

The Banners In The Central Maghreb Through Portulan Charts - 8th Hijri Century/ 14th Century Ad –

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Abstract :

The banners are a difficult topic to address in scientific research due to the lack of material archaeological sources and evidences. In this regard, what has been found does not satisfy a researcher's passion for a comprehensive study of flags and banners of all kinds. One of these few archaeological evidences is known as Portulan charts (nautical charts). In this paper, we will highlight the flags and banners of the Central Maghreb, which were drawn on these charts, mainly in the first phase that witnessed the manufacture and development of Portulan charts in the 8th CenturyHijri, 14th century AD.

Keywords: The banner, the flag, Portulan chart, nautical chart, Central Maghreb.

1. Introduction:

Flags, banners, and their takers in the Islamic and non-Islamic armies draw attention because they excite the soldiers. In this contexts, the flags are the symbol and slogan of the army in the wars. Besides, if it falls down, the soldiers panic and get doubts about the possibility of winning the battle. There had been many flags for each state. Some flags are of the Sultans, of the armies, and of the cities under the rule of a given authority. Portulan charts are one of the archaeological sources that provide information about the banners and flags. The aim behind Portulan manufacturing was navigation and sailing through the coastal cities. The cartographer smarked the cities that have main ports with the red color and a banner. This type

of charts emerged and flourished in Spanish, Italian, and Portuguese schools in the 08th Hijri century until the 10th (18th century AD).

The coastal cities in the Central Maghreb were among the main elements incarnated on these maps thanks to their position in the Mediterranean. Its main harbors linked it to Northern Europe, the Orient, the Far Maghreb, and the depths of Africa. The main Central Maghreb harbors in the 08th Hijri century were Bone, Bougie, and Constantine, which were part of the Hafsid State in the East. Besides, the harbor of Algiers, Bersehk, Honaine, Oran, and Telemcen were under the Zayyanids in the West. In this context, banners were drawn next to these harbors on Portulan charts. Therefore, the question that arises here is, “what is the type of the banners that were drawn next to these cities? And why?” Based on what was said, this paper shall focus on the nature of these banners through the investigation of the literature that focused on Portulan charts.

1. Definition of the banner:

The ancient Arabs used the banner in their wars. It is a piece of cloth hanged on the top of the spear, moved by the wind, and taken by the warrior. Ahmed Zamani states that the banner is the sign and symbol of the army that is seen by the soldiers. It is the central spot for the armed forces around which the soldiers and the horses turn. It is also known as “the mother of the war”. (Ahmed, 1991, p. 203) .It is a sign of the Emir appointment, (Ajaj, 2007, p. 204).as the leader of the army or a region of the state. Each soldier aims at throwing down the banner of the opponent. Therefore, we can call it the “aim”.

2. Definition of the flag:

It is the banner around which the soldiers gather. Besides, it is what is hanged on the spear. (IbnMandhur, 2010, p. 70) (Al-Nawiri Chiheb Dine, 2004, p. 186) .Besides, it is a sign of the Emir’s place because it is with him wherever he goes (Chokri, n.d, pp. 67-68). However, the most comprehensive definition is that of al Kalkachandi who sees that the flags are the banners that are taken behind the Sultan when he rides the horse. It is narrated that the Prophet peace be upon him used to give flags to the army he sends. Besides, they may be referred to as the band (such as the headband) because it is hanged on the top of the spear. The flag is also known as Sanajik, which means stabbing in Turkish, because it is hanged on the spear that is a tool for stabbing. (Kalkachandi, 1913, p. 127)

3. Definition of the Portulan:

It is derived from Italian and means a set of written sailing directions. The British Museum pointed in the catalogue of 1844 of charts to the term Portulano, or the set of the nautical charts. Most of the Anglophone writers use the expression "Portulan charts". The use of the "Portulan chart" dates back to 1890. In this regard, Cortesao & Teixeira de Mota confirm that the expression "Portulan charts" is not ideal, but it gained an irreversible solid ground. Then in 1925, Max Eckert suggested the expression "Romp line charts", "Loxodrome charts" was suggested by Arthur Breusing in 1881, and the expression "Compass charts" was by an anonymous. However, they had drawbacks. To avoid these differences, the French, Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese scholars referred to them as "nautical charts". (Campbell, 1987, p. 375)

The main terms that substitute the term "Portulan" are **carta de Navegar**, **Carta pro Navigando**, **mappamundi**, **mappae maris**, and **compasso**. In addition, the cartographer Petro Viscontte used the Latin terms "**carta**" and "**tabula**" for his charts. Moreover, a Catalanian Decree in 1354 and an official Portuguese document in 1443 included the expression "**carta de marear**". Antonio Pelechan described the paper he used for his chart in 1459 as **the cholfo** (the gulf). Despite all these names, "**the Portulan chart**" seems the most useful today. (Campbell, 1987, p. 375)

As for the scientific side, the experts disagree about a unified exact definition of the Portulan. Nevertheless, they agree on some characteristics. In this context, to be a Portulan, the chart must be an original manuscript. (all about portolans, 2013). The Portulan charts are ancient nautical charts that originated in the 13th century in the Mediterranean Basin and expanded later to cover other regions. They were used for navigation across the sea. They are known for their high exactness in drawing the maps all along the coasts. (Facsimiles of portolan charts belonging to the Hispanic Society of America, n.d). They differ than the other charts thanks to some elements such as the winds lines, the use of miles for distance, and the geographic names. (Sarazin, 2013, p. 13)

We can consider the Portulan chart in the Medieval Ages as a nautical book that contains the distances and directions between different points of the coasts. Besides, it contains instructions about the approach of the harbors and the navigation conditions. (Dalché, 1995, p. XI). In addition,

some of these charts provide important information about the internal regions, including the hydrography, animals, plants, the political figures, and the commercial routes. Thus, the charts are unique documents to shed light on the maps that targeted the lands. **(Jennifer, 2016, p. 53)**

4. The general description of the Portulan charts:

The production of the Portulan charts lasted for 500 years, from the 13th to the 18th centuries. These nautical charts cover the maritime space with its borders: harbors, coasts, and islands. Even if the coast is the main element, the cartographer represents the internal regions of the continents and islands. The Portulan chart was first for the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. It is a set of regional maps that were widened to cover the entire surface discovered or imagined by the navigators. **(Hofmann, H  l  ne, & Emmanuelle, n.d)**

The Portulan is drawn on the animals' leathers that are prepared for this. The preparation process includes cleaning, bleaching, and other treatments to make the leather suitable for writing. **(all about portolans, 2013)**. Drawing the map is manual. The map is cut and collected to make a bigger map or many tables of the Atlas. There are also Portulan cards drawn on paper that were found later **(Hofmann, H  l  ne, & Emmanuelle, n.d)**. Despite that the big charts require more than one piece of leather, most of them use one leather of an animal. The geographic names are generally written vertically on the coast regardless their direction. Thus, the reader has to turn the map to read some names. In this context, the names of the harbors are red while the name of the secondary harbors are black. In addition, the decoration is not methodological and hugely differs from one map to another, one type to another, and one era to another.

Moreover, the colors differ; the silver and the golden show the islands and rivers flows. Furthermore, some main coastal cities are marked with leaflets of the small urban landmarks, flags, and signs with different colors and shapes decorated with writings and animal and geometric drawings. Besides, there are winds, plants, and figures (real and imaginary), animals (even the legendary), and even sailing ships. The Portulan map is made up of a set of wind lines that refer to the main points through radiation from a central point that determines 08 main lines and secondary lines inside a circle of 16 or 32 angles. The cross point of these lines with the circle makes new centers that give the start of other nets of

intersected lines (black, red, and green). (**Hofmann, H  l  ne, & Emmanuelle, n.d**)

5. Models of Portulan charts from the 08th Hijri century/ 14th century AD:

The oldest documented signs of the Portulan charts refer to the late 13th century, namely 1270, regardless the fact that this date coincides with the date of the oldest living manuscript, Carte Pisane .(Nicolai, 2015, p. 517) (Campbell, 1987, p. 380) (Image 01) (Carte Pisane Carte marine de l'océan Atlantique Est, de la mer Méditerranée et d'une partie de la mer Noire, 2014)



Image 01: Pisane Portulan from the French National Library

Regarding the models chosen for this study, we have 10 Portulan charts that are, from the oldest to the newest, Pietro Vesconté (712 H/ 1321 AD), (**Pal. lat. 1362 A Pietro Vesconte, since 2013**). Angéline Dalorto (716 H/ 1325 AD) (**The portolan chart of Angellino de Dalorto, since 2009**), a Portulan for an anonymous Italian painter preserved in the Archives of the Italian city Lucca after 718 H/ 1327 AD (**Lucca chart Chart of the Mediterranean, Black Sea and western Europe, 2022**), Dolcert Angelino (730 H/ 1339 AD), (**Dulcert Angelino, 2018**) another anonymous Italian Portulan between (1330 AD/1360 AD) (**Antique map categories, since 1996**), Pizigano, Francesco and Sardi Agostinho (748 H/ 1367 AD) (**Pizigano, F. & Sardi, A Manuscript copy of 1367 manuscript chart of the Mediterranean**), three models for the cartographer Abraham Cresque (756 H/ 1375 AD) (**Abraham Cresques, Atlas de cartes marines [Atlas catalan], 2018**), namely the Catalanian Atlas, a Portulan that dates back to 1375 AD, and another Portulan between 1375 AD and 1400 AD, and the Portulan of Soleri Guillelmus (761 H/1380 AD). (**Guillelmus Soleri Carte marine de l'océan Atlantique Est, de la mer Méditerranée, de la mer Noire et de la mer Rouge, 2013**)

6. The banners and flags on Portulan charts:

The Portulan banners and flags are a very interesting topic and a source that provides us with the flags of cities and peoples that had collapsed from the 14th to the 18th centuries. Many Portulans were decorated with flags that indicate the advance of the discoveries, the conquests, and changes in the rule and influence. **(Pasch., 1986)** Besides, the flags on a tent or a leaflet show the city or, even if not exact, the ruling dynasty and the real monarchs. **(Campbell, 1987, p. 205)**. Unfortunately, despite they are very visible in the chart, the flags with clear colors are not generally recognized and are interpreted as a direct narration of the changing political reality. We may see the continuity of many cities in presenting an unchangeable flag despite the changes in the political dominance over specific cities because the design of the flag refers to the city, not the imperial power that rules it. **(Campbell, 1987, p. 401)**

Because the Portulan charts have no political borders as we perceive today, they use traditional elements (sovereignty badges) and symbolic and human signs (clothes, weapons, flags, and animals). The different authors analyzed the symbolic Portulan charts and shed light on their meanings, the political and religious connotations, the legends, the myths, etc. In this regard, the symbolic system of Portulan shows ornamental system that suits the scientific and technical value of the Portulan. However, we must read the cognitive elements they contain, not only the technical side. Therefore, Portulan aims at describing the political space that provides encyclopedic information about the state of the flag, the political powers, and the ruling dynasties. Thus, we must consider the Portulan flags as encyclopedic signs that describe and visually define the geopolitical spaces since the end of the 14th century; then, with a methodological manner in the following century. **(Alessandro Savorelli ,I portolani e il Libro del conocimiento de todos los reinos(secolo XIV), 2020)**

The strong point of representing the political space of the Portulan is in the definition of the powers of some regions outside Europe, mainly in the Islamic Maghreb with its political divisions and ruling dynasties. The flags on the maps in specific points are not always clear and explicit from one time to another due to the absence of what the flag represents; whether it is a local power, a central ruler, a dominator on a region, a specific region, bridges, conquests, ruling dynasties, or the colonial regions. **(Alessandro Savorelli ,I portolani e il Libro del conocimiento de todos los reinos(secolo XIV), 2020)** We had previously seen that the charts were primarily for the

harbors and the coastal cities to show who rules the harbor; despite they appeared on many internal cities. The study of this element provides another stylistic element about the cartographers and their schools. (Nicolai, 2015, p. 17)

7. Banners from the Central Maghreb:

During this period, the Central Maghreb was under the Hafsid in the East and the Zayyanids in the West. Most of the time, the geographic borders of these two states used to change due to the continuous tripartite military struggle that involves them and the Marinids in the Far Maghreb. All along the coast of the Central Maghreb, and from the previous models of the Portulan charts chosen for the study, we found 08 principal cities with a banner that distinguishes them. These cities are from the East to the West: Bone, Bougie, Constantine, Algiers, Bershek, Oran, Honaine, and Telemcen. We notice that all these cities are Mediterranean, save Constantine that is internal. The banners of these cities are as follows:

7.1 The banner of Bone: It has 07 banners. The 1st is by the cartographer Dalorto. It is white square with a triangular front of unequal lines. It has a slight yellow crescent that is encircled in a upward circle (table 01- a). The 2nd is for the anonymous Italian after 1327. It is a yellow rectangle with three bands in the front and an upward red crescent in the center (table 01- b). The 3rd is by Dolcert. It is white square with a triangular end whose sides are hollow. It has a dark yellow thick crescent in the center that is upward (table 01- c). The 4th is by Cresque in the Catalanian Atlas. It is square with a rectangular end and a bit pointy head. It has two lines leaning inwards and an upward black crescent (table 01- d). The 5th appears in another map in 1375. It is a yellow rectangle with an end that is decorated with sheets. It has an upward white crescent (table 01- e). The 6th appears in another Portulan for Cresque between 1375 and 1400. It is a yellow rectangle with a front that resembles two tongues. It has an upward white crescent (table 01- f). Finally, the 07th is for Soleri. It is white rectangle with a golden crescent that leans to the right (table 01- h). The fronts of all the banners are towards the right.

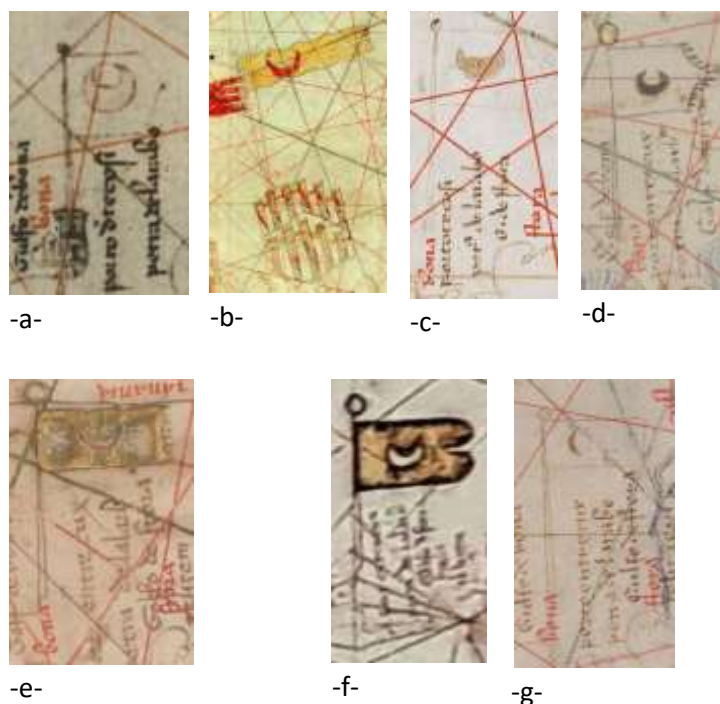


Table 01: the various banners of Bone

7.2 The banner of Constantine: It is dated between 1330 and 1360. It was made by an Italian anonymous cartographer. It has red rectangular shape that is wavy towards the left. It has along rope in its front.



Image 02: The banner of Constantine

7.3 The banner of Bougie: We collected 09 banners as follows:

The 1st is by Vesconté. It is a red rectangle with 03 bands in the front and an upward white crescent in the center (table 02- a). The 2nd is by Dalorto. It is a red square with a triangular front and a yellow arch in the center that is from the bottom to the up (table 02- b). The 3rd is by the Italian. It is a red rectangle with a front that has four bands and golden dome and minaret in the center (table 02-c). The 4th is by Dolcert. It is a red rectangle with a quasi-triangular front whose two sides are

arched inwards and the angle is not acute with an upward white shape in the center (table 02- d).

The 5th is red simple rectangle whose higher angle in the front is clear and resembles the bird's beak. It has the letter T in the center (table 02- e). The 6th is the Catalanian Atlas banner. It is square with a front that has 10 sheets that contain a golden crossbow (table 02- f). The 7th dates back to 1375. It is black square with a sided front that is decorated with sheets that have a golden crossbow in the center (table 02- j). The 8th is by Cresque between 1375 and 1400. It has the same descriptions of the previous banner. The difference is the absence of sheets in the front and the unclear symbol in the center. It is dark red rectangle (table 02-h). The 9th is a slight red rectangle with a golden and blue crossbow (table 02- i). Its front is towards the right.

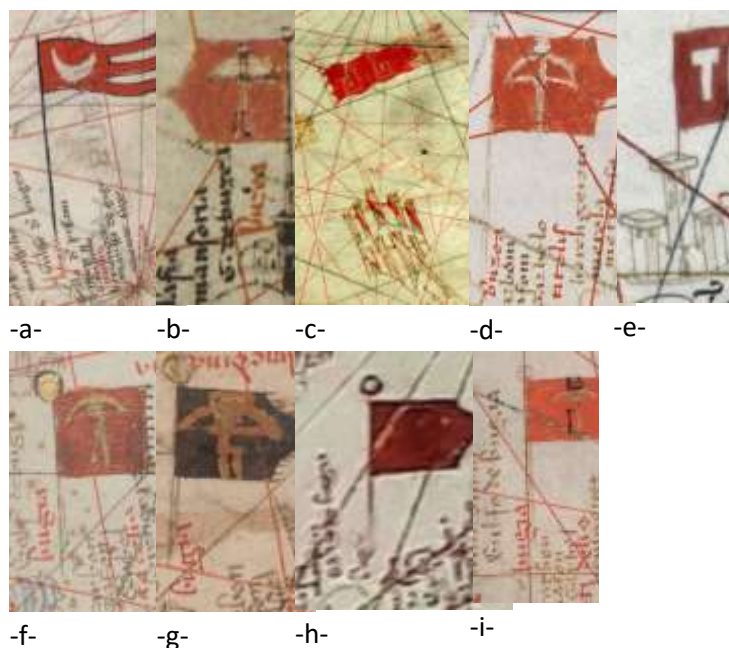


Table 02: the banners of Bougie.

7.4 The banner of Algiers: It is by Soleri (image 03). It is two equal bands that seem waiving rightwards by the wind. They end with white sheets.



Image 03: The banners of Algiers

7.5 The banners of Bershek: It has 06 distinct banners, as follows:

The 1st banner is by Dalorto. It is white square with a rectangle in the front whose sides are arched inwards. It has a red six-pointed star with a half-circle between each two heads of the star to form a flower in the center (Table 03-a). The 2nd is by Dolcert. It is two equal bands that seem waiving by the wind and end with sheets. It is divided into 05 parts by two lines between each part and the other (table 03- b). The 3rd banner is by Pizigani. It is a simple white banner. It is an upward white rectangle that resembles the bird's beak in the front and has a red six-pointed star in the center (table 03-c). The 04th is in the Atlas. It is a white rectangle with a non acute triangular head in the end, two inward arched sides, and is decorated with sheets. It has the same star in the center (table 03- d). The 05th is by Cresque. Its front is a side of 03 curves filled with rectangular white sheets. It has the same star (table 03-e). The last is by Soleri. It is just like the previous; but does not have sheets. The 1st, 3rd, and 5th banners have leftwards fronts while the 2nd and 6th are right wards.

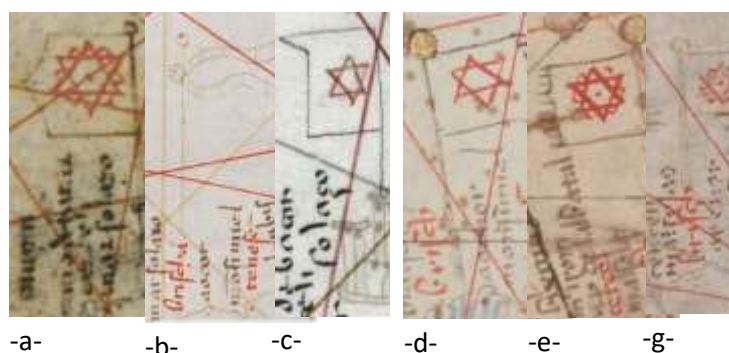


Table 03: the banners of Bershek

7.6 The banner of Oran: It is rectangle and rightwards. It ends with 03 sheets and an upward crescent in the center that has a red key at its left. Its head is in the bottom and body is upwards. It is by Vesconté (Image 04).

7.7 The banner of Honaine: It is rectangle and leftwards. It ends with 03 sheets and an upwards crescent. It is by Vesconté (Image 05).

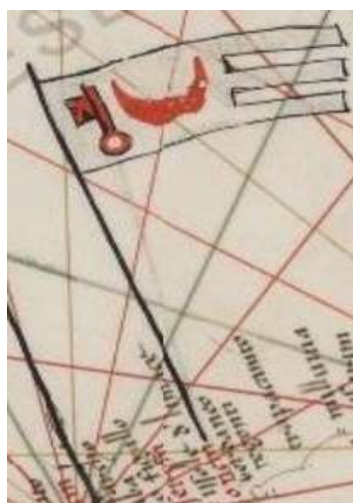


Image 04: the banner of Oran

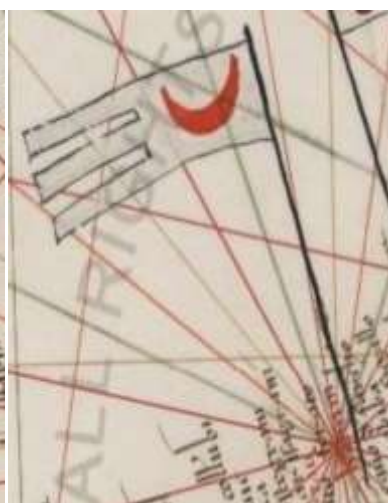


Image 05: the banner of Honaine

7.8 The banner of Telemcen: We have 07 banners, as follows: The 1st is by Dalorto and is not clear. However, it shows a white rectangle with a broken band and a series of black triangles from bottom to up (Table 04- a). The 2nd is by Dolcert. It is white, non-sharp, and triangular in the front. The triangle's sides are arched inwards with a blue upward wide crescent in the center (table 04-b). The 3rd is between 1330 and 1360. It is blue with a wavy triangular shape that has a thin front and a thin rope. It has an upward grey crescent in the center (table 04- c). The 4th is by Pizigani. It has a white rectangular shape that goes from bottom to up. Its higher angle in the front has the shape of a bird's beak. It shows a simple dark blue line in the center with an upward head and upward quirky tail (table 04-d). The 5th and 6th are by Abraham Cresque. They are rectangles. The first has an end that resembles a triangle with non-sharp inward ached sides while the other has a bit inward arched sides decorated with blue to grey sheets and a dark blue upward crescent (Table 04- e-f). The 7th is rectangular whose front has three non-deep inward arcs and an upward blue crescent in the center (Table 04- j). The fronts of all the banners are right wards.

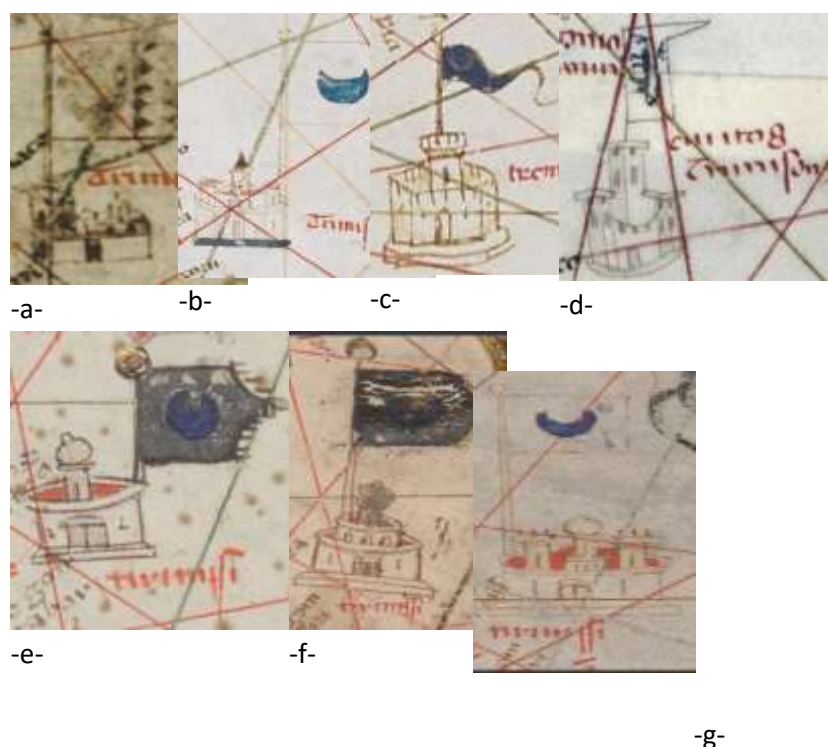


Table 04: the banners of Telemcen.

8. Study of the shapes and decorations of the banners: The previous images show diverse shapes, colors, and decorations of the banners as follows:

8.1 The shapes: We find 04 main shapes with simple differences in drawing, namely the square, rectangle, triangle, and the long bands.

8.1.1 The square banners: They have a side in the front of the banner. Usually, it takes the form of a triangle with a pointy-head and inward hollow sides (image 06).

8.1.2 The rectangular banners: They have 05 types; the ordinary rectangle with a front of 03 small inward curves, of a sided, triangular, with three bands, or with four bands end. Besides, one of the four angles takes the form of a bird's beak (image 07).

8.1.3 The triangular banners: They are wavy as if the wind moves them (image 08).

8.1.4 The banners with bands shape: They take the form of two waving bands by the wind hanged on the spear (image 09).

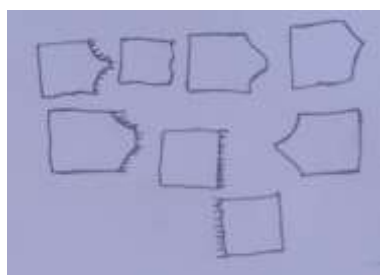


Image 06: the shapes of the square banners

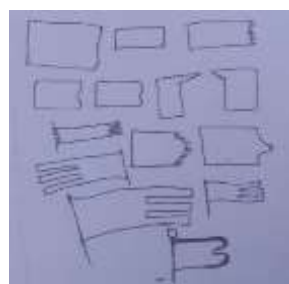


Image 07: the shapes of the rectangular banners



Image 08: the shapes of the triangular banners



Image 09: the banners with band shapes.

8.2 The decorations: We have 07 shapes, as follows:

8.2.1 The crescent and the six-pointed star: The crescent was drawn differently, such as half circle, wide thick and a bit opened shape, a thin shape, and with various directions; upward, rightward, leftward, and leaning towards angles. It is one of the prominent symbols in the Islamic ornament. As for the six-pointed star, it is made up of two intersecting triangles in three main forms, namely: simple with no additions, half circles between each point of the star to shape a flower, and with points instead of half circles (images 10 and 11).

8.2.2 The lines and the sheets: They take the form of parallel bands, black broken lines, and triple and quadruple bands in the front of the banner (image 12).

8.2.3 The crossbow: It is drawn with different sizes on the banner of Bougie. It is known to be a slight weapon to throw the arrows (image 13).

8.2.4 The dome and the minaret: Their shapes are very distinct. They are golden and show the religious affiliation of the city afar. They are drawn on the Portulan of the Italian that dates back to 718 H/1327 AD (image 14).

8.2.5 The key: It decorates the banner of Oran with the red color (image 15).

8.2.6 The letter T: It is white, thick, and was drawn on the banner of Bougie in 1365 (image 16).

8.2.7 The lion: It is drawn very simply and is found on one of Telemcen banners in 1365 (image 17).

As for the colors, they were the white, the black, the red, the yellow, the dark blue, and the golden.



Image 10: The various shapes of the crescent



Image 11: The shapes of the six-pointed star.

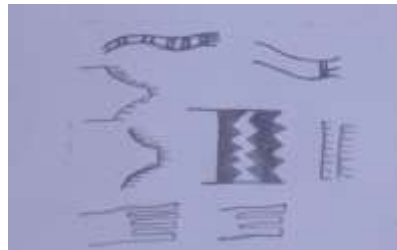


Image 12: The shapes of the lines and sheets



Image 13: The shapes of the crossbow.



Image 14: The two shapes of the dome and the minaret.



Image 15: The shape of the key.



Image 16: The letter T



Image 17: The shape of the lion

Conclusion:

In the end, we found important points about the banners, mainly the Portulan ones, as follows:

- These banners are the symbols of cities or the ruler appointed by the Sultan on the city, because we see some changes in the banners and their colors by different cartographers in different periods under one Sultan, such as the 03 first banners of Bone, the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th banners of Bougie, and the 1st and 2nd banners of Bone that was under the Hafsid Sultan Abu Yahya al Motawakil Ala Allah II (718-747 H/ 1318-1346 AD). Besides, there were some changes by the same cartographers, such as the banners drawn by Abraham Cresque.

- The main aim of the banners is showing the coastal cities and the main harbors for navigation and the mutual commercial activities between the states. In addition, the continuous existence of the banner on the same city for different periods shows its important commercial role, such as the city of Bone, Bougie, Bershek, and Telemcen. On the other hand, we notice one banner for Oran and Honaine in 1321 and Algiers in 1830. Then, they disappeared. This refers to the change on the main centers and harbors of the commercial exchange. As for the banner on Constantine in the Portulan of Ben Senti in 1330 and 1360, it is because Constantine was a main city in the Algerian East, linked the North with the South Sahara, and was a main commercial route.

- The banners of the Central Maghreb have diverse shapes, colors, and decorations. Most of the decorations are Islamic symbols that show the religious identity of the cities.

In conclusion, we can confirm the importance of the Portulan charts in revealing the situations of the Central Maghreb, mainly the economic aspect of the maritime trade, the political

borders, and the main changes on the ruling dynasties. Therefore, it is necessary to study the Portulan charts.

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