340056q
½ plak from Serain*



*Elsen 131-667
½ plak from Flanders*

Walerand II of Ligny 1304-1353 & 1364-1366 ^[4]

Based upon the reverse, inner legend, the coins were clearly struck for someone named Walerand (Valéran, etc.), but exactly who this person was is unclear. Théry and Poey d'Avant ascribe the coins to a Walerand III, but the dates that they give for him are either incorrect (Théry) or “post-leeuwengroot” (Poey).

Walerand III of Luxembourg

1331-1415	Théry ^[11]	74 years (= unlikely)
1371-1415	Poey ^[1]	post-leeuwengroot

Duplessy (ref. 4) gives the dates provided above, saying that Waleran II ceded his lands to his son (John I) in 1353, receiving them back in 1364 when John died (p. 54).

CATALOG OF COINS

• TYPE I

Some time between 1340-1346 ?

Poey d'Avant — ^[1]

R. Serrure — ^[9]

11♣ / 1♣ border



*Bibliothèque Nationale FRBNF44990457h / 3.44 g.
btv1b11340054t*

✠ MONETA ꝥ SERAIN'

WAL ERD OLI NEO

✠ [B]NDICT[... T : NO]ME : DNI : NRI : IHV : XPI

The central lion has a single tail; he may also have a crown on his head (3 pellets?). The mark after MONETA is unusual and unique. The border leaves are the same as those of Brabant or Flanders: ❁. This type was first reported by Théry (*RBN* 1924, ref. 11), using this specimen (*BN FRBNF44990457h*). The initial eagle indicates a coin that was probably struck before 1346.

Presumably, the reverse legend reads: *WALERanDOs LINEO*, or *Waleran of Ligny*. Note that both the *Two O's by the cross arms* and the *First O round, second O long* 'rules' have been followed.



COL-026-12 / 3.24 g.

Cabinet numismatique François Cajot, Société Archéologique de Namur

No sign of a crown on the central lion's head? What is going on with the metal of this piece? Is it an official coin? A medieval counterfeit? An "enfeebled", debased (but official) coin?

• TYPE II

1346 and thereafter?

Poey d'Avant n° 6909 ^[1]

R. Serrure 65 ^[9]

11♣ / 1🦁 border



*Bibliothèque Nationale FRBNF449904565 / 2.54 g.
btv1b11340053c*

• ✠ MONETA ✠ SEEREN

✠ VVA LL E RAN DVS

✠ BHDICTV : SIT : HOM E : DHI : HRI : I h V : XPI

The central lion has a double tail, the ends of which have no tufts. The obverse legend is slightly odd, and apparently reads MONETA SEEREN. The unusual letter **E** on the obverse is the same as the **E** in VVALLERANDVS on the reverse. Gone are the Ligny title and any attempt to follow the *Two O's by the cross arms* 'rule'. The initial cross indicates a coin that was probably struck 1346 or thereafter, although the Roman N's in the reverse, outer legend are unusual. The lobes of the border leaves are thinner than those of the previous type: ✠.

There are a number of other specimens known to us, all showing little or no variation from the example shown here above:



CdMB 114 / 2.45 g.

On the obverse of this piece, the final N has been accommodated for the pellet that follows.



Monnaies d'Antan 27-820 / 2.62 g.



CdMA 860790 / 2.36 g.



Künker Auction Summer 2018, Lot 860 / 2.25 g.

*VV~~Λ~~ LL~~Θ~~ R~~Λ~~Ω DVS ?

Appears to have barless A's on the reverse.

PREVIOUS LITERATURE

Poey d'Avant (ref. 1)

— 426 —

SERAIN.

J'ai peu de renseignements sur Serain. On sait seulement que c'était un fief situé dans le Cambrésis, et qu'il relevait de Crevecœur. Suivant M. Desains (*Revue num. fr.*, 1842, pag. 133), c'était un des anciens apanages des maisons de Saint-Aubert et de Walincourt, et, avant 1313, les seigneurs de ce fief jouissaient du droit de battre monnaie. Par les espèces venues jusqu'à nous, nous voyons que cette terre a appartenu aux seigneurs de Ligny, et qu'ils y avaient établi un atelier, qui fonctionna assez activement.

La numismatique de Serain ne nous était connue que par un petit nombre de pièces publiées par Duby, et par deux gros au cavalier armé dessinés dans la *Revue*. Je suis heureux de l'avoir enrichie d'une manière tout à fait remarquable.

WALERAN III. 1371—1415.

6909. ✠ VVALLERANDVS. Croix coupant la légende. 2^e légende : BRIDIC, &c.
R. MORET SEEREN. Lion debout.

BILL. Gros.

Coll. Mallet. — Pl. CLXIII, n° 22.

Cette pièce est une imitation des gros de Louis de Male, comte de Flandre.

Poey d'Avant, p. III-426 ^[1]



Poey d'Avant n° 6909 ^[1]

Plate CLXIII, 22

also *R. Serrure 65*

It is highly unlikely that the third letter (B) in the second word in the obverse legend is correctly depicted in this drawing.

Deerlijk Hoard (1894)

CHRONIQUE DES TROUVAILLES. — Nous devons à l'obligeance d'un confrère les renseignements suivants :

On vient de trouver à Deerlyk, arrondissement de Courtrai, près de l'emplacement de l'ancien château, deux petits pots, contenant l'un environ quinze pièces d'argent de Louis de Male et de divers souverains de l'époque — entre autres un gros au lion de Waleran III, de Luxembourg, frappé à Serain ; — l'autre vingt et une pièces d'or dont voici la nomenclature :

De Witte, RBN 1894, p. 295 ^[80]

“...un gros au lion de Waleran III, de Luxembourg, frappé à Serain;...”

...which is not really very much information at all. The coin could be a *grand blanc*, or even a lion-with-helm coin. We are not told if any of the 15 Flemish coins of Louis of Male (1346-1384) were *leeuwengroten* or not. The whereabouts of the Serain *leeuwengroot* (?) from the Deerlijk Hoard (1894) are currently unknown.

Schoo Hoard (1927)

Walram II. oder III. von Luxemburg,
Herr von Serain 1304—1353 bzw. 1371—1415.
Serain ist ein Dorf 4 Meilen von Cambrai und eine der
alten Apanagen der Häuser St. Aubert und von Wallaincourt in
der Grafschaft Cambrésis.
83. × WA | LLQ | RAN | DVS — + MONETA Blatt SEQRAN
4 Bruchstücke.
Poey d'Avant, Monnaies féodales No. 6909 (Rev. num. 1842
S. 133); Serrure S. 39 Fig. 65.

Suhle p. 83 ^[10]

The whereabouts of the Serain *leeuwengroten* from the Schoo Hoard (1927) are currently unknown ^[52]. Suhle reported 3 (p. 87) or 4 “fragments” (p. 83) ^[10]. Note the final **N** (not **Q**) in the transcription, which may be incorrect. See ref. 52 for more information.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors are extremely grateful to the following people and institutions for their very kind assistance:

The Bibliotheque Nationale de France (Paris), the Cabinet de Médailles, Brussels (CdMB / KBR), the firm of Comptoir des Monnaies / Numiscorner.com (CdMA), Panagiotis Iossif, the firm of Fritz Rudolf Künker Münzenhandlung GmbH, the firm of Monnaies d'Antan, Alain Renard (KBR), Johan Van Heesch (KBR), and Bas Völlink (DNB).
Thanks as well to Aurore Carlier, Alain Fossion, Catarina Pereira, and the Société Archéologique de Namur.

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