Armory 102 – Charge Group Theory and Style Rules

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Charge Group Theory

• SCA invention – SENA Appendix I
• A charge group is a group of charges of approximately the same size and visual weight that act as a single visual unit
• Most of our style and conflict rules are built around charge groups
• “Core” style devices must be organizable into charge groups

Charge Group Theory

• Primary Charge Group
  – Always placed directly on the field
  – Placed in the visual center of the field
  – Usually the largest charge group
  – Not all devices have a primary charge group
  – A central ordinary is (almost) always the primary charge group
Charge Group Theory

• Primary Charge Group

• Bend

Charge Group Theory

• Primary Charge Group

• Two Bendlets

Charge Group Theory

• Primary Charge Group

• A lion
Charge Group Theory

• Primary Charge Group

• Three lions

Charge Group Theory

• Primary Charge Group

• Semy of lions

Charge Group Theory

• Primary Charge Group

• A cross
Charge Group Theory

• Primary Charge Group
  – On a divided field with no central charge, the charges on either side of the division are the primary charge group.

Charge Group Theory

• Primary Charge Group
  – A lion and a cross

Charge Group Theory

• Primary Charge Group
  – A lion and semy of Crosses
Charge Group Theory

• Primary Charge Group

• Two crosses and an owl

Charge Group Theory

• Primary Charge Group

• An owl

Charge Group Theory

• Primary Charge Group

– A peripheral ordinary (chief, base, bordure, canton, orle, etc.) can never be a primary charge

– Field-primary armory

  • Armory with no primary charge group is considered to be Field-primary, and has special rules

  • Two possible ways this can happen:

    – No charges at all
    – Peripheral ordinaries only
Charge Group Theory

- Secondary Charge Group
  - Always placed directly on the field
  - Generally "surrounds" the primary charge group
  - Cannot have a secondary without a primary group

Charge Group Theory

- Secondary Charge Group
  - Primary: a chevron
  - Secondary: three roundels

Charge Group Theory

- Secondary Charge Group – peripheral ordinary
  - Primary: a bend
  - Secondary: a bordure
Charge Group Theory

- Secondary Charge Group – semy
- Primary: a cross
- Secondary: semy of lions

Charge Group Theory

- Tertiary Charge Group
  - Placed on another charge, not on the field
  - A single charge may only have one tertiary charge group on it

Charge Group Theory

- Tertiary Charge Group - Ok
- Primary: a pale
- Tertiary: three mullets
Charge Group Theory

- Tertiary Charge Group - Ok

- Primary: a pale
- Tertiary: a tower between two mullets

Charge Group Theory

- Tertiary Charge Group – No

- Primary: a chevron
- Tertiary 1: tower
- Tertiary 2: mullet

Charge Group Theory

- Overall Charge Group
  - Crosses the center of the field
  - Placed partially on the field and partially on other charges
  - Underlying charge is the primary charge
  - Can only have one overall charge group in any device
  - In period, the overall charge is almost always a bend
  - Overall charge must be substantially on the field
Charge Group Theory

• Overall Charge Group - Ok

• Primary: a lion
• Overall: a bend

Charge Group Theory

• Overall Charge Group – “barely” overall - No

• Primary: a pale
• Overall: a mullet

Charge Group Theory

• Maintained/Sustained charges
  – “Held” by another charge, usually a primary
  – Maintained charges are much smaller than the primary charge
    • Considered artistic detail
    • Do not count for difference
  – Sustained charges are more than ½ of the visual weight of the primary charge, but less that the total visual weight
    • Considered a secondary charge
Charge Group Theory

• Maintained/Sustained charges
  – Co-primary charge
    • “Held” charge has equal visual weight to the primary charge
    • Considered part of the primary charge group

Charge Group Theory

• Maintained Charge
  • Primary: a dragon
  • Maintained: a sword

Charge Group Theory

• Sustained Charge
  • Primary: a dragon
  • Sustained secondary: a sword
Rules of Heraldry – Blazon

- Azure, three fleurs-de-lys Or.
- Arms of France

Images from St. Machar’s Cathedral, Aberdeen, ca AD 1520

Rules of Heraldry – Blazon

- Or semy of eagles azure, a cross gules.
- Sir (Thomas) Cheney, Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports

Images from Insignia Anglica, mid 16C

Rules of Heraldry – Blazon

- Or, five mullets of eight points two, one, and two gules within a bordure azure.
- Arms of the Chefe Barbedo (Portugal)
Rules of Heraldry – Blazon

• Gules, two swords in saltire proper between four roses in cross argent.

Images from Insignia Anglica, mid 16C

Rules of Heraldry – Blazon

• Argent, a lion gules, a bordure sable semy of roundels Or.
• Count of Cornwall

Images from Insignia Anglica, mid 16C

Rules of Heraldry – Blazon

• Azure, on a bend gules between two mermaids argent, three fleurs-de-lys Or.
• Arms of the Chefe Ornelas (Portugal)
Rules of Heraldry – Blazon

• Checky
  Or and azure.
• Count of Warren

Images from Insignia Anglica, mid 16C

Rules of Heraldry – Blazon

• Barry
  argent and gules.

Images from Insignia Anglica, mid 16C

Rules of Heraldry – Blazon

• Or,
  three chevronels
  Gules.
• Count of Clare

Images from Insignia Anglica, mid 16C
Rules of Heraldry – Blazon

• Or,
  a chief indented sable.

Images from Insignia Anglica, mid 16C

Armory Rules – Types of Armory

• Individual submitters are allowed six pieces of armory
  – Device
  – Badges
• SCA Branches may register any number of pieces of armory
  – Device
  – Badges

Armory Rules – Types of Armory

• Device
  – One device per submitter
  – Becomes “Arms” when granted an AoA
  – Identifies “This is me”
  – Submitted on a shield-shaped form
Armory Rules – Types of Armory

• Badge
  – Multiple badges permitted
  – A badge can be an alternate device
  – A badge is used to identify “This is mine”
    • Possessions
    • Household members
    • Retinue
  – Can have a field or be fieldless
  – Submitted on a square-shaped form

Armory Rules – Types of Armory

• Armory with a field (A3A1)
  – Field is specified – solid tincture or partitioned
• Fieldless badges (A3A2)
  – Do not have a defined field
  – Can be displayed on any background
  – All charges must touch one another
    • “Cast out of metal” rule

Armory Rules – Contrast

• Rule of Tinctures (A3B)
  – Don’t place a metal on a metal or a color on a color
• Good Contrast
  – Metal and color
  – Metal and neutral
  – Color and neutral
Armory Rules – Contrast

• Good contrast is required when a charge is placed on a background (A3B4)
  – Identifiability must be maintained

[Diagram showing good and poor contrast examples]

Armory Rules – Contrast

• Divided fields (and charges) (A3B3)
  – Fields divided into two parts
    • Don’t need good contrast
    • Can’t have the same base tincture

[Diagram showing examples of divided fields]

Armory Rules – Contrast

• Divided fields (and charges) (A3B3)
  – Fields divided into three parts (per pall)
    • Need good contrast between one part and the other two
    • No two parts can share the same tincture or base tincture

[Diagram showing examples of divided fields with tinctures]
Armory Rules – Contrast

• Divided fields (and charges) (A3B3)
  – Fields divided quarterly or per saltire
    • Don't need good contrast
    • Can't have the same base tincture
  – All other field divisions must have good contrast

Armory Rules – Charge Groups

• Clarity of charge group (A3D1)
  – Charges must be clearly organized into charge group
  – Blurring the distinction between charge groups is not permitted

Armory Rules – Charge Groups

• Slot Machine (A3D2a)
  – A charge group may not contain more than two types of charges
  – Posture, tincture, etc. don't count
Armory Rules – Charge Groups

• Unity of Posture (A3D2c)
  – Charges in a charge group must be either
    • In identical postures/orientations, or
    • In a period arrangement which includes posture/orientation
  – Crescents are an exception

Disallowed Elements

• Restricted Charges (A6B1, GoT Table 3)
  – Charges which may not be used by anyone
  – Examples:
    • Red Cross/Crescent (Symbol of the IRC)
    • Crowned Rose (Symbol of England)
    • Swastika/fylfot (Offensive)
    • Etc.

Disallowed Elements

• Reserved Charges (A6B2, GoT Table 2)
  – Charges which may only be used by certain submitters
  – Examples:
    • White belt (Reserved for Knights)
    • Laurel wreath (Reserved for Society Branches)
    • Chaplet of roses (Reserved for Princesses)
    • Etc.
Disallowed Elements

• Unregisterable Charges (A2B5)
  – Charges which may not be registered as they are not period
  – Generally set by precedent
  – Examples:
    • Garden Rosebud
    • Ribbon
    • Selkie
    • Etc.

Disallowed Elements

• Step from Period Practice (SFPP) (A2B4, Appendix G)
  – One SFPP is permitted in a device, two or more are grounds for return
  – Non-European Armorial Elements
    • Islamic
    • Japanese
    • May require an IAP

Disallowed Elements

• Step from Period Practice (SFPP) (A2B4, Appendix G)
  – Non-European Plants and Animals
    • Except those used in period heraldry
    • Must be from a part of the world known to period Europeans
      – Interiors of Africa, North America not allowed
      – Northern Asia and Australia not allowed
      – Gray period is of limited use
    – Other charges and motifs listed in Appendix G or by precedent
Presumption

- Restricted or Reserved Charges (A6B)
  - Use of a restricted charge is prohibited as presumptive or offensive
  - Use of an un-earned reserved charge is prohibited as presumptive

Presumption

- Arms of Pretense or Augmentation (A6C)
  - A single charged escutcheon or charged canton may only be used by a submitter who has been granted an Augmentation of Arms (Augmentation of Honor)

Presumption

- Marshalling (A6F)
  - Marshalling is the combination of two or more arms into a single design
  - Not registerable in the SCA
  - We are assumed to each earn our own arms
Presumption

• Marshalling (A6F)
  – Only occurs on a Per Pale field (dimidiation or impaling) or a Quarterly field
  – Only occurs with a plain line of division

No

Ok

Presumption

• Marshalling (SEN A6F)
  – A single primary charge group over the whole field removes the appearance of marshalling

Ok

Ok

Presumption

• Combination of Name and Device (A6D)
  – Even if a name and device are independently acceptable, a combination of the two may be presumptuous
  – Examples
    • “York” and a white rose
    • “Lancaster” and a red rose
Final Thoughts

• Registerable vs. Authentic
  – A submission must be registerable; it need not be authentic
  – While we can encourage clients to design period-looking armory, we cannot, and should not, force the decision
  – If a client is set on a registerable but not very authentic submission, you should process it!

Final Thoughts

• Customer Service
  – It is our job to help our clients
  – We are here to make registrations happen, not prevent them from happening
  – When consulting, help clients create registerable submissions they like
  – When commenting, look for reasons to allow registration, not prohibit it
  – Heralds want a reputation for being helpful, not obstructionist!

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