



## The History of Favors and Their Place in the SCA Society Today.

By Lady Taysia della Vuenta

**fa-vor** [fey-ver]

**(n.) a gift bestowed as a token of goodwill, kind regard, love, etc., as formerly upon a knight by his lady. (1)**

What is the history of the token or favor in the Middle Ages and Renaissance?

Historically favors were given not just as a symbol of love but also as a display of friendship or allegiance or as an emblem of duties performed and services rendered. These could range from a simple bit of cloth from a loved one to a "patch" from one's patron worn on your clothes. From a charge to be added to one's banner to a ring given from the great Lord or King. And a lot of other objects as well, including cast metal badges and charges that were attached to belts, armour and other items.

Medieval tokens also were not, as is frequently the case in SCA practice, strictly gifts of a lady to her champion. A knight might equally give his lady a token of affection. The history of tokens is traceable through both literature and artifacts, and spans much of the medieval and Renaissance periods in Europe. Tokens and favours were given as payment for services where the deed performed far outweighed the expectations of the master; be he a lord or King.



So, how does that compare to what we refer to in the SCA as a favor? Looking at what history tells us; the SCA "fingertip towel" favor worn on the belt has no historical basis in medieval practice. If even our modern day dictionaries seem to sum up the meaning as we in the SCA do – how then did its purpose change; or become so defined by one action within our society?

According to the Silverdesert Chatelaine webpage(2) the word favor means:

**'A ribbon or other personal token given (usually to a fighter) as a mark of esteem. Favors may indicate simple friendship or a commitment to serve as consort.'**

Even further, on the Atenveldt webpage(3), they describe how to be a consort; with part of the meaning of a consort being:

**'A "favor" is exchanged between the two individuals to formalize the relationship. The favor should be carried whenever the fighter participates in combat for the consort, as it represents their joint Honor and Chivalry on the Field of Combat. (A favor can be any item that has meaning for the giver and receiver, including a piece of jewelry, lace, or remembrance.)'**

While there is no definitive example of the use of heraldry as belt favors, it is a small leap from period references noting the wearing of a liege-lord's badge to the use of heraldry on favors. This use of heraldry makes for ease of identifiability when declaring association with another. Heraldry

also adds to the pageantry, fosters the atmosphere we are striving for and enhances the visual experience for those involved.

So, on a personal level, have I made a favor for my lord – NO! Why not, I hear you ask? Well, I am a little lazy – you know the sort, great with theory, but when it comes to getting practical... I am also a mother of three boys so time is a luxury I don't always have. However, I am a little obscure in that I wear a "favor" of sorts on my own personal belt. I have made myself a favor bearing my husbands arms. In fact; I have even used this on my children's clothing so that they be recognized as belonging to the same family. I made it with pride to show that I loved and honored my husband both on and off the battlefield.

A favor in my own personal opinion is a gesture of love and devotion, a memento of affection, a promise of more, or just simply adoration between friends. It may also encompass the idea of being a thank you or a notoriety of recognition; an award for deeds done.

I like to believe in the romantic notion; the courtly love phenomenon. Lovers bound by secrecy, or married couples reveling in their eternal respect and companionship of old. A favor does not need be elaborate or even discernable to those not in the loop; just as long as any meaning in the favor is special and understandable to the bearer and wearer.

If I was to make a favor for my lord it would be his arms on a black background with a golden sun situated on each point of the shield. Above the shield would be the sign of eternity – or maybe something to represent Led Zeppelin....Thankyou was our bridal waltz.

So, if you would like to make your own favor I have included the following websites that gave excellent ideas on what constituted a favor and how to make them:

- (1) Stefan's Florilegium. Favors-msg : <http://www.florilegium.org/files/ACCESS/favors-msg.html>
- (2) The Fibre Guild Of Lochac. Knitted Gloves as Favours. By Meroe M. Cahill (Rohese de Fairhurst) : <http://www.sca.org.au/fibre/articles/knittedGlovesAsFavours.php>



#### Bibliography:

- (1) Dictionary.com : <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/favor>
- (2) What do they mean by that? : <http://www.silverdesert-sca.org/chatelaine/a-h.html>
- (3) The Kingdom of Atenveldt. How to be a Consort. : <http://www.atenveldt.org/Home/Articles/HowtobeConsort/tabid/67/Default.aspx>

#### Other references:

- (1) On the Giving of Favors & Tokens compiled by Baron Modar Neznanich : <http://www2.kumc.edu/itc/staff/rknight/favors.htm>
- (2) Kottr.com. Guard favors : [http://kottr.com/v/sca/events/2006/coronation-gc/IMG\\_0003.JPG.html](http://kottr.com/v/sca/events/2006/coronation-gc/IMG_0003.JPG.html)