

HERALDRY AND ART IN THE WORLD OF THE CRUSADES STATES

CONSTANTIN ITTU

Muzeul Național Brukenthal Sibiu
constantinittu@yahoo.co.uk

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The paper is aiming at dealing with the history of heraldry and art in the world of Latin or Crusaders States. On the one hand, the heraldry of the crusader states is, to this day, lesser known than European heraldry. On the other hand, while artistic activity was getting underway in Jerusalem sponsored by kings and Latin patriarchs, in Bethlehem the pilgrims to the holy site commissioned devotional icons for the church of Nativity.

Pope Urban II opened the Council of Clermont on 18 November 1095 – the moment that has gone down in history as the starting point of the crusades¹. Taking into consideration the historic framework, it is significant to mention that the pope Gregory VII had died in 1085. He was followed by Victor III, who had a very short pontificate, the next pope being Urban II (1088-1099). The newly elected pontiff was a good diplomat, more flexible than Gregory VII, his purpose being to improve the relations with Byzantium. Therefore he sent an embassy of reconciliation to the Emperor Alexios Komnenos (latinized Alexius Comnenus; 1056; 1081-1118), in 1089, and released him from the sentence of excommunication. As a consequence, Alexios was ready to re-host the pope's name into the *diptychs* (the patriarchal list) if Urban would send an acceptable statement of faith within a fixed period of time, but both sides did not regard this issue as extremely important. Urban was quite content with the new relations with Byzantium, because his intention was to break off negotiations with the Emperor Henry IV in the West².

The new situation was favorable to the Byzantine emperor, who was able to focus in re-organizing his army. He needed Western mercenaries for this purpose, and there are historians who affirm that the negotiations between the pope and the basileos on Church unity took into consideration the opportunity to hire such men in the Byzantine army. When Alexios met Count Robert I of Flanders (known also as *the Frisian*; 1035; 1071-1093) on a pilgrimage, he asked the Western nobleman if he could supply him with troops. As a consequence, when Urban II held a council at Piacenza (March 1095), the presence of a Byzantine envoy there seemed natural. In this respect, the Byzantine diplomacy emphasized the idea of help for Jerusalem and the Holy Land, not for Byzantium, the idea being regarded as a powerful propaganda in the midst of the Westerners. As a matter of fact, Alexios Komnenos needed mercenaries in order to reconquer Anatolia, in contingents small enough to be kept under control, not huge armies of knights – a crusade being the last thing he wished for his political plans³.

¹ Mayer 1996, p. 9.

² Mayer 1996, p. 6-7.

³ Mayer 1996, p. 7.

The papacy's theoretical interpretation of the crusade was that of an *armed pilgrimage*. Despite the fact that Gregory VII regarded the making of war in the service of St. Peter as a penitential act, Urban II linked the First Crusade to the ideology of pilgrimage⁴. For this reason, according to a story (legend?), it is said that Count Stephen of Blois, after deserting his fellow crusaders at the siege of Antioch, in the second wave of the First Crusade, arrived home in 1101 to suffer huge public disapproval. Adela, his spouse, encouraged her husband to recall the brave deeds of his youth and present lordly status. This *mulier sagax et animosa* („wise and bold woman”) persuaded her reluctant husband to rejoin the crusade. Indeed, Count Stephen of Blois went to the Holy Land, together with his companions, and finally reached the Sepulcher of Christ in Jerusalem⁵. Stephen of Blois was killed in an ill-advised charge at the Battle of Ramla, a town which lays on the road from Jerusalem to Ascalon, the latter being the largest Fatimid fortress in the Holy Land. Adela's name was famous in epoch because she was the youngest daughter of William the Conqueror, the first Norman king of England (1066–1087) – being known as Adela of Normandy –, and also because she became by marriage Countess of Blois, Chartres and Meaux⁶.

Those centuries were also witnesses of various kinds of pilgrimages or crusades. For example, a peculiar case is that of Philip of Alsace, count of Flanders, who sent a letter to Hildegard of Bingen, before his departure for the Holy Land in 1177, in order to ask her advice about his crusader undertaking⁷. The exchange of letters between Hildegard – the Christian mystic, German Benedictine abbess, visionary, polymath⁸, writer, composer, and philosopher⁹ – and the count of Flanders shows two different perceptions about crusade in the twelfth-century society. In his letter, Philip insisted on the importance of Hildegard's role, as *ancilla Christi*, in mediating between the Divinity and himself, as a *peccator and indignus* human being. Philip revealed the very bad *fama actuum meorum* just after his 1175 public decision to leave for Jerusalem. According to some sources, there were gossips according to which Philip decided to take the cross because of the atrocities he committed during the war against England¹⁰. The count was also charged with his brother Mattheew's death which had happened during the siege of Driencourt „ex eo quod in commotione guerrarum illarum ipse comes Flandrie et Viromandie potentissimus ad pacem componendam plurimum potuisset valere” („because he himself, count of Flanders and Vermandois, who was very powerful in rousing those wars, could have much influence on restoring peace”). On 12 August 1175, Philip had the knight Walter of Fontaines beaten to death¹¹. Taking into consideration that Hildegard referred, in her answer, to this well-known event, the count's letter of introspection can be regarded as being genuine, even if partly adapted.

Philip seemed to think of his crusade as a penitential pilgrimage, in order to redress his honor and to appear as being the champion of Christendom, but also a way to have a political profit. To be sure about his next steps, the count of Flanders asked Hildegard both for advices and for prayers. It is important to underline that, in her written answer, the abbess changed direction completely. She focused on the battles

⁴ Rousseau 2001, p. 31.

⁵ Rousseau 2001, p. 31; cf. Chibnall 1975, p. 324.

⁶ LoPrete 2007, p. 115.

⁷ Tessera 2001, p. 77.

⁸ *polymath*: a person who knows a great deal about many different subjects (Oxford 1989, p. 959).

⁹ Bennet, Hollister 2001, p. 317.

¹⁰ Tessera 2001, p. 80.

¹¹ Tessera 2001, p. 80.

against the Saracens only at the very end of her advice. Instead, Hildegard wrote – as usual in her writings – about her revelations that she got not to her own wisdom, but to the Divine Light, the *verum lumen*: the sacrifice of the Cross fulfilled by the *Agnus Dei* emphasized the idea of mercy, and not that of justice. Taking into consideration this framework, Hildegard addressed Philip as *filius Dei*, because *He himself created you in the image of the first man [Adam]*¹². She also urged Philip to check the fairness of his own judgment by looking at God's justice due to a distressing question: *why have you killed your neighbor without considering My own justice?* The sentence comes from the Gospel of Matthew 22, 36-40: *Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?"/ Jesus said to him, 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.'/ This is the first and greatest commandment./ The second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'/ All the law and the prophets depend on these two commandments.*" At this point, Hildegard had in mind the image of redeeming cross, the *signaculum crucis* able to secure God's mercy for the sinful count of Flanders: *you too, take refuge in the living God with the sign of the cross because of all your... sins and all your unjust judgements*¹³.

In his book *An Heraldic Alphabet*, J. P. Brooke-Little (1927-2006), the influential British writer on heraldic subjects, a long-serving officer of arms at the College of Arms in London, who rose to the second highest heraldic office in England, *Clarenceux King of Arms*, tells us a story about the birth of heraldry: once upon a time, an English king decided to hold a tournament near London, and for this purpose he sent the royal heralds throughout the country to announce the news and to invite the nobility to attend the event. Not far from the Scottish border, in Cumberland – a historic county of North West England which appeared in the 12th century –, there lived a knight called Sir John. He was a simple fellow not very accustomed to great occasions, but he thought that it would make a holiday for his wife and family if he took them down to London for the tournament. When he arrived at the spot, he noticed that most of the participants had coats of arms. Until then, Sir John had never heard about coats of arms, and therefore he approached a knight who had a rather splendid lion painted on his shield, and asked him about these coats of arms.

„Is there any reason" he said, „why I should not have a coat of arms?" „None at all", replied the knight, „you are also a knight. You need to be recognized in the tournament and presumably you need to use a seal from time to time. Obviously you are the sort of person who ought to have a coat of arms". Sir John replied: „what I should like is a red shield with three golden lions on it". His friend responded: „you can't possibly have that; that is what the King uses and the whole point of coats of arms is that no two people shall use the same device. If I were you I would seek the advice of one of the royal heralds. If you cross his palm with silver I am sure that he will help you".

When the herald asked Sir John what he wished to have on shield, the nobleman said: „a red shield, as I'm rather keen on blood, and on it I would like three Scotsmen's heads, cut off at the neck and bleeding, because most of my spare time is spent of lopping off the heads of marauding Scots". The herald courteously made a rough painting of this coat, held it up and asked Sir John what he thought of it. „As a matter of fact", Sir John admitted, „I really can't see the Scotsmen's heads at all. Their red hair, red beards and red faces just don't show up against the red shield".

¹² Ittu 2013, p. 98.

¹³ Ittu 2013, p. 99.

„Quite true” said the herald, „it is for the reason that I and my brother heralds have drawn up certain conventions, aimed at making arms as bold and distinctive, and consequently as useful, as possible. The principle convention is that coloured objects shall not be placed on a coloured shield. Therefore, if you have Scotsmen’s heads with their ruddy complexions, you will want to put them on either a silver or gold shield. Naturally you will not be able to afford the precious metals themselves, and indeed they glitter so much and are so heavy that it is impractical to use them, but they are represented by white and yellow. Also as far as possible we use simple and conventional symbols, many of them of great antiquity, and these stand out better than pictorial representation and are therefore more clearly visible”¹⁴. – *Well, this is just a fairly story, but I feel sure there is more than a grain of truth in it* said the author at the end of it¹⁵.

In the very early days of heraldry, only the noblemen and knights were allowed to bear coats of arms, possibly with the help of heralds. It must always be remembered that from the earliest days coats of arms were used not only in tournaments and battles, but also to beautify and identify. In this respect, there are many tombs, church stained glasses – commemorating a benefactor or a deceased person – as well as *gonfanons* (banners, standards) or *pennons* (pennants), which are now in museums’ collections, decorated with coats of arms. They were also painted on silken surcoats, as we know from the *Stowe manuscripts*, a collection of about two thousand Irish, Anglo-Saxon and later medieval manuscripts (from 1154 to the end of the 14th century)¹⁶.

As a matter of fact, the gonfanon was a peculiar standard, generally borne near the person of the commander in chief, and the pennon was a sort of flag. For example, Wace (1100-1174), born in Jersey, an Anglo-Norman author of two verses chronicles, the *Roman de Brut* (1155) and the *Roman de Rou* (1160-1174), wrote in the *Rou*¹⁷:

Li barons ourent gonfanons, (‘The Barons had gonfanons’)

Li chevaliers ourent pennons. (‘The Knight had pennons’).

This chronicle was commissioned by Henry II of England, who sometime before 1169 secured for Wace a canonry at Bayeux in the North Western France. The *Roman de Rou* was written in octosyllabic couplets and monorhyme stanzas of alexandrines, being a history of the Norman dukes from the time of Rollo the Wiking (after 911) to that of Robert II Curthose (1106). Wace wrote in the Old Norman, a dialect of the Norman language, which is a dialect of the Old French, and this is very important for the history of heraldry, because the roots of the heraldic vocabulary can be found in Normandy. There is a granite memorial stone to Wace built in Jersey’s Royal Square which includes a quote from the *Roman de Rou* that expresses the poet’s pride in his place of birth:

Jo di e dirai ke jo sui (‘I say and will say that I am’)

Wace de l’isle de Gersui (‘Wace from the Island of Jersey’)¹⁸.

Talking about the roots of the heraldic vocabulary, I would like to add that heraldry itself has a terminology on its own. *There are some who consider this to be tortuous jargon, but my own experience has shown that, generally speaking, people enjoy using the ancient words, mostly drawn from the old Norman French which would*

¹⁴ Brooke-Little 1985, p. 2-4.

¹⁵ Brooke-Little 1985, p. 5.

¹⁶ Foster 1996, XIII; Stowe 1895, ms 662, fo. 16.

¹⁷ Wace 1837, p. 91.

¹⁸ Foster 1996, p. XII.

have been the everyday language of the early heralds – said J. P. Brooke-Little, one of the highest officer of arms in the British realm¹⁹.

Indeed, heraldry has a terminology of its own. When one looks at a coat of arms, one always places oneself behind it as if actually carrying the shield, so that the left-hand side of the shield, as you look at it, becomes the *dexter* (right) side. Likewise the right-hand side is the *sinister* (left) side. The background is termed the *field*, and anything placed on the field is a *charge*. For example, a shield with three lions on it is said to be *charged with three lions*, each lion being a separate charge²⁰. The images displayed on coats of arms – mostly, but not only, as I already mentioned – on shields – were in many cases designed to express a feeling of power and strength, often in military terms. When knights were so encased in armour that no means of identifying them was left, the practice was introduced of painting their insignia of honour on their shield as an easy method of distinguishing them. Originally these were granted only to individuals, but were afterwards made hereditary, for example, by King Richard I of England, during his crusade to the Holy Land²¹.

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The *Jerusalem cross*, also known as *Crusaders' cross* or five-fold Cross, is a heraldic cross consisting of a large cross potent surrounded by four smaller Greek crosses, one in each quadrant²². From the historic point of view, the roots of the Jerusalem heraldic shield came from the coat of arms worn by Godfrey of Bouillon during the First Crusade and remained in use as the armorial of the Kingdom of Jerusalem throughout its existence, from 1099 to 1291²³. From the theological point of view, the symbolism of the five-fold cross is given by the five wounds of Jesus Christ – a topic which was first recorded in the 11th century under the patronage of Robert of Normandy (before 1035) –, as well as of Christ together with the four Evangelists. Jerusalem shield seems to be the most well-known violation of the rule of heraldic tinctures; only apparently, because the herald or the group of heralds who worked out the coat of arms, and lived in a religious framework, had in mind the words of Psalm 68, 13, which mentions a *dove covered in silver, and her feathers with yellow gold*. (This is *Psalm* 67, 14, according to the Orthodox Bible, where one can see: *Dacă veți dormi în mijlocul moștenirilor voastre, aripile voastre argintate vor fi ca ale porumbiței și spatele vostru va străluci ca aurul*). It is most probably, taking into consideration that it was *the kingdom of Jerusalem*, in other words, a realm in the Holy Land, the heralds had also in mind the next verse: *When the Almighty scattered the kings in the land, it was like snow fallen on Mount Zalmon* (Psalm 68, 14; Orthodox, *Psalm* 67, 15: *Când Împăratul Cel ceresc va împrăștiia pe regi în țara Sa, ei vor fi albi ca zăpada pe Selmon*).

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It is generally known that the participants to the First Crusade had conquered Jerusalem and founded a new kingdom, that of Jerusalem, which was surrounded by vassal states: Principality of Antioch, Principality of Galilee, County of Tripoli, County of Jaffa (later on: County of Jaffa and Ascalon), County of Edessa etc. From the point of view of art history, the chronological framework of this study refers to the second or

¹⁹ Brooke-Little 1985, p. 19.

²⁰ Brooke-Little 1985, p. 19-20.

²¹ Brooke-Little 1985, p. 14.

²² Seymour 1898, p. 356.

²³ Seymour 1898, p. 364.

even the third generation of crusaders' settlers, noblemen and noblewomen alike, in the Kingdom of Jerusalem. During those times, the monarchs were: Melisende (1131-1153; *1105 Jerusalem as daughter of king Baldwin I and Morphia of Melitene; †1161 Jerusalem aged 56), Fulk V (1131-1143; *1189/1192 Angers, France; †1143, Acre, Kingdom of Jerusalem aged about 52), Baldwin III (1143-1162; *1130 son of King Fulk and Queen Melisende; †1162 Beirut, Kingdom of Jerusalem aged 32), and Amalric I (1162-1174; *1136 son of Fulk and Queen Melisende; †1174 Jerusalem aged 38)²⁴.

In 1099 the crusaders took control over Bethlehem, Jerusalem, as well as Nazareth. These main holy sites of Christendom triggered an agenda for some of the most important art sponsored by the crusaders in the twelfth century. The Church of Nativity served as the coronation church of the crusaders' kings in the first quarter of the century. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre became the burial place of the Christian kings from the 1100 to 1187, and it turned into the coronation church from 1131 onwards²⁵.

Bethlehem or *Beit Lehem* in Hebrew means *House of Bread*, and this is connected to the Holy Eucharist, when the bread and wine are not longer simply bread and wine, but become Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, according to Gospels: *And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body./ And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it;/ For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins* (Matthew 26, 26-28)²⁶.

While artistic activity was getting underway in Jerusalem sponsored by kings and Latin patriarchs, in Bethlehem it was the pilgrims to the holy site who commissioned devotional icons for the church of Nativity. Among the sponsors of art after 1131 were King Fulk, and especially his wife, Queen Melisende, the first rulers who were crowned in the church of Holy Sepulchre²⁷.

However, King Fulk's most important commission was the so called *Psalter of Melisende*. This book is an illuminated manuscript commissioned around 1135 by King Fulk for the Queen Melisende. According to specialists, at least seven persons worked together on the production of this luxury manuscript by early 1135. A team of four illustrators (one of them being Basilius, a Byzantine-trained „crusader” artist who signed the Deësis image), simultaneously with a northern French scribe for the calendar and text of the Latin Psalter, a „crusader” ivory carver for the book covers, and a „crusader” embroiderer for the silk spine of the book embroidered with silver thread. In spite of the Greek name, the artist who wrote *Basilius me fecit* („Basilius made me”) is thought to have been trained in a Western school, although he was obviously influenced by Byzantine art. The decoration of the book reflects crusaders' taste which in Byzantium was synonymous with aristocratic style in artistic terms, and it reflects Melisende's Orthodox religious sensibilities. On the one hand, this is a notable example of crusader art, a result of different artistic styles, to be more precise, of Roman Catholic Europe, of Byzantine Empire as well as of Armenian illuminated manuscripts. On the other hand, *The Psalter of Melisende* is the most important product from the scriptorium

²⁴ Popa, Matei 1983, p. 581.

²⁵ Folda 1995, p. 142.

²⁶ Bria 1999, p. 186.

²⁷ Folda 1995, p. 142.

of the Holy Sepulchre in the twelfth century, and, in the same time, represents a new phase of crusader art *in which East and West are distinctively integrated*²⁸.

The book covers, both of ivory, show scenes from the life of King David, and from *Psychomachia* of Prudentius on the front side, as well as another king performing the Six Works of Mercy followed by six works of charity from the Gospel of Matthew on the back side, both showing Byzantine, Islamic and Western artistic influences. In the Gospel of Matthew, the Six Works of Mercy are described in the following scene: *Then will the King say to those on his right, Come, you who have the blessing of my Father, into the kingdom made ready for you before the world was:/ For I was in need of food, and you gave it to me: I was in need of drink, and you gave it to me: I was wandering, and you took me in:/ I had no clothing, and you gave it to me: when I was ill, or in prison, you came to me (Matthew 25, 34-36)*²⁹; *Then will he say to those on the left, Go from me, you cursed ones, into the eternal fire which is ready for the Evil One and his angels:/ For I was in need of food, and you gave it not to me; I was in need of drink, and you gave it not to me:/ I was wandering, and you took me not in; without clothing, and you gave me no clothing; ill, and in prison, and you came not to me (Matthew 25, 41-43).*

The king on the back side is dressed in Byzantine imperial clothes, but most likely represents a crusader king, perhaps Fulk. There is a carving of a falcon above him, which is possibly a clue that the king is Fulk, as *falcon* and *Fulk* in Old French were both *Fouque*. Underneath the falcon the name *Herodius* is carved, Latin for Gyrfalcon³⁰. The manuscript consists of twenty four full-page miniatures in colours on gold grounds in a prefatory cycle of the life of Christ with inscriptions in Greek (ff. 1-12v), nine half-page miniatures in colours and gold among the prayers dedicated to the Virgin and saints (ff. 202v, 205, 206, 206v, 207v, 208, 209, 210, 211), twelve calendar roundels in colours on gold grounds (ff. 13v-19), one full-page historiated initial in ink on a gold ground at the beginning of Psalm 1 (f. 23v), seven large initials in ink on gold grounds with animals, hybrids, men, and masks, with text in gold on brown strips in a decorated full-page border at the principle divisions of Psalms 26, 38, 52, 68, 80, 97, and 109 (ff. 46v, 60v, 74v, 89v, 106v, 123, 139v); also one full-page of text in gold on brown stripes in a decorated border at the beginning of Psalm 1 (f. 24). Large and small initials in gold, with penwork decoration in blue and yellow are to be found from ff. 24v-32v. The text was written in red, blue, or gold, a technique which is known as *chrysography*³¹.

Instead of a conclusion, I would like to mention a very important affirmation from the above mentioned Fulk of Charters, King of Jerusalem, text he wrote in July 1124: *For we who were Occidentals have now become Orientals. He who was a Roman*

²⁸ Folda 1995, p. 143-144.

²⁹ According to the Romanian Orthodox Bible, the words from *the Gospel of Matthew* are: „Atunci va zice Împăratul celor de-a dreapta Lui: Veniți, binecuvântații Tatălui Meu, moșteniți împărăția cea pregătită vouă de la întemeierea lumii. // Căci flămând am fost și Mi-ați dat să mănânc; însetat am fost și Mi-ați dat să beau; străin am fost și M-ați primit; // Gol am fost și M-ați îmbrăcat; bolnav am fost și M-ați cercetat; în temniță am fost și ați venit la Mine” (Matei, 25, 34-36); „Atunci va zice și celor de-a stânga: Duceți-vă de la Mine, blestemaților, în focul cel veșnic, care este gătit diavolului și îngerilor lui. // Căci flămând am fost și nu Mi-ați dat să mănânc; însetat am fost și nu Mi-ați dat să beau; // Străin am fost și nu M-ați primit; gol, și nu M-ați îmbrăcat; bolnav și în temniță, și nu M-ați cercetat.” (Matei, 25, 41-43).

³⁰ McKendrick, Doyle 2007, p. 84.

³¹ <http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/record.asp?MSID=8095&CollID=28&NStart=1139> (17. 07. 2014).

or a Frank has in this land been made into Galilean or a Palestinian. He who was of Reims or Chartres has now become a citizen of Tyre or Antioch. We have already forgotten the places of our birth; already these are unknown to many of us or not mentioned anymore³².

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³² Folda 1995, p. 143.

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Heraldică și artă în lumea statelor cruciate

Rezumat

Studiul acesta își propune să abordeze heraldica și arta din lumea statelor cruciate. Pe de o parte, heraldica statelor respective este, chiar până astăzi, mai puțin cunoscută decât cea a Europei. Pe de altă parte, în timp ce activitatea artistică înflorea în Ierusalim datorită sprijinului venit atât din partea suveranilor, cât și din cea a patriarhilor catolici, în Betleem, cei care au contribuit la împodobirea Bisericii Nativității cu donații pioase au fost pelerinii.