

Chapter 10: Guilds

It is not surprising that SCA folk, with their common interest in medieval arts and sciences, frequently organize into special interest groups. If the special interest group has the desire for a more structured organization, then they may form themselves into a guild. No special interest group is required to form into a guild to be official. If the group desires the structure of a guild, then they should pursue becoming a guild. A special interest group should not use the term "guild" in their title if they have not gone through the official organizational process. Some alternate terms that a special interest group could use in its title instead of "guild" are association, company, league, and metier (or its Old French root word of "mestier"). The special interest group could devise a clever name without any particular title, such as the Shire of Rokeclif's chain mail special interest group, "The Missing Links."

The medieval guild was a fraternal organization, with aspects of a social club, trade association, labor union, private school, and quality control inspector. It was a structured group of people with a common bond in their craft. Together the members taught apprentices, maintained high standards of work, fostered communication among practitioners, and moved within a sociable society of people with like interests.

At their best, SCA guilds can vigorously advance their craft and be friendly social groupings as well. An active and productive guild may alternate business meetings, workshops, classes, field trips, parties, and publications with a good deal of artisans' work throughout.

An MOAS also has the right to oversee the organization of guilds devoted to a specific art or science. Within a guild, members who are interested in a topic can work together and learn from each other while researching and practicing their particular craft.

Guilds are often formed to pool monies for purchase of supplies or equipment too expensive for individual members and it is only reasonable for the guild to restrict use of these to members. An Exchequer must be involved if the guild has money or property. Local guilds work with the local Exchequer. Kingdom guilds work with the Kingdom Exchequer, and so on.

Definition: A guild is a collection of people who share the same interest and who want to meet periodically to learn, discuss and promote that interest.

Purpose: Although a guild serves many purposes, the primary purpose is to advance the study and knowledge of a topic as well as spread the availability of information to those who are interested. Frequently the spread of information is through practice or teaching. Guilds, as a whole, help us learn about the structure of Medieval society while learning more about the art or science of the guild.

General Information: All guilds must conform to Corporate and Kingdom law. They must be open to everyone who is interested. There is no such thing as an exclusive or closed guild within the SCA. Additionally, a guild may not prevent or attempt to prevent people from practicing their craft outside the guild structure. A guild may not allow its structure to be used to further political factions or discriminatory practices. A guild which indulges in such activities may be suspended or dissolved by the authority which granted its charter.

Levels of Guilds: There are four levels of guilds: Local or Baronial, Regional, Kingdom and Interkingdom. There is no difference between a Local and Baronial guild. They are both local, even if the barony's cantons have chapters of the same guild. If there is interest within a region for a Regional guild it will function with its own internal structure and officers. A Kingdom guild has its own internal structure and officers and may have chapters across the Kingdom. Any branch of an Interkingdom Guild within the Middle Kingdom must have its own charter for the Middle Kingdom. It will be handled as if it were a Kingdom guild.

Guild Charters: To be official a guild must have a current, signed charter. Charters are important for a number of reasons: they help a group of people organize and define themselves and they make a group put into writing what separates it from the populace at large while holding the group together. Guild charters can be as simple or as complex as the guild desires. There are certain things every charter must include:

1. The name of the guild.
2. The main location of the guild.
3. The purpose of the guild.
4. The provisions for guild by-laws.
5. The way the guild officers are chosen and the length of term of office.
6. The way guild officers are removed.
7. The way to amend the charter.
8. The internal structure of the guild (masters/mistresses, journeyfolk, craftfellows, etc.)
9. A list of originating or charter members.
10. A signature block for the granting authorities and space for additional signatures and ratifiers.

Once the charter is written, it must be approved by at least three parties. First, the guild membership must approve the charter. Second, it should be given to the MOAS (local, Regional or Kingdom depending on the scope of the guild) for review. Finally, the Crown, or the Crown's representative (such as the local seneschal or the Baron/ess of a barony or Kingdom Seneschal depending on the scope of the guild) needs to approve the charter, have the charter proclaimed, and sign it. The guild principal should contact the signers beforehand to arrange the ceremony. Depending on how formal the guild is, court may be a good time to get the signatures required. Thereafter, the guild will be warranted in the Warrants of Appointment of Office issued by the Crown and Kingdom MOAS each reign. All officially recognized guilds must go through this process. If it does not, it is not an official guild.

Guild Principals: Although most guilds call their chief administrative officer the "guildmaster" or "guildmistress" this can lead to confusion if the guild has taken on the traditional apprentice-journeyfolk-master/mistress structure. To simplify things here, the term "guild principal" is used to refer to this chief administrative officer.

Guild principals should arrange time and places for the guild meetings. Guilds should meet at least twice a year and preferably more often since not all members will be able to attend each time. In the case of large or intergroup guilds, Pennsic or other Kingdom or Interkingdom events are good places to meet.

Sometimes circumstances are such that a guild needs to remove its guild principal. Provisions for this possibility should be included in the charter. Although no MOAS, at any level, can remove a guild principal, they may recommend to the Crown (or Their representative), that this be done. Or they may suggest that the guild suspended until a new guild principal has been chosen. If necessary, the Crown (or Their representative) may issue a proclamation dissolving the guild. There can be no guild principal to a nonexistent, unofficial guild.

Guild Structure: Guilds may want, but are not required, to follow a medieval structure. Minimally, a guild needs to have a guild principal. The traditional guild ranks are as follows:

Apprentice: The entry rank in the guild. An apprentice has expressed a desire to learn and practice this art or craft, but has little or no experience. They need supervision and instruction to complete a successful project.

Journeyfolk: The intermediate rank. A journeyfolk has appreciable knowledge of a craft and is capable of doing a project solo. They may need advice or help on some aspects and are not an expert in all aspects of the art or science.

Master/Mistress: The highest rank. A master/mistress should be able to do a large project from planning to finish and be capable of teaching every aspect of the craft.

Masters/mistresses are enough at home in their craft to be able to create new works as well as recreate previous ones.

The charter should spell out requirements for advancement in rank. It should not be hard to become an apprentice and it should not be easy to become a master/mistress. A master work might be required, or a certain amount of teaching within the guild. A mastery that comes too easily is not honored and one that comes too hard is not pursued. The charter might provide for testing, volume and quality of work, transfer of rank from similar guilds elsewhere, etc.

Reporting: One of the most important functions of the guild principal is to make sure the guild reports to the appropriate level officer on a quarterly basis. The guild principal may write the report themselves personally or they may designate this responsibility to someone else. However, the first responsibility rests with the guild principal. The reporting schedule for a guild runs two weeks prior to the MOAS's reports due dates so the MOAS may include guild information on their reports.

The due dates for Quarterly Report for a *Local* Guild are:

March 15
June 15
September 15
December 15

The due dates for Quarterly Report for a *Baronial* Guild are:

January 1
April 1
July 1
October 1

The due dates for Quarterly Report for a *Regional* Guild are:

January 15
April 15
July 15
October 15

The due dates for Quarterly Report for a *Kingdom or Interkingdom* Guild are:

March 15
June 15
September 15
December 15

Local guilds report to the Local MOAS. Baronial guilds report to the Baronial MOAS. Regional guilds report to the Regional MOAS. Kingdom and Interkingdom guilds report to the Kingdom MOAS.

Reports should include the following information:

1. The name of the guild.
2. The location of the guild.

3. The guild principal's name and address.
4. The name of the person submitting the report (if it is different from the guild principal).
5. The location and dates of meetings.
6. Topics covered since last report.
7. Significant projects and goals.
8. Problems and solutions (both interpersonal and guild-wide).
9. Current list of all known guild members.

If the guild falls under the jurisdiction of the Earl Marshal, such as the Equestrian College, the guild principal will report to the Earl Marshal. Guild Exchequers report on the dates determined by the Kingdom Exchequer's office in the following manner: Local guilds to the Local Exchequer, Baronial guilds to the Baronial Exchequer, Regional guilds to the Regional Exchequer and Kingdom or Interkingdom guilds to the Kingdom Exchequer. All other officers of the guild are to report to their appropriate superiors as deemed by such.