

War of Spanish Succession Guide

Notes on Catalan Military Flags



As a part of the Spanish Empire since the dynastic union between Isabel I of Castile and Ferran II of Aragon in 1469, the military vexillology of Catalonia became heavily iinfluenced by the Spanish practice and regulations over the following centuries –same as did the other constituent States of the Crown of Aragon. Nevertheless, all the mentioned regions (Aragon, Catalonia, and Valencia) retained strong distinct characteristics, which were extensively reflected in their military vexillology as late as the War of the Spanish Succession itself.

1 . Historical background: under their own banners



Kings of Aragon
Coat of Arms
since at least 1150

The Royal Coat of Arms of the Crown of Aragon bears four red pallets on a gold background, a dynastic symbol dating back to 1150. It is suspected to be older than that, but there is lack of conclusive evidence on this matter. Directly derivative of the mentioned Coat of Arms is the flag commonly known as "*Senyera*" or "*Quatribarrada*" *[=four-striped*], a design positively dating back to at least 1238 that displays four red horizontal bars on a yellow background. It is worth to be noted that several variations have existed for centuries, depicting either variable number of red and yellow stripes, or their vertical rather than horizontal arrangement.

This very same 1238 design constitutes the modern flags of Catalonia and Aragon regions, while different variations of it make the flags of Valencia and Balearic Islands in Spain, or Provence region in France.

It must be kept in mind the "*Senyera*" was properly a Royal Standard, and therefore its use was associated with the Royal House itself, or their estates, fortresses, fleets and armies. It wasn't by any means a people's own symbol, although in some cases civic institutions or militiae did use it, as a consequence of this symbol having been granted to them by the Crown.

During the War of Spanish Succession, the use by Austrophile units of the "*Senyera*" on the field was very limited, but not entirely non-existent –as it will be proven next.



Kings of Aragon
Royal Standard
since 1238



Barcelona City's Militia
Cloth Dressers
Company Flag

One such samples is the Cloth Dressers' Company Flag of the Barcelona City's Militia Regiment (or "*Coronela*"), that shows a field consisting of five alternate vertical stripes of red and yellow, surmounted by an image of Virgin Mary and the City's coat of arms. Its reverse is similar, but showing that guild's own coat of arms instead.

> *The "Coronela" civic militiae were typical of Catalan-aragonese cities, formed and maintained by the professional guilds of each town. Every guild was responsible for a company of the local regiment and provided for the men, uniforms, weaponry and flag of that company.*

A closely similar example is that of the Blacksmiths' Company Flag of the Palma City's Militia Regiment (Majorca), also showing five alternate vertical stripes of red and yellow, with the City's coat of arms at its center. Its reverse is also striped, but showing an image of the saint patron of that guild and its own coat of arms too.

There are indications of other similar examples, as we shall see later on.



Palma City's Militia
Blacksmiths
Company Flag



St. George's Flag
1359 - 1714

The other most widespread symbol in the Crown of Aragon was *Saint George's Cross*, whose use origin can be traced back to XII century as personal livery of at least one Count of Barcelona. Later, King Peter II gave the cross as a symbol of his newly created Military Order of *Sant Jordi d'Alfama* (1201), thereby contributing to its popularization throughout the territory. His son King James I 'the Conqueror', who had been brought up by the *Knights Templar* at Monzón castle after his father's death at the battle of Muret (1213), adopted a Saint George livery for his Royal Guard, so that the red cross device gradually became associated with the Military Arm of the kingdom.

In 1359, a *Generalitat* or *Diputació General* was created for each of the Crown of Aragon constituent States. They were institutions deemed to be a permament delegation of their respective Parliaments, and rapidly became effective executive powers of their own. All them adopted Saint George as their patron saint, and the Generalitat of Catalonia went even a step further, adopting a Saint George's Cross Seal or Coat of Arms, as well a Saint George's Flag for the troops it eventually raised. Thus, by the XIV century, Saint George's Cross had already become a people's own symbol, as attested by its spontaneous use by the Almughavar Companies in their campaigns throughout the Mediterranean.



Generalitat's Seal
1359 - 1714

2 . King's Colours: recapitulation



King's Colour obverse
1706 pattern

Despite the fact that Catalonian Authorities ruled entirely on their own the country, during the 1713-1714 late war period, it is nonetheless also true that they always chose to perform (nominally at least) on behalf of King Charles III, in whose name the war was conducted.

Therefore, it is quite safe to conclude that Late War Catalonian King's Colours still followed the general design established by earlier Charles Habsburg's 1706 Regulations; this way, all what has been already explained when dealing with generic Spanish Austrophile Colours (cf. *99GSD200 "Notes on Archduke Charles' Infantry Flags"*) does apply to specifically Catalan ones too

That is, King's colours were to be white with an image of the Virgin Mary, while commanders were allowed to choose Regimental flag motifs and colours.



King's Colour obverse
(speculative)

3 . Battalion Flags: overview



Tercio of Aragon's own Colour, 1678-1698
According to L. Sorando

Throughout the entire Habsburg rule period (1516-1700), the different States of the Crown of Aragon endeavoured a perpetual struggle for their own military units to carry St. George flags instead of Burgundy crosses, with quite variable results –as attested by the renowned Spanish scholars Luis Sorando and Antonio Manzano, who in a paper in *Emblemata* magazine attest at least two attempts by the Parliament or "*Cortes*" of Aragon (1620 and 1676) with the following quote:

> *"Haviendo de militar los Aragoneses debaxo del nombre de su Reyno [Aragón], siendo común el patrocinio de la milicia de esta Corona el de San Jorje, hayan de llebar (sic) en las vanderas y estandartes, en vez de los bastones y aspas de San Andrés que de esquina a esquina lleba aora la milicia española, de aquí adelante los aragoneses, assí en sus Reynos como fuera de ellos, la cruz de San Jorje partiendo la vandera (sic) en quatro partes iguales, cossa en que vendrán bien los demás Reynos de la Corona [Cataluña, Valencia y Mallorca]"*

This, translating as follows:

> *"Since the Aragonese are to serve in the military under the name of their Kingdom [Aragon]—and given that Saint George serves as the common patron of the military forces of this Crown—they shall henceforth display on their flags and standards the Cross of Saint George, dividing the flag into four equal parts. This shall replace the Saltires of St. Andrew*



Tercio of Valencia's own Colour
XVII century?

[Burgundy Crosses]—which the Spanish military currently bears, extending from corner to corner —and this requirement shall apply to the Aragonese both within their own Kingdoms and beyond them; a measure with which the other Kingdoms of the Crown [Catalonia, Valencia, and Mallorca] will surely be in agreement."

As cunningly remark Sorando & Manzano, the ultimate flag adopted by the Aragonese "*Tercio*" did display a saltire as required, but not a Burgundy Cross proper –as if they had chosen to carry in disguise a *tilted* St. George's Cross.

A perhaps more pragmatic solution was the one adopted by the "*Tercio*" of Valencia, which agreed to adopt the Cross of Burgundy, superimposed upon its traditional "*quatribarrada*" emblems –but not replacing them.

Catalonian "*Tercios*" just ignored the Burgundy Cross requirement –an attitude likely fueled by Catalonia's plain rejection of the "*Unión de Armas*" (*Union of Arms*) Spanish Crown's 1625 project. They simply used St. George's flags, just putting into practice what the Aragonese had requested in vain.



Catalonian Tercios own Colours
1640-1653 Separation War



Barcelona City's Militia
Battalion Flag until 1714

Both the "*Tercio*" and the Militia of Barcelona City bore the town's own Coat of Arms on a plain background (light blue for the "*Tercio*" and red for the Militia) since not least than XVII century, with no Burgundy Cross.

Other designs used by Catalonian military units used to display only Catalonia's Coat of Arms (identical to the Crown of Aragon's Royal Arms) or religious imagery, with no supplementary crosses either.

During the War of Spanish Succession, even the few Catalonian units raised by the pro-Bourbon party did not show the Burgundy Cross but particular symbols and mottos on a plain field –like the Battalion flag of the "*Regimiento de Voluntarios de Cervera*" (*Cervera town Volunteers Regt.*), which displayed the town's coat of arms accompanied by the motto "*Cerve Semper Fidelis*", on a plain white background.

Side note: I'm afraid to have temporarily lost track of the source attesting this latter statement. I do sincerely apologize for it.



Cervera Volunteers Regt. Battalion flag
(unknown so far source)

4 . Our designs



Catalan Battalion Flag
Early War obverse

Given the overall background previously explained, as well as the available data sources, my designs of Catalan units flags (either under Charles Habsburg direct command, or on their own after the 1713 Treaty of Utrecht) are going to observe the following lines:

As for **King's Colours**, they are to be plain white, with the image of Virgin Mary on the obverse –just like those of the rest of Austrophile Spanish units. Given the uncertainty about reverses, these are going to differ depending on the war timeline: those of regiments raised before Charles Habsburg becomes Holy Roman Emperor (1711) will show his Coat of Arms as King of Spain, while the later ones will display the imperial two-headed eagle. Randomly, some will show Virgin Mary again, just as the obverse. However, none is going to include a Burgundy Cross, contrary to what I might do in non-Catalonian units.

As for **Battalion Flags**, these will generally display the Coat of Arms of Catalonia on one side, with a variation again: at the obverse in flags predating the Treaty of Utrecht (1713), and at the reverse during the final stage of war. Known exceptions are not going to follow this rule, obviously.



Catalan Battalion Flag
1713-1714 reverse

Sources

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