



## IMAGE AND IDENTITY

THE SEALS OF THE COIMBRA SEE (12TH-14TH CENTURIES)

MARIA DO ROSÁRIO MORUJÃO

### THE BISHOPS

The most common figuration of the episcopal seals shows the prelate invested of his insignia, blessing and holding the crosier, bearing the mitre over his head, sideways in early ages (**Fig. 1, 2**). Some prelates possessed seals before being consecrated in their prelacy; as elected bishops, they made themselves be represented without mitre or crosier, simply holding a book in their hands (**Fig. 3, 4**). By the mid 13th century devotional elements, like crescents and stars, are introduced (**Fig. 5**). In the early 14th century the first coats of arms appear which will gradually conquer an outstanding role in episcopal seals (**Fig. 6**).

Some bishops, in the early years of the 13th century, elected a different figuration, depicting saints of their own devotion. The hagiographical seals are nonetheless more common from the end of the century on. They are generally divided in two or more plans, with devotional scenes occupying the central space and the image of the bishop being relegated to the inferior plan (**Fig. 7, 8, 9**). In the last decades of the 13th century is also initiated the practice of printing on the back of the seal a counter seal, which would confer reinforced authenticity to the document it thus validated (**Fig. 10**).

### THE CHAPTER

The Coimbra See's chapter has had its own seal since the beginning of the 13th century. The matrixes varied until around 1250, although being always shaped in a double ogive and bearing the depiction of the patron saint of the cathedral – the Virgin and Child (**Fig. 11, 12**). By 1250 a new seal was introduced, elegant and sober, which was to be used for decades and became a true symbol of the Coimbra's chapter (**Fig. 13**). In the beginning of the 14th century a new matrix was attempted, more to the taste of the time, but was very rapidly replaced only to return to the former figuration (**Fig. 14**).

### THE EPISCOPAL CURIA

The curia, organ of government of the diocese and also a dependent court from the bishop's authority, had its own seal from 1280 on. There are depicted the principal symbols of that authority: the mitre, the crosier and the ring (**Fig. 15**).