Changing SENA - A Test Case

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Recently I was asked for help in proposing changes to SENA. As I wrote my response I realized that it might be useful to others as a case study. SENA is a living document that changes to fit the needs of heraldry in the SCA. This article includes information in my original letter as well as information that non-heralds will need in order to help them deal with heraldic jargon.

Before I get into the text of my response I should define a few terms in case someone reading this is unfamiliar with them. The first term I should define is <u>SENA</u>. The Standards for Evaluation of Names and Armory are the SCA's current rules for submissions. The next term I should define is <u>Laurel</u>. This is a title we use for a specific person. Along with other duties this person has the final say in all submission decisions in the SCA. Laurel has a staff who are each in charge of specific parts of Laurel's duties. I mention a few of these people in this article. <u>Laurel Archivist</u> is in charge of maintaining submissions records. <u>Morsulus</u> is in charge of maintaining registration records. <u>Palimpsest</u> is in charge of managing discussions about the content and wording of SENA; she makes recommendations to Laurel who then proposes them to the Board of Directors for final approval. <u>Pelican</u> makes decisions on name submissions. The final term I should define is <u>precedent</u>. This is what lawyers call "case law." Any decision made by Laurel that changes the way we do things is called a precedent. Anyone can look up the decisions made by Laurel. The easiest way to search through Laurels decisions is using Morsulus' website: http://www.morsulus.org/

From what I understand it is theoretically possible to change SENA by writing a proposal backed up with period documentation. I can't speak to that method as I haven't tried it, however I gather that it has a lower success rate than the method I used. The way I did it was based on advice from the Laurel Archivist, Shauna of Carrick Point. In a Facebook comment, Andrewe Bawldwyn, who was Laurel at the time described the method I used as an example of the "right" way to do it. Basically:

- Don't ask to change the rules.
- Instead, establish a precedent in line with your intended change.
- This precedent will contradict the rules.
- Then fix the rules to match the precedent.

The first important thing I did was to <u>watch someone else fail</u>. The change I wanted to see was to make names from ancient Egypt registerable. At the time SENA specifically prohibited this. Shauna had suggested sending up a test submission. Another person, Amenhetep, was interested in changing the same rule that I wanted to change, so I followed his name submission closely. Shauna suggested that I ask to attend the online Pelican decision meeting for that name. It was not absolutely necessary, but it would help me learn the process. Since I was the only herald focusing on that culture, Lilia Pelican agreed to let me in. She and her staff were very gracious. They let me observe their process closely. This was important because it got me in a learning mood. I suspect that if I had been in a teaching mood

at that time I wouldn't have learned what I needed to learn. When the item I was interested in came up, they invited me to join in the discussion. They listened to me politely and gave me time to cover the subject thoroughly. Even the people who were against my idea took it seriously. Some of them expressed concerns. Some of them made suggestions. I took careful note of each of these. Eventually those suggestions and concerns were what I needed to change SENA. I don't think I would have gotten them properly recorded if I had let myself get angry with the people who were against my idea. Amenhetep's submission was eventually returned. But the text of the return was so informative that I had clearly defined criteria for the next attempt. This was that return: http://heraldry.sca.org/loar/2014/09/14-09lar.html#394

The next important thing I did was to break my goal into manageable pieces. Part of Amenhetep's name return stated "Western scholars could only access the information through secondary contact with the classical world, or through later Egyptian culture (after the reign of Alexander the Great)." This confirmed one of the most important things I took away from the Pelican meeting; which was that Ptolemaic Egyptian (the language of Egypt under Greek rule) would be much easier to document than pre-Ptolemaic Egyptian. That was a large compromise for me. My persona predates the Greek conquest of Egypt by over a thousand years. Some of my friends' personas predate mine by several centuries. I would have to (at least temporarily) give up on the larger goal of full Egyptian inclusion in order to get partial inclusion. Eventually that's what I decided to do.

The next attempt at registration was a test name for the use of demotic records (a subset of Egyptian records which became popular shortly before the Greek conquest). For that test name, I used the most well documented name elements that I could find. I made sure it met all the criteria mentioned in Amenhetep's name return. When I submitted it, documentation on the test name was over 30 pages. Commentary at kingdom level increased this amount. When that name made it to Laurel level there was almost no commentary from people who read that documentation. Apparently, this was a good sign even though it was frustrating at the time. As I was the submitter for that name I did not ask to be in the decision meeting for it. In either case I would have been expected to keep all parts of that meeting secret until the decisions were announced. Eventually that name was registered. This is the acceptance for that name: http://heraldry.sca.org/loar/2015/07/15-07lar.html#57

The actual proposal to change the wording of SENA came a little over a year after that when Ursula Georges took over as Palimpsest. She is working at identifying proposed changes to SENA and figuring out the wording of those changes. Since it was my submission that overturned the rule, she requested that I propose the new wording of the rule. I proposed several versions in an email to her. One of those wordings was included in her first rules letter which can be seen here: http://oscar.sca.org/index.php?action=145&id=69693 It was that letter which actually made the change to SENA.

Since the acceptance of my demotic test name, other heralds have joined me in helping submitters (including Amenhetep; now Amenhotep) to register Egyptian names using patterns from demotic records. We've established that Egyptian and Greek name elements are compatible in a whole name. We are currently working on establishing how professional bynames are to be added. Each of these require a submission to set the precedent. But these things are just part of fleshing out name usage from demotic records. They don't contribute much to my larger goal of full Egyptian inclusion. In order to make another step toward that goal I've submitted a test name using hieratic documentation.

Hieratic records cover a much larger period of time than demotic records do. If that test name is successful there will be a precedent for significant expansion of Egyptian name usage. Considering that hieratic records cover a period of 3.5 millennia (over half of recorded history) I honestly doubt that all hieratic records will be accepted in one lump. Perhaps I'll have to break it down into a more manageable set of goals. But I won't find out unless I try.

In summary: It's likely that, in the past, other people have tried and failed to change the same policy that you want to change. Their attempt is probably well documented in old records. Morsulus' records of acceptances and returns are available to everyone at http://heraldry.sca.org/loar/ and at the search page linked above. Laurel Archivist's full set of submissions and commentary records are available to Kingdom level Principal and Submission Heralds. These individuals can help you access the information in these records. Learn from other people's failure. Look at your goal. Try to see the places where your goal can be broken into smaller pieces. Don't expect your goal to be reached in one submission cycle. Celebrate the small victories, but don't rest on your laurels.