Heraldic Studies

Edited by Torsten Hiltmann and Laurent Hablot

Vol. 2

THORBECKE

Steven Thiry

Matter(s) of State

Heraldic Display and Discourse in the
Early Modern Monarchy (c. 1480–1650)

THORBECKE

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments

distractions. A final word of gratitude goes to my parents, grandparents, and sister for their patience and love, and to Bart, who changed my life in every positive way. My profound appreciation for them cannot be blazoned in simple terms.

Abbreviations

Arch. Nat.	Paris, Archives Nationales de France
Arsenal	Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal
BL	London, British Library
BMB Chiflet	Besançon, Bibliothèque Municipale (Collection Chiflet)
BMGN	Bijdragen en Mededelingen betreffende de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden (Low Countries Historical Review)
BnF	Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France
BNM Mss	Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional de España (manuscripts)
Fr.	Fonds Français (BnF)
KBR	Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek van België (Royal Library of Belgium)
Melián	Pedro Melián, M. P. Sor...Mexico, April 1650, RBP 2/II/1992, f. 11r.–17v.
NADH	The Hague, Nationaal Archief (National Archives)
RAG	Ghent, Rijksarchief in Gent (State Archives, Ghent)
RAH	Madrid, Real Academia de la Historia (Colección Salazar y Castro)
RBP	Madrid, Real Biblioteca del Palacio
RI XIII	Regesten Kaiser Friedrich III. (1440–1493), s.l. 2013, ed. Paul-Joachim Heinig, Christian Lackner, Alois Niederstätter (www.regesta-imperii.de).
RI XIV	Regesta Imperii XIV. Ausgewählte Regesten des Kaiserreiches unter Maximilian I. 1493–1519, ed. Joachim Friedrich Böhmer (www.regesta-imperii.de).

Introduction

In 1591, the puritan radical William Hacket committed a significant act of secular iconoclasm. Under the frenzy of divine revelation, he targeted a large panel depicting the coat of arms of Queen Elizabeth I that was mounted in front of Hacket's lodging at London Blackfriars[1]. *Commaunded by God* to do it – as he later confessed during his trial – the determined radical pierced the eyes of the red dragon and the lion, the two figures that traditionally supported the armorial composition of the Tudor rulers (figure 1)[2]. The cross depicted on top of the arched royal crown that surmounted the shield was carefully scratched off

Fig. 1: Panel with the coat of arms of Elizabeth I (this version with a golden dragon), St Thomas Becket Church, Salisbury. Late sixteenth century (courtesy of St Thomas's Church, Salisbury & Simon Howden).

in like manner[3]. Although the present book will not systematically address English heraldic developments, this incident exceptionally captures the main issues at stake[4].

---

1   Hacket's beliefs and trial are analysed in: Alexandra WALSHAM, »Frantick Hacket«: Prophecy, Sorcery, Insanity, and the Elizabethan Puritan Movement, in: The Historical Journal 41 (1998), p. 27–66.

2   On the Tudor use of the royal arms, see: John Harvey PINCHES, Rosemary V. PINCHES, The Royal Heraldry of England, London 1974; Henry Munro CAUTLEY, Royal Arms and Commandments in Our Churches, Ipswich 1934.

3   [Richard COSIN], Conspiracie, for Pretended Reformation: viz. Presbyteriall Discipline. A Treatise discovering the late designments and courses held for advancement thereof, by William Hacket, Yeoman, Edmund Coppinger, and Henry Arthington…, London 1591, p. 63; John STRYPE, Annals of the Reformation and establishment of religion and other various occurrences in the Church of England, during Queen Elizabeth's happy reign, vol. 4, Oxford 1824, p. 97–101.

4   I have looked into English heraldic particularities elsewhere: Steven THIRY, »In Open Shew to the World«. Mary Stuart's Armorial Claim to the English Throne and Anglo-French Relations (1559–1561), in: The English Historical Review 132 (2017), p. 1405–1439. See also: David GELBER, Heraldry, Heralds and the Earl Marshal of England, c. 1480–1603: War, Politics and Diplomacy, unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Oxford 2012; Adrian AILES, Heraldry in Medieval England: Symbols of Politics and Propaganda, in: Peter COSS, Maurice KEEN (ed.), Heraldry, Pageantry and Social Display in Medieval England, Woodbridge 2002, p. 88–93.

In its public manifestation, the royal escutcheon was considered a true token of legitimate kingship. Few would contest that it proclaimed rightful dynastic rule over the community of subjects. It is often said that having lost the practical function of military identification by the end of the Middle Ages, armorial images must have been submerged into the swollen atmosphere of Renaissance emblematics and the allegorical splendour of the Baroque[5]. The present-day persuasive tactics of shrewd marketers and the machinery of political spin encourage us to consider these symbolic remnants as bygone channels that mainly propagated the ideals of an aristocratic elite. The princely bearings in particular are held to have rallied support for the royal cause, identified property and − quite basically put − persuaded the easily impressed masses with their magnificence. Supposedly invented by heralds and propagandists in the service of haughty rulers, they either promoted the regal dominance of a court society to the outer world or, if their complicated iconography was praised in esoteric terms, struck the note of empty flattery.

Hacket's startling gesture against arms as a material object of royal power makes such an attractive, ready-made explanation unsatisfying in several respects. The violence hurled against the queen's abstract image chimed with other meaningful acts. As such, it exposed much larger concerns than simple disrespect for royal policy. Witnesses later testified to the additional discovery of a portrait of the queen, stabbed through the heart with an iron stake[6]. Accusations of harmful, sympathetic magic were soon uttered. What was more, these attacks against royal images turned out to be part of a wider »secret« conspiracy, unravelled through the reported preaching of this self-proclaimed messiah and his disciples. The men promoted the eradication of »infidels« (read: non-presbyterians), the impeachment of the queen's religious counsellors, and – not in the least – the physical assassination of the sovereign herself[7].

When the Privy Council confronted Hacket with these allegations in July 1591, he insisted that his deeds were divinely sanctioned. Addressing his prosecutors as a lawful king-prophet, he claimed to have been *mooved thereunto inwardly by the spirit, to take away her* [Elizabeth's] *whole power of her authoritie*[8]. The aggression towards the representative sign thus directly targeted the royal majesty. By ritually removing the idolatrous marks of the former owner and leaving intact the age-old quartering of the central shield, Hacket, in a certain sense, assumed the arms for himself. He thereby made a claim to *the Crowne of Englande*, because *her Maiestie had forfaited her Crowne*[9]. During the interrogation, he confessed this intention in a curious way: the lion and dragon were cast as the embodiments of oppressive and blasphemous transgressions against *God's people*. Therefore, the *wicked* council of the queen was to be removed and replaced by officers of his own picking in order to herald a new era of truly reformed religion[10].

5   Michel Pastoureau, Aux origines de l'emblème: la crise de l'héraldique Européenne aux XVe et XVIe siècles, in: Id., L'hermine et le sinople: études d'héraldique médiévale, Paris 1982, p. 327−334; Clive Cheesman, Some Aspects of the »Crisis of Heraldry«, in: The Coat of Arms, 3e ser., 6 (2010), p. 65−80.
6   [Cosin], Conspiracie, p. 63; Strype, Annals of the Reformation, IV, p. 97.
7   Walsham, »Frantick Hacket«.
8   [Cosin], Conspiracie, p. 61.
9   Ibid., p. 62.
10   Ibid., p. 61.

Although an isolated act, this heraldic defamation was no gratuitous vandalism against the established government – nor was it an unfavourable reaction to a propagandist message behind the sign. The construction of meaning through violent action was more complex, and targets were carefully chosen. Instead of erasing the complete royal achievement (i.e., the shield with all its accoutrements), the attack selectively targeted those visual components that signified the royal individual and the present dynasty, while the cross on the crown reminded Hacket of *popish* idolatry[11].

However insignificant anecdotes like these might seem at first sight, they reveal a reasoned programme of political renewal. Hacket himself was hailed by his supporters as an alternative monarch with an universal calling; a *king of Europe* or even a *king of the worlde* to be obeyed by all other monarchs[12]. The heraldic iconoclasm did not renounce the English monarchy in itself, but it strove to purify the political community of an apostate ruler who had forfeited her crown. Hacket was subsequently tried for *maliciously & traitorously, compassing, imagining, devising, and intending the deprivation and deposing of our said Soveraigne Ladie Elizabeth, from her honor and royall name of the Imperial Crowne of this Realme of England*[13]. He was publicly hanged, drawn, and quartered near Cheapside Cross on 28 July, the mode of his execution mirroring his own act of spectacular desecration[14].

1.1 APPROPRIATING THE ARMORIAL MATTER OF STATE

This curious case stands among many other public incidents with the royal escutcheon or its dispersed symbolism. Exceptionally contextualized, it poses compelling questions for an interpretation focussed merely on social identification, self-promotion, and orderly scripted image-building. Drawing a comparison with modern logos, branding, and national symbols stirs up problems as well. Moreover, the exchange between destruction, selective appropriation, and ideological construction defies the use of more traditional explanatory paradigms, like the semiotic model of communication or the persuasion of public opinion.

The principal features that constitute the central themes of the study at hand are apparent, however, in such seemingly negligible anecdotes. In the first place, the vignette above suggests that abstract forms of royal representation, and heraldry in particular, were ubiquitous and much better understood than we credit them today. All too often regarded as highly hermetic, individuals of diverse social backgrounds actually had access to these signs. They instantly recognized the arms as princely images and were able to attach importance to them – albeit not always in an approved way. The almost chirurgical, iconoclastic intervention at Blackfriars demonstrates that an illiterate, popular prophet – a man of humble upbringing – was surpris-

---

11 Pinches, Pinches, The Royal Heraldry, p. 133, 140, 154–156.
12 [Cosin], Conspiracie, p. 61–63.
13 Ibid., p. 65.
14 Walsham, »Frantick Hacket«, p. 28–29.

ingly well acquainted with visual (and tactile) conveyors of monarchical authority[15]. Hacket knew what the different parts of an armorial composition portrayed and appropriated them as the material actualization of his own, distorted mental universe.

In the second place, armorial »meaning« was not exclusively imparted by the explicit initiative of the ruler or a specialized entourage of artists, ritualists, or officers of arms. Heraldic imagery circulated on coinage, printed media, and daily commodities, as well as being affixed to spatial constructions. It could easily be created outside of the centralized production of grand portraits of state, monumental allegories, or short-lived props of dynastic ceremonial. Therefore, it seems likely that royal arms partially escaped the government's growing aspirations to image control. Despite the insistence of the manuals of the age, interpretations and adaptations were not the monopoly of professional heraldists. Even those men who had no knowledge at all of erudite iconographic explanations could make sense of the signs through more or less *impromptu* performances centring on their tangible dimension.

This conjures up a third and vital observation that any sound appraisal of the phenomenon must tackle. Apart from being highly stylized imagery, ensigns armorial also appeared in the guise of tangible objects with an approachable and often enduring character. In other words, their public function or versatility cannot be separated from one's access to their spatial disposition and materiality. This observation seems self-evident, yet because the majority of heraldic remnants have disappeared over time, their material essence is often overlooked. Previous studies mostly focussed on the general, the normative, the iconographic, or issues of provenance, but not on how the symbols attracted attention. More precisely: what shaped an individual's behaviour towards them? Hacket's iconoclasm hints at how instead of deciphering transmitted messages about the fortunes of the polity, diffuse issues of veneration, recognition, communal (dis)identification, or (dis)respect were at stake in heraldic imagery as well. There are strong parallels with the realm of the sacred. Here, the visual and material stimulated a sense of belonging to a community of believers, regardless of whether the intricacies of theological dogma really »persuaded« the average person[16].

In addition, an emphasis on the actual physical dimension of the images enables a better understanding of how the visual objects themselves actively participated in the process – a largely unexplored subject in historical studies. To a certain extent, the typical configuration and public exposure of arms encouraged – or obstructed – the degree of instrumentality that could be ascribed to them[17]. By doing so, heraldry boasted particular faculties in comparison to other political images. Abstract associations attached to the solid material context guided (the reach of) interpretation. Erected out in the open in a multiplied and approachable format, the regal shield actively confronted the beholder while provoking new acts of signification. This is not to deny the decisive influence of human actors in creating meaning. Yet, the sign also created, by its very nature, a condition that lay beyond the original intentions of the inventor or manipulator. Hacket's selective appropriation was only possible insofar as Elizabeth's public

---

15   On Hacket's social background, see: Ibid., p. 27.
16   Cf. John Bossy, Christianity in the West, 1400–1700, Oxford 1985, p. 57–75.
17   Theoretical reflections in: Bruno Latour, Reassembling the Social. An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory, Oxford 2005, p. 63–86.

escutcheon, exhibited in front of his dwelling, materialized a mixture of timeworn kingship and Tudor dynasticism.

In the fourth and final place comes the subversive agenda that underlay this and other examples of heraldic appropriation. It is an important point of interest if the aim is to fully appreciate the contribution of regal heraldry to the early modern formation of authority. Apparently, Hacket believed that the outward insignia really constituted and incarnated sovereign majesty. He consequently justified the violence as a necessary purge of the fundaments of the political fabric. The actual stabbing and scratching of the arms and portrait became a ritualized aggression against the powers and associations they embodied. By means of the rude desecration, the escutcheon was validated as the repository of a dignified and transcendent authority. The puritan later bragged that he would have behaved even more destructively *had it not bene for disquieting his hostesse where he lay, because when shee found it, she was very angrie therewith*[18]. Contemporary explanations of such violence used a language of correspondences that is at odds with the present conviction that heraldic images reflected a static social universe[19]. On the contrary, the irreverent gesture claimed to »reform« this innate structure. Action was motivated by an alternative religio-political programme which largely differed from official ideology and which interacted with subversive display. Restricting our scholarly attention to doctrines of power at the top neglects a great deal of this interplay.

So, by and large, what at first glance looks like a not so relevant footnote in a history of disobedience hints at the deeper involvement of an abstract visual genre within a shifting political process. Heraldic imagery effectively functioned insofar as a significance was ascribed to it. Interpretative actions directed its relevance along a number of situational factors. Instead of an immobile repository of status, concrete practices made heraldry a powerful component of changeable political affairs[20]. Following this realization, the description of the royal coat of arms as a solid signal of authority leaves the historian with an unsatisfied feeling. That same »authority« was no uncontested faculty with an objective existence, expressed through unambiguous media. It was something debatable, vulnerable, and reciprocal. It had to be carefully nurtured[21].

Although formally a possession of the head of state, the sovereign arms were in reality subjected to constant modification. They functioned in a complex interplay between different visions and stakeholders. This observation invokes important considerations: the particularities of regal arms in relation to other genres, their diffusion in society, the way they were treated, those who were involved, and most notably their association with principles of rule. To tackle these topics, the present book investigates the role that the heraldic played in the political culture of the early modern monarchy. Taking into account accessibility, creative action from below, materiality, and correspondence, I approach royal armorial symbolism (in its widest sense) as a dynamic set of codes, instruments, and gestures that were continuously interpreted and

---

18   [Cosin], Conspiracie, p. 61–62.
19   On heraldic semiotics, see: Brian Abel Ragen, Semiotics and Heraldry, in: Semiotica 100 (1994), p. 5–34.
20   Cf. Peter Burke, Performing History: The Importance of Occasions, in: Rethinking History 9 (2005), p. 35–52.
21   Bruno Latour, The Powers of Association, in: John Law (ed.), Power, Action and Belief. A New Sociology of Knowledge, London 1986, p. 271–276.

reinterpreted to serve specific needs. It will be argued that this interactive process entailed the political relevance of the phenomenon. Purposeful instrumentalization intersected with diverging stakes, and generated new meaning by adapting the misleadingly solid signals to specific circumstances, albeit within the limits posed by representative formula. Along the way, the government's attempts to control such expressions interfaced with notions of »authority«, »sovereignty« and »dynasty«. It is my contention that contemporary debates about the heraldic attributes of the sovereign helped to define, produce, or modify the foundations of the political order. Those involved took for granted that there was an organic connection between the external insignia and the power they visualized. Their writings and actions not only expressed views on how this happened, but also imparted new heraldic meaning to accompany political transformation. Opposite convictions about statecraft and sovereignty crystallized into particular armorial traditions and performances.

Because the exercise of authority was in essence a process of negotiation, the visual adaptation and its capacity to align or reject multiple stakes had its part in the formation of the state. Both construction and deconstruction were translated into a remarkable attention to the (re) design of outward abstract imagery. A more or less equitable balance between symbolic interpretations guaranteed the stability of political associations. Given the many inherent contradictions, such efforts were not only initiated from above. They involved a wide array of opinionated actors whose actions helped to uphold the multifaceted reality. The specific format and public presence of the heraldic artefacts themselves also played a part, dictating the basic conditions of ongoing signification. Hence, I will demonstrate that the obstinate process of appropriation contributed to the making of a precarious hierarchized community.

The central question that drives this research can be formulated as follows: How did different stakeholders apply this special form of princely representation – characterized by its palpable omnipresence as well as by a diffuse ideological framework that, more than ever, thrived in a booming print culture – according to the political needs of the moment? In other words, what were the primary motivations, mechanisms, and aims behind processes of heraldic appropriation? Once these layered processes are appreciated, the political impact of the signs can be questioned in a new light. What does the interaction of abstract royal symbolism with the elusive principles that framed monarchical authority tell us about the construction of sovereign power? How did the appropriation of regal insignia influence the formulation of policy? Inescapably, this also raises the problem of the limits of such instrumentalization.

Some clarification of the main concept of »appropriation« is useful before delineating the subject matter and its historiographical relevance. The cultural model of appropriation includes various forms of interpretation and adaptation. Basically, it boils down to purposeful and creative acts of signification within a concrete historical context. These acts comprise a broad spectrum wherein something might be completely altered or where a previous use or significance might be almost completely retained[22]. Therefore, a strict definition is not appropriate for this study. The examples instead speak for themselves. Timing, context, modalities, and results are

22   Willem Frijhoff, Toeëigening: van bezitsdrang naar betekenisgeving, in: Trajecta 6 (1997), p. 99–118; Kathleen Ashley, Véronique Plesch, The Cultural Processes of »Appropriation«, in: Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies 32 (2002), p. 1–15.

open questions. Even so, we have to keep in mind that »appropriation« was a very active process, not a takeover of prefabricated values from above. It could just as well be an act of creative resistance as the fashioning of something anew without necessarily resisting a meaning imposed by others (the existence of a »cultural« or »political good«, however, is a prerequisite). Thus, it was a field of activity for not only subordinate groups, but also dominant actors resorted to appropriation to make sense of visual encounters[23]. Central here is the contention that meaning was not a given, but constantly created in the social dialogue. This research looks at the construction of meaning through both a changing heraldic discourse and the performative functions of display. It compares instances of heraldic appropriation in the French monarchy and in the Spanish Habsburg lands.

Signification usually occurred with the public exhibition of royal bearings, and more than just the iconography played an essential role. Because the sign manifested itself on different material supports, certain ritualized acts were likely to cause new connotations. Furthermore, ideological conceptions conditioned the mental atmosphere wherein political significance was shaped and perceived. These conceptions were either developed in learned treatises and other literary media or by interlacing the material artefact with textual mottoes and signifiers. Indeed, the rise in popularity of emblematic thinking over the course of the sixteenth century further intensified a literary assimilation of these particles of sight[24].

Treatises on heraldry provide the core source for any investigation into this exchange. Manuals and theoretical dissertations on the art were written from the fourteenth century onwards[25]. While they were initially confined to a milieu of specialists relying on manuscript copies of the same basic narratives, printing multiplied the available texts. Knowledge on heraldic composition began to circulate on a wider scale, reaching men keen on advancing their social standing[26]. Ideas about the social and political value of ensigns armorial were integrated into legal compendia and larger, instructive works on honour and chivalrous conduct[27]. These were

---

23   FRIJHOFF, Toeëigening, p. 104–109; ASHLEY, PLESCH, »Appropriation«, p. 1–2, 4–6. The binary »model of diffusion«, which explains appropriation as a creative response towards a predetermined dominant culture that was imposed from above, has to be seriously nuanced. It was most certainly a two-way path, wherein the dominant players likewise had to construct meaning through appropriation. Cf. LATOUR, The Powers of Association, p. 266–269.

24   Mario PRAZ, Studies in Seventeenth-Century Imagery, Rome 1964; Pedro F. CAMPA, The Space between Heraldry and the Emblem: The Case of Spain, in: Peter M. DALY (ed.), Emblem Scholarship: Directions and Developments. A Tribute to Gabriel Hornstein, Turnhout 2005, p. 51–81.

25   Claire BOUDREAU, L'héritage symbolique des hérauts d'armes: dictionnaire encyclopédique de l'enseignement du blason ancien (XIVe–XVIe siècle), 3 vol., Paris 2006; Torsten HILTMANN, Spätmittelalterliche Heroldskompendien. Referenzen adeliger Wissenskultur in Zeiten gesellschaftlichen Wandels (Frankreich und Burgund, 15. Jahrhundert), München 2011; Pedro Blas VALVERDE OGALLAR, Manuscritos y heráldica en el tránsito a la modernidad: el libro de armería de Diego Hernández de Mendoza, unpublished doctoral dissertation, Universidad Complutense de Madrid 2001.

26   J. F. R. DAY, Primers of Honor: Heraldry, Heraldry Books, and English Renaissance Literature, in: The Sixteenth Century Journal 21 (1990), p. 93–103; Philippe PALASI, Jeux de cartes et jeux de l'oie héraldiques aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles. Une pédagogie ludique en France sous l'Ancien Régime, Paris 2000; Kathryn Karen WILL, Cultivating Heraldic Histories in Early Modern English Literature, unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Michigan 2014.

27   Gérard SABATIER, Claude-François Ménestrier: les jésuites et le monde des images, Paris 2009. On the interest in heraldry among early modern French erudites, see: Guy MAYAUD, L'érudition héraldique au XVIIe siècle: la question des origines des armoiries, unpublished doctoral dissertation, École Nationale des Chartes 2013. I was not able to consult this unpublished study.

published next to smaller, relatively cheap guides that explained the basic principles with a more practical purpose in mind.

Although encouraging a familiarity with such images, specialized treatises are not that suitable for the study of the appropriation of regal exponents. When the bearings of the sovereign are described, brief comments explain their standard appearance and exemplary position among other marks of esteem. Short normative prescriptions and repeated wisdoms prevail. Another restriction is that specialized treatises were unevenly spread geographically, both in number and character. The relatively dense number of textbooks on the subject circulating in the French-speaking areas compares unfavourably with the few exclusively »heraldic« publications in the Hispanic world. In the latter, the genre merged early in the sixteenth century with essays and compilations on genealogy, virtue, and noble honour (the so-called *nobiliarios*)[28]. Armorials or contemporary collections of arms are interesting sources as they tried to arrange complicated realities into hierarchized categories. Yet, most of the time they lack any explanatory indications, and this makes it difficult to reconstruct context and purposes[29]. For the early modern period, such compilations – finding a printed adaptation in, for instance, ornate armorial charts – as well as erudite commentaries and miscellaneous heraldic-related material are also badly catalogued. So far as they could be traced, they are used in this research as indicators of the relations between a rich symbolic field and their regal apogees. Fragmented compilations have also been useful to survey a number of royal grants of arms[30].

Contemporary works entirely dedicated to the history and symbolism of the king's achievement were rather uncommon. Because they were always written in view of a clear purpose, they nonetheless provide the backbone for examining the tactics of discursive adaptation. More so than general manuals, their inception can be related to specific, politically laden events. Their argumentation is most often a reaction to foreign encounters or domestic affairs. The French fleurs de lis attracted a small but lively tradition in that regard[31]. Similar issues were explored in more broader intellectual works on government or emblematics. Limiting the approach to this obvious, all in all fairly concentrated material would minimize the impact of thinking about the

28   Gaston Saffroy, Bibliographie généalogique, héraldique et nobiliaire de la France, Paris 1868–1988; Joannis Guigard, Bibliothèque héraldique de la France, Paris 1861; Jacques Lelong, Fevret de Fontette, Bibliothèque historique de la France, vol. 2, Paris 1769, p. 756–758; Thomas Gore, Catalogus in certa capita, seu classes alphabetico ordine concinnatus, plerorumque omnium authorum (tam antiquorum quam recentiorum) qui de re heraldica Latinè, Gallicè, Italicè, Hispanicè, Germanicè, Anglicè, scripserunt, Oxford 1674; George Gatfield, Guide to Printed Books and Manuscripts Relating to English and Foreign Heraldry and Genealogy, London 1892; Gerhardi Ernesti De Franckenau, Bibliotheca Hispanica. Historico-Genealogico-Heraldica, Leipzig 1676–1749; Ciriaco Miguel Vigil, Heráldica Asturiana y Catalogo Armorial de España, Oviedo 1892.

29   Torsten Hiltmann, Potentialities and Limitations of Medieval Armorials as Historical Source. The Representation of Hierarchy and Princely Rank in Late Medieval Collections of Arms in France and Germany, in: Thorsten Huthwelker, Jörg Peltzer, Maximilian Wemhöner (ed.), Princely Rank in late Medieval Europe. Trodden Paths and Promising Avenues, Ostfildern 2011, p. 157–198; Thorsten Huthwelker, Die Darstellung des Rangs in Wappen und Wappenrollen des späten Mittelalters, Ostfildern 2013. A typology of these sources in: Michel Pastoureau, Les armoiries, Turnhout 1976.

30   A valuable overview in: Jean-Philippe Gérard, Repertoire des ressources généalogiques et héraldiques du departement des manuscrits de la Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Versailles 2003; Benito Municio Cristóbal, Luis García Cubero, Bibliografía Heráldico-Genealógico-Nobiliaria de la Biblioteca Nacional de Madrid: impresos, Madrid 1958; Id., Bibliografía Heráldico-Genealógico-Nobiliaria de la Biblioteca Nacional de Madrid: manuscritos, Madrid 1992.

31   Saffroy, Bibliographie généalogique, héraldique et nobiliaire; Lelong, de Fontette, Bibliothèque historique, p. 756–758.

ensigns of kingship on literary culture. Armorial discourses are also found in the heavy tomes of general historiography, emblem books, apologetic pamphlets, ephemeral leaflets, and publications with a prophetic slant[32]. All these texts used heraldic references according to the possibilities of the genre without, by definition, being monitored by the authorities. Political objectives depended on physical and intellectual accessibility and, as such, operated on different levels of understanding. In isolation, however, they reveal little about actual practice and diffusion in the public sphere.

Because a comprehensive study of the heraldic patrimony of two monarchies for the entire early modern era would be unfeasible, this study strives to go beyond a superficial enumeration of some conspicuous heraldic attributes. Its central question requires a more in-depth appraisal, covering ideologically motivated behaviour. In order to ensure that the processes of appropriation and adaptation get due attention, a thematic selection will highlight a series of representative microstudies. Since the precise mechanisms and strategies of heraldic appropriation are clearest when images are openly questioned, moments of tension serve as a guideline. In ordinary situations the arms displayed on seals, monuments, and other commodities hardly spoke about their effects on authority. On the micro level of sudden interruptions, however, they reveal themselves as matters of interest and even as political actors in their own right; as reflected in learned polemics, incidents of heraldic iconoclasm, or heated disputes regarding the usurpation of arms (between monarchs and their subjects, as well as between fellow sovereigns)[33].

Some of the chosen cases in the book have already been studied in descriptive contributions of heraldists[34]. Because their historical context is often missing, a revision is much needed. To date, there are no real attempts to confront these case studies in a comparative perspective and to integrate them into the flourishing research on princely representations. Reconstructed on the basis of judicial documents, chronicles, ceremonial reports, and diplomatic correspondence, the selected controversies will expose the entanglement between lived experience with the signs and formative ideologies. A confrontation of »display« with »discourse« in a context of crisis yields much information about the functions, recurring mechanisms, and timing of appropriation. In this respect, the choice for two large, West European monarchies might seem stereotypical. Yet in contrast to smaller, middling states, dynastic newcomers, or alternative political organizations, the internal contrasts and opposing visions are better documented for regimes with a longer record. Nor should we forget that these »well-established« crowns were not spared domestic upheavals and rivalry.

The two-fold arrangement of available source material avoids another classical reading of »what« was depicted, artistically speaking. It is not my intention to present a mere typology of genres. The combination of display and discourse rather aspires to a better understanding of »how« and »why« the arms were depicted and interpreted, unfolding the strategies and methods underneath. A broad, comparative approach allows for the correction of deceptive

---

32   See for instance the discussion in: Rupert Taylor, The Political Prophecy in England, New York 1911, p. 4–5, 110–114, 134–156.
33   Cf. Latour, Reassembling the Social, esp. p. 80–82.
34   Bibliographic overviews in: Michel Popoff, Bibliographie héraldique internationale (et de quelques disciplines connexes) (http://sfhs.free.fr/documents/biblio_ internationale. pdf; consulted on 27/12/2016), 2008; Jos C. C. F. M. Van den Borne, Bibliografie van de Nederlandse Heraldiek, The Hague 1994.

generalizations based on isolated examples. Spanning more or less two centuries, it will also be possible to gauge evolving patterns in the attitudes toward these signs.

Without drawing strict chronological boundaries, the chosen examples run from the 1480s up to the middle of the seventeenth century. In general, this was a period of political consolidation following the establishment of new dynastic and political associations in the late Middle Ages[35]. After the disturbances of the Hundred Years War, the French kingdom markedly regained its self-confidence. While political theorists now decisively asserted the extensive sovereign prerogatives of a divinely ordained monarch, the territorial dimension of the French crown reached an unprecedented size and homogeneity. By the beginning of the studied period, almost all the formerly semi-independent fiefs had been incorporated into the royal domain. In the course of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries two autonomous entities, the duchy of Burgundy and the duchy of Brittany, were also drawn into its orbit. The grand ambitions of the Valois dynasty resounded in assertive policies and majestic splendour[36]. On the international stage, its renewed symbolic and heraldic articulations coincided with foreign rivalry. Military campaigns on the Italian Peninsula led to a long-standing conflict with the Habsburg enemy[37].

For the Habsburgs, the marriage of heiress Mary of Burgundy to Maximilian of Austria (the later Emperor Maximilian I) in 1478, and the pacification of the internally divided Low Countries, marked the starting point of a rapid dynastic aggregation of territories and titles. In a relatively short span, their immediate successors established a huge, composite state[38]. Under the reign of Charles V (1506−1556), the Spanish Trastámara inheritance and those prosperous Burgundian lands untouched by French expansionism were ruled side by side with the dignity of Holy Roman Emperor. The extension of the dynasty's possessions with the vast conquests made in the New World turned the Habsburg conglomerate into a burgeoning world empire[39]. The repercussions for the existing heraldic patrimonies of former dynasties were considerable. New combinations and local alternatives gained ground along the strenuous efforts to solidify this territorial enlargement and the need to forge mutual bonds between subjects and rulers. The partition of the Habsburg lands in 1555−1556, leaving the imperial title to the Austrian branch[40], heralded a global »empire« that was now definitely Iberian in character[41]. This Spanish monarchy, as the sprawling edifice of dominions was called by contemporaries, inherited an

35   Richard Bonney, The European Dynastic States, 1494−1660, Oxford 1991.
36   James B. Collins, The State in Early Modern France, Cambridge 1995; Robert Jean Knecht, The Rise and Fall of Renaissance France, London 1996.
37   Bonney, The European Dynastic States, p. 79−130.
38   John Huxtable Elliott, A Europe of Composite Monarchies, in: Past & Present 137 (1992), p. 48−71.
39   Id., Imperial Spain, 1469−1716, London 2002.
40   Heraldic appropriation in the German territories is outside the scope of the present study. The extremely complicated interplay between imperial authority, splintered princely ambitions, and the symbolic traditions of Estates and communities within the Empire makes this a desirable, yet daunting task. Similar questions are touched upon, for the political culture at large, in: Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger, Des Kaisers alte Kleider. Verfassungsgeschichte und Symbolsprache des Alten Reiches, München 2008. Heraldic communication in German towns is currently studied by Marcus Meer (Durham University). The extensive heraldry of the Austrian Habsburgs can be approached through: Michael Göbl, Wappen-Lexikon der habsburgischen Länder, Schleinbach 2013 and Franz Gall, Österreichische Wappenkunde. Handbuch der Wappenwissenschaft, Vienna 1977.
41   María José Rodriguez Salgado, The Changing Face of Empire: Charles V, Philip II and Habsburg Authority, 1551−1559, Cambridge 1988.

uneasy mixture of dynastic objectives and local visual traditions. In a geopolitical sense, it vied with France for supremacy in Europe.

In both monarchies, different attitudes towards the existing symbolic patrimony were harnessed through the initiatives of several stakeholders. The French fleurs de lis, the Austrian *Bindenschild*, the castle of Castile, or the lion of Leon had acquired such a sacrosanct status that no one thought of replacing them. But their significance was continually reinterpreted and revised. The differences between these revisions point at deeper structural incongruences in the political cultures in question. They expose crucial information about the polities and the evolution of dynastic (self-)conceptions at large. In that respect, France and the Habsburg composite state were, in many ways, antagonists. Some marked similarities, on the other hand, also fitted into wider debates about the desirable body politic.

The choice for the 1650s as a fault line of sorts is motivated by pragmatic reasons and occasionally extended to the end of the seventeenth century. It is primarily based on substantial changes in the available sources and the internal dynamics of the heraldic dialogue itself. Discourses about the mythic origins and deeper significance of regal arms seem to have run out of steam by the end of this century. Commentaries on the subject fall back sharply in number. There is, moreover, a notable change in tone. Popular interpretations with a legendary, mystical or pseudo-historical hue were gradually pushed aside by a critical sentiment that now valued the signs according to the historical pre-eminence of a concerned regime. Instead of deriving its esteem from the presumed intrinsic qualities of the armorial artefact itself, political prominence became independent of its outward marks. Admittedly, this new critical approach existed for a long time alongside the »mystic« and »legendary« register, showing that a qualitative turnover was neither sudden nor absolute. Yet, the seeds of change are already apparent in some of the cases under analysis.

In the symbolic grammar of royalty, princely bearings still took pride of place as reminders of dynastic relations and political claims. By at least the early eighteenth century, however, the performative ability that had accompanied new political transformations apparently lost some of its strength. At best retaining their original lustre in issues of rank, the descriptions of ceremonial no longer stressed the significant gestures associated with the regal escutcheon. Accusations about the usurpation of sovereign arms and accompanying titles remained a serious bone of contention up to the end of the *ancien régime*. Nonetheless, they changed from openly public manoeuvres into mainly legalistic disputes[42].

Long-term evolution in the performative capacity of armorial signs is difficult to identify, but this book will offer some suggestions, particularly in the diachronic approach used in the third, fourth, and fifth chapter. Changes offer important avenues for further research and require a viewpoint that transcends traditional chronological divides. In part, marked changes can be related to causes already explored in general historiography on representational media.

---

42   Cf. Thiry, Mary Stuart's Claim; Hervé Pinoteau, La symbolique royale française, Ve–XVIIIe siècles, La Roche-Rigault 2003, p. 506–511; Bertrand Jeanmouglin, Louis XIV à la conquête des Pays-Bas espagnols, Paris 2005, p. 23–24, 94–96; Nils G. Bartholdy, The Alteration of the Danish Royal Arms in 1819 in Consequence of the Cession of Norway in 1814, in: Elin Galtung Lihaug (ed.), Genealogica & Heraldica. Influence on Genealogy and Heraldry of Major Events in the History of a Nation, Oslo 2015, p. 49–50.

These include a general crisis in the associative mental universe of the late seventeenth century[43] and the increasing functional differentiation of symbols[44]. Both of these trends slowly undermined the belief in an »organic analogy« between symbol and referent. An altered emphasis in the sources shows how these developments specifically impacted the heraldic. First, the realization by an emerging antiquarian science that heraldic semiotics were not older than the twelfth or eleventh centuries also affected interpretations of the royal bearings – albeit at varying rates and levels[45]. It discredited the feeling of timeless continuity. Second, the following analysis hints at the inability of the growing bureaucratic system to protect the exclusivity of the regal insignia, whilst at the same time encouraging their diffusion in society[46]. Tackling the thorny question of long-term change can improve our understanding of the post-revolutionary, dismissive opinion about these signs and the success of alternative »emblems of nationality«[47]. This hypothesis about evolutions is meant as an open invitation to explore similar concerns for the post-1700 period.

By looking at regal heraldry from this perspective, the book at hand tries to fill a considerable gap in the cultural history of power. It explicitly counters a reductionist vision that denies any efficiency of state symbolism beyond vague seduction or self-indulging glorification. The same goes for the still largely dominant yet too simplistic propagandist thesis, which roughly posits that a centrally directed apparatus tried to impress and persuade a fairly passive audience. The challenges and ambitions of distinct regimes were, on the contrary, nurtured by unequivocal demands that greatly affected their cultural style. Up to now, the few specialized studies on princely heraldry lack such a broader focus. Recent research into political culture that adopts a multivocal approach also fails to draw systematic attention to the vital capacities of armorial imagery. Before setting out the methodological beacons of this book, it is therefore helpful to outline the available historiography and to consider the added value of a heraldic focus.

43   Peter Burke, The Demise of Royal Mythologies, in: Allan Ellenius (ed.), Iconography, Propaganda, and Legitimation, Oxford 1998, p. 245–254; Id., The Fabrication of Louis XIV, New Haven 1992; Michael Walzer, On the Role of Symbolism in Political Thought, in: Political Science Quarterly 82 (1967), p. 196–203.
44   Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger, Rang vor Gericht: Zur Verrechtlichung sozialer Rangkonflikte in der frühen Neuzeit, in: Zeitschrift für historische Forschung 28 (2001), p. 385–418.
45   Cf. Claude-François Ménestrier, Origine des armoiries, Paris 1680, p. 3–32; Torsten Hiltmann, Legenden im Zweifel. Die Frage nach der Herkunft der Wappen und das Ende der mittelalterlichen Heraldik im 17. Jahrhundert, in: Thomas Kühtreiber (ed.), Kontinuitäten – Umbrüche – Zäsuren. Die Konstruktion von Epochen in Mittelalter und früher Neuzeit in interdisziplinärer Stichtung, Heidelberg 2016, p. 301–329; Mayaud, L'érudition héraldique.
46   See, in particular, chapter 5.
47   Cf. Michel Pastoureau, L'État et son image emblématique, in: Jean-Philippe Genet (ed.), Culture et idéologie dans la genèse de l'état moderne. Actes de la table ronde organisée par le Centre national de la recherche scientifique et l'École française de Rome, 15–17 octobre 1984, Rome 1985, p. 145–153; Id., Les emblèmes de France, Paris 1998; Alain Boureau, État moderne et attribution symbolique: emblèmes et devises dans l'Europe des XVIe et XVIIe siècles, in: Genet (ed.), Culture et idéologie dans la genèse de l'état moderne, p. 155–178; Nick Groom, The Union Jack. The Story of the British Flag, London 2006.

1.2 POWER BETWEEN VISUAL REPRESENTATION AND CONSTRUCTION

Late medieval and early modern princes, regardless of whether they were strong rulers or dubious claimants, had to invest carefully in the construction of their authority. Its durability was not at all assured, but rested on fragile compromises[48]. Contextual variables, local stakes, and social pressures greatly influenced the plurality of politics. Moreover, formal institutions were always interlaced with informal relations[49]. Once invested with acclaimed prerogatives – no matter on what level – the actual exercise of power thus remained vulnerable. Its success depended on accumulated resources and public recognition. Externally, competition with dynastic rivals shaped and further complicated geopolitical concerns[50]. Political credibility was therefore subjected to a great deal of mediation; or back-and-forth bargaining between communities of subjects, intermediary institutions, and exalted leaders[51]. Even in the so-called »era of absolutism«, the entangled web of power relations never resembled the stereotype of a lone king towering on the very pinnacle of might[52].

Some scholars recently took up the cudgels for a more complicated view of state formation. They tried to identify the interaction of these interest groups and local actors in fostering (or restraining) public authority. If one wants to grasp the intricacies of state formation, one has to look beyond the dominant institutional infrastructure. Attention should be directed to more diffuse forms of cooperation, conflict, and popular resistance. Political cohesion and legitimacy – especially the position of princes as the temporal custodians of the realm – greatly depended on people implementing policies[53]. This vision of how authority was (de)composed and sustained at several levels opens up new possibilities for the study of concrete practices – chief among them, the exact role of abstract imagery within the whole of these multifaceted interactions.

The repertoire that stabilized the wayward dialectic web comprised, in the first place, instruments that have been evaluated by established historiography as the very foundations of the state. These include the creation of standing armies, a diplomatic apparatus, and efficient inter-

---

48   Latour, The Powers of Association, p. 266–269.
49   Birgit Emich, Frühneuzeitliche Staatsbildung und politische Kultur. Für die Veralltäglichung eines Konzepts, in: Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger (ed.), Was heißt Kulturgeschichte des Politischen?, Berlin 2005, p. 191–205.
50   Bonney, The European Dynastic States, passim; Lucien Bély, La société des princes (XVIe–XVIIe siècle), Paris 1999, p. 165–188, 274–294; Daniel H. Nexon, The Struggle for Power in Early Modern Europe. Religious Conflict, Dynastic Empires & International Change, Princeton 2009.
51   André Holenstein, Empowering Interactions: Looking at Statebuilding from Below, in: Wim Blockmans, André Holenstein, Jon Mathieu (ed.), Empowering Interactions. Political Cultures and the Emergence of the State in Europe 1300–1900, Farnham 2009, p. 1–31; Michael J. Braddick, State Formation and Political Culture in Elizabethan and Stuart England. Micro-Histories and Macro-Historical Change, in: Ronald G. Asch, Dagmar Freist (ed.), Staatsbildung als kultureller Prozess. Strukturwandel und Legitimation von Herrschaft in der Frühen Neuzeit, Cologne 2005, p. 69–90.
52   Ronald G. Asch, Heinz Duchhardt, Der Absolutismus – ein Mythos? Strukturwandel monarchischer Herrschaft, Cologne 1996; Nicolas Henshall, The Myth of Absolutism: Change and Continuity in Early Modern European Monarchy, London 1992; William Beik, The Absolutism of Louis XIV as Social Collaboration, in: Past & Present 188 (2005), p. 195–224.
53   Michael J. Braddick, State Formation in Early Modern England, c. 1550–1700, Cambridge 2000.

nal policing to discipline subjects[54]. Less coercive tools were sought in the fabrication of a modern judicial system and a central bureaucracy with specialized departments, all built on the bedrock of Roman law and the codification of »national« customs[55]. Independent fiscal mechanisms provided rulers with the financial credentials to maintain their autonomy in a highly competitive surrounding[56]. However, all these »rational« factors were only effective inasmuch as subjects were actively involved and recognized their legitimacy. The emphasis on compliance brings the importance of informal networks of patronage and communication into play[57].

Although the classical approach has its merits, it showed little interest in political symbolism. The majority of scholars took the nineteenth-century nation state as point of reference. They isolated those parameters wherein the evolution towards modernity was most apparent and then projected them historically. The specificities of premodern political associations, neither completely centralized nor steeped in uniform principles, were frequently neglected. It is now generally accepted that early modern polities did not conform to the ideal type of the uniform fiscal-military state. They rather consisted of overlapping jurisdictions, fragmented centres of authority, and imprecise boundaries[58].

In the main, the same can be said for the place of imagery in visualizing these political entities. Absent in older grand narratives about the rise and expansion of the great monarchies, it has been suggested that imagery played no noteworthy role in the construction of power. Emblems, allegories, ceremonial, and princely iconography were interesting from an antiquarian point of view, adding colour to a distant past. Yet they were not assumed to have had any real impact on policy making[59]. Serious historians brushed them aside as vain pastimes or outmoded relics of an archaic past. If some functionality was ascribed to them, it was as deceptive façades obscuring shrewd »political« intentions. Visual strategies were only noted in so far as they could be explained by categories of professionalization and rationalization[60]. A nascent interest in courts and elites did make the spectacles of state a worthy topic of research. They were mainly treated as an ingenious stratagem by absolute rulers to persuade and domesticate an unruly aristocracy[61]. This narrow perspective neglected a good deal of cultural production

54   Classical studies are: Charles Tilly, Coercion, Capital and European States, AD 990–1992, Cambridge 1990; Richard Bonney (ed.), The Rise of the Fiscal State in Europe c. 1200–1815, Oxford 1999; Geoffrey Parker, The Military Revolution: Military Innovation and the Rise of the West, 1500–1800, Cambridge 1988; Thomas Erdmann, Birth of the Leviathan: Building States and Regimes in Medieval and Early Modern Europe, Cambridge 1997; Hendrik Spruyt, The Sovereign State and Its Competitors: An Analysis of Systems Change, Princeton 1994.
55   Wolfgang Reinhard, Power Elites and State Building, Oxford 1996; Wim Blockmans, Jean-Philippe Genet, Visions sur le développement des états européens. Théories et historiographies de l'état moderne, Rome 1993.
56   E.g., Bonney, Fiscal State; Erdmann, Birth of the Leviathan.
57   Holenstein, Empowering Interactions, p. 14–19.
58   Matthew Vester, Renaissance Dynasticism and Apanage Politics. Jacques de Savoie-Nemours, 1531–1585, Kirksville 2012, p. 3–15.
59   E.g., Joseph Hugh Shennan, The Origins of the Modern European State, 1450–1725, London 1974, p. 11–24, 44–56.
60   On this neglect in older studies, see: Burke, Performing History, p. 35–52; Dougal Shaw, Nothing but Propaganda? Historians and the Study of Early Modern Royal Ritual, in: Cultural and Social History 1 (2004), p. 139–158; Peter Arnade, City, State, and Public Ritual in the Late-Medieval Burgundian Netherlands, in: Comparative Studies in Society and History 39 (1997), p. 300–318; Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger, Was heißt Kulturgeschichte des Politischen? Einleitung, in: Id. (ed.), Kulturgeschichte des Politischen?, p. 16.
61   The classical work is: Norbert Elias, The Court Society, transl. Edmund Jephcott, New York 1983 [1969].

with a political overtone by people not at the top of the social hierarchy. It systematically overlooked instances wherein visual rank and privilege were the subject of active bargaining[62].

In the past decades, a series of acclaimed studies have overturned this older view. The politics of representation are firmly on the historiographical agenda now. This shift implies that the inclusion of visual and cultural channels, treated in different constellations and contexts, might actually improve our knowledge of state authority as an entangled history of interaction. Abstract images exemplified the sovereign status invested in the monarch's person and lineage. Yet, because they also dealt with supra-personal principles, they were of concern to the community of subjects as a whole. Visual practices that look irrelevant or at odds with the expansion of sovereignty appear, upon closer inspection, crucial in the making or breaking of legitimate power. Scholars still struggle with how to reconcile valuable macro-historical insights about territorial integration and institutional growth with these new ideas on symbolic negotiation.

Propositions about groups or individuals deploying political images in view of their own needs rarely finds its way into larger discussions of authority. Libraries are filled with case studies on magnificent ceremonial, artistic patronage, and royal image-building. Yet still, this scholarship find a difficult to pinpoint the precise relation between, on the one hand, the outlines of a hierarchical structure and, on the other hand, the inherent discrepancies and inaccessibility of complex iconographies[63]. On the whole, this research privileges the singular and the exceptional[64]. The obsession with impressive court spectacles only covers a small part of a much wider picture. Official records often deliberately paint, post factum, a standardized impression of conformity that distorts our present-day perception[65]. One solution is to turn the spotlight on a very specific format of images encountered at almost every intersection in the dialectical web of power: Heraldry was both a highly particular form of representation and an ubiquitous sign of society's hierarchy[66]. It was available, in one way or another, to diverse individuals and groups[67]. As the opening anecdote demonstrated, it was a language understood by most.

This study restricts itself to the armorial bearings of rulers, their applications, and paraheraldic ornaments – that is, those signs associated with the edifice of state at large. By the fifteenth century, the family shields of princes had grown into marks of dynastic rule and territorial integrity[68]. They were integrated in governmental procedures of all sorts and found a wide spatial

---

62   A critique in: Jeroen DUINDAM, Myths of Power: Norbert Elias and the Early Modern Court, Amsterdam 1994, esp. p. 181−191; Olaf MÖRKE, The Symbolism of Rulership, in: Martin GOSMAN, Alasdair MACDONALD, Arie VANDERJAGT (ed.), Princes and Princely Culture, 1450−1650, vol. 1, Leiden 2003, p. 32, 44.

63   Sydney ANGLO, Image-Making: The Means and the Limitations, in: John GUY (ed.), The Tudor Monarchy, London 1997, p. 16−41.

64   EMICH, Frühneuzeitliche Staatsbildung, p. 191−205.

65   Helen WATANABE-O'KELLY, Festival Books in Europe from Renaissance to Rococo, in: The Seventeenth Century 3 (1988), p. 181−201.

66   RAGEN, Semiotics and Heraldry. Good general overviews of the development of heraldry are: Michel PASTOUREAU, Traité d'Héraldique, Paris 2008; Thomas WOODCOCK, John M. ROBINSON, The Oxford Guide to Heraldry, Oxford 1990; Faustino MENÉNDEZ PIDAL DE NAVASCUES, Los emblemas heráldicos. Una interpretación histórica, Madrid 1993.

67   PASTOUREAU, Traité, p. 59−61. Nevertheless, a process of aristocratization manifested itself during the early modern period, notably with regard to the effective »bearing« of newly conceded signs: Robert CHABANNE, Le régime juridique des armoiries, Lyon 1951; Luc DUERLOO, Privilegies uitbeelden. De Zuidnederlandse wapenkoningen en wapenkunde in de eeuw der Verlichting, Brussels 1991, p. 187−210.

68   PASTOUREAU, L'État, p. 145−153.

expression. Literary digressions on their symbolism combined the past chivalrous deeds of the dynastic house with new theoretical doctrines on the inalienability of sovereignty and constitutional checks. Although perceived as a stable manifestation of continuity, the attached notions altered in time. Almost everyone encountered these insignia, and they had a potential relevance for more than one agenda, either that of subjects or foreign adversaries. Furthermore, the regal ensigns cannot be completely isolated from all the other bearings of families and corporations that intricately covered social relations in the *ancien régime*. A close examination of this entire visual network is not possible here, but its breadth should be kept in mind.

1.2.1 Royal Heraldry and the Study of Political Symbolism

The second half of the twentieth century witnessed something of a revolution in the study of visual representation. Pioneer scholars working in the aftermath of the Second World War introduced the topic of rituals centring on royal insignia and abstract political metaphors. Percy Ernst Schramm and Ernst Kantorowicz, to name but two important precursors, drew attention to the strong tendency of symbolization that characterized premodern monarchies[69]. Their insistence on its political relevance found wider resonance through a view of the aesthetic that cast off the old guise of connoisseurship. Traditionally, art history had shown an interest in works of art created under royal patronage because of their inherent artistic qualities. The study of paintings and artefacts reached out for the sublime, revealing a universal attractiveness. It was not interested in explaining the historical context in which they were produced[70]. Contrary to majestic portraits or the allegorical scenes of canonized masters, abstract figurative forms were mostly ignored because of their unconcealed reproductive nature. At best, images like heraldry proved interesting to identify the sponsors behind large artistic projects or to solve questions of ownership[71].

Scholars began to stress the layered meaning that could be found in artistic media, linking them to political practices and thought. These early forerunners introduced an interdisciplinary approach into mainstream historiography[72]. They and their pupils produced a stream of detailed studies into particular aspects of political imagery in the sixties and seventies. This popu-

---

69   Ernst Hartwig Kantorowicz, The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology, Princeton 1957; Percy Ernst Schramm, Herrschaftszeichen und Staatssymbolik. Beiträge zu ihrer Geschichte vom dritten bis zum sechzehnten Jahrhundert, 3 vol., Stuttgart 1954–1956; Id., Der König von Frankreich: das Wesen der Monarchie vom 9. Zum 16. Jahrhundert, Darmstadt 1939; Id., Las insignias de la realeza en la Edad Media española, transl. Luis Vázquez de Parga, Madrid 1960.

70   A critique on this attitude in: Gérard Sabatier, Le prince et les arts. Stratégies figuratives de la monarchie française de la Renaissance à l'âge baroque, Paris 2010, p. 7–9.

71   On heraldry as an auxiliary science, see: Marc Jacobs, »La sottise héraldique?« Wapenschilden, hulp- en technowetenschap, in: André Vandewalle (ed.), Te Wapen! Heraldiek, teken van gezag en identiteit, Bruges 2004, p. 9–27; Till-Holger Borchert, Heraldiek, een thema van de kunstgeschiedenis?, in: ibid., p. 47–52.

72   Françoise Bardon, Le portrait mythologique à la cour de France sous Henri IV et Louis XIII: mythologie et politique, Paris 1975, p. 3–4, 175–290.

larized the study of princely rituals and artistry into a fully-fledged scholarly field[73]. Although closely related to each other in focus and use of sources, these researchers adopted slightly different methodological approaches. Heraldic media were only a marginal concern.

The American school of ceremonialists, for example, painted a holistic picture of ritualized succession by applying Kantorowicz's ideas on the legal principle of the king's two bodies – his physical person and immaterial dignity[74] – to French royal funerals and parliamentary pomp. They demonstrated how consecrated routines used visual rhetoric to externalize the norms and values that drove Capetian kingship[75]. Around the same time, associates of the London Warburg Institute began to dissect Renaissance state symbolism. They interpreted it as a chiefly elitist, almost hermetic activity that prospered in the cultural ambience of humanism[76]. Although preoccupied with learned exponents, their discoveries also concentrated on the then hardly noticed yet pervasive world of devices and abstract symbols that conveyed the so-called *arcana imperii*[77]. From the onset, the attempt to decipher highbrow conceits was plagued by the problem of reception. Were these complex strings of meaning indeed understood by the average recipient[78]? Unable to adequately measure the responsiveness of spectators, some historians even backed away from their former conclusions in later work[79].

By extension, the same problem impeded the study of heraldic symbolism as a political phenomenon. Was the conceptual vocabulary of arms – usually classified as elitist – subjected to similar restrictions? The second chapter of the present book revises this common misconception. By analysing a seventeenth-century controversy in New Spain, it gives the floor to a surprisingly wide group of individuals who encountered these signs and were able to make sense of them. Some were in the act of signification indeed guided by a learned background, looking at the stylized symbols through the lens of legalistic thought. Others clearly lacked this intellectual background, yet they still recognized the arms as abstract markers of authority and collective consciousness.

In the last decades, French scholars have taken another route towards uncovering the »imaginary« of the political. Their integrative approach combined visual material with literary expositions and poetic rhetoric, genres that all buttressed the single reign of a ruler. This overall view is explicitly connected to a *histoire des mentalités* – thus unveiling »mental representa-

---

73 Burke, Performing History, p. 36–37; Shaw, Nothing but Propaganda?
74 Kantorowicz, The King's Two Bodies.
75 Ralph E. Giesey, The Royal Funeral Ceremony in France, Geneva 1960; Id., The King Imagined, in: Keith Michael Baker (ed.), The French Revolution and the Creation of Modern Political Culture. Volume 1: The Political Culture of the Old Regime, Oxford 1987, p. 41–75; Sarah Hanley, The Lit de Justice of the Kings of France: Constitutional Ideology in Legend, Ritual, and Discourse, Princeton 1983; Lawrence M. Bryant, The King and the City in the Parisian Royal Entry Ceremony: Politics, Ritual and Art in the Renaissance, Geneva 1986.
76 E.g., Frances Yates, Astraea: The Imperial Theme in the Sixteenth Century, London 1975; Jean Jacquot (ed.), Les fêtes de la Renaissance, II. Fêtes et ceremonies au temps de Charles Quint, Paris 1975.
77 Yates, Astraea; Earl E. Rosenthal, The Invention of the Columnar Device of Emperor Charles V at the Court of Burgundy in Flanders in 1516, in: Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes 36 (1973), p. 198–230.
78 Anglo, Image-Making, p. 16–41.
79 Ibid.; Id., Images of Tudor Kingship, Guildford 1992, p. 1–3, 98–130; cf. Kevin Sharpe, Selling the Tudor Monarchy: Authority and Image in Sixteenth-Century England, New Haven 2009, p. 48–49; Shaw, Nothing but Propaganda?, p. 143–144.

tions « beneath visual proxies[80]. Rather than reducing the analysis to one generalized sameness, they stressed the multilayered functionalities of images. Contradictions and discontinuities were explained by the degree of accessibility. Consequently, a look at conflicting myths, ideological variants, and symbolic reverie exposed the agendas of several actors[81].

For the same reason, not every component of the imaginary assemblage woven around the princely individual worked outwardly. Some images nourished an almost profane, introspective devotion to political ideals. Others had a talismanic function without being »read« by a specific audience[82]. Such diffuse use is also applicable to the royal achievement. Mounting the king's bearings on city gates, on the façades of religious foundations, or even on private dwellings was to ensure royal protection. Spatial proximity to other signifiers structured political activities and heightened a sense of belonging to an inclusive community[83]. Speculations about the deeper significance of blazon in poetic or historical narrations encouraged readers – not in the least the monarch himself – to assimilate the principles of good rule and ancient continuity. The easily reproducible characteristics of armorial signs therefore provided a dynamic of its own.

Still according to the same *imaginaire*-thesis, it was through interconnected genres that the mental »image of the king«, making abstraction of personal dignity, substituted the true, physical »images of the king«[84]. This mental infrastructure – perhaps more accurately called »political culture« – did more than »legitimize« bold enterprises. It conditioned the very framework of royalty in which the individual monarch in question could act. In the words of Anne-Marie Lecoq: the »game of representations ... guided human action«[85]. These are original and substantial conclusions, yet the short-term perspective of most studies makes it difficult to assess evolution in this complex imagery. The focus also remains on the inner circle of the royal entourage. Voices of contestation or rejection, or occasions where *picturae* and poetic subscriptions were given a new meaning by altering their context, are silenced.

Interesting new perspectives have likewise been introduced in the related field of court studies. The centrality of the king's body in the ceremonious rhythm of the royal household is particularly stressed[86]. Besides such dynastic rites as entries, baptisms, or funerals, the daily life at court was framed by a constant *mise-en-scène* of this central actor. Far from being empty moves,

---

80   A landmark work is: Anne-Marie Lecoq, François Ier imaginaire, Symbolique et politique à l'aube de la Renaissance française, Paris 1987. See also: Colette Beaune, La naissance de la nation France, Paris 1985; Sylvène Édouard, L'empire imaginaire de Philippe II. Pouvoir des images et discours du pouvoir sous les Habsbourg d'Espagne au XVIe siècle, Paris 2005. An important precursor that already pointed at the mythologies surrounding the fleurs-de-lis arms is: Marc Bloch, Les rois thaumaturges: étude sur le caractère surnaturel attribué à la puissance royale particulièrement en France et en Angleterre, Strasbourg 1961.

81   Nicole Hochner, Louis XII. Les dérèglements de l'image royale (1498–1515), Seyssel 2006, p. 11.

82   Sabatier, Le prince et les arts, p. 41.

83   Michael Michael, The Privilege of »Proximity«: Towards a Re-definition of the Function of Armorials, in: Journal of Medieval History 23 (1997), p. 55–74.

84   Lecoq, François Ier imaginaire, p. 15–24.

85   Ibid., p. 22. A similar argument concerning the Spanish monarchy, in: Carmelo Lisón Tolosana, La imagen del Rey. Monarquía, realeza y poder ritual en la Casa de Austria, Madrid 1991, esp. p. 184.

86   Georges Vigarello, Le corps du roi, in: Id. (ed.), Histoire du corps 1: De la Renaissance aux Lumières, Paris 2005, p. 387–409; Sergio Bertelli, The King's Body: Sacred Rituals of Power in Medieval and Early Modern Europe, Pennsylvania 2001.

court ritual always constituted a collective and reciprocal act that depended on active participation. On the formal side, it took its main cue from liturgy, as John Adamson lucidly observed. In particular Eucharistic devotion provided a useful blueprint. This »migration of the holy« – to use a concept of John Bossy – sacralized the royal body such that it became increasingly unattainable and yet more perceivable thanks to widely shared semantic values[87].

This liturgical logic was not restricted to the actual (living) monarch. It equally applied to painted models or artefacts that provided both setting and method. These not only decorated the sumptuous halls of princely residences, but were also involved in the expressive outlines of the ritual calendar[88]. Representations, with the ruler's likeness in the limelight, derived their eminence from the same interpretative registers. The 1981 landmark study of the royal portrait by the French semiotician Louis Marin is particularly instructive in that regard. Marin interpreted the relation between power and image as a relation of substitution. In analogy to the Eucharistic transubstantiation, representations literally duplicated the king's presence. The royal image or sign thereby generated power in showing the authorization to act. Inversely, true authority and thus the real »portrait of the monarch« and his abstract majesty depended on this complete chain of mental representations[89].

Students of state portraits elaborated these ideas[90]. It became apparent that artistry based on physical imitation also relied heavily on signs with a more abstract character. This embodied the invisible majesty wherever it was staged[91]. In a general sense, the armorial shield has been evaluated as a »second body« that inscribed the biological body into a collective corpus of familial relationships; a genealogical portrait of its owner, so to speak[92]. Heraldic marks appearing in princely portraits proved the represented individuals' possession of or rights on a territory, as Naïma Ghermani argued for the sixteenth-century electors of Saxony[93].

This way of looking at the representative universe of the court raises many questions. Were contemporaries indeed aware of exemplary sacred categories when confronted with political representations (and also outside aulic rites)? Or was imagery a mere instrument of domi-

---

87   John Adamson, The Making of the Ancien-Régime Court, 1500–1700, in: Id. (ed.), The Princely Courts of Europe. Ritual, Politics and Culture under the Ancien Régime 1500–1750, London 1999, p. 28–32; Bossy, Christianity, p. 153–161. On the evolution of this sacralized body, see: Paul Kléber Monod, The Power of Kings: Monarchy and Religion in Europe, 1589–1715, New Haven 2001.

88   Sabatier, Le prince et les arts, p. 348–378.

89   Louis Marin, Le Portrait du roi, Paris 1981, p. 7–22.

90   Diane H. Bodart, Pouvoirs du portrait sous les Habsbourgs d'Espagne, Lassay-les-Châteaux 2011; Naïma Ghermani, Le Prince et son portrait: incarner le pouvoir dans l'Allemagne du XVIe siècle, Rennes 2009, p. 14–15; Sabatier, Le prince et les arts, p. 348–378.

91   Ghermani, Le Prince et son portrait; Hochner, Louis XII, p. 13; Fernando Checa Cremades, Felipe II, Mecenas de las Artes, Madrid 1992, p. 100–107.

92   Walter Seitter, Das Wappen als Zweitkörper und Körperzeichen, in: Dietmar Kamper, Christoph Wulf (ed.), Die Wiederkehr des Körpers, Frankfurt am Main 1982, p. 299–312; Hans Belting, Bild-Anthropologie. Entwürfe für eine Bildwissenschaft, München 2001, p. 115–142; Id., Wappen und Porträt. Zwei Medien des Körpers, in: Martin Büchsel, Peter Schmidt (ed.), Das Porträt vor der Erfindung des Porträts, Mainz am Rhein 2003, p. 89–100.

93   Naïma Ghermani, Le blason dans le portrait: d'une pratique dynastique à une pratique confessionelle. L'exemple des portraits princiers dans l'Empire au XVIe siècle, in: Denise Turrel, Martin Aurell, Laurent Hablot et al. (ed.), Signes et couleurs des identités politiques du Moyen Age à nos jours, Rennes 2008, p. 345–364.

nance[94]? Moreover, is the transmigration of precepts from the sacred sphere also noticeable for less direct – but no less common – abstract figures, like the regal arms? Were analogies with the Eucharist literally envisioned in the case of the sovereign bearings and, if so, did this lead to an appraisal of its political effects on the population? Therefore, it is not appropriate to completely isolate one visual genre from another. These questions call for deep reflection on different modes of kingship[95]. Did other constellations in the patrimonial makeup and dynastic legacy result in a different translation of sacred borrowings[96]?

These questions will be examined by paying attention to the exact argumentation deployed in the chosen case studies. When sources remain silent, concrete actions can be compared with practices in the religious sphere. Incidents of heraldic destruction, for instance, resonated with the motives of religious iconoclasm, even though they did not occur in the same ambience. My second chapter will introduce the main terms of this debate by means of a case from New Spain. A 1649 dispute about two unusually marshalled escutcheons in the cathedral of Puebla de los Ángeles illustrates the political sensitivity that surrounded heraldic symbolism. It pitted the Mexican Real Audiencia against the reformist bishop Juan de Palafox y Mendoza, under whose supervision the cathedral was completed. The ensuing polemic portrays the ambiguous relation between early modern kingship as a genealogical concept and armorial representations of sovereignty and territory. The possibilities and potency of arms will be compared to political delegation through human agents and more familiar media.

Not only lifelike portraits, but also the royal body itself has been described as a medium of representation, and the presumption that the physical person of the king incorporated a perpetual dignity was not confined to theory alone[97]. It had to be inscribed on the natural appearance of the ruler by means of a symbolic environment and a subtle play between distance and intimate affection[98]. In the high Middle Ages, as Laurent Hablot demonstrated, heraldic elements turned the physical being of princes into an incarnation of crown and dynasty. The sharing of personal devices, cognizances, or their adapted derivatives with relatives, courtiers, and aristocrats delegated power and multiplied family ties. In the fifteenth century, however, this heraldic elevation of the king's person became more and more prescriptive[99]. The royal arms were now treated as an inalienable good and use by officials and delegates was restricted to specific conditions[100]. Distinction with signs borne by non-sovereign relatives and elites had to be strictly observed. Somewhat contradictory to this increasing exclusiveness, the wide multiplication of

---

94   In that sense, Marin's ideas have been linked to the domestication-theory of Norbert Elias, see: Roger CHARTIER, Pouvoirs et limites de la représentation. Sur l'oeuvre de Louis Marin, in: Annales. Histoire, Sciences sociales 49 (1994), p. 413.
95   Cf. the comparative approach in: Gérard SABATIER, Sylvène ÉDOUARD, Les monarchies de France et d'Espagne (1556–1715). Rituels et pratiques, Paris 2001.
96   Cf. KLÉBER MONOD, The Power of Kings.
97   KANTOROWICZ, The King's Two Bodies.
98   VIGARELLO, Le corps du roi, p. 399–400.
99   Laurent HABLOT, En chair et en signes. Le corps héraldique et emblématique du prince au cœur des rituels de cour, in: Micrologus: Nature, Sciences and Medieval Societies 22 (2014): Le Corps du Prince, p. 657–678; ID., Le double du prince. Les livrées emblématisées à la cour, un outil politique reflet d'une nouvelle conception du pouvoir, in: Murielle GAUDE-FERRAGU, Bruno LAURIOUX, Jacques PAVIOT (ed.), La cour du Prince. Cour de France, cours d'Europe, XIIe–XVe siècle, Paris 2011, p. 281–299.
100   ID., En chair et en signes.

royal arms on prints, seals, monuments, coins, and city gates extended this »second« body in all parts of the realm. The implications of these two, counteracting developments are still unclear.

Studying the armorial programme of minor German princes, Kilian Heck emphasized the genealogical legitimation behind spatial display. He considered these »heraldic« media as exponents of a much larger genre (including pedigrees and cartography) that constructed a symbolic space which infused agnatic identity in the territory[101]. Heck's interesting study raises some critical remarks. First, those who ordered the armorial display and the later beholders frequently disagreed on how expressions of lineage exactly visualized and spread the authority of state[102]. For some, it was indeed the logical extension of genealogy, whereby the order of descent regulated succession to the entire inheritance. Others came to draw a strict distinction between privatized marks of dynastic affinity and the plain shield of the sovereign, which only embodied public jurisdiction. This, as we will see, was one of the points of contention in the discussion about the Spanish arms in Puebla. Political theory, stressing exclusive sovereign rights, prompted a new vision of the ability of arms to uphold or subvert the crown, regardless of dynastic affinities. Hence, royal heraldry cannot be simply understood as a subgenre of genealogy.

Second, the overlap between dynasty and crown was not equally obvious everywhere. These differences will be discussed in the third chapter, where I adopt a diachronic view of developments in the heraldic imagery of both the French kingdom and the Spanish monarchy on the basis of visual sources, normative treatises, and courtly procedures. The chosen examples shed light on when certain traditions were renewed or rejected, such as with the modifications of arms after the incorporation of new domains, as well as during crises of succession. The comparative perspective, confronting both changes in graphic habits and performative praxis, reveals separate ways to manage the body politic.

For the Spanish monarchy, the uneasy connection of the inner dynastic circle to a composite state, in which each entity retained its privileged identity, resulted in a flexible model. An overall heraldic achievement that tried to integrate different inheritances subsisted next to many regional variants and a collection of isolated signs with a predominantly territorial sense. In France, dynasty and territory almost completely fused. Most regional ensigns were replaced by the fleurs de lis of the Capetian lineage. The comparison does not stop at purely external features. Armorial practice also structured political succession, dynastic membership, and territorial integrity. It lays bare the essential fundaments of political culture. Dominant attitudes cultivated in courtly circles delineated the margins wherein strategies of appropriation could be deployed. By exploring these themes, the third chapter sets the general frame for the remaining parts of my analysis.

---

101   Kilian HECK, Genealogie als Monument und Argument. Der Beitrag dynastischer Wappen zur politischen Raumbildung der Neuzeit, Berlin 2002. Cf. GHERMANI, Le blason dans le portrait.

102   VESTER, Renaissance Dynasticism; Herbert H. ROWEN, The King's State. Proprietary Dynasticism in Early Modern France, New Brunswick 1980; Guy ROWLANDS, The Dynastic State and the Army under Louis XIV. Royal Service and Private Interest, 1661–1701, Cambridge 2002; Luc DUERLOO, Dynasty and Piety: Archduke Albert (1598–1621) and Habsburg Political Culture in an Age of Religious Wars, Aldershot 2012.

Recent work on courts and elites has opened up new opportunities to tackle the political role of royal heraldry. Court culture was not, as critical exponents of the field now underline, a monolithic unit that simply fostered royal supremacy. In reality, the polycentric relations between factions, influences, and sources of patronage encouraged elites to impose certain expectations on the monarch through the manipulation of titles of honour and the protocol of rank[103]. More than just a platform for the propagation of absolutism, aulic culture was interwoven with administration and – as often locally anchored in a civic surrounding – with the outer world. Precisely this aspect is crucial in exploring heraldic display and discourse as a phenomenon involved in wider issues of dominion. It does not cast the sovereign as the only actor of importance, but admits that royal imagery gave shape to different expectations. The armorial exhibition in rites of succession, in the daily political routine, or in a system of honorary recompense, carried weight for a wide group of people.

The intergenerational approach of court studies makes it possible to look at changes in symbolic practice against a background of changing strategies and transnational competition[104]. Competing acts of signification fiercely stirred political emotions. Praising the superiority of one power while downplaying the (legitimacy of the) bearings of others was considered an attack on majesty. At the same time, royal ensigns came into contact with local groups and players and were, as such, influenced by visual traditions embedded in a regional or civic context. Therefore, an analysis of heraldry's involvement in the obstinate process of state formation cannot take the court as its ultimate horizon. If we want to appreciate the diffusion and extent of adaptations, then we have to move away from the comfort zone of palaces and festivities with their polished sources. We should as well consider those constructions realized independently from the princely entourage. To do so, some ingrained misconceptions need to be rectified.

1.2.2 The Limits of Propagandist Idiom

The scientific output of the last decades demonstrates the relevance of cultural expressions in tackling the construction of monarchy[105]. Almost every significant ruler or court has earned a description of the display and ceremonial that legitimized and enhanced their authority[106]. Pictorial motifs have been identified, audiences explored, and evolutions mapped. To make sense

---

103 Adamson, The Making, p. 15–24.
104 Such an approach in: Karl Vocelka, Lynne Heller, Die Lebenswelt der Habsburger. Kultur- und Mentalitätsgeschichte einer Familie, Vienna 1997; Bély, La société, p. 188–194; Hendrik Ziegler, Der Sonnenkönig und seine Feinde. Die Bildpropaganda Ludwigs XIV. in der Kritik, Petersberg 2010.
105 Genet (ed.), Culture et idéologie dans la genèse de l'état moderne; Asch, Freist (ed.), Staatsbildung als kultureller Prozess; Stollberg-Rilinger, Kulturgeschichte des Politischen?, p. 11.
106 The field is vast, and it is no longer easy to get a comprehensive overview. Some influential examples are: Lecoq, François Ier imaginaire; Franz Matsche, Die Kunst im Dienst der Staatsidee Kaiser Karls VI: Ikonographie, Ikonologie und Programmatik des »Kaiserstils«, Berlin 1981; Anna Keay, The Magnificent Monarch: Charles II and the Ceremonies of Power, London 2008; Maria Goloubeva, The Glorification of Emperor Leopold I in Image, Spectacle and Text, Mainz 2000; Fernando Bouza Álvarez, Imagen y propaganda. Capítulos de historia cultural del reinado de Felipe II, Madrid 1998.

of the startling investment in representation and spectacle, many historians find inspiration in modern mass media. Through an interdisciplinary reading of several source types, they have argued that powerful dynasts increasingly fell back on specialized advisers, including chroniclers, poets, painters, and choreographers. Combining different iconographies, these »image-makers« or »fame-makers« contrived a perfect ruler who possessed sacred qualities[107]. The resulting complex was saturated with »princely mythologies« identifying the monarch with exemplary figures from pagan antiquity or the Christian tradition[108].

Sometimes, the comparison with modern techniques of persuasion is explicit. In 1974, Michael Sherman described the image politics of one of the first French kings to exploit new Renaissance motifs as »the selling of Louis XII«[109]. More recently, Kevin Sharpe adopted the same analogy in his remarkable study on the visual strategies of the English Tudors[110]. In another book on the »visual ideology« of Maximilian I (d. 1519), art historian Larry Silver described the emperor's groundbreaking use of new graphic media to »market« his person[111]. Most studies on royal pageantry do not draw analogies with present-day spin beyond reducing the visual to a buzzword: »propaganda«. Setting royal imagery aside as a coherent and centrally directed apparatus to impress subjects or rivals, they try to unravel the allegedly persuasive messages showered over the masses[112]. Widespread abstract signs are especially susceptible to this generalized interpretation since their specificity and layeredness are less easily understood[113]. The few times that coats of arms appear in larger studies, they are categorized as theatrical props that reinforced the central message of supremacy[114]. Even specialized investigations interpret their final aim as monarchical propaganda to the outer world[115].

---

107   A well-known and in many respects groundbreaking work is: Peter Burke, The Fabrication of Louis XIV, New Haven 1992. See also: Allan Ellenius, Introduction: Visual Representations of the State as Propaganda and Legitimation, in: Id. (ed.), Iconography, Propaganda, and Legitimation, p. 1–7; John Huxtable Elliott, Power and Propaganda in the Spain of Philip IV, in: Sean Wilentz (ed.), Rites of Power. Symbolism, Ritual, and Politics since the Middle Ages, Philadelphia 1985, p. 145–173.

108   Burke, The Fabrication; Ellenius, Introduction.

109   Michael Sherman, The Selling of Louis XII. Propaganda and Popular Culture in Renaissance France, 1498–1515, unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Chicago 1974.

110   Sharpe, Selling the Tudor Monarchy. See also the other volumes of his trilogy: Id., Image Wars: Promoting Kings and Commonwealths in England, 1603–1660, New Haven 2010 and Id., Rebranding Rule: The Restoration and Revolution Monarchy, 1660–1714, New Haven 2013.

111   Larry Silver, Marketing Maximilian. The Visual Ideology of a Holy Roman Emperor, Princeton 2008.

112   Examples of this, coming in more or less nuanced variants, are: Ellenius (ed.), Iconography, Propaganda, and Legitimation; José Manuel Nieto Soría, Las ceremonias del poder en la España medieval: propaganda y legitimacíon de la realeza Trastámara en Castilla, Madrid 1993; Bouza Álvarez, Imagen y propaganda; Elliot, Power and Propaganda, p. 145–173.

113   For similar reasons, though not without foundation, the propaganda paradigm is very popular in the interpretation of such ephemeral media as pamphlets and illustrated leaflets, see e.g.: Daniel R. Horst, De Opstand in zwart-wit. Propagandaprenten uit de Nederlandse Opstand 1566–1584, Zutphen 2003.

114   E.g., Édouard, L'empire imaginaire, p. 222–224.

115   Michael Göbl, Propaganda in den Wappen der Habsburger Monarchie, in: James D. Floyd, Charles J. Burnett (ed.), Genealogica et heraldica St. Andrews MMVI: Myths and propaganda in heraldry and genealogy: proceedings of the XXVII International Congress of Genealogical and Heraldic Sciences, St. Andrews, 21–26 August 2006, Edinburgh 2008, p. 313–336; Ailes, Heraldry in Medieval England, p. 88–93; Franz-Heinz von Hye (ed.), Staaten, Wappen, Dynastien. XVIII. Internationaler Kongreß für Genealogie und Heraldik in Innsbruck vom 5. bis 9. September 1988, Innsbruck 1988.

The assumption that political images or symbols conveyed messages of legitimacy is not wrong. Nonetheless, the use of such prefabricated categories as »propaganda« or »marketing« entails considerable danger. Dougal Shaw rightly stressed that what is usually called monarchical propaganda does not at all correspond to what is meant by the term today. The prevailing »propagandistic idiom« relies on the a-priori notion of a conscious scheme, enforced upon an undifferentiated audience[116]. This top-down scheme, as is usually believed, was designed under the absolute supervision of king and elite. Its contribution to the functioning of government is sought in persuading subjects of the rightfulness of policies (especially when these, to put it mildly, were doubtful). In other words, one supposes that behind the attractive packaging and seduction lay a distinct, rational goal. By stressing one-way manipulation, the concept is a covert inheritor of the older traditionalist approach[117].

It has been suggested that government-led efforts in this domain in the second half of the seventeenth century – especially at the French court of Louis XIV – gave rise to an unprecedented exploitation of images in the service of the absolutist state[118]. This tends to deny that princely representation is at least as old as state formation itself. Some recent comparisons add nuance to the so-called inventiveness of monarchs like Louis XIV. They portray image-building as a complicated exchange between imitation, invention, and inherited formulae[119]. Neither are early modern examples easily equated with modern mass media. Success and efficiency very much depended on the cooperation of multiple actors and the occasions on which they were put to use[120]. Even if there existed a central script – which is mostly doubtful – it was not so fixed as to strangle improvisation[121].

Rulers might have resorted to a circle of acclaimed specialists, yet this formed only a small fraction of how authority came to be construed through cultural experience[122]. »Official« themes continuously merged with alternative or competitive presentations. Subject matter endorsed by the regime could be redressed into a vehicle of resistance, while inventions from below sometimes placed obedience on a new track. Not in the least a static affair, this »multivocality« can best be observed in the fictions woven around the king's arms. Myths that traced their genesis back to a misty past were updated in the light of particular interests[123]. The literary deconstruction of elements, colours, and the shields' configuration was related to princely virtues, qualities, and duties. Because such stories were mostly set in pre-heraldic times, making them irrelevant for the study of the true »historical« inception of certain charges, scholars

---

116   SHAW, Nothing but Propaganda?, p. 139–158.
117   Ibid., p. 32; MÖRKE, Symbolism of Rulership, p. 32.
118   Claude ABRAHAM, Review, in: The French Review 66 (1993), p. 1004–1005. Burke himself was more careful in making a comparison with modern publicity: BURKE, The Fabrication, p. 1–14.
119   Gérard SABATIER, Margarita TERRIONE (ed.), ¿Louis XIV espagnol? Madrid et Versailles, images et modèles, Paris 2009; Jean-Frédéric SCHAUB, La France espagnole. Les racines hispaniques de l'absolutisme français, Paris 2003; Jeroen DUINDAM, Vienna and Versailles: The Courts of Europe's Dynastic Rivals, 1550–1780, Cambridge 2003.
120   BURKE, Performing History, p. 44–46; SHAW, Nothing but Propaganda?, p. 156–158.
121   ADAMSON, The Making, p. 10; BURKE, Performing History, p. 41–42.
122   Cf. ELLENIUS (ed.), Iconography, Propaganda, and Legitimation; GOLOUBEVA, The Glorification, p. 9.
123   A recent exception is: Paolo ZANINETTA, Il potere raffigurato. Simbolo, mito e propaganda nell'ascesa della signoria viscontea, Milan 2012, p. 141–208.

unjustly avoid them. There has been little interest in their functions apart from treating them as unchanging curiosities.

My fourth chapter delves deeper into this vibrant and largely unexplored material. It follows the subsequent remodelling of basic motifs associated with the heraldic figures of the selected monarchies[124]. The dynamic between official discourse and alternative signification thereby catches the eye. Ideological fictions did not arise in isolation. They were embedded within a larger discourse about the body politic, in which the alleged excellence and antiquity of figures revealed the principles of power. My comparative inquiry will unravel the contextual procedures with which inventions and intertextual adaptations applied the timeless dimension of the blazon to actual problems of governance. Was one genre supportive of another? And, when following changes in narrative topoi – be it a legendary tale or a recurring association – were certain registers replaced or even abandoned over time? Did literary explanations inspire public acts and vice versa?

In order to answer these questions, the early myth around the French fleurs de lis needs to be confronted with the varied heraldic lore of the Habsburgs. Especially the second half of the sixteenth century saw a period of mutual discursive influence. Acclamatory prose and historical reflections arose in a learned milieu, but they did not uniformly support princely ambition. Royalist authors reconciled older interpretations with new dynastic ideals. Regional stakeholders and critics of a reign equally relied on armorial reasoning to promote the presumed consultative nature of the crown. Taking Philip II's 1592 journey through Navarra and Aragon as an example, the interplay of discursive tactics with local display is questioned. The second part of the chapter zooms in on foreign relations between France and Spain in the early seventeenth century. In a climate of tension, authors had to cope with both external threat and domestic insecurities. Were all these fabulous tales and mystical descriptions rhetorical instruments to persuade the reader of a monarch's superiority? Or was something else at work, aiming for true effects in temporal policies?

In line with the propagandist stance, some scholars argue that it was mainly states in an early stage of development that needed centrally directed myths and rituals. Mass communication through symbols was a cheap means to strengthen the state's grip without resorting to repression[125]. Hinging on biblical and chivalrous ideals, medieval symbolism still expressed multiple social identities[126]. Its shared characteristics enabled an exchange of messages. It emotionally involved subjects in a higher social and political order to win their support for the princely cause[127]. Relations of power were affirmed as well as negotiated between groups that

---

124   Cf. the methodology used in: Michael Randall, On the Evolution of Toads in the French Renaissance, in: Renaissance Quarterly 57 (2004), p. 126–164.

125   Wim Blockmans, Esther Donckers, Self-Representation of Court and City in Flanders and Brabant in the Fifteenth and Early Sixteenth Centuries, in: Wim Blockmans, Antheun Janse (ed.), Showing Status: Representations of Social Position in the Late Middle Ages, Turnhout 1999, p. 81–82, 86–90. Cf. Mörke, The Symbolism, p. 34.

126   Werner Paravicini, Gruppe und Person. Repräsentation durch Wappen im späteren Mittelalter, in: Andrea von Hülsen-Esch, Otto Gerhard Oexle (ed.), Die Repräsentation der Gruppen. Texte – Bilder – Objekte, Göttingen 1998, p. 327–389.

127   Among others, this has been demonstrated for the Low Countries, see: Elodie Lecuppre-Desjardin, La ville des cérémonies. Essai sur la communication politique dans les anciens Pays-Bas bourguignon, Turnhout 2004.

influenced decision making[128]. In the case of a solid bureaucratic state, so the view goes, symbolic splendour was reduced to static representations endorsing the powers that be[129]. This alleged change in function is also related to a qualitative turnover. Renaissance artistry is said to have replaced the open medieval model with a powerful vocabulary of praise that drew from antiquity and limited ritual conversation[130]. Besides stupefying onlookers, *Fama*'s trumpet had to blast out the regime's glory to foreign courts[131].

A similar argument has been made for heraldic vocabularies. Michel Pastoureau wrote that in the new atmosphere of pomp and regulation, coats of arms lost much of their ancient lustre. Becoming more complex, their strength as vehicles for social identification was supposedly affected[132]. A degeneration of heraldic design, accelerating in the mid-sixteenth century, manifested alongside the rise of new visual genres. Older »paraheraldic« signs now fused with allegorical emblems, popularized since the publication of Andrea Alciato's »Liber Emblematum« (1531). Their obscure, aesthetic playfulness presumably corroded heraldry's capacity to convey political identities[133].

Heraldic appropriation is indeed often at stake during moments of change or shaky consolidation, as can be witnessed in the selected case studies. But this does not alter the fact that representations of rule were an inevitable component of the political fabric. A linear history of versatile adaptations transformed into forthright triumphalist rhetoric does not account for sudden empirical setbacks. Research on visual contestation shows that the same rhetoric of triumph actually inspired images of ridicule that criticized the monarch's policies or universal claims[134]. Moreover, innovations did not necessarily replace older traditions, as royal arms indisputably demonstrate. Cross-fertilization between traditional heraldic elements and the new world of emblems might have changed the former's look, but this did not necessarily make them less meaningful[135].

Quite recently, there has been considerable academic interest in the subject of heraldry at large. Young scholars have taken up such themes as the circulation of knowledge in early heraldic treatises and the compendia of heralds, or the ability of armorials to depict social order and

128   Blockmans, Donckers, Self-Representation; Peter Arnade, Realms of Ritual: Burgundian Ceremony and Civic Life in Late Medieval Ghent, Ithaca 1996.

129   Hugo Soly, Plechtige intochten in de steden van de Zuidelijke Nederlanden tijdens de overgang van de Middeleeuwen naar Nieuwe Tijd: communicatie, propaganda, spektakel, in: Tijdschrift voor geschiedenis 97 (1984), p. 341–345.

130   Strong, Art and Power, p. 3–19, 36–41; J. Ronnie Mulryne et al. (ed.), Europa Triumphans: Court and Civic Festivals in Early Modern Europe, 2 vol., Aldershot 2004. A nuanced vision on this transformation in: Peter Arnade, The Emperor and the City: The Cultural Politics of the Joyous Entry in Early Sixteenth Century Ghent and Flanders, in: Handelingen der Maatschappij voor Geschiedenis en Oudheidkunde te Gent 54 (2000), p. 65–92.

131   Adamson, The Making, p. 33–39.

132   Pastoureau, Traité, p. 66–73, 196.

133   Id., Aux origines de l'emblème, p. 327–334; Cheesman, Some Aspects of the »Crisis of Heraldry«; Anne Rolet, Aux sources de l'emblème: blasons et devises, in: Littérature 145 (2007), p. 53–78. On emblems in political festivities: Strong, Art and Power, p. 22–27; Boureau, État moderne.

134   Ziegler, Der Sonnenkönig und seine Feinde; Burke, The Fabrication, p. 135–150; Randall, On the Evolution of Toads.

135   Steven Thiry, From Royal Representation to Scientific Aspiration. Charles V's Columnar Device and the Dynamics of Appropriation (16th–18th centuries), in: IKON. Journal of Iconographic Studies 5 (2012), p. 217–234.

rank[136]. There are now critical discussions on coats of arms as signs of noble identity[137]. Furthermore, a much needed revision of the generally misunderstood contribution of heralds to the armorial field is on its way[138]. An interdisciplinary examination of armorial communication in all its cultural and social dimensions is in the works[139]. Nevertheless, most of this scholarship confines itself the Middle Ages. Historians steer clear of post-fifteenth-century developments and, so far, there has been no attempt to place the study of early modern royal heraldry into a broader cultural history of power[140]. Among others, Hablot and Christoph Friedrich Weber suggest that the fixation and regulation of the system significantly diminished its potential. They consider this process as more or less completed by the turn of the sixteenth century[141]. The present book argues that this standardization in no way led to a reduction in vitality or even »decadence«. Markedly in the royal sphere, the bureaucratic expansion enlarged the possibilities of armorial appropriation. Fixity emphasized the timeless nature of authority, whereas a synergy with allegorical emblems or new textual genres evoked new meanings.

It cannot be denied that there was indeed a strong tendency towards regulation from the later Middle Ages onwards. Princes tried to gain exclusive control over all armorial expressions in their lands and to place their own sign at the top of the symbolic pyramid. Increasing stipulations on the use of external ornaments, with the trappings of royalty as an unquestionable apex, pursued the codification of rank[142]. A governmental »take-over« also subjected armorial signs to punitive coercion (e.g., the defamation of the bearings of convicted traitors)[143]. In France, the first attempts to systematically register all noblemen's arms date from the 1450s and late 1480s, yet, in hindsight, remained no more than an ambitious proclamation[144]. Theoretically, all new bearings were henceforth conceded by the king. In January 1615, the creation of a

---

136 BOUDREAU, L'héritage symbolique; HILTMANN, Spätmittelalterliche Heroldskompendien; HUTHWELKER, Die Darstellung des Rangs; Miguel METELO DE SEIXAS, Maria DE LURDES ROSA (ed.), Estudos de Heráldica Medieval, Lisbon 2012. See also the doctoral research of Elmar Hofman (Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster).
137 Wolfgang ACHNITZ (ed.), Wappen als Zeichen. Mittelalterliche Heraldik aus kommunikations- und zeichentheoretischer Perspektive, München 2006.
138 Torsten HILTMANN, Heralds are not Heraldry / Heraldry not Heralds: To the Benefits of Clear Distinctions, in: Heraldica Nova. Medieval Heraldry in Social and Cultural-Historical Perspectives (blog on Hypotheses.org, http://heraldica. Hypotheses.org/766; consulted on 25/08/2014), 24 January 2014.
139 See the blog »Heraldica Nova« of Torsten Hiltmann (http://heraldica.hypotheses.org/149; consulted on 15/12/2017).
140 Although occupied with an ecclesiastical variant, early modern heraldry as a dynastic sign of power has been studied in: Torgeir MELSAETER, Zeichen der Macht, die Macht der Zeichen. Heraldische und para-heraldische Elemente in Kunst, Architektur und Literatur unter Papst Alexander VII. Chigi, 1655–1667, unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Antwerp 2013.
141 Laurent HABLOT, Le Roi fontaine de justice héraldique. La captation royale de l'expression emblématique à la fin du Moyen Âge, in: Silvère MENEGALDO, Bernard RIBÉMONT (ed.), Le Roi fontaine de justice: Pouvoir justicier et pouvoir royal au Moyen Âge et la Renaissance, Paris 2012, p. 223–240; Christoph Friedrich WEBER, Zeichen der Ordnung und des Aufruhrs. Heraldische Symbolik in italienischen Stadtkommunen des Mittelalters, Cologne 2011.
142 Luc DUERLOO, Het blazoen ontsmet. Adellijke heraldiek als toe-eigening van eer en deugd, 1550–1750, in: BMGN 123 (2008), p. 633–654; DUERLOO, Privileges uitbeelden, p. 68–119, 187–210; Ian DE MINVIELLE-DEVAUX, The Laws of Arms in England, France & Scotland, Charleston 2007; Fernando GARCÍA-MERCADAL, La regulación jurídica de las armerías: apuntes de derecho heráldico español, in: Emblemata 18 (2012), p. 259–297.
143 HABLOT, Le Roi fontaine de justice héraldique.
144 HILTMANN, Spätmittelalterliche Heroldskompendien, p. 277–278.

Juge général d'armes set out to suppress illicit assumptions more efficiently[145]. A grand-scale survey was only conducted as late as 1696, when Louis XIV ordered the registration of all arms in the kingdom. This resulted in the massive, though in many ways defective, »Armorial général de France«[146]. In the Habsburg monarchy, each of the kingdoms and principalities developed its own control mechanisms[147]. Rules and guidelines were written down by jurists or by minor officials of the royal household[148]. From the 1540s onwards, heraldic supervision in the dispersed lands was to some extent integrated in order to get a firmer grip on the honorary resources of a political society in transformation[149]. Did all these government-based efforts lead to a petrification of strategies revolving around the marks of sovereignty?

The fifth chapter proceeds from the realm of the imagination into the actual diffusion of royal tokens against this background of control and regulation. The process will be explored through a particular phenomenon: the recurring bestowal to others of parts from the royal blazon. Notwithstanding the move towards exclusivity and inalienable prerogatives, the French kings kept rewarding loyal subjects, corporations, and allies with the visual gift of one or more fleurs de lis (incorporated among other charges). It is interesting to juxtapose the long-term pattern of such concessions, in so far as this can be measured, with Habsburg attitudes. The donation of honorary grants and augmentations can be further examined through the texts of noble patents and the juridical debate. To what degree was this special gift-giving an asset that bolstered central authority? Or was it denounced as risky symbolic inflation that divided the sovereign dignity?

In a similar vein, ruling dynasties were faced with the subsistence of shared ensigns among those subjects who prided themselves on a familial intimacy with kingship. Some examples attest that these relationships empowered parties to participate in the political dialogue. With these circumstances in mind, what then were the changing motives of a monarch when granting or restricting a share in his armorial identity? It will become apparent that the defective cracks in the administrative system actually made it such that the increasing importance of written evidence and litigation – the so-called »paper heraldry« – was an ally rather than an obstruction to strategies of heraldic appropriation.

145   Alain De Grolée-Virville, Les d'Hozier. Juges d'Armes de France, Paris 1978.
146   Rémi Mathieu, Le système héraldique français, Paris 1946.
147   Alfonso de Ceballos-Escalera y Gila, Heraldos y reyes de armas en la corte de España, Madrid 1993; Henri Simonneau, Le roi d'armes dans les Pays-Bas bourguignons d'après une ordonnance de 1497, in: Torsten Hiltmann (ed.), Les »autres« rois. Études sur la royauté comme notion hiérarchique dans la société au bas Moyen Âge et au début de l'époque moderne, Paris 2010, p. 44–63.
148   Valverde Ogallar, Manuscritos y heráldica.
149   Jean Baptiste Christyn, Jurisprudentia Heroica Sive De Jure Belgarum Circa Nobilitatem et Insignia, Brussels 1668, p. 68–71 (see esp. article 8).