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Title of Project: SCA Circlet of Lordship, sterling silver with amber and sapphires

Overview: I really like shiny things. I decided I needed more shiny things, but pretty shiny things are extremely expensive. I figured I'd kill two birds with one stone and learn to make more shiny things myself, while saving some money. I chose to make a circlet for myself because it gave me the opportunity to make something particularly visible and gaudy. I used sterling silver, 14k gold, and fine silver, because only thralls wear brass, and chose sapphire and amber cabochons to mount on it, because my arms are Or and Azure. I chose to use seven gems, for the simple reason that seven is not six – I do not want this mistaken for a Baronial coronet.



Historical Basis: Some of the earliest forms of headgear worn to denote royalty or nobility are the diadems worn by the ancient Greeks! These are still preserved in museums, and illustrated on many coins of the era. For example, this coin, of Antiochus III of the Selucid Empire (ca. 223 BC – 187 BC), shows him wearing a diadem, and bears the inscription in Greek ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΑΝΤΙΟΧΟΥ, of King Antiochusⁱⁱ:



While these diadems started as simple ribbons or wreaths, worn upon the head for ceremonial or religious reasonsⁱⁱⁱ, by the 4th century, it was fairly common for rulers in the Greek world to wear a golden wreath on their head as a symbol of nobility or even divinity – because many depictions of the Greek pantheon showed the gods wearing wreaths:

Heracles with wreath of white poplar leaves^{iv}:



There is also the story of Apollo and the nymph Daphne, from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, in which she is pursued by Apollo and turns herself into a laurel tree. Apollo cuts off a branch to wear, and as a result is often depicted with a laurel wreath upon his head (Note that Apollo is also the god of poets and writers, hence comes the term "poet laureate" that we use today)^v.

Apollo Crowning Himself (detail)^{vi}:



Over time, rulers throughout the ancient world used diadems and circlets of precious metals formed as laurel leaves to denote their royalty and nobility. In Late Antiquity, the Langobards used an iron diadem, in fact a kind of small hoop, which the German emperors of the Middle Ages would decorate with gold plates and precious gems. The crowns of modern monarchs are derived from this model^{vi}, and also the coronets worn by lesser nobility in the European tradition^{viii} (which our Society is based upon, by Corpora^{ix}).

Tools and Materials:

- Hand tools, such as various clamps, hammers, rulers, shears, and pliers.
- A set of specialized bezel mounting hand tools.
- Silver solder in three varieties (hard, medium, and easy), flux, and a mapp gas torch.
- A 1/2hp pedestal mounted buffer, with two wheels.
- Sterling silver strip and roping. These were commercially sourced from a reputable online vendor of precious metals and jewelry findings.
- Oval cabochon-cut sapphire gems. Sapphire is a precious stone in the Corundum class^x, which also includes ruby^{xi}. These particular sapphires are lab-created, and backed with a thin sheet of mother of pearl to add luster. One natural sapphire of this size would have been a significant expense, and for three I would need to liquidate significant portions of my personal assets. By using lab-created stones, I was able to achieve the desired look of a translucent precious gemstone at a reasonable cost.
- Oval cabochon-cut amber. Amber, rather than being a mined gemstone, is fossilized plant resin^{xii}.
- .999 pure silver bezel cup mounts for the gemstones. Bezel settings are the earliest known technique for mounting gems.^{xiii}
- A piece of commercially tanned and dyed brown leather for an interior lining.
- 14k gold disks, used behind the bezel mounts to give contrast.

Procedure: I first amassed my materials, then used a small ball peen hammer and a 15 pound anvil to give the entire body of the circlet a hammered finish. This serves several purposes: it's aesthetically pleasing, it work hardens the metal, it hides a number of flaws in my workmanship, and it removes the need to laboriously polish to a smooth mirror finish.

I then began attempting to solder the silver roping to the strip. This failed. Not knowing why, I reached out for help on social media, and was contacted by Master Artemius Andreas Magnus, a Laurel in the nearby Barony of Delftwood, whose areas of expertise are jewelry making, stained glass, and lapidary. He invited me to his home and shop for a private class on jewelry making (and some fine fajitas as well). After learning the many things I did wrong (wrong torch, wrong flux), learning the many things I should do differently (use different grades of solder, pickle my work to remove fire scale), and getting some hands-on practice in his shop, I returned to my shop to buy new tools and begin anew.

Using the techniques taught to me by Master Artemius, I was able to produce better results. I soldered the roping to both edges of the strip, then bent the strip to fit my head, and soldered it closed. I then marked out where my gems would go, and very slightly bent the gold discs so they would conform to the curve of the circlet. The discs were soldered in place, then the bezel cups were soldered to them.

Once all the soldering was done, the circlet was left overnight in a chemical pickling bath to remove the discoloration from the torch and flux. Upon removal the next day, it was covered with a fine white residue. I removed this on the inner surface with a wire wheel brush, and on the outer surface by hand buffing it with a green abrasive (Scotch-brite) pad. Once the residue was removed, I used my pedestal buffer charged with a brown medium abrasive compound, then with a fine green polishing rouge, to give the piece a final polish.

After all polishing was done, the gems were mounted in the bezels. A small drop of superglue was placed in the bottom of each as a safeguard against accidental loss, the gem inserted, and the bezel made secure around each gem using the specialized bezel mounting tools.

Finally, a piece of soft brown leather was cut to line the inside of the circlet, both for comfort, and so that I did not have to polish the inside. The edges of this were folded over and glued down, to present a finished appearance, and the strip was glued inside the circlet.

Future Improvements:

- I could have used a period dye for the leather, but that is beyond the scope of this project.
- I could smith my own metal, but that is also beyond the scope of this project.
- I could make my own bezel mounts, but I have not learned this skill yet.
- I could generally just be neater and more skilled, for example my soldering is messy, and some of my bezels are off-center.
- I could cut and polish my own stones, but that is beyond the scope of this project.
- I could have better taste, and not make something so gaudy.

ⁱ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diadem> Retrieved 4/10/18

ⁱⁱ Kritt, Brian. (2016). The Selucid Mint of Ai Khanoum, Classical Numismatic Studies No.9. Classical Numismatic Group, Inc.

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.livius.org/articles/objects/diadem/> Retrieved 4/10/18

^{iv} Statue of Hercules, A.D. 100–199, Roman. Marble with polychromy, 46 in. high. The J. Paul Getty Museum, 73.AA.43.1. Image courtesy of the Getty's Open Content Program.

^v <http://blogs.getty.edu/iris/the-ancient-origins-of-the-flower-crown/> Retrieved 4/10/18

^{vi} *Apollo Crowning Himself* (detail), 1781–82, Antonio Canova. Marble, 33 3/8 in. high. The J. Paul Getty Museum, 95.SA.71. Image courtesy of the Getty's Open Content Program

^{vii} <http://www.livius.org/articles/objects/diadem/> Retrieved 4/10/18

^{viii} <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coronet>, Retrieved 4/10/18

^{ix} <https://www.sca.org/docs/pdf/govdocs.pdf>, By-Laws, Section III: "The SCA shall be dedicated primarily to the promotion of research and re-creation in the field of pre17thcentury Western culture..."

^x http://www.minerals.net/gemstone/sapphire_gemstone.aspx

^{xi} <http://www.minerals.net/mineral/corundum.aspx> Retrieved 4/10/18

^{xii} <http://academic.emporia.edu/abersusa/whatis.htm> Retrieved 4/10/18

^{xiii} <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stonesetting> Retrieved 4/10/18