

SECTION IX -- NAMES (ONOMASTICS) -- TECHNICAL

2) How to Do Name Consultation (August, XXI; April, XXV)

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Abstract: A detailed and definitive look at researching and documenting names in the SCA, with some advice on consultation itself.

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HOW TO DO NAME CONSULTATION

Alison von Markheim (April, XXV)

This article is aimed at the local herald or the herald at the consultation table who needs to help someone choose an SCA name. It will provide some definitions of the terms used in name research, some guidelines on picking a good, authentic Medieval name, some tips on how to help the submitter choose a name wisely, instructions on how to document the names that have been chosen and a bit of philosophy. It is followed in this handbook by a bibliography and resources list. Armed with this information, you should be able to advise people on how to choose a name that not only will please them, but will also be reasonably period and will pass the College of Arms.

DEFINITIONS OF SOME USEFUL TERMS

Some of these definitions are taken from either the Glossary provided with the Rules for Submission or from the old "The SCA College of Arms Glossary of Terms" published by the office of the Laurel King of Arms.

Personal name - The form of the name for an individual human being that the College of Arms registers. This might be the way your name would be written on your birth record, or your child's; or the way the name would be written down on the tax rolls or parish register. Of course the birth records, tax rolls or parish register referred to here would be period, not modern, documents.

Given name - A name given to a person at birth or in a naming ceremony, like baptism ... (They are variously called 'first name', 'forename', or 'Christian name'.)

Byname - A name other than a person's given name. 'Byname' is a broad term that may include surnames, patronymics and various epithets.

Patronymic - A name given to offspring to indicate the name of the father ... Note that when a couple registers the same patronymic, they are setting themselves up as children of the same father in much of our period, not as a 'married couple.'

Matronymic - A name given to offspring to indicate the name of the mother.

Diminutive name - A shortened form of the given name, e.g., Beth and Liz are diminutives of Elizabeth.

Armory - ... a general term encompassing devices, arms, badges, ensigns, augmentations, mon, seals, and such.

NAMES AND THE RULES FOR SUBMISSION

The next thing that must be addressed is the RULES. There are some (almost) immutable rules about SCA names that everyone must follow. Most of these rules have been around in one form or another for many years.

Unfortunately, if a submitter or consulting herald uses the SCA Armorial, a copy of the Order of Precedence or their experience to judge what is, and is not, acceptable naming practice, he or she will often be led astray. There are plenty of people listed in those documents, or actively playing in the SCA, whose names do not follow one or more of the rules below. For the first five or so years of the SCA there were no real name rules, save that a name not be offensive. Many of those whose names violate the current rules simply registered their names in the Days Before The Rules. Those people using illegal, but unregistered, names have been told that their name will never pass hand have simply never tried to register their name or device at all.

First, some of the General Principals under which the College operates apply to names. (All quotations are taken from the current Rules for Submissions.) The General Principals are:

Compatibility - "All names and armory shall be compatible with the period and domain of the Society," which is further defined as "All submissions shall be period in content", and "All submissions shall be period in style."

Offense - "No name or armory will be registered that may be offensive to a significant segment of the Society or the general populace."

Inappropriate Claims - "No name or armory will be registered which claims for the submitter powers, status, or relationships that do not exist." This is further categorized as: "A name or piece of armory that creates a false impression of the identity of the submitter will not be registered," and "A name or piece of armory which expresses or implies presumptuous claims to status or powers that the submitter does not possess will not be registered."

Each of these sections has a number of relevant rules, which will be summarized in the following sections. For the exact wording, please see the section in this Handbook on the Rules. Words in quotes are actual quotations from the Rules.

Compatible Name Content

The section on compatible name content covers several different types of names that are acceptable for SCA registration. They include documented names, constructed names, invented names, legal names and registered names.

Documented names are the easy ones. They include any and all given names, bynames, place names, and valid variants and diminutives formed in a period manner which can be shown to have been used during our period. This includes not only names found in histories, period literature, maps and reputable secondary sources on names, but also variants on those names that have been formed in a manner consistent with the language of the name. Under the previous rules, diminutives of names were not allowed to be registered, unless they had been independently documented as occurring in the Middle Ages. This removes that restriction, although obtrusively modern diminutives are still not allowed.

The second category is that of constructed names. The actual wording of the Rule is: "Documented names and words may be used to form place names, patronymics, epithets, and other names in a period manner." What it means is that documented elements may be combined to produce another name. What it does not specifically say, and should, is that all elements must be from the same language and time period, and must be combined in a period style. Several examples are given in the particular rule (XX.2), and are fairly good, although the examples of Ælfmund and Sheepford in the next rule are even better.

The third category, invented names, is now largely obsolete. The rule itself states: New name elements, whether invented by the submitter or borrowed from a literary source, may be used if they follow the rules for name formation from a linguistic tradition compatible with the domain of the Society and the name elements used. In part, this is still applicable. If an author has constructed a name according to the rule II.2 (Constructed Names, above), then we will not consider it to be automatically unacceptable, just because it was constructed in the 20th C. As an example, Tolkien's names for the people of Rohan in Lord of the Rings, would be acceptable for SCA use. Those names were constructed from recognizable Anglo-Saxon roots, and meet our criteria for constructed names.

However, it is no longer acceptable to actually make-up a name out of your own imagination. All invented (made-up) names must now conform to the strictures set out in II.2. The sub-clause (II.3.a) which states that invented names may not consist of randomly arranged sounds or characters, is now used to return any invented name that does not conform to II.2.

The second sub-clause (II.3.b) states that "Invented given names may not be identical to any other word unless a strong pattern of use of a class of words as given names in the same language is documented." That means that no invented name that has not been actually documented as a name may be used if the same word exists in any other language in any other form, unless it can be shown that similar words in that language were used as names. An example would be Storkr as an Old Norse given name. Storkr is an old Norse noun meaning "Stork"; but might be acceptable as a name or name element because similar words for birds, such as Orn (eagle), Hrafn (raven), and Krakr (crow), were used as documented given names and elements in Old Norse.

A new name could then be constructed using the element Storkr, as long as the rest of the name was in Old Norse, and the name was constructed according to Old Norse naming practices. This would allow such new constructs as Storkhaldr, Storkkatla, Hallstorkr, Guthstorkr, etc.

Legal names is the current phrase to describe what used to be called the mundane name allowance/loophole. It is very much like the old rule, and states: "Elements of the submitter's legal name may be used as the corresponding part of a Society name, if such elements are not excessively obtrusive and do not violate other sections of these rules." What it means, in effect, is that if a submitter's real legal given name is Lynn, he or she can use that name as his/her SCA given name, even though it is not a medieval given name. If a submitter's legal surname is Hagenschmitdt, it can be used as an SCA surname, even if no documentation can be found for it. The rule specifically states that the type of the name element determines its use in an SCA name, not the position of the name in the submitter's legal name. This very deliberately leaves the issue of legal middle names very vague. Lynn was a period surname; it is often found as a modern middle name, does it then qualify as an SCA given name? There will have to be several test cases on this rule before anything concrete can be said about its application in this case.

The qualifiers in the actual text, "if such elements are not excessively obtrusive and do not violate other sections of these rules" constitute what was once called the "Moon Unit clause". If Moon Unit Zappa were to join the SCA,

she would not be allowed to use her legal given name, because it would be considered to be obtrusively modern. (Sunshine and LaTasha would have to pick new names, too.) Similarly, a person with the surnames Earl, Knight or Duke would run afoul of section VI.1 and would have to pick other names.

The final segment of Compatible Name Content refers to names that have already been registered in the SCA. The rule specifically states that "Once a name has been registered to an individual or group, the College of Arms may permit that particular or individual to register elements of that name again, even if it is no longer permissible under the rules in effect at the time the later submission is made. This permission may be extended to close relatives of the submitter if the College of Arms deems it appropriate." Generally, the College of Arms has deemed it appropriate that real, legal, children of the owner of the otherwise unregistrable name element may register it as part of a similar name. Sometimes the allowance will be extended to real, legal siblings, parents or spouses, but less frequently.

Compatible Naming Style

Like the section on Compatible Name Content, this section consists of several parts. It includes requirements for two (or more elements), a given name and/or a designation. It also covers name grammar, linguistic and temporal consistency and name arrangement.

The Two Element Requirement is the easy one. It simply says that "All names must consist of at least two name elements." The reason for this very sensible and very old rule is that all heraldic and scribal records are kept in order by SCA name and unbearable confusion would occur if we did not have some way of distinguishing individuals.

The second requirement is that every registered SCA name must have a period given name. This rule was instituted to start the move towards more authentic names, and has spurred a vast amount of name research. It is also the first name rule that any newcomer should be told about. The general rule of thumb as to what constitutes an acceptable given name is that it must be a name that would have been given by the parents to a child born within our period. There were significantly fewer children in the real Middle Ages stolen by gypsies and called White Hawk -- "as I never knew what my real name was" than would be expected from the average SCA persona story. It's not entirely true that once a submitter has an acceptable given name that the rest of the name can be anything that he or she wants, but it is much more likely that the rest of the name is going to work if the given name is OK.

The final requirement, according to the phrasing of the rules is that all non-personal names need a designation. As it is stated, "Names for groups or offices must consist of a designation that identifies the group or office and at least one description element." That simply means that if your new incipient Canton is going to register its name, it needs to tell us that it is a Canton. (If it later grows up to be a Barony, we'll fix the designation free of charge. Do remember to tell the Heralds you want it done; we're not the Seneschal and we don't keep records of the status of groups.)

The section on name grammar includes a number of subtexts that are very important. First, it notes that we assume that standard grammar for a language applies unless we are both told otherwise, and provided with documentation that the non-standard form was correct in some time or place. Second, it notes that while names should generally combine elements that are all from a single language ... "a name may be registered that combines languages." It further restricts this option by noting that there is a rule of thumb that languages should only be used together if there was regular contact between the cultures that spoke those languages. That rule of thumb is applied more as if it were an actual rule. Finally, the initial paragraph notes that a name should not combine more than three languages. It is very likely that any name combining more than three languages, or even three languages that were not very, very closely related will be returned for poor style.

The subtext on Linguistic Consistency simply states that if you are going to use a name that includes any phrases or grammatically connected series of words, all of the words in the phrase must be in the same language and the grammar has to be correct for the language. In the small print it also notes that the phrase has to be temporally consistent as well. The only exception to that rule is that the English preposition "of" is considered to be neutral in most circumstances.

The final subtext notes that correct naming practice must be observed for one of the languages in any name. See the explanation with that section of the rules for examples (III.2.b.).

Offensive Names

It might seem that a simple statement that "Offensive names may not be registered ..." would be sufficient, but apparently it was felt that defining community standards was needed in this case. The class of offensive names have been broken down into four subcategories: vulgar names, offensive religious terminology, stereotypical names and offensive political terminology. Wisely or not, it has not been left to Laurel and the College of Arms'

discretion to state when a name is not acceptable for registration for reasons of taste. This might not be such a bad idea. A local person with a vulgar name is merely funny to his friends; if he is interviewed on TV under that name, the entire public perception of the SCA can be adversely affected. The College of Arms cannot make him stop using that name informally, but can refuse it the official stamp of approval.

As it has been invoked to return a name recently, the section of the Rules that deals with Obtrusive Modernity (found under VIII.4 - Compatible Armorial Style) is going to be noted here as well.

In spite of considerable evidence that it is very authentic medieval style, names including pornographic or scatological terms will not be registered. As translations of names in languages other than English is required on the submission forms, putting something rude in Polish isn't going to get it registered. A mildly vulgar name that is documented as period will probably pass, just as long as it doesn't have modern overtones that would offend the average SCA member or the general public.

The next three sections can be lumped together; Magical or religious terminology that is excessive or mocks the beliefs of others will not be registered; Allusions to derogatory ethnic, racial, or sexual stereotypes will not be registered; and Terminology specifically associated with social or political movements, or events that may be offensive to a particular race, religion, or ethnic group will not be registered. It's pretty comprehensive and very rarely invoked. The section most often found is the excessive part, even though religion was a very large, and usually mandatory, part of everyday life in the Middle Ages, the SCA plays down that aspect is very careful not to offend the adherents of any of the numerous religions found in our group.

Although it is not specifically noted in the sections on acceptable naming style, a name that seems to be overly evocative of modern things can also be returned. A recent example was the combination of a common diminutive (Joe) with the name of his branch. It was ruled that while "Joe of Branchname" was fine, and that was the holding name assigned, "Joe Branchname" sounded too much like "Joe Cool" and was obtrusively modern! (This, in the face of evidence that surnames formed from placenames usually lost the preposition "of" during the latter part of our period.) Under the old rules, there was a specific prohibition against joke names, names that were perfectly authentic, but combined to create a pun or a naughty allusion. While this rule no longer exists per se, provisions of the rules above are filling the gap.

Conflicting Names

It's a whole lot easier to summarize the rules on name conflict than it is to copy and analyze them. They are, in a nutshell, three: short names need to differ by at least one significant element from one another; long names need a bit more difference; if two names sound too much alike, they are in conflict. There's a bit more to it than that, but not much.

There are two catch phrases, primary element and significant element. The primary element in a personal name is the given name, and a change of given name is usually all that is needed for sufficient difference. Addition or change of any significant element (a surname, byname, placename, etc.) is sufficient difference as long as both names under consideration have three or fewer parts. ("Hilda Jonsdottir av Lindsted" has three elements. "Mary Catherine Johnson of Greenhall" has four.) If one or more of the names has more than three elements, two of them must be different for the names to be considered sufficiently different.

For a group name of any kind, or a title or order name, the primary element is the noun. This is important in determining conflict among groups, titles, orders, etc. Changing the primary element is always sufficient difference; "Shire of the Iron Hills" would not be in conflict with "Shire of the Iron Castle". However, the "Shire of the Blue Griffin" would be in conflict with "Griffin Herald", because addition (or change) of a modifier isn't enough to avoid conflict, and the designators "Shire" and "Herald" are considered transparent. I do not recommend studying the examples in the rules themselves, as several of them are contradictory.

When determining aural conflict (when two names sound too much alike), spelling variations and translations are not taken into account. Similarly, diminutives are not counted as different from the given name from which they derive; "Bill the Taylor" and "William the Taylor" will be considered to be in conflict.

The final section of the name conflict rules notes that names that imply specific relationships to people, SCA, literary or real, will be considered to be in conflict and won't be registered. The examples given in the rule (V.5) are pretty good for this one, and ought to be noted.

Presumptuous Names

The final section of the rules regarding names concerns presumption. The two rules themselves are pretty explicit: "Names containing titles, territorial claims, or allusions to rank are considered presumptuous" and "Names containing elements that allude to powers that the

submitter does not possess are considered presumptuous.”

Those are pretty straightforward. The examples given under VI.1 include most of the common pitfalls, although they do not note that the specific formations of “clan name of clan seat” and “surname of surname” (where the surnames are the same) imply that the bearer is head of a clan or of a landed family, and are prohibited.

The subtext to VI.2 is also straightforward. It says “Society names may not claim divine descent, superhuman abilities, or other powers that the submitter does not actually possess.” There are several examples given. If a submitter wants to call herself “Isolde the Invisible”, she had better be prepared to demonstrate it to a skeptical College of Arms!

HOW THE WEST KINGDOM REGARDS NAMES

There are some slight, but very definite differences between the West Kingdom's interpretations of the Rules for Submission and the way the rules are actually written when it comes to names.

GOOD NAMING PRACTICE AND SOME TIPS ON NAMING

There are several factors that combine to make a good name. The best names are appropriate, usable and authentic, pleasing to the ear, will wear well, are pronounceable and are unique. Above all, a good name must be a name the submitter wants and will use. It is quite possible to achieve all of these things with some knowledge and some persistence.

The SCA registers formal or legal names. In most periods, that name was determined by a clerk or scribe, if and when a person was involved in any legal or formal religious transaction. Names recorded under those circumstances are the authentic form we are seeking in a good SCA name.

THE APPROPRIATE NAME

When a submitter picks a name, it should be sufficiently formal and complete that it would be appropriate to use in a Court situation. Even the newest newcomer may someday be King or Queen, or receive a Peerage for their service or talents. It behooves a potential member of the nobility to have a name that will not sound undignified under those circumstances or look funny on a scroll. This does not mean that everyone should name themselves like a Victorian princess, with six given names, a surname, and a place name, but it does mean that if a gentle wants to be

called “Willy the Wacky”, he should perhaps register “William of Greenhall” and let his friends call him “Willy” informally. While it is Western tradition that the Royalty is only introduced by their given names and titles, it is not so in all the other Kingdoms, and “King Willy the Wacky” or “Earl Sir Willy the Wacky” lacks the dignity that Royalty and Nobility should show.

Names should also be appropriate for the person bearing them. It is unwise, to say the least, for an inexperienced newcomer who wants to become a fighter to take the name of “Melvin Knightsbane.” Unless Melvin is quite sure that he not only will continue to fight in the Society, but will become good enough to not be laughed at, another name might be better. Similarly, no lady ought to call herself “the Beautiful” unless she has it from several reliable sources that she is, indeed, beautiful. A newcomer ought to consider what kind of garb he or she will be likely to wear, as an Italian renaissance fop with a Viking name is a bit silly. These are not rules by any means, but practical suggestions based on observation of real mistakes.

There are no rules anywhere that say a name must be able to be pronounced correctly by anyone other than the submitter. Common sense would seem to dictate that a desire to educate the masses about the mysteries of Old Lower Slobovian would be better served by teaching a class in said language, rather than registering a name that no one can either say or spell correctly, and then screaming whenever someone messes it up. If someone really wants a really difficult name, he must be resigned to having his friends introduce him by only his given name (or if that is equally impossible, his mundane name), having the heralds flub it every time he is called to the field, not knowing WHO is being called up to court when he gets his Award of Arms, and then probably having the scroll misspelled as well ...

The person who wants a very difficult name should be warned that the name probably will be mispronounced until they are quite well known (which may be a considerable period of time) and if it bothers them, they should either reconsider or add a pronounceable nickname -- before one is earned!

THE AUTHENTIC NAME

Authenticity is the subject of no little debate. One position holds that because a name is one of the first things that a new SCA member gets, they should be not only encouraged, but required to do enough research about their chosen persona to pick an authentic name. The reasoning is that if the submitter will not bother with a real name, he will probably not bother with real

costumes or armor or anything else either. Another position states that the Society is a wonderful opportunity for us to rid ourselves of the name(s) that our parents saddled us with, rules or no rules. Good practice lies between the two extremes, but certainly leans toward the former.

An authentic name is one that comes from documentable medieval, not fantasy, sources. There is nothing inherently wrong with fantasy names and they are not explicitly banned under the rules. Some authors make up names that are in perfect keeping with medieval practice and with the spirit of the Society. If such a name is constructed from legitimate name elements in a period language and naming style, it is probably going to be accepted.

On the other hand, there are always the few submitters who come to the consultation table ready to tell you, the herald, what their names will be. With any luck, he or she read the name in a fairly reliable book and we can document it. Without luck, "the name came to me in a dream" and there is no documentable name anything like it in any of our sources. Only a few years ago, we could submit such a name and have a chance of it passing. Since then, the rules on made-up names have been significantly tightened, and our only hope is that local heralds will steer new people toward real names before they get too attached to anything really made-up.

The greatest offenders among fantasy and made-up names are what the heralds call TSCA names. TSCA stands for "Typical SCA", is pronounced "tisk-ka" and the term can be applied to armory as well. It is not a compliment. A TSCA device tends to be unbalanced and of markedly modern design, and usually uses several different heraldic monsters, or several different weapons, or cute little kitties, or cute little something elses. A TSCA name usually refers to dragons, unicorns, storms, or clouds, or uses too many adjectives. The following (imaginary) names are TSCA names: Melanie of Unicorn Valley, Elric of the Misty Blue Ayries and Jason Stormseeker. (If Jason is a meteorologist, the epithet might be justified.) A TSCA name can also be a perfectly formed name in three languages. From the languages and names used, the persona story of the submitter can usually be guessed at with better than 90% accuracy.

The current interpretation of the rules is becoming rather less lenient about overtly fantastical TSCA names, banning particularly improbable placenames. One consolation is that those with TSCA names and devices sometimes grow out of them, and change them to something more in keeping with the medieval part of the SCA, rather than the fantasy part.

A truly authentic SCA name will be in only one language, or at the very most, two languages. Most people of our period traveled very little and if they settled in an area other than the one of their birth, usually took a new name or a version of their name in the language of their new residence. This is still the case; look at all of the immigrants to new lands in the last several hundred years who took a new name in their new home. Not two hundred years after our time period, one George Friedrich Händel moved from Germany to England and became George Frederick Handel.

In period, most people had very simple names which consisted of one given name plus one or two, (or at the most three) bynames. A byname can be another given name; an epithet, descriptive or nickname; a patronymic; an occupational name; a family surname or a place name.

These would be most likely combined as:

- given name + patronymic (most common)
- given name + surname or occupational name (very common)
- given name + place name (moderately common)
- given name + surname + place name (more formal)
- given name + nickname (less formal, but documented)
- given name + patronymic + place name (more formal, but not common)
- given name + nickname + surname (less common)
- given name + given name + surname (very uncommon in period)

There was no fixed line between surnames, placenames, patronymics and nicknames in most cultures in our time period. What we consider to be a surname now was not necessarily the same thing then. Surnames today usually are derived from a patronymic (Johnson, Olson, McDonald, Jones), or from an occupational epithet (Cook, Schneider, Porter), or from a nickname (Kurtz, Black, Durant), or from a placename (Green, Husted, Ford). Earlier in period most of these kinds of names had prepositions, Michaelle Cook, Friedrich der Schneider, Joan atte Green, Katherine dela Ford; later the prepositions were dropped and what had been a descriptive name became what we think of as a surname.

Two other fairly common, but unauthentic, SCA naming practices need to be mentioned: matronymics and six-bit epithets. They are both often used in SCA names and are marginally acceptable, but they are less than completely authentic practices.

A matronymic is a name indicating that one is the child of a particular woman. In our current mundane society, this would seem to be a very reasonable way to designate which Jennifer belongs to which mother at the day care center. Not so in period. As everyone undoubtedly knows, in almost all cultures and times within the scope of the SCA, children were considered to be their fathers' property. A child's male parent was almost the deciding factor in its existence. Thus, matronymics were very rare in period. Modern feminist research and literature to the contrary, matronymics are not usually authentic, period practice. In period, if someone was identified as the child of a woman, rather than offspring of some man, it was for one of the following reasons:

- 1) It was a matrilineal culture. This was very rare.
- 2) The father's name was unknown. This either means the child was illegitimate by whatever standards the culture applied or there was some great mystery about the parentage. Great Mysteries happen in romantic novels and heroic literature, not in everyday life.
- 3) The father died before the child's birth, and there was no other male relative to claim the infant.
- 4) The mother was much better known than the father. This is similar to the modern "Mr. Barbra Streisand" situation.

Like the use of matronymics, names like Ellen the Elucidator are relatively common in the SCA and not at all authentic. Anyone wanting to be "X the Y", unless the epithet is documented as specifically occurring in period, should be encouraged to adopt a formal name as well. The sort of person who would have had only an epithet in addition to their name was usually a serf or peasant, and they would have used the name of their manor or village or their patronymic on any legal document.

Epithets were a very common way to tell one person from another with the same given name in period. The pool of available given names was quite small by modern standards, and even in the smallest villages there were bound to be several Pedros or Catherines or Olafs. Epithets were formed from all sorts of words and many of them have come into modern times as surnames. They frequently described some physical or social aspect of the person bearing them, and were often not at all complimentary. In period, they were usually comprised of a short, descriptive word or phrase. Although epithets were often applied to those of the upper classes, Edward the Confessor and William Rufus to name two offhand, strictly speaking they were not their names, those gentles

actually had formal names as well. Even the famous Eric the Red was formally known as Eric Thorvaldsson in the introductory part of the sagas.

People who were only called by given name plus epithet combinations were almost always not sufficiently educated to use words like "Obnoxious", "Sententious" or "Superfluous" as part of their name. Instead they would have been known as "X the Jerk" or "Traitor X" or "X Toomany". Those educated persons who would have received a six-bit epithet from their equally educated friends would have possessed real names as well.

NAME CONFLICT

Uniqueness in an SCA name is not often a problem in getting it registered. We check names submitted to the West Kingdom against famous real people and names previously registered in the Society, but we can not guarantee that someone didn't come up with the same name a week ago somewhere else.

When checking for conflict, check the SCA Armorial under not only the exact name the submitter wants, but also for alternate spellings and diminutives, if applicable. When names are checked at the meetings, we also consult dictionaries of biography, dictionaries of fictional characters and, sometimes other sources if the name rings a bell.

An actual conflict problem is with use-names, particularly given names. The West Kingdom has lots of Williams; it also has lots of Sir Williams. They tend to be known by their surnames or epithets instead of their given names. It might be a good idea to steer newcomers away from names that are overused in their area and also away from what could be considered to be notorious names. I'm sure that everyone can think of perfectly good names that are so associated with certain individuals (inside the SCA, or outside the SCA) as to be an unwise choice for the uninformed.

SOURCES FOR NAMES

There are lots of wonderful places to look for names. Until the SCA Names Book and the SCA List of Given Names books get published, the books listed in the bibliography in this handbook are a good place to start.

CONSUMER WARNING!! Be VERY wary about modern “What to Name Your Baby” books. They tend to list all sorts of names, some of which are given names, some of which are very definitely not. In addition, they very rarely give sources for their citations and still more rarely give any dates. They are very big on what a name is supposed to mean and what it signifies. Using a Baby Name Book as a primary source for a name can disappoint the newcomer who doesn't know about our ban on using surnames as given names, for instance, and who sets his or her heart on an unacceptable name. Citing a Baby Name Book as documentation is not considered adequate. Historical novels, like Baby Name Books, are good places to look for ideas but bad places to get documentation. They both need outside confirmation that the name was real, and used in period.

Period history and literature, books of saint's lives (with dates) and period primary sources like genealogies are excellent sources of given names and are considered to be almost de facto sufficient documentation. There are good surname books listed in the bibliography, many of which give medieval sources and forms for the names, and often include excellent documentation for given names as well. Epithets can be constructed from dictionaries if the submitter has enough knowledge of the language to get the translation and grammar correct. Maps and histories are good sources of place names. It is a wonderful thing if the consulting herald has a library of names books; it is far more likely that he or she will have scouted out the available resources in the local public or university libraries.

CONSULTATION

If you are consulting with someone about a name, urge them to quickly choose a documented given name, but to take their time about formulating the rest of the name and registering it. It is recommended that newcomers pick a given name fairly quickly; if they are introduced to everyone in a new group by their new SCA given name, it has a tendency to stick. Bynames can wait until they are more comfortable with who and what they want to be in the group.

Do try to educate newcomers in the very basics of SCA naming right from the start. They need to be able to start out their interactions with the Society on the right foot. They need to know that there are a few basic rules that need to be observed so they do not get attached to a name that is doomed from the start. Most of the general populace knows enough that the very first time a newcomer tries to call herself Eleanor of Aquitaine she can be guaranteed of being corrected; fewer know that the name Smith of Green Valley is unacceptable because

Smith is not a given name. It is much easier to change a surname or place name than a given name in the Society, but people do not adapt quickly to a change in their most common form of address and neither do their friends and acquaintances. Do remind people that the best epithets are given, not assumed.

Remember, what someone has registered and what they are called do not always have to be the same! You can call yourself anything in the SCA that you can convince people to voice, and as long as it isn't too pretentious or offensive, it probably will go unchallenged. A registered name must conform to the rules, and a submitter must be prepared to answer to that name under formal situations but we do not regulate what one is called by friends, or enemies!

HOW TO DOCUMENT NAMES

When a submitter has finally come up with a name he or she likes and is ready to register it, along with the submission forms some documentation is frequently needed. Some kinds of names do not need any documentation at all. If a person wants to call herself “Elizabeth Cook of London”, we do not need to know that “Elizabeth” is an Old Testament name and was common in the Middle Ages in England, “Cook” is a common occupational name or surname and just where London is located. If any part of the name is not common or is in a language other than modern English, then we need to know more about it. We really want to know the following things:

Language - The language of origin of the name, word or phrase should be specified if it is not modern English. Common given names do not have to have their etymology traced if there is evidence that they were used in the Middle Ages. If the submitter does not know the language of origin, it should be further researched before it is submitted. Also please cite specific languages: Celtic, Scandinavian, Slavic, Eastern European and Teutonic are groups of languages; individual languages within those groups are sometimes quite different from one another. If a word or name is clearly not English, we have to guess what it is unless you tell us. Our guess may lead us to conclude that while it LOOKS like a Slavic name, it doesn't appear in any Polish, Czech, Russian, Hungarian, etc. source that we have, and so we send it back to the submitter. When we receive an angry letter telling us that it was a perfectly good Irish Gaelic name we rejected, only the submitter or herald who didn't tell us what it was in the first place is to blame.

Time Period - The time period of a name or word is needed for most submissions and is required for given names.

The rules state that an SCA given name must have been used as a given name in our period; therefore some kind of proof of its use in period should be included in the documentation. For extremely common names, places or words (like any name from the Bible or well-known period literature) only a mention of the origin is needed; we do not need photocopies of pages of the New Testament or of Geoffrey of Monmouth or of Webster's Dictionary. For less common things, merely saying that such a name or word was used in the Middle Ages in a particular country is not enough. That means that the Kingdom staff heralds have to search out a citation in an acceptable source. Please cite a title, author, publisher and page number for the book(s) used as documentation. If the book is not likely to be one that is commonly available, please include photocopies of the relevant page or pages and of the title page of the book.

Meaning and Grammar - By and large, names do not really have meanings, in spite of the "What to Name the Baby" books tell you. People may name their children now with an eye to what the name is supposed to mean, but they did not do so in the medieval period. While many names do translate out to mean something, that meaning has traditionally been far less important to the namer than what the name sounds like, who in the family has previous borne the name, what famous people have borne the name in the cultural history of the namer, and what omens were associated with the name. When the history form asks for the "Language and Meaning" of the names, we do not need to know that the name "Mary comes from the Hebrew and means 'bitter'". However, if the submitter is calling himself Heinrich der Blutsücher, we would like to know that the given name and the epithet are German and that he thinks it means "Heinrich the Blood-Seeker". Then, if the grammar is incorrect, or he says that he thought it meant "Heinrich the Blood-Sucker", we can set him straight.

As the grammar of a name must be correct before it can be passed, we need to know both what language it is supposed to be, and what it is supposed to mean. If the grammar used to construct the name is not modern grammar for the language, we will ask that some documentation (including photocopies) be included to convince us that what is submitted is correct. If a language that is not one of the more common ones used (i.e., not English, French, German, Spanish, Italian or Russian), please include photocopies of the relevant dictionary pages and something to show that the grammar is right. Lots of people look up a few words in a dictionary and string them together to try to make an SCA name. Sometimes the end result is not what they intended. It is the job of the heralds to make sure that they do not embarrass themselves in front of people who do know

something about their language of choice. Admittedly, we most certainly do not know everything either, but we do have some very good resources.

Made-up Names - While it seems silly to ask for documentation for a made-up name, that is now the only way in which one can be passed. Names made up entirely out of someone's imagination are no longer acceptable. The only constructed names now registered are those based on existing names in a period language.

If a name is a new coinage from existing name elements, we need to know from what language the elements come, that they were used in period and that the language in question coined new names. For instance, coining new names from existing name elements can be done with some languages, including Old Norse, Anglo-Saxon and some early Germanic and Slavic languages. New place names can easily be made by using examples in almost all languages. If a name is not really traceable in period sources, but is very similar to one or more period names and is being cited as a variation on an existing name, we need to know about the similar name or names.

Other Considerations - We need to know some other things sometimes too. If a given name is derived from a surname, specific evidence of its use in period as a given name needs to be provided. If a given name is not period, but has been used several times in the SCA, the documentation should cite previous SCA registrations of that name with dates. (This information can be found in the Armorial, but is not, per se, evidence that the name is acceptable.) If a real place is used as a place name, it is nice for us to know where it is located. If someone wants to use the legal name allowance and the name is clearly not a period name (or was not used in period as a given name), we would appreciate it if documentation is included to show that it is in fact the submitter's real, legal given name. If you as the consulting herald have any questions about a name, go ahead and document it if you can; we probably know even less about it than you do because we can't talk to the submitter. If you can't provide great documentation, do the best you can and give us as much information as possible, then we'll take a shot at it. Good Luck.

PHILOSOPHY

Name consultation occupies a unique niche in not only the activities of the College of Heraldry, but in the SCA itself. People's SCA names are a part of their identity - sometimes only a convenient handle to be used during their medieval re-creationist activities, sometimes an alter ego more important to them than any other aspect of their lives. Oftimes a newcomer to the SCA comes in as a blank

slate - eager to learn about the Middle Ages and willing to accept any suggestion. Just as often, the person coming to you for help with a name already has a good idea what he or she wants, either by having selected a portion of the name, by having a specific place or language or time period upon which to concentrate, or by having a meaning or totem to express in a name. Sometimes a submitter comes to you with a name already picked out. If we're lucky, it was inspired by historical research; if we're not, it was found in a baby name book, taken from a role-playing game or fantasy novel, derived in a Scrabble game or "came to me in a dream".

No matter what the situation, the herald consulting on names must be extremely sensitive to the submitter's wants and needs. No matter how twinkie a name is brought to you, you must sternly suppress any expression of distaste. No matter how cute, you'd better not laugh unless the submitter laughs first, and then you get to explain about joke names. Ridicule and sarcasm have no place at the consulting table under any circumstances.

Always remember that it is the goal of the College of Herald's to have people come to us for help, and newcomers to our Society are especially welcomed. From us, they will receive their first impressions of the College of Herald's and often of the entire structure of the SCA. More than one new person has been completely turned off to the SCA because individuals at the consultation table did not display the courtesy and chivalry that is supposed to be the cornerstone of our group.

Some parting words:

"A man's name is not like a mantle which merely hangs about him, and which one perchance may safely twitch and pull, but a perfectly fitting garment, which, like the skin, has grown over him, at which one cannot rake and scrape without injuring the man himself." -- Goethe

This quotation should be the basis of every SCA name consultation. The heralds are the only people in the SCA who routinely say "no" to people; whenever and however they do it, they should always be careful not to injur(e) the man himself.

A few basic rules of consultation can be summarized: always be polite; always be positive; always find something to praise about even the worst of designs and ideas; always break bad news gently and sound as though you really regret it; never demean or belittle a submitter or an idea; never lose your temper; get as much information as possible and never fear to ask your senior officers for help. The rewards of having a submitter say "That's JUST what I wanted!" about your suggestions and designs are only exceeded by your pride when they get registered.