

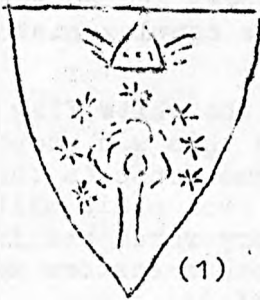
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HERALDRY IN THE LORD OF THE RINGS *

by Sam Long




Heraldry: the gayest, most colourful science; a subject as romantic and epic in its associations as The Lord of The Rings itself. Indeed, the Ring Trilogy is full of banners and emblems and signs of power that would come under the purview of a herald in our Western civilisation. In this essay I shall describe the various devices that appear in the Rings, and discuss them in terms of modern heraldry, history and anthropology.

Heraldry as we know it today did not exist in the time of the War of the Ring. Middle-earth was in a preheraldic time roughly corresponding to the 10th or 11th centuries in Western Europe. When the idea of a heritable coat-of-arms for other than rulers had not yet been introduced. I base this statement on the fact that individual arms are not described in the Rings, only the devices



of rulers or peoples. This in spite of the fact that there were many lesser characters who would doubtless have had arms (and had them described) if such arms had existed.

Heraldry is not concerned only with coats-of-arms, but with badges and other devices too. First a discussion of the 'arms' of Gondor (1), Rohan (2), Ithilien, and Dol Amroth (3). The most important and longest-established emblems in Gondor were doubtless those of the Kings of Gondor, the Heirs of Elendil: to wit, the White Tree and Stars that Aragorn bore (along with a Crown) on the Banner of Arwen at the Battle of the Pelennor. The Tree, of course, represented the descendants of Telperion, the White Tree of the Valar; and the Seven Stars are from the banners of the ships that carried the seven palantiri from the wreck of Numenor. Since the crown was the symbol of royalty in Gondor, the Kings placed a winged crown above these devices. (The Kings of Arnor and of Numenor wore no crown, and Elendil himself lived in Arnor. Hence I think the Crown was a later addition.) The Tree and Stars and Crown appeared on the Banner and on the surcoats of the Guards of the Citadel --- possibly in an escutcheon like the guards in the film The Lion in Winter. In modern heraldic parlance, the arms would be described thus: Sable, between a Crown of Gondor and a White Tree, seven estoiles in arc around the Tree, all argent. (Incidentally, a beautiful design for the Tree would be the trademark of the Stix, Baer & Fuller stores of St. Louis. I have seen a similar design

on the cover of the deluxe edition of the Rings). Proportion dictates that the crown be not much smaller than the tree. This design fits on a shield well, but there is difficulty in placing it on an ordinary rectangular flag. The shape of Arwen's Banner is not described, but it is my guess that it was square, or even oblong ( or  rather than ) , so that the design would not be lost in the field.

Of the emblems of Arnor there is not much known. Presumably the North-Kingdom used the Tree and the Stars, but those and the Crown were described as emblems of Elendil, I doubt that Arnor used the crown. Perhaps it was replaced by the Scepter, the symbol of Royalty in Arnor.

But we do know the Star was a badge of the North-Kingdom; it was worn by the Dunedain as a cloak-brooch in their ride to Rohan, and the Star of Elendil, the diamond that Aragorn wore on a fillet on his head, was part of the regalia of Arnor. (All these stars mentioned so far are of six points -- estoiles-- those used by the Elves and Dwarves were of eight). In the Middle-earth the symbolism of the Tree and Stars went back to Elven-mythology and the Two Trees of Valinor and Elbereth Starkindler. In European myth the tree is a symbol of life, renewing life, and the stars are the home of the gods. Anthropologically, then, the meanings are parallel, as is the origin of the crown. Gondor's crown was originally a war-helm and so were European crowns (altho the European variety has more complex history than just that).

The other well-known banner in Minas Tirith was the white flag of the Stewards of Gondor. We do not know why or when this was adopted or whether it should be considered 'arms' in the same sense as the royal devices should. Plain shields of one color, even plain white, are not unknown in modern heraldry, but they are very rare, and do not occur in British heraldry. (The Stuart Kings of Scots ancestors were stewards --sty-wards --to the dynasty they replaced.)

There is one more Gondorian flag to describe: the blue banner of the Princes of Dol Amroth. This beautiful flag is described as 'a white ship like a swan upon blue water,' that is: azure, a swan-ship argent. A Swan-ship was probably a galley with a swan's head in the bows, more or less as illustrated. If the device had been a swan, it would have been an even more beautiful design.

The banner of the Kings of the Riddermark is particularly interesting. Not only is the white running horse on green very striking and beautiful, not to mention appropriate for a horse-loving people like those of Rohan, but it is closely related to British armorial history as well. From 1714 to 1838 an exactly similar horse on red was part of the arms of the Kings of Great Britain from their Westphalian possessions as Electors and later Kings of Hannover. The horse is not a particularly common charge in British heraldry; nevertheless it is very ancient. It was used as an emblem in Germany and was taken to Britain by the Germanic invaders in the 5th century, (The names of Hengist and Horsa, whom legend says were the first Anglo-Saxon invaders of Kent, both meant 'horse', and a rampant horse on red forms the arms of Kent today.) Thus the emblem of Rohan is both fitting and full of associations with the Anglo-Saxons, whom the Eorlings seem (because of their names, all A2S) to resemble so much.

Now we turn to badges and other emblems. The Anvil is a natural emblem for Dwarves, and it is thus we find it on the Doors of Moria, along with the Seven Stars of the Plough or Big Dipper, which were also important to this northern folk. Elves were partial to stars and leaves as emblems, but we do not read of any pan-elvish badge.

Most of the badges worn in the Rings were used by the 'bad guys'. The grimmest and most baleful of all was the Red Eye of Sauron. The all-seeing eye of Big Brother and the Evil Eye of the past are equally fearsome and sinister, and the red on black is not, strictly speaking, good heraldry, I don't doubt the effect was lurid enough. Sauron's minions used other badges, too: the Moon-badge of Morgul is an example. The color of this badge is not certain, red maybe, but it was not white. It probably looked somewhat like the grinning moon in calendars and almanacs only the grin was a ghastly death-head. The moon-badge came from the fact that Minas Morgul, the tower of Sorcery, was originally Minas Ithil, the Tower of the Moon. The Southrons -- the name, by the way, has been in the language for hundreds of years-- used a banner of a black snake on red, which Theoden cut down on the Pellenor.

The last major badge is the White Hand of Saruman. Why a hand is not immediately clear, but it probably represented Saruman's hand-craft with which he hoped to make his own Ring.

Altho all the devices mentioned here have some meaning or other, I should make it clear that badges and arms do not have to mean anything, tho of course they may. The earliest arms in Europe were either puns or just pleasing designs. Arms are used to show dominion or as personal identification. Badges are worn by men to show their allegiance to some cause or master; thus we find servants, soldiers, employees, partisans using a badge -- be it livery, uniform, cockade, pin, brooch, colored scarf or flag -- to identify themselves to friend and foe alike. Badges are very powerful symbols -- men die for the flag tho the king or president be most unworthy. As if these individuals did not become symbols themselves.

Tolkien handles his heraldry well, all told. The major peoples have beautiful and heraldically correct emblems of great age and deep meaning; they are simple and well-designed. Sauron and Saruman use more badges, having more regimented armies. But the elves are more subtle. A leaf, a star, a jewel -- no uniformity for them. Tolkien makes us imagine his world thru word-pictures that are implicit rather than explicit; not often are beings, places, or events described in graphic detail. A painter or film-producer would have to use his imagination to the fullest to do justice to the Rings, and in doing so he could invent many flags and devices without violating the 'canon'. Here ~~we~~ have merely set forth the 'canon' in so far as it is explicit about this colorful subject of flags and heraldry.

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In the early wind
 Of a thistledown morn
 Your astrolobe hands
 Hurry swift as a mouse
 Over the globe of your thoughts
 And you read the dreams
 Of voles and men
 Of unicorn and mice.
 Then smiling through wrinkled
 Will-o-wisp eyes
 You pass down the road
 Happy that all is well.

Dave Weldrake

(continued from page four)

This issue of the MALLORN has been a lot longer in the making than we had intended. We volunteered to produce it at the 1970 SF Convention in April, but we had no idea that it would take so long to get the finances of the Society into a sufficiently organized state that money was available to produce the magazine. Nobody seems to have been to blame for this - it was just a lot of red tape to cut through (such as the bank requiring a proper formal constitution before they would open an account for the Society). But the MALLORN is four or five months later than we had intended it to be. For this we apologize, and hope that it's worth the wait.

With various personal changes looming up, mainly that Ro wants to study for gone A-levels, our time will be more at a premium than previously, and we will thus have to give up the editorship of the MALLORN quite soon. We'll put out the second issue, around next January or February, but after that the future is uncertain. If anyone wants the editorship, would they please speak up - someone will have to be found to take over from us.

Phil Spencer put out a flyer of his own - GAMMA - which he agreed to turn into a Society bulletin. The arrangement is that the MALLORN will be what one might call the Society's theoretical journal, publishing articles and so on dealing with various aspects of Tolkieniana, whilst the bulletin will feature the information concerned with the running of the Society - new members, notices of meetings, and so forth. The British Science Fiction Association has a similar arrangement, which works quite successfully. One advantage is that a small bulletin can come out more frequently than the MALLORN and so news of Society activities can be up to date when it reaches the members: a quarterly MALLORN isn't frequent enough for such a purpose. More MALLORNS would be impossible, both by reason of expense and of the physical labour involved in their production (especially as we both have our own magazines to produce, apart from the MALLORN). So I think the Society is indebted to Phil for offering to fill in the gap in this way.

Thus, as I began this editorial, THE MALLORN. Read on; I hope you enjoy it!

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