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ANALYSIS OF THE ENGLISH AND FRENCH ROLLS OF ARMS

The Analysis of the Royal Coats of Arms of the Encyclopedic Rolls of Arms created during the reign of Edward I (1272–1307) and their Possible French Sources

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SCOPE AND TIME FRAME

The present research’s wider topic is medieval English heraldry, namely the Central and Eastern European royal coats of arms in the English rolls of arms which were compiled under the reign of Edward I (1272-1307). Heraldry does not have a consensual definition, but its important and primary function was self-representation. Around its appearance in the mid-twelfth century the main function was to identify the knights in armor covering all their faces. For this identification they designed different colorful charges and ordinaries and drew it on their shields. Over the centuries heraldry lost its strong military association and became more and more artistic, up to the point when heraldry completely lost its military function in battlefields, sieges and in tournaments and turned into the instrument of artistic representation. The present thesis deals with the early medieval English general rolls of arms’ Central and Eastern European related royal arms. The research focuses on the general rolls of arms compiled in England during the reign of Edward I, with the emphasis on the Central and Eastern European royal coats of arms. These decades mean an outstanding period of English heraldry because numerous rolls of arms were compiled during this period.

HYPOTHESIS AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

It is always a primary question whether a particular blazon illustrates the contemporary heraldic practice interrelated with the structure of the coat of arms, the terminology used or the depictions or it is the result of the lack of knowledge, false information and misinterpretation. When we read the list of the arm holders many of the royal coats of arms seem fictitious. According to my research hypothesis several of these fictitious armorial bearings if not all have some prefiguration and these depictions. I also assume that the appearance of the examined royal coats of arms refers to the given regions’ political and dynastical relationships with England under Edward I. Connected to the hypothesis, numerous other questions are raised: whether the existence of a royal coat of arms in the rolls of arms means an independent or an autonomous kingdom, or how the changes in Central-Eastern European royal coats of arms were followed in the thirteenth- to fourteenth century’s England. Did the scribes work from a standard textual and heraldic tradition and can we distinguish the textual traditions?
TERMINOLOGY AND ITS PROBLEMS

Around the second half of the thirteenth century the number of different types of armorial rolls increases at an unprecedented pace. Many sieges, campaigns and tournaments occurred in this period, which might be one reason of the increment of the rolls of arms. The sudden appearance of this material raises several historical, art historical and philological questions, e. g. about their origins. We shall probably never know about the origins of the blazons, the written or the oral tradition of the classic blazons, but we receive a clear picture about the state of the French and English heraldry and the terminology of the shield descriptions from these rolls. Furthermore, we also receive an insight to the standardization level of the heraldic language. The terminology of heraldry developed continuously, both in France and in England. It is clear that the heralds needed a mnemonic system to achieve their professional requirements, hence when the system and the terminology of heraldry became more and more complex and detailed, the rules of blazoning also became more and more technical, as it is still less specific in the thirteenth century than later. Therefore, we can find different vocabulary in England and in France and also various phrases in the English rolls of arms. An in-depth philological analysis is not part of the present research but when it is required, I include the necessary examination on the adequate level.

METHODODOLOGY

To be able to answer the raised questions I use the methodology of comparative interdisciplinary research. Due to the lack of armorial rolls in Central and Eastern Europe I cannot compare the examined armorial rolls with the same source material compiled in the examined region. In spite of the missing rolls of arms, we have a rich material of other sources which were used as the displays of self-representation. These sources are primarily seals and coins, but also carvings and other visual evidences, like miniatures, which could serve as early heraldic sources. Here it is important to remark that the source value of the rolls of arms is extremely high not only because they are the collection of nobility records but also because of the described or depicted colors of the coat of arms. The other groups of heraldic sources typically do not contain the tinctures of the coat of arms: the seals and coins never, the carvings rarely, wall paintings occasionally give the color. The single colorful source group is the above noted illuminated codex miniatures. Thus, I use sphragistics, numismatic and different kinds of art historical
sources to successfully complete the comparative interdisciplinary research of the examined regions’ royal coats of arms.

The examined regions’ lack of sources is quite different. We cannot strictly divide the territories and state that the regions closer to the Western kingdoms are documented more, and those which are farther are documented less. The Hungarian and Bohemian regions and also the kingdoms of Cyprus and Armenia are relatively rich in extant sources unlike Poland and Serbia.

In several cases, I have to include sources which originate later but clearly have textual or pictorial connections with the contemporary material. Through this research I answer questions by the comparative analysis of the whole European regions’ royal coats of arms.

RESULTS

Since all the examined sources contain the coat of arms of England, Man Island, Scotland and France, thus I did not include these regions into the analysis. I focused on the regions which have more variations in rolls of arms. These are the following: North Europe, Iberia, Holy German Empire, Sicily and Italy, the Byzantine and the Latin Empires, Crusader States, Central Europe and the Middle East.

After the dissertation’s introduction I dedicated a chapter to the sources where I provide data about the remaining manuscripts and where I also present the blazons examined. After these two chapters the analysis starts with the North European region. The coats of arms of Norway and Denmark appear is all of the rolls of arms, however there is a big difference between them. Since the Norwegian insignia is correct in almost every source material, the Danish is incorrect. The analysis of the English-Norwegian and English-Danish relations demonstrates that the mutual friendship of Haakon IV and Henry III is behind the always correct Norwegian royal emblem. The lack of the diplomatic relation between England and Denmark explains the inaccurate Danish crest. The model of this incorrect Danish shield was unambiguously the Norwegian, since it features the attribute of Saint Olaf.

The picture is more layered regarding the kingdoms of Iberia. Nevertheless, we cannot find any completely fictitious coat of arms referring to the region. The analysis of the relationship between England and the Iberian kingdoms showed that the close connection of the Iberian kings and Henry III – Edward I was the foundation of the mostly correct coats of arms.

The German and the Sicilian royal coats of arms relates until 1266 thanks to the Stauf-dynasty. Regarding the Holy Roman Empire in many rolls of arms appear a one and a double headed black eagle. But because the single headed eagle rarely and the double headed eagle never was
worn by German kings and emperors, we can presume a particular English heraldic tradition. It is detectable that the above-mentioned tradition came from Matthew Paris. His crest-construction originates in the royal coat of arms of Otto IV whose shield is paly and features a half eagle and half of the three English royal leopards. If we would like to dissolve the interfusion of the German and English coats of arms and we keep in mind that heraldry strive for symmetry, we will receive the double headed eagle. The differentiation of the German titles king and emperor is also explained on the level of the representative heraldry. The single headed eagle appears in the political program of Frederick I and Frederick II, hence it was clear that the eagle is part of the representation of the ancient Imperator Romanii model. Since Frederick II minted the so called augustali coins in Sicily this topic was examined together with the other German heraldic practice. In the chapter of Sicily, I was concerned with the Anjou representation. The close friendship of Edward I and the Anjou kings – especially Charles II – explains the correct Sicilian coats of arms in the sources. In this chapter I also examined the new Czech Kingdom’s royal arms.

Regarding the Hungarian royal coat of arms, we can state that the English heraldic knowledge about the Hungarian king’s emblems dates back to the beginning of the 13th century. The political relation was close at that time, Andrew II was a crusader king, which gives a very close and strong connection. He wore lions on his barry bearings. Those lions appear in England 70 years later. After Andrew II the lion motif vanished from the royal usage in the Hungarian Kingdom and also after his reign as a consequence of the Mongol invasion and internal wars the diplomatic relations with England became weak. The dissertation also dealt with the coats of arms of Poland, Bulgaria and Serbia connected to the Central European region. Those armorials were completely fictitious, though the methodology of editing imaginary coats of arms can be explained.

The next two chapters dealt with the Byzantine and the Latin Empire and also with the Crusader States. After the fall of the Latin Empire the titular emperor and empresses still appear in the sources. The editors of the rolls of arms parallel with Courtney’s arms started to display the Palaiologos’ crest as well. Latter became more and more particular, which greatly exemplify the information flow and the development of the examined materials.

The imaginary royal coats of arms cover a great area from the Mongol Empire through the Middle East to Egypt and Africa. The sultan of Egypt as well as the imaginary king of Arabia and Africa never wore any Western style coat of arms. The English editors of the rolls of arms attempted to insert this barely known world into their system by the creation of these fictitious armorial bearings. All the royal coats of arms and bearings of the non-western world connected
to Europe by armed conflicts, thus these monarchs and their kingdoms are detectable as the *hostis naturalis* of the Western world.

Three isolable textual tradition was established through the analysis: the earliest three and rolls of arms and a fourth one, which is unknow in present days, but its existence is highly probable; the second is the so-called Segar Roll and the last category contains the collections from the beginning of the 14th century. Some editing principles were demonstrable as well. When the creator of the sources was not aware of the proper knowledge, they constructed canting arms, or used the nearby kingdom well-known crest as a base. In some cases, an earlier or specific English tradition was noticeable.

**CONTRIBUTION AND CONCLUSION**

The contribution of the present research is the analysis of the early English rolls of arms’ royal armorial bearings from a new perspective. Using a comparative approach and interdisciplinary methodology I intend to answer the question whether the appearance of the particular royal coat of arms in the early English rolls of arms refers to the known world of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century’s England. Through the analysis of the coats of arms and the examination of diplomatic relations we may receive an image of the political relationships and information flow on a new level: on the level of heraldry. The prefiguration of a given coat of arms will be identified, resulting in being able to distinguish the completely fictitious coats of arms from the coats of arms which have a clear antitype.

In conclusion we can state that the early English rolls of arms created during the reign of Edward I reflect to the foreign policy and knowledge of the English royal court at the end of the 13th and the beginning of the 14th century. This knowledge and the connections are not identical neither regarding regions nor regarding rolls of arms. The information, the understanding and the interest of the rolls of arms-editors are variable, while some regions’ royal arms are accurate, regarding some other kingdoms’ the composers had quite uncertain knowledge.