



War of Spanish Succession Guide

Notes on Archduke Charles' Infantry Flags



Likewise to the Portuguese case, plunging into Austrophile Spanish, or Austro-catalan, flags study can be quite discouraging –not only due to the scarcity of sources available, but also to a widespread, traditional reluctance among spanish scholars to approach subjects potentially questioning the current ruling House. This has prevented public from learning anything about “that other Spain” that was both legally and effectively ruled for up to 9 years by the Austrian claimant under the title of Charles III --until recent times at least. Still now a great deal of information at regard remains plainly unknown, lacking even formulated hypotheses by knowledgeable people. Therefore, a huge lot of more humble hypotheses from my own are due in this case.

1 . King's Colours: background



Colonel Flag
1632 pattern obverse

All the antecedents already exposed regarding Kings Philip V's Colours (cf. [99GSD100 "Notes on Philip V's Infantry Flags"](#)) do apply to Charles Habsburg's ones too. The basic difference between both claimants flags consisted in that, while the former ones evolved from the red Cross of Burgundy on white 1695 pattern, these others seemingly adopted a variation of the Virgin Mary 1632 pattern –albeit on a white field rather than a red one, just like already customary among Austrian regiments.

Right after the 1705 liberation of Barcelona by the Allies and the general uprising of the Crown of Aragon former States (Aragon, Catalonia, Valencia and Balearic islands), Charles Habsburg was finally able to set foot in Spain and be formally crowned as king.

Quite logically, from his portion of controlled territory Charles couldn't be considered king of all Spain yet –not without being crowned as king of Castile too, in Madrid. However, he already could be considered legitimately as king of Aragon under the name of *Charles III* –for he was formally crowned and swore the Constitutions of each Aragonese state before their respective Parliaments.

Right after these events, Charles established his court in Barcelona and started his government work.



Colonel Flag
1642 and 1695 patterns



Colonel Flag
1706 pattern

Once enthroned, Charles Habsburg published an ordinance book at Barcelona on March 20th 1706 regulating, among several other aspects, the colours and motifs of his Spanish Army units' flags. In its 24th Art. the Ordinance above states literally:

«...que todos los Estandartes Coroneles hayan de ser blancos, con la imagen de Nuestra Señora de la Concepcion (sic) Nuestra Abogada, y las otras Banderas, ô, Estandartes hayan de ser de el Color que gustare el Coronel y assimismo las mantillas de los timbales.»

That is, Colonel's flags were to be white with an image of the Virgin Mary, while commanders were allowed to decide the Battalion flag motifs and colours.

It was not specified there whether obverse and reverse should be the same, or if, otherwise, some degree of variation could be expected –just as actually happened with Austrian flags too, where sometimes a double headed eagle or any other coat of arms was depicted at reverse, or even occupied the very reverse leaving the obverse for the religious image.



Speculative reverse #1
1706 pattern

Burgundy Crosses



Likely Colonel Flag
1704 Ahumada's I.R.

Not any reference is made in these regulations about the use of Burgundy Crosses in Charles Habsburg's army, in open contrast with the design patterns explicitly published by Philip d'Anjou. So it can be inferred that, in principle, Virgin Mary's image was alone on the field –at least at flag obverses.

One of Charles Habsburg's spanish regiments, however, was created long before the above Regulations were published. Such was the case of *Admiral of Castile's I.R.* (better known as *Ahumada I.R.* on behalf of its colonel's name), which was formed in Portugal around 1703 and was formally given flags the next year –two years prior to the regulations above.

With regard to this particular case, it can be assumed that its King's Colour would still follow the older 1695 regulations, so most probably consisting at first of a red Cross of Burgundy on white field; this flag would have been added a Virgin Mary image later, over the cross (see drawing at left).

In his work *«Die Regimenten König Carl III (Die Habsburg Spanische Armée 1704-13)»*, August Kühn retrieves a good number of flag designs including both Burgundy Crosses and double-headed eagles. While many can seemingly be attributed to Southern Dutch or Italian regiments, the attribution to the *Catalan Guards* he gives to his own design no. #4 (image at right) is obviously erroneous. It is actually a Philip V's 1707 pattern King's Colour with an imperial eagle above. So this flag most likely belonged to a Bourbon regiment having changed sides after 1707 –probably a Neapolitan one.



Pretended Colonel Flag
(Philip V King's Colour)

Our designs



Speculative reverse #2



Speculative reverse #4

While Austrophile King's Colors obverse seems well established, there are no factual data regarding their reverse. Therefore, our own designs are to display always a white background, while using mostly one of two equally likely reverse designs –either the full coat of arms of Archduke Charles as King of Spain, for regiments raised before 1711; or the double-headed eagle, for those others created after Archduke Charles proclamation as Emperor.

Also, it is possible that some flags actually had identical obverse and reverse, so depicting Virgin Mary's image on both sides. Interchanged obverse and reverse cannot be discarded either. It seems wise then to allow some room for these alternative designs too, whenever appropriate.

Another, different case to be considered is that of Majorcan regiments, that might have displayed a particular device of their own on flag reverse, seemingly unseen anywhere else. This is an odd royal coat of arms that doesn't follow the commonly accepted Spanish Habsburgs pattern –and seems quite odd too (even erroneous), from an heraldic point of view.

Such coat of arms might rather resemble that one used by the Habsburgs as kings of Naples –but it doesn't fully match to this, either. Certainly odd as it is, nevertheless it's based on a real sample preserved at the Sanctuary of Lluch (Majorca), so I've considered appropriate to use it in majorcan regiments because of its actual likeliness.

Arbitrary as such criteria admittedly are (and can't be otherwise), these offer the advantage of showing in a single collection all the alternative design depictions known and/or likely, so eventually allowing user's own choice if he so desires.



Speculative reverse #3



Arms of Archduke Charles
as king of Naples

2 . Battalion Flags: background, if any

Only one single source exists explaining what Austrophile Battalion flags looked like. This is a 4-volume book published by Francesc de Castellví i Obando –an austro-catalan officer *exilé* in Vienna, who wrote a detailed history of the war under the title of «*Narraciones Históricas desde el año 1700 al 1725*».

In his work, Castellví gave thoroughful accounts of every regimental flag he had the chance to witness – such accounts unfortunately consisted only of image descriptions, with no reference to colours, decorations or background.

Our designs

Thanks to Castellví's work, now we know what precise images, coats of arms and motto scrolls showed these regimental flags actually –but the colour palette shown on each remains entirely in the field of pure speculation.

Therefore, I'm going to leave white backgrounds in most of cases, with some room for assigning a colour that matches that one of uniform facings where feasible or likely –just as in late war catalan regimental flags.

Little else can be done until further information is found out by historians and scholars, sadly.

Sources

- Charles III Habsburg, «Ordenanzas Militares», set of regulations first published in Barcelona (1706), spanish language; PDF Facsimile obtained from the Ministry of Defence of Spain.
- Francesc de Castellví i Obando, «Narraciones Históricas desde el año 1700 al 1725», 4-volume book first published in Vienna around 1749-1757 in spanish language; original book preserved at the Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv of Vienna, but intensively studied and quoted by catalan and spanish scholars. Only recently published to public («Narraciones Históricas», J. M. Mundet & J. M. Alsina Roca edition: Madrid 2003, 9788492073955).
- August Kühn, «Die Regimenten König Carl III (Die Habsburg-spanische Armee 1704-1713)», possibly unpublished typewritten paper, german language
- Francesc X. Hernández & Francesc Riart, «Els Exèrcits de Catalunya 1713-1714», catalan language, Rafael Dalmau publisher: Barcelona 2007, 9788423207138
- Luis Sorando Muñoz, «Banderas del Archiduque Carlos 1704-1714», paper in «Dragona» magazine (1992, issue no. unknown), spanish language