

KING JOHN'S IRISH REX COINAGE REVISITED. PART II: THE SYMBOLISM OF THE COINAGE

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Fig. 1. Engravings of the REX coinage of John illustrating the reverse estoile and crescent of the penny, cross and crescent of the halfpenny and estoile of the farthing. The farthing legends are transposed. (Penny reproduced from Sainthill 1844, Pl. 10; halfpenny and farthing from Simon 1749, Pl. 2.)

PART I of this paper, published in the last volume of the *Journal*, was concerned with the dating of King John's Irish REX coinage.¹ This second part explores the coinage's symbolism. Although this is a subject that has intrigued antiquaries and numismatists for the past three centuries its treatment has in its nature been highly speculative since there is no contemporary testimony to throw any light on the significance of the imagery; indeed, the most one can hope to achieve is an informed guess at what was intended.

What immediately catches the eye in Fig. 1 (above) is the triangle that is the prominent feature of both the obverse and reverse of each of the three denominations of the coinage. The earliest authorities such as Sir James Ware and Bishop Nicholson believed that it represented a harp.² By John Lindsay's time, however, such an interpretation had fallen into disfavour although there was little agreement as to an alternative, some believing that it referred to the presumed geographical outline of Ireland. Lindsay himself came to accept Richard Sainthill's view that the triangle was an emblem of the Trinity, an argument that Sainthill thought was strengthened by the presence of the cosmic symbols on the coinage's reverse that he regarded, not implausibly, as having religious significance.³

James Simon, a century earlier, had come to the more prosaic view that the triangle was intended simply to distinguish the Irish coinage from that of England.

Acknowledgements. I would like to express my warm appreciation once more to Lord Stewartby, Dr Martin Allen and Dr Barrie Cook for their comments on an earlier draft of the overall paper. I am also very grateful to Professor Sandy Heslop, John Cherry and three anonymous referees for reading earlier versions of this part of the paper, and to Dr Adrian Ailes, the Very Rev Dr Robert MacCarthy, Dr Stuart Kinsella and Dr Ragnháll Ó Floinn for their help on specific points. My thanks are due, too, to Adrian James, Assistant Librarian of the Society of Antiquaries, for his assistance in the provision of illustrations. It must be stressed that responsibility for the interpretative views expressed in the paper lies with the author and him alone.

¹ Dykes 2013.

² Harris 1764, 208; Nicholson 1724, 158–9. Nicholson, who had clearly read Ware, claimed that he owed his notion to a 'judicious observation' of the virtuoso eighth earl of Pembroke.

³ Lindsay 1839, 26; Sainthill 1844, I, 149–51, reprinting an extract from a letter he had contributed to the *Gentleman's Magazine* (Sainthill 1836). It is not without interest that, in the catalogue of the coin collection he made over to Archbishop Laud (which the latter donated to the Bodleian Library to form the nucleus of its numismatic collections), Dr John Barkham, the seventeenth century antiquary, puzzled over the obverse symbolism cautiously venturing the possibility of its association with the Trinity: ... (*nescio q^o symbolo*) *Triangulari figura; quae forte vel 3 Regna significant vel Æternæ Trinitatis protectionem*: Lambeth Palace Library, Laud MS 225, f. 79v.

We may more probably suppose, that as John was the first, that ordered his Irish money to be made of the same weight and standard with his English, and to be equally current in both kingdoms, yet, as the heads of the kings were inclosed in a circle on their English monies, so, for distinction sake he ordered his head to be represented in a triangle on his Irish coins.⁴

Whatever the meaning of the triangle – and Simon's interpretation is most likely the correct one – the overall iconography of the REX coinage can probably best be read in political terms; as propaganda to proclaim a new beginning in Ireland and the king's determination to establish personal control over his unruly lordship. This is borne out by the titulature and regality of the obverse and, despite its religious overtones, could better explain the penny's reverse design of a crescent surmounted by an estoile with seven wavy rays, or a 'sun whirl' as Dolley and Seaby described it.⁵ This device is considered by some authorities to have become by the later twelfth century a royal badge,⁶ having been used – the estoile having six or seven rays⁷ – by Richard I on his first Great Seal of 1189 (Fig. 2a).



Fig. 2. (a) Obverse of the first Great Seal of Richard I (Birch 1887–1900, I, no. 80: $4\frac{3}{8}$ in.). (b) Obverse of the second Great Seal of Richard I (Birch 1887–1900, no. 87: $3\frac{3}{4}$ in.). (Reproduced from Wyon 1887, Pl. 5, 35 and Pl. 6, 37, by courtesy of the Society of Antiquaries of London.)

Professor Barnard in his *The Casting Counter and the Counting Board* noted that this celestial design of a star or sun was also to be found on twelfth-century coins of the counts of Toulouse and the Toulousain counts of Tripoli (Fig. 3a, c). He thus came to the conclusion that it was a Toulousain badge and suggested that it might have been introduced into the Plantagenet royal house by Eleanor of Aquitaine – who possessed a hereditary claim to the county through her grandmother – on her marriage to Henry of Anjou in 1152.⁸ Unhappily, there seems to be no evidence of Toulousain usage of the motif before the time of the Second Crusade (1146–49), fifty years after Eleanor's grandmother had been ousted from her patrimony by her uncle, Raymond IV of St Gilles (1094–1105), from whom successive counts of

⁴ Simon 1749, 13, although he hazarded the notion that 'From this triangle perhaps proceeded the arms of Ireland – the harp'.

⁵ Dolley and Seaby 1968, xxxiv–xxxv.

⁶ For example, Burke 1884, lvi; Siddons 2009, I, 26 and 30; II, I, 73–5 and 228–9. Willement 1821 illustrates the badge 'from the first seal of King Richard the First' (p. 7) simply noting (p. 25) that 'the same emblems will be found on the Irish money of King John, and on the great seal of Henry the Third'.

⁷ Dr Adrian Ailes has pointed out to me that one of the estoiles has seven points and the other six. The differing number of rays in the various manifestations of the star on seals and coins probably has no deeper basis than the vagaries of the engravers and is ignored in this paper.

⁸ Barnard 1916, 99.

Toulouse and Tripoli were descended.⁹ An added complication is that the counts of Toulouse did not use the motif on the coinage issued in the county itself. The *deniers* to which Barnard referred – the *raymondins* issued by Raymond V (1148–94) – were struck at Pont-de-Sorgues for their separate marquisate of Provence, formally ceded to them in 1125 (Fig. 3a).¹⁰ Furthermore, it is worth bearing in mind that a star/sun was present on the coins of Bertrand II of Forcalquier (1150–1208), an adjacent county within Provence: (Fig. 3b), suggesting that the feature was of Provençal rather than Toulousain significance; a conjecture bolstered by the associated presence of the Cross of Toulouse as the reverse type of the *raymondins*.

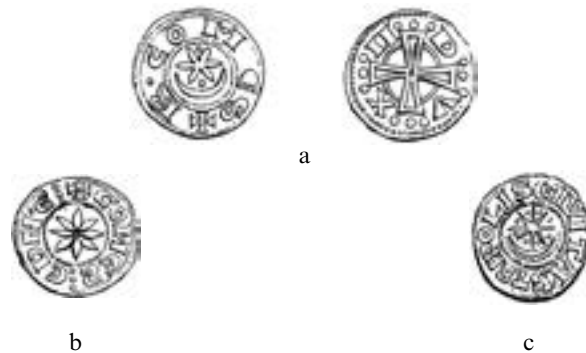


Fig. 3. (a) *Denier raymondin* of the marquisate of Provence struck by Raymond V of Toulouse (after 1148): Poey d'Avant 1858–62, II, no. 3723. (Reproduced from Poey d'Avant 1858–62, II, Pl. 81, 17.) (b) Reverse of a *denier d'Embrun* struck by Bertrand II of Forcalquier (late twelfth century): Poey d'Avant 1858–62, no. 4662; Rolland, 197. (Reproduced from Poey d'Avant 1858–62, II, Pl. 101, 18.) (c) Reverse of a *denier* struck by Raymond II of Tripoli (c. late 1140s–1164): Schlumberger 1878, 102. (Reproduced from Schlumberger 1878, Pl. 4, 4.)

Barnard also remarked that *deniers* of Bohemond IV, prince of Antioch (1201–33) bore a star/sun and crescent, but these are not combined as he implies, being set separately on either side of the obverse helmeted bust with a crescent in an angle of the reverse cross, a series instituted by his father Bohemond III (1163–1201) (Fig. 4a). The star/sun and crescent device combined did appear on rare Antiochene *copper* fractional coins (Fig 4b) and although their chronology is uncertain it is possible that they commemorate the installation of Bohemond IV as count of Tripoli by his father following the death of the Toulousain Raymond III in 1187. Until his death in 1201 all Antiochene coinage was in the name of Bohemond III.¹¹



Fig. 4. (a) *Denier* of Bohemond III of Antioch: Schlumberger 1878, 53–4. (Reproduced from Schlumberger 1878, Pl. 3, 4.) (b) Copper coin of Bohemond (IV?) of Antioch: Schlumberger 1878, 52–3. (Reproduced from Schlumberger 1878, Pl. 3, 3.)

⁹ Although Eleanor's grandmother, Philippa, was heiress to her father, William IV of Toulouse, the county had no tradition of female succession and she had been displaced by her uncle, Raymond IV, in 1094 on her father's death.

¹⁰ The counts of Toulouse had long claimed rights to the marquisate of Provence – the area north and west of the Durance. This was formally conveyed to them in 1125, the rest of Provence remaining under separate rule.

¹¹ For a modern review of these coinages see Metcalf 1995, 125–32, 145–6. For the Toulousain numismatic antecedents see also Sabine 1980, 79–80; North 1992, 83; Goodall 1993, 5–6.

It has traditionally been supposed that the star/sun and crescent design found on the coins of Tripoli (Fig. 3c, above), though very different in style and form, was based on that of the *raymondins*. The fact that Toulousain prototypes had earlier been closely copied in Tripoli after the crusader state's creation under Bertrand of St Gilles, count of Toulouse (1105–12) and count of Tripoli (1109–12) has been adduced as giving some credence to this argument.¹² There is, on the other hand, a case to be made, as Christopher Sabine suggested some thirty years ago, for the copying to have been the other way round, from Tripoli to Provence, stars and crescents being symbols 'much used by the Muslims and ... therefore familiar to the counts of Tripoli'.¹³ The critical issue is the chronology of the Tripolitan coins which have conventionally been attributed to Count Raymond III (1152–87). Since the Provençal *raymondins* are known to have been in circulation no later than 1151 they would on this time-scale have precedence.¹⁴ Nevertheless, Sabine has argued that the 'star/sun and crescent' coins of Tripoli may have been introduced as early as the later 1140s during the rule of Count Raymond II (1137–52), perhaps reflecting a more general move on the part of the crusader states to strike their own *deniers* at the time of the Second Crusade: the coinages of Antioch under Raymond of Poitiers (1136–49) and the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem under Baldwin III (1143–63) being cases in point.¹⁵

Transmission of the motif from Outremer to the West does seem to be a more plausible and natural explanation. Raymond V of Toulouse, then only fourteen years old, had been taken to Palestine on the Second Crusade by his father, Count Alphonse-Jourdain, but he returned home, in all likelihood imbued with the crusading ethos, after the latter's sudden and mysterious death at Caesarea in the spring of 1148. And, if there is a direct connection between the Tripolitan and Marquisate iconography,¹⁶ it seems not unreasonable to suppose that he adopted the emblem on his Provençal coinage to demonstrate his continuing support for the strong regional contingent remaining in the Holy Land under his illegitimate half-brother Bertrand who by now was more concerned with wresting Tripoli from his cousin, Raymond II, than pursuing the true objects of the crusade.¹⁷

The Second Crusade and its successors seem to have been the impetus for the striking in the West of coins with crescents and star/sun emblems in the field, though outside the marquisate of Provence this was exceptionally rare as a combined single motif; the *dineros* of Sancho VII of Navarre (1194–1234) (Fig. 5a) being a singular example.¹⁸ As individual symbols stars/suns and crescents are far more frequently met with on coins of the period: early instances being the bracteates of Conrad the Great, margrave of Meissen (1123–56), a leader of the 1147 Crusade against the Slavic Obodorites;¹⁹ while an attractive French feudal coin, probably dating from the 1170s, is the billon *denier* put out at the episcopal mint of Langres during the reign of Louis VII of France (1137–80) who had been leader of the Crusade two decades before (Fig. 5b).²⁰

¹² Metcalf 1995, 158. See Poey d'Avant 1858–62, II, no. 3862 and Pl. 80, 14; Schlumberger 1878, 100–1 and Pl. 4, 1. Bertrand was the son of Raymond IV of St Gilles.

¹³ Sabine 1980, 79–80. Although Sabine's argument is debatable (see the critique of Sabine in Metcalf 1995, 160–1) there is some support for his dating in the Harim/Harenc Hoard (dep. 1164?) which contains no Provençal *raymondins*: *Coin Hoards* 2008, no. 103, in *NC* 168 (2008), 432.

¹⁴ Rolland 1956, 105. Raymond V's succession to his father Alphonse-Jourdain as count of Toulouse in 1148 sets a *terminus post quem* for the introduction of the *raymondins* but there is no documentary evidence for their circulation before 1151.

¹⁵ Schlumberger 1878, 50–1, Pl. 2, 17 and 87–8, Pl. 3, 21–2. The contemporaneity of these coinages must remain conjectural at present in view of the lack of documentation and sparsity of hoard evidence: cf. Metcalf 1995, 53–7, 119–21.

¹⁶ Of course, the notion of any *direct* transmission of the motif may be misconceived. As already mentioned the stars/suns are different in style and form and the likely simultaneity of the introduction of the issues may suggest a separate and coincidental adoption of symbols already popular among Frankish crusaders in the Middle East.

¹⁷ Raymond II was thought to be implicated in the death of Alphonse-Jourdain and had been openly accused of this by Bertrand.

¹⁸ The symbolism of Sancho VII's *dineros* conceivably reflects his role in the breaking of the Muslim Almohad domination of Spain. Goodall's contention (Goodall 1993, 5) that Sancho was descended from Philippa of Toulouse is without substance.

¹⁹ Schwinkowski 1931, Pl. 1, 15, and Pl. 2, 21.

²⁰ The crusading significance of this coin's symbolism may reflect the important role played by Godfrey de La Roche-Vanneau, bishop of Langres (1138–63), in the promotion and progress of the Crusade. Godfrey, previously prior of Clairvaux, was a kinsman and disciple of Saint Bernard, abbot of Clairvaux, the Crusade's dominant preacher and enthusiast. Although



Fig. 5. (a) Billon *dinero* of Sancho VII of Navarre with reverse symbol of combined star/sun and crescent: Poey d'Avant 1858–62, II, no. 3329. (Reproduced from Poey d'Avant 1858–62, II, Pl. 71, 3.)
 (b) Billon *denier*, with a crescent and star/sun on either side of the obverse crozier, issued with the immobilized name 'LVDOVICVS REX' during the reign of Louis VII of France, at the episcopal mint of Langres: Poey d'Avant 1858–62, III, no. 5843. (Reproduced from Poey d'Avant 1858–62, III, Pl. 135, 12.)

No evidence has been forthcoming to indicate that the combined emblem was ever used in a royal context in England before the time of Richard I.²¹ And there seems no reason to believe that Eleanor of Aquitaine or either of her two husbands, Louis VII of France or Henry II, ever employed it although both spouses pursued vigorous if short-lived campaigns against Toulouse ostensibly in support of her increasingly tenuous pretensions. Neither did Richard when as duke of Aquitaine he had himself carried out a series of aggressive assaults on the county in 1186–88. Negative evidence must always be treated with caution but it is not until Richard's accession that we have any concrete witness to support the use of the device by the Plantagenet royal house and then only in the one arresting instance of his first Great Seal of 1189 (Fig. 2a, p. 91 above).

This timing is not without significance. And rather than being any gesture towards a frail familial heritage – of greater relevance was his inclusion of sprigs of the paternal *plantagenista* or broom on the seal – it is far more credible, bearing in mind its likely origins in the East, that Richard introduced the device as a public pledge of his personal commitment to the crusading movement;²² the star/sun symbol representing either his authority under God or indeed his own majesty; the latter interpretation being even more strongly stressed on his second Great Seal (1197/98) with its unambiguous sun-burst (Fig. 2b, p. 91 above).²³ Richard had already taken the Cross in 1187 following the fall of Jerusalem to Saladin – the first of the Frankish princes to do so – and, although events conspired to delay his departure to the Holy Land until 1190 twelve months after becoming king, he was throughout devoted to its recovery for Christendom.²⁴

This centrality of the Third Crusade to both government and to elite society in Ricardian England was perhaps exemplified by Richard's chancellor (1189–97), William de Longchamp, and Simon of Kyme, a Lincolnshire landowner and contemporary royal servant, who, while not known to be *crucesignati* themselves,²⁵ adopted the device on their seals. And its appear-

this *denier* was struck in the reign of Louis VII the legend 'LVDOVICVS REX' did not necessarily refer to this king but rather preserved the immobilized name of the Carolingian king, Louis IV d'Outremer.

²¹ Star/sun emblems, presumably signifying divine authority or majesty, had, however, appeared in the field on the fifth seal of Henry I (to both right and left of the king) and the second seal of Stephen (to the right of the king) (Birch 1887–1900, I, nos. 31, 46).

²² Some might question why Richard as a *rex crucesignatus* did not adopt a prominent cross in this instance as some German participants in the Third Crusade apparently did on their coins (cf. Stumpf 1991, 14, no. 15).

²³ Richard's identification of his majesty with the sun is exemplified in the cloak embroidered with crescents and 'flashing orbs of the sun' that he wore when meeting Isaac Comnenus, the renegade Byzantine 'emperor' of Cyprus, in 1191 on his way to the Holy Land. This association of the king with the sun is also typified in the comment of Richard of Devizes that Richard's leaving England in 1189 was 'as the earth is dreary in the sun's absence, so was the face of the kingdom altered at the king's departure': Giles 1841, 28. I am grateful to Professor Sandy Heslop for suggesting this association and the reference to Richard of Devizes (*pers. comm.*). The combined star and crescent emblems were replaced on Richard's second Great Seal by a single crescent to the right of the figure of the king and a single sun-burst of sixteen rays to the left (Fig. 2b). Richard's favourite nephew, the Emperor Otto IV (1209–15), adopted similar symbols on his seal said to be 'the work of a goldsmith in the service of the Angevins': Luckhardt and Niehoff 1995, I, 332.

²⁴ There is a long-standing notion that the device of a combined star and crescent had constituted the arms of Isaac Comnenus that Richard appropriated after his conquest of Cyprus and capture of Isaac. The theory has no merit, however, since Richard's involvement with Cyprus post-dates his first Great Seal by two years.

²⁵ Walter, a brother of Simon of Kyme, is said to have died in 1190 while on the Third Crusade: *ODNB*, s.v. Simon of Kyme.



Fig. 6.²⁶ (a) Counter-seal of William de Longchamp, bishop of Ely, as chancellor of England, 1189–97 (Birch 1887–1900, I, no. 1493: $1\frac{5}{8} \times 1\frac{1}{4}$ in.).
 (b) Seal of Simon of Kyme (d. 1220) (Birch 1887–1900, III, no. 11154: $2\frac{1}{2}$ in.).
 (c) Seal of Margaret FitzGerold, widow of Baldwin de Redvers, post 1224 (Birch 1887–1900, III, no. 12950: $c.1\frac{3}{8} \times \frac{7}{8}$ in.). (All © British Library Board.)

ance on the much later seal of Margaret de Redvers, derived from her father Warin FitzGerold the younger (*c.*1167–1215/16), may also have reflected his prominent personal participation in the campaigns of 1190–92 (Fig. 6).

No doubt there were others who adopted the emblem in the same spirit. In these particular instances, however, the emblem may at the same time have had a more mundane significance: as a mark of loyalty to the king, stressing the fact that Longchamp, Simon of Kyme and Warin FitzGerold were all long-standing and elite Angevin officials and that their authority (the crescent moon) was a reflection of the crusading king's majesty (the sun). Longchamp, it should be observed, was a protégé of Richard having been chancellor of Poitou before coming to England; FitzGerold had been a hereditary chamberlain of the exchequer since Henry II's time while Simon of Kyme, at a more local level, was a royal justice and sheriff of his county.²⁷ Whatever the true import of the emblem on these seals, it is inconceivable that Richard, who (except during his crusade and captivity) kept a constant grip on his kingdom's affairs and administration, would have allowed its use in this way if it did have personal familial connotations; especially in the case of Longchamp who made unfettered use of his personal seal in his major governmental capacity.

King John's use of the star/sun and crescent badge was restricted to his Irish pennies and while it is hardly credible see it as simply a novel decorative motif on a novel coinage it is equally difficult to interpret it in strictly crusading terms.²⁸ No more than conventionally devout, and throughout his reign distracted by other concerns, John never directly involved himself in the crusades and although he did promise to fund knights for the Holy Land he took the Cross only in 1215 after his submission to the pope and then simply for purely political reasons.²⁹ During the course of the striking of the REX coinage England was subject to interdict and for much of the time John was excommunicate. Although Ireland was not affected by the papal prohibitions and John was not much troubled by them anyway – indeed, financially, he handsomely profited from them – it may well be that John, given his quarrel with Innocent

²⁶ Seals are notoriously difficult to reproduce photographically but in these instances engravings which would have brought out the details of the sun/star and crescent emblems more clearly are not available.

²⁷ Interestingly both Simon of Kyme and Warin FitzGerold deserted King John in the midst of the civil war of 1215–17.

²⁸ Haigh 1839–40, 187 suggested that the star/sun and crescent motif was symbolic of John the Baptist whom John *may* have regarded as his patron saint but, as Haigh recognised, there is no evidence of this.

²⁹ The Angevins had a familial interest in the Holy Land since the royal house of Jerusalem was a junior branch of the house of Anjou and in 1185 Henry II had been offered the kingdom as successor to the ailing Baldwin IV. Henry had refused, well aware of the political infighting among the Latin states, and, with the problems of Ireland much in his mind too, he had also rejected John's pleas to take his place. A month later, in April 1185, John had been dispatched on his first expedition to his lordship: Warren 1973, 604–6; *idem* 1997, 32–5.

III, intended the motif to be seen as a public repudiation of the hegemony of a Papacy which had authorized the incorporation of Ireland into the English realm a half-century before: an assertion that the king's power in his lordship (the moon) derived directly from God and not from the divine authority of the pope (the sun or cross).³⁰ It would have been a declaration that would have had the full support and could even have resulted from the initiative of the justiciar, John de Gray, whose election to the archbishopric of York in 1205 had been quashed by Innocent III in the face of the king's support.³¹

An alternative reading perhaps is that John saw the symbol as the sun of majesty suffusing the pale moon of a troublesome lordship; the king coming to tame his over-mighty Anglo-Irish baronage, to further the establishment of English law and administration among an unruly people and, incidentally, to push forward the unfinished business of the reform of the Irish Church, a professed justification of the original Henrician conquest.³² The imagery may have meant little to the Irish populace at large but its message would not have been lost on John's wilful feudatories or Ireland's native kinglets.

If his first Great Seal is the only use of the star/sun and crescent device by Richard I that I have been able to find, its presence on John's REX pence is equally singular; no other contemporary examples of the device are to be directly associated with him. It does not appear on his Great Seal (Birch 1887–1900, I, no. 91) or even as an initial mark on any of the Short Cross coins that have been identified as his. Otherwise, and again in an Irish context, the badge is found only in St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin and in a setting which, though linked with the king, is not contemporaneous.³³ The cathedral was a foundation that the king actively supported and his liberal contributions to it are thought to have been memorialised by representations of the badge on the former prebendal stalls removed in the Cathedral restorations of the 1870s and as stone carvings – still existing – above the stalls of the dean and precentor at the entrance to the choir. Although the latter carvings could not have been undertaken before the rebuilding of the cathedral in the reign of Henry III the work was carried out by Henry de Londres, a faithful supporter of King John,³⁴ and a commemoration of John is not implausible.³⁵ But it is unproven; the carvings may have no connection with John but instead may have been intended to convey an ecclesiastical sentiment, perhaps the Majesty of God (the sun) reflected by his Church (the crescent moon).

By Henry III's time (1216–72) evidence for the regal use of the star/sun and crescent device is almost equally exiguous. It did appear as an initial mark on that king's first Great Seal (Birch 1887–1900, I, no. 100), on his Short Cross round fractional coinage (class VIIa3 or VIIaD, 1222–?), the estoile being rendered as a pellet (Fig. 7), and on some of his earliest English Long

³⁰ A similar repudiation of Pope Innocent III's dominion has been read into the presence of the separate star and crescent on the seal of John's nephew, the Emperor Otto IV.

³¹ John de Gray (d. 1214), bishop of Norwich (1200–14), a decisive, vigorous and capable administrator was a loyal supporter of King John. After the king's rapprochement with Pope Innocent III in 1213 Gray was elected bishop of Durham but he died before being able to take up the see. He was justiciar of Ireland from the autumn or winter of 1208 until 23 July 1213: *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

³² It was with the furtherance of church reform and the strengthening of papal jurisdiction in mind that the English pope, Adrian IV, had issued the bull *Laudabiliter* in 1155–56 sanctioning Henry II's expedition to Ireland (in the event not undertaken until 1171–72) and – as a *quid pro quo* – conferring on the king hereditary lordship of the country: Warren 1973, 194–8. Incidentally, it was a manoeuvre that 'gave impetus to papal claims in England without which the story of Archbishop Thomas Becket might have been very different': Southern 1970, 242–3, 252.

³³ A bronze ornament, assumed to be part of a horse's trappings and comprising a star linked to a crescent reversed, was found in the precincts of Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin in 1884 and then thought to be of thirteenth-century date. The whereabouts of the 'horse brass' – originally deposited in the Cathedral Chapter Room – has been unknown for many years but its dating – which was based solely on the use of the motif on John's REX pence and on the carvings in St Patrick's Cathedral – is very questionable and indeed the linked objects may have no royal connotations at all (see Cuffe 1902, 74 and Frazer 1879–88, Pl. XXIV, where the object is illustrated). Although they have, of course, not seen the brass both John Cherry and Dr Raghnaill Ó Floinn take the view that it is late, perhaps as late as the sixteenth or even seventeenth centuries (*pers. comms*).

³⁴ Cf. Crawford and Gillespie 2009, 104–5, 151. Henry de Londres (d. 1228), archbishop of Dublin (1213–28) and justiciar (1213–15 and 1221–24) was a *curialis* and staunch adherent of John, responsible for the continued construction of Dublin Castle as well as the building of several other castles in strategic parts of the lordship.

³⁵ An alternative theory is that the carvings commemorate John Cumin (Comyn), archbishop of Dublin 1181–1212, but this seems purely to be based on the use of the badge as an initial mark on the seal of John Comyn II, lord of Badenoch (Fig. 8b), who was, in any case, unrelated.

Cross pence (classes Ia and Ib: 1247–48) until it was replaced by a single star or sun as the norm for that series. On the king's second Great Seal of 1259 (Birch 1887–1900, I, no. 118) it was superseded by an initial cross and was completely absent from his Irish Long Cross coins (1251–54) which began to be issued a year after Henry took the Cross for a second time.



Fig. 7. Henry III round halfpenny, 1222–?, London, moneyer Ilger, with reverse initial mark of estoile and crescent, the estoile being rendered by a pellet. (Actual size $\times 2$. © The Trustees of the British Museum.)

It seems clear that by Henry III's reign, in England at least, the estoile and crescent device *sensu stricto* had lost its direct association with the war against the infidel and had become a purely decorative motif. As in the instance of Henry's first Great Seal it remained as a popular initial mark or filler in seal legends in place of the ubiquitous cross, the seals of John de Warenne, sixth earl of Surrey, *c.*1250,³⁶ and John Comyn II, lord of Badenoch, 1292, being just two of many examples (Fig. 8).



Fig. 8. (a) Seal of John de Warenne, sixth earl of Surrey, with the device as an initial mark, *c.*1250: Birch 1887–1900, II, no. 6524: *c.* 3¼ in. (Reproduced from Hunter-Blair 1943, Pl. XVI, *d* and Pl. III, *g*.) (b) Seal of John Comyn [Cumin] II, lord of Badenoch, with the device as an initial mark, 1292: National Records of Scotland, RH17/1/Drw14: *c.* 1 in., described in Laing 1850, 41–2, no. 222. (Reproduced by permission of the Keeper of the National Records of Scotland.)

This apparent 'secularisation' of the device is interesting bearing in mind Henry III's deep, if transient, engagement with the crusading ideal in the 1250s and his obvious attachment to stars/suns and crescents as accessory decorative features, apparent in a number of contemporary

³⁶ John de Warenne (1231–1304) was the grandson of Hamelin de Warenne, half-brother of Henry II and thus a Plantagenet but had no Toulousain family connections.



Fig. 9. A lead eight-rayed estoile and a crescent from the Antioch Chamber, Clarendon Palace ($2\frac{3}{5}$ in. maximum overall width). (Detail reproduced from Eames 1965, Pl. XXVI, by permission of the British Archaeological Association.)

non-numismatic royal contexts.³⁷ Of particular note is their presence as part of the sumptuous decoration of the ‘Antioch Chamber’ (c.1251) in Henry III’s palace at Clarendon. Here – one of four chambers with a crusading theme that he also commissioned for his palaces at Winchester and Westminster and for the Tower of London – lustrous *scintillis* or spangles of gilded-lead estoiles and crescents (Fig. 9) were nailed to the green-painted wainscot under a series of murals illustrating ‘the story of Antioch and the duel of King Richard’; chivalric depictions of the siege of Antioch in the First Crusade and the deeds of his ancestral kinsman, Robert Curthose, and the legendary achievements of his revered uncle a century later.³⁸

Such association of stars and crescents with the crusades was to linger on in Western Europe through the thirteenth century into the fourteenth at least, not infrequently finding favour with miniaturists in their illuminations of Muslim scenes (in, for example, Cantiga 63, The *Cantigas de Santa Maria* (*Códice Rico*, Biblioteca de San Lorenzo el Real, El Escorial, Madrid) and the *Roman de Godefroy de Bouillon* (Bibliothèque Nationale de France: Fig. 10)).

What conclusions can be drawn from this brief and admittedly conjectural survey of the star and crescent device in the context of its English numismatic and seal usage? In the first place it seems reasonable to suggest that its origins lay more generally in the crusades than in any specific Toulousain (or Provençal) antecedent. Secondly, while in England its significance may have mutated from crusader emblem to symbol of majesty, the belief that it was a dynastic badge³⁹ seems to be misplaced; grounded solely on its use by Richard I on his first Great Seal, by John on his REX pence, and by Henry III purely as a decorative initial mark on his first Great Seal and some of his English coins. But, by this latter time, as evidenced by a plenitude of baronial and ecclesiastical seals, the device was by no means confined to royal usage.

One cannot, of course, totally dismiss the possibility that the emblem was viewed as a Plantagenet cognizance in the twelfth or thirteenth centuries even if that was not the crown’s intention but as far as I am aware there is no contemporary written evidence to support such a belief.⁴⁰ It is only when we come to the turn of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries that anything positive emerges from the record. In 1401, at the height of the Commons campaigns to curb the issue of liveries, Henry IV abolished the wearing of the badge or *signe*, ‘the crescent with the star’, as household insignia by royal yeoman and valets.⁴¹ The impression one gets, however, from the context of the imbroglio is that the badge, like the ‘collar of esses’ conferred

³⁷ For example on the richly clad carved figure of Edward the Confessor in the south transept of Westminster Abbey, c.1250: Tristram 1943, 162. While this decoration may be simply aesthetic or representative of the English crown, bearing in mind Henry’s absorption in the crusading exploits of his uncle it may well reflect knowledge of Richard I’s attire in Cyprus in 1191 (see n.23 above).

³⁸ Although it was a popular subject in literature and decorative art as an expression of Richard I’s leading role in the Third Crusade the supposed personal duel between the Lionheart and Saladin never took place. On Clarendon and the decorations of the Antioch Chamber see Borenius 1943, 45–6, Pl. 13b; Eames 1965, 65, Pl. XXVI.

³⁹ A term used by Barnard 1916, 99 and North 1992, 83.

⁴⁰ English jettons bearing the device and thought to be of the time of Edward II might conceivably have drawn on knowledge of current royal usage of the emblem. The design is more likely however to have harked back to the REX coinage still known in England or to have been due quite simply to artistic whim and the availability of workshop dies.

⁴¹ *Et outre, nostre seigneur le roy, par assent avaunt dit, ad graunte qe sa livere de yomen ou vadletz, de la cressant ove l’estoille, soit de tout oustez: et qe nully la dit livere, n’autre, ne nulle autre livere ou signe d’autre seigneur ou de gentz de meindre estat, use, en presence, ne en absence de roy, sur peine desouthe limitez* (*Rotuli Parliamentorum*, III, 477, no. 110, 2 Henry IV [1400/1], quoted in Siddons 2009, 35).



Fig. 10. A Western view of Saracen cavalry from a fourteenth-century manuscript of the *Roman de Godefroy de Bouillon* (Reproduced by permission of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France.)

on knightly members of the king's entourage, was a *Lancastrian* mark of affinity carried over into the royal household from Bolingbroke's baronial past at the time of his usurpation. Corroboration of such usage may perhaps be found in Holinshed's tale of the magnate rebellion against Henry in 1400. One of the plotters, Thomas Holland, duke of Kent and half-nephew of the deposed Richard II, rallied his forces at Sonning, declaring (falsely) that King Richard, having escaped from confinement, lay at Pontefract with a hundred thousand men: 'And to cause his speech the better to be beleaved, he tooke awaie the kings cognisances from them that ware the same, as the collars [of esses] from their necks, and the badges of cressants from the sleeues of the seruants of houshold, and throwing them awaie, said that such cognisances were no longer to be borne.'⁴² Employed in this way the badge may not date back any further than the 1380s or 1390s and the large indentured retinues of John of Gaunt.⁴³

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⁴² Holinshed 1808, III, 12.

⁴³ The badge could conceivably have entered Lancastrian armory through Edmund Crouchback's marriage to Avelina de Forz, great-granddaughter of Margaret de Redvers. On the other hand it might have been adopted as a 'crusading' badge by Bolingbroke on his expeditions against the pagan Lithuanians or his pilgrimage to Jerusalem in the 1390s but this seems very unlikely. An interesting survival of Lancastrian usage of the badge may be its engraving on the so-called 'John of Gaunt's Horn' from Hungerford which has been dated to the fifteenth century. Hungerford was at that time a manor of the house of Lancaster.

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