

# Overseas Elements in Portuguese Armorial from the Modern Era

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## Abstract

The aim of this article is to analyze the presence of overseas elements in the armorials compiled in Portugal between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. Such representations frequently took the form of elements inserted into the coats of arms of families linked to overseas expansion, both through the addition of already existing insignia and the creation of new devices. However, from a certain time onwards, they also included the coats of arms attributed to the political entities exercising power in overseas territories that were either subject to the authority of the king of Portugal or subsidiary thereto. This was the case, for example, with some attempts at heraldic acculturation on the part of a restricted but significant group of municipalities.

## Keywords

Heraldry; Overseas; Iconography of power; Visual culture; Modern Era

## Resumo

O objectivo do presente artigo consiste em analisar a presença do Ultramar nos armoriais coligidos em Portugal entre os séculos XV e XVIII. Tais representações podem tomar a forma de elementos inseridos nas armas de famílias ligadas à expansão ultramarina, tanto por acrescentamento de insígnias já existentes, como por criação de emblemas novos. Mas abrangem também, a partir de certa altura, as armas atribuídas às próprias entidades políticas que exerciam o poder nos territórios ultramarinos submetidos à autoridade do rei de Portugal ou subsidiários a ela: caso de algumas tentativas de aculturação heráldica de organizações políticas autóctones e, sobretudo, de um conjunto restrito, mas significativo de municípios.

## Palavras-chave

Heráldica; Ultramar; Representação do poder; Cultura visual; Idade Moderna

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This text seeks to assess the impact of the overseas elements found in Portuguese heraldry from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century through the study of their presence in the armorials produced at that time.<sup>2</sup> For this purpose, an attempt will be made, first of all, to define the research object from a heuristic point of view, enquiring into the nature of armorials and their role in the political culture of the time. Next, the armorials produced in this particular period will be characterized, in order to enumerate and analyze those coats of arms contained within them that displayed overseas motifs. Finally, an attempt will be made to ascertain the presence and the nature of the heraldry attributed to the overseas territories themselves through works of this kind.

Pastoureau drew attention to the need to undertake a study of the heraldic literature produced throughout the Modern and Contemporary Eras, highlighting the divorce that has taken place between our current heraldic science and this type of literature (Pastoureau 1985: 129). Erudite heraldry has thus tended to move away from a genre of literature that it has abandoned to the hands of bibliophiles, resulting in a remarkable divorce between heraldic studies such as they are understood by these “dilettantes” and such as they are practiced by researchers: the former kind of heraldry is characterized by theoretical and normative criteria, enclosing itself within a system of rules and didactic examples that it then seeks to pursue to exhaustion; the latter, on the contrary, is malleable and lively, and frequently transgresses these supposed rules that are meant to guide it.

Boudreau took the study of the relationship between treatises on armory and armorials a step further, stressing that they were both founded on the touchstone of the notion of justice. Coats of arms were intended to reward, to remember and to establish forever the merits of a person, in accordance with the unavoidable criterion of truth and justice (Boudreau 1997: 388). In the midst of this mission of justice, the armorial served as a work of reference, as a testimony for identifying the best. The treatises, on the other hand, laid down aged statutes, preserving ancient ordinances and teaching the true science of armory. The armorials, in their turn, recorded coats of arms expressing ancient deeds, fixed the history of lineages, and exalted the glories of ancestors. For their authors, each set of books fundamentally conveyed the same memory: that of people’s origins. They were instruments used for the elaboration, conservation, and transmission of a collective

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memory that lay at the very basis of the culture of the nobility (Menéndez Pidal 2008; Guillén Berrendero 2012).

In this way, armorials and treatises on armory, when used together, conveyed an original conception of the heraldic system. Through these two types of works, what was established, above all, was the honorary nature of coats of arms, as well as their integration into a system of common reference, organized according to hierarchic criteria (Savorelli 2013: 289-315). Viewing heraldry as a system of honorific emblems is the key to understanding both its role in modern society and its insertion into coetaneous cultural production (Menéndez Pidal 2014: 437-459). When one considers the envy existing between professional and lay people, in other words between those who were officers of arms and those who were not, the cause for such rivalry must be sought in the very idea that heraldry served to construct and conserve the genealogical memory not only of noble lineages, but also of all the other individuals and all the other institutions that used a coat of arms for their identification. The close association of heraldry with genealogy and nobility derived from these functions: the former made it possible to recognize the lineages and the latter established the role that each entity was allotted in the established order (Figueirôa-Rêgo 2008).

For the Portuguese case, characterizing the production of heraldic books in the Modern Era would require engaging in the rather complex prior work of drawing up a list of such works, first of all establishing those that are exclusively or mainly dedicated to heraldic matters (treatises and manuals of armory, but also armorials, glossaries and specialized bibliographies) and also comprising, at a secondary level, works with a more general scope that include chapters on heraldry. Such a task has been partly undertaken by some heraldic scholars (Cabral 1929; Norton 2006: III, 27-45) and two proposals have been made for their systematization and interpretation (Borges 2004: II, 1003-1006; Seixas 2010: 357-413). From the group of such treatises, however, only four have recently been published in fresh editions (*Livro de Arautos* 1977; Rodrigues 1931; Norton 2006: III, 25-335; Velho 1958-1963). As far as the armorials are concerned, stress should be placed, above all, on the editions of the two monumental sixteenth-century manuscripts (*Livro do Armeiro-mor* 1956; *Livro do Armeiro-mor* 2000; *Livro da nobreza e perfeiçam das armas*, Godinho 1987); to which one may add only two works from the seventeenth century (*Brasonário da Nobreza de Portugal* 1999; Morais 2013). The parsimonious nature of recently published works clearly reveals that this type of production has been condemned to a state of almost complete forgetfulness. And this stands in marked contrast to the great profusion of

manuscripts of this type—both armorials and treatises on armory—that were published from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century (Seixas 2011: 265-320).

In Portugal, it can be seen that the sudden appearance of these compilations and treatises coincided with the appropriation of heraldry by the Crown in the transition from the Middle Ages to the Modern Era. Heraldry was then placed at the service of a certain princely and noble ideal, functioning as an instrument for the centralization of power. Armorials and treatises thus combined to produce a series of legal provisions adopted by the Crown in heraldic matters, beginning with the letters granting the right to have or to add to coats of arms (Seixas & Galvão-Telles 2014: 257-284). The number of these instruments for the appropriation of heraldic rights continued to increase in the fifteenth century, in keeping with the implantation of the political model for royal centralization, of which they were simultaneously a consequence and an instrument. From the reign of Afonso V onwards, a systematic policy was followed of bestowing coats of arms on the servants of the Crown with augmentations. Such augmentations were sometimes made as a way of symbolically alluding to a certain feat that was intended to be remembered, or sometimes amounted to the concession of a part of the coat of arms of the sovereign himself, thus binding the recipient to a relationship of symbolically perpetuated and established dependence (Lopes 1960: 107-124; Oliveira & Seixas 2002: 31-56). The reign of Afonso V was also characterized by another circumstance that had quite weighty consequences: the issue of the first known legal provision in matters relating to heraldry, dated May 21, 1476. This document sought to restrict the heraldic authority to the main officer of arms in the service of the Crown, who at that time was given the title of the Portugal king of arms (São Payo 1927: 35).

This whole process took place simultaneously with the great exploits of Portugal's overseas discoveries and territorial expansion, which justifies the purpose of this present article: to assess how the elements alluding to the overseas dominions were incorporated into these imaginary edifices, serving as agents of a collective memory of the Portuguese monarchy and its nobility at the beginning of the Modern Era.

The two sixteenth-century armorials that have survived until the present-day, the already-mentioned *Livro do armeiro-mor* and *Livro da nobreza e perfeição das armas*, contained references to an overseas dimension in Portuguese heraldry. Some of this heraldry belonged to the category that heraldists have classified as “imaginary,” or, in other words, it consisted of arms that were attributed to entities that did not put them to any effective use (Pastoureau 2006). In these same two Portuguese armorials, imaginary heraldry is limited to

a series of arms disseminated through previous compilations, namely with regard to the insignia of imaginary kingdoms (Azevedo 1966: 103-120), a procedure that was expressed, above all, in a desire to convey a complete image of the world, being closely linked to *portolanos* (portolans) and all manner of cartographic and cosmographic instruments (Savorelli 2015: 101-136).

Even more interesting is the way in which, in these same armorials, we can find heraldic reflections of the feats that were performed overseas. Royal intervention in the heraldry of the lineages connected to the overseas conquests took a variety of forms. First of all, the creation of one's own insignia, granted by the king through a letter of arms. The cases were listed by Braamcamp Freire and later studied by various authors (Freire 1989; Cabral 1955: 361-374; Lopes 1960: 107-124; Borges & Borges 1987/1988: 5-28; Oliveira & Seixas 2002: 31-56; Seixas 2012: 1-37). The following reports on heraldic figures are based on the comparison and analysis of the data provided by these various studies. Many of these insignia involved the superimposition of ancient and modern devices: which was the case with "augmentations", which were placed on pre-existing arms; this was also the case with the new arms that recovered the figures of the lineages themselves, differentiating them in some way and combining them with others, invented for the purpose and alluding more directly either to the nature of the feats that had generated the award of this favor or to their geographical context. Thus, without completely doing away with the pre-existing insignia, the arms that were redesigned in this way once again formed part of the logic that was commonly found among those who performed services for the Crown, and which was intended to spread the fame and perpetuate the memory of the family's involvement in the overseas expansion.

In certain cases, the granted elements had no specific or evident relationship with the exploits performed overseas. This was the case with some traditional figures, which were associated only in an abstract fashion with certain warlike qualities or religious devotions that one wished to exalt: the lions of Gil and Vicente Simões, Fernão Luís, Rui Vasques, Nicolau Coelho (Fig. 1), Duarte Coelho, Lourenço de Oliva, Fernão Moreira Perangal and Bento Maciel Parente; the lion's heads of Gonçalo Vaz de Campos; the eagles of Fernão Gil de Monterroio, Lopo Esteves and Gabriel Gonçalves de Freitas; the cross of Álvaro Afonso Frade; and the Franciscan cord of Gabriel Gonçalves de Freitas. Other figures were merely canting in nature: the heron (*garça*) of João Garcês; the archer of João Fernandes do Arco; the tower and wolves (*lobos*) of João Gonçalves da Câmara de Lobos; the wild olive-tree (*azambujeiro*) of Gaspar Pacheco do Azambujal; the shoe of Wolfgang

Holtzschuher; and the citadel (*alcáçova*) of Pêro de Alcáçova. There were yet other figures whose interpretation was difficult: the crow of João Lopes; the antlers of Rui Vasques; the bezants of Filipe de Brito de Nicote; the door knockers of Vasco Fernandes Caminha; the indented chief of João Lourenço; the indented fess of Fernão Moreira Perangal.

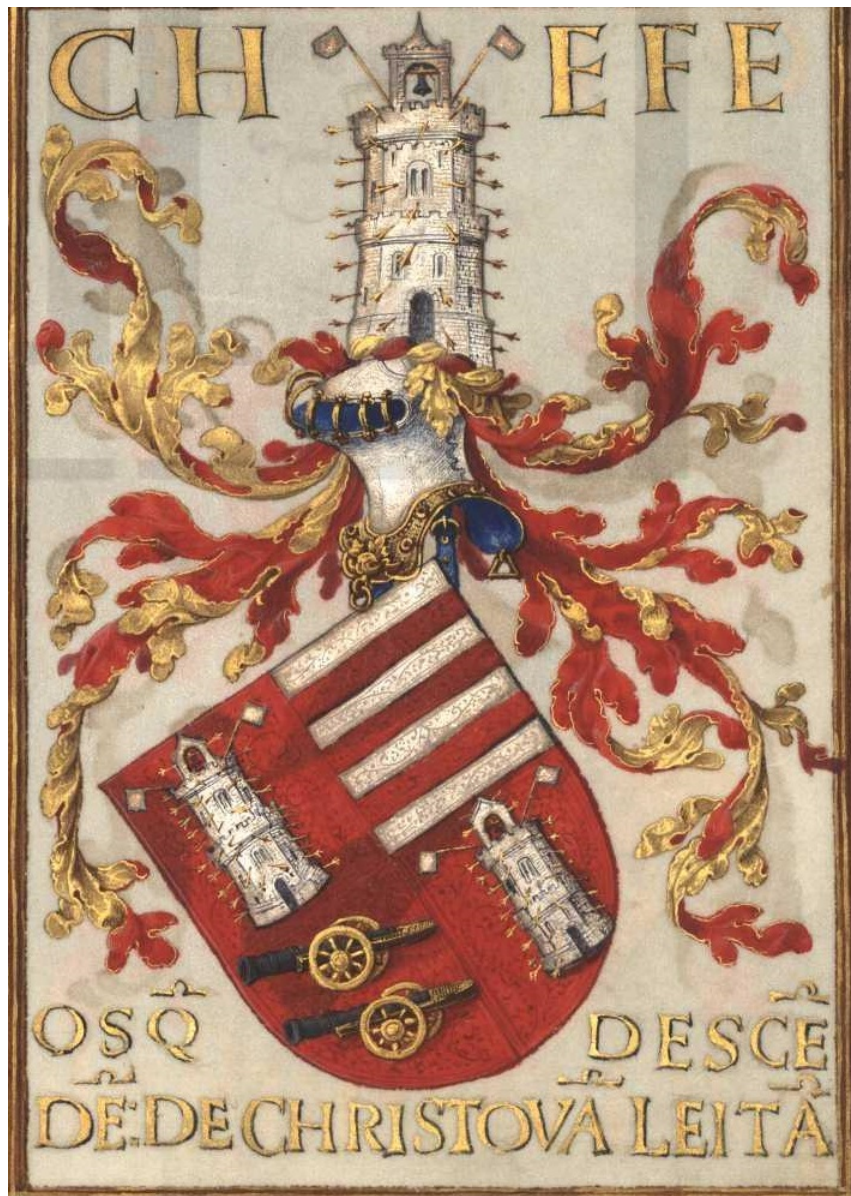


**Fig. 1** Arms of Nicolau Coelho (Tombo das Armas dos Reis e Titulares e de Todas as Familias Nobres de Portugal intitulado com o Nome de Tesouro de Nobreza. ANTT, Casa Real, Cartório da Nobreza, liv. 21, fl. 58, PT/TT/CR/D-A/001/21, picture kindly made available by the Torre do Tombo)

At a second level, such a relationship was established in a clearer fashion without resorting to elements directly alluding to the overseas, as in the case of the figures traditionally associated with the symbolics of the victory over the Islamists (the crescents of Fernão Gil de Monterroio and Sebastião Gonçalves Pita; the stars of Álvaro Gonçalves de Cáceres, João Lourenço, João Garcês, Gonçalo Mendes Sacoto, Fernão Moreira Perangal, and André Caldeira) or in the concession of some of the royal emblems themselves (the bezant of Álvaro Afonso Frade, the escutcheon of Portugal-Antigo [the royal Portuguese arms without the bordure of castles] of Vasco da Gama [Fig. 2], the *quina* [escutcheon with bezants] of Nicolau Coelho [Fig. 1], the castle of João Lobo, the cross of the Order of Christ of Wolfgang Holtzschuher and João de Figueiredo).



**Fig. 2** Traditional arms of Gama and arms of Vasco da Gama with their augmentation (António Godinho, Livro da Nobreza e Perfeição das Armas dos Reis Christãos e Nobres Linhagens dos Reinos e Senhorios de Portugal, Casa Real, Cartório da Nobreza, liv. 20, fl. 18v, PT/TT/CR/D-A/001/20, picture kindly made available by the Torre do Tombo)



**Fig. 3** Arms of Cristóvão Leitão (António Godinho, Livro da Nobreza e Perfeiçam das Armas dos Reis Christãos e Nobres Linhagens dos Reinos e Senhorios de Portugal, Casa Real, Cartório da Nobreza, liv. 20, fl. 41, PT/TT/CR/D-A/001/20, picture kindly made available by the Torre do Tombo)





**Fig. 4** Arms of Diogo Fernandes do Carvalho Benfeito (Tombo das Armas dos Reis e Titulares e de Todas as Famílias Nobres de Portugal intitulado com o Nome de Tesouro de Nobreza, Casa Real, Cartório da Nobreza, liv. 21, fl. 64, PT/TT/CR/D-A/001/21, picture kindly made available by the Torre do Tombo)

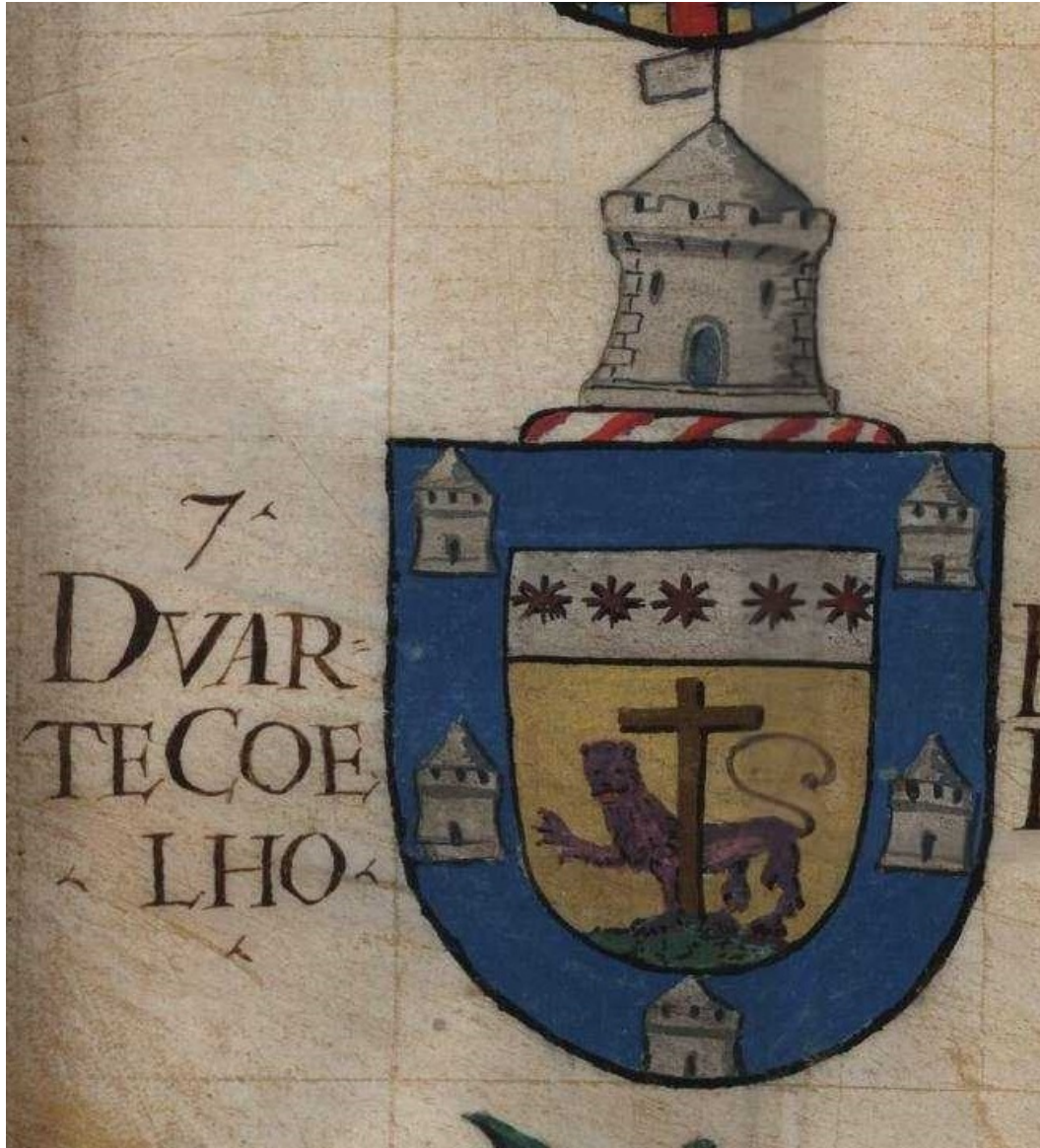
Finally, at a third level, the insignia might directly represent the circumstances of an overseas involvement: Most of these elements demonstrated warlike feats, displayed in the form of military constructions (the castles of Diogo de Azambuja, Álvaro do Couto and Filipe de Brito de Nicote; the towers of João Gonçalves da Câmara de Lobos, Martim Esteves Boto, Fernão Luís, Duarte Coelho, Cristóvão Leitão [Fig. 3], Lopo Barriga, João de Figueiredo, and Bento Maciel Parente; the walls of Manuel Mendes de Tânger and Francisco Monteiro de Pale; the bastions of Diogo Fernandes do Carvalho Benfeito [Fig. 4], Pedro Anes do Canto, and Belchior Vieira Ternate; the city of Luís de Loureiro), weapons (the lances of Manuel Mendes de Tânger, Diogo Fernandes do Carvalho Benfeito [Fig. 4], and Lourenço de Oliva; the cannons and arrows of Cristóvão Leitão [Fig. 3] and Francisco Monteiro de Pale; the sword of Belchior Vieira Ternate; the oval shield of Gaspar Pacheco do Azambujal; the scaling ladder of Luís de Loureiro), trophies (the flags

of Luís de Loureiro, Vasco Fernandes César, and Cristóvão Leitão [Fig. 3]), boats (the pinnaces of Vasco Fernandes César; the canoe of Bento Maciel Parente);

- As well as in the concrete representation of defeated enemies (the Moors' heads of Martim Esteves Boto, Gabriel Gonçalves de Freitas, Manuel Mendes de Tânger, Gonçalo Mendes Sacoto, Belchior Vieira Ternate, and Fernão Moreira Perangal; the Moors' busts of Wolfgang Holtzschuher, Diogo Fernandes do Carvalhal Benfeito [Fig. 4], António Correia Barém, and Lourenço de Oliva; the full-bodied Moor of Francisco Monteiro de Pale; and the governor of Azamor in the timbre of Luís de Loureiro);
- Or in the representation of the hero himself (the armed arms of Vasco Fernandes Caminha and Belchior Vieira Ternate; the full-bodied warrior of Francisco Monteiro de Pale); More rarely, the figures alluded to navigation (the undy point of Álvaro Afonso Frade, Nicolau Coelho [Fig. 1], Álvaro do Couto, and Bento Maciel Parente; the azure point of Gaspar Pacheco do Azambujal; the undy quarter of Filipe de Brito de Nicote; the seahorse of André Caldeira) and to the discovery and appropriation of territories (the columns [*padrões*] of Diogo Cão and Nicolau Coelho [Fig. 1]; the cliffs of Diogo Cão and Lopo Barriga; the cave of Bento Maciel Parente; the cross of Duarte Coelho);
- Finally, they incorporated exotic elements (the palm trees of Álvaro Gonçalves de Cáceres and João Lopes; the African heads of Fernão Gomes da Mina [Fig. 5]; the leopards of Nuno Martins Garro and Sebastião Gonçalves Pita; the tiger of Bento Maciel Parente).



**Fig. 5** Arms of Fernão Gomes da Mina (António Godinho, *Livro da Nobreza e Perfeição das Armas dos Reis Christãos e Nobres Linhagens dos Reinos e Senhorios de Portugal*, Casa Real, Cartório da Nobreza, liv. 20, fl. 26v, PT/TT/CR/D-A/001/20, picture kindly made available by the Torre do Tombo)



**Fig. 6** Arms of Duarte Coelho (Tombo das Armas dos Reis e Titulares e de Todas as Famílias Nobres de Portugal intitulado com o Nome de Tesouro de Nobreza, Casa Real, Cartório da Nobreza, liv. 21, fl. 51, PT/TT/CR/D-A/001/21, picture kindly made available by the Torre do Tombo)

Sometimes, the choice of figures alluding to overseas feats was combined with elements of pre-existing heraldry. One of the paradigmatic cases in this sense consisted in the coat of arms conceived by King João III for Duarte Coelho (Fig. 6), the first donatary captain of Pernambuco (Freire 1989: 145-146). Such arms, which were absent from the great Manueline armorials, are to be found in the *Livro Darmas da nobreza fidalgia do Reino de purtugal* (fl. 91), compiled by Brás Pereira Brandão, with later additions by Brás Pereira de Miranda (Albuquerque 1988: 66-70).<sup>3</sup> In these arms, elements of the ancient arms of Coelho (lion, bordure) were joined together with a series of new figures—a Latin cross

<sup>3</sup> The author wishes to thank Martim de Albuquerque and João Portugal for allowing him to consult and reproduce a copy of this armorial.

standing on a hill and a chief charged with five stars and a bordure with five castles. The cross standing on the hill alluded to the invocation of the Holy Cross in the denomination of the land that was beginning to be colonized, while the stars represented the Southern Cross. As far as the bordure is concerned, it may also point to the visual mimicry that this implied as a way of drawing closer to the Portuguese royal arms. Although such a statement may seem rather bold in nature, the policy of augmentations granted in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries expresses a clear desire to create visual links between those receiving the awards and the royal insignia. This amounted to yet another way of reinforcing the idea of this communion between the king and the nobility, or, to put it another way, expressed the pressing need to include the component of service to the Crown as the central axis of the new ideal of the nobility (Gomes 1998: 179-188).

With this combination of old and new elements, the coat of arms of Duarte Coelho (Fig. 6) clearly conveys the intervention of the Crown in the construction of the image of a nobility that, without denying its links to a long, ancient, and therefore glorious past, sought to project itself into the future through its service to the king in the country's overseas enterprise not only in the battlefields of North Africa or Asia, but also, from the reign of João III onwards, in the colonizing efforts being undertaken in Brazil. The identification of the illumination of the armorial of Brás Pereira is significant in this sense: beneath the name of Duarte Coelho is included the specification that he is "of the new Lusitania." Such a specification transmits the set of ideas that lay behind the refounding of the kingdom in those equatorial far reaches that Coelho had been allotted to govern and to where he sought to transfer a cultural model, in which, based on the principle of the Catholic faith, medieval traditions were merged together with the reinterpreted classical legacy (Mello 2002: 70-71). After all, it is this same message that his coat of arms ends up transmitting, with its fusion of pristine elements together with others alluding to the new dominions, framed by a bordure that imitated that of the royal coat of arms. This was a visual emblem of the project of New Lusitania as conceived by Duarte Coelho, and as stated on the coat of arms itself, where João III refers to the "many loyal services that Duarte Coelho, a nobleman of my household, has performed in the parts of India, where he has served for a long time in the war that I always have against the Moors and Infidels, as is the case in the captaincy of Fernão Buco of the New Lusitania in Brazil where, through my mandate, he is now my captain and governor" (Freire 1989: 146).

Generally speaking, however, in the heraldry of the nobility that was involved in overseas expansion, there was a fondness for traditional figures, corresponding to the

predominantly military and chivalrous nature of the feats alluded to in the grants of arms. Hence also the clear preponderance of the North African territory as the stage that lent itself to such feats; this was the quintessential field of combat against the infidel, in the pursuit of the ideals of the crusade and the *Reconquista*. Such a formal and spiritual connection made it possible to establish a real or imaginary link in genealogical terms with the notion of antiquity and the perpetuation of lineages, essential in the mentality of the nobility. And this same link was shaped in the construction of one's own highly chivalrous exploits based on heroic reports of a historical or mythical nature. This preference was in sharp contrast to what was taking place in the neighboring Spanish monarchy, where the expressive figures of "Americanness" began to establish their own important presence in the heraldry both of the conquerors of these territories and of the respective native elites that had been incorporated into their governance (López-Fanjul de Argüelles 2014: 151-178; 2015: 229-266).



**Fig. 7** Arms of Bemoim (Brás Pereira Brandão, *Livro da nobreza fidalgia do Reino de Portugal*, fl. 95 bis)

The Portuguese Crown did, in fact, seek to transplant the same logic to some social and political organizations that it came across overseas. Thus, João II awarded a coat of arms to Bemoin, of the Kingdom of Jalofó, in which there was a combination of a cross and the *quinas* (Resende 1991: 116; Fig. 7)<sup>4</sup>. Even more significant was the award of a coat of arms to King Afonso I of Congo, in which all the symbolic and legendary elements relating to Ourique and the ideal of the crusade were boldly transposed to equatorial Africa (Rosa 2006: 19-36). The heraldic acculturation that was started at this time also included the sending of 20 grants of arms to the Congolese sovereign authorizing the setting up (and control) within his kingdom of a heraldic representation of the nobility, together with their respective titles (Seixas 1996: 330-334). It is revealing that the new coat of arms of the Congolese sovereign converted to Christianity was included in the chapters of both *Livro do Armeiro-mor* and *Livro da Nobreza e Perfeição das Armas* dedicated to the heraldry of all the kingdoms existing in the world. By including such insignia, the compiler incorporated into this list a kingdom that was assumed as a subsidiary of the Portuguese Crown, which, in this way, strengthened its imperial dimension (Fig. 8).

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<sup>4</sup> Note that the first known representation of these arms was to be found in *Livro das armas da nobreza fidalgia do Reino de Portugal*, fl. 95 bis,



**Fig. 8** Arms of the King of Çongo (António Godinho, *Livro da Nobreza e Perfeição das Armas dos Reis Christãos e Nobres Linhagens dos Reinos e Senhorios de Portugal*, Casa Real, Cartório da Nobreza, liv. 20, fl. 7, PT/TT/CR/D-A/001/20, picture kindly made available by the Torre do Tombo)

One peculiar case was that of Duarte Pacheco Pereira. In the newly-discovered territories, the Portuguese did not find emblematic systems that were in any way similar to those of European heraldry (with the possible exception of the Japanese *mon*), but they sometimes applied the notion that those who were recognized as having the dignity of a sovereign should also have the power to grant arms. Thus, Duarte Pacheco was granted a new coat of arms by the king of Cochin (Fig. 9). Such insignia were organized, in every respect, according to the principles applied to the heraldry of the beneficiaries of grants of arms issued for exploits performed overseas: the shield comprised five crowns and a bordure charged with castles placed on ships and waves, surrounded by six banners placed beneath (Mattos 1936). Besides the allusion to the overseas exploits, the visual impact of the coat of arms was an obvious emulation of the Portuguese royal coat of arms, in the form of an imitation similar to that observed in the case of the arms of Duarte Coelho.





**Fig. 9** Arms of Duarte Pacheco Pereira (*Tombo das Armas dos Reis e Titulares e de Todas as Famílias Nobres de Portugal intitulado com o Nome de Tesouro de Nobreza*, Casa Real, Cartório da Nobreza, liv. 21, fl. 58, PT/TT/CR/D-A/001/21, picture kindly made available by the Torre do Tombo)

The group of coats of arms thus distinguished with elements relating to overseas themes appears in the two already-mentioned sixteenth-century armorials: they are to be found scattered among the manuscripts, thus providing, from the visual point of view, a fusion between the old and the new insignia. In this way, these armorials mirror the fusion between the old and the new aristocracy in the melting pot of the new ideal of the nobility linked to the service rendered to the Crown. And together with the *Sala dos Brasões* at the royal palace of Sintra, they confirm a hierarchy of nobles based precisely on the principle of loyalty to the Crown (Freire 1973: I, 39).

From the mid-sixteenth century onwards, there was in Portugal an increase in the production of heraldic works. The first armorials compiled by private initiative began to appear, such as *Livro Darmas da nobreza fidalgia do Reino de portugal* by Brás Pereira Brandão, *Livro do Senhor Dom Duarte*, *Livro dos Braçoens das Famílias deste Reyno, com suas origens* by

António de Ataíde, and *Blasones* by Jorge de Montemor (Sousa 1745: I, 51-154). The initiative for the production of heraldic texts had ceased to be an exclusive privilege of officers of arms. What lay behind this reality? One possible answer may be the reaction to the rules that had been imposed by the willful intervention of the Crown since the times of Afonso V, culminating in the legislation of Manuel I. Works produced outside the scope of the authority of the officers of arms were a reaction against the idea of transforming heraldry into an instrument that remained at the sole service of the Crown and its purposes. Seen from this point of view, it is easy to understand the bitter discussions and controversy that arose in the late sixteenth century around the role played by private individuals in conserving the nation's memory, away from the state institutions, namely the *Cartório da Nobreza* (Nobility Registry Office, Figueirôa-Rêgo 2008: 185-6). Thereafter, in the heraldry of the Portuguese nobility, elements reflecting overseas service were perpetuated in the armorials successively compiled both by the officers of the Crown and by private individuals (Seixas 2010: 357-413).

Notably absent from the sixteenth-century armorials were, however, the coats of arms of the actual territories that were discovered, conquered or colonized by the Portuguese Crown, with the exception of the already-mentioned coat of arms of the kingdom of Congo. Such an absence may be considered surprising. All the more so since it is in sharp contrast to what was happening in the neighboring Spanish America, where there was an abundant concession of coats of arms to cities by Carlos V and Filipe II (Amerlinck 1993: 19-30).

The reasons for this absence may be rooted, first of all, in the lack of a tradition on the part of the Portuguese Crown in awarding municipal coats of arms, unlike other European monarchies: in Portugal, civic arms were established and changed at the initiative of the councils themselves (Seixas 2011: 189-222). When the overseas expansion took place, this scheme was partly transposed to the new territories. In the early days, when the Portuguese presence was limited to Northwest Africa and the Atlantic archipelagoes, the emblems that were to be found there tended to repeat the theme of the royal coat of arms (with the variations of the second-born sons, lords of these islands) and that of the cross of the Order of Christ. As the Crown began to completely appropriate the expansionist enterprise, royal arms and badges prevailed over all other signs. When Manuel I became simultaneously king and governor of the Order of Christ, a combination that was later made definitive by his son João III, the triad of the royal coat of arms/armillary

sphere/cross of the Order of Christ became a predominant, if not exclusive, feature of the Portuguese overseas territories.

Accordingly, there were few overseas institutions and territories that had their own heraldry, which was, in fact, perfectly in keeping with the centralization of the royal power. Further contributing to this outcome was the traditional absence of any intermediate bodies in the Portuguese monarchy: there was no other organ of sovereignty that could interpose itself between the municipalities and the king. Indeed, one had to wait until the seventeenth century for the Portuguese armorials to begin to mention any heraldry belonging solely to the overseas dominions themselves, all of which was of a municipal nature.

The first such manifestation occurred in roughly 1630, through the pen of António Soares Albergaria (Cabral 1929), who conceived and produced a quite unique heraldic work: not only did he set himself the task of compiling the coats of arms of all known entities, but he also set out to explain all of their symbolic meaning, thereby integrating them into a system of clearly defined symbolic values. This was an extremely vast and innovative project. Underlying Albergaria's armorial was the idea that all the entities that participated in the construction of the Portuguese monarchy should express their contribution through a symbolic manifestation, or, in other words, through their respective coat of arms (hence the inclusion of all types of heraldry: family, dynasty, state, ecclesiastic, university, corporative, military, municipal). This latter form of heraldry therefore illustrated the individuality of each municipality and demonstrated the contribution that each of these had made to constructing the edifice of the monarchy, as well as the importance of the efforts that they had all made to the achievement of this same purpose). Hence the inclusion of four overseas municipalities: Funchal, Ponta Delgada, Goa, and Malacca (Albergaria: 304v-308v). Albergaria revealed these overseas arms because they were effectively used by the municipalities, but they were also explicitly inscribed in the collective memory of the Portuguese monarchy (the symbolic importance of Goa, the political and religious center of the Portuguese dominions in Asia and on the east coast of Africa, and of Malacca, marked out as the strategic key for the control of the Indian Ocean).

The period around the time of the Restoration of Portuguese independence from Spanish rule in 1640 coincided with a previously unseen interest in civic heraldry (Seixas 2011: 385-390). It was then that the iconographic series of coats of arms of the cities began to be disseminated. In relation to this context, it is interesting to note that the richest

approaches were probably to be found in the works produced by two magistrates: João Pinto Ribeiro (Seixas 2006: 189-206) and Cristóvão Alão de Morais (Morais 2013). The first highlighted the ways in which the symbolics of municipal power was inserted into coetaneous political doctrine. The second sought to establish the corpus of heraldic emblems of that same power. Both of them worked with the clear purpose of building a political edifice in which sovereignty, although nominally held in an absolute form by the prince, was based on the idea of the composition of various historical bodies united under the auspices of the Crown. Among these, the municipalities were of prime importance, both in relation to the residual part of sovereignty that they held (and which did not fall under the king's power, to which they submitted voluntarily, reiterating their allegiance at certain special moments and rituals) and in regard to the role that they played in the effective administration of the territory. It is not, therefore, surprising that the most complete armorial of the municipalities in the Modern Era was compiled by a magistrate from the time of the Restoration of Portuguese rule in 1640.

The restoration of Portuguese independence was, in fact, a moment when the various bodies that composed the monarchy underwent a period of reconstruction and a re-equilibrium of the forces between them. In the same way that a debate was held over the relative merits of the pen versus the sword, so was questioned the relative contribution of the various institutions and social strata that strove to build, defend, maintain, and expand the whole edifice of the monarchy. In this multifaceted equilibrium, the municipalities played an important role, which various authors presented as the immemorial manifestation of sovereignty and of the administration of the territory. It was within the context of this same pact that, in turn, the learned scholars and civil servants claimed for themselves and played an increasingly leading role as agents linking together the forces in question and the bodies that were in the service of the Crown. The civic armorial compiled by Alão de Morais thus reflects this dual role of cultural and political construction. As far as the overseas territories were concerned, the author included the arms of two cities from the Atlantic archipelagoes (Angra and Funchal) and, for the first time, those of a city in Brazil: São Salvador da Bahia (Morais 2013: 27, 30, 41) (Fig. 10).

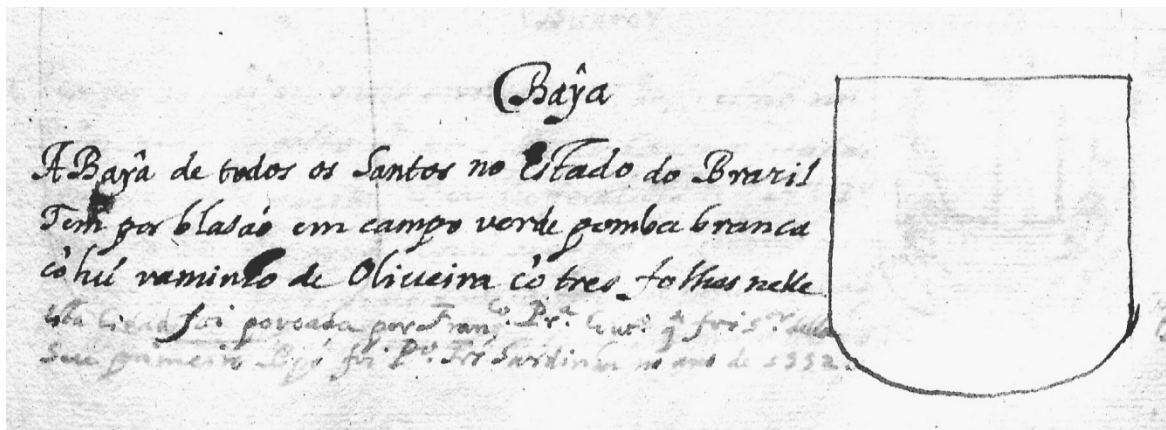


Fig. 10 Arms of the city of São Salvador da Bahia (Cristóvão Alão de Morais, *Compendio das Armas dos Reynos de Portugal & Algarve & das Cidades e Villas principaes delles*, fl. 41)

The reason why the arms of Bahia were included in Morais' civic armorial is the same as the one that had dictated the inclusion of those of Goa and Malacca in the earlier ones. Following the restoration of Bahia from its Dutch conquerors and the central role that the city played as the seat of the royal authority in Brazil, the city of Salvador had earned the legitimate right to be inscribed in the monarchy's register of epic feats not only in the Portuguese monarchy, it should be noted, but also in the Spanish monarchy. At the royal palace of Buen Retiro, the ceremonial hall displayed, on one side, the cycle of the labors of Hercules, and, on the other side, the heroic moments of the surrender of Breda and the restoration of Bahia (Sabatier 2003: 97). Just as had happened at the time of the debate about the reconfiguration of the royal coat of arms in the reign of João II, the principle of honesty dictated the possibility of certain arms being inscribed in the armorials as representative of the contribution that each body represented in this way rendered to the composite edifice of the monarchy (Seixas 2015: 285-309). Very much in keeping with the tastes of that time, privilege was given to the expression of that heraldry through a series of artistic and literary means, interlinked with one another through their common reference to the elements that composed the arms and the *ingenious* links that they made it possible to establish (Loskoutoff 2000).

In that sense, Bahia's arms mark a turning point in the understanding of heraldry. According to Morais, "the Bay of All Saints in the State of Brazil has as its blazon a dove argent on a field vert with an olive branch with three leaves" (Morais 2013: 30). These figures were not inspired by the traditional heraldic repertoire, nor did they include exotic elements alluding to the overseas dominions. The choice of a dove with an olive branch was an explicit reference to a biblical inspiration, with a highly symbolic and political charge, reinforced by the presence of the legend *Sic illa ad Arcam reversa est*. In fact, instead

of representing a particular military feat, the chosen sign was intended to symbolize the idea of the refounding of the kingdom in America, giving continuity to the project of New Lusitania generated in the sixteenth century by Duarte Coelho. This explains the choice of the dove with the olive branch, which in the biblical episode of the Flood returned to the ark to signal to Noah the world's redemption and the prospect of a New Alliance, upon which a newly implanted society would be built. Mention should be made of the exceptional nature of its composition inspired by the Old Testament, which only had a parallel in the heraldry of the town of Santa María de la Vera Paz, on what was at that time called Hispaniola, which had been the subject of a heraldic concession made by the Catholic Monarchs in 1508 (Herrera y Tordesillas 1601-1615: I, 225-226). This sign was justifiably adapted to the city of Salvador, the capital of the State of Brazil, all the more so after the definitive victory over the invading Dutch and French forces.



**Fig. 11** Arms of the city of Goa (*Tombo das Armas dos Reis e Titulares e de Todas as Famílias Nobres de Portugal intitulado com o Nome de Tesouro de Nobreza, Casa Real, Cartório da Nobreza*, liv. 21, fl. 10, PT/TT/CR/D-A/001/21, picture kindly made available by the Torre do Tombo)

The plan for a universal armorial of the Portuguese monarchy conceived by Albergaria was also taken up once again by his contemporary António Coelho, the Portugal

king of arms (Norton 2006: III, 27-45), and later by his son Francisco Coelho, the India king of arms (Seixas 2011: 361-366). In the armorial compiled by the latter, an extensive chapter was written about the arms of the cities of Portugal, preceded by another somewhat shorter one entitled “Arms of Some Cities of the Conquests of Portugal” (Coelho: 10). This included the kingdom of the Algarve with its four cities (Tavira, Lagos, Silves, and Faro), the cities of Funchal and Goa (Fig. 11), and the islands of São Miguel and Terceira. Even more interesting, however, is the inclusion in this same folio of a shield of arms attributed to the State of Brazil, consisting of a tree surmounted by a cross (Fig. 12).



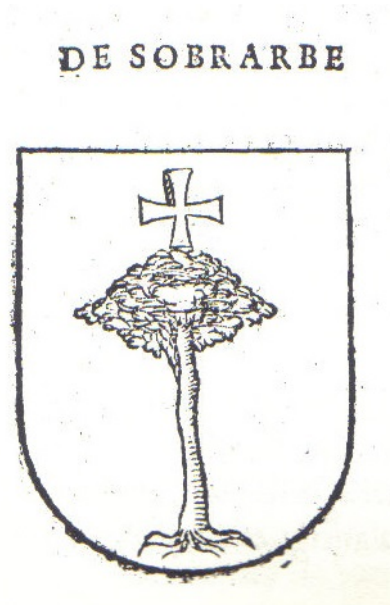
**Fig. 12** Arms of the State of Brazil (*Tombo das Armas dos Reis e Titulares e de Todas as Famílias Nobres de Portugal intitulado com o Nome de Tesouro de Nobreza, Casa Real, Cartório da Nobreza, liv. 21, fl. 10, PT/TT/CR/D-A/001/21, picture kindly made available by the Torre do Tombo*)

This is a curious case in various senses, mainly because it constitutes an example of imaginary heraldry. As was said earlier, the royal authority in the Portuguese overseas territories was invariably represented by the figuration of the royal emblems, making use of

the coat of arms itself, the badge of the armillary sphere, and also the cross of the Order of Christ. All of the institutions and individuals who acted on behalf of the king thus made use of these royal insignia as a visual instrument for the legitimization and affirmation of their authority, whatever might be their rank, position (viceroy, governor-general, governor, etc.) or nature (municipal council, law court, military command, etc.). Even when there existed a central political and administrative entity, as was the case with the general government of Brazil, there were still no autonomous signs. The arms with the tree surmounted by a cross were therefore situated in the field of imaginary heraldry, since they were never used by any authority in the American dominions of the Portuguese Crown.

Secondly, the arms imputed by the king of arms to the State of Brazil are important for their typological characteristics. They were, in fact, a creation, in which the possible levels of interpretation were multiple and overlapping, indicating the heraldic culture of their creator. Indeed, the Latin cross was an evident allusion to the territory's name of Santa Cruz (Holy Cross), with which it had been christened at the time of its discovery; while the tree can be understood as a reference to the *pau-brasil* (Brazilwood), whose name ended up prevailing over the original religious invocation. In truth, in both cases, the antecedents of the chosen images are gathered together in the cartography, in which the identification of the Portuguese territory on the American continent was realized, through a Latin cross or a tree, among other images. The solution of the tree surmounted by the cross therefore joins the two models together. With the advantage that, by doing so, it amounted to the remission of a symbolically devalued toponymy: the replacement of the invocation of the Cross by the name arising from that of a simple tree with commercial interest (and, what is more, red in color) did not cease to have connotations with the devilish influences that were spreading across the American territories (Souza 1993).





**Fig. 13** Arms of the Kingdom of Sobrarbe (Gonzalo Argote de Molina, *Nobleza del Andalucía*, fl. 34v)

Nonetheless, the theme of the cross-tree also had its roots in an Iberian tradition of imaginary heraldry (Seixas & Galvão-Telles 2009: 205-217). Gonzalo Argote de Molina attributed this same figure to the mythical reign of Sobrarbe, explaining that there existed a communion of Iberian royal symbolics centered around the model of the cross, to which all the Peninsula's sovereigns linked their coats of arms in one way or another (Fig. 13). This same author thus defended the existence of a background shared by all Spanish monarchs, based on the principle of the crusades and the expansion of the Christian faith, guided by a common teleology that justified the Iberian political unity eventually achieved with Filipe II. Specifically in Portugal, however, the heraldic theme of the tree-cross was linked, above all, to the mythical explanation of the arms of the Pereira family, referring to the miraculous appearance of a luminous cross above a tree during various battles in which successive members of the family line had distinguished themselves, most notably at the Battle of Rio Salado in 1340, where the prior Gonçalo Álvares Pereira, father of the Constable Nuno Álvares Pereira, had fought. It was from this latter figure that the Dukes of Bragança were descended, becoming his genealogical representatives, and, from the Restoration onwards, through this same lineage, the kings of Portugal. In fact, the mythical origin of the heraldry of the Pereira lineage was placed in parallel with that of the royal coat of arms itself, insofar as they were both based on the same model of the miraculous appearance that originated the transmission of a visual sign (cross, *quinas*) that displayed the sacred dimension of the lineage and the mission that had been entrusted to it.



**Fig. 14** Arms of the Viscount of Asseca (Abade de Vallemont, *Elementos da Historia*, here in the colored nineteenth century re-edition, p. 14)

Portuguese armorials in the eighteenth century do not present any particular innovation in relation to the previous century as far as the representation of overseas exploits is concerned. There is, however, one exception: in 1741, Pedro de Sousa de Castelo Branco published a translated version of *Les Eléments de l'Histoire* by Abbé Vallemont, which he sought to adapt to the Portuguese reality, namely in the part relating to heraldry (Vallemont 1741). For this purpose, the translator included in that chapter a series of additional engravings, among which was the coat of arms used at that time by the Viscounts of Asseca (Fig. 14). Inside the shield, these arms followed the customary quartered pattern that indicated the family's genealogical origins and the representation of its entailed heritage; but, outside the shield, the coat of arms introduced a novelty. On one side was an African king and, on the other, an Indian chief, standing on a terrace and supporting the shield. This was an allusion to the feats performed by Salvador Correia de Sá in the Portuguese dominions on both sides of the Atlantic, as well as to the perpetuation of this lineage in what had become transformed into the central axis of the Portuguese overseas dominions.

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