

# Organized Mayhem: “Votive Orders of Chivalry” in Early 15c France

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This paper is inspired by the work of two distinguished scholars. Dr. Richard Barber’s works led me to the habit of reading scholarly works in the first place, and Professor Jonathan Boulton’s work aroused more specific interest on chivalric orders. I myself have no scholarly credentials; for making this paper possible at all I must thank Ms. Jeanne-Marie Quevedo, the session organizer, who invited me to write this and provided initial research materials. I also owe a great debt to Richard Vernier, Professor Emeritus of French Literature, Wayne State University for his invaluable help and guidance in translating two of the charters referenced.

In laying out the foundations of his massive work *Knights of the Crown*,<sup>1</sup> Professor Boulton mentioned three “votive” –as differentiated from religious or princely– orders of chivalry of which little is known beyond their charters. The original idea of this paper was to look into that “little” in an attempt to offer a glimpse into the chivalric mind of the time.

The votive “orders” ( as we will provisionally call them) in question are known generally as follows:

- 1) The Escu Vert a la Dame Blanche, founded by a Marshal of France, Jean II le Meingre, called Boucicaut, in April 1400;
- 2) The emprise of the Fer de Prisonnier (Prisoner’s Iron) founded by Jean I, Duke of Bourbon in January 1415;
- 3) The emprise of the Dragon d’Or (Golden Dragon), founded by one of the Counts of Foix – which count, and exactly when, is not certain, but circumstantial evidence points to Jean Grailly, count from 1412 to 1437.

Their founding by three prominent figures of the time *seemed* to offer an opportunity to isolate an individualistic view of chivalric ideals and activities. “Individualistic,” specifically because these groups were burdened by neither a sovereign’s political needs nor the mandates of religious affiliation. That turns out to be a difficult case to make for all three founders.

This focus on self-oriented individualism was encouraged by Johan Huizinga’s characterization of all such organizations (in *The Autumn of the Middle Ages*<sup>2</sup>) as decadent, impractical and hyper-idealistic, serving only the individual’s fantasy life, a view abetted by P.S. Lewis’ comments in his essay *Une devise de chevalerie inconnue*,<sup>3</sup> where he called them “manifestations of a bizarre social code ... not necessarily supported by any serious aim.”

However, as Malcolm Vale points out in *War and Chivalry*,<sup>4</sup> Huizinga’s view seemed a little too decadence-oriented. It should not be too surprising, therefore, that Maurice Keen, whose introduction to his book *Chivalry*<sup>5</sup> acknowledges a debt of guidance to both Malcolm and Juliet Vale, agrees.

What sort of ideals could these orders promote? What was the individual member's likely view of the chivalric ideals of early 15c France? Such were the questions I had hoped to explore. A closer look at the material, however, suggests a different direction. But before discussing that, let us clarify the terms and look at the material.

Taking into account the work of Olivier de la Marche, P. S. Lewis, and Richard Barber, Boulton defined six types of chivalric groups often termed "orders," but argues that only four of these groups actually qualify for that designation.

The focus of *Knights of the Crown* was on "Monarchical" orders of chivalry founded by sovereigns, usually with a view to advancing or consolidating the prestige of the centralized state, the best-known example of which is the Order of the Garter founded by Edward III in 1344.

The other three classifications of "order" can, for our present purpose, be described simply.

Boulton labels "Confraternal" those which took the form of a devotional confraternity but were endowed with a formal constitution with an elected rather than hereditary chief. A prominent example: The Order of the Crescent founded by René of Anjou in 1448.

"Fraternal" orders had a simple democratic constitution which bound the members equally to each other by oaths of mutual loyalty and aid. Although these might be founded by princes, as was the Compagnie of the Black Swan in 1350, their intent was, unlike the monarchical orders, not perpetuity but rather to address specific crises.

And "Votive" orders – the subject of this paper – (to quote Boulton more extensively):

were characterized by a set of ordinances of the sort normally associated with those individual projects of formal heroism called *emprinses* or "enterprises" of arms. Their members took a collective vow to perform certain specific chivalrous deeds, under specific conditions and within a specific period of time, after the completion of which the society simply dissolved. Like the individual enterprises upon which they were modelled, these orders – which from their origin in a collective vow I call "votive" – were in effect chivalrous games in which their members were the players and the statutes the rules of play. Founded by princes and lords who saw themselves as paragons of chivalric virtue in the image of the heroes of the romances, the votive orders were intended primarily to enhance the heroic reputations of their participants. Not surprisingly, these orders have left even less evidence of their existence than the fraternal orders . . .

Our three Votive Orders have much in common besides having founders named Jean. They were founded in a particularly difficult era of French history, the latter part of the forty-two-year reign of Charles VI. In his book, *Royal Intrigue*,<sup>6</sup> R. C. Famiglietti sums it up:

. . . one of the most calamitous periods in French history... bitter rivalries between members of the royal family plunged the country into an endless civil war, and Henry V of England, reviving the claim of his ancestors to the crown of France, crossed the channel to fight for what he considered his birthright.

Charles VI . . . inherited a kingdom much restored from the ravages of the Hundred Years War by his father, Charles the Wise, but next to his throne stood four uncles, . . . eager to exert great influence . . . in 1392, four years after he had thrown off (their) tutelage . . . (he) fell victim to a mental disorder . . . from which he never fully recovered.

Famiglietti's book paints a picture of a politically chaotic environment, one which one might expect to provide many opportunities for chivalry to show itself, especially, it would seem, in the

breach. The mental disorder of the king, which continued through the time of the Agincourt defeat in 1415 up to the Treaty of Troyes with Henry V of England and the disinheritance of the Dauphin in 1520, led to great uncertainty. During one of his schizophrenic<sup>7</sup> episodes, Charles VI could be persuaded to sign documents which he would repudiate when more lucid. Thus, agreements or alliances between the king, the queen, dukes or counts might be sworn, broken, re-sworn and re-broken in a matter of months.

It was also an era of ducal assassinations and ducal defiance of royal government, which might or might not, at any given moment, reflect the king's policy. Even the Parisian citizenry, led by a family of butchers, were not afraid to capture and imprison members of the royal family.

It is against this background that we look at these charters and their authors.

As a mirror for similarities in their charters and activities, I looked for connections between the three *prior* to the founding dates of their orders. *After* the fact, we can place two of them in –virtually– the same boat, a prisoner ship to England after Agincourt.

The first, Jean II le Maingre, called “Boucicaut,” founder of the *Escu Vert a la Dame Blanche*,<sup>8</sup> had served in the army in 1387 under Louis II, “le bon duc” de Bourbon, father of Duc Jean I, who would found the emprise called *le Fer du Prisonnier*.<sup>9</sup> Returning from a campaign in Spain by way of Navarre, Boucicaut had jousted at the court of Gaston Phoebus, Comte de Foix. Gaston, author of the famous hunting book, was a predecessor, but not the father, of Jean de Grailly, a later Comte de Foix, who is thought to have created our third “order,” the *Device of the Golden Dragon*.<sup>10</sup> Who, in turn, is listed as a “companion in arms” in a challenge of arms dated 1406 by Jean, comte de Clermont, who would become the said Jean I, duc de Bourbon. His closeness to the Comte de Foix is confirmed by a letter from his son, who years later refers to the esteem in which his father had held the count.

As we shall see, our Comte de Foix and our duc de Bourbon knew each other in the context of deeds of arms. Our Boucicaut's biography shows no contact with our Comte de Foix, but his emprise shared a member with that of the duc the Bourbon: Raoul de Gaucourt, according to Lalande, “seigneur d'Argicourt, chamberlain to Charles VI, . . . was assassinated by the Burgundians in July 1417.”<sup>11</sup> And the Comte Jean I de Foix *did* marry, as his second wife, the sister of Messire Charles d'Albret, cousin-German to the king, in 1421. That Messire d'Albret was the first, and most august, signer of Boucicaut's emprise,<sup>12</sup> who died at Agincourt numbered as a Bourbon partisan and bearing much of the blame for the defeat due to his “asperity.”<sup>13</sup>

Of the three, Boucicaut has left us the most information. Much of it, including the foregoing, is provided in his anonymous biography, *Histoire de bon messire Jehan le Meingre, dit Bouciquaut, mareschal de France et gouverneur de Jennes*, was written in 1409 and made known to the printed world in 1620 by Théodore Godefroy. The critical edition is by Denis Lalande, published in 1985 by Droz, Geneva. In a separate, detailed study published in 1988,<sup>14</sup> Lalande confirms much of the information in the biography by comparison with other sources.

Born in 1366 into a military family originally from Touraine, Boucicaut enjoyed the advantage of a father who rose through the ranks before him, becoming a Marshal of France. At that time, there were only two Marshals of France at a time, junior only to the Constable of France, who was supreme general. Lalande describes him as “a valorous warrior and an able diplomat with a consider-

able role as councillor to kings Jean II and Charles V.”

According to LaLande, it was the senior Jean who first got the name “Boucicaut” stuck to the men of the family. It was no compliment, bearing the connotation of “wealth before honor.” But it would seem that the son and his little brother both took to the nickname with perhaps more than a little “boy-named-Sue” defiance. In the charter of l’Escu Vert, he signs simply “Boucicaut,” and his brother Geoffroy signs himself “Boucicaut son frere.”

Boucicaut may have acquired a new heraldic device as he gained in stature. The arms he inherited seem to have been “Argent, an eagle employée gules, barbed and beaked azure.”<sup>15</sup> But sometime during his tenure as Governor of Genoa, he commissioned a book of hours, the “owner page” of which shows a very different set of arms above the praying figure of the marshal. They appear to be *Vert, a chief argent over six bezants*<sup>16</sup>. The double-headed eagle is there, too, but on another shield over the figure of Boucicaut’s wife impaled with the “new” arms. It is clear that Boucicaut commissioned this painting of himself with this device after achieving great worldly success. Nothing subtle about it. Not only do we get six gold coins as the principal charge, but even in Boucicaut’s time, the word *argent* (heraldically, silver, painted as white) was a double entendre for money. Here we see a visual rendering of the phrase “en chef, l’argent,” or “above all, money.”

Our Boucicaut not only visited the Holy land and went to fight Lithuanian “sarracens” with the Teutonic Knights, but distinguished himself as a joustier. With two other knights, he defended a “pas” at St. Inglevert for 30 days, taking on about a hundred challengers and covering himself with glory in what Richard Barber and Juliet Barker called the “most famous French jousts of the fourteenth century.”<sup>17</sup> The fact that most of the challengers requested combats “à l’outrance” (“to the end”), paired with the fact that no major injuries resulted, sheds some light on the amount of mayhem (maiming?) that was organized on this occasion.

He was more than a good soldier, becoming a Marshal of France in 1391, and in 1392, Captain-General for Poitou, Berry, Auvergne, and all the Berry lands in Guyenne. He was only 26.

He also married well above his social station, with the Vicomtesse Antoinette de Turenne, in 1393. He excelled at tennis, too, winning 2000 francs off the duc d’Orleans that same year.

Life got more serious towards the end of the century. According to Lalande, who in his study cites a wide range of contemporary and modern sources, Boucicaut was part of the 1398 French expedition led by the 24-year-old Jean Sans Peur, Comte de Nevers, son of the Duke of Burgundy, to help the Emperor Sigimund against the Turks. After initial success, the campaign settled in for a seige of Nicopolis. The Allied camp was, to all report, a luxurious place, and reports of approaching menace in the form of a huge army were disregarded until too late. In panic, the “crusaders” killed 3,000 Turkish prisoners before hastening out to battle.

After losing the battle, the allied knights were taken prisoner, and several thousand were lined up to be decapitated in their turn, Boucicaut among them. Saved at the last moment by the entreaty of the Comte de Nevers on his knees, Boucicaut is credited with saving the lives of several noble prisoners in the many months of starvation, hardship and negotiation of ransoms that they endured before even the most august of them could go home.

Boucicaut was home only briefly before being sent east again, this time to save Constantinople. (Does this sound a little like *Tirant lo Blanc*?<sup>18</sup>) The city is under seige and the inhabitants are starving, but Boucicaut, not waiting for the Venetian reinforcements, defeats a larger blockading

naval force, raids the Turkish coastal towns for food, drives off the marauders, settles one of those Byzantine internecine disputes, and returns a hero to France. All in about eight months.

By now, April 1400, the effects of the Nicopolis disaster have set in. Widowed and orphaned ladies beseege the French court for help against marauders who find their estates easy pickings. Boucicaut's biographer reports that he reacted with great compassion, and that the result was the founding of l'Escu Vert a la Dame Blanche. I believe there's more here than coincidence and a convenient excuse to found an order for frivolous chivalric games.

If you consider that Boucicaut has been kept too busy since Nicopolis to dwell on what he saw there until now, it is not too much of a stretch to imagine that the terrible scene of 3,000 French noblemen being beheaded before his eyes, and the recollection that but for the Comte de Nevers he would have gone with them, might be brought back in a rush by the sight of these widows and orphans begging for assistance. There may even have been an admixture of guilt for his share in the military errors that had snatched defeat from the jaws of victory.

If we can judge from his tireless efforts on behalf of the wounded and dying prisoners after Nicopolis, which latter included Enguerrand de Coucy and Henri de Bar, Boucicaut was capable of being moved to strenuous action by compassion. In spite of the fact that this connection is not stated by either the *Livre des Faïtes* or by Lalande, I cannot but see him as emphatically giving the lie to his "moneybags" soubriquet.

The *Livre des Faïtes* says that Boucicaut wished to "found a notable and good order" to espouse the cause, and allowed twelve of his especially good friends to join him. Boucicaut's name does not head the list. The reason given is that the higher-ranking (by far) Messire Charles d'Alembret, cousin-german to the king, wished to join the order. The text of the order that we have, as well as some of the supporting material, is part of the *Livre des Faïtes*.

The badge devised was "un targe d'or esmaillée de vert, atout un dame blanche dedans" (a gold shield, enamelled in green, enclosing a white lady). The terms "atout" for the shield and "dedans" for the lady seem to emphasize that the shield is not merely "with" the lady but protecting her. The form of the description makes it clear that the gold is the metal substrate, not part of the color scheme. This gold badge was to be worn tied around the arm. Lalande mentions that "if the white symbolises the widowed woman, the green is the color of love being born and full of hope,"<sup>19</sup> referring us to Huizinga's discussion of color symbolism.<sup>20</sup>

We can encapsulate the articles, which are translated as Appendix I, as follows:<sup>21</sup>

- These 13 knights-companions bear the badge of the white lady with the green shield.
- Each knight is expected to guard the honor, estate, goods and renown of all ladies of noble lineage.
  - If any lady asks one or all of us to take action in succour of her honor, estate, goods and renown, we are bound to obey and carry out what we are requested to do.
  - If any of us so requested cannot for a good reason do as asked, we are bound to recruit others to do it.
  - If any lords, knights or esquires of good lineage and without reproach ask us to do deeds of arms with them, we shall comply. These deeds include single or multiple combats a l'outrance.
  - If a lady has asked first, we are required to go to her aid before dealing with any other deeds of

arms. The whole document gives general precedence to ladies' aid, although it specifies that if a lady asks after a challenge has been agreed on, then the gentleman may choose which to do first.

The rest details the various conditions, such as the finding of judges for combats, that ransoms shall be agreed on, and that the dead need not pay.

The order was to last 5 years. The document states that the original was signed and sealed by all.

All thirteen names are given: Messire Charles d'Alembret, Messire Boucicaut Mareschal de France, Boucicaut son frere (Geoffroy), Francois d'Aubissecourt, Jehan de Lignerès, Chambrillac, Castelbayac, Gaucourt, Chastiaumorant, Betas, Bonnebaut, Colleville, and Torsay.

While there is more work to be done in tracing the lives of the other signers, it is difficult at present to cite any actions taken within five years after the signing that might represent persons keeping the agreement of this emprise. However, a story is told in more than one chronicle about Geoffroy le Meingre ("Petit Boucicaut") from the year 1405, about an incident at court before many witnesses. To quote Famiglietti's note:

... an argument arose between Jean Malet, son of the lord of Graille, and Geoffroy le Meingre, called "petit Boucicaut." . . . It seems that a damoiselle of the queen, named Charlotte Cochet, had been the victim of sexual harassment inflicted on her by Malet. Boucicaut, who was 37 years old at the time and married, demanded that the young nobleman marry her. Hot words were exchanged, and when Boucicaut advanced towards him, Malet tripped on his gown as he stepped back in haste. Boucicaut dragged him across the floor by his hair, insulting him all the while.<sup>22</sup>

To be fair, there were other versions of the story, including one where both men were in love with the widow, and one chronicle dates it to 1406.

Boucicaut's military career continued another ten years. It is thought that it was while he was Governor of Genoa that he commissioned the Book of Hours from a workshop so excellent that a large *ouvre* is labeled today as that of the "Boucicaut Master." Lalande devotes an entire short chapter to Boucicaut's marriage with Antoinette of Tours, which, in spite of his stormy relationship with her father, seems to have held up well, if childlessly. Boucicaut is seen sharing command of a French detachment with M. d'Albret shadowing the English army just before Azincourt,<sup>23</sup> where he was captured. He died, still a prisoner in England, in 1421.

The second of our three emprises was founded by Jean I, duc de Bourbon in 1415, less than a year before Azincourt. And if he does not provide us with a "paragon of chivalric virtues," he will at least provide us with irony.

He seems to have been a bit of a disappointment. His father, "le bon duc" Louis II, was, in his later years, an exception by being loyal to the crown even to his own family's detriment. André Leguai, in his book *Les Ducs de Bourbon pendant le crise monarchique du XVe Siècle*,<sup>24</sup> says in general that "the dukes of Burgundy were not, as has long been written about them, and of other magnates of their time, "feudal vassals." They were ambitious princes, desirous of controlling the government of the realm and of developing their own interest." Louis was the exception: he who "had done more than any other duke of Bourbon for the constitution of the Bourbon state, who had created the most characteristic institutions . . . realised the major annexations, (etc.) , never sought to create a personal policy independent of that of the king." By contrast, the new duke Jean "did not

resemble, morally, his father. . . . he possessed none of the scruples nor partook of the conscience of his father.”

Jean I was born “on the wrong side of the blanket” in 1381 to Louis and Anne Dauphine, and legitimized in 1390 by Louis before the latter left for a campaign in northern Africa – a campaign on which, by the way, Boucicaut had begged the king, in vain, leave to participate. In June, 1400, he married Marie de Berry, daughter of the now-aged duke famous for Books of Hours, in the presence of both Charles VI and Manuel Paléologue, Byzantine Emperor.<sup>25</sup> Since Boucicaut had arranged the visit, he was probably present too.<sup>26</sup> Jean, now Count of Clermont, “belonged to a generation very cynical and violent, that of Louis of Orleans and Jean sans Peur. For him, as for others, the notions of loyalty, fidelity to his given word and oath taken, were only peripheral concerns.” In 1412, he participated in an intrigue instigated by the princes Orleans with the king of England. It may be to this traffic that we may attribute the reference in his Order’s charter to occasions “when I go to England.”

Ironically, his next trip to England was as a prisoner, and he never returned to bring to fruition the promise of the Order of the Prisoner’s Iron. The charter of that order, known from the same manuscript fragment on which the Count de Foix’s “devise” is recorded, is dated 1 January 1415. Its English translation (Appendix 2) is provided by C. T. Allmand in his book *Society at War*.<sup>27</sup>

Of the three Jeans discussed here, he is, for all his faults, the most qualified to found an order in emulation of those of Boulton’s Royal classification. But of the three charters, his offers the least in the way of statesmanlike ideals. While the Golden Dragon can be accused of “Boy-Scout-isme,”<sup>28</sup> the company of the *Fer de Prisonnier* offers but one “item” involving altruism, requiring, almost as an afterthought, that the members shall be compelled to give aid to widows, ladies and virgins when they have need of it.

Almost all of the rest of the charter does indeed read like the rules of a game. After establishing who the founder is and declaring his secular, personal reasons for the enterprise, he mentions that, in addition to advancing his good name in the profession of arms and winning fame, he also wishes to win the favor of “that most beautiful person” not identified further. At this point, he has been married almost 15 years.

The enterprise is to last two years, but the word “charter” does not appear in the document. No specific noun-phrase jumps to the front to define it; we are left to conclude that it is a company of seventeen companions involved in an enterprise somewhat more involved than the “challenge” the duke (as Count of Clermont) and 11 others had issued in 1406.<sup>29</sup>

The insignia members wore cannot have created much corporate identity. It is a piece of jewelry in the form of a prisoner’s iron worn hanging from the left leg. In this it reminds one of the Garter in that, unlike, for instance, the collar of the Order of the Golden Fleece or the Escu Vert, it is never “in your face” to call attention to itself. A piece of jewelry similar to it is specified as the “ransom” to be given by members defeated in the combats contemplated in the statutes.

This is not the first emprise of Duc Jean. His challenge of 1406, in which the future Comte de Foix was involved, involved wearing a bracelet, but also a rondelle and a sollar de fer. That challenge, made to the Duke of Lancaster, involved 13, the usual number of suspects, whereas the Prisonnier de Fer has sixteen in addition to the duke.

In brief, the statutes include the following in the form of a few very long sentences:

- We will wear our chain and iron for two whole years.

- We expect, within that time, to find an equal number of knights and esquires of worth and ability, without reproach, to fight us on foot “to the end.”
- Specifies weapons: lance, axe, sword, and dagger at least, plus a club of whatever length.
- Those of us who are defeated may be released on giving of an iron and chain in gold or silver (knight or esquire, resp.), while the members of the other team may give as ransom a bracelet of gold or silver, respectively.
- We shall have painted a picture of Our Lady of Paris and set up an iron as candle-holder, and cause a candle to burn for two years, and our arms will be painted there too. We shall have masses said there daily.
- If we are successful in our emprise, we shall endow the above in perpetuity. Each will contribute the bracelet such as worn on the day, and a portrait taken in the armor worn then.

The rest consists of exceptions and conditions, plus the said short mention of helping ladies.

Nothing I have found relating to Jean I de Bourbon contradicts Huizinga’s view that every maganate of this era had to have an “order” just to keep up with the messires Jones, and of the eight months of freedom Bourbon had before Agincourt, two or three of them were spent in a rather haphazard campaign not conducive to either arranging a spendid formal combat or pursuing the cases of offended ladies.

That does not conclusively say that no members of his emprise ever did anything chivalrous as a result of swearing to do so on this occasion. It is to be hoped that further checks on the biographies of the signers might reveal a hint in this direction. And it would be nice to see the rest of British Museum Add. ms 18840, which Lewis says includes a “Defi” of the members of the Fer du Prisonnier. But as of this writing, that manuscript is packed up for transit from from the British Museum to the British Library, and is thoroughly unavailable.

Jean II, Duc de Bourbon, spent 19 years in close captivity in English castles, “constantly in tension, deceived by hope of release,”<sup>30</sup> and died there in 1434.

The third of our three emprises we shall call “the Device of the Gold Dragon,” for it does not label itself an order or company. We can’t say exactly when it was founded.

The evidence for this device comes from British Museum Add. ms 18840, folios 3 and 4, which Lewis transcribed for his 1964 article *Une Devise de Chevalerie Inconnue, Créée par un Comte de Foix?*<sup>31</sup> The text is part of four “apparently detached parchment folios” which include the Bourbon “Defi” of 1406, as well as the statutes of the Device of the Dragon, of which my translation is presented here as Appendix 3.

In the article, Lewis suggested Jean I<sup>f</sup> as the founder, with cautionary notes. The style of the text, he points out, could be from any time in the first three-quarters of the fifteenth century, the approximate latest date given by the “lettre de form” on the folio. The evidence pointing to Jean de Grailly, Comte de Foix as the founder is, as Lewis points out, entirely circumstantial. But the circumstances are pretty good.

In another article, Lewis<sup>32</sup> has him jousting under a dragon banner in his youth, and speculates on the connection of the heraldic dragon sculpture over the door of Chateau de Mauvezin-en-Bigorre with Jean I<sup>f</sup>. Jean de Grailly became Comte de Foix in 1412. Since he had not been in the direct line to become Comte de Foix until Gaston Phoebus died without heir (having killed his), there was little



to connect him with the chateau until it became his.

The gold dragon has not been mentioned as a symbol of the Foix domains, but it is associated with Jean de Grailly, and with the royal house of Aragon. It may be noteworthy that the Foix/Béarn family had long been after the crown of Navarre, and tended to look west and south rather than east and north.

Thus, the castle in the Pyrenées is only associated with Jean I<sup>r</sup> from the time of his accession to the Foix lands, and the sculpture, containing a motto pretty firmly connected to him,<sup>33</sup> is widely believed to have been placed there by Jean.

Lewis also speculates that de Grailly could well have been influenced to found just such an order by his association with Jean, comte de Clermont. In 1406, the latter had yet to become Jean I<sup>r</sup>, Duc de Bourbon and to found the Ordre du Fer de Prisonnier. In that year, representing themselves and 11 others, the two sent a defiance to Henry of Lancaster suggesting a chivalric encounter. In that document, the future Bourbon calls Jean de Grailly a “companion in arms.”

Later, a letter from duc Jean’s son refers to the great affection felt by the duc for Jean de Grailly, who was not yet Comte at the time they were companions in arms.

There most likely other Comte de Foix to found this emprise is Gaston IV, Jean’s successor. Henri Courteault, then Archivist of the Archives Nationales, published in 1895 a detailed study of this magnate.<sup>34</sup> In a four-page section devoted to Gaston’s dedication to chivalric prowess, display and largesse, including several pas and jousts in which he was prominent, there is no mention of his founding anything like an order or even of giving out golden jewels.

Whoever this Count was, his document has the following points:

- It is commanded of me by her whom I neither must nor wish to refuse, that I bear this device of a golden dragon, and that I give this device to be borne by a certain number of ladies, knights and esquires.
- This dragon has a pearl placed at the top of its left wing. The dragon has nine vacant jewel seats.
- Those who bear the device may, by accomplishing feats of arms and chivalry, entitle themselves to fill the remaining jewel seats according to what they accomplish, providing they adhere to the rules of the device.
- The duties of the ladies are to honorably receive, entertain and give good cheer to all gentleman knights and esquires of whom they know no low reproach .
- Each bearer promises, if he/she hears ill said of any lady or gentleman, to speak out against such language, quitting the person in such a way as to underline their disapproval.
- Should any lady be placed in a dishonorable position or subjected to any wrong to her person, her honor or inheritance, and asks to be defended, each member is bound to do so.
- Bearers have one year to accomplish the nine feats of arms listed. They include various combats on foot in closed field, naval and land battles, crusades, visiting the Holy Sepulchre, and specific assaults.
- The ladies are also obligated to wear the badge for one year. And if the bearers carry out their emprises, the ladies may fill the spaces on the dragon’s wing as do the gentlemen. No relationship is indicated between specific ladies and specific gentlemen’s accomplishments.
- If anyone does an ill thing, the Comte retains the power to remove him with the counsel of the other companions.

- (After the year is over, implied) all bearers will keep the badges. When any member passes away, each will cause seven masses to be said; (Foix) will cause thirty.

The last 2 items are the only mentions of anything corporate. No other mention of “the company;” up to now it has been “the bearers” or “the companions” but nothing like “of the order.”

There is no mention of a specific number of members, no signatory list or even a date. The document which survived for copying into modern times was itself part of a collection of hand copies containing only the words of the originals.

The first part makes it clear that the “device” is very much a piece of jewelry. The indication of the left wing leaves open the chance that the dragon might well be seen en passant, or volant, facing to the left, not only like that on the sculpture but like most other heraldic animals. And the nine jewel seats remind one of the Nine Worthies.

Of the three, this document seems to record the closest thing to a “livery badge” but with some conditions laid down. But compared to the others, the thing is pretty open. There are things to accomplish, but they are pretty standard. Ladies are to be protected, but not with the kind of emphasis the Escu Vert gives.

In summation, we can say little more than that these knights thought about what they were doing when in armor, and wished to share their high opinion of deeds of arms with those around them, and think themselves as standing in the shoes of great heroes of antiquity. But after all is said and done, except in the case of Boucicaut, we cannot prove that these men did other than have a court scribe make up a device, and their jewelers to realize it in metal, just as one might commission a book of hours or a suit of armor.

Each of these is tailored to the user, and these suits tell us just a little about their owners.

## Notes and Bibliography

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16. Meiss, Millard, *The Boucicaud Master*, plate \_\_\_\_\_, London & New York, 1968. Since the plate is black-and-white, the "vert" is a guess while the argent is unmistakable and the gold of the bezants is similar to other brushed-on gold in the plate. Aside from the circumstance of the *Escu Vert*, it is suggestive that the Boucicaud Hours are said to be unusual for the use of green and white. (A color facsimile edition of these hours is forthcoming in late 2000.) Why the new arms would be shown impaled with the old over the figure of Boucicaud's wife may be explained by the disgrace at the hands of Boucicaud, of Antoinette's father Raymond de Turenne. The bezants might have come from Boucicaud's mother's family, the Linières, a prominent baronial family of Berry. The arms of Mauburin de Linières (on the same page as Boucicaud's in the Navarre armorial) includes a bezanty field. He is not mentioned by Lalande
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21. *Livre des Faïtes*, pp. \_\_\_\_\_

22. Famiglietti, p. 229-30, note 45.
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24. (For this and the next paragraph) Leguai, pp \_\_\_\_.
25. Leguai, pp. 55-56?
26. *Livre des Faites*, pp.
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