

THE STANDARD OR BANNER

A staff with a flag or colours under which men are united or bound for a common purpose either peaceful or in times of conflict. The ancient Egyptians were probably the first to adopt the use of a standard firstly as a rallying point and secondly to distinguish their people in war or in public ceremonies.

The Romans extended the use of the banner. The earliest Roman standard was a bundle of straw fixed to the top of a spear. This was succeeded by various animals i.e. the horse, the boar until it eventually settled upon the eagle.

The Beauseant or the Piebald is the name given to the banner (gonfalon) which the ancient Knights Templar carried before them into battle. It was divided across the centre. The upper half being black signifying they would be terrible to the enemies of Christ and the white signifies that they would be fair and favourable to the friends of Christ. The ethos is Arabic, black and white being popularly used in Arab Nations. Black however in Arabic signifies wisdom and white purity. The customary Arabic salutation is, "May your day be white" (May you be happy). Beauseant was not merely the name of the banner but also the battle cry of the Order. The Beauseant was inscribed with the words, "Non nobis, Domine, non nobis sed nomini tuo da gloriam" (Not to us, O Lord, not to us but to thy name ascribe the glory." Beauseant means "fair seat" in allusion to the two brethren of the Templars sharing the same saddle on a horse. The seal of true fraternal alliance. Hence the battle cry was a verbal alliance of brotherly love between Knights going into battle in the name of Christ. The Templar banner bearer was called the Gonfalonier and

the particular Knight was valourous and thus distinguished as a Knight banneret. This last word was sometimes corrupted into baronet. A term used by Sir Robert Cotton (1571-1631) when he suggested to James I of England that he receive a supposed order of baronets. James, new to England, from Scotland did not know any better. Hence the Order of 1611 was hereditary.

A banner hoisted over a taken castle or town indicated a stake to the plunder. So important was the position of banner bearer that William the Conqueror's banner bearer was given Alwick Castle in Northumberland for his services.

The Templars shall be remembered through the eyes of Matthew Paris, describing a departure of Knights for the Holy Land.

"They set out, passing through the town with spears held aloft, shields displayed, and piebald banners advanced, in unbroken formation, and sought a blessing from the people who crowded to see them pass. The Brethren uncovered, bowed their heads from side to side, and recommended themselves to the prayers of all."

Stephen Howarth states in "The Knights Templar" (1982), the battle standard of the Order went with the Master into battle.

"The standard was a black cross on a white ground, this, the gonfalon baucent has become a source of characteristic confusion amongst historians writing of the early Temple. Beauseant, meaning roughly 'of comely appearance,' baucent and beaucent, meaning nothing at all, are words often given as the standards name. In fact baucent, as it appears in the Rule, is a very common word in medieval romances,

piebald standard; the Senescal, the Marshal, the Commander of the City of Jerusalem and those of Tripoli and Antioch and finally the provincial Masters of England, Portugal, Aragon, Hungary and France. These were all the most important officers of the Order.

"Baucent" was the battle cry.

REF: "The New Knighthood" M. Barber 1994  
"The Piebald Standard" E. Simon 1959  
"The Rule of the Templars" J. M. Upton-Ward 1992  
"The Knights Templar" S. Howarth 1982

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