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PREFACE



An eagle with two heads – the first question is what to call it. Although similar forms appear in many distant and often unrelated cultures, *our* eagle – meaning the two-headed eagle we know from Germany and Austria and Russia, and elsewhere in Europe, traces back to the medieval Near East. In Greek it is *dikephalos* – the two-headed one – a word hardly known in the West. There is no really suitable single word available in English, but as usual the Germans have a compact and exact term. They call it *der Doppeladler* – the *double eagle*, and as the English alternatives are all awkward and ungainly, that is the name I will use for it in this book.¹

I first noticed the double eagle as a child, when I was given a copy of *Flags of Maritime Nations*, the United States Navy's official flag book.² This magnificent volume illustrated the flags of the nations, in beautiful color lithographs, so our warships could recognize them and render the appropriate courtesies and salutes. For this reason it included not just the main national flags, but for important countries the flags of kings and high officials, naval officers and government departments.³

In 1899 Austria and Russia were still functioning empires, and their emperors had grand and complicated imperial standards, which were illustrated in the book. The Russian imperial standard on land was a black double eagle on a golden field, and the eagle had such a wealth of intricate elements – crowns, ribbons, a scepter and orb, and nine shields – that it was illustrated separately, larger so the details could be understood. That very eagle is reproduced in color on the inside back cover of this book.

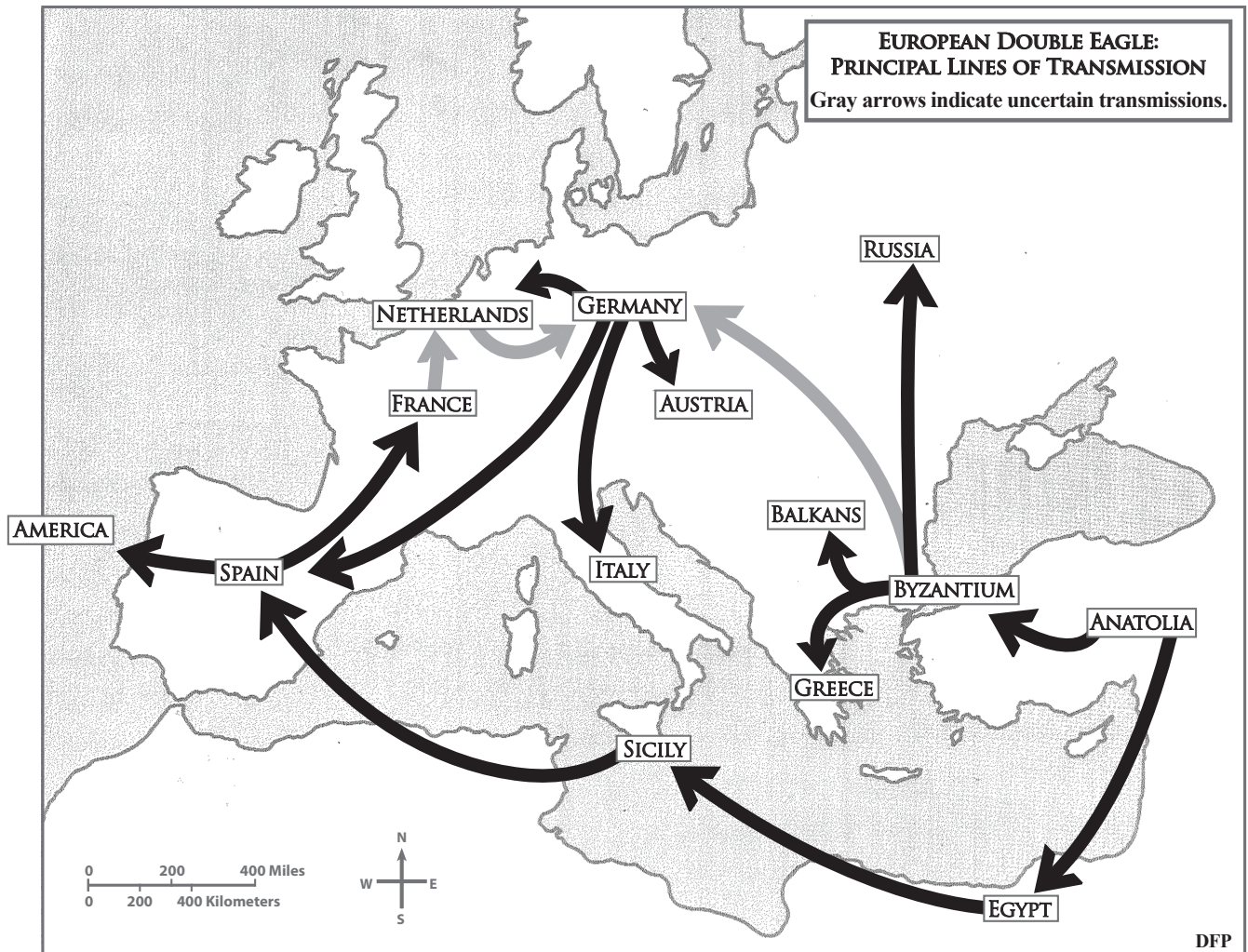
I won't say that eagle got me started on heraldry, the inexhaustible study that I have been learning from for the last 65 years, but it helped. The eagle had so many embellishments

¹ It is unfortunate that in the United States a \$10 gold piece was known as an *eagle*, and so a \$20 gold piece was a *double eagle*. If you Google *double eagle* this coin, and things named for it, account for most of the first results. Neither coin has been minted since 1933.

² Washington, 5th ed. 1899.

³ A few countries with the largest navies – Britain, France, Germany, Russia, the United States – issued these books from roughly the mid-19th to the mid-20th century. They are obsolete now, although still beautiful – the French *Pavillons Nationaux et Marques Distinctives* (Paris, 2000) was the last of the comprehensive volumes.

MAP



DIFFUSION OF THE DOUBLE EAGLE IMAGE IN EUROPE



COLLEGIUM POETARUM. WOODCUT BY HANS BURGKMAIR THE ELDER (1510).

THE DOUBLE EAGLE

by David F. Phillips

Numbered figures appear in the Gallery of Illustrations, beginning on page 91.
Notes on the sources of *all* the illustrations begin on page 139.



The eagle with two heads appears as a folk or religious image in many cultures, but the eagle of this book is the European heraldic double eagle that was the emblem of the German, Austrian and Russian empires. This book follows the double eagle's history as a highly influential image in the revived Western (or Holy Roman) Empire, and elsewhere in many other countries of Europe, and later long after the end of both empires and in some places even today.¹

THE NEAR EASTERN BACKGROUND

The image of the double eagle is not indigenous to Western Europe, and was scarcely known there before the 12th century. And where it was known, it was imported from the East (counting Islamic Spain as an outpost of the East).

The earliest known double eagle appears on a cylinder seal from the Sumerian city of Lagash around 2500 BC (Figure 1). It was also displayed by the Hittites, relics of whose civilization in Anatolia (now Asian Turkey) include the great double eagle carved into the stone of Alaca Höyük (Eyük) (Figure 2) and a cylinder seal impression from Boğazkale [Bogazköy] (Figure 3). But there is no reason to think that there is any Sumerian or Hittite connection to our eagle.²

The Hittite Empire fell around 1180 BC, and while there are occasional examples of the double eagle in the Near East in the intervening centuries, it does not reappear more than occasionally for about 2200 years. Around the 12th century AD there was an efflorescence of this image within the Great Seljuk Empire in what is now eastern Turkey and Mesopotamia. The Seljuks were Moslem in religion and Turko-Persian in culture, as was

¹ The image above is of an imperial herald of the 16th century.

² Double-eagle ornaments were also found by Schliemann in Bronze Age Mycenae – see Figure 4.

seal, as King of Bohemia, of similar design to that of 1363. These were the first such seals known for any member of a Western imperial family.⁹⁰

We do not know why these seals were cut with the double eagle. Perhaps the second seal was intended to show that Wenceslaus was King of Germany and of the Romans *as well* as of Bohemia, to emphasize his dignity in the absence of the imperial title.⁹¹ But that does not explain why this design was chosen for him in 1363, when he was only a child and not king either of Germany or of the Romans. Whatever it meant, it could not have been used as an imperial emblem as he was never emperor – indeed there was an imperial interregnum throughout Wenceslaus’ reign, from the death of Charles IV in 1378 until Sigismund’s coronation in 1434.



When Wenceslaus was deposed as King of the Romans in 1400⁹² he was succeeded by Rupert, the Elector Palatine. In 1402, during Rupert’s reign, Wenceslaus’ half-brother Sigismund (left) used a double eagle seal in his role as imperial vicar (a sort of viceroy, an imperial office).⁹³ When Rupert died in 1410, Sigismund was elected King of the Romans, and in 1417 ordered a beautiful imperial seal for himself, also with a double eagle (Figure 54). The Latin text of the original order to the seal-cutter survives, so we know the double eagle was chosen deliberately to be Sigismund’s imperial emblem at that time. No doubt he planned to be crowned soon.⁹⁴

But as it turned out, he was not crowned Emperor until 1433, 16 years later. He began using the seal in 1434. So it is a question whether the double eagle became the official emblem of the Empire in 1417, when Sigismund ordered the seal, or 1433 when he became Emperor, or 1434 when he began using the seal. However that may be decided, it is fair to say that the formal official symbolic use of the double eagle by the Western

⁹⁰ The first such seals known to Posse, anyway – see note 84. Another double-eagle seal was issued for Wenceslaus in 1371 – see *id.*, vol. 2, plate 7, no. 4.

⁹¹ Gerola suggests unpersuasively, note 56, at 34, that it was a graphic combination of the eagles of Silesia and Brandenburg.

⁹² For the first time; he was deposed *again* in 1402 before finally getting the hint and abdicating under pressure in 1411.

⁹³ The portrait of Sigismund, attributed to Pisanello, is notable for the size of the imperial earmuffs.

⁹⁴ The Latin text appears in Posse, note 84, vol. 5, p. 47.



Figure 44. Brooch of Gisela of Swabia (10th century).



Figure 46: Wall tile from Abbey Church of St. Emmeram, Regensburg (mid-12th century).



Figure 45. Silver penny of Leopold V of Austria (1197).



Figure 47: Seal of Count Ludwig von Sarwarden (c. 1185).



Figure 48: Seal of Poppo, Count of Henneberg (c. 1212).

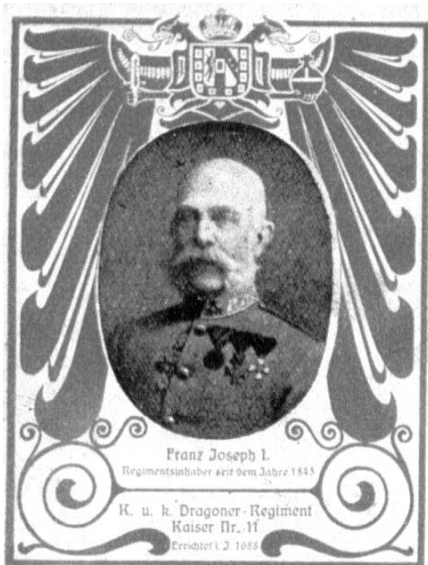


Figure 105: *Militärmark* of the Austrian 11th Dragoons.



Figure 106: Art deco design by Koloman Moser.



Figure 107: Emblem of the imperial Austrian Red Cross Society.

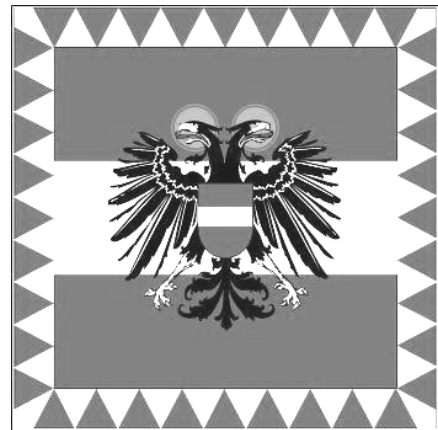


Figure 108: Officials' rank flag of the Austrian Federal State (1936) (red and white).

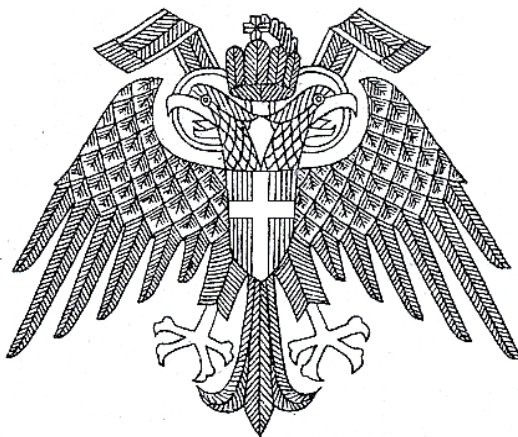


Figure 109: Emblem of Vienna (1934-38).



Figure 110: Arms of Fiume, by Hugo Gerard Ströhl (1900).



Figure 204: German glass bottle (1615).



Figure 206: Wallenstein's carved bureau (detail).

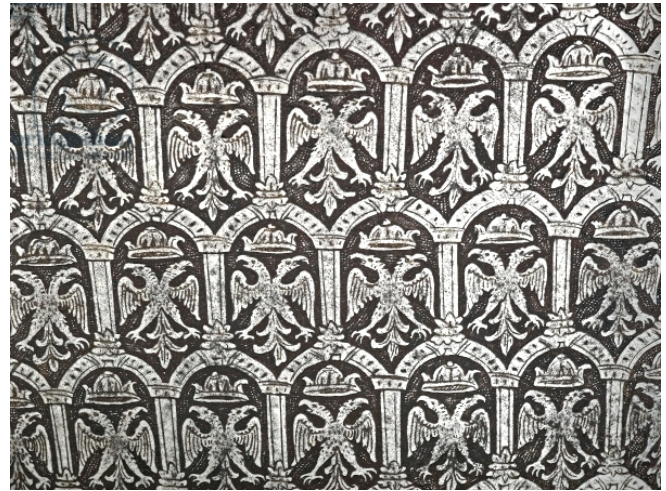


Figure 205: Italian armor (detail).

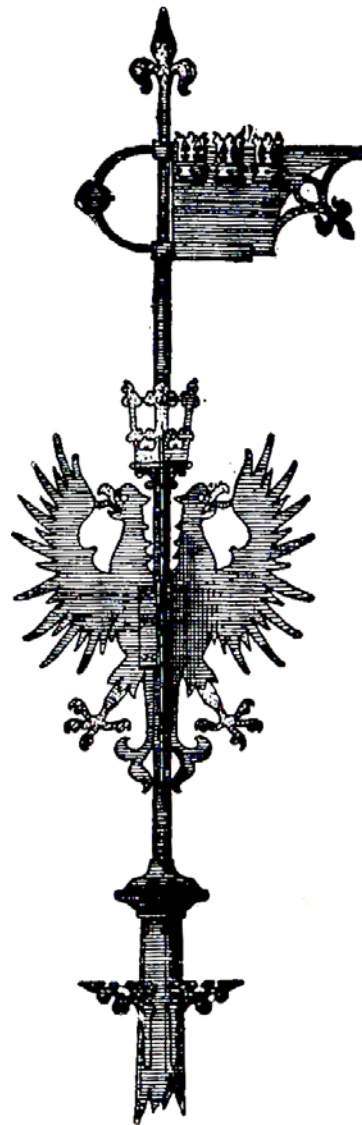


Figure 207: Weathervane from Cologne.



SOURCES OF THE ILLUSTRATIONS

Citations to *line numbers* refer to the numbered entries in this section.

Citations to *notes* refer to footnotes in the main text.

COVERS

1. **Front cover: Russian eagle.** From the *Imperial Book of Titles* (Tsarskiye Titulyarnik, Царский Титулярник) (1672). Image from Wikimedia Commons at tinyurl.com/mahapw6 (see note 205, page 64 above).
2. **Inside front cover: Austrian Empire middle arms.** From Hugo Gerard Ströhl, *Oesterreichisch-Ungarische Wappenrolle* [Austro-Hungarian armorial] (Vienna, 1900; modern reprint, Schleinbach [Austria], 2010), plate 4. Image downloadable on Wikimedia Commons at tinyurl.com/kh6x94k. For a gallery of expandable and downloadable images from this work, in color, see the Estonian hot.ee website at tinyurl.com/pqztqzs.
3. **Inside back cover: Middle Arms of Russian Empire.** From the official United States Navy flag book *Flags of Maritime Nations* (Washington, 1899), 53.
4. **Back cover: Quaternion Eagle.** *Das Hailig Romisch Reich mit Sampt seinen Gelidern* [The Holy Roman Empire with all its members], by Hans Burgkmair the Elder, c 1510. Image from Wikimedia Common at tinyurl.com/ku4m7r6. David de Negker, mentioned in the Wikimedia title, was the publisher but not the artist.

FORMATTER

5. **Title page. Arms of the Holy Roman Empire.** From Peterman Etterlyn, *Chronique Suisse* [Swiss chronicle] (Basel, 1507); image after Etterlyn by Brother Fidèle-Gabriel [Paul-Gabriel Dufour] for Émile Gevaert, *L'Héraldique: Son Ésprit, Son Langage, les Applications* [Heraldry: Its spirit, language and applications] (Brussels, 1923), 47, fig. 71.
6. **Table of Contents tailpiece.** Heraldic ornament by Agi [August] Lindegren, from Fredrik-Ulrik von Wrangel, *Les Maisons Souveraines de l'Europe* [Sovereign houses of Europe] (Stockholm 1898-99), 1:40.
7. **Dedication. Portrait of Whitney Smith.** Photograph by Austin Smith, reprinted with permission.
8. **Frontispiece. Collegium Poetarum.** Woodcut by Hans Burgkmair the Elder (1510), reproduced from Hubert Schrade, *Sinnbilder des Reiches* [Symbols of the Reich] (Munich, 1938), fig. 25. This work is a rich source of German double-eagle images.