

Camels
in
Heraldry

by

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INTRODUCTION

John Guillim, in his *A Display of Heraldrie*, said of the camel, "This *beast* farre surpasseth the *horse* in swiftnesse, in travell, to whom he is a hatefull enemie."¹ Well, that last part may be hyperbole. Actually, the first part may be, too. In a 30-kilometer endurance race held in 1993 in the United Arab Emirates with a mixed field of horses and camels, although "the horses were worried about the camels", the winner was, in fact, one of the horses according to Faisal Seddiq al-Mutawa, an official at the UAE Equestrian and Racing Federation.²

Bossewell, in his *Workes of Armorie* (1572), notes that camels are good "to beare charge and cariage."³ They are also, apparently, pretty decent as a charge, too, in armory, albeit used but comparatively rarely. But first, some background:

ORIGINS, HISTORY AND CHARACTERISTICS

Paleontologists tell us that the camel originated in North America some 40,000,000 years ago. Indeed, it is possible to find vendors in the American Southwest who sell plaster casts of prehistoric camel footprints. By one million years ago, they had spread to South America and into Asia via the Bering land bridge. There are, however, no native North American camels today, and they are survived in South America only by their diminutive relatives, the llama, alpaca, vicuña, and guanaco.

Fossilized remains of camels have been found near El Kowm, a 14 mile-wide gap between two mountain ranges with natural springs some 155 miles northeast of Damascus, Syria. These remains date back as far as one million years ago, far earlier than previous estimates for the arrival of the camel in the Middle East, which hadn't been known to be there before 10,000 years ago. A team of Swiss and Syrian archaeologists working at the same site have also discovered the 150,000-100,000-year-old fossilized remains of a previously unknown giant camel species. This camel is thought to have been about double the size of a modern-day dromedary. It stood approximately nine feet (three meters) high at the shoulder, and was around twelve feet (four meters) tall. The first bones from this species were found before 1995, but were confirmed as belonging to a camel only after more bones from several parts of the same animal were discovered. Between 2005 and 2006, more than 40 bone fragments of giant camels were found by the team.⁴

There are two varieties of true camels presently: the one-humped *Arabian* or *dromedary* (*Camelus dromedarius*), found primarily in Arabia, North Africa and India; and the two-humped *Bactrian* (*Camelus bactrianus*), found mostly in the highlands of central Asia from Turkestan to Mongolia. The Bactrian is shorter, heavier, a little slower, and has a longer coat of fur than its one-humped cousin. Both types are primarily used as beasts of burden, though they also provide wool, milk, hides, and meat.

Camels flourish in desert climates because of their unique physiology. They can survive on the coarse, sparse vegetation, thorny plants and dry grass that other animals cannot. When feed is good, they build up large stores of fat in their humps (contrary to common belief, they do not store water in their humps) which they can draw upon when food is scarce. Camels do not pant (as dogs

THE CAMEL AS A SYMBOL

A laden camel was sometimes used as the symbol (for example, in the synagogue of Aix-la-Chapelle/Aachen)¹⁴ of Issachar, one of the twelve tribes of Israel. The use of a camel as symbolic of the tribe reflects the dependence of Issachar on the Phoenicians, whose products the tribe transported. Camels were used by the Romans as the personification of Arabia, and the camel is found as such on some Roman coins.¹⁵

In Christian symbology, the *camel* stands for "temperance; royalty, dignity; obedience; stamina; associated with the Magi and with John the Baptist who was clothed in camel's hair. Also, as kneeling to receive its burden, it depicts humility and docility."¹⁶ Temperance, dignity, obedience, humility, and docility? All of the camels this author has ever seen must have been heathens, then. Including the one who thought that my beard looked like it might be tasty and attempted to eat it right off my face. (I am not making this up, and I have the photograph to prove it!)

The symbolism of the camel in an heraldic context is discussed in Nicholas Upton's 15th Century *de rei Militari*, or Treatise on Military Arts and Heraldry, on the same page as that of the toad, goat, and dog as they appear in arms. Discussing the camel, he cites Isidore of Seville's comparison of the Arabian camel with those from other places. This passage is often referred to in bestiaries or books on animal lore.

Lorenzo di Valfrei's *Dizionario di Araldica* in speaking of the symbolism of a camel states: "**cammello** Si rappresenta o passante (ossia in atto di camminare, passando da un lato all'altro dello scudo), o inginocchiato; sempre, però, muserolato (ossia con la museruola). In araldica, in cammello simboleggia la pazienza, la discrezione, e la prudenza."¹⁷ [**camel** Representative or passant (that is, in the act of walking, going from one side to the other of the shield), or kneeling; always, nevertheless, muzzled (that is, with a muzzle). In heraldry, the camel symbolizes patience, discretion, and prudence.]

Other authors give other meanings. "In *Armes* he [the camel] signifies a Man expeditious, and always ready for business."¹⁸ "Camel: Docility, patience, and perseverance."¹⁹ Similarly, and possibly borrowed from the same source: "The Camel. Sloane Evans gives the symbolism of this bearing as being 'docility, patience, and indefatigable perseverance.'"²⁰ "And there [in English herald-books] the camel also for his indefatigable perseverance."²¹

"[B]easts, birds, serpents, or any other creature, having life, may signify in *Armes*, as, ... the Camell for slouth".²² However, as has been noted by a number of heraldic authors but best said by Eugene Zieber, "[c]oats of arms were never intended as marks of disgrace, and it is absurd to say that the camel on one man's shield symbolizes slothfulness."²³

"The *camel*, long known as the 'ship of the desert,' was a symbol brought back from the arid wastelands of Africa, and might have symbolized endurance."²⁴ Of the three separate ideas given in this short sentence, only the first, that the camel has been long called the ship of the desert, is based on something other than speculation. Next to no evidence has been found during the research for this book that the camel was an heraldic charge was brought back from Africa (though it does

occasionally stand as a symbol of Africa), and only in Metzsig and Cooper is it stated that there is the symbolism of endurance (stamina) for the camel as a charge.

So, there are a number of different authors, each giving different interpretations for what a camel symbolizes in armory. Patience, discretion, and prudence; expeditiousness; sloth; endurance; perseverance; indefatigable perseverance. So which is it? What does the camel actually symbolize in arms? The fact that two different heraldic authors give significations for camels which are direct opposites (sloth and expeditiousness) only lends support to the idea that the "symbolism" of most heraldic charges and tinctures probably has as much foundation in heraldry as the use of abatements of arms; that is to say, next to none at all.

THE CAMEL IN HERALDRY

An Encyclopaedic Dictionary of Heraldry by Julian Franklyn and John Tanner states: "**camel:** [L.] a large, long-necked, hump-backed quadruped, having broad cushioned feet suited to walking upon sand, used as a beast of burden in Asia and Northern Africa; functions in heraldry chiefly as a supporter."²⁵ This last statement appears to be incorrect, however. This author's researches found far fewer camels as supporters than as charges on the arms or as crests, even when considering only English armory, as Franklyn and Tanner generally do. If Continental arms are included, the disparity is even greater.

One of the earliest references to camels and their relationship to heraldry occurs in the late 15th Century heraldic manual and bestiary, the *Deidis of Armorie*, translated from French into Scots and copied around 1494 by Kintyre Pursuivant Adam Loutfut at the behest of Marchmont Herald Sir William Cumming of Inverallochy.

The camell, as Ysidore sais, is a best berand great
birdingis ryicht lycht; and is lede to battell and
[975] is tame with ilakane; and of his nature plyand and crukis
his leggis befor at þai may charge him with his fordale,
suppos he be þus pacient in way; and in gret gait he
will nocht gang na suffir to be led out of þe pas that
he is customyt to gang, na he will nocht ber grettair
[980] fardalis na birdingis na he wes wont to, as þe doc-
tour Pleius sais in his viii buk in þe xix chptour.
And betaknys þat he þat first bur him in armes
wes a gret lord, wis, stark, and mychty, and
conueniant in battell, humiliand him and redy
[985] to tak þe charge of his subgettis; and ryicht pacient in his
dedis; neuerþeles, he tuk na charge at-our power and persoun,
and in na maner wald pas þe termys of resoun for
ony thing mycht cum till him.

The French description appears in Boudreau:

An Armorial of Camels

_____. *Three camels.* (Chesshyre)

_____. *Argent a camel passant azure.* (Chesshyre)

_____. *A camel statant.* (Chesshyre)

_____. *Argent three camels passant sable.* (quartered 3 by Erle) (Chesshyre)

?(#1). *Or a bactrian camel statant gules.* (Zürich Wappenrolle) [S.n.], *d'or au chameau de gueules (Kaboul?).* (Popoff)

Abocourt. (Brabant) *Écartelé: aux 1 et 4, d'or, à trois têtes et cols de chameau de gu.; aux 2 et 3, d'azur, à trois roses à quatre feuilles d'arg.* (Quarterly: 1 and 4, *Or three camel's heads and necks gules; 2 and 3, Azure three roses of four petals argent.*) (Rietstap)

Baku (Azerbaijan). *Quarterly: (1) Or atop a terrace vert a [cat] statant guardant or spotted sable; (2) Or issuant from a terrace vert three flames gules; (3) Azure atop a terrace a camel statant to sinister proper girthed gules bearing a pack vert; (4) Azure atop a terrace vert a six-fluked anchor inverted bendwise sinister proper.* (International Civic Heraldry)

Bessey (Figeac - Quercy). *D'azur, à un chameau d'argent.* (Azure a camel argent) (d'Abzac)

Bessey, N. *Azure a camel statant argent.* (d'Hozier)

Bonnaire, Madelene de. *Argent two camels heads and necks couped respectant sable on a chief azure three pineapples (pinecones) or.* (d'Hozier)

Borromeo-Arese. ... *le quartier sen.de l'ecartelé parti: a. de gu. a un chameau d'or, bridé de gu., couché sur une couronne d'or, sa bosse sommée d'un panache de cinq pl d'aut, d'azur, issantes d'une couronne d'or; ... (the sinister quarter per pale: a. Gules a camel or bridled gules lying on a crown or, its hump supporting a plume of five ostrich feathers azure issuant from a crown or.)* (Rietstap)

Borromeo, 14th-15th century Milan, was granted a camel in his arms.

Bossun, Olivier de. *Argent a camel passant azure.* (d'Hozier)

Bottu, Françoise. *Argent a camel statant gules atop a terrace vert, in chief three thistles proper.* (d'Hozier)

Boyeldieu. *Ec: au 1 d'azur à la tour d'or, surm. d'un coq d'arg.; 2 et 3 de gu. au pont de trois arches d'arg; au 4 d'azur au chameau d'or.* [Quarterly; 1, *Azure a tower or surmounted by a cock argent; 2 and 3, Gules a bridge of three arches argent; 4, Azure a camel or.* (Rietstap)

Kröcher (modern). *D'azur à un chameau pass. de arg. (Azure a camel passant argent.)* (Rietstap) (Woodward)

Laâyoune Province, Morocco. *Or, a fess wavy between an ostrich passant and a camel passant gules on a bordure vert five roses(?)/roundels(?) azure(?), one, two, and two.* (International Civic Heraldry)

Langhals. *D'azur à une tête et col de chameau au nat., bridée de gu. (Azure a camel's head and neck proper bridled gules.)* (Rietstap)

Larrey [Napoleon's Egyptian campaign in 1798]. *Ec.: au 1 d'or à un palmier de sin., posé à dextre, soutenu d'une terrasse du même, et acc. d'un dromadaire pass d'azur; aux 2 et 3 d'azur à trois chev. d'or; au 4 coupé; a. d'arg. à la barre ondée de gu., ch. d'une raie nageante du champ; b. d'or à une pyramide de sa. (Quarterly: 1, Or a palm tree placed to dexter atop a terrace vert and accompanied by a (bactrian) camel passant azure; 2 and 3, Azure three chevronels or; 4, per fess, argent on a bend sinister gules a skate/ray swimming argent, and or a pyramid sable.)* (Rietstap)

le Grand, Jean. *Azure a camel passant or atop a terrace vert and in chief two (locusts?) volant en arriere argent.* (d'Hozier)

Leonhardi. *Ec.: au 1 d'azur à un chameau d'arg; au 2 d'arg. a un Américain au nat., ceint de plumages de gu. et d'arg., tenant un arc tendu d'azur et decochant une flèche de sa.; au 2 d'arg. à un Africain au nat., ceint de plumages de gu. et d'azur, tenant de sa main sen. une massue abaissée; au 4 d'azur à un vaisseau de trois mâts d'arg., voguant sur une mer du même, sommé d'un pavillon de gu à la croix d'arg. (Quarterly: 1, Azure a (bactrian) camel passant argent; 2, Argent an American (Indian?) proper belted of feathers gules and argent, maintaining a bow azure and nocking an arrow sable; 3, Argent an African proper maintaining in his sinister hand a club to base; 4, Azure a vessel of three masts upon waves of the sea argent, supporting a pavilion gules with a cross argent.)* (Rietstap)

Leschemeau, Etienne. *Gules three camels statant or.* (d'Hozier)

Linars. *D'azur à la bande d'or, acc. en chef à sen. d'une rose, la lige ch. de deux croiss., et accostée de deux bâtons polés, l'un en bande, l'autre en barre, le tout d'arg.; en p. à dextre d'un palmier terrassé, acc. d'un dromadaire pass., le tout aussi d'arg. (Azure a bend or in sinister chief a rose, the [liege?] charged with two crescents between two pole sticks the one in bend the other in bend sinister both argent, in dexter point a palm tree on a terrace tree accompanied by a camel passant all also argent.)* (Rietstap)

Lion de Poit., La Com^{té} du. *Azure a camel statant or atop a terrace vert.* (d'Hozier)

Loke. *Parti: au 1 d'azur à un dromadaire d'arg. sur une terrasse de sin.; au 2 d'arg. à un épi tige et feuillé au nat. (Per pale, azure a (bactrian) camel passant argent atop a terrace vert, and argent an ear of wheat slipped and leaved proper.)* (Rietstap)

Michorowski [see Schmoltz-Michorowski]. (Rolland)

Supporters

Edmonstone of that Ilk/Edmonstone of Ednam. *Two camels proper*. (Nisbet)

Inverness, Royal Burgh of. Dexter. *A dromedary proper*. (Fox-Davies 2) (Louda says *two-humped*, and it's drawn in the Lyon Register as a two-humped camel, though it lacks the other Bactrian features, such as the shorter legs. See, e.g., Fox-Davies 2, p. 123.)

Jean-Charles-Charlau, Baron de. *Deux chameaux d'argent rampants*. (*Two camels rampant argent*). (Cogné)

Kitchener, Viscount (later Earl). Dexter. *A camel proper*. (Fox-Davies 2; Galles)

N-----, Lord G-----. *Two camels*. (Smith)

Romrée, Counts of. *Camels [or]*. (Woodward; Duerloo)

Romrée. *Deux chameaux pareils à celui de l'écu, tenant chacun une bannière aux armes de l'écu*. (*Two camels as on the shield, each maintaining a banner of the arms of the shield*.) (Rietstap Online)

Romrée. *Two camels as in the arms, the dexter maintaining a tilting lance bearing a banner of the arms as on the shield marshaling Quarterly: 1 and 4, Or a fess checky argent and azure, issuant from the fess a demi-lion proper; 2 and 3, Gules three antique stirrups argent; and the sinister maintaining a tilting lance bearing a banner Per pale, baron, Argent four pallets sable, femme, Vair a fess or*. (Duerloo)

School of Oriental and African Studies. Dexter: *A camel proper*. (Hall)

School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. Dexter: *A camel proper*. Sinister: *An elephant proper*. Granted by Royal Warrant 14 Oct 1917, exemplified 17 Dec 1918.

Weston, Sir William (Lord Prior of St. John of Jerusalem, d. 1539). Sinister, supporting banner of arms: *A camel rampant pean orbéd unguled eared and collared or*. (de Walden)

Worshipful Company of Coopers, The. On either side *A camel gules semée of annulets and bridled or*. (Fox-Davies 2; Key West)

Worshipful Company of Merchant Taylors, The. On either side *A camel or*. (Fox-Davies 2; Key West)

Crests

? (#1). *A [bactrian] camel statant gules.* (Zürich Wappenrolle)

? *A camel statant.* (Handdrawn and partially colored drawing of arms and crest, ca. 1855)

Abberbury, Oxon. and Suffolk. *A camel's head, sable.* (Fairbairn)

Abbernathyn, Sijr Joon. (Sir John Abernathy). *Une tête de chameau gris, à long cou autour duquel s'enroule une laisse de sin., une cloche d'or sur le poitrail.* (*A camel's head gray, bridled with the leash reflexed about the neck, the base of the neck chained and belled or.*) (van Helmont)

Amphlet, Staffordshjre. *A dromedary, proper.* (Fairbairn)

Amphlett. *A dromedary proper, bridled sable.* (Fairbairn)

Amphlett, John, Esq. of Clent House, Worcester. *A dromedary, proper.* (Fairbairn)

Amphlett, John, Esquire, Clent, Stourbridge. *A dromedary statant, bridled proper.* (Fairbairn)

Amphlett, Richard Holmden, K.C., of Wyrchbold Hall, Worcester. *A dromedary proper, bridled sable.* (Fairbairn)

Amphlett, Rev. Charles, of Earlscombe, Worcester. *On a mount vert, a dromedary statant proper, charged with three cinquefoils sable.* (Fairbairn)

Amphlett, Charles Edward, Captain 6th (Iniskilling) Dragoons. *On a wreath argent and azure, a dromedary statant proper, with halter and line reflexed over the back or, charged on the body with two lozenges argent.* (Fairbairn; Elven)

Amphlett, Edward Greenhill, J.P., of Worthing. Sussex. *On a wreath argent and azure, a dromedary statant proper, with halter and line reflexed over the back or, charged on the body with two lozenges argent.* (Fairbairn)

Appelton, Appolton. *A camel couchant proper.* (Fairbairn)

Appelton, Appolton, England. *A camel couchant proper, trappings gules fringed or.* (Fairbairn)

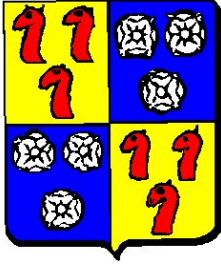

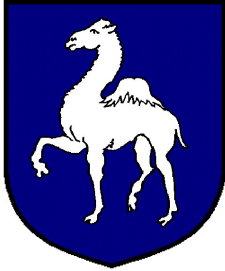





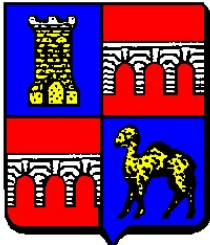
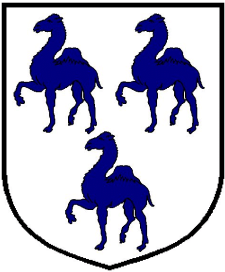

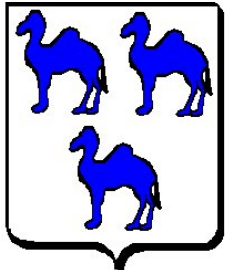




Betagh. *A camel's head erased argent, bridled gules.* (Fairbairn)

Bourges of Westport, Dorset. *A camel's head erased proper, bezantée.* (Fairbairn)

Bradford, Ireland. *A camel's head sable.* (Fairbairn)

Burges, Ireland. *A camel's head coupéd gules, bezantée.* (Fairbairn)

Arms

<p>Abocourt</p> 	<p>Baku, Azerbaijan</p> 	<p>Bessey</p> 	<p>Bessey, N</p> 
<p>Bonnaire, Madelene de</p> 	<p>Borromeo</p> 	<p>Bossun, Olivier de</p> 	<p>Bottu</p> 
<p>Boyeldieu</p>  <p>Boyeldieu <i>(B^e de l'Empire) Paris</i></p>	<p>Calmels</p> 	<p>Calmels, Pierre</p> 	<p>Calmels d'Artensac</p>  <p>Calmels d'Artensac <i>Auv. Lang.</i></p>
<p>Calmels de Lestiez</p>  <p>Calmels de Lestiez <i>Guercy, Toulouse</i></p>	<p>Camein, Alphonse</p> 	<p>Camel</p> 	<p>Camel, Georges</p> 

<p>Edmonston, John</p> 	<p>Hanley County</p> 	<p>Hanley County Borough</p> 	<p>Orcana, Conte a (Orkney)</p> 
<p>Pepys</p> <p>20</p> 	<p>Pepys</p> <p>24</p> 	<p>Pögl</p> 	<p>Stileman</p> 
<p>Stileman</p> 	<p>Stileman</p> 	<p>Stileman</p> 	<p>Stileman-Le Strange</p> 
<p>Tunesi</p> 	<p>Vasich</p> 	<p></p> 	<p>Camel crest button</p> 

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