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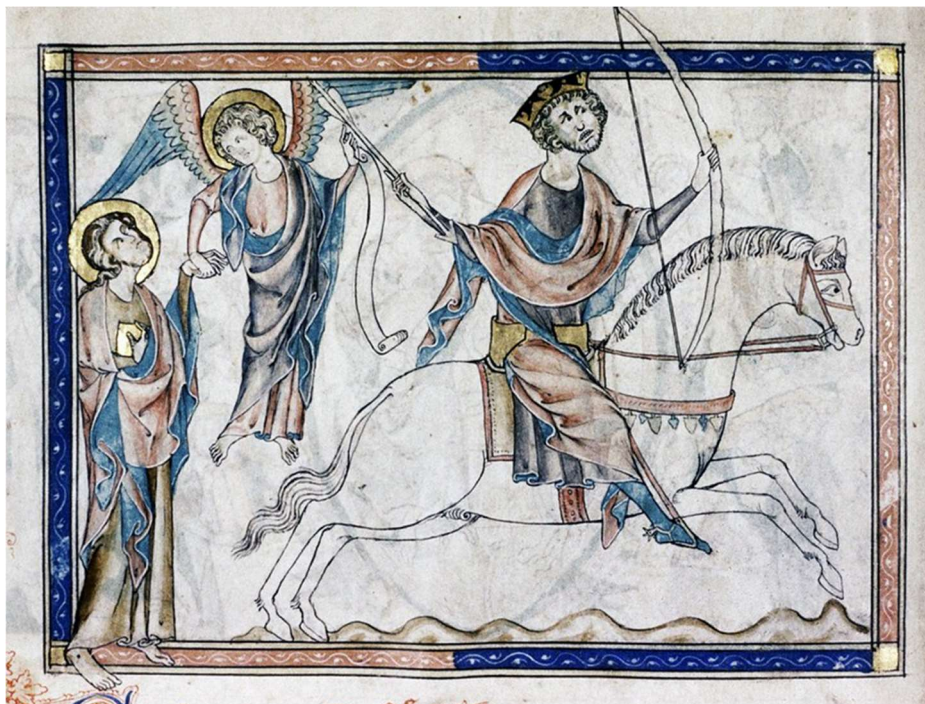
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Heraldic Harness Pendants

François-Xavier BON et Alban PÉRÈS

Cet article est la traduction de la contribution des auteurs au tome 93 de la RFHS paru en 2023 sous le titre « Les pendants de harnais armoriés ». Cette édition en ligne s'intègre dans le projet plus large de publication d'un ouvrage dédié à la collection de pendants de harnais du Musée Dobrée de Nantes.

This article is a translation of the authors' contribution to Volume 93 of the RFHS, published in 2023 under the title "Les pendants de harnais armoriés". This online edition is part of a wider project : a book is being prepared, dedicated to the collection of harness pendants in the Musée Dobrée in Nantes.



1. Douce Apocalypse (1254-1272)
Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Canon. Bibl. Lat. 62, fol. 4 v
© Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford

In this article, we attempt to synthesize the knowledge that we've acquired over the last few years about fixed and mobile metal ornaments used to harness riding horses in Western Europe during the Central and Late Middle Ages. This state of knowledge will soon be developed with the publication of the large *corpus* of the Dobrée museum in Nantes, which essentially comes from the Rochebrune collection, that we had the honor of studying. We will limit our study to pendants, and specifically heraldic pendants, as the subject is so vast. This initial overview of our observations will require future work to cross-reference archaeological and scientific data in order to refine our analyses and answer questions that remain unanswered.

I. MISUSE AND ABUSE OF THE WORD « VERVELLE » IN FRENCH

The first and essential point is the word used to designate these objects, which are paradoxically as numerous as they are poorly documented. In France, the very few publications dealing with the subject are often dated, essentially dating back to the 19th century. In the footsteps of Victor Gay, count Raoul de Rochebrune¹ and Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord, duc de Dino² (*fig. 3*), scholars of the period (thanks to excavations and fortuitous inventions) built up large collections of medieval artefacts, which led to questions about these heraldic metal ornaments (*fig. 1-2*). It was at this time that the word « vervelle » began to be used by antiquarian societies, appearing to be the most appropriate in the absence of an adequate terminology to designate these artifacts in french. However, as early as the beginning of the 20th century, Joseph Roman³ distinguished between « vervelles à faucon » (for falcons) and « vervelles à chien » (for dogs) on the basis of their size (large for dogs, small for birds). Although the author doesn't address the case of equids, the term « vervelle », used as much for modest-sized falcons as for powerful steeds, already raises questions.

1. The Musée Dobrée collection of pendants is almost entirely made of the Raoul de Rochebrune donation.

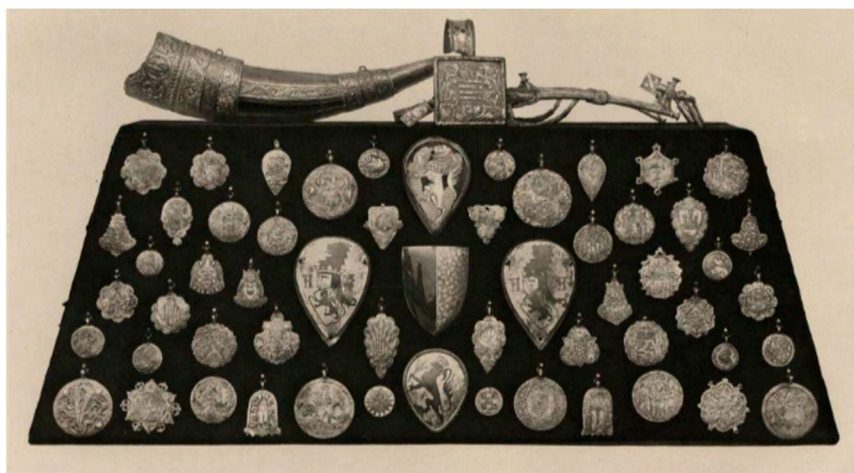
2. The collection of Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord, duc de Dino, was acquired by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. See also Charles-Alexandre de COSSON, *Le cabinet d'armes de Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord, duc de Dino*, Paris, 1901.

3. « The word « vervelle pour les faucons » is very frequently found in inventories from the Middle Ages, and these vervelles are rightly considered to have been small escutcheons intended to be suspended from the legs of falcons by chains, so that these birds, carrying with them their certificate of ownership, could be returned to their owners should they go astray. On the other hand, I've never seen the word « vervelle à chiens » in any of the inventories, and I can't think of a name for the object that served the same purpose for the hunting dog as the *vervelle* does for the flying bird. There is no doubt, however, that there were vervelles for dogs as well as falcons. In fact, there are two distinctly different models of these objects, some very small for falcons, others much larger and consequently much heavier, which would have needlessly overloaded the falcons, whereas they were perfectly suited to hunting dogs. *Vervelles* are rare objects, but falcon *vervelles* are particularly rare because of their small size, which has generally been the cause of their loss and rapid destruction. Almost all are enamelled on both sides, although some are single-sided and recessed » (Joseph ROMAN, « Vervelles à faucons et à chiens », *Bulletin de la Société nationale des Antiquaires de France*, 1904, p. 309-311).

Heraldic Harness Pendants



2. Victor GAY, *Glossaire archéologique du Moyen Âge et de la Renaissance*, t. II, Paris, 1887, p. 470



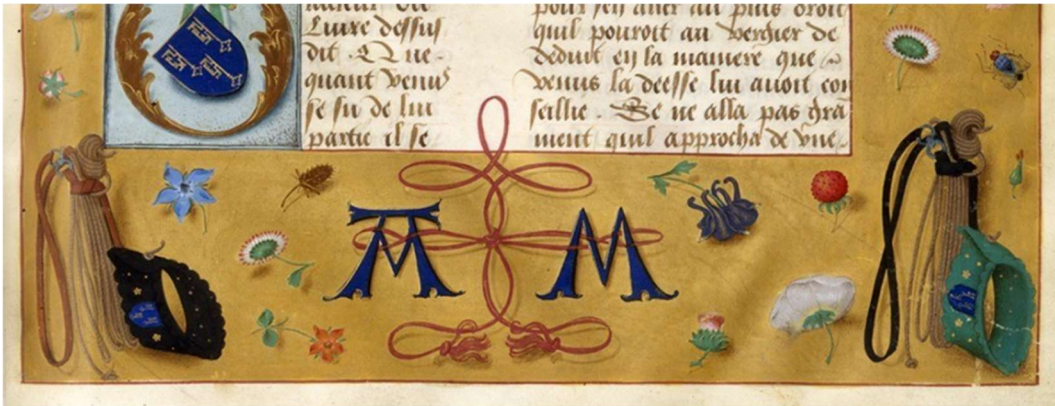
3. *Collection of pendants belonging to Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord, duke of Dino*
Charles-Alexandre de COSSON, *Le cabinet d'armes de Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord, duc de Dino*, Paris, 1901, p. 104



4. *Vervels*
Portable Antiquities Scheme database

It's essential to clarify terminology and definitively do away with the term « vervelle », which is used exclusively in the falconry. The « vervelles » recently studied and classified by typology by Michael Lewis and Ian Richardson⁴ are of a completely different conception. They are small metal rings worn by birds of prey such as falcons. The term « anneau » is mentioned by Victor Gay in his glossary⁵ as a synonym for « vervelle ». This small ring was engraved with the name and/or coat of arms of the bird's owner on the outer rim, on the edge, or on a scutiform plate (fig. 4). Clearly, this does not correspond at all to the use of the objects concerned by this article. The borrowing of « vervelle » from the lexical field of falconry⁶ has therefore led to a confusion in people's minds that persists to this day, as evidenced by the recent labels of the Musée du Moyen-âge in Cluny.

As for dogs, while it's certain that breeds such as greyhounds and great danes, like falcons, bore their owner's name or coat of arms, it's unlikely that they were adorned with dangling escutcheons that would have been easily lost. Reading medieval texts and the few iconographic aids we have, we understand that they were more likely to have been fitted with a leather collar with one or more riveted plates, adorned with their owner's emblem or coat of arms (fig. 5-6).



5. *Libre des eschés amoureux, ou des eschés d'amours* (detail), 15th century
Paris, BnF, ms français 9197, fol. 202 – Photo BnF, all rights reserved.



6. *Dog collar* – Hull and East riding Museum (England) – All rights reserved

4. Michael J. LEWIS et Ian RICHARDSON, *Inscribed vervels. A corpus and discussion of late medieval and Renaissance hawking rings found in Britain*, Oxford, 2019 (Bar British Series).

5. Victor GAY, *Glossaire archéologique du Moyen Âge et de la Renaissance*, Paris, 1887.

6. « Fait et forgé cinquante quatre vervelles en manière d'annelés dorez el esmailiez par dehors, aux armes de France, pour les faucons dudit seigneur [le roi], et poisent 3 onces 15e.st. d'argent » (Paris, AN, KK/23, fol. 118).

If the term « vervelle » is abusive and inappropriate, what should we name these objects ? The Spanish use the words *pinjante de arnés*, while the English call them *harness pendants*. Our neighbors understood that these objects were not intended for falconry, but to adorn equestrian equipment. If our scholars of past centuries haven't found a suitable term for these pendants, it's quite simply (although this may seem odd) because none exists in the French vocabulary. In addition, we have not come across any text that mentions the term « vervelle » to designate an item of equestrian equipment. In fact, there is no precise term for the protean metal elements (fixed or mobile) made of copper alloy used to decorate equestrian harnesses. We have to accept this, and avoid using a word that comes close to the desired term, but is inaccurate. Despite the scarcity of written sources, it is the word « pendant », followed or preceded by its denominator, that is most frequently encountered⁷ : « pendant à rosette », « à émaux de France pendant », « écu pendant de fin cuivre doré », « écu branlant », etc. To be precise, the term « equestrian harness pendant » should be used.



7. « Golden rose offered by pope John XXII to count Rodolphe de Neuchâtel (c. 1330)
Cluny Museum (Paris), inv. Cl. 2351
Photo RMN / musée de Cluny - Musée national du Moyen Âge / Franck Raux

7. « A Jehan de Troies, sellier, pour une selle de cordouen vermeil pour l'evesque de Nevers, ouvrée de rubens d'or tout entour de la couverture de rosettes dorées ; le frain et le poitrau de cuir vermeil de Naverre doublé de cuir de Honguerie, cousu de fil bleu à deux coutures, garnie de pendans de fin cuivre doré taillez et esmaillez ». (Paris, AN, KK/34, fol. 16 v).

While armorial badges could be used as decorative elements on costumes, furniture or equestrian equipment, armorial pendants do not seem to have been linked to clothing, although they were not limited to equids. In fact, during the second half of the Middle Ages (13th-15th centuries), pendants adorned many objects, such as the famous « golden rose », presented in 1330 by Pope John XXII to Rodolphe de Nidau, count of Neuchâtel (*fig. 7*). Nevertheless, it is on equestrian harnesses. This being the case, we feel it would be consistent to use the expression « pendant de harnais » to designate these objects, following the example of our English neighbors, and to banish once and for all the word « vervelle » which, as we have seen, has never been used to define these objects.

The rarity of detailed representations⁸ (pictorial and sculptural) of these harness pendants in the medieval period, due to the style and technical constraints of the miniaturists and craftsmen of the period, and the lack of knowledge of their uses, manufacturing techniques and dating, combined with the lack of serious studies and their virtual absence from museum display rooms, have largely contributed to their difficult apprehension and lack of interest. However, these harness pendants, most of which bear coats of arms even though they are anepigraphic, are unquestionably of prime importance for the study of medieval heraldry. The aim of this article is to provide the main keys to a better understanding of these objects, which are as abundant as they are little-known.

II. ORIGIN OF HARNESS PENDANTS

Pendants and other equestrian ornaments can be found in almost every culture, and have been around since man first domesticated his mount (horse, mule or hybrid), well before the Middle Ages. These metallic elements, which not only had a decorative function, but also a sonic, a performative or even an apotropaic one⁹, were privileged witnesses to the birth of heraldry. Indeed, as the first users of coats of arms belonged to the knightly class, harness pendants were naturally ideal supports for displaying the emblematic and, above all, the heraldry, with the desire to mark one's lineage. Around the middle of the 13th century, there was no knight without a coat of arms. This may sound like a truism, but there is no knight without a horse, just as there is no horse without a coat of arms !

The appearance of coats of arms seems to have coincided with the appearance of armorial bearings. As soon as an individual, a knight, wears a sign that complies with the rules of the blazon, equestrian ornaments will appear that take up this sign. The study of these artifacts, which were born with heraldry and have accompanied it for over two centuries, is therefore of the utmost importance. The horse serves as an intermediary in the staging of coats of arms, thanks to its sturdiness and the many supports it can offer. The caparison and shield are the most visible elements, but coats of arms are sometimes present on very small surfaces (pommel of swords, bits – *fig. 8* –, buckles, bridles, girths, saddle pommel, cantle, headpiece, stirrups, spurs, etc.). Of course, these elements are not, or very rarely, depicted on iconographic sources (illuminations, paintings, seals, stained glass) due

8. We must remain careful with iconographic sources, as the size and technique make it impossible to represent such small details. Coats of arms are often produced in close-up in order to clearly identify the heroes. Furthermore, primitive sources mainly present imaginary knights. You also need to be vigilant the dating of the lighting, which may be completely out of sync with the subject represented.

9. In Great Britain and Spain, this category of pendants occupies a much more important place than in France.

Heraldic Harness Pendants

to their small size, but they are present throughout the knight's body, his personal equipment and that of his mount (*fig. 9*). This certainly meets a need for prestige and luxury.



8. *Bit with the arms of a king of Naples*
(2nd quarter of 14th century)
New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Arts,
inv. 04.3.478a, b – Cliché TMA, tous droits réservés.



9. *Alfonso X of León and Castile*
Miniature taken from *Codex Tumbo 'A' de Santiago* (v. 1229-1255)
Archives of the cathedral of Santiago de Compostela

We have to be aware of the staggering monetary value of all this decorum: the horse, its maintenance, as well as its dressing and everything that covered it. The saddle cover, for example, required considerable yardage of the most precious fabrics from abroad, embroidered with appliqués, leather, bronze and so on. Not to mention the workmanship, which was always carried out with the utmost luxury by the finest craftsmen. The same is true of the « harnoi » (the entire harness), which is akin to goldsmith's work, so meticulous are the parts, bits, headpiece ornaments, pendants, stirrups and spurs.

The level of prestige and luxury is at its highest, with great attention to detail. These jewel-like pendants could be counted in the hundreds, as demonstrated by the discovery in 2012 at Caherduggan Castle (Wales) of a harness strap approximately one meter long, adorned with 48 armorial pendants (*fig. 10*)¹⁰.



10. Harness bridle (Wales, 14th century)
<https://blog.rubiconheritage.com/2012/06/28/>

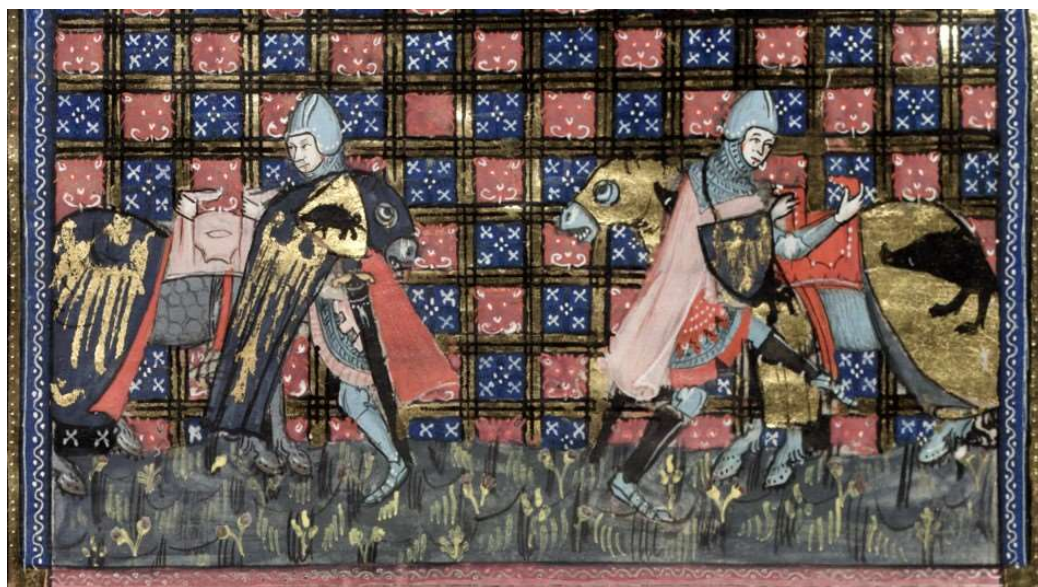
If one of the primary purposes of a horse's sign is to display wealth for all to see, the harness pendant and other heraldic elements not only serve to highlight the equine owner's social status; they also contribute to a certain interconnection between the knight and his horse. In the image of the king seated on his throne, clad in his mantle that blends in with the canopy, all equestrian equipment creates a symbiosis between the knight and his mount. Like a centaur (*fig. 11*), the knight is one with his mount, and conversely, the mount is one with the knight. Signing his horse meant using him as an intermediary. The mount thus becomes the knight's double, the avatar of his representativeness, the double of his power, authority and identity. The horse thus adorned can be entrusted, delegated and ridden by another rider, who symbolically takes on the identity of its owner (*fig. 12*). Chivalric friendship, horse lending, gifts, war prizes, etc. These are established practices, although still poorly studied, which can sometimes blur the lines of identification. Thus, during the excavation of the courtyard of the Louvre, an heraldic pendant and a Spanish bit were discovered, and on the English land¹¹ Spanish (*fig. 13*) and French (*fig. 14*) pendants were uncovered.

10. John NICHOLL, « Some leather finds from Caherduggan Castle, Doneraile, Ireland », *Newsletter of the Archaeological Leather Group*, n°44, September 2016.

11. Occurrences listed on the *Portable Antiquities Scheme* database (<https://finds.org.uk>).



11. The Duke of Brabant.
Armorial équestre de la Toison d'or (Flanders, 15th century)
Paris, BnF, Arsenal 4790, fol. 11



12. The Romance of Alexander (1338-1410)
Oxford University, Bodleian Library, MS. Bodl. 264, fol. 150 r



13



14



15

13. Spanish pendant discovered in England. PAS, DEV-C6D8F7. All rights reserved

14. French counterpart discovered in England. AS, NMS 004937. All rights reserved

15. Official or abbey harness pendant. Mayenne, private collection



16. Seal of Hugues X de Lusignan (1233)

Original imprint, AD Vienne, 1H 5/1

Although in the majority of cases the heraldic pendants feature family or personal arms, we also note (albeit more rarely) a few occurrences with ecclesiastical, jurisdictional and, more frequently, royal coats of arms (*fig. 15*). In the case of the latter, it is clear that there is very little likelihood of these examples coming from the king's personal mount, but rather from one of his representatives. This example clearly shows that the emblazoned

horse serves as an intermediary in the signage process, and not necessarily as a means of displaying the rider. It also demonstrates that the horse, adorned with heraldic pendants, reflects and embodies power (notably chivalric identity) and its corollary : seigneurial identity. The importance of the horse's signage can sometimes predominate over that of the rider or rideress, as in hunting parties or scenes of civil life. This can be seen, for example, on the seal of Hugues de Lusignan (*fig. 16*), where he is depicted in hunting attire without any apparent emblematic sign, while his mount is wearing numerous pendants (although it is not certain that they are heraldic). In this case, when the mount bears coats of arms on small parts of its equipment such as pendants, it is impossible for the viewer, given the size of the support, to visualize and identify the arms. We must therefore look for something deeper between horse and rider than the pure and simple display of heraldic signs.

III. MANUFACTURING TECHNIQUES

Most often made of gilded or silvered copper alloy (much more rarely of precious metal), the vast majority of pendants are cast. For the oldest models, heraldic or proto-heraldic (*fig. 17*), pendants are gilded and decorated with engraved motifs that are difficult to determine whether they are emblematic or pre-heraldic. The engraving evokes a heraldic aspect, but they are colorless and rarely scutiform. Then, very quickly, models were produced using the *champlevé* enameling technique. The coat of arms is then frequently depicted in a shield inscribed on a larger base (*fig. 18*). At the same time, almond-shaped production is developing (*fig. 19*), culminating in the second quarter of the 13th century with a certain standardization of form with the so-called « Old French » shield. It should be noted that France and the Germanic countries remained relatively constant, unlike the English, and even more so the Italians and Spanish, who constantly innovated and evolved with the times. While maintaining a balanced composition, pendants adopted more elaborate forms or were embellished with decorative, symbolic or totemic elements. This very real evolution, particularly in Spain, is probably linked to the fact that the use of harness pendants has lasted much longer there than in France.



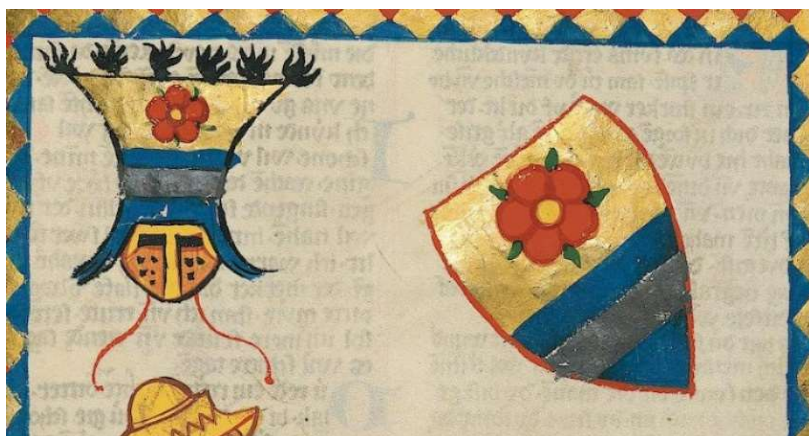
17. Harness pendant. Private collection

18. Harness pendant with an unidentified coat of arms. Private collection

19. Harness pendant. Nantes, Musée Dobrée, 930.1.23

© H. Neuveu-Dérotrie / Musée Dobrée - Grand Patrimoine de Loire Atlantique

The production centers (with the exception of a few rare cases, including one probably located near the French-Spanish border) strove to represent the metals with the real material (gold or silver), even though they had mastered the use of white enamel. In fact, white enamel was preferred for elements outside the coat of arms (decorations). Despite the problems associated with oxidation and maintenance, this seems to have been a genuine desire, as illustrated by the *Manesse Codex* (fig. 20).



20. « Der Marner » (detail), *Codex Manesse* (14th century)
 UB Heidelberg, Cod. Pal. germ. 848, fol. 349 r

IV. LINK BETWEEN THE COLOR ALTERNATION RULE AND CHAMPLEVE ENAMELING

As anyone with even the slightest interest in heraldry knows, the fundamental rule is that colour and metal (« enquerre » in french) cannot be superimposed. For want of a better word, we imagine that this rule was established with optimal legibility in mind, which seems coherent and plausible. But beyond this idea of legibility, it seems possible to establish a link with champlevé enamel manufacture.

The mid 12th century saw the emergence of heraldry. This period coincides with the rise of champlevé enameling (which spread from several European centers), the principle of which consists in hollowing out cavities (alveoli, cells, cuvettes) in the copper with a chisel, to receive the coloured glass powders. These troughs alternate with higher metal parts (partitions, reserves), which are gilded or silvered¹². We can see that the technical constraints to which enamelling craftsmen are subject, induce the fundamental principle of heraldry requiring the alternation of enamel and metal¹³. These constraints were even more pronounced in the early production of harness pendants, which, in addition to being more

12. Spare metal surfaces were silvered or gilded with mercury amalgam. Moderate heating evaporated the mercury, leaving a layer of gold or silver. It's important to understand the principle to avoid mistakes. The quality of the work can vary enormously from one case to another.

13. Michel Pastoureau has highlighted the rarity of coats of arms contravening the rule of alternating enamels and metals, with the exception of the Iberian peninsula, where they represent around 2 % of the corpus (Michel PASTOUREAU, *L'Hermine et le sinople. Études d'héraldique médiévale*, Paris, 1982).

complex to produce, had to take into account the exorbitant manufacturing costs by simplifying the production of each piece. The development of technical mastery of enameling then allowed for the concomitant colors, with some bowls separated from others only by a thin partition (also gilded or silvered). In this case, however, the surrounding colors only concern the outside of the shield (*fig. 21*). This comparison allows us to hypothesize that the fundamental rule of alternating enamels and metals is inherited from the technical constraints of champlevé enameling. Over time, these technical constraints would disappear, but the heraldic rule persisted. Add to this the use of the term « émail » in french (« enameled » in english) to designate colors in the language of blazon, and we can legitimately wonder about the links between the development of heraldic rules and the techniques used to manufacture champlevé enamel objects. Indeed, the earliest known representation of a coloured coat of arms is the champlevé enamel funeral plaque of Geoffroy V Plantagenet, Count of Anjou (1113-1151), dated 1160-1165 (*fig. 22*). This champlevé enamel technique is used in the vast majority of harness pendants. However, it should be noted that other enameling techniques were used (although we cannot go into the details), but the principle and approach are very similar.



21



22

21. *Harness pendant (detail)*. Nantes, Musée Dobrée, 930.1.21

© H. Neuveu-Dérotrie / Musée Dobrée - Grand Patrimoine de Loire Atlantique

22. *Enameled tombstone of the Count of Anjou Geoffroi V (France, 12th century)*

Le Mans, Musée Jean-Claude-Boulard-Carré Plantagenêt

Once you've assimilated the principle that the bowls are enamelled and the reserves gilded or silvered, it's easy to identify « metal » and « colour » parts of the examples that have suffered significant damage. On the example preserved in the Dobrée museum under n°570-2932 (*fig. 23*), we note that the saltire and the martlets are in relief, which leads us to conclude that they were gilded or silvered. The field of the shield, on the other hand, is recessed, which means it was enamelled. On the basis of this observation, and thanks to analysis of the minute remnants of metal and enamel, we were able to determine that the coat of arms was « gules, a saltire gold between 4 martlets gules », which corresponds to the Déluge family *alias* de Dilugio, Diluvio, originally from the northern Paris region. In the case when analysis reveals absolutely no remains of metal or enamel, the application of this principle, combined with the object's place of discovery, can nevertheless rule out a number of possibilities, or even establish a probable identification.



23. *Harness pendant*

Nantes, Musée Dobrée 570.2932 (d)

© H. Neuveu-Dérotrie / Musée Dobrée - Grand Patrimoine de Loire Atlantique

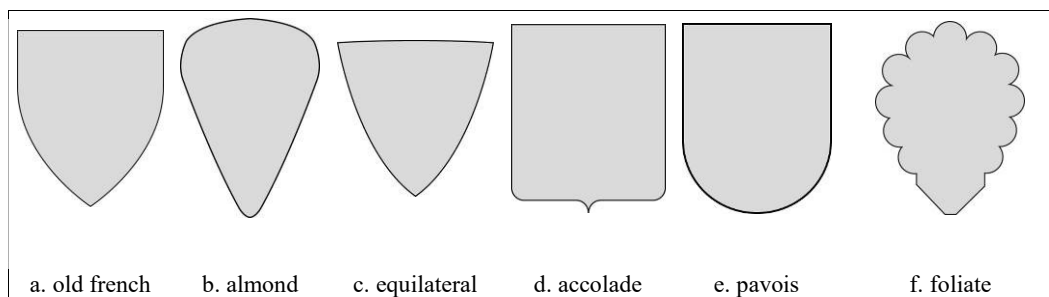
V. TYPOLOGY

As mentioned above, the corpus of harness pendants is very extensive, but also very poorly exploited due to a lack of knowledge of this type of object. As a result, they are often poorly classified, or lost among other heterogeneous objects. By studying the Rochebrune collection at the Musée Dobrée in Nantes, consulting the English *Portable Antiquities Scheme* database and accessing other French and foreign public collections, as well as private holdings, we were able to sketch out a typology. We have opted for a triple alphanumeric classification that takes into account the object as a whole from bottom to top : harness pendants (A), B. suspension loops. (B) and suspension plates (C). This typology will make it easy to classify models in collections, and to draw up statistics to correlate the different types with the places where these objects were found, used and produced, for example.

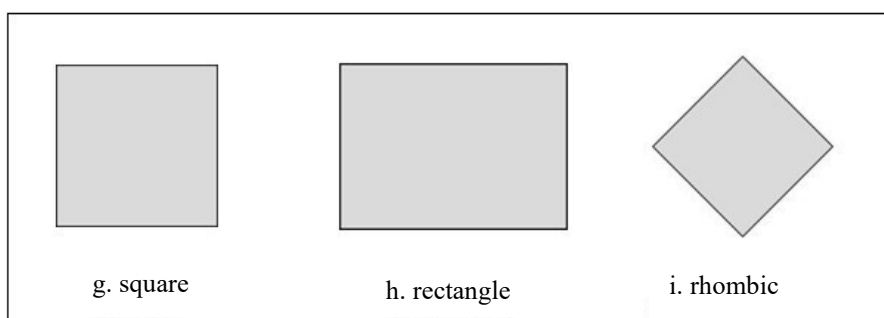
A. PENDANTS

We have identified four main families of pendants, based on their overall shape, each of which includes subsets. Of course, this typology will evolve as new discoveries are made.

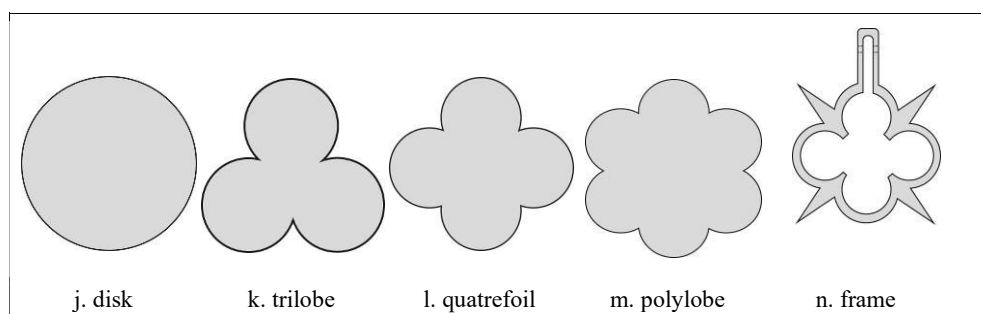
1. Triangular



2. Quadrilateres



3. Circular and lobed

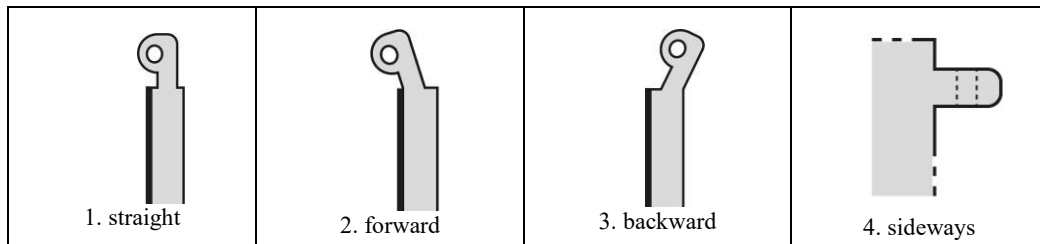


4. Others

This category mainly includes human and animal forms.

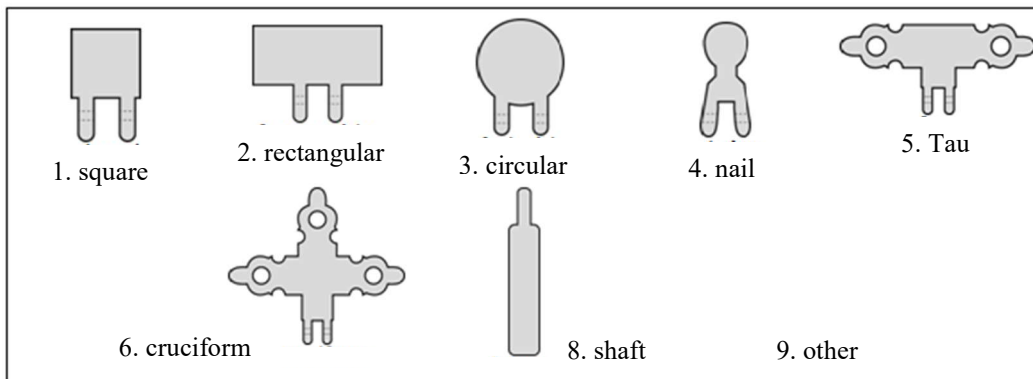
B. SUSPENSION LOOPS

In the case of pendants, the position of the suspension loop is superior, whatever the shape. However, there are three variations in terms of orientation : straight, leaning forward and leaning back. This offset of the suspension loop allows the piece to swing back and forth more easily when in motion, and prevents the object from colliding with the suspension mount when the horse is in motion. It should be noted that occurrences with a lateral suspension loop (type B 4) are exclusively associated with the type C 8 suspension mount (see next paragraph).



C. SUSPENSION MOUNTS

Very rarely found attached to the pendants, the suspension mounts can be used to determine the type of attachment, and therefore potentially give indications of the original support. These suspension mounts were attached to the support by a rivet integrated into the reverse or by several rivets inserted into holes which were then caulked. More rarely, a single nail was located on the reverse. We have been able to identify nine of the most common shapes, of varying dimensions. These suspension mounts were used to hold the pendant by means of a hinge and an iron or copper alloy pin. Almost exclusively made of copper alloy, lock suspension mounts are cast or hammered. Their upper surfaces are usually gilded, and sometimes decorated with engraving or champlevé enamel. In the case of heraldic pendants, the decoration on the suspension mount can be emblematic or decorative (*fig. 24*), like the example bearing the arms of the Thouars family with a plant motif. The suspension mount may also be decorated with a coat of arms, which is not always identical to that on the pendant. In this case, the reading is very complex and requires in-depth study to determine the correlations between the two coats of arms, which do not necessarily concern related families, but who, sometimes, have a social link. We have noted that the order appears to be hierarchical, with the main coat of arms on the pendant and those of lineages or fiefs on the suspension mount.



For example, a harness pendant bearing the coat of arms of the Thouars family, complete with suspension mount (*fig. 24*). Using our classification system, we determine that the pendant is triangular in shape (A 1 a), that its clasp projects forward (B 2), and that the suspension loop is rectangular (C 2). We can therefore assign it the A 1 a-B 2-C 2 code that determines its typology.



24. Harness pendant. Nantes, Musée Dobrée, 930.1.17
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VI. SPECIAL DEVICES

In addition to harness pendants of various shapes and suspension mounts, there are a number of special devices that share the same functions and manufacturing techniques, but have some notable features.

1. Rotating banner type

As we have seen in the chapter on typology, there are also models with a lateral clamp (type B 4), which were exclusively associated with lateral loop (type C 8). These rotating devices, which date from the 13th to 14th centuries, were designed to adorn the horse's headpiece (*fig. 25*). These side-hung artifacts (which can't be called « pendants » because they don't hang down) have been the subject of much debate among collectors and archaeologists since the 19th century. Much rarer than pendants, there are only four examples of this type in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of New-York, one in the collections of the Don Juan Institute in Madrid, and another in the Louvre Museum. The Dobrée museum has the largest collection of this type, with eight examples, including one complete with its device. The *Portable Antiquities Scheme* database lists around thirty of these. As with harness pendants, there is no specific term for these objects. In his

glossary, Victor Gay¹⁴ uses the term « bâtonnet tournant » to designate all these devices. We prefer the term « bannière tournoyante » (« whirling banners » in english), which better expresses the object's movement when installed on its device and its proximity to the banners. It's also for this reason that we prefer the word « hampe » (flagpole in english) to « bâtonnet » to designate the rod supporting the object.



25. Headpiece ornament. Victor GAY, *Glossaire archéologique...* (see footnote 5), t. I, p. 131

26. Harness pendant. Nantes, Musée Dobrée 930.1.161.
© H. Neuveu-Dérotrie / Musée Dobrée - Grand Patrimoine de Loire Atlantique

The shaft, systematically made of gilded copper alloy, comes in several variations : cylindrical, slightly conical, baluster-shaped, with a central knot, sharp-edged or blunt. The suspension mount is also systematically gilded copper alloy. The most common model features two rectangular loops, so that the entire device is held in place by the headpiece straps. A hole slightly larger in diameter than the shaft is cut between the two loops to allow the shaft to be inserted and rotated easily. The lower part of suspension mount is flat. Rivets can be fitted to reinforce the hold.

There is a high degree of typological unity in the French corpus, unlike the English and Spanish examples, which are more diverse. Most French examples are heraldic, with identical coats of arms on both sides, and more rarely with different coats of arms. This peculiarity is seen exceptionally on pendants with a superior suspension loops, which required a highly complex suspension device to ensure that both sides of the pendant were visible to the viewer. Although they were always on the side, the location and orientation of the loops can vary. These particular devices are close to the principle of the banner system, since all the elements studied correspond to the codes of heraldry, vexillology and chivalry. The heraldic charges all face the mast, as in a banner held by a rider. As the banner is projected backwards when riding, it was customary to depict elements such as animals facing forwards, regardless of which side they were facing. The example in the Dobrée

14. GAY, *Glossaire...* (see footnote 5).

museum n° 930.1.61 (fig. 26) is always in the direction of travel. However, the comparison with banners must be tempered by the diversity of the decorations observed, both heraldic and decorative.

The use of this type of ornament, which was very popular in the 13th-14th century (fig. 27-28), does not seem to have continued much beyond this period. Although bridle and headpiece elements were still found at the end of the 14th century, they evolved to adapt to new fashions before falling into disuse. The main reason for this was probably the evolution of the bridle bit. What's more, placing these ornaments on the horse's head was certainly highly decorative, but it's easy to imagine them being prone to snagging and being ripped off at the slightest obstacle.



27



28

27. *Cantiga* from Alfonso X of Castile, « *Cantigas de Santa Maria* » (13th century).
Panel I (detail). Madrid, Library of El Escorial, Codex MS T.I. 1, *Códice Rico*

28. *Roman de Tristan* (1201-1300)
Paris, BnF, ms français 755, fol. 128 v.



29. *Headpiece element* (14-15th century)
Londres, British Museum, inv. 1855,1029.13

2. Complex Headpiece devices

Based on the same principle as the « whirling banners », there are other very elaborate devices also designed to adorn horse headpieces (fig. 29). The pendants suspended from

them were very small in size. These are most probably the ones that were mistakenly attributed to falconry by 19th century scholars, and which are still defined in this way today in certain collections (Cluny museum).

VII. THE DIRECTION OF THE WALK

Harness pendants, and all other emblazoned equestrian equipment, pose another problem : the reading direction. In addition to the rule of alternation mentioned in part IV, heraldry requires that the charges making up the coat of arms be shown to the dexter, in the direction of the wearer's walk. In keeping with this principle, equestrian equipment (caparison, bits, banners, saddle decorations and pendants) are designed in this way. But as much as the elements on the left side of the horse (the « noble » part, where the shield is worn) respect this principle, the elements on the right one must be « bypassed » to respect it¹⁵. This principle is particularly evident on equestrian seals, the vast majority of which depict the rider riding to the right, forcing the elements of the coat of arms to be « bypassed ». The seals of Renaud I and Renaud II of Guelders illustrate this principle perfectly, since, with the exception of the single-sided shield, the coats of arms on the caparison and banner are in the direction of travel (*fig. 30-31*). Wealthy patrons whose coats of arms required it, therefore, had « left » and « right » pendants made to respect the direction of travel. The discovery of certain coat-of-arms pendants with « contourné » charges must therefore be analyzed with this particularity in mind, making identification all the more difficult.



30



31

30. Cast of the seal of Renaud I^{er} of Guelders. (1281). Arch.nat., Sc/D/10799

31. Cast of the seal of Renaud II of Guelders. (1332). Arch.nat., Sc/D/10800

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15. The expression « contourné by courtesy » cannot therefore be applied to equestrian equipment. Here again, there doesn't seem to be a dedicated term for this peculiarity, which is assimilated by the spectator, who unconsciously understands the mirror effect induced by the side from which he looks at the horse. This equestrian peculiarity was addressed by Bartolo de Sassoferrato (§§ 29-30-31). See Nigel RAMSAY, « Regulating heraldry and insignia. The treatise *De insigniis et armis* of Bartolo da Sassoferrato », in *Image et droit. Du ius imaginis au droit à l'image*, ed. Naïma GHERMANI and Caroline MICHEL D'ANNOVILLE, Rome, 2022, p. 115-130 (online : <https://books.openedition.org/efr/41165?lang=fr>).

VIII. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SOUND

Medieval society was marked by an acute perception of the sound aspect of its environment. The auditory dimension of events was of great importance, and people were accustomed to the immediate recognition of a wide range of sounds. Ears were trained, not by teaching, but by daily experience. They could just as easily identify the noises that punctuated the day as a sound vital to survival (fire bell, lookout) or the gallop of a horse in the distance. As for the horse, in addition to the animal's natural sounds (clattering hooves, breath, rider's equipment), there's a whole panoply of « bells » made up of bells, rattles and other dangling elements known as « flying or wobbling rings »¹⁶. These elements came into action when the horse was in motion, and their sound evolved or amplified according to the gait. This sound, produced from these idiophones or self-resonants, is the result of rare taps for bells (only when suspended from headpiece elements), and more commonly of jolts and shakes for bells, clappers and pendants. These sound artifacts are well documented by pictorial representations, as well as by texts recounting wars, battles and tournaments¹⁷ during which knights were happy to display « senals e de cascavels »¹⁸ (emblems and bells). This masculine preference for idiophones on their palfrey shows that people differentiated between the clear, pure sound of the bell, and the din of the clanking rings striking the pendants. The Middle Ages were also a time of strong belief in the sacred and the marvellous. The knights felt protected by the noise emitted by their equipment, a kind of talisman capable of dispelling danger through its apotropaic function. By the middle of the 14th century, knights made adaptations to their existing pendants, and invented new processes to produce sound¹⁹.

In analyzing the corpus we studied, we found that harness pendants particularly designed to emit sound have essentially a decorative or symbolic function, with forms and procedures that will be developed later²⁰. These particular pendants are composed of several elements : a suspension mount, a pendant and an articulated frame (*fig. 32*). The frame, made of copper alloy, systematically and elegantly echoes the shape of the pendant. Its dimensions are significantly smaller than those of the counterpart, so that the latter systematically strikes it, thus producing the desired sound. To amplify this sound effect, some models include a rivet (added at the design stage or later) that acts as a knocker when the instrument is dropped.

16. Look to *Les paysages sonores du Moyen Âge à la Renaissance*, ed. Laurent HABLLOT and Laurent VISSIERE, Rennes, 2016.

17. JACQUES BRETTEL, *Le tournoi de Chauvency*, ed. Maurice DELBOUILLE, Paris, 1932 ; ANTOINE DE LA SALE, *Jehan de Saintré*, ed. Joël BLANCHARD and Michel QUEREUIL, Paris, 1995.

18. *Le roman de Flamenca, publié d'après le manuscrit unique de Carcassonne...*, v. 781, p. 30, ed. Paul MEYER, 2^d edition, t. 1, Paris, 1901.

19. *Comptes de l'écurie du roi Charles VI (1381-1387)*. Vol. 1 : *Le registre KK/34 des Archives nationales*, ed. Guy-Michel LEPROUX, Paris, 1995, vol. 1, fol. 58 : « tous le harnois semé de gros bouillons de fin cuivre doré et argenté et d'anneles doubles volans 100fr » ; *ibid.*, in 1386, fol. 56 : « for 10 saddle harnesses, both for steeds and for horses, made and trimmed of Hungarian leather, covered with vermeil cordouen, studded with gilded bolts and unstudded with branches studded with pucettes and sown with double-flighted ringlets » ; fol. 85 : « selles de cuir de Hongrie couvert de cordouen noir et découpé par branche clouées de cloux dorez et d'annelez volans blans et dorez-les quelles selles furent délivrées au roy » ; *Comptes de l'écurie du Dauphin in 1420*, fol. 87 : « les 7 harnois fait de cuir de vache noir clouez de annez rons et fuzilles de laitton branlans par dedens ».

20. On the occasion of the publication of our book on the collection held at the Dobrée museum in Nantes

No complete examples of heraldically decorated « sound » hangers have been found. However, some examples with a very long suspension loops (*fig. 33*) tend to prove that a frame was originally present, and that heraldic pendants therefore existed in this category. Gauthier de Coincy, in his *Miracles of Notre-Dame*, alludes to the jingling of those harnesses :

« Qui oist comment tintenoient
Li lorein a ces chevaliers,
Molt les escoutast volentiers »²¹



32



33

32. *Harness pendant*. New York, The Metropolitan Museum, 04.3.375

33. *Harness pendant*. Nantes, Musée Dobrée, 930.1.129

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CONCLUSION

In the light of this article, in addition to the necessary clarification of the use and manufacture of these harness pendants, which are still improperly referred to as « vervelles », we can see that the foundations of heraldry are very probably linked to the arts and crafts of the Middle Ages. Indeed, in addition to the rule of alternating enamels and metals discussed in part IV, it is conceivable that the chromatic limitation of colors is also linked to the use of enamels. These correlations seem obvious, given the shared lexical field of this technique and that of heraldry. Although heraldic and sometimes technical knowledge is essential for a correct understanding of these objects, the study of coats of arms must be enriched by harness pendants, and these artefacts must be considered as a primary source of early coloured heraldry, on a par with armorial bearings and seals.

21. GAUTIER DE COINCI, *Miracle de Notre Dame* (v. 1490-1492), Paris BnF, NAF 24541.