

A Preliminary Look at the Leeuwengroten of Louis of Mâle (1346-1384): Issues IV and V

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Louis II of Mâle, Issue V, Type 12
private collection, 3.28 g.

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Introduction

The *leeuwigroot* was struck in Flanders, on and off, from 1337 until 1364. It circulated widely throughout the Low Countries and beyond, and was imitated in many places.

Existing records from medieval Flanders tell us that there were eight separate issues of *leeuwigroot* during the reign of Louis II of Mâle, Count of Flanders (26 August, 1346 – 30 January 1384), the first issue actually beginning under his father, Louis of Nevers (17 September, 1322 – 26 August, 1346). The Fifth Issue was produced from about 1355 to late 1359 ^[2]^[4]^[13]:

5th issue V	mint	alloy	fine	weight	number
20 Dec.1354 – 9 May 1355	Ghent	6d.4gr	0.492	{3.547}	1,542,150
9 May 1355 – 24 Nov 1355	Ghent	6d.4gr	0.492	3.55	2,525,400
20 Feb 1356 – 31 Oct. 1356	Ghent	6d.4gr	0.492	3.55	4,074,450
31 Oct. 1356 – 18 Nov. 1356	Ghent	6d.4gr	0.492	3.55	75,900
22 Nov. 1356 – 3 Dec. 1356	Ghent	6d.4gr	0.492	3.55	100,188
10 Dec 1356 – 22 Jul 1357	Ghent	6d.4gr	0.492	3.55	3,636,300
29 Jul 1357 – 4 Nov 1357	Ghent	6d.4gr	0.492	3.55	1,911,300
4 Nov 1357 – 14 Apr. 1358	Ghent	6d.4gr	0.492	3.55	2,094,150
14 Apr. 1358 – 28 Apr 1358	Ghent	6d.4gr	0.492	3.55	282,900
28 Apr 1358 – 20 Apr. 1359	Ghent	6d.4gr	0.492	3.55	2,701,350
20 Apr. 1359 – 29 May 1359	Ghent	6d.4gr	0.492	3.55	500,250
29 May 1359– 18 Oct. 1359	Ghent	6d.4gr	0.492	3.55	1,797,450
				Ghent	21,241,788
8 Oct. 1357 – 12 Nov 1357	Malines	6d.4gr	0.492	3.55	51,750
12 Nov 1357 – 17 Jun 1358	Malines	6d.4gr	0.492	3.55	1,350,675
				Malines	1,402,425
				TOTAL	22,644,213

Each successive issue was struck from either silver of a fineness reduced from that of the previous issue, or with a reduction in the weight of the coins, or both. Such debasement of the currency was common practice in the Middle Ages.

The issues of *leeuwigroten* were marked by the mints through the use of special marks on the coins, for example an **L** with a pellet over the ‘foot’, the direction of the stem of the leaf after MONETA, or the change from a long **O** to a round **●**, etc. Since these were “secret” marks for use by the authorities and not the general public, the medieval records do not relay which mint signs went with which issues, and numismatists must try and piece together the chronology from the information gathered from researching coin hoards ^[5].

In 2011, Aimé Haeck published an article entitled: *De leeuwengroten met het kruisje van Lodewijk van Male – Een proeve van (her)classificatie* ^[2]. In one fell swoop, this seminal work encompassed and superceded everything that had previously been written about the *leeuwigroot* of Louis of Mâle. Haeck’s system of classification was adopted by Jean-Claude Martiny in the first volume of his three-part *Het Munthuis in Gent* ^[4], published in 2014.

While we may not be in complete agreement with everything proposed by Haeck in his article, his work is by far the most accurate, comprehensive and well-researched of any publication on the *leeuwengroot*, and there is no reason whatsoever not to use his system as the starting point for a thorough investigation into this type of coin. The article that you are currently reading is a small part of said larger investigation.

Available evidence seems to bear out the theory, proposed by previous researchers, that Louis of Mâle's largest issue of *leeuwengroten* (Issue V, well over 22 million coins struck) should correspond to the type of coin that is most often seen today.

The most common coins are those with an obverse, outer border with 5-lobed leaves, and the following obverse legend:

• ✠ MONETA ✠ FLAND'

Both A's have crossbars, the leaf-stem points to the A of MONETA, there is a pellet left of the initial cross and the L of FLAND' is not pelleted. (On the reverse, a long O in COMES and non-pelleted L in LVDOVIC'.)

Haeck classified this type as Issue V, Type 12 ^[2].

An interesting paradox has arisen – Issue V coins are by far the most common coins today, yet it is rather difficult to find good specimens for study. It is *because* they are so very common, that they have become “unloved” by dealers, collectors, numismatists and museums alike, who usually look for the rarer varieties, such as a round O in COMES or a pellet left and right of the initial cross of the obverse (the two ‘second most common’ varieties). The collections of many collectors and museums are lacking in Issue V coins – the most common *leeuwengroten* of all.

And because more Issue V coins were struck than any other issue, more of them circulated, which in turn means that more of them were worn down and more of them were deposited in hoards. This, in turn, means that the majority of hoard *leeuwengroten* are Issue V coins, but also that they are usually well-worn examples. End result: few good, Issue V pieces for study – the most common *leeuwengroot* of all.

All of this has contributed to the Issue V sub-groups going unnoticed until now.

Issues of *Leeuwengroten* Prior to the Fifth

In order to focus on Issue V, we would like to limit our discussion of the other issues as much as possible, and we shall therefore dispense with too many details at this point. In a nutshell, Aimé Haeck proposed the following characteristics, with which we concur ^[2]:

Issue I obverse: no pellet left or right of initial cross

Issue II obverse: pellet right of initial cross; reverse: round O in COMES

Issue III obverse: pellets left and right of initial cross

We can further report that all of the coins from these issues have ‘wedge’ L’s, ‘sharp’ C’s and N’s with ‘feet’ (see below).

The T of MONETA is always annuleted on Flemish *leeuwengroten*: **T**, and the O is always round. The coins of Issue V have “normal” L’s (as opposed to pelleted **L**’s), and a long O in COMES on the reverse (as opposed to the round **O** of Issue II).

‘Wedge’ L’s

All of the *leeuwengroten* struck in Flanders up until Issue V, including those of Louis I of Nevers, have ‘wedge’ L’s on both faces (although we cannot actually speak for the elusive Issue IV; see below):



By ‘wedge’ L we mean that the ‘foot’ of the L is a large, sharp, triangle or wedge: **L**. Sometimes one or both of the vertical sides will bend inwards slightly: **L**. Sometimes the ‘wedge’ is taller than the upright of the letter, sometimes shorter.

It appears that things changed at some point during Issue V, when the use of variant L’s began (see below).

‘Sharp’ C’s

All of the *leeuwengroten* struck in Flanders up until Issue V (including those of Louis I of Nevers) have ‘sharp’ C’s in the reverse, inner legend (again, we cannot be certain about Issue IV):



‘Sharp’ C’s

By ‘sharp’ we mean that the closing bar of the C has two sharp points on the right side, as opposed to rounded edges. The second C is often “enveloping” the O that follows it.

Again, it appears that things changed at some point during Issue V, when the use of variant C’s began (see below).

The C's on the coins of Louis of Nevers, although somewhat different in style, are still 'sharp':



Louis of Male C's



'sharp' C (Louis of Nevers)



'sharp' C's (Louis of Mâle)



'rounded' C's



'pellety' C (Issue VI, 'pellety' N sub-group)

The Reverse, Outer Legend C's

It is important to note that the style of the C in the reverse, outer legend (BNDICTV) follows its own course, so to speak, independent of the inner legend. Throughout the Fifth Issue of Louis of Mâle, the C in the outer legend remained the 'rounded' type: **Ꝉ**.

'Rounded' C's from the reverse, outer legend:



The reverse, outer legend is well-known for being illegible, thus good examples of letters can be difficult to find, making the study of them all the more difficult.

'Normal' N's (with 'feet')

All of the *leeuwengroten* struck in Flanders up until Issue V (including those of Louis I of Nevers) have 'normal' N's on both faces, i.e. **ꝛ**'s with 'feet' (once again, we cannot be sure about Issue IV).

with 'foot': **ꝛ** without 'foot': **ꝛ**



'normal' N's with 'feet'

Once more, things seemed to have changed during Issue V, when the use of variant ('footless') N's began at some point (see below).

Issue IV

Issue IV (7 Sep. 1353 – 24 Oct. 1354) was of short duration and ended with the murder of mintmaster Jehan Percheval on October 24, 1354. Only 318,120 coins were struck; they are extremely rare today, perhaps even unknown.

Aimé Haeck tentatively proposed the following as a possible, obverse legend for this issue ^[2]:

• ✠ MONETA + FLAND'

The only difference from Issue V, Type 12 is that the leaf-stem curves towards the F of FLAND' instead of the A of MONETA.

If such coins exist (or ever existed), then it seems perfectly logical that such characteristics could have been those of Issue IV, based upon the general progression of changes in minting marks within the other issues. The problem with verifying this theory is the lack of coins. And of the few known specimens that seem to conform to the characteristics proposed by Haeck, none of them are particularly satisfying.

Two of the known [potential] examples of Haeck Issue IV are currently housed in the Amsterdam Museum and the Stichting Musea Noardeast Fryslân (Museum Dokkum) in The Netherlands:



*Amsterdam Museum KA-17219, 2.19 g.
Issue IV?*



*A short stem pointing to the F,
or a long stem pointing to the A, made from a defective punch?*



*Dokkum K211, 2.31 g.
Issue IV? Wedge L's?*



*A short stem pointing to the F,
or a long stem pointing to the A, made from a defective punch?*

Although these coins *seem* to show a leaf-stem pointing to the **F** of FLAND', they both have extremely short stems, which may in fact be the result of defective punches (or poor strikes), and may actually have been intended to curve back toward the **A**, and thus may not be intentional minting marks (and thus Issue V coins). Dokkum K211 appears as though it may have 'curvy' L's.

Compare this example from a private collection, which helps illustrate the problem:



private collection, 2.62 g.



*A short stem pointing to the F, or a long stem pointing to the A?
Where does the lion's claw begin?*

It is conceivable that Issue IV coins could have been made by using mutilated leaf-stem punches, which had been altered so that the [much-shortened] stem pointed to the **F**. There is currently little or no evidence to support such a theory, other than the coins shown here, but it is a possibility that bears mention. Clearly, there is far more research needed on this subject.

A third coin (Dokkum K310) is not particularly legible:



*Dokkum K310, 2.70 g.
Issue IV? 'Rounded' C's on the reverse, illegible L's on both faces*



*An all but illegible leaf that seems to have a stem pointing to the **F**
A none too convincing specimen for Issue IV.*

And finally, consider the coin used as an illustration by Haeck (and thus Martiny) shown on the next page; the 'curvy' **L** on the obverse ('wedge' **L** on the reverse), and the 'rounded' **C**'s on the reverse do not easily lend themselves to a determination of Issue IV. These are the characteristics of a 'narrow' **L** sub-group coin, an Issue V coin (see below).

The determination for this coin thus rests squarely upon the leaf after **MONETA**. This all-important leaf is not exactly crystal-clear in the photo, nor is the direction of its stem – *the* crucial point for identification. Is this coin in fact from Issue IV (stem to **F**), or from the far more common Issue V (stem to **A**)?

From what little we can see in the photo, the form of the leaf itself (i.e. the lobes) seems unusual, but we cannot say much more than that.



Haeck IV, 11 ^[2]
Martiny 33-7 ^[4]



the leaf mark

In the absence of a truly convincing coin bearing the characteristics ascribed by Haeck to Issue IV, or some other alternative, we cannot be sure at this point exactly what the characteristics of Issue IV *leeuwengroten* are.

Issue V, Type 13

We shall begin our discussion of Issue V with Type 13 instead of Type 12. Aimé Haeck proposed the following as the obverse legend for Issue V, Type 13 ^[2]:

• ✠ MONETA + FLAND'

The only difference from Type 12 would be that the leaf-stem is straight and not curved. However, **we have been unable to verify the existence of this type of coin.**

None of the known examples of coins that appear to have the characteristics of a Haeck V-13 coin are clear and unrefutable examples of such a coin. The illustration coin used by Haeck (and Martiny) shows a leaf-stem that interferes with the central lion's claw and which is unclear – it may be straight, it may not. In the end, however, we feel that the leaf-stem is most likely curving toward the A of MONETA, and this coin is simply another Type 12,

'rough' type (see below). This idea is further supported by the 'footless' N's (discussed later) clearly visible in the reverse, outer legend.



*Haec V, 13 (3.16 g.) [2]
Martiny 33-8, variant 2 [4]*



the leaf mark



'Footless' N's in the reverse, outer legend



*Dokkum (1932) K227, 2.55 g.
Straight leaf-stem? 'Wedge' L's, illegible C's*



K227, the leaf mark

Although the leaf-stem of K227 appears to be straight, the mark is not clear, and the 'straight' stem might be an illusion. While we would not want to place too much stock in this coin as an example of a Haeck V-13, we also felt that it required mentioning.



Dokkum (1932) K232, 2.91 g

Straight leaf-stem?

'Curvy' L on obverse, reverse L unclear, 'rounded' C's.



Once again, the leaf-stem appears to be straight but the mark is not very clear. This coin, too, is inconclusive as an example of a V-13 coin.



*Dokkum (1932) K203, 2.36 g.
 Straight leaf-stem?
 'Curvy' L on obverse, 'wedge' L on reverse, 'rounded' C's.*



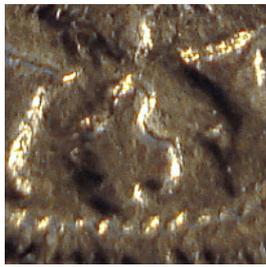
The leaf-stem is far from clear, and could easily be curved toward the A of MONETA. We would certainly not want to rely on this coin as an example of a Haeck V-13.



*Dokkum (1932) K338, 1.68 g.
 Straight leaf-stem?
 'Wedge' L's on obverse and reverse, 'rounded' C's.*

When we had this coin in our hands in 2014, we remarked that it seemed as though it had been plated, perhaps copper plated with silver, and we noted that it may well be a medieval counterfeit (note the low weight) ^[5].

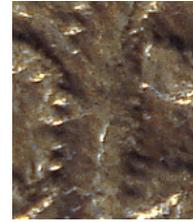
The leaf after MONETA is certainly unusual, and unlike any other leaf-mark we have seen thus far. It certainly *appears* to have a straight stem, but for that matter it also “appears” to be a cross. The sole visible N on the reverse *appears* to be footless.



the leaf-mark



N from the reverse



part of the 'pellet' ring

Finally, the entire coin has a rather unique look to it, for example the distinctive pellet rings, the ‘pellets’ of which are quite long and sharp.

We have too many questions (or rather, doubts) about this coin to want to rely on it as an example of a Haeck V-13 coin. It seems likely that it is in fact an Issue V, ‘rough’ style sub-group coin (assuming that it is a genuine, Flemish issue).

Although *leeuwengroten* with a **• ✠ MONETA + FLAND'** legend may well exist and may indeed belong to Issue V, Type 13, at this point in time we do not have a convincing specimen of such a coin. While a “gap” exists as far as Issue IV coins are concerned (i.e. Issue IV coins must have existed, whatever their characteristics), there is no known “gap” for which a Type 13 must exist.

The general progression of minting mark changes could certainly accommodate an obverse legend with a straight stem, but there is no real need to search for one unnecessarily. **It is possible that straight stems were not used in Flanders after Issue II.**

If anyone can provide us with a good photograph of a good coin, clearly and undeniably showing Haeck Type 13 characteristics, we would very much like to see it (this applies to Haeck Issue IV coins as well).

Issue V, Type 12

Having studied the *leeuwengroot* carefully for some time now, we have noticed several sub-groups within the issues of Louis II of Mâle in Flanders. These groups seem to show similarities in the dies, or in the punches used to make the dies. At first, we felt it best to cautiously state that these sub-groups may have no further import in the classification of the *leeuwengroot*, and merely show evidence of the same hand having made the punches or dies. However, we have since come to believe that at least some of the sub-groups show intentional changes in the dies, which were more than likely used as some kind of internal mint identification system, the details of which are now lost to us.

The more we looked at V-12 *leeuwengroten*, the more subtle differences we noticed between the coins. These differences have gone unreported by previous researchers, but we have come to believe that they cannot be ignored. We feel that have been able to sketch out a rough estimation of the chronological order of the coins, although the case is far from closed, and more research is certainly needed. In total, there seem to be six sub-groups to this issue.

We must also not forget that some of the differences in the coins may in fact reflect the two mints of Ghent and Malines, where Issue V was struck. Approximately 15 times more *leeuwengroten* were struck at Ghent than at Malines during Issue V. (The question as to exactly *what* the mints were recording with their marks, other than the Issues, has not yet been answered satisfactorily. There are more variants than mints, Issues and/or mintmasters – what is it that the mints were marking?)

What we believe to be a possible, chronological order is as follows:

The ‘refined’ style

(well-made coins, refined leaf, ‘wedge’ L’s and ‘sharp’ C’s)

The ‘footless’ N group (including the phasing-in of the ‘footless’ N’s)

(N’s without ‘feet’, new punches or older, mutilated punches used; ‘wedge’ L’s and ‘sharp’ C’s)

The ‘rough’ style

(‘rough’ leaf-mark, ‘sharp’ or ‘rounded’ C’s)

The ‘narrow’ L group

(‘narrow’ or ‘curvy’ L obverse only; ‘sharp’ or ‘rounded’ C’s)

The ‘curvy’ L group

(‘curvy’ L obverse and reverse; ‘rounded’ C’s)

The ‘serif’ L group

(‘curvy’ L obverse, ‘serif’ L reverse; ‘rounded’ C’s)

<i>Sub-group</i>	‘refined’ style	‘footless’ N	‘rough’ style	‘narrow’ L	‘curvy’ L	‘serif’ L
<i>Possible attribute</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-
Wedge L obv	⚔	⚔	⚔	-	-	-
Wedge L rev	⚔	⚔	⚔	⚔	-	-
Narrow / Curvy L obv	-	-	-	⚔	⚔	⚔
Curvy L rev	-	-	-	-	⚔	-
Serif L rev	-	-	-	-	-	⚔
Sharp C rev	⚔	⚔	⚔	⚔	-	-
Rounded C rev	-	-	⚔	⚔	⚔	⚔
‘normal’ N obv	⚔	-	⚔	⚔	⚔	⚔
‘normal’ N rev	⚔	⚔	⚔	⚔	⚔	⚔
‘mutilated’ N	-	⚔	-	-	-	-
‘footless’ N obv	-	⚔	-	-	-	-
‘footless’ N rev	-	⚔	⚔	-	-	-

Bear in mind that despite the obvious inadequacies of our sub-group names, we are also keeping a sharp eye on the forms of *all* of the letters, as well as the border leaves and the central lion. In other words, our estimation of the ‘footless’ N sub-group is not based solely upon the N’s (for example).

Issue V: Refined Style

Perhaps the best identifier of this sub-group is the leaf-mark, which is very ‘leafy’ and well-defined, with a distinctive, sickle-like stem: . (Of course, a worn ‘refined’ leaf could easily look like a ‘rough’ style leaf – an ever-present problem.) The L’s of this sub-group are always ‘wedge’ type.

Coins of this sub-group tend to be struck on larger flans. They are well-engraved and generally well-struck, as one might expect from coins produced at the beginning of a mint run. Therefore, we have tentatively placed these coins at the beginning of Issue V.



The ‘refined’ leaf mark after MONETA

Examples of ‘refined’ style coins:



*‘refined’ type
private collection, 3.27 g.*



'refined' type
G. Henzen, 2.93 g.

Issue V: 'Footless' N

When we first reported this sub-group, we referred to it as the 'broken' N group^[5]. We have since come to prefer the term 'footless' N group (or rather, 'footless' **Ɔ**), because the removal of the 'foot' from the N's seems to have been an intentional act, which further indicates that the 'footless' N was intended as some kind of minting mark.

It appears that the coins began with 'normal' N's (with 'feet') on both faces, previous to and again during the early, 'refined' style of coins discussed above. Over time, it seems that the punches used to make the N's on the obverse dies were intentionally mutilated by having the 'feet' removed (i.e. carved off). (One could here imagine a sub-sub-group, the 'mutilated' N group.)

After this we see N's without 'feet', which seem to have been made from punches that were produced as 'footless' from the beginning; presumably the mutilated punches had worn out and been replaced with new, 'footless' punches.

Ɔ

'normal' N with 'foot'

Ɔ Ɔ Ɔ

mutilated punches used to make 'footless' N

Ɔ

new punch used to make 'footless' N



Examples of mutilated punches being used to make the N's (obverse)



Examples of "new" punches being used to make the N's (obverse)

Eventually, the N's in the reverse, outer legend lost their 'feet' as well, although there seems to be less evidence of mutilated punches being used on the reverse.



Examples of 'footless' N's in the reverse, outer legend

At some point, there appears to have been a return to N's with feet, beginning with the obverse, during the 'rough' style of coins (see below).

The leaf-mark of this sub-group is the 'leafy' and well-defined type mentioned above under the 'refined' type, and the L's are always 'wedge' L's. It is for these reasons that we have tentatively placed this sub-group directly after the 'refined' type.

Examples of 'footless' N coins:



*Footless N's, obverse only
private collection, 2.72 g.*



*Mutilated N's on obverse, footless N's on reverse
private collection, 2.75 g.*



*Mutilated N's on obverse, footless N's on reverse
private collection, 3.28 g.*



*Mutilated N in MONETA, footless N in FLAND on obverse, footless N's on reverse
Dokkum (1932) K231, 2.59 g.*



*Footless N's obverse and reverse
Dokkum (1932) K261, 2.89 g.*

Issue V: Rough Style

At some point, the 'feet' returned to the N's, however the coins were no longer of the 'refined style', rather they seem to have become the 'rough style'. Admittedly, the differences between the 'refined' and the 'rough' styles are rather subjective, as both sub-groups have N's with feet, and 'wedge' L's. One of the main distinctions lies with the leaf mark after MONETA, which is now 'rough' and not well-defined: . From this point onwards, the old, 'refined' leaf is no longer seen on the coins.

It seems that during the period of transition back to N's with feet, coins were struck in the 'rough' style, but with 'footless' N's in the reverse, outer legend (see the illustration above for Haeck Type 13).



The 'rough' style leaf mark after MONETA

Examples of 'rough' style coins:



*Obverse: return to 'normal' N's with feet, 'rough' leaf-mark / reverse: remnant footless N's
private collection, 3.14 g.*

Compare this coin to the following example. It is the 'rough' style of leaf mark that leads us to believe that the 'footless' N's in the reverse, outer legend are in fact a remnant from the period of 'footless' N's, and indicate a return to N's with 'feet'.



*'Normal' N's on both obverse and reverse, 'rough' leaf-mark
private collection, 3.12 g.*

'Rounded' C's

Many 'rough' style coins do not have 'sharp' C's in the reverse, inner legend; they have 'rounded' letters instead. The two coins shown on the previous page have C's that are fairly rounded.



'Rounded' C's

It is not clear when (or why) the C's changed from the 'sharp' type, and at this moment we are not sure that the C's indicate any kind of intentional minting mark. Some 'rough' style coins have 'round' C's and some 'sharp'; the same is true of the next sub-group ('narrow' L).

It bears mentioning at this point that coins assigned by Haeck to Issue VI also have 'rounded' C's, as well as 'rough' style leaf-marks after MONETA and 'wedge' L's.

Coins assigned by Haeck to Issue VII have 'sharp' C's, which in fact resemble those on the coins of Louis I of Nevers (!). (Another similarity with the coins of Louis of Nevers are the 3-lobed, obverse, border leaves on the Issue VII coins.)

The Issue VII leaf-mark after MONETA is unique to Issue VII: , and both 'wedge' and 'curvy' L's are seen (but with pellets). (Some Issue VII coins have their own, unique A's as well, the 'bow' A: )

Issue V: Narrow L

The evidence seems to suggest that the next change in the Issue V, Type 12 coins was the introduction of the 'narrow L' sub-group, characterized by the use of a distinctive L in FLAND': .

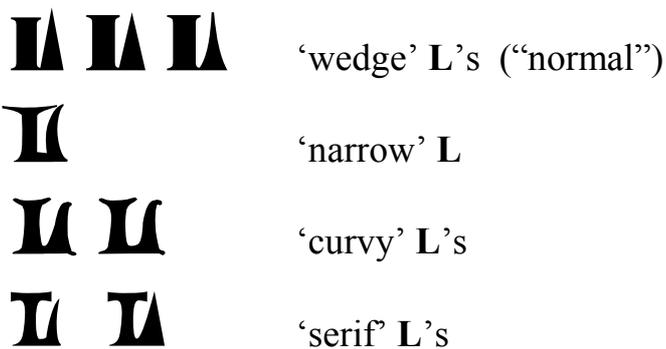
This seems to have been the first time that any L other than the standard, 'wedge' L () had ever been used in Flanders on a *leeuwengroot*, including all of those struck for Louis I of Nevers (see, however, **ISSUE IV** above). Whether or not this new L was intended as an intentional minting mark is unknown.

The major identification point of the 'narrow' L sub-group is the fact that the obverse L is 'narrow', with a long, curving 'foot' and a large, sharp serif, while the reverse L remains the 'wedge' type.



'Narrow' L's

The difference between a 'narrow' L and a 'curvy' L is subtle, and it seems that the 'narrow' L evolved into the 'curvy' L over time. A key point for this sub-group is that the reverse L remains 'wedge' type.



Note that while one or both sides of a 'wedge' L 'foot' *may* curve inwards, one or both sides of a 'narrow' or 'curvy' L *always* curve *away* from the ascender of the letter (i.e. to the right).

All the N's of this sub-group have 'feet', and of course, the leaf after MONETA seems to be of the 'rough' type, which is why we have placed this sub-group after the 'rough' style. Coins of this sub-group are difficult to find. It is possible that we are looking at the difference between coins struck in Ghent and those struck at Malines.

Examples of 'narrow' L coins:



'Narrow' L on obverse, 'wedge' L on reverse. Double-struck. private collection, 3.14 g.



*'Narrow' L on obverse, 'wedge' L on reverse
private collection, 3.08 g.*



*'Narrow' L on obverse, 'wedge' L on reverse
private collection, 2.76 g.*

It appears that eventually the 'narrow' L evolved into the 'curvy' L while on the reverse the 'wedge' L remained:

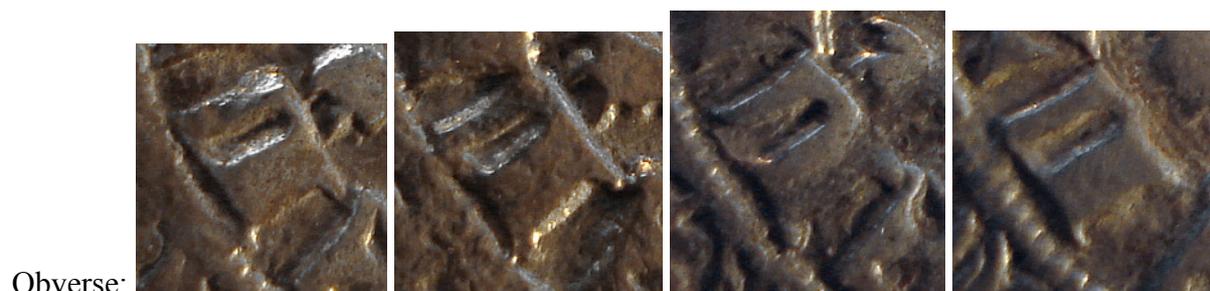


*'Curvy' L on obverse, 'wedge' L on reverse
Sneek (1955), MP-015-a*

The C's of the reverse, inner legend on the first two examples above are fairly 'sharp', while those on the latter two coins are more 'rounded'.

Issue V: Curvy L

The major identification point of the 'curvy' L sub-group is the fact that both obverse and reverse L's are 'curvy'; the 'wedge' L is gone.



Examples of 'curvy' L coins:



*'Curvy' L's, obverse and reverse
Dokkum (1932), K106, 2.27 g.*



*'Curvy' L's, obverse and reverse
Sneek (1955), MP-015-ak*

Issue V: Serif L

This sub-group is characterized by a reverse legend containing an **L** with a distinct, large serif: **Λ**, and an unusually large **V**'s. In addition, the letters **MES** often have a rather jumbled look to them, and the **E** and **S** are often merged with one another. Whether or not the **L**'s of this sub-group were intended as intentional minting marks is unknown.



'Serif' L's and large V's from the reverse

Coins of this sub-group always have a 'curvy' L on the obverse.



'Curvy L's from the obverse

Examples of 'serif' L coins:



*Obverse: 'curvy' L / reverse: 'serif' L, large V and 'rounded' C's
private collection, 3.62 g.*



*Obverse: 'curvy' L / reverse: 'serif' L, large V and 'rounded' C's
Dokkum (1932) K051, 2.55 g*

We have found that it is best not to attempt to draw too many conclusions based upon the weights of individual coins.

Note the difference in weight between the two coins above, a hefty 1.07 grams. In theory, coins of the same issue (and certainly of the same sub-group) should be much closer to one another in weight, which is clearly not the case here. (The lighter coin conforms better to the average weight for this sort of *leeuwengroot*.)

A quick comparison of the “average” weights of known pieces to the “target” weights of Louis of Mâle *leeuwengroten* as given in Aimé Haeck’s article ^[2] clearly shows that the actual [known] coins generally weigh less than they were “supposed to”. This probably has something to do with Gresham’s Law and the machinations of medieval coin hoarding.

Conclusion

The exact characteristics of the rare Louis of Mâle, Issue IV *leeuwengroten* remain unknown. Aimé Haeck’s tentatively proposed coin, identical to the “common type” but with a leaf-stem curving to the F of FLAND is certainly plausible, but remains unproven. Alternatives are lacking, however.

Aimé Haeck’s tentatively proposed coin, identical to the “common type” but with a straight, uncurving leaf-stem (V-13) is also plausible, but remains unproven as well. Convincing examples of such coins are as yet unknown, and for the time being we must reserve judgment on the existence of this type.

With the possible exception of Issue IV, all of the *leeuwengroten* struck in Flanders up until Issue V of Louis II of Mâle had ‘wedge’ L’s, ‘normal’ N’s with ‘feet’, and ‘sharp’ C’s. During Issue V, the use of variant letter forms began.

We have identified what appear to be six separate but overlapping sub-groups to Issue V (Type 12). The alteration of the N’s (and probably that of the L’s as well) seem intentional and were therefore most likely intended as some kind of minting mark. The general change from the ‘refined’ to the ‘rough’ style was probably simply the result of time. The reasons behind the change in C’s from ‘sharp’ to ‘smooth’ is far less apparent; the change may not be intentional at all. The switch from one C to the other does not seem to have been very “black and white”, and the two styles may have coexisted to some extent.

The authors welcome any and all comments or opinions regarding the contents of this paper. Any submissions of photographs of *leeuwengroten* (of any region or issuing authority) will be most appreciated.

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Afterword

The coin shown on page 1 (and again on p. 19), currently in a private collection, is an example of a coin from the ‘footless’ N sub-group of Issue V, with mutilated, ‘footless’ N’s on the obverse, and ‘footless’ N’s in the reverse, outer legend.



*Louis II of Mâle, Issue V, Type 12
private collection, 3.28 g.*

But there is something unusual about this coin; it seems to have some extra markings on either side of the **O** of LVDOVIC’ on the reverse:



It is entirely possible that these “marks” are nothing more than meaningless slips of the engraver’s hand. They could certainly be careless “extensions” of the pellet ring above the letter.

On the other hand, these may be some kind of minor minting mark, used for some aspect of internal mint administration.

The coin is very well-engraved and well-struck, and there do not seem to be any other ‘stray’ marks on either face. Because the unusual marks are so clear and easy to see, we felt that some mention of them was warranted, whether meaningful or meaningless.

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