

Chronique

The Journal of Chivalry

Articles, Essays, Reviews

Issue #1
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Understanding the Tournament

Chronique

The Journal of Chivalry

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CHRONIQUE

Greetings! The editors of CHRONIQUE cordially welcome our readers and give you our promise of producing the highest quality publication possible.

Given the increased focus on the various computer networks and in small journals concerning fighting philosophy, concepts of chivalry and questions of authenticity, we believe CHRONIQUE will provide a forum where students of these topics can exchange information.

We believe that the a growing number of people are pursuing medieval recreation and tournament combat for reasons that extend far beyond the physical exercise or entertainment. There is something rewarding, something which has endured nearly seven centuries since the earliest tournaments and the earliest writings of the Romances which have carried the knightly ideal forward. CHRONIQUE will look at issues surrounding the whole spectrum of the tournament experience from our historical models to modern tournaments of chivalry.

Using the forum, articles, essays, reviews and new translations of authentic sources, the editors hope to present a wide variety of perspectives and sources ranging from the philosophic to the practical. CHRONIQUE will also reprint important primary and secondary works which have passed into obscurity in an effort to provoke thought and to keep these works under consideration.

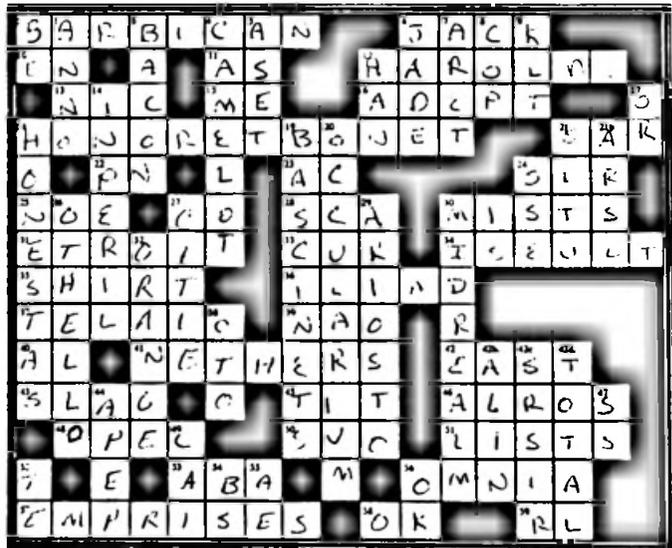
Each issue of CHRONIQUE will orbit loosely around a theme, but will also include responses to previous items. The purpose of this is to help create a dialog between our readers which will in turn provoke thought and foster knowledge.

Though the editors are long-time members of the SCA, easily the largest and most controversial recreation groups, CRONIQUE is not an SCA publication, nor is it limited to discussions of SCA

matters, though those may certainly be addressed. We aim to consider chivalric topics of interest to students of medieval culture. The emphasis on experience by recreationists, tempered by traditional analysis should forge a new perspective that is provocative and valuable.

We challenge you, the readership, to support CHRONIQUE and our quest for excellence. Contribute your thoughts, experiences and your studies and CHRONIQUE can rise to a high level of quality and become a valuable resource for tourniers, students and scholars. Take up our challenge and join us in the quest which was begun by knights nearly seven centuries ago but which is still pursued by some as hotly today as it was during the day of the knight in shining armour.

CROSSWORD CHALLENGE #1



FORUM

In future issues, the FORUM column will handle letters and responses from our readers. It is our hope that if something strikes you in the articles, essays or other forum letters, that you will write at least a few words of response so that a continual dialog can be built.

In the next issue of CHRONIQUE, we will be looking at historical tournament societies and knightly orders. There will be two expositions on the Company of Saint George, the tourneying society founded within the SCA.

In the December issue, we will examine 'points of honor', a topic which the editors believe should be the cause for great clamour. If you have a question or an opinion on either subject, by all means put your thoughts to paper.

A list of seven questions follows in place of the letters the editors hope to find in the future. Pick one and send us your answer!

Questions:

1. Why do you fight in tournaments?
2. How does your consort or Lady affect how you act on the tournament field?
3. What is the most important virtue a combatant can exhibit? Is it different for "formal" knights? Would a period knight have agreed?
4. What is the most important virtue a consort can display?
5. In terms of SCA-style fighting, how do you know that a marginal blow is not good. How do you know you are right?
6. What should you do when you feel your opponent is "playing a different game", or in the extreme, cheating?
7. Are there any elements of SCA fighting style which are authentic? Are there authentic styles which can be adapted to SCA fighting?

Calendar

- June 1992 Chronique issue #1
Understanding the Tournament
- Aug. 1992 Pennsic War (Slippery Rock, PA)
Certainly the largest SCA event in the world, this may well be the largest medieval recreation event in the world. Seven to ten days of tournaments, classes, revelry, and wars with upwards of 900 combatants per side. I have been told that the Tenans of Northshield intend to hold a Pas D'Armes on site.
- Chronique issue #2
Knightly orders and tournament Societies
- Sept. 5-6 King Rene Tournament (Minneapolis)
Sponsored by the Tenans of Northshield
Contact: Mack Mackenzie
AKA Sir Corwyn Greyrider
(612)-861-5169
- Oct. 1992 Company of St. George
Grand Pas D'Armes (Berkeley, CA)
Contact: Brian R. Price
AKA Earl Sir Brion Thornbird Ap Rhys

A 15th century tournament treatise
of uncertain authorship

Translated by Ray Lischner
AKA SCA L. Peregrin Payne
Kingdom of An Tir

Editors Notes

This article first appeared on the Rialto computer network in March, 1992. It was brought to my attention and I found the content intriguing—as Mr. Lischner states in his introduction this is one of two major treatises on tournaments from the 15th century.

In an effort to bring more resource materials into the hands of tournament sponsors, combatants and recreationists, I offer his complete translation.

Lischner's translation was offered without the footnoting; I have attached these notes in order to point out selected elements that might be of particular interest to our readers, or to clarify points that seem muddy.

The work

Originating from the mid- to late- 15th century (1452-1475), the manuscript translated by Mr. Lischner was found in SPECULUM, THE JOURNAL OF MEDIEVAL STUDIES, Vol XIX, October 1944 in an article by Eduard Sandoz, Tourneys in the Arthurian Tradition.

Content

Given the Arthurian setting, the treatise describes a tournament as it might be held at a "round table". Round table tournaments

were really festivals of growing lavishness, popular from the late thirteenth century.

Knightly combatants and their prince (or sponsoring noble) took on the persona of an Arthurian character, and a drama was played out in the classic romantic style. The clear influence of secular romantic authors such as Chretien de Troyes can be plainly seen¹ as knights and squires² meet in combat to display prowess, honor, and to please the ladies.

A tournament was often the centerpiece of such festivals, though there is some evidence that the competitive motive was not as important as the dramatic—there are numerous accounts of the “Lancelot” character sweeping the field while “Kay” is unhorsed and soundly defeated. Such random outcomes are extremely unlikely and suggest playacting.

Nonetheless, the following article may shed some light on tournament practices during the 15th century. One must keep the dramatic motive in mind, however, and also bear in mind that this is to some extent an idealization. Though we do not have an author for the original treatise,³ the piece remains an interesting resource.

Lischner's Translation

Two of the major treatises on tournaments that were written in the fifteenth century include “The treatise on the form and description of the tournament”, by King Rene d’Anjou (*Oeuvres choisies de Roi Rene*, vol. 2; Ed. by M. le comte de Quatrebras, pp. 1-43; Angers : Cosnie et Lachese, 1845.)⁴ and a second treatise (below) of uncertain authorship (Sandoz, Edouard; “Tourneys in the Arthurian tradition;”, *SPECULUM* 19, (1944), pp. 389-420.

The former has been translated in its entirety, as is noted below. The second is shorter, and is translated here. The original includes blazons for knights of the Round Table and the rules governing the order of the Round Table; these

are not included.

The Translation

The form one holds tournaments and assemblies in the time of King Uther Pendragon and of King Arthur between princes of Great Britain and the Knights of the Round Table.

First the kind or prince who intends to hold a tournament chooses any good city or village near woods and rivers; the woods and rivers delimit the field. It is the custom at major festivals that King Arthur holds a court in the middle of the tournament and gathering.

Next, he selects princes and knights of great renown and calls them, and by his gracious prayers and requests, he advises them of his intentions.⁵ When he is satisfied by his effort and that of those who will aid him, he announces the tournament in the following manner.⁶

He has a herald wearing his arms accompanying two maidens as messengers, and gives the herald a shield of arms of the king or prince with whom he would undertake the tournament. In this manner, he sends the herald with a letter in rhyme, well written according to the customary form, and notifying the said prince of the tournament with words said by the officer of arms in the following manner.

"Sire, king (or prince, according to his estate), the King, my lord, sends me before you, for the high praise and great renown and prowess at arms he know to be yours. He sends you these letters by me and this shield, begging your pleasure, to hold a tournament as such a place: for the glory of the knights and for the ladies pleasure and for sport."⁷

The response of the prince who receives the tourney:

"I thank the king (or prince) for the honor he does me because he could find many others more worshipful and virtuous in this realm than I for fulfilling his desires, and

know that I am not of such great renown, however, for the love of him, and also because I always wish to exercise my knights in feats of arms, I accept the offer he makes me."

He then takes the letters and touches the shield, and he has it brought into his great hall and gives it the most honorable place so that everyone can see it.

After he makes his response in the same manner—in a letter and in rhyme—in the best words he can, he gives the gifts to the officer at arms and to the maidens. Note that he who receives the tournament knows about it well in advance. He therefore undertakes and names the day three months later, for such is the custom of the realm of England, that it cannot be done sooner. After these things are done and the response received by the challenger, one then sends word to announce the tournament at the court of the two princes. After that, the maidens and messengers go and search for knights who desire to win the prizes to come to the tournament, and they also find squires who wish to receive the order of chivalry, and so notify them.

How the tournament field is to be arranged.

The place is chosen near a village and castle or a large city by a river and forest. And in this manner, the village is closed on one side and the woods or river on the other form the two ends of the lists. Behind the lists are the tents and pavilions of the two princes who would strike the tournament. Everyone has the right to enter the village for obtaining arms, horses, or other needed things.

The form of the arrival of the princes.

Then the challenging prince comes to the city or village three weeks or a month before the day of the tournament. There he gathers all the knights who came for the tourney and directs each according to his station, because many good, poor knights come who do not have everything they

need in their array. 8

It is good when everyone has their arms, especially the knights of great renown who will try to win the prize of the day. The knights carry colors or other marks of the quest, as ordered by the princes of the tournament, each one bearing colors for his entourage.

No signs are carried except the banners of those who lead orders in the tournament or three ranks of knights, according to the number of people each one has in his party. And each puts in the last rank of those assembled the best knights, who, by their virtue, can undertake and conquer in the end. 9

The first ones who accept the tournament come three or four days before the tourney begins. They pass to the opposite {side?} of the village, on the other side of the lists, or set up tents to make lodging for the knights, because they do not enter the village until after the tournament. 10

The lodging where the ladies must stay is near the length of one side of the lists. The other side is empty and is not closed, except by the forest or the river. On two sides of the lists, each has three gates, large and spacious, where the knights issue in order, six by six, each lined up under his banner.

Everyone can, on their parts, go and visit their acquaintances, except for the princes, who remain concealed. Also the officers of arms and maidens and jugglers can assuredly go from one party to another. Anyone can go as far as the village of the tournament, without daring to enter the village, unless necessary or commanded by the prince of one side or the other.

What must be done for the village of the tournament.

Of everyone who is assembled, those who wish to be made



new knights bathe and keep vigil for the day, and they are clothed in one color and dine together close to the table of the prince, each according to his rank and dignity. They are served honorably after going to hear vespers, together with the knights who escort them.

After vespers, the prince who must make them knights remonstrates them: how they must hold loyalty and truth above all things, honor the Church, sustain widows and orphans, engage in feats of arms, to joust a outrance or to the death, in honorable causes, to honor nobility, cherish righteousness, and be kind to the good and fierce to the bad. After everyone promises these things, they all dispose themselves for a vigil that night in the church, each to his devotions until the next morning, when the mass of the Holy Spirit is celebrated.

After mass, everyone goes to rest until the hour of the high mass, when everyone returns to the lodging of the prince, to accompany him and go before him, two by two, by rank, and thus go to the church where each one is put in his place, in his ordained seat.

The high mass begins. Between the epistle and the gospel, the knights are made with prearranged benediction and the

swords by the prince who has them given. Then the spurs are put on by the knights. Then everyone returns to their seats until mass is celebrated, and then everyone leaves, accompanying the prince, in the manner they entered.

In this arrangement in the great hall, where, after the feast is proclaimed and everyone is seated in order, as said before, they are honorably served. At that time come minstrels and jugglers of all sorts, and any new, good songs are sung. After eating, they leave the tables, grace is said, and spiced wine is taken; the new knights go and arm themselves.

At the hour of nones, the horn is sounded for the beginning of vespers for the tournament, ¹¹ and all the new knights come, two by two, nobly appareled, and no one would dare carry a shield of only one color: all white or all green or all red or other colors or metals. And no one carries swords except courtesy blades, made of fir or yew, with an iron body, without cutting or sharpening. Thus they mount and break lances until low vespers when the retreat is sounded.

So everyone returns to his pavilion and disarms and dresses for coming to the prince's pavilion where everyone gathers when supper is announced. The prince receives them at his board, accepting to all who have done well: those who have done the best are seated at his table and are well united and fortunated for giving greater courage the next day.

Supper furnished and grace said, the prince goes to where the ladies are lodged. And the prince leads the knights who did the best that day, all to amuse themselves until bed time. Now if the prince has any knights who remain hidden so as not to be recognized, they visit and feast them according to their station, their valor and their skill at arms.

Everyone returns and puts in array what they will need the next day. Everything is arranged by the prince or knights who lead the paths to the field and the gates by which they will attack from every part. And everyone goes to mass

when the sun rises. At prime, everyone is armed and mounted under the sign of who must lead them.

For the day of the tournament.

As mentioned, each knight carries such emblazons as he wishes, except for any emblem of color of the device of the prince on whose part he is fighting, except for the knights who arrive at the tournament who do not want to be known. Everyone is armed with a helm, hauberk, shield and sword, made of wood. Cutting swords and all other weapons that are used in mortal combat are forbidden from striking a man uncovered and unarmed of cutting weapons; otherwise only the pommel the sword can be used. ¹² This is forbidden and commanded on pain of losing honor in the tournament. Everyone waits under his emblem, up to where the ladies are.

After prime, all the ladies, in grand array, go to their galleries that are now called scaffolds, some with princesses, others are lead by their parents, and others by their friends, some secretly and quietly so that no one knows and no one can recognize them. Thus everyone can see the tournament, privately, at her ease, without anyone knowing. Also, foreign knights can help each party without being pressed to be known: each according to his desire. ¹³

The things above being done, the trumpets and horns are sounded. Then enter the first set of knights onto the field, where many good strokes of the lance and many good blows with the sword are made, and many men beaten where the tourneying is such that no power can relieve them. The tournament is maintained in such a manner than each party makes three or four ranks, depending on the men who have good leaders. Each of the sides of the battle put the newest knights first, and those who turn out to be weak, the other followers in his party can come to his rescue him. In such a manner, the melee continues to have the battles until all the companies are gathered. And thus are

seen great feats of arms and great blows of one side and the other—because each one endeavors by all his might to maintain his honor. 14

And after all the ranks of knights are then assembled, there often comes unexpectedly a good knight who does not want to be recognized except by his prowess of arms. He comes so smartly in his fighting that by one stroke of the sword, often three or four knights immediately recognize him. Then he puts his hand to his sword and makes such arms that the party whom he attacks is relieved and the other is repelled so that all, crying "ransom and prize," fall on him, naming him and crying out loud, "the knight of the red shield," or any other such signs that he wished to carry.

At this point, such are the blows and combat that one or the other side is vanquished and put to flight, up to the limits of the lists, and the others are so pressed with sword cuts that the great haste they make amidst the woods and forest, without returning to the field and summoning, that the trumpets and horns sound the retreat. And there are hardy men who would strike more blows with the lance and sword. Thus everyone returns under his order and banner, and then goes to disarm.

And then all the knights who came alone, as said before, return and slip away from the tournament so that one does not know who has come back. One this occasion when the princes and knights return from the tournament and they come to give the prize. and the knight cannot be found, they undertake a quest. By the great desire that the princes and knights have to know who he is, for which many knights travel to fetch him and bring him to the great court of King Arthur, where, when he is found, he receives great honor.

It is true that any time a tournament is fought and that one of the parties is defeated, the vanquished can call for a tournament the next day or another day that seems good,

because this is the custom in the realm of old England: that the knights are again on the field and cannot refuse the vanquished, on pain of reproach.

The form of giving the prize.

For the prize to be given, the knight must be found so he can be with the prince and other knights. The prince first hears the report of those who watched the tournament and his officers of arms and of his wise knights, and elders who understand these matters, also those who fought in the tournament. And the opinions of those above are reported to the ladies, And with their good consent, the knight is sent to be fetched, if he can be found in any manner in the world. And the prince on whose side he fought takes his hand, and to him says these words:

“Sir such, by great effort of arms that everyone has witnessed today, which you have made, and by your valiance and great prowess, principally in the victory at this gathering, for the assent of all and the concession of favor of the ladies, the prize and gains are given to you and granted to him who has vanquished all.”

The knight says, “my very redoubted and sovereign lord, (when he is sovereign), the most noble in this world fights, I thank you, the ladies, and other knights here pressing their high honor that it is your pleasure to make and present to me. And I can hardly realize it, since such honor is not due me and is in no way deserved. Nevertheless, to obey your good command and those of the ladies, and so to please you, I take and accept it, not as a hardship, but to obey you as I said.”

The knight is seated this evening and the next on the side of the high seats, near the prince, and is served like the prince, neither better nor worse, and very richly dressed in a coat and mantle just like the prince. So is he honored by all the people, the said prince, and the other lords, who with the

prince give him many beautiful gifts, which only please and honor him with whom they feast.

The next day, after dinner, the princes gather and take leave of each other, sometimes in good love, and sometimes with a little bitterness, which is why tournaments are undertaken. And thus, it is not many months of the year that the realm of England is not having any tournaments. So the good knights are taken by the princes from all parts with good works and gracious pleasures and other good natures. Such knights are of such high prowess that they are more worthy than any prince, and thus each one tries to do well and to be worthy at arms.

This form of the tournament endured until after the death of King Arthur. Thus have you heard the manner, courteously enough, they kept until the realm was transferred to those who looked after it and devised in many parts these tournaments, not only done in the realm of {England} and not only in Great Britain, but also in France and in {Germany}, {Spain}, and other places. And the interest grew so much that great hatred spread with it, and many men were killed.

So Pope Boniface {VIII} prohibited such tournaments and jousts, on pain of interdiction. And so chivalry and nobility did not wait, and idle arms in times of peace were used in a sweeter fashion. Thus was devised the book made by a very high and mighty prince, the King of Sicily, the King of Jerusalem and of Hungary {Rene d'Anjou}, as you can see afterwards.

¹ See especially Ruth Huff Cline, "The influences of Romances on tournaments of the middle ages", *SPECULUM* 20, (1945).

² It is interesting that squires were also mentioned in the treatise; there is documented evidence of squires participating on the same

tournament field as knights. In the *Statum Amoroium in Tournaientis*, written c. 1295-1305 by Edward I, knights are limited in the number of squires that may accompany them on the field.

In this instance, squires are to attend if they "wish to achieve the order of chivalry", and are knighted in a court by the Prince before the tournament begins.

³ It has been hinted that the author is King Rene himself, though this is still unsubstantiated.

⁴ An English translation has been recently prepared by Dr. Elizabeth Bennet, editor of *Tournaments Illuminated*. Copies are \$6 and can be obtained from her at the following address: 169 Sawmill Road, Pottstown, PA, 19464.

⁵ It is not clear whether the author meant that he first collects his team or whether he notifies those who may participate on both sides. There is an statement later that the challenged prince is already aware of the event.

⁶ Does this mean that the team first trains together?

⁷ The reasons for the tournament are stated to be to compete for the prize; for the glory of the knights, for the ladies pleasure; and for sport. The response adds also 'for the exercise of the knights'. Note that here, even in a dramatic format, the reasons include both training and the quest for renown.

⁸ It is interesting to note that the providing of missing arms and equipment is a common feature of nearly all of the 15th century encounters I have found—in many of the *Pas D'armes* the patron must provide weapons similar to his own for those who are lacking. Generosity may be the primary motive but as has been shown by accounts as early as Edward I tournament gear became increasingly expensive. There seems to be a preference to draw knights of prowess and renown rather than those who are rich enough to support themselves.

⁹ The element of fair play is enhanced—each has an opportunity to meet an opponent at or near his skill level.

¹⁰ Although it stated earlier that all may enter the village in order to properly equip themselves.

¹¹ Vespers is a sort of behourd at which the squires (or in this case new knights) mount with weapons a plaisance and compete under the scrutiny of the gathered chivalry. For an excellent discussion of the vespers see Juliet Barker, *THE TOURNAMENT IN ENGLAND: 1100-1400*, pp. 140-141. (Boydell, 1986)

¹² Here again are weapons a plaisance, very similar to those depicted in King Rene's book. By using non-lethal weapons there is a definite emphasis on chivalry rather than on training for war.

¹³ This seems to imply that foreign knights may fight as unaligned and may attack where they wish when they wish.

¹⁴ Chivalry by example!!!

Some Tournament Functions in Recreation Societies

Brian R. Price

AKA SCA Earl Sir Brion Thornbird Ap Rhys, OL
Kingdom of the West

The tournament has undeniably captured the attention of our imagination as inheritors of Western culture. As children, the aspects of heroism and adventure characteristic of the knight-errant dance across our play with the power of reality. As adults, many are captivated by the wonder of the knight in shining armor image. The romantic image appeals to us still, after nearly seven hundred years. This interest has given a great deal of drive to the modern recreation societies, societies which strive to recreate various aspects of medieval life and which are successful to varying degrees. The tournament is central to the larger recreation societies, such as the SCA, and it's role has many permutations not often considered even by those who are hardfast tourney enthusiasts.

The tournament was a central knightly activity from the twelfth through the fifteenth centuries. Though the nature and purpose of the tournament itself changed during this period from a training tool for war-units to a framework to display acts of individual prowess and the building of renown, it remained a martial, colorful and powerful expression of knightly zeal. It remains the same today, part of our near-mythical cultural roots.

For the recreation society, the tournament serves many functions. Chiefly, it attracts new interest into the societies and slowly inculturates members into the ideology of chivalry by requiring chivalric conduct. Additionally, it is a testing ground for individuals to measure their skill (prowess) and their mental strength. In this sense it is also a

martial art, a uniquely Western martial art which carries the unique western value system bound tightly in the chivalric codes. These two major functional areas are often divided in the minds of tournaments as they consider themselves part of the "martial arts school" or of the "chivalric school". To a large degree these roles are not mutually exclusive—the role of the tournament is inclusive of both but the degree to which a combatant emphasizes certain elements places them somewhere on a spectrum between the two.

The tournament experience as a tool for the martial art

Within the SCA, fighting has been practiced for a quarter of a century. During that time, it has grown, changed, developed. It has evolved to the point to where most of the best combatants have certain elements of style in common, elements that are part of a new martial art which has grown in the context of the rules that govern our combats.

Like other martial arts, our techniques of swordsmanship are concerned with efficiency, fluidity, power, and precision. It is difficult to say how much of our technique is actually authentic, since little was written about fighting form until the sixteenth century, at which point the tournament had all but perished. There are elements of delivery and calibration which are regional or which are unique to a specific subculture, but in a general style has been developed which is effective within the context of our tournament societies.

In addition to the physical elements of our martial art, there is also a complete philosophy that accompanies the art. We as combatants are taught mental control at levels similar to those taught by the major martial arts, and combatants learn rules of conduct, elements of convention, and techniques of focus which would not be unfamiliar to other martial arts practitioners.

ment function, and to take both ends of the spectrum into account.

As combatants, we should strive to advance the quality of our prowess, of our martial art, and to hold tightly to our moral values in the face of the tournament challenge.

As sponsors, we should strive to emphasize chivalric conduct and prowess connected as one unit--this can be done by looking beyond the traditional "victor" for those exemplars of chivalry and prowess who by their example create a medieval, effective role model. Reward these individuals and we all emerge victorious.



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Tournaments to Enhance Chivalry

Hugh T. Knight, Jr.
AKA SCA Count Sir Rhys of Harlech
East Kingdom

The stated aim of SCA fighting is to recreate knightly, chivalrous combat, and yet all too often we speak of fighting in either modern military or sporting terms. Worse, we often act as though we are playing a modern sport with all of its' "win at all costs attitudes" or are actually fighting real life and death battles where any ruthless stratagem we can devise is not only acceptable but expected. Unfortunately, those who are repelled by these attitudes can often go too far in the other direction, emphasizing supposedly chivalric acts to the point where skill is almost ignored.

We need to emphasize chivalry and courtesy while continuing to raise the overall level of skill of our martial art, and we must meet both goals without compromising either one. It isn't sufficient for a man to be the most courteous and authentically equipped fighter in the world if he is unable to defeat the local stick jock; he is thereby equating chivalry with ineffectuality in the eyes of those for whom he should be setting the example. It is equally unacceptable to be able to defeat all comers if you are armed in the fashion of the latest Hilderbrant calendar and believe that wrestling your opponent to the ground of clubbing him while he is down is the best way to win.

In this essay I will discuss ways to mix period and modern tournament types to help achieve this goal. In the first part I will evaluate modern tournament formats and discuss their place in the SCA, and in the second part I will describe two period types of tournament in detail.

I don't believe that my proposal will solve the problem; all of us will have to develop a variety of means to that end.

But by taking the best from the old and the new, by emphasizing the glory and art our system of combat and by showing that prowess and style are not mutually exclusive, I fervently believe that we can take a giant step towards this goal.

Modern Tournament Types

The most common forms of tournament are bear pits, round robins and single- or double- eliminations. Each of these types of tournament have value for SCA fighters, but each also has difficulties which make them unsuitable for events (as opposed to practice). Bear pits and round robins emphasize endurance over skill, which I feel to be contrary to the purpose of formal tournaments. Additionally, these types of tournaments are not at all period.

They are useful in practice, however, as a means of developing endurance and can be used to keep fighting going in practice when everyone has a tendency to stand around and talk. In practice, all fighters should strive for as much helmet time (to steal a line from Earl Brion Thornbird) as possible since that is more important for learning to fight than any amount of talk and analysis.

In contrast, single- and double- elimination tournaments are balanced in favor of skill over endurance; you can't make up for lackluster performance by fighting a large number of bouts. Additionally, these types of tournaments have the tremendous advantage of creating an exquisite sense of pressure which forces us to push ourselves to our absolute limit of performance. While practice is useful for building endurance, improving timing and for learning new techniques, I feel that the only real advancement a fighter experiences (after he has developed a proficiency in the basics during practice) comes from fighting in elimination tournaments; the deeper the list the better the learning experience, with a good, cleanly fought really though Crown {tournament} being the best training situation in the

SCA. Fighters who suffer from "tourney choke" are often those who have had little experience in elimination tournaments.

Unfortunately, elimination tournaments are not without their flaws. First, the competitive nature of these types of tournaments can lead to the "win at any cost" attitude we are trying to eliminate. To mitigate this danger, we must train out fighters and ourselves to value the precepts of chivalry and show, by example, that it is possible to win without resorting to tactics and techniques unsuitable for a gentleman.

Second, fighters can travel several hours to an event only to go out in a few rounds. I think this is the reason elimination tournaments are seldom seen in the East. This problem can be solved by running a less formal tournament for those who have been eliminated.¹ It is important that this second tournament be of a type which requires little preparation or staff since most groups holding events would lack the personnel and time to run two such contests at the same time, but the second tournament should have a structured format or else fighters may lack the initiative to start something themselves. A ransom tournament (which I will discuss at length below), or a series of increasingly large melee scenarios are ideal.

Unfortunately, elimination tournaments are no more documentable than bear pits or round robins, and I'm afraid I don't have an easy answer to this one (ed. Sigh!). Medieval tournaments had a real sense of danger that we are unable to recreate which had the same effect as the pressure of elimination tournaments has for us. Since this is important for us, we must, in this instance, keep the undocumented format for some events. We can mitigate this by making our elimination tournaments as full of chivalry, courtesy and pageantry as possible and by leaving the tourney season with a goodly number of actual period type of tournaments.

event to give to my Lady to show her my valor. I got the idea for this from Sir Jehan le Batarde who held the first Pas D'Armes which it was my privilege to witness.

The Ransom Tournament

The ransom tournament is perhaps the earliest form of tournament to have been held. It differed from actual warfare only in that the primary intent was to capture rather than to kill your opponent (so as to ransom his horse and armor- it has been said that Sir William Marshal, one of the greatest tournaments of all time, significantly affected the balance of trade between England and France while leading the mesnie of Henry the Young King) and that there was a safe conduct area in which one could rest.

Basically, knights would meet at a pre-arranged area and would engage in combat until they could not continue or could no longer ransom themselves (some knights carried gold on their person so that if they were overthrown they would pay their ransom could pay their ransom and get back into the fighting without delay).

For our purposes, several variations are possible. My personal favorite is to issue ribbons to each fighter with which to ransom himself when defeated. The number of ribbons a fighter receives is proportional to his rank (E.g. Dukes might get three, Count or Earls four, Knights five, etc.) so that those of lesser rank can stay in the tournament for as long as possible. After each fight, the victor claims one ribbon from the loser until a fighter has no more ribbons and is therefore out of the tournament. When one person has all the ribbons (this seldom happens) or a set amount of time has passed, the tournament is halted with the victor being the one with the most ribbons.

Another variation is to set up a tally board on the side of the field where fighters go after they have fought. The list mistress then subtracts a number of points from the loser's score (negative scores are possible) commensurate with his

rank and adds that amount to the victor's tally. Combat ends when everyone has had enough or when a set amount of time has passed; again, the victor is the one with the most points.

A third variation is to have everyone bring several prizes or gifts with which to ransom themselves. The Kingdom of Meridies sponsored this variation of a ransom tournament at Pennsic, and it was a lot of fun to walk off the field with several small gifts.

The list for a ransom tournament needs to be large as it would be for a field battle with everyone on the field at once. A captain is selected for each of the two teams, and sides are drawn up evenly from the fighters present. The fighting should begin with challenges, and then the two sides should come together in a mix of small melees and single combats. In order to encourage single combat, the fighters should be told that if a single combat challenge is given and accepted other fighters may not rescue a hard pressed or defeated comrade. Otherwise, rescues may be accomplished by defeating those attacking your team mate. Of course, there is no reward for defeating someone from your own team, and you may not challenge a team mate.



ALL SAINTS ARMOURY

Tom Huguenin

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While this type of tournament does tend to encourage endurance, it is extremely period and gives fighters all of the fighting they are likely to be able to handle of both melee and single combat.

Closing

In conclusion, by using these suggestions, I feel we can do a great deal to enhance the skill, style and pageantry of SCA fighting. In order to make a difference, however, each of us must guard against complacency. We cannot allow ourselves to be pushed into demeaning our art to mere sport, and we must treat our opponents with the courtesy and chivalry appropriate to a knight.

When our local groups are planning events, we should argue vehemently in favor of better, more authentic, tournaments. While at events, we should encourage fighters to dress and arm themselves in a period fashion, to act in a courteous and chivalric manner, and in all ways to imitate the manners of a courtly gentleman of arms.

I welcome any comment on this or any other subject relating to medieval chivalry. Contact me at the address below, using my mundane name on the envelope:

Count Rhys of Harlech, KSCA
Hugh T. Knight, Jr.
21 Oak Terrace, #1c
Somerville, NJ, 08876

¹ Editors note: When I lived in the Middle Kingdom, there was often a "novice list" run for those who had either fought for less than a year or who had not won a tournament. This served to protect the lesser skilled combatants. This was run concurrently and was often interspaced in between the rounds of the main list. There is no such convention in Caid or the West, where I now reside.

The Purpose of the Tournament of Chivalry

Brian R. Price

AKA SCA Earl Sir Brion Thornbird Ap Rhys, OL

Editor's notes

I had not originally planned to include this essay, which dates from November 1991, in Chronique, but some submissions went astray and gaping holes of space were left. The essay is part of my forthcoming Book of the Tournament, a tournament treatise in the spirit of the 15th century that attempts to explore the philosophy of tourneying as shared by members of the Company of Saint George. In the next issue there will be an article on the Company and it's goals, but for now take the following as my opinion as to the essence of the tournament experience. I look forward to commentary on the piece and will include the best of such comments in the FORUM of the next issue.

Few activities can match the color, romance, and excitement of the Medieval tournament of chivalry. Knights, squires and lords compete with one another in their displays of prowess and honor, of their skills and their character. Ladies escort their lords to the field, watchful of their performance as the combatant fights for the honor of the consort. Some ladies fight as well, displaying their own chivalric conduct. In addition to the entertainment, spectators can observe the combatant and the challenger in a melieu where character is brought to the surface and honest expressions of courtesy and valor can be plainly seen. These are values in short supply these days, and their display makes the tournament all the more pleasing.

The tournament is more than a display. For the combatants, it is the testing ground upon which their carefully honed martial skills and their personal values are tried. Opponents are met

who have a wide divergence in skill and virtue, and it is challenging to attempt to overcome superior prowess and / or an opponent with a less than pleasant demeanor. There is a challenge to behave in a knightly fashion regardless of the circumstances; to be courteous, generous, respectful, loyal and full of nobility and sincerity in the effort. This challenge forms the most difficult and important function of the tournament as a testing ground for character.

Less lofty and more tangible than this philosophical goal, however, is the challenge to prowess. The development of swordsmanship takes years of practice to build the coordination, the familiarity, the confidence and the focus necessary for graceful power. It is this grace in ability, this making the difficult look easy that is a key attribute to knightly style; a crisp, simply elegant series of movements that likens a fine fight to a dance. Baldassare Castiglione, writing in the latter 15th century, terms this elegance "Sprezzatura", a word and a concept too absent from society at large.

A reward for this refinement is the accolade of formal knighthood, bestowed by the King in response to the popular accord of the Chivalry and by the Kingdom. The Crown invests the candidate with the white belt, spurs, and chain; tokens of the Knight's achievement but heavy in their responsibilities. To many the attainment of formal knighthood is the pinnacle of experience within the tournament society, yet at the investiture the knight is charged with the duties to set the example upon which many will look.

Combining the two challenges then, of prowess and of spirit, we find the essence of the obstacles that will confront combatants as they tourney. As combatants clash in a whirling dance of color and shining steel, the spectator and combatants alike are treated to an experience unlike any other. For a brief moment in time, we can taste the Romance of Chivalry, experiencing first hand some of the magic of the knightly ideal so resounding in literature and in our Western values.

Reviews

Maruice Keen, Chivalry

Yale University Press, 1984

Few works are as elegantly constructed as this piece. Dr. Keen has brought together a fine overview of knightly institutions, philosophies, and experience in a book that is incredibly readable and useful for recreationists. Most academic works lack the vitality of this piece--it is a book that will offer a myriad of sources for further research and is well written enough to encourage interest. Excellent notes and an exhaustive bibliography round out this cornerstone to any book collection on knighthood and chivalry.

Vale, Malcom. War and Chivalry

University of Georgia Press, 1981

Although technically out of print, this book has surfaced with some regularity amongst used dealers. Dr. Vale artfully examines a series of questions relating to chivalry and its relation to war during the 15th century. "The Literature of Honor and Virtue", "Orders of Chivalry in the 15th Century", "Chivalric Display", "The Techniques of War", and "The Changing face of War" show that the chapter headings are indeed pertinent to recreationist activities. In addition, the book includes a series of interesting tables, a chronology of events from 1400-1525, and Clement Jannequin's 'La Guerre'. An out standing book.

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political and diplomatic affairs of France, Italy
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- 001 **The Book of the Tournament**
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includes written music and there is a wealth of
historical information presented in the favored
dialog-format of the 15th century.
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Submission Guidelines

Chronique is looking for articles on subjects of interest to those involved in modern tournament societies. Such articles would include, but would not be limited to, pieces on chivalric ethics, marshalling, fighting techniques, arms and armour, historical research on tournaments, knighthood, etc.

Submissions should include a letter granting Chronique the right to publish the article, and may either be typewritten (doublespaced), or electronically rendered in IBM format: Pagemaker, WordPerfect, Word, Word for Windows, Windows Write are all commonly used formats. Others may be available.

Deadlines are normally 6 weeks before the next issue is scheduled, but because of the short time between the first issue and the Pennsic issue the deadline for the August issue is July 15th. For the December issue it is October 15th. Submissions should be sent to the Editor.

Books, Monographs & Class Notes

BRIAN R. PRICE

AKA SCA Earl Sir Brion Thornbird ap Rhys, OL

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--All of the above are available from the Editor--

Chronique

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