

## **REGIONAL STYLE CLASS**

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This class is a brief overview (no more than that!) of the regional styles of heraldry found in our time and place. Its purpose is to help consulting heralds to aid those submitters who wish for a smidgen of authenticity for their persona's armory.

Note that not all regional styles apply to all Society submissions: there may be conflict, violation of core style rules, &c. But with luck, these will be minimized.

*Caveat:* Remember the tale of the University lecturer in Music, 500 years in the future, trying to define the term "country music". No definition will be possible: some songs that belong in the genre don't fit the definition, and *vice versa*. The best will be to say that country music was *characterized* by certain attributes – and we must do the same for the regions of medieval heraldry.

#### **Introduction:**

Local style is as much a matter of the design as it is the specific charges. It's true, there are some charges which are found only (or mostly) in particular regions. But local style is not determined by charges *nearly* as often as many submitters think. (Thistles don't mean Scotland! Harps don't mean Ireland!)

*Nota bene:* The design motif [*Plain tincture 1*], a [*Charge*] [*Plain tincture 2*] is authentic style for any time and any place within the domain of the Society where heraldry was used. And [*Plain tincture 1*], three [*Charges*] [*Plain tincture 2*] is almost as good. Do not be afraid to encourage these motifs!

The drawing *style* of the armory can determine its region – and indeed, its period – just as much as the design does. An early-period oak tree looks very little like a late-period oak tree: if the client is interested in early period authenticity, the drawing style becomes important. Similarly, there were different drawing styles for different regions. Sadly, the discussion of drawing styles is beyond the scope of this overview class.

#### **Polish:**

There are examples in period Polish heraldry of many of the "standard" charges: eagles, swords, bull's heads, spears, &c. But Polish heraldry is best known for its "cipher-charges", which possibly derived from *tamga* or runic marks of the nomads of Scythia.

Heralds from outside Poland tried to blazon these cipher-charges as combinations of Western charges, such as *crosses*, *broad-arrows*, and *horseshoes*. Society heralds do the same: a cipher-charge can only be registered if it can be so blazoned. Fortunately, most can.

Whatever the charges, Polish heraldry was frequently limited in tincture. About half of all Polish armory had a red field; about a third had a blue field. And 90% of the armory used argent charges only.

### **Iberian:**

Spanish and Portuguese shields started out with wider bottoms than the longer triangular shields of Anglo-Norman heraldry. This influenced the evolution of Iberian heraldry – bear in mind, quartering was invented in Spain. The implications:

- The default placement for five charges in Anglo-Norman design was 2,2,&1. In Iberian design, the default placement was 2,1,&2 (i.e., in saltire).
- The default placement for six charges in Anglo-Norman design was 3,2,&1, to fit on a triangular shield. In Iberian design, the default placement was 2,2,&2.
- The wider shield bottom also allowed for odd field divisions not much found elsewhere (e.g., checky of 15).

Iberian heraldry also had charges that seem to be peculiar to it: the *quoin*, the *lunel*, the *rastrillo*, the *bend engouled*, the *bordure denticulada*, the *caldera gringolada*. Crescents inverted were frequent; phrases (such as the first words of the Ave Maria) were not uncommon.

### **Germanic:**

Germanic armory includes the regions of Germany, plus Switzerland, Scandinavia, and others. There was a wider reliance on field-only armory here – many of our stranger field divisions are from German heraldry. (Note that, when a strange field division was used, the field was almost never charged.) As for the tinctures themselves, the use of furs was rare.

Crests were the most common form of differencing.

Charges peculiar to Germanic heraldry include the *nesselblatt*, the *seeblatt*, and the *frauenadler*. Human figures were commonly shown, and frequently used the head and torso only (e.g., an *armless demi-woman*).

Many of the more common charges were used in uncommon ways: *attires* bent in circles, *sea-lions* with their tails over their heads, *chevrons* issuant from odd points of the shield, &c. Three-fold radial symmetry was often used.

### **Italian:**

Bear in mind that "Italian heraldry" is something of a misnomer: there was no Italy *per se* in period, so no Italian heraldry. The peninsula was a hodge-podge of city-states, with no centralized heraldic authority. With that in mind...

Italy invented the *impresa*, and it shows. (^\_^)

Striped fields (*bendy, paly, &c*) were common, as were "chiefs of allegiance". These came in two types: the *capo dell'impero*, for Ghibellines and supporters of the Holy Roman Empire, and the *capo d'angio*, for Guelfs and supporters of the southern kingdoms (e.g., the Two Sicilies).

Some charges that seem to be peculiar to Italian heraldry include: the *mount* (or *trimount*) *couped*, the *beard*, and items from classical mythology (*caduceus, cornucopia*).

### **English style:**

The standard style of pre-16<sup>th</sup> C. English armory forms the basis of the "core style" of Society armory. There was little difference in design through most of our period between English heraldry and French, Scots, Low Countries, or Irish heraldry.

- The use of the *estoile* (rather than the *mullet*) to symbolize a star, was a peculiarly English practice. Five-pointed mullets were much more common here than the Continent.
- Other charges peculiar to this style include: the *clarion*, the *water-bouget*, the (*four-legged*) *dragon*, the *martlet*.
- *Party of six pieces*, with two types of charge, seems to be uniquely British.
- Multiple *piles in point*, though not exclusively of this style, are found here far more often.
- Likewise, while the *saltire* and the *ship* were found elsewhere, they were more frequent in Scotland; while the *crequier* and the *cross of Toulouse* appear to be uniquely French.

### **Tudor English:**

English heraldry under Sir Thomas Wriothesley, Garter King of Arms 1505-1534, was far more complex than that which preceded (or immediately followed). Many of the Wriothesley grants would violate the Society's core standards of complexity. Nonetheless, it's possible to approximate the style in this Society:

- Increased use of complex lines for ordinaries
- More than one type of tertiary charge
- Charged ordinaries between secondaries, often with charged chiefs
- Crests were frequently as complex as the arms

## **Hungarian:**

Up until c.1540, Hungarian heraldry was strongly influenced by German heraldry (barely distinguishable, actually). Then it began to develop the features which characterize it today:

- Many of the usual tinctures were seldom used; ermine and vair were almost unknown. Most fields were blue; most shields had green mounts or trimounts. Violations of the Rule of Contrast were common.
- Central ordinaries such as chevrons were uncommon; the usual motif was a single primary charge atop the mount. If there were secondaries, they were arranged around the primary, usually in chief.
- Turks (usually severed heads or otherwise bloodied) were found in roughly 1/6 of all Hungarian arms.

## **Non-heraldic cultures (e.g., Viking):**

Some cultures which are popular in the Society predate the invention of heraldry: Viking, Romano-Celt, and so on. (They may have had shields, and symbolic markings, but these didn't constitute heraldry as it's usually defined.) Other cultures didn't acquire heraldry until *after* our period: Russia, for example. (Any period Russians with arms almost certainly received them elsewhere, e.g., Poland.) For personae from these cultures, the best we can do is incorporate artistic elements into otherwise-standard heraldic design.

*Viking:* Wolves, ravens, drinking horns, longships, Thor's hammers, and valknuts are all too popular within the Society. There are other "Viking-style" charges available, such as the furison, the spur, the boar, the goat, and even the hair comb.

*Roman:* Eagles, gladii, and thunderbolts seem most popular within the Society. There are other charges available, such as the human head cabossed, the griffin, lions' and dragons' heads, and motifs borrowed from Greek art such as the triskelion of legs.