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Editorial

The argument is frequently mooted that to survive, heraldry must move with the times. I suggest that the opposite is true; it is because heraldry, give or take and odd DNA Double Helix, does not become ever more trendy, and that this is one of the main reasons why it flourishes.

All through the ages, oddities have occurred and no doubt they will continue to do so. I will quote but a few examples, as these lapses are well known; favourites quoted by authors of heraldic books are Caerlyon, many of the London Livery Companies, Nelson and later augmentations to the arms of famous Victorian warriors. But these are exceptions and are invariably quoted to illustrate bad heraldry.

If the symbolism of armory, which can suggest most of the advances in science and technology, is abandoned in favour of representationalism, armory will find itself competing with the logos, the latter being odds-on favourites.

Having written that, it is up to the heralds to be very cunning and imaginative in their craft so that they can offer an acceptable and attractive alternative to logos, some of which are very skilful and often, as with British Rail, symbols capable of blazon. There is an exciting mean between pedestrianism and beyond-the-fringe representationalism which must be understood, nurtured and exploited. Heraldry in Great Britain still has considerable cachet, woven of many strands, the chief of which is traditionalism; if it loses that, it may lose all.

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Honorary Editor
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Pre-Armorial Use of the Lion Passant Guardant and the Fleur-de-lis as Heraldic Badges in Norman Sicily

BY LOUIS A. M. MENDOLA

This study relates to symbols which became principal charges in the arms borne by the Capetians and Plantagenets. It will be seen that these symbols were known as badges or other personal insignia from an early date, and the extant evidence of this may antedate that known elsewhere, although no assertion is made that these symbols could not have been employed, in this form, in England or France during the same period, perhaps in some medieval record yet to be discovered. Our concise review, however, takes us to Palermo during the reign of the first King of Sicily, Roger II of the Norman de Hauteville dynasty.

This coincides with the reigns of Henry II in England and Louis VII in France. The arms most often attributed to Henry II are *gules two lions passant guardant or*, those usually attributed to Louis VII being *azure semé-de-lis or*. That a Siculo-Norman king used both symbols as badges is not altogether surprising, but the date at which these were used clearly presents a number of questions.

The lion and fleur-de-lis are truly ancient symbols, and it is quite unlikely that either Henry or Louis appropriated their respective charges from Roger but, at the very least, there is much to suggest that the last was making use of both symbols as early as 1130. This is profound, for Louis' earliest known use of the fleur-de-lis is most frequently based on a seal dated at least seven years after this. Henry's own use of the lion passant guardant, later associated with the arms of Normandy, must remain in some question pending discovery of evidence providing a direct connection. The arms of the de Hautevilles is a simple bend; they are not known to have ever used either a lion or fleur-de-lis in the coat of arms (escutcheon).

In the case of the fleur-de-lis, there can be no doubt that it is in some way associated with the charge displayed by the Capetians, as Roger bore it in the same form and tinctures in which it was used by the royal dynasty of France.

The Palermitan evidence provides us with the only tangible basis for presuming the heraldic use of either symbol before circa 1137 by one of these three royal dynasties.

Sir Anthony Wagner has defined [armorial] heraldry as "the systematic use of hereditary devices centered on the shield". According to Charles Boutell, a badge is defined as "heraldic insignia distinctive to a person or family but not associated with an escutcheon or helm". It is

commonly presumed that badges, in some form, existed before armorial bearings.

The author has determined that armorial heraldry was unknown in Sicily as recently as 1175, this based upon its absence from the shields of the Monreale Knight Figures sculpted during that period, as well as the lack of armorial bearings in any other Sicilian source dated before that time. King Roger's use of the lion and fleur-de-lis constituted their classification as badges as displayed in the sources mentioned here. Roger himself probably was not armigerous, although his grandson, William II, probably used arms some time after 1175.



Figure 1.



Figure 2.

Figure 1 shows the famous mosaic depicting Roger II crowned by Christ. Located in the church known as the Martorana, this representation was executed by Greek artisans circa 1155, probably to mark Roger's death in 1154. Roger was crowned at Palermo in 1130. Clearly visible on his robe are numerous fleur-de-lis rendered in gold on a deep blue field — azure semé-de-lis or. The image appears to depict the actual robe worn by the king at his coronation; we have no evidence to the contrary and accounts of the lavish ceremonies indicate that the robes were woven, in part, of gold thread.

At the Basilica of Monreale, near Palermo, a mosaic completed before 1188 depicts William II, Roger's grandson, also crowned by Christ and dressed in a nearly-identical robe, azure semé-de-lis or. The imagery is obviously based on the figure of Roger created some thirty years earlier, but the fleur-de-lis pattern argues a hereditary use of the device. This would justify its designation as a royal badge of the de Hauteville dynasty of Sicily.



Figure 3.



Figure 4.

In Figures 2 and 3 we see the lions passant guardant visible on either side of the throne pedestal of the Palatine Chapel in the Royal Norman Palace in Palermo. These mosaics were completed before 1143. The photos afford us a view of the surrounding mosaic work, also executed by Greek artists. (Unfortunately, some segments of scaffolding are also visible.) The Byzantine countenance of the beasts is interesting, their eyes almost human and their manes beardlike, even as the ears and noses are clearly leonine. The fields, and parts of the lions' manes, are white.

From a distance, the figures appear gules or even tawny. However, a closer view reveals considerable variation in the colour of the stones, many of which are actually yellow ochre in the middle values, reddish in shadowed areas. Were the colourcasts considered ochre, as well they could, these lions would be the same tincture (or) as those in the arms of the Plantagenet kings of England after Henry II, and perhaps the arms of Henry if he were indeed armigerous. The pose (passant guardant) is identical.

Unlike the evidence for the fleur-de-lis, no hereditary use of the lion badge by the de Hautevilles has been determined. However, its position, on prominent roundels facing the throne, suggest more than a merely decorative purpose. It is altogether possible that other images supporting the possibility that it was hereditary have been lost to time.

The lion passant appears elsewhere, on a Saracen shield in a capital sculpture at Monreale, rendered circa 1175 (Figure 4). It could be that these Saracen soldiers in the service of the King of Sicily used a form of his badge on their shields as a kind of regimental insignia. This would imply that the lion was still used as a royal badge during the lifetime of William II.

The very existence of these badges prompts speculation, but they are beautiful if only considered as works of art characteristic of their age or any other one. They transcend time.