

# The Coat of Arms

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# THE COAT OF ARMS

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# THE ENIGMATIC ARMS OF TRENCAVEL

DARIA S. STAROSKOLSKAYA, Ph.D.

## Abstract

*The powerful Occitane family of Trencavel was integrally connected with the Albigensian Crusade, and has become a focus of considerable corpus of pseudo-history relating to the quest for the Holy Grail. This has led to a surprising amount of interest in the family's arms. This paper looks at the surviving evidence from seals and other sources in an attempt to disentangle the diverse theories connected with the symbolism of the arms.*

In the summer of 1209 French knights responded to Pope Innocent III's call to arms against the Cathar heresy that was sweeping the south of what is now France, having taken the cross they invaded the county of Toulouse, then an independent principality. Meanwhile, the leaders of the Crusade entered into negotiations with the excommunicated Count of Toulouse, Raymond VI, who having assessed the impending threat, chose to surrender to the mercy of the invaders, leaving his prevaricating vassals to fend for themselves. The Count had to undergo the humiliation of public repentance, but having thus saved his life, and that of his family, he was later permitted to return to Toulouse.

After the abdication of Raymond VI, the primary target of the Crusaders was the lands of the wealthy and influential Viscounts Trencavel who were key vassals of the Counts of Toulouse. Raymond Roger Trencavel, Viscount of Béziers, Albi and Carcassonne, took too long to ponder the Crusader proposal. As a result, he was denied the opportunity to surrender, and fled in haste to the fortress of Carcassonne, abandoning his lands, and leaving behind most of his possessions. On July 21st 1209 the French army approached the walls of Béziers, an important centre of Trencavel influence, and the following day the city fell. The invaders staged a terrible massacre in the city. The cruelty towards the local residents was recorded by the chronicler Caesar Heisterbach, the horror and brutality of which rings down to this day. When the soldiers asked the leader of the campaign, the papal legate Abbot Arnold Amalric, Abbot of Cîteaux, how to distinguish heretics from Catholics, he allegedly replied: "Kill everyone, the Lord will recognize his own."<sup>1</sup>

In early August, almost without encountering resistance, the Crusader army approached Carcassonne and laid siege to the fortress. Realizing that the city was not ready for a long siege, Raymond Roger agreed to enter into negotiations, but having been lured out of the walls with false guarantees he was taken prisoner.<sup>2</sup> After the capture of the Viscount, Carcassonne was soon taken. According to the chronicler, residents were allowed to leave their homes, taking with them only what was on them. Viscount

<sup>1</sup> In the original, the abbot's Latin phrase "Caedite eos. novit enim Dominus qui sunt eius" ("Kill them all, for the Lord will know them who are His") contains an obvious reference to the Apostle Paul's second Epistle to Timothy (2 Timothy 19).

<sup>2</sup> *Song of the crusade against the Albigensians* : Guillaume de Tudèle et continuateur anonyme, Chanson de la Croisade contre les Albigeois, en vers. BNF Ms. fr. 25425, Laisse no. 33.

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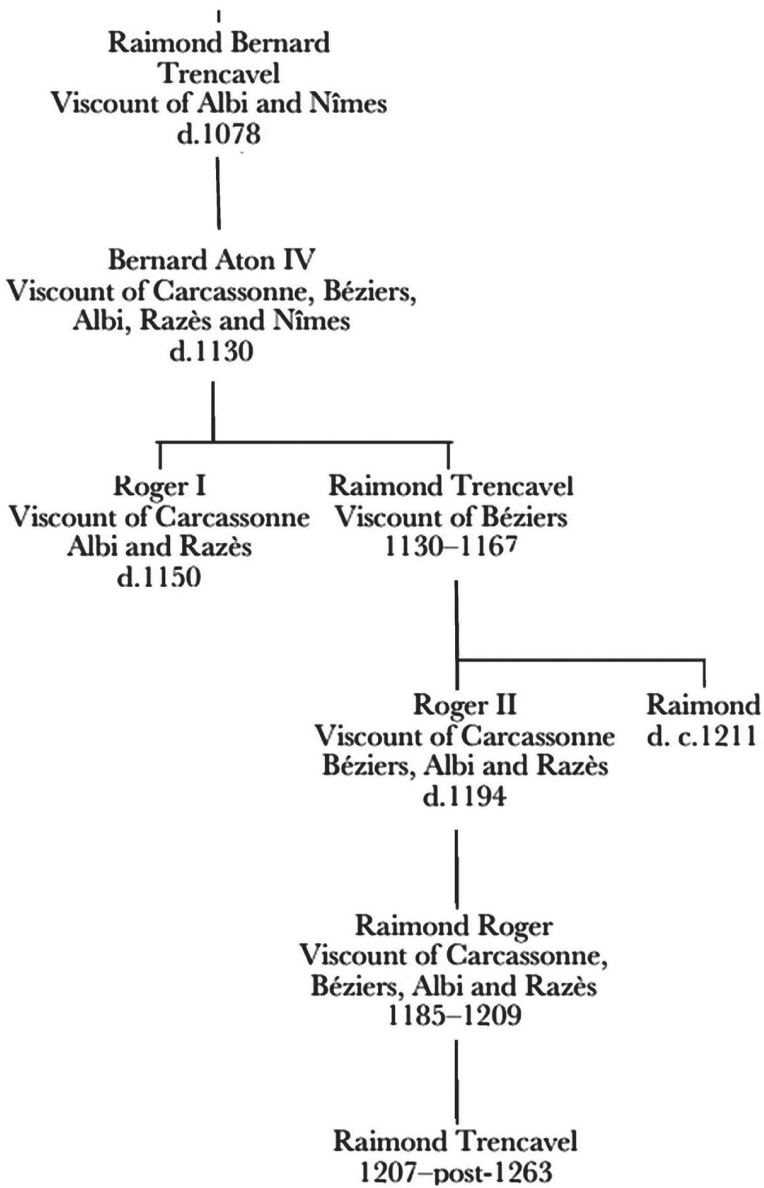


Figure 1: Fragment of the Trencavel genealogy



## THE ARMS OF TRENCAVEL

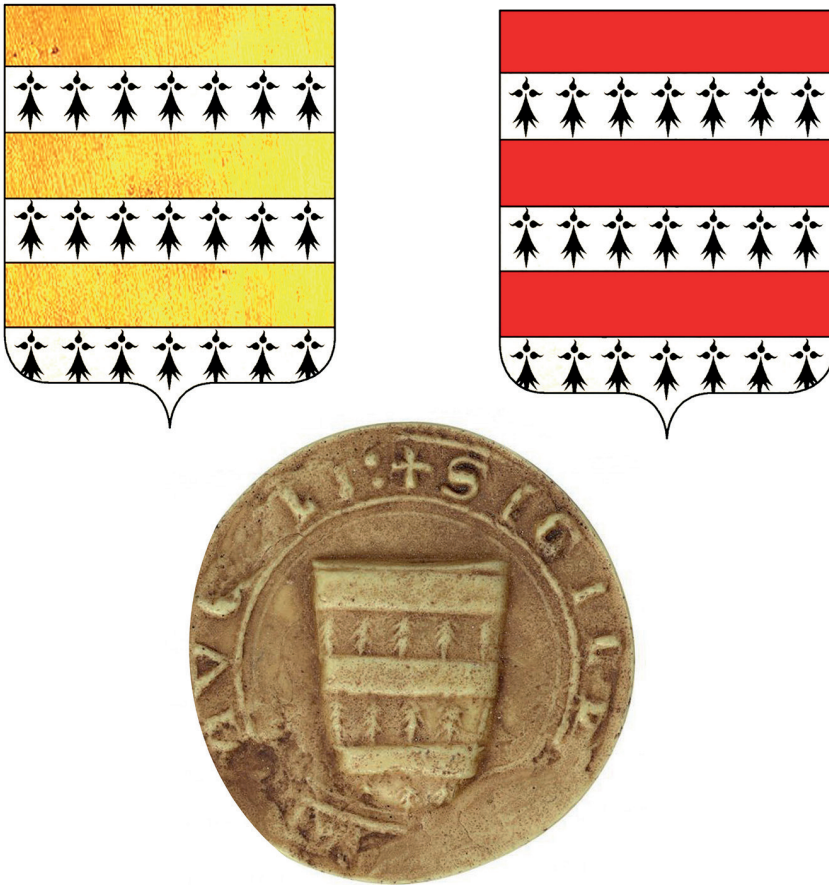


Figure 2: top left, 2a: supposed ancient arms of the city of Béziers according to Reitstap; top right, 2b: reconstructed arms of Trencavel. Source of a and b: geneanet.org ; bottom, 2c: seal of Raymond II Trencavel, with ermine tails, appended to his charter of 1248, Douët-d'Arcq no.761, archives nationale de France, Paris.

Trencavel was imprisoned in his own dungeon, where he died under suspicious circumstances.<sup>3</sup> All the lands and possessions of the family were transferred to Simon de Montfort (d.1218) who had made a name for himself during this military campaign. He was believed to be uniquely qualified to cope with the rebellious spirit of the local population.

Despite the fact that the son and heir of the Viscount, Raymond II, survived and went on to fight for his inheritance, the family had suffered a hammer blow from which it never recovered. Unrest in the region continued for another two decades, with the unfolding

<sup>3</sup> Elaine Graham-Leigh, *The Southern French Nobility and the Albigensian Crusade* (Woodbridge, 2005), pp. 42, 47-49, 51, 69.

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events, known to history as the Albigensian Wars or the Crusade against the Albigensians, being recorded in the chronicles of William of Tudela (*Song of the Crusade against the Albigensians*), Pierre de Vaux (*History of the Albigensians*), and others.<sup>4</sup>

The momentous events of these times have propelled the Trencavel family into the realm of modern folklore, and they have become widely known figures in popular culture. However, we are concerned here more with their rise than in their inglorious end. The ancestor of this powerful family was Bernard, Viscount of Albi, who flourished in the early tenth century. His great-grandson - Raymond Bernard (d.1078) - thanks to a propitious marriage, added Carcassonne, Beziers and Razes to the family possessions (**Figure 1** pedigree). The son of the latter - Bernard Hato IV (1078–1130) - having also gained Agde, divided his possessions between three heirs. The elder Roger I (d.1150) received Carcassonne, Albi and Razes, the middle Raymond I (d.1167) - Béziers and Agde, the younger Bernard Hato V - Nimes (d.1163). On the death of his older brother, Raymond succeeded him, thus reuniting the fief which then passed in its entirety to Raymond's eldest son Roger II (1167–1194). The Raymond Roger of the Albigensian Crusade was the son of Roger II. Raymond II Trencavel (1207–1263) was only two years old at the time of his father's death in the dungeon, and grew up in exile at the court of the Aragonese king. Upon reaching his majority Raymond II began an active campaign to recover return his inheritance. After the death of Simon de Montfort at the siege of Toulouse in 1218, Montfort's son Amaury was unable to hold on to the continually troubled lands in Languedoc, and Raymond II managed to hold Béziers from 1224 to 1226, after which he gave the territory to the French king in exchange for a monetary allowance, and returned to Aragon.<sup>5</sup> Thereafter the name Trencavel disappeared and was seen no more in French genealogy.<sup>6</sup>

A mute witness of the rise and fall of the Trencavel family is their coat of arms. It is well known, and has come down to us largely thanks to the coats of arms of the cities that adopted them. We are also fortunate to have several preserved seals. The main version of the arms is now considered to be *Barry gules and ermine*. It is believed that this is the coat of arms depicted on the seal of Raymond II Trencavel (**Figure 2c**). Other variants of this coat of arms are also known, which are often found in historical and pseudo-historical literature. Disputes have arisen not only about the correct tinctures of the coat of arms are, but also about what exactly is depicted on the *bars argent*, because on some of the seals they do not look like ermine tails (**Figures 7, 9, 11.**) It has been postulated that the charges on the bars might have changed over time. The correct tinctures have perhaps been preserved in the *Barry argent and gules* of the city of Béziers, to which a chief has been added.

The ermine tails are not seen in any known manuscripts which include the Béziers coat of arms, such as that in Hozier<sup>7</sup>, but a connection with the Viscounts Trencavel

<sup>4</sup> Guilhem de Tudel, *Canso de la Crosada* (Song of the crusade against the Albigensians) BNF Ms fr. 254254; P de Vaulx-Cernay, *Histoire de l'hérésie des Albigeois et de la sainte guerre contre eux de l'an 1203 à l'an 1218*. (Paris, 1824).

<sup>5</sup> C de Vic & J. Vaissète, *Histoire générale de Languedoc*. 15 vols (Toulouse, 1872–1892) vol. 8, pp. 846–848.

<sup>6</sup> L. d'Alauzier, 'L'héritage des Trencavels', *Annales du Midi*, vol.62 (1950).

<sup>7</sup> Charles-René d' Hozier, BNF, *Armorial général de France, dressé, en vertu de l'édit de 1696*, vol.14, Languedoc pt.1 p. 249. In 1696 the chief azure was charged with three fleurs de lis or.

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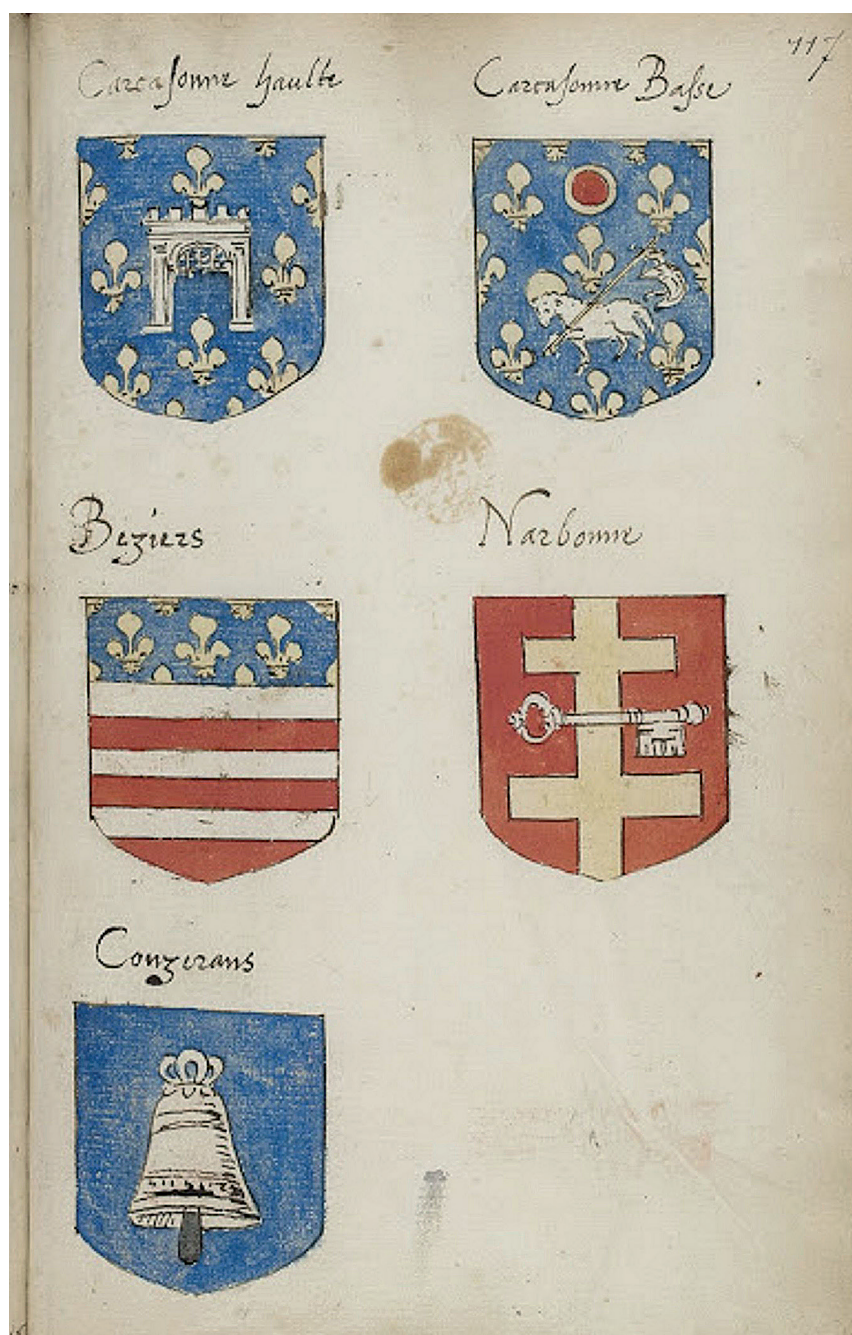


Figure 3: middle left, arms of Béziers c.1600 from BNF Ms.fr 17256 f.117r, the Armorial de La Planche.

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seems apparent, and the same theme of alternating bars gules and argent is found in other heraldry from the former territory of the Viscounts, notably the city Uzès, which now has arms identical to those of Béziers. A *Barry or and ermine* version of the arms is given by Rietstap in his *Universal Armorial* (**Figure 2a**)<sup>8</sup> He states these as being the arms of “Languedoc Béziers”, as distinct from those of “French Béziers”, to which he ascribes *Barry gules and ermine a chief azure semy of fleur de lis or* (**Figure 3**). The latter arms are a symbolic representation of the incorporation of the city into the French crown in 1226.

It is improbable that *Barry or and ermine* was ever used as arms by the city of Béziers, but this version of the coat of arms has taken on a life of its own, being wrapped up in a bogus mystery of the Trencavel. The shield has become widely dispersed in fiction, and is actively reproduced to this day. It is with these arms, for example, that Raymond Roger appears in the television series “Labyrinth”, released in 2012, and based on the 2005 novel of the same name by Kate Mosse.<sup>9</sup> The novel speculates on the legend connecting the Trencavel with the Order of the Templars and the history of the Holy Grail. A wave of mysticism, beginning at the end of the nineteenth, and continuing into the first half of the twentieth centuries, has projected occult activities onto the Viscounts of Trencavel, apparently inspired by Catharism.<sup>10</sup> The topic still attracts the attention of amateur researchers, which only contributes to an increase in the number of conspiracy theories.<sup>11</sup> The latter, in turn, provokes some interest into their imagined coat of arms and its history.

Having dealt with the question of tinctures, let us turn to the difficulty caused by the ermine bars. The reason for the assumption that initially something other than ermine tails was used on the arms of Trencavel is a seal of 1226, often mistakenly believed to be the seal of Raymond II, but in fact the seal of the commune of Béziers (**Figure 4a**). It was affixed to a charter by which the inhabitants of the city promised to obey the king of France. It is perhaps not surprising that this seal has been mistaken for the personal seal of the Viscount. The obverse depicts an armed horseman with the Trencavel coat of arms, a motif not typical for city seals. The legend clarifies the seal’s purpose. It reads “comune civi [tatis biterr] icensiu [m ...]” (commune of the city of Béziers). The reverse depicts the lamb of God (**Figure 4b**).

Comparison of the Béziers seal with the seals of other cities in the region confirms that the placing of a horseman with the seigneur’s personal seal on the obverse is unique, and probably had a certain motive. The relationship of the Viscounts with the bishop and primate of Béziers remained tense for a long time, and that even led to an uprising in 1167, after which Roger II was forced to promise not to decide anything without the consent of the bishop.<sup>12</sup> This practically excluded the Viscount from control over the affairs of the city. It would be surprising for there to have been the arms of Trencavel on the seal prior to 1224 when Raymond II regained control of the city. It can

<sup>8</sup> Rietstap vol.1, p.195.

<sup>9</sup> Kate Mosse, *Labyrinth* (London, 2005).

<sup>10</sup> N.Peyrat. *Histoire des Albigeois: les Albigeois et l’Inquisition* (Paris, 1872); O.Rahn, *Kreuzzug gegen den Gral. Die Geschichte der Albigenser* (Broschiert, 1934).

<sup>11</sup> R. Nelli, *Histoire secrète de Languedoc* (Paris,1978), pp. 204–210.

<sup>12</sup> G. Debax, “Les premiers notaires de Bèzièrs (dernier tiers du XII<sup>e</sup> siècle)”, in *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale*. Vol. 51, no.202 (2008), p. 8.

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*Figure 4:* Top left, 4a: obverse of the 1226 seal of the Béziers commune depicting Viscount Raymond II, Douët-d'Arcq no. 5614 archives nationale de France, Paris. Top right, 4b, reverse of the same seal; bottom, 4c: detail of the Trencavel arms on the horse caparison.

be assumed that no matter how coldly their subjects treated the Viscounts Trencavel, they liked the rule of the Montforts even less.<sup>13</sup> Unfortunately seals of the commune have not survived prior to 1226.

Eighty years later, the horseman reappeared on the seal of Béziers, this time dressed in French royal lilies (**Figure 5**). After giving up the lands in favour of receiving financial support, Raymond II nevertheless did not renounce the title of Viscount Béziers, which is confirmed by the legend of his seal of 1247: *vice: comi-ti: biterehsis* (Viscount of Béziers). This seal is also interesting because it offers another representation of the figures on the bars argent, giving rise to their interpretation as ravelles (**Figure 6**).

<sup>13</sup> *Graham-Leigh, op. cit.*, pp. 143–147.

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Figure 5: Left, 5a, seal of Béziers 1303 with a horseman carrying the French royal coat of arms Douët d'Arcq no. 5616 archives nationale de France, Paris; right, 5b, arms of Béziers under the French monarchy, source: geneanet.org.

The French historian Laurent Macé, on the basis of the available pictorial sources, stated that ermine fur appeared on the seal of Raymond II for the first time in 1248, arguing that when he lost the title of viscount, he also abandoned the ancient family coat of arms, replacing the original version with ermine fur.<sup>14</sup> The question of what is depicted on early seals, if not ermine tails, remains open. Macé himself supports a widespread view that it was nothing more than a radish.<sup>15</sup> The idea that this root crop offers the explanation for the mysterious Trencavel arms is based on the assumption that many coats of arms of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries are canting in nature. It has been theorised that the nickname “Trencavel” which one of the founders of the dynasty received can be interpreted as the Occitan *trenca ravel* (French *tranche ravelle*), that is, “chopped radish”.<sup>16</sup> According to another version *ravelle* is the Occitan version of the *crevalle* - the name of small fish similar to sardines. Another suggestion is that the nickname comes from the Occitan *trenca avelana* – “a device for cracking nuts.”<sup>17</sup> Then we have the suggestion that the correct interpretation is *trenca vel*, where *vel*

<sup>14</sup> Laurent Macé, “Par le tranchant, la rave et l’hermine. Pouvoir et patronyme : les sceaux des Trencavel (XII<sup>e</sup>–XIII<sup>e</sup> siècles)”, in *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale*, no.202 (2008), pp. 105–128.

<sup>15</sup> Laurent Macé, “Tranchetoison: Onomastique, héraldique et sigillographie de la maison vicomtale des Trencavel (XI<sup>e</sup>–XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle), in *Le Moyen Age* vol 127 (2021), pp. 355–379.

<sup>16</sup> Some publications translate the word *ravelle* as *radish* or *turnip*, the exact translation from Old French cannot be established. Editor’s note: in Frédéric Godefroy, *Dictionnaire de l’ancien langue françaises et tous ses dialectes du IX<sup>e</sup> au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle*, 8 vols (Paris, 1891–1902) vol 6 p. 624 *ravelin* is a small radish, while *ravel* is both the base of a tree and a sort of fish.

<sup>17</sup> Gauthier Langlois, “À propos d’une représentation du Viscount Trencavel sur une peinture murale de la conquête de Valence: l’exil du dernier Viscount de Béziers, Albi et Carcassonne dans les états de la couronne d’Aragon”, in *Bulletin de la Société d’Études Scientifiques de l’Aude*, vol. 104 (Carcassonne, 2014), p.57.

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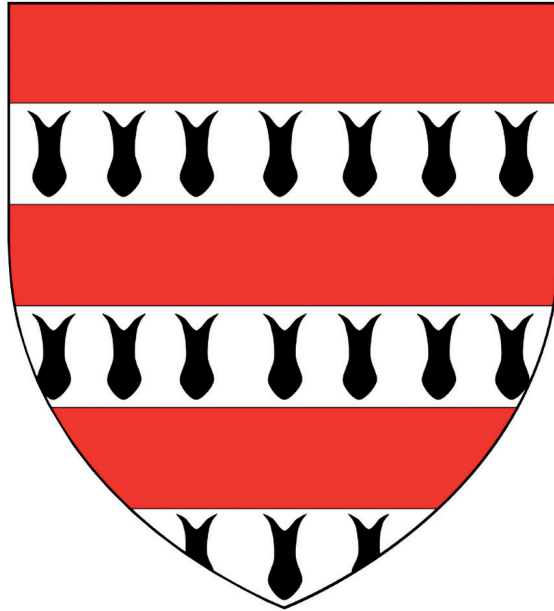
Figure 6: obverse and reverse of the 1247 seal of Raymond II Trencavel, with detail of the shield and horse caparison showing the “ravelles”, Douët-d’Arcq no.760. archives nationale de France, Paris.

means “veil, veil, banner”, and the whole nickname means “ripper of the veils”, which correlates with the connection of the Trencavel to stories about the Holy Grail.

There are times when attempts at decipherment reach the point of heraldic absurdity. Gerard de Sed, as proof that the ermine was always intended, argued that since ermine is a fur symbolic of purity it is presented in the coat of arms as raia mond “pure stripe”, which is consonant with the name Raymond, and also alternates with the roge (meaning red in Occitan), consonant with the name Roger.<sup>18</sup> It seems superfluous to explain why this version is bad, starting with the fact that the coat of arms is generic, and not personal, and ending with the fact that the interpretation of the symbolic colour of tinctures appeared only in the fifteenth century. Such versions,

<sup>18</sup> Gerard de Sède, *Vues hérétiques sur l’héraldique, Le blason, son écriture, son symbolisme et sa phonétique* (Paris,2003), pp.104-105.

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*Figure 7:* detail of the arms of Raymond II Trencavel in 1247 with an interpretation of his arms charged with ravelles. Douët-d'Arcq no.760. archives nationale de France, Paris. Shield: source, Wikimedia Commons.

put forward by amateur historians, are undoubtedly not devoid of their charm and find their followers, especially laying on the fertile soil of mysticism. Unfortunately such linguistic games with heraldic terms often leads us in a false direction. The principle of constructing a coat of arms based on the sound of a name in the early period of



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heraldry had a somewhat different, rather literal descriptive character which could be read without hints and puzzles.

For the heraldry to have been in any way connected with the surname Trencavel it is necessary for us to examine how this was used by the family. For the historiography of the Middle Ages it is customary to utilise fixed surnames in order to avoid confusion, and this is often done in retrospect. Surnames as they are used today only began to appear in the twelfth century. They are associated with a whole series of social and cultural processes, part of which was the origin of the coat of arms, associated simultaneously with the name, the figure of the ancestor-founder and the land, the inheritance of which was the fundamental principle of genealogical memory.<sup>19</sup> The representatives of the Trencavel clan considered Béziers as the main land holding, calling themselves the Viscounts of Beziers (and not, as one might expect, of Albi) in the legends of all their seals and in most documents, but not everyone used the surname Trencavel.<sup>20</sup>

The first usage of the cognomen Trencavel was by Raymond Bernard (d.1078), Viscount of Albi. After him his grandson Raymond I was mentioned in 1142 as *Raymundus qui cognominor Trencavelli*.<sup>21</sup> Graham-Lee, the researcher of the feudal nobility of southern France, notes that subsequently this epithet was associated only with those descendants of the clan who bore the name Raymond, suggesting that it was in commemoration of the founder-ancestor, rather than a generic surname. She also draws attention to the fact that surnames among the Languedoc nobility were very rare, and most importantly, they always remained individual and were never inherited.<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, every generation of viscounts had its own Raymond, and if he was not the eldest son and heir, he was still Seigneur Béziers (except perhaps Raymond, brother of Roger II). The next example cited by Graham-Lee also contradicts her own observation about the use of the surname exclusively by men with the names Raymond. Thus Ermerganda, daughter of Bernard Hato IV, was also named *Trencavella* in the letters of her son.<sup>23</sup> The last representative of the genus, Raymond II, used this nickname so intensively that it replaced his first name.<sup>24</sup> In all probability this way of identifying himself was part of the campaign to return his father's inheritance.

It thus appears that the surname Trencavel was strongly associated with by the Viscounts of Béziers, and was used in relation to this family, if not always by its representatives themselves, then by the rest of the Languedoc nobility, starting from its very appearance in the eleventh century. Only after the final loss of their Languedoc possessions did the descendants of Raymond II abandon the surname.<sup>25</sup> It is therefore concluded that to have had canting arms based on the name Trencavel is plausible.

<sup>19</sup> R.Bloch. "Étymologie et généalogie: theories de la langue, liens de parenté et genre littéraire au XIII siècle" in *Annales, Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations* vol.36 annee N 5, sept-oct. (1981), p. 950; G.Duby, "Structure de parenté et noblesse dans la France du Nord aux XI et XII siècles" in *Hommes et structures du Moyen Age*. (Paris, 1973), p. 283.

<sup>20</sup> Graham-Leigh, *op. cit.*, pp.145–146.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p.144.

<sup>22</sup> *ibid*

<sup>23</sup> *ibid*

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*,p. 145

<sup>25</sup> Alauzier, *op. cit.*, pp. 181-186.

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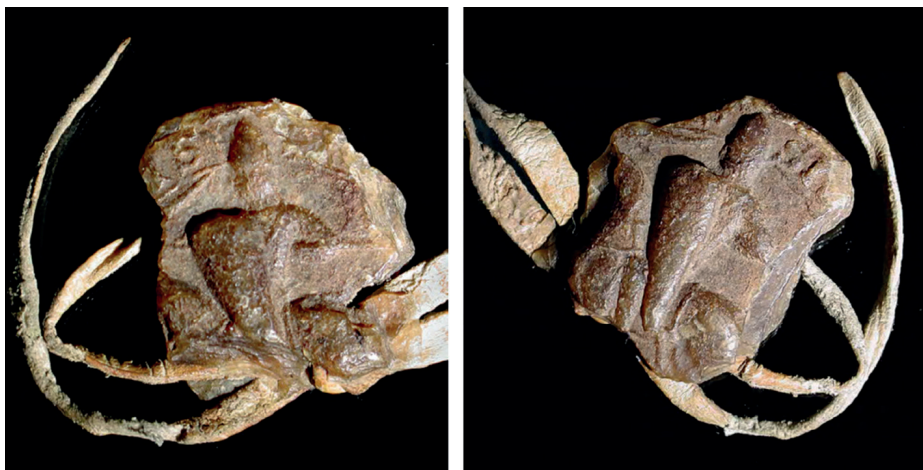


Figure 8: obverse and reverse of the seal of Viscount Roger II (d.1194) used in 1185. Archives départementales de la Haute-Garonne, H. Malte, Pézenas no.10.

Although seal usage by the nobility was already widespread in Languedoc by the middle of the twelfth century, when heraldry originated, the earliest known seal for a member of this family is that of Roger II, only recently discovered in an archives and dating to 1185. (Figure 8).<sup>26</sup>

A horseman is depicted on both sides of the seal, which is quite typical for the second half of the twelfth century. Roger is armed with a large kite shield, but the poor state of preservation of the seal impression does not allow us to say whether there are any heraldic designs on it. Notwithstanding, the surface of the shield does look flat enough to suggest that it might not yet have been heraldic. The next surviving seal of the Trencavel is the seal of Raymond Roger on a charter of 1202 making a grant to the Templar commandery at Pézenas (Figure 9). Once again a poor state of preservation, does not allow us to unambiguously interpret the presence of the coat of arms on the rider's shield, but the presence of a bar or fess seems clear, and perhaps there are markings upon it, but this might be perceived as being more with the eye of faith of the author. (Figure 9).

The earliest seal of Trencavel which unquestionably contains the coat of arms which has been the subject of this paper is that belonging to Raymond Trencavel, appended to a charter of 1211 (Figure 10). The surviving letters of the legend read "R ..... AVEL"(reverse side) "+ S. RA ..... EL"(obverse side), which together with the coat of arms gives the identity of the owner. This is also the first instance of the presence of the surname on a seal. The entry from the Douët d'Arcq catalogue states that the seal confirms the charter by which "R. Trencavel, son of R. Trencavel and his wife S. transfer to Simon de Montfort all his rights in the Viscounties of Béziers, Carcassonne,

<sup>26</sup> Hélène Débax & Laurent Macé, "Deux sceaux inédits des Trencavel (1185 et 1202)", in *Annales du Midi: revue archéologique, historique et philologique de la France méridionale*, no. 116 (2004), p. 383.

## THE ARMS OF TRENCAVEL

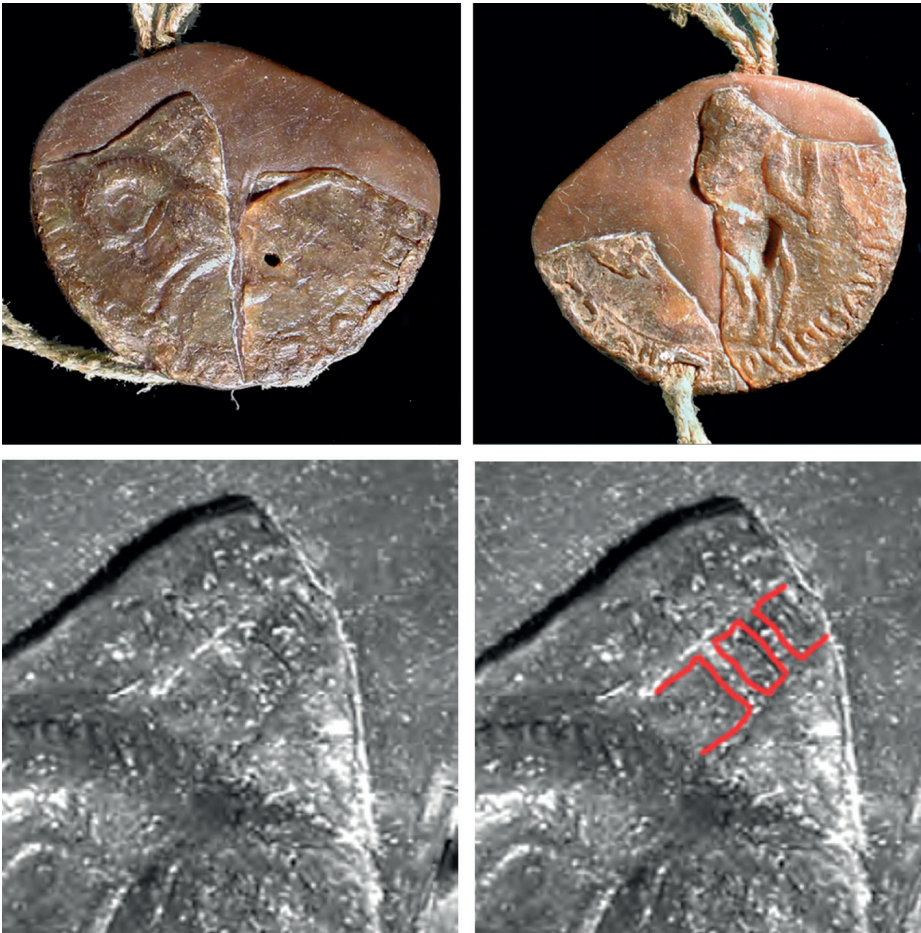


Figure 9: top: obverse and reverse of seal of Viscount Raymond Roger appended to a charter of 1202; below, author's suggested reconstruction of the markings on the bend or fess. Archives Départementales de la Haute Garonne, H. Malte, Pézenas no.19

Agde and Razès.”<sup>27</sup> Spouse S. can only indicate Saura the second wife of Viscount Raymond (d.1167). The large gap in the legend between the name Raymond and the surname Trencavel indicates that the formula was Raymond .....son of ... Trencavel. The mother of the then four year old Raymond II, was Agnes of Montpellier. This seal belonged not to Raymond II but to the boy's great uncle Raymond, son of an earlier Raymond Trencavel, and was the only surviving adult male member of the family at this time. It is impossible to know for how long before 1211 the great uncle Raymond had been using the seal.

<sup>27</sup> Douët-d'Arcq no. 759, vol.1, p. 384. The charter was signed on 9<sup>th</sup> July 1211 at Ripam Tarni and is not to be confused with a charter signed on behalf of Raymond II at Toulouse on 9<sup>th</sup> June 1211 from which no seal survives, see *Histoire General de Languedoc* (Paris, 1737) vol. 3 Preuves p. 232.

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*Figure 10:* Obverse and reverse of 1211 seal of Raymond Trencavel, with detail of the two shields. Douët d'Arcq no. 759, 759b. archives nationale de France, Paris.

The few and poorly preserved seals of the previous generations of Trencavel are in complete contrast to the large number of impressions associated with Raymond II. During his reign Béziers's seal with his coat of arms and several personal seals were made. The image of his seals had a symbolic function in the long fight for his inheritance against the Montforts. We have seen a variety of ways in which the figures on the silver bars of the arms of Raymond II were crafted over his lifetime, the work of different craftsmen, some of them not necessarily well versed in the relatively new heraldic vocabulary, and relying on both previous images and their own imagination. While some examples clearly resemble ermine tails, others do not. An extreme example is the 1269 seal of Raymond's son Roger (**Figure 11**) and the abovementioned 1226

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Figure 11: Seal and counter-seal of Roger de Béziers, son of Raymond II, with detail of the coat of arms on the counter-seal. Douët-d'Arcq no.762 archives nationale de France, Paris.

seal of the Béziers commune (**Figure 4**) on which the figures do not resemble ermine tails but rather some other object. Clinging to the idea that the arms are canting one might look for a heraldic figure or division that would be consonant to the family name and visually similar to the images on seals. And there is such term as *tronçonné*. So here we might add another hypothesis to the many theories concerning the figures on the Trencavel arms. *Tronçonné* is a rare heraldic term found in only a few sources, and exclusively applied to the de Trie family. It can be found in the Chifflet-Prinet Roll (CP / CPF, 1295–1298), in which “Monsieur Renaud de Trie carries the arms *Or a bend tronçonnée argent and azure*”, and in Walford’s Roll.<sup>28</sup> The arms are described in like manner in the poem entitled “The Tournament at Chauvancy” by the troubadour Jacques Bretel, who gives an account of a tournament which took place at Chauvancy

<sup>28</sup> “Walford’s Roll” in *Aspilogia II: Rolls of Arms of Henry III*, ed. Hugh Stanford London (London, 1967), p. 194; Gerard Brault, *Early Blazon 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.* (Woodbridge, 1997), p. 284.

THE COAT OF ARMS

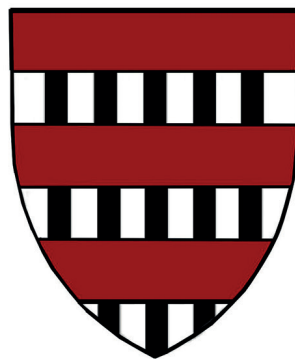
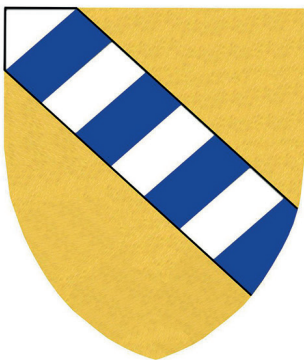


Figure 12: Top, 12a: Renaud de Trie jousts with Gerard de Loos at the Chauvency tournament of 1285, Bodl. Ms douce 308 f.120r. Source, Digital Bodleian CC-BY-NC 4.0 © Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford. Bottom left, 12b: arms of Trie; bottom right, 12c: author's reconstruction of possible origins of the arms of Trencavel with reference to Figures 4 and 9.

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in 1285, in which Renaud de Trie participated.<sup>29</sup> The illustration to the manuscript gives the idea of what it actually looked like (**Figure 12a**). The term itself is believed to be derived from the French verb *trancher* (to cut or sever) or the word *tronc* - old. French “Trunk, log, post” and in the heraldic sense preceded what is now termed *gobony* in English, being a vertical alternation of stripes. It is not difficult to notice some visual similarity between the Trie bend and the Trencavel bar (**Figure 12b**), and there is a phonetic consonance between *tronçonné* and Trencavel, taking into account the due difference between the *langue d’oc* and the *langue d’oil*. Thus, it can be suggested that the difference in depictions of the arms of Trencavel could be the artists’ interpretations of their idea of a tree trunc and that might justify the appearance of vertical bars, spruce-like figures and notorious ravelles. However, as the term did not pass into the heraldic vocabulary it soon became forgotten. Later artists or craftsmen copied previous images in the manner they saw fit and so they became ermine tails.

In conclusion, I would like to cite another image of this coat of arms, which was discovered relatively recently. In 2014 Langlois was able to identify as Raymond II Trencavel a horseman from a wall image of the early fourteenth century from the wall of the castle of Alcañiz in Aragon (**Figure 13**).<sup>30</sup> The scene itself represents the capture of Valencia between 1232 and 1238. At this time the last Trencavel was in exile in Aragon. Langlois, on the basis of the surviving documents of the viscount’s stay, was able to prove that he took part in the royal campaign to seize Valencia, retained a high position, despite the loss of all property privileges. This image, unfortunately, does not in any way confirm the hypotheses given in the article. But it does not refute them either. This is another visual embodiment of the coat of arms, which outlived its owners and having originated quite early in the story of heraldry, still arouses interest.

<sup>29</sup> Jacques Bretel, “The Tournament at Chauvancy” verses 2218–2221, in Nigel Bryant (ed.), *The Tournaments at Le Hem and Chauvency* (Woodbridge, 2020); D.S. Staroskolskaya, “Heraldry of the Chauvancy Tournament”, in *Proceedings of the State Hermitage Museum, vol. 99: Heraldry: research and practice: proceedings of a scientific conference dedicated to the memory of S.N. Troinitsky* (St Petersburg, 2020).

<sup>30</sup> Langlois, *op. cit.*, pp. 49–60.

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*Figure 13:* Raymond II Trencavel as part of the Aragonese army from the castle of Alcañiz, Photograph: Gerard Langlois.