Fig. 1. Tile with armillary sphere, c. 1515 (Palácio Nacional de Sintra).
Lord of the World and Beyond

At the very end of the fifteenth century, after almost a century of long, hard and resilient voyages down the coast of Africa, a Portuguese fleet led by Vasco da Gama finally found a maritime way to connect Europe and Asia around the Cape of Good Hope thus opening the vast and unimaginably complex world of the Indian Ocean to the sails of the Portuguese king.

The king was D. Manuel, who had just come to the throne in 1495. Like most other monarchs of his time, and perhaps more so than some, Manuel was very much aware of the importance of his image, of the symbolic order (to use Pierre Bourdieu’s expression), and of memory (national, genealogic and personal) in the construction of his power.

In this he had good precedents to learn from. After all, right before his ascent to the throne, his cousin and predecessor John II and the Catholic monarchs Ferdinand and Isabel had convinced the pope to divide the globe between Portugal and Spain along an imaginary line that crossed a still not so well known sea. Nothing but a line, one might think. One would be wrong.

Manuel was, without a doubt, the Portuguese king that invested the most in the construction of his image and he did so in as many ways as he could. Upon the return of Vasco da Gama, Manuel immediately wrote to the Catholic monarchs (by now his in-laws since he had married their eldest daughter, Isabel) and to the pope to tell them about the good news. These letters, however, do more than conveying novelties. In them, Manuel used a new royal title, which he invented: “King of Portugal and of the Algarves of before and beyond de sea, Lord of Guinea, and of the conquest, navigation and commerce of Ethiopia, Arabia, Persia and India”.2

The king of Portugal was already also king of the Algarves of before and beyond the sea3 and, since John II, also Lord of Guinea. With Manuel he would add to his already grand title nothing less than the conquest, navigation and commerce

---

1 The ideas in this article were first presented in Copenhagen, in 2012. Krista De Jonge’s comments on that presentation were instrumental for the (substantial) revision of the ideas that I presented then. Whatever mistakes it may still contain are entirely my own responsibility.


3 The Algarves of before the sea is the south of Portugal; those beyond are the Portuguese possessions in Morocco.
of Ethiopia, Arabia, Persia and India. To Manuel’s mind, one must recognize, words were worth more than actions. Nomenclature was, therefore, one of the ways through which Manuel shaped his image as king. Art and architecture were just as, and perhaps even more important.

It has been written that during Manuel’s 26 years of reign, more buildings were erected than in the preceding two centuries. Whether this statement is mathematically correct or not is not very important. What is relevant is that there is hardly any place in Portugal, no matter how small a village it may be, that does not have its manuelin building. Today’s architectural historians discuss whether there was or not a manuelin style. But the king himself made sure that all those who saw the buildings he commissioned or financed knew that these stood for the monarch’s presence.

To guarantee that this presence-by-proxy effect was fully achieved, the king apposed his personal symbol – the armillary sphere – wherever he could, for instance upon tiles that were ordered from Seville to embellish the walls of the many palaces that he owned (Fig. 1). Armillary spheres were often found in even more prominent locations, such as the façades of the many churches the king commissioned, perhaps the most important of which is that of the Hieronymite Monastery in Lisbon, which Manuel elected as his burial place. For the main door, the model of the Chartreuse of Champmol (by way of Zaragoza’s Santa Engracia) was followed, and he had his wife (his second Spanish wife) and himself portrayed in the company of their patron saints. At the mouth of Lisbon’s river, the Tagus, not too far from his mausoleum, Manuel had a fortress built, the Tower of Belém (Fig. 2), and on its façade, of course, he placed his personal symbols, the double armillary sphere flanking the royal coat of arms.

Continental Portugal, however, was only a small portion of the realm of the Lord of the conquest, navigation and commerce of Ethiopia, Arabia, Persia and India and so Manuel’s arms can also be found over a door of the North African fortress of Safi, renovated by the king, on the façade of the small chapel of the fortress of the island of Mozambique, or over the main door to the Franciscan church in Goa, India, just to mention a few of the many possible examples. Furthermore, Manuel would not stop at architectural surfaces and his personal symbol can also be found, for instance, on Luso-African saltcellars as well as on the earliest porcelain objects the Portuguese bought in Malacca, all reminding us that Manuel’s dominions did extend into Ethiopia, Arabia, Persia and India, as his new official title claimed, and that, by proxy of art and architecture, he was indeed omnipresent.

The King in Lisbon

In 1498, when Da Gama arrived from India, bringing with him the promise of a world full of possibilities for one as imaginative as Manuel, the king lived in the traditional royal palace that his predecessors had occupied, inside the medieval castle of Saint George.

Since the early 15th century, Lisbon was undergoing substantial changes caused by a very prosperous and ever growing overseas commerce that was shifting the city center from the old heights of the castle and its medieval surrounding neighbourhood to the riverfront where new infrastructures for navigation and maritime trade had been built and where the new great commercial fortunes were starting to erect their palaces. One of the new commercial infrastructures that had been built in the riverfront was the House of Ceuta, later rechristened House of Guinea, a royal warehouse where all the goods coming from the Portuguese possessions in Africa were kept, recorded and taxed. Upon the arrival of da Gama, the House

---

4 Paulo Pereira (ed.), História da Arte Portuguesa, Lisbon 1995. The articles by the editor in the second volume of this survey provide a good overview of the architecture of the period.


6 This palace does not survive but for a few architectural elements. Cf. Manuel Vaz Ferreira de Andrade, Palácios Reais de Lisboa, Lisbon 1949.

of Guinea changed its designation for the third and last time. Naturally, it became the House of India. Concomitantly, the king made one of his boldest symbolic moves: he decided to abandon the old castle (and therefore the centuries’-old city geography) and have a new palace built, the Paço da Ribeira (the Palace by the River), literally above the House of India: the ground floor of the new palace remained a warehouse where spices and gold, precious stones and ivory were kept. The royal family, in turn, dined and entertained, slept and partied, conspired and ruled on the upper floors. In other words, the king literally slept on top of his most cherished treasures. Francis I, King of France, was not entirely off when he (reportedly) referred to Manuel as “le roy épiciere”, the king of spices.9

The question that needs attention in this article is how life happened in this rather peculiar setting where the hustle and bustle of the port raised from down bellow, mixed with the smell of cinnamon and

---


clove, and made its way up to the representational and residential spaces of the royal palace where the most formal ceremonies in the realm took place.

The Burgundian Model and its Limits

If there is a model to be identified for court ceremony in Portugal it should probably be Burgundian but its influence was only effective to a certain extent. In fact, much of the ways in which life was organized at the Portuguese court seem to have been an original, local creation, in a considerable part due to King Manuel. Unfortunately, 16th-century royal court ordinances, if they ever existed, have yet to be found. Therefore, the conclusions that can be reached today must be based for the most part upon a few city views (almost exclusively of Lisbon) and some narrative sources such as descriptions of ceremonies, diplomatic letters, and chronicles. What these show is a life punctuated by rituals that resemble, and sometimes mimic those that could be seen in other parts of Burgundian-influenced Europe co-existing with other ones that seem much more, and sometimes utterly peculiar, often originating in the particular historical moment that Portugal was going through, at the early stages of the construction of its worldwide presence. Let us start with Burgundy.

In 1430, Isabel of Portugal, daughter of King John I, married Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy. Through this marriage, a diplomatic alliance was sealed between a country, Portugal, vastly expanding beyond the modest limits of its natural frontiers, and another one, Flanders, which was the most important market for the goods Portugal brought from overseas. Isabel being an educated woman and a patron of the arts, her role in the transmission of Burgundian models to Portugal was certainly relevant.

It has been reported that the retinue of the duchess-to-be encompassed over 2000 people, most of which were businessmen to whom the duke was happy to grant trading privileges, and whom the duke allowed to establish a permanent commercial presence in Bruges. That is how the Portuguese Feitoria da Flandres, as it was called, was established, and its activity continued on, going strong even when it moved to Antwerp, shortly after the return of Vasco da Gama from India.10

Since the early decades of the fifteenth century, thousands of Portuguese, from seamen to businessmen, from diplomats to intellectuals and sheer globetrotters, travelled to and lived in Flanders under the protection of the dukes of Burgundy. Eventually, Charles of Ghent became King of Spain and then Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire and in yet another bold diplomatic move, Manuel’s son, John III, married Charles’ sister Catherine, while the Emperor in turn married John’s sister, Isabel of Portugal.

Burgundian taste penetrated Portugal, while Burgundian art was imported into the country in large quantities. In fact, until at least the early decades of the 16th century, the art of Flanders was the most important source of inspiration for Portuguese artists while several Flemish painters and sculptors traveled to Portugal to try their luck. In the time of King Manuel, Portuguese manuscripts were sent to Flanders to be illuminated. If you wanted the best tapestries you had them brought from Flanders.11 And a certain bishop who wanted to buy an altarpiece for his newly built cathedral told his secretary to have it brought from Flanders where it would be not only of better quality but also cheaper than anything that could be commissioned in Portugal.12

From a ceremonial point of view, Burgundy was also an important model. Joyeuses entrées are documented in Portugal since the 14th century and they included a route that was progressively stabilized, textiles decorating the façades of buildings along the path, bonfires in chosen squares and lights in the

windows at night, and a formal, public speech, more often than not proffered in Latin, to welcome the royal member of the occasion. Theatrical performances were also part of Portuguese joyeuses entrées in the form of tableaux vivants in the streets and of theater plays proper once the pageant was over. The attending celebrations also included martial games such as jousts, a game called canas and bullfights. Proto-forms of triumphal arches are recorded since the late 15th century, while fully-developed, Renaissance ones make their first recorded appearance in 1552, as part of the celebrations of the wedding of Prince John Manuel with Joanna of Austria. While the origin of several of these components of the pageant can be traced back to Burgundian practices, others, such as the bullfights, seem to have been rather Iberian. Moreover, there were others still that seem to have been specifically Portuguese. I will come back to these further ahead.

Inside the palace, Burgundy’s influence could also be felt. Unless there were special guests or on particular occasions, the king ate in public and alone at the table. Meals, often accompanied by music, were always a ceremony, which involved several attendants that performed roles dictated by their various ranks. On Christmas Eve, 1516, for instance, D. Manuel dined in the sala grande of the Palace of Ribeira. The table was set over a two-step dais and the prince, who came into the sala with the king, stood by his father’s right hand side. Many court officials took part in the ceremony, their distance in relation to the table (and therefore to the king) indicating their courtly standing. The maiordomus (mordomo-mor) brought the towel and handed it over to the prince who, in turn, kneeled to pass it on to his father. He remained on his knees until the king finished his meal. Then the ritual was repeated for the prince’s dinner, whose table was set on the lower step of the dais. The Duke of Bragança, the highest ranking noble of the land, held the prince’s towel. When the prince finished his meal, he returned to his standing position next to his father on the top step of the dais. The Duke of Bragança and the counts that were present were then served their meals by their own servants. Those of the duke walked a few steps apart and ahead of those of the counts.

Thus meals could be a highly complex affair ritualized in the Burgundian way. Kneeling, however, seems to have been a practice used by Manuel to further sacralize his presence and that of his successor. There was at least one other space in which the influence of Burgundy could be felt, which is the palatine chapel. When it came to attending mass in his palace, the king had two options, both of which assured his separation from the rest of the court. Sometimes he would attend mass from a balcony (tribuna) overlooking the main chapel, where he could remain alone or in the company of other members of the royal family. While this practice was widespread in Europe, the king’s other option was more evidently of Burgundian origins, that of attending mass in the nave, protected by a curtain; the curtain was itself more often than not a Burgundian textile as well. The symbolic effect of such separation between king and court is the same as that achieved by the complex ritualization of meals, as mentioned above, and other court ceremonies.

13 Ana Maria Alves, As Entradas Régias Portuguesas, Lisbon 1986.
14 Annemarie Jordan, ‘Cosa veramente di gran stupore’. Entrada real y fiestas nupciales de Juana de Austria en Lisboa en 1552”, in: Krista De Jonge et al. (eds.), El Legado de Borgoña. Fiesta y Cerimonia Cortesana en la Europa de los Austrias (1454-1648), Madrid 2010, 179-240 provides copious sources for these celebrations.
17 References to the tribuna, for instance, in Ernesto de Campos de Andrade (ed.), Relações de Pero de Alcâova Carneiro, Conde de Idanha, do Tempo que Ele e Seu Pai, António Carneiro, Serviram de Secretários (1515-1568), Lisbon 1937, 437-438; and in Tratado em que se declara quem foi D. Aleixo de Menezes…, Biblioteca Geral da Universidade de Coimbra, Mss. 167, fl. 57v. The tribuna of the church of Saint Francis, in Évora, which was a palatine chapel, still exists.
18 See, for instance, Damião de Góis, Crónica do Felicíssimo Rei D. Manuel, Coimbra 1926, part I, chap. 54.
Architecture and Court Ceremonial: The Royal Palace

In spite of the Burgundian influence that can be identified in practices such as the ones described above, much of the Portuguese court ceremonial devised by D. Manuel and continued by his successors definitely carries a local flavor as far as rituals are concerned as do the settings in which these took place.

The construction of a new royal palace, itself a part of the major renovations D. Manuel promoted in Lisbon,\(^\text{19}\) was a crucial component of the king’s careful invention of his new image as Lord of the conquest, navigation and commerce of Ethiopia, Arabia, Persia and India. As mentioned above, from around 1501, the monarch had his new residency, the Palace of Ribeira, literally built on top of the House of India.

This was, therefore, a peculiar royal palace, that included the warehouses of the empire and the royal armory on the ground floor, and the residential parts of the royal house, including the sala grande, on the upper floors. Contrary to what was believed for a long time, the long building that dominates all views of pre-earthquake (i.e., pre-1755) Lisbon, stretching between the medieval wall and the river is not the palace but only part of it as represented c. 1510. In fact, as I have had the opportunity to show elsewhere,\(^\text{20}\) the residential part of the palace was not located on the upper floors of this long structure but rather on the buildings further to the north, organized around three courtyards that can be seen in a prospect of Lisbon a few decades later (Figs. 3-4).

A military element was added to the palace, a small fort whose foundations were plunged in the waters of the river, topped by a crenellated terrace with bartizans and an even smaller docking structure on the side, visible in its original configuration in Fig. 3. Documents called it a baluarte, a bastion, which it was not exactly yet. But it was indeed equipped for fire weaponry and in 1508-11, when it was built, the forms of military architecture, together with the vocabulary to describe them, were both changing.

Finally, the bastion and residential buildings were connected by means of a long, arched structure. In its original version it was organized in two floors topped by a terrace. The ground floor contained storage space while the upper one, directly accessible from the palace, was structured like a long loggia, certainly open on to the square next to it and perhaps to the other side as well. That is why primary sources call it as varandas, the verandas.

Later in Manuel’s reign, verandas and fort were the objects of another construction campaign that added a floor to both structures (Fig. 5). The most important result of this campaign was the transformation of the general aspect of the bastion, which lost its military character and gained a more secular physiognomy. Nonetheless, when Manuel died, in

---

\(^{19}\) Helder Carita, Lisboa Manuelina e a Formação de Modelos Urbanísticos da Época Moderna (1495-1521), Lisbon 1999.

\(^{20}\) Senos 2002.
1521, the Palace of Ribeira was already the mish-mash of juxtaposed and superimposed buildings that it would remain until the 1755 earthquake destroyed it entirely: a “poorly-designed building” wrote Venice’s envoy, Lunardo da Cà Masser already in 1504, “the worse building I have ever seen” would even claim a cruel Pierre Bordey, several decades later.\(^{21}\)

From the point of view of court ceremonial and of its peculiarities, a few features of the palace should be mentioned. First of all, the king now lived in the middle of the commercial center of his city. He no longer commanded it from the heights of the old castle, he was now very much part of it; he even placed the House of India under his domestic wing. From his windows, he could see the busy traffic on the river, boxes of Asian riches being unloaded from his ships, and even boats being built and repaired to the left of his palace.

Second, the king’s palace was located right by the river and could be accessed directly from the water. This was very important as far as ceremonies were concerned because from then onwards, all important visitors would enter Lisbon from the river. Some would come from the Atlantic and pass the Tower of Belém on their way to the royal palace. Others would be housed right across the river, in Almada, until the city and its king were ready for them. They too would arrive to the palace by boat.

Finally, to the east of the palace, a new grand square was created where before there was only some\(^{21}\)

sand and much mud. Until then, Lisbon’s only other sizeable square was that of Rossio, where the market took place but never royal ceremonies. From Manuel onwards, the Terreiro do Paço (the Palace’s Square) became the single most important space of representation for the monarch.

**Water**

In 1521, a few months before the king’s death, D. Manuel accompanied his third and last wife, Eleanor of Austria (sister of Charles V and later also wife of Francis I, King of France), in her joyeuse entrée into Lisbon. They waited for four days across the river while Lisbon made itself ready for their entrance. During those days, the river became a stage for boat parades and games, while at night bonfires were lighted in the city. The new palace was the background for all these festivities.

The day they finally crossed the river, they were accompanied by over 600 boats, which sailed by the riverside convent where the king’s sister, the queen-dowager lived. The old queen was carried in a state chair to the shore to greet her new successor. The royal couple disembarked in the Palace’s Square by means of a wooden dock built and decorated for the event, and then disappeared from the public eye, into the palace where more (strictly courtly) celebrations took place. The joyeuse entrée, i.e., the public part of the festivities, had become entirely a maritime affair.

From the moment of the construction of Ribeira onwards, the ceremonial potential of the river was frequently fully explored. Years later, in 1552, when John III’s son, John Manuel, married Joanna of Austria, the Spanish princess went through a similar ritual. Joanna too waited across the river for a few days. This time the king himself crossed the river in a boat covered in silk and brocade to meet his daughter-in-law and accompany her into Lisbon. As in the days of Manuel, the river was packed with boats all dressed in the best textiles. In several of them, music was played.

The river became such an important component of these types of ceremonies that in 1521, when Manuel’s daughter Beatrice departed Lisbon, by boat, to join her fiancé, Charles III, Duke of Savoy, the farewell festivities that extended through several days, took place on her ship docked in front of the palace. Palace and ship were connected by means of a bridge built especially for the occasion. Once the princess was on board, her ship replaced the palace as festivities took place on the water rather than on dry land. On the occasion, the city was given a chance to witness the comings and goings of guests and servants as they entered and left the ship. Regular citizens could also partake in the celebration as they greeted the participants from the big square.

Water had definitely become a major component of court ceremonial.

**The Palace’s Square**

Another fundamental space, as far as the public components of ceremonies were concerned, was the Royal Square. In the events mentioned above, royals tended not to mingle with the crowds: the square was reserved for the general public who could see the river from it and that which was happening on the water.

The square was also a space that was embellished by the people. When Joanna of Austria entered Lisbon, the city had dressed the square in silk and brocade, and because it was already getting dark when the princess finally left the boat that had brought her across the river, the people had lit fires in the square.

In 1565, John III’s niece, Maria got engaged to Alessandro Farnese, the Duke of Parma and Piacenza. In the festivities that took place in Lisbon, the groom was represented by the Spanish ambassador in Lisbon, Alfonso de Tovar. While the court

---

23 Jordan 2010.
celebrated inside the palace behind closed doors, in the square wooden structures were mounted and adorned with tapestries and paintings for the enjoyment of the people. There was a bullfight and other entertainments that involved 1024 horsemen that paraded in military-like formations.

An imposing embassy lead by Peter Ernst, Count of Mansfeld was sent from Flanders by Margaret of Austria to collect the bride. Like others, this embassy arrived in Lisbon coming from the ocean, which means they were first greeted by Manuel’s double armillary sphere on the Tower of Belém. Then they stopped in front of the Hieronymite Monastery, where more manueline armillary spheres could be seen and where the visitors were saluted by over 300 canon blows making it feel “as if the sky was about to fall into the river”.26

Pierre Bordey, who was part of the retinue, explained how many aristocrats escorted the visitors through the river, from Belém to the Palace’s Square where “one could see a great number of people, such as I think was never assembled before”.27 As the fleet approached, and before they could be overwhelmed by the masses, Manuel’s arms on the façade of the bastion-turned-tower could not have gone unnoticed.

The omnipresence of Manuel’s arms prominently featured throughout a path that the king had devised and built imposed an unavoidably local sense to all ceremonies that took place in Lisbon.

The Verandas

The Palace’s Square was also important when the king showed himself to the city from up above in the verandas of his palace to down below where his people greeted him. Both visual and textual sources are unclear as to the exact configuration of this part of the building which early sources call verandas, while Pierre Bordey uses the term galerie, a gallery. Whether the verandas were open on both sides or just on the side facing the square remains to be determined.

Be that as it may, the verandas were the most extraordinary architectural feature of this building for a number of reasons, starting with the fact that they functioned as the façade of a building that was not behind it, but rather positioned at a 90° angle in relation to them. In other words, from the square, the verandas present themselves as the façade of the palace. However, the palace was not behind them (there is no actual building behind them) but rather further to the north, in a maze of constructions virtually invisible from the street as they were mostly turned inwards into three internal courtyards.

At the same time, this peculiar architectural invention provided urban form to the Palace’s Square. Without it, the western side of the square would either be defined by the blind wall of the king’s garden or it would shapelessly extend to the shipping yards located beyond the garden. Without the verandas, the square would lack a sense of monumentality that it needed since it was the most important stage in which the monarchy presented itself to the city. There would be no square without the verandas.

From a ceremonial point of view, the verandas were also rather unique and fulfilled a double role. In 1513, for instance, the Duke of Bragança led an army bound to Azamour, a Portuguese stronghold in Morocco that was under siege. The troops gathered in Lisbon and before they embarked, they paraded in military fashion in the Palace’s Square.28 The king and the rest of the royal family watched the ceremony from their verandas. These could function, therefore, as a space in which the king attended ceremonial events in his square while at the same time showing himself to his city.

The second ceremonial function of the verandas was that of circulation devises that simultaneously functioned as display settings for the king. In 1521, Manuel was visited by an embassy from Venice. The ambassador, who arrived by boat, disembarked not on the square but rather on the fort. He was then led up a spiral staircase and was met by the king in a room that had just received a new decorative program including a gilded ceiling carved with vegetal

27 “[Il] se véoit ung si grand nombre de peuple, que je pense que l’on n’en a guaire veu davantage assembler pour un coup aultrepart”, cf. Castan 1888, 58.
28 Góis 1926, 161; Correia 1992, 140.
animal and geometric motifs as well as tile panels on the walls, perhaps with the armillary sphere that Manuel liked so much. After this first encounter, the king took his visitors through the also just finished upper veranda, all the way to the Great Hall, at the opposite end, where a grander reception took place. Once this was over, the ambassador and his retinue were taken back to the fort but this time through the lower veranda. On his way back and forth, the ambassador could enjoy unique views of the city, while the city, down in the square could see his boat approaching and its passengers moving from the fort to the Great Hall and back.29

Years later, King John III used the exact same ceremonial path to receive a Moroccan king.30 When Joanna of Austria arrived in Lisbon, the verandas were hung with rich silk and brocade tapestries and it was in the verandas that the embassy sent by Margaret of Austria to fetch the Princess Maria was received by the king and the royal family. This time, King Sebastian had his throne actually set up in the veranda, which had thus replaced the Great Hall.

The verandas were therefore much more than a mere way of getting from one place to the other. They had an urban raison d’être as they created a square, they fulfilled an architectural function as they were the real (if slightly unreal) façade of a palace that didn’t have another one, and finally they served a ceremonial role as they were used to show the king, and sometimes his guests, urbi et orbi, in majesty.

Epilogue: The Empire

Water, through which one arrived and which surrounded one once inside the palace, was a constant presence for those who visited the king in Lisbon. They would approach the palace by boat, have a first glimpse and then a full view of the large square in front of it crowded with people and decorated with textiles and ephemeral structures, and then they would further enjoy the views from the verandas as they were shown to the people in their progression towards the sala grande. This magnificent scenario that D. Manuel had devised must be equated within the context that presided over its construction and its usage during the 16th century.

The Palace of Ribeira was built in the aftermath of da Gama’s triumphant return from India; it was created, both physically and figuratively, to be the house of the Portuguese empire. The empire was, in fact, a recurrent topic in royal ceremonial. Probably, the most famous instance in which Manuel’s empire was evoked by the king in a ceremony was the embassy he sent to Pope Leo X. Its triumphant entry into Rome, in 1514, featured an elephant that was the object of many descriptions, letters and publications, and that Raphael painted in the Vatican apartments and which evidently stood for the Portuguese king’s Asian possessions.31

At home too, the empire was a fundamental component of court rituals. In 1521, the day after the joyeuse entrée of Queen Eleanor into Lisbon, Manuel and his wife went from the palace to the cathedral to attend mass; the façades of the buildings along their path were covered with paintings on wood depicting Manuel’s fortresses in Asia. Years later, Queen Catherine of Austria offered a banquet to Count Mansfeld, the already mentioned ambassador of Margaret of Austria. The queen decided to add a particularly exotic touch to the occasion by having two types of water served at dinner, one from the catholic Tiber, standing for Catherine’s commitment to Rome, and another one from the Ganges, showing the full extension of the possessions of a queen of Portugal.32

These arguments were still used to try to convince Philip II of Spain to settle his capital in Lisbon when he became king of Portugal. For his solemn entrance in Lisbon, in 1581, Philip crossed the river by boat, the same way almost a century earlier Manuel had

29 The expressions upper and lower veranda (“varanda de çima” and “varãda debaixo”) are used by the chronicler who describes the event. Góis 1926, 193-194.
30 Andrada 1937, 422.
31 See Annemarie Jordan, The Story of Süleyman: Celebrity Elephants and Other Exotica in Renaissance Portugal, Zurich 2010, for a wider view of the presence of exotic animals in the Portuguese 16th-century court.
32 According to De Marchi, ‘vivande di molti e diversi paesi, [were served] quivi per gran miracolo recate, cioè dall’Indie Orientali et Occidentali, che sono del Re di Portogallo’, cf. Bertini 1997, 86.
imagined all visitors should.33 He was received by a series of statues depicting Portugal’s possessions in Asia. In this ephemeral program, Lisbon was presented as the natural center of Philip’s now truly worldwide realm. The Spanish king was not convinced.

Nevertheless, in his description of the seven wonders of Lisbon, diplomat and intellectual Damião de Góis compared the Palace of Ribeira to a war machine that aggressively advanced towards the sea.34 For Góis, Ribeira was the perfect architectural metaphor of the empire Manuel had envisioned. The king left both, palace and empire, to his successors. Burgundy, and then Flanders and the world of the Habsburgs provided the court in Lisbon with various elements of their court ceremonial. But the empire that the Portuguese monarchs built gave it a twist and made the ways of the court in Lisbon somewhat unique.


34 Damião de Góis, Lisboa de Quinhentos. Descrição de Lisboa, Lisbon 1937, 52.