

SECTION VI -- PROTOCOL, TITLES, AWARDS AND PRECEDENCE

6) Sumptuary Customs in the West (January XXI, March XXV)

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Abstract: A review of the customs restricting items of apparel and decoration in the West Kingdom. There aren't many of them.

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SUMPTUARY CUSTOMS IN THE WEST

William the Lucky (January XXI, March XXV, January XXIX)

If you want to know what tokens go with which rank, refer to Section VI.4: Tokens of Rank. This section approaches the problem from the other direction: if you see someone wearing something (or if you are trying to design something into an outfit of your own) what, if anything, will it be assumed to mean?

In general, there are no Sumptuary Laws in the Kingdom of the West, just Sumptuary Customs. This does not mean that they are any less rigorous, just that they are harder to discover and much harder to change. You should also be aware that other Kingdoms have Sumptuary Laws (and/or customs) which can differ dramatically from those here; if you move elsewhere, check on the local customs with the College of Herald's or with a knowledgeable person in your new Kingdom.

Colors and Fabrics:

As you might guess from the above, you can wear any color or fabric which you can afford. If you like velvet, wear velvet. If you can afford silk, feel free to wear silk. If you look good in purple, you can use it extensively.

Banners:

A banner should have your own device on it, not that of someone else. There are no restrictions on size, shape, number, etc. of banners you can display (but you should avoid combinations of number and size which block the view of others). Flags, such as those flown from pavilions, are also generally unrestricted. There is no restriction on displaying of a banner with the arms of the Kingdom at any event held by any branch within the Kingdom, though it should not be displayed by an individual other than the King or Queen. (You should probably make the construction of such a banner a project of the entire branch rather than just putting one together on your own.)

Headgear:

Generally, you can wear anything on your head that you can afford, so long as it does not look like one of the handful of restricted items: the Kingdom Crowns, the Principality Coronets, the Ducal and County Coronets, the wreaths of the Order of the Golden Poppy (Kingdom), the Torse of Valour (Kingdom), and the Torse of Honor (Principality of the Mists). For descriptions of some of these, see the article on Tokens of Rank (Section VI.4). It is recommended that headgear not be made so ornate that it could be mistaken for a Crown worn by visiting Royalty. In general, if you avoid roses and poppies, oak leaves and strawberry leaves, and do not have an embattled top edge, you are unlikely to accidentally cause offense. The Principality Coronets do not feature symbols which you are likely to include by accident.

Wreaths of laurel and/or rosemary leaves are frequently used for the winner of a tourney; unless you have been awarded one that day, it is better to refrain from wearing one (no matter how many you may have won in the past) -- just so you don't confuse people.

Neckwear:

Fealty chains are generally of open links, and do not have anything (except possibly the medallions of other Orders) hanging from them. If you wear such a chain, it will be seen as a Fealty chain; if you wear a chain of small links, or one of the other kinds of pendant(s) hanging from it, it will not be. Peers in fealty do not always wear chains; some wear other kinds, but your use of one of these other kinds will not be seen as presumptuous.

Peerage Collars (collars of plaques, usually of symbols of the order(s) of peerage the person wearing the collar belongs to, possibly interspersed with some personal symbol or token) are reserved for peers, and should be worn by peers in fealty.

Medallions of the various orders are described in the article on Tokens of Rank. If you stick to jewelry which looks like jewelry, you should be clear.

Belt and Baldrics:

White belts and baldrics should only be worn by members of the Order of Chivalry. (Note that 'white' includes silver and various off-whites, and 'belt' includes leather and cloth belts, sashes, etc.) Other colors of belts and baldrics may be worn by anyone in this Kingdom, but may be restricted in some other realms (e.g., red for squires, green for apprentices, etc., etc., etc.). Generally the Chivalry are tolerant of others who wear an outfit which happens to have a white band around the middle as part of its color scheme, provided the wearer does not use only that sort of color scheme in all of their outfits. That means you can wear a white stripe or a white rope around your waist once in a while without having the world come crashing down around your head. But if you wear the same white stripe with several different outfits, you will be expected to have earned it, and will earn criticism if you have not.

A simple, single color, baldric with the symbol of the office on it is often used by officials when they are on duty. So long as you avoid the color and symbol combinations used by the offices (red with a gold key, green with gold trumpets, black with gold swords, etc.) you can wear any kind of non-white baldric you like. You should be aware that if you are wearing the baldric (or tabard, or anything else) with the symbol of an office on it, you are assumed to be on duty and available for work.

Spurs:

Anyone may wear spurs when appropriate, i.e., when riding. At other times, anything more than prick-spurs are a safety hazard to others and should be avoided.