



JUNTA DE CASTILLA Y LEÓN EL CRONISTA DE ARMAS

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THE CRONISTA DE ARMAS OF CASTILLE AND LEON AND THE REGISTER OF ARMAS

HERALDRY

Heraldry, the most significant European system of symbols, appears along the 12th century and may be described as *the systematic use of hereditary emblems in someone's coat of arms: in the begining of a nobleman or a knight; but lately spread to ladies, commoners, Jewish and communities (towns, monasteries), up to the whole society; Wagner synthesizes it as the systematic use of a hereditary emblem into a coat of arms.* Nowadays Heraldry is known as the science which studies those emblems and its use.

The heraldic emblems appeared, as mentioned above, in 12th century in central Europe to recognize each one from each other by a peculiar system of symbols. Even knowing that before that date already existed that kind of identification systems (in Greece, in Rome, in Japan, etc.), those are not considered as heraldic ones because they own different meanings. The wear of heraldic emblems was created as a consequence of the civilization we lived then and had an immediate success directly related with its social acceptance. This point is the cause and not the consequence of many of its original uses.

The origin of the coat of arms is an individual issue strictly indicated to warriors, but, even is known its wear obeyed to recognize fully armoured knights in the battlefield, it seems that really it was provoked by fashion moods, a point according to the civilized human being. Lately, once living in the 13th century, the coat of arms became familiar and hereditary goods. In the last days of that century its wear is part of the clergy as well as the birth of the corporative heraldry, which allows to recognize towns and its rulers.

The coat of arms is just the colourfull expresion of a distinctive sign which origin and ownership was mainly a capricious act. The emblems which form the coat



of arms were spontaneously born before the appear of the rules, principles and procedures needed to limit its correct wear.

The origin and develop of the heraldic emblems can be divided in three periods: the primitive period in which coat of arms, pieces and forms are spontaneously created (12th to 15th centuries); the stable period in which coat of arms continues its develop along with the Heroic Science to study, explain and rule this new field of knowledge (15th to 17th centuries); and the formalist period in which the heraldists just spent their time by getting the system as much complicated as they could, and to merely study its formal appearance (17th to 19th centuries). Since the end of the 20th century there is a flow to return to its primitive purism and the absolut scientific study of these emblems, a study in continuous and firm grown since fifty years ago.

Heraldry is, at last, a tool to proclaim, by antique symbols, our own or common identity.

CASTILLE AND LEON

The region of Castille and Leon is the biggest territory of the European Union (followed by Bavaria) extended in the main part of the territory of the ancient Crown of Castille and Leon, formed by the union of both medieval kingdoms in 1230, and increased along the following centuries by Castilla la Nueva, Andalucia and West Indies (América).

The ancient kingdoms of Castille and Leon, where the heraldic costumes arrived a bit later than in the rest of Europe - probably because its location aside of central Europe-, are owners of a main and well considered position in the history of these emblems, not only because the huge wear of them, but because here was born a heraldic way that succeded all along Europe: the perfect heraldic quarter division, introduced by King Ferdinand III the Saint in 1230, who needed to include the royal arms of both kingdoms in his coat of arms.



The quarter division was a very important heraldic improve because consideres in terms of equality the emblems of both kingdoms, due to a precise balance of surfaces. This Castille and Leon new wear of heraldry for different arms was adopted immediately by the whole Christian orb, where it was extremely well accepted, even reaching the Scandinavian and Slavonic countries.

THE OFFICERS OF ARMS: KINGS OF ARMS, HERALDS AND PURSUIVANTS

Contemporaneously with the distribution and wear of the heraldic emblems, appeared the figure of heralds and kings of arms -in the begining musicians and vagabond minstrels- which step by step reached the institutions and adquired relevant military and diplomatic tasks, getting spezialized afterwards in the study and rule of the heraldic emblems to which they gave name. This interesting figure has been treated by the most illustrious authors, as the British sir Anthony Wagner, the Frenchman Paul Adam-Even and the Portuguese Artur Norton, and in Spain by Dr. Ceballos-Escalera (*Heraldos y reyes de armas en la Corte de España*, Madrid, 1993).

Historical precedent of the charge rises up to the second half of 14th century, when it is named an officer of arms called *Castilla* in the court of Castille and Leon. It is true that by that time heralds had got a certain prestige and were considered honest individuals into the chevalry world. They were very keen in emblems and in the heraldic traditions and uses, in other words: the secular ceremonial (jousts, tournaments, trials of merit, coronations, funerals, knighting ceremonies, Order admittances, etc.). They also had had relevant meanings at war, in campaign: their work was like condecoration officers, taking the name and emblems of those who had bravely fought, as well as those of the death. But the most important in terms of hostility was their immunity, so since 14th century they did not merely act as messengers of each one of the contenders, but true diplomats authorized to treat about challenges, truces, surrenders, etc. That social and courtesan arising was



mainly due to their important play the Hundred Years' War (1337-1437), the last heroic deed of the medieval chivalry, when they hardly worked as peace and war messengers, but also as military advisers. Along the Middle Ages appeared a considerable amount of officers of arms serving princes and barons as diplomatic representation and runing official and secret mail. Then were the heralds the first diplomats in the modern sense of the word because they constituted a recognized kind of corp, with application rules and functions. Following this first diplomatic roll they were in charge of palatine ceremonial and a bit later only the knowledge and entering of heraldic uses.

The step to the modern State, where the king is the sovereign, and the administrative offices are in hands of specialized officials, gets slowly down with the work of officers of arms and heralds. In the Spanish case, the last diplomatic missions took place around 1540. A century and a half later, under the kingdom of Philip V, the kings of arms saw the lost of their competence in palatine ceremonial. Since then, even under the Crown service, their courtesan importance shall be very little and their office shall be pointed to the study and comercialization of heraldic and genealogic works, a side activity of their past function but very profitable. Once in our time the Spanish officials of arms had changed their Crown straight reliance by a public service through the State administration: the figure of the kings of arms and of the heralds is, under the huge enviroment of the public administration, an unique case of a medieval office survival; a charge that, by a continuous variation of its function, got to stand still until today.



THE GRANTS OF ARMS

The grants of arms are a very special kind of document, even quite similar all around the medieval and the modern Europe, keeps its own character in Spain.

Usually are compiled in it heraldic and genealogic foreground, and nobiliary if it is the case, of someone or of a family or lineage, which use to be used to confirm the right to wear a coat of arms. The old grants of arms are so an important tool for historical knowledge.

The grants of arms issued today are still useful in those social and familiar meanings, considering that the prejudices of 19th century against heraldry (the system of symbols owned by Europe to which were ascribed to nobiliary nonsenses) had passed away, and are still serving well to two clear necessities of the society, under a great social and territorial mobility with the lose of family roots, and the need to substitute personal and familiar knowledge of its origin and traditions by a scientific knowledge eased by the officials of arms.

By the other side, there is the coverage the individual well know need to be clearly identified and distinguished from each other in a massive and egalitarian world.



THE CRONISTA DE ARMAS OF CASTILLE AND LEON

CREATION OF THE OFFICE AND APPOINTMENT

The charge and office of Chronicler of Arms of Castille and Leon was created, recovering an old historical figure, by the powers conferred to the Council of Castille and Leon by Decree 105/1991, May 9th (published in the *Official Bulletin of Castille and Leon* of May 16th of 1991). The Chronicler of Arms of Castille and Leon is under the authority of the Board of Interior and Justice and its Head Office of Territorial Administration.

The Council of Castille and Leon agreed this creation because the public faculties and competences in the fields of local and territorial administration, historical heritage, traditions and promotion of culture (to where this science undoubtedly belongs, away from the prize system and law of the Ministry of Justice) were given according to article 26th of the Home Rule Statutes of Castille and Leon approved in 1983, and conferred by the State Administration by Royal Decrees 2469/1982 and 3019/1983.

The most relevant meaning of this political decision was no other than acquire a consultative organ, in this case formed by an only one responsible, in order to avoid mistakes when



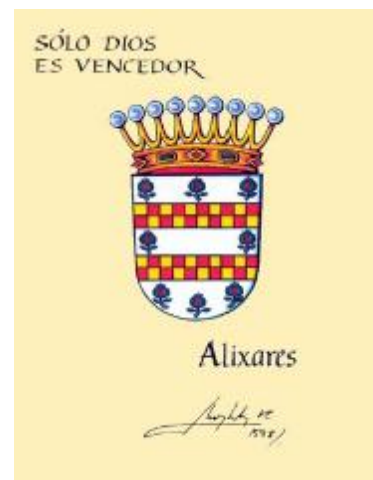
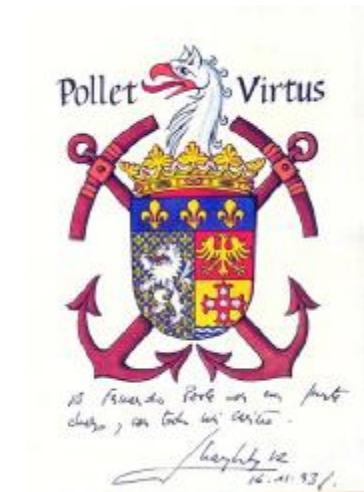
approving new coats of arms and flags, as well as any change of those already existing. But the Council of Castille and Leon aim went longer because wanted to put under the citizenship an office to free grant their right to wear coat of arms, as well to corporations. That is why the office was created as part of public service.

The appointment of the Chronicler of Arms of Castille and Leon depends on the President of the Council of Castille and Leon, who names the candidate among accredited specialists, who may be Doctors in Law or in History. Once celebrated the appointment, the charge is free of fees, honorific and life long.

There is not today any other office like this, with the same title or competences, as other Councils had chosen by create counselors or heraldic commissions.



Since his appointment in 1991 until 2007, the Chronicler of Castille and Leon has worked and published more than a thousand of statements and reports in relation with new and old coats of arms and municipal ensigns -around eighty statements yearly-, and near to two hundred and eighty personal grants issued. Among this documentation the new coat of arms, after had been ennobled by H.M. the King, of composer Don Joaquín Rodrigo, Marquis of the Jardines de Aranjuez; general Don Sabino Fernández Campo, Count of Latores and Head of H.M. House; and to professor and academican Don Emilio García Gómez, Count of the Alixares. By the way, H.M. the King has approved by his own *manu regia* the coat of arms of the referred Latores, Alixares and of admiral Poole, Head of H.M. Military Household. All those grants had been published in the *Official Bulletin of Castilla and Leon*.



FUNCTION OF THE CRONISTA DE ARMAS OF CASTILLE AND LEON

The Chronicler of Arms of Castille and Leon might inform about every relative affair over public symbols and emblems submitted by the Council of Castille and Leon, County Council Offices, Town Councils, and any other public offices.

Also and according with the appoinment signed by H.E. the President of the Council of Castille and Leon in June 13th of 1991, the Chronicler of Arms shall perform the following functions

wearing every faculty and competence, honour and distinction, of the former Chroniclers Kings of Arms of Castille and Leon, so being able to sign under such title every report and statement that this Council of Castille and Leon may submit to the sciences of your charge, issue the grants of genealogy, nobility and coat of arms, the letters of appointment for the officials of arms, the confirmations and creation of new arms, and permission of wearing it given to all those citizens who asked for (which shall be registered and achieved in your Minute Book, which shall be yearly sent to the Central Archive of the Administration of Castille and Leon), wear the traditional ensign of this office, and sign every document with the title of "Castilla y León".

According to that text the modern Chronicler of Arms of Castille and Leon is the bearer of the traditional competences of the former Chroniclers, Kings of Arms and Heralds of Castille and Leon, as compiled in Royal Decree of July 29th of 1915, and in Decree of April 13th of 1951. That is to say that according to article 16th of the already mentioned Decree 105/1991, the Chronicler of Arms has the legal authority to issue and register grants of arms under any citizen application. This authority means:



- The issue of grant anyone's coat of arms, its wearing, as well as emblems and motto.
- The register of all existent coat of arms, emblems and mottos.
- The attribution and concession of new coat of arms, emblems and mottos under anyone's application.
- The issue of grant and register the noble quality of those who can prove it.
- The honorary appointment of officials of arms (heralds and pursuivants), following the tradition of the former Kingdoms of Castille and Leon.
- The organization of the ceremonies to celebrate the wearing of new municipal symbols.

All those activities are not only reserved to Spanish citizens of Castille and Leon, but according to the Spanish tradition, are open to the rest of the Kingdom and the whole world, because the former Kings of Arms had never had their faculties restringed by a territorial matter -another difference with some other kingdoms and territories.

PROCEDURE TO OBTAIN A GRANT OF ARMS

There is not a specific procedure to obtain a grant of arms in Castille and Leon, but Law 30/1992 concerning Public Administration and its general administrative procedures must be consulted.

In this sense, a postal letter, fax or e-mail addressed to the Chronicler of Arms of Castille and Leon applying the issue of the desired document may be enough. Enclose to that letter should be all the documents one may think useful for the purpose, as well as every thing wanted to be included in the grant of arms.

Once accepted the application and accredited and proved the enclosed documentation, the Chronicler of Arms of Castille and Leon shall submit a rough copy to the applicant for his confirmation or correction. The definitive document shall be issued once the details were perfectly accorded.

THE ISSUE OF THE GRANT OF ARMS

The grants of arms may include just a new coat of arms or the register of an already existent ones, or even the applicant's genealogy or nobility proofs.

Usually this kind of documents are written on a specially ornated paper with full coloured medieval arms of Castille and Leon fringe, it includes the hand painted coloured coat of arms on a parchment-like paper. All of it in red leather binding, with gold engraved coat of arms of Castille and Leon and inside a red briefcase.

There are too the called simplified grants of arms which just include reference to existing registered coat of arms in official paper.



FEES OF ISSUE

The issue and register of a grant of arms is free, as well as the Office of the Chronicler of Arms of Castille and Leon.

Nevertheless, the expenses produced by legalization and binding -complexity and extension- shall be paid by the applicant.



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