

SECTION XII -- WHAT TO TELL A NEW PERSON

1) A Very Basic Introduction (August, XXI)

Author: Eilis O'Boirne

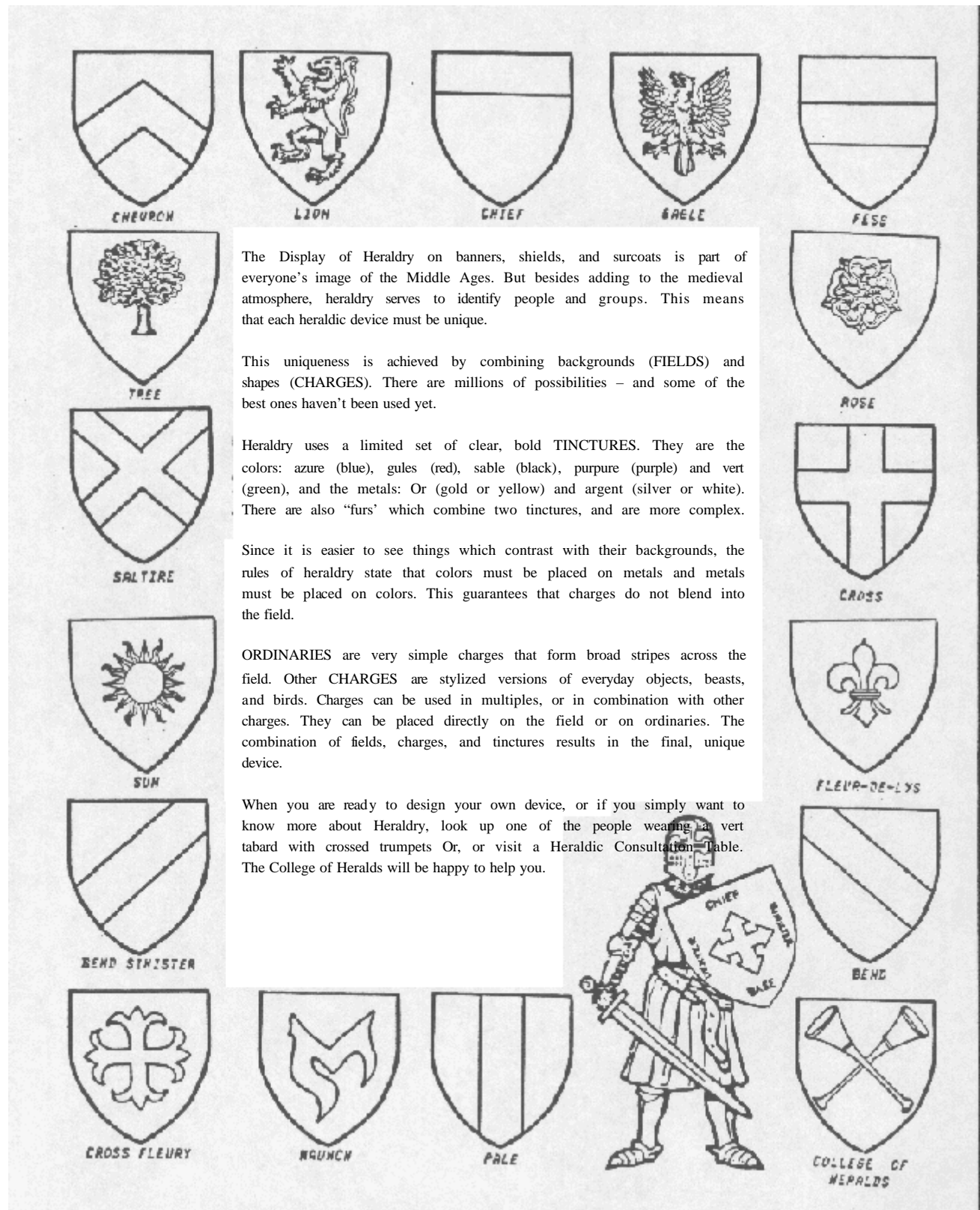
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Abstract: Reprint of the page on Heraldry from Queen Carol's Guide to the SCA, with permission to reprint.

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The Display of Heraldry on banners, shields, and surcoats is part of everyone's image of the Middle Ages. But besides adding to the medieval atmosphere, heraldry serves to identify people and groups. This means that each heraldic device must be unique.

This uniqueness is achieved by combining backgrounds (FIELDS) and shapes (CHARGES). There are millions of possibilities – and some of the best ones haven't been used yet.

Heraldry uses a limited set of clear, bold TINCTURES. They are the colors: azure (blue), gules (red), sable (black), purple (purple) and vert (green), and the metals: Or (gold or yellow) and argent (silver or white). There are also "furs" which combine two tinctures, and are more complex.

Since it is easier to see things which contrast with their backgrounds, the rules of heraldry state that colors must be placed on metals and metals must be placed on colors. This guarantees that charges do not blend into the field.

ORDINARIES are very simple charges that form broad stripes across the field. Other CHARGES are stylized versions of everyday objects, beasts, and birds. Charges can be used in multiples, or in combination with other charges. They can be placed directly on the field or on ordinaries. The combination of fields, charges, and tinctures results in the final, unique device.

When you are ready to design your own device, or if you simply want to know more about Heraldry, look up one of the people wearing a vert tabard with crossed trumpets Or, or visit a Heraldic Consultation Table. The College of Heralds will be happy to help you.

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