



Regarding the Relative Authority of Kingdom and Local Officers

In 2021 some confusion arose in the Outlands regarding the relative authority of different kingdom offices, and more so of their local counterparts. In particular, there was confusion about the roles and responsibilities of the seneschal and the exchequer.

This resulted in a Society investigation into the matter. The results of that investigation, as with all society investigations, regarding individuals are confidential. However, there was one repeated theme from this investigation that needs to be addressed.

It seems that many people are under the misconception that if there is a perceived conflict among SCA or kingdom rules or policies, the seneschal's interpretation is always the correct one. The investigator and others were repeatedly told by those contacted that 1) it was the job of the seneschal, at any level, to interpret all Society rules, including those policies of other offices, and 2) that the seneschal's interpretations could not be questioned, even by an officer at a higher level in a different sphere of authority.

These statements are incorrect. There is nothing in Corpora or any of the SCA's policies or governing documents that supports this notion. Corpora states, in I.A.3, Precedence of Law, the following partial order, below By-laws and Corporate Policies:

- c. The Corpora of the Society
- d. Society Officers' Policies approved by the Board
- e. Kingdom Law (within the kingdom that enacts it)
- f. Decision of the Crown (within the kingdom and for the duration of the current reign)

Notably absent from that list is any mention of kingdom or local officer policies. Note that point (d) simply says "Society Officers' Policies approved by the Board." This means any Society officer. It does not set one above another. Sections VI and VII of Corpora also denote the specific responsibilities of Society officers and required Kingdom Great Officers, and do not include a hierarchy of authority. Corpora does specify that the kingdom seneschal is responsible for "coordinating the other kingdom officers as required for the smooth operation of the kingdom" but that does not mean the kingdom seneschal is the manager of the other great officers.

Further, Corpora VII.A.1, Kingdom, Principality, and Local Officers—General, states:

Officers assist Royalty in the administration of the lands and branches of the realm. Each officer has a specific area of specialization, and a defined geographic scope.

Within those bounds, an officer coordinates branch activities, and may supervise deputies or lesser officers. (Emphasis added.)

This means local and kingdom officers must focus on decisions that fall within their area of responsibility: The knight marshal should not apply heraldic rules, and the local seneschal is not authorized to apply exchequer rules. All the officers need to work together, each within their own area of authority/expertise, to ensure the smooth running of the kingdom and its branches.

In conclusion: Where questions of interpretation of officer policies arise, local officers have no authority to interpret any kingdom or Society policy. Questions regarding the meaning/interpretation of a policy or rule must be taken to the relevant Kingdom officer. If the Kingdom officers believe that a conflict exists between kingdom rules or procedures, they should attempt to work it out for themselves as equal partners with different areas of responsibility. If they cannot resolve the conflict, or if they believe there is a conflict between Society policies (such as between something in the Society Exchequer's policies and the policies of the Society Seneschal) those Kingdom officers would then approach the two Society officers and ask for clarification.

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