

The Alfa Badge

It was stylish in the early days of automobile to use the company's initials to name the car (Fabbrica Italiana Automobili Torino was already well established making F.I.A.T.s in Turin) and the acronym A.L.F.A. was a natural choice for the new Milanese company. The name of the car is in no way related to the first letter of the Greek alphabet. (which Vincenzo Lancia's company had already appropriated in 1907 for its product line).

The Alfa badge is arguably the most remarkable emblem associated with any marque. For it, the owners combined two symbols that had been associated with the city of Milan since the Crusades: a red cross and a serpent swallowing a man. The red cross is an obvious Christian symbol of medieval heraldry. The man in the serpent's mouth is a Saracen (a Muslim), so the serpent motif recalls the Christian Crusaders' defeat of the infidels, a fact that is probably not detailed in certain of Alfa's current marketing areas. The serpent motif became an honorary sign awarded to a prominent Milanese family. It was eventually permanently attached to the Sforza family.

Originally, the acronym ALFA and the word MILANO appeared on the badge separated with two square knots. The knots were associated with the di Savoia family; they and the blue encircling field symbolize royalty. The company was purchased by Niccolò Romeo in 1915, and in 1920, his name was appended to ALFA by hyphenation. It is only on the badge that the name has ever been hyphenated.

The wreath around the badge commemorates Alfa's World Championship of 1925. During the early 1930s, a few Alfas were assembled in France and "PARIS" replaced "MILANO" on about two hundred badges. "MILANO" was deleted when the Alfasud factory went on-line in 1971 (while "PARIS" fit, "POMIGLIANO DEL' ARCO" would have been a bit much).

Excerpted from:

Braden, Pat. (1994). *Alfa Romeo Owner's Bible*. Massachusetts: Bentley Publishers, (p.2).