

Religion and Civil Society Project

Visual Elements of Royal Symbology: Royal Insignias and Emblems

The analysis of the “divisas” or royal insignias used by Juan II de Castilla [King John II of Castile] (1404-1456) as an expression of his political project and identifying sign of his own political faction in the context of battles for power which destabilized his government. More specifically, the insignia of the “Escama”, the “Ristre” and the “Banda” will be analyzed, two of them being signs of their respective chivalric orders, whose history will be reconstructed by means of combining chronicle testimonies, iconographs, and literary works.

This research, carried out by Álvaro Fernández de Córdoba, offers not only an explanation –up to now nonexistent– of the origin and variable development, but also it attempts to integrate these signs in a global analysis of the political tensions, the messages of propaganda and the evolution of the esthetic forms in the court of king John II. Further on in the investigations, the analysis will be extended to the reign of the Catholic Monarchs in order to decipher some signs of the chivalric culture reinvented in their court; more specifically, the insignias that were occasionally used in the festivals of the knights that were celebrated during their reign. The discovery of an unknown relationship of the “cimeras” (chimeras) and letters of the participants of the jousts shown off in the Valencian festivities of 1481 will give us an excellent opportunity to reconstruct this type of performances that permit the exhibition of royalty as the high point of the order of chivalry and the source of a merry festival that ran over into urban environments that were not always pleasant. The document that we analyze, singular in its type, not only offers us important information for studying the “microliterature” of the letters of the participants of the jousts (Alan Deyermond), but also permits us to place an important link in the knowledge, still fragmented, of the chivalric rituals of the 15th century.

María Narbona will carry out a parallel investigation for the Navarrian environment using documentation available in the Archivo del Reino de Navarra (Archives of the kingdom of Navarre). First of all, research will be carried out regarding the concession of the Príncipe de Viana of the collar de the Jarras and the Grifo on the part of Alfonso el Magnánimo (Alfonso the Magnanimous), as well as a letter which was recently found in the Archivo Real de Valencia (Royal Archives of Valencia), dated in 1458. In addition, the insignias of the queen María de Castilla (Queen Mary of Castile), wife of the Magnanimous, will be carried out; more specifically the study will be dedicated to the Olla or Apurador, that appears in her will and in her sepulcher in the Monastery of the Trinity of Valencia. All of this must be contrasted with the investigations regarding the insignias of Alfonso V being carried out by the art historian, Joan Domenge Mesquida, at the University of Barcelona. These investigations will be carried out in the Archivo Nacional de Simancas (National Archives of Simancas in Valladolid) and the library of the Real Academia de la Historia (Royal Academy of History in Madrid) for the case of the court of king John; and the Archivo del Reino de Navarra (Archives of the kingdom of Navarre in Pamplona), the Archivo Real de Valencia (royal Archives in Valencia) and the Archivo de la Corona de Aragón (Royal Archives of the Crown of Aragon in Barcelona) for the Navarrian case.