

The Sumptuary Laws of Meridies, Summarized [from the September 2, 2006 version]
Summary prepared by Rosamond, of the Shire of Drakenmere

What is a sumptuary law? In imitation of the original Middle Ages, the Society applies sumptuary laws which forbid or restrict members of the general populace from the wearing certain articles, especially luxurious (“sumptuous”) apparel, symbolizing ranks and offices.

What is the difference between a member of the general populace and a person with a title?

Although you can call yourself “Thomas the Scrivener” or “Alyce the Curious,” all pre-fix titles must be awarded in court, rather than self-claimed.

While everyone who participates in the Current Middle Ages is a lord or lady in general, a member of the general populace is a person who has not yet received an Award of Arms (AOA) or higher honor, and therefore cannot be called Lord A or Lady B or a more advanced title. From King X to Mistress Y to Sir Z, all are appointed titles, either temporary or permanent.

Members of the general populace should choose headbands of cloth, ribbon, beads, or leather rather than metal. To put it simply, only individuals who have been awarded special honor in court due to skill in combat or service to the dream may wear a metal “headband” or crown. Kingdom Law states which type of headgear is appropriate respectively for royalty, nobility, the peerage, and members of the populace who have won grants of arms or awards of arms. Due to the expense, all sumptuary jewelry may be worn with substitute metals, so long as they match the colors in question. Other members of the populace should choose headbands of cloth, ribbon, beads, or leather rather than metal.

In choosing necklaces, other jewelry and printed cloth, members of the general populace should avoid strawberry leaves, crown-like markings, the letter M (on jewelry only), thick gold neck-chains, laurels, or pelicans. As with headgear, members of the general populace should avoid metal necklaces with special meanings – insignia such as strawberry leaves, crenellations (like the top of a chess rook), or the badge and letter M of Meridies – as well as solid band-type gold neck-chains. These are exclusive to members with the honors listed above.

In choosing necklaces, other jewelry and printed cloth, members of the general populace should avoid the symbols of laurels or pelicans.

Jewelry or other accessories featuring symbols of the laurel or the pelican may be worn only by individuals who have received the peerages of Master/Mistress of the Laurel or of the Pelican, respectively. However, recipients of different awards and honors can wear those badges on ribbon – rather than metal – necklaces.

Only a member of the Chivalry can wear a white belt or baldric and a gold neck-chain or gold spurs. Through prowess in battle, a “heavy weapons” fighter may be named a member of the Chivalry. Whether male or female, this person is thereafter known as Sir [insert name]. He or she may wear the following adornments forbidden to other members of the populace:

- A Knight (member of the Chivalry who swears fealty to the King) wears a simple white belt and may wear an unadorned neck-chain of gold or spurs of gold.

- A Master of Arms (same honor as a Knight, but one who chooses to affirm fealty to the King) may wear a simple white belt as long as it is accompanied by a simple white baldric, and may wear spurs of gold, though not a gold neck-chain.

Members of the general populace should try to avoid carrying any baton that may appear to be a symbol of office. While wearing the tabard of his/her office, a herald may carry a white, yard-long baton.

Due to the specific heraldic rules, always check with a Herald while designing your device, painted shield, or flag. Only members of the populace with a Grant of Arms or higher title may use a supporter in his/her device. A supporter is a thing or things 'supporting' the shield of the arms. Usually, the supporters are animate creatures such as lions, dragons, fish, or humans. Paired supporters (one on each side of the shield) are only granted in rare cases.

Only members of the peerage can use heraldic flags known as standards. Each bears the badge of the Kingdom of Meridies, although they vary in length based on the title of the owner.

Members of the general populace must avoid wearing white belts and should try to avoid wearing red, green and yellow belts. While Kingdom Law restricts only the color white in the populace's use of belts, it is common custom within Meridies to award different-colored belts to scholars who are squires to knights (red), apprentices to laurels (green), or protégé of pelicans (yellow). Therefore, general members of the populace are encouraged to avoid these belt colors.

NOTE ABOUT HERALDS: If you want to know more about the office of herald, contact Lady Cibella Monmouth (Pennon Herald of the Kingdom of Meridies) or Lord Brian MacGrioghair (Herald of the Shire of Drakenmere).

NOTE ABOUT MARSHALS: Marshals on the tournament field are often seen carrying colored or striped batons as symbols of their office, and because it makes it possible immediately for fighters and all others to see who is in charge on the field. If you are interested in learning more about the office of marshal, contact The Honorable Lord Elijah Cameron of the Black Isle (Heavy Weapons Marshal and Rapier Marshal of the Shire of Drakenmere).

NOTE ABOUT STUDYING UNDER A BESTOWED PEER: If you want to know more about how to become a squire to a Knight, apprentice to a Master/Mistress of the Laurel (Arts and Sciences), or protégé to a Master/Mistress of the Pelican (Service), please contact The Honorable Lady Dianora Lizabetta di Vittori di Cellini (Seneschal of the Shire of Drakenmere). It is not necessary that the scholar and his/her peer be members of the same group.