

# Heraldic Studies

Edited by Torsten Hiltmann and Laurent Hablot

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Torsten Hiltmann/Laurent Hablot/Matteo Ferrari (eds.)

# Heraldry in Medieval and Renaissance Cities

The Case of Italy in the European Context



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# À la mémoire de Christian de Mérindol

Christian de Mérindol nous a quitté le 24 septembre 2023. Nous tenons à lui dédier ce présent volume consacré à l'héraldique dans la ville. S'il n'avait pu être des nôtres à l'occasion des journées d'études héraldiques dédiées à ce sujet à Rome en 2015, Christian de Mérindol reste néanmoins un des pères fondateurs de l'héraldique monumentale qui nous occupe ici.

Il a été, pour beaucoup d'entre nous, un maître et un ami dont les travaux, les conseils, les remarques, toujours bienveillants, pertinents et précieux, ont forgé le savoir et les perspectives de recherches. Que ce grand savant à qui nous devons tant soit ici remercié et honoré.

Laurent Hablot (Paris) et Torsten Hiltmann (Berlin), directeurs de la collection *Heraldic Studies*

Matteo Ferrari (Paris), éditeur

novembre 2023



# Introduction



# Coats of Arms in Urban Space

An Introduction to the Use of Heraldry in Medieval  
and Early Modern Cities and Towns in Italy and Europe

Matteo Ferrari (Paris)  
Laurent Hablot (Paris)  
Torsten Hiltmann (Berlin)

**Abstract:** *This article presents a thorough exploration and initial discussion of the widespread use of coats of arms in urban spaces during the medieval and early Renaissance periods in Italy and Europe. It starts with a detailed examination of the field's research history, investigates the diverse monumental applications of heraldry in various urban locations and analyses the range of entities that utilized coats of arms for communication in these settings. The study places particular emphasis on the ephemeral use of heraldic symbols, which enhances our understanding of this phenomenon beyond what we may glean from surviving sources, whether they are monumental or depicted in manuscripts. Additionally, the paper discusses the different practices employed when dealing with heraldic symbols in urban settings, especially in cases of shifting allegiances. It contends that the convergence of diverse interests and spheres of influence from multiple groups, individuals, and institutions makes the city an exceptionally fertile place for the development and application of heraldic communication, and discusses whether Italy, particularly its northern cities characterised by distinct governance structures, nevertheless exhibits unique characteristics in this context that set it apart from the rest of Europe.*

The medieval and early Renaissance cities are spaces saturated with coats of arms. We only need to evoke the words with which the chronicler Jean de Bourdigné describes the town of Angers in 1529 to realise this. Nearly fifty years after his death, the emblems of King René are still visible everywhere: »il n'y a bonnes maisons en Angiers (si ce n'est de nouvelles basties) esquelles l'on ne voye le blason de ses armes ou quelque mot de ses devises«<sup>1</sup>. And a half-century later,

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1 Jean de Bourdigné, *Chroniques d'Anjou et du Maine*, ed. by Victor GODARD-FAULTRIER, 2 vols., Angers 1842, vol. 2, p. 231 cited by François COMTE, *Les lieux du pouvoir ducal à Angers au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle*, in: Jean-Michel MATZ, Noël-Yves TONNERRE (eds.), *René d'Anjou (1409–1480), pouvoirs et gouvernement*, Rennes 2011, pp. 163–194, p. 164. This article is largely based on data collected by the ArmmaA research programme, funded by the French Agence Nationale de la Recherche – Programme d'Investissements d'Avenir (ANR-21-ESRE-005, Biblissima+).

Michel de Montaigne is surprised to see that coats of arms with fleur-de-lis are also reproduced on all the buildings of the city of Prato, in Tuscany: »les fleurs de lis y sont partout«<sup>2</sup>.

As it is the case for the French philosopher who wondered about the identity of these fleurs-de-lis – they were, in fact, the arms of Prato (*gules semy de lys or*) and, perhaps, those of the Anjou family (*azure semy de lys or, a label gules*) – these heraldic traces, still numerous in the urban context, still challenge the current historian as well. Highlighting heraldry in the city implies, first and foremost, defining the specificity of this particular setting within the general practices of sign-making in space between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. How does the urban world differ from other worlds in this respect? Documented from the 13<sup>th</sup> century onwards, the public and monumental display of coats of arms applies, as we know, to most places charged with staging the power represented by these particular signs, in this case, seigniorial power and all the forms of authority deriving from it. Deployed on palaces, castles and strongholds, these heraldic signs are also displayed on instruments of domination and control (milestones, halls, mills, wells, pillories) as well as on media of representation and memory, particularly in sacred spaces (parish churches, seigneurial chapels, necropolises and tombs). Adopted by secular and regular ecclesiastical authority, this semiotics of power is also found on monasteries, priories and other religious buildings that also dot the countryside.

As such, the city simply extends and brings together the practices and issues associated with heraldic manifestations. However, what characterises this urban reality also defines the specificity of its sign-making. The medieval urban world is, in fact, one of concentration and cohabitation of populations, powers, communities and interests within an enclosed, organised space, in continuous growth. These multiple realities coexist within a common identity – the legal person of the city – a sum of particular identities, each more or less invested with a share of power and authority, justifying the use of specific and diverse signs of representation. Heraldic signs can be seen on walls, gates, bridges and towers, the seats of urban magistracies, castles and palaces, belfries, market halls, universities, wells and fountains, courts and instruments of justice, cathedrals, churches, chapels, monasteries and convents, districts and fiefs, trades, townhouses and private homes, taverns and shops. It is the cohabitation, competition and interlocking of these different spheres that sets the city's public space apart, generating a profusion of signs as well as a constantly evolving visual dynamic, the knowledge of which contributes to urban life.

While these constants can be found in almost every city in Europe, Italy, despite its great diversity, is a kind of special case that has attracted specific and perhaps misleading attention. Anyone walking through the historic centre of an Italian city, carefully observing the façades of churches and palaces, will not remain indifferent to the quantity of heraldic representations unveiled before their eyes. Many of these painted and sculpted coats of arms date back to the Middle Ages and the early Renaissance, particularly in the cities of central Italy, where the ancient architectural heritage has been better preserved from the vagaries of time and human action. Major centres such as Florence, Padua, Perugia, Siena, Rome and Venice, as well as smaller towns such as Prato, San Gimignano, Assisi and Cortona, boast a wealth of heraldic documentation, yet representing only a tiny

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2 Michel de Montaigne, *Journal de voyage en Italie par la Suisse et l'Allemagne*, ed. by Nina MUEGGLER, Laura PICCINA, Bordeaux - Paris 2023, p. 224.

fraction of the armorial decorations that were produced, and which we can now only partially understand thanks to the testimony of textual sources and a few iconographic documents.

Despite losses that remain impossible to quantify, these monumental remains and indirect traces help to consolidate the image of Italy as a territory in which, from the Middle Ages onwards, the use of heraldic representations underwent a development unrivalled in Europe, particularly in urban settings. But how accurate is this vision? Are Italian cities really an exception on the continent? Or might this impression be biased by an effect of sources? Are there other urban centres that can compete with Italian cities in terms of the abundance of heraldic evidence? This is precisely the question explored in the present volume. The aim here is certainly not to draw up an inventory of heraldic presences in cities across Europe but rather to examine the actors who, in the urban setting, present themselves through the medium of heraldry and to identify the places that are chosen for this communication, in order to analyse the semiotic functions that were entrusted to this type of visual communication which, relying on well-established rules of composition, could speak to very wide audiences.

## MONUMENTAL HERALDRY. A RECENT FIELD OF STUDY WITH ANCIENT ORIGINS

Some preconceived ideas about the diffusion of coats of arms in the ornamentation of European urban spaces probably also derive from the relatively late emergence of a specific interest in monumental heraldry and, consequently, from the absence of any in-depth work on this type of imagery. It was particularly due to Christian de Mérindol's research that, following the revival of heraldic studies in France during the late 1970s, coats of arms in architectural settings underwent more focused analysis. These studies go beyond merely identifying the coats of arms, exploring their semiotic and symbolic functions in relation to the historical context of their representation, display environment, medium, orientation, and proximity to other images<sup>3</sup>. As the founder of a new analytical methodology, Christian de Mérindol's work has laid the foundation for research programs entirely dedicated to the study of monumental heraldic decorations from the medieval and Renaissance periods such as the »ArmmA – Armorial Monumental du Moyen Âge« project, initially introduced at the University of Poitiers in 2014 and currently supported by the École Pratique des Hautes Études in Paris<sup>4</sup>, and inspired others<sup>5</sup>. This research fits in with various projects and studies in recent years on heraldry as a means of communication for certain social or institutional categories (princes, authorities, etc.), in certain spaces such as

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<sup>3</sup> Christian DE MÉRINDOL, *La maison des chevaliers de Pont-Saint-Esprit*, vol. 1: *Les décors peints. Corpus des décors monumentaux peints et armoriés du Moyen Âge en France*, 2 vols., Pont-Saint-Esprit 2001; *Id.*, *Images du royaume de France au Moyen Âge. Décors monumentaux peints et armoriés. Art et histoire*, Pont-Saint-Esprit 2013 (with bibliography to develop the analysis of the case studies listed).

<sup>4</sup> The results of the research project, led by Laurent Hablot and Matteo Ferrari, are available at <https://armma.saprat.fr/> [accessed 20/11/2023].

<sup>5</sup> Torsten HILTMANN, *L'héraldique dans l'espace domestique. Perspectives historiques sur les armoiries et le décor héraldique dans l'espace profane (espace germanique, XIII<sup>e</sup>–XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle)*, in: *Le Moyen Âge* 123 (2017), pp. 527–570 and Anne-Laure CONNESSON, *L'héraldique sculptée à Florence 1400–1530*, PhD thesis, Université de Picardie, 2016. Heraldry is a recurring theme, too, in the work of Cécile BULTÉ, *Images dans la ville. Décor monumental et identité urbaine en France à la fin du Moyen Âge*, PhD thesis, Paris IV Sorbonne, 2012.

palaces and great halls, as a recurring element of the iconographic repertoire used in the decoration of certain types of works such as ceiling paintings, and as a constant in artistic production, all from a pan-European perspective<sup>6</sup>.

If all these research initiatives have brought to light essential and most often unpublished information on the use of images in a monumental context, and therefore obviously also in an urban setting, it should not be overlooked that these heraldic images, painted or sculpted in buildings of all kinds, had early on attracted attention. First by those scholars who, from the 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards, criss-crossed Europe in search of antiquities; then, in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, by art and history enthusiasts involved in heritage protection or interested in all manner of documents capable of shedding light on the past of a town, a region or a family. Here again, until relatively recently, the interest in coats of arms depicted on monuments was not always driven by a desire to inventory or study heraldry and its uses. Certainly, scholars interested in the history of a city generally did not fail to mention the coats of arms on its buildings as necessary documents for the reconstruction of events and the identification of protagonists, as was the case with Giovanni Antonio Pecci for Siena or Alessandro da Morrona for Pisa<sup>7</sup>. Attention to monumental coats of arms, moreover, may also have stemmed from practical necessity, as evidenced by the *sepoltuari*, the handwritten registers in which the tombs located in a certain church or cemetery are inventoried. Made to monitor and keep track of the beneficiaries of burial rights, they most often give a simple description of the tomb and its epigraphic and heraldic complements, but can also offer a graphic reproduction of the coats of arms that are reproduced on its surface, as we can see in the *Sepoltuario* made in 1650–1657 by Stefano Rosselli, a Florentine scholar particularly interested in antiquities and genealogical studies<sup>8</sup>.

For François Roger de Gaignières, who inventoried the coats of arms he observed on the monuments he visited during his travels across France and reproduced them with the help of Louis Boudan, the awareness of the threat of disappearance hanging over this artistic heritage went hand in hand with the desire to collect all kinds of documents evoking the illustrious figures who had made the history of the kingdom<sup>9</sup>. In the same way, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Canon Charles Afforty compiled a collection of sketches of coats of arms from different periods, which he had collected, in no apparent order, from churches and other buildings in the Senlis diocese, with the aim of compiling an armorial listing the arms of the eminent families of Senlis and its

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6 Laurent HABLOT, Torsten HILTMANN (eds.), *Heraldic Artists and Painters in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times*, Ostfildern 2018; Torsten HILTMANN, Miguel METELO DE SEIXAS (eds.), *Heraldry in Medieval and Early Modern State-Rooms*, Ostfildern 2020; Dario DE CRISTOFARO, Marcello BEATO (eds.), *Dentro e fuori la corte. La funzione politica della pittura profana nel Nord Italia tra Tre e Quattrocento*, Rovereto 2023; Monique BOURIN, Maude PÉREZ-SIMON, Georges PUCHAL (eds.), *De l’Aragon au Frioul. Esquisse d’une géographie des plafonds peints médiévaux*, Paris 2021; Monique BOURIN, Georges PUCHAL, *Les plafonds peints auvergnats dans le corpus européen méridional*, in: *Sparsae* 91 (2023), pp. 5–47.

7 Siena, Archivio di Stato, ms. D 4–6, Giovanni Antonio PECCI, *Raccolta universale di tutte l’iscrizioni, arme e altri monumenti, si antichi, come moderni, esistenti in diversi luoghi pubblici della città di Siena* and Alessandro DA MORRONA, Pisa illustrata nelle arti del disegno, 3 vols., Pisa 1787–1793.

8 The original of this work is preserved in the family’s private archives in Florence (ms. 262), and several copies were made, such as the one on display in Florence, Archivio di Stato, Fondo Rosselli del Turco, ms. 624–625.

9 Laurent HABLOT, *Savoir et pratique héraudique au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle, l’exemple de Gaignières*, in: *Dix-septième siècle* 291 (2021), pp. 47–62. The Gaignières collection has been virtually reconstituted by the Collecta project. Digital archive of the Gaignières collection (1642–1715): <https://www.collecta.fr/index.php> [accessed 20/11/2023].

territory, while in Prato, Canon Giuseppe Nesti copied for the same purpose the inscriptions and coats of arms visible in his city at the time, more than half of which dated from the 14<sup>th</sup>–16<sup>th</sup> centuries<sup>10</sup>. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Vincenzo Forcella and Émile Raunié systematically recorded the coats of arms depicted in the churches of Milan, Rome and Paris, sometimes accompanying their identification with historical notes, but only insofar as they complemented epigraphic texts, which they inventoried as historical documents<sup>11</sup>.

Alongside these authors, for whom heraldry was not yet the main focus of interest, the scholarship of the 19<sup>th</sup> and first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century produced the first heraldists who traversed the territory with the primary objective of researching the coats of arms visible on monuments. Once again, the phenomenon developed most significantly in France. Arthur Bouneault in Niort, Louis Charbonneau-Lassay in Loudun, Paul Chardin and Henri Frotier de la Messelière in Brittany, and Alphonse Angot in Mayenne, to name but a few, are some of the best-known protagonists of a scholarship that had finally recognised monumental heraldic images as historical sources in their own right<sup>12</sup>.

However, this kind of scholarship, which had been growing until the 1950s, came to a halt when this form of traditional erudition, as a sort of narrative and elite history, no longer coincided with new and more modern historiographical approaches. The history and art history that emerged from this new historiographical trend lost sight of emblematic information for a long time, even though it was omnipresent in the visual and textual sources. Only the brilliant contribution of Michel Pastoureau and his demonstration of the perfect correspondence between heraldry and the problems of the *Nouvelle Histoire* (history of mentalities and sensibilities, history of symbols, complete analysis of sources and use of images) led to a gradual revival of scholarly interest in the subject. Nevertheless, generations of historians and art historians still lack critical training in this area, and there are still many gaps in the studies essential to the understanding of medieval societies and their monuments.

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10 Jean-Baptiste AUZEL, *L'armorial de Senlis du chanoine Afforty*, XVIII<sup>e</sup> s., Beauvais 2002 and Vittoria CAMELLITI, Vieri FAVINI, Alessandro SAVORELLI, *Stemmi di antiche famiglie pratesi. Da un quaderno illustrato di Giuseppe Nesti (sec. XIX)*, Prato 2022, but we will also recall the work of Battista Casotti who, at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, took note of all the coats of arms visible in the streets of the same Tuscan city (Prato, Biblioteca Roncioniana, ms. 67).

11 Vincenzo FORCELLA, *Iscrizioni delle chiese e d'altri monumenti di Roma dal secolo XI fino ai giorni nostri*, 14 vols., Rome 1869–1884; Id., *Iscrizioni delle chiese e degli altri edifici di Milano dal secolo VIII ai giorni nostri*, 12 vols., Milan 1889–1893; Émile RAUNIÉ, *Épitaphier du vieux Paris*, 3 vols., Paris 1890–1901 (the work has been updated and supplemented by Max Prinet, André Lesort and Hélène Verlet).

12 Paul-François BROUCKE, Matteo FERRARI, Laurent HABLOT, *La redécouverte de l'héraldique monumentale. Érudition antiquaire et protection du patrimoine (France, vers 1850–1950)*, in: *Étudier et restaurer le bâti médiéval (1850–1950). Acteurs, méthodes, enjeux*, in press.

## A FIELD OF RESEARCH WITH UNCERTAIN CONTOURS. A HERALDIC GEOGRAPHY TO BE CONSTRUCTED

Thanks to the above-mentioned studies and to a historiography that is increasingly attentive to the recording and identification of armorial elements, information relating specifically to the use of heraldry in urban contexts is becoming more and more numerous. However, the absence of comprehensive studies so far and the highly varied state of preservation of monumental heraldic attestations across the continent means that this information is extremely fragmentary and heterogeneous, to the point where it is now difficult to gain an overall view of the phenomenon, whether at the national level or even within relatively restricted geographical or historical circumscriptions<sup>13</sup>. This is precisely the case for the Italian peninsula, where studies to date have focused mainly on cities and regions, such as Tuscany, where the evidence is more numerous, better preserved and well documented by written sources<sup>14</sup>, leaving behind other centres where urban heraldry was certainly no less present. Such as Naples, where heraldic representations were part of the political communication arsenal of both the Angevin and Aragonese courts as well as of the local nobility<sup>15</sup>, or Catania, where the Palazzo della Giurazia was apparently adorned with the coat of arms of the urban magistracy that occupied it<sup>16</sup>. In smaller rural centres as well, such as Clusone, Savigliano, Orzinuovi, and others, most of the representative buildings, including the seats of civil servants, were often adorned with armorial decorations.

In fact, as the articles in this collection demonstrate, the development of urban monumental heraldry was to be found in other parts of Europe, in addition to Italy's communal and seigniorial towns, even if the phenomenon often followed different chronologies. Whereas in central and northern Italy, heraldry conquered the public sphere as early as the second half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, elsewhere attestations become more numerous from the late 14<sup>th</sup> century onwards, and even from the 15<sup>th</sup> century, as in certain regions of northern and central Europe (Flanders), which were nonetheless the cradle of the first coats of arms.

If, in most of these political areas, the peak of the use of heraldry was often in the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, we must not forget that our perception of the phenomenon is largely influenced by the degree of preservation of these monuments, which until today have often been neglected. How many armorial keystones have been drilled through to run power cables? How many armorial stones lie in museum storerooms without their origins being known? How many coats of arms have been hastily restored, or even replaced, with no regard for their original appearance? The hastily repainted coat of arms in the church of St Hilaire de Nalliers in Poitou or the crudely resculpted relief on the Quinquengrogne tower of the Château de Bourbon-L'Archambault are just two of the many examples that testify to the scant attention that monumen-

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13 But see Marcus MEER, *Heraldry in Urban Society. Visual Culture and Communication in Late Medieval England and Germany* (Oxford Studies in Medieval European History), Oxford 2024.

14 Vittoria CAMELLITI, *Artisti e committenti a Pisa XIII–XV secolo. Storie di stemmi, immagini devozioni e potere*, Pisa 2020.

15 Nicolas BOCK, *Fideles regis. Héraldique et comportement public à la fin du Moyen Âge*, in: Jean-Louis KUPPER, Alain MARCHANDISSE (eds.), *À l'ombre du pouvoir. Les entourages princiers au Moyen Âge*, Liège 2003, pp. 203–234.

16 Paola VITOLO, *Iconografia urbana, coscienza civica e simboli del potere nella Sicilia aragonese. Il sepolcro della regina Maria di Sicilia (1363–1401) nella Cattedrale di Catania*, in: *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome. Moyen Âge* 131 (2019), pp. 529–559.

16 Matteo Ferrari, Laurent Hablot, Torsten Hiltmann

tal heraldry has received over the years and the difficulties that today's researcher faces in studying it<sup>17</sup>.

The search for forgotten attestations and the criticism of the authenticity of those preserved but altered by the hand of man will, in any case, only provide a glimpse of the coats of arms that adorned the visual horizon of men and women, particularly those living in towns, in the late Middle Ages and early Renaissance. The destruction of coats of arms perpetrated, sometimes with surprising meticulousness, at the time of the Revolution in France as in other countries affected by revolutionary movements, is well-known<sup>18</sup>. Heraldic iconoclasm is, however, a phenomenon that, if we confine ourselves to France, also took place during the Wars of Religion – in Le Mans as in Poitiers, coats of arms fell victim to the Huguenots just like other secular images located in places of worship – and in a much more organized fashion in 1830, when the royal signs were pulled down in the early hours of the uprisings<sup>19</sup>. In addition, the transformations undergone by urban centres from the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards, as in the case of Haussmann's Paris or Florence's *risanamento* project, and the destruction perpetrated during the world wars led to the disappearance of many monuments of the past and, with them, the heraldic evidence they concealed. And while sculpted fragments and remnants of wall paintings loaded with armorial shields were preserved at the time of the demolitions for storage in local museums, the armorial face, so to speak, of the ancient city is lost forever<sup>20</sup>.

## PLACES, ACTORS AND FUNCTIONS OF THE MONUMENTAL HERALDIC IMAGE

Cities offered a wide range of actors the opportunity to take advantage of a relatively small space and the presence of transit points, through which people were often forced to move at one time or another during the day (city gates, market areas, places where political and judicial authority was exercised, buildings of worship) to convey messages through images and thus reach a wide and composite audience. As heraldry is one of the most effective means of communication, due to its medial flexibility, graphic efficiency and ease of comprehension based on its abstract nature<sup>21</sup>, urban buildings, both secular and religious, were rapidly filled with coats of arms (whose function changed according to the places and methods of display and the nature of the persons, physical or moral, represented).

To those approaching the city walls, the town immediately appeared as a highly emblematized place. Boundary stones decorated with coats of arms marked the limits of the territory

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17 On these two monuments see the entries by Matteo Ferrari and Antoine Robin respectively in the ArmmA database: <https://armma.saprat.fr/monument/eglise-saint-hilaire-nalliers/> and <https://armma.saprat.fr/monument/bourbon-larchambault-chateau-tour-quiengrogne/> [accessed 20/11/2023].

18 François SOUCHAL, *Le vandalisme de la Révolution*, Paris 1993.

19 Laurent HABLOT, *Le bris des armes. L'iconoclasme héraldique dans la société médiévale*, in: Pascale CHARRON, Marc GIL, Ambre VILAIN (eds.), *La pensée du regard. Études d'histoire de l'art du Moyen Âge* offertes à Christian Heck, Turnhout 2016, pp. 181–191.

20 The heraldic pieces, along with other items preserved from destruction, have notably contributed to the collections of the Musée Carnavalet in Paris and the Museo di San Marco in Florence, as well as the Musée Sainte-Croix in Poitiers.

21 Torsten HILTMANN, *Zwischen Grundwissenschaft, Kulturgeschichte und digitalen Methoden. Zum aktuellen Stand der Heraldik*, in: *Archiv für Diplomatik* 65 (2019), pp. 287–319, pp. 305–308.

over which the direct power of the municipal authorities was exercised: milestones of this type, dating from the 14<sup>th</sup> century, charged with the arms of the city, the lords who governed it and their representatives, are preserved in Padua and Brescia<sup>22</sup>. City coats of arms naturally adorned the thresholds of the urban space: they marked its borders and traced the limits within which the municipal authorities exercised their prerogatives. Municipal coats of arms were thus displayed on the outer walls of city gates, often alongside those of the institutions that governed the city, the authorities to which it was subject or to which it had entrusted its protection. In Lyon, for example, the Porte de Bourgneuf, already adorned with a painting of the city's coat of arms at the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, was newly decorated in 1493 with a relief which, as a sign of loyalty, associated for the first time the municipal coat of arms with that of the king, who during his entrances usually entered the urban centre from this side<sup>23</sup>.

These decorations also sometimes incorporated representations of the city's patron saints and its sovereigns, as seen on the Saint-Denis gate in Paris, known from an illumination by Jean Fouquet<sup>24</sup>: the statues of Saint Denis and two other enigmatic figures were probably surmounted by the royal coat of arms, crowned and held by two angels, apparently created after 1436 in place of a painting of the city's coat of arms, executed directly on the masonry of the building's exterior façade. In other cases, the coat of arms stands on its own, as in the case of Montbrison's urban gates, which the Bourbons had systematically marked with their own coat of arms, perhaps as early as the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, to symbolically place the town under their authority<sup>25</sup>. In still other cases, more articulated heraldic programs were set up on city gates which, distributed on the basis of a well-established hierarchical order, indicated the institutions and magistracies that shared the political space, describing the relationships of subordination or dependence that linked them, and showing the political network and allegiance in which the city was embedded. Thus, in 1428, on the Porte de la Tranchée in Poitiers, the town's coat of arms (and that of the mayor in a preliminary project that was probably abandoned) was framed by two figurations of the king's coat of arms<sup>26</sup>; in Florence, the gates of the new curtain wall completed in 1333 were adorned with the arms of the Commune, the People's party, the Anjou family, lords of Naples and leaders of the Guelph front to which the city belonged, and statues of Marzocco, the city's emblematic lion, as seen in the famous illumination in Domenico Benzi's *Speculum humanum* dating from 1335–1347<sup>27</sup>.

Placed at the entrance to the city or linking its districts, river bridges and the towers that guarded them – other obligatory places of passage – were privileged places for authorities to make a show of themselves, as attested by the ancient Prague Bridge, built by Emperor Charles IV and adorned with a heraldic program illustrating the territorial power of the House

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22 Franco BENUCCI, Gli antichi stemmi confinari del Padovano, tra pietre e carte d'archivio, in: *Archeologia veneta* 34 (2011), pp. 182–217 and Matteo FERRARI, blocco lapideo con stemmi, 1332–1337 e 134 o 1355, in: ID. (ed.), *La città del Leone. Brescia nell'età dei comuni e delle signorie*, exhibition catalogue (Brescia, 28 October 2022–29 January 2023), Milan 2022, p. 238.

23 Tanja LEVY, »Mystères« et »joyeusetés«. Les peintres de Lyon autour de 1500, PhD thesis, Université Paris-Sorbonne, 2013, p. 166.

24 Paris, BnF, ms. Fr. 6465, fol. 444r.

25 <https://armma.saprat.fr/monument/montrbrison-porte-de-la-madeleine/> [accessed 20/11/2023].

26 <https://armma.saprat.fr/monument/porte-de-la-tranchee/> [accessed 20/11/2023].

27 Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, ms. Tempi 3, fols. 57v–58r.

of Luxembourg, or in Lyon, where in 1531 the municipal arms were sculpted with those of the king on the middle tower of the Saône bridge, linking the Saint-Nizier district, located on the Presqu'île, to the cathedral and craft district now known as Vieux-Lyon<sup>28</sup>.

Inside the city walls, the authorities who governed the city found the ideal space to display their presence through heraldry. They marked their properties, the buildings in which they exercised their governing prerogatives, and the works they carried out on behalf of the community. The phenomenon is still strikingly intense in Italian cities. The palaces where municipal authorities sat in Florence, Siena, Perugia, Padua, and Rome – to mention only the best-known cases – bore, both inside and out, the arms of the institutions, factions and parties that held power, often accompanied by those of higher magistrates. Written sources testify to numerous other communal palaces also adorned with heraldic decorations now lost<sup>29</sup>. However, heraldry was also an important and meaningful component in the palaces where city councils used to meet in Germany, Flanders, France and Switzerland<sup>30</sup>. In Lyon, for example, the city's coat of arms was depicted in several places in the palace where the consuls sat: perhaps as early as 1465 on a stained glass and carved on the staircase pillar, and probably on a fireplace and other stained-glass windows in the 1510–1520 period<sup>31</sup>.

Public works for community use were also marked with the coat of arms of the institution that had promoted their creation and, possibly, that of the magistrate in charge, as illustrated by the Fontebranda fountain in Siena, bearing the coat of arms of the city, the Arroios fountain in Lisbon, bearing the coats of arms of the city and the kings of Portugal, and a well in San Gimignano bearing the coat of arms of the podestà Guccio dei Malavolti. But the arms of political authorities could also mark marketplaces – such as the loggia del Pesce in Florence (1567) adorned with the arms of the Medici and the magistrate of the Grascia – and places designated for the administration of justice, such as the pillory installed in a square in the city of Poitiers in the 15<sup>th</sup> century and charged with the city's arms.

Alongside this institutional heraldry, more or less developed depending on the country and the period, the urban space experienced an early deployment of monumental representations of personal and family coats of arms. The funerary context was probably the first to see an intensive use of heraldry, as witnessed by the numerous tombs and grave markers to be found in churches all over Europe and in their ancillary spaces (chapter houses, cloisters, forecourts, etc.). In addition to identifying the deceased, the coat of arms displayed inside the church not only asserted the burial rights he had been granted but also gave him the legal capacity to pass them on to his family and heirs, to boast of his merits in maintaining and embellishing the edifice or providing the elements necessary for worship, to inscribe – when integrated into larger

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28 LEVY, »Mystères« et »joyeusetés« (as in n. 23), p. 164.

29 Matteo FERRARI, Stemmi esposti. Presenze araldiche nei broletti lombardi, in: Id. (ed.), *L'arme segreta. Araldica e storia dell'arte nel Medioevo (secoli XIII–XV)*, Florence 2015, pp. 91–107.

30 Marcus MEER, History on the Walls and Windows to the Past. Heraldic Commemoration of Historical Identity in Late Medieval English and German Town Halls, in: HILTMANN, METELO DE SEIXAS (eds.), *Heraldry in Medieval and Early Modern State-Rooms* (as in n. 6), pp. 135–152. Cécile BULTÉ, Emblématique royale dans les hôtels de ville du Val de Loire (1440–1510), in: Alain SALAMAGNE (ed.), *Hôtels de ville. Architecture publique à la Renaissance*, Tours 2015, pp. 189–215.

31 LEVY, »Mystères« et »joyeusetés« (as in n. 23), pp. 155, 158–159, 162.

ensembles as in the case of Breton representations of pre-eminence<sup>32</sup> or the tradition of memorial shields supervised by the city council like in Nuremberg<sup>33</sup> – the individual and his family in a well-ordered, hierarchical society.

From the second half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, personal and family coats of arms also became a common feature of civil building ornamentation. Displayed on aristocratic and bourgeois residences, they certainly marked ownership, but through their composition or their association with other emblematic signs and other types of images – just like the Hôtel of Jacques Coeur in Bourges or the Hôtel de la Gruuthuse in Bruges – they also declared the owner's social and political position, his network of alliances, the rights he held or presumed to hold by virtue of marriage or ancestry, and his aspirations. Scattered around the city in meticulously chosen locations, they affirmed the rank of their wearers in society and identified their zones of influence, following the example set by the great Roman families of the late Middle Ages<sup>34</sup>. The realization of works in the service of the community could also offer private individuals further opportunities to display their own signs and thus prove their generosity, as happened in Venice with the wells that the great families of the nobility built at their own expense in the courtyards of their residences to supply the city's inhabitants with drinking water, in addition to those commissioned and engaged by the public authorities.

## MONUMENTAL AND EPHEMERAL

Sometimes we tend to forget that these heraldic representations that dotted the city on durable supports were regularly multiplied by decorations made of less resistant materials, following the example of those banners or streamers made of brass or painted copper, or of those roofs painted or formed of glazed tiles with the owner's emblematic arms or colours that, in late medieval and early Renaissance illuminations, often adorn the roofs of princely residences and city gates. In Guillaume Revel's *Armorial* the towers of castles, ramparts and other eminent town buildings are constantly adorned with banners bearing the fleur-de-lis arms of the Bourbons and those of the Dauphin de Forez<sup>35</sup>; in Master Boucicaut's depiction of Avignon, the popes' palace overlooking the city is equipped with towers on which the flags of the church are flying<sup>36</sup>; again, in the *Vision of Saint Francis* painted by Benozzo Gozzoli in the church of St Francis in Montefalco in 1450–1452 appears a palace entirely decked out with ensigns and hanging shields.

Far from being imaginary, these city portraits are entirely plausible, as evidenced by the records of expenditures made for the creation of such heraldic elements. In Poitiers, for instance, the Porte Saint-Lazare (or Saint-Ladre) was adorned in 1428 with metal banners painted with

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32 On this phenomenon, well documented in Brittany, see Hervé DU HALGOUËT, *Droits honorifiques et prééminences dans les églises en Bretagne*, in: *Mémoires de la Société d'histoire et d'archéologie de Bretagne* 4 (1923), pp. 31–87.

33 See the article by Katja Putzer in this volume.

34 On this subject, see the articles by Andreas Rehberg and Emiliano Bultrini in this volume.

35 Paris, BnF, ms. Fr. 22297.

36 Paris, BnF, ms. Fr. 23279, fol. 81r.

the arms of the king and the city<sup>37</sup>, while, in the same city, the belfry had been adorned at the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century with metal banners and »lead tables« painted with the arms of the duke of Berry<sup>38</sup>. In Milan, the arms of the Visconti, lords of the city, were reproduced on the brass banner that a Saint Michael brandished on the top of the bell tower of the church of St Gothard, the chapel of the seigniorial palace<sup>39</sup>, while in Tournai, the city's belfry, restored in 1396–1398, was adorned with a veritable forest of banners (counting eight large ones and 37 small ones) bearing the arms of the king of France and the town, made by »maistre Wattier, fondeur« and gilded by the painter Jehan le Mone<sup>40</sup>.

These heraldic devices, relatively mobile but intended for continuous display, were accompanied by far more ephemeral armorial elements, made on cloth or wooden boards on the occasion of religious celebrations, joyous entries<sup>41</sup>, funerals of high-ranking figures, tournaments or feasts organized to celebrate a military victory. On these occasions, standards, banners, panels, baldachins and other heraldic objects could be displayed on the façades of churches, houses and palaces, or transported throughout the city, accompanying, for example, the remains of a prince at his funeral ceremony. Examples include the banners displaying the arms of the trades on the Saône bridge during Charles VIII's joyous entry into Lyon in 1490; the veritable heraldic procession, with armorial flags and shields, that escorted the body of Jean Galéas Visconti to Milan in 1402<sup>42</sup>; or the 3,500 crests bearing the arms of France created in 1515 by painter Jehan Perréal for the funeral of Louis XII, 700 of which were dotted along the route taken by the royal remains, from the Salle des Tournelles to Notre-Dame Cathedral, then from Notre-Dame to the suburban basilica of St Denis<sup>43</sup>. The miniatures in the *Livre des Tournois du roi René* evoking the setting in sign of an inn by the banners of jousters in a fictitious tournament, perhaps in Angers<sup>44</sup>, and this right to »faire blason fenêtre«, remind us in passing that the city was, by far, also the preferred setting for these chivalric feasts<sup>45</sup>.

37 Louis REDET, Extraits des comptes de dépenses de la ville de Poitiers, aux XIV<sup>e</sup> et XV<sup>e</sup> siècles, in: Mémoires de la Société des Antiquaires de l'Ouest 6 (1839), pp. 385–411, pp. 390–391.

38 Id., Extraits des comptes de dépenses de la ville de Poitiers, aux XIV<sup>e</sup> et XV<sup>e</sup> siècles, in: Mémoires de la Société des Antiquaires de l'Ouest 7 (1840), pp. 381–446, pp. 412–413.

39 Giovanni Battista SANNAZZARO, »Angelus ex metallo, habens in manu vexillum cum vipera«. Per la statua sul campanile di San Giovanni in Corte a Milano, in: Arte lombarda 179–180 (2017), pp. 5–16.

40 Barthélemy Charles DU MORTIER, Étude sur les principaux monuments de Tournai, Tournai 1862, pp. 220–221.

41 When Charles VIII entered Lyon in 1490, the banners of the city's brotherhoods had been displayed on the Saône bridge: Tanja LEVY, La ville en représentation face au roi. Armoiries lyonnaises et entrées royales, de Louis XI à François I<sup>r</sup>, in: Alexis CHARANSONNET, Jean-Louis GAULIN (eds.), Lyon 1312. Rattacher la ville au royaume?, Lyon 2020, pp. 293–308. On this theme see also Bernard GUENÉES, Françoise LEHOUX, Les entrées royales françaises de 1328 à 1515, Paris 1968 and David RIVAUD, L'accueil des souverains par les corps de villes. Les entrées royales dans les »bonnes villes« du Centre-Ouest (XV<sup>e</sup>–XVI<sup>e</sup> siècles), in: Robert FAVREAU, Régis RECH, Jean-Yves RIOU (eds.), Bonnes villes du Poitou et des pays charentais (XII<sup>e</sup>–XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles), Poitiers 2002, pp. 267–290.

42 Federico DEL TREDICI, I due corpi del duca. Modelli monarchici, fazioni e passioni nei funerali di Gian Galeazzo Visconti, in: Società e Storia 160 (2018), pp. 315–342.

43 Anne-Sophie BESSERO-LAGARDE, Les auteurs des pompes funèbres héraudiques à la Renaissance, in: HABLOT, HILT-MANN (eds.), Heraldic Artists and Painters (as in n. 6), pp. 179–189.

44 Paris, BnF, ms. Fr. 2695, fols. 54v–55r.

45 On jousting in Anger, see COMTE, Les lieux du pouvoir ducal à Angers (as in n. 1), pp. 180–184.

## A REGULATED VISUAL CODE, IMAGES EXPOSED TO INSULTS

The success of heraldry as a means of communication within cities also prompted civil and religious powers to intervene in its use, establishing regulations that defined which coats of arms could be depicted where. Perhaps the most striking example comes from Italy, where from the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century onwards, the municipal authorities of many towns ruled by popular governments approved regulations prohibiting the display of personal coats of arms on public buildings that were to be reserved for representations of institutional arms<sup>46</sup>. Part of the measures taken to limit the action of large families and, more generally, to prevent public officials from taking advantage of the visibility granted to them by the mandate exercised to extend their power of influence and that of their families, these decisions testify both to the spread of the heraldic image in the public space and to the fears that this type of image could generate due to its effectiveness.

Exemptions were sometimes provided based on circumstances and the location where the coat of arms was represented. In Florence, for example, in 1329, the priors of the arts decided that only the arms of the church, the pope, the Anjou family and the king of France could be painted on public buildings with those of the commune, the people, the Guelph party (but the coats of arms of the Anjou and those of France were not to be combined with personal coats of arms)<sup>47</sup>. Elsewhere, the heraldic manifestations of municipal officials were probably subject to the approval of other urban magistracies. This is the case in Poitiers, where it appears that the authorization of the city council was required before the mayor could have his coat of arms depicted on works he had commissioned.

But changes of power regularly triggered the process of erasing and replacing signs, as the deposition of a government entailed – in the Middle Ages as well as in much more recent times – the removal of its signs. An early 15<sup>th</sup>-century illumination in Giovanni Sercambi's *Chronicles* vividly portrays this tradition by depicting the changing regimes in Lucca over time<sup>48</sup>. Sometimes, to mark a change of government, it was simply a matter of painting the signs of the new power over those of the old, as at Porta Dieda in Bassano del Grappa, where the arms of the Empire and the Visconti were covered by the lion of Saint Mark once the town came under the authority of Venice. Elsewhere, however, these actions could take on the appearance of an undertaking requiring considerable effort and resources due to the quantity of coats of arms to be destroyed and repainted, or the desire to leave no trace of the authority with which they were associated. Thus, in Padua, in 1313, the imperial eagles were erased *cum ipso pariter cemento [...] ne qua in posterum signa decerni possint* from the commune palace and other places in the city

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46 Standards of this type are known from Brescia (1290), Perugia (1297), Siena (1309–1310), Florence and Prato (1329), Amelia (1330) and Gubbio (1338): Giampaolo ERMINI, *La décoration picturale de la salle majeure du Palais de la Commune d'Orvieto*, in: HILTMANN, METELO DE SEIXAS (eds.), *Heraldry in Medieval and Early Modern State-Rooms* (as in n. 6), pp. 165–184, pp. 167–171 and Matteo FERRARI, *La «politica in figure». Temi, funzioni, attori della comunicazione visiva nei Comuni lombardi (XII–XIV secolo)*, Rome 2022, pp. 120–121.

47 Max SEIDEL, »Castrum pingatur in palatio«. 1. Ricerche storiche e iconografiche sui castelli dipinti nel Palazzo Pubblico di Siena, in: Id. (ed.), *Arte italiana del Medioevo e del Rinascimento*, 2 vols., Venice 2003, vol. 1, pp. 161–192, pp. 188–189, doc. 7.

48 Lucca, Archivio di Stato, Biblioteca manoscritti, ms. 107, no. 123.

where they had been painted, and the same occurred in Treviso<sup>49</sup>. In Savoy, after regaining possession of his state in 1559, Emmanuel Philibert immediately commissioned a team of painters to destroy the French king's coat of arms, which had been depicted everywhere twenty years earlier, and to paint his own<sup>50</sup>. There are countless examples of this type of sign replacement across the continent, as witnessed again in Tournai in 1513, where at the end of the victorious siege led by English troops, the arms of France were immediately replaced by those of England<sup>51</sup>.

## CONCLUSION: IS THERE AN ITALIAN SPECIFICITY?

The examples cited and the case studies presented in this volume prove that the use of heraldic imagery in the urban context in the late Middle Ages and early Renaissance was certainly not exclusive to Italian cities. Born at the very moment when, across the continent, cities were expanding in terms of demography and size and gradually acquiring a centrality that was sometimes unprecedented in administrative, economic, legal, political and religious terms, heraldry very often found a particularly propitious space for its use within town walls.

In a world where coats of arms became an increasingly widespread sign of identity, the phenomenon can no doubt be explained by the fact that the many players who animate the urban scene, and often compete with each other, find in the heraldic image an effective tool to respond to their own desire to assert themselves and their role in society. This clearly implies the presence of a public that is sensitive to the messages conveyed by coats of arms and, above all, capable of decoding armorial ensembles that are sometimes complex or original: conditions that seem to be perfectly met in medieval towns due to their demographic »weight«, their ability to attract people, determined by the multiple functions that take place within their walls, and the stable and important presence of professions interested in the semiotic functions of heraldry due to the very needs of their profession (notaries, judges, officers, merchants, etc.).

It is currently difficult to determine how many coats of arms an »urban« resident between the 13<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries might have known. However, not only do numerous traces and documents attest to the visual omnipresence of these signs, but also narrative and normative sources reveal many clues suggesting that a certain heraldic competence was widespread in a considerable part of society. For instance, there are accounts of artists inventing coats of arms for private individuals or appropriating them for political reasons<sup>52</sup>; chronicles that touch upon

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49 The Padua episode is recounted by Ferreto Vicentino, *Historia rerum in Italia gestarum ab anno MCCL ad annum usque MCCCXVIII*, ed. by Carlo CIOPOLLA, Rome 1914, p. 115 and by the *Annales patavini*. Redazioni muratoriane A-C, ed. by Antonio BONARDI, in: *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores* 8, Città di Castello 1907, pp. 199–265, p. 234, while that of Treviso is mentioned by Giambattista VERCI, *Storia della Marca trivigiana*, 20 vols., Venice 1786–1791, vol. 6, doc. DXCIV, p. 27.

50 Luisa Clotilde GENTILE, *Artistes, hérauts et heraldique de part et d'autre des Alpes Occidentales*, in: HABLOT, HILT-MANN (eds.), *Heraldic Artists and Painters* (as in n. 6), pp. 76–94, pp. 87–89.

51 Le siège et la conquête de la cité de Tournay l'an 1513, in: *Bulletins de la Société historique et littéraire de Tournai* 3 (1853), pp. 130–134, p. 134.

52 About these episodes see Franco SACCHETTI, *Il Trecentonovelle*, ed. by Valerio MARUCCI, Rome 1996, nos. LXIII, CLXI; Bonincontro MORIGIA, *Cronicon Modoetense*, in: Ludovico Antonio MURATORI (ed.), *Rerum Italicarum Scri-*

entries, tournaments, and rituals, highlighting the role of coats of arms in these events and the reactions they elicit; the campaigns to change or destroy emblems, in connection with shifts in allegiance; the registers of deliberations of assemblies that recount debates within town councils about coats of arms<sup>53</sup>; the armorial shields that notaries often traced on the pages of registers containing the deeds they drew up<sup>54</sup>. On the other hand, we shouldn't forget that it was the very structure of urban society that demanded of its inhabitants a certain ability to recognize a certain number of the coats of arms they had daily before their eyes: those of the town, the principal magistrates, the great urban or surrounding families, the bishop and his canons, trades, districts, the sovereign (the pope, the king, the emperor), princes and their agents, distinguished guests. It's not hard to imagine that the citizens of Italian communes, where political participation was very broad and institutions made images a central part of political and institutional communication, must have been familiar with dozens or even a hundred coats of arms.

As an extremely effective communication tool, coats of arms consequently adorn cities all over Europe, accompany their social, political, and institutional transformations, and sometimes provoke irritated reactions, as evidenced by the condemnatory words that some clergy (but not only) express against their spread in religious buildings<sup>55</sup>. However, the idea of an Italian specificity does not seem entirely dismissible, even if it is probably necessary to distinguish between, on one hand, the north and the centre of the peninsula, where communal and seigniorial forms of government prove to be accelerators of the use of heraldry in the urban context, and, on the other hand, southern Italy where, to the best of our knowledge and with necessary reservations, it is mainly the arms of the sovereign, the great families orbiting the court, and the high clergy that found their place on and within the city walls.

First and foremost, the plurality of actors, particularly institutional ones, operating in the Italian urban space and early on equipping themselves – sometimes as early as the second half of the 12<sup>th</sup> and the first of the 13<sup>th</sup> century<sup>56</sup> – with coats of arms regularly reproduced in different parts of the city, finds no comparison elsewhere. This is particularly true of northern and central Italy, which saw the development of the communal system. The coats of arms of the political authorities governing the town or under whose domination the town was placed – so masterfully displayed on the façades of communal palaces –, those of religious institutions and their dignitaries, and those of citizens were accompanied by an infinite number of signs linked to the various organizations that participated in the town's administrative, economic and some-

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tores 12, Milan 1728, col. 1101; *Historia Iohannis de Cermenate notarii mediolanensis*, ed. by Luigi Alberto FERRAI, Rome 1889, pp. 71–72.

53 Giovanni VILLANI, *Nuova Cronica*, ed. by Giovanni PORTA, Parma 1991, book XI, chap. CC, pp. 1172–1173.

54 Matteo FERRARI, *Notariato e sapere araldico. I disegni di stemmi dei notai piacentini alla fine del Medioevo*, in: Alessandra BASSANI et al. (eds.), *Notai tra ars e arte. Mediazione, committenza e produzione tra Medioevo ed Età Moderna*, Genoa 2023, pp. 89–110.

55 Maria Monica DONATO, »Ogni cosa è pieno d'arme«. Uno sguardo dell'esterno, in: FERRARI (ed.), *L'arme segreta* (as in n. 29), pp. 19–27; Luisa Clotilde GENTILE, »Ambitiosa decorandi arrogantia«. L'avversione per gli stemmi nelle chiese, dai predicatori medievali ai trattatisti della riforma cattolica, in: *Armas e Troféus. Revista de História, Heráldica, Genealogia e Arte* 19 (2017), pp. 29–60.

56 Christoph Friedrich WEBER, *Zeichen der Ordnung und des Aufruhrs. Heraldische Symbolik in italienischen Stadtkommunen des Mittelalters*, Cologne - Weimar - Vienna 2011.

times even political activities<sup>57</sup>. One can think first of all of the arts and crafts guilds which, although documented in other regions such as Paris, Flanders and Germany, multiplied surprisingly in Italian cities – as in Bologna, where the arms of the 26 *arti* appear, in the mid-14<sup>th</sup> century, next to those of the commune on the seal of the gonfalonier des arts et des libertés of the Guelph party (Florence, Bargello Museum) – and commissioned imposing monumental works, as in the case of the palaces of the Florentine guilds, richly adorned as early as in the 14<sup>th</sup> century with totally unprecedented heraldic representations<sup>58</sup>. The city's political parties (Nobility and People) and the factions (Guelphs and Ghibellines) vying for supremacy over communal institutions were also endowed with coats of arms, which more often than not became part of the municipal heraldic panoply in the ornamentation of public palaces and all manner of works commissioned by the city's civil authorities. Furthermore, there were urban administrative subdivisions and lower-level administrative groupings – generally also charged with administrative and political functions, but especially active in organizing the army and defending the city – that were also endowed with insignia, likewise reproduced in monumental contexts, like the figures supporting shields with the insignia of the districts and localities of the territory represented in the palace of the commune of Milan (1260–1270) or the insignia of the *rioni* displayed on the façade of the Senatorial Palace in Rome in the mid-15<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>59</sup>

The Italian specificity, however, does not stop at the quantity and variety of signs deployed in urban space; it also concerns the extremely early chronology of the appearance of the heraldic image on city buildings. Whereas in most of Europe, heraldic representations in urban space spread mainly during the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, in the Italian peninsula it was already a well-established presence in the second half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. So much so that, as mentioned above, municipal authorities felt it necessary to intervene to regulate its use, particularly on public buildings.

The chronology and specific methods of using heraldry in public spaces and communication in medieval cities still require extensive clarification. This volume contributes to this by examining the case of Italy and comparing it with other examples, in the hope of setting a valuable milestone for future research.

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57 On these aspects, see in particular Alessandro SAVORELLI, Il bestiario araldico delle città medievali. Un bilancio statistico, in: Ammentu. Bollettino Storico e Archivistico del Mediterraneo e delle Americhe 25 (2024), pp. 115–138.

58 A case in point is the representation of the administrative structure of the city of Florence in a heraldic painting on the ceilings of the palaces of the guilds of physicians and apothecaries, and of the guilds of judges and notaries: Maria Monica DONATO, Gli affreschi del Palazzo dell'Arte de' Giudici e Notai, in: Annali della Scuola Normale di Pisa. Classe di Lettere e Filosofia 7 (2015), pp. 3–20 and Anna POMIERNY-WĄSIŃSKA, Florence and its Signs. A Late Mediaeval Diagram of the City, in: Heraldica nova. Medieval and Early Modern Heraldry from the Perspective of Cultural History, <https://heraldica.hypotheses.org/4880> [accessed 21/11/2023].

59 On the paintings in the Broletto in Milan, see FERRARI, La »politica in figure« (as in n. 46), pp. 169–180, and on those in the Palazzo Senatorio in Rome the article by Andreas Rehberg in this volume.