

Marta Serrano Coll

Art as a Means of Legitimization in the Kingdom of Aragon: Coronation Problems and Their Artistic Echos During the Reigns of James I and Peter IV

To analyze the figurative images of the kings of the Aragonese Crown, some time ago I compiled all the representations of the monarchs from Sancho Ramírez (king of Pamplona and Aragon in 1063), to Ferdinand II (known to historians as the Catholic and who died in 1515). This compilation of different artistic media (sculpture, picture, illumination, coins and seals) has given me a complete overview of royal iconography in Aragon during the Middle Ages.

A brief look at the corpus shows a progressive change in Aragonese iconography throughout the medieval period that can be explained in political, economical, religious, social or familial terms. This study will put forward new line of research that looks at the combination between the sacred and the profane in Aragonese royal iconography.

The study will start with some of the iconographical changes seen in images of James I the Conqueror that clearly reflect the concept of “conquest right”, whereby a man is deemed to be king of a territory simply because he has conquered it by the sword. This concept, which has its origin in earlier coronation problems, implied, in my opinion, a clear wish to establish a figurative connection between the monarchic and the holy. Without going into detail, we can see this general intention in certain royal effigies whose details will be discussed in this paper.

This will to strengthen the links between monarchy and divinity is one of the objectives of Peter IV the Ceremonious, who was a great admirer of James I. Peter’s images also originated from a political decision closely connected to the coronation liturgy and gave rise to a kind of iconography that verged on the sacrilegious. As I will show, the points of contact between both kings are not coincidental; the effigies, artistic commissions and other decisions made by both of them reveal common interests which derive, however, from the different problems they had to deal with. I want to demonstrate that, in certain cases, and in particular in the Crown of Aragon, royal iconography shows that the sacred and the profane are not so isolated from one another.