

## « ATAVIS & ARMIS » and other expressions of Lazarite identity seen in their proper context

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### Abstract

The arms of the Order, Argent, a cross Vert, may well have existed already during the era of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem but, records having been wilfully destroyed at repeated sackings of Boigny, first during the Hundred Years War; then during the Wars of Religion; and lastly by the mobs of the French Revolution, there is precious little preserved. On the other hand, the *Memoires* of the Order, printed in 1649 claim that the green cross was adopted shortly after the transfer in 1254 of the Magisterial Seat to Boigny. A manuscript from 1314 with the Statutes of the Order, preserved at Seedorf, Kanton Uri, in Switzerland, indicates that Knights and Priests of the Order wear a green cross, sewn onto their habit. The Motto of the Order, *ATAVIS & ARMIS – By Ancestry and Arms –* made perfect sense when it was introduced by a *Règlement* promulgated on New Year's Eve 1778.

### Introduction

*“It is in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ that we must glory, in whom is our salvation, our life and our resurrection ; through him we have been saved and set free.”*

(St Paul. Letter to the Galatians, 4:16)

When Pope Urban II, at the Council of Clermont in 1095, exhorted Christendom to “take up the Cross” and go to war for the Holy Sepulchre of our Lord and Saviour in Jerusalem, he ignited a fire in people's hearts that would have long-lasting effects. The response was overwhelming. Thousands of people literally “took up the Cross”, sewing a cross onto their garments, and set off for the Holy Land. This was the first time in recorded history that a cohort of mainly lay people assumed a common symbol to denote them as Soldiers of Christ. Eventually, the Holy City of

Jerusalem was conquered on Friday 15<sup>th</sup> July 1099. The Latin Kingdom was established, and a Latin patriarchate erected. When, on Friday 18<sup>th</sup> May 1291, the last outpost of the Latin Kingdom of the Holy Land, Saint Jean d’Acre or Akkon, eventually fell into the hands of the infidel, the nearly two centuries of close contact with the Middle East had had an enormous impact on the Occident.

The two principal aspects of this influence, which are relevant to us at this moment, are the establishment of the religious military Orders, including the Order of Saint Lazarus of Jerusalem, and the birth of heraldry. It is very possible, although there appears to be no conclusive evidence, that the first shields, adorned with a simple cross, were carried already by knights on route to Jerusalem on the first crusade. In any case there are quite a number of heraldic arms containing just a plain cross, albeit in different tincture combinations. To give but two examples: A gold cross in blue is the national flag of Sweden but also the arms of Toulon in France and Verona in Italy ; with an “M” for “Mary” in the 4<sup>th</sup> canton, it is the arms of Pope Saint John Paul II. Swedes visiting Toulon or Verona, especially after a “night out” might be forgiven for thinking they were miraculously transported back to their own country. Both cities sport in abundance of what could be mistaken for the Swedish national flag.



**Swedish national flag**

A green cross on white, as we all know, constitutes the arms of the Order of Saint Lazarus of Jerusalem. Curiously enough, for some reason, the green cross on white is quite rare outside the Order except as a shop sign to indicate the location of a pharmacy, especially in France.

Exceptions to this rarity are:

1. The commando ensigns for senior officers of the Portuguese navy consisting of a green cross in white, accompanied by various badges. The Inspector of the Fleet, however, uses no additional badge but, in fact, flies the plain white flag with the green cross of the Government of the Order of Saint Lazarus;<sup>1</sup>
2. In 1952, the Union of South Africa introduced various naval ensigns, white with a green cross, based on the concept of the White Ensign of the British Royal Navy, with the first canton fully occupied by their national flag in miniature. It is, therefore, not a flag that should be confused with a flag of our Order.<sup>2</sup>



**Portugese Naval Ensign  
Commander of the Fleet**



**South African Naval Ensign**

The arms of the Order, Argent, a cross Vert, may well have existed already during the era of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem but, records having been wilfully destroyed at repeated sackings of Boigny, first during the Hundred Years War; then during the Wars of Religion; and lastly by the mobs of the French Revolution. There is precious little preserved. On the other hand, the Memoires of the Order, printed in 1649 claim that the

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<sup>1</sup> *Republic of Portugal: Current Naval Ensigns & Flags.*  
<http://tmg110.tripod.com/port1.htm>

<sup>2</sup> Andries Burgers. South Africa Naval Flags. *Flags of The World website*, 2006,  
<https://www.crwflags.com/fotw/flags/za-navy.html>

green cross was adopted shortly after the transfer in 1254 of the Magisterial Seat to Boigny.<sup>3</sup> We shall never truly know when the cross vert was adopted! A manuscript from 1314 with the Statutes of the Order, preserved at Seedorf, Kanton Uri, in Switzerland, indicates that Knights and Priests of the Order wear a green cross, sewn onto their habit.<sup>4</sup> The tomb of Frère Thomas de Sainville, Grand Master of the Order 1277-1312 at Boigny, depicts him wearing a small Greek cross, i.e. *cross coupée*, over his heart. Similarly, the tombstone of Frère Jacques de Besnes, Master General of the Order (1370-1384) at Boigny, sadly now lost, included his personal arms with a small Greek cross above the shield, centred on the upper outer edge; a precursor to the chief of religion. He is wearing a similar cross on his mantle, over the heart.<sup>5</sup> The equestrian seal of de Besnes, attached to a document from 1384, also shows a Greek cross on his shield not reaching the edges. Seals in use at the same period at Burton Lazar in England and at Gfenn in Switzerland, on the other hand, show shields with an ordinary cross throughout.<sup>6</sup> The chapel of the commandery of Saint Antoine de Grattemont, in France, contains two depictions of the arms of the Order in stone sculpture from the second part of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, both showing a Latin cross, again not reaching the edges of the shield.

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<sup>3</sup> *Memoires, Regles et Statuts, Ceremonies et Privileges des Ordres Militaires de Notre Dame du Mont Carmel et de S. Lazare de Jerusalem*. Lyon: Antoine Cellier, 1649

<sup>4</sup> Siegfried von Schlatt. *Dei Regein des Heiligen Orderns S. Lazari*. Manuscript, 1314-1331 held at Seedorf Monastery.

<sup>5</sup> *Tombeaux de Thomas de Sainville, Jean de Paris et Jacques de Baine, maîtres de l'Ordre de Saint-Lazare de Jérusalem* (gravures). Extracted from: *Recueil de mémoires et documents concernant divers Ordres français ou étrangers. Recueil de pièces, extraits, mémoires et documents concernant les Ordres de Saint-Lazare et du Mont-Carmel*. I. Ms. Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des manuscrits, Clairambault 1316; +187 fols.

<sup>6</sup> Charles Savona-Ventura. *The Sigillography and commemorative artifacts [medallions, medals, stamps, plates] of the Order of Saint Lazarus*. Malta: Grand Priory of the Maltese Islands - MHOSLI, 2013, +55p

A manuscript Armorial of the Order, dated 1753, in the *Bibliothèque Nationale* in Paris, contains an illumination of the Arms of the Order of Saint Lazarus as it supposedly was, before the merger with the Order of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in 1608. It shows the shield, *argent*, a cross *vert*, as we know it, placed on an eight-pointed green cross with white borders and surrounded by a set of pale grey prayer beads in four sections interlacing the eight points of the cross. The whole is set on a black manteau, lined with green, issuing from an open antique crown, or in English terminology, an “eastern crown”, of nine points, without a bonnet inside. The same Armorial clearly shows that, until the incumbency of Frère Jean de Lévi, Grand Master 1556-1564, the cross of the Order behind the shield was a plain Greek cross.<sup>7</sup>



**Chapel of the Commandery of Saint Antoine de Grattermont, France**

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<sup>7</sup> *Armorial général des Ordres royaux, militaires et hospitaliers de N.-D. du Mont-Carmel et de Saint-Lazare de Jérusalem, recherché et recueilly par frère Claude Dorat de Chameulles,... présenté à MM. les Chanoines réguliers de l'abbaye royale de Saint-Victor de Paris par M. Vincent Thomassin, avocat au parlement, juge-garde armorial desdits Ordres, en 1753.* Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des manuscrits, Français 23135, 96 fols., Paris

At the St Lazarus Convent of Seedorf, in Switzerland, there is an 18<sup>th</sup> century painting representing the legendary visit in 1184 of the leprous King of Jerusalem, Baldwin IV. In the picture, there is a man dressed in red, carrying a green cushion with an antique crown and a sceptre in front of the king.

Intentionally misusing a term, one could say that, during the latter part of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Order of Saint Lazarus was “Maltesered”. That is to say that, from 1556 to 1603, when the Royal-appointed Grand Masters of the Order were Knights of the Sovereign Military Order of Saint John of Malta, the cross *couped* was replaced by the eight-pointed cross recently adopted by the Order of Saint John. The rationale for this canonically extraordinary situation is, though, for another occasion. This “Maltesering process” has had two particularly important and lasting consequences:

1. Frère Jean de Lévi replaced the Greek cross by a green Maltese cross with a white border. The exact date is unknown, but it was before 1564. A similar cross with white border was subsequently adopted for the French Royal Orders when these came into being. It still survives in the insignia of the Spanish Order of Don Carlos III.
2. At the Chapter General at Boigny in 1578, Frère François Salviati, following his election to the Grand Magistry, among other significant measures, introduced the ceremonial of the Order of Malta for the Reception and Profession of Knights in the Order of St Lazarus. The Order’s entire collection of records and archives at Boigny had been destroyed in a Huguenot attack and of the castle remained just one tower, part of the chapel, and a barn. The rest was in ruins.

This Ceremonial is printed in the Memoirs of 1649 and remained unchanged until 1700 when they were somewhat simplified. It is the basis for our ceremonials of today and is still used at the Solemn Profession of a Knight of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta. It must be understood

that, until the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Order of Saint Lazarus of Jerusalem was still, in principle, a monastic Order following the Rule of St Augustine and governed by the Master General in Chapter in the normal fashion. At the Chapter General held at Boigny at Pentecost in 1578 the whole French Order counted only half a dozen knights. It would appear that Philibert Marquis de Nérestang, appointed by Henri IV in 1604, was the first and only married Grand Master of the original Order of Saint Lazarus. The amalgamation in 1608 with the newly created Order of Our Lady of Mont-Carmel meant, in reality, the change of *raison d'être* of the historic Order of Saint Lazarus. The Order's assets were used to endow the new Order of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. This change in the *raison d'être* of the old Order of Saint Lazarus is emphasised by the 1753 Armorial of the combined Orders which, after the mention of Philibert de Nérestang, clearly states "*Fin de l'ancien Ordre de St Lazare*". It follows that the future *raison d'être* of the Order would be different.

At the time of the revival of the Order in France in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, it would appear that at first no personal armorials were used. The only heraldic sign representing the Order was the green eight-pointed cross, generally correctly designed and proportioned. The organisation was called plainly "*l'Ordre de Saint Lazare de Jérusalem*".<sup>8</sup> Paul BERTRAND's important work on the history of the Order, published in 1932, is titled "*l'Histoire des Chevaliers-Hospitaliers de Saint Lazare*" and bears a large green eight-pointed cross on the cover.<sup>9</sup> An *in blanco* diploma in Latin, dating from after the appointment of the 4<sup>th</sup> Duke Seville to the office of Lt Grand Master in 1930 and before his election to Grand Master in 1935 styles the Order "*ORDO SANCTI LAZARI IN JERUSALEM, NAZARETH AC BETLEEM*". According to a publication of 1936, the seal of the Order bears the shield with the plain cross, placed on the eight-pointed cross and surrounded by the grand collar. The legend reads: "S.

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<sup>8</sup> de Jandriac. Les chevaliers Hospitaliers de Saint Lazare de Jerusalem et de Notre Dame de la Merci. *Rivista Araldica*, November 1913, XI(11):p.679-683.

<sup>9</sup> Paul Bertrand de la Grassiere. *Histoire des Chevaliers-Hospitaliers de Saint-Lazare*. Paris, 1932

*SANCTI LAZARI IN JERUSALEM*".<sup>10</sup> The seal on a diploma of 1967 bears a similar embossed white seal, 53 mm in diameter, with the legend in French: "*ORDRE DE SAINT-LAZARE DE JÉRUSALEM*".

If the Motto of the Order, *ATAVIS & ARMIS* – By Ancestry and Arms – made perfect sense when it was introduced by a *Règlement* promulgated on New Year's Eve 1778, one may pose the question: Is that still the case? During the latter part of the reign of Louis XIV and throughout that of Louis XV, the nobiliary prerequisites for obtaining public offices became more and more strict and by a Royal *Règlement* of 15<sup>th</sup> June 1757, Louis XV transformed the Order into a pension institute for 100 high-ranking military officers of impeccable lineage, awarded at no cost for either the King or the State. Twenty-one years later, the motto "By ancestry and arms" seemed appropriate.<sup>11</sup>

It may not be out of place to mention here that the Orders of Saint Lazarus and Our Lady of Mount Carmel were separated by another Royal *Règlement* of 21<sup>st</sup> January 1779, turning the latter Order into a bursary for three students at the *École Militaire*. Thus, the Order of Saint Lazarus was brought back to life under its own identity, at least in name.<sup>12</sup> This would have remained under the protection of the Kings of France until 1883 with the death of Henri V, Comte de Chambord. In the circumstances, one can have some sympathy with the French hierarchy for reporting this abuse

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<sup>10</sup> Charles Otzenberger-Detaille & Paul Bertrand, Paul. *L'Ordre Militaire et Hospitalier de Saint-Lazare de Jérusalem. Office Central de Saint-Lazare de Jerusalem*. Paris: MHOSLJ, 1936.

<sup>11</sup> *Règlement (de Monsieur, grand-maître général) concernant les ordres royaux militaires et hospitaliers de Notre-Dame-du Mont-Carmel et de Saint-Lazare de Jérusalem, 31 Decembre 1778*. Paris: imp. de Monsieur, 1779.

<sup>12</sup> *Règlement que Monsieur, frère du Roi, en qualité de grand-maître général tant au spirituel qu'au temporel, des ordres royaux, militaires et hospitaliers de Notre-Dame du Mont-Carmel et de Saint-Lazare de Jérusalem, veut et ordonne être observé sur l'admission des élèves de l'Ecole militaire, 21 janvier 1779*. Paris: Imp. royale, 1779.



of ecclesiastic benefice to the Holy See, which, eventually, resulted in the rather papal Bull *Militarium Ordinum Institutio*, of 10<sup>th</sup> December 1772.<sup>13</sup>

Until the mid-1970s, all diplomas were headed by the plain green eight-pointed cross and all Order correspondence was enacted under the same cross for at least another decade. The French Obedience Dress Regulations of 1990 were issued under the same symbol. What might be the reason for this modesty? The simple answer is: Tradition! A tradition that possibly goes back to the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem. The Rule & Statutes for the combined Orders promulgated in 1649 contains an article that reads: “*Tous les actes de l’Ordre doivent être commencés par le signe de la Croix, et par ces paroles : Au nom de Dieu, de la Vierge, et de Saint Lazare.*”

In the official translation of the Fundamental Constitution of the Order of 1949 from Spanish into English, this paragraph is rendered as follows: “The Sign of the Cross and the invocation ‘In the name of God, of the Virgin, and of Saint Lazarus’ is to precede every act of the Order.”<sup>14</sup> This translation, although inexact and misleading, is retained in the Malta Obedience Constitutions of 1979 and 1999. In the Orléans Constitutional Charter of 2006, Article 4 reads: “All official acts of the Order are to be preceded by the invocation ‘In the name of God, the Virgin Mary and Saint Lazarus’.”<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Clement XIV. *Militarium Ordinum institutio* promulgated 1772. Transcribed in: *Lettre Patientes du Roi, concernant l’Ordre de Saint-Lazare données à Versailles le 18 Janvier 1773. Registrées en Parlement le 27 Février audit an.* Paris, 1773, +8p.

<sup>14</sup> *Orden Militar Hospitalaria de San Lázaro de Jerusalem: Ordenanzas Generales.* MHOSLJ, 1949; *An English Translation of the Fundamental Constitution of the Order, As Promulgated by the 44<sup>th</sup> Grand Master, The Duke of Seville, in 1948.* Malta: MHOSLJ, 1972.

<sup>15</sup> *The Constitution of the Military and Hospitaller Order of Saint Lazarus of Jerusalem - The By-Laws of the MHOSLJ. Agreed by the Joint Reunification Commission, Toronto 18 February 2006/Amended 11 March 2006, +9p. (+11p.)*

To correctly interpret the original instruction, one needs to examine the meaning of the term “act” in its proper context: This word can mean a number of things and, in current usage, it rarely has the meaning intended here, which is “document”. The fact that it is so, is obscured by four unfortunate circumstances:

- 1) Incorrect translation of the three first words in the French text due to lack of understanding of both context and concept;
- 2) that from 1949 onwards, this incorrectly translated article has been taken out of its proper 1649 context, which is regulations for the Chapter General, and moved to the “presentation” of the Order among the first articles at the very beginning of the Constitution, where it makes little or no sense;
- 3) in the Constitutions of the French Obedience and the Orléans Constitutional Charter, the reference to the “Sign of the Cross” had been lost;
- 4) on letterheads, diplomas, and publications, the green eight-pointed cross has latterly been replaced by the full arms of the Order.

To sum up: In English, this article, if maintained, should read : “All acts of the Order are to commence by the Sign of the Cross and these words: In the Name of God, of The Virgin, and of Saint Lazarus”. However, there is a strong suspicion that this “Lazarite Trinity” saw light after the amalgamation by Henri IV of the Order of Saint Lazarus with the newly founded Order of Our Lady of Mount-Carmel. In any case, it does not figure in the minutes of the for the Order crucial Chapter General at Boigny in 1578.

In the days before printing and “logos”, the text of acts of some importance, i.e. documents, often commenced with a calligraphed Sign of the Cross and the invocation of God, followed by a reference to Our Lady, and the name of a patron-saint. The Codex d’Abusson of 10<sup>th</sup> October 1489 for the Knights of Saint John of Jerusalem is a good example. It

begins with the Sign of the Cross and the invocation in Latin translated to: “In the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ, of Mary, the Mother of God, and of Saint John the Baptist, the Precursor of Christ, and our Patron; Frater Pierre d’Abusson, ... etc.” Traditionally also, the legend on seals begins with the Sign of the Cross, and so do countless inscriptions of various kinds.

To return to the arms of the Order, its current form, albeit in a different design can be traced to the first part of the 1930s, drawn up for the election and installation in 1935 of Don Francisco de Paula de Borbón y de la Torre, *iure uxoris* IV<sup>o</sup> Duque de Sevilla, as 44<sup>th</sup> Grand Master of the Order. It is contemporary with the present style of the Order as “The Military & Hospitaller Order of Saint Lazarus of Jerusalem”. This was also the period when the modern insignia were introduced together with a sparkling gala uniform and a slightly less ostentatious ceremonial uniform.

Those of you who may have studied the INSTRUCTION ON BANNERS, of January 2012, will have noticed that: “The banner of the Order displays the un-differenced arms of the Order and should, therefore, be used solely to represent the Grand Magistry.”<sup>16</sup> It follows that only the Grand Magistry should use the full arms of the Order. This notion is based on the Grand Magisterial Decree N° 52 of 1969 (Duc de Nemours) on the Armorial Bearings and Seals of the Order, the beginning of which reads: “The arms of the Order which are the property of the Grand Master and may not be used except by his specific authority, and which may appear in part or whole on the seal of the Order are” ... and then follows the blazon. Since this Decree has not been abrogated, one may maintain that it is still in force.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> *Regulations for the Recording and Use of Heraldry within the Order of St Lazarus of Jerusalem*. MHOSLJ, revised March 2012.

<sup>17</sup> *The Military and Hospitaller Order of Saint Lazarus of Jerusalem - Constitutional Decrees - 46th Grand Master H.R.H. Prince Charles Philip of Orleans, Duke of Nemours, Vendome and Alencon*. Malta: MHOSLJ, 1969.

The arms of the Order were matriculated on 6<sup>th</sup> September 1967 at Her Majesty's Court of the Lord Lyon King of Arms in Edinburgh and subsequently recorded in the Public Register of All Arms and Bearings in Scotland. On that basis, differenced arms for six Jurisdictions of the Order, Lochore, Scotland, England, Canada, Ireland, and South Africa, were matriculated twenty days later by the same authority. These jurisdictional arms consist of a shield of the Order, Argent, a Cross Vert, accompanied in the first canton by a distinctive mark of cadency; for Lochore a fleur-de-lys Sable from the arms of the Hereditary Commander; for Scotland, a thistle; for England an heraldic rose (but not a "Tudor" one); for Canada a maple leaf; for Ireland a shamrock; and for South Africa a Protea flower proper. Below the shield is a scroll with the motto of the Order. Considering the status and authority of the Court of the Lord Lyon, and the simple beauty of these arms, one need look no further for examples to follow. As is evident from the matriculation, the field of the first canton remains Argent. If the tincture of a canton is altered, it is no longer the arms of the Order!<sup>18</sup>

In this context, it is important to state that, for a number of very good reasons, it is not acceptable to introduce any official national, civic, institutional, or personal arms or badges into the arms of Jurisdictions of the Order. It may seem an easy option but has various undesirable connotations. On the other hand, respecting the rules of heraldry and eventual applicable State Law, charges from such arms may well be incorporated. It is well known that there may be those who will find this difficult to accept, but this is the rule! All now well-established signs, emblems, and badges, like our own beloved green cross, were once new and their recognition had to be merited.

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<sup>18</sup> Matriculation of the Order of the Military and Hospitaller Order of Saint Lazarus of Jerusalem on the 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1967. Matriculation of the Arms of the Commandery of Lochore on the 26<sup>th</sup> September 1967. *50<sup>th</sup> Volume of the Public Register of All Arms and Bearings in Scotland*. Scotland: Lyon Court, Scotland, 1967, pp. 35, 38.

Despite all the upheavals our Order has had to face, even during the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and more recently, the Order of Saint Lazarus of Jerusalem has a mission to the world of today, and to that of tomorrow. Therefore, let us remain steadfast in the precepts of the Beatitudes and in the Pauline virtues: Faith, Hope, and Charity, to the glory of God, for the benefit of those in need, and for the sanctification of our own souls!

Let me now finish with a prophesy of our founder, the Blessed Gerard:

“Our brotherhood will remain for ever, because the soil in which this plant is rooted is the misery of the world and, in accordance with the Will of God, there will always be people wishing to alleviate suffering and to make misery more bearable.”