

THE ORDERS OF KNIGHTHOOD THROUGH THE CENTURIES

Genesis

In the beginning, Chivalry was a mixture of ideals, customs and traditions that Ampere defined as "the historic Romance of Feudalism." It developed in Europe during the Middle Ages on the basis of ancient origins and Nordic traditions, but its first manifestations appeared during the Feudal period.

The concept of medieval woman as a source of inspiration and love had a great influence on the development of Chivalry. Before this time, there is no evidence of gallantry either toward women or toward an adversary, or any evidence of love as a sentiment. Chivalry, in ancient Rome, was a rank inherited by birth, census, or by heroic actions. We find no evidence of Chivalry among the Homeric heroes, who were known to flee before a strong enemy, and who were known to strike their women, and offend their Gods.

The institution of Chivalry developed gradually, and became a military rank in defense of the state, religion, women, the weak, and the oppressed serfs of the nobility. Later, defense was extended to other social classes. Knights from other than the aristocratic class were rare; others were included only after conclusive demonstrations of bravery and sacrifice.

Chivalry was at first a league of the rich and the powerful against the violence and ravages of lawless bands of brigands that plagued Europe. It was a society of nobles who pooled their resources, shared honors and perils, and pledged to defend one another to the death.

Chivalry had great social importance. It developed in a period of individualism in which everyone took the law into his own hands, because the state was powerless to defend the property of its citizens. Later, Chivalry was idealized by writers and poets.

Its principal merits, besides introducing social justice, are the introduction of respect, loyalty and humanity, virtues up to this time almost unknown even among the inhabitants of the same region. The exaltation of love in adventures, celebrations and ceremonies was a usual practice among the Knights. As a result, courtesy was always present even in the most ruthless contest, and loyalty was paramount in every type of competition.

There are many theories concerning the origin of Chivalry. According to Chateaubriand, Chivalry was born of the Nordic characteristics of sentiment, courage and loyalty, fused with the Arab instinct for gallantry and wonderment. According to Laurente, it originated in the individualistic Germanic spirit, confidence in their strength and their untameable pride. According to other authors, it arose as a result of the attempts made by the clergy to transform feudalism into a force which would guarantee the existence of the Church and of the social institutions. To still other authors, Chivalry was the result of the transformation during the Carolingian era of the Franco-Germanic army, which was forced to fight on horseback in order to combat the plunderers who had invaded the empire.

In reality, Chivalry had a natural origin, and was the historic conclusion of the development of realities that existed for a long time. At first, it was indeed warlike, as in the time of Charlemagne and the Paladins; later, it became religious as in the Crusades, and finally, it became gallant. It was in this way that it was exalted by troubadours, poets and knights: "Of women, knights, arms, loves, courtesy and courageous deeds, I sing . . ." (Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso* I).

The regions in which the spirit of chivalry was mostly felt were southern France, then Spain, Italy, and somewhat less in England, where it assumed an aristocratic character. Its historical period covers the Eleventh to the Fourteenth Centuries.

The poets of the Renaissance made their Knights accomplish incredible deeds, often based on popular legends; extremely exaggerated were those attributed to Roland, Rinaldo, Guerrino, the

Meschino, Astolfo, and Siegfried. They are responsible for making Chivalry legendary in Europe.

Orders of Chivalry—History

In Europe we find some of the most typical institutions of Chivalry. One type was termed "Honorary," instituted to reward Knights for merits and for services rendered to the Crown or to recognize the importance of their birth or family. Such Orders are: Saint Michael, The Holy Spirit, Our Lady, Golden Fleece, and Charles III. Another type was called "Regular," formed by Knights who had in the past distinguished themselves in Europe or in the Holy Land while fighting for the Faith. Later, it became an association of noblemen who continued their fight against the Infidels under the Flag of Malta. These were the Orders of Aviz, Temple, Alcantara, Calatrava and Saint George in Carinzia. Another was called "Social," which included noblemen of the same social status, such as the Orders of the Knot, of the Vessel, of the Lioness, and of the Golden Iron.

Actually, the term "Knight" has quite a different meaning today from that of the past when, in order to become a knight, a boy of an aristocratic family would begin his apprenticeship at the age of seven. He would abandon his childhood games for those of the soldier and would serve first as a page at a court of a noble friend of his father. At fourteen he would become a valet or squire, and he would receive his first sword to serve the Knight, with whom he would share the rigors of training in the risks of combat.

At the age of twenty-one, sometimes even before in the case of a prince or of a youth particularly strong and able to handle arms, he was named a Knight by the King. Kings in fact had this privilege from the most remote times. Later, it also became the right of municipalities or of other famous Knights.

The "accolade" of Knighthood was first signified by a fist on the shoulder, later by touching the shoulder with a sword and a kiss on the left cheek, between the Knight and his patron. The Prince Bisignano, the Prince of Melfi, the Duke of Atri and the Count of Maddaloni, who were Knights of the French Order of Saint Michael, renounced their affiliation with the Order when the Kingdom of Naples, of which they were feudal lords, declared war on Louis XII, King of France.

Among the great historians who wrote about chivalry are: Rocquancourt, Sismondi, Giannone, Tutini, De Stefani, Macchiavelli,

Menestrier, De La Marche, Cibrario, Playne, Ginanni, Capaccio, Arnone, Morice, Cape Figue, Mennio, Villani, Loyseau, La Roque, Crollanza, Padiglione, Picianelli, Padula, Cappellette, Bascape and Santa Maria.

Deschamp wrote about the Knights: "The Knights in this world cannot live without concern. They have to defend the people and pledge their blood to propagate the faith."

With chivalry arose the Fief of Chivalry, of which only the knights honored with the Belt of Knighthood could be invested. Memory of ancient Chivalry remains only in the titles of the lower degrees in the Orders of Knighthood. It should be noted that only the title of Knight is retained by the most important Orders in the world, such as, "Our Lady," the "Supreme Order of Christ," "Saint Andre," "The Elephant," "The Seraphs," "The Garter," "Charles I," "The Black Eagle."

Since they formed a real armed force, the knights were called "Militiamen" from the Latin "miles."

In fact, speaking of Giano della Bella, descendent of Hugo of Brandenburg, Vicar of the Emperor Ottone III, Dante wrote: "From him derived honour and the army; let us hope that today he joins his glory with the people." Anc Cacciaguida says: "Then I followed the Emperor Corrado and I joined his army."

We know twenty-eight categories of Knights, such as "The Band" formed in Florence in order to fight Henry VI of Luxemburg; "The Cavalry" that represented the Civic Army; "The People," elected by the people; and "The District" with the function of protecting the city.

Orders of Chivalry and Nobility

Belonging to one of the orders gave the Knight and his descendants the right of nobility. Some of the most important orders are: The Annunciation, Saint Maurice and Lazarus, Isabelle the Catholic, Saint Ludovico of Parma, The Plain, Massimiliano Giuseppe, The Merit, The Iron Crown, Marie Therese of Austria, Saint Ann of Prussia, Saint Patrick, Saint Umberto, Saint George of Hanover, The Black Eagle, The Golden Fleece, Saint Stephen of Austria and of Tuscany, The Teutonic, The Golden Lion of Assia-Cassel, Saint John of Prussia, The White Eagle, Saint Andre and Saint Alexander Newsky, The Christ, Leopold of Austria, The Crown of Bavaria, The Crown of Wurtemberg, Saint George of Bavaria, The Alcantara, The Calatrava, Saint James of the Sword, Our Lady of

Montesa, of Danebrog, The White Elephant, The Conception of Villaviciosa, Saint Vladimir, etc. (Padiglione, "The Titles of Chivalry").

In fact, Riccio (Decis. Cur. Arch. III 136) says that Knights of The Golden Spur would hand down to posterity the Right of Nobility. In the Diploma from Charles V (March 10, 1530) conferring Knighthood on some members of the De Lupis family, we find: "We proclaim you noble and generous soldiers with the honour of the sacred Roman Empire." In another Diploma from the same Emperor to the Taverna family in Milan, "We declare your descendants nobles during our reign and forever." (July 31, 1548). This is confirmed in the famous works of Cardinal De Luca, by the law of Charles D'Angio of January 29, 1224; by the Laws of 1800 of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies; by the Law of 1635 issued in Piedmont by Amadeo I of Savoy; by the 1818 protocol of the Imperial and Royal Court of the Kingdom of Lombardy Veneto, etc. We see also the great importance with which the titles of Chivalry were regarded in the past centuries from the fact that many kings and princes aspired to the titles.

From the Annals of France, we learn the following: Charlemagne conferred Knighthood upon his son Louis the Good. He, in turn, knighted his son, Charles the Bold. Louis IX of France knighted his son, Philip III, who in turn knighted three of his sons. Francis I wanted to be made an armed Knight by the famous Baiardo (the knight said to be without stain and without fear). Ruggiero, King of Sicily, conferred knighthood upon his three sons, Frederic, Charles and Robert d'Angio. Malcolm, King of Scotland, wanted to be knighted by Henry of France; and William Rufus, King of England, was knighted by Archbishop Lanfranco. We also learn that Henry II of England received the Military Belt from the Marshal of Bise, Edward IV from the Count of Devonshire, Henry VII from the Count of Evadol, Edward VI from the Duke of Somerset, and Louis XI of France from Duke Philip of Borgogna.

Women were also able to attain knighthood. In fact, Elizabeth of Hornes was named "Equitess" in the marriage contract of her sister Alice with John de Merode. Mary and Elizabeth of Hornes are qualified "Chevalieres" in documents of 1451. Catherine Baw is called "Militissa" in record books of Malines of 1441.

Orders of Chivalry reserved to women in the past were the orders of: The Azza, The Band, The Mountain, The Lady Slaves of Virtue, The Cross of Stars, The Skull of Death, The Love of the Masses, Saint Elizabeth, Saint Therese of Austria, Saint Ann of the Swan,

The Luigia, Saint Catherine, The Sidonia, etc. (Crollanza, Encyclopedia of Chivalric Heraldry, p. 168).

“With knighthood was introduced a new form of nobility. The ancient Germanic form of feudalism was replaced with a more noble aim than that of conquest. After the first fervor of the Holy Land Crusades, the knights gave splendour and counsel to the Reign; they defended the people and during peacetime introduced the gentle mode of life, and abandoned the useless atrocities to war. They taught dignity to man, courtesy to valor and gentleness to war.” (Crollanza ap. loc. cit.).

In ancient Rome the rank of Knight was synonymous with nobility and during the Middle Ages became the first step to aristocratic hierarchy. In fact, even today, many European families are registered as Knights in the national aristocratic index. For instance, Cugia of Saint Orsola, Marquis of Saint Charles, Knights, Don.

Aristocrats of great importance had the title of Knight among the nobility of the Holy Roman Empire; for example, Focas Comneno de Curtis of Byzantium, Imperial Highness, Count, Knight of the Roman Empire. Various were its degrees (all hereditary), and they were Knight, Noble, Baron, Count, Marquis, Prince.

Orders of Chivalry—Classification

According to the majority of the experts on the subject, the subdivision of the various orders of Knighthood is the following:

1. Orders of the Collar, reserved to kings and personalities of first importance but not to the clergy. In general, these are the most important orders in the nations where they were founded; for instance, Orders of the Annunziation in Italy, the Golden Fleece in Austria and the Garter in England.

2. Orders of the Cross, also called Ecclesiastic or Religious Militia, are subject to religious profession of international character; the Order of Malta, for instance.

3. Orders of the Spur, conferred by Popes and Sovereigns to reward specific merits.

According to Santa Maria and his followers, the orders are categorized as follows:

1. Military Orders, awarded for military merits.
2. Honorary Orders, awarded for civic merits.
3. Ecclesiastic Orders, conferred by the Pope.
- 4., Regular Orders, established with religious regulations.

Maigne and his followers prefer the following:

1. The Grand Orders reserved to Sovereigns and persons of prime importance.

2. Orders of the Court, reserved to the nobility.

3. Orders of Merits, accessible to anyone who qualifies.

They are classified by Bascape and his followers thusly:

1. State Orders, belonging to the heraldic patrimony of a nation.
2. Dynastic Orders, once belonging to the historic patrimony of a reigning family and which have been transferred to the nation.

3. Dynastic Orders, belonging to the heraldic patrimony of a reigning family.

4. Pontifical Orders, which included only those under Pontifical protection and issue, such as the Order of the Holy Sepulchre.

5. Magisterial Orders, whose Grand Master is not a descendant of a sovereign family. The Grand Master is often not hereditary, but elective. These are also known as the Independent Orders of Chivalry.

The establishment of Branches of Orders in Italy, for instance is regulated.

For the national orders of Italy, official authorization is not necessary. For those of other nations, authorization is obligatory. In case of war, it is mandatory for knights to resign their membership in orders of enemy nations.

For the Papal orders, authorization is not necessary. But authorization is necessary for the dynastic orders of ruling families, as though they were foreign orders.

The Italian Magistrature and the Supreme Court of Appeal do not authorize non-national dynastic orders, but the use is lawful if the name and the rank of the order is specified, such as Knights of Saint George in Carinzia. Today, the Magisterial Orders are considered by law as private associations.

In general, the Orders of Knighthood are subdivided into ranks in the following ascending orders: Knight, Knight-Officer, Knight Commander, Grand Officer and Knight of the Grand Cross. The exceptions include those of primary importance, such as Order of the Annunciation, Golden Fleece, Saint Gennaro, Garter, etc., that have only the rank of Knight.

The titles of Knight Commander and of Knight of the Grand Cross appeared in the Fifteenth Century.

In some orders the rank of Grand Cordon also exists, but it is really an incorrect nomenclature for the rank of Knight of the Grand Cross. The two modern ranks of Grand Officer and of Knight Commander were spelled differently in the Nineteenth Century.

In the past, many Orders granted hereditary or honorary titles of nobility, such as the following Orders: Annunciation, Christ, Golden Spurs, and Saint Maurice and Lazarus.

The majority of the Orders had decorations and a uniform of distinctive color. Uniform colors were: Order of Malta, black; Order of Saint Maurice and Saint Lazarus, green; Order of Constantine, blue. Currently, uniforms are used in special ceremonies of the Orders of Malta, Holy Sepulchre and Constantine.

Orders of Chivalry—Decorations and Uniforms

The correct use of the decorations follows:

The Large medals are worn on the military uniforms.

The Miniature medals are worn on frock coats with formal clothes.

On informal jackets it is only proper to wear miniature medals without ribbons and suspended on a gold chain.

On civilian clothes, only the rosette is worn as a boutonniere. This is a small round lapel button covered with the colors of the Order. A cloth or metal bar of different ribbons may be worn at the same time, but only one rosette may be worn.

On uniforms of the chivalric orders, military uniforms, and a frock coat, the following may be worn: Collar decorations worn by the Commandery, of the various Orders of Chivalry; the badge of Grand Officer of the Knights of the Grand Cross and the Grand Cordon; and the transversal bands worn from the left shoulder to the right side.

Most of the Orders now have a cape usually in the same colors as the ribbons of their Orders, worn over a frock coat, and occasionally over an evening jacket.

In honor of the glorious past of Knighthood, men who have been elevated to Orders of Chivalry must feel strictly bound to their rank of Knighthood, the heritage of the ancient traditions, and of the patrimony of valor, honesty, dignity and courtesy that "Knight" has signified for nearly a millennium.

Sovereign Order of Cyprus

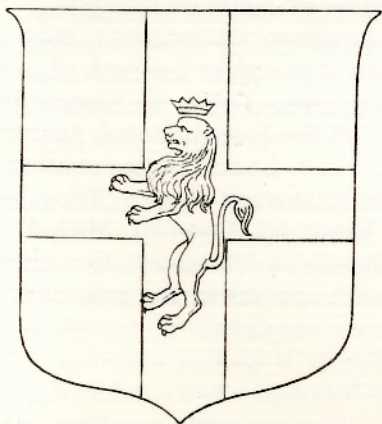
The Sovereign Order of Cyprus belongs to the category of the National-Dynastic orders since its Grand Magistaire is hereditary in the Lusignan family, once the rulers of Jerusalem and Cyprus.

The most famous historians on Knighthood agree that the Order of Cyprus was founded by Guy de Lusignan in the last part of the

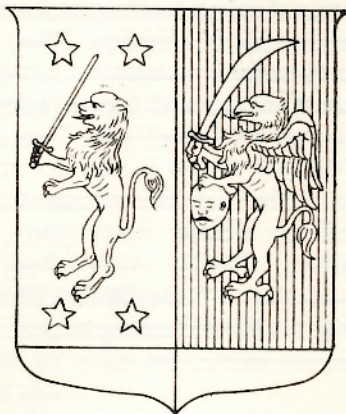
Twelfth Century. They also agree on the continuity of the Grand Magistaire who was succeeded by his descendants.

According to some authors, the Sovereign Order of Cyprus became dormant when Catherine Cornaro, widow of James de Lusignan, sold the island to Venice. The Order, however, disappeared only in Cyprus; the de Lusignan family continued to confer the rank of Lord until the time of Louis-Hugues de Lusignan. Later, he became the Marquis of Lezay and then Marshall of the French Royal Army in 1762. As stated in the documents in 1763, Louis-Hugues conferred the office of Hereditary Chancellor to Count Stefan Peter von Valitch, whose descendant, Most Reverend Lorenzo Michel de Valitch, Titular Archbishop of Ephesus, is currently Hereditary Chancellor of the Order. The succession appears in the genealogical table on the following page.

LUSIGNANO



von VALITCH *



Hugues-François
Marchese di Lezay,
Signore di Marais,
diretto discendente
di Simone, figlio
di Ugo VII, Signore
di Lusignano

Louis-Hugues
Marchese di Lezay,
Maresciallo delle
Armate Reali Francesi
nel 1762

nomina

Stefan Peter
primo Cancelliere
Ereditario dell'Ordine
Sovrano di Cipro

—
Franz Paul

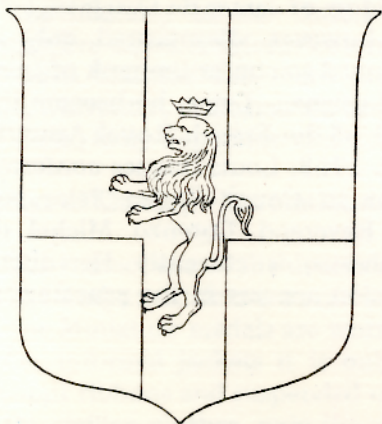
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Stefan Peter

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Franz Paul,

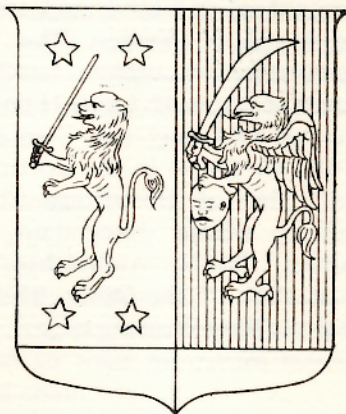
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Michele Paolo Pietro,
attuale Cancelliere
Ereditario

* For personal reasons during the Second World War, his sympathies being with the Allies), *von* was changed to *de*.

LUSIGNANO



von VALITCH *



Hugues-François
 Marchese di Lezay,
 Signore di Marais,
 diretto discendente
 di Simone, figlio
 di Ugo VII, Signore
 di Lusignano

Louis-Hugues
 Marchese di Lezay,
 Maresciallo delle
 Armate Reali Francesi
 nel 1762

nomina

Stefan Peter
 primo Cancelliere
 Ereditario dell'Ordine
 Sovrano di Cipro

—
 Franz Paul

—
 Stefan Peter

—
 Franz Paul,

—
 Michele Paolo Pietro,
 attuale Cancelliere
 Ereditario

* For personal reasons during the Second World War, his sympathies being with the Allies), *von* was changed to *de*.