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CIVIC HERALDRY AND SPACE IN MEDIEVAL PORTUGUESE TOWNS[1]

Heráldica municipal y espacio en las ciudades medievales portuguesas

Miguel Metelo de Seixas
Instituto de Estudos Medievais. Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas. Universidade Nova de Lisboa. Av. de Berna 26 C 1069-061, Lisboa, Portugal. C. e.: miguelmeteloseixas@fcsh.unl.pt. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0811-573X

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ABSTRACT: Traditionally, heraldic studies have focused on the symbolic dimension of the signs they analyze. However, considering the nature of these signs —forms of self-representation and visual communication— they can and should be studied not only in their abstract dimension, but also or above all in their concrete use. Each plastic expression of given arms encapsulates specific references, related to factors such as their location, which define the heraldic message's targets, observers, and commentators. This article proposes a comparative reflection regarding the location of stones with arms in medieval Portuguese towns, covering a specific heraldic typology: the arms of the municipalities themselves. We demonstrate how Portuguese municipal heraldry was used for the demarcation and symbolic appropriation of urban space during the medieval period.

Keywords: heraldry; iconography; representation of power; urban space; Portuguese municipalities; Middle Ages.

RESUMEN: Tradicionalmente, los estudios heráldicos se han centrado en la dimensión simbólica de los signos que analizan. Sin embargo, teniendo en cuenta la naturaleza de estos signos —formas de autorrepresentación y comunicación visual—, pueden y deben estudiarse no solo en su dimensión abstracta, sino también o sobre todo en su uso concreto. Cada expresión plástica de unas armas determinadas encierra referencias específicas, relacionadas con factores como su ubicación, que definen los destinatarios, observadores y comentaristas del mensaje heráldico. Este artículo propone una reflexión comparativa sobre la localización

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de piedras armeras en las ciudades medievales portuguesas, abarcando una tipología heráldica específica: las armas de los propios municipios. Pretendiendo demostrar cómo la heráldica municipal portuguesa fue utilizada para la demarcación y apropiación simbólica del espacio urbano durante el período medieval.

Palabras clave: heráldica; iconografía; representación del poder; espacio urbano; municipios portugueses; Edad Media.

SUMARIO: 0 Introduction. 1 Heraldry and urban space: heuristic and methodological questions. 2 Municipal and royal heraldry in Portuguese medieval towns: subordination and balance. 3 The heraldic marking of urban space.4 Conclusion. 5 Works cited.

0 Introduction

In her overview of studies on medieval Portuguese towns, Amélia Aguiar Andrade indicated the significant historiographical gaps in this field, highlighting some restriction to local scholarship and a proliferation of monographs, which although erudite are generally devoid of general perspectives and problematizations. However, as this author points out, urban history is a particularly favorable terrain for heuristic questioning, especially considering that «tout ce qui se passe dans un décor urbain peut être considéré comme de l'histoire urbaine»[2]. Therefore, the present text aims to contribute to the problematization of an issue that, until now, has attracted little attention from scholars: the relationship between heraldry and urban space. We hope to open perspectives that foster a renewal of both heraldry and urban history.

Some historiography is already concerned with studying how power structures «mark» cities, underlining the importance of «une description cartographique des empreintes du pouvoir sur la ville pour tenter de reconstituer le mouvement qui les y a laissées» and seeking to «définir une rhétorique de la puissance à partir du marquage de la ville par les pouvoirs urbains, et tenter d'y mesurer les parts respectives de la communication, de la persuasion, de l'intimidation ou de la propagande —que celle-ci soit implicite ou explicite—»[3]. The instruments for the symbolic marking of urban spaces are diverse and can be complementary or antagonistic. Urban organization itself can include these instruments, also evident in architecture and the use of media with very varied typologies, scales, intensities, and communicational forms, usually visual in nature, but which can incorporate other components, such as auditory elements (one need only think of the importance of bells in medieval urban life).

The role of epigraphs (that is writing) in this type of marking has already been studied. Armando Petrucci indicated how the town, during the medieval era, was no longer the «written body» it had been during Antiquity and would, in part, become once again

[2] Andrade, «La ville», 155.
[3] Boucheron, «Introduction», 10-1.

in the Renaissance[4]. As this author points out, the relative (not absolute) loss of writing's relevance in marking the medieval urban space is largely due to an abrupt decrease in the literacy rates of urban populations. In this context, other codes of visual communication assumed a prominence previously held by epigraphs in the definition and symbolic appropriation of urban space. Heraldry was undoubtedly one of them. Strangely, however, this relationship is poorly reflected in historiography.

1 Heraldry and urban space: heuristic and methodological questions

Since the mid-twentieth century, heraldry has been the subject of epistemological reformulations, which have sought, among other things, to combat some of the heuristic limitations that previously dominated this field. One of these limitations was the fundamentally abstract character attributed to heraldic signs: these are usually analyzed in their typological aspects and symbolic value, as if they could have value and be understood outside their historical context. Moreover, the heraldic sign itself is considered independently of its plastic expressions, insofar as these only refer to each emblem's archetype (the *coat of arms*) but constitute more or less accurate reflections. The limitations of this kind of approach have been highlighted by a whole generation of heraldists[5].

The importance of contextualizing heraldic manifestations derives not only from their chronological position and inclusion within a certain era and society, but also the physical space where such emblems are inserted. A comprehensive understanding of heraldic emblems relies on such complex contextualization. Therefore, the same arms do not necessarily have an identical meaning in each plastic representation, even if they are coeval and rigorously equal in their typology. The message of each representation also varies according to its spatial location, considering that heraldry essentially serves as a code of self-representation and visual communication. Used and understood as an act of communication, the heraldic emblem conforms to a series of other semantic codes to express, consubstantiate, and project a certain image of its originator (or of whom it was generated for). This image does not function as an abstraction, but as a concrete act of communication, with its sender, its recipients, observers and, eventually, commentators. Each manifestation thus establishes an intrinsic relationship with the space where it is found.

This relationship is valid for the built space, where heraldry performs functions with complex contours, which are much broader than merely identification, as discussed by most studies. This complexity was studied with acuity regarding the relationship between heraldry and the sacred space in the Middle Ages: Laurent Hablot highlighted the intrinsic character established since the thirteenth century between the phenomenon of *heraldization of the sacred space* and the *sacralization of heraldry*[6]. This same problematization was studied in the Portuguese case, with evidence of its applicability from the

[4] Petrucci, *Jeux*.
[5] Pastoureau, *Traité*; Savorelli, «L'araldica»; Hablot, *Manuel*; Menéndez Pidal, *Los emblemas*.
[6] Hablot, «L'héraldisation»; Hablot, «Sacralization».

thirteenth century to the late medieval period[7]. These studies also glimpsed the potential of analyzing the use of heraldry as an expression of power in the space built by sovereigns, in particular the places where power was exercised[8]. This same relationship between heraldry and space was considered, in the Portuguese case, as essential to characterize noble architecture, regarding the presence of arms both in the exterior and interior of buildings associated with noble lineages[9].

This approach also laid bare the role heraldic emblems played in the symbolic appropriation of space in its abstract forms of representation, namely in cartographical, geographical, and chorographical works, and other instruments for mapping the territory[10]. To a certain extent, armorials (i. e., the collection of heraldic emblems represented in a unified way, whether in manuscripts, codices, scrolls, or in drawings, paintings, sculptures, with the aim of representing certain communities) are comparable to cartographic and geographical works, since these instruments visually project, fully or in part, the world and its perceived or desired underlying order, according to the view of the authors, recipients and observers[11].

However, there are few studies specifically about the heraldic phenomenon's relation to medieval urban space, with three exceptions: a study focused on the territories and cities of the Burgundian Netherlands and the Holy Roman Empire[12]; another one centered on Northern Italy[13]; and a third on Portugal[14]. The cases that have attracted the most attention from scholars are ephemeral events, namely the ceremonies linked to royal entrances in cities[15]. Some studies offer clues for problematization based on regional or local surveys. Along these lines, there are numerous studies based on Italian and French cases that include the analysis of specific civic monuments[16] or the headquarters of communal power in general[17]. However, there are no general surveys assessing the phenomenon in its entirety[18]. This holds true even when there is a detailed inventory of the municipal heraldry present in a region's entirety, as in the Italian province of the Marche: although all the observable sources were listed, in a work of great scope and erudition, the surveyed sources are not confronted with the space they occupy[19]. The research project «Armma: Armorial Monumental du Moyen-âge» began in the Poitou-Charentes

[7] Seixas and Portugal, «À sombra»; Seixas, «Art».

[8] Mérindol, *Images*; Hablot, «Le décor»; Hiltmann and Seixas (eds.), *Heraldry*; and Seixas, Hiltmann and Portugal, *State-Rooms*.

[9] Seixas, «O uso».

[10] Savorelli, «Atlanti».

[11] Seixas, «Overseas elements».

[12] Damen and Meer, «Heraldry». The topic was also the subject of a colloquium entitled *Heraldry in the Medieval City* whose proceedings await publication under the coordination of Laurent Hablot and Torsten Hiltmann.

[13] Ferrari, *La «politica»*.

[14] Seixas, «Heráldica municipal».

[15] Alves, *As entradas*.

[16] For instance, Borgia, *Gli stemmi*; and Gado, «Stemmi».

[17] Bulté, «Emblématique».

[18] Savorelli, «Araldica».

[19] Carassai *et al.*, *Le Marche*.

region[20]. Its results allowed a first critical approach. Matteo Ferrari systematized the information collected on the ground and combined it with documentary sources to produce an overview of heraldry's appropriation of the urban landscape in the city of Poitiers[21]. The conclusions of this study were able to

> demonstrate how places and buildings linked to secular powers are full of heraldic signs. Isolated or inserted in larger compositions, they were the instrument of a spatial arrangement of signs, which was both official —since it emanated from a decision by political authorities— and public —since they addressed the whole community and, more generally, all those who traveled to the city—[22].

Such abundance did not prevent intense emulation among the entities represented in the urban space's heraldry. On the contrary: Ferrari's analysis highlights the connection between the analyzed heritage and the successive political balances experienced in the city, with the presence of the arms of the king of France, the Duke of Anjou, the municipality of Poitiers and, sometimes, the personal or family insignia of the *maire* (city mayor). A hierarchical relationship was always used to structure and define the space where power was exercised.

This conclusion was corroborated by Anne-Laure Connesson's thesis devoted to late-medieval Florentine heraldic sculpture. Naturally, in this case, the multiplicity of actors and the variability of relationships between them make the political balance more intricate than in the French example. This inevitably translates into a greater diversity of heraldic typologies present in the public space. However, the author suggests that this diversity can be analyzed comprehensively, using the concept of *civic heraldry* to define the diverse arms displayed in public places. When read together, these express a common identity composed of the complex (and changeable) articulation of forces and political actors. The fluctuations in these heraldic ensembles expressed the changes in the political balance governing the city. Hence the preferential use of the city's central space (the main square) and the communal palace that stood there: «L'identité civique devait pouvoir se construire et se montrer dans l'espace public, sur la place de la cité. La façade des palais communaux comme support d'exposition d'armoiries remplit donc parfaitement ce rôle»[23].

From his survey of Florentine heraldic sculpture and other coeval artistic and patrimonial manifestations, Connesson highlights the structural role played by heraldry in public buildings —beyond the mere decorative and identifying role—:

> Si l'accumulation d'écus armoriés sur les façades des palais publics tend à remodeler l'architecture du bâtiment, leur présence à l'intérieur des édifices délimite et définit les espaces où le pouvoir s'exerce, contribuant ainsi largement à sa mise en scène. Les armoiries

[20] http://base-armma.edel.univ-poitiers.fr/

[21] Ferrari, «Héraldique».

[22] I thank the author for providing this text before its publication, and for providing numerous and useful bibliographic information as well.

[23] Connesson, «L'héraldique», I, 107-8. See also Gado, «Stemmi».

> colonisent les lieux de passages comme les portes, les escaliers et les cours intérieures mais également les différentes salles du pouvoir civique où les emblèmes envahissent parois et plafonds[24].

In this way, the practical and symbolic functions are closely entangled, weaving together heraldry, architecture, and public space. This same relationship was observed by Mario Damen and Marcus Meer in the case of German and Burgundian cities. They highlighted the diversity of plastic resources used by heraldry in the symbolic appropriation of urban space:

> The same territorial dimension of heraldry found its expression in material culture. Painted walls, carved stones, and stained glass in noble palaces, churches, town halls, for instance, show how extensive arrangements of heraldic signs evoked notions of territory, demarcating dedicated spaces, or representing diverse territorial structures[25].

Meer also emphasized the importance that the use of heraldry had in the decoration of municipal buildings, as an instrument to structure collective identity in the late-medieval German and English cases[26].

2 Municipal and royal heraldry in Portuguese medieval towns: subordination and balance

In Portugal, Carlos Caetano's doctoral thesis studied town hall buildings and the monumentalization of local power, spanning a vast chronology, ranging from the fourteenth to the nineteenth century. Focusing on the typology of the buildings in municipal capitals, the author indicates three essential components —the courtroom, council chamber and prison—, which could be complemented by a series of optional components such as spaces for shelter, storage, trade and commerce, administration, residence, aid, and devotion[27]. However, the structural composition of town hall buildings was not necessarily distinctive from other buildings. The author stresses the need for the presence of two types of identifiers: the bell (with its tower or belfry) and the coat of arms[28]. In Caetano's view, the latter played a primary role in characterizing the municipal building: «a casa do concelho, que era essencialmente uma casa como as outras, era também, enquanto casa do concelho, uma casa diferente das outras, pois quase sempre ostentava um ou, mais raramente, dois brasões nobilitadores na sua fachada»[29]. However, Luísa Trindade pointed out how municipal halls emulated manor houses, tending to imitate

[24] Connesson, «L'héraldique», I, 119.
[25] Damen and Meer, «Heraldry», 248.
[26] Meer, «History».
[27] Caetano, *As Casas*, 335-90.
[28] Caetano, *As Casas*, 390-410.
[29] Caetano, *As Casas*, 402.

their architectural formulas, especially in the late medieval period[30]. As a result of this imitation, municipal buildings often began to flaunt «elementos da iconografia paçã, como os coroamentos ameados, as pedras de armas ou a adopção da torre»[31].

The present study is limited to the case of Portuguese urban municipalities under royal lordship and does not cover municipalities under the ecclesiastical lordship of bishops or military orders, nor those under noble lordship, for which a complementary study would be necessary. Unlike what happened in France and Italy, the heraldic typology in Portuguese municipal hall buildings of that kind of municipalities was reduced to two modalities: the royal arms and the municipal arms. The former was almost indispensable, sometimes articulated with the latter, always hierarchically:

> Todos os brasões, reais, concelhios ou «mistos» (os que justapõem ou combinam as armas do Concelho e as do Reino) suscitam ou repõem a questão da presença nobilitante e quase obrigatória dos brasões na arquitectura e equipamentos concelhios. Com efeito, o brasão real (muito mais que o do concelho) tanto integra a generalidade das fachadas das casas da câmara, […] como surge em elementos e em pormenores arquitectónicos e decorativos, realizado nos mais variados materiais e aplicado nas mais diversas circunstâncias[32].

Hence the importance of the stone bearing the arms in the building used as the seat of municipal power: not as simple ornamentation or ostentation (although these effects could also be desired and achieved), but as a certain epiphany. More than identifying, the stone with the arms served to transform the building into a symbolic seat of municipal authority. Heraldry had, in this sense, a performative character: the building, whatever its dimensions, history, or framework was ennobled by the arms and could thus become a place of collective memory.

Hence the importance of choosing the place the heraldic element would occupy in the municipal building: the criterion of visibility was paramount, together with other both practical and symbolic factors, such as centrality and elevation, or simply articulating urban factors (such street orientation) and valuing the effect of perspective (even if this required placing the heraldic stone in a corner). In general, there was also a preference, in the exterior, for transitional spaces: once again, symbolic, and practical aspects of delimiting public space were combined in this context.

The symbolic aspects are related to understandable factors: heraldry announced the spatial transition, providing the passer-by with a concrete indication of the limit they were about to cross, and the authority exercised in the space ahead. Practical aspects, sometimes overlooked, were not insignificant: affixing municipal signs visually expressed the correspondence between the space and a series of rights, prerogatives, and advantages of that municipality; such signs, in short, announced the legal and administrative authority of the entity that managed the municipality.

30 Trindade, «Casas».
31 Trindade and Cabral, «Um bom», 350.
32 Caetano, *As Casas*, 738.

In this way, municipal heraldry constituted the visual complement of a series of symbolic objects that condensed the individuality of each municipality, such as the charter in which the mutual obligations between municipality and king were enshrined, the chest in which the most relevant municipal documentation was kept, or the keys that the municipality symbolically handed over to the sovereign during solemn entrance ceremonies.

Figure 1. Medieval stone with Beja's municipal insignia (a castle and an ox) surmounted by the Portuguese royal arms, fourteenth century (Beja castle, photo by the author).

Figure 2. Stones with royal and municipal arms with epigraph in the fountain of Andaluz, Lisbon, 1336 (Lisbon Museum, replica, photo by the author).

This also resulted in a peculiar relationship between municipal signals and royal heraldry: while the charter reflected a central authority hierarchically superior to local power, the municipal arms were often combined with the royal arms, in an unequivocal hierarchical relationship. This was expressed by always placing the royal arms in a more honorable position than the municipal insignia: sometimes on a higher plane, as can be seen, for example, in the stone of the municipality of Beja, today in the castle of this city (Figure 1), or in the stone of the Andaluz fountain in Lisbon (Figure 2); sometimes on the heraldic dexter, i. e. the observer's left, such as in the Arroios fountain in the same city

Figure 3. Stone with royal and municipal arms in the fountain of Arroios, Lisbon, 1360 (Lisbon Museum, Colecção do Museu de Lisboa / EGEAC / Câmara Municipal de Lisboa).

Figure 4. Stones with royal and municipal arms in the fountain of Canos, Torres Vedras, fourteenth century (photo by the author).

Figure 5. Epigraphic stone with the Portuguese royal arms and the canting insignia of Borba, in the walls of this town, 1302 (photo by the author).

(Figure 3). But there were also other complementary strategies for promoting the royal arms in relation to the municipal arms[33]. One strategy was duplicating or multiplying the royal symbols, whose profusion signaled the primacy of the King's power over the rest, as in the Canos fountain in Torres Vedras (Figure 4). Another was displaying the emblems within a shield, as often seen in the royal arms, or outside a shield, as often seen in municipal insignia, as can be found in the inscription on the walls of the town of Borba, in which the Portuguese royal coat of arms, represented in a shield, is accompanied by a barbel fish (*barbo*) that is the canting insignia of the municipality (Figure 5). A final form of hierarchical valorization was the inclusion of the municipality's identifying figures within the royal coat of arms, as is the case, for example, in the stone of the so-called Gothic fountain in Atouguia da Baleia, where the Portuguese *quinois* are complemented by castles and bulls (Figures 6 and 7).

More than a simple reminder, the presence of royal and municipal heraldry constituted what can be called a *visual performative act*: their concrete existence simultaneously invoked and created the specificity of the municipal power, legitimately exercised over the territory they marked, and over the community that lived or circulated in that territory. Just as the municipal seal served to legitimize the documentation emanating from the municipality or that the municipality confirmed, so displaying the municipal arms on heritage, upon objects and places of collective memory, legitimized the power of the municipal agents over the whole urban space.

[33] Hablot, «Le décor», 151-2.

Figure 6. Gothic fountain of Atouguia da Baleia, fourteenth century (photo by the author).

Figure 7. Gothic fountain of Atouguia da Baleia, detail of the coat-of-arms stone (photo by the author).

This expression was not only an abstract invocation of the legitimacy of power; the arms, used as spatial markers, also indicated that the delimited space was subordinated to a specific juridical-administrative regime, including a fiscal dimension. In this regard, the presence of arms entailed two interesting parallels.

First, these limits and their political specificity were marked with inscriptions. However, in a predominantly illiterate society, inscriptions had the disadvantage of being decipherable by a much smaller number of observers. It would be interesting to compare the placement of epigraphs and arms, to understand when either was used separately or in articulation, and to observe either's behavior regarding the occupation and symbolic definition of space.

The second parallel concerns the presence of measurement standards, sometimes near the access doors to urban spaces: just as the kingdom was marked by the diverse political-administrative identities of its municipalities, so the measurement systems presented a notorious diversification[34]. In both cases, the heraldic signs and the representation of the measurement units marked the municipality's subjection to royal authority. Sometimes both systems merged: thus, the weight units, entrusted to the municipality, were marked with the royal heraldry, and sometimes supplemented with the municipal heraldry.

This complementarity is linked to the evolution of relations between local and central power in Portugal during the late medieval period. The fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were, in fact, a time of crucial economic development, despite the deep crises that occurred intermittently. This development was accompanied by a more accentuated social stratification within the municipalities, most noticeable in those that experienced developments linked to the increase in maritime trade, especially the two main cities of Lisbon and Oporto[35]. The urban oligarchies resulting from this social ranking also built their own heraldic forms of self-representation, which emphasized the coherence of the group, its capacity for projection and, especially in the case of the cities where the court was more frequently established, its privileged relationship with the royal power[36].

At this stage, relations between the royal authority and the local oligarchies tended to become more complex, with increasing convergences and conflicts[37]. These fluctuations were echoed in the main institution that mediated between the king and the other political agents in the realm: the *cortes*, a kind of parliament convened by the monarch and organized according to the three traditional orders, among which the popular arm (i. e. the municipalities) took on increasing prominence. This tendency was reinforced by the election of King João I at the Coimbra *cortes* in 1385, in the context of the dynastic crisis opened by the death of Ferdinand I two years earlier and the war against King Juan I of Castile-Leon[38].

The «Atlantic turn» of the major European trade, which began in the fourteenth century but greatly increased in the following century, also tended to stimulate those

[34] Barroca, «Medidas»; and Viana, «Algumas medidas».
[35] Coelho, «O Estado»; Farelo, «A oligarquia»; and Barros, «Oligarquia».
[36] Farelo, «A heráldica»; and Henriques and Mendes, «Coerências».
[37] Moreno, «O poder», and Coelho, «Relações».
[38] Sousa, «O discurso».

previous patterns. In this sense, the fifteenth century was a pivotal period for the relationship between the Crown and the municipalities: a complex relation that can be summarized by the expression of mutual dependence, which led to necessary cooperation, not without its moments of conflict[39]. Overseas expansion, which began in 1415 with the conquest of Ceuta, also played a part in this process, contributing to a greater centralization of royal power and to the enhancement of towns linked to maritime trade. It is no surprise, then, that the oldest stones with Portuguese municipal heraldry that have survived to the present-day date from the fourteenth century; and that the number of occurrences of this type of heraldry increased considerably during the fifteenth century[40].

Figure 8. Stone with the Portuguese royal arms and the municipal canting insignia in Serpa, fourteenth century (photo by the author).

3 The heraldic marking of urban space

The epicenter of the municipality's heraldic signs was, naturally, the town hall headquarters. Unfortunately, there are few of these medieval stones left, which have generally been removed and replaced during the modern or contemporary era. An exception is

[39] Moreno, «O poder real»; and Sousa, «A estratégia».
[40] Seixas, «As insígnias».

the beautiful stone that still marks Serpa's town hall today, with a dragon (*serpe*) as a canting element (Figure 8). But their presence could extend to other urban spaces, in various municipal buildings or structures, as pointed out by Caetano[41], namely structures and facilities for water supply (wells, cisterns, fountains, washhouses, privies); spaces for storage, gathering and shelter (public barns, municipal corrals); spaces for para-industrial transformation (slaughterhouses, municipal ovens); public spaces for socializing and commerce (fairgrounds, covered benches, ball fields, bullfighting arenas, municipal porch, butcheries, weighing houses and the house of the *almotacé* —the inspector of weights and measurements—; housing spaces (the residence of the judge and magistrate, the municipal inn); spaces for health, aid and devotion (leprosarium and house of Saint Lazarus, foundling wheelhouse, chapels and hermitages of Saint Sebastian); and spaces for representation, justice and punishment (pillory, but not the gallow, since the death penalty was strictly a royal prerogative). Many of these municipal facilities are represented in the monumental survey carried out by Duarte de Armas at the beginning of the sixteenth century, although the scale and the perspective of his drawings does not allow us to ascertain their heraldic ornamentation, represented only in rare cases[42].

Reconstituting the presence of municipal heraldry in medieval Portuguese towns is, however, hampered by basic heuristic issues. The absence of a general inventory of the Portuguese medieval heraldic heritage is a first —and serious— obstacle[43]. The few local and regional inventories, on the other hand, do not always cover all heraldic typologies, since many focus exclusively on family heraldry. In contrast, given its eminently political dimension, both royal and municipal heraldry were usually erased, transformed, or replaced[44]. Despite these limitations, there is evidence of some significant examples of municipal heraldry placed on municipal buildings or structures in Portuguese urban clusters of the Middle Ages, such as the gothic fountain in Atouguia da Baleia and the fountain of Figueiras in Santarém; the water fountain of Canos in Torres Vedras and of Andaluz and Arroios in Lisbon; the Alcorce bridge in Santarém; or the weighing house in Elvas.

The symbolic importance of pillories should be emphasized, given the primacy of the higher levels of justice as the core of any legitimate power in the Middle Ages, necessarily connected with a transcendent dimension. Hence, on the one hand, the usual figuration of religious and cosmic elements in the decoration of these facilities; and, on the other, their centrality in the urban space, placed in the main square, usually in front of the town hall building. Also, for this reason, the most usual heraldic presence in pillories was that of the royal arms, figured evidently in the most honorable place, since all justice emanates from the monarch, who acts in the name of God. The Christological interpretation of the *quinois* (the five escutcheons in the royal arms) as related with the five wounds of Christ was disseminated early on, thus justifying and visually expressing a concept of justice whose application, in concrete spaces and instruments, assumed a

41 Caetano, *As Casas*, 166-230. For Lisbon, see Aguiar, Farelo and Gomes (eds.), *Pão, carne e água*.
42 Armas, *Livro*; Barroca, «O *Livro*».
43 Seixas, «Bibliografia».
44 Borgia, *Gli stemmi*, 25.

transcendental and legitimating dimension[45]. The secondary and subordinate presence of the municipal arms in the pillories is similar to other heraldic typologies, where they also share space with the royal arms[46]. But it should be noted that the presence of municipal heraldry is quite numerous, having survived (always in conjunction with the royal coat of arms) in the medieval pillories of Açores (Celorico da Beira), Alverca do Ribatejo, Angeja, Azambuja, Bragança, Castelo (Sátão), Castelo de Vide, Chaves, Ega, Ourém, Penela, and São Vicente da Beira[47].

Figure 9. Stones with royal and municipal arms framing a sacred image at the door of Almedina, Coimbra, first quarter of the sixteenth century (photo by the author).

Despite the importance of the pillories, the most common cases of municipal arms outside the town halls seem to occur in the walls surrounding the villages. Here, the stones with arms are generally located in the entrances of the urban centers or their castle, as those in the doorways of Estremoz in Borba, Almedina in Coimbra, Atamarma in Santarém, Castelinhos in Leiria or São Sebastião in Olivença. The presence of municipal insignia in the wall's doorways instils upon the passer-by a clear definition of their entrance into the urban space, wherein heraldry is associated with architecture (Figure

[45] Seixas, *Quinas*.

[46] There are examples of family heraldry (such as the arms of the Sousa family in the pillory of Prado), of ecclesiastical heraldry (such as the arms of the Order of Avis in the pillory of Fronteira), or of personal badges, such as the fishing net, badge of Queen D. Leonor, in the pillory of Óbidos. See, respectively, Seixas and Portugal, «À sombra»; Seixas and Galvão-Telles, *Heráldica,* 123-4; and Seixas and Galvão-Telles, «As insígnias».

[47] Malafaia, *Pelourinhos portugueses*, 68, 92, 96, 111, 128, 155, 156, 172, 187, 290, 315, and 357.

9). This was completed by the urbanism of many towns, where the main road ran from the main door to the castle, crossing the main square where the municipal building and the pillory were located. Here, the passer-by could rediscover the same visual message present at the entry door, that is: the municipal arms (identifying the *concelho*) together with the royal arms. In all the cases mentioned, both the gateways in the walls and the municipal buildings and structures, there is an unwavering principal: the municipal signs are subordinate to the royal arms[48]. According to the current state of knowledge from the sources, the exclusivity of royal and municipal signs is only broken by the stone with arms on the doorway of São Sebastião in Olivença, which in addition to the royal arms and the county's canting symbol (an olive tree), also presents a shield with the arms of the *alcaide* (military governor) Pero Lourenço do Rego (Figure 10). The symbolic importance of fortifications had other remarkable heraldic consequences: castles, towers and walls were the most common structures bearing Portuguese municipal heraldry of the Middle Ages[49]. This undoubtedly reflects an affirmation of the municipalities' military capacity but can also reflect the image that towns conceived and projected of themselves as spaces delimited by a defensive perimeter.

Figure 10. Epigraphic stone of the doorway of São Sebastião in Olivença, showing the Portuguese royal arms, the municipal canting insignia, and the shield of the governor Pero Lourenço do Rego, 1306 (photo by the author).

The concrete and symbolic delimitation of space through heraldry was also present in the landmarks used to define the spatial limits of municipal power. For example, João II ordered the placement of a series of landmarks along the mouth of the Tagus, to

48 Barroca, *Epigrafia medieval*, II, 2-1313-20 and III, 453.
49 Sameiro, «A Heráldica».

delimit the territory of Lisbon (Figure 11)[50]. This measure was not merely expressed the legitimacy of the municipal political authority, but also a concrete instrument to activate fiscal rights, in close association with the respective charter[51].

Figure 11. Border stone with municipal insignia of Lisbon, fifteenth century (Lisbon Museum, Colecção do Museu de Lisboa / EGEAC / Câmara Municipal de Lisboa).

Heraldry's spatial appropriation was also not necessarily confined to the physical territory: it could also have an auditory dimension. As mentioned, bells were one of the essential elements identifying municipalities, as they played a symbolic and practical role of great importance in organizing the life of the community. Consequently, the placement of heraldic emblems upon bells was logical, as a mark of possession or commission, but also had an apotropaic character[52]. Therefore, one would expect that municipal bells be marked with the respective heraldic signs. This practice, unproven as of yet for municipal entities, has been documented and studied, for example, with regard to religious communities and settlements subjected to certain landlords. Notice, for instance, the

[50] Cid, *A Torre*, 174-5.
[51] Seixas, «Art», 297.
[52] Ermini, «La campana».

bell with the arms of Berengária Aires in the Almoster monastery and the bell with the arms of Vasco da Gama in the town tower in Vidigueira, capital of the county attributed to him[53].

The manifestations listed here leave out, however, many others that might have existed in medieval Portuguese villages, given the heuristic limitations, but also because of the comprehensiveness of the heraldic phenomenon in the Middle Ages. The heraldic emblems covered, in fact, a multitude of movable objects, part of which applied, precisely, to delimit the urban space. The most obvious example is flags. Together with the seal matrix, the flag was a symbolic municipal element par excellence; in contrast, however, the flag could be replicated nearly without limit. Several documentary sources reveal the importance of flags and indicate the attention paid to their display, maintenance, or loss[54]. They were undoubtedly used on the solemn occasions of community life (such as royal entrances or acclamations) but also in the municipality's ordinary life.

Sometimes, they were embodied in more permanent manifestations, such as heraldic weathervanes like those that adorned the palace of the municipality of Setúbal: two weathervanes with their cupper globes and insignia of Saint James[55]. Naturally, flags played a special role in times of war, both in identifying the municipal army and delimiting the space under the municipality's authority. In this sense, Fernão Lopes provides a revealing description of the 77 towers that garrisoned Lisbon's walls during the siege by King Juan I of Castile in 1384:

> *Avia em estas torres muitas lamças darmas e bacinetes, e doutras armaduras, que rreluziam tamtas que bem mostrava cada huma torre per ssi que abastamte era pera sse deffemder. Em muitas dellas estavom troons bem acompanhados de pedras, e bamdeiras de sam Jorge, e das armas do rreino e da çidade, e doutros alguuns senhores e capitães que as poinham nas torres que lhes eram emcomendadas*[56].

This narration mentions two realities alluded to earlier. Firstly, the inextricable symbolism and practicality when applying heraldry to an urban space: in addition to the role of marking city fortifications, flags served to signal the concrete assignment of the city's defense sectors. They also served an ingratiating, soulful function, which the chronicler also indicated. Secondly, the constant articulation between royal and municipal heraldry, here interpolated with manorial or family heraldry[57].

[53] Mendes and Henriques, «Ffeguras & Sinaes»; Villa Franca and Rosa, «Configurar»; and Seixas and Oliveira, «As armas».

[54] These questions are valid for both the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Age. João Pinto Ribeiro, a magistrate closely linked to the movement to restore Portuguese independence in 1640, produced an interesting reflection on the political symbolism of municipal flags. Seixas, «João Pinto».

[55] Trindade, «Casas», 224.

[56] Lopes, *Crónica de D. João I*, I, 223.

[57] Seixas, «Heráldica no castelo».

4 Conclusion

This observation highlights the need for a comparative reflection, on several levels. First of all, the phenomenon of defining urban space with municipal heraldry must be studied in comparison with the other heraldic typologies also represented there: foremost, royal heraldry, which, as seen earlier, was an intrinsic part of municipal power's expression in Portugal; but also, family, ecclesiastical, religious, corporate or even imaginary heraldry, in addition to the para-heraldic emblems (badges). They all combine in the urban space, promoting its definition and hierarchy simultaneously, in a complex relationship that only a careful study can uncover.

A comparative reflection is also necessary to compare the Portuguese examples with those of other political realities. Related with the aforementioned Italian and French cases, the configuration of Portuguese heraldry has some specific characteristics, namely the absolute predominance of the binomial royal/municipal arms (where the former retain hierarchical and numerical prevalence), only exceptionally tempered with other typologies. One can also infer, therefore, that the heraldry marking the Portuguese urban space functioned less by agglutination than by contrast, clearly revealing the hierarchical predominance of the king and municipalities as complementary sovereign bodies (despite the former's political prevalence over the latter). Profoundly altered by the Manueline reform of the charters, which often led to the waning —sometimes even the disappearance— of the old municipal arms in favor of the royal arms, this marking was enduring[58].

Well into the nineteenth century, it was remembered and reconstituted in a key moment of national redefinition: the acclamation of Pedro V, in 1855, as part of the Regeneration Movement. The arches in Lisbon's Terreiro do Paço were decorated from one end to the other with a frieze bearing the arms of the kingdom's towns and those overseas, creating a symbolic space that represented all the peoples and territories with which the monarch, upon his ascent, established a mutual political pact, based on a tradition presented and felt as timeless, an essential complement to the constitutional dimension of the sovereign's legitimacy[59].

In conclusion, the relationship between heraldry and symbolic appropriation of medieval urban space opens a field of study that is vast and interesting in its varied ramifications. This field is at the crossroads of various aspects of history (political, institutional, social, cultural) and art history, but also urban studies. This text does not present a comprehensive vision of municipal heraldry's spatial function in medieval Portuguese towns, it merely aims to frame a series of questions and clues that can be explored later. To go further would require an exhaustive survey of patrimonial and documentary sources, as well as comparisons with other heraldic typologies and similar phenomena in other states.

[58] Seixas, «A emblemática».
[59] Seixas, *Heráldica, representação*, 47-86.

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