

SEATING AT COURT AND BANQUET

And Other Bits of Precedence and Etiquette

William the Lucky (20 June XXI)

The final word on who sits where or other matters of protocol is the Crown's, [or Coronet's or Baron's]. The job of the herald is to advise the Royalty on what is customary, traditional, appropriate, etc. If no special instructions come down from on high, this is how things should be done; if the Crown wants something else, you may wish to point out that it is contrary to standard practice but if They still want it, that's how it should be done.

Outdoors, it is usual for the King and Queen to be in the Royal Pavilion, and the Territorial Princes and Princesses to be in Their various Principality Pavilions. These pavilions should be set up close together (so that They can all be seated 'in front' at court while still in Their own pavilions --- and without having the open space in front of the Thrones be excessively wide. If the Principality pavilions are not present, the Princes and Princesses can be seated in the Royal Pavilion. The Crown Prince and Princess are traditionally seated in the Royal Pavilion, on either side of the King and Queen, or, if other Royalty is present, at the King's side.

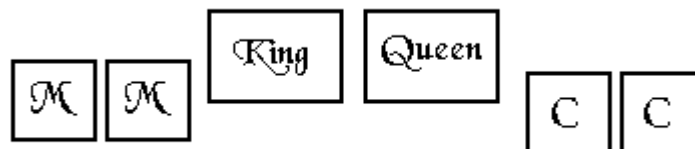
Indoors, the various royalty are usually seated in an arc at one end of the room. If the room is a particularly large one, it may be better to put the arc at one side. (This gives everyone, including members of the court, a better chance to see and hear what is going on.)

In general, the Sovereign and/or Consort of whichever group is holding the event sit at the center of the arc. This is the Prince and Princess for a Principality event, and the King and Queen for any other event (i.e., Kingdom events and local events). The Sovereign sits to the right, with the Consort to His (or Her) left, if both are present. Others seated at the front at Court are distributed according to precedence: first to the right hand of the Sovereign, then to the left of the Consort, then (if necessary) alternately to the right and the left. [Editor's note -- these are STAGE directions -- i.e., RIGHT = STAGE RIGHT -- or the direction of those ON stage looking toward the audience.]

[Be sure to leave a space to the Sovereign's right for the Herald, and space behind the Thrones for attendants to pass back and forth.]

○ Kingdom Events:

In particular, at Kingdom events the King and Queen sit at the center. To Their right sit the Crown Prince and Princess, if any, or any visiting Kings and Queens from other Kingdoms, (usually within the Royal Pavilion, if the Court is outside), then the various Territorial Princes and Princesses alternately to the right and left. (See figure below.)



At the High Table at a Banquet, the distribution is again: King and Queen at the center, other Royalty alternately to Their right and left.

Seating at Court and Banquet, Cont.

○ Principality Events:

At Principality events, the Prince and Princess sit at the center. The King and Queen, if present, are guests. (Extremely honored guests, to be sure, but guests.) Therefore They sit to the right hand of the Prince and Princess. Other Territorial Princes and Princesses are alternated from side to side, just as with Kingdom events.

In addition, in the Principality of the Mists, the Bard of the Mists is seated to the right of Their Highnesses.

○ Local Events:

At local events, the center position is taken by the King and Queen (if They are present) or by the Prince and Princess. If neither are present, the local Territorial Baron and Baroness take the center position. (To provide a ceremonial focus when the Sovereign and Consort are not present is one of their duties.) At Baronial Courts where the business is strictly Baronial, seating may be done as for a Principality, except with the Baron and Baroness in the center position.

If there is no Royalty present, and the group is not a Barony, then the Seneschal or Herald may stand at the center and make such announcements as are necessary. The resulting session is not a 'court' and should NOT be referred to as one -- officers don't hold court on their own. For such a gathering, call people to gather for 'announcements of the day' or some such phrase.

○ The Crown Prince and Princess

In contrast to the mundane practice, the Crown Prince and Princess rank immediately after the King and Queen and before any of the Territorial Princes and Princesses. (They also usually rank before any visiting Kings and Queens.)

If there is a Crown Prince and Princess, and if They are present, They can be worked in accordingly. However, while there are Principality Pavilions for the Territorial Princes and Princesses, the Crown Prince and Princess will generally be seated in the Royal Pavilion with the King and Queen. In which case, the Principality Pavilions remain set up as they would be in the absence of a Crown Prince and Princess. (This has the added advantage of avoiding the need to shift pavilions around in the midst of a Crown Tourney.)

Within the Royal Pavilion, the Crown Prince and Princess are usually seated together to the left of the Consort. (This provides better balance, since there is usually a cluster of officers to the right of the Sovereign.) An alternative is to seat the Crown Prince to the right of the King and the Crown Princess to the left of the Queen. Consult Their Royal Highnesses and Their Majesties on how They wish to have seating arranged.

○ Precedence

As noted above, the Crown Prince and Prince Princess take precedence over the Territorial Princes and Princesses. The precedence of the Principalities within the Kingdom of the West is:

1. Mists
2. Cynagua
3. Oertha

Just in case you find yourself with the Crowned heads of more than one Kingdom to deal with, the precedence of the several Kingdoms is:

1. West
2. East
3. Middle
4. Atenveldt
5. Meridies
6. Caid
7. Ansteorra
8. Atlantia

9. An Tir
10. Calontir
11. Trimaris
12. Outlands
13. Drachenwald
14. Æthelmarc
15. Artemesia
16. Ealdormere
17. Lochac
18. Northshield
19. Gleann Abhann

Note well that each King and Queen take precedence over everyone else within Their own Kingdom, and each Prince and Princess take precedence over the other Territorial Princes and Princesses within Their own Principality.

○ Feasts

In organizing feasts, the question arises of who to seat at the head table. If Royalty is present, They get to sit there. It is usual to seat the King and Queen in the middle. Others who might be seated at the head table include the Seneschal, the day's champion, etc., and their lords or ladies. If you are trying to fill up the table, you might also ask any visiting Royal Peers. Also, the Royalty may have friends They wish to have seated with Them at the head table. Ask.

(It sometimes happens that some of the Royalty has attachments other than the individual with whom They are reigning - wives, husbands, boy friends, girl friends, children, etc. In contrast to courts, at feasts it is appropriate to seat them together at the head table.)

Bear in mind that, while some people love sitting at the head table, others would much rather sit elsewhere with friends. ASK individuals if they wish to sit at the head table; don't try to order them to do so. (You may importune them if you wish, but don't push it too hard.) One possibility, if nobody shows signs of interest in sitting at a head table, is to set one and have nobody sit there -- an approach which has been tried and worked well in the past. Do not ask the King and Queen to sit alone at the head table unless that is Their wish.

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