



War of Spanish Succession Guide

Notes on Portuguese Infantry Flags

Researching into early XVIII century Portuguese flags can be deeply disheartening. One would believe that the natural disasters so often having hit its capital city, Lisboa, had cared to target key pieces of Portugal's history and reduce them to ashes. Such happened with the Army Arsenal's *Arquivo da Tenência* ("Tenure Archive") devastated by the 1755 earthquake. Same happened to the archives of the *Junta dos Três Estados*, ("The Three Estates Board", a permanent board emanating from the *Cortes* or Parliament), burnt to ashes by a fire in the 1830s –and with it, most accountancy on flags commissioning and other military expenses.



Military Colours: background



Terços Company Flag
1640 pattern

After the 1640-1668 Restoration Wars, Portuguese infantry units were still named *Terços*, and carried one flag per company. There were no equivalents to a «King's Colour» in Portuguese *Terços*, so all flags in a given unit shared the same design. No surviving samples have been preserved due to natural disasters, so the only sources available are contemporary paintings. Those quoted by Ernesto A. Pereira de Sales' works (1929) invariably pointed toward green flags with the Portuguese «Cross of Christ».

However, in his work from 1940, Gastão de Matos openly doubted the uniformity of green as the field color of flags and banners, as stated in Ernesto Sales papers. Despite admitting the predominance of green and white in flags (for these being the colours of the ruling House of Bragança), according to his own sources there also were flags with the «Cross of Christ» on white field; and it couldn't be discarded the existence of other colours and patterns combinations.

As pointed by the vexillologist José Sobral, it would be already frequent to find flags with mainly green and white geometric patterns –a sample of which can be seen by the image at right.

Also, Jorge P. de Freitas remarks the existence of a paint by the Dutch artist Dirk Stoop showing a whi-



Depicted variant
1650 map



Depicted variant
Painting by Dirk Stoop

te flag with a plain green cross, that strongly resembles the symbol of the nobiliary Order of Aviz (see image at left).

At some point between 1704 and 1707, either king Peter II or his son John V endeavoured an overall reform of Portuguese Army, that would bring the old *Terços* into modern style Regiments. According to all sources read, it's then when new regulations about regimental flags were issued, in all probability.

Quoting José Sobral:

“Em cada [...] terço existe uma bandeira por companhia, aparentemente, todas de formato igual. O desenho padrão das bandeiras seria um esquartelado de oito peças verdes e brancas, com uma bordadura contra-esquartelada do mesmo. Os Regimentos da Armada Real usariam bandeiras esquarteladas de 12 peças verdes e brancas”.

This translating as:

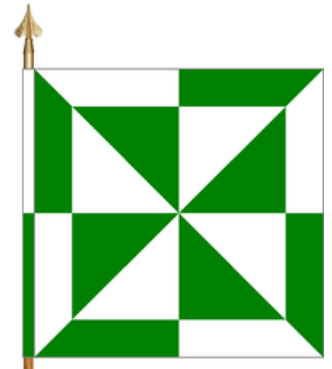
“For each [...] company of a regiment there is one flag; apparently, all of them sharing design. The standard flag pattern would be a square of eight green and white pieces, with a counter-square frame of the same. The Royal Navy Regiments would use flags divided in 12 green and white pieces”.

According to local sources, in **1728** the Royal white and green livery was replaced by red and blue, something that had an immediate effect on military colours. However, it actually seems not to have been as immediate as stated, as observed in [Kronoskaf](#) website:

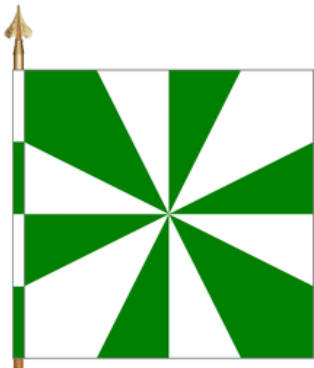
Inventories of war materials made from 1763 onwards in different forts listed various colour patterns under the term «bandeiras de guerra» (=war flags). These inventories often referred to green and white colours, [...] still in use in some regiment in 1771. The inventory of Fort Estremoz in 1763 mentions 12 green and white colours. The same year, an inventory at Elvas lists 15 colours of white and green taffeta.

Other patterns were also in use. For example, an inventory of the general stores of the province of Minho (in Viana), made in 1771, mentions 14 regimental colours: 3 of red taffeta, 8 with blue and red stripes on a white background, 3 with green stripes on a white background, two black roan linen standards carrying the royal arms in the centre, 2 standards carrying the royal arms (without specifying the colour of the background).

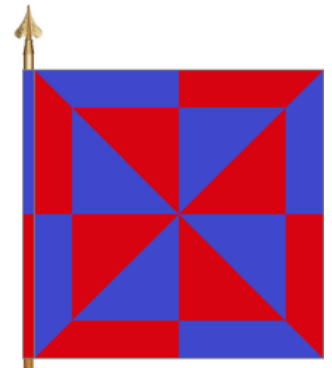
That could make some sense if having in mind that white and green colours were still kept by the House of Bragança as own, despite the Crown livery change.



Regimental Flag
~1700 pattern



Marine Infantry flag
~1700 pattern



Regimental Flag
1728 pattern

Our designs



Emblazoned version
Speculative

Once again, given the scarcity of real factual data, some room to speculation must be allowed.

What must be kept into account is that there is no way to associate any flag design to any Portuguese regiment –except for the Marine infantry, as explained above. Therefore, all our designs can be referenced to the pattern itself only, not to this or that unit.

Also, my designs will follow the hypothesis that, if early 1700 green-and-white flags lasted that much to be replaced after the 1728 regulations came into effect, it could quite possibly have happened the same before, during the War of Spanish Succession, with the new geometric pattern flags coexisting with the older Cross of Christ ones.

And last, despite no evidences of distinctive King's Colours in the Portuguese Army of those times, it seems me wise to provide with a purely speculative emblazoned version for every design published.

In the end, our Portuguese flag sheets are going to refer to either 1640 or 1700 patterns, with a more likely unemblazoned version of that design and a speculative emblazoned version altogether –for whatever the purpose hobbyists would use them.

Sources

- Ernesto A. Pereira de Sales, «Àpontamentos àcêrca das Bandeiras e Estandartes regimentais do Exército e da Armada, e ainda de outras bandeiras militares», paper in «Elucidario Nobiliarchico» #12 vol. 2 magazine (1929) by Ministry of Public Instruction, portuguese language
- Gastão de Melo de Matos, «Bandeiras militares do século XVII e a bandeira da Aclamação», unknown publisher (1940), portuguese language
- José J. X. Sobral, «Evolução das Bandeiras e Estandartes Militares Portugueses» article [<https://audaces.blogs.sapo.pt/1877.html>] in his own «Audaces» website on Heraldry, Vexillology and History [<https://audaces.blogs.sapo.pt/>], portuguese language
- Jorge P. de Freitas, «Guerra da Restauração» military history website/blog [<https://guerradarestauracao.wordpress.com/>], portuguese language
- ['Marr' pseudonym], «Talabarte» website/blog on portuguese militaria [<http://talabarte-marr.blogspot.com/>], portuguese language
- Kronoskaf – The Virtual Time Machine website, knowledge data base on historical topics [<https://www.kronoskaf.com/>], english language