Abstract: During the Middle Ages the production of broad cloth is one of the main sources of income for the Low Countries and especially Flanders. Organic materials such as textile leave very few remains which makes them difficult to trace in archaeological research. Medieval cloth was sealed with lead seals by the civic authorities of the cities where it was produced. However medieval Flemish cloth seals are ill studied. A few suggestions for a new approach based on the formal properties of these lead seals are made. A series of surface finds in Saray al-Djadid (Russia), the ancient capital of the Golden Horde, and some neighboring towns provide new insights in the trade of Flemish cloth during the 14th century. Seals of several cloth producing Flemish cities were identified: Aire (F), Damme, Mechelen, Popercinge, Tournai and Ypres. Others could not yet been identified. For the first time a lead tubular seal is published bearing the badge of the Jochids.

The production of woolen cloth has been one of the major foundation stones of the economic and cultural rise of the Southern Low Countries during the Middle Ages. The origins of cloth production in Flanders are not very well documented but it is clear that from the end of the 11th century onwards cloth production evolved from a domestic occupation to a highly specialized proto-industrial activity focusing on the export of high quality products. During the 13th and the first half of the 14th century the production of woolen cloth was at its apex in Flanders. The export of high quality Flemish cloth took two directions. The Hanseatic League monopolized trade with Northern Europe and adjacent parts of Russia. The exact extent of these exports is difficult to judge since local – Russian and other – sources at the end of the trade chain are either inexistent or insufficiently exploited by historic research. The cloth itself has long since disappeared and left hardly any traces but for the lead cloth seals. These inconspicuous witnesses are prone to survive where organic material such as textile is destroyed by wear and tear, insects, water and time. The find of e.g. a cloth seal of Tournai during archaeological excavations at Novgorod illustrates the possibilities offered by this kind of

* Raf VAN LAERE, Rozenstraat 22, B-3500 Hasselt. E-mail: raf.van.laere@telenet.be.
** Oleg TROSTYANSKY, S. Mihailova 1-202, RU-Cherboksary 428015. E-mail: shw73@bk.ru.
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RBN, 156, 2010, p. 103-128.
objects. But for the moment lack of archaeological evidence makes it hard or even impossible to follow Flemish cloth from Novgorod deeper into Russia and Asia.

A large part of the export however depended on the Champagne Fairs where Italian merchants bought Flemish cloth to export it to the Mediterranean and the Near East. After the decline of the Champagne Fairs during the last quarter of the 13th century Genoa concentrated on the direct sea route through the Atlantic to the cloth producing cities of Flanders, especially Bruges.

The 13th century was one of the most fascinating periods in the Middle Ages. For the first time since the end of the Roman hegemony Europe was linked with a global network that stretched from the Iberian peninsula in the West to China in the East and from Scandinavia in the North to Indonesia and the African coasts of the Indian Ocean in the South. Europe was an equal partner but situated somewhat at the periphery. The Italian cities rivaled to dominate the trade between Europe and the East. The involvement of Venice in the Crusades resulted in a sometimes uneasy alliance with Mamluk Egypt which made it possible for her to eliminate partially her rivals especially Genoa. Venice had access, albeit indirectly to the sea route from Egypt to the East and depended for her European contacts for a good deal on the land route over Germany.

The Genoese were avid buyers of Flemish cloth. But the final destination of the cloth they bought is difficult to establish since, once it arrived in Italy, it hardly left a trace between the numerous other products traded by the Genoese. From the late 13th century onwards Genoa preferred the sea route to reach Flanders and other European destinations. By establishing several trading ports on the coast of the Black Sea especially in the Crimea, Genoa hoped to optimize its Eastern trade over the land route through Central Asia. Apparently the ancient Silk Road happened to be relatively safe during the larger part of the 13th century. The fact that both the Roman Catholic Church and the Mongols several times tried to establish good mutual relation undoubtedly favored the economic links at some point. But even before the advent of the Black Death in the middle of the 14th century the situation had changed. As the internal strive between and within the Mongol successor states increased, the land route to China became increasingly unsafe. But both Genoa and Venice continued their commercial activities on the coast of the Black Sea for other reasons such as slave trade and kept in touch with the Golden Horde.


The presence of Flemish cloth seals from the last quarter of the 14th century in the ancient capitals of the Golden Horde gives us the first tangible proof of the export of Flemish woolen cloth in the area north of the Caspian Sea at the threshold of the Silk Road. Although it is not impossible that the Flemish cloth reached the Golden Horde by the way of Genoese traders that bought it directly in Bruges or elsewhere in Flanders, it seems more probable that it followed the Baltic route and crossed Russia from Novgorod downwards.

Cloth seals

During the Middle Ages and Modern Times woolen cloth played a major role in the prosperity of both large and small towns of the Low Countries. It should come as no surprise that these towns closely supervised the quality of the cloth produced within their jurisdiction. Quality control linked with a tendency to monopolize the production of cloth and to out market competitors were a constant in the economic preoccupations of town councils. Quality control was materialized in lead seals.

It is not clear when and where lead seals were introduced as quality marks for textile. It has been suggested that their use was inspired by Byzantine examples. But since these Byzantine seals were probably of the bulla-type the question of the origin of the other types of lead seals remains unsolved. The oldest normative text that mentions the use of seals is dated 1220 and comes from Maastricht. However there is no reason to suggest that Maastricht was innovating here. It seems plausible that seals were introduced in Flanders as early as the 12th century. By the middle of the 13th century the use of lead seals was common practice not only in Flanders but also in Holland, France, Italy, Germany and Spain.

Even in the Low Countries, where cloth making was a major export industry, the study of lead seals has been neglected to the point that general overviews are still nonexistent. Literature dates often from the 19th century or is scattered over a large number of local publications that are difficult to trace.

Medieval World), Harlow, 2005 and especially chapter 11 Traders and adventurers, p. 290 sqs. for a somewhat more nuanced point of view.


5 During the 19th century several notes and articles on «Belgian» lead seals were published in the RBN. The most informative for the medieval period are: L. DESCHAMPS DE PAS, Quelques médaux et plombs de marque relatifs à l’Artois, in RBN, 23, 1867, p. 114-131; seals of Saint-Omer (F) (p. 127-130), Poperinge (p. 130), Aire (F) (p. 130), Arras (F) (p. 130-131) most of which were found in Thérouanne (F); E.H. VAN HENDE, Lettre de M. Van Herde à M. R. Chalon, président de la Société royale
Recent publications by Egan and several German scholars are of limited use since each country seems to follow its own traditions when sealing cloth or other products. The existing information on lead seals learns us that generalization is nearly impossible. Each town had its own rules that changed in the course of time. In some cases a seal guaranteed the quality of the weaving, another the quality of the fulling and a third the quality of the coloring, the length etc. Sometimes different seals were used for each quality control, in other towns a second, a third etc. stamp was applied on the same seal. In some cases the number of lead seals used on a piece of cloth could even give a general indication of its quality. Not only texts but also archaeological finds of textile fragments with one, two, three and more seals testify of the diverse uses of lead seals.

These differences explain why no generally accepted modern terminology seems to exist. The English expression cloth seal finds a parallel in Dutch textiellood but it is broader than the equally Dutch lakenlood or the French plomb de drapiers or plomb de draperie and narrower than the German Bleiplombe that seems to find its equivalent in the French plomb de marque or plomb de marchandise. Originally the Dutch word lood was used indifferently for all kind of lead seals used for woolen cloth, customs etc. The more specific terminology seems to be the result of a late – 19th or even 20th century – evolution. For this reason we earlier proposed a more technical and neutral terminology that can be used without prejudice even when the exact use of a lead seal is unknown as is the case with seal Sa 46.


8 Het woordenboek der Nederlandsche taal op cd-rom, Den Haag, 2003 s.v. Lood § k and 1.

During the Middle Ages several types of lead seals were used in Flanders. The most common type is the hinged seal. It consists of two circular discs connected by a strip. One of these discs is perforated while the inside of the other disc is provided with a single or a double security pin. This pin pierces the cloth and is put through the hole of the other disc before being flattened in the process of the sealing. If in doubt the pierced disc is considered to be the obverse since the corresponding side usually bears the coat of arms of the issuing town or the "most important" iconographic element. The disc with the pint on its backside is considered to be the reverse since it mostly bears a secondary iconographic motive. Once the seal has been closed it is impossible to open it without leaving clear traces on the obverse disc. This type largely corresponds to Sabatier's sceau à plateaux, the English rivet or riveted seal as described by Egan and the German Scheibensfigiplombe as described by Hittinger.\(^\text{10}\)

Tubular seals consist of a small lead tube that is directly affixed to the cloth. It is impossible to distinguish a technical obverse or reverse. Tubular seals often bear only one impression. If there are two iconographic sides, the side with the coat of arms of the issuing town is considered to be the obverse. Sometimes it is difficult to distinguish the tubular seal from the bulla-type which consists of a thick circular disc that is pierced diagonally with a tunnel. A string passed through this tunnel is used to tie the seal to a document, a piece of cloth or some object. Several varieties of this type exist but until now none was found at Saray.

**Identification**

Most early lead seals lack an inscription which makes their identification difficult and often hazardous. Since cloth seals are official marks of quality one can expect them to show the official coat of arms of their town of origin. However since heraldic colors lack on lead seals, coats of arms can change over the years and information on medieval civic arms is not readily available, identification is not always easy.\(^\text{11}\) Sometimes the official coat of arms serves only as source of inspiration for a simpler design. Even worse, some seals imitate more or less closely the design of a more successful cloth producing town to enhance the sales. Systematic research based on archaeological and surface finds would be very helpful but remains largely absent for the moment.

\(^\text{10}\) A. Sabatier, *op. cit.* [n. 5], p. 8 sqs. and G. Egan, *op. cit.* [n. 6], p. 4 sqs. and D. Hittinger, *op. cit.* [n. 7], p. 7 sqs.

\(^\text{11}\) The website *Heraldry of the world* (www.ngw.nl) by Ralf Hartemink with nearly 60,000 contemporary civic coats of arms to date (June 2010) is however extremely useful as a starting point for further research.
Both the eagle and the lion rampant are very popular heraldic figures in the Low Countries. We also know that both heraldic symbols were used by towns that didn’t bear them in their coat of arms. This makes the identification of seals with an eagle and/or a lion but without a legend, very hazardous. The eagle is monocephalic which means that there is no link with the Holy Roman Empire. That excludes towns such as Aalst (French Alost, prov. Oost-Vlaanderen), Geraardsbergen (French Grammont, prov. Oost-Vlaanderen), Ninove (prov. Oost-Vlaanderen) and others which bear the bicephalic imperial eagle in their coat of arms. Since the eagle/lion seals found at Saray display high artistic qualities it seems justified to look first at important towns such as Ghent (prov. Oost-Vlaanderen) rather than to small towns. The coat of arms of Ghent shows a lion rampant and at the end of the 14th century the shield of Ghent is held i.a. by an eagle. However the lion of Ghent is crowned and it is hard to imagine that the proud city of Ghent would leave this detail out. However two small towns: Aire (Dutch Arien) now in France and Lo now part of Lo-Renninge in the Belgian province West-Vlaanderen offer a much better perspective.

Aire, situated on the river Lys, a tributary of the Scheldt, seems to have been founded in 641. Later it was fortified by the counts of Flanders in their battle against the Vikings. Finally Philip of Alsace, count of Flanders (1168-1191), simply confirmed the city rights in 1188. A few years later, in 1196 Aire was detached from Flanders to be added to the county of Artois. In 1199 the seal of Aire shows a lion rampant while a monocephalic eagle appears on the counterseign.

The small town of Lo, now part of Lo-Renninge, offers another possibility. Although the seal of Lo from the 16th century onwards shows a bicephalic eagle we know that in the 14th century the eagle was monocephalic. At that same period a counterseign with a lion rampant was used. In 1168 Lo received privileges from Philip of Alsace, count of...

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14 A. de Gheyllinck Vaernewyck, op. cit [n. 12], p 233-234 and J. GiysSENS, Les petits deniers de Flandre des XIe et XIIe siècles (Cercle d’études numismatiques.
Flanders (1168-1191). In spite of the existence of an annual market the town never really flourished. However cloth industry is well attested until the 14th century. In later times cheese production became the most important economic activity.15

Sigillographic traditions of several towns place the most important heraldic element on the “technical” obverse of the seal. For Aire this would mean the lion, for Lo the eagle. Looking at the seals found in Saray one is tempted to identify them with cloth seals of Lo but in the 19th century similar seals were without much arguments attributed to Aire where the tradition of cloth manufacturing was older and more persistent.16 The lack of well documented finds of this type of seal makes any identification uncertain.

Damme (prov. West-Vlaanderen)

There can be no doubt about the identification of the seal of Damme. In 1180 the city of Damme was granted privileges by Philip of Alsace, count of Flanders (1168-1191). Originally the city was called Hondsdamme. The coat of arms of the city is speaking since it show a dog – hond in Dutch – running to the – heraldic – right on the central bar of three red / white / red. These arms appear partially on a city seal of 1237. On that seal however there is no trace of the star under the dog as shown on the seals found at Saray. Very few details are known on the textile industry of Damme. The town was especially renowned for its sed harbor which served as an out port of Bruges. Damme had staple rights for herring and wine. About 1240 Hanseatic merchants established themselves at Damme. Lombards followed a few years later. Damme flourished between the second half of the 12th century and the 15th century when the Zwin that linked the harbor to the North Sea silted up.17

Travaux, 5), Bruxelles, 1971, p. 176 no 512 for numismatic evidence pointing in the same direction.


16 L. Deschamps de Pas, op. cit. [n. 5], p. 130, pl. III, fig. 17. A. Sabatier, op. cit. [n. 5] doesn’t mention seals of Aire-sur-la-Lys.

**Ieper (French Ypres, prov. West-Vlaanderen)**

Although a cross patriarchal appears on the coat of arms of two Flemish towns – Roeselare (French Roulers) and Ypres – there can hardly be any doubt that the lead seals discussed here are from Ieper. The oldest town seal extant, dating from 1199, already shows the cross patriarchal. The cloth industry from Ypres fully developed during the 12th century. Internal political strife led in 1280 to the Cockerulle revolt which reflected the growing economic and political tensions when the cloth industry became under pressure. During the 14th century the economic situation deteriorated as a result of the restrictions on the export of English wool. The suburbs destroyed in 1383 during a military campaign of an English army were not rebuilt for tactical and demographic reasons. John the Fearless, duke of Burgundy (1404-1419) revoked the privileges of Ypres and the town rapidly lost its importance due to the competition of cheap cloth produced in rural Flemish communities.¹⁸ In spite of the large quantities of cloth produced at and exported from Ieper during the Middle Ages, lead seals from Ypres are reputed to be rare¹⁹ but during archaeological excavations in the Verdrongen Weide at Ypres at the end of the 20th century over 500 lead seals of Ieper were discovered that show an extreme richness of reverse designs.²⁰ Since several seals of Ypres published here have a reverse similar to seals found at de Verdrongen Weide they have to date from before 1383. These seals provide a chronological framework for the other seals found in the Golden Horde area.

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¹⁹ e.g. L. Clemens, op. cit. [n. 4], p. 170.

²⁰ M. Dewilde & S. Van Bellinghen, Excavating a Suburb of Medieval Ypres (Belgium). Evidence for the Cloth Industry, in M. Dewilde, A. Ervynck & A. Wielemans, op. cit. [n. 18], p. 57-76. A detailed publication of all the cloth seals found during this excavation is planned.
Mechelen (French Malines, prov. Antwerpen)

At first sight the identification of the seal of Mechelen is not obvious since it doesn’t resemble the coat of arms that was used from the Late Middle Ages onwards. The lead seals of Mechelen show a crosier to the – heraldic – right. The identification is confirmed by a seal from the collections of the British Museum. The coat of arms on the seals of Mechelen from 1268 and 1302 show a shield with three pales – the arms of the Berthout family – behind a crosier. These arms were in use at least until the middle of the 15th century. The medieval history of Mechelen is rather complex. At first the seigniory of Mechelen belonged to the prince-bishop of Liège. But a local aristocratic family, called Berthout, tried to emancipate Mechelen with the alternate support of the counts of Flanders and the dukes of Brabant. From the 12th century onwards wool industry became the dominating economic activity. Ships from Mechelen that fetched wool from England exported finished cloth that was much in demand because of its high quality. In the years following 1301 the town received several privileges e.g. the staple rights of salt, fish and oats. In 1357 Louis of Male, count of Flanders (1346-1384), was finally able to eliminate the overlordship of the prince-bishop of Liège. After his death Mechelen was integrated in the Burgundian Low Countries as an independent seigniory.

Poperinge (prov. West-Vlaanderen)

The coat of arms of Poperinge shows a gloved right hand to the – heraldic – right, holding a crosier to the – heraldic – right. These arms refer to the abbots of Saint Bertin’s in the French city Saint-Omer who were the feudal lords of Poperinge till the French Revolution. The town, that was never enclosed by a wall, received its first privileges in 1147 from Thierry of Alsace, count of Flanders (1128-1168). Since no early seals of the city are known the lead seals published here can be considered to be the oldest more or less datable seals of the town. During the 13th century

21 G. Egan, op. cit. [n. 6], p. 112, n° 325 and 326. The reverse however doesn’t seem to correspond with the reverse of the seals found in Gulestan and Saray.
cloth industry became increasingly important in Poperinge and several different qualities were produced and exported. Poperinge participated in the Flemish hanseatic corporation at London. A fierce competition existed with Ypres, which obtained from Louis of Nevers, count of Flanders (1322-1346) in 1322 a monopoly for cloth production for the western part of Flanders. From the 14th to the 16th century most cloth from Poperinge was exported to Germany. Later Poperinge became famous for its linen industry and as an export centre for hops.

_Tournai (Dutch Doornik, prov. Hainaut)_

Several towns in the southern Low Countries and northern France share a tower in their coat of arms but the seal found in the Crimea is clearly from Tournai. Tournai is one of the few Belgian towns that can boast of its Roman origin. During the Middle Ages it distributed its allegiances between the king of France and the count of Flanders. The changes of camp were reflected in its coat of arms. Lilies appeared when the king of France was favored but when he fell out of grace they disappeared. Since lilies are present here, the seal has to date from a period of French dominance. During a turbulent 14th century Tournai lost and regained its privileges several times which makes it very difficult to date this lead seal with certainty. Stylistic elements and the presence of a legend – _SEEL_ which means seal in the local parlance – seem to suggest a date late in the 14th or early in the 15th century although an earlier date cannot be excluded totally. If this hypothesis is correct the seal probably dates from between 1370 and 1423.24

There are some indications that during the Late Roman period military clothing was produced in Tournai. Although stone quarries seem to be the most important economic element during the Middle Ages, the wool trade is well attested from the 11th century onwards. The next century merchant of Tournai participated in the hanseatic trade on London. We know that by that time cloth of Tournai was widely exported e.g. to Novgorod.25 At the end of the 14th and the beginning of the 15th century a period of decline started. Its position on the frontier between France and the Southern Low Countries made it very vulnerable to military conflicts.26


24 M. MITCHELL, _op. cit._ [n. 6], p. 953 shows a lead seal of Tournai with a tower accosted by lilies. But this seal seems to be clearly later.

25 J. BLANKOFF, _op. cit._ [n. 1].

26 Armories communales en Belgique. Communes wallonnes, bruxelloises et germanophones. II, Bruxelles, 2002, p. 749-753 and M. SEVŞES, _op. cit._ [n. 12], p. 268-
Shield with cross

Although crosses are less popular in the heraldry of the Low Countries than lions and eagles it is hardly possibly to identify such coats of arms without colors or legends. Free standing crosses that don’t touch the border of the shield such as the one on the lead seal found at Saray could not be traced to a specific town. The crescent and the crosslet accosting the shield don’t help much either. If one concentrates on the western part of Flanders there is only one medieval town, known for textile industry which bears a cross in its coat of arms: Izegem (French Iseghem). But the cross is plain and blazoned twelve martlets in orle. These arms were used by the local lords of Izegem at least from 1238 onwards. The crescent and the crosslet accosting the shield don’t help much either. If one concentrates on the western part of Flanders there is only one medieval town, known for textile industry which bears a cross in its coat of arms: Izegem (French Iseghem). But the cross is plain and blazoned twelve martlets in orle. These arms were used by the local lords of Izegem at least from 1238 onwards. It is not impossible that the city of Izegem used a simplified version of these arms on its lead seals. Izegem is an old seigniory that was promoted to a county in 1688. During the Late Middle Ages it became an important centre for linen industry. Linen cloth from Izegem was exported worldwide in spite of the obstruction of towns as Kortrijk (French Courtrai) and Roeselare but possibly the linen industry was preceded by wool industry.27

Golden Horde – Jochids

On the only tubular seal figures the lamgha or badge of the descendants of Jochi (ca. 580 / 1184 – 624 / 1227), the eldest son of Chingis Khan and ancestor of the Khans of the Golden Horde. Jochi was born approximately nine months after his mother, Chingis Khan’s wife Börte, was abducted by the Merkid tribe. At the end of his life he seems to have been on bad terms with his father who died several months after his eldest son. Paternity doubts were amongst the reasons why the descendants of Jochi were excluded from succeeding Chingis Khan. After the death of Jochi, his eldest son Orda and his second son Batu inherited his realm and founded respectively the White Horde and the Golden Horde.28 This badge appears for the first time in 671 / 1272/3 on coins of Mangu Timur (665 / 1267 – 675 / 1280), the great-grandson of Jochi and one of


the most prominent khans of the Golden Horde.\textsuperscript{29} The badge was used up to the middle of the 15\textsuperscript{th} century. No similar seal has been published before and its use is unclear.

The seals

All lead seals discussed here were found on the territory of the Golden Horde. Unfortunately the seals were found without much archaeological context or they were surface finds. The absence of a well documented context makes it impossible to know whether the seals were part of coherent archaeological complexes indicating the existence of a shop of a cloth trader or a tailor or if they were part of a lot of scrap. In 2002 drawings of the Flemish seals were published without much comment by Lebedev and Klokov.\textsuperscript{30}

\textbf{Tzarevskoe – Gulistan}

The Tzarevskoe archeological site, close to the small modern town Tzarev, is situated on the left bank of the Akhtub river, a left tributary of the Volga at approximately 100 km from the large city Volgograd. For a long time it was identified with the Golden Horde capital Saray al-Djadid but this identification is no longer accepted. The Tzarevskoe settlement is now considered to be the site of Gulistan (Persian for Rose Garden), the main city of the ulus or Mongolian district of the same name. Between 752 / 1351 – 768 / 1366 it equaled Saray al-Djadid in importance. During the period of internal struggle (758 / 1357 – 782 / 1380) that followed the death of Djanibek Khan, this region of high economic and strategic importance suffered heavily. The city of Gulistan was abandoned in 767 / 1366 or 768 / 1367 and never reoccupied again.\textsuperscript{31}

Although all seals from Tzarevskoe were collected without archaeological context the short lifespan of Gulistan makes it possible to date them roughly in the middle of the 14\textsuperscript{th} century. This fits perfectly with information available on the cloth production and trade of Mechelen.


\textsuperscript{30} V.P. Lebedev \& V.N. Klokov, \textit{The West-European Lead Trade Seals form the Golden Horde Fortified Settlements}, in Rossiyskaya Arkheologiya, 2002, 1, p. 92-100. (= V.P. Lebedev \& V.N. Klokov)

\textsuperscript{31} E.Y. Goncharov, \textit{Old And New Saray - Capital of The Golden Horde (a new look at sources)} to be consulted at http://216.15.211.67/byzantinebronzes.ancients.info/page33.html or http://www.islamiccoinsgroup.50g.com/assikka/old%20and%20new%20saray%20%20capital%20of%20the%20golden%20horde.htm.
Aire or Lo

Gu 1 quarter. Hinged seal; diam. ca. 1.5 cm; position ?; apparently unopened; not accessible, only a drawing available
Obv.: an eagle within a border of dots
Rv.: a lion within a border of dots
Ref.: V.P. Lebedev & V.N. Klokov, drawing 1

Mechelen

Gu 1. Hinged seal; diam. ca. 2 cm; position 5 o'clock; obverse fragment with remainder of the connecting strip
Obv.: a crosier cutting a border of dots
Legend: illegible traces of a legend
Rv.: traces of an unidentified design

Gu 1 bis. Hinged seal; diam. ca. 2 cm; position ?; apparently unopened; not accessible, only a drawing and an older picture available
Obv.: a crosier
Legend: illegible traces, maybe |N|
Rv.: traces of an unidentified design, possible a quartered cross

S elitrennoe – Saray al-Djadid  32

The hill of Kuchugus, near the village of Selitrennoe, is located approximately 120 km to the northwest of the city of Astrakhan. The site is now generally accepted to be Saray al-Djadid. Saray al-Djadid or New Saray was probably founded around 730 / 1329 and replaced Old Saray as the capital of the Golden Horde at the beginning of the reign of Djanibek Khan who reigned from 742 / 1342 to 758 / 1357. Very little is known of

32 Different spellings are used e.g. Sarai al-Djadida but for the Arab placenames we prefer to follow The Encyclopaedia of Islam, New Edition, Leiden, 1979.
its subsequent history but one can assume that it took a key position in the trade route to Asia. Saray al-Djadid was ruined by Timur Lang (771 / 1370 – 807 / 1405) during the winter of 797 / 1395. The city was however partially rebuild. From 1502 onwards Saray was several times raided by Russian troops and before the end of the century it disappeared from the historical stage. From *Pratica della mercatura* compiled by Francesco Balducci Pegolotti between 1335 and 1343 it is clear that the importance of Saray as a trade center was well known in Western Europe.33

Over the years 42 lead seals were found close to the south of the salt lake at the site of ancient Saray al-Djadid. Unfortunately they do not come from the regular excavations that have been going on since the early 1970’s.34

If we accept that the attack on Saray by Timur Lang severely reduced its role as a trade center we are probably right in dating all the seals found at Saray between 730 / 1329 and 797 / 1395. This fits with the known dates for the seals of Ypres i.e. the last quarter of the 14th century. However Saray retained its status as a capital during the first third of the 15th century and we have some information on its cloth trade in 1438.35 Whatever the archaeological context of the seals may have been, one can safely assume that the seals of Aire or Lo, Damme, Mechelen and Poperinge all roughly date from the second half of the 14th century.

*Aire / Lo*

Sa 37. Hinged seal; diam. ca. 2 cm; position 12 o’clock; weight 16,65 g; unopened, obverse corroded, reverse unclear
Obv.: an eagle within a border of dots
Rv.: a lion within a border of dots

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34 See E.Y. Goncharov, *op. cit.* [n. 31].

Sa 38. Hinged seal; diam. ca. 2 cm; position 9 o'clock; weight 16,50 g; unopened
Obv.: an eagle within a border of dots
Rv.: a lion within a border of dots

Sa 39. Hinged seal; diam. ca. 2 cm; position 11 o'clock; weight 17,33 g; unopened
Obv.: an eagle within a border of dots
Rv.: a lion within a border of dots

Sa 40. Hinged seal; diam. ca. 2 cm; position 12 o'clock; weight 16,48 g; unopened
Obv.: an eagle within a border of dots
Rv.: a lion within a border of dots
Ref.: V.P. LEBEDEV & V.N. KLOKOV, drawing 1

Sa 41. Hinged seal; diam. ca. 2 cm; position 12 o'clock; weight 15,95 g; unopened
Obv.: an eagle within a border of dots
Rv.: a lion within a – double (?) – border of dots
Sa 42. Hinged seal; diam. ca. 2 cm; position 8 o' clock; weight 16.64 g; unopened
Obv.: an eagle within a border of dots
Rv.: a lion within a border of dots

Sa 43. Hinged seal; diam. ca. 2 cm; position 6 o'clock; weight 17.40 g; unopened, secondary piercing of the obverse part of connecting strip
Obv.: an eagle
Rv.: a lion

Sa 44. Hinged seal; diam. ca. 2 cm; position 12 o'clock; connecting strip ca. 1 cm
Obv.: an eagle within a border of dots
Rv.: a lion
Ref.: V.P. Lebedev & V.N. Klokov, drawing 2

Damme

Sa 19. Hinged seal; diam. ca. 1.5 cm; position 12 o'clock
Obv.: traces of an unidentified design, probably two or more letters
Rv.: a running dog, below six pointed star
Sa 20. Hinged seal; diam. ca. 1.5 cm; position -
Obv.: traces of an unidentified design, probably two or more letters
Rv.: a running dog, below dog a six pointed star

Sa 21. Hinged seal; diam. ca. 1.5 cm; position 12 o’clock
Obv.: traces of an unidentified design, probably two or more letters
Rv.: a running dog, below a six pointed star

Sa 22. Hinged seal; diam. ca. 1.5 cm; position 6 o’clock
Obv.: traces of an unidentified design, probably two or more letters
Rv.: a running dog, below a six pointed star

Sa 23. Hinged seal; diam. ca. 1.5 cm; position 6 o’clock; heavily corroded
Obv.: traces of an unidentified design, possibly one or more letters
Rv.: a running dog, below a six pointed star

Sa 24. Hinged seal; diam. ca. 1.5 cm; position -; heavily corroded
Obv.: traces of an unidentified design, possibly two or more letters
Rv.: a running dog, below a six pointed star

Sa 25. Hinged seal; diam. ca. 1.5 cm; position 12 o’clock
Obv.: a running dog, below a six pointed star
Rv.: traces of an unidentified design, possibly two or three letters or CII
Sa 26. Hinged seal; diam. ca. 1.5 cm; position 12 o’clock; small remainder of the connecting strip, corroded
Obv.: a running dog, below a six pointed star
Rv.: traces of an unidentified design, possibly two or three letters or CII

Sa 27. Hinged seal; diam. ca. 1.5 cm; position -; corroded
Obv.: a running dog, below a six pointed star
Rv.: traces of an unidentified design

Sa 28. Hinged seal; diam. ca. 1.5 cm; position 5 o’clock; unopened but connecting strip missing
Obv.: a running dog, below a six pointed star
Rv.: traces of an unidentified design, possibly two or three letters or CII

Sa 29. Hinged seal; diam. ca. 1.5 cm; position 9 o’clock; unopened but connecting strip missing
Obv.: a running dog, below a six pointed star
Rv.: traces of an unidentified design, possibly two or three letters or CII

Sa 30. Hinged seal; diam. ca. 1.5 cm; position 12 o’clock; unopened but connecting strip missing
Obv.: a running dog, below a six pointed star
Rv.: traces of an unidentified design, possibly two or three letters or CII

Sa 30bis. Hinged seal; diam. ca. 1.5 cm; position ?; not accessible, only a drawing available
Obv.: a running dog, below a six pointed star
Rv.: traces of an unidentified design, possibly two or three letters or CII
Mechelen

Sa 11. Hinged seal; diam. ca. 1 cm, total length of the connecting strip ca. 1 cm; position ?, unopened
Obv.: traces of an unidentified design
Rv.: the top of a crosier
Ref.: V.P. LEBEDEV & V.N. KLOKOV, drawing VIII

Sa 47. Hinged seal; diam. max. 2 cm; position ?; remainder of the connecting strip, reverse severely damaged
Obv.: a crosier, below a dot
Rv.: traces of an unidentified design

Sa 9. Hinged seal with double security pin, diam. ca. 1 cm, total length of the connecting strip ca. 1 cm; position ?, unopened
Obv.: traces of an unidentified design, possible a crosier with a lily at the bottom right
Rv.: traces of an unidentified design
Ref.: V.P. LEBEDEV & V.N. KLOKOV, drawing X

Poperinge

Sa 3. Hinged seal; diam. ca. 1 cm; position ?; obverse fragment with remainder of the connecting strip
Obv.: blank
Rv.: a hand with the thumb inwards
Sa 31. Hinged seal; diam. ca. 2 cm; position 9 o'clock; weight 7.48 g; unopened
Obv.: a hand holding a crosier, within a border of dots
Legend: [LVM (P or D)]
Rv.: a hand holding a crosier, within a border of dots
Legend: indecipherable traces
Ref.: V.P. LEBEDEV & V.N. KLOKOV, drawing 10

Sa 32. Hinged seal; diam. ca. 2 cm; position –; obverse fragment with the remainder of the connecting strip
Obv.: traces of an unidentified design, probably a hand to the left holding a crosier
Rv.: traces of an unidentified design
Legend: [ILL]
Ref.: V.P. LEBEDEV & V.N. KLOKOV, drawing 12

Sa 33. Hinged seal; diam. ca. 2 cm; position –; obverse fragment with the remainder of the connecting strip
Obv.: a hand holding a crosier, within a border of dots
Legend: [IGILL]
Rv.: traces of an unidentified design, possibly a crosier
Ref.: V.P. LEBEDEV & V.N. KLOKOV, drawing 11

Sa 34. Hinged seal; diam. ca. 2 cm; position –; opened and closed again with the outside of the reverse at the inside, showing a double security pin; connecting strip preserved
Obv.: a hand holding a crosier
Rv.: –
Ref.: V.P. LEBEDEV & V.N. KLOKOV, drawing 13
Sa 35. Hinged seal; diam. ca. 2 cm; position -; reverse fragment with remainder of connecting strip

Obv.: -
Rv.: a hand with the thumb inwards, possibly holding an object, within a border of dots
Ref.: V.P. LEBEDEV & V.N. KLOKOV, drawing 14

Sa 36. Hinged seal; diam. ca. 2 cm; position -; reverse fragment with remainder of connecting strip

Obv.: -
Rv.: traces of a border of dots
Ref.: V.P. LEBEDEV & V.N. KLOKOV, drawing 18

Ieper

Sa 5. Hinged seal; diam. ca. 1.5 cm, total length of the connecting strip ca. 2 cm; position 6 or 12 o'clock; weight 8.76 g, opened and closed again

Obv.: a lion within a border of dots
Rv.: a cross patriarchal
Ref.: V.P. LEBEDEV & V.N. KLOKOV, drawing XI

Sa 16. Hinged seal; diam. ca. 1.5 cm, total length of the connecting strip ca. 2 cm; position ca. 12 o'clock; opened and closed again

Obv.: a cross patriarchal, the top flanked by two small x's
Rv.: probably a lidded pitcher
Ref.: V.P. LEBEDEV & V.N. KLOKOV, drawing 29
Sa 17. Hinged seal; diam. ca. 1.5 cm, total length of connecting strip ca. 2 cm; position ca. 6 o'clock; opened and closed again
Obv.: probably a lidded pitcher
Rv.: a cross patriarchal within a border of dots
Ref.: V.P. Lebedev & V.N. Klokov, drawing 30

Sa 18. Hinged seal; diam. ca. 1.5 cm, total length of connecting strip ca. 2 cm; position ?; unopened, largely of flan
Obv.: a cross patriarchal within a border of dots
Rv.: traces of unidentified design
Ref.: V.P. Lebedev & V.N. Klokov, drawing 31

SaN 6. Hinged seal; diam. ca. 1.5 cm; position 1 o'clock; obverse fragment
Obv.: a lion
Rv.: a cross patriarchal

SaN 2. Hinged seal; diam. ca. 1 cm; position -; obverse fragment
Obv.: shears or spring scissors
Rv.: traces of an unidentified design, possibly a cross patriarchal
Sa N 2 bis. Hinged seal diam. ca. 1,5 cm; position ?; not accessible, only a drawing available
Obv.: a cross patriarchal, below two x’s; within a border of dots
Rv.: probably a lidded pitcher
Ref.: V.P. Lebedev & V.N. Klokov, drawing Va

**SHIELD WITH A CROSS**

Sa 15. Hinged seal; diam. ca. 1,5 cm; position ; obverse fragment with remainder of the connecting strip
Obv.: shield with cross, the shield is flanked by a crescent (left, heraldic right) and a star (right, heraldic left); the total design within a border of dots
Rv.: traces of an unidentified design
Ref.: V.P. Lebedev & V.N. Klokov, drawing IV

**UNIDENTIFIED DESIGN**

Sa 7. Hinged seal; diam. ca. 1 cm; position ; obverse fragment with remainder of the connecting strip and of the runner
Obv.: traces of an unidentified design, possibly a part of a lion, within a border of dots
Rv.: traces of an unidentified design
Ref.: V.P. Lebedev & V.N. Klokov, drawing 39

Sa 8. Hinged seal; diam. ca. 1 cm; position ; obverse fragment
Obv.: traces of an unidentified design within a border of dots
Rv.: –
Ref.: V.P. Lebedev & V.N. Klokov, drawing 40
Sa 10. Hinged seal; diam. ca. 1 cm; total length of the connecting strip ca. 1 cm; position ?; unopened.
Obv.: traces of an unidentified design, possible a letter N, within a border of dots
Rv.: traces of an unidentified design
Ref.: V.P. LEBEDEV & V.N. KLOKOV, drawing IX

Sa 12. Hinged seal; diam. ca. 1 cm; total length of the connecting strip ca. 1 cm; position 1 o’clock; unopened
Obv.: traces of an unidentified design, possibly a bird
Rv.: traces of two letters: C and ?
Ref.: V.P. LEBEDEV & V.N. KLOKOV, drawing VII

Sa 13. Hinged seal; diam. ca. 1,5 cm; total length of the connecting strip ca. 1 cm; position –; unopened, remainder of the runner at the obverse
Obv.: a letter P probably within a double dotted border
Rv.: traces of an unidentified design
Ref.: V.P. LEBEDEV & V.N. KLOKOV, drawing VI

Sa 45. Hinged seal; diam. max. 2 cm; position ?; opened, connecting strip incomplete, both sides heavily corroded
Obv.: traces of an unidentified design
Rv.: traces of an unidentified design

SaN 4. Hinged seal; diam. ca. 2 cm; position `-; obverse fragment
Obv.: traces of an unidentified design
Rv.: traces of an unidentified design

SaN 4 bis. Hinged seal; diam. ca. 1 cm; position ?; not accessible, only a drawing available
Obv.: traces of an unidentified design possible a Xristogram, within a circle
Rv.: -
Ref.: V.P. LEBEDEV & V.N. KLOKOV, drawing XIII

Golden Horde – Jochi

Sa 46. Tubular seal; rectangular, ca. 1 cm x 2 cm; position -; weight 5.46 g.
Obv.: badge of Jochi’s family
Rv.: blank

Staryi Krym – Solkhat

This seal was seen in an private collection. It was found at Staryi Krym or Old Crimea, formerly the town of Solkhat, the capital of the Crimean ulus under the Golden Horde. The original Tatar name qirim which means “my hill” was later extended to the whole of the peninsula. Others derive the expression from the Turkish girim which means “ditch”. The city played an important role in the trade of the Italian merchants. Some suggest that the parallel name of the city Solkhat is in fact derived from the turkified Italian word solcata which means “furrowed”.

Tournai (Dutch: Doornik)

Hinged seal with double security pin; diam. ca. position -; obverse fragment
Obv.: crenellated tower or portal topped with three lilies
Legend: * SE * / * EL *
Rv.: traces of an unidentified design
Legend: [DE]

**Dubovka – Beljamen (Arab bldjmnn)**

The seals come as stray finds from an archaeological site situated from 40 km to north of Volgograd, near the small town of Dubovka, that can probably be identified with the town of Beljamen mentioned by the Arab geographers Abu al-Fida (672 / 1273 – 732 / 1331) and Ibn Arabshah (791 / 1392 – 854 / 1450). The town had close relations with Gulistan which was situated about 55 km to the south-east. Coins found at the same site indicate contacts with the region of the Dnieper including Kiev and with Russian principalities such as Ryazan, about 200 km to the south-east of Moscow.\(^5\)

**Poperinge**

Be 1. Hinged seal; diam. ca. 2 cm; position ?; not accessible, only a drawing available  
Obv.: a hand holding a crosier, within a border of dots  
Legend: SIGILUM. D[  
Rv.: a hand holding a crosier, within a border of dots  
Legend: indecipherable traces  
Ref.: V.P. Lebedev & V.N. Klokov, drawing II

**Unidentified**

Be2. Hinged seal (?); diam. ca. 1,5 cm; position ?; not accessible, only a drawing available  
Obv.: a lion  
Rv.: traces of an unidentified design  
Ref.: V.P. Lebedev & V.N. Klokov, drawing XIV

Be3. Hinged seal; diam. ca. 1,5 cm; position ?; apparently unopened; not accessible, only drawing available  
Obv.: traces of an unidentified design, within a border of dots  
Rv.: -  
Ref.: V.P. Lebedev & V.N. Klokov, drawing XV