The Story of Halle's Armorial Bearings

In the technical language of heraldry the Arms of the City of Halle may be described as: Argent, two stars gules in pale with a crescent gules in bar position open above between them, that is to say a red crescent moon lies with its concave part up between two red stars, one above, the other below, on a silver (effectively white) background. This form is first to be seen in the seal of the Talschöffengericht, dating from the early 14th century. This court was responsible for law and order in the "Talstadt" Halle, where the brine wells were worked. Already in the same century this had been added as an inclusion to the seal of the town council, which otherwise represented a Madonna enthroned.

When the need was felt for official arms for the city of Halle at the high-point of its power during the Middle Ages, around 1450, it was this inclusion in the then seal that was chosen. The oldest extant representation of these arms is that to be seen on the stones placed over the St. Maurice gate to the city in 1457, which are now to be seen in the Moritzburg State Gallery. From the 15th century the same city arms are also to be found in use by the municipal administration, for instance as "ex libris" in manuscripts and books belonging to the archives and councillors' library.

There is no historical indication as to the symbolic meaning of the arms; only a legendary tradition more or less as reported in "Die Sagen der Stadt Halle und des Saalkreises" by Schultz-Galera:

In olden days where the town of Halle now stands there were only 96 thatched wooden huts, in which the Halloren lived and worked at their salt panning. One fine day, as they were seated before said huts, a bishop came by to whom the whole land then belonged and who had his seat in the castle at Giebichenstein.

They asked him to grant them permission to build a proper town here; but he laughed and asked them if they had found a good buyer for their rags and tatters, to provide them with the wherewithal to build a town, for they appeared to be very poor. Whereupon they answered him thus:

"An if we have this day water and wood,
then have we the morrow silver and gold."

"Well then, in God's name build ye in water and wood," quoth the bishop, "and let sun, moon and stars shine upon you." And in remembrance of this saying to this day sun, moon and stars are to be seen in the city's arms.