

# Art or document?

## A glimpse at the contents of letters patent

KWHSS LX  
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Laurel Queen of Arms  
Drachenwald



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# Introduction

## Who am I?



### ■ Birgitta Lulli

- ▶ Senior (or is it senile?) herald
- ▶ Dabbler in scribal arts since as XXV or so
- ▶ Companion of the Pelican  
for bureaucracy
- ▶ Companion of the Laurel  
for reading Old Swedish and writing Old Finnish
- ▶ Companion of Defence  
for having a sword even though a pen is mightier

### ■ Unni Leino

- ▶ Reader in Finnish, Tampere University
- ▶ Editor-in-chief emerita, *Onoma*
- ▶ Former member of the Heraldry Council at the Finnish  
National Archives



# Introduction

## What is this?

- Scribes do lots of cool stuff
- Most of the work are award scrolls
  - ▶ Also, letters between rulers
- Award scrolls are official documents
  - ▶ They need to describe who gave what to whom where, when, and why
- Format of these uniform across period Europe
  - ▶ Origins in late antiquity
  - ▶ Standardised by 13th century
  - ▶ Some regional variation but surprisingly little



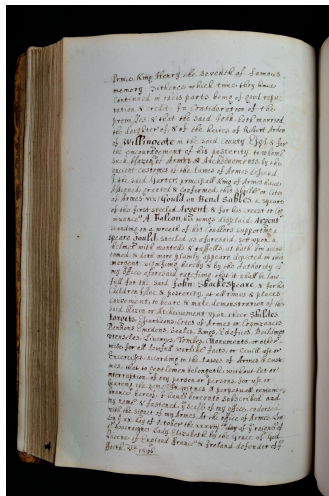
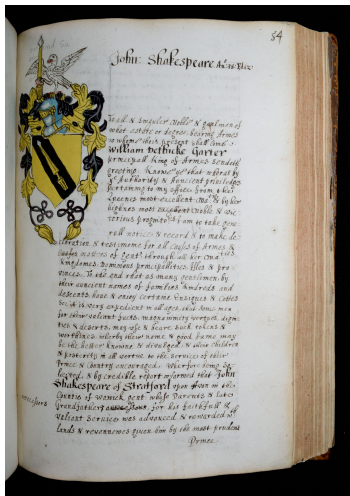
# Anatomy of a period diploma

## Standardised format

- Three main sections
  - ▶ Virtually always present, the subsections not necessarily
- *Protocol*: Initial formalities that set the scene
  - ▶ *Invocatio*: invoking God
  - ▶ *Intitulatio*: naming the official(s) giving out the document
  - ▶ *Inscriptio*: listing the recipients
  - ▶ *Salutatio*: greetings
- *Text proper*
  - ▶ *Arenga*: reasons for the act
  - ▶ *Dispositio*: the official act itself
  - ▶ *Sanctio*: punishment for breaking against the act
- *Eschatocol*: Closing formalities
  - ▶ *Corroboratio*: proving the authenticity of the document
  - ▶ *Subscriptiones*: listing witnesses
  - ▶ *Datatio*: the time and place the document was given

# Anatomy of a period diploma

## Grant of Arms to John Shakespeare, 1596



Copy book from the library of Sir Joseph Williamson: MS 137, Queen's College, Oxford

# Anatomy of a period diploma

## Letters of Nobility to Henrik Klasson, 1435



SDHK 22469, Swedish National Archives

# Anatomy of a period diploma

## What to do with these?



- Text of both letters in the handout
  - ▶ Early Modern English as is
  - ▶ Late Old Swedish (and Latin) also translated to English
  - ▶ The various sections marked
- The structure can be used as a template for award scrolls
  - ▶ After all, it was relatively uniformly used across all Europe for the last three centuries in period
- Wordings can be used for award scrolls
  - ▶ Although one should understand what is said



# Using it for an award scroll

## Protocol



- Inscriptio

*To all and Singular as well Nobles as Gentles to whom these presents shall come:*

- Intitulatio

*We Gerhardt and Aurelia, Kinge and Queen of the realme of Drachenwald,*

- Salutatio

*greetinge.*

# Using it for an award scroll

## Text



### ■ Arenga

Forasmuch as it hath allwayes bene a rule in all well Governed Kingdoms very requisite to grace and giue, Credit to the vertuose and welldeserving for the Incorporiment of others to follow there stepps in all Honorable Actions and Heroicall vertues and because the Just reward of vertue is Honor and to detayne a dutye where there weare cause to yeald it weare merely Iniustice being therefore required by Pietari Pentinpoika Vv to rance him as Baron of Our Court in the societie of men of such a stature as casts the Heroes of the auncient time into eternal Shade, of high worth and heroic courage, as alsoe fyndinge him to be a man of Such desert as he well deserueth to be Accompted in that nomber. Hereto also confirmyng before all Our intensions to distinguish the men of Good worth and merytt by Appropriating unto them selues some Signe of Honor.

### ■ Dispositio

The premyses therefore considered, We Gerharddt and Aurelia, this ratify and confyr we unto the sayd Pietari Pentinpoika Vv, as valiant and mighty with the pen as with the sword.

# Using it for an award scroll

## Eschatocol



### ■ Corroboratio

In witnes whereof We have put our hand and this Our Royale  
Seale of Drachenwald.

### ■ Datatio

Dated the second daye of februarye in the XXXV yeare of the So-  
cietye in the Baronie of Arnimetsä during this Celebration of  
Midwinter.

# Things to keep in mind

## Caveats



- Remember that this is not just recreation, it is a legal act
  - ▶ Inside the Current Middle Ages, of course
- Some of the things done in period documents may not be done in our courts
  - ▶ Our honours generally will not be inherited
  - ▶ Do not accidentally give AoA's to the proper recipient's children
- Remember to list all necessary information

# Things to keep in mind

## Protocol



- Include at least the names and titles of the one(s) giving the letter
- The recipients can be omitted or included
  - ▶ *We – – make it known*
  - ▶ *We – – make it known to all and singular, as well noble as humble, to whom these presents shall come*
- Watch out for specific words
  - ▶ *Letters Patent* (or translations) implies peerage
  - ▶ *Grant* implies a GoA-level award

# Things to keep in mind

## Text proper



- The reasons for giving the award can be brief or wordy
  - ▶ Use as little or much space as you like!
- It's possible to embellish the thing given
  - ▶ Tax exemption for an AoA recipient's holdings? This is the *definition* of nobility in medieval Sweden
  - ▶ Right to teach anywhere? This is the main implication of an academic degree of Master
- Include sanctions if you like
  - ▶ many Scandinavian Letters Patent have a clause of 'And so do We forbid anyone, whosoever they are, from breaking against these Our Letters under pain of Our Royal vengeance and wrath.'

# Things to keep in mind

## Eschatocol



- Use an understandable date, e.g. *the xv day of June anno Societatis lx*
  - ▶ Many period letters are dated by saints' feast days
  - ▶ The calendars were not uniform across Europe  
When was the Feast of S. Vitus and Modestus, a.S. xxxv?
  - ▶ Use these (in addition to an obviously unambiguous date) only if there's no conflict with the recipient's beliefs
- Mention a seal if one will be attached to the letter
  - ▶ And if not, not!
- It's possible to list witnesses to the act
  - ▶ They should add their seals and/or signatures
  - ▶ Typically, this wasn't done for items given under the Great Seal of a Kingdom

# In summary



- There's a formula for diplomas that was used across medieval Europe
- It can be used for award scrolls
  - ▶ it looks and sounds good
  - ▶ it makes sure important things aren't left out

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