

SECTION X -- ARMORY -- TECHNICAL

8) Reserved and Prohibited Charges (May, XXXII)

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Abstract: College of Arms list of Reserved and Prohibited Charges. Reprinted with permission.

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RESERVED AND PROHIBITED CHARGES

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The following is a list of charges which have been ruled to not be allowable in SCA armory. There can never be a totally exhaustive list of unregistrable charges, for several reasons: Any charge can be drawn in such a way as to be unrecognizable, and therefore unregistrable; Any item which does not have a standard form would be unregistrable (since it could not be reliably reproduced from a blazon); Offensive charges and modern charges would also be on this list. However, this list should do two things: First, it should help you to avoid the majority of charges which have been ruled to be not allowable in registered armory; Second, it should give you a good idea of why charges are ruled to be unacceptable, and therefore you might be better equipped to judge whether an unusual charge someone shows you might end up being allowed or disallowed. (Caution: Unless you know, for a fact, that the Laurel Sovereign of Arms will not register a particular charge in question, do not tell people that "such and such" is not allowed. Instead explain to them why other things have been disallowed in the past and make them aware that similar problems might apply to their idea.)

Be sure to read the descriptions thoroughly, to understand whether or not all uses of the charge will cause a submission to be returned, or if only particular uses are disallowed (for example, the entry for Belt shows that only Knights of the SCA can use white belts in their armory; this does not prevent non-Knights from using other-colored belts). One thing you will not see on this list: Charges which are allowed in one Kingdom but not another. This is because there are no such charges. Let me say this again: There are no charges which are disallowed only in a particular part of the SCA. This is because the Laurel Sovereign of Arms, and only Laurel, determines what practices are or are not allowable in SCA armory.

I have compiled this list from several sources, primarily from the SCA Glossary of Terms [Glossary] (available from the SCA Marketplace), Laurel Cover Letters [CL], and Letters of Acceptances and Returns [LoAR]. In most cases I have probably not found the original source of the restriction, but a re-statement. Where possible I have tried to find recent re-statements and clarifications on the prohibited use.

Baldric - White baldrics can only be used in the armory of Masters of Arms. [Glossary]

Belt - White belts can only be used in armory of Knights of the Society. [Glossary]

Bog Beast - An SCA-invented, rather than period, heraldic monster. [LoAR 4/94, p.17]

Cap of Maintenance (also Chapeu) - Reserved to members of the Order of the Pelican. [Glossary]

Chain - Closed loops of chain (of any color) are reserved to members of the Knighthood. (Links of chain are not restricted) [Glossary]

Chaplet of Roses - Reserved to Princesses. [Glossary]

Cross coupé gules - Reserved by International treaty to the International Red Cross. [LoAR 5/92, p.25]

Cross of flame (or composed of flame) - Offensive. Representative of the Ku Klux Klan. [Glossary]

Crowns & Coronets - May only be registered in the arms of Society branches of Principality level or above, or in the personal armory of Dukes, Duchesses, Counts, Countesses, Viscounts, and Viscountesses. [Glossary]

Crowned Rose - Royal Badge of England. [Glossary]

Crowned Shamrock - Royal Badge of Ireland. [Glossary]

Crowned Thistle - Royal Badge of Scotland. [Glossary]

Donnelly Knot - An SCA-invented, rather than period, heraldic charge. [LoAR 9/96, p.8]

Double tressure flory counter-flory (and variants) - Used in Scottish armory as a Royal Augmentation. [Glossary]

Fangs - Have no standard form and therefore cannot be accurately reproduced from a blazon.

Flames - Flames are allowable as charges, but must be drawn correctly. This means that flames "proper" cannot be drawn as "a flame gules, fimbriated Or" (or vice-versa). They should be drawn as alternating gules and Or (or, Or and gules) tongues of flame. [CL 5/95, p.3]

Flames (charges composed of) - Charges composed of flames are not allowed, both because of a lack of period evidence and because the identifiability of the charge is always severely reduced. [LoAR 7/94, p.11]

Fleur-de-lys (gold fleur-de-lys on blue fields) - The use of three, or a semy of, gold fleur-de-lys on anything blue is so strongly associated with the Royalty of France that their use in SCA arms is considered presumptuous. [Glossary]

Gateway - As opposed to towers or domed arches (both of which are period charges), this picture of two towers with a partially open gate between them (as can be found in the Pictorial Dictionary) is an SCA-invention. [LoAR 11/96, p.1]

Hands of glory (hands enflamed or on flames) - Associated with "black magic". [Glossary]

Imperial Dragon (five-toed Chinese Dragon) - A symbol of the Emperor of China. [Glossary]

Lightning flash (shazam style lightning bolt) - There is a period form for a lightning bolt, but it is not the same as what we modernly draw (sometimes called a "shazam", after similar comic book illustrations). [LoAR 8/83, p.6]

Lisbjerg gripping beast - Not a period (or for that matter, modern) heraldic beast. [LoAR 12/95, p.23]

Mitre - Only used in arms of bishops.

Pallium (a pall whose lower edge is couped & fringed) - Only found in arms of archbishops.

Papal Cross - Granted only by the Pope. [Glossary]

Pelican in its piety (or pelican vulning itself) - Can only be used in armory of members of the Order of the Pelican. [Glossary]

Pentacle (also the Pentagram) - Associated (rightly or wrongly) with satanism and "the occult". [Glossary]

Red Hand of Ulster - Used as an augmentation in England. [Glossary]

Ribbon - Not a re-constructable charge. This means that ribbons may not appear by themselves, however, uses where the ribbon is not a significant design element (a falcon "belled and jessed", or a hawk's lure on a ribbon) would still be registerable. [LoAR 9/94, pp.15-16]

Rivenstar - Not a period charge. [LoAR 8/92, p.32]

Rose en soleil - Badge of the Plantagenet family. [Glossary]

Royal Dragon (four-toed Chinese Dragon) - Symbol of the Ruler of Korea. [Glossary]

Snowflake - There is no "standard" snowflake, and therefore the design cannot be accurately reproduced from the blazon. Also, there is a period charge which is visually similar - the escarbuncle. [CL 8/94, p.2]

Swastika (also called Fylfot) - Despite its (albeit rare) existence as a period charge, it is too reminiscent of Nazi Germany to be registered in SCA armory. [Glossary]

Three-headed Eagle (displayed) - Badge of the Holy Roman Emperor.

Tooth or Teeth - As with fangs (above), having no standard form, they cannot be accurately reproduced from a blazon.

Triskellion Gammadion (looks like a 3-armed Swastika) - Offensive. A symbol of one of the branches of the Nazi SS, and currently used by a pro-apartheid, white-supremacist group. [LoAR 9/92, p.39]

Tudor Rose (a white & red rose combined) - Badge of the House of Tudor. [Glossary]

Two straight trumpets crossed in saltire - Reserved to registrations of seals of Principal Heralds. [Glossary]

Wreath (laurel wreath) - May only be registered in the arms of Society branches. [Glossary]

Wreath of Roses - Reserved to Queens and members of the Order of the Rose. [Glossary]