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THE ACCOUNTS OF THE BAILIFFS IN THE COUNTY OF FLANDERS: AN ALTERNATIVE SOURCE FOR THE STUDY OF COIN USE IN THE LATE MIDDLE AGES (14th-15th CENTURY)

Research on coin use is mainly based on archaeological coin finds. Often, coins were purposely concealed to preserve or protect them from danger, but usually with the intention of a later recovery by the hoarder. Forgetfulness or even death of the hoarder can be the cause of failing to retrieve them. In 2000, van Vilsteren argued that the burying of some of these hoards had a more religious connotation; he stated that the coins were put in the ground as some kind of offering to the Gods, and were not at all meant to be found or recovered. He came to this conclusion after relating coin hoards with other finds and offerings in their proximity.

The composition of hoards and the number and variety of coins were undoubtedly determined by the motive of the burying (preservation – security – religious motives). In other words, archaeological discoveries can clarify the number and the kind of coins that were meant to be buried. But these hoards are often composed of a selection of better coins and are to a lesser extent useful to find out the variety of coins that were used on a daily basis and the content of the money purses that medieval people would be carrying. This kind of information can be useful to investigate the role of hard cash in everyday life in the Middle Ages. To reveal it, we need another kind of source. That is why in this article, I want to draw attention to an important written source, namely the accounts of the bailiffs. As these archival documents also allow us to identify the owners of the coins, they offer us the opportunity of a sociological approach, something that would hardly be possible using the archaeological finds on their own. This is not a full presentation of the data, but a mere introduction to the usefulness of these documents.

In the late-medieval county of Flanders, a bailiff was an official responsible for criminal indictments and the punishment of crimes. His job was to apply the local customary law and the legislation of the counts of Flanders. He had to impose the law and punish all those acting against it. He could

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impose fines, administer justice, or settle a case out of court. In middle Dutch, these amicable arrangements were called 'compositions' \[3\]. The bailiff had to submit his account every trimester to the Court of Audit (French: Chambre des Comptes; middle Dutch: Camer van der Rekeninghe). This was a central institution set up in 1386 by Philip the Bold, duke of Burgundy and count of Flanders. On the death of count Louis of Male in 1384, the county had passed into the hands of this duke of Burgundy who in 1369 had married Margaret of Male, Louis’ only daughter \[4\]. Philip the Bold established the Court of Audit in Lille in order to centralize the finances of his possessions in the Netherlands (pays de par-deça) \[5\], which, as a result of the successive territorial extensions by the house of Burgundy, eventually included the county of Namur, the county of Hainaut and the region of Tournai. As such, the Court of Audit was entrusted with the monitoring and the closing of the accounts of all paymasters in the duke’s territories. In practice, in his three-monthly reports, a bailiff had to account for his fines and confiscations (who? why? how much?) and for his expenses (e.g. the costs for the erection of the gallows). He could for instance forfeit goods from bastards who died without an heir \[6\], from convicts or from suicides, because suicide was also seen as a criminal act, and the lawbreaker had to be hanged \[7\]. Confiscation lists could also be made after a public rebellion whereby the goods of the rebels were forfeited. For the county of Flanders, several such lists were kept, e.g. after the revolt of Ghent and Bruges in 1385, the revolt of Bruges in 1436-38, or the revolt of Ghent in 1449-53 \[8\]. When the goods were confiscated, generally detailed lists were noted down in the accounts of the bailiff. These lists could also describe the contents of purses together with the value of the coins. Hence, an analysis of these lists can give us information on the coin circulation in the late Middle Ages. These ‘archival hoards’ have a major advantage, viz. the fact that the coins can immediately be related to their owners and their social-economic backgrounds, professions, origins, family ties, and so on. These inventories are therefore far less anonymous and can imbed belongings in the form of cash in a wider social, economic and political context.

It should be clear from this that bailiff accounts can be a valuable source for numismatic research, and I want to demonstrate their importance by

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\[3\] Van Rompaey 1961.

\[4\] See Blockmans & Prevenier 1999.

\[5\] Santamaria 2012; Mireille 1992; Dumolyn 2002. The Court of Audit in Dijon was responsible for the organization of the finances of the duchy of Burgundy (pays de par-delà).

\[6\] Carlier 2001.

\[7\] Lowagie 2008.

\[8\] Brussels, State Archives of Belgium, Court of Audit (＝ SAB, CA), nos 18224, 18250, 18252, 18253, 48986-48989.
showing some examples and by discussing the information they contain in regard to coin use and coin circulation.

This article is based on archival research of the accounts of the bailiff of Bruges and the Franc of Bruges for the rather short period 1395-1410, but that random check covering 15 years only already yielded enough examples to prove the richness of this source. I shall therefore not present a detailed study, hoping that this article can be a stimulus for others to explore this kind of written sources in the study of coin use and coin circulation.

The information the accounts contain can be divided into three groups: the first group deals with cases where the bailiff protects or imposes a ducal monetary ordinance and punishes everyone acting against its provisions — the second group concerns stolen or found coin purses — the third group considers the aforementioned confiscation lists made after the death of a bastard or a convict such as a suicide.

1. Enforcement of monetary ordinances

The first group of items in the accounts of a bailiff concerning monetary issues are those dealing with the enforcement of monetary ordinances. The bailiff had to publish these and make them known to the duke’s subjects. He also had to impose the instructions and punish everyone acting against them. In most cases this meant a punishment for people paying with prohibited currency.

An in-depth investigation of one particular example can make clear how this control of the coin circulation worked. On August 8th 1392, duke Philip the Bold forbade once more the circulation of some foreign coins in his county of Flanders and had instructions to this end sent to the bailiffs, ordering that his ordinance had to be published and that illegal money had to be tracked down. He noted that despite the ordinance, several merchants and inhabitants were still receiving banned money. What’s more, some money changers and traders were putting large amounts of the prohibited currency of Holland back into circulation. These coins resembled the ducal coins, but had a lower fineness and their value was only one third or one fourth of that of the ducal coins:

‘Ce nonobstant il est venu a nostre congoonisance que plusieurs marchans et gens d’autre estat, tant noz subgez comme autres, alloent, mettent et recoivent les estranges monnoyes d’or et d’argent par nous defendues et par especial aucuns changeurs et marchans de monnoye ou autres genz ont apporté de nouvel en nostre dit pais grant quantité de monnoye d’or et d’argent forgees ou pais de Holland ce qui sont contrefaites assez prés au semblant des nostre et qui sont fraudees en alloy et en valeur et ne valent pas au tiers ou au quart prés autant que les nostre’[9]

By putting the debased coins back into circulation, the population, and in particular the common people who did not know the difference between the accepted and the prohibited currency, suffered a loss. This caused damage to the economy:

‘par quoy le peuple commun, mesmement les simples genz qui n’ont pas congnaisance des differances qui sont entre les monnoies que faisons forger et les dictes monnoies qui sont forgees en Hollande, est grandement deceu en grant dommage et prejudice de nous, de noz subgez et de la marchandise’

That is why the duke ordered that the ordinance had to be proclaimed at the usual places (‘lieux accoustumés’), particularly markets and town halls. The bailiff had to explain which coins were banned and how to recognize them:

‘que es lieux acoustumez vous faites crier et publier de nouvel les monnoies estranges, en signifiant a noz subgez et tous autres les differences par les- quelles les dictes monnoies de Hollande pourront estre congeues’

As a consequence of this ordinance, the bailiffs punished everyone paying with banned coins. The fine was 6 or sometimes 3 lb. parisis. The coins used were also confiscated. The accounts of the bailiff of Bruges contained a specific section called De la recepce des monnoyes (‘All receipts from monetary matters’), which implies that this category of revenue made up a considerable part of the total revenue of the bailiff.

In January 1395, the bailiff of Bruges confiscated a florin of Holland and imposed the man who wanted to pay with it a fine of 6 lb. parisis. After the confiscation, the bailiff sold the florin for 24 s. parisis[10].

It is no coincidence that most people paying with such florins were foreigners. By trading in a merchant city like Bruges, they imported the foreign coins into the city and put them into circulation. By way of example: in 1399, the bailiff, or schout as he was called in Bruges, confiscated two forbidden florins from the Scottish merchant Guillaume Taillefer, who was sentenced with a fine of 3 lb. parisis. But since the Scot said that he was unaware of the ordinance, so he did not know that it was forbidden to pay with the florin, and also because he was poor and had no other money in his pockets, the bailiff dropped the fine, only confiscating the two florins. Each piece was sold for 16 s. parisis, so the bailiff earned in total 32 s.[11].

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A second example: Lambert Lamsin was called a *homme forain* (*a foreign man*) and was also punished because he paid with a forbidden florin. A third example picked among the numerous ones: the case of Pierre, son of Christian, who was called *estrangne homme*, and of Matthijs, son of Gerrard, also a *homme forain* who paid with forbidden money from England and Holland. The price at which confiscated florins were sold varied from 16 to 24 s. parisis, and was undoubtedly determined by the different condition and weight of each piece.

When someone intended to pay with a forbidden florin, the receiver (who was going to be harmed) could report him to the bailiff. That was one way how the bailiff could have known about the offense and punish the payer. But the bailiff could also take proactive steps and systematically track down the banned coins. That is why he sometimes organized raids in taverns, inns and public houses and checked the currency used for the payments. Especially during the annual fairs, when foreign merchants (and thus foreign coins) came to Bruges, the bailiff was very observant.

For example, in 1401, during the annual fair in Bruges, the bailiff and some aldermen held raids in hostels and taverns. In the house of the Lombards, called the *Cauwerzijne*, they discovered four prohibited gold coins. For each of them there was a fine of 6 lb.; normally the gold would also have been forfeited, but because *burghers* of Bruges were exempt from confiscation, the bailiff could only collect the fine of 24 lb., of which he kept one fifth for the overhead expenses, so in total only 19 lb. 4 s. was paid to the duke. The financial experts of the Court of Audit would write down their remarks during the audit of an account in its margins. In this particular case they noted there that the bailiff should be interrogated about the fate

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*qu’il c’estoit un povre estrangne homme et non sachant de l’ordonnance des monnoye et n’avoir plus argent ou monnaye ainsi qu’il disoit, le laissa l’escoutete quite pour les diz ii florins qui furent venduz au cangé xvi s. la piece, monte, 32 s.*

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[12] SAB, CA, no. 13679, 5 May 1399 – 30 June 1399, f° 189v: ‘De la recep...e l’ordonnance de monseigneur dont l’amende est iii lb. et le florin fourfait que fû vendu xvi s., composé parmi le florin, 40 s.’

[13] Ibid.: ‘De Pierre filz Christiaens, calaingie comme estrangne homme de ce qu’il avait offert en paiement un florin de Ghelre contre l’ordonnance de monnoyes de monseigneur dont l’amende est iii lb. et le florin fourfait que fût vendu xviii s. receu de lui par composicion parmi le florin, 48 s.’

[14] Ibid.: ‘De Matthijs, filz Gerrard, homme forain, calaingie par les sergians d’avoir offert en paiement monnoye d’argent defendue d’Engleterre et de Hollande contre l’ordonnance des monnoyes de monseigneur dont l’amende est v s. de la piece et les deniers fourfait montent tout parmi les deniers, 50 s.’

[15] The name *Cauwerzine* traces back to the French town Cahors, where the first money-lenders in Flanders came from. Later, the inhabitants of Cahors were generally associated with people working in the world of finance, so the name *Cahorsijnen* was given to all usurers and bankers in Flanders.
of the four gold coins [16]. Because it was generally known that bailiffs were greedy, he had probably put the proceeds of their sale in his own purse. The focus of the bailiff in this raid was explicitly mentioned, namely the money changers, who were specialists with a thorough knowledge of real coins and money of accounts. By virtue of their office, they had to exchange all the offered coins at their official value. They also had to supervise the coins in circulation, extract all the inferior or counterfeit ones and bring them to the ducal mint [17]. In the accounts of the bailiffs, several items indicate that the money changers were not always clean-fingered. So it is not illogical that the bailiff focused on them in his raids. In 1407, fifteen years after the aforementioned ordinance, a money changer was punished because he brought a large amount of florins of Guelders to Bruges and put them into circulation. The fine was immense: the money changer had to pay 1,000 gold crowns, with a total value of 2,000 lb. parisis [18]. In the year 1400, Bicke Ghelreszone had to travel to Flanders to pay 18 pounds ‘gros of Flanders’ for a commercial transaction performed in Hamburg (‘par change fait en la ville d’Ambourg’). For this payment, he had bought ‘blanche monnaie de Flanders’ from Guillaume Priem, a money trader from Guelders. But after a while Bicke began to get suspicious and he brought a small amount of the coins to the minters in Bruges to have them verified.

[16] SAB, CA, no. 13680, 10 January 1401 – 9 May 1401, f° 62r°: ‘Le joëdï en la sem- païne de la fore de Bruges darrain passé, l’escoutete a la auvecq xi eschevins aux hosteux ou on tenoit hostelerie aux taverne et maisons des canguers, usuertiers et tafelettiers, pour y enquerre se aucuns avoir fait contre les ordonnances des mon dit seigneur. Et par especial aux diz cangeurs taverriers usuertiers et tafelettiers, pour y trouver monnaie defensuez qui ilz pouvoient avoir receu dedens la ditte fore sans estre coppes desquelles l’escoutete trouva iiii pieces d’or a la maison des grand Lombarts appelez Cauwersine, iiii pieces d’or dont l’amende est de chacune piece ii fois lx s. et l’or fourfait. Et par ce que les dis Cauwersins sont affranchi comme bougrois de Bruges par quoy il ne peut fourfaire leurs biens, le dit escoutete ne fait compte des dittes pieces d’or, mais a prins la ditte amende qui monte xxiiii lb. de la quelle il prent le quint denier a cause de son office, demeur la part de monseigneur qui monte, 19 lb. 4 s. In margine: Soit parlé de ceste partie a messiers du conseil afin de parler l’escoutete pour savoir la cause qu’il a tenu lastible les dit court et de dis deniers d’or ou il semble qu’il donnt pour ce estre franchie que bourg.’


[18] SAB, CA, no. 13685, 2 May 1407 – 19 September 1407, f° 15v°: ‘De Henry vanden Eede, changeur et bourgeois de Bruges lequel estoit calangie d’avoir amené dedens la ville de Bruges grande quantité de Florins de Ghebre et les illec distribué et employez et fait avoir cours a xviii et a xix gros la piece lesquelz ne valoient que xiiii gros et demi ou environ lequel estoit contre l’ordonnance de la monnaie de monseigneur et de son commun pays de Flandres et en grant grief prejudice et dommage du commun peuple laquelle calange le dit escoutete mist en question devant bauschmeesters et eschevins de la ditte ville pour fair punicion comme a tel cas appartient dont si avant sur ce fu procedé que ledit Henry Vanden Eede si souumbist en l’ordonnance de Pierre de Montherant, tresorier de mon dit seigneur, de Andrieu de Douay, receuver et de Robert de Caples, bailli de Bruges par le moyen desquel il a composé pour mille cou- ronnnes d’or qui valent, 2,000 lb. par.’
The minters informed the bailiff of Bruges, who ordered a thorough investigation of the coins. After a while, they came to the conclusion that the value of the coins was only half that of an official coin, although they looked exactly the same as the ducal coins (‘*on ny trouva aucun contrefait de forge tant seulement de aloy et de valeur*’). Maybe that is why the minters did not address the question of the bailiff to ‘purge’ the money. This means that they did not want to officially declare the coins to be forged (in which case they could have been melted down and reminted into legal money). Precisely because there were no exterior differences, perhaps they thought that the duke had ordered to mint a new, debased coin emission? Anyway, the minters did not want to take the risk to melt down official ducal coins, but at the same time, they did not know what else to do with the confiscated pieces, so the bailiff called upon the officials of the Court of Audit and asked them if they could instruct the minters. In the account of the next trimester, the bailiff reported that the Court had answered the question and that they declared the coins to be indeed counterfeited, so that the minters were eventually allowed to melt them down.\(^{[19]}\)

The ordinance not only decreed to confiscate forged or banned coins, but also forbade the export of silver. Alain Termaieur, a messenger, was ordered by Ferrier Deconulles, a merchant in Bruges from Mallorca, to

\(^{[19]}\) SAB, CA, no. 13680, 20 September 1400 – 10 January 1401, fol. 45v: ‘De Bicke Ghelreszone, merchant d’Amborgh, a qui la somme de xvii lb. gr. par change fait en la ville d’Ambourg a payer a Bruges fu envoyé en blanche monnaie de Flandres et bailli par un nommé Guillaume Priem, merchant de monnaghe en Ghelre, laquelle somme lui ayant seceu du matin lui semble quant ce vient sur le jour que en la dit monnoie pouvoit estre deffaulte en prinst en sa main environ ii ou ii s. gr. et les apporta en la monnoye a Bruges, pour en savoir la verité ou ilz furent calange par quoy la cognoisance en vient a l’escoutete qui le dit Becke en calange eet la ditte somme des deniers a ycelle Bicke demandant comment de qui en quelle maniére et commebien il dicelle monnoie avoit receu, qui dist et respondi comme dit est des xvii lb. gr. Et par ce que le dit Bicke ainsi fu trouvez ou dit fait loyad par la loy de la ditte ville en sa personne fu jugies quittes et le dis deniers toutes estré fourfais a Monseigneur es mains du dit escoutete, qui les envoya a la monnoie ou il fait tout coppé et jugiet pour mains valoit de la moité a plus que la blancq monnoie de mon seigneur combien que on n’y trouva aucun contrefait de forge fors tant seulement de aloy et de valeur. Et pour ce que ceux de la ditte monnaie de Bruges ont refusé au dit escoutete de purgier les dessus dit deniers pour ce qu’ilz esgent de la maisne forge et monnaie de monseigneur. Si est il que le dit escoutete requiert que de mes seigneurs en soit ordonné que l’en doit faire pour lui en respondre et compter au premier compte ensuivant.’

10 January 1401 – 9 May 1401, fol. 62r: ‘De Bicke Geleeszone, calenga le dit escoutete xviii lb. gros monnoie blac, les quelz par ce questionent trouvé contrefait a la monnoie de monseigneur dont au darrain compte en jenvier le dit escoutete fist mention ainsi qu’il prit apparoir par ses dis comptes du dit jenvier, lesquelx xviii lb. gros le dit escoutete delivre au maistre de la monnoie de Bruges pour les y purgier sauf son quantité deniers a cause de l’office et par ce le dit escoutete n’en compte riens mes on doit repondre le dit maistre de la monnaie. In margine: Soit rendu la valeur du dit argent on comptue ensuitt ou soit apporté certiffication du maistre de la monnoie de la ditte ville et recepvoir dicelle relei Thomas en Flandre.’
deliver a quantity of silver (28 marc, 5 onces de Troyes) to Ramont de la Croix, a merchant from Toulouse, who stayed in Paris. Export of silver was punished with the confiscation of the metal, and normally its bearer, Alain, would have to be exiled from the county of Flanders. But because the latter explained he was only a messenger sent by Ferrier and that he was unaware of the ordinance, he was not banned, but fined the considerable sum of 150 lb. parisis[20].

2. Stolen or found coin purses

The second category in the accounts of the bailiff on monetary issues concerns stolen or found coin purses. What is interesting about these items is that they can reveal how much money and which coins medieval people were carrying with them. Pauwel Coolman, an inhabitant of Oostkerke, a village near Bruges, was punished because he had with him 23 gold crowns and 7 florins from Spain. They belonged to Olivier Coolman, a criminal who was sentenced to death for theft in the city of Avignon, France. How the coins passed into the hands of Pauwel is not mentioned, but they were confiscated because of the death penalty of Olivier. Each piece was sold: the crowns at 40 s. parisis and the Spanish florins at 38 s. parisis, bringing a total of 59 lb. 6 s. parisis[21]. In the Franc of Bruges, the poor man Thiery le

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[20] SAB, CA, no. 13679, 7 May 1397 – 17 September 1397, f° 149v°: ‘De Ferrier Deco-nulles de Maillorque, marchant demourant a Bruges liqueux avoit nageaire chargié a ung nomme Alain Termiauer, porteur des lettres, certaine quantité de billon d’argent pesant xxviii marx et v onhes de Troyes pour porter a Paris et le delivrer illec a Ra-mont de la Crois de Tolouse, demourant en la ditte ville de Paris la quelle chose est contre l’ordonnance faite par mon dit seigneur et son conseil et commun pays de Flandres sur le fait de ses monnoyes dont l’amende et punicion est le dit billon est fourfait a Monseigneur et ceulx qui le portent ou font porter estre bannis certain terme hors du pays de Flandres. Ainsi que les dittes ordonnances plusadplain le dé-clairent le quel Alain estoit en chemins vers la porte pour aler hors d’icelle le dit escoutete le fist prendre par aucuns des sergans. Illec sergans a tout le dit boillon, et en oultre, le dit escoutete calainga le dit Ferrier d’avoir fait emporter le dit boillon comme dessus dit. Sur quoy le dit Ferrier confessant que par commandement du dit Ramont de la Crois a qui il estoit facteur comme il dist et non sachant de la ditte ordonnance comme il affirma par son serment il achoi le dit boillon au dit Alain poir poorter ou lieu comme dessus dit humblement priant au dit escoutete que considéré ce que dit est il se voelsit subporter de faire pour fermer du dit ban le quel l’escoutete par l’avis et conseil du recepveur de Flandres et du bailli de Bruges le dit Ferrier a composicion du dit ban et mesfait pour la comme de 150 lb. In margine: Le recepveur de Flandres present Alard goni de ce compte a affirmé la ditte composicion est vraye.’

[21] SAB, CA, no. 13682, 17 September 1403 – 14 January 1404, f° 18r°: ‘De Pauwels Coolman, li quelx avoit desoubz lui en ses mains xxiii couronnes d’or et vii florins d’Espagne appelé maites, appartenant a ung nommé Olivier Coolman qui fu justiciez en Avegnon a cause d’avoir robé sur le chemin lesquelx Florins le dit bailli a calangi-es comme fourfait a monseigneur a cause de la ditte justice, montans les diz Florins les couronnez compte a xi. s. la piece, et les dittes mattez a xxxviii s. ainsi qu’il ap-
Smet was punished because he had robbed a man carrying 12 mites [22]. This was only a small amount, but for a poor man like Thiery, it was worth the risk to try to steal it. The theft of a much larger amount was registered in 1405. In that year, the merchant Nadael and his son Clais did business in Bruges. They made use of an assistant, called Perrin de Bellamanoir, who was entitled to pay and receive money to/from the clients. But, after a while, he was accused of having stolen no less than 1,800 gold coins. However, the father Nadael suspected his son Clais, who got along very well with Perrin, to have known about the theft and even to have been his accomplice. The bailiff wanted to torture Clais, who did not confess anything. Since the bailiff could not sentence Clais purely on the basis of the malicious rumours, he settled out of court with a fine of 100 lb. parisis. The account gives no further information on what happened with the huge amount of 1,800 gold pieces [23]. This case provides an example of how

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[22] SAB, CA, no. 13680, 20 May 1400 – 20 September 1400, f° 22v: ‘De Thiry Le Smet, li quels fu prins et soupechonnez d’avoir prins a ung homme ou chemin sa tasse ou il avoit environ xii mites et non plus lui laissez composier considérè qu’il agut en prison a grant povreté et misere bien par l’espace de iiii ans et qu’il fu malades de l’impedime dont il moru le lendemain quant il fu hors de prison, pour iii nobles, valent 14 lb. 8 s.’

[23] SAB, CA, no. 13683, 12 January 1405 – 11 May 1405, f° 30v: ‘De Claiquil filz Nadael, valeresse merchant estrangere, lequel nageaire avoit un varlet appellè Perrin de Bellemanoir qui lui avoit fui grant temps et soudoit faite la merchandise du dit Nadael, son maistre, et aussi recevoir son argent. Si que le dit Perrin par temptacion de l’ennemi fausa de male faire et fist si avant qu’il embla a son dit maistre xviii pieces d’or ou environ et s’en fui a tout qu’on ne povoi savoir qu’il estoit devenus et quant le dit Nidal fu pient de la grant perte dessus ditte se desconforta moult grandement comme raison est dont le dit Perrin de Bellemanoir tantost fu suspeconnez veu qu’il est fai et avant ce que le dit Nadael puis savoir la certaine verité qui avoit emblè son dit argent couru fui de vilaines parolles au dit Claquin, son filz, disant que ce ne povoit estre qu’il ne devist bien savoir dudit larchin veu qu’il avoit en grand de compaigne et composition avecq icellui Perrin lesquelles parolles l’escoutete entendi secretement et fist tant qu’il fist tantost prendre et emprisonner le dit Claquin filz dudit Nadael en lui calaengant et mettant fui d’estre coulpables et avoir sceu du dit larchin et aydiet et conforté le dit laron a faire le dit fait dont le dit escoutete le voïloit incontinent examiner et requist a la loy qu’il venissent a porter cognoissance de ce que par nolement le dit Claquin confesseroit pour fui ce proceder selont loy et justice ou pareil accoustumè. Sur quoy la ditte loy respondit que nullement ne le souffirroit ne l’ont faire souperconner se le dit Claquin en povoi riens faire ou estre coulpables au dit fait de quoy le dit escoutete en feist toute la diligence qu’il povoit et savoir mais n’en povoi n’avoir telle information que raison y eust de l’examiner en aucune maniere fors tant seulement les hastastes parolles que le dit Nadael, pere du dit Claquin, lui avoit en courtreul et en chaleur. Et que considerè et que se le dit Claquin par loy senist voulu revenez selont la coutume de la ditte ville de Bruges, l’escoutete n’en euist riens eu ainsi que le dit Claquin est un bien jouene valleton et de bonne renommee et veu que son dit père avoit eu si grande dommaige si la laisser composer pour 100 lb.’
many gold coins merchants could possess, or of the size of amounts they were handling.

Another category within this group are found coin purses. Cases of ‘true finders’ keeping the money for themselves would obviously never be registered in the accounts of a bailiff, because it would be hard to prove this practice or to qualify it as a theft. There is however one major exception: in the name of the duke whom he represented, the bailiff could claim goods that washed ashore from the sea or that were found in rivers. By virtue of the so-called ‘droit de lagan’, they were considered as property of the duke, and therefore, these finds had to be reported to the bailiff [24]. So when Ernoul Weytins and his mates robbed an Englishman at sea of 45 gold nobles, the bailiff did not punish this act of piracy, but claimed ten percent on behalf of the duke. So he confiscated four nobles and a half, which had a value of 46 lb. 4 s. parisis. Even when someone could prove that a washed-ashore coin purse was his property, the duke could still claim it, using his ‘droit de lagan’. And obviously, the greedy bailiffs seized every opportunity to confiscate such goods and interpreted this regulation very stringently. Clais Le Gloyere was buying fish on a boat, but during that transaction, he dropped his coin purse into the water. Another fisherman nearby dredged up the purse and gave it back to Clais. But because the purse had dropped into the water, it was considered property of the duke, and it was the duty of the fisherman to report this ‘find’ to the bailiff, even though he knew the purse belonged to Clais le Gloyere. Clais himself was in his turn obliged to report to the bailiff that he had recovered his purse, and had to pay 20 lb. parisis. Such a severe interpretation of the legislation was a clear sign of an overzealous and greedy bailiff.

3. Confiscation of purses

The third category in the accounts of the bailiff on monetary issues is maybe the most interesting for numismatists, and concerns the inventory of confiscated goods which belonged to deceased persons, with sometimes

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[25] SAB, CA, no. 13683, 12 January 1405 – 11 May 1405, f° 28r°: ‘De Ernoul Weytins qui avec ses complices prins sur la mer ung englois, appellé Thomas et rechonna XLV nobles dont le dit bailli calanga pour monseigneur le x° denier, qui monte iiii nobles et demi, valent 46 lb. 4 s. par.’
[26] SAB, CA, no. 13679, 13 January 1399 – 4 May 1399, f° 165r°: ‘De Clais Le Gloyere li quelz estians en un batel qui estoit avuez a terre pour achater du poisson, perdy sa tasse en laquelle il avoit de l’argent, la quelle tasse fu trouvé par un appelé Clais le But, pesueur, le quel le rendi au dit Clais, senz le donner a cognoistre au dit bailli, du quel mesfait le dit bailli les a calangé tant le dit Clais le But qui afoit rendue la ditte tasse comme le dit Clais le Goyer de le avoir receu senz le voir porté a la cognoissance comme dit est et les a laissié composé veu quils le furent par innocence et pour leur povreté pour, 20 lb. par.’
a detailed description of the content of coin purses. As mentioned at the beginning of this article, the bailiff could confiscate goods from bastards, from strangers who died without an heir, from convicts and from suicides. In 15th-century Flanders, the bailiffship was sometimes farmed out, i.e. offered to the highest bidder. This implied that once the bailiff had taken up his office, he wanted to earn back his investment as soon as possible. So we always have to be cautious with a description of coins, because it is possible that some of them had already disappeared into the purse of the bailiff before the inventory was actually made. Nevertheless, we have several written sources which can shed light on the content of some coin purses.

The main advantage of these sources is that the inventoried belongings in cash can be linked to the owner, hence to his profession, his wealth and his family ties, because all this information about the person concerned may be mentioned in confiscation lists. The data are not always very elaborate, but sometimes give us a good view of the owner’s situation. In the case of a detailed description of the coins, these would often also be assigned a specific value in a money of account (mostly in pound parisis), so the total value of the belongings in cash could be estimated. In the example of a dead foreigner, only the total value of the silver money is mentioned: 6 nobles; the coins were kept by the government for two years and two days, waiting for an heir to come and claim the goods.

Another example can be found in the accounts of the ‘receveur général des recettes extraordinaires de Flandre’ (‘general receiver of the extraordinary revenues’). This was an office that had been in existence since 23 April 1445. Its purpose was to centralize different revenues such as confiscations from deceased bastards, suicides, etc., and to relieve the bailiffs from that task. In the Archives Départementales du Nord in the city of Lille in France, some of the vouchers and exhibits of the accounts of this general receiver are still kept. One of these items is a complete list with all the properties (estate and houses) and debts of Pieter van Marye, a burgher of Gistel who committed suicide in October 1491. It was drawn up by Maertin van Nieuwenhove, at that time the general receiver of the extraordinary revenues;
after an enumeration of his real estate, the household goods are described as follows:

‘De huuscatteyen ten huse daer de zelve Pietre woonde. Eerst inde achter-camere ii coetsen elc met eenen bedde ende oorpuelwe teen met een rood wollin beddeclée ende tandere en sayen ende elc een gheschinger omber-hanc, maer teen bedde behoort toe Goolkin Mottx. Item i dridsoor met ii laken daer in waren twee hoofdcleeren ende buersen met ghelde daer in was in zelveren ghelde xiii lb. vi s. parisis. Item zes Utrechtse gulden, tder-dendeel van eenen leer, een alven Phs clinckaert.’ [29]

The dridsoor or three-eared pot contained two sheets, but also some coins. First there was silver money with a value of 18 lb. 6 s. parisis, but also six guilder from Utrecht and a half ‘Philippus Klinkaert’, which had been minted in Ghent in 1426, i.e. 65 years before this inventory was made [30].

The next example was also found in the accounts of the bailiff of Bruges. It concerns again a confiscation after a suicide. In the spring of 1404, the bastard and merchant from Breda Jehan Hart was found drowned in the city river. The bailiff declared that Jehan had committed suicide (‘par temptacion de l'anemy’ = by seduction of the enemy, i.e. the devil). So in the bailiff’s opinion, he had the right to confiscate the goods of Jehan Hart. And he had very good reasons for trying to do so, because Jehan had carried a coin purse containing several gold coins. These were summed up, and we can clearly see how the pound parisis and the denarius gros served as moneys of account to assign a value to each coin:

De Jehan Hart, bastard et forain né de Breda, lequel par temptacion de l'anemy se noya es fossez de la dicte ville comme l'en dist dessus. Lequel on trouva les parties a senssuit qui lue changer en blanche monnaie, premiers xix nobles d'Anghleterre a vi s. vii d. gr. le piece valent avec ung noble de Flandres a vi s. v d. lxxviii lb. xviii s. parisis. Item xxii viue escus de Gand esquelz estoient vi escus du roy et de l'empeureur tous au pris de xi s. pieche valent xliliis lb. Item xiii mailles de Hollande a xix gr. pieche valent vint livres six solz. Item deux autres mailles de Ghelre a xxvii s. pieche valent liiiis s. Item ung autre denier d'or nomme tor a xxxvii s. parisis. Et ung escu de Luxembourcq a xxxiii s. parisis. Concluant lesquelles parts d'or montent a cent quarante neuf livres et huit soiz parisis monnaie de Flandres. Ainsy qu'il appartenoit par certiffication de Jehan Du Molin, controleur, et de la ville de Bruges pour la dicte somme de 149 lb. 8 s. parisis [31].

[29] Lille, Archives Départementales du Nord, Série B, no. 4237.
[30] Deschamps de Pas 1875, pl. xx·40; De Mey 1985, no. 344; Delmonte 1964, no. 486.
Table 1 gives an overview of the content of Jehan Hart’s purse at the time of his suicide.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of coin</th>
<th>Value per coin</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19 nobles of England</td>
<td>6 s. 7 d. gr. (3 lb. 11 s. 8 d. par.)</td>
<td>78 lb. 18 s. par.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 noble of Flanders</td>
<td>6 s. 5 d. gr. (3 lb. 17 d. par.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 old ‘écus of Ghent’</td>
<td>40 s. par.</td>
<td>44 lb. par.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mailles of Holland</td>
<td>29 gr. (1 lb. 9 s. par.)</td>
<td>20 lb. 6 s. par.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 mailles of Guelders</td>
<td>27 s. par.</td>
<td>2 lb. 14 s. par.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un autre denier d’or nommé tor</td>
<td>37 s. par.</td>
<td>1 lb. 17 s. par.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 écu de Luxembourg</td>
<td>33 s. par.</td>
<td>1 lb. 13 s. par.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>149 lb. 8 s. par.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1 – Content of the purse of Jehan Hart*

English nobles were minted for the first time under Edward III (13 November 1312 – 21 June 1377). He wanted to create a strong currency that could be used for the growing economy and overseas trade, and the coins can be recognized by the representation of a ship. These ‘trade coins’ were imitated in the Low Countries [32]. Jehan Hart carried 19 English nobles, valued at 79 d. gr., and 1 Flemish noble, valued at 77 d. gr. The coin purse also contained 22 old ‘écus of Ghent’ [33], which had been minted in Ghent, Bruges and Mechlin in the period 1346-1364; they show the count, sitting on a throne, holding in one hand a sword and in the other a shield with a two-headed eagle. The inventory also records ‘mailles’. Jan Grolle, in his book on the coins of Holland, mentions ‘mailles’ only in the context of a little gros, minted under Jan of Holland (1296-1299) as counterpart for the French maille of 1296 [34]. Since all the other coins mentioned here are in gold, I assume that the ‘maille’ too refers to a gold coin. Perhaps, this name was given by a contemporary to a gold coin representing a knight, wearing a coat of mail, as e.g. on the florin of Willem v, count of Holland and Zea-

[32] Deschamps de Pas 1875, pl. vii·16; De Mey 1985, nos 260–262; Delmonte 1964, no. 474.
[33] Gaillard 1852–57, no. 207; Deschamps de Pas 1875, pl. vii·16; De Mey 1985, nos 176–178; Delmonte 1964, no. 454.
The coin name 'tor' referred to the gold tower, a coin which was not minted in Flanders, but in Brabant (more precisely Louvain) in 1375-1381 and again in 1392-1393, during the reign of Johanna and Wenceslas (1355-1383)\(^{[36]}\). That there can be no doubt about the Brabant origin of the coin is corroborated by the vouchers and exhibits that were originally attached to the account of the bailiff. In the 19th century, these have all been snipped off and collected in a separate series, the so-called 'Acquits de Lillé'. I have been through some of these boxes and envelopes, and there I discovered several vouchers concerning the suicide of Jehan Hart and the coins found on his corpse. One of them, dated 16 February 1404, is from Jehan du Moulin, inspector of finances and who is also mentioned in the account. He declared the coins he had found and their value. The 'tor' is identified here as being a denier from Brabant: 'ung autre denier d’or de Brabant nommé tor'\(^{[37]}\). Despite the vague mention in the accounts of the bailiff, we can conclude beyond a doubt that the 'tor' is indeed the gold tower of Brabant. In the same series of the 'Acquits de Lillé', with the different vouchers and exhibits, I also found some additional information on the coins Jehan Hart had in his possession. It appears that the aforementioned coins were not the only ones he kept in his purse. On 16 March 1404, the municipality of Bruges published a charter that gives information about the discovery of the corpse and its autopsy. The same list of gold coins mentioned earlier is again included, but in addition the purse also contained 10 silver gros, which were given to the men who carried the body to the Saint John's hospital, where it was eventually buried. That is why these coins were never mentioned in the accounts of the bailiff\(^{[38]}\). So the coin purse con-

\(^{[35]}\) Van der Chijs 1858, nos 7-8.

\(^{[36]}\) De Witte 1894-99, nos 401 and 417; Delmonte 1964, no. 51.

\(^{[37]}\) SAB, CA, ‘Acquits de Lillé’, 39/1, carton 54: ‘Je, Jehan Du Molin, controleur des comptes des officiers de mon tres redoubte seigneur monseigneur le duc de Bourgogne de son pays de Flandres, certifie a tous par ces presentes que […] Item ung autre denier d’or de Brabant nommé tor a trente sept solz parisis. Et ung escu de Luxembourg a trente trois solz parisis. Toutes lesquelles parties d’or montent a cent quatreante neuf livre et huit sols parisis monnaie dure. Tesmoins mon signe manuel cy mis le XVI jour de fevrier l’an mil cccc et trois. Signature: Molin’.

\(^{[38]}\) SAB, CA, ‘Acquits de Lillé’, 39/1, carton 54: ‘A tous ceulx qui ces presente lettres ver-ront ou orront, bourgoymaisters, eschevins et conseil de la ville de Bruges, Salut. Pour ce que droit veult et raison donne que l’en tesiomogn choses veritablest est il que nous vous certifions et tesiomogns par ces presente que […] premiers dix neuf nobles d’Engleterre. Item ung noble de Flandres. Item seze vieux escus de Gand. Item six vieux escus tant du roy comme de l’empereur. Item ung denier d’or de Brabant appellé tor et ung escu de Lecemburg. Item quatorze florins de Hollande et deux florins de Ghelre et dix groz de Flandres, lesquelx dix groz firent bailliez par lesdiz Martin et eschevins a ceulx qui le corps du dit trespassé porterent des diz fossez jusques a l’ospital Saint Jehan pour enterrer. Et que autre finance n’estoit trouvé sur le dit corps. En tesiomgn de ce nous avons fait seeller ces lettres du seel aux causes de la ditte ville de Bruges. Faites et donnees l’an mil cccc et trois, le XVI jour de mars.’
tained in total coins from England, Flanders, Holland, Gueldres, Brabant and Luxemburg. This can be explained by the profession of the owner: a Brabant merchant who probably had trading relations throughout the Low Countries and England. This is a modest example, but it gives a good view of the information suchlike sources can provide.

Concluding remarks

In this article, I discussed the information that accounts of the bailiff and confiscation lists can provide on coin use and coin circulation in the late Middle Ages. Also wills can yield similar information. For example the inventory made after the death of William du Prêt by his executors also contains an elaborate list of the coins he possessed [39]. Whereas archaeological research can give us important information on the material, the type, the condition and the spread of the coins and the composition of a treasure, these lists can link the composition and the value of someone’s belongings in cash to the social-economic context and the owner’s status and his profession. An in-depth study of these sources can broaden our knowledge on what kind of coins were used by whom and in what transactions, which coins people were carrying with them and which ones they would keep in their houses. However, the analysis of someone’s belongings in cash tells little about his means and property, because it takes no notice of the rents, leases, debts, loans or the ownership of land in a (still not completely monetized) late-medieval society.

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