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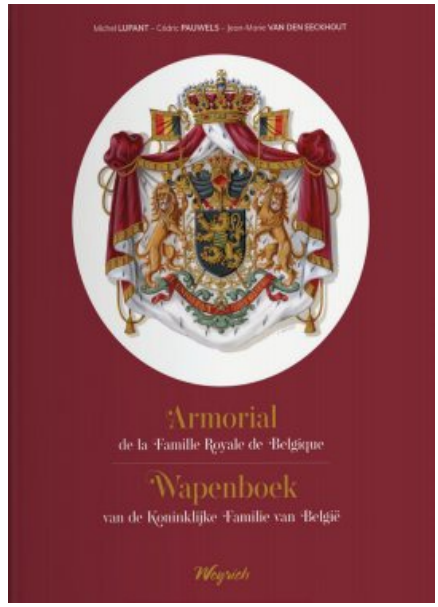

Michel Lupant, Cédric Pauwels, and Jean-Marie Van Den Eeckhout*, Armorial de la Famille Royale de Belgique et de ses alliances européennes/Wapenboek van de Koninklijke Familie van België en haar europese allianties*.
Neufchâteau: Weyrich Édition, 2022. 600 pp.
Hardcover ISBN 9-782874-897443. €135.

This is the most comprehensive work produced yet about the arms of the Belgian royal family. Strongly influenced by the work of the late Roger Harmignies (1922–2017), one of the doyens of post-war heraldic studies in Belgium, this *Armorial* lists sixty-eight arms of members of the Belgian royal family, along with decorations, honours, flags and ensigns. It is chronologically ordered, starting with King Leopold I, who became king in 1831 and ends with Princess Delphine and her children, whose royal status was confirmed in 2020. The texts of the original blazons are reproduced and the whole book is in French and Dutch.

As the subtitle 'de ses alliances européennes/haar europses allianties' suggests, the arms of the Belgian royal family owe much to its founder, King Leopold I of the Belgians (reigned 1831–65). Born a younger son of the ducal family of Saxe-Coburg-Saalfeld, Leopold first married Princess Charlotte of Wales in 1816. She died in childbirth a year later in 1817, however Leopold was given permission by the Regent to quarter his arms of Saxe-Coburg with Charlotte's arms in 1818. He was called to the throne of Belgium in 1831 and married Princess Louise-Marie d'Orléans in 1832 [**Figure 1**], the first of many dynastic marriages that would continue into the twentieth century and would include the houses of Habsburg, Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, Wittelsbach, Savoy, Bonaparte, Bernadotte, and Nassau-Luxembourg.

The arms of Leopold after he swore allegiance to the Constitution on 21 July 1831 were those of the new Kingdom, but the arms of Saxony quartered with those of the United Kingdom of Great Britain stayed as an inescutcheon, albeit with the removal

of Princess Charlotte of Wales's label as well as the inescutcheon over all of Hanover. It is possible that these latter alterations were undertaken for the sake of simplicity; or that Leopold was making a point about his proximity to the British throne. The British quarterings were officially dropped by Leopold I's son, Leopold II (reigned 1865–1909) on 13 July 1880. The *Armorial* includes also the arms of the Empire of Mexico (1864–7), via Leopold I's daughter Empress Charlotte, and of the Independent State of the Congo, whose arms were granted in October 1886 and which were still used after Belgium took over the colony in 1908.

The list of King Albert I's 90 decorations is a glimpse at the shift of the world order during his reign, between 1909 and 1934: decorations from the Ottoman Empire (1910), kingdoms of Prussia (1910) and of Württemberg (1913) ,and from the republics of Czechoslovakia (1918), Poland (1922), Latvia (1923), Estonia (1925), and Lithuania (1930). On 23 April 1921, Albert dropped the Saxon inescutcheon from the royal arms.

Figure 1: arms of King Leopold I and Queen Louise-Marie, daughter of King Louis Philippe of France from the church of Notre-Dame au Sablon, from p. 81.

Figure 2: arms of King Philippe and Queen Mathilde, from p.543, artist Cédric Pauwels.

It is absent from the arms on Albert's Garter stall-plate; he was made KG on 4 December 1914, but perhaps the stall-plate postdates 1921. Similarly, Albert received the Order of the Seraphim on 1910 but his stall-plate was only installed in 1932.

When Leopold III, who had reigned from 1934, abdicated on 16 July 1951 his arms kept the sceptres and grand collar of the Order of Leopold, which hitherto had been reserved for the sovereign (p. 340). This situation did not reoccur in 2013 upon the abdication of his younger son Albert II (reigned 1993–2013).

The arms of the future Queen Fabiola were created with the assistance of Roger Harmignies in 1960, shortly before before her marriage to King Baudouin (reigned 1951–93). Unlike the others who had hitherto married into the Belgian royal family, Fabiola was a Spanish aristocrat and not of royal stock (the other exception was Liliane Baels, a Belgian aristocrat who married Leopold III in 1941 as his second wife; she was

never queen but was given the rank of princess). There was uncertainty about Fabiola's arms and the account by Harmignies reproduced in the *Armorial* is a fascinating insight into the process behind creating arms, trying to avoid ugliness and mockery, as well as an example of the successful post-war international cooperation between heraldists.

Of particular interest are the changes made by the current King Philippe on 12 July 2019 (Lupant and Pauwels have written on this elsewhere, in *Le Parchemin* in 2020). The inescutcheon of Saxony reappeared; the motto *L'union fait la force* was now translated into Dutch (*Eendracht maakt macht*), and German (*Einigkeit macht stark*) [**Figure 2**]. In the wake of his granting of a royal title to his half-sister Princess Delphine, the daughter of King Albert II and Sybille de Selys Longchamps, she and two children were given royal arms: her younger son, Prince Oscar, born on 28 October 2008, is the youngest member of the family whose arms appear in this book.

One of the main attractions of the *Armorial* is the range of sources used. There are many images from the stained-glass windows in Notre-Dame au Sablon, the Cathedral of Saint-Michel and Sainte-Gudule, Antwerp Cathedral, the Chapelle des Amerois, the Chapelle de la Conversie at Saint-Hubert, the chapel of the château of Ronchinne, the Sint-Catherinakirk at Hoogstraten, the church of the Trinité at Ixelles, the Sint-Jorisgilde at Ghent, and Saint George's Chapel at Windsor. The stall-plates of the orders of the Garter, the Elephant, and the Seraphim, which most kings of the Belgians have received, are repeated examples of the diplomatic and international uses of heraldry. There are monograms, ciphers, and seals. There are images from menus, cigarette cards, and *livres-d'or* as well as of ex-libris (that for Queen Fabiola was designed by Harmignies). Mention must be made also of the careful research into the royal ensign: sometimes even US and Russian sources have been marshalled to track down what is clearly one of the more ephemeral, and thus harder to trace, elements of modern royal heraldry. There are the arms for the royal train used by King Baudouin, which are of the same design as the royal ensign.

Any book of this scale will have minor errors. The authors use 'Saxe-Cobourg-Gotha/ Saksen-Coburg-Gotha': the name of the Duchy after 1826 was Saxe-Coburg and Gotha. (I myself made this error in referring to Saxe-Coburg-Gotha once in print elsewhere.) Sometimes the dual French–Dutch text does not tally: thus Leopold I, as Prince, was given the Royal Guelphic Order by the Prince Regent of the United Kingdom on '2 mai 1816' but also on '22 maart 1816' (p. 64; cf. the image on p. 71 from the College of Arms Orders Collection that clearly states it was bestowed on 22 March 1816). The list of honours of Regent Charles (1944–50) correctly includes the G.C.V.O. but incorrectly concludes with the V.C. These are just quibbles. Generally the attention to detail is impressive, even down to the ribbon bookmark, which is, naturally, a tricolour of black, gold, and red. The dustcover is of the same shade of amaranth as the Order of Leopold.

The *Armorial* is a delight for royal genealogists, and will be a favourite reference point for researchers interested in European royalty as well as in the heraldry of Belgium.

Christopher Guyver