

There and Back Again: A Submission's Tale

by Lillia de Vaux (Rebecca S. Johnson)

They Returned My Submission, Now What?

In most cases, heraldic submissions make it through the process without a problem, or with only minor changes. Some submitters, however, get the unfortunate news that their name or armory was returned. This class will discuss common reasons for return (and thus, how to avoid them), and how to fix the problems and resubmit.

Common Reasons for Return - Names

Lack of documentation or inadequate documentation

All parts of a name must be documented, and lack of documentation is grounds for administrative return of a submission. By documentation, we mean a summary of the information, full citations for the sources used (name, author, publisher, URL, etc), and photocopies or printouts from the sources. The *only* sources exempt of the requirement to provide copies are listed in Appendix H of the Administrative Handbook (<http://heraldry.sca.org/laurel/admin.html#APPENDIXH>).

There are several reasons why we require copies: (a) so we can verify the information, (b) so we can assess the quality of the source, and (c) so that we can recreate the information – in the case of web sources – if a URL goes dead. An example of the last was seen in a recent return, although it was for an armorial submission, not a name:

Additionally, the documentation consisted of a one-page summary, which contained citations of several web pages. No printouts were provided for any of those websites. Printouts of any source not in Appendix H of the Administrative Handbook are required by section IV.C.2 of the Administrative Handbook. The reason such printouts are required for web pages is shown in this submission: One of the web pages cited in this submission was hosted on Geocities, and accessed on March 5, 2009. Geocities was taken off the web as of October 27, 2009. It is, therefore, impossible to verify the submitter's documentation. [Dietrich von Sachsen, Dec. 2009]

We not only require copies, but we also need trustworthy sources. Some of the books listed in Appendix H are of very high quality and are included for that reason. Others are on the list because they are easily found and purchased. Limitations and shortcomings of the sources are described in the appendix, which also includes a list of books to be avoided or used with caution. A book that we don't recommend should not be used as sole documentation for a name, as it will not be considered adequate. Many baby name books fall into this category, largely because they either don't provide dates for the names, or they "normalize" or standardize the spellings (i.e., use modern forms). Genealogical records, encyclopedias, and general/popular histories also frequently normalize names, so must be similarly approached with caution.

For non-personal names, like award, order, and household names, and heraldic titles, we need similar documentation to show that the name is plausible in period. Specifically, it has to follow the “meta-patterns” that we can document.

[Award of the Rising Star] This name is being returned for lack of documentation of the construction of the order name. No documentation was provided, and the College found none, that an abstract descriptive such as Rising was used to modify a noun such as Star in period order names. Barring such documentation, this name must be returned. [Ansteorra, Kingdom of, Sept. 2001]

Documentation also includes any necessary petitions for group names, letters of permission to presume or to document legal relationships for use with the grandfather clause, etc. Requirements for and examples of these are found in the Administrative Handbook.

Incompatible combination of languages

Even though a member might have a very elaborate persona story to explain why they have a first name from one culture and a last name from another (“my father was a French merchant and my pregnant mother was kidnapped by Barbary pirates and taken to Japan...”), names must be historically plausible in order to be registered. This is one of the few areas of the SCA where a “reasonable attempt” isn’t necessarily good enough. We have to be able to show that a significant mixing of cultures could have occurred in the time period desired. A table of compatible and incompatible languages is found at http://www.ellipsis.cx/~liana/sca/weirdness_table.html.

Some combinations are considered possible, but not significantly so, and are classified as a “step from period practice” (SFPP), formerly known as a “weirdness” – these are still registerable as long as it is the only SFPP in the name. Others are not allowed at all, as being implausible during our period. If we don’t have a precedent addressing a specific combination, then documentation needs to be found to make a case for it. If this isn’t provided with the submission, commenting heralds try to fill in the gaps; however, consulting heralds and submitters shouldn’t count on us being able to find the information we need in the short time we have to comment.

As documented, this name is a mixture of an English given name and a placename found in a Latin document of a 13th C placename in what is modern day Romania. The language of this placename is unclear, although it is documented as an early name of the place known today as Brasov. Most popular websites about Brasov indicate that barasu is a Pecheneg word meaning "fortress;" Pecheneg is an Eastern European language that became extinct around the 12th C. As there is no evidence of contact between English and Pecheneg speakers (or, for that matter, Romanian speakers), such combinations are not registerable. The submitter noted the Latin name Lucianus, and the modern Polish name Lucjan, but neither of these support the form Lucian. Because the submitter will not accept major changes, we are forced to return this name. [Lucian Barasu, Feb. 2008]

Incompatible time periods

The rule of thumb that we follow is that all name elements must be dated within a 300-year time span. The thinking behind this is that the available pool of names, grammar, and naming patterns changed over time, especially as cultures came into contact with others and languages evolved.

Not only did languages change over time, the pool of names that were in use changed over time as well. Therefore, when one element in a name is only dated early and another is only dated late, it is unlikely that these two elements would have been appeared in the same name. The greater the temporal disparity, the less likely these name elements would have appeared together. RfS III.1 states in part that "Each name as a whole should be compatible with the culture of a single time and place." Currently, there is no weirdness for elements that are dated within 300 years of one another, but there is a weirdness for elements dated between 300 and 1000 years apart. Elements that are dated more than 1000 years apart are not registerable, due to the significant temporal disparity. [Sáerlaith an Einigh, Nov. 2002]

Yes, this means that a submitter can be penalized twice for a large temporal disparity: one SFPP for the disparity itself, and another if the language changed in that period:

An Old English given name which cannot be dated after 750 combined with a Middle English byname which cannot be dated before 1100 counts as two steps from period practice. The first comes from the combination of the two languages, Old English and Middle English. This lingual combination is a step from period practice because of the differences in the grammar and orthography of the two languages, as well as the fact that there is only a very brief period of time where it makes sense to speak of both languages being used at the same time. The second step from period practice is because of the temporal disparity of the elements; this step from period practice would be present regardless of the language of the two elements, because temporal disparities account for changes in the name pool and in the available name patterns, not for changes in the language.

Compare this with the case of an Old English given name which is dated to 950 combined with a Middle English byname which cannot be dated before 1100. This combination is just one step from period practice, for the lingual disparity. Compare it also with the case of a Middle English given name which cannot be dated after 1125 and a Middle English byname which cannot be dated before 1450. This combination is also just one step from period practice, for the temporal disparity. [Sáerlaith an Einigh, Nov. 2002]

As stated earlier, a name with one SFPP is registerable; a name with two is not.

Use of presumptuous or legendary names, or names that claim powers or honors

Not only do we have to show that a name was used in our period, we have to show that it was used by **normal humans** in period. Names of deities are generally not allowed. Similarly, we don't allow people to register names that claim they are of supernatural descent, unless the parent's name is also part of the regular naming pool for that culture.

Belphoebe is a name unique to Spenser's The Faerie Queen. This character, the Fairie Queen, was an allegory for Elizabeth I. Belphoebe is unregisterable for two reasons. First, as it is allegorical, rather than being the name of a regular human character, it is not registerable as a name from period literature. Additionally, since Belphoebe was the name of the Faerie Queen, this name violates RfS VI.2, "Names containing elements that allude to powers that the submitter does not possess are considered presumptuous Such claims include ... given names that were never used by humans". [Belphoebe de Givet, Feb. 2002]

The patronymic was submitted as Thorrason on the LoI, changed at kingdom from Thorson. It is clear from the data given by Fellows Jensen (Scandinavian Personal Names in Lincolnshire and Yorkshire, s.n. çrr) that the given name Thor was used in England, and (Black, s.n. Thor) has Scottish examples. Fellows Jensen labels the name Anglo-Scandinavian and notes that there is no clear evidence of its use by human beings in Scandinavia...We have therefore restored the submitter's original patronymic, slightly modifying the spelling to conform to normal Scandinavian practice. [Thjodric Thorsson, Jan. /1996]

Lastly, if a name can be returned if it was only used by one prominent historical figure, or is too evocative of one:

This name is being returned for conflict with Edward the Black Prince, son of Edward III who was created Earl of Chester in 1333, Duke of Cornwall in 1337, and Prince of Wales in 1343 (Cambridge Biographical Encyclopedia s. n. Edward the Black Prince).

RfS V.1.c reads,

Protected historical personal names are protected in all of the forms in which they commonly appear. Charlemagne, which becomes Carolus Magnus in Latin and Karl der Grosse in German, is protected in all three forms.

Longstanding precedent says that Edward Duke of Cornwall would conflict with Edward of Cornwall. Thus the question that has to be answered is whether the prince was known as Edward Duke of Cornwall. If so, this submission is in conflict with him. If not, this submission is not in conflict with him. ...

As he was created Duke of Cornwall in 1337 and Prince of Wales in 1343, there is a six year period where his primary title was Duke of Cornwall. During this time, it is reasonable to assume that he was commonly known as Edward, Duke of Cornwall. As such, this submission is in conflict with him and must be returned. [Edward of Cornwall, Aug. 2001]

No changes or major changes allowed

The example of Lucian Barasu above demonstrates another common reason for return: the submitter has declined to permit major changes or any changes at all. Changes like correcting the spelling or grammar of a name are “minor changes”. “Major changes” are actions like changing the language, adding or removing an element, and changing order of elements.

Many submissions cannot be registered without some kind of change, usually minor. Selecting the “no changes” boxes ties the hands of the heralds and can force us to return a name because we can’t fix it:

Precedent requires that descriptive bynames in Old Norse may only be registered in all lowercase letters. We would change the name to Broddi hornabrótr, but the submitter will accept no changes. Therefore, we are forced to return this name. [Broddi Hornabrátr, Feb. 2008]

Use of “SCA-compatible” or “problem” names

Some names historically used by SCA members (if you’ll pardon the pun), have since been found to have no historical basis in our period. Some of these were originally from fantasy literature such as *The Lord of the Rings* or were post-period inventions that were thought to be found in period. Some of these “traditional” names were allowed to be registered on the basis that they were very popular in the SCA and it wouldn’t be fair not to allow their use. However, as the Society matured, and our knowledge of period naming practices improved, these names have become phased out and are not often submitted. As a result, these “SCA-compatible” names were finally ruled unregistrable, effective May 2009. Now, if a submitter wants to register one of these names, the submission is subject to the same standards of documentation as any other name. Not all of these names are disallowed entirely, but they were either not used or were used very narrowly in our period.

For more information, see <http://heraldry.sca.org/laurel/names/returned-names.html>, and The Academy of Saint Gabriel’s Problem Names Project, (<http://www.medievalscotland.org/problem/>).

Conflict

Name uniqueness (and thus, conflict) is an area where SCA heraldry departs the most from period practice. Whereas in period, we see a few very popular names used over and over, and many identical names in families, we do not allow identical names to be registered in the SCA. Due to the vast pool of names out there, personal name conflicts are actually infrequent. We most often have them when a submission uses a diminutive or variant of an already-registered name, or sounds or looks (in writing) too similar to another:

However, de Flandre is significantly different from le Flemyng because Flandre and Flemyng are significantly different in sound and appearance. York is equivalent to York, Münstermann is equivalent to von Münster, and Undertheclyf is equivalent to del Clif and Cliff. Zum Roten Löwen 'at the Red Lion' is significantly different from zum Löwen and from zum Blauen Löwen 'at the Blue Lion'. Lion (from a sign name) is not significantly different from de Lyon because the bynames do not differ significantly in appearance.

The comparison between the bynames Cordovera 'Cordovan' and de Cordova 'of Cordova' is parallel to the comparison between the RfS example comparing Der Brabanter and von Brabant. In both cases, the particle [sic] are irrelevant to determining the difference between the names. The substantive elements have the same level of difference as the example Brabanter and Brabant. Cordovera and Cordova have the same level of difference as Brabanter and Brabant. Just as Der Brabanter and von Brabant conflict per RfS V.1.a.ii.(b), Cordovera and de Cordova also conflict. [Elena de Cordova, Sept. 2003]

This name conflicts with Kate the Green (registered in July 1998). Kate is a diminutive of Catherine, and the bynames Greene and the Green are equivalent. [Catheryne Greene, May 2003]

Non-personal name conflicts are more frequent. Due to our rules, we don’t consider the “designator” part of the name (e.g., House or Pursuivant) or a branch name when determining conflict:

[Rapier Herald] This name conflicts with the household name Dreiburgen School of Rapier, which was registered to the barony of Dreiburgen in October 1995. School is the designator in this household name and is transparent for conflict purposes. The addition of a group reference, such as Dreiburgen, is normally transparent for conflict purposes. However, previous precedent (including The Order of the White Scarf of Caid (Caid, Kingdom of; Acceptances, Caid, April 1997) and Order of the Golden Swan of Aneala (Aneala, Barony of; Acceptances, Lochac, July 1999) has ruled that a group reference is enough difference to clear the conflict when used in conjunction with a letter of permission to conflict.

This title does not conflict with Carolingian Rapier Company (Carolingia, Barony of, November 1989), Rapier Champion (Atlantia, Kingdom of, March 1994), or Baronial Rapier Champion (Ponte Alto, Barony of, April 2001) because these items are generic identifiers and are not actually registered items. Generic identifiers are "functional, generic, and thus not held to conflict standards" (Cover Letter for the January 1993 LoAR). They may optionally include a reference to the branch name, but such a reference does not negate the generic nature of the identifier. [Ansteorra, Kingdom of, Dec. 2003]

Common Reasons for Return – Armory

Conflict

The most common reason for return is conflict with other registered or protected armory. This is the hardest to avoid, as conflict checking is one of the most complicated tasks for a herald to learn. Our rules of conflict are designed to emulate the so-called "core style" of period rules of cadency, or differencing of arms. We typically require two "differences" (CDs) from other registered or protected armory.

In addition, we have something called "visual conflict" where – even if a design was technically clear by counting CDs – two pieces of armory are considered to appear nearly identical when compared side-by-side (we literally hold them up together). Unfortunately, visual conflicts generally can't be predicted because we conflict check from blazons (the words), and visual conflicts are based on emblazons (the pictures) – and the latter is what we're actually registering.

Contrast problems

All parts of a design must have good contrast against the other parts that they are touching. In practice, this means that you can't have metal-on-metal or color-on-color, except in very specific instances, defined in our Rules for Submission and various precedents.

[Lozengy gules and Or, a duck volant wings addorsed sable and on a chief vert three ducks naiant Or] This device is returned for lack of contrast between the chief and the field. As depicted, the vert chief lies entirely against the gules portion of the field. Precedent says:

The sable chief does not have sufficient contrast with the per saltire gules and argent field, because the sable chief entirely adjoins a low-contrast gules portion of the field.

The problem [of lack of contrast] is not unique to this field division: Per bend gules and Or is a neutral field, but Per bend gules and Or, a chief sable still suffers a lack of contrast. (LoAR June 1993)

[Porfinna Grafeldr, June 2002, R-Ealdormere]

This submission has the same problem: the vert chief lies entirely against the gules portions of the field.

Please inform the submitter that, were the Or sections of the field against the vert chief, this would be registerable. [Verena Entenwirth, May 2009]

Lack of identifiability

All charges on a device or badge must be identifiable. If the majority of commenters can't figure out what something is, then the armory will likely be returned.

[Azure, in pale an ostrich plume quill pen fesswise and a decrescent argent, an orle of roses Or] This device is returned for lack of identifiability. The charge in chief was blazoned as an ostrich plume quill pen on the Letter of Intent, but none of the commenters could identify it as such. The resemblance of the charge to an alembic flask was far too strong.

On resubmission, the submitter should draw the charge clearly as either a quill pen (with a visible nib and most of the vanes removed so it can be held comfortably) or as an alembic flask. [Safiya bint Ahmad ibn Abdulla, May 2009]

Poor period heraldic style

Purely post-period charges or treatments will be returned unless documentation can be found of their use in period. Some combinations are automatically disallowed, e.g., more than three types of charge in the same charge group ("slot machine heraldry"), similar but non-identical charges of the same type ("sword and dagger heraldry"), and overly complicated or modern-looking designs.

Just as with names, we have SFPP's for use of charges or designs that were not found in period. Charges in this category include artistic motifs or other items that were found in period, but not in heraldry, e.g., volknuts, pawprints, lightning bolts, wolves ululant (howling), and birds displayed that aren't eagles. The use of New World flora and fauna that were known to Europeans in period is allowed, but is also a SFPP if they weren't used in heraldry. As with names, only one SFPP is allowed; two or more will be cause for return.

Lack of documentation

If a charge hasn't been registered before, or a submission has a drastically different depiction from the "defining instance", then documentation should be provided to show whether it was known in period and that the depiction is accurate. For charges that have both period and modern forms, only period depictions are allowed; examples of modern versions that are disallowed are the "shazam"-style lightning bolt and the six-sided coffin:

Coffins have only been registered twice in the SCA, the last time in 1985. The coffins in this submission, as in the previous submissions, are six-sided shapes following the outline of the top of a hexagonal coffin palewise. Thus, the basemost side ("foot") is narrower than the chiefmost side ("head") and the wide point separating the other four sides is at shoulder height. A number of commenters asked whether this was a period coffin shape and whether coffins were found in period heraldry.

No evidence was presented, and none could be found, for coffins as charges in period heraldry. Given the wide diversity of constructed items found in period heraldry, a coffin should be an acceptable charge as long as it is drawn so that it would be recognizable to a period viewer as a coffin.

No evidence was presented, and none could be found, that the shape in this submission was a period coffin shape. Some documentation for coffins was found, consisting of pictures of coffins in illuminated manuscripts showing funeral services, pictures of existing funeral palls in embroidery references (used for draping over a coffin), and a description of one existing child's coffin c. 1400. These references all showed coffins with four-sided tops. The tops were mostly rectangular, but some coffins had trapezoidal tops, so that the "head" was wider than the "foot". Without documentation for the shape of coffin in this submission, it may not be registered.

The coffins in illustrations of funeral services were all shown from the side (during the service, or carried by pallbearers). The top-only view of the previous coffin registrations therefore seems somewhat unlikely. Future attempts to register coffins should not only address the shape of a period coffin, but should address how a period coffin would be drawn so that a period viewer would recognize it as a coffin (rather than another sort of box or chest). [Constance MacLeod, Feb. 2002]

Documentation also includes any necessary petitions for group devices. The requirements are found in the Administrative Handbook.

Marshalling

In the SCA, we do not allow marshalled arms, or arms that show descent. For example, *Per pale Or and sable, a lion and a stag combattant counterchanged*, could be construed as a claim of descent from a parent with the arms *Or, a lion rampant contourny sable*, and the other parent with *Sable, a stag rampant Or*, neither of which the submitter has "earned".

No Holding Name Allowed

A holding name is a name that is temporarily registered when the submitted primary name is returned, but there is an accompanying piece of armory. This "holds" the spot and allows us to register the armory without a final name. The submitter has the option of refusing the creation of a holding name, but this means any armory submitted with the name will also be returned if the name is not registered.

It is important to note that holding names can only be created at the Laurel level; they cannot be created in kingdom. As such, if a primary name is returned in kingdom, any armory that goes with it is also returned.

How Do I Fix the Problems So I Can Resubmit?

First, read the decision carefully. The text of the return will tell you exactly what was wrong with it.

Secondly, the best way to have a successful submission or resubmission is to work with a competent herald who can ensure that the rules are followed and all of the paperwork is in order. Another way is to avoid or limit use of the “no” checkboxes. We don't expect submitters and their heralds to know the ins and outs of every language, so allowing us to fix minor grammatical or spelling errors may be all that is needed to pass a name.

For names returned for conflict, the easiest way to clear it is to add an element, such as a locative byname. So, a William Marshal would possibly conflict with the famous Angevin Earl Marshal, but a William Marshal de Selby would not. Another option is to obtain a Letter of Permission to Conflict from the other person.

If a name is returned because it claims a relationship with another registered person, the submitter can try to get a Letter of Permission to Presume from the other person, or must change the name.

[Rhys ap Bleddyn, Jan. 2007] This name is presumptuous of the registered name Osanna verch Rhys ap Bleddyn, registered January 2003, as it constitutes a claim (albeit unintended) to be Osanna's father. Precedent defines this as a protected relationship:

The name Ranulf fitzStephen de Acre was registered in July 2000. The currently submitted name, Stephen of Acre, is effectively a claim to be Ranulf's father. As a result, this submission is in violation of RfS VI.3, "Names Claiming Specific Relationships", which states: "Names that unmistakably imply identity with or close relationship to a protected person or literary character will generally not be registered." [Stephen of Acre, Oct. 2003]

For armory returned for conflict, the submitter has two options: (a) obtaining a Letter of Permission to Conflict from the other person (assuming it's an SCA member or their legal heir), or (b) redesigning the armory to change it enough to grant at least two CDs.

Armory returned for stylistic problems must be either redrawn or redesigned, depending upon the reason for the return. Sometimes, stylistic “problems” can be allowed by a Regional Style Exception. For these, the submission needs to state which region (e.g., Germany) and must include documentation – such as from period rolls of arms – for each item in the design:

[Or, on a cross argent between four lions rampant a cross potent sable] This submission is returned for violating the rule of tincture. Section VII.2 of the Rules for Submissions, Armorial Contrast, defines what is considered acceptable contrast. Good contrast does not exist between a metal and a metal, and RfS VII.2.b.i explicitly requires that the field must have good contrast with charges placed directly on it. The submitter asked that this be registered using a regional style exception, per section VII.6.b of the Rules for Submissions. We quote that section here in full:

b. Regional Style - Alternatively, a proposed exceptional armorial design element may be documented as characteristic of a specific regional armorial style. In such cases the

submitted armory may be registered provided that all of the following conditions are met. (1) The submitter explicitly requests an exception to the other sections of Part VIII (Compatible Armorial Style) on the grounds that the submitted armory exemplifies a specific regional style. (2) Documentation is adduced to show that exceptional design element was not uncommon in the regional style in question. (3) Documentation is adduced to show that all elements of the submitted armory can be found in the regional style in question.

This submission has not actually satisfied any of the three requirements.

While a regional style exception was requested, no region was specified.

Documentation was provided for the use of Or crosses on argent fields, but the examples were limited to Jerusalem, kings of Jerusalem, and the banner carried by Count Eustace on the Bayeux Tapestry, which is frequently considered to be the banner that the pope sent to show his support for William's invasion of England. One example, mutated throughout history, does not show that the practice was "not uncommon."

*Documentation was also not provided, and none could be found, showing that all elements of the submitted armory can be found in a regional style. None of the provided examples showed secondary charges in any tincture other than Or and none of the provided examples show any tertiary charges at all on the primary charge. **[Dietrich von Sachsen, Dec. 2009]***

If the submitter feels that a return was made in error, an appeal can be prepared; appeals need to include additional documentation to strengthen or clarify the original submission. One can almost never go wrong with more documentation!

Be aware that resubmitting means that you have to go through the entire process again, from sending in a submission form and any documentation, through the internal (kingdom) and external (SCA-wide College of Arms) commentary periods, and the ultimate decision meetings. This is to ensure that the resubmission has fixed the original problem, is free of other ones, and is free of conflict. Please be sure to check the paperwork and mark that it is a resubmission, if applicable, so the submitter isn't charged another fee by mistake. Please provide the submission history (i.e., previous submissions/returns) whenever possible so that we ensure we have everything filed and linked appropriately.

Note for the future: At this time, the rules are undergoing a revamp, with various proposals put forward to simplify things like determining appropriate lingual mixes and temporal compatibility. When that happens, this will be rewritten to take the changes into account.
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