

THE COLOURS OF PRINCE CHARLES AND THE VEXILLOLOGICAL ORNAMENTATION AT HIS FUNERAL

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One of the least known, however controversial, personalities of the 16th century in Spain was Prince Charles, the son of king Philip II and of his first wife Maria Manuela of Portugal. He was born in Madrid in 1545 and died there in 1568. His early death caused several rumours at the Court, and he became a quasi-legendary figure, inspiring literary works by authors ranging from Lope de Vega, his contemporary, to Schiller and Alfieri. In accordance with usual practice at that time (the Baroque period), not only in Spain but in most of Europe, Charles' obsequies, celebrated in the church of the monastery of «Santo Domingo el Real», were a solemn occasion, full of the pomp and magnificence appropriate to such an important personage. Royal obsequies in the Spanish Golden Age, although occasions of sadness, were social ceremonies abundant in ornaments, where flags had an important role. But it should not be thought that this was exclusive to funerals, because vexillological objects were used as ornamentation in all kinds of social celebrations. Nor was it something exclusive to Spain at that time; everybody knows of examples for this in other places and periods.

In the celebration of royal obsequies, two aspects were combined. On one hand, the religious ceremonies (sometimes lasting for several days) were held inside the church which had been specially decorated for the occasion, where a grandiose catafalque in ephemeral architecture, plentiful in allegorical and symbolic ornamentation, was built. On the other hand, a large procession would leave the «Alcázar» (palace), the residence of the Royal Family, and make its way through the streets to some important church of the city (usually «Santo Domingo el Real», as in this case). The remainder of this article is based on a very important documentary source, a printed report similar to a journalistic chronicle, written by Juan López de Hoyos at the time¹. The report is entitled «Relación de la muerte y honras funebres del SS. Principe D. Carlos, hijo de la Mag. del Cathólico Rey D. Philippe el segundo nuestro señor» (a report of the death and obsequies of Prince Charles) and has the catalogue number R-12.870 at the National Library of Madrid.

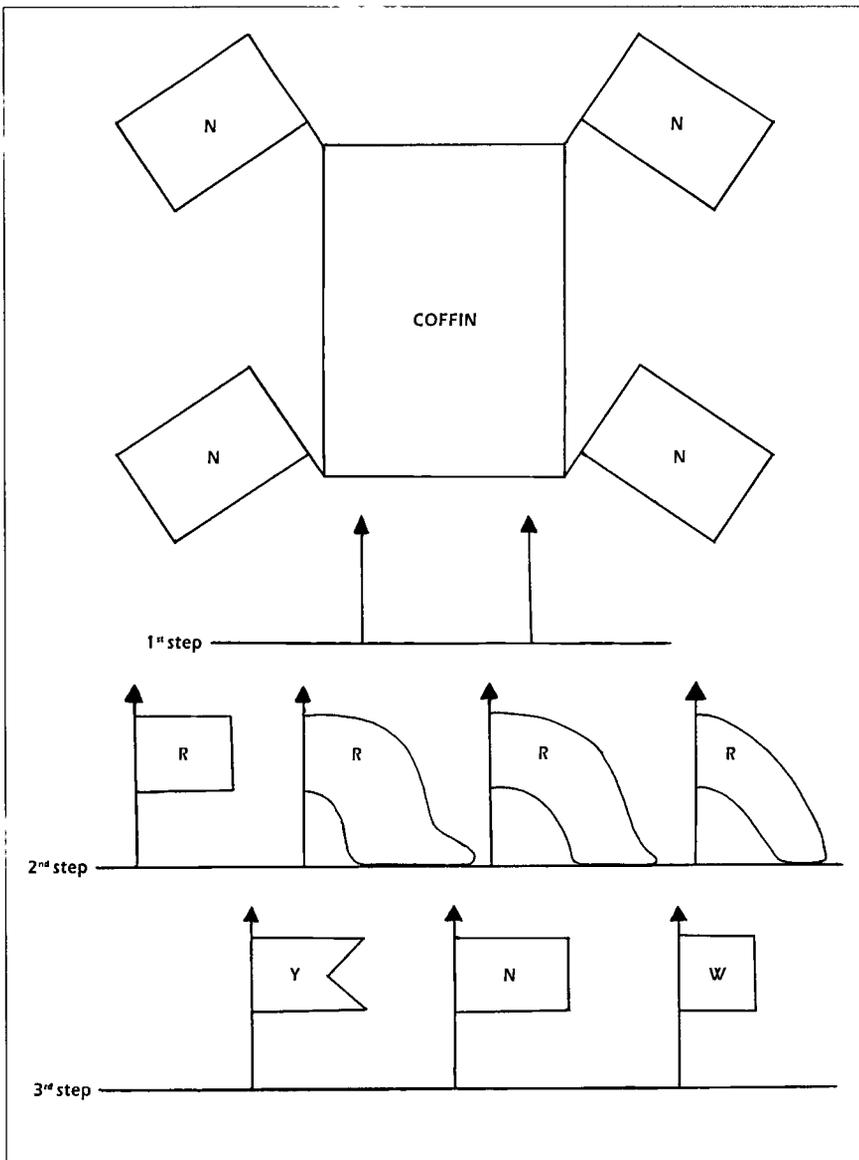
We could have chosen another personage or other documentary sources to illustrate the role of flags in the ornamentation of funerals and other social events. The choice of López de Hoyos' report about Prince Charles' obsequies was motivated by the important information which the author provides about Prince Charles' personal colours (something very different from his coat of arms). As it was customary in these reports, the description of the event is extremely detailed. López de Hoyos' account begins with the first symptoms of the Prince's illness and continues until the end of his funeral. The author has much to say about the flags in Charles' obsequies, but his report does not contain illustrations. According to his text, I have tried to put the flags in a scheme [Figure] Describing the funerary procession, he remarks (folio 14r): «...comenzaron a salir las cofra-

días, cada una con su insignia de cruz y pendones...» (the brotherhoods started to appear, each with their cross and banners). Nevertheless it is in the church, where the obsequies are celebrated, that flags play the most important role. Marginally vexillological, draping covers all the church walls (folio 23r-23v): «Cubriéronse de luto todas las tres naves de la yglesia...» (the church was covered in black).

Furthermore, we find genuine flags at the principal element, the catafalque. This was sumptuous and had a square ground plan, with a column at each corner (folio 27r-28v): «... de las quatro cornijas de las columnas pendían quatro vanderas no muy grandes de figura quadrangular, en las quales estauan sculpidas las armas y blasones de los quatro abuelos de su Alteza en esta manera: Al lado derecho... estauan las armas imperiales del inuictissimo Emperador Carlos quinto... . Ex diámetro le correspondía a esta mirando desde la mano derecha al pie yzquierdo la vanderá que pendian de las armas de la catholicíssima Emperatriz Doña Ysabel de Castilla, eran las armas de España con las quinas de Portugal. La vanderá que pendía de la columna de la mano yzquierda eran las armas de los serenísimos Don Iuan y Catherina Reyes de Portugal... , la que a esta correspondía al pie derecho eran las armas del Catholicíssimo Rey don Philippe nuestro señor, y de la serenísima Princesa de Castilla D. Luana primera, muger de su Magestad y hija de los dichos serenísimos reyes de Portugal, y madre de su Alteza, esta tenía las armas de Castilla, quinas de Portugal...»² (from the four cornices of the columns hung four rectangular flags, not very large, with the coat of arms of the Prince's grandparents). (Folio 29r-30r): «Pusiéronse más abaxo de la cabecera de la tumba tres estandartes grandes... . En el segundo estante auia quatro lanças fijadas con quatro vanderas de carmesí con este orden en la primera de la mano derecha estaua el guión con las armas reales que arrastraua por tierra. En la segunda estaua la vanderá con las armas plenas, mayor que la del guión. En la tercera es estandarte... . En la quarta lança estaua el pendón. Todas con las armas reales, atrauesadas con el lambeo...» (at the head of the coffin there were three steps... On the second one, there were four lances with four crimson flags: the first at the right was a personal standard; the second one a banner, the third one a standard and the fourth one a pennon. All of them bearing the royal coat of arms crossed by the label).

(Folio 30r-30v): «En el tercero y último estante auia tres lanças con tres vanderas de tres colores diferentes blanco, negro y amarillo que eran los colores de su alteza. La primera de la mano derecha era el guión. La segunda el estandarte. La tercera la corneta. Estas eran de tafetán rasas sin ningunas armas» (on the third step, there were three lances with three flags in the colours white, black and yellow, the Prince's colours. The first flag on the right was the personal standard, the second the standard, the third the pennant. All of these flags were without any coat of arms)³.

We find two clearly different kinds of flags: some heraldic, with coat of arms, and others plain in different colours, without arms. Among the heraldic flags were those which hung from the four corners of the catafalque. They were said to be square and to bear arms, but their colours are not mentioned. Shall we suppose



Scheme of flag decoration at the catafalque of Prince Charles according to López de Hoyos

that the coat of arms occupied the whole flag? Probably not. Which colour were they? We dare say that they were probably black. Likewise, the four flags on the second step of the catafalque were heraldic. All of these were crimson and bore the royal arms, but each flag had a different and particular name: guidon, banner, standard and pennant. What was the shape and size of each flag? Although López de Hoyos does not specify anything in this respect (should we believe that these characteristics were well-known to the readers of his report?), we can conclude from the description that the pennant was the smallest, followed by the guidon (bigger, as it was trailing on the ground), the banner (even bigger) and the standard (the biggest).

The three flags on the third step were plain flags, not heraldic ones. Precisely because of that they are, without any doubt, the most interesting from a vexillological point of view. In his description quoted above, López de Hoyos refers to three flags in three colours. Did each flag have only one colour or did each of them show all three colours? The practices of that time make us think that each flag had only one colour. And if we assume that López de Hoyos mentioned them in their order, the personal standard («guión») was white, the standard black and the pennant yellow. Which shapes did all these flags have? We have already said that López de Hoyos does not tell anything about it. So we have to deduce it from other contemporary sources or proto-vexillological works.⁴ According to such references, all these flags were of square or rectangular shape, they did only differ in size and charges. The exception is the pennant, which was swallow-tailed. All these vexillologists agree that the personal standard did not carry the royal arms, only personal devices. However, in López de Hoyos' text it is said that all the flags had the royal arms, with the Prince's label (hence the Prince's personal arms). Are we mistaken in our interpretation of the sources? Is López de Hoyos wrong in his description? Perhaps Prince Charles did not yet have any personal device due to his early death?

In any case, López de Hoyos' report (like many others) demonstrates the outstanding role which flags could play in baroque royal obsequies. At the same time (and herein lies the exceptional importance of this text) it is the only source (to our best knowledge) describing Prince Charles' personal colours.

Notes

¹ Juan López de Hoyos was a 16th century intellectual, writer and scholar. A well-known person in Madrid, he was the school teacher of Miguel de Cervantes, the author of «Don Quixote».

² López de Hoyos is wrong. Prince Charles' mother was not Juana, but Maria Marjela, the first wife of Philip II.

³ Readers who are interested in further details about Prince Charles' obsequies may consult the «Report of the 20th International Congress of Genealogy and Heraldry», Uppsala, 1992, where we have studied the heraldic aspects in Prince Charles' funeral ornamentation.

⁴ Alfonso X, «Leyes de Partida», Diego de Valera, «Tratado de los preceptos y desafíos», Ferrnand Mexía, «Nobiliario Vero», Pedro de Gratia-Die, «Blasón General», Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo, «Libro de la Cámara Real del Príncipe D. Juan», Pedro Salazar de Mendoza, «Monarquía de España», Bernardino de Escañete, «Diálogos de Arte militar».